

Curator Uma Nair

Sajitha G.







Early Works Charcoals Poems of Love Sculptures Experimental Charcoals Graphics Archetypes

Sajitha's Studio at Vamanapuram riverside, Kallar, Ponmudy, Thiruvananthapuram,Kerala



STREE

My body The quadrant of A thousand things The gesture Of love Of loss Beyond suffering Inscribed in The silence of Man's moods My body Ripe for questions Ripe for races In my sadness An actor Without an audience Yet in darkness My soul dances Filters melancholy I am Stree.....

UMA NAIR

In search of femininity

Early Years

Think of a 6 year old girl brought up in the hamlet of Kumaranaloor, near Kottayam. Known for red earth, thickly wooded verdant forests and small tributaries that form scenic backwaters - it is the place of dreams and desires. It is the place where a little girl can grow up in a mood of her own private pennings, romancing the moon on a dim lit night or watching the silvery shaft of moonlight dance on the waters of the stream. Couple those yearnings and learnings with the poetic intensity of Kerala's eminent poets and writers –and you get an artistic sensibility that weaves the spirit of a woman and the fertility of the red earth and its pouring rain.

While most artists from Kerala are happy to create their works out of the political and socio-cultural contexts Sajitha's works were born out of an intensity that burned with the human desire of penetrating and probing the feminine quest. Her 1994 award given by the Kerala State for her work 'Spiritual Love' does at best set the tone of her yearnings for finding herself through every inch of space in artistic domains. The changing face of the woman is her first and every design. Exploring and interpreting figural translations with a restraint that is both primitive and classical her evolution of works have a way of presenting the power of yesterday with the poignancy of today. Her early works are autobiographical in tenor but rather than a mere illustration, Sajitha was concerned with illustrating the relationship between the self as the character experiencing and the actual experience and surroundings.

'My early works were related to myself, my family and the environment in which I lived,' says Sajitha.'Later on the tone of the works changed because I started looking at the concerns of a woman and when that happened my outlook and my composition changed. In my early works I used colours of the forest - it was bright and had a different energy about it. But in the past few years when I began Archetypes everything went through a sea change. I started looking at the paradoxes of being a woman.' "I don't want to avoid telling a story, but I want very, very much to do the thing that Valéry said -- to give the sensation without the boredom of its conveyance."

Francis Bacon



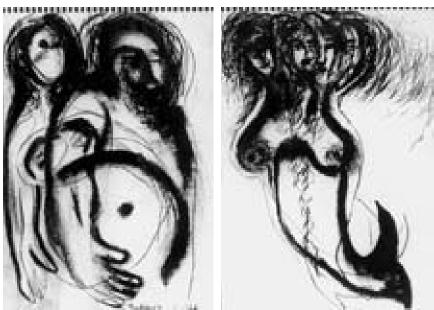
Daily sketches, 18 cm x 10 cm, Charcoal, 1994



From the Sketch book, 30 cm x 72 cm, Charcoal, 1995



Tamil Ponnu, 21 cm x 14 cm, Charcoal, 1994



Charismatic charcoals

Interestingly it is her early charcoals and her singular portraits that stand out as a testimony to her search for the self. Perhaps paradoxes of simplicity in which the gravity of the charcoal is not only raw but also highly refined. In fact the charcoals in this show are so intense and so overt in expressionist tenor it comes through like an art-shock almost impossible to create in a sophisticated audience, and so far away from high culture that regards the unbeautiful body through the lens of academic criticism and social analysis.

These charcoals are like minute composite filters of everyday symbolism; they greatly reduce wasted sentimentality and bring on immediacy. Sajitha comes through as a strong representative of the quest for femininity, but she is also plugged-in to changes that happen, thoughtful about the projections in mood, and successful in her studies that run more like series. It's almost like eavesdropping on women's territory. Speaking with a rustic but frank and forthright accent, and drawing conventional social themes like mother and child, friends, and eliciting morals, and lessons from it.

Kerala's, most acclaimed female writer Kamala Das says: Sajitha does not celebrate the fact of her existence, she does not offer any solutions, nor does she pass on any messages. She gifts the viewer with the Weltschmerz of today's displaced generation. She knows how different today's world is from yesterday's. One cannot help being reminded of the tragic landmarks of this century - the all pervasive cynicism and the cult of money. Sajitha's art is strong meat, it cannot be ignored.'

Look closely at the romantic aesthetic that weaves out in the collection 'Poems of Love'. Each work is a telling tale of loving and holding on to memories of yesteryear. Yet Sajitha's later works are also about the disappointment of life that comes after one has lived through the gap of dream and reality. Her titles of her shows have said it all- 'Beauty By Mistake, Silence and Violence, Search through Self, Searching for Mother Roots,' everything has a tale to tell.

Her "disappointment" seems to derive from an abstract analysis of society's false public face and also from the private disenchantments of childhood—that erosion of faith in the magical power of animals, fairy tales, people and religion. Her early coloured works have poignant figures- her figures have wandered out of their fairy tales, driven to despair by the daytime nightmare of adulthood.

Shifting Perspectives

Her works then run along a narrative unfolding through shifting perspectives of each character's stream of consciousness. 'When I begin a painting I always have a particular theme in mind,' said she, 'but as it progresses I realize that what opens up is a search for finding my roots, asking questions about my existence. I believe that when the dialogue between a work of art and the artist is deep rooted, the presence of the artist in that work is ever-present. For me only art can lift and speak to us of moods and moments of our inner selves. My individualism emerged in the form of a deep concern for the status of women, the reality in which I lived and the meaning of my existence.'

By far the most powerful subject in the show, however—one that can overwhelm fine distinctions—is the presence of the visceral female body. Over the past four decades, artists have waged a furious struggle over the body, seeking to reclaim it from the using and abusing of men in particular and society in general. The struggle is not pretty. Because iconic presentations of the female body are so slick and formidable, feminists have responded with iconoclastic intensity, asserting other views of the flesh in an aggressive, confrontational, in-your-face manner. They celebrate



Poem of Nostalgia, 36 cm x 18 cm, Charcoal, 1993



Women and Reality, 42 cm x 35 cm, Charcoal, 1993 (Collection - Cleveland Gallery, U.K.)

the imperfect; they highlight the lost, ignored, and damaged.

Look at the images in any way, it is as if the reality of the woman has been shattered, her internal compass dislodged, and the artist coming to a kind of knowing innocence even as she grapples with maturity. Creating works of cultural authority cannot be easy, but there's something about the stories that are told in these images, they cross genres and make connections that are universal.

Feminists have won the battle over the body, in art if not society. It's now difficult to see an idealization of the female figure—in painting, advertising, or the movies—without recalling their work. Perhaps that's why a disconcerting sameness is now developing in the feminist presentation of the body, despite the effort in this show to highlight differences. The sameness lies not in the details but in tactics, tone, and mood. The iconoclastic woman develops into the iconic.



Faces Series, Charcoal, 1996

Certain works in the show reflect paradoxes, opening unexpected ground for feminist art. No stereotype, no transgression. There is no scream of the victimized, no ironic takedown of the cliché. Instead, the carefully composed image is vital, even joyous in the wise and melancholy manner of all great Madonna like women who sit or stand in their own majesty. 'Archetypes became a search for roots,' says she, it began when I was in Paris. The colour of the body, resting in dark and spirited upheld hands, is opaque and dense. Sajitha's women in this last series come to no conclusions about mother and child, innocence and experience, beauty and beast. It challenges convention by insisting upon a renewed feeling for the mysterious and the deeply rooted spirit that is born of the earth and born of ancient civilizations.

In a rare work the full moon and lunar activity ascends in one hand and descends in another, while the image appears hollow it is also filled with haunting echoes of time, its womb of imagery warmed by memory. In this work, the empty seems to dream of the full, the surface of the interior, and the silent of the written.

The 'Search Through Self II' with the image of the fish juxtaposed head down has become a private symbol. It seems to embody the way, increasingly, we experience contemporary art. What isn't there captivates us. Steps away from it is a new pair of works in coloured strokes washed by the effect of water. In provocative and subtle ways, this work renders the place of utopian thought in our culture. But Sajitha has a certain detachment: Utopian thought is not, today, viscerally at hand. She compares and contrasts—utopians long for either the mountaintop or the city—and convey the ineffable nature of dreams. The models melt and shift in the eye. But utopia for Sajitha is so much Virginia Woolfe's `room of one's own'.



Mother, 90 cm x 120 cm, Charcoal, 2001

Room of one's Own

The divorce in her personal life and moving to a small delightful stone cottage at Vamanapuram in Trivandrum brought about a major shift in the way she lead her life.'I lived among the tribals and the walls of my home were made from the boulders and stones of the river front ,'says Sajitha. She quotes Virginia Woolfe and says: There came a time when I wanted and understood what Woolfe meant when she spoke of `A room of one's own' in 1928.

In the autumn of 1928, Virginia Woolf delivered an essay full of thought-provoking, even groundbreaking ideas underpinned with wry humour, to the students of the Girton College for Women at Oxford. It was a rambling discourse but it was by no means hard for the listeners to pick out the many nuggets of wisdom it contained. Ruing the fact that women have, for far too long, been subjugated intellectually, emotionally and of course physically, by men, Woolf proclaimed that the way to a woman's true emancipation lay in a room of one's own and an independent amount of 500 pounds a year to live on. `Economic independence changes everything,' says Sajitha. 'All the equations of the past crumble and new faces are seen in relationships.' Years ago in an interview to The Hindu she candidly said: We look at how far we have come, and then we know there can be no turning back.' Perhaps most emotive of all are her early works Freedom and 'Power of Woman'1995. 'Power of a Woman is about the potential of a woman.' says Sajitha. 'Many women who have given away too much of themselves talk of recovering their losses,

Relationships, 7 cm x 32 cm, Mix media, 1987



of recovering their earlier freedom. And surprisingly though I began my work with a strong bias towards woman, I gradually realized that men were also victims of the same system they had created....and at one point it was difficult to differentiate between men and woman as victors and victims of a vicious system that had influenced the human psyche over a long period of time.'

The loose, lithe lines in the graphics belong to a mood and mooring far away from India. In Germany the passionate strength of the contour found its way into the lithographs that spoke of the lived idiom. Of deepened timbre is the rotund image of the beggar at the tube station whom she would glance at everyday. Sajitha's recalls her return from Germany and the 1996 Suryanelli serial rape case in Kerala which caused concern in the context of justice. The case involved a 16-year-old school girl from Suryanelli, a small settlement in the high ranges of Idukki district, who was transported from place to place across the state and sexually assaulted by a series of men over a 40-day period in 1996. The accused, initially estimated at 42, included some wellknown and well-placed individuals. 'I couldn't sleep for days,'says Sajitha and then I began my series `Darkness at Noon.'



Darkness at Noon, 325 cm x 165 cm, Charcoal, 1996



Remembrance of Akka Mahadevi, 300 cm x 180 cm, Charcoal, 2007

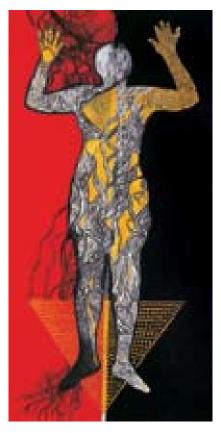
Archetypes - Ritual and resonance

Art and literature have always explored the primal difficulties of family and relationships in life. In that respect, this series is a reflection of an inner spirit. What's often highlighted is a powerful counterpoint to the clichés of contemporary despair. You must love childhood's promise —also imbued with Platonic ideals—to destroy it with imaginative power. You must know paradise to lose it well. Something stirs you when you look at the mother and child works in the show of 2 decades- its like partaking of an image of fierce physical vitality in which the heavyset woman clasps an exquisite baby to her breast. The image is psychologically rich, at once brazen and tender.

Perhaps it is in the figures of Archetypes (begun in Spain 2003) that one finds the spirit of rootedness of the earth and the strength of the goddess. Sajitha's few months of living with tribals brings on a mood of the Bhagwatis (goddesses) of Kerala - the goddesses who would be worshipped during the cultural ritual dance of Theyyam. In fact the untitled work of the dual plane with the woman's hair tangled into knots around the body is reminiscent of a ritual called (Mudi Theyyam) Hair Dance in Kerala done only by women. Her very act of personification is a ritual born of a meditative resonance.

There, the Theyyam dancers appear during the annual festivals of gods and goddesses. The rituals in such shrines are different from those of the Brahmanical temples. Such a cultural fusion or interaction between the 'little' and 'great' cultures makes Theyyam an interesting field of research for social scientists. The impact of this cultural fusion could be traced on social organization based on caste system and in the agrarian relations. Once the cult was patronized by the Brahmins, the intermediary and lower castes also took it as a major religious practice. In fact the entire arrangement of ritual theatre and dance has become the religion of the masses.

Archetypes then places the woman as the avatar of the cosmos, enshrined in the omniscient and fractured map of a lucid interior - the mandala of mesmeric moorings- floating elements, planetary eyes and mouth, that leap forwards and backwards in time as intonations to alternate existence. There is an infinite dimensionality projected with tripartite brush as spiritual structure, art, and ritual— set of an inner psyche torn asunder, is rocked from equilibrium by the sound of contemplation turning



Archetypes Series, 210 cm x 90 cm, Mix media on canvas, 2007

over irresolvable issues inside a curious mind. Human elements comprise the template of a whole universe—structured around a radiation of strokes of enlightenment in colour.

Archetypes is a series that is born of deep reflections and metaphysical distillation. There is indeed a deeply founded aesthetic of Keralian connectivity, an inspirational, inclusiveness, and visual construction of a sensibility that goes beyond the mere body. What ensues is iconic character and timeless historical presence of the psyche of mortal thinkers and builders. In graphically arresting portraits of women made manifest, the image itself curls through the waking and dreaming minds of those who see rather than simply observe, uncoiling with the sinuous grace of the human body and the eternal philosophical searching of the

Nature, 30 cm x 24 cm, Charcoal, 1995



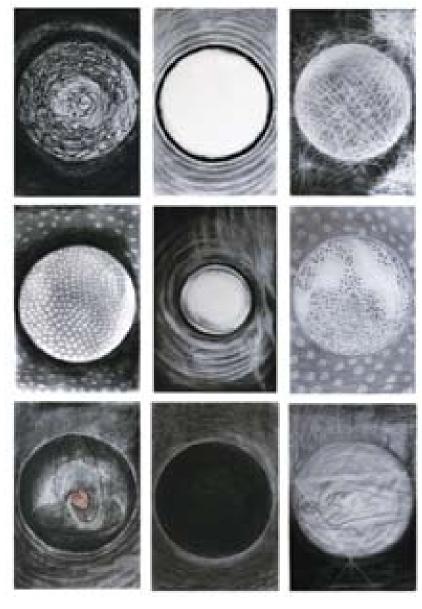
human mind.

Sajitha came of age in a rarefied environment in Kerala. Unveiling her works in an age where feminist critics fiercely analyze what's become known as "the male gaze makes the predicament somewhat alluring and amusing." At the same time, we are so caught up in a consumer culture that is churning out images of women with perfect bodies and Aids ripping through the nation. These images are distinctive and differential; they are far from the run of the mill ideological connoisseurs of the visceral. This vision of the body-this counter-gaze—specifically in the recent post 2000 Archetype represents Sajitha's series effort to expose the strength of the woman. Perhaps spit truth into society's lying face: and reflect the woman's roots in mother earth. (The body in Archetypes from which silvery tears drop from long threads could belong to a woman who is born of the earth.)

Navagrahas

Most intriguing is Sajitha's work Navagraha.Sajitha says danseuse Chadralekha's Navagraha was the best personification of the pattern of planets and the quest in time. Here, her Navagrahas are also conceived in terms of number and geometry. By making number evocative, giving it visual imagery, the approach to mathematics is enlivened. In our ancient texts, number one, for instance, could be expressed as Surya or Chandra. Two is evoked by netra or a pair of eyes. Similarly, four is expressed by naming the four Vedas and seven by pronouncing the Saptak the seven swaras of music.

Bhaskaracharya poses his fractions or quadratic equations in the delightful context of nature. The slokas of the Navagraha have



Navagrahas, 36 cm x 24 cm each, Charcoal, 2007

further prompted to further the translation of the Navagrahas into time and space. Sajitha's Navagrahas embody that eternal meld of time and space.

Sajitha says Chandralekha's explanation places the context best: 'The inspiration for "Navagraha" came from the placement of the Navagraha icons in temple compounds in which each graha has an ordained sthana. Interestingly, none of the nine icons face each other. Therefore, when you perambulate around the Navagrahas, you experience a sensation of movement-in-theround. In the early 1970s, Chandralekha was also looking for a new content for the dance. The form itself received a new charge by juxtaposing it with the tensile energy of yoga. Sajitha's Navagrahas are like flickering moments of astral, radiant release invoking the titanic paradox of good and evil, of light and darkness.



Installation on femininity, used turmeric powder, 2006

Mother Roots

Look long at the triangle in the installation - almost like stirring a ritual - it oscillates between the past and the present. It is the embodiment of timelessness. It enters a realm of secret and private interiors and mysterious dark spaces turgid with light: the *kumkum* is a realm of flow, it is the colour of passion but it is also the accumulation of feelings - intensely inchoate, unusually undefined, armorously amorphous. The turmeric brings to attention our roots to mother earth - it disperses solidity and invites harmony and fluidity. The triangle is the duality of the feminine within-it speaks of the surge of the spiritual and celebrates the act of becoming from being. Pleasure and pain both reside - sadness springs from an inert desire to transcend. The equivocal tenor of the kumkum is the hallmark of identity.

This work is like an epilogue,' says Sajitha who created it in Chennai in Sep: 2006 at an art camp at Dakshinachitra. Created within a proscenium context; she sees it as the organization of movement within a space/time framework in the connectedness to nature and the mother spirit. 'The triangle is the basis of all creation in my works,' says she, 'It connects us to the geometry of the body — it can embody all — and also connect to the purity of line. For me art happens when you look at the body in terms of a prolific variety of movements in time.'

The triangle enables an architectonics of body-in-space. It frames for us the visual logic of the intimate concerns of being. There is a continual connectivity of the play of space and time within this, and once you connect with this, it becomes the challenge of speaking a visual-kinetic language — space filled, space emptied, positive space, negative space — and forms and meanings emerging out of the kumkum and the turmeric in it.

Curator's Conclusion:

A sensibility like this can take long to develop. Very early in life Sajitha came to an essential realization about moral scale: while she could speak the truth of womanhood directly she must tell it as in the form of the `slant' of Emily Dickinson. In her charcoals it is all black and white but she thinks in grey. In womanhood she reveres lofty heights and studies ambiguous shallows, she is outraged indeed by what man has made of woman, but she has no slogans-only silence.

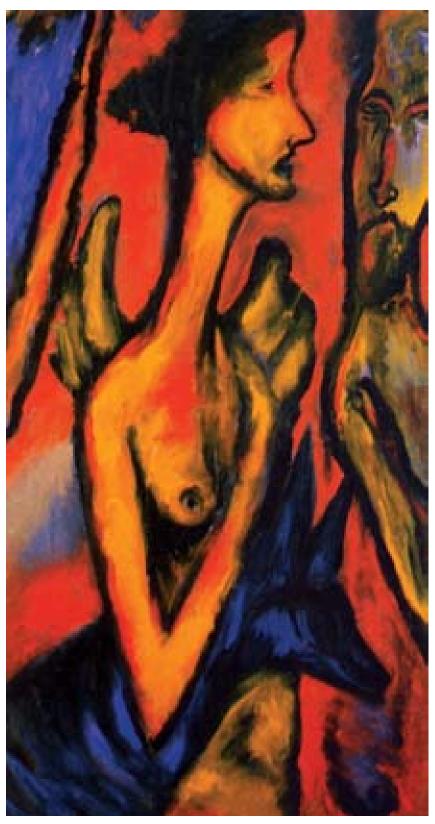
This show is hung differently; it weaves through back and forth. By removing the textbook narrative of style, I wanted the curation to allow the "sensation" of the early modern figure to emerge without the usual "boredom of its conveyance." The result is a modern figure that now looks unexpectedly alone, in ceaseless flux.

The actual appearance of many women appears to be only one truth among many. Instead, the vast spaces on either side of the human surface -- the interior space of dreams and exterior space of social reality -- become the presiding powers. And the metaphysical figure of the artist steps forward, becoming more important than the figure depicted on the canvas.

Stree then is always a narrativealways telling compelling stories. But the current, experiences too should leave a lasting impression about what tradition and experience in art really means.

For *Stree* is tracing a tradition, a tradition properly understood, which unveils not only as a chrysalis; but a butterfly-albeit wounded.

UMA NAIR APRIL:2008 CURATOR AND CRITIC



My wings grows slowly... you can hear...everything but you can't help me with your force... it grows slowly... my wings

112 cm x 61 cm, Oil on canvas, 1994

ARTIST'S STATEMENT

Once I begin to work on a painting, a chain of thought comes to the fore and I feel a compulsion to develop ideas through an open-ended series of works: some people might interpret this as a form of escapism but I see it rather as a conviction in the validity of art itself.

Before actually beginning a painting, I always have a particular theme in mind. But through the working process this develops and changes as my own relationship with the canvas or watercolour is formed. To hold conviction in my own mind a work must begin to ask questions to me about our very existence. I believe, therefore, that when the dialogue between a work of art and the artist is deep-rooted, the presence of the artist in that work is ever-present. When considering aesthetics for me this is one of the most important and telling aspects of art.

From the works of great masters, such as Massaccio, Rembrandt, Kathe Kollwitz and Emily Nolde, specific moods and feelings are evoked with such sincerity that we can also relate such emotions to our own lives. If a work retains our concentration and attention and can speak to us of moods and moments of our inner selves. I believe that it is only then that it is elevated from "decoration" to "art". For: me, only art can lift and speak to us in such a way and this is the reason that through the centuries has come to shape civilization.

The works, which I have done, until now are, I feel, just a beginning. Born and brought up in Kerala, the lifestyle of villagers, the landscape of the backwaters and the art forms of dance and music, like Padayani Theyyam, all continue to hold nostalgia for me that also have a relevance to my painting. In 1984, I travelled to Santiniketan and during that visit met Mr. K.G. Subramaniam. I was much impressed by his work and his overall approach to art.

Another artist who has held particular importance for me is Mr. K.C.S. Panicker whose early works such as "Humanity", I was drawn to since I was a student.

My individualism slowly emerged in the form of a deep concern for the status of women, the reality in which I lived, the meaning of existence.

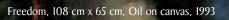
My earlier works something strongly to me regarding the potential of women. Many women who have given away too much of themselves talk of recovering their losses, of recovering their earlier freedom, and surprisingly enough, though I began my work with a strong bias towards women. I gradually discovered that men were also victims of the same system they had created... and at a point it was difficult to differentiate between men and women as victors and victims of a vicious system that had influenced the human psyche over a long period of time."

My work known for bearing within them the traces of my lifes journey, but in this expressions I undertake a far more conscious journey into my innerself - into the secret corridors carved by life's incessant chisel. Past a period of intense disharmony between the inner and outerselves, these days evoke a certain clarity that reminds one of the clean lights that streams down from the clean, freshly washed sky, into a bright dustless world after a heavy stormy down pour. These unfold in moments of intense self-reflection, when my questions sail along the streams of my inner, self, to discover hidden recesses which I have been taught to ignore or forget. In these little hiding places, I find buried treasures - memories of other women, their unique energies, their intuition, in sight.

This inner journey provoke me to question the lines that divide the human from nature... my images however, side-step orientalist or primitivist stereo types. Rather they protest against locking the human and the natural in to water-tight compartments, and instead project the vision of a third, combined matrix of energy, which, however, is not simply sum of its parts. Every one of my images reminds the viewer that if is this third that animals the immense spiritual conciousness and cultural essence that every mortal carries within."

From my series of self portraits elements encourage one to look beyond the purely formal in search of clues to the articulation of identity as an artist and as an independent women. The expressive potential and ultimate mystery inherent in the human face. What I want to show in my work is the idea that hides itself behind so called reality.





EARLY WORKS

'Human endeavour today is taking us to outer space. We are exploring distances which are far away from us. Often those distances may be imaginary. As far as those distances are outside the human body, same distance exists within the body. You are as far away from your body as you are away from some distance. Your body is full of complexes, your body is full of stratifications of time, stratifications of value systems, of judgments, of dos and don'ts, behavioral modes; there are so many problems with your body that you are at a distance from your body. Walk towards your body.'

Chandralekha



The Search Within, 183 cm x 76 cm, Acrylic on canvas, 1995

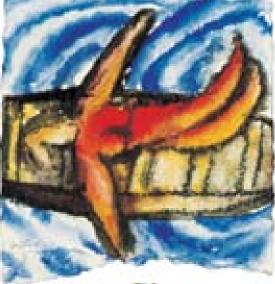


Days and Thoughts, 108 cm x 78 cm, Acrylic on paper, 1996

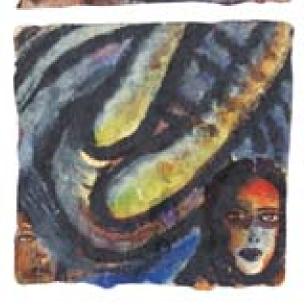


Phases of woman, 80 cm x 60 cm, Acrylic on paper, 1995







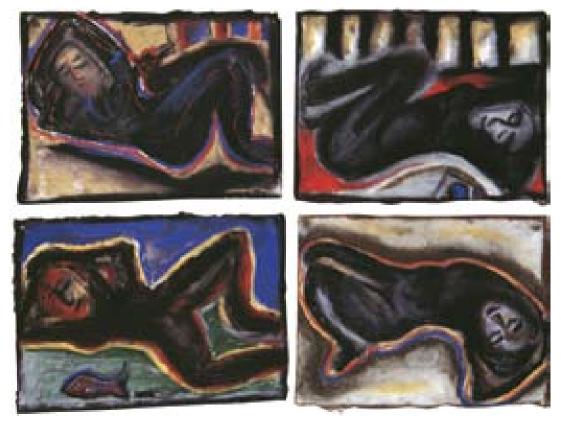




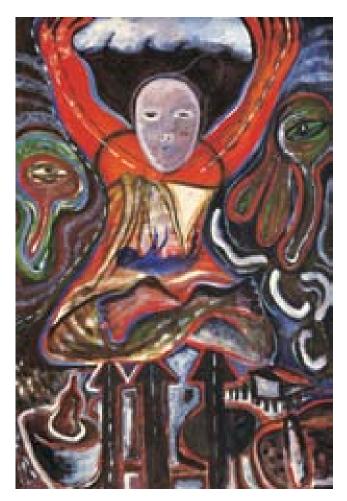
Poem of Nostalgia, 33 cm x 33 cm, Mix media, 1995



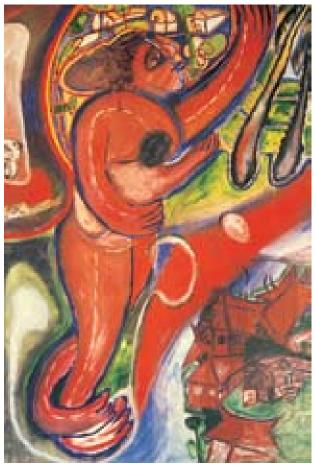
Woman and Nature, 30 cm x 39 cm, Mix media, 1994



Untitled, 80 cm x 60 cm, Mix media, 1996



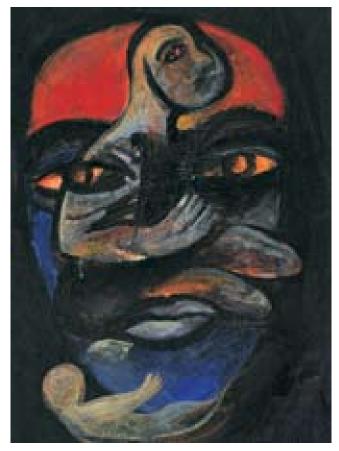
Emancipation, 180 cm x 120 cm, Oil on canvas, 1996



Power of nostalgia, 180 cm x 120 cm, Oil on canvas, 1996



Love, 45 cm x 45 cm, Acrylic on canvas, 1992



Hope, 62 cm x 56 cm, Acrylic on canvas, 1993



CHARCOALS

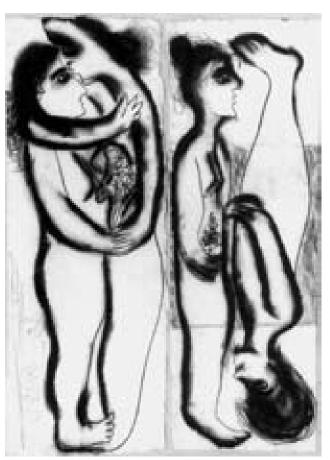
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Self Portrait, 90 cm x 60 cm, Charcoal on Paper, 1989



Reflection, 76 cm x 56 cm, Charcoal, 1994

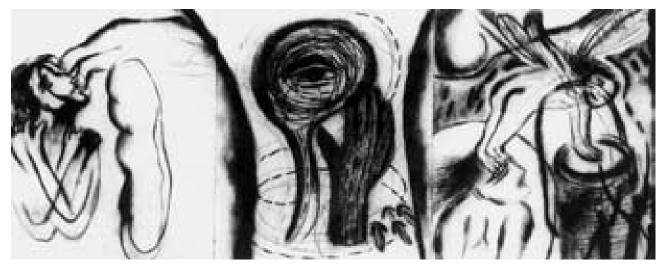


Untitled, 60 cm x 30 cm, Charcol, 1990



35 x 27 cm, Charcoal, 1994

Wild & Strong Waves... Sea... sometimes... I wanted to be with you



Ammaye Chavitti - Kinattilecku, 72 cm x 30 cm, Charcoal, 1996



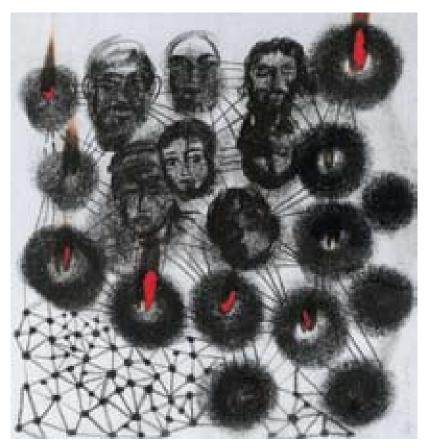
Untitled, 72 cm x 30 cm, Charcoal, 1996



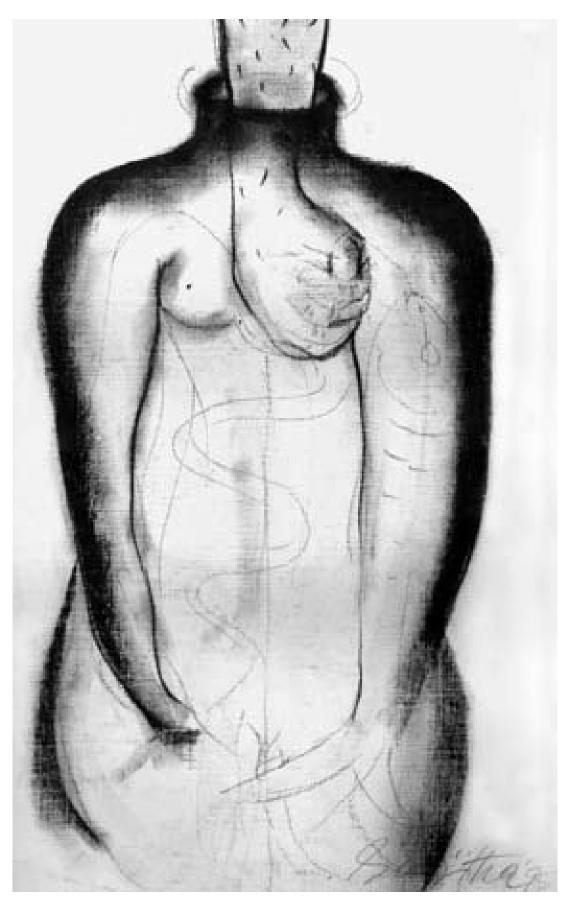
Tamil Ponnu, 21 cm x 14 cm, Charcoal, 1994



Darkness at Noon, 325 cm x 165 cm, Charcoal, 1996 (Sooryanelly Issue)



Connections, 45 cm x 45 cm, Charcoal & Collage



Untitled, 60 cm x 30 cm, Charcoal, 1995



Diary of Day, 120 cm x 90 cm, Charcoal, 1999



Emancipation, 102 cm x 76.5 cm, Charcoal, 1995







Magic of love, 30 cm x 15 cm, Pen drawing, 2000





Untitled, 120 cm x 90 cm, Charcoal, 2001



POEM OF LOVE SERIES...

echos of this day ...

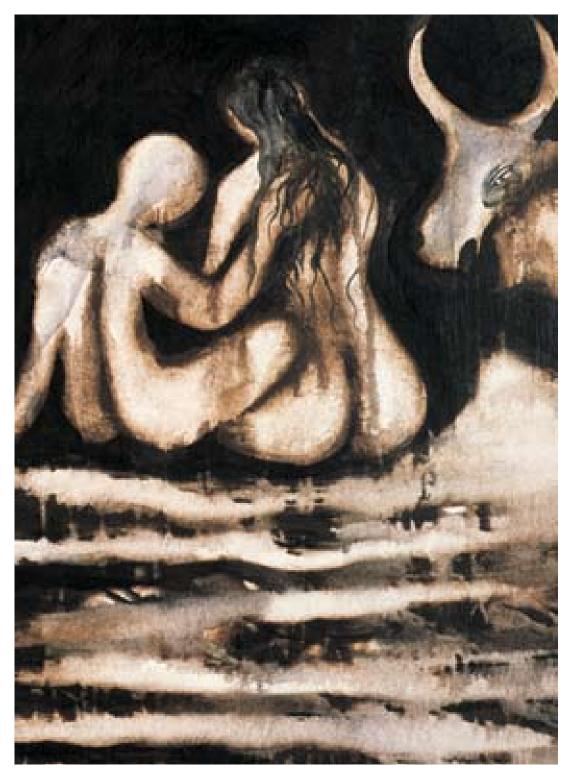
This day... Colours burning bright... fire of bright colours, licks every part of my body.

To forget the traumas of the past, the ship-wrecked life of yesterdays. a tight rope walk... between sanity and lunacy.

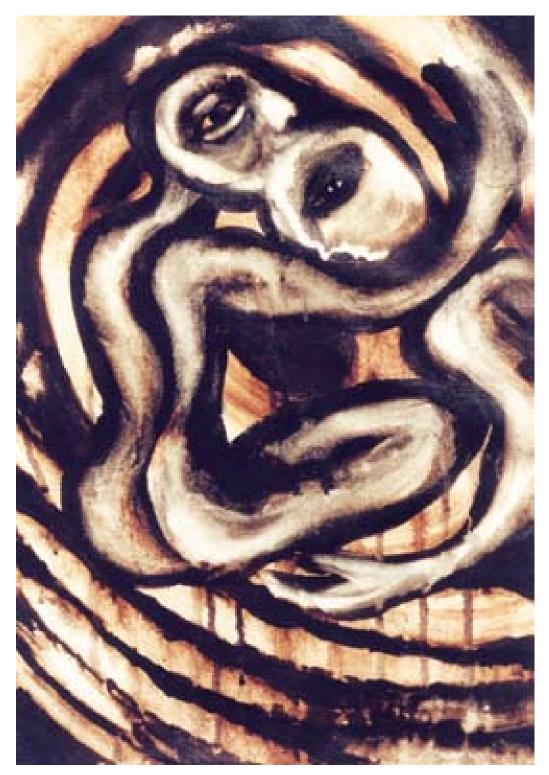
I recollect... the broken pieces of canvases, where stormy relationships were... interwined and trapped.

This day... canvas and colours, and strong strokesviolently fornicate and sigh..

Sajitha G. 1995



Poem of love, 60 cm x 45 cm, Acrylic on canvas, 2001



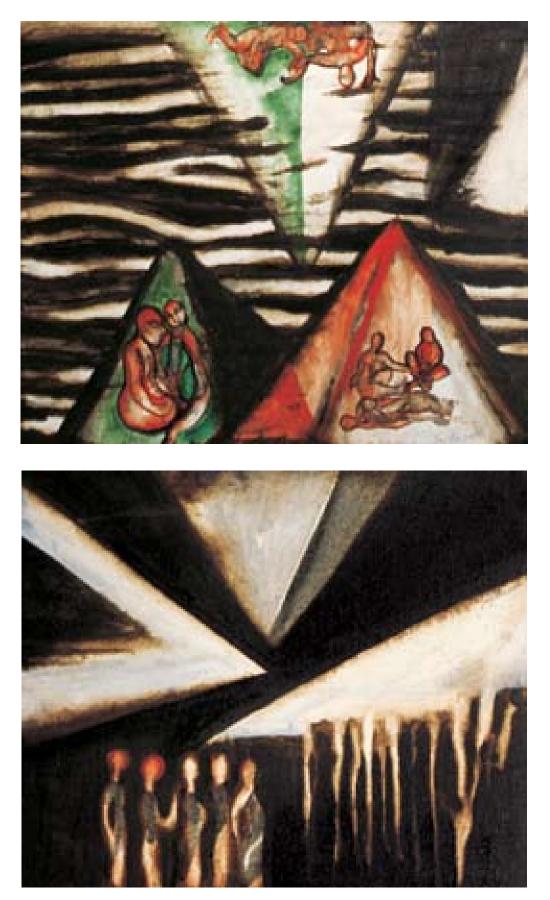
Poem of love, 60 cm x 45 cm, Acrylic on canvas, 2000



Poem of love, 60 cm x 90 cm, Acrylic on canvas, 2001



Poem of love, 60 cm x 45 cm, Acrylic on canvas, 2000



Poem of love, 60 cm x 45 cm (each), Acrylic on canvas, 2000











Poem of love, 60 cm x 45 cm (each), Acrylic on canvas, 2000









Poem of love Series, 60 cm x 45 cm (each), Acrylic on canvas, 2000



'Otta Mulachy', 45 cm x 30 cm, Acrylic on canvas, 1999



Untitled, 45 cm x 30 cm, Acrylic on canvas, 1999



Poem of love, 60 cm x 45 cm, Acrylic on canvas, 2000



Poem of love Series, 90 cm x 60 cm (each), Acrylic on canvas, 2000



SCULPTURES

Sajitha's sculptures are born out of a primal instinct, the seated figure unconsciously embracing the triangle, the human hand nestling the lizard, the terracotta flowers that lie like scattered jasmines around the female form –it is a literate projection of aesthetics.

Her sculptures create a turning point in visual history, that she redefined the idea of beauty, with strength,that she combined painting, sculpture, photography, and everyday life with such courage, and that she was interested in, as she put it, "the ability to conceive female failure as progress."

Most of all, we can probe and love these works for their fecundity and fearlessness-a ritualistic killing of social mores.In her sculptures, Sajitha is a sagacious Satyr grazing at art history. Her quest-is to move from high minded heroism to a vernacular that finds resonance in the realism of rigor. She rocks the boat of pretty women and sets out for the shores of artistic discourse born from the inner experience. The spirit endures.

UMA NAIR



Mother, 90 cm x 60 cm, Terracotta, 2002



Archetypes Series, Height- 30 cm, Terracotta, 2002



Archetypes Series, Height- 90 cm, Terracotta, 2001



Monument for Ancestors, Terracotta, 2002



A COLORED

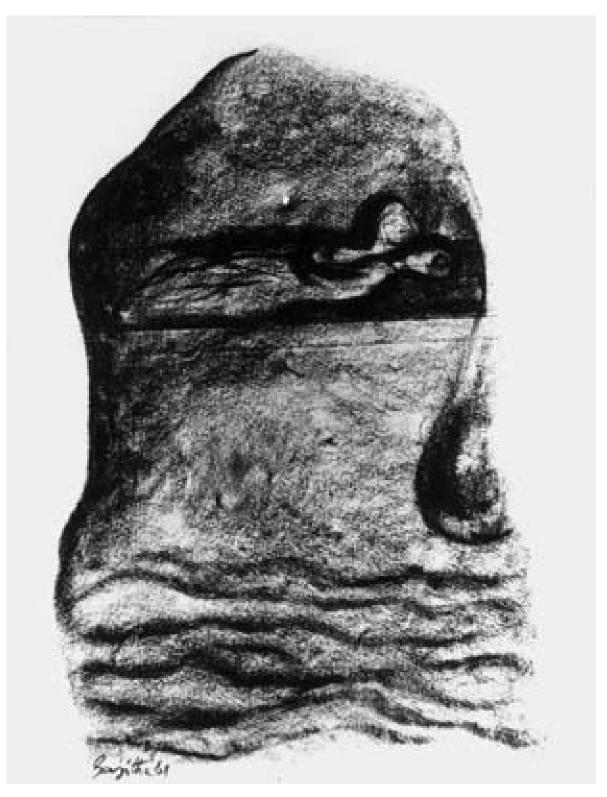
EXPERIMENTAL CHARCOALS

Return, O my first happiness! joy inhabits the strange cities, a new magic descended to earth city of undreamed dreams, constructed by daemons with such patience faithful to you will I sing! one day I too will be a woman of stone, bride....widow....on a tomb... that day, maternal goddess, hold me tight In your great embrace, of stone.

Sajitha G. 2008.



Untitled, 120 cm x 90 cm (each), Charcoal on Paper, 2001



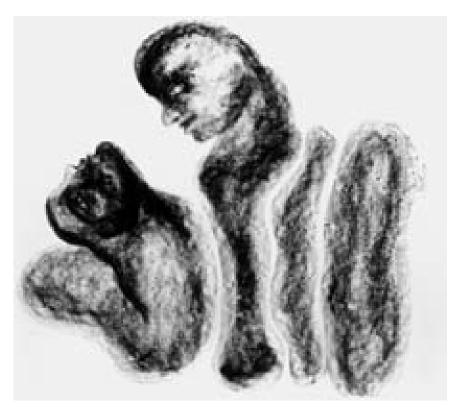
Untitled, 60 cm x 45 cm, Charcoal on Paper, 2001



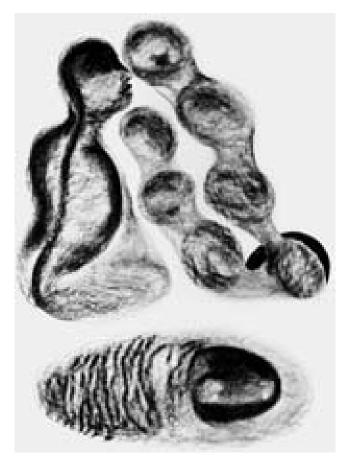
Untitled, 120 cm x 90 cm, Charcoal on Paper, 2001



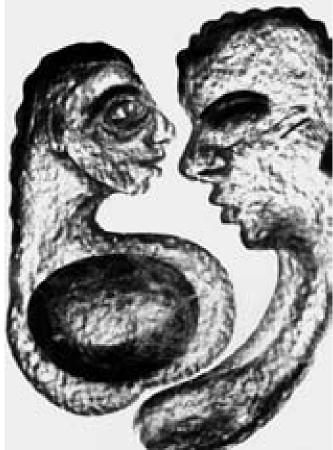
Emotions, 120 cm x 60 cm, Charcoal on Paper, 2001

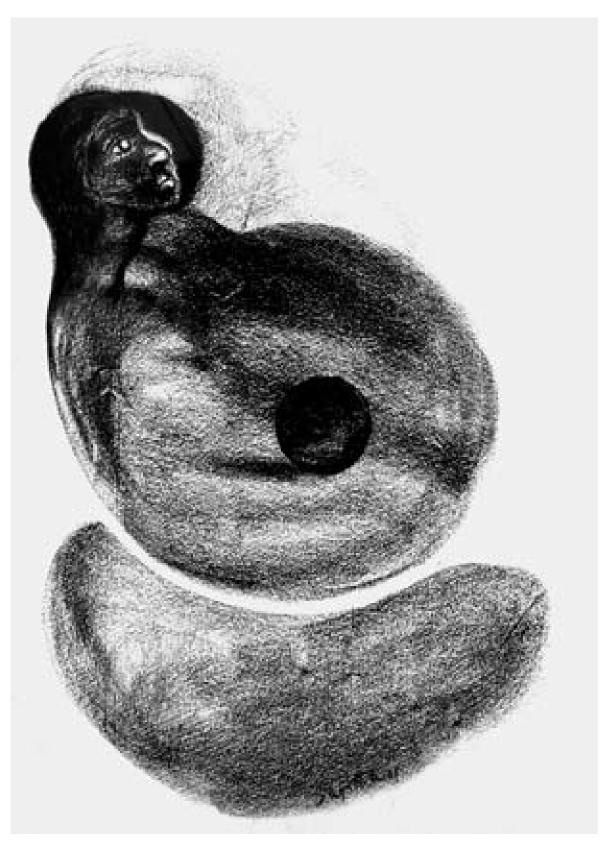


Untitled, 120 cm x 60 cm, Charcoal on Paper, 2001



Untitled, 120 cm x 90 cm, Charcoal on Paper, 2001





Untitled, 60 cm x 45 cm, Charcoal on Paper, 2001



GRAPHICS



Childhood, 60 cm x 45 cm, Etching, 1988



Untitled, 120 cm x 120 cm, Woodcut Print on Cloth, 2000



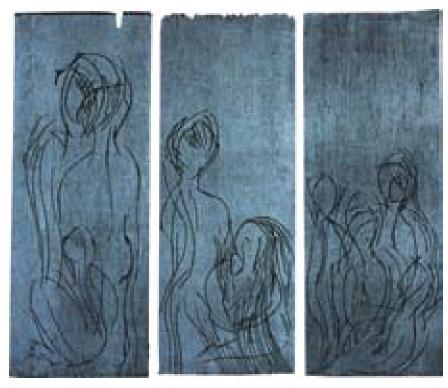
Sleeping with Moon, 60 cm x 30 cm, Woodcut on Paper, 1996



Family, ISO cm x 75 cm, Woodcut on Cloth, 1996



Untitled, 120 cm x 60 cm, Woodcut Print on Paper, 2000



Untitled, 150 cm x 150 cm, Woodcut on Cloth, 2000



Untitled, 150 cm x 90 cm, Woodcut on Cloth, 2000





ARCHETYPES



Archetype Series, 180 cm x 105 cm, Charcoal on Paper, 2003 (Collection : NGMA New Delhi)



Archetype Series, 180 cm x 105 cm, Mixed Media on Paper, 2003



Archetype Series, 120 cm x 120 cm, Charcoal on Paper, 2003



Archetype Series (Self Portrait), 180 cm x 90 cm, Charcoal on Paper, 2004



Archetype Series, 90 cm x 90 cm, Acrylic on Canvas, 2006



Archetype Series, 90 cm x 90 cm, Acrylic on Canvas, 2005



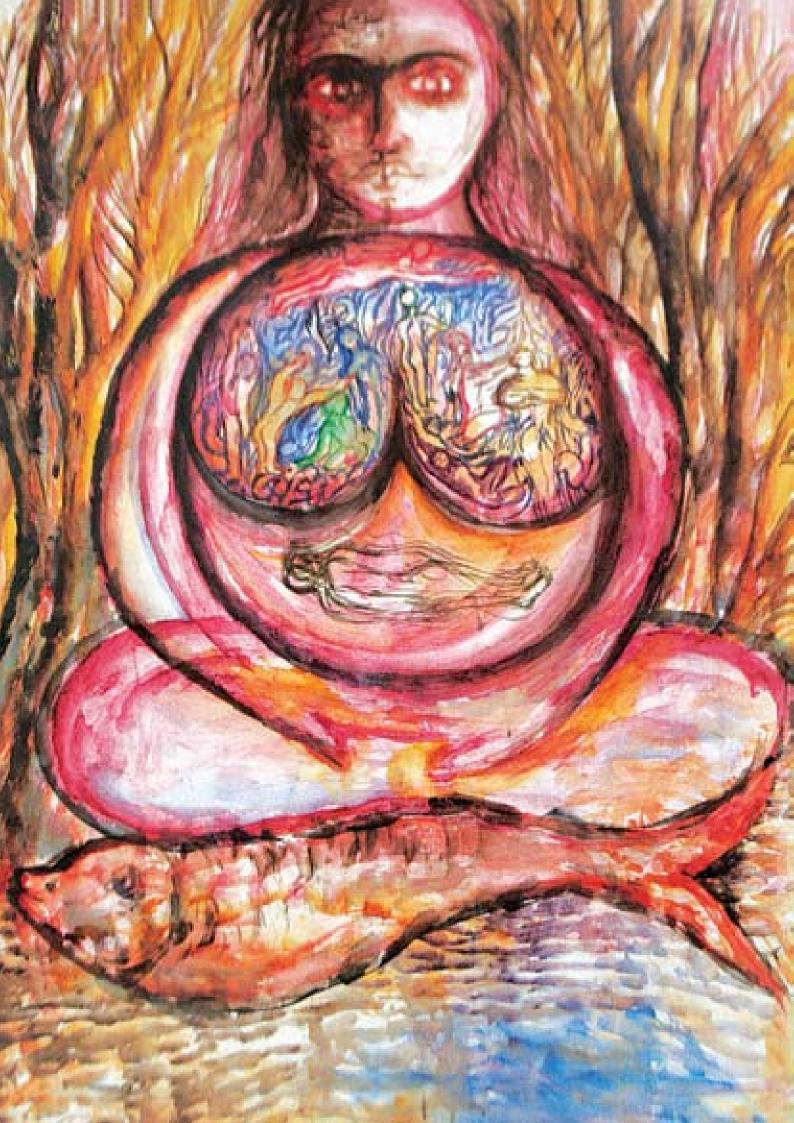
Archetype Series, 90 cm x 90 cm, Acrylic on Canvas, 2005

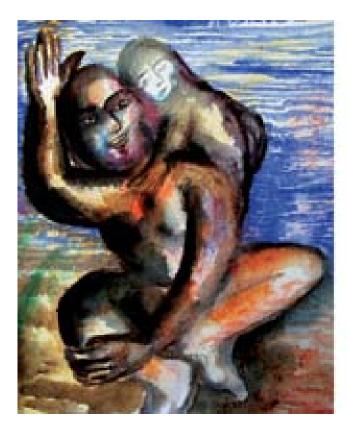


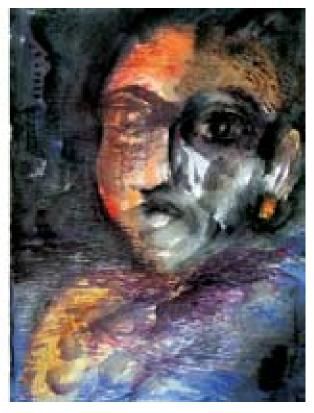
Mother Series, 180 cm x 90 cm, Acrylic on Canvas, 2006



Mother -I, 60 cm x 60 cm, Acrylic on Canvas, 2006







Archetype Series, 45 cm x 30 cm, Acrylic on Paper, 2003 (each)



Experimental Work, 45 cm x 30 cm, Mixed Media on Canvas, 2003



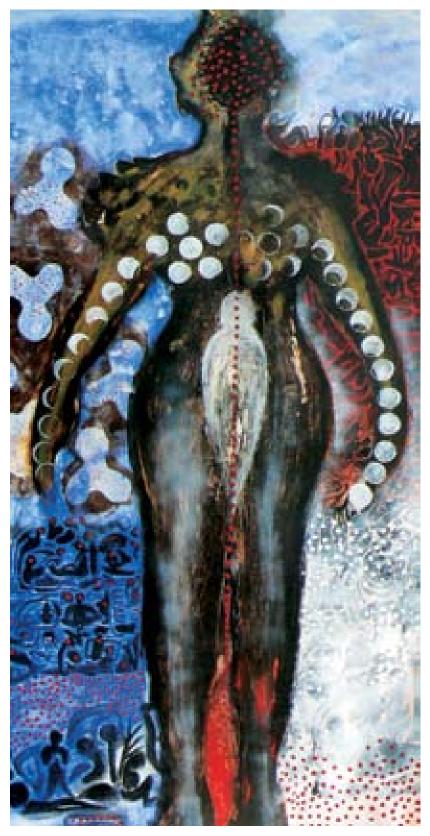
Experimental Work, 45 cm x 30 cm, Mixed Media on Canvas, 2003



IOI Eyes, 45 cm x 30 cm, Oil on Canvas, 2003



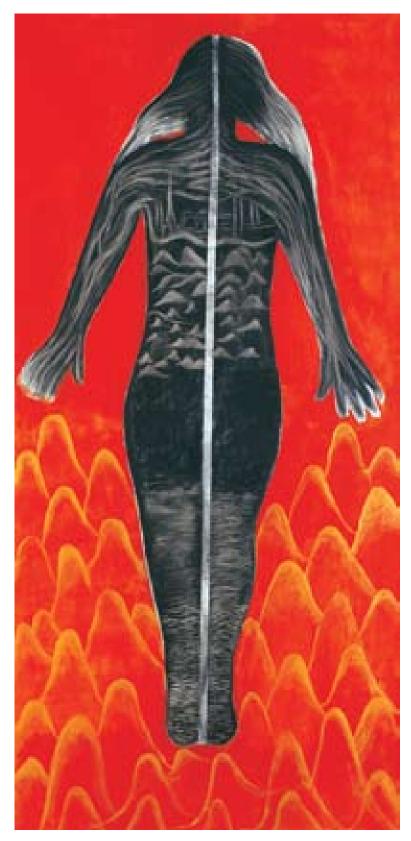
Umblicalcode, 180 cm x 90 cm, Acrylic on Canvas, 2005



Archetype Series & 'Marappachi', 180 cm x 90 cm, Acrylic on Canvas, 2006



Archetype Series, 210 cm x 100 cm, Mixed Media on Canvas, 2007



Portrayal on Dancer Chandralekha, 180 cm x 90 cm, Mixed Media on Canvas, 2006



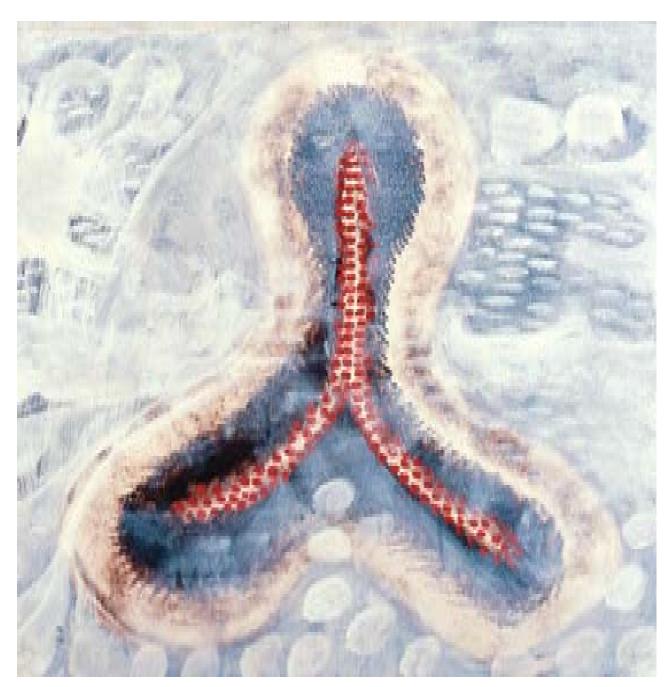
An Eye, 90 cm x 90 cm, Acrylic on Canvas, 2007



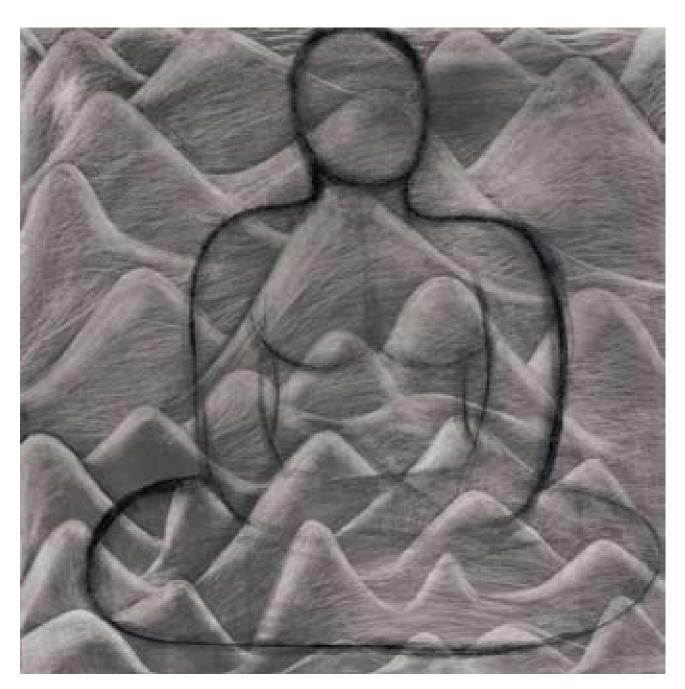
Grass Hopper Women, 90 cm x 90 cm, Acrylic on Canvas, 2006



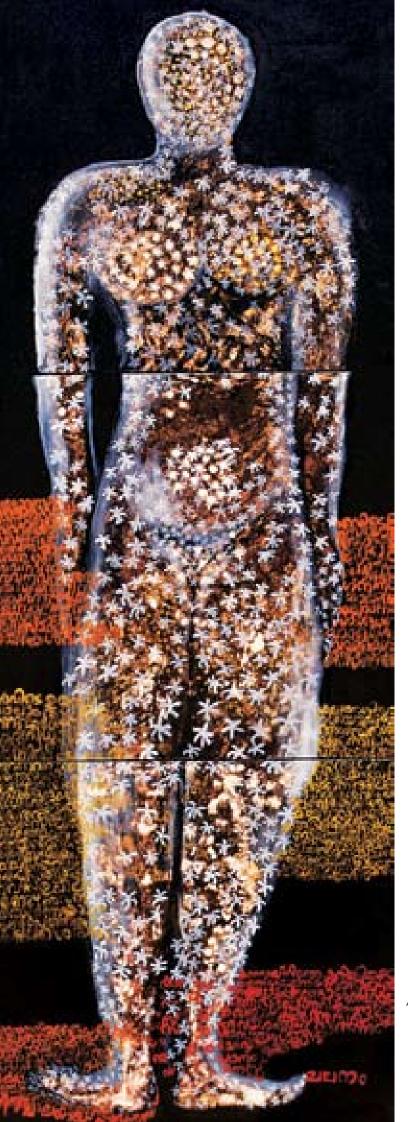
Untitled, 90 cm x 90 cm, Acrylic on Canvas, 2005



Archetype Series, 60 cm x 60 cm, Acrylic on Canvas, 2006



Archetype Series, 90 cm x 90 cm, Charcoal on Canvas, 2007

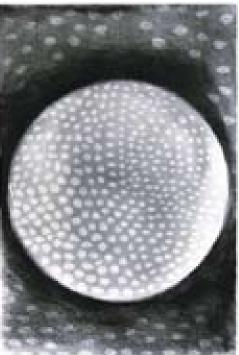


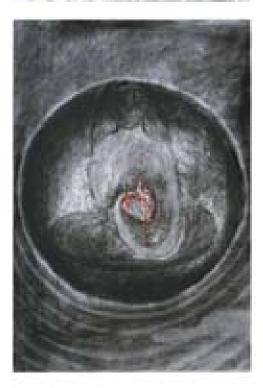
Archetype Series, 270 cm x 90 cm, Acrylic on Canvas, 2008



Untitled, 90 cm x 90 cm, Acrylic on Canvas, 2008



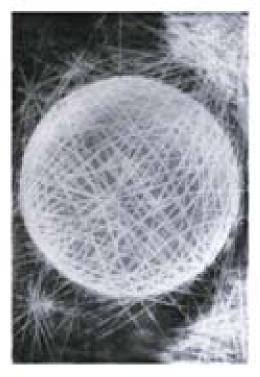


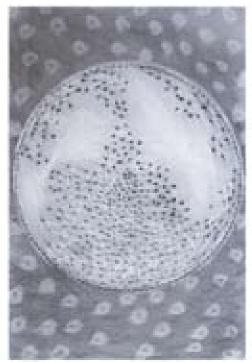


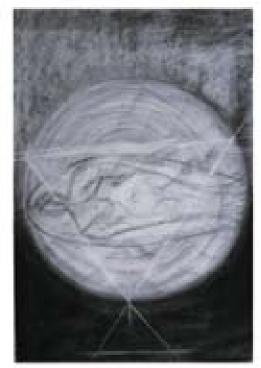












NAVAGRAHA





Sajitha says Chandralekha's explanation places the context best:`The inspiration for "Navagraha" came from the placement of the Navagraha icons in temple compounds in which each graha has an ordained sthana. Interestingly, none of the nine icons face each other. Therefore, when you perambulate around the Navagrahas, you, experience a sensation of movement-inthe-round. In the early 1970s, Chandralekha was also looking for a new content for the dance. The form itself received a new charge by juxtaposing it with the tensile energy of yoga. Sajitha's Navagrahas are like flickering moments of astral, radiant release invoking the titanic paradox of good and evil, of light and darkness.

The Woman-Painter's 'Discretion and Restraint' An autobiographical Interview with Sajitha G.

by Dr. J. Devika, (An Historian and Gender studies scholar at Centre for Development Studies, Trivandrum, Kerala)

Devika: Kerala is often celebrated as the land where boys and girls have equal access to education. However, we have very few women who work steadily and over long periods in art, film, and other such fields. Often, art is little over what one acquires as an embellishment in childhood – and it ends there, for both boys and girls, but especially for girls. Could you tell me something of your childhood?

Sajitha: I grew up in a village close to the town of Kottayam in Kerala. I remember being caught up with the enticing natural beauty of the place – the grassy slope called the Pullarikkunnu, and the wide green fields. I used to spend long hours sitting below the tamarind tree in front of our house, trying to sketch Pullarikkunnu, and sometimes, trying to write about it.

But no one at home, including myself, thought of this as 'aesthetic' activity – it wasn't read as 'art' or as the harbinger of an artistic sensibility. I was a solitary creature at home, a bit wild. Therefore I had to endure a lot of scolding. Not that my family was unloving; they just didn't have a clue about how to handle my excessive energy.

They also probably sensed that this excess energy was detrimental to 'womanly' callings. So they did their best to discipline me. It was sometimes so stifling that once I decided to end my life before a speeding train. But when the train finally came, I ran away; its whistle was too scary!

But I did have a number of opportunities to escape my family's disciplining. We used to sell milk from our cows, and I used to deliver the milk to our customers' homes. That was a job I loved. It was really good fun to be walking alone, indulging my eyes, touching leaves and plants and flowers... My favourite was the little pearl-like droplets of dew that formed at the tip of grass-blades when it was really wet. I would try to wet my eyes with those, and milk would reach our customers late! That always brought me a scolding at home!

D: Could you tell me a bit more of the 'excessive energy' you just mentioned?

S: That was something that would not submit to my family efforts to discipline me. Those days, I'd wander off to sacred groves to daydream, and immerse myself in the sights there – sights like that



College of Fine Arts, Trivandrum, Kerala



First Solo Show at College of Fine Arts, Art Gallery, Trivandrum, Kerala, 1987



Sculpture camp (Stone Carving) with Japanese Sculptor Hiroshi Mikami at CFA, Trivandrum, Kerala, 1983



Inauguration of 'Women & Reality' show at Cochin by Kamala Suraya (Poetess) & Balachandran Chulllikkadu (Poet), 1995



Kenkiff (Painter) at Virgina Studios, London, 199



Woodcut Printing lessons at 'Wort und Bild' by senior German artist Oskar Glozenleuchter, 199

of the little ants scurrying about collecting fallen flowers. They entered my imagination vigorously – returning in dreams at night. I used to be fascinated by snakes, ant-hills, the Paala tree, said to be the abode of the Yakshi... My first sculptures were shaped from the soil of the ant-hills. I had a private world more intense than that of other kids. Something that would not fold up through disciplining. Some of my relatives did notice this. I started my first diary at six – little notes about Nature around me, and about my friends.

Later, I was able to channel the energy generated from my deep private reflections into art. My father didn't want that, really. I was a good student at school, and he would've rather liked me to become an engineer or a doctor. My father was a nursing assistant at the Kottayam Medical College – someone who knew little about art. I too didn't really care about the future. But by the time I reached the seventh standard, my tastes were beginning to form: they were definitely literary and artistic. I used to take part in several competitions, without my father's knowledge, at school. Used to win prizes too, but didn't dare to tell my family. Once my father spotted a prize I had won – and that brought me a scolding for having participated in a contest without the family's knowledge. But the nuns, who taught me at school talked with him, told him that I was a talented child. That made him very happy – and his attitude changed.

At school, my 'artistic inclinations' were discovered utterly by chance, by a woman teacher. In fact I learnt that what I had scribbled was poetry, only when Cecily Teacher told me so! After that, I won prizes in drawing contests at the District and the State levels, and that convinced my father completely of my abilities. But he was still concerned about me finding a living through art. It was a brave decision that he took, to let me study in the College of Fine Arts in Thiruvananthapuram. Many people told Father that the place was crawling with drug addicts; so he was quite worried. The first few days, he used to accompany me to college. I, however, wasn't scared at all...

D: Really? A young rural girl, going into a nearly all-male institution for the first time, and not nervous at all?

S: That's true. I wasn't nervous. Even the little misgivings I may have had, even those appeared negligible because I was truly fired by a burning desire to do art. The other reason was that I had an element in me that did not bend before the disciplining imposed by the norms of femininity. Most of my classmates were boys, and we were all good friends.

D: In short, Sajitha turned herself into a 'boy', right?S: Certainly not! I was able to get a hold upon the actual dimensions

of gender only when I closely interacted with the boys in college. Men appear before us wearing the mask of the Masculine. Usually, women fall in love with this mask. This is a trap which leads us into slavery - it freezes us, makes us immobile. I was, however, able to see beyond the masculine mask donned by my male peers. Behind this visor, men share many positively humane qualities with women. Male chauvinists are born when men refuse to acknowledge this humane side of their natures, which they share with women. In the initial stages, men interact with us only from behind these masks. We have to ignore them, relentlessly dismiss their claims, and in fact, mercilessly reject those men who continue to hide behind masculine facades. We must insist on responding only to the feminine virtues that these facades hide. If we persist in this for a sufficiently long while, many would find the courage to strip off their masks before us. I have always cared to respond only to the non-masculine aspects of my male friends. That has helped me to find good friendships.

There's an incident that comes to my mind now. This was when John Abraham, the celebrated Malayalee film maker, visited our campus. We'd all gathered, and John kept on making prurient jokes – they never touched me, and for that reason, I didn't get angry or embarrassed, I kept smiling. In the end, John was so pissed off, he asked, "Are you really a woman?"

Good friendships don't even need our bodies. I had very warm pen-friendships when I was in college. Friends I never saw, friends I saw just once. The death of one of these friends was a major shock I endured in my life. I overcame it by consciously turning myself towards others.

Many people haven't a clue about what Woman is – very few have tried to even find out. Most people tend to treat Woman as an object in the beginning. We must find the strength to overcome that level. With that we would've overcome the male ego. Women need good friendships for artistic and intellectual activity, of all kinds. Only those women who successfully build such relationships will be able to make their space in these fields.

D: Have you felt that the field of painting is unfriendly to women? Has it ever disappointed you?

S: I'm someone who got out of Kerala as soon as I finished my studies. I couldn't even think of going back to a domestic setting after being for so long in an artistic environment. I married a painter, and into a family that was deeply involved in art. I was filled with the intense longing to be an artist. Ravi's family was immersed in art, and I reckoned that this would make my journey easier. Leaving Kerala at the age of twenty was very beneficial, I think.



Ex-Chief Minister of Kerala Mr. E.K. Nayanar visited show at 'Wort und Bild



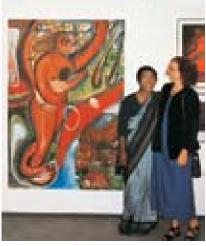
Inauguration of 'Beauty by Mistake' show, Bachum, Germany, 1996



Shilpi inaugurating 'Beauty by Mistake' at Easel Art Gallery, Chennai, 1996



nteraction & Improvisation on 'Beauty by Mistake' show (A German theatre group), 1990



Die Gallery Essen, Germany (Renate Gölzenleuchter), 1992



Nomad Project at Japan (Susanne Zemrosser, Susanne, Trixy, Alan Franklin), 1998

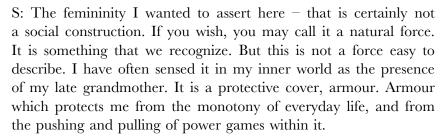
Cholamandal, too, didn't rise up to my expectations. That place is also filled with a lot of unhealthy competition and hatred. I suffered a lot; my confidence was shaken. In fact, after two years, I began to wonder whether I could be an artist at all. I decided to return home for good after I became pregnant (with my daughter). That changed later. Passing through some unspeakable sorrows, I think, steeled me. That determination lifted me up from an abyss of frustration; I was determined to prove myself before everyone who had beaten me down. Ravi Shankar [father of my daughter], too, sharpened my determination to work better and more persistently. My migration to Chennai made it possible for me to work on the Sculpture, Graphics and Painting sections of the Madras Regional Centre Studio. In 1990, we shifted to Cholamandal; we stayed there till 2005. In 1992, I won the Kendra Lalit Kala Akademi's scholarship, and several scholarships followed... I studied in England in 1995; I got the Charles Wallace Award from the British Council. That was a turning point. My determined resistance had paid off. Before I turned thirty, I had already won recognition; I had travelled plenty abroad, and had major exhibitions. People who put us down usually manage to win by raising the flag of sexual morality. They try to destroy our courage by repeatedly telling us that sexuality is bad. As if no other kind of relationship with men is possible!! This misconception comes out of the faulty idea that female bodies are just like male ones.

People don't see that if women have truly fulfilling creative lives, then sex becomes secondary. To get ahead, women should forge strong mental armour capable of protecting them from such vile gossip.

D: But, certainly, this is not the only hurdle? In a society that places the larger share of childcare and domesticity upon the woman, where is the time and energy for art or other intellectual pursuits? S: Yes, this is a major hurdle, indeed. One can overcome it only through persistent effort. If a woman has indeed the passion for art, she will find the time and the energy for it, no matter how taxing domestic work and childcare may be. This isn't easy, but art has a driving force of its own. It keeps pushing us, irrespective of how burdened we may be. It is nothing less than a possession that drives us to work and work. My own hand, for instance, I feel, has often been the instrument of a greater force working through me. It drives us to work furiously whenever the child is asleep, or when she's gone to school.

And besides, this activity raises us above the problems that affect domestic life. The quarrels and accusations that we inevitably face at home will not really touch us any more. I have created images imbibing the full heat of such experiences. In general, I do draw a lot, and when faced with such troubles I created even more. My autobiographical work mostly came out of those times. The great sorrows I had to bear left their imprint on my work (though I never tried to depict them consciously). Many recognized that extraordinary intensity in those creations. My paintings began to attract buyers; people began to find artistic value in my work. My determination to overcome did work, in the end.

D: You have mentioned two kinds of femininity. The first is the femininity that is imposed by society, which you perceive to be an ideology, and reject. But the second sort of femininity you've been hinting at - as a force resistant to disciplining - could you elaborate on that?



May be it's easier to specify what it is not. There are two points here. First, there is the light that floods our inner worlds once we free ourselves from androcentric values. That light reveals to us many things that were invisible earlier. Thus femininity is the ability to see afresh. Secondly, while it may be impossible to provide an exact description of its form or essence, there can be no doubt that it is energy. It is the energy that prompts us to remain with dignity in a hostile society, once we have rejected precisely the 'feminine values' that have the blessings of the dominant. Femininity is a form of power. But it is not authority; it can never be. It does not prepare us to dominate or subdue anyone. It is but the energy that allows us to claim spaced, and live dignified lives in utterly unfriendly social climates. In reality, this is a force that is very useful to men. Women who are truly feminine are alone able to pierce the masks of masculine domination, and recognize the uniqueness of individuals who hide behind them.

Art is of utmost importance here; the rejection of ugly gender values brings light, which strengthens our art. New forms and modes of expression begin to appear spontaneously in our work. They may not be palatable to society. But these, and the processes through which they are shaped, are welcome indeed.

In order to recognize this femininity, introspection – the persistent eye directed at the inner world – is necessary. This is not the withdrawal into a private realm; indeed, it is the reverse; it is to get



Poem of Love' at Fundacion Segundo Y Santiago Montes, Valladolid, Spain, 2000



Dr. Ayyappa Panicker (Poet) at show in Spain, 2000



Prof. Rothermund, Velu Viswanathan, Ayyappa Panicker & G.N. Devi at Spain show, 2000



Famous Spanish Painter, Raffa Carralero (Sajitha's Guru) at Faculty of Fine Arts Salamanca. Spain. 200



guration of show at Windspiel Gallery, Vienna, Austria by T.P. Srinivasan (Ambassador of India). 2004



Susanne Wenger (Sculptor) on her 90th Birthday at Vienna Museum, 200-

out of oneself and gaze back. But today, this is not easily achieved for most women, who carry many burdens. Most often, women look outward, not inward – at the needs of the family, at relatives. And the inward gaze is not really encouraged for women, either. I myself was often labelled as lacking in modesty, as quarrelsome, adamant, and rebellious – a wild one.

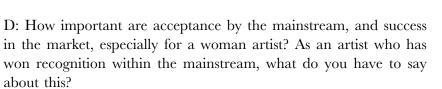
D: Like in any other mind-centred activity, is not the role of teachers and mentors important in the field of art as well? How does this affect women who try to create new and unfamiliar images? What is your experience?

S: I was lucky to study under gifted teachers who had confidence in my talents, and offered plenty of encouragement. This is not a minor matter as far as a woman artist is concerned. For example, it was the well known sculptor, Kanayi Kunhuraman, who told me first that I had the ability to create sculptures. In painting, I found my teacher in Spain – Rafa Carralero, of the Salamanca Faculty of Fine Arts. I have had the fortune to meet several celebrated artists in my travels; I have learned much from them. They woke me up to the possibility of developing art into therapy; they unveiled before me the aesthetic possibilities of wood carving.

Of course we have very many talented teachers here (most of them are men), but there are serious hurdles in the way of girl students who approach them, mostly arising from the skewed way in which we tend to conceive of relationships between men and women. This is not anybody's individual failing; rather, social norms are such. Besides, in this society, there are other formidable barriers, such as that of age. This, for instance, is not a major barrier with teachers abroad. The absence of these barriers drastically changes the nature of the student-teacher relationship there.

Also, abroad – in Europe – artists enjoy social respect. That changes the nature of human interaction within the field of art; the relatively lower levels of insecurity lessen the ill-effects of competition. I remember, particularly, visiting an artists-writers meeting point called 'Words and Lines' in Germany, a place visited by artists who are renowned and with long experience. The discussion and the drawing there are intense, and often last all night. I was asked to speak of an artist from Kerala. Since my linguistic ability was strictly limited, I offered to draw. I produced a charcoal series on the work of Kerala's celebrated filmmaker and writer John Abraham. How well they communicated! The artists there identified in John a figure close to Passolini! I was about 27 years old at that time; these were all people much richer than me in age, maturity and experience. Yet, they could treat me as an equal! My age or my gender was never a hurdle there. But when a woman receives such a honour as this here, what are the common responses? "She's a woman, that's why", will be the most common response. But all my opportunities came from my work. I was invited by people who'd seen only my work, and not me.

Lastly, the teacher's role is important, but strictly limited. It involves imparting basic skills, recognizing the student's strengths and directing them into fruitful channels, sincere and constructive criticism, and encouraging serious thought and discussion. Beyond that, the student must take all responsibility. Very few are able to devote all their time to artistic pursuits. That, if achieved, is a great attainment.



S: I have never run after money or recognition. Both these, however, have come to me. I was fired by the desire to do something new in art. There were times in which even money to buy art materials was hard to find. But I've never created anything just for money. I was lucky to receive fellowships almost continuously, and so I was able to keep on working without break, and learn new things as well.

If you ask about acceptance by the mainstream, I think that is still distant. I've gained acceptance internationally, but not nationally. This applies to women artists from the south. Secondly, there are not very many women in staterun institutions like the academies and colleges. There are at least a few who are jealous and hostile, and deliberately try to keep them out. But women artists who aren't so persistent, who don't look like much of a threat to male artists often find plenty of sympathy within these institutions! Women who are full-time artists, who have been recognized beyond the national level, are often denied this sympathy.

But winning such recognition is certainly not a bad thing, irrespective of whether the woman works full-time in art or not. That's because those people and spaces that regard recognition by the state institutions with suspicion are not really less androcentric in any significant sense. So we have a very difficult balancing act to perform – which requires us to inhabit both the spaces offered by the state, and the oppositional spaces, without allowing ourselves to be overcome by the patriarchal norms that rule both of these more or less alike. We have to learn to retain our oppositional energies in either of these. As long as the anti-state, anti-mainstream art scene remains largely androcentric, women cannot afford to simply reject the state's or the mainstream's recognition. And vice-versa.



K.G. Subramaniam, (Senior painter) at. C.F.A. Trivandrum, Kerala, 2006



Last meeting with (Late) Dancer Chandralekha at Besant Nagar. Chennai, 2006



Monica Delafuente (Dancer), Spanish filmmaker Carlo Serra and her daughter at New Delhi, 2008



S.H. Raza (Senior painter) visited studio 'Cite Internaionale des Arts, Paris, 2007



Sasi Kumar (Journalist & Filmmaker) & Sadanand Menon (Art critic) at Alliance Francaise, Chennai, 2007



Austrian Sculptor, Otto Posch at his studio, 2007

D: Lastly, let me put before you something I have understood from this conversation. Sajitha's words make clear the foolishness of the common belief that the woman artist is devoid of 'discretion and restraint'. In fact, your experiences do reveal that the woman artist does need a non-patriarchal sort of 'discretion and restraint' in order to carve for herself a space within the field of art....

S: That's true. Art needs the ability to persist at work; it requires constant practice, observation and alertness. This is, however, not the mechanical 'modesty' or 'discretion' we usually find in women. In the normal case, such discretion is a quality produced within a bounded space which is imposed on women, in which they are confined. Such 'discretion' is characterized by a certain withdrawal, certain limits. This is not the 'discretion' I've talked about. It does not trigger withdrawal; rather, it endows us with an understanding eye that enables intense empathy towards other women. It is not limiting; on the contrary, it is growth, and the ability to foresee and forestall danger. This is not just a matter of surviving; it is our very birthright as women.

'Restraint' is not submission either. It refers to strategy. In this field, direct hostile encounter often proves costly for the woman. It takes away the energies necessary for artistic pursuits. Therefore, at times, silence does not mean cowardice; it merely means strategic avoidance. It not only helps us to conserve energy, but also to measure our words carefully and use them effectively.

One often encounters the common idea that the woman artist is 'ready for anything'. This is true and false at the same time. The woman artist gives shape to new images by gaining a degree of distance from established norms. But there is persistence practice and constant effort in her work. One can never think of a situation in which there are no rules at all. When established rules are upturned, we do not reach a situation in which there are no rules; indeed what we usually have is a new set of rules and limits. The internal strength to resist and overcome these new rules and limits if they prove to be obstacles in the way of artistic creation is an indispensable element in the kind of persistence necessary for a life of art. The simple binary of discipline/indiscipline does not apply to the persistence and practice required of the artist. That can be earned only through allowing the one's self to blossom and grow. This does not mean that one should allow selfishness to grow - rather the reverse. The self must grow outward; it must reach out, not grow narrowly towards one. This is achieved through a whole range of efforts, ranging from strengthening one' self to ensuring one's economic independence. My studio and house at Kallar were the fruits of my artistic labour; it is my greatest personal achievement, which I secured through my economic independence. And it does represent, in some ways, a return to Nature!

Stree then is always a narrative-always telling compelling stories. But the current, experiences too should leave a lasting impression about what tradition and experience in art really means. For *Stree* is tracing a tradition, a tradition properly understood, which unveils not only as a chrysalis; but a butterfly-albeit wounded.



AN ACID CRITIC - A SCHOLARLY CURATOR

'Art is about seeing out loud,'says art critic Uma Nair who has been writing for the past 20 years.Known for her acid honesty and an integrity that sets her apart, Nair critically engages with notable works of art by notable artists and art from artists who are unknown. Writing for newspapers has changed, according to her, now readers are well informed and well read so they need quicksilver wit and a hair-trigger of liveliest of contemporary writing, tracking pleasure and jump-starting intelligence on the fly.

Over 20 years of travelling to Washington D.C. and New York to take in the best shows she realized that the true critic looks at art from the perspective of the viewer and closes in the web of the ignorant, the oblivious, the indifferent, the lover, and the enemy. Writing at all times must be indepth, perceptively passionate, yet without sentimentality' says she. "Her words pierce the content and beauty of each work of art to test its endurance in time and memory."said Professor Amartya Sen once after being disappointed over the fact that she was not Bengali.

Curating a show for her is about walking a fine line. It must be scholarly and thematic in its evolution. 'Curating is about suddenly, subtly morphing into a trenchant broadside against commercialization and finding a soul in a curatorial exercise,' says she.

The "critic's first flushes of discovery," to borrow a phrase from the late Pauline Kael, must posses a literate power of observation that can't quickly lapse into highfalutin prose or incomprehensible rubric. It should include dollops of colloquial "friendly freedom"--but not too much of dumbeddown prose. According to her, admirable critical eclecticism should never devolve into scattershot, tangential entries.

'Critics are allowed to--and should--wax rhapsodic'she says. She writes as critic for the Asian Age and Economic Times. Her last curation was Moderns - 40 works from the prestigious Lalit Kala collection, which travelled to Jordan. "Sajitha's *Stree* was an exercise in rediscovering the myriad moods of a woman," says she.

Nair is mother to a 25 year old son, and lives in New Delhi.Her passion is music, she sings gospel at her school, where she is English Teacher to the 10th Grade. `Teaching keeps me grounded, rooted to reality!' she adds.





SAJITHA G.

- 1967 Born 9th of December in Kumaranalloor, Kottayam, Kerala, India.
- 1987 Bachelor of Fine Arts, Painting Government College of Art, Trivandrum, Kerala.
- 1987-90 "Regional Centre Studios", Chennai.
- 1989-04 Lived and worked at Cholamandal Artists' Village, Chennai.
- 1995-07 Travelled toU.K., Germany, Sweden, Holland, Scotland, Japan, Srilanka, Austria, Spain & France

Presently working at Lalit Kala Akademi Studios, Garhi Village, East of Kailash, New Delhi.

SOLO EXHIBITIONS

- 2008 'STREE' Tracing 20 years' Travancore art gallery organised by Trinethr Art Gallery, New Delhi.
- 2007 Alliance Francaise de Chennai.
- 2007 Cite Internationale des Arts, Paris.
- 2005 Selected works from 1985-2005 at Durbar Hall Art Gallery, Cochin, Kerala
- 2005 "A journey through Mother Roots..." at Alliance Francaise de Trivandrum.
- 2004 "Archetypes: A search through self" at Windspiel Galery, Vienna, Austria.
- 2004 "Archetypes: A search through self" at Alliance Francaise de Chennai.
- 2000 "Congreso International Sobre Asia", Fundacion Segundo Y Santiago Montes, Valladolid, Spain.
- 2000 One month exhibition, Wort und Bild Gallery, Bochum, Germany
- 2000 October Gallery, London
- 2000 "Beyond the finale..." Alliance Francaise Gallery, Chennai.
- 1999 "Searching from self" Queens Hall Arts Centre, Hexam, UK.

- 1998 Katsuyama City Centre, Japan.
- 1998 Werkstatt Wort und Bild, Bochum, Germany.
- 1998 Freud Art Cafe, Oxford, UK.
- 1997 "Three decades of search within" Die Galerie, Essen, Germany.
- 1996 "Beauty by Mistake", The Easel Art Gallery, Chennai.
- 1996 "Beauty by Mistake", Werkstatt WORT und BILD, Bochum, Germany.
- 1996 "Artist of the Month", Max Mueller Bhavan, Chennai.
- 1996 "Frauen und Wirklichkeit", Kunstseminar Galerie, Metzingen, Germany.
- 1996 Saras Albano muller's Gallery, Schwelm, Germany.
- 1995 "Frauen und Wirklichkeit", Elsa Brandstrom Gymnasium, Oberhausen, Germany.
- 1995 Queen's Hall Art Centre, Hexam, Northemberland, UK.
- 1995 Women and Reality", Woodlands Gallery, Cochin, Kerala.
- Alliance Francaise de Chennai, organized by Sarala's Art Centre and Alliance Francaise.
- 1987 College of Arts Gallery, Trivandrum. Sponsored by Lalit Kala Academy, Kerala.

GROUP SHOWS

- 2007 Women artists show at Regional Center, Chennai.
- 2006 Women artists show at Dakshinachithra, Chennai.
- 2006 ENTRUSTED' An exhibition of 25 Charles Wallace India Trust arts scholars, British Council, New Delhi
- 2005 I00th Birthday Celebration of Pablo Neruda(Poet) at Wort Und Bild, Germany
- 2005 'Double Enders' Travelling show Jehangir Art Gallery, Mumbai Vadehra Art Gallery, New Delhi - Durbar Hall, Cochin.
- 2005 'Women@rt' at Forum Art Gallery, Chennai.
- 2004 'Contemplations' an exhibition of paintings by eminent women artists, Habiart Foundation, New Delhi.
- 2004 'Contemplations' an exhibition of paintings by eminent women artists, Gallerie Sara Arackal, Bangalore.
- 2003 'Viswakarma' Publiekscentrum Voor Beeldende Kunst Enschede, Netherland.
- 2002 'Viswakarma' Kulturforum Rheine, Germany.
- 2002 State Exhibition of Kerala, Lalit Kala Akademi, Cochin.
- 2002 Women artists from India, Art World, Chennai.
- 2001 44th National Exhibition, Lalit Kala Akademi, New Delhi
- 2001 "Silence and Violence" black and white Drawing and Painting show, Two women artists, Lalit Kala Akademi Regional Centre, Chennai.
- 2000 Dreams, questions and struggles, three women artists, October Gallery, London.
- 2000 Woodcut Prints Exhibition at Wort und Bild, Bohum, Germany.
- 2000 Three artists at Lalit Kala Academy, Regional Centre Galleries, Chennai.
- 1999 Four artists at Vinyasa Art Gallery, Chennai.
- 1999 Three women artists at Art World, Chennai.
- 1999 Group Show of Madras artists, Vinyasa Art Gallery, Chennai.
- 1998 "Begegnungen" with H.D. Golzenleuchter (German Artist print-maker & Poet), Germany.
- 1998 "Alchemy show", The Apparao Gallery, Chennai.
- 1998 "Nomad Project, International exhibition, Durbar Hall, Cochin, Kerala.
- 1998 "Nudes" The Apparao Gallery, Chennai.
- 1998 "Nomad Project shows" Austria cultural centre, London, Contemporary art gallery, Sweden and Katsuyama city centre, Japan.
- 1997 Seven contemporary women artists from different countries. Alliance Francaise De Chennai.
- 1998 "Southern Stars" exhibition organised by The Art World, Chennai.
- 1997 Human Form and Art, Lalit Kala Academy, New Delhi.

- I997 Gallery 47, London, UK.
- 1996 "Faces and Figures", Quay Side Gallery, U.K.
- 1996 I2th Cleveland International Drawing Biennial, U.K.
- 1996 "Chennai: an Emotion. 1996", Exhibition of Contemporary Indian Art
- 1995 "Contemporary Miniatures", Easel Gallery, Chennai
- 1995 "Women Painters Show", Kottayam, Kerala
- 1995 "Second Annual Exhibition", Chithram Art Gallery, Cochin, Kerala
- 1995 "23rd State Exhibition", Lalit Kala Academy, Kerala.
- 1993-94 "Research Awardees" Travelling Exhibition, L.K.A, Lucknow, Bhubaneswar, Calcutta, Chennai.
- 1993 "Two women artists", Sarala's Art Centre, Chennai.
- 1993 "Two women artists", Chithram Art Gallery, Cochin, Kerala.
- 1990-93 National Exhibition of Art, New Delhi.
- 1989-92 Lalit Kala Academy, Chennai.
- 1987,90,92 Regional Art Exhibition, Lalit Kala Academy, Chennai.
- 1984 Women Painters Show, Trichur (first exhibition).

CAMPS, WORKSHOPS AND RESIDENCIES

- 2006-07 Artist Residency Cite Des Arts, Paris.
- 2006 All India women artists camp at Dakshinachithra, Chennai.
- 2006 All India painters Camp in connection with Roerich Centenay Celebration organized by Directorate of Kannada and Culture, Bangalore
- 2003 Artist Residency at Faculty of Fine arts, Salamanca University, Spain
- 2000 The International artists camp. "The Village" Habarana, George Keyt Foundation, Srilanka invited through ICCR
- 2000 Wood cut workshop with German artist, Golzenleuchter, at Wort und Bild, Bochum, Germany
- 1999 National painters camp at Moonnar, organised by Kerala State Lalit Kala Academy
- 1999 Painters camp at Venkatappa, Bangalore
- 1998 "Painting camp" organised by Tamil Nadu Ovia Nunkalai Kuzhu, at Chennai
- 1998 "Nomads Project" International workshop at Kerala rtandalam, Trichur, Kerala
- 1998 "Painting camp" Venkatappa Art Gallery, Bangalore
- 1998 "Nomads Project" International workshop at Katsuyama beautiful mountains, Japan
- 1997 Ninth Trinnale International camp, organised by Lalit Kala Academy, New Delhi
- 1997 Kerala state camp organised by State Academy at Kila, Trichur
- 1996 Print-making Workshop under Prof. H.D. Golzenleuchter, Bochum, Germany
- 1996 One month Studio Residency at the Kunstseminar Metzingen, Germany
- 1996 Three months Studio Residency at Queen's Hall Art Centre, U.K.
- 1994 "Women Painters Camp, organized by Lalit Kala Academy, Kerala
- 1992 "Ceramic Sculpture Camp", Lalit Kala Academy, Chennai
- 1985 "Painting Camp" at Trivandrum (Kerala) with Prof. N.S. Bendre
- 1983 Sculptors Camp" (Stone Carving) with Prof. Hiroshi Mikami from Japan

AWARDS AND GRANTS

- 2008 14 Leading Women Artist of India Felicitated by National Legal Service Authority of India New Delhi (on March 8th International Womens Day)
- 2006-07 French Scholarship for Artist Residency in Citedes arts Paris
- 2006 Member governing council Vyloppilly Samskrity Bhavan cultural centre, Govt. of Kerala.
- 2002 Member of Kerala LKA

- 2003 Travel grant from Salamanca University, Spain
- 1999 Travel grant from Queens Hall Arts Centre UK
- 1999 Travel grant from Nomad Project (European union) for England and Japan
- 1997 50th Golden Jubilee of Independence of India exhibition, Senior Award, Organised by Tamil Nadu state Academy (Tamil Nadu Ovia, Nun Kalai Kuzu, Chennai).
- 1996 Grand Prize, 12th Cleveland International Drawing Biennial, U.K.
- 1995 "Charles Wallace Award" through British Council, U.K.
- "Kerala State Award" for Painting.
- 1993-95 Scholarship from Shantidevi Mansinghka Trust (Chamber of Commerce, Calcutta).
- 1992-93 Research Grant for Painting, Lalit Kala Academy, New Delhi.
- Lions Club Award.

ORGANISATIONAL WORKS

- 2008 Directed an Art camp for Tribal students at Vyloppilly Samskrity Bhavan, Trivandrum, Kerala.
- 2002 Conducted a camp at Kottayam district, Organised by Kerala State Lalit Kala Akademi, Trichur.
- 2002 Conducted an art camp for tribal children, Attapadi, Palghat, Kerala, Organised by AHADS.
- 2000 Directed painting workshop for children at Max Mueller Bhavan, Chennai.
- 1998 "Nomads Project" International workshop at Kerala Kala Mandalam, Trichur, Kerala.
- 1997 7 contemporary women artists from different countries at Alliance Francaise de Chennai, through networking of artists while travelling.
- 1996 Woodcut prints of H.D. Golzenleuchter (German Artist print-maker & Poet), at Easel Art Gallery, Chennai.
- 1995-05 Conducted many art therapy workshops for women and children. (for mentally ill kids).

PUBLICATIONS

Designed cover for literary books. Illustrated fiction published in India Today. Illustrated Malayalam, Tamil, German poems.

COLLECTIONS

National Gallery of Modern Art, New Delhi. Alliance Francaise de Chennai. Lalit Kala Academy, New Delhi. Malayala Kala Gramam Mahi, Kerala. and many private collections in India and abroad.

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