

LALU PRASAD SHAW

EARLY AND RECENT WORKS

Graphics | Crayons | Temperas



Shaw 77

Shaw 11/11/1977

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INTRODUCTION

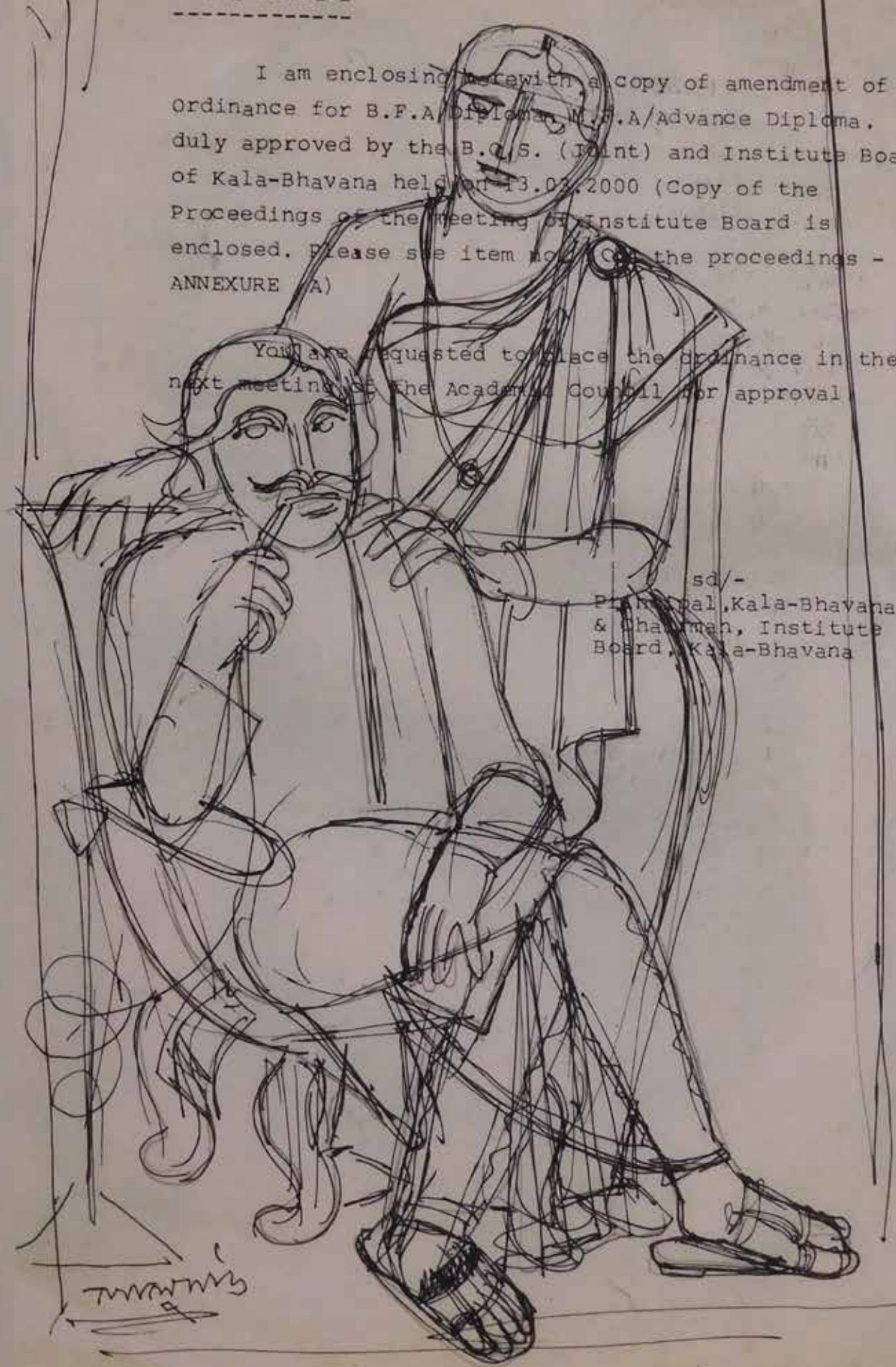
‘Shaw employs printmaking techniques to distil his complex imagery into potent and universal signs to address basic human concerns. Themes of love and jealousy, loneliness and anxiety, and sickness and death preoccupy him and resonate in his printed oeuvre.’

—K.G. Subramanyan

This seminal retrospective brings together works from different phases of Lalu Prasad Shaw’s artistic career, selected to allow a wide-angle look at the 87-year-old master’s decades-long engagement with his craft. As a student at the Government College of Art, Calcutta, Shaw mastered the techniques of handling oil and later tempera before experimenting with printmaking. He was deeply affected by the political situation of the time, but chose to express his discontentment through satire and humour. After his initial struggle to establish himself, Shaw gained recognition both as a painter and printmaker, besides being an active member of Society of Contemporary Arts. As the artist elaborates, ‘Since 1983, I have dedicated myself primarily to the medium of tempera. Despite their distinction, my prints and paintings mirror the similar affinity for experimentation with space and form, image, harmony and balance.’

Stylistically, Shaw has evolved an artistic narrative that is abstract and surreal in some cases but rooted in realism in other instances, his dexterity

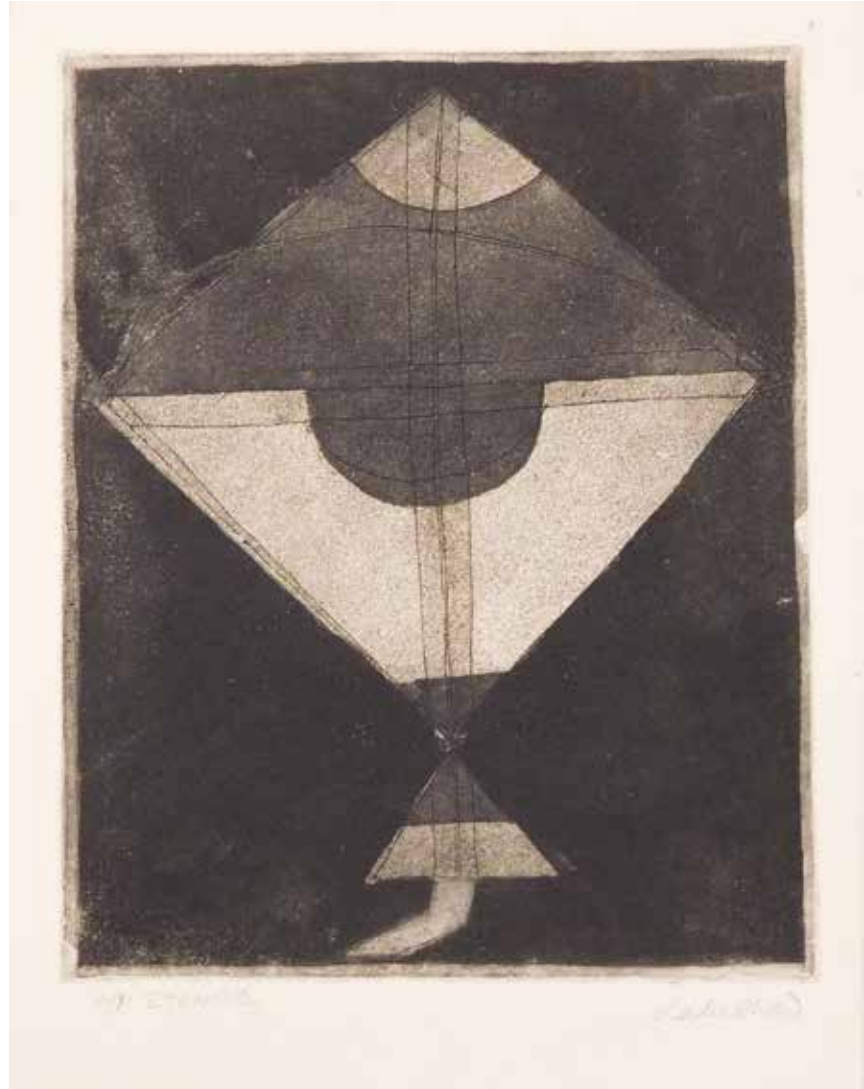
in both the genres quite exceptional. While the exhibition has some brilliant instances of his early work and fine line drawings, the latter-day works are equally significant and relevant if one is to understand Shaw's place amongst his outstanding contemporaries, many of whom are no longer among us, including Dharmanarayan Dasgupta with whom he had an initial Two Person Show. Shaw's present-day compositions, with their positioning of figures and objects on an essentially flat picture plane, have a unique quality of brevity and wit. The Babu-Bibi series is especially enchanting with the everydayness that the works capture, whether it be sartorial preferences or routine. Jibananda Das's Banalata Sen is present, too, as the inspiration that brings alive the romance in the Bibi-Babu tale. The series is also a reminder to the viewer of the artist's Bengali roots of which he is rather proud. No matter what the theme, the city of Calcutta, his deeply beloved Mahanagar, is a part of his pictorial story.



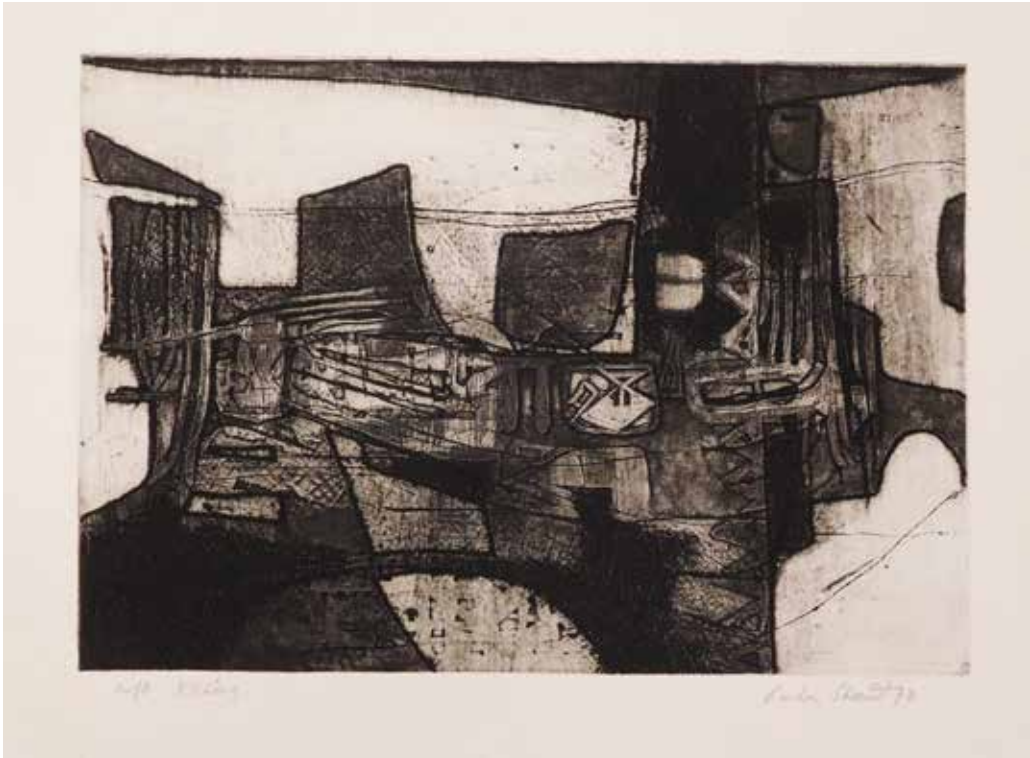


GRAPHICS

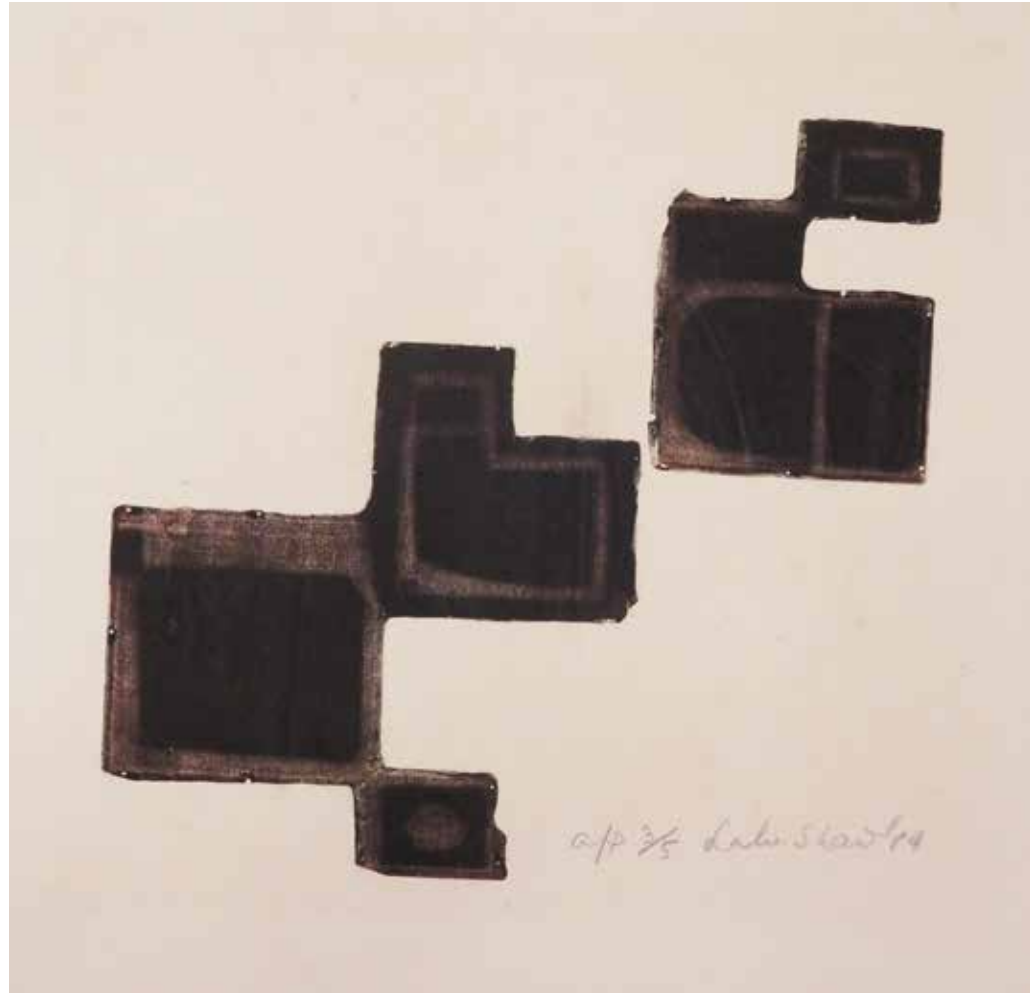
This selection proves Lalu Prasad Shaw's formidable expertise of printmaking techniques. It has been a lifelong spiritual mission 'to be one with the burin, the panel, the universe in a free-flowing gesture which is the ultimate aim.' Shaw's compositions are sans a beginning, middle or end. They are suspended in endless time, aligned in spirit to the past as much as the unseen future. The bleakness of displacement and unrest, the sense of hope and hopelessness comes from his personal engagement with the political scene in the state but underlying the despair is deep faith in humanity. The tragi-comedy of life is like a temporal sequence that comes and goes, the artist accepts this inevitability as he creates his myths. His graphic prints—mostly abstract, with geometric patterns in bold black-and-white—are reminiscent of the cityscape, the intricate mesh of lines and forms in turns elegiac and joyous morph into animated imagery depending on how you choose to view them.



Untitled, Etching, 17"x 13", 1976



Untitled, Etching, 17"x 22", 1970



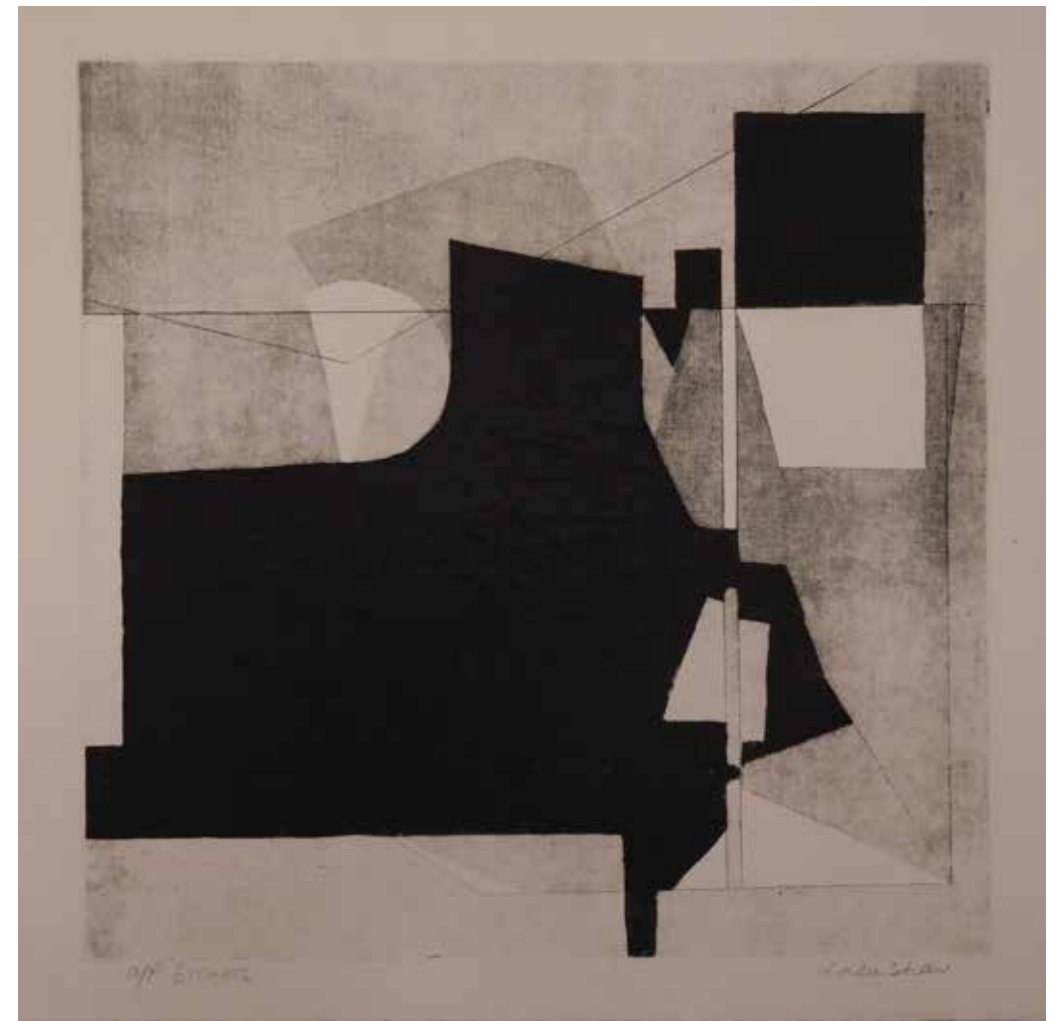
Untitled, Etching, 20"x 20", 2014



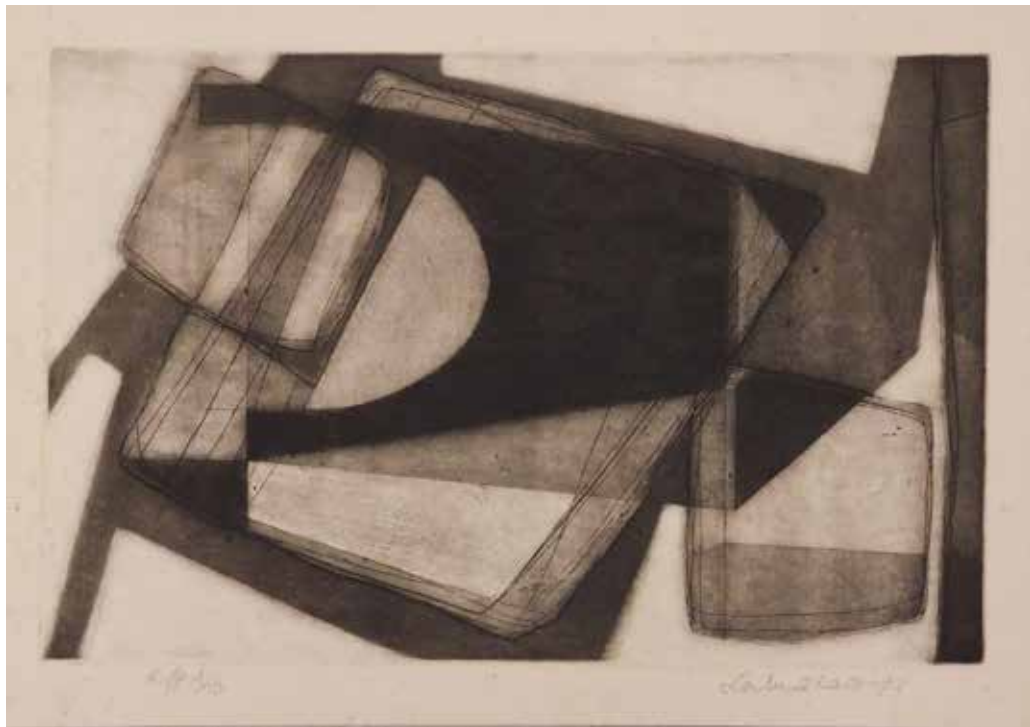
Untitled, Etching, 21"x 15", 1974



Untitled, Etching, 22"x 16", 1983



Untitled, Etching, 22"x 22", 1976



Untitled, Etching, 15"x 22", 1977



Untitled, Etching, 18" x 14", 2013



Untitled, Lithograph, 25" x 20" , 2007



Untitled, Lithograph, 25" x 20", 2012



Linocut, 14" x 12", 1977



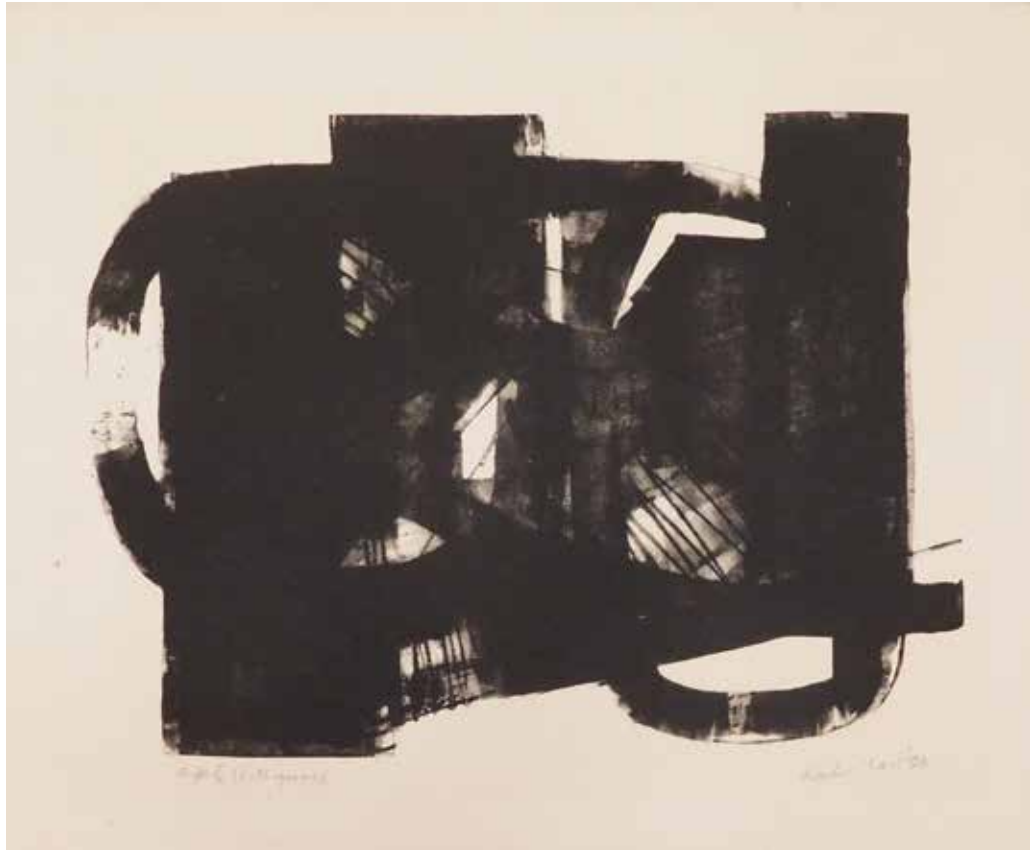
Linocut, 14" x 12", 1977



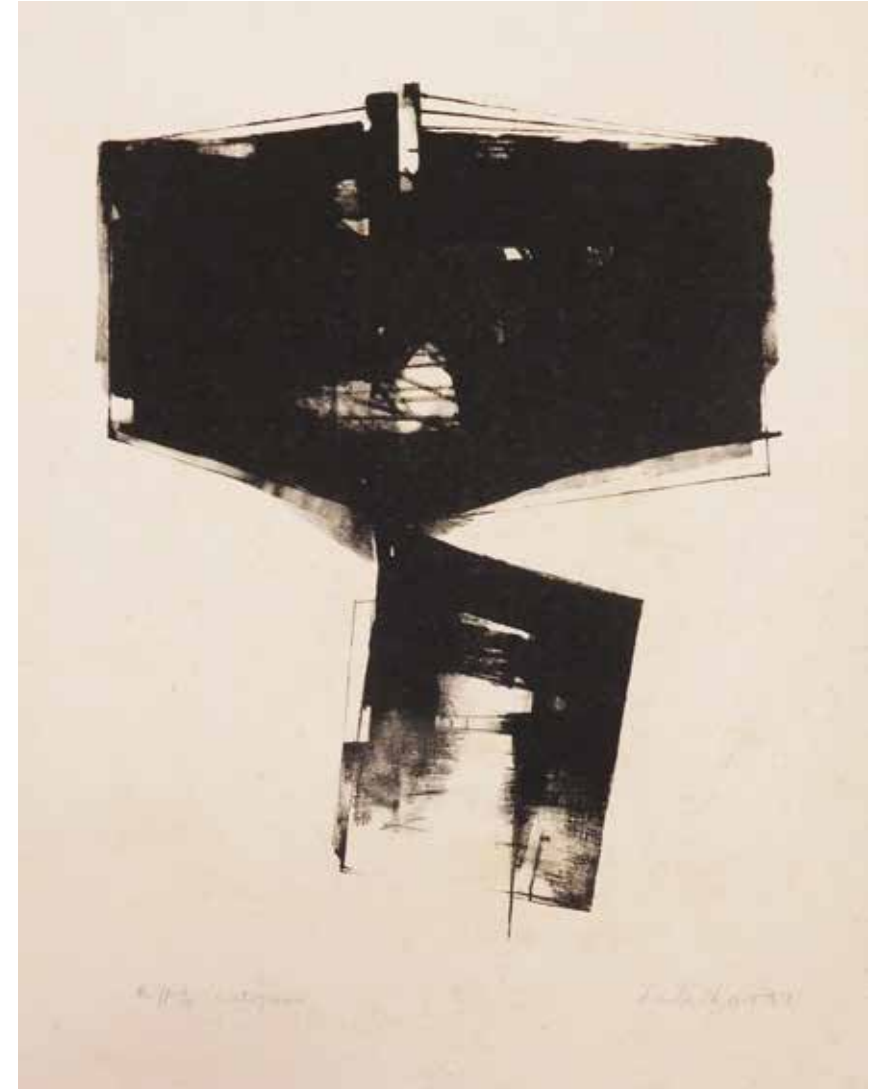
Linocut, 14" x 12", 1977



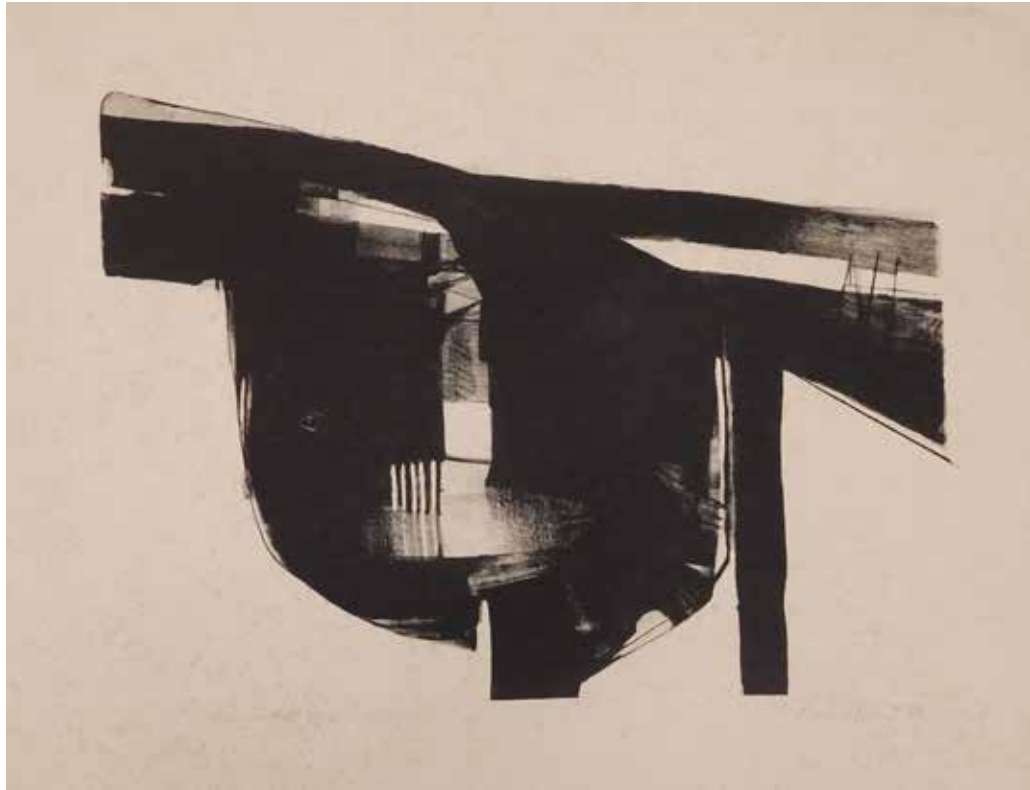
Lithograph, 20" x 14", 1991



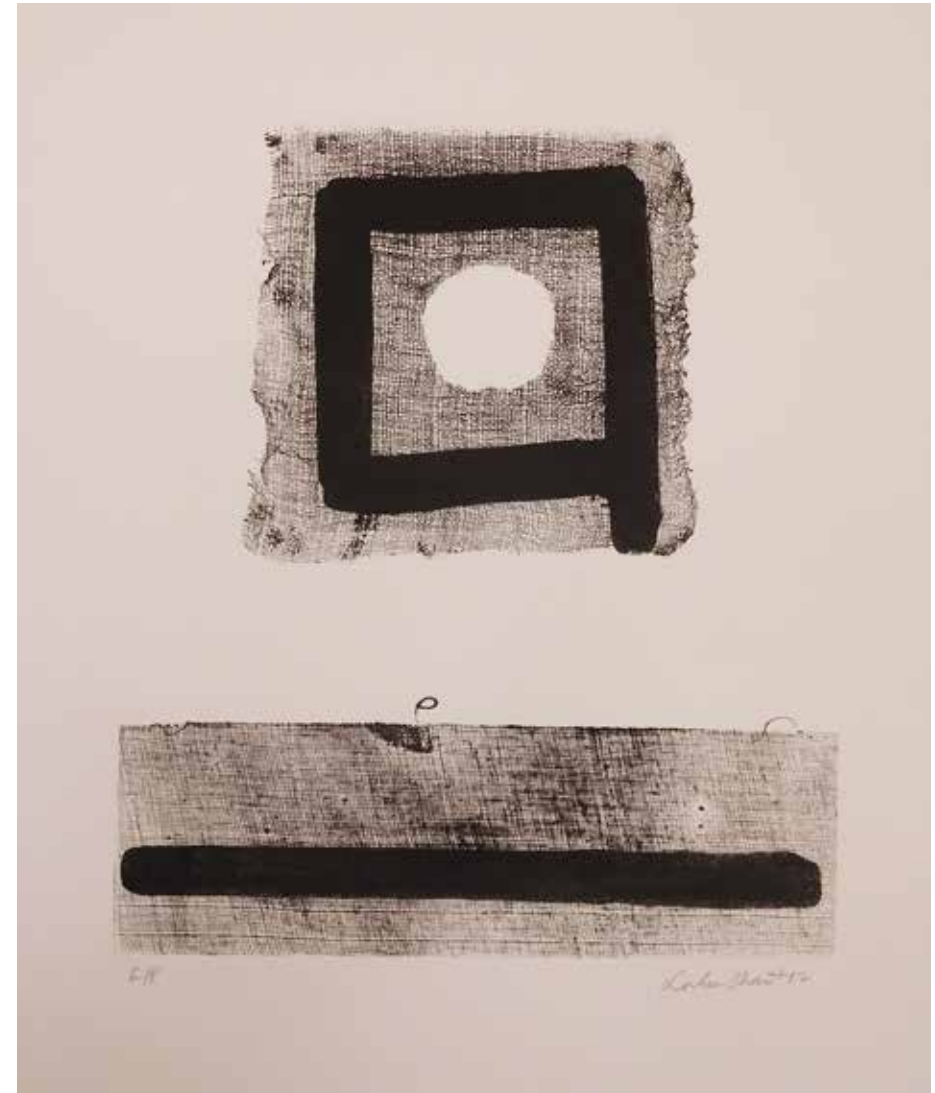
Lithograph, 20" x 25", 1983



Lithograph, 22" x 16", 1983



Lithograph, 19" x 24", 1983



Lithograph, 22" x 18", 2012



Lithograph, 25" x 18", 1984

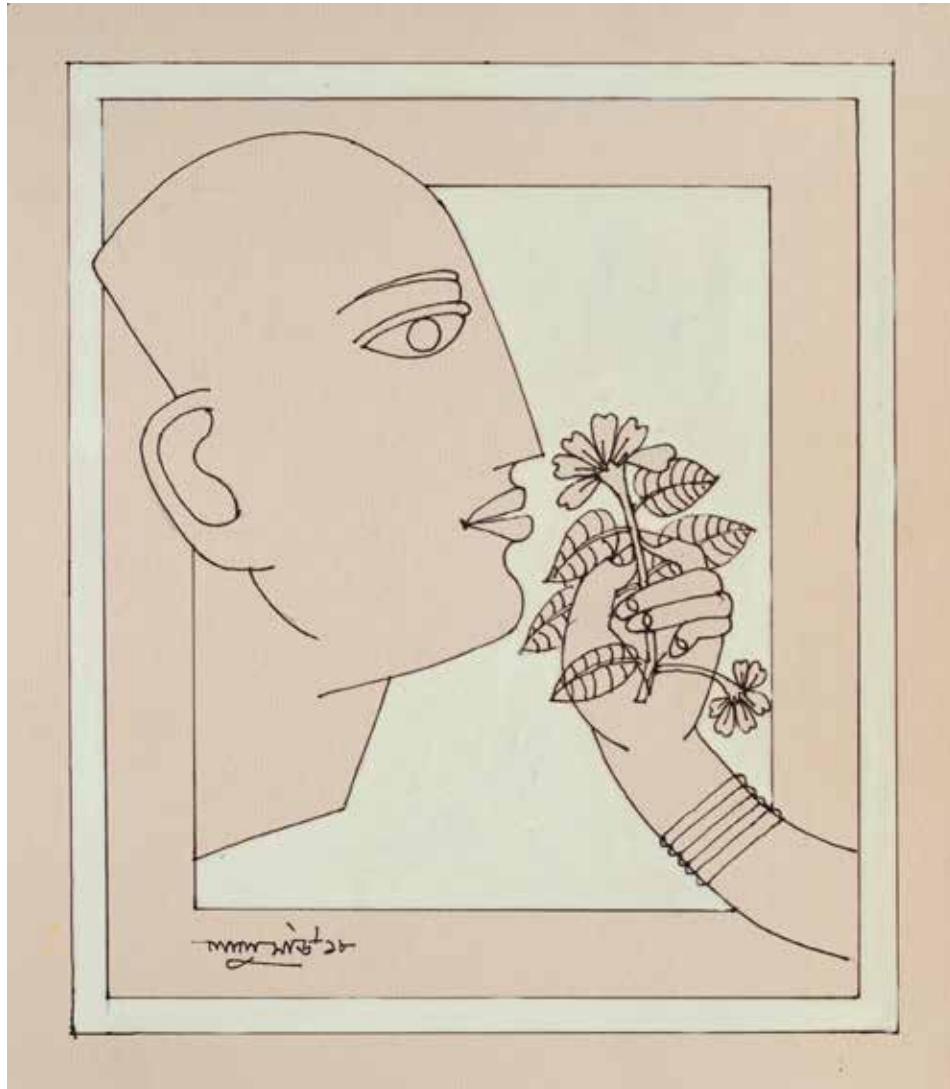


Lithograph, 29" x 22", 2012



CRAYONS

Here is a series of works that mark a stylistic shift, creating a two-dimensional space with images that belong to the figurative genre. The compositions with strongly delineated lines—at times using charcoal and conte—are powerful portraits of characters whose expressions are compelling and realistic. Sometimes, the element of fantasy and whimsy appears as the head is severed or balanced on the crook of an arm, with a magpie or crow sharing the same frame. The cat with the fish is reminiscent of a *Patachitra* painting commonly seen but with the unmistakable handling of Shaw's deft lines and therefore more quirky and contemporary.



Untitled, Mixed Media on Board, 16"x14", 2018



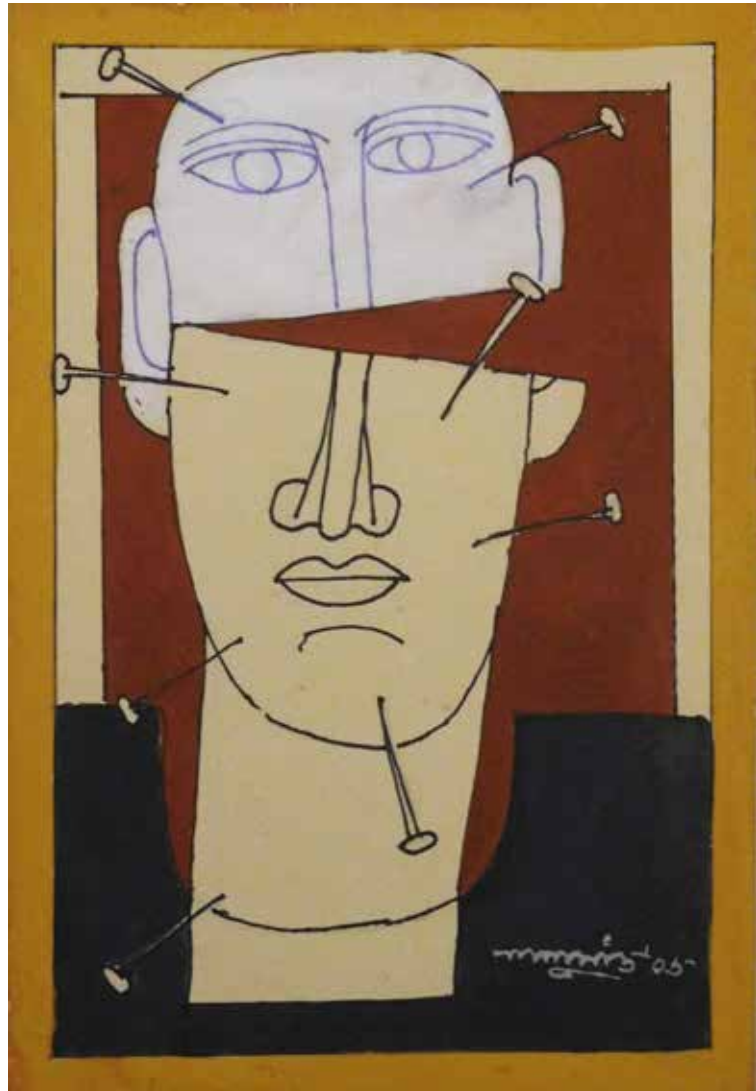
Bird, Mixed Media on Board, 16" x 13.5", 2018



Untitled, Charcoal and Conti on Board, 20.5" x 15", 2017



Untitled, Charcoal and Conti on Board, 20.5" x 15", 2014



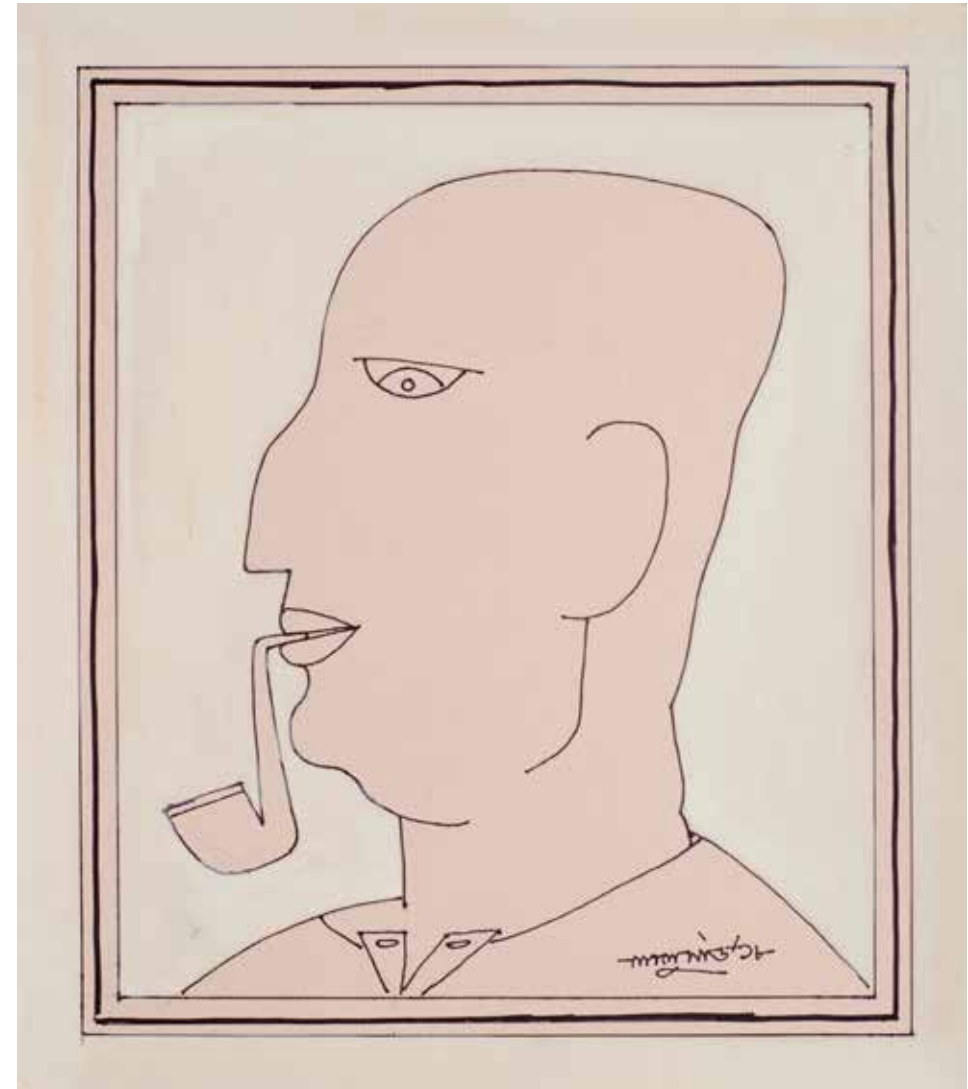
Untitled, Mixed Media on Board, 11" x 8", 2006



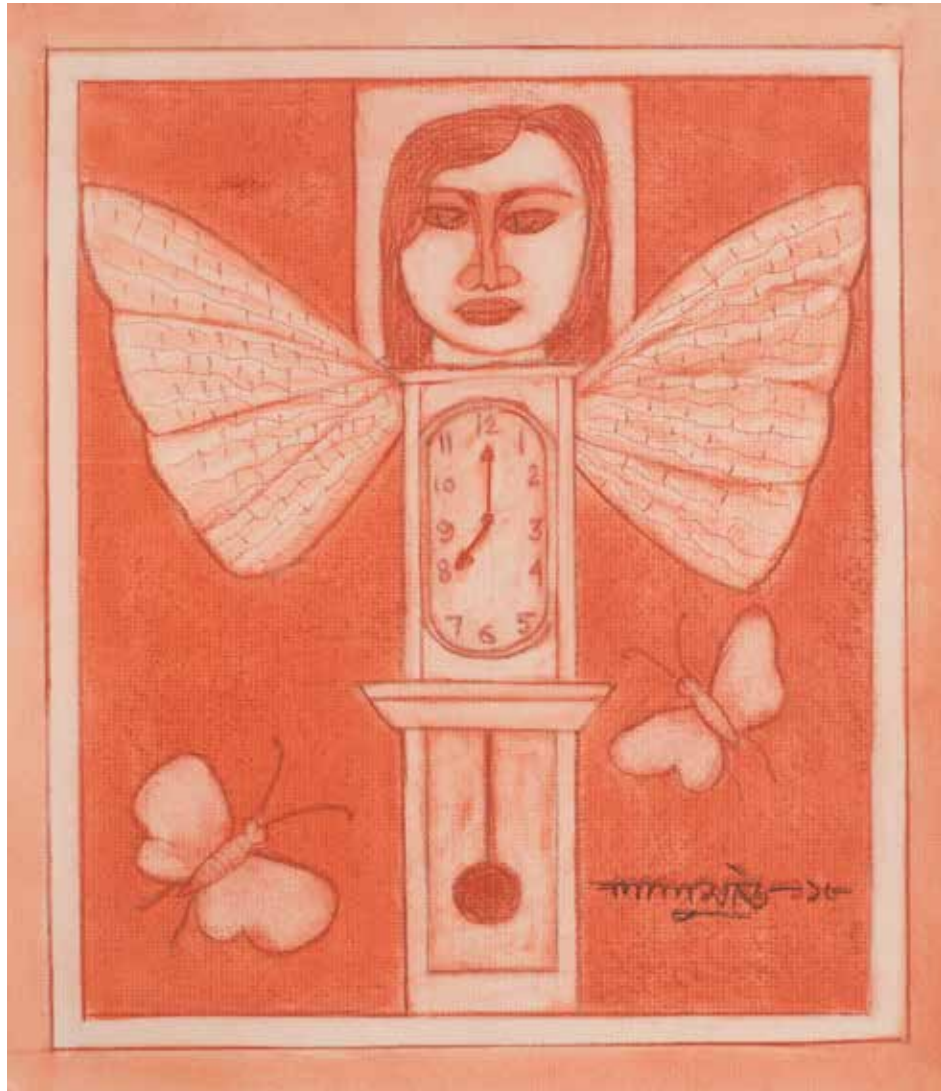
Untitled, Charcoal and Conti on Board, 20.5" x 15", 2016



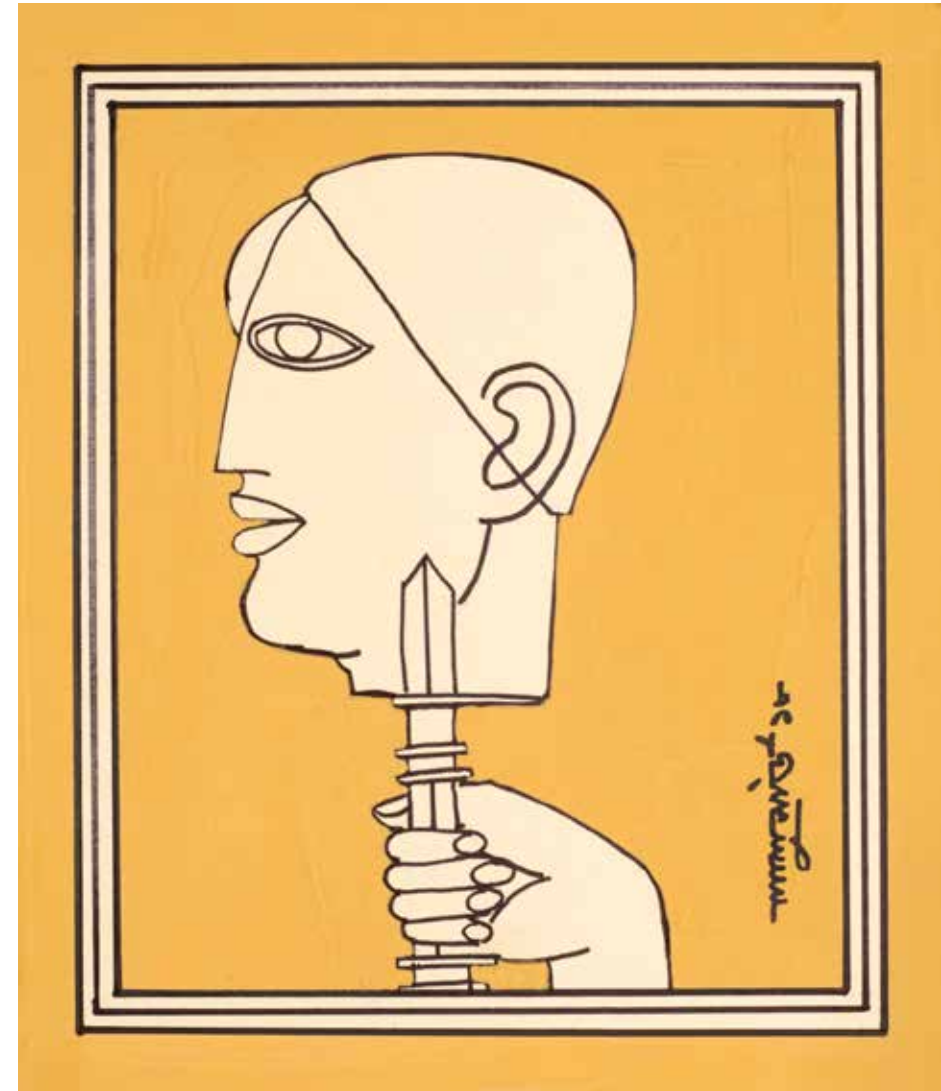
Untitled, Charcoal and Conti on Board, 20.5" x 15", 2021



Untitled, Mixed Media on Board, 16" x 14", 2018



Untitled, Mixed Media on Board, 16" x 14", 2018



Untitled, Mixed Media on Board, 15.5" x 13", 2018



Untitled, Mixed Media on Borad, 16" x 10", 2015



TEMPERAS

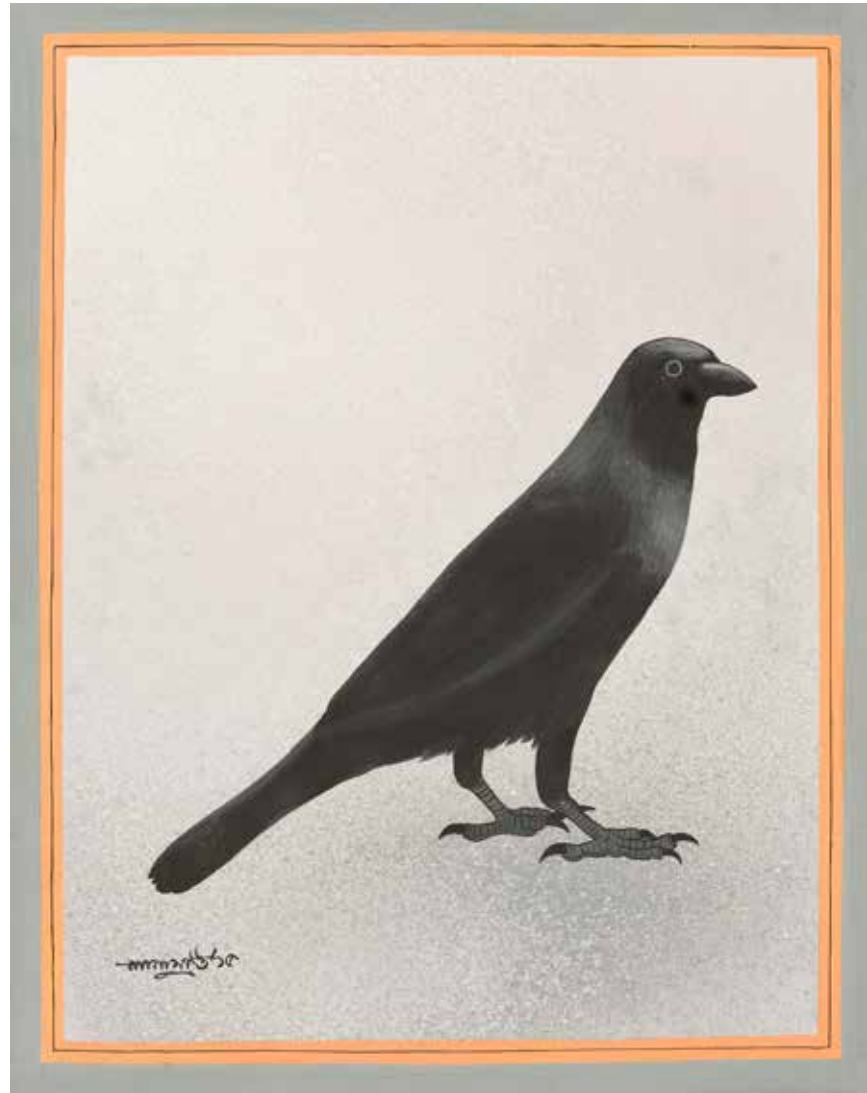
As one of the foremost living artists in India to use tempera as a medium, Lalu Prasad Shaw's oeuvre is unparalleled and unique, bringing alive the eternal 'Mahanagar' with its **dramatis personae caught in dramatic moments** of their lives. The virtuosity and mastery of the veteran is present in each frame, the reflections, interiors and a nostalgic yearning for what is now past. Shaw's portraits of the elaborately coiffed women, eyes kohlrimmed and mysterious, remind one of Banalata Sen, the eternal heroine of Jibananda Das's poetry, dear to every Bengali's heart. Like Banalata, Shaw's female figures are romantic, whiling away time as they await a tryst. The men are solemn or of intellectual demeanour unless the artist has decided to paint him as an older man, set in his domestic routine. The stark realism in his paintings is in contrast to his graphics or his drawings that are surreal and distorted. Lurking beyond the immediate picture of couples or single people lost in reverie is the teeming metropolis, the silhouette never too distant of Shahid Minar and the Maidan or Victoria Memorial where the city-dwellers either ruminate or romance, and at times join fellow citizens in protest or "*michheel*". Here an illusion of time is captured as the beloved city of Calcutta is celebrated with every brush stroke.



Untitled, Tempera on Board, 22" x 15", 2011



Bibi, Tempera on Board, 28" x 20", 2018



Crow, Tempera on Board, 24" x 19", 2015



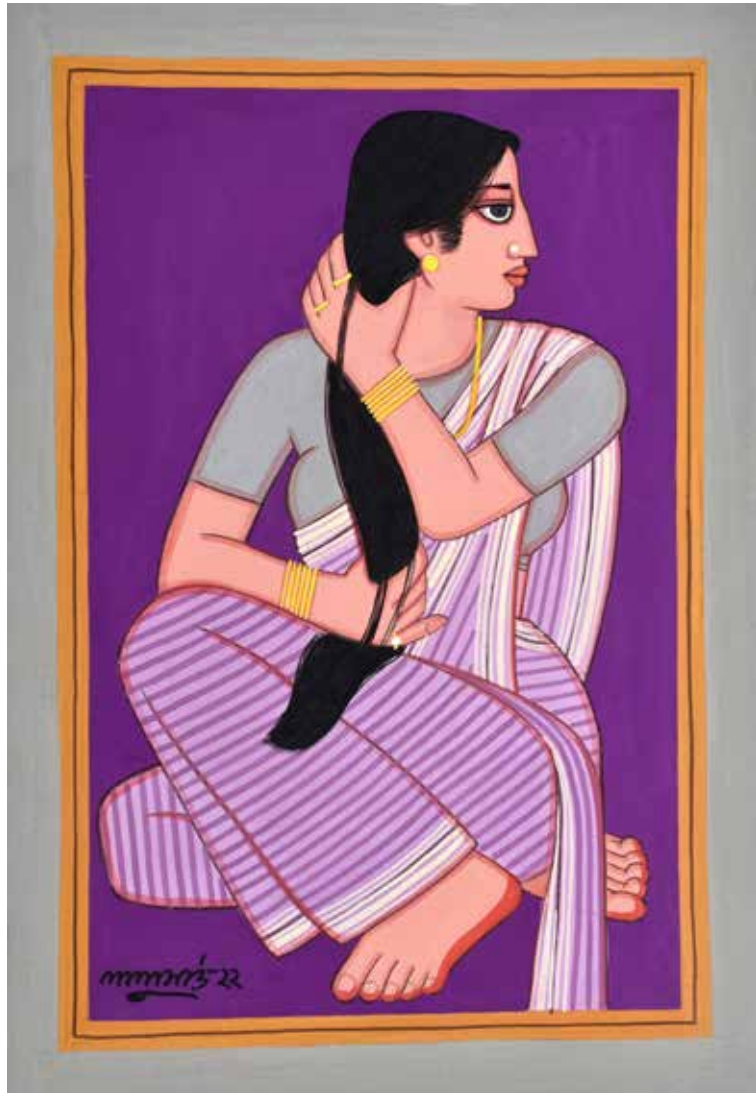
Untitled, Tempera on Board, 18" x 25", 2015



Babu, Tempera on Board, 21.5" x 15", 2019



Untitled, Tempera on Board, 20.5" x 15", 2011



Bibi, Tempera on Board, 21" x 14", 2022



Babu, Tempera on Board, 21" x 14.5", 2022



Babu, Tempera on Board, 28" x 20", 2015



Bibi, Tempera on Board, 21" x 15", 2002



Bibi, Tempera on Board, 21" x 14.5", 2021



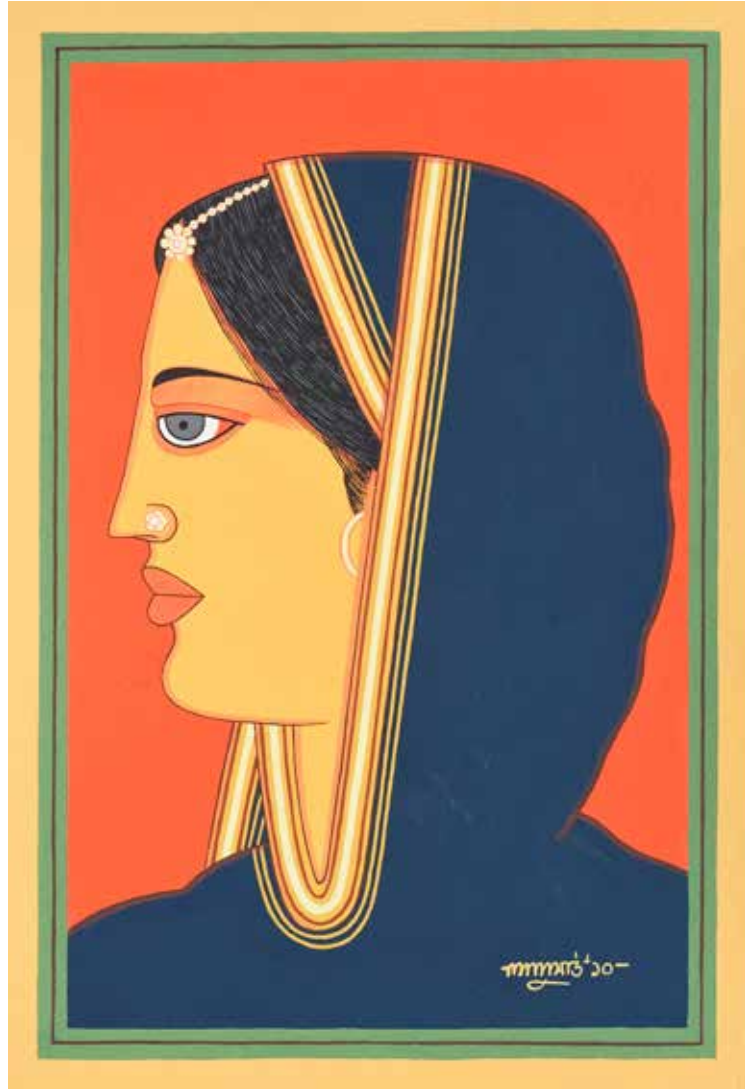
Bibi, Tempera on Board, 21" x 14.5", 2015



Bibi , Tempera on Board, 21" x 15", 2018



Bibi, Tempera on Board, 21" x 15", 2013



Bibi, Tempera on Board, 22" x 15", 2010



Bibi, Tempera on Board, 21" x 15", 2012



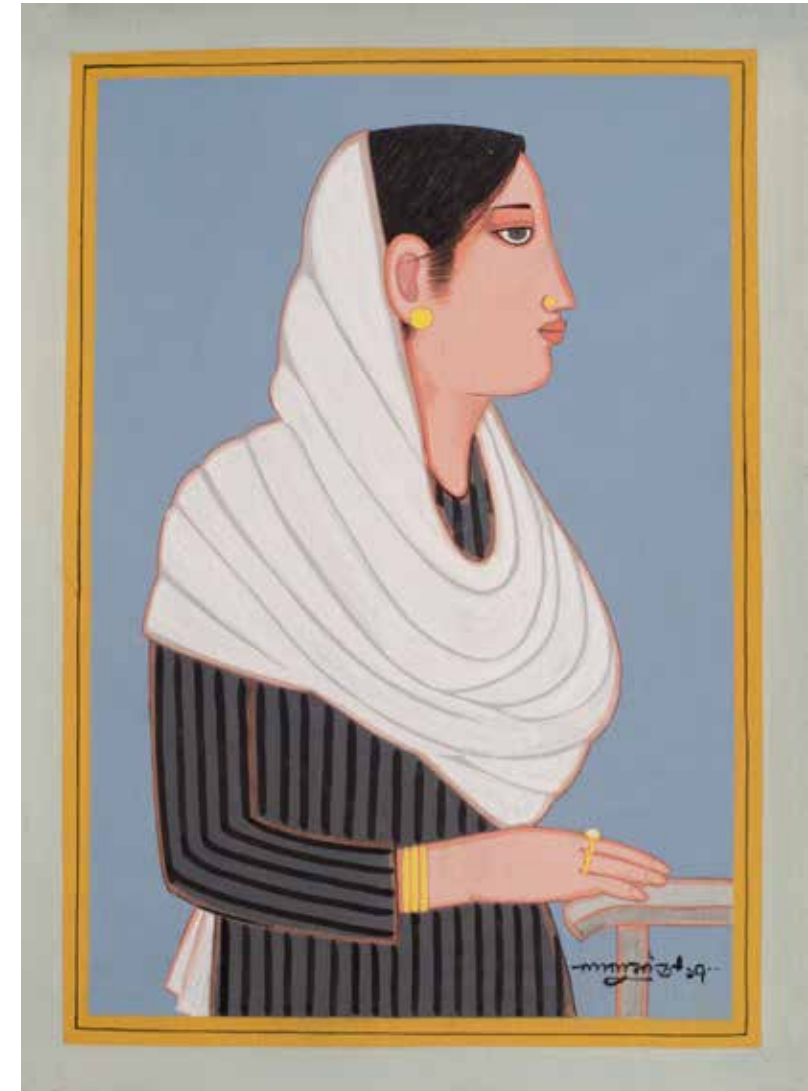
Bibi, Tempera on Board, 21" x 15", 2018



Durga, Tempera on Board, 21" x 15", 2012



Bibi, Tempera on Board, 28" x 20", 2012



Tempera on Board, 21" x 15", 2017



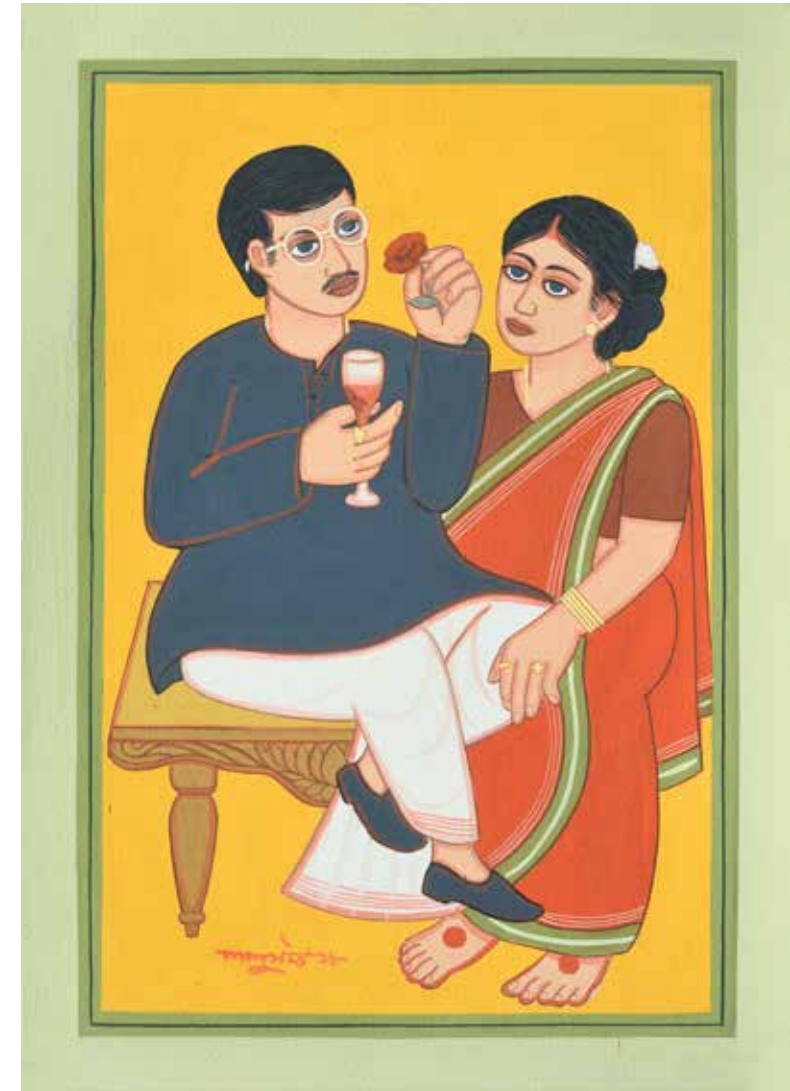
Untitled, Tempera on Board, 21" x 15", 2018



Untitled , Tempera on Board, 21" x 15", 2018



Untitled, Tempera on Board, 22" x 15", 2007



Babu O Bibi, Tempera on Board, 21" x 15", 2018



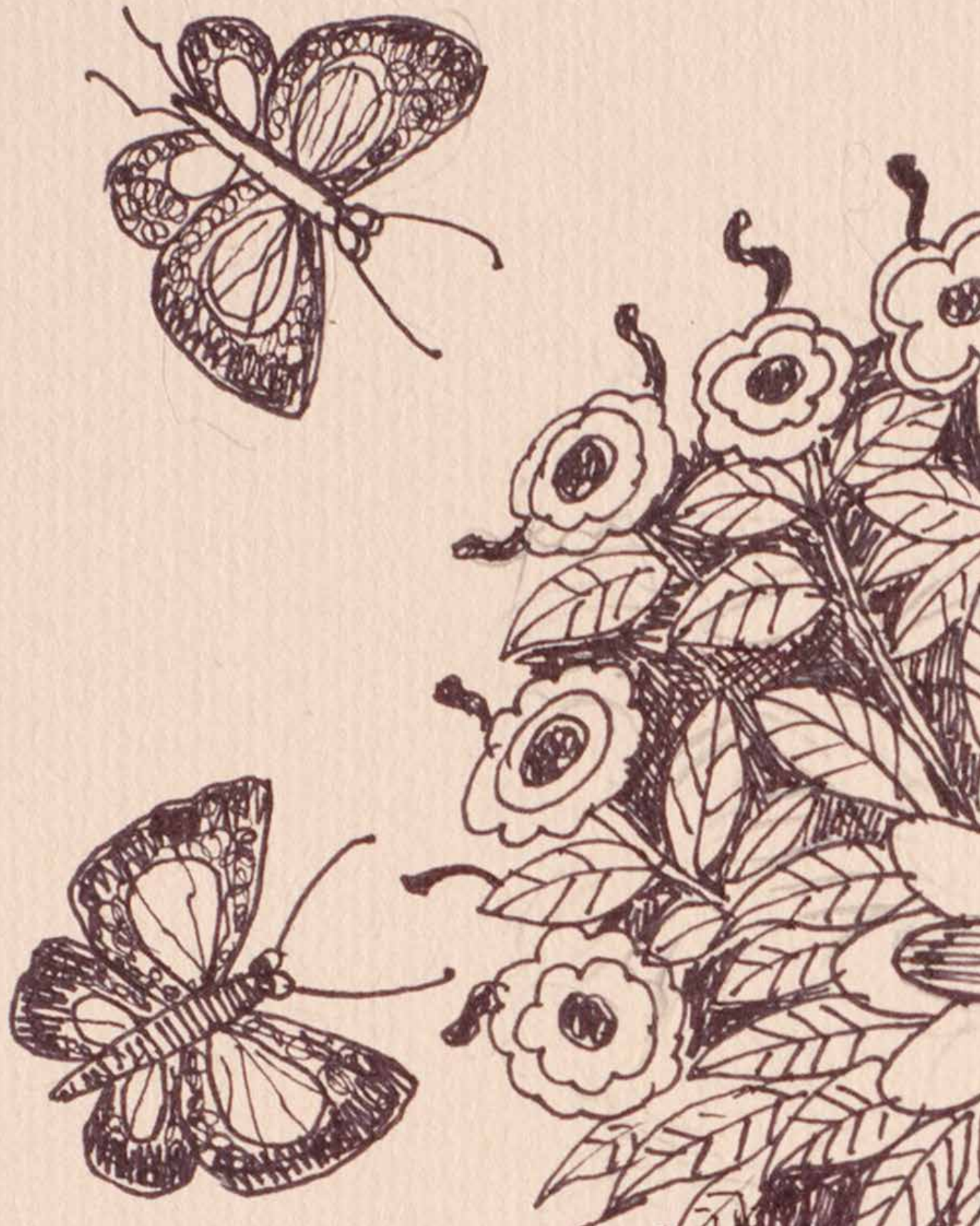
Babu O Bibi, Tempera on Board, 21" x 15", 2018



Babu, Tempera on Board, 15" x 21", 2012



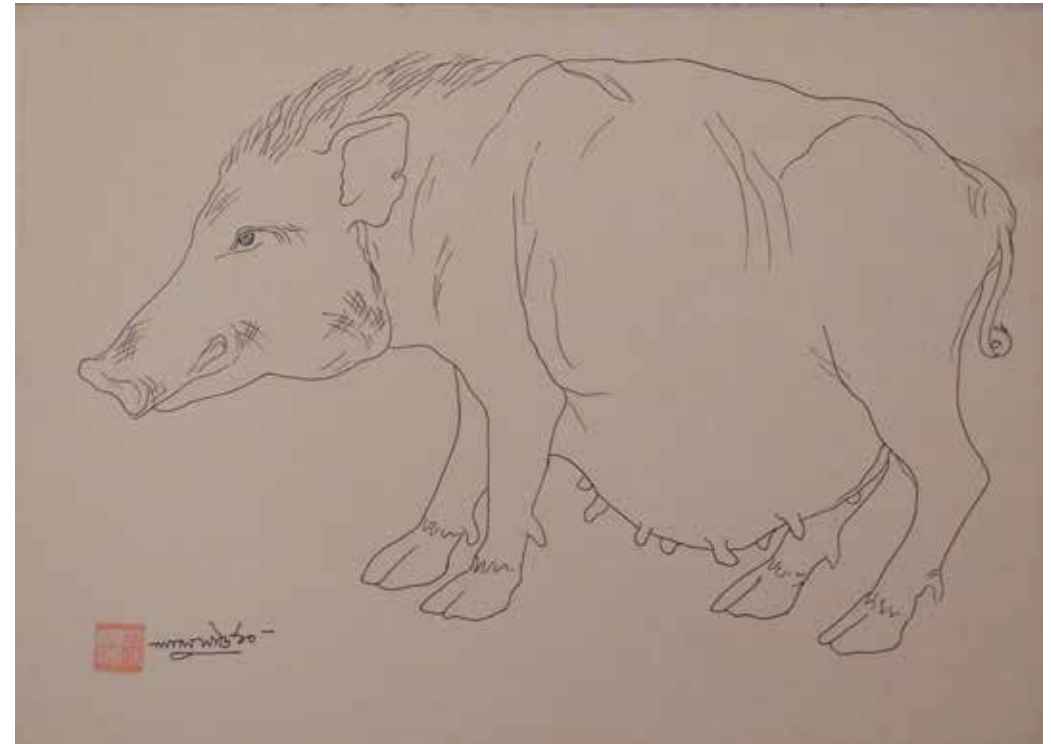
Babu, Tempera on Board, 28" x 20", 2018



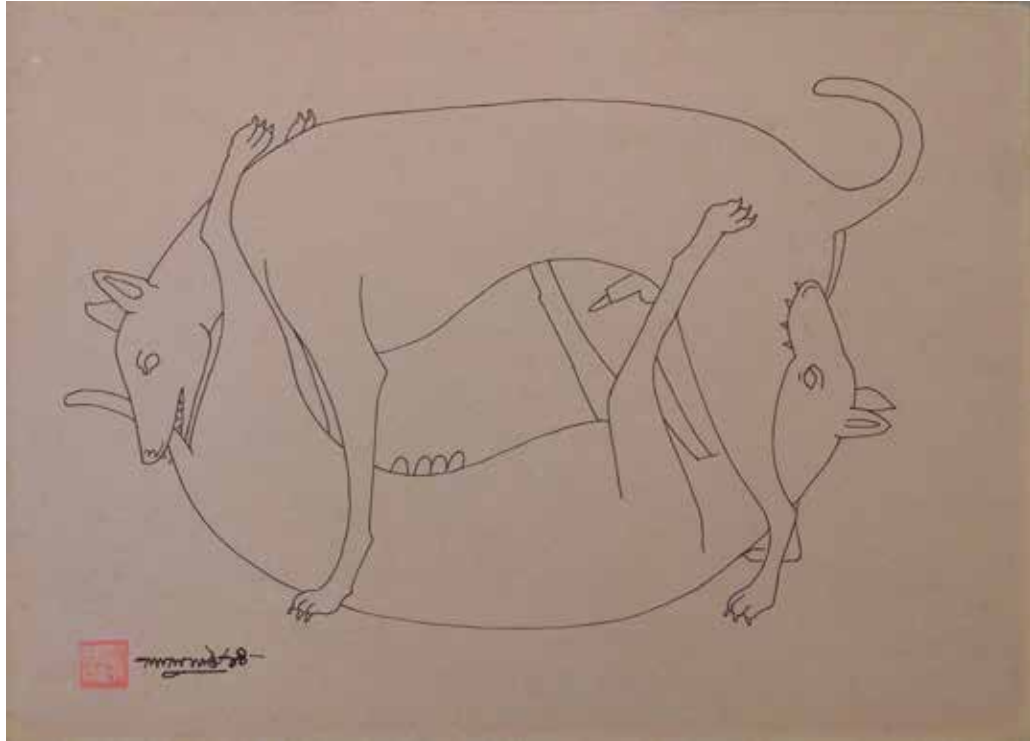
DRAWINGS



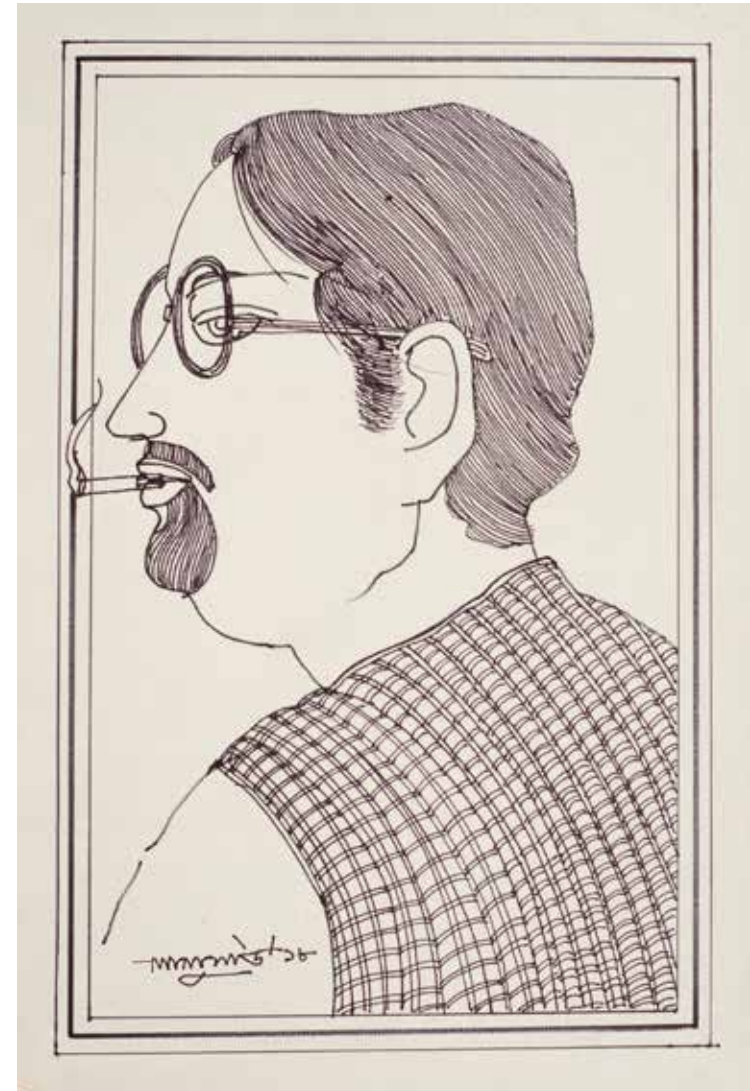
Untitled, Marker on Board, 15" x 20.5", 2010



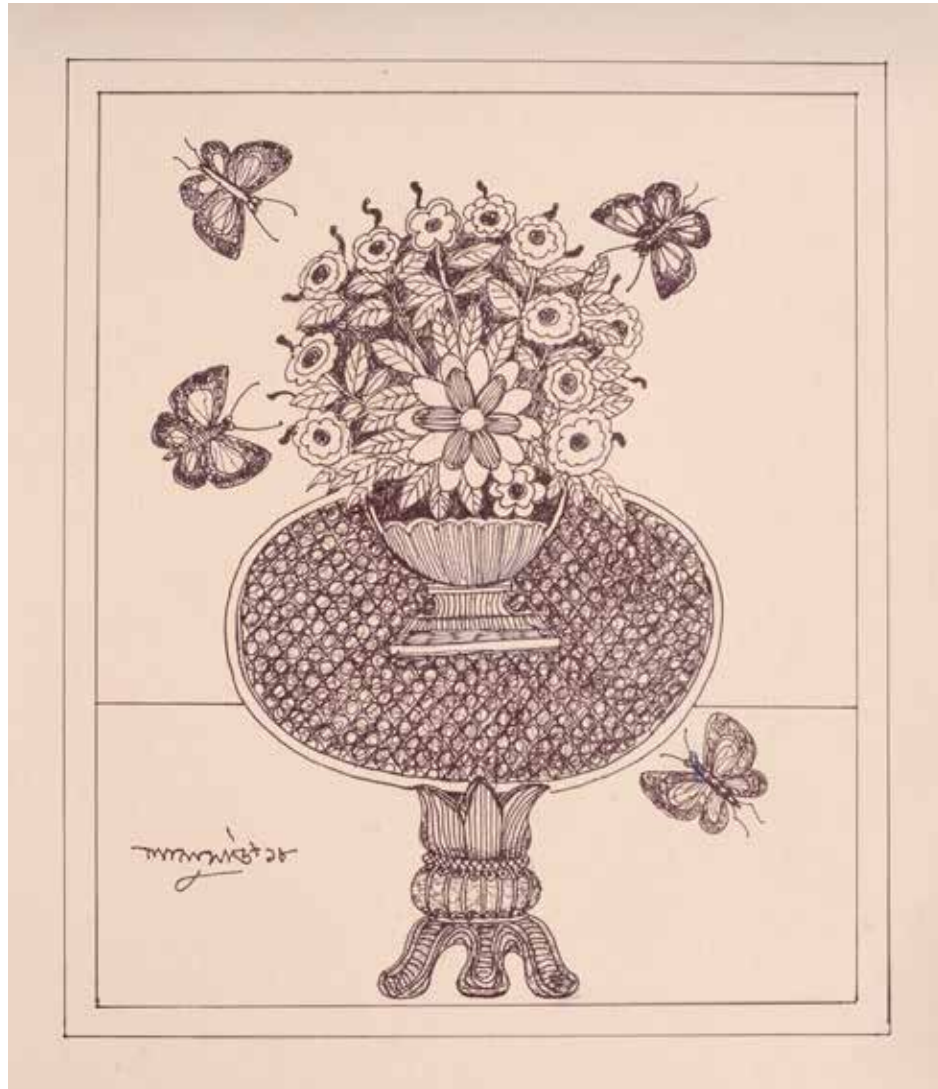
Untitled, Marker on Board, 15" x 21", 2010



Untitled, Marker on Board, 15" x 21", 2014



Babu, Marker on Board, 16" x 11", 2018



Still Life, Mixed Media on Board, 16" x 13.5", 2018



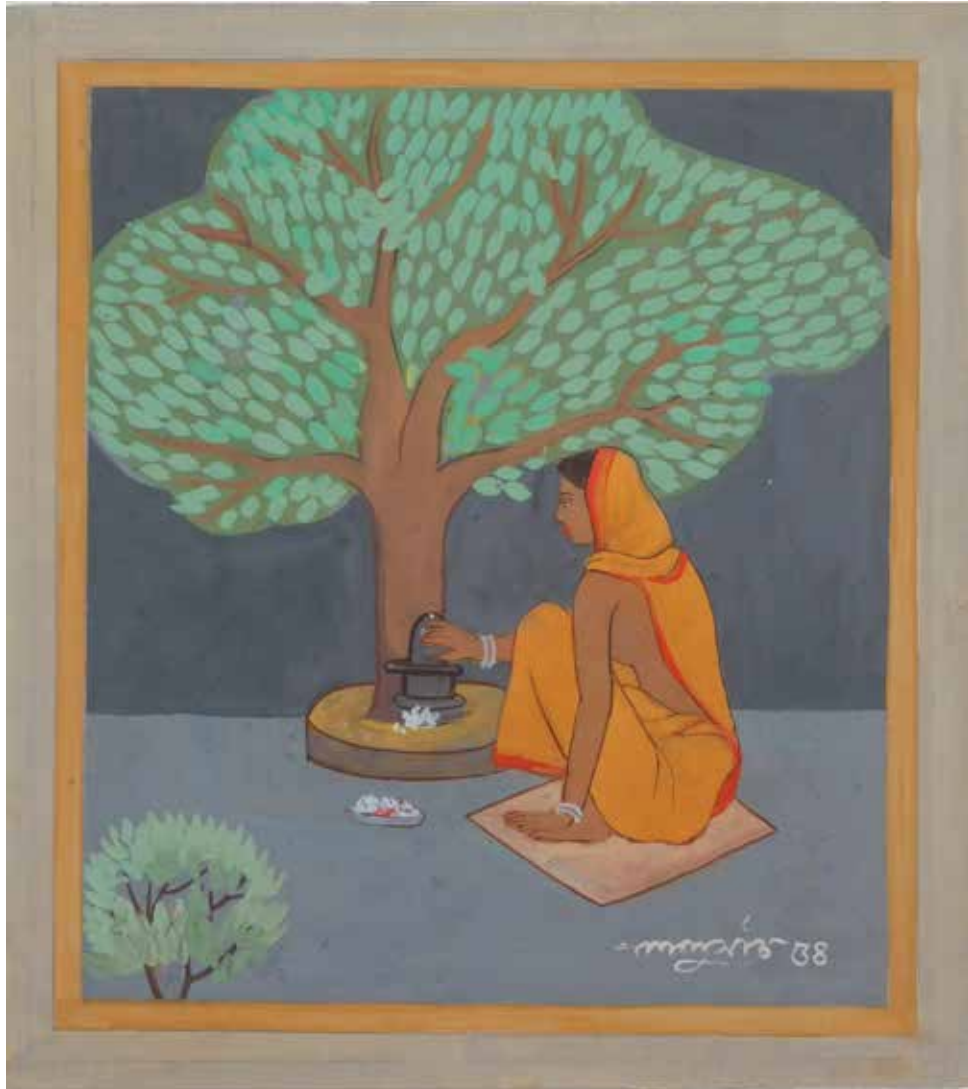
ACADEMIC STUDIES



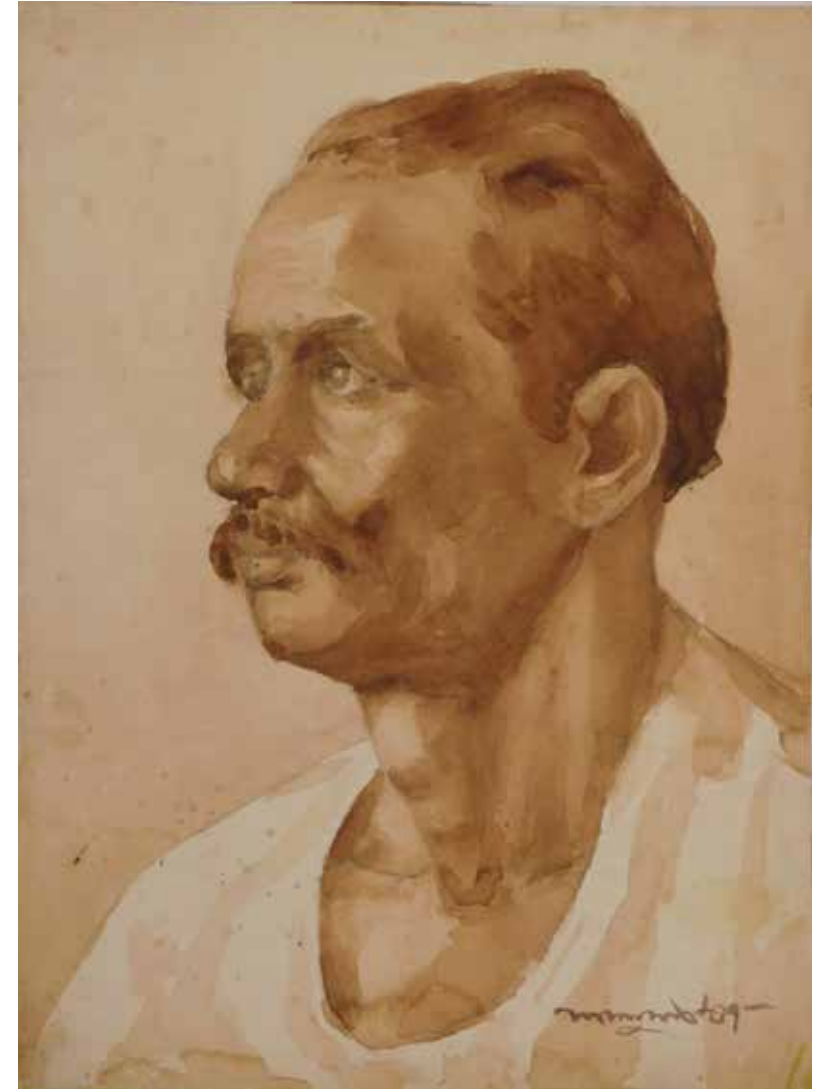
Untitled, Watercolour on paper, 7.5" x 10", 1957



Still Life, Oil on Masonite Board, 24" x 18", 1958



Untitled, Tempera on Board, 9.5" x 9", 1954



Untitled, Water Colour on Paper, 15" x 11", 1957



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