JOTTINGS as Paintings

GANESH PYNE



Arun Ghose

JOTTINGS 38 Paintings of Ganesh Pyne



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Jottings as Paintings Ganesh Pyne By Arun Ghose

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About

Ganesh Pyne 1937 – 2013

Pyne's '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 Calcutta 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. Born in Calcutta in 1945, Pyne's place in the history of modern Indian art is more than assured.

Introduction

rt is essentially national, science cosmopolitan and hence international. In other words art always need locally fertile soil to thrive while study of scientific knowledge and laboratory inventions are free from such geographic compulsions. Today there is a growing argument in favour of art to be billed as an entity without geographic barrier (international!) in the name of globalisation but that, it is often suspected, is primarily aimed to justify random copying of art language that evolved elsewhere, read US.

Originality of artistic thought and idiosyncratic style of pictorial execution was always a necessary pre-condition in art and that remains even more so in post-modern world of art today. Seen under this perspective, the rate of progress in art today thus appears rather negative. This argument gains ground when analysing, with critical introspection and unbiased assessment, the state of art prevailing in the last five centuries or even earlier. Few will disagree if told that art in India, after Ajanta, did not progress much as there exist no visible proof of any post-Ajanta art activity that equals the artistic merit of the murals in those cave walls. The first few centuries in the Gregorian calendar witnessed art produced with such magnificence and equally mesmerising proportion that remains virtually unchallenged even in the modern times. This argument easily brings to the surface an even more interesting corollary. Without progress all art produced post-Renaissance in the West should be viewed as dead. Though such a harsh assessment is not altogether devoid of logic, strangely enough, art is still alive due to only one single reason. It is the need of the people to have art that makes them feel proud, something they can relate to and wish to call as if they won them even if

not owned personally but collectively. There comes the national characteristic of art. In other words art is still rooted in national soil, even the type and composition of the soil is borrowed from art produced elsewhere.

No artist of the modern era, as mentioned already, can match the artistic excellence attained by the Renaissance Masters in the old West. In order to overcome such shortcomings in one's technical and artistic acumen, and skill to draw and paint as well as the past Masters, there is an increasing tendency to utilize modern technology to aide making of art. To this one may add the recent addiction of not a few to increasingly use photography as an active ingredient in their work. It is indeed surprising to find very little discussion at the critical level for or against this phenomenon. The increasing influence of photography in post-modern art in India surely merits an in-depth debate not done so far. Art of Ganesh Pyne, free of such external aides (photography included) thus acquires a different dimension like so many of his contemporaries but unlike the recent trend of techno-art practices. Attempts to transplant art ideas of foreign origin in India, in the recent past, has only succeeded to please a select few who wishes to erase all traces of National heritage in their thoughts and actions to acquire the dubious status of global citizenship. Simultaneously, such attempts has also succeeded in further distancing the larger section of the populace who rooted for art they could view as belonging to the nation they belong to. Ganesh Pyne stands his ground in between. His art is umbilically linked to the glory of Indian art heritage of the past and may also be easily viewed as the ablest successor to Abanindranath and his much-celebrated style which, in its turn, learned a lot from various sources of Oriental Art.

OF PAIN AND PYNE

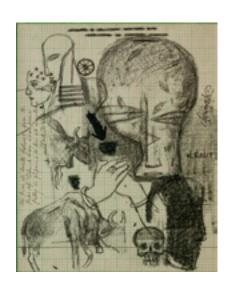
anesh Pyne was born in time to be able to witness a lot that has happened in the city he grew up. Kolkata in 1937, the year he saw the light of the day for the first time, was certainly anything but peaceful and yet, for the kid growing within the comforting shelter of a large family not without means of adequate survival, the life was peaceful enough that did not remain so soon enough. In front of their ancestral house was an old temple and the image of Sri Chaitanya, housed in its alter was always visible from the window of his room. Stories heard regularly from his grandmother often included life of Sri Chaitanya and thus the image assumed livelier proportion in the fertile imagination of the ten-year-old boy. While it accounts for the recurrence of Sri Chaitanya's image in his art it does offer little clue to define what prompted his family to allow, if not encourage, to go and study art. They, it appears in retrospect, were not the arty type. The young boy, practicing his drawing skill without the benefit of skilled supervision, however was so good that the teachers of the Government art school, looking at the drawing sheet submitted as his entrance examination, immediately recommended him to be admitted in the higher class. A direct admission in the second year surely meant presence of more than adequate artistic skill in the young applicant which needs little preparatory study done in the first year classes.

The intensifying struggle for freedom, with Calcutta as one of its principal nerve-centre, was seething with overt and covert activities which, in 1947, bared its ugly side in horrific proportion. Partition of Bengal, an unfortunate aftermath of the trade-off that took place during the transfer of power between the concerned players, unfolded unseen terror of the worst magnitude. Pyne, then aged ten, witnessed scenes of large-scale massacre from his windows as men killed men at will on the road and inside the lanes and by-lanes in the neighbourhood. His visual metaphor of disjointed human limbs owes a lot to his almost daily viewing, mostly from his fabled window, such frequent transportation of dead bodies in hand-drawn carts, not one but so many at a time, heaped hastily one over the other and kept scantily covered with little respect for the dead. Once he saw a human hand trailing behind from such a heap of bodies, its droplets of warm blood

leaving a silent mark of protest to its unknown executioners. It surely was not the only instance when his fertile imagination was exposed to similar scenes of human inhumanity. In his youth, while struggling to find his own visual language, he witnessed yet another nightmare. Naxalite movement in Bengal in the early seventies, a predominantly ultra-left phenomenon that believed in armed uprising to overthrow existing political governance, was suppressed by using equally brutal, perhaps even more inhuman, methods of torture and killing. Pyne's recollection of human sufferings thus had its stock overfilled with such macabre visions of human tragedy. The chemistry in his mind that transformed such imagery, seen at an interval of nearly two decades, into food for his art is a subject that surely merits scholarly attention Story of his life was, to a large extent, may therefore be simply viewed as full of pain and sufferings. He had an antenna that was large and receptive – its array of parabolic dishes rotated in the direction he chose and recorded signals of pain and sufferings of humans around him like a radio-telescope gathering distant signals from outer-space. Pyne had the super-sensitive soul of a true Vaishnavite. An important cult practice of this rather ancient philosophy is to train oneself to be able to feel the pain and sufferings in others as if they are the extension of self in all aspect and thus the pain inflicted on others should simultaneously evoke the equal and parallel sensation in the sensory organism of a true Vaishnavite. Sitting in his secluded corner of a small cubicle a floor up inside an old house (that was his studio for the good part of his creative life) his sympathetically attuned mental-antenna was gathering those calls and outcries emanating in the outer world with ease and accuracy. The real Pyne was made on this accumulated feel of pain. His artistry revolved, and evolved, on this bedrock of sensitized mechanism at work in his psyche with fine filters that were remote-controlled by the artist from his self-imposed isolation. Aloof, yet not altogether alienated. Characters he imagined as real, and visualized with accentuated physiognomy, is therefore metaphoric generalization of individuals he knew to exist in real life. His Arjuna in front of his armoured war-vehicle (or Chariot, as they said in Puranic times) thus is the painted epitome of valour standing up to root out all evils.

JOTTINGS AS PAINTINGS





camera raw image file, in the world of digital photography, contains minimally processed data from the image sensor of the digital camera. Raw files are named so because they are not yet processed and therefore are not ready to be printed or edited. Raw image files are sometimes called digital negatives, as they fulfill the same role as negatives in film photography: that is, the negative is not directly usable as an image, but has all of the information needed to create an image. The purpose of raw image formats is to save, with minimum loss of information. Ganesh Pyne's jottings surely sound closer to the concept of a raw file in digital photography. Arguably, that was not all that merits our attention.

'Here are some jottings for you to read when I am gone', wrote Leo Tolstoy in his epic novel 'War and Peace'. Opinions are, perhaps not unjustifiably, divided sharply over the definition of jottings. While some prefers to use the term as a synonym for preliminary recordings of ideas, like sketches for paintings, Pyne himself has chosen to use the word with a difference. In an interview, given to Ranjit Haskote several years ago, the artist has observed that "in earlier days, the idea would come to my mind first. Then I would search for the forms, sketching and sketching. Now, the store of my mind has become richer, with age. When I sit down with my paper, I make 'jottings', which are preparatory work. I make different versions of an image, and then translate the one I like best into tempera on canvas." It is as if the artist's mind flows down in a rapid stream of ideas while the artist in him sits on the bank watching them flow and waits for the occasion when a floating idea reveals itself to him more fully. With this articulation of his idea of jottings, Pyne has elevated this 'not-often-takenseriously' genre into an independent art practice. Each jotting, whether used for eventual enlargement in tempera on canvas or not, thus merits closer attention on its own.

History of World Art has witnessed many such events that will exemplify this definition. We may as well choose Emile Zola's epic novel, GERMINAL. The American Heritage Dictionary of

the English Language refers to the word Germinal meaning a state of affairs relating to, or occurring, in the earliest stage of development whereas, according to some other source-books, it also refers to being or productive of something fresh and unusual; or being as first made or thought of; "a truly original approach". Surely sounds even more familiar as jottings of Ganesh Pyne.

Flaubert's Madame Bovary paved the way for Realism in literature. Emil Zola , not remaining content with Flaubert's style, decided to create his own variant of the same , now often known under the banner of Naturalism. His novel, Germinal, was the seventh of a series of twenty which was intended as a sequel to Balzac's Human Comedy and, immediately after its publication in 1878, took the attention of many, Manet included. Seen in retrospect this Novel may also be thus credited with the germination of modernity in European art growing out of France towards the close of the 19th century.

It will be tempting to draw a parallel to the central theme of this novel with Pyne's obsession on the timeless cry of protest against oppression and the misery of the poor who never inherit the Earth. Zola described miner's misery, their love and sorrow and hunger and despair, against the backdrop of a merciless, miserable, wintery Earth. 'The Earth itself is the most powerful character in Germinal. Larger even than the voracious mine or "evil beast" that monstrously consumes human flesh, the Earth is at once beautiful and terrifying'. Zola describes it in his own way by emphasizing a kind of determinism in which the characters' heredity and environment essentially determine their actions. Love of the Earth, in this milestone of a literary masterpiece, is evoked most powerfully in the memory of the pit pony, Bataille. In a moving anthropomorphic passage, Zola shows Bataille galloping desperately through the narrow bowels of the Earth. One may notice similar assemblage of ideas in Pyne's imagery and more so in his jotting of a horse who's furiously galloping hoofs seem frozen in suspended animation to evoke a sense of





desperation in the caged stallion wishing to break free. Pyne stops right there, as he always does, to allow the viewer to complete the end-view as they wish. Mysterious but seldom arbitrary. It is no less interesting to obtain a glimpse into what went into the Artist's psyche while he drew this horse. In his mind's eye he was telling himself 'the essential advantage for the feet is not to have a beautiful world to deal: it is to be able to see beneath both the beauty and ugliness; to see the freedom, the river and the sky'. In order to make his point clearer he has additionally scribbled a title for his horse too. It, in his view, is the proverbial archetype of the sacrificial horse that is allowed free run with armed escort and trots everywhere to represent the imperial might and right to rule and is sacrificed in the end in the ritual pyre of the Aswamedha.

It is therefore; at least while viewing Pyne's jottings, one would do better in allowing more time to enjoy the same on its own term. What he had done in enlarging these works is of little consequence in assigning degree of artistic importance to these jottings. They, instead, merits to be viewed not as a preliminary sketches that he did in his early stage of artistic development but as an independent works of art done with ink on paper. There remain several reasons favouring such an argument and the most important of them is the feel of concentrated execution that each jotting convey and the same is viewable in abundance in similar works done in oil or acrylic paint on canvas and other supports.

The characters in Zola's novel Germinal are, generally speaking, representative types rather than unique individuals and groups are often more important than isolated individuals. Pyne has created his visuals on the same mould, adding tangential commentary on the respective social positioning of his drawn characters in his inimitable style of using deliberate lines using pen on graph-paper. 'Night of the shepherd', a curiously oftrecurring theme in Pyne's select oeuvre, may serve to illustrate this point. A goat taking the shelter of a man's warm heart is what he paints repeatedly but easily manages to communicate more than what meets the eye on the first glance. It is the identity of the person that undergoes subtle changes in the use of his carefully randomized cross-hatchings. In one the drawn character appears as the crafty butcher, rearing the unsuspecting animal seeking his shelter with care and warmth, only to slaughter it for the right buyer. In yet another same figure appears full of divine aura and assumes the role of Goutama- Buddha or Sri Chaitanya to whom all living beings flock to receive shelter of wisdom. Identity of Pyne's 'Shepherd' thus oscillates between diverse extremities of human emotion. His jottings, small or full-page, always retain the completeness of a work of art in its handling of details that

essentially creates such meaningful ideation with the ease of a master in full control of his intellect and instrument in equal measure.

It his known that, surprisingly enough, Ganesh Pyne used to articulate his thoughts on art and also on his own art rather well despite his preference for staying away from the limelight. His volumes of letters, written to a close friend in Germany, bears adequate testimony to this side of him that demands scholarly attention to decode his metaphors. Carefully written lines that often accompanies his 'jottings' therefore offers additional clue to the thoughts germinating in him while the same is drawn on paper. Presence of written words also elevates his 'jottings' closer to post-modern art practices though his intention surely was precariously poised on the edge, not committed to delve any deeper.

One such gem of a jotting retains the words that catalysed its initial ideation. It was a quote from the American author Mark Twaine who wrote 'the fear of death follows from the fear of life. A man who lives fully is prepared to die at any time'. In his 'jotting' the artist has drawn leaves cascading down, signifying the 'Fall', over an introspecting face. His life-long fascination with dead lineament also brings forth in this face a sense of death to come. Femininity of the face, with its elongated pair of eyes, is subtly indicated with a bangled pair of hands complete with its ring of love. Profile of a muscular bull by her side, stomping its forepaws to assert its strength of life, is fronted by a skull baring all its teeth in a silent laugh as if realizing the eventual end which is also indicated by an arrow pointing downward. Such use of poetic metaphor, in the series of 'jottings' available for viewing in this show is an abundant feast for eyes. In addition these works also are viewable as the 'RAW IMAGE FILE' offering initial, unedited and un-processed visuals of the artist. Comparison with the finished tempera of some of these RAW files offers even more interesting inroads into the artistic craft of Ganesh Pyne.

Pyne had a surprising ability to draw his viewers in. His art demands intimate attention not only by its imagery but also by the superlative quality of technical (artistic) skill present in abundance in his art, including these 'jottings'. This feature in his art also serves to silence his detractors whose techno-centric art making often succeeds the other way round. The dominant role that Nationality of the artist plays in their art is, while viewing these 'jottings' at close range answers forcefully without being obvious, an eloquently silent performance that merits repeated viewing and demands scholarly attention in larger measures.

Jottings, in detail

Ganesh Pyne, Untitled, 10.5" x 8.5" (approx.), Ink & Paint on Paper.



Fig. 1



Fig. 2a Detail

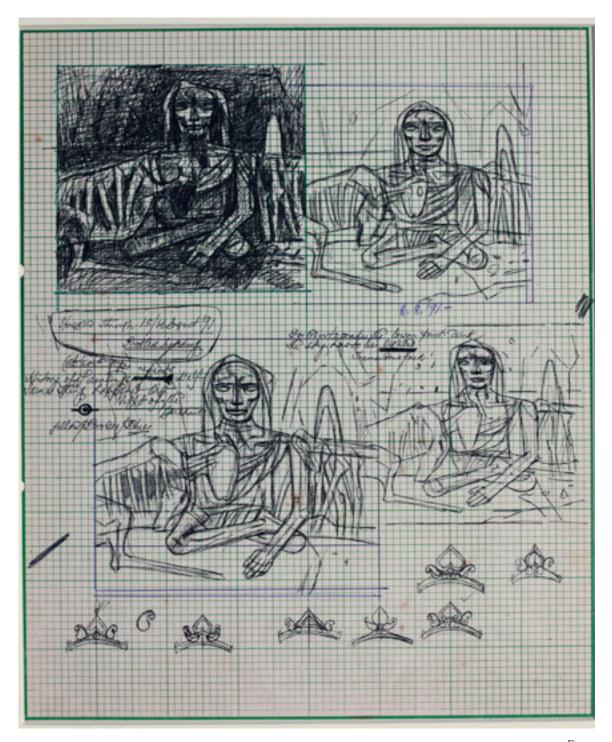


Fig. 2

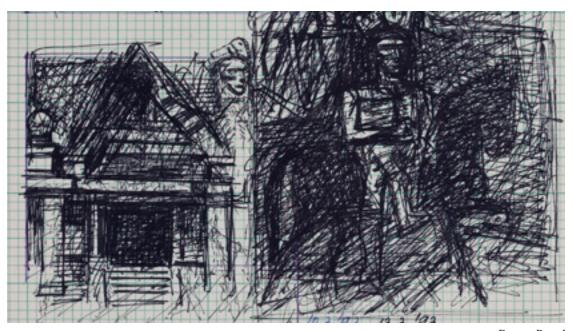


Fig. 3a Detail

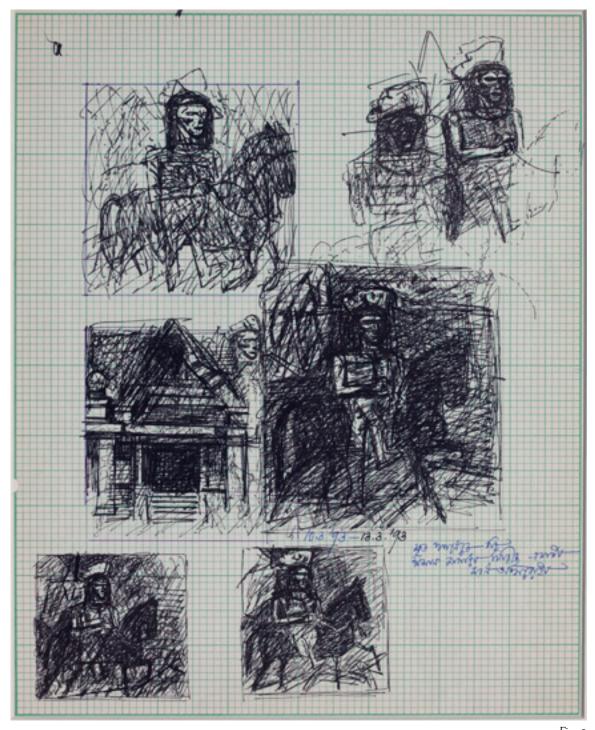


Fig. 3

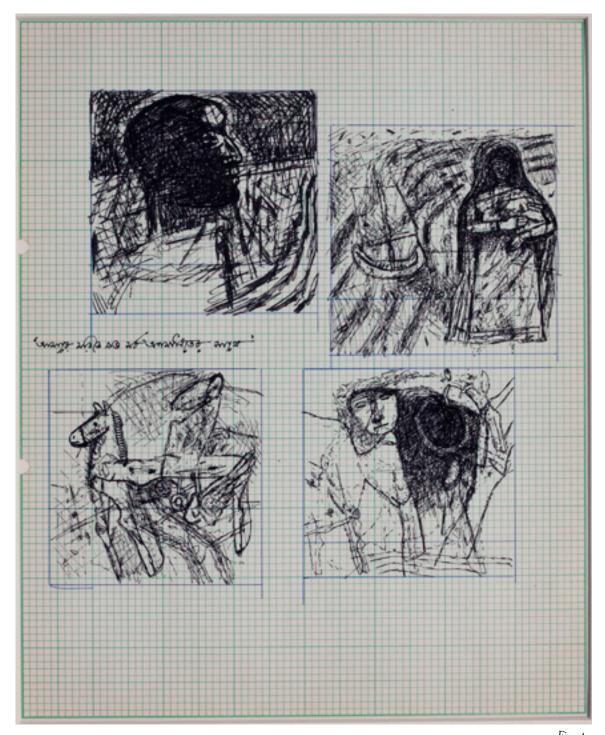


Fig. 4



Fig. 5



Fig. 6a Detail



Fig. 6

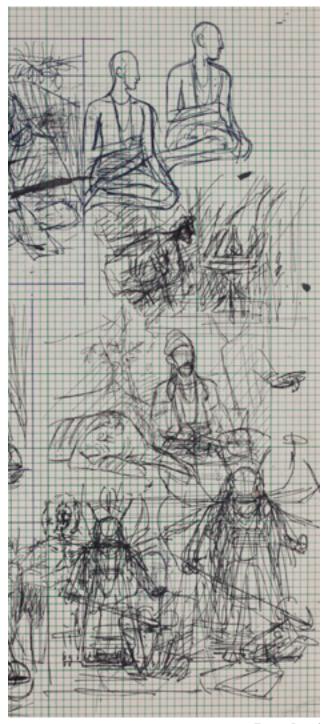


Fig. 7a Detail

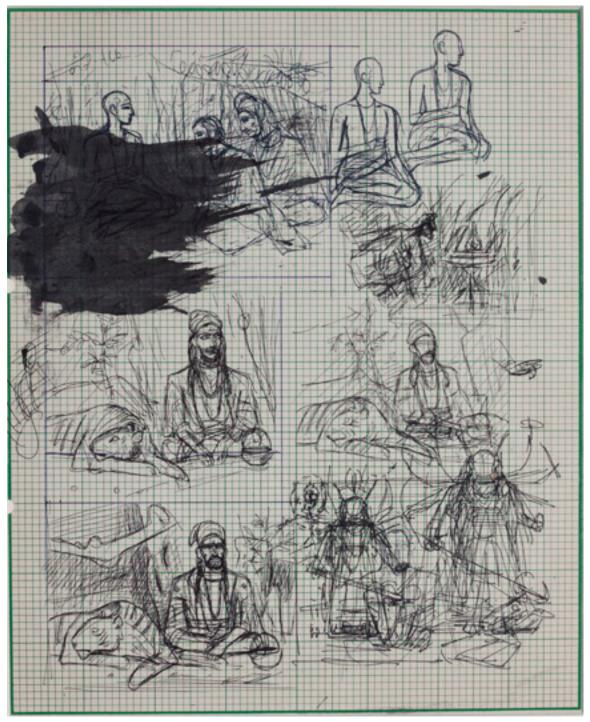


Fig. 7



Fig. 8



Fig. 9

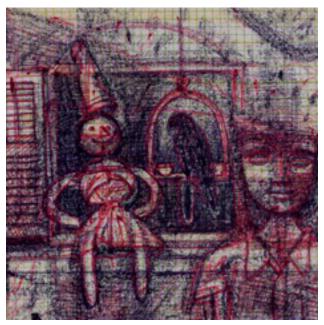


Fig. 10a Detail

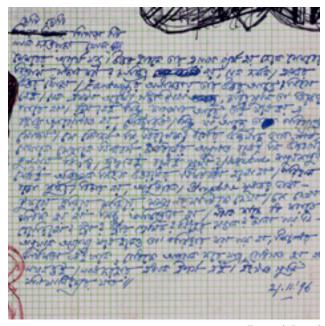


Fig. 10b Detail

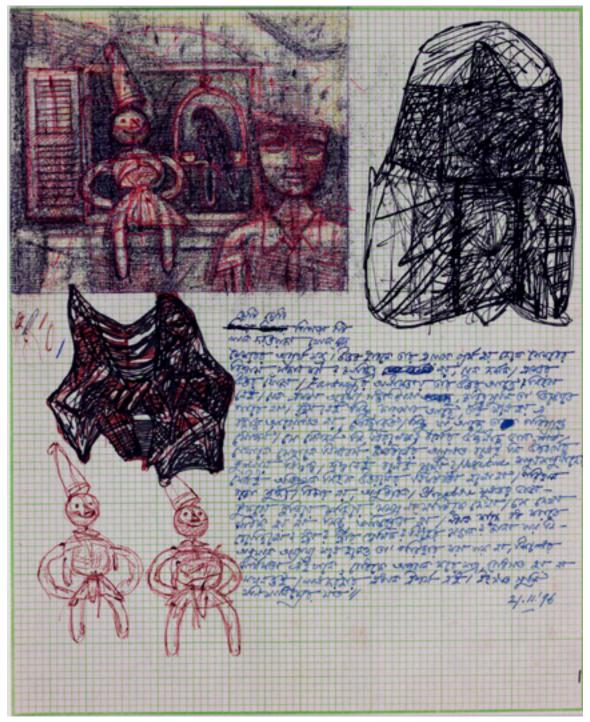


Fig.10

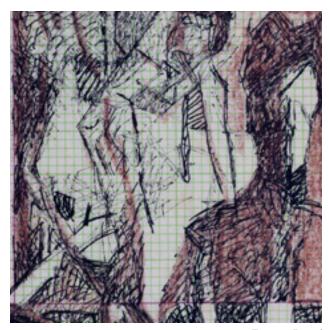


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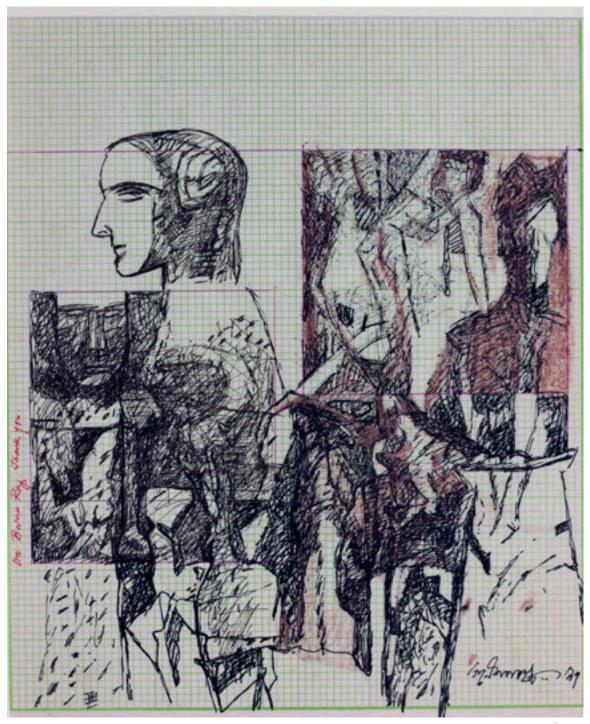


Fig. 11



Fig. 12

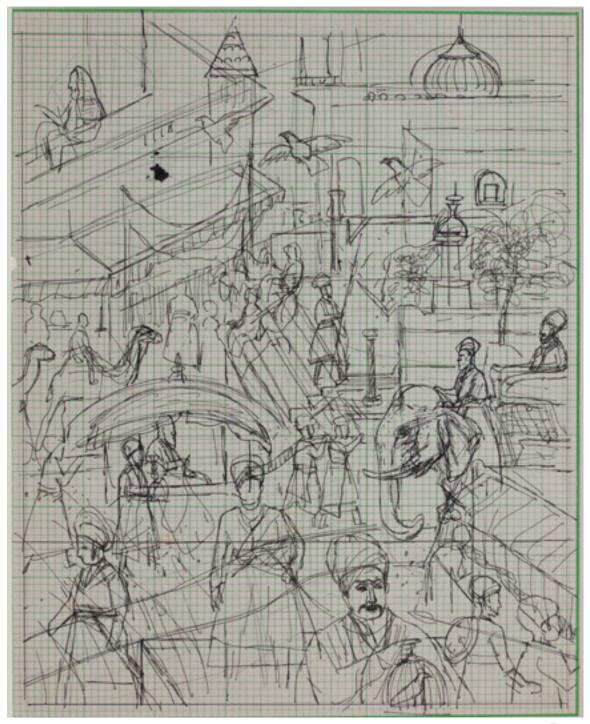


Fig. 13



Fig. 14a Detail



Fig. 14





Fig. 15a Detail

Fig. 15b Detail



Fig. 15c Detail



Fig. 15

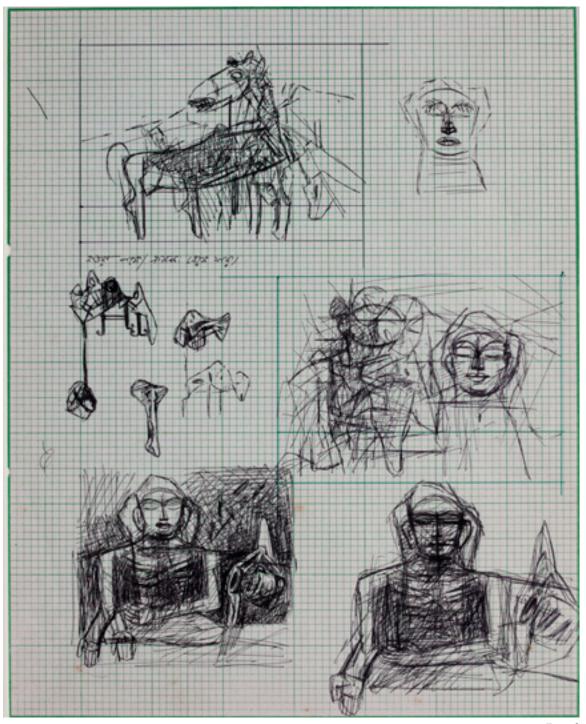


Fig. 16



Fig. 17



Fig. 18a Detail

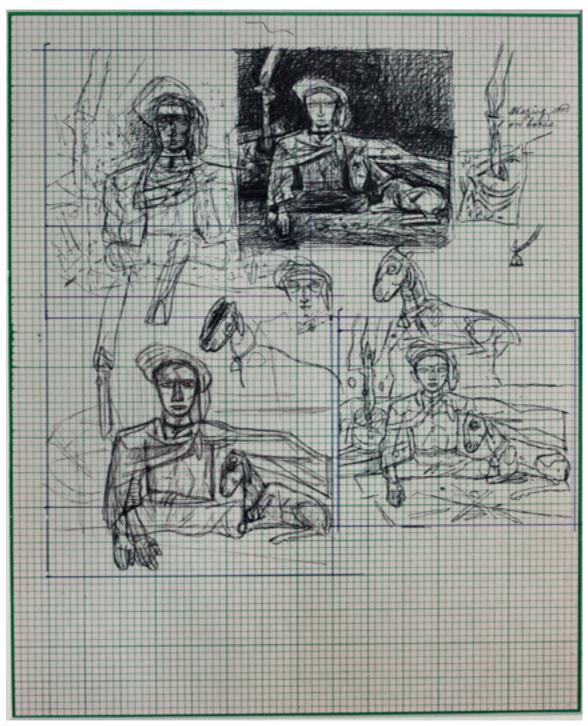


Fig. 18



Fig. 19a Detail



Fig. 19b Detail

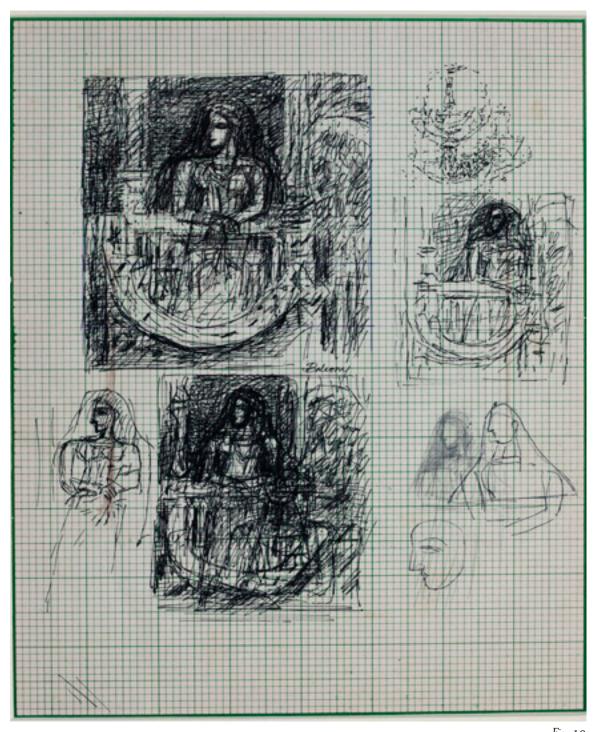


Fig. 19

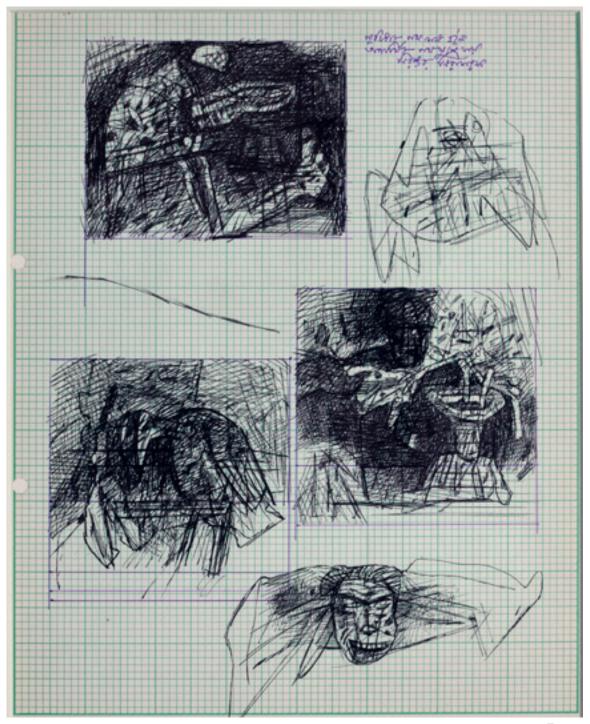


Fig. 20



Fig. 21

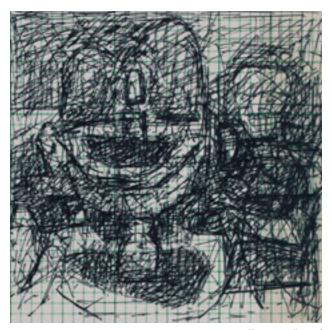


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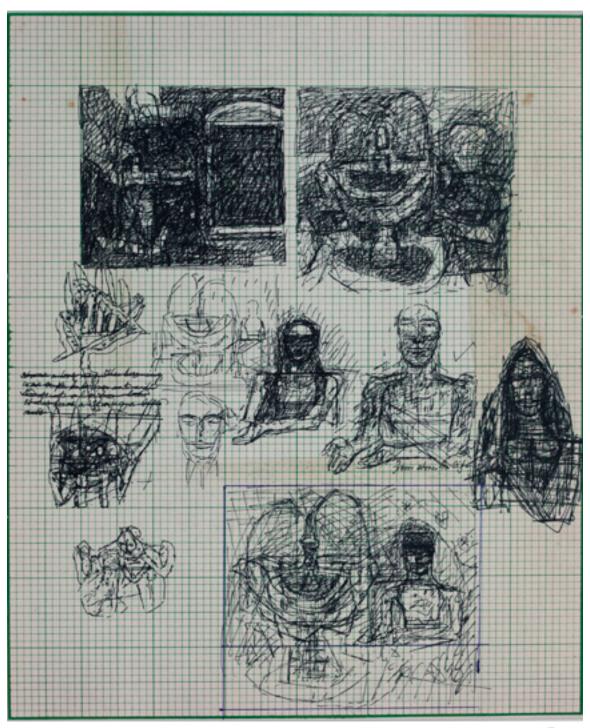


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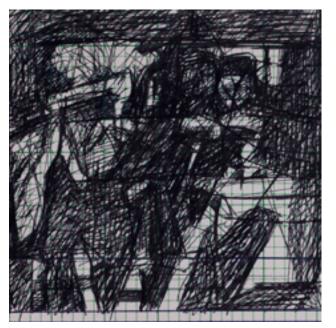




Fig. 23a Detail

Fig. 23b Detail

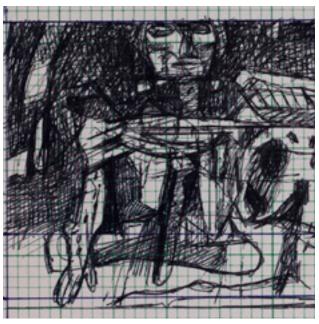


Fig. 23c Detail

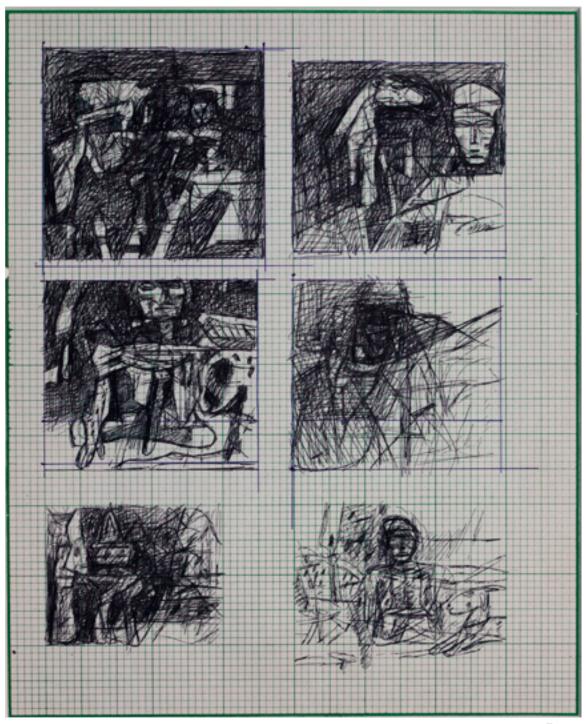


Fig. 23



Fig. 24

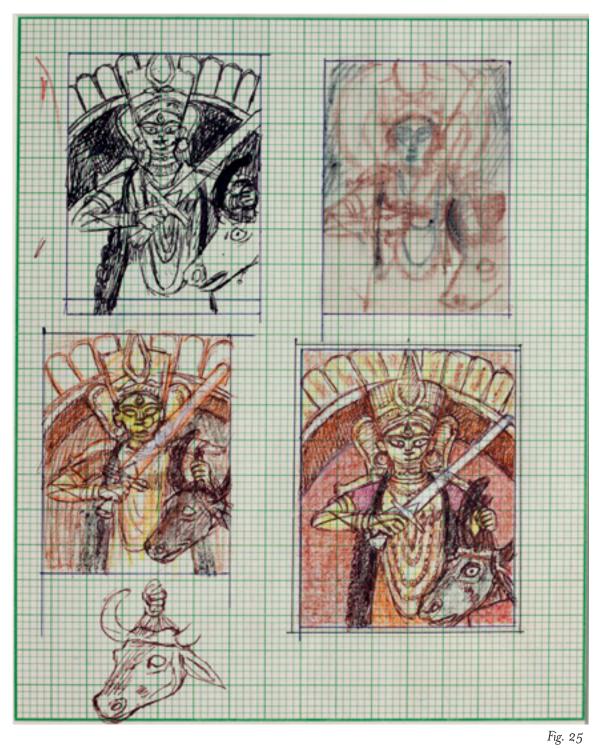




Fig. 26a Detail



Fig. 26

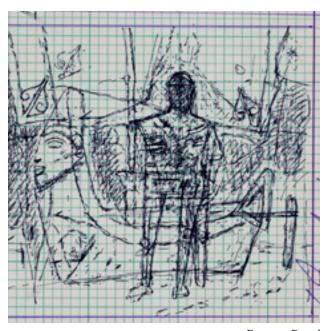


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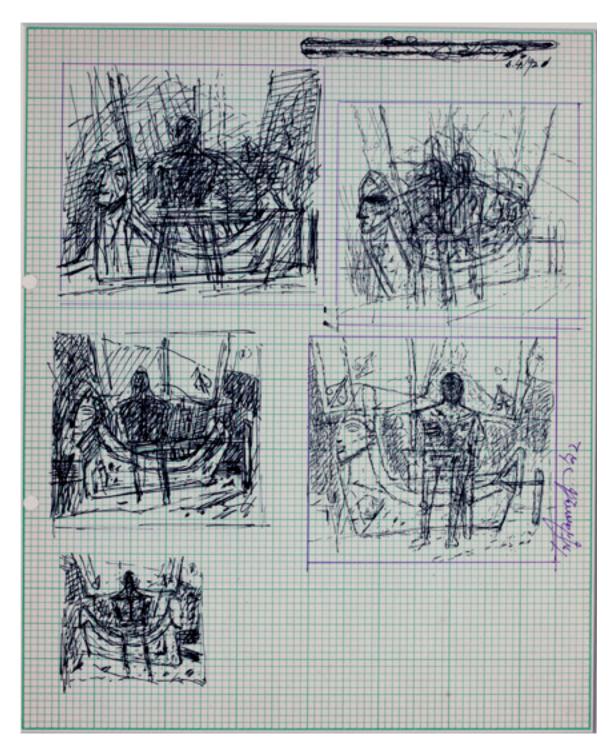


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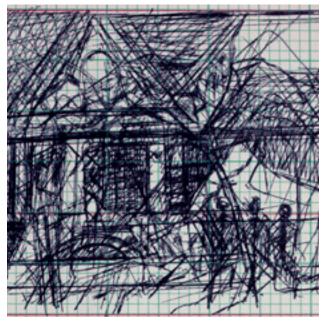


Fig. 28a Detail



Fig. 28b Detail

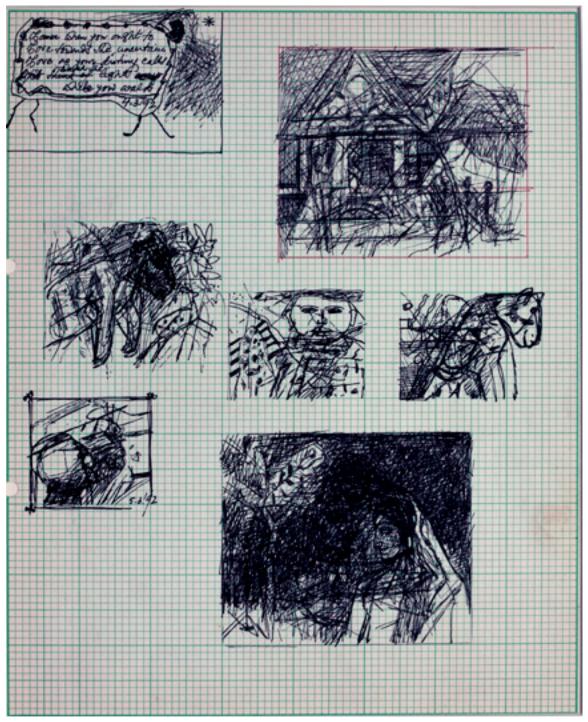


Fig. 28

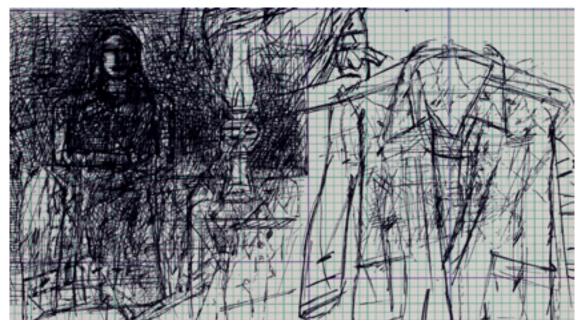


Fig. 29a Detail



Fig. 29b Detail

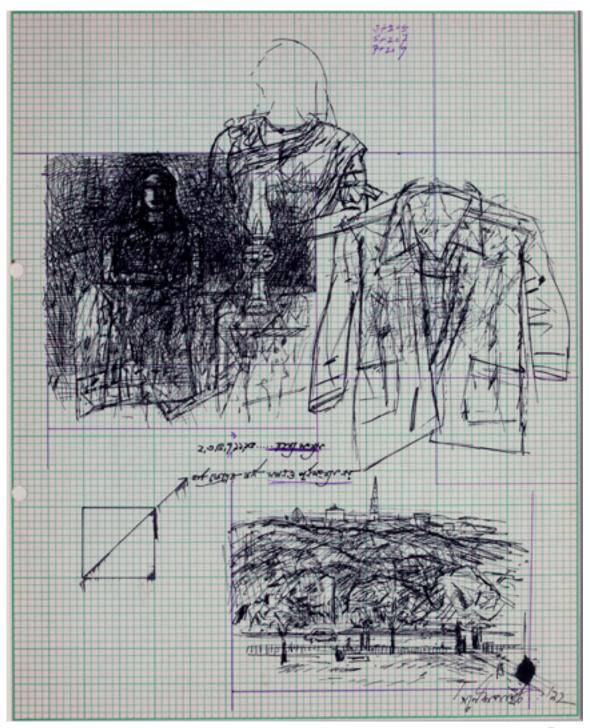


Fig. 29



Fig. 30a Detail

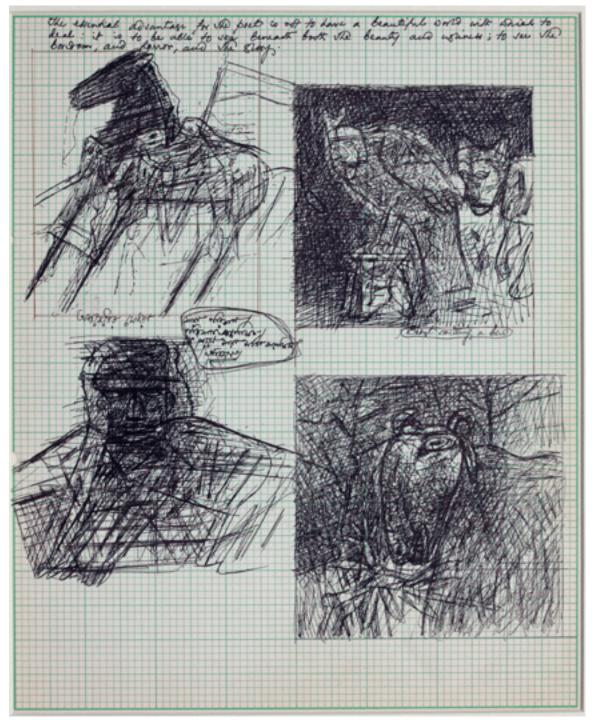


Fig. 30

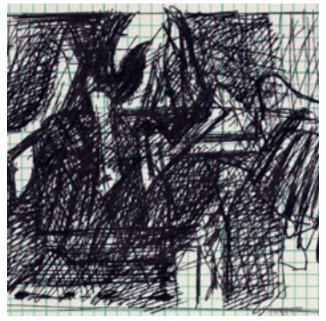


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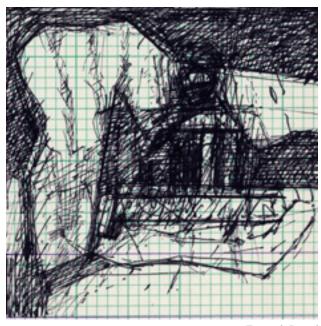


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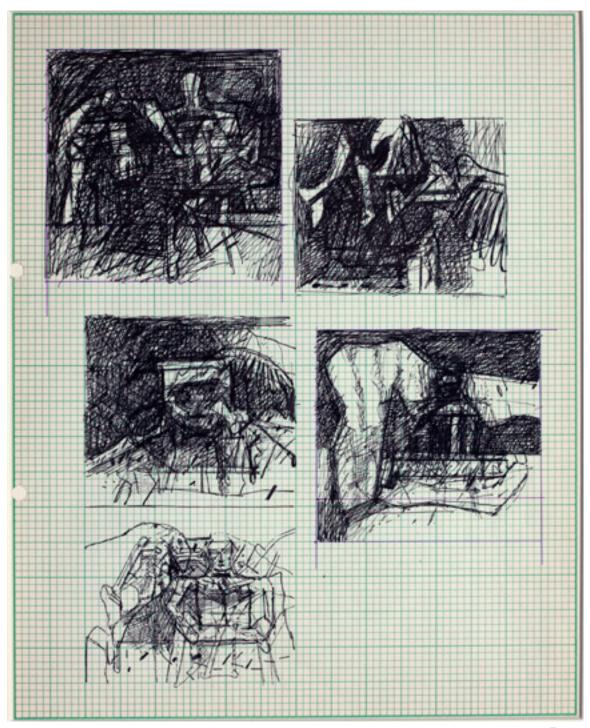


Fig. 31



Fig. 32a Detail



Fig. 32b Detail



Fig. 32



Fig. 33a Detail

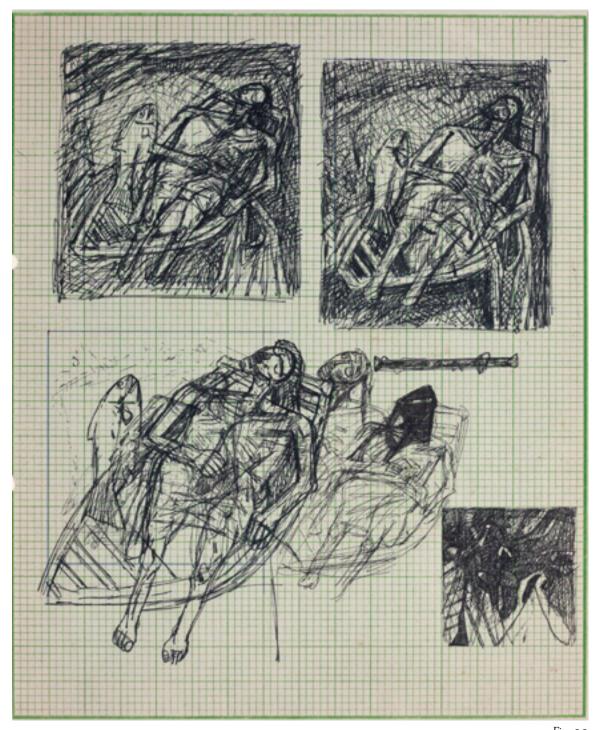


Fig. 33

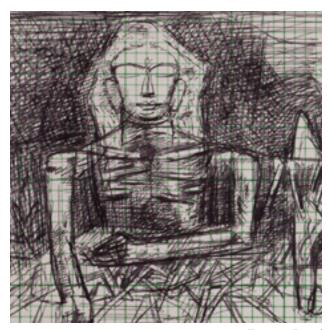
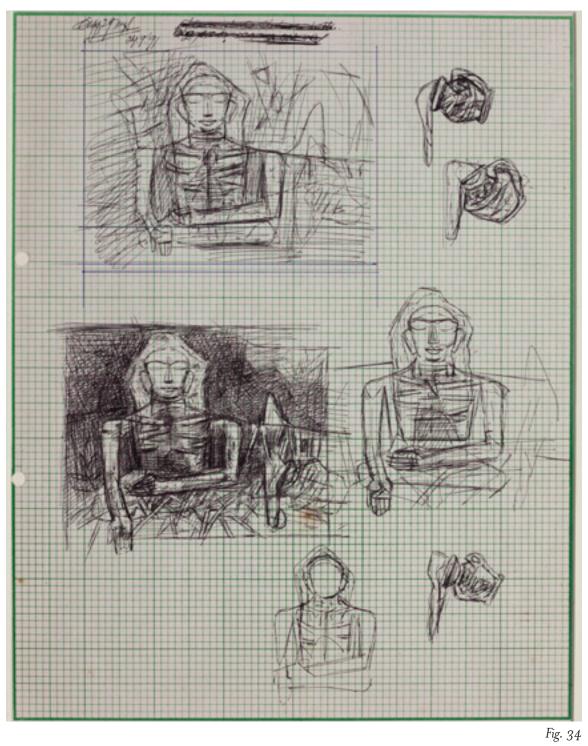


Fig. 34a Detail



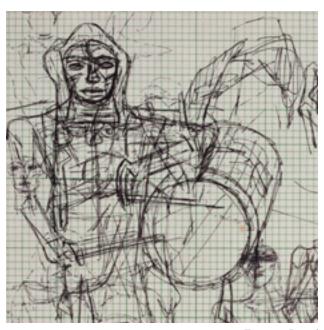


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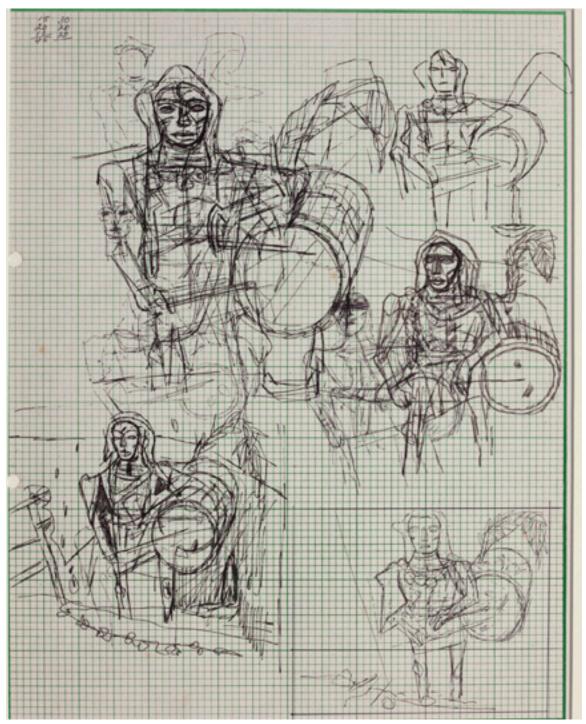


Fig. 35



Fig. 36



Fig. 37



Fig. 38a Detail

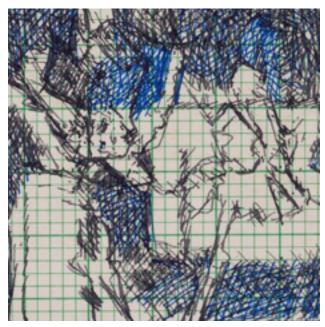


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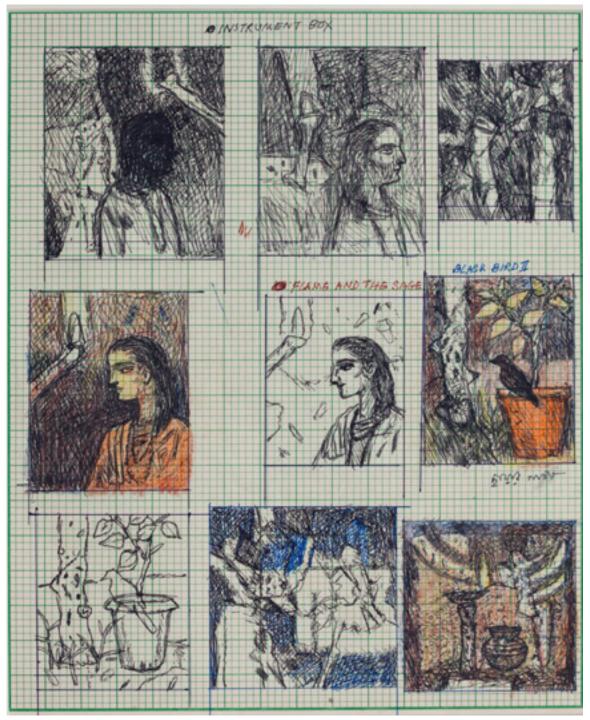


Fig. 38



Fig. 39a Detail



Fig. 39

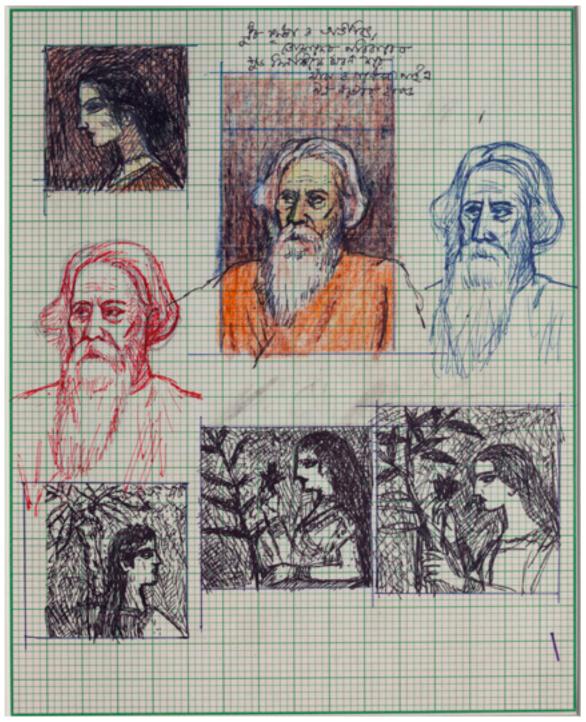


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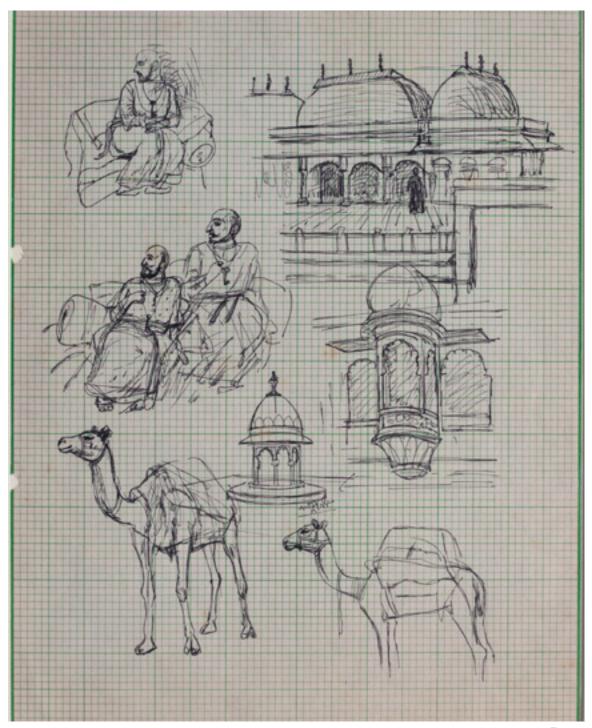


Fig. 41



Fig. 42a Detail

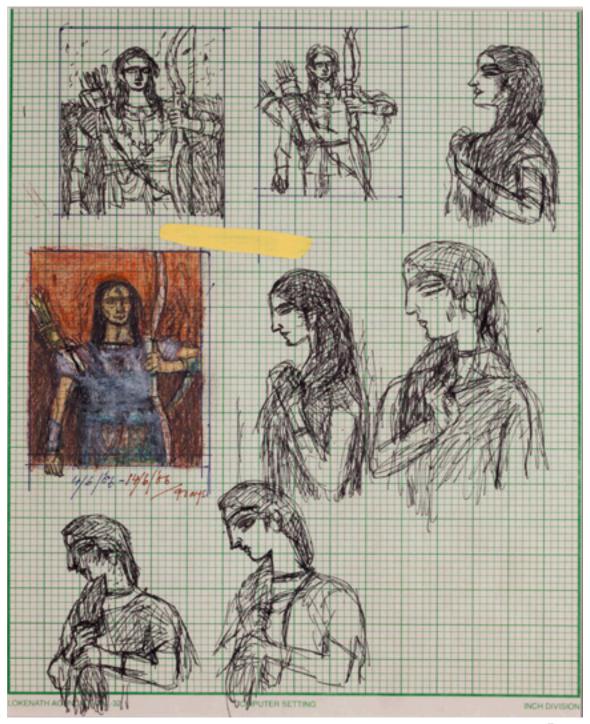


Fig. 42

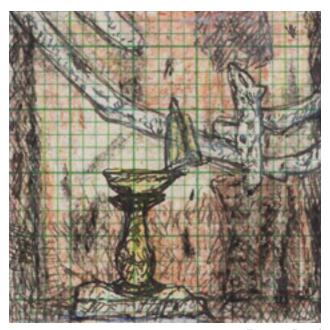


Fig. 43a Detail

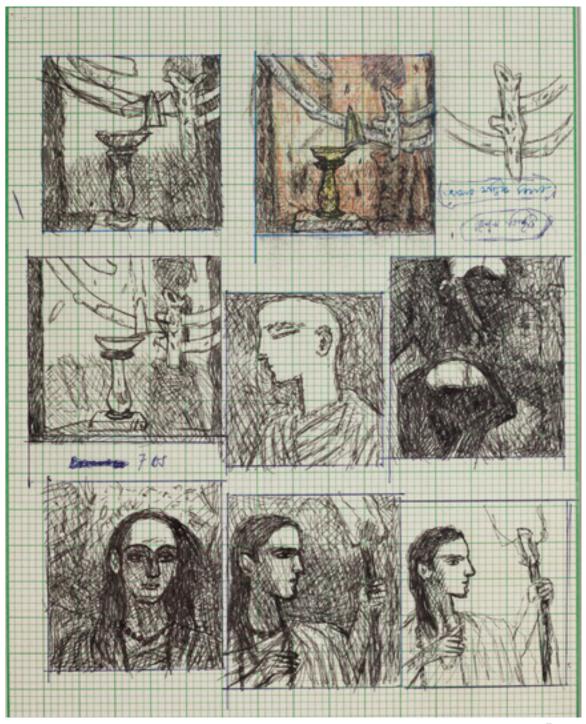


Fig. 43



Fig. 44

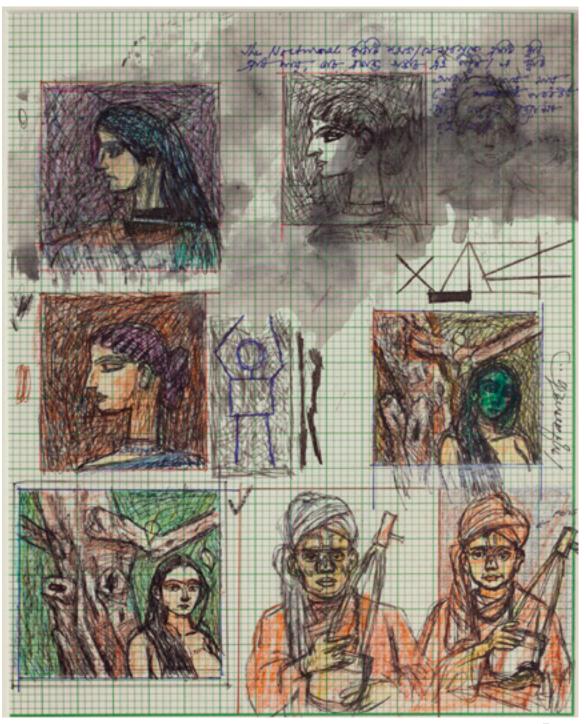


Fig. 45

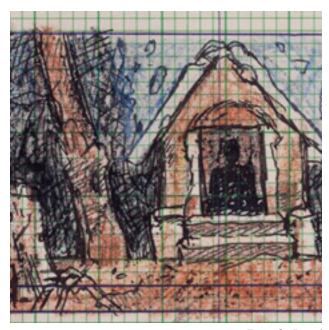


Fig. 46a Detail

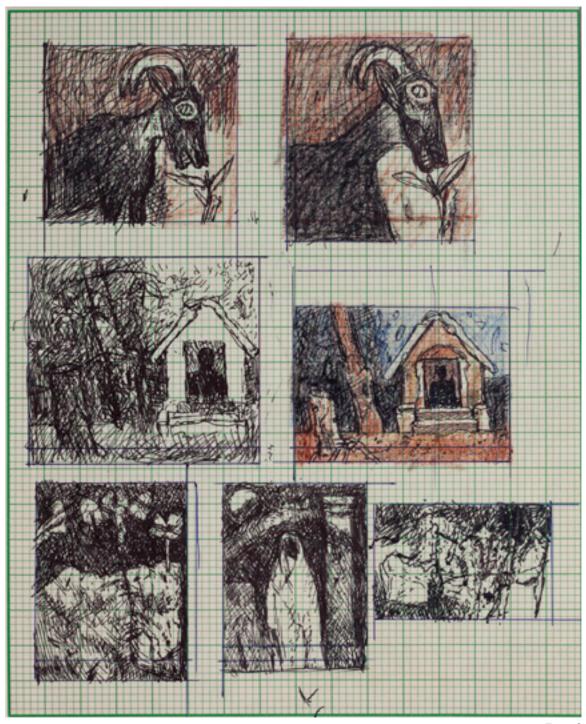


Fig. 46



Fig. 47a Detail

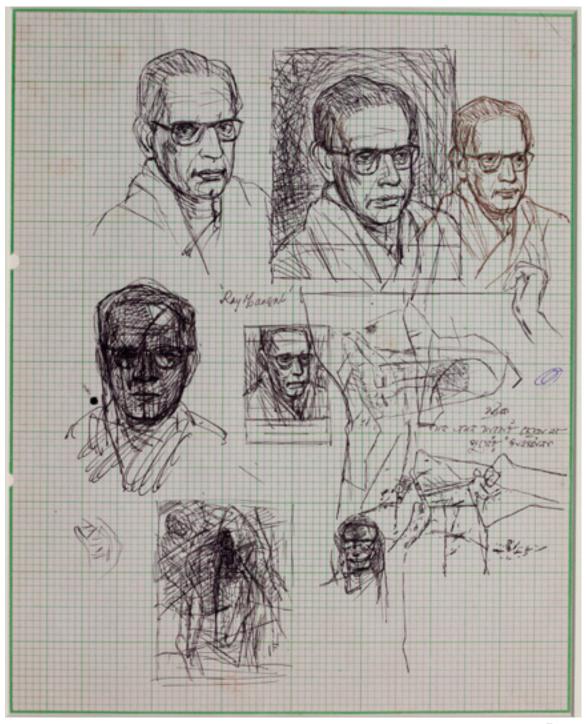


Fig. 47

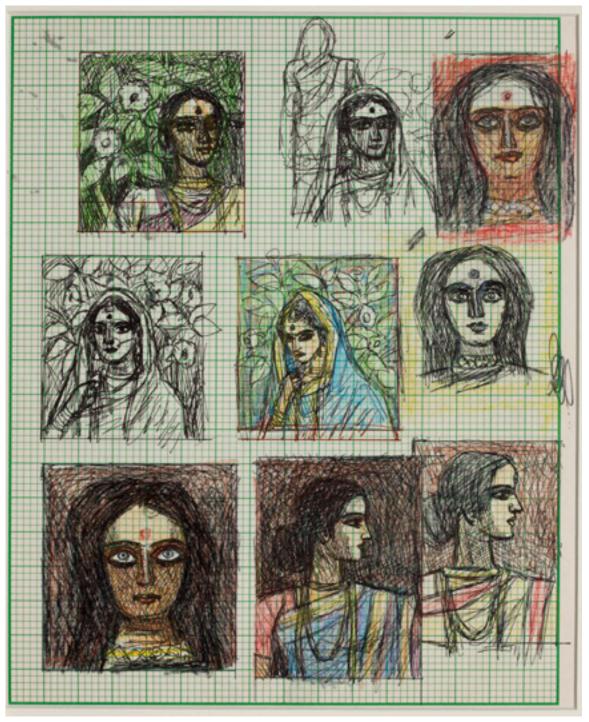


Fig. 48

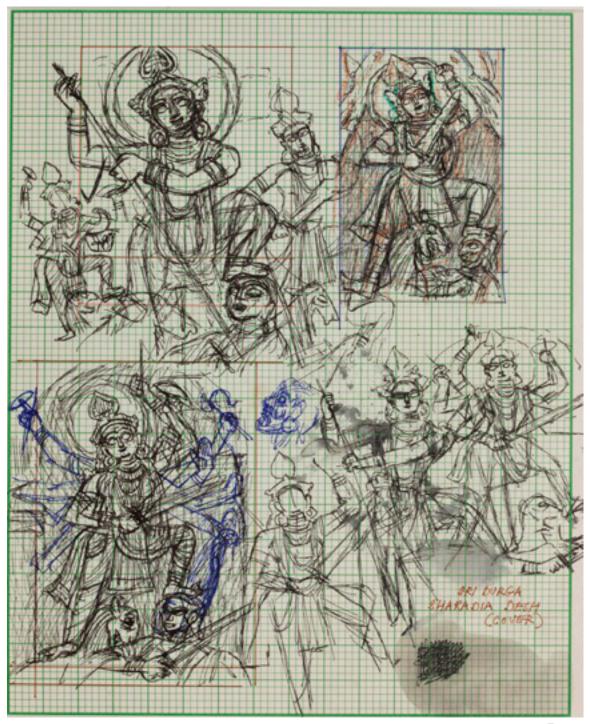


Fig. 49

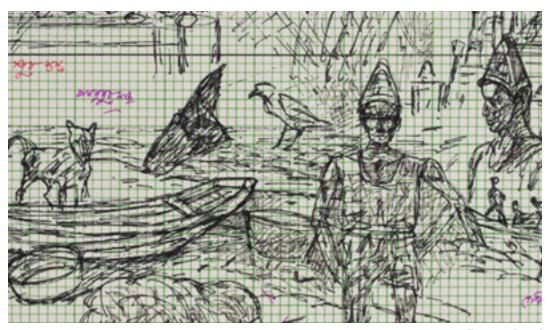


Fig. 50a Detail

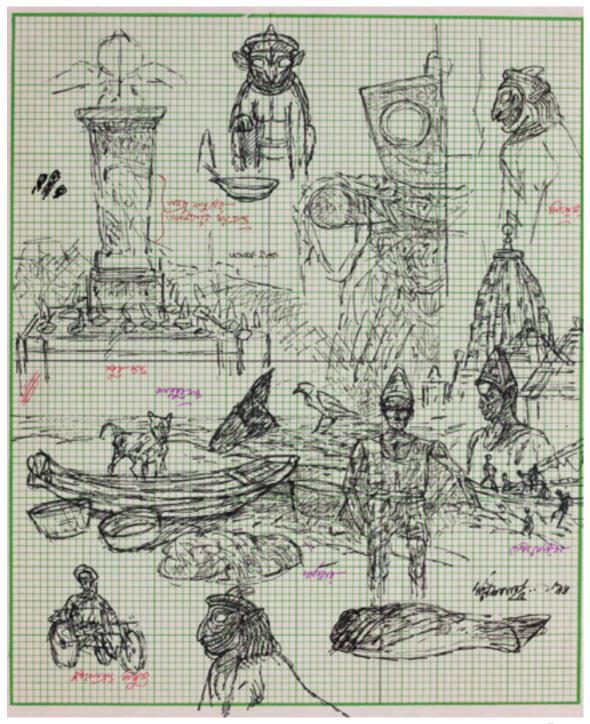


Fig. 50



Fig. 51a Detail

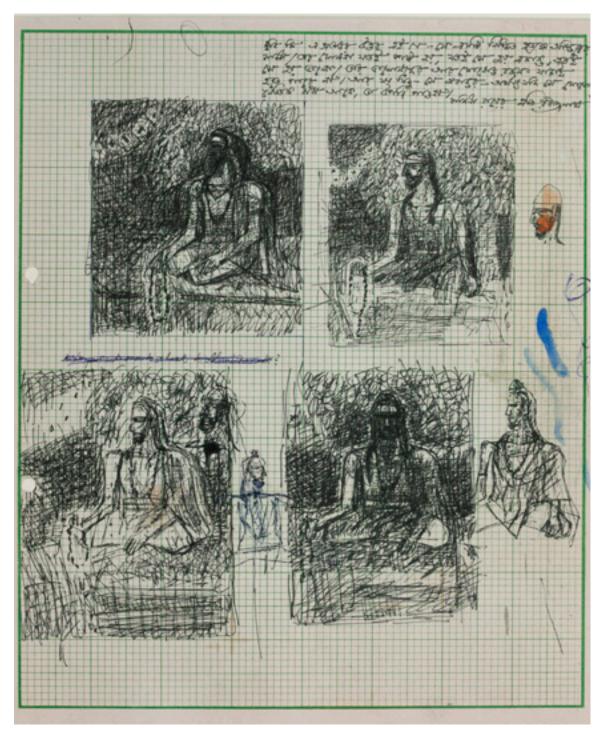


Fig. 51

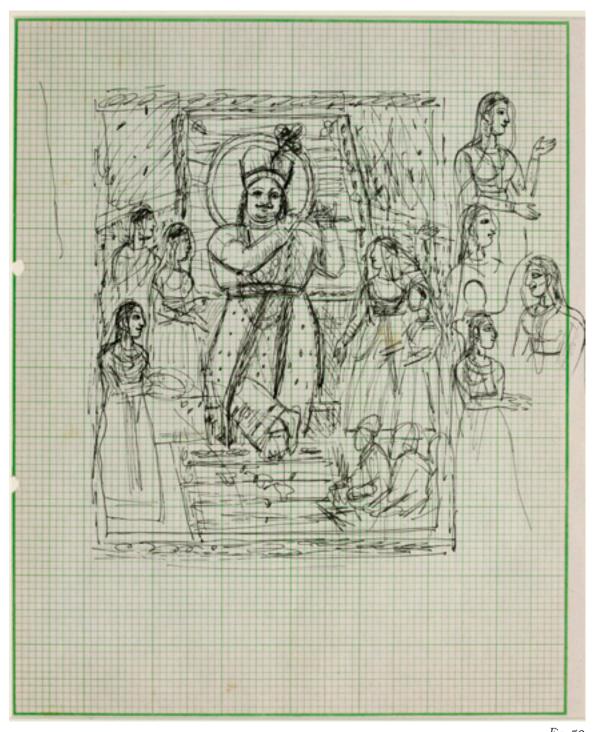


Fig. 52

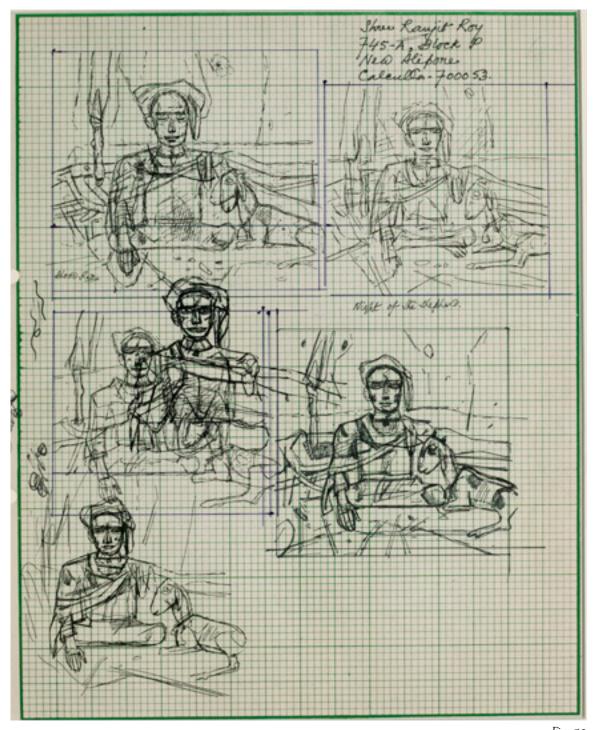


Fig. 53

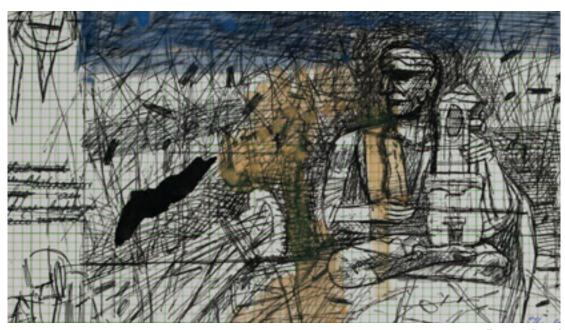


Fig. 54a Detail

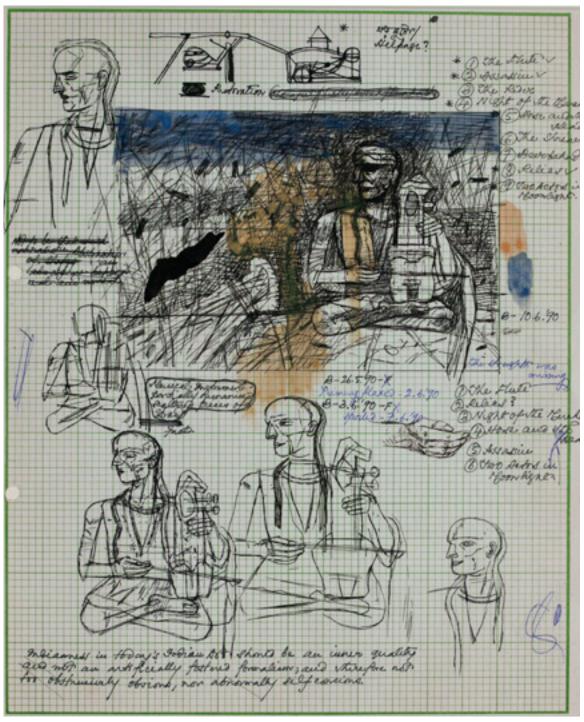


Fig. 54

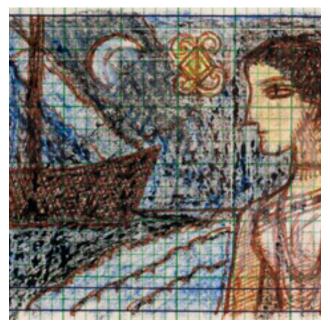
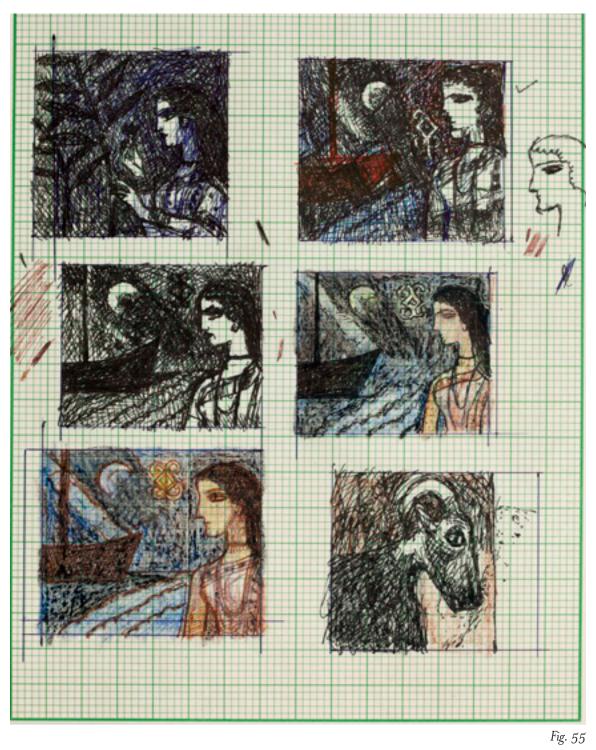


Fig. 55a Detail



Fig. 55b Detail



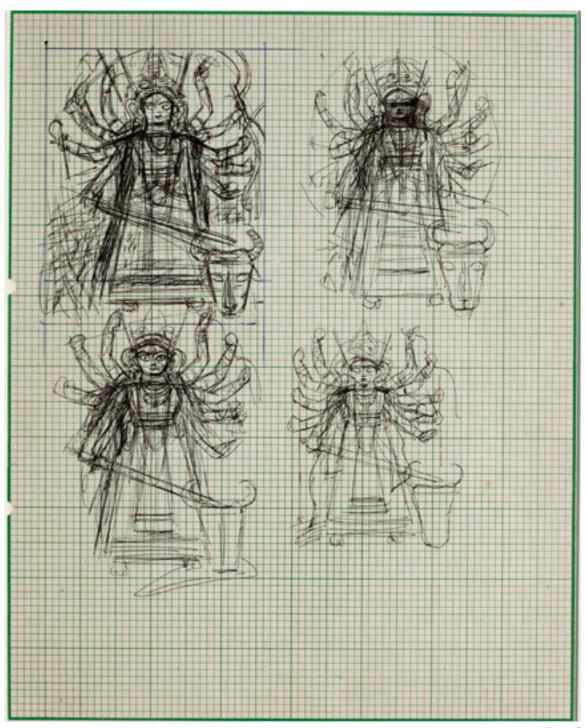


Fig. 56

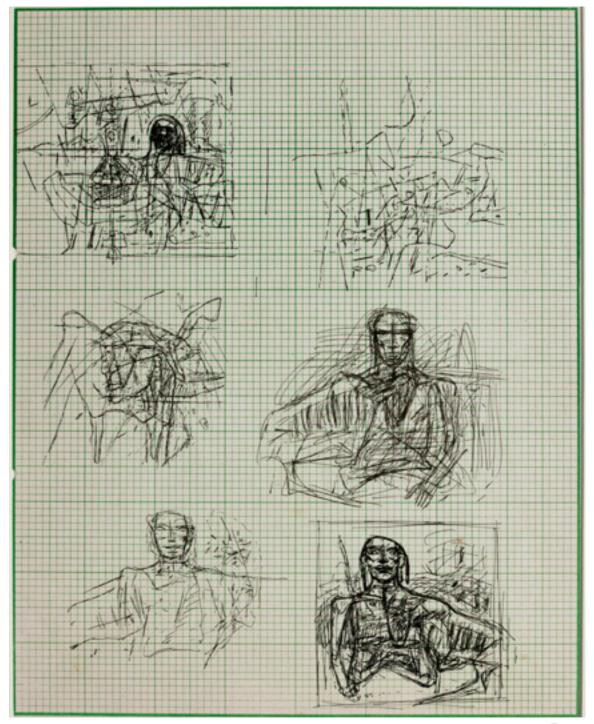


Fig. 57



Fig. 58a Detail



Fig. 58



Fig. 59a Detail

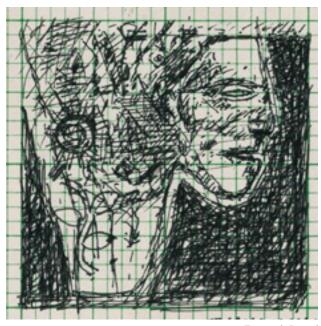


Fig. 59b Detail

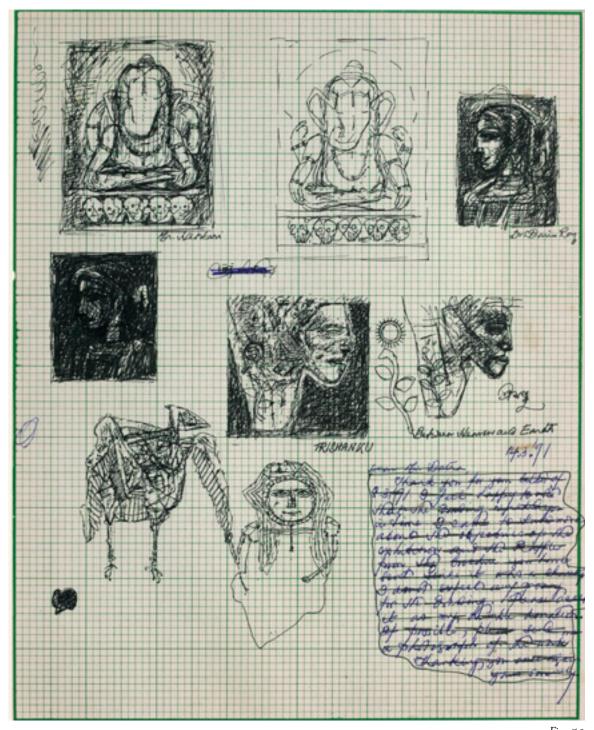


Fig. 59

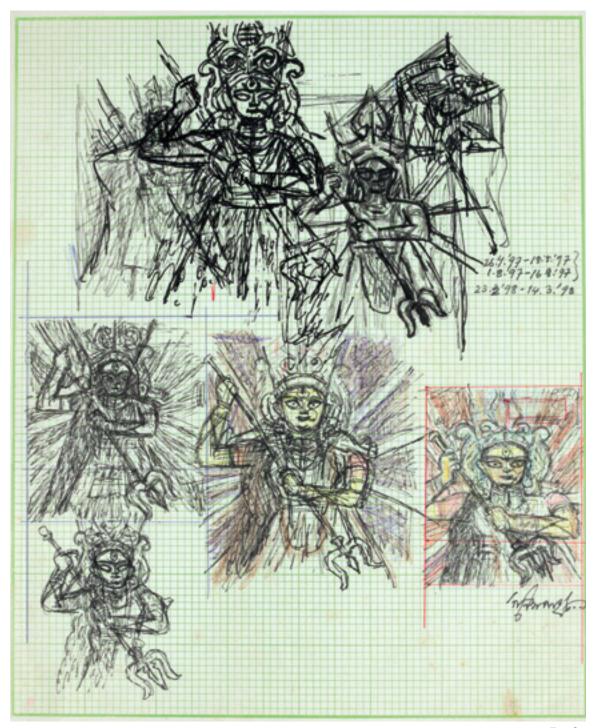


Fig. 60

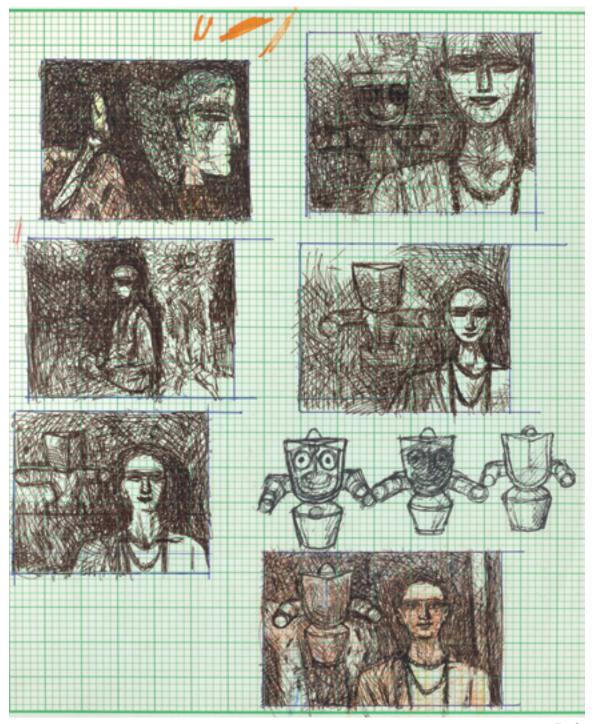


Fig. 61

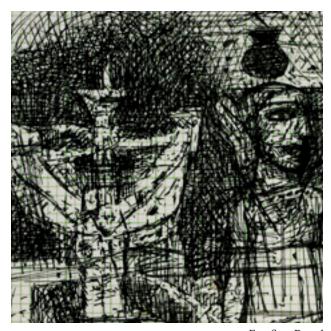


Fig. 62a Detail

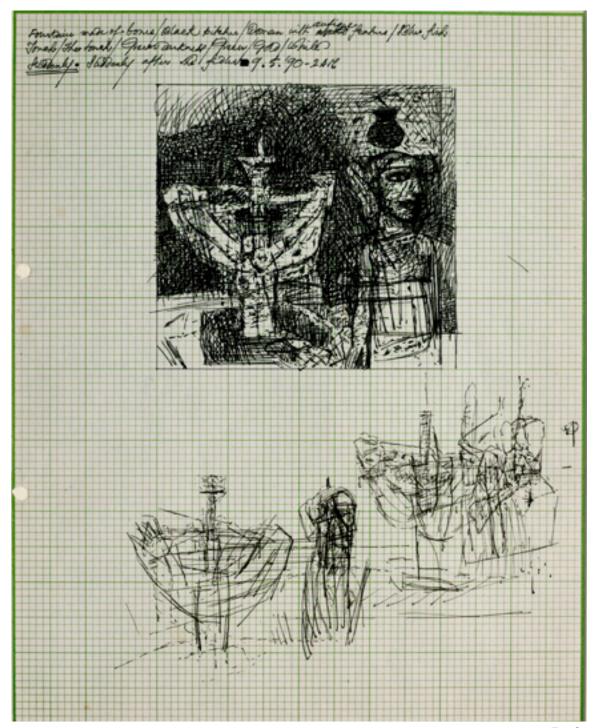


Fig. 62



Fig. 63a Detail



Fig. 63



Fig. 64

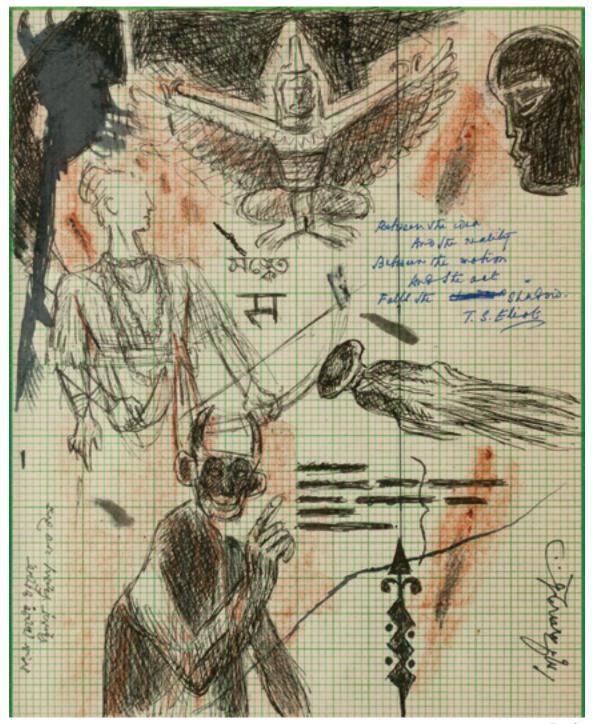


Fig. 65

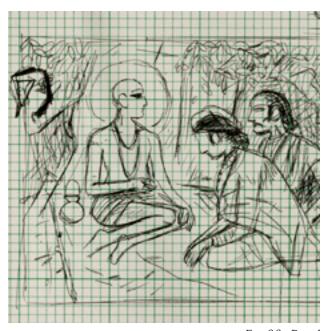


Fig. 66a Detail



Fig. 66



Fig. 67a Detail



Fig. 67

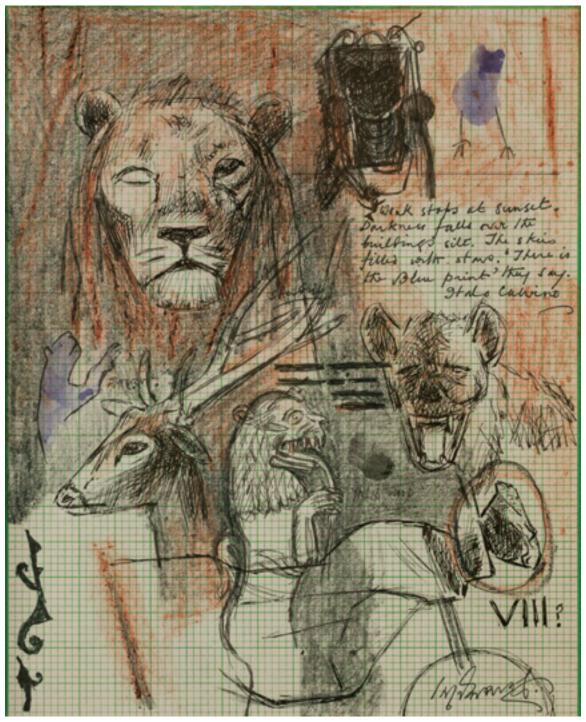


Fig. 68

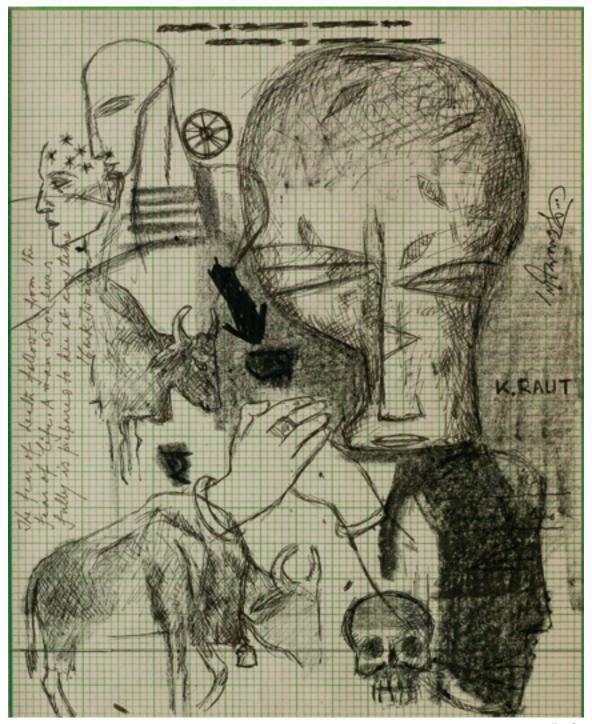


Fig. 69



Fig. 70a Detail

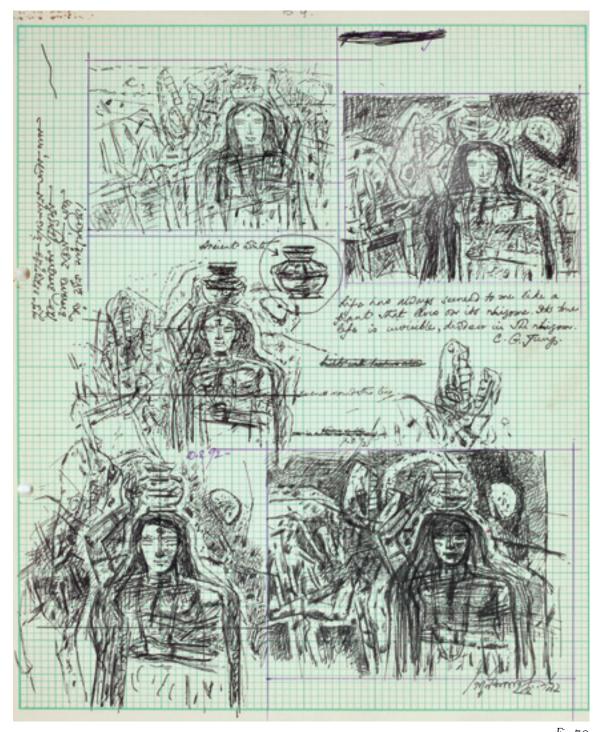


Fig. 70



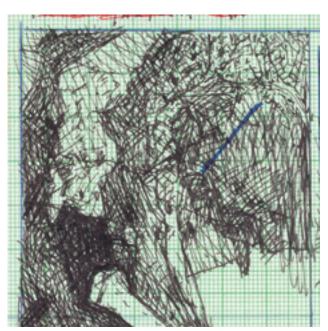


Fig. 71a Detail

Fig. 71b Detail



Fig. 71c Detail



Fig. 71

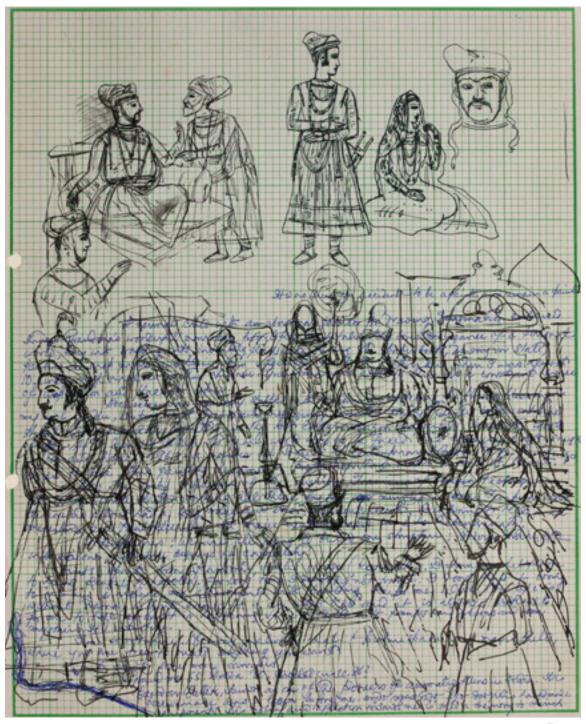


Fig. 72

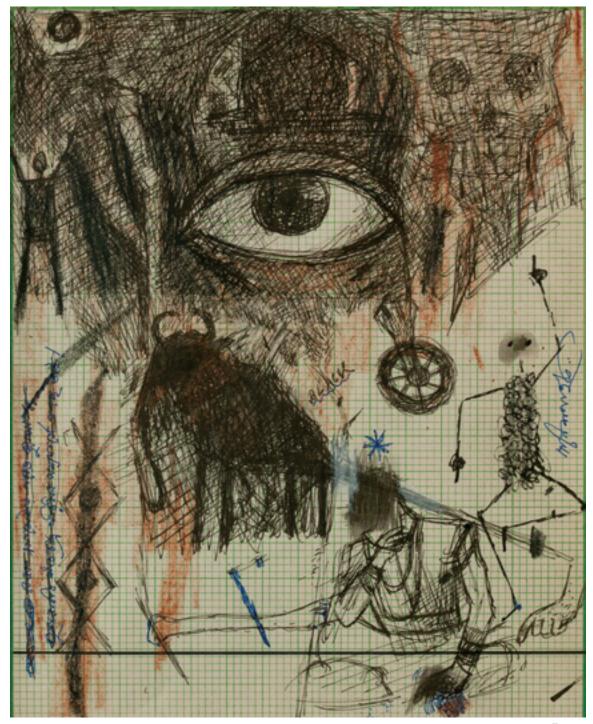


Fig. 73



About

ARUN GHOSE

A ll 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.



About

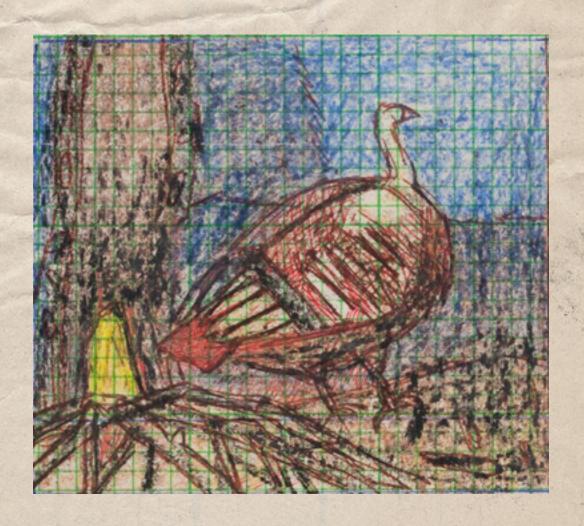
SANCHIT ART

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, K. Laxma Goud, Lalu Prasad Shaw, Neeraj Goswami, Paresh Maity, Ram Kumar, Sakti Burman, Sanjay Bhattacharya, Satish Gujral and Thota Vaikuntam are some of the artists represented by Sanchit Art.



• The within bracket part of logo to be foil stamped.







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