

Simran KS Lamba



NOUVEAU
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My work is based on my responses to everyday living-I often think about how small things change so much in different environments. It was while getting my home done that I discovered the potential that lay in the medium of coal tar. It presents multiple possibilities. For me painting is really about how it can absorb the world around it. I don't think that painting has to be purified in order to become itself.

In using coal tar, wires, crayons and different media to create, I am harnessing the notion that painting absorbs everything around itself. I believe that it makes painting alive, part of the world that it's in. I'm also reinventing the idea of mixed media to echo the truth that painting especially links and blends with other media. It's great that a canvas can absorb other media and tar becomes a vital material because it is more than just a fusion agent.

I have always felt that painting has this intense symbiotic relationship with the texture and materiality of different materials. There are contradictions and contrasts that come forth as novel ideas. I always ask myself how we can set up a situation in our own work that can explore these ideas. With the limitations of mostly being a studio artist presenting studio as a subject, I try not to treat the studio preciously. I let paintings live on the floor all around me and it is as if they speak in tones when I create over days and weeks, I look at them in different kinds of light, and start again. Somehow I have tried to experiment more with external elements, things that are built outside, and let time happen to them.

“All our language is composed of brief little dreams.”

Paul Valery

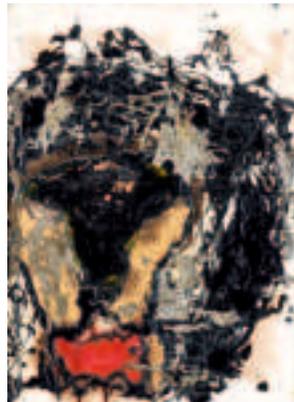
Art can be a cunning beast, it can throw up all kinds of references and annotations. And when it is unleashed in the hands of a mendicant of aesthetic crucibles it can give us realms within realms. Meet Simran KS Lamba who delves into the development of new definitions of painting, including the monochrome, creates serial structures, and churns up images that speak of fire and smoke; at times he weaves in a focus on light, at times ensues a minimalist movement within the framed space; but seems to have a hunger for the interrogation of the relationship between nature, fictitious fantasy, and humankind. It is his unique journey with the use of coal tar that evinces a rare interest in viewer activation; and the production of evocative art actions, that keep the human gaze alive and thinking long after it is seen no more.

Scream, Lion, Rebellion, Terrace Lilies, Fragments, Queen of Thorns, Woman in the Mirror, Tempest, Swan are just a few titles that you savour in the sojourn of coal tar and colour. Titles in this oeuvre have an academic as well as ecological echo –in his many frames both large and medium he emphasizes the power of gestural abstraction and personal expression, the emerging of a new approach to painting. He explores the use of single colours and serial structures to achieve a minimal aesthetic. By limiting his palette to one colour at times and applying dense layers of crayons in an all-over treatment, he downplays the hand of the artist and creates a cohesive choreography in which he points to the painting's capacity to convey immaterial concepts like energy fields within the landscape of the human mind.

Moon in a Well is a quixotic work with mythic moorings. It gives us a flashback of stories that we keep in our inner recesses. The little metal piece, the meandering wires and the strokes and squiggles of coal tar add a gravity of gorgeousness to it. You think of time and you think of memory. Memory is like a pile of stories determined by feelings and constantly revised to fit new feelings. The quaintness of this work lies in the suggestion of the narrative even as the subject is more like an abstracted still life. Literary leanings come effortlessly to Simran who is a graduate in Literature.



Rebellion



Lion



Women in the Mirror



Fragments

Calibrated Colour and Coal Tar

In his handling of colour energies, Simran's minimal compositions and carefully calibrated painting choices take his paintings as close as possible to the emotional and perceptual effects of colour and texture uninhibited by any descriptive constraints of form. “ I look for residual hints in what I create,” says Simran, “Its about the beauty of autumn, the still life scene that plays out before my eyes.” A tiny ridge—the residue of a curly coal tar edge—separates the autumnal toned tree from the frame. The oil paint/crayon has a mildly reflective eggshell finish. The division of tree and space seems one of natural intuition—just enough to create a supple moody finish the even vertical strokes of the oil paint's application. This surface resulted in deep terrain that avoided both glare and the colour-deadening effects of a matte surface.

The *Series of Faces* works incorporate coal tar, metal sheets, metal filigree, nails and oil paints. It is the amber tints that create the properties of holding light betwixt the many coagulations of colour. As for his decision to compose within three or four or five-foot squares of color, in an interview with this critic, Simran had this to say: “For days on end, I tried to figure out how the viewer could respond to the coal tar within the tints of colour in the middle of the frame when different textures like nails and metal sheets and filigree and coal tar are placed in the adjacent areas [...] Initially I thought the simple placements would allow that to happen, but it seemed that the color relationships with the other textural elements dominated the one on which the viewer concentrated, so I began increasing the size of each elements placed within the frame and reducing the colour tones and creating minimal islands [...] I finally ended up with what I thought was the ideal frame simply by sitting and looking at it; it turned out to be reflections that could be created in quasi abstract narratives that of course are rooted in reality but born out of my own fictitious notions. ”

The large works, while formally complex, show off Simran's command of color values as well as project the intensity of the larger works. In all the large works, Simran distributes the colours along a vertical axis without resorting to symmetry across it. In *Series of Faces-8 (Man with Ring)*, the oil meshed colour and foil moves from a light cobalt amber to a pale smoky beige across the dominant lower-right/bottom-left axis. Although the colour placement has a pleasing quirkiness, it creates the graphic punch of the prismatic patterns in the ropes that suggest the hair contours. The same is true for *Series of Faces-9 Woman in Curls*, which has a central band of pure charcoal values interrupting its vertical dulcet colour sweep. It, too, showcases Simran's pitch-perfect color sense but the foil frames effectively mute the impact in its overall design.

Pulsating Complexity

The works like *Tempest*, *Swan* and *My Friends* convey a greater energy, in part by their scale, but especially in the symmetrical arrangements around a vertical axis, with the colours either fading or growing in intensity as they move away from the center. The arrangements in works like *Tempest* and *Swan* set up pulsations that grow in subtlety and complexity with sustained viewing. Following Cézanne's dictum that a good painting should be a “color undulation,” Simran moves from the darkened embered end of the spectrum to the textured end of the spectrum as the colour variations travel from the bottom of the canvas to the top.

The most powerful painting is *Cityscape at Night*, created with molten metal, coal tar, ink, nails, washers and oil paint. This exceeds all the others in its intensity of tranquil movement, quiet drama, and sense of nocturnal energy. The central axis of saturated colors moves from the moonlit essence of esoteric symbolism on the top to pulsating smoky blue intonations up at the top, creating a distilled plane with the top half that symmetrically modulates from atmospheric articulations to crusty earth tones in gold and silver striations. The rest of the tonalities fade in a vertical pattern, with the two outermost bottom corners moving closest to in depth incantations. The rapid density in darkness to the lower corners creates a dramatic contrast across the field.

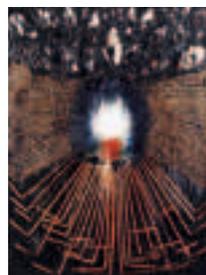
The speed of the transition from the vibrant blue tones at the top and to near black and gold and silver at the edges, along with the downward direction of the fade induces a sense of release and elation in this critic. It is a testament to Simran's colour mastery that he can play with prismatic color sequences—with just the luminosity of white and blue to give us an evanescent cityscape in which the night is endowed with a complexity and intensity we do not expect from art that includes the humble coal tar, nails and washers as a medium and material.



Swan



Terrace Lilies



Vishwaroop



Birth

Intangible Communications

With Simran's work, the nature of the materiality is different and captured in various manners that suggest the ether of virtual, intangible communications. The virtual field of cosmic energies is important in his works. You discern it in a riveting work entitled *Birth* that uses coal tar and paint. Translating the multiple imageries stacked around the central crimson tide that holds the face of the human, it is as if birth takes place from the inside of the flame into an expanded physical space, in the most non-literal way possible. What is the nature of thinking in this virtual, centered world? Is it about the way that we often lose focus in this world? Every component is competing for our attention in this work which speaks about ways in which we mediate our external worlds.

Simran affirms, “I am interested in the imagery that centers and stabilizes focus. Even though this work incorporates the process and the manner in which we now look at visual images through the mediation of inner rhythms, I blended in the coal tar and oil paint to create an allegory that you could relate to but also be participant of because life has so many struggles and sorrows.”

In some ways in terms of his deep rooted searches Simran reminds me of Yayoi Kusama's “Fireflies on the Water” (2002), where she warped installation space. It was a physical, yet not just a single place in terms of intent and approach. It suggested expansion in its use of wall, floor, and ceiling. And through the use of mirrors she also suggested the reflective computer screen, which parallels the virtual realms we now also occupy.

“I am working on a video,” says the erstwhile film maker who looks more like a solitary pilgrim in the quest of an artistic nirvana. “With my work, I am interested in the materiality of painting. I like those kinds of beautiful reflective scenes that can in painting marks be stretched and reinterpreted by the use of the materials like coal tar, ropes, mesh and metal sheets, leather, crayons and oil paints. So I combine techniques and time in front of the basic painted image. You will see that in my work *Tiger*, its an abstract study that looks at the endangered animal and yet speaks of its magnificent coat. Its such a masterpiece in the theory of evolution. The materialness of painting with the inclusion of textural elements in a nouveau manner is important to how my work evolves.”

Coal tar over a canvas, is fascinating-it becomes the source for the completion of the objective because Simran couldn't have envisioned what that would be like without the materiality of the ideation of colour tones that could be adjacent to black. He couldn't have painted from looking at a reflective, shiny screen. He needed to see the scale of his sensibilities. Its as if he needs to see a blocking of already-painted imagery alongside its coal tar-altered decipherings. Painting for Simran is an inchoate experience, it goes beyond the mere act of painting-it's a process that accumulates and builds up into a momentum that must reach a crescendo of cohesive cadences. Painting then has become more about using these devices and details to make paintings that are incorporated into a personal aesthetic environment. He could not have envisioned paintings and environments without the materiality of his elements and that is why in practice and in his own sensitivity he stands alone and apart.

Sculptural Installations

You need the physical tactility and the immersive, phenomenological experience of your ideations in a space, walking around an object, as well as the objectness of the space itself. Imagine taking iron woks of different sizes and creating a series of deeply quasi spiritual installations that dwell on Radha Krishna, Shiva and other elements of mythic and religious iconography. Simran takes the paradigms of relations of differently colored concentric woks to play on viewers' spiritual and optical perceptions. In the context of the language of abstraction these sculptural installations have a broader resonance, religious, historical as well as philosophical.

People who know the Bhagvadam and the many upadeshas will recall wandering through the many verses that speak of the Vishwaroopa, the Radha Krishna allegiance and the stories of Shiva and his symbolism. Simran's deeper understanding of the tales and the many imageries bring us to his works where he plays with the tenets of spectral shadows of other elements with the use of different metals and tonalities on the woks. The idea of creating the equivocal stance with both sides presents an ethereal and, in a good way, somehow ponderous pathway, as if you might find your way to a clear divine light with time and patience and intuitive reasoning.

The installations have the ability to transport us, as thoroughly as the original notions because they are nicely fitted to their spaces. With so much room around it and silhouettes of daylight, it's immediately and orientingly immersive. When you walk around and look at it from all angles, however, it becomes enveloping and absorbing.

The spaces left in between the woks and the circular holes in the centre leads to a patterning that is identical but rivetting. With its many rhythms and echoes, the whole is like three-dimensional visual rhetoric on religio societal echoes.

Curiously, Simran seems to have a long preoccupation with subtleties of perception, it may be that he intended viewers to be subliminally if not consciously affected by the quasi abstract shapes of the installations.

No doubt each as an artist Simran employs spherical and circular formats for his own illustrative reasons. He also probes us to question why he has taken time to pursue such reductive, seemingly purely formal aesthetics.

But in a deep sense, Simran has made an extended effort to profoundly alter the collective consciousness of our time, and in that he shares a utopian ethos. "What I was thinking about was changing the whole visual structure of how I look at the world and this whole system of beliefs," he explains. "My deeper journeys of solitude and the ramparts of Indian history allowed me to explore the rich content of time again."



Uma Nair
Art Critic, New Delhi



The Chair - 40" x 52" - Coal Tar



Winter Chill - 18" x 38" - Coal Tar





Web - 34" x 27" - Coal Tar, Ink and Wires



Untitled (Black and White - 5) - 14" x 18" - Coal Tar



Candles in the Darkness - 32" x 48" - Coal Tar



Conch - 26" x 48" - Coal Tar



Horse in Motion - 48" x 28" - Coal Tar



Musicians in the Street - 18" x 12" - Coal Tar



Lovers- 32" x 48" - Coal Tar



Cityscape in Black and White - 23" x 27" - Coal Tar



Dancers - 14" x 16" - Coal Tar and Foil



Untitled with Tar and Metal Wire - A - 18" x 22" - Coal Tar and Metal Wire



Untitled with Tar and Metal Wire - B - 18" x 22" - Coal Tar and Metal Wire



The Delta - 28" x 24" - Coal Tar



Twisted Ying - Yang - 40" x 52" - Coal Tar



Porter in the Forest - 24" x 24" - Coal Tar Residue and Ink



Princess in the Forest - 24" x 24" - Coal Tar Residue and Ink



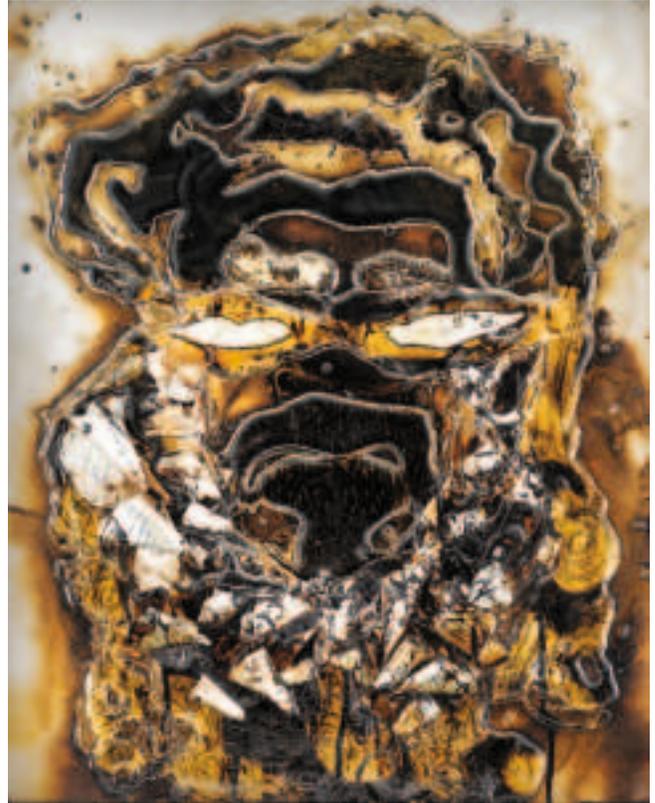
Queen of Thorns - 26" x 48" - Coal Tar, Molten Metal, Rivets, Nails and Metal Filigree

Repose - 28" x 47" - Coal Tar, Molten Metal, Rivets,
Nails and Metal Filigree and Oil Paint

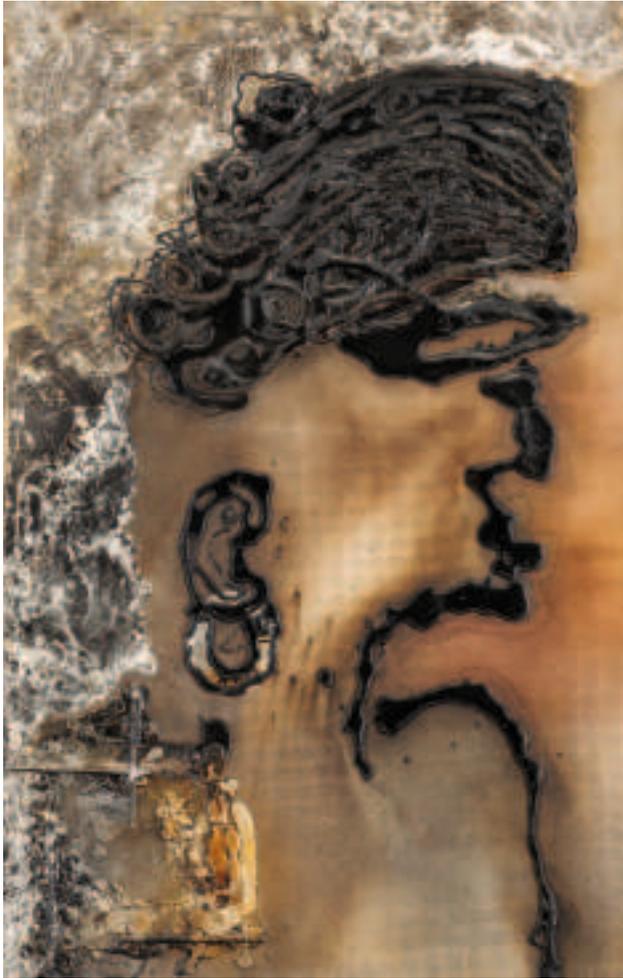




Series of Faces - 6 (The Woman with Earrings) - 34" x 38"
Coal Tar, Metal Sheets, Nails and Oil Paint



Series of Faces - 7 (Man with Beard) - 34" x 38"
Coal Tar, Metal Sheets, Nails and Oil Paint



Series of Faces - 8 (Man with Ring) - 36" x 47" - Coal Tar, Ropes, Foil, Mesh, Nails and Oil Paint



Series of Faces - 9 (Woman in Curls) - 36" x 47" - Coal Tar, Ropes, Foil, Mesh, Nails and Oil Paint



My Friends - 23" x 79" - Coal Tar and Oil Paint



Firecracker - 40" x 52" - Coal Tar, Oil Paint, Metal Wire and Wax



The Thinker - 22" x 28" - Coal Tar, Radiator Strips, Polishing Agents and Oil Paint



Sauntering in the Dusk - 40" x 54" - Coal Tar, Leather, Wire Mesh, Metal Wires and Oil Paint

Moon in a Well - 40" x 54" - Coal Tar, Metal Disc and Wires, Ink, Rudraksha and Oil Paint





Clockwise : Untitled in Crayons - A - 14" x 16" - Coal Tar, Crayons and Metal Wire
Untitled in Crayons - B - 14" x 16" - Coal Tar, Crayons and Metal Wire
Tresses in the Wind - 14" x 16" - Coal Tar, Crayons and Metal Wire
Tiger - 14" x 16" - Coal Tar, Crayons and Metal Wire

Cityscape at Night - 52" x 76" - Coal Tar, Molten Metal, Ink, Nails, Washers and Oil Paint





Untitled with Tar and Ink - 4 - 26" x 26" - Coal Tar and Ink





An Autumn Evening - 51" x 61" - Coal Tar, Oil Paint and Polishing Agents



Tempest - 32" x 32" - Coal Tar and Oil Paint



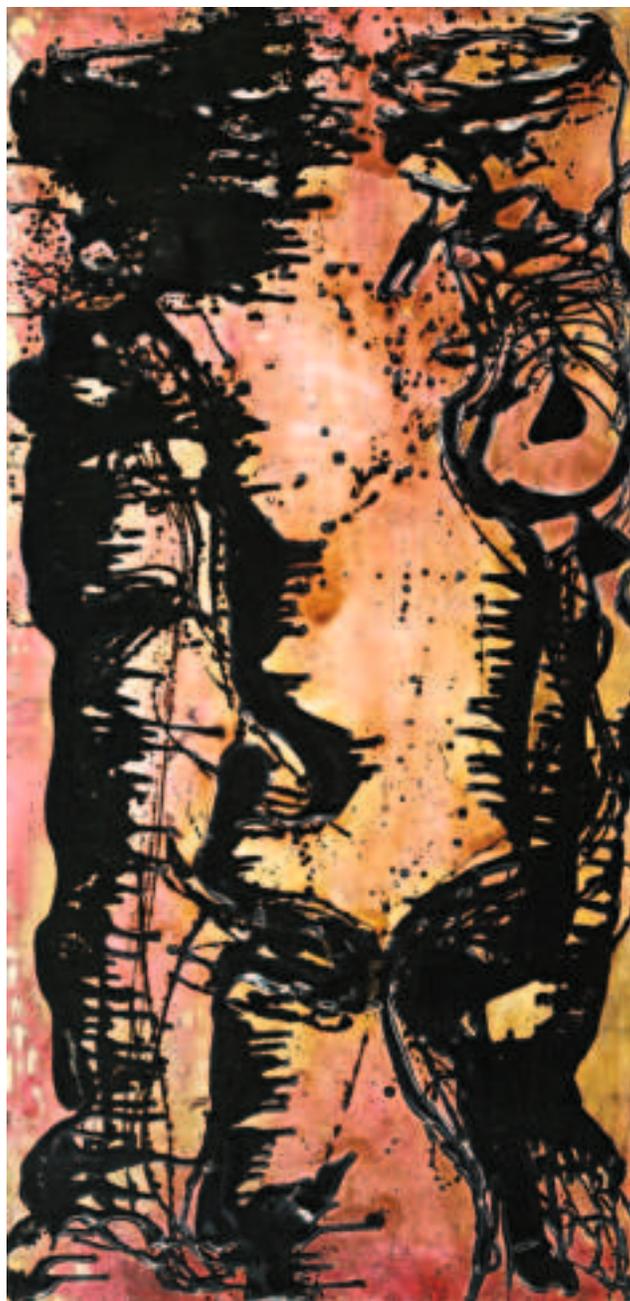
Trio - Part 1 - 38" x 50" - Coal Tar, Molten Metal, Wax and Oil Paint



Left : Trio - Part 2 - 38" x 50" - Coal Tar, Molten Metal and Oil Paint
Above : Trio - Part 3 - 38" x 50" - Coal Tar, Molten Metal Nails, Embroidered Fabric and Oil Paint



Brain Freeze - 27" x 46" - Coal Tar



Fusion - 27" x 51" - Coal Tar, Ink and Oil Paint



The General - 33" x 39" - Coal Tar, Ink and Oil Paint

Samurai - 33" x 39" - Coal Tar, Ink and Oil Paint





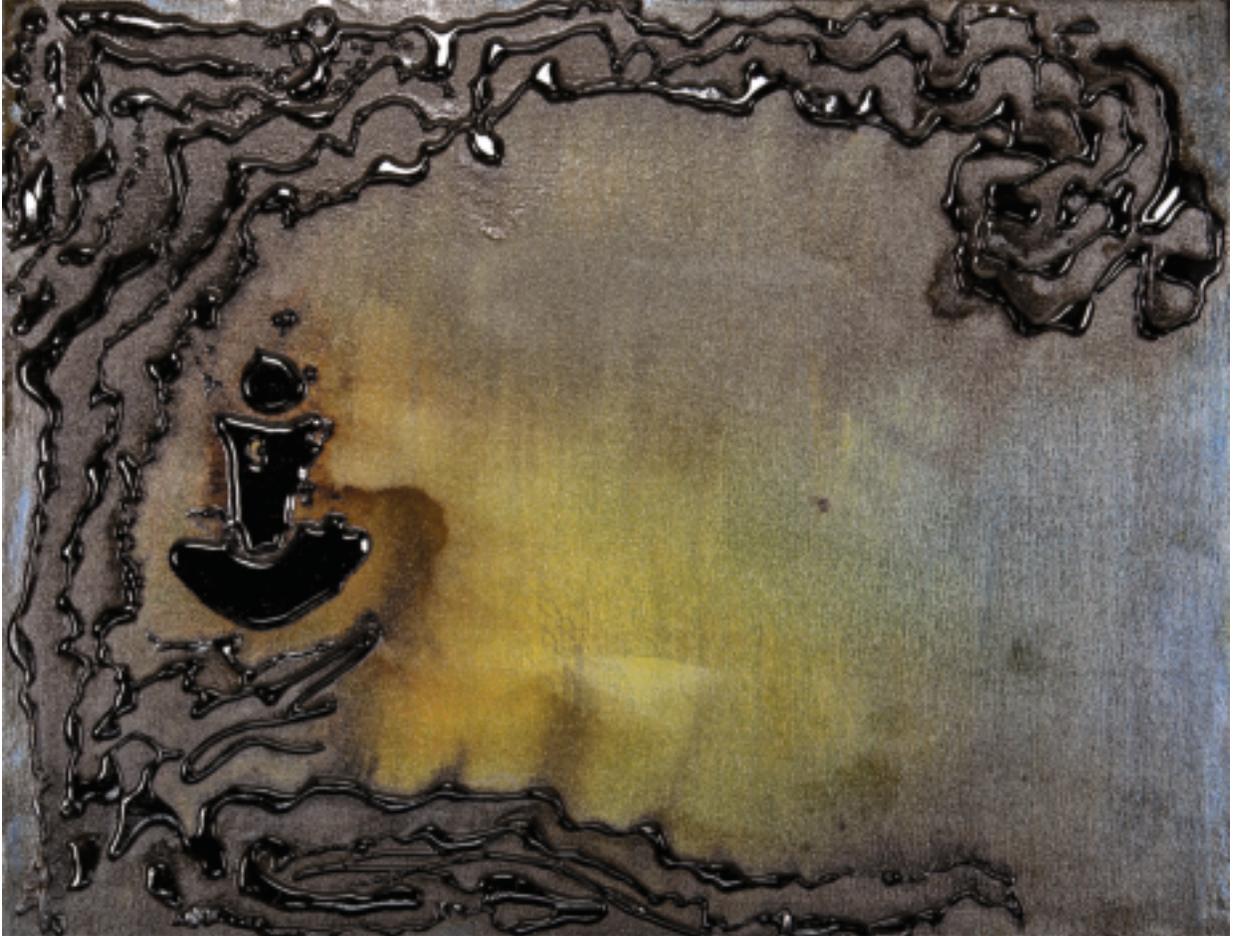
Flamingo Pair - Nesting - 55" x 67" - Coal Tar and Oil Paint



Flamingo Group - 66" x 75" - Coal Tar and Oil Paint



Flamingo Pair - In Flight - 55" x 67" - Coal Tar and Oil Paint



Meditation - 14" x 16" - Coal Tar, Crayons and Oil Paint

Wildfire Dance - 33" x 39" - Coal Tar, Ink, Oil Paint and Polishing Agent





Window I - 37" x 58" - Coal Tar, Molten Metal, Copper : Wires - Strips - Dust, Oil Paint and Metal Sheets



Window II - 39" x 71" - Coal Tar, Metal Sheets, Copper Dust and Oil Paint



Window III - 58" x 71" - Coal Tar, Molten Metal, Copper Dust, Oil Paint and Metal Sheets



Window IV - 55" x 71" - Coal Tar, Copper Dust, Polishing Agents, Metal Sheets and Oil Paint

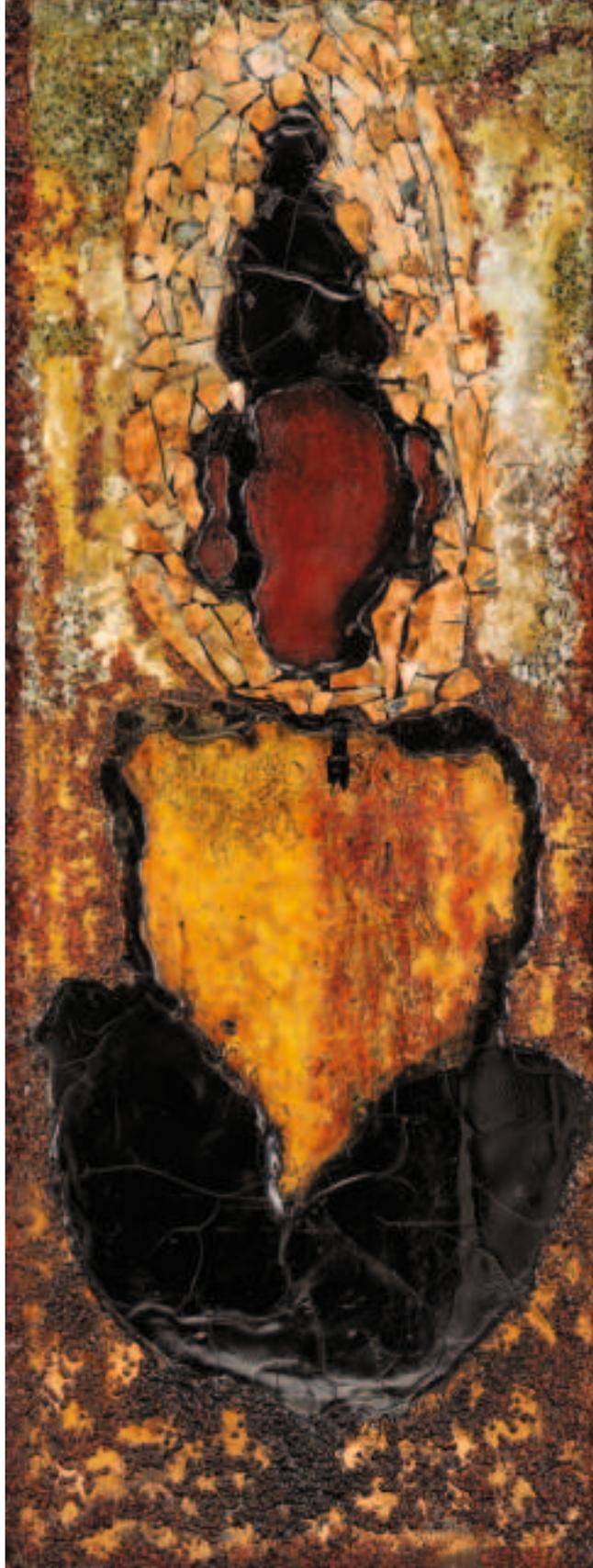


Window V - 66" x 79" - Coal Tar, Copper Dust, Oil Paint
Metal Wires and Sheets



Window VI - 66" x 79" - Coal Tar, Molten Metal, Copper :
Wires - Strip - Dust, Oil Paint, Metal Wires and Sheets

Ganesha - 36" x 74" - Coal Tar, Glass, Polishing Agents, Oil Paint



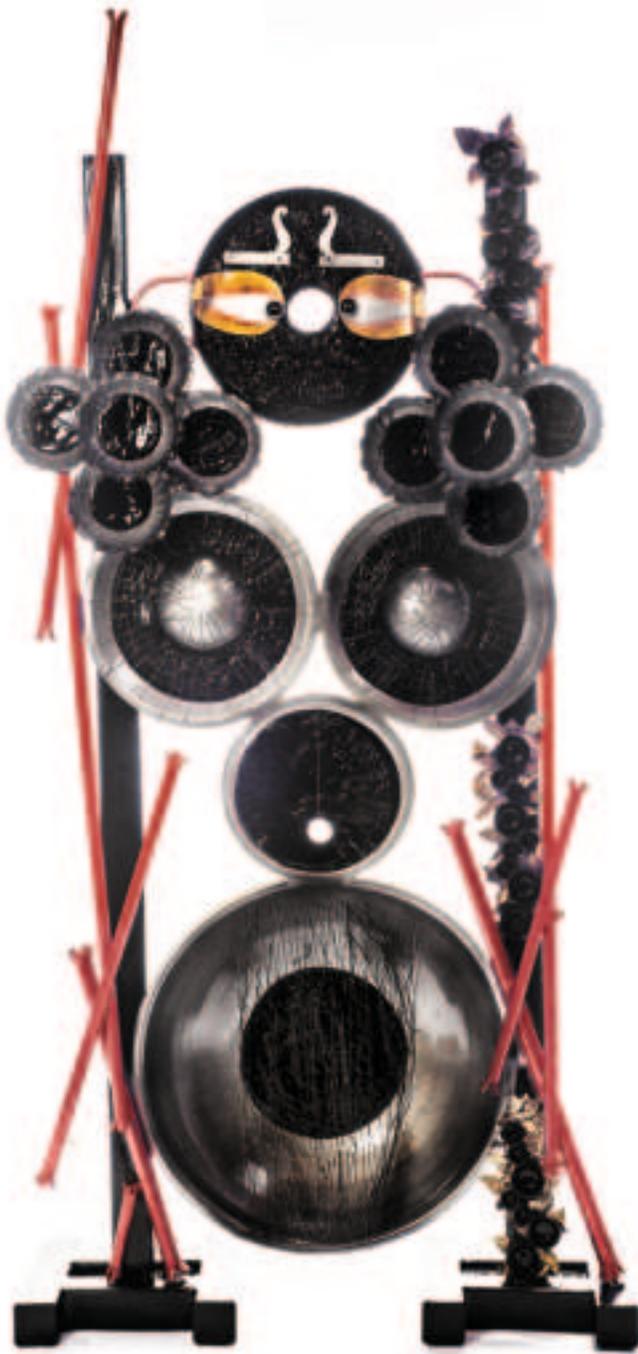


Swan Song - 40" x 88" - Coal Tar, Molten Metal, Ink, Metal Wire and Oil Paint





Shunya - Krishna - Front (Right) & Reverse (Left) - Coal Tar, Metal and Allied Media



Shunya - Radha - Front (Left) & Reverse (Right) - Coal Tar, Metal and Allied Media



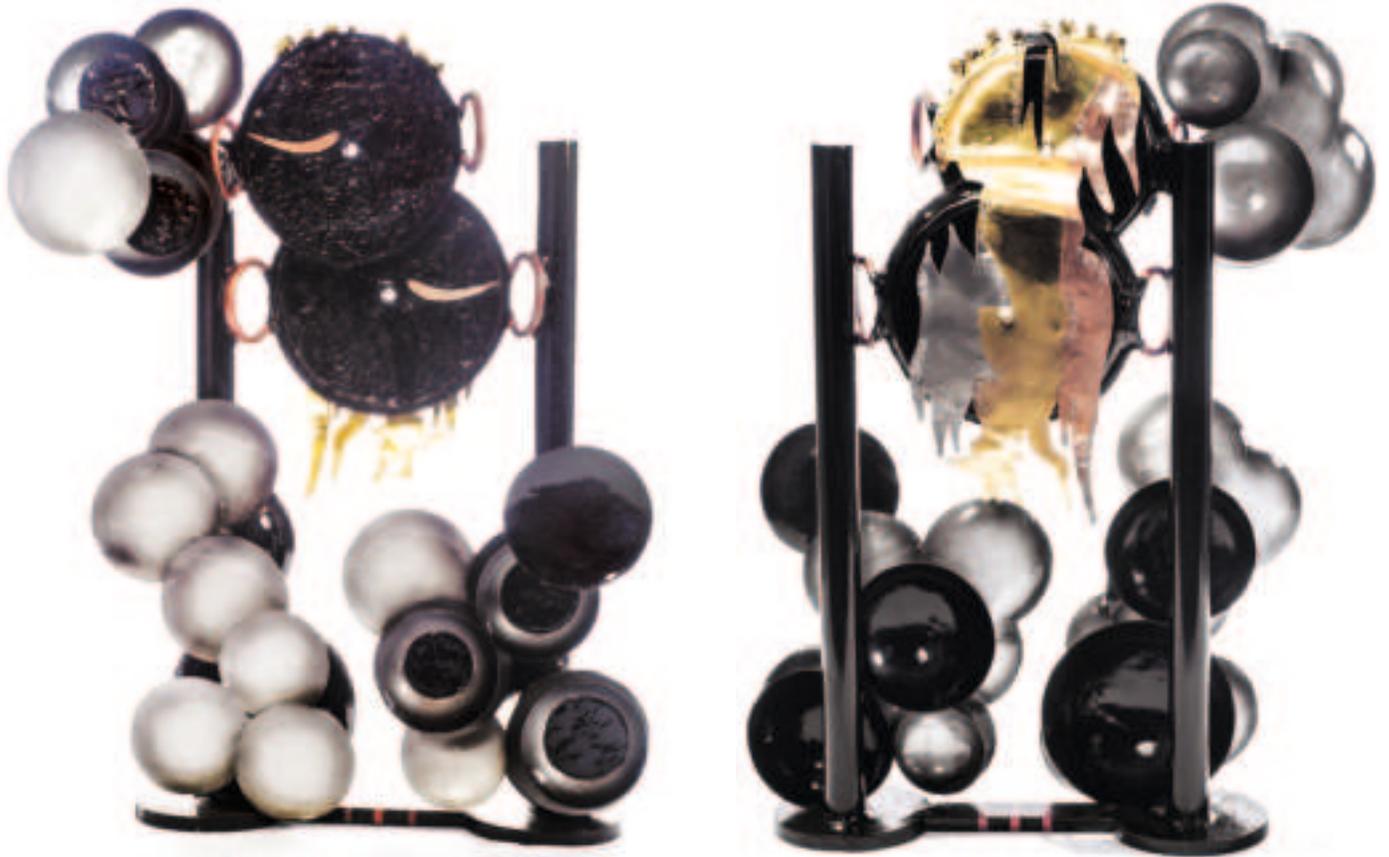
Shunya - Radha & Krishna - Front (Right) & Reverse (Left) - Coal Tar, Metal and Allied Media



Shunya - Das - Front (Left) & Reverse (Right) - Coal Tar, Metal and Allied Media



Shunya - Dasi - Front (Right) & Reverse (Left) - Coal Tar, Metal and Allied Media



Shunya - Das & Dasi - Front (Left) & Reverse (Right) - Coal Tar, Metal and Allied Media



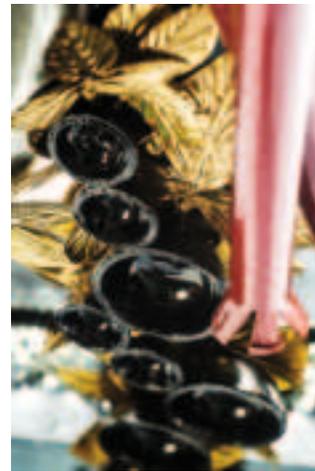
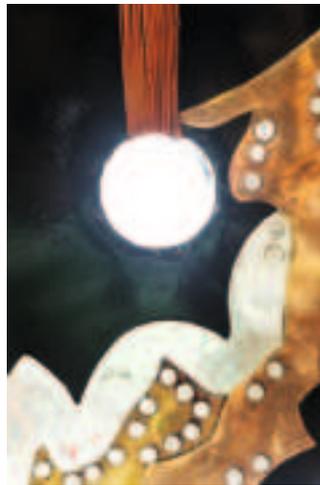
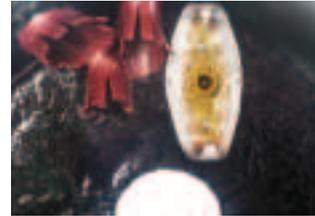
Shunya - Shiva - Reverse - Coal Tar, Metal and Allied Media



Shunya - Shiva - Front - Coal Tar, Metal and Allied Media



Shunya - Diffusion - I (Left) & Diffusion - II (Right) - Coal Tar, Metal and Allied Media



Simran KS Lamba

Simran KS Lamba is a mixed media visual artist, sculptor and installation artist based out of New Delhi, India. Simran's work in mixed media genre comprises of a trans disciplinary approach towards using variable media such as tar, lead, tarmac, industrial scrap metal and glass to bring to the fore latent contexts and subjects that constantly affect an individual's private space and simultaneously the conventional artist space: a space which is also fraught with its interjections within the public sphere, offering vantage points of expression to the artist and of perspective to the viewer alike.

Simran's work in the public sphere, follows this thought trajectory with multiple media being employed whether to create commissioned work or certain site specific projects. Several of his projects showcase the use of kaantha, terracotta, copper, brass and aluminum sheets, and wire mesh which are employed at times to create symbolic icons of festivity or other projects involving 14 feet metal plates fused together and duly inlaid with tar and copper wire treatments to form a unison of nature and city architecture. Simran's commissioned work within the public sphere has involved the use of expansive coal tar filled iron woks which take center stage with frayed metal pipes forming the appendages of quintessential deities of Hindu mythology, most of his projects and commissioned work being undertaken for the country's leading hospitality groups like the Taj Hotel Group and the ITC Hotel Group and individual private collectors.

Patinated copper and wood come to the fore with Lamba's body of work within the sculptural sphere, with victims of abject deforestation being the subject of his research. Natural formations of adeneum roots are extolled through the use of copper, generating a juxtaposition of the innate beauty of a natural formation with the usage of an industrial deep earth element, in this series of work.

Simran has been working with tar and allied media since 2006, after he accidentally stumbled upon the latent potential that lay within the confines of this dark, viscous, non pliant industrial agent whilst waterproofing his studio's terrace and debuted with "Genesis" his first body of work of mixed media paintings using tar in 2010 to wide critical acclaim. Simran's complex oeuvre and its expositions have been numerous in count, with each body of study underlying a nuanced expression of his multi faceted practice and thought trajectory, each body of work displaying the novelty and intrinsic beauty of not just the medium but also the ramifications of content and thematic resonances explored through his mediums of choice and the innate parallels that Simran brings into focus with tar and everyday objects like discarded scrap and recyclable materials like nails, wax, fabric and filigree.

Simran continues to work independently on his artwork, sculptures and installations in New Delhi wherein he constantly seeks to push the boundaries of his technique and expression through his current endeavors. His work titled 'Gandhi and Industry' was also part of the 61st National Exhibition of Art at the Lalit Kala Akademi (National Academy of Art) in New Delhi 2020.

Simran has also been granted a patent for 'A Method of Creating Three-Dimensional Artworks' by the Government of India recognizing his unique processes and experimental techniques in 2023.

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