

Konari

# KALA SUTRA

2015 | DUBAI Invisible, Unique yet Variable

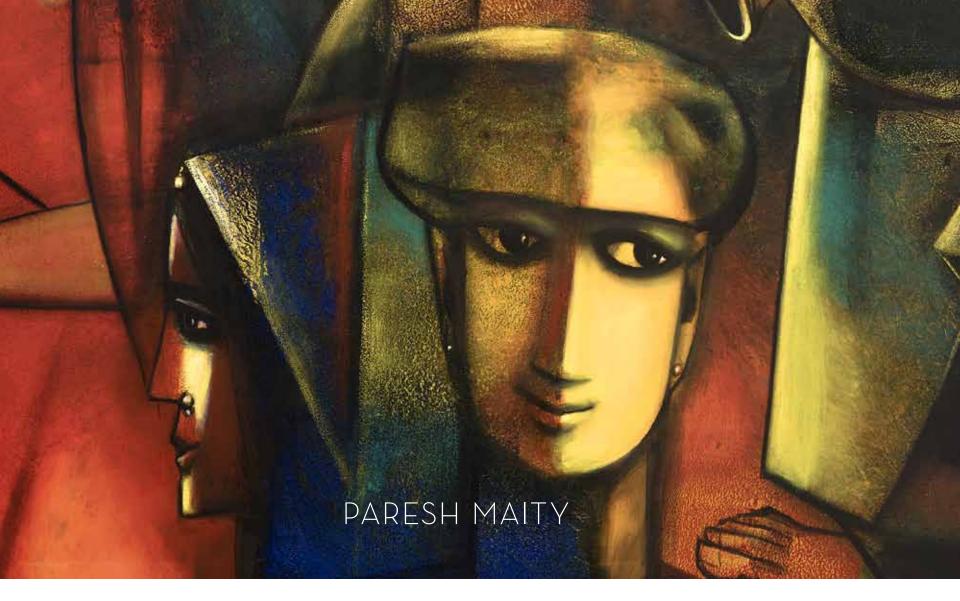


## KALA SUTRA

2015 | DUBAI Invisible, Unique yet Variable

Curated by Arun Ghose





Solo Show in Dubai February, 2016

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#### CURATOR'S NOTE

### KALA SUTRA

### INVISIBLE, UNIQUE YET VARIABLE

KALA SUTRA invisible, unique yet variable. 'Kalasutra' is the essential thread of aesthetic foundation over which rises art of a nation in various eras. In the present era its 'invisible' presence, and possible continuity from art of the past, is loaded with scepticism bordering on near disbelieve. A humble attempt is made herewith, with a series of exhibitions, to re-assess its relevance in order to ascertain art now being made in a pan-Asian perspective. What has emerged out of our effort, and

show-cased in the present exhibition, is an apparent dichotomy in the sense that this 'Kalasutra' is unique yet variable at any given stage in human history and more so today.

Art that shocks one's mind and attempts at channelization of slumbering minds into guided pathway of radical thought is what distinguishes a section of post-modernism that is often credited with progress of thought today. A clear example of this obviously lies with the criterion adopted for selection for the coveted 'Turner Prize' in art. Berlin Biennale, a year ago, had appointed a few art-activists as the festival's curators whose close link with the Russian anti-Governmental agitation through the medium of art had also made clear the preference given to this kind of art created to 'shock' at this prestigious biennial. This Russian art collective (called Voina meaning war) put a phallus on a bridge and burnt a police truck on New Year's Eve in order to stage their art with the aim of declaring war against police abuse and the government's highly publicized authoritarian methods. Internationally, Voina's ideology—defined by the group as "anti-consumerist lifestyle marked by alternative living strategies, such as dumpster diving"— is publicized more significantly worldwide than it is at home. Giant "Voina Wanted" banners can be seen in the U.S., the U.K., and Germany. As German film director Artur Zmijewski, a Voina supporter at the Berlin Biennale, put it, "Art is free, and Voina activists are not just saying words, they act to prove the idea."

What surely lies at the extreme opposite to this trend ĺnow predominantly prevalent in art festivals and even in museums of modern art) is a huge quantum of art created following the age-old accepted formats of the 'easel' variety that are usually meant for more 'intimate' viewing. What distinguishes the two extremes lies solely on the visual forms adopted and almost exclusively on the methods used and materials employed to achieve the desired outer appearances. In spite of employing such an extreme degree of visual difference one seldom fails to notice the existence of a chain of thought that threads the two together. A protest is a protest, no matter how it is painted or assembled, or perhaps

staged as in Voina's burning of police trucks. Maite Delteil in Paris, and Seneka Senanayake in Sri Lanka, in the present exhibition, along with Svitlana Osobik working in Ukraine and Dubai, also achieved an equal intensity of protest in their art but did so without succumbing to the lure of utilising any element of 'shock'. Any attempt to compare the relative merit, and possible demerit, in these two extreme varieties of art-making is obviously futile as both have a near equal share of success in what they attempted to achieve. Artistic expression is mystical and sacred but these are not arbitrary. All work of art bears a conscious, and pre-meditated. statement and that statement is made by inventing images. There is no art without images and the purpose of images in art is to visualise such statements in the form of visual symbolism - aimed at clarifying the

unknown by means of the known. What is of even more importance is to note that the 'invisible' thread of aesthetic foundation surely links them together and the question of who betters whom is best left for the posterity to decide. Time alone can judge, for the better.

With these parameters of thought guiding one's choice of artwork it will now be possible to offer a reasonable explanation of how the 'invisible Kalasutra' links the art of sixteen artists chosen for the present edition of 'Kalasutra' exhibition. Each of them is, it will surely appear, unique and yet variable from one another without losing their idiosyncratic brilliance of thought and artistic skill.

Maqbool Fida Husain, arguably the most famous painter in Indian contemporary art, had died only a few years ago. The New York Times, in their obituary notice, had described him as "an artist whose modernist reinterpretations of mythic and religious subjects made him India's most famous painter". In his art has 'converged' a lot of India's artistic heritage and what emerged had retained the vigour of story-telling in idiosyncratically modern fashion. Ram Kumar. a close friend of Husain and ten years his junior still works on his canvases and papers each morning in Delhi. His canvases are like long poems, easy to read but not easy enough to decipher the coded message loaded with spiritual overtone. He is easily inspired by the layers of accumulated memories, generated and carefully stored in his mental data-bank, about his long association with the holy city of Varanasi spent often in company with friend Husain. In the limited world that

he lives in. he feels free to use subconscious images, and fond memories, of the past etched deep into the subconscious. Seashells and marine remnants, water lilies in bloom and the rounded spread of its delicate leaves. and such other relics that smells of environmental tranguillity appear in his canvases with unpredictable regularity. While these alone are enough to offer an accumulated image (of life that shines after the rains) the artist in him starts to explore other mostly pictorial avenues, to create an art that aspires to scale greater heights by incorporating a multi-spiritual approach to art. Ram Kumar's spiritual overtone finds a muted yet unmistakable echo in Neeraj Goswami who represents this continuity of thought over a period of two or more decades as he is junior in age to Ram Kumar by that many years.

Art, like music, eventually clothed itself to assume the role of a coded language and communicable only to those initiated in decoding such hieroglyphics in the same way the acceptance of classical music depends upon the training of the ear to discern its musical excellence. Abstract art. in the West, mainly grew out of the need to develop a personalized image of spiritual feelings that, in its core, is essentially formless. Something similar also happened in Neeraj's art. For him subjects do not matter. What matters are the complete visual form and the visual experience of that form. Titles are given after he complete the works just to facilitate the viewer to connect with the work of art so that he or she can associate themselves with the painting and then experience the hidden meaning in the form. Spirituality, in its core, is uniquely personal and conceptually abstract. Neeraj, in his art, has successfully found a way to incorporate his feelings in terms of pictorial metaphor. Heritage of art, of past and present and from the East and the West, has converged in his subconscious out of which surfaces such forms, intensely spiritual with timeless continuity.

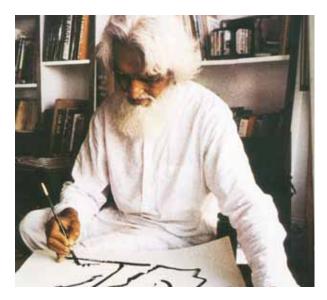
Husain and Ram Kumar are not alone in their perch. Satish Gujral also belongs to the same level in age and artistic importance with a unique mix of urban sophistication and rural simplicity that typifies his art along with his complexity of pictorial metaphor and readability of scripted visuals. The elegantly crafted sculpture of Satish Gujral adds yet another dimension to his versatility. Perhaps the generation that followed these three closely is represented by the art of Ganesh Pyne, Jogen Chowdhury, Manu Parekh and Thota Vaikuntam. A lot has been written, and widely discussed, about the art of these four stalwarts. What is of even more importance is the intensity of pictorial effort that each of them, in their idiosyncratic way, pours in their art to successfully construct a bridge between heritage and contemporaneity. Their art, seen together, easily assumes a prime example of 'Kalasutra' in line and colour and art of Thota Vaikuntam surely deserves a closer look.

Hailing from a rural hinterland in India, Vaikuntam has highlighted the ethnicity of life around him and has also developed a unique mode of representation by accentuating the design-quality of caste marks and ethnic attire of local populace. He utilizes his signature-like style of representation and elevates the status of people he paints into a deistic level. Staging of dramatic art in rural India, often with men acting as women using distinctive yet colourful make-up, thus acquires an altogether different meaning in his art and, at the same time, reveals the continuity of artistic tradition from rural hinterland to urbanised India converting tradition into modernity. Jogen Chowdhury, on the other hand, has remained faithful to his inner compulsion to paint the urban sociopolitical complexities and did so utilising his signature-like style in black. What distinguishes his art is his uniqueness in effortlessly combining the spirit of art, in the East and the West and of all ages, without revealing any debt to the past. His art also offers visual shock but does so without any severity of punch line that distinguishes art of the extremes in postmodern period.

Paresh Maity's linear rhythm with expressive angularity is no less unique and derives its visual strength also from his carefully crafted palette that easily evokes an age-old pictorial bond with art of its glorious past while, at the

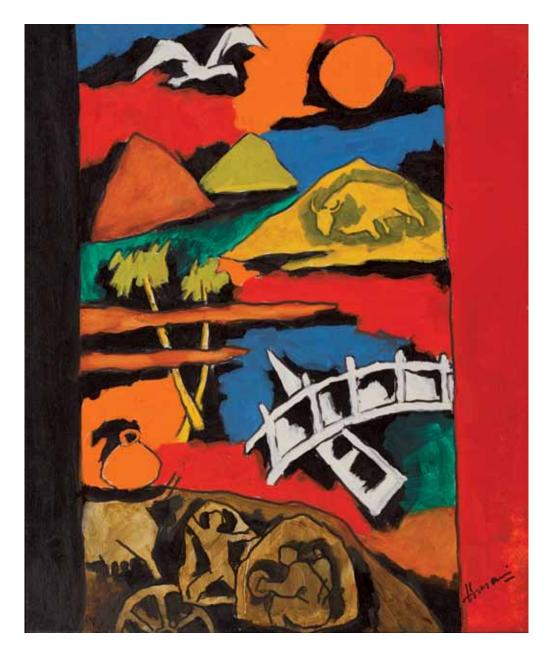
same time, charting in his own style a delectable continuity of Indian aesthetics, of past continuous in present perspective. The same is attempted, and successfully achieved, in the art of the four women artists in this 'Kalasutra' edition. Maite Delteil in Paris and Svitlana Osobik in Ukraine, along with Jayasri Burman and Vasundhara Tewari Broota, in Delhi, work independently and yet the combined output of these four, in this show; represent the invisible unity of thoughts at work among feminine sensitivity defying geographical distances. Manoj Dutta and Kishor Shinde, in this show, take up the role to illustrate the continuity of artistic sensibility that underlies constructive abstraction and recognisable representation in Indian art today.

Paul Klee, in his Bauhaus days, had used a simile of a tree to explain the process of artistic creation. The trunk of the tree, according to him, is the artist himself who grows its roots deep into the soil of its origin to draw the sap. Artistic idea that lies behind all act of creative art is the sap for the artist and it undergoes radical transformation in the eye and mind of the artist in the same way as the sap is chemically transformed in the trunk of the tree. The result is the foliage, flowers and fruits that has little resemblance with the roots and the trunk and yet remain umbilically linked. The simile holds well in the case of most of the artists chosen for this show but not without major differences, too. Each of them is significantly different from all others in having grown their roots simultaneously in countries that are poles apart. They thus are able to draw their 'sap of artistic inputs' from cultural soil of the East and that of the West in variable measure. In India there is such a tree, called Banyan tree that has aerial roots dangling down from extended branches. Eventually the tree grows so vast that that the roots from the branches become multiple trunks that simultaneously draw the sap from a large tract of land to help the foliage growth atop. Artists today are comparable to similar, organic, growth of huge Banyan trees with its aerial roots spread wide apart and grown deep into lands of different origin. What is indeed of much critical interest is the variation of fruits they bear even with 'sap' of the same soil, unique yet variable.



#### **Maqbool Fida Husain** 1915 - 2011

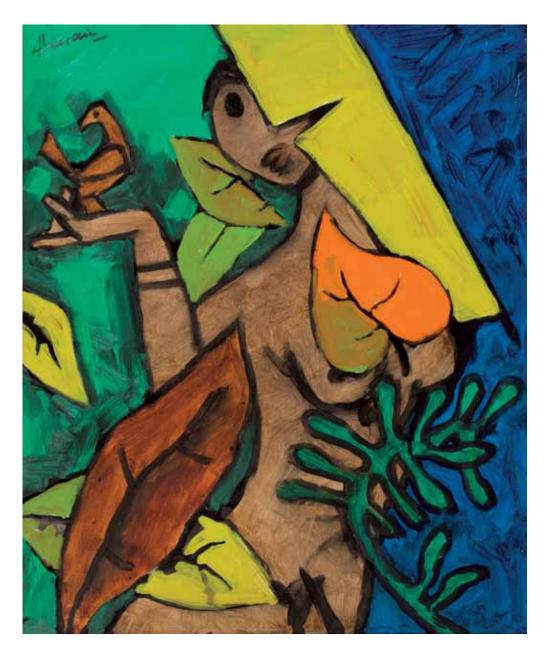
M aqbool Fida Husain is one of the most celebrated artist in International arena from India in the twentieth century who continued to reign supreme well into the twenty first. His ability to create pictorial metaphor at will, coupled with his mesmerising ability to draw and paint in any medium, had always placed his name in the forefront of Indian contemporary art. Museums and internationally acclaimed collectors chased him with lucrative offers to paint for them. He was also an avid film-maker and had directed several films that received critical acclaim in various platforms of world cinema.



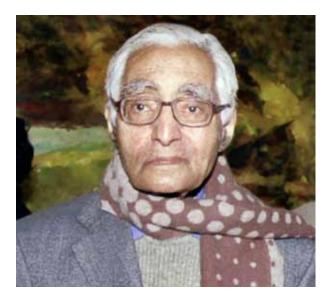
M F Husain | Untitled | Oil on Canvas | 24" x 20" | 2003



M F Husain | Untitled | Oil on Canvas | 24" x 30" | 2003



M F Husain | Untitled | Oil on Canvas | 24" x 20" | 2003



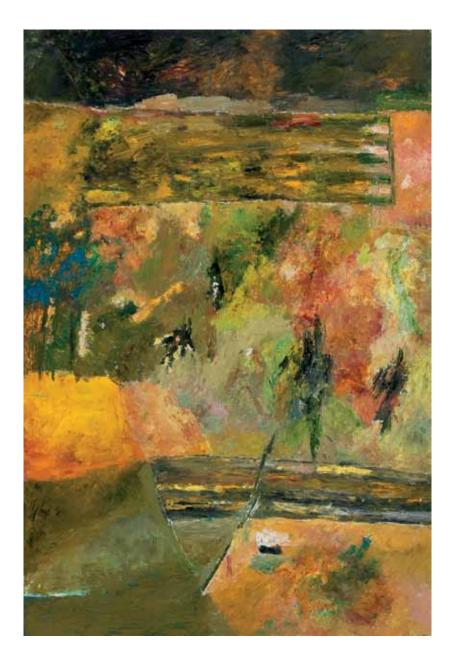
### Ram Kumar

b. 1924

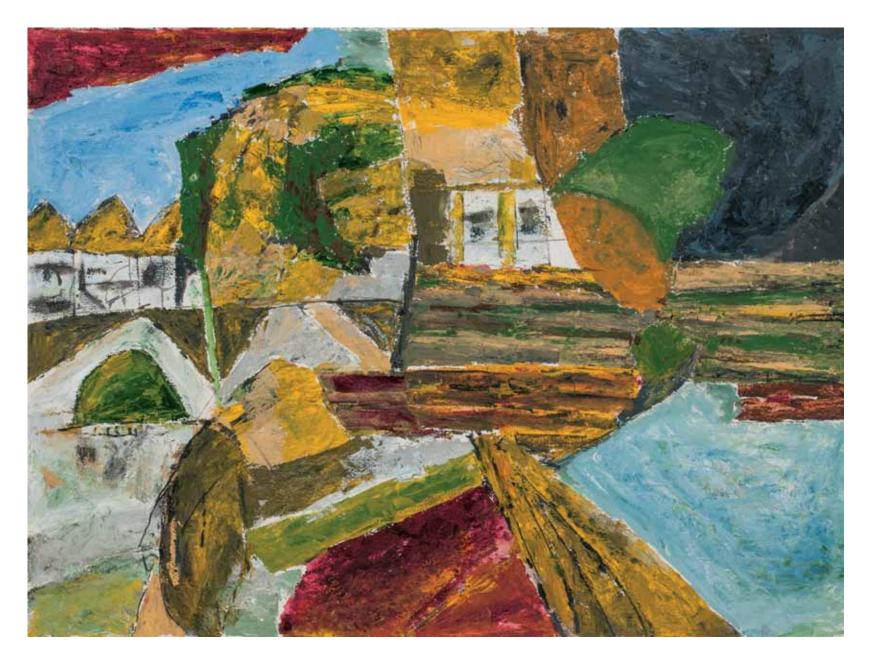
Ram Kumar's canvases are like long poems, easy to read but not easy enough to decipher the coded message with casual viewing. He is inspired by his long association with the holy city of Varanasi spent often in company with friend Husain. In the limited world he lives in, he feels free to use sub-conscious images, and fond memories, of the past etched deep into the sub-conscious. Seashells and marine remnants, water lilies in bloom and the rounded spread of its delicate leaves, and such other relics that smells of environmental tranquility appears in his canvases with unpredictable regularity.



Ram Kumar | Untitled | Oil on Canvas | 36" x 36" | 2013



Ram Kumar | Untitled | Oil on Canvas | 24" x 36" | 2013

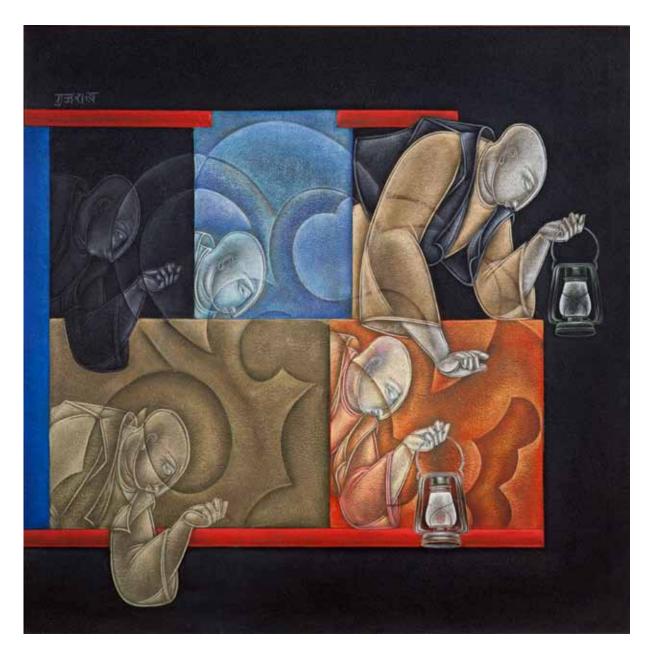


Ram Kumar | Untitled | Acrylic on Paper | 22" x 30" | 2012



**Satish Gujral** b. 1925

Painter, Sculptor, Muralist, Architect & Writer Satish Gujral may easily be described as a living legend; one of the few who have consistently dominated the art scene in India during the entire post independent era. He was born in 1925 and, during 1944-47, came into contact with the Progressive Artists Group in Bombay, which included S.H. Raza, F.N. Souza, P.N. Mago, Jehangir Sabavala, M.F. Husain and others. Satish Gujral could not accept the PAG's total adaptation of techniques and vocabulary of European Expressionism and Cubism. He searched for a kind of modernism rooted in Indian traditions.



Satish Gujral | Night Gods | Acrylic on Canvas | 54" x 54" | 2006



Satish Gujral | Untitled | Acrylic and Gold on Canvas | 12" x 12" | 2012

Satish Gujral | Untitled | Acrylic and Gold on Canvas | 12" x 12" | 2011



Satish Gujral | Untitled | Acrylic on Canvas | 34" x 45" | 2008



Satish Gujral | Untitled | Bronze | 10" x 18" x 2.5" | 2004 | Edition 7 of 7

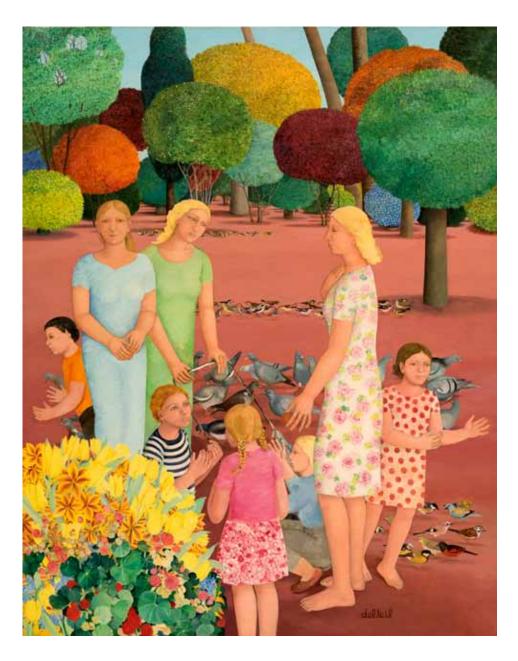


Satish Gujral | Untitled | Bronze | 13" x 10" x 4" | 2011 | Edition 2 of 9

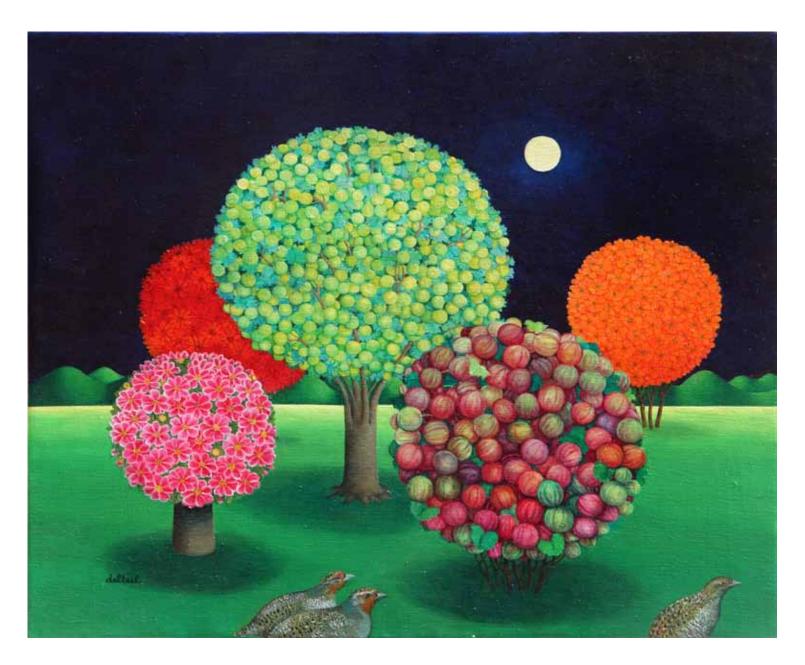


### *Maite Delteil* b. 1933

ntellectual sophistication and naive realism, an artistic mix of the two showing candor and freshness with camouflaged spontaneity, may describe the art of Maite Delteil but only in parts. Her art and its innocent finesse is as enigmatic as her life she shared with her artist husband from India and her development in art surely reveals how the invisible thread of Indian art flowers in divergent geographic locations.



Maite Delteil | Meeting in the garden | Oil on Canvas | 57" x 45" | 2010



Maite Delteil | The Secret Night | Oil on Canvas | 22" x 18" | 2015

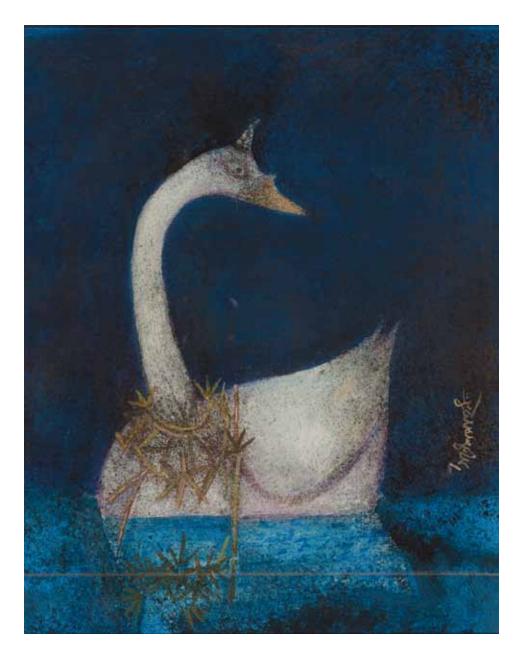


Maite Delteil | The Full Moon | Oil on Canvas | 24" x 20" | 2015

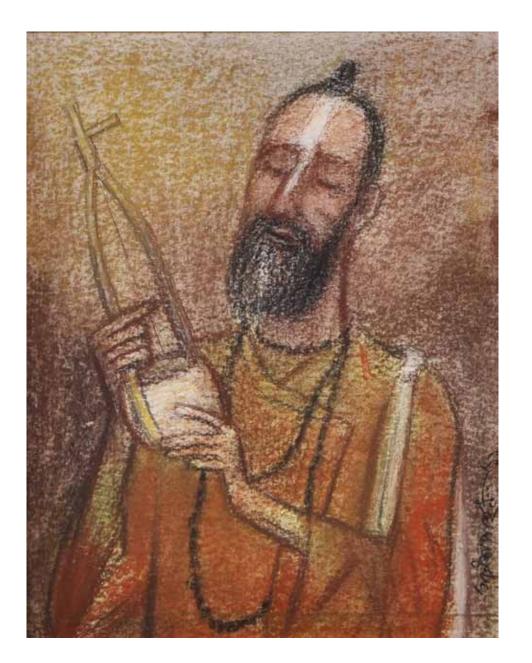


**Ganesh Pyne** 1945 - 2013

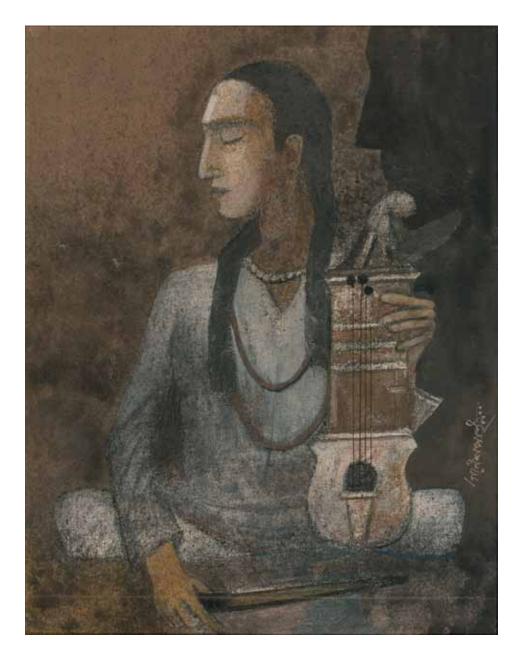
B orn in Calcutta, Pyne grew up on stories told by his grandmother - folk stories, mythological stories and fairy tales. His 'signature' style is shaped by his own experiences of solitude and alienation that he had lived through and aided by the pain and horror he had witnessed in the city of Kolkata during the sixties of the last century. What surfaced in his art however appear as mysteriously enriched with moods of tenderness and calm serenity, rich with visual depth in which every single stroke appear charged with muted eloquence. Today, he is known as the foremost exponents of the Bengal School of art.



Ganesh Pyne | The Swan | Tempera on Canvas | 17.25" x 13.5" | 1980

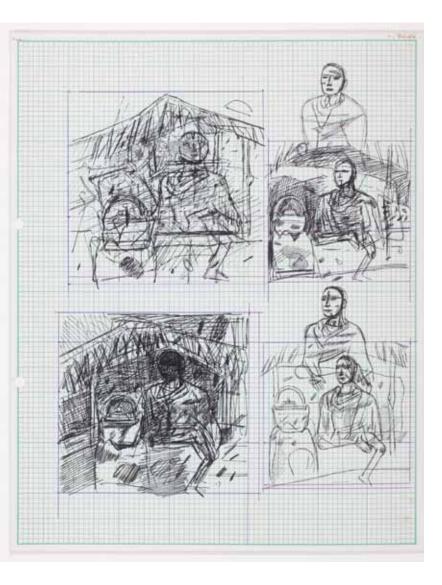


Ganesh Pyne | Baul | Conte | 9.4" x 7.4" | 2011

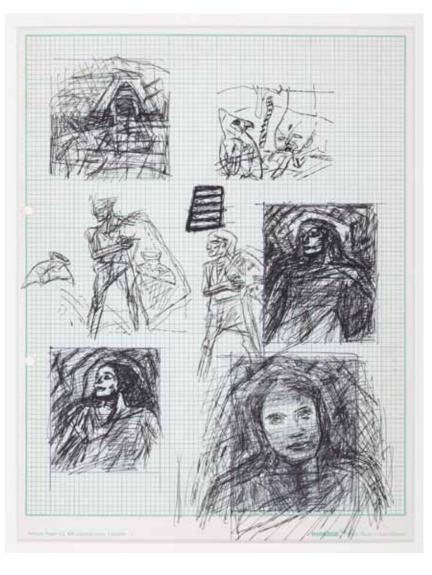


Ganesh Pyne | The Musician | Tempera on Canvas | 17.25" x 13.5" | 1982



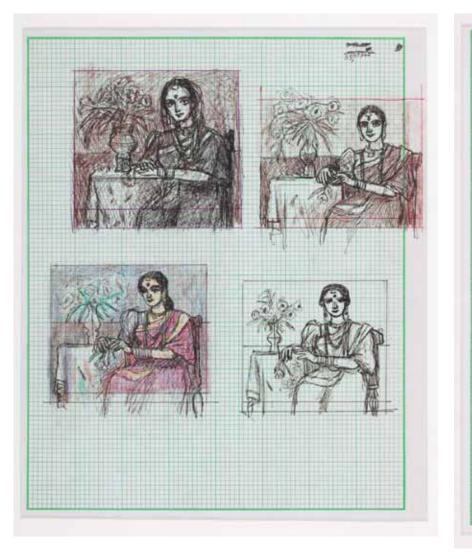




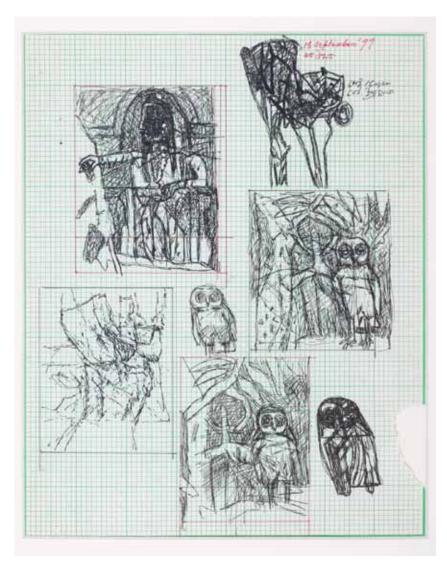


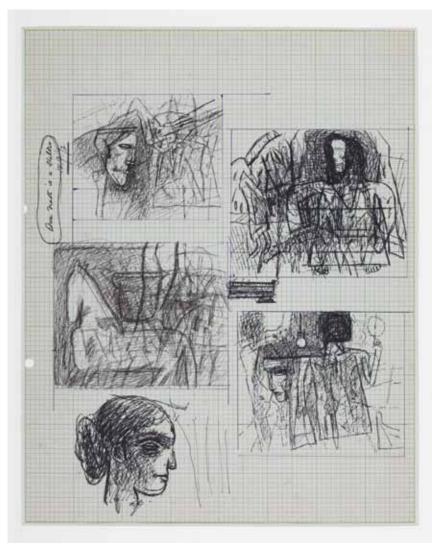
Ganesh Pyne | Untitled | Pen & Ink on Paper | 11.1" x 8.10"











Ganesh Pyne | Untitled | Pen & Ink on Paper | 11.7" x 8.11"



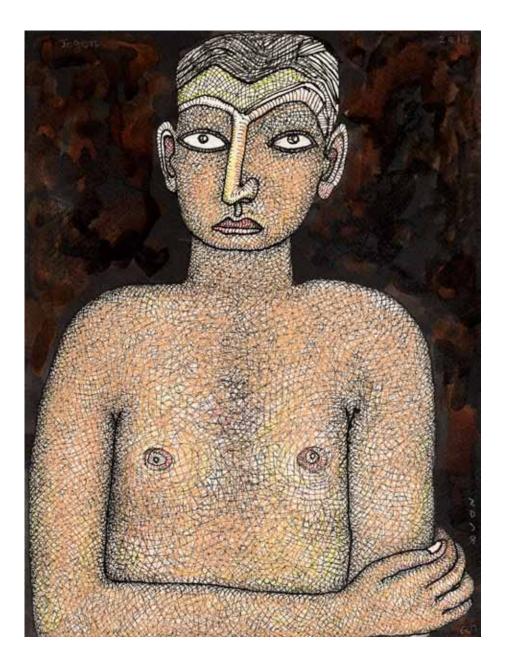


## Jogen Chowdhury b. 1939

B orn in neighbouring Bangladesh, he had to undergo the life of a refugee during the difficult and troubled days of Partition of Bengal and has risen since then to the undeniably top echelon of art in India today. His inimitable style in portraying human figures easily coveys the intended message of spineless immorality and pervasive dishonesty in public life. His idiosyncratic style also retains its umbilical link to the art of the past in which lyrical linearity predominates.



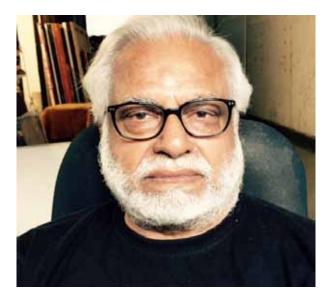
Jogen Chowdhury | Bakasur - IV (D) | Pen & Ink, Coloured Pen & Pencil on Paper | 13.7" x 16.1" | 2014



Jogen Chowdhury | Young Boy | Pen & Ink, Coloured Pencil and Oil Pastel on Paper | 12" x 9" | 2014



Jogen Chowdhury | Woman with Silver Necklace | Pen & Ink with Mixed Media on Paper | 12.7" x 12.8" | 2014



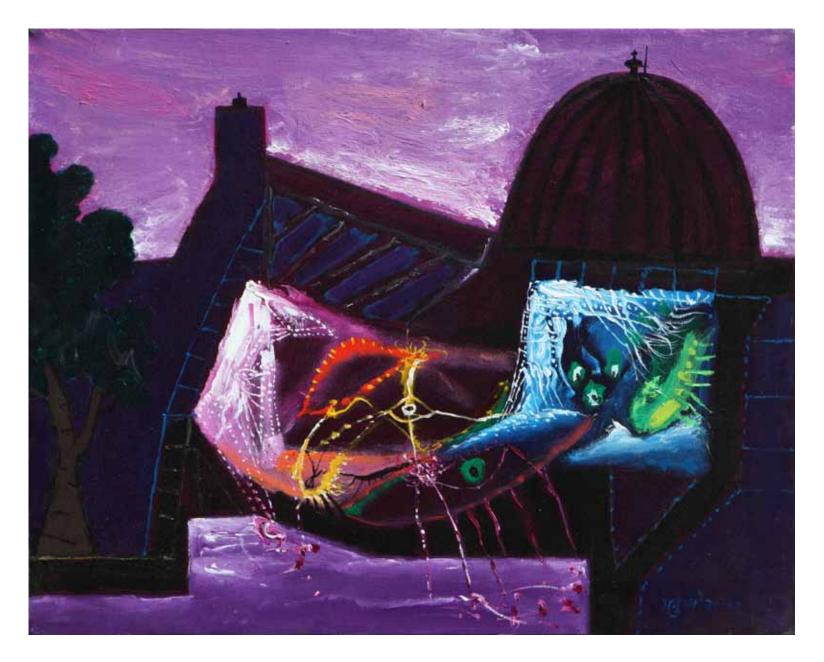
# Manu Parekh

b. 1939

A nu has multiple roots and deftly managed to implant them in locations poles apart, in Gujarat where he was born and initially grew up and in Bombay where he learnt his art to start with. It was Kolkata and Santiniketan, however, when nature and its artistic manipulation got revealed to him in the art of Rabindranath and Ramkinkar and the effect, more on a perceptual level, stayed with him ever since. His roots in European modernism also led him to re-discover the existing co-relation of inherent sexuality in organic forms while the holy city of Banaras took his art to yet another level, towards unity in contradicting diversity.



Manu Parekh | Flowers from heaven - 27 | Acrylic on canvas | 36" x 36" | 2015



Manu Parekh | Banaras Landscape 1 | Oil on Canvas | 24" x 30" | 2014



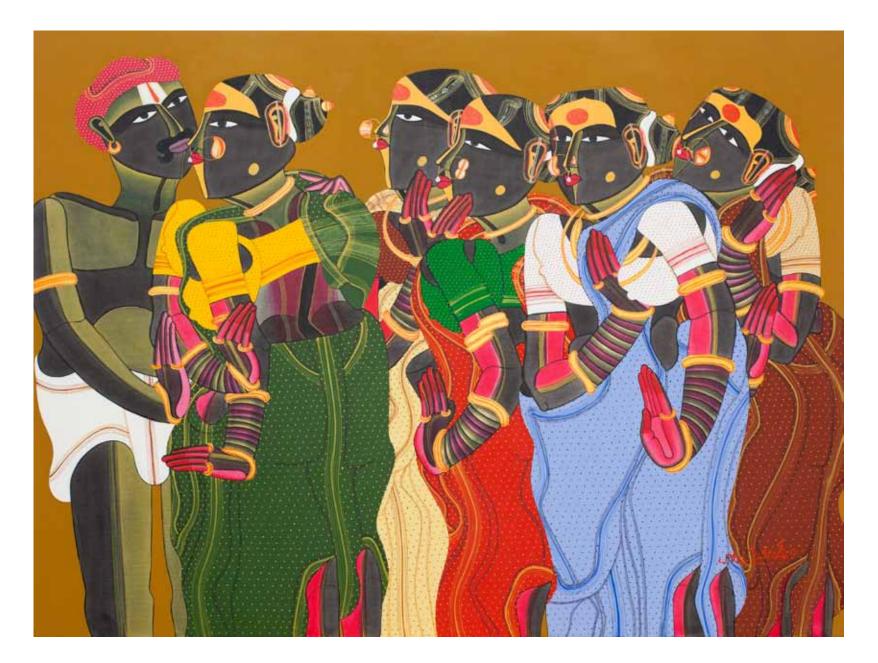
Manu Parekh | Banaras Landscape 2 | Oil on Canvas | 24" x 24" | 2015



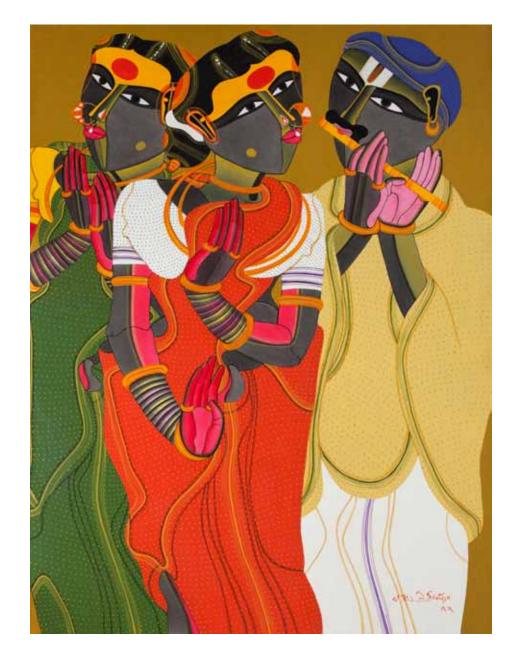
# **Thota Vaikuntam** b 1942

hota Vaikuntam hails from Andhra Pradesh, in South India, since childhood he was obsessed, and fascinated, by the male artists who used to impersonate female characters in the travelling theatre groups that performed in his village. He drew inspiration from their loud make-up and admits finding the women of his village very sensuous and that he only attempts to capture their vibrancy. Vaikuntam's art has a sense of strength to it, a power that emanates from the paint or charcoal that he applies to the surface, from his controlled lines, and from the fine strokes that he executes. He has elevated art of his generation to newer heights.





Thota Vaikuntam | Untitled | Acrylic on Canvas | 36" x 48" | 2010



Thota Vaikuntam | Untitled | Acrylic on Canvas | 48" x 36" | 2015



#### Senaka Senanayake b. 1951

Senaration of our past for future. His intimate knowledge of the vanishing rain-forest on his own backyard has led him to paint a series of personal dreamscape that resonate with a truly global view on the issue of environmental concern. His art, armed with an idiosyncratic and sophisticated technique, easily reflects a very old heritage in Western Art and effortlessly mixes the same with the Eastern miniaturist's traditional emphasis on details.



Senaka Senanayake | Prosaic Bloom | Oil on Canvas | 60" x 60" | 2015



Senaka Senanayake | Colours That Fly | Oil on Canvas | 48" x 36" | 2015



Senaka Senanayake | Dragonflies | Oil on Canvas | 36" x 36" | 2015



#### Vasundhara Tewari Broota b. 1955

Asundhara's art is a classic example of narration of complex intellectual issues mirrored in feminine sensibilities yet expressed with visual poetry. She, in her recent works, has developed a unique pictorial metaphor that is neither real nor surreal but easily engages the two extremes without loading her art with excess, intellectual, baggage. Born in Kolkata, educated in Delhi and exhibited worldwide, she has positioned herself as an inseparable link in the continuity of art in India today with her inspiring interpretation of Indian womanhood, often painted in their natural skin, while remaining engrossed in their search for independent individuality.



Vasundhara Tewari Broota | Multiple Waves - Mind Body Water | Acrylic and Oil on Canvas | 48" x 72" | 2015



Vasundhara Tewari Broota | Eye of the tiger | Oil on Canvas | 48" x 48" | 2012

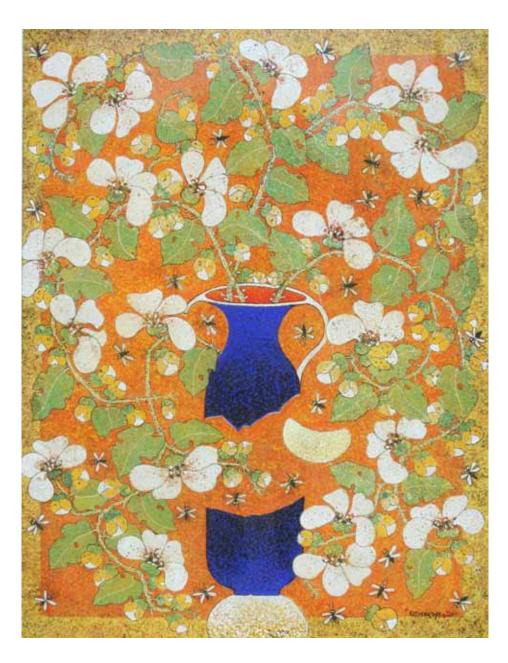


Vasundhara Tewari Broota | Goggles Golguppa and She | Acrylic and Oil on Canvas | 48" x 72" | 2015



**Manoj Dutta** b. 1956

Manoj Dutta is one of those who have risen to the top bracket in Indian Contemporary Art without receiving any formal training in any school of art. His art, as a result, reflects an unadulterated version of intensity felt towards nature and related natural elements that are seldom painted by his contemporaries. His pictorial idiom, in addition to complementing his intense love for nature, also conveys a communicable message of intimacy with love for one and all. Exhibited widely in India and abroad, his art positions itself as an important milestone in the long passage of art in India today.



Manoj Dutta | Spring | Tempera on Board | 39.3" x 29.5"



Manoj Dutta | Prakriti | Tempera on Board | 39.3" x 29.5"



Manoj Dutta | Untitled | Tempera | 30" x 30"



## Kishor Shinde b. 1958

Shinde's canvases are his playground in which one could trace his spiritual aspirations, intensity of personal emotions and feelings that are essentially abstract, both conceptually and even when translated pictorially. While standing before a virgin space of a canvas, his inner eye seems to open up and responds by imagining complimentary shapes, abstract in shape yet communicable to all. Comparatively young and deeply spiritual, Shinde and his art demands its forceful entry into the best of Indian contemporary art by its own right.



Kishor Shinde | Untitled | Powder coated Metal Work | 22" x 72"



Kishor Shinde | Untitled | Acrylic on Canvas | 36" x 36" | 2013



Kishor Shinde | Untitled | Oil on Canvas | 48" x 48" | 2015



## *Jayasri Burman* b. 1960

A rmed with the sensitive empathy that typifies success in female artists in all ages, and more so in modern times, Jayasri has experimented with various art forms before settling down with her preferred idiom that openly proclaims her admiration to Indian folk tradition in visual art. Her bronzes, in recent years, bear her inimitable style and together, with her paintings and drawings, convey her concern for Indian womanhood poised at the cross-road of tradition and modernity. Her art, in perfect sync, easily combines complex imagery with charmingly simplified visual metaphor.



Jayasri Burman | Buddha | Watercolour, Pen & Ink on Paper | 48" x 48" | 2015



Jayasri Burman | Sankha Lata | Watercolour Pen and Ink on Paper | 36" x 36" | 2014



Jayasri Burman | Eshanputra (Son of Lord Shiva) | Watercolour Pen and Ink on Paper | 36" x 18" | 2013



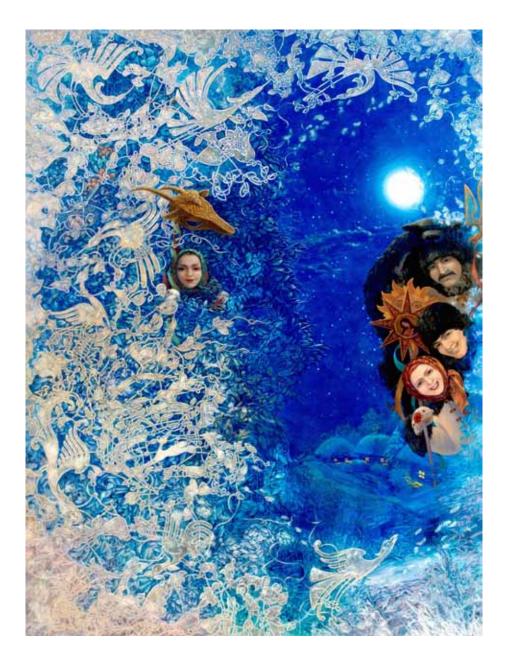
## Svitlana Osobik

b. 1961

Svitlana hails from Poltava, a city in central Ukraine, and is a graduate of the prestigious Lviv Academy of Arts and Crafts. Her works are a natural fusion of genres. The resplendent energy and life force, the use of narrative line, decorativeness and unmatched thoroughness originate from folk art. Her paintings sometimes appear as reminiscences of the past, sometimes as visual scenes of human subconscious and mystical fantasies. They represent unique synthesis of mythology, religion and anthropology. The viewer has an opportunity to meet famous characters of Ukrainian literature and mythology, to explore the fabulous trails and roots of the culture and to penetrate the depths of the unconscious.



Svitlana Osobik | Inside Out | Oil on Canvas | 70.8" x 47.2" | 2006-2007



Svitlana Osobik | Christmas Night | Oil on Canvas | 62.9" x 47.2" | 2009-2012



Svitlana Osobik | Eye of the Verdict | Oil on Canvas | 27.5" x 37.4" | 2011



## **Neeraj Goswami** b. 1964

N eeraj'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. His palette, and simplified rendering of meditative humans, together portrays a unique tradition in Indian art in which spiritual feeling predominates. Tradition and modernity of painterly style co-exists in his art that carefully conceals his complex method of applying paint and drawing lines, leaving only a surface of infinite bliss.



Neeraj Goswami | Gift | Oil on Canvas | 48" x 36" | 2015



Neeraj Goswami | Rise (mute reverberations) | Oil on Canvas | 70" x 47" | 2013



Neeraj Goswami | Enchanted shunya (Play) | Oil on Canvas | 60" x 60" | 2013



## **Paresh Maity** b. 1965

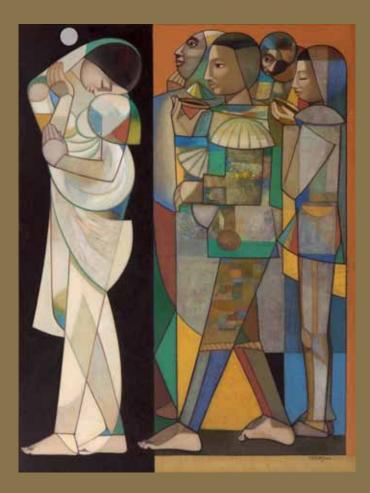
Ver the last two decades and perhaps even more, art of Paresh Maity remains singularly devoted to exploit the beauty of lines, fluid and rigid together, that easily reveals the continuity of lyrical quality of line in Indian art of the past era. His mastery over colour has added the right balance to his art which visibly pulsates with the love and warmth of the land and life he witnessed in the desert flats of Rajasthan. Exhibited and awarded almost all over the world, Paresh has established himself in the world of art today with solid foundation and mesmerising skill.





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