

MUSAWWARI
MINIATURES TODAY

Curated by Khushboo Jain

Maha Ahmed | Maryam Baniasadi | Rameshwar Broota
Jethro Buck | Gargi Chandola | Linda Edwards | Ayesha Gamiet
Alexander Gorlizki | Yasmin Hayat | Keerat Kaur | Pavan Kavitka
SM Khayyam | Murad Khan Mumtaz | Divya Pamnani | Amaranta Peña
Vaishali Prazmari | Vinita Sharma | Annelie Solis
Manish Soni | Mahaveer Swami | Amjad Ali Talpur

OJAS ART

ON RESILIENCE, RESURGENCE, AND TRANSFORMATION:
MINIATURES IN THE POSTMODERN
by Khushboo Jain

Indo-Persian miniatures carry with them a layered history, filled with cultural significance and artistic evolution. And to truly understand this art form, one must begin with its very name.

Although often described as 'miniatures,' these works vary significantly in size—from smaller than postcards to metres in height. Despite the variation, the label 'miniature' persists. But why is this art form confined to this terminology and what was its original nomenclature? One may wonder.

Upon exploring historical texts, particularly Persian sources, one finds references of these paintings being locally called '*musawwari*'. In Persian tradition, *musawwari* describes a traditional painting style associated with miniature art across Central and South Asia. The painters themselves, including in Indian references, were called '*musawwaris*.' Given this background, one might question why the paintings are not called '*musawwari*.' Even verses of Mirza Ghalib have the appearance of the term '*musawwari*,' referring to 'painting.'² This makes one wonder— why not reclaim this term in the contemporary context?

Interestingly, the term *musawwari* continues to describe miniature painting in Pakistan, while it has largely disappeared from use in India, where the term 'miniature' prevails. The latter term can be framed within the larger context of post-colonial identity, as it was coined by the West. By adopting Western terminology, traditional art forms like *musawwari* may be seen as marginal within the modern art discourse that prioritises Western aesthetics, contributing to a sense of cultural erasure. Meanwhile, the continued use of *musawwari* in Pakistan signals a different trajectory—one of cultural affirmation.

The transition from '*musawwari*' to 'miniature' - if one may want to term so—exemplifies how colonial influences can shape cultural identities and artistic legitimacy. Acknowledging this relationship is essential for understanding the complexities of contemporary art practices in miniatures and the ongoing struggles for cultural representation in post-colonial contexts.

This further renders an exploration to the story of *musawwari*. In its barest summary, miniatures kept running in different courses and paces from the eleventh to the nineteenth century between Persia and the Indian subcontinent. Several streams of development ran parallel to one another during this time. However, with the advent of the British Raj, Western aesthetics effectively overshadowed traditional practices, marginalising detailed, labour-intensive miniatures, relegating them to the status of 'tourist kitsch' and 'exotic imagery' stripping them of their cultural significance.³

Despite these challenges, the spirit of miniature painting has proven to be remarkably resilient. In recent years, there has been a resurgence of interest in miniature painting. This owes much to the institutional support, primarily, the National College of Arts in

Lahore⁴ and the Prince's School of Traditional Art in the UK, which have significantly contributed to the preservation and promotion of miniature arts.

It is important to note that the practice of *musawwari*, iconographically, has always been open, engaging in new dialogues and exchange of ideas. Facilitated by the Silk Road, flow of artistic ideas and materials between regions was evident, drawing from Chinese and Central Asian landscapes and figures in Timurid, Herat, as well as European prints within the Mughal court. This exchange has played a key role in developing the visual language of *musawwari*.⁵ In fact, this openness is closely related to the current stylistic evolution of miniature art, as it transcends geographical boundaries and intersects with various cultures, remaining relevant through its pluralistic engagements.

The twenty-one gifted artists featured in this show each see the world around and within them in unique ways, creating personal dialogues within the realm of miniatures. By blending traditional techniques with contemporary themes, they explore and redefine the art form, drawing on heritage and personal narratives. Through experimentation with form, technique, materials, iconographies, and storytelling, they break new ground in miniature art.

Hailing from Ecuador, Amaranta Peña infuses Andean culture in her practice and re-contextualises the symbolism of the universe so present in the oral traditions and in coexistence with territory, through her ritual of preparing materials and painting. In parallel, Ayesha Gamiet, a London-based artist, draws inspiration from Persian and Indian miniature painting, illuminated manuscripts, and poetry. Grounded in the rich visual language of Islamic art and the natural world, Gamiet reinterprets traditional forms, motifs, and narratives for a contemporary audience. Her work, which combines representational and fantastical elements, celebrates the beauty of nature and evokes a sense of pride in everyday life.

Following in this vein, British-Syrian artist Yasmin Hayat draws inspiration from the meditative beauty of Islamic art, delving into the thoughts, symbolism, and folklore stories that underline these works. Her creations blend Eastern and Western methodologies to explore themes of migration, heritage, and memory. Hayat's unique approach marries the landscape style of painting with geometric elements. Similarly, the works of Vaishali Prazmari incorporate elements from her diverse heritage, blending Indo-Persian miniatures with influences from Chinese painting. Adopting a unique syncretic approach, her art evolves in cycles and encompasses a wide range of processes inspired by the tales and motifs of "A thousand and one Arabian Nights."

Contemporary artists deftly navigate globalisation and socio-cultural shifts, transcending its classic format. Artists are embracing scale, newer folios, and commentary, while ensuring its relevance. For instance, UK-based Pakistani artist Amjad Ali Talpur, in his artistic practice defies cursory, inattentive readings. He

inverts the very trope by staying true to scale but creating a mosaic of small images in the form of actual physical puzzles instead of reducing the scale of motifs within one monolithic image. This invites a relationship with his viewers, involving them in the questions of domestic, economic and social pressures that the artist engages with. Similarly, Maryam Baniyadi, an Iranian artist based in Lahore, rethinks borders as realms of discussion and possibilities, exploring themes of hybridisation and coexistence in her art, by bringing multiple observations in play, often times stark, through the use of her imagery and compositions.

While traditional forms maintain depiction of stories namely from epics, religious texts, and poetry; more contemporary ones are complex and deeply enmeshed with geopolitics, nationhood, and creative subjectivities. These subjects are expertly explored in the works of Lahore-based artist SM Khayyam, who delves into the duality of loss and impermanence giving emphasis to history, transition, and power. The fading faces, frayed edges, and the delicate balance between detail and dissolution in his work evoke the tension between creation and destruction. In his work, each layer of pigment serves as a metaphor for the layers of history that accumulate and wear away, leaving traces that are both fragile and powerful.

Another significant theme that is observed is the exploration of socio-cultural identity wherein artists often navigate their personal and collective histories, utilising the miniature to negotiate their identities in an evolving global landscape. Such observation can be seen in the works of Nasik-born Pavan Kavitar who embeds objects of memory, expressing a simple way of living through tranquil compositions and minimalistic semantics. He gathers clusters of experiences shaped by his shifts and changes in both natural and urban spaces as he relocates in search of work, home, and artistic identity. Similarly, Maha Ahmed from Dubai, draws inspiration from Persian and Mughal manuscripts and from the tradition of Japanese landscape painting with its contemplative, meditative compositions of water, plants, rocks, and animals. In her works, Ahmed places hybrid creatures into imagined utopian landscapes. Her paintings can be read as documents of identity construction, cross-cultural experiences and transformative events that occurred in the artists' personal life.

Throughout the history of miniatures or *musawwari*, artists have continuously recognised and honoured the skills and expressions of their masters, thereby, grounding their practices in tradition. This reverence has informed their practices, enabling the incorporation of new iconographies and innovations. Such is an example of Divya Pamnani who began training under the renowned Bikaner master artist Mahaveer Swami. Pamnani's work is characterised by a departure from traditional miniature archetypes, as she explores symbolism and imagery in her creations. Similarly, Delhi-based artist Gargi Chandola trained under a Kangra master artist, Vikas Soni weaves modern narratives of femininity and territoriality with a humorous commentary, while utilising recurring characters and motifs.

In this artistic evolution, the atelier system in miniature painting also marked a revival. These collaborations challenge traditional artists to refine their skills and create works of a higher quality, focusing on artistic merit rather than commercial viability. These pieces explore themes of self and 'Otherness,' achieving a balance between the poignant and the problematic, engaging the viewer in both visual and thematic depth. New York based Alexander Gorlizki, has ingeniously adapted to this tradition, where he brings surreal dreamscapes using a unique visual language. While not trained himself, Gorlizki brings his artistic visions to life through his atelier in Jaipur, led by master artist Riyaz Uddin.

What is further noteworthy is that Western artists are adopting Indian miniature techniques, subverting the historical trend wherein Western patronage shaped Indian art. In this instance British artist Jethro Buck creates a quiet space of contemplation for the viewer, nourishing the senses and soul through Indian miniature techniques. Similarly, Spain based Annelie Solis explores cosmological, astronomical, and astrological imagery, with overarching themes of spirituality and divine beauty, expressed through multicultural and interfaith symbolism. Meanwhile, Linda Edwards, a Zimbabwe-born British artist, embraces the tradition of using gold—primarily inspired by miniature paintings in medieval and early modern European and Islamic manuscripts. This diversity demonstrates mutual influence, as Indian aesthetics are reinterpreted within contemporary contexts, enriching the global art narrative and fostering meaningful dialogue between cultures and traditions.

Even as the postmodern painters deal with newer concepts and ways of making art—they keep an ongoing interaction with tradition in their technique and the ethos of the medium where traditional miniature provides a steady source of imagery for their works. In his practice, Murad Khan Mumtaz, an US-based Pakistani artist and scholar brings small acts of remembrance to his paintings meditating on traces of local cultures and histories disappearing in the globalised landscape of contemporary life. In his works he brings landscapes to centre stage, which are often otherwise relegated to background offerings in traditional miniature paintings. Canadian artist Keerat Kaur draws inspiration from Sikh philosophies, and employs the art of metaphor and symbolism to revolutionise the relationships we share to nature and spirituality. Her aesthetic sensibility exists in a realm where ordinary activities merge with dreamlike compositions. Kaur's works introduce a new palette dominated by pastel hues of pink and purple, adding a modern sensibility to her art.

To contribute to this discourse, one cannot overlook the importance of paying homage to the master artists who continue to practise the art and, in many cases, uphold the final lineage. While the resurgence and contemporaneity of miniatures are worth celebrating, the traditional mannerisms of *musawwari* are often overlooked in favour of its growing "contemporary counterpart." There is often a tendency to repackage orientalism, framing traditional art not as serious cultural expressions but as commodities designed to satisfy Western appetites for exoticism. This dynamic

diminishes the intricacies of this art form, overshadowing its historical context and further alienating traditional practices from their cultural significance. On that note, contemporary miniaturist practice has also been slotted into a niche within a larger trend. Over the last few decades, artists gained recognition primarily when addressing "identity politics" and cultural satire, particularly those critiquing their own cultural values. Within this dominant framework traditional *musawwari* is rarely given legitimate consideration, in a global context.

However, traditional forms remain as relevant to their time as their modern interpretations. Placing contemporary works in this exhibit alongside those of the masters is an intentional effort to break down such categorisations. Mahaveer Swami, a sixth-generation miniature artist from Bikaner, draws on themes from Hindu mythology, showcasing both ascetic figures and the intricate daily life and Indian divinities in tranquil visual experiences. Jaipur-based Vinita Sharma, known for her innovative techniques, blends classical methods with her wishful thinking, often incorporating a diverse colour palette and thematic elements that resonate with contemporary audiences. Similarly, Manish Soni hailing from Bhilwara, features diverse moods and settings of nature, reflecting a contemporary flair while remaining rooted in traditional themes.

As tradition converges with innovation and boundaries blur between the conventional and the experimental, it gives rise to a fundamental question: When does a work of miniature art transition from being a traditional miniature to a miniature-inspired painting to an attempted one? This trichotomy is reflected in the works of Rameshwar Broota, which do not directly fall under the conventional understanding of miniatures. However, his approach—using the tip of a blade to scratch through surfaces and create textures layer by layer, parallels the technique employed in traditional miniatures, where a thin *qalam* or brush—sometimes just a single hair—is used to build up multiple layers of paint. These innovative practices challenge our understanding of what constitutes a 'miniature,' thereby prompting a reconnection with the question of its terminology, broadly in contemporary context.

Each stroke and detail, imbued with profound significance, beckons the viewer on a journey of discovery through a layered world where thought, labour, and mediums intertwine, embodying *musawwari* as a powerful narrative of resilience, resurgence, adaptability, and transformation.

Endnotes

- 1 Mumtaz, Murad Khan. "Miniature Painting in Pakistan: Divergences Between Traditional and Contemporary Practice." Guggenheim UBS Map: Perspectives, Guggenheim, 4 Feb. 2013; Fazl, Abul. Akbarnama. Translated by Henry Beveridge, vol. 1, 1902–1939, reprint 2010; Ansari, Sahari. "Ghalib Wrote His Best Poetry by Age of 28." Dawn, 17 Feb. 2020.
- 2 "Seekhe hain mahrukhon ke liyey hum musavvari / Taqreeb kuchh to behri-mulaqaat chahyey". Ansari, Sahari. "Ghalib Wrote His Best Poetry by Age of 28." Dawn, 17 Feb. 2020.
- 3 Martin, F. R. Miniature Painting of Persia, India, and Turkey. Vol. II, London, 1912; Goswamy, B. N. The Spirit of Indian Painting: Close Encounters with 101 Great Works, 1100-1900. Thames & Hudson, 2023; Titley, Norah M. Persian Miniature Painting and Its Influence on the Art of Turkey and India. University of Texas Press, 1983.
- 4 "How Art Became Lahore's 'Secret Weapon.'" Art Basel, 2023.
- 5 Mumtaz, Murad Khan. "Copy/Repeat: Conserving South Asian Painting Through Practice." The Expanded Field of Conservation, 2022.

Maha Ahmed

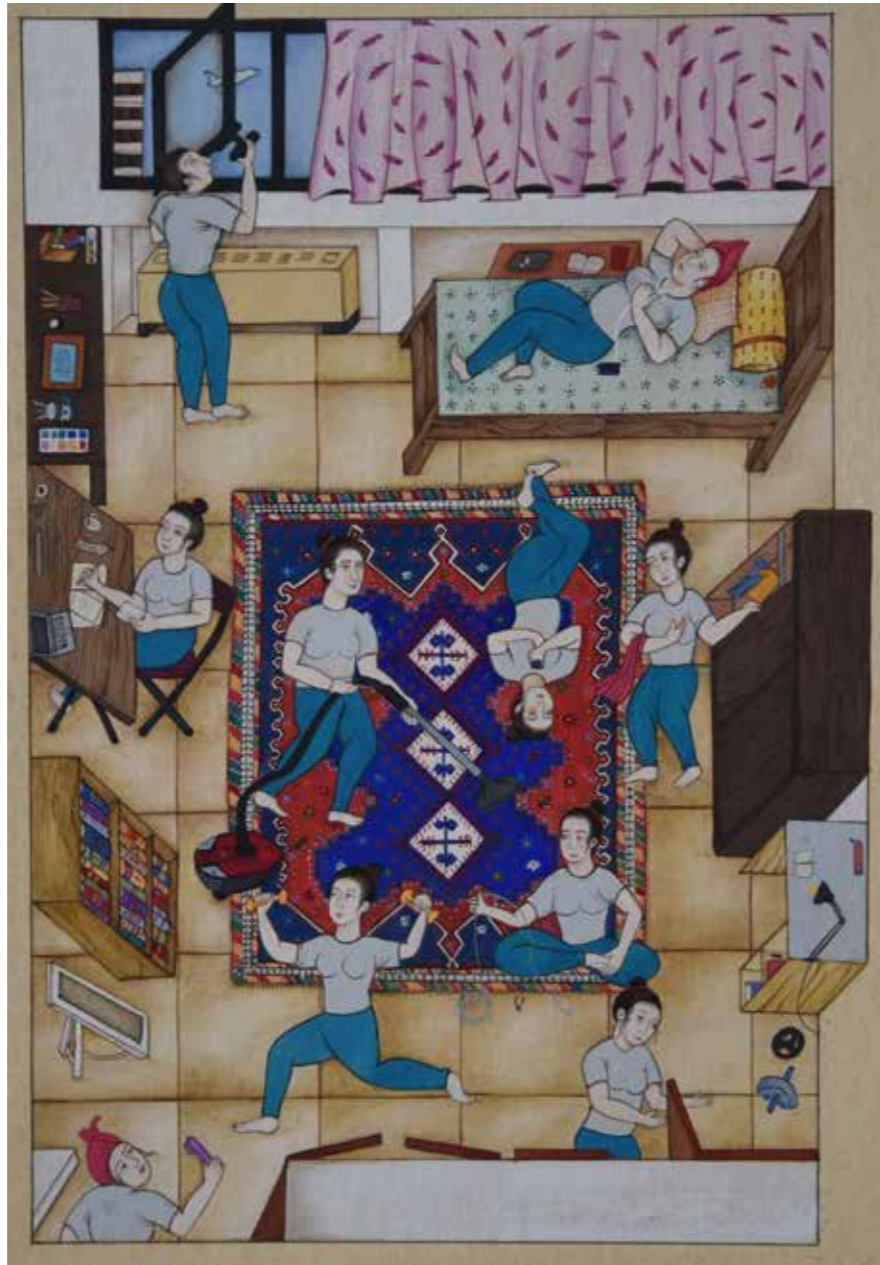
Embracing Uncertainty, 2024
Gouache on coffee-stained paper
18 x 13 in | 45.72 x 33.02 cm



Maryam Baniasadi

Cricket Match, 2022
Gouache on Wasli
9 x 12 in | 22.86 x 30.48 cm





Pandemic, 2022
Gouache on Wasli
6 x 8 in | 15.24 x 20.32 cm



Qawali night, 2022
Gouache on Wasli
9 x 12.5 in | 22.86 x 31.75 cm

My first interaction with Rameshwar Broota ji was in 2007-08, while working on a project with Tihar Jail inmates. Over the years, I've had the privilege of spending time with him, including travelling together for the Freedom to March Project — each interaction deepening my fascination with his artistic process.

Nothing has captivated me more than his small-format canvases—works that seem to defy the expectations we have of Broota's larger-than-life creations.

Broota's oeuvre is synonymous with grandeur and scale; his canvases typically span feet, not inches. The precision and scale of his large works are astounding, but it's his smaller works, measuring a mere 6 by 6 inches, that offer an intimate, deeply personal glimpse into his genius. The contrast between his typical monumental pieces and these miniature works is striking, and even those familiar with his art are often surprised by the mastery he brings to this small format.

In fact, during a conversation with Professor BN Goswamy at the Jaipur Literature Festival, he was astonished when I mentioned these smaller works. Subsequently, I shared images which he found enthralling and wanted to dwell deeper into the allure this small format held for Broota. Unfortunately, we lost Dr. Goswamy in 2023 and this conversation remains incomplete.

The preparation of these small canvases is a meticulous process. Broota begins by layering the canvas with multiple coats of paint, creating a unique texture that serves as the foundation for his intricate work. But where traditional miniature artists build up their layers with the thinnest brush, Broota reverses this approach. Using the edge of the simplest blade—ideally of Bharat brand—he carefully scrapes away at the paint, coaxing out the imagery that lies beneath. Each stroke of the blade is deliberate, each line painstakingly carved into the layers, revealing a world within the canvas.

The result is nothing short of mesmerizing. These small-format paintings demand even more precision than his larger works; they leave little room for error, requiring a level of focus and control that speaks of Broota's mastery.

In his studio, you may see a large canvas on the easel, but there will also be a small canvas on his desk, receiving just as much care and attention. When asked if he considers these works as miniatures, Broota dismisses the classification, simply stating, "They are paintings, and that's all that matters. The small ones require even more focus as there is no margin of errors."

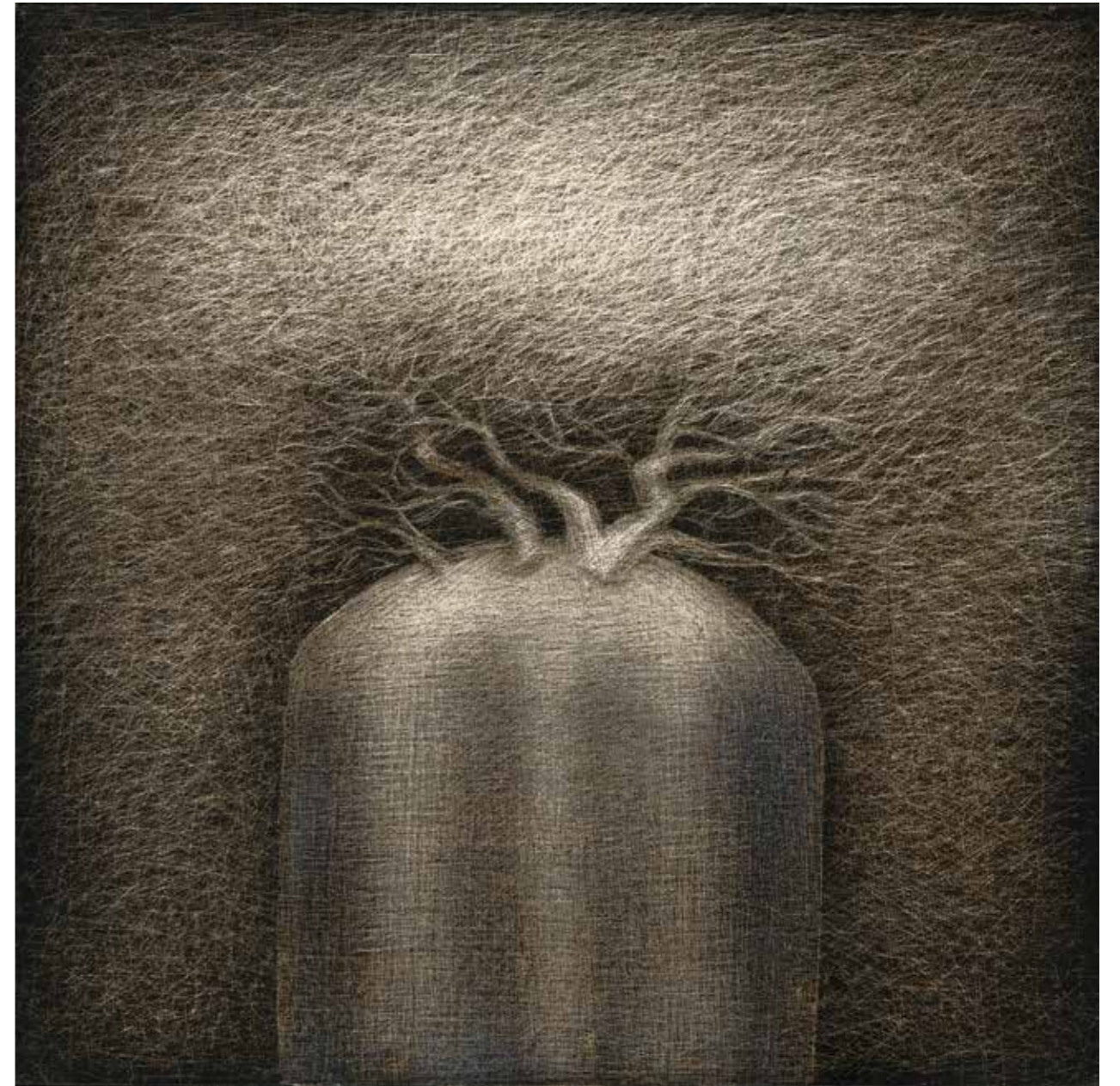
It is a privilege to present Broota's small-format works in this exhibition, bringing in a different element to this exhibition. These paintings add a distinct and significant dimension showing us that size does not determine the depth of a painting's soul. It is a rare gift to witness such precision, emotion, and grandeur condensed into such an intimate space.

In the world of Broota's miniature works, every inch tells a story.

— Anubhav Nath

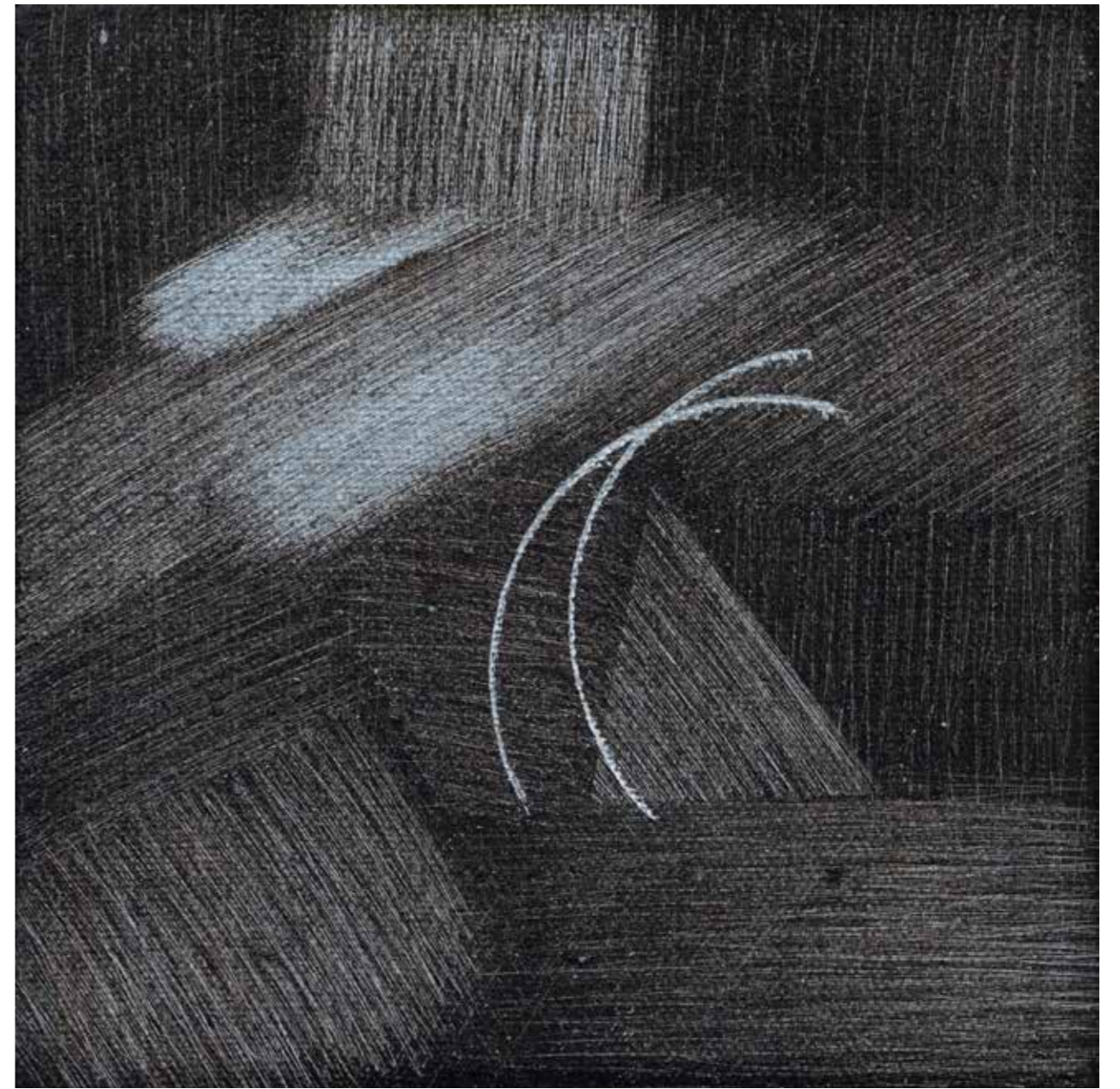
Rameshwar Broota

Untitled, 2021
Oil on Canvas
10 x 10 in | 25.4 x 25.4 cm

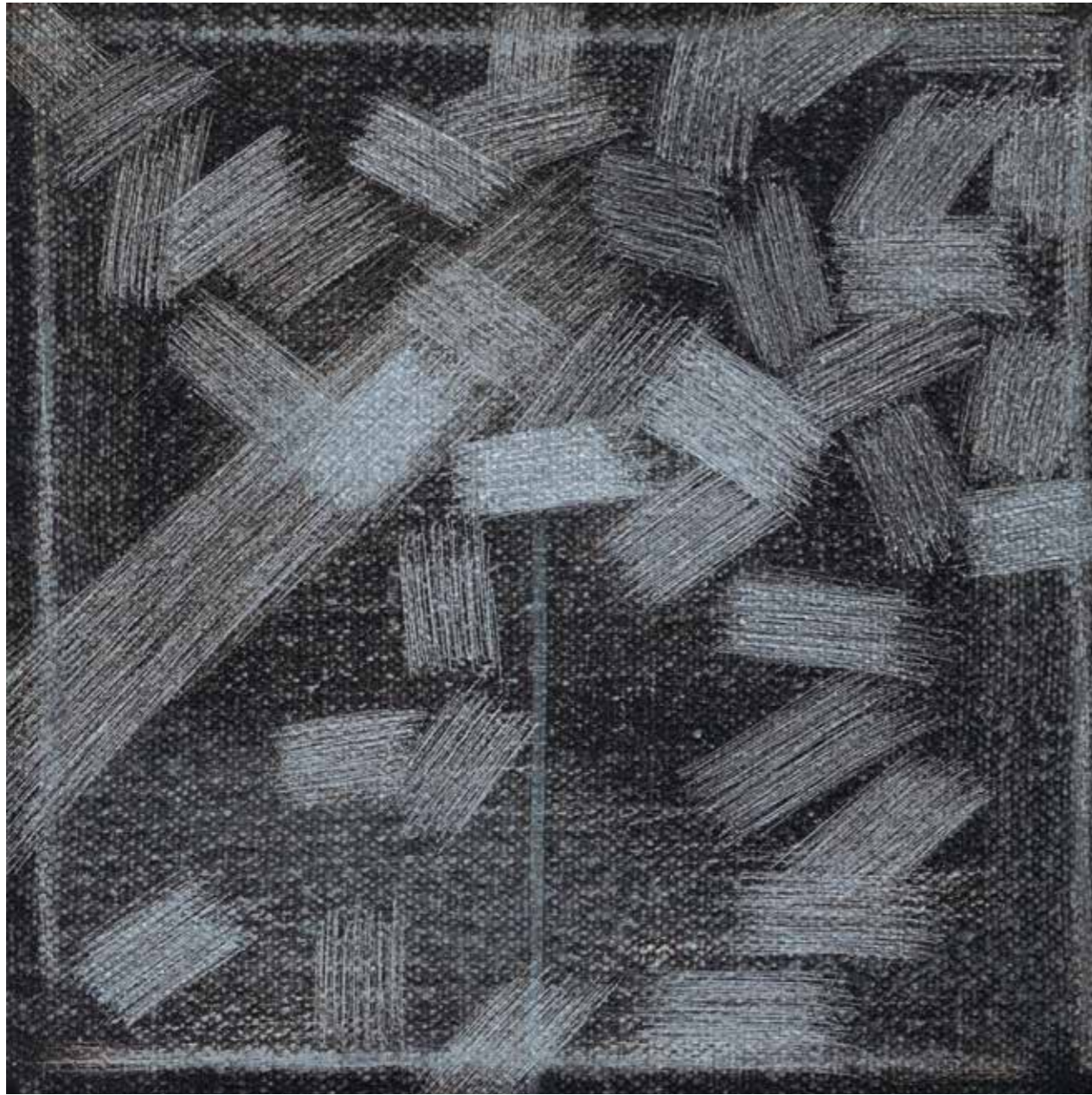




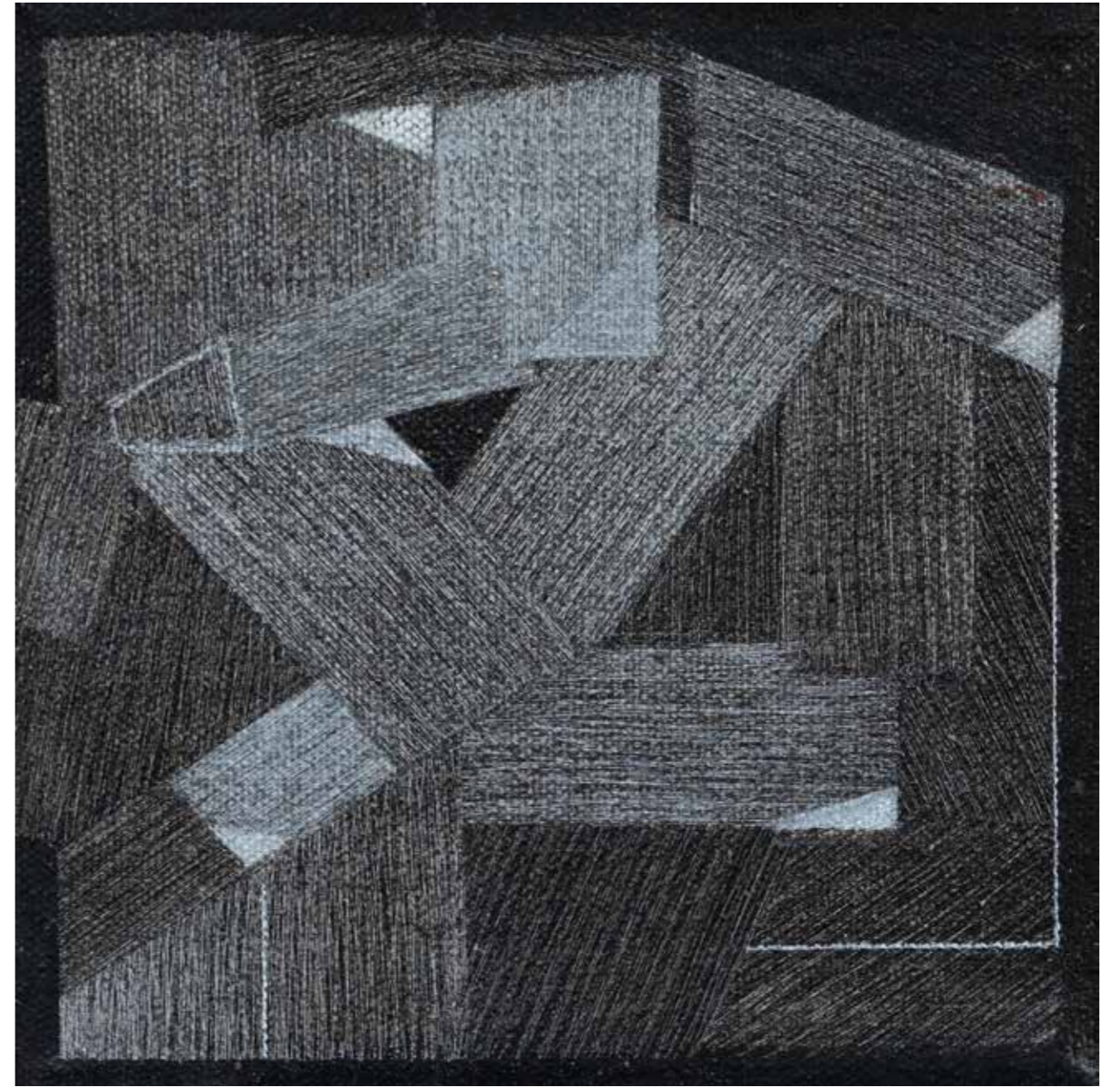
Untitled, 2024
Oil on Canvas & Resin
6 x 6 in | 15.24 x 15.24 cm



Untitled, 2024
Oil on Canvas
6 x 6 in | 15.24 x 15.24 cm



Untitled, 2024
Oil on Canvas
6 x 6 in | 15.24 x 15.24 cm



Untitled, 2024
Oil on Canvas
6 x 6 in | 15.24 x 15.24 cm

Jethro Buck

Lesson by Moonlight, 2024
Gouache, Watercolours on hemp paper
12 x 9 in | 30.48 x 22.86 cm



Gargi Chandola

Clash and Smash II, 2024
Gouache on Wasli
19 x 14 in | 48.26 x 35.56 cm





Clash and Smash I, 2024
Gouache on Wasli
19 x 14 in | 48.26 x 35.56 cm



Clash and Smash III, 2024
Gouache on Wasli
19 x 14 in | 48.26 x 35.56 cm



The Turning World II, 2024
Watercolour, 24 carat gold leaf
on Two Rivers handmade cotton paper
11 x 11 in | 27 cms dia.

Linda Edwards



The Bright Moon Rises, 2024
Watercolour, 24 carat gold leaf
on Two Rivers handmade cotton paper
11 x 11 in | 27 cms dia.



I Send My Message to the Moon, 2024
Watercolour, 24 carat gold leaf
on Two Rivers handmade cotton paper
11 x 11 in | 27 cms dia.



Running to paradise II, 2024
Watercolour, 24 carat gold leaf
on Two Rivers handmade cotton paper
11 x 11 in | 27 cms dia.



Six Around One II, 2024
Watercolour, 24 carat gold leaf
on Two Rivers handmade cotton paper
11 x 11 in | 27 cms dia.

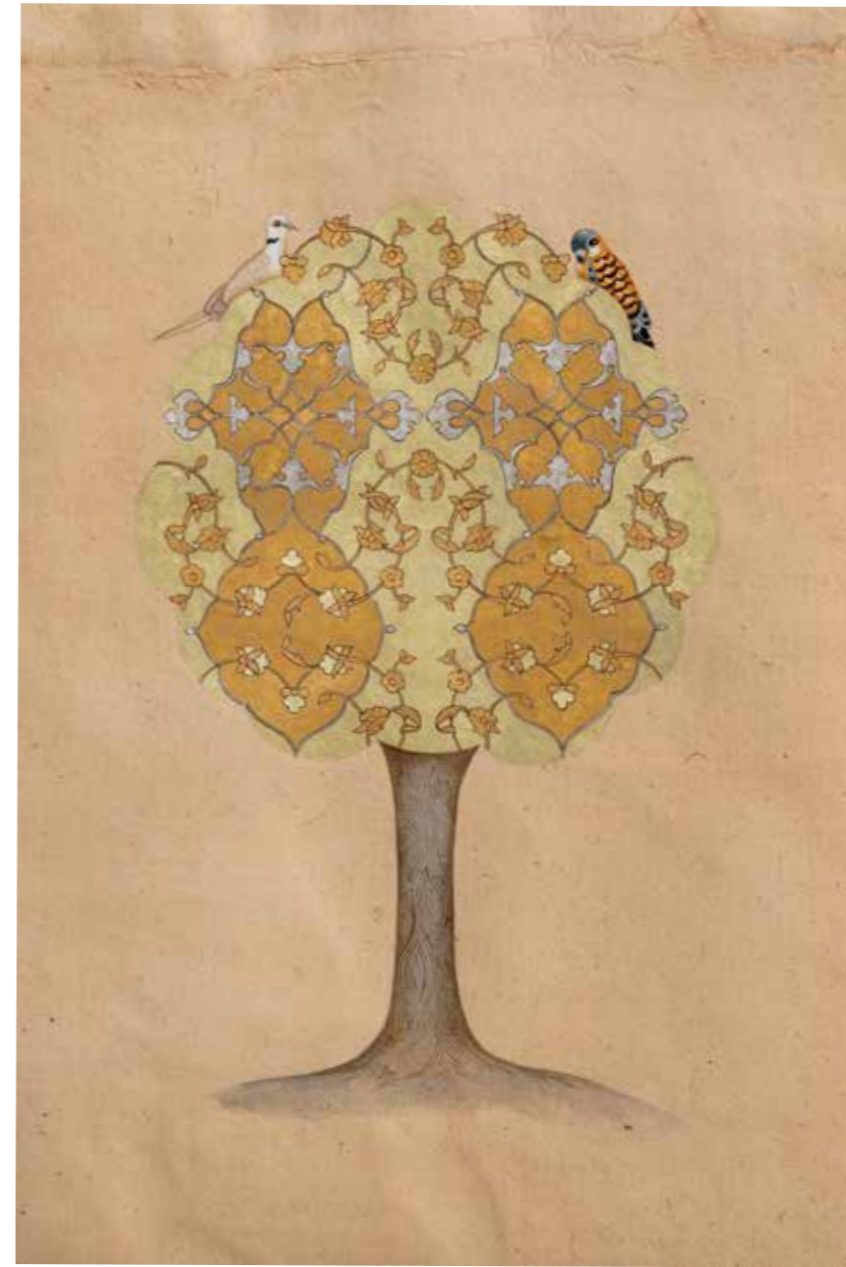
Ayesha Gamiet

The Parakeets and Persimmon Trees, 2020
Shell Gold, gouache, watercolour
on Nepalese Lokta Paper
13.78 x 9.74 in | 34 x 24 cm





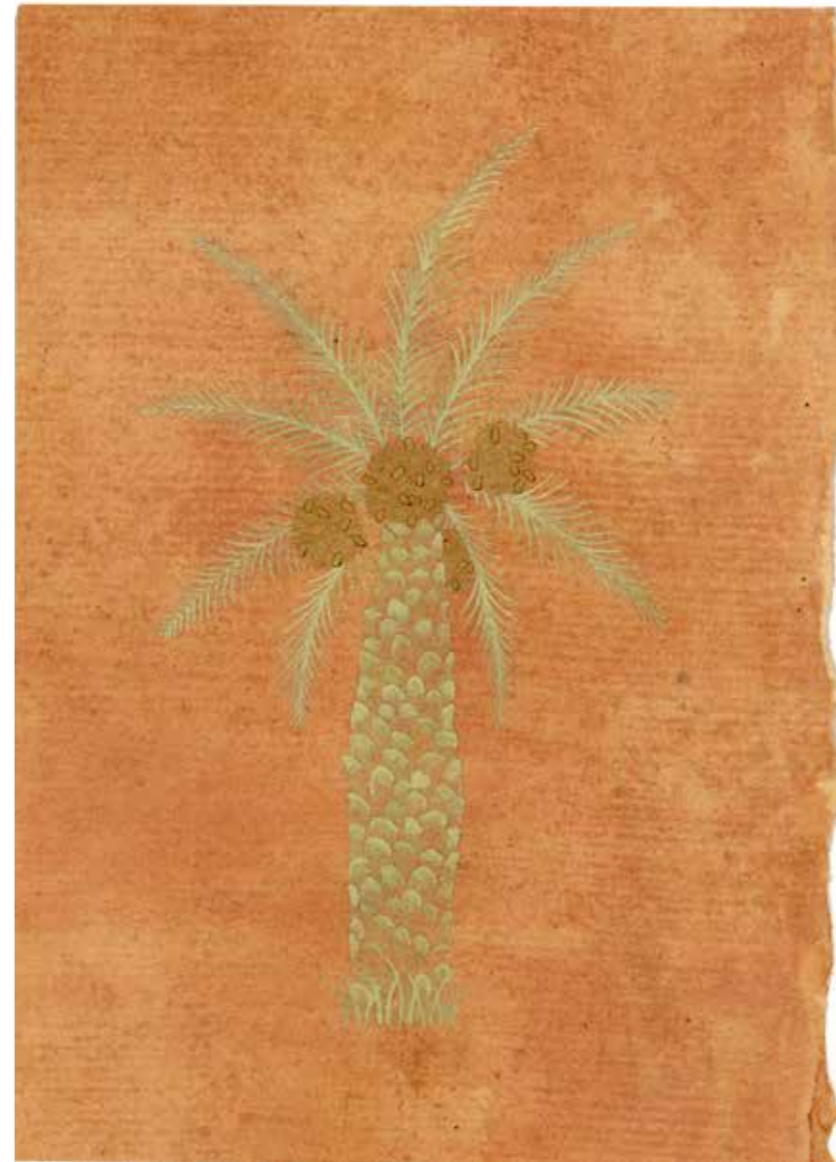
The Flight Across Ocean, 2022
Shell Gold, gouache, watercolour on hemp paper
13.39 x 9.45 in | 34 x 24 cm



Ayten Hoca's Tree, 2024
Shell gold, palladium shell, gouache, watercolour,
walnut ink on stained Indian hemp paper
7.28 x 11.02 in | 18.49 x 27.9 cm



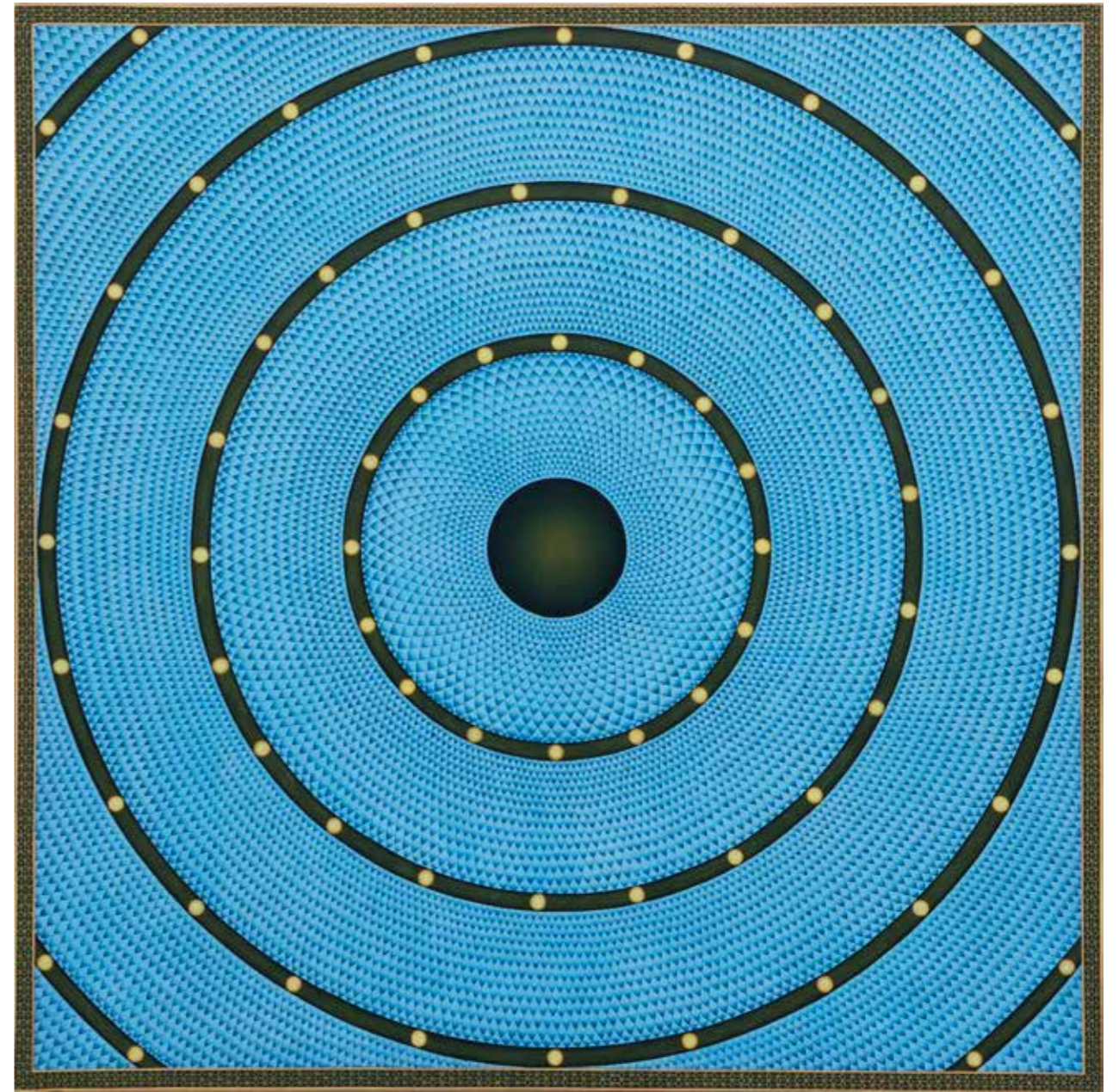
Valley of Love; Fig Tree, 2021
Shell Gold on hemp paper stained with avocado skin
8.07 x 6.1 in | 20.4 x 15 cm



Valley of Love; Date Tree, 2021
Shell Gold on hemp paper stained with avocado skin
8.07 x 6.1 in | 20.4 x 15 cm

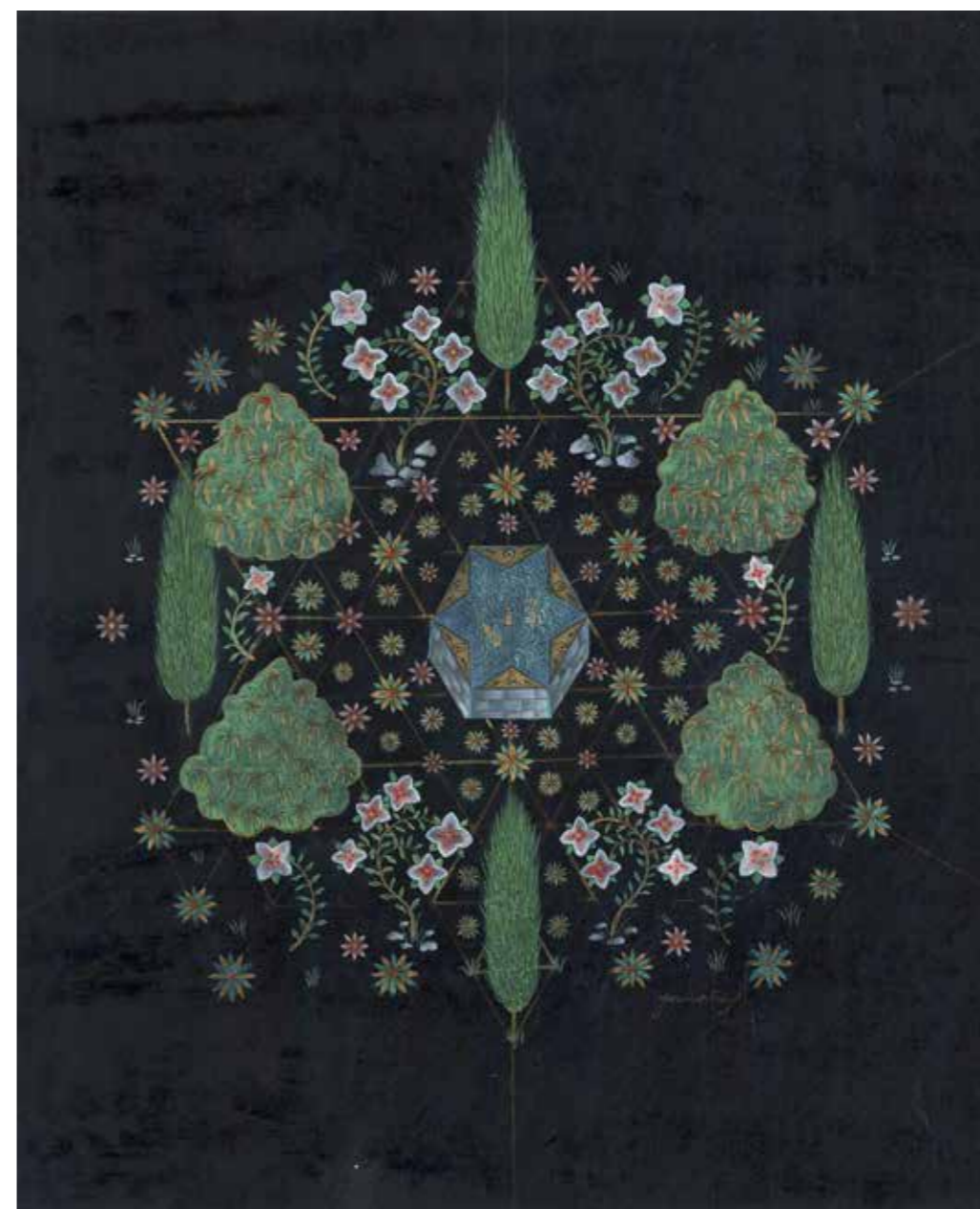
Alexander Gorlizki

Untitled 1 (Pichwai), 2024
Pigment on Cotton
42 x 42 in | 106.68 x 106.68 cm



Yasmin Hayat

A Beautiful Dream, 2024
22 carat shell gold, genuine palladium shell,
genuine 23.5 carat gold leaf, hand-ground pigments
on handmade indigo paper
12 x 14 in | 30.48 x 35.56 cm





The Dogs of Ashabe-Kahf, 2018
22 carat shell gold, genuine palladium shell, genuine 23.5 carat gold leaf,
hand-ground pigments on handmade indigo paper
24 x 33 in | 60.96 x 83.82 cm

Keerat Kaur

Self-taught, 2024
Gouache, natural pigments on Wasli
25 x 35 in | 63.5 x 88.9 cm





Khirki, 2023
 Gouache, natural pigments and gold foil
 on HW 3mm cardstock
 16 x 20 in | 40.64 x 50.8 cm



Langar, 2023
 Gouache, natural pigments and gold foil
 on HW 3mm cardstock
 16 x 20 in | 40.64 x 50.8 cm



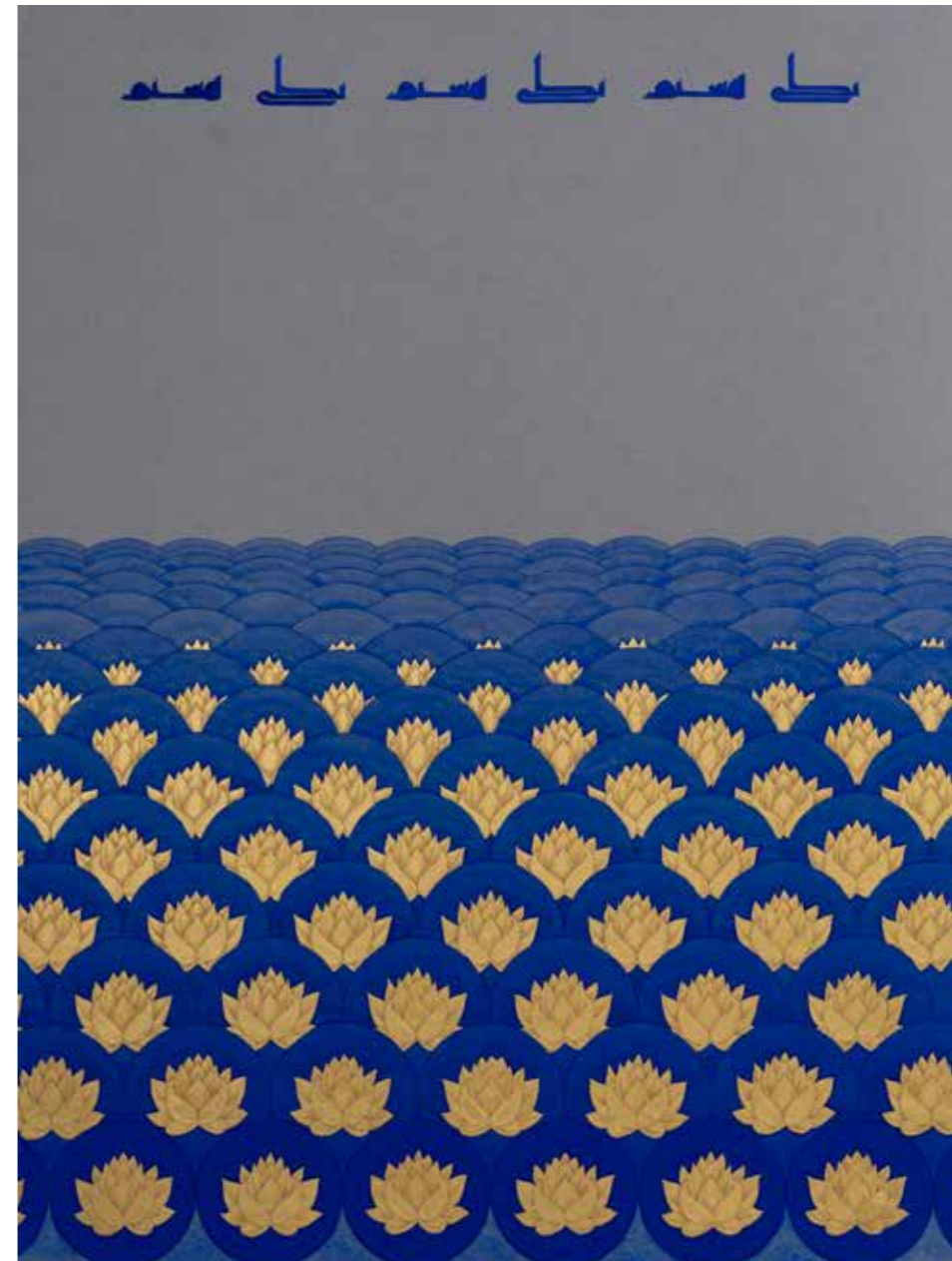
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Pavan Kavitkar

Observer-III, 2024
Gouache and watercolours on paper
30 x 60 in | 76.2 x 152.4 cm

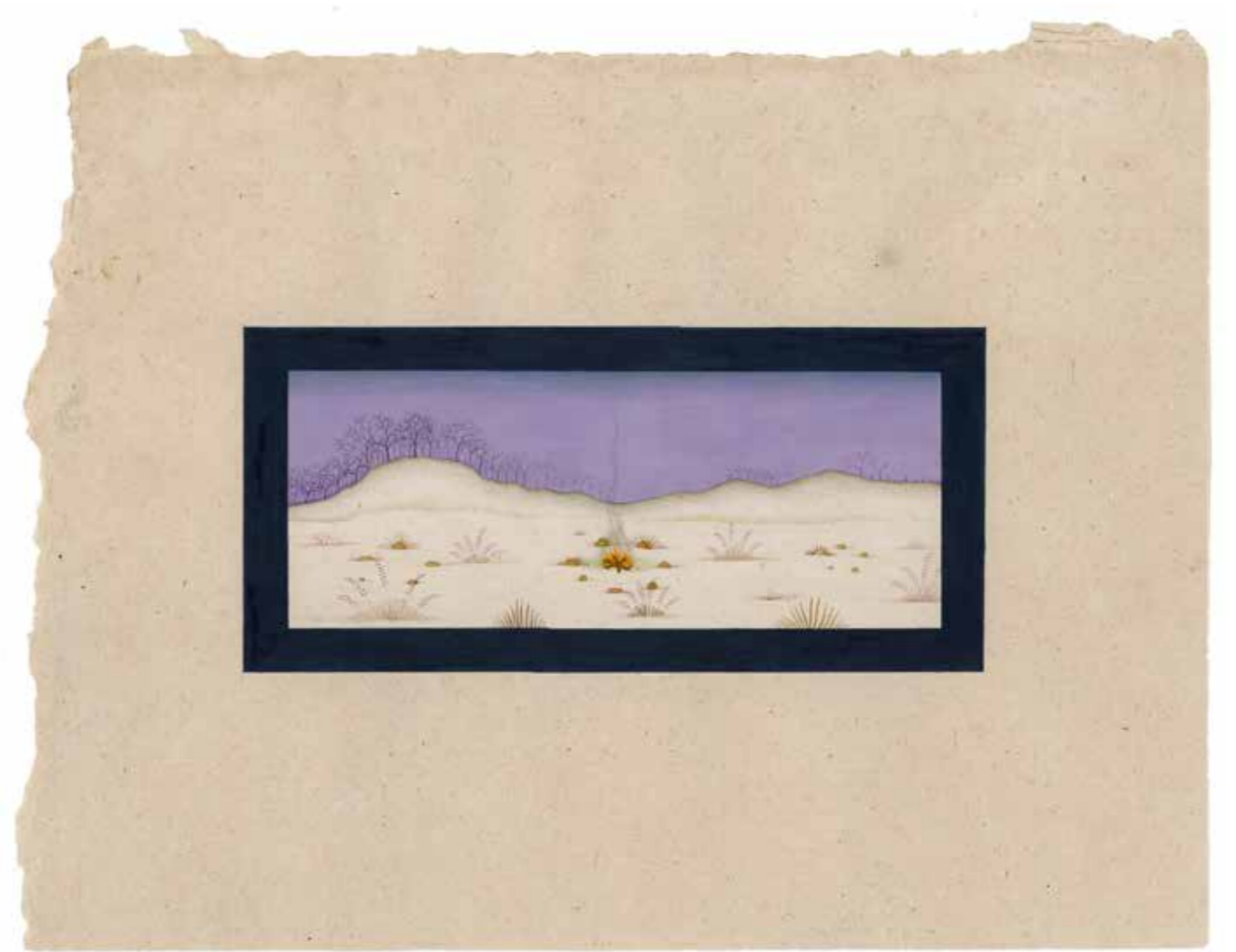
SM Khayyam

The Essence of Oneness, 2024
Gouache, Natural Pigments, Lapis Lazuli,
24k Gold Leaf on Cotton Archival Paper
16.5 x 22 in | 41.91 x 55.88 cm





Stillness Whispers, 2024
Gouache, Natural Pigments, Lapis Lazuli,
24k Gold Leaf on Cotton Archival Paper
16.5 x 22 in | 41.91 x 55.88 cm

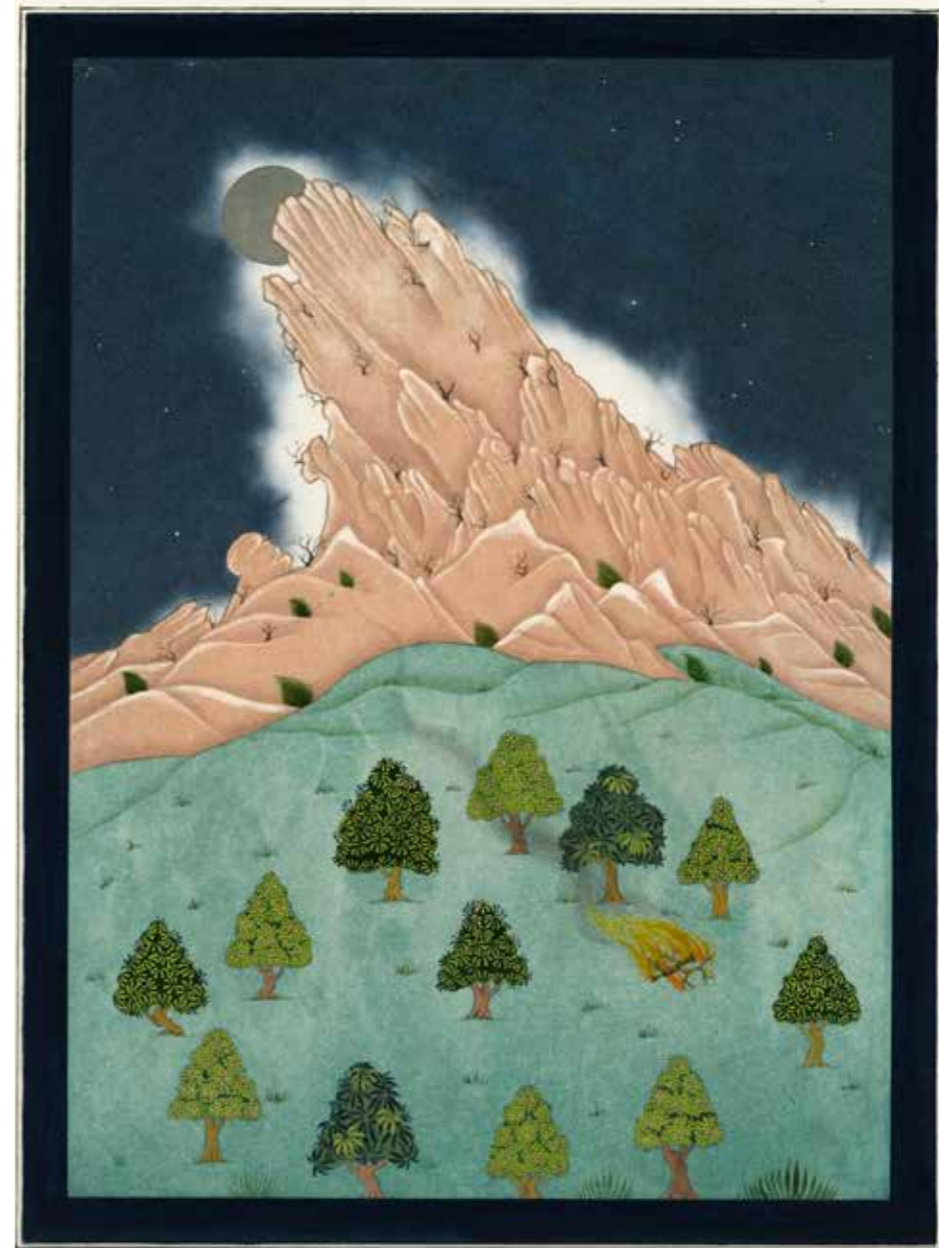


Murad Khan Mumtaz

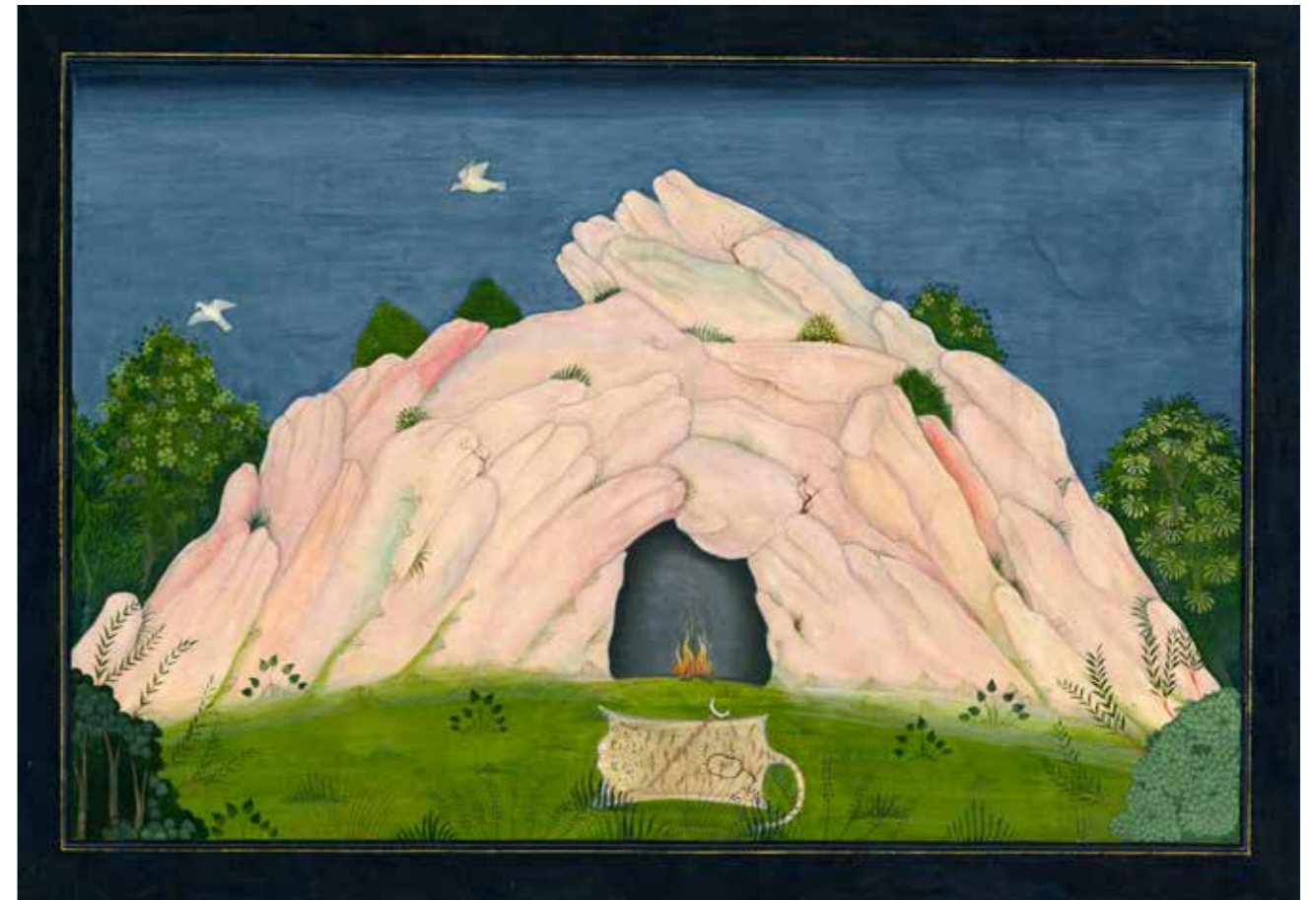
Winter Fire, 2024
Natural pigments on handmade Wasli paper
Artwork Size: 4.75 x 10.25 in | 12 x 26 cm
Paper Size: 14.5 x 11.5 in | 36.83 x 29.21 cm



Summer Burning Mountain, 2024
Natural pigments on Handmade Wasli paper
10 x 7.43 in | 25.4 x 18.87 cm



Early Summer Burning, 2024
Natural pigments on Handmade Wasli paper
11.12 x 8.31 in | 28.24 x 21.1 cm



Early Spring, 2024
Natural pigments on Handmade Wasli paper
11.25 x 15.62 in | 28.57 x 39.67 cm

Divya Pamnani

Cloud reverie 6, 2024
Stone pigments, Gouache, and inks on Wasli
13 x 13 in | 33.02 x 33.02 cm





Cloud reverie 3, 2024
Stone pigments, Gouache, and inks on Wasli
13 x 13 in | 33.02 x 33.02 cm



Cloud reverie 4, 2024
Stone pigments, Gouache, and inks on Wasli
13 x 13 in | 33.02 x 33.02 cm

Amaranta Peña

The Three Worlds, 2020
Natural pigments, watercolours
Gilded with 23 carat shellgold on mulberry paper
44.49 x 12.60 in | 113 x 32 cm



Weaving Time and Space, 2024
Natural pigments, watercolours
Gilded with 23 carat shellgold on mulberry paper
39.37 x 12.60 in | 99.9 x 32 cm



fold down



fold out

Vaishali Prazmari

Four Friends, 2022
Chinese ink on paper, opaque watercolour
on paper and oil on copper
Quadriptych, 6.38 x 3.94 in | 16.20 x 10 cm each

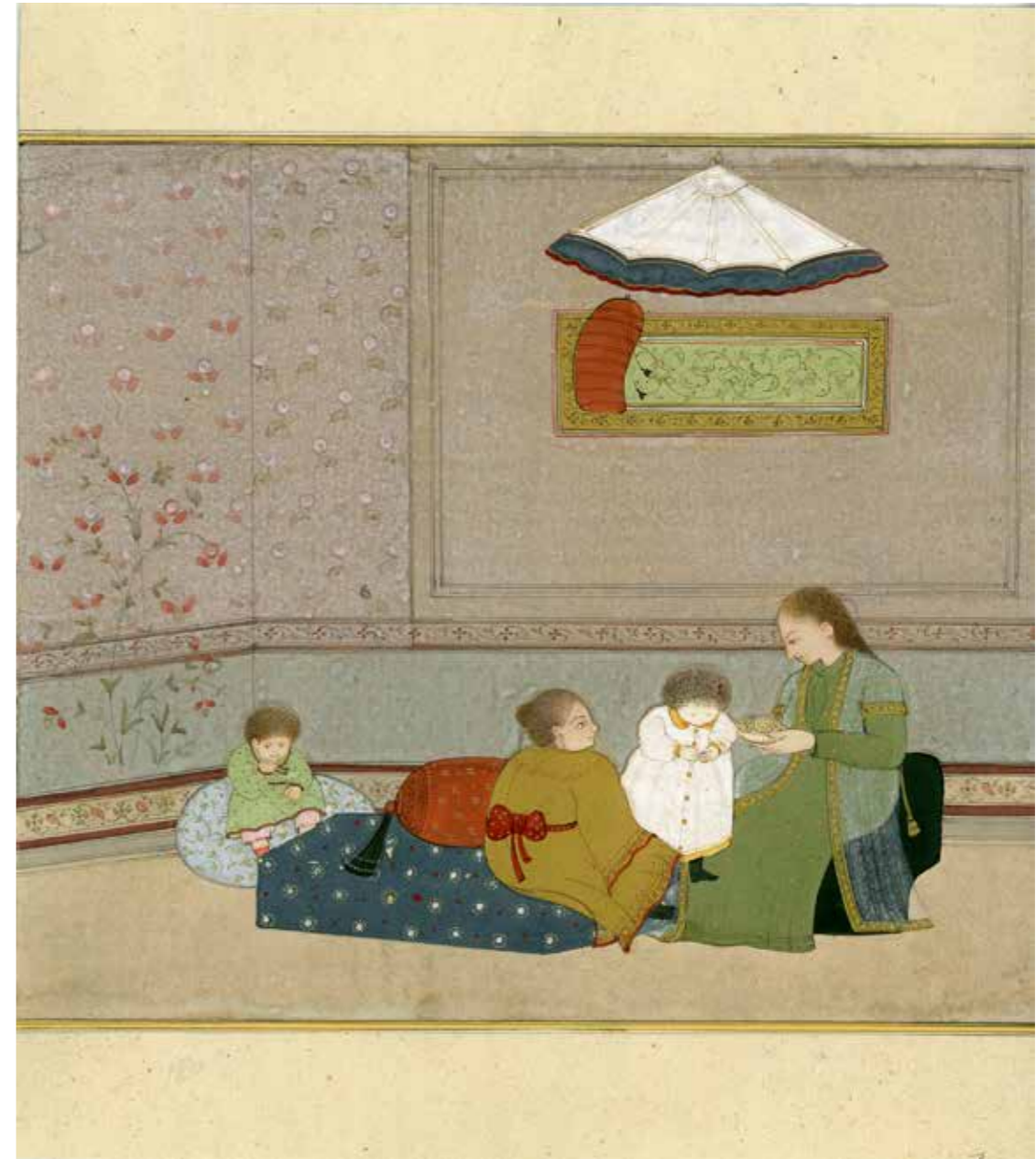
Vinita Sharma

Children III, 2022
Stone Colour, Liquid gold on Wasli
8.25 x 7.7 in | 20.9 x 19.5 cm





Children II, 2022
Stone Colour, Liquid gold on Wasli
8.25 x 7.7 in | 20.9 x 19.5 cm



Children I, 2022
Stone Colour, Liquid gold on Wasli
8.25 x 7.7 in | 20.9 x 19.5 cm



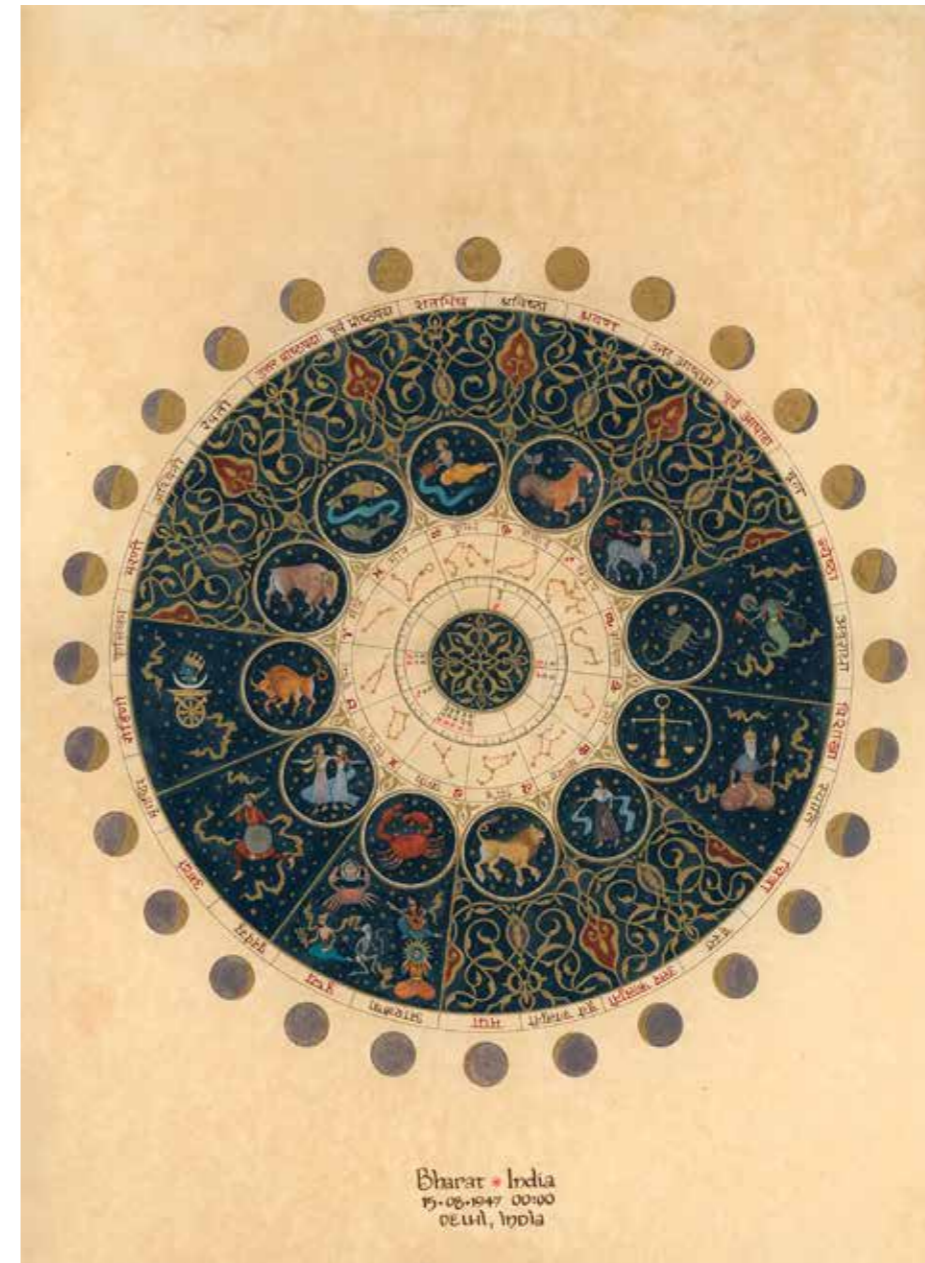
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Annelie Solis

Map of Constellations, 2020
Natural pigments and shell gold on Wasli paper
58 x 31 in | 147.32 x 78.74 cm



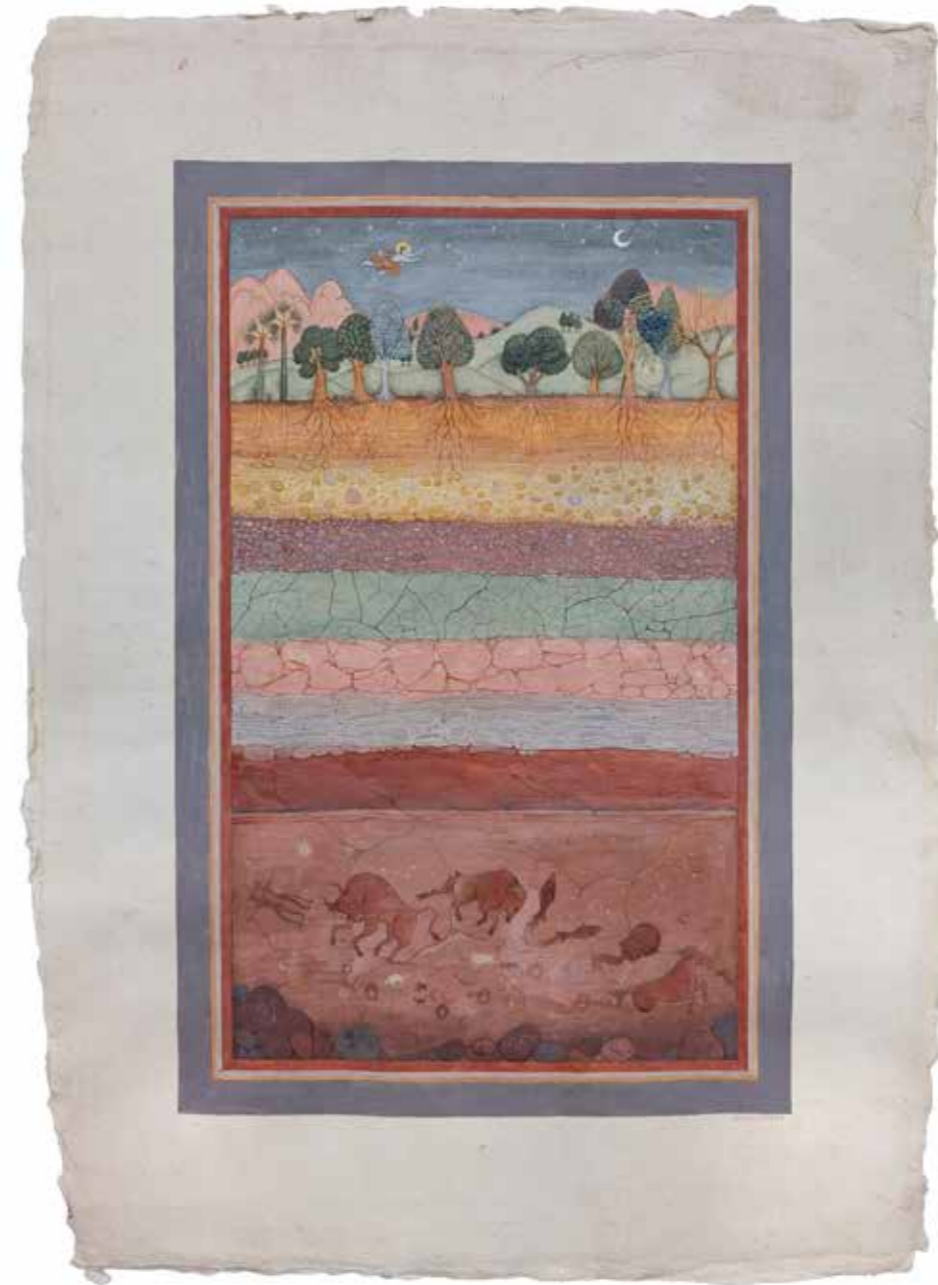
Talking with Ptolemy, 2020
 Natural pigments on Wasli paper
 11.02 x 15.75 in | 22.9 x 40 cm



Birth Chart, 2024
 Natural pigments & shell gold on
 hot pressed watercolour paper
 11.75 x 16.5 in | 29.84 x 41.91 cm



Heaven, 2024
Foraged Trinidadian pigments & shell gold on Wasli paper
16.54 x 22.83 in | 42 x 57.9 cm



Earth, 2024
Foraged Trinidadian pigments & shell gold on Wasli paper
16.54 x 22.83 in | 42 x 57.9 cm

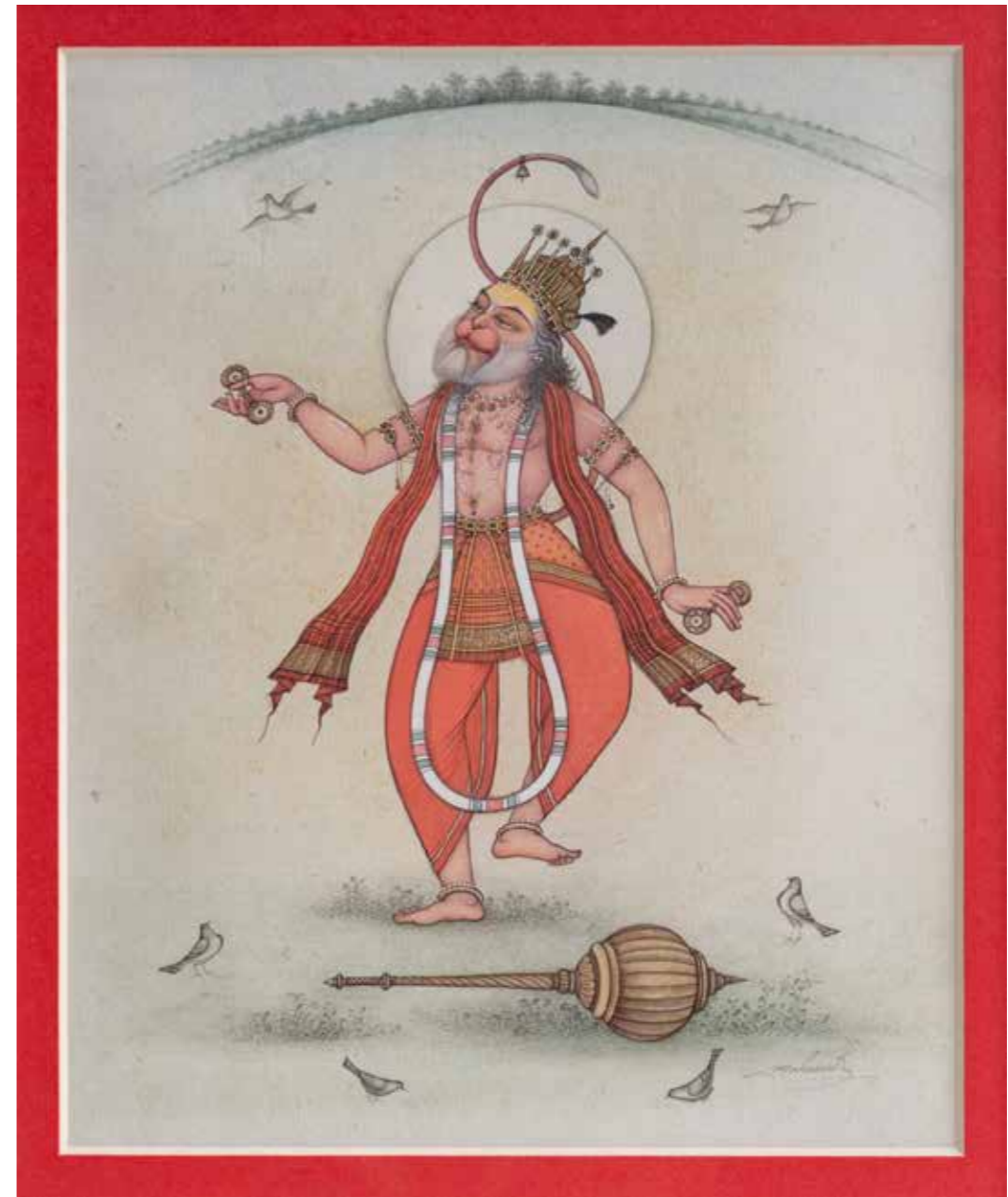
Manish Soni

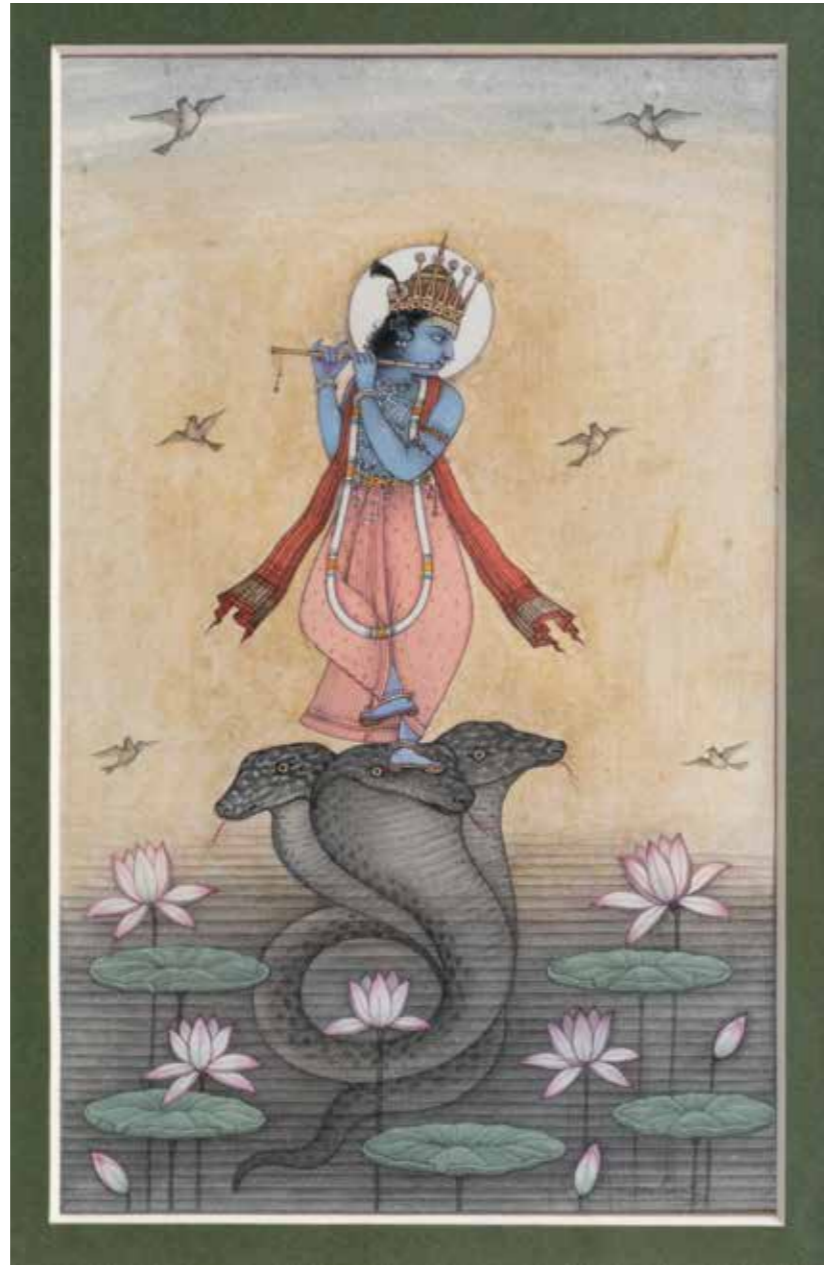
A Symphony of Elements, 2024
Natural pigments and gouache on Wasli
24 x 24 in | 60.96 x 60.96 cm



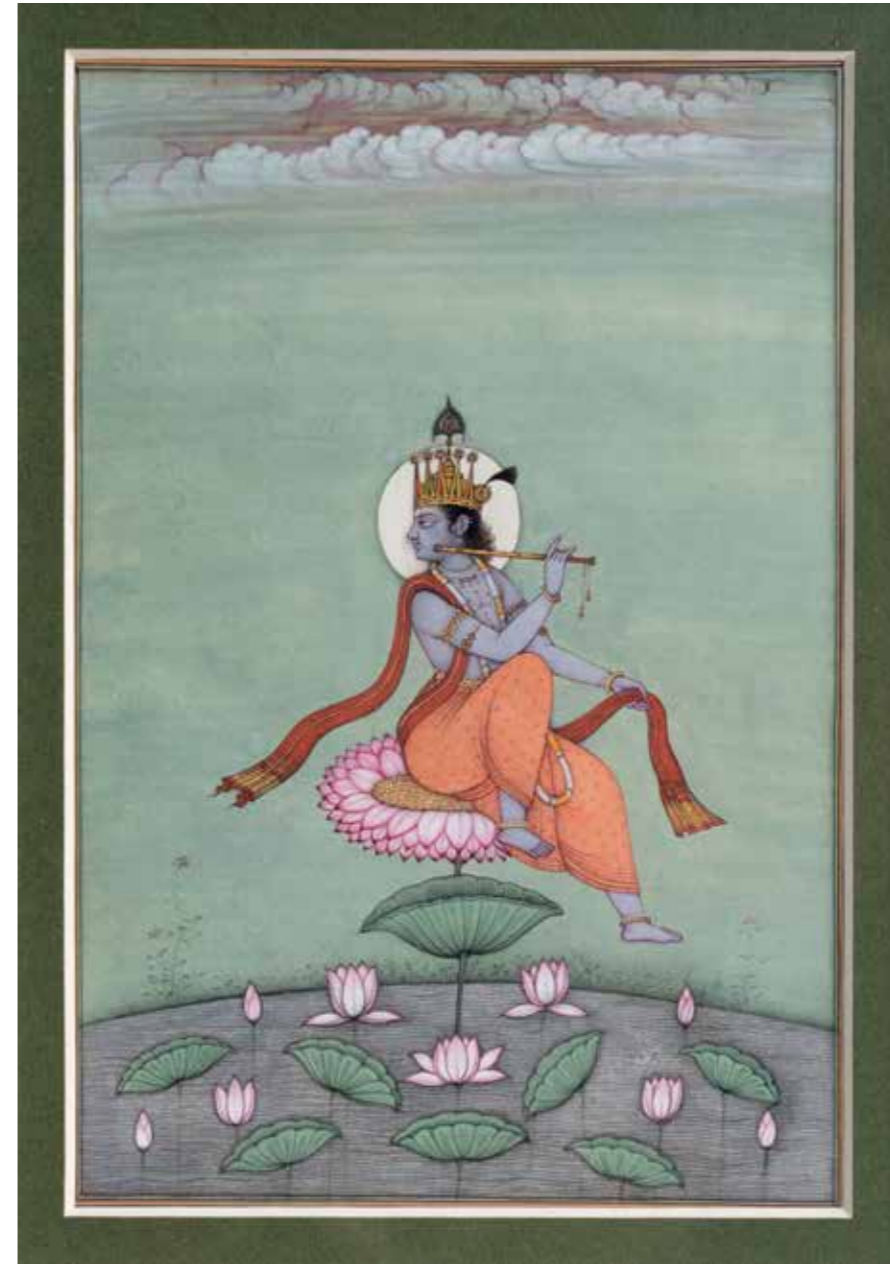
Mahaveer Swami

Bhakt Hanuman, 2024
Natural Pigments, Gold ink on Wasli
9 x 7.5 in | 22.86 x 19.05 cm

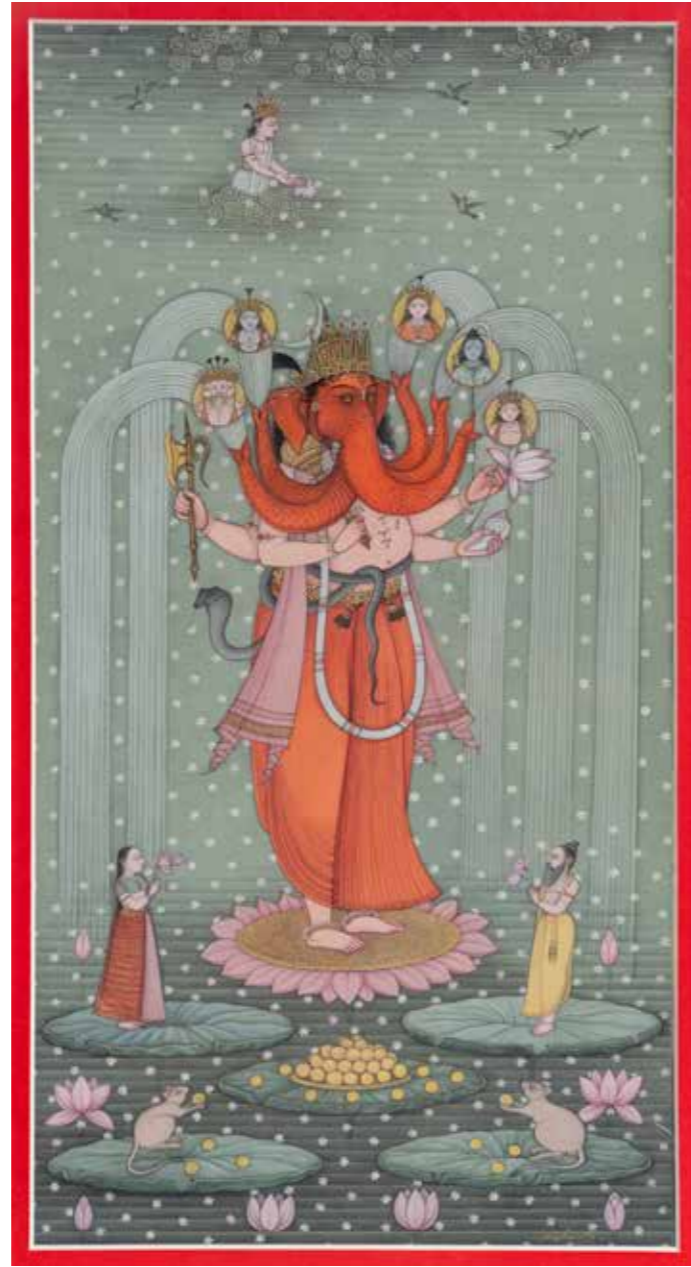




Krishna Dancing on Kaliya, 2024
Natural Pigments, Gold ink on Wasli
9.5 x 6 in | 24.13 x 15.24 cm



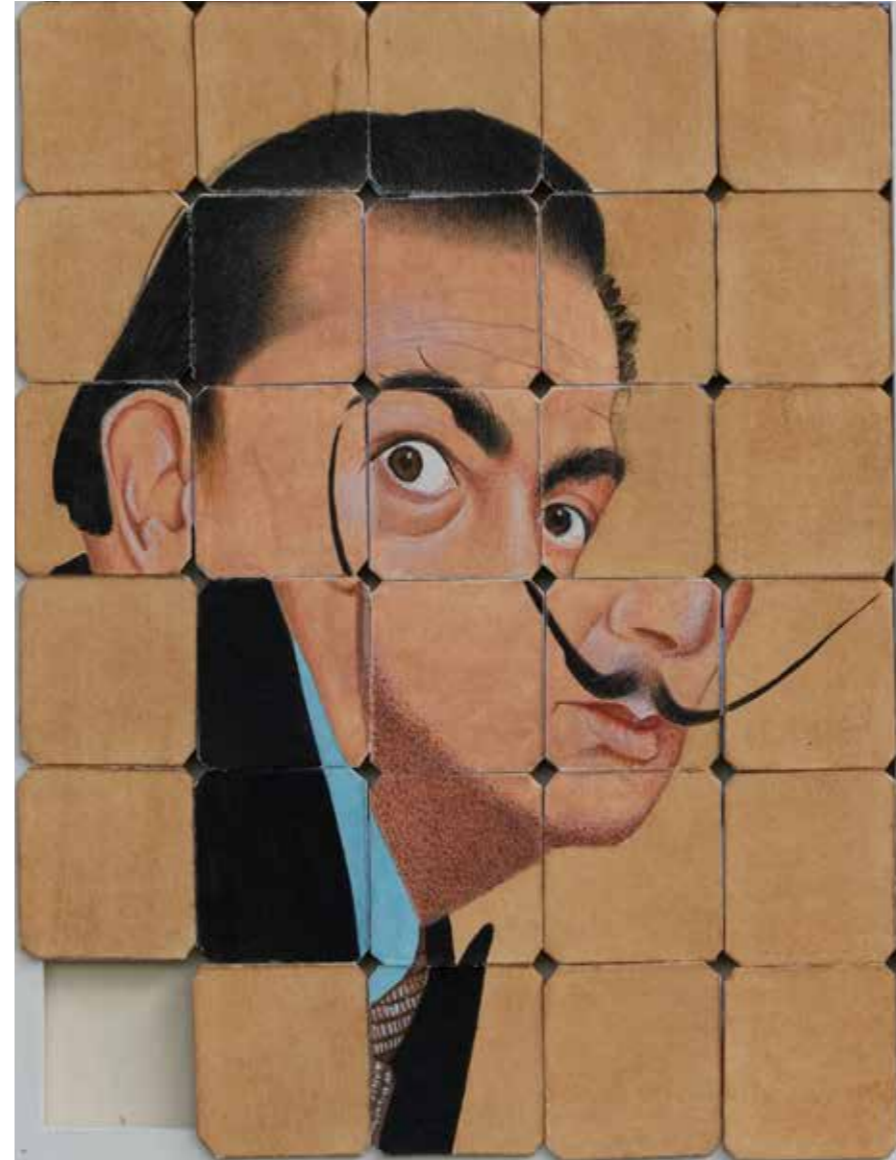
Krishna, 2023
Natural Pigments, Gold ink on Wasli
8.5 x 6 in | 21.59 x 15.24 cm



Virat Ganesh, 2024
Natural Pigments, Gold ink on Wasli
21.5 x 11.5 in | 54.61 x 29.21 cm



Tulip, 2024
Natural Pigments, Gold ink on Wasli
13 x 6 in | 33.02 x 15.24 cm



Amjad Ali Talpur

Portrait, 2024
Gouache on Wasli
6 x 7 in | 15.24 x 17.78 cm



Portrait, 2024
Gouache on Wasli
5 x 6 in | 12.7 x 15.24 cm



Portrait, 2024
Gouache on Wasli
5 x 6 in | 12.7 x 15.24 cm



Portrait, 2024
Gouache on Wasli
5 x 6 in | 12.7 x 15.24 cm



Portrait, 2024
Gouache on Wasli
5 x 6 in | 12.7 x 15.24 cm

For more than a decade, Ojas Art has been at the helm of working with the indigenous arts. This project has been an exploration of something different. Art has no boundaries – is truly exemplified by the musawwari project-exhibition.

The exhibition features a diverse group of about 20 artists, from Europe, North America, Ecuador, South Asia, and the Middle East. They demonstrate a mutual influence, where Indian aesthetics are reinterpreted within contemporary global contexts, in turn, enriching the global art narrative.

In bringing together artists from diverse backgrounds, this exhibition showcases the enduring relevance of musawwari. It highlights how this intricate art form continues to inspire and evolve, transcending time and geography. Through these works, we see how tradition serves not as a constraint, but as a fertile ground for innovation and creative expression in today's global art scene.

The exhibition seeks to move beyond the revival of miniature art, and invites a much deeper inquiry into its dynamic and ever-evolving nature today. This exhibition will mark the beginning of something afresh for us at Ojas Art.

I would like to thank my team for their unwavering support.

Anubhav Nath
Director, Ojas Art





Artist Information

Maha Ahmed born in 1989, lives & works in Dubai, completed her Master of Fine Arts at Central Saint Martin's School of Art, London on the Caspian Art Foundation Scholarship (2015) and a Bachelor of Fine Arts in Miniature Painting at the National College of Arts, Lahore (2012). Drawing on feelings of isolation and wonder, Ahmed's intricate, otherworldly visions of fantastical creatures and distant worlds offer a poignant reflection on her personal feelings of unfamiliarity during a period of living and working in Tokyo.

Her artistic style lies in the de-construction of identity, the self-positioning within a cultural context and society's reactions to the individual. Ahmed draws inspiration from Persian and Mughal manuscripts and from the tradition of Japanese landscape painting with its contemplative, meditative compositions of water, plants, rocks and animals. In her works, Ahmed places hybrid creatures into imagined utopian landscapes. Her subjects subtly inhabit spaces that are not dominated by humans but reserved instead for the unfolding of dreams, for imaginings and for emotions.

Maryam Baniasadi is an Iranian visual artist based in Lahore, Pakistan. She holds a Bachelor's degree in miniature painting from the national college of arts. She completed her Master's degree in visual arts from the same institute in December 2017.

In her paintings, she uses elements from nature specially trees and manmade objects like red bricks to rationalize this relationship. She presents these objects and nature as two elements that continue to exist parallel to each other as both evolve with one complimenting the other; to her the manmade object is like human ambition which is always trying to tame nature and create boundaries. This is evident in her work as she depicts the importance of all that is green around us and the way it grows side by side with manmade objects.

The medium and techniques of miniature painting that she uses to paint these subjects represent her personal style and changes that take place in the process of creating them.

Rameshwar Broota born in 1941 in New Delhi, Broota is one of the most important artists from his generation of post-modernists. He completed degree in Fine Arts from the Delhi College of Art. Since 1967, he has served as the head of department at Triveni Kala Sangam, New Delhi. Broota's work is included in many prestigious collections, including the National Gallery of Modern Art, New Delhi; the Rashtrapati Bhavan, New Delhi; Lalit Kala Akademi, India; the Josip Broz Tito Museum, Yugoslavia; Kunst Museum, Dusseldorf; the Chester and David Herwitz Collection; the Peabody Essex Museum, USA; and the Kiran Nadar Museum of Art, New Delhi and Noida.

Over the course of his career, Broota has received several awards and honours, including the Lifetime Achievement Award at the Lalit Arpan Festival, New Delhi, in 2013; the Kala Vibhushan by the All India Fine Arts and Crafts Society, New Delhi, in 1997 and many more. In 2015, he had a major retrospective at Kiran Nadar Museum of Art, Delhi.

Jethro Buck born in 1986 and completed his Masters in Arts in Traditional Arts at The Prince's School of Traditional Arts, London in June 2014. He attended Falmouth College of Art 2005–8, following a year of Art Foundation at Abingdon & Whitney College in 2003. After university, he worked at St. Edwards School, Oxford as a teaching assistant and technician where he was also Artist in Residence.

In 2014, he was honoured with the Ciclitira prize for outstanding work presented by HRH Prince Charles. From the time he received a grant from INTACH in 2012, he used this to study Indian miniature painting under the tutorage of master painter Ajay and Vinita Sharma.

Jethro Buck is a painter with a special interest in Indian miniature painting. He applies Traditional techniques to explore and celebrate the natural world often using hand ground natural pigments.

Gargi Chandola is a visual artist based in New Delhi. Her work focuses, in no particular order, on observations of the self, the everyday, and her imaginings. Within these observations, she gravitates towards themes of feminism, personal history, violence, socio-political hierarchy, and often articulates these with a touch of humor. Gargi creates paintings (primarily on paper), illustrated zines, and large-scale murals.

She is the co-founder of Post-Art Project, a multi-disciplinary arts studio. Currently, Gargi is training in Pahari Miniatures in Kangra School under master artists Vijay Sharma & Deepak Sharma. Her work has been showcased in a number of shows in India and London. In 2023, she had her first solo exhibition with Method Kala Ghoda, Mumbai.

Linda Edwards born in Africa and raised in Stockton-on-Tees, North East England, and Linda Edwards is a self-taught artist residing in Shrewsbury, Shropshire. She earned a degree in Geography from the University of Cambridge and worked as a freelance illustrator from 1993 to 2017, collaborating with international clients on children's books and product licensing. In 2014, she founded Sunny Side Art Ltd. to celebrate places through her illustrations.

Since 2017, Linda has focused on creating and exhibiting paintings. Her work has been showcased in exhibitions, including Trena Cox: Reflections 100 at Chester Cathedral (2024), The Turning of the Sun at Mrs Jones Gallery (2023), and the Bath Art Fair (2023, 2024). She has also participated in A Charm of Goldfinches at Gateway Gallery and the Shrewsbury Museum and Art Gallery's Arts Trail Open (2023). Linda's artistic practice celebrates the natural world, exploring pattern, colour, and geometry. Her meditative layering process culminates in the use of gold leaf, drawing inspiration from medieval manuscripts and Indo-Persian art.

Ayesha Gamiet was born in London and lives and works in the South East of England. She trained at the Prince's School of Traditional Arts, where she specialized in Islamic manuscript illumination and miniature painting. In 2018, Ayesha completed her apprenticeship in manuscript illumination under Master Illuminators, Ayten Tiryaki and Çiçek Derman in Istanbul. She was then commissioned by the Royal Library at Windsor Castle to illuminate frontispieces for four volumes of poetry gifted to HM Queen Elizabeth II, HM The King, and poet Imtiaz Dharker. The final volume was acquired by the Royal Collection Trust.

Rooted in the rich visual language of Islamic Art and the natural world, Ayesha's work reinterprets traditional forms, motifs, and narratives for a contemporary context. Inspired by Persian and Indian miniature painting, illuminated manuscripts, poetry, and stories, Ayesha's art is enriched by many different cultural influences. Ayesha employs traditional methods and techniques in creating her paintings.

Alexander Gorlizki born in 1967, in London, studied Bachelor of Fine Arts at Bristol Polytechnic, followed by Master of Fine Arts in Sculpture at the Slade, London. Alexander currently lives and works in New York.

Known for his works Indian style miniature paintings, his obsession with miniatures has made him collaborate with Riyaz Uddin, a Jaipur based miniature artist and opened Pink City Studio, in Jaipur. Gorlizki has done over 15 solo exhibitions, the most recent ones being Variable Dimensions, Dallas and Special Presentation, New York, both in 2015. He has participated in numerous group exhibitions and residencies while his artworks are a part of the Denver Art Museum, Royal Ontario Museum and Victoria & Albert Museum to name a few. He has also taught at various museums and institutions including the Victoria & Albert Museum, University of West England and Museum Kunstpalast.

Yasmin Hayat born in 1990, is a British-Syrian artist who studied painting at Central Saint Martin's (University of Arts London) before specialising in the arts of the SWANA region at the Prince's Foundation School of Traditional Arts. After graduating with distinction in geometry and miniature painting, Yasmin developed a language of painting which is derived from an old Arabic style and incorporates contemporary Western and Indo-Persian techniques. Her work is a considered blend of Eastern and Western methodology which she uses to explore themes of migration, heritage, and memory. In 2018, Yasmin was awarded the Kairos prize by His Royal Highness, King Charles and Professor Keith Critchlow for her paintings which preserve and celebrate traditional art practices and techniques.

Yasmin experiments with pigments which she hand makes from minerals, plants and earths. These tactile and luminous colours, which are consciously selected due to their relation to the painted subject, result in a dimensional finish which transforms, moves and reflects, just like the stories depicted.

Keerat Kaur is a Canadian-born artist & architect with Sikh-Punjabi roots. Her work takes shape through the disciplines of painting, sculpture, writing, music, and architecture. Drawing inspiration from Sikh philosophies, she employs the art of metaphor and symbolism to revolutionize our relationship to nature and spirituality. Her aesthetic sensibility lies within a realm where the ordinary merges with the dreamlike.

Regardless of the chosen medium, Kaur's work is firmly rooted in the written word, serving as a pivotal starting point. This characteristic lends her work a profoundly narrative and illustrative quality, as imagery and language seamlessly coalesce, enriching each other's impact.

She completed her schooling in French Immersion, received her Bachelor of Arts in 2012 (Western University) and her Master of Architecture in 2016 at University of Toronto, while continuing her formal training in the Dhruvad and Khayaaal schools of Indian Classical Music. Having a passion for languages, she is able to read, write and speak Panjabi, French, and Hindi. She is currently learning the Shahmukhi script and is studying the ancient language of Braj through the examination of historical Sikh texts.

Pavan Kavitkar born in 1990 in Amravati, India, graduated with a Bachelor of Fine Arts from Sir JJ School of Art, Mumbai, 2014 and Master of Fine Arts from Visva Bharati University, Santiniketan, West Bengal, 2016.

Pavan Kavitar's artistic practice addresses the complex interplay of spaces, drawing inspirations from concrete vs. nature, which are imbued with memories, artifacts and instances. He focuses on the subtle contradiction and often overlooked details of everyday life between man and nature exploring the interconnected conflict and harmony.

His works have been exhibited in multiple group shows. Additionally, he has taught as a guest faculty at the College of Fine Art at Karnataka Chitrakala Parishath, Bangalore for two years. He has received the 2021 Golden Brush Award- Artild Gallery, Bangalore, 2021, All India Merit Grant for Lockdown Art from Prafulla Dahanukar Art Foundation, Mumbai, 2020, Khoj Support Grant, 2017–18 and many more.

SM Khayyam was born in 1992 in Quetta but currently lives and works in Lahore. Khayyam obtained a Bachelor's degree in Fine Arts, with a major in miniature painting, from the National College of Arts, Lahore. He takes an experimental approach to his work using diverse mediums, including drawing, painting, sculpture, illustration, large-scale installations and calligraphy.

Khayyam has been exhibiting his work from early teenage and his first solo show was held in 2008. Since then he has exhibited his artworks both nationally and internationally. He has also participated in the Maktab Project in Lahore Biennale in 2018. His solo show, Zargar: An Ode to Malmal at Koel Gallery Karachi, June 2024, MINI Exhibition with Canfas Art Gallery, west Wales, August 2024, showcased contemporary miniatures, and also exhibited in a group exhibition "Dastaweez" at Numaishgah Art Gallery, Lahore, Pakistan in December 2023. He is currently working on his on-going, Commission Project at Art TEFAF 2025.

Murad Khan Mumtaz born in 1980, a native of Lahore, Pakistan, is an artist and researcher, completed his PhD in South Asian art history at the University of Virginia, in 2018 and is an Associate Professor in Department of Art Williams College. He graduated with a Bachelor of Fine Arts from the National College of Arts, Lahore, in 2004, and completed his Master of Fine Arts at Columbia University in 2010.

Mumtaz's work is informed by his training in traditional Indian painting. He initially learnt this craft in his native city of Lahore and has continued to investigate techniques of Pahari painting, including the preparation of traditional natural pigments. Since, then his practice is concerned with the disappearance of traditions and histories in the wake of the modern, with a focus on 18th century North Indian painting.

Divya Pamnani was born in 1983, Mumbai and completed her Bachelor of Science in Psychology at the University of Texas, Austin, 2007; MPH, Master in Public Health, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, 2011; PGD, Indian Aesthetics, 2020 and PG, South Asian Painting: The Art of the Book in South Asia, 2021, Jnanapravaha, Mumbai, 2021. Her work has been exhibited in a solo show at Kathiwada City House, Mumbai, 2022.

Divya pursues ongoing training in the Indian Miniature painting technique from Master Artist Mahaveer Swami in Rajasthan, a proponent of the Bikaner School of painting. Divya is engaging with the tradition, crafting a unique visual language, and painting on themes that are personal yet

universal, carefully referencing select imagery to convey meaning and symbolism through her work. Through her work, she endeavors to bring positivity, beauty and joy into this world.

Amaranta Peña born in 1986, in Quito, Ecuador, completed her Bachelor's degree in Applied Anthropology in 2015 at the Salesiana University in Quito. Her interests in holistic well-being and Liberal Arts education lead her to explore the Fine Arts and Crafts of different cultures. Her artwork is inspired by the natural world and wildlife in her native country, Ecuador.

Captivated by the magical worlds of stories and myths told by grandparents, Amaranta Peña tries to express them through watercolor paintings or sounds of ceramic musical instruments. As a guardian of this fabric woven from words seeped in knowledge, she watches for glimpses of it in paintings, illustrations and ceramics that she might pass it along to the generations which follow. She immerses herself within their narrative seeking the shared invisible points of departure and arrival. Her most recent works comprise an immersion in the realm of miniature painting using ink and watercolors.

Vaishali Prazmari holds degrees from both the Slade School of Fine Arts (Bachelor of Arts, Honours) and the Prince's School of Traditional Arts and holds Master of Arts (Distinction) in Medieval and Renaissance Studies (UCL) specializing in floating islands. She studied Persian and Indian manuscript painting under various masters and Chinese painting under a master in Hong Kong. She has been bringing traditional painting to life for a wider audience as an educator for 10 years.

British artist Vaishali Prazmari works on a contemporary visual interpretation of the 1001 Nights. Her multidisciplinary work incorporates elements from various cultures including the Indo-Persian miniatures and Chinese painting of her multiple heritages. Her work has been acquired in collections globally and she has exhibited nationally and internationally for nearly 20 years.

Vinita Sharma lives and works in Jaipur. Her journey as an artist is marked by a series of impressive accomplishments. She has been invited to conduct several short courses and workshops on miniature painting techniques at esteemed institutions worldwide. Notable among these are the five-day short courses held at Heenat Salma Farm in Doha, Qatar, and Les Beaux-Arts de Marseille-Paris. She has also demonstrated her mastery at Virginia Commonwealth University in Doha, leaving a lasting impression on students and fellow artists alike.

Vinita Sharma's artistic talents have been showcased through numerous exhibitions both nationally and internationally. Her solo exhibition at the Shifting Frames Art Gallery in Marseille, Paris, was a resounding success, allowing art enthusiasts to experience the depth and intricacy of her miniature paintings firsthand. She has also participated in group exhibitions at prestigious venues, including the Sheikh Faisal Museum in Doha, Buckingham Palace in London, and Air Space Projects in Sydney, Australia. Each exhibition served as a testament to Vinita's artistic vision and technical prowess.

Annelie Solis, a Trinidadian artist exploring cosmological and astronomical imagery using materials provided by the Earth. The interest in artistic spiritual expression across cultures and religions led her to The Prince's Foundation School of Traditional Arts where she has recently completed her

Master of Arts, graduating with distinction. The experience at the School of Traditional Arts greatly enriched her arts practice through a deeper understanding of perennial philosophy and the craft process.

The use of natural materials has become of the greatest importance to her work as a principle. She found it is as critical to the essence of a painting as the symbolism of the imagery painted. She has learned these traditional methods and it is as though a veil has been lifted, and though her journey with pigment foraging is just beginning, it will be a lifelong pursuit. She had several solo exhibitions throughout Trinidad and has participated in group exhibitions internationally.

Manish Soni born in Bhilwara, Rajasthan hails from the family of Rajasthani miniature artist and pichhavi master Badrilal Chitrakar Soni. Following the family tradition, he started painting at a young age and apprenticed alongside his father and grandfather. He has created a large body of work, including some notable reproductions by concocting his wasli with layers of paper stuck together before burnishing, making his own colors using minerals, vegetable extracts and other natural materials and painting with squirrel hair brushes.

His ongoing show “Ragamalas- Pictures for All Senses” at Rietberg Museum, which is the culmination of the Ragamala Project established in 2021 at Museum Rietberg as part of the GBF Research Programme for Indian Art and Artists, where he and Murad Khan Mumtaz were the only contemporary artists invited to produce works on the subject.

Mahaveer Swami Born in 1959 in Bikaner, Rajasthan, received his initial training at home and later earned a Diploma in Painting and sculpture at the Rajasthan School of Art in Jaipur. Meanwhile he mastered in traditional style of painting under guidance of his mentor late Shri Vedpal Sharma “Bannu”.

He has exhibited in over 60 galleries in India from 1986 to 2021 in the cities of New Delhi, Mumbai, Kolkata, Chennai, Bangalore, Jaipur, Hyderabad, and Pune, and internationally in Paris, Brussels, Jerusalem, Washington DC, Pittsburgh, Wave Hill, New York and Denver in the U.S.A., Japan, Bangkok, Hong Kong, Shanghai, Singapore, Spain and Australia.

Swami’s work is in the collections of over 17 museums and galleries in India and internationally in Jerusalem, Berlin, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania (USA), Camden, Maine (USA), New York, Paris, Belgium and Algeria. His artwork appears in several books, magazines and online blogs.

Amjad Ali Talpur was born in Hyderabad, Pakistan in 1979, and received his Bachelor’s degree at the National College of Arts, Lahore, in 2005. Recognized early in his career, he received considerable attention for his senior thesis solo show in 2005, and has been included widely in shows featuring contemporary miniatures like those at the Alhamra Arts Council, Lahore, in 2003; the French Embassy, Islamabad, in 2006; Nomad Art Gallery, Islamabad; Chawhandi Gallery, Karachi, in 2007; Aicon Gallery, New York, in 2008; and a solo exhibition at Canvas Gallery, Karachi, in 2008, amongst others.

Amjad Ali Talpur’s artistic practice defies cursory, inattentive readings. Trained as a miniaturist, he inverts the very trope by staying true to scale but by creating a mosaic of small images in the form of actual, physical puzzles instead of reducing the scale of motifs within one monolithic image.

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