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Review Srijon Chowdhury paintings pull you in for a closer look

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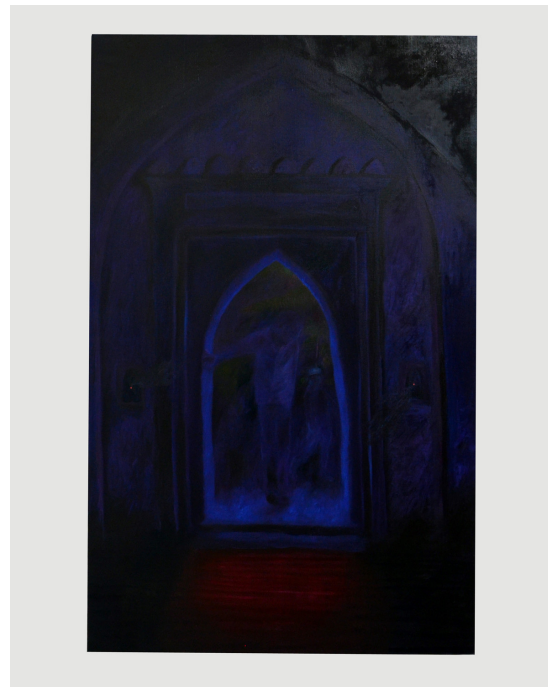
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Srijon Chowdhury's paintings at Klowden Mann are hard to see. At first glance, they look like deep blue monochromes. On closer inspection, details emerge: folds of cloth, a hand, the glow of a cellphone screen.

With slightly more effort, you can discern murky figures caught in banal but solitary moments: smoking, talking on the phone, just hanging out. These images are somewhat fugitive, submerged in blue shadows and entombed in flickering layers of varnish that render them fleeting at best.

In this, Chowdhury's work invokes the Impressionists, who recorded scenes of bourgeois life in optically dazzling scrimms of paint. It also, oddly, reminds me of looking at an Ad Reinhardt black painting, whose subtle shifts in tone evoke a searching, fathomless feeling that makes me aware of my own desire to see.

These are lofty comparisons for paintings of what are essentially casual snapshots, but the charm of Chowdhury's work is that it imbues mundane scenes with a romantic, almost religious awe. The only painting that strays from bars, cafes and domestic scenes drives this association home. "Dad entering my great great grandfather Asgar's mosque" depicts the shadowy figure of a man framed within a pointed arch delineated with an ethereal glow. Like his father in this image, Chowdhury's paintings occupy a threshold between the visible and something more mysterious.



Srijon Chowdhury's "Dad entering my great great grandfather Asgar's mosque," 2016. (Daphne Mangin / Klowden Mann)