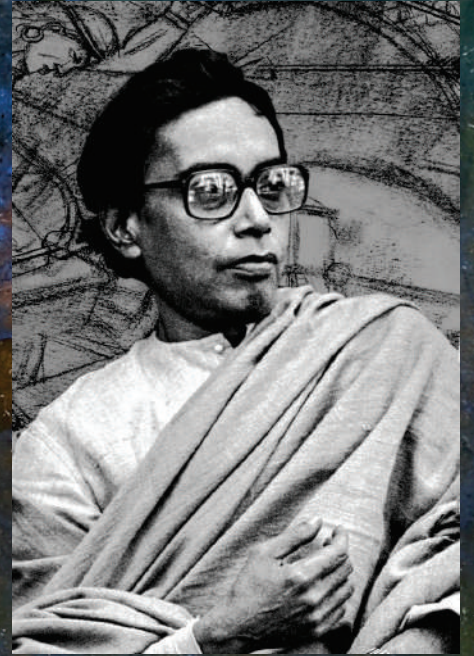


SCA
1960-2026



Commemorating the
Birth Anniversary
of
GANESH PYNE



(1937-2013)

Society of
Contemporary Artists
presents

GANESH PYNE

Selected works from private collections

Curator: Jyotirmoy Bhattacharya

B. R. PANESAR GALLERY
398 Jogendra Garden Kasba, Kolkata - 700107

Exhibition will continue till 13 June 2026, 3 - 7 p m daily

In collaboration
with



View online on
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Non-commercial exhibition



Ganesh Pyne 1937 - 2013

The unfathomable depths of the human mind can be explored through an artist's brush. Legendary artist Ganesh Pyne stands as a true testament to this statement through his paintings, serving as a mirror of his own life and experiences. His life was dominated by fantasy stories that he read as a child, losing his father when he was just nine years old, the horror of the Calcutta riots, followed by the trauma of the partition of India in 1947 – all of which formed the crux of the paintings that he created later in his life. Against this backdrop of trauma, Ganesh Pyne admittedly found some solace in the arms of his grandmother Nandarani, whose narration of folk and mystical tales to him eventually swayed his mind towards a realm of imagination that became one of the biggest inspirations for his paintings.

Ganesh Pyne completed his training as an artist at the Government College of Art and Craft in Calcutta (Kolkata) in 1959. In the initial days of his career, he worked as a book illustrator and animator at Mandar Mullick's studio, which shaped his narrative style and attention to detail. In the year 1963, Ganesh Pyne joined the Society for Contemporary Artists, which led him to work closely with other art masters like Bikash Bhattacharjee and Ganesh Haloi. A turning point in his career took place in the 1970s when the legendary artist Maqbool Fida Husain praised him by calling him the best painter India has in

modern times in an article published by a renowned magazine of the time, 'The Illustrated Weekly of India'.

As an artist, Ganesh Pyne had a widened vision where he drew inspirations not only from Indian artists like Abanindranath Tagore but also from international artists like Rembrandt, Frans Hals and Paul Klee. Apart from them, legendary animation artist Walt Disney and renowned film-makers like Federico Fellini and Ingmar Bergman also left a lasting impression on him. Ganesh Pyne's unique visual language, defined by 'poetic surrealism', set him apart from other contemporary Indian artists. Working primarily in small tempera and gouache paintings, he created haunting yet poetic images characterised by rich black or blue tones, delicate textures, and symbolic figures. His artworks often presented dark symbolisms comprising skeletal forms, mythical creatures, masks, puppets, and dreamlike characters, in order to narrate the turmoil of human life and the unending quest of the human soul to find solace.

Throughout his career, Pyne received widespread recognition in India and abroad. Notable among these were the Gagan Abani Puraskar of 1997, Abanindra Puraskar of 2004 and Raja Ravi Varma Award of 2011, which was awarded to him by the Government of Kerala. He was also bestowed with the Lifetime Achievement Award by the Indian Chamber of Commerce in 2012, thereby recognising his legacy as one of the greatest artists in the realm of Indian modern art.

Despite the awards and accolades, Ganesh Pyne lived a solitary life away from the bustling life of media and artist gatherings. He lived a very private life and refrained from holding major exhibitions. Nonetheless, his unique paintings became some of the highest-priced paintings in the art market throughout the 1980s and the 1990s and continued to be appreciated within the country and abroad until he passed away in March 2013.

To this day, this legendary figure continues to influence the artists who are mesmerised by the emotional depth of his paintings and their ability to transform one's memories and experiences into timeless works of art. Ganesh Pyne, therefore, remains one of the brightest stars in the realm of contemporary Indian art, whose legacy transcends generations of art enthusiasts.



GANESH PYNE

1937

Born in Calcutta on 11 June

1960s

Worked as an animator at Mandar Studios in Calcutta

1968

Represented India at the World Youth Festival in Prague

1970

Participated in the Paris Biennale, one of his major international appearances

1997

Received the Gagan Abani Puraskar, Visva-Bharati University

Late 1980s

Held his first major solo exhibition

2000s

Created major works inspired by the Mahabharata

2011

Honoured with the prestigious Raja Ravi Varma Award the by Government of Kerala

2013

Passed away on 12 March in Kolkata

1954

Enrolled at the Government College of Art & Craft in Calcutta

1963

Joined the Society of Contemporary Artists

1968 & 1971

Participated in the Indian Triennale exhibitions organised by the Lalit Kala Akademi in New Delhi

Late 1970s

Prasied by M. F. Husain as one of the finest painters of his generation.

1980s

Exhibited in London, Paris, Germany, and Washington DC

1998

Buddhadeb Dasgupta directed a documentary on Ganesh Pyne's life and practice, titled 'A Painter of Eloquent Silence'

2004

Awarded Abanindra Puraskar in 2004 by the Government of West Bengal

2012

Received Lifetime Achievement award from the Indian Chamber of Commerce



Curator's Note

We are celebrating the eighty-ninth birth anniversary of the renowned artist Ganesh Pyne, and it is both an honour and a privilege to present an exhibition of his artworks. The occasion offers a moment to revisit his extraordinary artistic legacy. Curating the show provides me with an opportunity to reflect on my own experience with the artist and his work. My first meeting with Ganesh Pyne came through a remarkable stroke of luck. As I was beginning my life as a curator and presenting my first show, I was introduced by Biren Kaka (Biren Das) of K.C. Das to Dr Barin Ray, who happened to be Pyne's dentist. When I expressed my wish to meet the artist, Dr Ray kindly arranged a visit to his studio.

The memory remains vivid. As I stepped into the studio, I found Pyne at work, carefully painting the graceful form of a swan. To witness him painting in real time was an extraordinary experience, although at that stage of my life, I had not yet developed the eye to fully appreciate the depth and complexity of his art. It was only with time that I came to understand the magnitude of his achievement, the mastery hidden within subtle details, the quiet intensity of his imagery, and the profound emotional and philosophical layers embedded within his works. I was fortunate enough to flip through his personal diaries and sketchbooks. The opportunity to work on the publication "Priya Lalu, Iti Ganesh: Postcards from Ganesh Pyne to Lalu Prasad Shaw (1958–1968)" offered an intimate glimpse into a lesser-known aspect of the artist's life. These postcards were far more than correspondence; they were visual conversations, each carrying illustrations that reflected the ideas, humour, and artistic exchanges between two young artists. Through them, one witnesses Pyne as a student, navigating that crucial transitional period when an artist is still searching for a distinctive voice and language.

His journey reveals how deeply rooted he was in History and Sanskrit. However, Pyne never abandoned his Bengali identity; rather, he embraced it with remarkable conviction. The consciousness of being Bengali permeates his art. Through a unique synthesis of philosophy, memory and modernist sensibilities, he created a visual language entirely his own. Within his works, one may identify the plays of light that one finds in artists such as Paul Klee and Rembrandt, yet Pyne's artistic vision remains unmistakably personal and deeply grounded in the cultural landscape of Bengal. His artistry cannot be confined to a few words. Whether in his tempera paintings, pen-and-ink drawings, or watercolours, there is a constant spirit of experimentation and discovery. His studio seemed less a workspace and more an artistic laboratory, a place where ideas, materials, and techniques were continuously tested and transformed. For an artist of his generation, this level of introspection and sustained experimentation was revolutionary. His practice possessed an almost meditative quality, driven by a lifelong pursuit of artistic truth. There are moments when Pyne's works evoke for me memories of standing before the reliefs of Angkor Wat in Cambodia, where scenes from the Kurukshetra unfold across ancient stone walls. His images possess a similar sense of timelessness and layered narrative. Looking at his art has never been a passive act; it has always demanded contemplation and understanding.

One work that remains especially unforgettable is his portrayal of Chaitanya Mahaprabhu. Rather than merely depicting a historical figure, Pyne captures an essence, an embodiment of spiritual awakening, devotion, and philosophical depth. In doing so, he achieves something rare. He transforms portraiture into a profound meditation on Bengal's cultural and spiritual heritage. The works presented in this exhibition carry that same essence. Alongside his paintings, the exhibition also highlights his illustrations, offering insight into an important formative period of his life. These drawings and watercolours reveal an artist in transition, a young practitioner driven not by materials or circumstance but by an irrepressible need to create. They remind us that artistic practice begins not with perfection but with persistence. An idea finds its way onto whatever surface is available; the medium becomes secondary to the impulse to express.

These early works reveal the innocence of beginnings and the gradual evolution of an artistic vision. They show how sustained practice shapes an artist over time, allowing the artist within to emerge fully. In the scratches of Ganesh Pyne's works, that journey has resulted in one of the most distinctive and influential artistic voices, spreading from the narrow alleys of North Kolkata to the different corners of the World.

- Jyotirmoy Bhattacharya

Ganesh Pyne Unframed

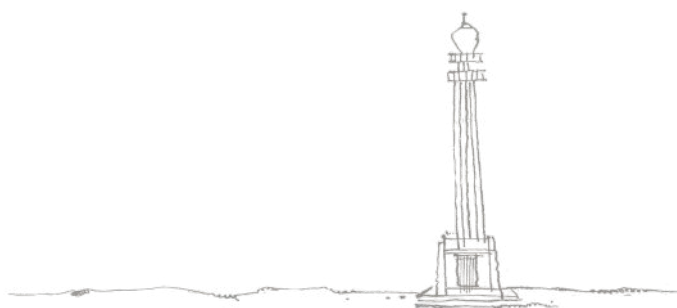
This exhibition offers a rare, intimate encounter with Ganesh Pyne, presenting the master “unframed” through a remarkable private collection. Moving beyond the pristine, singular masterpieces conventionally celebrated on museum walls—though a few true masterpieces are indeed anchored here—this curation brings together the vital paraphernalia of his daily creative life: preparatory sketches, spontaneous ink drawings, children’s book illustrations, and technical colour swatches.

By foregrounding these raw materials alongside finished works, the exhibition marks a crucial conceptual shift in institutional curating—redefining the “collectible” not merely as a finished luxury object, but as the expansive, archival trail of an artist’s lifelong practice. For art historians, such a collection provides an indispensable goldmine. It validates the evolutionary mechanics of creation, demonstrating that an artist’s true legacy resides as much in the tentative grid lines of a hand-ruled tempera colour palette sheet as it does in a final canvas.

Crucially, this collection also showcases Pyne as a generous and deeply engaged collaborator, highlighting his creative dialogues with other pioneering thinkers and creators of his time, such as Anjan Sen and Debiprasad Bandyopadhyay. These exchanges reveal how fluidly his visual language intersected with literature, poetry, and broader intellectual movements.

Yet, what remains profoundly striking across this vast, material versatility is the sheer, unyielding strength of Pyne’s artistic vision. Whether encountering a dense, philosophically annotated ink study titled *Durga*, or a hauntingly shadowed, untitled architectural streetscape from 1964, his unmistakable signature is etched into every stroke. The characteristic twilight mood, the fine, rhythmic cross-hatching, and the deep dialogue with myth and urban alienation are present even in his most casual margins. By dismantling the rigid boundaries between the preparatory and the permanent, this exhibition does not diminish the myth of the master; rather, it humanizes his genius, proving that for a true visionary, no scrap of paper is ever ordinary.

- Sujaan Mukherjee





Portrait of Mrs. Meera Pyne
Mixed Media on Paper
8.2 x 6 cm
1996

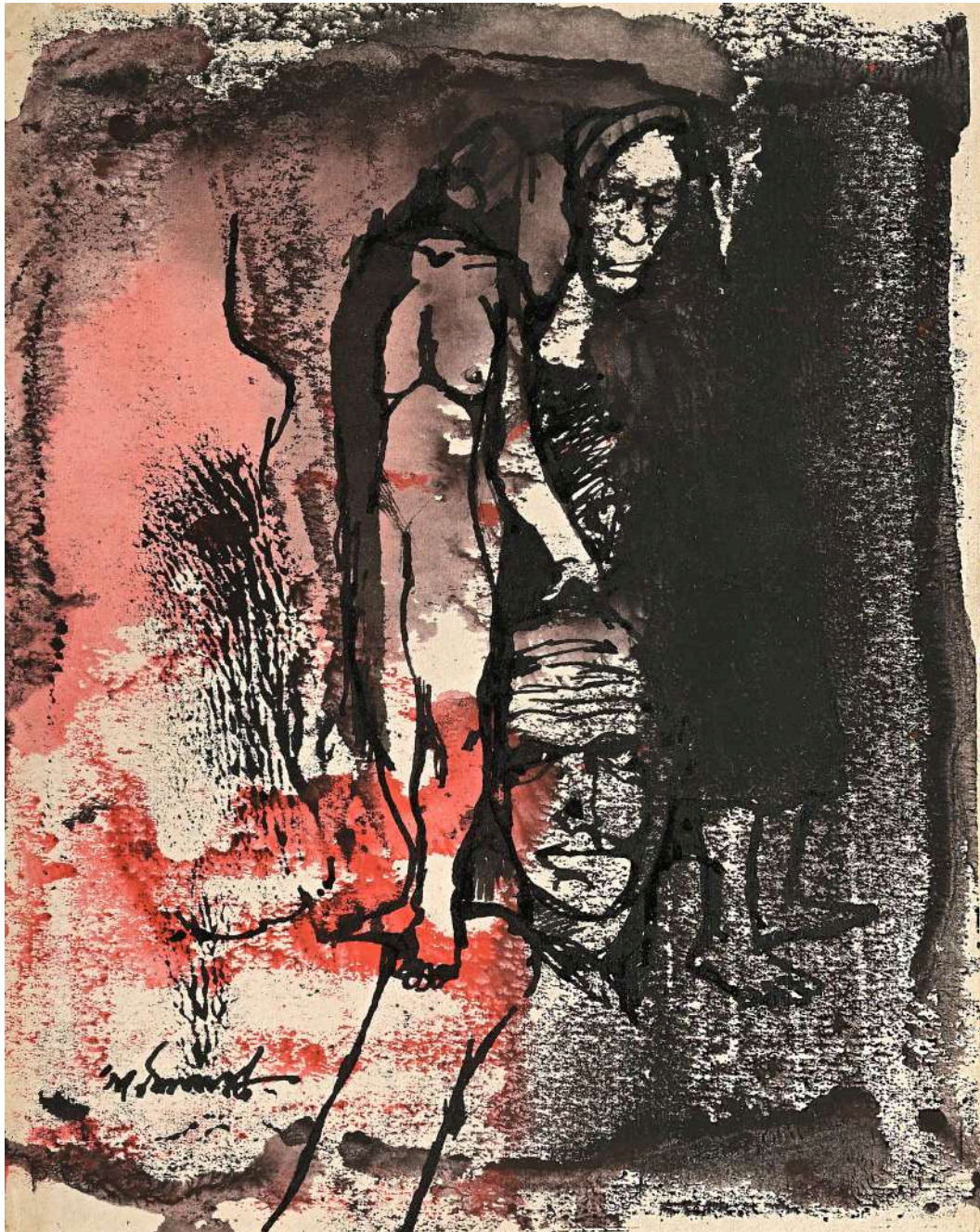


Monkey

Tempera on Board Paper

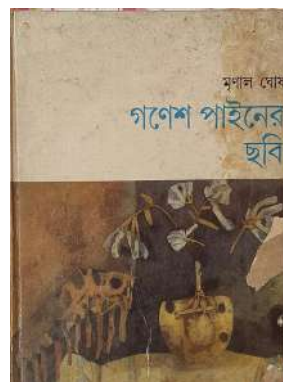
12.5 x 18 cm

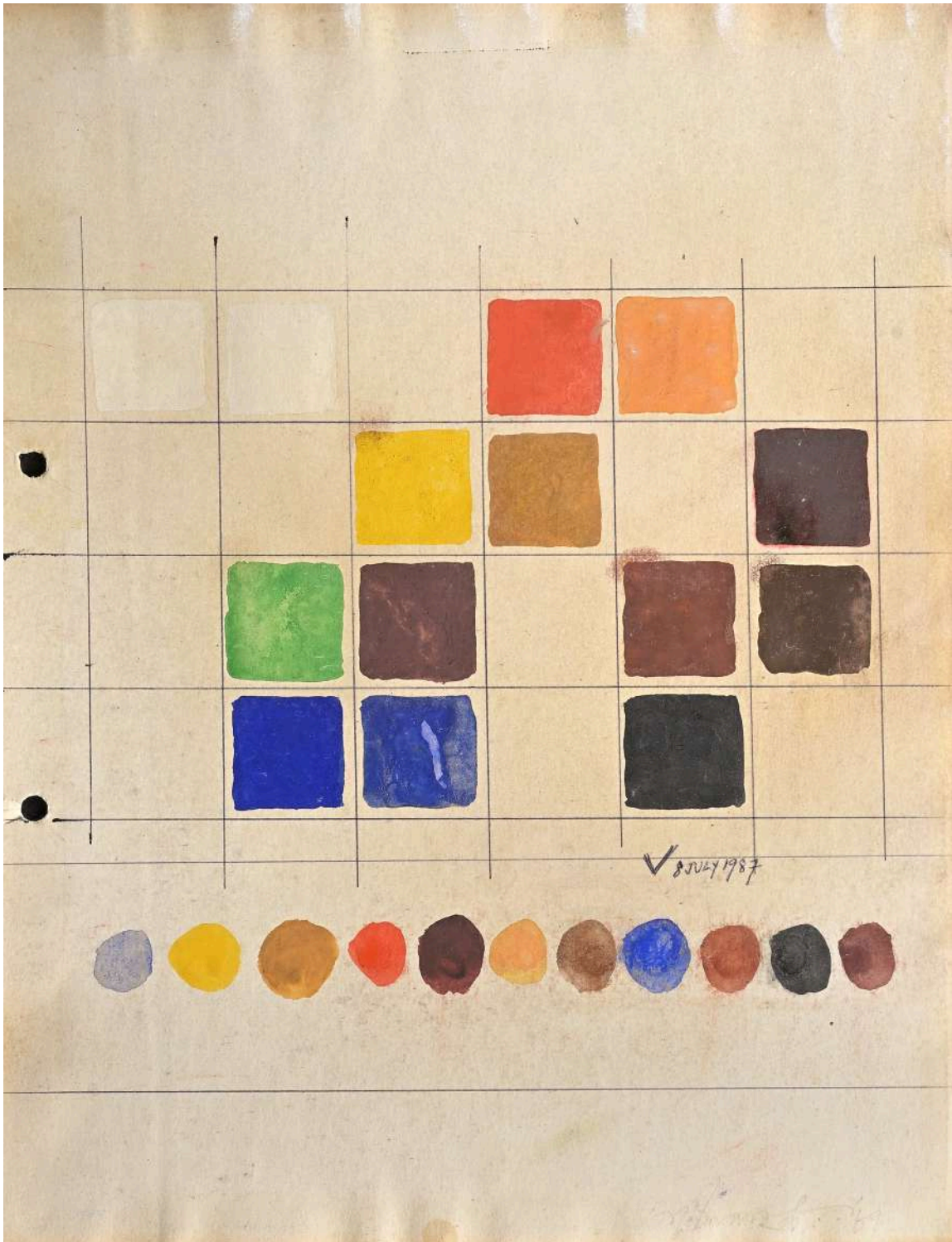
1958



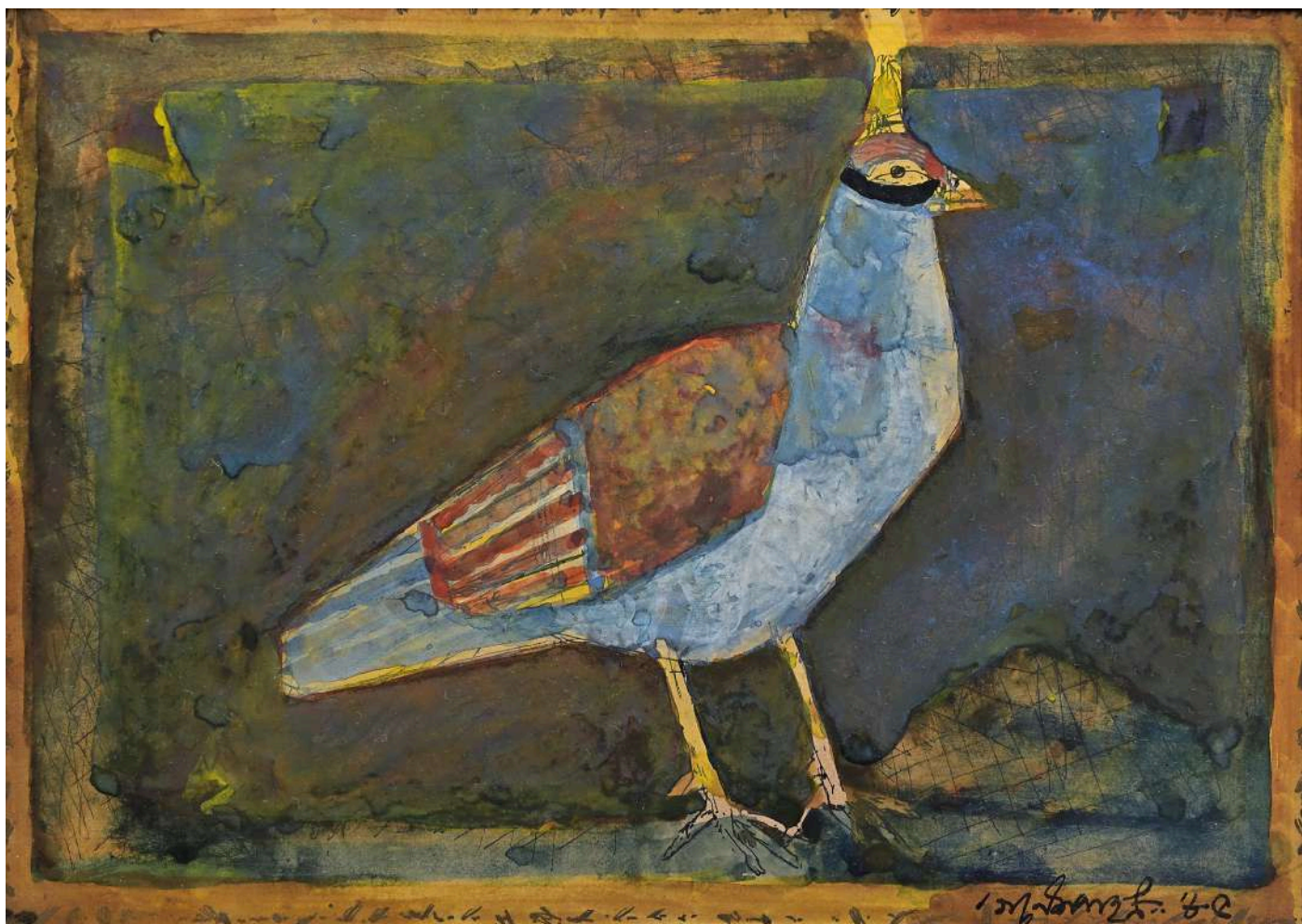
Untitled
Watercolour and Ink on Paper
15 x 19.3 cm
1962-1963

Published in the book titled
'Ganesh Payner Chobi'
By Mrinal Ghosh

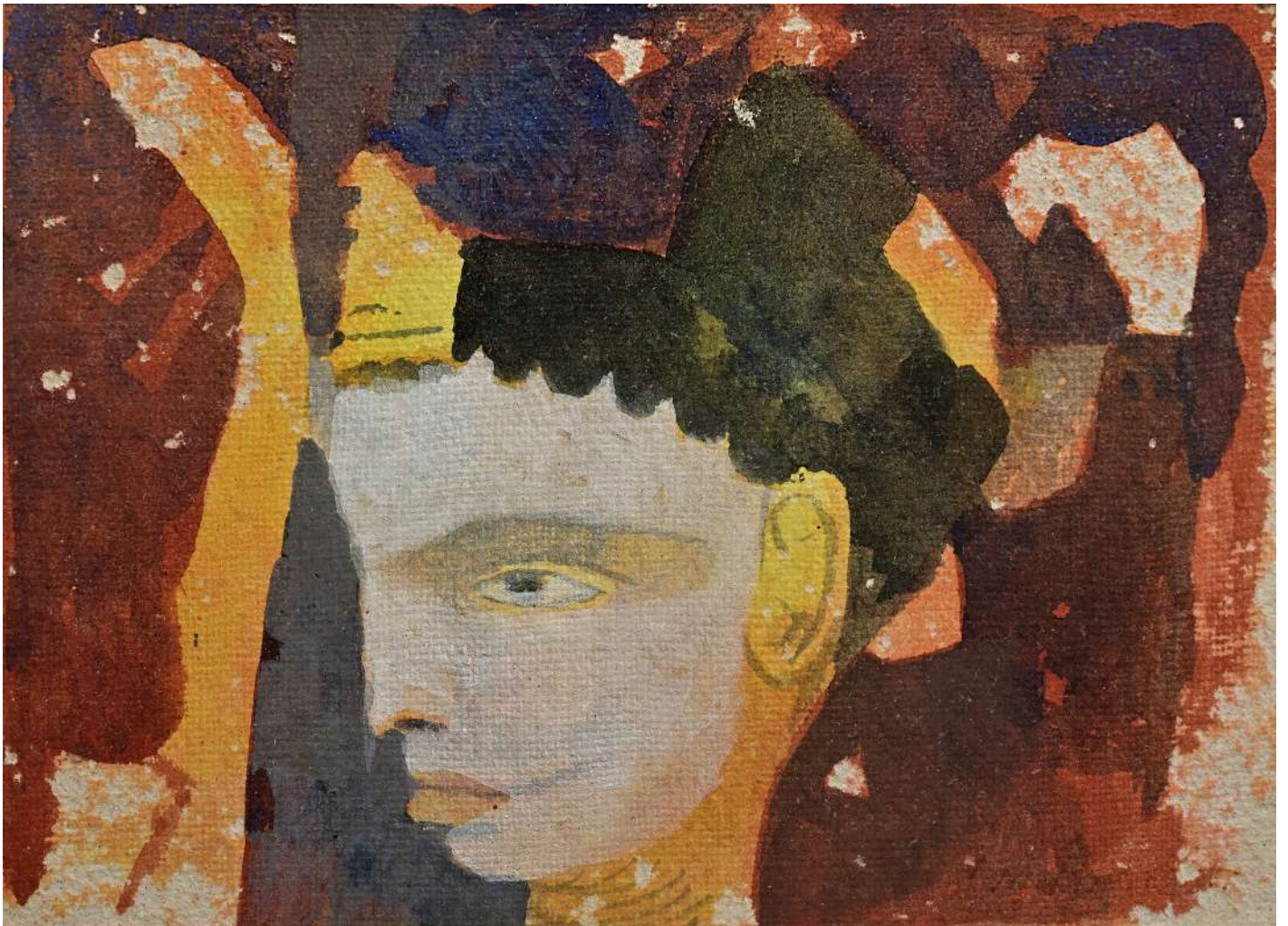




Ganesh Pyne's Colour Palette
Tempera on Paper
21.1 x 28 cm
1987



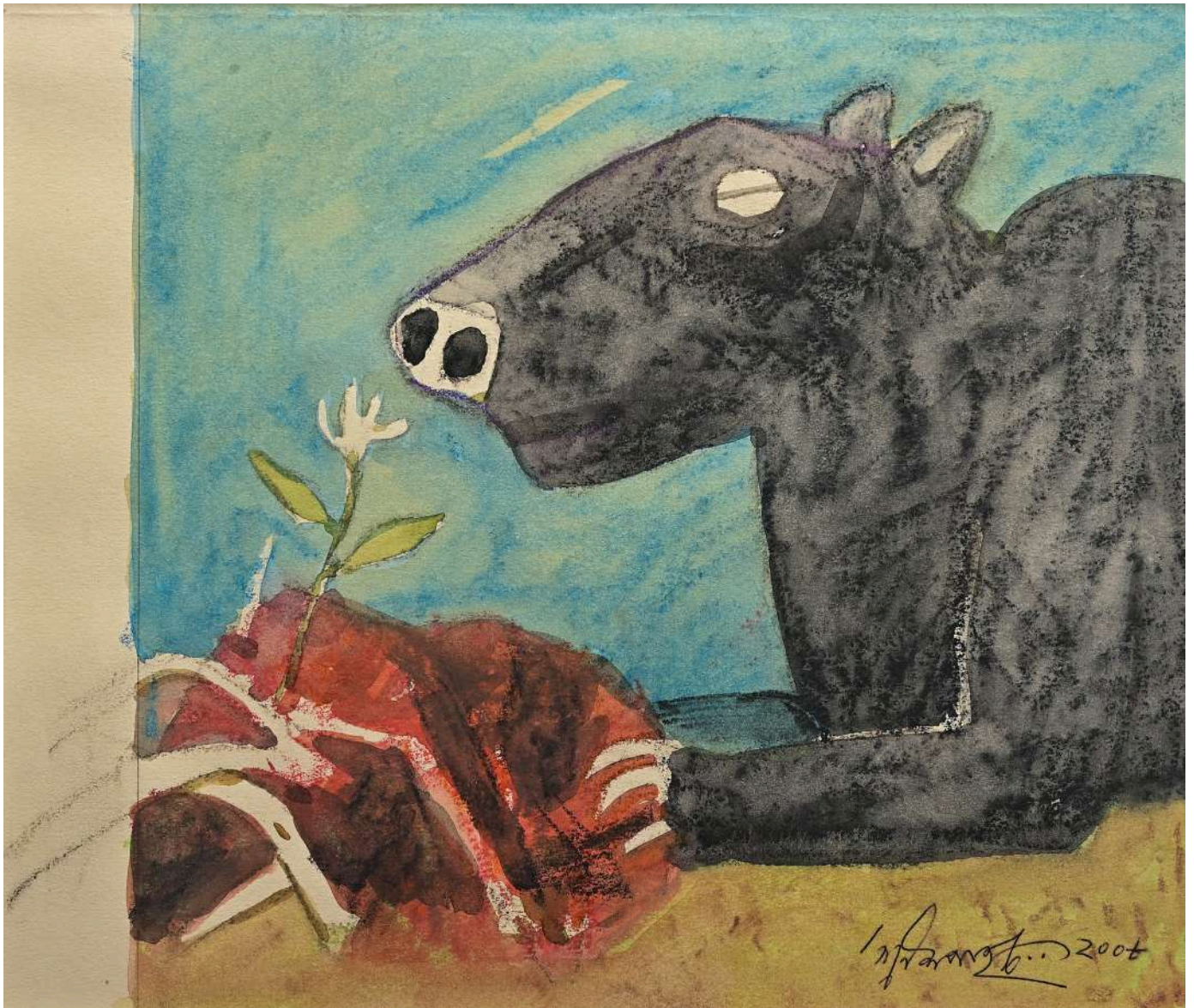
Peahen
Tempera on Paper
17.7 x 12.3 cms
1985



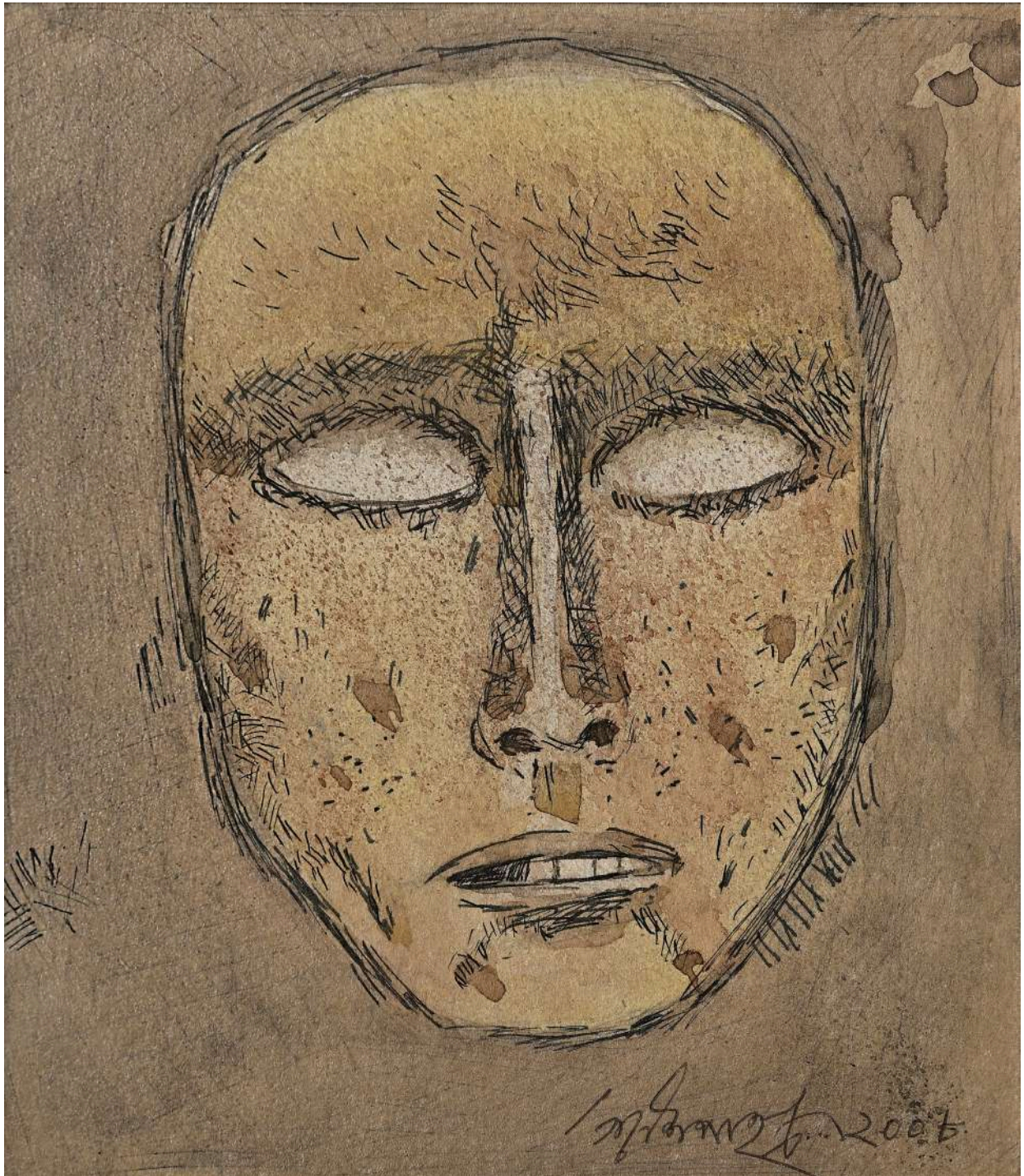
Queen
Tempera on Paper
10 x 13.6 cm



Untitled
Watercolour on Paper
10 x 15 cm
1964



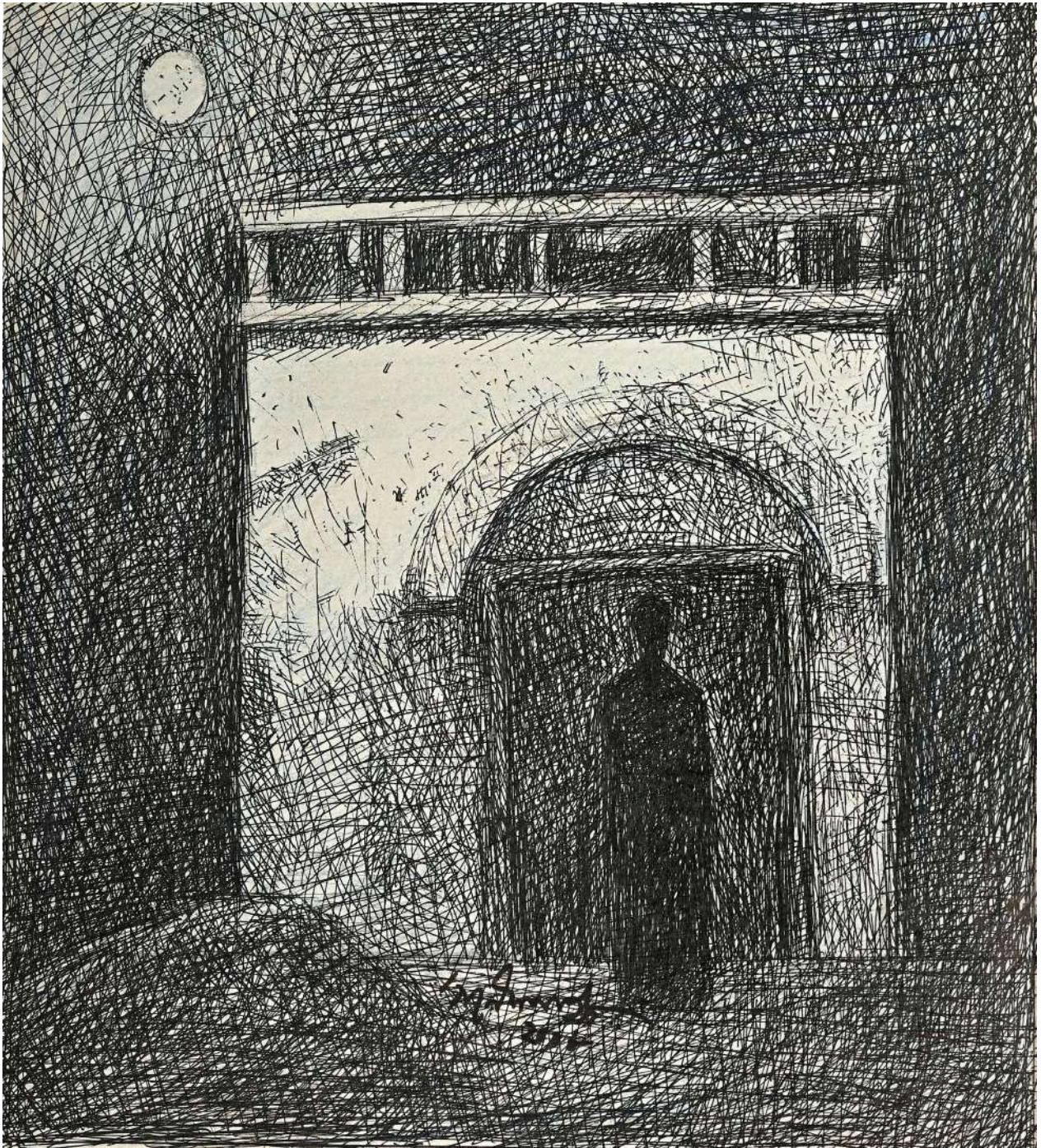
The Animal
Pen, Ink and Crayon on Paper
22.6 x 25.5 cm
2008



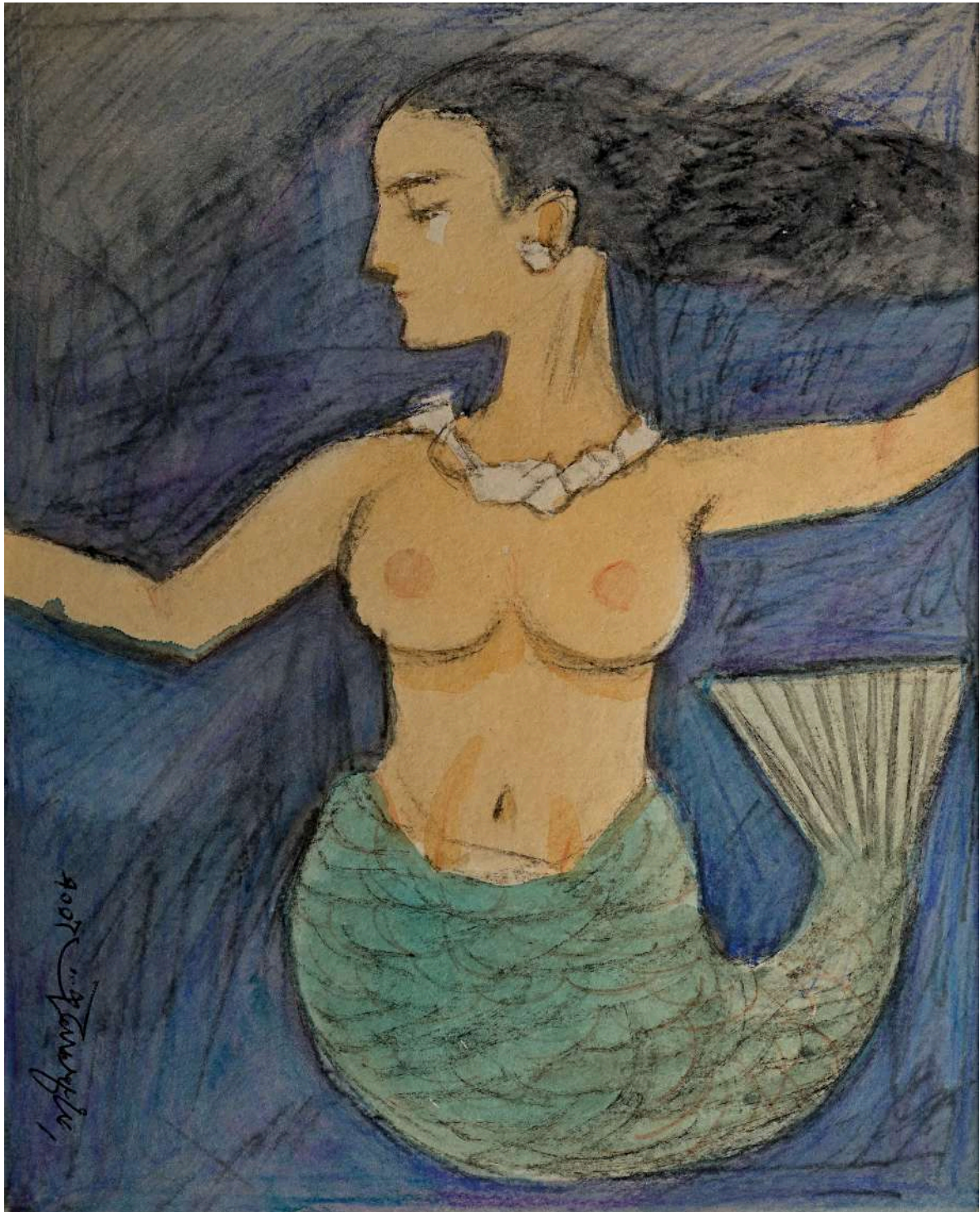
Untitled
Mixed Media on Paper
15.1 x 18.1 cm
2008



Untitled
Mixed Media on Paper
15.8 x 15.3 cm
2008



The Night
Pen, Ink and Crayon on Paper
23 x 25.1 cm
2008

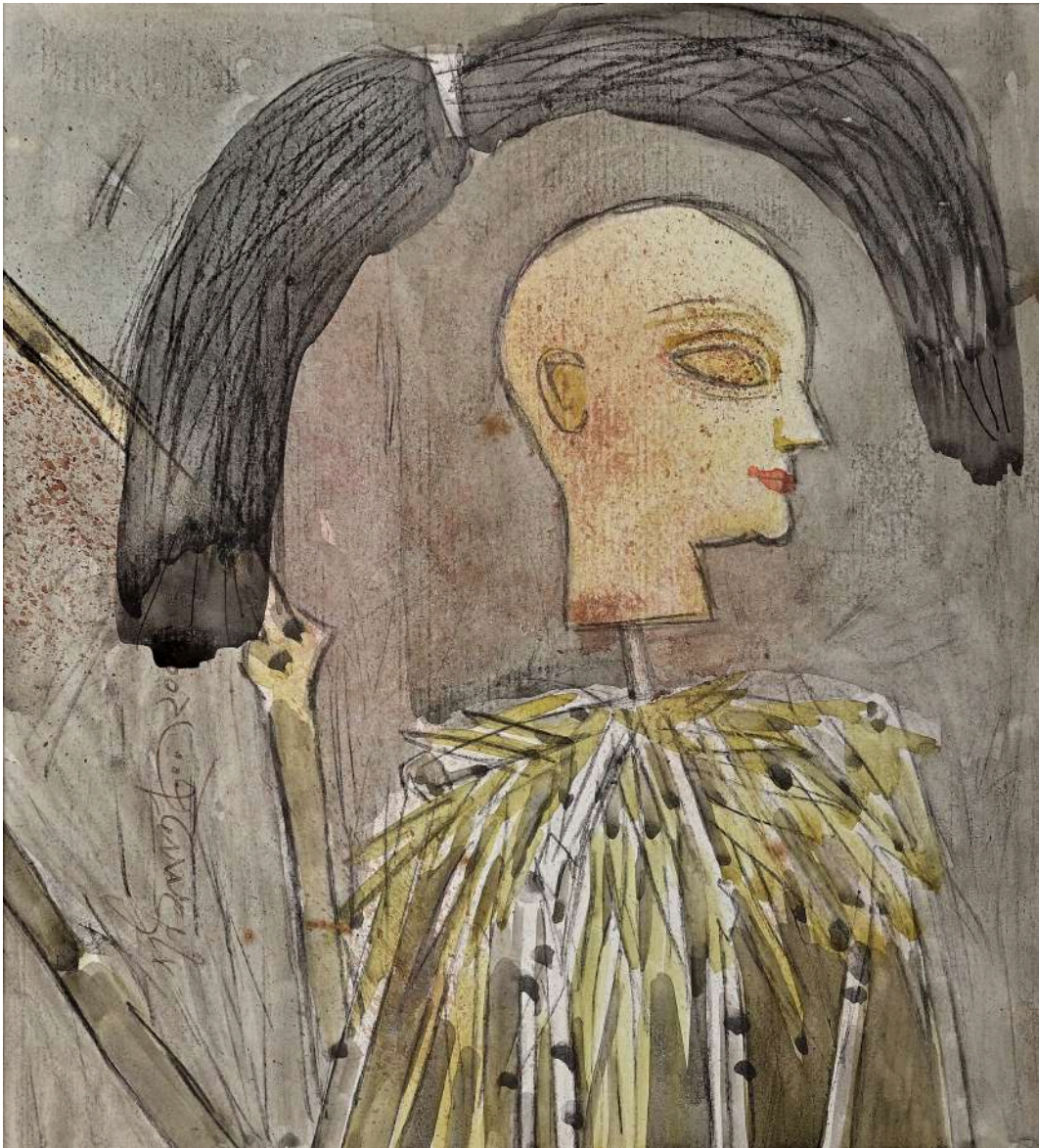


Mermaid

Pen, Ink and Crayon on Paper

20.8 x 25.4 cm

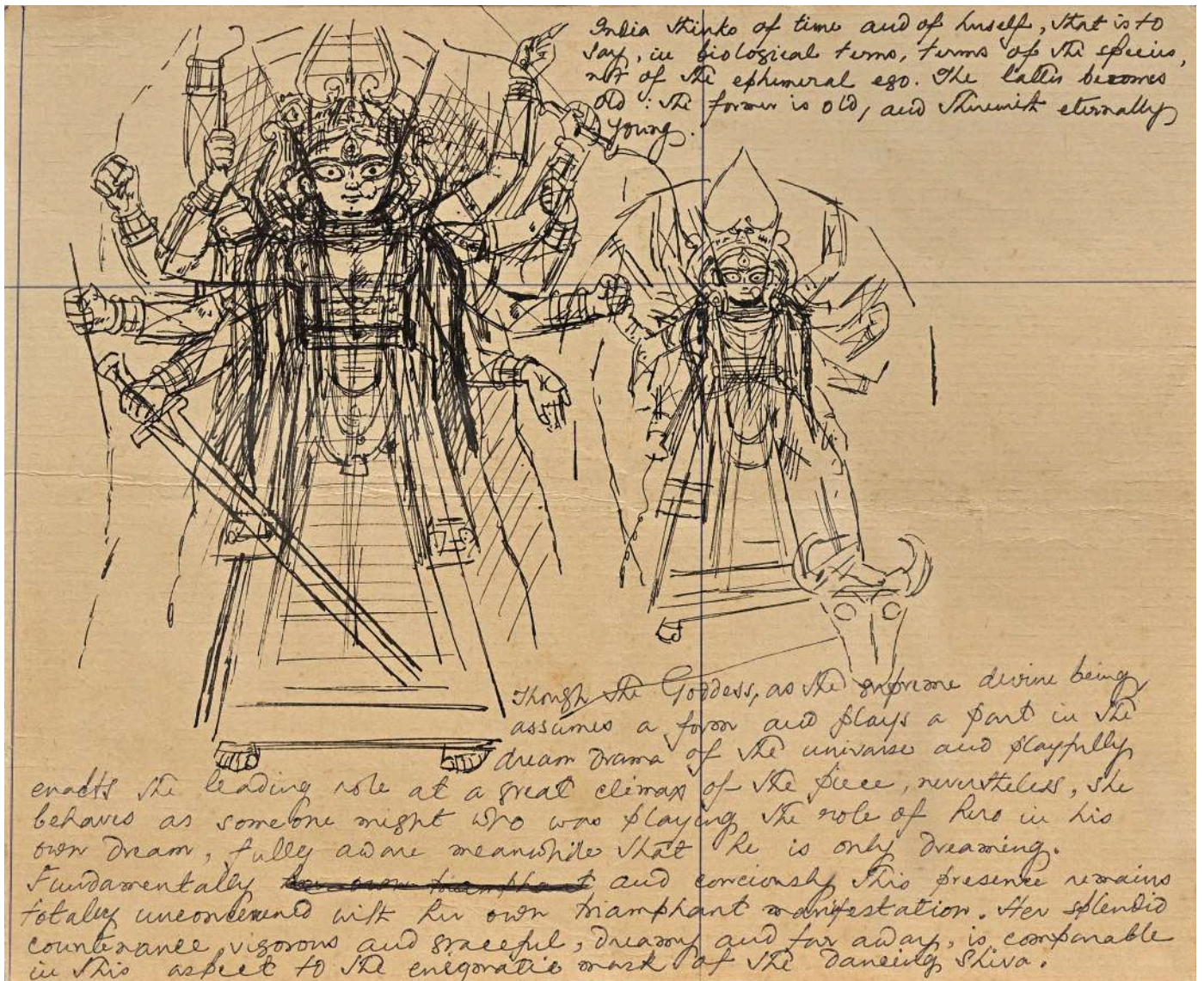
2008



Untitled
Mixed Media on Paper
17.4 x 19.3 cm
2000



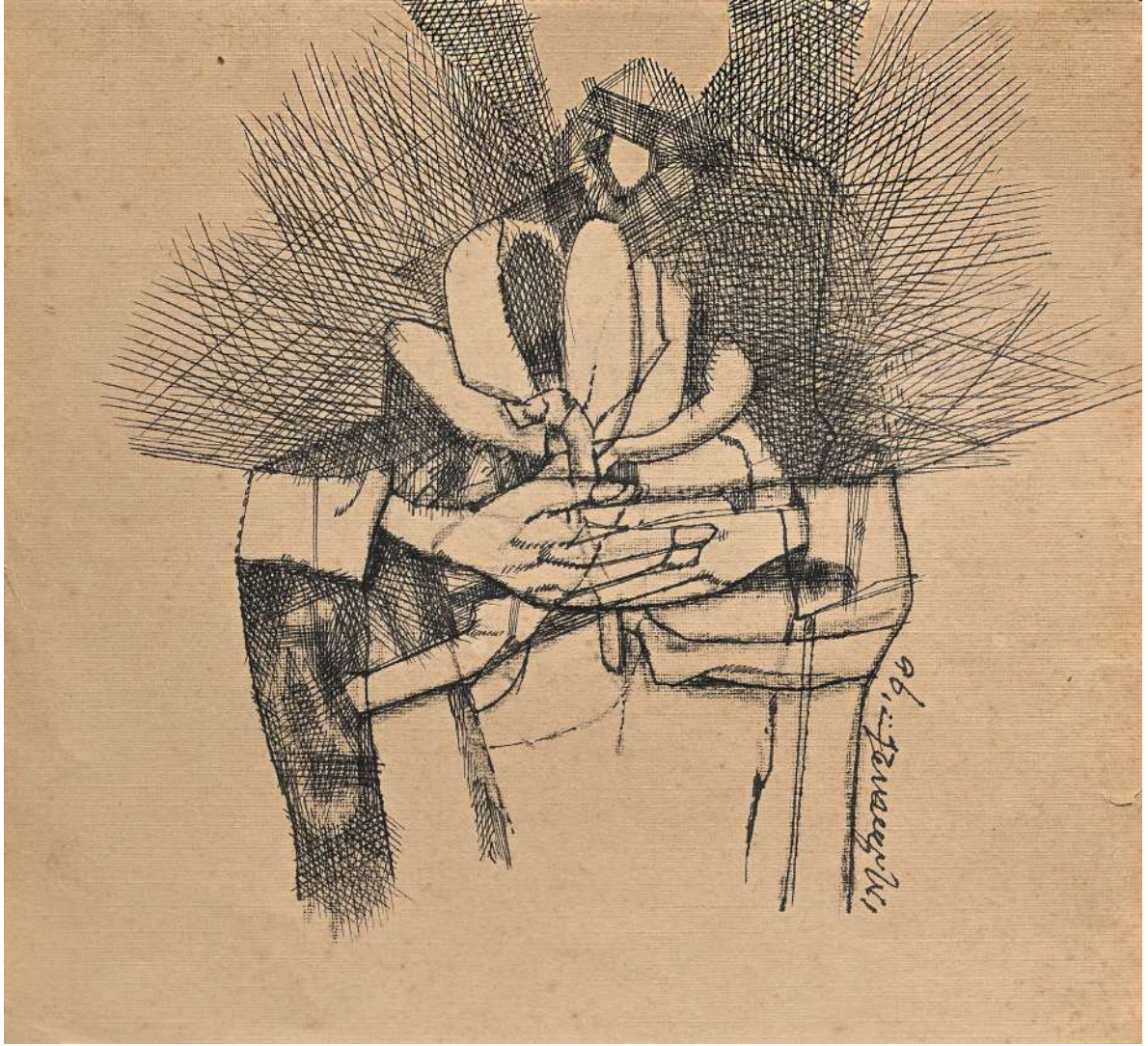
Untitled
Conte on Paper
34.9 x 33.7 cm
2008



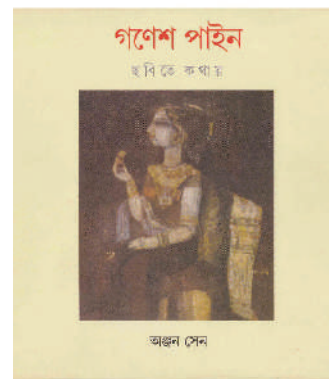
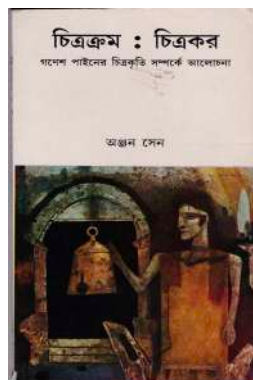
Durga

Pen, Ink on Paper

15.9 x 19.9 cm



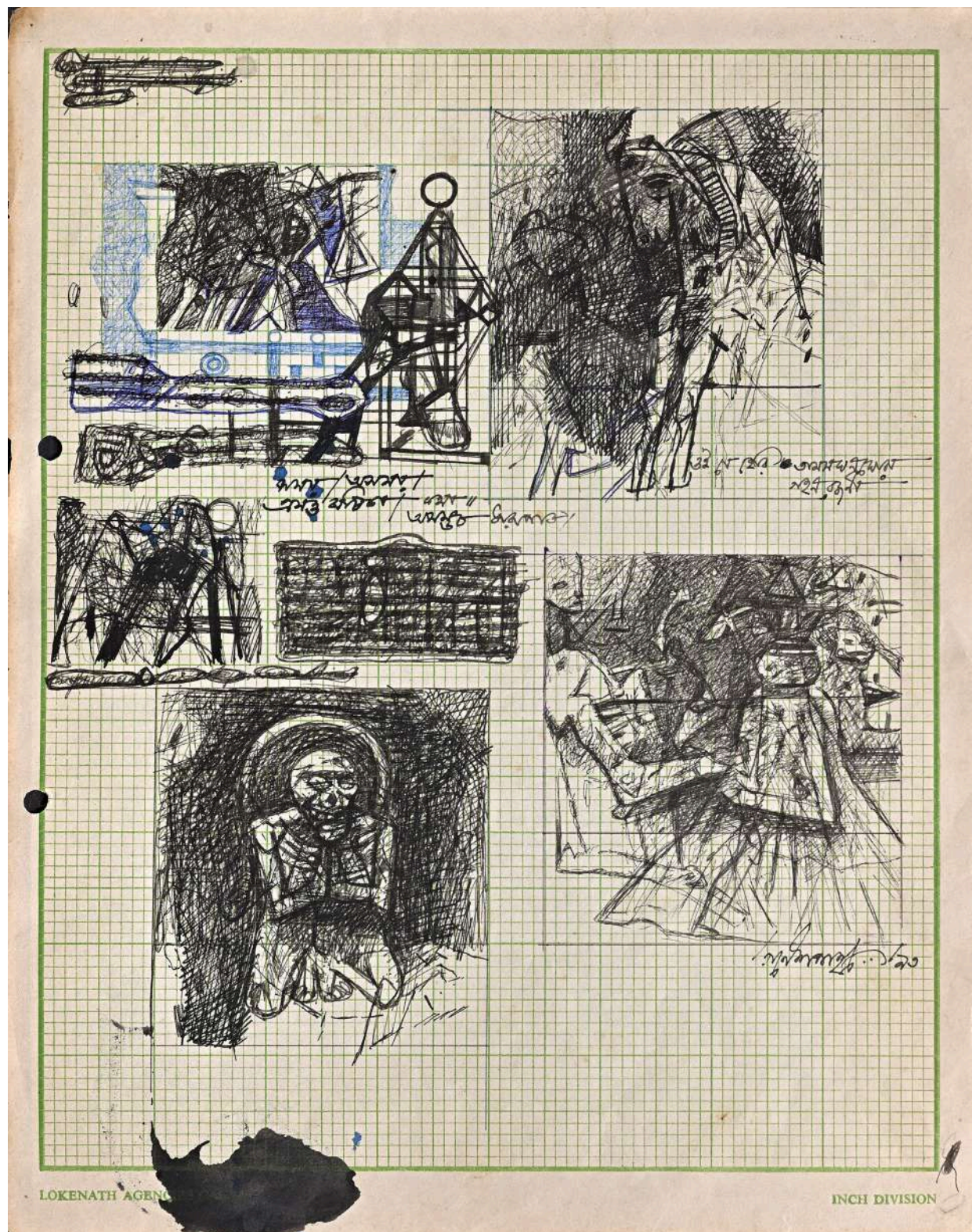
“Rekha Ma Dasere Money” Madhusudan Duttar Kabitar Chitrangan
Pen, Ink on Paper
17.5 x 19.3 cm
1978



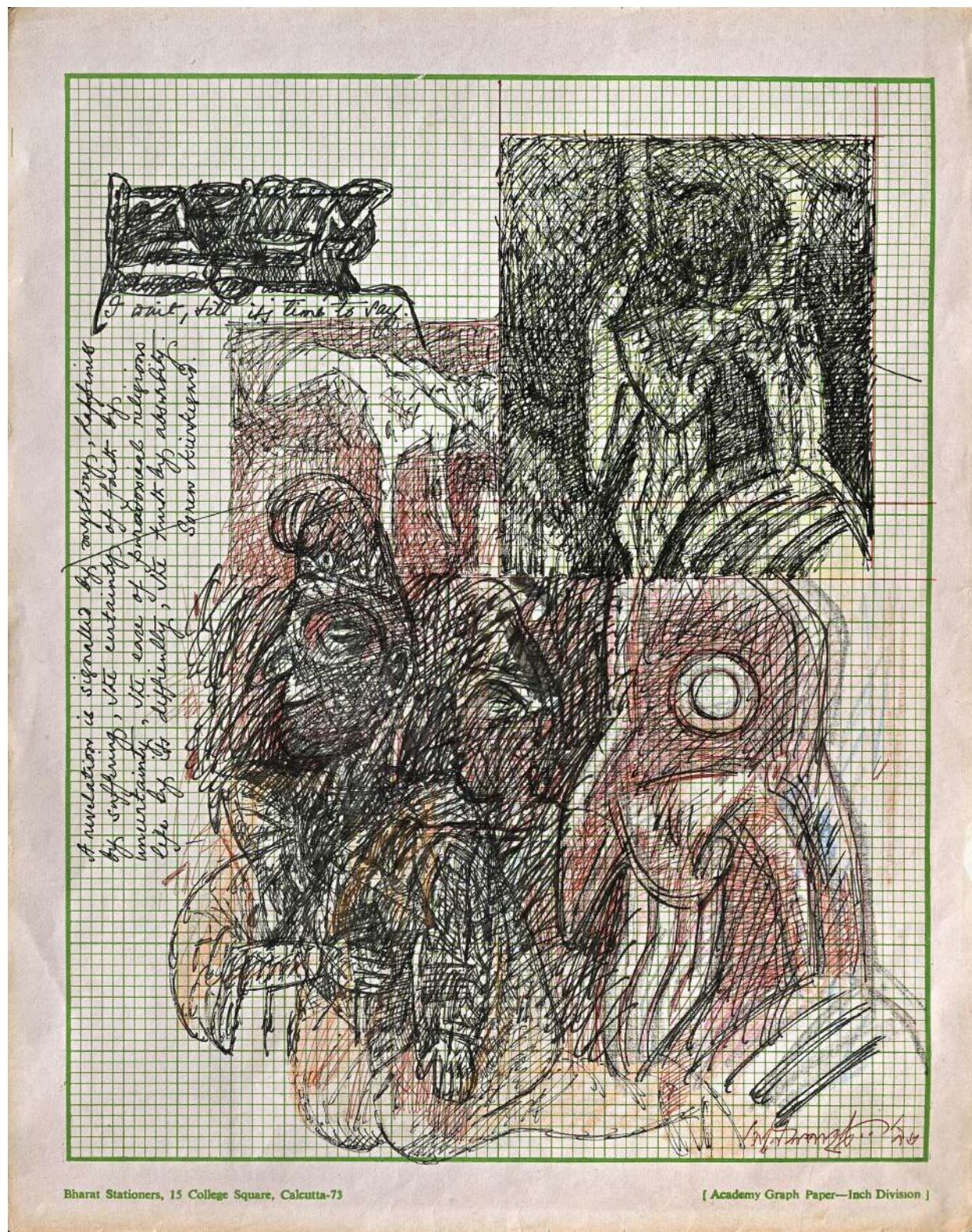
Published in the books by Anjan Sen, titled
'Chitrakram : Chitrakar Ganesh Pyne Chitrakriti Somporke Alochona'
& 'Ganesh Pyne Chhabite Kathay'



Untitled
Pen, Ink on Graph Paper
27.9 x 22.3 cm
1992



Untitled
Pen, Ink on Graph Paper
27.9 x 22 cm
1993

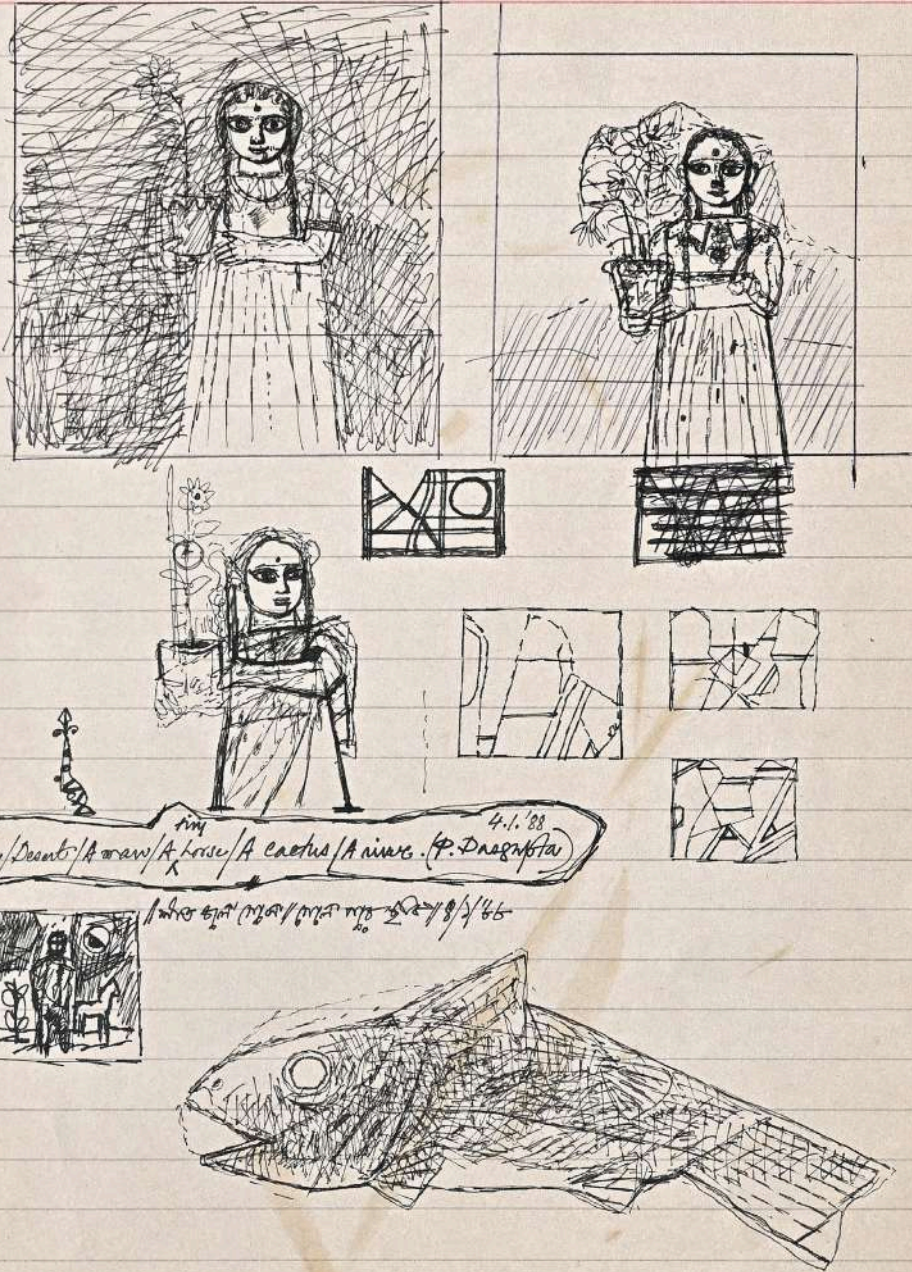


Bharat Stationers, 15 College Square, Calcutta-73

[Academy Graph Paper—Inch Division]

Untitled
Pen, Ink on Graph Paper
28.9 x 23.1 cm
1996

If you want something important to be seen, you must not only satisfy reason, you must move the heart also. Mahatma Gandhi.



Untitled
Ink on Paper
27 x 20.9 cm
1988

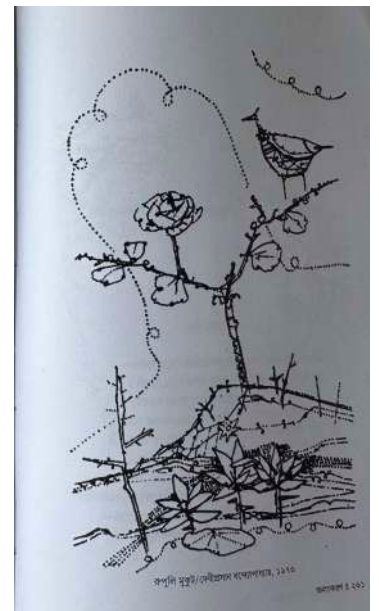


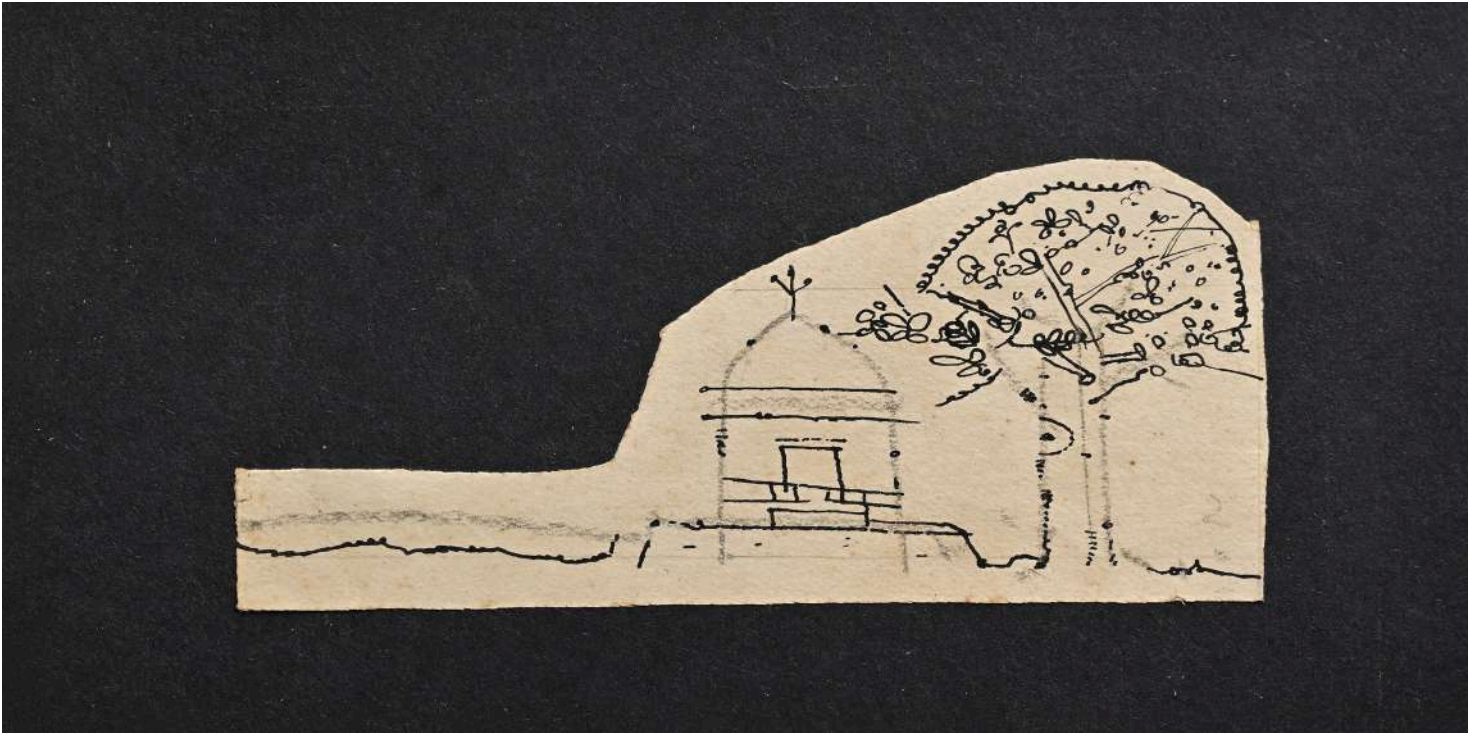
Krishna
Ink on Paper
17.2 x 22.3 cm
1984



Illustration for Roopoli Mukut
Ink on Paper
16.7 x 21.2 cm
1976

Published in the book titled
'Roopoli Mukut'
by Debiprasad Bandopaddhay

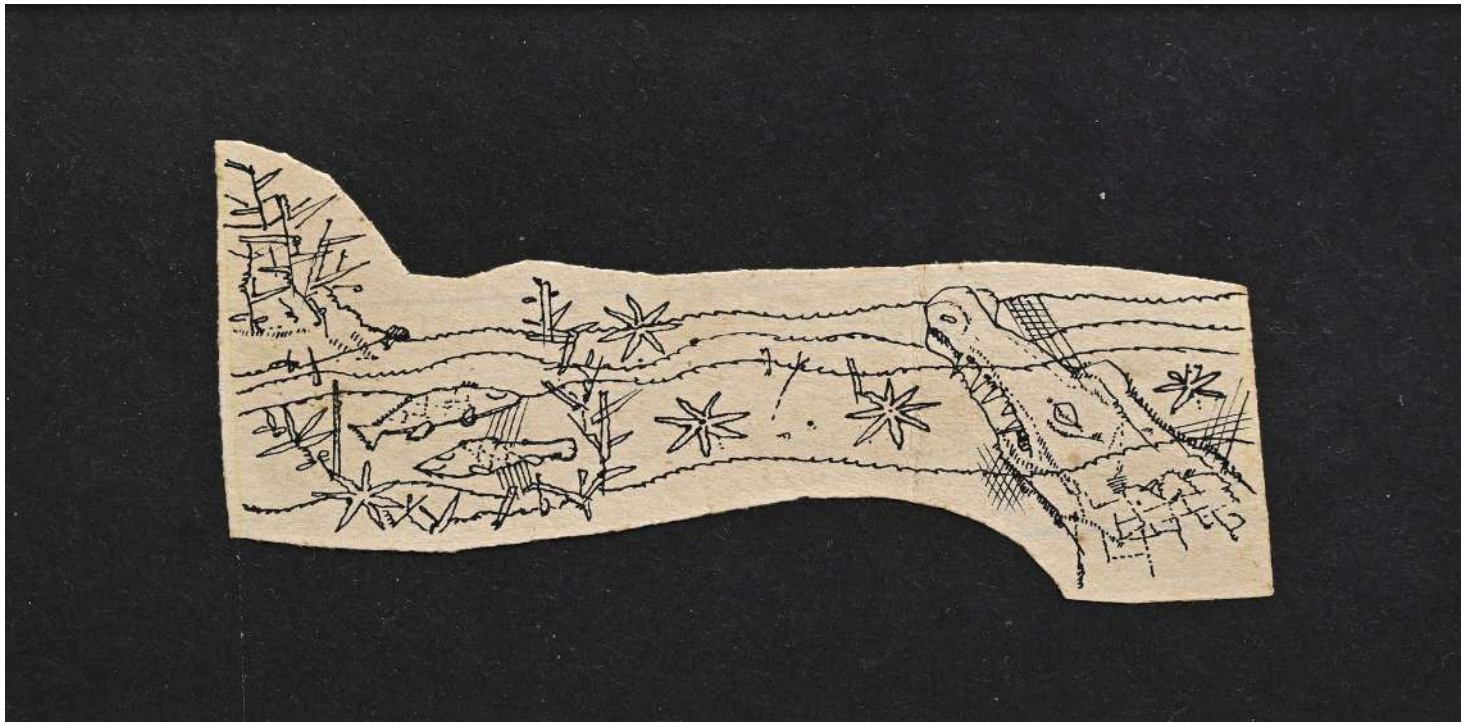




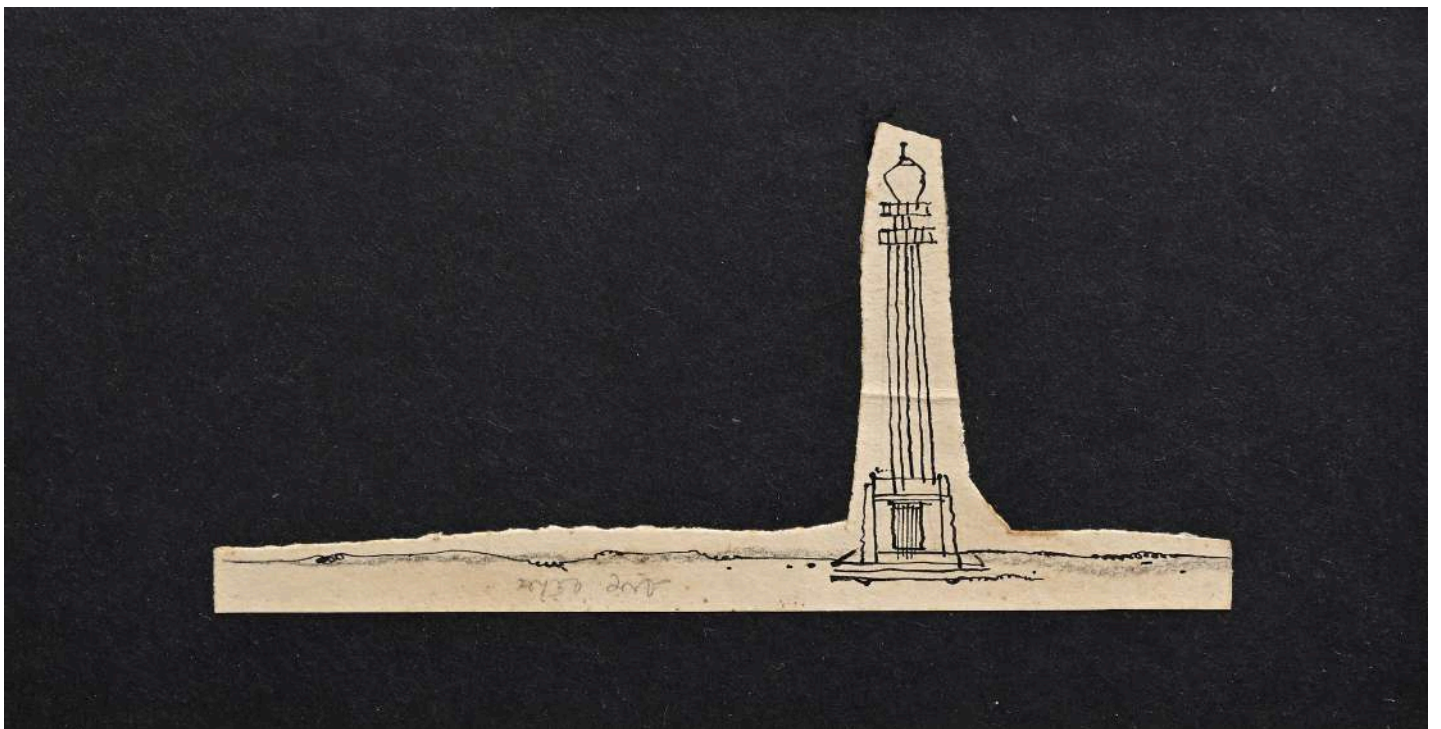
Untitled, Ink on Paper, 5.4 x 12.5 cm



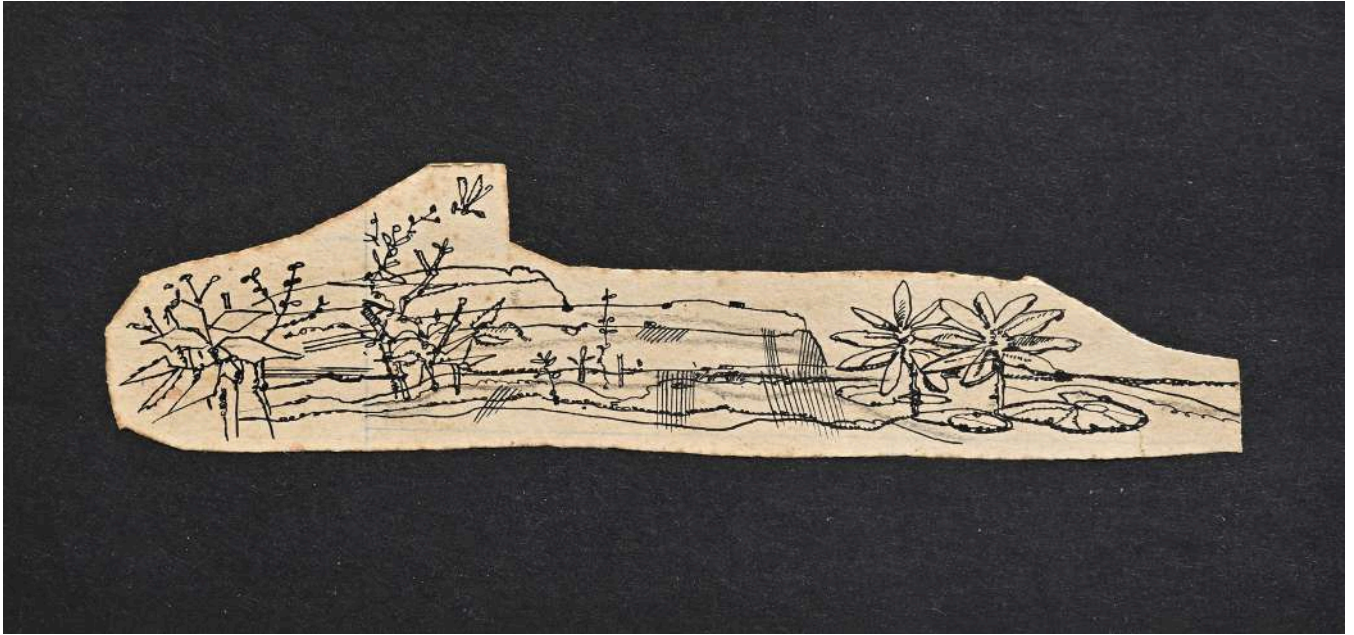
Untitled, Ink on Paper, 12.7 x 4.5 cm



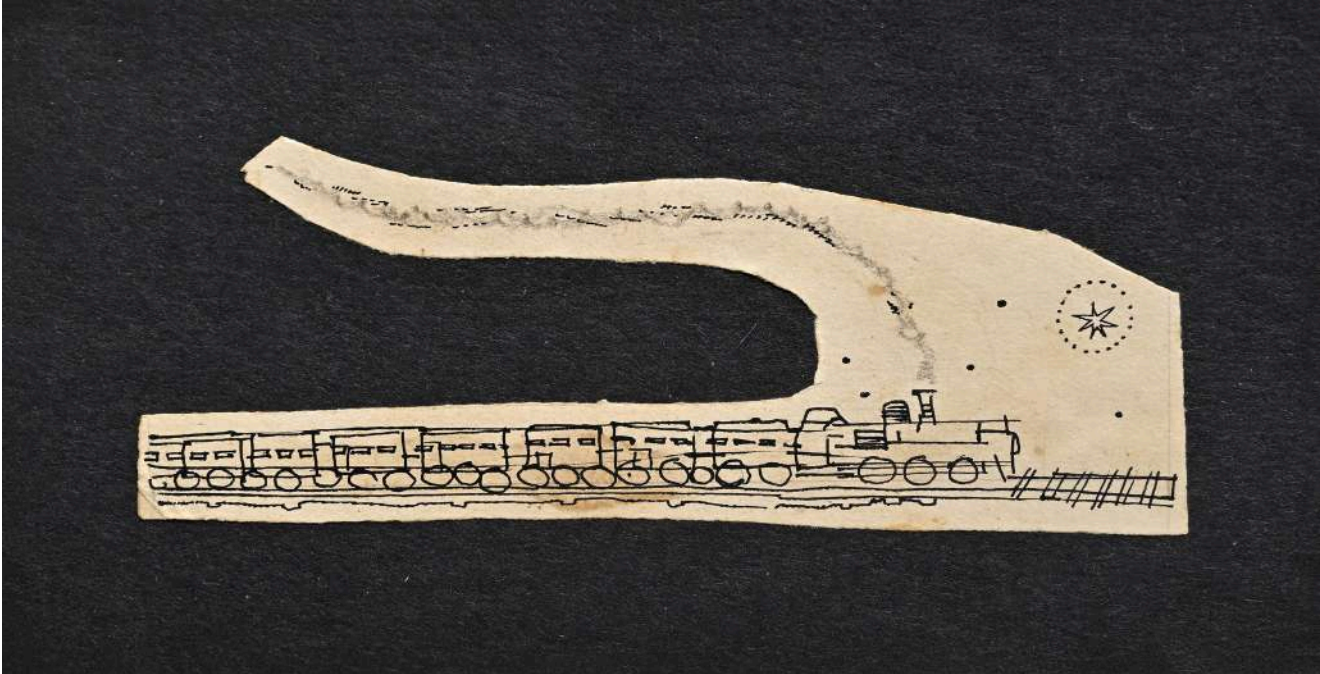
Untitled, Ink on Paper, 5.5 x 12.5 cm



Untitled, Ink on Paper, 12.5 x 5.8 cm



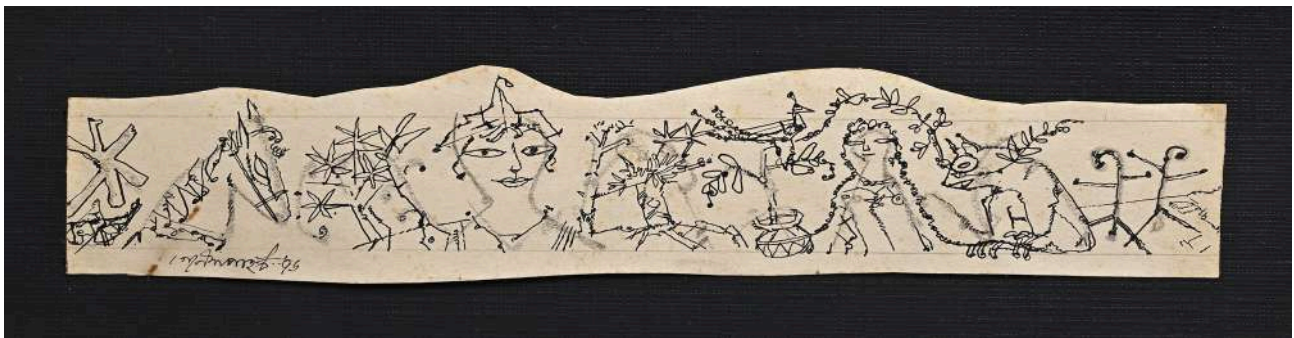
Untitled, Ink on Paper, 4 x 16.5 cm



Untitled, Ink on Paper, 13.1 x 5 cm

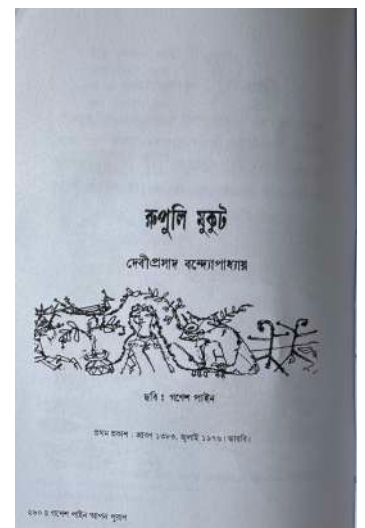


Untitled, Ink on Paper, 26.4 x 5.3 cm



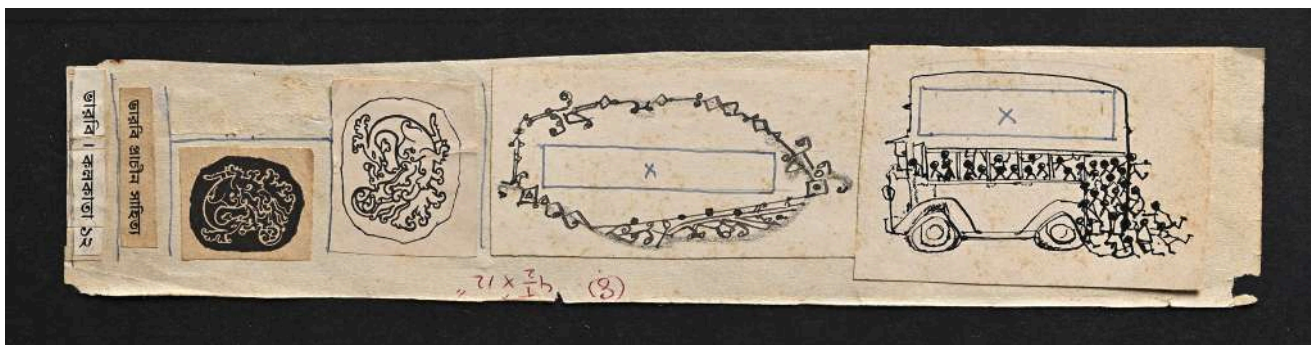
Untitled, Ink on Paper, 4.7 x 25.7 cm, 1976

Published in the book titled
'Roopoli Mukut'
by Debiprasad Bandopaddhay





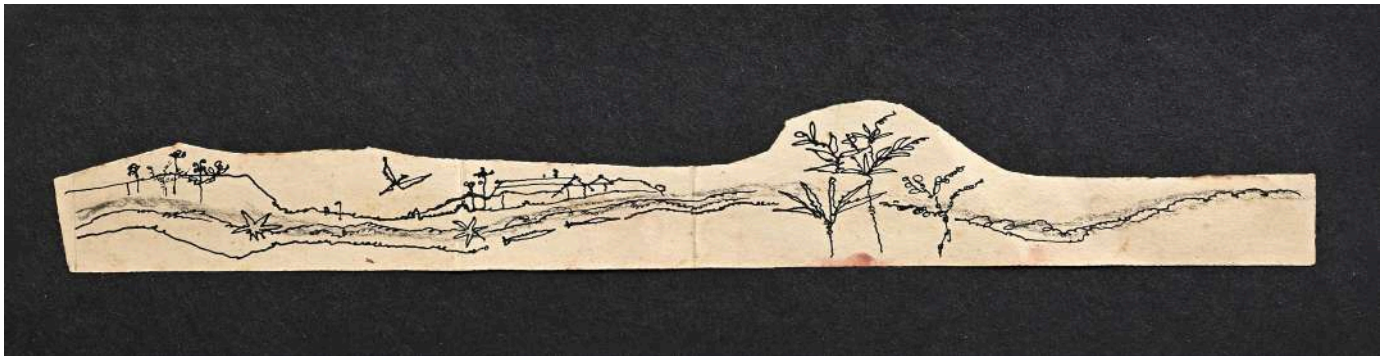
Untitled, Ink on Paper, 6 x 26.8 cm



Untitled, Ink on Paper, 5.5 x 26 cm



Untitled, Ink on Paper, 3.7 x 25 cm



Untitled, Ink on Paper, 26 x 3.5 cm

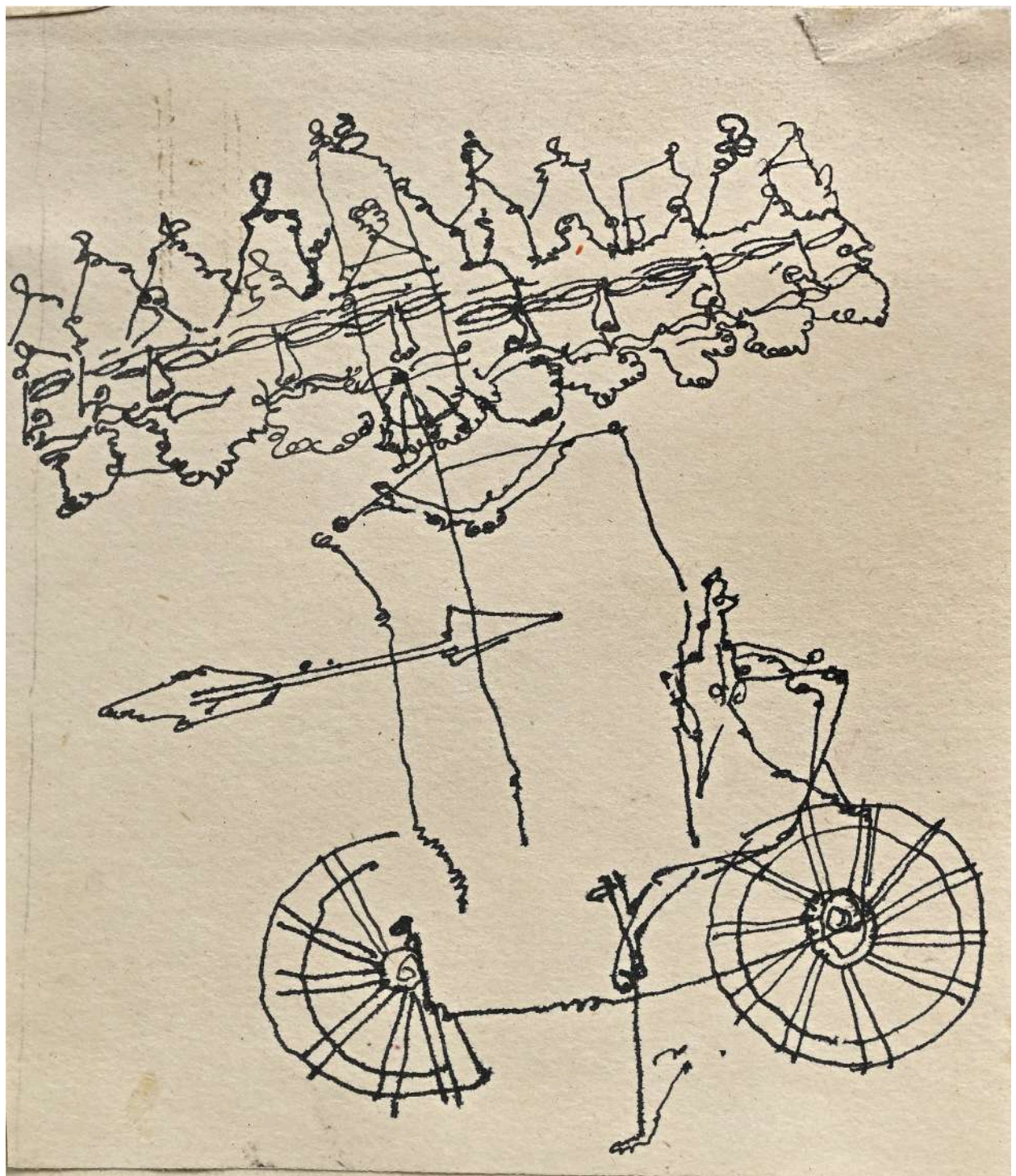


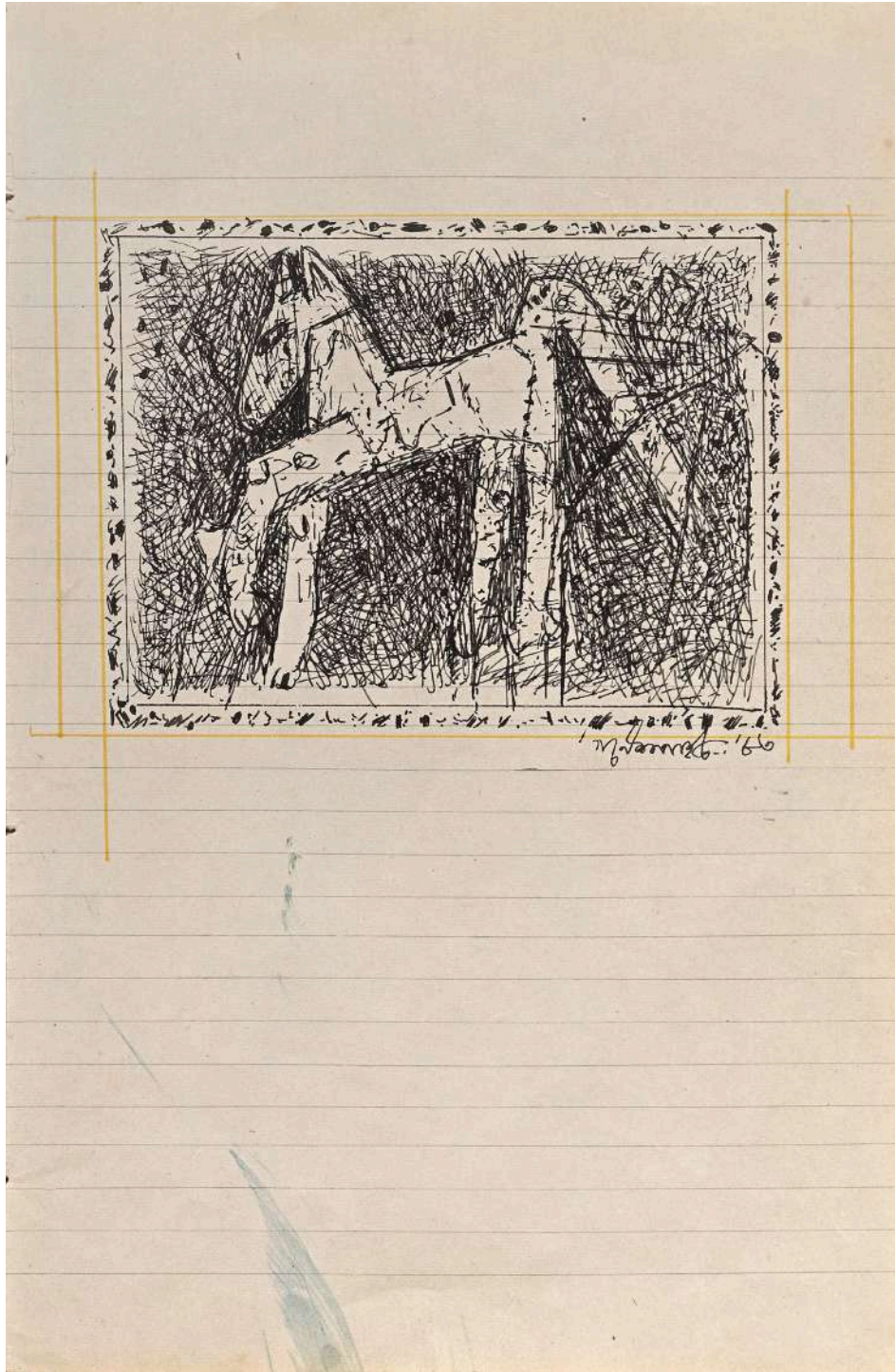
Illustration from the Hindu Epic Ramayana
Ink on Paper
9.3 x 7.9 cm



Illustration from the Hindu Epic Ramayana

Ink on Paper

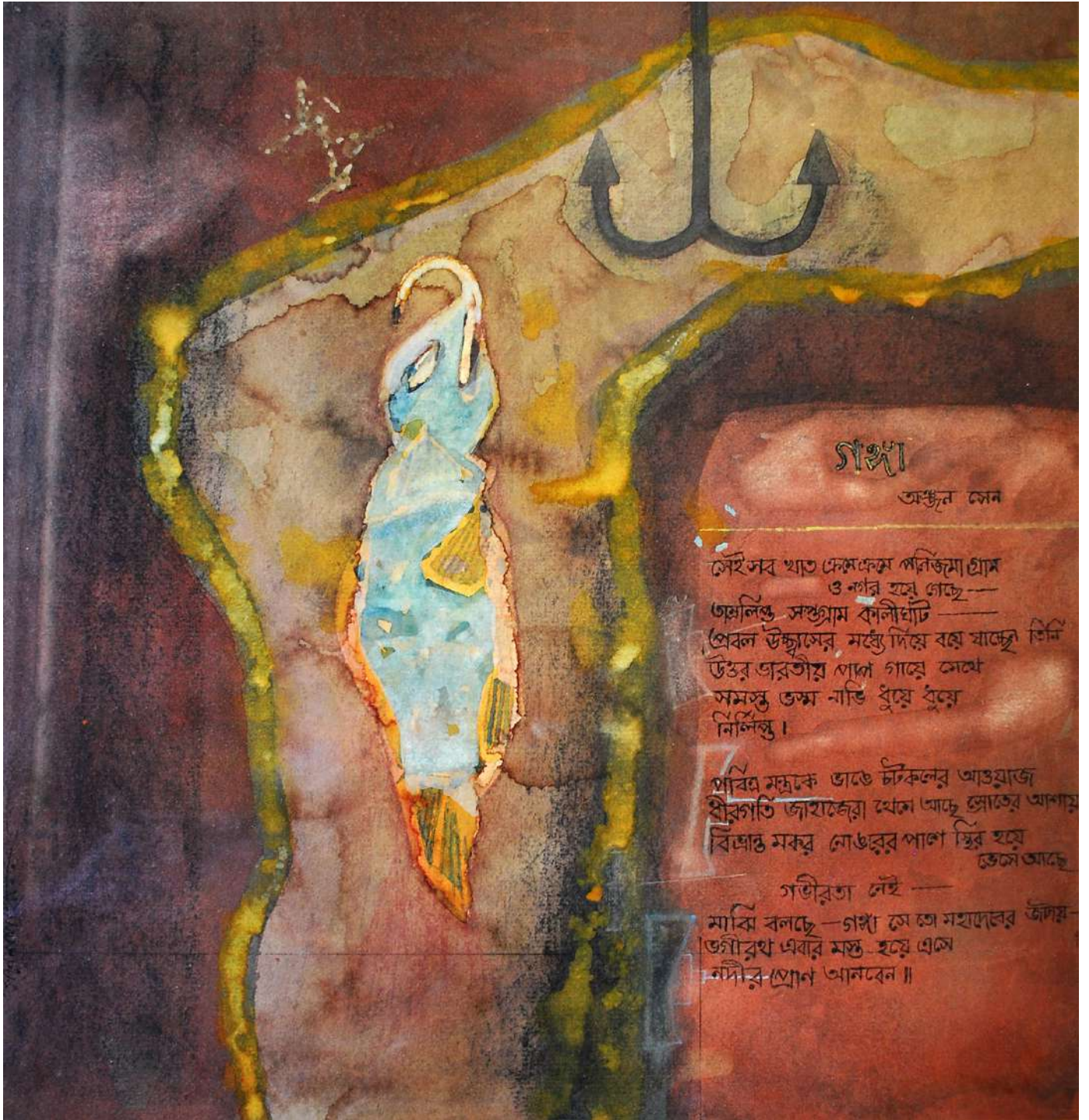
9.1 x 10.3 cm



Untitled
Ink on Paper
13.5 x 20.8 cm
1983



Untitled
Ink on Paper
19.1 x 12.6 cm
1964



A Painting Based on Ganga : A Poem by Anjan Sen
Pen Ink and Watercolour on Paper
33 x 33 cm



Portrait of Mr Anjan Sen
Pen, Ink and Crayon on Paper
19 x 15.24 cm



Baul Singer
Mixed Media on Canvas
43.18 x 33.02 cm