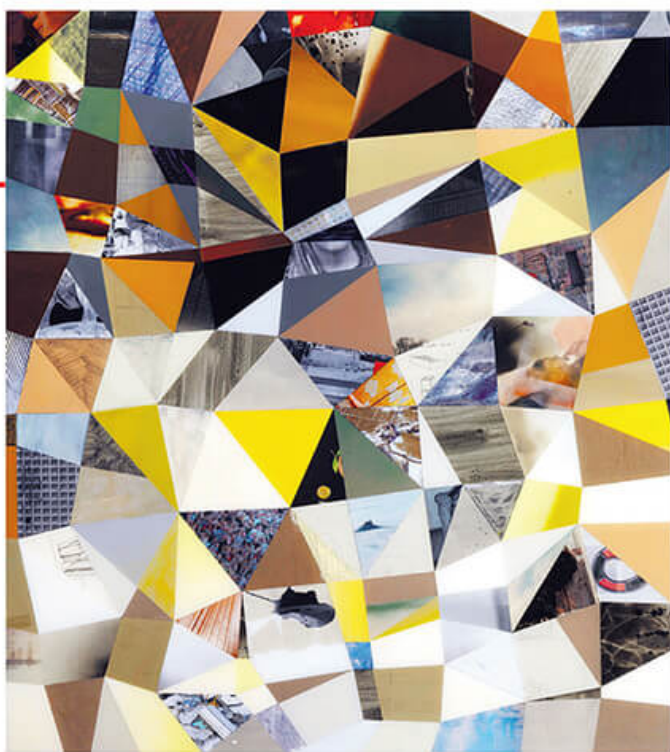


Artworks by Berlin-based artist Matthias Bitzer, titled *Islands and Chains*, mark the German's first solo exhibition in India, and will showcase a selection of his paintings, sketches and sculptures



Cloudgazer (2015); acrylic and ink on canvas



No man is an island

SOMA DAS

soma.das@mid-day.com

IT TOOK Ashwin Thadani, founder of the city-based artspace Galerie Isa, almost two years to bring Berlin-based artist Matthias Bitzer's artworks to India. His works, curated in an exhibition titled *Islands and Chains*, are based on figuration and abstraction and derive inspiration from 19th century icons in the field of film, literature, music and dance. The acclaimed artist was the recipient of the Otto Dix Prize (2010), awarded annually to an emerging artist from a German-speaking country.

Islands and Chains will feature abstract paintings, sketches and sculptures created using multiple media, which are aimed to create a dialogue within the space. Bitzer's interests include personal



Artist Matthias Bitzer

identity, and he plays with the visual language of modernism, combining figurative portraits with abstract, geometric designs.

Taking a new perspective on classical modernism, the 40-year-old artist combines portraits and geometric constructions and takes recourse to the stories and intellectual historical contexts of the 19th and early 20th century. Through his art, he probes questions of authenticity, the construction of reality, hypnagogia (transition from wakefulness to sleep) and structures of personality development.

Bitzer is inspired by protagonists from 19th century literature, film, music and dance, such as Austrian author Arthur Schnitzler, American poet Emily Dickinson, Argentine storyteller Jorge Luis Borges and German dancer Anita Berber, and uses them as starting points for his creations.

Bitzer explains the thought behind his artworks: "The show is inspired by the idea of contemplating a peacock; an idea that found its origin in the relation of (Austrian poet) Rainer Maria Rilke and (Italian actress) Eleonora Duse." He adds that the exhibition will see the gallery space envelop a body of new works consisting of different mediums, techniques, forms, and dimensions. "Some claim proximity, others offer distance. All my works are rooted in a particular motivation. The message is bound to a process of transformation that is fundamental to the fluxus in the works," he observes.

Bitzer explains that the protagonists in his works evolve from various sources, including fictional characters from stories. "In some cases, my endeavour is to deconstruct their origin, transforming them into some sort of universal symbol, which stands in no relation to these parameters. In *Islands and Chains*, I refer to Eleonora Duse and Rilke, but not for reasons of narrative or nostalgia. It



(Top) Saturnine sky, 2015; paper and epoxy on board; (above) Contemplating a peacock (2015); acrylic, ink on canvas

was to depict the impulse to maintain a momentum of desire, prolonging the inevitable emptiness of fulfillment," he concludes. Bitzer will proceed to Hong Kong and Tokyo post the exhibition.