

CONTEMPORARY ART IN POST-COLONIAL SOUTH ASIA

(A Focus on Contemporary Indian Artists)

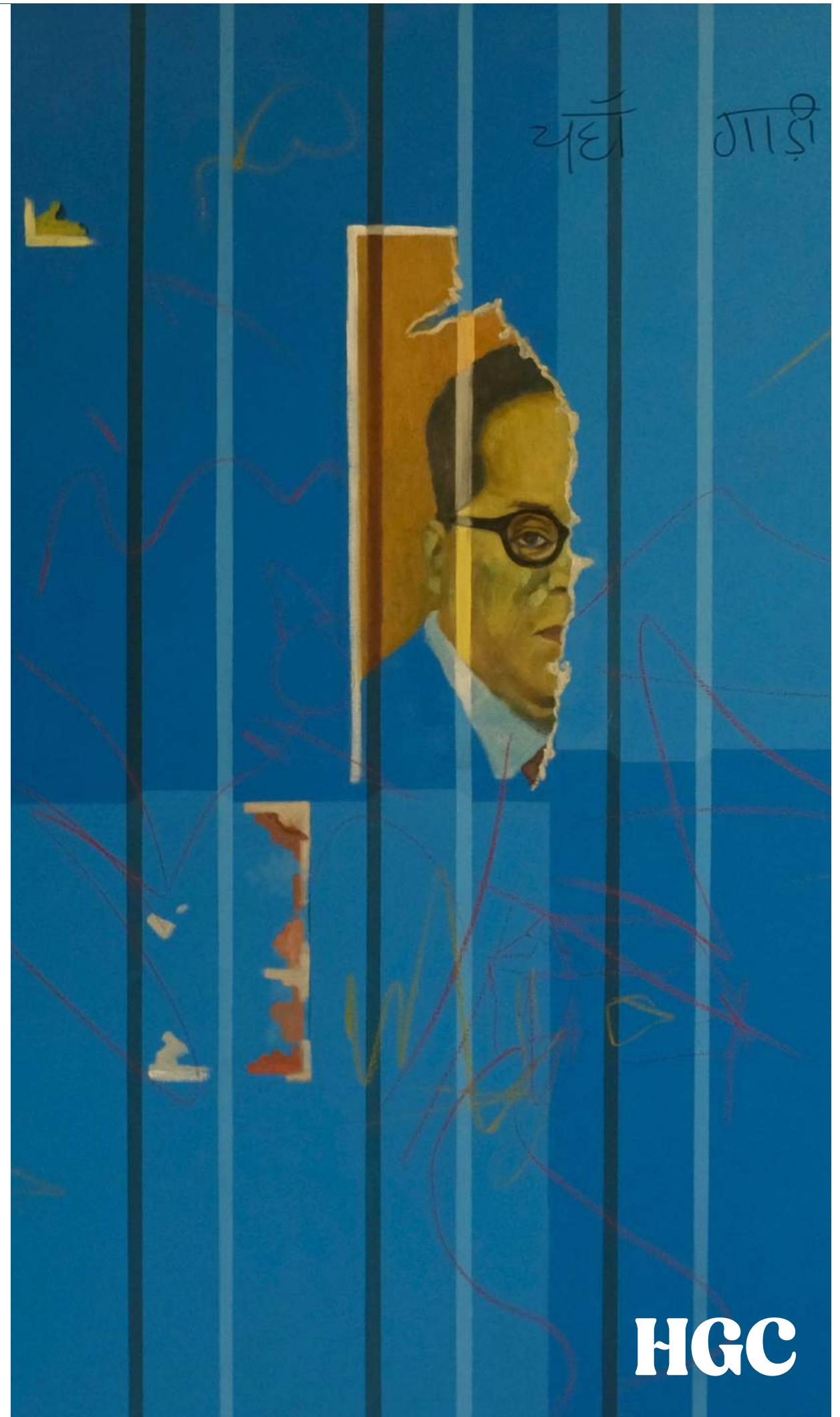
CONTEMPORARY ART IN POST-COLONIAL SOUTH ASIA

HIDDEN GEM COLLECTIVE

EDITION 3, 2026

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CONTRIBUTORS

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Mail: hiddengemcollectivesouthasia@gmail.com

Website: hiddengemcollective.site

Instagram: [@hidden.gem.collective](https://www.instagram.com/@hidden.gem.collective)

Phone: +91 9868674040

Anunay Rai

Anunay Rai (b. 1980) is an artist based in Gurugram, India, and maintains a studio in New Delhi. He earned his Bachelor's degree in Design (2003) from the Apeejay Institute of Design, New Delhi. Following an early career in advertising, he fully transitioned to art practice in 2021. Rai experiments with diverse materials such as concrete, pigments, coal, sawdust, and cow dung to create organic sculptural forms. His practice moves fluidly across painting, drawing, sculpture, and installation, developing a distinctive language rooted in materiality and process.

Deepakk

Deepakk (b. 1993) is a multidisciplinary artist currently based in Delhi, India. He holds a Bachelor's degree in Fine Arts (Painting, 2017) from Tecnia Institute of Art and Design, Delhi, and a Master's degree in Fine Arts (2022) from Sir J. J. School of Art, Mumbai. His practice spans painting, sculpture, video, and digital media, with a material focus on bricks, oil, clay, ash, and acrylic. Through these mediums, Deepakk explores materiality, transformation, and the interplay between the organic and the constructed.

Deepak Sharma

Deepak Sharma (b. 1979) is an artist currently based in Vadodara, India. He received formal training in Applied Arts at the College of Art, Jammu (1998–2002) and pursued further studies at Sir J. J. School of Art, Mumbai (2003–2005). Sharma primarily works with acrylic painting, while also experimenting with unconventional materials such as sponge and foam to expand the textural and formal possibilities of his practice.

Shipra Gupta

Shipra Gupta (b. 1986) is a visual artist based in Delhi–Noida, India. She earned her Bachelor's degree in Fine Arts from the College of Art, Delhi (2010), followed by a Master's degree in Fine Arts from Amity University, Noida (2024). Working primarily with acrylic painting and tapestry, Gupta has developed a distinctive technique that mimics the appearance of patches of fabric being stitched.

Nalinakshya Talukdar

Nalinakshya Talukdar (b. 1999) is a visual artist from Assam and currently based in Vadodara, India. He earned his Bachelor's degree in Fine Arts from Dr. Sobha Brahma Music and Fine Art College, Assam (2021), followed by a Master's degree in Fine Arts from Maharaja Sayajirao University, Gujarat (2023). Working primarily with woodcut printmaking, he explores the possibilities of using various textured surfaces to craft his visual narratives.

Victor Hazra

Victor Hazra (b. 1988) is a multimedia artist based in New Delhi. He earned his Bachelor of Visual Arts from the Government College of Art and Craft, Agartala (2011), followed by a Master of Fine Arts in Painting from Rabindra Bharati University, Kolkata (2014). Hazra's practice spans painting, sculpture, photography, and archival material, often bringing these mediums into a dialogue.

FOREWORD

Contemporary Art in Post-Colonial South Asia, Edition 3 is not simply a catalogue of artistic practices focused on six distinct Indian artists — Anunay Rai, Deepakk, Deepak Sharma, Shipra Gupta, Victor Hazra and Nalinakshya Talukdar — but an attempt to pause, to listen, and to reflect on the textures of a region where art continues to wrestle with history and yet insists on imagining futures. South Asia, with its long shadows of empire and its equally luminous traditions of resilience, has never ceased to be a contested site for cultural production. The post-colonial condition here is not a neatly concluded chapter but an ever-expanding field of negotiations — between memory and material, between inherited forms and disruptive technologies, between the weight of the past and the urgencies of the present.

To speak of contemporary art “in” post-colonial South Asia, rather than “of” it, is to signal precisely this tension. The preposition in situates practice within a context, acknowledging that South Asia is less a monolithic identity than a fluid, shifting ground where transnational currents, local histories, and material realities intersect. This edition, then, does not aim to fix South Asian contemporary art into a singular narrative. Instead, it seeks to unfold multiple nuanced dialogues — dialogues that emerge in the gaps between disciplines, in the folds of material, and in the restless gestures of the artists whose works are gathered here.

Post-coloniality in India is not merely political independence marked by historical dates; it is an ongoing condition, marked by uneven modernities, linguistic diversities, economic anxieties, and fragile yet dynamic democracies. The decolonial project, still unfolding, demands that we interrogate inherited systems of knowledge and aesthetics while forging new vocabularies of thought. Contemporary art becomes one such vocabulary: a language that can stretch across pigment, steel, pixels, or thread, articulating what often resists articulation.

In the last few decades, South Asian contemporary art has increasingly engaged with questions of materiality — how materials carry memory, how they embody social realities, how they resist commodification. It has also been a space of resistance against homogenizing global narratives of modernism. The artists included in this publication are deeply rooted in these trajectories, yet each one expands them in distinct and surprising ways.

Taken together, the practices of Anunay Rai, Deepakk, Deepak Sharma, Shipra Gupta, Victor Hazra and Nalinakshya Talukdar illuminate the multiplicity of contemporary art in India. Their materials — concrete, wood, ash, sponge, acrylic, brick — are not incidental; they are chosen sites of engagement with the world. They ask us to consider: What does

it mean to build and to unbuild? How does a surface carry memory? And in what ways can art trace the fragile, unfinished project of decolonization?

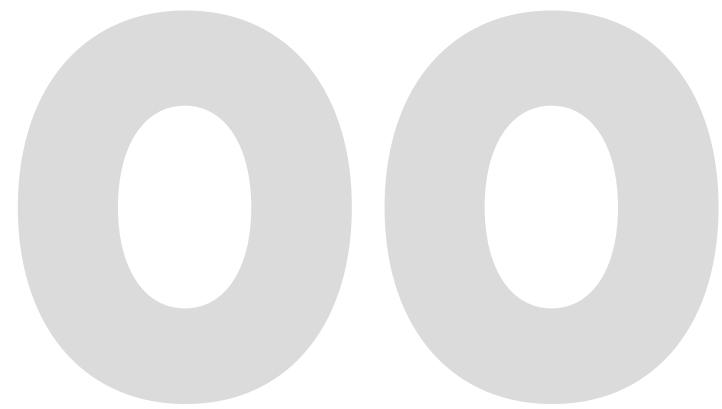
This publication is not meant to resolve such questions but to hold them open. To read these pages is to encounter art as inquiry, as resistance, and as imagination. The works assembled here are part of a larger and ongoing conversation — one that extends beyond the studio, the gallery, or even South Asia itself. They speak to the porousness of borders, the hybridity of forms, and the persistence of creativity in the face of precarity.

If post-colonial South Asia is a palimpsest — written, erased, and rewritten across centuries — then these artists are among its contemporary scribes, inscribing new marks upon its surface. Their practices invite us to look more closely, to listen more carefully, and to enter into dialogue, not for answers, but for the possibility of seeing differently.

As you turn these pages, may you find not only the works but also the resonances, the silences, and the urgencies that animate them. For it is in these layered encounters that contemporary art continues to matter — as thought, as gesture, as resistance, and as care.

Davangi Pathak
Anthropologist & Art Curator

CONTENTS



CONTEMPORARY CIVILISATION

Deepakk

6 -11



CONWOO INSTALLATION

Anunay Rai

12 -15



16 -21



WOODCUT PRINT SERIES

Nalinakshya Talukdar

22-25



26 -29



30 - 35



PARADOXICALLY

Victor Hazra

SILENT FIRE SERIES

Anunay Rai

URBAN LANDSCAPES

Shipra Gupta

THE FRUITS

Deepak Sharma

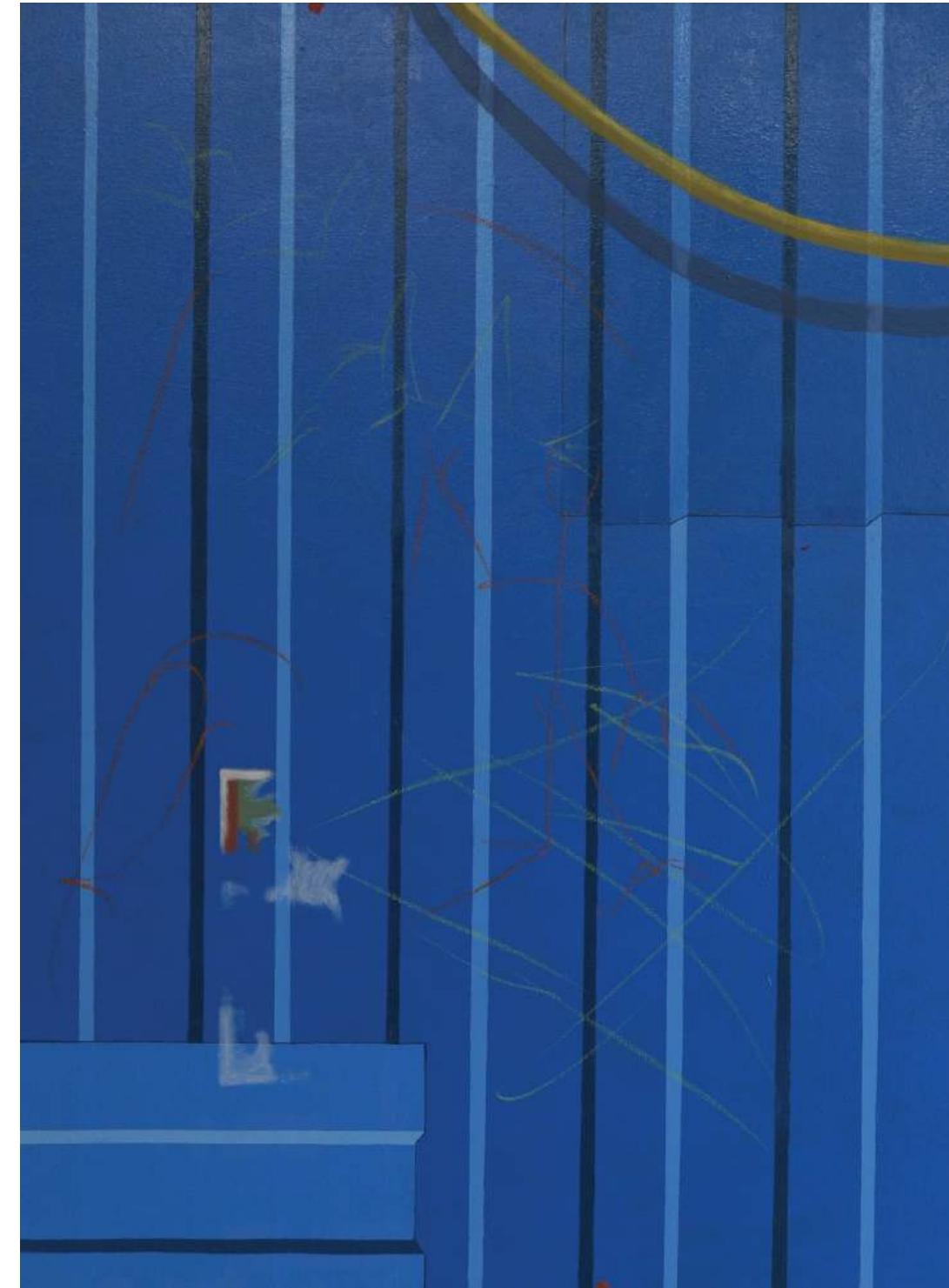
36 - 41



CONTEMPORARY CIVILISATION

Deepakk's practice and works, generated as an act of resistance, recall both construction and destruction, evoking the ceaseless cycle of cityscapes that rise and crumble in contemporary India. What sets Deepakk apart is his bold and innovative use of unconventional materials – particularly ash – which he transforms into evocative visual narratives. This becomes a dialogue with the raw, elemental matter of urban life. At the heart of his practice lies a deep inquiry into the relationship between humanity and nature, with a special focus on animals navigating the ever-evolving landscapes of contemporary civilisation.

01



Behind the Story II, Enamel and oil on canvas, 30 x 40 in, 2025

02

CONWOO

Anunay's sculptures are crafted from CONcrete and WOOD, layered with acrylic and coal. These are not neutral substances; they carry with them histories of labor, rural economies, and ecological cycles. The concrete is cast using everyday household objects – familiar things that leave behind their quiet, unintended imprints. The wooden elements are assembled without chasing perfect craftsmanship; instead, the process unfolds through experimentation, learning, and instinct.

There's often a significant gap between the casting of the concrete and its place in a final composition. On the day of casting, there's no fixed idea driving the process – only an urge to act, to experiment, to see what takes form. The casts are left untouched in the studio, gathering dust – sometimes for months – before they're rediscovered, washed, and folded into new arrangements. This slow, intuitive return to the material echoes a quiet spiritual truth: that our actions often precede their meaning or consequence.

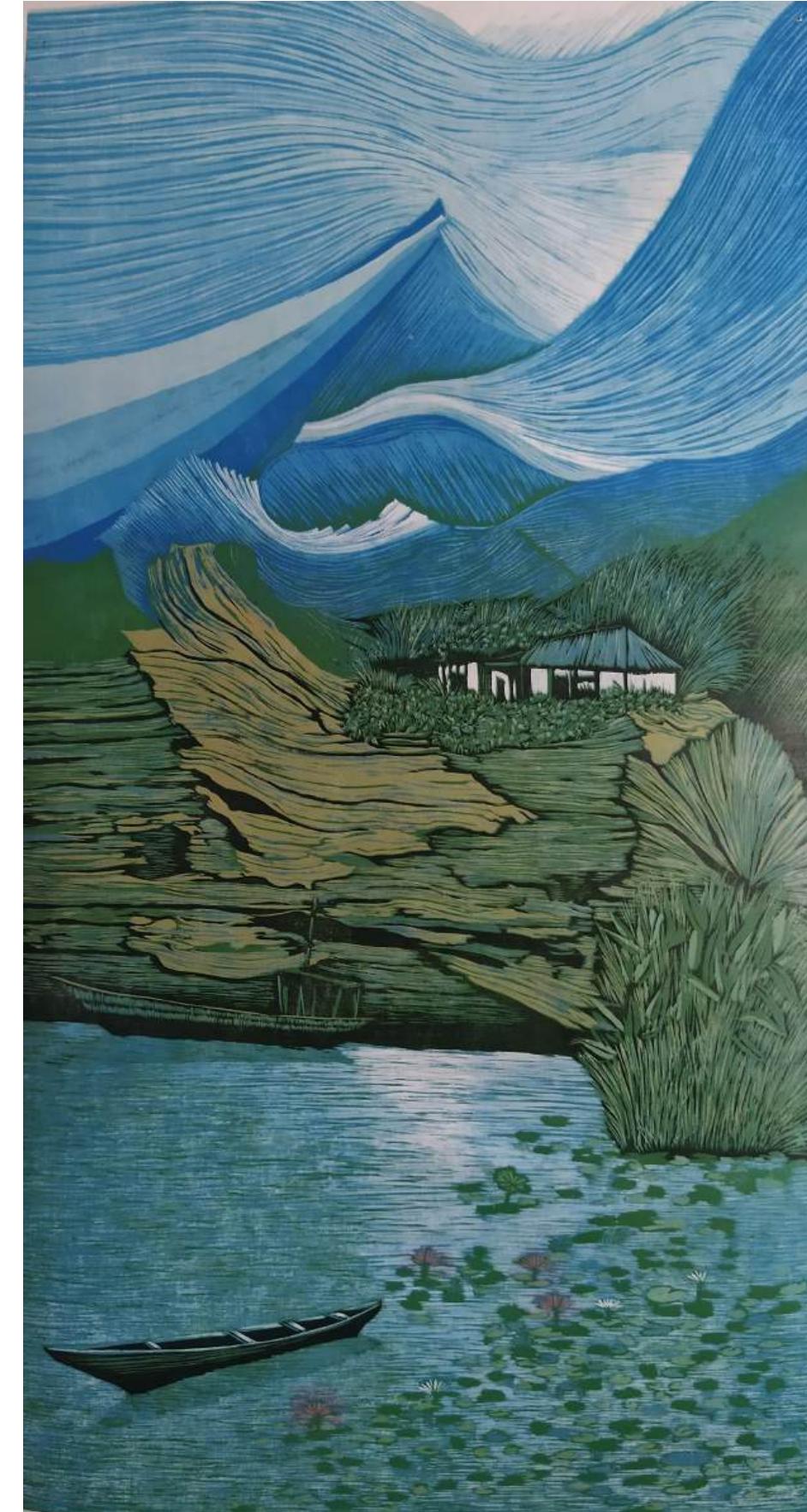


The Broken Japa Mala No. 1, Acrylic, water soluble graphite and coal on concrete and wood, 15 x 16 x 3.5 in, 2021

03

Nalinakshya constructs visual narratives through richly textured matrices, working primarily with woodcut printmaking. For Talukdar, the matrix is not merely a technical tool but an active presence that shapes the imagery and guides the viewer's experience. In the context of post-colonial South Asian art—where artists continuously negotiate the residue of imposed visual languages and the reclamation of indigenous materialities—his insistence on the matrix as a living, resistive surface becomes especially significant. The resulting textures often gesture toward broader ideas such as the erosion of identity, the layering of memory, and the interplay of light and shadow, echoing the region's ongoing negotiations between inherited histories and reclaimed visual autonomy. Through this material emphasis, the work encourages viewers to reflect on how physical surfaces influence visual interpretation and how artistic forms in South Asia continue to process the afterlife of colonial structures.

WOODCUT PRINT SERIES



Into the nani's fairytale, Edition 1/4, Woodcut print on paper, 26 x 48 in, 2024

04

Victor's *Paradoxically* is an ar(t)chival series in which photographs are set in dialogue with sculptural forms, creating a formative, almost liminal space. The photographs were taken by Victor in 2016, during a residency at the Piramal medicine factory in Thane, Maharashtra. At the time, the abandoned factory was undergoing its metamorphosis into a high-rise real estate development.

The vestiges of its industrial past—objects, textures, and atmospheres—captivated his attention. The series dwells on the tensions between creation and erasure, permanence and impermanence, presence and absence. Transformation and flux is the core of Hazra's inquiry, prompting reflections on human existence as both perpetrators and participants to natural phenomena—organisms that assert dominance over what might otherwise be considered "normal."

PARADOXICALLY SERIES



Paradoxically, Ink & contie on cardboard forms and print on acid free paper, 8 x 8 in , 2025 (each)

SILENT FIRE

Anunay's *Silent Fire* embarks on an introspective journey, using the medium of paper to explore the layered nature of the Self. This evolving body of work unfolds through drawings, sculptural drawings, and pyrographic mark-making—where ink and fire converge in a meditation on form, perception, and impermanence. The process begins with a raw and vulnerable examination of the artist's own nude form—photographed in moments of heightened arousal.

05

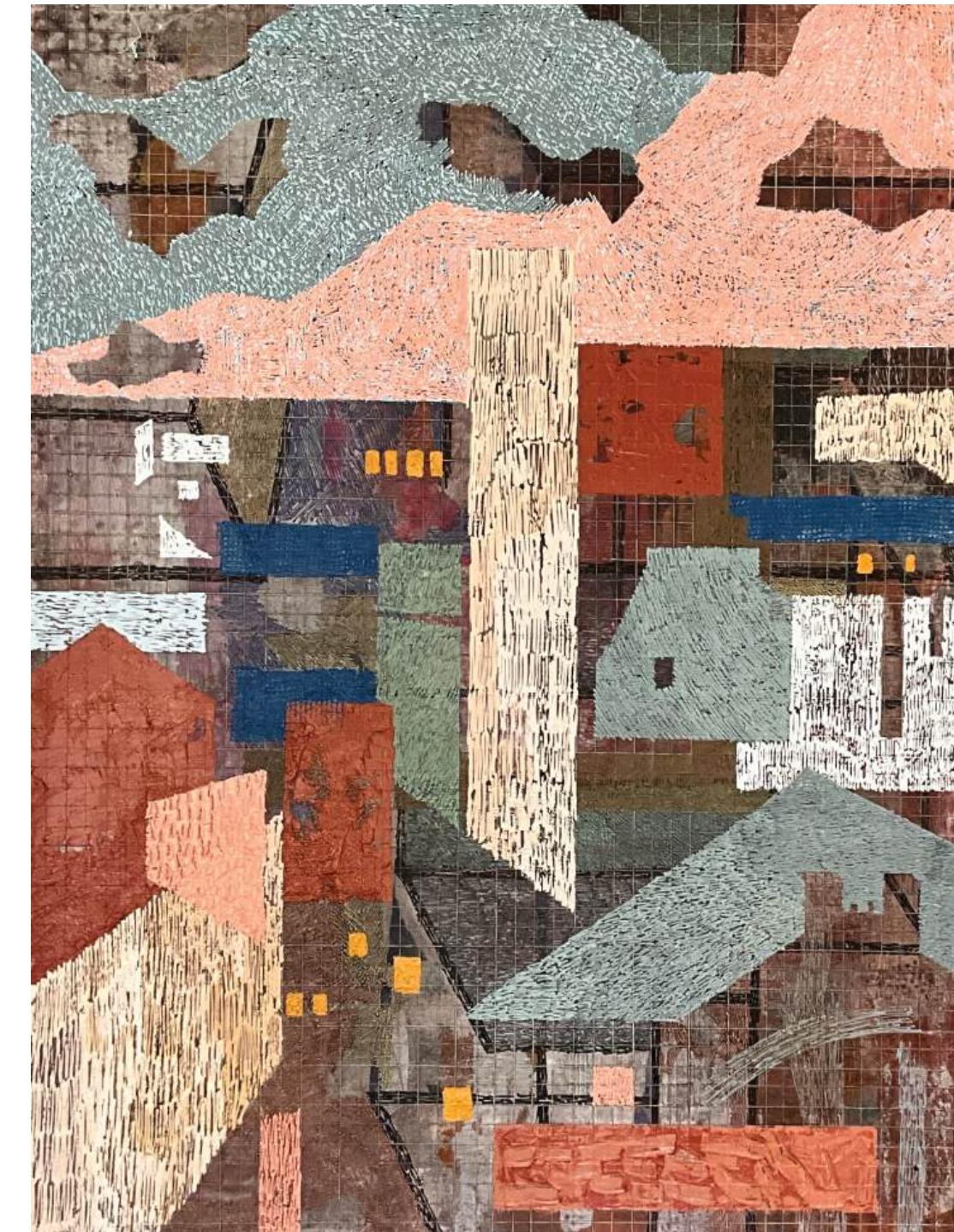


Silent Fire No. 8, Indian ink and pyrography on paper, 6.8 x 10.6 in , 2024

06

Shipra Gupta's work draws inspiration from the ever-shifting nature of urban life—its cycles of growth, decay, and renewal. Cities are never still. Across time, entire civilizations have vanished beneath the ground, only to be replaced by new ones. Later, we excavate fragments of the past—objects and stories that reshape our understanding of history. This continuous rhythm of building, dismantling, and rebuilding lies at the heart of her artistic process.

URBAN LANDSCAPES



Brick by brick, the sky burns, Acrylic on canvas, 36 x 48 in , 2025

07

Deepak Sharma's practice suggests that even within apparently traditional modes, there exists a space for rupture. The use of sponge foam as a primary surface destabilizes the smoothness of acrylic, creating textures that resist easy consumption. He interrupts and reconfigures the painted surface. His works question what it means to paint in an age when painting has repeatedly been declared obsolete. The persistence of the medium, in his hands, becomes a quiet but potent statement about survival and transformation.

THE
FRUITS

Ek Anar Sau Bimar, Acrylic on sponge foam, 11 x 18 x 2 in , 2024