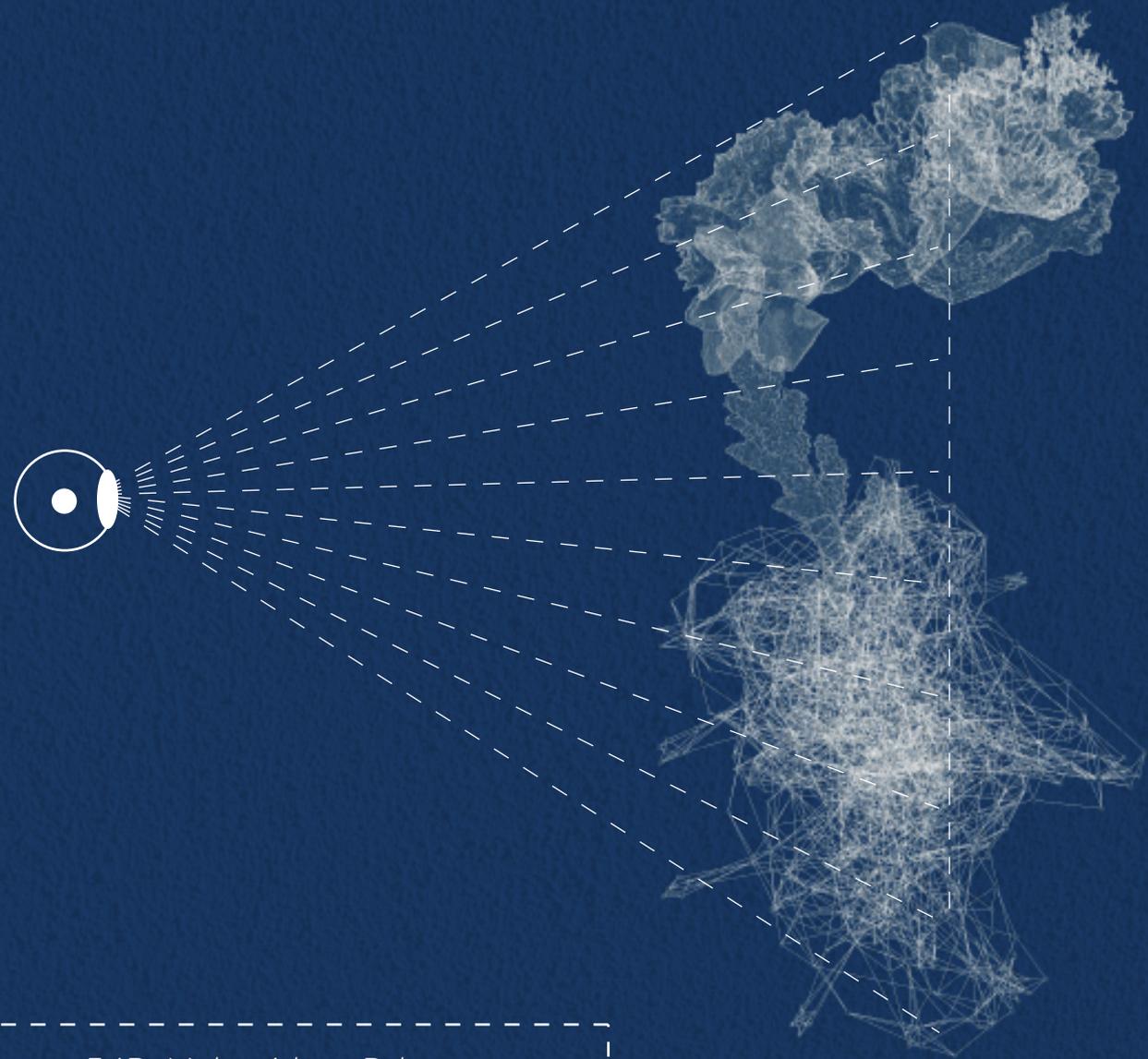


Art Exposure presents

A MECHANICAL EYE VIRAAG DESAI



11 SEPTEMBER - 30 OCTOBER 2020

For appointments and inquiries :

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Dover Terrace, Ballygunge,
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11 AM - 8 PM . CLOSED ON SUNDAYS

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ONLINE EDITION : AMECHANICALEYE.COM

The ways of seeing are much ordained by the times that we live in and more specifically by the technologies of vision that they commandeer. Depending on the period under study, one can discover very different perceptions on such things as magic, religion, diseases, the body, the world, landscapes, nationhood etc. But before sweeping wide, let us for a moment hone in on the history of mark-making. The representations of the world in our art are governed by different technologies of reconnoitring, framing, measuring, and rendering available at any given point in time. These technologies of perspectival augmentation, the various kinds of vision enhancing mechanical devices enlisted in the service of reproducing our surroundings, are in fact what is recalled by the exhibition title, 'A Mechanical Eye'. One would be familiar with any number of mechanical/ optical contraptions from Camera Obscura, Camera Lucida and graphic telescopes for isolating and delineating subjects, to Claude glass for studying tonalities within a landscape, to various frames and machines for apprehending perspective, to more recent advances in photography leading to fresh breakthroughs in the domain of reality-capture. We have consistently invested in expanding our powers of observation in a bid to get closer to reality. In other words, one of the key threads in the story of humanity is an entrainment of perspective by the stream of technicity, motioning in the direction of greater realism, veracity, and visual objectivity.

The mechanically-mediated interpretations of reality are in turn incorporated into our sensorium, shaping its landscape and colouring our attitudes towards the world. Leaving the realm of art, one can pinpoint moments of paradigmatic shift in our perspective throughout history, brought about by new imaging technologies directed both inwards and outwards, towards the self and the surroundings. From a bird's eye view, the commencement of photogrammetry—the use of photography for mapping— and remote-sensing revolutionised survey techniques, urban planning, resource prospecting, war operations, meteorology, disaster management etc. Recall the momentous photograph of the earth taken from space in 1972, 'The Blue Marble', and how it offered a unifying vision to humanity, mustering our disparate existences into a global consciousness. Whereas at a microscopic level, thanks to a plethora of technology for engendering visualisations of our viscera, such as X-ray, magnetic resonance imaging, endoscopy etc., we now have a radically different understanding of the organisation, functioning and systems of the body, not to mention new insights into the causality and symptomology of diseases that vex it. Needless to say, all this technogenic envisioning has changed the way we view the world today. It is important to remember however, that perception not only captures reality but also invents it. The vision of the world offered to us by the mechanical eye underscores our worldview which in turn wills the world to fit that frame.

Speaking of landscapes moulded by the human will, the term 'Anthropocene' has swiftly gained currency in the recent years, denoting the epoch characterised by significant geological, climatic and ecological shifts that could be laid at the door of human activity. We now have markers in the form 'plastiglomerates'—rocks composed of sediments and organic debris agglutinated by molten plastic—future fossils that will tell a story about the extent to which the human will had pervaded and reconstituted natural phenomenon. Desai's Eidetic series are resonant of these misshapen anthropic-signatures. The amorphous composites collaged together from salvaged bits of quotidian posters and affiches represent a cross-section of human desires and needs. After being carefully peeled off the walls, these are stacked and primed into a recomposed matrix that is selectively sanded. Mimicking the natural forces of accumulation and erosion that codify time in the arrangement of rock strata, these abstract timelines of human culture and exploits are literally brought to surface through a process of controlled abrasion. One can call it an exercise in socio-archaeology. The variegated cultural topographies of the Eidetic series are further adumbrated by impressions of the aftermath of Amphan, the cyclone that wreaked havoc in Desai's native Kolkata earlier this year. If the agate-like blobs can be seen as a brick in the wall of the Anthropocene, then one can interpret their painted shadows as writings on the wall.

The chimeric visions of the Anthropocene are further explored in a series of digital collages. Embracing the current moment of physical confinement characterised by a heightened cybernetic and social media activity by turning to his multidisciplinary background in sound and set design, the artist combines photogrammetry, 3-D scanning and airbrushing to render into collages the many co-extensions—neural, cybernetic, ecological—that bind us into a composite whole. Our biosphere is rapidly reconfiguring itself as a reaction to human activities, assimilating our waste into its matrix and giving birth to new forms and phenomena such as plastiglomerates, decorator worms, algal blooms, cephalopodic takeover of the oceans, locust swarms, zoonotic pandemics, climate change, sea-level rise, typhoons, fire storms, etc. What we espy in digital collages such as Progeniture are new alphabets of a shape-shifting biosphere. These composite characters assembled from 3-D scans of elements as wide-ranging as corals, trees, machine parts, Victorian houses, geographies, organs, and vegetables, signify a fusion of hardware and wetware in a manner that complicates our understanding of life. Furthermore, it is possible to read them as oblique commentaries on the present-day information economies and the politics of intellectual rights.

Thanks to a variety of visualisation technology we can now boast an expanded empirical perspective on life and its sundry entanglements. This acquired 'clarity of vision' or what can be called the modern scientific gaze is literalised in the worksthrugh a reduction of various components to their 'purer' latticed forms. An immersive optic installation Trichotomy uses the additive and reductive qualities of light to illuminate and meld different layers that symbolise animate matter, technical infrastructure, and the mesh of flows interlinking them. In rendering visible some of these invisible flows the artist emulates a scientific gaze with its imperative of empiricism and objective distance, laying out the specimens for examination on an anatomical table as it were. Like Plato's theory of forms, the trinity of layers in Trichotomy, represent interwoven parallel realities where natural forms inspire and coexist with mechanical inventions, virtual simulations and mental imageries which in turn condition our environs. The intensified vision that filters through these multiple realms reveals a dappled picture of reality which exists as a far-removed shadow of an original that has since changed; indeed as the serpent biting its own tail.

- Adwait Singh



Eidetic Image I & II | 9 x 12 in | *Found paper, watercolour, graphite on paper* | ₹ 35,000/- each



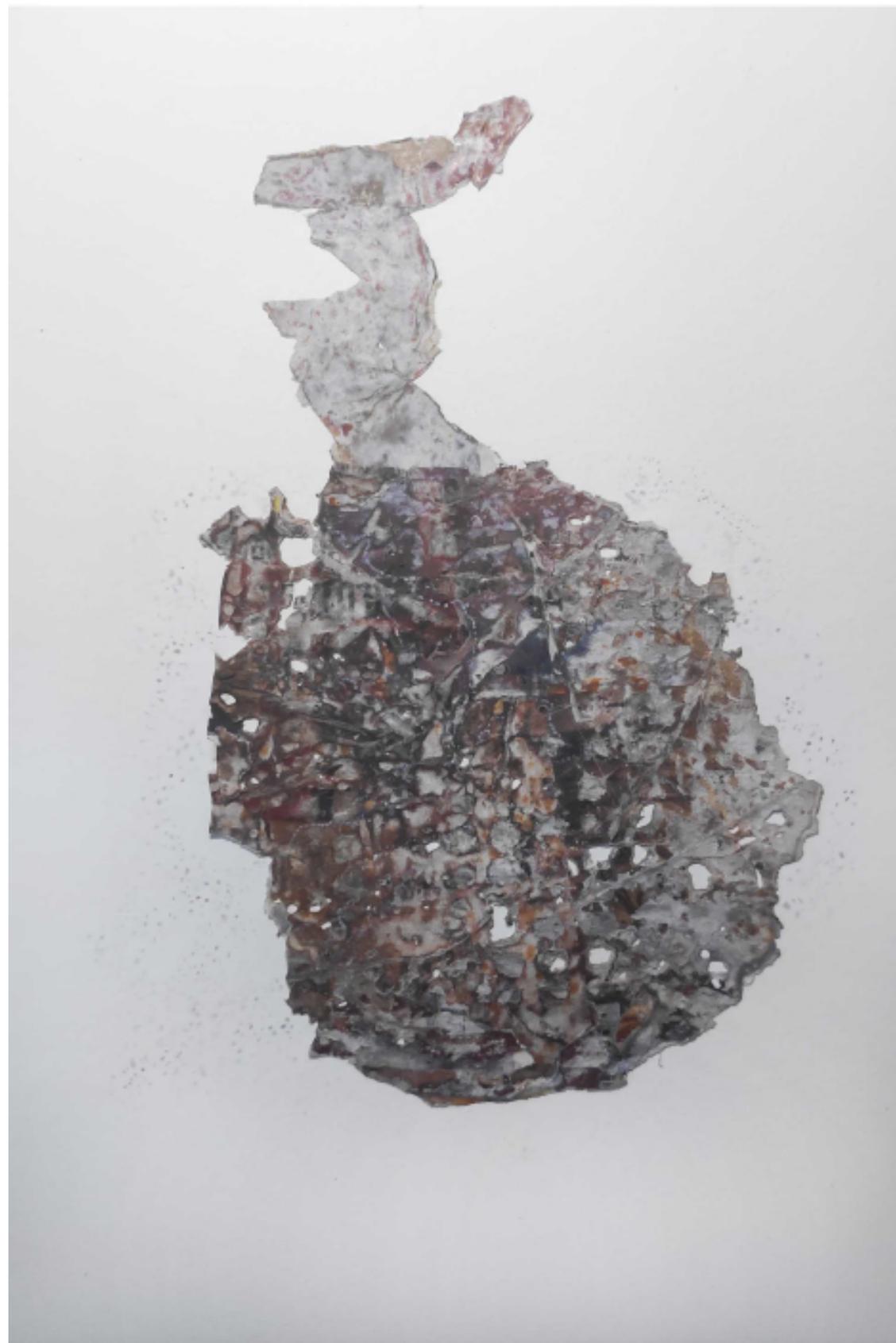
Half-life I & II | 9 x 12 in | *Found paper, watercolour, graphite on paper* | ₹ 35,000/- each



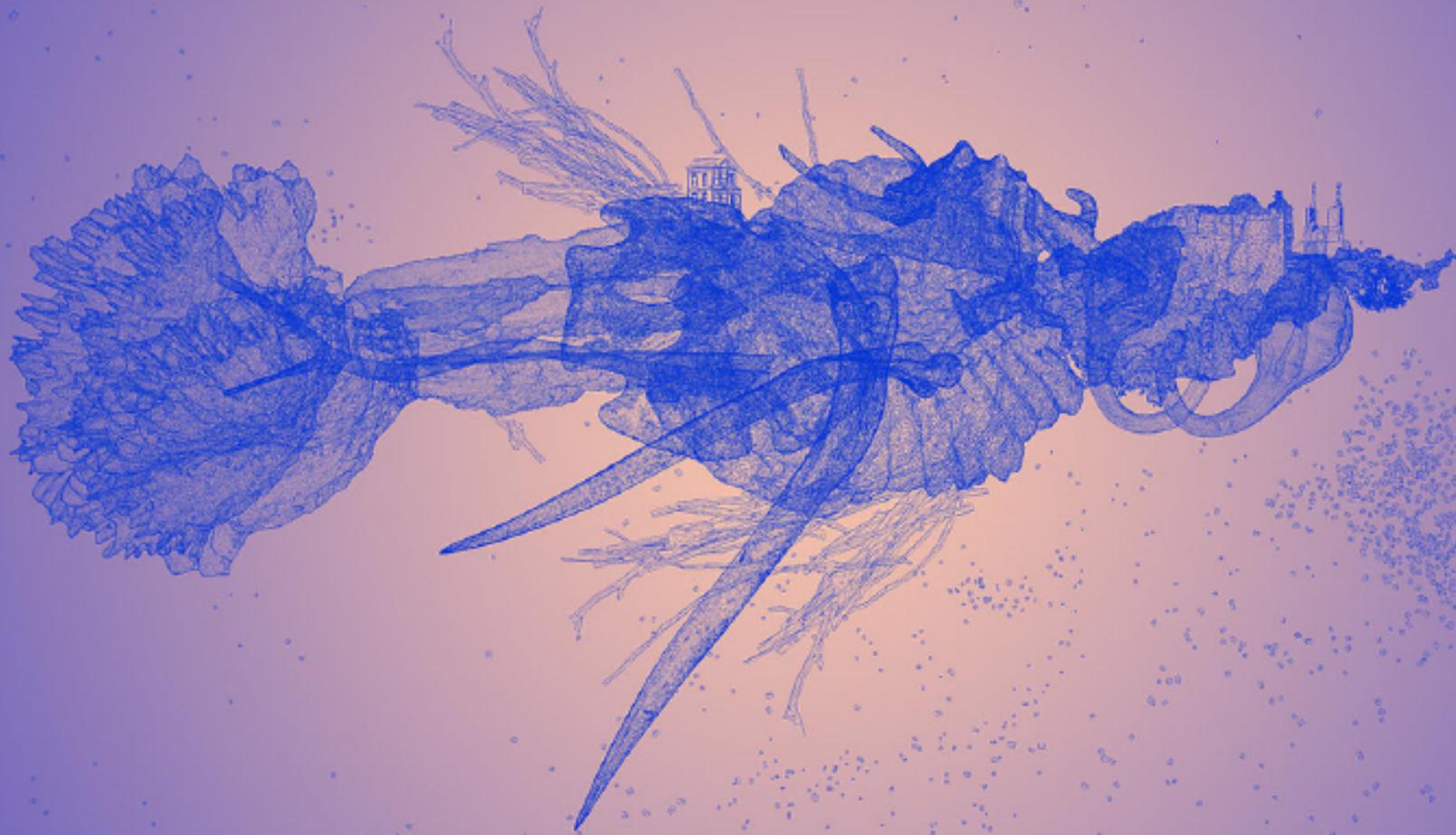
Half-life III & IV | 9 x 12 in | *Found paper, watercolour, graphite on paper* | ₹ 35,000/- each



(left)
Superbloom
12 x 18 in
*Found paper, watercolour
on paper*



(right)
Colony
12 x 18 in
*Found paper, watercolour
on paper*
₹ 45,000/- each



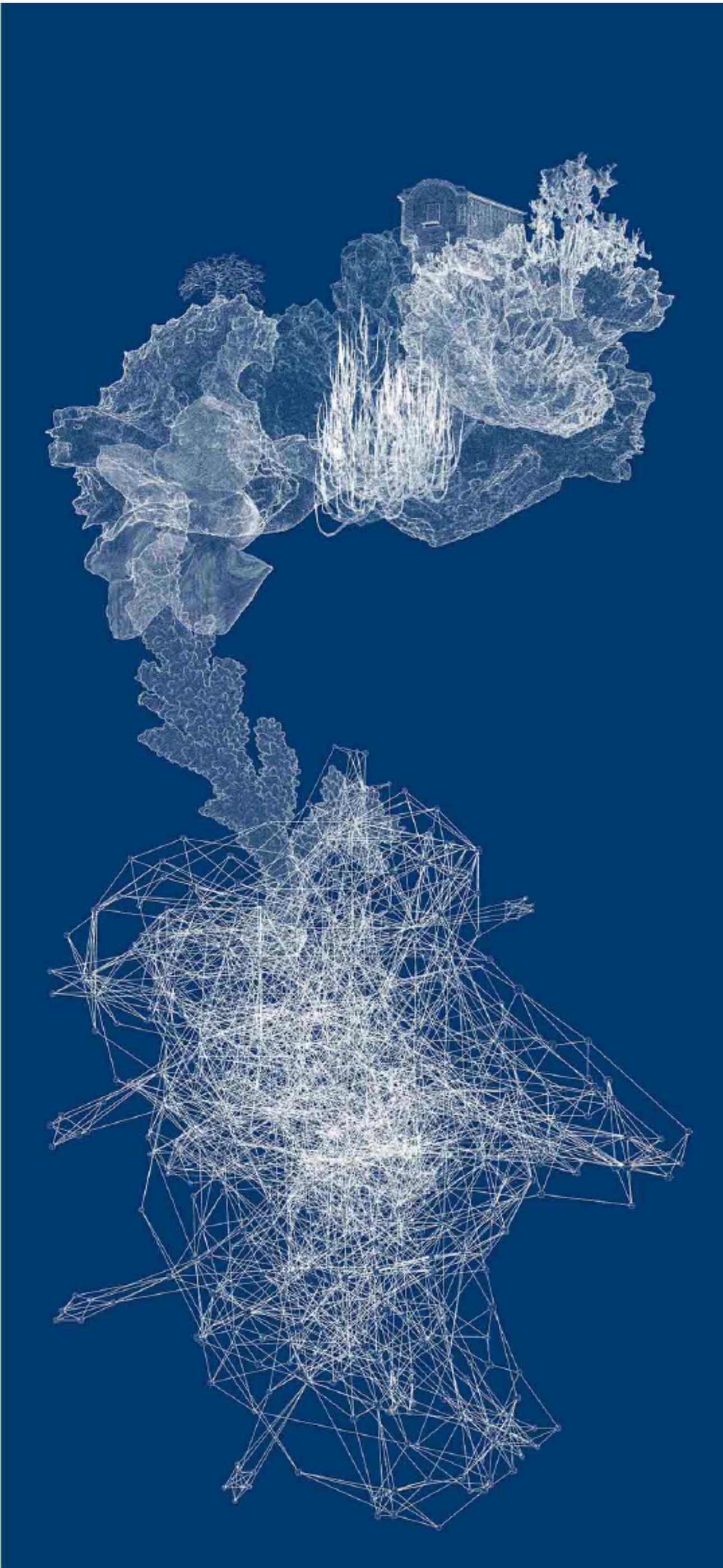
Nekton (edition of 4)

23 x 54 in

*3d assets: Calabash gourd,
beehive, flower coral, pigeon bone
sea shells, particle simulation.*

Print on archival paper

₹ 50,000/-



Excursive gene (edition of 4)

23 x 50 in

Print on archival paper

*3d assets: Neural networks,
brain coral, red coral,
victorian house, trees*

₹ 50,000/-



Micrograph (edition of 4)

23 x 50 in

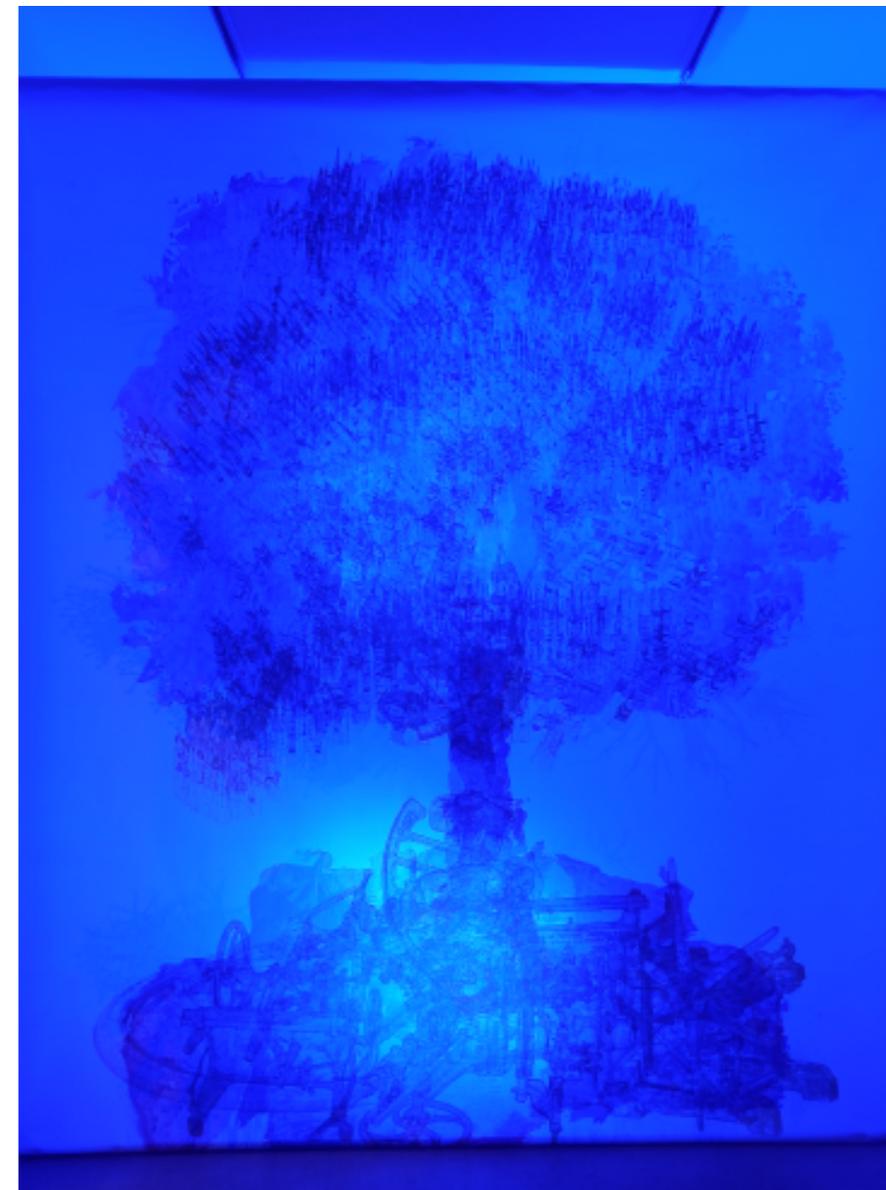
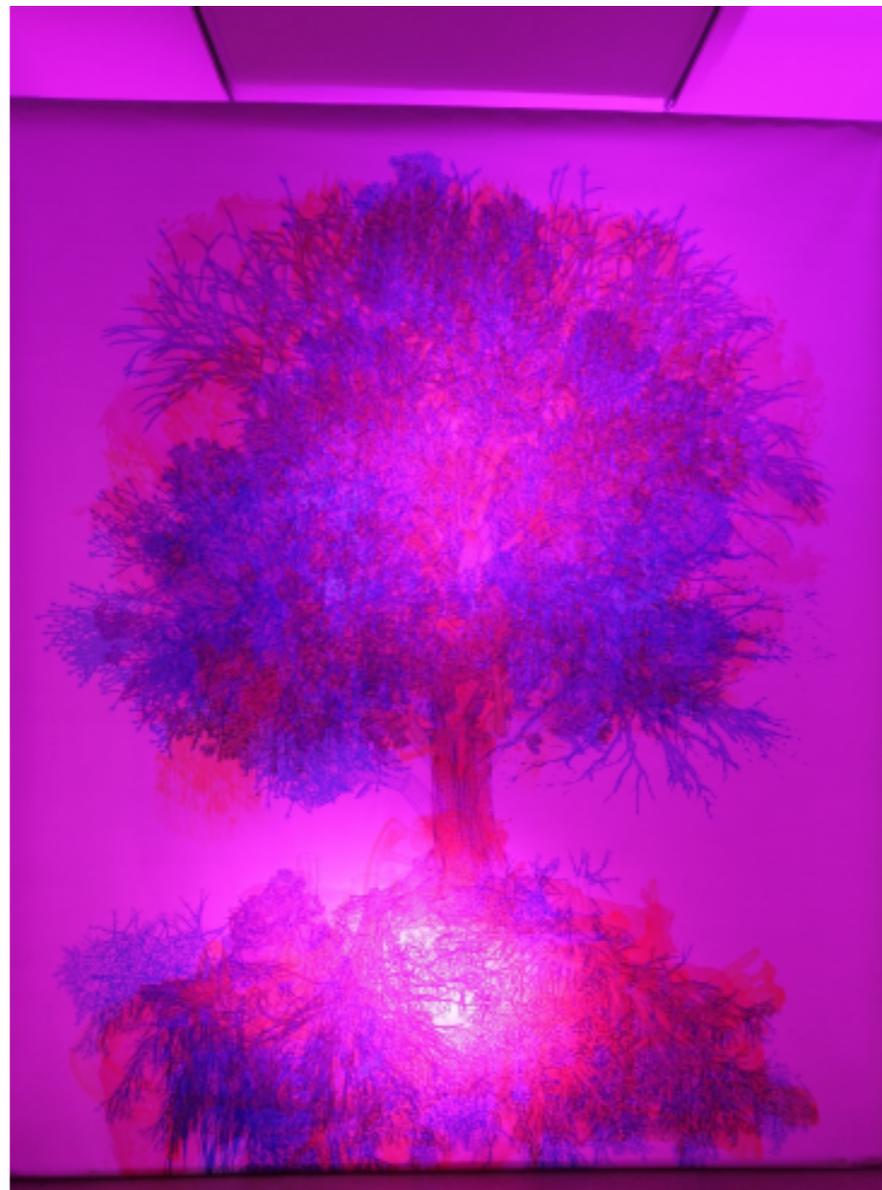
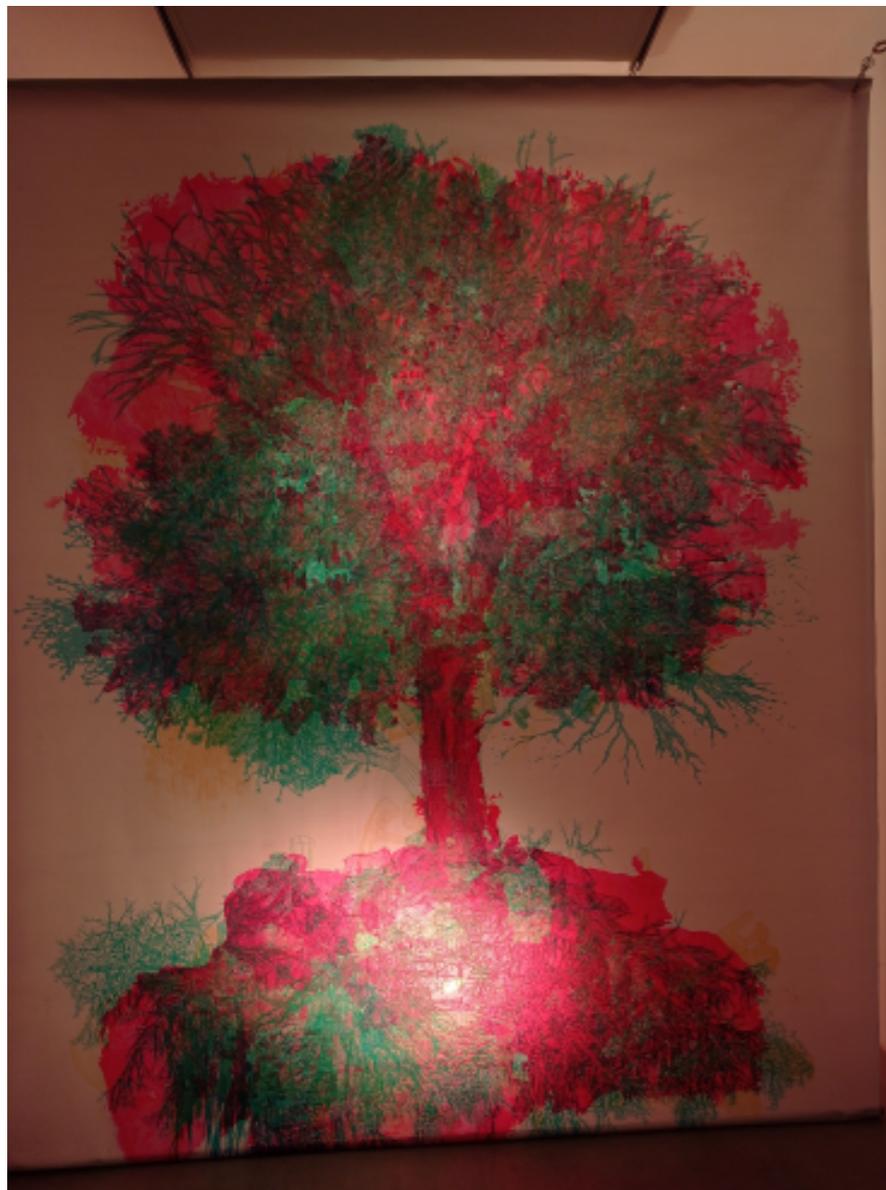
Print on archival paper

3d assets: Explosion,

brain coral, red coral,

heart, trees

₹ 50,000/-



Trichotomy

97 x 109 in

Backlit transparency. LED

120 second cycle



installation shots @ Art Exposure



Terms and conditions

Inclusive of framing

Inclusive of crating

Shipping as per actuals

Gst : 12% extra

International shipping available

All sanitizations standards met

For appointments and inquiries :

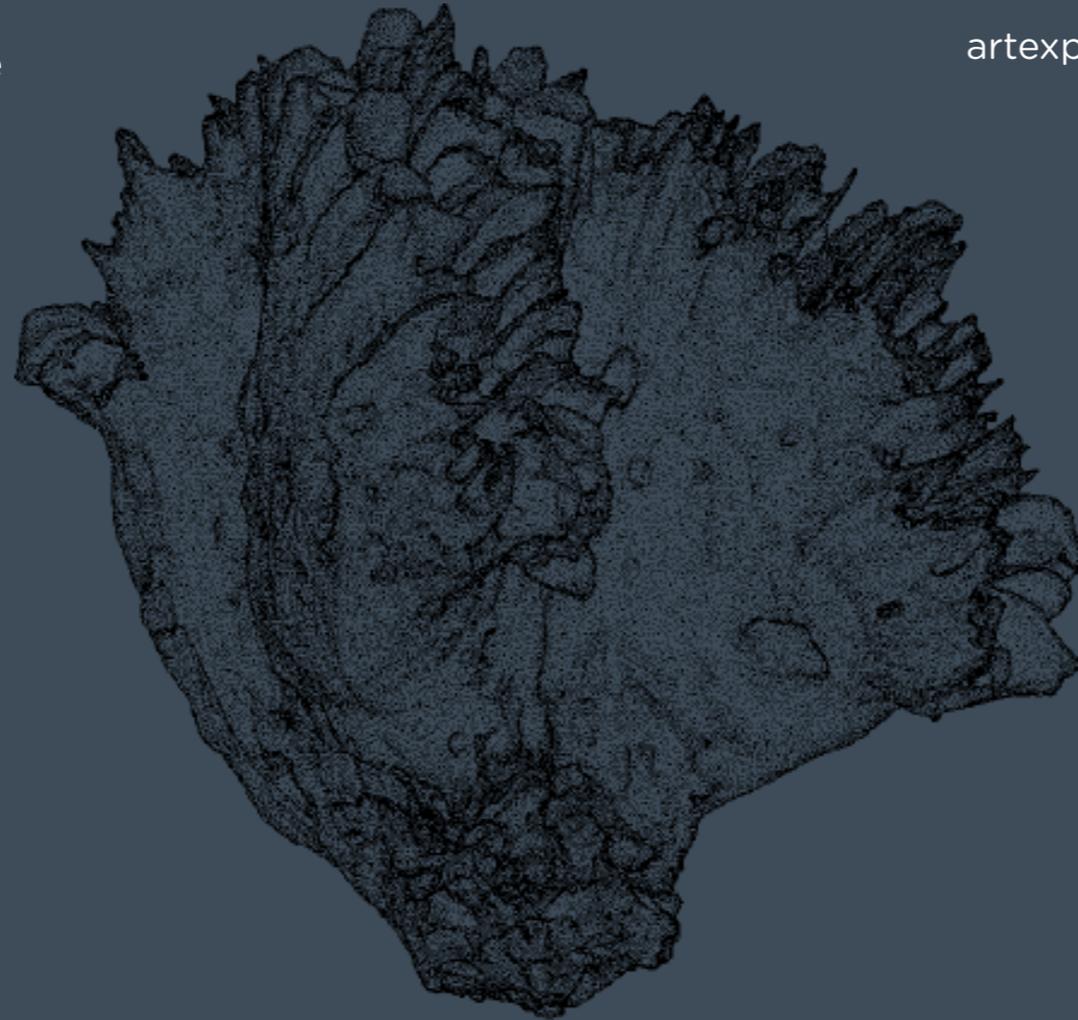
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