

JCCA

JAIPUR CENTRE OF CULTURE & ARTS

CELEBRATING

HIMMAT'S

JOURNEY OF AN ARTIST

1st July to 31st October 2023

Curator:

Jyotirmoy Bhattacharya

Presented by

Monika Sharda

Gallery Director

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Acknowledgment

Dedicated to our Father, Late Shri P. D. Sharda and thanks to our Mother, Anusuya Devi Sharda for all the moral support in coming up with this book.

Thanks also to Sankalp Gupta, Rishika Sharda and Srishti Sharda for their valuable inputs in forming the contents.

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Cover Photograph: Nasir Ali Mamun

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Forward

JCCA, the Jaipur Centre of Culture and Arts, stands as a truly exceptional space in Jaipur, dedicated to the promotion of contemporary and modern art from artists from around the globe. Its primary objective is to nurture the art culture in Rajasthan, elevating it to new heights. Within its gallery walls, artists are provided with an invaluable platform to exhibit and propel their exceptional talents.

Today, we proudly commemorate the extraordinary life and work of one of India's living masters, the illustrious Himmat Shah. This momentous occasion is an exclusive showcase centered around Himmat himself, as we have the honor of presenting his magnum opus, "Under the Mask" – a breathtaking collection comprising 338 unique paintings, crafted during the challenging times of the COVID-19 pandemic.

When the world was gripped in the relentless clutches of the coronavirus, Himmat Shah's insatiable curiosity and boundless creativity triumphed. In those uncertain times, his novel strokes danced upon paper, each stroke a testament to his inner child, radiating enlightenment.

Having had the privilege of knowing Himmat over the past few months, I have come to admire not only his simplicity, infectious laughter, and profound knowledge across various fields, but also his unwavering courage, visionary outlook on life, and genuine concern for nurturing contemporary art among the younger generation. His delight upon witnessing JCCA, where his vision of fostering a love for contemporary art finds perfect harmony with our own, was truly heartwarming.

Therefore, it is with great pleasure that we present this remarkable exhibition, a celebration of Himmat's 90-year artistic journey – a testament to his indomitable spirit and unparalleled creativity.

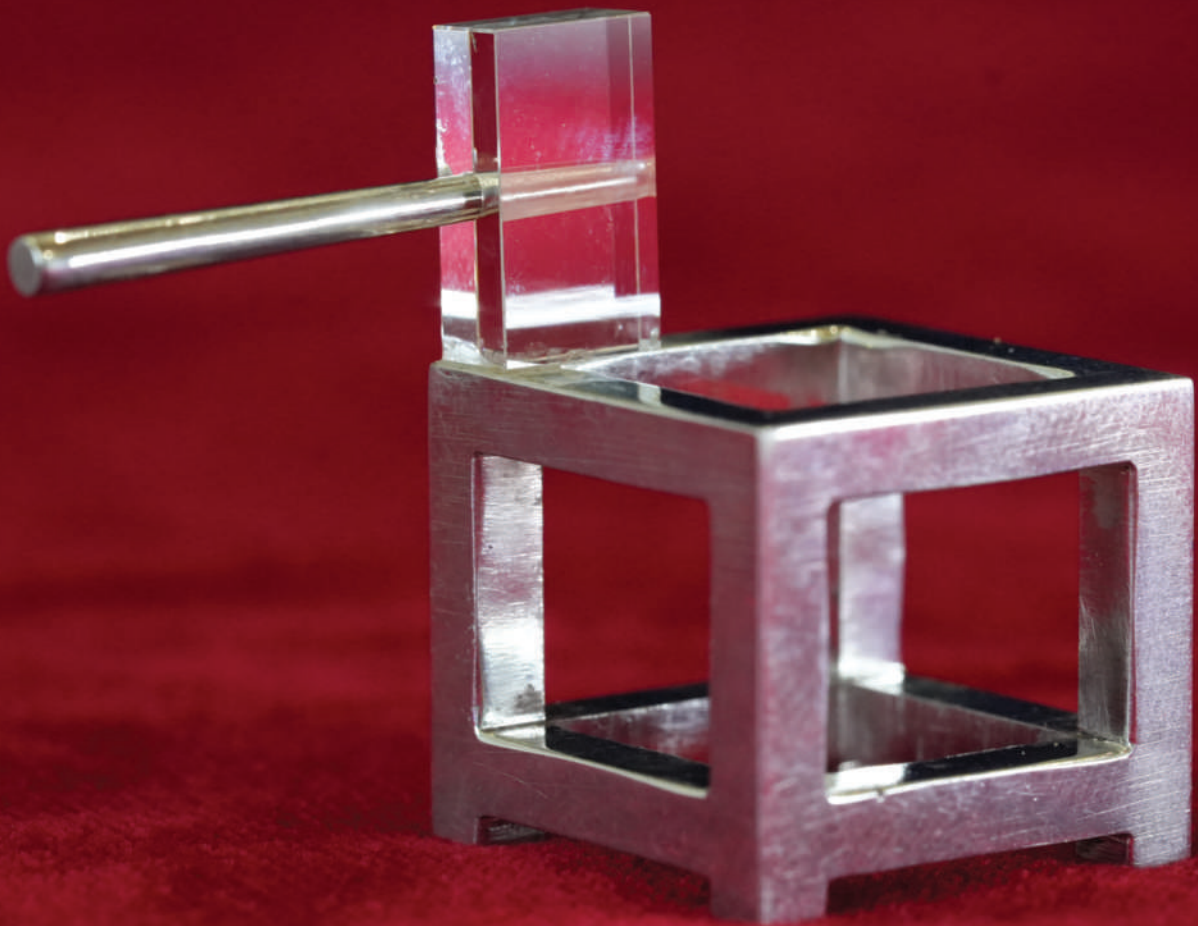
Monika Sharda
Director of JCCA

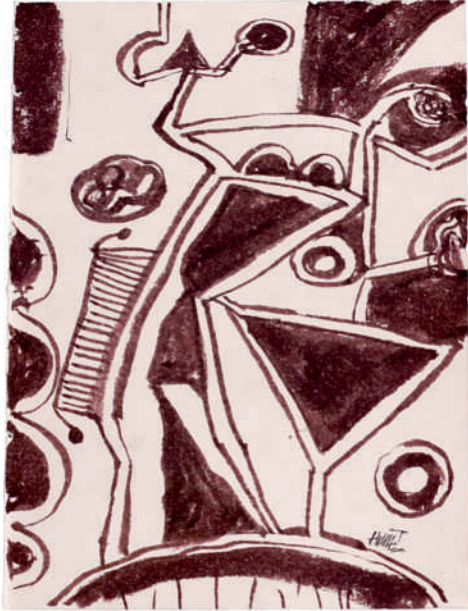
Wisdom Fruit
Diamond Version
19.6 mm x 6 mm



**Hammer on the square
Diamond Version**

42.2 mm x 22.2 mm x 33.5 mm







'HIMMAT'

Jyotirmoy Bhattacharya

After hearing the title 'Under The Mask' what comes to our mind mostly is the exposure of hidden feelings and expressions. We have to hide behind the mask the expression that discloses our feelings. When we are looking for other techniques to express the attitude of expression and its wanderings, the artist indulges in creating with brush and lines of colour and depicts all his worldly feelings through lines.

My first acquaintance with Himmat Shah was at Shantiniketan. It was there that I take a look at the art of the artist for the first time. It was clear to me the geometric structure and lines of the sculptures he created. The assemblage of scratches and lines in three-dimensional form is like the gathering of many two-dimensional images from each page. Combining bold lines and cubism, he has shown a new horizon of Indian sculpture history. My closeness with him deepened when I became the



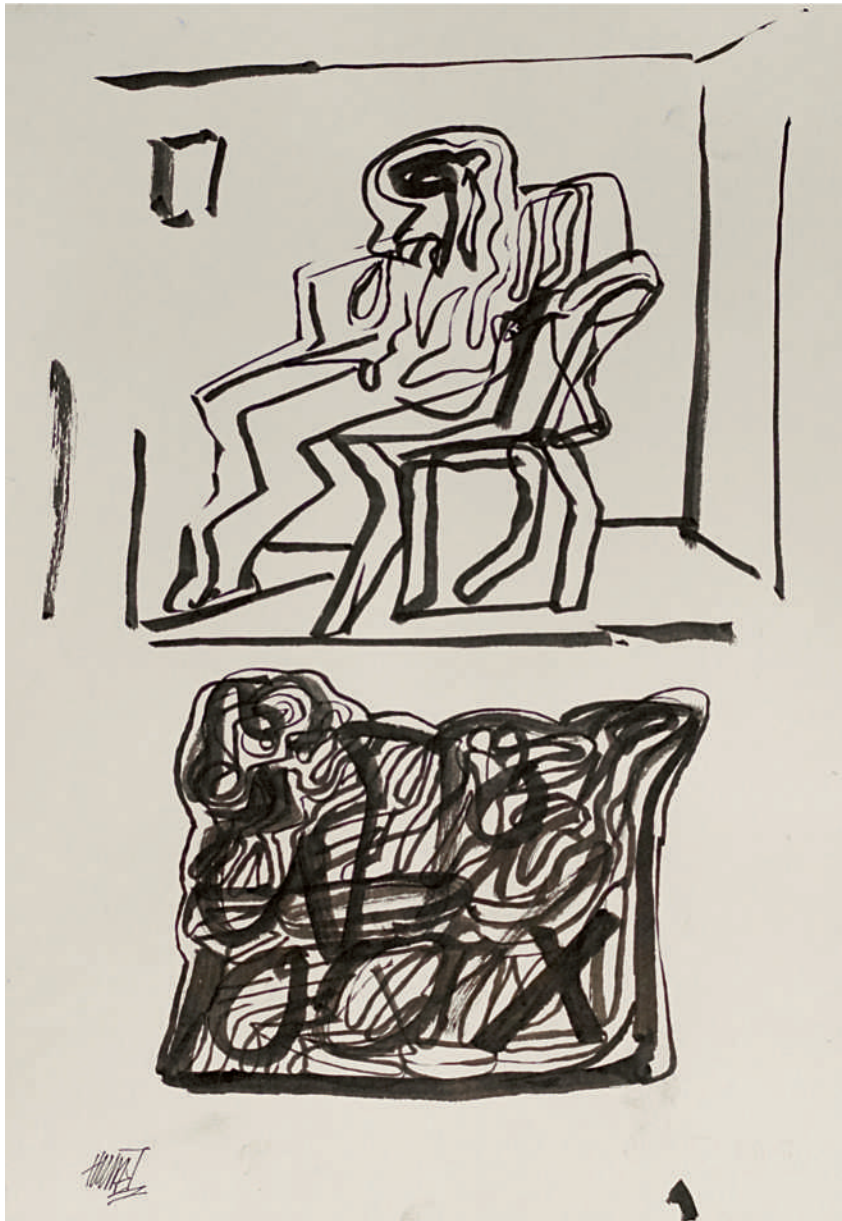
project director of his biographical film, *Portrait of an Artist*. In that time, listening to the unknown side of his life, I sorted a struggling character. In the motion of bohemian life, the sign of creation of the artist blooms from the concealment of inquiry and search. This successful artist has broken the barrier of traditional education and presented his own ideas with determination.

Today, in spite of being ninety years old, he is still found in the form of a free boy intoxicated in creation. In our life when everybody was scared and hid themselves in the corner of the house due to the outbreak of epidemic, the scratch that the



artist cut in search of creation in that time is being presented in this exhibition. Leaving aside the so-called water color and acrylic medium, he stuck to using ink, brush and pen. For him, the use of ink on paper takes a strange pleasure in changing the surface of the brush from which he finds the joy of creation.

According to Joan Miro, "The painting rises from the brushstrokes as a poem rises from the words. The meaning comes later." The images of the artist titled 'Under The Mask' during the Covid period is so similar. Each picture is connected with other in a strange rhythm. Sometimes he took the form of a python, sometimes he took the form of a face full with questions. Sometimes two hands



are raised in a relaxing pose. His image captures countless cubic lines and the artist himself. From the window to the garden of his house or the vase on the table or the reflection of the quarantine period of life. In every picture Himmat Shah has left the impression of his three-dimensional philosophy. A strange bonding of East and West took place in his 'Under The Mask' series.

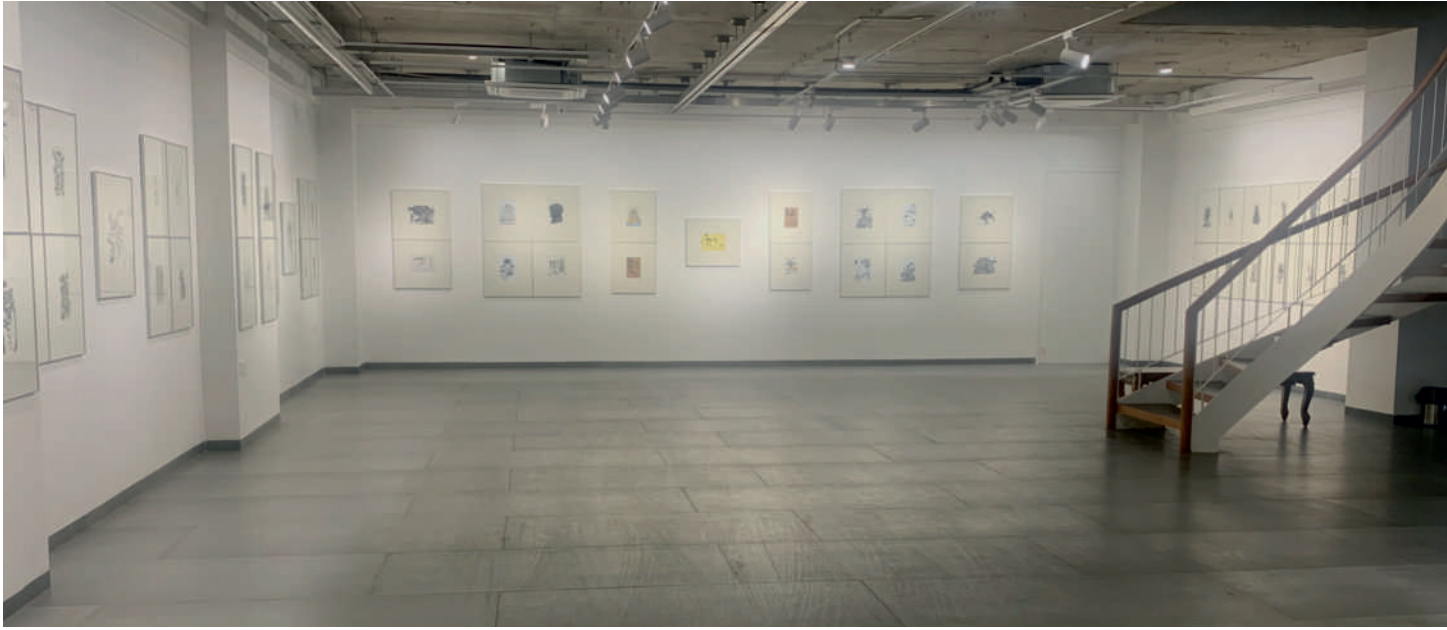
According to Himmat Shah, a true artist is one who puts aside his academic education and enjoys the joy of his own creation with free thinking. That's why the creation of

Himmat is beyond time. This successful artist who grasped Indian philosophy and perception embodied life in terracotta and bronze clearly marked that effectiveness in his paintings as well.

Now, he has prepared his dream studio and wants to develop his ideas through new experiments in his own creative laboratory. Himmat Shah wants to enjoy creating his art in different mediums like lithograph, etching, terracotta, bronze and even in stone carving.







SYNOPSIS OF THE SHOW

Tarun Sharda

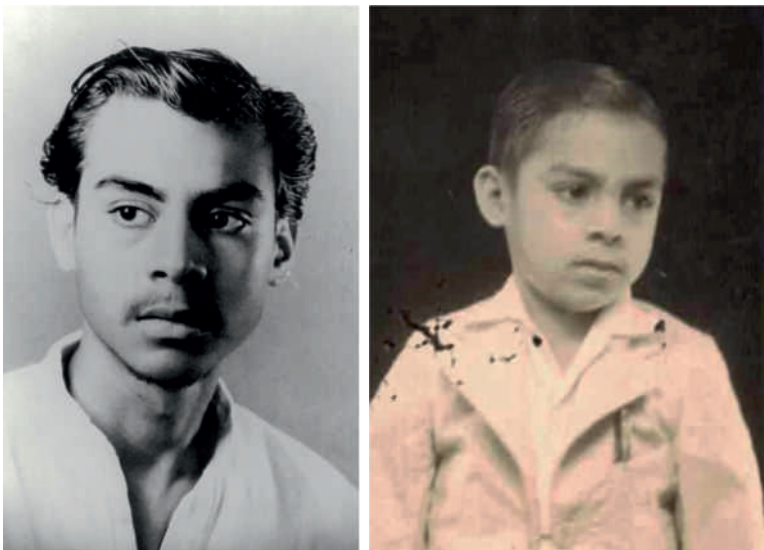
When I interacted with Himmat Shah for the first time, I couldn't understand the mysticism as elaborated. But, that had certainly seeded something into the ocean of my ever exploring world of thoughts, that I started going again and again to listen. In every meeting, the mysticism and the joy of wandering into it, remained the same though a few words may have changed. There was a resonance between wordless expressions, dipped in a sea of the mystic art world, and scientific conjectures. The space-time had started converging somewhere to attempt the show.



FOUR QUADRANTS OF ART EXPRESSIONS

Himmat's life of 90 years as a master painter and sculptor are akin to the four stages of life defined in Hindu philosophy. This analogy of the four quadrants of his art expressions may not necessarily be as clearly distinctive and divided equally in time as the four quadrants of life are supposed to be. However, they are clearly visible as a response of time intermingled with space, but, certainly, not manipulated by the intellect. I wonder if this, the difference between art and science, are indeed creations of soul and mind, respectively.

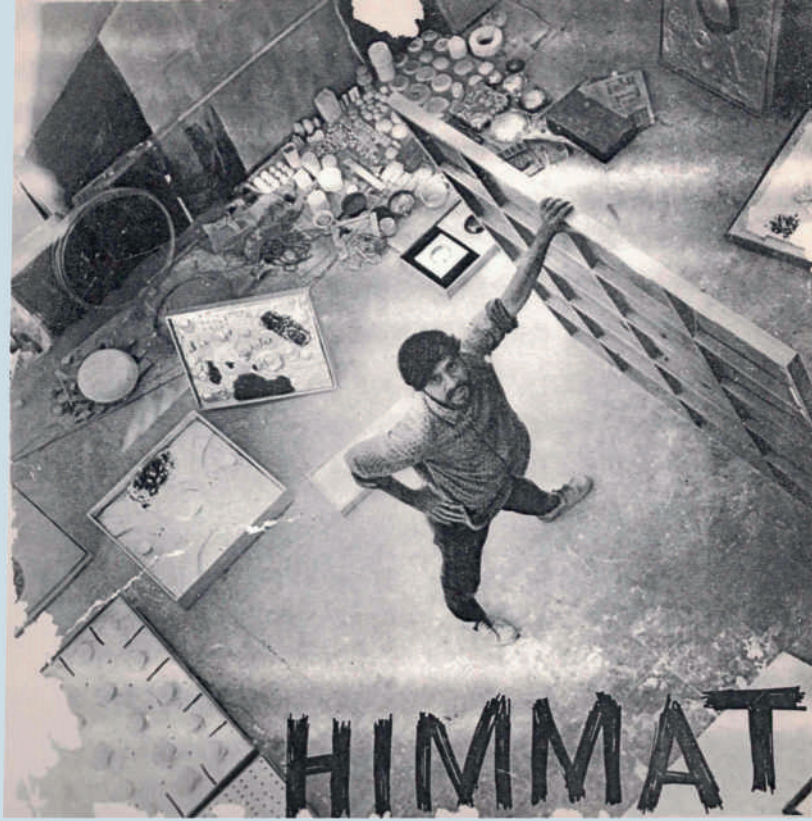
Interestingly, a clear trend is visible in his creations with his artistic age; he had started applying his early learning to his artistic expressions in his drawings and paintings until the 1970s; then started unlearning those (external) learnings until the 1990s, when he settled as a sculptor; and, after this, he went deeper inside, letting go more and more of the intellect, space-time in his art expressions until the end of the 1990s; before finally coming up with his recent works of a series of drawings named "Under the Mask" while settled in Jaipur in his ongoing fourth quadrant of artistic life.



SPROUTING AT 10

You cannot basically hold creativity within you for long. It, in fact, starts from taking birth, which, itself is the very first act of creativity. Further, the desire to spur out the artist, within, cannot be held for long. But how long? It is decided by its intensity. This intensity was so strong that he ran away from home at the age of 10 to bring a true artist, Himmat Shah, to our world!

The first quadrant of his art work demonstrates a period of influence of his external learnings while finding his soul. This is evident from the fact that his art work of this period shows influences from his birthplace Lothal, the site of Harappan civilisation. Himmat was learning from his environment and from his time, in away that was totally different and unconventional.



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Himmat's work, so contemporary in time, also recapitulates the innate artistic bent of his people. The rich use of textures which the village people of Saurashtra make in designing their clothings, their furniture, their kitchen wares, is a marvel of folk sensitivity and Himmat carries this gift with extraordinary grace into his work.

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- J. Swaminathan

ART/COMPLEMENTARITIES

Self-Referential Images Of Pateria, Himmat Shah

By K. B. GOEL

THE strong showing of Ramnath Pateria, that fabulous romantic sculptor from Makrana, at the Babindra Bhawan Grounds last week and Himmat Shah's coming of age with his recent work at the Art Heritage Gallery are events whose significance and implications will be a subject of studio talk for a long time. The works by these two sculptors have very little in common, yet there is this common ground: style as subject—a style that is inherently charged with emotive power. No doubt their plastic vocabulary is different: in Pateria's work something happens to the motif and it is transformed into a meaningful sign while in the Pateria the plasticity of the material, its superiority over the motif, is asserted. Putting it another way, Himmat's world offers the possibility of a self-referential illusion for the viewer (the idealisable references to the world we know have been eliminated to the extent that the image sets up a self-referential acquaintance: we know this world because it has a familiar interiority of mind) while Pateria is a musician of the code: he combines sound and sense which defined in Sanskrit as *linguistic prose*, means dovetailing of the signifier (material and volume) and signified (forms and their meaning-construction relationships with the signified). Pateria's work does not demand the presence of that interiority of mind which characterises Himmat's work; rather it remains on the borderline where elements of sculpture and their iconic import

combine, where material is dematerialised to become form, a construction where the process of transformation is seen in terms of the projected code of the work. The transformation process in Himmat's work draws attention to the crucial proposition: the inverted cycle of myth-message-code.

The correct sequence of the terms—the code, the message, and the myth—needs explaining. There is the possibility of confusion in the order of their sequential unfolding; for instance, the code and the myth may combine in such a way that the message is received as a consequence of the—whether intended or accidental—combination of the two. The possibility of confusion has been admitted even by linguist Roman Jakobson: he expresses the confusion in this way: "We may notice that metalanguage also makes sequential use of equivalent units, combining synonymous expressions in an equational sentence A=A (the same is the female of the horse). Between poetry and metalanguage, all the same, there is a diametrical opposition: in metalanguage sequence is utilised to construct an equation, while in poetry it is the equation which serves to construct the sequence."

Applying the metalinguistic and poetic definitions of discourse in terms of the code and the myth, we observe that in Pateria's work the equation has primacy over sequence; that is to say, the relation of plastic elements in his works (shores within an overall form) appears to determine the internal form of his constructions. In working out the grammar of this relationship he is guided by intuition no doubt, while to a lay viewer it may appear that the materiality of the stone has priority over geometry of vision.

Himmat's methodology is different: the myth determines the self-referential discourse in his

Now heuristic is not the correct way of learning the meaning of a work of art: the truth is seldom revealed by the heuristic approach. Heuristic being part of an ideology, and ideology which always has this double level of articulation, makes use of culture as an instrument to be internalised by people whether the items of its constituent beliefs are true or false.

Culture bears the impact of ideology by instilling certain habits, ideas, norms, and one of the functions of the capitalist ideology is to look upon works of art as a means of enlightenment. "And it is proposed by practitioners that abstract art is an especially testable means of enlightenment," Charles Harrison says. When we look at art objects rather long enough to turn them into what may be called a sort of 'internal content' we enter the ideological process of internalising their message in terms of the ideology we share. The relation to the loss of correspondence with reality is substituted by the relation of heuristic to history. Looking at Himmat's images which are relevant to the vividly consciousness-shaping power of the myth we experience the defeat of history by heuristics. The relation 'picture of' is absent in Pateria's work too; there is instead a new relation—the self-validating unit revealing their intersubjectivity through the plasticity of the whole. His aesthetics are cognitive governed entirely by formal necessity.

The works of Himmat and Pateria are of cognitive significance as both are constitutive of that aspect of ideological production that is epistemologically blind: 'I can see A as B and someone can see it as C which, as it stands, is not a statement of much interest. One might as well say: if you are not in tune with this universe you are not so much at fault as dead.'

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The sign system which has mythical features is created by an individual, by sculptor Himmat Shah and he may have understood the nature of the myth in a way wholly incomprehensible to the viewer.

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- K.B. Goel for the Patriot

In Himmat's little collages one listens to silence, a silence after the din of battle has died down. They are burnt on crumpled paper with dots and lines. In these collages Himmat returns to salvage all the beauty and terror of childhood.

The "Five Contemporaries" show, while bearing individual signatures, projects a collective unconscious. This collectivity guarantees the validity of a new kind of art which bears no semblance to representationalism, figuration or to fooling around with daubs of colour in the name of abstraction. When Ambadas paints memory images in his pictures he is never similar to any of the abstractionists in the known sense, or when Swaminathan puts up a peacock on a suspended rock he is being neither literary nor surrealist. Both in their own realms gaze back and forth into psychic depths to discover something relevant to their being. This is contemporaneity. When Rajesh tries to decipher spaces in algebraic manipulations or when Himmat evokes the beauty and terror of childhood they are far from using ambiguous and oft-repeated symbols—the bull, the horse, the figure holding up a light. One feels that these artists are involved in coining not the symbol, but the language of the symbol.

This then, is the new promise. No wonder even the initiated tend to miss the point in these pictures. It may be difficult to forecast a new art trend from these works, but it could definitely be said that there is a genuine

MARCH 10, 1968

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In Himmat's little collages one listens to silence, a silence after the din of battle has died down. They are burnt on crumpled paper with dots and lines. In these collages Himmat returns to salvage all the beauty and terror of childhood

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– Art Critic for the Link



UNLEARNING THE LEARNING

From the moment a person is born, he/she starts to learn. First you begin to feel the touch of your mother. Then you begin to hear sounds around you. Then you begin to see things around you. Once you start growing out of your infancy, you are thrust into some or the other form of a formal learning process. Though some of this learning is essential, a lot of it starts to confine your thoughts into the direction decided by your parents, your family members, and the society at large.



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A creative intellect can do anything, using any means desired to show expression. Art and liberty are both like Prometheus' fire that will burn through any repression. In the past, art and religion were entwined but now all values are changing. Modern education has given degrees and a social value to art. This has killed the spontaneity of expression and art has been relegated more to selling than to creation.

In nature there are myriad forms and images from which the artist finds his concepts of creation. A creative idea should be expressed by using whatever material is best suited for expression. When we paint we should first understand the surface of the canvas before making a single stroke.

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- Himmat Shah on liberty, nature...

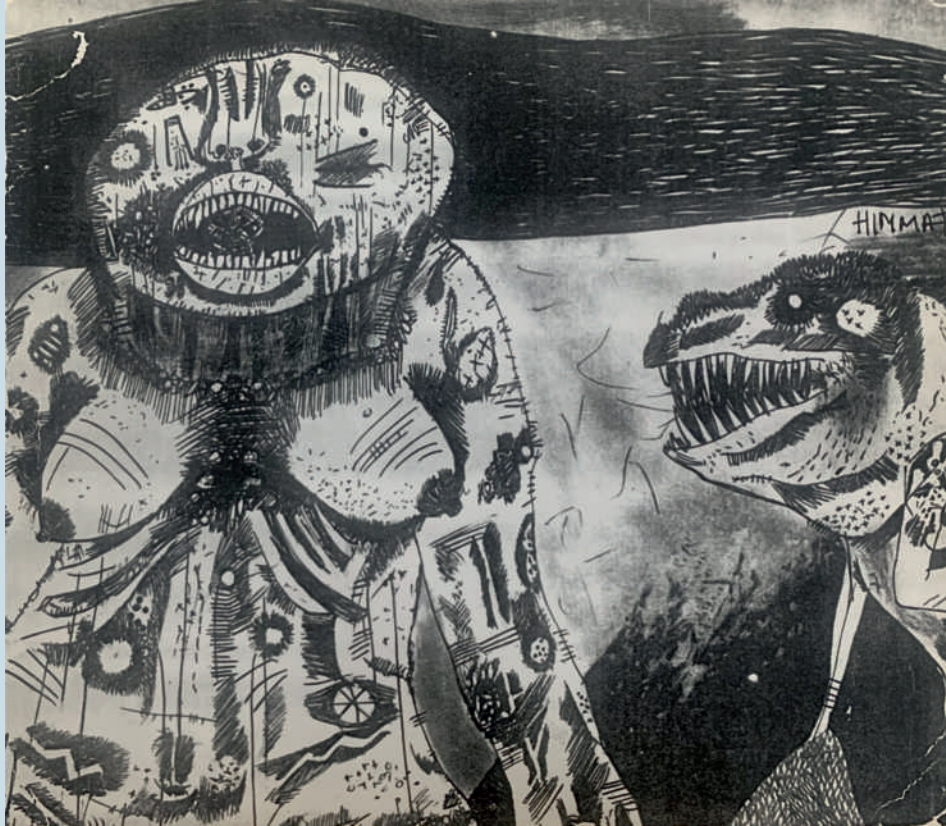


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I believe that art comes to man and that the artist is merely the medium. For him meaning lies in expression and not with technique. There is no compromise in art and a true artist must forget all preconceptions before he can create and live his art.

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- Himmat Shah on art...



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I like Himmat. I like his drawings. Most of all, I like the startling way in which he counter-poses his pleasant, gay personality with the horrifying image of a pervert on the rampage. It is as if the suave magician, to prove a point, unexpectedly makes your robes disappear to show that every man is naked beneath his clothes - and just as you stand shivering in the altogether, hey presto! the laughing face of Himmat is there to reassure you of your respectability.

”

- J. Swaminathan



For Himmat, this learning that restricts your thoughts into predefined directions by people around you, is the biggest road block in your realization of your true self. For him, the first step of opening up, the first step of tasting true freedom, is to unlearn what has been learnt. Only when you unlearn, can you start seeing and enjoying art, particularly contemporary art.

THE JOURNAL

NEW - CASTLE : SATURDAY , JANUARY 13, 1966
ODD GLIMPSE OF INDIA HAS THEM BLUSHING

BY JOURNAL REPORTER

School boys stared , open - mouthed teenagers sniggered , house-wives bleeshed. Even a prominent members of the city council raised his eyebrows just a little. The cause , A painting at the laing Art gallery , New castle.

Last night the police were investigating a complaint about the picture which depicts horrific characters in erotic positions. Entitled "Man's Fate" it is by Himmat Shah. "It caused quite a stir especially among teenagers", said the gallery assistant. " But unless you either know it's there, or else look very closely it's quite easy to miss", headed.

PURITAN

Director of the gallery Mr. Collingwood Stevenson said that he has not received any complaints about the picture. "It is all in the mind", he said. "If you've been brought up to believe that sex is dirty and unhealthy, then naturally you'll think anything depicting sex dirty and unhealthy. This sort of thing isn't regarded as at all out of the ordinary in Indian sex is a very definite part of their art." He was surprised at the reaction to the picture. "I have always though this part of the country fairly free from narrow - mindedness and puritanical thinking," he said. A police spokesman said, "One individual complaint does not mean that there is anything necessarily bad about the painting , but we are investigating." Meanwhile , the picture stays in its place and the staring goes on.

A Brief Introduction

There is an apparent grossness in Himmat Shah which is deceptive. In the elaborate and surgical sexuality of his men and women, in the beauty and horror of his animals, there are precise rhythms. Himmat is a meticulous anatomist when he is at figure. Where abstract design is concerned he is a disciplinarian. I should like to avoid the futile debate over the optical and formal elements of his work, and try instead to identify its basic matrix. In other words, try to understand what aspect of the Life Force he is responding to. At this level a discussion on its mere craft becomes secondary. Yet the craft is considerable, as these slides will show. You will see a tremendous range from drawing and paintings to reliefs, sculptures and murals. In this range there also seems to be a movement from passion to a certain restful inwardness. Himmat's collages (we will be discussing the collage) are excellent examples of the indispensibility of all forms chosen for composition. Collage, in another sense, is a tribute to all forms, and an assertion of the untenability of discord.

(O.V.VIJAYAN)

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- O. V. Vijayan for The Journal, New-Castle



When he started unlearning the learning, his expressions became more freer, but also more furious. Forget India, even London, the bastion of the modern world, couldn't stop gasping at the sight of his erotic, fornicating figures, which were human and animal at the same time. This was a period of great recognition for Himmat Shah. He had the opportunity to travel through Europe, meeting and working with other great artists of the time. But it was also a period of a great struggle. When he returned back to India, he had hardly any personal possessions.

The body listens
or does it speak?
the fingers shriek!
The eye on the side,
The nest on the thighs slides
The mirror slips to splintery suicide
Disarray.

The tongue pierced with arrow.
A dogged, pussy-footed, unending chase
Stalking herself in the water-ways,
Mourning-appareled,
She prays:
Spare me of the dark -
The night will come all too soon,
The morning has already lost itself in the noon.

Confusions reign,
All in vain, I mistake
desire for thunder
illusion for woman
error for scripture.

Is this a trinity coming up?
Or a trident coming down?
Is it the tree in the courtyard, aspiring for the sky?
Or the eagle hurtling down from the high!

The moon is thrown on the street,
Pounding feet, pouncing hands,
and frenzied shouts —
But have I my own doubts
Are shadows of the/walls
Signing on each other?

The ants crawl up the calves,
The bear claws: fangs hang on to the flesh,
deathly though dead the desires clash,
All ends in a flash
The lady vomits herself on the lap!

Omits everything except
Postures, pythons,
arms, arches,
and breasts.

Srikant Varma (originally Hindi).
Translated - Manohar Shyam Joshi



UNLEARNT HEADS

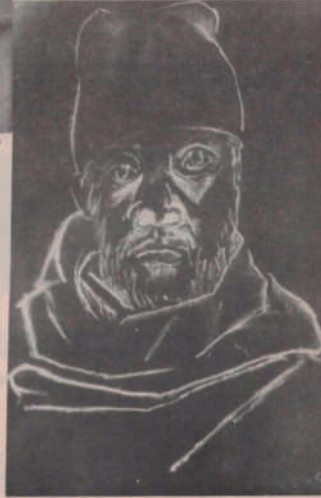
The next phase of his artistic expressions was marked by a new enlightenment. Here was a Himmat Shah, who had first learned from surroundings, and then became free of his learnings. Now he was the true child, the uncorrupted, the pristine. Over the next few decades, this unlearning got reflected in his unconventional creations of heads in terracotta, and in bronze. Small heads, giant heads, thin heads, bulging heads, heads with odd shapes. Heads with shapes that forced one to forget meaning and intellect, and instead focus on pure art.



Alok Gajju

Himmat Shah on himself...
I am the only true painter in India. I do not believe in any kind of compromise. We are all in the trap of commercialization, and now even art has become commercial to an extent. The artist should shatter his previous world, and then create a new world through his art. Only then will there be creation and not replication.

Others on Himmat Shah...
Krishan Khanna, the doyen of Indian artists: "He is one of the most dedicated and unworldly artists working today".
Younger artists: "There is no denying that Himmat Shah lives in a world of his own creation. As for the value of his art, it is the work of a genius but some of us don't understand it at all".



“

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- Himmat Shah on himself.
India Magazine

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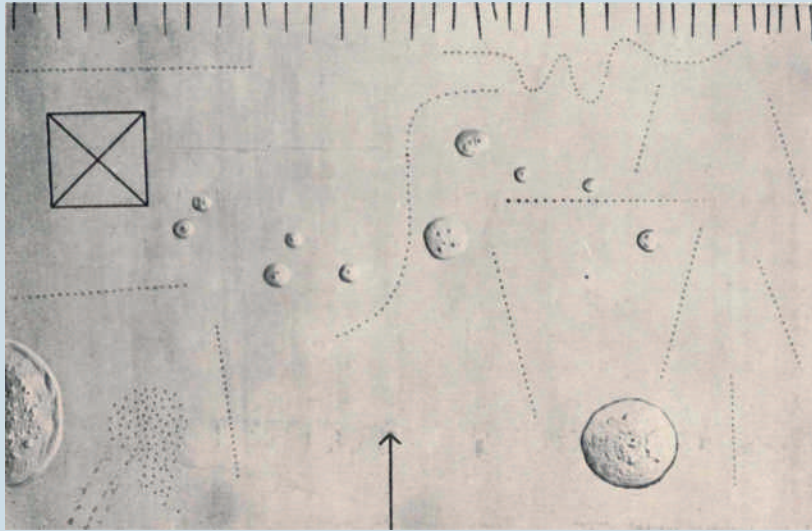
- Krishna Khanna. India Magazine



There is no denying that Himmat
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it is the work of a genius but some
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- Younger artists. India Magazine

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It would be no exaggeration to say that Himmat, 43, is today among most versatile practitioners of his craft: no one is probably richer in repertoire than Himmat, who has been continuously involved in an almost unique diversification of his medium to achieve the ultimate reality of his dreams. He has refused to restrict himself to any set style of painting. He has done some absolutely novel experiments with collages and even executed some brilliant pieces of sculpture in a continued process of what he had once visualised on the canvas. He lives these days in his studio in South Delhi in a world of silver paste of which he has made some interesting use in his latest creations.

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- Anees Chisti



Himmat's mantra has always been about freedom. Not just the freedom to do what we want, but the freedom to think too. Freedom to see things too. When one sees art and tries to find meaning in it, one is trying to relate the art with a preconceived notion. Himmat has always detested this. For him, it means that the mind is not free. The mind is trapped in the world around it. His sculptures present an opportunity for a person to be free not just in body, but in mind and spirit too. Enjoying art without finding any worldly meaning is perhaps the truest sense of freedom to Himmat.

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I was told not to ask for meanings. I was asked to stand before a modern painting and absorb the total impression; decide for myself if it integrated into a statement. Now Himmat is not an articulate person. He is virtually illiterate. But it would be a mistake to assume from his lack of formal education that Himmat does not know what he is about. Or that he is diffident. He is hardly that. I have still to come across anyone who has greater contempt for words. Words are not his medium; he has no use for them; so he doesn't care for them.

”



M. C. Gabriel for The Hindustan Times



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This is how I see things. This wall you will say is yellow but I don't see it as just yellow. I see it as hundreds of colours creating a rhythm of yellow. And you ask me about the silver I use. You see it as silver. I see it as an awe-inspiring spectrum of incandescence.

”

- Himmat Shah



The various shapes and sizes of heads that Himmat has sculpted enable a person to think of a head, and the associated meanings of a head, in many different ways. They open a person's mind to new possibilities, new imaginations, new ideas, newer directions.

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In expression, the naive repetition of rather elementary forms, which characterized his earlier manner, has been shed.

- Krishna Chaitanya for the Hindustan Times

Himmat Shah infuses a high degree of cubist energy in his pen-and-inks as well as his famous heads.



- Anshul Avijit for the Metro Today Magazine

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UNDER THE MASK

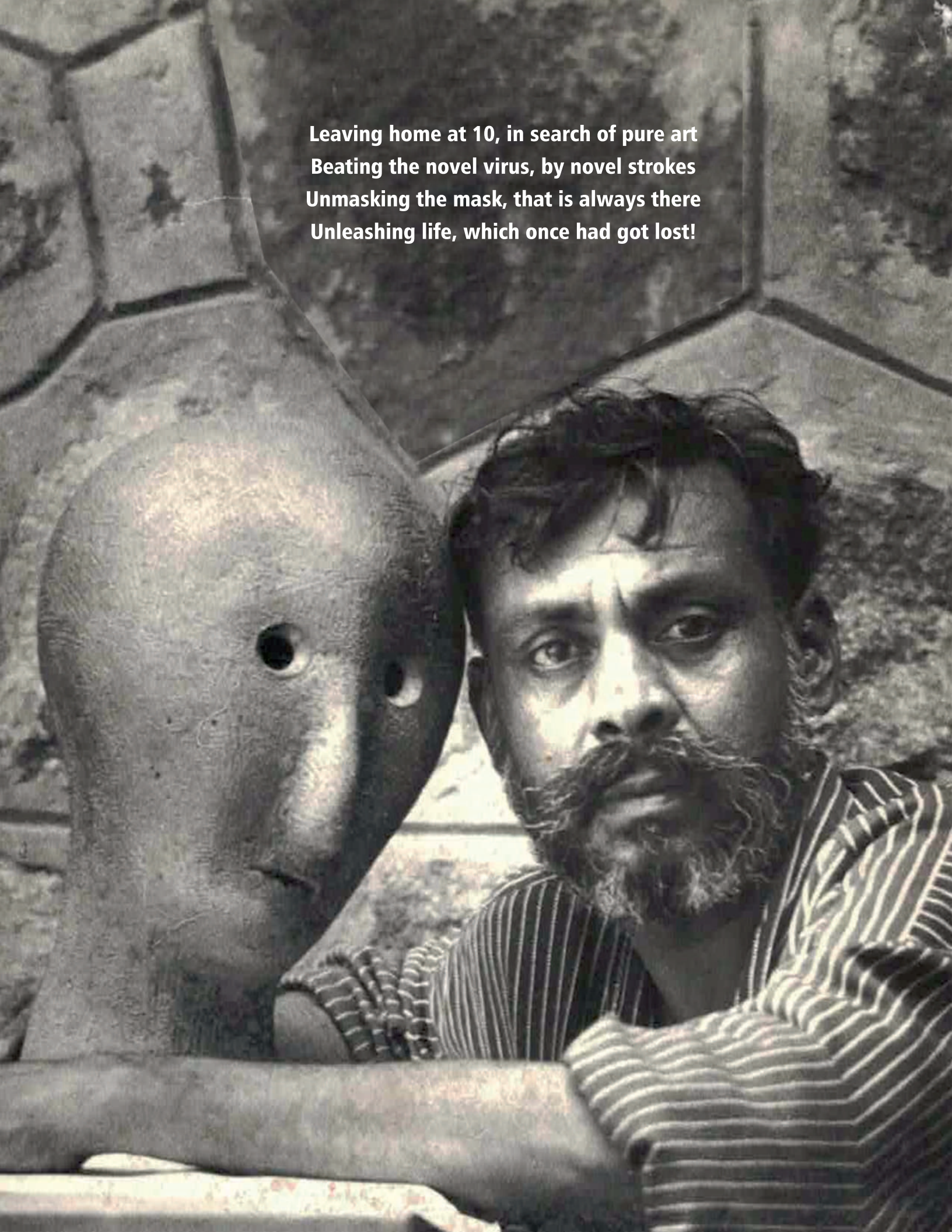


The pandemic generated different kinds of reactions from different people. Some enjoyed the forced vacations; some despaired the looming crisis.

Himmat Shah, just as in the Hindu philosophy of Vaanprasthashram (i.e., spending the rest of one's life as a recluse in a forest), withdrew from the materialistic world. As he withdrew from the world, he became one with himself. And in this process, a great fountain of art flowed from his soul and gave birth to a set of unmatched contemporary paintings that portray the inner self of Himmat Shah, which while seemingly complex, also depict a surreal simplicity of his inner child.

It is indeed an honour to get an opportunity to write about the unique creations, Under the Mask, of India's most eminent artist, Shri Himmat Shah. The depth of 80 years of engrossment in pure artwork is clearly visible in this recently painted collection, "under the mask". The works, presented in the show, are as novel as the cause that had forced us humans to put on the mask! The movie is still going on.

**Leaving home at 10, in search of pure art
Beating the novel virus, by novel strokes
Unmasking the mask, that is always there
Unleashing life, which once had got lost!**





पृष्ठभूमि के अनछूए पन्ने

यह शो आज अंतिम रूप लिए आप सभी के सामने है, लेकिन यह इतना सरल और सहज नहीं था जितना आपके समक्ष है। ये ऐसे विचारों का परिणाम है जो लिविंग मास्टर हिम्मत शाह से मिलने के बाद मेरे जहन में हिलोरे मारने लगे थे। पहली मुलाकात में कला जगत के इन गूढ रहस्यों को समझना बेहद मुश्किल रहा लेकिन जैसा सर्व विदित है, 'शाह' के रहस्यों का जवाब पूरी 'हिम्मत' से वे खुद ही दे सकते हैं। उन्हें सुनने की उत्सुकता के साथ शुरू हुआ मुलाकातों का सिलसिला। रहस्यवादी कला जगत के समुद्र में डूबी शब्दविहीन अभिव्यक्तियों और वैज्ञानिक अनुमानों के बीच एक समन्वय स्थापित होने लगा था। ब्रह्मांड ने शो के प्रयास के लिए कहीं जुटना शुरू कर दिया था।

कलात्मक अभिव्यक्ति के चार चरण

90 वर्षीय हिम्मत शाह का जीवन बतौर शिल्पी और चित्रकार गहराई से देखने पर हिन्दू दर्शन के अनुसार चार चरणों में विभक्त जान पड़ता है। ऐसा दृष्ट्य एक विशेष दृष्टिकोण से हासिल होगा, क्योंकि उनकी कलात्मक अभिव्यक्ति विभाज्य नहीं है बल्कि एक समझ है। यह फ़न समय के साथ उन्हीं की परिधि में पल्लवित पौधा है जिसके पौषण में बेवजह की बुद्धिमता की खाद का कोई योगदान नहीं है। इस पर कौतूहल होता है, क्या कला और विज्ञान के बीच जो अंतर है वह वास्तव में आत्मा और मन की रचना है?

उनके सफर में साकार हुई रचनाओं में जो टूट है वह दिलचस्प है। साल 1970 तक शुरुआती सीख के साथ उन्होंने पेंटिंग्स में अपनी कलात्मकता को अभिव्यक्त किया। फिर बाहरी दुनिया से जो भी सीखा उससे साथ छुड़ाते हुए, बिसराते हुए उन्होंने 1990 तक एक शिल्पकार के रूप में पहचान स्थापित की। इसके बाद उन्होंने भीतर की गहराई में गोते लगाते हुए 90 के दशक के अंत तक अपनी रचनाओं को बुद्धि, समय और स्थान के सांचे से स्वतंत्र कर दिया। फिलहाल कलात्मक जीवन के चौथे चतुर्थांश में जयपुर में रहते हुए उन्होंने "अंडर दी मास्क" नामक चित्रों की एक श्रृंखला को अंतिम रूप दिया। उनका यह चरण अभी भी जारी है, इसमें बहुत कुछ छिपा है और बहुत कुछ बाहर आना बाकी है...



10 साल की उम्र से सतत साधना

यह बड़ा ताकतवर तथ्य है कि आप रचनात्मकता को लम्बे समय तक स्वयं में सिमित नहीं रख सकते। यह वास्तव में, जन्म लेने से शुरू होता है, जो स्वयं पहला रचनात्मक कार्य है। इसके अलावा, कलाकार को भीतर से बाहर निकलने की इच्छा को लम्बे समय तक दबाकर रखा भी नहीं जा सकता है। लेकिन कब तक रखा नहीं जा सकता है?...यह इच्छा की प्रबलता पर निर्भर करता है। 10 साल की अल्प आयु में ही इस इच्छा ने संकल्प का स्वरूप ले लिया और दुनिया से एक सच्चे कलाकार के रूप में हिम्मत शाह का साक्षात्कार करवा दिया। उन्होंने घर को अलविदा कह दिया और फिर कभी पीछे ना मुड़े। स्वयं की खोज के दौरान उनके कलात्मक कैनवास पर पहली छाप बाहरी प्रशिक्षण से प्रेरित दिखाई पड़ती है, क्योंकि पहले चरण की रचनाओं में उनके जन्मस्थान लोथल व हड़प्पा सभ्यता की झलक देखने को मिलती है। हिम्मत अपने परिवेश और अपने समय से सीख रहे थे, यह एक तरह से बिल्कुल अलग और अपरंपरागत था।

"हिम्मत के काम में समकालीन समय की तस्वीर साफ दिखती है, ये रचनाएं स्थानीय लोगों के कलात्मक रुझान को भी दर्शाती है। सौराष्ट्र के ग्रामीणों के कपड़ों, साज-सामान, बर्तनों की बनावट काफी समृद्ध रहती है, यह लोक संवेदनशीलता का चमत्कार है, हिम्मत इस उपहार को बड़ी संजीदगी से काम में लेते हैं।"

जे. स्वामीनाथन

"हिम्मत शाह की कल्पनाओं पर आधारित कोई साइन सिस्टम जब आकार लेता है, तो हिम्मत ही है जो दर्शकों की समझ से परे जाकर इसका मर्म समझ सकते हैं।"

के.बी. गोयल फॉर द पैट्रियट

"हिम्मत के छोटे-छोटे कोलाजों में युद्ध के शोरगुल की समाप्ति के बाद छाने वाले सन्नाटे को सुना जा सकता है। कागज जलाकर बिन्दुओं और रेखाओं को उकेरा जाता है। इन्हे देखकर लगता है कि हिम्मत के बचपन की शरारत भरी सुंदरता लौट आई है "

- आर्ट क्रिटिक फॉर द लिंक



'अनलर्निंग दी लर्निंग'

जन्म के साथ ही इंसान का सीखना शुरू हो जाता है। हम सर्वप्रथम माँ के स्पर्श को महसूस करना शुरू करते हैं, उसके बाद चारों तरफ की आवाज़ें सुनाई देती हैं, फिर हम देखने लगते हैं अपने आस-पास मौजूद चीजों को। एक बार जब आप अपनी शिशु अवस्था से बाहर निकलना शुरू करते हैं तो आपको सीखने की औपचारिक प्रक्रिया की तरफ बढ़ने को मजबूर होना पड़ता है हालांकि इसमें से कुछ सीखना आवश्यक है लेकिन दुनिया का यह सीखना आपके विचारों को आपके माता-पिता, परिवार के सदस्यों और बड़े पैमाने पर समाज द्वारा तय की गई दिशा में सीमित करना शुरू कर देता है।

हिम्मत के अनुसार, "यह सीख जो आपके विचारों को आपके आस-पास के लोगों द्वारा पूर्वनिर्धारित दिशाओं में सीमित करती है, खुद की खोज में सबसे बड़ी बाधा है। उन्मुक्त होने और सच्ची स्वतंत्रता का स्वाद लेने का पहला कदम है, जो सीखा गया है उसे भुला दिया जाए।" बकौल हिम्मत जब आप सीखते नहीं हैं, तभी आप कला को देखना और उसका आनंद लेना शुरू कर सकते हैं, विशेष रूप से कंटेम्पररी आर्ट का।

लर्निंग से अनलर्निंग एक ऐसी राह पर चलने की तरह है जहाँ दुनिया से सीखे सभी सबक को भुलाना था और अपनी निर्विचार दुनिया बनानी थी। इसके आगाज़ से ही उनके जज़्बात जमाने से जुदा या कहे अधिक मुक्त और उग्र होते चले गए। भारत क्या, आधुनिक दुनिया का केन्द्र माना जाने वाला लन्दन भी उनके तिलिस्म की तपिश नहीं झेल सका, कामोत्तेजना और व्यभिचार पर प्रकाश डालने वाली ये रचनाएं एक ही समय में मानवीय भी थी और पाशविक भी। यह हिम्मत शाह के लिए अहमियत वाला दौर था। उन्हें यूरोप की यात्रा के साथ तत्कालीन महान कलाकारों से मिलने और काम करने का अवसर मिला। इसी बीच संघर्ष भी उनके साथ-साथ चलता रहा, जब वे वापस भारत लौटे तो व्यक्तिगत संपत्ति के नाम पर उनके पास कुछ नहीं था।

बकौल हिम्मत शाह रचनात्मक बुद्धि का धनी व्यक्ति विचारों की अभिव्यक्ति के लिए वांछित माध्यम का उपयोग करके कुछ भी कर सकता है। कला और स्वतंत्रता दोनों प्रोमेथियस (ग्रीक पौराणिक कथाओं के पात्र) की आग की तरह हैं, जिनका दमन करने पर वे जल उठते हैं। अतीत में कला और धर्म आपस में जुड़े हुए थे लेकिन अब सभी मूल्य बदल रहे हैं। आधुनिक शिक्षा ने भले ही कला को डिग्री और एक सामाजिक मूल्य दिया है पर इसने अभिव्यक्ति की सहजता को मार डाला है और कला को सृजन की बजाए बाजार परक बनाने पर जोर दिया है।

प्रकृति पर हिम्मत शाह कुछ इस तरह प्रकाश डालते हैं:-

"प्रकृति में ऐसे असंख्य रूप और तस्वीरें हैं जिनसे कलाकार अपने सृजन की अवधारणा पाता है। अभिव्यक्ति के लिए जो भी सामग्री सबसे उपयुक्त हो, उसका उपयोग करके एक रचनात्मक विचार व्यक्त किया जाना चाहिए। जब हम पेंट करते हैं तो एक स्ट्रोक लगाने से पहले हमें कैनवास की सतह को समझना चाहिए।"

कला को लेकर हिम्मत के खयाल कुछ इस तरह हैं:-

मेरा मानना है कि कलाकार केवल माध्यम है, कला खुद मनुष्य के पास आती। उसके अर्थ भावों में निहित है ना कि तकनीक के साथ। कला में कोई समझौता नहीं होता, एक सच्चे कलाकार को चाहिए कि अपनी रचना बनाने और जीने से पहले वह सभी पूर्व धारणाओं को भूल जाए।

"यह कहना कोई अतिशयोक्ति नहीं होगी कि 43 वर्षीय हिम्मत आज अपने तरह की शिल्प शैली के सबसे बहुमुखी साधकों में से एक हैं, वे अपने सपनों की हकीकत को साकार करने के लिए अपने मीडियम के जरिए विविधता को दर्शाने को लगातार प्रयासरत हैं। उन्होंने खुद को चित्रकला की किसी निर्धारित शैली तक सीमित रखने से इंकार कर दिया है। उन्होंने कोलाज के साथ बिल्कुल नए प्रयोग किए हैं, यहां तक कि उन्होंने जो कैनवास पर देखा उसे भी शिल्प का रूप दे दिया। वह इन दिनों दक्षिण दिल्ली में अपने स्टूडियो में सिल्वर पेस्ट से सजी की दुनिया में रहते हैं, इस पेस्ट का उन्होंने अपनी नवीनतम रचनाओं में दिलचस्प उपयोग किया है।"

- अनीस चिश्ती

"मुझे हिम्मत और उनके चित्र दोनों पसंद है। वे अपने सुखद और आनंदित व्यक्तित्व से परे जाकर हिंसात्मक और क्रोध भाव को अपने चित्रों में उकेरते हैं, उनका ये चौंका देने वाला तरीका भी बेहद पसंदीदा है। ये जादूगर की करामात जैसा है जो यह दिखने के लिए यकायक शख्स को बेपर्दा कर देता है कि बिना कपड़ों के सब क्या है। इन चित्रों को देखकर जब कोई सिहर उठता है तब हिम्मत कि मुस्कान उसे निश्चित करती है।"

- जे. स्वामीनाथन

"उनकी दृष्टि से स्त्री और पुरुष की विस्तृत रचना और जानवरों की सुंदरता व भयावयता में एक लयबद्धता है। बड़ी गंभीरता से एक एनाटॉमिस्ट की तरह हिम्मत चित्र बना रहे होते हैं।"

- ओ.वी. विजयन फॉर द जर्नल, न्यू-कैसल

कुछ कहा जा रहा है शरीर से!
चीख रही हैं अंगुलियाँ,
आंख उतर आयी है पीठ पर,
जंघा में घोंसला,
आईना टूटकर
गिरा हुआ है जमीन पर।
जबान छिदी हुई है तीर से।
अपना ही पीछा करते-करते दबे पांव नहर में,





काले कपड़े पहने हुए वह,
'शाम न हो, शाम न हो' कहती पहुँच गयी है दोपहर में।
गड़बड़ा गया हूँ मैं इच्छा को बिजली,
वहम को स्त्री,
भूल को पुस्तक कहता हुआ!

बसता है शहर या गड़ता है त्रिशूल?
आंगन में रोज बड़ा होता है पेड़ या केवल
मंडलाती है चील?
सड़क पर गिरता है चन्द्रमा, झपटती है भीड़
या दस्तखत करती है परछाईं
एक दीवार की दूसरी दीवार पर?

पैरों पर चढ़ती है चीटियाँ
कंधे पर पंजे गड़ाता है रीछ,
भुजा पर प्रेमिका करती है वमन!

बची रह गई हैं मुद्राएँ, सर्प, हाथ, धनुष और उरोज।
...हिम्मत शाह के चित्रों को समर्पित श्रीकान्त वर्मा की कविता

“अनलरन्ट हेड्स”

शाह के जीवन का अगला चरण इतिहास में नए और स्वर्णिम सवरे की तरह है। अब दुनिया ऐसे हिम्मत से दर्शित हुई जिसने पूर्व में अपने परिवेश से सीखा और अब हर शिक्षा से मुक्त हो गए। वह बच्चे की तरह निर्विकार और सच्चे बन गए। इस अनलरनिंग का असर आगामी दशकों में परम्परागत ढांचे को तोड़ते हुए तैयार हुए उनके टेराकोटा और ब्रॉन्ज हेड्स में दिखने लगा। कुछ छोटे तो कुछ विशाल, कहीं पतले तो कहीं उभरे हुए विषम आकार वाले हेड्स। ये हेड्स अर्थ और बुद्धि से परे जाकर शुद्ध कला को प्रदर्शित करते हैं।

शाह ने इंडिया मैगज़ीन से बातचीत में कहा:-

"मैं भारत का एकमात्र सच्चा चित्रकार हूँ। पहला, किसी भी तरह के समझौते में मेरा विश्वास नहीं है। हम खुद तो जाल में फंसे ही कला को भी एक हद तक व्यावसायिक कर दिया। कलाकार को अपनी बीती दुनिया को छोड़, कला के माध्यम से एक नई दुनिया का निर्माण करना चाहिए। केवल तभी सृजन होगा, प्रतिकृति नहीं।"

"वह आज काम कर रहे सबसे समर्पित और अलौकिक कलाकारों में से एक हैं।"

- कृष्णा खन्ना। इंडिया मैगज़ीन

"इस बात से कोई इनकार नहीं है कि हिम्मत शाह अपनी खुद की बनाई दुनिया में रहते हैं। जहां तक उनकी कला के मूल्य की बात है, तो यह एक प्रतिभा का काम है लेकिन हममें से कुछ लोग इसे बिल्कुल नहीं समझते हैं।"

- युवा कलाकार। इंडिया मैगज़ीन

स्वतंत्रता और नवीनता यही हमेशा से हिम्मत के मूल मंत्र हैं। वांछित काम को करने की ही नहीं बल्कि चीजों को देखने और सोचने की स्वतंत्रता भी इसमें शामिल है। आम तौर पर जब कोई किसी आर्ट वर्क को देखता है और उसमें अर्थ खोजने की कोशिश करता है, तो वह कला को एक पूर्वकल्पित धारणा से जोड़ने के प्रयास में रहता है। हिम्मत हमेशा से इसके धुर विरोधी रहे हैं। उनका मानना है कि ऐसा करने पर हम मुक्त नहीं वरन अपने चारों ओर की दुनिया में फंस जाते हैं। उनके द्वारा बनाए गए स्कलपचर्स मनुष्य को तन, मन और आत्मा से मुक्त होने का अवसर प्रदान करते हैं। किसी सांसारिक अर्थ को खोजे बिना कला का आनंद लेना ही शायद हिम्मत के लिए स्वतंत्रता का सबसे सच्चा अर्थ है।

"एक मॉडर्न पेंटिंग के समक्ष खड़ा रहकर मुझसे अर्थ पूछने के बजाए ऑब्जर्व करने को कहा गया, साथ ही स्वतंत्रता दी गयी स्वयं की समझ से मायने तय करने की। हिम्मत मुखर नहीं बल्कि एक गजब के ऑब्जर्वर है। भले ही उन्होंने औपचारिक शिक्षा हासिल नहीं कि लेकिन इसके चलते यह मान लेना एक गलती होगी कि हिम्मत को नहीं पता कि वह क्या है। वह संकोची भी नहीं है। मुझे अभी भी किसी ऐसे व्यक्ति से मिलना है जिसका शब्दों से सरोकार नहीं है। शब्द उनके लिए ना ही माध्यम हैं ना ही उपयोगी, ना ही उन्हें इनकी परवाह ही है।"

- एम.सी. गेब्रियल फॉर द हिंदुस्तान टाइम्स

"मैं कुछ ऐसे चीजों को देखता हूँ, आप कहेंगे कि यह दीवार पीली है, लेकिन मुझे यह सिर्फ पीली नहीं दिखती। मैं इसे सैकड़ों रंगों के रूप में देखता हूँ जो पीले रंग के साथ लयबद्ध हैं। मैं जिस सिल्वर को काम में लेता हूँ आप इसे सिल्वर के रूप में देखते हैं पर मैं इसे प्रेरक और जोशीले स्पेक्ट्रम के रूप में देखता हूँ।"

-हिम्मत शाह

हिम्मत ने अलग-अलग शेष और साइज के हेड्स तराशे हैं, वे एक व्यक्ति को हेड्स के बारे में सोचने और हेड्स से जुड़े अर्थों को कई अलग-अलग तरीकों से सोचने में सक्षम बनाते हैं। वे नई संभावनाओं, नई कल्पनाओं, नए विचारों और नई दिशाओं के लिए व्यक्ति के मस्तिष्क को खोलते हैं।

"वे पतले-दुबले हैं। उनकी आँखें एक सहमे बच्चे की तरह हैं। वे अकेले रहते हैं, चीजों को देखने के उनके निश्चल भाव से इत्तेफाक नहीं रखने वाली दुनिया से दूर। उनका खुद से सवाल रहता है, मैं कौन हूँ?...वे कहते हैं कि मैं कोई कवि नहीं हूँ, मेरे चित्र अपनी कहानी खुद बयां करते हैं। मैं उनके चित्रों को देखता हूँ तो महसूस करता हूँ कि वे बोल रहे हैं, हालांकि वो जो अक्सर कह रहे हैं कि वो कहने में असक्षम हैं। यह इस तरह से है कि कोई बच्चा अति उत्सुकता, गुस्से या उदासी में कुछ कह नहीं पाता है। हिम्मत कहते हैं, किसी के जीवन का सबसे महत्वपूर्ण अनुभव, अकथनीय ही रहता है।"

- कमल कपूर फॉर हिंदुस्तान टाइम्स





"उनके काम में आई नवीनता और परिपक्वता से जन्मी अभिव्यक्तियों ने उनकी प्रारंभिक रचनाएं जो उनकी विशेषता थी और पुनरावृत्ति को ढक दिया है।"

- कृष्णा चैतन्य फॉर हिंदुस्तान टाइम्स

"हिम्मत शाह अपनी कलम और स्याही के साथ-साथ अपने प्रसिद्ध हेड्स में उच्च स्तर की क्यूबिस्ट एनर्जी का संचार करते हैं।"

- अंशुल अविजीत फॉर मेट्रो टुडे मैगजीन

“अंडर दी मास्क”

कोरोना महामारी ने लोगों में अलग-अलग प्रतिक्रियाएँ उत्पन्न कीं। कुछ ने जबरन छुट्टियों का आनंद लिया एवं कुछ की हिम्मत के आगे संकट के साहस ने दम तोड़ दिया। इस दौरान हिंदू दर्शन की वानप्रस्थ आश्रम की धारणा के अनुकूल, भौतिकवादी दुनिया से परे उन्होंने जीवन बिताना शुरू किया।

दुनिया से दूर होते होते वे स्वयं के इतना पास हो गए मानों खुद में ही खो गए। परिणाम स्वरूप कंटेम्पररी पेंटिंग्स का ऐसा संग्रह तैयार हुआ जो हिम्मत शाह के अंतर्मन के तत्कालिक भावों का चित्रण साबित हुआ। यह संग्रह दिखने में जटिल भले ही हो पर हिम्मत में मौजूद बच्चे की एक वास्तविक सादगी को भी दर्शाता है।

भारत के सबसे प्रतिष्ठित कलाकार लिविंग मास्टर हिम्मत शाह की अनूठी कृतियों 'अंडर दी मास्क' के बारे में लिखने का अवसर मिलना वास्तव में सौभाग्य की बात है। इस दौरान तैयार रचनाओं में उनका 80 साल का अनुभव सम्पूर्ण रूप से झलकता है। इन रचनाओं ने सच्चाई छिपाने वाले इंसानी मुखौटों को उतार फेंका और कोरोना काल में मास्क के पीछे छिपी मुस्कान को भी बाहर निकाल दिया। शो में पेश आर्ट वर्क उन सभी कारणों के मुंह पर तमाचे की तरह है जिन्होंने हम इंसानों को मुखौटा लगाने के लिए मजबूर किया था!...

"तलाशने को कला 10 साल में दहलीज छोड़ दी,
रंग ही बन गए अस्त्र-शस्त्र और कोरोना से जंग छेड़ दी,
अपनी रचनाओं से सच्चाई छिपाते इंसानी मुखौटे से दिलाई आजादी,
'अंडर दी मास्क' से कोरोना काल में खोई मुस्कान लौटा दी"...

"हिम्मत शाह के कलात्मक जीवन का चौथा चरण अभी भी जारी है,
इसमें बहुत कुछ छिपा है और बहुत कुछ बाहर आना बाकी है"...

All text and quotes translated from English



AN ARTIST WHO STANDS APART

U. Rajagopalan



Bearded and bespectacled, short statured Himmat Shah is a painter and sculptor, almost remaining far apart from ever growing crowd of artists. A very amiable person in normal exposition, one has to draw out Himmat from his seclusion to understand the strength behind the silence in solitude.

In an ideal natural setting in Garhi studios this unpretentious man spoke at length about plethora of experiences and experiments in life as an artist. Himmat said that all his efforts were to instill confidence in man so that the eternal probe will be continued uninterrupted because life has been always a swim against the current in order to preserve one's identity, conviction, and courage.

Every storm in medium of art, as experiences showed has only strengthened the spirit or essence of the artist in man provided his commitment to the medium, nay to himself is genuine.

However, in the present dispensation. Himmat observed that the search for the element unfathomable in human beings in terms of sensibilities, reacting to certain situations, perhaps, even imperceptible, is almost non-existent.



The slogan of only, draw sell and succeed has overtaken all other considerations stultifying the essential creative urge. In transformation timeless art is slipping into time bound productions. However, the artist has to survive. He needs money for survival and not for amassing wealth.

Born in 1933 in a remote village named Lothal in Ahmedabad, district of Gujrat, Himmat had his initial lessons from Jagubhai Shah and did a course in J.J. School of Art, Bombay. Joining the Faculty of Fine Arts, M.S. University, Baroda, Himmat Shah worked under the great painter N.S. Bendre on a scholarship for advanced studies in painting.

In 1959 and again in 1962 won the prestigious national awards, the Jammu and Kashmir academy 's Gold Medal in 1961 and Bombay Art Society award in 1962. Himmat studied etching under Hayter and Krishna Reddy in Paris and made a pilgrimage to art museums in Europe. Almost every museum and academy has acquired his works. He has 12 solo exhibitions to his credit so far.

Whatever Himmat has handled in the field of art, he has successfully maintained the stand – apart from individuality and distinction in every creation. And when Himmat emphatically ruled out the possibility of compromising for compromising sake of basic values, concepts, and convictions he was reminded of the fact that it is always non-conformists who push the world ahead.

THE ARTIST IN THE AGE OF CONSUMERISM

Suneet Chopra

To understand the art of Himmat Shah one has to visualize that timeless child of Lothal playing with malleable clay fashioning images with traces of millennia crumbling on them. Yes, it is the same Lothal where sailors from the cities of the Tigris and Euphrates from Bahrain and Makran, brought tales of wonder that lit up children's eyes before the lamps were put out for the night.

Their eyes lit up with colours from across seas as no doubt Himmat's did with the colours of Bendre, the birds, and mounds of Swaminathan and the verbal imagery of Octavio Paz. Himmat's art is magical and wonderful.

But to leave at that would be to miss the importance of his innocence as an unconscious mirror of our times. Gone is the resplendent bull of the clay seals of Lothal. In its place we have a broken bottle of whiskey with plastic flower sticking out of it. And it has plastic drop of dew shining on its petals. Or again shapes that look like cartoons ready to be dispensed with in wood, marble, and clay, frozen in a state of constant "built in obsolescence" remind one that art and consumerism hard work to teach the fingers



sensitivity to all kinds of texture and familiar marketable shapes can no longer be kept apart from each other. for all our posturing art and its market are inseparable.

Indeed, this subtle theme runs through all of Himmat's work. Gilded objects of clay sculptures that have traces of paintings on them and hieroglyphs of antiquity gouged on the series of heads placed side by side rhythmically like the metal plates of xylophone remind one of ancient markets where all sorts of wondrous things came up for exchange. And yet there are those self-mocking elements crumbling, decaying, and drifting away before our very eyes, ironically reminding us that not only is all that glitters not gold, but it is on its way out. Himmat Shah's art reminds one of dusk when the day is done, and the night has not yet descended. It is the time the predators relate the most, the time of the hunt. And the hunters like it best.

Indeed, these excavations are not accidental. The emergence of the group in 1890 in the wake of the Indo-China War led by one of the 'God that failed' variety, a man who just quit the communist, J Swaminathan, was not accident. It may not have been conspiracy: but it certainly was a part of the drift that went with the anti-China hysteria of that time. Perhaps that is why it never survived its first show, opened by none other than Jawaharlal Nehru, in 1963. but the artist continued as all creative persons do with their own agendas.



Himmat's art is that of the end of millennium. It is rooted in gut experience. It internalizes both the emergence of mass-produced Kitsch and built-in obsolescence of the consumerist society, rather like the works of Andy Warhol. But being an Indian and not merely being a graft from the West, it retains its deep concerns with the exploration of materiality texture and the question of presenting reality as it emerges out of the creative process. In other words, it cannot divorce itself from avant-gardism or the God that failed. Therefore, it only reaches the threshold of the post-modernist heaven without letting go of the agenda of modernism for it has gut understanding that the god it claimed has failed seems still to be alive and well. This is the strength of this art which walks uneasily between the market and the Avant-grade. That is why those who bought works of his at about Rs 1,000 to Rs 5,000 some 20 years ago can rest content with seeing his works enter the five to six figure brackets today. It is the work of a very astute survivor that we see at the Sridharani Gallery 'sponsored by the Art Heritage. It is definitely a show that should not be missed by art lovers.

Himmat Shah

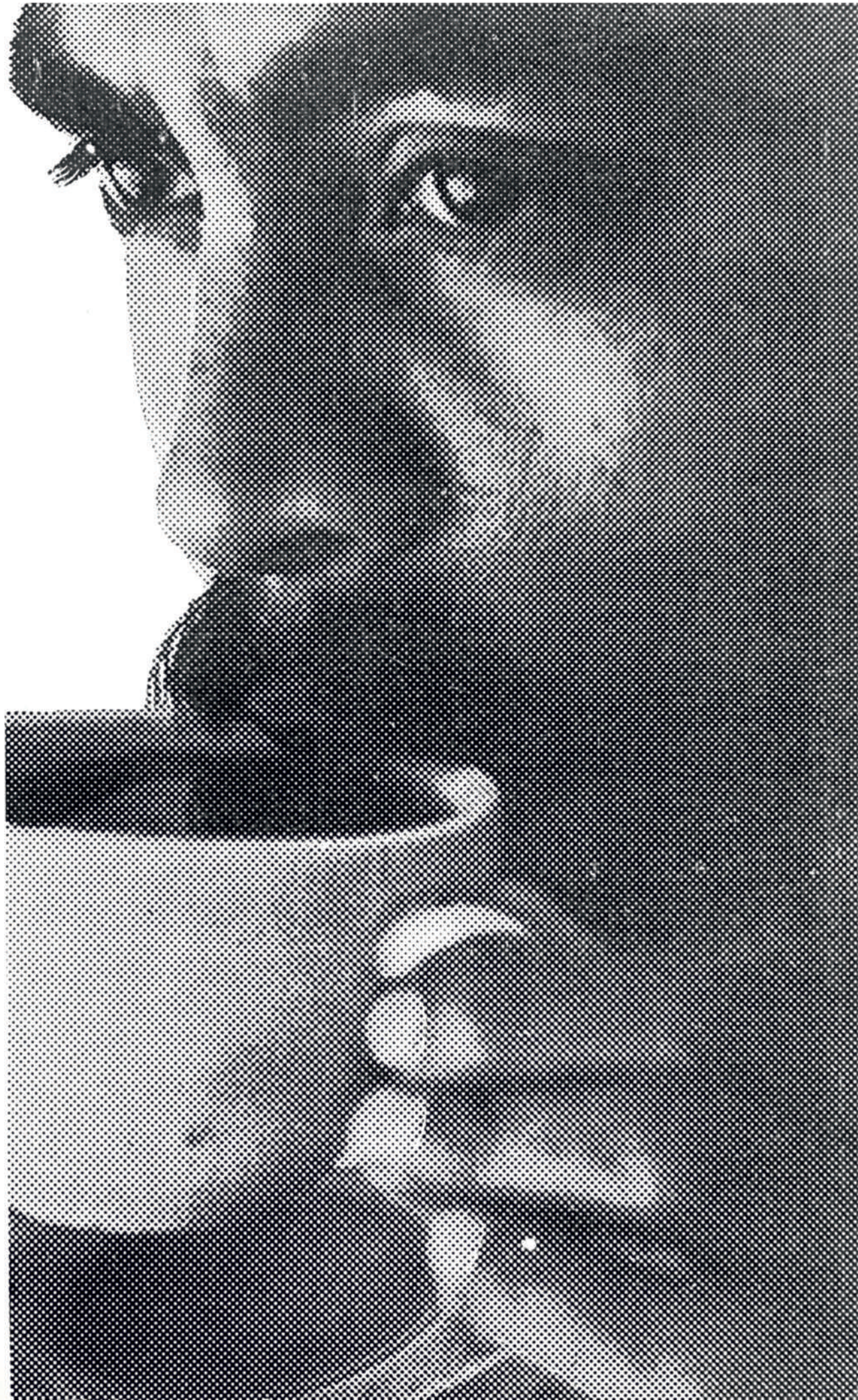
A New Castle journal reported in January, 1966 :

“School boys stared, open mouthed teenagers sniggered, housewives blushed. Even a prominent member of the city council raised his eyebrows just a little. The cause : A painting at the Laing Art Gallery, New Castle Last night the police were investigating a complaint about the picture which depicts horrific characters in erotic positions. Entitled *Man's Fate*, it is by Himmat Shah. “It caused quite a stir specially among teenagers”, said the gallery assistant. “But unless you either know it's there, or else look very closely, it's quite easy to miss”, he added.

The Director of the Gallery, Mr. Collingwood Stevenson said that he has not received any complaints about the picture. “It's all in the mind”, he said. “If you've been brought up to believe that sex is dirty and unhealthy, then naturally you'll think anything depicting sex dirty and unhealthy. This sort of thing is'nt regarded as at all out of the ordinary. In India, sex is a very definite part of their art.” He was surprised at the reaction to the picture A police spokesman said : “One individual complaint does not mean there is anything necessarily bad about the painting, but we are investigating.”

So, the investigation goes on !

GLIMPSES OF THE JOURNEY





Himmat Shah is a master draughtsman.....But over and above being this, he is a stylist ; it is not that he draws well but he draws in a style of his own.

—*Indian Express, New Delhi, March 16, '64*

Himmat Shah is a young painter who believes in the truth of his craft.

—*Times of India, New Delhi, March 17, '64*

Himmat takes us into a world of grotesque beings and distorted parts of real figures ; but even here he never once strays from reality. His vision is concentrated on sex, which is supposed to be a most complicated problem in the sophisticated world.

The artist is however not trying to solve the problem ; he just expresses his queer reactions through a language which reminds us of Pablo Picasso's "Guernica".

—*Hindusthan Standard, Calcutta, February 26, '65*

Meanwhile Himmat Shah speaks a different language. The present exhibition shows for the first time the complete change of style undergone during the past years and the amazing flexibility of his means of expression.



Lush, Variegated Textures

HIMMAT SHAH'S WORKS

By Our Art Critic

Himmat Shah is still remembered for his exhibition of daring drawings that depicted the sexes in all its ritualistic splendour and salistic starkness. These drawings were very dramatic in theme but there was a virtuoso line—the deliberate flamboyance of the well trained and inspired draughtsman who was out to create a Gothic grotesque. That great roar and tumble in which the Freudian lid was personified was actually a take-off on Khajuraho. Himmat Shah carried everybody with him.

The present exhibition of his six and collages at Kunika-Chemould Centre takes you to that Mansion of Memory. The inscriptions and the hieroglyphs on the canvases are the writing on the walls, the echoes and the history of what happened there. They are also the dark symbols of the essentially dark dialogue between man and woman. There are symbols here that are religious and cruel—the arrow, the crescent, the trident and the forms of various herbs that have softened and unfurled.

MOST SUBTLE

Nothing is directly stated but there are the implications of the sex story. In its sublimest statement there is the lingam-yoni arrangement of "Painting 21." In its most sensual form there is the sinister scars of rapine, as in "Painting 7." Between these works there are all forms of variations that are bold or brazen or sometimes very beautiful as in "Painting 15," "Painting 14" and "Painting 6." The last is perhaps the most subtle of all the compositions. In a rectangle with six arms, an arrow traces into the third of the four concentric ovals leading surely for the fœtal target.

His paintings have lush and variegated textures and great puffs of paint (the black ones recall the sensuous blocks of indigenous tobacco complete with silver paper and all that). These puffs of paint are incised crudely and look like lacerated wounds. Here and there the collage and the texture are overdone. Texture and inscription do not co-exist in "Painting 6." The solution to this kind of problem is worked out in "Painting 20." The collage is too sentimental in "Painting 11." The calligraphs is not convincing in "Painting 10." And occasionally the colours are hard and spectacular. Through a blue filter all this would look splendidly matte.

But for all this the exhibition is exciting. It is on till March 23 between 10 a.m. and 7 p.m.

हिम्मत शाह के नये चित्र सौन्दर्य जो 'सुखद' नहीं, पर खींचता है

● प्रयाग सुकल

हिम्मत शाहका नाम अब बिचकला सभके लिए गया नहीं है। ('धर्म' में अनेक बार उनके स्केच तथा चित्र प्रकाशित हो चुके हैं) कलकत्ता और दिल्ली में कला के विभो और रेखाचित्रों की प्रदर्शनियां काफ़ी प्रशंसित और खींच रही हैं। इसके पहले उन्हें ललित कला अकादमीका राष्ट्रीय पुरस्कार दो बार (१०-१२) प्राप्त हो चुका है। वे 'दूर १८९०' के सौख्य सदस्यों में रहे हैं। आजकल वे दिल्ली में स्वतंत्र रूप से चित्र-रचना में लगे हैं।

हिम्मत शाहके शाखा विचित्रों की सामग्री आकर्षित करती है। उनके रंगों में एक 'सुखा-पन' है और उनकी अकुलाहट उन्हें 'पुनः' करती मानस प्रकृति है। उनके एक चित्र में, जो सुकल: सारके-सकल है, रंजक एक

धीनका उनसेम मीने कतिपय नये विचित्रों का चित्र-ना भर उपलब्ध करनेके लिए किया है। इसलिए कुछ सपने और मानस पदार्थों को एक ओर रखकर भी देखें, तो (भी) समझा कि इन विचित्रों में सुखा है, बल्कि सुखला है। विचित्रों की प्रतीकों और संकेतों की व्याख्या का अब सावध सचेत लिए एक-ना नहीं हो सकता, लेकिन उन्हें लेकर किसी ऐसी जगह पहुंचा जा सकता है, जहां सचकी सत्यता की जांचाया जा सके न हो, किसी बड़े विरोधकी सुबाहस न होनी। हिम्मत शाहके प्रतीक (जो संकेतोंका काम भी करते हैं) तीर, बिजुल, घड़के हुए साकार आदि आसकी चित्रोंमें 'अदृश्य' को ही व्यक्त करते मानस प्रकृति हैं। हिम्मत शाहके चित्र अब उनके पिछले चित्रों की ही शोभावाला नहीं है।



● चित्र : हिम्मत शाह

पल्लवा-ना सुखा मानस प्रकृति है या फिर रंजक एक 'प्रकार'। लेकिन वह क्या मानस प्रकृति है या क्या है, की बात काली विकृत ही नहीं है, जिसकी कि उसके प्रयास की। फिर यह प्रयास बाह्य जो कुछ सफ़रक ना दिखकर प्रकृति हो। इसी तरह एक चित्र में रंग अपने सजीव हैं कि कुछ दूरसे देखनेपर हल्की नीली और हल्की सुभासी रंगों-की छानवी मानस प्रकृति है— इस 'रंगों'की सुखदुर्गमि' चित्रके है बजरीके छोटे-छोटे दाने। बड़े बात यहां की क्या समने या क्या मानस पदार्थकी नहीं है, चित्रकी सामग्री और समीचा-का प्रयास पढ़ने की है। बी की इन

यों इन चित्रों में भी सौन्दर्य-विकृत है। वे चित्र आकृतिमयक नहीं रहे और न ही इनके सौन्दर्य हैं। सभी चित्र तीव्र रंगों में हैं। इनमें कुछ अन्य उपकरणों, मीम आदि का प्रयोग भी किया गया है।

हिम्मत शाहके विचित्रोंका सौन्दर्य-बोध, इस चित्रोंके-ने सौन्दर्य-बोधके काफी चित्र है। और कई सुखद रंगोंके प्रयोगके बावजूद इनका सौन्दर्य 'सुखद' नहीं है। लेकिन इस सौन्दर्यकी अपनी शक्ति और अपने आकर्षण हैं। ●●●

ART

TWO PAINTING EXHIBITIONS

By Our Art Critic

The exhibition of paintings by Mr Prasant Sen and Mr Nikhilesh Das, AIFACS gallery, first floor, could be dismissed with a single line. It is, as far as this Critic can see, without any merit whatever, meaningless and unfeeling sneers and daubs of paint, poor caricatures of abstract and modern painting. Not recommended.

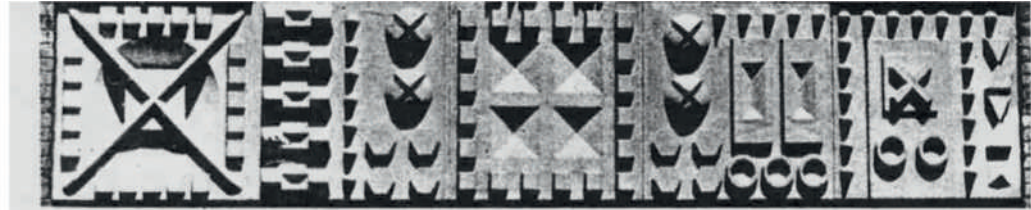
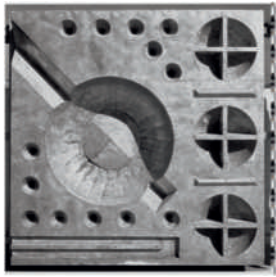
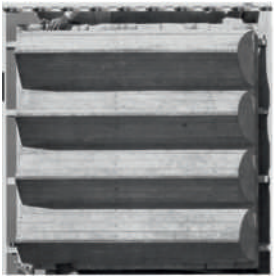
Mr Himmat Shah (Kunika-Chemould Art Centre) is a different cup of tea. Mr Himmat Shah, now 28, has been developing on interesting lines these last three or four years and his last exhibition, at the Triveni Gallery (1964), was an eloquent testimony of his talent and vision and skill.

The present show does not, unhappily, continue that line of development. Mr Himmat Shah is again on the search and the paintings now hung at the Kunika could as far as style is concerned, be the work of six different painters. Here and there we meet again with his fine line-work, now across areas of oil paint, sometimes symbolic designs, sometimes asymbolic. In others he uses the gimmicks of texture such as sand and varnish and wax mixed with oil, gold paint and silver paint, an electric fitting of brass and what you will.

In many of these the talent of this young painter still shines through, and I would call Nos. 2 and 7 more than attractive paintings, in fact, striking in their simplicity. The point, however, is that Mr Himmat Shah is still searching for his own style, and he has not yet found it; he is interesting, but undecided; the power of a distinctly individual style is missing.

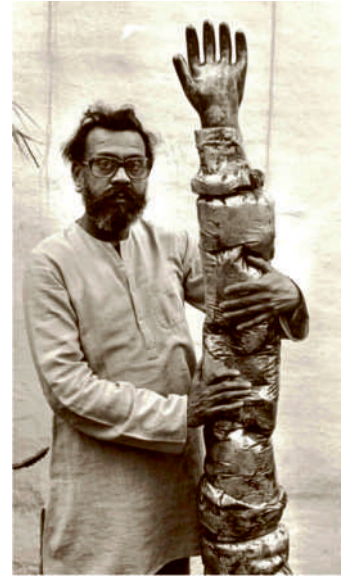
Open daily from 10 a.m. to 7 p.m. until March 23.

1966 THE STATESMAN, 17 MARCH



सेंट जेवियर प्राइमरी स्कूल (अहमदाबाद) में हिम्मत शाह के म्यूरल का एक हिस्सा.







METRO TODAY



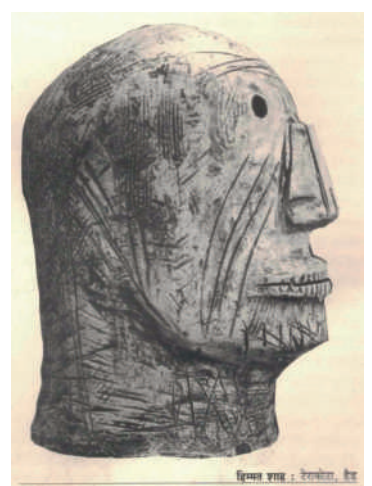
CATCHING UP: Shah (left) and Sankaran; (right) collage by Shah

retro scape

Historical shows? Retrospective? Chronical? retro? Apparently they were also trying to evoke photographer Harman, which would add a Singh to the title of the exhibition, on Nagpur, was in India during the 1950s and 1960s when he was creating a scene in London not only with his former sketches but also with his first piece, Himmat Shah, of the same genre, infuses a high degree of cultural energy in his pen and ink on his traditional Indian, hand-drawn, sketchy style. The gallery was at a crucial juncture in Huma Khawaja Village, engaged in bringing some kind of cultural history to old and important Indian works with "Shah, Souza and Sankaran", featuring the stalwarts Himmat, Francis Newton and Vivan.

Chatterati 5 ROVING EYE

HIMMAT SHAH attained celebritydom in the '60s when his erotic art raised official hackles and led to him being banished from the exhibition circuit. The Gujran painter from Gardi did return to the limelight eventually and the city's cocktail circuit toasted him for the 10th time last weekend at Art Inc. art aficionados Prithvi Kurian's Shubpur Jai gallery. Shah is showing his pen-and-ink works that Kurian ran into at the artist's home. Some of the work suffers in clarity because of the varying quality of the paper used, but he's living up to his reputation by bravely asking his patrons to interpret the use of an stroke.



Himmat Shah: A drawing of a head

ARTS & LEISURE • Himmat Shah

CHALK FROM CHEESE

Retiree in his days of semi-retirement no longer seems an artist, who has voluntarily changed of a normal life. In fact, he is a man who has decided to make outstanding ceramic or terracotta heads, which look straight out of archaeological excavations. The heads and wing-poking actions of Himmat Shah and his highly complex and absorbing work are as different as chalk from cheese.

Himmat Shah's heads are unique. Some look like white, some have hair, some are white with some without the power of vision. He makes the heads in all possible forms, upright, smooth and lumpy.

Shah himself: "I try to make sculptures using natural strokes. With wide and simple lines, I usually get the effect. I want, I am simple artists, who are the subject of the work. Some a sculpture is made out of the white surface of the work and the play of light on through the whole structure of the work and gives a different meaning to the same process."

The 60s has seen many a virtuoso but even during technical, rigorous and rigorous periods, he has refused to let go of his natural artistic talent. The fully conceptual and manual like great artist, one should take a drink at his Gardi studio. Pondered on a rocky shore, with an abandoned but surrounded by starting heads and gone a feeling of something, it is a huge one. But one Shah starts looking at his thought process which has gone into the making of these creative materials in his Studio Gardi, there is no end to one's attachment.

From a painter's family in Gujarat to the



Photo: Megha Rai

The Solitary Reaper

Continued experiments with terracotta have been behind Himmat Shah's famed monolithic heads, on display at KNMA



Artist Himmat Shah, who over the years has been known for his terracotta heads, is exhibiting his work in a solo show at the National Museum of Modern Art in Delhi. The exhibition, titled 'The Solitary Reaper', is a continuation of his long-standing interest in terracotta. The show features a variety of his work, including large-scale heads and smaller, more intricate pieces. The artist's work is characterized by its simplicity and the use of natural materials. The exhibition is a testament to his dedication to his craft and his unique artistic vision.

Photo: Megha Rai

ARTS & LEISURE • Himmat Shah

Though he has accepted some of the best pieces of art, Himmat Shah is neither a showman nor a showman. He is simply an artist in love with his vocation. His art is not just a profession, it is a way of life. He has spent his entire life in the pursuit of his art, and he has achieved a level of mastery that is rare in our time. His work is a reflection of his inner world, and it is this honesty and vulnerability that makes it so powerful. He is not just an artist, he is a man who has found his purpose in life through his art.



Photo: Megha Rai

H

immit works in terracotta, ceramic and metal. He makes heads, some white, some black, some with intricate details. He is a man who has spent his entire life in the pursuit of his art, and he has achieved a level of mastery that is rare in our time. His work is a reflection of his inner world, and it is this honesty and vulnerability that makes it so powerful. He is not just an artist, he is a man who has found his purpose in life through his art.

ART HIMMAT SHAH: A Transforming Vision

An insatiable desire for perfection, constant innovation and a dilution of being inspired — these characterize Himmat Shah. His work forays in his inspiration from nature and technology read on eye for detail. Hii Maheshwari highlights the philosophy behind his art



Photo: Megha Rai

Selected Sculptures





Bronze
87 x 21 x 19 cm



Bronze
224 x 90 x 64 cm



Bronze
49 x 21 x 21 cm



Bronze
49 x 21 x 21 cm



Bronze
34 x 16 x 9 cm



Bronze
36 x 9 x 9 cm



Bronze
195 x 52 x 50 cm



Bronze
127 x 67 x 38 cm

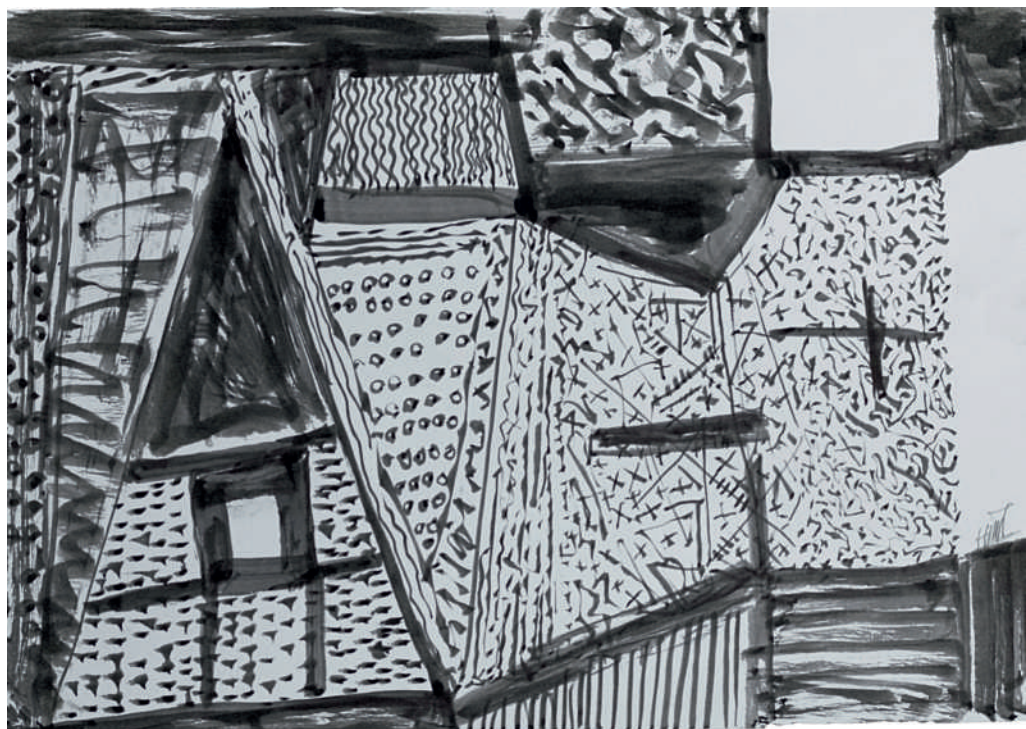


Bronze
37 x 10 x 9 cm



Bronze
29 x 20 x 21 cm

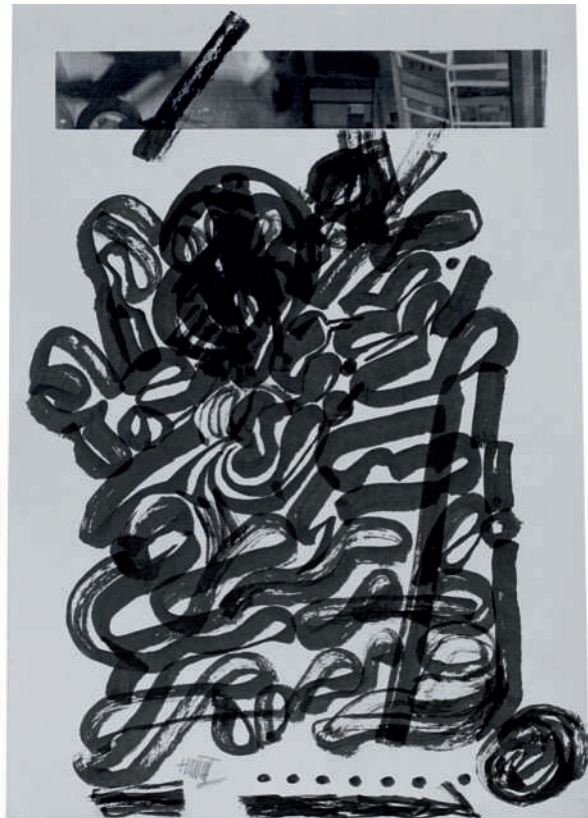
UNDER THE MASK
Selected Paintings



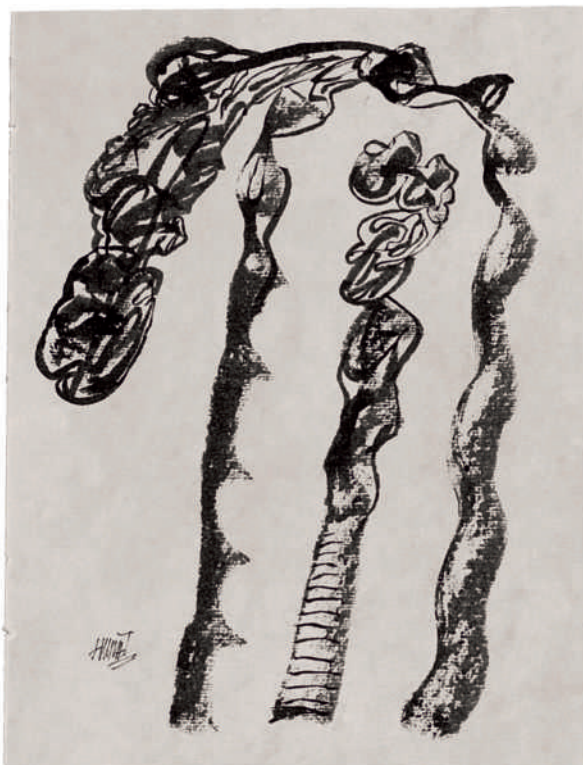
Water colour on paper, 29 x 20.5 cm



Water colour on paper, 30.5 x 29 cm



Water colour on paper, 29 x 21 cm



Water colour on paper, 19.5 x 14.5 cm



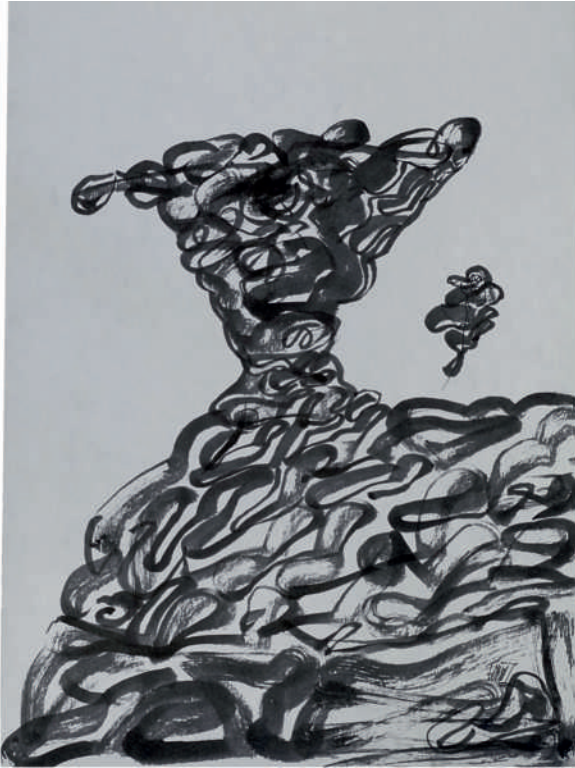
Water colour on paper, 19 x 14.5 cm



Water colour on paper, 31.5 x 31.5 cm



Water colour on paper, 14.5 x 17 cm



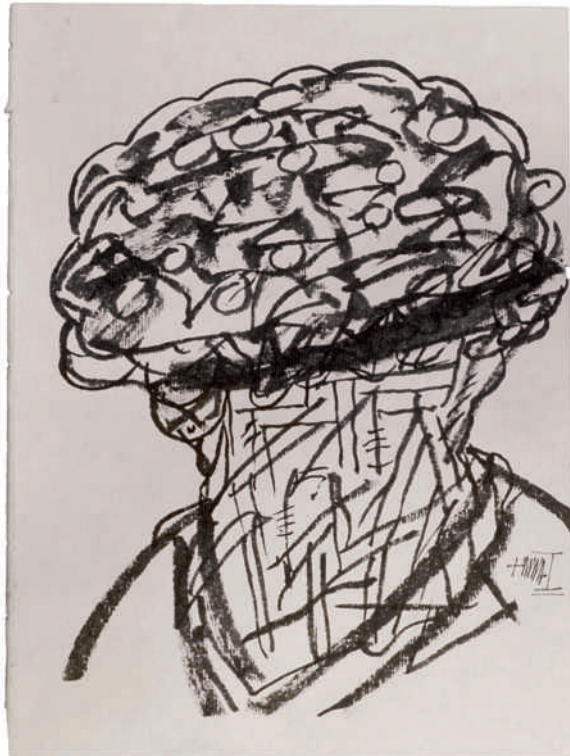
Water colour on paper, 29 x 20.5 cm



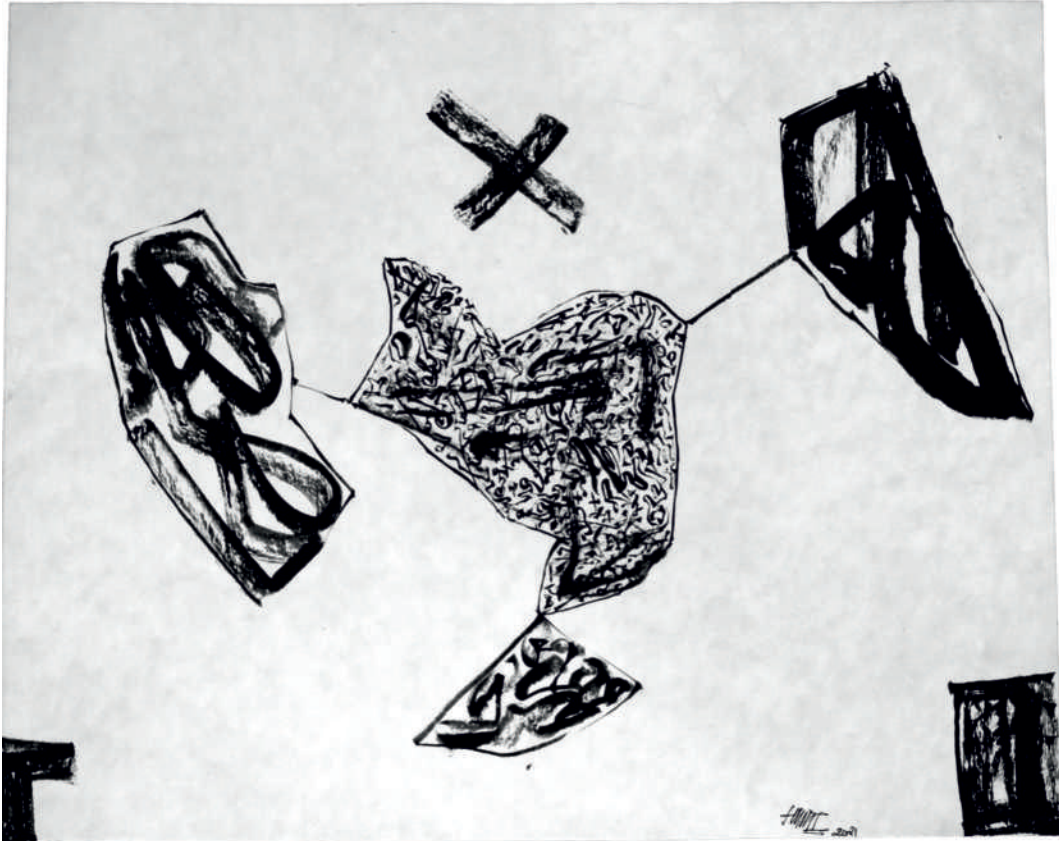
Water colour on paper, 19.5 x 14.9 cm



Water colour on paper, 19.5 x 14.5 cm



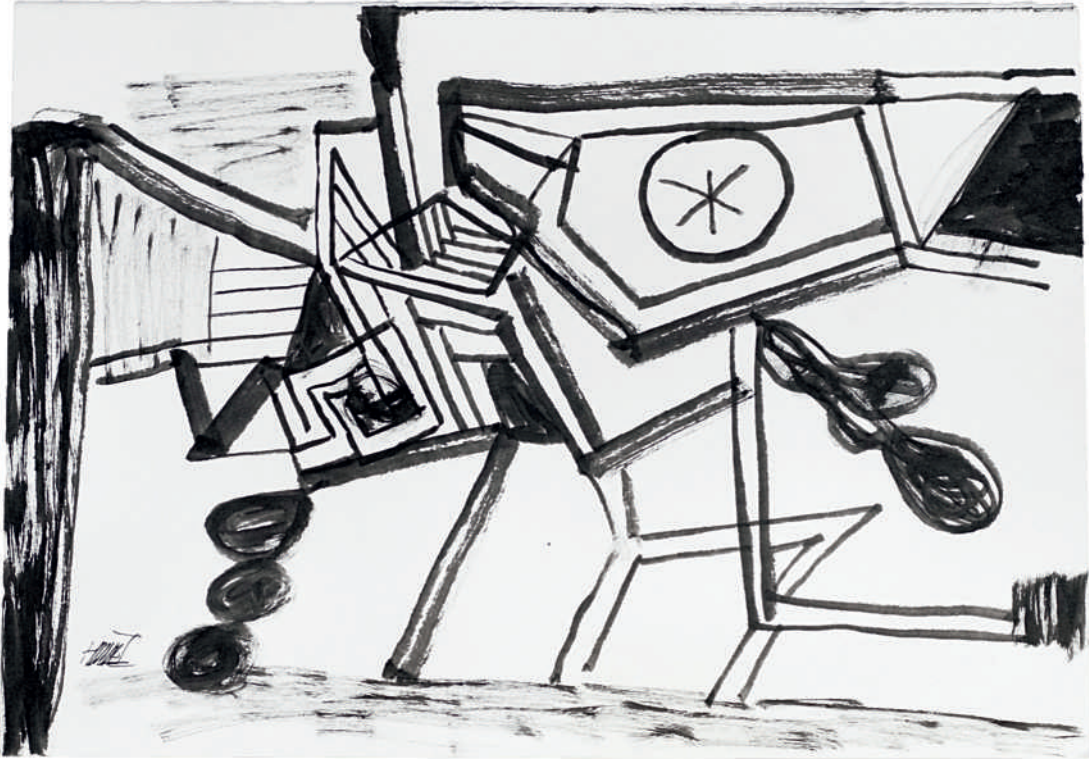
Water colour on paper, 19.5 x 14.5 cm



Water colour on paper, 27 x 36.5 cm



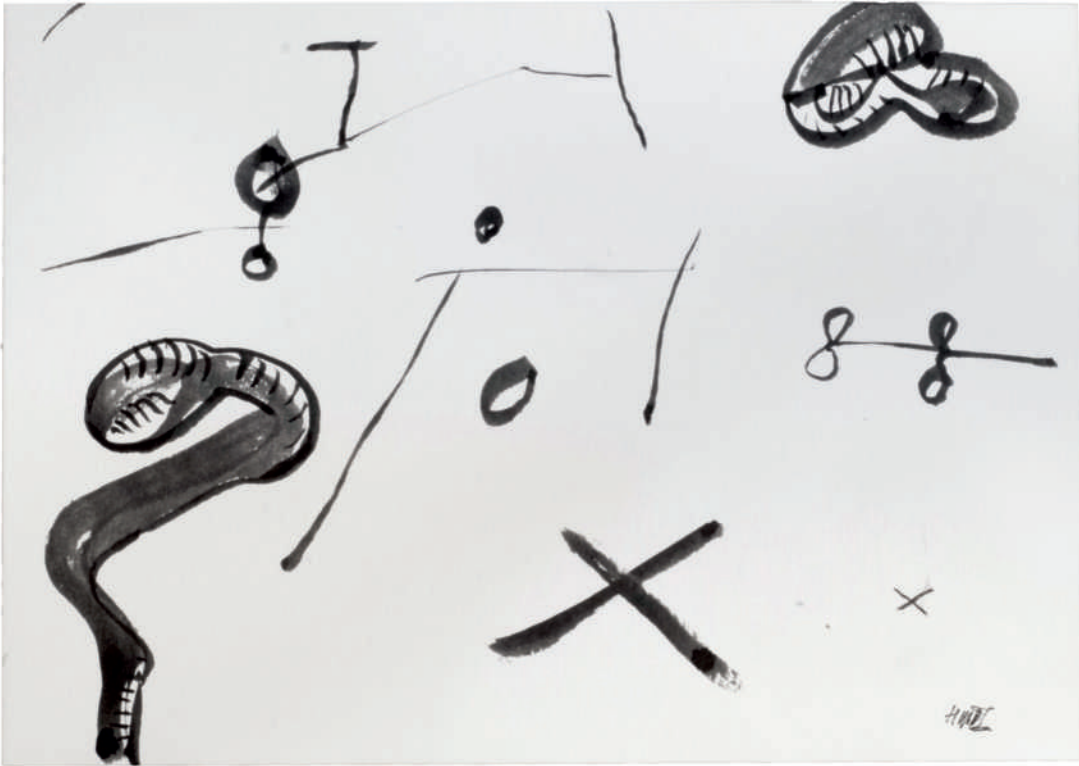
Water colour on paper, 20.5 x 29 cm



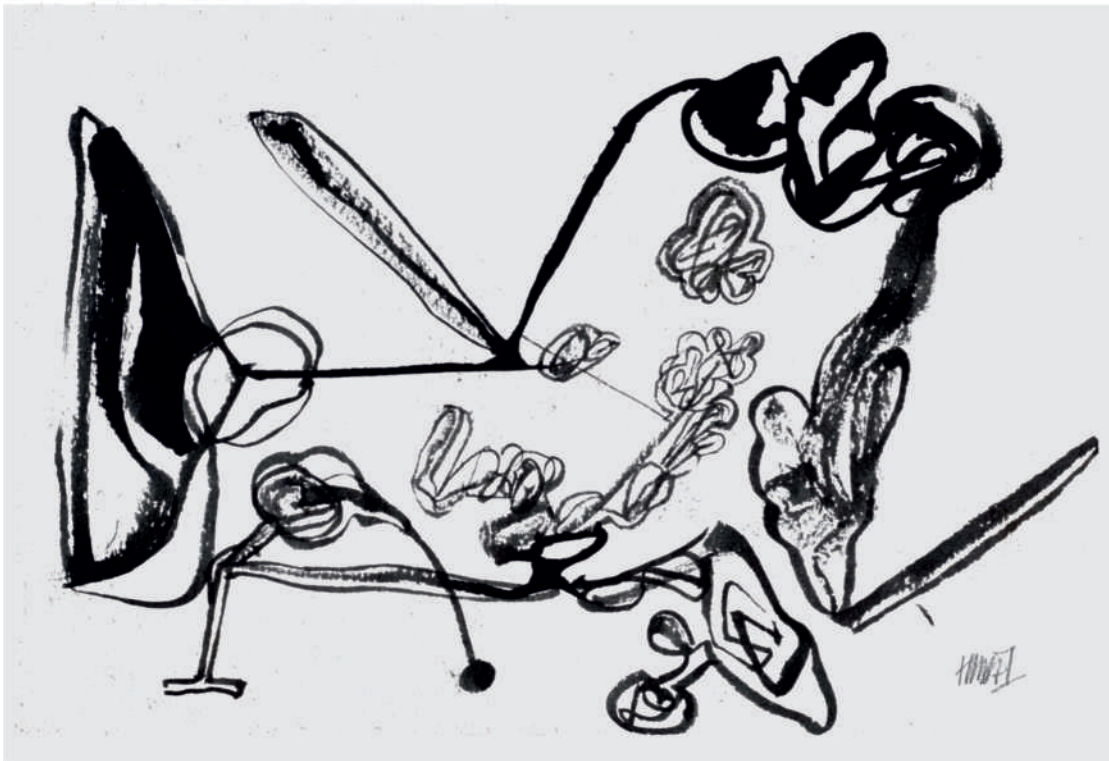
Water colour on paper 17.5 x 24.5 cm



Water colour on paper, 14.5 x 20.5 cm



Water colour on paper 14.5 x 20.5 cm



Water colour on paper, 20 x 28.5 cm



Himmat's new studio