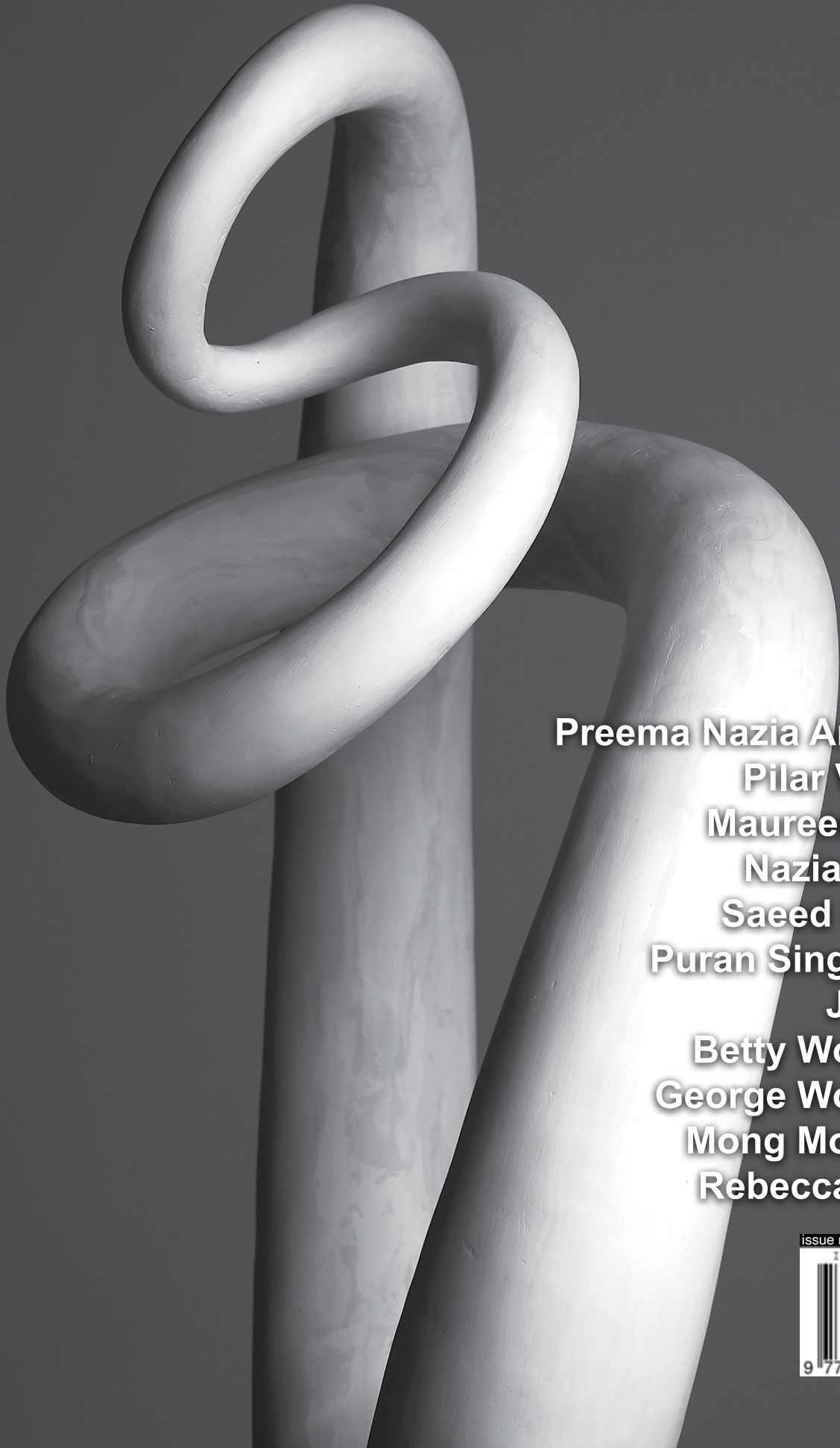


The Blue **Lotus**



Lu Yu
Preema Nazia Andaleeb
Pilar Viviente
Maureen Drdak
Nazia Ahmed
Saeed Ibrahim
Puran Singh Jhala
John Oh
Betty Woodman
George Woodman
Mong Mong Sho
Rebecca Hague

issue no. 58 Summer 2023

ISSN 2754-9151



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The Blue
Lotus





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Rickshaw Girl

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The Blue Lotus



A quick word

Summer

And, so quickly, it's Summer.

Welcome to this fresh off-the-press issue of The Blue Lotus magazine (58).

In this issue are galleries and exhibitions from the UK as well as Malaysia. Also a story from Bangladesh and a short story (and its review) from India. And lots, lots more.

Thank you, as always, for being here and reading this magazine. Do come back to future issues or take a look at past ones on ISSUU.

Submissions are encouraged to be sent to martinabradley@gmail.com

*Take care and stay safe
for Covid 19 and its variants are, sadly, still
with us.*

Martin

(Martin A Bradley, Founding Editor)



Lu Yu





Puzzle



Transcendent



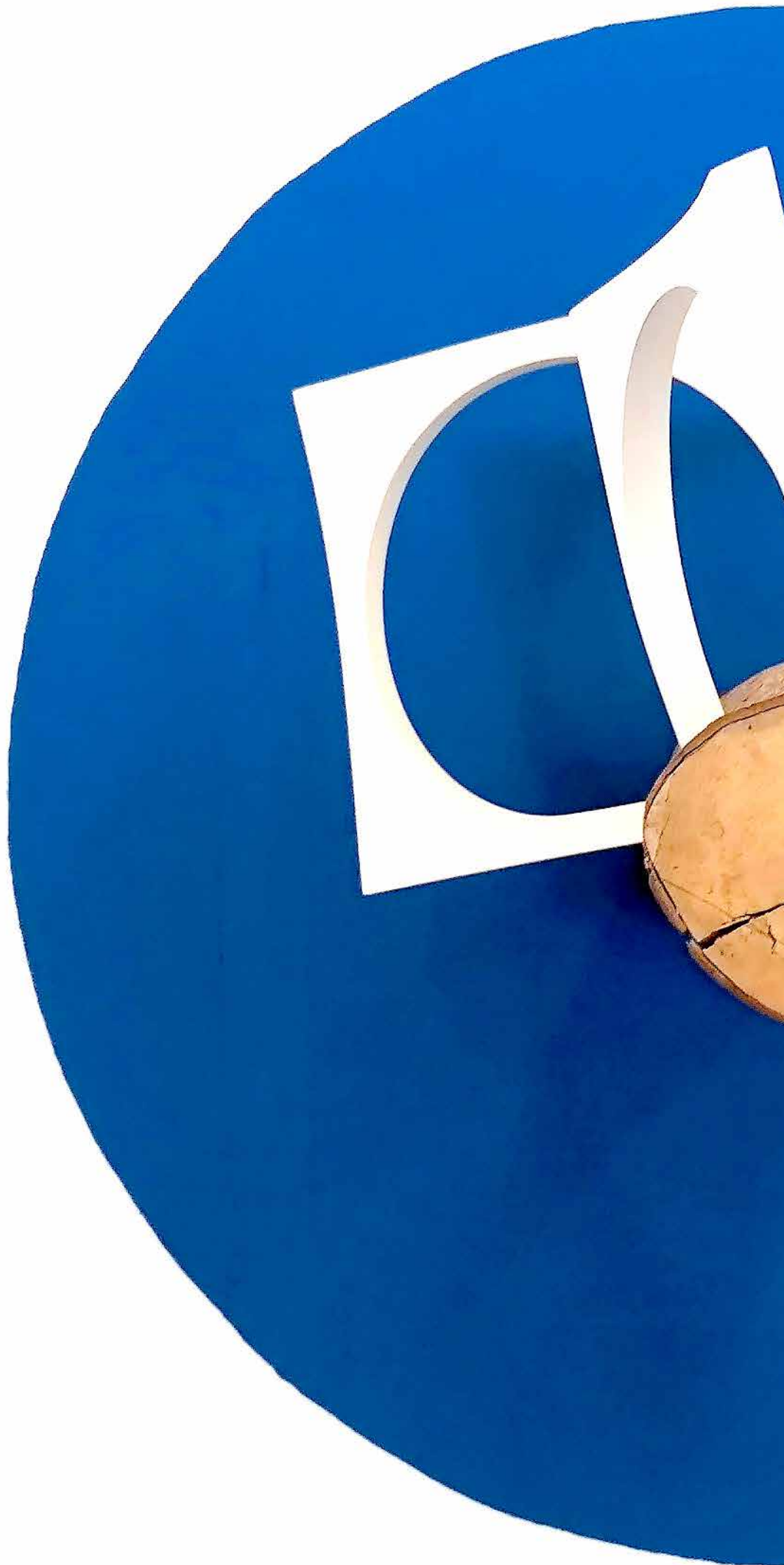
Lu Yu

I am originally from China with no art background or experience but somehow I know Art is always my greatest interest and deepest compassion.

After my children have grown up, I am currently studying fine art in School of Art in Colchester Institute. Although I appreciate classical drawings and paintings very much, the contemporary art, particularly abstract sculpture and installation fascinate me the most. I feel I could express myself and get tremendous satisfaction by exploring and experimenting three dimension using different materials and processes.

I would say my works are strongly inspired and influenced by some Minimalistic sculptors like Sol LeWitt and Donald Judd. I have great appreciation and love for the purified form of beauty itself. And also I am interested in exploring the relationship between the visible simplified outer form, space and the invisible inner space, emotions...

[Instagram@luyu_artist](https://www.instagram.com/luyu_artist)



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Transcendent

Lu Yu's process of plaster sculpture making



Drawing by wires in space.



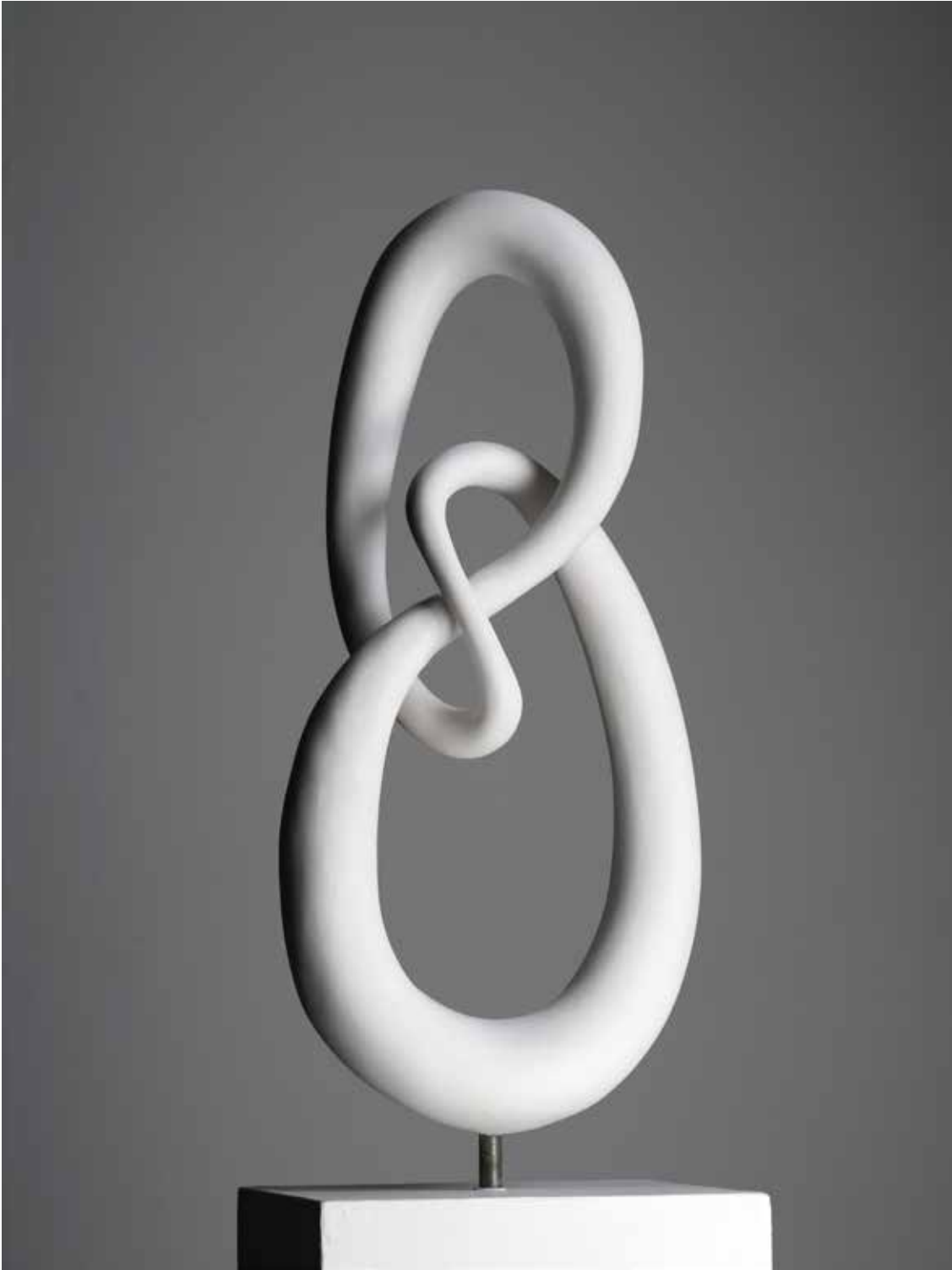
Joining metal 'bars' together with small clamps



Adding chicken wire for plaster



Plastered and sanded to perfection



Untitled



Dream & Reality



Puzzle

Colchester Art Society



TRACK MARKERS

CONTEMPORARY SCULPTURE AT FINGRINGHOE



1 APRIL - 30 SEPTEMBER 2023

DEBBIE AYLES | NICOLA BURRELL | JULIE CUTHBERT | PAYNE GUNFIELD | **LU YU**
LUCY LUTYENS | CHRIS MEIGH-ANDREWS | DAVID TRENOW | CLIVE WAKEFORD

Reserve open 10am - 5pm, 7 days a week, free entry
Fingringhoe Wick Nature Discovery Park, Colchester, CO5 7DN
www.essexwt.org.uk | www.colchesterartsociety.co.uk



Puzzle at Track Markers, Fingringhoe Wick Nature Discovery Park

Atto-Prem/self-L
Nazia Pre

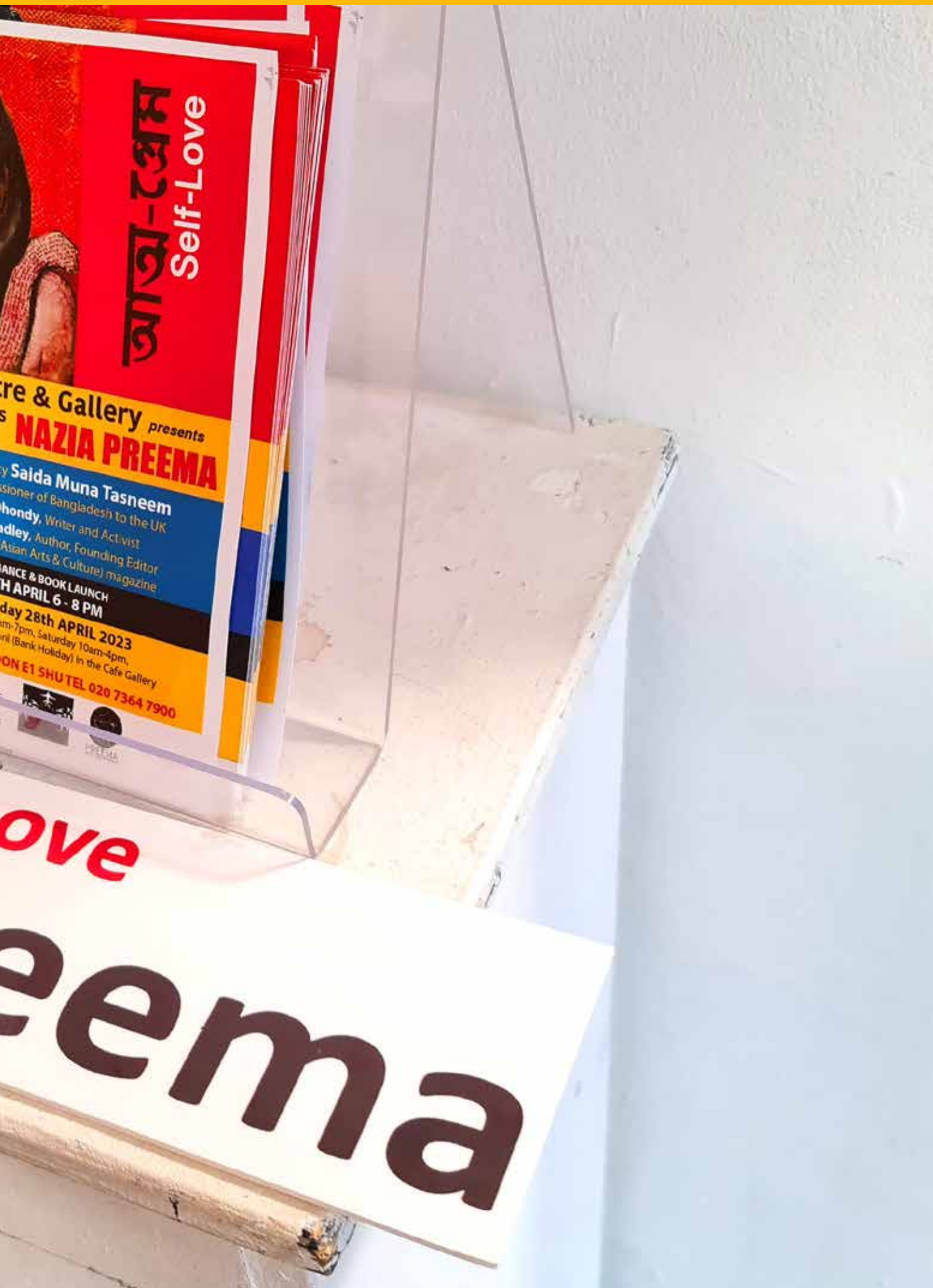


Brady Arts Centre
an exhibition of work

Chief Guest: Her Excellency
High Commissioner
Special Guests: Farrukh D
Martin Bra
Blue Lotus

PREVIEW, PERFORMANCE
THURSDAY 6TH

Saturday 8th - Fri
Open Monday to Friday 9
closed Sundays & Monday 10 Ap
192-196 HAMBURY ST, LONDON



আত্ম-স্নেহ
Self-Love

Brady Arts Centre & Gallery presents
NAZIA PREEMA

by Nazia Preema
Commissioner of Bangladesh to the UK
Journalist, Writer and Activist
Nazia Preema, Author, Founding Editor
(Asian Arts & Culture) magazine
DANCE & BOOK LAUNCH
Saturday 28th APRIL 2023
10am-4pm, Saturday 10am-4pm,
Easter Bank Holiday in the Cafe Gallery
LONDON E1 SHU TEL 020 7364 7900

Self-Love
Preema

Preema Nazia Andaleeb at the [Brady Arts Centre & Gallery](#), London, UK



Nazia Preema: Self-Love
Preema Nazia Andaleeb
2011



PREEMA ACTIVE

Bangladesh artist Preema Nazia Andaleeb's artworks 'Nazia Preema: Self-Love' were on show at London's Brady Arts Centre (Hanbury St, in London's East End/Tower Hamlets). That notable venue, according to its online history was..."Established in 1896 by Jewish philanthropist Charlotte Rothschild, the club offered children of Spitalfields's underprivileged, Jewish immigrants recreational and educational opportunities, as well as holidays to the countryside."

Today, the Brady Arts Centre is the centre of a Multi-Ethnic cultural community, and popular with the local Bengali population. It is there



that I had the delight of being asked to be a guest, speaking briefly at the launch of Bangladesh's intriguing artist Preema Nazia Andaleeb's exhibition, her art, paintings, graphics, photographs of her performing, as well as a showing of her video (DLAB 2019, Bangladesh, Back ART Foundation [BAF] as well being a launch her book (Preema Donna) too.

When I arrived at the Brady Arts Centre, out of the East London Spring drizzle, for the exhibition, and in high hopes of taking a few minutes break in the ground floor café (over a flat white and slice of whatever cake might just be available) the cafe was closing, due to preparations for the launch of Preema's exhibition



and book. As the coffee machine had been shut down, I was persuaded to take a 'nice cuppa tea', instead.

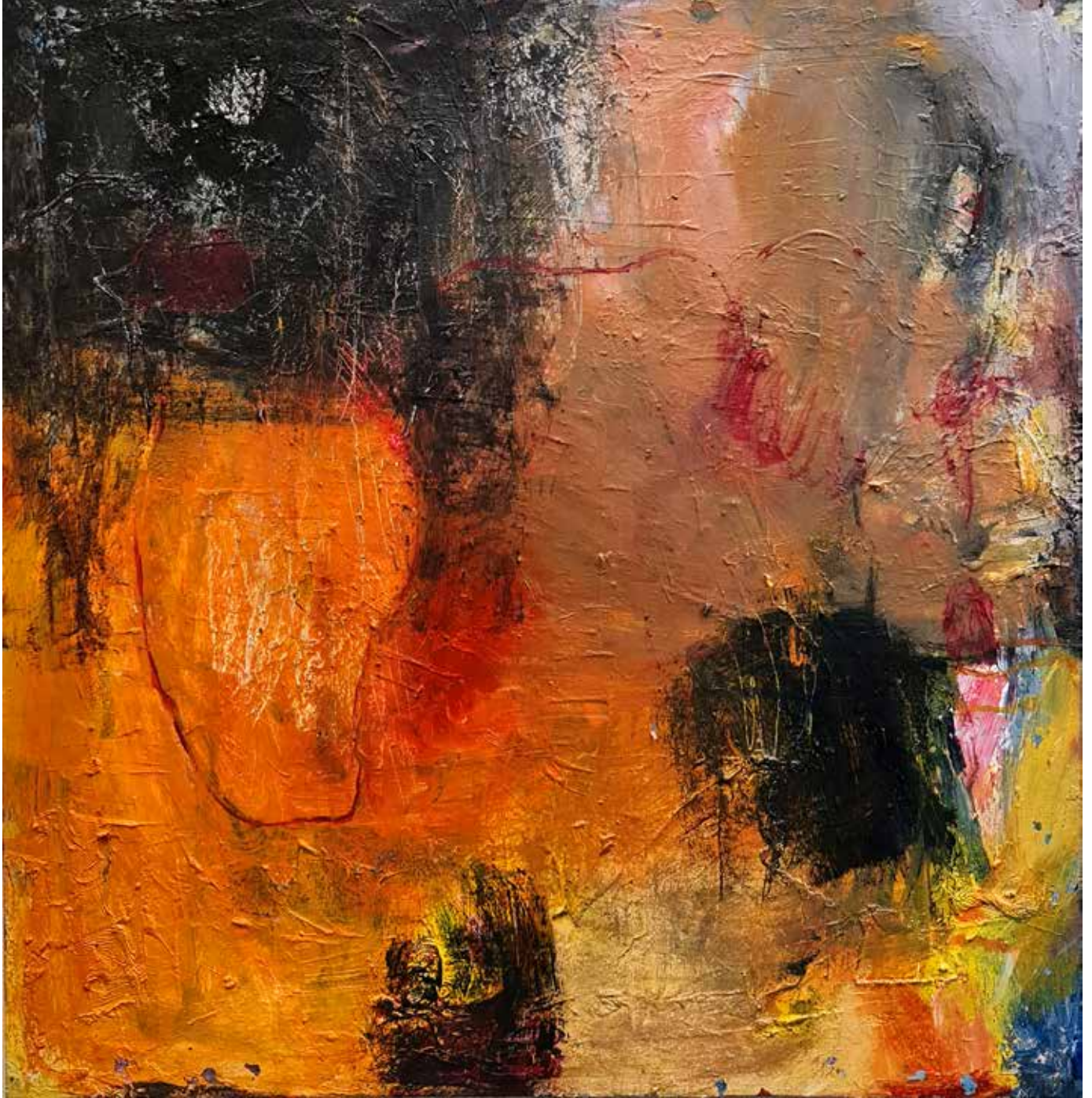
The tea, chats to various early art-loving arriviers, and my nosiness re the erection of the exhibition and the fact that it was the first time I was witnessing Preema's works 'in the flesh' (as it were), led me to look a little more closely at what was being placed on those walls.

Previously, I had written about Preema's book (as 'Preema Nazia Andaleeb; Not a Book Review', in *The Blue Lotus* magazine, issue 57), and remarked that Preema often creates paintings with an 'Expressionistic' feel. Being there, in that 'Centre', made me reflect upon



the work I was seeing.

Some art historians like to place the concept of a South Asian 'Expressionism' (in art) way back to Lucknow Technical School and Bhagwant Singh (with his terra-cotta models of 'Famine', 'Beggars' and 'A Cripple' exhibited in Delhi between 1902 and 1903, at the 'Delhi Exhibition'). Others would like to cite Rabindranath Tagore and his paintings exhibited in 1932, and later the expressionist experimentation at Tagore's Santiniketan, or the 'progressive' painter M.F. Husain (Maqbool Fida Husain) and his various modernisms as Expression in South Asia's origins. Which ever founder might have been responsible for an early South Asian 'Expressionism' style, there is little doubt that Preema Nazia Andaleeb now champions that style from out of Bangladesh, with her paintings as well as with her emotive Performance Art pieces.







For, as an added bonus, at the Brady Centre, we were treated to a live performance by Preema which began in the 100 seater theatre and ended at the exhibition space in which her artworks were being displayed. It is one thing to see photographs, or even videos (You Tube et al) of Preema's performances, but entirely something else to encounter her interactions when performing live.

Of 'Performance Art' the Tate website (<https://www.tate.org.uk/art/art-terms/p/performance-art>) Indicates that ..."Throughout the twentieth century performance was often seen as a non-traditional way of making art. Live-ness, physical movement and impermanence offered artists alternatives to the static permanence of painting and sculpture.

In the post-war period performance became aligned with conceptual art, because of its often immaterial nature....More recently, performance has been understood as a way of engaging

directly with social reality, the specifics of space and the politics of identity. "

Preema's performance art is, really, a tool used by the artist and (preferably) to be witnessed live, by an audience and as it happens. She is quoted as saying "An artist is always in the practice of making art." ('An Enigma: Connecting the Dots', by Abesh Mehjabeen, in Showcase magazine, July 1, 2021).

And her performance, dangling in the lacuna betwixt life and art, is us witnessing her 'in the practice of making art'. Many performance art pieces are akin to the ephemeral Tibetan Tantric sand paintings, which are impermanent and destroyed after completion. Preema's performances cannot be bought, sold or passed on. Her performance art is time limited, grown in, and for, the moment. Her 'performances' may be seen to be in the realm of Walter Benjamin and his 1935 essay 'The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction', where Benjamin



posits the notion of 'aura', deemed innate in an original work of art, but lost in a reproduction, in this case video.

The unexpected nature of Preema's performance in the theatre at the Brady Arts Centre, at first baffled, then intrigued as she, initially, vocalised something primal, unintelligible. Then Preema moved amidst the audience, beginning to entreat, asking, then questioning - Śununa (listen, in Bangla).

We, the audience, were intrigued, not knowing what was expected there was no audible audience response. Walking down from the seated audience, pulling at her black attire, Preema had interacted as she went, then took to the moodily lit stage. On that stage, and under those evocative lights, it was as if her quest for self-love drew her to connecting with her Jungian/ Janovian 'inner child'. She had pouted, stamped petulant feet, beat the floor with her hands while all the time presenting a fascination

of movement, a physicality of action to the, by then rapt, audience.

In time, Preema's engaging presentation moved from the colourfully lit stage, and into the exhibition space. We (but by then, her) audience followed to witness Preema performing a live action 'automatic' drawing with white chalk, on the cleared cafe floor.

Her movements were ever more intriguing, mesmerising. Like a modern day (Bangladeshi) Sarah Bernhardt, Preema Nazia Andaleeb gave wholly of herself. She had put her energies of mind, body and soul into her stunning performance and energising the whole Brady Arts Centre by so doing. It certainly was an experience I would not have wanted to miss.

Ed





আত্ম-প্রেম Self-Love

Brady Arts Centre & Gallery

presents an exhibition of

NAZIA PREEMA

Chief Guest: Her Excellency **Saida Muna Tasneem**
High Commissioner of Bangladesh to the UK

Special Guests: **Farrukh Dhondy**, Writer and Activist

Martin Bradley, Author, Founding Editor
Blue Lotus (Asian Arts & Culture) magazine

PREVIEW, PERFORMANCE & BOOK LAUNCH
THURSDAY 6TH APRIL 6 - 8 PM

Saturday 8th - Friday 28th APRIL 2023

Open Monday to Friday 9am-7pm, Saturday 10am-4pm,
closed Sundays & Monday 10 April (Bank Holiday) in the Cafe Gallery

192-196 HANBURY ST, LONDON E1 5HU TEL 020 7364 7900

My Mother Pattu

Saras Manickam

Deeply humane, in turn wry and humorous, the stories in this collection haunt readers with their searing honesty. Lalitha, abused by her own mother, learns that bullies carry emotional traumas that scar everyone's lives.

Shiva Das confronts the truth of his own culpability when his adult special child dies in tragic circumstances. A woman, deeply in love with her husband, discovers to her anguish that the love of a good man is not enough.

A little boy tries hard to hold his family together as his parents' marriage disintegrates before his eyes.

A mother has a poignant yet brutal conversation with God about her severely disabled son.

Three young people idealistically reject racial prejudice and stereotyping, only to find that in Malaysia, their future paths are largely determined by ethnicity and privilege.

The extent to which a woman will go in her hatred for her daughter's childhood friend, ends in a violent aftermath.

An Indonesian maid realizes that the money she sends home has become more important than her own welfare or safety to her family.

A racial slur triggers reflections on friendship, identity, the loss of belonging and trust in a multi-racial community.

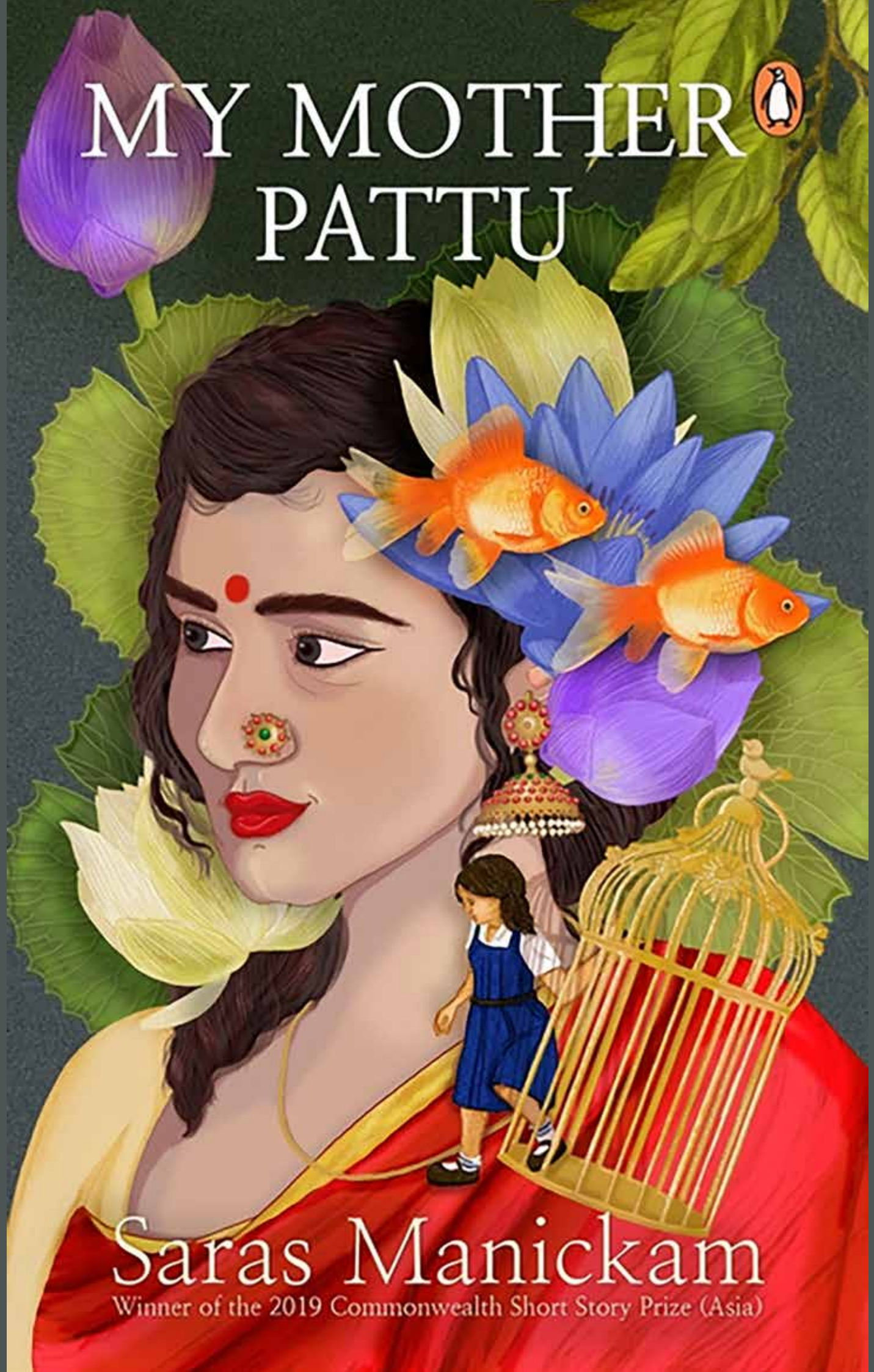
Meet the extraordinary in ordinary people when they confront the truth of their past and present – and refuse to look away. Authentic and unsentimental, each story celebrates the

resilience of the human spirit even as it challenges comfortable conventions about identity, love, family, community and race relations.

Saras Manickam

An award-winning writer, Saras Manickam's story, 'My Mother Pattu' won the regional prize for Asia in the 2019 Commonwealth Short Story Contest. In 2021, it was included in the anthology, The Art and Craft of Asian Stories, published by Bloomsbury, and in 2022, it was published in The Best of Malaysian Short Fiction in English 2010-2020. Saras Manickam worked as a teacher, teacher-trainer, copywriter, Business English trainer, copy-editor, and writer of textbooks, school workbooks and coffee-table books while writing short stories at night. Her various work experiences enabled insights into characters, and life experiences, shaping the authenticity which marks her stories. She also won the 2017 DK Dutt Award for her story, 'Charan'. Some of her other stories have appeared in Silverfish and Readings from Readings anthologies, while one was shortlisted for the 2021 Masters Review Summer Short Story Award. She lives and works in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia.

MY MOTHER PATTU



Saras Manickam

Winner of the 2019 Commonwealth Short Story Prize (Asia)

RELEGERE





Natividad Navalon1



Amparo Alepuz1

R E L E G E R E: Exhibition on Religion and Interculturalism

By Pilar Viviente

Professors from the Miguel Hernández University, CIA researchers, professors from the University of Valencia, the University of Granada, the University of the Basque Country and the University of Salamanca, together with other national and international artists, show the results of their latest investigations in art at the international exhibition R E L E G E R E.

The exhibition has been organized by Prof. Sarat Kumar Jena, director of the educational research centre IACLSC, International Association of Comparative Literature, Society and Culture, <https://iaclsc.wixsite.com/iaclsc>, and Professor Pilar Viviente, General Secretary of the IACLSC and art director of the exhibition. Likewise, the show has been curated by the IACLSC and the MATERIA Research Group of the UMH. https://www.umh.es/contenido/Investigacion/:uor_1137_136/datos_es.html

The exhibition includes two works by each of the 18 artists selected in the IACLSC public call: Ana Maya León, Amparo Alepuz, Daniel Tejero, Elia Torrecilla, Emilio Luis Fernández, Eugene Hyon, Imma Mengual, Jose Luis Lozano, DeAlbacete, Lourdes Santamaría, Mar Sueiras, María Jesús Cueto, Maria José Zanón, Natividad Navalón, Pilar Catalán,

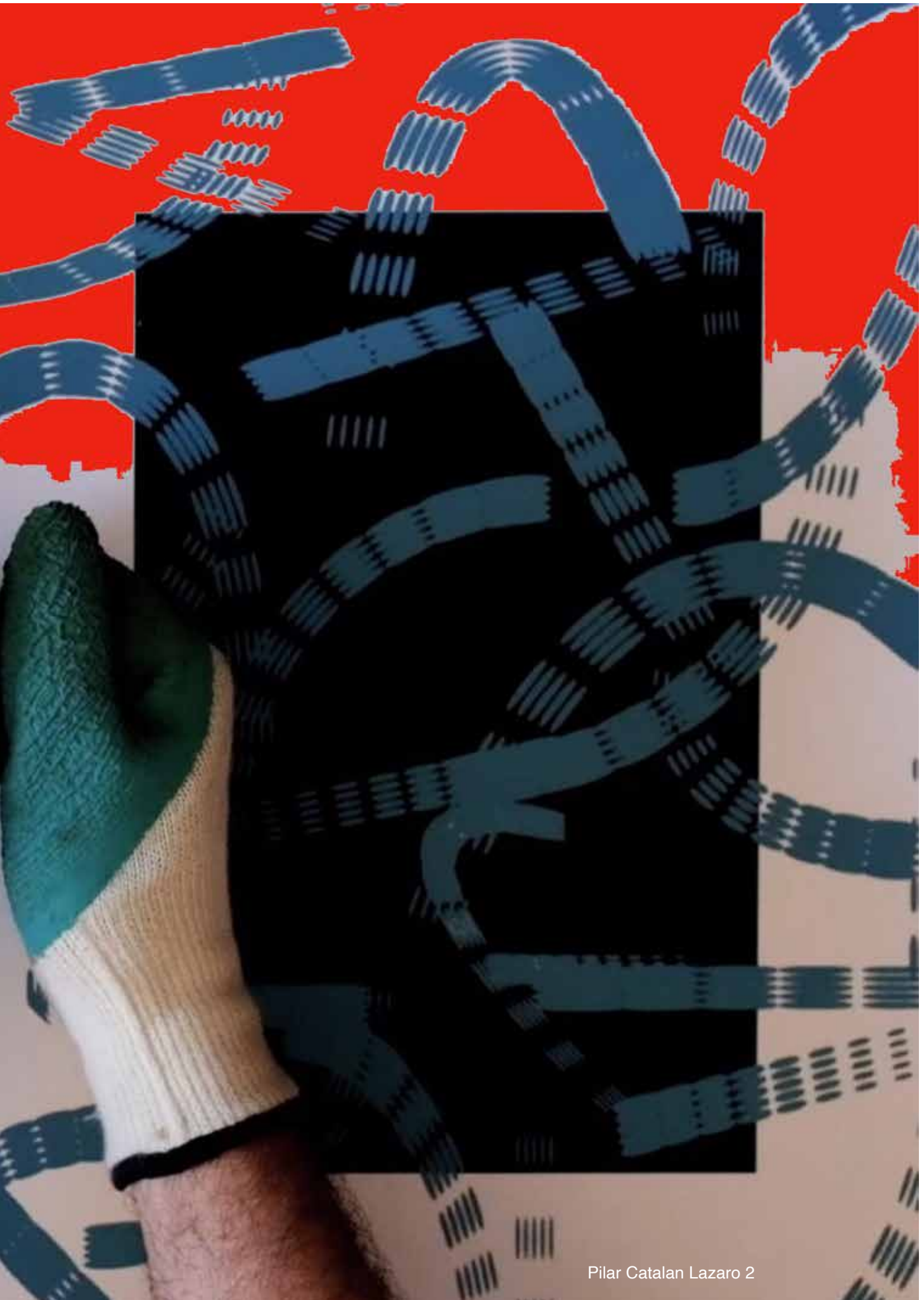
Pilar Viviente, Teresa Chafer y Vicente Barón. The works (painting, sculpture, photography) are on display at the exhibition hall of the KIIT School of Law, KIIT University, April 21-22 2023, authorized by the congress for this purpose, and later in a permanent online exhibition from 7 May 2023 on the Conference-Exhibition website, <https://icri2022.wordpress.com/>

The list of artists brings together five Spanish universities. A subsequent publication in the IACLSC journal of interdisciplinary studies is planned, as well as a Catalogue Book of the exhibition independent of the Proceedings Book of the conference, edited by the professors Sarat Kumar Jena and María Pilar Viviente Solé: Religion and Interculturalism: Philosophies and Traditions in Liberal Arts and Humanities (Volume I, 2023). ISBN: 9798378098576

Concept R E L E G E R E

What does the word relege mean in English? The classical etymology of the word "Religio", which goes back to Cicero himself, derives from relegere: re (again) + lego (read) where lego has the sense of "to review", "to choose", or "to consider carefully". Modern scholars such as Tom Harpur and Joseph Campbell have argued that religio is derived from





Pilar Catalan Lazaro 2

religare: re (again) + ligare (unite or connect).

R E L E G E R E read again - Relegere: re (again) + lego (read) - the social and cultural dimensions of religion and interculturalism, while uniting - Religare: re (again) + ligare (to unite or connect) - cultures, connecting different and distant traditions with different cultural concepts and values.

Relegere: re (again) + lego (read), "read", "review", "choose" or "carefully consider" the artistic research-creation in relation to the main themes of the International Conference on Religion and Interculturalism and its social and cultural dimensions, such as the promotion of inter-religious cultural diversity, inter-cultural dialogue or the precarious condition of humanity's spirituality in times of technological advance, from different perspectives of contemporary art and artistic styles by the artists.

Religare: re (again) + ligare (unite or connect) cultures. Inter-culturality is an increasingly urgent issue in the 21st century and inter-cultural competences are at the centre of all education. Cultural and economic globalization has caused the world to be increasingly interconnected, a world to which contemporary art can make an important and significant contribution: situations where the inter-cultural appears characterizing social and symbolic practices that produce new cultural intersections, new spaces, exchanges, interactions and articulations of meaning, thus producing profound transformations in the plurality of cultures in which religions are framed.

Interculturalism is a political movement that supports inter-cultural dialogue and challenges tendencies of self-segregation within cultures. Interculturalism implies going beyond the mere passive acceptance of the multiple cultures existing in a society and, instead, promotes dialogue and interaction between cultures. The artists participating in the R E L E G E R E exhibition contribute with their works so that, from the inter-cultural aspect of our society,

cultural concepts and the constructive values of cultures are presented and preserved in a different way from the past.

In contemporary society, the relationships between inter-culturality and religion are a consequence of cultural diversity and asymmetric globalization. The overcoming of Eurocentrism (and the logocentrism that sustains it) represents an important advance in the inclusion not only of women but also of cultural diversity. Interculturalism refers to a non-Eurocentric point of view. Contemporary art deals with an infinite variety of subjects, and the variety of languages used and the abundant media available allow artists to visually present inter-cultural concepts to their audience in a wide variety of ways. The RELEGERE exhibition thus joins the many representations in contemporary art that, understood as ideological products, refer to inter-cultural concepts. By exploring the inter-cultural concepts between the works, the way in which cultural exchange takes place, we provide young artists and researchers with contexts of thought in keeping with the universal circumstances of contemporary art.

Exhibition RELEGERE

4th IACLSC Biennial International Conference-Exhibition, April 21-22 2023, School of Law, KIIT University, Bhubaneswar.

Permanent online exhibition at the Conference-Exhibition website, May 7 2023.

<https://icri2022.wordpress.com/>

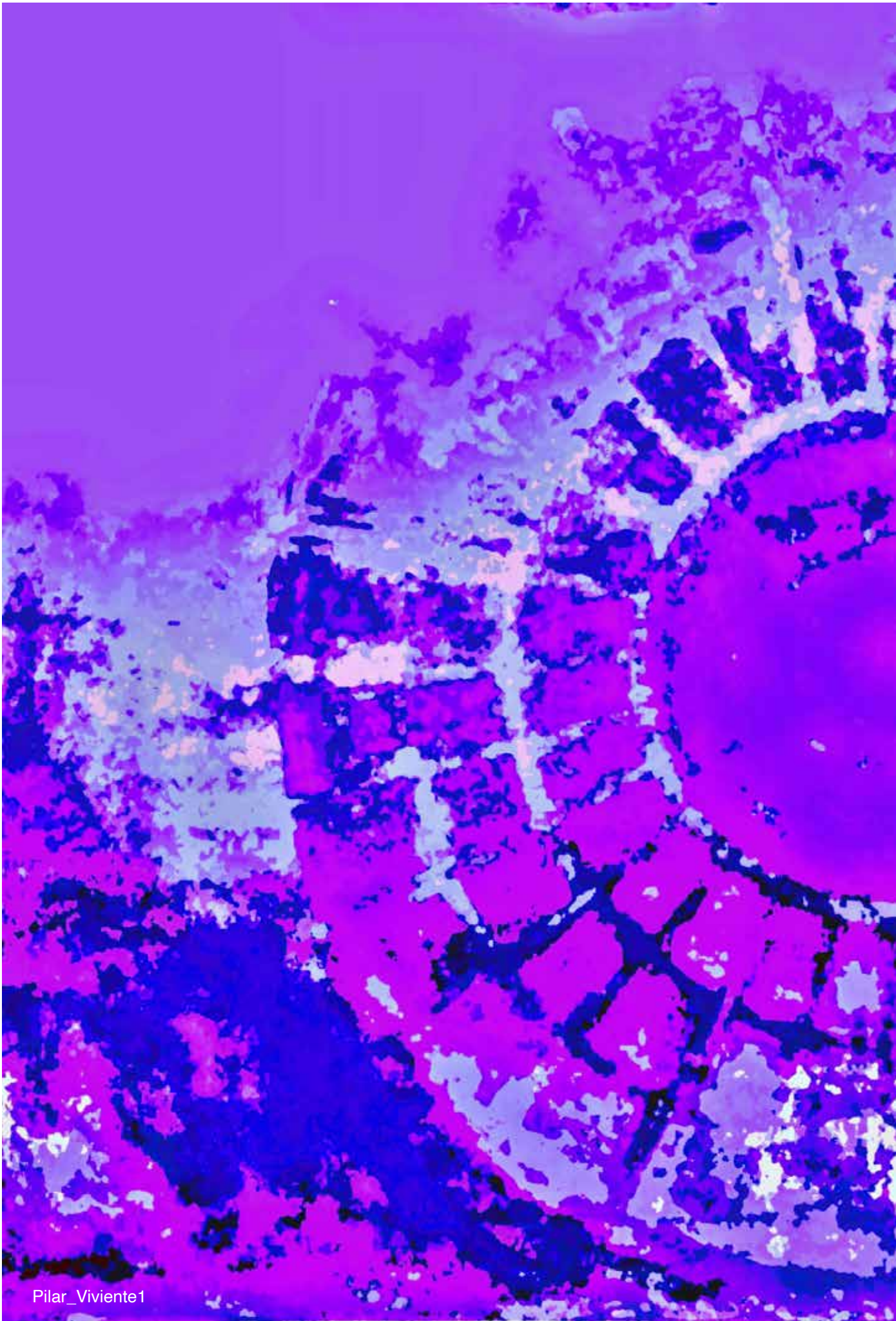
Curators: MATERIA Research Group, UMH, Elche, Spain, and IACLSC, Bhubaneswar, INDIA.

Exhibition Director: María Pilar Viviente Solé, IACLSC General Secretary.

Photo Credit: Courtesy of the artists and of the IACLSC, 2023. <https://www.facebook.com/iaclsc>



Eugene Hyon 1



Pilar_Viviente1





Vicente Baron Linares 1

For some time now, I have been developing in my work the concept of "Rodete", so present in the headdresses of Iberian women. And to this Series belongs the work featured here, 2022. The wheel-shaped ornament on each side of the Iberian bust La Dama de Elche is called "Rodete". We can also find Palaeolithic Rodetes similar to Chinese disks in the Altamira Museum. In addition, the "wheel" is also a mandala. I've been working inspired by the shape and symbolism of this particular design, who carry liberation through repetition, either visually or soundly (solo piano). It refers to cosmic consciousness and archaeological themes, mythical and universal patterns beneath the surface, and is related to an artistic research into light and colour.

The "Rodete" connects contemporary art with archaeology and brings archaeology and knowledge from the past to the present, thus redefining identities from an ecofeminist perspective (feminism and ecology), focusing on ecological sustainability, women and gender issues. There is here the search for a primitive but powerful way in which to express a feminist framework. As Eva Klæhn points out, "The multimedia project Rodete of Pilar Viviente explores the forgotten balance between history and gender." (HOME [less] Catalogue. Garmisch-Partenkirchen: New Art Salon Foundation, 2022).

Pilar Viviente

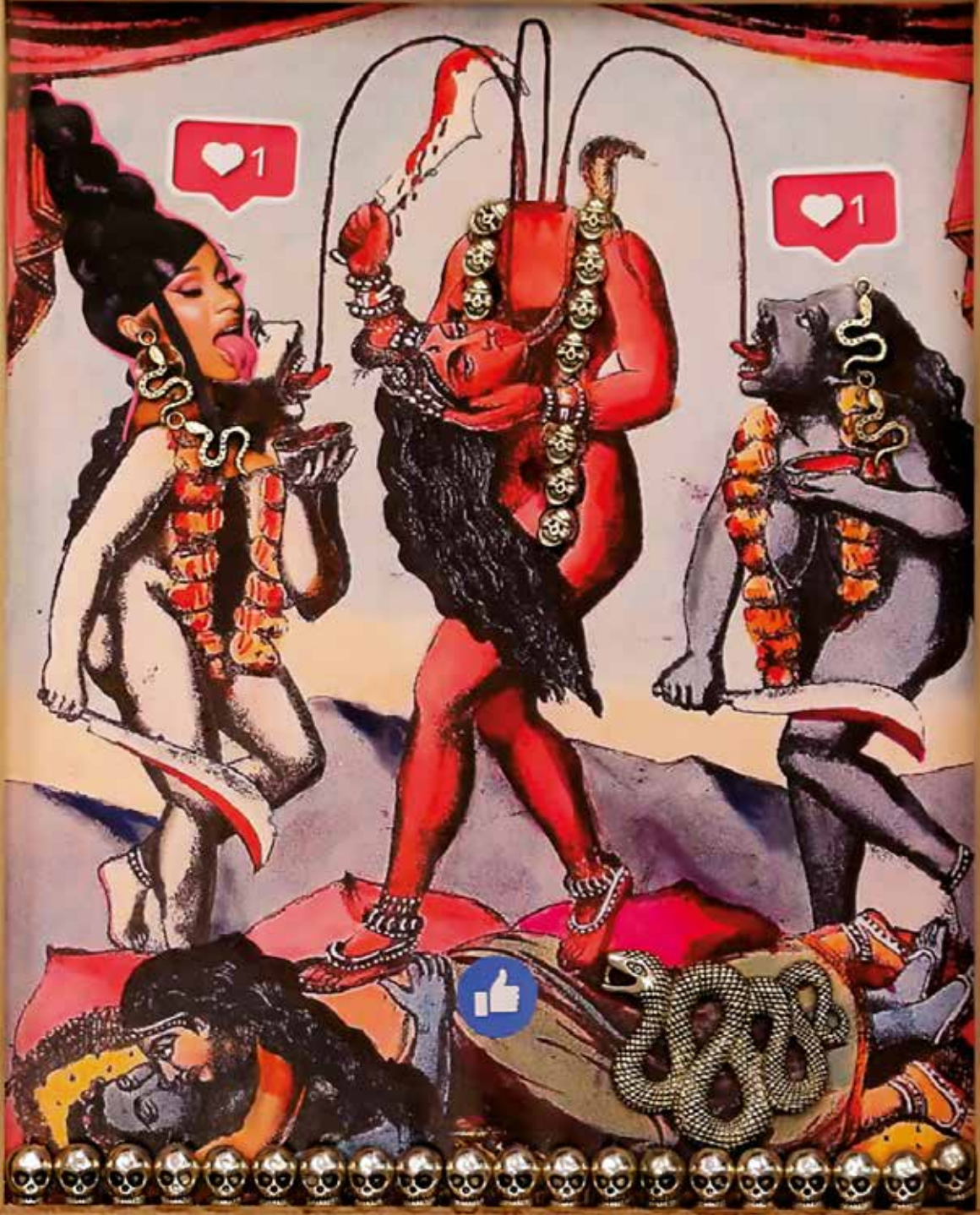
María Pilar Viviente Solé (Madrid, 1958) is a multidisciplinary artist belonging to the "reflective generation" in Spain of the 90s (EL PAÍS 16 Ago 1989). Award for the Best National Degree (1987) & FPI Dissertation Research Fellowship (1988-1992). Doctor by the UB (1993)

she is lecturer & Ph.D. advisor at the Faculty of Fine Arts, UMH, since 1998, being Director of Drawing Area 7yr. & IRO 2yr. She is (since): 1997 InSEA member (UNESCO); 2015 Contributing Editor (Spain) of Socialist Factor magazine; 2021 General Editor of the IACLSC Journal of Interdisciplinary Studies and Member of the IACLSC Research Council.

With nearly 200 publications on her authorship, articles both national and international, she has published in media as Grupo Noticias, The Word UK, Socialist Factor magazine; art and culture magazines as Arte Omega, La Brecha, Km 0, El Temps d'Art, The Blue Lotus, Crisis -Erial Ediciones; academic journals as Arte, Individuo y Sociedad, Reencuentro: Análisis de problemas universitarios, Visual Culture & Gender, UMH Sapiens, Hofstra Hispanic Review; and art catalogues and proceedings books.

From 1985 until now she has put over around 200 national and international exhibitions in galleries, museums, and art spaces, taking part in Biennales and Fairs. She has recently received the Museari 2022 Award for Artistic Career. Her work is represented in important Museums as MACBA and Private and Public Collections all over the world.





Lourdes Santa Maria2



ART
GALLERY

8 - 31 March

SHE 2023

WOMEN ARTISTS EXHIBITION

in conjunction with

INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY (IWD)

8 March 2023

Aminah Abd Rahman | Elly Nor Suria | Habsah Abang Saufi | Irma Murni
Jaja Yusof | Marisa R Ng | Meriam Omar | Noriza Arzain | Rose Dahlina
Adeline Shatsala | Alina Nikolaeva | Anugerah Gee | Intan Azmi | Lai Nian
Maedeh Hoseini | Malah | Melinda Yeoh | Sharmi Aryanti | Sue A Rashid
Syamin Alyaa | Tish Hayati



With a focus on contemporary art, [KL City Art Gallery](#) is worth being on art lover's itinerary. Enjoy exploring art, ideas and issues of our time with us.

We celebrate creativity, tolerance and openness to wide ranging cultural and artistic ideas. The Gallery showcases works of Malaysian artists whose works in all genres, reflect their thinking of our socio-cultural issues.

The Gallery is also a platform for young and emerging artists. Through our regular exhibitions, our artists share their personal language of expression and unique vision. Their works give meaning to our times. KL City Art Gallery is the perfect space for artists, collectors, art lovers and observers to interact and inspire each other.

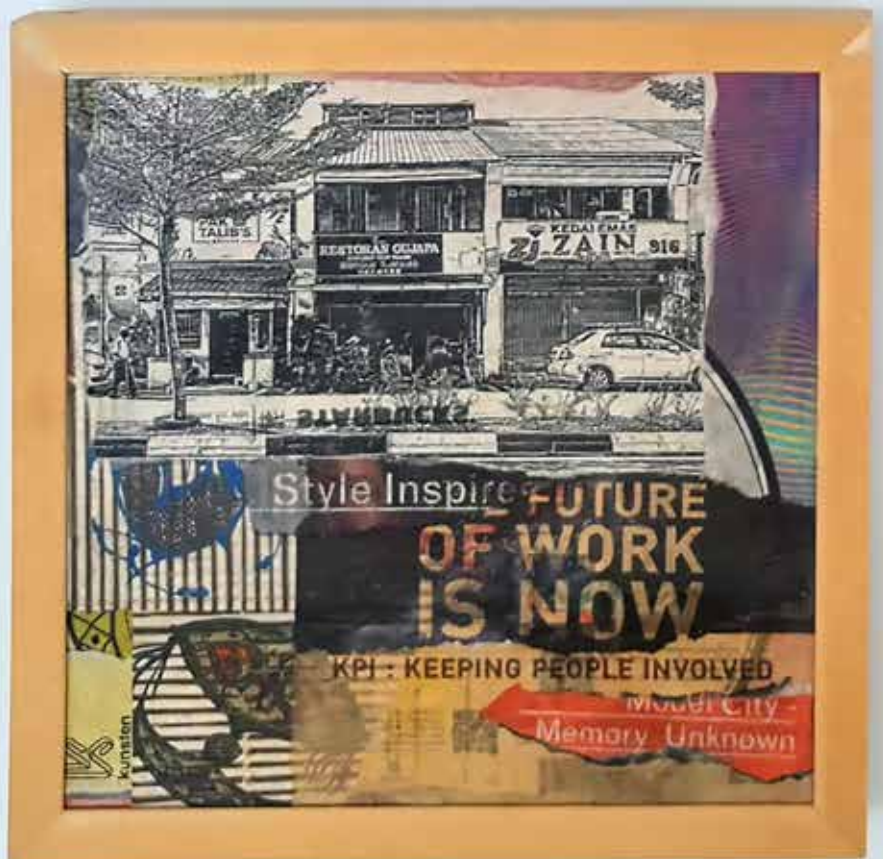
The Gallery also actively conducts programmes such as talks, forums, workshops, cross-disciplinary projects and cultural performances. As we are located at the KL Jazz & Arts Centre (KLJAC), music is an added art form to experience. KL City Art Gallery's exhibitions and activities are exciting the art local scene.

KL City Art Gallery also offers private and corporate clients' consultation for private acquisition and related services.

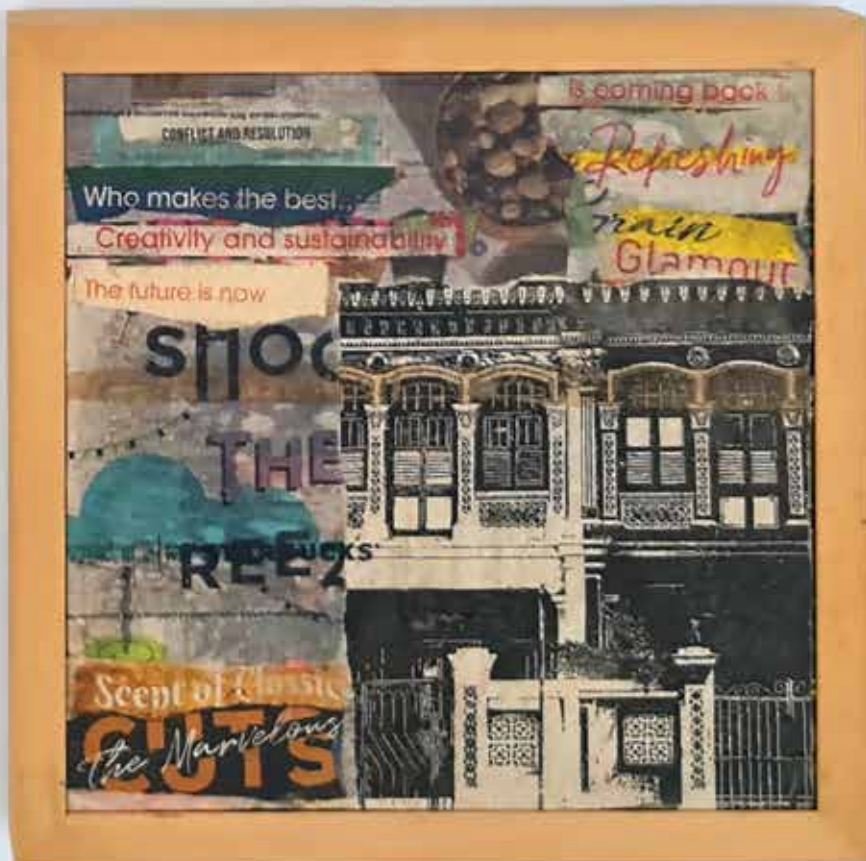
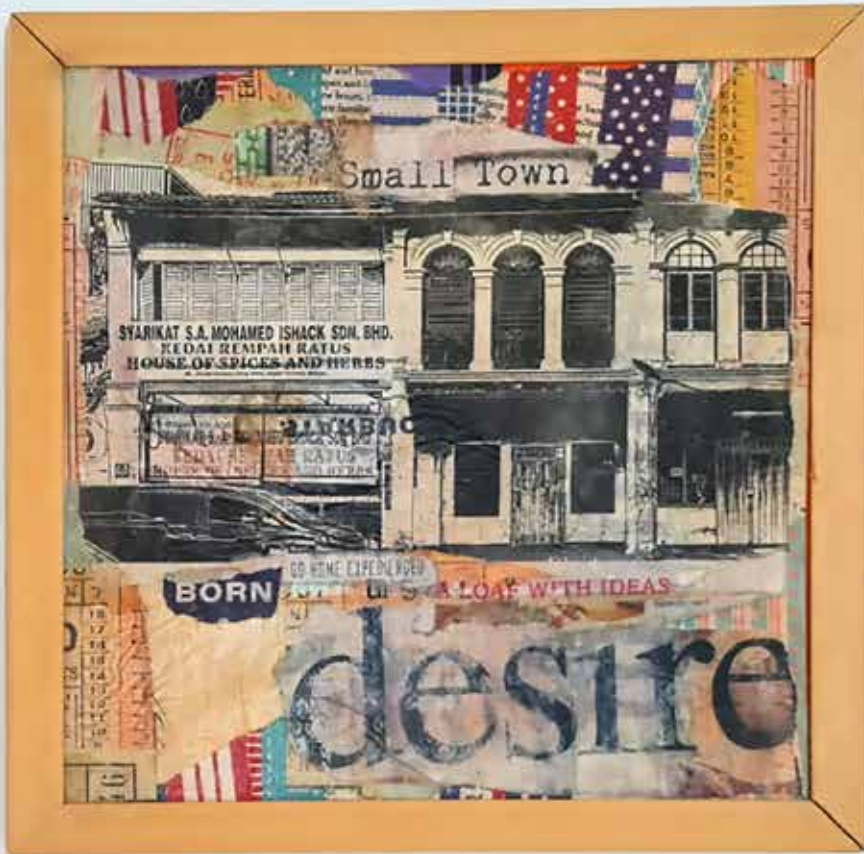




KL City Art Gallery



Noriza Arzain, Soul of Time







Elly Nor Suria, Sarapan buat Suri



Elly Nor Suria, Landscape of Belonging



Ms Meriam Omar, Paddy Series



Rose Dahlina Rusli, 1. Teritip series





Marisa R Ng, My Hope Is In The Creator

Maureen Drdak ardens mundi

Presents a collective portrait of a planet in violent turmoil— each anti-world prefiguring an apocalyptic face of global warming. A developing series of ten planned works, the series is envisioned as a sublime procession of nine “burning worlds,” each incarnating a specific impact of climate change, culminating with one monumental anchor work. Four completed works are presented here; the blackened furioso of firestorms, the flood of melting glaciers, the desiccation of drought, and the explosive force of bombogenesis. In its collective totality and heightened materiality,

Ardens Mundi

Presents a portentous convergence of forms, processes and energies hurling towards environmental cataclysm—a manifest *cri de coeur* for universal action. Intersecting history, culture, science,

Ardens Mundi

Embodies the unique living history of the relationship and dialogue between two artistic traditions and practices. For the past decade Drdak’s work has employed the unique synthesis of repoussé metalwork and painting. This congress of materials—the first of its kind—was pioneered by Drdak and definitively established during her 2011 Fulbright research fellowship to Nepal where she studied with the finest living masters of this elite practice, the grandsons of the famed Kuber Singh Shakya of Patan, Nepal. Drdak is the first and only artist to date working with this unique congress of materials.

Ardens Mundi

Uniquely demonstrates the dynamic potential of traditional practices for contemporary applications; it provides both model and catalyst for contemporary artists in their exploration of the interstitial spaces between culture, process, and material. It explores and evidences the exciting expressive potential inherent in vanishing traditional aesthetic practices--and by extension—aids in their preservation.

Maureen Drdak



Ardens Mundi 4, Tempestatis



Ardens Mundi 1, Inferno



Ardens Mundi 2, Conflatura

Ardens Mundi 3, Dessico



Ardens Mundi 4, Tempestatis







Ardens Mundi 3, Dessico

THE WORK OF MAUREEN DRDAK

The work of Maureen Drdak is a synthesis of dichotomies. Disparities of materials and traditions seamlessly converge her work to excite and engender deeper looking and experiencing. It compels interrogation of our previous assumptions of material and cultural categories, impelling us to revise those assumptions. That the artist has managed such a lift is the result of her fifteen year immersion within the multivalent landscapes of Nepal and the Himalayas, and her unique relationship with its most celebrated family of repousse metalworking. I have followed her work since our first meeting in Patan in 2009, when I learned of her study with Rabindra Shakya and the late Raj Kumar Shakya, the grandsons of Nepal's historic master, Kuber Singh Shakya. Sadly, the passing of both Raj Kumar Shakya and his father Rudra Raj Shakya in 2021 due to Covid complications has created a monumental void in the cosmos of Nepal's traditional repousse artists. Maureen's practice results from deep engagement with the internal and external worlds of Nepal, most especially that of the Kathmandu Valley's Buddhist Newars. Her respect for their world, and her careful attendance to her own internal response, are clearly evident in her work and process. It bears emphasizing in our culturally contentious moment, that this is cultural bridging of a most unique form. The catalyst for her groundbreaking synthesis of repousse metalwork and painting was her spontaneous aesthetic response to the time-abraded surfaces of the heavily gilded copper toranas—hemispheric bas-reliefs—that surmount important entrances to venerated temples and palaces throughout the Valley. Drdak notes that the very nature of these doorways effects the transition between worlds—the passage from material to spiritual. For Drdak, this implicit meaning of expansion and integration profoundly influenced her

approach to her work, as embodied in her pedagogical immersion under Master Rabindra Shakya, in the complex and compelling materiality of her repousse and painting synthesis, and the intense physicality of her practice—it is significant that Drdak works all aspects of the metal herself. Critically, it was also Maureen's recognition of the endangered status of the practice of these celebrated artists that impelled her to investigate the expressive potential of repousse for contemporary art, demonstrating to indigenous artists the inherent potential of their traditional practices for new expressive form. As her work demonstrates, she has impressively succeeded on so many levels. But climate change—the subject of Drdak's *Ardens Mundi*—surmounts all these origin stories, and it is to this cataclysmic reality, that Maureen has fully concentrated her vision. The Himalayas are the third fastest site of global warming and the observable snowfall decline on these mighty peaks burned itself into Drdak's vision with every visit to Nepal. The resulting developing body of her monumental work speaks to the anthropogenic challenge of humanity's very survival, but it is the sumptuous surfaces and dynamic compositions of these works that instruct and inspire, and hold the viewer spellbound.

Sangeeta Rana Thapa Founder and Director, Siddhartha Art Gallery and Siddhartha Arts Foundation; Founder Chair, Kathmandu Triennale

MAUREEN DRDAK'S ARDENS MUNDI

Maureen Drdak's work has fascinated me for more than a decade. I have seen her explore techniques and ideas in ways both visually stunning and intellectually rooted in ancient and contemporary traditions. Drdak's work is at its core representative of contemporary abstraction with a strong sense of the communicative power of physicality. Tied through her studies to the traditions of Nepalese copper repousse artistry, which she has pursued with unrestrained dedication and passion, she has developed a selective mastery of the methods of her mentors in Nepal. As prophetic statement her series, *Ardens Mundi*, speaks to the destructive impacts of human-caused climate change, the forms of which immediately call to mind many centuries of imagery tied to the Hindu deity Shiva's climactic destruction of the world through a frenetic dance of fire and devastation. With their twisting, spiralling energies they reference mandalas, the meditative tools used in the Buddhist spiritual practices common in the Himalayan region, tracing the inevitable path from birth to death and back again as the wheel of life turns on and on. The eye follows each of Drdak's circular mandalas into the centre and back out to the periphery in an unending display of the apocalypse at the core of each work.

Repousse serves a key role as the most prominent and visually compelling element within each burning world. Copper incarnates the emphatic form and energy contained within their spherical constraints. Thick applications of minerals and pigments provide textures and visual cues reading as earth, as sky, as land ablaze in the unstoppable conflagration. These maelstroms like the mandala, map our experience in the face of these natural forces to reveal cause horrific future we have brought upon ourselves.

Living in California and facing head on

environmental disasters Drdak depicts, I find myself transfixed by these swirls of fire, of drought and never-before-seen storms. These mandalas show me the path that lies ahead. This prophetic imagery speaks to an inescapable future. While I see in these works elements Nepalese spirituality, they are equally reflective of Drdak's personal history. Trained in Philadelphia and widely travelled in Europe and the Middle East Drdak is grounded within her own heritage and traditions. What may be mandalas to me are also the horsemen of our current apocalypse. Drdak's aesthetically sumptuous, dynamic displays of materials give these manifestations of impending doom just the right amount of sex appeal so that we welcome them in the door. It is then that their full impact can be felt and their deadly job can commence. Durer's horsemen rode in from the sky rich with the imagery of death; Drdak's horsemen spin and twist their fiery slashes of destruction conveying the devastating power we have unleashed and that we all one day soon will feel cutting, burning, drowning all that we cherish and desire to retain.

Robert Mintz, PhD

Deputy Director, Art & Programmes, Asian Art Museum of San Francisco.

THE WORK OF MAUREEN DRDAK



Ardens Mundi 1, Inferno



Nazia Ahmed



Rickshaw graveyard

Nazia Ahmed

I had first met Dhaka's up-and-coming artist Nazia Ahmed, at her impeccable house/gallery/museum, in Dhaka city, during the early months of 2019. She was a friend of a friend, and I was visiting with artists all over Dhaka, while simultaneously researching for my writing about another Bangladesh artist. Nazia had shown me her artworks and, later that year, I had featured her work on the cover of this magazine (The Blue Lotus, issue 17, April, 2019), and some of her other images in the interior too. I had been greatly impressed by the artist's style, her colour sense, and the slightly whimsical air to much of her work (a la the Russian-French painter Marc Chagall).

Kaiser Hag, Dhaka's renowned poet, had written these lines (in 'Poor Man Eating')

*"I would paint the scene
Over and over
In luscious oil:
The painted proliferation
Might work magic,
Converting seeming impossibility
Into an eager mouth."*

In her poetic sense, Nazia Ahmed has developed images of Dhaka's eponymous rickshaws, or as the artist relates the 'colourful chaos' ('Life Story' and 'This City') of Dhaka. As well as the much loved three-wheeled rickshaws, Nazia also features images of love-strong women ('A love that tastes vintage, but feels brand new') as well as mythical mermaids. Nazia sees mermaids as children of the ocean, and their stories as 'tragic tales' in works like 'Mermaid by heart' and 'The



Gypsy Soul





Mermaid by heart

girl you've left drowning, she has become a mermaid'). Nazia Ahmed mentions, in a romantic sense, that she is a "mermaid at heart", for in oceans, mermaids are simultaneously piscine creatures of light and "daytime dreamers". Surprisingly enough, one Southeast Asian version of India's epic the Ramayana (500 BCE to 100 BCE) introduces Suvannamaccha, who is a 'golden' mermaid (half fish and half human) princess. Suvannamaccha is a daughter of Tosakanth (otherwise known as the demon king Ravana), and she and Hanuman fall in love, and have a child (Macchanu).

Nazia works magic as she feeds the observers' imaginations and our very soul(s), with her visual poetics. Her projected hunger is the hunger of the soul, not of the somatic belly. She proffers visual satiation for we aesthetically malnourished, feeding our hearts as well as our eyes.

Bangladesh's Dhaka, aka 'The Venice of the East' or 'City of Mosques', in which the artist's marvels spring to life, is the artistic capital of a riverine country adjacent to the Buriganga river. Dhaka is becoming known for its outstanding female artists (Farida Zaman, Rokeya Sultana, Preema Nazia Andaleeb, Kanak Chanpa Chakma et al and now, it seems, Nazia Ahmed too.

In the ancient city of Dhaka, Nazia Ahmed had been developing a unique colour strength, as witnessed in so many of her works, while also becoming known for her unique 'vision' of her beloved country of rivers, its quintessence, its lovers living and longing within the classical and new cities.

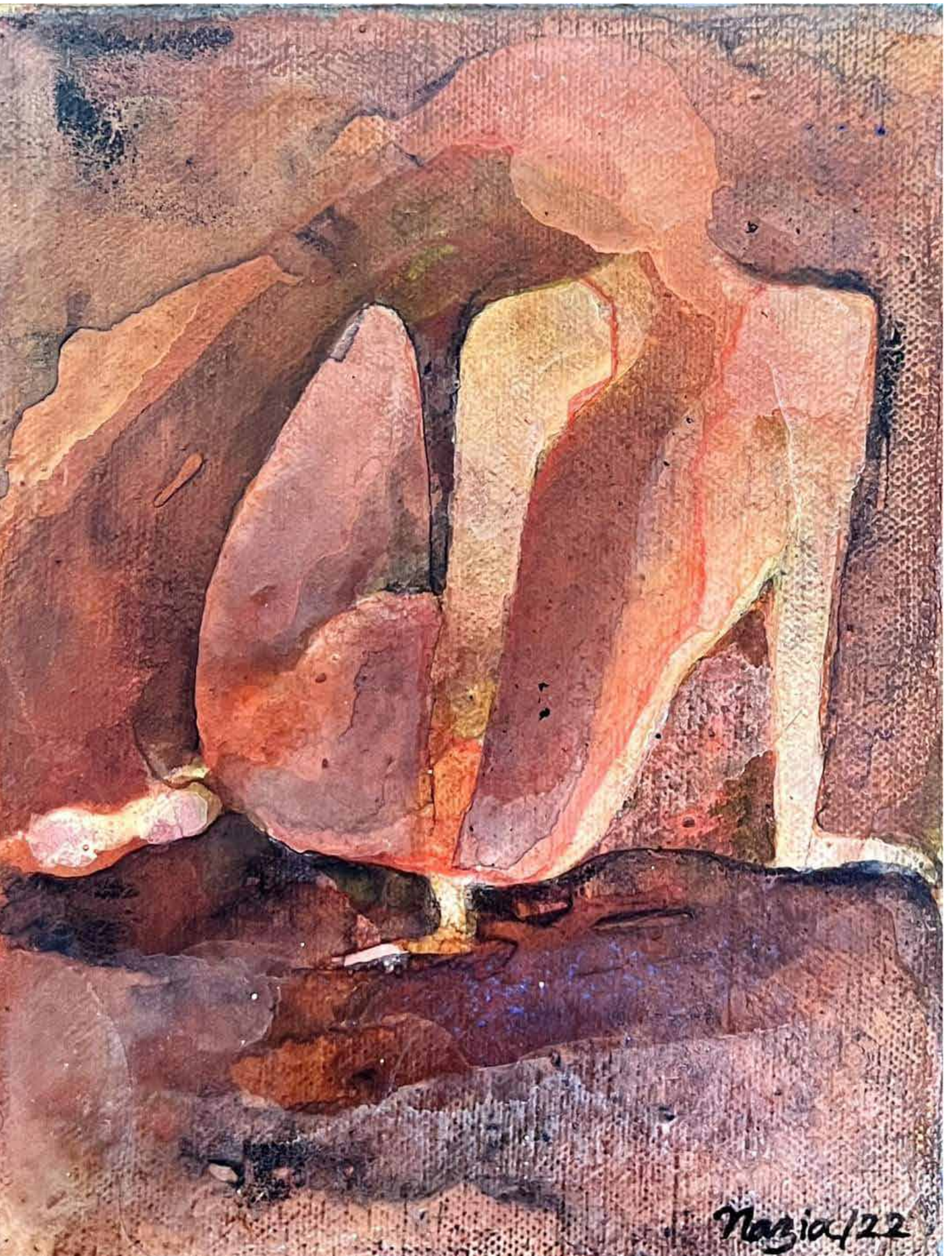
Nazia's paintings are oft rapt in mystery, incurring frequent explosions/riots of colour. It is as if 'Holi' (aka Dol Purnima)

celebrations (when pink 'abir' and a multitude of other colours are thrown in celebration) has erupted, and into which her subjects become subsumed. Those very tinges, tinctures and most vibrant hues have previously lain, intermingled, gracing the streets of Dhaka during the month of March (during 'Holi' time), and have, intentionally, graced Nazia's impressive substrates as purposeful theatrical 'settings' for her intriguing narratives.

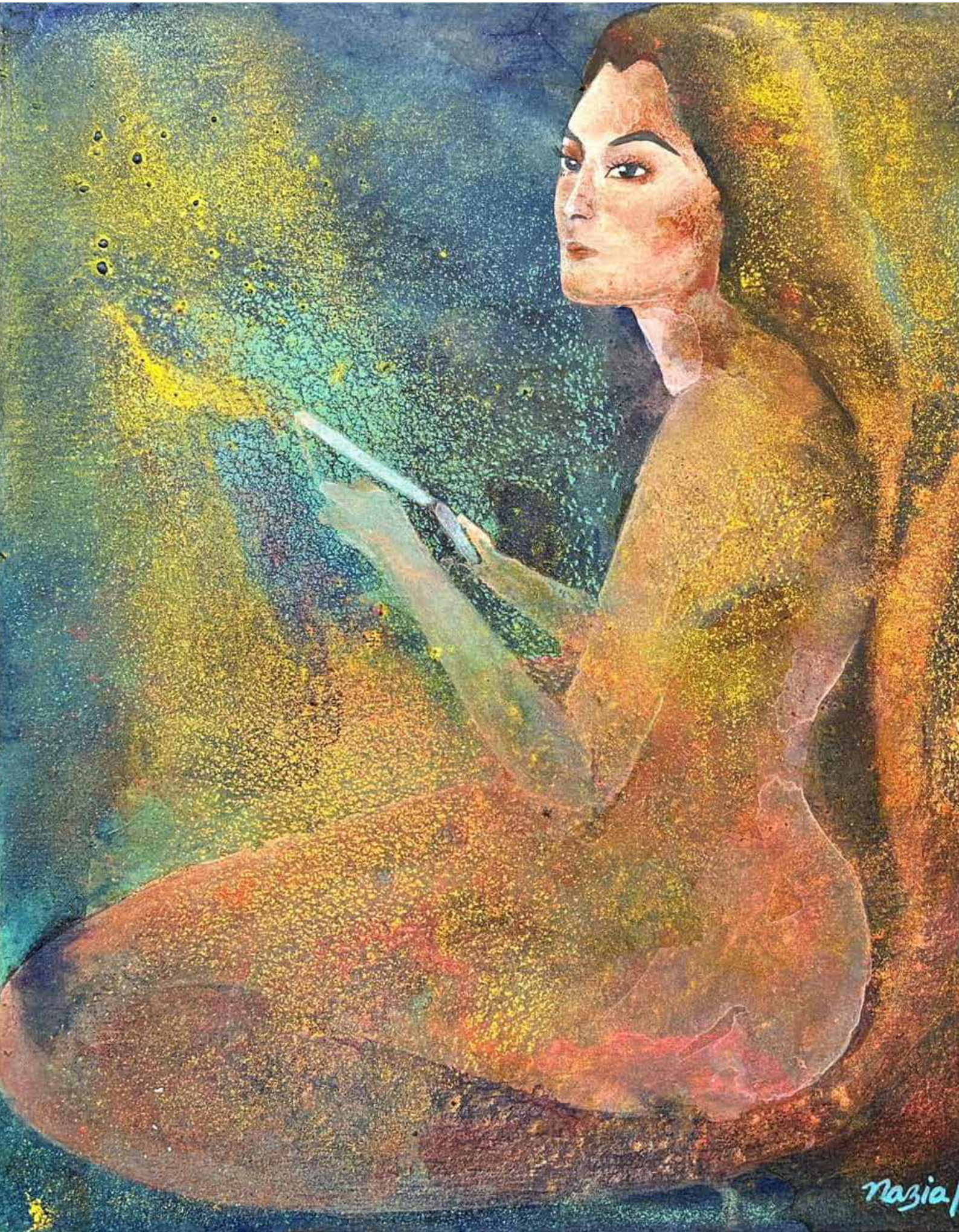
Nazia Ahmed is an intelligent, educated, woman. The great (Rabindranath) Tagore has written that there are three varieties of education, firstly 'indriyer siksa' (education of the senses), then 'jnaner siksa' (education of the intellect) and 'bodher tapasya/sadhana' (sympathy with all existence). To be educated in all three involves not just learning, but seeing, understanding and 'feeling' (in the spiritual sense).


Nazia demonstrates these aspects of 'education' in her perspicacious approaches to her subjects, be they three-wheeled conveyors of suburban dwellers pulling their conveyances towards turbulent unknowns, petulant and legendary aquatic creatures in their watery abodes or amorous beings enraptured and entangled in moments of tender delusion or, ultimately, spell-broken and love-wrecked.

Nazia Ahmed's works, of course, stretch far beyond the mere whimsy mentioned above, hinting at the wonders of images brought forth from Bengal's Amrita Sher-Gil (who wrote of her Indian sitters as being subjected to "indefinably melancholy" and who was, some believe, the bringer of School-of-Paris Modernism to India during the early 1930s). Nazia's recent (2023) works like 'Prends ma Main' ('Take my Hand') and 'Âme Soeur' ('Soulmate'), may be seen as a nod back



Il no longer wait for your bullshits





to those Indian Modernist works of Sher-Gil and, ultimately, to 'Post-Impressionism' and the emotive works of Symbolism, as outlined by Jean Moréas in his *Le Symbolisme* in the *Figaro* (1886) and the French/Belgique visual arts of the time expressing emotional experiences through "synthesis of form and feeling" (Nicole Myers, 2007, Symbolism).

It is no wonder then, that Nazia Ahmed's artist star is on the rise.

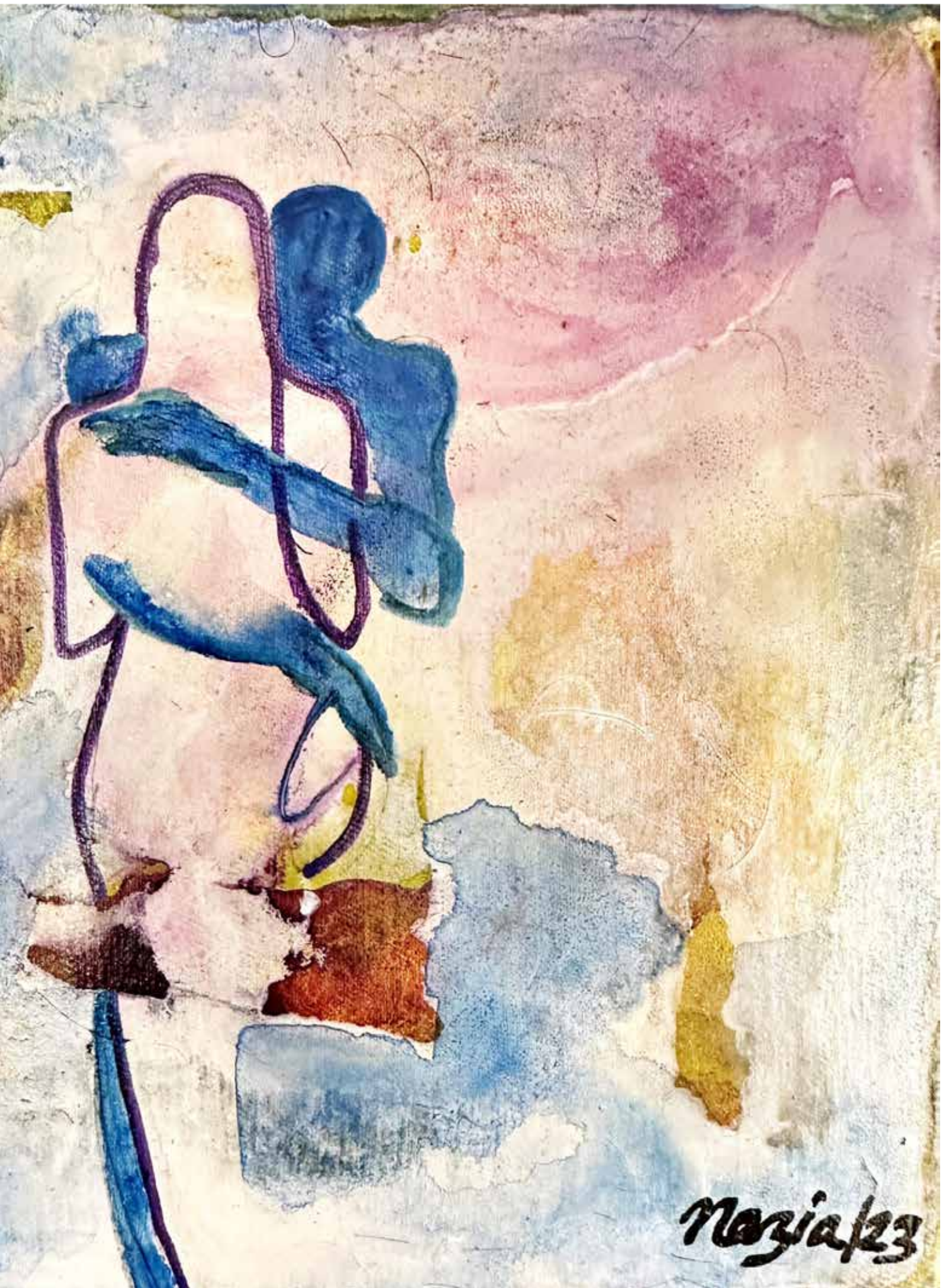
Ed.

I am Nazia

one of many aspiring Bengali artists who's fascinated about the beautiful world around us. My fascination of the colours and shapes in my surroundings are expressed vividly in my artwork. This fascination turns into inspiration for my countless works of art. The dreams I see come to life on a blank piece of canvas in which I relive my childhood, my surroundings and my life through. I tell my story through the strokes of my paintbrush and a part of me goes into every painting I make. Art is my life, my dream, my passion and like many others, I am motivated to live my fantasy and make my surroundings even more beautiful.



It's different with you



Nazia/23

HILLS LIKE WHITE ELEPHANTS

Ernest Hemingway (1899-1961)

The hills across the valley of the Ebro' were long and white. On this side there was no shade and no trees and the station was between two lines of rails in the sun. Close against the side of the station there was the warm shadow of the building and a curtain, made of strings of bamboo beads, hung across the open door into the bar, to keep out flies. The American and the girl with him sat at a table in the shade, outside the building. It was very hot and the express from Barcelona would come in forty minutes. It stopped at this junction for two minutes and went on to Madrid.

"What should we drink?" the girl asked. She had taken off her hat and put it on the table.

"It's pretty hot," the man said.

"Let's drink beer."

"Dos cervezas," the man said into the curtain.

"Big ones?" a woman asked from the doorway.

"Yes. Two big ones."

The woman brought two glasses of beer and two felt pads. She put the felt pads and the beer glasses on the table and looked at the man and the girl. The girl was looking off at the line of hills. They were white in the sun and the country was brown and dry.

"They look like white elephants," she said.

"I've never seen one," the man drank his beer.

"No, you wouldn't have."

"I might have," the man said. "Just because you say I wouldn't have doesn't prove anything."

The girl looked at the bead curtain. "They've painted something on it," she said. "What does it say?"

"Anis del Toro. It's a drink."

"Could we try it?"

The man called "Listen" through the curtain. The woman came out from the bar.

"Four reales."

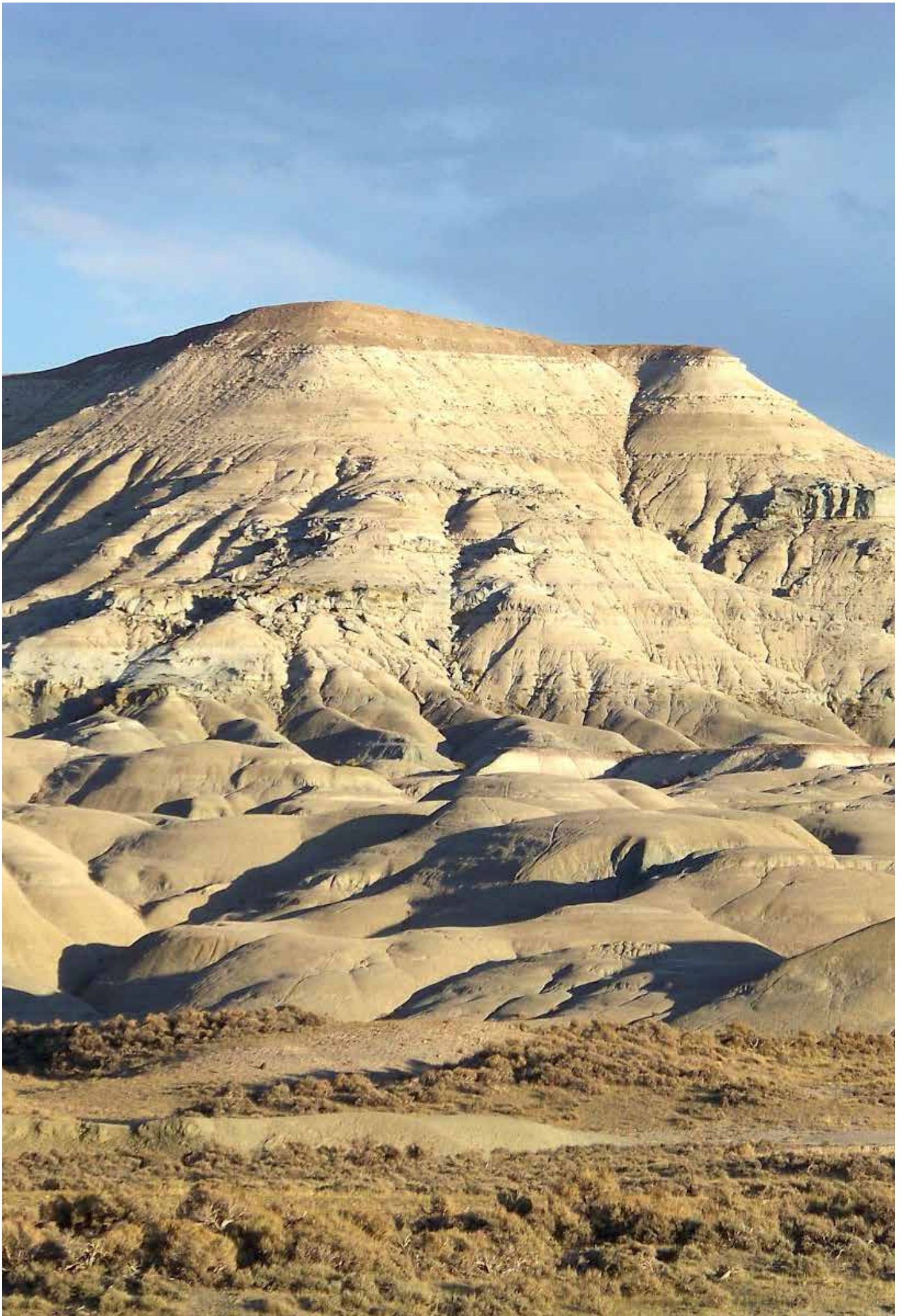
"We want two Anis del Toro."

"With water?"

"Do you want it with water?"

"I don't know," the girl said. "Is it good with water?"

"It's all right."



"You want them with water?" asked the woman.

1. River in the north of Spain.

"Yes, with water."

"It tastes like licorice," the girl said and put the glass down.

"That's the way with everything."

"Yes," said the girl. "Everything tastes of licorice. Especially all the things you've waited so long for, like absinthe."

"Oh, cut it out."

"You started it," the girl said. "I was being amused. I was having a fine time."

"Well, let's try and have a fine time."

"All right. I was trying. I said the mountains looked like white elephants. Wasn't that bright?"

"That was bright."

"I wanted to try this new drink. That's all we do, isn't it—look at things and try new drinks?"

"I guess so."

The girl looked across at the hills.

"They're lovely hills," she said. "They don't really look like white elephants. I just meant the coloring of their skin through the trees." "Should we have another drink?"

"All right."

The warm wind blew the bead curtain against the table.

"The beer's nice and cool," the man said.

"It's lovely," the girl said.

"It's really an awfully simple operation, Jig," the man said. "It's not really an operation at all."

The girl looked at the ground the table legs rested on.

"I know you wouldn't mind it, Jig. It's really not anything. It's just to let the air in."

The girl did not say anything.

"I'll go with you and I'll stay with you all the time. They just let the air in and then it's all perfectly natural."

"Then what will we do afterward?"

"We'll be fine afterward. Just like we were before."

"What makes you think so?"

"That's the only thing that bothers us. It's the only thing that's made us unhappy."

The girl looked at the bead curtain, put her hand out and took hold of two of the strings of beads.

"And you think then we'll be all right and be happy."

"I know we will. You don't have to be afraid. I've known lots of people that have done it."

"So have I," said the girl. "And afterward they were all so happy."

"Well," the man said, "if you don't want to you don't have to. I wouldn't have you do it if you didn't want to. But I know it's perfectly simple."

"And you really want to?"

"I think it's the best thing to do. But I don't want you to do it if you

don't really want to."

"And if I do it you'll be happy and things will be like they were and you'll love me?"

"I love you now. You know I love you."

"I know. But if I do it, then it will be nice again if I say things are like white elephants, and you'll like it?"

"I'll love it. I love it now but I just can't think about it. You know how I get when I worry."

"If I do it you won't ever worry?"

"I won't worry about that because it's perfectly simple."

"Then I'll do it. Because I don't care about me."

"What do you mean?"

"I don't care about me."

"Well, I care about you."

"Oh, yes. But I don't care about me. And I'll do it and then everything will be fine."

"I don't want you to do it if you feel that way."

The girl stood up and walked to the end of the station. Across, on the other side, were fields of grain and trees along the banks of the Ebro. Far away, beyond the river, were mountains. The shadow of a cloud moved across the field of grain and she saw the river through the trees.

"And we could have all this," she said. "And we could have everything and every day we make it more impossible."

"What did you say?"

"I said we could have everything."

"We can have everything."

"No, we can't."

"We can have the whole world."

"No, we can't."

"We can go everywhere."

"No, we can't. It isn't ours any more."

"It's ours."

"No, it isn't. And once they take it away, you never get it back."

"But they haven't taken it away."

"We'll wait and see."

"Come on back in the shade," he said. "You mustn't feel that way." "I don't feel any way," the girl said. "I just know things."

"I don't want you to do anything that you don't want to do—"

"Nor that isn't good for me," she said. "I know. Could we have another beer?"

"All right. But you've got to realize—"

"I realize," the girl said. "Can't we maybe stop talking?"

They sat down at the table and the girl looked across at the hills on the dry side of the valley and the man looked at her and at the table.

"You've got to realize," he said, "that I don't want you to do it if you don't want to. I'm perfectly willing to go through with it if it means anything to you."

"Doesn't it mean anything to you? We could get along."

"Of course it does. But I don't want anybody but you. I don't want any one else. And I know it's perfectly simple."

"Yes, you know it's perfectly simple."

"It's all right for you to say that, but I do know it."

"Would you do something for me now?"

"I'd do anything for you."

"Would you please please please please please please stop talking?"

He did not say anything but looked at the bags against the wall of the station. There were labels on them from all the hotels where they had spent nights.

"But I don't want you to," he said, "I don't care anything about it."

"I'll scream," the girl said.

The woman came out through the curtains with two glasses of beer and put them down on the damp felt pads.

"The train comes in five minutes," she said.

"What did she say?" asked the girl.

"That the train is coming in five minutes."

The girl smiled brightly at the woman, to thank her.

"I'd better take the bags over to the other side of the station," the man said. She smiled at him.

"All right. Then come back and we'll finish the beer."

He picked up the two heavy bags and carried them around the station to the other tracks. He looked up the tracks but could not see the train. Coming back, he walked through the barroom, where people waiting for the train were drinking. He drank an Anis at the bar and looked at the people. They were all waiting reasonably for the train. He went out through the bead curtain. She was sitting at the table and smiled at him.

"Do you feel better?" he asked.

"I feel fine," she said. "There's nothing wrong with me. I feel fine."

A REVIEW

Title: Hills Like White Elephants

Author: Ernest Hemingway

Genre: Short Story

Reviewed By: Saeed Ibrahim

This off-beat short story written by none other than Nobel laureate Ernest Hemingway created a revolution of sorts when it was first published in a literary review in August 1927. Challenging all the traditional norms of storytelling, publishers at first rejected the story because they felt it was sketchy and anecdotal and did not tell a story in the true sense. Also, there was no plot to the story, no narration and no identification of characters.

But it is precisely these so-called drawbacks that make "Hills Like White Elephants" so path-breaking in its impact and influence on 20th century fiction. Hemingway's characteristic understated writing style is so well brought out in this story and showcases his Iceberg Theory, according to which the words on the page should be merely a small part of the whole story – typically "the tip of the iceberg." From Hemingway's standpoint, a writer should use as few words as possible in order to indicate the larger, unwritten story that resides below the surface.

This minimalistic approach to storytelling is exemplified in "Hills Like White Elephants." The technique seems to have gone down well with later readers and by the closing years of the century, the story appears to have been resurrected. Of all Hemingway's short stories, this story began to feature in more and more anthologies and in 2002 it was even adapted for film. The reason for the renewed popularity of the story lies in the change in readers' perceptions of what constitutes a good story. Readers no longer want to have the smallest details to be spelt out concerning the characters. They prefer this to be left to their own imagination and to figure things

out for themselves.

"Hills Like White Elephants" tells the story of a man and woman drinking beer and anise liqueur while they wait at a train station in Spain. Through their cryptic dialogue, we gather that the couple are trying to find a solution to a problem, but they can't seem to agree on a resolution to the problem. In the less than 1500 words of the story the subject of their exchanges is never mentioned. The reader is bemused at the discussion between them and through guesswork and reading between the lines, is left to work out what exactly is going on. The inconclusive and "incomplete" ending adds to the enigma.

Do read this little masterpiece, rich in symbolism and metaphor and figure out for yourself the subject of the couple's conversation and your interpretation of the likely denouement of this intriguing tale.

It is available as a stand alone short story on Kindle or as part of a complete collection of the author's short stories

<https://www.amazon.com/Hills-White-Elephants-Ernest-Hemingway-ebook/dp/B09GMPYMY4/ref>

<https://www.amazon.com/Complete-Short-Stories-Ernest-Hemingway/dp/0684843323/ref>

HAPPY READING!

Puran Singh Jhala

The artist Puran Singh Jhala comes from, and still lives in, Chuda, a small town in Saurashtra, Gujarat, India. He studied Fine Arts at Maharajah Sayajiroa University of Baroda and graphic design at National Institute of Design, in Ahmedabad. In 1978, he joined the Nehru Foundation (which became the Centre for Environment Education or CEE) as a graphic designer and was involved in various projects pertaining to coral technologies.

Puran Singh Jhala has worked as a graphic designer for Nehru Foundation as well as illustrating for 'Indian World Catalog'. He has experimented with rural technology, making drawings for an Ahmedabad magazine. While in some of his paintings he has documented antique Indian Graphics. On cloth he has made a 'Ramayana' from an antique (120 year old) book of lithographs and has preserved Indian heritage. Puran Singh's Jhala's artistic endeavours have been deeply influenced by the myths, legends, folklore, arts crafts and textiles of his region of Saurashtra.

The artist has had 22 shows in smaller towns of Saurashtra like Chuda, Limbdi, Chotila, Saylaetc. And also in cities such as Pune, Bangalore, Ahmedabad, Rajkot, and Mysore. He frequently uses pure bright colours to fill his exquisite drawings. One series, of which, is of parrots and butterflies.

Ed.







Chandelier



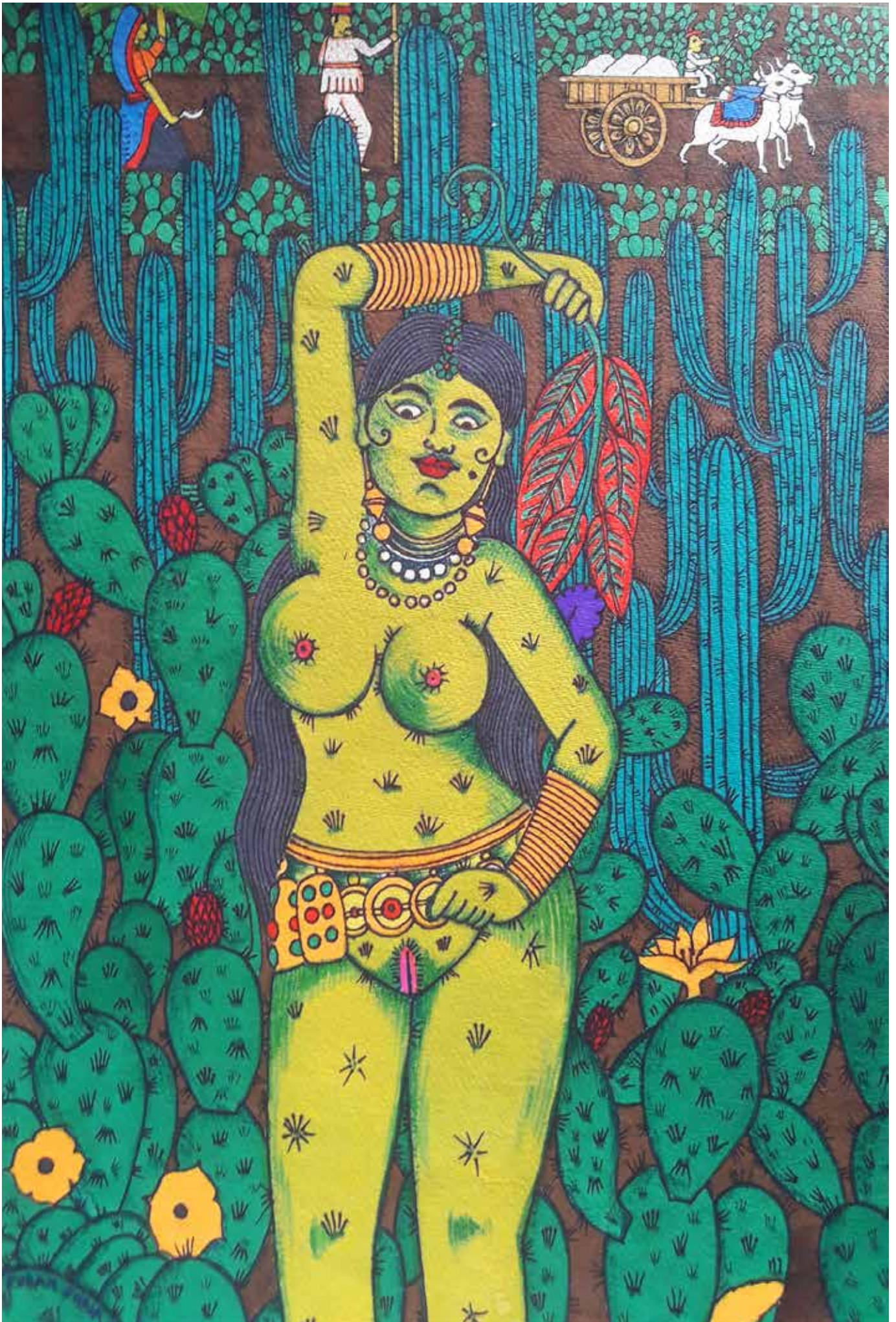


Flowers n butterflies



Rites of Spring

Cactus Queen







Rape of Tibet

Charleston





20th century hub of the 'Bloomsbury Set'



For those of us who needed to drain our bladders before alighting the King's Tours Coach (at East Hill), Firstsite, (Colchester's premier exhibition site, which doesn't officially open until 10am) at 9am allowed a small group of art enthusiasts to use their facilities. It was all hail-fellow-well-met as we members of Colchester Art Society (CAS) began our charabanc outing down Colchester's East Hill and out into the wild, as it were.

There was, however, a distinct lack of crates of alcoholic refreshment, pork scratchings

et al, excusable perhaps because it was, after all, still Ramadan; not to mention that we were intent upon travelling to the sumptuous, yet rural, Charleston to ogle British art as it was in Britain, on the very cusp of 'The Continent's', blossoming 'Modernism'.

Traversing Wirth-Miller East Anglian countryside (with stark trees scraping cobalt skies), it wasn't long before we crept into scenery re-imagined by Ravillious, and on through areas simply reeking of Graham Sutherland and a hotchpotch of artists who had been intent upon dragging



Blighty into the 20th century (with nods and winks to our more garlic infused neighbours).

The Almighty was in his heaven and blessed us with carefully wrought clouds against stunningly blue skies, on our venture into Sussex. Rolling hills, carefully white sheep and a distinct outpouring of daffodils (and tulips) welcomed us to the former rural home of the distinctly gender fluid expatriated Bloomsbury Group (Virginia Woolf, Duncan Grant et al).

Gardens bursting with blooms, countryside vistas, new art galleries and even a pond with a romantically upturned boat, Charleston's exterior had it all. If I had dared imagine that that was all there was, I would have been, sadly, wrong.

Whichever delights abounded outside that once rented farmhouse, they were nothing compared to the artistic jewels, delightful decoration and multiple surprises which await even the most astute and learned visitor to that property. I'm neither. Imagine my shock, awe etc. when I discovered





that said house was not the garish, crowded, compendium that books and magazines unwittingly portray it to be.

A little history.....

According to the Tate website ...

“In 1905 a group of writers, artists and intellectuals began to meet at the London home of the artist Vanessa Bell and her writer sister Virginia Woolf. They shared ideas, supported each other’s creative activities and formed close friendships. The group became known as the Bloomsbury Group and their meetings continued for the next thirty years.” The ‘Bloomsbury Group’ of artists, writers etc., had, at one time or another, included Thoby Stephen (Vanessa Bell’s brother), writer and publisher David ‘Bunny’ Garnett, writer Lytton Strachey, writer E.M. Forster, writer Desmond MacCarthy, translator and writer Arthur Waley, art critic Clive Bell, publisher Leonard Woolf, economist John Maynard Keynes, publisher David Garnett, and artists Roger Fry and Duncan Grant. Novelists Virginia Woolf and Vita Sackville-West were constant visitors.

In the midst of the most horrific example of man’s inhumanity towards man, the atrocity of the ‘Great War’ (WW1), eleven years later (1916) some members of the Bloomsbury Group (namely Vanessa Bell and Duncan Grant) rented an old farmhouse in Firle, Sussex (Britain), called Charleston. And that is, really, where this story begins and was the destination of our little arty outing.

The immense glory of the Charleston farmhouse house is in the way that the arts of the new British ‘Modernism’ abuts myriad



styles, antiques and found objects, and just blends right in. The overall impression (in and outside the house) is that what could have been a hotchpotch of misaligned items, seems to work, in a 'Modernist' curated way. We 'visitors' were made to feel right at home up to, and until we had to depart, back to Britain's 'First City' and its own art legends.

Ed.

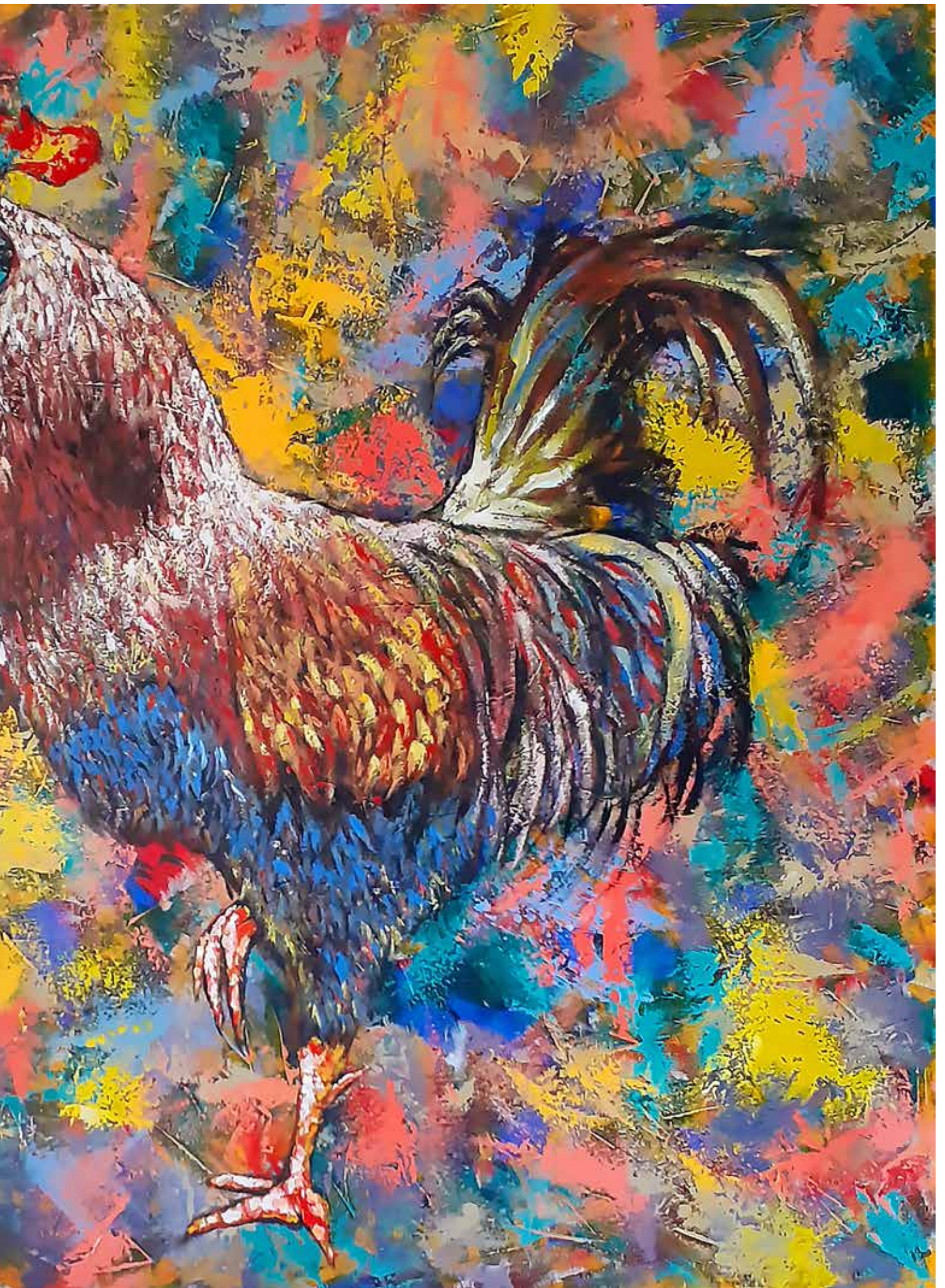






JOHN OH







John Oh's Fresh Fowls

John Oh's fresh images sing with movement, colour and texture.

In 1967, John Oh Jyh Neng, also known as John Oh, majored in painting 1988 - 1990 at the Saito Academy of Graphic Design. Later he attended the Malaysian Institute of Art, with a scholarship majoring in ceramics 1993 -1995.

1990 Young Artists Award

John Oh was the Founder of the Contemporary Malaysian Water-colourist's Association and, early on, was a water-colourist with works in various Malaysian Watercolour exhibitions, including the 'Malaysian Watercolour Show '93', where he exhibited 'Rock of Ages II', alongside the inimitable Malaysian *Nanyang* artist Tew Nai-Tong. By 2008, John Oh was exhibiting alongside Malaysian notables, including Tew Nai-Tong, Yeo Eng Hin and Dr Cheah Thian Soong.

In 2014 John Oh's watercolour 'Cock Fight' was included in the exhibition (and catalogue) 'Asian Water Colour Expression II: Colour of Asia' in Bentara Budaya Bali, Indonesia (24th October to 2nd November 2014, and featuring watercolours from China, Hong Kong, Indonesia, Korea, Malaysia, Myanmar and Singapore.

Bali is significant, due to its connections to the concept of a 'Nanyang' school or style of art, developed in Malaysia and Singapore, and for

being a hub for artists ever since 1952, when Liu Kang, Chen Chong Swee, Chen Wen Hsi and Cheong Soo Pieng embarked on their historic field trip to Bali, returning with notions gleaned from the artists and 'Post-Impressionist' subjects they saw on that well-preserved Hindu island of Bali, sat next to, and part of, Indonesia.

Tew Nai Tong, who was to become John Oh's mentor at Malaysia's Saito Academy, had attended the lustrous 'Nanyang Academy of Fine Arts (NAFA), in Singapore, before heading off to Paris, France, in 1967, on the well trod path to complete his art education at the *École Nationale Supérieure des Beaux-Arts*.

Nanyang (Nan Yang), for those not *au fait* with the term means South (China) Seas in Mandarin. The name "...*Nanyang itself was originally coined by newspaper critics of the late 1920s to early 1930s, to denote contemporary Chinese stories that were written based on local Singaporean subjects.*" (Quoted from Alicia Yeo, Reference Librarian, Lee Kong Chian Reference Library, in her article Singapore Art, Nanyang Style). The term 'Nanyang' was adopted by a new Singaporean art school, in 1938, run by in a Chinese migrant artist and teacher Lim Hak Tai, for his 'Nanyang Academy of Fine Arts'. Tew Nai Tong, schooled in Parisian and Nanyang styles of art, and eventually had his works associated with that Balinese/Singaporean Nanyang 'style' of art. He

visited Bali between 1992 and 1997.

“The Nanyang style refers to the pioneer Chinese artists’ work which was rooted in both the Western schools of Paris (post-Impressionism and Cubism for example) as well as Chinese painting traditions; styles and techniques of both were distinctively integrated in depictions of local or Southeast Asian subject matter.” (Singapore Art Museum, 2002).

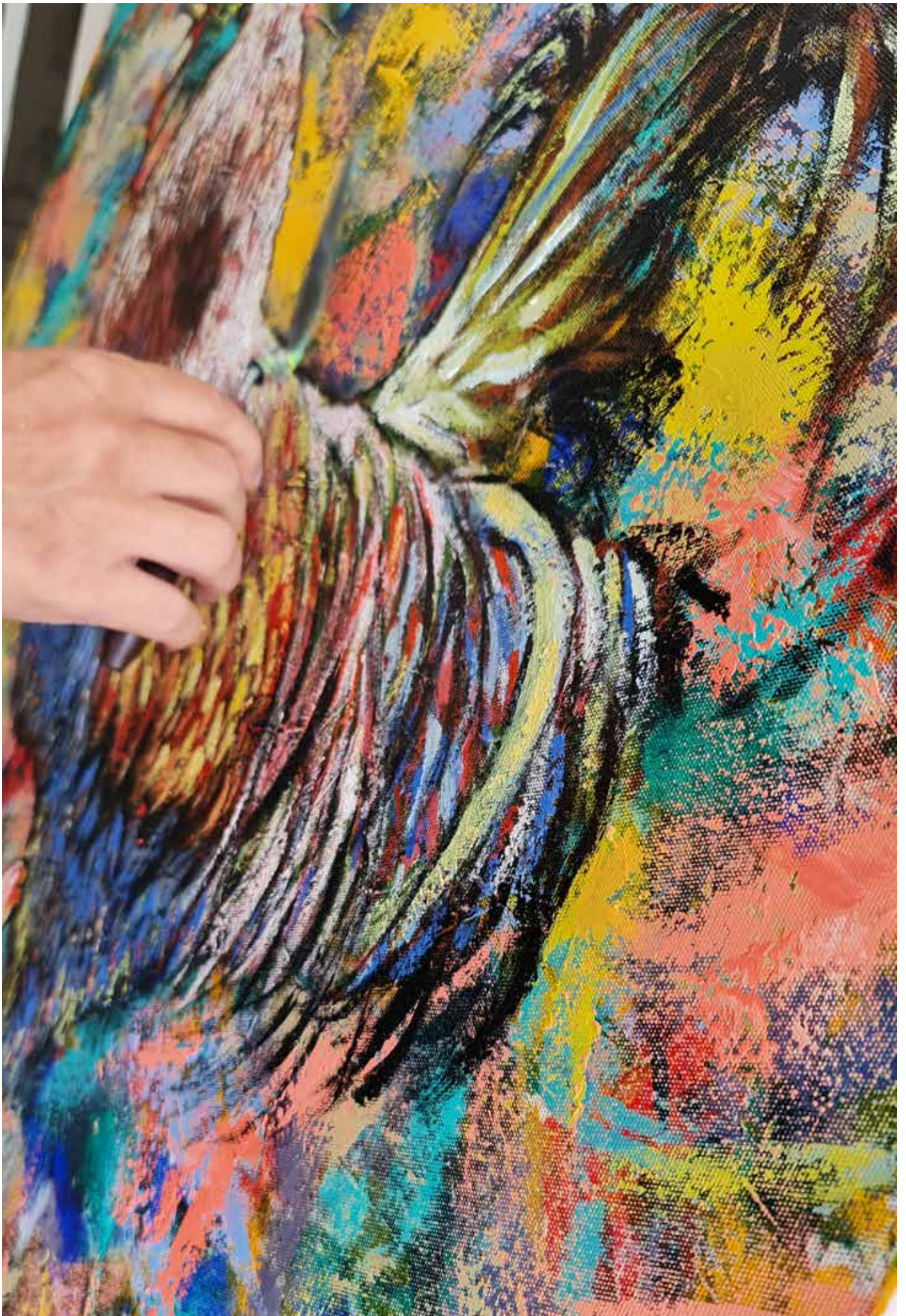
As well as ‘Cock Fight’ (2014), more recently (2022 - 2023) John Oh has embarked upon a series of acrylic paintings on A1 size 300gsm acid free, cotton, cold pressed, watercolour paper. These works feature roosters/chickens/fowl. The cockerel, or rooster, in Chinese culture represents punctuality and honesty. They are considered auspicious symbols of good luck, bringers of light and protectors from darkness. It is said that the rooster’s red comb resembles the hats of the historic Chinese scholars and officials, and so symbolises organisation, and intelligence.

In Bali, cock-fights were sacred and had been part of ‘*Tabuh Rah*’ (to spill blood), now banned, but had been an important Balinese Hindu ritual, dedicated to neutralising evil spirits. Balinese

men believed that roosters represent virility and masculinity, and treated their own fighting roosters as princes, grooming them, pampering them with good food and, of course, talking to them.

In his new series of fowls, John Oh has moved away from watercolour, preferring to create his images using ‘*Fauves*’ (wild beasts) like colours and expressionistic movements, using palette knives to add texture, instead of brushes. His subject matter is true to his ethnicity, true to Balinese culture, and ultimately true to adherents of Nanyang ‘style’.

Ed.















Betty Woodman
&
George Woodman
At Charleston





The first in the UK to show both artists together, this exhibition celebrates the work of ground-breaking American ceramic artist Betty Woodman (1930–2018) and painter and photographer George Woodman (1932–2017).

A riot of colour, Betty Woodman and George Woodman brings together the artists' vibrant ceramics, vivid abstract paintings, radical assemblages, photographs and an early collaboration. Side by side, kindred palettes and patterns emerge, evidence of the couple's continuous artistic dialogue and mutual influences.

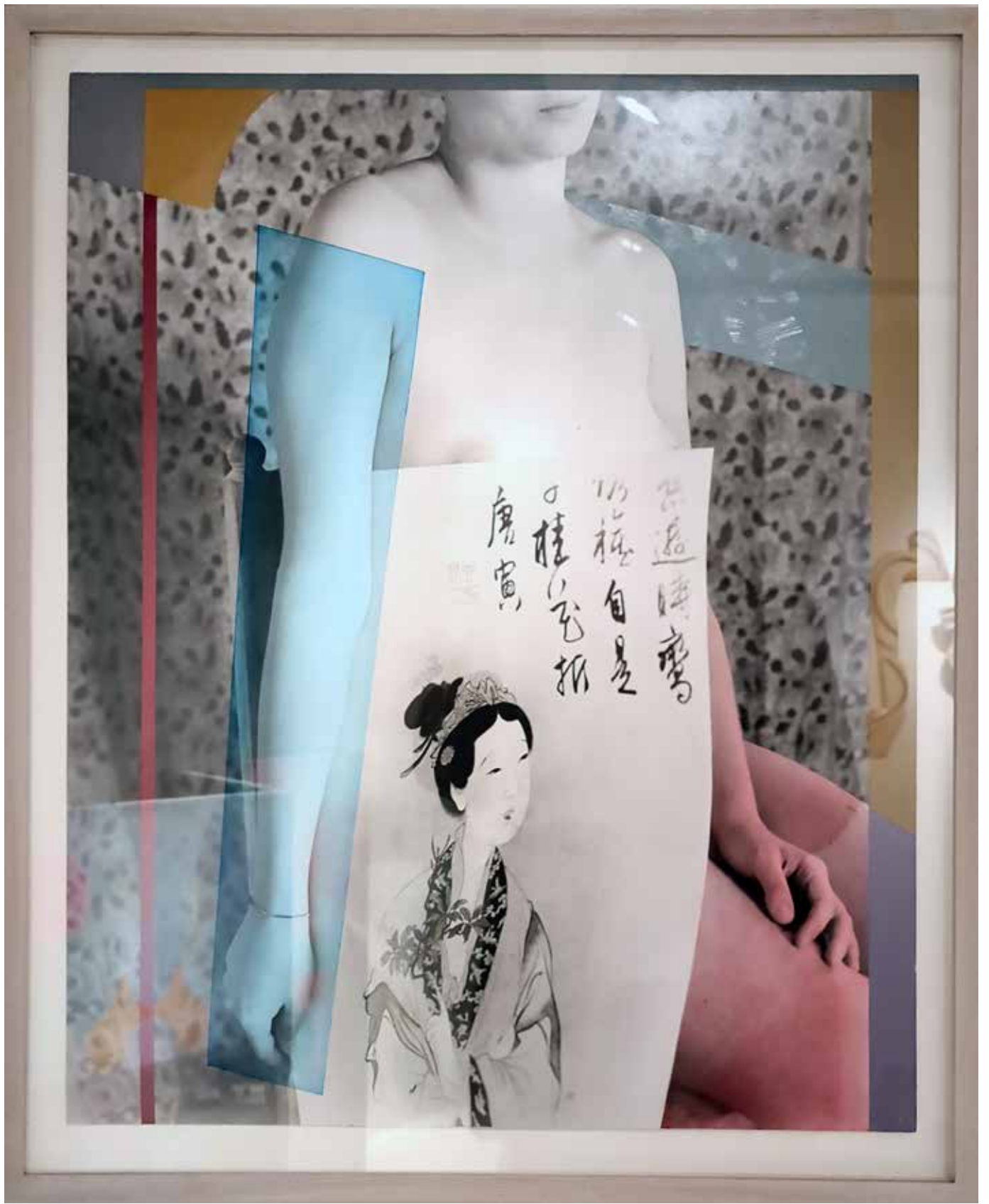
The exhibition highlights the untold story of Antella, a small town south of Florence, Italy where an ancient stone farmhouse became a significant part of the artists' lives. It was their home and studio, their inspiration and their canvas, and the setting for some of their most important artistic breakthroughs. As George described it, it was 'an artist residency for two.' The show explores the work of both artists from the perspective of their shared life, experiences and influences.

Not unlike Bloomsbury artists Vanessa Bell and Duncan Grant who lived at Charleston, the Woodmans lived and worked together for decades. From 1968, they spent part of each year at Antella and created a home full of artistic experimentation and creative expression. Like Charleston, it was a space where art and everyday life were entwined. Archival photography brings Antella to life alongside the works Betty and George created there and beyond.

In this two-person show, the first since the artists' deaths, we explore the impact of place on artistic creativity and the lasting legacy on the Woodmans' work.

From <https://www.charleston.org.uk/exhibition/betty-woodman-and-george-woodman/>







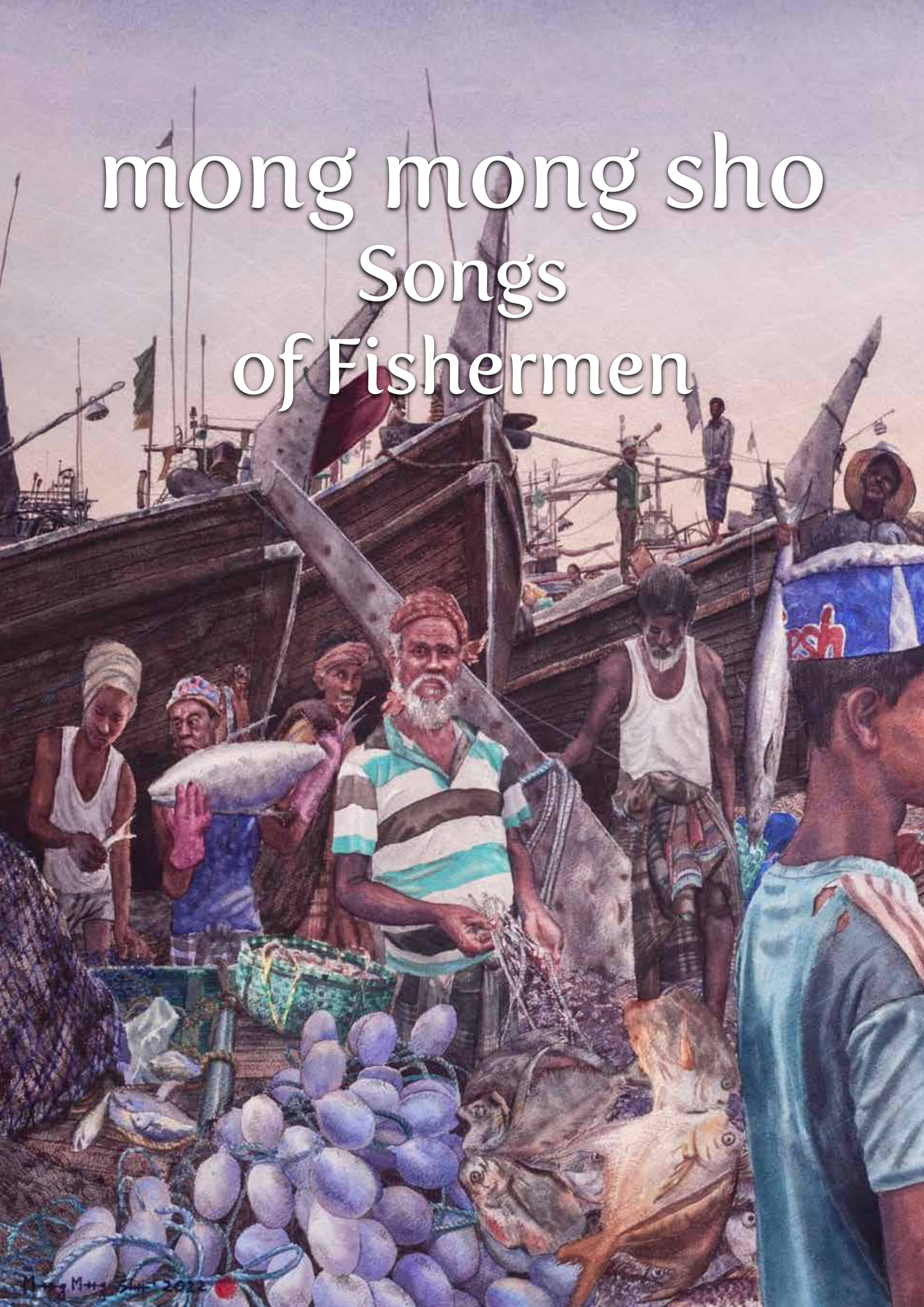






mong mong sho

Songs of Fishermen









Fisherman's Songs

Professor Alak Roy

Some questions had come into my mind before I started writing about Mong Mong Sho, my ex-student in Bangladesh, who is now studying and living in Kunming.....Why someone wants to be an artist, what an artist wants to do, where he finds his inspiration and what he wants to express and how? And how an artist becomes relevant to the contemporary art world. Finally, how one can relate his own experience in art?

A tree grows towards infinite possibilities under the open sky if the roots seep deep into the earth; it has no fear to be uprooted. There has been "changing questions" about the role of an artist since pre-historic periods. Today, an artist lives in a multifaceted world being challenged with the possibilities on how to explore art. An artist as a person lives in today, but with yesterday following him.

The name Mong Mong Sho is not a Bangla name. He belongs to a small ethnic group named Rakhine in Maheshkhali, an island of Bangladesh. A hilly island surrounded by the Bay of Bengal and close to the mainland with its coastal belt serving as a vibrant harbour. One of the main economy is fishing and cargo business that has thrived since ancient times. This island is very much secular in nature as Muslims, Hindus and Buddhist live harmoniously side by side. They are a community in relation with the hills for cultivation, the sea for fishing and the harbour for business. The people of this island are quite familiar and lives with the various atrocities of nature and know how to







struggle for survival. Mong Mong Sho was born and spent his childhood within this locality and surroundings. Beautiful landscape and waves crashing on the foothills, winds, rains and storms are part of this life. But artist Mong Mong Sho tried to capture the life and struggle of fishermen of the sea. He tried to explore the hustle and bustle of the harbour, fishing and fishing boats with all sorts of visual details related to it.

He has been studying and living in Kunming, a landlocked province in China, which is very much in contrast to his childhood golden memories, hence his nostalgia drags him to work with. And watercolour itself has relation with water, thus the rationale behind his chosen media.

He is going to complete his post-graduation in watercolour painting where his guide and teacher named professor Chen Liu is a master of watercolour and a very renowned professor. The technique is very special compared to wash technique in general of China. Influence of his teacher, in a positive sense, is evident in his work but very far from his priorities of subject matter. His teacher is more interested in expressive human figures and portraits while Mong Mong Sho's paintings reflect instead the absence of human figure however one still feels the vibrant activities of the fishermen and the harbour. He surprises us with meticulous details of fishing boat and its activities. One can



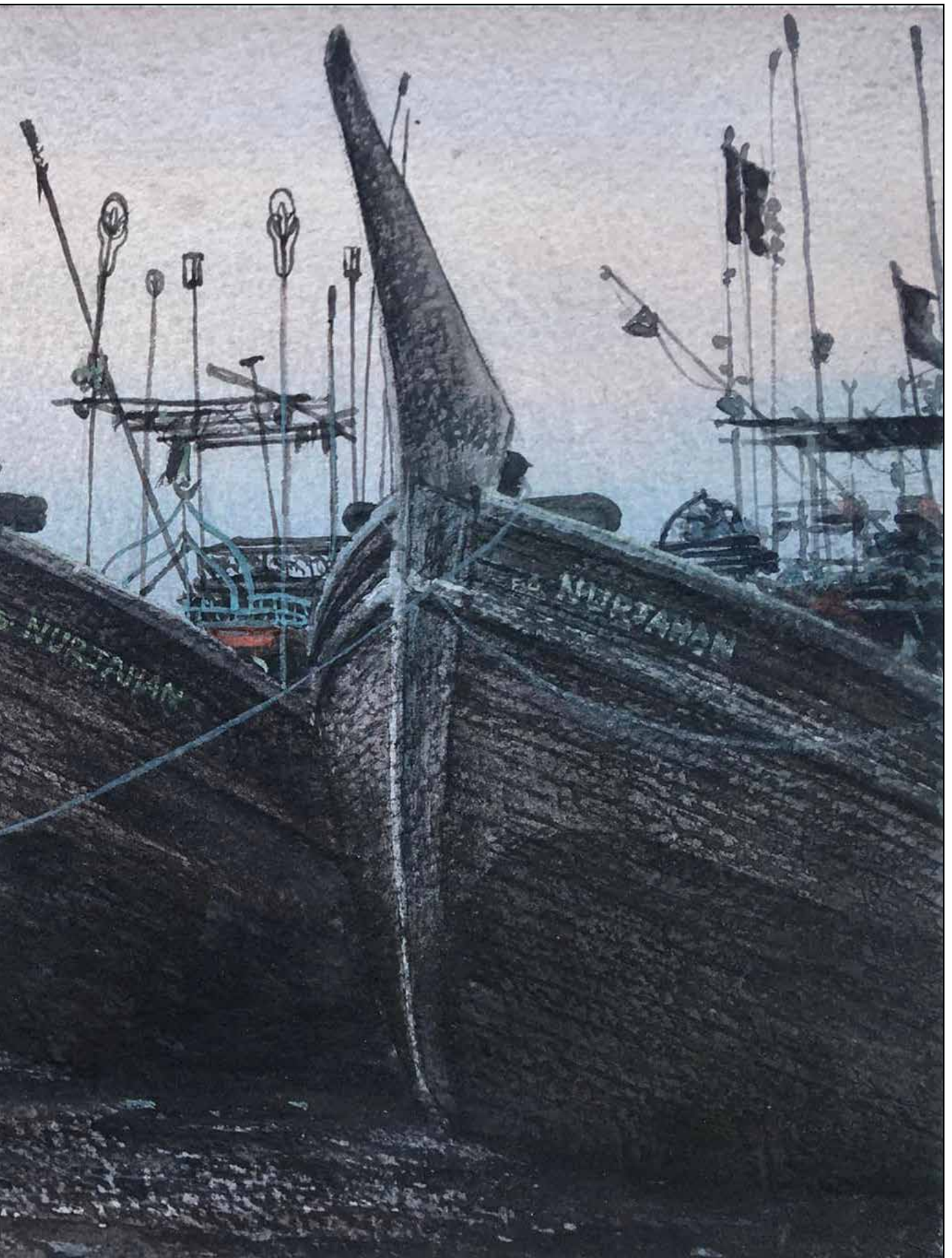
smell the muds and muddy water in his paintings. His wooden boats are very unique in shape, form and colour. The realism and technique of his watercolour paintings are very unique which we have never experienced in Bangladesh. Surprisingly he was not satisfied with two dimensional paintings but also includes three dimensional installations with sounds to help the art lovers to experience the real harbours of southern Bangladesh.

I would like to conclude by saying that Mong Mong Sho's paintings have a body of Chinese but a soul of Maheshkhali. He wants to listen to his heart and never forget about his birth island. Hence reminding us of Pablo Picasso who was living in Paris but always a Spaniard by heart and by art.











**Colchester Art Society
Spring Exhibition**

**The Benham Gallery,
Cuckoo Farm Studios
Boxted Road,
Mile End, Colchester
CO4 5HH**

**Thursday-Sunday
30 March- 16 April
2023
11-4pm**

Membership Enquiries
membershipsec.cas@gmail.com

This address should be used for any enquiries regarding membership of the Society. To become a member please [click here](#).

Correspondence Address
CAS Hon Secretary, c/o 32 Inglis Road, Colchester, CO3 3HU



The [Colchester Art Society](#) was formed in 1946 for the promotion of the visual arts by a group of artists based in the Colchester School of Art. Amongst the earliest members were John Nash, Cedric Morris, Arthur Lett-Haines, Henry Collins and Roderic Barrett. The Society has maintained a lively programme of exhibitions and other activities for over 70 years.

Membership is open to all who practice, or have an enthusiasm for, the visual arts and we currently have around 350 members.

The Society organises two major exhibitions each year in Colchester, one in the summer and one in the winter. These exhibitions are open to submissions from members and non-members but are subject to selection by a panel elected by the members. Additional exhibitions are organised from time to time.

Other activities include Spring and Autumn lectures delivered by prominent professional artists, organised visits to a variety of venues of art interest, and informal social gatherings.

A newsletter is published every four months. Members are kept informed of our activities via the newsletter, email circulars and our social media accounts.





olchester Art Society
pring Exhibition 2023



Velma Goyer
Dancing Priest
Textile/wood, Mannequins
perspex

NFS



















Colchester Art Society Spring Exhibition 2023

Memories of bright Boishakhi nights

Rebecca Haque

Contrary to popular images of celebration of Pohela Boishakh, usually replete with the early morning epicurean ritual of feasting on plentiful platters of Panta ilish, my earliest memories of the Bangla New Year are suffused with the serotonin-rush of the taste of sugary, pale creamy-white, wafer-thin moon-shaped candy, Batasha. Close cousin to the egg-white whipped meringue, the boiled Batasha is as light and exhilarating as the cool evening breeze of summer. Deliciously crunchy and crumbly between the teeth and tongue, the sound and sensation in the mouth is poetically onomatopoeic of a sudden shower of raindrops. Heavenly, pearly, rainbow bearers, the seven colours bursting against the red lining of the full cheek, spontaneously sending sparkling signals of ecstasy to the brain's neurons.

The memory of the juicy luxuriance of mouthfuls of Batasha, ubiquitous Boishakhi junk-food, childhood's candy-coin, is my present currency propelling me on a journey into the past, into a time of a discovery of her roots, her people and her land, its rich history with its glorious fusion of diverse cultures. Autobiographical memory relates to things we remember during the course of our lifetime.

Tonight, as I dwell on Pohela Boishakh 1421, my fingers play a staccato symphony on the keyboard, with the inner eye evoking images and perceptions of bright Boishakhi nights in my lifetime's time-line. The poet in me observes the images that arise in my mind as I write. This, I know now, is how the human mind works: we construct narratives through the imaginative process as memories of actual events are trawled unconsciously through word-association or object-relation. Time is a river, and my consciousness dragnets across ripples of

memory to gather the few indelibly imprinted scenes of Boishakhi nights.

The first memory of such a night, a memory which is a constant source of positive sustenance, comes from the warm, wholesome family reunions in Dacca in the years 1960-63, when my father was a newly promoted Major at the Combined Military Hospital in Comilla. These were the years when the First Bengal Regiment was raised and the cantonment was an idyllic retreat of hills and valleys nestled among the ancient archaeological ruins and stupas of Mainamati. Dacca was so close, my grandfather's sprawling two-storied mini-mansion at 2A C Roy Road, Armanitola, beckoned me and my brothers on weekends and school holidays. Father would put mother on the train, the Green Arrow, with the small children tightly holding hands, sheltered close to their mother inside the noisy, crowded compartment. We would reach Dacca at night, our anticipation of receiving lavish entertainment and opulently stored harvest produce from grandfather's estate in Dhamrai, Savar, increasing in direct relation to the decreasing distance between Comilla and Dacca. The train's terrific tooting pushed back the sleepy dark hamlets, as a few more loud toots soon brought the twinkling lights of the city within sight.

It was during one such visit to Armanitola that my grandfather, my Dada, took me and my brothers to the Boishakhi mela at Chowk bazaar one evening. I do not remember where my brothers roamed or with whom. All I remember is my Dada holding my hand in a firm grip and leading me through the crowd, stopping now and then to exchange greetings or to buy toys and appetising snacks.

Naturally, the visual perspective in this mental



Panta ilish



Batasha

the present, I cannot see above the adult knee-height. As I weave through the parting path amidst the folk and the arts and crafts, in quiet and secure contentment, my eyes make contact with children of my age and my curious mind ponders the magic of the makers of the terracotta figures, the moveable wooden toys, the beaten tiny tin and brass cooking pots and pans, all laid out neatly in rows on mats on the ground. Dada stops and looks down and calls my name as he offers me a small paper bag of Batasha with his free right-hand. His eyes shine with the light of unconditional love as I happily, quickly, pop a coin into my mouth and crinkle it in one bite. Behind Dada, just a bit to the left, I am entranced by the intricately latticed bamboo conical stand and the underside of a large oval brightly painted tin tray.

The mela-space becomes brighter, and there are more people as evening turns to night. We went our way towards the parked car and home and to dadi and my mother. Both awaiting our return to feed us all the dishes they had companionably cooked together on the two wood choolas in the large rectangular kitchen on the eastern side of the inner courtyard. (One house beyond the kitchen wall, on the east, lay the large colonial structure of Anandamoi Girls' High School, where my father's youngest sister attended classes.

I remember watching her having brunch of rice and curry at 10:00 in the morning to begin classes at 11:00 AM. As soon as tiffin-time bell rang at her school at 3:00 PM, I would be ready after my own lunch at home downstairs, and scamper upstairs to the long mesh-grilled, chessboard black-white tiled verandah-cum-sitting room. Auntie would be waiting with a few friends on a flight of open stairs on the outer western part of the school ground, and we would merrily signal or wave or sometimes shout across the expanse of the single-storey house between us.)

Dada bought me small handicrafts from the fair that bright night. He bought me terracotta figures. I remember holding the specially

moulded horse, the horse of Gandhara art. I felt an eerie sense of *déjà vu*; I knew him. I had met him in Taxilla and Mohenjo-Daro when I was four years old; I knew him in Mainamati. He was my spirit-guide, my Sagittarian soul-mate, infusing me with the breath of fiery quest and freedom, infusing me with the unquenchable thirst to run with the wind, to let my mind and the senses explore the uncharted vastness of the earth and the sky. I am made in my grandmother's image.

My dadi's gene, her X-chromosome, makes me sentient, makes me passionate in life and laughter. But, sadly, such is the paradox of chance and time of birth, the remnants of nineteenth-century bourgeois culture of Bengal kept dadi unlettered, covered, confined in the Andar Mahal. Dada could not alter the cultural conditioning of his beloved wife, but he could, and did emancipate his daughters with education and the right to choose.

For me, my Dada was the true hero: life-giver, saviour, protector, benefactor, a role he proudly passed on to my father, his first born. Grandfather recognised the free spirit that I am from the moment I was born. He led me forward into light and love of learning and would let me lovingly gaze at the rows of thick brown, bound volumes of law books in his large downstairs Chamber rooms. I would read the gold-embossed titles and sometimes, in the evening, he would have me sit beside him and let me hear a client or a group consulting civil cases. He never let me sit in on a single criminal case.

Even as a child, I was especially blessed in that my curiosity, my precocity, my love of reading and sports and athletics were not taboo in this household. I was loved; I was powerful in the knowledge that I was respected and admired. More significant, so essential for self-esteem and positive growth, my dark brown skin was never, ever, a factor in qualitative assessment of my worth as a female. With wisdom and affection, I was gently guided into a lucid understanding of appropriate personal and social conduct.

lived flitting back and forth between Comilla and Dacca in those precious three years of the Sixties. The road from Armanitola to Savar and Nayarhat became familiar terrain, with rest stop at the sweet-shops at Nayarhat for the famous Roshogullas of my home district.

I remember the car arriving at Nayarhat, and taking a boat to our village, Equria, with the entire village receiving us like royalty. I remember the boat-ride vividly, and I can still feel the water touching my trailing fingers as I tried to trap the large flat lotus leaves to capture the pink jewel of a flower in the centre. I remember running through fields of bright yellow mustard plants. I remember the towering Kashful, and how I loved to bring back long-stalked bunches of the silky, feathery wild flowers to illuminate the Armanitola upstairs verandah with their light, silvery elegance.

I remember my father taking it upon himself to teach us about the geography of the land and the navigability of its river. He took us once on a day trip from Sadarghat on a flat steamboat all the way to the ghat at Equria. I remember one glorious Pohela Boishakh we began our journey at Daudkandi on a double-decker steamboat, and arrived at Sadarghat around midnight.

I remember the exquisite beauty of sunset on the river, of dusky smoke surrendering to the night-dew. I remember the bright colours of life's activities along the sloping banks of the river, and the gliding majesty of the simple sampans.

I had been immersed in live performances, in the music and songs of the folk dramas, Beder Meye, and Nakhshi Kantha'r Math, successively in those three years in the two cities, and on this voyage the little girl's soul connected palpably with the land and the river of Bengal. I can still feel my heart melting as it did then as the plaintive song of the sampan wallah drifted across the night air over the steady flow of the water's current. An incorrigible romantic that I am, as I was even then, of course without the knowledge of the word or of its definition, I remember a sense of

perplexed yearning deep in the recesses of my mind as I quietly turned my head to catch the distant call of a melodious flute.

That journey on the river has been for me the most treasured gift a father can give to his only daughter. It is a journey of such great magnitude of joy in my mental landscape, that in moments of feelings of loss or anxiety, dreams of this event subliminally surface from my restore, to heal, and provide strength to complete my life's work. The memory of this journey is momentous because it defines me, the kind of person I was at that tender age, and am now in maturity.

As I compose the last few lines of this soliloquy, I feel I have circumnavigated the globe on the back of the zodiac archer, the centaur. My memories have beatified me, have let me live again the years of my own individual history, and reinforce my distinct identity as a Bengali woman. Memories of bright nights in Bengal have enlarged my soul, added a new dimension to my personality. I am free to reach my journey's end.

I am strong in my resolve to be worthy of the gift of life and promise of trust given to me by my grandfather and father. Memory of a bright Boishakhi night bespeaks a prophecy of a benevolent New Year. I wish all to spread the message of the essence of Bengal: unity in diversity, celebration in song and dance, efflorescence in art and creativity.

I wish to put a candy-coin in the right palm of every Bangladeshi child, man, and woman. A sacred Batasha to sweeten each and every person's breath and being. A sacrament of trust and respect.

The writer is Professor, Department of English, University of Dhaka.



Roshogullas

Malaysian Bak Kut Teh (肉骨茶) Herbal Soup



瑞祥

瑞祥封肉肉骨茶
RESTORAN SWEE XIANG



瓦煲肉骨茶	1个位	RM 16.50	1½个位	RM 29.00
瓦煲猪脚醋		RM 16.50		RM 29.00
封肉		RM 15.50		RM 27.00
封肉元蹄		RM 72.00		
肉骨茶碗		RM 15.50		
猪脚醋碗		RM 15.50		
咖喱鸡	普通	RM 9.00	特大	RM 18.00
猪肚汤 / 肠汤	碗	RM 6.00	瓦煲	RM 7.00
青菜饭	小	RM 8.00	大	RM 9.00
卤蛋		RM 1.20		RM 1.50
豆干		RM 1.50		
鸡脚		RM 1.50		
		RM 4.00		
			脚版	
			碱水糕	
			油条	

bak kut teh

I have been eating Bak kut teh (pork ribs soup) for so many years (in Malaysia) that I really cannot remember when I started. Once, with a trusty packet of the essential herbs and spices, I even bought pork bones and meat and cooked bak kut teh in Figueres (Catalonia, Northern Spain), when I was there for Christmas.

If we are to trust *Wikipedia*, then “Bak kut teh is a pork rib dish cooked in broth popularly served in Malaysia and Singapore where there is a predominant Hokkien and Teochew community. The name literally translates from the Hokkien dialect as "meat bone tea", and at its simplest, consists of pork ribs simmered in a broth of herbs and spices for hours.”

Bak but teh can include these ingredients: pork ribs, star anise, cinnamon, cloves, dang shen/Tong sum (Codonopsis root), Yu zhu/Yok chok (or Solomon's seal rhizome), Star anise, cloves, pepper corns, fennel seeds, Chuan xiong (Rhizome Ligustici), Goji or wolf berries, Shu si huang/Lok sok tei (Rehmannia) Dong gui (Angelica Sinensis) dried Chinese mushrooms, Tofu skin knots, Tofu puffs and a whole garlic bulb and rock sugar.

Now back in Malaysia (my spiritual home), I was immediately swamped with offers to dine on bak kut teh, well, actually, two offers, but you must understand that bak but teh is very very filling.

The images here are from the second meal of bak but teh, in Klang Utama (which is very close to the source of what is considered to be the best bak but teh in Malaysia)











when I had the opportunity (and permission) to take photos of the process.

There were distinct differences in style of broth between the two restaurants. Honestly, I loved them both.

Another bak kut teh restaurant, under a bridge in the Malaysian town of Klang, lays claim to the origin of this dish, and has made a name for itself in the promotion of the restaurant and the dish. I cannot attest to the validity of that claim, although I have tried, and liked, the bak kut teh, there.

Ed.





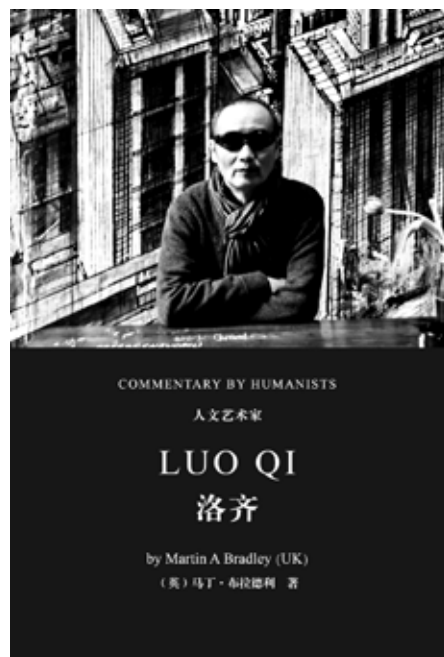




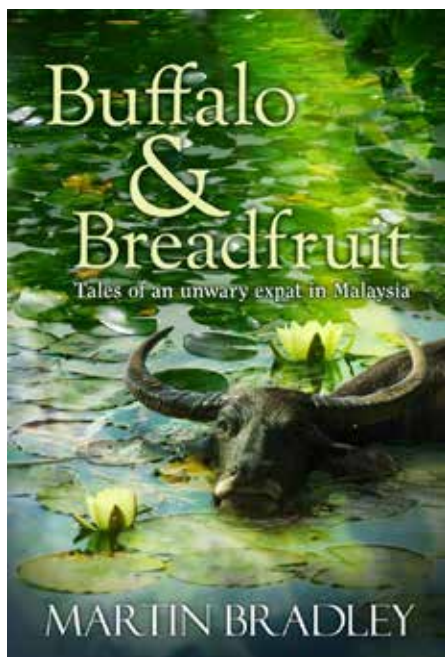
Martin Bradley

Martin Bradley is the author of a collection of poetry - *Remembering Whiteness and Other Poems* (2012, Bougainvillea Press); a charity travelogue - *A Story of Colours of Cambodia*, which he also designed (2012, EverDay and Educare); a collection of his writings for various magazines called *Buffalo and Breadfruit* (2012, Monsoon Book); an art book for the Philippine artist Toro, called *Uniquely Toro* (2013), which he also designed, also has written a history of pharmacy for Malaysia, *The Journey and Beyond* (2014, Caring Pharmacy).

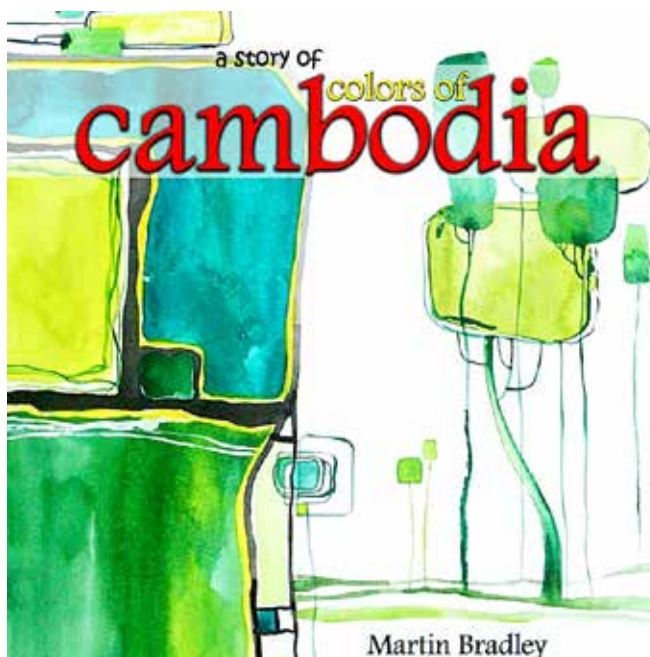
Martin has written two books about Modern Chinese Art with Chinese artist Luo Qi, *Luo Qi and Calligraphyism* and *Commentary by Humanists Canada and China* (2017 and 2022), and has had his book about Bangladesh artist Farida Zaman *For the Love of Country* published in Dhaka in December 2019.



Canada 2022



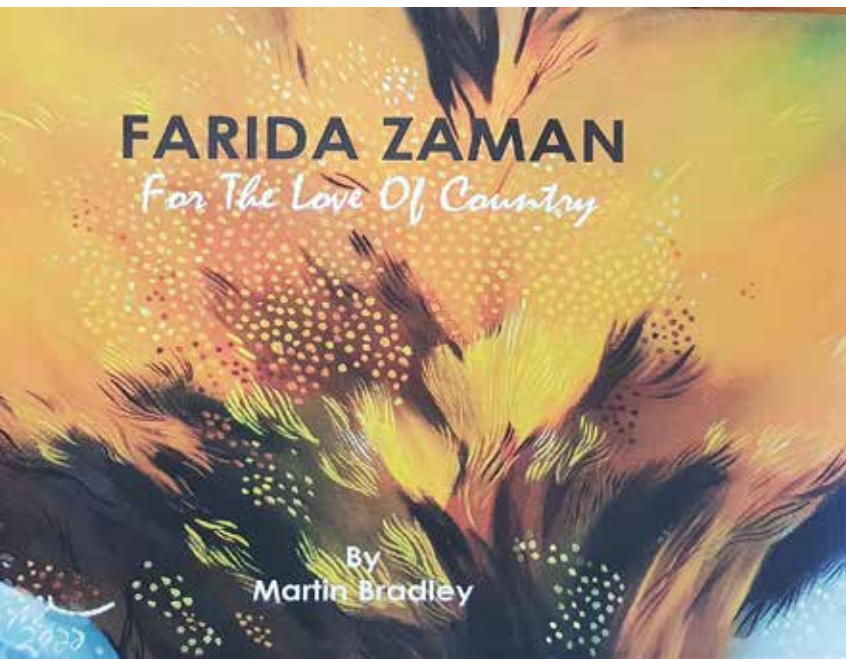
Singapore 2012



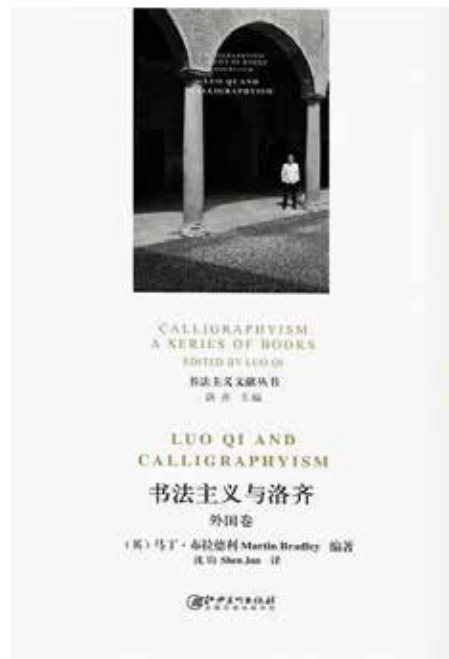
Malaysia 2012



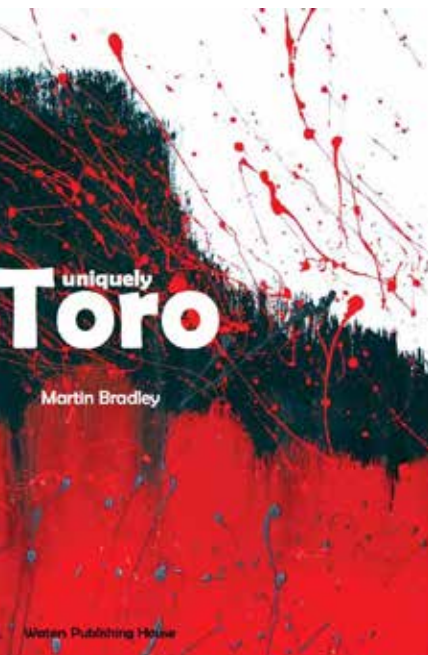
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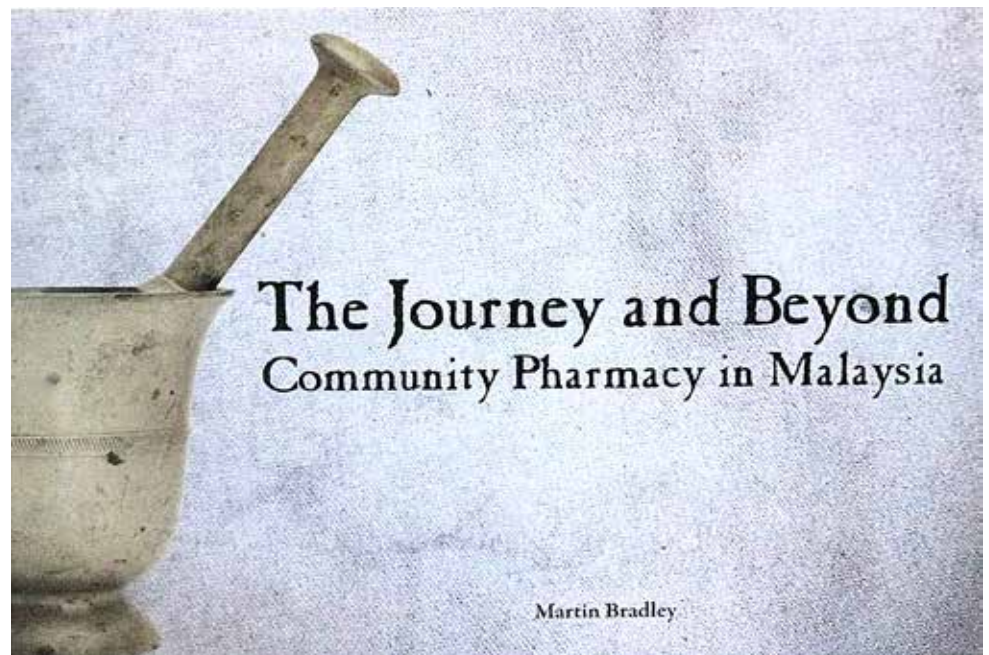
Bangladesh 2019



China 2017



Philippines 2013



Malaysia 2014

THE BLUE LOTUS



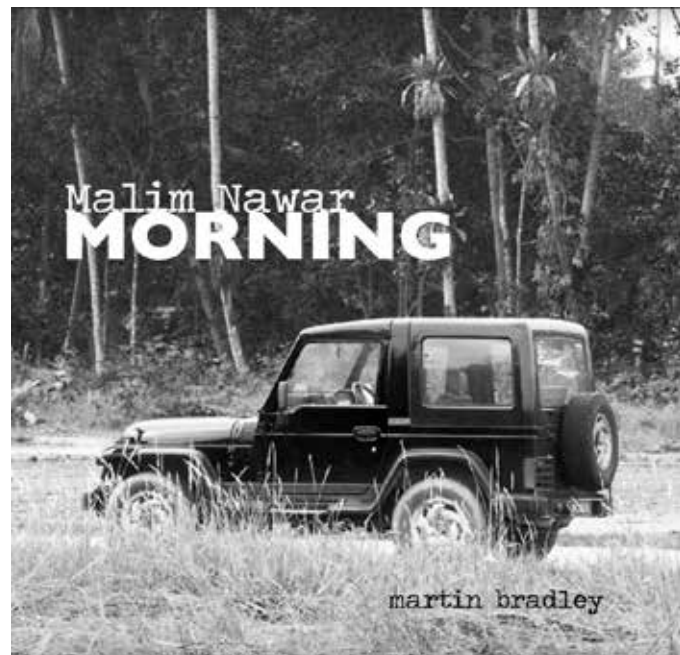
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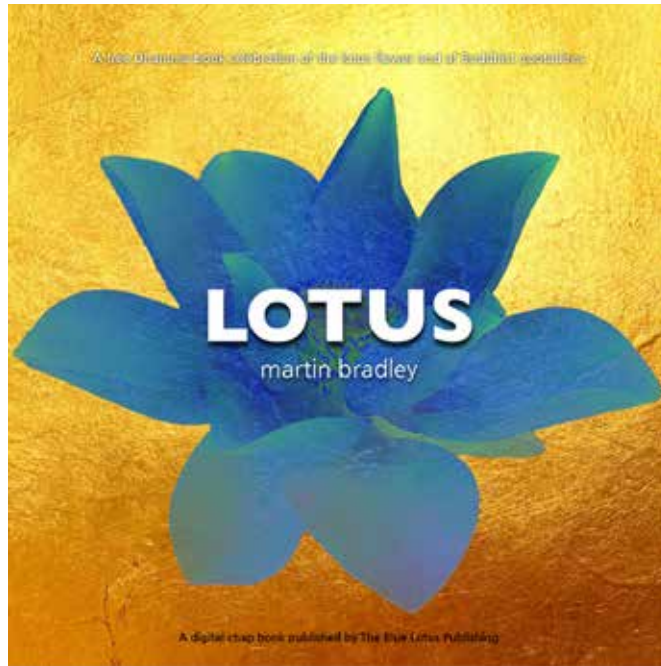


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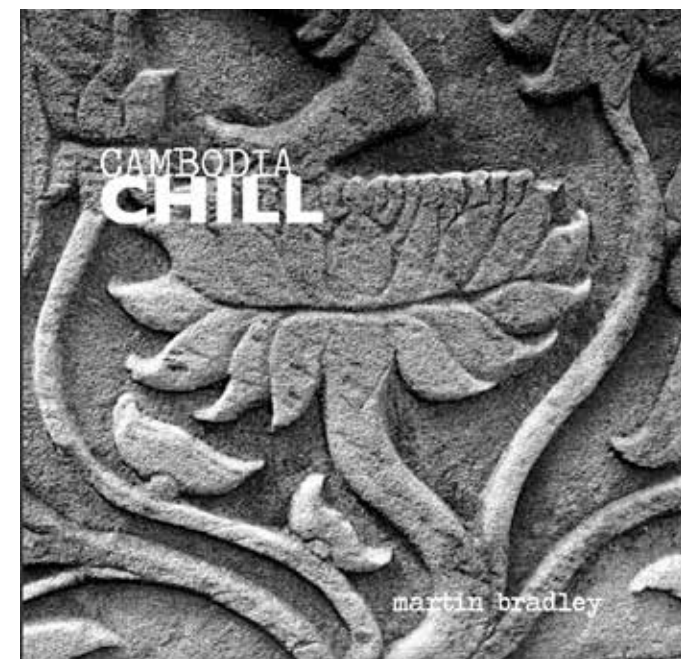
US CHAP BOOKS



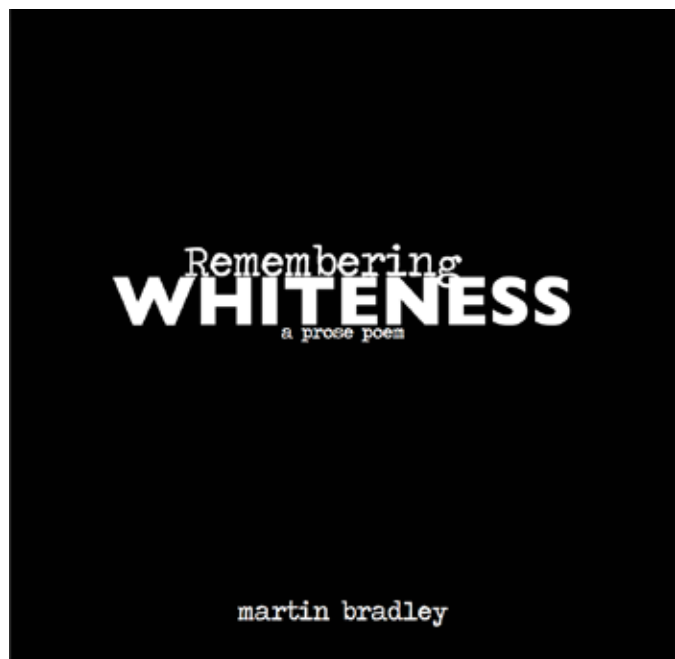
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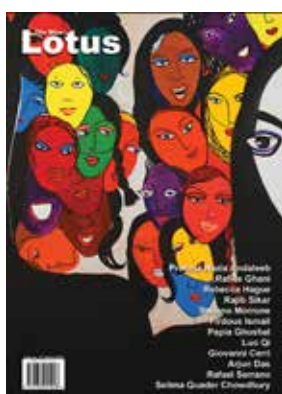
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...a selection



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