

An abstract painting with a textured, expressive style. The background is a mix of warm tones: ochre, sienna, and terracotta. A large, dark, charcoal-like stroke sweeps across the upper left. A prominent, circular, golden-yellow shape with a rough, metallic texture is positioned on the right side. The overall composition is dynamic and layered.

OLD GOLD MINNE

Usha Phenany Pathak

GOLD MINE

By
Usha Phenany Pathak

Curated by
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Usha Phenany Pathak

The Lightning Painter

Usha Phenany Pathak talks about her journey as a painter who has travelled across the globe but returns to her mother-land bringing with it the power of her artwork, that may be compared to the ocean contained within a dewdrop.

The rapidity with which Usha Phenany Pathak paints definitely defines her work. Known as the "lightning portraitist" who could put down line, colour and composition with an amazing amount of speed and precision to capture the resemblance of her sitter, young Usha began as a force to reckon with. However, do not mistake the speed with which she works as a kind of nonchalance. She knows every colour, every stroke and every evocation that she renders on canvas.

Usha's training began when she was about five-years old, when she found that she was drawn to the Scraper-Board that her father created. "Scraper-board was a unique technique of drawing, which was used some 70 years ago for reproducing the accurate print, for newspaper advertising. My father Mr. Shankar Phenany was one of the five topmost renowned artists in India, who mastered this technique. This drawing method was introduced by the British where the artist employed a board of plaster of Paris and the German Pelican waterproof black ink. It is spread and once it is dried, using a very sharp scraper, the artist scrapes down the ink, to make vertical and horizontal lines to acquire a dot. The drawing is made with these dots, with absolute accuracy and precision," she recalls.

With the technique unfolding before her eyes, Usha moved towards art as naturally as a duck to water. Although she did not begin learning and reproducing that scraper-board technique, which she

was very much in awe of, she adopted her own approach. She began drawing directly with the pen or ballpen on the paper without any prior marking with a pencil. Also, at the age of 13, she rendered the paintings directly with colours on canvas without making any prior sketching or drawings. "These drawings and paintings were very rewarding but I wasn't able to capture the whisper of the wind and the gurgling of the river in a realistic manner and that led to the happening of abstraction in my work. For she believes, "The painting is a happening," she says passionately.

She went on to study painting at Sir J.J. School of Art in 1975 where she came under the influence of Shankar B Palsikar, the father of Mumbai's contemporary art culture and mentor to Bombay Group of Artists, and a great number of city artists who found fame and fortune in the twentieth century. Later on, she went on to study at the computer Graphics in the USA in 1992 and round it off with a tutorial of Sculpture at the Center of New York in 1994 "I wanted to give both -- my ability to draw and conceive form importance and my ability to imagine things in an abstract manner as well," she defines her purpose adding, "I travelled the world looking for the dialogue between the human soul and the cosmic energy power. I felt that I could combine figurative and space elements to achieve this and I began to paint in a larger format as a painting and not a portrait," she says. Usha's approach to some of her works also carries her method of learning and training in sculpture. In a sense some of the work does have a sculptural feel to it, with an emphasis on musculature and bone. The full-formed faces convey a sense of power and unbridled modular structure.



During her time in the US, Jean-Michel Basquiat was her favourite artist. It was his ability to combine his writing of enigmatic epigrams with drawing, and painting that inspired her. His bringing together of text and image, abstraction, figuration, and historical information mixed with contemporary critique, was much in the manner that appealed to her and spoke to her sensibilities that charmed her. The ability to bring something to the ‘sufferance right from the inner recesses’ is what charmed her and acted as a stimulant in her work.

“In a sense, it was also coming across the writing of Kabir and his dohas that was inspirational. He compared the dewdrop and the ocean for they both were made of the same water and in a way the dew had the same water of the sea even if one was more powerful than the other. I spend my life as an artist looking for the power of the ocean in the dewdrop,” she says.

With an artist, like her contemporary Prabhakar Kolte, one can see in his works that he believed that form could function as pure colour in space and he often worked to the point that the forms were unrecognisable with any existing codes. This was an intention that many abstractionists followed. With Usha’s works, one can see the transition between some of the figurative work and that which becomes abstract. Her intention of moving towards abstraction, as she explained, was to capture the essence of nature, that was vast and beyond the purview of figuration.

Usha wanted to capture that subconscious notion, which had been hushed till recently and when it gained form and came forth, she embraced the immense intensity of creative energy. It echoed like a ‘wind in the desert that creates as it transforms’. It gave her a tremendous sense of abstruse reality. Her guru, Shankar B Palsikar, believed that abstraction was a spiritual activity, where one moved deeper to reach levels that were meditative and yet

awake. Many have acknowledged a great debt to this painter and teacher, who taught them not only about art but about life and its values as well.

With the elements combined under her control, Usha’s painting managed to achieve many landmarks during her career. She showed her work in Manchester, Aldwych and London in the UK and in Wyoming, New York and CA in the USA, besides showing in India and Colombo, Sri Lanka. She has taught at Sir J. J. School of Art, of which she is an alumni, as the assistant lecturer and has served as the Honorary Joint Secretary to the Arts Society of India. In the US she has served as a Founder member of The Sunnyside Art League, NY, Jury for the International Art shows, and for the Ecuadorian Cultural Exchange School, New York.

After achieving so much it seems impossible that she would be building a future project and yet she is. At the auction of her paintings, a few years ago in Delhi, that was organised by the Earth Foundation, she was introduced to many dignitaries and ambassadors from across the world. She appealed to them to contribute to the cause of charity to underprivileged girl children. Many Ambassadors from Europe and the Middle East, invited her to their country to hold her exhibition. She requested them to be a part of this project.

“I have been making quick sketches of the patients at the Tata-Bhabha cancer hospital in Mumbai to make small books for sale whose proceeds will be deployed towards the treatment of cancer patients. Many ambassadors have responded to my request by assuring me of assistance while in their country. It has been an ongoing process that I am occupied with until now and into the distant future,” says Usha Phenany Pathak.

— Georgina Maddox

Abstract Series

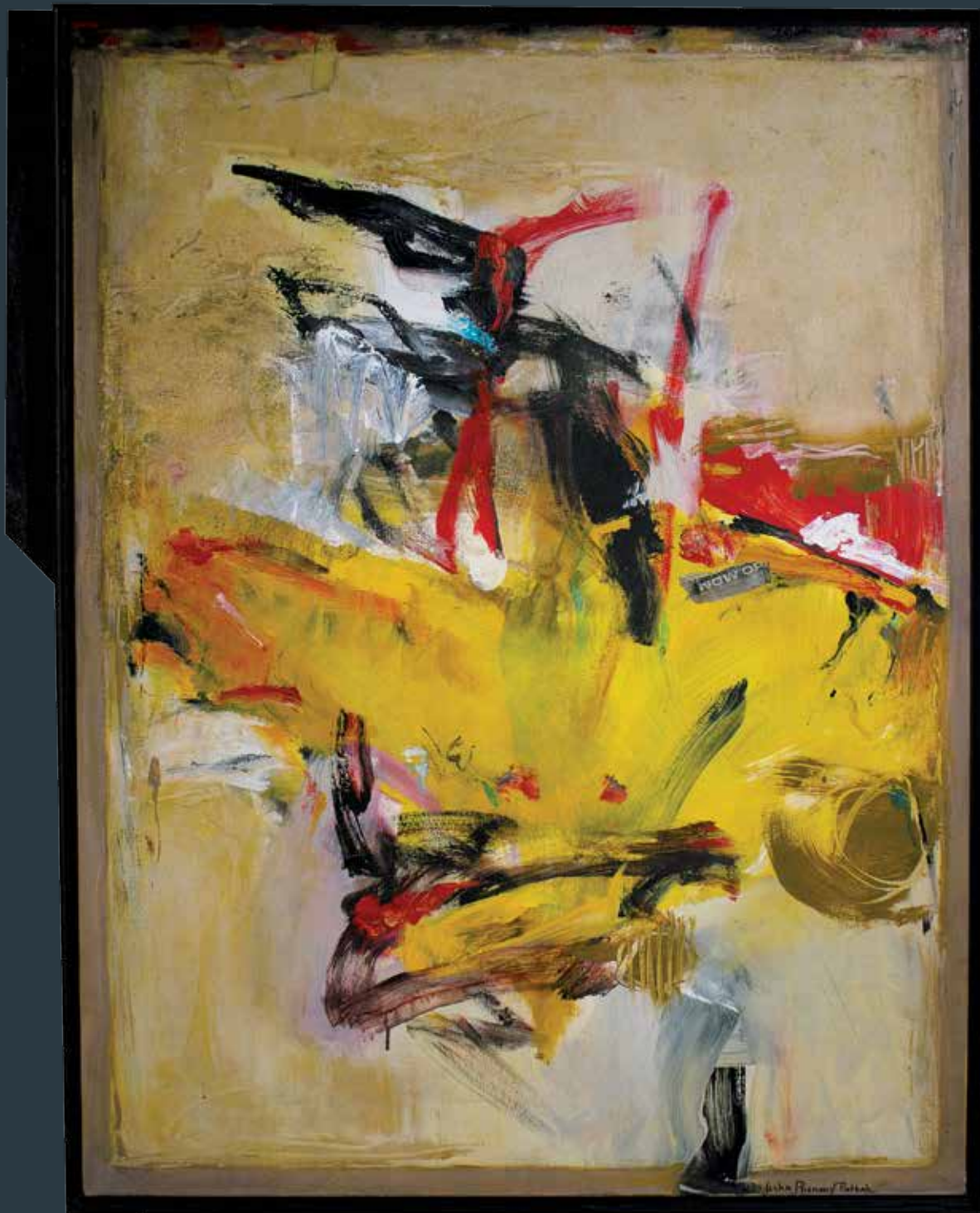
In Usha's abstract works we see a swirling power, a kind of wrestling with inner energy to finally reach a sense of calm, the meditative quality and the luminosity of colour descending upon the work at last. In some instances, the lines dripping colour, the heaving splashes of colour, the transitions of reds to browns...all convey that sense of movement and vitality. While in other compositions the blues and the blacks, the floating squares and rectangles, the white gauze bandage and the linearity of the inner forms bring to the viewer that sense of calm and meditation that the artist seeks to convey.

— Georgina Maddox



Mixed Medium on Canvas | 30 x 24 inches





Mixed Medium on Canvas | 50 x 40 inches



Mixed Medium on Canvas | 55 x 43 inches



Mixed Medium on Canvas | 53 x 48 inches



Mixed Medium on Canvas | 50 x 40 inches



Acrylic on Canvas | 15 x 38.5 inches



Mixed Medium on Canvas | 35 x 25.5 inches



Mixed Medium on Canvas I 43.5 x 55.5 inches



Mixed Medium on Canvas I 54 x 38 inches



Mixed Medium on Canvas | 38 x 50 inches

Every throbbing sound from the womb of knowledge--is born a 'revolution'!

With every step ahead the 'SELF' assumes to get closer to conquering the universe --repeatedly hit with a spin of a ladder of 'wisdom' just to know that it's not the end, but in fact, the beginning of a 'realization'.

But then the SELF is determined to be enlightened and trusts that one day the spirit of 'oneness'--the 'harmony'--that splendid ecstasy of 'happening' would be experienced-----not like the way the dew drop melts into the ocean---rather it's the other way round--just the way the ocean slips into a dew drop!

-Usha P. Pathak



Acrylic on Canvas | 15 x 38.5 inches



Acrylic on Canvas | 12 x 12 inches



Acrylic on Canvas | 12 x 12 inches



Acrylic on Canvas | 12 x 12 inches



Acrylic on Canvas | 12 x 12 inches



Acrylic on Canvas | 12 x 12 inches



Acrylic on Canvas | 12 x 12 inches



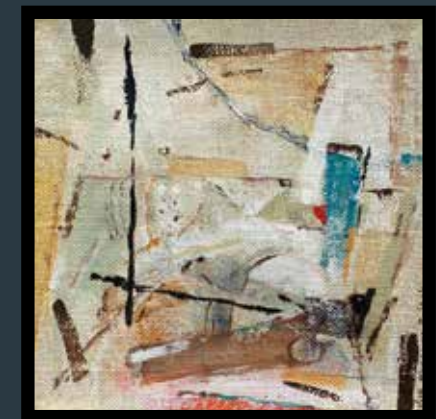
Acrylic on Canvas | 12 x 12 inches



Acrylic on Canvas | 12 x 12 inches



Acrylic on Canvas | 12 x 12 inches



Acrylic on Canvas | 12 x 12 inches



Mixed Medium on Burlap | 22 x 30 inches



Mixed Medium on Wood | 14 x 21 inches

"These drawing and painting were very much rewarding but I wasn't able to capture the whisper of the wind and the gurgling of the river with the figurative drawings and that led the happening of abstraction in my work. For the painting is a happening,"

-Usha P. Pathak



Acrylic on Canvas | 15 x 38.5 inches



Mixed Medium on Canvas | 55 x 43.5 inches



Mixed Medium on Canvas | 55 x 43 inches



Mixed Medium on Canvas | 40 x 30 inches



Mixed Medium on Canvas | 60 x 45 inches



Mixed Medium on Canvas | 43 x 31 inches



Mixed Medium on Canvas | 34 x 25.5 inches



Mixed Medium on Canvas | 13.5 x 23.5 inches



Mixed Medium on Canvas | 13.5 x 23.5 inches



Mixed Medium on Canvas | 13.5 x 20.5 inches



Mixed Medium on Canvas | 13.5 x 20.5 inches



Mixed Medium on Canvas | 12 x 12 inches, set of 3

Artist Statement

The 'subconscious mind' of a human kind has an enormous power that accumulates and restores all the tiniest to mightiest experiences of life. It's like a colossal 'gold mine' with exuberant gold.

An extraordinary creative ability of an artist digs into it, to obtain the exact and unparallel expression of execution that transforms his experience to the higher level of ecstasy!.. Sometimes attaining a 'Supremacy!'

'This' experience is phenomenal, when the artist achieves his goal.... that shines in his mind like a gold.... to 'treasure' those moments forever!

Usha Phenany Pathak

Portrait Series

There is also a certain abstraction that is part of her work, even where her portraits although they capture the essence of the sitter, there is a use of colour and line that may be characterised as a post- Impressionist fervour. Her work is characterised by its contours and mannerism, where the glazed brush- strokes bring a vibrant quality and unbridled passion to the work that elicits a visceral emotional impact. In a sense, her work taps into the "Synthetism" that was characteristic of works by Paul Gauguin, and according to its tenets, the final, visual form is determined by a synthesis of the outward appearance of the natural form. The artist's feelings about the subject matter, and the aesthetic considerations of colour, line, and form decide the attractiveness of the form. In Usha's works many times there is an emphasis on the face and the other aspects are rendered in an abstract manner. Whether it is the clothes or the areas surrounding the figure.

— Georgina Maddox



Mixed Medium on Canvas | 24 x 24 inches



Mixed Medium on Canvas | 24 x 24 inches





Mixed Medium on Canvas | 60 x 48 inches



Mixed Medium on Canvas | 60 x 48 inches



Mixed Medium on Canvas | 60 x 48 inches



Mixed Medium on Canvas | 60 x 48 inches



Mixed Medium on Canvas | 24 x 24 inches



Mixed Medium on Canvas | 24 x 24 inches

The departure from figuration was also a happening. It was an extension of the profound routed subconscious notion which had been silent so far. When it burst out and embraced the immense intensity of creative energy, it echoed like a wind in the desert... that creates as it transforms... through and within myself, reflecting again and again through my work, giving me the tremendous sense of abstruse reality!

-Usha P.Pathak



Mixed Medium on Canvas | 48 x 60 inches



Mixed Medium on Canvas | 38 x 50 inches



Mixed Medium on Canvas | 60 x 48 inches



Mixed Medium on Canvas | 24 x 20 inches

When my voyage for the tactual expression of intuition began..... the 'reality' was transformed into the 'truth'!

Creativity entered the world of spirit and the abstract ideas embodied through various images - unrestrained by formal conceptions.

My childhood passion for capturing through paints.. a spirit of 'human being' which I believe is the most beautiful creation of nature.... later turned into a blissful act of creativity! To me, it is an event.....a happening.

-Usha P. Pathak



Mixed Medium on Canvas | 48 x 48 inches



Mixed Medium on Canvas | 48 x 48 inches

Artist Profile

Education :

- Fine Art (drawing-Painting) Sir J.J. School of Art, Mumbai-1975
- Computer Graphics - Parsons School of Art, NY, USA-1992
- Sculpture Center of New York, USA-1994

Selected Solo Exhibitions:

- White Mountain Gallery, WY, USA-2002
- Gallery Rocksprings, WY, USA-2002, 2000
- Olive Art Gallery, CA-2001
- Escoita Fine Arts, CA-2000, 1990
- Aerial Art Gallery, SOHO, NY-1989
- Congleton Art Gallery Manchester, UK-1989
- Barkers Fine Art, London-1984
- Sanskritik, May Fair, UK-1980, 1979
- India House, Aldwych, UK-1979
- Neeldlean Gallery, UK-1978
- Colombo National Museum of Art-1977
- Gallery International, Colombo, Sri Lanka-1977

Selected Group Exhibitions:

- California Fine Art Gallery, CA-2004
- Gallery Gems Eagle, WY-2003
- Anderson Fine Art, WY-2003
- Rosen Field Gallery, GA-2002
- Spheris Gallery, VT-2000,1998,1993
- Jack Olson Gallery, IL-2001
- Carel Gallery, FL-1998,1994,1990
- Jacob Javitz Center NY-1993
- International Design Center, NY-1992
- Agora Art Gallery, SOHO, NY-1992
- Lever House, NY by American Artist Professional League 1992
- Gracie Sq.Art show, Ny -1994, 1992
- New Rochelle Art Assoc., New Rochelle-1992
- Sheraton Center, NY-1990
- Ching Chan Gallery, by AQA NY-1990
- Aerial Art Gallery, SOHO, NY-1987

Honours:

Lectures and Demonstrations:

- The Figures in Art-by The Rochester Art League, NY-1996
- Art in East & West - By The Ecuadorian Cultural Council, Ny-1994
- Pictorial Space - by Sankritik, London-1980
- Art Today - by Kensington Art Association-1979
- Portrait Painting - by Art Society of India-1977
- National Academy of Sri Lanka-1977

Invite for the First International Show by:

The Cultural Council of Sri Lanka-1997

Awards:

- International SOHO Competition, New York-1991
- Individual Artist Showcase by AQA, NY-1991
- The American Artist Professional League-1990
- Gold Medal-The Bombay Art Society-1997
- Artist Center-1987,1977,1976
- The Art Society of India-1977,1976
- The Maharashtra State Art Competition-1975
- Fellowship at Sir J.J. School of Art-1975
- The Best Student-Teacher-1974
- Gladstone Solomon Award, Sir J.J. School of Art-1974
- Lady Harding Merit Scholarship, Sir J.J School of Art-1973

Position Held:

- Founder member of The Sunnyside Art League, NY -1994
- Jury for the International Art shows, Ecuadorian Cultural Exchange
- School, New York -1992,1990
- Jury for different art competitions in India, UK and USA
- Assistant Lecturer / Instructor, Sir J.J School of Art, Mumbai - 1976-77
- Honorary Joint Secretary to the Art Society of India - 1977

Collection:

- The Museum of Art for the Federation of Russian Mission to the United Nations
- Colombo National Museum, Sri Lanka
- U.S. Senator Lautenberg, Washington, USA
- President’s House, Sri Lanka
- Prime Minister of India, Mr. Vajpaypee
- Mr. Michael Werboff, Renowned Portraitist, USA
- Samual Wang, New York Philharmonic, NY
- Barkers, Kensington, UK
- Indo-American Cultural Society, India
- Public and Private collections in the USA, Canada, Europe and India

Reviews and Interviews:

Art Speak, New York
Manhattan Arts, New York
S F Chronicle, CA
Queens Tribune, New York
India Abroad, New York
India Worldwide, New York

Daily Rocket miner, Wyoming
Star, Wyoming
The Chronicle, U.K
Sunday Observer, Sri Lanka
Economic Times, India
Evening News of India

There is a massive gulf between traditional realism and Contemporary art but Usha Phenany Pathak can turn her hand to both styles with ease. She is a painter who has imbibed Nature in the raw, and has caught the demeanor of her models and ‘milieu’ of her subjects virtually in the act. She is a ‘lightning portraitist’ as she captures the soul and spirit of her subject with ‘lightning speed’.

Alexandra Shaw, Manhattan Arts, NY

Usha has ushered in a philosophy that proceeds with many layered viewpoints, an elaborate dialogue between paint and concepts. Her art is a painted metaphor, the past machine of a perpetual second, the fossil emotion of an infinite longing, the magic desire evolving or the broken axis of the compressed space, reflected in the form of inner, personal, landscape.

Abraham llein, Art Speak, NY

With a proficiency in realism as well as abstract expressionism, Usha constantly challenges herself to reach new heights of expression. Her painting techniques are innovative, embracing myriad variations in texture and palette, in order to reflect the ever-changing, spontaneous impulses in nature and man.

Ann Jantz Star, WY

Usha brings to her portraits the spontaneity of the cartoonist, and has gone behind and within her caricature, giving it depth, expression and a vivid and vital vision. Her calligraphy, born of fierce, bold, undefeated stokes of deep and somber colaration, brings out the inner mental patterns of her subjects with sweeping vigor.

S.F Chronicle, CA

TAG

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