

Drawn to remember

All must be remembered:
a turning wind, the threads
in the threadbare event must be gathered,
yard after yard of all we inhabited,
the train's long trajectory,
and the trappings of sorrow.

–Pablo Neruda, excerpt from "Memory"

Things, people, places exist in a stream of never forgetting; they arrive in the loneliness of my studio. One re-sees the things one saw. With the quickly vanishing images in rushes, one tries to collect and keep them safe, to go back to them and recall them. My paintings remind me why I remember something while looking at something else. My works contain the experience of looking. The curiosity of looking at a person, a person in a particular condition. Existences mingle; the animals, the trees, and objects in my paintings may tell human stories. Caring as an idea often comes as a mainstay—there is a fear of not being able to attend to the pain of others. Sometimes things happen and there is a regret of not acting right at that time and there is a desire to undo things; I reimagine situations like I wish them to be. I want to keep a close watch on my loved ones, there is a fear of losing them. But the condition of time only permits me to work on it mentally. The present time has made me forget how to greet and meet the people as earlier. An act which was right for one moment fails in another moment.

There is always a negotiation between the act of making and what I feel. The small scale gives both the artist and the viewer a sense of intimacy, it creates a kind of nearness to the things that are distant. The experiences of a cold ice cream and an airy day, how to paint those sensations and translate them visually. The things one can't have anymore have turned up as sensations. Something which you savoured physically is being tasted, ruminated through senses, and turned into a different plane of material: the paints.

–Mahesh Baliga, 2022