



TANTRA



DEVI

Kamakhya Temple, Guwahati, Assam

Photo Courtesy: Prashanta Seal



ART KONSULT
ART GALLERY FOR CONTEMPORARY INDIAN ART

Presents

TANTRA

Curated by Bryan Mulvihill

Akkitham Narayanan . Anindita Bhattacharya . Anita Ghei . Arindam Chatterjee . Bryan Mulvihill
Bina Ramani . Deepak Tandon . Debasish Mukherjee . G. R. Santosh . Gopa Trivedi . Gauranga Ghosh
George Mailhot . Jasleen . Kalicharan Gupta . Mahirwan Mamtani . Manish Pushkale
Megha Joshi . Prafulla Mohanty . Priyanka Govil . Puneet Kaushik . S H Raza . S K Sahn
Sanjay Das . Sangeeta Gupta . Shefali Munjal . Shobha Broota . Sohan Qadri . Suhas Nimbalkar

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Art Konsult
3, Ground Floor, Hauz Khas Village,
New Delhi-110016

www.artkonsult.com



EARLY BENGAL SCHOOL

Kali

Oil on Canvas

26 x 20 inches



UNDER THE INFLUENCE OF TANTRA

Bryan Mulvihill

The idea of Tantra has, ever since the word appeared in English, been shrouded in mystery, esoteric 'mumbo jumbo', wild speculations, gross misunderstandings and sheer fantasy. Tantra was introduced into the 'language' in the late 18th century by European missionaries in India, who were appalled and horrified by the explicit imagery, lavishly colored multi-appendaged deities in union with consorts which were on display, 'in all places' temples, sacred sites and worshiped by pious devotees with lavish complicated rituals.

The very term Tantra took on all sorts of abnormal associations. Thus the study and in depth understanding of Tantra remained cloaked in elaborate mystery and misinformation. This has been perpetuated over centuries and is now all the more difficult to diffuse. 'Under the Influence of Tantra' is an attempt to shed some light on the significance and influence of Tantra on art making in India and abroad. To begin with we have to look at what exactly is Tantra.

Tantra is a spiritual method or science focused on the nature of experience, in particular experience of the mind. Although indigenous to India there are within it distinct lineages of the Hindu, Buddhist and Jain. All began using the same language- Sanskrit, but each lineage assigned its own meanings to the specific terms used. Thus the confusion of meanings of the terminology in use. The essence of the practice of Tantra is the Sanskrit term Parbandha: continuity, the interconnectedness, of everything, in an ongoing cycle of action and reaction. An ongoing journey of our relationships to oneself and others represented as the goal and the path. In Tibet the practice of Tantra is termed Vajrayana, the indestructible, adamant or continuous path.

Everything we interact with ultimately happens in the mind, including the acts of body and speech in our relationships with the world around us as well as our own inner world of perceptions, feelings, ideas. This is the basis of the Yogacara school, yoga is this sense of working on oneself, yoking. Also known as 'cittamatra' often

translated as 'mind-only', the idea that one's relationship to the three worlds of sensuousness; feeling, the world of form, objects and the formlessness of the inner world of one's being, all happen in the mind. In this case mind is not seen as a holder of thoughts but as a location where impressions are experienced and transmitted. Mind is the basic primordial awareness principal itself.

The goal of tantra is to come into direct experience of pure awareness. In Buddhist terminology this is dharmakaya or vajrayana. The various yoga practices dealing with prana, bindu, nadis and so on is known as 'sambhogakaya', and the various disciplines of each particular tradition of tantric practice, cleanliness, purification rituals, and modes of being etc. are known as 'nirmanakaya'. Each of the three kayas' are bodies, paths, vehicles, interconnected in a continuous development right up to the fulfillment stage of pure being or 'suchness', beyond conceptualization or language. Great emphasis is placed on direct experience.

Looking at the transitory nature of all things, including the self can give rise to ongoing frustration but from the tantric point of view it also presents a great opportunity of transformation, giving rise to an ongoing state of bliss. In tantra the word used for bliss was sukha, which is not specifically something as merely pleasant or pleasurable but more the idea of a 'peak experience'. The experience in which all conceptions and judgements, even the idea of a located self, completely pass away and the 'experience alone counts'. What is referred to as bliss can be understood to transcend transitoriness, permanence or any other form. Even the traces or memory of experience itself has disappeared and it is being in 'experience alone that counts'. For this we have to look deeper into what is understood as 'citta' mind. Not the thinking or feeling mind experiences but a primordial, unqualified unconditioned state of being, this ongoing 'peak-experience', as fundamental awareness itself.

The Yogacaras describe the process of how this basic awareness creates the environment in which our ordinary way of being is separated from the direct ongoing peak experience. If we thoroughly understand and have control over this process we can remain in the primordial state of peak experience all the time. The term 'alayavijnana' which describes this process, which varies with different Buddhist and Hindu



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JASLEEN SINGH
 Kalachakra- Leh, Ladakh, Set II-B
 Archival Print, Limited Edition of 15
 24 x 16 inches, 1976

>
FOLK ART OF HIMACHAL PRADESH
 Devi
 Natural Pigments & Gold on Paper
 5.5 x 5 inches



schools of tantra, but basically refers to the split between subject and object. The alaya being the basic foundation of awareness, vijnana the function of constant transformation, developing into forms.

Awareness is not static but an ongoing knowingness. Jnana is that which comprehends, knows. Citta: Mind, as something that stores up experiences and at some point, under appropriate conditions the nature of the stored experience, manifest, is actualized as forms. These deposits of potentialities are termed vasanas, which develop according to two principles; one the intrinsic nature of the thought or deed which combined with given conditions take on specific forms. When citta is split the primordial awareness begins to look back and takes the original unity out of which it develops as its 'self' rather than an ongoing transformation of awareness itself, these are known as 'manas'.

This is where the Buddhist and Hindu tantra differ. The Hindu tantra assumes this original unity of the alayavijnana as the transcendental ego and the manas as the empirical ego. Here the Buddhist rejected the reification of these aspects, saying they all belonged to the unity of the transformational process, where the manas become the source of all subsequent mental functions in the way implied by common speech when we say "I see" or "I know". In tantra all these mental functions are part of the total process of transformation. The alayavijnana as the original source is undifferentiated, ethically and karmically neutral. This split becomes tainted by its own illusion and through elaborations takes the forms of our perceiving with the five senses and the mental factor, in Buddhist view the sixth sense, we can call consciousness, begins to name and solidify our experience. Our experience gets tied down, frozen, into the ordinary mode of perceptions of self and other. We begin to feel something is not whole, not quite right and there could be other possibilities. This is where the practice of tantra begins to bring us back to the original primordial state. In this primordial state there is no 'beginning', it always is the fundamental creative power, know in tantric terms as 'mahasukhakaya'. It is the unity of all aspects of experience. 'Maha' is that of which there can be none greater, and 'sukha' is bliss which is the ongoing complete peak experience, and kaya as the felt being or body, not in the sense of a physical body but and experiential ongoing embodied experience. This deeply experienced is the Bodhi of being awake in Buddhism 'Buddha nature' or dharmakaya.

All things appear, come to be experienced due to accumulated causes and conditions, but at the same time they are ultimately empty or impermanent by nature, 'shunyata'. These are not two aspects that are separate, they are totally simultaneously arising, you cannot have one without the other. Knowing and experiencing this deeply is the freedom afforded by the practice of tantra.

Within the Hindu tradition this 'undivided whole', the ultimate 'Ground of Being', in the Brahmin systems, one managed to stay permanently in the undivided state of attention with the entire mind stilled and absorbed in the Ultimate, is where we achieve Release. Our reference point ceases to be the transitory human concerns but coincide into an all embracing Consciousness, which is at once 'being and bliss'. This is the fundamental path of tantra, the absolute value can be retrieved by reversing the energy that flows in one direction and becomes frozen, less active into the absolute ongoing primordial, original lived energy being itself. When it is frozen we feel imprisoned and tied down, we are no longer free agents but circling in samsara.

This possibility of returning to the original has been rendered manifest in the forms of certain symbols of transformation such as the mandala. Transformation from ordinary perception to primordial intrinsic awareness takes place when we train our body speech and mind to see differently. This is where the role of the artist comes in. The ordinary way is characterized by the fact that perception is related to accomplishing some end other than the perception itself. In tantra we can also look at things and enjoy their presence aesthetically, to actually see things as they are, in a constant state of manifestation. Impermanence is not a source of sadness but of the arising of primordial awareness.

In tantric practice all aspects of experience are used as path, instead of suppressing experiences of pleasure, delight, ecstasy and vision they are cultivated and used. If the basic ground of tantra is continuity, thus attaining the



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SANJAY DAS

Cosmic Rythm-V & VIII

Depicting Goddess Kali in various forms enacted by bahurupi (traditional performing artists of India, Bangladesh, Tibet, Nepal and Pakistan)

Hahnemuehle Photo Rag Bright White

12 x 18 inches (each), Edition 1/10

SRISRIKALIMATA (Top) >

Chitpur Lithograph, Kansari Para art studio situated in central Kolkata, near Bou Bazar was famous for lithographic printing. The emergence of these printing presses in late 19th c. saw the death of Kalighat paintings. These were popularly known as Chitpur lithographs.

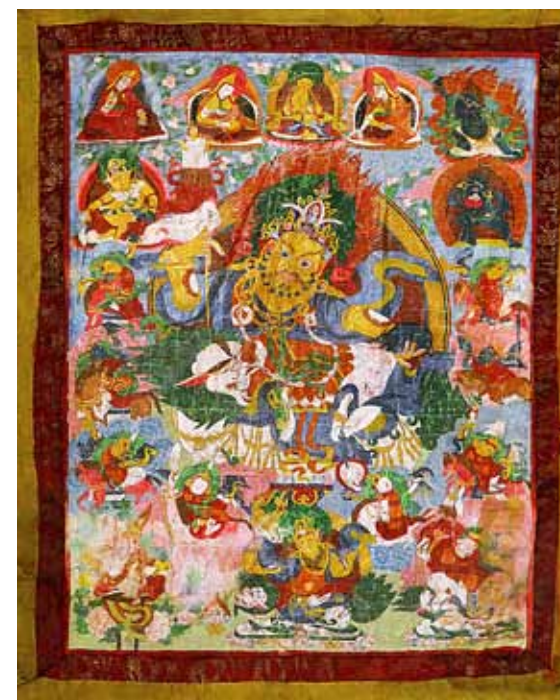
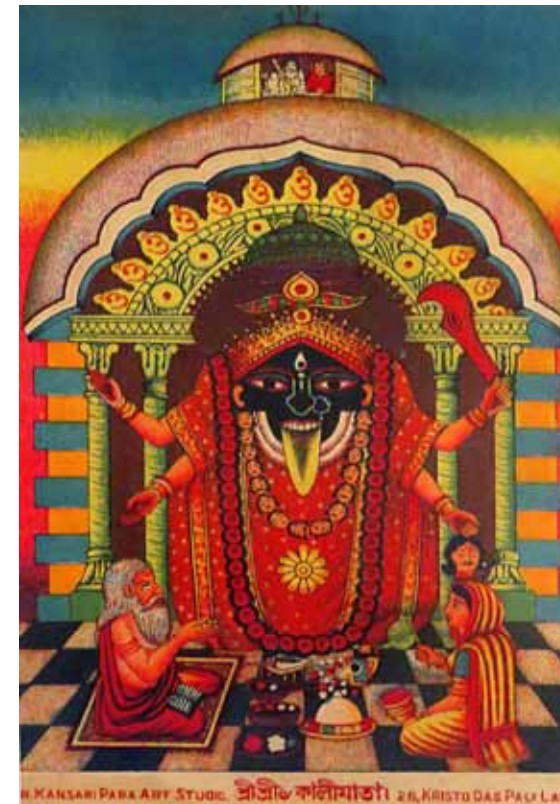
7.5 x 5 inches

THANGKA PAINTING >

Dharma Protectors, Gelugpa Lineage

Natural Pigments on Cloth

36.5 x 26 inches



goal to total emersion is not the end but the beginning of the transmission of one's attainment, sharing the experience through whatever means is affective: art, music, human interactions of every kind; body, speech and mind. Tantra continues beyond the fruition level of direct interaction.

This is where the artistic manifestations come into play, visual art is more adept in transmitting these experiences, allowing us to imagine the unity of all aspects of experience. Ultimately tantric art should be able to afford the practiced viewer the sought after mahasukha experience.

The imagery of tantra has pervaded much of the artistic practice of India from ancient times going right back to Mohenjo-daro Swastika seals and prototype mandala patterns of 2500 BC. These images developed in complexity and significance over the centuries especially during the evolution of Buddhist and Hindu tantric cults that flourished from 3rd C. BC up through the 12th in North India and throughout the Trans-Himalayan regions of Ladakh, Kashmir, Himachal and Nepal from where they spread into Tibet increasing with Islamic conquests of North India. Imagery representing cosmic mandalas, prana, bindu, nadis; have permutated all forms of Indian culture, from elaborate temple deities to folk and tribal motifs, seen in textiles, decorative objects and architecture. While the practice of tantra became increasingly secretive, especially under the influence of Islam and later under the British occupations, the imagery continued to spread.

In mid 20th Century as modern art, especially painting came under the influence of abstract ideals, with the rise of 'Abstract Expressionism', 'Post Painterly Abstraction', and 'color-field' painting fore-fronted western modern art movements where basic symbolic forms became the norm in western modern art. During this period many Indian modern artists began to travel, study and exhibit their own contemporary modern works in major art centers around the world. Several astute Indian art dealers set

up galleries and exhibitions in modern art capitols such as New York, Paris, London. As these Indian modern artists came increasingly into contact with Western modernist movements, they recognized increasing similarity with these International modern art forms and their own indigenous tantric motifs that they began incorporating into their art works. The astute Indian art dealers began to expound these indigenous Indian tantric art references both of the region's contemporary artists along side with tribal and folk works of art. Tantric Imagery became synonymous with Indian art and culture. Many Indian tantric exhibitions, catalogues and books began to appear. For the most part the Indian contemporary modern artists were not specifically practicing tantra per se but they in various creative ways incorporated this familiar imagery into their works of art. The works of Raza, Sohan Qadri, even M F Husain are good examples of this. As the craze for 'authentic' tantric art spread, numerous Indian contemporary artists found themselves and their works much sought after both abroad and increasingly at home in India as well. However skillfully these works used the tantric iconography they did not necessarily portray a direct tantric experience of the maker.



Tantra comes out of specific forms of meditation. This is where the understanding of the symbolism of tantra, the mandala principal represents the relationship of the practitioner to the phenomenal world, one's basic life situation. It is perhaps now at this time in the early 21st century that there some contemporary artists both in India and abroad who have had the opportunity to study authentic tantra from experienced masters. Especially with the return of the rich Buddhist lineages of Indian tantric practices that have come back to India after a millennia being preserved in the monasteries beyond the Himalayas, with the Tibetan diasporas. It is now possible to receive authentic transmission from experienced holders of the living tantric masters. With this will surely arise new vibrant tantric art forms that offer direct vision and experience of these deep spiritual treasures that came into being and developed so widely across many areas of India. The emerging contemporary works will not necessarily follow the old traditions but find new ways to afford the viewers actual glimpses of the experience of an open creative beginning- less mind of dharmadatu shunyata.

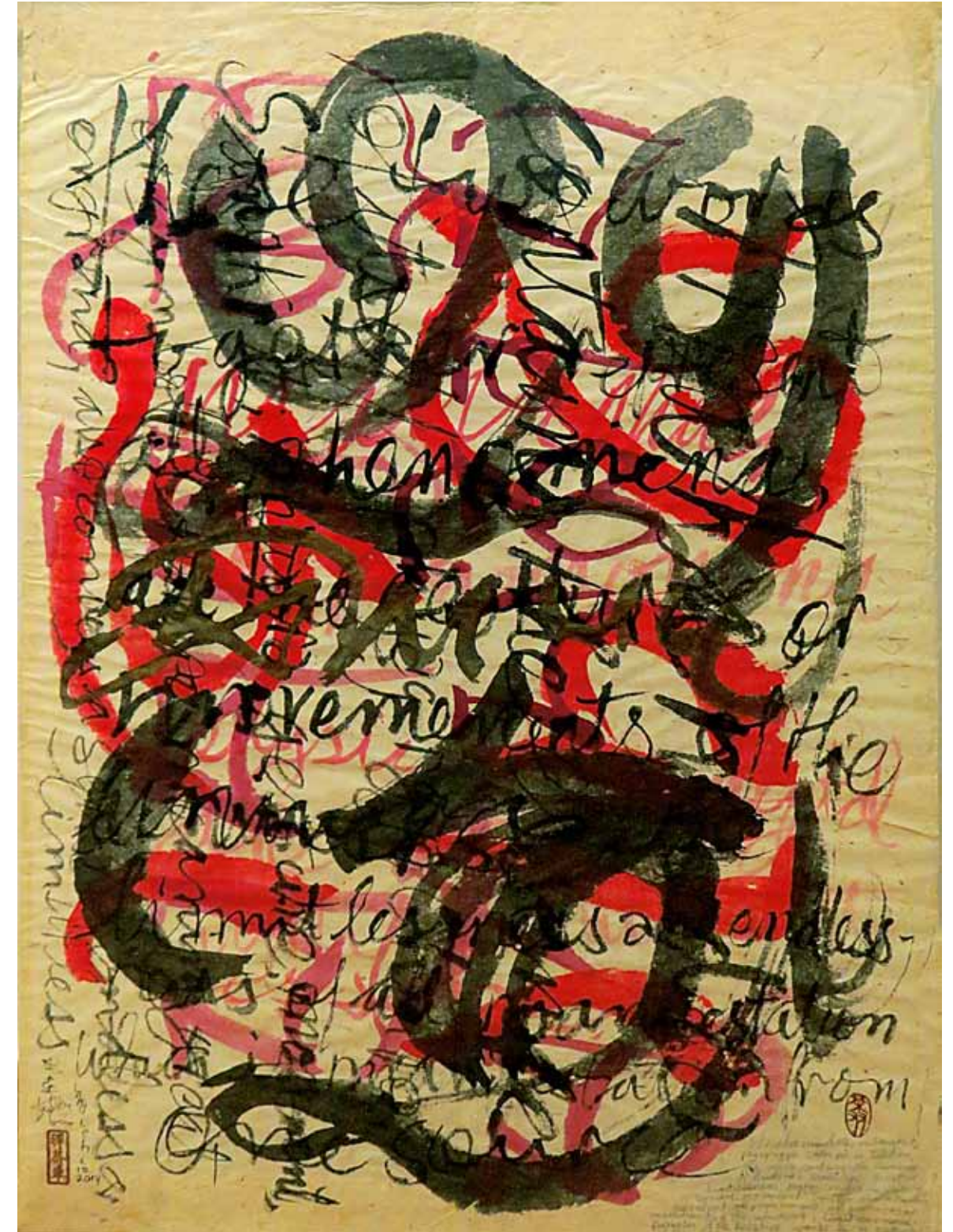
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FOLK ART FROM RAJASTHAN
 Depicting Erotic Tantric Subjects
 Natural Pigments on Cloth
 32.5 x 20.5 inches



AKKITHAM NARAYANAN
 Untitled
 Acrylic on Canvas
 38.5 x 30.5 inches, 2006



ANITA GHEI
Bimbapratibimba (Triptych)
Acrylic on Canvas
36 x 18 inches, 2006



BRYAN MULVIHILL
Mahamudra
Natural Pigments on rice grass paper from Arunachal Pradesh & Chinese Ink with Gold Dust
33 x 23 inches, 2014



BRYAN MULVIHILL

Saranath Ashoka Edictit

Natural Pigments on Chinese Handmade Paper Mounted in Scroll

54 x 26.5 inches



BRYAN MULVIHILL

Dream

Natural Pigments on Mulbery Paper with Gold Dust

39 x 11 inches, 1995



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DEEPAK TANDON

Untitled
Acrylic on Canvas
45 x 67 inches, 2012

DEEPAK TANDON >

Untitled-I
Transformed Photograph on Archival Paper
9 x 12 inches, Edition 1/3, 2007

Untitled-II
Transformed Photograph on Archival Paper
12 x 9 inches, Edition 1/3, 2007

Untitled-III
Transformed Photograph on Archival Paper
7.5 x 9 inches, Edition 1/3, 2009





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DEBASISH MUKHERJEE

Untitled

Wood, Paper, Terracotta and Acrylic Paint

40 x 40 inches, 2015



DEBASISH MUKHERJEE >

Untitled

Wood, Paper, Terracotta and Acrylic Paint

18.2 x 11 x 11 inches



G. R. SANTOSH

Untitled

Acrylic on Canvas

30 x 24 inches, 1994



GAURANGA GHOSH

Untitled
Oil on Canvas
26 x 24 inches, 1991



GEORGE MAILHOT

Untitled - I
Mixed Media on Paper
30 x 22 inches, 2011



GEORGE MAILHOT

Untitled - II
Mixed Media on Paper
30 x 22 inches, 2011



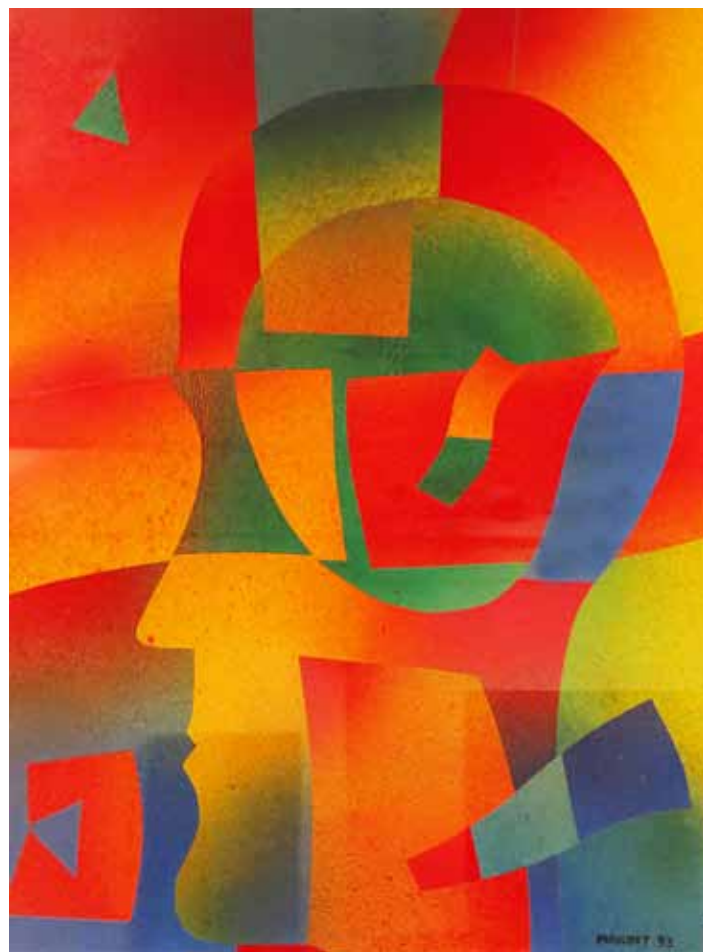
GEORGE MAILHOT

Untitled
Mixed Media on Paper
71 x 51 inches



GEORGE MAILHOT

Untitled
Mixed Media on Paper
71 x 51 inches, 1999



GEORGE MAILHOT

Untitled I & II

Mixed Media on Paper

30 x 21 inches (each), 1993



GEORGE MAILHOT & BINA RAMANI

Shin, Heart/ Mind Permutations

Mixed Media on Paper

16 inches dia, 2013



JASLEEN

Initiation Ceremony, Kalachakra- Leh, Ladakh

Archival Digital B/W Prints From The Original Negatives

Olympus/ Illford, 48 x 60 inches (Each), set of 19 photographs, 1976

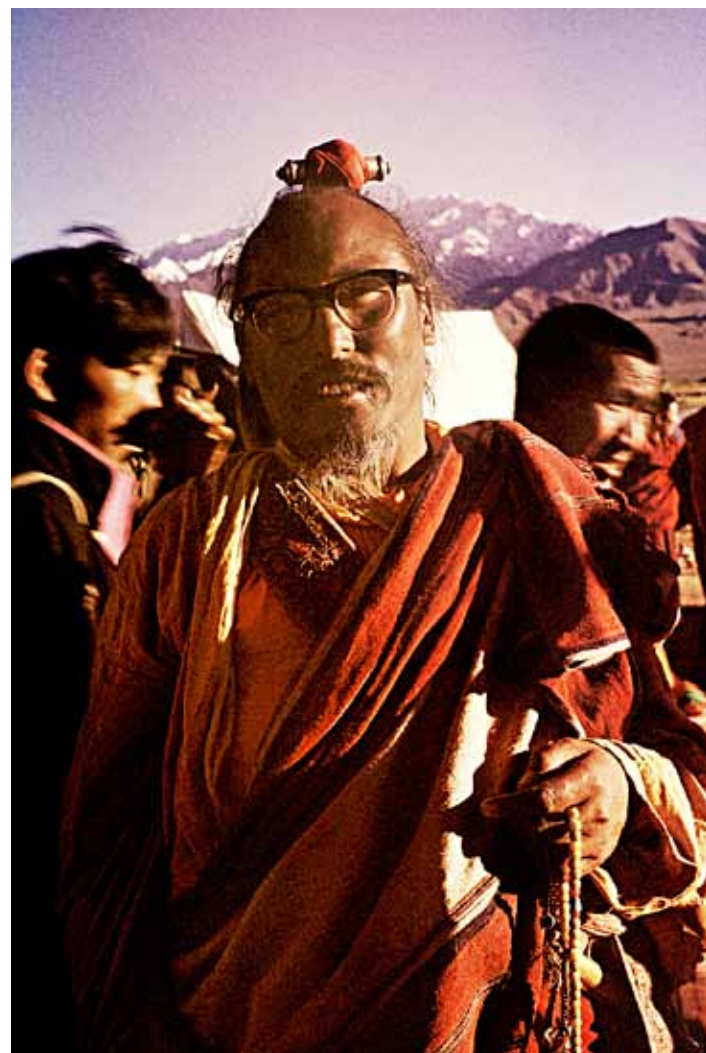


JASLEEN

Kalachakra- Leh, Ladakh, Set II- A & II-C

Archival Pigment Print on Hahnemuhle Paper, Limited Edition of 15

16 x 24 inches (Each), 1976



JASLEEN (left)

Kalachakra- Leh, Ladakh, Set III- C

Lama Dancer, Performing Celebration Dance to Honour Senior Lamas

Archival Pigment Print on Hahnemuhle Paper, Limited Edition of 15

24 x 16 inches, 1976

JASLEEN (right)

Kalachakra- Leh, Ladakh, Set VIII-A

'Weather Maker' He changes Weather with His Power

Archival Pigment Print on Hahnemuhle Paper, Limited Edition of 15, 24 x 16 inches, 1976

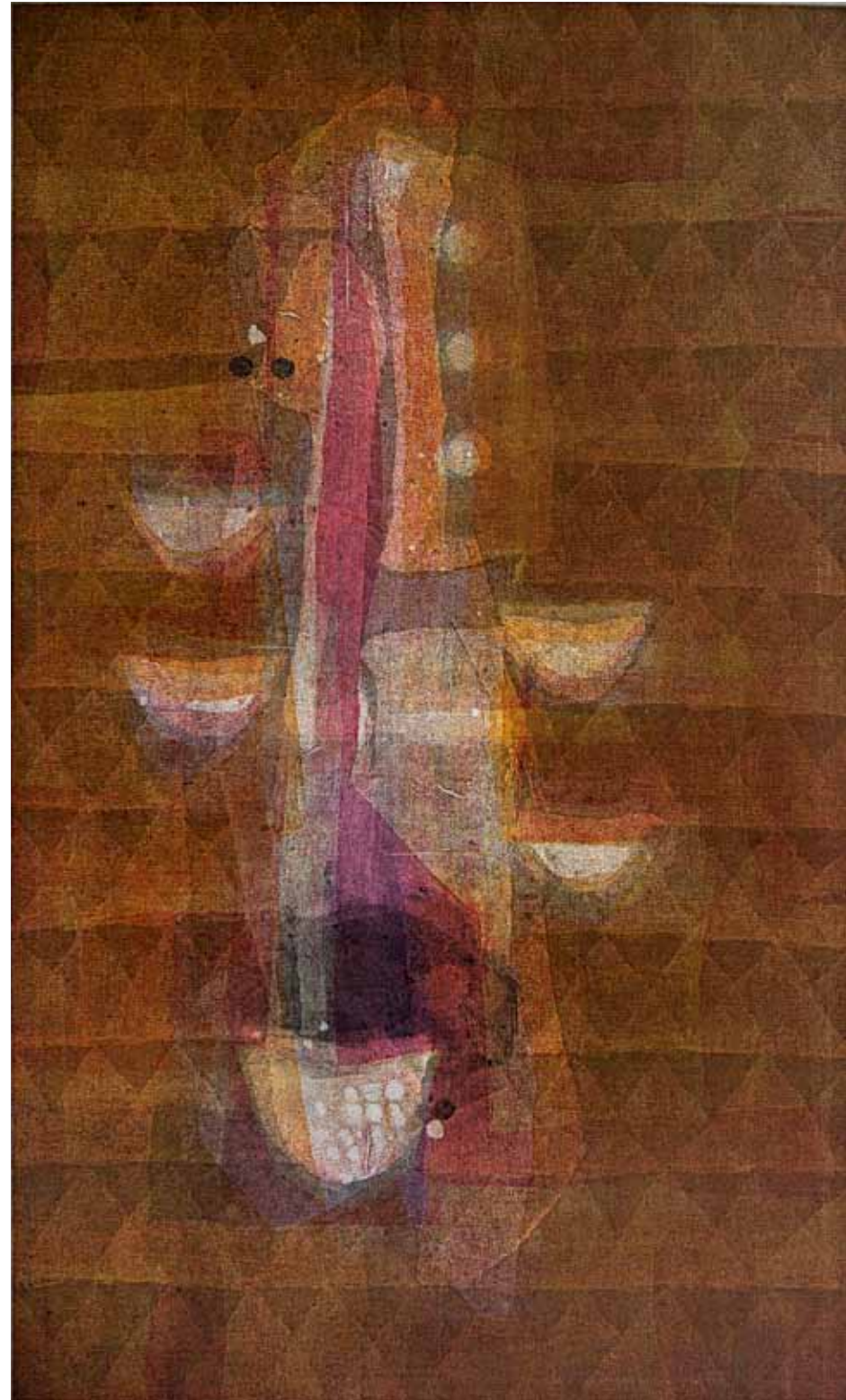


KALICHARAN GUPTA

Ground of Being

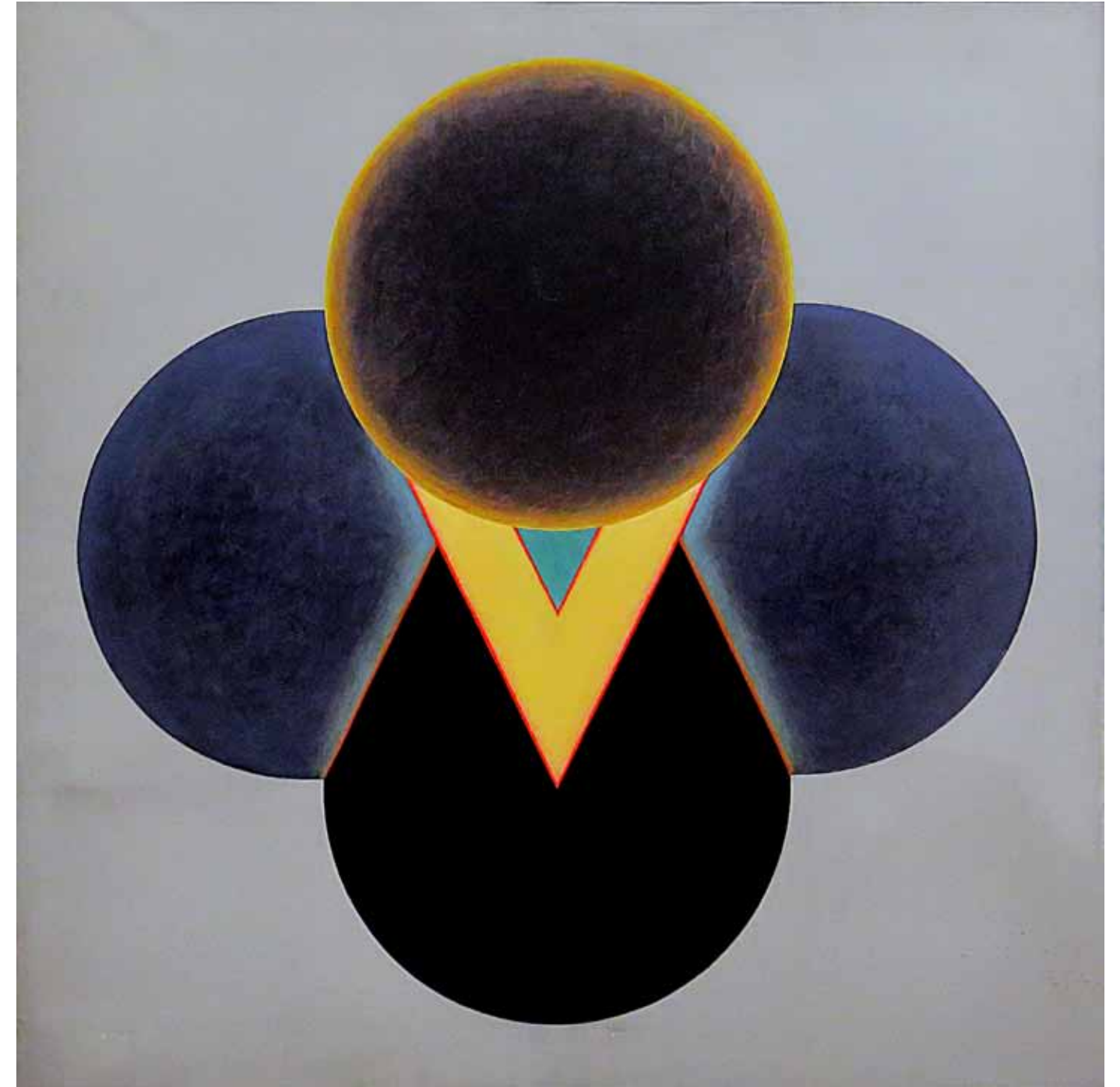
Acrylic on Canvas

55 x 60 inches, 2007



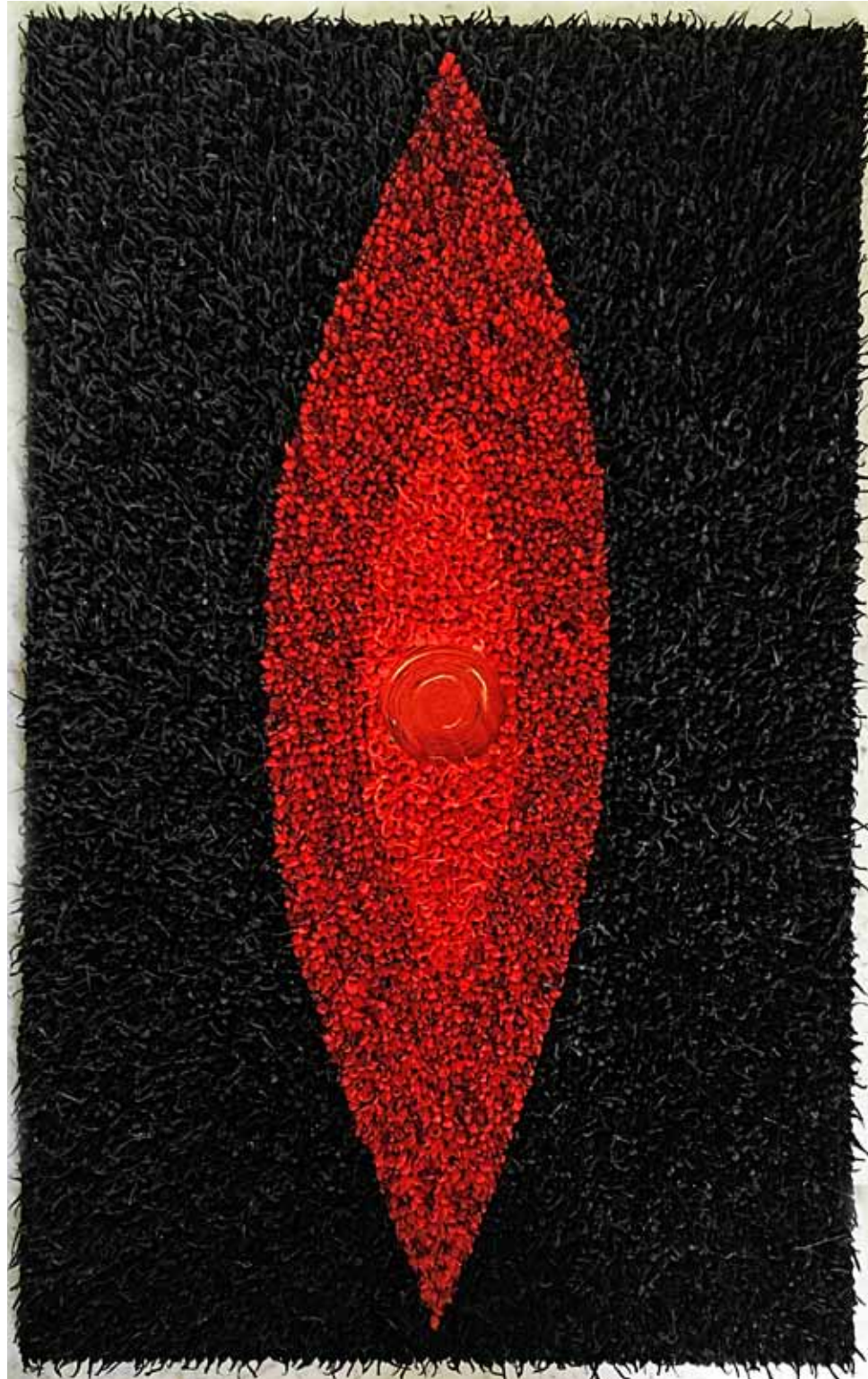
MANISH PUSHKALE

Vowel of Colour & Island of Noun-IV
Mixed Media on Canvas
60 x 36 inches, 2016



MAHIRWAN MAMTANI

Untitled
Oil on Canvas
32 x 32 inches



MEGHA JOSHI

The Wound- III

Cotton Wicks, Vermillion and Acrylic Paint on Plywood

48 x 30 inches, 2016



This installation is made with thousands of incense sticks in a ritualistic act.

It is a 'yantra' for no deity, a repetitive 'mantra' saying nothing.

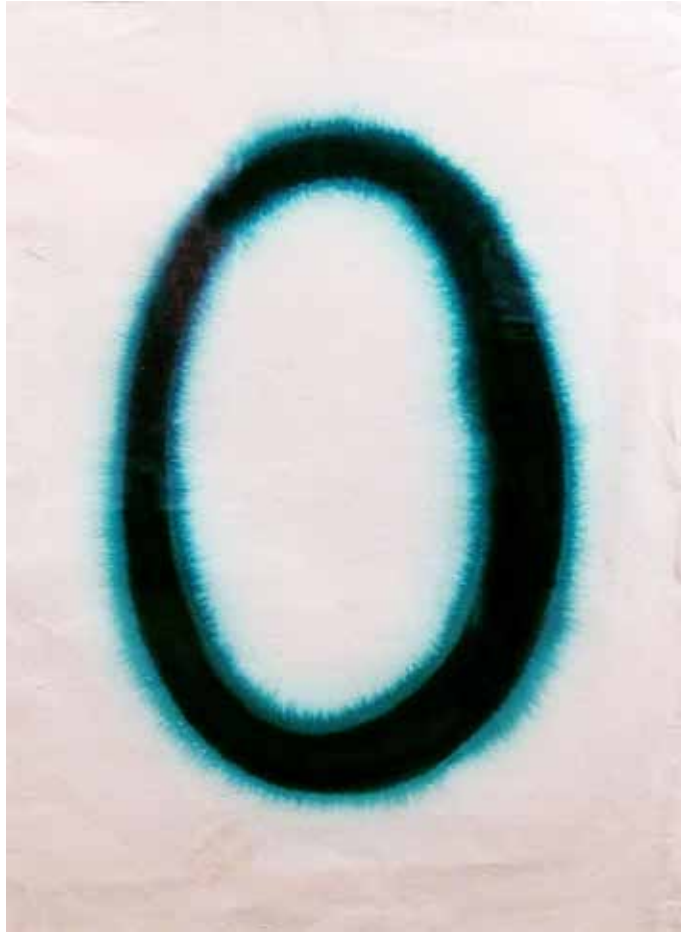
It is an exercise focusing on energy - both dynamic and static. It conveys chaos and stillness; the mysterious and obscure yet the familiar and mundane in a symmetrical and asymmetrical matrix.

MEGHA JOSHI

Untitled

Incense Sticks (40 kgs)

88 x 65 inches (approx), 2017



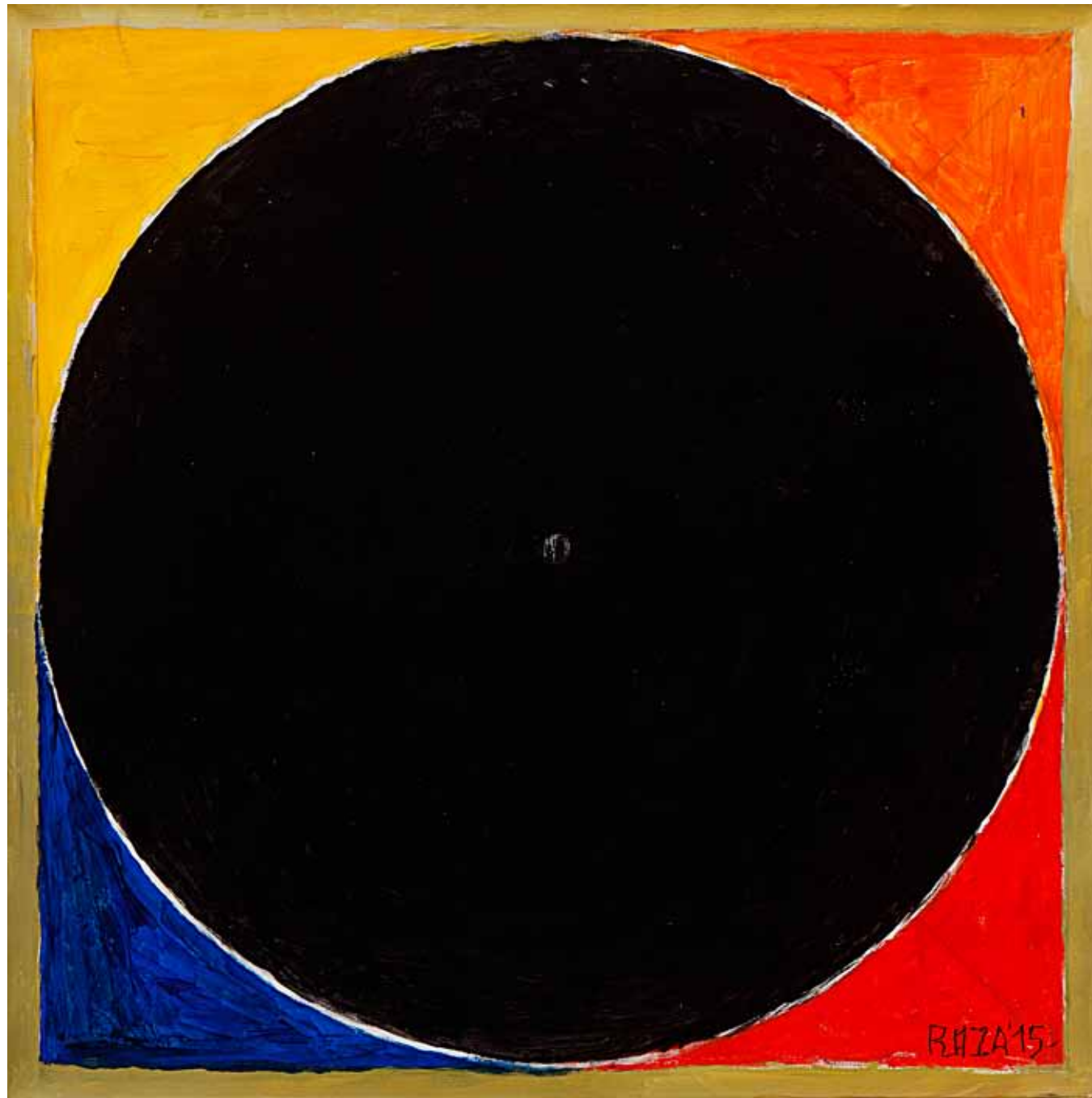
PRAFULLA MOHANTY

Untitled I, II
Watercolour on Paper
30 x 22 inches (Each)



PUNEET KAUSHIK

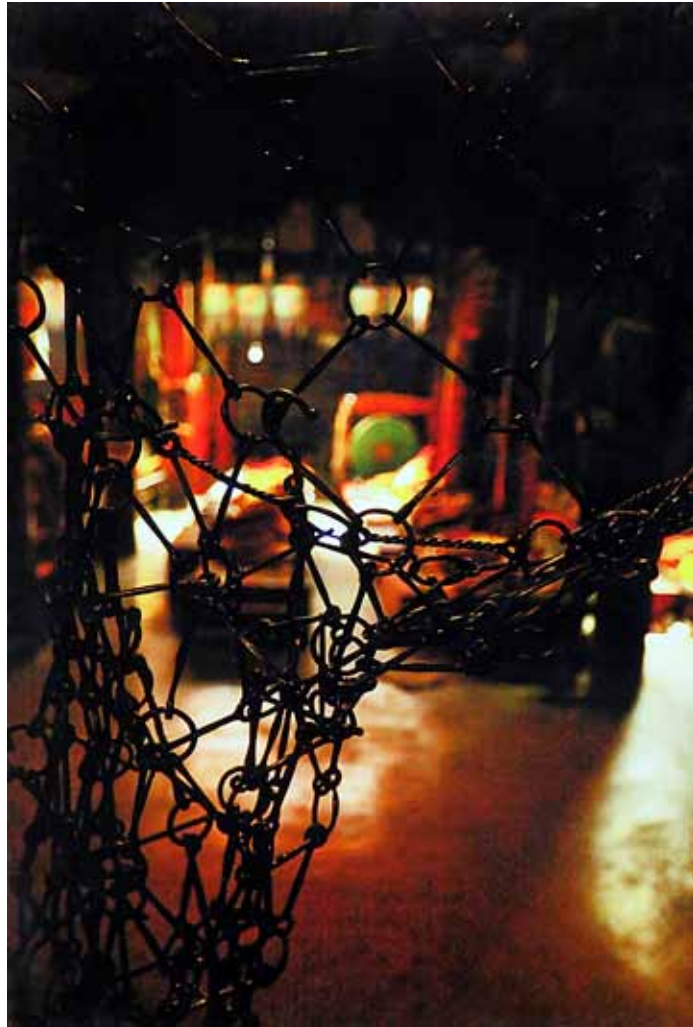
Untitled
Mixed Media on Canvas
67 x 43 inches



S H RAZA
Panch Tatva -II
Acrylic on Canvas
24 x 24 inches, 2015



S H RAZA
Aaroh
Acrylic on Canvas
24 x 24 inches, 2013



SHEFALI MUNJAL

Untitled

Photograph

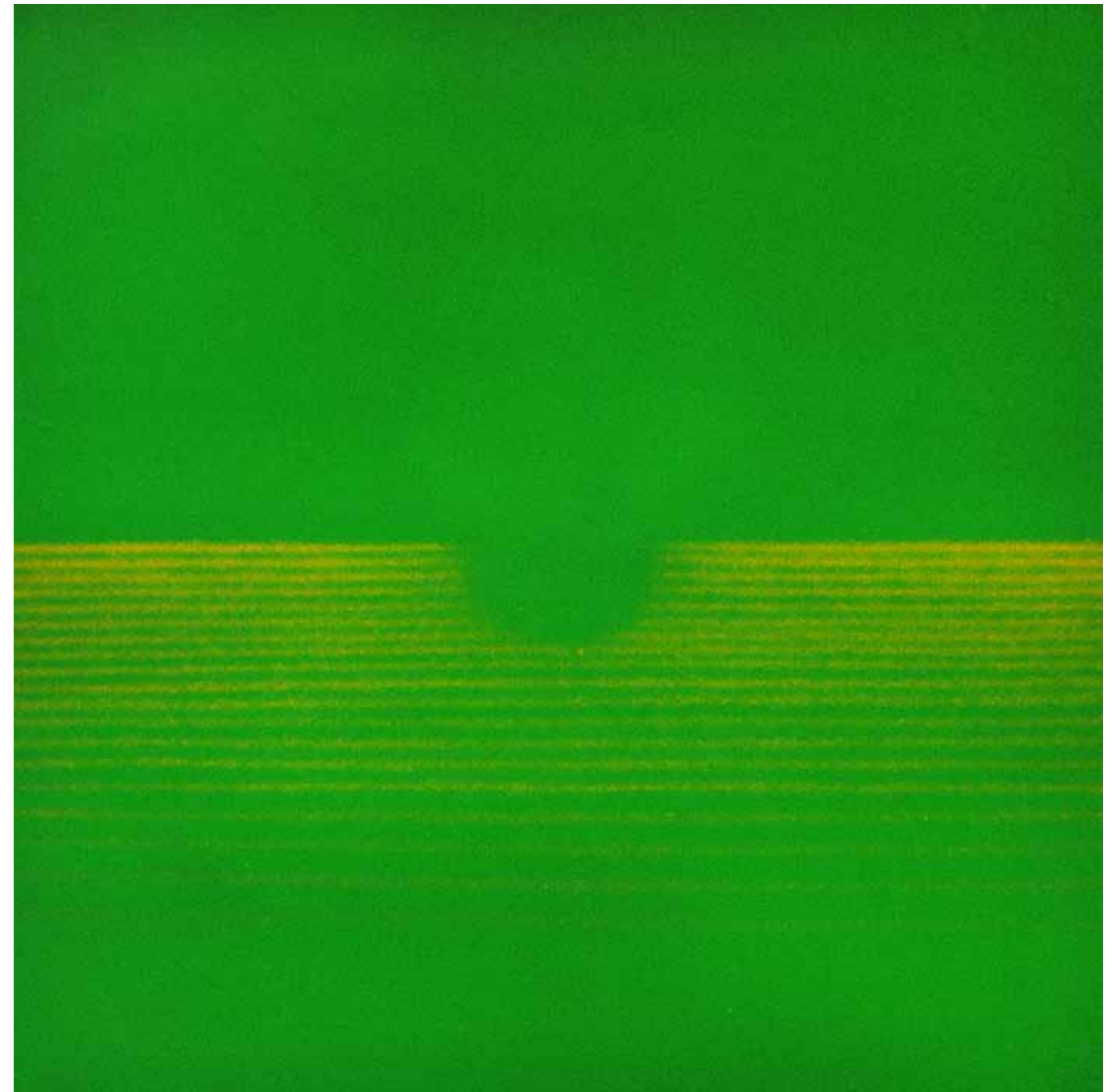
35.5 x 23.5 inches, Edition: 1/3, 2010

SHEFALI MUNJAL

Door To Knowledge

Photograph

35.5 x 23.5 inches, Edition: 1/3, 2010



SHOBHA BROOTA

Untitled

Oil on Canvas

30 x 30 inches, 2007



S K SAHNI

Space X

Acrylic on Canvas

35 x 35 inches, 2010

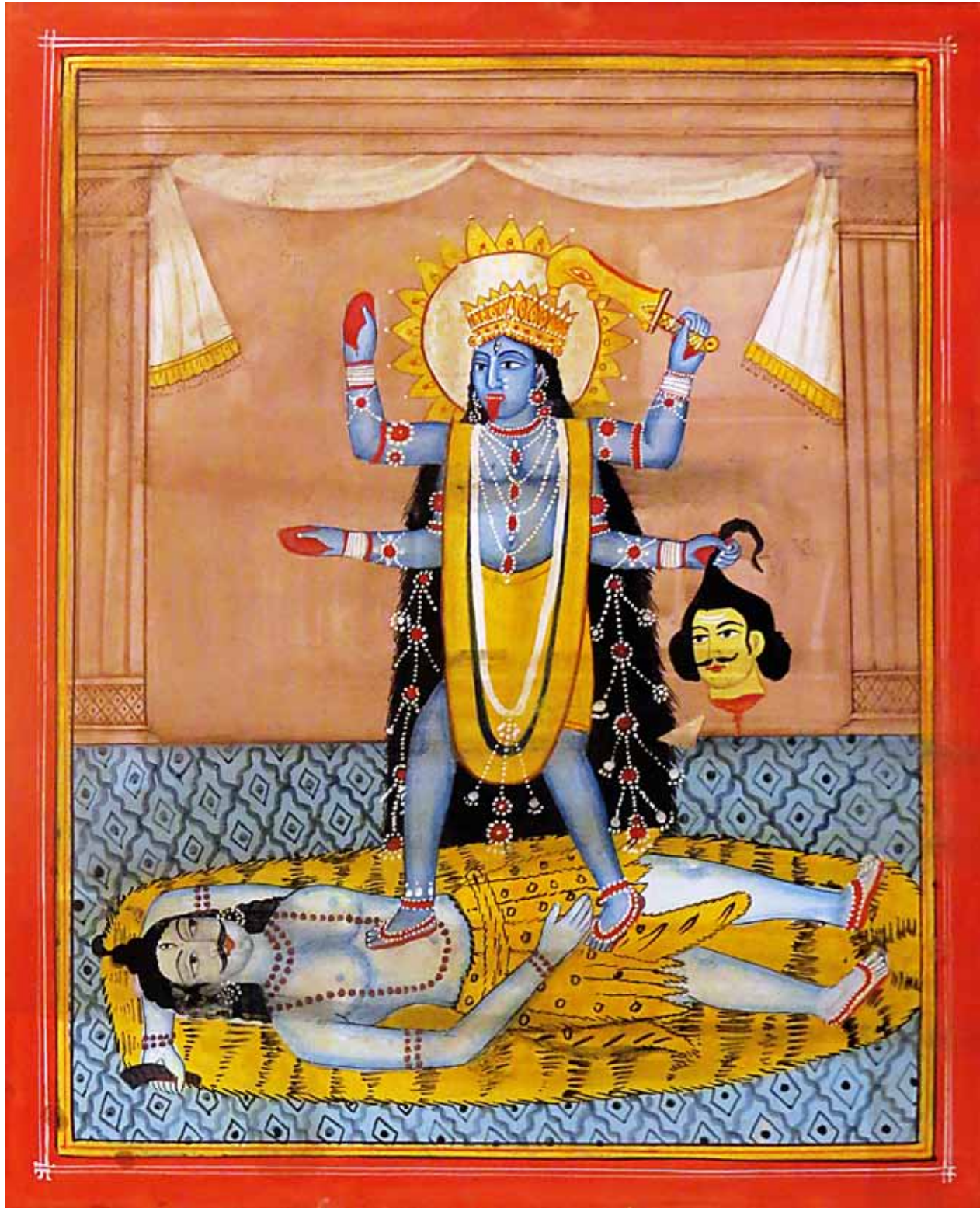


S K SAHNI

Drawing No. C-44

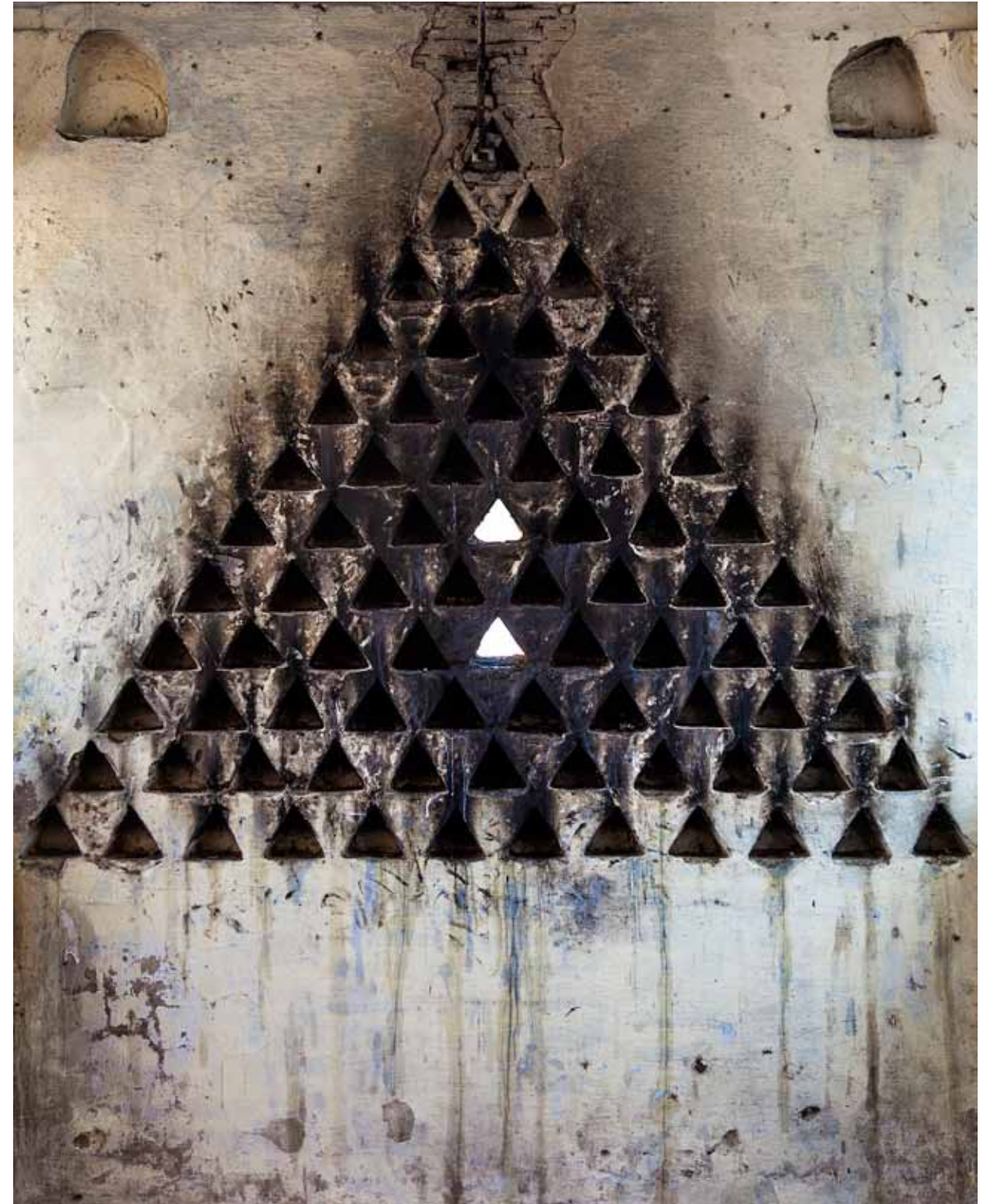
Oil on Canvas & Plastic

15.8 x 15.8 inches, 2000



BENGAL MINIATURE

Kali
Gouache on Paper
9.5 x 8 inches



SANJAY DAS

Cosmic Rythm-I
Hahnemuehle Photo Rag Bright White
35 x 28 inches, Edition 1/10



SANJAY DAS

Cosmic Rythm-II & III

Hahnemuehle Photo Rag Bright White

22 x 33 inches (each), Edition 1/10



Charak

'Charak' is said to be derived from 'Chakra' meaning circle or literal meaning of this Bengali word is 'Spinning like wheel'. Body piercing and hook-swing are the primary and foremost part of this festival. The worshippers believe they are blessed and protected by the Lord as they perform a dance, walk on hot embers and pierce their body with iron rods, to show their devotion. Iron hooks are tied on the backs of hermits or Sanyasis and they are then suspended on a crossbeam placed on the top high post. Further, they are swirled around in a rapid speed by the means of rope. It is believed that these acts of penance actually functions as a near-role reversal for men attempting to experience the pains of womanhood, including childbirth. The agricultural community, which considers the agricultural soils as mother, believes they impart pain to the soil and thus to their mother, during acts like plowing, harvesting, and thus they undergo such acts of penance to feel the same amount of pain. These celebrations lead to prosperity in the coming year, wiping out all the sufferings and pains of the current year.

SANJAY DAS

Cosmic Rythm-IV

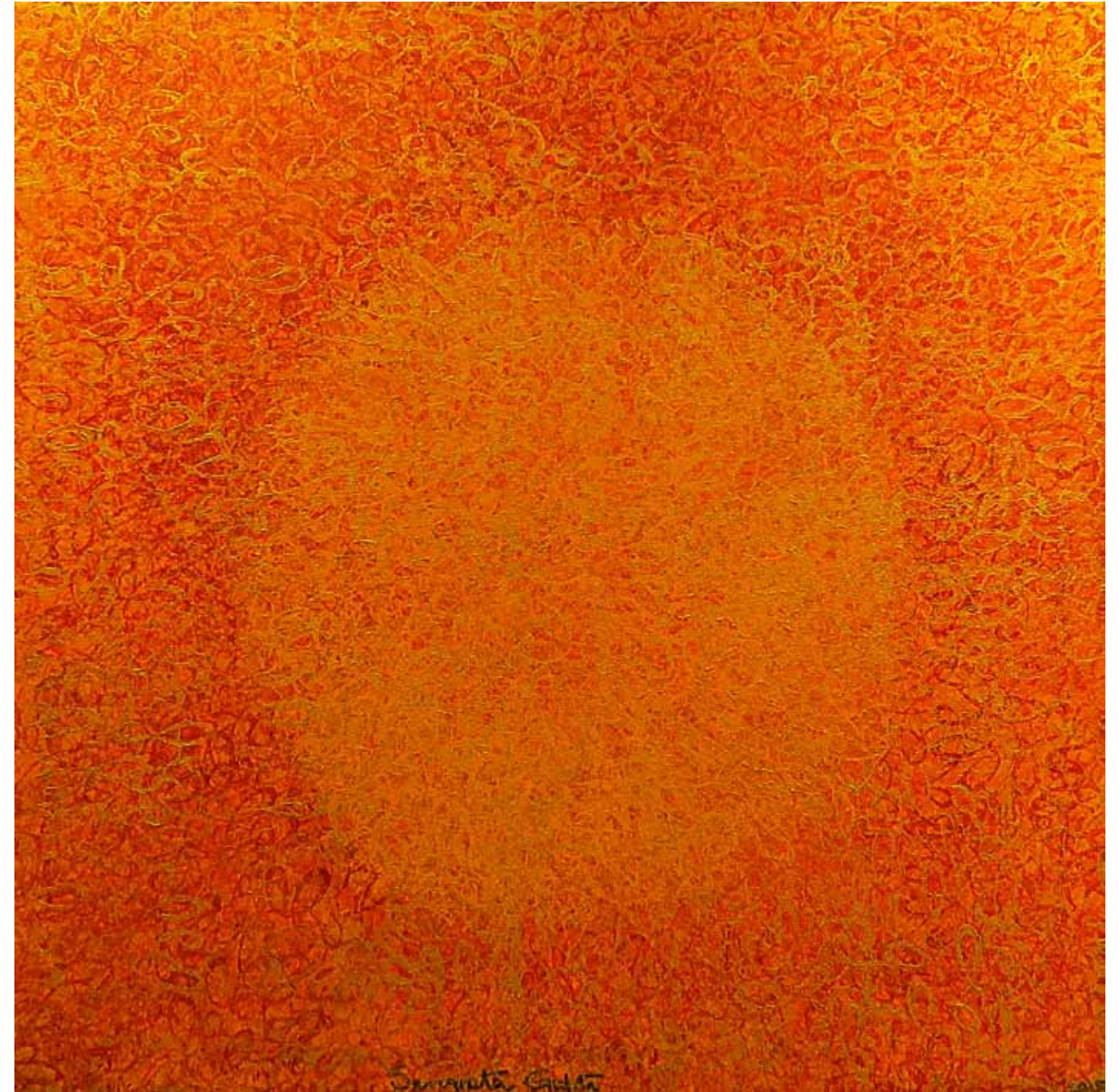
Hahnemuehle Photo Rag Bright White

22 x 33 inches, Edition 1/10



Gajan

"Shiber Gajan", which closely means "Lord Shiva's worshipping, is performed by the devotees signifying marriages of the male forces of Shiva, Nil or Dharmaraj with their respective consorts. Gajan spans for around a week, starting at the last week of Chaitra continuing till the end of the Bengali year. The word Gajan in Bengali language has originated from the word Roar or Garjan that emits during the festival. The word is also considered as a combination of two words i.e. ga, which is from the gram, means village and Jan, originated from the word janasadharan meaning folk. So Gajan is a festival of village folk. Rituals like dance with human skulls, body piercing and fire plays are seen during this time. Men and women dressed up like Gods and Goddesses dance and enact various mythical stories of Kaali, Durga, and Shiva. The festival is linked to the agricultural community, as they pray for the rains and better harvest.



SANJAY DAS

Cosmic Rythm-VI & VII

Depicting Goddess Kali in various forms enacted by bahurupi (traditional performing artists of India, Bangladesh, Tibet, Nepal and Pakistan)

Hahnemuehle Photo Rag Bright White, 12 x 18 inches, Edition 1/10

SANGEETA GUPTA

Untitled

Acrylic on Canvas

36 x 36 inches, 2016



SOHAN QADRI

Untitled

Watercolour, Natural Dye and Incision on Paper

39 x 25 inches, 1996



SUHAS NIMBALKAR

Untitled

Mixed Media on Canvas

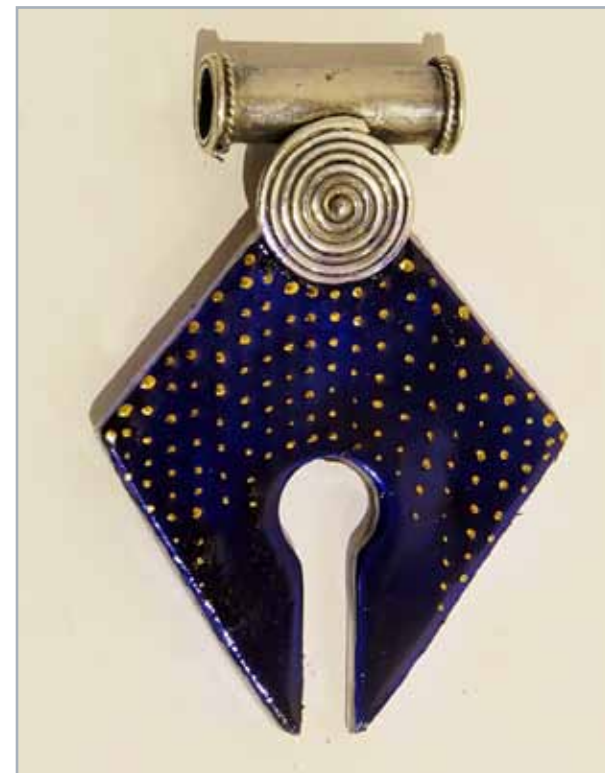
23 x 23 inches



< S H RAZA
Painted on Silver Pendant
1.75 x 1.75 inches, Edition: 4/10
Signed verso

PRIYANKA GOVIL (left) >
Painted on Silver Pendant
2 x 1.6 inches, Edition: 1/1
Signed verso

PRIYANKA GOVIL (right) >
Painted on Silver Pendant
2 x 1.5 inches, Edition: 1/1
Signed verso



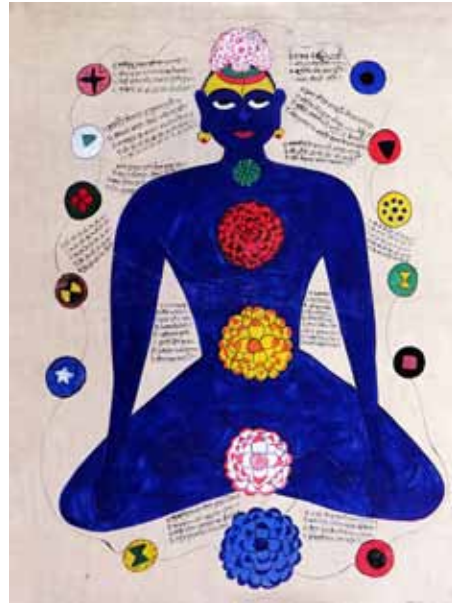
ANINDITA BHATTACHARYA
Painted on Silver Pendant
1.5 x 1.5 inches, Edition: 1/1
Signed verso

ANINDITA BHATTACHARYA
Painted on Silver Pendant
2.75 x 2 inches, Edition: 1/1
Signed verso



GOPA TRIVEDI
Painted on Silver Pendant
2.75 x 1.5 inches, Edition: 1/1
Signed verso

GOPA TRIVEDI
Painted on Silver Pendant
2 x 1.75 inches, Edition: 1/1
Signed verso



FOLK ART FROM RAJASTHAN

Depicting Tantric Subjects

Natural Pigments on Cloth

23 x 16.5 inches, 22 x 16.5 inches, 21.5 x 16.5 inches

FOLK ART FROM RAJASTHAN

Depicting Tantric Subjects

Natural Pigments on Cloth

66 x 43 inches



FOLK PAINTING FROM GUJARAT

Depicting Various Ritual Objects Used for Performing Puja
 Natural Pigments on Paper
 20 x 16 inches



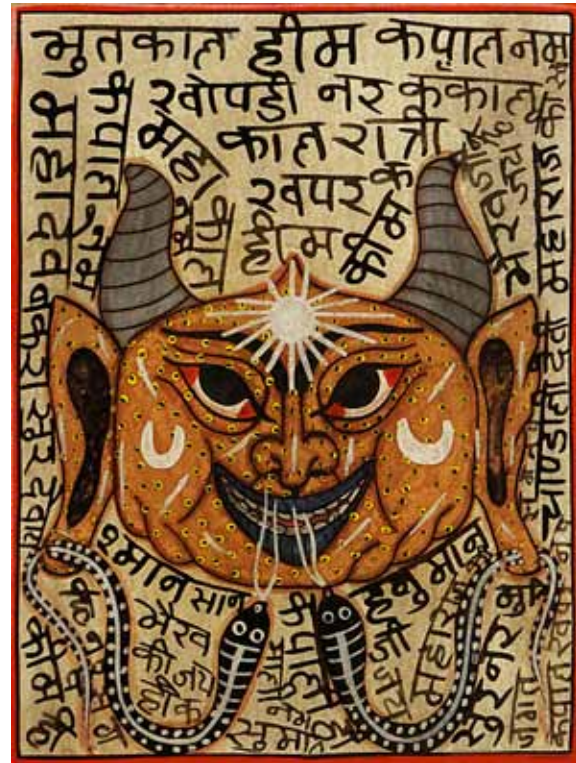
FOLK PAINTING FROM GUJARAT

Depicting Various Ritual Objects Used for Performing Puja
 Natural Pigments on Paper
 25 x 20 inches



FOLK PAINTING FROM GUJARAT

Depicting Various Ritual Objects Used for Performing Puja
 Natural Pigments on Paper
 21.5 x 21.5 inches



▲
FOLK ART FROM RAJASTHAN
 Depicting Tantric Subjects
 Natural Pigments on Paper
 10.5 x 8 inches (Each)

FOLK ART FROM RAJASTHAN
 Depicting Tantric Subjects
 Natural Pigments on Cloth
 27 x 21.5 inches



FOLK ART FROM GAURIPUR, ASSAM
 Kali
 Gouache on Paper
 28 x 22 inches



FOLK ART FROM GAURIPUR, ASSAM

Kali

Gouache on Paper

22 x 28 inches

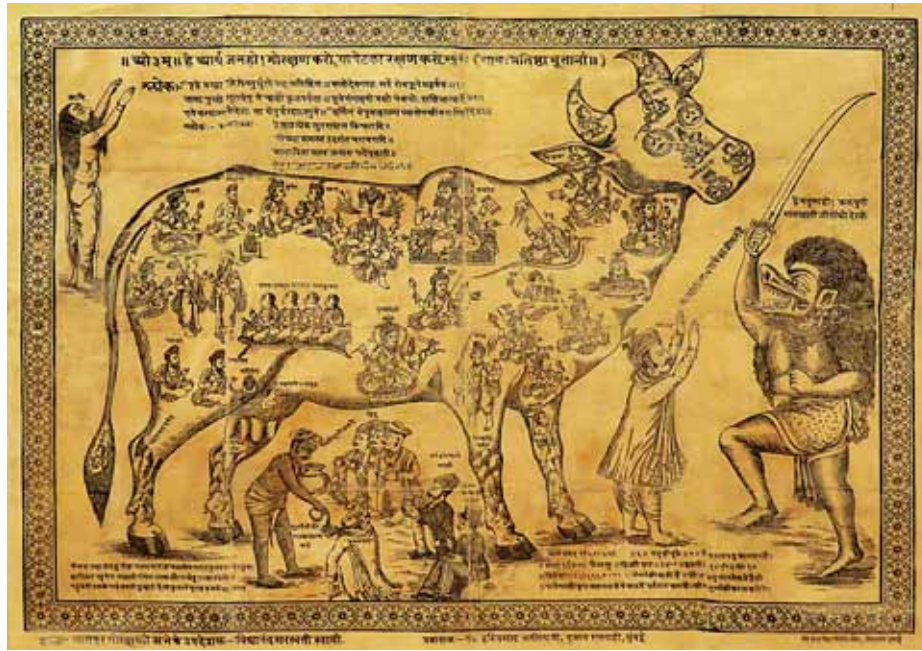


PICHWAI PAINTING, RAJASTHAN

Raktabeej

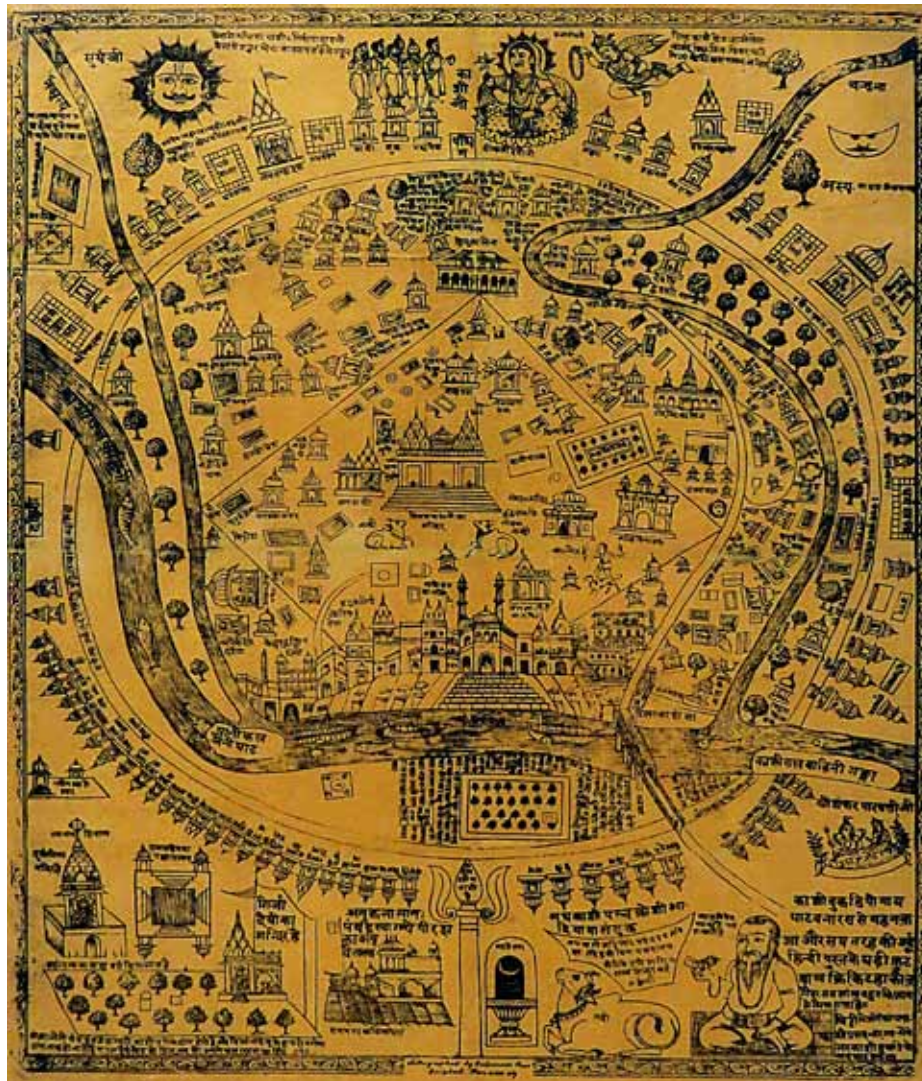
Natural Pigments and Gold on Cloth

66 x 48 inches



**SRI KARUNESH PRINTING PRESS,
MUMBAI**

Lithograph
17 x 22 inches



**SULOMANI PRESS, GAIPHATI
BENARAS**

Lithograph
26 x 19.5 inches



FOLK ART FROM RAJASTHAN

Depicting Erotic Tantric Subjects
Natural Pigments on Cloth
30.5 x 24 inches



FOLK ART FROM RAJASTHAN

Depicting Erotic Tantric Subjects

Natural Pigments on Cloth

32 x 20 inches

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THANGKA PAINTING

Buddha, Sakya Lineage

Natural Pigments on Cloth

27.5 x 18 inches

THANGKA PAINTING

Vajradhara, Gelugpa Lineage

Natural Pigments on Cloth

30.5 x 22 inches



THANGKA PAINTING

Form of Bodhisattva with Manjusree (left) and Mahakala (right)
 Natural Pigments on Cloth
 27 x 17.5 inches



THANGKA PAINTING

Life of Buddha
 Natural Pigments on Cloth
 29.5 x 19.25 inches



BHUTA MASK FROM KARNATAKA

Mukhalinga
 Bronze
 17.5 x 6.5 x 8 inches

Mukhalinga, literally means 'linga with a face'. The linga (or lingam) is an abstract representation of the Hindu god Shiva, seen as a symbol of energy. The mukha, is a covering used to give a face or iconic form to the abstract Shiva Lingam. Worshippers believed that the face would allow them to both see and be seen by Lord Shiva.



Although informed by Hindu iconography (markings of Siva, serpents, third-eye indications), these masks are part of a separate Shamanic tradition. Bhutas are a powerful mixture of heroic ancestors, forest spirits and classical Hindu Gods.

BHUTA MASK FROM KARNATAKA

Mixed Alloy

11.5 x 11.5 x 4.5 inches, 14 x 13 x 5 inches

11.5 x 9 x 5 inches

Individual identification is complicated as the same form could be worshipped as several different Bhutas depending on the family line and location of the shrine. Some of these masks were worn by individuals in Shamanic trance ritual. Their awesome visages are meant to convey a sense of great power and influence to be accessed by the local community for individual and group welfare.



VOTIVE FIGURE, BHUTA SCULPTURE FROM TAMILNADU/ KARNATAKA BORDER

Wooden Sculpture

20.5 x 9.5 x 15 inches



(a)



(b)



(c)



(d)



(e)



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FOLK ARTIFACTS FROM ANDHRA PRADESH

Wooden Sculpture

8.5 x 5 x 3.25 inches (a), 10.75 x 5 x 3.5 inches (b)

8 x 3 x 2 inches (c), 7 x 3 x 1.5 inches (d), 9.5 x 4.5 x 2 inches

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FOLK ARTIFACTS FROM ANDHRA PRADESH

Goddess Manasha

Wooden Sculpture

20 x 14.5 x 7 inches



VOTIVE FIGURE, BHUTA SCULPTURE FROM TAMILNADU/ KARNATAKA BORDER

Wooden Sculpture
23.5 x 7 x 9 inches



VOTIVE FIGURE, BHUTA SCULPTURE FROM TAMILNADU/ KARNATAKA BORDER

Wooden Sculpture
24 x 17.5 x 10.5 inches



MASKS FROM RAGHURAJPUR, ODISSA

Kali
Paper Mache
23 x 14 x 4 inches (each)





LODOICEA (COCO DE MER)

Joined Coconut in Shape of a Woman's Vulva

12 x 14 x 6 inches



BHAIRAV

Kamakhya Temple, Guwahati, Assam

Photo Courtesy: Prashanta Seal



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