



Satirical Symphony

A solo show by A. Rajeswara Rao





Presents

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A solo show by A. Rajeswara Rao

Curated by
Annapurna M. & Kiran K. Mohan

12th September 2024

Visual Arts Gallery
India Habitat Center, Lodi Road, New Delhi - 110003

The show continues at the Art Magnum Gallery 21st September - 20th October 2024

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Credit@ Dhoomimal Gallery Team and Art Magnum Team

Front cover & Back cover: **1947 Classmates**, Acrylic on acrylic sheet, 48 x 48 inches, 2023

Inside cover: **Smoking Zone**, Pen and ink on paper cut, 36 x 42 inches, 2017

Inside back cover: **Massage Centre**, Pen and ink on paper cut, 30 x 36 inches, 2017

DIRECTOR'S NOTE

It is not often that as a gallerist you connect with an artist and his works instantly. In Rajeswara Rao's works, it was an instant connection. I was fascinated by his technique, use of satire and also his thought process. In current times where satire as a form of expression has become more relevant, be it, in political or our daily routines, the use of satire works as a significant tool to highlight prevalent issues. A. Rajeswara Rao, has a distinctive style which makes his works exclusive. He is an artist who is truly dedicated to his art which also influences the versatility of his art.

Rao transforms his observations of people and their mannerism into a make-believe surreal world which is full of magnificence and quirkiness. His meticulous use of colour further enhances his intricate forms & lines leading to a wholesome experience for his audience.

The gallery holds pride in presenting different mediums of artistic expression ranging from the traditional to the modern, the contemporary and the experimental. Housed at a contemporary space with ultramodern infrastructure located in the heart of South Delhi, the gallery attempts to lend its voice to the novel and noteworthy talents through a roster of shows that present the news makers of contemporary genre and also the old masters and marvels of Indian art from the pre and post-independence era.

I hope each artwork induces humour in your sensitivities.

Saurabh Singhvi
Art Magnum
August 2024

Racing thoughts through multiple genres of artworks can be overwhelming and escalate the adrenaline rush. The first thing that strikes, when you see Rajeswara Rao Ji's work is the robust imagery. In today's contemporary art scene people try to pick up socially relevant issues and do a narration on these to make their works more impactful. Rajeshwar ji makes no such attempt. The use of striking colour palette, superimposed figures and deliberate choice of capturing day to day situations involving mundane characters.

This bold imagery and satire creates a deep impact on the viewers. Whether it be his large works with cityscapes, brides, or just men women or his smaller paper works which are strong in lines, imagery, spontaneity, humour and satire.

However, if one comes to think of it, this strong imagery was a hallmark of his father's works too. The legendary Late Paidi Raju's works were a lot more classic and conventional in subjects, and Dhoomimal was very fortunate to showcase his works at the gallery.

It's fascinating to see Rajeswara Ji's reverse acrylic works. A medium so difficult to work on but Rajeswara Ji does it with full authority. These works create layers in his artworks adding even more character and dimensions. In a world where everyone is busy painting pretty pictures to match the tastes and current trends, to literally manufacture the same work once it gets commercially recognised. Truly, it's so refreshing to see an artist who has such frankness, boldness and is constantly experimenting in terms of subject or technique. Not forgetting to mention the proficient use of 'satire' in his artworks and the titles given to each of these. Rather than depicting the flaws in reality, the satire exaggerates to a point until they become comical or ridiculous.

Satirical Symphony is a show presented by Art Magnum and Dhoomimal Gallery. For us at Dhoomimal, across eight decades and three generations we continue to provide innumerable platforms to artists to achieve milestones and become the pioneers in Indian Modern & Contemporary Art. Finally, I would like to thank Ms. Anju Poddar, Ms. Shalini Sharma and Ms. Upasana Ansari for making the Hyderabad Curtain raiser show a success along with all the teams across Art Magnum and Dhoomimal Gallery and especially to our artist Rajeswara Rao & his wife Padma Rao, the curators and art connoisseurs.

Enjoy the visual treat followed by Laughter Unlimited!

Uday Jain
Dhoomimal Gallery
August 2024



A SATIRICAL SYMPHONY

Guided by the strong principles of his father, Paidi Raju—an esteemed senior artist, poet, sculptor, and art guru—Rajeswara Rao’s work is imbued with profound influence and inspiration. His father’s anecdotes and poetry serve as a rich source of learning for younger artists, demonstrating the power of words and actions. Known for his patience and kindness, Paidi Raju’s ethos is reflected in Rao’s personal and professional life. Rao considers it a blessing to be born into such a family, where his two sisters pursued dance. However, Rao aspired to carve his own identity, distinct from his father’s renowned legacy.

A graduate of Andhra University (Class of ‘83), Rao’s journey took a serendipitous turn when a colleague guided him to the newly established Hyderabad Central University. Rao’s hunger to learn and immerse himself in the art world drove him to leave his comfort zone and move to the bustling city of Hyderabad. His early works delved into the themes of life and death, capturing the raw essence of human existence.

For Rao, the mantra “Sit and think” is essential for an artist to realize their subject and path. He believes that attitude significantly contributes to one’s growth and work. Patience, he asserts, is key to stability in any field. In 1995, his marriage to Padma Reddy, an artist herself, marked another major turning point, profoundly influencing his work.

Rao’s keen wit and satirical lens breathe life into a vivid world where the familiar blends seamlessly with the fantastical. His paintings invite us to encounter characters from the silver screen, regal kings, old classmates, and elaborately adorned women. Through his astute observations and reflective distance, Rao creates a rich tapestry of the human experience.

Employing the reverse painting technique on acrylic sheets, Rao adds intriguing perspectives and dimensions to his subjects. Each brushstroke on the transparent surface reveals his mastery, transforming the ordinary into the extraordinary. His color palette, a testament to his artistic intuition, sometimes opts for monochrome simplicity, punctuated by sensuous details. The titles of his works often add new dimensions, inviting viewers to engage deeply with his art and occasionally tricking them into seeing beyond the surface.

This solo exhibition invites you to delve into the satirical world of Rajeswara Rao, where humor and critique intertwine, and each piece offers a new lens through which to view society. Witness the harmonious fusion of wit, observation, and technique, as Rao’s work challenges and delights in equal measure.

Annapurna M.
Curator

◀ Barsaat Ki Raat, Acrylic on canvas, 72 x 48 inches, 2011

BAATON BAATON MEIN...

Satire happens to be one of the oldest literary genres, the word was coined by Marcus Fabius Quintilian: Roman educator and classical rhetorician. This word comes from the Latin word 'satur', which means full. Nonetheless, no matter how much satire or sarcasm is seen or heard, the reason it integrates people is because of its fun elements and the wildness it holds is sincere.

Satire has often been used in literature, design and art as a technique of speaking truth to power to raise people's inner consciousness specifically during authoritative rule or political strife. "Satire is moral outrage transformed into comic art....." Philip Roth. The Satirical Symphony, is a visual narrative of what I see and what I have seen happening down the twenty years, says the artist A. Rajeswara Rao. The polite, soft spoken and the humblest person, who I love to address as RR Sir, stood waiting outside his studio for us. His studio, very typical like several others, had huge wooden tables with papers, colours, pencils and the obvious art tools that completely surrender to the artist while he is at work. Very enthusiastically he took us around his studio, where old sculptures were stacked in one corner. My curiosity kept growing as a small child about the medium of the sculpture but didn't utter a word to even ask because I didn't want to go wrong in my guessing. The same sculpture was the centrepiece when RR's works were displayed as a curtain raiser at the State Gallery, Hyderabad in the first week of August '24. It was overwhelmingly received by the art fraternity. The show was inaugurated by Ms. Anju Poddar & Ms. Shalini Sharma and not forgetting the immediate family and friends of the artist himself. Shri. B. A. Reddy (father-in-law of Rajeswara Rao), who has been a practicing artist and an art educator, was glad and recollected of Dhoomimal Gallery being the only one in the heart of the city. One feels proud and humbled too, when you hear from people about Ravi ji & Uma ji and their hospitality and bond with each artist.

The change of topography in RR didn't affect him on his personal front, coming from an affluent family and a family of artists, his father A. Paidi Raju was his inspiration. "Although his father's style was conservative and RR was deeply influenced by his father.....," said Dr. Prof. Kirtana Thangavelu, who taught him in 1988-89. Rajeswara Rao was amongst the 1st Batch of students at the Sarojini Naidu School at the University of Hyderabad, now called Sarojini Naidu School of Communications, University of Hyderabad. In my long conversation with her on the day of the special preview, she spoke about how RR, while exploring modern & contemporary art, held on to his own voice during this period of transition. He reinvested in humour and reconfigured to sum up crucial moments and treatment was so real. The humour makes the works more powerful, orientation of the city life and the authenticity that remains as he also becomes a part of this urbanization.

While personally interacting with the artist, we get to encroach upon his inner sensitivities.....which are captured in his artworks. The use of a colourful palette which gives an insight to the locals in our southern part of the country and the humour visually created around these local men and women. Interestingly, his first set of models were his maternal aunts and he painted them and titled the work as 'the seven sisters on cycles', which was displayed at Sakshi Gallery. RR found them appealing and addressed them as 'Old Heroines'. As the saying goes....Charity begins at home.... so did each of his characters in his artworks - his wife and sons not spared. I would say laughter that strung the bond within the family and that led to being an example to the people around or the society. The artist himself is a man of simple needs - simple food on time and in his comfortable environment where he can work at his own pace and time. Although very shy in nature, once he opens up...his one liners make you burst into gregarious laughter, while he stands smiling feeling happy like a kid. I think it will be right to say that he paints the 'Satire' that is in total contrast to his real self. Coming to his technique used in his artworks, especially when he works on the reverse of the acrylic sheet - every subject defined and every stroke is disciplined with the right

pressure in the derived area. A very difficult procedure to adopt and execute, while his canvases or papercuts do not show any evidence of compromise in the details of his artwork. RR says, "covid period was the most productive time for me, no disturbance from the outside world, only work work..." As a family of artists, they respect each other's space and they are vocal about opinions and critical dissection of each other's works. As he shares his nostalgic times, I also reminisce into my college days lectures, where Mrs. Raghunathan taught us Chaucer's - 'Canterbury Tales'. That was satire in literature and here down so many years, I stand witness to Satire in art. Lastly, each artwork of Rajeswara Rao's hangs in grandeur with subjects that address childhood memories, dance, cinema, bridal shoots, life in a metro, cowboys, the royals, bold beauties and myths.

Not forgetting the "Black Shades"... Kala Chaashma.....

To a larger extent RR has managed to put his message across to the society on how money, richness, brands, big cars and huge pomp & show in reality doesn't define a class in a person. It is eventually the human he or she is in reality, we see splurging of wealth on one side and on the other, the world going minimalistic. Thanks RR for these artworks, let's take a peep into our souls. Tvaralō kaluddām!

Kiran K. Mohan
Curator



Piya...Tu...Ab...Tho...Aaaja
Acrylic on acrylic sheet, 48 x 36 inches, 2006



A. RAJESWARA RAO

DIL KI KALAM SE...

Two events that markedly brought a change in my art practice are 1. my shift from Vizainagaram, a small culturally evolved town to Hyderabad into a totally different milieu in 1988 and 2. after a few years, my shift from the bustling city center of Hyderabad to a small forlorn village in its outskirts called Hyderguda which comes in the Ranga Reddy district.

I am witness to the metamorphic change of this village from a small hamlet with rich green fields, small tiled houses, little wayside temples, bicycles, a primary school, a post office, and all things that constitute a small village and above all the simple people and their local traditions to what it is today.

The 'development' started around 2000 onwards, the real estate boom happened and along with it, the transformation ...the PVNR Express Highway came in, the bridge on the Musi became active, connecting the village and its surrounding hamlets to the city, and a new class of the nouveau-rich emerged, changing the topography of landscape, and of thought. Illiterate and uneducated...pompous and showing off.

The old tiled houses and the fields transpired into a concrete jungle with multi-stories and gated communities. The farmers became real estate heroes and the lesser ones brokers.... flaunting gold jewellery, brands, ray ban sunglasses, Armani suits, Gucci shoes, etc and big cars....Honda city, Tavera, Audi, etc ... It was such a fantasy with the Mercs rolling down the narrow roads, women and men glittering in real gold and garish clothes dropping names of exotic drinks and imported liquor, flex prints announcing the welcoming of 'package trip returnees'....and so much more.

They captured me and became my muses involuntarily....how they imitate the 'rich' how they try to fit into the elite and how they want to live life full time and king-size exhibiting and fulfilling the underlying desires. So there are these chic clothes, extravagant photo shoots visits to pubs, movies, malls and package trips. The narcissism and the consumerism, is rampant loud and unapologetic...It's a new aesthetics. It is so much like today....all consuming.

'Satirical Symphony' is a visual narrative of what I see and what I have seen happening down the twenty years.

A. Rajeswara Rao



"Rajeshwar's late father A. Paidi Raju is a renowned artist and founder of Fine Arts College in Waltair University, Vishakapatnam, A. P. Facing hardship is an integral part of an artist's life and so was for Rajeshwar. Paint & brush became his toys in life. In this conflicting contemporary art scenario around us, after three decades of self-sustaining art practices in various mediums, Rajeshwar has succeeded in finding an appropriate medium of reverse painting on acrylic as a tool for his creative expression".

I wish him every success in his life

K. Laxma Goud

"As an integral part of our family Rajeswara Rao inspires us with his dedication towards his work, his unassuming persona, endearing honesty, humility and simplicity.....traits that are difficult to find in this generation. His unwavering commitment to his work and family makes us Proud to have him as the perfect son in law".

*Dr. B. A. Reddy
Artist and Art Educator*

"Delighted to be an admirer and an early collector of Rajeswara Rao's whimsical works.

Even if you don't know him, his exquisite technique and layered humour makes each piece; more than just an artwork, but a story and tells you a little more about the artist".

*Atul Kasbekar
Photographer/Producer*

"One of the most maverick artists with tremendous wit and humour built into his art. His bold and non conformist style – brings a smile to my face every time I look at his paintings".

*Sunil Rao and Sucharita
Architects and Connoisseurs*

"A man of modest stature, with immense creativity and imagination. Whimsical stories and characters rendered in his signature style and technique. His stories about his art and subjects are always a sublime delight. He is A Rajeswara Rao".

*Nanda Kumar Birudavolu
Architect*



Don't Be Silly Darling

Acrylic on acrylic sheet, 36 x 48 inches, 2007

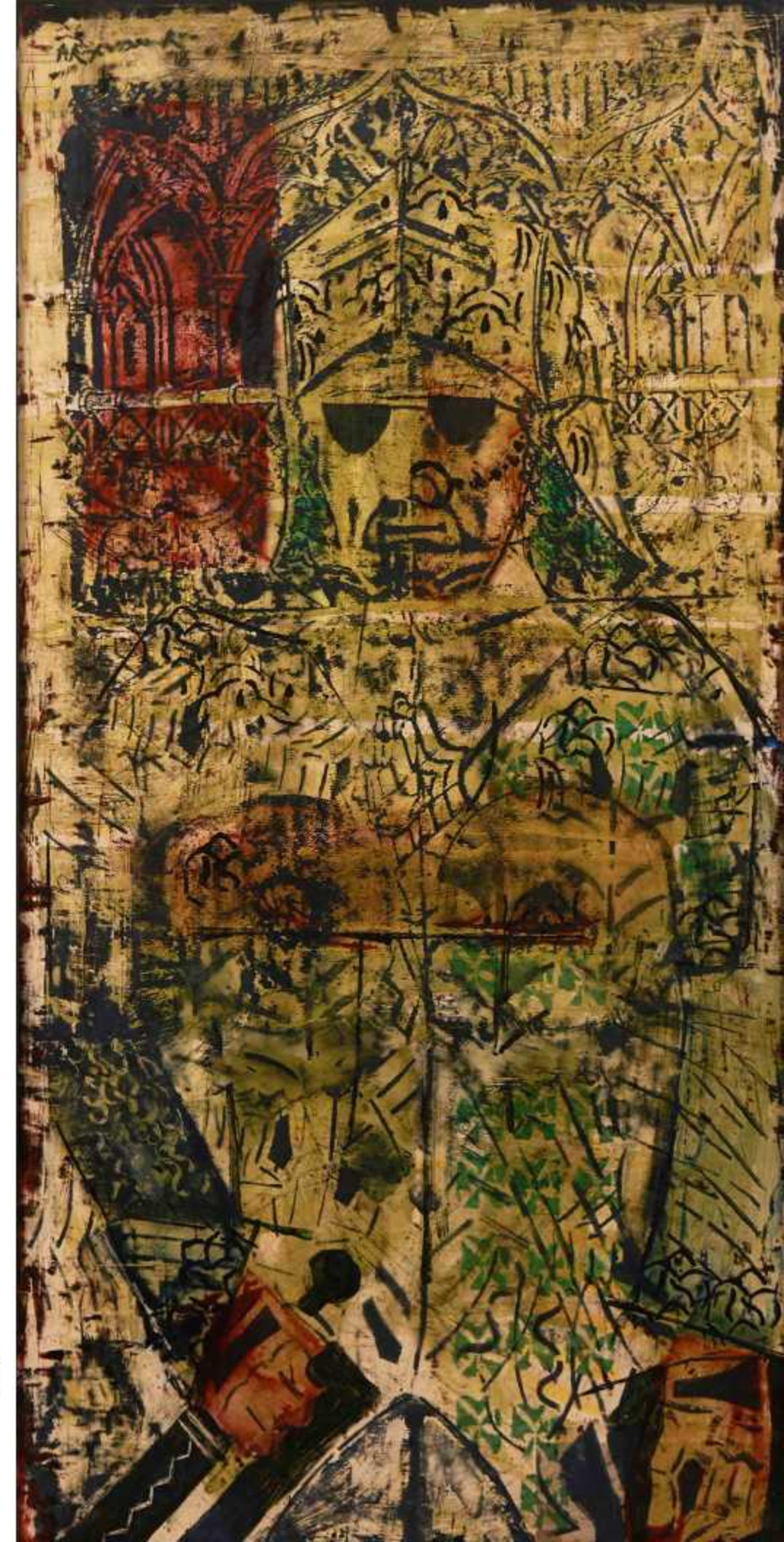


Shooting Chal Raha Hai

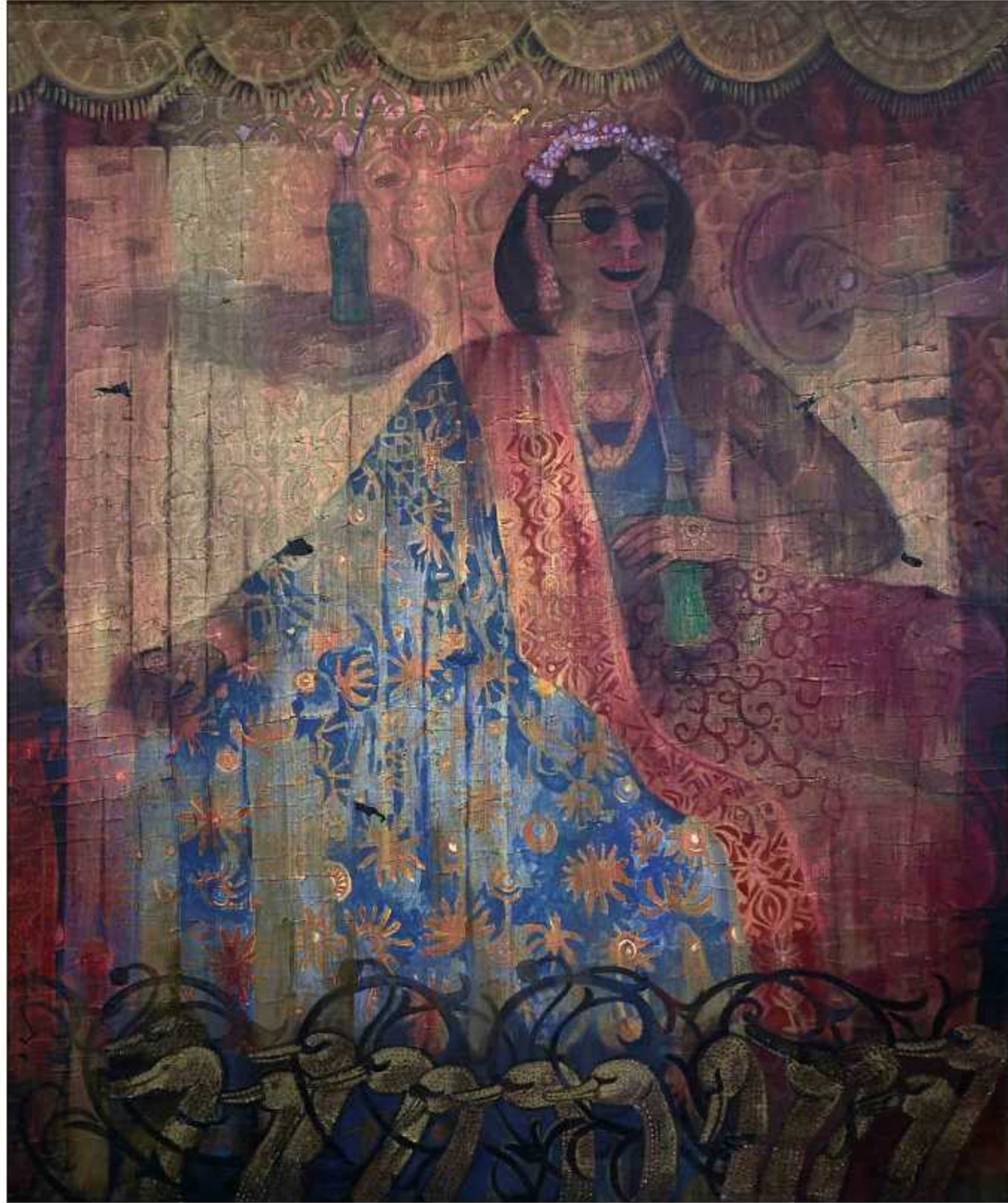
Acrylic on acrylic sheet, 48 x 60 inches, 2006



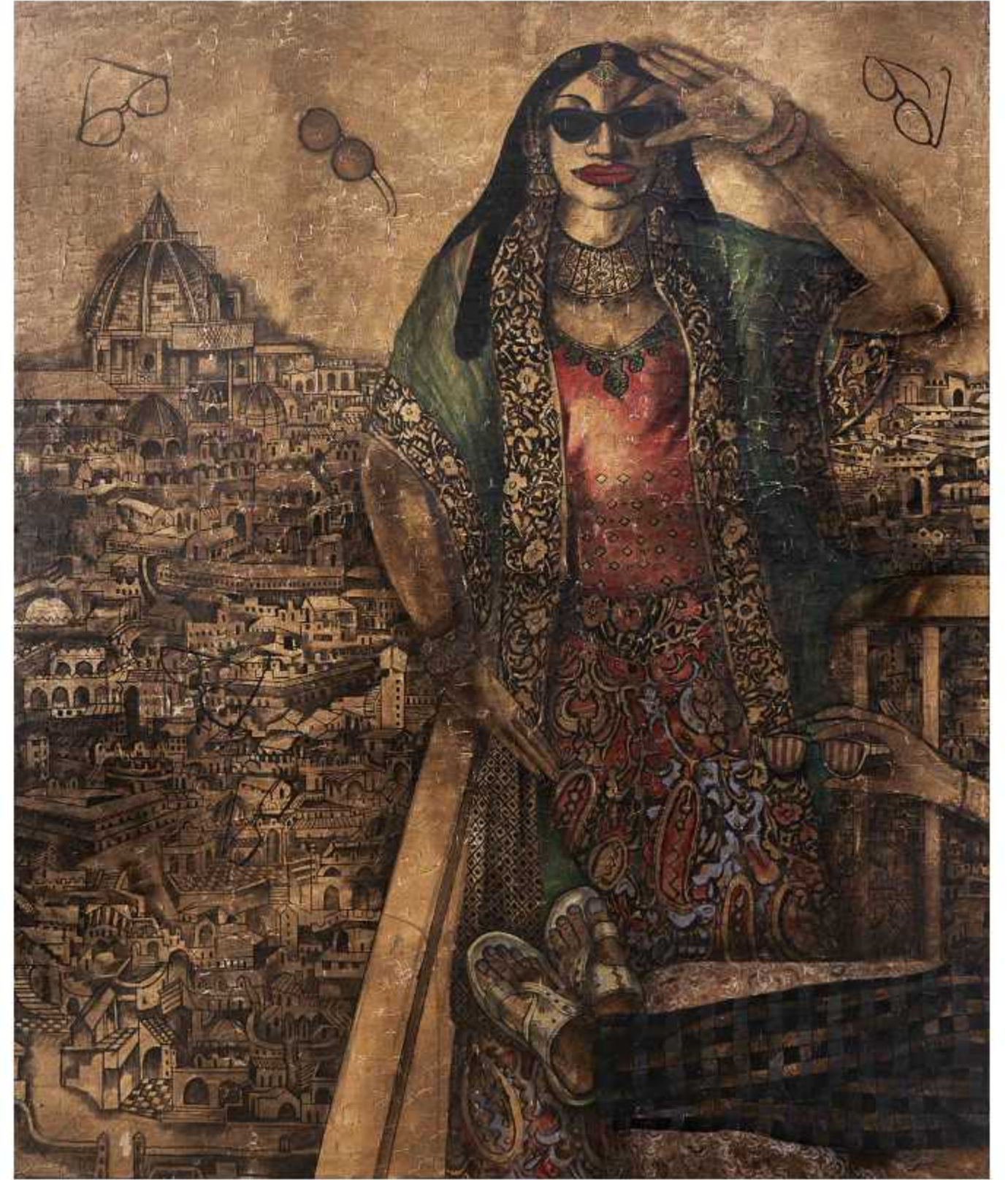
The Kings
Acrylic on acrylic sheet, 48 x 48 inches, 2018



The King
Acrylic on acrylic sheet, 48 x 24 inches, 2018



New Billionaire With Her Golden Ducks
Acrylic on canvas, 72 x 60 inches, 2011



My New Ray Ban
Acrylic on canvas, 72 x 60 inches, 2011

THE MERRY WORLD OF RAJESWARA RAO

So self-effacing is Rajeswara Rao (a fact that is further accentuated by his small frame and non-descript style of dressing) that you wouldn't take him to be among the leading contemporary artists of today. He would rather remain invisible in a crowd, and be the observer, the proverbial Common Man looking at the idiosyncracies of the people around him. He shies away from any applause or speeches, and would rather quietly stand in some corner mingling with people, especially with those non-descript people who we don't take cognizance of. He is after all, a social commentator chuckling to himself, about the many eccentricities of the nouveau riche who have suddenly acquired wealth from the lands they have sold, and want to prove to the world that they too can afford the things that give the rich their social status. These include everything from bungalows, cars, to designer bags, shoes, and dark glasses.

Rao somewhere during mid-career broke loose from the prevailing style of his seniors who were busy depicting the robust rural men and women of Telangana. He too is concerned about people of Telangana and Andhra for that matter, but he is more focused on what urbanization and quick wealth can do to the psyche of a people; He sees them go berserk buying "status" that will make them equal to the bold and beautiful people they see on screens and in gossip magazines.

He recalls how Hyderguda in Attapur where he moved in the early 2000 was an agricultural area filled with paddy fields. There used to be the usual plumber and butcher eeking out a miserable existence in this village that is on the outskirts of Hyderabad. Rao, ever curious would have long conversations with people around him. Once the house-help, confessed that because she was dark and overweight, she could not find a suitable boy to marry. And you can find this woman in his early works, with thick lips, watch, bright coloured lipstick, designer glasses, sipping a cola hoping she would find a nice boy to marry now that her family had made a lot of money by lucky turn of events.

Rao observed before his eyes, how the lives of the villagers around him changed when they sold their agricultural land to touts for the airport that was coming up. Overnight, literally they had cash that they didn't know what to do with except to fritter it away.

Being illiterate they wouldn't even know the make of the car, but bought anything that was big and bright and then whizzed around the colony adorned in flashy gold rings, jazzy bush-shirts and the by now Rao's trademark, the dark glasses. You can meet these men and women in the current works on show - the rosy-cheeked girls smeared with red lipsticks and wearing sleeveless dresses and stilettos or men with almost 10 crystal rings on their fingers (because they believe it was crystals that brought them luck), series of gold chains and the most expensive shoes, Gucci or Bucci, they don't care. This for sure is the aspirational India, and why not, these rural folk too must be part of the rising consumerism brought about by a liberalized India where "foreign" goods are available for the asking.

Rao tells you of how "packaged" tours (you can find glimpses of these tours in the exhibition too) are common among these newly rich, and how they book themselves on trips to either Paris or Holland (again who cares, as

long as you can get on a plane?), take the mandatory selfie with Mona Lisa or the Eiffel Tower and come back to boast about the foreign trip back home. One landlord who was building extension upon extension on his land went on such a foreign trip, which is all good Rao seems to say, but he later went around on a horse around their streets, to the applause of roaring crowds! If this is not fodder for an artist, what is?, Rao seems to ask.

His wife Padma, an artist and print maker herself, recalls how simply and unobtrusively Rao leads his life, keeping to himself, mostly focused on working. He is reluctant to even look at his phone to answer calls or check his mails for messages. His only obsession according to her, is his work and you realise from all that you see, how much he enjoys it: the medium (acrylic or acrylic sheets) as much as the quirky men and women who stride with unabashed pride into the works.

Hailing from Vijainagaram near Vizag, he has long been fascinated by the palaces of the kings there and you find this fading world with their dim lights in his work. There is of course Bond, and this is not the Bond of Hollywood movies, but Bond from umpteen Telugu films. He believed for long these Telugu films were shot abroad, not realizing these were shot on Tollywood sets with superhero Telugu heroes and their guns and horses. These Telugu cowboys and Bond get a special mention in this show. Bond Brothers and Bond hoon Main are the colourful titles of these works.

And don't miss the swag of the ten-headed Ravana-sura, a dummy that the men take their photos with, thrusting their heads into one of the blank space that is a head. Main Hoon Don, Rao proclaims in the title of this work, and indeed what fun life can be!

I have known Rajeswara Rao for almost three decades now, have even visited the studio he used to share with three other artists in Lakdika-pul, been to their home in Attapur (though not met his nouveau riche friends) and I have to say that in the art world his stature might have doubled over the years, but at heart he remains the simple artist that he always was. At every show, either because he thinks I have a sense of humour or because he genuinely wants me to understand his works, he goes to some length to explain the genesis of every one of his paintings. In fact, takes great joy in explaining them to me.

For someone who is so reclusive, he makes it a point to attend any event I invite him for, and this included my recent book launch. Not only did he attend the book reading, but gifted me a watercolor, that is supposed to be depiction of me, in my handloom sari and baubles. He has been kind to me in this portrait though I am still wondering about the dark glasses on my face! Maybe he believes, journalists too have unnecessary airs.

Ratna Rao Shekar
 Writer, Editor and Art Proponent



Rollercoaster

Acrylic on acrylic sheet, 60 x 48 inches, 2006



On The Screen Off The Screen

Acrylic on acrylic sheet, 48 x 48 inches, 2006



Self Service

Acrylic on canvas, 48 x 72 inches



We Are The Golden Siamese
Acrylic on canvas, 48 x 48 inches



Mein Asli Mumtaz Hoon
Acrylic on acrylic sheet, 48 x 48 inches

ARITAKULA RAJESWARA RAO'S SATIRICAL SYMPHONY: A SOLO EXHIBITION OF PAINTINGS

In a world full of woes, wars and absurdities we badly need a laugh. And the best laughter could be directed at none other than our flaws, follies and foibles. Humans have natural inclinations to generate ample matter for lampoonery and burlesque that may unconditionally glide into the radar of satire and fun. Although, the majority of the artists engage in portraying miseries and mayhem or create escapes of lyrical imageries, among them are a gifted few who reflect to us our vanities and idiosyncrasies.

Therefore, when we initiate to discuss lampoons, artist Aritakula Rajeswara Rao, stands tall in making poignant visual parodies that can draw daggers in social ambits. With a natural penchant for modernity, his eye focuses on human behaviours gravitating toward the excesses of consumerist indulgences and affectations that are forever parading across various media (unaware of the sharp eye) for attention.

This critical observation of his environment was rather evident from his work from the early nineties. Working on the reverse glass painting technique he sagaciously adopted for the acrylic sheet to glass. Then, Rajeswara Rao was like a boy on the beach; from around his Nampally studio, he accumulated imagery/elements such as claustrophobic spaces, cats, broken sinks/toilets, rundown houses, people, and anything that served his visual vocabulary. This was a sombre period of his career when he questioned life and was attempting to link his artistry to the dualities of existence. Carrying forward this preoccupation of enquiry into the mid-nineties the spectator saw yet another burst of emotions in the form of a series titled Portrait of a Marriage. Autobiographical in content this series projected yet another accumulation of many more elements to the already bustling repertoire of his imagery bank: furniture, plants, animals, aeroplanes, cars and a multitude of objects.

Well, the point here is to highlight his voracious nature to assimilate visuals that have been moulded and appropriated for an all-time application hereafter. Nevertheless, until he shifted to his new home-cum-studio in 1996, he was sharply censured for flooding his canvas (read acrylics) with undulated visuals that demanded huge attention from his audience. Interestingly, it is this bank of visuals/imageries that has fastened his audience to his work today. It's remarkable to see his spectator engagement which is the fruit of labour of his early years of obsessive assimilation of forms that were devoutly drawn in his sketchbook.

Once settled in his spacious studio at the Hyderguda village, located on the outskirts of Hyderabad, one regards a huge shift in his perception and delivery. Unexpectedly the spectator was then, face-to-face with local deities and wayside temples in his work. This series altered his spectrum and practice too. From here on, a protagonist or two occupies a prominent space on his canvas. Therefore, his articulations which were erupting from an internal space give way to the external. Objectification now becomes the mode and methodology of his practice. Also, the scale of his works enlarged, transforming his statements to become bolder and assertive. This is the period when a few more insertions took place in the form of street theatre performers who played the part of mythological characters. With this, a gentle waft of humour also pervaded his creative space: cigarette-smoking Hanuman or a Lord Shiva sporting a wristwatch and goggles, riding rickshaws were a delightful visual that certainly tweaked the seriousness that Rajeswara had been portraying earlier.

Although there was an interim tragic phase where he responded to the acts of terrorism and global unrest, Rajeswara reinstates humour, mirth and satire enacted in his village environment. Interestingly, it was the IT (Information and Technology) sector growth in south India, between the years 2000 – 2008, which resuscitated the wit in his work and satire which became a prominent tool of his creative process. The spectator here needs to understand the foil he has been working on. Therefore, with the upsurge in IT, the real estate sector started burgeoning too which created a fortunate tremor in his village. The field lands transformed into construction zones and the villagers, literally received gunny bags full of money. This scenario impacted Rajeswara's work too. From an artist he became a behaviourist, observing the economic and cultural transformation taking place in his immediate surroundings. It was a period of bling under which his village dazzled. Simpletons were now racing across tiny bylanes in sedans and SUVs, sporting diamonds and Ray Bans and all the accessories that money could buy. And naturally, the emerald fields gave way to the greys of concrete. This was a surreal moment which transformed a sleepy village into a burgeoning residency. Exactly at this moment, Rajeswara Rao started catapulting through his works the cultural shift society has adopted.

“Human society is truly a realm of comedy... Man is the only being who can both laugh and be the cause of laughter, or, to be more precise, every object of amusement contains a human and social element”. Extract from the book of Aesthetics, by Y Borev.

Rajeswara Rao's paintings from now on transform into a compendium of observations that put people under the spotlight. Therefore, in the role of an artist, he adopts the gaze of a photographer to capture the dreams and desires of the common folks. Gazing at the spectator from behind their goggles with wide grins, the subjects appear like a willing lot who line up unabashedly for the artist to record their glee and liberation, extracted from their newfound wealth.

In 2005 the artist explored a riveting genre of photography for his Incognito Series. Termed as bazaar photography or Rotigraphy (bread and butter photography), Rajeswara Rao borrowed its modus operandi to portray the drama and design of a transforming society. Firmly rooted in their rural psyche his characters seem to push it hard to set themselves in a space of their wants and desires. Therefore, like the rotigraphers of the small towns and villages, the artist meticulously designed kitsch backdrops to cater to the aspirations, fantasies and desires of these robust people. A classic fit in Satirical Symphonies is the painting titled Mai Hoon Bond, 2011. The cowboy composed in a filmy set, shooting the bear bottle, the head of a horse jetting from the side of the canvas (a signature compositional technique of Rao to indicate the secondary presences of others as one mostly sees hands jetting into the frames from all sides), the flapping birds, and the spacious checkered floor of the bungalow is a classic pointer to the man's machismo. Deciphering such quirky streaks in society the artist builds up the drama we all love to see ourselves in. The Rotigraphy compositions adopted by Rao hugely complemented his style of expression. Especially, when the protagonist in the frame directly looks into the eye of the spectator and evokes in them an identical humour painted by the artist. This matrix not only suited his temperament but stayed on to see a gamut of subjects treated most uniquely and singularly in every painting he created.

Yet another significant facet of Rao's artistry has been the robust nature of his characters who kept the essence of humour well-tuned with their sexual innuendos. The caricaturish portrayals not only maintained the universality against singular identities but also targeted societal hypocrisy bundled within these beings. For instance, *My New Bed*, 2007, and *Wah America*, 2012, illustrate the psyche of a person who must take sexuality behind the curtains of closed doors. Brilliantly composed in translucent reds, the execution is symbolic of the popular colour code appreciated for nuptial intimacies.

Hugely accepted for his style of expression, Rajeswara Rao simultaneously kept updating and refining his subject matter. Gradually, the garish and bulky simpletons moved out of the frames to make room for the more sophisticated baby dolls and boys of the club class. This is the juncture when the social media junkies flashed selfies for no rhyme-or-reason spamming the life out of humanity. A closer inspection of Rao's characters will reveal a sophisticated protagonist who is more at ease in the designer constructed interiors. They appear to be more at ease and not so eager for the spectators' attention. But the underlying perversion definitely lingers.

For instance the paintings: *Night Club Babies*, 2012, *Smoking Zone*, 2018, *My New Girlfriend*, 2023 and *My Pink Cheeks*, 2023, contain the complete paraphernalia of grabbing the spectators' attention but at the same time the cheekiness is meant to complement the ultra modernity of these characters. With an air of nonchalance, they sit pretty and stylish in their familiar world of high design.

Another endearing factor about Rajeswara's work is the compactness of his layouts. After giving enough room to the central character he utilizes every negative space to make it as busy and pronounced. Just like the ignited lives of his figures, the backdrops are ultra-furnished to serve the purpose of juxtaposing the physicality and the psyche of his people.

Satirical Symphony is a bouquet of works that has been executed between the years 2006 and 2024. This body of work spans a time frame of almost eighteen years and what is significant here are the consistency of thematic value and the freshness of approach. The spectator never finds it dull or disconcerting to gaze at the portrait gallery of Rajeswara Rao, instead, he or she would find it engaging to decipher his incomparable style of repurposing and utilising the multitude of patterns and forms surrounding his quirky personae.

Though this might sound like hyperbole, one can see a strong imprint of the artist's humour that creates, talks, meditates and lives not like his characters.

Atiya Amjad
Art writer & Curator



Bathroom Singer

Acrylic on acrylic sheet, 60 x 48 inches, 2007

“Rajeswara Rao’s art beautifully captures the transitions of life and the aspirations of people, both in social settings and private spaces. His unique reverse painting technique on acrylic sheets creates vivid, multi-dimensional compositions that invite viewers to explore the deeper narratives within his works.

Through the expressions and body language of his characters, Rao offers sharp societal commentaries. His precise line work and thoughtful use of color—balancing bright hues with neutral tones—enhance the depth of his storytelling.

Rao’s paintings are rich with humor and drama, reflecting his keen observations of people and their stories. He blends observational precision with a fantastical interpretation, creating intricate, lively compositions. His art is both relatable and insightful, highlighting the everyday negotiations and dilemmas we all face. It also serves as a reminder of the powerful influence of popular media on our culture, delivered with a subtle touch of wit and charm”.

S. P. Singh, IAS
Former Chief Secretary to Govt. of Telangana and Art Connoisseur

“Your artwork is a true masterpiece!!!

Your talent and skill are evident in every brushstroke, use of colours, the composition and the emotions it evokes and every detail to create a truly breath-taking piece of work.

Your work is a joy to behold, inspiring, bringing happiness and wonder to all who see it!”

Gampa Srinu
Entrepreneur

Magnolia
Acrylic on acrylic sheet, 48 x 24 inches, 2022





My New Bed

Acrylic on acrylic sheet, 48 x 36 inches, 2007

"People say I inherited my dad's eyes. In the true sense yes.....I look at the world with compassion, truth and confidence. I see the world through his eyes...full of kindness, integrity,resilience and that intuitive wit, loving him beyond words for the gift".

A. Rishi Tej
Architect

"From his father's art school in the kings fort which was also our play place, Raja growing up into this fascinating artist is beautiful. What is also beautiful is our unconditional friendship of 55 years".

A. Venkatapathy Raju

"Since the age of 8 the kings forts, palaces, the huge halls, the fort walls, the firing holes, the trenches and Raja's dad's art School in the fort at Vizainagaram were our play grounds. Been enjoying the fact that memories translating into paintings is beautifully nostalgic".

P. Prakash



My New Wife
Acrylic on acrylic sheet, 60 x 48 inches, 2008



Mein Diana Nahi Hoon
Acrylic on canvas, 60 x 60 inches



Welcome "Lakshmi"

Acrylic on canvas, 72 x 72 inches, 2012



The Twin Sisters

Acrylic on canvas, 48 x 36 inches, 2024



Fish Massage

Acrylic on canvas, 48 x 48 inches, 2024



Main Hoon Bond
Acrylic on canvas, 54 x 48 inches, 2011

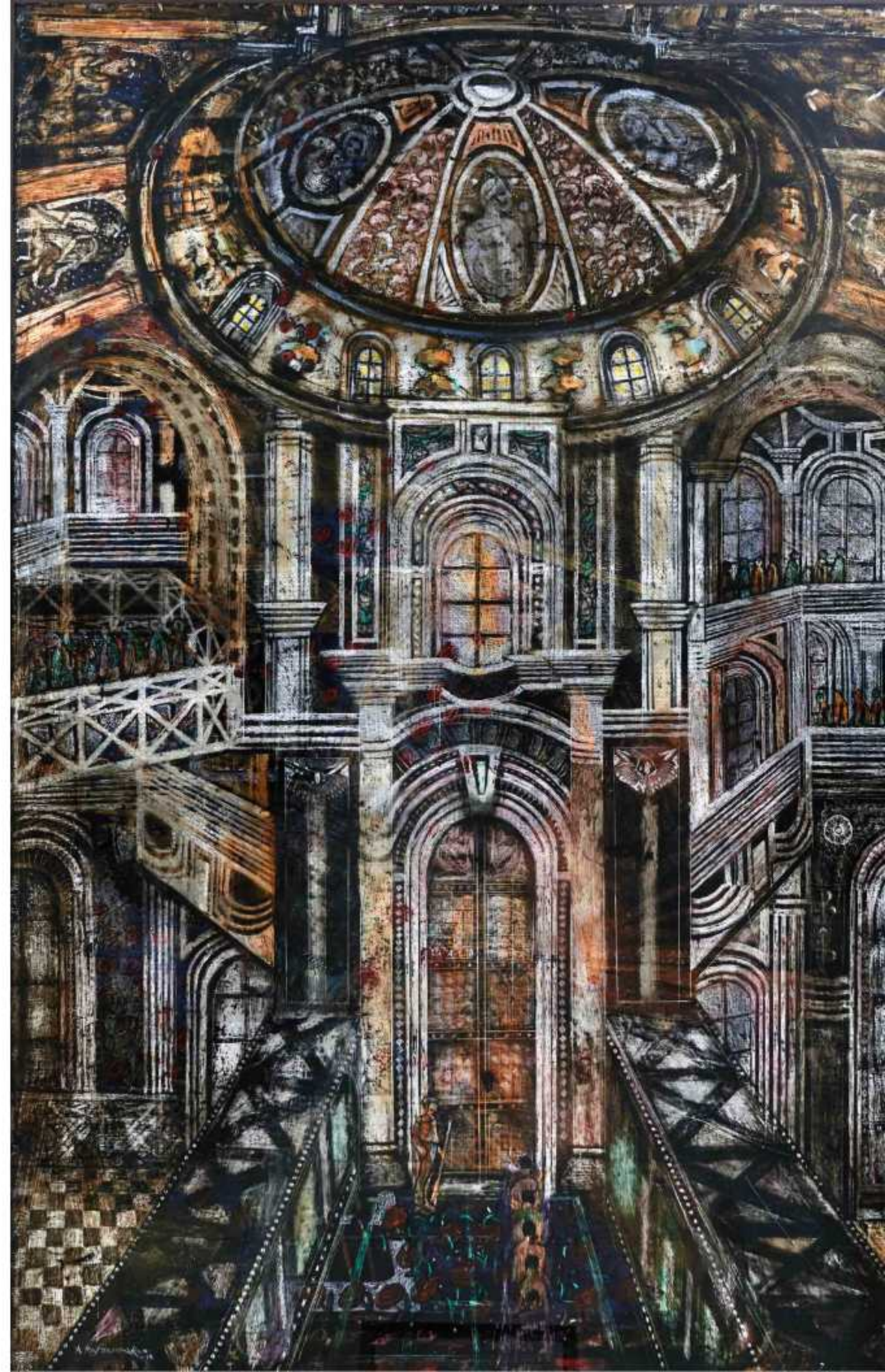


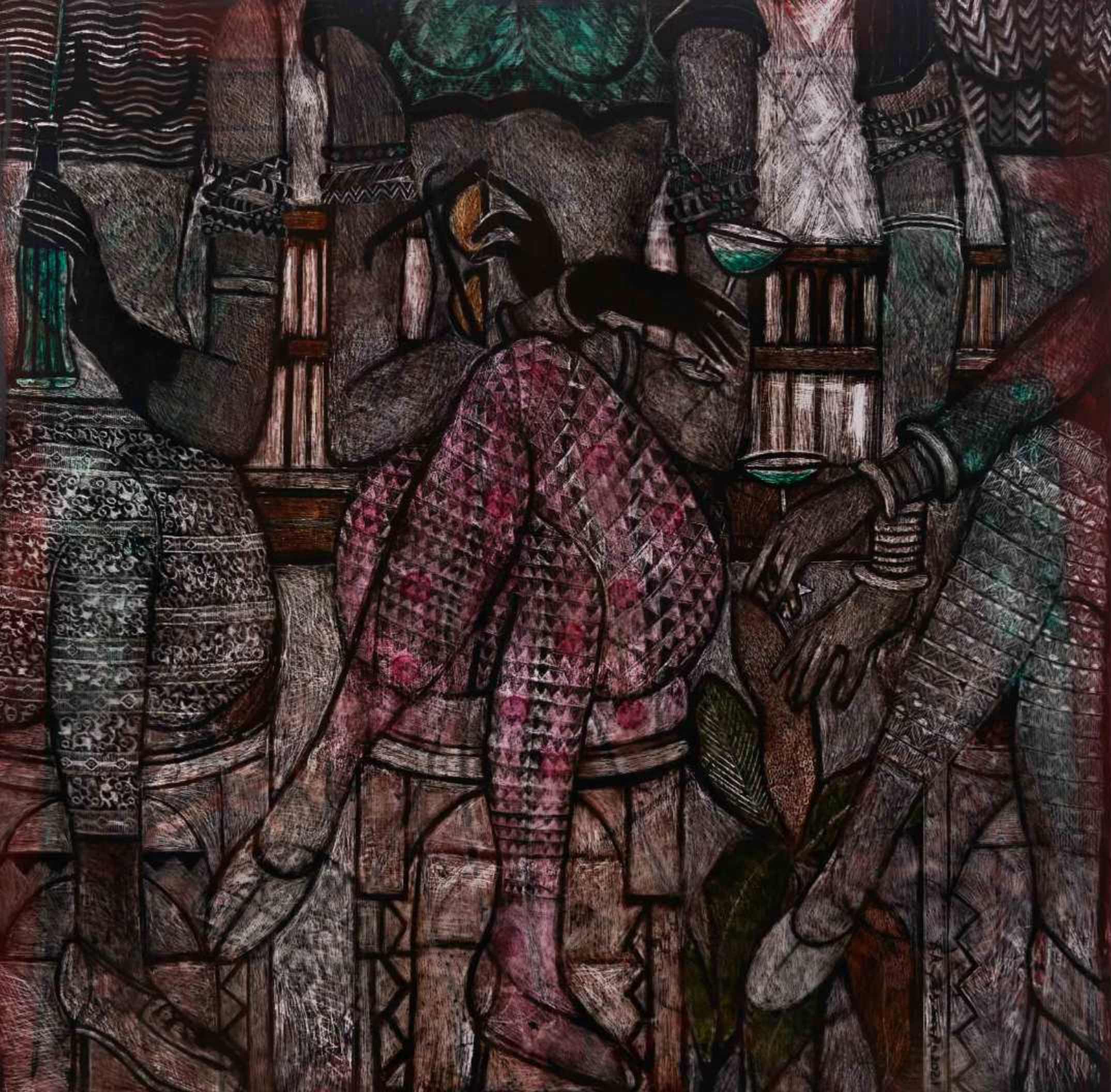
Bond Brothers
Acrylic on acrylic sheet, 48 x 18 inches (each), 2020



Bride's Break Time
Mixed media on canvas, 48 x 36 inches

Package Trip. Acrylic on acrylic sheet, 72 x 48 inches, 2018 ▶





Smoking Zone

Acrylic on acrylic sheet, 48 x 48 inches, 2021

“Express..’ he says. Reminds me and urges me to ponder about what it means to have this blessed life during these times on this earth. It’s pure love towards what he does....and there it is, a magic when he flips the acrylic sheet with his impressions of hands and age long determination”.

*A. Shree Tej
Designer*

“Rajeswara Rao, my elder brother addressed as Pedda Babu is more of a best friend than brother. Other than being a prolific art and an amazing human being he is an impeccable Classical dancer who performed with me and akka on multiple occasions. Pedda Babu is very simple and humorous just as his painting titles, traits that are most lovable”.

Dr. Vani Ratnam

His continuous search for better and better techniques on/with acrylics, watercolour, graphics, paper cuts papier-mâché etc gave him an edge over many others striving for new methods. For me and my studio friends, our friendship will be for many years to come.

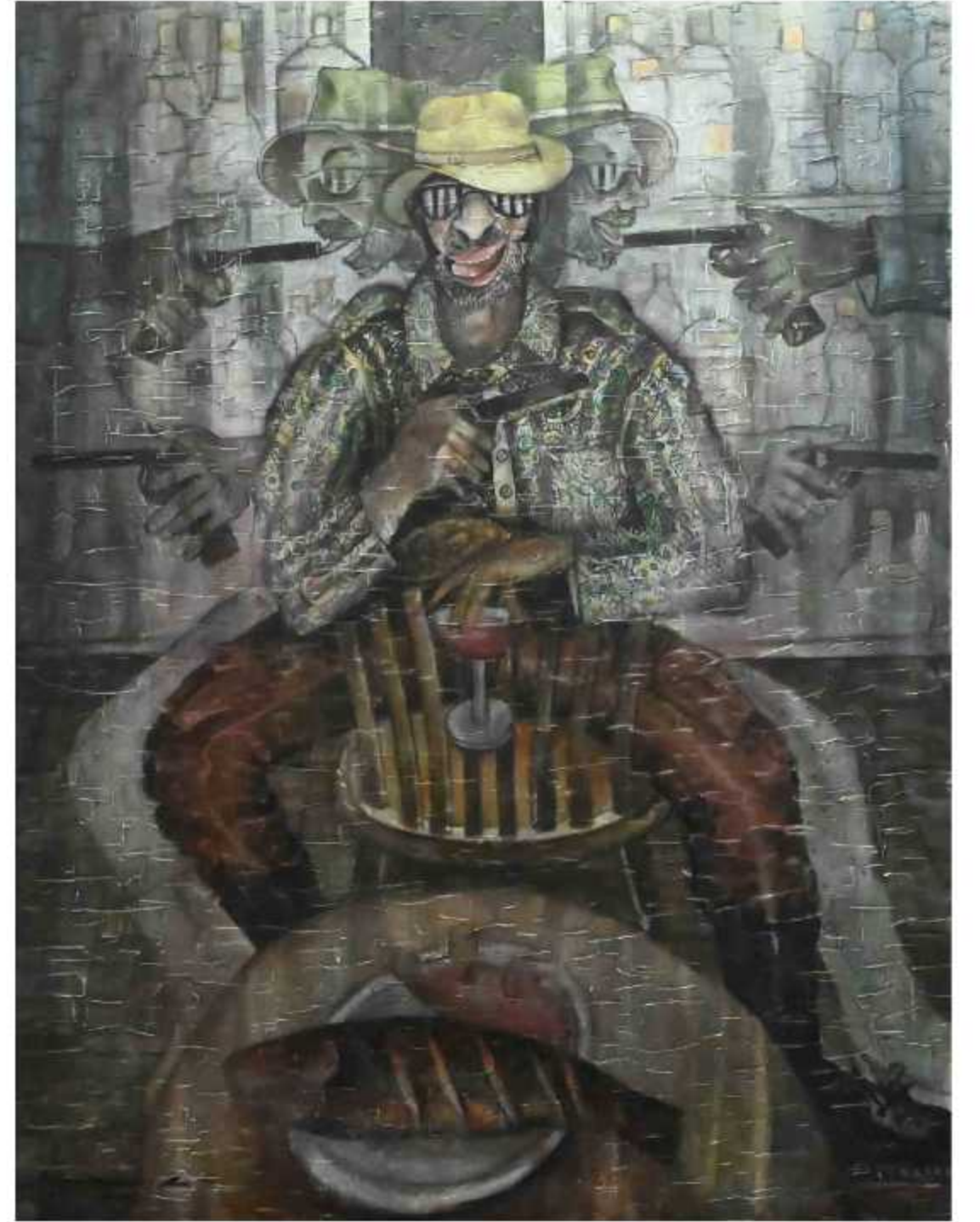
*Kusum Vishwanath
Former Studio Mate*

It has been a long journey. We met in 88 and decided to establish a common studio in 90 which would become a platform and launch pad for many more aspiring artists. Rajeswara is a very friendly person with an amazing personality and a lot of commitment and enthusiasm. It is the innumerable challenges and his passion that has culminated to impact his journey and the field of art over the past three decades.

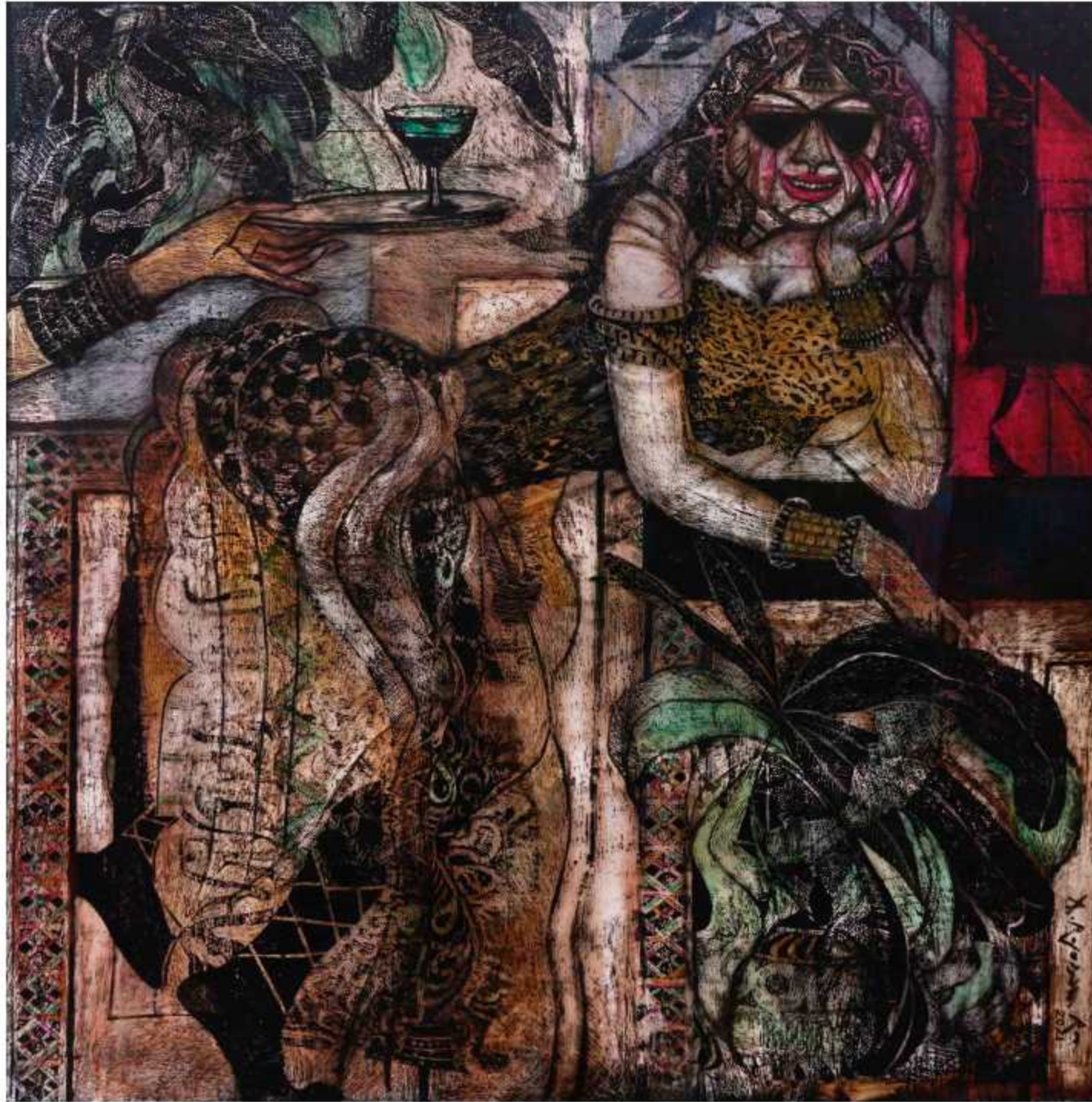
*Dr. K. Srinivasa Chari
Prof. Telugu university and former studio mate*



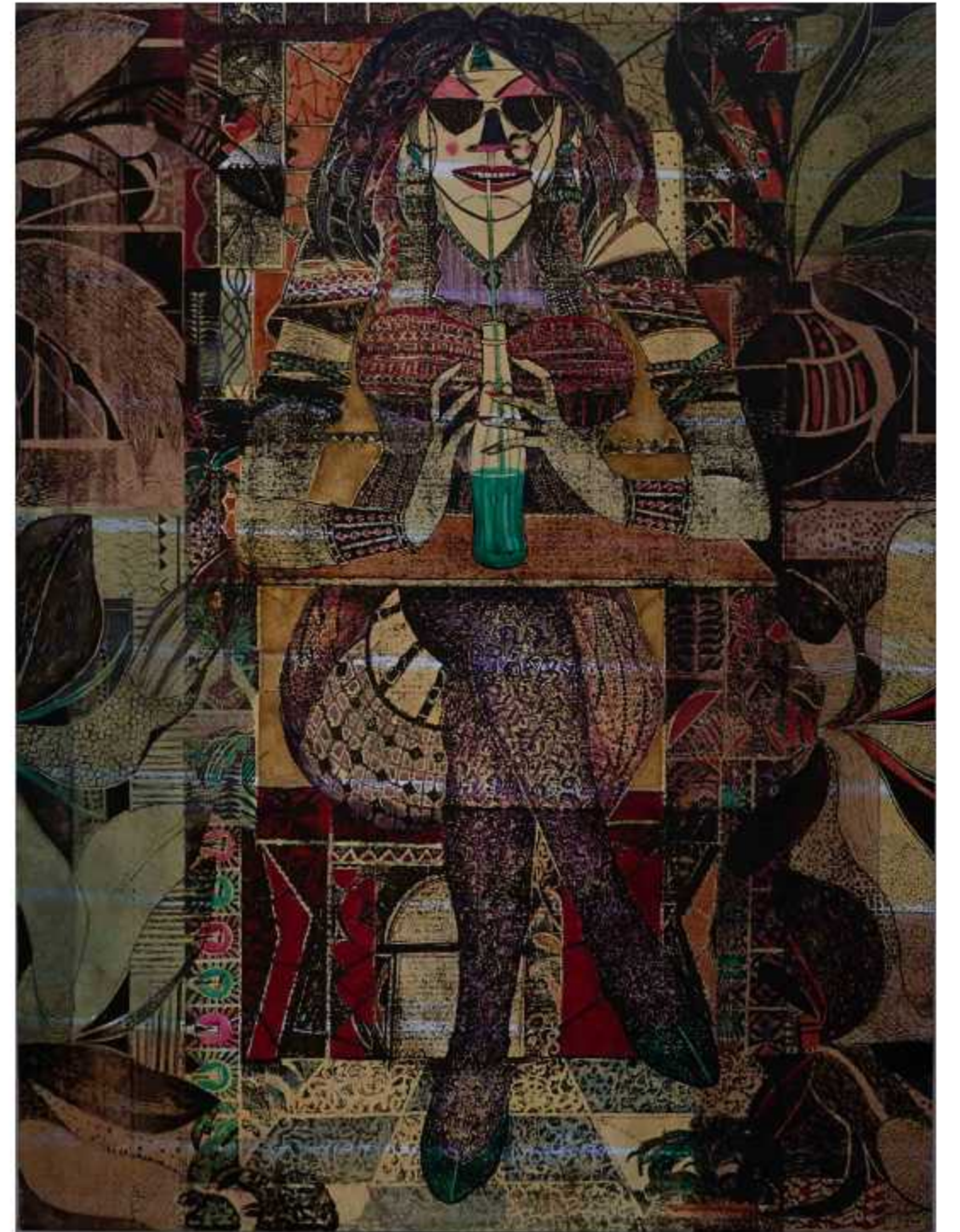
Dubai Reflections
Acrylic on paper, 36 x 12 inches, 2020



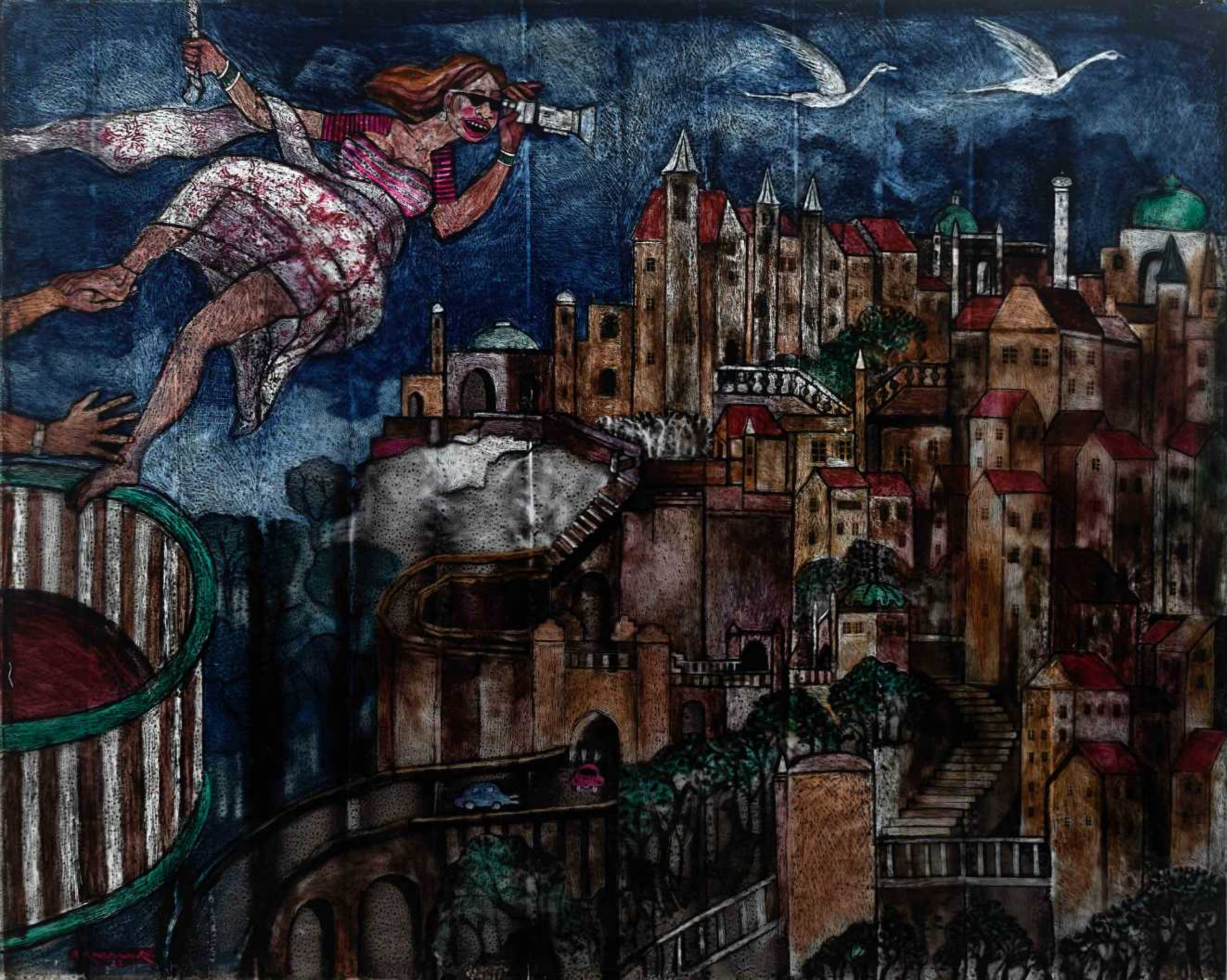
Boy With Twisted Hand
Acrylic on canvas, 48 x 36 inches, 2024



The Bar Girl
Acrylic on acrylic sheet, 48 x 48 inches, 2021



Thanda Thanda Cool Cool
Acrylic on canvas, 48 x 36 inches



Hawa Ke Saath Saath

Acrylic on acrylic sheet, 48 x 48 inches, 2023



Waiting For The Heir
Acrylic on acrylic sheet, 36 x 48 inches, 2024



Bhago Basanthi
Acrylic on canvas, 60 x 60 inches, 2022



Cheers Baby Cheers

Acrylic on canvas, 48 x 48 inches, 2023

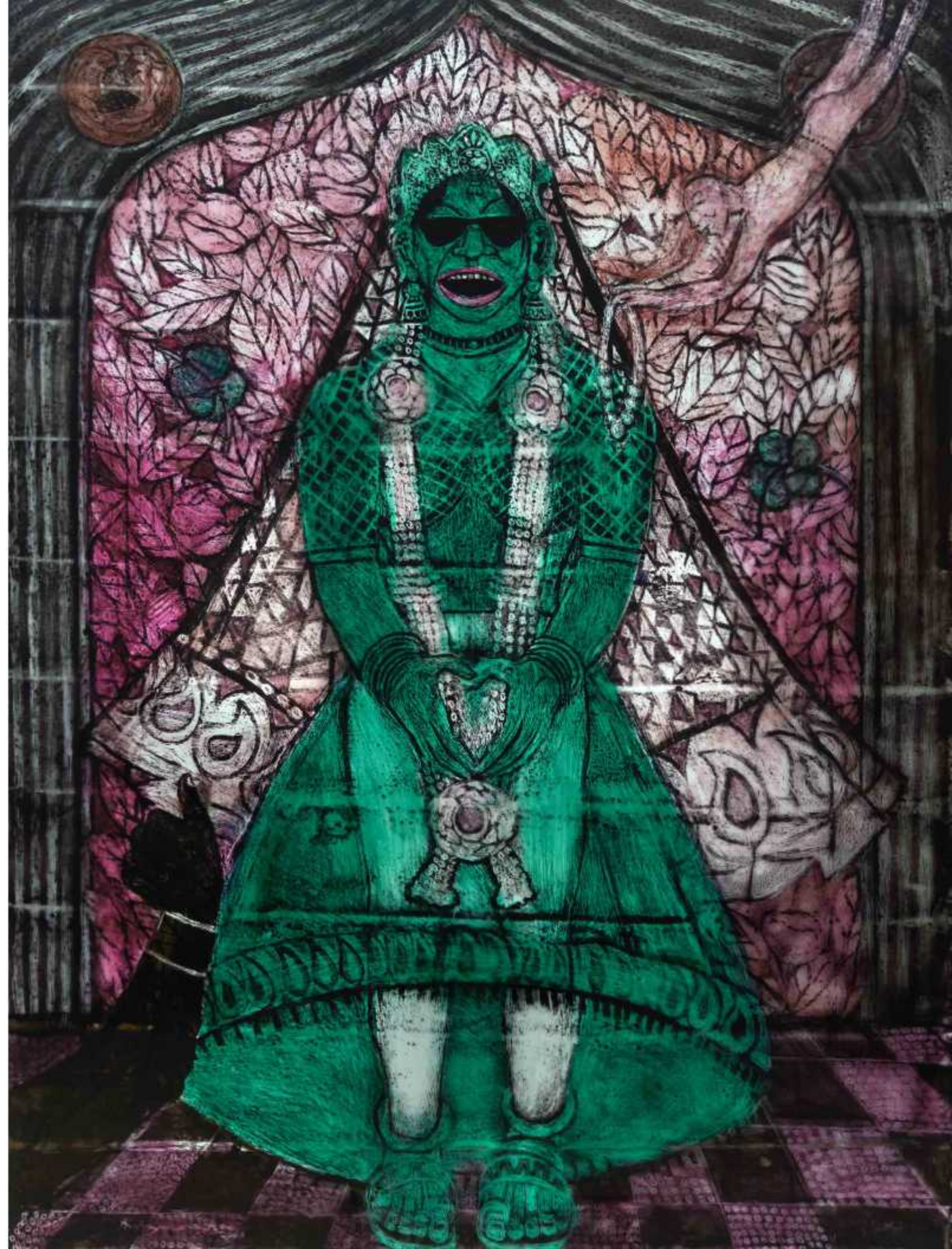


Night Club Babies

Acrylic on acrylic sheet, 48 x 48 inches, 2021



Bridal Photo Shoot
Acrylic on acrylic sheet, 48 x 36 inches (each), 2023





I Am Engaged
Acrylic on acrylic sheet, 48 x 24 inches, 2023



I Love You Darling
Acrylic on acrylic sheet, 48 x 24 inches, 2023



Mein Devanand Se Kum Nahi
Acrylic on acrylic sheet, 48 x 36 inches, 2023



My Lucky One

Acrylic on canvas, 60 x 72 inches, 2014



My New Girlfriend

Acrylic on acrylic sheet, 48 x 48 inches, 2023



1947 Classmates

Acrylic on acrylic sheet, 48 x 48 inches, 2023



Shiva On Bike

Acrylic on acrylic sheet, 48 x 48 inches, 2024



Wish You A Happy Married Life Darling
Acrylic on acrylic sheet, 48 x 36 inches, 2015



Kuch Kuch Hota Hai
Acrylic on acrylic sheet, 48 x 24 inches, 2023



Smoking Zone

Pen and ink on paper cut, 36 x 42 inches, 2017



Massage Centre

Pen and ink on paper cut, 30 x 36 inches, 2017



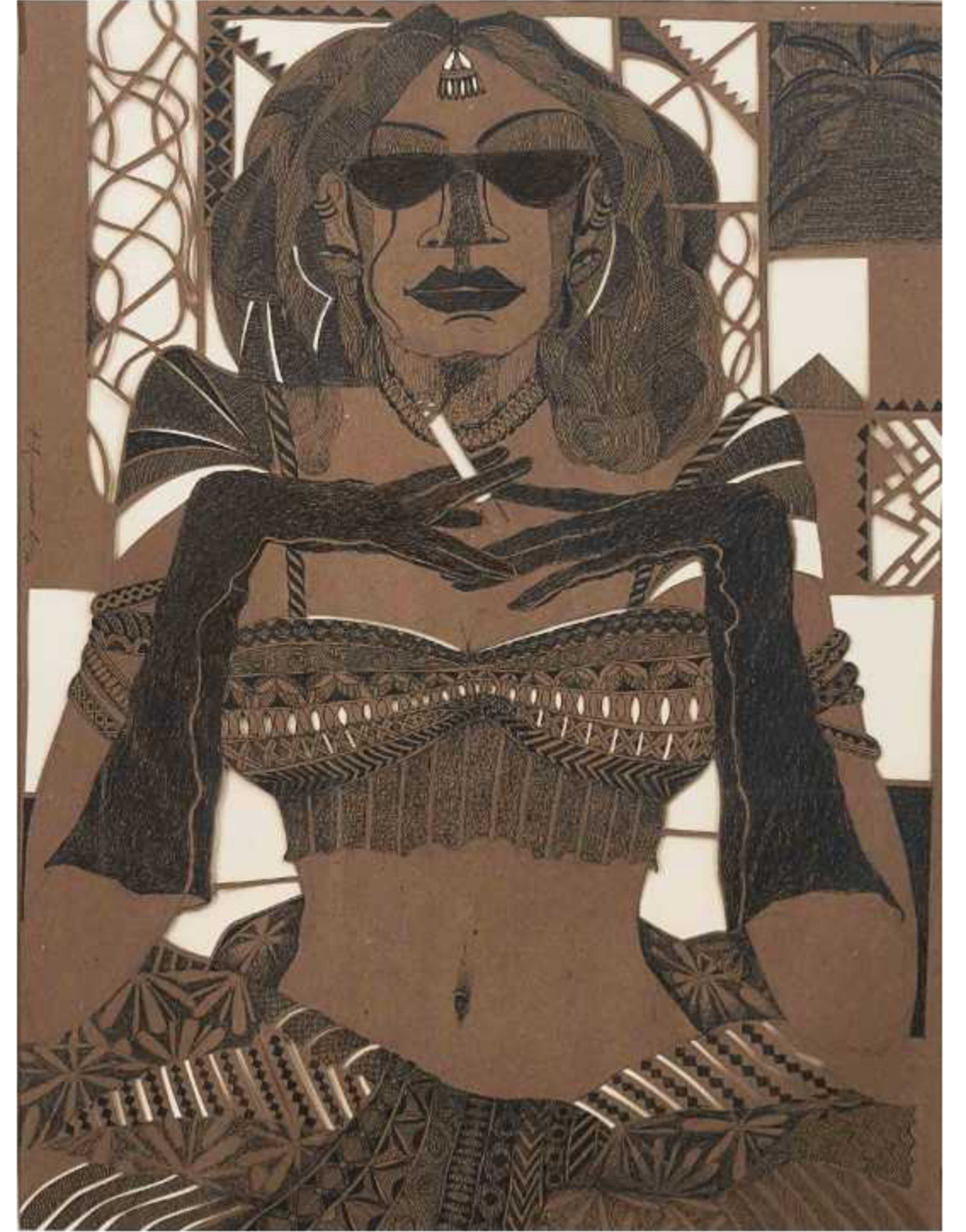
Cheers Baby Cheers

Pen and ink on paper cut, 30 x 24 inches, 2017



Smoking Zone

Pen and ink on paper cut, 24 x 12 inches, 2017



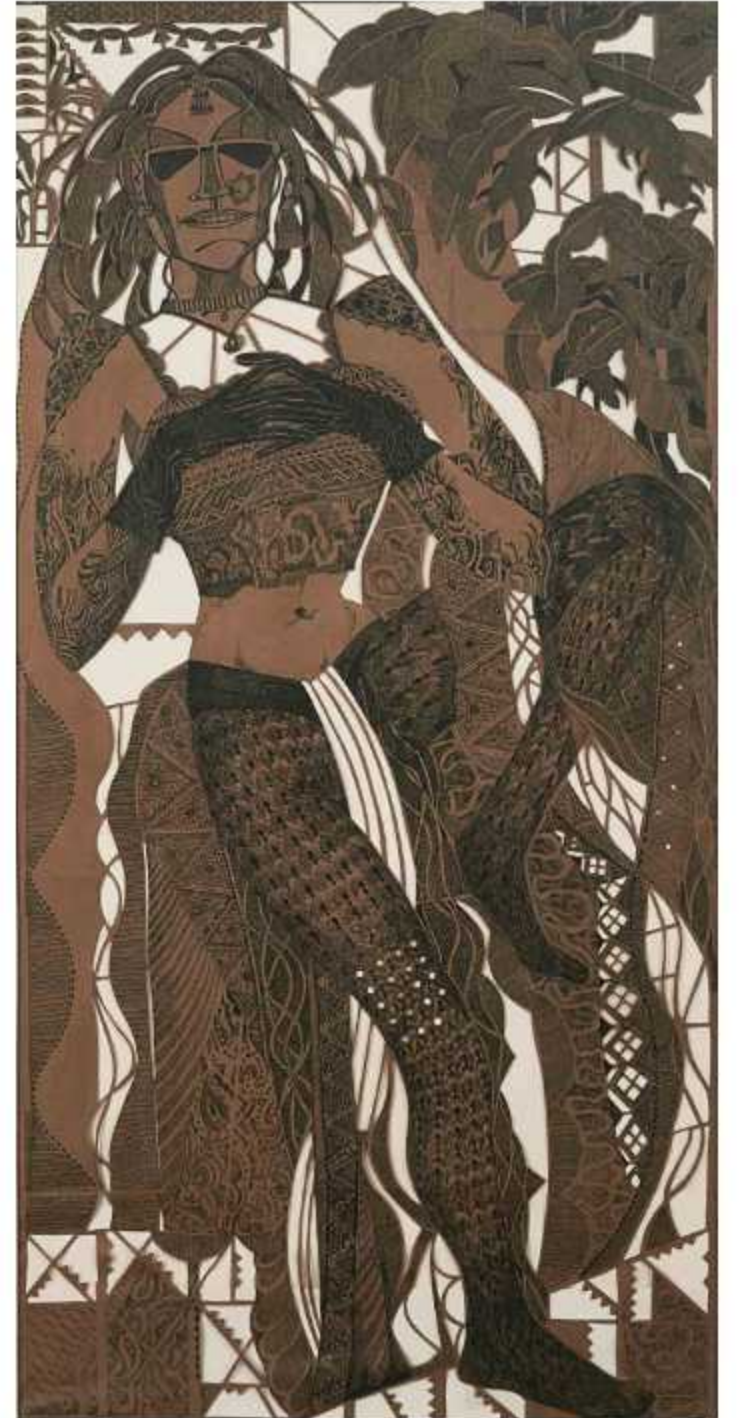
Smoking Zone

Pen and ink on paper cut, 30 x 24 inches, 2017



Smoking Zone

Pen and ink on paper cut, 24 x 24 inches, 2017



Smoking Zone

Pen and ink on paper cut, 48 x 24 inches, 2017



Smoking Zone
Pen and ink on paper cut, 30 x 24 inches, 2017



Smoking Zone
Pen and ink on paper cut, 48 x 48 inches



Rani Ratna Prabha
Pen and ink on paper cut, 30 x 24 inches

Raja Saheb Jang Mein Hai, Pen and ink on paper cut, 30 x 24 inches, 2021 ▶



ARTIST BIO

Born in 1960 in Vizainagaram, Andhra Pradesh. In 1983, I completed B.F.A. from Andhra University and M.F.A. from Hyderabad Central University in 1990.

People have been my muses - always. The labyrinth of external resources - just superficial amazes me. Soaking in the pleasures, desires, wants and needs of the maze of people around me and who I come across, I celebrate their appearances, their happiness - their courage to flaunt, decipher themselves with a new abandon thrashing their inhibitions if any and creating cervixes in the social milieu to fit into the high society. Pretensions are a need here that alternate into a necessity. I am concerned with the height of these pretensions - so what if one loses oneself in the middle of confusions and ununderstandability over the time. That would be an entirely different canvas - maybe later.

I am like a mediator - a felicitator between the situation and the people in it. Relying more on my photographic memory I explicitly carry out the snapshot without telling stories and refraining from the formal narrative.

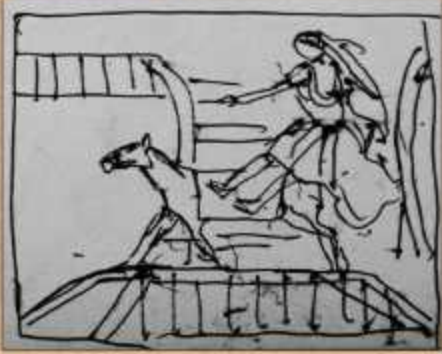
A take-off from the new found riches of the illiterate landlords, the glitzy TV serials, professionals released from the cocoons of traditionalist and village upbringing, the gullible young men and women profusely trying to fit into the elite. The need to change identity, the need for the unnecessary, the compulsive metamorphosis-resulting in a new aesthetic fascinate me, turning the frightening consumerism into an amusement rather than a negativity to reckon with.

The raw passion intoxicates me to delve into their physical persona and a little on their reveller psyche - in turn allowing myself to indulge in their intemperance. It is totally Indian.

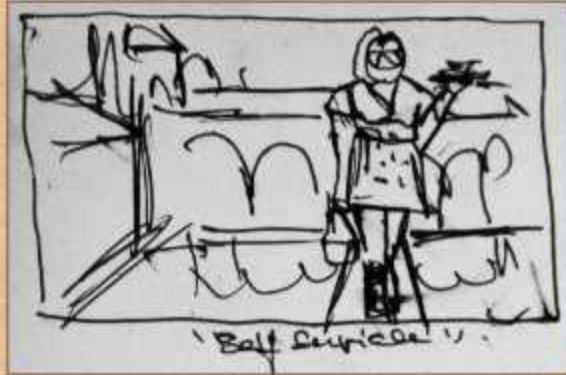


MAIN
SHAYAR
TOH
NAHIN...





"Where are my Ray Bann."



"Self Suicide"



"Smoking Again"



"Woman's hidden side"



"Don't be Silly Beauty"



"Night Club Babes"



"Welcome Ladies"



YAADON KI BARAAT...



▲ Work from early 90s.. glass and paper.



①



②



③



④



⑤



⑥

- ① Rajeswara Rao with his childhood friends on a trip.
- ② Installing at Daira Art Center, Hyderabad.
- ③ Triennial International Arts Camp, New Delhi, with artist Krishna Reddy.
- ④ Shoba Broota and Rekha Rodwittiya at Rajeswara Rao's solo at Gallery Espace.
- ⑤ Ustad Alladin Khan's residence, Anjolie Ela Menon, Amitava Das, Mona Rai and Debu.
- ⑥ Childhood friends, Vizianagaram, Andhra Pradesh.



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7 & 8 Making of Gudipati Venkata Chalam,

Telugu writer and philosopher & Bust of 'Chalam'.

9 International Painters' Camp, Sanghi Nagar, Hyderabad.

10 Rajeswara Rao with his siblings.

11 Starting of the professional journey: Studio mates Sajid-bin-Amar, Rajeswara Rao, Late Lakshmana Murthy, Srinivasa Chary and Kusum Vishwanath, 1991.

12 Inspired by Picasso, Assemblage.

13 National Painters' Camp, Lalit Kala Akademi, Kerala.

14 At Lakshmi Ganapati Studio, beginning of an inspiration.

15 With Sameer Aich and Jaya Ganguly, Maiher (Art Ichol).

16 Rajeswara Rao's watercolour solo at Gallery Sanskriti, Inaugurated by Raza Saheb with Gallerist Ambika Beri.

17 Ideating Birla Planetarium, Hyderabad.

18 Ghar pe.

19 Anjolie Ela Menon.

20 Family in 2015.

21 National Painters' Camp, Bihar Museum.

YE KHABAR CHHAPVA DO AKHBAAR MEIN

Portrait of two artists as young men...

...One is fascinated by television sets, the other prefers human forms

RAJESHWAR RAO AND SAJID BIN AMAR
Pundole Art Gallery

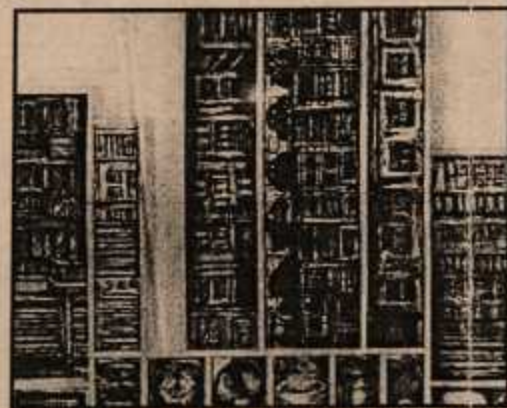
Rajeshwar Rao and Sajid Bin Amar are both ex-alumni of the University of Hyderabad, having recently completed their masters' degree in fine arts. However, the paintings they offer at the Pundole Art Gallery could not be more unlike, not only in terms of the media used, but also in the more important matter of their imagery. While Rajeshwar Rao firmly roots himself in the urban milieu with his claustrophobic close-ups of objects as diverse as wall clocks, television sets and cars, Sajid Bin Amar seems to be more interested in the human equation.

Rajeshwar Rao's canvas is constructed out of narrow rectangles and squares of glass and acrylic sheets, each panel offering a cropped view of a different object.

These panels are later collaged together within the wooden framework, to form the skyscraper skyline, familiar to any city-dweller. The Paul Klee style of architectural landscape recurs constantly in the often used motif of the building — ancient colonial buildings and chawls with their crumbling facades and decorative trolly-worked balconies and fire escapes. In fact, most of Rao's motifs have an old-world charm, not only in the colours that he uses (reminding one of Gothic stained glass windows) but also in their delineation, especially of the rickety radio, the stoneware pickle jars, the table fans and the toy buggy cars and trains.

Sajid is clearly an expressionist with his almost monochromatic use of blacks and deep ochres.

The human face, either in portrait grids or reacting to the presence of other human beings is what he por-



An untitled painting by Rajeshwar Rao at the Pundole Art Gallery

trays in his small sized drawings. The strong, jagged lines coupled with thin washes and rubbings of pigment, clearly underline a sense of brooding over the unattainable — the world of urban angst is what crystallises from his frenetic distortions and textural meanderings.



Shades of mysticism



Art of a 'Speaking Tree'

By De Anu Rao Green

Like a speaking tree, Rajeshwar Rao makes his immediate appearance in his paintings. In a vast cityscape, the sit-on-the-narrow-avenues, the multi-storied apartments, his surroundings, the stories around the corner are woven effectively into lively lines, sharp, bright colours and broad, confident tones.

In the first shock of the city, the artist emerges from the contrast from the vibrant surroundings of his native Visakhapatnam and the often bleak of his mother and the local.

There, after marriage, the core, practices are filled with formal energy and he comes out with a sense of freedom. His drawings are shaded, integrated with reality. There is an overall tension of a suspense story stopped mid-way. A line, sensitive, expands from his hand around the corners of a grid for the icons.



Rajeshwar Rao's art arises from sensitive observation

Extending visual syntax

The visual syntax of an artist's work is a complex web of lines, shapes, and colors that form a unique language. In the case of Rajeshwar Rao, this syntax is characterized by its precision and its ability to convey a sense of depth and texture. His use of narrow rectangles and squares of glass and acrylic sheets creates a layered effect, allowing the viewer to see through the work and into the spaces between the panels. This technique not only adds to the visual complexity but also reflects the artist's fascination with the urban environment and its intricate details.



Warmth and nostalgia

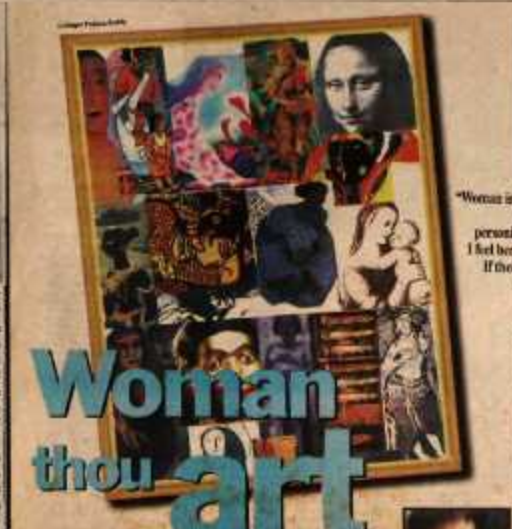
Asajid Bin Amar's art is a study in warmth and nostalgia. His monochromatic palette of blacks and deep ochres creates a somber yet intimate atmosphere. The human face, often depicted in portrait grids or reacting to the presence of other human beings, is the central focus of his work. Through his expressive brushstrokes and textured surfaces, Amar conveys a sense of emotional depth and a longing for a past that is both personal and universal.



వర్షం వచ్చింది
అందరినీ
రాజేశ్వర రావు



రాజేశ్వర రావు తన చిత్రాలలో
పాత పాత వస్తువులను చిత్రించడం
వల్ల ప్రేక్షకులను ఆకట్టుకుంటున్నాడు.
తన చిత్రాలలో అతను
పాత పాత వస్తువులను చిత్రించడం
వల్ల ప్రేక్షకులను ఆకట్టుకుంటున్నాడు.



Wondered why Da Vinci painted the Mona Lisa or the 'Virgin of the Rocks'? Find out what inspires our own artists to choose the female form

Woman thou art
A woman doesn't die. She is immortal and an everlasting phenomenon, an angel who protects the dead, and a being with wider perspective. A Rajeshwar Rao



She's a print-maker who works from her own studio in Rajendranagar along with her husband Rajeswara Rao, who is also an artist. Padma believes that the 'worlds of theatre, literature and films in Hyderabad are segregated. There isn't much dialogue between people from these professions. Modern art is a cerebral activity, and healthy discussions between people from all these fields would enrich art'. Padma prefers the print medium, as she says it has a sense of 'layers', a process, just like our own lives. Moreover, it is a medium where there is 'this and thatness'. Her works reflect anger over the way women are treated. Infanticide, 'testing' of a woman's virginity, which is a common practice in many parts of the country, all become subject matters for her work. Padma is clearly one of those artists whose work is very much rooted in reality and happens around her. 'There are very few artists who respond to the happenings around them these days', she says. Perhaps, at one level, the works of many artists are self-indulgent.



PADMA REDDY & RAJESWARA RAO

Rajeswara Rao, who works with acrylic and glass, feels that for Hyderabad artists to come up, help from the media would go a long way. He says, 'Though the Hyderabad artists compete at the national level in terms of their work, they are not given due recognition in places outside Hyderabad. Whenever a Hyderabad artist is exhibiting in big metros, there are few or no reviews. Only producing good work does not help. Media exposure is also important'.

Evocative expressions

A. Rajeswara Rao's painting exhibition 'The Threshold' is a rare visual treat. The artist's work is a study in evocative expressions, capturing the essence of human emotions and experiences. His use of vibrant colors and bold lines creates a sense of movement and energy, drawing the viewer into a world of visual storytelling. The exhibition is a testament to the artist's skill and his ability to convey complex messages through his art.

అద్ద గేలరి



Cliched portrayal?



కళలతో కలసినుకున్న కమ్మన ప్రసన్న



Extending visual syntax



Warmth and nostalgia



Extending visual syntax



Art on the backburner

The National Gallery of Modern Art needs to get rid of outdated and develop a modern code to play an effective role in art exhibitions and documentation. GAYATHRI SANKAR writes about the gallery which has not been able to utilize the right part of its grant this financial year.

Sold On Youth

Young artists are finding it difficult to sell their work in the current market. The National Gallery of Modern Art has been trying to help them through its 'Art on the Backburner' initiative.

Creative context

A unique artist-residency at Daura - Centre for Art and Culture, provides the lives and works of seven city-based artists.

His colourful world of chaos

Through his vibrant and chaotic paintings, the artist expresses his inner world and the complexities of life.

Creative images from Andhra Pradesh

A collection of creative and expressive artworks from various artists across Andhra Pradesh.

THE MASTERS

A series of articles highlighting the works and lives of master artists, exploring their techniques and influences.

Inochnilo

Exploring the artistic journey of Inochnilo, a contemporary artist known for his vibrant and abstract compositions.

All that glass

Exploring the artistic journey of an artist who uses glass as a medium, creating intricate and layered compositions.

ग्रामीण जीवन पर आधारित चित्रकला प्रदर्शनी उद्घाटित

A painting exhibition based on rural life is inaugurated, showcasing the struggles and beauty of the countryside.

REVIEWS

A collection of reviews for various art exhibitions and performances, providing critical insights and perspectives.

Heart of Art

Exploring the emotional and spiritual core of art, discussing how it connects with the human heart.

INSPIRED BY THE WORLD AROUND HIM

How the world around us inspires artists, from nature and society to personal experiences and emotions.

The Cute and the Cut

Exploring the contrast between the cute and the cut in art, discussing how artists play with these concepts.

Childhood recollections of an artist

A personal account of an artist's childhood, reflecting on how early experiences shaped their artistic vision.

The morning ritual

Exploring the morning rituals of an artist, from their wake-up routine to their creative process.

GOING BEYOND THE CANVAS

Artists are breaking the boundaries of the canvas, exploring new mediums and techniques.

Rajeshwar Rao at Gallery Espace

A review of Rajeshwar Rao's exhibition at Gallery Espace, highlighting his unique style and themes.

When men also wore lipstick

Exploring the theme of gender and identity in art, specifically focusing on the use of lipstick in male portraits.

The Quirky Humor of Rajeshwara Rao

An analysis of the quirky humor in Rajeshwara Rao's art, discussing his use of irony and social commentary.

Paintings that bring

Exploring the impact of paintings, how they bring stories to life and evoke emotions in the viewer.

Life in a studio

A look into the daily life of an artist in their studio, from the creative process to the challenges they face.

మహాకవితా... అందమైన రూపాలు...

A collection of poems and their beautiful illustrations, celebrating the art of poetry and visual storytelling.

creativity

Exploring the concept of creativity, how it fuels innovation and artistic expression in various fields.





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