



penetralia

ART OF **NEERAJ GOSWAMI**
CURATED BY ARUN GHOSE



SANCHIT ART









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JEHANGIR ART GALLERY, MUMBAI
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CONTINUES AT
THE VIEWING ROOM, MUMBAI
12TH - 26TH FEBRUARY, 2014




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CURATOR'S NOTE

'I am creating my own iconography by wielding silence and music. Sharp angles, curves, triangles, planes merge with fluid shadow-lines and mysterious depths that balance my art. The yearning of soul and its need to find solitude and peace amidst the chaotic turmoil that is life is what my art is all about. I believe that truth lies in the moment...'

- Neeraj Goswami



The innermost parts of a building, especially the sanctuary of a temple, were, in older times, usually named with this word. Though its use, much like the active practice of spirituality in modern times, has gone mostly out of fashion – its significance hardly waned. What is new, however, is usage of this word to title, meaning an overall assessment, of an artist's output of twenty odd paintings. Encountering significant contribution of one's spirituality in his or her art is not uncommon but the way Neeraj Goswami devotes all his inwardly accumulating creative energy in his art is indeed a milestone in art today. 'Penetralia', at least in this instance, indicates the quintessential element of his art that matured with an astounding pace in the recent past.

'Doing is very good; but it comes from thinking. Fill the mind were fore with highest thoughts, out of which will come great work', thus said Swami Vivekananda. The significant role of spirituality in art arises therein. In a broader sense all artists are spiritual while some are more conscious about it than the rest and Neeraj surely ranks among its serious exponents in the field of visual art. Role of spirituality in shaping the developmental course in his art can hardly be overstated but one need to take a closer look at this stage on what defines spirituality.

Spirituality may be described as an interesting manifestation of human intellect that draws its strength out of specific practices to train individual thought-process. Purpose of such 'yogic' practices is to channelize one's mind in specific direction that makes him transcend the barriers of worldliness. The usual conception of caste, creed, religion as well as lesser impulses like sex and sensuality gets dissolved when mind transcends into this spiritual path and, at the same time, enables him to realize his or her connection with the 'truth'. Spirituality is often quoted as 'the personal, subjective dimension of religion, particularly that which pertains to liberation or salvation'. As cultural historian and Yogi William Irwin Thompson put it, "Religion is not identical with spirituality; rather religion is the form spirituality takes in civilization."

Art in the past was a conscious product of spiritual thoughts and often resulted out of the compulsion to create avenues of communication between a select few as the creator to humanity at large as its recipient. The select few were those privileged with the intellectual faculty to conjure up spiritual thoughts they viewed as governing the human cycle and the role of art was that of a visual language in which those views were expressed. Visual art however had been handicapped in the sense that it always remained

dependent upon recognizable elements in order to express such 'abstract' concepts like love and war, devotion and prayer. Music, on the other hand, is and always was able to express such elements like love and compassion or heroism and valor which, in essence, are abstract concepts. Carefully combined musical notes have long been able to express such 'abstract' moods and human ears have become trained and accustomed in deciphering such messages that are encoded in corresponding permutation of musical notes. A close linkage, between music and visual art may easily be found in the image of God created in different civilization over the millenniums in the past. Almost always, in the past, such Godly images tend to follow the path of 'Sakar' to 'Nirakar', form to formlessness. In other words the image of God, as the civilization progressed, gradually changed from formal depiction of Gods (usually depicted as humans with super-human attributes) to the ultimate level of formless abstraction. In India the same road was travelled by its artists but with a significant difference. Here the formless pebble or an even larger piece of stone was being easily worshipped, since time immemorial as the manifestation of Lord Shiva by its rural and urban population alike. Recognizable but not necessarily 'Realistic'.



There is a common enough link to this phenomenon of transition, between 'formal realism' to 'abstraction', in Neeraj Goswami's life and art too. Born in a rather orthodox family of Saraswat Brahmins, and having a devout practitioner of 'Sri-Vidya' as his beloved grandfather, he was clearly destined to lead a spiritual life but that did not happen in the way it was expected. He was rather successful as a child prodigy in the field of visual art and has had his share of limelight as an infant prodigy even while remaining shackled with very 'limited' fiscal means. The tragic death of his father, and the even more tragic circumstances in which his father had to die leaving the family orphaned with little means to support, had catapulted Neeraj to the path of visual art rather firmly and he was forced to accept the path of realism in art to start with, mainly because circumstances demanded it. Neeraj, even before enrolling in the art college of Delhi, became a part-time bread-earner of his family by working as an artist-illustrator for children's books and was also doing portraits and landscapes on demand. He had also had his first solo while still a student in Delhi's Summerfield School, in the school's art-room.

It is not without significance to note that his progress in arts, during his days in Art College and thereafter, had quickly paved the way for a gradual shift of preference from 'Realism' to 'mysticism' with Rembrandt as his chosen idol. Neeraj's spiritual orientation that was

kept in expected level of suspension since he got separated from his pious grandfather got rekindled after he met his Guru in 1986. His art however took time to reflect his changed mental direction and, during these formative years, had moved from one direction to another but never regressing. It also moved from 'realistic' form to depict life around us to increasingly symbolic portrayal of spiritual bliss that humanity should always aim for:

In Indian 'yogic' tradition such visions, that appear to a blessed few during deep meditation, are to be kept close to oneself and not to be divulged even to fellow-worshippers. Neeraj is an exception in the sense that he did paint what he sees, only with eyes closed.

'I do not paint the World as I see it. I paint it the way I imagined it', said Pablo Picasso and did the same by painting recognizable figures even though he changed their appearances dramatically and often touched the threshold of emotional and 'abstract' feelings with his masterly manipulation of recognizable elements of the subject he used in his canvases. **What Picasso and the rest of modern masters in the West have done with the outward appearance of men and nature, Neeraj has attempted the same by looking inward.** In the art of Neeraj Goswami we find a special mirror at work within his inner self. His mirror does not reflect

the image faithfully as is normally done, mirror-like. His mirror, instead, adds up another dimension to reflected images as the surface of his mental mirror is coated with a 'spiritual layer of mercury'. Years of spiritual practices have allowed him to consolidate the layer at the back of his 'mirror' and the quality of image reflected out of it thus has gained significantly.

A closer understanding of Neeraj's painting technique is helpful, at this stage, in order to arrive at a better appreciation of his art which, as he rightly says, is intricately inter-wired with his own sub-conscious self. His paintings bear truthful representation of what goes on inside the man who created them and this is revealed in layers of paint he applies on his canvases.

The very first layers of paint his white canvases receive do not have any under-drawing to direct him his choice of palette. For this act he depends entirely on his meditative skill and a trained hand that takes over the intellectual function to interpret what his mind has begun to imagine. It is more like the clouds gathering up in the sky to form floating images. In his case the images remain hidden in the depth of his mind and he continues to rub in 'paints' using hand-rollers of various sizes and shapes, and erasing also at will whenever necessary depending on his intuitive acumen, while the image germinates within. The first layer of paint is followed by several more layers, some

of which may additionally offer a textured surface too, and together becomes his middle layer (imprimatura) which by then emerges with the germinated idea of what shape his creation, in his canvases, will appear to be. He often starts to work with several canvases at a time, whenever a new set of canvases arrives in his studio, and he works on each of them whenever he feels ready for it and the signal always comes from within. Each painting of Neeraj Goswami thus bears witness to his concentrated act of meditation taking place in the act of painting on canvas itself and grows along with the same pace of organic development of the artwork so created. Finally he starts to draw his images over his layer of constructed 'imprimatura' and finishes his work with touches of colors. Instead of being pre-meditated his working process reveals a growth-pattern whose point of origin assumes equal importance for the viewer to decipher along with the end result.

During his tryst with art over the last forty years (and perhaps a few years more if one takes into account his performance as an infant prodigy at the age of five in a primary school at Patna) one thing sure appears clear in retrospect. His art reveals a mute struggle to erase mental unhappiness aiming to attain bliss unlimited and he achieved it progressively, by degrees. Parallel to turbulent affairs of the art world, in which he had to remain a silent witness, there emerged major changes

in his psyche as expected. All traces of inner agony, for reasons not unjustified altogether, gradually got dispersed from his heart like the lifting of fog in wintery dawn aided by the first rays of rising sun.

His last solo in Delhi last year gave ample evidence of his matured, Buddha-like, state of all-forgiving mental calmness. His palette also reflected the glow in his heart with a surprising richness of black and gold that was eloquent with his mental iconography of musical silence. The present series of paintings offers to serious viewers his increased command over his craft. His visualization of 'Shunya', for instance, may easily serve to illustrate the issue. The concept of 'nothingness or shunya', in ancient Hindu texts, occupies a primary position of sacred importance. It signifies infinite bliss, indivisible yet not unattainable, achievable yet unalterable. Neeraj has visualized the concept using a human form with its limbs un-linked yet appear complete and overfilled with mental peace with love for one and all. The Greeks once learned the secret of sculpting perfectness of human form to portray such completeness of mental and physical being. Neeraj, in his recent series, has achieved a similar completeness that is personal yet universal, a visual documentation of PENETRALIA. He has, expectedly enough; risen to the occasion to claim his position in the world of art while remaining committed to his faith in the purity of inner self.





NEERAJ GOSWAMI

Born in 1964 at Patna, Neeraj earned both a bachelor's degree and a master's degree in fine arts from Delhi College of Arts.

Neeraj's painterly journey starts deep inside his mind, during his daily meditation, in which images emerge in his purified soul. His paintings reveal this gradual growth taking place on the surface of his canvases with ever-increasing clarity of thought and matching execution.

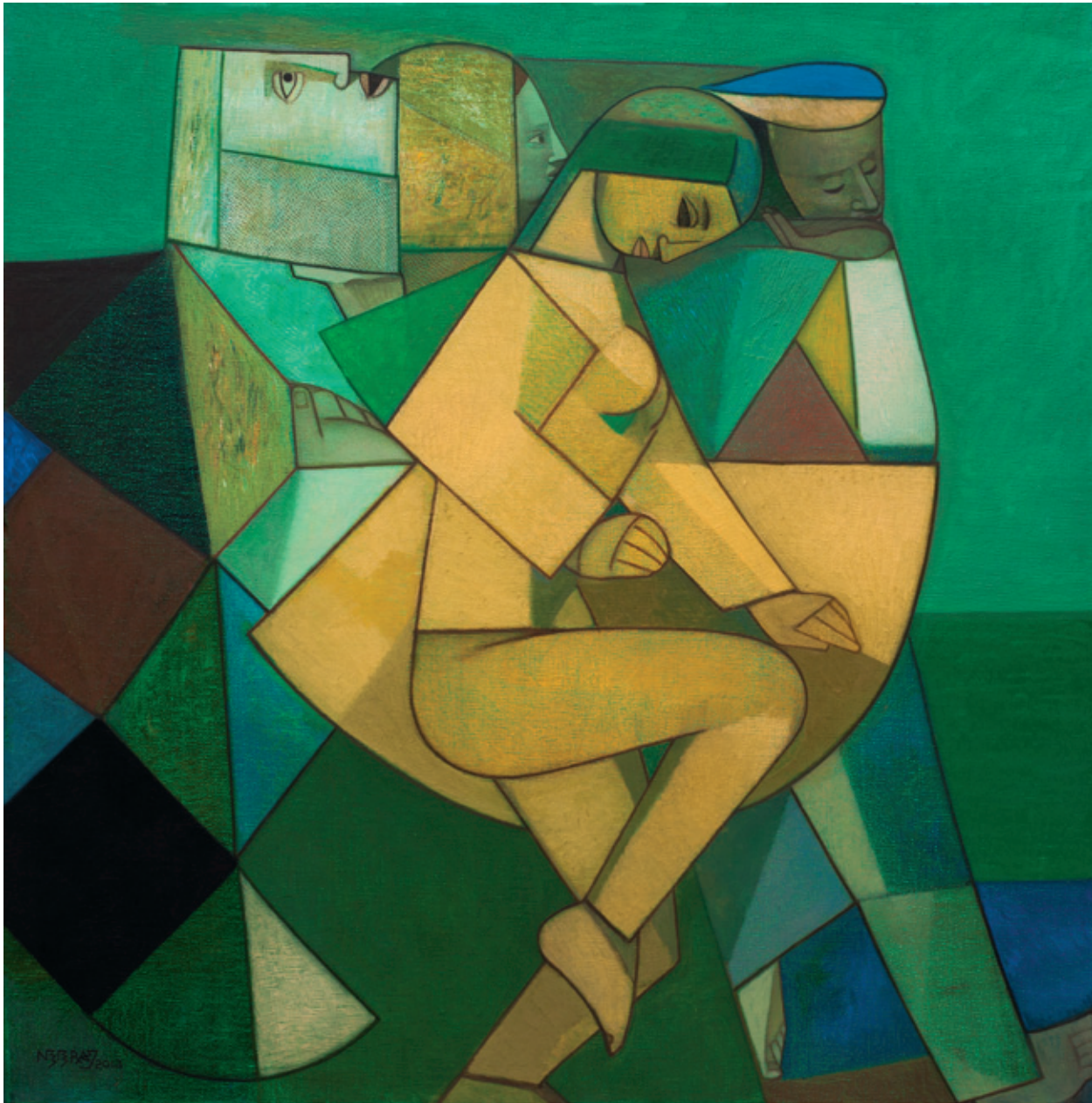
Neeraj received the Bharat Bhawan award at the second biennial of contemporary Indian art in 1988 and was awarded Lalit Kala research grant fellowship the same year. Besides these Goswami has been in great demand as a muralist and a portrait painter. He executed some important murals and commissioned portraits, particularly the

portrait of Honorable President Shri KR Narayanan, 1999 for the Rajya Sabha. His works are part of Museum Collections around the country including the National Gallery of Modern Art in New Delhi as well as private collections in India and abroad. His paintings are in corporate collections of Apollo Group, Hero Honda, Ranbaxy Group, Max India, Adidas, Somdatt Group and Reliance Industries Ltd, etc.

His palette, and simplified rendering of meditative humans, together portrays a unique tradition in Indian art in which spiritual feeling predominates. He lives and works in Delhi.



With the Golden Orb | 24in x 24in | Oil on canvas |2013



Beginning of a Dance | 24in x 24in | Oil on canvas | 2013



Young Couple | 24in x 24in | Oil on canvas | 2013



Journey by Night | 24in x 24in | Oil on canvas | 2013



Emerging | 36in x 24in | Oil on canvas | 2013



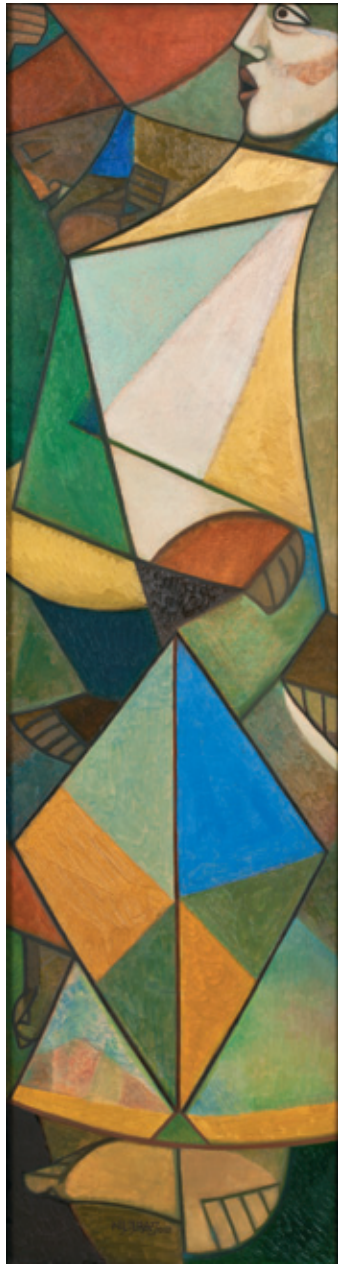
Play by Night | 36in x 24in | Oil on canvas | 2013



Young Girl | 36 inx 24in | Oil on canvas | 2013



Like an Angel | 36in x 24in | Oil on canvas | 2013



Performer | 38in x 10in | Oil on Board | 2012



Tamsa ma jyotir gamaya (From darkness lead me to light) | 60in x 48in | Oil on Board | 2012



Walk by Night | 60in x 36in | Acrylic and Oil on Canvas | 2012



Night Watch | 48in x 84in | Acrylic on Canvas | 2012





Moonlit | 70in x 118in | Acrylic on Canvas | 2012



Dialogue | 35in x 23in | Acrylic on board | 2013



Enchanted shunya (Play) | 60in x 60in | Oil on Canvas | 2013



Rise (mute reverberations) | 70in x 47in | Oil on Canvas | 2013



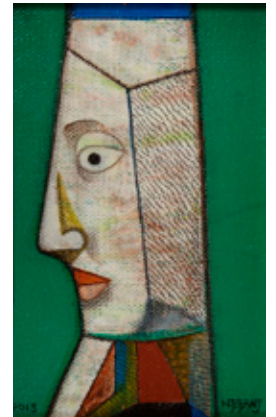
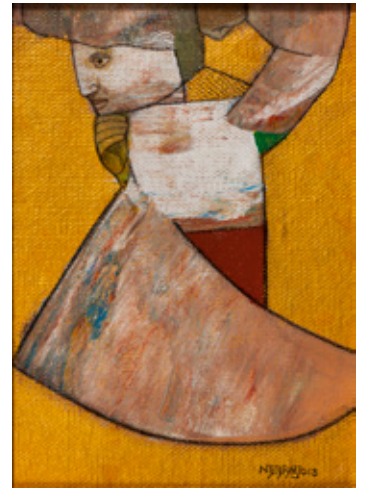
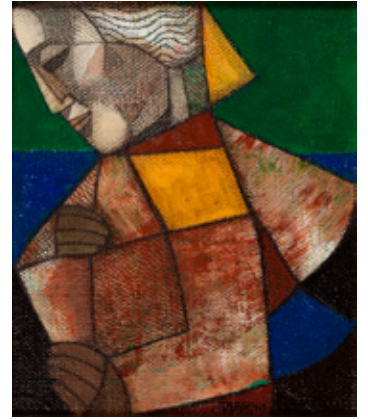
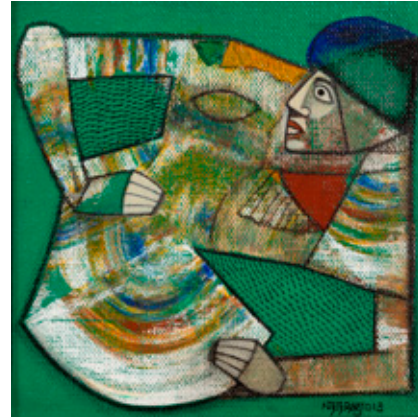
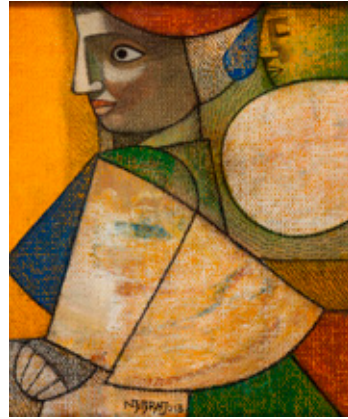
Play | 36in x 48in | Oil on canvas | 2013

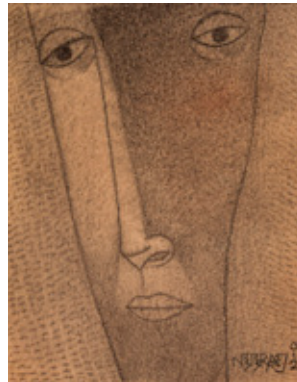
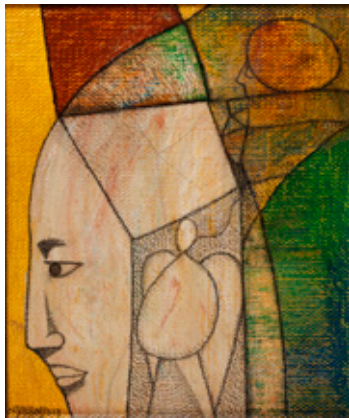
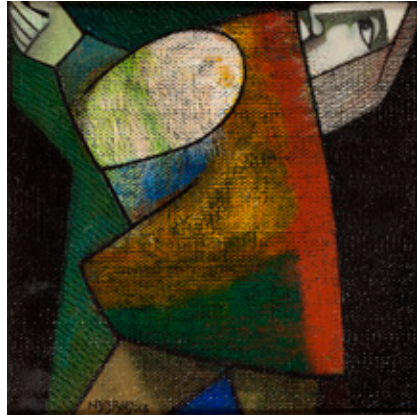
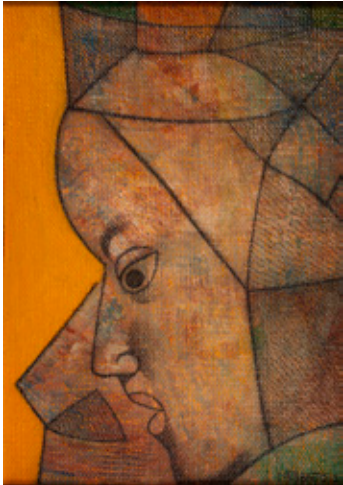


A Walk in Blue Space | 48in x 36in | Oil on canvas | 2013



Flight into Space (Shunya) | 42in x 48in | Oil on canvas | 2013







The Musician | 72in x 48in | Oil On Canvas | 2013



Journey of a Head | 48in x 36in | Oil On Canvas | 2013



Vacation | 48in x 36in | Oil on canvas | 2013



Journey Towards Light | 36in x 48in | Oil on Canvas | 2012



ARUN GHOSE

ABOUT THE CURATOR

All branches of fine art extend their attraction to Arun Ghose yet his responses are far from equal to each of them. He is fascinated a lot more by the study of appreciation of arts, a fact that is supported by the volumes of critical essays he has written so far on artists and their art in India today. Even though he had completed his art training from recognised art institutions in India and abroad, he has stayed away from the creative arts and concentrated on assessment and appreciation, curating and conservation. He has served as the art-critic of a well-known literary magazine in Bengal and has introduced more than a hundred art exhibitions with his critical input besides authoring several books on life and art of veteran artists like Somenath Hore, Paritosh Sen and Sakti Burman. Recently, he also wrote a book on leading contemporary artist, Neeraj Goswami, which has been subject to much acclaim and praise. He, since last ten years, co-ordinates a post-graduate diploma course on

'Appreciation of Indian Art' at the Ramakrishna Mission Institute of Culture at Kolkata and has delivered lectures in numerous national seminars on art, museology and conservation.

His professional career had an equally varied mix. He has served with due distinction in museums of repute for nearly thirty years before opting for being an independent art-expert since the beginning of the present millennia. He has, as ex-Curator of the Government of India's programme called 'Festival of India', organised important exhibitions of contemporary Indian Art abroad. Husian's last two major shows, entitled '88 Oils On His 88th Birthday' and 'The Lost Empire' had him closely working with the ageing artist both in India and London. His interest in conservation of paintings had resulted in his first book entitled 'Conservation And Restoration Of Cultural Heritage', published in Delhi in 1980.

He lives in Kolkata and works not being limited to this city alone.



SANCHIT ART

ABOUT THE GALLERY

Sanchit Art represents the best of contemporary Indian art and it specializes in showcasing quality artworks by artists of various age groups. It also aims to bridge the gap between artists working in India and abroad by establishing a platform to show contemporary European art in India while reciprocating the same with curated shows of contemporary Indian art abroad.

Sanchit Art now has two galleries in Delhi and Agra and both are spacious with full complement of necessary fittings necessary for display of contemporary art to its discerning and international clientele. It also has partnered InvesArt Gallery of Spain to show Picasso and Braque, among others, at the India Art Fair. One of our major shows at Singapore in April 2013, curated by Arun Ghose with works of nine seniors, was welcomed in the mainstream media of South East Asia in superlative terms. Sanchit Art is now in the process of firming

up its initiative in Singapore with major art programs in the coming months.

Sanchit Art also has a dedicated team of researchers with a matching publication programme and believes in perfection, mutual trust and fairness as the cornerstones of all its interactions and dealings. It has already published a large 'coffee-table' book on art of Neeraj Goswami while its second book on a very important artist in India is under preparation.

Ganesh Pyne, Jayasri Burman, Jogen Chowdhury, Paresh Maity, Ram Kumar, Sakti Burman, Sanjay Bhattacharya, Satish Gujral and Thota Vaikuntam are some of the artists represented by Sanchit Art.

ART OF NEERAJ GOSWAMI

— coffee-table book —



————— *Summary* —————

Art of Neeraj Goswami reflects the state of art in India as it grew over the last fifty years. He, since childhood, had always found himself reasonably well established as an accomplished artist. His pictorial style got consolidated over the fertile bed of his self-realization that was the outcome of his spiritual life. His art, in fact, is a life-long narration of how such a dramatic transformation came about in his life and how his art reciprocated the same transformation, slowly yet steadily, in canvas and on paper and occasionally sculpted in bronzes.

The book focuses on the deeply spiritual nature of the artist's work. This coffee table book attempts to bring the works of one of India's best known artists to every person.

Art Of Neeraj Goswami: Liquid Distillation Of Animated Consciousness was formally released on the 29th of January, 2013, at Lalit Kala Akademi, New Delhi. It has received positive reviews and has garnered attention from the art world as well as the general public

————— *Specifications* —————

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Available for purchase in limited numbers.

The publication can be purchased directly via Sanchit Art, major book stores across the country and many leading online book stores.

*In celebration of the artist's solo presentation, Penetralia, 100 AUTOGRAPHED BOOKS
would also be sold on a first-come-first-serve basis.*

Please write in to info@sanchitart.in to reserve your copy, today.





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