

Celebrations begin to mark 150 years of iconic artist Abanindranath Tagore

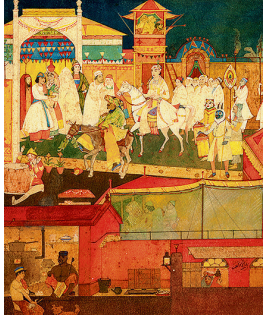
'His unique interpretation of *swadeshi* themes created a new awakening'

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Year-long celebrations marking 150 years of Abanindranath Tagore will kick off on Saturday, with a host of on-line workshops and talks paying tributes to the leading light of the Bengal School of Art.

Abanindranath, a nephew of Rabindranath Tagore and a decade younger to the poet, helped shape modern Indian art and was the creator of the iconic 'Bharat Mata' painting. The celebration, titled *Abanindranath at 150: Bichitra Revisited*, is being organised jointly by Victoria Memorial Hall, Kolkata, and DAG.

This collaboration, according to the organisers, is in the spirit of experimentation and exchange that took place at Abanindranath's Bichitra Studio at Jorasanko (the ancestral home of the Tagore family in Kolkata). The iconic south verandah of Jorasanko was established as



Fine art: Scenes from the *Arabian Nights* painted by Abanindranath Tagore. ■ SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

a studio and laboratory by the artist and his brothers Gaganendranath and Samarandranth and it hosted art classes, plays, performances, *addas*, and magic shows.

"Abanindranath Tagore was arguably the first major exponent of an artistic idiom that sought to modernise the Mughal and the Rajput styles in order to counter the influence of Western models of art under the colonial regime. His unique interpretation of *swadeshi* themes created a new awakening

and heralded a revival of Indian art," Jayanta Sengupta, secretary and curator of Victoria Memorial Hall, told *The Hindu*.

Victoria Memorial Hall is the custodian of the Rabindra Bharati Society collection, the single-largest collection of works by the artist. For DAG, the artist is central to its exhibition on the National Art Treasure artists at the Drishyakala Art Museum in Delhi as well as the foundation of the galleries on the Bengal School of Art at

Ghare Baire, Kolkata.

Sumona Chakravarty of DAG said: "Abanindranath's work is timeless, we continue to be amazed and delighted by it. He witnessed an important point in the nation's history when there were questions around the identity of India, and he responded by creating a new language for art that was so wide-ranging and diverse that even today it is a powerful reminder of the syncretic tradition we have inherited and need to safeguard."

On Saturday, four events will be held – over Zoom – through the day with special workshops for children, performative dialogues, and conversations. These events also mark the launch of a year-long celebration of the artist through digital projects, films, performances and workshops by contemporary artists who are re-engaging with his oeuvre and the spirit of the Bichitra Studio.