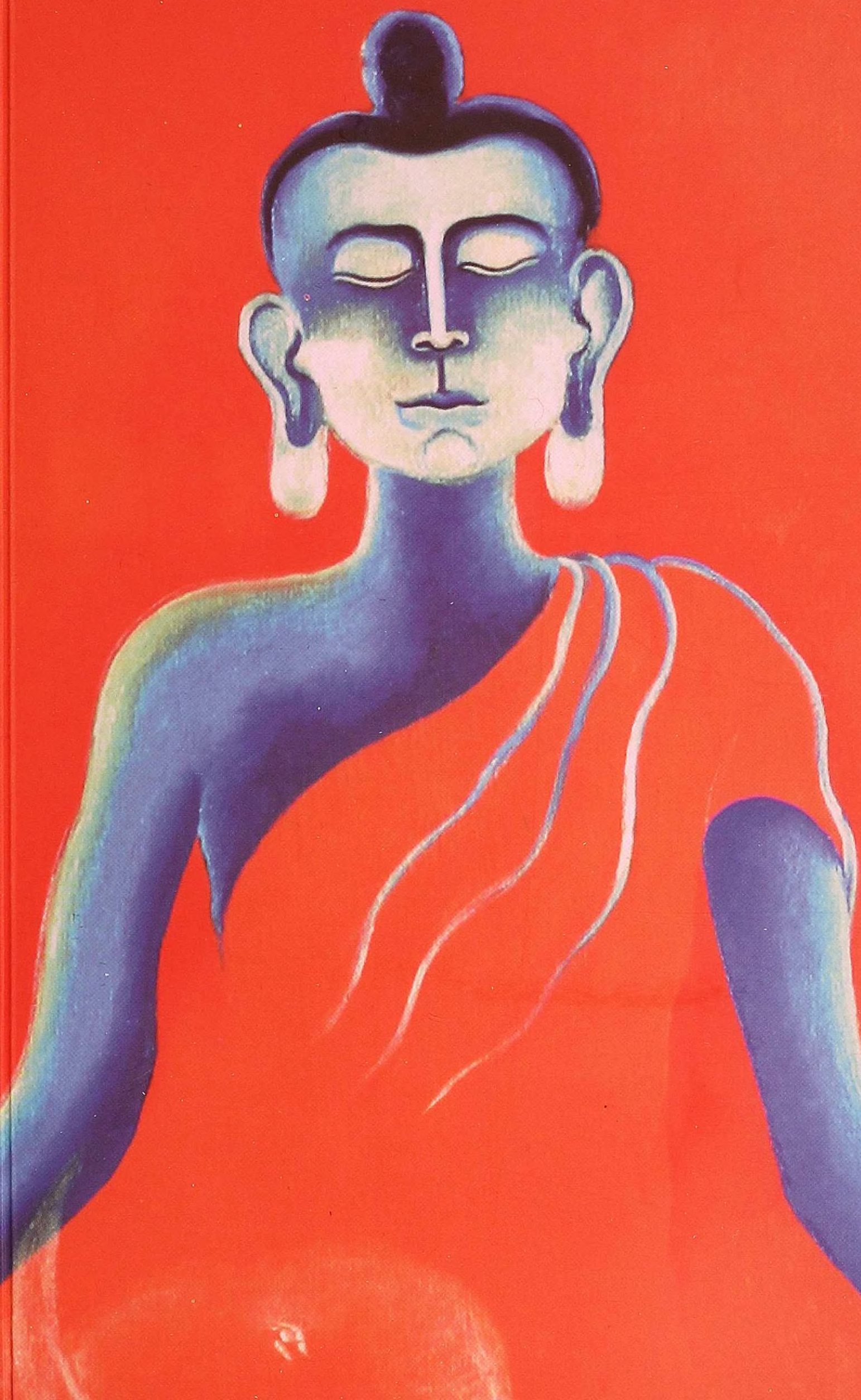
INDIAN PAINTINGS *of the* NEW MILLENNIUM



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Sunanda and Umesh Gaur Collection

Curated by Helen Asquine Fazio, Ph.D.

Thomas J. Walsh Art Gallery
Quick Center for the Arts
Fairfield University
1073 North Benson Road
Fairfield, CT 06824-5195
September 17, 2005 through December 4, 2005

Mason Gross School of the Arts
Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey
33 Livingston Avenue
New Brunswick, NJ 08901-1959
May 8, 2006 through June 17, 2006

Introduction and Acknowledgements

The current art scene in India is one of the most vibrant in the world. In the last few decades, India has experienced a remarkable blossoming of modern art, which has adapted traditional imagery as well as modern artistic practices. Contemporary Indian art is refreshing, unselfconscious and free spirited, but also rooted in the Indian psyche. Indian artists reflect the globalization of India and its changing contemporary society and put a new face on a country which in the past has been known for Bollywood, spicy food, yoga and outsourcing. This spring, the Asia Society and the Queens Museum of Art presented *Edge of Desire*, the first-ever major exhibition of contemporary Indian art in the United States.

In an attempt to bring arts of the world to the Connecticut community, Thomas J. Walsh Art Gallery at the Fairfield University is pleased to present the exhibition *Indian Paintings of the New Millennium*. The exhibition consists of twenty-seven works of internationally recognized contemporary artists as well as India's most innovative emerging artists. Reflecting a time of socio-political globalization of India, exhibition artworks address cultural values and ethnic identities as well as contemporary, political, social, and environmental issues.

There are many people to thank for this exhibition and its supporting materials. The exhibition is culled from the collection of Sunanda and Umesh Gaur, one of the largest private collections of modern and contemporary Indian art in the United States. The Gaurs have been collecting for more than fifteen years and their collection consists of about two hundred works, focusing on vintage works by senior artists of post-independence India. In recent years, the Gaurs have started to collect emerging artists, and this is the first exhibition from their collection that focuses on Indian paintings produced in the last few years. Their generosity in lending works from their collection to this exhibition is greatly appreciated. We thank them tremendously for educating the general public about this field by helping many university museums in the United States, such as the Thomas J. Walsh Art Gallery at Fairfield University, to organize exhibitions on modern and contemporary Indian art.

We are indebted to my long-time friend and colleague Jeffrey Wechsler, Senior Curator at the Rutgers University's Zimmerli Art Museum, for providing an introduction to the Gaurs and their collection. Special thanks go to Helen Asquine Fazio for curating the exhibition and to Dr. Fazio and Gayatri Sinha for writing the catalogue essays and descriptive texts for the works.

We would like to thank Jacqueline Thaw and Faye Sfugaras of the Mason Gross School of the Arts at Rutgers University for designing an excellent catalogue and

Lory Frenkel for editing it. We would also like to thank Lewis and Marilyn Cohen for their magical invitational design, and Chuck De Angelis for his innovative installation design.

Thank you all for helping us to realize our mission at the Thomas J. Walsh Art Gallery to offer innovative and multicultural exhibitions with diverse educational programming to our students, faculty, administration, and the wider Fairfield community and to make the gallery a significant visible symbol of the Quick Center for the Arts and Fairfield University.

We are pleased that this exhibition will be traveling to Rutgers University and will be exhibited at Mason Gross School of the Arts Gallery next year as a part of programming associated with the visit of His Holiness the 14th Dalai Lama, Tenzin Gyatso, in fall 2005. This exhibition will be a part of a plethora of activities contributing to a year-long exploration of global issues. We would like to thank Dennis Benson and Lawrence Waung of the Mason Gross School of the Arts for coordinating this.

Diana Mille, Ph.D.
Director, Thomas J. Walsh Art Gallery

Mason Gross School of the Arts at Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey wishes to thank Fairfield University for organizing the exhibition *Indian Paintings of the New Millennium*. This collection of work from the Fairfield show will travel to Rutgers and be included as part of the Mason Gross Galleries exhibition on Contemporary South Asian Art, which will run from May 8 through June 17, 2006. We appreciate their assistance and graciousness. Apart from our gratitude to Fairfield University, we would also like to acknowledge and thank Sunanda and Umesh Gaur, from whose extensive collection of modern Indian art these works are drawn.

We are particularly pleased to have the works at Rutgers at this time as Tenzin Gyatso, the 14th Dalai Lama, will be visiting the university in early fall 2005. In honor of the Dalai Lama's visit, the university is hosting a year-long series of events centered around the themes of the Dalai Lama's talk on mutual understanding, peace, and spirituality. The paintings of these contemporary Indian artists fold nicely into this series and our exhibition as a whole.

Lawrence Waung, *Gallery Director*
Dennis Benson, *Associate Dean*
Mason Gross School of the Arts

Indian Paintings of the New Millennium

HELEN ASQUINE FAZIO

India has recently passed two important milestones. In 1997, India achieved a half century of independence, having thrown off the yoke of the British Raj in 1947. In 2000, the country participated in the global achievement of two millennia of semi-civilization— it was a year of both hope and fear. Presenting selected works from the Sunanda and Umesh Gaur Collection of modern and contemporary Indian art, this exhibition at Fairfield University, *Indian Paintings of the New Millennium*, addresses ways that selected contemporary Indian artists portray the themes of the triumph of hope and the potential for violence—the poles between which postmodern lives are strung.

India is a pluralistic democracy, an aggregate nation made up of ancient princely states whose histories were already deep before the Raj brought an end to those governments. Looking into the future, it was the task of the leaders and thinkers of the new state to imagine how progress could be achieved without loss of soul. Writing about the development of the anti-colonial, nationalist identity, Partha Chatterjee[1] makes it clear that India has aligned itself along a clear fault line. On one side, attaining economic and technological modernity requires agreement with the values and techniques of the developed West. On the other side, and more important in the long run, attaining modernity depends upon keeping faith with fundamental discarnate, precolonial values and maintaining the "distinctness of one's spiritual culture." For India, these cultural values are varied, coming from a plethora of ethnic, tribal, religious, and familial identities—identities that increasingly come into conflict as resources are strained in neglected rural villages and opportunities are limited in teeming modern cities.

The first-tier response of the modern citizen becomes a backward look into the imaginary past. As an escape from rampant progress as national borders shift, governments change, methods of transport speed up, and strangers from various social strata are thrown together on crowded trains and buses and in apartment houses, the modern citizen becomes nostalgic. Looking backward, he or she imagines an idyllic past. Writing about modernity and its spiritual quests and created myths, Svetlana Boym[2] comments that the modern nostalgic, "is never a native but a displaced person who mediates between the local and the universal." Such a person was Rabinindranath Tagore, the aristocratic poet and artist of pre-independence India who brought an exhibition of modern European art to his home state of Bengal in 1922, but charged India's artists to root themselves in tribal styles. Once fascinated with European progress, indeed a knight of the British Empire who received the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1913, Tagore eventually soured on the repressions of the Raj and called for artists of his caste and class to reinvent their roots through the emulation of the art of the tribal Santhals.

After the turn of the new millennium, the idea of loyalty to roots, real or adopted, is a dubious value in India. There are many kinds of roots and many ways of inhabiting and exacerbating the small niches of the cultural subdivisions based upon religion, caste, gender, and identity politics. In a 2004 interview with the married artists Jitish and Reena Kallat, the interviewer praised the couple for their liberalism, because Jitish is culturally a Keralite and Reena is culturally a Punjabi, and thus they reach across the traditionalist south/liberalist north cultural divide.[3] Each artist in this exhibition, indeed, hails from distinct cultural roots and his or her work represents the interplay between loyalty to those roots and the disloyalty of the social critic. It has been abundantly clear in the past, and remains so today, that identity politics in India represent inflammatory and easily manipulated tension points. K. G. Subramanyan's *Untitled* (2004) illustrates the historical torching of the Muslim-owned Best Bakery in March of 2002, an act of retaliatory arson carried out by Hindu mobs in reaction to the Godhara train burning, an accident that was attributed to Muslim arsonists. T. V. Santosh's *Untitled* (2004) illustrates a less-clear but equally disturbing narrative as his rioting militants, their heads covered by what may or may not be the *kuffiyeh*, replicate themselves with a weapon and flag, striding toward some indistinct conflict. G. R. Iranna's naked, defenseless giant in *Untitled* (2004) is cowed by a fleet of diving airplanes. That these three works are without specific titles emphasizes the loose play between political commentary and political position. Sudhir Patwardhan makes a very clear social statement in *Wounds II* (2003). There is no ambiguity. Suffering makes us all one and the same.

Although they exploit the narration of conflict and discomfort, India's contemporary artists, working at the dawn of the new millennium, represent a second-tier response to the stress factor of the attrition of cultural soul. There is less nostalgia, and no mourning for the lost, imaginary home. Facing forward, the artists represented in this exhibition embrace both the death of and the possibilities for the repristination of Indian cultural forms. Engaging with grave matter, Atul Dodiya in *Kiss* (2002) and Anupam Sud in *Do Not Touch the Halo* (1999) create mystical images that suggest the arrival of a plague and convey the warning that all empires must eventually fail. Truth is not to be avoided. There is hope, but it cannot be realized through a return to the precolonial past. Gulammohammed Sheikh's *Mappa Mundi* (2003) provides a vision of a spiritual country populated by deer and birds, refreshed by flowing rivers, attended by religious holy persons of several traditions, and guarded by lovers, poets, and mystics. The known world is redrawn as a new, global kingdom of shared traditions. Even for the less blithe Arunanshu Choudhury, the newly urbanizing landscape in *Eye Wonder II* (2004) retains a place for the playful and the divine. In *Maya's Dream* (2004), the cover image of this catalogue, Arpana Caur retells the patriarchal tale of the Buddha. Buddha's mother, Queen Maya, becomes the real subject of the painting as both

the literal seed and foundational root for a philosophical tradition that changed the world. The Buddha, arising from his mother, embraces her, and the *bodhi* tree of knowledge points down toward her.

In the new millennium, India's contemporary artists clearly continue to negotiate the socially responsive artist's roles as critic and visionary. Interrogating, rather than accepting or ameliorating the harsh changes of urbanism and collision, and in many cases, actively searching for criticism, their art makes itself a witness to the daily performance of Indian postmodernity.

Helen Asquine Fazio holds an MA in Art History and a Ph.D. in Comparative Literature from Rutgers University and specializes in South and East Asia. A former gallery owner and a collector of Himalayan art, Dr. Fazio is consultant for the visit of the 14th Dalai Lama to the office of Academic Affairs at Rutgers University and is a freelance curator. She is a co-editor of *Home and the World: South Asia in Transition*, an anthology of studies on art, nationalism, gender, translation, and untouchability, forthcoming from Cambridge Scholar's Press.

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[2] Boym, Svetlana. *The Future of Nostalgia.* New York: Perseus Books, 2001.

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Contemporary Indian Art – Some Leading Engagements

GAYATRI SINHA

The trajectory of the movement in Indian art began in the spirit of an uncertain modernism but has directed itself toward a vigorous postmodernist language that absorbs and redefines the inheritance of Euro-American art movements with Indian aesthetic traditions. In a nation where the benefits of modernity are unevenly distributed, the notions of center and region, rational and traditional knowledge, fact and fabular narratives come together in a vivid postmodernity. Since the 1990s, this realization has fueled Indian art.

THE 1990s—A DECADE OF CRITICAL CHANGE

The leading definition of Indian art since the 1990s, in contrast to earlier decades, has incorporated its determined accommodation of the tensions of Indian polity and its relative negation of the debates around art making. In coming out of the dominant Soviet socialist mode in the late 1980s, India encountered, for the first time, the benefits of mass television and communication systems, artistic exchange, and a reforming economy. The support of a rapidly changing financial base encouraged waves of migration from villages to urban centers and, thence, to American and European citadels of financial muscle. Modernity and modernization kicked in with unpredictable influences on the language of art. The personal video that came to India and replaced the photograph for documenting marriage ceremonies became a critical tool in *avant garde* video art in the 1990s. Photography expanded from the sinewy rigors of the newsroom into the art gallery, and most importantly, the categories of high and low art became blurred. Simultaneously, the realization of the wealth of popular art, the studio photograph, film poster, regional film aesthetics, and the vivification of mythology in an era of right-wing politics opened up possibilities for the language of critique, irony, and subversion.

Change is never permanent or even. Nevertheless, the perception of engagements with democracy has led to strong articulations by groups, including women and *dalits*, and their pronounced sexual and political issues in art. Artistic exchange programs with the West and the representation of Indian art, particularly in southern world biennials lent Indian concerns a global platform. Furthermore, the influences of the West and of Japan that dominated Indian art from about 1910 to the mid 1960s shifted to accommodate a more intimate sense of region. Artists' responses in the last decade suggest that events in Afghanistan, Bangladesh, and Iraq have had a direct bearing on artistic consciousness. The emergent idioms reflect a slew of postcolonial identities and hybrid locations.

NARRATIVE AS ALLEGORY

One of the outcomes of the Indian nationalist movement that rebelled against

imperial British rule (1880–1947) was the revivifying of Hindu myths to evoke a sense of messianic national identity. Hundreds of thousands of images of Hindu gods and national leaders, often in close conjunction, were produced by popular presses and were seen as objects that occupied a shifting zone between the deified and the secular. In the last two decades, this bank of images has produced a rich fount of possibility for subversion, allegory, and play, particularly against the backdrop of right-wing politics. A body of paintings (and by extension video art) has sprung out of the shared national and mythic narratives to challenge the totalizing definitions of the nation. This body of works includes Badri Narayan's *Queen Khemsa's Dream of Hamsa,* with its reference to the Akbari period *Hamsa Nama* painted manuscript. At the other end of the spectrum, Gulammohammed Sheikh appropriates myths and Indian classical art as elements of a shared, universal heritage and an assertion of political freedom. Arpana Caur locates herself in a long line of artist-narrators who have given form to the fable of Queen Maya, the mother of the Buddha. Caur's image traces a line that reaches back to Gandhara art, but it demonstrates the contemporary artist's desire to interpret pictorial histories in the light of contemporary sensibilities. In the work of Anupam Sud and Ganesh Pyne, we see the conflation of the archaic with the contemporary, while Atul Dodiya evokes a fabular image of the deathliness that stalks India's trouble spots, notably Gujarat and Kashmir.

ABSTRACTION AS AVANT GARDE

Modern art practitioners of abstraction have drawn with ease on multiple sources. In recent years, abstract painting in India has overcome some of the vexing debates surrounding indigenism and internationalism that raged in the 1960s and 1970s to paint with some remarkably fresh insights. The influence of the Sir J. J. School in Mumbai, where Prabhakar Kolte was a prominent figure for several years, has been significant. Also, the Art Center of Bharat Bhavan in Bhopal has produced a crop of abstractionists that includes Manish Pushkale. Pushkale is a leading example of the integration of western minimalism and Indian geometric abstraction.

THE CITY AND THE STREET AS LOCUS

In the postcolonial, post-globalism period, the phenomenon of the city has undergone rapid metamorphosis. Different layers of Indian consciousness, such as the princely, the colonial, the official institutions of the new nation state, and the globalizing marketplace, allow for different horizontal cultural strata. Simultaneously, the street has emerged as the most important field of contemporary visual culture. It is here that the accretions of political ideology, the emergence of pan-Indian gods, the glittering seductions of Bollywood, and the persuasive power of the market are most visible. In addition, the street is home for the homeless, the site for mass protest, and the locus for art as activism.

The contradictions that are afforded by these different times, of an India that lives as vitally in the smallest village as it does in the modern metropolis, feed the tensions that are visible in Indian art. Subodh Gupta employs a photorealistic style to valorize the Indian milkman's cycle, while K. G. Subramanyan deliberately inverts factual data into images of a perverse play. Reena Saini Kallat and Sudhir Patwardhan directly engage with the violence that dogs complex social alignments. Jitish Kallat and T. V. Santosh draw on the image that is set out by the media to play out its ambiguity, while in the work of G. R. Iranna and Sunil Das, the larger issues of humanity and vulnerability are played out.

The artists and works selected for this exhibition represent some of the complex concerns and refinements at work in Indian practice in the new millennium. The swings between mythic allusion and evocations from an indigenous aesthetic appear to shift and embrace the mediatic image to create a slew of iconic strategies.

Gayatri Sinha is an independent curator based in New Delhi and is currently the art critic with the national newspaper *The Hindu.* She has curated exhibitions of modern Indian art and photography at the National Museum and the National Gallery of Modern Art in New Delhi, and many other galleries throughout India. Her writings include: *Expressions and Evocations—Contemporary Indian Women Artists* (Marg, 1996), *Krishen Khanna: A Critical Biography* (Vadehra Art Gallery, 2001), and *Indian Art: An Overview* (Rupa Books, 2003).

The works in the exhibition



K. G. Subramanyan born 1924

Untitled (Best Bakery), 2004
Gouache on hand made paper, 30″x 22″

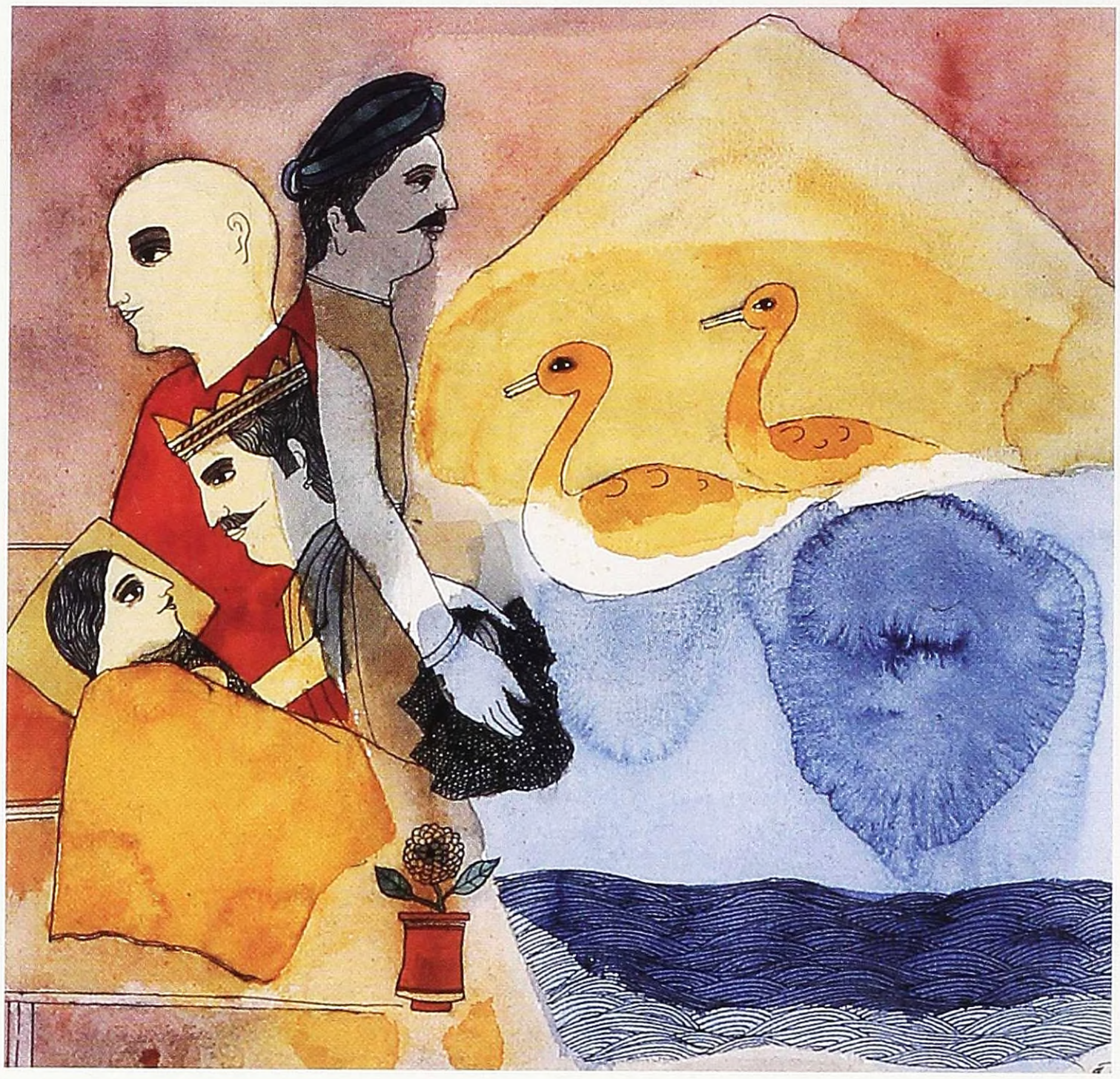
As an ideologue and artist, K. G. Subramanyan occupies a unique position in the field of Indian art. Since the politically troubled 1980s, his particular role has been to comment on social polity in a style that is both witty and aphoristic. Through his responses to the intercultural tensions between a traditional and a rapidly globalizing society, Subramanyan comments on contemporary India through images of play and cynicism. As such, his work is almost never about man's heroic possibilities; rather it mimics the sly depredations of the ordinary. This work, inscribed with the word "bakery" on the right, is strongly suggestive of the widely publicized Best Bakery case of 2003, which became a central symbol of the Godhra carnage in Gujarat. In this episode, some members of a Muslim family were allegedly burnt alive on the bakery premises in a deeply shocking incident of Hindu–Muslim conflict. The predominant use of terra-cotta and a flaming orange palette emphasize the actual scene of the fiery devastation. The downward propulsion of the figures, with their flailing arms and legs, is forcefully rendered. The partitions, suggestive of walls, enhance this scene of entrapment, while the leaping flames of the bakery fires appear to rise and consume the victims. This painting belongs to the corpus of work that defines Subramanyan's imaginative response to the media reportage of the incident. Subramanyan's social concerns tend to be articulated without didacticism, even as he documents critical moments in contemporary Indian political history. GS



K. G. Subramanyan born 1924

Unplanned Encounter, 2001
Oil on canvas, 54″x 54″

In its content and construction, this painting relates to several works by the artist on the subject of unexpected visitors and the chance encounter. Since the mid-1960s, Subramanyan has worked with the grid to create multiple perspectives and the image of the voyeuristic figure looking into and out of the composition. It is also a device that helps him create a sense of claustrophobic interiors, of figures constricted within a confined psychic space. Subramanyan has also developed a style of figure construction that combines the spiky energy and informality of Indian folk painting with cubist techniques such as the double head and fragmented figure construction. Through such devices, he brings a vivid, edgy quality to his paintings as well as a sense of play, dream, and allegory. In this work, the inverted and sexual central plunging figure, the seeming lack of actual communication among figures pressed together within a closed space, and the milieu that combines the formality of an apparent museum with the unexpected gesture are typical of Subramanyan's style. GS



Badri Narayan born 1929

Queen Khemsa's Dream of Hamsa, 2000
Watercolor on paper, 23″x 22.5″

Born in Andhra Pradesh, Narayan was eighteen years old when India made the transition from colony to independent nation. His work has focused on the narration of traditional India's wealth of fabular and folkloric literature. Narayan's work is exemplary for representing a particularly Indian, nationalistic modernism, a movement instigated by the Bengali poet-artist Rabindranath Tagore, who enjoined Indian artists to explore contemporary media and techniques but to retain the thread of attachment with India's past traditions. Coinciding with independence, Indian writing for children experienced a revival of retellings of mythology and history. Narayan, also a writer, has illustrated more than eight books of fables for children and has written on the importance of the narrative tradition. His fine art continues his devotion to the telling of tales. Although himself a Hindu, Narayan has not limited himself to painting only Hindu narratives. The story of Queen Khemsa is a love story subsumed within the Persian romantic epic the *Hamsa Nama*, a text of stories brought to India by Muslims in the ninth century and illustrated during the reign of Akbar in the thirteenth century. HAF

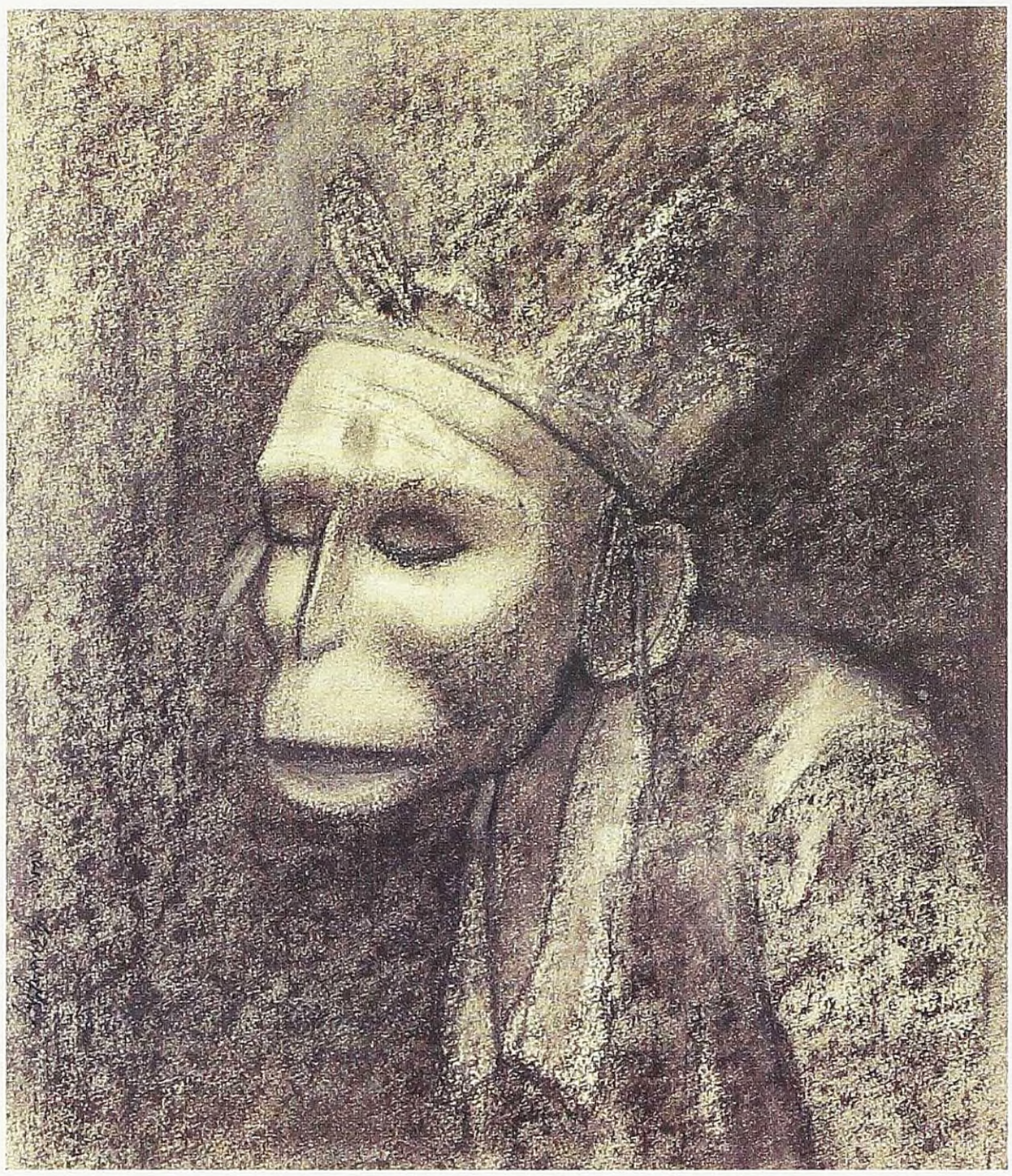


Ganesh Pyne born 1937

The Mask, 2001
Tempera on canvas, 23.5″x 19″

Ganesh Pyne's oeuvre is invested with images that are richly suggestive and evocative. He has said, "My paintings are about mystery, beauty and agony: these are the essential elements."* Since the 1980s, this Kolkata-based artist has painted on the subject of the mask. Here, a mask with blank eyes and a frontal, iconic presence appears to emerge from a darkened background with a theatrical effect that is somewhat reminiscent of the style of Rabindranath Tagore. The deep ivory color of the mask is suggestive of deathliness, and is characteristic of Pyne's frequently used images of bleached bones and skeletal forms. The absence of any other details, combined with the layers of tempera that appear to trap the light, create an effect of mystery. The fact that Pyne has been a nocturnal painter and is obsessed with the gap between image and reality is apparent in his works on puppets, dolls, and figures of warriors and assassins who appear to belong to a medieval history. In an earlier work, *The Masks* (1994, tempera on canvas) two painted figures effectively suggest that the mask is symbolic of a dual identity. In reference to his oeuvre, one can see how Pyne uses the device of a frontal, iconic mask-like face to lend his figures an enigmatic poignancy. GS

* Sen, Geeti. *Image and Imagination*. Ahmedabad: Mapin, 1996, p 146.

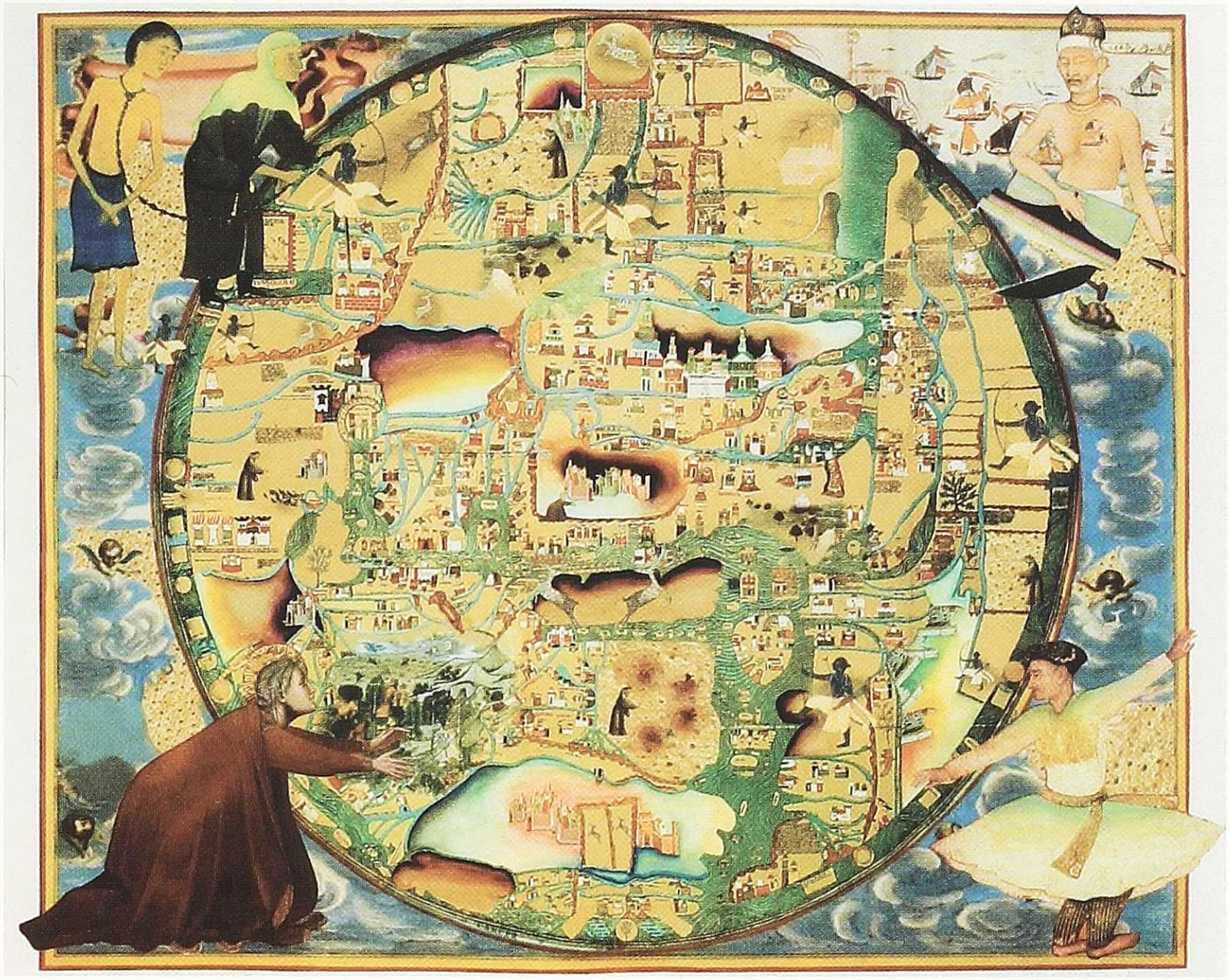


Ganesh Pyne born 1937

Untitled, 2004
Pastel on paper, 14″x 12″

Since the mid-1960s, Ganesh Pyne has painted the ape as an image of mockery. His work *The Ape* (1967) is endowed with a golden crown, while in *Self Portrait* (1968), Pyne represents himself as a captive monkey on a leash, wearing a decorative crown. In this work the simian appears as a tired and aging performer. He is clothed to emphasize the man–beast interrelationship that is common to Pyne's paintings. The *tilak*, or auspicious mark on his forehead, and what may be a sacred thread suspended over his left ear, add to this image of mockery. However, the monkey is rendered formally, as in a portrait, in deep somber colors that lend it a certain dignity. Pyne has spoken of the monkey/ape as representing the base, dark side of man, "... the man and the ape exist in one body and when the ape's desires are about to be fulfilled he disappears and is succeeded by the man, who is disgusted by the ape's appetites."* GS

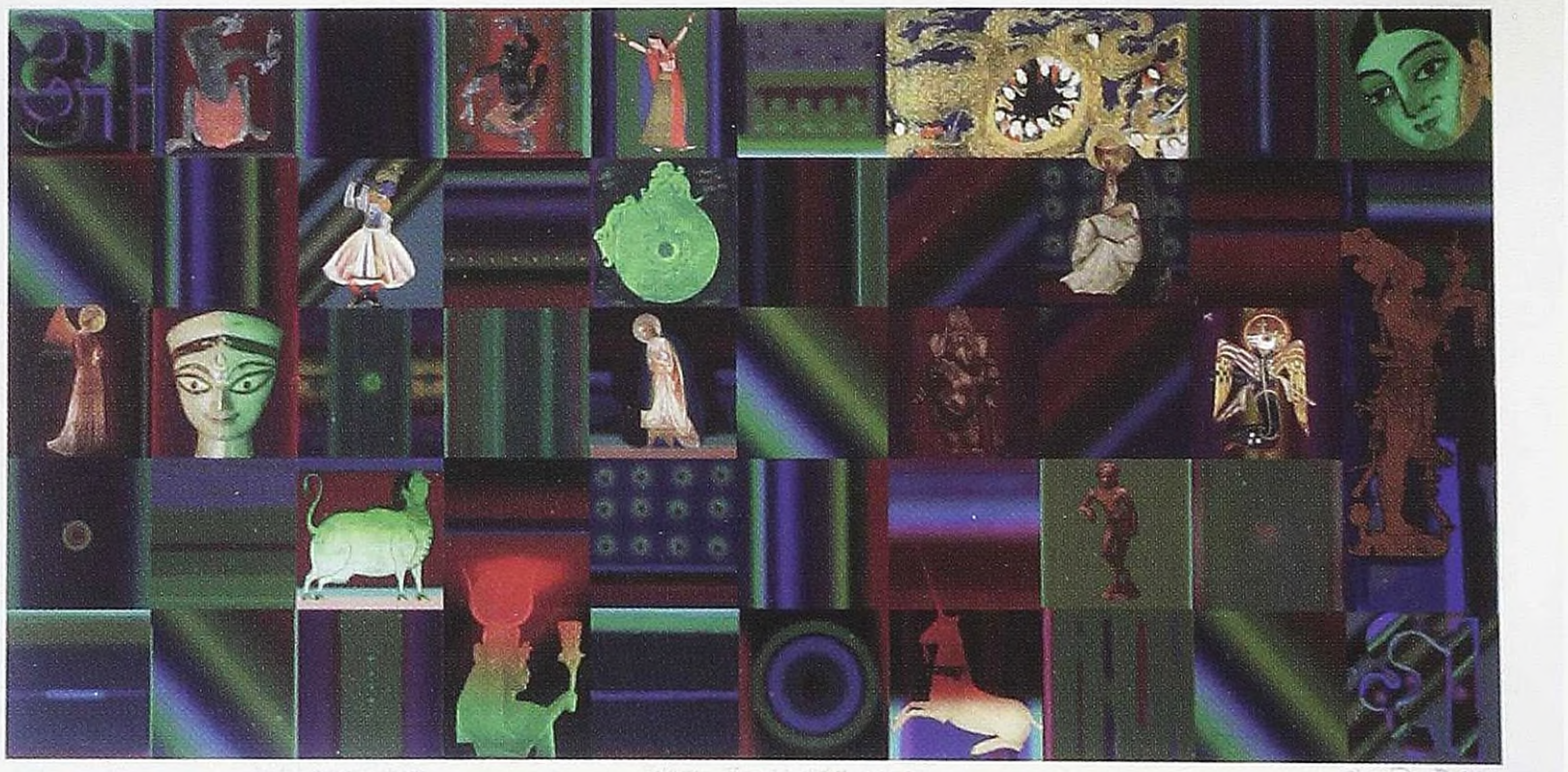
*Sen, Geeti. *Image and Imagination*. Ahmedabad: Mapin, 1996, p 139.



Gulammohammed Sheikh born 1937

Mappa Mundi, 2003
Gouache on digital inkjet print, 23″x 28″

After graduating from art school in Baroda, Sheikh spent a year studying in Great Britain and traveling through Europe looking at the work of Renaissance masters. *Mappa Mundi* was inspired by Sheikh's interest in a postcard image of an ancient map, the Mappamundi of Gervaise of Tilbury. Executed at a Benedictine monastery in Germany in 1234, the original map, lost to the chaos of WWII, depicted a spiritual-mythological landscape and attempted to describe the geography of the world as it was known in the thirteenth century. Born in a primarily rural district of Surendranagar, Gujarat, Sheikh has lived and worked within the layered spiritual intertext of India itself, a terrain where the postmodern rubs shoulders with the ancient.
In *Mappa Mundi*, the known world floats in a celestial realm guarded at the four corners by a Sufi dervish, a reproduction of Giotto's fourteenth century rendition of Mary Magdalene, the lovers Laila and Majnum from a painting by the sixteenth century master Mir Sayyid Ali, and a portrait of the poet-saint Kabir. They, like the four apostles of the new world order of love and spirituality, gesture to introduce the viewer into a profound continent traversed by monks and saints. HAF



Gulammohammed Sheikh born 1937

Talisman Twin 1, 2001
Digital collage on inkjet paper, 12″x 24″

Sheikh speaks to the importance of revisiting the artistic traditions of both India and the entire world in this age of globalization and border crossings, both metaphorical and physical. *Talisman Twin 1* is a rich fabric of motifs sampled from indigenous Indian traditions, including Mughal miniature figure painting of women of the court, Kalighat art, contemporary Bengali *papier maché* festival sculptures of the goddess Durga, and classical bronze sculpture of the god Ganesh. These are interspersed with an amalgamation of iconic images of traditional arts from around the world, including a Chinese jade ceremonial *bi* disk, a Celtic angel from an illuminated manuscript, a Renaissance angel, and a detail of the fifteenth century tapestry "Unicorn in Captivity," from the Southern Netherlands. Each of these images represents rich cultural traditions, a warp and weft of histories and spiritual values. When taken as a whole, the work transcends national boundaries and vibrates with the intensity of the messages from individual heritages that do not conflict, but rather participate together as poignant witnesses to the valuable heritage of the world. HAF



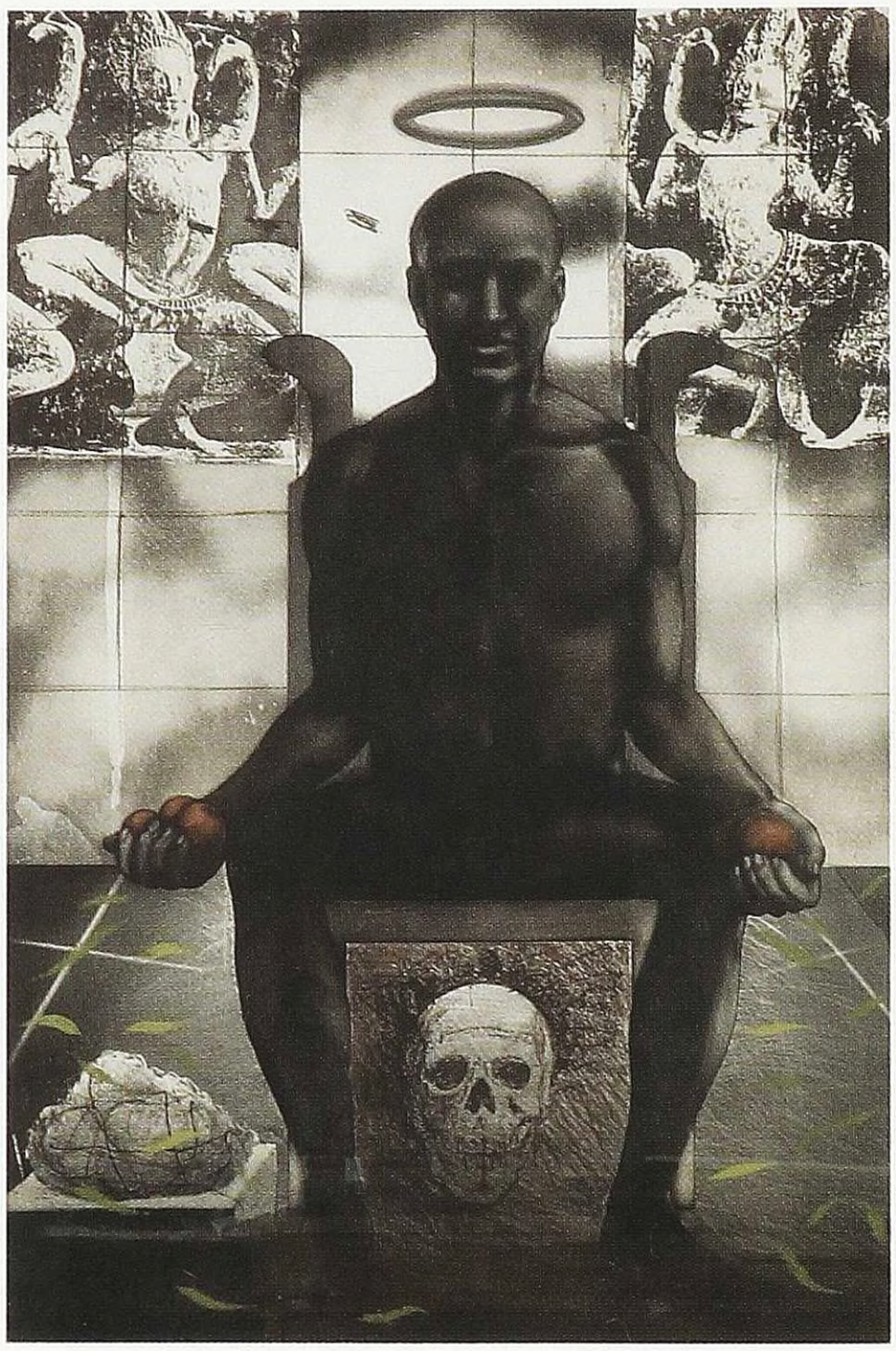


Sunil Das born 1939

Untitled (Woman), 1997
Oil on canvas, 32″x 32″

Untitled (Woman Side Portrait), 1997
Oil on canvas, 32″x 32″

Sunil Das trained at the Government College of Art in Kolkata and the Ecole des Beaux Arts in Paris on a French government scholarship. Until the mid 1960s, he worked and exhibited in Paris. He is well known for the strong linear quality that he brings to his drawings and paintings of horses, bulls, matadors, and women. The optimism and energy that he brings to his animal forms recedes from his depictions of women, most of whom are identifiably prostitutes in his home city of Kolkata. Das seldom varies in his portrayal, lending the women strongly delineated, but slackened faces that emphasize their poignant condition, and exposed, vulnerable bodies. In *Untitled (Woman)*, under the fatigued face, the woman's pale torso appears to catch the light of the street lamp. The absence of any detail other than the street wall, with its patina of age and the residue of fading graffiti, emphasizes the figure's isolation. Das usually works with a restricted palette of ochres, white, black, and red to portray his female figures. GS



Anupam Sud born 1944

Do Not Touch the Halo, 1999
Etching on paper, 35″x 24″

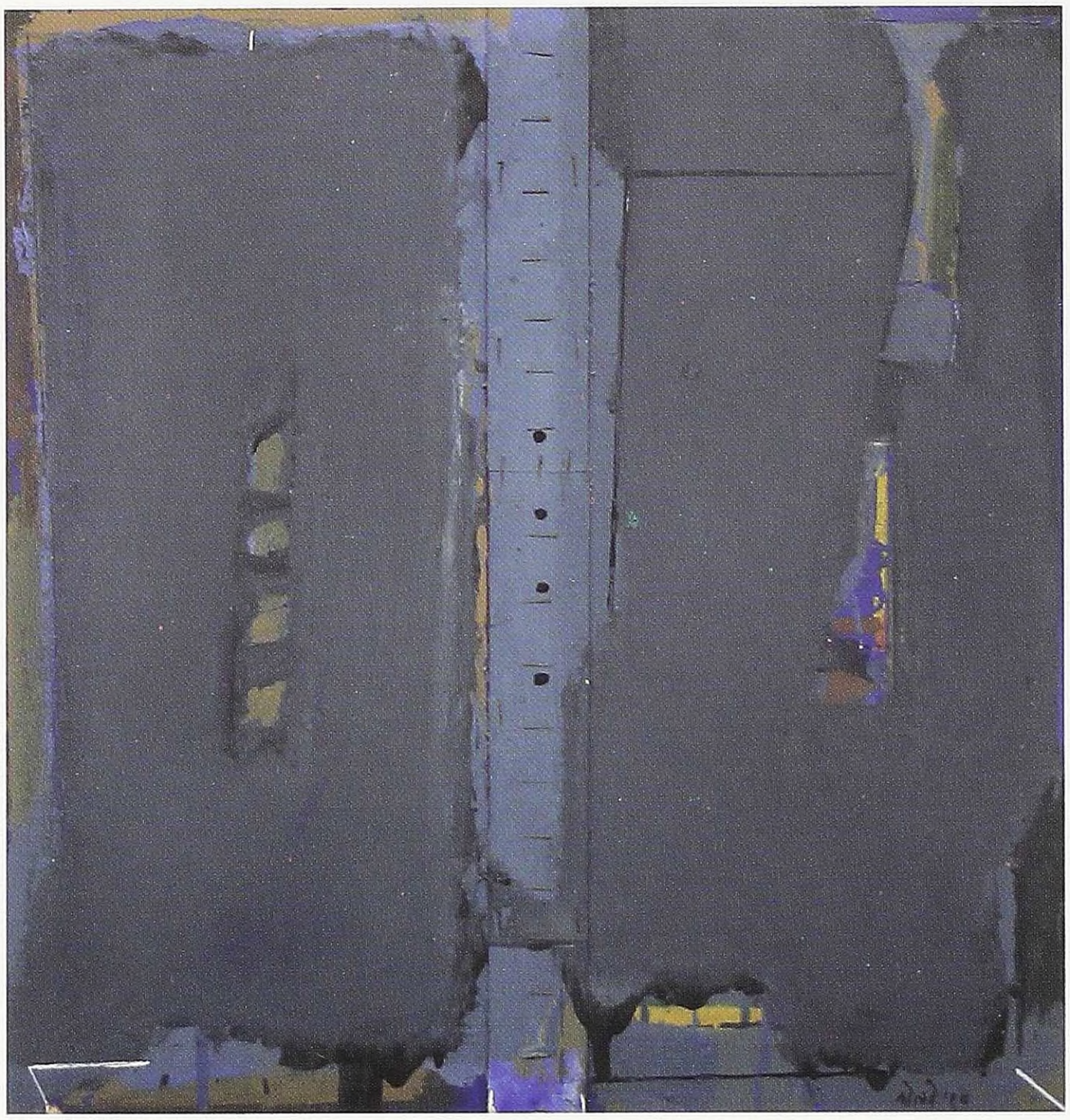
Born three years before Indian independence, and only a child when the violence of Partition shook her native state, Sud has achieved a perspective of feminist compassion for the human condition that traverses national boundaries and the indigenous subject. Her nudes are often devoid of hair and other cultural markers, making them citizens of no particular country, but their athletic physiques make them thoroughly modern inhabitants of a developed, perhaps overdeveloped, world. In this piece, the halo that is not to be touched floats above a rigidly enthroned figure whose hands hold red orbs that are suggestive of the orb of world dominion of the British kings, yet, the red glow also suggests the *stigmata*, a dubious distinction of divinity and divine suffering. Imprisoned in the electric chair of office with the *memento mori* grinning between his calves, Sud's divine figure is mocked as well as adorned by dancing *apsaras* at his shoulders and exists as a dubious icon of power and its limitations. HAF



Anupam Sud born 1944

Aqua Pura, 1999
Etching, 34″x 21″

In *Aqua Pura*, Sud's lovers face each other, but each is absorbed within his and her own thoughts, for their eyes do not meet. However, this is also a moment of calm, intense communication. The bottled water represents a clean and protected resource for the couple, a shared consciousness. The glass they share suggests a ritual, as if this moment is a sacrament that involves the drinking of the water. One has the sense that life goes on around these two, but they tarry like abstract and unsullied souls, each utterly absorbed in the moment, giving the painting the feeling of describing eternal time, rather than a moment in time. The sealed bottle of water has come to suggest something that is both positive and negative. Bottled water is potable in environments where the natural water suppiy is clearly non-potable, but the bottling of water in developing nations has also been criticized by environmentalists because the industry participates in the selling of water that they think should be freely available all over the world. The presence of the bottled ritual water returns us from musing on eternal time to the present, returning these lovers to a moment by a street stand in an urban environment. HAF



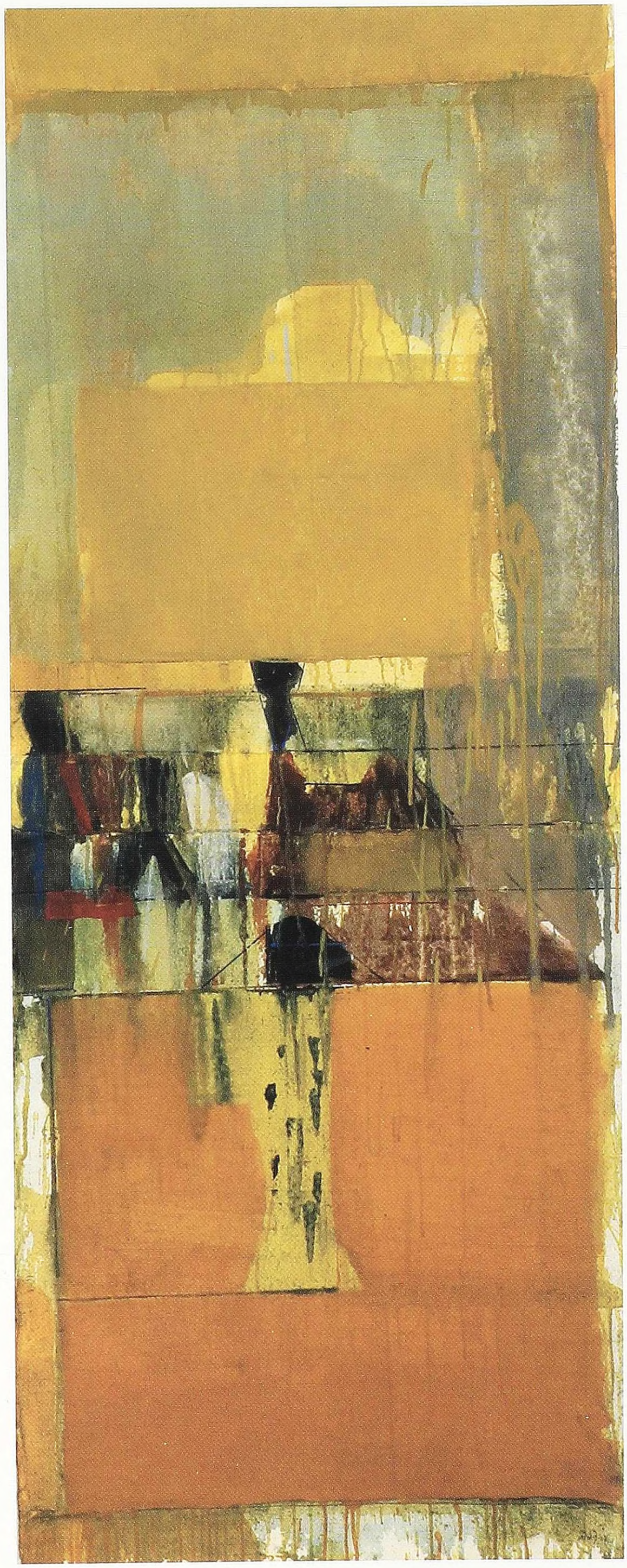
Prabhakar Kolte born 1946

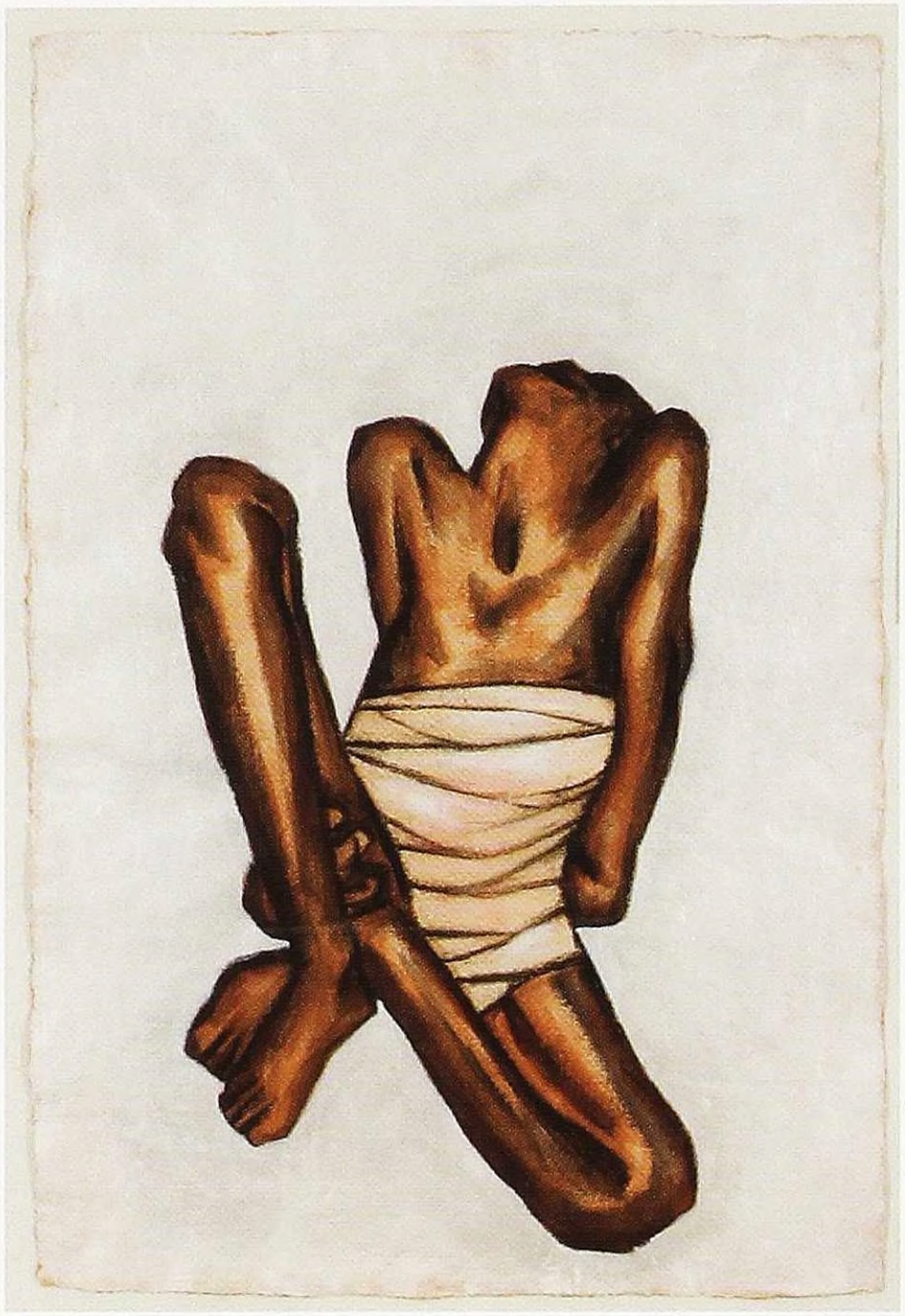
Untitled, 2002
Watercolor on paper, 21″x 21″

Prabhakar Kolte was trained at the Sir J. J. School of Art, and subsequently taught there for twenty-two years until his retirement in 1994. In his career, Kolte has worked as academic, curator, performance artist, and painter. Kolte's distinctive style of painting usually creates a strong color field with a saturated, dense effect. This field then reveals forms like color bands of heightened and complex activity. The effect that Kolte achieves is one of spatial expanse relieved by select areas of rhythmic movement. We appreciate the artist's strong linear quality, even as he works with smooth and unpredictable visual effects. If Mondrian's grid-like cubes and squares evoked the order and layout of New York City, Kolte's work is closer to the Indian reality of his own city, Mumbai, with its unplanned rhythms and dense movement. Kolte's early paintings had a strong resemblance to the work of Paul Klee, but more recently he has simplified the relationships of color, space, and form to establish a more essential and universal language. Like other abstract artists, Kolte steps beyond the limits of formal experimentation to evoke a response that is both emotional and spiritual. GS

Prabhakar Kolte

Untitled, 2004
Watercolor on paper, 72″x 30″

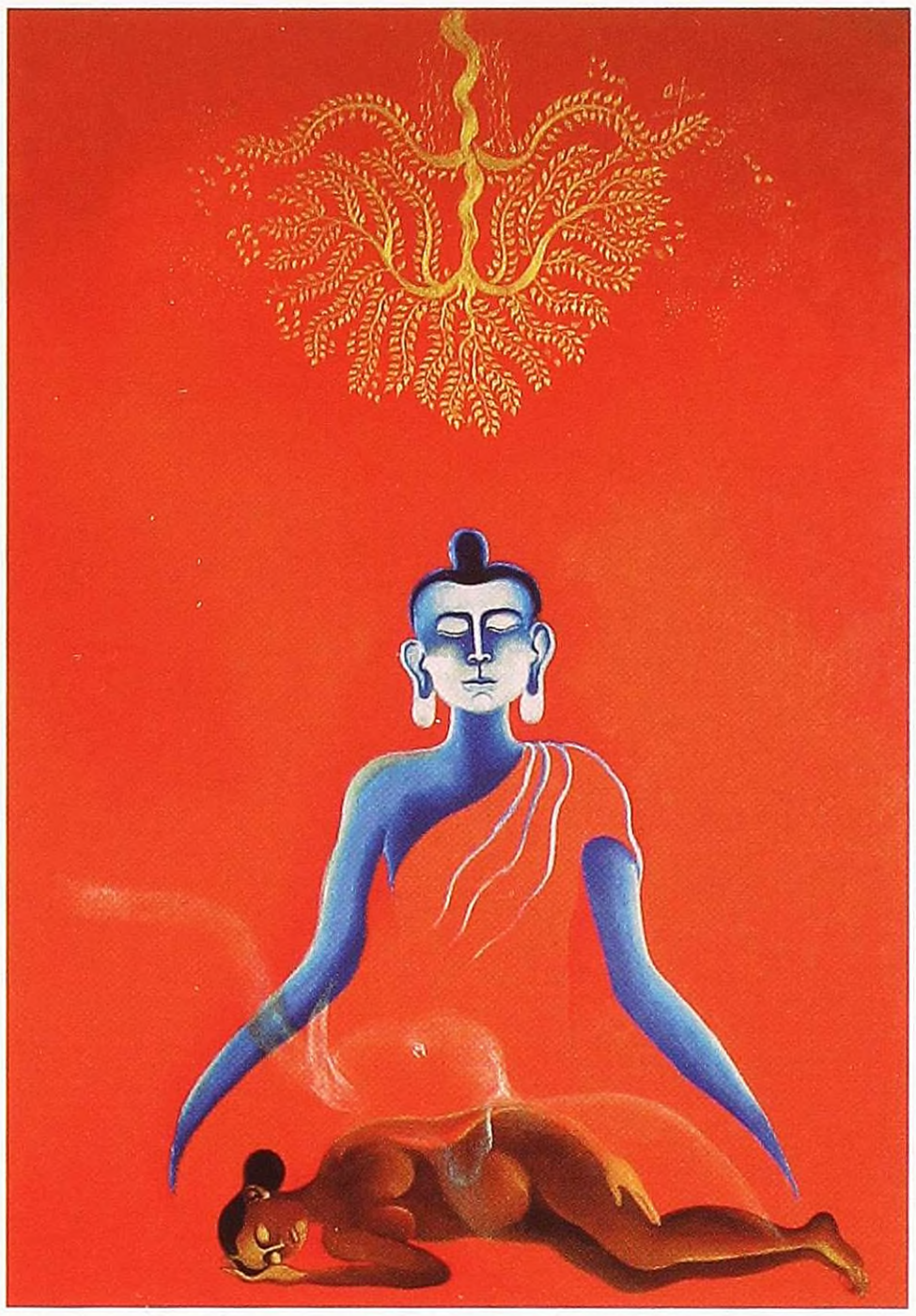




Sudhir Patwardhan born 1949

Wounds II, 2003
Acrylic on paper, 40″x 29″

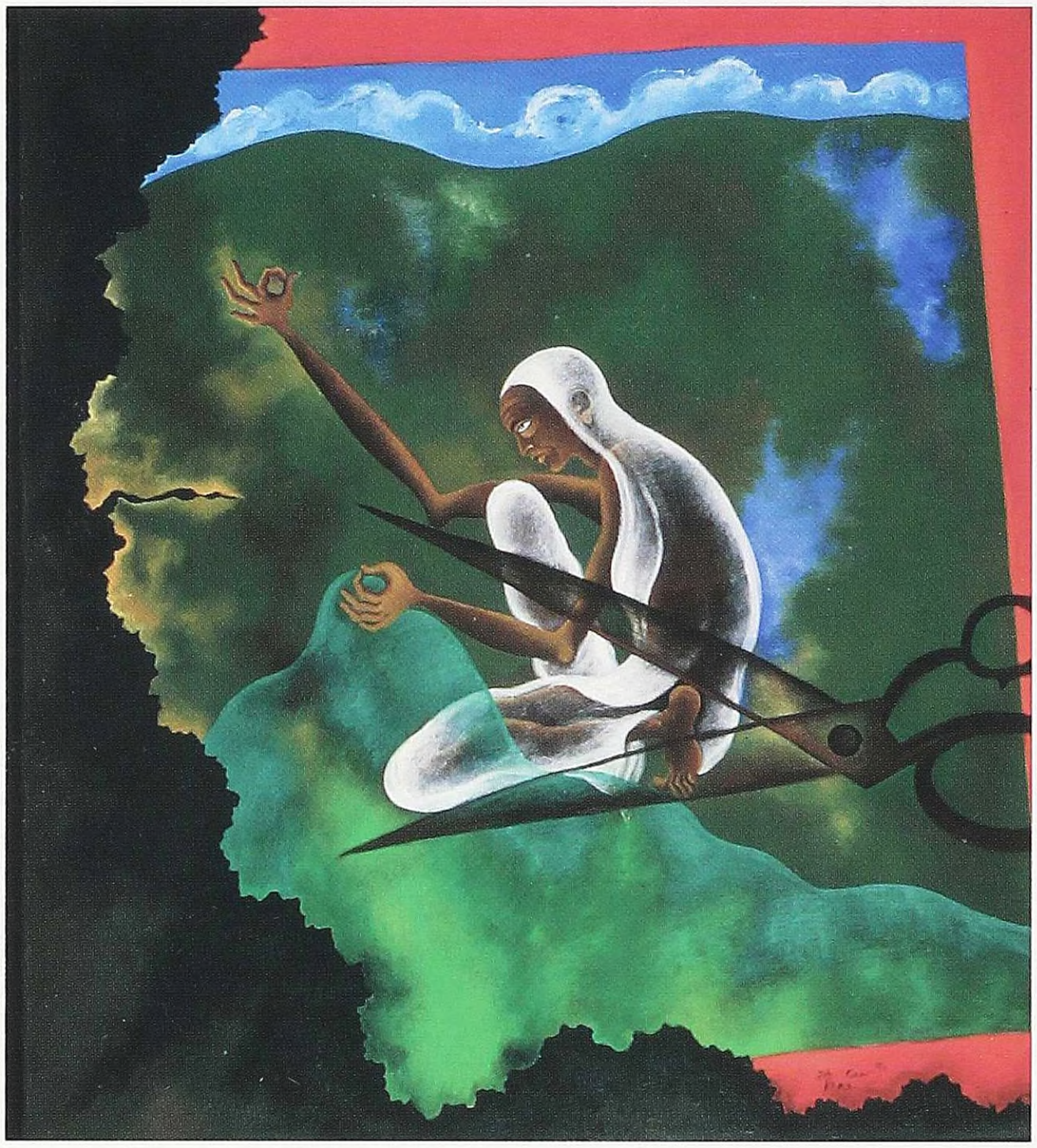
A practicing radiologist in Thane, Mumbai, Patwardhan brings his socially responsible physician's perspective to his work as an artist. Typically, this self-taught master painter's subject is urban realism—the quotidian scenes of contemporary Mumbai cityscapes. Patwardan's figures are absorbed in the small tasks of daily life as they negotiate crowded streets and neighborhoods. Their faces are grim, but it appears they will prevail. By contrast, *Wounds II* is a vision right out of the clinic. The subject is the apotheosis of suffering, twisting in torment from the pain of the malevolent gash or burn beneath the bandages, which themselves subversively suggest another kind of malice and bondage. *Wounds II* is far more powerful than it would have been if Patwardhan had placed this figure in the context of the clinic, where other figures and the furnishings of the hospital environment would have given an explanatory narrative. In *Wounds II*, Patwardhan has pared away the soothing storyline and made a strongly critical social statement in this portrait of the archetype of pain. HAF



Arpana Caur born 1954

Maya's Dream, 2004
Oil on canvas, 67″x 53″

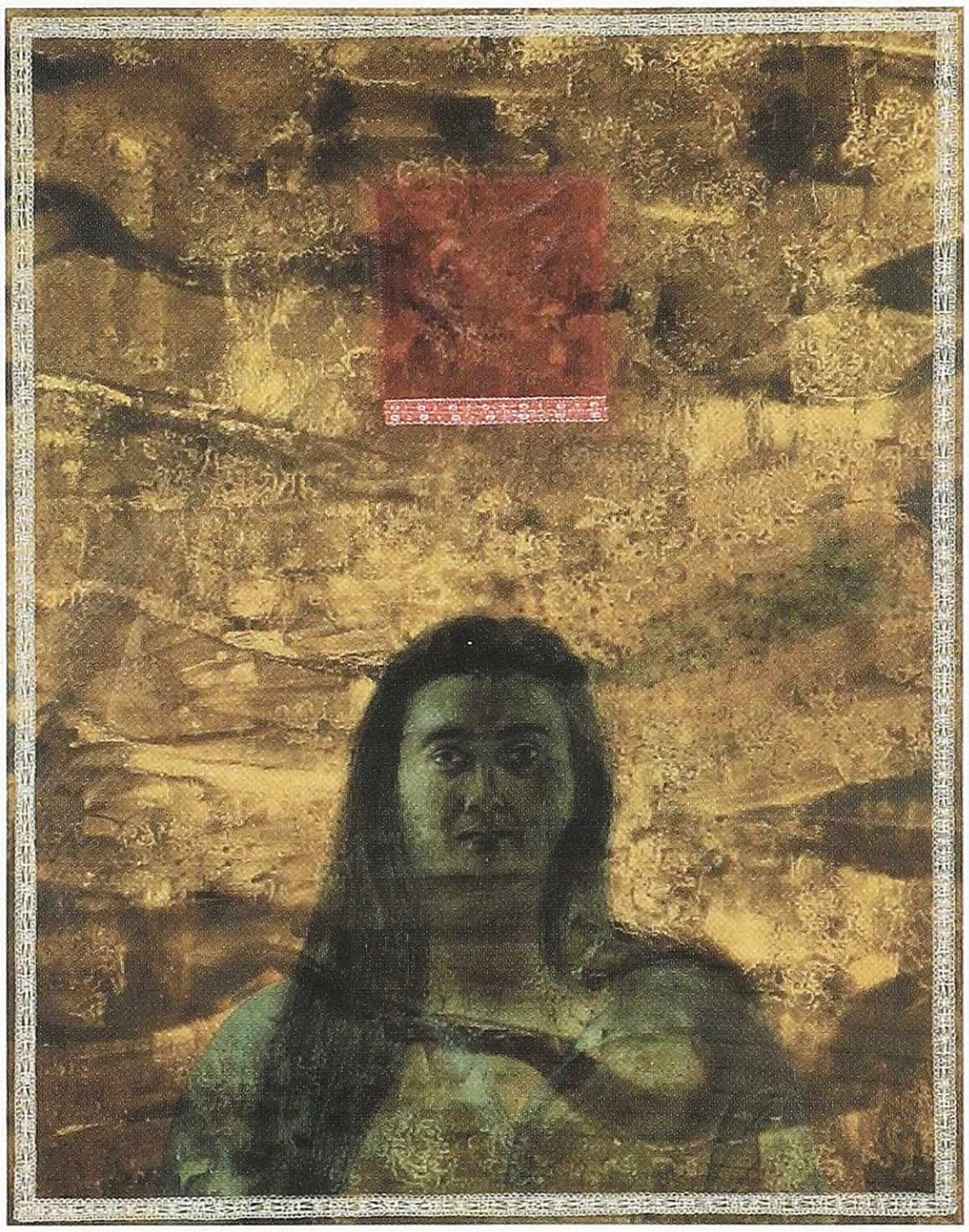
Arpana Caur grew up in post-independence India, and her work addresses many of the thematic and stylistic concerns that pre-independence Indian artists pondered and theorized. Working occasionally in collaboration with tribal and village artists, Caur raises social awareness of indigenous traditions and the needs of rural artists. Holding an MA in literature, Caur depends upon the narration of a story, as is traditional for Indian art, but she brings her narratives up to the present by addressing contemporary issues such as environmental decay, exploitation of the poor, the legacy of partition, and the suffering of women. Although of Punjabi Sikh background, Caur employs mythological themes from many eastern and western traditions. *Maya's Dream* depicts Queen Maya Devi, the mother of Prince Siddhartha who became the historical Buddha. Childless Maya dreamed of a white elephant, an auspicious sign. She later gave birth to the divine child, but died while he was an infant. Caur's painting illustrates Maya dreaming, but also positions her, sleeping or dead, embraced by her grown son, the meditating post-enlightenment Gautama Buddha. From above, a representation of the *bodhi* tree, under which Siddhartha attained his enlightenment, descends like a golden shower. HAF



Arpana Caur born 1954

Time, 1994
Oil on canvas, 67″x 53″

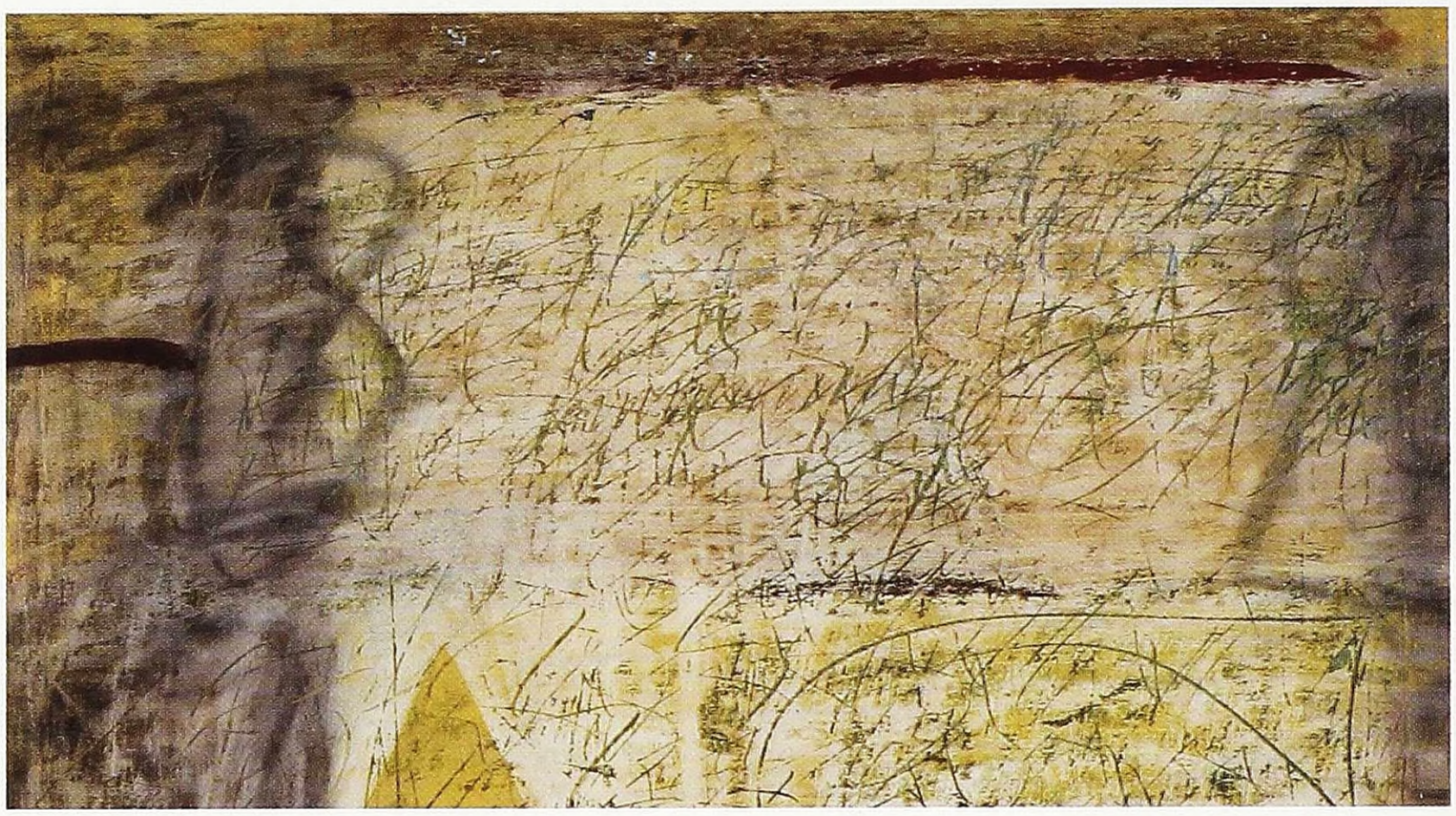
As a committed feminist, Caur focuses on women of all ages and social positions as her subjects, from the homeless widows of Vrindaban to iconic goddesses. The implicit power of Caur's female figures prevails, although many are disenfranchised dreamers, poor laborers, eclipsed by men, or solitary. Mythical traditions overlap in Caur's eclectic vision. In *Time* she refers to a story from classical Greek mythology in which the three chthonian women who are the Fates—Clotho, Lachesis, and Atopos—spin, weave, and cut the thread of life. Throughout her career, Caur has told the story of fate and time in various ways. In this rendition from 1994, the solitary figure of an old woman wears a garment that suggests both the white *sari* of the widow and the white shroud of the deceased and sits in a heavenly realm sewing a green mantle. She is both the intent seamstress of the rich cloth and the rider of the shears that will ultimately destroy the fabric she creates. HAF



Vasundhara Tewari born 1955

Untitled, 2003
Mixed media on paper, 30″x 22″

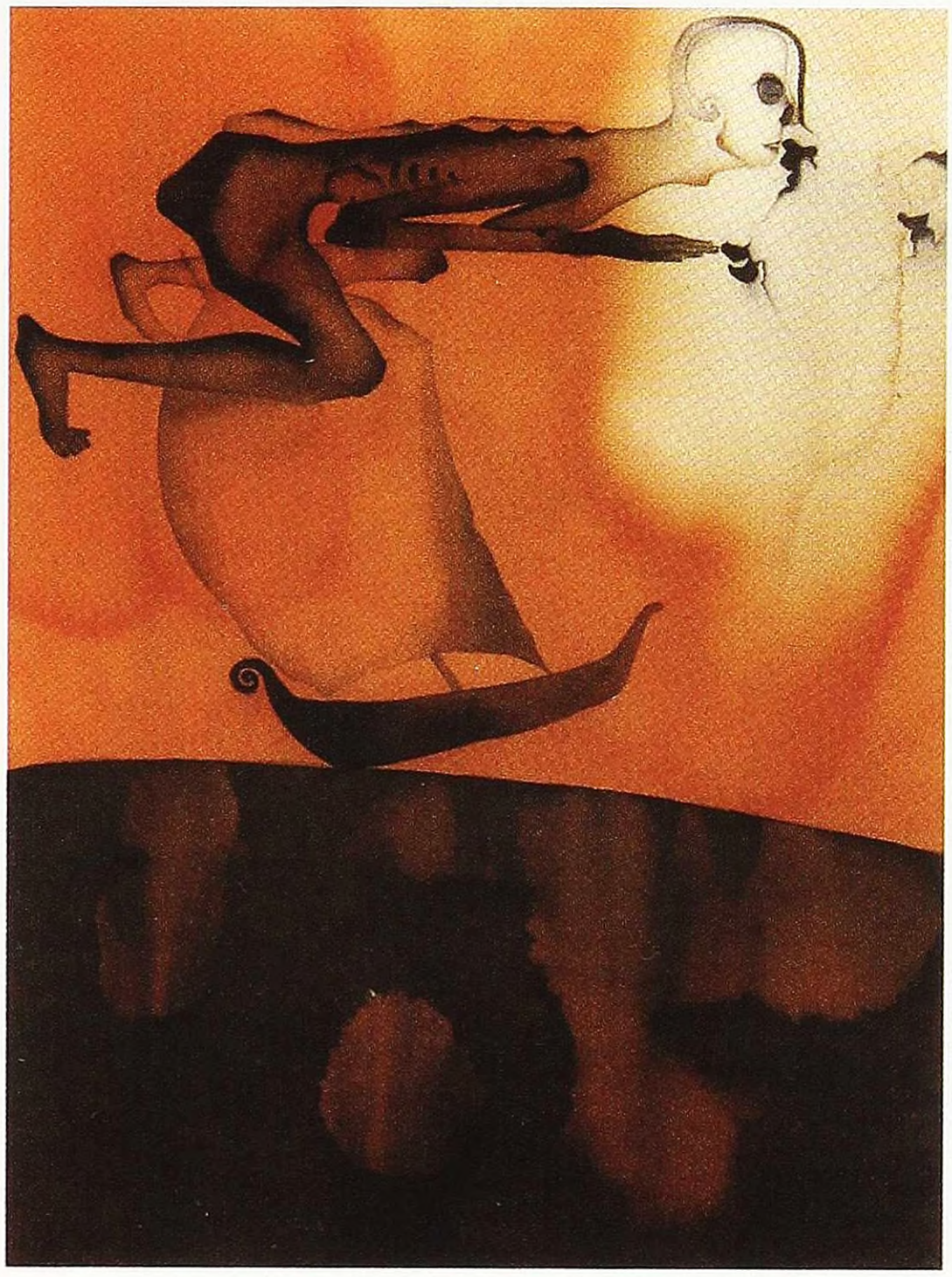
Tewari's work explores the female body as a mysterious and often alien terrain. Tewari studied art and literature during her college years and her first figure model was her own grandmother. Her early work is sculptural, depicting the dynamic curves and folds of the often ripe female body consumed by sleep or work, or abandoned in a fantasy landscape. What the subject herself may be thinking is an enigma. Tewari's later work reflects her interest in indigenous imagery and folk crafts, including the art of *mehndi* and patterns on *sari* fabric. Flatter and more loosely painted than previously, her recent work explores the psycho-mental, unconscious world of the dreams and fears of her subjects. *Untitled* suggests a self-portrait. The figure, absorbed in her thoughts, floats as if imprinted on a screen, the border suggesting the woven edge of a piece of finished fabric. Above her head, a square of red suggests a folded *sari* with an ornamental *pallu*. Red refers to the wedding *sari* of Hindu women, the powder *sindoor* at the parting of a married woman's hair, the customary dress of Hindu goddesses, and the color of blood. In this work, the block of red alludes to the conferred ceremonial status of essential femininity. HAF



S. Harsha Vardhana born 1958

Untitled, 2004
Mixed media on paper, 28″x 46″

A trained scientist and professional manager, Harsha Vardhana abandoned his career in the biomedical industry for painting. A self-taught artist, Harsha Vardhana is primarily inspired by his father, the eminent painter and ideologue, J. Swaminathan. In his writing as much as his own practice, Swaminathan argued for indigenous values to stem the influence of the schools of Paris and New York that dominated Indian art in the 1950s and 1960s. In the 1960s, Swaminathan broke fresh ground with a series of paintings on the color geometry of space, inspired by his study of Indian Pahari painting. Swaminathan's espousal of an Indian symbolism, traceable to the earliest ritual art, forms the dominant core of Harsha Vardhana's work. Nevertheless, Harsha Vardhana uses these elements for their graphic, rather than their symbolic value. The ascending triangle, which has its origin in Indian *yantra* drawing, represents the male principle in *tantric* ritual art. In this work, it brings definition and balance to the larger field. Harsha Vardhana prepares the field with several layers of color application, creating a sense of trapped light and the patina of age. The marks on the surface appear to be gestural, and are intended to convey a lack of premeditation and the organic effects of time. Even as a contemporary work, *Untitled* contains suggestions of the early tribal cave art of Central India that can be traced back to prehistoric times. GS

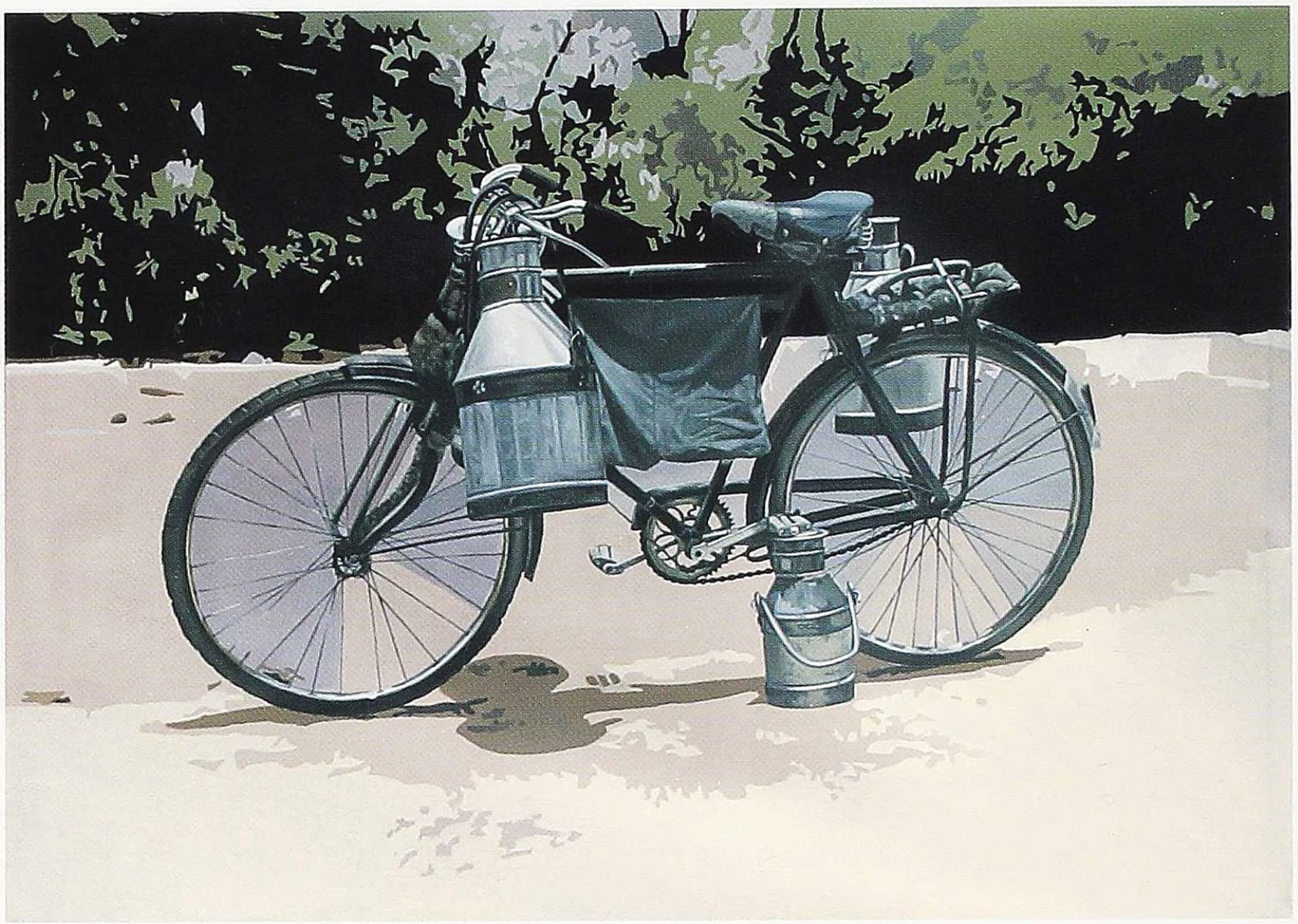


Atul Dodiya born 1959

Kiss, 2002
Watercolor on paper, 29.5″x 21.5″

Born in a *chawl* in the Mumbai suburb of Ghatkopar, Dodiya was determined as a child to be a painter—a profession to which he has brought his enormous talent and exuberant eclecticism. Frequently changing styles and switching directions, he is constantly in motion. He attended art college in Mumbai and studied briefly in Paris, returning to India to paint in his childhood flat, which has been converted into a studio. Dodiya's work is variously humorous, and capriciously kitschy, often reflecting the cacophonous images of India's street culture. The artist has a compassionate and reflective side. But Dodiya also has a dark and wrathful side with which he expresses his frustration with the lack of political and social progress in modern India after almost sixty years of independence from the Raj. In *Kiss*, a skeletal, wraith-like figure, airborne like a pestilence on the sails of a boat, slides forward and bestows a kiss—undoubtedly the kiss of death—upon India's northwestern corner, malevolently blessing the state of Gujarat and the contested country of Kashmir with his malignant touch. As Dodiya himself has said, "I can only go about circumambulating ladders, sliding down, looking up, and knocking against skulls and bellies. In the final countdown it is all skulls and bellies."* HAF

* Sambryani, Chaitanaya. *Edge of Desire: Recent Art in India*. London: Phillip Wilson, 2005, p 124.



Subodh Gupta born 1964

One Bicycle, 2003
Oil on canvas, 66″ x 90″

Gupta works in diverse media including video art, installation, and painting. His concerns address rural Indian culture, the effects of migration, and the concept of objective value. In this sense, his gaze is directed away from the elite to the concerns of India's aspiring classes with their movement from the rural to the semi-urban, and the values of material production that are allied to mass taste. *One Bicycle* represents a continuing body of work in paint and sculpture that is inspired by Gupta's native state of Bihar. The bicycle bearing milk cans represents the rural milkman, one of the first symbols of a modernizing India in the 1950s, before the introduction of mass mechanical milk distribution. Now, the milkman's bicycle is an anachronism in the era of greater affluence and technology. Gupta works in a photorealistic, somewhat dead-pan style, allowing the viewer to bring interpretative value to the work. Extending the dialogue of the bicycle series, Gupta has bronze-cast both the Indian scooter and the Ambassador car, with their respective associations of mobility, class, and power. Seen in this continuum, the divergent time and economic scales that exist in contemporary India become obvious. GS



T. V. Santosh born 1968

Untitled, 2004
Oil on canvas, 54″x 72″

In recent years, T. V. Santosh has produced a body of paintings that derive from media reportage, often on the subjects of war, conflict, and global inequity. His position as a socially reactive artist is based on the contentious areas of truth and perception. In working with the media image, he hones in on selectivity in reportage and the manipulation and duality that are often conveyed thereby. In this painting, Santosh plays upon this sense of ambiguity. The two masked figures appear bearing flags and what appear to be crude weapons. Their covered heads emphasize their anonymity and the uncertain ground they occupy as either terrorists or freedom fighters. The salient suggestion is that truth is understood on the basis of national or religious persuasion. The fact that the masked figures could belong geographically to the large swathe that moves from Palestine, Iraq, and Afghanistan into Kashmir heightens the viewer's uneasy reading. Santosh's painterly style is consonant with his concerns over the possibility of adjustments in reported television footage or newspaper texts. The painting suggests distortions in the process of developing a negative, of the image floating in the surreal space between reality and fantasy. GS



Arunanshu Chowdhury born 1969

Eye Wonder II, 2004
Mixed media on paper pasted on board, 48″x 48″

Arunanshu Chowdhury graduated from Maharaja Sayajirao University in Baroda. As a painter, Chowdhury derives his inspiration from print media and its coverage of political issues. He has said that, in "using funky motifs, new cartoon images, modern board games, popular movie stars, I am exposing a common mind frame."* He typically builds up a painting through different layers. While the larger body appears hazy and nebulous like a dense sky, different elements are introduced that complicate the surface. In *Eye Wonder II*, the airspace becomes both literal and poetic, with flying paper planes and a line drawing of Hanuman, the Hindu god. As a central figure in the epic *Ramayana*, Hanuman has his tail set on fire and, leaping from rooftop to rooftop, burns down the city of Lanka in an apocryphal act of retribution. The viewer's perspective appears to look down from a great height, past the soaring paper planes and Hanuman aloft, at a network of roads and pastures in which cartoon animals gambol. Across this once-gentle but now-urbanizing idyll, the map, with its divisions and borders, becomes an imposition of modern times. Chowdhury scrambles size and perspective, and dream and reality to interpret the mundane and the spiritual in the light of rapid change. GS

* Gallery Espace New Delhi, *gallery text* (2004).



G. R. Iranna born 1970

Untitled, 2004
Acrylic on tarpaulin, 66″ x 66″

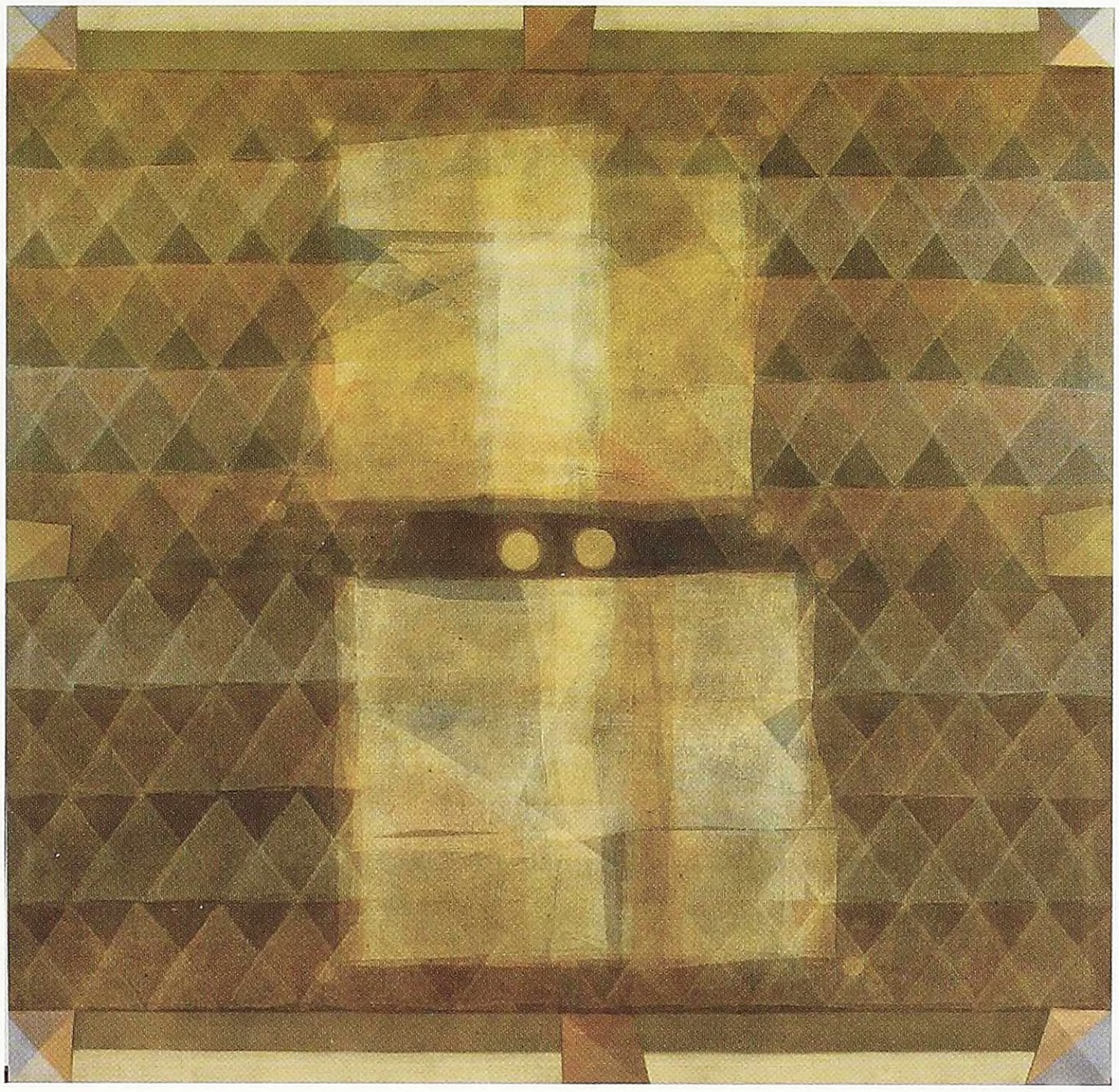
G. R. Iranna spent his early years steeped in the Lingayat culture of Shiva worship in a farming community in Bijapur district Karnataka. A devout form of Hinduism, the progressive Lingayat movement originated in the twelfth century to advocate community service and social responsibility. As an arts student, Iranna trained at Gulbarga, Karnataka, the Delhi College of Art and was artist in residence at the Wimbledon School of Art in London from 1999–2000. Iranna's painting positions the solitary male figure in a manner that suggests an archaic heroism. His protagonist is usually gestural and appears to be pitted against existential forces for survival. In this painting, the figure is rendered as both the hunter and the hunted, caught in apparently primal conflicts. In his vulnerable state, he crouches in self-defense. The figure is located against an abstract background that appears to drip, weave, and spin like a complex energy field or an amorphous landscape. Like some other contemporary Indian painters, Iranna uses the airplane to symbolize a potential threat. However, in the inversion of scale, the descending and diving airplanes are toy-like, affirming the supremacy of the human figure. GS



Reena Kallat born 1973

Liquid Air, 2003
Composite of 22 works, acrylic on paper, 48″x 119″

Kallat, who attended the Sir J.J. School of Art in Mumbai, considered medical school at one time, but her father changed her mind, suggesting that she choose a more expressive future path. Like many of India's woman painters, Kallat employs the female body as subject, re-appropriating womanly flesh as the canvas for her own statements about the integrity of the female-owned female body. Her photographs frequently focus upon decorated hands and feet as the loci of feminine self-beautification. *Liquid Air* is a strong and significant departure from her customary images of women, goddesses, vine-like vegetable forms, and political lions of the Indian revolutionary period. A series of images of fantastic daggers, cutlasses, swords, handguns, dueling pistols, rifles, and automatics, which the artist has invented in ever more fabulous designs, contributes to a disturbing gallery of fetishes of destruction. The works suggest the capricious, richly decorated weapons of the Mughal *rajas* of sixteenth century India. Individual paintings are arranged to appear to fall like a deadly rain. Portraits of hands frame the gallery of weapons at either end in a gesture that implies both the giving and accepting of these dubious gifts, simultaneously frivolous and malicious. HAF



Manish Pushkale born 1973

Shamo-Sharana, 2005
Oil on canvas, 72″x 72″

Manish Pushkale is an Indian abstractionist. Trained as a printmaker at Bharat Bhavan Art Center in Bhopal, Pushkale reveals many of the influences of the leading abstract painters, V. S. Gaitonde and J. Swaminathan. Early in his career, Pushkale was inspired by the stained glass paintings of medieval churches in Paris. Pushkale employs many of the elements of traditional Indian geometric abstraction, such as the square of the triangle, even as he frees them from their ritual associations. Instead, through the use of translucency, Pushkale invokes effects that are subtle and symphonic. This is partially achieved by using cloth to reabsorb pigment, leaving a minimum residue of paint. The somber tones of ochre, saffron, white, and cream are associated with sacred orders, sacrifice, and renunciation in the Indian tradition. The translucent passage of light between the essentially harmonious, but unpredictable, forms creates a consonant effect. The repetitive quality of Pushkale's paintings has led to descriptions of them as *mantra* paintings. *Mantra* or ritual chanting that is sacred in the Hindu, Jain, and Buddhist traditions, emphasizes the value of repetition and concentration. GS





Jitish Kallat born 1974

Untitled 1, 2002
Mixed media on handmade paper, 29″x 22″

Untitled 2, 2002
Mixed media on handmade paper, 29″x 22″

Self-portraiture is Kallat's primary method of communication, using his own face, distorted by varied means, to represent a postmodern "Everyman" who frets and writhes as both social protestor and social victim. Critical and edgy since his art school days, Kallat began the self-portraiture projects as a method of finding his own voice; now, as a mature artist, he continues to revisit this metaphor of the portrait. Born in Mumbai, Kallat remains devoted to the metropolis, and Kallat illuminates both the city's street life and the literal Mumbai street itself on his canvases, often distressing the picture surface to suggest the urban decay of concrete and asphalt. Customarily beginning with a photograph that he manipulates, Kallat, in these works relies upon the naturally uneven surface of handmade paper as the paint that he has blown away from the image finds its own egress outward through the rough surface. "Blasts from a vacuum cleaner nozzle result in the dissolution of the near-likeness," giving the opportunity of random effects which add life to these portraits of people photographed on the street.* HAF

*Hoskote, Rantit. *Jitish Kallat—First Information Report*, Bose Pacia Modern, New York (2002).

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