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THE MONSOON CHAPTER 4

Curated by Himanshu Verma

10 – 30 September 2009
Gallerie Nvya, New Delhi

Presented by Red Earth as part of The Monsoon Festival 4
In Association with Gallerie Nvya



RED EARTH



THE MONSOON FESTIVAL 4: CELEBRATING CLIMATE CHANGE?

14 August – 18 September 2009
New Delhi

Conceived, Curated and Presented by

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Catalogue Production, Publishing and Copyright

Red Earth, 2009

Printing

Archana, New Delhi

www.archanapress.com

Festival Website

www.themonsoonfestival.com

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THE MONSOON CHAPTER 4

Paintings exploring the universe
of monsoon & climate change



Curated By

Himanshu Verma

Artists

Bibhu Patnaik

Biplab Muzibar Rahman

Debarchan Rout

E.H Pushkin

Gagan Singh

Manil Gupta

Nandan Ghiya

Pranay Lal

Pratul Dash

Rajendra Kapse

Tanuja Rane

Viraj Naik

Waswo X. Waswo

THE MONSOON CHAPTER 4 INFO

Venue and Exhibition Partner: Gallerie Nvyā

Preview Reception: Wednesday 9 September 2009, 6:30 – 10 pm

Exhibition Dates: 10-30 September, 2009

Timings: 11.00 am to 7.30 pm

Open Sundays. Closed Mondays

Exhibition open to all

Unauthorised photography and audio/video recording not permitted

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Red Earth Facebook Group

<http://www.facebook.com/group.php?gid=20409640888&ref=ts>

Red Earth Monsoon Festival Cycling Facebook Group

<http://www.facebook.com/home.php#/group.php?gid=103165742373&ref=ts>

VENUE & FESTIVAL PARTNER

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NOTE FROM THE CURATOR

The Monsoon Chapter is 4 years old now. The exhibition was a brainwave that started Red Earth's core work – celebrating Indian seasons and festivals with contemporary art, keeping alive the natural urge of the Indian mind to respond to *mausam*.

Contemporary Indian art, for some strange reason has forgotten to celebrate, and has disconnected itself from this beautiful scheme of things, where the arts unite with the mood of the season to create magic. The Monsoon Chapter rekindles this sensibility.

Following the cyclical and organic nature in which Indian art has developed, we celebrate the monsoon every year. Same stories, same motifs, same themes, and yet, it all seems so new, that is the unfathomable joy of life, the monsoon!

The Monsoon Chapter too follows this protocol. From its first edition, the exhibition has made an effort to capture the universe of the monsoon and its million awakenings through the diverse voices of many artists. The chapter has delved deep into the universe of the monsoon, representing it in abstraction, celebrating its flora and fauna, the human response to the season, divinities and mythologies connected with the monsoon, landscapes, monsoon objects, the body and the monsoon, and the love hate relationship that cities share with monsoon.

This year, as expected, we see the same things, but the story seems as fresh as ever, as always.

Written by some regulars, and some first time monsoon writers, the chapter this year presents complex stories of the the monsoon, entangled with contemporary environmental concerns, bloody climate change! Our writers have adopted new languages to convey these new experiences.

We hope you enjoy them, celebrating the monsoon, and thinking about change....

I send you purple dreams, interspersed with generous doses of our monsoon darling, genda phool,

Himanshu Verma
(September 2009)

CHAPTER 1

FLORA, FAUNA, RAIN....

As a prologue, Bibhu Patnaik's new monsoon growth challenges us to think about the symbolism of the tree cage, and larger issues surrounding it.

(Artist Statement Overleaf)

E.H Pushkin's *Serpent*, a musical instrument from 1725 AD seems to be making some monsoon noises... Serpents are venerated, and worshipped in the monsoon; and people in many cultures believe that they bring rain.

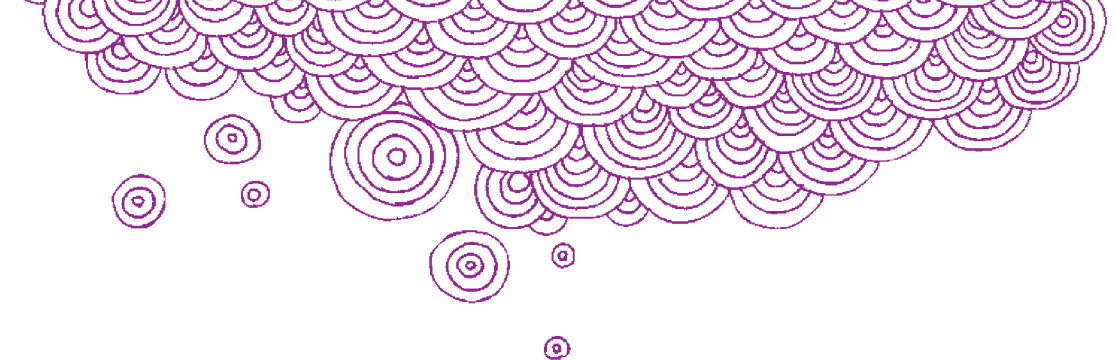
Tanuja Rane and her battery of insects come alive in the season, madly pouring out of the cornucopia and busily going about their everyday tasks.

Viraj Naik's monsoon menagerie has a lesson to teach you. This eco-friendly fauna is inspiring us to conserve water and harvest the rain.

(Artist Statement Overleaf)

Finally, Debarchan Rout's insect family is engaged in a monsoon meeting, reminding us that nobody is immune to the romantic potential of rain. Debarchan's lovers meet in cool greenery, surrounded by raindrops.





ARTIST SPEAK

Bibhu Patnaik

The spiral and straight horizontal lines of the tree cages in the park in front of my studio inspired me to start a few works recently. As the works progressed, several layers of thoughts engulfed my mind. On one hand, a tree cage is a symbol of guardianship. It takes care of saplings, a protective covering. This also resonates with the need of environment protection, a burning issue in today's time. On the other hand, the sapling in a tree cage stands secluded from its immediate surroundings till it grows high enough to cross the cage – now the cage is a symbol of a bar in contrast to the idea of guardianship. I leave it to the onlookers to see my work from their own point of view.

Viraj Naik

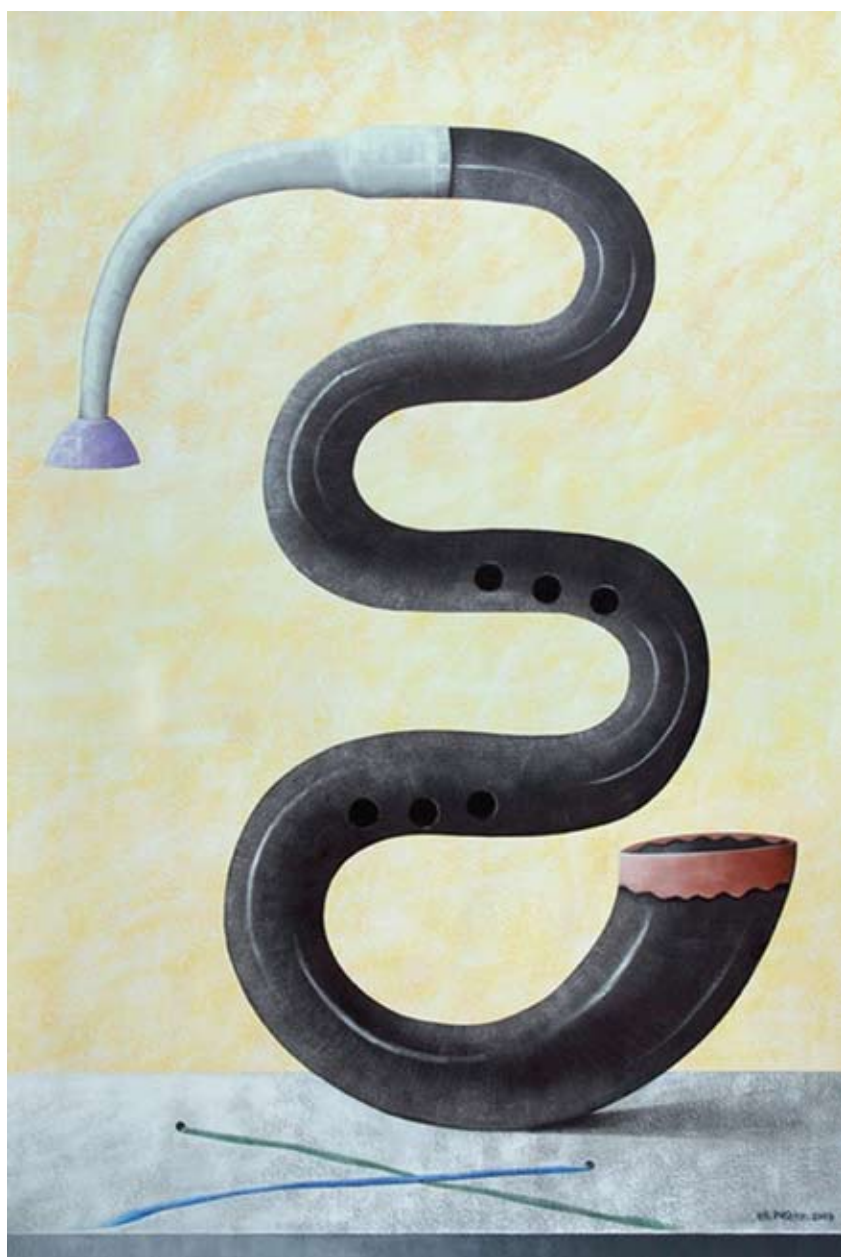
Rainwater harvesting is essential for survival. So, we empty our buckets and long to fill it in the rains. Store rain and use it whenever in need throughout the year. Make this mission possible and you will be the only lord for centuries.



Bibhu Patnaik The Tree Cage (BIPA17) Gouache, Acrylic & Soil on Fabriano Paper 55" x 25" 2009



Bibhu Patnaik | I Do All My Crying in the Rain (BIPA18) | Gouache on Fabriano Paper | 25" x 19" | 2009



E.H. Pushkin Serpent (AD 1725) - (EHP3) Acrylic on Paper 44" x 30" 2009



Tanuja Rane Anonymous I (TR26) Dry Point on Steel Plate Intaglio; Printed on Handmade Paper 28" x 19" 2009 (Edition 1/6)



Tanuja Rane Anonymous II (TR27) Dry Point on Steel Plate Intaglio; Printed on Handmade Paper 28" x 19" 2009 (Edition 1/6)



Viraj Naik Ultimate Survival (VIN17) Watercolour on Paper 30" x 22" 2009



Viraj Naik Chase Dark Clouds (VIN18) Watercolour on Paper 30" x 22" 2009



Debarchan Rout Untitled (DERO20) Acrylic on Canvas 66" x 48" 2009

CHAPTER 2

THE HUMAN RESPONSE....

Rajendra Kapse started a new series of works - *Praying for Rain* - last monsoon for our chapter, which he carries forward this year. He embarks on a search for water, metaphysically ploughing deep for water that may be there (but the water is finishing!)

A conglomeration of Kapses then meets to call the rain, a round table conference of sorts to appease the monsoon. These works inspire us on to keep the faith, highlighting the human agency in monsoon happenings, urging us all to be rainmakers...

Just close your eyes, and pray for rain...

Kapse's prayer is answered in Waswo X Waswo's works. It starts raining heavily, and our monsoon man steps out to enjoy, complete with camera and assistant.

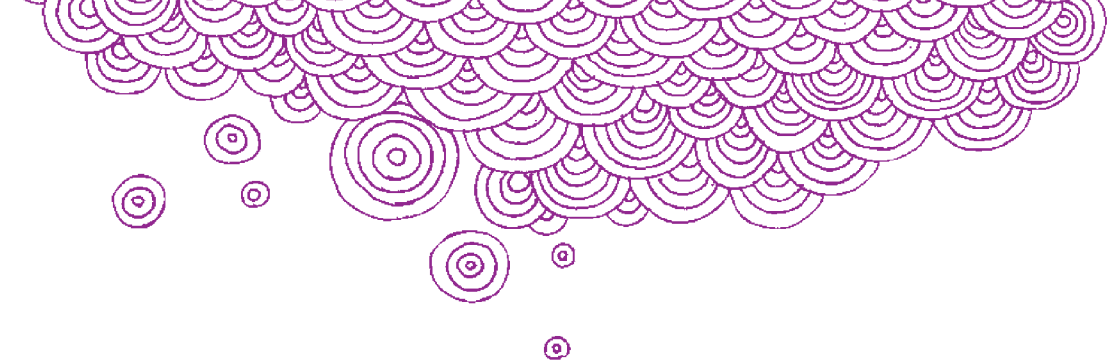
Waswo goes on to take us on a whirlwind monsoon journey, capturing a thousand conflicting emotions of the grandiose season in just three small miniatures. Indeed, what is the Indian monsoon without miniatures?

Next, monsoon man reaches the rice fields of Karnataka and documents this monsoon happiness. It is raining, and the fields are full. Everyone is happy.

Things are not so happy in *The Dry Lake* though, the lakes of Udaipur have dried up. Perhaps we should say a prayer again?

(Artist Statement Overleaf)





ARTIST SPEAK

Waswo X. Waswo

Each of these miniatures is autobiography brought to life through the talents of R. Vijay. Even the gold borders, painted by Shankar Kumawat, help to tell the story.

Grey Skies captures the joy of a monsoon thunderstorm, the filling of lakes, the cool grey wetness with which nature gifts the earth.

In The Rice Fields references my first book, *India Poems: The Photographs*, and depicts how a photograph with the same title came to be made. This image was taken in the rich agricultural lands of Karnataka.

The Dry Lake is an image from Udaipur. I've lived in Rajasthan long enough to witness its struggles for water. Coming from America's Midwest, where periodic rainfall is taken largely for granted, it was new for me to become acutely conscious of the need for rain. Like the Udaipur locals, I have learned to eagerly watch the clouds at monsoon time, hoping each day for a downpour. I have seen Udaipur's lakes go fully dry, and have experienced the strange wonder of lying at their dry bottoms to watch the stars.

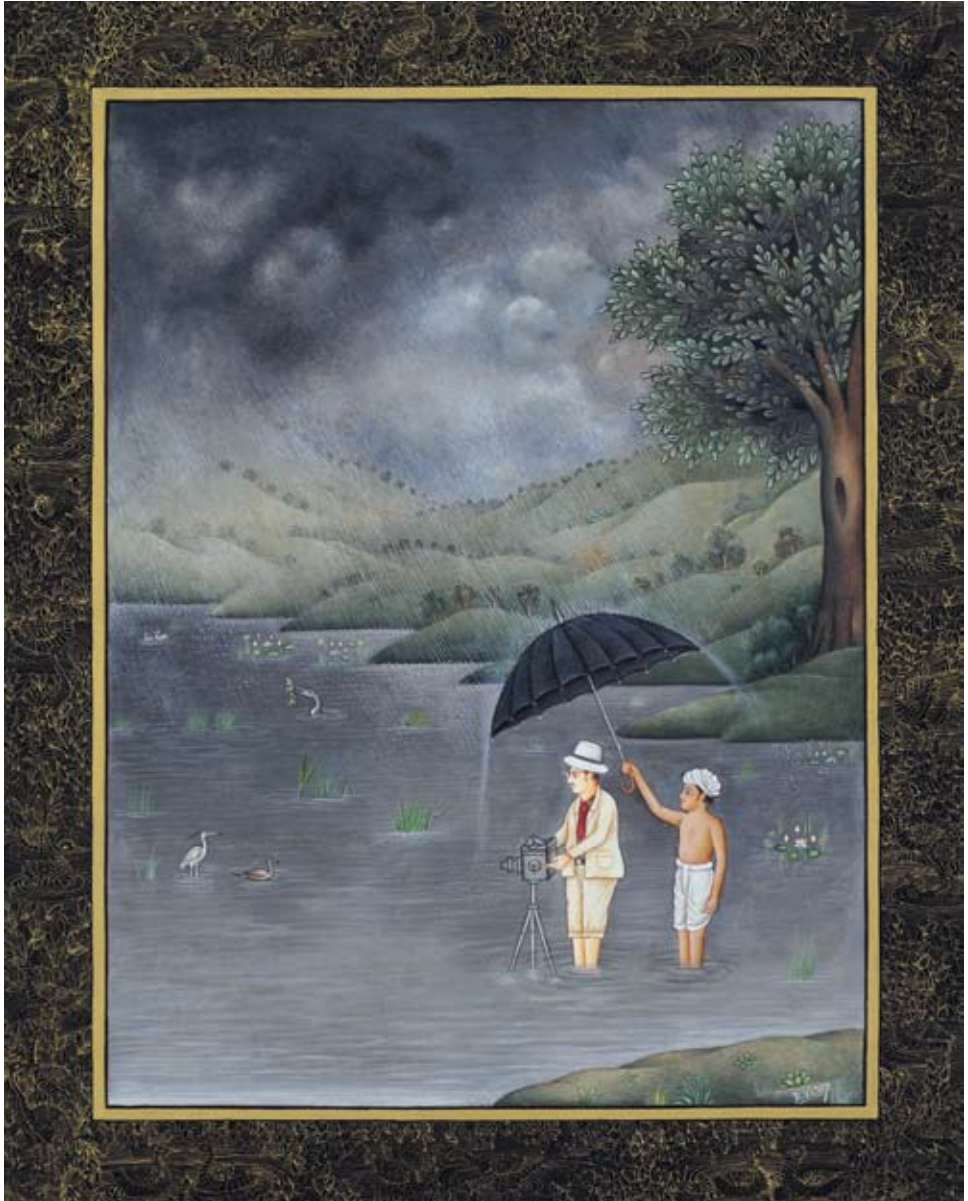
But the story is more than just a personal one. It is a story of the earth's need for water, and our enjoyment of how nature fulfills us. Of course the subplot is the unnatural threat of climate change, and our human responsibilities toward protecting the planet.



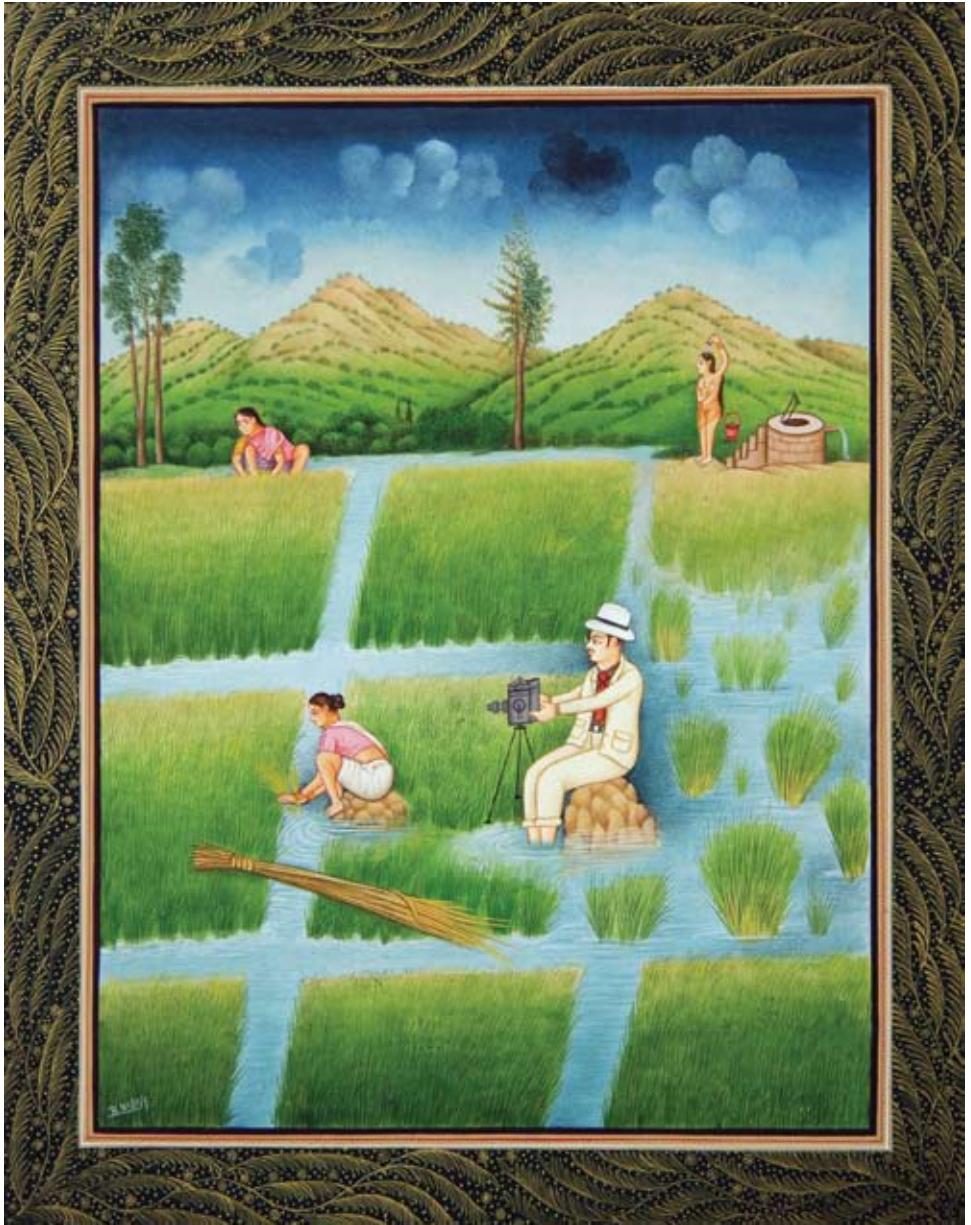
Rajendra Kapse Praying for Rain 2 (RK36) Oil on Canvas 60" x 60" 2009



Rajendra Kapse Praying for Rain 3 (RK37) Oil on Canvas 60" x 60" 2009



Waswo X. Waswo & R. Vijay Grey Skies (WXW3) Pigment & Gold on Wasli 9.5" x 7.5" 2009



Waswo X. Waswo & R. Vijay In The Rice Fields (WXW2) Pigment & Gold on Wasli 9.5" x 7.5" 2007



Waswo X. Waswo & R. Vijay The Dry Lake (WXW4) Pigment & Gold on Wasli 7.75" x 17.5" 2008

CHAPTER 3

MONSOON MADNESS, HUMAN MADNESS....

A miscellaneous selection celebrating the monsoon madness and the human madness that is causing climate change, environmental disaster and the disappearance of the monsoon.

Debarchan Rout poetically hallucinates and makes metaphysical rain, calling to aid the divine prowess of Lord Vishnu.

(Artist Statement on Facing Page)

Nandan Ghiya expresses fears that human civilisation might be drowned in flood in this new game of climate change. He provokes thoughts in such a dynamic way: “FEAR of FLOOD or FUN of FLOOD”...?

(Artist Statement on Facing Page)

Pranay Lal’s mastermind gives us several pointers to think about WATER, the “ever-changing entity”. Paani Paani Re...

(Artist Statement on Facing Page)

Manil Gupta passionately expresses his concern that man is overtaking nature.

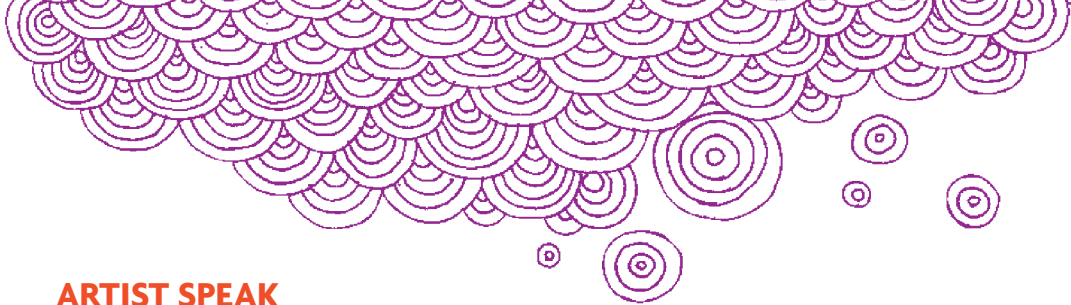
(Artist Statement on Facing Page)

Pratul Dash’s landscapes are full of beauty and devastation at the same time. There are angels and lotuses, but also signs of impending doom – falling birds, and toxic landfills.

(Artist Statement on Facing Page)

Biplab Muzibar Rahman’s *Purple Dream* juxtaposes the protagonist’s monsoon dreams with the pragmatic mechanical reality of change.





ARTIST SPEAK

Debarchan Rout

In *Summer Fantasy*, I present myself as a helpless character, who is awaiting the now very unpredictable monsoon in the cruel burning summer. I hallucinate in the summer about the rain. I have been working on depicting folk stories in my paintings, and in this painting, I have depicted elements of a story from *Vishnu Purana* about how Lord Vishnu saves a helpless elephant from a crocodile. I am dreaming about Lord Vishnu in the sky, seated on Garuda and showering a black rain cloud on me.

Nandan Ghiya

We all know about global warming & Antarctic meltdown. Erratic weather changes have become the order of the day. Looking from my rooftop, I often wonder if the whole cityscape around me would one day get flooded with water, which is what I have tried to depict in this painting. Like a disaster movie. Like mythology. FEAR of FLOOD or FUN of FLOOD? I don't know. All the people will live on their rooftops. Boats will replace cars. The fanatics will try to lift a mountain that won't exist & the pragmatics will go fishing. Hence, life will still go on. And then change is always good. Right?

Pranay Lal

Water, the ever-changing entity....taking on myriad shapes and forms and meaning as it flits across time, place, regions, circumstances and mindsets. Water in the floods that drives out Ramprasad from north Bihar provides him with a living in north Delhi – from a region of plenty (albeit destructive) to a region of scarcity – water remains intertwined to every Ramprasad's fateline, forever defining his destiny.

Manil Gupta

My work currently deals with the amusingly-overwhelming paradoxes of life: life/death, joy/pain. I'm bemused how man is constantly trying to play god. But what is man's position in nature's overall variety of existence? Who decides? Does he? Who is above one or below another? What all can we consume? We seem to justify anything and everything. Where should we stop? Controlling nature seems to be a very desirable but highly self-annihilating concept. But then, maybe it's meant to be like that...You know what I mean...

Pratul Dash

I use animals / birds in my works as circumstantial witnesses. Animals can sense threats much more than humans, but they cannot react; they are just witnesses to the tragedy made by humans.



Debarchan Rout Summer Fantasy (DER019) Acrylic on Canvas 48" x 66" 2009



Nandan Ghiya Fill in the Blanks with Water (NAGH1) Acrylic on Canvas 48" x 66" 2009



Pranay Lal North Bihar (PRLA8) Acrylic on Canvas 45" x 36" 2009



Manil Gupta Gadbad (MG12) Acrylic on Canvas 40" x 48" 2009



Pratul Dash Falling Birds (PD14) Watercolour on 300 gsm Acid-free Paper 30" x 22" 2009



Pratul Dash Lotus Landscape (PD15) Watercolour on 300 gsm Acid-free Paper 22" x 30" 2009



Biplab Muzibar Rahman Purple Dream (BMR14) Mixed Media on Canvas 48" x 48" 2009

CHAPTER 4

URBAN LANDSCAPES

We move on to the larger picture - monsoon landscapes. These works set in urban settings foreground varied monsoon experiences in the city.

A whiff of fresh air in this predominantly painting exhibition, Biplab Muzibar Rahman's photography etches stories of the monsoon in Calcutta.

(Artist Statement Overleaf)

Rain in Calcutta typifies the classical romance of the monsoon. Streets and shops awash in a blur of rain and the figure of the rickshaw-puller emerges, a careful act of concentration and capturing just the right monsoon moment.

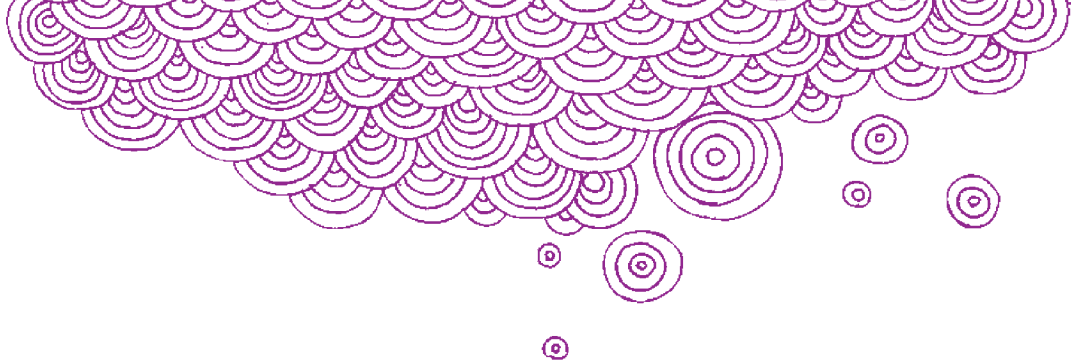
An Offering to Ganga also operates nominally in the romantic mode, retaining some of the romance of the monsoon, like the boats on the Ganga. But there are other stories being told here. Water levels in the river are scanty and the river bank is lined with toxic waste, is this what we have to offer to the Ganga, our most sacred water?

Gagan Singh's landscapes of Monsoon in Delhi also offer romantic and anti-thetical views of the Monsoon.

(Artist Statement Overleaf)

The Lonely Black Buck encompasses lotus fields and mountains, a landscape of vast and expansive open spaces in which the mind is renewed. And then, in his second work, *The Monsoon Chapter*, we see the polluted waters of Delhi, the dirty Yamuna tumbling through Delhi, methane flowing in our veins, the anarchy of development.





ARTIST SPEAK

Biplab Muzibar Rahman

Rain in Calcutta: The moment when day light almost vanishes and raindrops fall from sky. Rickshaw-puller drives his vehicle faster, very slow shutter speed.

An Offering to Ganga: The Hoogly; a young girl at the right corner, looking for something, almost crying: “see what we have offered to the holy river!!”

Gagan Singh

The Lonely Black Buck: I met him in the Zoo (Chiriaa Ghar). And I was possessed by him. I liked him a lot. He was like a General. He helped me to travel, to see things differently. He took me to the wide open fields, to the hidden lotus pond. We travelled to the Indus river, into the heart of the Himalayas. But the General remained alone, maybe that’s why he is pissed!

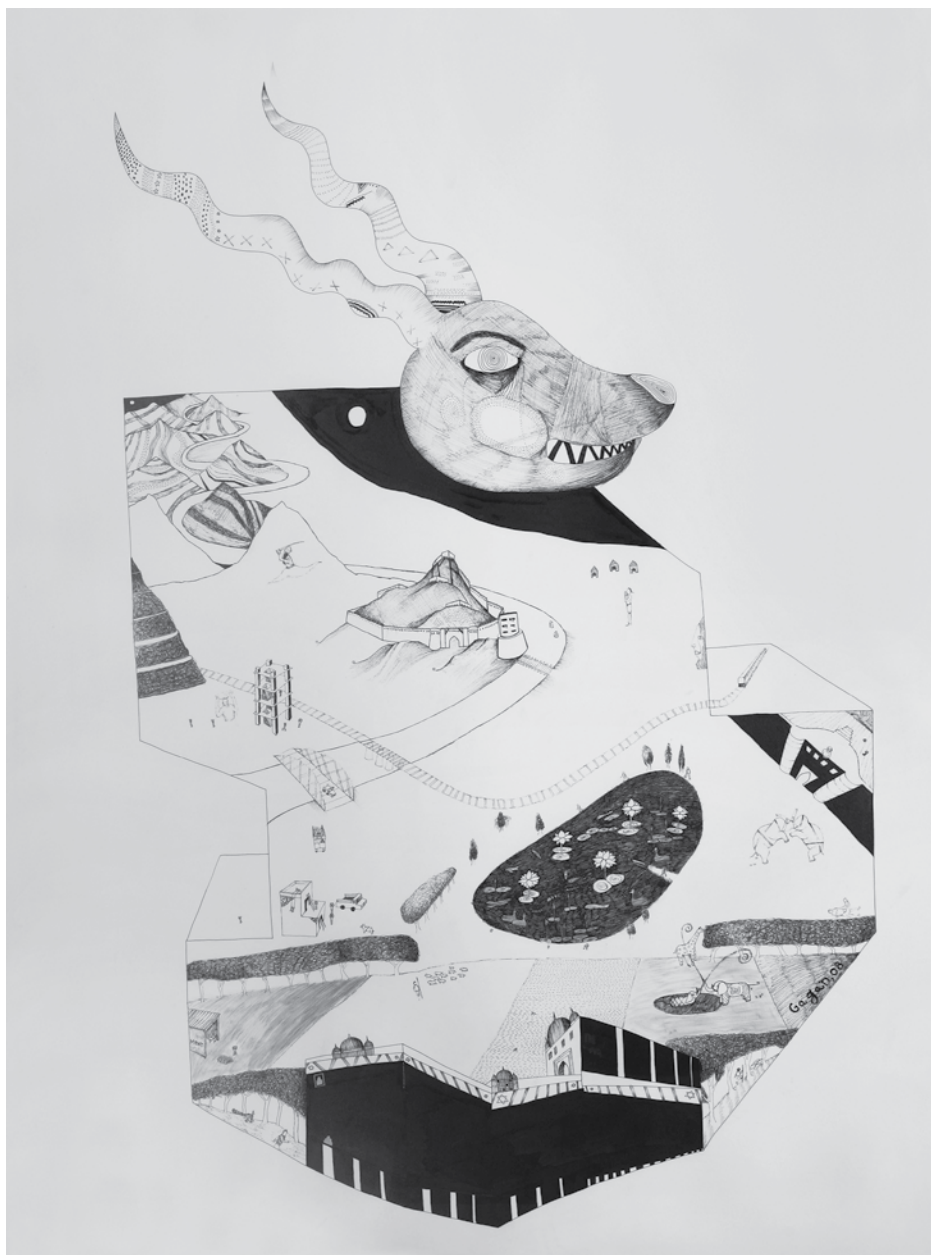
The Monsoon Chapter: I, the warrior watch the river flow across the city. Wounded, yet struggling to survive, I am rolling, tumbling into this vast river. I am part of it, of all the flyovers, bridges, roads and the sewage pipes emptying into the dirty, filthy Yamuna.



Biplab Muzibar Rahman Rain in Calcutta (BMR12)
Black and White Film, Digital Print on Acid Free 350 gsm Archival Paper 26.3" x 40" 2004 (Edition 1/5)



Biplab Muzibar Rahman Offering to Ganga (BMR13)
Black and White Film, Digital Print on Acid Free 350 gsm Archival Paper 26.3" x 40" 2007 (Edition 1/5)



Gagan Singh The Lonely Black Buck (GDS27) Pen & Ink on Paper 60" x 44" 2008



Gagan Singh The Monsoon Chapter (GDS28) Pen & Ink on Paper 60" x 44" 2008

CHAPTER 5

THE UMBRELLA

A brief epilogue to the exhibition.

Monsoon objects have always fascinated me, and the umbrella is the most popular and typical object of the monsoon.

Over the last few years in The Monsoon Festival, much celebration has happened with umbrellas, on umbrellas.

We end this year's chapter with this favourite toy of the monsoon, an inanimate object capable of immense poetry....

E.H Pushkin helps us to celebrate the umbrella.

Pushkin recreates the late soldier's monsoon. The late soldier, Pushkin's father-in-law, used this black umbrella for about 30 years. As a remembrance, Pushkin etches this umbrella for posterity in his work.

Elsewhere, we see the umbrella, eagerly awaiting rain, looking out of the window, for that first drop of rain, perhaps a message from the late soldier...?





E.H. Pushkin Reconstruction of a Late Soldier's Monsoon (EHP1) Acrylic on Canvas 55" x 61.5" 2009



E.H. Pushkin It Would Be Nice to Wait for Rain near the Window (EHP2) Acrylic on Canvas 55" x 61.5" 2009