THE COMPULSIVE ACT: DRAWINGS BY JOGEN CHOWDHURY

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Aftermath, Felt Pen and Pastel on Paper, 29.5cm x 21cm, 2002

THE COMPULSIVE ACT: DRAWINGS BY JOGEN CHOWDHURY

Soumik Nandy Majumdar

'Drawings reveal the process of their own making,'
John Berger

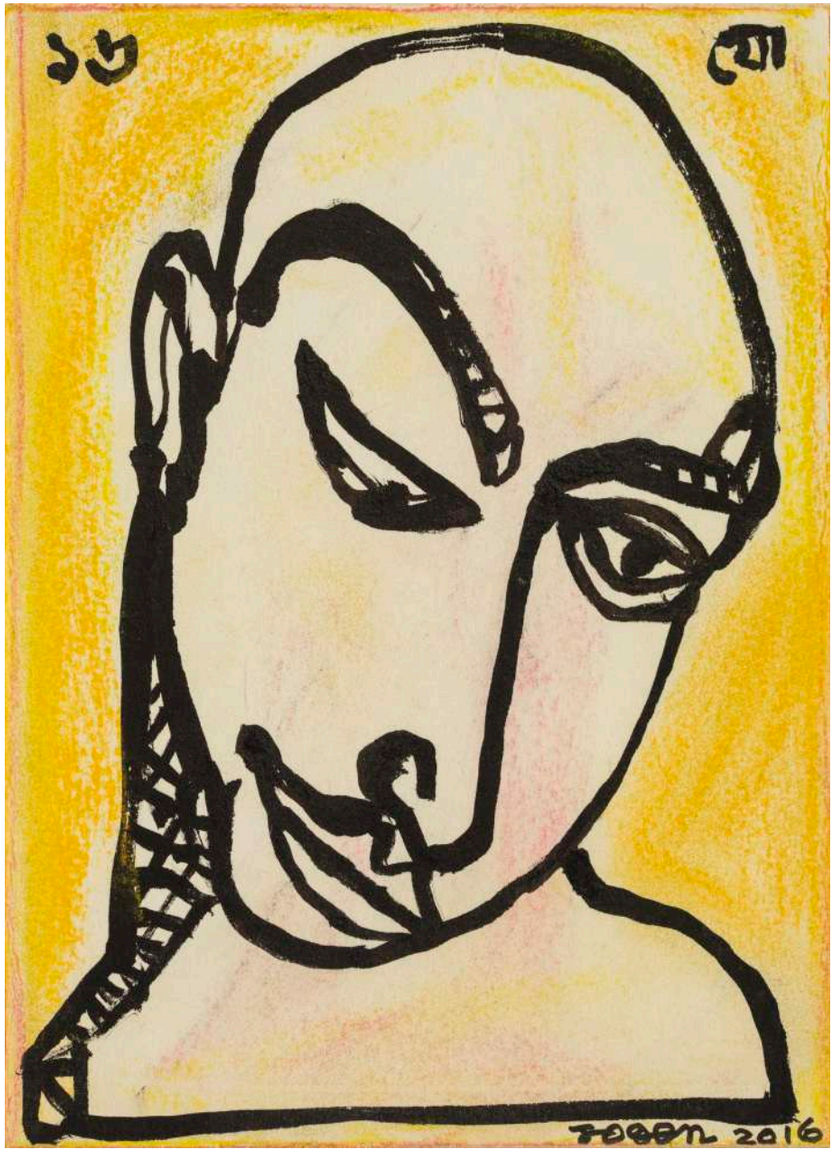
Jogen Chowdhury's drawings are truly revealing in the sense that they embody a compelling truth an artist aspires for. The truth in this context is multi-layered. It is about an artist's unremitting visual encounter with the world around and it is also about bringing to the paper what is already in the mind's eye. A keen observer of life with all its minutiae, Jogen Chowdhury strikes an obsessive relationship with the perceived visual reality in these drawings.

Small, ordinary and even banal visuals of everyday life and natural surrounding find their ways effortlessly to his six decades long practice of intimate drawings, to his quick scribblings and spontaneous imaginations. This passionate engagement manifests itself in numerous drawings Jogen Chowdhury did since the beginning of his journey as an artist. Till date he continues to draw ceaselessly and compulsively at any time and

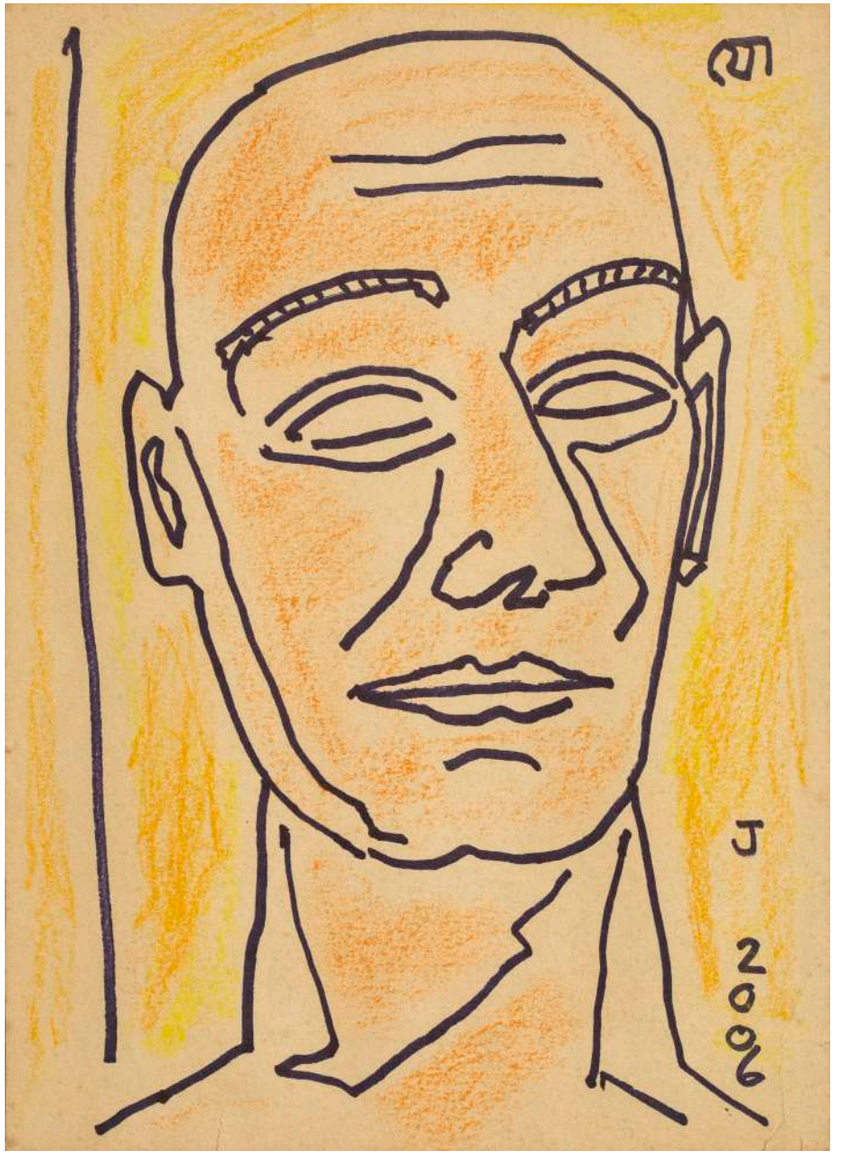
at any place. Random yet intimate, these drawings, executed on any piece of paper he could lay his hand on, eventually grew in number following him at every step. The drawn images collect themselves together as palimpsests inscribed with multitude of experienced moments thus making the mental process and the final images fairly complex, albeit discreetly. In some sense this apparent effortlessness evident in many of these drawings often camouflages the highly complex coordination between hand, skill, mind, vision and memory. The more we look at them we begin to realize that these drawings tend to claim an independent life of their own, assuming an iconic image-presence, irrespective of what they *represent*.

Jogen Chowdhury's drawings are characterized by distinctive lines which function not only to shape the visual forms from life but they also draw out what is supposedly out of sight or buried deep inside the psyche. Lines with various insinuations and width, sharp or soft, squiggly or aggressive, keep moving around the reality seen and felt and burrowed deep into the psychic realm of human existence. Stylistically speaking, the drawings range from a tender naturalism and expressionism at one end to a highly evolved personal idiom imbued with instinctual drive at the other. They often overlap to form a characteristic style and tendency of their own eschewing the trap of a singular idiom or technique and allowing the creative impulse to innovate a variety of modes to express and convey the stream of thoughts.

The restive edgy quality of lines in most of his drawings are partly intuitive as much as they are about the organicity of nature and the sensuality of life. This visual ambivalence that sustains the strength in these drawings are rooted in Jogen Chowdhury's deep faith in the incessant flow of life despite the shadows of the dark edges of life. These drawings are testimonies of that process to keep this renewal alive with a sense of deep commitment. A glimpse at the six decades of drawings unveils how that faith is passed on from one drawing to the other, each one sharing its energy with the next. We are fortunate witnesses to a secret alchemy at work, as it were.



Face with Yellow Background, Black Felt Pen and Pastel on Paper,
19cm x 14.1cm, 2016



Face of a Man, Felt Pen and Pastel on Paper, 25.1cm x 18cm, 2006

Black Head, Felt Pen on Paper, 15cm x 10cm, 1974

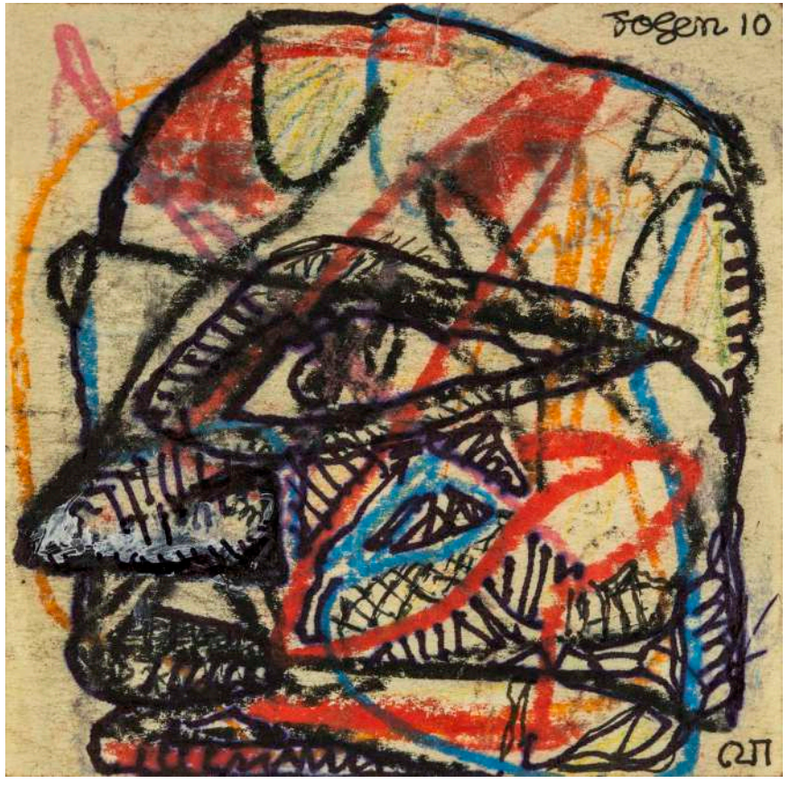
Composition, Gouche on Paper, 18cm x 13cm, 1994

Apple, Pastel and Mixed Media on Paper, 18cm x 18cm, 1999

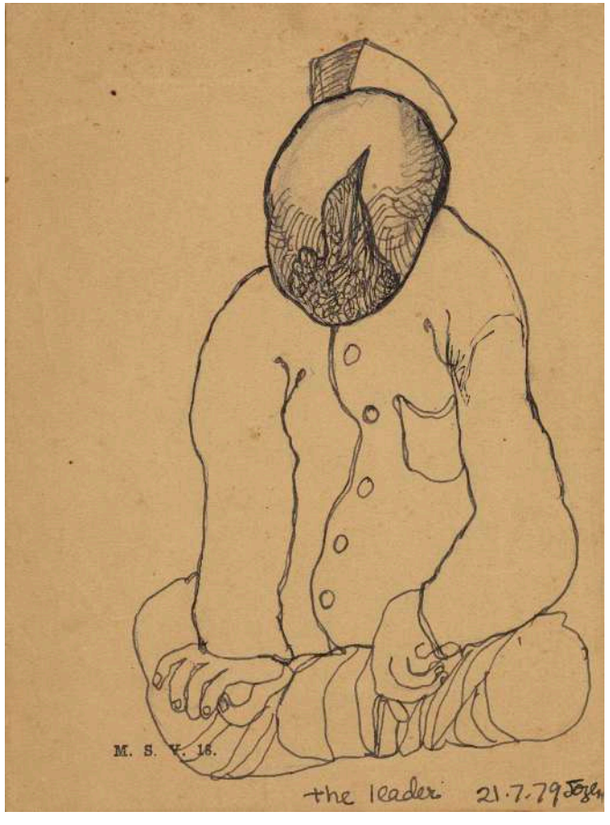
Kite, Ink Brush and Pastel on Paper, 24.8cm x 19cm, 1992

Bird, Ink and Pastel on Paper, 18cm x 13cm, 2020

Head, Pen and Ink and Pastel on Paper,10cm x 10cm, 2007

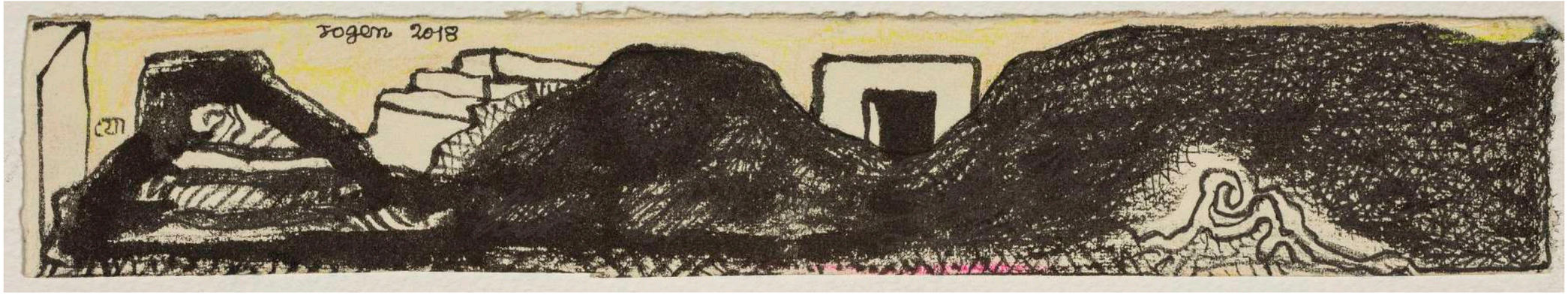


Head, Pen and Ink and Pastel on Paper, 7.50cm x 7.50cm, 2010

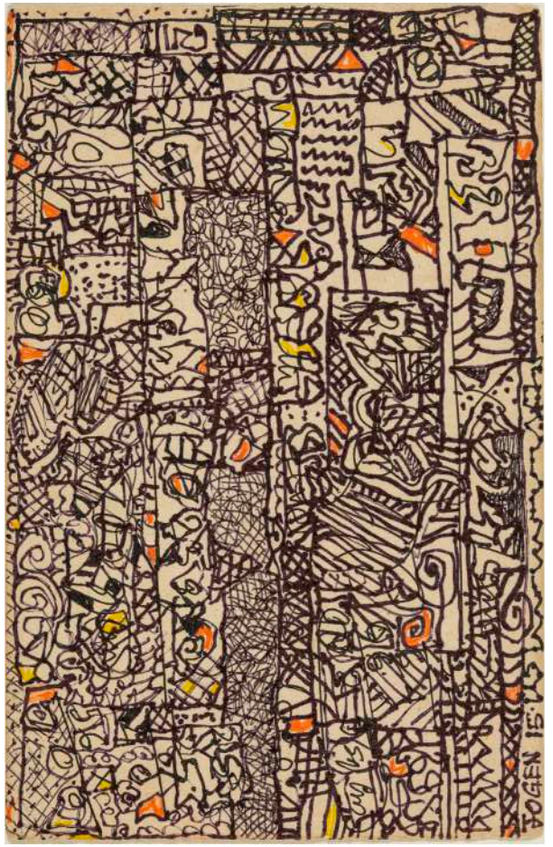


The Leader, Ink on Paper, 14.4cm x 10.6cm, 1979

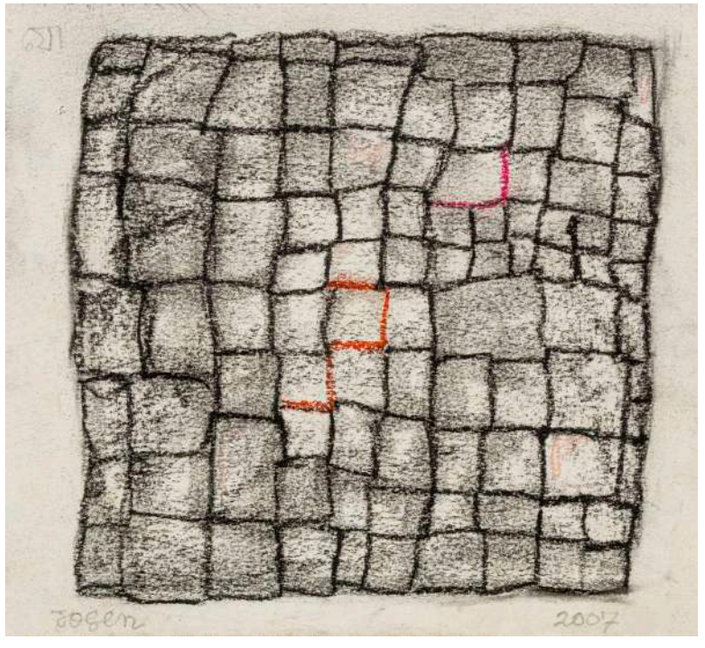
Woman, Pastel on Paper, 27cm x 36cm, 2001



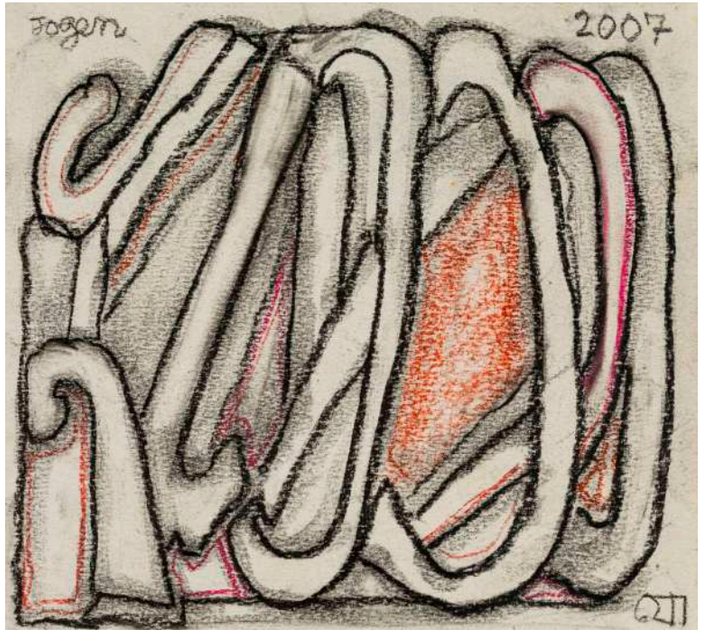
Landscape in the Night, Black Ink with Brush and Pastel on Paper,
4.6cm x 28.4cm, 2018



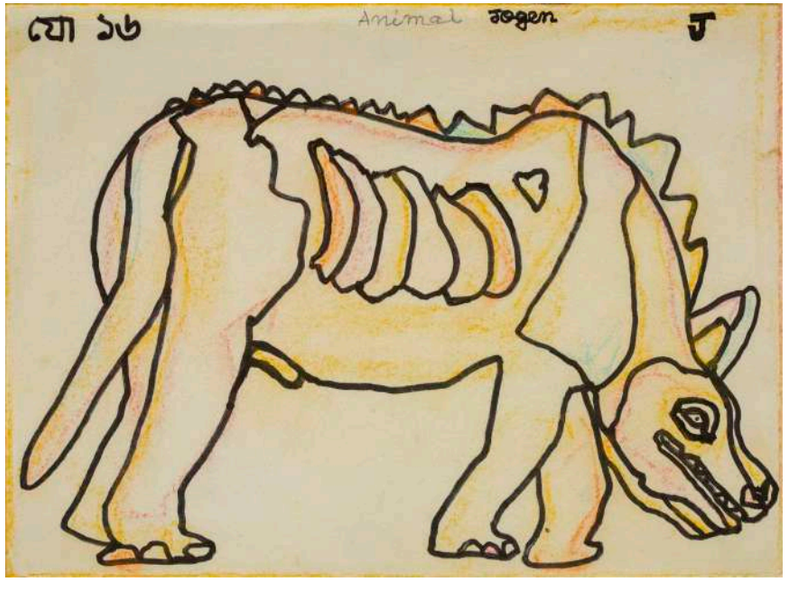
Untitled III, Pen and ink and Pastel on Paper,
9cm x 14cm, 2015



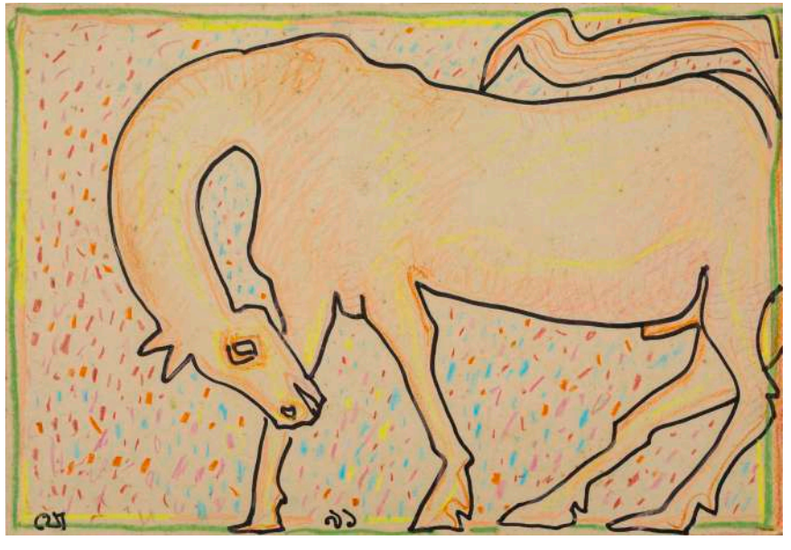
Quilt, Dry Pastel on Paper, 18cm x 20cm, 2007



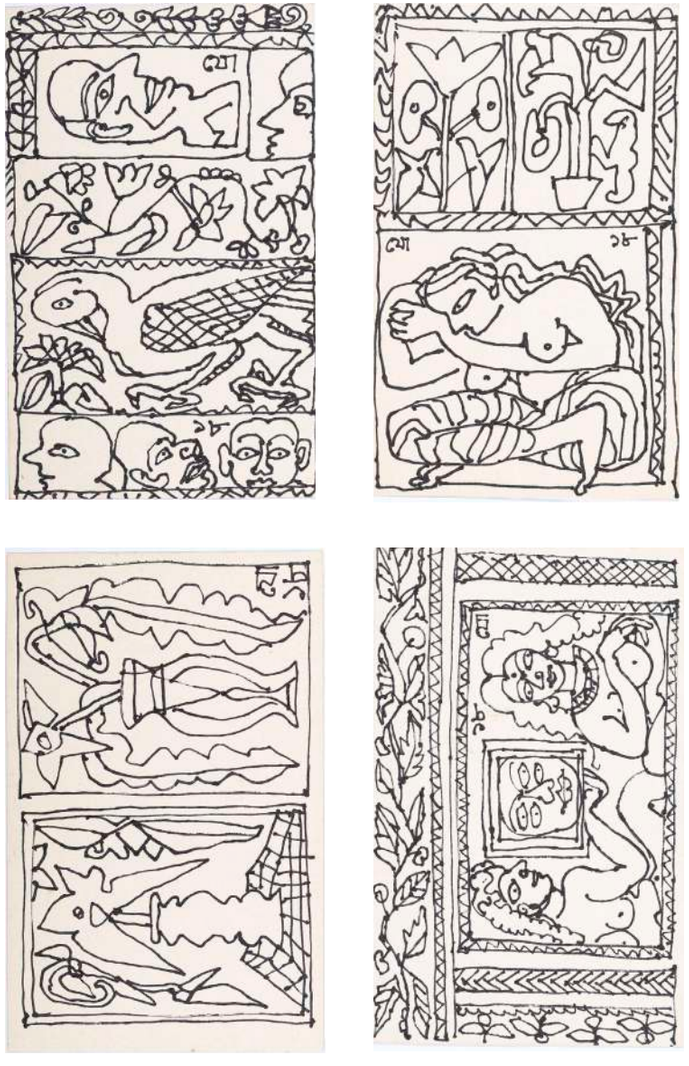
Untitled, Dry Pastel Colour on Paper, 18cm x 20cm, 2007



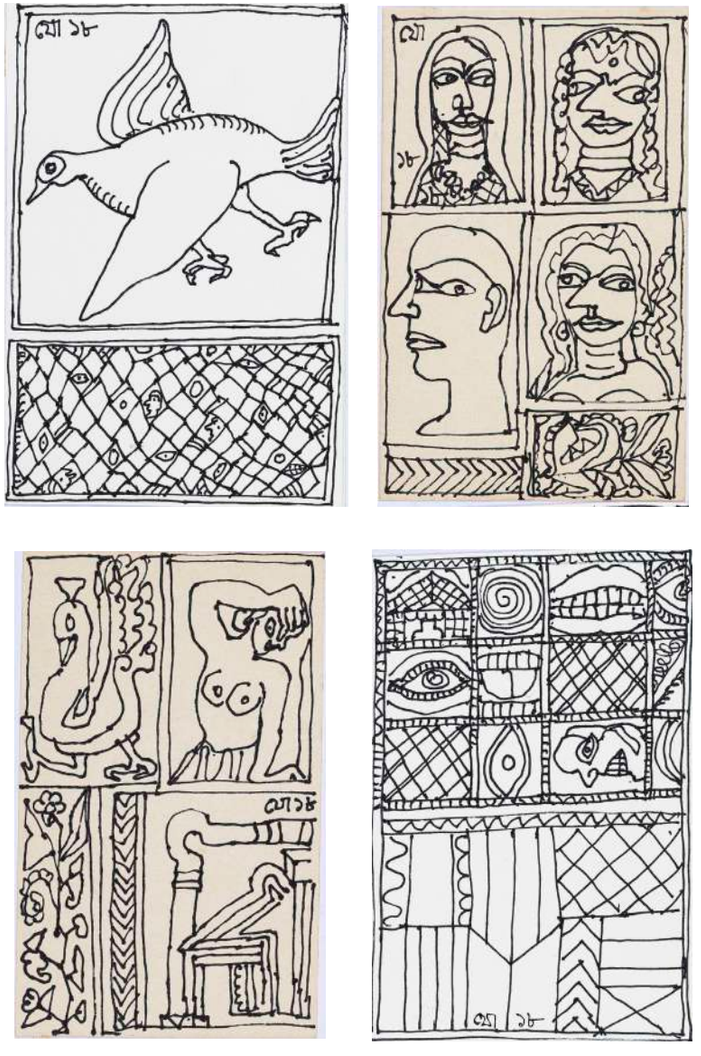
Animal, Black Felt Pen and Pastel on Paper, 25.3cm x 18.7cm, 2016



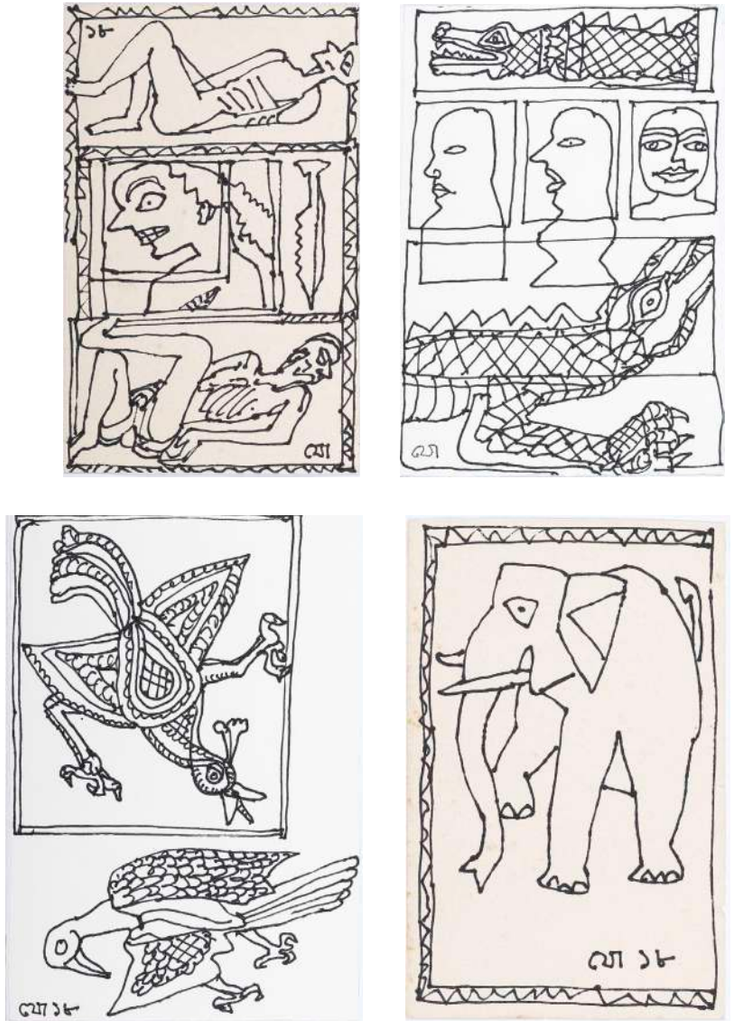
Horse, Felt Pen and Pastel on Paper, 24cm x 34.9cm, 1991



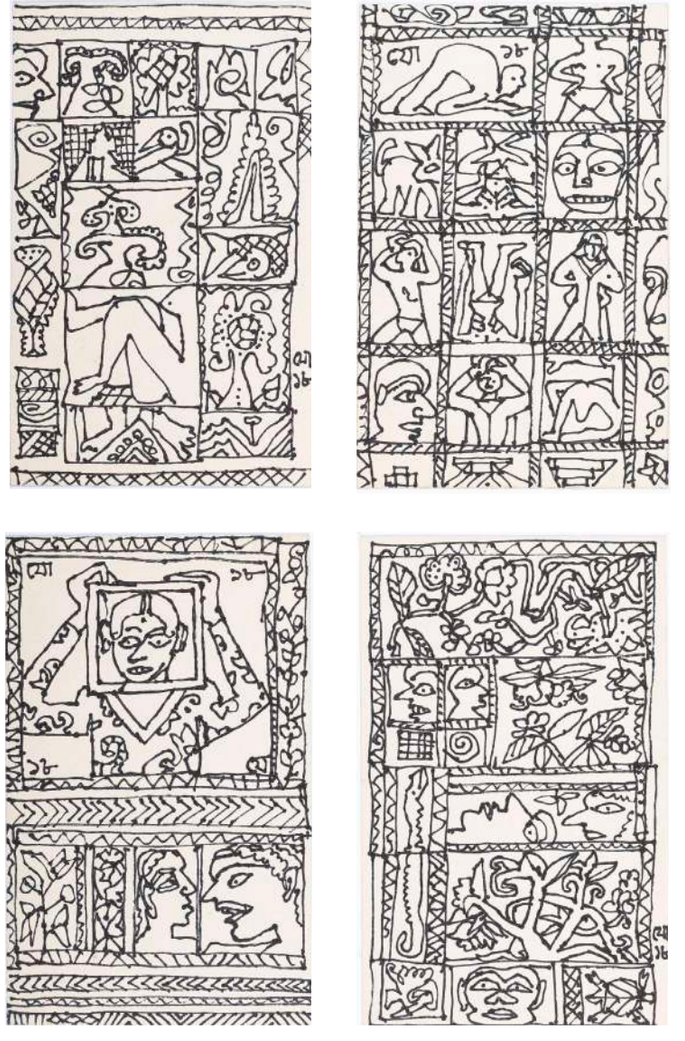
Drawing for Mural, Black Ink on Paper, 30cm x 20cm, 2018



Drawing for Mural, Black Ink on Paper, 30cm x 20cm, 2018

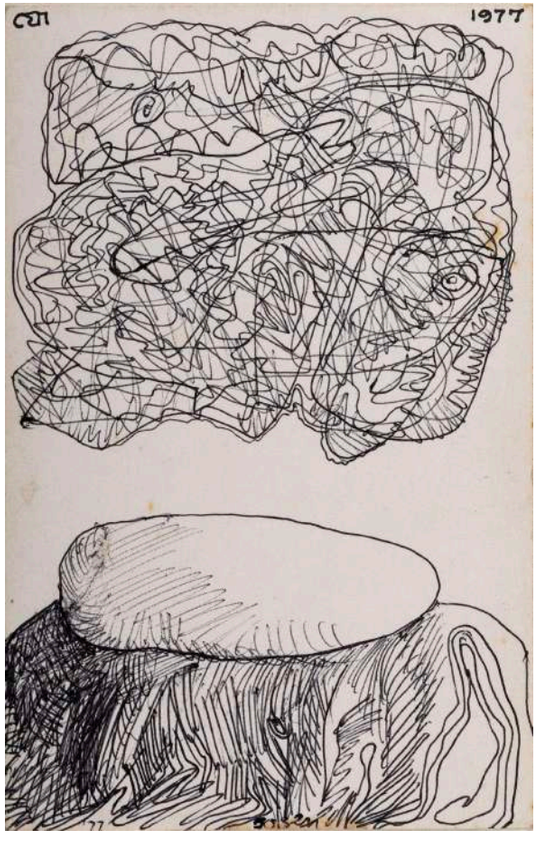


Drawing for Mural, Black Ink on Paper, 30cm x 20cm, 2018

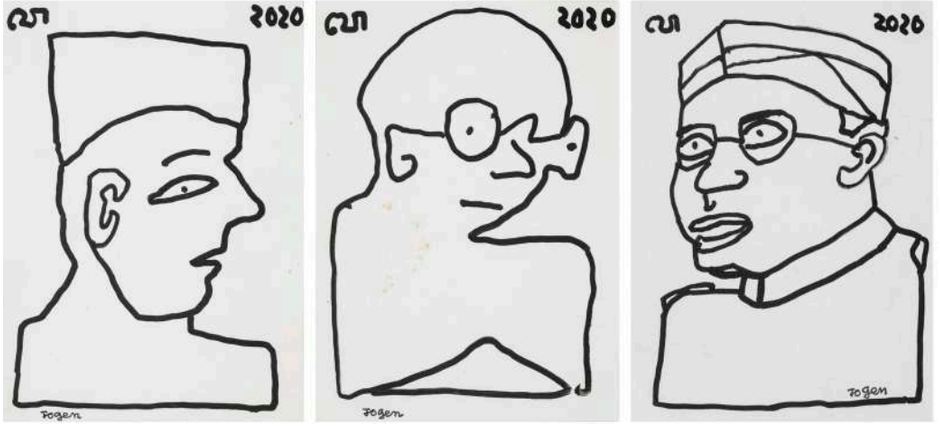


Drawing for Mural, Black Ink on Paper, 30cm x 20cm, 2018

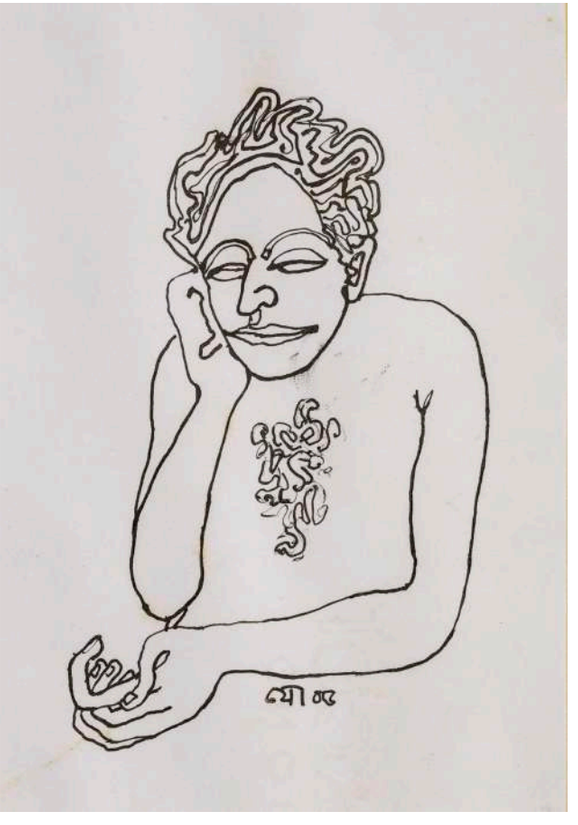
Woman in Bed, Pen and Ink on Paper, 12cm x 10.2cm, 2005



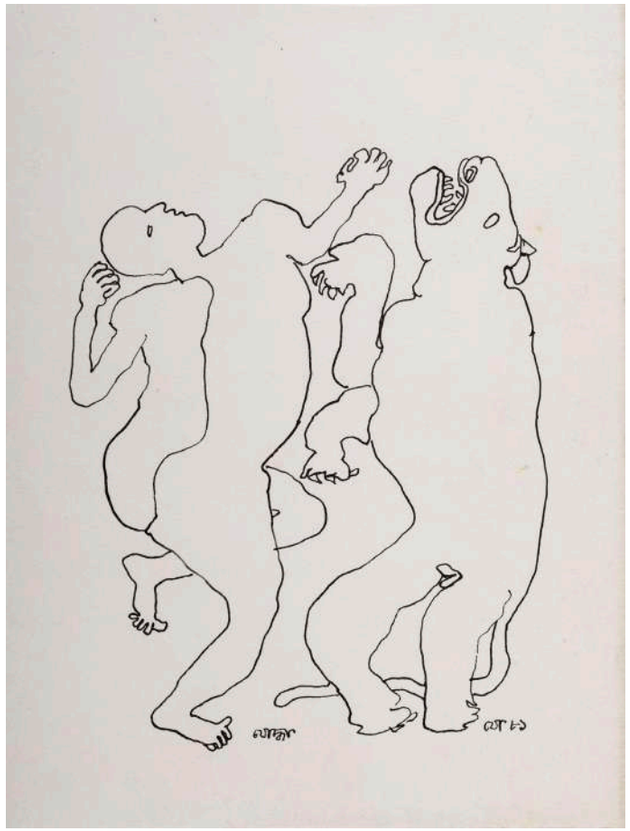
Under The Sky, Black Ink on Paper, 12.6cm x 8.3 cm, 1977



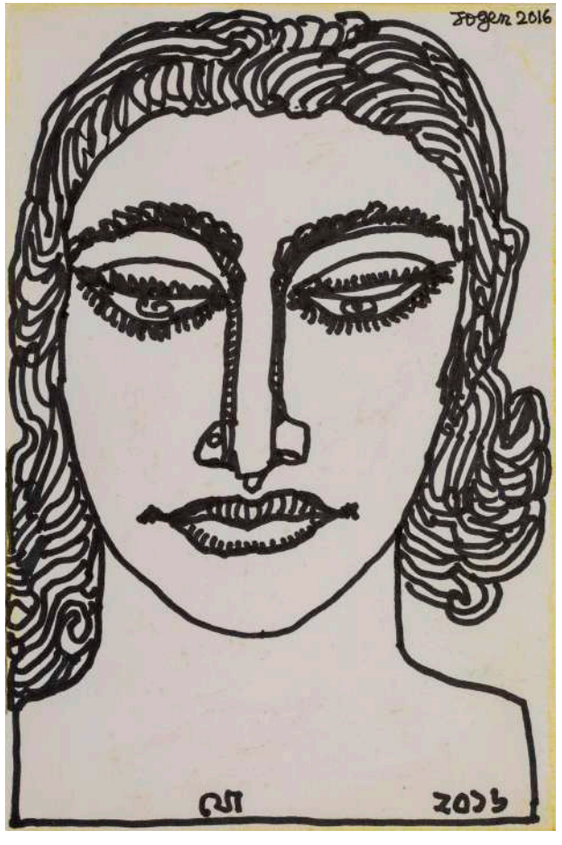
Three Leaders, Ink on Paper, 17cm x 42cm, 2020



Thinking Man, Pen and Ink on Paper, 14cm x 9cm, 2005



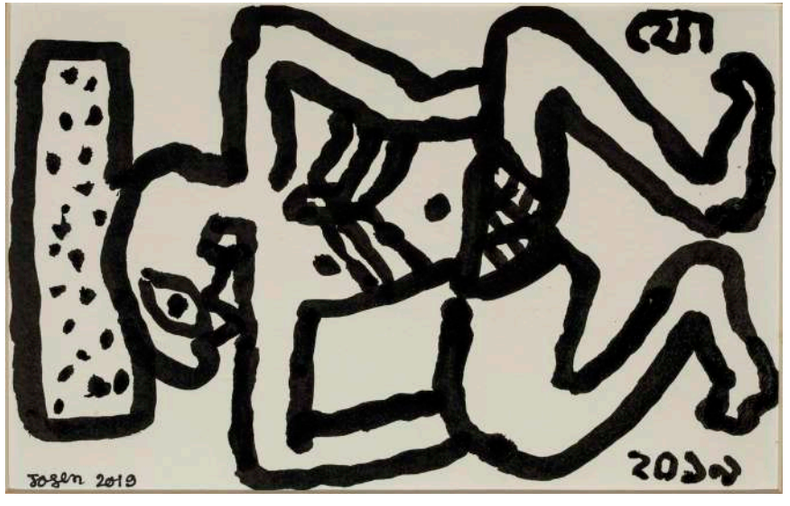
Fighter, Pen and Ink on Paper, 18cm x 13.7cm, 1981



Face of a Beautiful Girl, Black Felt Pen and Pastel on Paper,
28cm x 19cm, 2016

Animal, Ink on Paper, 6cm x 5cm, 2020

Woman Resting, Black Ink with Brush on Paper, 18cm x 28cm, 2019

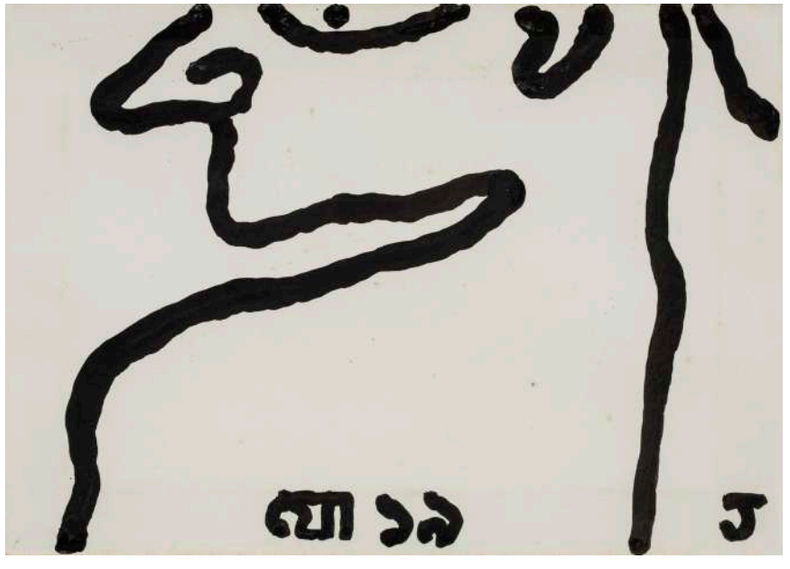


Man Resting, Black Ink with Brush on Paper, 18cm x 28cm, 2019

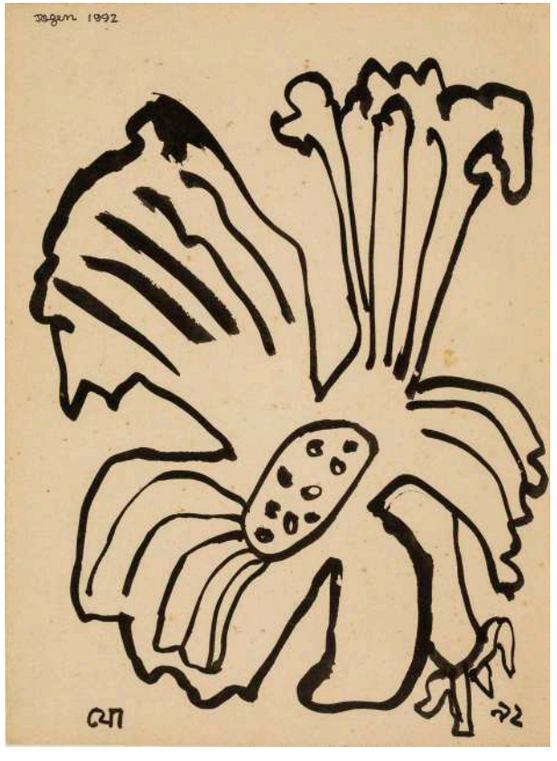
Man Falling, Black Ink with Brush on Paper,
17.5cm x 12.5cm, 2000

She, Black Ink with Brush on Paper,
18cm x 13.6cm, 2000

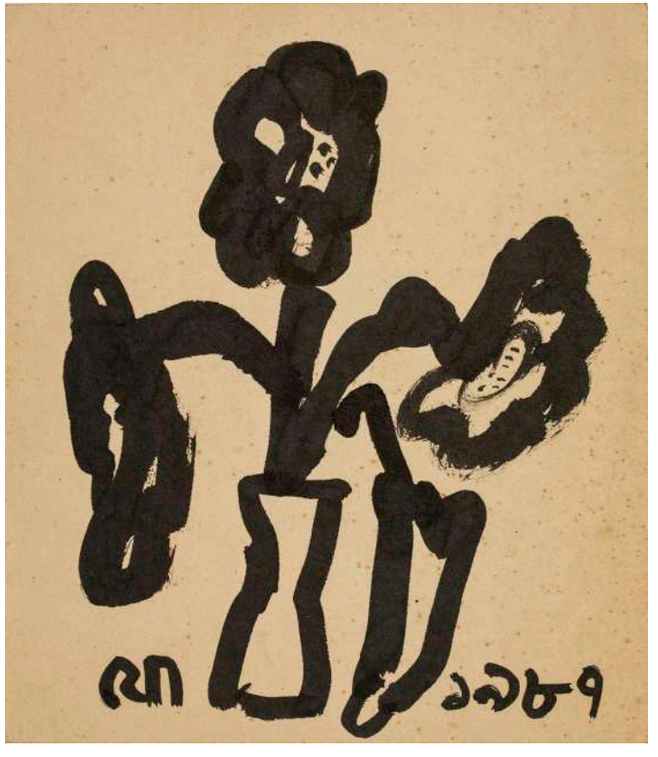
Window, Black Ink with Brush, 38cm x 28cm, 1990



The Suspicious Man, Black Ink with Brush on Paper,
21cm x 29.7cm, 2019



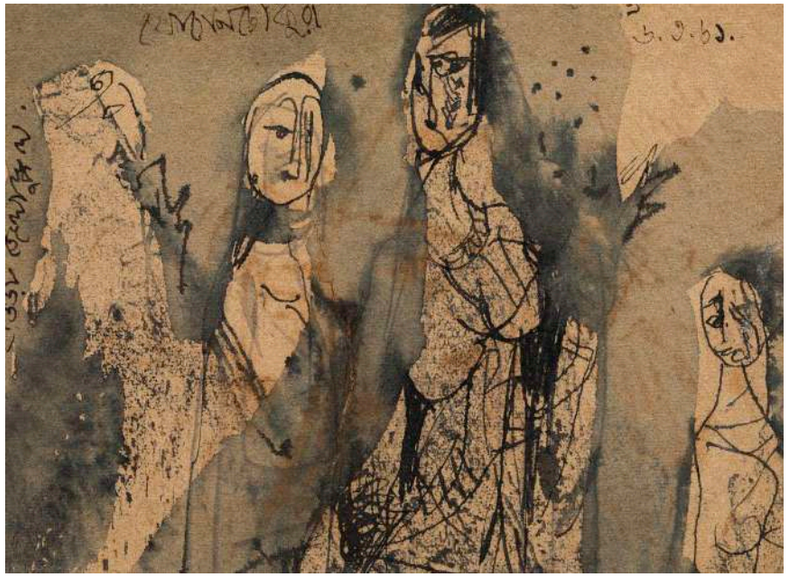
Flower, Ink and Wash on Paper, 25.5cm x 18.6cm, 1992



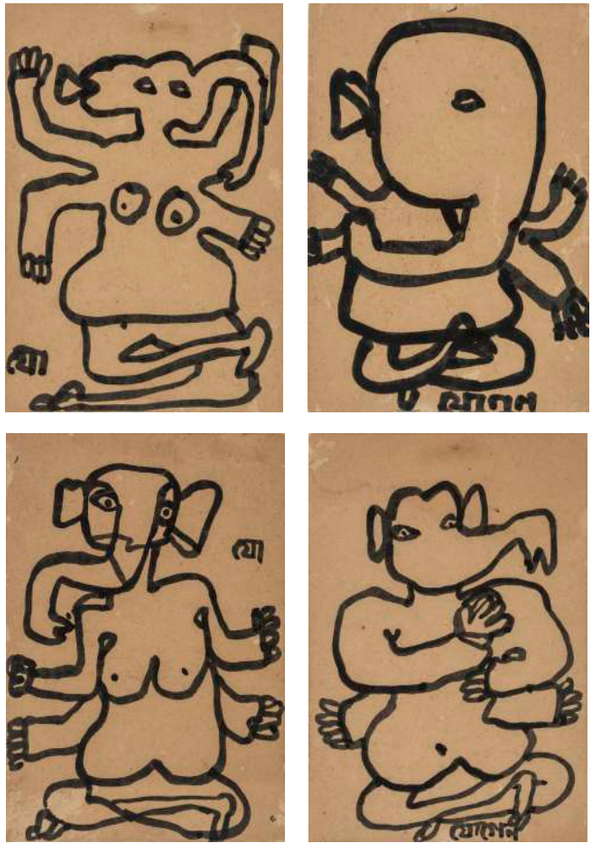
Flower Vase, Black ink with Brush on Paper,
27.5cm x 24.2cm, 1987

Flower Vase , Black ink with Brush on Paper,
21.5cm x 17.1cm, 1985

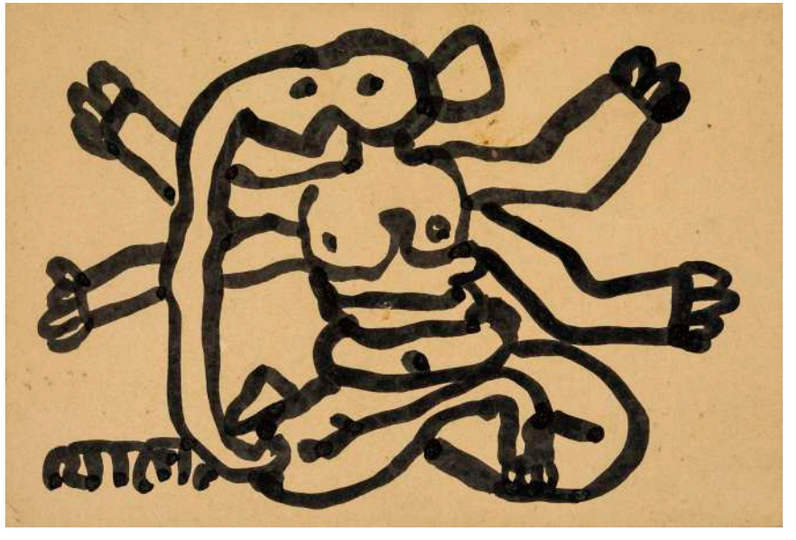
Flower in a Vase, Pastel on Paper,
33.3cm x 8.9cm, 1996



Family, Ink and Wash on Paper, 8.6cm x 12.2cm, 1961

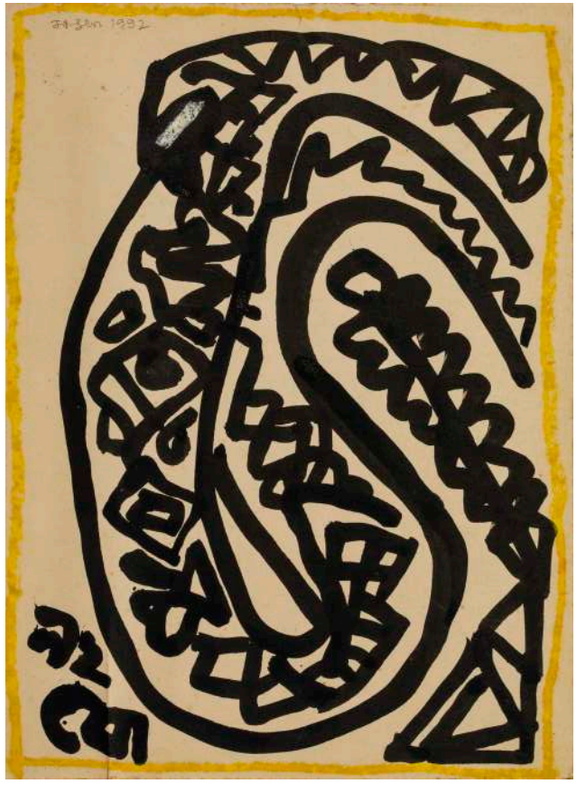


Set of Four Ganesha, Ink on Paper, 30cm x 23cm, 1970

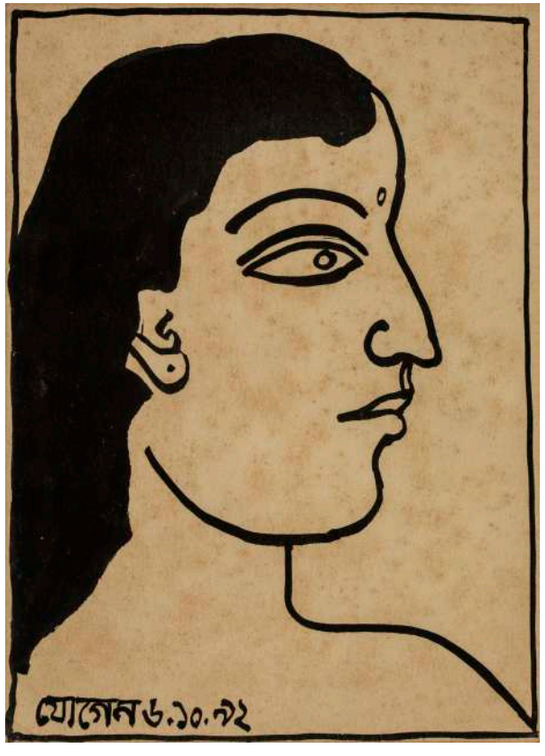


Ganesha, Ink on Paper, 9.5cm x 14cm, 1970

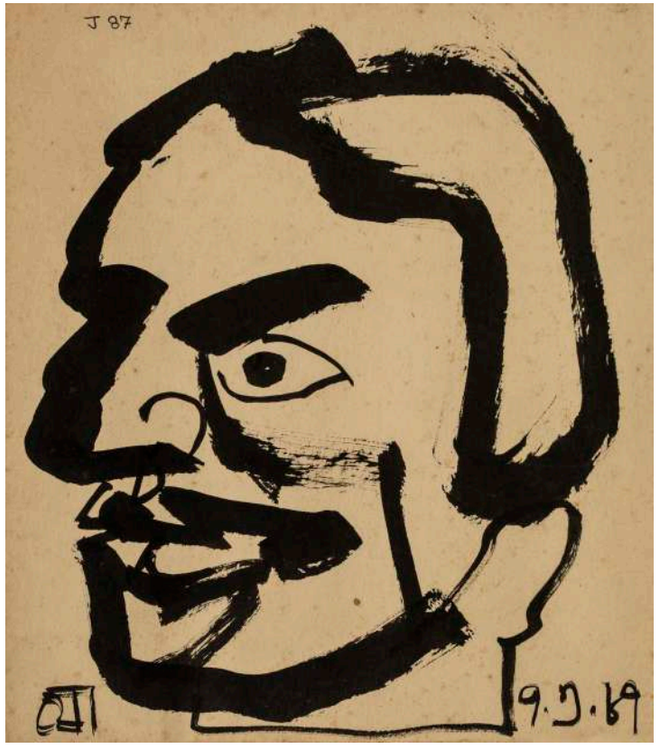
Child Ganesha, Ink on Paper, 14cm x 9.5cm, 1970



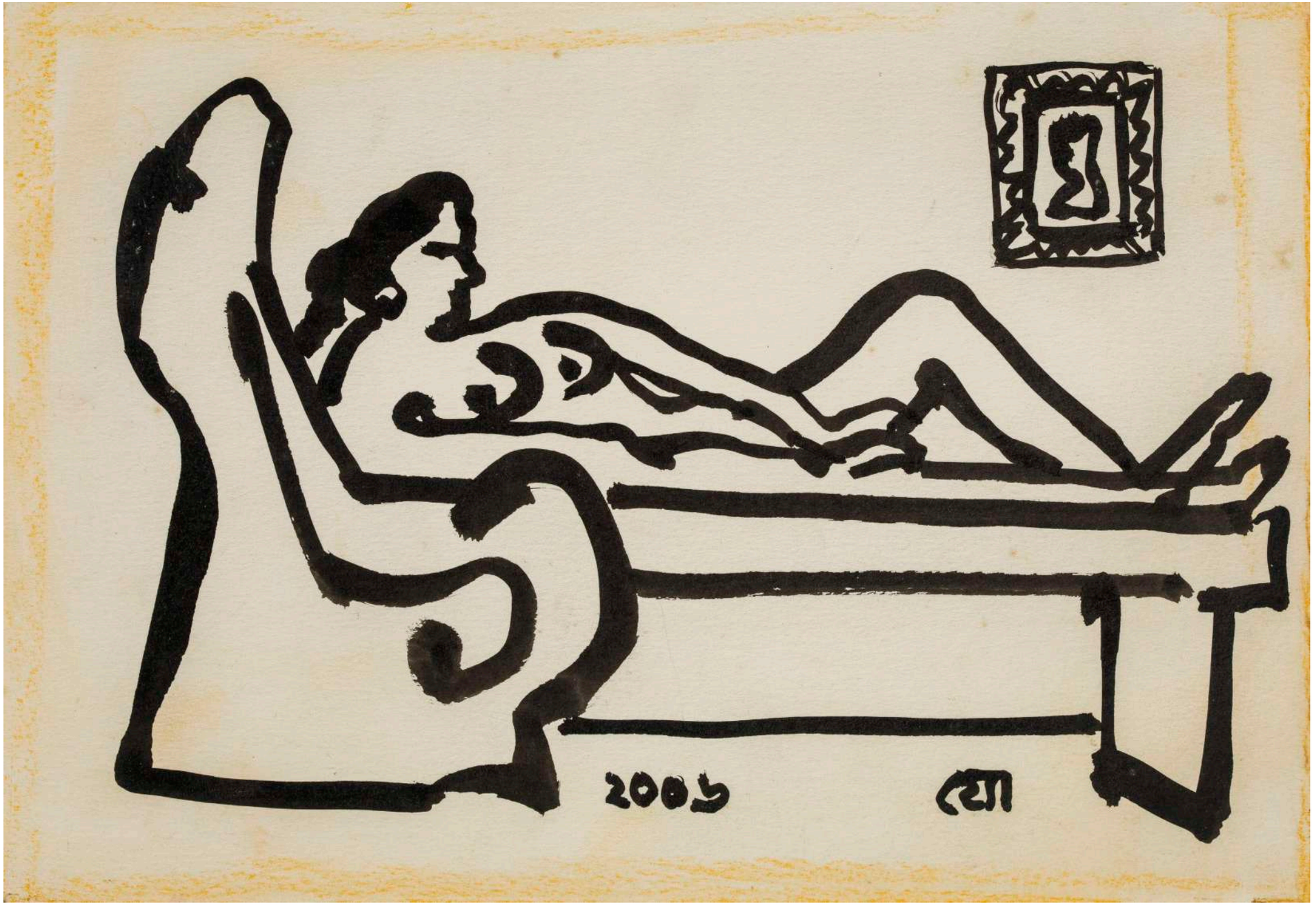
Family, Ink and Wash on Paper, 8.6cm x 12.2cm, 1992



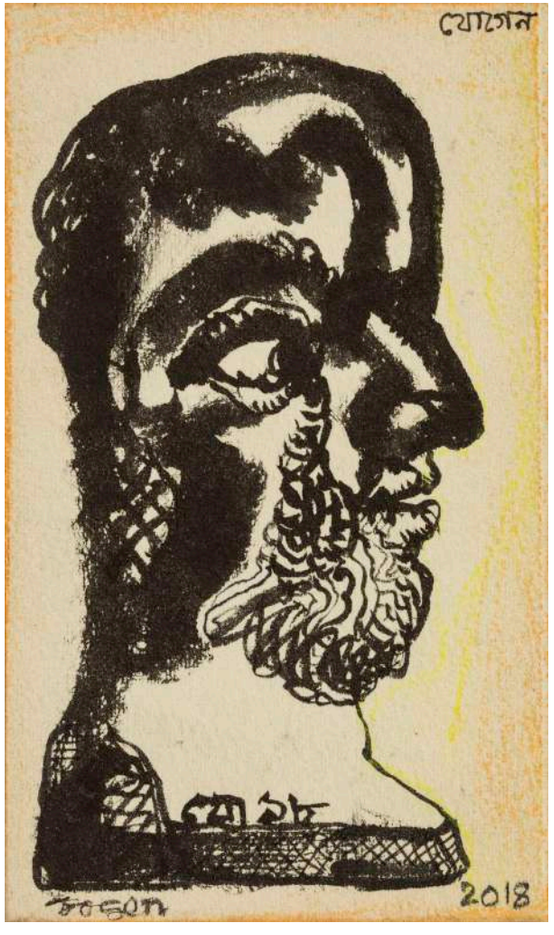
Face of a Woman with Black Hair, Ink and Wash on Paper,
28.1cm x 20.4cm, 1992



Face like Utpal Dutta, Black ink with Brush on Paper,
21.3cm x 19cm, 1987



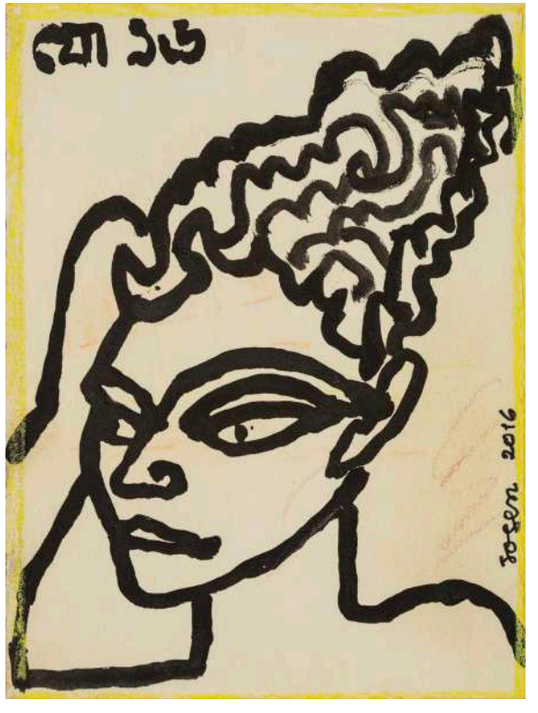
Lady Reclining on a Couch, Black Ink with Brush on Paper,
17.5cm x 24.8cm, 2006



Face with Beard, Black Ink with Brush and Pastel on Paper,
14.4cm x 8.8cm, 2018

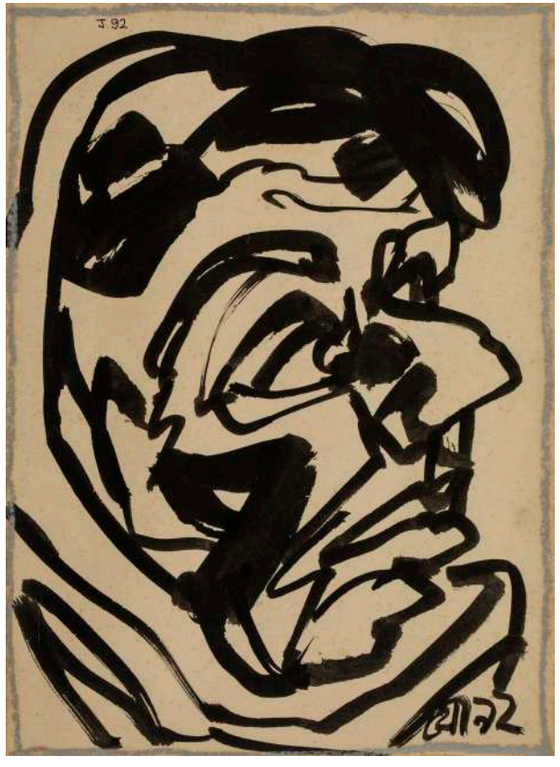
Landscape in the Night, Black Ink with Brush on Paper,
23.5cm x 18.6cm, 2015

Birds, Black ink with Brush on Paper, 18.7cm x 18.9cm, 2001

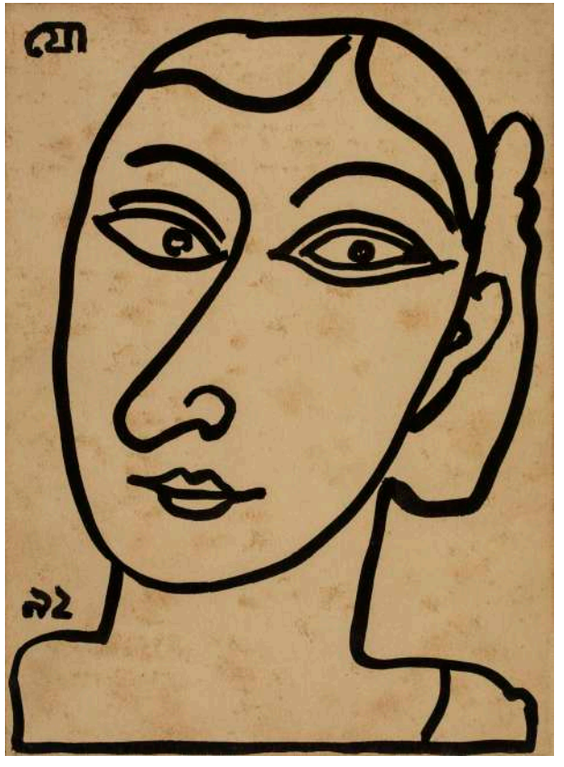


Woman with Curly Hair, Black Felt Pen and Pastel on Paper, 19.1cm x 14.2cm, 2016

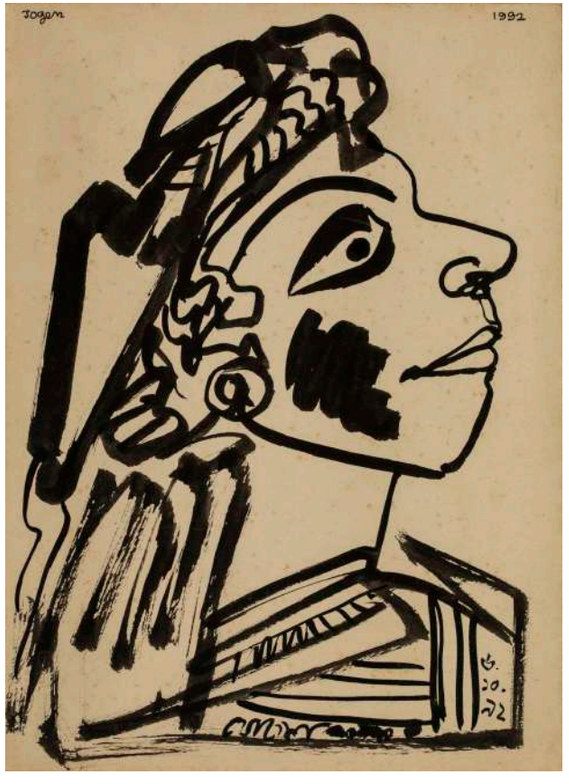
Back of a Man, Black ink with Brush on Paper,
28.5cm x 14.5cm, 2006



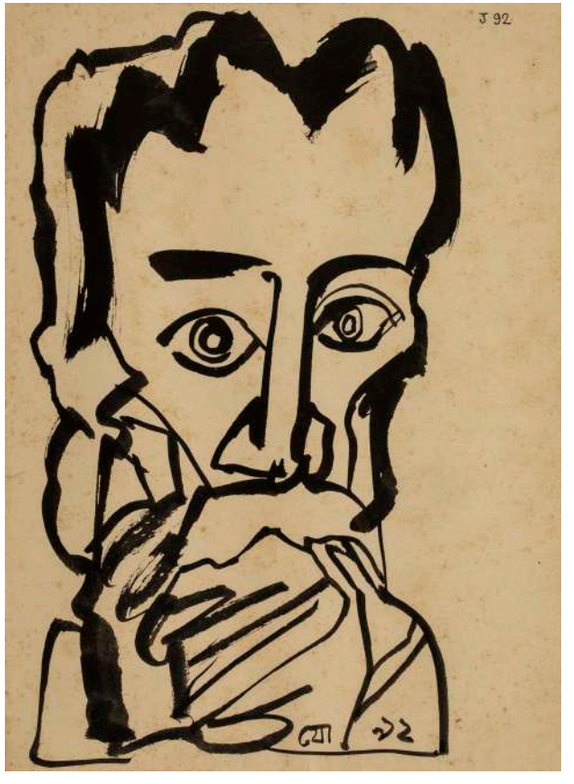
Old Man, Black Ink and Brush on Paper,
25.5cm x 18.7cm, 1992



Face of a Woman with Black Hair, Black Ink with Brush on Paper,
28.1cm x 20.4cm, 1992

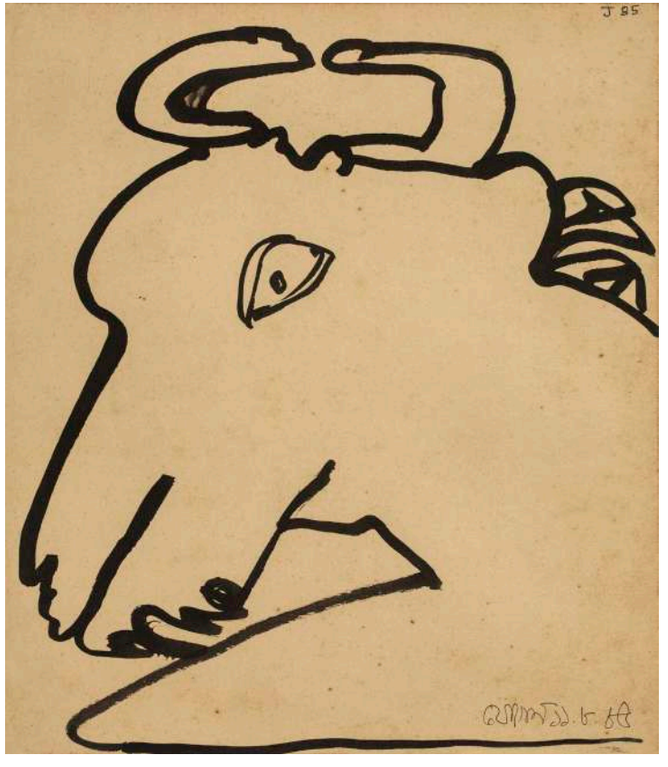


Actor, Black Ink with Brush on Paper, 25.5cm x 18.7cm, 1992



Old Man with Beard, Black Ink with Brush on Paper,
25.6cm x 18.6cm, 1992

Gaze, Ink on Paper, 13cm x 19cm, 1990

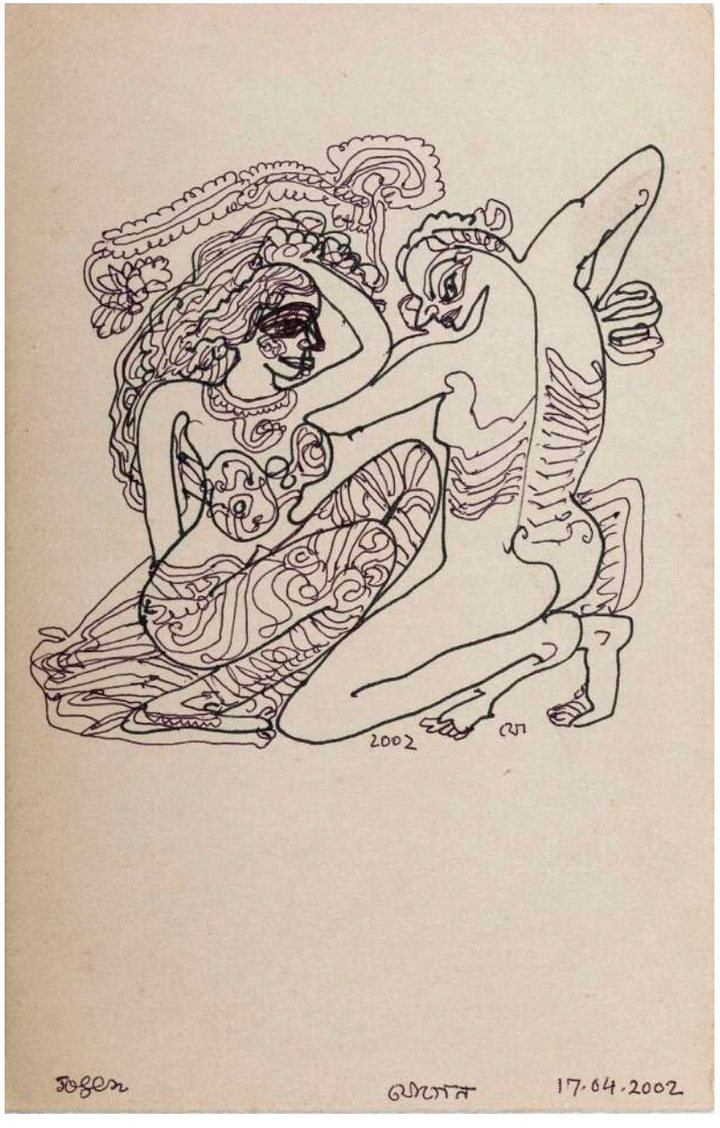


Goat Head, Black Ink with Brush on Paper, 25.3cm x 21.9cm, 1985

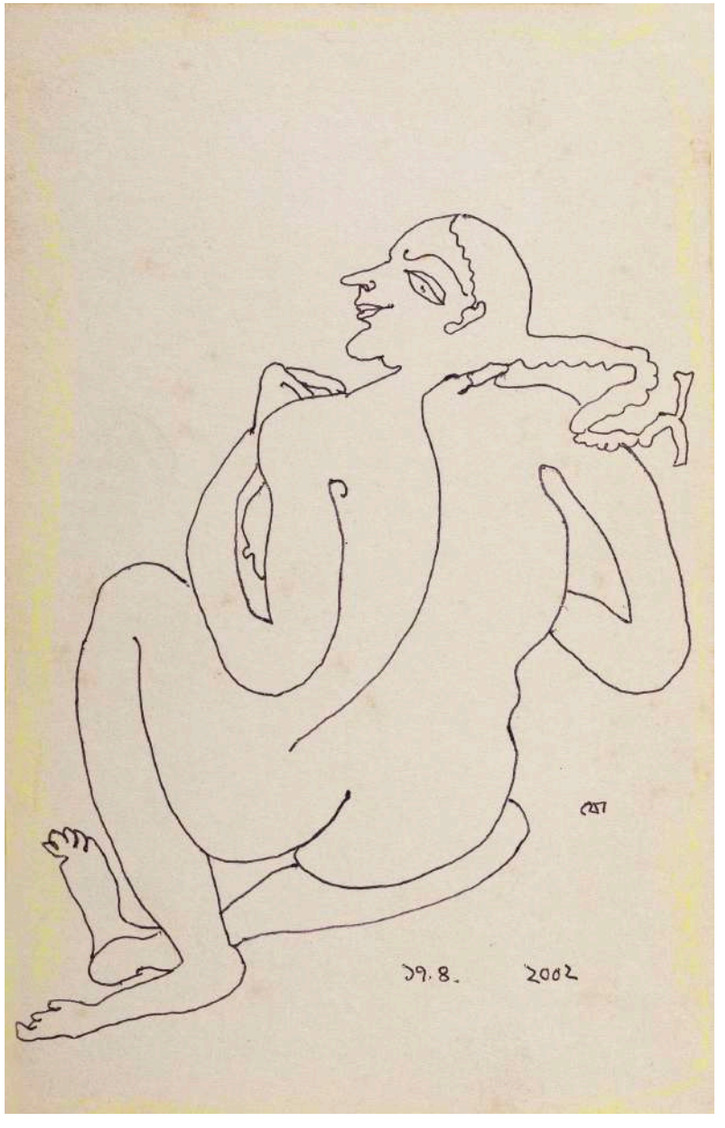
Story, Ink on Paper, 14cm x 20cm, 2022

Untitled I, Ink on Paper, 8.9cm x 14cm, 1997

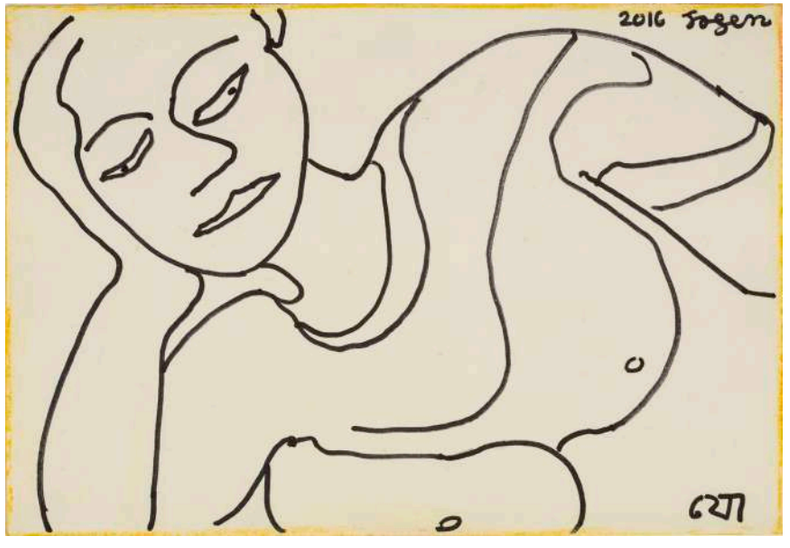
Untitled II, Ink on Paper, 8.9cm x 14cm, 1997



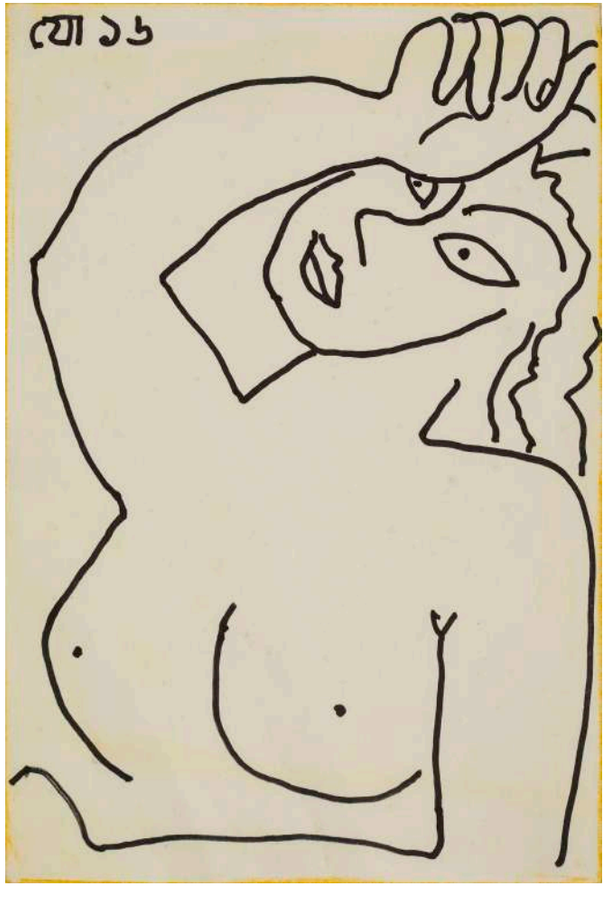
Couple, Pen and Ink on Paper, 16.3cm x 11.4cm, 2002



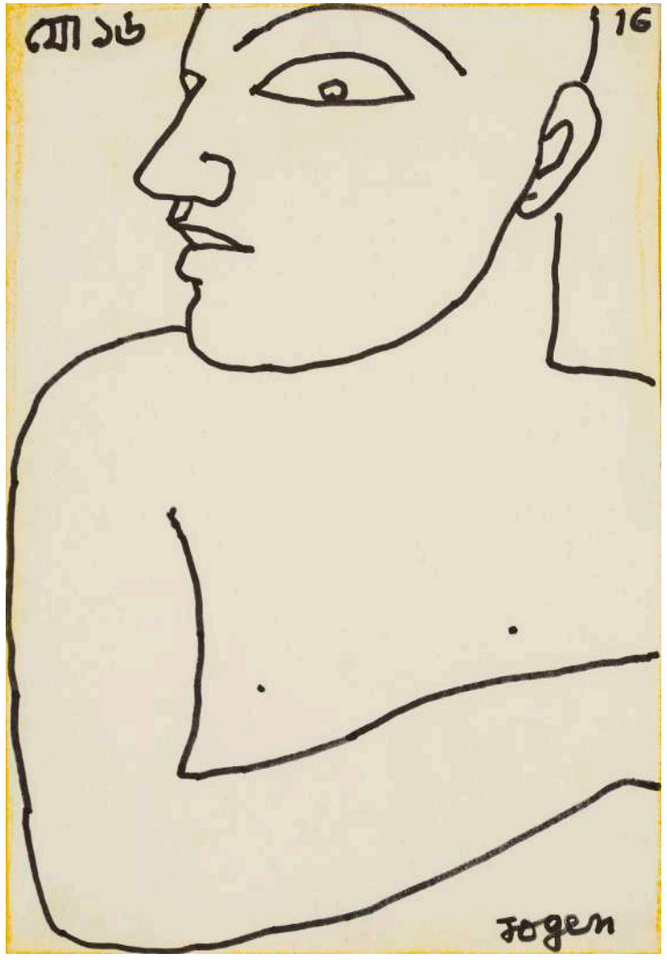
Woman Nude, Pen and Ink on Paper, 14cm x 9cm, 2002



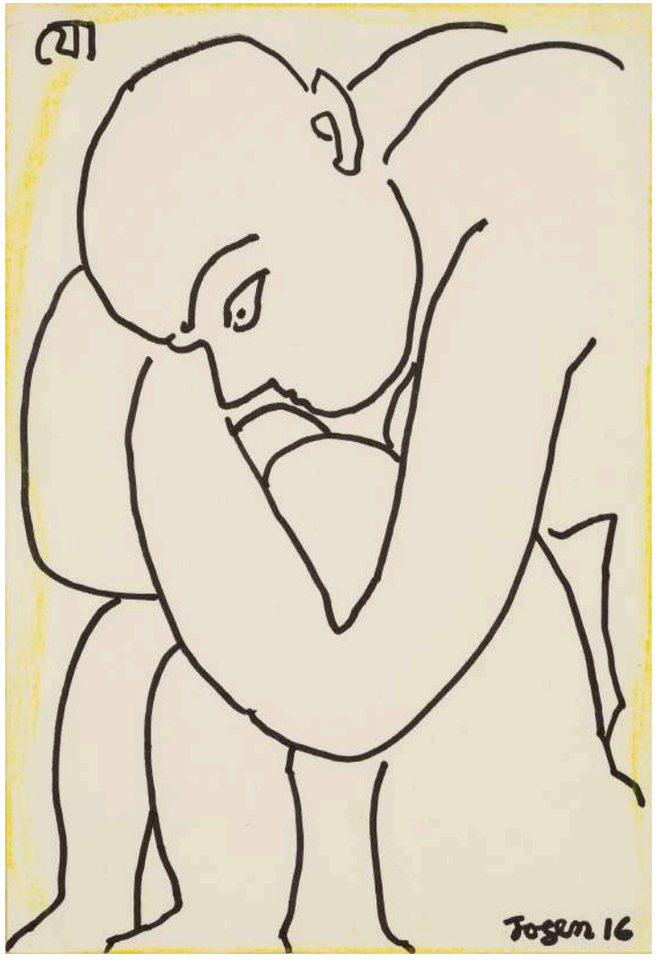
Woman in Thought, Black Felt Pen and Pastel on Paper,
19.1cm x 28cm, 2016



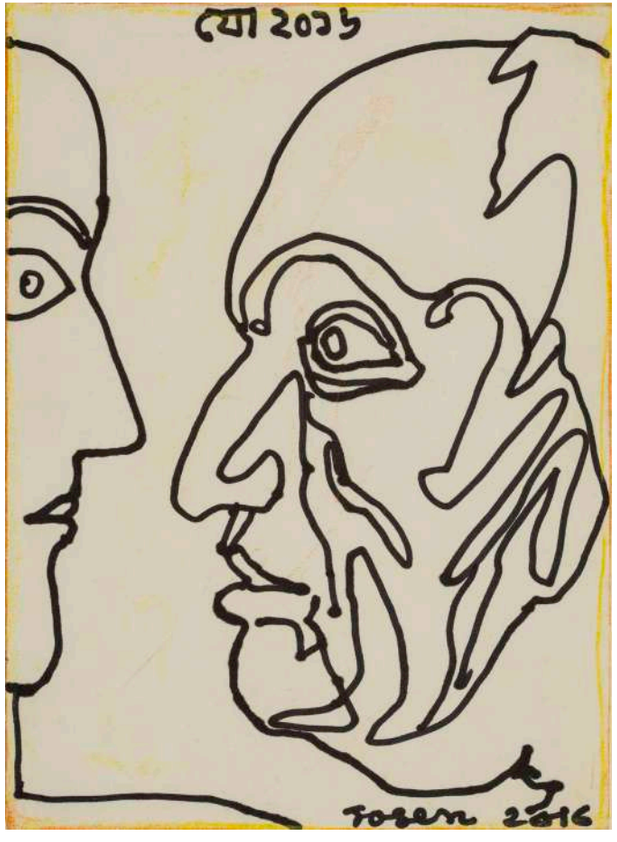
Woman, Black Felt Pen and Pastel on Paper, 27.1cm x 18cm, 2016



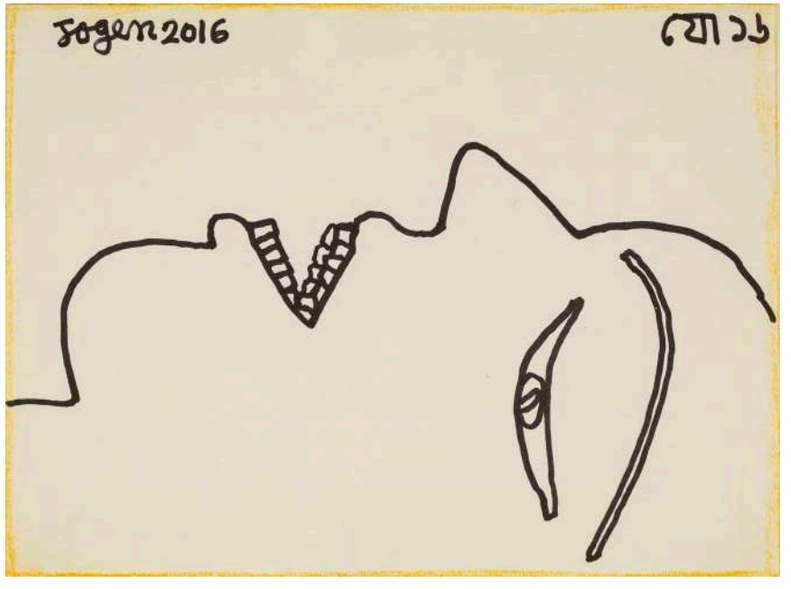
Man, Black Felt Pen and Pastel on Paper, 28cm x 19cm, 2016



Man Resting, Black Felt Pen and Pastel on Paper,
28cm x 19cm, 2016

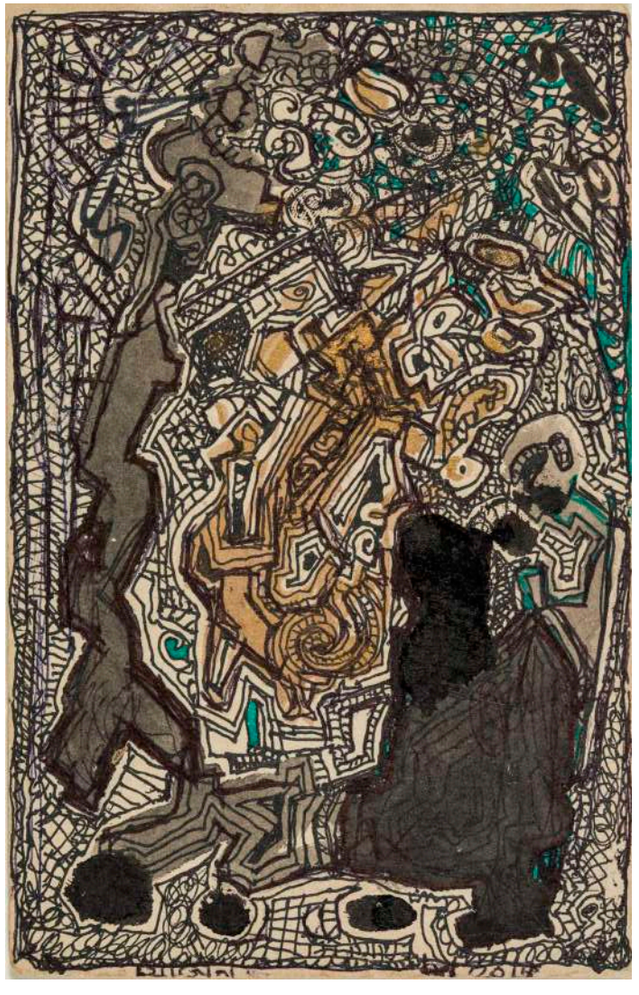


Two Men (Faces), Black Felt Pen and Pastel on Paper,
25.4cm x 18.6cm, 2016

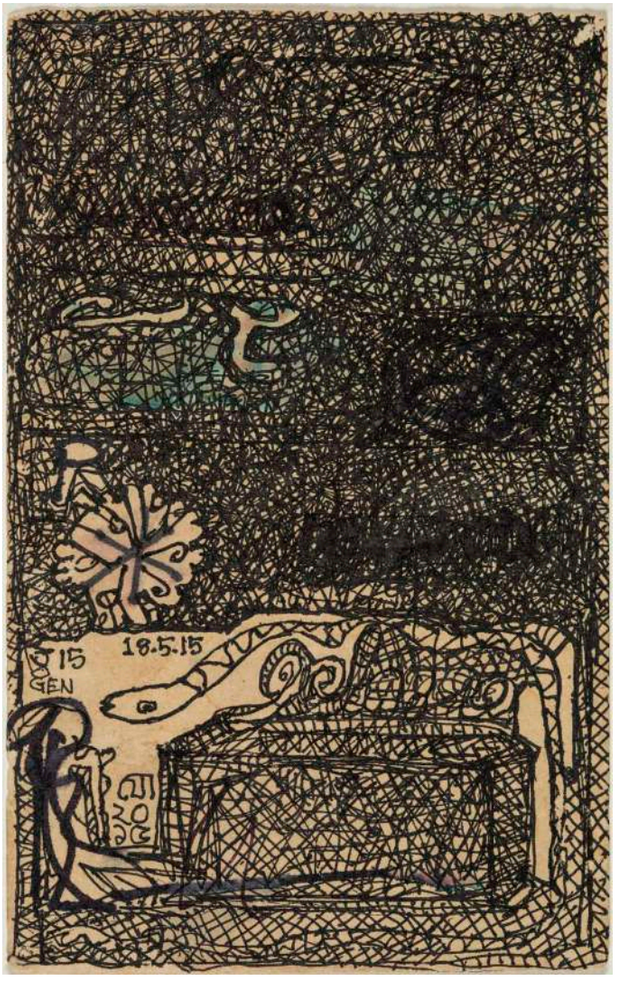


Face Looking Up, Black Felt Pen and Pastel on Paper,
25.2cm x 18.7cm, 2016

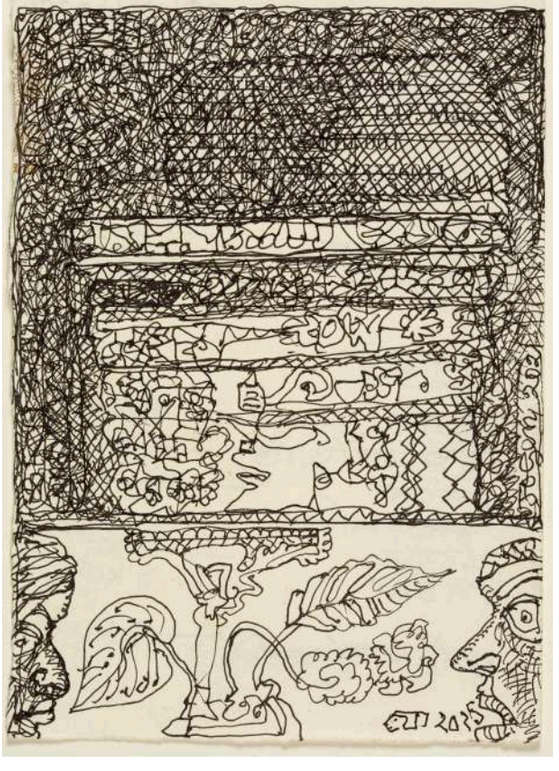
Not from Memory, Pen and Ink and Collage on Paper,
10cm x 13cm, 2021



Untitled II, Pen and Ink and Mixed and Media on Paper,
14cm x 9cm, 2015



Untitled IV, Pen and Ink and Mixed and Media on Paper,
14cm x 9cm, 2015



Untitled, Pen and Ink on Paper, 15cm x 11cm, 2021

Flower, Felt Pen and Mixed Media on Paper,
24.9cm x 17.7cm, 2006

18.5.15
15
GEN

Image Courtesy : Jogen Chowdhury

‘My works have introverted quality with intense feelings. When I paint or draw, I also establish a relationship with my subjects. As a social being, it becomes natural. It serves multiple purposes’.

- Jogen Chowdhury

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