

Form:Flow

by Robin Cantwell

As recorded in *I Am That*, the great Hindu spiritual teacher Nisargadatta Maharaj spoke of a non-duality that binds together the fabrics of the universe: an innate oneness that connects us all. It is in this same spirit that Amar Gallery brings together Pandit Khairnar and Parul Thacker, two Indian abstract artists that in many ways are binary in comparison - male and female, expressionistic and conceptual, non-figurative in feature and meticulously defined in detailed - but whose works synergise in the transcendental experiences they create, culminating in the very same non-duality of 'being' that Nisargadatta once visualised. Though different in all manner of material and design, the works of Khairnar and Thacker converge through the collective gaze of the viewer, their individual disciplines interconnected within a singular prism of meditative self-inquiry.

Khairnar's selection of oil on canvas are abstract evocations of luminosity; intangible memories and perceptions reminiscent of Mark Rothko's expressionist 'multiforms'. They are transformative colour fields, a style of painting that places less emphasis on gestural brushstrokes and objectivity in lieu of a more individualised context devoid of landscape and figure. However, as with many of the great artists who have mastered this particular approach to painting, to say that Khairnar's works are solely non-representational would be something of a misnomer. They are, in fact, highly representational works of the world around us; articulations of the instinctual human experience that possess their own life force. In the words of Clyfford Still, one of the leading figures of abstract expressionism, 'I never wanted colour to be colour...texture to be texture. I wanted them all to fuse together into a living spirit.'

Previous attempts at this method have often produced images that are chiefly concerned with stark contrast of pigment - one thinks of Barnett Newman's pure and vibrant juxtapositions, his thin vertical 'zips' of primary colour defining their spatial structure. However, Khairnar's use of oil paint is not simply an exercise in colour and collocation: his works are spiritually-infused explorations of light and shade, twilight and daybreak, emerging horizons and inner awakenings. Their distinctive quality lies in their atmospheric depth, shrouding the canvas in mystery. Are we looking at a panoramic vista from afar, watching the lights gently fade across the sky? Or perhaps we're being invited into Khairnar's own inner psyche, the creative powers of his subconscious expressed through plumes of haze and glow? It is this enigma of space, time and form that draws us in, the traditional points of figurative work dissolving within Khairnar's blurred lines.

Many similar expectations of form are challenged in the transdisciplinary works of Parul Thacker, a formidably-trained practitioner in embroidery and surface ornamentation. In the same way artists such as Peter Voulkos crossed the traditional divide between ceramic crafts and fine art, Thacker transforms the world of textile into a medium of aesthetic wonder, using her expertise to weave together a web of nylons, silks and precious stones that range from natural minerals found in Himalayan caves to raw crystals that, in Thacker's own words, create a 'city of light...knitted together to form a map above our terrestrial existence'. They're as sensorially rich as the paintings of Kandinsky, multilayered in their painstaking application, with each crystal and rock hand-stitched into the fabric of the piece. It is this interdimensionality between texture and space that allows Thacker to open a dialogue between painting and sculpture; through one surface flows another.

Engaged in the unorthodox, Thacker uses pigments and materials as varied as holy ash and graphite. This unique blend of material amalgamates into a collection of works that are ethereal in their geography, as captured in her series of photographs that open windows into other worlds. At times delineated in geometric structure, at others as biomorphic in shape and lattice as Joan Miró or Jean Arp, each piece communicates in its very own language. Take *The Labyrinth* for example: locked in an endless flow of gauze on linen, infused with an entire galaxy of bloodstone and pebbles, it is as if the artist is weaving her own way through the maze that she herself creates. Much like Khairnar's oil paintings, Thacker's creations are mystic colour fields of metaphysical dimension, an endless energy current of interconnected fibres: a non-duality of lifeform and soul.