



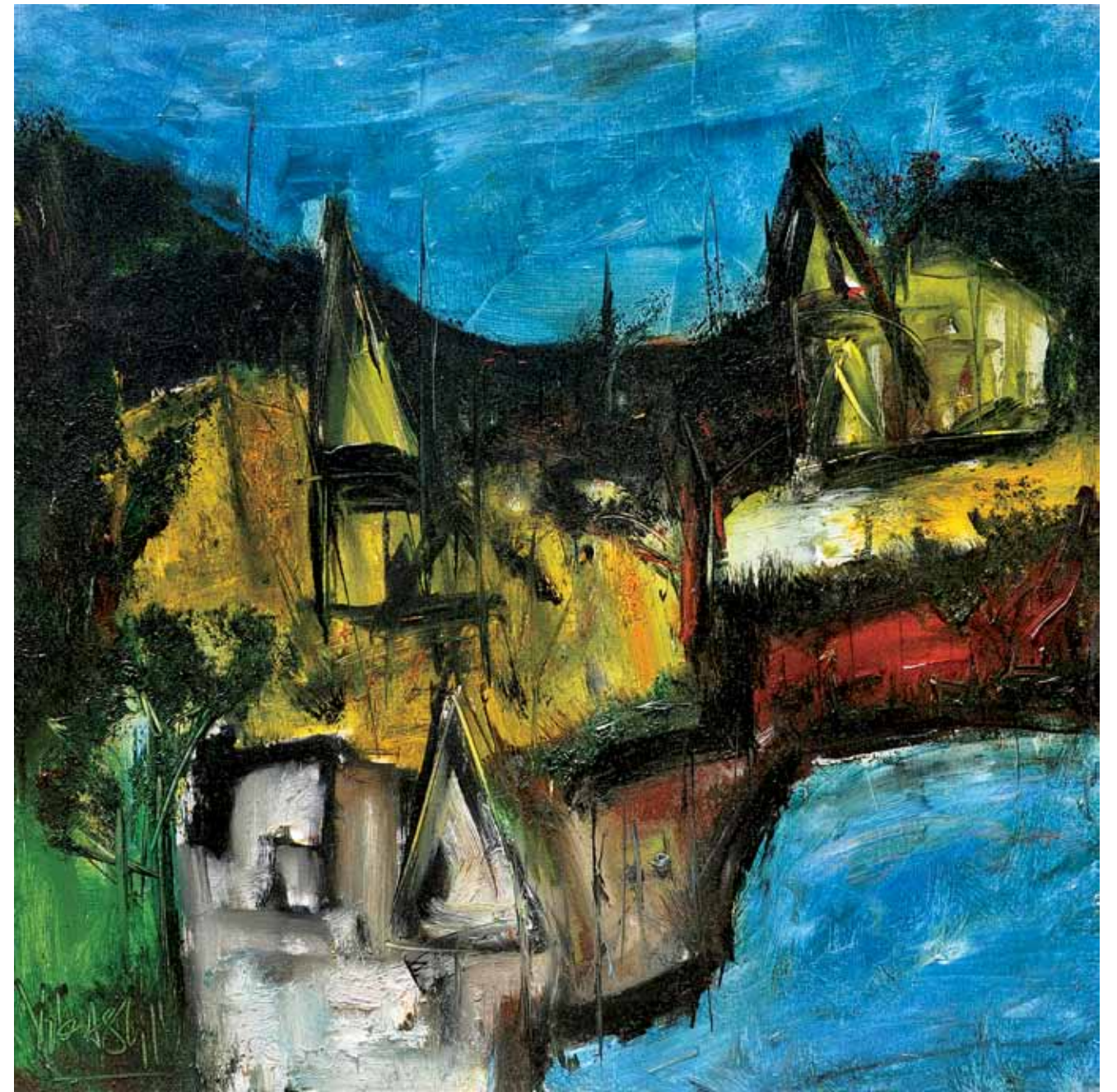
THE ALCHEMIST

VIKASH KALRA



THE ALCHEMIST
a monographic exhibition by VIKASH KALRA

'Mindscape' Series | Oil on Canvas | 30 x 30 inches | 2014





'Mindscape' Series | Oil on Canvas | 20 x 16 inches | 2014

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 allurements of landscapes and painting landscapes

gives them a sort of freedom that they do not otherwise get from their abstract or figurative works. 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 photoshopping of experiences and images? The experiences of the contemporary are set up in the mind of the 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 absencing 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



'Mindscape' Series | Oil on Canvas | 24 x 72 inches | 2014

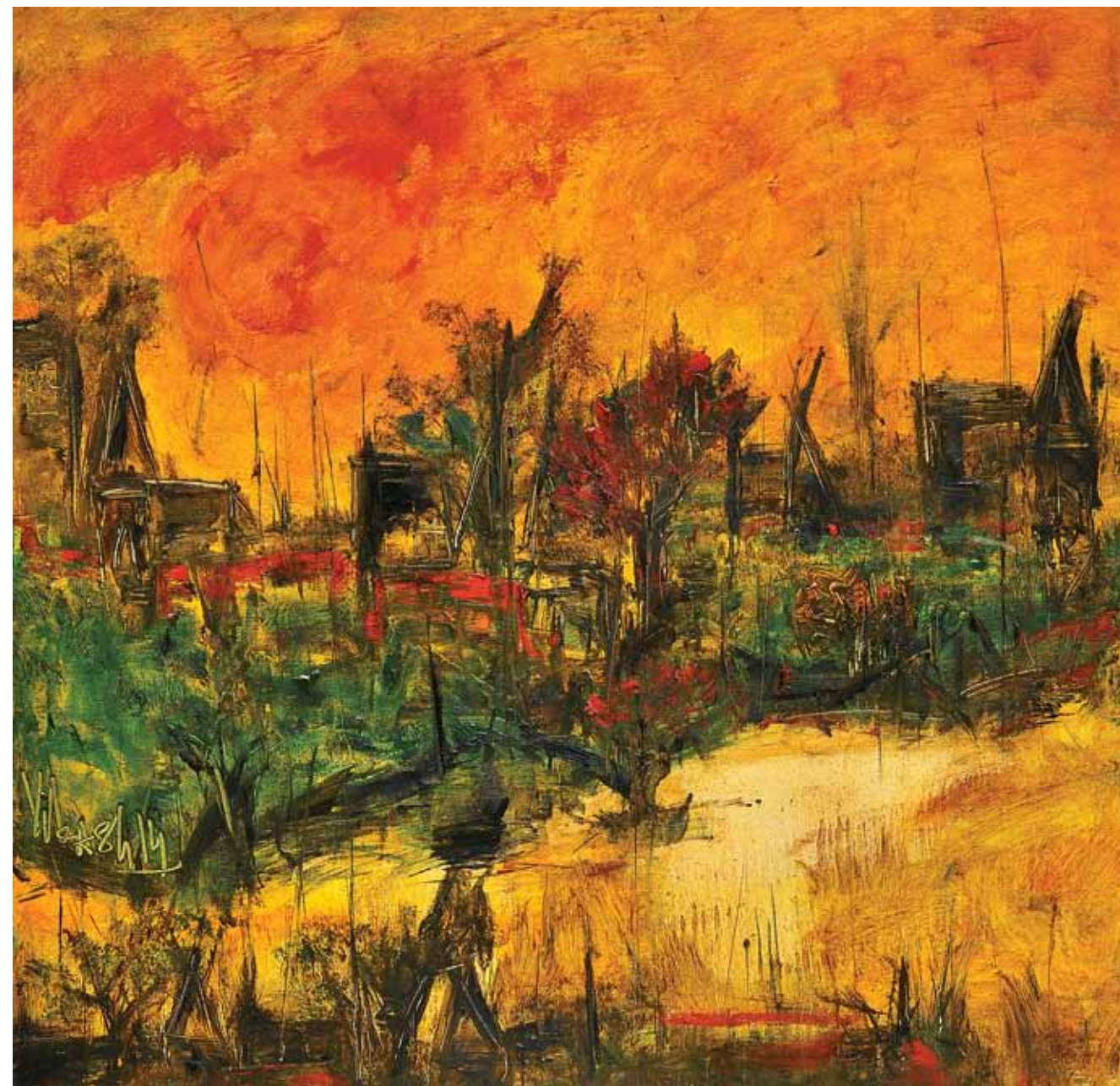
'Mindscape' Series | Oil on Canvas | 45 x 45 inches | 2014





'Mindscape' Series | Oil on Canvas | 24 x 72 inches | 2014

'Mindscape' Series | Oil on Canvas | 45 x 45 inches | 2014





'Mindscape' Series | Oil on Canvas | 12 x 72 inches | 2014

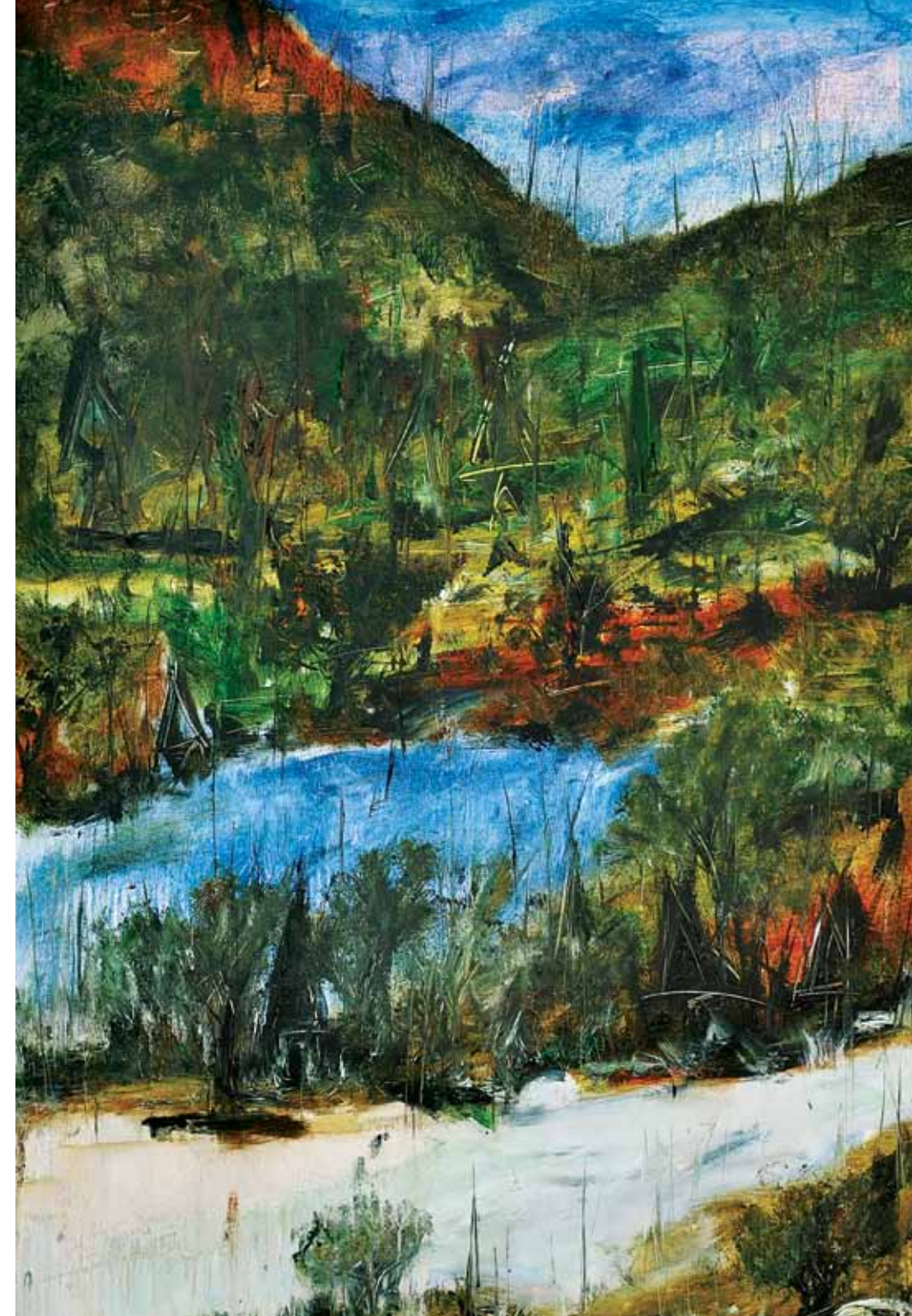


'Mindscape' Series | Oil on Canvas | 66 x 162 inches (Triptych) | 2013

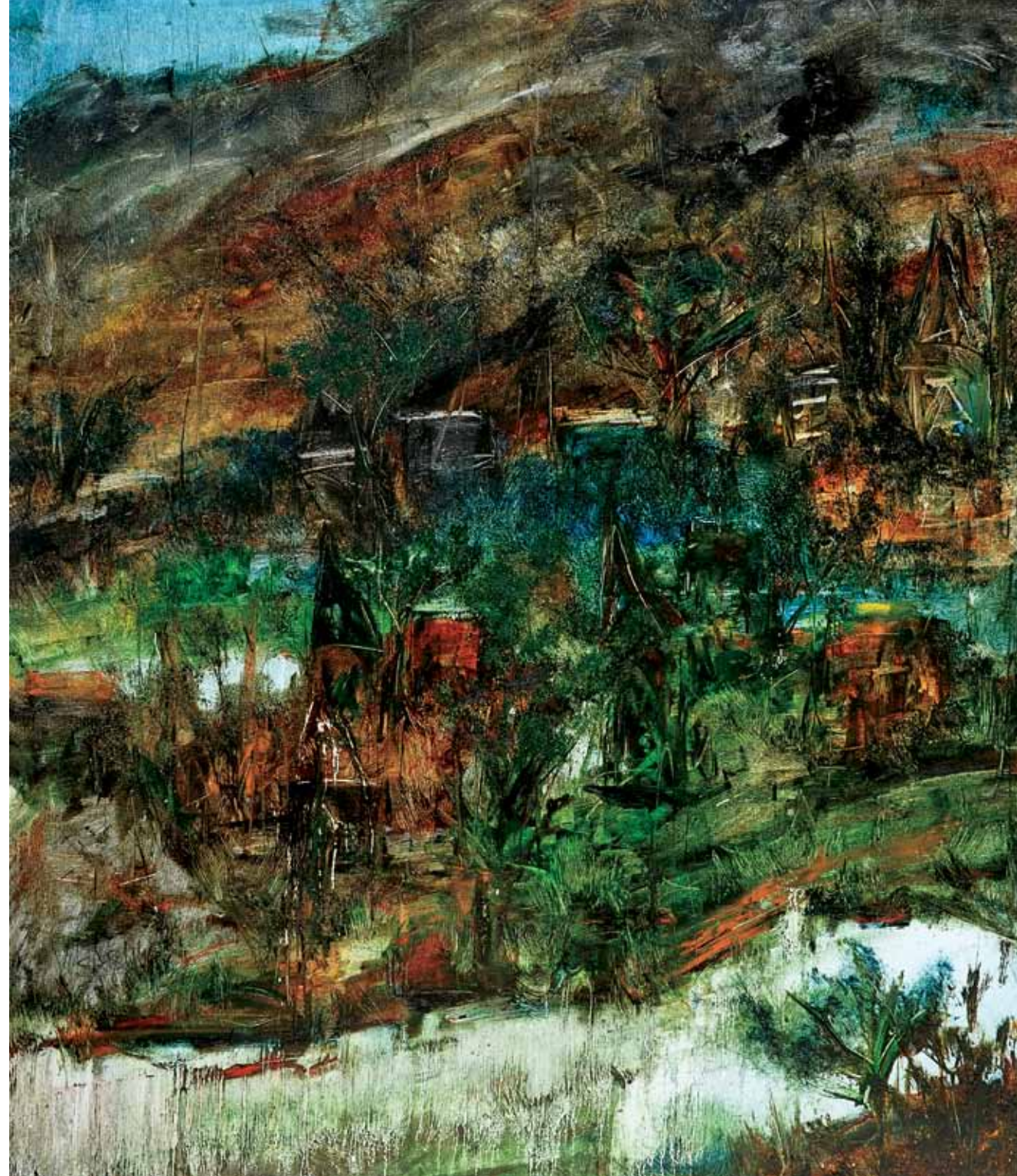


'Mindscape' Series | Oil on Canvas | 24 x 72 inches | 2014

'Mindscape' Series | Oil on Canvas | 60 x 40 inches | 2014



'Mindscape' Series | Oil on Canvas | 58.5 x 47 inches | 2014



'Mindscape' Series | Oil on Canvas | 30 x 30 inches | 2014





'Mindscape' Series | Oil on Canvas | 24 x 24 inches | 2014

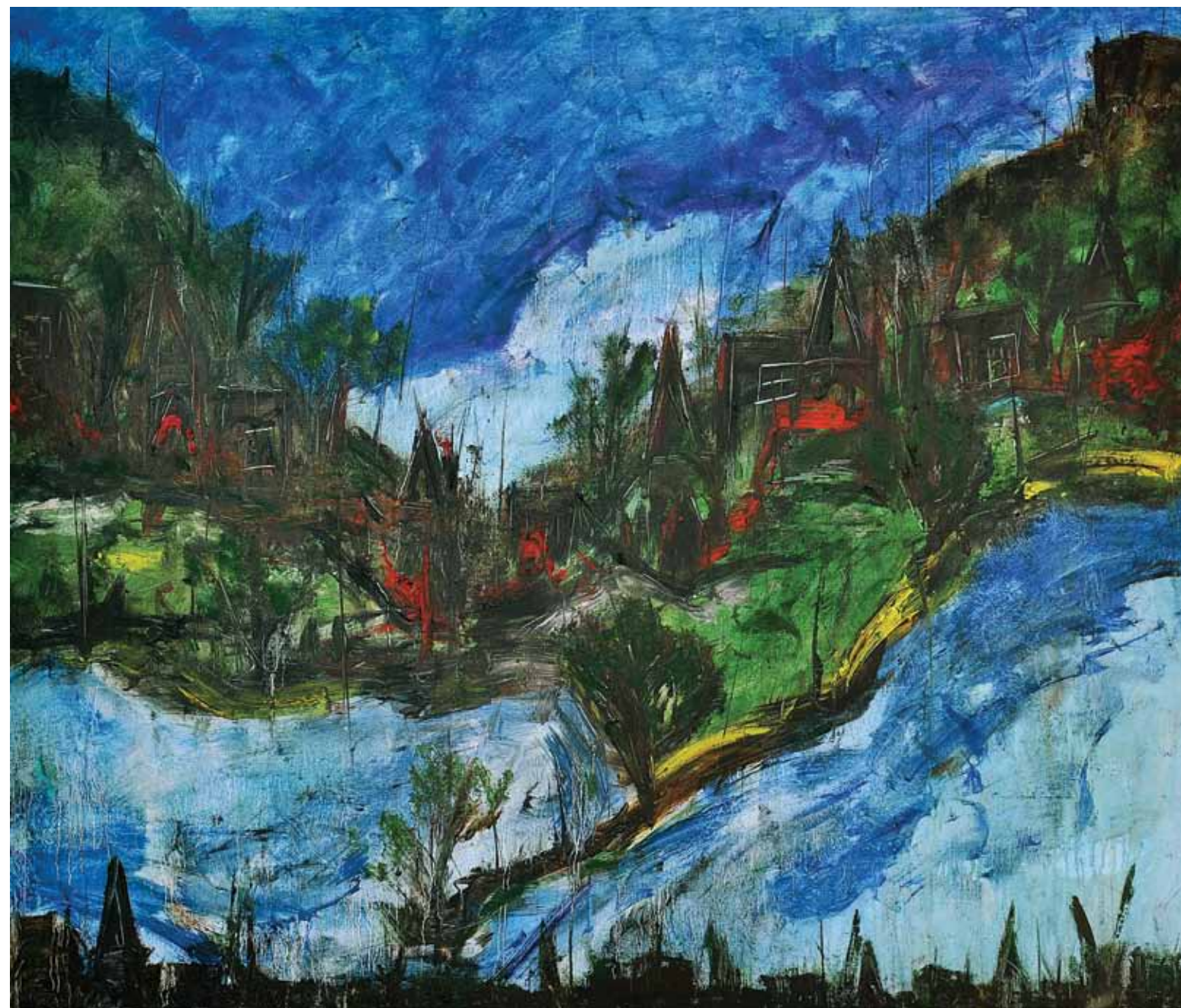


'Mindscape' Series | Oil on Canvas | 24 x 24 inches | 2014

'Mindscape' Series | Oil on Canvas | 48 x 36 inches | 2014



'Mindscape' Series | Oil on Canvas | 60 x 72 inches | 2014



'Mindscape' Series | Acrylic on Paper | 22 x 30 inches | 2014



'Mindscape' Series | Acrylic on Paper | 22 x 30 inches | 2014



एक जीवन - चल मीठे पानी की तरह, एक जीवन - चल ठंडी हवा की तरह
एक जीवन - चल मधुर संगीत की तरह, जीवन एक सोच मत...

विकाश



Vikash Kalra

Born : 27th July 1973; New Delhi, India

EXHIBITIONS

2014

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

Group show at Art and Aesthetic "A Tribute to MASTERS & MASTERPIECES - History Revisited", 29th Jan - 28th Feb Group Show, Gallerie Nya, The Winter Tale 2013 Sunday, December 15, 2013 to Monday, February 03, 2014 Group show in DHOOMIMAL ART CENTRE, Jan.

2013

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

Group Show, Art Chutney , 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 Nya , 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 Nya, 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

Short Film on Vikash Kalra, Dreams on Canvas previewed on Doordarshan.

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

2008

Lalit Kala Akademi, New Delhi

Palm Court, IHC, New Delhi

Travancore Art Gallery, New Delhi

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

2007

60 Years of Independence, Rashtrapati Bhawan, New Delhi

Group Show, VAG, IHC, New Delhi

Solo Show The Artist The Man, Palm Court, IHC

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

Indian Railways, New Delhi

Art Konsult Gallery, New Delhi

Mandira Bedi, New Delhi

and many art connoisseur in India and abroad.



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'Mindscape' Series | Oil on Canvas | 36 x 24 inches | 2014

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THE ALCHEMIST

A monographic exhibition by
VIKASH KALRA

August 2014

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Art and Aesthetic

F 213/A, 1st Floor, Old MB Road,

Lado Sarai, New Delhi – 110030

Phone: 011 – 41587277,

+91 9810063772

Email : info@artandaesthetic.com

Website : www.artandaesthetic.com



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