

An Alert Silence: Painting Silence

Vasant Wankhede (1936 - 2015)

Online Exhibition curated by Dr Tarana Khubchandani

May 5th - June 7th, 2021

art  soul

Exhibition catalogue



Untitled | fabric collage on canvas

40 x 36 Inches

Silence and spaciousness go together. The immensity of silence is the immensity of the mind in which a centre does not exist. The perception of this space and silence is not of thought. Thought can perceive only its own projection, and the recognition of it is its own frontier.

- Jiddu Krishnamurti wrote in the *The Only Revolution, India, 1969.*

Perhaps he had said this to Vasant Wankhede while lecturing at the Sir JJ School of Arts, Bombay where Wankhede was pursuing a diploma in drawing and painting. Wankhede graduated in 1959 under the tutelage of Shankar Palsikar, who was the dean at the school from the years 1968 to 1975. Though Palsikar was his professor, Wankhede held a close friendship with his teacher that was both familial and intellectual.

Shankar Palsikar was a founder member of the avant garde 'Bombay Group of Artists' formed in 1956. A professor who often styled himself and propositioned the thoughts of Paul Klee and illustrated a book holding the title of 'Colour & Sound'. in 1972. An introduction to a friend to propose and speculate about the artist Vasant Wankhede is essential in order to write about a man who rather preferred 'Silence'.

We are not sure that Wankhede encountered Krishnamurti during his time at school or during the Deanship of Palsikar at the Sir JJ School but what we know is that the words by iconoclast professor had deep impressions on how Wankhede sought his practice and his life. A keen observer Wankhede was a cartoonist at the National Films Division where the use of stop motion drawing and colours illuminated by light would need a fine balance. His films Gopal Deuskar, 1988 (life of the artist), Warli Art, 1985 (Documentary on Indigenous tradition of art called Warli) Woman: A Tribute (Undated documentary on the life of Indian women) An Ungrateful Man and Siddharth; all were studies into the subject bereft of drama or sensational posturing.

Born in the district of Jalgaon 1936, Wankhede suffered an infection on his left hand that later led to his hand being shortened surgically. He kept ill health company through his life. A school teacher impressed by his ability to draw introduced him to the vocation and argued with his parents to allow him to go study at the Sir JJ School. Initially he lived with an artist G A Gangal and his wife in Dadar and later in the Goldsmith community hostel in Girgaum. After graduating in 1959 he began working in the Government press where setting the page for newspapers had visual recurrences in his works where different spatial elements were held together in one visual pane called the painting.

During his college time he realised that he had issues with his kidneys. He once collapsed during school and doctors then predicted him a short life. In 1979 he was admitted to hospital to deal with pain that emanated in his kidneys though he returned home with surgery, the use of medical gauze in his works began from there. Thus, health and his vocation gave techniques for his abstraction but as Krishnamurti observes: *'Silence is difficult and arduous, it is not to be played with.'* Wankhede was often silent, he learnt to live with himself and not bother others. Long train trips from Malad to the National Films Division studios despite his ill health was dealt with silence. Abstraction in colour for Wankhede is not sound but silence.

Palsikar was seen as a tantric artist. His discourse on abstraction often dwelt in Hindu philosophy and was drawn from an Indic source much like Kandinsky or Klee. V S Gaitonde on the other hand was more interested in non-dualism and the oneness of truth with an esoteric imaginary. We need to see Wankhede's affinity with Krishnamurti's teaching and his travails with health to understand that he was not persuaded by the dogmas of religion and rather followed the iconoclastic views of Krishnamurti who spoke beyond religion, state or divisions that bound us to natural biases. An artist who had been condemned to a short lifespan found his subject in Silence to live as Krishnamurti notes:

"It is only in alert silence that truth can be"



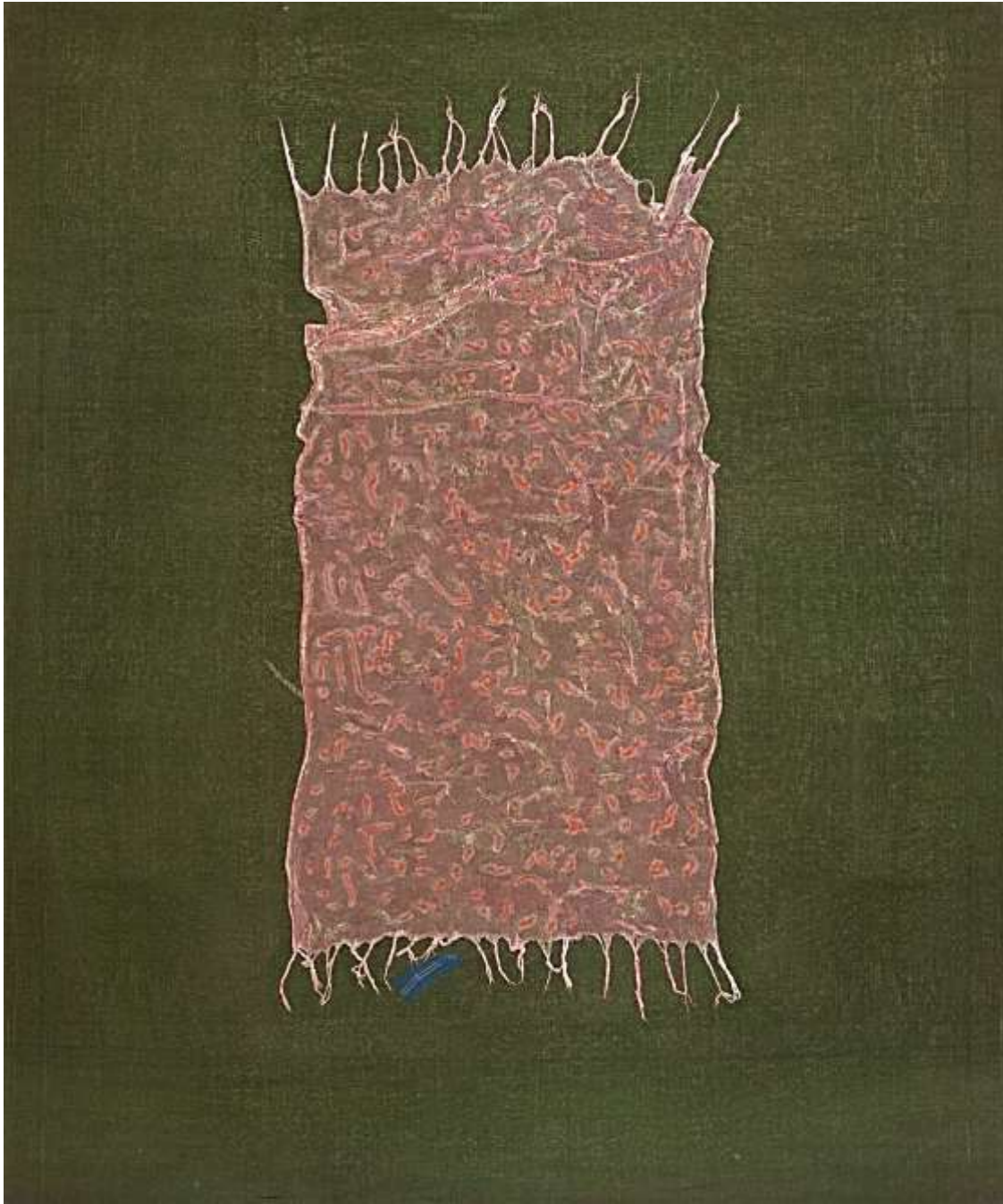
Artist | Vasant Wankhede

Title | Missing Phase of the world

Medium | Paper collage on canvas on a wooden frame

Size | 60 x 48 Inches

Price | INR 20 Lacs



Artist | Vasant Wankhede

Title | Untitled

Medium | Collage with fabrics

Size | 48 x 40 Inches

Price | INR 13.50 Lacs



Artist | Vasant Wankhede

Title | Untitled

Medium | Collage on paper

Size | 27 x 19 Inches

Price | INR 3.5 Lacs



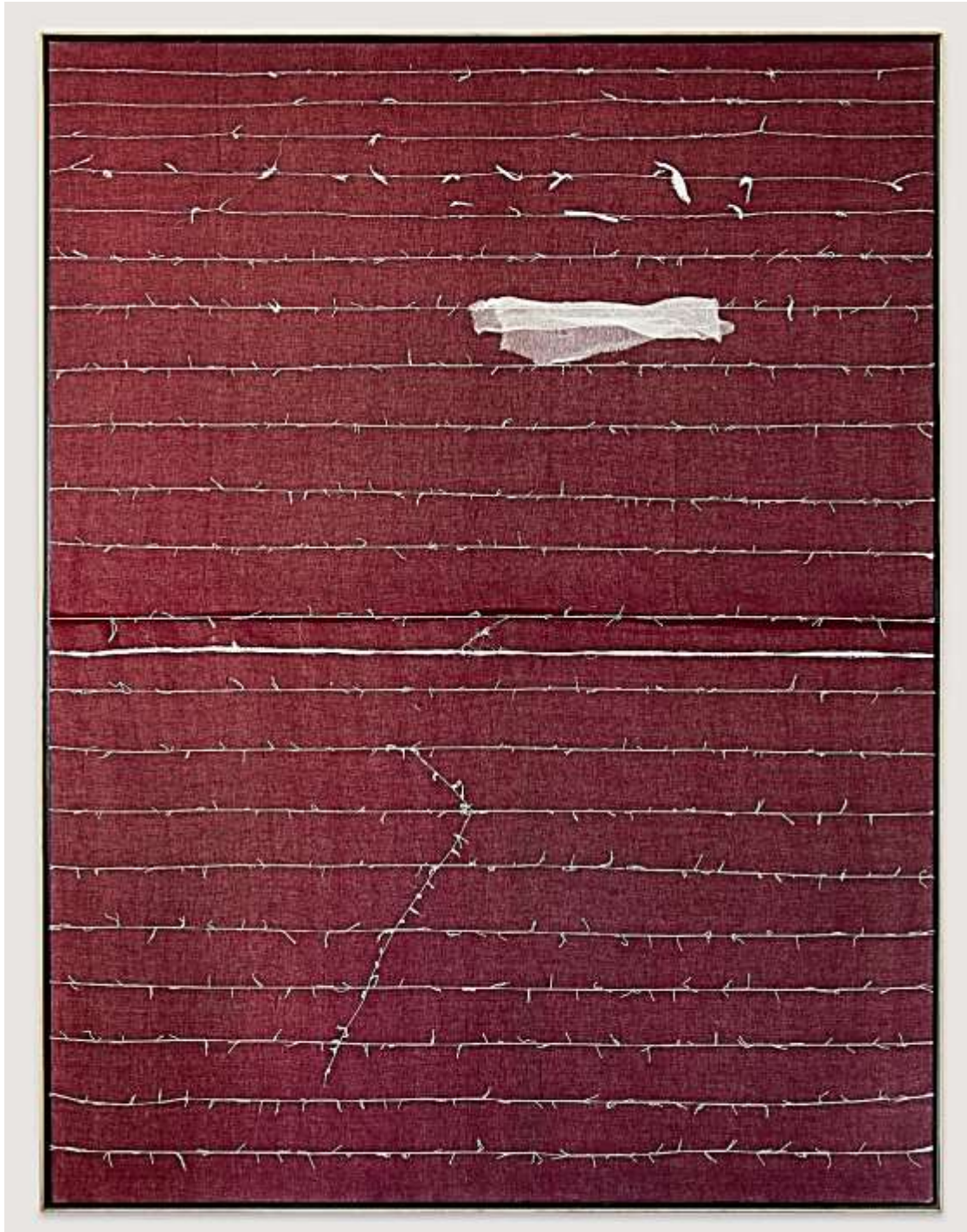
Artist | Vasant Wankhede

Title | Untitled

Medium | Oil on canvas in silver & grey colours on wooden frame

Size | 59.5 x 50 Inches

Price | INR 21 Lacs



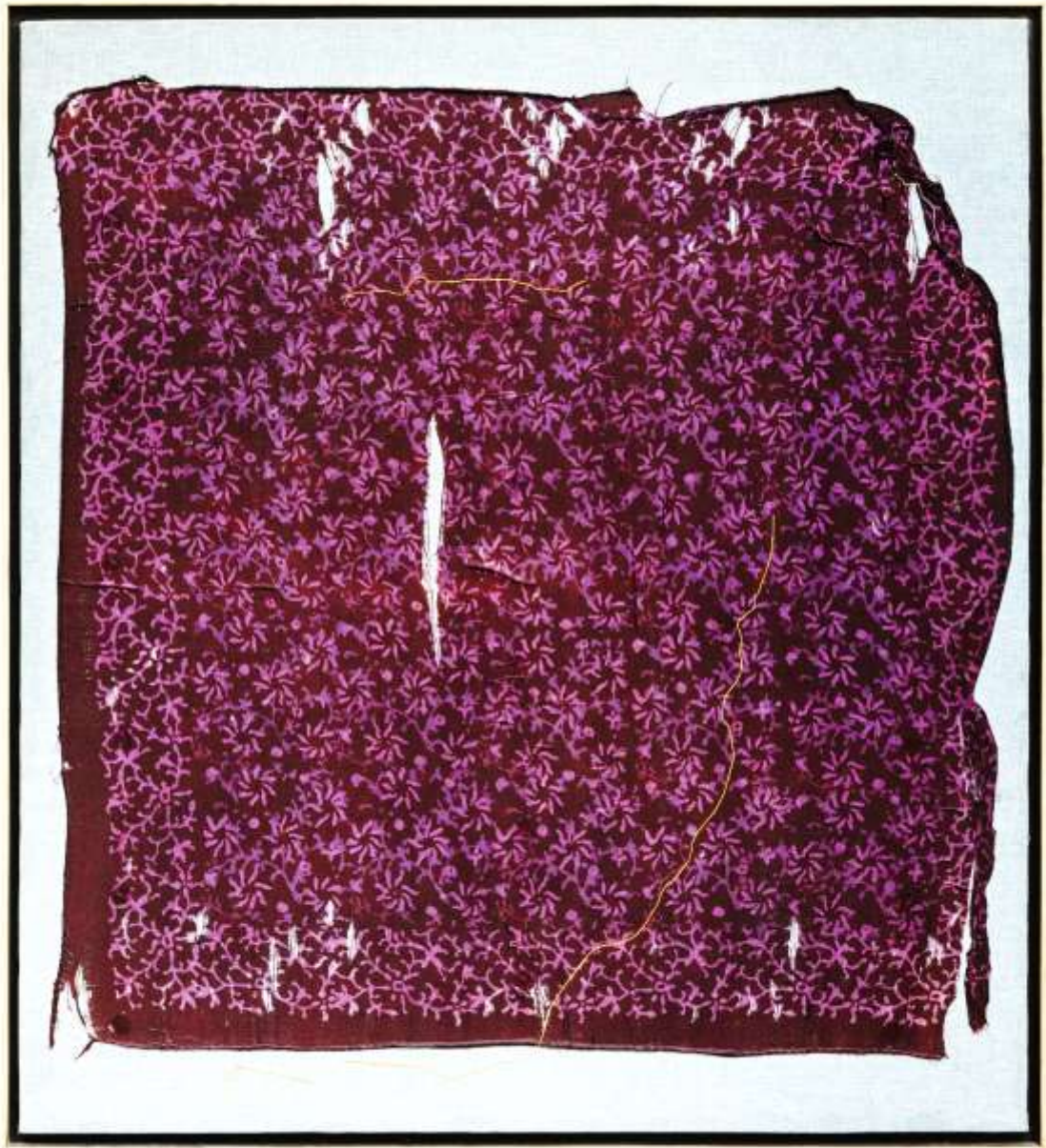
Artist | Vasant Wankhede

Title | Untitled

Medium | Fabric on collage, thread knots on maroon background

Size | 80 x 60 Inches

Price | INR 33 Lacs



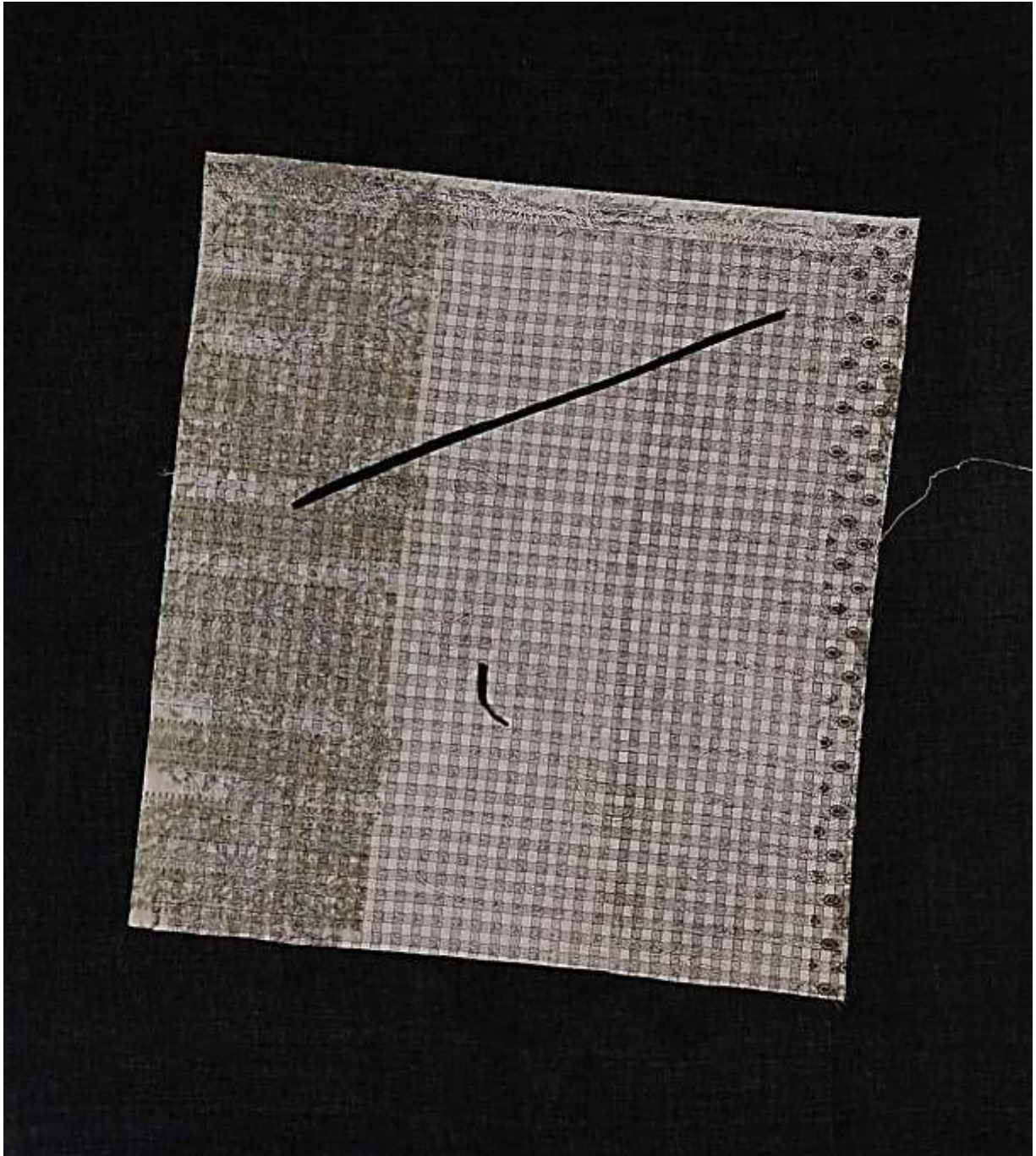
Artist | Vasant Wankhede

Title | Untitled

Medium | fabric collage on canvas

Size | 40 x 36 Inches

Price | INR 10 Lacs



Artist | Vasant Wankhede

Title | Untitled

Medium | Collage on fabric

Size | 46 x 36 Inches

Price | INR 11.50 Lacs



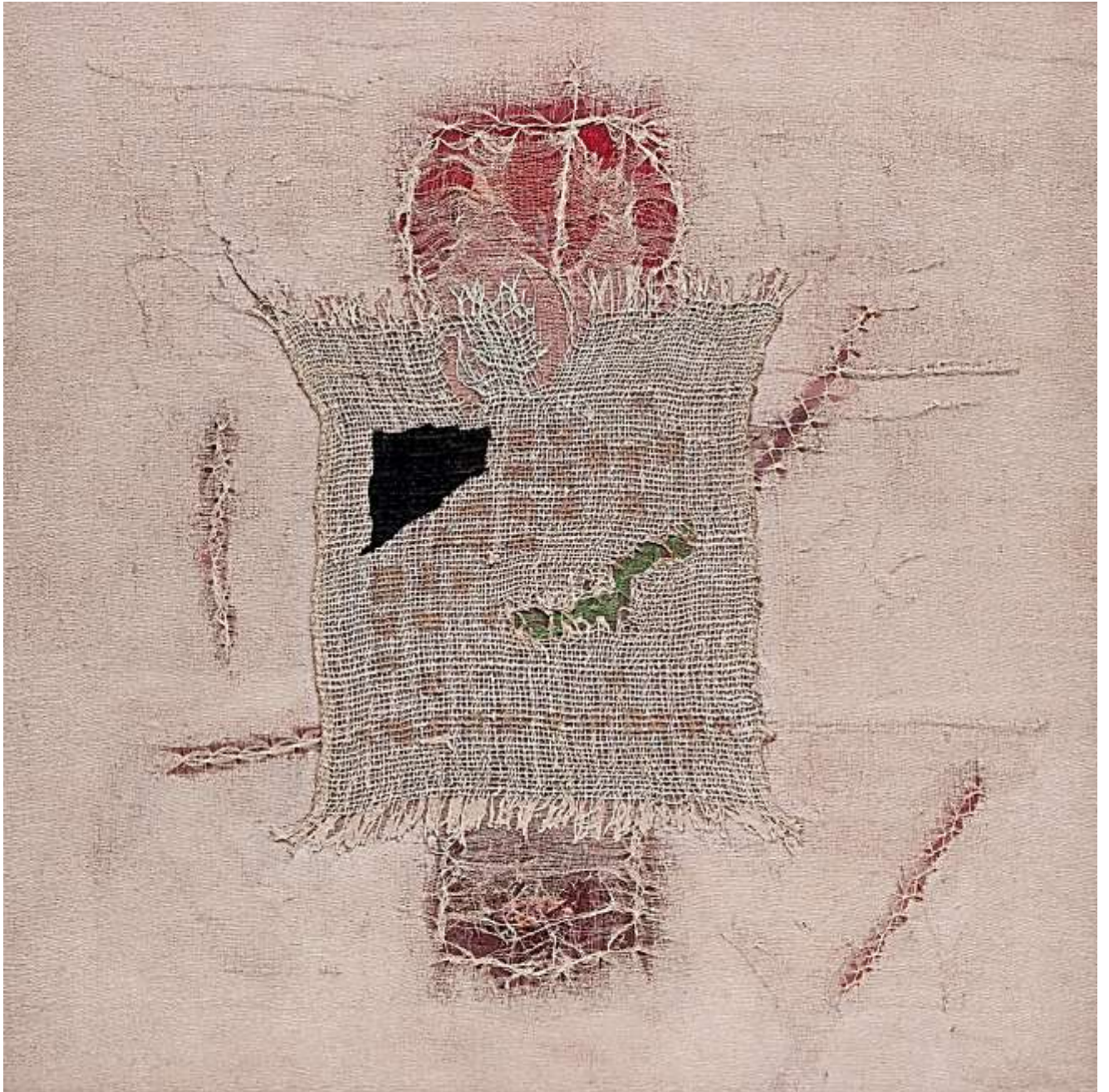
Artist | Vasant Wankhede

Title | Untitled

Medium | Collage on fabric

Size | 36 x 30 Inches

Price | INR 7.5 Lacs



Artist | Vasant Wankhede

Title | Untitled

Medium | Collage on fabric

Size | 36 x 30 Inches

Price | INR 7.5 Lacs



Artist | Vasant Wankhede

Title | Untitled

Medium | Watercolour on paper

Size | 30 x 22 Inches

Price | INR 3 Lacs



Artist | Vasant Wankhede

Title | Untitled

Medium | Watercolour on paper

Size | 30 x 22 Inches

Price | INR 3 Lacs



Artist | Vasant Wankhede

Title | Untitled

Medium | Watercolour on paper

Size | 30 x 22 Inches

Price | INR 3 Lacs



Artist | Vasant Wankhede

Title | Untitled

Medium | Watercolour on paper

Size | 25 x 21 Inches

Price | INR 3 Lacs



Artist | Vasant Wankhede

Title | Untitled

Medium | Watercolour on mountboard

Size | 24 x 18 Inches

Price | INR 3 Lacs



Artist | Vasant Wankhede

Title | Untitled

Medium | Watercolour on mountboard

Size | 21 x 15 Inches

Price | INR 3 Lacs



Artist | Vasant Wankhede

Title | Untitled

Medium | Watercolour on mountboard

Size | 21 x 14 Inches

Price | INR 3 Lacs



Artist | Vasant Wankhede

Title | Untitled

Medium | Watercolour on mountboard

Size | 21 x 14 Inches

Price | INR 3 Lacs



Artist | Vasant Wankhede

Title | Untitled

Medium | Watercolour on handmade paper

Size | 21 x 15 Inches

Price | INR 3 Lacs



Artist | Vasant Wankhede

Title | Untitled

Medium | Watercolour on handmade paper

Size | 21 x 15 Inches

Price | INR 3 Lacs



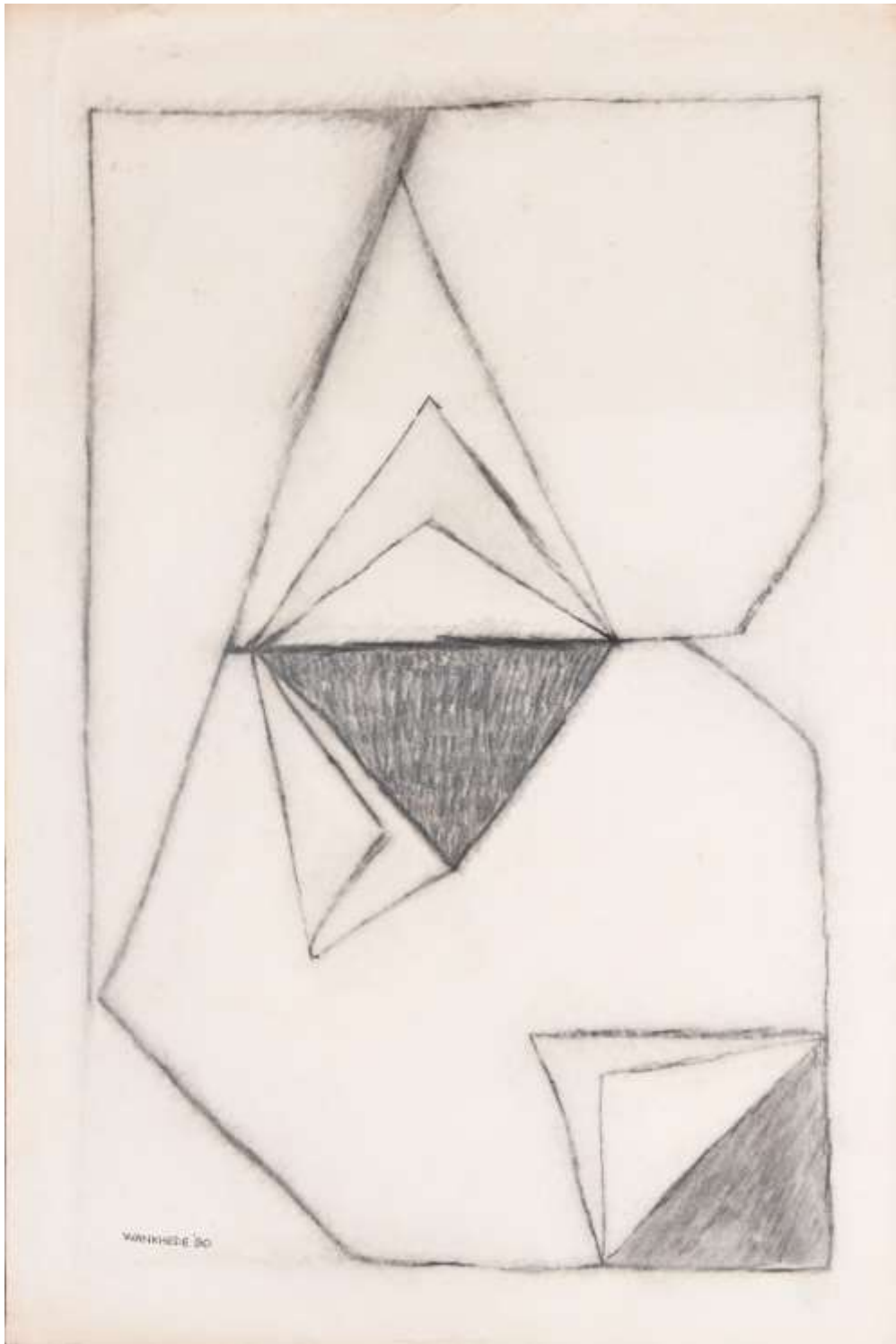
Artist | Vasant Wankhede

Title | Untitled

Medium | Watercolour on handmade paper

Size | 21 x 15 Inches

Price | INR 3 Lacs



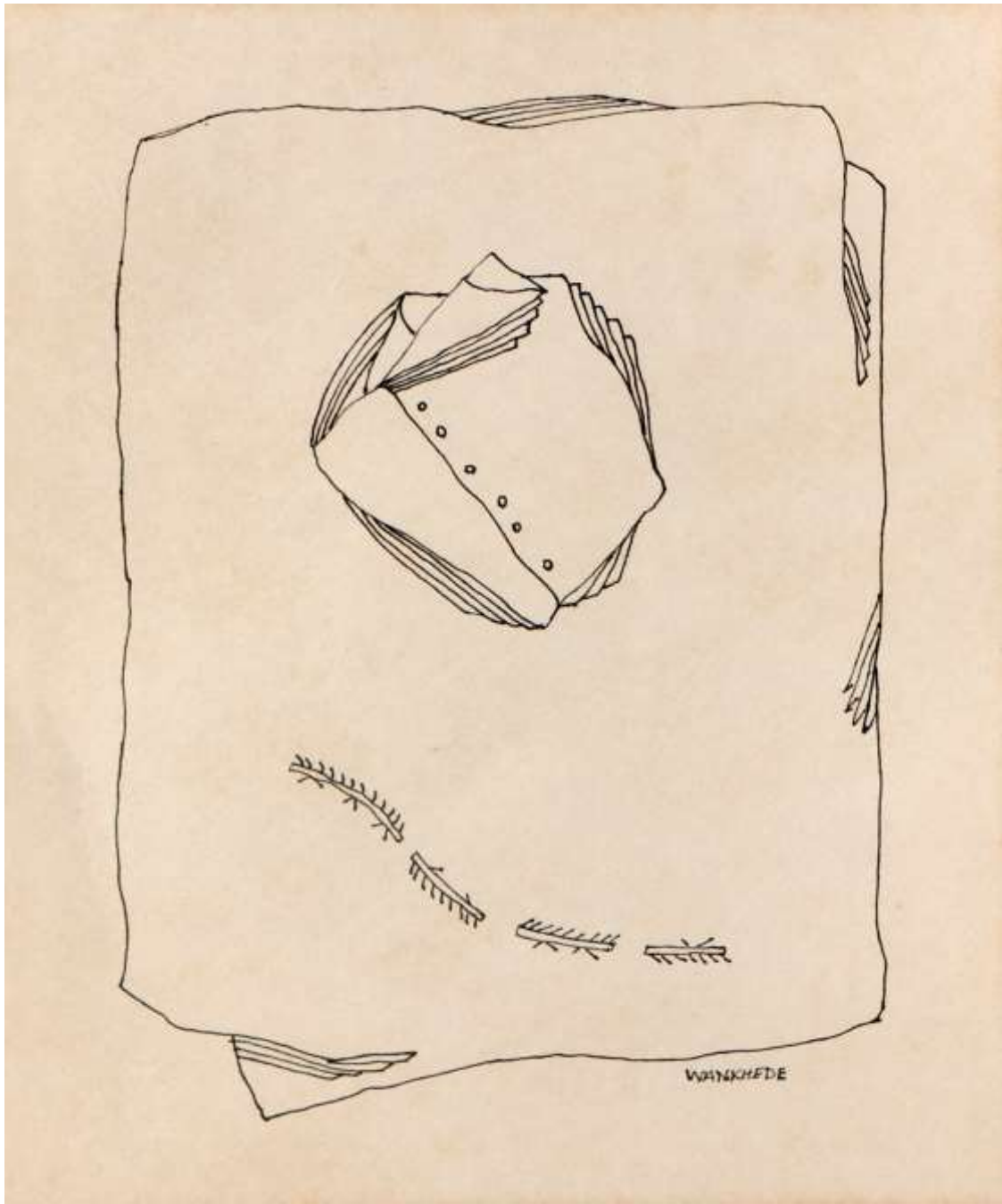
Artist | Vasant Wankhede

Title | Untitled

Medium | Charcoal drawing on handmade paper

Size | 21 x 15 Inches

Price | INR 3 Lacs



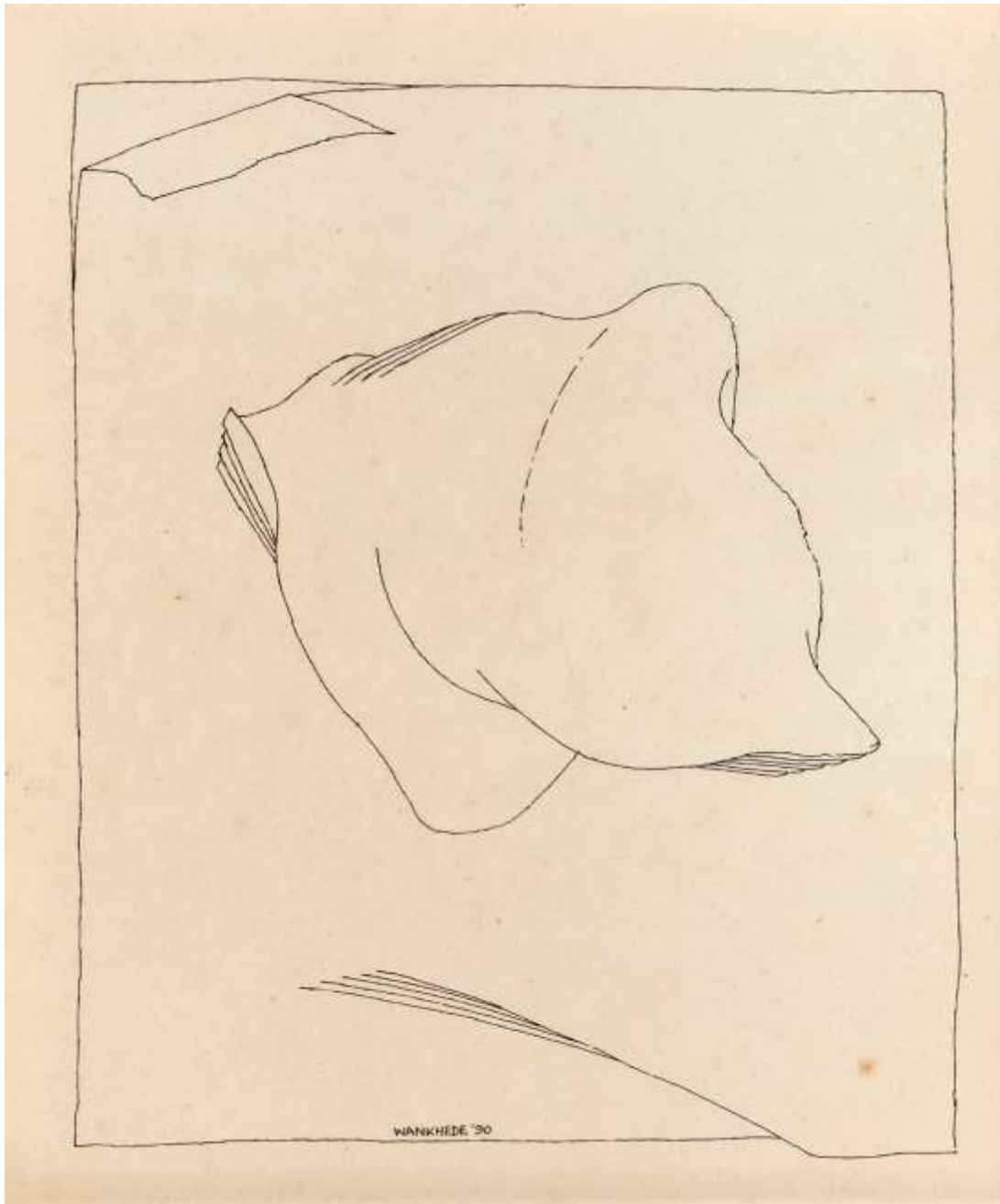
Artist | Vasant Wankhede

Title | Untitled

Medium | Drawing on paper

Size | 10 x 8 Inches

Price | INR 1 Lac



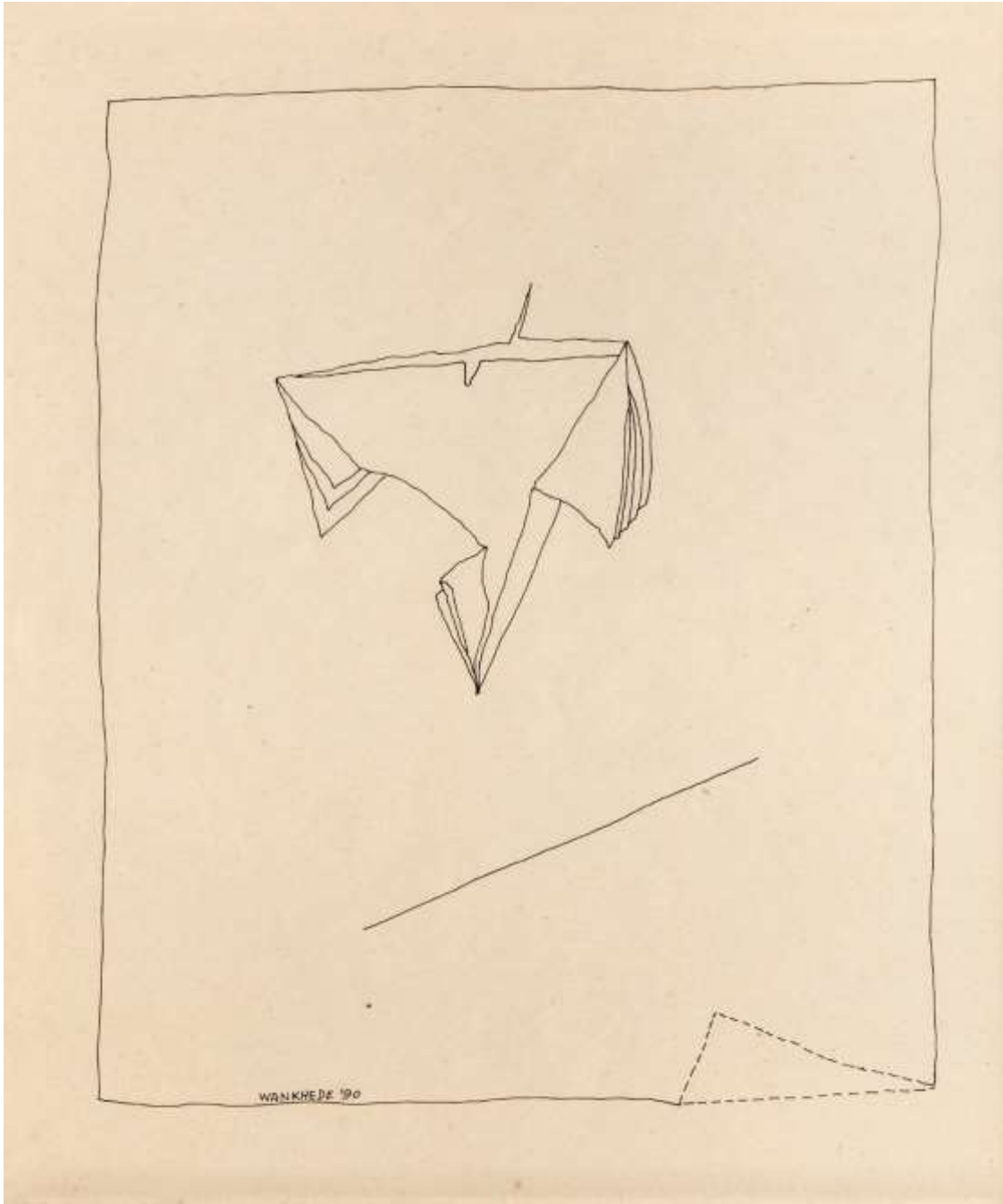
Artist | Vasant Wankhede

Title | Untitled

Medium | Drawing on paper

Size | 10 x 8 Inches

Price | INR 1 Lac



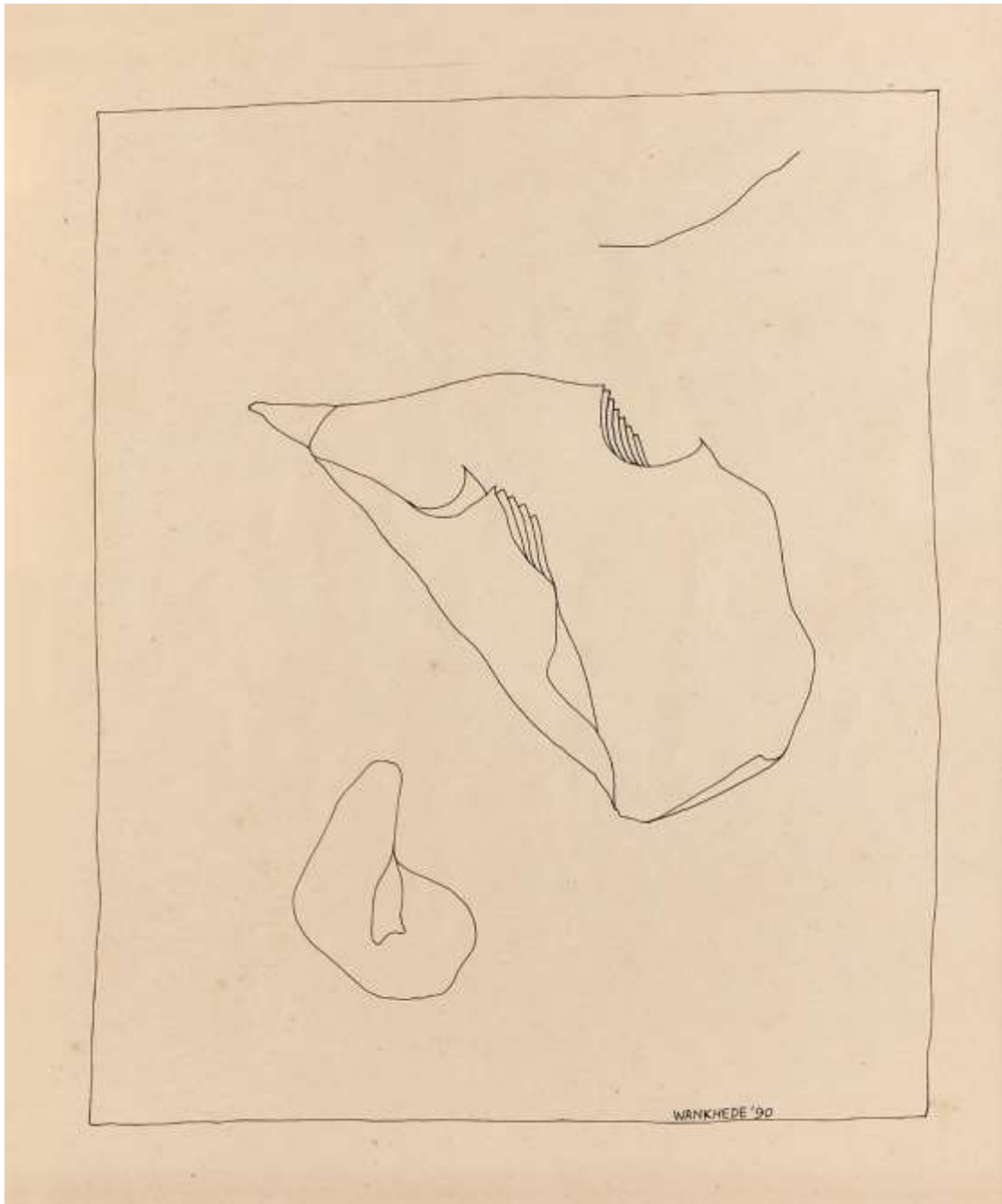
Artist | Vasant Wankhede

Title | Untitled

Medium | Drawing on paper

Size | 10 x 8 Inches

Price | INR 1 Lac



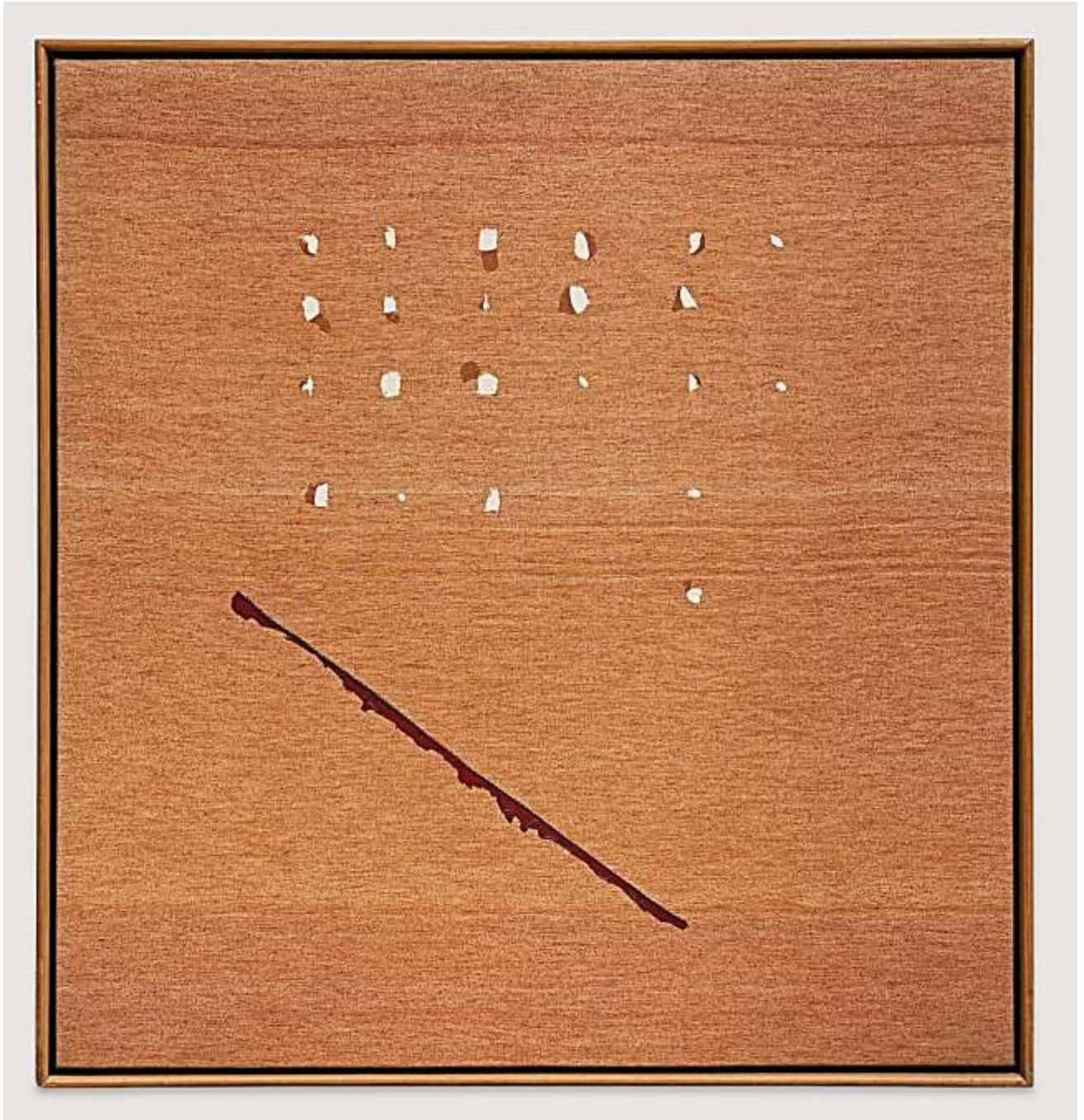
Artist | Vasant Wankhede

Title | Untitled

Medium | Drawing on paper

Size | 10 x 8 Inches

Price | INR 1 Lac



Artist | Vasant Wankhede

Title | Untitled

Medium | Fabric Collage on canvas

Size | 48 x 48 Inches

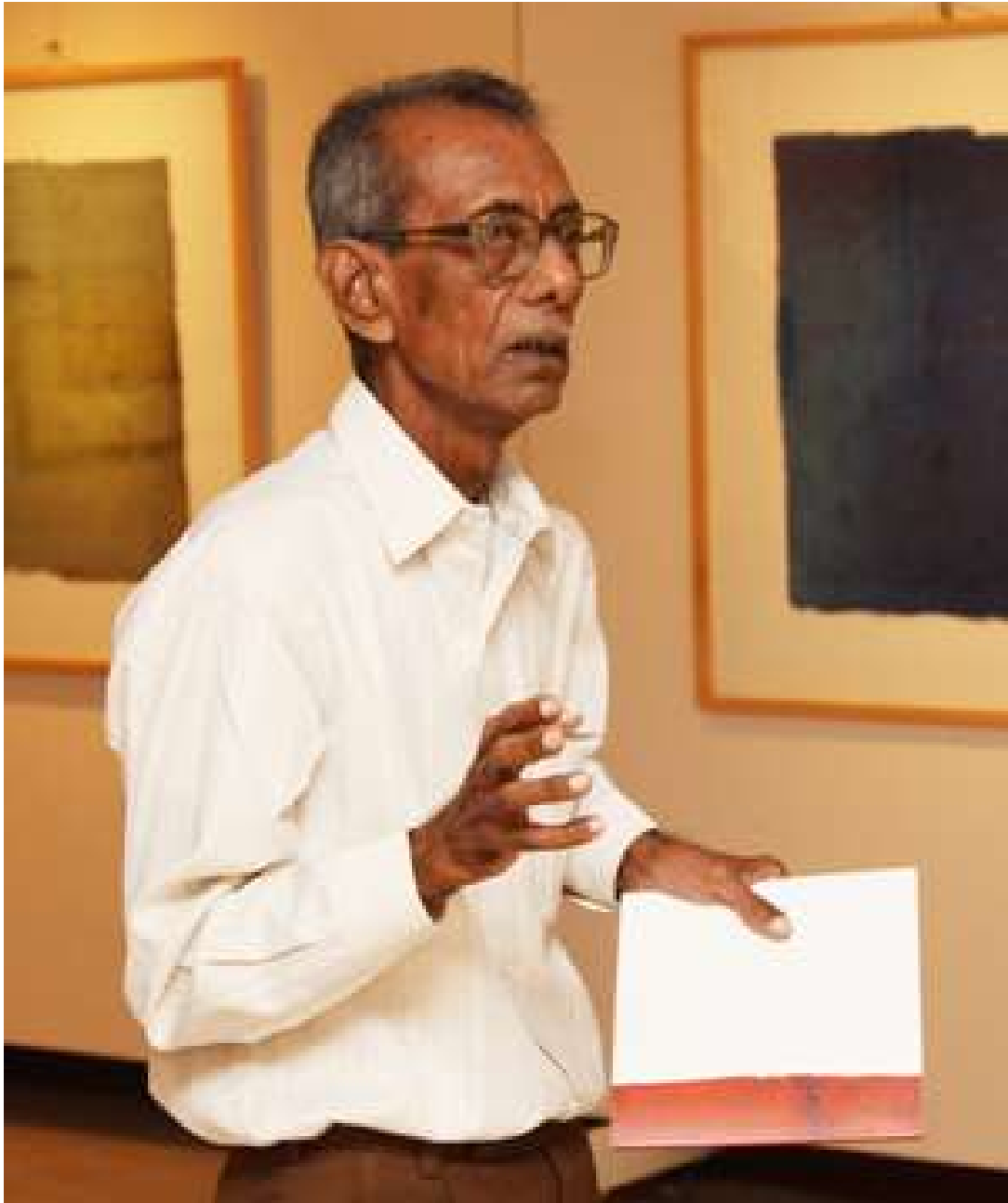
Price | INR 16 Lacs

In the words of painter Prabhakar Kolte; *'Vasant Wankhede is one of those who senses the innermost meaning of life and tries to convert it into a visual aesthetic joy without much fuss about it. He invents it in a simplistic manner, the unnoticed images stuffed into vivid materials, and boldly puts them next to silence in his pictorial space. For him art material does not exist separately and therefore whatever is accessible as a medium, he uses with aesthetic inclination.*

Wankhede has truly remained a watch tower, undisturbed for years despite the tides that have come and gone with changing time. You may not find his signature on his paintings, but such a kind of an absence speaks for the presence of the artist who has given to the paintings his eyes, his breath, his blood, his yesterday, today and tomorrow, his joy and sorrow, all and everything except his name - Vasant Wankhede - which was given to him by his parents and now once again by his paintings."

Wankhede was a keen observer; he would notice a pattern or a colour on his daughter's saree and ask her to keep it for him when she was done with the cloth for his use in his collages. These elements along with a colour palette drawn from observations and deep practice silence bring a practice together of painting that draws an inner life. In a pandemic when life is seen with much hope, discarding the cynicism of reality becomes urgent, the life of Vasant Wankhede becomes tool book to overcome the travesties of health. Jyoti Wankhede Save his daughter runs the Chitrakar Vasant Wankhede Foundation which works on the varied facets of Wankhede's life. They support upcoming artists find their place within the scene, organise film festivals and screenings for emerging film makers and make people aware about organ donation a fact that would have eased the life of Vasant Wankhede.

Jyoti Wankhede Save in conversation with Art & Soul Editorial, April 2021.



Vasant Wankhede (1936 - 2015) formed his visual vocabulary dedicated to silence in order to open an ear to the field of human vision.

Born in 1936, he studied under the tutelage of Shankar Palsikar at the Sir JJ School of Arts, Bombay from where he graduated in Painting and Drawing in 1959. He later worked at the Government Press and later at the National Films Division where he worked in the cartoon department and directed five 'Silver Lotus' winning documentaries. He had a retrospective in 1999 and a solo show with Bodhana in 2008 as well as solo with Gallery Art & Soul among the many he has had over the years at the Jehangir Art Gallery and Taj Art Gallery.

He is seen in the collection of the Museo Novecento Milan, National Gallery of Modern Art, New Delhi & Mumbai, Glenberra Art Museum, Japan and the Roopankar Museum of Fine Arts, Bharat Bhavan, Bhopal. His films with the National Film Division as Director are The Ungrateful Man, Woman: A Tribute, Siddharth, Warli Painting (The film won a National Award) 1985 and Gopal Deuskar 1988)

In his paintings one sees rags being transformed into colours, stains into aesthetic areas. Bandage not covering the wound but revealing the inner lustre of the feeling the artist has cared for. One may imagine their marks left in between some scratches, or stuck with the loose threads hanging from the contour of a pasted piece of cloth serving as a lone reminiscence. At one moment one can easily identify the material used by the artist to disclose his artistic merits, but such a state of identification does not last for long, as the same pushes further for an unusually stunning experience. It enters into a journey where one can experience the inseparability of matter and spirit inquisitively, explored by a beholder of creative impulses and keen craftsmanship.

Films :

Gopal Deuskar, 1988, Director Vasant Wankhede

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2OvisykOVL4>

Warli Art , 1985 , Director Vasant Wankhede

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uWMHlEQ6_yI

Woman : A Tribute , Director Vasant Wankhede

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=N4KgRddle5I>

Siddarth : Director Vasant Wankhede

Vasant Wankhede (1936 - 2015)

Diploma in Drawing and Painting - Sir J.J. School of Arts,
Mumbai -1959

Solo Exhibitions:

1965 - 1967-- Taj Art Gallery (Mumbai)

1969 - Pundole Art Gallery (Mumbai)

Oils on Canvas

1972 - Jehangir Art Gallery (Mumbai)

1973 - Jehangir Art Gallery (Mumbai)

1977 - Taj Art Gallery (Mumbai)

Calligraphic Collage Work

1986 - Pundole Art Gallery (Mumbai)

Calligraphic Collage Work

1990 - Pundole Art Gallery (Mumbai)

Fabric Collages

1993 - Pundole Art Gallery (Mumbai)

Fabric Collages

1999 - Birla Academy of Art and Culture

Retrospective

2008- Bodhana foundation

Group exhibition s:

1969; 1970; 1974 ;1978; 1979, 2000 and 2003

Select Participations:

1993 - " A Critical Difference" - an exhibition of
Contemporary Indian Art, touring Six cities in U.K.

Organized by Aberystwyth Art Centre and Welsh Art Council.

1996 - " Urban Signals Shifting Images " - inaugural
exhibition of the Birla Academy of Art and Culture, Mumbai

1996 - 6th Bharat Bhavan Biennale of Contemporary Indian Art,
Bhopal

1997 - 50 years of Art in Mumbai (1947 - 1997)

Organized by National Gallery of Modern Art

2004 -- "The Search" paintings from National Gallery of Modern Art at Muscat, (Oman)

2005 -" Journey 2"- Organized by Art and Soul, Mumbai

2007-" Unstretched Canvas"- inaugural exhibition of Bodhana foundation, Mumbai

2009- V.K. Wankhede: Retrospective exhibition, Organized and sponsored by Bharat Bhavan, Bhopal

2010- The Harrington Street Art Centre, Kolkata - Inaugural exhibition

FILMS:

The Ungrateful Man

Abid

Women - a tribute

Siddhartha

Warli Paintings (National Award)

Gopal Deoskar (National Award)

Awards for Recognition

1984-- Sober Lotus for Animation

(National Award)

1985 -- Deputed for Cambridge Film Festival

1986-- Silver Lotus for Direction

COLLECTIONS

National Gallery of Modern Art, New Delhi

National Gallery of Modern Art, Mumbai

Glenbarra Art Museum, Japan

Milan Museum, Italy

State Bank of India

Air India

Taj Mahal Hotel

Larsen and Toubro

IDBI

UB House

Aditya Birla Group

Skypak Couriers Ltd.

Hotel Sea Rock

Tanishq

Mustang Currimjee

Mico

H. Van Der Giessan, Holland

Ruston Hormazdiyar

Sydney Gomes

And many other Private Collections.

Gallery Art & Soul

Gallery Art & Soul, established in 2003 is a gallery of Indian modern, contemporary and decorative arts in the heart of Bombay. Founded by Dr. Tarana Kubhchandani as an extension of her activities at the Art & Soul Cancer Foundation, the gallery has pursued a discourse both within India and internationally of aesthetic syncretism producing exhibitions that are varied in genre, materiality and conceptual though across art historical timelines.

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Catalogue Raisonné compiled by Gaurav Phaterpekar for Gallery Art & Soul, Bombay, April 2021



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