

SANCHIT ART

GENESIS

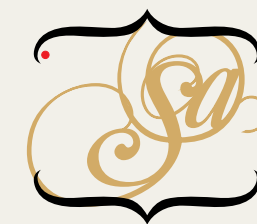
NANDAN PURKAYASTHA



GENESIS

NANDAN PURKAYASTHA

Uma Nair
Curator & Author



SANCHIT ART

All works are for sale, prices upon request

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About Sanchit Art

Sanchit Art offers a panoramic review of modern & contemporary Indian art, focusing on providing a holistic experience of art from an intellectual and spiritual perspective.

Focusing on bridging the gap between Indian artists and art lovers across the world, our exhibition program concentrates on the annual events we organize at Singapore, Hong Kong, Dubai, and London, and also participating in major art fairs worldwide.

Our curatorial focus has continuously been to sustain the essential thread of the cultural foundation of the past while nurturing the dynamics of the contemporary and provide a broader appreciation for the artists linked in this remarkable representation of Indian art.

We represent India's leading masters and promising younger artist's such as Dipak Banerjee, Ganesh Pyne, GR Santosh, Jayasri Burman, Jogen Chowdhury, K Laxma Goud, Lalu Prasad Shaw, Manoj Dutta, MF Husain, Neeraj Goswami, Paresh Maity, Ram Kumar, Satish Gujral, Thota Vaikuntam, Satish Gupta, Nandan Purkayastha and Deveshi Goswami.



NANDAN PURKAYASTHA

Born in Assam, Nandan graduated from the NIFT, Kolkata but has over the years become an artist of rare depth and measure.

His early inspirations belong both to ancient Indian mythology as well as old Western cowboy classics. His love for drawings creates a matrix of monochrome drawings and paintings, created from intricately detailed pen and ink imagery on paper. His imagery runs through the tapestry of time. Though faceless - his sculptural ensembles and people are often intermingled with interrelated elements composed in contoured spiral patterns, bringing esoteric and elegant imagery to life.

Nandan is a contemporary modernist, whose work is firmly placed in today's era but harks back to yesteryear too. His fables belong to both fantasy as well as memory, his characters that inhabit the landscape of his paintings eked from folk dances that he was privy to as a child while growing up in Assam.

The tenor of multiple textures that he loves to weave patiently around these creatures are a testimony to his background in design. This is also evident in the drapery and hairstyle of figures and contours of birds and beasts in his work. He is also a sculptor and excels in caricatures.

He has featured in a series of successful, solo and group exhibitions in India as well as overseas. His first solo exhibition was in Kolkata, 2010 followed by exhibitions in Delhi and Mumbai with various leading galleries such as Art Musings.

His solo exhibition with Gallerie Ganesha at the India Art Fair was well received in 2016. His sculptures and paintings are displayed in Mondo Art Gallery in Madrid, Spain. His work has featured in many important publications like The Hindu, Delhi Times, and The Week.





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“Beauty is no quality in things themselves. It exists merely in the mind which contemplates them; and each mind perceives a different beauty. One person may even perceive deformity, where another is sensible of beauty; and every individual ought to acquiesce in his own sentiment, without pretending to regulate those of others.”

- David Hume, Of the Standard of Taste, 1757

Sculptural Stories

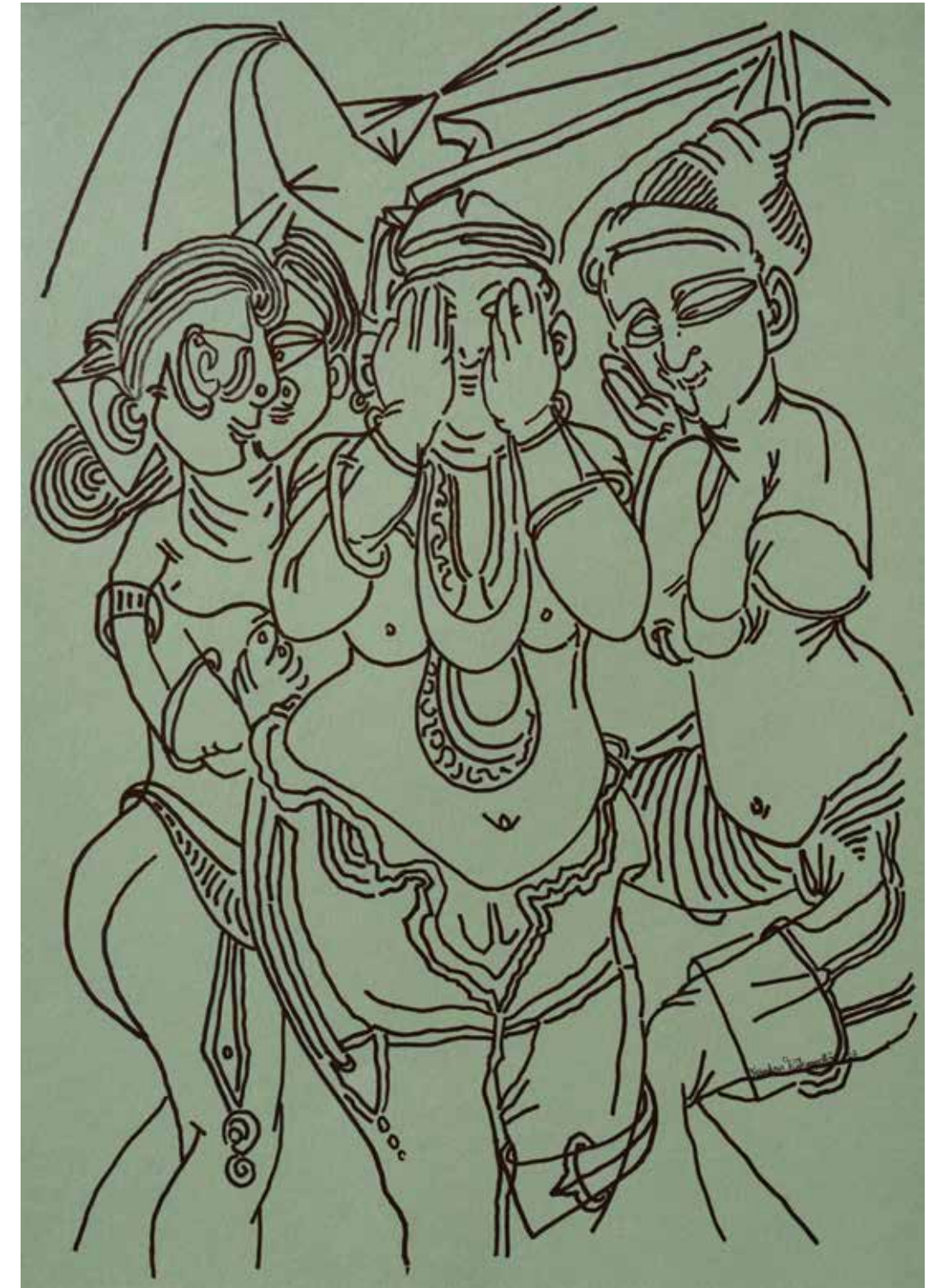
“My love for temple sculptures has taken me to various places. From the temples in Assam I have seen during my childhood to temples visited in later years – each memory is etched in eternal imagery. While the Kamakhya was one of the most cherished in early years, it was also the design dynamics of Durga Puja pandals and their process from beginning to finish, that gave me a love for shapes and modelling. I learned that drawings must have sculptural finesse. However, on my later travels I was most fascinated with the temples in Indonesia as well as Thailand. Studying temple architecture and sculptural traditions are important for understanding the culture

of our ancestors. This trajectory of 20 years has recreated itself as a matrix of an unconscious universe.

Sculptures for me have universal outstanding value. In Indonesia I saw stone temples of various shapes and sizes that were either in a complete and preserved condition or have been retained as ruins. The sites I saw included all elements necessary to express its exceptional significance and were well maintained. Those sculptural images came back into my drawings. The beauty of the human figure became my mainstay. It comes naturally to me when I sit with sketch books.”

- Nandan Purkayastha to Uma Nair

Untitled - I
(Sculptural Stories)
Marker on paper
16.5" x 11.5"
2023



Translating the sculptural line

Nandan Purkayastha's work is rooted in unusual combinations of the history of the sculptural traditions of Indian as well as South Asian arts, ancient Indian history, and cultural urban trends. This new corpus, continues figurative forms in multiple series, in mellifluous forms of human hybrid and whole are embodied on both canvases as well as drawings as a continuing investigation into the nature of forms and abstraction. Design trends in contemporary character and drawings come together to create a mosaic of moods, these works say that design in cultural fabric of mediums and modes is all around us, it has been a constant in the development of mankind since the earliest of days, forms adapted, modified, reimagined and improved in all aspects of the world we inhabit.

Nandan's interest in drawing began at an early age; he

initially studied design, before devoting himself entirely to contemporary art, to making paintings with an experimental approach to the possibilities of figurative language. The artist's supple and precise gestures conjure up sensual/sacred compositions featuring a succession of faces and forms and mythic nuances in full flow.

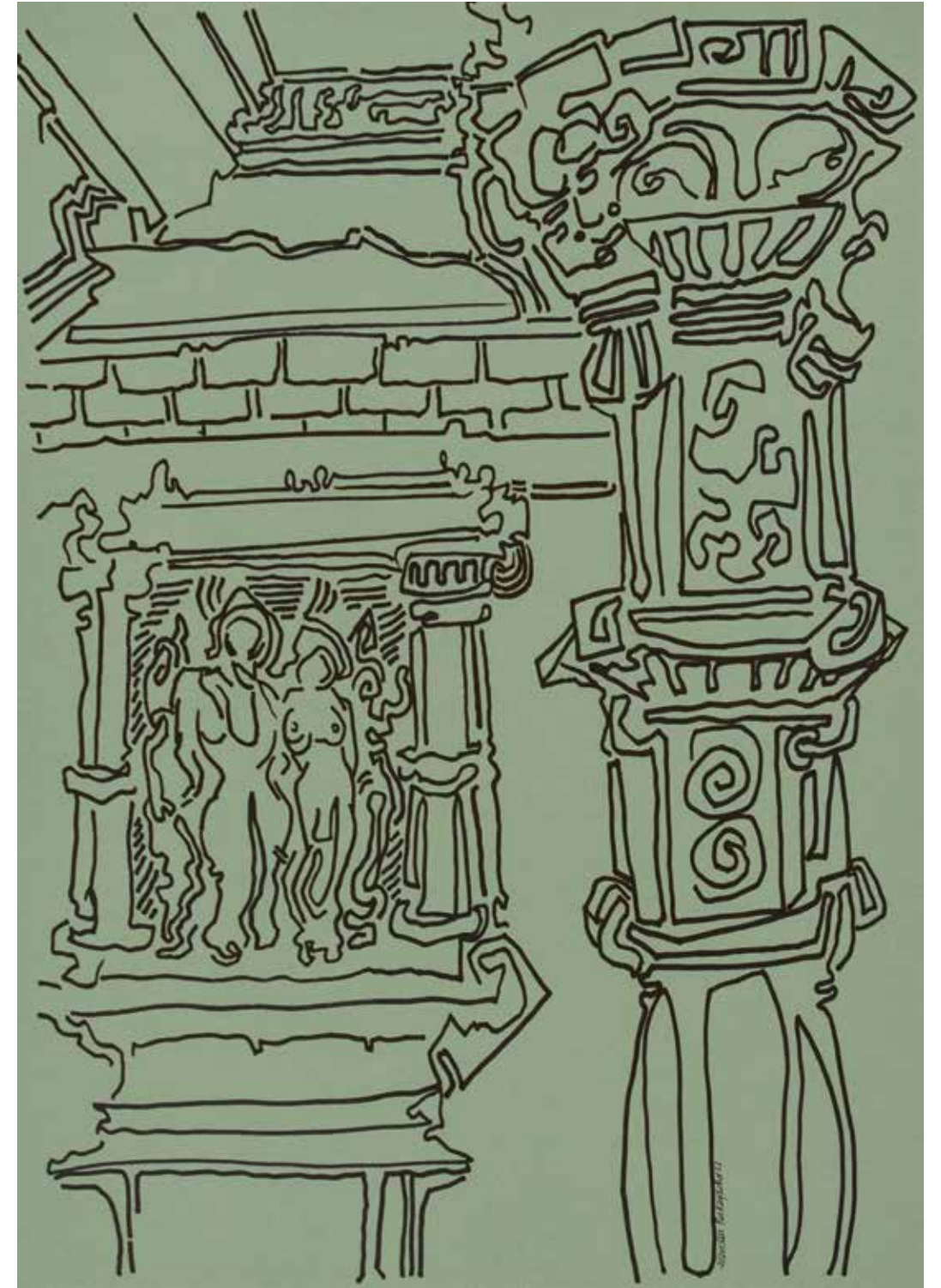
Formed in the articulations of infinite forays of both form and function, the graphic characters depicted become purely potent visual images that weave into all kinds of dialogues. Amongst the frames and fragments forms and faces crisscross, sometimes merge into plumes and fractions, evaporate then collide, generating into bursts of pictorial energy. Nandan plays with the patterns of paradoxes. There is a tensile dispersion that keeps each composition whether drawing or robust fusion of characters in perfect balance.

Untitled - II
(Sculptural Stories)
Marker on paper
16.5" x 11.5"
2023





Untitled - III
[Sculptural Stories]
Marker on paper
16.5" x 11.5"
2023



Untitled - IV
[Sculptural Stories]
Marker on paper
16.5" x 11.5"
2023



Nandan succeeds in reproducing the subtleties of language in the expressiveness of his contours that stimulate both intonations, plural perspectives and body movements that constitute the very essence of human expression in his sensibility.

Untitled - V
(Sculptural Stories)
Marker on paper
16.5" x 11.5"
2023



Untitled - VI
(Sculptural Stories)
Marker on paper
16.5" x 11.5"
2023



Untitled - VII
[Sculptural Stories]
Marker on paper
16.5" x 11.5"
2023



Untitled - VIII
[Sculptural Stories]
Marker on paper
16.5" x 11.5"
2023

Monochromes

“My drawings are a means of capturing my ideas for my life as an artist, perhaps a way of sorting out ideas and developing them as I look at the pages of everyday living.

Drawing and sketching ideas has been important for me all these years, I carry a small sketch book with me everywhere; it helps me as an artist to develop and understand what I want to create directly on to the pages. It begins with the process of what I want to make, how best to make the ideas in my head, and the finality of the images springs forth with spontaneity. I have learned in my practice that my plans are a summation of my artistic ideas that evolve as I keep creating.”

- Nandan Purkayastha to Uma Nair

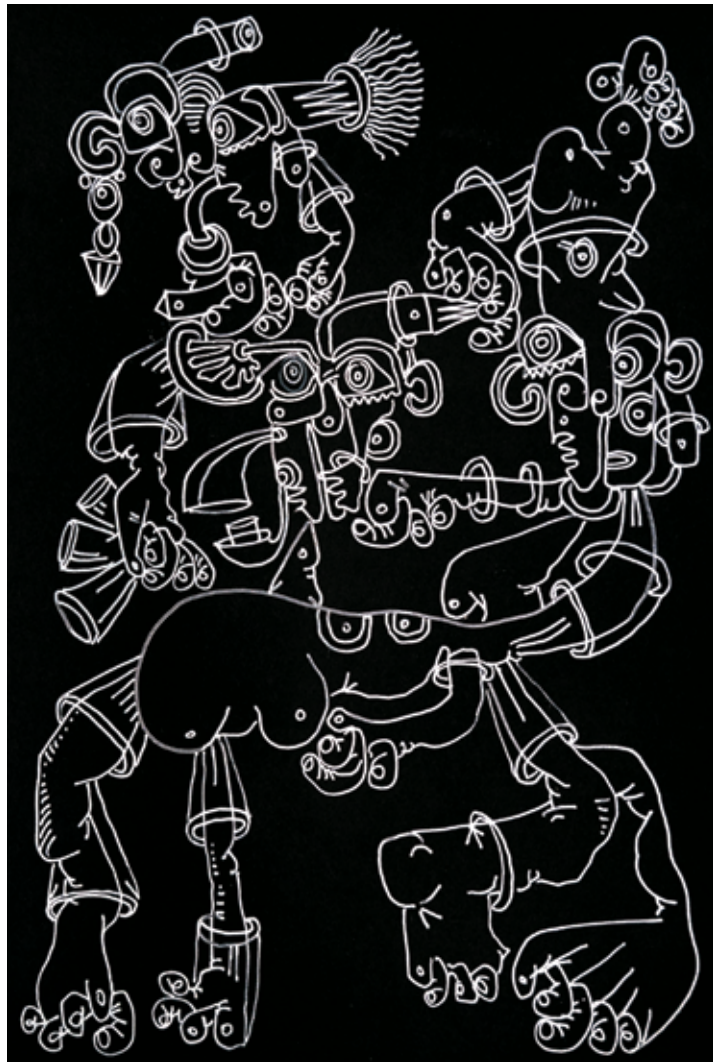
Nandan Purkayastha’s drawings celebrate the simple tenets of living. Set against ebony background, his people come in whole or fragmented forms, with lithe lean lines that are animated and full of quixotic and quaint characters that spring out from his fields of fantasia. The conversation and corollaries between his smiling and animated images are born within the genesis of his sketches of the evolving scenes that are filled in a series of sketchbooks by the artist. These books turn into his avant-garde series.



Untitled - I
(Monochromes)
Pen on Paper
8" x 5.5"
2023



Untitled - II
(Monochromes)
Pen on Paper
8" x 5.5"
2023



Untitled - III
(Monochromes)
Pen on Paper
8" x 5.5"
2023



Untitled - IV
(Monochromes)
Pen on Paper
8" x 5.5"
2023



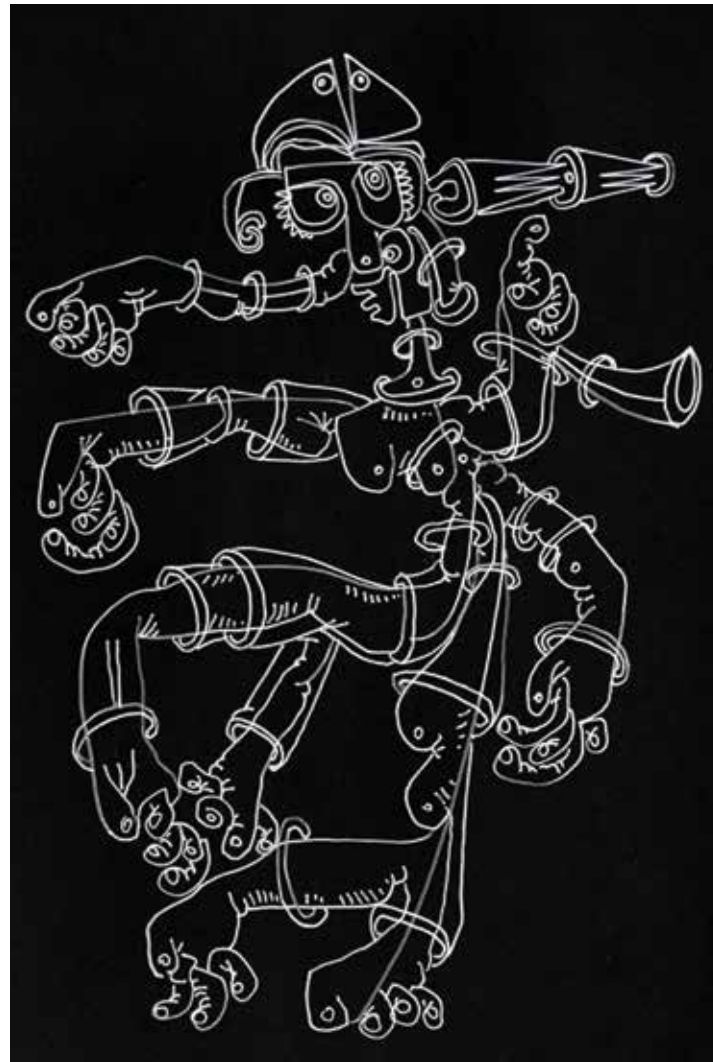
Untitled - V
(Monochromes)
Pen on Paper
8" x 5.5"
2023



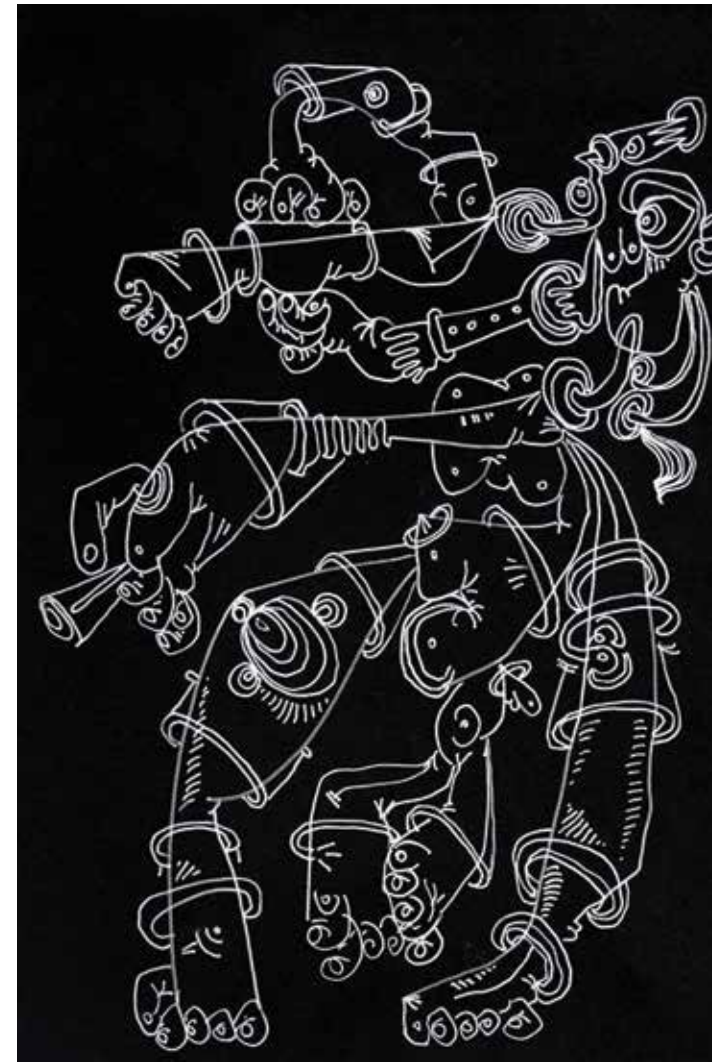
Untitled - VI
(Monochromes)
Pen on Paper
8" x 5.5"
2023



Untitled - VII
(Monochromes)
Pen on Paper
8" x 5.5"
2023



Untitled - VIII
(Monochromes)
Pen on Paper
8" x 5.5"
2023



Untitled - IX
(Monochromes)
Pen on Paper
8" x 5.5"
2023



Untitled - X
(Monochromes)
Pen on Paper
8" x 5.5"
2023



Untitled - XI
(Monochromes)
Pen on Paper
8" x 5.5"
2023



Untitled - XII
(Monochromes)
Pen on Paper
8" x 5.5"
2023



Untitled - XIII
(Monochromes)
Pen on Paper
8" x 5.5"
2023



Untitled - XIV
(Monochromes)
Pen on Paper
8" x 5.5"
2023

Fervent Forms



Untitled - I
(Fervent Forms)
Pen & Ink, Marker on Paper
7.5" x 7"
2023



Untitled - II
(Fervent Forms)
Pen & Ink, Marker on Paper
7.5" x 7"
2023

The observer's eye moves between the fervent forms, looking for ways to discover the plethora of themes that suit back and forth through time past and time present. The narrative of both presence and absence function as indicators, facilitating the imaginative universe of the exhibited works. Some refer to a trip to Khajuraho with ancient Indian sculptures floating in the cosmic corridors of epic poetry.

Each composition for him is singular in its ability to embody both history and absurdity, presence and absence, constraints and infinite possibilities. Nandan's paintings slip in and out of legibility, generating time and again persistent enigmas in the pictorial planes of faces from his own archive. According to the artist, this is one of the key points of painting, which tends to "propose and present visual diaries that blend into a mapping of precision and the inevitable accidents of both drawing as well as painting."



Untitled - III
(Fervent Forms)
Pen & Ink, Marker on Paper
7.5" x 7"
2023



Untitled - IV
(Fervent Forms)
Pen & Ink, Marker on Paper
7.5" x 7"
2023



Untitled - V
(Fervent Forms)
Pen & Ink, Marker on Paper
7.5" x 7"
2023



Untitled - VI
(Fervent Forms)
Pen & Ink, Marker on Paper
7.5" x 7"
2023



Untitled - VII
(Fervent Forms)
Pen & Ink, Marker on Paper
7.5" x 7"
2023



Untitled - VIII
(Fervent Forms)
Pen & Ink, Marker on Paper
7.5" x 7"
2023



Untitled - IX
(Fervent Forms)
Pen & Ink, Marker on Paper
7.5" x 7"
2023

Translating experience and expression

Nandan's work reminds us that drawing is still alive and vibrant, and that this is true even in the 21st century. As the artist says, "For me drawing is more than a living art form. It is a way of mining, different parts of my own consciousness, and translating my experience directly on the sheets of paper as well as on canvas. There is something about the touch on the medium that exhibits or exemplifies a set of feelings or ideas in that moment of alchemy for me. In today's increasingly fast-paced world, I believe an artist explores and transforms into contemporary reality, with his or her own beliefs of the renewal as well as the present."



Untitled - X
(Fervent Forms)
Pen & Ink, Marker on Paper
12" x 9.5"
2023



Untitled - XI
(Fervent Forms)
Pen & Ink, Marker on Paper
12" x 9.5"
2023



Untitled - XII
(Fervent Forms)
Pen & Ink, Marker on Paper
12" x 9.5"
2023



Untitled - XIII
(Fervent Forms)
Pen & Ink, Marker on Paper
12" x 9.5"
2023



Untitled - XIV
(Fervent Forms)
Pen & Ink, Marker on Paper
12" x 9.5"
2023



Untitled - XV
(Fervent Forms)
Pen & Ink, Marker on Paper
12" x 9.5"
2023



Untitled - XVI
(Fervent Forms)
Pen & Ink, Marker on Paper
12" x 9.5"
2023



Untitled - XVII
(Fervent Forms)
Pen & Ink, Marker on Paper
12" x 9.5"
2023



Untitled - XVIII
(Fervent Forms)
Pen & Ink, Marker on Paper
12" x 9.5"
2023



Untitled - XIX
(Fervent Forms)
Pen & Ink, Marker on Paper
12" x 9.5"
2023



Untitled - XX
(Fervent Forms)
Pen & Ink, Marker on Paper
12" x 9.5"
2023



Untitled - XXI
(Fervent Forms)
Pen & Ink, Marker on Paper
12" x 9.5"
2023



Untitled - XXII
(Fervent Forms)
Pen & Ink, Marker on Paper
12" x 9.5"
2023



Untitled - XXIII
(Fervent Forms)
Pen & Ink, Marker on Paper
12" x 9.5"
2023



Untitled - XXIV
(Fervent Forms)
Pen & Ink, Marker on Paper
12" x 9.5"
2023

Genesis invites us to enter the complexity of Nandan's world and to lose ourselves in an imaginary realm of the pensive, the playfully powerful notes of a sea of characters in which the prosaic and the poetic both flit and float into a seamless theatre of the past and the present.



Ocean of Time

Love for Alphabets

“My drawings are born of my love for the alphabets in my mother tongue Bengali,” he says. “The curly notations in the script have always been my catalyst for creation. From those curly alphabets with which I made so many errors are born my humans who don’t look like humans they have many attributes and many limbs and many accentuated embellishments that come through my love for mythic subjects and tales of ancient Indian history and folklore. You could say that while my drawings look modern they are born of the roots of tradition.”

- Nandan Purkayastha to Uma Nair

A series of five drawings replete with curves, curls and textures look like hybrid humans woven into harmonious still life scenes, although the expression on their fragmented faces stands out. According to its compactness and cohesive qualities Nandan is adept at sprinkling his drawings with references to all kinds of great and small events – past and present debacles on different scales right down to the smallest of humble realities. The citation of particular moments and their rearrangement in scenarios

could be seen as an attempt by the artist to represent the realities of modern cities through a new medium of drawings in lithe long and small lines. However, the use of ‘real’ fragments of drawings all added and then extended give us the language of modernist moorings and lead us to images that are ‘not only to be conceptual recreations of reality but also to be in themselves additions to that reality’ Nandan gives us images of alternate realities offered by the medium of drawings.

Contours for him are primary they give us the idea that different textures can enter into a composition to become the reality in the painting that competes with the reality in nature. Nothing is excess each curve, each loop has its place, and every element enters a universe for which it was made and where it retains, in a measure, its strangeness and beauty. And this strangeness was what he wants to make people think about because we are quite aware that the world has many strange and fascinating attributes. The limbs in particular have their own facets of both finish and finesse.



Untitled - I
(Ocean of Time)
Marker on paper
12.5" x 9.5"
2023



Untitled - II
(Ocean of Time)
Marker on paper
12.5" x 9.5"
2023



Untitled - III
(Ocean of Time)
Marker on paper
12.5" x 9.5"
2023

Five monumental canvases come together to create 'Ocean of Time,' a magical medley of quaint characters and singular animals who are inspirational for their animated qualities of wide-eyed innocence and charismatic corollaries woven into their very nature of existence. The fish, the tiger, the horse, the elephant and the camel all become the focus as he centres their place in the cosmic consciousness and man and nature.

Drawing with an oil stick Nandan adds fantastical, malevolent characters, born of his own fiction, part mythic, part faun, to create an insignia of patterns and poise. Equally novel are his depictions that have subtle appropriations of a magical approach to form, reflecting the subject matter of the paintings. In some, the figures of the men and women are reduced to the most elementary and radically simplified contours. In other examples, he takes the opposite approach, filling the drawing's surface from edge to edge with linear patterns and repetitions of form: object, dress and the human figures come together to create a corollary of conversations.

From looped lips and expressive eyes, to carelessly

tousled hair, the woven and carved designs, and especially distinctive decorative idioms whirling across the five canvasses in minimalist moorings create an emphasis on graphic elements (coupled in the present paintings with a highly restricted palette of lithe strokes) to create a nearly realistic all over interweave of figure and ground, accentuating the planar character of the pictorial space. Even the individuals themselves here are transformed into two-dimensional entities, the light coming through the white spaces on their bodies and offsetting them like patterns again within the spaces of neutral exteriors.

In the echoing of the natural we see a linking of the figures with their environment in a clever visual rhyme; the repetition of circular and curvilinear forms, moreover, lends the compositions a dynamism that evokes the restlessness and perpetual motion of people and an entire environment shaped by their sensibilities. More generally, the autonomy of artistic creation, in which such parameters as space, colour, and proportions are governed by a logic inherent only to the picture, corresponds to the sphere of existence, a world far removed from conventions and restraints.

Untitled - IV
(Ocean of Time)
Marker on paper
12.5" x 9.5"
2023



Evolution and Exploration

These are used to chart the lexicon of both his design dynamics as well as exploration of new ideas. Nandan takes us back to the Old Masters such as Leonardo Da Vinci, Salvador Dali, sculptor Henry Moore, Pablo Picasso and many others for whom their sketch books and preparatory works often became recognised works of art in themselves.

These drawings in monochrome explore the origin of his own works and give us an insight into the artistic process. Sometimes, they may even tell the stories of works that never made it from the pages of his sketchbook into reality.

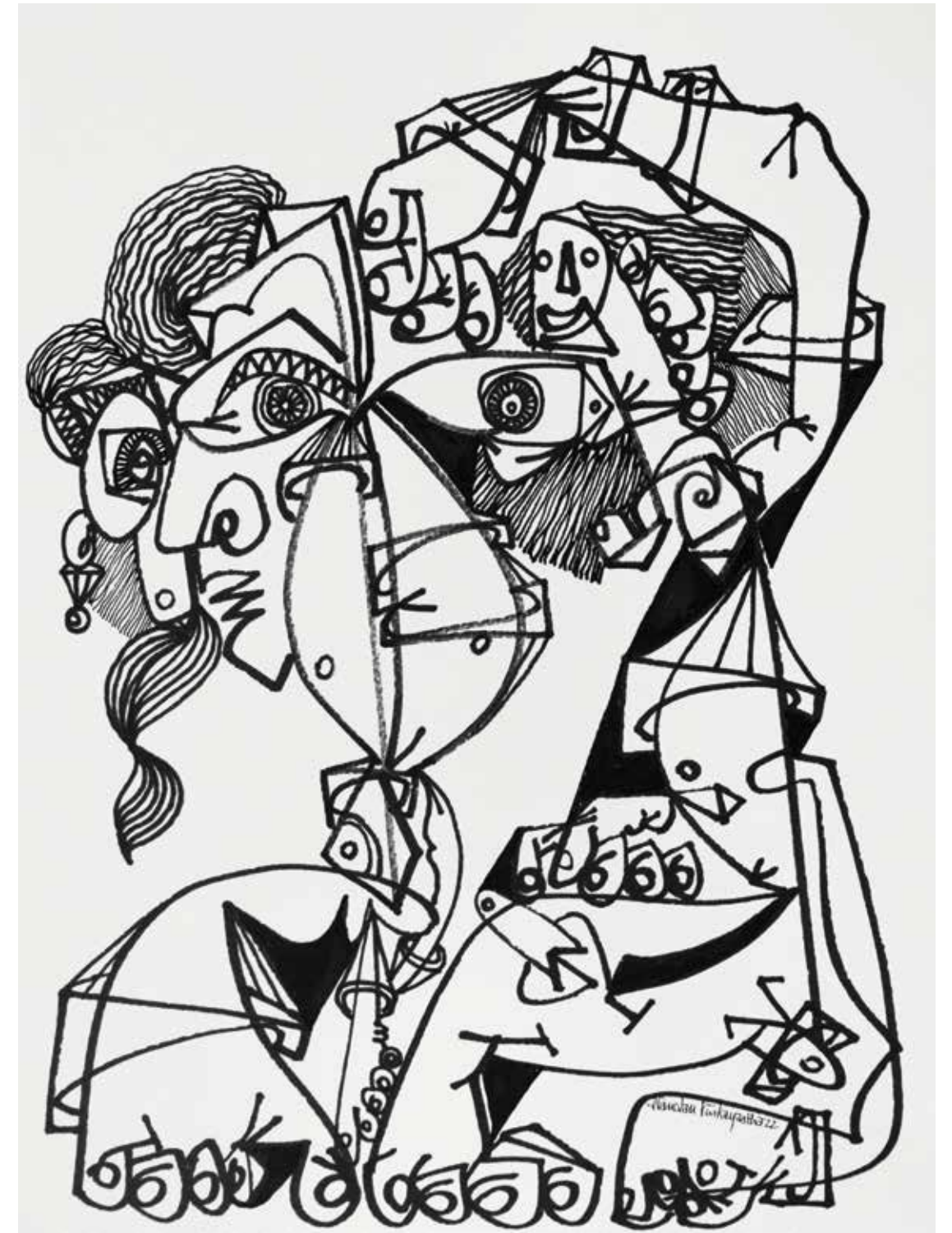
Nandan says there is no amount of experience or knowledge that is a substitute for planning and developing an idea before creating it. Direct drawings allow the artist to get an idea onto paper, explore how it might look in different materials, poses, shapes, sizes or any number of variations. This spontaneous documentation produced whilst drawing ideas and designs helps create new ideas and helps retrospectively, the artist, to determine how larger drawings build into the development of his summation of works.

Drawing sculptural forms with rounded voluptuous

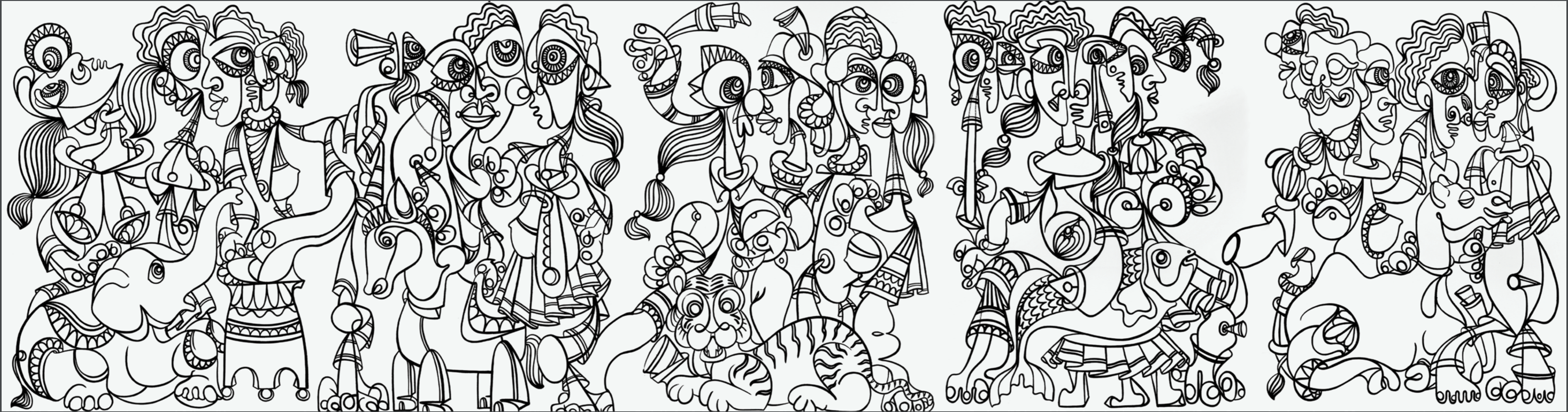
contours and creating and keeping sketchbooks whilst working is one of the most useful and popular ways to develop ideas and help produce art for Nandan.

These drawings done over many days, hours and months are valuable items in their own regard, both for an individual's artistic process as well as for us to look back on. It is a process that helps understand the origins of his smaller as well as larger works, the context that the works evolved in and how it may have influenced his later works.

In the context of an evolution, drawings like this or sketchbooks containing pulsating designs can become important and coveted pieces of the body of work. The humans in these takes on kinetic alterations. These humans are sometimes sculptural, sometimes robotic. They remind us as much of Pablo Picasso as well as Max Ernst at times. These works on paper expose the intense draftsmanship behind every creation. Laying long and broken lines and figurative elements on top of one another, the machinations of the artist's brain manifest in this exploration of the human entities as individuals or as a group. The curved edges to the figures round each group into each other, creating varied vignettes within the picture planes.



Untitled - V
(Ocean of Time)
Marker on paper
12.5" x 9.5"
2023





Sepia Series

Along with an impression of wild, untameable nature, the series of drawings in the sepia paintings evoke something of the modern urban landscape, the overlapping, abutting, entities echoing the towering realities of the effervescence of shapes.

Objects dress and playfulness all come into vision in these works. Visual and spontaneous associations become the instinctive imperative. Nandan says, "I take

inspiration from anywhere and everywhere. Picasso, of course, has always been a part of that influence. His works are inspiration for all of us."

For Nandan, Pablo Picasso's work is full of humorous touches and satirical slants, featuring sketches from his everyday life. Nandan takes a vein of caricature too and adds touches that flit between sacred, profane and sensual.



Untitled - I | Sepia | Tea & Coffee wash, Oil Pigment stick on Rice Paper and Coldpress Paper | 44" x 44" | 2023



Untitled - II (Sepia) | Tea & Coffee wash, Oil Pigment stick on Rice Paper and Coldpress Paper | 44" x 44" | 2023



Untitled - III (Sepia) | Tea & Coffee wash, Oil Pigment stick on Rice Paper and Coldpress Paper | 44" x 44" | 2023



Untitled - IV (Sepia) | Tea & Coffee wash, Oil Pigment stick on Rice Paper and Coldpress Paper | 44" x 44" | 2023



Untitled - V (Sepia) | Tea & Coffee wash, Oil Pigment stick on Rice Paper and Coldpress Paper | 44" x 44" | 2023

Crimson Tide

When he creates a series of drawings that have a crimson tint in the backdrop there is at once a reckoning of a dramatic air of reflective indices that anticipate a theatrical as well as thematic rendition of the many scenes that appear.

The layers of vibrant, primary scarlet colour underneath, are just glimpsed through the various whorls and ripples made by the artist's many curled curves. Nandan suggests at once that between his characters are the indices of the layers of life, colour, and joy. These bright crimson hues conjure a distinct sense of mystery behind the always conversant, fecund

company of intriguing characters that fill his and feed his sensibility.

The presence of a bird, elephant, horse in the midst of these towering, impenetrable characters with large lips and bulbous eyes, meanwhile, represents another important link to Nandan's art, with the small animals and birds occupying the role of the lone wanderer, common figures in the Indian narrative tradition, within the scene. All these have always played a significant role in Nandan's life – since childhood, as he himself explained, he had made a clear unconscious connection in his mind between people and birds and horses and elephants.



Untitled - I
(Crimson Tide)
Acrylic, Pigment Oil stick on Paper
44" x 22"
2023



Cradle of Contours

Across three vertical monumental canvases, Nandan creates a rare and celebrated format, as he entwines imagery drawn from the annals of contemporary reality as well as ancient history with a poignant, retrospective view of his own life and art in conversations with time. Laced with strokes of crimson it is the many humans in this universe that is replete with conversations that become corollaries. Fused twin faces, bulbous eyed humans celebrate.



Cradle of Contours (Crimson Tide) | Acrylic, Pigment Oil stick on Paper | 60" x 132" | 2023



The most monumental work in the exhibition *Time and Being* spans 17 ft x 7 ft and becomes a drawing that takes on the mirror image of a mural that has been created like a cinematic continuum.

It unveils like an enveloping, replay of a litany of people who pulse through the flaming fragments of colour, with incalculable beauty, as well as a sea of animation and a sense of liveliness.

Hybrid creatures populate both the artist's extravagant collage like drawings and startling sculptural vignettes, variously merging human and alien and earthling, and female and male into assertive female-leaning beings. An interest in fusing opposites is suggested in the linking of intertwined, beings who seem to live every moment.

Manipulating pen and ink and watercolour paint into pools of colour, Nandan carefully applies to his surfaces imagery sampled from disparate sources – these images belong to design dynamics, modernist moorings of his own imagination, rooted in anthropological and

botanical traditions, and foundations of South Asian arts. The resulting works are a residue of the conventions of aesthetics and ethnography and eroticism that underpin such offerings as they riotously free of biological determinism as well as psychological conditioning.

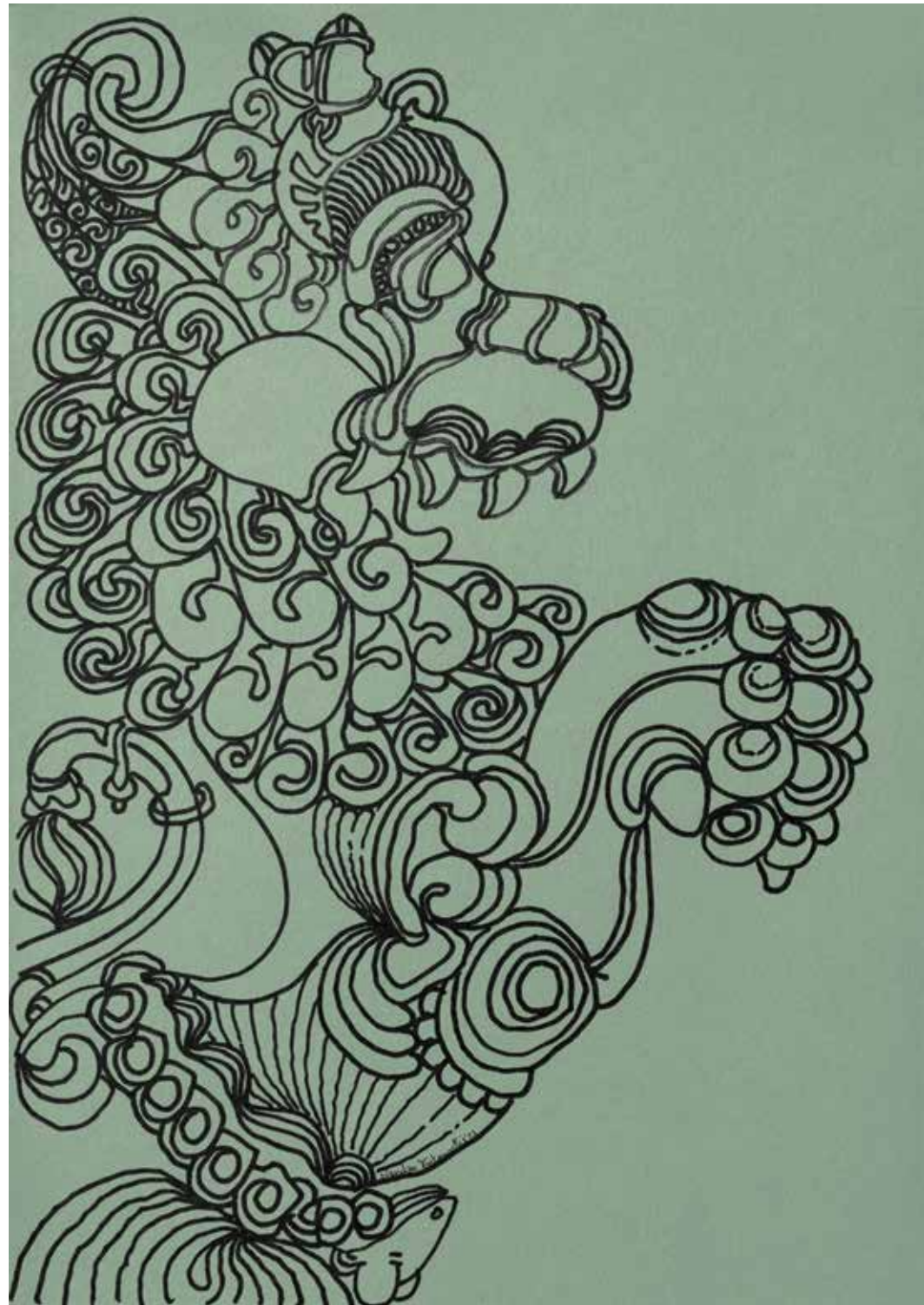
In the running collage-like conversations we see a more densely textured and sculptural ground.

Painterly techniques are employed alongside Nandan's signature construction of images comprised of deftly drawn human forms. In addition, his visual language is further enriched by his use of unexpected colour tones as in the crimson wash effect that brings with it a corollary of cultural significations.

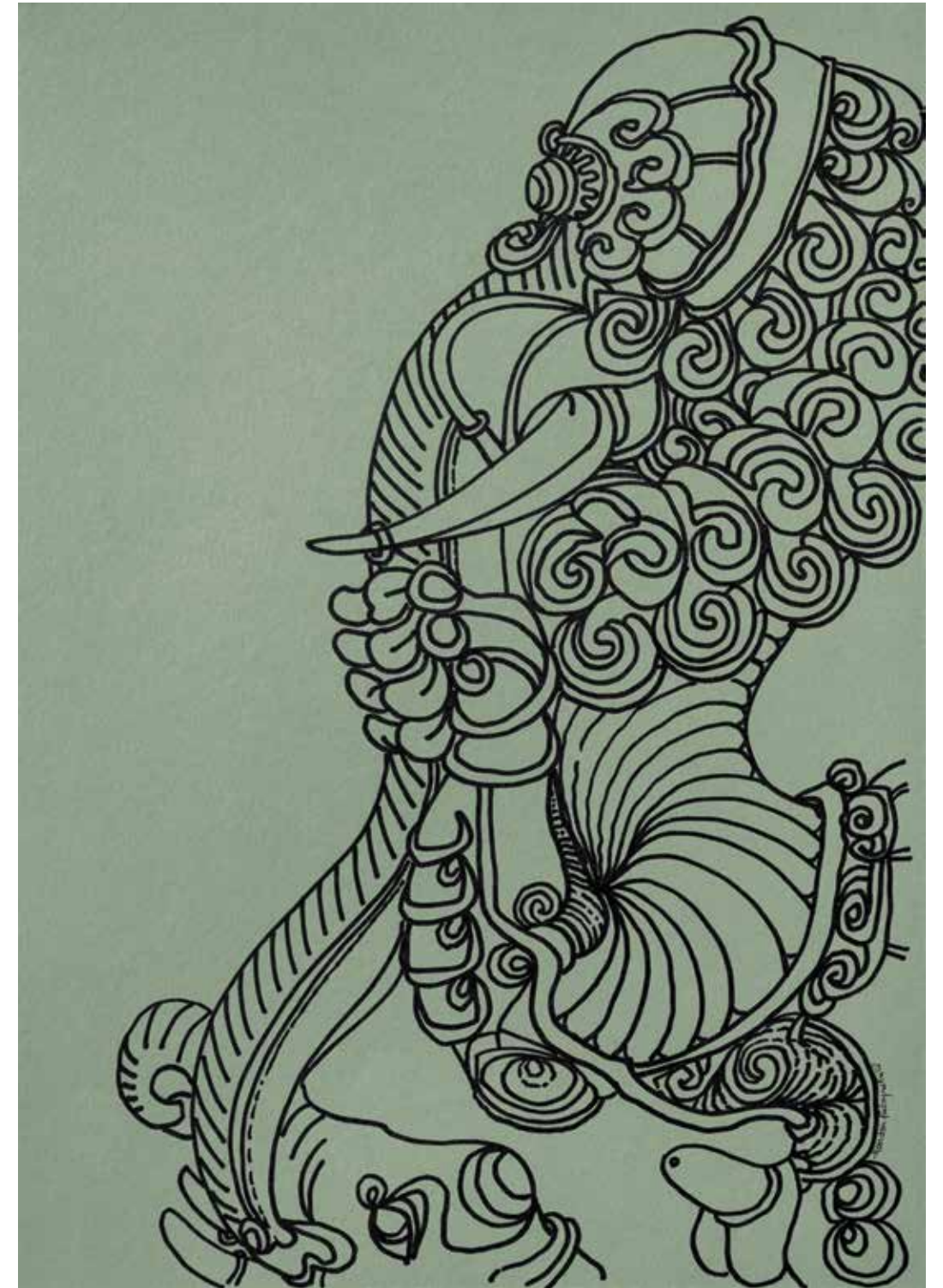
Nandan's artistry is both indigenous, genuine and devoted to a tropical life. He is consistently challenged to pursue his art with complete concentration within the expressiveness of his work, without regard for any social ideology that could affect his choice of subject or style.



Time and Being (Cinematic Continuum) | Acrylic, Pigment Oil stick on Canvas | 84" x 204" | 2023



Untitled - I
(Surreal Signatures)
Marker on Paper
16.5" x 11.5"
2023



Untitled - II
(Surreal Signatures)
Marker on Paper
16.5" x 11.5"
2023

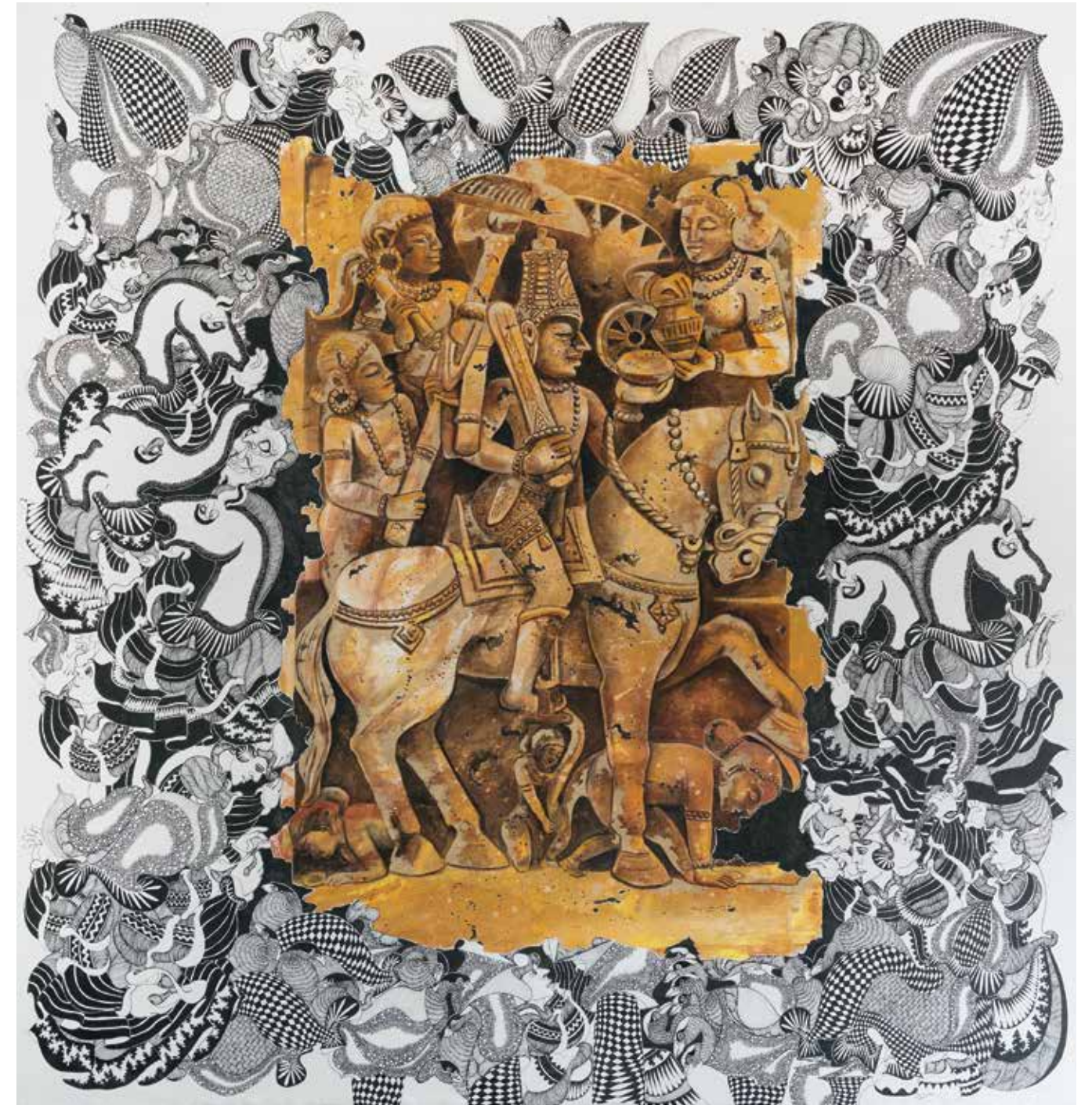
Timeless, Ancient Languages

As an artist Nandan says he has felt a deep spiritual connection to watching humble potters in Bengal creating their Durgas replete with the Mahishasuras; we also see in his art a profound, enigmatic approach to the landscape of characters that enter and play their parts in his own thoughts and artistic concerns. Indeed, his love for drawing appear to draw directly from everyday explorations of the succinct and the sublime, the surreal signature, as well as overlapping forms conjuring a sense of magical enchantment and awe before the wondrous forces of rituals and beliefs and customs that fill the Bengali calendar.

One look at his pair of canvasses (As Time Goes By I & II) reflects his love for antiquity as well as the world of zoological fantasia. In his own odyssey of materials and mesmerising structures he unearths deep-rooted

emotions. Nandan's visual creations celebrate our collective history and explore how art communicates into the present and the future. We at once think of ancient rock carvings to his own chimeric creations, he shares his journey of self-discovery and reminds us all that we actually speak the most ancient language of all.

Nandan's canvasses have to be seen against the background of artistically calculated, brilliant stagings of memory, experience and travel nuggets. They also offer him opportunities for reflection, clothed in a play of both land and marine elements that create multiple realms of nether worlds. Within the drama of the world we note that the choreography of characters resembles a carnival which is changeable and yet as free as possible of perceptive and representative conventions.



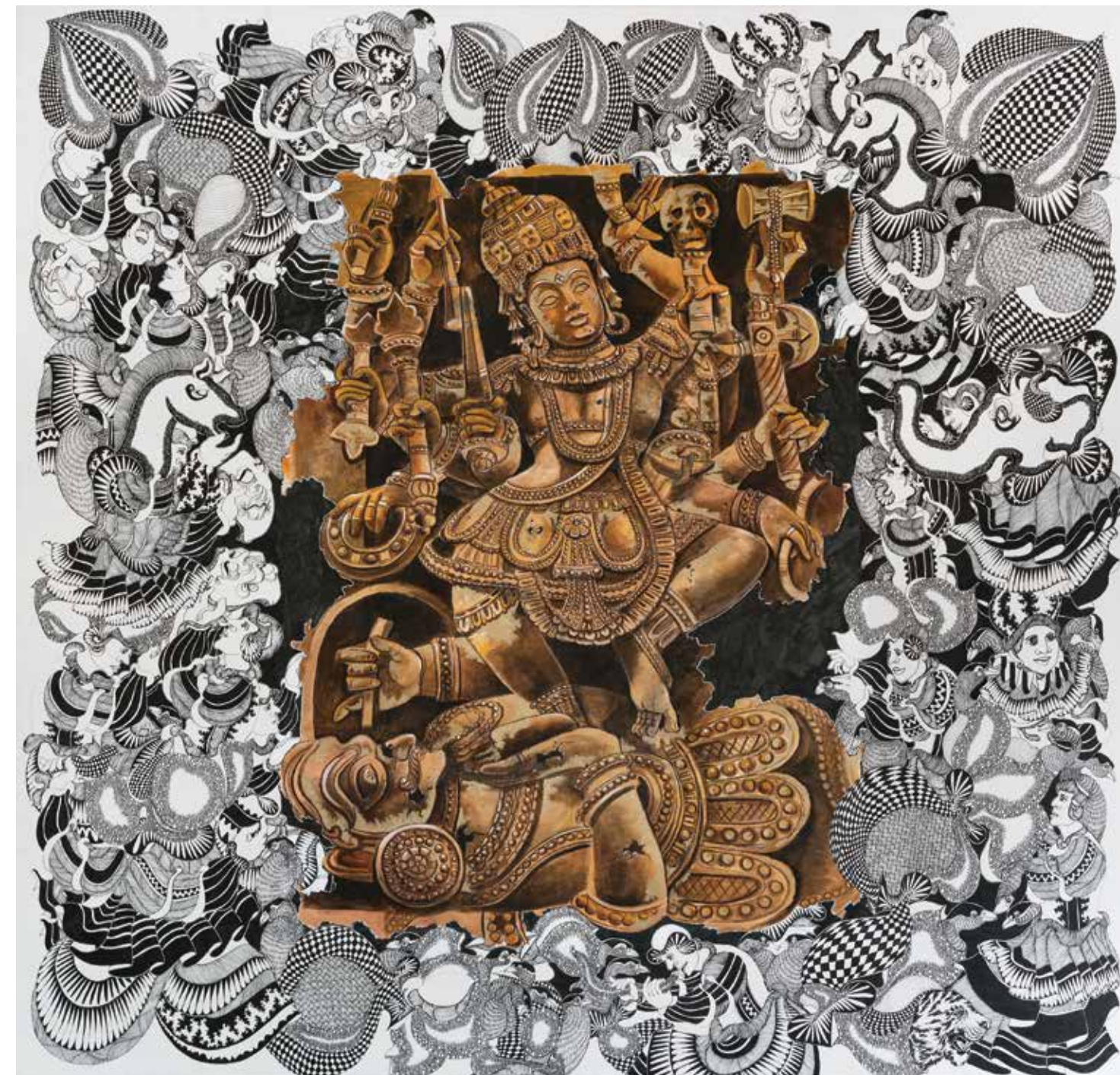
As Time goes by - I (Surreal Signatures) | Acrylic, Pen and Ink on Paper | 84" x 84" | 2023

Within the milieu we note the artist's enduring interest in the dynamism and graphic possibilities of forms. Within these two-dimensional works, the artist makes use of colour and contour to paint and create materiality from the natural world, grounding his compositions in sweeping, semi-abstract traces of all kinds of natural vegetal forms.

The sculptural tenor in these two works created like inscriptions juxtaposed, reflect his interest in working with singular forms across varied textural terrain. Nandan has been developing, refining, and reworking knotted sculptural forms in his painting – throughout his career, investigating relationships between materiality and

scale in works that seem to undulate and shapeshift as viewers move around them. The artist's textured realistic multiple forms rendered in vibrant shades of earthy tones, brings questions of masses and coloration to this exhibition.

These canvasses are hung as a continuum, with drawings between that are stylistic opposites: in which we glimpse the beauty of contrasts in figurative versus abstract, expressionistic versus geometric and minimal to create maximal impact. But, in fact, all these become a mainstream cultural discourse of our times. These canvasses reflect that our visions are distinct, no matter what the attitude.



As Time goes by - II (Surreal Signatures) | Acrylic, Pen and Ink on Paper | 84" x 84" | 2023



Conversations with Time
(Celestial Realms)
Watercolor, Pen and Ink on Paper
35.5" x 60"
2023



Nandan's wiry images seem to be born of a forest of powerful dreams and seances, at once we evince a labyrinthine arena of mystery, magical realms and possibilities, that prey on the haunted the recesses of an unconscious mind. Indeed, one can think of Nandan's dreams wandering along thick lush tropicana of the artist's earliest memories of childhood.

Retelling this formative moment, we can gaze at the delight of what the Romantics called "emotion in the face of Nature." When we look at the multiple arms and legs and the many tentacle-like tendril limbs we are reminded of what it is to be both free and captive, at one and the same time.

Nandan's drawings look like a residue of his voyages of discovery in the unconscious' as he ventures to 'record what is seen. . . on the frontier between the inner and the outer world'. For him, his experiences and memories are an archetypal symbol of this shadowy borderland between what is known and what is unknown. He elaborated on this concept vividly

conveying his fascination with the various kinds of mythological that populated the world. In particular, these compositions resonate with the central qualities he identifies in the forests of distant Himalayan kingdoms in the North East. They are, it seems, sometimes savage sometimes strange, impenetrable, dark and russet, extravagant, secular, swarming, diametrical, fervent, and likeable, perhaps without yesterday or tomorrow. Naked, but delectable and delightful they dress only in their majesty and their mystery and make us think of the Minotaur.

Within dense and impenetrable as well as deeply textured, powerful illustrations reflect Nandan's growing mastery of interpretations to adapt a litany of spontaneous forms and characters, evoking naturally a series of contemporary patterns more intensely than a traditional realist approach. The expressive potential of his own curly contoured technique is made all the more powerful in the present compositions by the rich interplay between the thin, black lines that dominate the surface of the drawing sheets.

Crucibles of Creation
(Celestial Realms)
Pen and Ink on Paper
60" x 108"
2019



Cosmic Echoes



“My idea for creating this set of 4 works is mainly to think about my relationship with experiences both in the manner of what I have seen in proximity as well as distance, and is very much tied to this legacy of what we inherit, what we share with each other, and how we translate what we inherit and what we share into something that becomes our art. Within the invention of so many characters and memories my coloured works with pen and ink as well as acrylics and watercolours become like conversations that have to do with the past as well as the present.

When I create characters they belong as much to life as well as to my memories of elements in temples visited. You always see that sculptural language plays with both the universe of animals and birds as well as man and woman and many hybrid features. I use the same idea. Sometimes you may see a 3 headed Ravana, at times a face of a goddess, a face of an asura all kinds of imagery find their place because I just paint and draw at a furious pace.

So, my relationship with historical and mythic sculptural forms belongs to this idea of belonging to the distance and it brings into play an ancestor ship, we belong to forms that those ancestors have developed over time.”

- Nandan Purkayastha to Uma Nair

This idea of distance and ancestor ship both become important elements in Nandan’s seeking forms through the histories of moving, and developing geographies, and creating architectures, and moving through infrastructures. This quadriptych unveils like

a cornucopia of characters which embrace the idea of distance and histories in terms of time. But within this is the universe as consciousness.

Nandan thinks about them in terms of reaching in a distant space and in a different place, and then pulls those things together to create something new. And this newness appears in both form, and material, and language that has history embedded in it. The chromatic fragments of historical happening brings in a spatial distinction speaks of weaving in the past into the present. Colours in his hand flit and float in the miasma of momentum.

He adds: “My work really is about forms and historical themes that go after knowledge. And this kind of work soothes me as an individual and as an artist. It soothes me to understand that history and the future are there, and I’m the person in between working in the present, I’m engaged with both.”

This set of four works brings into vision great words by Sophie Strand, in the “The Flowering Wand.”

“When I think of what I believe in, it is closest to a form of animism. The belief that all plants, creatures, and parts of the earth are animate and alive. But it is an animism of chaotic difference, of woven contamination. It is an understanding that my being alive does not mean I should assume that the aliveness of the hill, or the river, or the wild roses is the same flavour as my aliveness.

Knowing that a stone is alive keeps me alive. And knowing that a stone is alive differently than me keeps me asking questions. Keeps me humble and curious and open to surprise.”



Carnival of Characters (Cosmic Echoes) | Acrylic, Watercolour, Pen and Ink on Coldpress Paper | 60" x 164" | 2022

Curvilinear creatures and Yali

You have myriad form conditions and curvilinear conditions that are all historically and biologically related to a form of artistic liberation Nandan's singular study of the guardian Yali held within its own cosmic universe. He creates a complex set of conditions put together, as we glimpse and gaze at a kind of cluttering of organic forms that also embody deep histories of liberation, within ancient geographies, and architectural botanical forms that live within the physically formed mappings of real time.

And under these conditions Nandan creates hypershapes. These of course, become an amalgam of histories contained within a space that embodies the positive spaces and negative spaces. The cornucopia of characters are both serpentine, reptilian as well as angelic and demonic. So all of these throughways are a kind of path-making, creating spaces and inventing ways through something to another side of an unknown present.

In this and many other paintings Nandan updates the vision of the mysterious universe for the modern experience, imbuing its wild, untameable nature with echoes of the mythic landscape, capturing the sense of wandering through old temple towns, feeling dwarfed by the environment, and becoming lost in the tangled landscape of the metropolis. Nandan brings this theme to further heights in this singular work in which the striations and sculptural traditions consume the ecosphere, poignantly foreshadowing the present.

Within the richness of myriad moorings the work morphs into mythical, celestial beings whose creatures bridge a retelling of foundational tales.

In Nandan's practice, mixing an understanding of materials the montage like creations are not a mere formal choice but a guiding principle of resilience and regeneration. Fictional characters merge with historical figures, animals, and plants in a tantalizing cycle of metamorphosis, which unleashes their empowering and healing abilities.

The imagery hinges on transformations in terms of rebirth and reincarnation: through fusing with other materials, his subjects emerge renewed and "return to their potential and their power." In shedding the skin of familiarity and morphing into fantastical chimeras, Nandan's figures eclipse preconceived notions of race and gender.

The sculptural line in these images tell us that Nandan is an incredibly prolific draftsman whose creative act often begins on paper, working out ideas through meticulous drawings, mostly executed in pen and ink, acrylic and watercolour on cold press German paper. Like many artists of his time, he travels and spends time to learn and study the art of the past; where he draws after the antique and modern sculptures that abound everywhere in the places he inhabits.



Yali (Cosmic Echoes) | Acrylic, Watercolour, Pen and Ink on Coldpress Paper | 60" x 64" | 2023

Summative Impressions

(Dreams between spaces I & II)

In the tapestry of time we can touch the past, because it is no longer behind us, but it is part of us as it spirals up to us from the deep, curls back on itself from within an evanescent electric blue. According to Nandan we carry the memories that have shaped us and keep them alive by continuing to be within the cosmos of connectivity. While each element and form has its own place, we see a melding of the melody of life's tapestry in the dreams between spaces. Sometimes it seems as if the bird forms are calcified and defined by the processes of life. They become shell-like too. The time-line of life has mapped its own tracing and brought back everything to us, and both mythological and archaeological records (i.e. memories contained in collective dreaming and memories contained in matter) all become a universe. And yet it is in the spaces between our dreams, through which we remember our connection to living beings – and our connection to the cosmos to which our beloved, watery and atmospheric realms belong. Within the

atmospherics of time and tide, the seeds of life, of man and nature come together in a paradisaal pattern from unknown places.

Indeed, the manner in which the mass of elongated as well as short forms protrude into the darkened pitch-black Japanese ink depths summons an impression of the soaring creatures of all climes and states of the vertically expanding oceans of time. In these canvasses Nandan emerges as a Surrealist who makes connections between the landscapes of life and the sea depths – capturing an almost hallucinatory journey through the arcadia of fantasy, in which the varied forms are suddenly transformed into a primeval forest. The plant plumes on the people are so overgrown, the puissant pink fronds are so feminine in expression and rampant, that we feel we are looking at a cosmic ocean of entangled, crushed, strangled; tentacle clad creatures streaking across, nature overpowers the frame.



Dreams between Spaces - I

Cosmic Echoes
Acrylic, Watercolour, Pen and Ink on Coldpress Paper
22" x 18"
2023



Dreams between Spaces - II

Cosmic Echoes
Acrylic, Watercolour, Pen and Ink on Coldpress Paper
22" x 18"
2023

Cosmic Echoes

This uncanny sense of dimension, is made of light as well as shadow, with the resemblance of his interior desires...where he wants a painting to run its free course with instincts as well as deeply entrenched intuition.

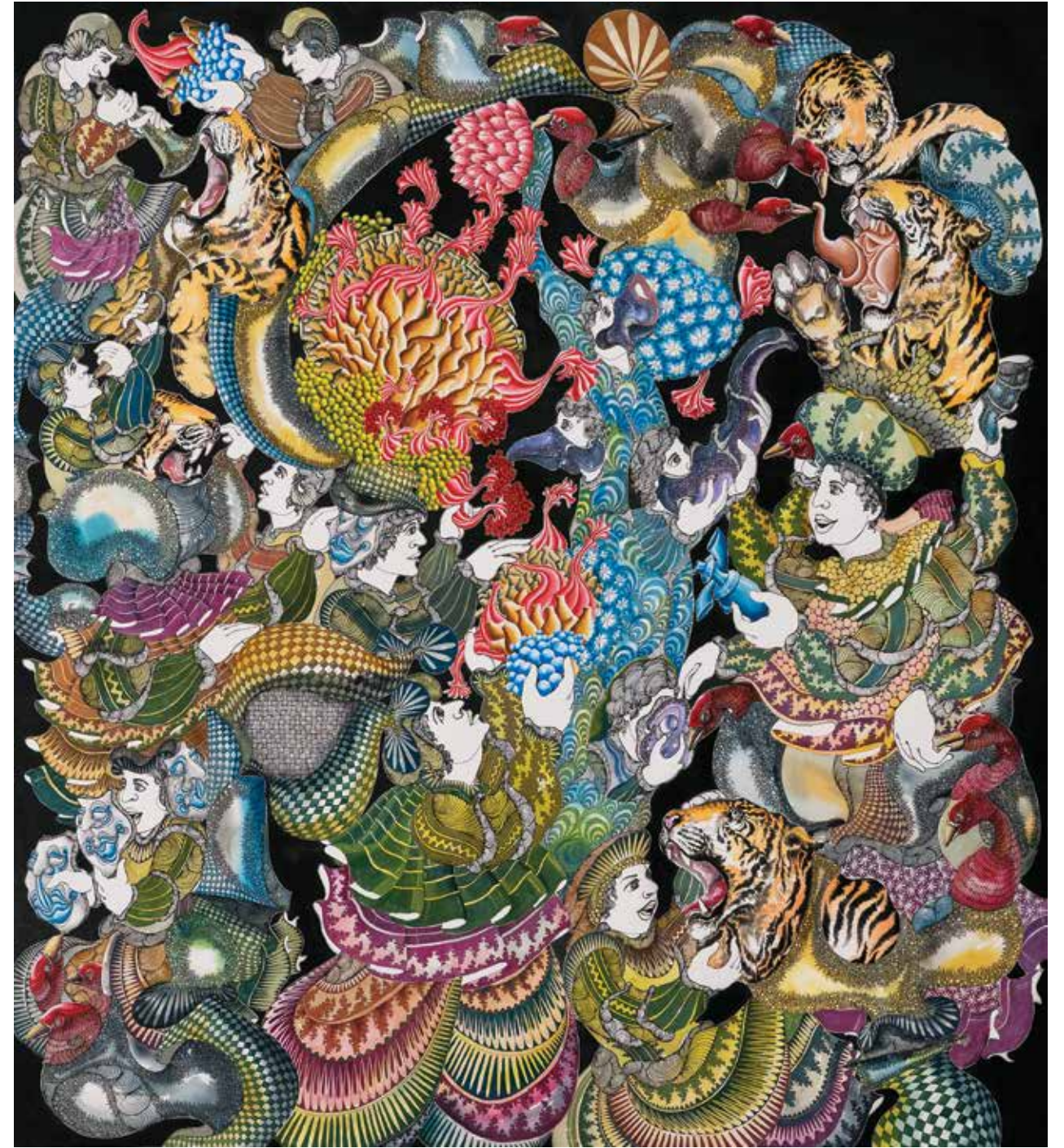
Cosmic Echoes is a coloured work on paper that looks more like an exploration with layered simultaneity in the coming together of the past and the present. It is therefore primarily within the context of the cosmic as well as cinematic indices that the extraordinary characters are interpreted in contemporary fashion with plumes and feathers and embellishments within a marine ecological transparency. These characters belong as much to Broadway as well as to Bombay. Straight off a street in Calcutta strutting their feathers or at a dine out in Bangalore. Contemporary finesse and facets of fashion all come together with hybrid haunts.

Nandan creates multiple impressions with his magic

brush. . . at first glance, some confusion perhaps; but, little by little, everything comes clear, slowly. . . it is a miracle, an enchantment. . . a homage, involuntary perhaps, rendered to the cinematic impression of both time and tide.

Both colour and contour become the foundation of his sense of multiplicity, in creating a universal culture and landscape that encourages him to assert an overt classicism in his work. While he plays with multiplicity he also reflects his love for major influences behind the many-layered classicism of time past and present in the manner in which he plays with the 'transparency' of the cultural fabric of design dynamics in his painting.

The meaning of such a work remains deliberately hinted, made up of a personal code of imagery that only he can recognize and interpret. Perhaps it is an expression of his "inner desire" to be read by himself alone.



Cosmic Echoes (Cosmic Echoes) | Acrylic, Watercolour, Pen and Ink on Coldpress Paper | 60" x 65" | 2023



Time Past and Time Present
(Pictorial Idioms)
Acrylic, Watercolor, Pen and Ink on Coldpress Paper
60" x 104"
2022



Time Past and Time Present

Three paintings come together to create a cosmic sequence of the threads of time. For Nandan life regenerates itself within the mythos analogies. Presented in conversation with one another, the artist's series featuring shades of electric blue, coral, and green, and related largescale frond like creations are results of his explorations of rounded and tendril like organic structures.

According to him ancient myths from different parts of the world envision life's leanings transitioning the world between ages dominated by different species in which the guardian Yali reverberates and reincarnates. He says that the ocean carries genealogical and archeological memories of all these time periods, like a collective matrix of all life on Earth. Mirroring this process of accumulation and adaptation, Nandan builds up his paintings slowly, in layers – embedding circular hand drawn tendril like protrusions in watercolours and acrylic, as he adds lushness and volumes to the figures and fronds and tentacle like protrusions. The central panel evolves as a process of creation by encapsulation, reinterpreting classical mythology woven into contemporary reality and revealing fundamental elements and frequencies of life that form an eternal cycle.

Nandan's symbolism – the organic creatures of the cosmic ocean and circles representing movement, wholeness and transition, single-cell organisms dividing and multiplying, learning to swim and learning to fly – suggests the potential within all living beings to become one with the vastness of time, space and change represented by the Ocean, the potential to transform and navigate new surroundings like a pioneer, a transplanted soul of regeneration.

Interestingly in his worldview, traditional hierarchies are dismantled – predators coexist with prey as equals, men are in the service of women, and humans look to animals for guidance to navigate new environments. Based in part on the artist's research into temple architecture and ancient as well as modern myths, the paintings depict small as well as abundant forms, we amidst humans there are sentient beings offering us information on the atlas of coexistence amidst rich climatic patterns.

To this he adds fantastical, malevolent characters, part demon, part faun, to create an insignia of patterns and poise. Equally novel are his depictions that have subtle appropriations of a magical approach to form, reflecting the subject matter of the paintings. In some, the figures of the men and women are reduced to the most elementary

and radically simplified contours. In other examples, he takes the opposite approach, filling the drawing's surface from edge to edge with linear patterns and repetitions of form: object, dress and the human figures come together to create a corollary of conversations.

From stripes on the clothes, to ropy texture tousled hair, the woven and carved designs, and especially distinctive decorative idioms whirling across the sheets create an emphasis on graphic elements (coupled in the present paintings with a highly restricted palette of subtle sepia) is to create a nearly abstract, all-over interweave of figure and ground, accentuating the planar character of the pictorial space. Even the individuals themselves here are transformed into two-dimensional entities, the light coming through the white spaces on their bodies and offsetting them like patterns against the sepia, neutral interiors.

The flat, additive quality of the compositions reproduce a quaint strategy for describing reality, with its detail obsessed rendering of the immediate surroundings that verges on subordinating no one form to any other, but instead adding element to element to produce the pictorial continuum which was at the heart of his concerns.



Dance me to the End of Time
(Pictorial Idioms)
Watercolor, Pen and Ink on Paper
33" x 60"
2020

In his sculptural ensemble set he recreates his little vignettes as cultural entities to capture the entire compound of the elements found in his works. His view of life in a matrix is dominated by an overall composition in which a sense of depth and distance from the main subject of the paintings are scripted by sculptural contours. He follows this by his signature use of curved lines, offering tactile detail to the metallic form while at the same time showcasing the dynamic movement of the smaller volumes. The structure of the sculpture itself is made up of stark lines. Contours build the details. At the same time, Nandan conveys the sense of volume to the small sculpted suite by creating a gradation of colour to the body of the composition so it looks as if it is at another level creating a deeper dimension; from dark to light and eventually nearing the gradation of spaces within and without.

Nandan's art has always been a product of his direct observation of his surroundings. Nandan regards himself as a naturalist, and in his own way seeks to depict the realities of the world around him and fixes the storm of energy from his emotions which has arisen through concentration on somethings which have initially inspired him.

During the sculpting process, Nandan would take time to examine the subject of his work, probing into its being until he felt that he had become one with it. In this set he has used his sculptural ensembles as a fundamental exercise for becoming one with the subject of choice at that moment. An artist of high degree of sensitivity, his sculpted contours and curves convey his inner vision onto the installations. With his unique methods, he gives himself the freedom to manipulate and control the sculpted strokes as he adds another form to his repertoire. The sculpted series look like forms of the sun as if looked at from a distance like a mirage.

We think of the sun because it is a depiction of the natural forces that we believe in – it represents the essence of natural source of energy and life. With the sculptural form, Nandan also reveals the sense of heat that he wishes to convey in his ensemble; be it one sun, two, or more. Different colours applied around in a second layer, convey different intensities of heat. The sculptural ensemble is a testament of Nandan's devotion to different strands of expressionism and his ongoing affair with the intensity of his subject. Although drawing and sculpting may appear profoundly different, for Nandan these two disciplines are often intertwined.



Untitled - I (Sculptural Ensembles) | Acrylic and Brass on Handmade Paper | 30" x 22" | 2023



Untitled - II (Sculptural Ensembles) | Acrylic and Brass on Handmade Paper | 30" x 22" | 2023



Untitled - III (Sculptural Ensembles) | Acrylic and Brass on Handmade Paper | 30" x 22" | 2023



Untitled - IV (Sculptural Ensembles) | Acrylic and Brass on Handmade Paper | 30" x 22" | 2023



Untitled - V (Sculptural Ensembles) | Acrylic and Brass on Handmade Paper | 30" x 22" | 2023

Ecological and historical annotations

An overview of Nandan's works denotes a sense of ecological and historical supplication. The lush world he depicts is not one in which humans maintain their dominance, autonomy, or forbearance. The works command our attention, the faces in his drawings and paintings share an unabashed expressivity, though perhaps such a characterization lends too much credence to the contemporary as well as classic perspective. In his tryst with tides of time and place Nandan presents a case for preserving the status of our own species and sloughs off pretension as he combines humans with nature's rhythms.

In some of these works it seems as if the hinges of antiquity are literally unearthed from the soil of the cities after having been buried in dirt and oblivion for centuries. Some are among the most celebrated examples of classical sculpture. Their rediscovery, shows that the creation of sculptures in the past were based on harmonic proportions that were the consequence of a precise, mathematical relation between the head, limbs, and body. This harmonious relation was seen to parallel the harmony on which the universe was established. In his larger works when he recreates these sculptural studies as a group we can discern the depth of figurative proportions.

The darker earthy tints contrasted with the white drawings surrounding it shows that as an artist Nandan often draws at night, and explores the play of light and shadow on these forms. The stark contrast of pen and ink with touches of watercolour heightening creates a strong sculptural effect in all his canvasses. Executed in a deftly rendered combination of crayons, watercolour, pen and ink, the sacred and the sensual both come together.

"The human figure and its many indices is the basis of all my work," Nandan affirms, "and that for me means the male/female study." In the great majority of the artist's works the female/male figures are seen standing, a preference that initially stemmed from his desire to work on imagery he saw sculpted in stone, for the practical concern that a carved standing figure is structurally graceful in full form.

Women in his drawings whether on paper or canvas possess the plasticity of form, as well as the thematic significance, that could bear the weight of many inferences, and sustain the profound and far-reaching metaphor by which our bodies, become the world. The works point to a history and the hypothetical world while providing a model of living through an intimate entwining with nature. The visionary hybrids populating Nandan's work usher in a world where diverse species and peoples exist in a harmony rooted in interconnectedness. He encourages audiences to consider these mythical worlds as places for cultural, psychological, and socio-political exploration and transformation.

In summation Genesis as an exhibition reflects on sexuality, masculinity, femininity, ecology, politics, the rhythms and chaos of the world. In his exploring and subverting cultural preconceptions of the female/male body and the feminine, Nandan proposes worlds within worlds, populated by powerful hybridized female/male figures. His practice has been engaging in his own unique form of myth-making, one in which the interweaving of fact with fiction opens up possibilities for another group of symbolic female/male characterizations, markedly different from those that appear in either classical history or popular culture.

- Uma Nair
Curator & Critic

About the Curator



An art critic for 34 years who has written for major newspapers and currently writes as critic for Architectural Digest India and a blog on Times of India. As a curator her most important shows have been *Moderns (Indian Masters Collection)* LKA 2007, *Carved Contours* Retrospective of Jamini Roy 2016, *Rustic Resonance* Select Retrospective Gopal Ghose 2015, *Earth Songs* Tribal Art Collection LKA 2016, *Bapu at 150 Years* Lalit Kala Akademi 2018, and Jyoti Bhatt *Manushya Aur Prakriti*, original intaglios for Bihar Museum Patna 2020.

In publications her most important books have been *Shashwat* for NGMA, *Itihaas* (sculptures NGMA Archives), and *Dhanraj Bhagat* at 100 Years for NGMA.

Her book on Sayed Haider Raza *Reverie with Raza (2016)* will be published again this year in India. Her interview with Raza about Mahatma Gandhi was published in the *Raza rassoinne* translated into French this year to mark 100 years of Raza in Paris at Centre Pompidou. Translation was done by the famed Professor Annie Montaut (emeritus of universities, in Paris).



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