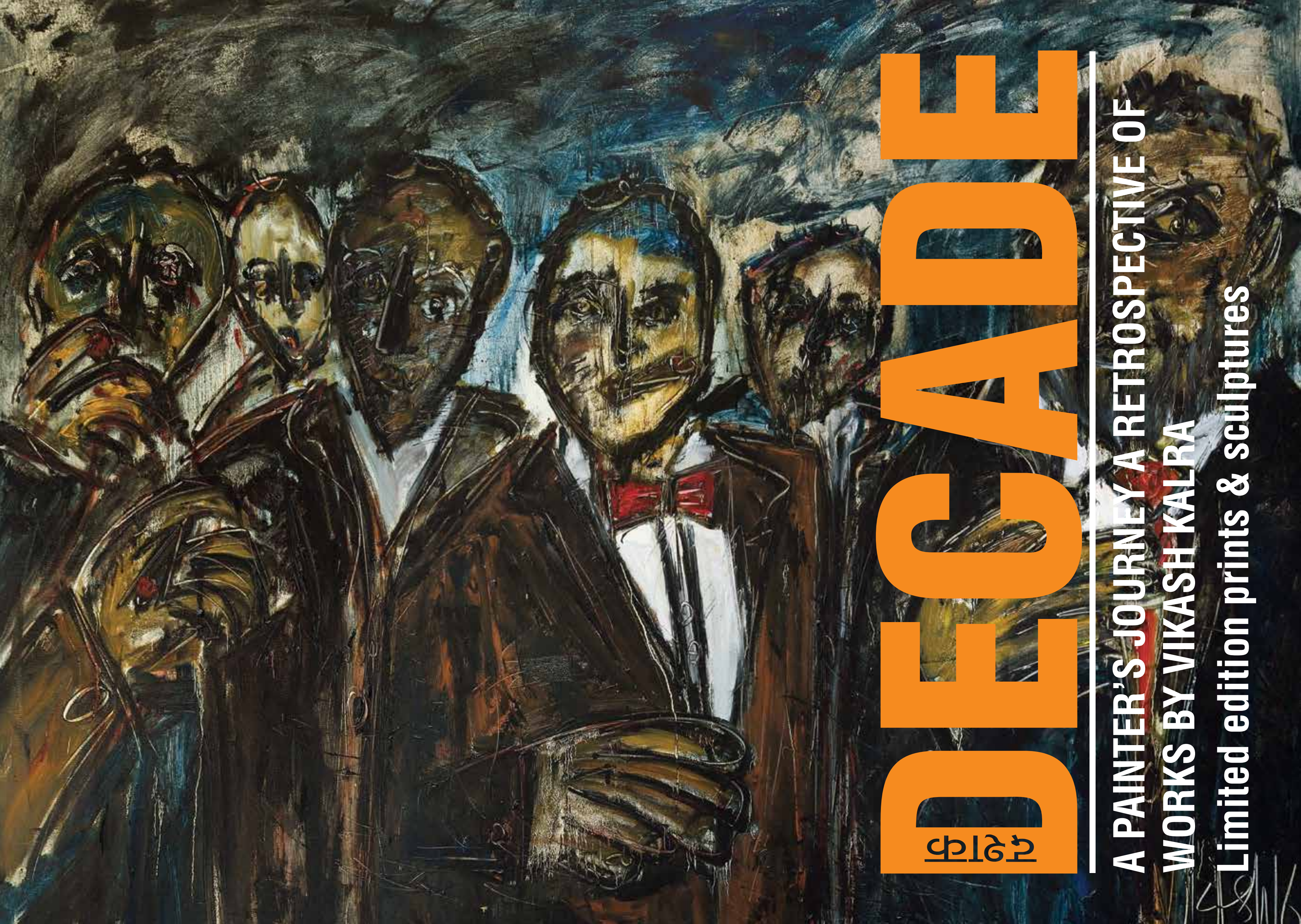


दशक DECADE

A PAINTER'S JOURNEY A RETROSPECTIVE OF
WORKS BY VIKASH KALRA

Limited edition prints & sculptures





DECADE

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ABOUT PRINTSVILLA

VISSION PRINTSVILLA IS AN ONLINE MARKETPLACE FOR LIMITED EDITION PRINTS, BOOKS, SIGNED PRINTS, SERIGRAPH, LITHOGRAPH, COLLECTIBLES AND ALL KIND OF ARTS INTERIOR AND ARTIFACTS. PRINTSVILLA IS A VENTURE OF PRESTIGIOUS DUBAI BASED ALTURAASH ART GALLERY, A SUBSIDIARY OF ALTURAASH GROUP.

"PRINTSVILLA" IS AN EXCLUSIVE ATTEMPT TO PRINT/REPRODUCE THE PAINTINGS OF THE NOTED YOUNG CONTEMPORARY ARTISTS USING HIGH QUALITY DIGITAL TRANSFERENCE AND PRINTING TECHNOLOGY, AND MAKE IT ACCESSIBLE TO A LARGE NUMBER OF PEOPLE AT AFFORDABLE PRICES. WE WOULD LIKE TO SPREAD ARTISTS' WORKS AMONGST THE PEOPLE WHO REALLY LIKE THEIR FAVORITE ARTIST WORKS BUT CANNOT AFFORD THE ORIGINALS BECAUSE OF THE PRICE TAGS ATTACHED TO THEM. TO SATISFY THIS AESTHETIC DEMAND, A COMPANY HAS BEEN SET UP AND THE PRIME AIM OF THE COMPANY IS TO MAKE LIMITED EDITION SIGNED PRINTS OF THE ORIGINAL PAINTINGS AND SELL THEM FOR AFFORDABLE PRICES IN A NEW AND EMERGING MARKET. TODAY, COLLECTING RARE PRINTS HAS BECOME ONE OF THE PRESTIGIOUS ACTIVITIES OF THE INFORMED ART COLLECTORS. "PRINTSVILLA", AS A COMPANY OFFERS THIS UNIQUE OPPORTUNITY TO THE ART COLLECTORS AS WELL AS GENERAL ART ENTHUSIASTS TO OWN AND FLAUNT AN 'ORIGINAL' PRINT OF MANY EMERGING NOTABLE INDIAN ARTIST.

THE IDEA OF MAKING PRINTS AND SELLING THEM THROUGH AN EXCLUSIVE COMPANY TOOK SHAPE WHEN "PRINTSVILLA" FOUND THE DEMAND FOR WELL-KNOWN MODERN ARTIST'S AS WELL AS OTHER YOUNG ARTISTS' WORKS INCREASED ON THE ONLINE PLATFORMS. BUT MOST OF THE ENQUIRIES WERE FOR THE SIGNED PRINTS AS THEY COULD NOT AFFORD THE ORIGINALS. TODAY, THE PRINTSVILLA AS A COMPANY SELLS A LOT OF SIGNED PRINTS OF MANY INDIAN ARTISTS WITH AUTHENTICATION CERTIFICATES. ACCORDING TO THE COMPANY SPOKESPERSON, THESE PRINTS COULD BE BOUGHT MAINLY FOR FULFILLING AN AESTHETICAL NEED OF THE BUYER. HOWEVER, AS IT IS A SIGNED PRINT WITH AN AUTHENTICATION CERTIFICATE, THE COMPANY DOES NOT RULE OUT THE POSSIBILITY OF THEM TURNING INTO A MINOR INVESTMENT ITEM IN THE PRESENT MARKET. WE FEEL THAT THESE SIGNED WORKS ARE PRICED IN A VERY MODERATE WAY AND AS THEY CARRY A CERTIFICATE OF AUTHENTICATION ALONG WITH EACH PURCHASE, THEY COULD TURN OUT TO BE RARE PRINTS IN THE FUTURE MARKET. SO IF SOMEONE THINKS IN TERMS OF RESELLING THE PRINTS IN A FUTURE MARKET, THE 'AUTHENTICITY' OF THESE PRINTS CANNOT BE QUESTIONED.

MISSION "PRINTS VILLA" STEPS INTO A REALM THAT SOME OF THE EXISTING GALLERIES HAVE ALREADY EXPLORED. HOWEVER, OUR EXPLORATION IS DIFFERENT FROM THAT OF THE ESTABLISHED GALLERIES THAT SELL THE PRINTS, BOTH SIGNED AND UNSIGNED (WHEN IT IS SIGNED THE PRICE IS UP) AS MERCHANDISE. WE DO NOT WANT TO TREAT THEM AS MERCHANDISE THAT EITHER BECOMES A CURIO IN A COLLECTOR'S CABIN OR A SENSORY-TEASER ON A WALL. OUR INTENTION IS NOT TO CREATE AN ILLUSION OF THE ALTERNATIVE OR STAND IN AESTHETICS. WE WANT ARTIST'S PRINTS TO BE TREATED AS INDEPENDENT WORKS OF ART WITH A SENSE OF AESTHETIC AUTONOMY VIS-A-VIS THE SOURCE PAINTING. WE EXPECT TO REMEMBER ARTIST'S WORKS NOT JUST AS MEMORABILIA COLLECTED FROM MUSEUM OR GALLERY VISITS BUT AS WORKS OF ART COLLECTED WITH A SENSE OF PRIDE. "PRINTSVILLA", AS AN EXCLUSIVE COMPANY, OFFERS THIS SERVICE TO THE ART ENTHUSIASTS. WE BELIEVE THAT WE WOULD ALWAYS KEEP THE PRICE OF THE SIGNED PRINTS WITHIN A LIMIT. IT IS NEITHER CHEAP NOR EXPENSIVE. IT IS A WORK



OF ART WORTH COLLECTIBLE'; THAT IS THE MOTTO OF PRINTSVILLA. WE ALSO BELIEVE THAT MANY OF THE YOUNG ARTISTS WHO ARE SIGNED BY THE COMPANY TO PRODUCE AUTHENTICATED PRINTS WOULD FOLLOW THIS MOTTO OF SUCCESS.

HISTORY WE HOWEVER ARE NOT THE FIRST COMPANY TO INITIATE SUCH AN EXPERIMENT WITH THE PRINT OF THE ORIGINAL PAINTINGS. IN INDIA, IT WAS STARTED BY RAJA RAVI VARMA IN THE EARLY TWENTIETH CENTURY AS HE WANTED HIS PAINTINGS TO REACH EVERY HOUSEHOLD IN INDIA. AS A PIONEERING ARTIST WHO HAD GIVEN HUMAN FORM TO THE GODS AND GODDESSES OF THE HINDU PANTHEON FOR THE FIRST TIME AND THEREBY CREATING A NEW AND POPULAR VISUAL HISTORY IN INDIA, IT WAS IMPERATIVE FOR RAJA RAVI VARMA TO SPREAD THE FRUITS OF HIS LABOR TO THE PUBLIC. HE KNEW THAT HIS WORKS WERE COMMISSIONED BY THE ROYAL PATRONS WHO COULD AFFORD TO BUY HIS WORKS. BUT RAVI VARMA WANTED HIS WORKS, ESPECIALLY THE PICTURES OF GODS AND GODDESSES, TO REACH EVERY HOUSEHOLD IN INDIA. TO FULFILL THIS END HE SET UP A PRINTING PRESS IN LONAVALA NEAR PUNE AND HIS OLEOGRAPHS BECAME AN INSTANT HIT. THIS PIONEERING EFFORT BROUGHT IN MANY OTHER ENTREPRENEURS AND ARTISTS TO START THEIR OWN PRINTING PRESSES AND TO BRING OUT PRINTED PICTURES OF NOT ONLY GODS AND GODDESSES BUT ALSO CHARACTERS FROM SECULAR THEMES. ALSO THESE IMAGE PROLIFERATION EFFORTS RESULTED INTO A SORT OF HYBRID AESTHETICS THAT COMBINED THE PRINTED IMAGES AND CRAFTED INTERPOLATIONS OVER IT. RAVI VARMA'S SIGNATURE PRINTED ON THE OLEOGRAPH PRINTS IN A WAY AUTHENTICATED THE PRINTS, SO WAS THE CASE OF THE WORKS THAT CAME OUT OF OTHER PRINTING PRESSES SET UP IN VARIOUS PARTS OF INDIA. NOW, A CENTURY LATER, THE SURVIVING PRINTS FROM THOSE LOTS COMMAND VERY HIGH PRICES IN THE ART MARKET.

"IT IS INTERESTING TO SEE HOW A PRINT, OVER A PERIOD OF TIME BECOMES A RARE PIECE OF ART. THERE ARE A FEW REASONS WHY THIS TRANSITION FROM A MASS PRODUCED OBJECT TO A RARE OBJECT OF AESTHETICAL AS WELL AS MONETARY VALUE HAPPENS. FIRST OF ALL, WHEN SOMEONE BUYS A PRINT, WHETHER IT IS SIGNED OR NOT SIGNED, IT IS NOT NECESSARY THAT THAT PERSON IS GOING TO KEEP IT FOREVER. AS HE HAS SPENT A COMPARATIVELY SMALL AMOUNT ON THE PRINT, THE VALUE HE ATTACHES TO IT MAY BE LESSER THAN THAT HE WOULD ATTACH TO AN ORIGINAL PAINTING. IN THAT SENSE, THERE ARE ALL CHANCES OF THIS PRINT GOING OUT OF THE ATTENTION SPAN OF THE BUYER AND BECOME A 'VALUELESS' PIECE OF ART. BUT WHEN THE SAME PRINT IS SOUGHT BY SOMEONE IN THE FUTURE AND IT IS UNDERSTOOD THAT THERE ARE ONLY A FEW PRINTS LEFT IN THE WHOLE WORLD, THIS VALUELESS PRINT WOULD BECOME AN 'INVALUABLE' PIECE OF ART. THIS IS WHAT EXACTLY HAPPENED TO RAJA RAVI VARMA'S PRINTS AND TO SO MANY OTHER PICTURES, POSTERS AND THE PUBLICITY MATERIALS PERTAINING TO POPULAR CULTURE INCLUDING BOLLYWOOD MOVIES.

"TODAY, COLLECTING RARE PRINTS HAS BECOME ONE OF THE PRESTIGIOUS ACTIVITIES OF THE INFORMED ART COLLECTORS. PRINTSVILLA, AS A COMPANY OFFERS THIS UNIQUE OPPORTUNITY TO THE ART COLLECTORS AS WELL AS GENERAL ART ENTHUSIASTS TO OWN AND FLAUNT AN 'ORIGINAL' PRINT OF MANY EMERGING NOTABLE INDIAN ARTIST.

"THE BEST EXAMPLE OF A LIMITED EDITION PRINT BECOMING A POINT OF INVESTMENT COULD BE SEEN IN THE LIMITED EDITION PRINTS OF PABLO PICASSO. CHRISTIE'S PRINTS & MULTIPLES DEPARTMENT OFFERS WORKS SPANNING CENTURIES OF PRINTMAKING – A COMPREHENSIVE JOURNEY THROUGH WESTERN ART MOVEMENTS FROM 1500 TO THE PRESENT DAY. CURRENTLY HOLDING THE WORLD RECORD PRICE FOR ANY PRINT SOLD

AT AUCTION – PABLO PICASSO'S LA FEMME QUI PLEURE, I (STATE VII/VII), SOLD FOR \$5,122,500 (NOVEMBER 2011), DOUBLING THE PREVIOUS RECORD PRICE – THE DEPARTMENT CONTINUES TO HOLD AUCTION MARKET SHARE, AND REPEATEDLY ACHIEVES EXCEPTIONAL SALE RESULTS. CHRISTIE'S SALES DEPARTMENT FEATURES PROMINENT OLD MASTER WORKS BY REMBRANDT HARMENSZ. VAN RIJN, ALBRECHT DÜRER, AND FRANCISCO GOYA; MODERN MASTERPIECES BY PABLO PICASSO, HENRI MATISSE, MARC CHAGALL, AND JOAN MIRÓ; AND REMARKABLE IMPRESSIONS FROM ANDY WARHOL, ROY LICHTENSTEIN, KEITH HARING, DAVID HOCKNEY, FRANCIS BACON, AND OTHER POST-WAR, POP, AND CONTEMPORARY LEADERS. WITH A BREADTH OF MATERIAL AND A WIDE VARIETY OF PRICE POINTS, THE PRINTS DEPARTMENT CONTINUES TO PROVIDE SUPERIOR EXPERTISE TO BOTH NEW AND SEASONED COLLECTORS. WE HOPE THAT THE INDIAN MODERN AND CONTEMPORARY ARTISTS CAN ALSO ASPIRE FOR SUCH GRAND SUCCESS THROUGH LIMITED EDITION PRINTS PROVIDED IF WE DEVELOP A GOOD MARKETING SYSTEM. WE ARE HAPPY THAT "PRINTSVILLA" HAS UNDERTAKEN THIS HISTORICAL MISSION.

" THERE IS A PARADOX WHEN WE SEE 'ORIGINAL' PRINT. A PRINT, PRIMARILY REPUDIATES THE EXISTENCE OF THE ORIGINAL. WHEN A PRINT IS AN EXACT REPRODUCTION OF THE ORIGINAL PAINTING, THE DIFFERENCES BETWEEN THEM COULD BE CITED ONLY IN THE CASE OF SURFACE TEXTURE, DEPTH, SHEEN AND SIZE. ON THESE FRONTS, A PRINT IS FUNDAMENTALLY DIFFERENT FROM ITS ORIGINAL. BUT WHAT COULD BE THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN TWO IDENTICAL PRINTS TAKEN FROM THE SAME SOURCE? TODAY, WITH DIGITAL IMAGING AND DIGITAL REPRODUCTION SYSTEMS IN VOGUE, ANY NUMBER OF ORIGINALS OF A DIGITAL IMAGE COULD BE MULTIPLIED USING COMPUTER SOFTWARE. AN IMAGE WHICH IS EQUAL IN SIZE AND SATURATION WITH THOUSANDS OR MILLIONS OF ITS REPLICAS CANNOT BE CALLED AN ORIGINAL AS IT DOES NOT DIFFER FROM ANY OF THE MULTIPLIED IMAGES. THEN HOW DOES ONE ASSURE THE 'ORIGINAL AND RARE' QUALITIES OF A PRINT? THIS IS WHERE THE IDEA OF LIMITED EDITION COMES INTO PLAY. WHEN THE EDITIONS OF AN IMAGE ARE LIMITED, ITS ORIGINALITY IS PROTECTED. WHEN IT IS FURTHER AUTHENTICATED BY THE SIGNATURE AND CERTIFICATE OF THE ARTIST, IT ALMOST GAINS THE AESTHETICAL VALUE OF THE ORIGINAL IN A DIFFERENT MEDIUM AND SCALE.

"WALTER BENJAMIN, THE GERMAN CULTURAL THEORIST AND PHILOSOPHER IN HIS ESSAY 'WORK OF ART IN THE AGE OF MECHANICAL REPRODUCTION' ARGUED THAT AS THE TECHNIQUES FOR REPRODUCING AN IMAGE WERE WELL DEVELOPED A WORK OF ART COULD NOT CLAIM ITS ORIGINALITY AS REPRODUCIBILITY ITSELF HAD REPUDIATED THE IDEA OF ORIGINALITY. THAT MEANS WHEN A WORK OF ART IS MECHANICALLY REPRODUCED IN THE SAME SCALE, ONE CANNOT DISTINGUISH BETWEEN WHAT IS ORIGINAL AND WHAT IS A COPY. SO TODAY, MANY OF THE WORKS OF ART ARE ORIGINAL OF THE COPY AS THEY DEPEND TOO MUCH ON THE ALREADY EXISTING OR REPRODUCED IMAGES. THE THIN LINE THAT EXISTS BETWEEN THE IDEA OF ORIGINAL AND COPY IS AT THE VERGE OF A COLLAPSE. BUT FOR AN ART COLLECTOR, THE IDEA OF HAVING AN ORIGINAL IS STILL VERY IMPORTANT. WHILE "PRINTSVILLA", AS A COMPANY THAT PROMOTES THE SIGNED PRINTS OF MANY INDIAN ARTIST DOES NOT SAY THAT THESE ARE ORIGINAL WORKS BUT IT EMPHASIZES THAT THESE ARE ORIGINAL PRINTS, SIGNED AND AUTHENTICATED BY THE ARTIST HIMSELF. THE ARTIST, UNLIKE RAVI VARMA AND HIS CONTEMPORARIES, WHILE WANTING HIS WORKS TO BE POPULAR, DOES NOT WANT THEM TO BE CHEAP GLOSSY PRINTS AVAILABLE IN VILLAGE FAIRS AND CITY PAVEMENTS. WE WANT PRINTS TO GAIN A RESPECTFUL PLACE IN THE ART COLLECTIONS AND DECORATIONS. AND TO THIS END WE LIMIT EACH OF HIS PRINT WITHIN A STIPULATED NUMBER.



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ALCHEMY OF LANDSCAPE PAINTING

VIKASH KALRA IS A TIME TRAVELLER, REINCARNATING HIMSELF AT TIMES AS WORDS AND AT OTHER TIMES AS SYMBOLS, AND NEVER LETS HIMSELF BE CARRIED AWAY TO THE COMBINATION OF BOTH WHICH OTHER ARTISTS HAVE ALREADY DONE. WORDS COME TO HIM IN THE FORM OF POEMS THAT HE RECITES BEFORE A MIRROR AND WHEN A MIRROR IS NOT AVAILABLE, BEFORE A LENS. CAMERA CATCHES HIS MOVING LIPS AND THE SOUNDS THAT THOSE LIPS MAKE AND TOGETHER THEY COME OUT AS, POETRY AS PERFORMANCE AND PERFORMANCE AS POETRY. VIKASH DOES NOT DISTINGUISH OR DISCRIMINATE; INSTEAD HE REACHES OUT TO PEOPLE THROUGH YOUTUBE AND OTHER SOCIAL NETWORKING SITES. FOR THIS ARTIST, THESE TECHNOLOGICAL INTERFACES ARE NEW LANDSCAPES WHERE PEOPLE WANDER, SOME WITH FIXED AIMS AND SOME WITHOUT ANY AIM AT ALL. IN THE REAL INDIAN TRADITION, VIKASH KALRA'S WORDS AND SYMBOLS WANDER AROUND WITHOUT ANY FIXED AIM; WORDS AND SYMBOLS GO OUT ON A PILGRIMAGE WITHOUT ANY SHRINE OR DESTINATION. AND DURING THIS JOURNEY ALL WHAT THE ARTIST SEES, HE CAPTURES IN HIS MEMORY, LATER ON HIS CANVASES, AND REMEMBER, THEY ARE NEVER THE SAME. WHAT IS IMPORTANT FOR HIM IS THE TRANSFORMATION OF THE WORDS TO PERFORMANCE AND MEMORIES TO IMAGES. THESE ACTS OF MUTATION AND REINCARNATION OF MEMORIES AND EXPERIENCES ARE SOMEWHAT COMPLICATED. A LANDSCAPE OF VIKASH KALRA IS A JOURNEY, PERHAPS UNDERTAKEN BY EVERYONE WHO WITNESSES IT BUT SOMEHOW FAILING TO TRANSLATE IT IN THE WAY THAT THE ARTIST DOES.

THESE LANDSCAPES DONE IN AN EXPRESSIONIST FASHION IS ONE OF THE PIVOTAL COMPONENTS OF VIKASH KALRA'S OEUVRE, WHICH OTHERWISE ALSO INCLUDES FACES, COUPLES, EROTIC SCENES, CHEMICAL DRAWINGS, FIGURATIVE SCULPTURES AS CONSTITUTING ELEMENTS. IN THIS FOCUSED EXHIBITION OF HIS LANDSCAPES, ONE COULD SEE THE ARTIST BRINGING ALL HIS EXPERIENCES AND MEMORIES INTO CONDENSED LANDSCAPES. THOUGH VIKASH DOES NOT LIKE TO BE KNOWN AS A LANDSCAPE ARTIST, DEPICTING THEM IS ONE OF THE MOST EXCITING ARTISTIC PROCESSES FOR HIM. FOR A DEVOTED LANDSCAPE ARTIST, ANY KIND OF LAND BECOMES A TRIGGER; HE COULD ELABORATELY PAINT IT WITH ALL THE DETAILS OR ABSTRACT IT TO ITS ESSENCE. BUT FOR MAJORITY OF THE ARTISTS LANDSCAPE PAINTING IS SOMETHING UNAVOIDABLE. WHETHER IT IS BENODE BEHARI MUKHERJEE OR RAM KINKAR BAIJ, ZARINA HASHMI OR NILIMA SHEIKH, EVEN WHEN THEY PRACTICE A DIFFERENT SORT OF PAINTING, LANDSCAPES OCCUR IN THEIR CREATIVE PROCESSES, AT TIMES CHALLENGING THEM WITH ITS BEAUTY OR AT TIMES CAJOLING THEM WITH ITS SIMPLICITY. THOSE ARTISTS WHO WOULD LIKE TO GO BEYOND THE ACADEMIC RESTRICTIONS AND THEME BASED PRACTICES ARE CHARMED BY THE ALLUREMENT OF LANDSCAPES AND PAINTING LANDSCAPES GIVES THEM A SORT OF FREEDOM THAT THEY DO NOT OTHERWISE GET FROM THEIR ABSTRACT OR FIGURATIVE WORKS



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EXPRESSIONISTS, UNLIKE THE FIGURATIVE ARTISTS BRING OUT LANDSCAPE AS VERY STRONG MEMORY REGISTRATIONS. VIKASH KALRA'S LANDSCAPES BELONG TO THIS TRADITION OF LANDSCAPE PAINTING.

FOR THE ARTIST LANDSCAPE PAINTING OR PAINTING LANDSCAPES OPENS UP TWO POSSIBILITIES BEFORE HIM; ONE, IT IS A RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN INDIVIDUAL NATURE AND THE 'NATURE' OF NATURE. TWO, IT IS ABOUT THE ABSENCE OF INDIVIDUAL NATURE AND IT IS ALSO ABOUT THE NEGATION OF ONE'S OWN NATURE AND LETTING THE OTHER NATURE DOMINATE. IN THE FORMER SENSE, IT IS A CONFRONTATION BETWEEN THE ARTIST AND THE LANDSCAPE. THIS CONFRONTATION OR THE ENSUING RELATIONSHIP NEED NOT NECESSARILY BE A SMOOTH AND HAPPY ONE. THE ARTIST COULD TREAT LANDSCAPE AS QUITE OPPRESSIVE, UNLIKE THE CONVENTIONAL LANDSCAPE PAINTINGS. HE ALSO COULD USE IT AS A VERY BENEVOLENT ONE. AND AT THE MOST IT COULD BE USED AS SOMETHING TO EXPRESS THE IMMENSITY OF HUMAN EXISTENCE AND ITS HIDDEN POSSIBILITIES. BUT IN THE LATTER SENSE, THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE ARTIST AND THE NATURE IS THAT OF SLAVE AND MASTER, DEVOTEE AND THE DIVINITY, WORSHIPPER AND THE WORSHIPPED. HERE THE ARTIST HAS TO SUBMIT HIS OWN SELF BEFORE THE POWER OF NATURE AND ALLOW HIMSELF TO BE LED WHEREVER THE NATURE WANTS HIM TO GO. BOTH THESE POSSIBILITIES COME TO PLAY IN VIKASH'S WORKS. BUT WHAT I TAKE INTEREST IN IS A THIRD POSSIBILITY; THE POSSIBILITY OF LANDSCAPE TO BE CONTEMPORARY WITHOUT SHOWING A TRACE OF CONTEMPORARY ELEMENT.

ONE HAS TO BE RETREATING TO REMOTE AREAS IN ORDER TO PAINT LANDSCAPES TODAY WITHOUT CONTEMPORARY ELEMENTS. OTHERWISE ONE HAS TO DEPEND COMPLETELY ON THE CREATIVE AND IMAGINATIVE FACULTIES OF HUMAN MIND TO CONJURE UP SUCH LANDSCAPES. AS I HAVE MENTIONED ELSEWHERE IN THIS ESSAY VIKASH IS AN ARTIST WHO TRANSFORMS THE EXPERIENCES OF THE JOURNEYS INTO MEMORY AND FROM THERE TO LANDSCAPES. THIS ALCHEMY OF TRANSFORMING INTANGIBLE MEMORIES INTO TANGIBLE PAINTINGS IS SOMETHING UNIQUE ESPECIALLY FOR AN ARTIST WHO DOES NOT PARTICULARLY FEEL LIKE TRAVELLING FOR THE SAKE OF DOING LANDSCAPES. FOR ME, THEN THESE LANDSCAPES ARE CONTEMPORARY ONES, ORIGINATING FROM HIS EXPERIENCES OF THE URBAN LANDSCAPES AROUND HIM AND EVEN WITHIN HIM AS HE LIVES IN AN URBAN SPACE, BUT TAKE AN ABSOLUTELY DIFFERENT AND EVEN ROMANTIC FORM WHEN THEY COME ON TO THE CANVASES. THIS HAPPENS WHEN THE ARTIST ERASES ALL WHAT IS CONTEMPORARY FROM HIS MEMORIES. BUT I UNDERSTAND IT AS AN ARTISTIC/CREATIVE TECHNIQUE THROUGH WHICH HE COULD BRING FORTH A SERIES OF LANDSCAPES THAT HAVE THE CONTEMPORARY VIBRANCY AND CLASSICAL FEEL. THIS IS AN ABSENCE TECHNIQUE OR A TECHNIQUE OF ERASURE, AND AT TIMES REPLACING THE PRESENT WITH THE PAST.

CAN IT BE CALLED A MENTAL PHOTOSHOPIING OF EXPERIENCES AND IMAGES? THE EXPERIENCES OF THE CONTEMPORARY ARE SET UP IN THE MIND OF THE



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ARTIST AS A BACKDROP AND FROM THERE THE DETAILS OF ARCHITECTURES AND URBAN SCENES ARE ERASED SLOWLY AND METICULOUSLY. AT TIMES, THE ARCHITECTURAL FORMS ARE ALTOGETHER REMOVED OR AT TIMES THEY ARE REPLACED BY ANCIENT LOOKING STRUCTURES. THIS TECHNIQUE OF ABSENTING OR ERASURE ALLOWS THE ARTIST TO MAKE THESE LANDSCAPE PAINTINGS QUITE FLUID; THEY COULD TAKE VERTICAL AND HORIZONTAL FORMS, AND LARGE OR SMALL FORMATS. INTERESTINGLY, WHEN THE ERASURE IS DONE IN THE MIND, THE DYNAMICS THAT CONSTITUTE AN URBAN FEELING OR IMAGE REMAINS AS IT IS AND THIS DYNAMICS IS TRANSPORTED TO THE PICTORIAL PLANE USING ANIMATED BRUSH STROKES. ALSO, DEPENDING ON THE MOOD OF THE ARTIST, HE TAKES A LOT OF FREEDOM IN USING/CHOOSING THE COLOUR. OF LATE, VIKASH HAS BEEN USING A LOT OF BLUES, YELLOWS AND ORANGES UNLIKE HIS EARLY BLACKS, GREENS AND REDS, THOUGH THE SHADES OF THESE COLOURS APPEAR QUITE OFTEN IN HIS WORKS.

THIS CONTEMPORARY DYNAMISM THAT VIKASH CREATES, FOR ME IS A WAY TO UNDERSTAND THE ARTIST'S GRIP NOT ONLY ON THE CONTEMPORARY LIFE AROUND HIM BUT ALSO HIS KNOWLEDGE ABOUT THE CLASSICAL AND MODERN LANDSCAPES. A GENERALLY INITIATED VIEWER MAY SEE THESE LANDSCAPES OF VIKASH AS EXPRESSIONISTIC ONES AND ALSO THEY COULD CONNECT THESE WORKS TO SOME MID 20TH CENTURY INDIAN MASTERS. BUT A DEEPER LOOK BY AN INFORMED VIEWER WOULD HELP HIM/HER UNDERSTAND HOW VIKASH USES LANDSCAPES FROM RENAISSANCE TO NOW, AS SEEN IN THE ART HISTORY. HE REFERS TO THESE ART HISTORICALLY ACCLAIMED LANDSCAPES NOT AS A DELIBERATE PLOY TO MAKE HIS WORKS GRAND BUT THIS REFERENCE COMES AS A SPONTANEOUS OUTREACH TO HISTORY. IN SOME OF THE VERTICAL LANDSCAPES ONE COULD SEE HOW VIKASH USES THE RENAISSANCE LANDSCAPE KEEPING THE FOREGROUND, MIDDLE GROUND AND BACKGROUND STRUCTURES INTACT. FROM A CLOSER DISTANCE THEY

LOOK TWO DIMENSIONAL TO BE DISTINGUISHED, HOWEVER A MERE REPOSITIONING OF THE VIEWER'S BODY WOULD BRING A DIFFERENT FEEL ABOUT THE WORK AND THEY START VIBRATING LIKE A THREE DIMENSIONAL PAINTING. THE MORE ONE LOOKS FOR CLASSICAL REFERENCES THE MORE ONE COULD SEE THEM IN VIKASH'S WORKS. RIGHT FROM DA VINCI TO VAN GOGH TO TURNER, VIKASH'S WORKS SUBCONSCIOUSLY PAY HOMAGE TO ALL THESE MASTERS.

IN THIS EXHIBITION, VIKASH HAS BROUGHT IN TWO DISTINCT ELEMENTS FOR INTENSIFYING THE FEEL OF HIS LANDSCAPE PAINTINGS; ONE IS A VIDEO AND THE OTHER IS A SET OF CERAMIC WARES WITH VIKASH'S IMAGES GLAZED ON TO THEM. IN THE VIDEO WORK, VIKASH TRAVELS THROUGH THE SUBURBS, WASTELANDS, BARREN AS WELL AS FERTILE STRETCHES ALONG THE HIGHWAYS AND THE IMAGES CAUGHT ON CAMERA FROM THE WINDOW OF A MOVING VEHICLE ARE PLAYED DIRECTLY IN A LOOPED VIDEO. IT IS A SORT OF GOING ROUND AND ROUND IN THE SAME PLACE BUT GIVING AWAY THE FEEL OF AN EXTENSIVE TRAVELLING. THIS IS EXACTLY THE FEELING THAT VIKASH'S LANDSCAPE PAINTINGS IMPART TO THE VIEWERS; THE PAINTINGS AS A WHOLE LOOK LIKE THEY ARE GOING ROUND AND ROUND THE SAME THEME BUT A RELOOK REVEALS THAT IT IS AN EXTENSIVE JOURNEY UNDERTAKEN BY A CREATIVE MIND THAT RESIDES IN A FRENZIED CREATIVE PERSONALITY LIKE VIKASH KALRA.

JOHNYML
NEW DELHI
2014



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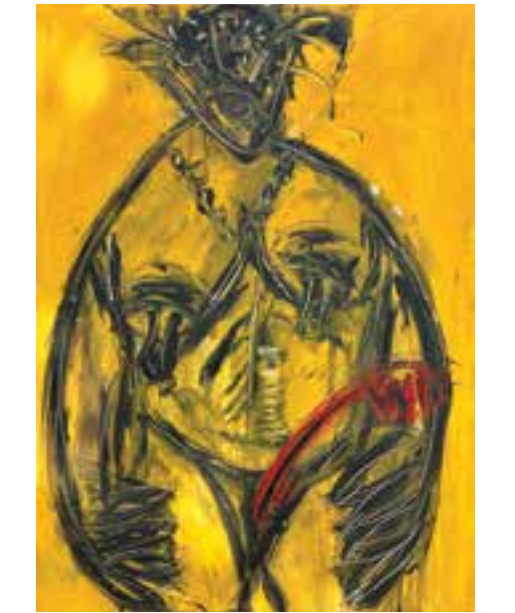
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VIKASH KALRA JOURNEYS

IT IS DIFFICULT TO KNOW WHERE TO START WHEN WRITING ABOUT THE ARTWORK OF VIKASH KALRA, INDEED HOW TO PUT DOWN ON PAPER FOR OTHERS TO READ, ABOUT THE MAN HIMSELF, THE ARTIST AND THE CREATIVE BRAIN THAT PRODUCES THE PAINTINGS WE SEE. THIS IS BECAUSE TO CONSIDER KALRA AND HIS ARTISTIC OUTPUT IS TO ENTER A WORLD SO FULL OF ENERGY AND OBSESSION, OF MOVING FROM ONE IDEA TO THE NEXT, FROM ONE ROOM TO THE OTHER, FROM BOOK TO BOOK, LANDSCAPE, PORTRAIT, POEM, SCULPTURE. HE NAVIGATES THESE POSITIONS WITH EASE SLIDING FROM ONE TO THE OTHER WHILST WE ARE LEFT TRYING TO CATCH OUR BREATH. THAT IS UNTIL AS THE VIEWER, WE ENTER THE WORLD OF KALRA'S LANDSCAPE PAINTINGS, HIS JOURNEYS, OUR SOJOURNS, WHERE WE ARE GIVEN THE FREEDOM TO EXPLORE AND THE SPACE TO LINGER AND ENJOY.

KALRA IS A NEW TALENT IN THE INTERNATIONAL ART WORLD. AN ENIGMA, HE FITS NONE OF THE DEFINITIONS OF AN ACADEMIC ARTIST. SELF-TAUGHT, HE FREELY EXPLORES THE IDEAS INTRINSIC TO THE WORK OF THOSE WHO INSPIRE HIM. LIKE SOME OF THESE MASTERS, ONCE A BRUSH, A PEN OR PALETTE IS IN HIS HAND, HE BEGINS HIS PERFORMANCE WORKING AT SPEED AND WITH FLUIDITY AS HE STARTS HIS JOURNEYS, THROWING OUT IMAGES OF THINGS SEEN OR GLIMPSED AND SPILLING THEM ONTO THE CANVAS.

SO WHAT DO WE SEE IN HIS PAINTINGS, WHAT DOES HE GIVE US? THE ANSWER TO THIS IS SURPRISING, PARTICULARLY WHEN WE ARE PRESENTED WITH A SERIES OF WORKS WHICH FOR THE PURPOSE OF THIS INTRODUCTION WE WILL CALL LANDSCAPES. SOME WOULD CALL THESE WORKS OF KALRA'S ABSTRACT OR ABSTRACTED PAINTINGS. THIS IS NOT STRICTLY TRUE AND TO CONSIDER THEM IN THIS WAY WOULD BE TO MISS THE ESSENCE OF THE OFFERINGS KALRA IS INVITING US TO EXPLORE. A TRUE ABSTRACT WORK REFERS TO NOTHING OTHER THAN ITSELF. ABSTRACTED IMAGES IN A PURE ACADEMIC SENSE ARE ATTACHED TO REAL THINGS; TO PLACES, OBJECTS AND PEOPLE THAT EXIST IN REAL TIME.

HOWEVER, BEFORE THINKING ABOUT THE CONTENT OF THE PAINTINGS THAT WE ARE LOOKING AT IT, IS IMPORTANT TO CONSIDER THE PHYSICAL LANDSCAPES BOTH REAL AND IMAGINED THAT INFORM KALRA WHEN HE STARTS TO PAINT.

BASED IN SOUTH DELHI, BOTH THE OUTSIDE AND THE INSIDE SPACES OF KALRA'S STUDIO SHARE VISUAL REFERENCES. WHILST IN A LEAFY SUBURB, THE STUDIO IN DELHI COULD NEVER BE CONSIDERED RURAL OR PRIMARILY CONTAINING LARGE TRACTS OF 'FREE SPACE'. IT IS URBAN, BUSY, NOISY, COLOURFUL AND BRIMMING WITH LIFE. ENTERING KALRA'S STUDIO ENTAILS A JOURNEY; THROUGH ALLEYWAYS AND UP NUMEROUS FLIGHTS OF STAIRS. ON ENTERING, THE STUDIO MIRRORS THIS LANDSCAPE AND MOVING THROUGH IT PARALLELS THE JOURNEY. THE VIEWER IS FACED WITH ROOM UPON ROOM PILED HIGH WITH PAINTINGS, CANVASES, PILES OF STUFF, BOXES, MUSIC AND IT IS PEOPLED BY THE FIGURES STARING OUT OF KALRA'S NUMEROUS FIGURATIVE CANVASES THAT LINE THE WALLS. THE ARTIST SURROUNDS HIMSELF INSIDE AND OUTSIDE BOTH PHYSICALLY AND MENTALLY. HE CREATES JOURNEYS AND CELEBRATES THE TURNS AND TWISTS. IN THIS PROCESS THE ARTIST ROUTINELY REWARDS HIMSELF. THE BRAIN LIKES REPETITION. IT PARTICULARLY ENJOYS VISUAL REPETITION AND PAYS ITSELF WITH A REGULAR INJECTION OF DOPAMINE. IN OTHER WORDS, AS HUMANS, THE MORE WE SEE AND DO SOMETHING AND REPEAT THE PROCESS THE MORE OUR BRAIN REWARDS US AND IT FEELS GOOD.

WE CAN THEN GO BACK TO THE QUESTION WHAT DO WE SEE IN KALRA'S LANDSCAPE PAINTINGS OR MORE TO THE POINT WHAT ARE WE OFFERED? IN ALL THE PAINTINGS WE ARE INVITED TO TAKE THE JOURNEY WITH THE ARTIST. OUR EYE IS DRAWN ACROSS THE CANVAS FOLLOWING THE SUGGESTION OF TREES, FAUNA AND BUILDINGS THAT SKIT ACROSS THE SPACE. THIS IS THE JOURNEY THAT KALRA IS CREATING FOR US AS HE REMEMBERS THINGS SEEN, FEELINGS, COLOURS, SMELLS AND SOUNDS. WE ARE INVITED TO ENJOY BUT MOST IMPORTANTLY WE ARE OFFERED RESTING SPACE. SOMEWHERE ACROSS THE PAINTED SURFACE, DETAILS BECOME SPARSE AND ARE REDUCED TO BRUSH STROKES AS KALRA ALLOWS US TIME TO ENJOY THE JOURNEY. WE CAN MOVE IN AND OUT OF THIS CONTEMPLATIVE SPACE AND BACK TO 'THE ACTION' AS WE CHOOSE. THIS BECOMES AN INTERESTING DICHOTOMY AS THIS WOULD APPEAR TO BE THE OPPOSITE OF HOW THE ARTIST PRODUCES, AS HE ALLOWS HIMSELF NO TIME BETWEEN THIS WORK AND THE NEXT WHICH IS ALREADY LINED UP AND READY TO GO. THE AVAILABILITY OF SPACE FOR THE ARTIST IS ALMOST NON-EXISTENT BETWEEN HIS THOUGHTS, PROCESSES AND THE LAYING DOWN OF PAINT ON CANVAS. SO AS HIS FLOW OF IDEAS ACROSS THE CANVAS SPEEDS-UP, HE HAS NO TIME TO DIFFERENTIATE SHAPES AND FORMS SO ALL BUILDINGS BECOME REPRESENTATIONAL, THREE-LINE IMAGES AND OTHER REFERENCE POINTS BECOME DEFINED PURELY BY MARK-MAKING. AND STRANGELY IN THIS ERRATIC AND THOUGHT-FILLED EXERCISE, BY CONTRAST, KALRA EASES OUR JOURNEY FOR US AS HE SKIPS OVER EXCESS AND LEAVES US WITH JUST ENOUGH.

THE CONTEMPLATIVE ENERGY IN KALRA'S PAINTINGS IS FURTHERED IN THE ARTIST'S USE OF COLOUR. WHILST EVERY PAINTING IS DIFFERENT, WHAT THEY GIVE THE VIEWER IN TERMS OF CHOICE OF COLOUR IS A REDUCED PALETTE. SO EACH WORK SITS EASILY WITH ITSELF AND OUR BRAIN IS NOT ASKED TO STRUGGLE WITH TOO MANY OPTIONS BUT IS INSTEAD GIVEN THE FREEDOM TO ENJOY THE HARMONIES CREATED. FOR EXAMPLE, IN THE PAINTING SHOWN ON PAGE-43 WE CAN REVEL IN THE DELICIOUS AND VIBRANT ORANGE AT THE TOP OF THE CANVAS AND REFLECTED IN THE BOTTOM PART OF THE PAINTING AS A SLIGHTLY WATERY AND CALMER HUE THAT ALLOWS US TO EXTINGUISH FOR A MOMENT THE POWER OF THE FIERY COLOURS THAT PUNCH AT US FROM THE TOP.

HOWEVER, AS IS THE ARTIST'S DUE, KALRA DOES NOT LET THE VIEWER OFF QUITE SO EASILY AS HE JUST PUSHES SOME OF OUR JOURNEYS AND MAKES US WORK JUST THAT LITTLE BIT HARDER TO WALK THE PATH WITH HIM. IF WE LOOK FOR EXAMPLE AT HIS LONG FORMAT PAINTINGS SUCH AS THOSE SHOWN ON PAGE-36 AND PAGE-50, JUST LIKE JACKSON POLLOCK'S PAINTING SUMMERTIME, WE THE VIEWER ARE ASKED TO PARTICIPATE IN THE ACTION, AS IN ORDER TO SEE THE DETAIL WE NEED TO GET THAT LITTLE BIT CLOSER AND IN THIS COMING FORWARD WE ARE FORCED BY THE ARTIST TO LITERALLY WALK THE JOURNEY AS WE MOVE FROM LEFT TO RIGHT AND ULTIMATELY FOLLOW IN KALRA'S FOOTSTEPS.

LAURA WILLIAMS
NORWICH, UK, 2015



Painting: Oil on canvas, 40 x 40 inches, 2014



Painting: Oil on canvas, 40 x 40 inches, 2014



Painting: Oil on canvas, 40 x 40 inches, 2014



Painting: Oil on canvas, 40 x 40 inches, 2014



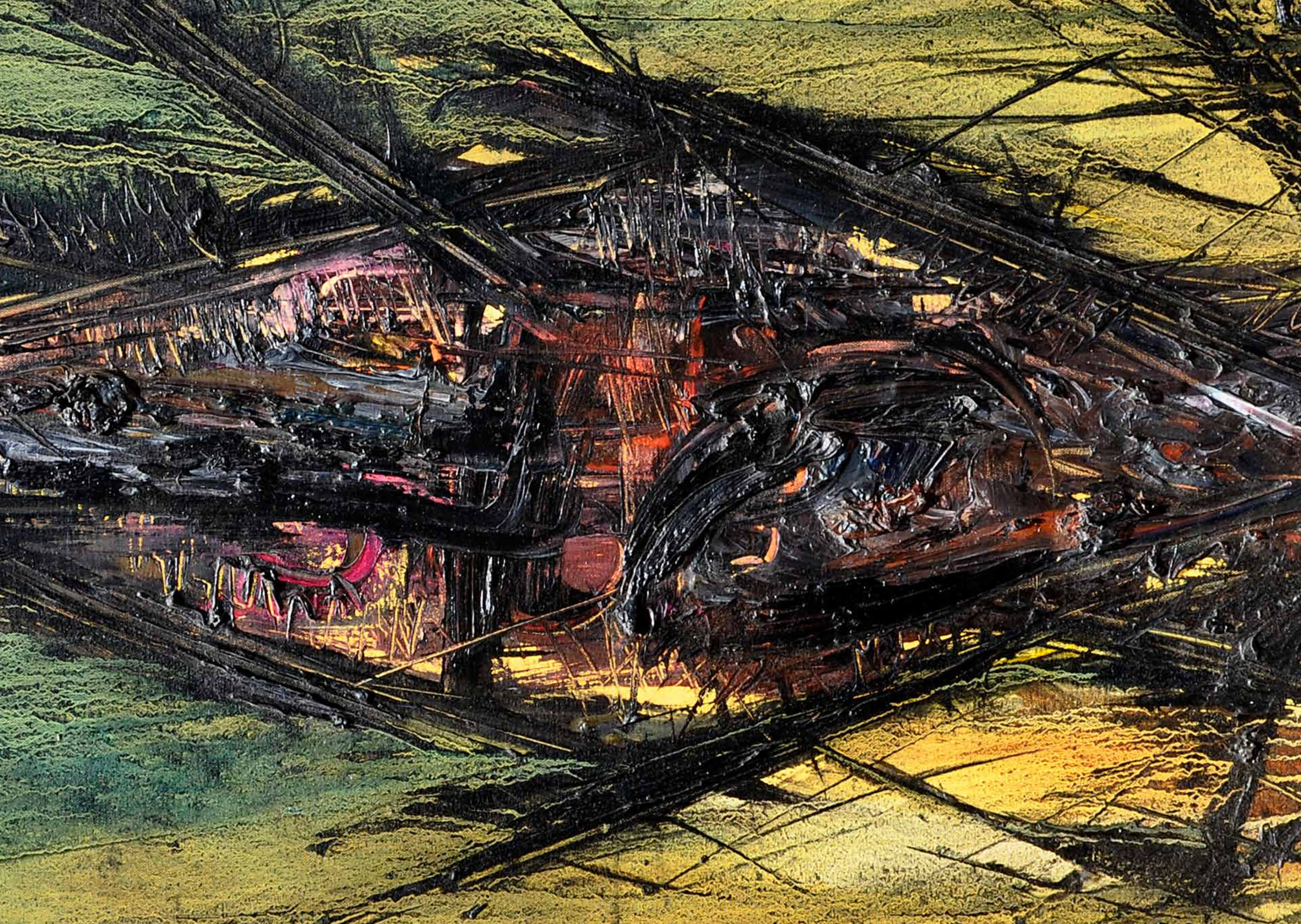
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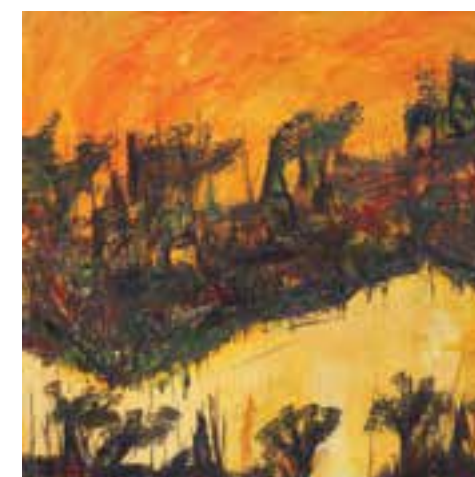
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BEING THIS EXHIBITION OF PAINTINGS OF VIKASH KALRA, A SELF-TAUGHT ARTIST, EXPRESSES THE BASIC TRUTH OF BEING THAT TRANSCENDS BOTH GEOGRAPHIC LIMITS AND STYLISTIC CONSTRAINTS. HIS WORKS EVOLVE OUT OF SHARDS OF ACTUAL ELEMENTS OF THE ENVIRONMENT THAT ARE THEN CLOTHED IN SWATHES OF OIL COLOUR THAT COME OUT OF THE MIND OF THE ARTIST, EXPRESSING MOODS AND INNER FEELINGS THAT WELLED UP IN THE ACT OF CREATION OF AESTHETIC OBJECTS FROM PERCEPTIONS AND EXPERIENCES OF LIVING. THEY ARE OBJECTS THAT REFLECT WHAT CATCHES THE EYE OF THE ARTIST IN A FLEETING MOMENT TO BE TRANSFORMED BY HIS OR HER HAND FEEDING ON A MYRIAD OF EMOTIONS. THIS THEN IS ORCHESTRATED INTO A HARMONY THAT GOES BEYOND THE ARTIST INTO AN INDEPENDENT LIFE OF ITS OWN. EACH WORK IS AN INDIVIDUAL THAT CLAIMS ITS OWN SPACE AND TRAVERSES ITS OWN HISTORY THAT GOES BEYOND THE MOMENT OF CREATION, THE ARTIST AND HIS ENVIRONMENT. IT NOW ENTERS ITS OWN JOURNEY AND SET OF RELATIONS THAT GO BEYOND THEIR CREATOR INTO SPACES THAT ARE PEOPLED BY THOSE WHO CONFRONT THESE WORKS AND CONVERSE WITH THEM. THEY MAY WELL HAVE EMERGED OUT OF THE BEING OF THE ARTIST BUT THEN TAKE ON A LIFE OF THEIR OWN.

A GOOD WORK OF ART IS ONE THAT IS AT EASE IN ANY ENVIRONMENT AS IT IS AN OBJECT BUT ALSO AN AESTHETIC CREATION. VIKASH KALRA'S WORKS IN THIS SERIES REFLECT THIS QUALITY WHICH IS NOT SOMETHING THAT HAS COME OUT OF A MAGICIAN'S HAT. THEY REFLECT THE CHEQUERED CAREER OF A NEWS-PAPER VENDOR WHO BECAME A PAVEMENT BOOK-SELLER AND A CAR SALESMAN BEFORE BEING AWAKENED TO HIS INNER AESTHETIC SENSITIBILITY BY LOOKING INTO BOOKS ON ART THAT HE CAME ACROSS WHEN HE WAS SELLING BOOKS. THESE ALLOWED HIM TO SPEAK MEANINGFULLY WITH PABLO PICASSO AND F.N. SOUZA, AND FINALLY, TO EXPRESS HIMSELF IN HIS OWN WAY AS HE DOES IN THIS EXHIBITION. THIS IS WHAT WE MEAN BY SAYING HE IS A SELF-TAUGHT ARTIST. I WOULD PREFER TO CALL HIM A SELF-PROPELLED ONE, FOR HIS CONTACTS WITH THE ENVIRONMENT AND THE EXPRESSION OF ARTISTS LIKE PICASSO AND SOUZA HAVE

INSPIRED HIM TO SPEAK IN MANY LANGUAGES AT FIRST AND THEN IN HIS OWN ALONG HIS INDIVIDUAL PATH OF DEVELOPMENT. IT IS THIS SECOND ELEMENT THAT GIVES THIS EXHIBITION THE CAPACITY OF NOT ONLY REFLECTING INDIVIDUAL MOMENTS OF CREATIVE EFFERVESCENCE BUT ALSO A RANGE OF EXPRESSIONS THAT GIVE THE ARTIST'S STRING OF WORDS THE SHAPE OF A LANGUAGE.

IT IS THIS MATURITY OF RANGE THAT REFLECTS ITSELF IN THE EXHIBITION AS A WHOLE. ITS CHARACTER IS THE SAME AS WHEN KRISHNA SHOWS ALL HIS ASPECTS AND FORMS IN ONE SWEEP TO GIVE THE DOUBTFUL ARJUNA THE CONFIDENCE TO COMMIT HIMSELF TO PUTTING UP A FIGHT TO THE LAST FOR ENSURING AN END TO INJUSTICE IN THE BHAGWAT GITA. IN THE SAME WAY THIS EXHIBITION OF VIKASH KALRA REFLECTS A RANGE OF EXPRESSION, A CHOICE OF COLOURS AND A VARIETY OF FORMS THAT GIVE US THE CONFIDENCE THAT HE HAS EVOLVED A COMPLETE REPERTOIRE IN A DECADE OF EXPERIMENTS THAT HE WORKED ON AFTER BEING INSPIRED BY THE PAINTINGS OF PICASSO AND SOUZA. TODAY HE HAS ACHIEVED HIS OWN EXPRESSION BEYOND THEIR INSPIRATION. THIS IS AN IMPORTANT STEP FORWARD.

IT IS VISIBLE IN HIS 'HEAD' SERIES AS WELL, WHERE THE INFLUENCE OF SOUZA HAS GIVEN PLACE TO AN EARTHY BROWN WITH HIGHLIGHTS THAT REFLECT OTHER POINTS OF REFERENCE IN OUR FOLK-LORE LIKE THE IMAGE OF A WOMAN WITH A PARROT SO CHARACTERISTIC OF OUR POPULAR ART. AS A RESULT, THIS EXHIBITION REFLECTS BOTH A BREAK FROM THE INFLUENCES OF THE PAST BUT ALSO A CAPACITY TO RISE ABOVE THE LIMITS OF HIS OWN INDIVIDUAL WORKS AND CREATE A RANGE THAT ENCOMPASSES THE EXHIBITION AS A WHOLE, REFLECTING THE STYLE THE ARTIST EVOLVES AS THE TRUE EXPRESSION OF HIS BEING. THIS THEN IN TIME WILL BECOME BOTH HIS IDENTITY AND THE ROAD-MAP OF HIS JOURNEY INTO THE FUTURE. EVERY ARTIST WORKS TOWARDS THIS AND WHEN HE SUCCEEDS IT MARKS A MEMORABLE MOMENT IN HIS LIFE AS THIS EXHIBITION DOES FOR VIKASH KALRA.

SUNEET CHOPRA
ART CRITIC, WRITER



Painting: Oil on canvas, 40 x 40 inches, 2014



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SOJOURNING IN THE TRUTHS OF LIFE AND ART

VIKASH KALRA PAINTS WITH PASSION AND HIS PASSION IS DRIVEN BY A VISION; A VISION PERHAPS REALIZED THROUGH LIFE EXPERIENCES. HE HAS TWO IDEALS IN HIS CREATIVE LIFE—PABLO PICASSO AND FRANCIS NEWTON SOUZA. DESPITE HIS OPEN ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF THE FACT THAT HE IS 'SERIOUSLY' INFLUENCED BY THESE MODERN MASTERS, MANY ART LOVERS STILL LOOK AT HIS WORKS WITH A CERTAIN AMOUNT OF CURIOSITY THAT VERGES INTO THE ZONE OF ACCUSING THE ARTIST OF PLAGIARISM. BY NOW HE HAS LEARNED TO OVERLOOK SUCH NEGATIVE OUTLOOK OF PEOPLE WITH A SMILE AS HE KNOWS THOROUGHLY THAT HIS ART DOES NOT COME FROM COPYING HIS BELOVED MASTERS. WHAT IF SOMEONE CANNOT STRAY FROM CERTAIN STYLISTIC FEATURES NOT BECAUSE HE IS A SLAVE TO THE STYLE BUT BECAUSE IT IS THE ONLY WAY HE COULD EXPRESS HIMSELF? WHAT IF ONE ARTIST IS NOT GALLIVANTING ALONG THE CORRIDORS OF VARIOUS STYLES AND NOT INDISCRIMINATELY ADOPTING THEM TO MAKE A MARK OF HIS OWN? WHAT IF HE HAS YIELDED HIS CREATIVE ENERGIES TO A PURSUIT THAT SUITS PERFECTLY TO HIS PURPOSE? WHAT IF AN ARTIST DOES NOT WANT TO DO ANYTHING IN VISUAL ART OTHER THAN PAINTING OR SCULPTING USING THE FEVERISH EXPRESSIONISTIC STYLE OF THE ABOVE MENTIONED MODERN MASTERS? WHAT IF THIS ARTIST HAS BEEN CONSISTENT DURING THE LAST TEN YEARS, WHICH IS THE TOTAL NUMBER OF YEARS OF KALRA AS A CREATIVE ARTIST SO FAR AND STILL WANTS TO CONTINUE IN THE SAME VEIN BUT WITH NATURAL EVOLUTION OF THE WORKS WHICH IS NOT APPARENT TO THE UNTRAINED EYES BUT IS MANIFESTED BEFORE THE CAREFUL ONLOOKERS? THEN WE SHOULD ACCEPT THAT ARTIST WITH A HEIGHTENED SENSITIVITY AND ALLOW OURSELVES TO SEE HIS WORKS IN A NEW LIGHT.

LOOKING AT THE PAINTINGS OF VIKASH KALRA, WHICH IS PROLIFIC IN OUTPUT AS HE WORKS LIKE A POSSESSED MAN DAY IN AND DAY OUT, ONE COULD SAY FOR SURE THAT IT IS NEITHER MARKET NOR CRITIQUE ON HIS WORKS THAT SETS HIS CREATIVE SPIRIT RINGING. THERE IS SOMETHING THAT IS BEYOND ALL THE MATERIALISTIC CONSIDERATIONS THAT MAKES THIS ARTIST TO WORK THROUGH CONDUCTIVE AND DIFFICULT TIMES. PERHAPS, IN KALRA'S OWN WORDS, THERE IS NO TIME WHICH IS DIFFICULT FOR AN ARTIST. HE BELIEVES IN WHAT PICASSO HAD FAMOUSLY SAID ONCE: SOMEONE HAD PUT A QUESTION TO PICASSO. HAD HE BEEN CONFINED IN A CELL WITH NO PROVISION TO DRAW OR PAINT WHAT COULD HE HAVE DONE? TO WHICH, PICASSO SAID HE WOULD HAVE PAINTED THE WALLS OF THE JAIL WITH HIS TONGUE. THIS STATEMENT COULD BE A FIG OF IMAGINATION ON THE PART OF THE PERSON WHO HAD RECORDED IT OR IT COULD BE PURELY AN UNDISPUTABLE TRUTH. WHATEVER MAY BE THE CASE, THE STATEMENT OF PICASSO CONTAINS A GREATER ASPECT OF HIS APPROACH TOWARDS ART AND LIFE AS AN ARTIST. PICASSO DID NOT THINK ABOUT THE LONGEVITY AND DURABILITY OF HIS WORKS. HIS WHOLE IDEA WAS TO CREATE WORKS OF ART. AND EACH WORK OF ART AS HE BELIEVED HAD ITS OWN LIFE ONCE LIBERATED FROM THE MIND AND HANDS OF THE ARTIST. THE PERENNIAL DUTY OF THE ARTIST IS TO WORK IRRESPECTIVE OF THE MATERIALISTIC GAINS THAT IT COULD BRING TO HIM AS IT LIVES THROUGH OR GOES FURTHER IN THE ART CIRCUIT INCLUDING THE ART MARKET. A DECADE LONG CREATIVE CAREER OF KALRA ALSO REVEALS THE SAME ATTITUDE OF THE ARTIST. A VISIT TO HIS



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STUDIO OR A CAREFUL STUDY OF HIS INNUMERABLE SKETCHBOOKS WOULD TELL US HOW THIS ARTIST BELIEVES IN WORKING INCESSANTLY, WITHOUT A BREAK, WITHOUT THINKING OF THE FUTURE OF HIS WORKS.

TO UNDERSTAND KALRA'S WORKS ONE HAS TO HAVE A GENERAL IDEA ABOUT THIS ARTIST'S LIFE BEFORE HE DECIDED TO BECOME AN ARTIST AROUND TEN YEARS BACK. BORN TO A MIDDLE CLASS FAMILY IN DELHI, KALRA WAS NOT A CHILD PRODIGY. HE NEVER DREW ANYTHING OR NEVER ATTEMPTED PAINTING HIS NOTEBOOKS WITH THE CHEAP COLOR PENCILS THAT A CHILD GENERALLY GETS DURING THE GROWING UP YEARS. NOT BEING AN EXCEPTIONALLY GIFTED STUDENT, KALRA SCRAPED THROUGH HIS ACADEMIC STUDIES AND OBTAINED A DEGREE IN COMMERCE FROM THE DELHI UNIVERSITY. WHEN HE REMEMBERS HIS CHILDHOOD AND GROWING UP YEARS, HE DOES NOT HAVE ANY QUALMS TO ACCEPT THAT HE WAS NOT GOOD AT ANYTHING PARTICULAR. HIS FATHER'S UNTIMELY DEATH HAD DESTABILIZED THE FINANCIAL PROSPECTUS OF HIS FAMILY. THAT WAS ONE REASON WHY HE GOT INVOLVED IN THE DISTRIBUTION OF NEWSPAPERS. NOT A GRAND JOB TO DO OR A GRAND PROFESSION TO BOAST OFF, DISTRIBUTING NEWSPAPERS WAS A 'SHADOW JOB' FOR HIM OR TO BE PRECISE, A JOB DONE BY SHADOW PEOPLE. NEWSPAPER BOYS OR THE NEWSPAPER AGENTS DO NOT HAVE A FACE TO SHOW TO THE PEOPLE. THEY GATHER THEMSELVES AT CERTAIN KEY LOCATIONS WHERE THE MINI TRUCKS FROM THE NEWSPAPER PRINTING FACTORIES UNLOAD THEIR DAILY ISSUES IN BUNDLES, AND SORT THEM OUT FOR DIFFERENT LOCALITIES. KALRA DID THIS SUCCESSFULLY ALONG WITH HIS BROTHERS AND GAINED ACCESS TO VARIOUS BUSINESS HOUSES THAT WANTED TO DISTRIBUTE THEIR PAMPHLETS ALONG WITH THE DAILIES. THIS WAS NOT ONLY AN ADDITIONAL INCOME FOR KALRA BUT ALSO A WAY OF DEVELOPING HIS NETWORKS, WHICH HE DID NOT KNOW WHEN HE WOULD PUT TO USE.

KALRA, IN HIS PREVIOUS AVATAR AS A NEWSPAPER BOY WAS NOT PLANNING TO SPEND THE REST OF HIS LIFE IN A SHADOW PROFESSION. HE GOT INTO SECOND HAND CAR BUSINESS WHICH BROUGHT HIM ENOUGH MONEY. HE TRAVELLED ALL OVER THE COUNTRY AS PART OF PROCURING AND DELIVERING SECOND HAND CARS. SOON HE GREW TIRED OF IT AND SET UP A RESTAURANT IN DELHI WITH HIS BROTHERS AS PARTNERS. SUCCESS AS A RESTAURANT OWNER WAS NOT HELPING HIM MUCH AS SOMETHING ELSE WAS HAPPENING IN/TO HIM. KALRA SOLD HIS RESTAURANT TO SOMEONE ELSE AND MOVED ON. IN BETWEEN HE PUT HIS FINGERS INTO PROPERTY DEALING. DURING ALL THOSE YEARS HE KEPT ON RECOGNIZING THE FACT THAT EACH SUCCESSFUL MOMENT WAS SUPPOSED TO BE FOLLOWED BY A MOMENT OF FAILURE. HE SAW MONEY COMING IN BUNDLES AND DISAPPEARING WITHOUT LEAVING A TRACE AND RENDERING HIM A PAUPER IN A FEW MONTHS' TIME. PROVIDENCE WAS SUCH THAT KALRA FOUND HIMSELF ONCE AGAIN SITTING WITH NEWSPAPERS AND MAGAZINES IN A BOOTH IN A BUSY SOUTH DELHI MARKET. HE HAD BOUGHT AN UNSUCCESSFUL SECOND HAND BOOKSHOP WITH PAVEMENT RIGHTS FROM A FAILED BUSINESSMAN. SITTING AMONGST STACKS OF SECOND HAND BOOKS, NEWSPAPERS AND MAGAZINES, KALRA ENTERED INTO A NEW REALM OF LIFE; A LIFE OF KNOWLEDGE. IDLE HOURS SPENT AMONGST BOOKS, WHILE THE PATRONS WERE STILL TAKING A NAP IN THE HOUSING COLONIES AROUND THE MARKET, KALRA SAT UNDER THE SUN AND KEPT READING BOOKS WRITTEN BY AUTHORS WHOM HE HAD NEVER



SEEN OR HEARD BEFORE. SUCCESS WAS STILL IN PURSUIT OF THIS FAILING BUSINESSMAN. KALRA BECAME ONE OF THE TOP PROCURERS OF SECOND HAND BOOKS FROM PUBLISHING COMPANIES ALL OVER THE WORLD AS HE STARTED RECEIVING A STREAM OF PATRONS WHO WERE PLACING ORDERS FOR DIFFERENT KINDS OF BOOKS.

TODAY, IF KALRA HAS A WELL-STOCKED LIBRARY OF ART BOOKS AT HIS HOME AND STUDIOS, THE REASON IS HIS SOJOURN IN LIFE AS A PAVEMENT BOOKSELLER. ART WOULD HAVE BEEN A REMOTE THING FOR KALRA HAD IT NOT BEEN HIS CHANCE ENCOUNTER WITH A SECOND HAND BOOK ON PICASSO AT HIS PAVEMENT BOOKSTALL. RESTLESS AND CONFUSED, HE FLIPPED THROUGH THE WORKS AND SOMETHING GOT BURST IN HIS MIND; CERTAIN FLOODGATES WERE OPENED. LIKE SOMEONE POSSESSED BY A SPIRIT, KALRA STARTED DRAWING ON THE MAGAZINES THAT HE WAS SUPPOSED TO SELL. HIS ATTENTION TURNED FROM SELLING BOOKS TO DRAWING ON THOSE BOOKS AND MAGAZINES. NIGHTS AND DAYS PASSED IN DRAWING AND WITHIN A WEEK'S TIME KALRA HAD COVERED AROUND THREE THOUSAND PAGES WITH HIS DRAWINGS. IN HIS TYPICAL STYLE HE SOLD OFF HIS THRIVING SECOND HAND BOOK BUSINESS TO SOME OTHER PERSON AND WALKED OFF TO A WORLD WHICH HE WAS ABSOLUTELY NEW. AND HE DID NOT KNOW THAT THAT WORLD WAS MUCH HARsher AND COMPETITIVE THAN THE WORLDS THAT HE HAD GOT INVOLVED HIMSELF, RIGHT FROM PAPER DISTRIBUTION TO SECOND HAND CAR SELLING, FROM RESTAURANT TO SECOND HAND BOOK SELLING. IT WAS TIME FOR HIM TO DEAL WITH SOMETHING VERY FRESH AND HE DID NOT KNOW HOW TO GO ABOUT IT.

THERE ARE SOME PEOPLE IN THE WORLD, IF THEY DON'T FIND SUCCESS IN THE EXISTING METHODS OF BUSINESS OPERATIONS THEY WOULD SET UP THEIR OWN METHODS TO GAIN SUCCESS. IN THE CASE OF ART VIKASH DID NOT HAVE ANY NEW METHODS TO SUCCESS. FROM HIS FEVERISH AND FERVENT STUDIES OF PICASSO, AS BY THAT TIME HE UNDERSTOOD HIS EXPRESSIONS MATCHED VERY WELL WITH THAT OF PICASSO AT LEAST STYLISTICALLY AND FORMALLY OR LATER WITH FRANCIS NEWTON SOUZA, HE UNDERSTOOD THAT HE NEEDED A STUDIO; THAT WAS HOW ARTISTS OPERATED, HE FOUND OUT. KALRA, UNLIKE OTHER ARTIST IN TOWN, WAS FINANCIALLY STABLE AND HE HAD A COUPLE OF FLATS AT HIS DISPOSAL TO CONVERT INTO AN ART STUDIO. THUS KALRA'S JOURNEY AS AN ARTIST BEGAN. HE EQUIPPED HIMSELF WITH STUDIES WHICH HE HAD MISSED WHEN HE WAS REALLY A STUDENT IN SCHOOL AND COLLEGE. EACH JUNCTURE OF HIS CREATIVE CAREER WAS RIDDEN WITH PROBLEMS AS HE COULD NOT FIND ENOUGH PATRONS TO SUPPORT HIM. BUT HIS EXPERIENCE AS A BUSINESSMAN CAME HANDY WHENEVER HE FOUND A PROBLEM. AND HE HAD A FEW SHOWS IN THE MEANWHILE. BUT WHEN HE PUT UP HIS FIRST SOLO SHOW, CRITICS CAME FORWARD TO CONDEMN HIM AS A PICASSO OR SOUZA IMPERSONATOR. ANY ARTIST, AT THE FACE OF SUCH SEVERE CRITICISM COULD HAVE DROPPED THE STYLISTIC AFFINITIES WITH THOSE MASTERS THEN AND THERE. BUT KALRA STUCK TO HIS GUNS/BRUSHES. EVEN TODAY HE BELIEVES THAT HE IS A SELF-TAUGHT ARTIST AND WHENEVER HE PAINTS HE DOES NOT PAINT TO CREATE A PICASSO OR SOUZA BUT A KALRA HIMSELF.

SELF-TAUGHT ARTISTS, I HAVE OBSERVED IN MY CAREER AS AN ART CRITIC, HAVE A TENDENCY TO GO EITHER FOR ABSTRACTION OR FOR RAW EXPRESSIONISTIC LANGUAGE. ABSTRACTION, THOUGH I UNDERSTAND IT AS AN EFFORT TO CAPTURE THE CORE ESSENCE OF FORMS, FOR MANY IT IS A HANDY FORMALISM. IT HELPS THEM TO 'PLAY' WITH SURFACES AND COLORS AND WITH CERTAIN SPIRITUAL JARGON PUT INTO IT ADEQUATELY TO PEP UP MEANING, THEY OFTEN GET AWAY WITH SUCH ABSTRACTION. BUT IN REALITY, AN ARTIST REACHES TO ABSTRACTION WHEN HE OR SHE HAS A TREMENDOUS HOLD ON THE FORMS AND THIS FORMAL UNDERSTANDING OF SHAPES AND STRUCTURES HELPS THEM TO UNDO THEM AND TO GO INTO ESSENCE THAT FUNCTIONS AS THE BASIS OF ALL STRUCTURES. REGARDING RAW EXPRESSIONISM, THE KNOWLEDGE OF BASIC FORM IS VERY STRONG IN THESE KINDS OF ARTISTS BUT THEIR LACK OF ACADEMIC TRAINING DOES NOT ALLOW THEM TO FORMULATE THE FORMS THE WAY SUCH TRAINING WOULD HAVE DONE. SO THEY DEPEND ON THE RAW ENERGIES OF LINES AND COLORS AND THE TOTALITY OF ABSTRACTION THAT THEY CREATE IN UNISON. WHILE SOME ARTISTS DEPEND ON IMPASTO TECHNIQUE, WHERE COLOR BLOBS ARE LIBERALLY USED TO CREATE THICK LINES AND FORMS, SOME OTHERS USE STRONG LINES TO CREATE THE CONTOURS OF FORMS WHICH THEY WOULD FILL IN AT A LATER STAGE. KALRA IS SELF-TAUGHT AND HE COULD HAVE EASILY GONE INTO ABSTRACTION. BUT AS WE KNOW BY NOW, KALRA'S INITIATION INTO ART HAPPENED THROUGH RANDOM DRAWINGS WHICH HE REALIZED RESEMBLED THOSE



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Painting: Oil on canvas, 40 x 40 inches, 2014

OF PICASSO AND SOUZA. THIS MADE A HUGE IMPRESSION ON HIS MIND AND TODAY WITH TEN YEARS OF PRACTICE BY HIS SIDE, WE CANNOT CALL HIM THAT HE IS RAW AND UNTRAINED. HIS TRAINING IS NOW WELL FOUNDED AND IS IN A STYLE AND FORMALISM WHICH ARE FAINTLY SIMILAR TO PICASSO AND SOUZA.

KALRA'S WORKS COULD BE DIVIDED INTO FIVE MAJOR CATEGORIES: LANDSCAPES, FACES, COUPLES, FEMALE NUDES AND COMBINATION OF HUMAN AND ANIMAL FORMS. TO UNDERSTAND THESE CATEGORIES WITHIN WHICH KALRA EXPRESSES HIMSELF, THOUGH THERE ARE NO STEADFAST RULES, ONE HAS TO SEE PRIMARILY THAT THE ARTIST DOES NOT INTEND TO REPRESENT ANYTHING. EXCEPT FOR A FEW SELF-PORTRAITS THAT THE ARTIST HAS DONE, HE HAS NEVER TRIED TO GIVE ANY VERY SEMBLANCE OF HIS SITTERS, OBJECTS, SCENES OR SPACES TO THE PAINTINGS. HENCE THE LANDSCAPES THAT WE SEE IN KALRA'S OEUVRE ARE NOT THE LANDSCAPE THAT COULD BE SEEN IN THE OUTER WORLD. IF AT ALL THERE ARE SOME REFERENTIAL LANDSCAPES PAINSTAKINGLY FOUND OUT BY SOMEONE IN DUE COURSE OF TIME, THE ARTIST DOES NOT FOLLOW ANY RULES TO REPRESENT THEM IN HIS WORKS. AS THEY ARE LANDSCAPES MOSTLY INFESTED WITH GOTHIC CHURCHES AND BUILDINGS, WE CANNOT SAY THAT KALRA REPRESENTS HIS IMMEDIATE SURROUNDINGS. IN MY VIEW, KALRA'S LANDSCAPES ARE IMAGINARY FIELDS THAT HE CONJURES UP WITHIN HIS COLLECTIVE EXPERIENCE. IF AT ALL THEY REPRESENT ANYTHING, THEY REPRESENT THE ARTIST'S INWARD JOURNEYS AND WE DON'T HAVE ANY REASONS TO DISPUTE THE FACT THAT HE DOES SEE SUCH PLACES IN HIS SURROUNDINGS AS HE INTERNALIZES THEM IN HIS OWN FASHION. OR THEY COULD BE THE ESSENCE OF THE LANDSCAPES THAT HE HAS SEEN AND HOPED TO SEE IN HIS JOURNEYS.

IN THE BEGINNING OF HIS CREATIVE CAREER, KALRA AS OBSESSED BY/WITH THE WORKS OF PICASSO AND SOUZA HAD TURNED TO HUMAN FACES AS A FIELD THAT COULD WELL CAPTURE THE EMOTIONS THAT WERE INTENSELY FELT BY HUMAN BEINGS. WHEN A PERSON FEELS SOMETHING INSIDE HIM, WHAT HIS COUNTENANCE EXPRESSES NEED NOT NECESSARILY SHOW THE SAME INTENSITY OF THAT FEELING. WE THE HUMAN BEINGS ARE CAPABLE OF CAMOUFLAGING OUR INTERIORITY USING VARIOUS MASKS OF DIFFERENT EXPRESSIONS. KALRA IN HIS MULTI-FACETED BUSINESS CAREER HAD COME ACROSS SO MANY PEOPLE WHO WERE BENEVOLENT ON THE ONE HAND AND RUTHLESS ON THE OTHER. HE HAD SEEN FACES OF PEOPLE THAT WERE APPARENTLY CHERUBIC BUT HAD HIDDEN DEVILISH INTENTIONS. ALL THESE FACES THAT WE SEE IN KALRA'S WORKS ARE HIS REFLECTIONS ON THE FACES THAT HE HAS COME ACROSS IN HIS LIFE. INTERESTINGLY MOST OF THEM ARE THOSE OF MEN; MEN WHO APPEAR AS MEN, MEN WHO APPEAR AS DEVILS, MEN WHO APPEAR AS ANGELS AND MEN WHO APPEAR AS ABSOLUTELY LOST IN THE WORLD. THESE FACES ARE CAPTURED IN STRONG LINES AND COLOR PATCHES. IT IS INTERESTING TO NOTICE THAT HE SIGNS HIS PAINTINGS 'VIKASH' IN BOLD LETTERS, AT TIMES BIGGER AND THICKER THAN THE CONTOURS OF THE WORK ITSELF. IN MY VIEW, IT IS AN ACT OF TAMING AND POSSESSING ALL WHAT HE HAS SEEN AND EXPERIENCED WHILE WITNESSING THE FACES OF THE PEOPLE IN HIS THRILLING JOURNEY THROUGH LIFE. WITH HIS SIGNATURE HE POSSESSES THEM AND OWNS THEM AND THROUGH THIS OWNING OF ANOTHER SELF, HE CONTROLS THEM. EACH FACE PAINTING IS A MOMENT OF RECONCILIATION AND AN ACT OF INTERIORIZING OF CERTAIN UNPALATABLE EXPERIENCES AND TRANSCENDING OF THE SAME.

KALRA IS A FAMILY MAN WHO HAS A WIFE AND TWO CHILDREN. HIS IDEA OF SPENDING TIME WITH FAMILY IS ALL ABOUT CREATING A HAPPY ATMOSPHERE. AS A MUSIC LOVER HE HAS A GOOD COLLECTION OF MUSICAL INSTRUMENTS PROCURED FROM DIFFERENT PARTS OF THE COUNTRY. WITHOUT ANY TRAINING HE PLAYS THEM; THE SAME PHILOSOPHY THAT HE LIVES IN HIS PAINTINGS, OF PAINTING WITHOUT KNOWING HOW TO PAINT. HE PLAYS THEM WITHOUT GRAMMAR AND HE SAYS THAT HE PLAYS THOSE INSTRUMENTS TO MUSE HIMSELF. BESIDES AMUSING HIMSELF WITH VARIOUS MUSICAL INSTRUMENTS, HE ALSO ENTERTAINS HIS CHILDREN WITH HIS MUSICAL SKILLS. WHILE THE CHILDREN PLAY 'GRAMMATICAL' MUSIC, HE PLAYS WITHOUT ANY GRAMMAR. KALRA, SITTING AT HOME AS A SATISFIED YOUNG MAN WITH KIDS AND WIFE, PLAYING MUSIC THEM WOULD MAKE HAPPY PICTURE. BUT FOR THE ARTIST THE HAPPY PICTURE OF A FAMILY IS JUST ONE SIDE OF ALL FAMILY PICTURES. HE UNDERSTANDS THAT FAMILY LIVES ARE RIDDEN WITH TROUBLES, FIGHTS AND CONFUSIONS. FAMILIES ARE POWER STRUCTURES AND IN A WAY IS A JAIL WHERE ONE RETURNS HAPPILY. HIS NEVER ENDING ENTHUSIASM TO PAINT THE COUPLES STARTS FROM THIS IDENTIFICATION WITH THE FAMILY LIFE BOTH AS

A HEAVENLY EXPERIENCE AND A TORTURING SOCIAL SYSTEM. IN EACH COUPLE PAINTING, HE BRINGS IN A MALE AND FEMALE CONJOINED BY FATE OR BY CHOICE BUT CAUGHT IN A DIFFERENT SET OF RULES THAT THEY WERE NOT EXPECTING WHILE THE ACT OF COMING TOGETHER WAS DONE INITIALLY. THEY LOOK INDEPENDENT, DEFYING THE PRESENCE OF THE OTHER IN THE SAME FRAME, BUT AT THE SAME TIME CAUGHT IN A SET OF INVISIBLE RULES AND POWER RELATIONSHIPS. KALRA SAYS THAT HIS COUPLE PAINTINGS ARE AN EFFORT TO UNDERSTAND FAMILY AS AN ACCEPTED BUT CONTESTED SOCIO-POLITICAL AND ECONOMIC SYSTEM.

IN ONE OF MY INTERVIEWS WITH KALRA, HE MADE A GENERAL STATEMENT WHICH CAUGHT MY IMAGINATION BY FORCE. WHILE COMPARING THE NUDE PAINTINGS OF PICASSO WITH THOSE OF SOUZA, KALRA OBSERVED THAT PICASSO'S NUDE PAINTINGS WERE 'HAPPY' NUDES. THEY ARE NUDES THAT DISPEL THE POWER RELATIONSHIP WITH THE ARTIST AND THE SITTER. THE SITTER LOOKS HAPPY EVEN IN HER SUBDUED AND DISTORTED IDENTITY WHILE THE INVISIBLE FACE OF THE ARTIST ALSO LOOKS HAPPY. BUT WHEN IT COMES TO THE NUDES DONE BY SOUZA, THEY LOOK REALLY AGONIZED. EACH NUDE SEEMS TO BE WRITHING IN PAIN AS IF THEY WERE CAUGHT IN A SITUATION WHICH THEY REALLY DID NOT WANT TO BE IN. THERE IS ALWAYS A FORCING OF THE ARTIST PALPABLE IN THEM. KALRA EXPLAINED FURTHER SAYING THAT EACH PAINTING HAD AN ENTRY POINT AND IF THE ARTIST COULD COME OUT WITH CERTAIN LEVEL OF ACHIEVEMENT OTHER THAN CARNAL PLEASURES, THE PAINTING WOULD TURN OUT TO BE A HAPPY PAINTING. IN PICASSO'S NUDES ONE COULD SEE THE HAPPINESS OF THE ARTIST WHO ENTERS AND EXISTS AT THE RIGHT MOMENT WITHOUT EXERCISING POWER OR COERCION WHILE IN SOUZA ONE COULD SEE THE ARTIST STRUGGLING WITH HIS CARNAL INSTINCTS AS WELL AS AESTHETIC DRIVES. THOUGH I DO NOT TAKE KALRA'S VIEWS AS ART HISTORICAL ALTRUISM THERE IS A GRAIN OF TRUTH IN HIS OBSERVATION. EACH NUDE PAINTING IN THE HISTORY OF ART HAS A HISTORY OF POWER POLITICS TOO. THIS POLITICS OF POWER IS OPERATIONAL BETWEEN THE SITTER (THE WOMAN WHO IS FORCED TO STRIP OR WILLINGLY DOES THAT FOR THE ARTIST FOR LOVE OR AGAINST A FEE) AND THE ARTIST (WHO WITHIN THE GIVEN SITUATION HOLDS THE RIGHT TO GAWK AND GAZE THEREFORE TO OBJECTIFY THE SITTER). KALRA GOES BY PICASSO WHEN HE DOES HIS FEMALE NUDE PAINTINGS.

IN KARLA'S WORKS ONE COULD COME ACROSS SEVERAL NUDE PAINTINGS. A BIT OF PRODDING REVEALS THAT THE ARTIST DOES THEM WITH A LOT OF LOVE. MANY PAINTINGS ARE DONE IN AN IMAGINARY PLANE WHERE THE SITTER IS ABSENT AND THE WHOLE ASPECT OF PAINTING IT RELIES ON THE EMOTIONAL STATE OF THE ARTIST AT THAT GIVEN MOMENT. WHEN AN ARTIST IMAGINES A NUDE AND PAINTS IT FROM HIS IMAGINATION, THE POLITICS OF POWER COULD BE PRE-MEDITATED. THE NUDE COULD BE DONE WITH A LOT OF CARE AND TENDERNESS AS IT INVOLVES A SORT OF YEARNING AND NOSTALGIA. BUT WHEN THE NUDE IS RIGHT IN FRONT OF THE ARTIST, THE MAN-WOMAN RELATIONSHIP IN AN ACTUAL PLAIN COMES INTO PLAY THOUGH BOTH THE PARTIES DO NOT INTENTIONALLY WANT TO ACKNOWLEDGE IT. IN KALRA'S CASE, HIS NUDES PAINTED OUT OF MODELS SITTING FOR HIM ARE DONE WITH THE SAME TENDERNESS AS HE PAINTED THEM OUT OF HIS IMAGINATIONS. PAINTING NUDE IS A FIELD OF CONTESTATION AS WELL AS A SOCIAL CONTRACT AND TRUST. WHEN IT IS A FIELD OF CONTESTATIONS, AS SEEN ABOVE, THE NUDES COULD TURN OUT TO BE VERY PAINFUL AND WHEN IT IS DONE ON TRUST IT COULD BE BEAUTIFULLY PLEASING. AS KALRA'S NUDES DO NOT REPRESENT ANY EXISTING OR IMAGINARY WOMAN, BUT THEY ARE THE REPRESENTATIONS OF THE 'WOMAN' IDEA IN HIM AND HIS RESPONSES TO THIS IDEA, HE CONFESSES THAT HE HAS EVEN TAKEN THE LIBERTY TO PAINT THE NUDES A BIT 'VIOLENTLY'. FOR HIM VIOLENCE MEANS A MANIFESTED STATE OF ANGER AND REPRESSION. BUT HE REITERATES THAT HIS NUDE PAINTINGS ARE THE REPRESENTATION OF THOSE IDEAS THAN BRINGING THE MODEL AND THE ARTIST INTO AN IMBALANCED POWER RELATIONSHIP.

THE COMBINATION IMAGES OF HUMAN BEINGS AND ANIMALS ARE AN INTERESTING PART OF KALRA'S PAINTINGS. WHEN ONE SEES A LAST SUPPER PAINTING, CONSIDERING THE HISTORY OF THE ARTIST, IT IS EASY TO COME TO A CONCLUSION THAT HE IS OBVIOUSLY INSPIRED BY SOUZA WHO HAD DONE THE THEME, LAST SUPPER AT VARIOUS STAGES OF HIS CREATIVE CAREER. THOUGH KALRA ACCEPTS THAT HIS INSPIRATION ALSO COMES FROM SOUZA, HE POINTS OUT THAT THE IDEA OF LAST SUPPER COMES MORE TO HIM FROM THE CHRISTIAN MYTHOLOGY AND FROM THE RENAISSANCE MASTER, DA VINCI. THE LAST SUPPER, ACCORDING TO THE ARTIST, IS A MOMENT OF TRUST AND BETRAYAL OF A SOCIAL



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CONTRACT. WHETHER THERE IS GOD OR SON OF GOD IS PRESENT AS THE CENTRAL IMAGE, A COMMUNION OF PEOPLE ON A DINNER TABLE HAS A LOT TO DO WITH TRUST. AS HE HAS SEEN A LOT OF BREACHING OF TRUST IN SOCIAL SITUATIONS, HE FINDS IT A STRONG AND EMPHATIC THEME TO WORK UPON. HE CONSISTENTLY AND PERSISTENTLY GOES BACK TO THE THEME OF LAST SUPPER, AT TIMES LEAVING SEVERAL OF SUCH PAINTINGS UNFINISHED. ACCORDING TO HIM, THE VERY THEME ITSELF IS A REVELATORY ONE. IN HIS LAST SUPPER THEME PAINTINGS, KALRA REPLACES HUMAN BEINGS WITH ANIMALS SO THAT THE PAINTING ITSELF BECOMES AN ALLEGORY OF HUMAN TRAITS AND CHARACTERS. THOUGH SARCASTIC AND IRONY ARE HARDLY SEEN TRAITS OF THIS ARTIST, WHEN HE TREATS LAST SUPPER, THEY SURFACE AS IF A CRITIQUE OF HUMAN CHARACTERS WERE THERE IN HIM THROUGHOUT. AT TIMES KALRA FEELS LIKE GIVING INDIVIDUAL SPACE TO CERTAIN ANIMAL FIGURES. AS HE DOES NOT REPRESENT A PARTICULAR ANIMAL, WHENEVER HE DOES IT, LIKE AN APE OR DOG OR DONKEY OR MONKEY, HE FEELS THAT IT IS AN EXPRESSION OF AN UNAVOIDABLE STATE OF BEING AT LEAST TEMPORARILY AND ONCE HE FINISHES A PAINTING LIKE THAT HE COULD FLUSH IT OUT OF HIS OWN SYSTEM.

IN THE CONTEXT OF THE PRESENT EXHIBITION, IT WOULD BE INTERESTING TO HAVE A LOOK AT THE SCULPTURES OF KALRA. ONCE AGAIN, HIS LACK OF TRAINING IN SCULPTING COMES HANDY HERE TOO. AN IDEA OF CREATING SOMETHING IN THREE DIMENSIONAL LED HIM WORK ON SOMETHING WITH CLAY. IT DID NOT START OFF AS MAKING A 'SCULPTURE' BUT AS A SIMPLE PLAY WITH FORM. WITH NO DRAWING IN HAND TO EMULATE, KALRA WENT ON SHAPING THE CLAY TILL HE ACHIEVED A HUMAN SHAPE OUT OF IT. EXPERIMENTS FOLLOWED ONE AFTER ANOTHER AND TODAY KALRA DOES SCULPTURES REGULARLY THAT SHOW HUMAN BEINGS RENDERED IN AN EXPRESSIONIST STYLE. IT IS SURE THAT WHILE HE WAS ELONGATING THE FIGURES OR GIVING THEM RUGGED SKIN TEXTURES, HE WAS PARTICULARLY THINKING OF GIOCOMETTI OR RAM KINKAR BAIJ. BUT THE RESULTS SHOW THAT KALRA IS IN THE LINEAGE OF THESE TWO SCULPTORS, WHO WERE EQUALLY POSSESSED AND OBSESSED BY THEIR CREATIVE ENERGIES. WHEN WE LOOK AT THE WORKS OF VIKASH KALRA DONE DURING THE LAST ONE DECADE AS A WHOLE, WE COME TO FEEL THAT THIS ARTIST HAS GROWN FROM FORMALISM OF MASTERS TO A STYLE THAT COULD, IN COMING YEARS, DEFINITELY DEFINE HIS OWN CREATIVE OUTPUT. WHAT PROMPTS ME TO CAST MY VOTE FOR HIM IS HIS PERSISTENCE IN DOING HIS WORKS, HIS DEVOTION TO THE HISTORY OF ART, AND HIS PERENNIAL BELIEF IN HUMAN GOOD. LACK OF ACADEMIC QUALIFICATION COULD BE A BOON AT TIMES PROVIDED IF THAT DOES NOT MAKE AN ARTIST FILL HIS OR HER WORKS WITH UNNECESSARY MEANINGS AND MAKE THE WORK OF ART A BEAST OF BURDEN. HERE WE HAVE AN ARTIST IN VIKASH KALRA, WHO BOTHERS LEAST ABOUT THE POSSIBLE MEANINGS CREATED OUT OF HIS VIEWERS BUT BOTHERS QUITE A LOT ABOUT THE PRACTICE, WHICH FOR HIM TODAY IS HIS ONLY LIFE LINE THAT SUSTAINS HIM BOTH MATERIALISTICALLY AND SPIRITUALLY.

JOHNY ML

VIKASH KALRA'S WORK IS DYNAMIC, VIBRANT AND SHOWCASES HIS COMMITMENT TO A LIFELONG PROCESS OF INNOVATION. HE CREATES PASSIONATE ART, WHICH IS TRULY HUMANISTIC. HE EXPERIMENTS WITH STYLES AND CONTINUES TO REINVENT HIMSELF. HIS WORK IS REMINISCENT OF THE WORDS OF PICASSO "WHENEVER I WANTED TO SAY SOMETHING, I SAID IT THE WAY I BELIEVED I SHOULD."

THE SUBJECTS COVERED IN VIKASH'S PAINTINGS COMPRISE OF STILL LIFE, LANDSCAPE AND NUDES. HE EXPRESSES HIS IDEAS WITH BOLD STROKES, WHICH ARE AT TIMES VIOLENT, AND AT OTHER TIMES OVERTLY SEXUAL.

KOMAL SIBAL – ART AFICIONADO



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SEEING INDIVIDUAL TALENT AGAINST TRADITION

LEARNING IS ALL ABOUT UNLEARNING, ESPECIALLY WHEN IT COMES TO THE ACADEMIC TRAINING THAT AN ARTIST GAINS OVER A CONSIDERABLE PERIOD OF TIME. OFTEN AN ACADEMICALLY TRAINED ARTIST STRIVES TO ACHIEVE A SORT OF PERFECTION OF RENDERING AND STYLE THROUGH A PERSISTENT DECONSTRUCTION OF THE CANONS OF HISTORICAL ART STYLES. HOWEVER, FOR THOSE ACADEMICALLY UNTRAINED ARTISTS, CANONS COME AS NATURAL AS AIR AS THEY APPROACH ART FROM THE BASIC HUMAN INSTINCT TO EXPRESS IN AN AVAILABLE AND PROFICIENT MEDIUM. TENETS OF MODERN AND MODERNIST ART HAVE BEEN SET AND FOLLOWED BY MANY THOUGH THEY HAVE REACHED THE PINNACLES OF IT THROUGH THE ICONOCLASTIC EFFORTS ON THEIR TRAINING. BUT IT IS INTERESTING TO NOTICE THAT UNTRAINED OR SELF-TAUGHT ARTISTS REACHING SUCH HEIGHTS WITHOUT THE CONSCIOUS ATTEMPTS TOWARDS ICONOCLASM AND NEGATION OF SET STYLES. THEIR STRUGGLE IS WITH THEIR NATURAL INSTINCT TO EXPRESS; EXPRESS IN TRUEST AND EFFECTIVE WAYS. THEIR FIGHT IS AGAINST THE SO CALLED SOPHISTICATION OF ART THAT OFTEN BOGS DOWN AN ARTIST WITH ITS DEAD WEIGHT.

VIKASH KALRA, A SELF TAUGHT ARTIST WITH A LOT OF EXPERIENCE FLAUNTS HIS EXCELLENCE IN THE MODERNIST EXPRESSIONISTIC AND AT TIMES CUBISTIC AND FAUVIST IDIOMS WITH SUCH AN EASE THAT ANY ONLOOKER OF HIS WORKS WOULD TAKE HIS WORKS FOR THE CREATION OF A MASTER WHO HAS LEARNED TO UNLEARN THE ACADEMIC TRAINING. VIKASH, A GRADUATE FROM DELHI UNIVERSITY, IS A HUMANIST AND A KEEN LISTENER TO THE INTERNAL HUMAN EMOTIONAL COMMOTIONS. HE APPROACHES HIS CANVASES WITH THE VERVE OF A CHILD AND



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WITH THE CRAFTSMANSHIP OF A MODERNIST MASTER. ONE COULD RECALL THE STYLES OF ANDRE DERAIN, PABLO PICASSO AND EVEN THAT OF WILLIAM DE KOONING. HOWEVER, A CLOSER LOOK AT THE WORKS OF VIKASH WOULD REVEAL THE FACT THAT THESE WORKS ARE NOT DONE WITH THE DELIBERATE EFFORTS TO EMULATE SUCH STYLES, INSTEAD THEY COME QUITE NATURAL TO THE ARTIST AS HE FINDS THEM CAPABLE OF EXPRESSING HIS PHILOSOPHICAL AS WELL AS AESTHETICAL CONCERNS.

IN VIKASH' WORKS INTIMATE HUMAN RELATIONSHIPS, LANDSCAPES AND EXPRESSIONISTIC PORTRAITS OF DISTINCT INDIVIDUALS COME UP QUITE OFTEN AS THEMATIC PRIORITIES OF THE ARTIST. THESE PRIORITIES COULD BE SEEN AS THE DISTILLED QUANTIFICATION OF THE ARTIST'S OBSERVATIONS OF THE HUMAN BEINGS IN GENERAL AND THEIR RELATIONSHIP WITH THE MATERIAL WORLD. HOWEVER, WITHIN THESE MATERIALISTIC RELATIONSHIPS, ONE COULD SEE VIKASH SEARCHING FOR THE SPIRITUAL THREAD (NOT IN A RELIGIOUS SENSE) THAT CONNECTS THEM TO BE A PART OF THE GENERAL BACKDROP THAT HE CREATES WITH COLORS AND HIGHLY CHARGED EMOTIONAL BRUSHWORKS. THE ARTIST USES EXTREMELY INTENSE COLORS LIKE THE FAUVES DURING THE EARLY TWENTIETH CENTURY. IN ORDER TO BRING IN THE SPIRITUAL BEAUTY OF NATURE, THE FAUVES HAD USED INTENSE AND UNREFINED COLORS. VIKASH CAPTURES THE SAME FEEL QUITE SPONTANEOUSLY IN HIS WORKS WHILE EMPHASIZING THE ALMOST SAME ARTISTIC INTENTIONS.

IN THE VISUAL WORLD CREATED BY VIKASH HUMAN RELATIONSHIP FUNCTIONS IN A VERY UNIQUE WAY AS HE CHOOSES TWO PROTAGONISTS, A MALE AND A FEMALE IN ORDER TO EMBODY THIS RELATIONSHIP. AS IN THE FAMOUS SERIES OF 'ARTIST AND MODEL' BY PABLO PICASSO, THERE IS AN INTERESTING ENCOUNTER BETWEEN THE MALE AND THE FEMALE WITHIN THESE PICTORIAL FRAMES. MORE THAN A RELATIONSHIP, IT HIGHLIGHTS THE INTIMACY BETWEEN THE OPPOSITE GENDERS AS IF THEY WERE ENACTING A SCRIPTED SCENE OF LOVE. THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THEM IS ENIGMATIC AS AT TIMES, THE MALE SEEMS TO BE SUBSERVIENT TO THE FEMALE AND AT OTHER TIMES THE FEMALE SEEMS TO BE AGGRESSIVELY POSSESSED BY THE MALE. THIS ALLURING GAME OF MUTUAL SUBMISSION GOES ON IN MOST OF THE FRAMES AND QUITE INTERESTINGLY, THE ART HISTORICAL REFERENCES BECOME SO OBVIOUS THAT THE ARTIST UNINTENTIONALLY BECOMES A LEARNER AND UN-LEARNER OF 'TRAINING' AS MENTIONED ELSEWHERE IN THIS ESSAY.

HOWEVER, THEMATICALLY SPEAKING, THE MALE-FEMALE RELATIONSHIP AND THE POWER PLAY INVOLVED IN IT SEEMS TO BE ONE OF THE MOST INTERESTING TOPIC FOR VIKASH AS HE CREATES QUITE A LOT OF CHANCES WITHIN HIS PICTORIAL FRAMES, WHICH ARE PREDOMINANTLY RED AND HOT, FOR THEIR CHANCE AND DELIBERATE ENCOUNTERS. AS AN ONLOOKER OF HIS WORKS, ONE COULD GET THE SENSE OF THIS MODERNIST MAGNANIMITY OF IDEAS AND RENDERING FROM THESE WORKS THOUGH THE SPATIAL ARRANGEMENTS OF THE PROTAGONISTS WITHIN THE PICTORIAL FRAMES ARE CONSIDERABLY DIFFERENT FROM THOSE SPATIAL DIVISIONS CREATED BY THE MODERNIST MASTERS OF THE TWENTIETH CENTURY. THE DRAMA, IF ONE COULD CALL IT SO, IN VIKASH'S WORKS HAPPENS WITHIN CLOSED AND



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CLOISTERED ROOMS, ALMOST REMINDING ONE OF THE SIMILAR SITUATIONS IN ARTIST'S STUDIOS WHERE THE ARTIST AND HIS MODEL OR THE ARTIST AND HIS ADMIRERS COME TO EXPERIENCE INTIMATE ENCOUNTERS.

LANDSCAPES IN VIKASH'S WORKS EMBODY A SUBLIME CATEGORY. THESE ARE NOT THE REAL REPRESENTATIONS OF THE PLACES THAT WE SEE AROUND OR THESE ARE NOT EVEN THE ARTIST'S ROMANTIC ASPIRATIONS TO LIVE IN SUCH DREAMY LANDSCAPES. THE INTENSE, HOT AND DEEP LANDSCAPES THAT VIKASH CREATES IN HIS WORKS ARE THE PLACES THAT EXIST EVERYWHERE BUT CAMOUFLAGED BY THE QUOTIDIAN NATURE OF LIFE. SUCH SUBLIME LANDSCAPES ARE ABUNDANT AND PRESENT EVEN IN THE MIDDLE OF A CITY BUT ONE NEEDS SPECIAL EYES, INNER EYES TO SEE THEM SEPARATE FROM THE SURROUNDING DIN. GIFTED WITH THIS ARTISTIC VISION, VIKASH TRACES OUT SUCH LANDSCAPES AS A PART OF HIS AESTHETIC MEDIATION AND MEDITATION AND WITH A SORT OF HAPPINESS HE REPEATEDLY PAINTS THEM IN MANY SUCCESSIVE FRAMES. IF ONE LOOKS AT THE WORKS OF VIKASH CAREFULLY, ONE COULD ALSO DISCERN THIS FACT THAT THE VERY SAME LANDSCAPES REAPPEAR IN AN INCONSPICUOUS WAY, IN MOST OF HIS WORKS AGAINST WHICH THE PROTAGONISTS ARE PLACED IN ISOLATION OR IN PAIRS.

SECURE AND CONFIDENT IN THEIR SECLUDED POSITIONING BOTH WITHIN THE SOCIETY AND IN THE PICTORIAL FRAMES, THESE PORTRAITS OF MEN AND WOMEN, WHICH I WOULD LIKE TO CALL AS THE SPIRITUAL PORTRAITS OF THE FAMILIAR PEOPLE, INVITE THE VIEWERS TO A DIFFERENT WORLD OF EXPERIENCE WHERE THEY COULD ENCOUNTER PEOPLE LIKE THEMSELVES BUT MORE TRUE TO THEIR SELVES. THESE ARE SPIRITUAL PORTRAITS OF PEOPLE BECAUSE WHAT VIKASH TRIES TO ACHIEVE IN THEM IS NOT THE VERY LIKENESS OF ANYONE, INSTEAD HE ATTEMPTS TO GET THE INTERNAL FEEL OF THE PEOPLE; MOST OF THEM, UNLIKE THE PORTRAITS OF PEOPLE DONE BY RAM KUMAR IN 1960S, ARE NOT BOGGED DOWN BY GLOOMINESS OR A SENSE OF HOPELESSNESS. ON THE CONTRARY, THE PORTRAITS OF VIKASH EXUDE A SORT OF ENERGY, WHICH IS AT ONCE PLAYFUL AND INTENSE AND ASSUME AN ICONIC STATUS WITHIN THE AESTHETIC FRAME WORK PLACED BY THE ARTIST. ONE COULD SEE A SORT OF JOVIALITY THAT THE ARTIST WANTS TO HIGHLIGHT WHILE DOING THESE WORKS AS HE INTENTIONALLY PLACES THEM AGAINST THE COLORS INDICATIVE OF THE AFOREMENTIONED SUBLIME LANDSCAPES AS IF THEY ALL WERE MONA LISAS FROM A DIFFERENT AGE.

DESPITE THE HOT COLORS THAT VIKASH USES TO BUILD UP HIS IMAGES AND BACKGROUNDS, THESE PAINTINGS HAVE A SENSE OF HAPPINESS. THIS IS WHERE VIKASH DIFFERS CONSIDERABLY FROM THE MODERNIST IDIOM OF PAINTINGS, WHICH HIGHLIGHTED THE EXISTENTIAL PROBLEMS OF THE PEOPLE RATHER THAN THE HAPPY MOMENTS FROM THERE LIFE. VIKASH, WITHOUT GIVING HAGIOGRAPHIC DETAILS, PAINTS THE PORTRAITS OF EVERYMAN SO THAT ANYONE COULD IDENTIFY WITH THE IMAGES IN THESE WORKS ESPECIALLY AN INFORMED VIEWER WOULD FIND PARALLELS, AFFILIATIONS, MERGERS AND DIVERGENCES WITH THE ESTABLISHED CANONS. THE KIND OF SPONTANEITY THAT VIKASH CELEBRATES IN THESE WORKS TELLS THE VIEWER OF HIS STRONG URGE TO EXPRESS WITHOUT TOO MUCH DELIBERATION TOWARDS IDIOMATIC SOPHISTICATION. FOR THE ARTIST, HERE BOTH THE BRUSH AND ITS WOODEN END BECOME EQUALLY HANDY AS HE PROCEEDS WITH THE HUMAN IMAGES. THE RANDOMNESS OF STROKES ENDS UP IN THE CONSTITUTION OF SOLID



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IMAGES AND WITH THE SWIRLING MOVEMENTS OF THE OTHER END OF THE BRUSHES, THE ARTIST CREATES CONTOURS AND OUTLINES. HE EVEN LETS THE PAINT TO DRIP IN ITS OWN COURSE TO PRESERVE THE NATURAL RHYTHM OF THE IMAGE AS WELL AS THE ACTIONS THAT CONSTITUTE SUCH IMAGES.

GOING BACK TO THE INITIAL ARGUMENTS THAT I SET AT THE BEGINNING OF THIS ESSAY, I WOULD CALL VIKASH KALRA A FAST LEARNER AND A DIFFERENT SORT OF UN-LEARNER. AS A SELF TAUGHT ARTIST, HE IMBIBES THE HIGH POINTS OF MODERNIST TRADITION AND MAKES USE OF THEM IN HIS WORKS. WITHOUT ANY INTENTION TO RECREATE THE 'FEEL' OF THE MODERN, HE JOURNEYS CLOSELY WITH THE MODERN MASTERS. IT IS SAID THAT EACH POINT IN ART HISTORY IS A POINT WHERE AN ICON IS BROKEN AND A NEW ICON IS CREATED. THIS ICONOCLASTIC TENDENCY OF MODERNISM FUNCTIONS IN VIKASH KALRA AS A CRITIQUE OF THE POST-MODERN (AS IN HIS DELIBERATE EFFORTS TO STICK TO THE MEDIUM AND STYLE OF HIS LIKING RATHER THAN PURSUING TRENDS) AND AN ASSERTION OF TRADITION AS AN ONGOING PROCESS. AND IN HIS SCHEME OF AESTHETICS, VIKASH INCORPORATES THE BEST MOMENTS FROM THE TWENTIETH CENTURY ART HISTORY, PAYING TRIBUTE TO THE MASTERS WHILE RETAINING HIS INDIVIDUALITY AS AN INDIAN CONTEMPORARY ARTIST, RESPONDING TO THE CHANGES OF OUR TIMES IN WAYS WHICH HE DEEMS TO BE DESIRABLE AND FEASIBLE. I WILL CLOSE THIS ESSAY WITH A QUOTE FROM "TRADITION AND INDIVIDUAL TALENT", AN ESSAY WRITTEN BY T.S. ELIOT IN 1919: "NO POET, NO ARTIST OF ANY ART, HAS HIS COMPLETE MEANING ALONE. HIS SIGNIFICANCE, HIS APPRECIATION IS THE APPRECIATION OF HIS RELATION TO THE DEAD POETS AND ARTISTS. YOU CANNOT VALUE HIM ALONE; YOU MUST SET HIM, FOR CONTRAST AND COMPARISON, AMONG THE DEAD. I MEAN THIS AS A PRINCIPLE OF AESTHETIC NOT MERELY HISTORICAL, CRITICISM."

JOHNY ML



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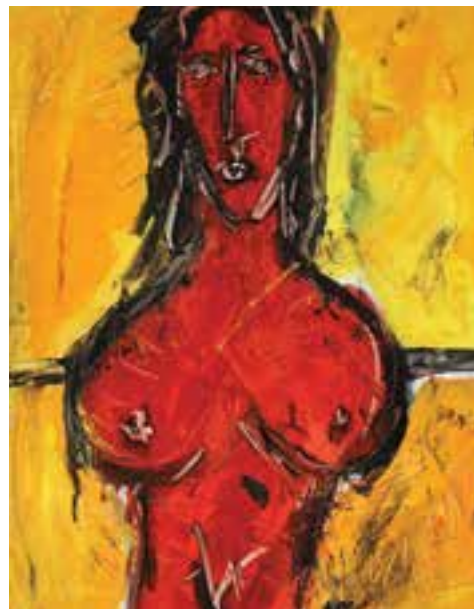
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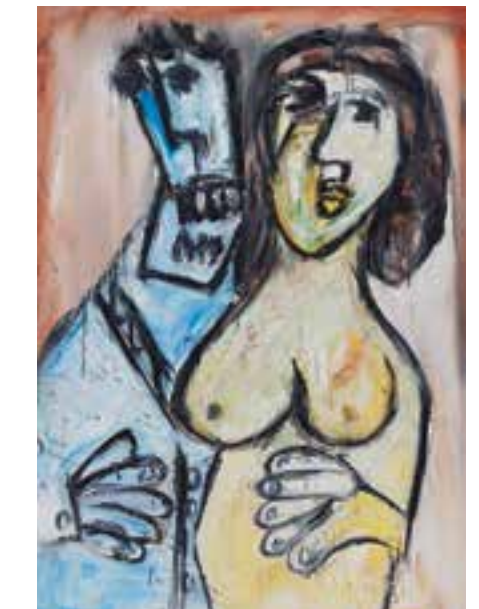
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TRUTHS ON ART AND THE ARTIST

GOODNESS IS BOTH AN ETHICAL AND AN AESTHETIC STANDARD. TO BE GENUINE AND PLEASING, ART MUST BE HONEST AS WELL AS GOOD. IN FACT, HONESTY SHOULD AND HAS ALWAYS BEEN THE MOST IMPORTANT CRITERION FOR ART. ART IS AN INCARNATION OF THE ARTIST'S HONESTY OF PRESENTING WHAT HE WISHES TO AND HOW HE DOES SO. IT PENETRATES THE SURFACE OF THINGS TO PORTRAY THEM AS THEY REALLY ARE FROM THE POINT OF VIEW OF THE ARTIST. OUR SELF-TAUGHT ARTIST VIKASH KALRA IS NOTHING IF NOT UTTERLY FRANK AND EXPLICITLY HONEST ABOUT HIS ART, AS INDEED HE IS ABOUT HIMSELF AND HIS GOALS IN LIFE.

ART COMMUNICATES TRUTH IN VARIOUS WAYS. SOMETIMES IT TELLS A STORY, AND THE STORY IS TRUE TO HUMAN EXPERIENCE – IT IS AN INCARNATION OF THE HUMAN CONDITION. SOMETIMES ART TELLS THE TRUTH IN THE FORM OF PROPOSITIONS. ART CAN ALSO CONVEY EMOTIONAL AND EXPERIENTIAL TRUTH, AND IT CAN DO THIS WITHOUT WORDS, AS IS THE CASE WITH VISUAL ART. BUT WHATEVER STORIES IT TELLS, AND WHATEVER IDEAS OR EMOTIONS IT COMMUNICATES, ART IS TRUE ONLY IF IT POINTS IN SOME WAY TO THE ONE TRUE STORY OF WHAT THE ARTIST WISHES TO EXPRESS FOR THE SAKE OF PURE ARTISTIC EXPRESSION AND AN ADVENTURE INTO THE REALMS BOTH OF THE TANGIBLE AND THE INTANGIBLE, TO THE EXCLUSION OF ALL ELSE, UNDERTAKING A VISUAL VOCABULARY THAT MIGHT FIRST CHALLENGE BUT EVENTUALLY SATISFY THE ARTIST. SO IT HAS BEEN WITH VIKASH, WHILE EMULATING THE SENIOR ARTISTS.

A FREQUENT TRAVELLER AT ONE STAGE IN HIS LIFE, HIS WOOL GATHERING OF SIGHTS AND SOUNDS HAS BEEN MOSTLY IN COURSE OF HIS WORK AND TRAVEL. ONCE THE EXCESSIVE MOVEMENT BEGAN TO WEAR HIM DOWN, HE CRAVED FOR SOME STILLNESS, AN URGE TO SLOW DOWN, HAVE TIME TO READ, THINK AND ENGAGE IN INNER DIALOGUE.

ALL THE WHILE HE HAD FOLLOWED ART SHOWS AND THE HUGE PRICES THE ART WORKS COMMANDED INSPIRED HIM. AN INNER VOICE TOLD HIM HE COULD DO IT, TOO—BE CREATIVE WITH A PURPOSE.

IT WAS LEARNING TIME AND HE BEGAN WITH THE STUDY OF GREAT MASTERS, INDIAN AND INTERNATIONAL. HE IS COMPLETELY DISARMING WHEN HE STATES SIMPLY THAT ADDED TO HIS CREATIVE URGE AND THE RELEASE HE WAS HOPING TO FIND, WAS THE INCENTIVE TO EARN MORE FOR A BETTER LIFE FOR HIS FAMILY— WIFE AND TWO YOUNG BOYS. IT WAS WITH BELIEF IN HIMSELF THAT HE TURNED TO CREATIVE PURSUITS IN 2006.

ASK HIM WHO INFLUENCED HIM IN THOSE EARLY DAYS OF LEARNING AND NAMES POUR OUT WITHOUT PRETENSION, STOPPING AT FN SOUZA AND PABLO PICASSO. IF HIS DRAWINGS AND PAINTINGS ARE RECOLLECTIONS OF SOME OF THE GREAT MASTERS, IT IS PROBABLY IN OBESANCE TO THE MUCH VENERATED GURU-SHISHYA PARAMPARA OR TEACHER-PUPIL TRADITION OF INDIA. WHETHER IN THE EAST OR THE WEST, WE CAN TREASURE OUR TRADITIONS AND ENCOURAGE

THOSE SERIOUSLY EXPLORING AVENUES OF EXPRESSION WITH BOTH DEPTH AND RANGE IN THE TRAINING PROCESS. THE MULTI-DIMENSIONAL VIKASH HAS TRAINED HIMSELF FOR ALL OF PAINTING, SCULPTURE AND DRAWING.

A MOOD INSPIRED COLOUR PALETTE, VIKASH PAINTS IN THICK COATS OF COLOR, HIS BRUSHWORK EXECUTING THE DICTATS OF PERCEPTION AND MOMENTS IN MEMORY, GUSHING FORTH LIKE A MOUNTAIN SPRING. THOUGH HE DOES PAINT HUMAN SYMBOLS OF FAITH AND HABITATION, HIS HEART BY WAY OF PAINTING, IS MOORED IN NATURE—DARK, BROODING. BRIGHT OR ALTERNATELY FIERY, ENCONSCING ALL OF HUMAN LIFE. MINUS THE STRAIGHT JACKET OF INSTITUTIONAL TRAINING, VIKASH RETAINS THE NATURAL PASSION AND INTENSITY TO PAINT AND DRAW AS HE WISHES, SANS BOUNDARIES. WHICH AT THIS STAGE OF HIS ART PRACTICE COMES EASY TO HIM, AS ONE WHO HAS NO DIRT OF SUBJECTS, REVEL AS HE DOES IN THE MAGIC OF LIFE. VIKASH COMPOSES WELL, AND HIS HANDLING OF PERSPECTIVE, DIVISION OF SPACE AND USE OF LIGHT APPEAR AS EFFICIENT AND AS EFFORTLESS.

FAMILY, FRIENDS AND ACQUAINTANCES PEOPLE HIS LIFE, EVERYDAY ENCOUNTERS INFORM IT, EVENTUALLY EMERGING IN HIS DRAWINGS. A HABITUAL DOODLER, HE HAS OF LATE ORGANISED HIMSELF, FOCUSING ON THEMATIC UNITY. "I DRAW CHARACTERS, AS THEY APPEAR TO ME IN CONVERSATION, BEHAVIOUR AND BODY LANGUAGE. THAT IS HOW I CAN JUXTAPOSE A HUMAN FORM WITH A DONKEY'S HEAD. HUMAN RELATIONS ARE VITAL FOR ME, AS IS THE MAN-WOMAN RELATIONSHIP. THE WOMAN'S FORM IS BEAUTIFUL, ONE THAT CONTINUES CREATION, GOES ON TO BECOME MOTHER AND CHILD..."

AS HE PAINTS, SO DOES HE DRAW, IN QUICK ENERGISED STROKES IN SPONTANEOUSLY GUARDED LINES, ARTICULATING MUSCULATURE, FACE AND FORM WITH GREAT EFFICIENCY, MANIFESTING HIS NATURAL TALENT AS MUCH AS HIS THRILL IN DRAWING. THERE IS POWER AND BOLDNESS BOTH IN HIS BRUSHWORK AND HIS LINES. NEITHER INSTRUCTIVE, DIDACTIC, NOR PROPAGANDISTIC, HIS PAINTINGS ARE A MEANS OF COMMUNICATION—THERAPEUTIC, HEALING, EVEN PURGATIVE, HIS DRAWINGS ALTERNATING BETWEEN AMUSEMENT AND SENSUALITY.

IT IS VIKASH'S HONESTY AND POSITIVITY THAT MAKE HIM PRODUCE MEANINGFUL ART AND CONNECT WITH HIS AUDIENCES. FOR ALL OF THIS, HOWEVER, THE ARTWORLD NETWORK IS THE GROUND OF POSSIBILITY FOR ANYTHING TO APPEAR AS ART FOR US TODAY. WHAT MAKES SOMETHING AN ARTWORK IS NOT AN OBSERVABLE PROPERTY IN AN ARTWORK ITSELF. THE WORK IS MERELY A NODE IN A NETWORK OF FORCES WITHOUT WHICH IT WOULD BE UNRECOGNIZABLE— LITERALLY INVISIBLE.

NO FORM OF EXPRESSION NEED BE DEPLORED, ONLY INFERIOR REPRESENTATIONS IN THE NAME OF ART; AND VIKASH KALRA MOST CERTAINLY DOES NOT FALL INTO THAT CATEGORY.

ARUNA BHOWMICK
MARCH 2015



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GAUGE THE GAZE – THE ARTWORKS OF VIKASH KALRA

VIKASH KALRA IS AN ENERGETIC YOUNG SELF-TAUGHT ARTIST WHO ENTERED THE CREATIVE WORLD FOR HIS LOVE OF ART. HE HAS ATTAINED MASTERY WITH HIS BRUSH AND CANVAS WITHIN A VERY SHORT SPAN. HE HAS DONE SIX SOLO EXHIBITIONS AND A NUMBER OF GROUP SHOWS IN INDIA AND ABROAD. HE HAS GOT REPRESENTATION FROM WELL-KNOWN ART GALLERIES OF INDIA INCLUDING ART KONSULT. HIS WORKS HAVE BEEN PART OF PRESTIGIOUS ART FAIRS INCLUDING INDIA ART FAIR 2013 & 2012, UNITED ART FAIR, 2012, INDIA ART FESTIVAL. HIS WORKS HAVE SOLD THROUGH NOTED AUCTION HOUSES OF INDIA LIKE ART BULL, ART CHUTNEY AND MANY MORE. SEVERAL NOTED ART COLLECTORS FROM INDIA, UK, USA, AND FRANCE HAVE MADE COLLECTION OF HIS WORKS.

VIKASH KALRA'S IMAGES ALTERNATE BETWEEN THE HUMAN FIGURE AND THE LANDSCAPE, AND BETWEEN PRIMARY AND TERTIARY COLOURS – ANCHORS THAT ALLOW HIM TO ENJOY AN AESTHETIC VARIETY TO SUCCESSFUL CONCLUSION. RICH IN TEXTURAL EXPERIMENT, THE IMAGES REVEAL DIFFERENT METHODS OF CONSTRUCTION USING BRUSH AND PALETTE KNIFE. HIS CITY AND LANDSCAPES MIRROR HIS EMOTIONAL WORLD; AS THE ARTIST TURNS INWARD, HIS WORKS BECOME INCREASINGLY CONTEMPLATIVE. FROM THE SOMBER STRUCTURES OF HIS EARLY PAINTINGS, TO THE GENTLE LYRICISM AND JOYOUS OPTIMISM OF HIS MATURE LANDSCAPES, EACH TRANSITION HAS BEEN CAREFULLY MEASURED.

PAINTED IN GREYS AND BROWNS, HIS LANDSCAPES ARE CONCRETE AND PALPABLE, WITH RECOGNIZABLE ARCHITECTURAL FORMS. LINKED TO ONE ANOTHER, THE SCHEMATIZED HOUSES ARE SUSPENDED IN EMPTY SPACE UNDER A BLAZING SUN. THE LANDSCAPES ARE IMAGERY AND TIMELESS, ALERTING KALRA'S PREFERENCE FOR A MORE CONCEPTUAL VISION OF NATURE. SOON, NATURE BECOMES SOMETHING NOT TO BE OBSERVED OR IMAGINED, BUT TO BE FELT. SUMMER AND WINTER, NIGHT AND DAY, DARKNESS AND LIGHT – AN AUSTERE PAINTINGS IN GREY AND BLACK – WHERE THE ARTIST CONSTRUCTS A VISION OF SUMMER IN BROAD STROKES OF ORCHE, REDS, YELLOWS, AND ORANGES.

HIS CREATIVE APPROACH WAS HUMANIST RATHER THAN IDEOLOGICAL. DESPERATE, LONELY, ALIENATED MEN AND WOMEN WERE THE SUBJECT OF HIS EARLY FICTION. KALRA HAS ABANDONED THE FIGURES TEMPORARILY IN FAVOUR OF HIS LANDSCAPES AND CITYSCAPES, CREATING SHADOWY OUTLINE OF DILAPIDATED HOUSES AND ROOFS USING HEAVY IMPASTO IN HIS EXPRESSIONIST STYLE.

THE AIM OF ART IS TO REPRESENT NOT THE OUTWARD APPEARANCE OF THINGS,
BUT THEIR INWARD SIGNIFICANCE.

-----ARISTOTLE



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VIKASH KALRA IS DEEPLY INFLUENCED BY THIS QUOTE OF ARISTOTLE. HE HAS ALSO DONE A HANDFUL FIGURATIVE WORKS AND ENJOYS THE REPRESENTATION OF THE OBJECTS WITH DISTORTED ANATOMY. IT'S NOT BY CHOICE BUT IT'S THE GAZE WHICH HE DOES NOT WANT TO NEGATE TO. HE DOES NOT GO WITH THE RULEBOOK DEPICTING THE PLEASANT FACES AND VISUALLY PLEASANT WORKS, RATHER HE ALWAYS INTENT TO COME OUT WITH THE FEELING HE SEES AROUND. THE ARTIST SAYS THAT HE PAINTS WHAT HE SEES. HE DOES NOT WANT TO MANIPULATE THE BAD IN TO GOOD, IN FACT HE PEEPS IN TO THE MIND OF THE SOULFUL CREATURES OF SOCIETY AND FEELS THE VARIOUS EMOTIONS UNDULATING IN THE INNER SELF AND SHOWS IT ON HIS CANVAS. HE UNVEILS THE PAIN BEHIND THE PLEASANT LOOKING HUMAN BEINGS. HE PAINTS WITH BOLD STROKES USING BROAD BRUSH NORMALLY INCORPORATING PULSATING COLOURS TO THE CANVAS DEVOID OF THE RESTRICTIONS OF MEDIUM.

THE BEST THING ABOUT HIS WORKS CAN BE SEEN IS THE FLOW, THE FLOW OF ARTISTS' MIND, THE BRUSH AND THE STROKES. THESE FLOWS ACCUMULATE IN TO THE RHYTHM AND THE ARTIST FEEL CONTENTED AFTER THESE CREATIONS AND HOPES THE VIEWER ALSO FEEL THE SAME.

FINALLY I MUST SAY THAT THE NEW CREATION OF THE LANDSCAPE AND EXCLUSIVE FIGURATIVE WORKS WITH A DIVERSE SIZE, FORMS, COLOURS AND COMPOSITION OFFERS A VISUAL DELIGHT TO THE VIEWER.

VIKASH NAND KUMAR
ART HISTORIAN
NEW DELHI



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COLLOQUIAL DIALOGUE WITH ART

"THE ARTIST. THE MAN." A SOLO SHOW OF RECENT WORKS OF VIKASH KALRA HELD AT OPEN PALM COURT, INDIA HABITAT CENTRE FROM 24TH – 28TH APRIL 2010. IT WAS HIS TWELFTH SOLO EXHIBITION IN DELHI. VIKASH IS AN ENERGETIC YOUNG SELF TAUGHT ARTIST WHO ENTERED THE CREATIVE WORLD FOR HIS LOVE OF ART. HE HAS NOT RECEIVED ANY FORMAL TRAINING IN ART AND CHOSEN CANVAS AS A MEDIUM TO EXPRESS HIS EMOTIONS. HAVING INFLUENCED BY THE EXPRESSIONIST STYLE OF PAINTING TRADITION THE FIGURES PORTRAYED IN HIS CANVAS DEPICT THE INTRINSIC BEHAVIOR OF HUMAN MIND. THE DISTORTED GEOMETRY OF HUMAN ANATOMY INDICATES VARIOUS NUANCES WHICH GO LIKE TURBULENCE WITHIN A COMMON MAN. HIS ART WORKS ARE A REFLECTION OF HIS QUIRKY SELF AND TRIES TO DIG UP THE MIND OF THE VIEWER.

HIS RECENT WORKS COMPRISED OF FACES ALONG WITH SOME FIGURINE REPRESENTATION BESTOW AN ARRAY OF FEELINGS WHICH IMPLIES THE ARTIST'S CONTINUAL PROCESS OF EXPLORATION OF THE PEACE. A VIEWER CAN ALWAYS SEE THE MENTAL DOGMA OF ARTIST BY SEEING THE CANVASES. THESE WORKS CARRY MANIFESTATIONS OF CHILD-LIKE EXPRESSIONS. THEY INSTIGATE VIEWERS TO INTERROGATE THE ARTISTIC APTITUDE. ALL HIS WORKS EMBRACED WITH POIGNANT NOTIONS DWELLS INEXORABLY WITHIN THE VARIED MOODS – RUDENESS AND TENDERNESS, DISTRESS AND SENSE OF HUMOR, GRIEF AND SPOOF, ANTAGONISM AND SERENITY.

THOUGH THE ARTIST IS AWARE OF THE FACT THAT THE VIEWERS ARE GETTING A NOTION OF PESSIMISTIC VIEW OF HIM BUT IT'S NOT THE TRUE FACT. HE IS A PRETTY MUCH OPTIMISTIC PERSON WHO WANTS TO MAKE PEOPLE VISUALIZE THE TRUTH THROUGH HIS DISTORTED ANATOMICAL REPRESENTATION. BEING AN EXPRESSIVE PERSON HE DOES NOT BELIEVE IN THE MEDIUM PATH FOR THE JOURNEY OF LIFE.

THE WORKS DISPLAYED IN THIS EXHIBITION ARE SUITABLY CHOSEN BY THE ARTIST FROM A WHOLE RANGE OF WORKS MADE BY HIM DURING LAST ONE YEAR. THE PERSPECTIVE OF EXPRESSION, CONTEMPORARY VISION OF REALITY AND ITS REPRESENTATION SHOWS THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE ARTIST'S APPROACH TO UNCOVER THE FICTION OVER THE REALITY. IN THIS SHOW ALL THE WORKS ARE UNTITLED EXCEPT TWO WORKS WHICH ARE TITLED AS "I AM BEAUTIFUL" DEPICTING THE EXAGGERATED BEAUTY OF FEMALE BODY. THESE WORKS FORMULATE A VALIANT TESTIMONIAL OF CREATION ALONG WITH OBSESSION, DISTRESS AND FEELING."

HIS WORKS ARE QUITE PROVOCATIVE WHICH IGNITES CONTEMPLATION WITHIN THE VIEWERS' MIND. HE PAINTS WITH BOLD STROKES USING BROAD BRUSH NORMALLY INCORPORATING VIBRANT COLOURS TO THE CANVAS DEVOID OF THE RESTRICTIONS OF MEDIUM.

MOST OF HIS WORKS ARE NOT AESTHETICALLY PLEASANT BUT THEY HAVE THE COMMAND THAT VIEWERS GET DIRECTED TO UNDERSTAND THE NOTION OF REALITY INHERENT IN THE ARTISTIC CREATION. THE CANVAS SHOWS THE PSYCHIC BUOYANCY OF ARTIST'S IMAGINATION AND DOES NOT REVEAL THE METAPHORS OF OBJECTS IN ACCUSTOMED APPROACH. THERE IS ALWAYS AN INTRINSIC CRAVE TO TAKE THE SPECTATORS TO SENSE A DIFFERENT FACET OF VERACITY. HE IS NOT SKEPTICAL OF CIRCUMSTANCES AS IT IS VARIABLE NOT THE CONSTANT ONE.

THE PERSON WHO IS AWARE OF THE ARTISTIC JOURNEY OF VIKASH CAN EASILY DEDUCE THE FACT THAT THE ARTIST IS CONTINUOUSLY GETTING VERSES OF ART PRACTICES BY DEALING WITH THE BRUSH, PAINT AND CANVAS AND MOREOVER HE HAS CONCRETE BELIEF IN HIS ARTISTIC SKILL AND CREATIVITY. OVERALL THE SHOW WAS A COMPLETE DELIGHT FOR THE ART AFICIONADOS.

VIKASH NAND KUMAR



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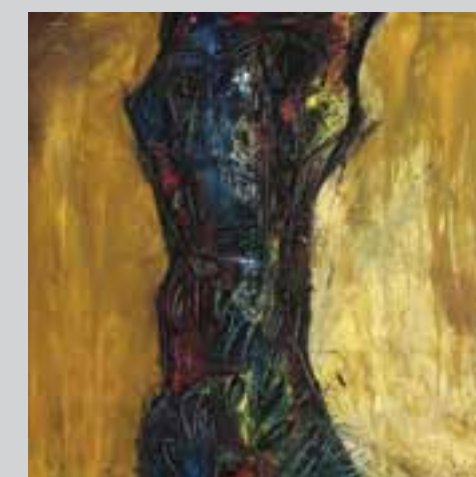
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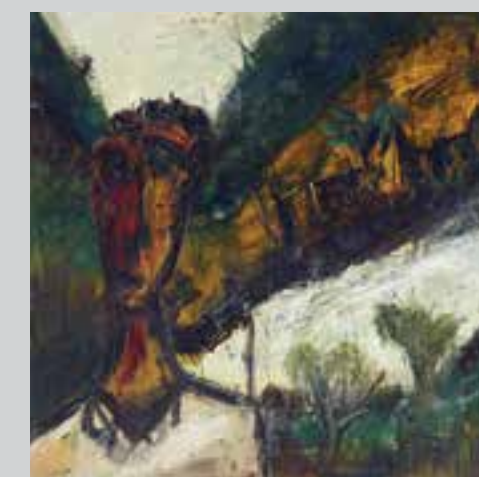
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THE ARTIST. THE MAN

IF THERE ARE ANY SIMPLE TRUTHS ABOUT ART AND THE ARTIST— IT IS AS PICASSO STATES "PAINTING IS A BLIND MAN'S PROFESSION. HE PAINTS NOT WHAT HE SEES, BUT WHAT HE FEELS, WHAT HE TELLS HIMSELF ABOUT WHAT HE HAS SEEN." THE SAME HOLDS TRUE FOR VIKASH KALRA. HIS ART IS A DEPICTION OF THE TURBULENCE, THE CLIMAX AND THE ACHE IN HIS LIFE. HIS STROKES ARE BOLD, DEFINITE, A BURST OF EMOTION TREATED WITH ALMOST A CHILD LIKE QUALITY. BUT THERE IS NOTHING CHILD LIKE ABOUT ITS DEPICTION. THE SUBJECT'S NAKED SCARS, THEIR HAUNTED EYES AND THE IMPREGNABLE SILENCE AS YOU STAND BEFORE IT. HIS ART IS DIFFICULT. IT IS DEMANDING. IT OFFERS YOU A GLIMPSE OF THE INTRINSIC NATURE OF MAN, OF WOMAN, OF RELATIONSHIPS AND THEIR TEMPESTUOUSNESS. IT WILL NOT ALLOW YOU TO REMAIN PASSIVE.

OF THE MAN, THE ARTIST. HE EXISTS WITH THE CARELESSNESS OF SOMEONE AWARE OF HOW TRULY TRANSIENT LIFE IS. HE IS ENFRAMED BY HIS PHILOSOPHY, HIS EXPERIENCE AND HIS DABBING HAND WHICH STOPS FOR NO ONE. HE HAS RISEN, FALLEN, LOVED AND BETRAYED. HE EXISTS FOR

ALL TO SEE, AS DOES HIS ART AND THEREIN LIES HIS TRUTH — TO EXPECT LITTLE BUT TO DENY LIMITATION. IT IS IN THIS CONTEXT THAT ONE CAN APPRECIATE THE SUBLIMINAL QUALITY OF HIS WORK WHICH TAPS INTO THE REMNANTS OF A FORGIVEN YET INESCAPABLE PAST. STILL, IT OFFERS YOU HOPE. HOPE, BECAUSE BY WITNESSING ITS EMOTIVE FAMILIARITY AND BY VALUING EACH MOMENT FOR ITSELF, WITH EACH STROKE AND EACH EXPRESSION, YOU ARE IN FACT FREED BY IT. THE DAY HAS NOT BEEN WRITTEN NOR HAS THIS LIFE.

FINALLY, TO APPRECIATE THE BEAUTY OF HIS WORK, PREPARE TO REVEAL SOMETHING OF YOURSELF. ART IS AFTER ALL, FOR VIKASH, AN INTIMATE CONVERSATION BETWEEN THOSE WHO WERE ONCE STRANGERS IN THIS UNPREDICTABLE LAND OF OURS.

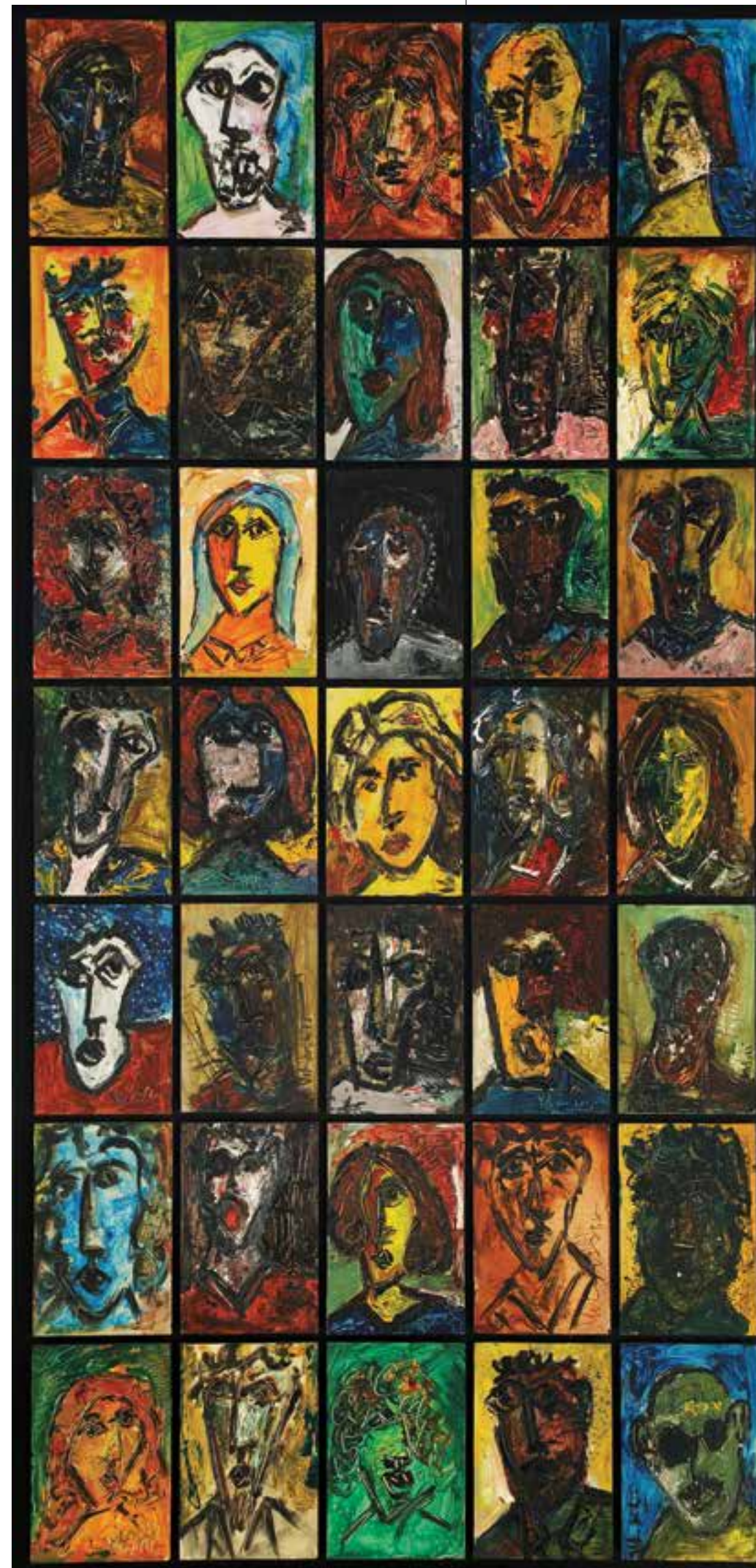
TRUPTHI BASAVARAJ
EX. MEMBER OF THE TRINITY ARTS COMMITTEE,
UNIVERSITY OF CAMBRIDGE, U.K.

COLLAGES OF CONQUESTS

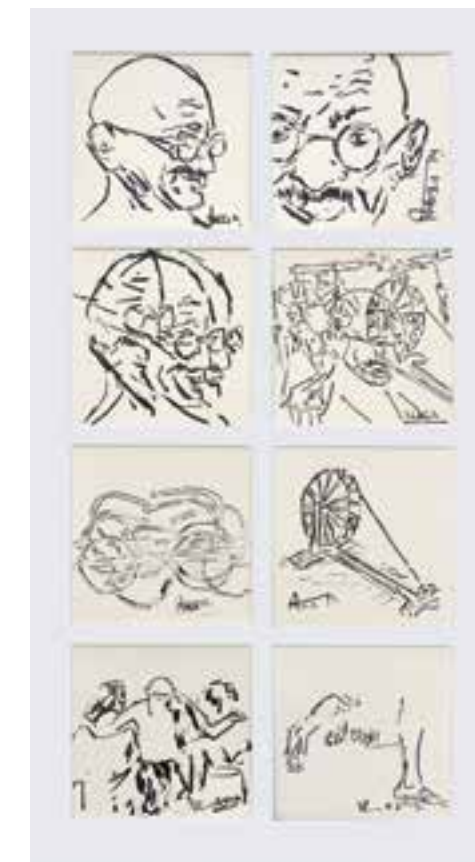
CAN DRAWINGS BE THE WORKS OF ART DREAMING IN BLACK AND WHITE? DRAWINGS ESSENTIALLY, ARE ABSTRACT STRUCTURES THAT EMBODY THE POSSIBILITIES OF A FULLY FORMED WORK OF ART WHETHER IT IS A PAINTING OR A SCULPTURE, A DIGITAL WORK OR AN ARCHITECTURAL EDIFICE. WHEN AN ARTIST MAKES A DRAWING, WHICH IS AS SPONTANEOUS AS HIS BREATHING AND BLOOD FLOW, IT BECOMES THE REAL EXPRESSION OF HIS PHYSICAL AS WELL AS MENTAL STATE OF BEING; A SORT OF SIMULTANEOUS WITNESSING, VISUALISING AND TRANSLATING WITH COMPLETE CONCENTRATION AND AWARENESS OR WITH TOTAL AUTOMATISM. THIS IS A SORT OF MARK MAKING WITH OR WITHOUT A PURPOSE, OFTEN RESULTING INTO A BODY OF REGISTRATIONS WITH AUTONOMOUS EXISTENCE EVEN IF THEY ARE NOT REALIZED INTO OTHER MEDIUMS. A VISUAL ARTIST, LIKE A WRITER, MAKES ALL THE EFFORTS TO HIDE AND EDIT OUT THAN EXPOSE AND IN THE PROCESS HIS DRAWINGS ARE GENERALLY KEPT AWAY FROM THE PUBLIC EYE, AND ARE LET OUT ONLY WHEN THE ARTIST MAKES DELIBERATE ATTEMPTS TO SHOW THEM FOR PUBLIC PERUSAL IN PRIVATELY HELD SHOWS OR PUBLICLY PROLIFERATED THROUGH DIGITAL MEDIUMS. THIS SELF BARING COMES WITH A PRICE TAG, OF DIGNITY, INTEGRITY AND AESTHETICAL PERMISSIBILITY BECAUSE MANY OF THE DRAWINGS OF AN ARTIST COULD CARRY HIGHLY OBJECTIONABLE AND UNPALATABLE VISUALS WITHIN THEIR FORMATS, WHICH WOULD EVENTUALLY BRING EITHER PUBLIC WRATH OR PRIVATE SCORN FOR HIM. HOWEVER, WHEN AN ARTIST DARES TO BARE HIS DRAWINGS, ESPECIALLY WITH AN INTROSPECTIVE INTENTION, THAT VERY EFFORT BECOMES COMMENDABLE FOR SUCH EXHIBITION/ISM COULD MAKE OR BREAK HIS CREATIVE CAREER; IT COULD BRING TOTAL OUTRAGE OR ABSOLUTE EMBRACE.

SUCH RISK TAKING COMES QUITE NATURAL TO VIKASH KALRA, WHOSE STYLE OF PAINTING HAS BEEN LIKENED TO THE MODERN MASTER, FRANCIS NEWTON SOUZA. EACH TIME HE PRESENTS HIS WORKS, IT HAS ALMOST BECOME A NORM THAT THE ART VIEWERS ARE OUTRAGED OR HAVE GONE COMPLETELY IN AWE WITH HIS CREATIVITY. IN THE PRESENT EXHIBITION, KALRA, HOWEVER HAS CHOSEN TO DISPLAY HIS 'DRAWINGS' IN A COLLAGE MODE, WHICH IS QUITE UNLIKE OTHER REFERENTIAL MASTERS OR EVEN HIS OWN USUAL DISPLAY STRATEGIES. AT THE SAME TIME IT SHOULD BE ADDED TO THE CRITICAL VIEWS ABOUT HIS WORKS THAT HE PREFERS SOME SECTIONS OF HIS CREATIVE ENSEMBLES TO BE EXHIBITED IN A COLLAGE MODE. COLLAGES ARE CREATED OUT OF DISCARDED AND DISPARATE MATERIALS AND OBJECTS IN A PARTICULAR FORMAT IN ORDER TO CREATE A NEW LOGICALLY COMPREHENSIVE VISUAL FORM, WHICH IS AESTHETICALLY APPEALING AND RADICALLY DIVERSIFIED FROM THE USUAL NORMS OF VISUAL ARTS. GOING BY THE TRADITIONAL CUBISTIC COLLAGES, WE COULD SAY THAT THERE ARE TWO TYPES OF COLLAGES; ANALYTICAL AND SYNTHETIC. IN ANALYTICAL COLLAGES, THE ARTIST TRIES TO DISCERN THE MATERIALS IN USE AND THROUGH THEIR DIFFERENCE AND THE FINAL MERGING OF IT INTO THE RESULTANT WHOLE, ACHIEVES AN AESTHETIC FINALITY, WHICH IS APPEALING TO BOTH THE EYES AND HUMAN LOGIC. IN SYNTHETIC COLLAGES, DISPARATE MATERIALS AND IMAGES ARE BROUGHT TOGETHER IN AN EFFORT TO DIFFUSE THEIR DIFFERENCES USING BOTH VISUAL AND INTELLECTUAL LOGIC IN ORDER TO PRODUCE A RESULTANT WORK OF ART. IN THE CASE OF VIKASH KALRA, HOWEVER COLLAGES HAVE A DIFFERENT MEANING.

SINCE 2006, VIKASH KALRA HAS BEEN EXHIBITING ONE OR TWO SETS OF COLLAGES IN HIS OTHER PREDOMINANTLY PAINTING OR SCULPTURAL EXHIBITIONS. BUT A KEEN LOOK AT HIS WORKS AND EXHIBITIONS SO FAR REVEAL THAT IN EACH EXHIBITION HE BRINGS A SET OF WORKS OR FRAMED WORKS OR SCULPTURES FRAMED WITHIN THE SPACE IN



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Painting: Oil on canvas, 40 x 40 inches, 2014



AN EFFORT TO MAKE THEM AS A SINGULAR WORK OF ART. HERE HIS ATTEMPT IS TO COLLAPSE THEIR DISTINCT IDENTITIES AS AUTONOMOUS WORKS OF ART. THE ARTIST, USING HIS INTERNAL LOGIC, PLACES ONE PIECE OF DRAWING OR PAINTING, WHICH COULD BE A SERIES OF PORTRAITS, NUDES OR EVEN ANIMAL HEADS, IN RELATIONSHIP WITH THE OTHER IN THE ENSEMBLE AND THE COHESIVENESS LOOKS SO STRONG THAT TAKING OUT ONE OF THEM WOULD END UP IN TOTALLY COLLAPSING THE WORK OF ART. BUT AT THE SAME TIME, IF THEY ARE INDEPENDENTLY EXHIBITED, WITHOUT SHOWING THE POSSIBILITY OF THEM BEING TOGETHER IN A COLLAGE, THEY ASSUME THE NATURE OF AUTONOMOUS WORKS OF ART, NOT EVEN ONCE BETRAYING THEIR CLOSER AFFINITIES WITH THE WORK OF ART SEEN/DISPLAYED NEXT TO IT. WHEN SEEN SEPARATELY, THEY LOOK LIKE THE MEMBERS OF A SAME FAMILY LONG LOST BY THE TRICK OF PROVIDENCE, STANDING IN THE SAME ROOM BUT NOT KNOWING EACH OTHER. THEY COMMUNICATE AND EXCHANGE GLANCES ONCE IN A WHILE BUT THEY NEVER UNDERSTAND THAT THEY BELONG TO THE SAME FAMILY. BUT ONCE THEY ARE INTRODUCED TO EACH OTHER, IN THE SURPRISE EMBRACE THEY LOOK SO COMFORTABLE TOGETHER THAT IT BECOMES ALMOST IMPOSSIBLE TO SEPARATE THEM. KALRA'S COLLAGE WORKS ARE LIKE THESE FAMILY MEMBERS INTRODUCED TO EACH OTHER IN A CROWDED HALL.

KALRA'S INTEREST IN CREATING COLLAGES COMES OUT FROM HIS PERSONAL EXPERIENCE AS A MAN WHO HAS DONNED MANY ROBES DURING HIS FORMATIVE YEARS. HE HAD PLAYED THE ROLE OF A PAVEMENT BOOK SELLER, CAR DEALER, RESTAURANT OWNER AND SOCIAL WORKER. OFTEN KALRA SAYS THAT HIS WORK IS LIKE A COLLAGE MADE OUT OF VERY DISPARATE THINGS, EACH OF WHICH LOOKS SO DIFFERENT AND INCONCEIVABLY ODD WITH THE OTHER ELEMENT. A PAVEMENT BOOK STALL SELLER COULD BECOME A WRITER; A CAR DEALER COULD BECOME A CAR COLLECTOR, A RESTAURANT OWNER COULD BECOME A GOOD CHEF. THAT IS THE WAY OUR LOGIC WORKS. BUT A MAGAZINE SELLER COULD BECOME A FORMULA ONE RACER; A CHEF COULD BE A GREAT SINGER. EXAMPLES ARE ABUNDANT IN HISTORY THAT MANY A SUCCESSFUL PEOPLE HAVE DONE ODD JOBS BEFORE THEY BECAME SUCCESSFUL ENTREPRENEURS. THE AGGREGATE OF THEIR LIFE EXPERIENCES HELP THEM TO CREATE THE FINAL PICTURE OF THEIR SUCCESSFUL LIVES AND IN A WAY THEIR LIVES ARE COLLAGES OF A LOT OF APPEAL. IN KALRA'S CASE, HE NEITHER DID EXCEL IN ANY OF HIS FORMER JOBS NOR DID HE BECOME A SUCCESSFUL ENTREPRENEUR. INSTEAD, HE BECAME AN ARTIST AND THE LIFE THAT HE CHOSE TO LIVE BECAME AN ANALYTICAL COLLAGE. THIS ASPECT OF VARIETY AND DIVERSITY EXISTS IN HIS WORKS AS WELL AS THE WAY HE CHOOSES TO DISPLAY THEM.

EACH YEAR, IN HIS SOLO SHOWS, KALRA HAS ATTEMPTED VISUAL COLLAGES. THEY LOOK LIKE ISLANDS OF MEANINGS IN AN OCEAN OF WORDS AND SYMBOLS. THIS DOES NOT MEAN THAT THE REST OF THE WORKS ARE MEANINGLESS. THEY ARE MEANINGFUL WHEN SEEN FROM THE VANTAGE AND GREEN POINT OF THIS ISLAND. IN A WAY, I COULD SAY THAT THESE COLLAGES ARE THE FOCAL POINTS AS WELL AS CLUES OF ENTRY TO THE GENERAL VISUAL FIELD OF KALRA'S AESTHETICS. THIS AFFINITY FOR COLLAGES COMES FROM HIS DAY TO DAY EXPERIENCES TOO. A QUICK VISIT AT HIS STUDIO WOULD PROVE THAT ONE HAS ENTERED A REALM OF VARIETY. AN ARTIST'S STUDIO CANNOT BE ABSOLUTELY CLEAN (THOUGH MANY ARTISTS TODAY PREFER TO KEEP THEIR WORK SPACES CLEAN AND ORGANIZED LIKE A CORPORATE MANAGER'S OFFICE ROOM AND DESK); KALRA'S STUDIO IS IN FACT MESSY. BUT LIKE ANY INTERESTING ARTIST'S STUDIO, THERE IS A METHODICAL MADNESS IN HIS STUDIO ALSO. AS A COLLECTOR OF THINGS, HE BRINGS MANY VARIETIES OF VIGNETTES FROM DIFFERENT PLACES AND LITERALLY LITTERS HIS STUDIO. THESE ARE THE THINGS ACCORDING TO HIM, WHICH GIVE MEANING AND LIFE TO THE STUDIO. ALSO HIS WORKS VARY IN SHAPES AND SPACES. THEY ARE SHAPE SHIFTERS AND SPACE SHIFTERS. THEY COME IN DIFFERENT SIZES. WHILE ONE OF THE WALLS DISPLAYS A HUGE CANVAS AND ITS WORK IN PROGRESS, ANOTHER WALL MUST BE A SERIES OF PORTRAITS DONE ON SMALL BOARDS AND NEATLY ARRANGED. THERE ARE REDS AND BLACKS LYING SPLATTERED ALL OVER, ONE COULD SEE WHITE AND BLUE SITTING PRETTY IN THEIR LARGE CONTAINERS. WHILE PALETTE KNIFE AND BROAD BRUSHES LOOK ABSOLUTELY TIRED AFTER A HARD DAY'S WORK, LITTLE PENS AND CRAYONS LOOK AS IF TAKING A NAP. TOGETHER, THEY MAKE A VISUAL TREAT, AN ALLADIN'S SHOP FEELING. A COLLAGE CAN COME OUT OR AN IDEA OF COLLAGE CAN TAKE SHAPE IN THAT SPACE OF THE ARTIST, AT ANY GIVEN TIME.

THIS EXHIBITION HAS A SERIES OF DRAWINGS, DONE IN HIS CONSPICUOUS UNAVOIDABLE STYLE OF THE REFERRED MASTER, ARE EXHIBITED IN COLLAGE FORMS. THEY ARE COLLAGES BECAUSE TOGETHER THEY MAKE SENSE; DISPLAYED SEPARATELY THEY LOOK MORE LIKE STUDIES FOR LARGER WORKS OR AS I MENTIONED EARLIER IN THIS ESSAY, VISUAL REGISTRATIONS THAT ARE NOT ALWAYS MEANT FOR PUBLIC VIEWING. BUT WHEN THEY ARE BROUGHT OUT FOR PUBLIC VIEWING THERE HAS TO BE LOGIC. THIS LOGIC CAN COME IN TWO DIFFERENT WAYS: ONE, THE WORKS COULD BE KEPT IN THEIR ORIGINAL LOCATION (IN SKETCHBOOKS OR UNFRAMED PAPERS) OR THEY COULD BE PRESENTED WITH A SUITABLE FOREWORD AND SEEN IN A FOLIO KIND OF PRESENTATION. SOMEHOW, KALRA AVOIDS BOTH THESE AND GOES FOR A COLLAGE PRESENTATION. THIS IS A PHYSICAL MANIPULATION OF SPACE THROUGH PICTORIAL FRAMES IN ORDER TO CREATE A NEW MEANING OUT OF DIFFERENT DRAWINGS. THEY ARE LIKE THE FRAMES OF A GRAPHIC NOVEL TAKEN OUT OF CONTEXT AND EXHIBITED. BUT LOOKING AT IT FOR LONGER DURATIONS WOULD EKE OUT MEANINGS THAT WOULD EVENTUALLY TAKE THE ONLOOKERS TO THE MIND OF THE ARTIST.

JOHNYML
MUMBAI
MARCH 2015



Painting: Oil on canvas, 40 x 40 inches, 2014



Painting: Oil on canvas, 40 x 40 inches, 2014





I believe in the “complete interlocking of image and paint” so that each movement of the brush on the canvas alters the shape and connotation of the image. My works are a result of unconscious choices and I tend not to have control of how the end result would look like. I feel paintings tend to be pointless if the paint itself were not eloquent. Francis Bacon said “I think of myself as a maker of images. The image matters more than the beauty of the paint ... I suppose

Vikash Kalra

Born: 27th July 1973, New Delhi
A Self Taught Artist

EXHIBITIONS

2016

Tribute to Picasso & Souza by Vikash – Solo show – August – Dhoomimal Art Centre.

Live interview , DDNational - Good Evening India -4 30pm Aug26 (Youtube link: <https://youtu.be/PleoERUJGE0>)

VIKASH KALRA- A TRIBUTE TO PABLO PICASSO & FRANCIZ NEWTON SOUZA/ Dhoomimal Art Centre. (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=958lrsQJMaE&t=1s>)

Short film on Art and spirituality - Speaker- Vikash Kalra (Youtube link: <https://youtu.be/cMFsYX-9x2w>)

AP'PRAA (LIMITLESS) – Public Art (Installation) 26 Sculptures – VR Bengaluru & VR Surat, Whitefield Art Collective & Art Chutney – February and April.

Short film on Sculptures “LIMITLESS “- by Vikash Kalra (Youtube link: <https://youtu.be/06kAJx3zINw>)

2015

Aparajita (Beti Bachao Beti Padhao) – Group Show – Voluntary Health Association of India – Visual Art Gallery, India Habitat Centre, New Delhi.

Tales from the Soul Marrow – Solo Show – April – Art Indus, New Delhi.

Short film on Tales from the Soul Marrow – (Youtube link: <https://youtu.be/3jarP3ihvvg>)

JOURNEYS – Solo show – January – Indian Art Fair, New Delhi – by Art 18|21, UK. The Gandhi Group show – January – Indian Art Fair, New Delhi – by Art Indus, New Delhi.

Short film on INDIA ART FAIR 2015 - Solo show JOURNEY by Vikash Kalra (Youtube link: <https://youtu.be/4uY-nleNam4>)

DDNational - Good Evening India - Vikash Kalra - 16th Jan 2015 (Youtube link: <https://youtu.be/yOV-DRqZGHU>)

Talk on Feminism in art share views with Geeti Sen (Writer, Cultural Historian, Critic, Editor) (Youtube link: <https://youtu.be/6x-QcUxE9sE>)

2014

Solo show in Indian Art Festival, 27th - 30th Nov 2014. Nehru Centre, Worli Mumbai.

THE ALCHEMIST - a monographic exhibition – Solo show – August 2014, Art and Aesthetic, Lado Sarai, New Delhi.

Four Walls – Exhibition of India's contemporary art – Taj Westend, Bangalore from 4th -13th April 2014, with Artchutney.

Group show at Art and Aesthetic "A Tribute to MASTERS & MASTERPIECES - History Revisited", 29th Jan - 28th Feb.

Group Show, Gallerie Nvya, The Winter Tale 2013. Sunday, December 15, 2013 to Monday, February 03, 2014.

Group show in DHOOMIMAL ART CENTRE January

2013

Solo Show in Indian Art Festival, 19-22 Dec. Nehru Centre, Bombay.

Group Show, Artchutney, Coimbatore on 23rd - 24th November, 2013.

Group Show, Voice on Art, "Centurion 2013" 9th Nov to 15th Nov, at Visual Art Gallery, IHC, New Delhi.

Group Show, Gallerie Nvya, 9th Anniversary Show "NAVA" Friday, September 06, 2013 to Thursday, November 07

Group Show, Art Chutney " Varicolored " The Taj West End, Bangalore. 14th July. Group Show, Gallerie Nvya, New Delhi, May 15, 2013 to July 27, 2013.

Angels of History, Solo Show, Art Konsult, Visual Art Gallery, IHC, New Delhi. Revelations-I,

The Pune Art Gallery, Pune. Modern & Contemporary Indian Art Auction, Art Chutney, Bangalore. India Art Fair 2013, Art Konsult, New Delhi.

2012

Art Bull, Autumn Auction.

Group Show, Art Bull, Lado Sarai, New Delhi.

United Art Fair, New Delhi.

Group Show, Surya Hotel, New Delhi.

Into The Void, Solo Show, Art Konsult. India Art Fair 2012, Art Konsult.

Group Show, Salar Jung Museum, Hyderabad.

The Dramatics of Diverse Interpretations/Perspectives, Group Show, Art Konsult.

Group Show, Arts of The Earth, Open Palm Court,

IHC. Short Film, Obsessions, The World of Vikash Kalra by Vinod Bhardwaj previewed at Art Film Festival, NGMA, New Delhi (Youtube link: www.youtube.com/watch?v=EM2a64YWdEY).

Short Film on Vikash Kalra, Dreams on Canvas previewed on Doordarshan (Youtube link: www.youtube.com/watch?v=8wBeDTFeCfc)

2011

Group Show, Lalit Kala Akademi, New Delhi.

Group Show, Arts of The Earth, Open Palm Court,

IHC. Autumn Auction, Artbull, New Delhi.

Museum Collection-3, Group Show, Art Konsult, Visual Art Gallery, IHC, New Delhi.

50.25.10 (50 Works, 25 Artist, 10 States) The Art Corridor, The Taj, by Art Chutney, Bangalore.

Solo Show – Nostalgia/Memory, Visual Art Gallery, IHC & Art Konsult, New Delhi.

Group Show, The Taj, Art Chutney, Bangalore.

2010

Solo Show - The Artist The Man-IV, Open Palm Court, IHC, New Delhi.

2009

Group Show, Marangar Fort, Rajasthan.

Vivid Hues, Epicentre, Gurgaon & IHC, New Delhi.

Solo Show - The Artist The Man-III, India Habitat Centre, New Delhi.

Group Show, Rooh - The Journey Within, VAG, IHC, New Delhi.

Line of Control, Online Show with www.rangartgallery.com

2008

Lalit Kala Akademi, New Delhi.

Palm Court, India Habitat Centre, New Delhi.

Travancore Art Gallery, New Delhi.

Solo - The Artist The Man-II, VAG, India Habitat Centre, New Delhi.

Chehare (Faces) Online Show with www.rangartgallery.com

2007

60 Years of Independence, Rashtrapati Bhawan, New Delhi.

Group Show, VAG, IHC, New Delhi.

Solo Show The Artist The Man, Palm Court, IHC, New Delhi.

Lalit Kala Akademi, New Delhi.

Lakhotia Art Gallery, New Delhi.

Rabindra Bhavan, New Delhi.

2006

Triveni Gallery, New Delhi.

Visual Art Gallery, IHC, New Delhi.

Palm Court, IHC, New Delhi.

Solo Show - Chehare (Faces) Rang Art Gallery, Delhi.

2005

Lalit Kala Akademi, New Delhi.

Triveni Gallery, New Delhi. Open Palm Court, IHC, New Delhi.

COLLECTION

Many art connoisseur in India and abroad.

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