

Flower power

Dutch photo artist Bas Meeuws captures the beauty of nature through his still life series



Bas Meeuws



©Bas Meeuws, Mughal Botanical (#03), 2015, C-print on dibond behind acrylic. Courtesy Tasveer

an adult, he visited his wife at her art school, where he observed artists at work. Some of his close friends were photographers, too. When he wasn't busy at work, he would click photos. Gradually, he started plucking flowers and clicking them in the privacy of his drawing room with studio lighting using two flashes and a black backdrop. Over a period of time, he built a database of 11,000 different photos of flowers in various stages of bloom. Meanwhile, he started taking pictures of vases and tables at antique fairs.

He started collecting the images to build a collage. Elaborating the process, Bas says, "I start off with a table and an empty vase and then I put in one flower digitally, followed by another and the process continues till I create a unique arrangement. They are neither based on any past paintings that I have seen nor do I sketch the final image in advance. Everything comes from my imagination. The best part is that I can play with the flowers to my liking, as there's no gravity. So, I can place them in strange positions. Sometimes, I use the same one in three different



©Bas Meeuws, Untitled (#47), 2011, C-print on dibond behind acrylic. Courtesy Tasveer

ways in one single work, and all of them look distinct. I also use pictures of butterflies and insects. I add a lot of layers, clean up the images, adjust the lightings and create shadows."

He decided to capture God's creations of nature in his lenses after being

inspired by the rich art heritage of Holland. "In my country, we have a large tradition of still life. I was inspired by the Dutch still life of 16th and 17th centuries and was attracted to them. I wanted to create them through photography," he exclaims.

Quiz him about the significance of the exhibition's name and he says, "That's the beauty of it. You can see spring flowers during winter. I can change proportions and colours just to create the perfect picture irrespective of whether they are in bloom or not at that point of time."

As part of this show, he has also created the series titled *Mughal Botanicals* and *Mughal Still Lives*, which reflect a cross-pollination between eastern and western artistic traditions. For this, he sought inspiration from floral motifs seen in illuminated Mughal marna-

scripts and monuments and used the same techniques of representation as his Dutch works.

"For this, I have used the private collection of Abhishek Poddar, the founder of Tasveer, who had approached me to put together this exhibition. In 2015, when I came to India, I visited the Golden Triangle — Delhi, Agra and Jaipur — where I learnt about Mughal art and architecture. I used some

Spring in the Wintertime is on at Tarq, Apollo Bunder till May 31 from 11 am - 6.30 pm.

pics for background, but it was a challenge to transfer the marble inlays into my photos. I also used Indian flowers like hibiscus and a combination of tulip and lily, thereby creating my own flowers," he smiles and says. He adds that he will continue his quest for flowers. "I am pretty curious to see how I can keep on using them, yet have a fresh approach towards my work," he signs off.