



art exposure  
presents

# MEMORY LEAVES

RADHIKA AGARWALA   RID BURMAN   VIRAAG DESAI

# Memory Leaves

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Radhika agarwala  
Rid Burman  
Viraag Desai

Curated by Uma Nair

## MEMORY LEAVES

*Uma Nair*

The exhibition Memory Leaves takes its title from a conversation I had with India's greatest woman artist Arpita Singh when I wrote her essay for her monumental work *Wish Dream* in 2004. It also reminds me of the great story of the vineyard of Aeolus. In the story it is said that the earth has memory, like the vine. For us humans, it is a question of synchronising this root memory and that of the soils. In addition, the vines must respect the earth. These 3 artists echo that story of root memories born through the crucible of experiences but harnessed through an odyssey of experimentation.

In a world of fabular tales and everyday realities this show is about otherworldly abstraction and reality, along with figures of transformation, as companions on an imaginary journey through the metamorphoses of bodies and definitions of the human spirit.

Viraag Desai, Radhika Agrawal and Rid Burman are three practitioners who are forever grounded in many conversations with the world they inhabit. There are questions that keep emerging from their dialogues with the ambience, and the environment. These works by all three of them seem to capture inquiries that pervade the sciences, arts, and metaphysics of our time.





In their search for the subjects and thematic ideologies we see a representation of an abstract tenor and a metamorphoses of the human figure; the relationship between individuals and technologies; the connection between humans and the Earth transitions that lead to destruction and decadence. Nature is the glue that holds them together and unravels their odyssey of abstraction, of sifting the light from the mood edits of darkness and springing works that delight the mind's eye.

Three odysseys during the pandemic also reflect three seasons of being a part of the firmament of man and nature. There is great solace in remembering that what we call human nature, with all of its terrors and transcendences and contradictions, but we are also a humble subset of nature itself. In the landscape of nature, where the galaxy gives rise to the birth and death of stars we see a syncopation of creation and destruction. In the change of seasons in nature we see the revelation of all things beautiful even though fractured.

This exhibition exemplifies that we are mosaics, out of the broken bits of experience we become whole. These artists are encouraging us to think about the history of art, bring it forward and experiment with vision, thus stretching human capacity to new tasks in the landscape of nature's accents. In the fracturing experience of modernity each artist harnesses the potential of technologies to transform their own experiences into Memory Leaves.



Radhika Agarwala  
Untangling the debris as it flies away  
Cast brass and patina  
6 feet diameter  
2022

## RADHIKA AGARWALA

### UNTANGLING THE DEBRIS AS IT FLIES AWAY

“Let everything happen to you. Beauty and terror. Just keep going. No feeling is final.” Rainer Maria Rilke’s quote, frames my state of mind. The continuing pandemic intertwined with a cyclone amidst its damage troubled me, traumatised me and compelled me to take action as an artist, almost wearing the boots of an archaeologist.

The destruction became my material as well as my inspiration – acquiring the largest specimen ever for my practice – a fallen holy peepal tree / *Ficus religiosa*, which I found being removed by the municipal workers who agreed to let me take it.

I was particularly interested in this tree because of its historical, ecological and mythological importance. This tree also known as Sacred Fig is truly considered holy for Indians. Since childhood, I have seen people worshipping it, living inside it, saints chanting and performing rituals inside the tree. This tree is found everywhere, especially in my home city and my surroundings in Kolkata. According to Hindu mythology, Lord Brahma is considered to reside and dwell inside the roots of the sacred fig tree. Ecologically speaking, this tree releases oxygen in a repeat cycle without taking any break unlike most trees. This tree became my symbol and my metaphor for my journey. Through my works, I’m trying to capture a botanical melancholy of degeneration and struggle, life and death, absence and presence.

Radhika Agarwala to Uma Nair ( March 2022 )

## TACTILE TECTONIC SHIFTS

Scarred earth from the destruction caused by cyclone Amphan in Kolkata has been captured by Agarwala in the work ' Tectonic Shifts,' et al. Gashes in the ground – studies and impressions of soil tracking enables an unseen tracing of displacement and loss. Colours of the patina evoke memories of the past foliage, now lost to time. Her sculptures attempt to capture co-evolution and mutation encountered within her inhabited urban ecologies. In this trio of tree specimens, she mirrors the past to create a corollary with an ecological echo.

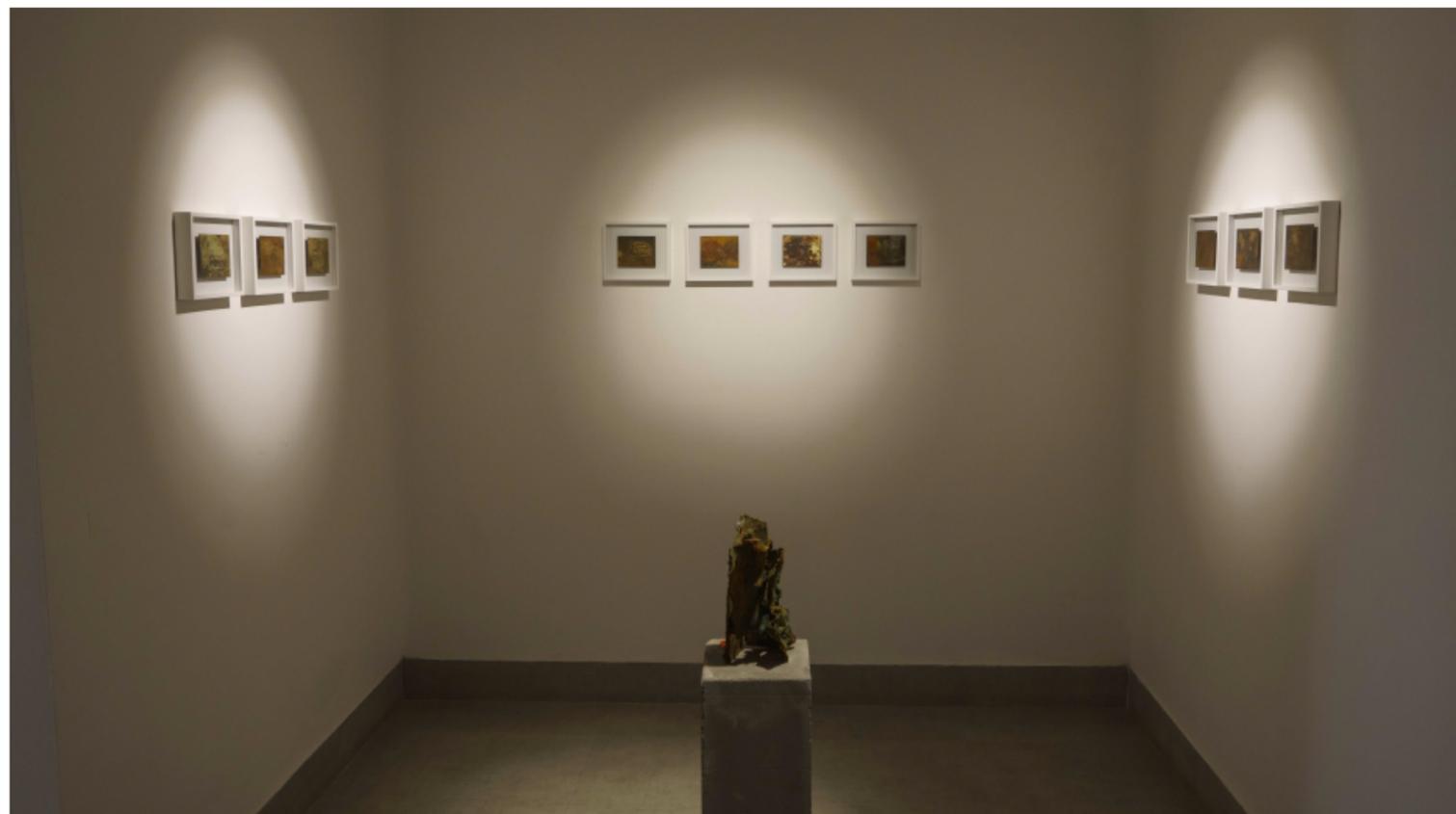
Radhika elucidates: “ Studying these tree specimens , I let them dry in my studio for almost one and half years , removing all its toxins and wires coiled up through the barks , preparing them to be alive again. I created moulds of various states of its degeneration. The decay of my moulds not only reflects the destruction of the natural ecosystem but also the cracks and the deterioration of our human body and condition.”



Radhika Agarwala  
Studies in Earth Displacement ( 1 - 30)  
Etching and patina on brass  
5 x 6 in each  
2022

Studies in Earth Displacement ( sculpture I )  
Cast brass and patina  
8.5 x 9 x 5.5 in  
2022

Studies in Earth Displacement ( sculpture II )  
Cast brass and patina  
11 x 10 x 6 in  
2022



Radhika Agarwala  
Studies in Debris Displacement ( 1 - 9 )  
Etching and patina on brass  
8 x 9 in each  
2022

Debris flow  
Cast brass and patina  
38 x 10 x 10 in  
2022

## FRACTURING EXPERIENCE OF MODERNITY

If Shifting Tectonics is one chapter another is a cluster of 35 (3 x 2 inch ) works, 'Studies 1-36 , Untangling The Debris As It Flies Away' – patina on brass , which reflects improvisations and plaintive studies of soil. Radhika creates multiple patinas , in colours of the earth ( brown , black , green and blue , etc) representing our oceans, forests ,soil ,and mountains. Installed in organic representations, Radhika's work is born of the belief that humanity can only defeat the fracturing experience of modernity - only feel whole again - if it harnesses the potential of knowing about the impact on earth elements from nature. As an artist through specialisation and experimentation, her works find the means to answer humanity's needs. In her commentary, the external space has become something foreign and hostile, so all we have in our internal reality is a space of safety and protection set between very specific limits, anything outside deconstructed, broken in pieces.

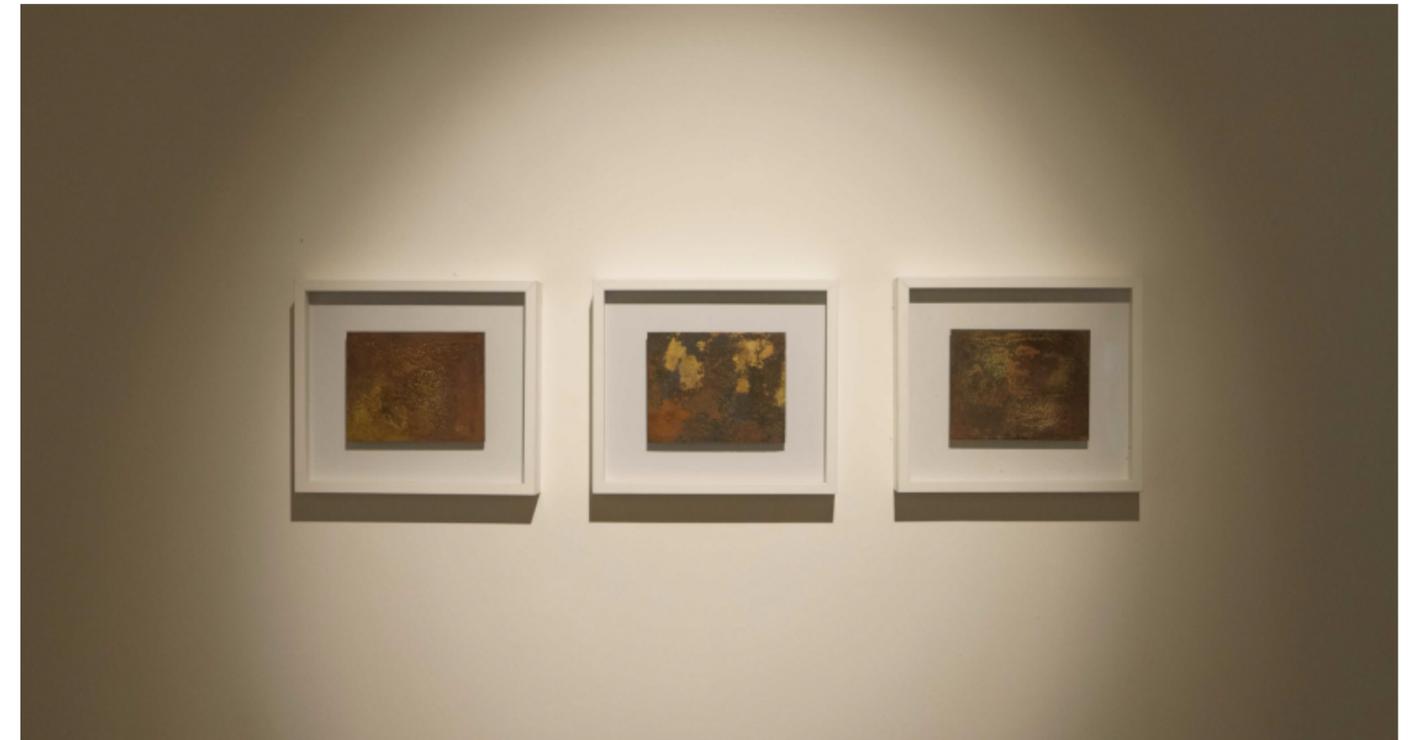
## TIME AND HISTORY

Radhika's monumental work contemplates humanity's relationship to the natural world with visual wonderment.

Untangling the Debris as it flies away, is a series in urban ecologies, where life is constantly re-envisioned through the prism of her own imagination in which transformation and decadence are constant forces of change. We see a classic commentary where trans disciplinary work presents us with tools of thought, and explores the presuppositions of science and everyday life. It is a world where everything can change, be transformed, become something else; almost like a world that has lost with the pressures of human living, an eternal object of fascination and desire, yet also a stencil of startling power and mystery, always fleeing the strictures of a fixed, coherent identity.

In this time of uncertainty and mixed feelings, her new body of work grapples with and negotiates our splintered culture, the strikingly frequent intersection of our aspirations and our anxieties. Continuing her uncannily prescient, presciently uncanny exploration of the ways in which images saturate, inform, transform, liberate, and implicate. Dense, occasionally impenetrable, evocative, residual tree forms play with the distances implicit in images of nature's decadence and detritus. We feel like we know them because their images are so much around us, and yet we do not - and cannot - know them precisely because they are all images.

Radhika's oeuvre is a visual vernacular that emerges from a thoughtful, deliberately in-depth engagement. Conceived like time capsules, it provides additional tools of investigation and introspection, weaving a web of references and echoes that link the past and the present.



Radhika Agarwala  
Studies in Debris Displacement ( 7 - 9 )  
Etching and patina on brass  
8 x 9 in each  
2022

## MONUMENTAL MAGIC

Radhika's approach is wide-ranging, a transhistorical approach that traces kinships and affinities between artistic methods and practices, to create new layers of meaning to bridge the present and past. What emerges is a historical narrative that is built around forms of symbiosis, solidarity, and human hood. The largest work in this suite *Untangling the Debris as it flies away* transcends the graph of time.

We are introduced to post human ecologies spanning nature's moods. The devolved and dispersed character of human agency and moral responsibility in the contemporary condition appears linked with the deepening global trauma of 'in-humanism' as a paradox of the Anthropocene for Radhika. Reclaiming human agency and accountability is crucial and critical for collective resistance to the unprecedented state of environmental and social collapse resulting from the inhumanity of contemporary capitalist geopolitics. Understanding the potential for such resistance in the post-human condition requires urgent new thinking about the nature of human influence in complex interactional systems, and about the nature of such systems when conceived in a non-anthropocentric way. Each work in this suite unravels like a time capsule frozen in the leitmotif of *Memory Leaves*.

Many of the stories told in Radhika's time capsules thus participate in the complex process of rewriting and rereading ecological history that has marked the last few months, when it has become clearer than ever that no historical narrative can ever be considered final.



*Untangling the debris as it flies away* (closeup)

## RID BURMAN | DRISHTI

Most of my work comes as a homage to the dialogue between us humans and nature. We exist because of nature and yet our relationship is quite skewed.. we are nothing but a blip in the entire existence of nature and somehow we always seem to not respect this .

Through the series of images I wanted to highlight small but unmissable marks of nature on our everyday existence.. its also a way to create an awareness... to see , appreciate , learn humility. Throughout my childhood, both my parents have been a big influence on spirituality.. the invisible hand of the unknown... a sort of a calculation that goes on and life keeps unfolding..like a big equation ...balancing things out but creating its marks in the process

Rid Burman to Uma Nair ( March 2022 )



Riddhibrata Burman  
Conception I & II  
Chromogenic Print  
(manual process)  
38 x 76 in  
2022





Riddhibrata Burman  
Drishti I - IV  
Photogramming  
19 x 19 in each  
2022

Photographer Rid Burman's interest in qualities of space, time, and light have endured throughout his career and transcended the very different media he employs. In this suite of works he splits his exploration into two seminal chapters. The first suite seeks to expose light abstraction in nature's passages. Amidst the earthy soil sediments, textural tenors reign supreme. Look closer and you sense a mosaic of moorings that revel in nature's design dictates.

The second suite is a flashback to the ethereal world of the great pedagogue Lazoly Moholy Nagy who created "photograms" in 1920s. These photograms born out of dark room drama are (photographs made without the use of a camera or negative) like Nagy, Burman is ultimately interested in studying how all basic elements interact. But there stops the similarity, if Nagy used objects, Burman uses colour. In more ways than one Burman highlights the power of photography as fine art, 'not to define but to suggest the possibilities of photographic vision.'



Riddhibrata Burman  
Drishti IX - XI  
Photogramming  
17.5 x 20 in each  
2022

## PHOTOGRAMS IN CAMERA - LESS COLOUR

Moholy Nagy, the principle player of the Abstract Expressionist form said : "The photogram, or camera-less record of forms produced by light, which embodies the unique nature of the photographic process, is the real key to photography."

Burman elucidates : Creating photograms has picked up pace recently with some very prominent and serious photographers from the West who have incorporated this in their fashion statements as well personal work. It is quintessentially playing and painting with light on photosensitive paper in complete darkness. Thus bringing about a very meditative quality and thought to the process "

Burman's abstract doodles in colour become an exploration of the medium as he expands its capabilities and informs his expansive understanding of its role in the creation of art for a new age. Like Moholy-Nagy he makes these images without a camera, in the dark room by squeezing colour gels on or over the sheet of photographic paper and carefully directing the angle and movement of light, creating enigmatic compositions in colour tones that transcend the sum of its parts.

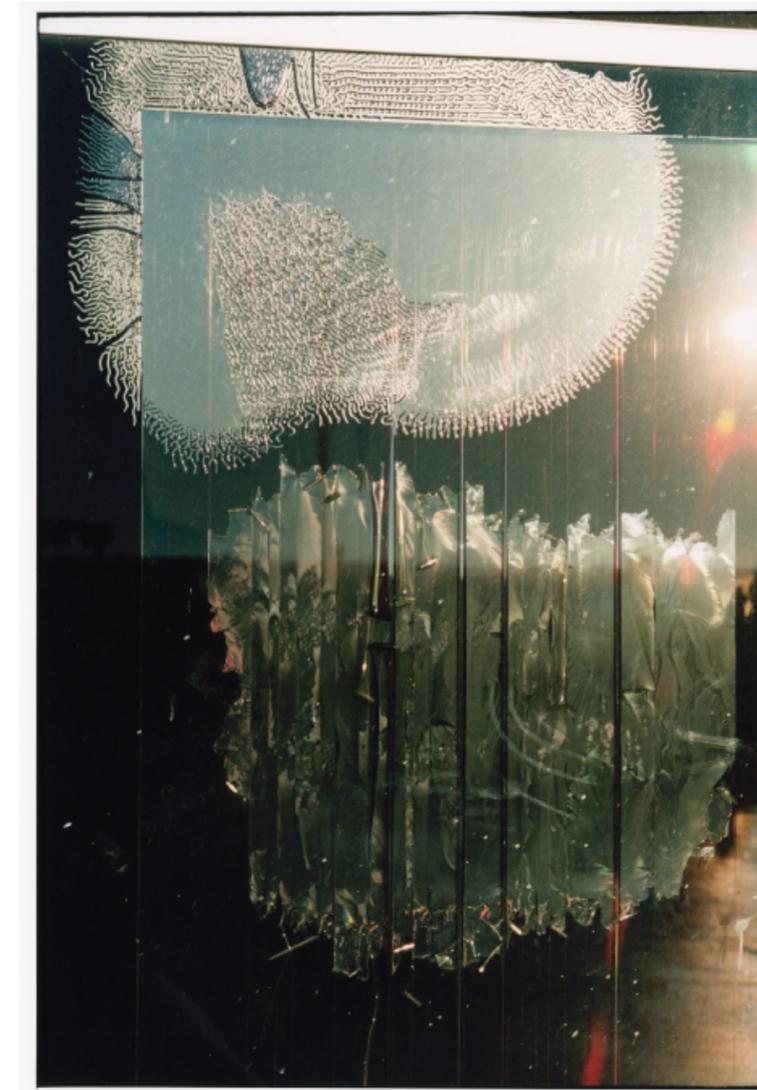
Burman brings forward Moholy's belief in the photogram as a tool for artistic expression. ' The photogram, or camera-less record of forms produced by light, which embodies the unique nature of the photographic process, is the real key to photography' he wrote in his 1933 essay A New Instrument of Vision.

## ALBUM OF MEMORIES

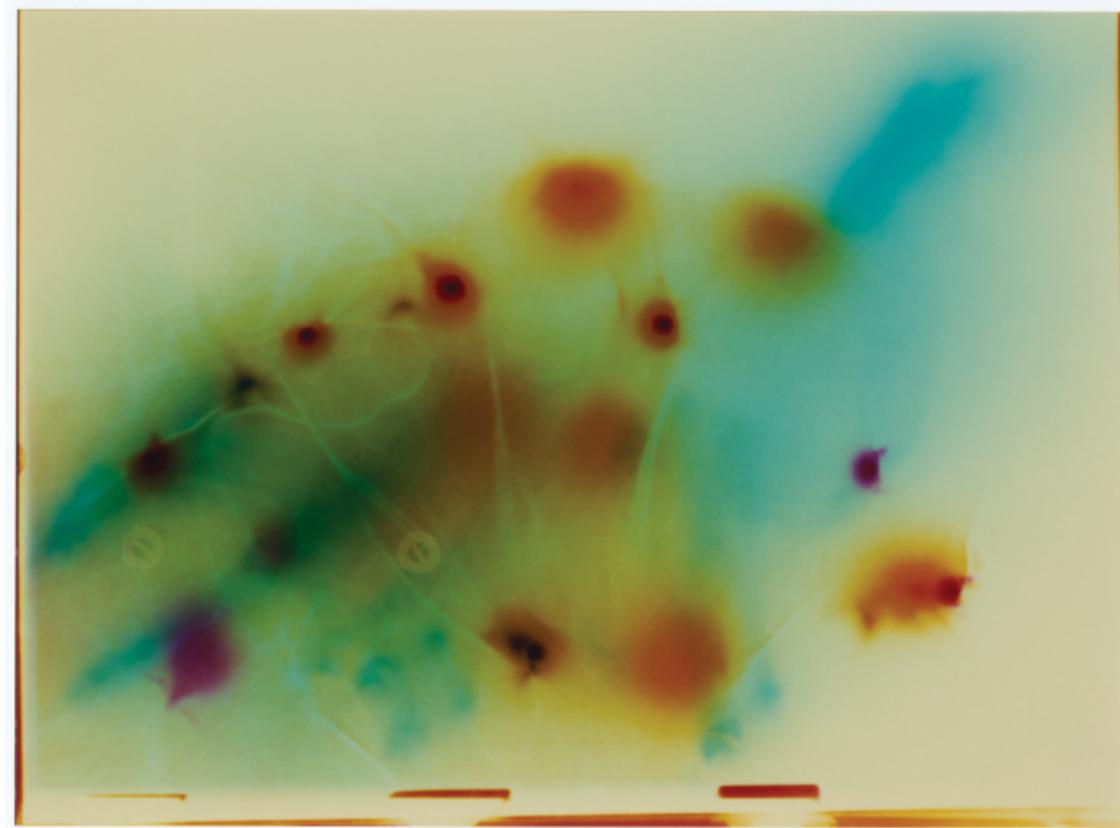
For someone who handles colour every time he shoots for Architectural Digest, Vogue or GQ in Conde Nast publications, Burman's dalliance with colour brims his own encyclopaedia of an album of memories. This experimentation then is a novel experience of deliberate manipulation in dark room drama. He explains colour codes of subversion.

"The colours in the photograms are reversed...if we paint with blue light, the colour comes yellow, because it's going from negative to positive.. similarly with red it gives a very interesting tone of Cyan. For me this is a very interesting interpretation spiritually.

Converting energy almost .. somehow churning out something positive from something negative, a process of cleansing. Naturally a lot of the symbolism therefore led me to play with religious and superstitious interpretations. A bit of darkness converted through light into a bright burst of symbolic colour. I am asking people again to see, to stop, to feel..which is why the eye is consistent in many. Also there are many symbols of meditation .. or at least an impression of them," adds Burman.



Riddhibrata Burman  
Sunset  
Chromogenic Print  
43 x 31 in  
2022



Riddhibrata Burman  
Drishti VIII  
Photogramming  
17.5 x 20 in  
2022

## NATURE'S ABSTRACTS

Burman's second suite is an ode to nature. In Burman's handling of nature's abstract studies we see quotidian objects transformed into pure compositional elements within a dynamic and animated whole. Dominating the images is the artful interaction of texture and tones in the palette of light's prism. Colour connotations appear as a comparatively obscure network of tones in the lower register. In these abstract studies, those portions of residual linear elements rest directly on the photographic paper during exposure and are rendered with greater clarity. The alluringly indistinct rendering of the forms suggest that there was a suspension for a fragment of exposure time. We see a confluence of contrasting colour fields in this suite. Gravitas and depth both intermingle to create a corollary of conversations that sift and sieve through the tenets of time and tide. Colour for Burman is many registers. He explains:

"When I am photographing something it's also a lot to do with the colour of the light, weather, the amount of sunlight in both reflection and refractive indices. Colours change with these things and so do our reactions. I would think I am sensitive to these things, and deeply affected by what I see through the lens, it's in constant flux, it changes several times a day.

Sometimes the somber deepness of greens mixed with elements of whites reminds me about our bodily functions...everything in the universe somehow seems really connected..I see colour and patterns repeated so many times in completely different things that are in no connection to each other otherwise. I love juxtaposing colour yes...for me it gives an interesting complexity to a visual ..emotionally.”

This suite then stirs within us powerful emotions that can make all kinds of things materialise. We hear in them the sound of two parts detaching, the moment when nature is the most physical, the most raw and tangible that it will ever be. It is in this moment that the sounds come out; when the image becomes more than a mere metaphor.



Riddhibrata Burman  
Drishti V - VII  
Photogramming  
20 x 13 in each  
2022

These abstracts contain within an anti-vanitas logic. We think not of the blooming flowers and dewy botanics on old Dutch paintings, but an emphasis on the peak of life in sober manifestations of what remains: the moulds detached, the skins shed; things become useless, and become art. To come back to the open fabric of nature, the flip side to its exposure is an invitation to care, just as nature is a space carved out for inhabitation. We could say there's something desolate about these abstract studies, something empty, yet full about the scenes. But it is precisely amidst the material reality of that matrix of oneness, in this capturing of the aftermath, that we meet, finally, paradoxically, to acknowledge that nature is an embedded mutation with human memory.



Riddhibrata Burman  
A State of Brittleness  
Chromogenic Print  
22 x 18 in  
2022



Riddhibrata Burman  
Cosmos  
Chromogenic Print  
39.5 x 30.5  
2022

## VIRAAG DESAI | BREAKING DOWN BINARIES

I feel the most intense experiences of colour in its subtle shifts. The sensitive contrasts between shades of paper and white resin, or graphite against darkness, help highlight or conceal the topology of the surface. Monochrome creates a comfortable space for me to aim towards more intricate geometries without creating too much dissonance.

I have been most interested in forms that are 'generative' or produced via the use of computer algorithms and formulae. This allows me to create intensely complex geometries that are usually experienced in a digital space. These generative forms can range from root simulations to crowds of people to fractals. . Stereolithography 3d printing technologies are an essential part of this process, bridging the gap between the digital and physical. High resolution 3d scans are also used to tether the compositions to reality. I found an affinity and familiarisation that progressed and brought me to this point.

Viraag Desai to Uma Nair ( Feb 2022 )



Viraag Desai calls his suite of translated 3D works as transitives. He divides his creative surge into chapters that he titled After the Void, Paroxysm as well as Body Politic. The essence of form is his most integral design dynamic. His process and technique both call for scrutiny because it opens doors to a unique ingenuity. He invites us to open up to a great multiplicity of alternative ideas in sculptural signatures. The works themselves stand alone as hypnotising, visually pleasing and prompting introspection, but they are activated in a certain context of all art explorations that have come before them, by breaking down binaries and reminding us that we as humans have continued to embark on new odysseys albeit after the pandemic.

Viraag explains , “ After the Void (I -VII) is a series about the emergence from the void of the pandemic/shutdown into a new world. The lack of human activity has reset the world to a new natural state, where the wilderness has reclaimed civilization. With each piece we get a progressively more magnified view, going from the social to the personal.”



Viraag Desai  
Detour  
5 x 5 x 15 in  
Oxidized Copper on Resin  
2022



Viraag Desai  
Halycon  
9 x 5,5 x 16 in  
Graphite on resin  
2022

## DIGITAL DALLIANCE

Viraag loves having a digital dalliance with the essence of form. His works invite us to open up to a great multiplicity of alternative ideas in sculptural signatures.

His use of 3D printed resin helps him to fabricate into his work an intricate geometry. His process is scientific because he uses electroplating and oxidation to fabricate forms of ingenious intonations. Viraag plays with the idea of manifestation thereby creating a series of works that seem like a recurring ripple of forms born of a fulcrum of foundational creativity. His understanding of architectonics is also deep and observational in tone and tenor.

He says : “ Paroxysm documents the initial outburst out of the old system, represented by a crumbling classical house. Root systems have broken down the architecture, allowing the inhabitants to finally be free.”

In more ways than one he embodies T.S.Eliot’s Four Quartets when he wrote time past and time present.

Viraag is most explicitly concerned with time as an abstract principle but seems to give it a transitional character in his creation. Paroxysm then is a combination of a hypothesis on time—indicating to us that the past and the future are always contained in the present when he takes the example of the crumbling classical house.

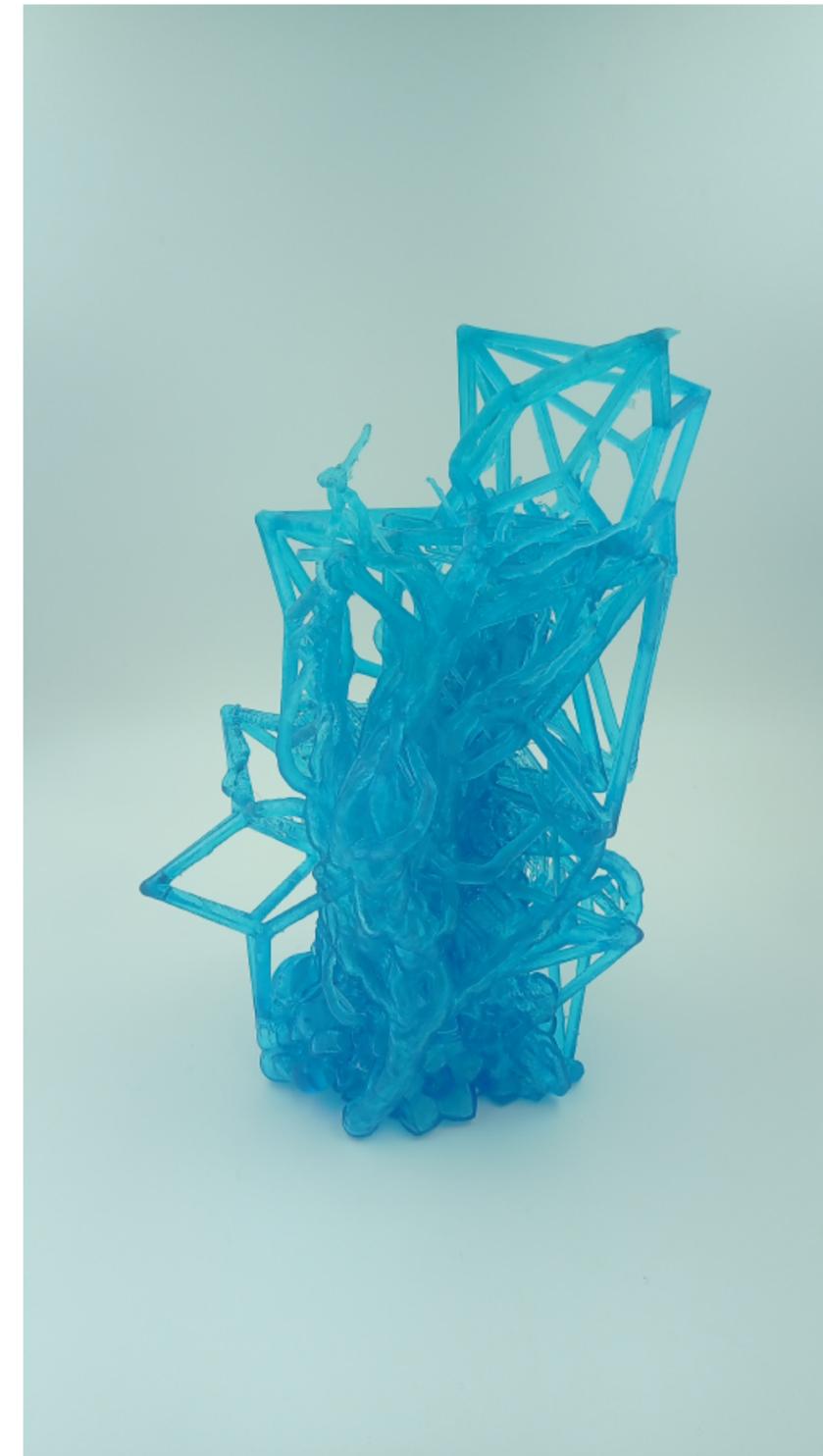


Viraag Desai  
Elysium  
11 x 7.5 x 32 in  
Graphite on resin  
2022

## MOORING METAPHORS

*Viraag also tries his hand mooring metaphors in the figurative human figure. Body Politic — is about the ascent to the 'mind' or head of the political body. He says it is inspired by phrenological diagrams, the work acts as a metaphor for the physical body as well as the concept of the state (polity).*

*Body Politic bears many experiences too. We are reminded of bodies mottled with nature's fiery brilliance: flowing magma taking the place of blood vessels, while the human skin channels the vibrancy of solar/lunar flares in the context of night or day. The figure's expression is a mixture of intense changes, a certain diabolism sets in and we sense both pain and resignation. Desai conjures our minds with all kinds of stories and references, In doing so, he nods to the overwhelming presence of diversity in the representation of the past and the present, as well as to the legacy of colonisation, migration and so many other stories that run through the annals of history.*



Viraag Desai  
Overture  
8 x 7 x 17  
Resin  
2022

## SCULPTURAL ENSEMBLE

His work Halcyon sees a detour as well as a symbiotic relationship between man and his environment, where the people work together with their mechanical systems to produce a new natural reality.

Viraag uses the dictums of technology to create a series of sculptural ensembles that have an amorphous aura and are beautifully proportioned. Not only are his original ideas carefully related to the foundational principle of the human figure, but all these works are perfectly balanced with the main body of the ideations he presented. The specific quality of this balance derives precisely from the tension between the proportioned stacking of elements and the upward movement of the ensemble as a whole. In finding his own islands of integration and sublimation we also see the precision of artistic decision which characterises his work and also becomes manifest in the choice of materials, in the relation between their identity and differences.

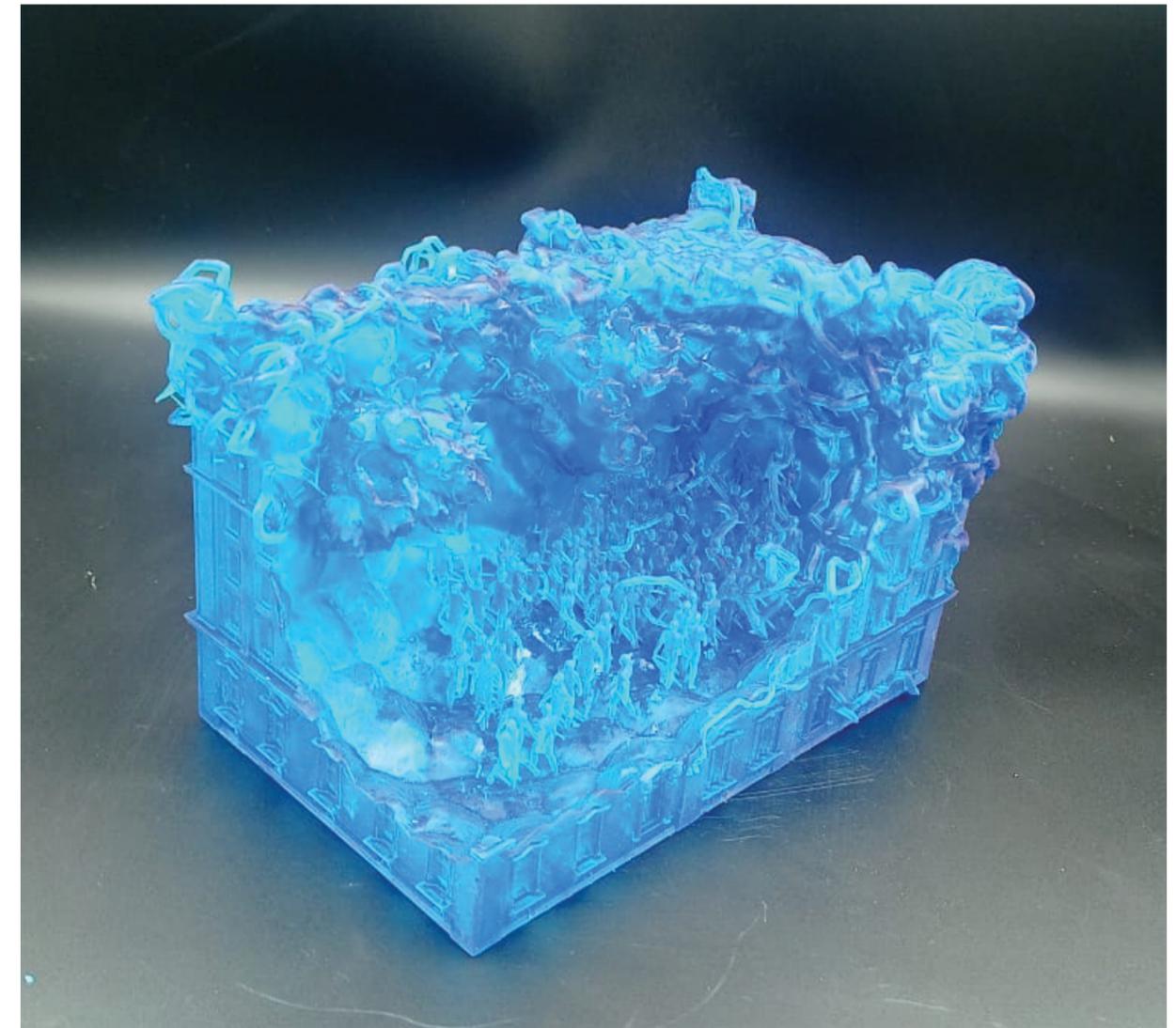


Viraag Desai  
Progeny  
5 x 5 x 23  
Oxidized copper on resin and PLA  
2022



Viraag Desai  
Body Politic II  
8 x 6 x 28 in  
Graphite on Resin  
2022

In his seamless construction of recent works Viraag gives the viewer a sense of maximalist whimsy, a shared state of collective hybrids. According to him Detour shows a more intimate scene of reflection in the middle of an exodus. In the essence of evocations of the ancient past and futuristic possibilities—here is a nod to modernism’s different registers. We are left with a mosaic of memories created in the context of chimerical constellations of the songs of the earth.



Viraag Desai  
Paroxysm  
9 x 6 x 7 in  
Resin  
2022



Viraag Desai  
After the void II  
16.5 x 13.5 x 4 in  
resin on paper  
2022



Viraag Desai  
After the void III  
16.5 x 13.5 x 4 in  
resin on paper  
2022



Viraag Desai  
After the void VII  
16.5 x 13.5 x 4 in  
resin on paper  
2022



Viraag Desai  
After the void V  
16.5 x 13.5 x 4 in  
resin on paper  
2022

## **RADHIKA AGARWALA**

Born in Kolkata, artist Radhika Agarwala received her MFA in Fine Art from Goldsmiths, London, in 2011. She received her BFA in Painting from Rabindra Bharati University in Calcutta (2007), followed by a Post-Baccalaureate Certificate in Painting from The School of the Art Institute of Chicago (2008) and an MFA in Painting from the University of Florida, College of Fine Art (2010). Her paintings often reflect her flirtation with fragility and permanence, using material from both nature and civilization. She finds it impossible to ignore mankind's role as a major geological force, one whose impact that has not yet fathomed. She draws inspiration from nature and every city she has lived and incorporates them into her art forms and practices.

She has been a part of multiple exhibitions which includes both solo and group exhibitions, which includes names like 'For Two Lovers', Kristin Hjellegjerde Gallery, London, 'Encounter', Kristin Hjellegjerde Gallery, London, Delhi Contemporary Art Week, Presented by Gallery Latitude 28 ,New Delhi, 'All The Days And Nights, Kristin Hjellegjerde Gallery, London, Delhi Contemporary Art Week, Presented by Gallery Latitude 28, New Delhi, India Art Fair, Presented by Gallery Latitude 28, New Delhi, 'Art Exhibit', The India Story 4.0, Kolkata, Babur Ki Gai', Latitude 28 & Art District XIII, New Delhi, curated by Adwait Singh.

## **RID BURMAN**

Born in India in the early 80's, Rid Burman has his roots in the family of sculptors and painters. As a consequence, art has always been a chief source of inspiration for him as a photographer.

After resourceful years of education at Brooks Institute of Photography in California, he has worked as an assistant to Steven Klein & Mark Seliger, post which he returned to India. He has been collaborating with eminent magazines like Elle & Vogue to name a few.

He has the ability to create unique stories and with it share a vision of his own. He is one photographer who is always on the move across the globe, thus philosophies from both side of the world inspire him.

He has also photographed some of the most renowned faces in Indian cinema and continues to enjoy the process of creating a great blend of art and commerce.

## **VIRAAG DESAI**

Viraag Desai (b.1986) graduated in 2009 with a BFA from The School of the Art Institute of Chicago. He has widely shown in USA & India.

He has participated in artist residencies throughout India but more notably in Neilson Gallery, Grazalema, and Cadiz, Spain and most recently the Uronto residency, in Bangladesh. Group exhibits include 'Wanderlust' . J&K Gallery. Arcadia , California (2010); 'Trip Tash ' at AakarPrakar Galley; 'Screenshots of Utopia' and 'Mapping Detours' at Chitrakoot Art Gallery (2013); 'The Tube Without Paint, A Fungal Lattice & The Bird That Never Flew Away, Jehangir Art Gallery, Mumbai. He took part in the Cima Awards show in Kolkata followed by 'Uday' at AakarPrakar Art Advisory, New Delhi in 2016, followed by the 'Affordable Art Fair' in Hampstead.

He has completed several large scale commissions for commercial spaces, both in India and abroad, expanding his practice from painting to sculpture to technology-based installations, such as 'Emissions' at Serendipity Arts Festival, Goa. This has allowed him to further meld his experience in digital and set design with his artistic practice.

In the last year he participated in the Piramal residency, followed by a commission to paint murals for Piramal Aranya, Mumbai. He veers towards the technical in his new-media art, when designing for films concerts and plays (Rakshas,2019), drawing his inspiration from physics, math and emerging online cultures.

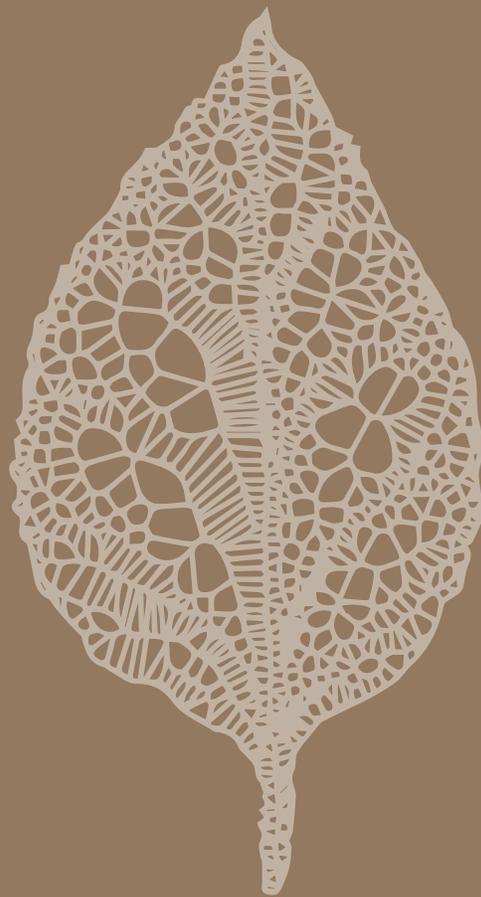
At present, he works between his studios in Mumbai and Kolkata.

## **UMA NAIR**

Curator Uma Nair has written art criticism for 32 years. Her books include Paresh Maity 25 years and Reverie with Raza. Her interview of Raza and Gandhi ( 2004) will be published in the French Centre Pompidou publication this year.

Her curatorial ventures have been Earth Songs ,Moderns and Bapu@150 with Lalit Kala Akademi. Select Retrospectives of Gopal Ghose, Jamini Roy Prodosh Das Gupta and Jyoti Bhatt.

Memory Leaves is her first avant-garde curatorial venture.



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