



SAKIBAHANUNAS



SANTANUHAZARIKA





**Santanu Hazarika**

“BLCK is an extension of my turbulent existence and the contentment it brings to me. I began my practice using the deep black tones of India Ink, so when you doodle using black ink, the metascape it allows is very graphic, there are no tonal qualities you rather depend on the ability to sketch, it absorbs light. BLCK is a reflection on my artistic practice which absorbs popular culture. Emotionally driven and violently molded, BLCK is an invitation into my world of comfortable turbulence.”

**BLCK**

10<sup>th</sup> February to 28<sup>th</sup> February 2022

**Curated by Bina Aziz**

**ART & SOUL**

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“Santanu fascinates me. His paintings fascinate me. His thought process fascinates me. I find myself intrigued by his visual language, his energetic imagery, his love affair with monotonous, his undulating landscapes and the quirk of his characters... curiosity then gets the better of me and I exclaim, “Santanu, how does your mind tick???”

To understand how his mind ticks, we invite you to BLCK for a sneak peek in the world and imagination of the enigmatic and hugely creative Guwahati born Hazarika.

After the pandemic related challenges, Art & Soul is pleased to present this solo debut exhibit of Santanu Hazarika - BLCK.

**Tarana Khubchandani**  
Director - Gallery Art & Soul

art & soul



## The Digital Colony

### *Sanctuaries of Music and Visual Mores*

How do we aestheticize the speed of a video game? What is the sense of perspective in the visual memory of a child having grown up watching videos? With much gusto as you stare into Santanu Hazarika's drawing book, an anime image of Saraswati emerges on an owl, you map the speed as its loops into a hue of ochre. In a recent interview Santanu talks of his influences which include the Japanese artist Takashi Murakami to the video game conceptualiser Hidetaka Miyazaki, but his practice does not remain flat on the surface like Murakami, it holds the speed of the video game, but unlike Miyazaki, Santanu vocabularises his imagery independently. Santanu Hazarika born in 1992, Guwahati, is an autodidact artist who began drawing as way to deflect the drudgery of Indian school curriculums, his initial reference points were comic magazines from the West found in the few second hand book stores to be found in his city. The content for an 8 year old was beyond what he had imagined, these were books that were infested with violence and sexual imagery, plots and stories that Santanu could not understand. Digital Art exists within the definition of art generated through computer based

technology and is a term that has been in use since the 1960s and has included art produced through computer graphics, algorithms and using the medium in the forms of video, photography, sound and kinetic interventions. Street Art or Post Graffiti art is a term that emerged in the 1960's that took on a popular guerrilla form of graffiti that was pillared on accessibility, walls, realism and political satire. Street Artists often used pseudonyms and acquired anonymity to make works that were deeply critical of the state and society - a notable example is Banksy. Using stencils, spray paint and the cover of night to draw up images that now travel across the world through digital mediums of Facebook, Instagram and news media. Though Anime or animation was pioneered in Europe, it has been popular in Japan since the early 20th century. Japanese woodcut prints have a similar aesthetic vision of perspective, colouring and placement of human figures. The narrative is

spontaneous, surreal and comic in Japanese woodcuts. From the 17th century onwards a great interest developed in Western Europe for Asian painting transported through woodcuts prints from East Asia. I mention Digital Art, Street Art and Anime in the essay that elaborates on Santanu Hazarika's practice to place Santanu within the context of art criticism and contextualize his visual references. Broken homes make strange bed-fellows, often art is a sanctuary for the mind, we allay our disappointments with creation. Santanu befriended musicians who were into Heavy Metal and became a member of the Guwahati's underground music scene. He began designing covers and these illustrations opened up a genre that was universal. Simon Castets and Hans Ulrich Obrust founded a long-term program - 89 Plus- of future cultural producers who would define our visualscape in the future, specifically those who were interconnected through the social networking platforms of the internet. Specifically Instagram. The artists chosen were to be born after a specific year - 1989. As we know 1989 was a year of turmoil but a new universalism emerged within a globalscape of imagination. Culture was now not

contained between borders. Guwahati, the city of the Eastern Light, is like Japan is to the world, Assam is to India. Santanu emerges as an outlier drawing from what he got visually - from Attari video games to hand me down comic magazines to connections with heavy metal music. In the definitions of the cultural theorist Hans Ulrich Obrust these are artists who represent more than half of the world's population and arrive at their visuals through the internet. We cannot define Santanu's art as graffiti, pop art or guerrilla art, but in a new genre that is emerging but not yet defined and it is not post internet art. Firstly because the internet is not over, we are still inhabiting its wonders. We all live in digital colonies of hope and fear defined by what is sent out to us visually. Anime today is the bedrock of video game visual culture and anime has progressed and spread on the walls of modern day graffiti. The transformation of street art onto Instagram as the mode of distribution and dispersion is interesting. Santanu comes from Assam, and in Guwahati on the summit of a hill in the city you have the temple of Kamakhya that is built like a woman's

womb, rituals around the temple draw heavily from mother worship and menstruation. Guwahati has long known the traditions of the occult and tantric worship. His Saraswati mounted on the Eagle - Owl is an example of that surreal tantric realism. With the Santiniketan a school of wash painting as a new genre emerged that rejected the Western Realism being taught at colonial schools of art established by the British across India. This along with its aesthetic connections to indigenous Bazaar painting and miniature schools spread across India as a stylistic vocabulary to depict Gods and Goddesses. Assam is within the cultural sphere on Bengal, though its traditions of music, song and storytelling come from the past glories of the Ahom Empire. Even though Santanu had been drawing out of comic books, drawings that he would sell to friends in school to raise money for himself, as a child, when he left his engineering course and was sitting idle at home, he began exploring myths from Hinduism where he found the subjects of his work . This makes his inspirations distinct from other street artists. The interconnections of age old philosophy and myth in image making, with techniques and aesthetics found in animation make his works eclectic with

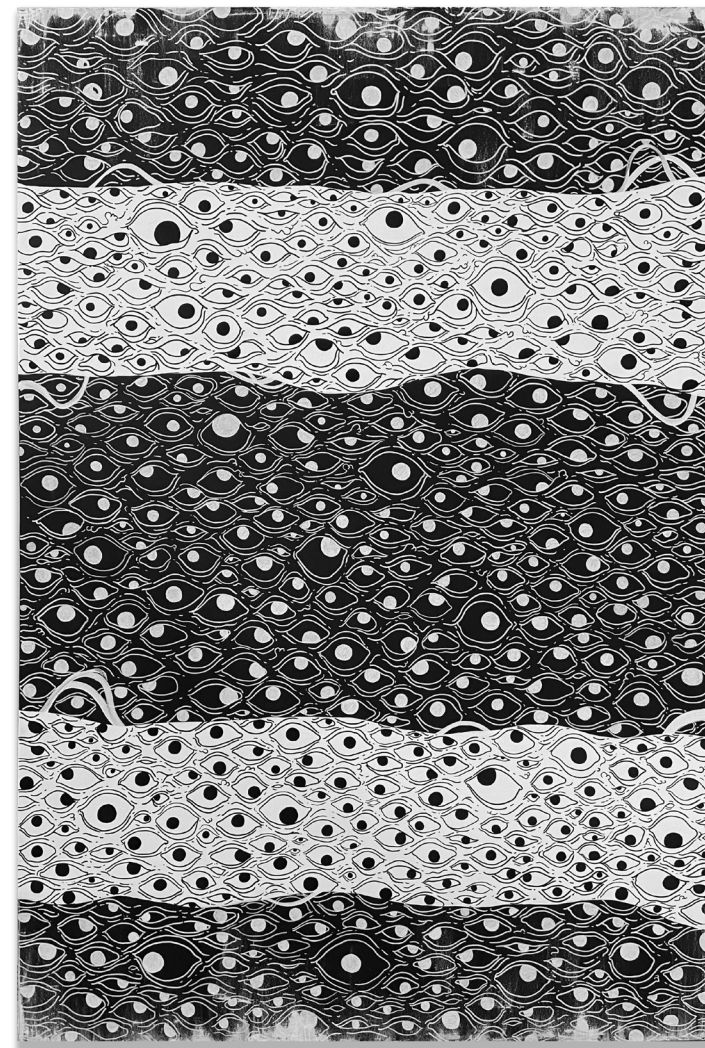
a narrative situated in the 21st century. In 2014 after a long period of personal struggle, having dropped out of engineering college Santanu, won the first ever Redbull World Doodle Art Championship in Capetown. He arrived at the competition through a friend's suggestion on Facebook. India today sits within a corporate visual realm of popular culture. Santanu has had collaborations with Reebok, NDTV, Gully Gang and Azadi Records. With Ritviz he recently made India's first ever NFT sale. In February 2022 during the Mumbai Gallery Weekend he opens a solo at the Gallery Art & Soul called BLCK. Santanu began his practice using the deep black tones of India Ink, so when you doodle using black ink, the metascape it allows is very graphic, there are no tonal qualities you rather depend on the ability to sketch, it absorbs light. Perhaps BLCK is a reflection on his artistic practice, it absorbs popular culture. We see here that Santanu first begins with a doodle that finds life on an app called Instagram. Instagram is the platform for dissemination. But he also makes works in association with brands for the internet platform, the conceptualisation of these works happens within the construct of them being viewed on

Instagram. He makes creative solutions for brands such as Reebok and does NFTs for art within the spontaneity of changing landscapes of visual culture. His art is not made into an NFT, rather he makes art as non-fungible tokens. For his solo show Santanu delves into the deep realms of himself, bones, anatomy and landscape narrate myths, erotica, humour and pain. We come across an artist who is multiplying his stories through his works. He inhabits the gallery painting around a bed where he sleeps on, like an influencer he is naked in front of the audience, they come seek and view his truths laid bare to scrutiny. This is not an exalted position but the demystifying of a soul seen in the distance of the internet. Love and its prerogative to find forms of culture is very existent in his output, basic emotions are laid bare whether it is in his relationship or it is in the recent death of his grandmother. He also has found a wall in the city to go paint on a graffiti for children from the surrounding slums. The image was first found in a doodle, then disseminated through Instagram and perhaps its process will be found in an Instagram reel showing him execute the mural. Okakura and Rabdindranath has

predicted this cultural universality when the world had just begun to gather and exchange across geographies. We now live in the times of the internet and Santanu is the apostle of visuality in our times bringing technology, myth and painting together. A visual laboratory is set up at Art & Soul, the realm of art here is decorative but accessible, we see a definite change. The exhibition runs the length of the Mumbai Gallery Weekend, a time where varied practices of art come to focus and here we show the practice of a popular art form yet undefined but to be seen by many within the context of contemporary art and its criticism. BLCK, Santanu Hazarika's solo show emerges as an exhibit of a phenomenon that presents a practice which is an enigma of the person who creates visual networks of personal histories, video gaming, popular culture and the skill to draw. It's our moment for an art form to emerge from our interiors crafted and scripted by a genius image maker.



**The Collector**  
72 x 60 in  
acrylic on canvas



**Eyes of Vajra**  
72 x 48 in  
acrylic on canvas



**Saturate**  
60 x 48 in  
acrylic on canvas



**A.D.I.D.A.S**  
72 x 60 in  
acrylic on canvas





**Grin**  
48 x 36 in  
acrylic on canvas



**Duality**  
72 x 60 in  
acrylic on canvas

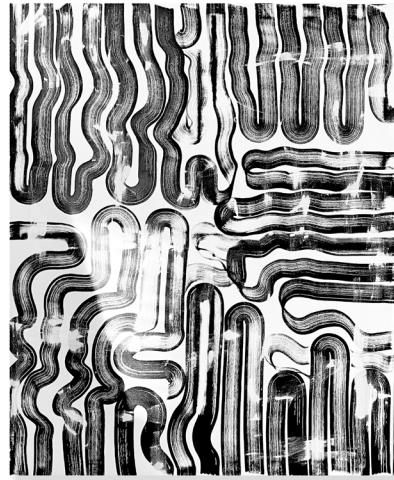
**Turbulence**  
acrylic on canvas



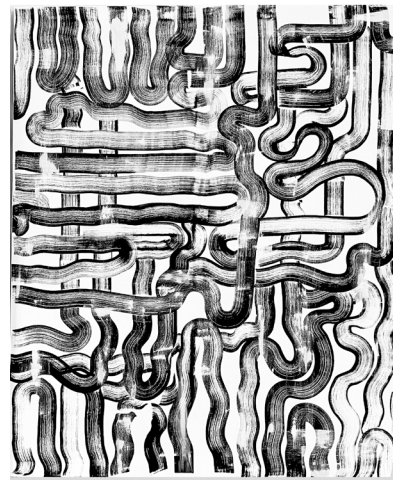
1  
60 x 48 in



2  
60 x 48 in



3  
60 x 48 in



4  
60 x 48 in

**Fragments**  
acrylic on canvas



diameter 16 in



10 x 10 x 10 in



diameter 14 in



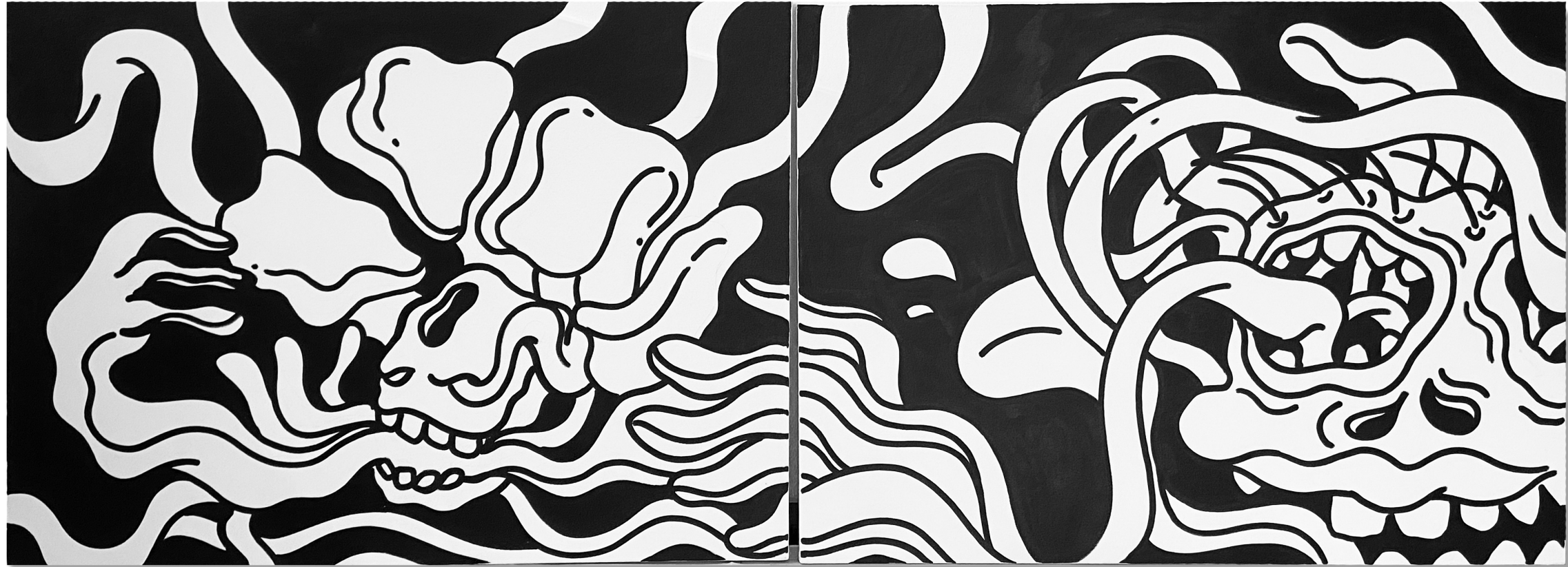
diameter 12 in



diameter 24 in



14 x 18 in



**Whats So Funny!**  
Diptych 36 x 48 in each  
acrylic on canvas



**Flasher**  
30 x 22 in  
ink and acrylic on paper  
300 GSM



**Moth Princess**  
30 x 22 in  
ink and acrylic on paper  
300 GSM



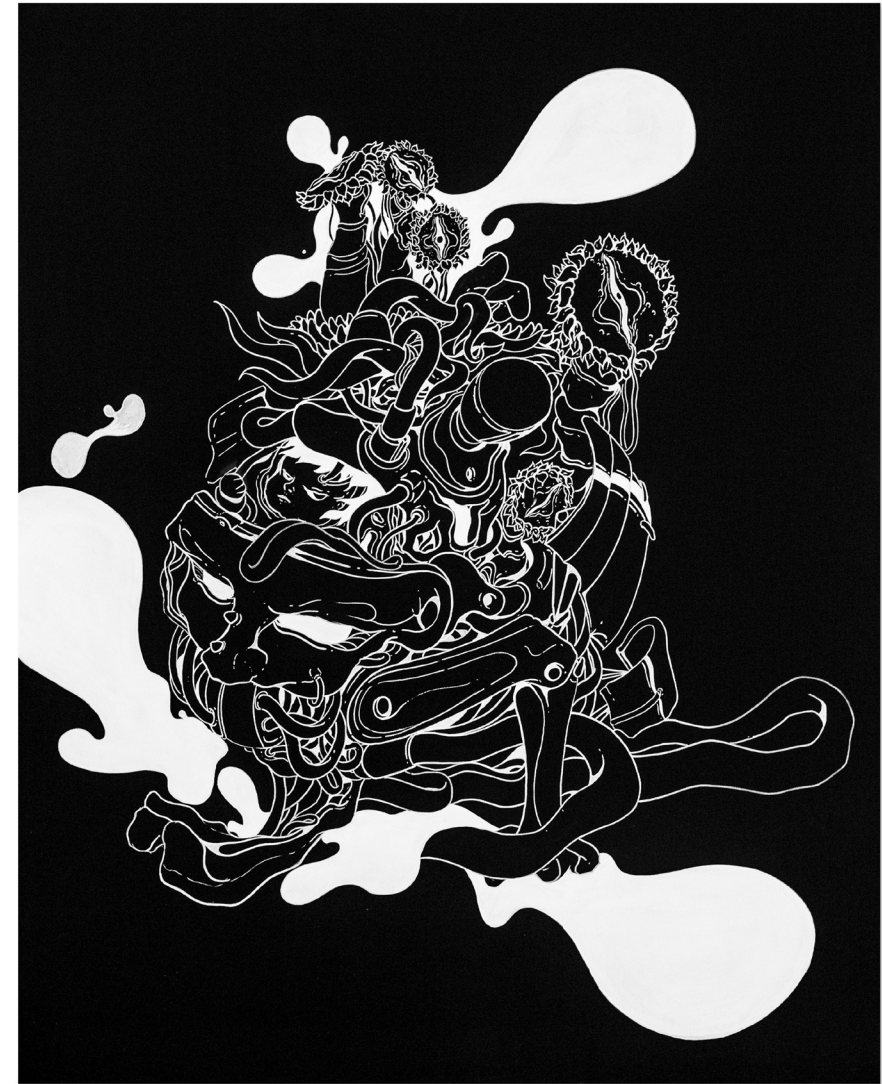
**Spaghetti**  
30 x 22 in  
ink and acrylic on paper  
300 GSM

**My Lady**  
30 x 22 in  
ink and acrylic on paper  
300 GSM





**Pharaoh**  
60 x 48 in  
acrylic on canvas



**Angry Flower Child**  
60 x 48 in  
acrylic on canvas



**Innocence 3**  
84 x 84 in  
hand tufted rug



**Blow**  
72 x 72 in  
acrylic on canvas

**Dance**  
60 x 48 in  
acrylic on canvas



**Gamusa**  
48 x 36 in  
acrylic on canvas



**The Spill**  
72 x 48 in  
acrylic, ink on canvas

**Monkey Brains**  
48 x 36 in  
acrylic on canvas



## Achievements

- 2014- Winner and Crowned as Red Bull World Doodle Art Champion '14, Cape Town, South Africa
- 2015- Featured in Verve's achiever's fresh list  
Invited as guest of honour by the Government of Russia for Forum RITM, Omsk, Russia.  
Painted murals across Siberia.  
Featured artist and curator at Metropolis Asia 2015
- 2016- Guest of Honour for the 41st Karbi Youth Festival  
Live Art performance at Rashtriya Sanskriti Mahotsav  
Honourable judge and speaker for art and design competition for IIT Guwahati.  
Awarded by the Chief Minister of Assam for extraordinary contribution in the field of art, Assam .
- 2017- Selected by the Ministry of Culture, India, to be part of 'Tat Tvam Asi' art camp at Simhasth Kumbh Mahaparv and the group exhibition at the Indira Gandhi National Center for Arts.  
Selected as Judge and collaborated with google for Red Bull World Doodle Art Championship'17, San-Francisco, California  
Head started 'Satrangi Bharat' - a Pan India railway beautification project initiated in Neemuch, Madhya Pradesh.
- 2018- Invited by prestigious Dibrugarh University as resource person/speaker on doodle art and the subconscious mind  
Live painted for NDTV cleanathon tele-marathon for 12 hours co-hosted by Amitabh Bachchan with a live auction on tv  
Collaborated with a one Plus for launch of 6t model Customised sneakers for Famed rally driver CS Santosh, cricketer R L Rahul and for Adidas India.
- Collaborated with Adidas originals for launch of 'ozweego', and ultra-boost  
Collaborated with music artists – Ritviz, Raftaar for creating their debut album artworks.  
Initiated Guwahati beautification project in association with the state government.
- 2019- Collaborated with The Plated Project for creating limited edition art plates to feed hungry children.  
Was commissioned to create the Red Bull fridge for rapper Divine  
Hosted creators collective with Adidas originals.  
Selected by Adidas originals as one the superstars of change from India.
- 2020- Collaborated with Azadi records and Seedhe Maut for merchandising.  
Commissioned art work for Royal Enfield .  
Multiple collaborations with musicians : Gully gang India , Ritviz, Nucleya, Ikka and MC Altaf  
Designed the official tour bus for Rajasthan Royals, IPL team in association with Red bull.
- 2021- Launched NFT artwork and set a record for the fastest NFT sale, in a record time of 37 secs  
Collaborated with One Plus for Steven Harrington Edition Smart Search  
Collaborated with Adidas originals for a commissioned Mural at their largest Halo concept store.  
Launched an NFT series with rapper Divine .  
Invited as a TedX speaker for TEDxSIULavale.  
Collaborated with the iconic apparel brand Dust of Gods for Chinese New Year limited edition Capsul.
- 2022- Debut Solo Art Exhibition at Gallery Art & Soul, Worli



## **Acknowledgements**

**Shruti Haasan    Rodney Gomes**  
**Karan Kanchan    Gursimar Singh**  
**Karan Parikh    Meher Sachdeva**  
**Mc Altaf    Rahul Singha**

Photography:  
**Shayaan Aziz**  
**Teej Datar**

Catalogue Design Coordination:  
**Firebird Phase Media**  
**Bina Aziz**  
**Santanu Hazarika**

When I first met Santanu early in 2021 he came across as a humble young artist whose mind was consumed with so much energy and creativity, raring to just give it all. The transition of coming from Assam to Mumbai wasn't easy, but Santanu has already proved himself by designing and collaborating with various well - known brands. He was constantly creating images that have a strong visual impact ,reflecting his childhood memories.

When I heard his thoughts behind his creations it was even more fascinating. As a viewer we understand and interpret only what we see visually but delving into that mind which has so many stories to tell, was the reason this launch was important. Then the lockdown happened. This did not deter Santanu or those who believed in him. He became the first artist to sell his art on the NFT platform in a record time of 37 seconds. He designed music albums , merchandise, and just got better and better.

Tarana and I waited patiently for the pandemic to end to give him the launch that he so richly deserves. That time has finally come.

I wish him all the best for his journey. Santanu is going to be a game changer in the world of art and is the artist to look out for in 2022!

**Bina Aziz**  
Art Curator





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