



**EDGE Art konsult**  
THE ART GALLERY FOR CONTEMPORARY INDIAN ART

F-213 B, First Floor, Lado Sarai, New Delhi-110030  
Ph: +91-11-65683083, E: info@artkonsultindia.com

[www.artkonsult.com](http://www.artkonsult.com)







## RAW EXPRESSIONISM

---

VIKASH KALRA

Drawings | Paintings | Sculptures

TO PHYSICALLY VIEW ANY WORK'S  
IN THE CATALOGUE,  
PLEASE CALL NEELAM MALHOTRA @ 9811436878

समुद्र की लहरें आकर टकरा रही हैं, समुद्र के तट से हजारों लाखों वर्षों से लहरे चली आती हैं, टकराती हैं लौट जाती हैं। फिर आती हैं टकराती हैं और लौट जाती हैं। जीवन भी हजारों वर्षों से अनंत-अनंत लहरों से टकरा कर उठती और गिरती हैं। जरूर जीवन कहीं उठना चाहता है वह समुद्र की लहरें, जीवन की ये लहरें कहीं ऊपर पहुँचना चाहती है, लेकिन किनारे से टकराती हैं और नष्ट हो जाती हैं फिर नई लहरें आती हैं टकराती हैं और नष्ट हो जाती हैं। यह जीवन का सागर इतने अरबों सालों से टकरा रहा है संघर्ष ले रहा है रोज उठता है गिर जाता है, क्या होगा इसके पीछे का कारण ?

जरूर इसके पीछे कोई बड़ी ऊँचाई छूने का प्रयास चल रहा है। जरूर इसके पीछे कुछ और गहराई जानने का प्रयोजन चल रहा है। जरूर जीवन की प्रक्रिया के पीछे कुछ और महान जीवन पैदा करने का प्रयास चल रहा है।

विकाश

The waves of the ocean hit the shores dash & fall, since a thousand years endlessly, again and again they rise and crash and fall retreating and approaching again crashing and retreating again just like life for thousands of years has been rising and falling. The desire is doubtlessly to rise up, reach a goal but they crash against the cliffs and are destroyed forever newer waves then reinstate their place and they too crash against the cliffs only to be destroyed the ocean of life has been for millions of years trying to rise above, struggling, and crashing everyday, what must be the motive behind this?

It must be a conspiracy to rise and reach a new level of consciousness must be a scheme to search the deepest depths there must exist in this cycle of existence an effort to create elevated lives.

Vikash

हाथ पकड़े विश्वास का,  
चल रहा हूँ।  
पहुँच पाऊँगा  
मंजिल पर ?  
कि भटकता ही रहूँगा,  
आज क्या है ?  
दुख: की लम्बी कहानी  
कल जाने  
क्या लिये  
बैठा हुआ हो.....  
दर्द भी  
या चैन भी कुछ  
शांति भी कुछ  
प्रेम भी कुछ  
सरलता भी  
हर रोज यह कहता हूँ कि  
रुक जाओ  
थोड़ा आराम कर लो  
मगर.....

दिन खत्म हो रहा है  
रात पास आ रही है  
मंजिल का पता नहीं  
चल रहा हूँ  
हाथ पकड़ कर विश्वास का...

विकाश

I hold on to faith and proceed  
Will I reach my goal or wander?  
What is today?  
A long tale of sorrow  
Tomorrow what shall I hold as I sit  
Pain or some solace  
Some peace  
Some love  
Some simplicity  
Stop a bit, rest a little I say everyday  
But.....  
The day ends  
Destination out of sight  
Night approaches  
I go on  
Holding on to faith.....

Vikash



## 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 conducive 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 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



Oil on Canvas, 40" x 40"

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



Oil on Canvas, 30" x 60"

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 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.



Oil on Canvas, 24" x 48"

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 Kalra'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 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



Oil on Canvas, 24" x 48"



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 sarcasm 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 Giacometti 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



Oil on Canvas, 24" x 48"



Paintings





Acrylic on Canvas ♦ 78" x 60" ♦ 2013

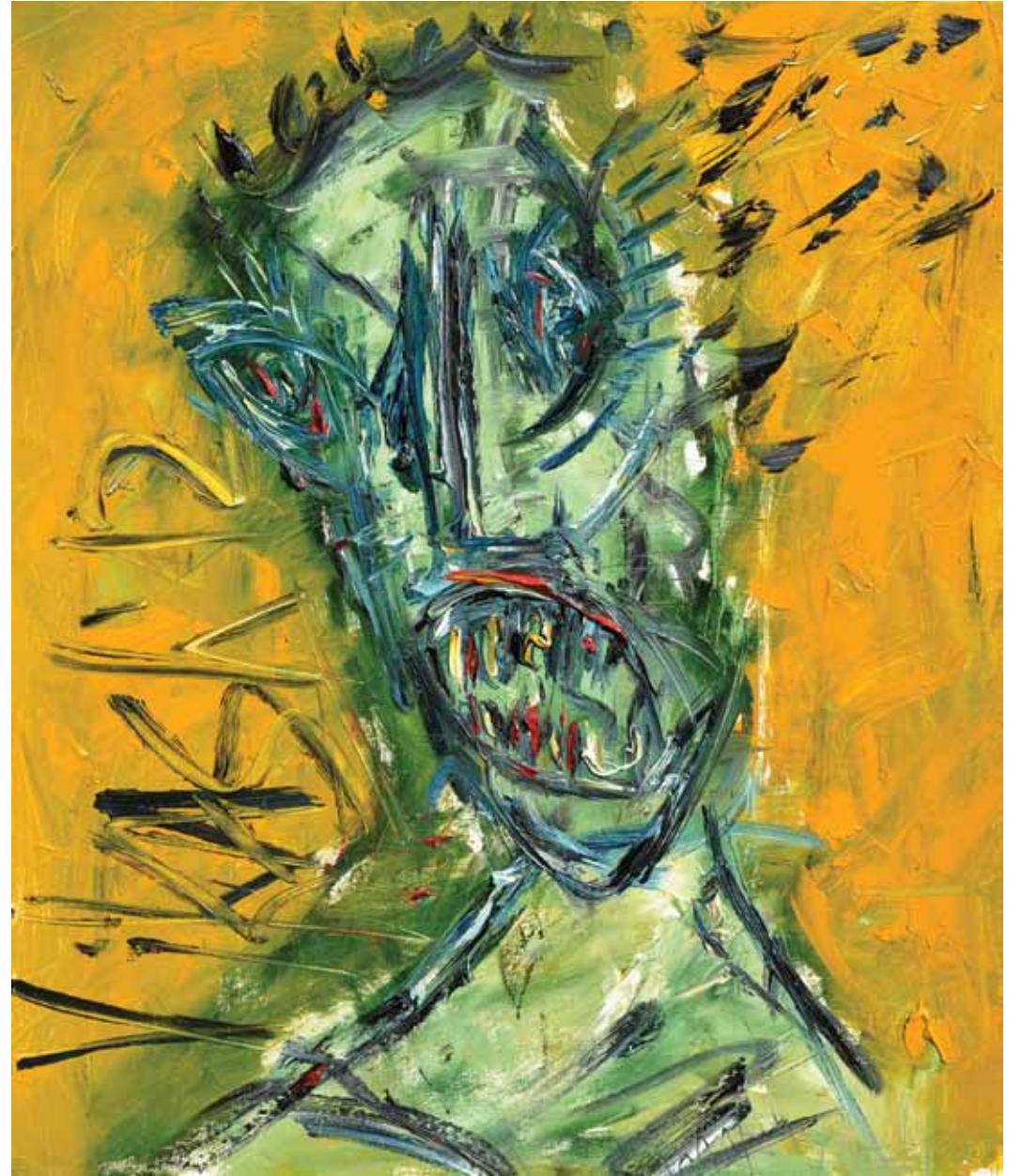


Acrylic on Canvas ♦ 78" x 60" ♦ 2013





Oil on Canvas ♦ 48" x 60" ♦ 2012



Oil on Canvas ♦ 36" x 30" ♦ 2012



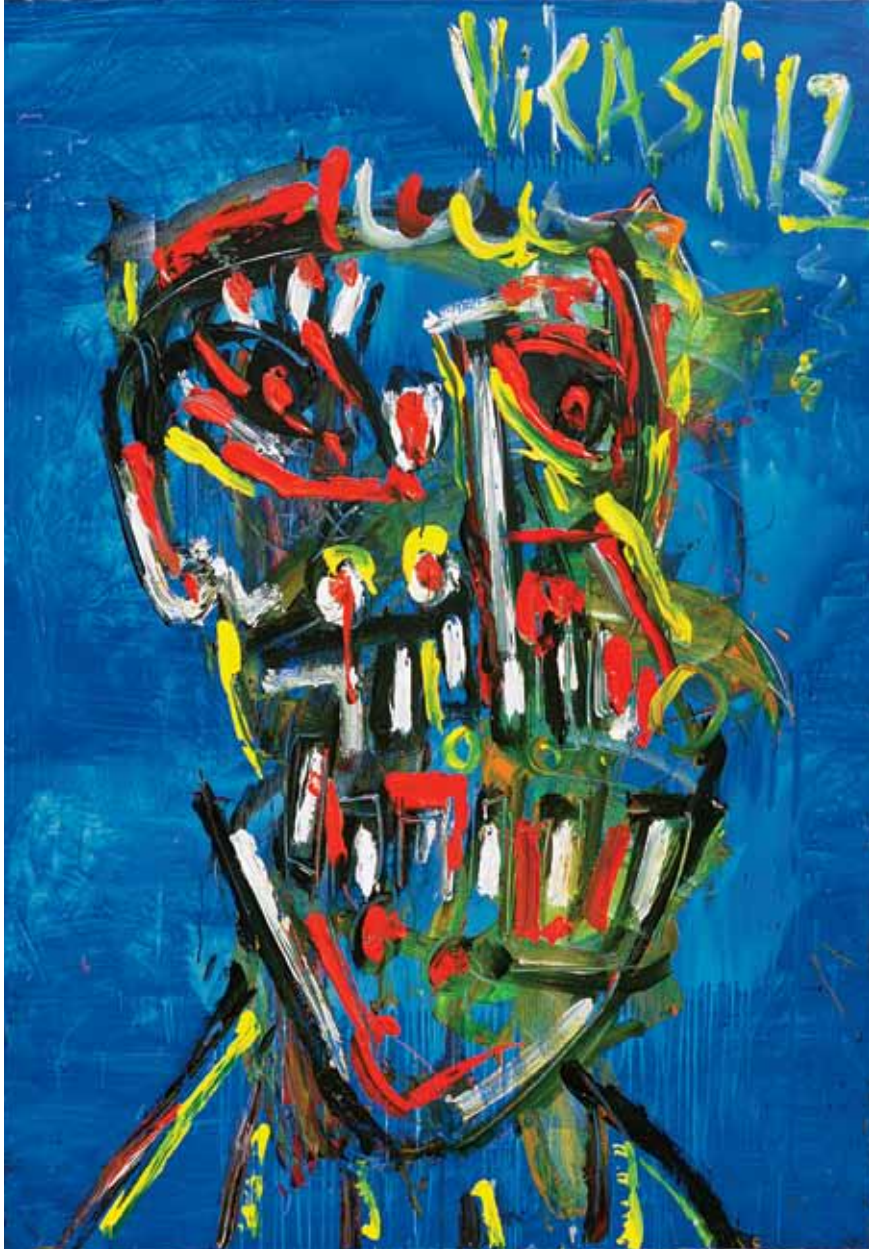


Oil on Canvas ♦ 48" x 36" ♦ 2012



Oil on Canvas ♦ 40" x 30" ♦ 2012





Acrylic on Canvas ♦ 54" x 42" ♦ 2012

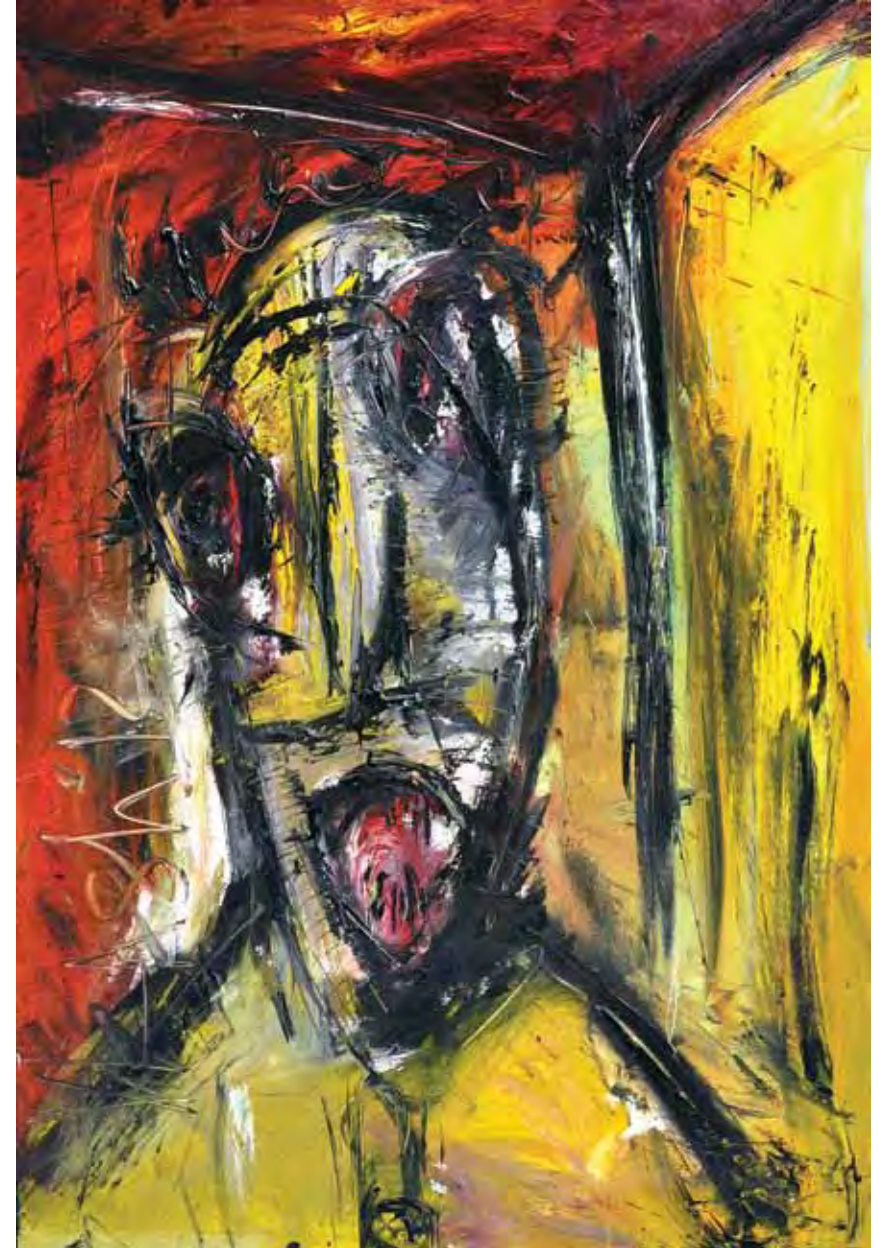


Acrylic on Canvas ♦ 50" x 36" ♦ 2012





Oil on Canvas ♦ 50" x 36" ♦ 2012



Oil on Canvas ♦ 58" x 39" ♦ 2012





Oil on Canvas ♦ 60" x 40" ♦ 2012



Oil on Canvas ♦ 60" x 40" ♦ 2012





Oil on Canvas ♦ 40" x 40" ♦ 2012

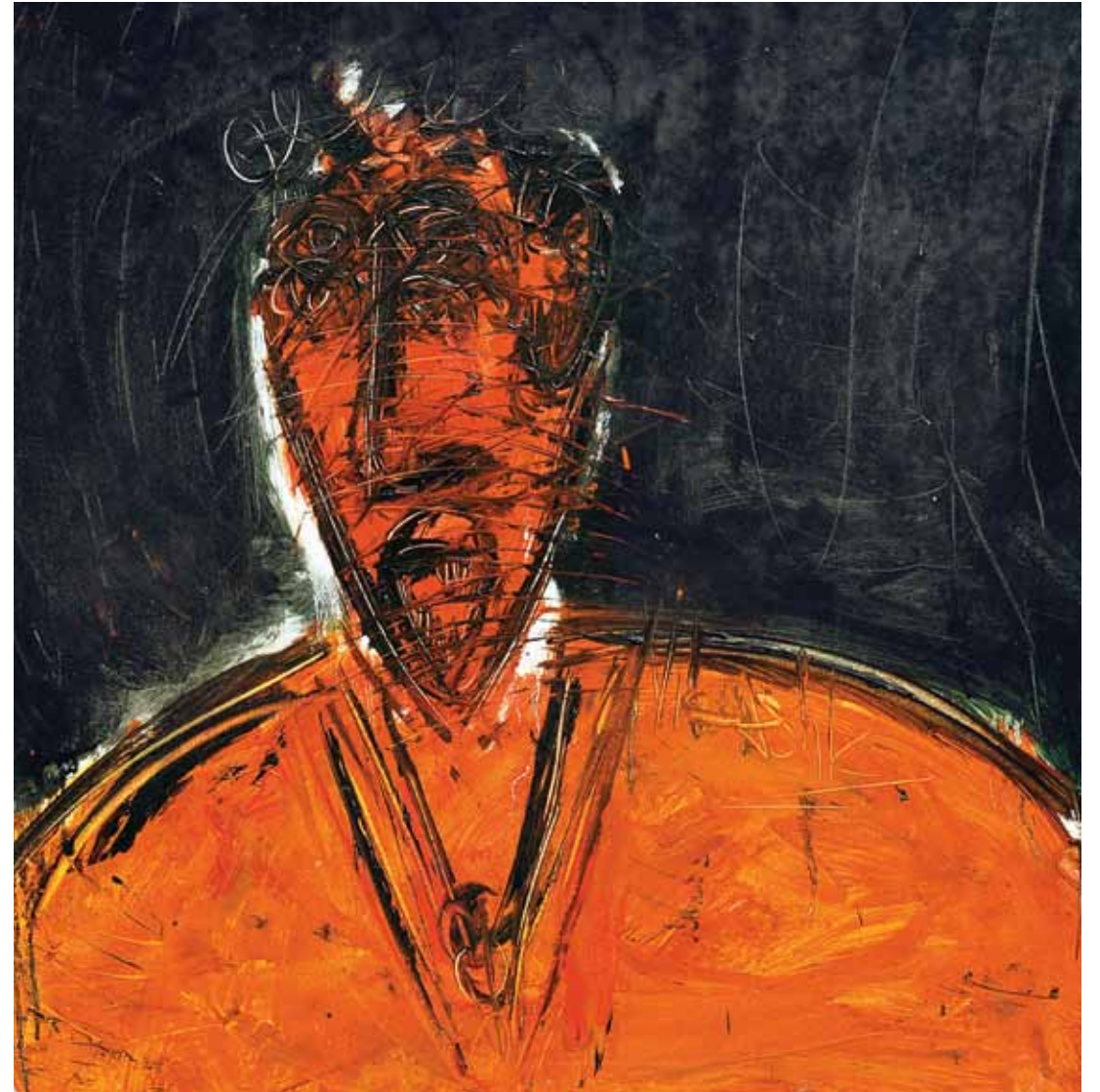


Oil on Canvas ♦ 40" x 40" ♦ 2012





Oil on Canvas ♦ 50" x 36" ♦ 2012



Oil on Canvas ♦ 40" x 40" ♦ 2012





Oil on Canvas ♦ 72" x 48" ♦ 2012



Oil on Canvas ♦ 60" x 78" ♦ 2012





Oil on Canvas ♦ 36" x 48" ♦ 2012



Oil on Canvas ♦ 36" x 48" ♦ 2012





Oil on Canvas ♦ 48" x 84" ♦ 2012



Oil on Canvas ♦ 48" x 84" ♦ 2012





Oil on Canvas ♦ 48" x 36" ♦ 2012



Oil on Canvas ♦ 48" x 36" ♦ 2012





Oil on Canvas ♦ 36" x 96" ♦ 2012





Oil on Board ♦ 21" x 37" ♦ 2012



Oil on Canvas ♦ 30" x 48" ♦ 2013



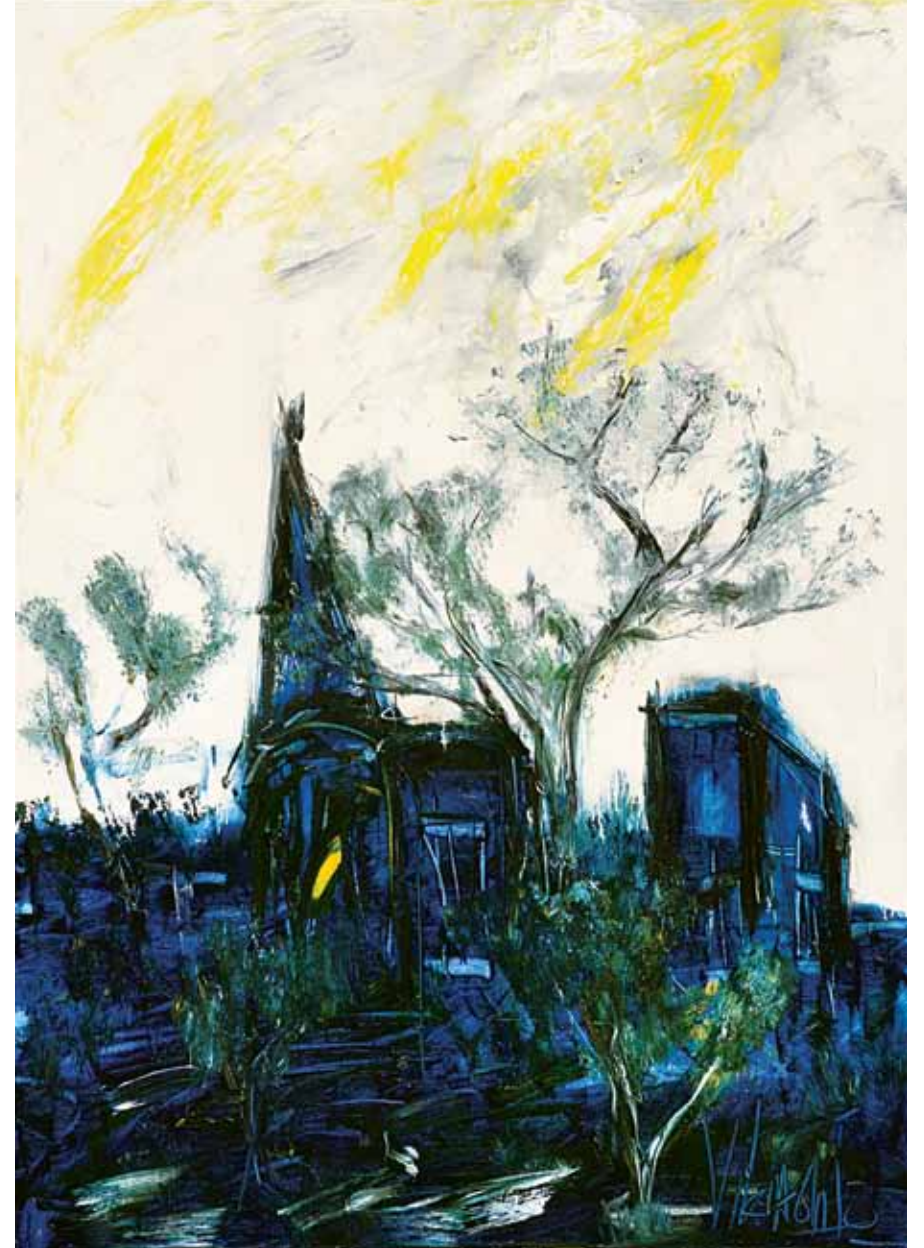


Oil on Canvas ♦ 36" x 96" ♦ 2012





Oil on Canvas ♦ 48" x 48" ♦ 2012



Oil on Canvas ♦ 50" x 36" ♦ 2012





Oil on Canvas ♦ 60" x 156" ♦ 2012





Acrylic on Canvas ♦ 73" x 32" ♦ 2012



Sculptures



## Aesthetic empiricism with the truth

Internally driven, and emotionally charged, Kalra's art could be described as "dark yet uplifting simultaneously". His depictions of the human figure veer between stark isolation and collective joy.

Being a self-taught artist, Kalra has initially chosen the canvas as a medium of his expression. Remaining out of the prototype of any academic training Kalra's art is free spirited and an impulsive expressionist. His works carry manifestations of a child-like expressions and yet a mastery of its representation and inspired by grownup themes of life. After accomplishing over his creative thrust of painting the artist has experimented with the medium of sculpture in fiberglass. The distorted geometry of human anatomy is intact in his three dimensional figures also that indicates various nuances which go like turbulence within a common man.

Kalra is pretty confident and optimistic who wants to make people visualize the truth through his distorted anatomical representations. His expressions are candid and are a reflection of his quirky self that may seem sometimes provocative which ignites contemplation within the viewers.

His recent body of works comprise of faces along with some figurine representations bestow an array of assorted feelings which may imply joy, ecstasy, mystification, havoc simultaneously. It may also suggest the artist's incessant process of exploration. The onlooker can sometimes get perplexed with the artist's mental dogma. They instigate viewers to quiz the artistic talent. 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.

Kalra's recent relief sculptures in fiber glass narrate instances or sometimes apparently stories but whatsoever they challenge our ordinary concept of beauty. He does not work to make his works aesthetically pleasant but they have the sway to drag the viewers to understand the notion of reality inherent in the artistic creation. His human forms are sometimes simplified to a point of abstraction, rough body and expressively modeled head but whatsoever the emotional intensity of these works and of his oeuvre taken as a whole- is testimony enough that compassion has been an integral part of his subjects. His artistic vision is not changing as per the market rather he tries to spell out the dictum he wants to put through his works.

The subjects of his works come from the society he live in, the people he interacts with and the perception he perceives in his daily life. These works offer a sense of passion, anguish and sentiment artist senses in the pleasant looking creatures of this artificial social setup. The uneven anatomy of the figures makes his work more fascinating. We can map the artistic journey of last few years of this artist and can notice the fact that the artist has tangible confidence in his artistic skill and creativity.

His contemporaneity lies in the choice of themes that stresses on human behavior from his surrounding that truly evoke an impression on the mind and soul of the onlooker. The new creation of these fiberglass sculptures is an entire package portraying the artist's internal journey with creativity that he has put forth in varied size, forms, colours and composition to offer a visual attention as well as delight to its spectator.

Pranamita Borgohain  
Art Historian based in Delhi



Fibre ♦ 32" x 13" x 10"





Fibre ♦ 28" x 15" x 12"



Fibre ♦ 34" x 18" x 14"





Fibre ♦ 35" x 22" x 19"



Fibre ♦ 34" x 19" x 12"





Fibre ♦ 37" x 15" x 28"



Fibre ♦ 42" x 18" x 12"





Fibre ♦ 43" x 15" x 12"



Fibre ♦ 31" x 14" x 10"





Fibre ♦ 82" x 12" x 30"



Fibre ♦ 77" x 34" x 12"





Fibre ♦ 31" x 16" x 9"

Fibre ♦ 32" x 13" x 10"



Fibre ♦ 38" x 12" x 10"





Fibre ♦ 21" x 28" x 27" each (10 pieces)





Fibre ♦ 32" x 16" x 7"



Fibre ♦ 31" x 15" x 8"





Left to right  
Fibre ♦ 31" x 15" x 8"  
Fibre ♦ 29" x 11" x 12"  
Fibre ♦ 30" x 13" x 8"



Chemicals



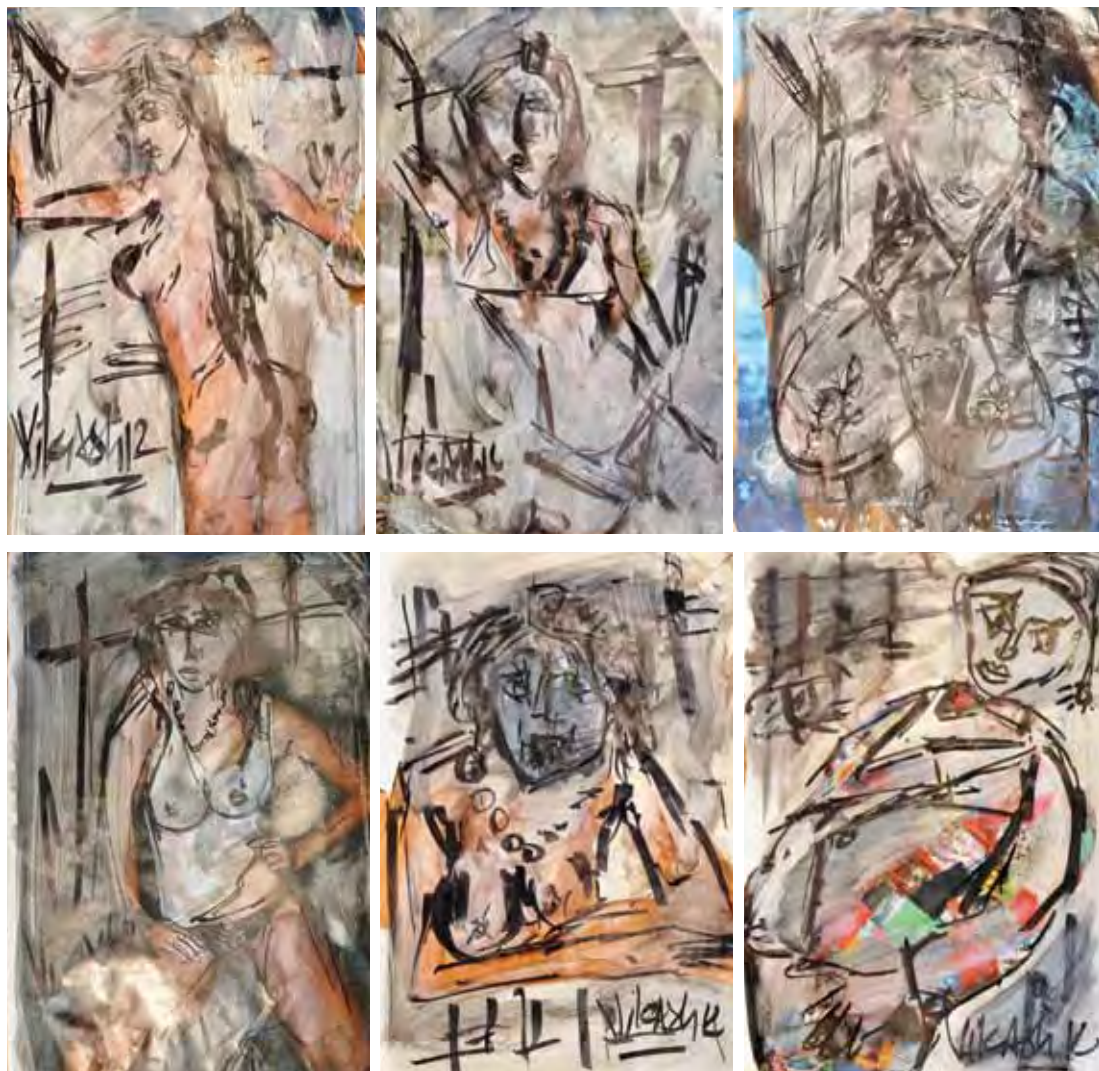


Chemical on Paper ♦ 11" x 8" ♦ 2012

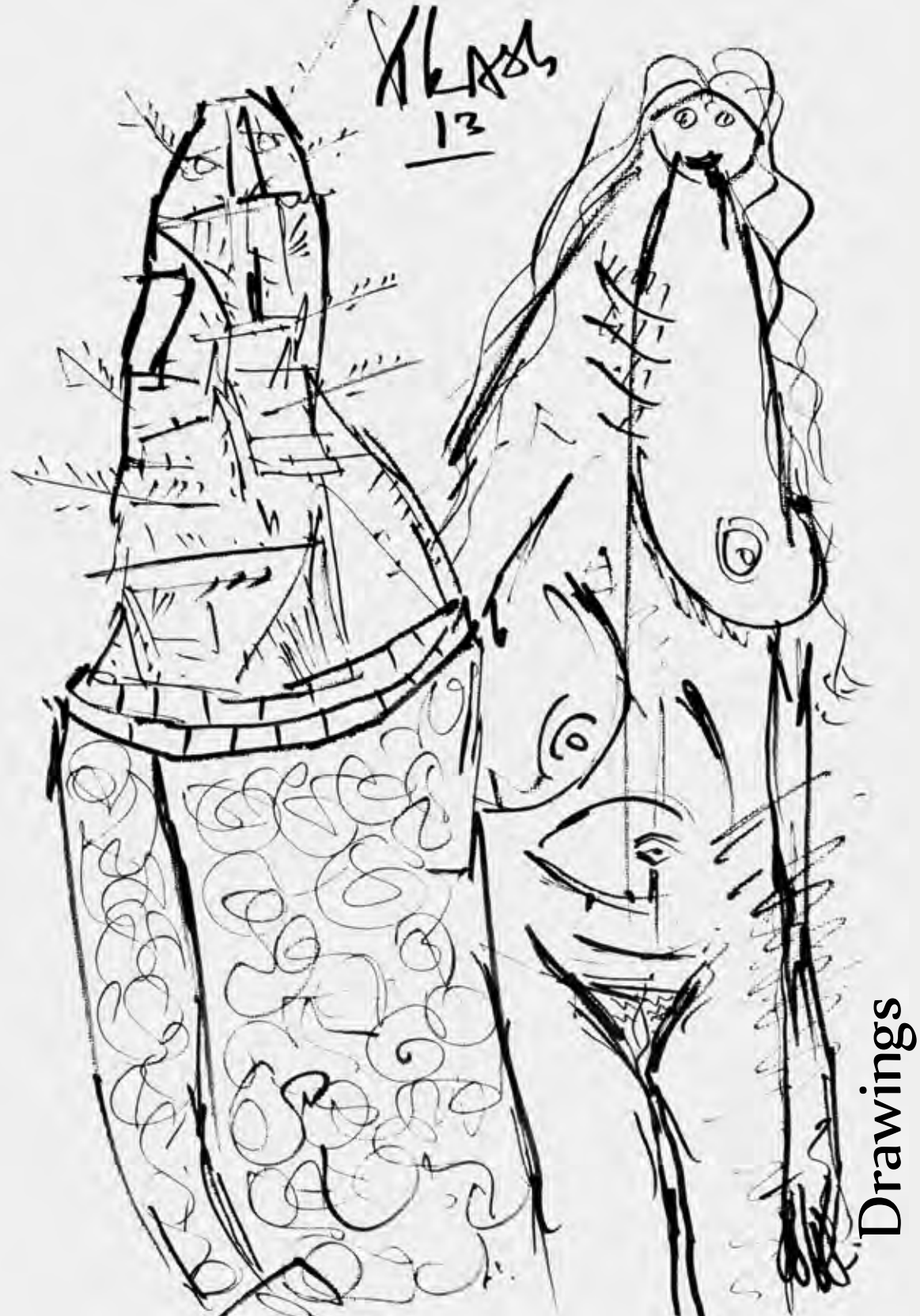


Chemical on Paper ♦ 11" x 8" ♦ 2012 Each





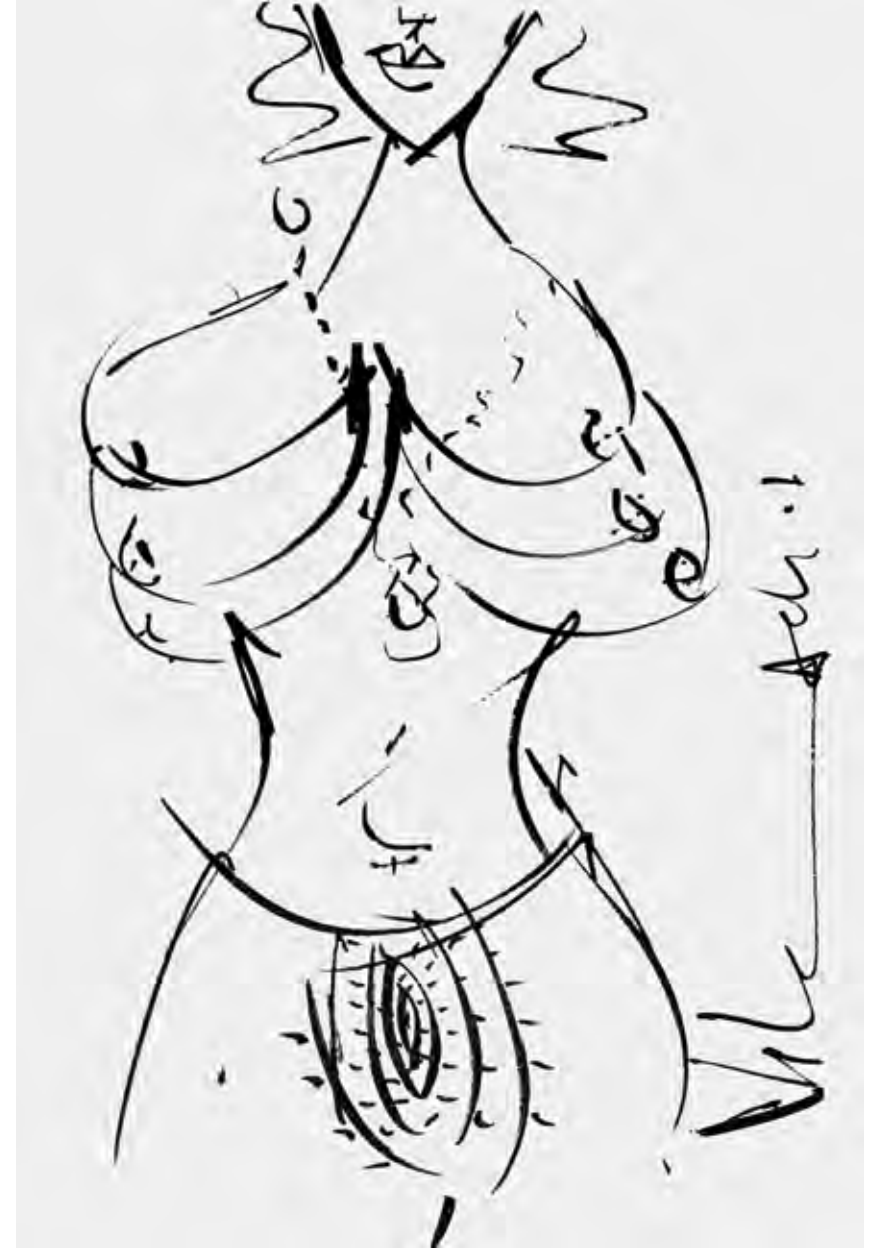
Chemical on Paper ♦ 11" x 8" ♦ 2012 Each







Pen & Ink on Paper ♦ 10.5" x 8" ♦ 2012



Pen & Ink on Paper ♦ 14" x 10" ♦ 2013





Pen & Ink on Paper ♦ 14" x 10" ♦ 2013



Pen & Ink on Paper ♦ 14" x 10" ♦ 2013





Pen & Ink on Paper ♦ 10" x 14" ♦ 2013



Pen & Ink on Paper ♦ 10" x 14" ♦ 2013





Pen & Ink on Paper ♦ 10" x 14" ♦ 2013



Pen & Ink on Paper ♦ 10" x 14" ♦ 2013



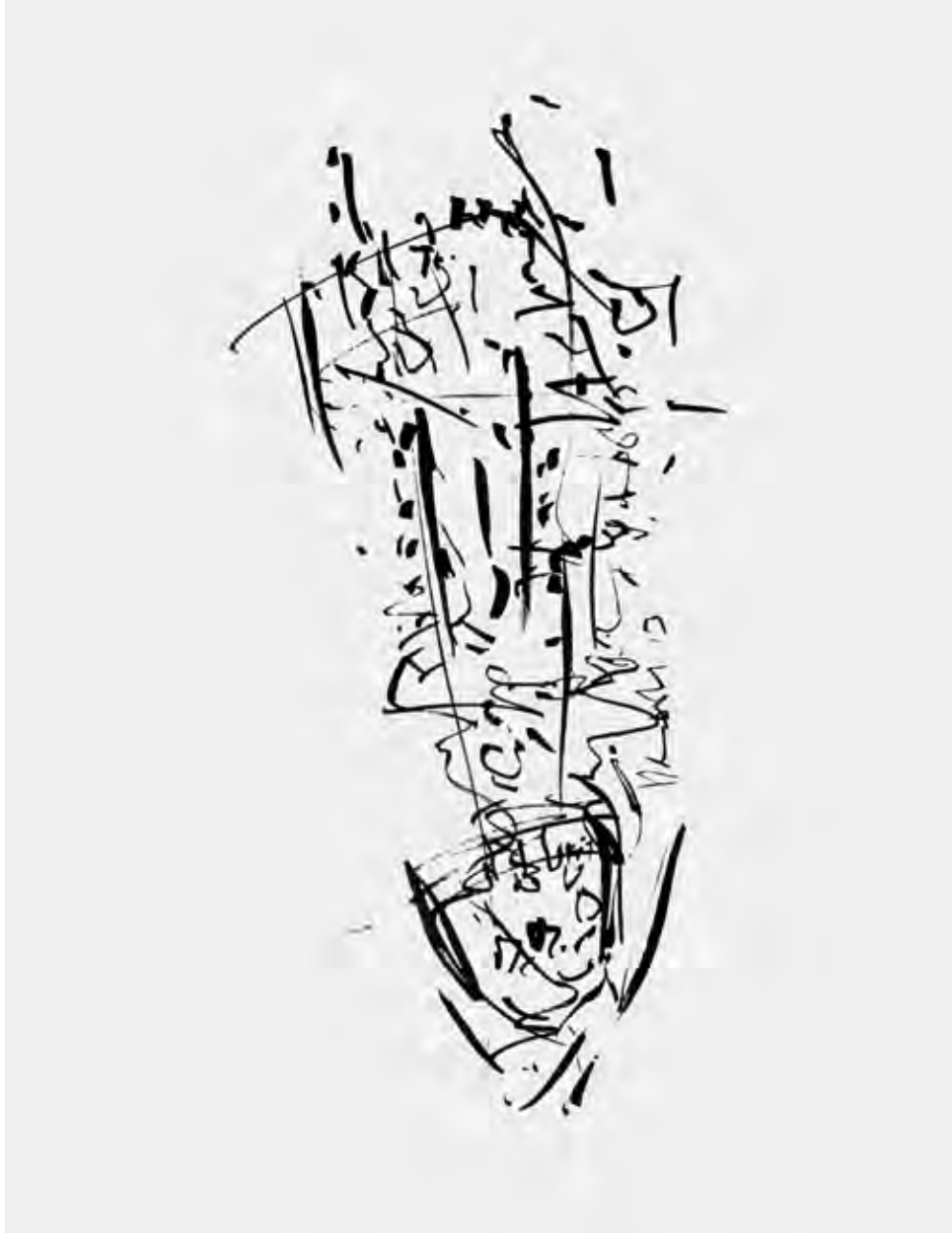


Pen & Ink on Paper ♦ 10" x 15" ♦ 2013



Pen & Ink on Paper ♦ 14" x 20" ♦ 2013





Pen & Ink on Paper ♦ 18.5" x 13" ♦ 2013



Pen & Ink on Paper ♦ 18.5" x 13" ♦ 2013





Pen & Ink on Paper ♦ 18.5" x 13" ♦ 2013



Pen & Ink on Paper ♦ 20" x 14" ♦ 2013





Pen & Ink on Paper ♦ 18.5" x 13" ♦ 2013 Each



Pen & Ink on Paper ♦ 20" x 14" ♦ 2013 Each





Pen & Ink on Paper ♦ 18.5" x 13" ♦ 2013 Each



Pen & Ink on Paper ♦ 20" x 14" ♦ 2013 Each



## 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 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 aesthetic 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 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 their 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 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

## 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 orange, 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

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

## 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 dabbling 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.



## 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 24<sup>th</sup> – 28<sup>th</sup> 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





## Vikash Kalra

Born : 27th July 1973

Place of Birth: New Delhi

Qualification: Graduate From Delhi University, A Self Taught Artist

### EXHIBITIONS

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

Group Show, Group Show

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](http://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](http://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](http://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  
Chehere (Faces) Online Show with [www.rangartgallery.com](http://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

COLLECTIONS

Hero Corporate Services Ltd.  
Mr Neville Tuli, Osians, India  
Mr. Tarun Vadehra (Vadehra Arts & Interiors)  
Omaxe Group Headquarters, New Delhi  
Prabhat NGO, New Delhi  
Rang Art Gallery, New Delhi  
Indian Railways, New Delhi  
Art Konsult Gallery, New Delhi  
Mandira Bedi, New Delhi

and many art connoisseur in India and abroad.



© Published: Art Konsult, 2013

Text : Johny ML, Vikash Nand Kumar, Pranamita Borgohain, Trupthi Basavaraj

Design & Photography : Prashanta Seal

Printed at Archana, [www.archanapress.com](http://www.archanapress.com)

All rights are reserved under international copyright conventions. No part of this catalogue may be reproduced or utilised in any form or by any means, electronic or mechanical, including photocopying, recording or by any information storage and retrieval system, without prior permission in writing from the publisher.