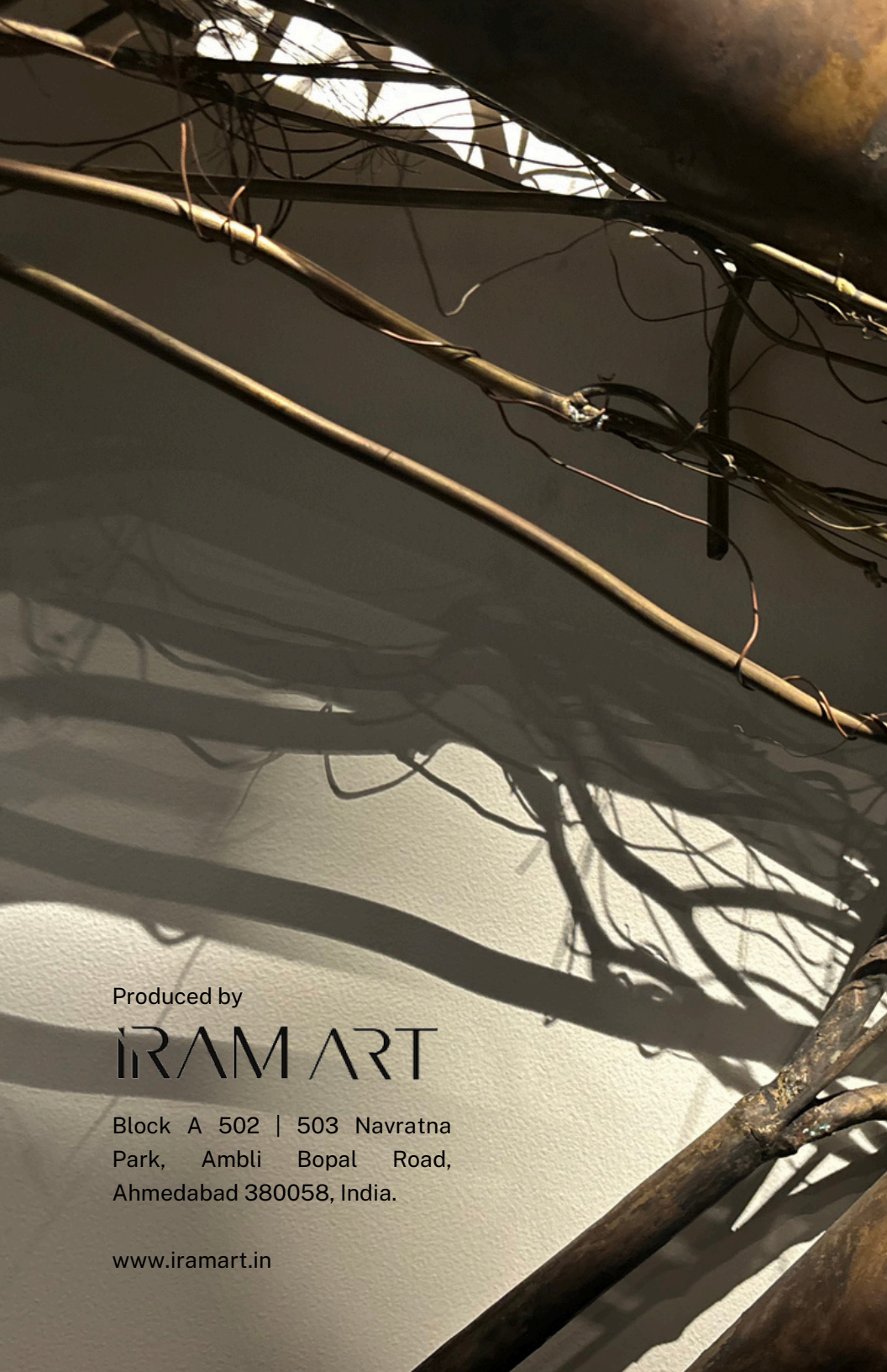


SYNAPTIC ODYSSEYS

NARAYAN SINHA | RAKESH PATEL



Produced by

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CURATED BY SATYAJIT DAVE

CURATOR'S NOTE

Synaptic Odesseys explores and extends our ways of perception and cognition of the Visual Arts. The exhibition does so through a close examination of relationships between objects, materials, archives and the exhibition space itself. It does so through the materially informed practices of Narayan Sinha and Rakesh Patel.

While material engagement and its relation to perception forms the proscenium of the conceptual nodality of this exhibition, it is, however, the tip of the proverbial iceberg. The curatorial inclinations of the show begin from American Philosopher Alva Noë's, in "Strange Tools: Art and Human Nature," where he argues that "artworks are not passive objects to be observed but active tools that shape our perceptual experiences". The highly sensuous tactility of Narayan and Rakesh's practice act as catalysts for recollection, and reflection of our own ontological positions. Through the formal tendencies of their practice, Narayan and Rakesh declare emphatically while gingerly disclosing their conceptual intentions. By their very nature of triggering the innate materially embedded disposition of our perception, they become tools to explore, expand and expedite our abstract-aesthetic understanding of

the world. Philosophical discourses around perception, that of Aesthetics, and Reality, through objects have been key in understanding the nature of Human Existence. These postulations have furthered our understanding of our place in the world. In relation to the world. It is curious to note that Pre-Industrialised societies respond to these questions through the very nature of their knowing and being in this world. For they do not concur to the Cartesian split of body and mind. Rather through rituals, traditions, and customs - the loss of which is lamented in many ways by Hans Ulrich Obrist - becomes part of their onto-epistemological frameworks.

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- Satyajit Dave



UNTITLED, 2022 BRASS 51CM X 104CM X 16CM





POSTULATIONS ON NARAYAN SINHA'S PRACTICE

Art is often a reflection of one's environment, upbringing, and experiences. In the case of Narayan Sinha, the amalgamation of Bengal's untamed wilderness abundant with fertile plains, dense jungles, beaches, a plethora of flora and fauna and most famously, the Sunderbans crossed with the mechanical echoes of family automotive factories where the clanging of metal, the whirring of machines, and the organised chaos of the factory floor forms the backdrop against which his artistic journey unfolds.

Drawing inspiration from his surroundings, he began to experiment with found mechanical mediums, breathing new life into castaway metal scraps that littered the factory floor. Through small interventions and meticulous craftsmanship, he transformed these lifeless materials into intricately detailed sculptures, each bearing the imprint of his unique vision.

A glance at his work, and one can discern a play of form through industrial metal castaways. His sculptures often depict organic forms infused with elements of



mechanical nature, seemingly blurring the boundaries between the two realms. A sculpture of a tree may feature roots and barks crafted from discarded automotive parts, while a flower may bloom from the twisted remains of a scrapped metal machine.

While on one hand the reconstitution of industrial discard alludes to an initial understanding of environmental inclinations, a closer inspection reveals an informed understanding of material ontology. The material tactility discloses gingerly, highly sexual undertones of his work. The range of treatment of the material becomes a means to convey the sensuous tactility - through this highly tactile formal play, the work crescendos to a visual spectacle. It is here that Narayan's practice moves beyond material deceit of much of contemporary art.

Material understanding in his work operates at various taxonomic stages where the practice becomes a poignant commentary on environmental sustainability on one hand and evoking the larger discourse around matter and materiality in modern and contemporary philosophy on the other. His work is reminiscent of Günter Bandmann's phrase, 'enabling material to talk'. While popularly understood as material engagement or faculty as a mode of representation, it essentially challenges the anthropocentric post-enlightenment intellectual tradition. It, on the other hand, advocates for the notion of material as having its own inherent aesthetic agency.



UNTITLED, 2022 BRASS 109 CM X 252 CM X 23 CM

NOTES ON METAL

Metals have been crucial to human evolution and development. They have long held a profound significance for humanity, serving not only practical purposes but also playing a central role in spiritual and cultural practices across civilizations. From tools and weapons to infrastructure and transportation, metals have facilitated progress and innovation in countless ways. Beyond their practical applications, metals have held deep spiritual and symbolic meanings for cultures around the world. Gold, revered for its lustrous beauty and rarity, has been associated with wealth, power, and divinity in many societies. Silver, with its reflective properties, has often been linked to purity, wisdom, and the moon. Copper, believed to possess healing properties, has been used in rituals and talismans for millennia. Moreover, metals like bronze and iron have been imbued with protective qualities, warding off evil spirits and negative energies in various cultural traditions.

Metallurgy had a profound socio-economic impact on ancient Indian society. The emergence of metallurgical specialisation created new opportunities for skilled craftsmen and artisans, fostering economic growth and cultural development. Metallurgical centres became

hubs of trade, commerce, and cultural exchange, attracting merchants, traders, builders, and artisans from far and wide. The production and trade of metal objects contributed to the accumulation of wealth and the rise of urban centres. The depiction of metallurgical activities in art, literature, and religious texts reflects the importance of metallurgy in ancient Indian culture. Various artisanal practices such as Dokra, Bengal and Kutch Bell crafts, Thatheras of Jandiala, etc stand as a testament to the nature and percolation of metal into the socio-cultural life of Indians.

During the British Raj, many modern steel factories were established in the erstwhile province of Bengal. With the establishment of the Tata Iron and Steel Company (TISCO) in 1907. TISCO's Jamshedpur plant became the cornerstone of India's steel industry, pioneering the production of steel rails and laying the foundation for coal and electricity based industrialization in the country. With this began a new network of ecosystems of mining, production, distribution, etc. The steel industry became the bedrock on which the modern railway and automobile industry developed in India. The ancillaries of these industries have become a critical component of the economies of various states.

COLLECTIVENESS B, 2024 BRASS, PAPER, IRON, ALUMINIUM 85" X 77" X 3"



While metals offer countless benefits to humanity, their extraction and processing can have significant environmental and ethical implications. Mining activities often lead to habitat destruction, pollution, and exploitation of natural resources. Furthermore, the production of metals can involve hazardous chemicals, processes that are energy intensive, and labour abuses in some cases. As society becomes more conscious of sustainability and ethical sourcing, efforts are underway to reduce the hazards on the environmental and social impacts of metal production and consumption.

Organisations like the UN too are consciously looking at policy formation, and organising systems to mitigate the larger challenges of these industries. Introduction of the Sustainable Development Goals by the UN is one of the key steps that looks at the larger systemic ways of addressing these challenges.

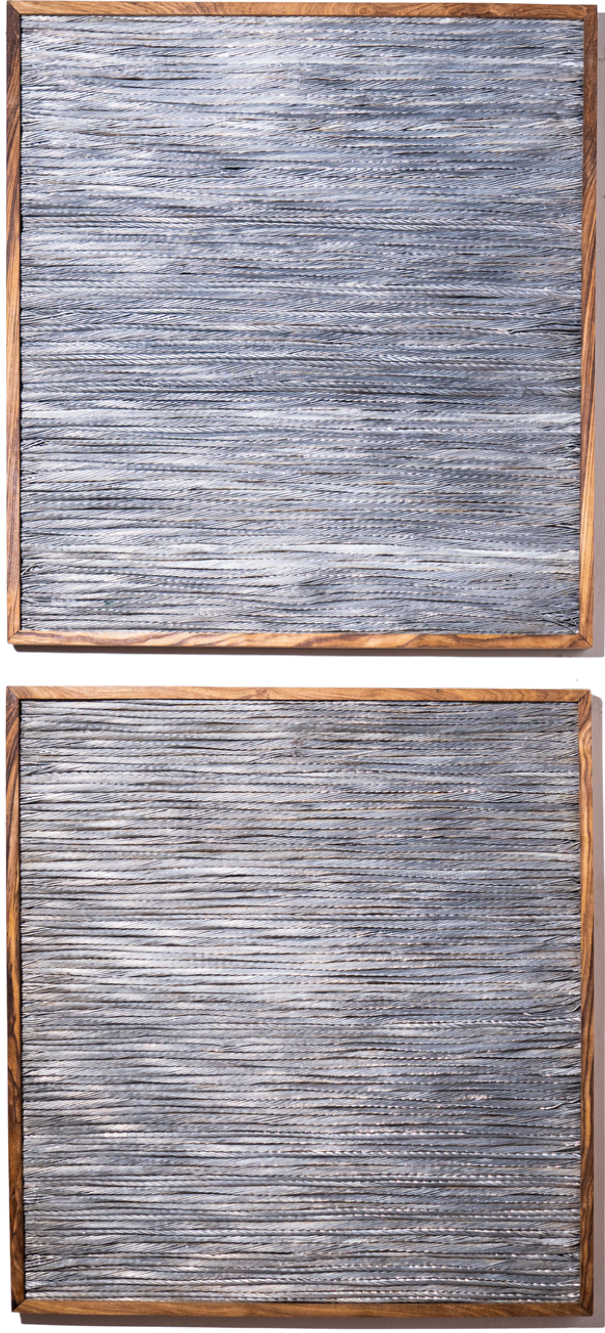
REFORMED - 2. 2022 BRASS 183 X 18 X 13 CM WEIGHT - 10 KG



REFORMED - 1, 2022 BRASS 170 X 26 X 11 CM WEIGHT - 9 KG



ENERGY - FLOW (TWO WORKS), 2022 ALUMINIUM 219 X 89 X 5 CM WEIGHT - 51 KG



TOGETHER (TWO WORKS) . 2022 WATERCOLOR ON PAPER
194 X 74 X 5 CM WEIGHT - 10 KG







ROOTS , 2023 COPPER 8' X 2.4' (EACH WORK)



Photography in Mexico (1930-1940)

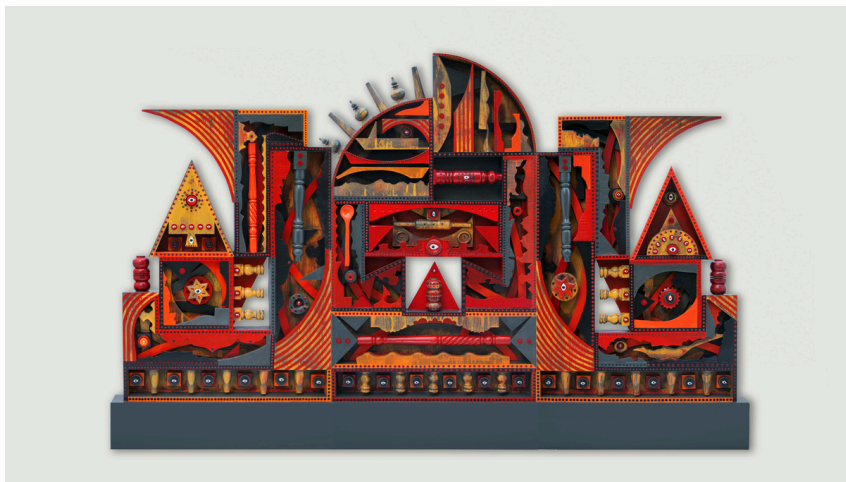
The first photograph of the Mexican Revolution was taken in 1911 by a Frenchman, Charles de Meulles, who was in Mexico on a mission to document the country's political and social changes. Since then, photography has played a crucial role in shaping the public perception of the revolution and its aftermath. In the 1930s and 1940s, Mexican photographers used their cameras to capture the struggles of the working class, the impact of the revolution on rural communities, and the rise of the Mexican state. This period saw the emergence of a new style of photography, known as 'documentary photography', which aimed to provide a realistic and unbiased view of the world. Mexican photographers like Alfonso Portes, Manuel Alvarado, and others used their cameras to document the lives of the people, the impact of the revolution, and the role of the state. This period also saw the rise of the Mexican state, which used photography to promote its policies and ideology. The Mexican Revolution was a period of great change and upheaval, and photography played a central role in documenting and shaping the public perception of this period.



POSTULATIONS ON RAKESH PATEL'S PRACTICE

Rakesh's work began as a means of establishing a relationship with oneself and the holy. Coming from a farming family, as a boy, he was always drawn to the idea of working with his hands and natural materials. At the same time, while he saw the craft communities in his area, he was intrigued about how craftsmen worked with materials.

Rakesh uses discarded wooden objects from flea markets to create art. This idea of material exploration and upcycling finds its roots in the craft traditions of India, where found objects – especially those that remained in the production process either of textile, or home construction, or furniture – are transformed into a uniquely new avatar. This act of creating objects of daily use from the discard or excess is what fascinates and drives his practice. He collects the excess wooden blocks from artisans, assembles and creates a courtyard/altar, this courtyard/altar is a reflection of self and the culture that he belongs to... be it the temple architecture, or the vibrant colours the texture, even the fragrance has a major impact on his work as



RED EYE IN MY COURTYARD - 1, 2023
MIX MEDIA ON WOOD 178 X 275 X 15 CM

he tries to incorporate them in his work.

He collaborates with a small community of woodworkers as a part of his creative process. While working in close proximity with them, he has observed the ways in which they worship the divine through the act of making. In a way he feels, this act of making and seeing forms an important part of their collaboration, forming the premise of being one with the divine. Every part of his creative process is driven by extensive research into the philosophy of his practice. This is reflected in his drive to understand the mathematics and metaphysics of temple structures, material understanding and depth of research of wood, and woodworking traditions

The works remind one of a quote by Wassily Kandinsky from his book ‘Concerning the Spiritual in Art’,

“The spiritual life, to which art belongs and of which she is one of the mightiest elements, is a complicated but definite and easily definable movement forwards and upwards. This movement is the movement of experience. It may take different forms, but it holds at bottom to the same inner thought and purpose.”

A close inspection of his work reveals peculiarly organised forms and colour. Forms that are conceptual

and physical deconstructions of built structures. Colour on the other hand hammers these deconstructions into the viewer's soul. The 'work' is literally a re-imagination and construction of a divine space where the outward relief protrusions become ways to formulate individual, independent spiritual connections. These connections are beyond the religiosity or dogmatic frameworks of organised faith.

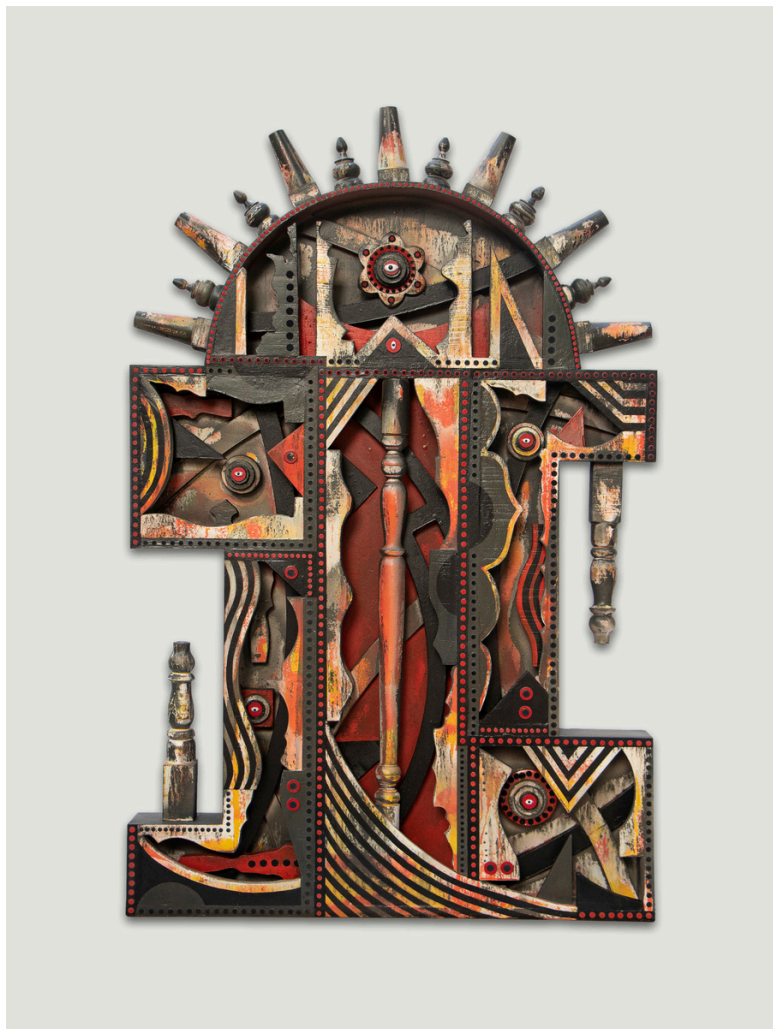


UNTITLED, 2024 MIX MEDIA ON WOOD
178 X 275 X 15 CM

NOTES ON WOOD

Wood as a material of constructive architecture and decorative art has been in use since ancient times both in the erection of temples and dwellings. The first material which man could without any difficulty make use of even in primitive times was wood. Its persistence, however, till the commencement of the twentieth century for constructive work has been mainly due to its easy availability and comparative pricing. References to wood(s) can be found across various texts from Ancient India - be it philosophical, religious, or administrative. Moreover, travellers of the likes of Megasthenes too have mentioned the exquisite nature of workmanship on wood and the raw material. It is also curious to note that the early ancient stone temple architecture tradition of India is merely an alibi of its wooden counterpart and not as distinctly independent as it is made out to be.

While all regions and corners of the country have a significant cultural idiom of working in wood, the plastic quality of wood from Gujarat has provided a very handy material for the expression of an art so dear to the people of this land, where some carving at least on the door or window frame is the commonest feature of houses in towns and villages, its extension to other

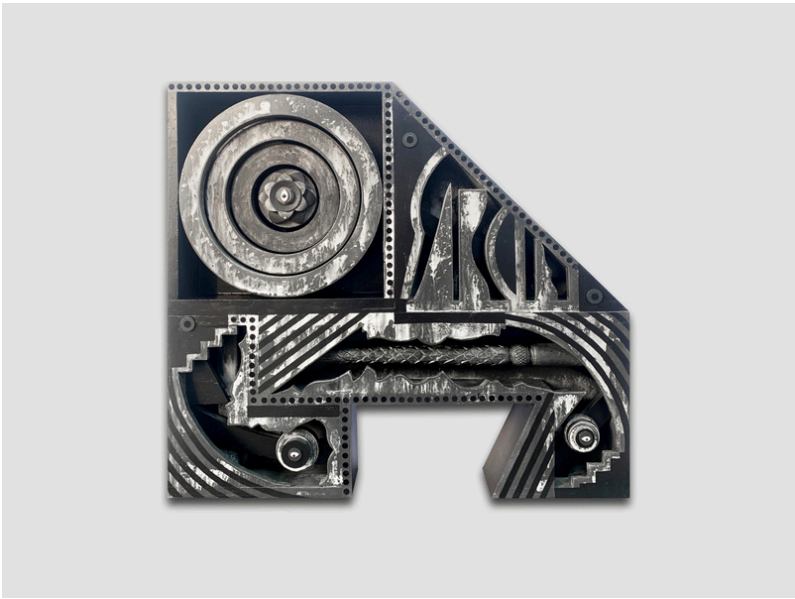


GOD IS IN MY COURTYARD - 17, 2023
MIX MEDIA ON WOOD
54" X 35" X 4"

parts, elaboration and ornamentation varying according to the purse of the owner. One encounters this in the wood block tradition of Pethapur as well as Kutch which is linked closely with textile traditions, the Sankheda furniture tradition of South Gujarat the wooden toy tradition of Idar in the North, the wood engraving and carving tradition of Kutch and much more. The development, however, of wood sculpture as a distinctive style of art was encouraged by the inherent quality of the material, the artistic taste of the people, the creative genius of the carver further stimulated by religious zeal and royal patronage, all of which were instrumental in keeping alive the traditions of wood work in every nook and corner of Gujarat.

Gujarat enjoyed a unique position in the development of wood carving, both in the construction and decoration of temples and dwelling houses. Some of the Jain temples built in wood and decorative work in the houses of towns and villages all over Gujarat display the various aspects of wood work that came into vogue in this part of the country. The artistic instinct of the people was so highly developed in Gujarat that in addition to temples and dwelling houses, the master craftsman had full scope for the application of his inventive faculties to such diverse objects as ghar derasar, pigeon houses for birds, carts, chariots, boats and articles of domestic use.

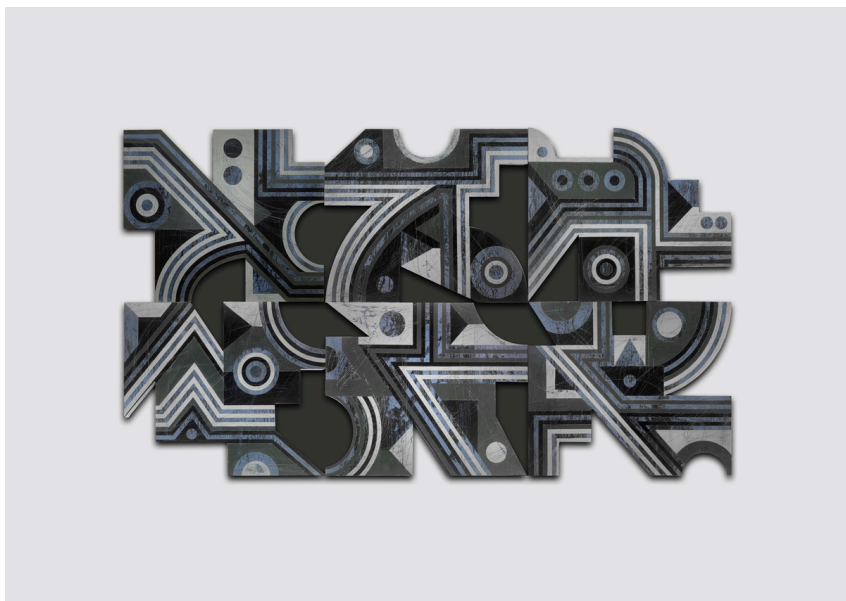
Of the various woods available to the artisans, Shevan wood holds a special place in their hearts and minds. This, in one part is due to its religious importance, and in part due to its inherent soft quality and colour which is a dream of a woodworker wanting to carve or mould wood. This makes Shevan the preferred wood of choice for artisans making wooden temples for domestic initiations.



COURTYARD SERIES, 2024 MIX MEDIA ON WOOD
28" X 30" X 4"



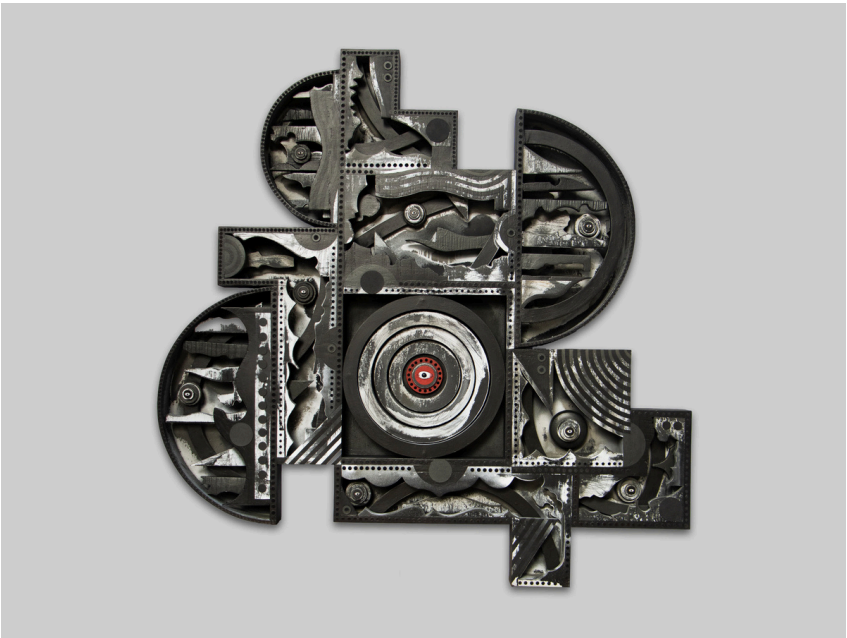
COURTYARD SERIES, 2024 MIX MEDIA ON WOOD
38" X 28" X 4"



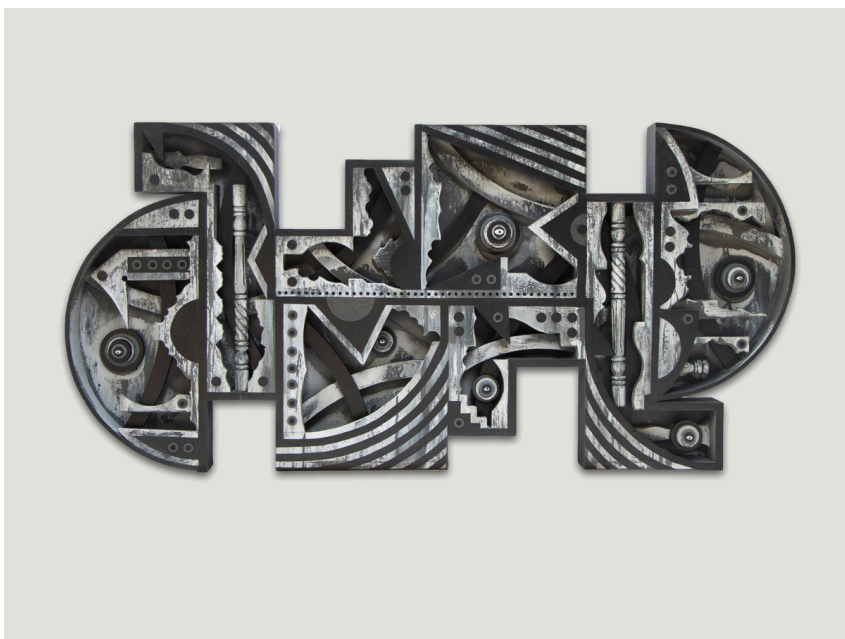
ART DECO SERIES , 2024
ACRYLIC ON WOOD COMPOSITE PANEL
16" X 19" EACH
32" X 57" FOR THE SET OF 6 WORKS



ART DECO SERIES - SET , 2023
ACRYLIC ON COMPOSITE WOOD PANEL
VARIABLE AS PER SETUP
EACH WORK IS FOR 16" X 19"



RED EYE IN MY COURTYARD , 2023
MIX MEDIA ON WOOD
54" X 56" X 4"



GOD IS IN MY COURTYARD - 13, 2023
MIX MEDIA ON WOOD
30" X 63" X 4"

ABOUT THE ARTISTS

NARAYAN SINHA

Born in 1977, Narayan Chandra Sinha is a self taught sculptor with a background of working with industrial materials. His practice extends into sculpture and painting with large format installations and watercolours being his forte. His sculptures often depict organic forms infused with elements of mechanical nature, seemingly blurring the boundaries between the two realms. A sculpture of a tree may feature roots and barks crafted from discarded automotive parts, while a flower may



bloom from the twisted remains of a scrapped metal machine. Since 2000, Narayan has shown his work in over 14 solo and group exhibitions. His works have been showcased at the Birla Academy of Art and Culture in Kolkata, Jehangir Art Gallery in

Mumbai, Academy of Fine Arts in Kolkata, Bikaner House in New Delhi, and more. He has also shown at various international art fairs in Basel, Istanbul, Miami, Paris, and more.

His works are a part of prestigious collections such as RMZ Foudation (Bangalore), Delta Airlines (USA), The Radiant Group LLC (USA), Ultim Group (Switzerland, Germany, Dubai), VEI Swiss AG (Switzerland, Russia), Oriental India, Hetero Pharmaceuticals (Hyderabad)

He lives and works in Kolkata.

ABOUT THE ARTISTS

RAKESH PATEL

Born in 1983, Delwada, Gujarat. He studied Diploma in Drawing and Painting from Sheth C. N. College of Fine Arts, Ahmedabad. Since 1999, he has exhibited his works in various shows frequently. The idea of material exploration and upcycling finds its roots in the craft traditions of India, where found objects – especially those that remained in the production process either of textile, or home construction, or furniture – are transformed into a uniquely new avatar. This act of creating objects



of daily use from the discard or excess is what fascinates and drives his practice.

His works have been a part of many prestigious solo and group shows such as the 'All India Annual Art Exhibition' at Jehangir Art Gallery, Mumbai by the

Bombay Art Society, and for a group show 'Five Fingers' in 2014

respectively. In 2013, his works were exhibited at India Art Festival, Nehru Centre of Art in Mumbai. He has been awarded by Ahmedabad Municipal Corporation in 2012 and Gujarat State Lalit Kala Academy in 2013.

He lives and works in Ahmedabad.

His works are a part of prestigious collections such as Vandana & Cyril Shroff (Cyril Amarchand Mangaldas), Aditya Goel (Venture Capitalist), Vamsi Bandi (Hetero Pharmaceuticals), Apurva Amin Architects (Ahmedabad), Quadeye (Gurugam), Kunvarji Group (Ahmedabad, Dubai), Jitendra Mistry (Architect).

ABOUT CURATOR

SATYAJIT DAVE

Born in 1992, Satyajit Dave is an independent Curator and Academic who works with non-profit organisations, art galleries, in curatorial and research roles. He regularly lectures on Art, Design, and Architecture histories and philosophy at various Universities in India. Some of his key curatorial and research projects include - researching and editing for a publication and exhibition on Art and Design at the Whitworth Gallery in Manchester, A Research based survey exhibition on printmaking practices



showcasing over 150 artworks, books, and objects spanning from 1750's to 2020 for Latitude 28 at New Delhi, setting up a curatorial fellowship program for young curators working in South Asia 2023, setting up printmaking workshop in Mumbai and a recent

exhibition on Art and Design and Craft interstices at the Bikaner House in Delhi. His current exhibition Synaptic Odesseys at the Iram Art Gallery in Ahmedabad, India was reviewed in the Medical Humanities Journal The Polyphony hosted by Durham University.

Alongside his curatorial and research practice, he has set-up a Master's specialisation in Design and Curation at NIFT, which is part of the M.Des program.

He lives and works in Ahmedabad

ABOUT IRAM

Iram Art Gallery was set-up by Harssh Shah with the primary objective to discover and promote artists of various genre and media, while simultaneously work with established artists to create a cohesive and supportive community of artists and collectors both locally and globally. We are committed to promoting ideas around contemporary art and critical thought within Ahmedabad, a city entrenched in cultural history, but without, until now, a strong contemporary art presence. It is our mission to set a global benchmark, considering best practices



and supportive holistic programming to showcase local emerging talent along with Indian and International artists so that our community of artists, collectors, and art lovers have space within their own city to learn, discover and engage. We aim to create value and make a

difference through showing a global standard of artworks, established and emerging and working with various stakeholders to create an ongoing curation of annual programming, both at our physical space in Ahmedabad, as well as online channels and with temporary multicity presence through art fairs and temporary exhibitions.

The Gallery has a strong focus on research and engagement through its research based curated exhibitions, the Iram Learning Initiative and its series of talks and workshops.



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