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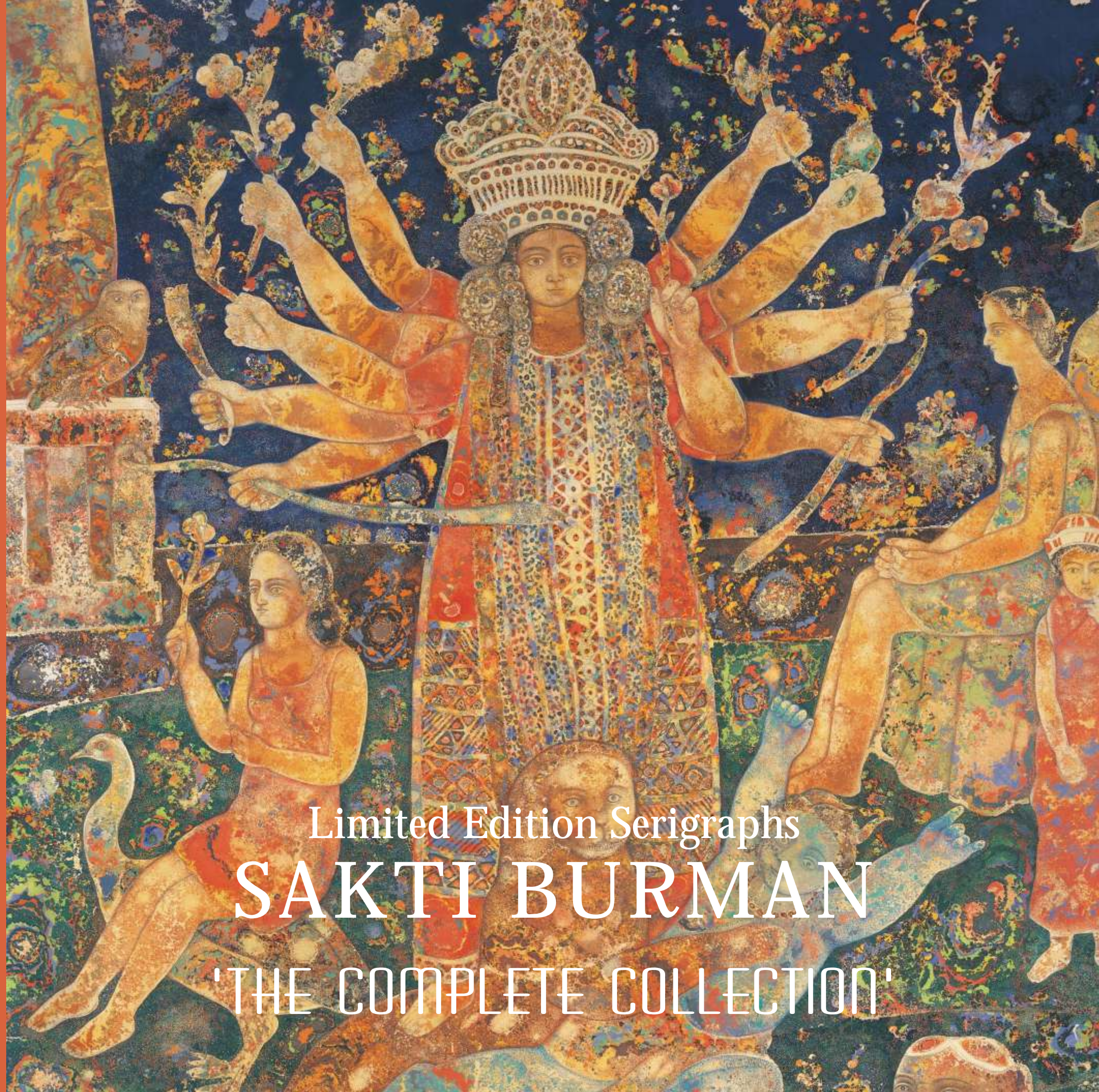
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Limited Edition Serigraphs

SAKTI BURMAN

'THE COMPLETE COLLECTION'



Limited Edition Serigraphs

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The Serigraph Studio
presents

Limited Edition Serigraphs
by
SAKTI BURMAN

'THE COMPLETE COLLECTION'
(A Portfolio of 24 Serigraphs)

2010



Dancing at the Confluence of Images: The Art of Sakti Burman

Ranjit Hoskote

The past is never past in Sakti Burman's art, nor is it ever singular. Various Indian and European pasts inhabit the floating present tense of Burman's paintings and serigraphs: they are spoken and acted in his frames by protagonists drawn from Greek and Hindu mythology, West European art history, Bengali popular culture and family folklore. The Mughal gardens that once surrounded the Taj Mahal are re-animated here, as are pastoral scenes of revelry by the rivers of France, both visions long lost under the advance of industrial modernity and its ideology of relentless speed and progress. The divinities of a vigorous popular Hinduism, which has now unfortunately been eclipsed by the aggressive pieties of a politicised majoritarian ideology and the banalities of TV-channel spirituality, continue to re-make the world through their enchanted play in his tableaux.

The splendidly warlike yet motherly Durga presides over a festival here, the goddess' eyes wide enough to transfix and hold all creation still. The reclusive yet magisterial Shiva sits on his bull, lost in a yogic trance yet commanding the quixotic legions of his followers. And we are entranced by the child Krishna, who frolics with cows with the same choreographic facility that he demonstrates while strangling demons. Shiva's sons, Ganapati and Kartikeya, are to be found at play everywhere in Burman's works; in them, we see the artist's grandsons reflected.

In the confluence of sources that flows through Burman's image-making practice, we also find Watteau's bleached yet magical figures, their music almost inaudible, the theatre of their gestures subtle yet candid in its homage to mortality and time. We find, also, Manet's more robustly argumentative figures, straddling the fossil beauty of legend and the sensuous immediacy of the present; and Chagall's flying conjurors and musicians. In Burman's approach to structuring time and space, we may detect traces of the stylised calendars of the Limbourg Brothers and the synoptic visual narratives of Giotto and his contemporaries.

In Walt Whitman's memorable phrase, invented to describe an individual who inherits diverse histories and temperaments, Burman "contains multitudes". In their elegant fusion of time horizons, Burman's works remind us that the global contemporary is, above all, a time and place of complex allegiances. We are all entangled in multiple definitions of self, linked by heredity, affinity and choice to various sources of cultural meaning. In such a situation, the artist cannot be pinned down to a specific national, or nationalist, definition of selfhood. The artist's imagination is a receiving and transmitting station, and signals come to it from every quarter; the artist's project is to sift through these, in order to process the code into fresh and ever-renewed manifestations of his understanding of his lifeworld.

Burman is a pilgrim of these complex allegiances that shape the global contemporary. Born in Calcutta in 1935, he graduated from the Government College of Arts and Crafts there in 1956. He then moved to Paris, to study at the Ecole Nationale Supérieure des Beaux Arts. Such a journey to Paris was a rite of passage, and practically de rigueur among postcolonial artists of Burman's generation. In Paris, he could immerse himself in one of the primary matrices of Western modernity: home and beacon, source of inspiration and patronage to many of the influential avant-gardes that had shaped and contributed to the serial efflorescences of international modernism across the 20th century. And yet, although he has lived and worked in France ever since, participating fully in French cultural and, so to speak, psychic life, he has also insisted on retaining his connections with India through friendships, professional collaborations, ongoing conversations and frequent visits.

Accordingly, in his deceptively buoyant and pleasurable paintings, we may discern the perennial, the ongoing, the

never-to-be-resolved but immensely productive dialogue of Here and There, Was and Not-yet, Self and Other. Indeed, these categories break down in his work, because Burman does not treat any identity as static or sacrosanct, preferring to traverse all grounds of identity to relay the paraphrase-resistant complexity of cultural belonging. His protagonists define themselves through the flux of their engagement with one another. In his frames, often delicious in their evocation of dusty pinks, fruity yellows and first-leaf greens, Harlequin may stop Durga in her tracks; a domestic pet may address an animal that serves as the vehicle of a god. Kartikeya and Ganesha romp in a sylvan valley in south-western France; monsters from the depths of the oceans cohabit the same space as angels. Watteau's musicians rub shoulders with Bodhisattvas.

Pompeii and Ajanta, Etruscan tombs and Mahayana shrines, the Tagore circle's love for the suffusion of light and Chagall's delight in levitation: all these elements of pictorial and archaeological fascination take their place in the genealogy of Burman's secular iconography. What this pilgrim proposes, for us, is the image of a universe that is churning with contradictions, ambivalences, multiplicities: a universe that is never still, that is never assured of that stillness beyond change which, the idealist philosophers insist, lies beyond the agitation of appearances.

Indeed Burman anchors himself in the play of appearances, or of maya, if you will. A seriousness of purpose sustains the making of these apparently playful works, which evolve through a meticulous sequence of formal decisions: as attested to by his figures, drawn from richly hybrid origins and celebrating their plural nature; his surfaces, painstakingly built up in layers of application and in varying degrees of textural detail, suggestive of marbling and pebbling, of frescoes and columns carved from veined porphyry and travertine; his spatial divisions, which transform the straightforward two-dimensional picture surface into a complex allusion to the honeycomb, the maze, the secret garden, and the neural circuitry of thought.

To enter Burman's interiors, landscapes and tableaux, therefore, is to submit to the measure of a dance that take us

deeper, not only into the recesses of a possibly shared mythic consciousness, but also into the intricacies of an inter-cultural life. That is to say, into his own life, as he has led it: in the space of excitement, exhilaration, anxiety and epiphany between two distinct cultures. Birth relates him to India, choice to France: for Burman, the moorings that link him to India are as crucial as the linkages that connect him to France. The fictions and allegories that he spells out have as much to do with his passion for myth as they do with his desire to reflect on the contexts and circumstances of his own life. As such, his art is an extended act of autobiography, performed as a pageant.

Some painters address the tenor of the present in its full brutality. Their gift is slanted towards a realism that seizes us and forces us to confront the world in which we stage the performance of our life, the means precise and unsparing, the conclusion inescapable, the transformation of our consciousness achieved through shock and horror. Other painters allude to the many-layered present, using "indirection to seek direction out", to adapt Shakespeare's phrase. In so doing, they also allow the present to speak in a polyphony of voices: to touch on various sensations, to provoke stimulations of different intensities. Burman belongs to the second tendency: he treats his paintings as unfolding texts in which the histories of two civilisations, that which is his by birth and that which is his by adoption and long residence, interweave with the course of his private history.

The faunal deities of the woodland, who have never relinquished their grip on the European consciousness, return in his art as figures of erotic energy and sexual joy: naiad and satyr, maenad and undine. The tsunami that struck rimland Asia in late 2004 finds embodiment here, in the form of an undersea chimera that emerges to strike the terror of the unknown and uncontrollable into the hearts of the mortal and innocent. And it is not impossible to read, occasionally, a political inflection in Burman's work. I would interpret one of his recurrent images, a wondrous composite of Noah's Ark and Manu's ship, laden with a magical cargo of artisans and demigods, conjurors and mysterious animals that have survived the cosmic flood, as a vibrant riposte to the persistent rhetoric of Europe's conservatives. Terrified by the waves of immigration from the former Third World, these custodians of what they see as a pure European civilisation repeat the rallying cry that "the boat is

full". Burman, through allegorical means, offers testimony against such parochialism and paranoia.

As an artist whose sensibility was moulded by the conventions of the 1940s and 1950s, Burman's understanding of the artist's life does indeed revolve substantially around the notion that art is a sacred daemon, a bearer of messages from subliminal and even sublime sources; and therefore, he does visualise his practice as an act of worship offered to the sometimes cruelly intransigent, sometimes abundantly generous Muse. Importantly, however, his account of his own practice does not preclude the interpersonal relationships and the socialities that amplify and enrich the artist's essential solitude.

When Burman pictures himself in a classical portrait of the artist in his studio, for instance, he subverts the sense of withdrawal traditionally associated with that space: for him, the studio is not a solitary sanctum or retreat but denotes a social, even familial ethos. We find the artist at his easel but surrounded by his grandchildren, doubling as Shiva's children, who are devising worlds of their own around him with their toys and games. Has myth costumed itself in contemporaneity? Or has the present reinvigorated itself with the archetypal energies of the past? Burman's art is charged with the metaphor of the actor, the theatre, the masque. We have

moved beyond maya or the play of appearances here; we are in the landscape of lila, world-producing play. In the landscape of lila, everyone plays a significant part and no detail is irrelevant. Enlightenment lies in the realisation that one is participating in a script of transience and apparition, of sudden irruptions and vanishing acts.

And yet, I would not argue that the terrain of lila can be addressed only passively, through a choiceless acceptance of what the flux of events can bring. On the contrary, just as the script remains inert verbiage until it is dynamised by the agency of the actor, so too do Burman's tableaux come to life only because he has organised personal narratives, chance events, archival borrowings and iconographical references into a coherent pattern for our delectation. He is a storyteller who reinvigorates our imagination by reminding us that we are not simply made of muscle, nerve and bone, but that we are also made up of the words and images, the poems and stories that we inherit from countless previous generations with our genetic code. Burman's paintings fascinate us, not only because they captivate us with the particularity of the stories they hold, but because they connect the eye, the touch and the mind with the irresistible river of Story, whose flow will never cease so long as the human imagination remains actively engaged with the surprises, disappointments, epiphanies and nightmares that its lifeworld throws up.

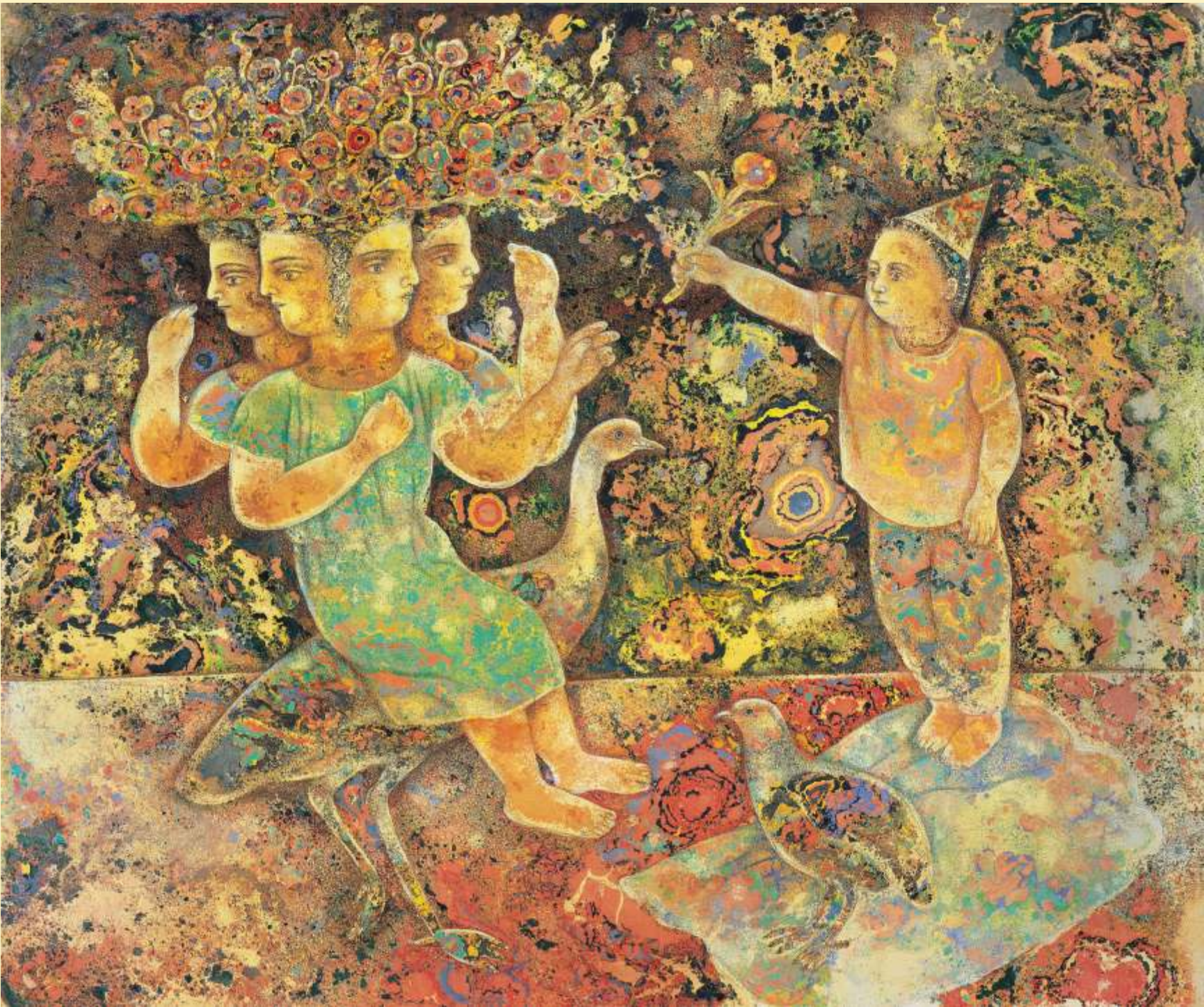
Ranjit Hoskote is a cultural theorist, curator and poet. He is the author of 17 books. These include five volumes of poetry; most recently, *Vanishing Acts: New & Selected Poems 1985-2005* (Delhi: Penguin, 2006) and *Die Ankunft der Vögel* (Munich: Carl Hanser Verlag, 2006). Hoskote has authored eight monographs, including *Bharti Kher* (New York: Jack Shainman Gallery, 2007), *The Crafting of Reality: Sudhir Patwardhan, Drawings* (Mumbai: Foundation B&G, 2010) and *Zinny & Maidagan: Compartment/ Das Abteil* (Frankfurt: Museum für Moderne Kunst/ MMK, 2010). Hoskote has curated 20 exhibitions of Indian and international art, including a mid-career survey of Atul Dodiya (Japan Foundation, Tokyo, 2001), a retrospective of Jehangir Sabavala (National Gallery of Modern Art, Mumbai and New Delhi, 2005-06), and 'Detour', a critical homage on the centennial of Gandhi's Hind Swaraj (Chemould Prescott Road, Mumbai, 2009). Hoskote was co-curator of the trans-Asian collaborative project, 'Under Construction' (Japan Foundation, Tokyo and other Asian venues, 2001-2002). Ranjit Hoskote and Hyunjin Kim co-curated, with Artistic Director Okwui Enwezor, the 7th Gwangju Biennale (Korea, 2008).



Ganapathy Offering Flowers

'Ganapathy Offering Flowers' is a tender portrait of childhood. The protagonist is not Ganesha the elephant-headed god, but his namesake, the artist's grandson, who makes a floral offering to a four-headed child-divinity seated on a bird, crowned with an overflowing bouquet of flowers. Burman often sets his tableaux in a pastoral paradise in which fruits, birds and animals abound, proposing a tranquillity and abundance that are threatened by the seismic turbulences of contemporary life.

Paper size : 22" x 30"
Composition size : 18" x 22"
Paper : Somerset 250 gsm
Edition size : 125





Bibi and Mem

This work revolves around the figure of Ganapati, the guardian deity of beginnings and elephant-headed protector against obstacles. In this work, as in many of his other works, Sakti Burman conceives of life as a dance that is choreographed through the energy of shifting erotic and familial relationships, the flowering of generations, and the coexistence of various forms of enjoyment. Ganapati, the dancer at the heart of the dance, relays his energy to his companions, a man and woman in Western clothes and a young woman riding a mythic tiger. It turns out that this activity is held in a frame within the frame, set behind two adolescents, who inherit it as their backdrop and history. As in many of his works, Burman blurs the boundary between the world of the gods and the world of human beings, the idyllic landscape and the contemporary cityscape, France and India.

Paper size : 30" x 22"
Composition size : 25" x 19"
Paper : Somerset 250 gsm
Edition size : 125





Dancers

Burman delights in referencing forms of ritual and folk performance. Here, he develops his tableau around the pantomime of the walking horse, where a man in a hat wears the richly appliquéd costume of a horse and plays a theatrical rider. Various costumed figures surround him, including a young man in courtly Mughal or Rajput angarkha and pugree, and a young woman dressed in more casual Western-style clothing. Here, as elsewhere, Burman adopts the metaphor of the theatre or the pageant, through which to narrate a story about travel, transition and life between two societies and cultures, and their respective historical inheritances.

Paper size : 30" x 35"
Composition size : 26" x 32"
Paper : Somerset 300 gsm
Edition size : 125





Krishna

Krishna as child and god, serenader of women and killer of demons, dominates this work. The divine flautist is surrounded by other figures from Burman's ongoing fantasia, in which life is continuously being transfigured into myth: we find the peacock here and the adolescents, and also a riveting centaur-like figure who prances yet remains melancholy, keeps the beat of the dance yet retains the detachment of the observer, and is perhaps a portrait of the artist as chronicler and archivist of human dispositions. These counterpoints, worked into the rhythm of the composition, underscore the nature of Indic celebration as 'grave festivity', in the scholar Heinrich Zimmer's perceptive phrase.

Paper size : 30" x 22"
Composition size : 25" x 19"
Paper : Somerset 250 gsm
Edition size : 125



Legends of Hope

Sakti Burman is a poet of pleasure and optimism. He has applied himself consistently to invoking the sources of human joy and security, asking how humans survive and flourish even in the most unpromising circumstances. In 'Legends of Hope', he juxtaposes two of his favoured motifs: a wonderfully executed Ganesh Janani, Parvati with her son Ganapati, and the image of Noah's Ark or Manu's Ship, arriving at its promised destination after having crested the cosmic deluge that has destroyed the rest of creation. These stories incarnate the hopes and dreams that societies have nurtured, and which have inspired them to quest on through the long nights of the spirit.

Paper size : 30" x 35"
Composition size : 26" x 32"
Paper : Somerset 300 gsm
Edition size : 125



Paper size : 40" x 30"
Composition size : 35" x 27"
Paper : Somerset 300 gsm
Edition size : 125





Ganesh Janani

Sakti Burman visits a classical topos from the art of Kalighat here, which flourished between the 1830s and the 1930s in Calcutta, and which produced watercolours and prints in which the high iconography of Hinduism was vigorously and marvellously transformed into a popular vocabulary through the use of irony, humour and tenderness. In 'Ganesh Janani', we find the Great Mother in her role of Parvati, as Ganapati or Ganesha's mother, enthroned and receiving homage from her worshippers.

Paper size : 30" x 22"
Composition size : 23" x 19"
Paper : Somerset 250 gsm
Edition size : 125





Durga

The Great Mother in the form of Durga, goddess of war and protectress against evil, the beautiful and inviolable goddess who kills the buffalo-demon Mahisha and secures the threatened balance of the world, recurs often in Burman's art. If she destroys demons, she also gives life to the good, the innocent and the creative. Accordingly, Burman often presents her in the company of children, musicians and animals. In 'Durga', offers a pictorial paeon in homage to this divinity, placing her at the focal point of the festival that is life. Around her cavorts a dramatis personae drawn from various sources: Shiva as yogi, Ganapati as dancer, a couple from a Roman fresco.

Paper size : 40" x 30"
Composition size : 35" x 27"
Paper : Somerset 300 gsm
Edition size : 125



Lovely Summer Day

Sakti Burman is unusual in his love of subjects such as leisure and pleasure. In his exploration of the experiences that enrich human experience, he turns to the transfigurations of consciousness made possible by cultural stimulation. In this work, we assemble a variety of such stimulations together: the artist's model with her back to us, the flautist playing to a bird and monkey, who are properties from a mediaeval allegory introduced into normal life, a man reading a paper on a couch. All of these inhabit a painting set on an easel, and standing outdoors; where a woman also sits, enjoying the pleasant weather with her lion at her feet, even as a carpet extends out onto the lawn. Interior and landscape, as often in Burman's art, form a continuum here, all spatial divisions overcome by the fluid play of the imagination.

Paper size : 30" x 37"

Composition size : 26" x 34"

Paper : Somerset 300 gsm

Edition size : 125



Sacre-Coeur

In this self-portrait, the artist presents himself in the act of painting the basilica of Sacre-Coeur, set imposingly on the heights of Montmartre, at the highest point in Paris. However, in a surprising move, he fuses the practice of plein air painting with that of studio painting: he depicts the edifice with a nude model who is posing on the grass for him. As often happens in Burman's paintings, inside and outside, interior and landscape, studio and urban landscape are mingled. In a further layering of diverse times and places, meanwhile, even as a jogger runs past, he crosses Shiva and Parvati who are galloping by on Nandi the sacred bull. The somewhat Mughal appearance of the basilica, which was designed in the unusual Romano-Byzantine style, enhances our pleasurable uncertainty as to the location of the scene. Guided by the artist, we abandon realism in favour of enchantment.

Paper size : 40" x 30"

Composition size : 35" x 27"

Paper : Somerset 300 gsm

Edition size : 125



Shiva and Parvati

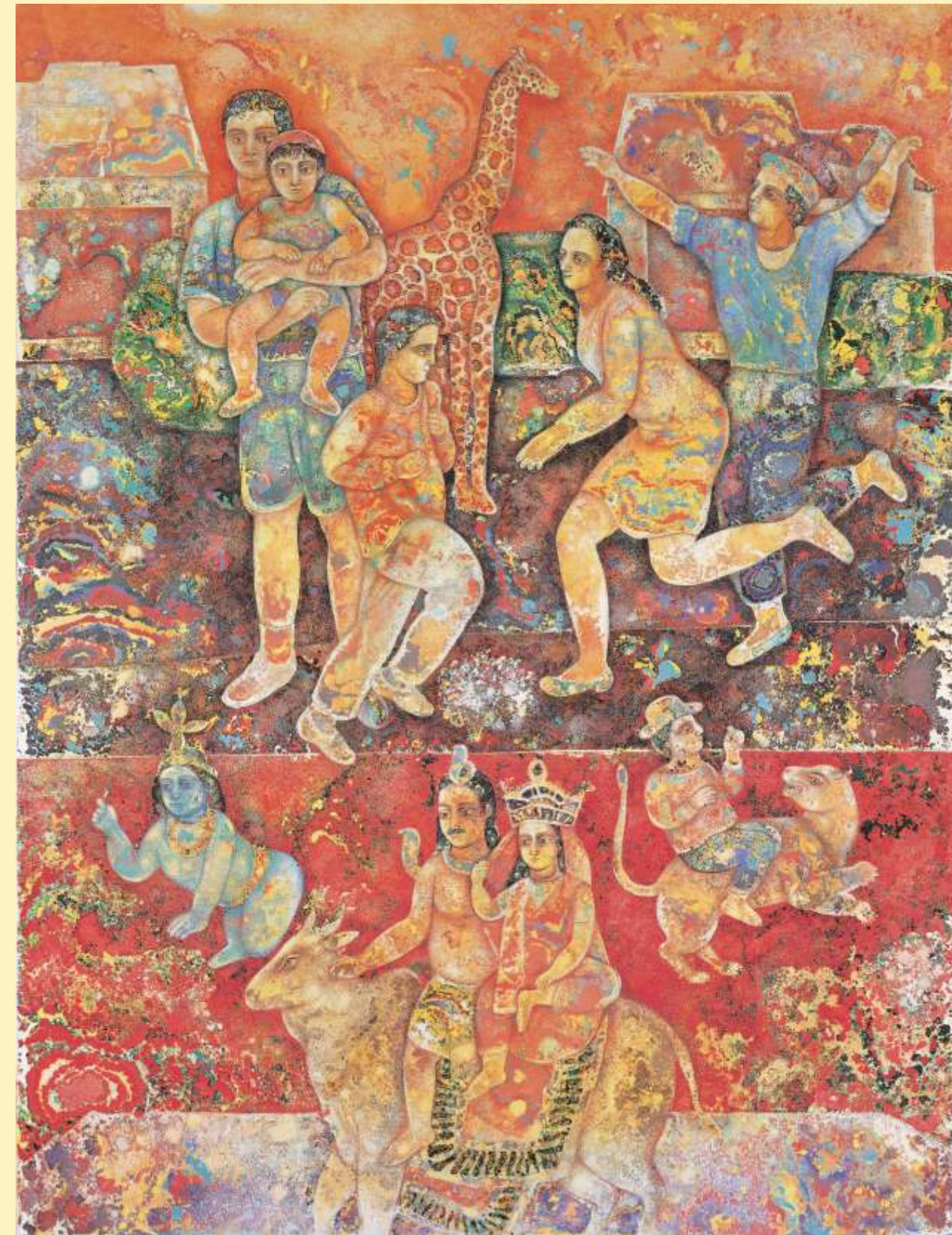
In this lively work divided into two strata and populated by figures in active motion, Burman offers a pictorial hymn to the extended family. He develops a parallel between the divine domesticity of Shiva's family, attended by the child Krishna in a departure from conventional depiction, and the domesticity of the human family. The humanisation of the divine family is a theme that we find adumbrated in Pahari drawings and paintings as well as in Kalighat watercolours and prints, and Burman is certainly inspired by these sources of cultural energy. Significantly, as in Kalighat practice, Shiva is portrayed as an ascetic who does not care to play the dandy, while Parvati wears the elaborate sari of the Bengali bhadralok lady but the crown worn by Mughal queens, as depicted in the late Agra ateliers and the regional styles of Lucknow and Patna.

Paper size : 30" x 22"

Composition size : 25" x 19"

Paper : Somerset 250 gsm

Edition size : 125



Flying Bird

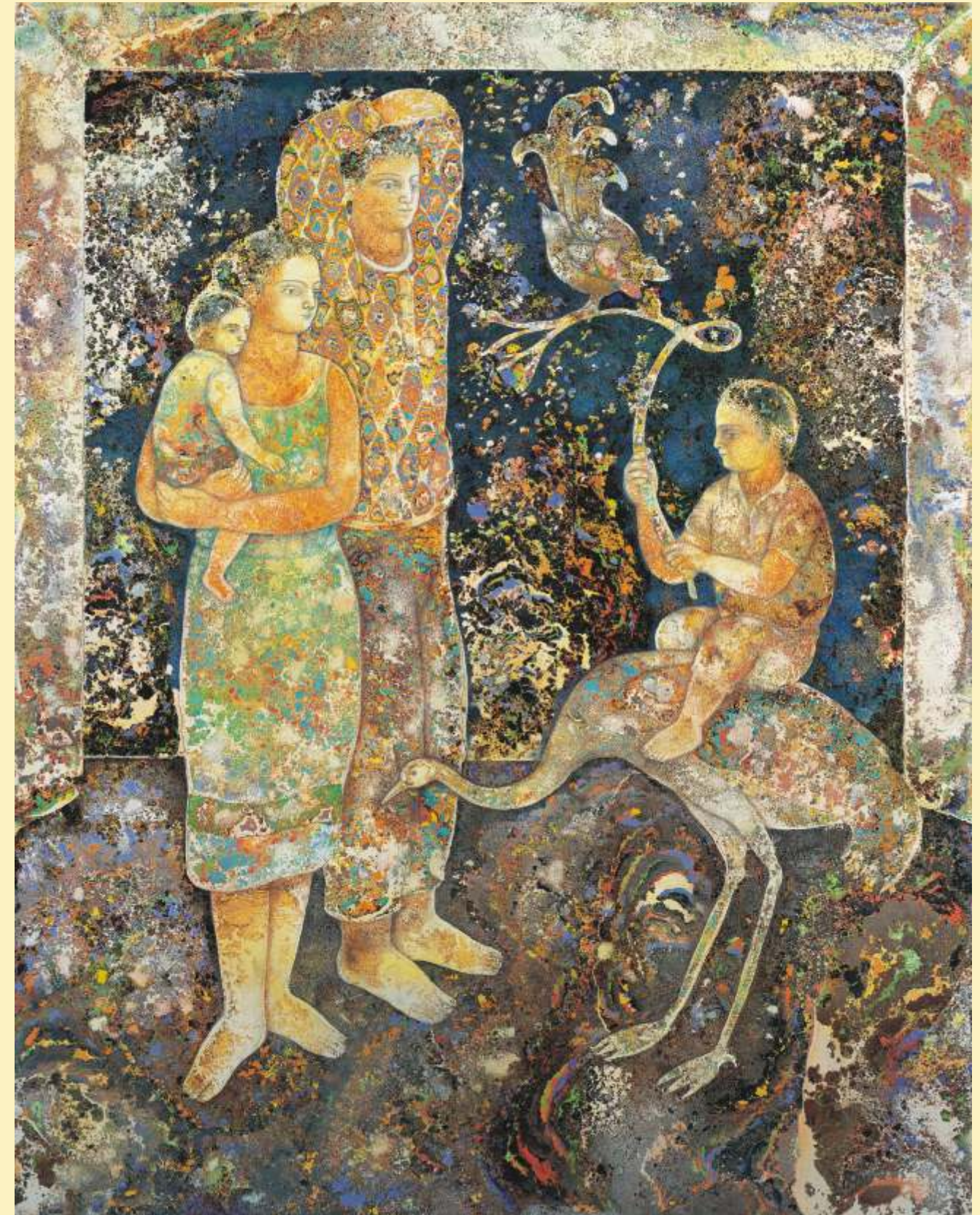
Sakti Burman delights in the enigmatic encounter between beings that belong to different orders of being. Here, a couple with an infant, reminiscent of Picasso's Harlequin family, are addressed by a magical child who rides a wingless bird but holds aloft, on a branch, a wondrously plumed bird that heralds psychic transformation. This bird held on a branch recurs in Burman's art, and suggests the irruption of enchantment into ordinary life, the inexplicable epiphany of art that can shift the tenor of normality.

Paper size : 30" x 22"

Composition size : 23" x 18"

Paper : Somerset 250 gsm

Edition size : 125



In Flight

'In Flight' is developed around the figure of Sakti Burman's grandson; around him whirl a variety of figures culled from his grandfather's imagination. We find the peacock, attended by a flying figure; a figure on a swing; and the woman on a wingless bird, holding the magical plumed bird on a branch. This work stands at the threshold of annunciations, initiations into knowledge that will carry the boy protagonist from childhood into youth.

Paper size : 22" x 30"
Composition size : 18" x 22"
Paper : Somerset 250 gsm
Edition size : 125



Noah's Ark

In one of the startling compressions of time and register for which Burman's art is distinguished, the artist-persona paints Noah's Ark, loaded with its human and animal cargo of survivors, even as that fabled vessel sails towards him, its story unfolding on the wall behind him, because the wall has become a cinema screen. Or is it the screen of mythic memory, brought vividly to contemporary being, made more real than the real under pressure from the imagination? Will the studio be inundated by the Flood on which the Ark still rides? Or has the Ark stopped in mid-passage, stilled by the will and desire of the artist?

Paper size : 30" x 37"

Composition size : 26" x 34"

Paper : Somerset 300 gsm

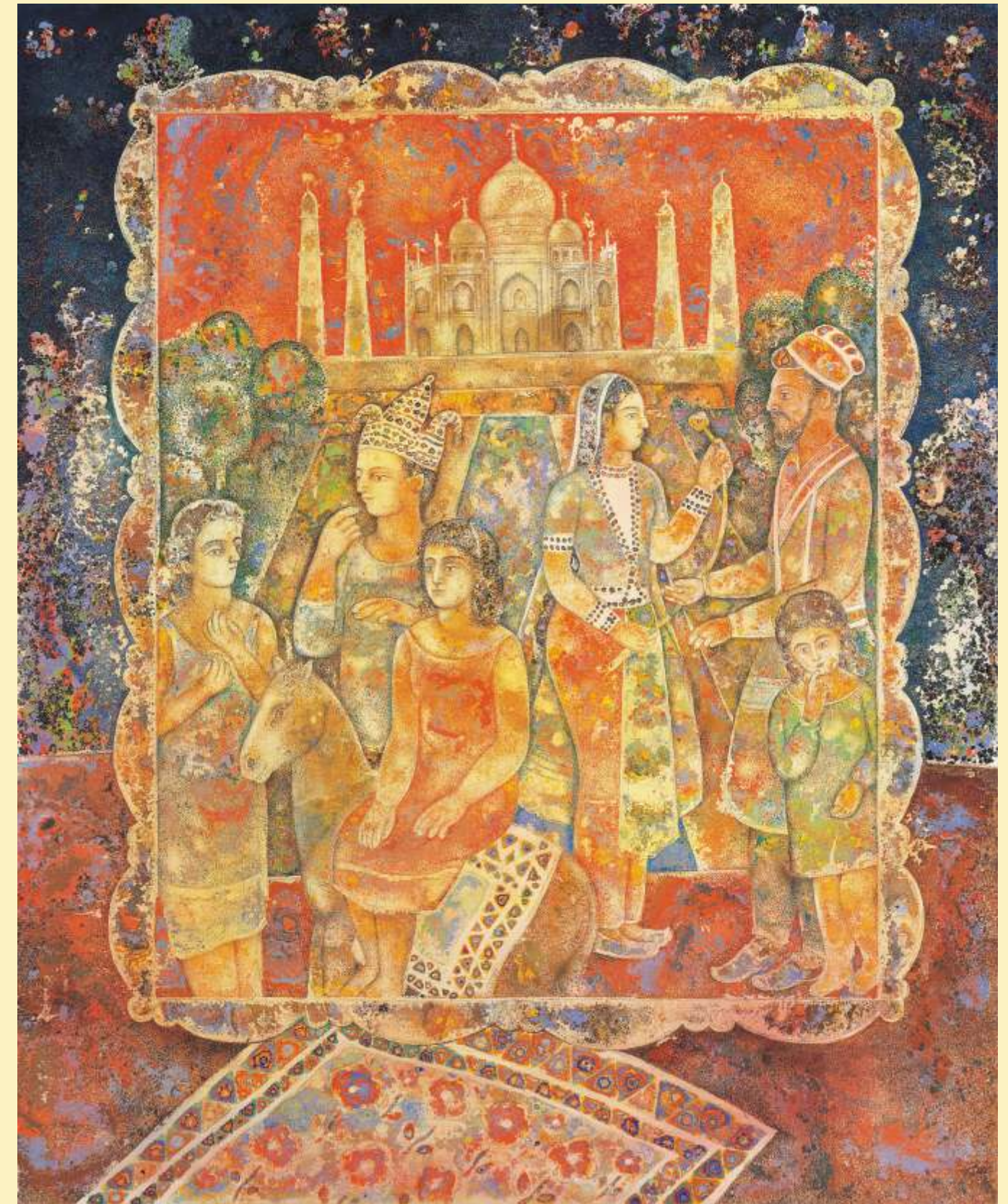
Edition size : 125



Legends of Love

If hope is one of Sakti Burman's pivotal concerns, love is another. In 'Legends of Love', he blurs the boundary between past and present, juxtaposing a bride and groom with the Mughal emperor Shah Jehan and his imperial consort Mumtaz Mahal. Behind these figures is Shah Jehan's legendary architectural tribute to his wife, the Taj Mahal. In a device that he enjoys, this lively blurring of boundaries and re-animation of dormant emotional energies takes place in a frame within a frame, so that the act of looking at this serigraph is an act of double viewing.

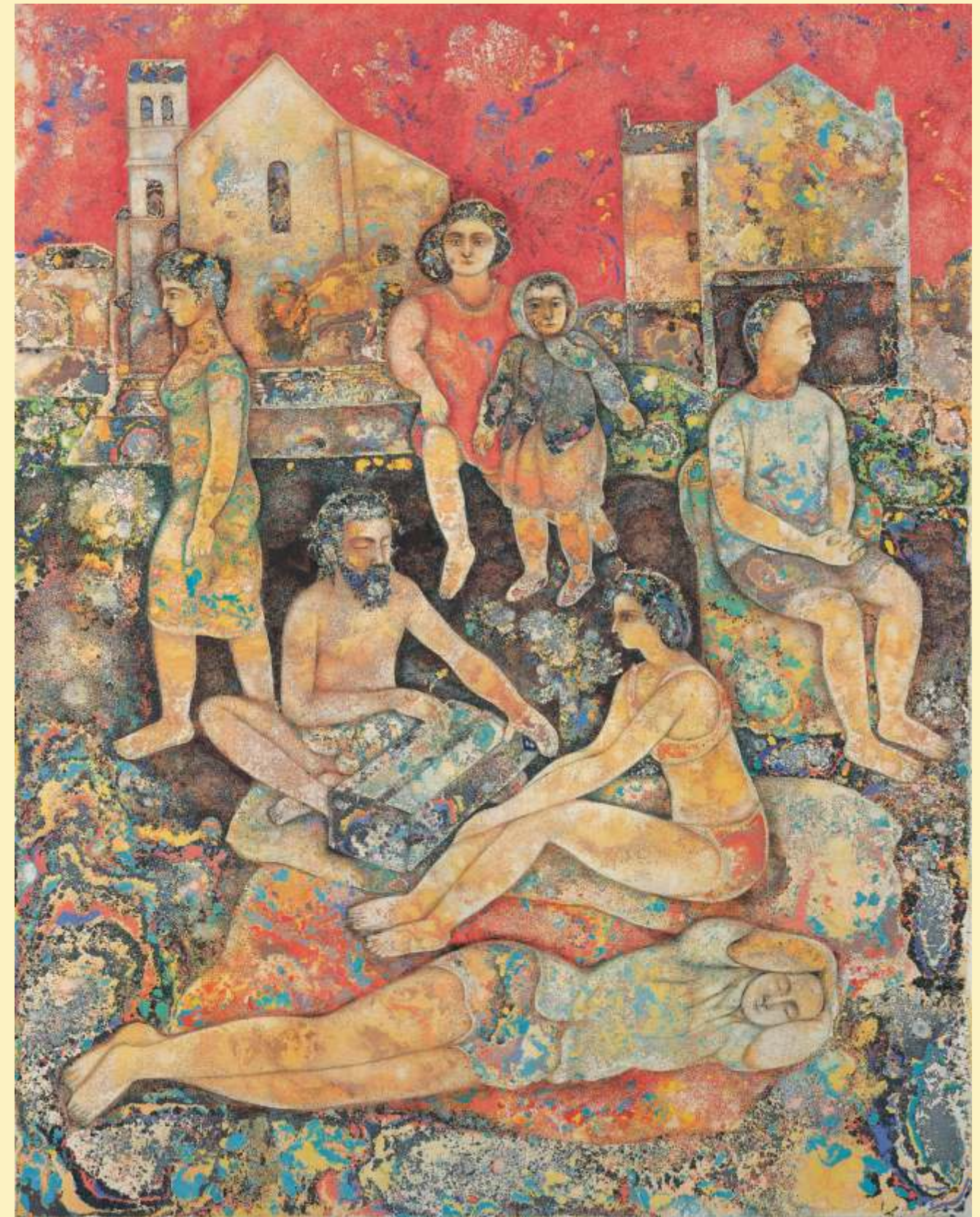
Paper size : 30" x 22"
Composition size : 22" x 18"
Paper : Somerset 250 gsm
Edition size : 125



Sadhu Singing

The eponymous protagonist of this work is a baul figure singing with a harmonium for accompaniment, a representative of that composite Bhakti-Sufi movement which developed stunningly beautiful poems and songs in eastern India between the 15th and 20th centuries. He appears to be addressing a man and woman who seem to be sun-bathing on a beach, even while other figures go about their daily lives in an epitomic West European town.

Paper size : 30" x 22"
Composition size : 24" x 19"
Paper : Somerset 250 gsm
Edition size : 125



Dreamers

The condition of dream is central to Sakti Burman's art. Through dream, he figures his experience into a tapestry of allusion, allegory and myth; through dream, again, he configures the motifs of his life into enduring elements of a narrative that is larger than the ambit of the individual self. In 'Dreamers', he revisits two of the most ancient and compelling myths that sustain and inspire the human will to survive and flourish: the myth of the Flood, the cosmic deluge that is survived only by a select few aboard Noah's Ark (in the Judaic account) or Manu's Ship (in the Sanskrit account), and the myth of Eden, that enchanted homeland of serenity before the advent of difference, shame and violence, populated by birds and animals at ease with each other.

Paper size : 30" x 22"

Composition size : 25" x 19"

Paper : Somerset 250 gsm

Edition size : 125





Now and Then

Time past and time present are fused in the studio, for Burman. In the foreground, we find two figures culled from the world of the spy thriller: James Bond and one his ladies at a table. Behind them, and in apparent incongruity, are the Shiva of Kalighat and his retinue, human and chimera figures performing a dream choreography. Two orders of fantasy appear to have been precipitated into the same frame, and we are invited to puzzle out the connections that hold them together.

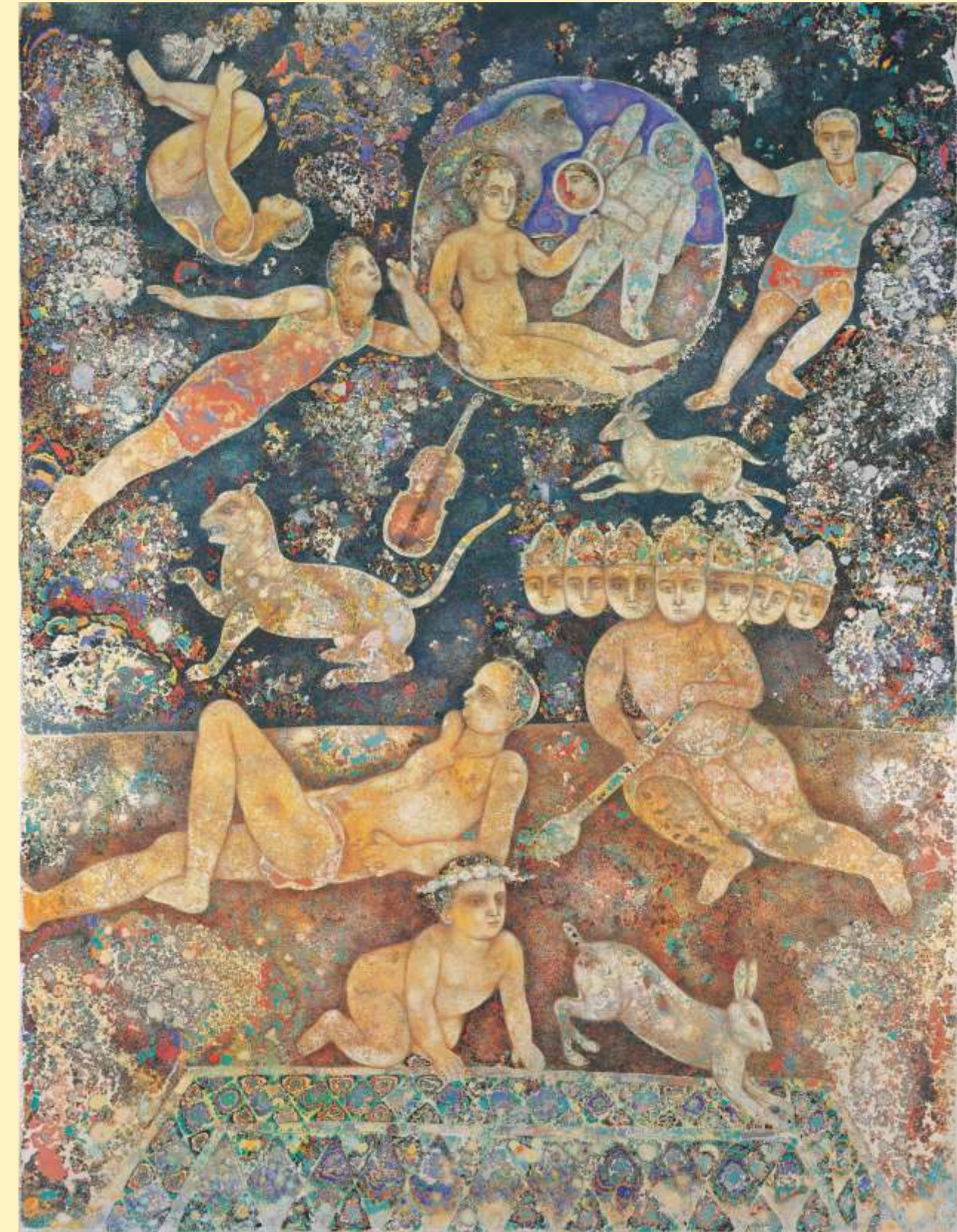
Paper size : 40" x 30"
Composition size : 35" x 27"
Paper : Somerset 300 gsm
Edition size : 125



Journey

Burman offers elegant homage, in 'Journey', to Hieronymus Bosch and his memorable phantasmagoria, 'The Garden of earthly Delights'. Burman borrows, from Bosch, his glass bubble with its naked nymph – but replaces the male figure in the bubble with an astronaut. Around this caprice, various figures float in zero-gravity space: humans and animals, and also a violin. Burman encrypts the traces and vestiges of various stories, leaving us to imagine the outcomes that spin out of this frame: a seven-headed figure, a man who appears to be reclining on a beach, a child wearing an imperial laurel, and a hare, all seem to fly off in separate and equally tantalising narrative directions.

Paper size : 30" x 22"
Composition size : 25" x 19"
Paper : Somerset 250 gsm
Edition size : 125



Memories

Memories and dreams transit across one another in Burman's art. Here, in a picture space arranged in compartments or chapters, he orchestrates various self-images or situations that hold great emotional valency for him: we find the figure of the artist as James Bond here, the artist as a mysterious Magrittean man in a hat, a stylised tiger from the miniature idioms, the dreamer and the couple in love. Burman enjoys structuring his material in the form of a reflection on the course of his life and its choices, or the classical topoi of the artist's life as phrased through the sites of the studio, the academy, the journey of self-discovery, the family, relationships, and the wider world.

Paper size : 30" x 37"

Composition size : 26" x 34"

Paper : Somerset 300 gsm

Edition size : 125





Festival

Set against the skyline of a European town, the festival that gives this work its title is a gentle rebellion against the routines of modern life. The figure of Harlequin is revived and set loose to work his magic among children, musicians and animal-headed dancers from the jatra. Curiously, though, Harlequin remains melancholy and withdrawn, even though he stands at the heart of the festivity: this may be one of many versions of a self-portrait of the artist as one who is both participant and witness, actor and observer in his own dramas of creation, communication and being.

Paper size : 30" x 35"
Composition size : 26" x 32"
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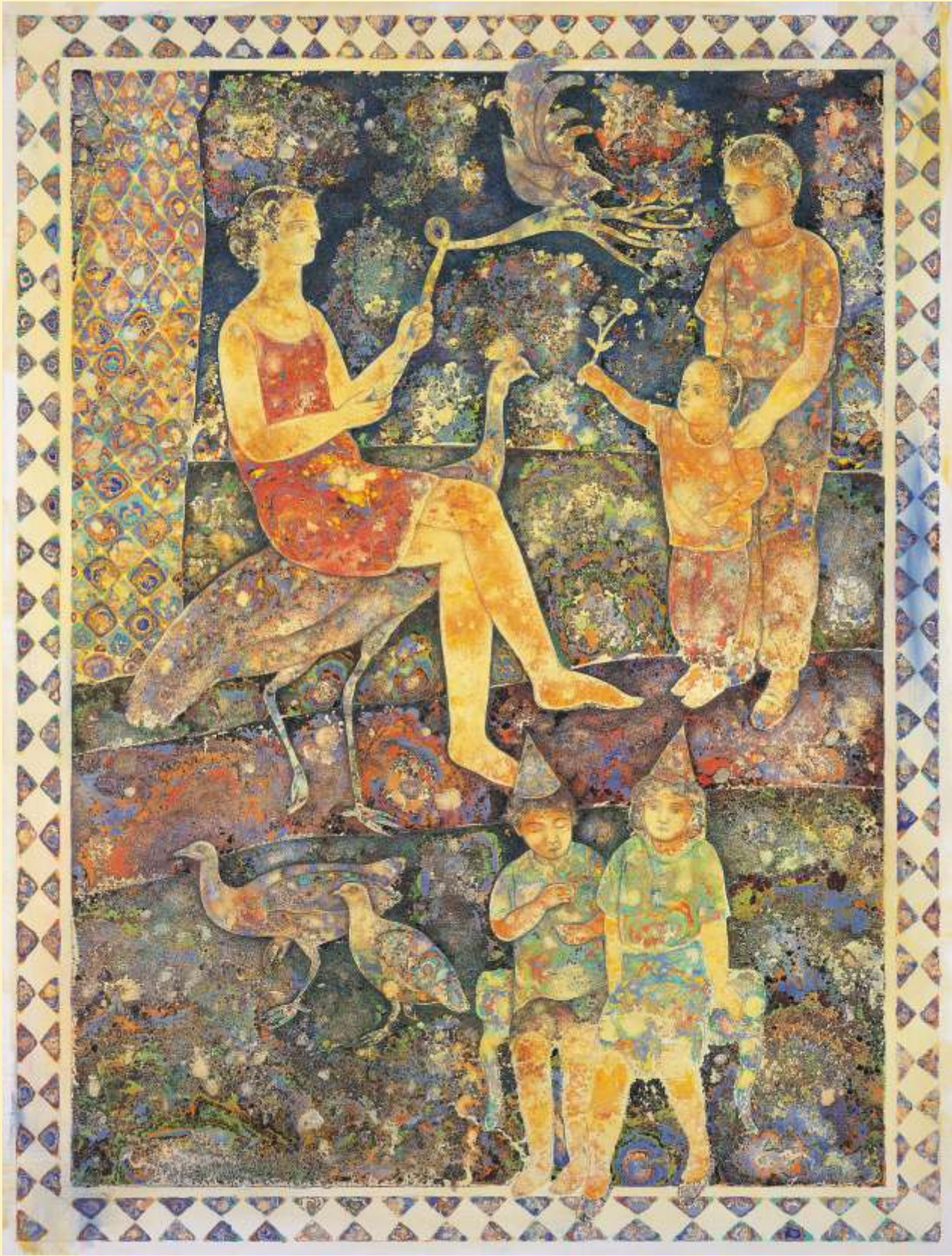




Happy As A Bird

Sakti Burman is almost unique, in a period more strongly associated with bleak and pessimistic prognoses for both the private and the public life, in celebrating the life of domestic felicity, conjugal bliss, and leisure. In 'Happy As A Bird', he presents a family calibrated between myth and normality, surrounded by the bounties of nature. The plumed bird that heralds psychic transformation is here, as are the children in pointed caps, and the interplay between elements of the interior and elements of landscape. Tapestries and rugs run into lawns and trees, often, in Burman's art, and walls dissolve at a single touch in his continuously morphing universe of signs and symbols.

Paper size : 30" x 22"
Composition size : 25" x 19"
Paper : Somerset 250 gsm
Edition size : 125



Homage to Kalighat

'Homage to Kalighat' records Sakti Burman's fascination with the powerful demotic imagery of the Kalighat ethos, which humanised the gods. For a century, around the temple of Kalighat in Calcutta, a shifting coalition of painters, toy-makers, sculptors and print-makers reinvented Hindu iconography by reference to ritual exemplars as well as Mughal and Christian iconography and contemporary events. Here, Burman presents Krishna as the child flautist with the peacock for his totem and vehicle. This work gains strength from its bifid symmetry: to one side of Krishna is the divine family of Shiva, with Ganapati, and Parvati on a Pahari-inspired tiger; to the other side stand a human father, mother and child. Both the celestial and the terrestrial figures render homage to Krishna, in his role as preserver of the universe.

Paper size : 40" x 30"

Composition size : 35" x 27"

Paper : Somerset 300 gsm

Edition size : 125





Taj Mahal

In 'Taj Mahal', Burman Mughal brings dramatically together the Mughal ambience of the Taj Mahal and the ironised pastoral landscape of Edouard Manet's revolutionary 1863 painting, 'Déjeuner sur l'herbe'. Manet's picnic on the grass came to stand, in the eyes of many bourgeois viewers, as a symbol of the impropriety and subversiveness of the bohemians, with its two artist or intellectual figures, its naked nymph or prostitute looking the viewer straight in the eyes, and its clothed female figure dipping into a pool. More than a century of interpretative familiarity later, the painting has acquired a serene classicism that quite eclipses its former notoriety. In Burman's handling, Manet's painting becomes an evocation of relaxed defiance and pleasure beyond the bounds of bourgeois society, which fuses with the elegance of Shah Jehan's monumental poem to love to form a tranquil theatre of the emotions.

Paper size : 40" x 30"
Composition size : 35" x 27"
Paper : Somerset 300 gsm
Edition size : 125



Reflections - on Life and Art

Sakti Burman with Ina Puri

Ina Puri

New Delhi, January 1st Circa 2010

The enduring image that appears and reappears in Sakti Burman’s world is the Noah-like figure in an ark, heralding animals and birds to what would seem a safe sanctuary, away from floods and ruination. There is immutability in this space, a sense of continuity that anchors the dreamer in his ark. It has been pointed out that the figure could well be that of the painter himself, with his entourage of family, birds and beasts that do not appear to feel in any way daunted by the calamitous circumstances threatening their very existence. Instead, they seem exuberantly high-spirited and gay. In the painter's mind there is no conflict about the merrymaking picnickers pitching their lot against high waters. Why should there be because, after all, the dominant mood in his depicted world is that of undimmed hope and happy optimism even as the ark is facing an uncertain fate - even that perhaps of doom? It is fitting, therefore, on the first day of the New Year to engage in a conversation with Burman on life, art, romance and image-making – and to analyse the shining beacon of hope in the present times of global despair, recession and chaos.

In Burman's light-filled studio apartment, the artist is bent over his canvas, meticulously dipping his brush onto a palette where cubes of jewel-bright colours pool in liquid squares of crimson, yellow, indigo, from there to be tipped delicately on the canvas. The surface which has already been prepared with an acrylic-water solution is now a mosaic of iridescent fluid shapes, pinpricks of colours that flow into outlines defined earlier by the painter. To watch the technique Burman has mastered over the last many decades is to suspend belief, such is the sense of wonderment it evokes as he fills in the outlines creating that marbling-like effect, the household around him is preoccupied with chores of their own. The domestic routine, murmurs from the other rooms, children's laughter, His wife, Maite instructing the help are sounds that one can associate with Burman's studio. This is his world; the one that appears like a leitmotif on his canvas, the world that retains it's own pace and flow whether he is in Paris or Delhi.

Ina Puri: You left your country for another, you have been residing there most of your life. What does the concept of home (or home country) mean to you? How has it moulded your artistic sensibilities? You have often cited the instance of the great maestro Chopin who migrated to an alien land but never forgot his roots. How do you interpret your life in that context?

Sakti Burman: “I owe my basic inspiration to Chopin...like the great musician, I too migrated to another land to make my fortune but in making that journey the one thing I never left behind were my roots. The further I travelled away from my home in distant Bidyakut and my large extended family, the more I clung to memories of my homeland where the sun shone bright, bringing into vivid focus colours of the sky, the rivers, the landscape, the people and their colourful rituals propitiating the Gods, what the locals humorously referred to as 'baaro maashey tero parbon' which means that in Bengal the 12 months have 13 festivals to celebrate.”

“I remained a man obsessed and hungering for a glimpse of the undulating village roads leading to our home, the leafy trees shading the grassy patches beneath where young lovers would keep secret trysts on dark moonless nights. I could hear their murmurs still far away in a land where it was acceptable to hold hands and even kiss in public places. The different worlds congealed & coalesced years after I got used to living there but fleetingly my senses are still a trifle outraged when I hear my grandchildren discuss their boyfriends or girlfriends casually in front of us. Coming back to the perceived East-West oscillation many other artists face, my response is simple - I am comfortable in both cultures and I paint my own personal vision of a world which is in harmony with both worlds.”

As an interesting result of this dual citizenship/dwelling in two diverse worlds that had more to do with the mental and spiritual spaces, Burman's transition was slow-paced and gradual, as was his awareness of Western art and its practices. His was almost a pilgrim's progress, unimpeded and soaring free of pressures, the need to perforce or contextualise. Given this individuated approach, Burman's painting acquired a lulling quietude, a feeling that the viewer was stepping into a dreamscape where the jester ruled the magical universe of divinities. And thus did several worlds integrate on Burman's canvas a joyous melding of his spontaneous effervescence alongside a formal Parisian education that necessitated a restraint, a holding back, resulting in a unique composition that was rooted primarily in the painter's creative imagination but also offered a contemporary vision.

There is a traditional mooring to the painterly approach by Burman that makes use of images of Durga and other Hindu divinities like Ganesha or Kartika, each paired with their 'vahanas' amidst a dramatis personae of jesters, bespectacled young men, nubile women lolling seductively on elaborate chaise-lounges, little boys and girls chasing each other in innocent glee. Burman's visual topography is

colour saturated fields illumined by underpinnings of light that seems to have their source somewhere deep within the surface.

IP: What is your role as a 'sutradhar'? Do you feel like an intimate spectator, familiar with his subjects, aware of their moods/emotions at every moment? And it seems like there is also a musical quotient in your work. Where does that come from?

SB: "In the early years I nurtured dreams of becoming a musician. My family was conservative but encouraged my artistic leanings that then veered to music particularly the sitar. I remember how we used to gather outside auditoriums like New Empire and listen to the great maestros play concerts over microphones drinking hot tea to keep warm on freezing winter nights. It was such fun! If there were listeners inside, there were equal numbers of passionate music-lovers, maybe not quite so affluent, sitting outside - eager to listen to their gurus create magic in the well known music conferences in Calcutta. And so it was that without a penny in our pockets, we heard Pandit Ravi Shankar, Ustad Vilayat Khan, Ustad Ali Akbar Khan's performances when we were all young & the world around us was young as well. As time passed and I struggled with the rudiments of sitar playing, it dawned upon me that music wasn't my calling and that my muse was Art. I recalled that from my earliest childhood no matter how fond I was of Classical music, it was painting that I enjoyed above all else. I loved painting landscapes, riverscapes, portraits of friends and at inspired moments national leaders too. At this juncture, I put away my sitar resolutely and began my journey in the pursuit of art. It turned out to be a wise decision. Yes, it is true that my own involvement is that of an intimate observer perhaps because my memory plays a crucial part in my pictorial story-telling."

As a freshman, straight from the small mofussil town of Bidyakut, Burman was thrown in an environment that was eclectic & strange. The Government Art College situated then in Dharmatalla, was a beehive of activities within the class and outside the class-rooms. Burman remembers Jogen Chowdhury a year junior to him, Sarbari Roy Choudhury, Sanat Kar, Shyamal Dutta Ray, Arun Bose and Ganesh Haloi as contemporaries. He lost his heart to Santosh Rohatgi, a beautiful classmate, only having the courage to ask her out many years later in Paris.

Calcutta, was Burman's first tryst with city lights and he was enthralled by all that he saw in the streets: the glittering city people, the theatre, cinema, music halls filled with the well-spoken and well-heeled. In college, as he earnestly applied himself to his chosen curriculum, his professors impressed him deeply with their teachings and eccentric ways in equal measure. Monindro Gupta left an indelible impression on his mind by introducing him to the pyramidal structure of composing which was something that guided Burman's visual language in years to come, as did the influence of Gopal Ghosh.

Burman's first major exhibition, an exposition of Russian painters was at Artistry House, Park Street when it was the only gallery that existed. Interestingly, Burman showed in the same space years later. The infinitely more exciting show during his college times however, was that of Nandalal Bose, held in the Art College. It was a turbulent time politically and in the art fraternity too, loyalties were sharply divided between the followers of the Bombay Progressive Group and the Calcutta Group.

IP: The Parisian chapter -- were you overwhelmed by the new country? How did it welcome you and what were your first experiences?

SB: "I left the shores of India and went to Paris to seek my destiny. Those were difficult years with language and communication being merely the initial hurdles that I had to encounter. At Ecole Nationale Superieure des Beaux-Arts I joined Chapelain-Midy's atelier where I would meet with other young artists and dreamers all determined to change the world. Unlike the Art College in Calcutta where we were expected to work on studies from imagination, in Paris we had beautiful women as models."

With his wife, Maite's gentle prodding, Burman reminisced about the brief and passionate interlude with a beautiful Greek girl who was sitting for him once - the one time he got carried away. The romance was fleeting but even though years have passed, he still has the painting of this model with him.

IP: Memories form a subtext & contextualize your painterly moorings too, yet the narrative of your art draws from memories of a different world. You journey in your mind to another time, when as a little boy you witnessed your Didi's grand wedding - where the groom arrived on elephant back. At other times, the painted pageants we often see on your canvas seem to originate in our 'Roop-Katha' or 'Raj Kahini'. Your stories/imageries are steeped in nostalgic anchoring and are fragrant with associations of rural Bengal. If your art has a muse, would you say it is a geographical locale, maybe even a distant song sung by women at a village wedding?

SB: "Looking back, I realise that memory has lent itself in more ways than I've actually even known, to my image-making. The pictorial narratives are peopled with characters from fables and mythologies as well as some I've known intimately. Far away from my hometown of Bidyakut, I journeyed back to my boyhood, as a painter and discovered rivers, rituals, faces that were once an integral part of my life. In my cold & dark room, struggling to stay warm in the freezing temperatures, my mind wandered back to Bidyakut and I found solace.....these memories sparked the creative process, from where fantasy took flight."

IP: Yet, there was Paris, the glitzy, glittering European city, where lovers strolled by the Seine pursuing their dreams and fantasies, drinking wine in smoky cafes, reading and

having passionate arguments about the meaning of life/living/art. How did you absorb all of this? Were you entranced? Seduced? Did you not lose your heart to the first French woman who blew an audacious smoke ring in a gallery, distracting your attention momentarily from the stunning Matisse work?

SB: “I was wonderstruck, Ina,” he smiles “the women were so beautiful, fashionable, poised....they took my breath away! I learnt the language, threw caution to the winds and settled into my modest lodgings, determined to make the most of every moment. I read Balzac, Baudelaire, Voltaire and painted. I fell in love with Paris....I have to admit that like any young impressionable callow youth I too veered towards the great masters in the early years and fell under the influence of Bonnard, Matisse, Chagall and of course Picasso. Just to stand before their canvas was to experience the unreal. It was so far removed from my life in Bidyakut; where no gallery existed and where art was an 'alpona' traced in elaborate patterns by the women-folk of the household on auspicious occasions like puja or weddings....”

IP: And you painted a cityscape, a mosaic of chimneys & roofs towering towards heaven where cherubic women/angels/ frolicked naked amidst clouds?

SB: “Amidst all the distinguished masters, Bonnard struck a chord deep within my soul and I felt a sense of artistic kinship with him. His colours reminded me of Persian and Indian miniatures and his compositions of interior spaces was lyrical....I attribute my early success to this imbibing of Bonnard's vision.”

Burman's 1957 canvas with the cityscape went on to be exhibited at the Salon de la Jeune Peinture and was acquired by the Town Hall for Musee de la Ville de Paris, but more significantly, it was an indication of the artist's style as it would develop in years to come.

IP: Fascinatingly, decades after you've found your artistic idiom, memories continue to inspire you? The exquisitely textured compositions bring back the frescoes of Ajanta & Ellora, places you visited years ago ,the radiant blues, ochres, crimsons continue to pay a tribute artistically to the Persian & Indian miniature tradition you so admired as a young man....would you not agree? Also, your predeliction to use curves instead of lines.

Burman looks at the painting on the table before him and responds...

SB: “Over the years my approach has changed very little and I still have that child-like wonder when I see the world around me. I love fantasies, fables and medieval allegorical tales and gradually, they have become an integral part of my narrative. In my magical world the figures inhabit their own spaces; while they exist in the same shared universe they remain detached from one another. And it is true that in my painterly iconography I tend to use curves rather than straight lines....”

IP: But there are no real concerns with the real world? Your characters inhabiting their ephemeral floating spaces are always depicted in minutest detail, draped, shod and in quaintly shaped headgear; an array of fez/caps for the boys. Isn't your artistic perspective such that the figures viewed from the top angle, have no shadows?

Burman laughs..

SB: “But naturally, it is a magical, enchanted world...anything can happen!” Then, in a sombre tone he continues “About real concerns, I would like to say that even the great Matisse continued to paint in his own oeuvre despite the fact that the World War was ravaging nations across the world...I remind myself of the tale of Pandora when conflicted by issues of 'real concern'. ‘Curiosity’ could lead to calamity so how can I, a mere painter, ever expect to make any changes in the way people think or act? All I can do in this one lifetime is sing of ‘Hope’ and paint images of an enchanted world where Gods frolic with mortals and all is well with the world....”

IP: Sakti, we see you visit India every winter; at times with an exhibition of paintings, but this time you will be holding an exhibition of your serigraph prints. How did that come about?

SB: “Well, it all began about 5/6 years ago, when Lavesch approached me with a proposal that struck me as being rather interesting. He suggested we consider doing a portfolio of my paintings as limited edition prints, this of the highest quality in serigraphy. Though my paintings were fetching a fair price I thought ‘Why not’? Also, the idea of seeing my paintings transform themselves in another medium intrigued me and I agreed.”

IP: For an average person what would these serigraphy sets offer? Do they get to see your early or recent works?

SB: “I'm delighted with the fact that these serigraph prints represent two decades of my art, thus, works that are thematically from my earlier phases will be a part of this collection alongside the more recent. Incidentally, most of these works are sold in distant places, hanging on walls of collectors in New York, Paris, Delhi, London, Mumbai...but in our collector's edition portfolio titled ‘The Complete Collection’, we offer a retrospective virtually of my works covering a range of subjects / themes / styles I've experimented with down the years.”

IP: I have been asked often by art-lovers who do not have exorbitant sums to spend how they can collect masters and each time I've said they should acquire prints of the artists they admire. Unfortunately, in our country there weren't many people who had the required skill to make good quality prints, invariably, there would be some glaring flaw

or the other....would you say you are satisfied with what Lavesh has achieved in terms of quality?

SB: "I'm very pleased with the results. Lavesh has been able to get the exact tones of my palette, be it Vermilion or Crimson, or indeed a combination of both."

IP: I think the most wonderful thing about this endeavour is it's affordability, now it will be easier for young collectors to start buying their favourite artists.

SB: "Absolutely. I am happy that my works will now be able to reach out to many more art lovers. There are also art collectors wanting to acquire my paintings but I have not been able to provide these as I am not a prolific painter and produce hardly 15 paintings in a good year, these art collectors can now enjoy my art through this medium of high quality serigraphy."

Ina Puri is an author, documentarian and independent curator. Her documentary on Manjit Bawa has won the National Award.

My Story

Sakti Burman

It was in my school that I heard the story of Pandora’s Box, Zeus, who had created Pandora out of clay, gave her a box when she received her life and asked her not to open it, But her curiosity got the better of her and she opened the box, And instantly emerged from it all the evils and bad tempers. She closed it in haste and what remained inside the box was ‘Hope’ that lay at the bottom.

The myth had a great message for me, not so clearly spelt out; when as a child I heard it. But it stayed deeply inscribed in my unconscious and I hope it will stay with me forever; for the rest of my life. The message was simple as I realized later and had a lasting impact on my life and work as a painter. It taught me that ‘Hope’ is the only thing that sustains our life and keep us on the move amidst all failures and frustrations. In all our despair and distress there remains only ‘Hope’, leading us on to reach the end of the dark tunnel.

When I look at my works done over the last five decades I have an impression that it is ‘Hope’ that I have been painting all my life. Another thing the myth taught me is that the essence of all the great adventures of life is ‘Curiosity’. ‘Curiosity’ may land us in danger, May often lure us to taste the forbidden fruits, And may often be the root of many of our woes and sufferings. Yet, Pandora would still have remained a lump of lifeless clay had she not been given with life one of life’s major drives – ‘Curiosity’.

Like that of any struggling artist my life was not a smooth sailing. I was born and raised in a traditional family of landed gentry residing for generations in Bidyakut, a thriving lush green village, now in Bangladesh. Ours was a large extended family – living under the same roof of a large house – which included, besides cousins and relatives, people connected with farm work. Life, both outdoor and indoor, had an even tenor and pace with a gentle bustle round the year with domestic and social business. There were frequent festive occasions, major and minor, when a wedding took place, a child was born, family deities were ceremonially worshipped or when the gorgeous celebration of Durga Puja took place, which like Christmas for the Christians, is the greatest festival of the Bengali Hindus.

On every such occasion our house became a happy abode of a festive crowd of relatives, friends, guests and visitors and those who were employed to take care of every aspect of the event. As a child I had certainly imbibed this joyous spirit that flowed freely animating the whole house. It is not unlikely that the spirit of joy and hope that my paintings exude owe a good deal to those childhood days in Bidyakut. Many other details of motifs and moods and even certain stylistic elements in my works have been traced back to my happy childhood experiences by critics who have written on me. I began to paint and draw, and it was in my school at Dibrugarh, a town in Upper Assam in the Eastern part of India that I impressed my art teacher by a regular display of skill in copying portraits of famous public figures like Tagore and Gandhi. But the most decisive evidence of my talent was found when I did a portrait of Jawaharlal Nehru, the first Prime Minister of Independent India. I did it straight from life, watching my subject from a short distance away when he addressed a big crowd at Dibrugarh, from the specially put up podium. My appreciative elders showed it to the Prime Minister and he was pleased to sign his name on it.

In my family there was none who had any special interest in the visual arts, but music was a major interest of my sisters and many of my cousins and other relatives. I myself learnt to play the Sitar, taking lessons from a maestro. However, my talent for painting came to be counted most by my father and other members of the family when I finished school. With their encouragement – though they had doubts about my making a living as an artist – I joined the diploma course in Fine Arts at the Government Art College in Calcutta in 1951.

In college I worked hard to the appreciation of my teachers to learn all the basics of painting and drawing. But the most important part of my training was my exciting exposure to both Western and Indian art through fine reproductions and photographs available in the library. Among western masters, old and modern, I admire most Masaccio, Giotto, Piero della Francesca, Rembrandt, Goya, Chagall, Matisse and Bonnard. Van Gogh, Gauguin, Monet and Manet were my special favourites. After I left college I was keen to continue my studies; My parents and elder brothers were very much supportive and helped fulfill my dream of coming to Paris.

I came to Paris in 1956 and enrolled as a student in the Ecole Nationale Superiure des Beaux-Arts. It was in Paris that I realized how much of hazard and hard work was involved in my becoming an artist. A student in a foreign city, not flush with money, I had to make do with a modest allowance from home. Life was hard, particularly in winter, living in a small dingy room on the sixth floor of a house with a steep staircase. It had no room heating, no running water, hot or cold; and I had to use a common toilet. I felt depressed, suffering terribly from cold and sometimes from want of proper food. Often I despaired of continuing any more and indulged in plans of going back to India. I saw a dark tunnel with no light at the end. But my moods of depression would not last long. For, my hopes and dreams were very big. The lack of creature comforts didn't deter me from passionate pursuit of my dream.

At the same time what kept me going on was my tremendous curiosity to know and my keen desire to learn every thing about the fascinating vista of the world of art that opened up for me in Paris. After all Paris was still the center of world art. While working in the Beaux-Arts, busy with my daily practice of drawing, painting and sketching I regularly visited all the galleries and museums and tried to read all the available books on art and art history. I picked up fast the names of great modern masters, all the major movements in modernist art and tried to grasp all the aesthetic drives of the nearly one hundred year run of modernism in Europe that had globally overhauled the very concept of art in our times.

I also faced the same problems that probably plagued every young artist, especially those who uprooted themselves from their native culture and studied art in Paris, viewing as models, as I did, the maestros of modernisms like Picasso, Braque, Matisse, Chagall and Bonnard. I soon found myself in the throes of two questions 'What and How to paint?'

I couldn't forget my Indian roots and at the same time I was fascinated by my two favourites of the time Matisse and Bonnard, especially their paintings of interiors. Their colours reminded me of Persian and Indian miniatures. I also tried to pick up something from the Italian Renaissance masters such as Masaccio, Giotto and Piero della Francesca whose murals and frescoes lent me certain ideas when I thought of how to paint.

Meanwhile, I visited India for six years in 1963 and stayed there for about a year holding two shows, one in Calcutta and other in Delhi. I sold only two paintings, that too with a great deal of effort. Despite my good Beaux-Arts degree, I found it was not easy for me to live off painting. Still 'Hope' continued to feed my

dream of becoming a full time painter. I came back to Paris and somehow survived, doing odd jobs but devoted most of my time to painting and drawing. Within a couple of years I visited India again, and this time I went there with my wife Maite Delteil, also an artist who I had known since my Beaux-Art days and we got married in the meanwhile.

In India we visited all the great sites of India's ancient and classical art and architecture and studied wonderful works of folk and miniature painting. My eyes opened to the glory of India's art heritage and I was sort of reborn as an artist. I went back to Paris and settled there to paint and do nothing else.

My art from now on took a new turn, in which my sole aim was to express myself without any conscious effort to forge a style out of the resources I had absorbed whether in the West or in India. Every painting I did was an attempt to know myself, and in the process my images shaped out of everything I experienced in life, since probably my days as a child in the remote Bengal village. All my excited enjoyment of art in India and in the West that lay stored in my memory and in my unconscious, all the myths and fairy tales, legends and lore I had heard or read, my love for music and the songs of Tagore or the poetry of Baudelaire – all went into the making of my paintings to evoke a world of unreality, but one very much real in my imaginative life and enlivened in every part with hope, joy dream and fantasy.



Sakti Burman

Born 1935

Studied Government College of Art & Crafts, Calcutta

Ecole Nationale Supérieure des Beaux-Arts, Paris

The artist lives and works in Paris and Anthé. Lot-et-Garonne

Solo Exhibitions

- 1954 Art & Industry, Calcutta
- 1956 Ecole des Beaux-Arts, Paris
- 1958 Galerie des Beaux-Arts, Paris
- 1961 Piccadilly Gallery, London
- 1962 Ashoka Gallery, Calcutta. All India Fine Arts & Crafts Society, New Delhi
- 1963 Galerie Saint-Placide, Paris
- 1964 Scott and Faure Gallery, La Jolla, California
- 1965 Kunika Chemould, New Delhi
- 1967 Piccadilly Gallery, London. Pundole Art Gallery, Bombay
- 1970 Galerie Doucet-Coutureau, Paris. Pundole Art Gallery, Bombay
- 1971 Galerie Nuovo Sagittario, Milan
- 1973 Galerie Nuovo Sagittario, Genoa
- 1974 Galerie Arts et Beaux-Arts de France, Paris
- 1975 Galerie de L'Hôtel Méridien, Nice
- 1977 Pundole Art Gallery, Bombay. Kunika Chemould, New Delhi
- 1978 Birla Academy of Art and Culture, Calcutta. Chanakya Art Gallery, New Delhi
- 1979 Galerie Gérard Sauret, Libos
- 1980 Galerie De Barnardi, Aachen, Musée de Blois, Musée de Villeneuve-sur-Lot
- 1981 Galerie de la Rue Ancienne, Geneva
- 1982 "Contes et Légendes", Galerie d'Art de la Place Beauvau, Paris. Galleria Cecchini, Perugia. Galleria Lame, Bologna
- 1983 Galleria Sagar, Zurich
- 1984 Musée Denon Chalon-sur-Saône, Galerie d'Art de la Place Beauvau, Paris. Kunsthandlung Osper, Köln
- 1985 Galerie Das Kunstabinett, Gogh, Allemagne
- 1986 Hôtel de ville de Claremont-Ferrand. Centre Culturel de la Ville d'Agen
- 1988 Pundole Art Gallery, Bombay. Chitracoot Art Gallery, Calcutta. Sista Art Gallery, Bangalore.
Homage à R. Tagore, Galerie d'Art de la Place Beauvau, Paris. Galerie Présences, Bruxelles
- 1989 Semaine Culturelle Indienne, Eaubonne, Val d'Oise. Perpignan, Fondation Bauby. XX^{eme} Salon Du Grenier à Sel, Orléans
- 1990 Pundole Art Gallery, Bombay
- 1992 Centre of Contemporary Art, New Delhi. Hommage à Beaudelaire, Galerie de la Place Beauvau, Paris
- 1993 Chitracoot Art Gallery, Calcutta. Pundole Art Gallery, Bombay
- 1995 The Gallery (Apparao Galleries), Madras
- 1996 Exhibition organised by Galerie Ecole de Paris at Wakayama & Sapporo; Visual arts Centre, Hong Kong organised by Apparao Galleries
- 1997 Cloître de la Dame Blanche, La Rochelle. Organised by the Town Hall. Exhibitions organised by Ecole de Paris in Tokushima. Miyazaki and Osaka with the works of Picasso, Chagall and Miró
- 1998 Salon d'Automne, Paris, Espace EIFFEL BRANLY
- 1999 Atlantic Gallery, New York – organised by Apparao Galleries
- 2001 Exhibition organised by Pundole Art Gallery in Mumbai at Pundole Art Gallery
Exhibition organised by Birla Academy of Art and Culture and Pundole Art Gallery in Kolkata
- 2002 Exhibition organised by Art Today and Pundole Art Gallery at Art Today Gallery, New Delhi

2005	Exhibition organised by Pundole Art Gallery and Apparao Galleries in Jehangir Art Gallery, Mumbai, in Birla Academy, Kolkata
2006	Exhibition organised by Pundole Art Gallery and Apparao Galleries in Chennai and in Visual Art Gallery, India Habitat Centre, New Delhi
2008	Maison de l'Unesco. Organised by Unesco, Salles Miró, Paris. Art Alive, New Delhi
2009	Aicon Gallery, New York and London

Participations

1964	Chemould, Calcutta
1975	The Hermitage, Leningrad. Pouchkine Museum, Moscow
1980	Galerie Jean Maribach, Mulhouse. Galerie Schémes, Lille. Museum of Villeneuve-sur-Lot, Musée de Blois
1981	Figuration Actuelle, Château des Hayes
1982	International Triennale, New Delhi
1983	L'Art Fantastique, Musée de Belfort
1983	Helpage India, Jehangir Art Gallery, Bombay
1984	International Graphic Art Exhibition, New Delhi
1984	Drawing 94, Gallery Espace, New Delhi
1995	Indian Contemporary Paintings, Christie’s London. Autumn Exhibition curated by CIMA Gallery at All India Fine Arts & Crafts Society, New Delhi
1997	Chamatkar, The Indian Metaphor, Whitleys Art Gallery, London, organised by CIMA
1998	Christie's auction, Indian Contemporary Paintings, London. Multimedia Art 1990's, Calcutta. “Harmony Show”, Bombay. “Within the Frame” Apparao Galleries Hong Kong. “The Art of Charity” Bombay
1999	VIENNA Sigmund Freud’s “Interpretation of Dreams” exhibition organised by University Art Museum, Birghamton, New York. Artists in the exhibition: Odilon Redon, Giorgio de Chirico, Marc Chagall, Salvador Dali
2000	Birghamton, University Art Museum, Sigmund Freud’s “Interpretation of Dreams”. Artists in the exhibition include Odilon Redon, Giorgio de Chirico, Marc Chagall, René Magritte, Salvador Dali
2002	“Aspects of Modern Indian Painting”, New York, organised by Saffronart and Pundole Art Gallery. “Return to Eden”, Art Musings, Mumbai
2002	For the Golden Jubilee Celebration of Jehangir Art Gallery. Participated in an auction with three painters to raise funds for Jehangir Art Gallery, Bombay
2002	“Palette 2002”, Visual Art Gallery, India Habitat Centre, New Delhi
2003	“The Said & Unsaid”, organised by the committee of the Jehangir Art Gallery and Apparao Galleries, Mumbai
2003	“Shanti Path”, Tao Art Gallery, Mumbai
2003	Anniversary Exhibition, Art Musings, Mumbai
2003	“The Celebration of Colour”, Vadehra Art Gallery and Times of India, Mumbai and New Delhi
2003	“Portraits of a Decade”, organised by CIMA Gallery, Kolkata
2003	“Mappings”, Exciting New Links between Ancient Cultures of India and Egypt, organised by Uttarayan (Baroda), Visual Art Gallery, India Habitat Centre, New Delhi and Bayer ABS Limited Gallery, Baroda
2003	“Master Strokes”, organised by Art Musings, Mumbai. “Fair and Furious”, organised by Art Alive, Visual Art Gallery, India Habitat Centre, New Delhi. “Works on Paper”, organised by Gallery Threshold, Visual Art Gallery, India Habitat Centre, New Delhi
2004	“Indian Artists for France” organised by the French Embassy at Alliance Française, New Delhi
2004	“Confluence” organised by Artsindia, New York. “A Vision – Looking Back-Looking forward” organised by Apparao Galleries. “The Burman Family” organised by Visual Arts, London Gallery 27
2005	“Spirit Set Free” Golden Jubilee show organised by Kumar Gallery, New Delhi
2005	“10th Harmony Show” organised by Tina Ambani, Mumbai
2006	“The New Space”organised by Art Space, Dubai
2006	“Two 2 Tango” organised by Gallery Nvya, Lalit Kala Akademi, New Delhi
2006	“Harmony Show” organised by Tina Ambani, Mumbai
2006	“Making of Divinity” curated by Ina Puri, sakshi Gallery, Mumbai
2006	“Shadanga” curated by Alka Pande & Gallerie Ganesh, Visual Art Gallery, India Habitat Centre, New Delhi
2007	“Resonance” organised by Art Musings at Museum Gallery, Mumbai
2007	“MIRROR” organised by Gallery Nvya, New Delhi

2007	Invited as “Artist in Focus” at the Harmony show, Nehru Centre, Mumbai
2007	“Faces of Indian Art” organised by Art Alive at Visual Art Gallery, India Habitat Centre, New Delhi
2007	“Indian Art 2007”, organised by International Institute of Fine Arts at House of Lords, London
2007	“Art Paris Abu Dhabi” modern and contemporary art fair

Salons

Biennale de Paris, Section Française, Musée d’Art Moderne, Paris
Salon d’Automne, Grand Palais, Paris
Salon de la Jeune Peinture, Musée d’Art Moderne, Paris
Salon des Etrangers, Musée d’Art Moderne, Paris
Salon de la Société Nationale des Beaux-Arts, Paris
Salon des Artistes Français, Grand Palais, Paris
Salon Comparisons, Grand Palais, Paris
Salon des Terres Latines, Grand Palais, Paris
Salon de Juvisy
Salon de l’Isle-Adam
Salon de Montmorency
Salon Arts en Yvelines, Orangerie du Versailles

Collections

National Gallery, New Zealand
Musée de la Ville, Paris
National Gallery of Modern Art, New Delhi
Punjab Museum
Allahabad Museum
Leicestershire Education Committee
Hull Education Committee
Yorkshire Education Committee
All India Fine Arts & Crafts Society, New Delhi
Delhi Press, New Delhi
Lord and Taylor, New York
Air India
Chandigarh Museum
Bhabha Atomic Research Centre, Bombay
Ministry of Culture, Paris
Musée Rapin, Villeneuve-sur-Lot
Bibliothèque Nationale de Paris
Ville d’Eaubonne
British Museum, London
Represented in several private and public collections both in India and abroad.

Publications and Illustrations

“Sakti Burman” Monography, published by Imprimerie de Blayac, France
“Sakti Burman – Dreamers on the Ark” published by Pundole Art Gallery, Bombay
“Contemporary Indian Art” published by Glenbara Art Museum, Japan
“Contemporary Indian Artist from Bengal” published by Gallery Sanskriti, Kolkata
“A Guide to 101 Modern and Contemporary Indian Artists”, Amrita Javeri, Mumbai

“Faces of Indian Art’ published by Art Alive Gallery, New Delhi
“Dreams 1900-2000” edited by Lynn Gamwell, Birghamton, University Art Museum
“Réves et Reflets”, album of 12 limited edition lithographs
“Hommage à toi, France” Illustrated a poem of Mallarmé
“Gitanjali of Rabindranath Tagore”, album of 16 limited edition lithographs
“Sakti Burman” Monography, published by Lalit Kala Akademi
“Now and Then” published on the occasion of the exhibition organised by Unesco-Paris
“Portfolio” published by Lalit Kala Akademi
“The Complete Collection” a portfolio of 24 limited edition serigraphs, published by The Serigraph Studio.

Awards

Médaille d’Argent de Montmorency
Prix des Etrangers, Ecole des Beaux-Arts, Paris
Prix de la Ville de l’Isle-Adam
Médaille D’or, Salon des Artistes Français, grand Palais, Paris
Médaille “Arts, Science et Lettres”
Médaille au Salon de Juvisy
Invité d’Honneur, Colombes
Invité d’Honneur, Douai
Invité d’Honneur, Sainte Maxime
Invité d’Honneur, Enghien-Les-Bains

Limited Edition Serigraph

Lavesh Jagasia

What is a Limited Edition Serigraph?

A Limited Edition Serigraph is a Limited Edition Fine Art Print.

A Serigraph is a Fine Art Print which has been produced using the screen printing method thus more precisely making it a Fine Art Screen Print.

The word ‘Serigraph’ literally means to draw through silk, In Latin ‘seri’ means silk and in Greek ‘graphos’ means to draw.

The name ‘Serigraph’ was coined by Carl Zigrosser, an eminent curator of prints of the Philadelphia Museum of Fine Arts, to distinguish Fine Art Screen Prints from other commercial and industrial Screen Prints.

What is a Fine Art Print?

Print making is one of the oldest forms of pictorial communication and of artistic expression, dating back to the 14th century in Europe and even earlier in China. Yet, despite the fact that most people know what a “print” is, it has become difficult to tell the difference between a ‘Fine Art Print’ and an ‘Art Poster’ which is a pure ‘Photo-mechanical Reproduction’.

This confusion has intensified over the past twenty years as artists have expanded the definition of a ‘Fine Art Print’ to include a variety of new and innovative print making techniques.

One of the primary characteristics of print making is that many nearly identical images can be made by inking and printing the same block, plate, stone, or screen, again and again. This makes it possible for many people to see and/or own an image.

Besides, what needs to be eradicated is the general notion that anything produced by the artist even in a partial indirect manner such as using the help of assistants or availing printing facilities outside of the artists’ studio does not deserve to be seen as a work of art. The human mind can certainly put to use currently available technology to create works of art of a high caliber, but the artist has to ensure that the painterly approach and feel is not diluted in the process. What also matters, is the concept along with the manner of execution of the print. The concept would always be original and reflect an individual signature style in the case of each artist.

There is no reason why an artist should be denied the facility of a practitioner in an allied creative field such as printing to assist him. What matters is the “authorization” of the print, this being the sum total of all the above i.e concept, technique, process and approach. These would be deemed to be accepted by the artist

as his by putting his signature on the print, thereby accepting it as a work either executed by him or under his supervision and thus regarding it as a 'Fine Art Print'.

However, an exception to note in this regard would be the recent instances of 'Offset' prints and 'Digital Reproductions' being signed by artists and released either as a 'Limited Edition' or as an 'Open Edition'. In spite of these 'Offset' prints and 'Digital Reproductions' bearing the signature of the artist and/or being released in a 'Limited Edition', they do not qualify as 'Fine Art Prints' and are segmented as 'Photo-Mechanical Reproductions' in art markets across the globe. These types of 'Offset' prints and 'Digitally Reproduced' prints are treated as mere 'Art Posters' having no value as collectible works of art.

What are the different types of Fine Art Prints?

There are various types of Fine Art Prints and they are differentiated by the process or technique by which they have been printed.

The different types of Fine Art Prints that would qualify as an artist's print and the print regarded and accepted internationally as Fine Art Prints or Multiple Original works of art are Serigraphs, Lithographs, Linocuts, Woodcuts, and various types of Intaglio prints such as Etchings, Engravings, Drypoints, Aquatints and Mezzotints.

What is a Limited Edition Fine Art Print?

As explained above a 'Fine Art Print' is not a commercially reproduced poster printed on a high-speed web press from photo-mechanically produced metal plates. 'Fine Art Prints' are regarded as 'Multiple Original' works of art. When these 'Fine Art Prints' are printed in a limited quantity or restricted in the printing run to a specified number they are said to be printed in a 'Limited Edition'. This limiting of the number of prints is conceived as such by the artist to make the print rare and add value to it.

"Proofs" of the work are pulled until they meet the artist's approval. The number of prints for the edition is then pulled, print by print, where upon they are signed and numbered by the artist. For example 4/50 means it is fourth impression from the total of fifty impressions. (Although this does not necessarily represent the actual order of printings). The artist keeps some 'Artist's Proofs' for himself, usually marked "A.P." or "A/P".

Generally after the number of prints in a 'Limited Edition' are pulled, the plates, stencils, blocks etc. are meant to be destroyed or defaced making it impossible to reprint or restrike the same image again, thereby genuinely rendering it as a 'Limited Edition'.

Lavesh Jagasia is an art connoisseur and founder of 'The Serigraph Studio'. As an art publisher he has collaborated with various artists such as S.H. Raza, Jehangir Sabavala, Ram Kumar, Paritosh Sen, K.G. Subramanyan, Jogen Chowdhury, Ganesh Haloi, Lalu Prasad Shaw, Rameshwar Broota and Sakti Burman, among others.



Lavesh Jagasia with Sakti Burman

The Serigraph Studio
Contemporary Art Prints
www.serigraphstudio.com