

Tales from the Soul Marrow

Vikash Kalra



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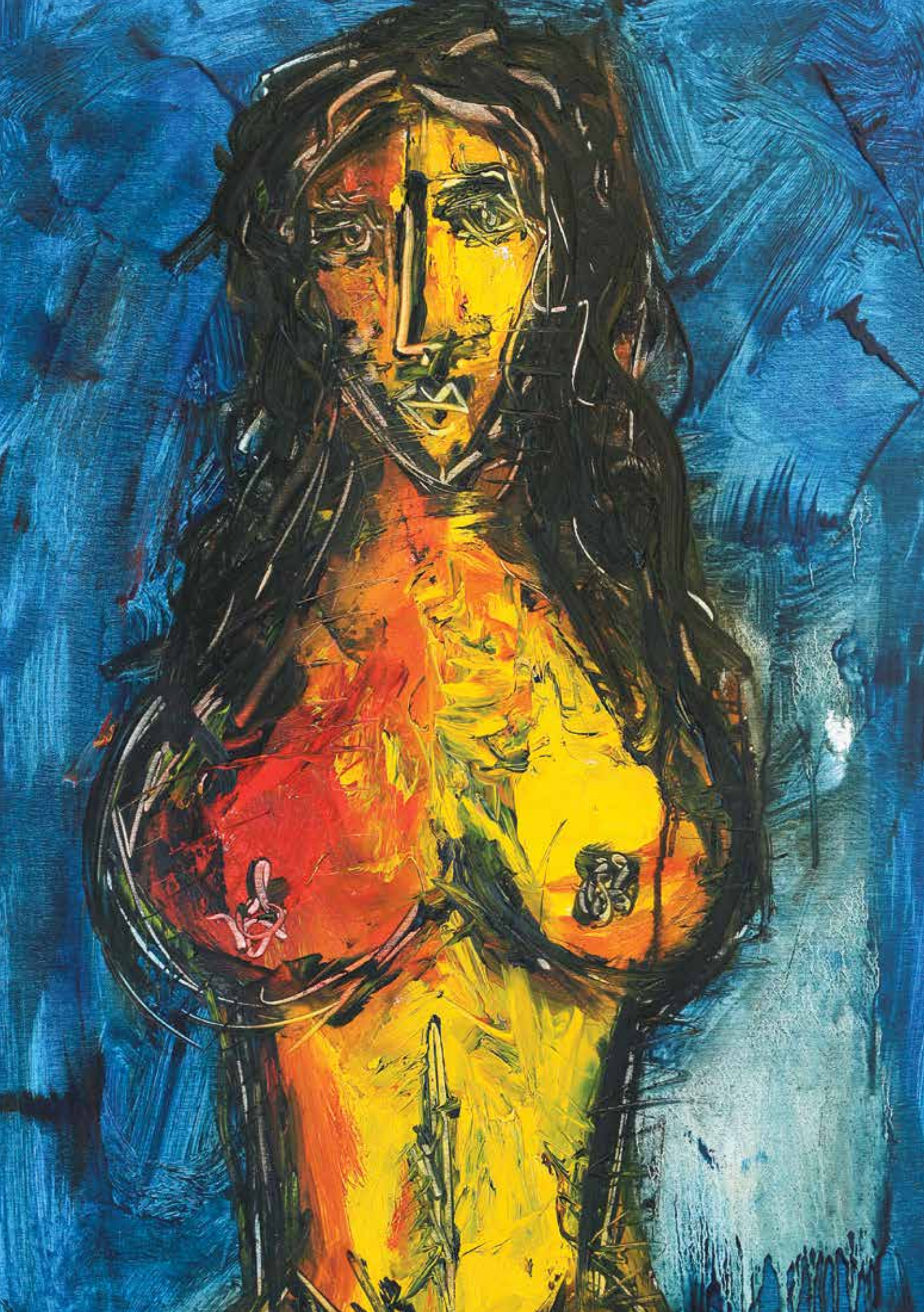
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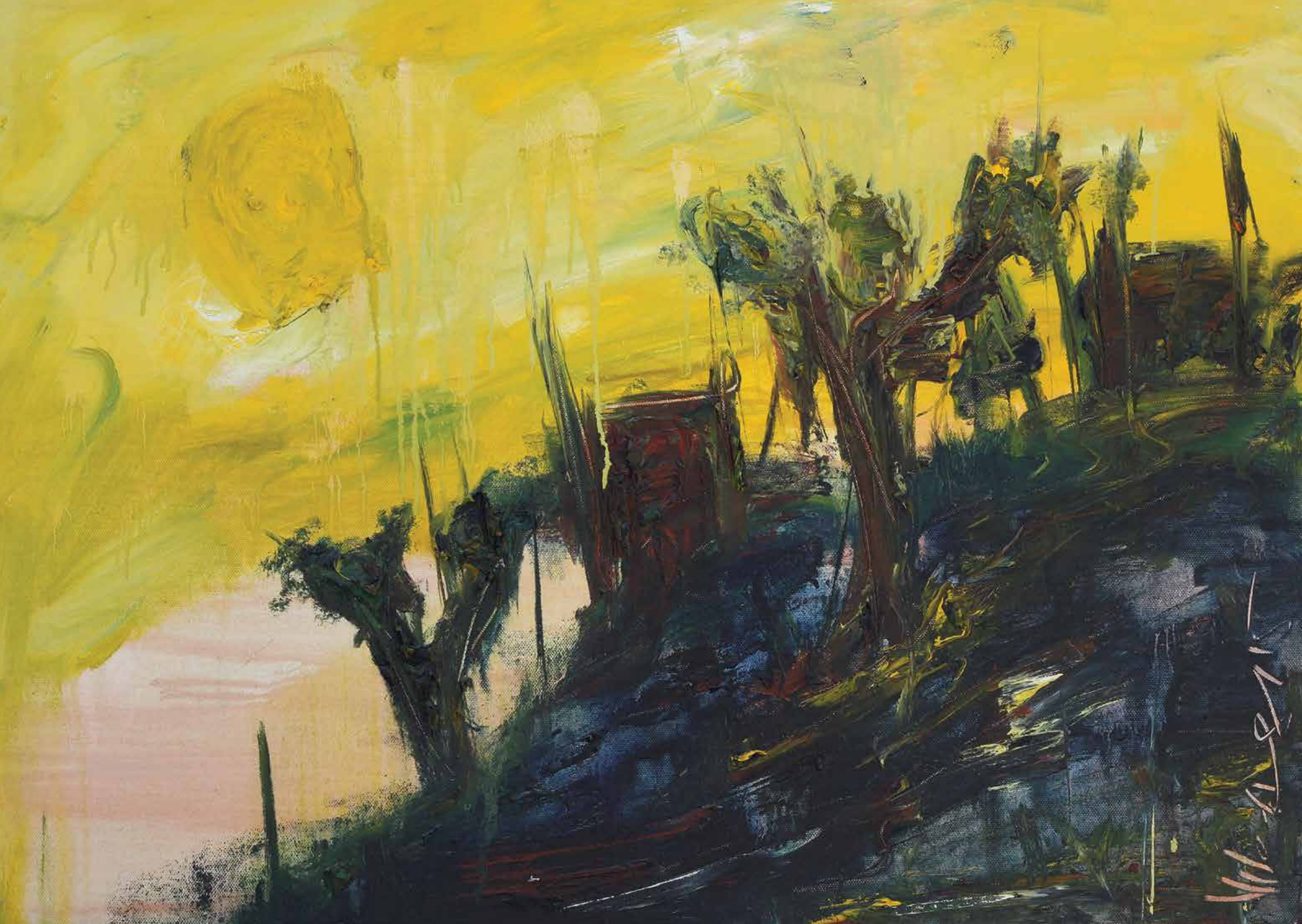


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Vijay Lakshmi Dogra







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 obedience 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



Nude | oil on canvas | 91cm x 61cm (36" x 24") | 2014

himself for all of painting, sculpture and drawing.

A mood inspired colour palette, Vikash paints in thick coats of color, his brushwork executing the dictates 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, encompassing 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 dirth 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, focussing 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.

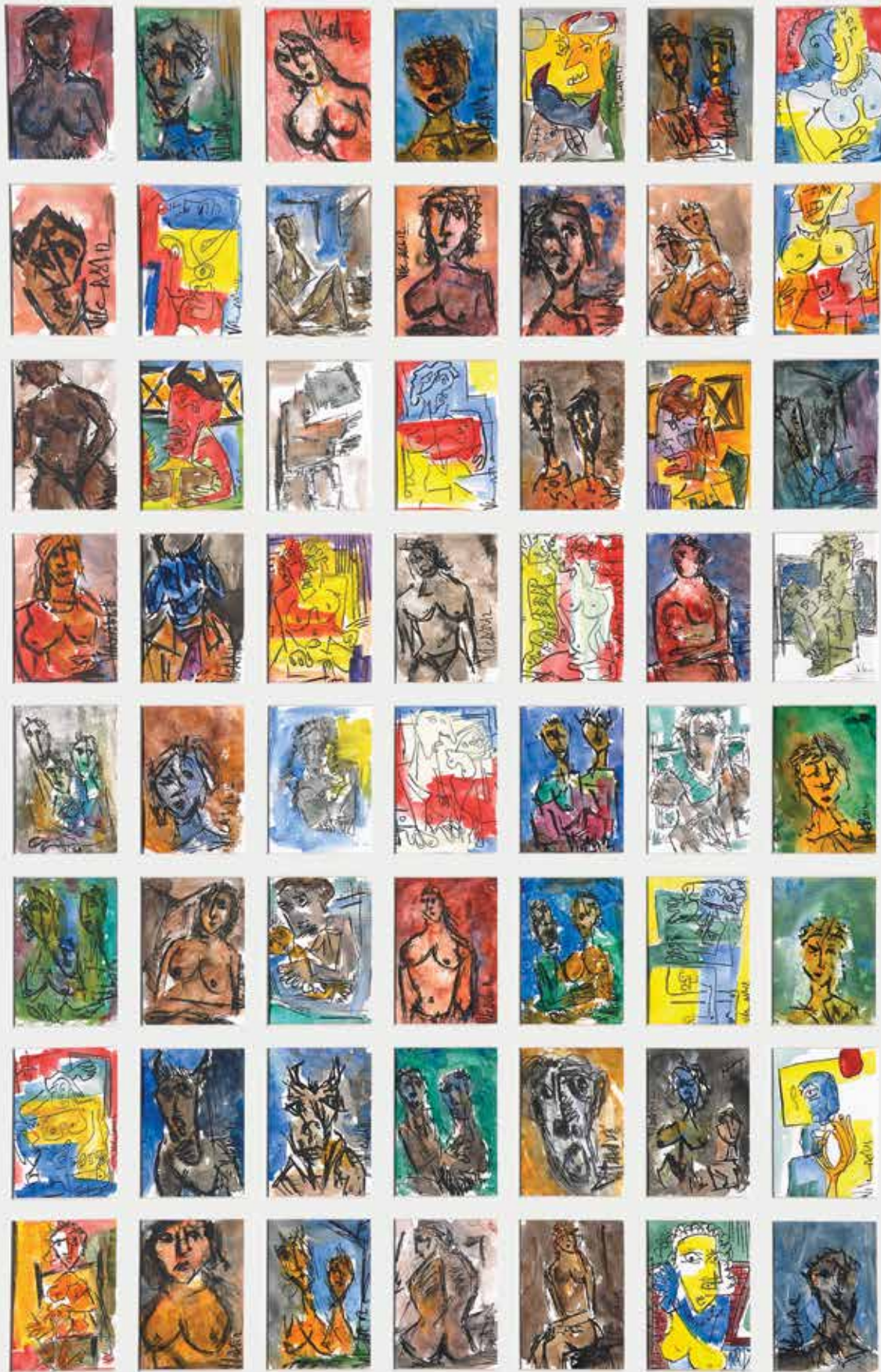


Nude | oil on canvas | 61cm x 46cm (24" x 18") | 2015

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



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 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.

JohnnyML
 Mumbai
 March 2015



Collage2 | pen and ink on paper | 110cm x 58cm (43" x 23")
 (10" x 9" each-8 drawings) | 2014



Collage3 | water colour on paper | 114cm x 79cm (45" x 31") (5" x 5" each-39 drawings) | 2012



Head | oil on canvas | 91cm x 91cm (36" x 36") | 2014



Head | oil on canvas | 76cm x 76cm (30" x 30") | 2015



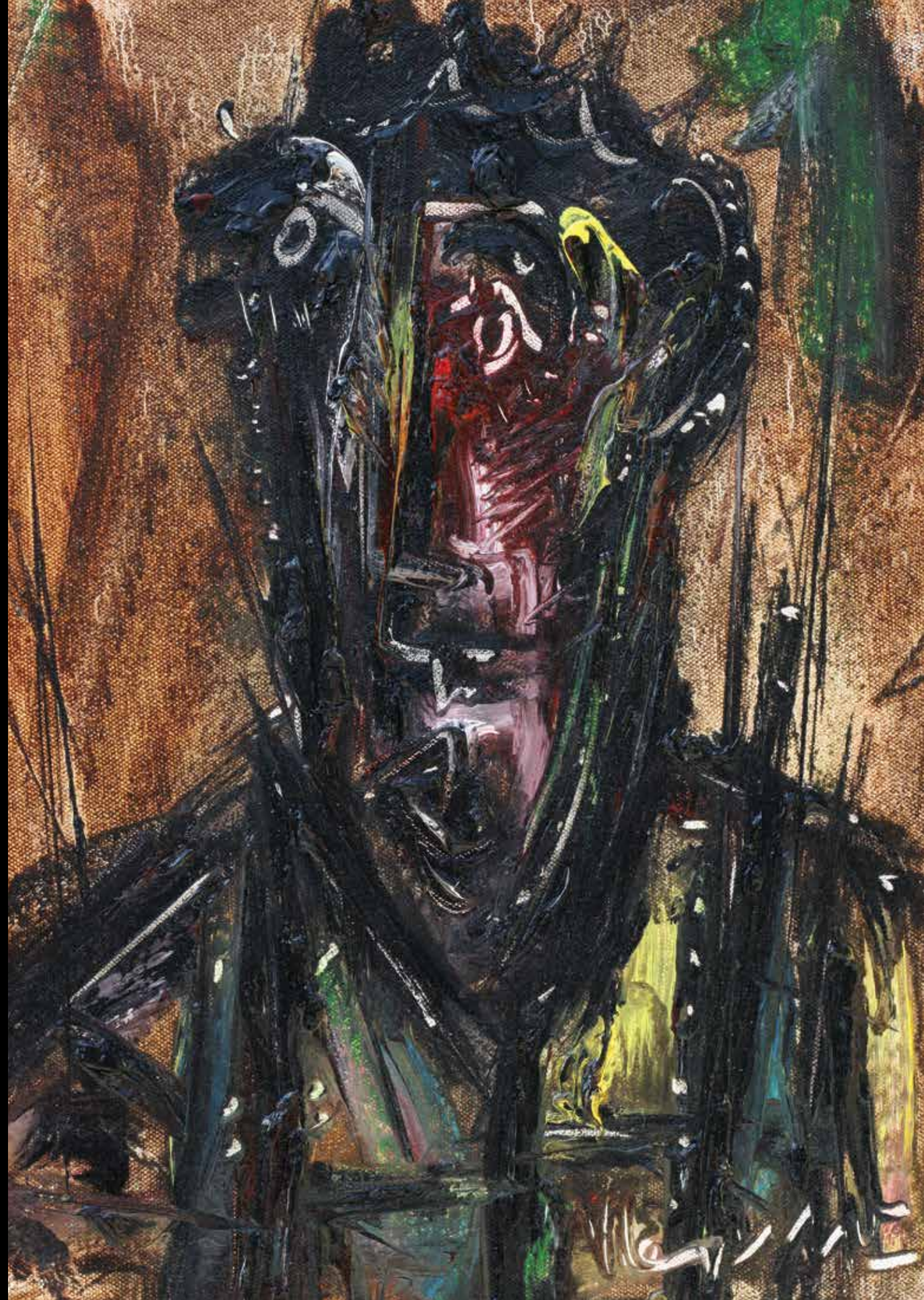
Head | oil on canvas | 61cm x 46cm (24" x 18") | 2015



Head | oil on canvas | 61cm x 46cm (24" x 18") | 2015



Head | oil on canvas | 38cm x 30cm (15" x 12") | 2015



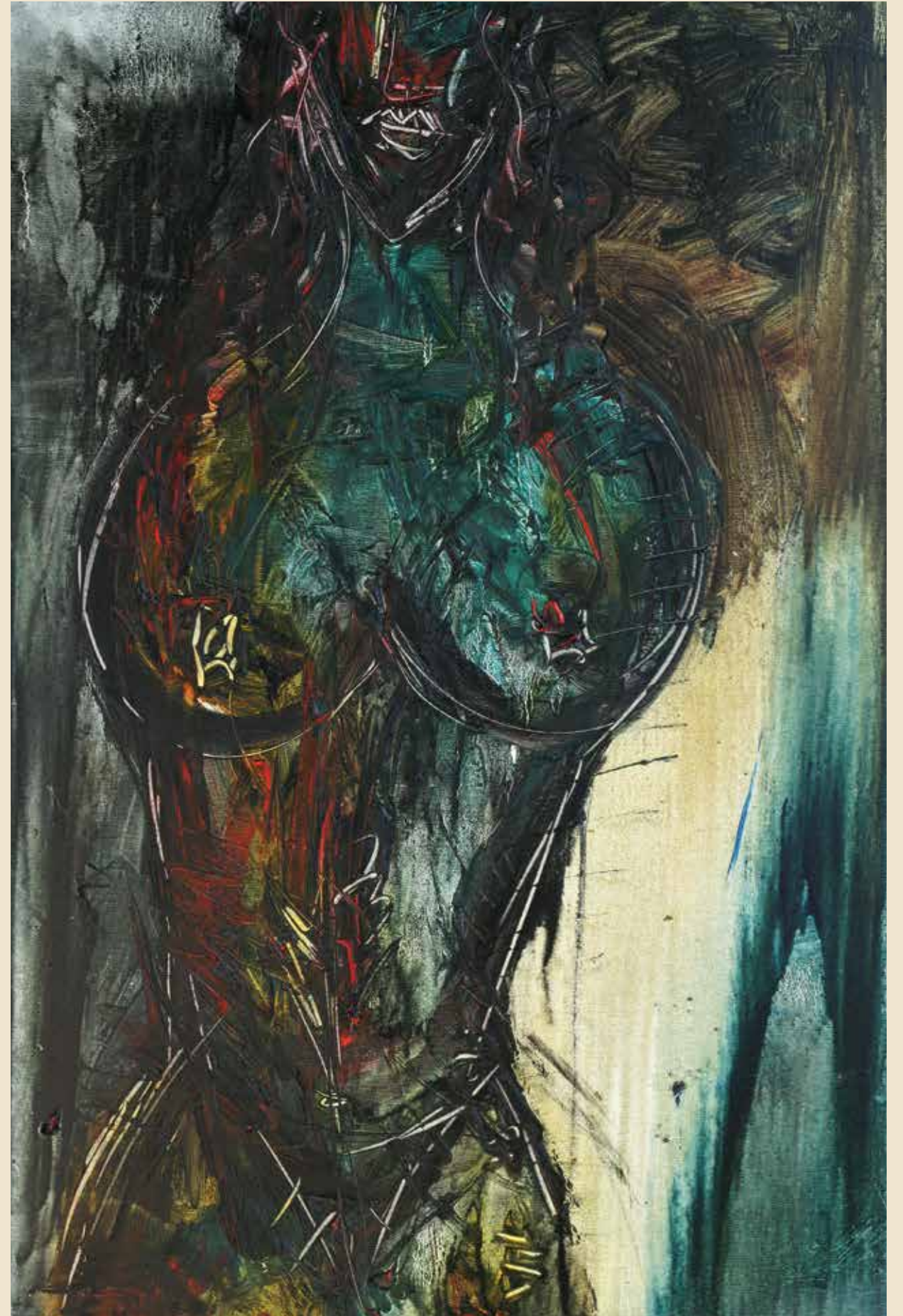
Head | oil on canvas | 38cm x 30cm (15" x 12") | 2015



Head | oil on canvas | 122cm x 122cm (48" x 48") | 2015



Head | oil on canvas | 122cm x 122cm (48" x 48") | 2015



Nude | oil on canvas | 91cm x 61cm (36" x 24") | 2015



Nude | oil on canvas | 91cm x 91cm (36" x 36") | 2015





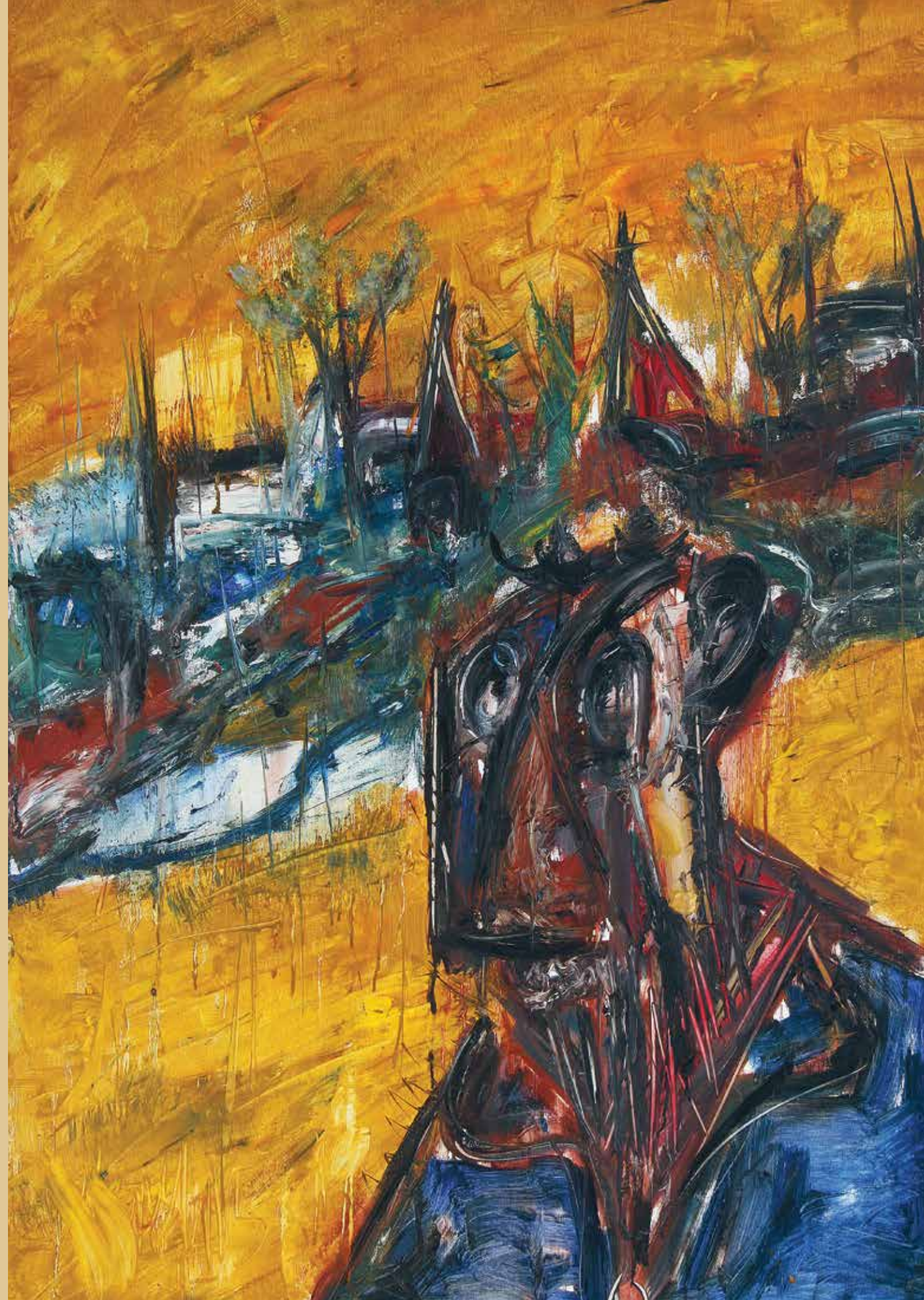
Mother and child | oil on canvas | 122cm x 92cm (48" x 36") | 2015



Mother and child | oil on canvas | 122cm x 92cm (48" x 36") | 2015



Mindscape | oil on canvas | 56cm x 82cm (22" x 32") | 2015



Mindscape | oil on canvas | 127cm x 92cm (50" x 36") | 2015



Mindscape | oil on canvas | 102cm x 102cm (40" x 40") | 2014



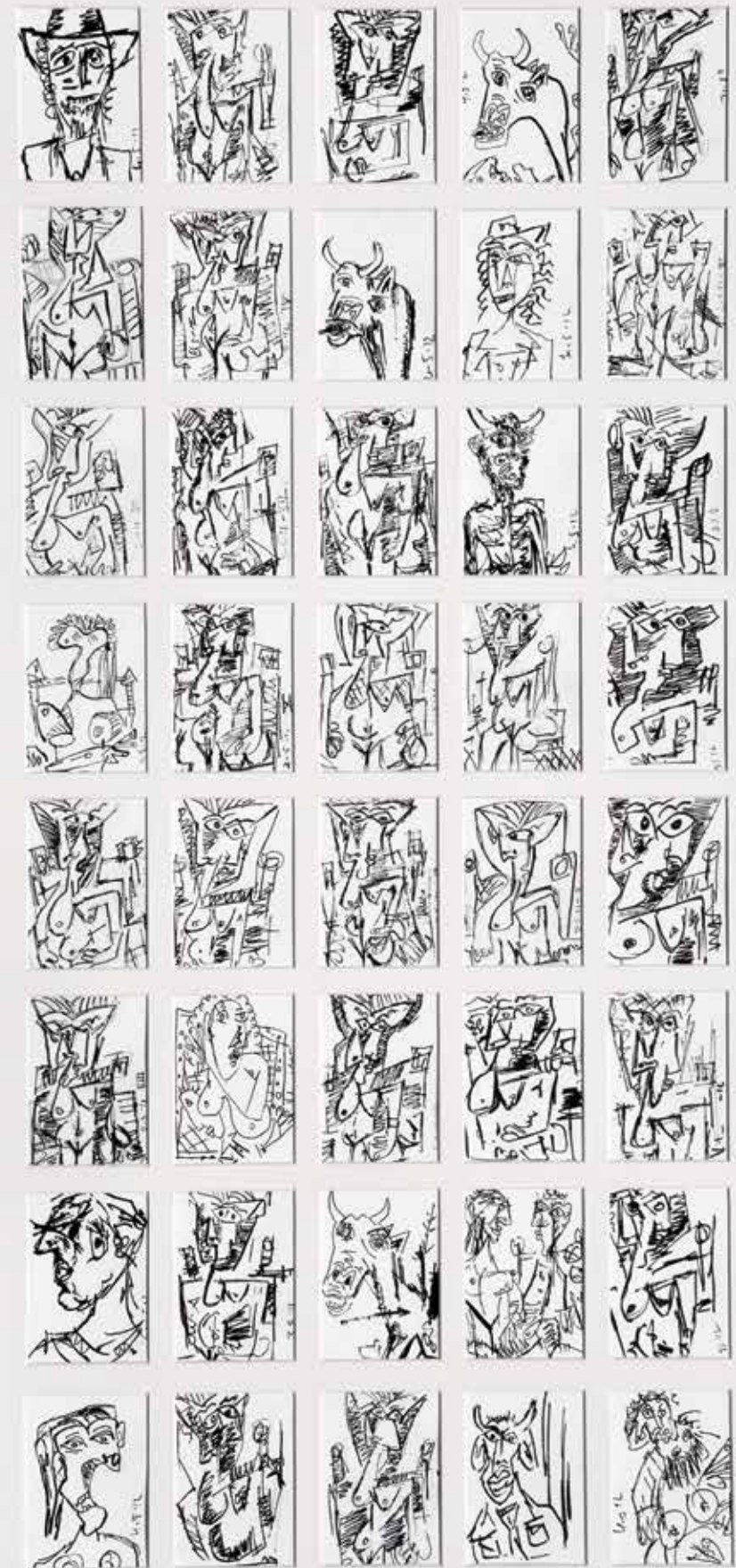
Mindscape | oil on canvas | 76cm x 76cm (30" x 30") | 2014

Mindscape | oil on canvas | 91cm x 91cm (36" x 36") | 2015



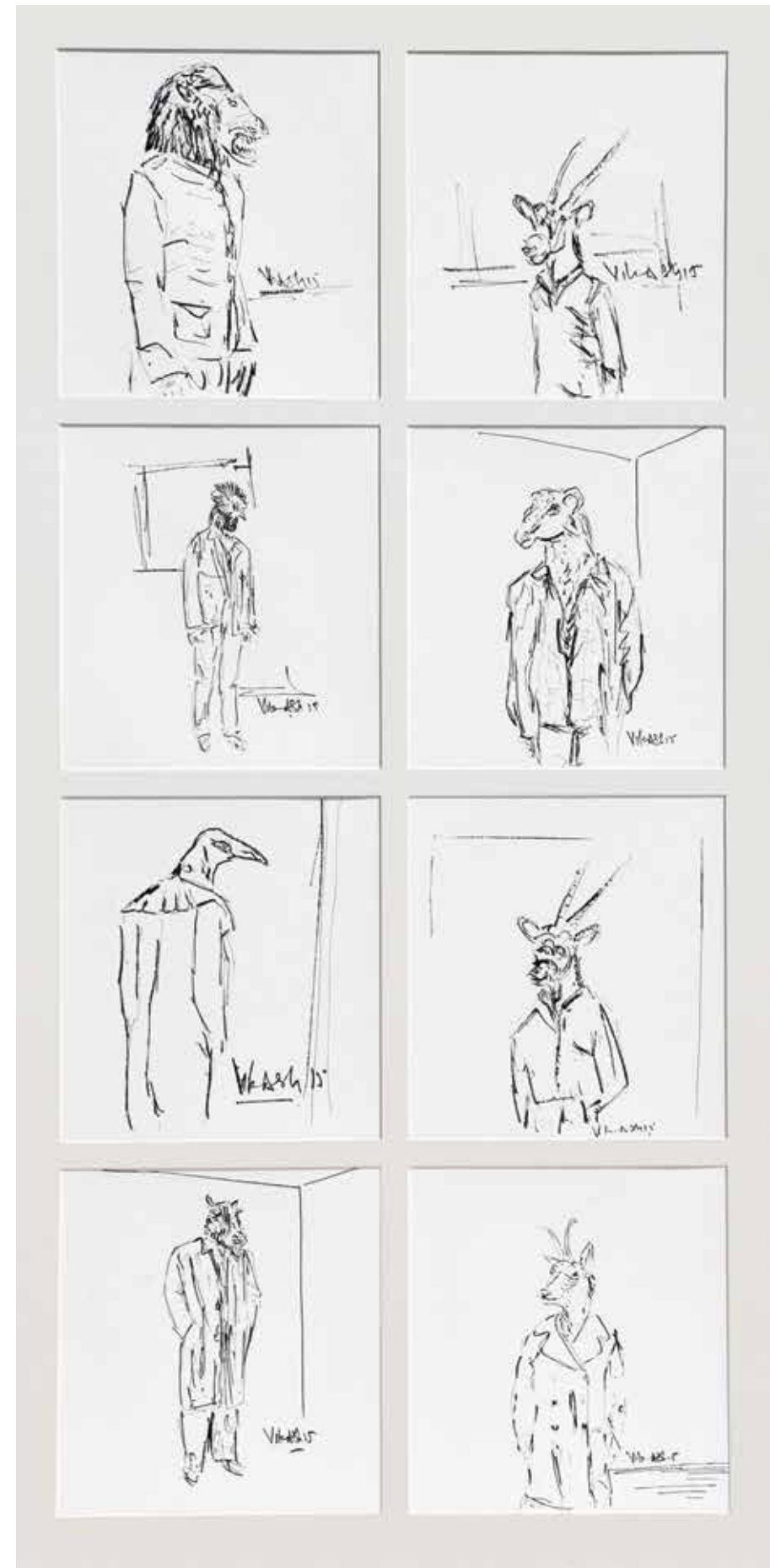


drawings





Collage5 | pen and ink on paper | 119cm x 58cm (47" x 23") (10" x 11" each-8 drawings) | 2015



Collage6 | pen and ink on paper | 119cm x 58cm (47" x 23") (10" x 11" each-8 drawings) | 2015



Collage7 | pen and ink on paper | 119cm x 58cm (47" x 23") (10" x 11" each-8 drawings) | 2015



Collage8 | pen and ink on paper | 119cm x 58cm (47" x 23") (10" x 11" each-8 drawings) | 2015



Collage9 | pen and ink on paper | 119cm x 58cm (47" x 23") (10" x 11" each-8 drawings) | 2015





Collage10 | pen and ink on paper | 119cm x 58cm (47" x 23") (10" x 11" each-8 drawings) | 2015



Collage11 | pen and ink on paper | 119cm x 58cm (47" x 23") (10" x 11" each-8 drawings) | 2015



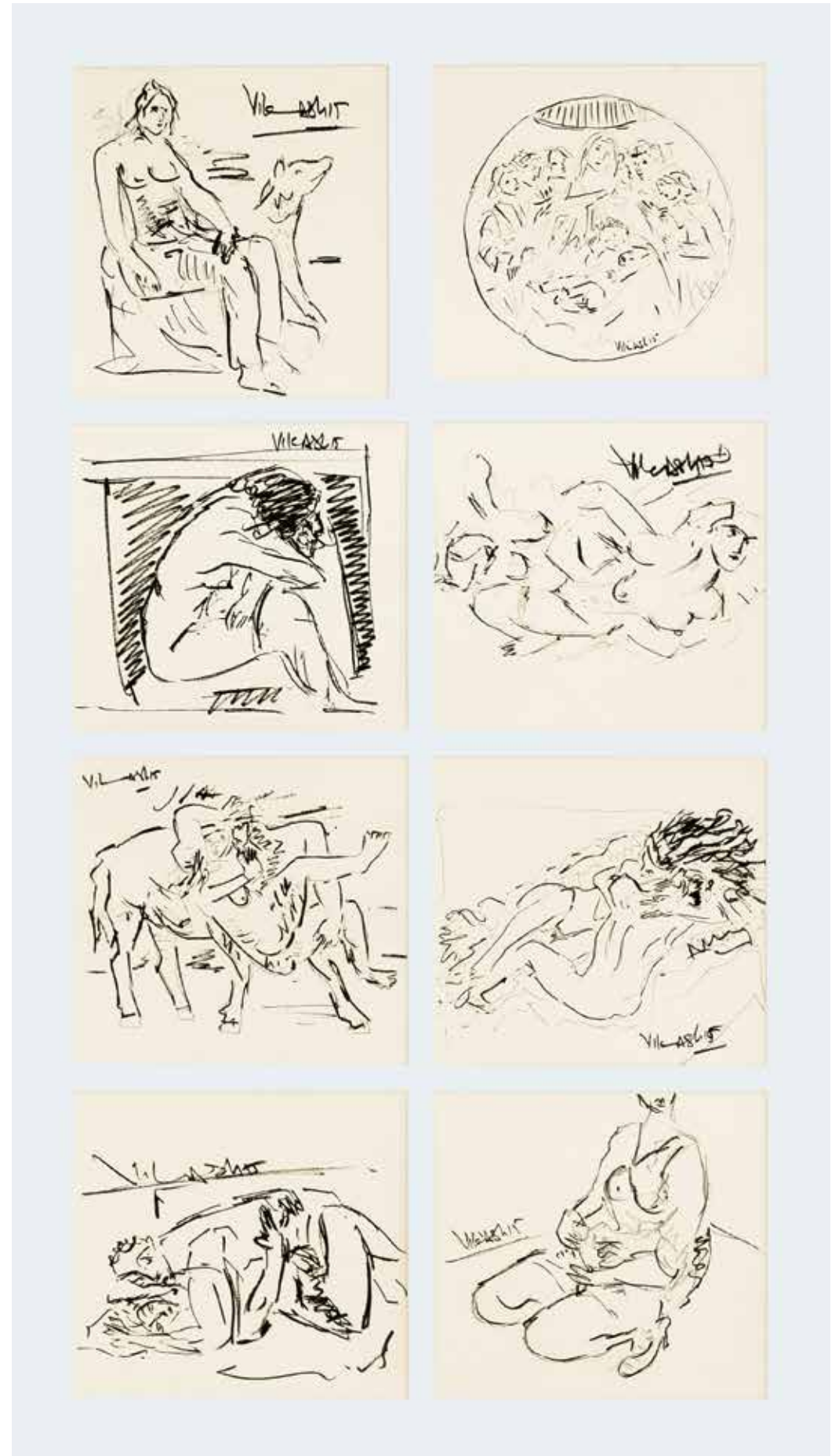
Collage12 | pen and ink on paper | 119cm x 58cm (47" x 23") (10" x 11" each-8 drawings) | 2015



Collage13 | pen and ink on paper | 119cm x 58cm (47" x 23") (10" x 11" each-8 drawings) | 2015



Collage14 | pen and ink on paper | 110cm x 58cm (43" x 23") (10" x 11" each-8 drawings) | 2015



Collage15 | pen and ink on paper | 114cm x 63cm (45" x 25") (10" x 11" each-8 drawings) | 2015



Collage16 | pen and ink on paper | 119cm x 58cm (47" x 23") (10" x 11" each-8 drawings) | 2015





Collage 17 | pen and ink on paper | 110cm x 58cm (43" x 23") (10" x 11" each-8 drawings) | 2015



Collage 18 | pen and ink on paper | 110cm x 58cm (43" x 23") (10" x 11" each-8 drawings) | 2015



Collage19 | pen and ink on paper | 114cm x 63cm (45" x 25") (10" x 11" each-8 drawings) | 2015

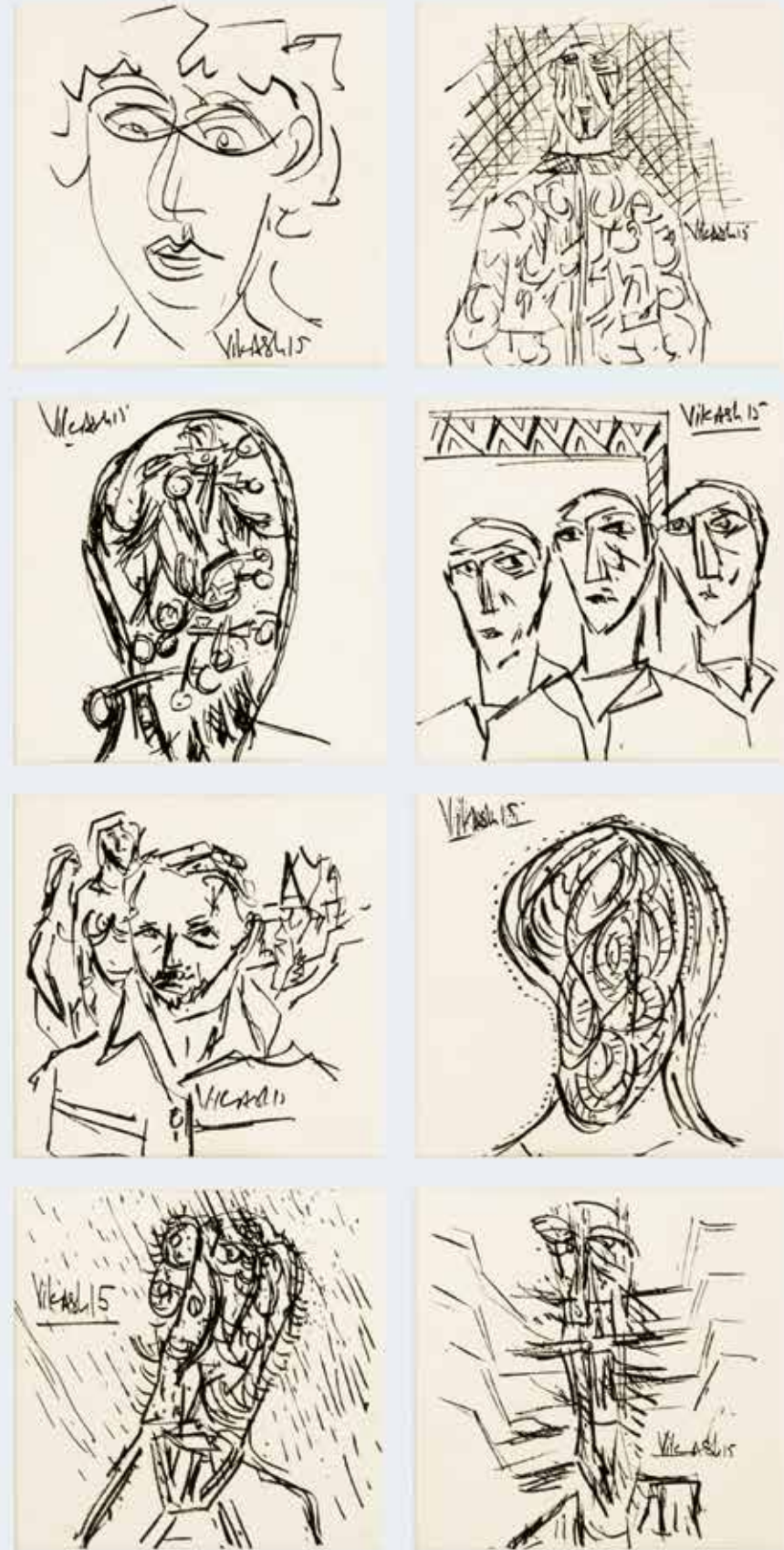


Collage20 | pen and ink on paper | 119cm x 68cm (47" x 27") (10" x 11" each-8 drawings) | 2015



Collage27 | pen and ink on paper | 119cm x 58cm (47" x 23") (10" x 11" each-8 drawings) | 2015





Collage22 | pen and ink on paper | 110cm x 58cm (43" x 23") (10" x 11" each-8 drawings) | 2015



Collage23 | pen and ink on paper | 110cm x 58cm (43" x 23") (10" x 11" each-8 drawings) | 2015



Collage23 | pen and ink on paper | 119cm x 58cm (47" x 23") (10" x 11" each-8 drawings) | 2015



Collage24 | pen and ink on paper | 119cm x 58cm (47" x 23") (10" x 11" each-8 drawings) | 2015



Collage25 | pen and ink on paper | 119cm x 58cm (47" x 23") (10" x 11" each-8 drawings) | 2015



Collage26 | pen and ink on paper | 119cm x 58cm (47" x 23") (10" x 11" each-8 drawings) | 2015



Collage27 | pen and ink on paper | 119cm x 58cm (47" x 23") (10" x 11" each-8 drawings) | 2015



Collage28 | pen and ink on paper | 119cm x 58cm (47" x 23") (10" x 11" each-8 drawings) | 2015



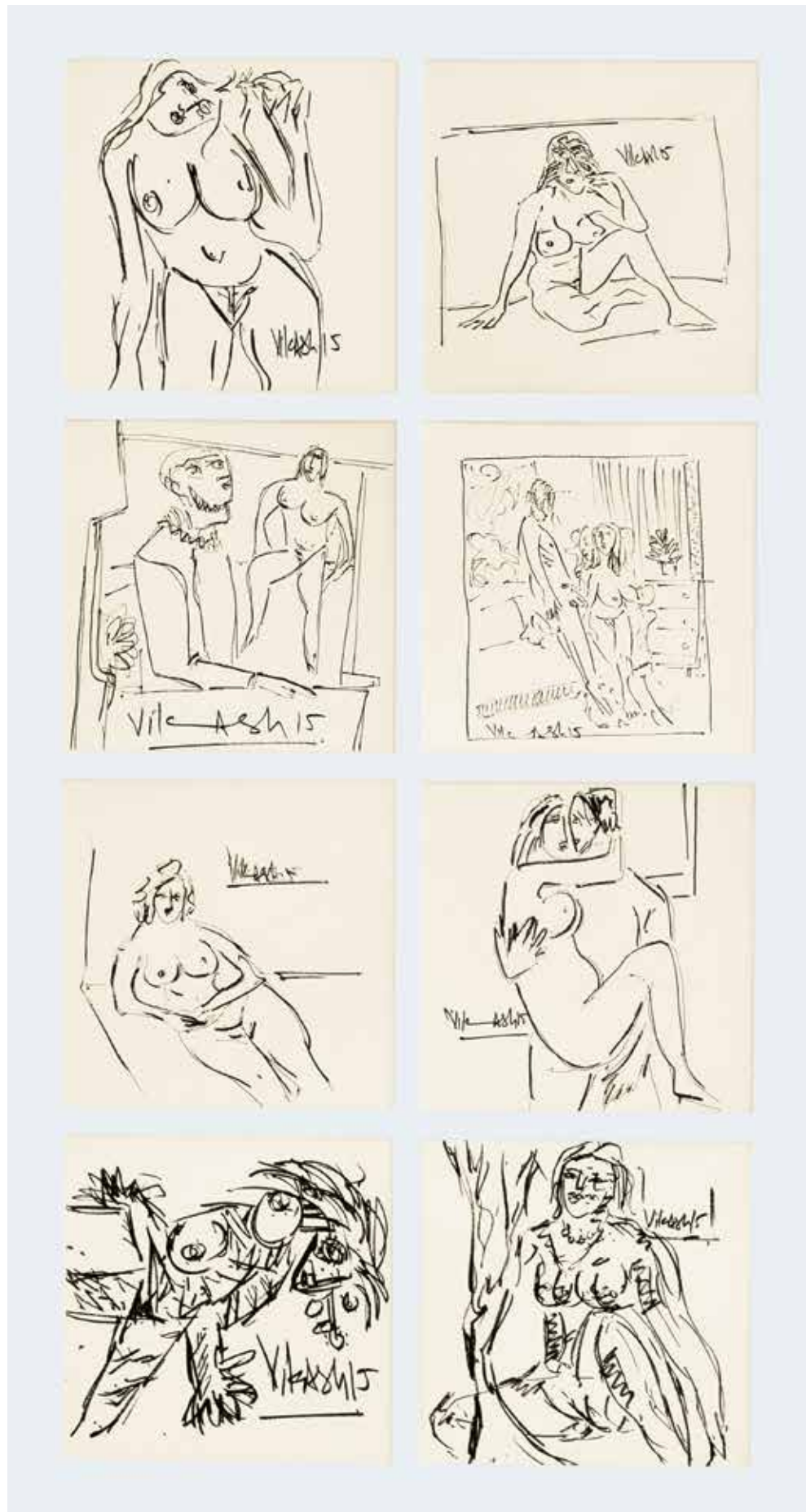
Collage29 | pen and ink on paper | 119cm x 58cm (47" x 23") (10" x 11" each-8 drawings) | 2015



Collage30 | pen and ink on paper | 119cm x 58cm (47" x 23") (10" x 11" each-8 drawings) | 2015



Collage31 | pen and ink on paper | 110cm x 58cm (43" x 23") (10" x 9" each-8 drawings) | 2015



Collage32 | pen and ink on paper | 110cm x 58cm (43" x 23") (10" x 9" each-8 drawings) | 2015



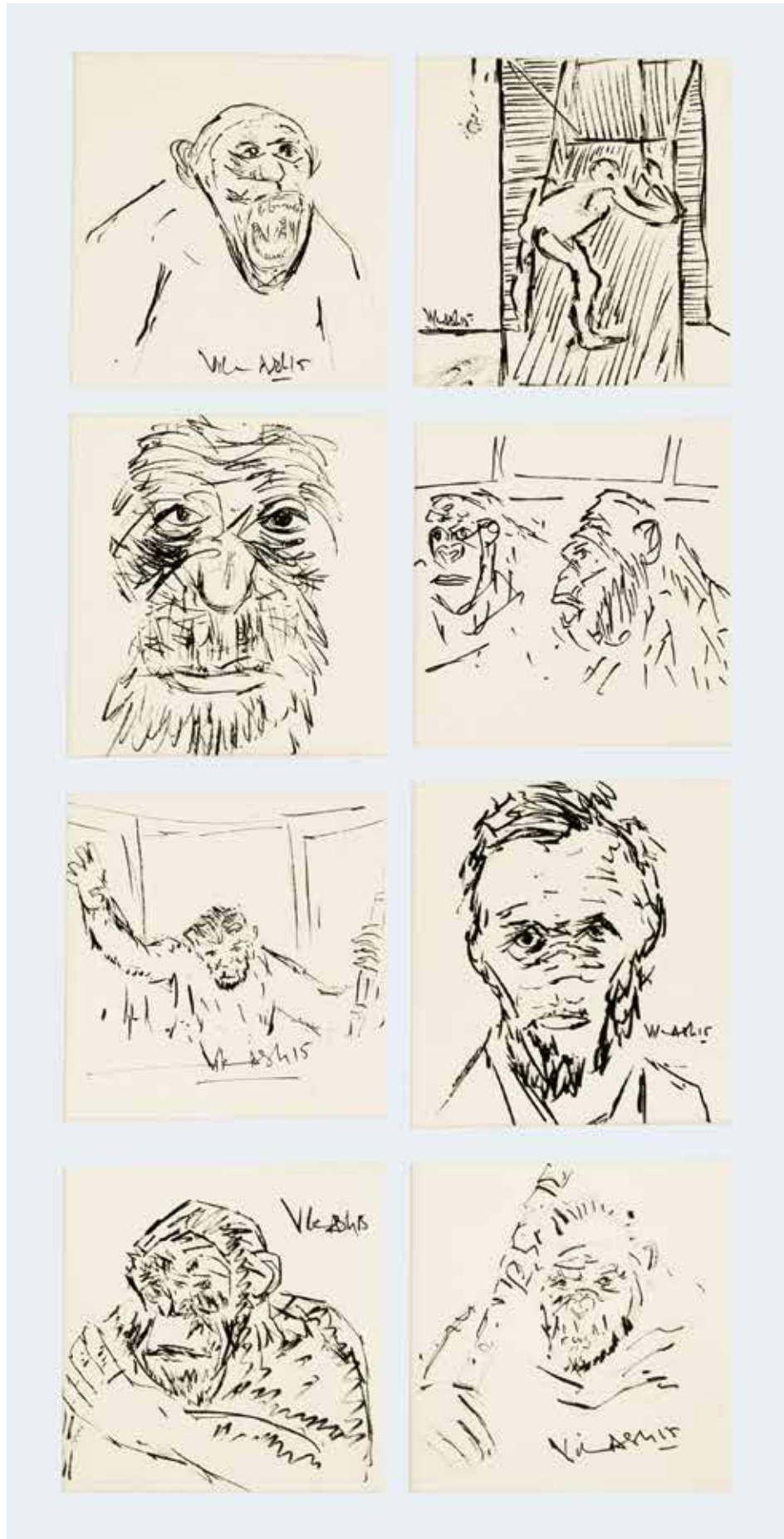
Collage33 | pen and ink on paper | 110cm x 58cm (43" x 23") (10" x 9" each-8 drawings) | 2015



Collage34 | pen and ink on paper | 110cm x 58cm (43" x 23") (10" x 9" each-8 drawings) | 2015



Collage35 | pen and ink on paper | 110cm x 58cm (43" x 23") (10" x 9" each-8 drawings) | 2015



Collage36 | pen and ink on paper | 119cm x 61cm (47" x 24") (10" x 11" each-8 drawings) | 2015



Collage37 | pen and ink on paper | 112cm x 28cm (44" x 14") (10" x 11" each-4 drawings) | 2015



“FOR ME, PAINTING CAN BE
COMPARED TO AN ACT OF
CONSOLATION TOWARDS
THE SPIRITS OF THE DEAD

IN THE SAME WAY THAT
ONE SPRINKLES WATER TO
PROTECT THE DEAD FROM EVIL
SPIRITS DURING A BUDDHIST
PURIFICATION RITUAL”

-VIKASH KARLA



Vikash Kalra

Born : 27th July 1973

Place of Birth: New Delhi

Qualification: Graduate From Delhi University, A Self Taught Artist

EXHIBITIONS

2015

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.

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 Jan.

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.



Head | oil on canvas | 101cm x 77cm (40" x 30") | 2012

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