

WORKING ROOM

THINKING TANTRA

Thinking Tantra Research Papers

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Thinking Tantra

by Rebecca Heald

'Form is always temporal, that is relative, for it is nothing more than the means of the moment, whereby today's revelation is made known and given resonance.'

Kandinsky¹

In 2004 New York's Drawing Center presented a small display entitled 'Field of Color: Tantra Drawings from India'. On roughly letter-sized paper, seemingly aged and worn, with text and stamps coming through from the reverse, was a set of drawings composed of bold shapes and vibrant colours. Though it was stated that the drawings were from a very particular tradition, and all made anonymously, many of them were curiously familiar: a black and white stripy square; blocks of bright colours; amorphous shapes and spirals reminiscent of Surrealist gestures; a black triangle and red circle remarkably similar to Kazimir Malevich's 1915 *Black Square and Red Square*. Accompanying gallery text described the drawings as distillations of seventeenth-century Sanskrit text, developed as tools for meditation, and made by people who would neither describe their work as art or themselves as artists.

For years I carried these images around in my head, and I would often find myself referencing them in conversations with artists, colleagues and friends. Some knew them already, others were happy to be introduced. It was very hard to find out anything substantial about the drawings, written or otherwise: existing materials on them were obfuscatory, using empty words to describe them – 'beautiful', 'mysterious', 'magical'. My initial attempts to discover more were strongly discouraged by some. Anecdotally I learned that many artists owned examples of them, and I found interpretations of their different elements: 'Black indicates the night of the world. Blue is consciousness. The lighter, the purer. Spirals and arrows symbolise energy. Inverted triangles depict the Goddess.'² I lay no claim to expertise, nor do I claim to present any definitive narrative, history or interpretation.

The drawings that first drew me into this area of research are distinct, and though in recent times they have become popular, they are part of an extensive and complex history. Some argue it is the art historian and collector Ajit Mookerjee who devised the term 'Tantra Art' as a way of neatly packaging artefacts for a Western market. Poet Franck André Jamme in his notes for 'Field of Color' says:

One could assert that this man's passion, in fact, 'invented' the art. Just to be clear: The pieces obviously existed before. But he assembled and founded a collection. [...] At times, he even went too far, presenting some pieces as older than they were, or as coming from different parts of the country. [...] A rare and complex man, from all evidence.³

Mookerjee's books, including the classic 1967 *Tantra Art: its Philosophy and Physics*, adorn many an art-lover's bookshelf. *Tantra Art* coincided with the counterculture movements of the 1960s and '70s with its search for alternative ways of being, thinking and seeing. Mookerjee describes his relationship with Tantra art as one of 'spiritual adventure', claiming that 'Tantra is both an experience of life and a scientific method by which man can bring out his inherent spiritual power'.⁴ In the book's dedication, the second person on his list of thanks is Philip Rawson. It is Rawson who curated the seminal 1971 exhibition 'Tantra: The Indian Cult of Ecstasy' at the then newly opened Hayward Gallery, London, before publishing *The Art of Tantra* in 1978. Here and there, in Europe and the USA, there were an increasing number of tantra-related exhibitions. 'Fifty Tantric Mystical Diagrams', staged first at the Los Angeles County Museum of Art in 1969, before touring to the Jewish Museum in New York in early 1970, claimed to be 'the first public showing of such diagrams in the United States'. In a small booklet made for the 'Special Installation', Pratapaditya Pal, the Keeper of Indian and Islamic Collections at the Boston Museum of Fine Art, defines tantrism as 'a system incorporating shamanistic rites and ideas, occult charms and practices [...] The universal appeal of [which] is attested by the fact it was accepted by every major religious sect'.⁵ It is precisely the fact that tantra is integrated into multiple traditions that it has been, and, for many, continues to be, so controversial.

In a recent catalogue for Goutam Ghosh, an artist featured in *Thinking Tantra*, there is an essay by scholar Kaustubh Das, 'Tantra and Sacred Art: Exploring Rasa Theory through Yogic Principles', that explores how tantrism might be related to art.⁶ Das outlines a history in which the academic discipline of Indology, as practiced by European Christians, put down hatha-yoga and tantra 'as vulgar abominations or conjurer's tricks'.⁷ Effectively, as a result of colonisation, tantra was driven underground because it wasn't text-based, it often involved taboos and, as it cut across religions, not belonging to any of them exclusively, it upset museological attempts at systematisation. It isn't just westerners who shy away from tantra: many in India recoil in fear from tantric images. If in the west tantra has become impossible to disassociate from sex, in India it is often associated with black magic and evil spirits.

When looking at many tantric drawings, or abstracted elements of them, it is possible to compare them to other artworks, to imagine that some of these images were floating around Europe at the turn of the twentieth century, lodging themselves in minds and imaginations, the philosophies accompanying them helping to answer age-old questions about life, death, meaning and purpose. In turn one wonders who would have seen the 1970 exhibition that travelled from Los Angeles to New York, a key period in the development of abstract and conceptual art practices. One also contemplates what impact Rawson's work as a tutor at the Royal

College of Art and Goldsmiths might have had on his teaching and in turn his students' approach to their work.

L. P. Sihare, erstwhile Director of the National Gallery of Art in New Delhi, wrote his doctorate thesis on interactions between Indian art and the west around the turn of the twentieth century. In the catalogue for an exhibition he co-organised entitled *Neo-Tantra: Contemporary Indian Painters Inspired by Tradition*, Sihare writes:

From an historical perspective, it can be said that some of the greatest masters of abstract art, such as Wassily Kandinsky, Piet Mondrian, Kasimir Malevich and Paul Klee, who were very much drawn to Upanishadic and Vedantic teachings, partly through direct sources, did pave the way for modern Indian artists to explore new areas of Indian esoteric doctrines in order to transform them to formulate and enrich their own aesthetic theories and creative vision.⁸

He continues: '[...] Western artists found essential nourishment and guidance in Indian doctrines [...] Indian theories of cosmogony extensively discussed principles of macrocosmic creation, using terms such as space, light, colour, form, and geometric shapes which are also common to the vocabulary of abstract art.'⁹ One tendency in the small literature that exists on tantra is to methodically compare and contrast western practices that have an affinity with tantric drawings, yantra diagrams or mantras and systematically detail how they align or differ. It is a method that betrays western art historical methods, which rely upon having two slide projectors side-by-side when lecturing: 'This is like this; this isn't like that.'

As a curator, I have found the way to work with these drawings is not to try and bash meaning out of or into them, nor endlessly wrestle similarities or differences, but rather accept them for what they are in the most immediate moment. The etymology of the word tantra – 'tan' being Sanskrit for 'stretch' and 'tra' being 'beyond all boundaries' – is vast in its ambition. And I haven't been able to fathom how such simple forms could trigger alleged transportive experiences: it can't be the drawings alone, surely? Yet I have never been too drawn to learning the mechanisms for activation (ritual, alchemy, psychoactive substances etc.). Though I've had cursory discussions about the drawings with neuroscientists, my preferred path of research has been the one that has led me to talk with artists, collectors and gallerists. I am happy to accept there are things I don't or can't know. The idea of having a drawing like this in your pocket or next to your front door as something to look at when you want or need to recalibrate appeals to me enormously, and although it is an experience I feel is beyond my immediate reach, this does not hinder me from enjoying or appreciating these drawings.

Therefore, in researching the drawings, rather than seeking new sources or ensconcing myself in libraries, I have employed conversation and dialogue to try and understand what it is that makes them so compelling to me, and to others. In talking about them, it quickly becomes apparent that among those that respond to the drawings, they bear different significance for different people; some relate to them in predominantly formal terms, others in more conceptual ways, others know the intricacies of the intellectual and cultural histories, the issues of ownership, the place they hold in esoteric circles. This multiplicity of relationships that people have with the drawings is compelling and provided me with a way to make sense of a diversity of material in terms of devising an exhibition.

The 2004 display at the Drawing Center was alongside a solo exhibition by Richard Tuttle, an artist who has known of this type of drawing for a long time. In correspondence with me he described these drawings as 'a complicated way to locate the spiritual in positive time'. Continuing: 'We, of course, just look at the image, and that makes me nervous, for it is negative, unless shown along with a valid, contemporary art practice about the positive in our culture.'¹⁰ This is exactly what this exhibition seeks to do, to bring to the fore connections between images and artworks from different cultures, that viewers might contemplate different truths.

In offering a necessarily incomplete and fragmented presentation of Tantra drawings, *Thinking Tantra* seeks to introduce new audiences to this complex and potentially infinite field of study, interaction and experience.

This is an exhibition that is presented in four parts. While 'Tantra art' exists in many possible forms, here the focus is on drawings. An earlier iteration of the exhibition in Mumbai was materially more expansive including painting and moving image, but for the Drawing Room emphasis is maintained on the medium of the artworks that originally inspired this curatorial adventure.¹¹

The exhibition is presented in roughly chronological order. The first group of works includes a range of 'original' tantra drawings and yantras. Though 'tantra' and 'yantra' are often used interchangeably it is worth defining terms here: tantra is a body of beliefs and practices that enables individuals to conjoin with something much larger than themselves – 'nothing short of cosmic forces'¹²; a yantra is a geometrical diagram or object used as a tool in tantric rituals; a mantra is a word, or series of words, syllables or sounds believed to have sacred spiritual power. As is suggested by their phonetic similarity, these three elements are almost always entwined with one another. As the 'traditional' works here have been made anonymously and are not usually classified as artworks it is hard to attribute exact dates to them

as well as offer hard and fast details of provenance or meaning. Gallerist Joost van den Bergh, a specialist in tantra, Jain and ritual art from India, has helped bring together this particular selection, which, like the exhibition as a whole is based on instinct and makes no attempt to present a definitive history.

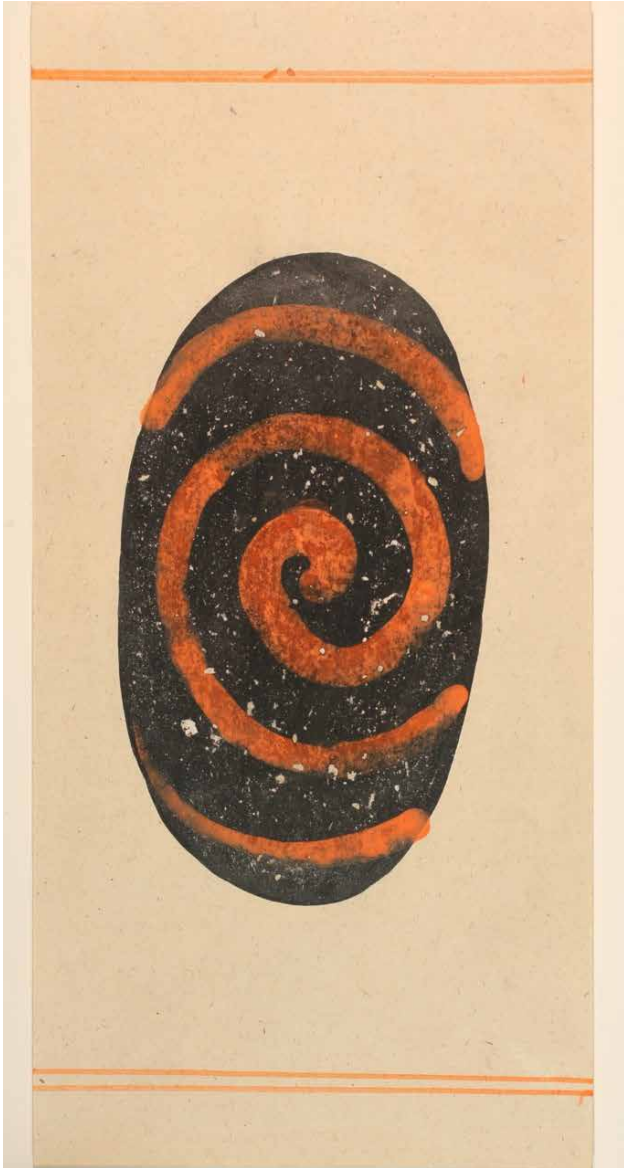
A small amount of work from the so-called 'Neo-Tantra' movement or category is also included here. 'Neo-Tantra' is a phrase coined in 1985 by Edith Tonelli and Lee Mullican, who with the help of L. P. Sihare co-curated *Neo-Tantra: Contemporary Indian Art Inspired by Tradition*, at University of California, Los Angeles, an exhibition of 'art [that] is not tantra but related to it, coming out of it in some way'.¹³ Sihare's self-appointed intellectual mission was to demonstrate that Indian abstraction was not merely iterative of what was happening in the west, that Indian artists had their own, distinct inspirations upon which to draw, and that 'Neo-Tantra' was the primary manifestation of this fact. Sihare was supported in his mission by the Kumar Gallery in New Delhi, which promoted artists like G.R. Santosh and Biren De. For some however, the UCLA exhibition was seen as promoting a stereotyped spirituality as a central feature of modern Indian art, something many artists found an anathema. Still the term 'Neo-Tantra' came to be widely adopted by the art world and is now broadly applied to work by artists who were both included in the UCLA exhibition as well as many who were not. The selection of artists in *Thinking Tantra* expands beyond that of the UCLA exhibition and Sihare's circle to include artists such as Prabhakar Barwe, who incorporated tantric elements into his artworks during the early 1960s following a period of time immersed in Hindu tradition and culture in Varanasi.

The third kind of tantra drawing shown here is the anomalous authored work by Acharya Vyakul and Badrinath Pandit - technically tantra 'tools' should be anonymous and ephemeral. Attaching one's name to a tool designed to connect cosmic forces might be interpreted as an act of earthly vanity. Vyakul, literally meaning 'the excited one' in Sanskrit, was a flamboyant character, written about by Shezad Dawood here in this volume (pp. 24 – 31). These works first came to the west's attention when poet Franck André Jamme included them in a selection of works for the 1989 Centre Pompidou exhibition *Magiciens de la Terre*. From this time on Vyakul began exhibiting his works widely before establishing the richest private museum of folk and tantric art in India. Of Pandit little is known, other than he was a highly regarded Sanskrit scholar and painter and it is said he was perhaps Vyakul's teacher.

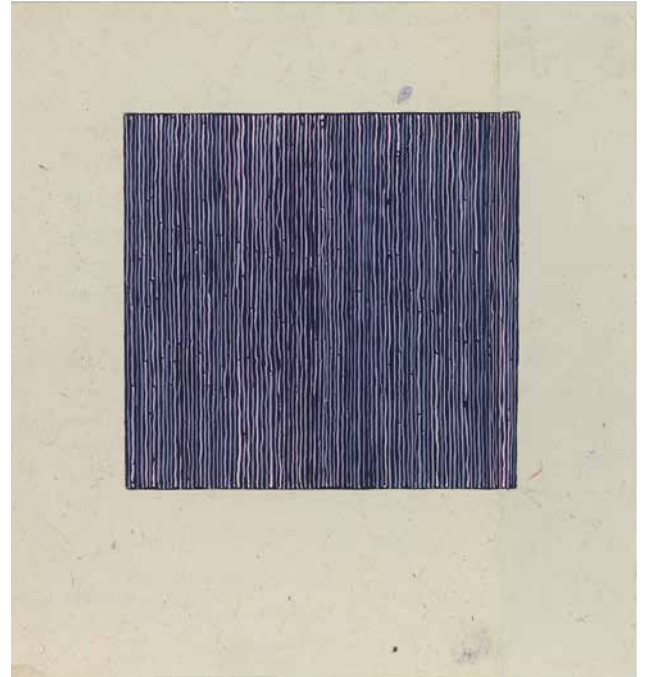
Finally, *Thinking Tantra* features work by contemporary artists, all of whom know of and readily articulate a relationship with tantra drawings. One of the perils of assembling works for this exhibition has been that of projection – many tantra drawings look or feel familiar to already known artworks and histories. The best route to selection of contemporary artists I have found has been to include artists who are somehow invested in tantra drawings, something which has been discerned over a period of years via conversations, chance, and studio visits. The artists each relate to tantra in different ways. Their various approaches and articulated relationships and connections to the drawings are detailed throughout this publication.

Notes

- 1 As quoted in Mookerjee, A. & Kumar, R. (1967) *Tantra Art: Its Philosophies and Physics*. Paris: Rupa & Co., p.16
- 2 Jamme, F.A., (2004) 'Field of Color: Tantra Drawings from India' in *Drawing Papers 50*. New York: Drawing Center, p.6
- 3 Jamme, p.3
- 4 Mookerjee, A. & Kumar, R. (1967), p.11
- 5 Fifty Tantric Mystical Diagrams, Los Angeles County Museum of Art, 1969
- 6 Das, K, 'Tantra and Sacred Art: Exploring Rasa Theory through Yogic Principles', in Ghosh, G. (2015) *Ascribing to them birth, animation, sense and accident*. Oslo: Standard Oslo, p.10. Available online: <https://vajrachinta.wordpress.com/2016/05/25/tantra-and-sacred-art-exploring-rasa-theory-through-yogic-principles/#more-59>
- 7 Ibid., p.12
- 8 Sihare, L.P. (1985), 'Contemporary Neo-Tantra Art: A Perspective', *Neo-Tantra: Contemporary Indian Painting Inspired by Tradition*. Berkeley: University of California Press, p.18
- 9 Ibid.
- 10 Email with the author, 29 January 2015
- 11 The earlier iteration of *Thinking Tantra* happened at Jhaveri Contemporary, Mumbai, 24 January – 19 March 2016
- 12 Exhibition hand-out, *Thinking Tantra* at Jhaveri Contemporary, 2016
- 13 Greenstein, J., 'A View of India's Tantric Art' in Los Angeles Times, 25 December 1985



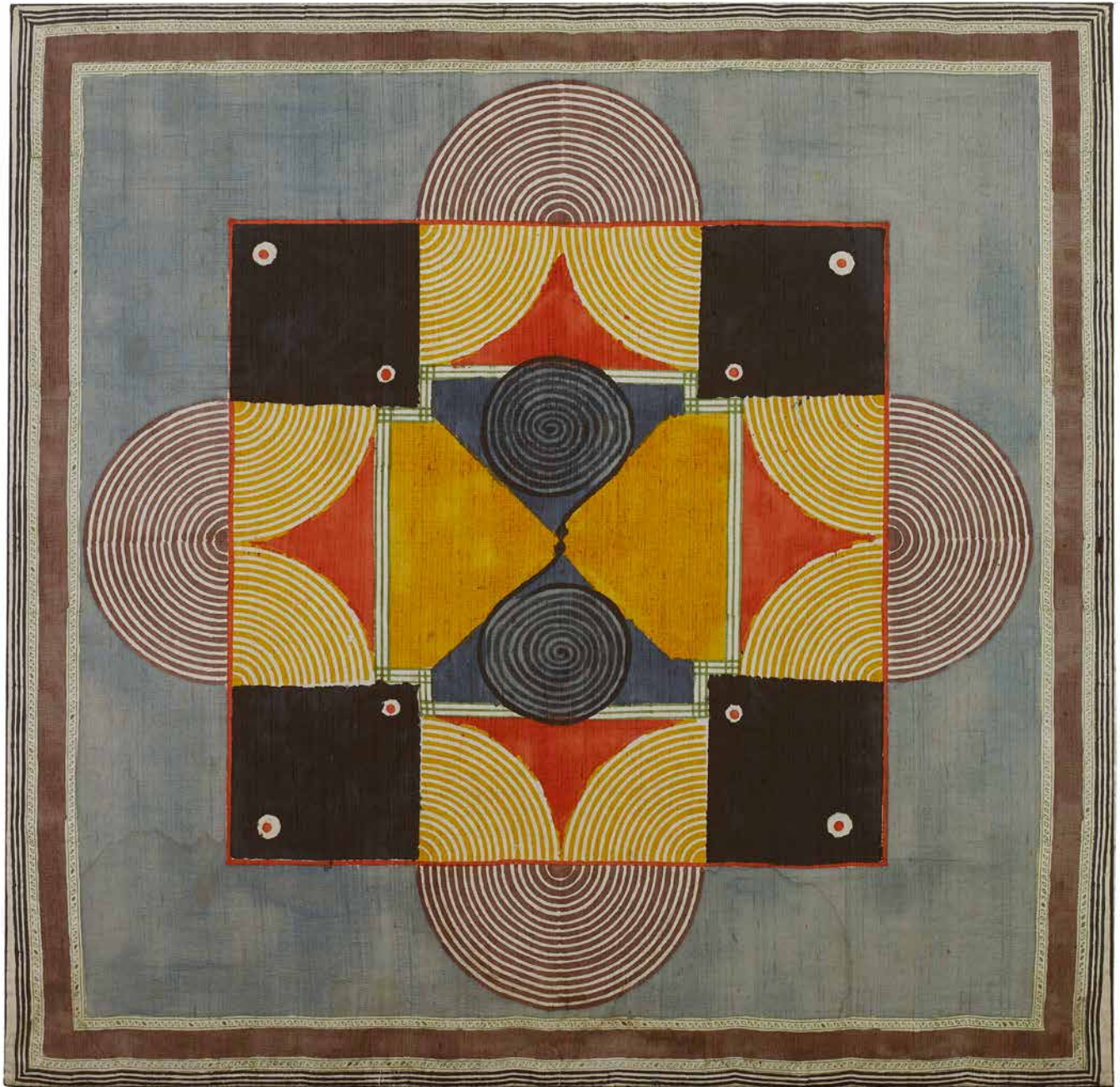
Cosmic egg (brahmamda) study
Gouache on paper
Northern India 20th century
29 x 15 cm



Untitled, 1993
Unspecified paint on found paper
Udaipur, Rajasthan, India
34 x 24.5 cm

Anonymous Tantra drawings

This section presents a range of anonymous Tantra drawings sourced with the help of Joost van den Bergh. Included in the selection are a number of key 'types' including the *Brahmama*, or Cosmic Egg, the source of the universe and the subject of many traditional tantric drawings. Curator Massimiliano Gioni featured a collection of these in his 2013 Venice Biennale.



Prabhakar Barwe
Untitled, c.1960s
 Acid colour on Dupioni silk
 84 x 85 cm

Prabhakar Barwe

Barwe was part of a kaleidoscopic experimental scene that emerged in the 1960s and '70s and that is often marginalised in the canonical narratives of modern Indian art. An artist from Bombay, Barwe lived in Varanasi between 1962 and 1965 and it is here that tantric forms first captured his interest. For Barwe, tantra was a way of thinking that encompassed everything, and he was dedicated to finding his own, specific and personal, version of it. He believed that art exists as the result of the human need for spiritual experience. These very rare works are from the time Barwe spent working at the Weavers Service Centre, part of the Government of India's Ministry of textiles, where artists worked with weavers in the development of textile designs. While there he infused his designs with symbols and shapes borrowed from tantric traditions.



Tom Chamberlain
Tell Me Later II, 2016
Colour pencil on paper
25 x 30.5 cm

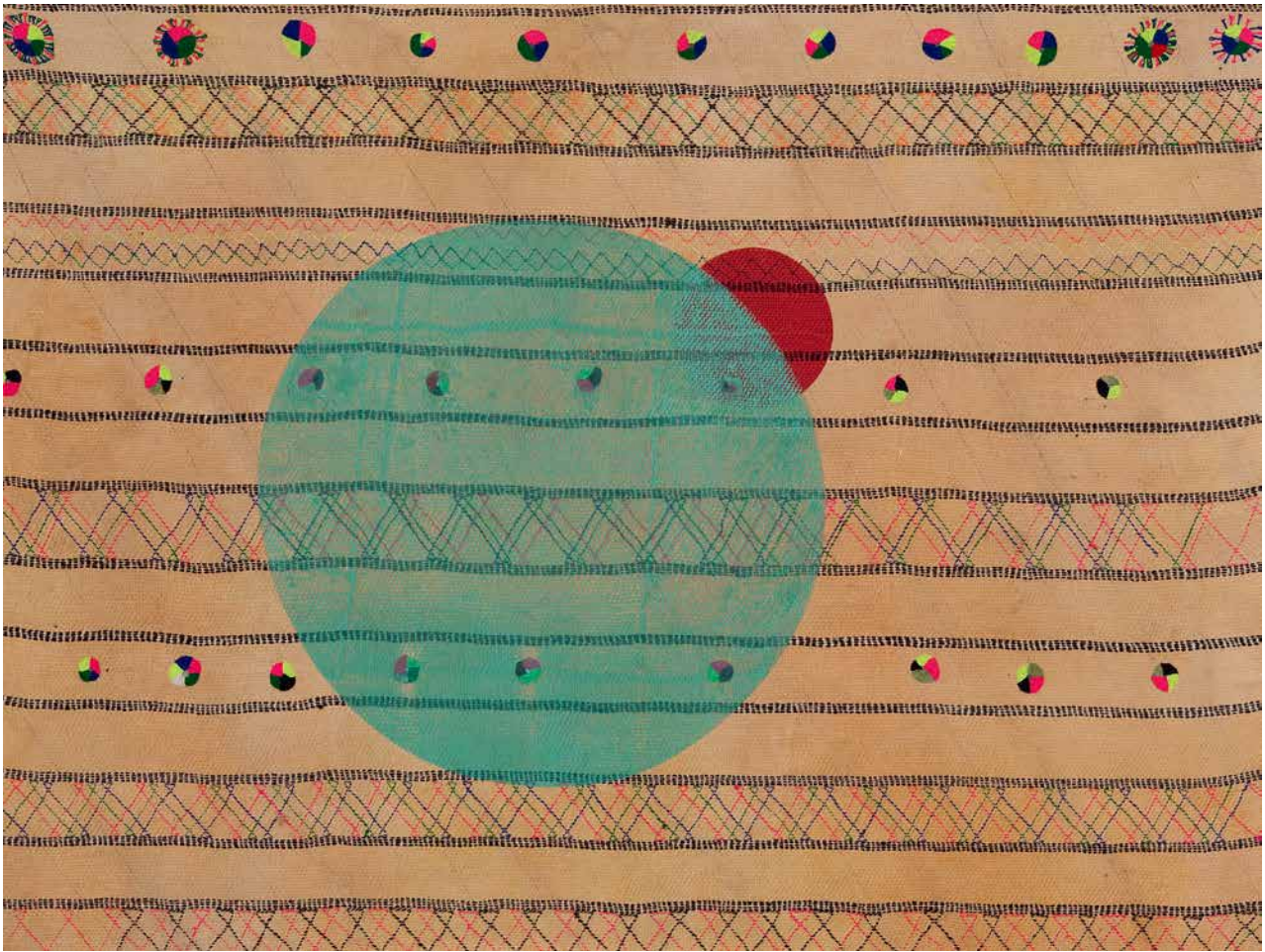
Tom Chamberlain

Chamberlain has had a relationship with tantric drawings, especially Shiva lingam drawings, for more than a decade and is intrigued by the notion that they are ‘things that get used.’ Chamberlain deploys the act of looking as a temporal agent and it is only through this act that the work comes into its own. Chamberlain wants his work to sharpen the senses, and to exist as a living entity, both in and of itself, and for the viewer.

He writes:

I like that Shiva drawings, through having a specific use, suggest an emphasis on how we attend to things, rather than why. They provide an encounter that demands something other than the analytical faculties of eye and mind, and offer the possibility of looking as something that is more like abandon. In ‘Coming to Writing,’ Hélène Cixous says of her approach that ‘it is as if I were inciting myself: “Let yourself go, let the writing flow, let yourself steep...”’ A practise of the greatest passivity. At once a vocation and a technique. This mode of passivity is our way – really an active way – of getting to know things by letting ourselves be known by them. You don’t seek to master. To demonstrate, explain, grasp.¹⁴

14 Email to the author, 12 October 2016. Hélène Cixous, ‘Coming to Writing’ in *Coming to Writing and Other Essays*, Harvard University Press, 1991, p. 57



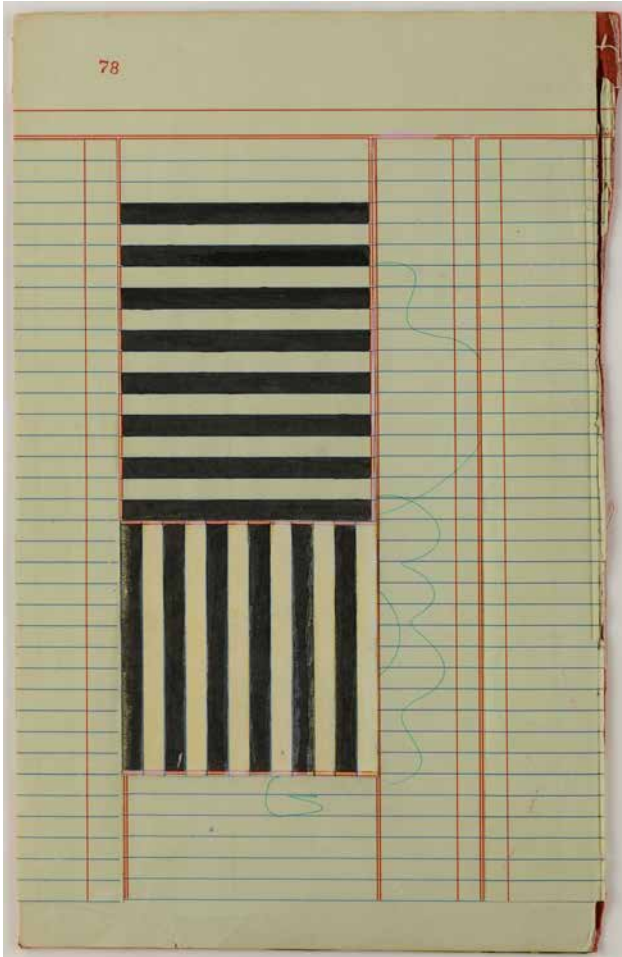
Shezad Dawood
YTR 1, 2010
 Acrylic on vintage textile
 125 x 165 cm

Shezad Dawood

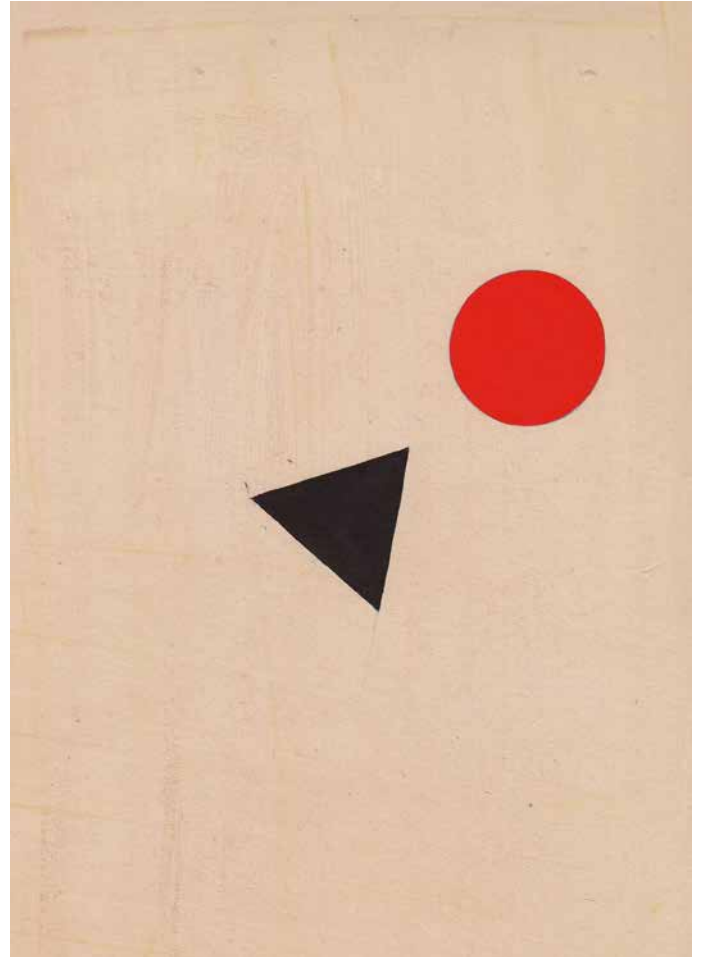
Dawood has a long-standing commitment to the exploration of the esoteric. Often fusing symbols from different mystical, religious, and philosophical traditions, he is absorbed by what he describes as ‘the irrational and esoteric foundations of Modernism’. In work over the past decade he has often referenced tantric symbols and philosophies directly, as here in *YTR 1*, 2010. The abbreviation ‘YTR’, from yantra, is indicative of the aspiration for the work to be a tool for transcendence. Of this piece, Dawood says:

The two circles indicate the intersection of the manifest and hidden spheres of experience. Where speech meets conscious thought and all things become possible. This meeting ground is common to all the esoteric traditions: from Sufism to Gnosticism, and is the space where the tantric practitioner or practical magician operates. In scientific terms it is also the intersection between normative and quantum possibility, and thus represents evolving consciousness as it moves beyond duality.¹⁵

¹⁵ Email to the author, 23 September 2016



Nicola Durvasula
Untitled (78), 2009
 Ink, gouache, pencil on paper and ledger book cover
 33 x 21.2 cm



Nicola Durvasula
Untitled (copy tantra), 2010
 Watercolour, gouache, ink on paper
 31.9 x 23.5 cm

Nicola Durvasula

Originally from the UK, Durvasula lived in India for a decade. Though her method of working is different from tantrikas (practitioners of tantra), as Francesca Fremantle, a scholar of Hindu and Buddhist tantra, suggests, if there are 'English Tantrics', she is definitely among them. Some years ago she acquired multiple copies of Drawing Center's publication 'Field of Color'. She used these copies in different ways – some images she cut out and framed, some she used as a basis upon which make to new work, and some she transcribed: questions of agency, authorship, and appropriation abound. Also shown here are works that venture into the sonic realm of tantra–mantra, in which graphic symbols are used as a starting point to be activated by musicians and percussionists.

In a diary entry of 13 June 2016 Durvasula writes:

Anatomy of a single note – floating in space – what if, in these graphic notations, I break down even further the structure of the note/the dot/the Bindu – what would happen then? Would we enter a black hole, the pinhole of truth... like an onion, remove all layers and get to the heart of the 'MATTER' which is infinitesimally finite?¹⁶



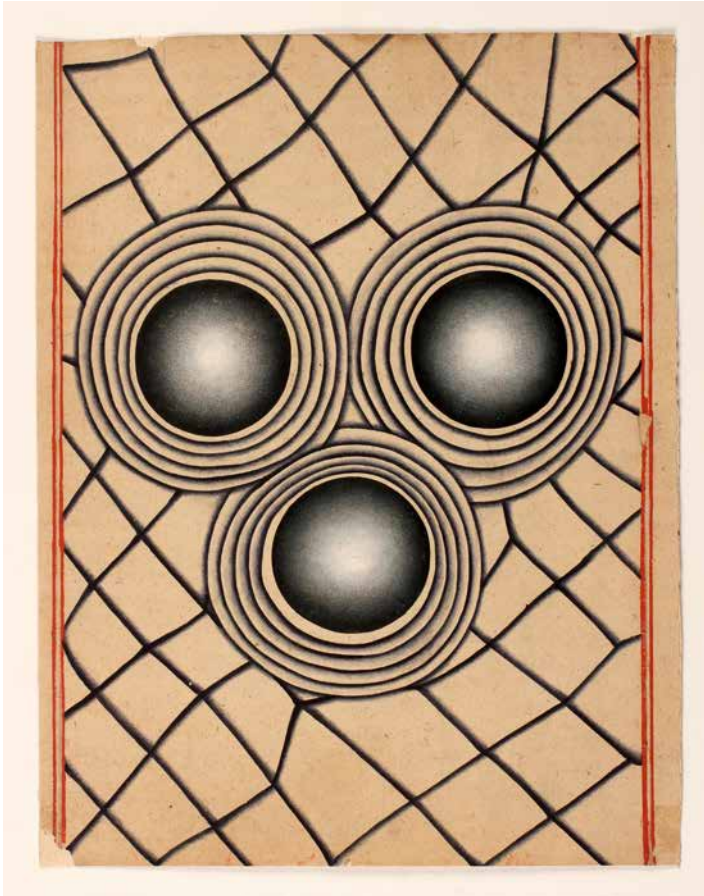
Goutam Ghosh
While dancing stay in the circle, 2015
 Gouache on newsprint glued on cotton textile
 113 x 122 cm

Goutam Ghosh

Ghosh's recent catalogue *Ascribing to them birth, animation, sense and accident*, makes a number of direct references to tantra, including an essay by Kaustubh Das on the encounter between Indian religious and spiritual practices and colonialism. Ghosh writes:

Modernism has not been a mere search for absolute truth, as opposed to religious art. Rather, it has been a move to appreciate the different shades of truth. In my case, I do not feel the need of any special permission—neither from a priest nor from a scientist—to access both of these fields of knowledge. I am my own priest in my temple and my own scientist in my laboratory.¹⁷

17 Ghosh, G. (2015), "The autonomy of objecthood" in Goutam Ghosh, *Ascribing to them birth, animation, sense and accident*, (exh. cat.). Oslo: Standard Oslo, p.33



Alexander Gorlizki
Take It And Leave It, 2016
 Pigment on paper
 30.4 x 23.4 cm



Alexander Gorlizki
The Kiss, 2015
 Pigment on paper
 33 x 22.2 cm

Alexander Gorlizki

Gorlizki established a collaborative practice in Jaipur with master miniaturist painter Riyaz Uddin in 1996. From this time on, he also built up an extensive collection of early Indian vernacular drawings including tantric diagrams and yantras (literally, 'machines'), some dating as far back as the mid-eighteenth century. For this exhibition he shows works on paper that allude to this wide-ranging and historical material. Gorlizki says:

Collecting contemporary drawings by anonymous artists makes it impossible to determine the nature of the relationship between artist and subject matter. Is she or he a Tantric practitioner or an artist making Tantric imagery? The relationship between art, spirituality and commerce is very fluid and to me very interesting, particularly in the context of the Rajasthan painting ateliers.¹⁸

18 <http://www.gorlizki.com/magicmarkings.html>



Prafulla Mohanti
Creation, 1980
 Watercolour, ink
 and gouache on
 hand made paper
 77 x 56 cm

Prafulla Mohanti

Mohanti was part of L.P. Sihare's 'tantra' group that travelled to the USA and became 'Neo-Tantra'. Now eighty, he has distinct memories of making art since the age of three. Known as the village artist, growing up he was relied upon to make drawings for all occasions and decorate people's houses. Based in London, he originally came to the UK in the 1960s to study town planning in Leeds. Wrestling the greys of England, he began to cover his lodgings with bright-coloured artworks, sometimes made during ritualistic performances.

My painting is rooted in my village culture, which is influenced by yoga and Tantra. Art is a part of daily life. The lotus is the main symbol. The lotus of my childhood has undergone changes through abstraction, from a circle to a point. Absolute abstraction makes it disappear. From this nothingness life begins again and becomes everything, the total universe.¹⁹

¹⁹ Email conversation with author, 7 July 2016



Jean-Luc Moulène
Big Bifur, 2010
Epoxy resin, cotton wire
50 x 80 x 80 cm

Jean-Luc Moulène

Moulène's ambition in making artworks is to give viewers the sensation that they are 'living and standing'. He first encountered tantra drawings at the Centre Georges Pompidou's *Les Magiciens de la Terre* exhibition (1989). For the Pompidou's 2011 *Paris-Delhi-Bombay*, he undertook a series of complex experiments to imagine how a multi-coloured Tantra drawing might exist in three dimensions, work which continued and formed an important part of his exhibition at Dia Beacon in 2013. *Big Bifur*, 2010, is a work from this series that is suggestive of how one reality can stem or divide from another, existing in parallel.



Badrinath Pandit
Salagramas, mid 20th
century
Gouache on paper
Each 13.5 x 11.5 cm

Badrinath Pandit

Little is known about Pandit, except that he was a highly regarded Hindu priest and Sanskrit scholar. He is known for his abstract renderings of *shaligramas*, or sacred stones, said to represent the god Vishnu in his many manifestations.



Anthony Pearson
Untitled (Solarization), 2012
 Framed solarized silver
 gelatin photograph
 43.1 x 32.2 cm

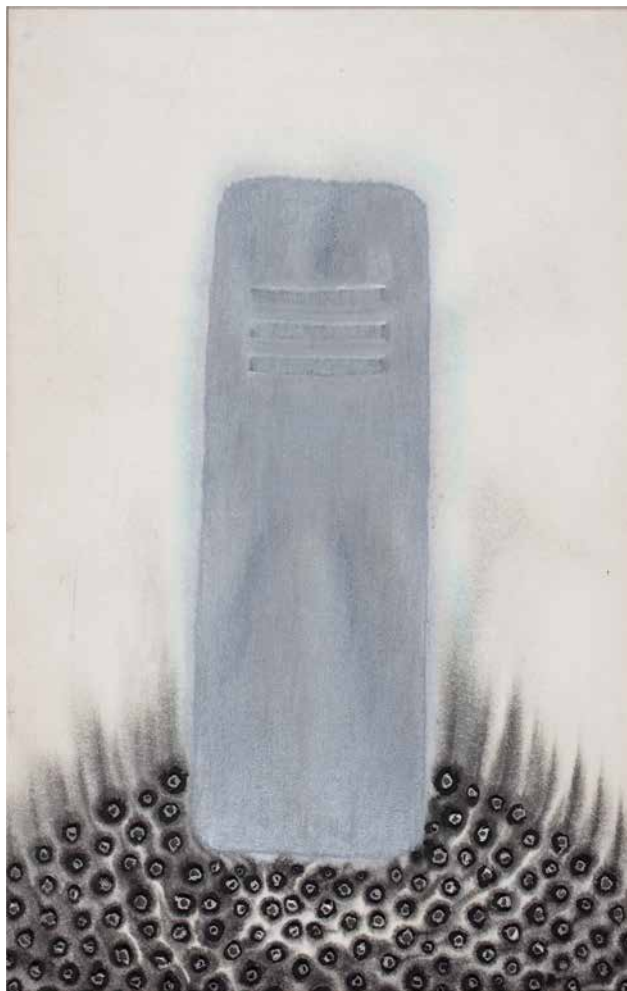


Anthony Pearson
Untitled (Solarization), 2012
 Framed solarized silver
 gelatin photograph
 43.1 x 32.2 cm

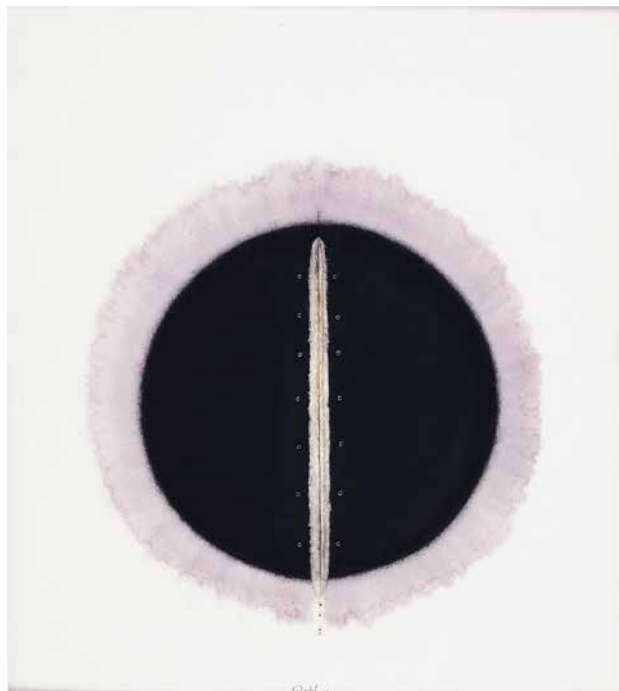
Anthony Pearson

Pearson first encountered tantra drawings at an exhibition in Santa Monica in 2011. He is preoccupied with archaic forms and the way in which these drawings – their shapes and their colours – have been remade for centuries. As an artist he has developed his own distinctive visual language, based on techniques such as solarisation, which he transcribed and repeats, treating the outcome of these experiments as specimens to trigger transcendent states of experience. Art critic Jonathan Griffin has said of Pearson: ‘There is a sense that any single work of Pearson’s is only a temporary stand-in for something else, something withheld or absent, or maybe something lost altogether.’²⁰

20 Griffin, Jonathan, ‘*The Man Who Wasn’t There*’, *Frieze*, 06 March 2013, p.124



Sohan Qadri
Untitled, 1987
 Ink & dye and silver paint
 on handmade paper
 48.3 x 30.5 cm



Sohan Qadri
Untitled, 1984
 Ink and dye on handmade paper
 39.4 x 35.6 cm

Sohan Qadri

Qadri was a yogi, poet and painter who abandoned representation early on in his long career and began to incorporate tantric symbols and philosophy into his vibrant minimalist works. It was the time he spent in silence and meditation in the Himalayas and Tibet, he said, that led him to make artworks. Qadri left India in 1965, eventually settling in Copenhagen. He distilled tantric symbolism into his own abstract language.



Prem Sahib
Doubles I, 2016
 Gouache on paper
 48 x 37 cm



Prem Sahib
Athlete VII, 2016
 Gouache on paper
 48 x 37 cm

Prem Sahib

With work often characterised by strong geometry and a bold palette, it is instinctively possible to find a neat place for Sahib in a history of minimalism. Yet, this would deny the bodily and erotic dimension that runs through his work. In sweeping terms, the same could be said of tantric drawings. Yet, as noted above, while they may bear similarities to western abstraction, it must be recognised that they are born of a different tradition, one which is all-inclusive in its reach and which has bliss and ecstasy at its core.

For *Thinking Tantra* Sahib has made a new series of drawings inspired by the male form sheathed in sportswear, made abstract through truncation and singular, flat colour. A new 'breathing' neon animates the exhibition space. The template is made in copper and matches the scale and sweep of bodily gestures; the neon is digitally programmed to light up and dim to the rhythm of human breathing.



G.R. Santosh
Untitled (Pencil I)
 Pencil on paper
 60.9 x 43.1 cm

G. R. Santosh

Santosh's drawings are neither abstract nor representational. His merging of opposites – Shiva and Shakti, the male and female forms – to achieve transcendence, has its roots in tantra. Originally self-taught, he went on to study in Baroda at the Maharaja Sayjirao University under the artist N. S. Bendre. The MSU art school was established after Indian independence and sought to distance itself from colonial predecessors and support a distinctive 'Indian' modernist aesthetic. Many in the school drew upon Indian folk traditions. Santosh came to tantra following an experience in 1964 in the Amarnath cave, a holy Hindu site in Jammu and Kashmir. Writing in the catalogue for the UCLA *Neo-Tantra* exhibition, he speaks of the relationship between tantra and art: 'The universal mind (Brahman) manifests itself by its own will and when transformed in an artist's mind becomes self-creative. The individual mind of an artist has the potential to transform the visual concept into the materialised creative expression: a work of art.'²¹

21 Sihare, L.P. (1985), 'Contemporary Neo-Tantra Art: A Perspective', *Neo-Tantra: Contemporary Indian Painting Inspired by Tradition*. Berkeley: University of California Press, p. 38



Richard Tuttle
Source of Imagery VI, 1995-2010
 Paint on plywood,
 wooden block
 108.9 x 83.8 x 27.3 cm



Richard Tuttle
Separation (Group 3, Number 4), 2015
 Styrofoam board, pine molding, synthetic batting,
 synthetic fiber, acrylic paint, colored pencil, bamboo
 skewer, nail, transparent tape
 58.4 x 50.8 cm

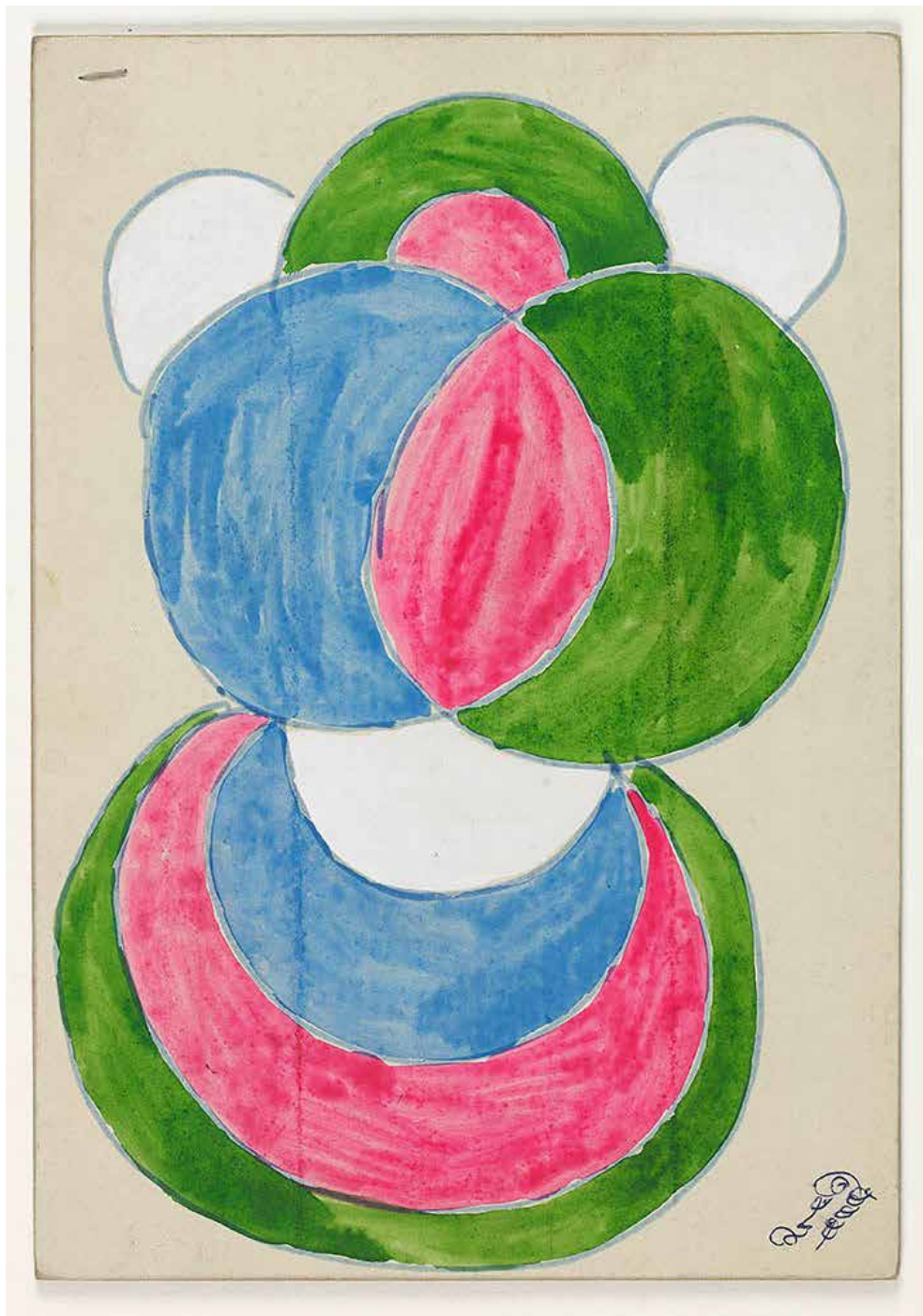
Richard Tuttle

It is Tuttle who provided the original inspiration for this exhibition. His exhibition at the Drawing Center in New York (2004–5) was accompanied by a small collection of tantra drawings set upon wallpaper he had designed. He has collected tantric drawings for some time and writing of them says:

Very often they have been kept as a talisman by their commissioner. Both hidden from sight of the world, and connecting to the world, through an image as certain as it is unverifiable, they are a certificate free of the very thing certified, a complicated way to locate the spiritual in positive time. We, of course, just look at the image, and that makes me nervous, for it is negative, unless shown along with a valid, contemporary art practice about the positive in our culture.²²

The curatorial premise of *Thinking Tantra* shares this philosophy.

22 Email to the author, 29 January 2015



Acharya Vyakul
Untitled
 Jaipur, India, 20th century
 Gouache on paper
 24 x 17 cm

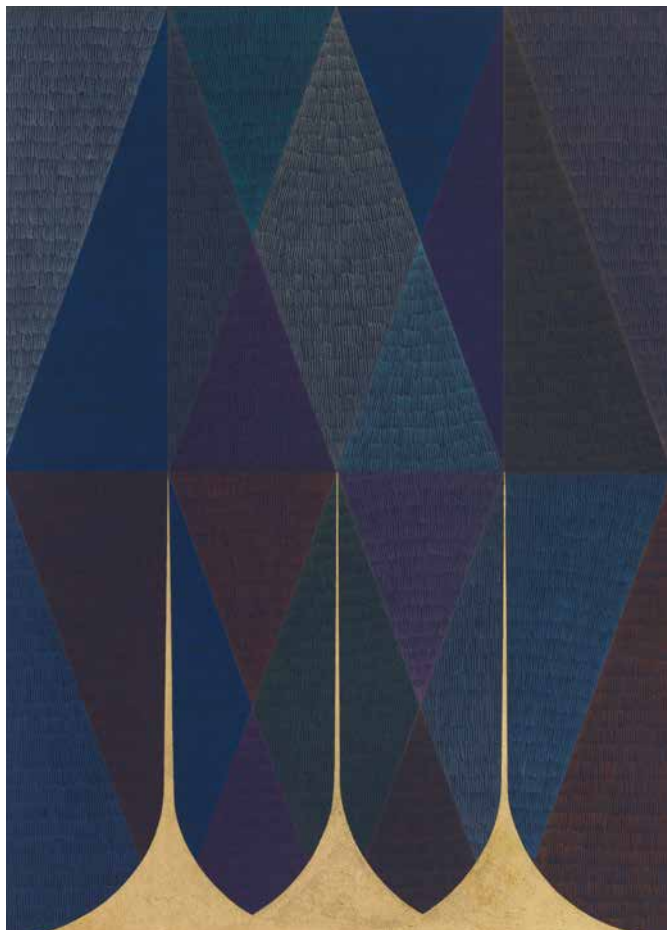
Acharya Vyakul

Vyakul was billed as a tantric artist in Jean-Martin Hubert's 1989 landmark exhibition *Magiciens de la Terre*. Kapil Jariwala wrote of him in 1998:

Vyakul does not paint in a studio nor does he paint every day, perhaps only twice a year and then in a concentrated spell for two or three weeks. He makes the paintings wherever he might be, in his house, on a walk, in a temple or in a garden. Often using materials close to hand, paper from ancient manuscripts, cloth or waste card are painted with pigment ground from anything that will give its colour: cow dung, leaves, coffee, vermilion or coal; it isn't unusual to find lipstick or felt-tip pens either.²³

Purists don't consider Vyakul a 'tantrika' since he authored his works.

23 Kapil Jariwala, text for the exhibition 'Vyakul: Tantric Painter' at The John McEnroe Gallery, 1998



Claudia Wieser
Untitled, 2016
 Gold leaf, colour pencil on colour paper
 46 x 33cm



Claudia Wieser
Untitled, 2015
 Ink on wood
 25 cm diameter

Claudia Wieser

Wieser first encountered tantric drawings via the publication *Field of Color* while installing her 2011 exhibition at the Drawing Center in New York. Wieser's practice has been described as one in which she instinctively 'recuperates a mystical Modernism'.²⁴ She herself makes a connection between the tantric drawings and exercises given to students at the Bauhaus, who were given set colours and shapes with which to make new combinations. There is another connection that might be made in relation to the Bauhaus's ambition to collapse the distinctions between artists and craftspeople, notably that tantric drawings are not usually made by artists or as part of an artistic practice. Here, Wieser also presents sculptures. Made of simple shapes, like the drawings, they are the result of a lengthy process that involves sanding, oiling, and painting – traces of which are left in the final versions.

24 Matthew Nichols, 'Claudia Wieser: New Work at Marianne Boesky', *Art in America*, 5 December 2013

Open Circuit – Colour and Altered States

Shezad Dawood

There are two key themes I wish to explore in this paper:

- 1 That creation and transmission might be read as one-and-the-same actions in the operation of certain practices. These practices often involve an abdication or 'stepping aside' of their creators, whether by immersion in process, or through a similar (but not unrelated) transmission of higher forces through the vehicle of the 'creator', who becomes the amanuensis of a shared, or collective consciousness. Both in their own way enact a radical form of collaboration (with creative agency and audience).
- 2 That the works produced, and here I wish to look at drawing in the expanded field as containing both movement and light, contain an animating principle, that has relations to both animism and pattern (as a structural interface).

It might not be popular to refer to the artist as *medium*, but a number of recent exhibitions have paid attention to what could be termed spiritual or mediumistic practices. The groundbreaking presentation *The Spiritual in Art: Abstract Painting 1890-1985* at Los Angeles County Museum of Art (1986-7) has been followed by more recent exhibitions including: Susan Hiller's *Dream Machines* at the Camden Arts Centre, London (2000); *The Message. The Medium as Artist* at Kunstmuseum Bochum (2008); and *Traces of the Sacred* at Centre Pompidou, Paris (2008). Also of importance have been the various recent exhibitions on the painter Hilma af Klint (1862-1944),¹ the inaugural exhibition at the Museum of Everything in London in 2010 and a wealth of 'esoterica' at Massimiliano Gioni's *Encyclopedic Palace* for the Venice Biennale in 2013, which included works by Klint, Rudolf Steiner², Aleister Crowley, Emma Kunz and Augustin Lesage.

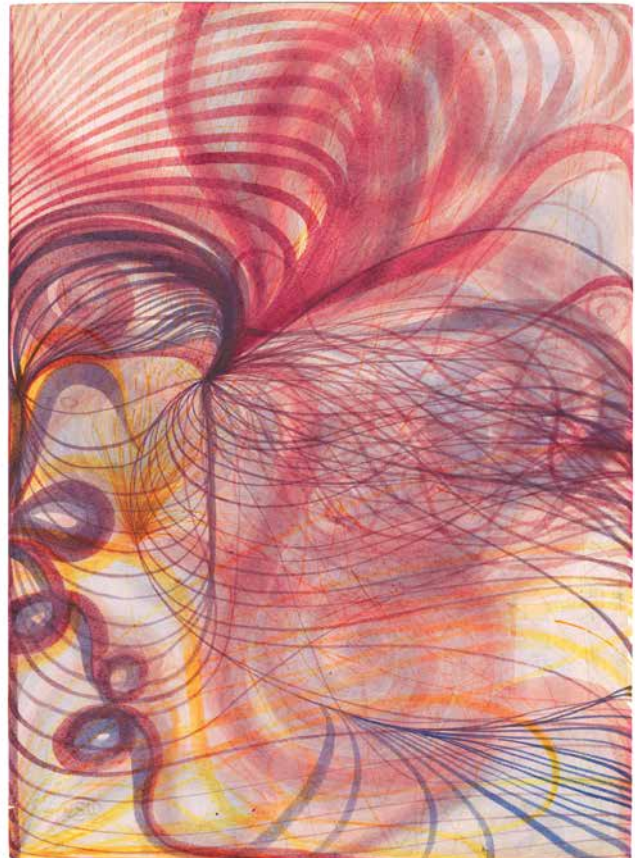
However, what I am more interested in is how a more stringent hermetic practice both disavows the popular, and the idea of sole or unique agency in the creation of the work. It is this essential contradiction that is for me the point of a certain approach to practice that is both necessarily esoteric and democratic at the same time. A kind of 'stepping aside' if you will.

There are many non-art practices that involve a similar stepping aside of the host, to allow a hitherto unrecognised breadth or depth of vision. Such as the possessions undertaken by Vodoun adepts depicted in Maya Deren's *Divine Horsemen: The Living Gods of Haiti*, shot between 1947 and 1954, but only completed and released posthumously twenty-four years after her death. It was Deren's loss of self in an increasing personal engagement with the practitioners she documents that prevented her from completing the work as originally intended (under the terms of her Guggenheim scholarship), but which also gained her the trust and proximity to these practitioners as the line between them blurred.³

Another example that I have witnessed first-hand at the Urs of Shah Abdul Latif Bhitai, in Bhitshah, Pakistan, sees Sufi practitioners invoke a divine madness, and temporarily become 'wild dogs', as they are overwhelmed by a glimpse of the unseen. Or the priests at the sacred inner shrine to Shiva Shakti in

Tiruvannamalai's Annamalaiyar Temple complex in South India, who were so transfigured in the tantric ecstasy of the divine fire of cosmic energy that the fire literally radiated from their eyes and their auras were so heightened that you could feel the heat they were radiating as a separate and disembodied counterpart to the flames flickering in the mouth of the Goddess – the active feminine energy of Shiva. In this feminine embodiment of a male deity you have the twin poles of the manifest and unmanifest that underscore most hermetic systems from Gnosis to Taoism, Sufism and Tantra. And it is the action of the twin poles of a hermaphroditic consciousness that gradually pulls us into dialogue with the un-manifest – a process of letting go – that opens us up to the cacophony of sound and colour, and a more abstract semiotics of the unmade that lies just behind our assumptions of the reality principle, or codex (for which read: conditioned experience):

The *experience* – that was the word!... none of the great founded religions... began with a philosophical framework or even a main idea. They all began with an overwhelming *new experience*, what Joachim Wach called 'the experience of the holy,' and Max Weber, 'possession of the deity,' the sense of being a vessel of the divine... an ecstasy, in short... Zoroaster hauling haoma water along the road and – *flash!* – he runs into the flaming form of Archangel Vohu Mano, messenger of



Georgiana Houghton

Flower of Samuel Warrand, 1862

Watercolour and gouache on paper laid on board with pen and ink inscription on verso, 32.6 x 23.7cm



Georgiana Houghton

The Holy Trinity, 1861

Watercolour and gouache on paper laid on board with pen and ink inscription on verso, 32.6 x 23.7cm

Ahura Mazda, and the beginning of Zoroastrianism. Saul of Tarsas walking along the road to Damascus and – *flash!* – he hears the voice of the Lord and becomes a Christian. Plus God knows how many lesser figures in the 2,000 years since then. Christian Rosenkreuz and his “God-illuminated” brotherhood of Rosicrucians, Emanuel Swedenborg whose mind suddenly ‘opened’ in 1743, Meister Eckhart and his disciples Suso and Tauler, and in the twentieth-century Sadhu Sundar Singh – with – *flash!* – a vision at the age of 16 and many times thereafter: “...often when I come out of ecstasy I think the whole world must be blind not to see what I see, everything is so near and clear... there is no language which will express the things which I see and hear in the spiritual world...”⁴

Georgiana Houghton (1814–84) is one of these lesser figures. She is a largely forgotten spirit medium, and spirit artist, who between 1861 and 1871 produced ‘automatic’ or spontaneous watercolours on paper, while overshadowed by a disembodied spirit called Henry Lenny, and seventy archangels (who it transpired were on occasion the evolved forms of iconic figures such as Titian and Rembrandt). Georgiana in her own deeply personal way anticipated both the automatic drawing that was to become more ‘systematised’ under Breton and the Surrealists, and the theosophically inspired abstraction of Kandinsky. But perhaps more important than art-historical chronology, is the ‘break with’ or alternative to systematised automatism that she represents.

Houghton began by drawing so-called ‘spirit flowers’, to represent the unseen bodies or aspects of family members, such as her deceased uncle Samuel Warrand (*Flower of Samuel Warrand*,



Georgiana Houghton

The Eye of the Lord, 1866

Watercolour and gouache on paper laid on board with pen and ink inscription on verso, 32.7 x 23.8cm

1862). In fact the spirit flower of her deceased uncle Samuel would be one of the last of these flowers. As in 1861, with the advent of Henry Lenny as her spirit guide, she made the important transition to what she terms ‘sacred symbolism’, with the work *The Holy Trinity* (1861). Here you have a clear example of the shift invoked when an artist steps out of the way. If we look merely at the theophany of colour, let alone the sheer complexity of line evoked, the visceral propensity of the work becomes what I would term ‘post-rational’. What I mean, or would lay claim to with this assertion, is that whereas with her ‘spirit flowers’ I can stand back and bear objective witness to their qualities of light, colour and form, albeit tinged with a hermetic quality, with the works that supersede the flowers that is no longer an option. Love or loathe them, you are carried along by their logic and their sheer brazen displays of epiphanic constellation, and a whole world of non-corporeal being that lie mirrored in their obverse sides.⁵ These obverse sides become increasingly potent and reveal the presence of various angelic messengers, not unlike the *Masters of the Wisdom* of later theosophical tradition. Helena Petrovna Blavatsky, one of the founders of the Theosophical Society (and a former spirit medium herself) was overshadowed, or in dialogue with, a number of disembodied Masters, usually human beings who had gone further along the evolutionary ladder than most, and who remained voluntarily in service to our continued Earth-bound evolution.

When understood from this historical/esoteric point of view it becomes less surprising that Houghton would be channelling Titian, for example in *The Eye of the Lord* (1866 – various works from this period bear messages from or testament to their

disembodied progenitors on the reverse). What perhaps is more interesting is the blurring of agency and the subject position, not just between Houghton and Titian, but I would argue between Houghton, Titian and the viewer. For in displacing her own subject position, an open circuit is left for the viewer to complete, and so a shared theophany is enacted, which empowers and invites the viewer as an equal:

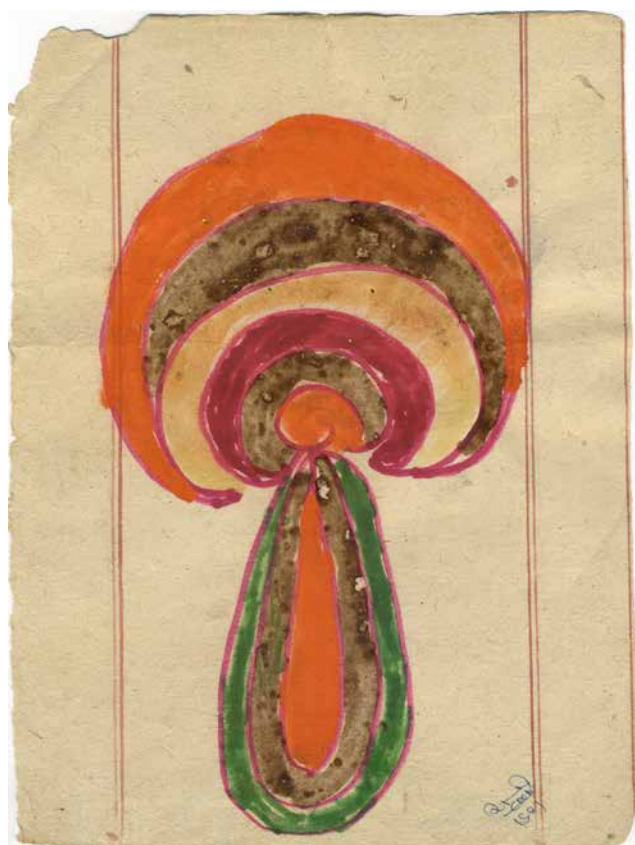
On one side of him are ranged hosts of beings who are more than human, and who, in past kalpas⁶, reached and passed the stage where man now is; on the other side are hosts of the subhuman evolutions who in future kalpas will achieve the stage of humanity. Man stands midway between the two, and is at the point of balance; herein lies his problem. He does not partake wholly of the material side of evolution, nor is he wholly the expression of the third Logos, the Brahma aspect of the Deity, Who is an expression of pure energy or intelligence, motivating that tenuous something which we call substance. He is not wholly Spirit, the expression of the first Logos, the Mahadeva aspect, which is an expression of pure will or necessitous desire, impelling to manifestation. It is the fundamental motive itself or the great will to be. Man is a product of the union of the two; he is the meeting place of matter or active intelligent substance, and of Spirit or the basic will. He is the child born of their marriage or at-one-ment. He assumes objectivity in order to express that which is in each of the two opposites, plus the result of their merging in himself.⁷

One of the key elements of practices of this kind,⁸ is their disregard for time or context: a kind of trans-historical internationalism *par excellence*. As such I find the nearest qualitative (rather than formal) parallel to Houghton in the work of Acharya Vyakul (1930–2000). Acharya Ram Charan Sharma or 'Vyakul' (literally 'the excited one' in Sanskrit) was a tantric practitioner, artist and founder of the Museum of Indology (although 'artist' might not

be a term he would have initially sought or applied to himself, as his work only began to be exhibited within the context of contemporary art in the late 1980s, when he was already well into his 60s). The treatment of his work was not really considered for archival purposes, using pigment directly onto rough pieces of paper, often torn carelessly from larger notebooks. It is also worth noting the import of pure pigment in ritual and as signifier in both tantric and wider Hindu ritual: saffron, for example, represents fire, and by extension both purity and abstinence (as impurities are burnt in fire, so saffron-coloured clothing indicates a search for both inner light and vision). He also made his own pigments from whatever he could find: plant material, coffee grounds, lipstick, cow's piss and coal, when he felt overwhelmed by the need to make images (apparently only a few days a year).

Colour then is a prime mover in Vyakul, and it is this primacy that steals one's attention immediately, and then leads the waking mind into rabbit holes of its own confection. Whether sacred hedgehogs or divine mushrooms: a kind of psilocybin-lingam of post-rational delight. Here as in the left-hand path⁹ *par excellence* there are traps and pitfalls for the unwary, delicate blooms and butterflies to trick one into easy utopias of the senses and fill one's mind with the dream of the lotus-eater. In fact it is this danger for the unwary that marks Vyakul out as a true tantric practitioner and adept. It would be a mistake to stop with colour and form, and not follow these works to their limit. Or perhaps more accurately to the viewer's limit or threshold for epiphanic rupture or the kind of shifting ground in the etheric and mental planes that is best described as a kind of radical non-subjectivity, in which the 'dots,' 'flowers' or geometric forms are just way stations.

In this way Vyakul truly is a kind of messenger of the gods, an intermediary or *Go-Between*, as curator Peter Lewis puts it, in his emphatic call to artists and curators to shed their fixed positions (their skins as it were):



Acharya Vyakul
Untitled, c. 1980s – '90s
Pigment on paper
16.5 x 24 cm

Acharya Vyakul
Untitled, c. 1980s – '90s
Pigment on paper
24 x 16.5 cm



Acharya Vyakul
Untitled, c. 1980s - '90s
 Pigment on paper, 16.2 x 21.2 cm

... artists and curators alike, equally so all of us, may uncover a universal truth in the eventual process of going between forms, contents, and their particular structures. Something like Lacan's variation of the 'cogito', "I think therefore I am" applies: "There where I think, I am not, and there where I am, I do not think". The confusion itself performs a liberation... This 'supplement' of refusal is committed to chance. Something is happening. Even right now as we read between the lines... the Go-Between stumbles across chance in the process of running

between orders, the memory of which may expire through the intensity and pleasure of the journey, but not without thought's active interference. "Thought can be raised up from its powerlessness only through something that exceeds the order of thought."¹⁰

The link to Hermes, or 'Hermes Trismegistus' is more than an abstract connection. The figure of Hermes Trismegistus, as mythical author of the *Asclepius* and *Corpus Hermeticum*, also known as the 'thrice great', is a figure that has confounded scholars for centuries: purported to be an Ancient Egyptian priest, and also an amalgam of Thoth and Hermes revered by certain mystery cults, it is now often supposed that his origin is Hellenistic Greek, rather than Egyptian. Regardless, the development of Hermeticism, which stems from the sacred texts attributed to him, and which developed in parallel with Gnosticism in the early common era, had a profound impact on Renaissance alchemy¹¹ – given that a large part of the *Hermetica* deals with transubstantiation, both from a philosophical and technical point of view.¹²

In the strange case of Acharya Vyakul, he began regularly ingesting small quantities of mercury as part of his tantric practice, and with the goal of higher vision (always a result of the union of opposites: at-one-ment, the resolution of the poles of matter and spirit, masculine and feminine) and longevity, which, it is supposed, led to his untimely death. Or perhaps allowed him, like many other adepts or teachers, to define the hour and medium of his passing.

It is worth sounding a cautionary note however, as the pull and fascination of an object or individual, equally represents



Annamalaiyar Temple, South India

a limit, or the erection of a barrier between the viewer and the unseen (i.e. becoming a representation or stand-in for it), by the creation of a need for that outward object or teacher as a means to liberation. One could take this further and suggest that the desire to represent in itself implies a deception, and it is only by embodying transformative potential that the artist or artwork can prove a useful intermediary to the viewer, and function as a key to a locked door. As such any revelation should be incorporated and then move on:

You speak of a vision of Siva. Vision is always of an object. That implies the existence of a subject. The value of the vision is the same as that of the seer. That is to say, the nature of the vision is on the same plane as that of the seer. Appearance implies disappearance also. Whatever appears must also disappear. A vision can never be eternal. But Siva is eternal.

The vision implies the seer. The seer cannot deny the existence of the Self. There is no moment when the Self as consciousness does not exist, nor can the seer remain apart from consciousness. This consciousness is the eternal being. The seer cannot see himself. Does he deny his existence because he cannot see himself with the eyes as in a vision? No. So Pratyaksha (direct experience) does not mean seeing, but being.¹³

These were Sri Ramana Maharshi's comments to a questioner asking after visions of Siva. Sri Ramana Maharshi performed his penance at the Annamalaiyar Temple in Tamil Nadu. I say this not just to introduce a biographical note about Maharshi's function as a possible avatar, but also to look at how the concept of the avatar provides a different way of addressing being. And how an alternate pictographic semiotics has evolved from this parallel perceptual field. One in which the function of Annamalaiyar, as

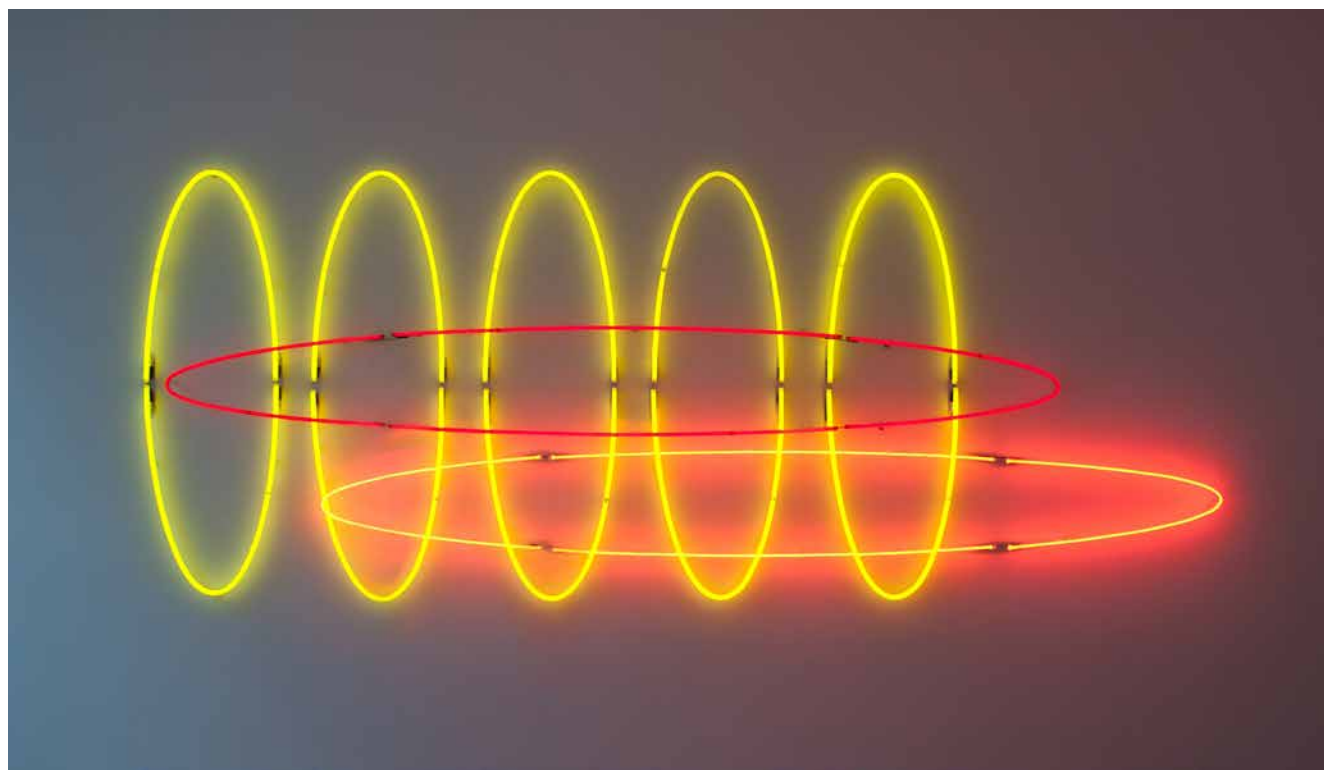


Shezad Dawood

The Black Sun, 2010

White circular neon on black surface, neon diameter 110 cm. Wall surface 250 x 325

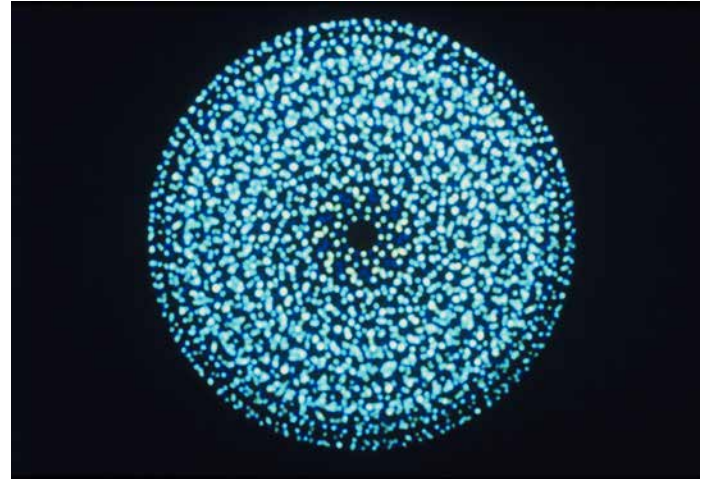
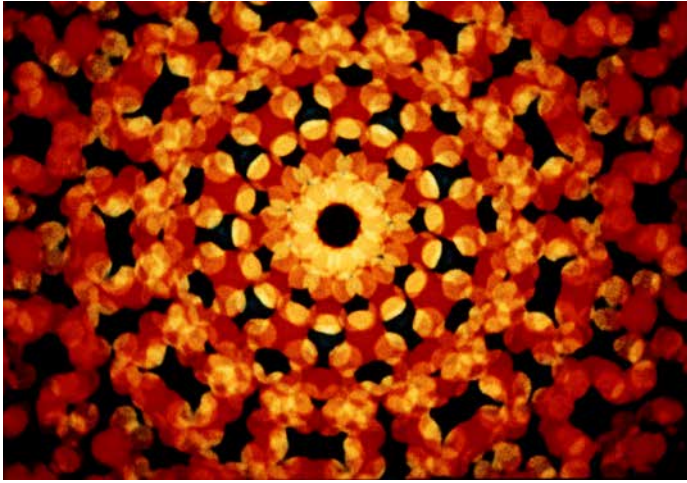
a three-dimensional mandala or yantra, uses drawing in space to act as a focus for mental and etheric energies. And so we are led onto frequency, and this is where I wish to depart from a more quotidian understanding of drawing and what it actually means. Drawing is about spatial or temporal configuration, whether this is in the drawing-notation of John Cage or the traction of line-light in my own neon tracings of ritual geometry and language as sign.



Shezad Dawood

Elliptical Variations II, 2014

Wall mounted neon, 160 x 400 cm



James Whitney
LAPIS (two film stills), 1966
 16mm film (colour, sound)

My own 'drawing' in neon is about the rapid and intuitive generating, and self-editing of archetypes: archetypes that both conform to a kind of primal geometry and also signify a certain threshold for ideas and an idea of the threshold itself. I use various practices from meditation to tai chi and qigong to try to step out of the way, and allow a certain automatism or higher mind to overtake intent, and generate form as computer-drawings (so an odd hybrid of hand and machine as divine interface). I keep working usually until ten or twelve drawings have emerged, or at least the rough outlines of colour and line. STOP. REPEAT. Usually it takes between thirty to seventy drawings for one of value to emerge that seems to transcend what I already know or recognise, and that presents the possibility for further consideration. In this way the practice starts to become both hermetic and generous. It is hermetic because the potential for transformation needs to be enacted internally first. If I am not transformed by my own work, how can it possibly open a door for others to walk through? Hence this idea of the threshold or border as a kind of aporia or upper limit where logic folds in on itself, and beyond which an alternate key is necessary to unlock the door, whatever form this might take (it constantly changes).

In drawing with neon, as with the use of colour in any drawing, you are investigating the perceptual field and the affect of colour both individually and in combination. What for me links neon with a type of mediumistic drawing is the effect whereby the glow and retinal retention of colour and line in the eye of the viewing subject reveals and illuminates the mechanism of perception itself. Again this would propose certain practices as a circuit that requires the viewer to complete their specific feedback loop or transmission.

A parallel 'drawing in light' is also performed by figures as diverse as Len Lye (1901–80) or James Whitney (1922–82) in the field of experimental film¹⁴. We should not forget that there is an indelible link between drawing and movement that goes back to its earliest known origins. The animating principle, or underlying animism in cave paintings is merely one of the first modes of mirroring (or reflecting) something of the earliest aspiration to pierce the veil of everyday reality – in order to understand the semiotic and symbolic codes that run behind and beneath it. The illuminating principle of the unseen quite literally overpowers and unveils our sight. This vision or temporary ecstasy is something deeply troubling to our

Euclidean vision of the world, yet always oscillating at the edge of its frame. We know there is more, and this is the very tension of our being at the midway point of evolution in our system: halfway between the poles of matter and pure spirit. The multidimensional and quantum being that is our terrifying destiny: able to see and be inhabited by beings for whom we have not only no name, but no frame: the archangels of divine ecstasy that reveal the abstract field of the threshold.

After 1942 Whitney became increasingly interested in such diverse systems as Jungian psychology, Taoism, alchemy and the writings and lectures of Krishnamurti.¹⁵ And this idea of a ritual practice entered more and more into the increasingly labour-intensive process behind his films. *Yantra* took eight years to complete between 1950 and 1958, and was produced by making patterned grids in 13 x 18 cm cards by painstakingly perforating them with a pin. He then painted through the holes onto a second series of cards, thereby creating serial imagery with an incredible layered depth and movement. A kind of dance begun through the ritual process of mark-making, which was in turn further transformed through hand-processing and solarisation.

Lapis (1965) is the alchemical film par excellence, and follows a similar process of layering hand-painted dots. However, this time the process took only two years (1963–1965), thanks to the help of analogue computer equipment developed by his brother John (also a film-maker in his own right, and a collaborator on some of their earliest films). *Lapis* takes the viewer through a personal vortex of colour associations, as the pale blue of the sea gives way to mandalas of red and green, which, superimposed, yield to purple and are annihilated over and over again, first with a white and then a black frame – all the while charging the retina with after-images that further multiply the range and effect of colour. In a constant cycle of death and rebirth, creation and negation do their infinite dance and hint at the true function of the Philosopher's stone of classical alchemical and hermetic lore. The dynamic interpenetration of the disciple by forces both spiritual and material resolves these seeming opposites into the body of light of the true initiate.

In an interesting parallel to the other key adepts charted through this paper, Whitney also maintained parallel practices in sumi brush painting and was an exquisite potter and ceramicist, with

a particular interest in raku – all ritualistic practices in their own fashion. In particular, one can feel a very similar aspiration and movement in both his films and brush paintings, as both are very concerned with an almost retina-like circular form (or orb: see Whitney's film *Dwija*, 1973¹⁶), made up or encircled by dots or artefacts in the visual field, that further fragment the form, and which gives rise to a sensation of seeing beyond the quotidian visual spectrum. Or possibly even seeing the quotidian field of view mirrored and re-projected onto the retina of the viewer, in a kind of transcendental inversion which further reconfigures our concept of vision.

It is no surprise that these moments come from sustained and at times repetitive practice, as is the case with Whitney's ritual method of individually piercing frames as a kind of mantra or repetitive trance device. Or in moments of self-forgetting, such as the vision that occurred to Beat writer and artist Brion Gysin (1916–86) while on a bus in France:

Had a transcendental storm of colour visions today in the bus going to Marseilles.

We ran though a long avenue of trees and I close my eyes against the setting sun.

An overwhelming flood of intensely bright colours exploded behind my eyelids: a multi-dimensional kaleidoscope whirling out through space. I was swept out of time.

I was out in a world of infinite number. The vision stopped abruptly as we left the trees.

Was that a vision? What happened to me?¹⁷

This epiphanic moment happened while Gysin's eyes were shut. Much has been made of this lightbulb moment in the development of his *Dream Machine* (created along with computer programmer



Maya Deren

Meshes of the Afternoon, (film still)

1943, USA, 16mm, B&W, optical sound, 15minutes

and engineer Ian Sommerville), which utilises a bare lightbulb, within a cardboard cylinder – with a pattern cut out – that revolves on a 78 rpm turntable. The function of the pattern is to create intermittent pulses of light that induce *flicker*: a symptom that generates alpha waves in the brain leading to vision akin to that in deep meditation or dream sleep. The machine was a tool for visionary experience or the unconscious to overtake the rational Euclidean field. The effectiveness of the whole operation of the *Dream Machine* is predicated on the viewer's eyes being shut, in a neat correlation with the collapse of subjective agency in dream sleep or true meditative states. And the function of pattern in the successful operation of the machine seems to me both active agency and its result: both affect and effect in the way it stimulates alpha waves, and simultaneously suggests the distortion of the visual field witnessed by the viewer.

Gysin's use of pattern in his drawings and roller-ink and photo-collages, and in the cylinders used in his *Dream Machines*, owe not only a debt to the looping repetition synonymous with Japanese and Arabic calligraphy, the grid and Sufi ritual, as well as to Gysin's vaunted 'cut-up technique' (a form of random image and text generation that may or may not have evolved from his ejection by Breton from the Surrealists for self-professed insubordination). What seems to hold true is this semi-permeable membrane whereby drawing and movement dance across the border between the sacred and the profane, and the object itself seems merely an arbitrary border or way station. Like the title of Maya Deren and Alexander Hammid's film *Meshes of the Afternoon* (1943), it points to the very thin gauze that surrounds the perception of the material world, and behind which stands the unbounded world of spirit.

I don't wish to get bogged down in a futile attempt to define the nature and form of spirit beyond matter, as that is the point: it cannot be known, held or comprehended by mortal faculties. I am a strong believer that only a highly developed vessel can begin to peek behind that curtain, but where we get close to an understanding of it is in this relation between drawing and movement and the urge (or will) that animates them. Again for me, drawing and film are essentially linked, and more so than we generally make allowance for. Add to this a notion of collaboration, that might move into the arena of shared consciousness or collective loss of self (for which read: ritual), and you get an idea of the motivations behind my *New Dream Machine Project*.

I wished to pick up Gysin's legacy, which had had a long and sustained impact on my thinking and writing, and revisit both



Brion Gysin

Calligraphy, 1962

Watercolour and ink on paper, 24.5 x 20.5 cm



Shezad Dawood *New Dream Machine Project*, (film still), 2011. Super 16 mm transferred to HD, 15 minutes

his time in Morocco, and the many other artists and scientists who had weighed in with their contributions to the possible affect of the dream machine subsequent to Gysin. So in essence bearing witness to a number of ghosts (Geist), that might join me on a journey across my own time in Morocco, and a new set of conversations and collaborations in the present: the theophany of a collective action. My quasi-homage to Gysin became an improvisation in the past and the present simultaneously that involved a giant 3-metre-tall industrial-scale dream machine (Gysin's had been approximately 70 cm tall), installed on the stage at the Cinémathèque de Tanger (at the kind invitation of Yto Barrada), and a live performance in the round involving the current incarnation of the Master Musicians of Jajouka (some of

whom were the original members who had performed at Gysin and Mohamed Hamri's 1001 Nights café in Tangiers in the 1960s) and cult English guitarist Duke Garwood.

The improvisation (I had only introduced the musical artists the night before) became in itself an unintended three-hour theophany, where performers and audience and even film crew all danced around each other, in an eruption of sound and light (which I like to think even the spirits of the dead or absent friends entered into). I like to think then that the medium is always drawing, or dancing. For it is this shared idea of animus, the inhabiting principle that impels a certain quality of drawing into movement, and from which drawing in turn is born.

Notes

- 1 These include exhibitions at: Museum voor Moderna Kunst, Arnhem (2010), Moderna Museet, Stockholm (2013) and Serpentine Gallery, London (2016)
- 2 Rudolf Steiner was a major influence on Hilma af Klint's later work.
- 3 There is an odd parallel here to Klint's request that her work not be shown until twenty years after her death. Only Deren's book *Divine Horsemen: The Voodoo Gods of Haiti* (1953) was released in her lifetime.
- 4 Wolfe, T. (1989), *The Electric Kool-aid Acid Test*. London: Black Swan, pp.116–7.
- 5 I am reminded here of the clue provided in William Blake: 'What Fearful hand or eye/ Could frame thy fearful symmetry' (*The Tyger*, from *Songs Of Experience*, 1794).
- 6 Kalpa is a Sanskrit word meaning an aeon, or a relatively long period of time (by human calculation) in Hindu and Buddhist cosmology.
- 7 Bailey, A (1951), *A Treatise on Cosmic Fire* - Section Two - Introductory Questions Part 1, London/New York: Lucis Trust. Available online: https://www.lucistrust.org/online_books/a_treatise_on_cosmic_fire_obooks/section_two_the_fire_mind_solar_fire/introductory_questions_part1
- 8 'Practice' may not be the most accurate term: perhaps 'need', as a systemic rather than an individual creative urge, is more appropriate.
- 9 The left hand path in Hinduism (from which its association in Buddhism springs), is most closely associated with tantric practices, and is often seen as a shorter, if more unorthodox (or even extreme) path to spiritual attainment, often aligned with shakti or goddess worship.
- 10 Lewis, P (2005), 'Go Between' in *Go Between* (exh. cat.). Frankfurt: Revolver Press, pp. 20–21. Curator and artist Peter Lewis is the publisher of online research journal */seconds*, was Senior Lecturer in curating at Goldsmiths college 2000–2003, and chief curator of Sharjah Biennial 6 in 2003.
- 11 Islamic alchemy often connects Hermes Trismegistus to the infallible prophet Idris.
- 12 There is some overlap between hermeticism, tantra and alchemy, in that the true inner work of all three was the transubstantiation of the body and mental apparatus of the adept or initiate.
- 13 Godman, D. (ed.) (1988), *Be As You Are: The Teachings of Sri Ramana Maharshi*. London: Arkana, p.164
- 14 Len Lye was born in Christchurch, New Zealand and James Whitney in Altadena, California.
- 15 Similar influences also informed the work of fellow Californian Jordan Belson, whose films *Mandala* (1953), and *Raga* (1958) it is worth mentioning here. Whitney and Belson are seen as key figures in the field of 'visual music': where musical structure is used to inform, or is converted directly into visual imagery.
- 16 *Dwija* (1973), by James Whitney, uses the Sanskrit term meaning 'twice-born' or 'bird' as its title, to effect a very particular notion of rebirth in Hindu and Buddhist cosmologies. And functions as a cipher for the alchemical process by enacting the transubstantiation of sound into colour, and light into form. The work uses solarisation and re-photographed rear-projection to enact this continual flow of doubling, of the central motif of an orb-like vessel, which in itself becomes a stand-in for the cosmic egg, of both Chinese and Indian creation myths.
- 17 Extract from the diary of Brion Gysin on 21 December 1958, in: Gysin, B. (1992), *Dreamachine Plans*, London: Temple Press

Tantric imagery: affinities with twentieth-century abstract art

Virginia Whiles

Western curiosity with the esoteric mysticism and unique imagery of Tantra has been illuminated by several recent exhibitions and by R.K. Mookerjee's books *Tantra Art and Tantra Asana*.

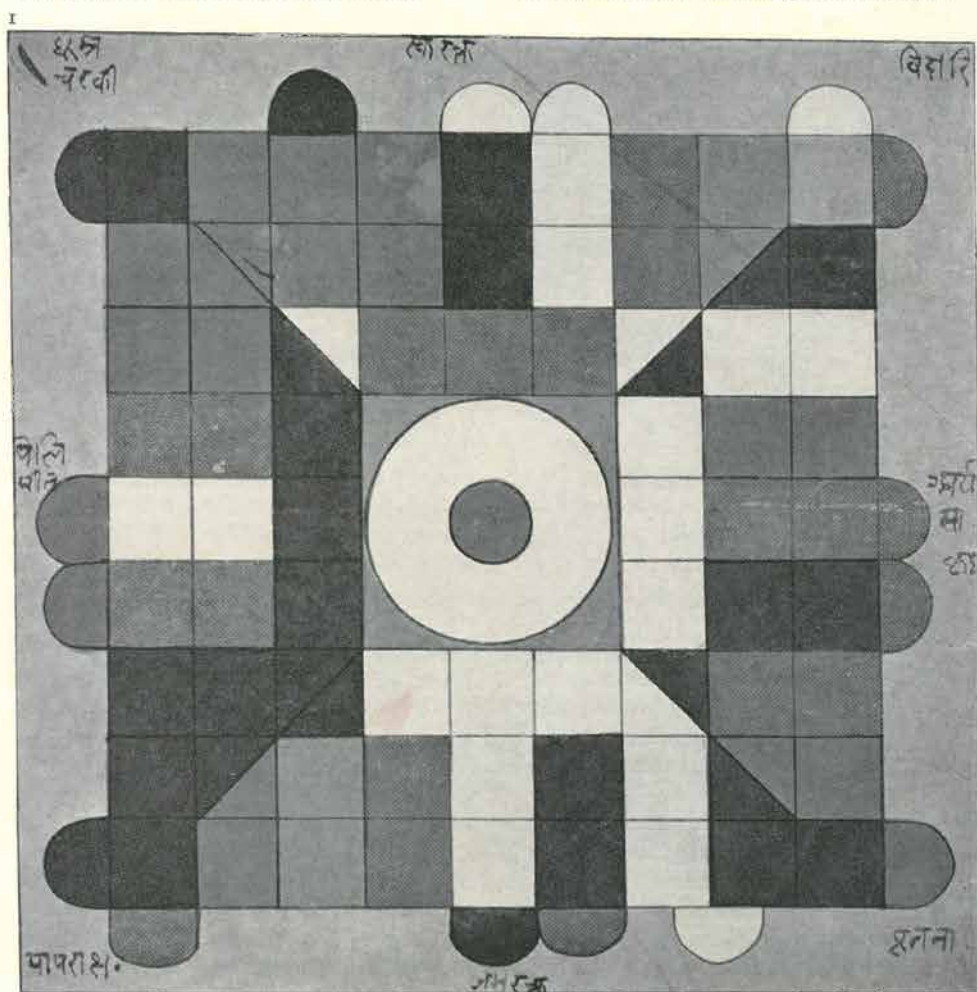
This commentary contains essentially conjectural analogies between Tantric imagery and its pictorial affinities with western abstract art. Similarities in form suggest comparisons in content. However, to correlate elements of Tantric philosophy with certain metaphysical preoccupations in twentieth-century abstract art is dubious, simply because of the fundamental differences in the aims and environment of two creative languages.

Tantric imagery is a system of signs within a very specific semantic code, the function of

the occidental understanding of the term. Tantric images are described as 'tools, aids, visual supports or psychological apparatus', used to evoke divinities, which, through supreme concentration during meditation, help the Yogin to visualize Ultimate Reality, Enlightenment, or *Nirvan*.

Yantras are 'power diagrams', of an abstract, geometrical or figurative nature, which reveal the underlying structure of the universe. In order to interpret them, it is important to understand the philosophical context of the imagery.

The term *Tantra* comes from its Sanskrit roots: *tan* = 'to expand in continuing, unfolding process', and *tra* = 'tool'. Therefore, *Tantra* = 'that which extends knowledge'. It developed



which is essentially religious and spiritual. It follows a strict iconographical canon which involves the fusion of the collective and individual consciousness. Western abstract art manifests a deliberate activity based on individual consciousness, which is free from a collective sign system. It is concerned with the individualization of creative activity rather than with the communication of a collective belief. Whereas Tantric symbols have a specific function, those in abstract art conceive of form as content, so any attempt to correlate the spiritual implications of the two can only be hypothetical and incidental.

It is erroneous to call Tantric imagery 'art' in

from Mahayana Buddhism and Vedanta Hinduism, and first appeared as an ideological sect during the fourth century AD in north-east India, and gradually influenced Yoga from the sixth century onwards. It flourished particularly during the tenth to twelfth centuries AD, from Nalanda in Bengal. Tantra owed much to early *Jain* texts on astronomy and astrology for its extraordinarily expansive cosmogony. Its aim is, by way of essentially 'living' rites, to reach enlightenment in one life and to avoid the endless cycle of rebirths. The emphasis is on 'psycho-experimental' methods, involving highly complex rituals of a physiological and occult nature under what Bharati has called

1. *Astronomical Computation*
Painting, Tangra, c. eighteenth century
Courtesy: Ravi Kumar
2. *Devi Ambika*
from an illuminated manuscript
Rajasthan, c. seventeenth century
Private coll. Courtesy: Ravi Kumar

॥ श्री अंबिकादेवता



'laboratory-like' conditions.¹

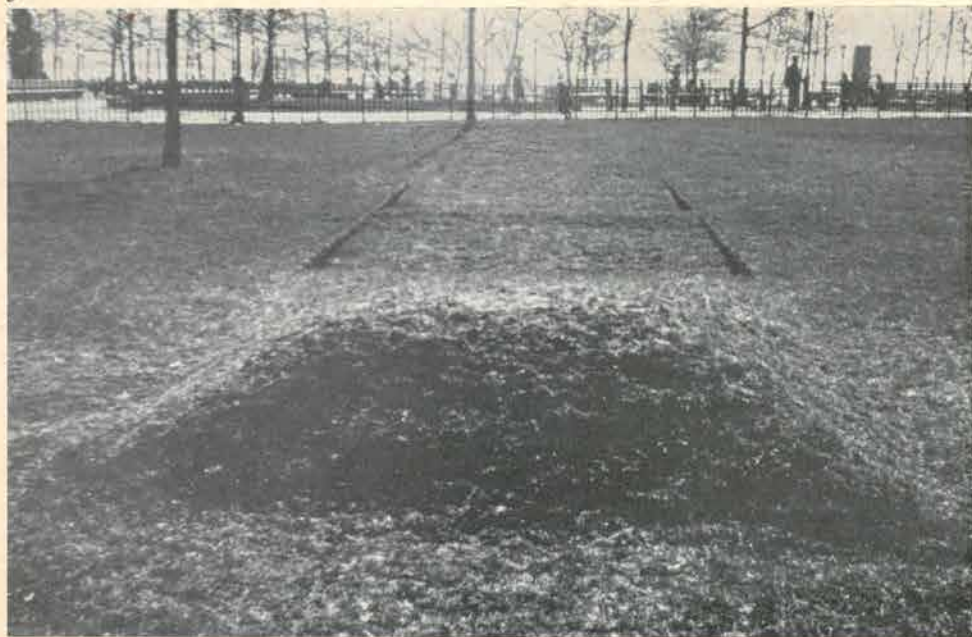
'The flesh, the living cosmos and time are the three fundamentals of Tantric *Sadhana*.'² *Sadhana*, or ritual, involves the analogy between the 'gross' (flesh) and the 'subtle' (divine) bodies. Employing Hatha Yoga, combining the use of *Asanas*, *Mudras*, *Mantras* and *Yantras*, the stress is on a practical, experiential exercise, using the vehicles of the heart and sexuality rather than the traditional ascetic or speculative approach. The aim of the Yogin is, via this *Sadhana*, to understand the structure of self and thereby the structure of the universe, microcosm-macrocosm; to realize the Oneness of All by the uniting of opposites (or

complementaries) within the self.

The physiological ritual is directed towards awakening the slumbering *Sakti* (the dormant female creative impulse symbolized by the *Kundalini*) and to raise this through various energy centres (the seven *Chakras*) situated in the body along the *Sushumna* or central nerve chord, to join finally with *Purusha* (the male formless supreme consciousness) in the *Sahasrara* (the topmost part of the head symbolized by the thousand-petalled lotus) and thereby realize *Ananda*: joy, bliss, *Nirvan*, realized in *Advaya*: absolute union of opposites, which is illustrated by the union of *Siva* and *Sakti* (male and female). The sexual ritual—

Maithuna—signifies the 'integration of principles', the union of the soul with the divine. During this final stage of a long, complex ritual, experience of the transcendental unity of opposites is realized by the simultaneous immobility of breath, semen and thought. The ritual symbolizes the rise from the limitations of *Maya*³ towards understanding Supreme Reality.⁴

Tantric doctors rejected the Brahmanic tradition as inadequate and returned to the pre-Vedic cult of the Great Goddess, *Sakti*, the Divine Mother embodied as the mystery of creation. They felt this step to be essential in relation to the *Kali-Yuga* spirit: the contemporary



3 Richard Long
Old Sod 1969
 Completed earthworks projected at a site in
 Battery Park, NYC
 4 *Asanas*
 from an illuminated palm-leaf manuscript
 Orissa, c. seventeenth century
 Private coll. Courtesy: Ravi Kumar

dark-age spirit obliging man to search for truth within the experience of his fallen condition.

Within the 'Living' Rite there are two schools of thought: the 'Left-Handed' ritual (*Vamacara*) which is the path of extreme hazard involving literal engagement in the Five Ms⁵, including *Maithuna*; the 'Right-Handed' Ritual (*Dakṣinacara*) which is the moderate path involving metaphorical engagement with the Five Ms.

6. Tantra is linked with Zen via Mahayana Buddhism: for example, the 'direct-pointing' method of Zen is basically similar to the intensive 'short-cut to redemption' method of Tantrism. Both schools of practice have evolved from the Mahayana Buddhist premise that *Nirvan* (enlightenment) springs from *Samsara* (existence). This is based on a philosophy of the illusion of opposites or contraries; thus, Buddhahood may be equated with Supreme Immortality because only the universal Void is, everything else is without ontological reality.

Tantra has certain parallels with the western Mysterio-Sophic current, going back to a confluence of Gnosticism, Hermetism, Greco-Egyptian alchemy and the ancient Greek Mysteries. Their common insistence on the esotericism of doctrine is similar to Tantric secrecy and complex initiation rites. Similar to the eastern concept of *Maya* is the western mystic belief that the phenomenal world reveals only partial reality. Other analogous ideas include the knowledge of the divine by initiative rather than reason; the aim to unite the duality of man, the unity of opposites towards identity with the universal self and the reintegration of the subject-object dichotomy.⁶

Language in Tantra is intentionally negative and ambiguous to ensure the potency and secrecy of its content for the initiate. It employs the notion of destruction and re-invention as a mental exercise to create a paradoxical situation for the Yogin (similar to Zen in which bizarre imagery is used to shock the disciple

into direct experiential realization). Such language is used to rediscover the state of completeness that preceded conventional language and consciousness of time. The use of *Mantra*⁷ is of basic importance in the ritual.

'Whatever is pronounced in *Mantra* is an event... words are deeds...'⁸

Repetition is important in *Mantra*: *japping*, or constant chanting, 'empties the mind for higher experience'.⁹

Within a general framework of metaphysical analogy, I propose to use three specific Tantric concepts as a basis for a pictorial comparison with twentieth-century abstract art. These three concepts are: the reductive imagery of *Yantra* diagrams, negative language and the use of repetition.

The *Mandala* is perhaps the most familiar form of *Yantra* to western perception. It is a cosmological diagram of the universe, a geometric projection of the world reduced to an essential pattern. Like all *Yantras*, it is a tool used as an aid to meditation. 'A mandala is indeed the All as reflected in the ego.'¹⁰ Jung recognized the mandala as an archetypal image, born of an interior 'naturally religious' impulse from the 'collective unconscious'.¹¹ He used the word to designate a symbolic representation of the 'nuclear atom' in the human psyche.

Reflected in patients' dreams, or drawn afterwards, the mandala acted as a protective place preventing disintegration of the psyche and producing sensations of harmony. Tantric thought follows the traditional Hindu and Buddhist practice of regarding the mandala as the 'sacred domain of the gods'. However, Jung suggests that the central deity is replaced in such 'modern' mandalas by the 'Wholeness of Man'.¹¹

This archetypal imagery of the unconscious may suggest a hypothetical link between the primary forms favoured by western abstract artists and the geometric diagrams of Tantra. Jung's concept of the 'Wholeness of Man'

implies mystical connotations which would probably be questioned by contemporary artists. A brief study of the purist element in abstract art over the last sixty years may suggest alternative replacements for the 'deity in the mandala', i.e. the content.

The essential concern of the recent formalist, minimalist and systemic movements is that of reduction, wholeness and primary form. The direction is towards defining the essence via the disposal of what is redundant. In Tantra, the functional structure of an object is described as its *Yantra*, the aim of which is to help meditation on the Void. Dynamics in *Yantras* depict the eternal flux of opposites, of active and passive movement. This is symbolized by the interaction of male and female triangles which eventually unite in the *Bindu*: the nucleus symbolizing the union of all opposites such as zero and infinity, creation and destruction, subject and object.

Certain aspects of contemporary abstract art tend to reject the hierarchy of parts and the interplay of relationships in order to sustain an indissoluble whole. 'Things in their elements, not in their relations' (Andre). 'Primary structure... a vehicle for the fusion of distinct parts into an indivisible whole, for the incorporation of order and disorder' (Judd). The emphasis is on the absolutism of the object (Minimalists) or the specificity of the experience (Process Art and Earthworks). The focus is on the immediate, the Now. For example, Flavin has said that his work synonymizes 'its past, present and future states without recurring a loss of relevance', a concept epitomized by Robert Morris's work, *Box with the sound of its own making*, which integrates the process with the object. Earthworks exist in the present tense as their removal entails their destruction. This preoccupation with the present is reflected by Cage: 'Contemporary music is not the music of the future, nor the music of the past, but simply music present with us, this moment



now. This now moment.' Such statements parallel the Tantric and the Zen concept of time: that only one single moment is actual, the Now. 'The past exists in its memory and the future exists in its anticipation and both of these are Now, for when the world is inspected directly and clearly, past and future times are nowhere to be found.' (Watts)¹²

The aim of the *Yantra* is to reintegrate the Yogin with the essence of Being and Non-Being, with the Void. The minimalist, conceptualist ethos is orientated towards 'nothingness', towards the dematerialization of art, towards what E. Develing has described as 'the visual absence of something which nevertheless has a physical presence'.¹³ This is manifested not only in certain group names such as 'Nul' or 'Zero' but also in the concepts behind works such as Oldenburg's dug trench, *Placid City Monument*, of which it has been written: 'Its invisibility made it all the more visualizable'¹⁴; or LeWitt's buried cube at Texas Airport, the existence of which has to be taken completely on faith. The lack of content is the content. Such annihilistic attitudes towards the art object are summed up by Cage's maxim: 'There is no point or the point is nothing.' However similar these directions appear, any allusion towards a metaphysical analogy can only be superficial simply because the semantic precision defining the word 'void' in Tantric texts is not at all comparable to the nebulous concept of 'nothingness' iterated by the Minimalists.

The conceptualist character and the minimalist object have been further described as negative, repetitive, boring, detached, timeless. Both focus on a confrontation with the spectator, either by simply 'being', with the minimalist object, or by 'non-being' with the environmental, conceptual approach. By forcing such an engagement with the immediate, both attempt to overcome the subject-object duality. This may suggest qualities of Zen,

such as Direct-Pointing (*Chin-Chi*) via words or actions which can be either absurd or very ordinary; and *Tzu-San*, simply 'Being' or spontaneous naturalness, which is very similar to the Tantric concept of *Sahaja*: pure spontaneity which can only be apprehended through actual experience.¹⁴

A comparison of moods is easily prompted by such quotes as: 'My work has no more idea than a tree or a rock or a mountain or an ocean.' (Andre)

'The Blue mountains are of themselves Blue mountains, the white clouds are of themselves white clouds.' (Zenrin)

'Now the world is neither meaningful nor absurd, it simply is.' (Robbe-Grillet)

'We must concentrate on the very act of being.' (R. Morris)

Therefore, although a spiritual affinity with Zen Buddhism may be evoked by the concern with 'confrontation', any attempt to relate the latter to the more specific Tantric code would be more difficult.

Repetition of *Mantras* annuls the 'reality' of the secular world. Repetition of imagery employed in the reductive aesthetic of contemporary culture, including art, literature, music and film¹⁵, has a similar purpose: that of emphasizing the immediate and arresting time. 'It is repetition alone that has the power to isolate the present tense' (Kierkegaard).¹⁶ Such reiteration of time duration forces a confrontation between the object and the spectator in order to define the extent to which involvement promotes meaning. As Reinhardt optimistically suggested: '...forcing the spectator to penetrate beyond boredom to pure aesthetic enjoyment'; or as Robert Morris said: 'The visual significance of a work... is rather a function of our own perception of it...' But neither aesthetic enjoyment nor the perception of a process has anything in common with the aims of Tantric imagery.

Yantras have a very specific function to the

initiated. For the uninitiated, their symbolism can either be transcribed into amorphous linguistic analogies, or simply and understandably, on account of their vibrant patterns, purist shapes and primary colours, be appreciated for their pictorial affinities to western abstract painting. Instead of being 'art objects', they are via-media in the exercise of meditation on the Void. The 'art-objects' of Minimalists, Formalists, etc., are frequently declared to be 'via-media' in the exercise of changing perception. Does this exercise have metaphysical implications? Any attempt to relate the two creative forms would have to consider this question.

The 'modernist' aesthetic is inclined to reject earlier twentieth-century neo-Platonist theories of art and prefers to define its system without reference to external absolutes. However, there are certain contradictory phenomena which reveal a strong philosophical link between the contemporary 'reductive' element and earlier twentieth-century 'universalist' movements. A concern for both environment and communication, illustrated by the claim for a 'pro-public' art, is a direct extension of earlier ideals witnessed in such groups as the Suprematists, the Constructivists, Bauhaus and De Stijl.

There are several twentieth-century abstract artists whose work exhibits a formal quality of a very comparative nature to that of Tantric imagery. For example, the primordial ovoids of Brancusi's¹⁷ sculpture are very similar to Tantric *Brahmandas* or world eggs. Some of Delaunay's 'simultaneous compositions' of discs and spirals resemble certain *Kshetras* or cosmic field paintings in Tantra. Totally abstract *Kshetras* illustrating forces of energy or vibrations of sound and light, embody an atmosphere of passive exultation and contemplative presence evoked by the works of Rothko, Still, Reinhardt and Newman.¹⁸ However, the four antecedents of contemporary

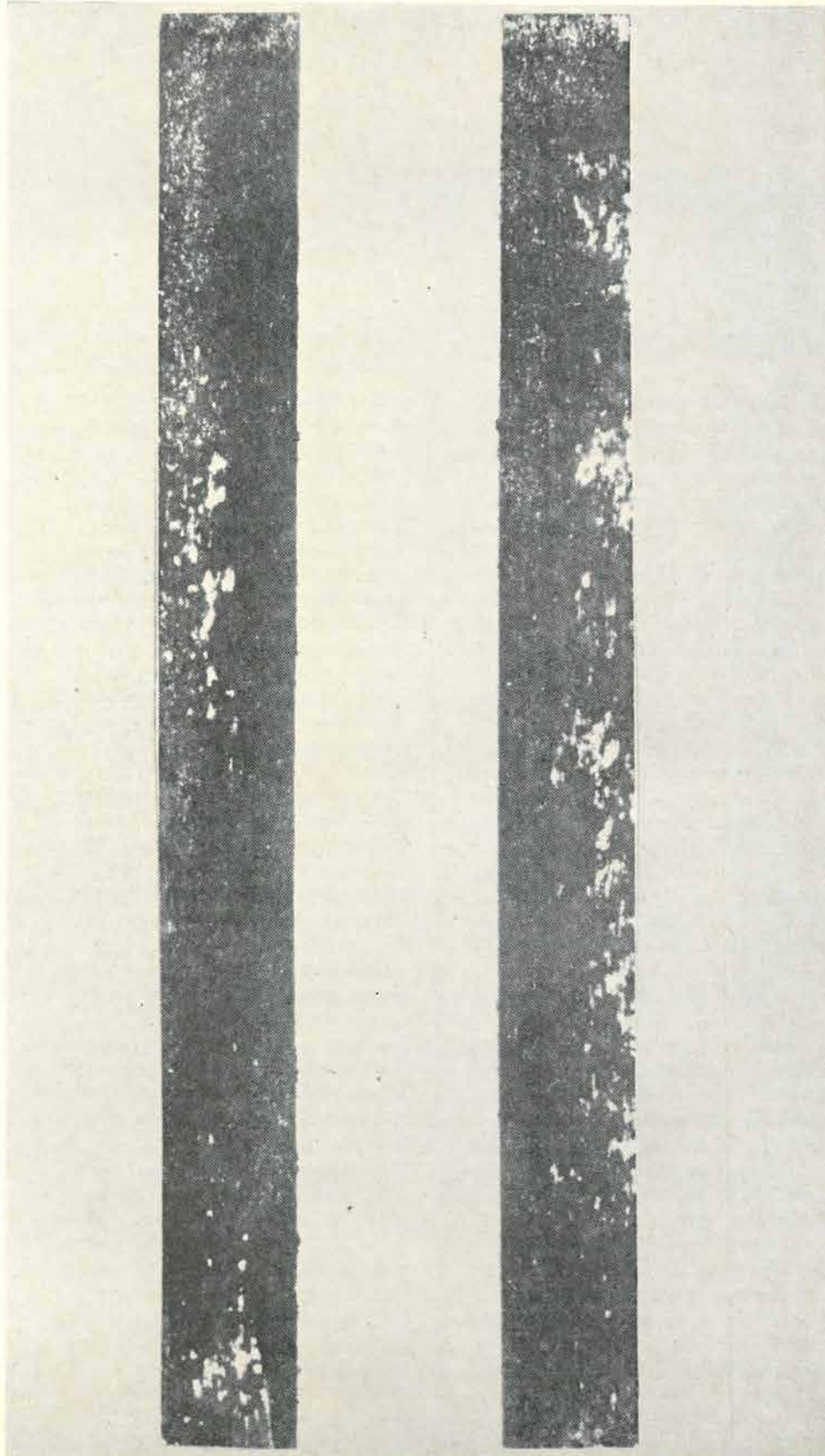
5 *Matrika Yantra*
 Painting
 Rajasthan, c. eighteenth century
 Private coll. Courtesy: Ravi Kumar
 6 Barnett Newman
Composition: Red White Black 1949
 Ink and gouache 21 × 7½ in.
 Coll: the artist

7 Mark Rothko
Sketch for Mural No. I 1958
 Oil on canvas
 105 × 120 in.
 Coll: the artist

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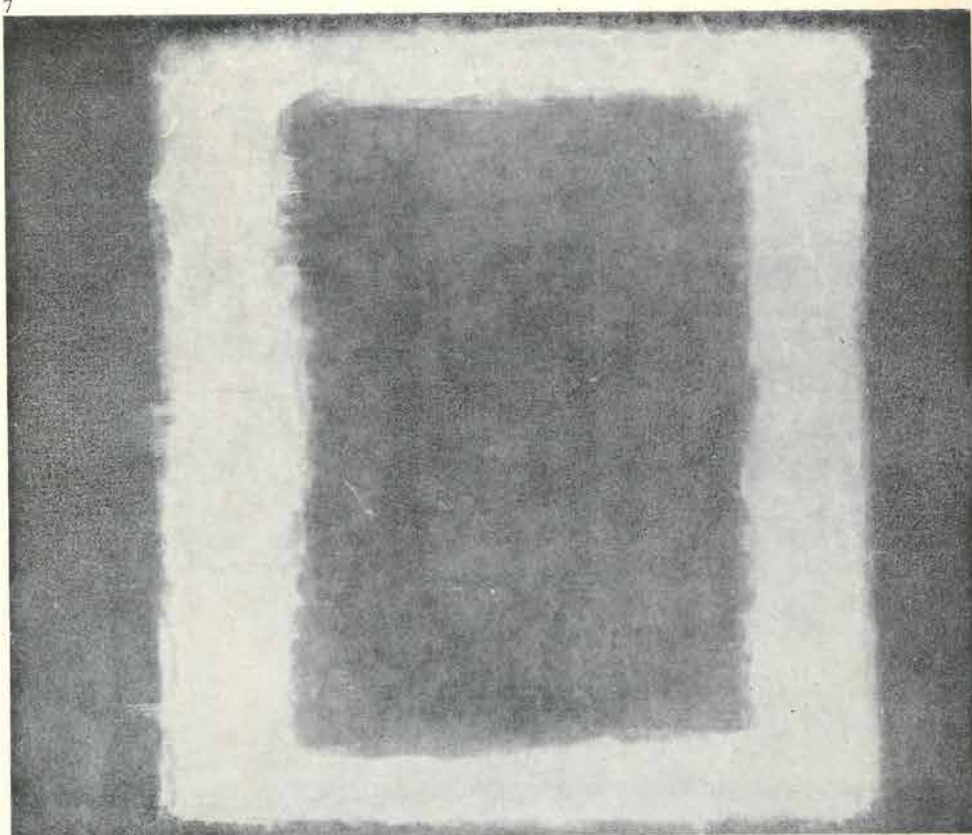


movements I have selected to discuss in particular (Malevich, Kandinsky, Duchamp and Mondrian) not only reveal certain pictorial affinities with Tantra but also share a particular concern with the metaphysical. This concern is worth examination in view of its ostensible parallels with Tantric philosophy.

Possibly comparable to the Indian concept of *Maya* is Malevich's belief that conventional reality is illusion; his desire to restore a harmonious relationship between man and the universe is parallel to the Tantric aim of uniting microcosm and macrocosm. His Hegelian reasoning that the universe has no purpose, his Kantian theory that art is the only way to liberation as it possesses the 'purpose of purposelessness', both reflect 'Zen' characteristics which are also common to Tantric thought. Malevich's 'squares' and 'crosses' are formally comparable to basic *Yantras* in their reduction of content, ascetic lineation and visual clarity. His objects are in a sense archetypal symbols, not in the least ornamental; in themselves they are meaningless: feeling is the significant element. This is shown by such titles as *Feeling of Mystic Will*, *Feeling of Mystic Wave from Outer Space*. His concern for 'the mystery of the object in the non-objective world' is reflected in the Minimalist reverence for monuments: 'deliberate, static, primitivism amidst a simultaneous electric world'.¹⁹ Whether this can be related to Tantric imagery is doubtful. Contemporary interest in primitive archetypes is essentially experiential and deliberate; it is not nostalgic nor is it unconscious. As Robert Morris said: 'The similarity of specific forms is irrelevant. Grid patterns show up in Magdalenian cave painting. Context, intention and organization focus the differences.'

Duchamp's influence on the reductive element in contemporary art is somewhat different. His approach is seen as conceptual rather than mystical and by way of inspiration of the 'idea'. This influence is illustrated by LeWitt's comment: 'The idea is the machine that makes the work.' For Duchamp, the only modern idea is criticism; in a sense, his modern metaphor for the Void or the 'deity in the mandala' is criticism, in place of the absence of idea. Octavio Paz, in his lucid thesis on Duchamp,²⁰ compares the Tantric image of *Kali* devouring the universe to Duchamp's *Large Glass*. Paz suggests that both images represent the unveiling of conventional reality: *The Bride Stripped Bare* is synonymous with *Kali*'s destruction of *Maya*. His hypothesis is that whereas the significance of the Tantric myth is metaphysical, Duchamp's myth shows that criticism is the only possible modern idea. The volume of writing surrounding minimalist and conceptualist work might well imply a somewhat desperate desire to fill the western *horreur du vide* with classification of a chiefly critical kind. However, I feel the validity of Paz's analogy is questionable; again because the cultural environment and aims of the two

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images are totally different.

On another level, Duchamp's work suggests an incidental link with Tantra: his work demands active participation from the spectator. Like *Yantras*, Duchamp's objects require contemplation towards a sense of enlightenment. Earthworks also demand participation from the spectator but the essential significance lies in the process on the part of the artist. This emphasis on the experiential could be analogized with the essentially 'living' rite in Tantra. The Tantric concept of *Samsara*, or eternal flux, is reflected in the 'constant of change' aspect symbolized by Earthworks. It is a fundamental characteristic of twentieth-century abstract art and was epitomized earlier on in El Lissitzky's classic statement: '... The work represents a standstill of Becoming and not a static end.'²¹

Much of Mondrian's profoundly spiritual philosophy suggests tentative links with Tantric concepts. Inspired by the writings of Böhme, Brouwer and Schoenemaeker, Mondrian became very interested in Indian philosophy. He read Krishnamurti throughout his life and joined the Theosophical Society. Directly influenced by Schoenemaeker's 'Positive Mysticism', his work reflects the belief that the 'plastic' stands for 'spiritual'. It embodies principles such as the absolutism of

the universal and the reintegration of all dualities. Formally, Mondrian's paintings have a distinctly comparable concern to *Yantras*: the dynamic equilibrium of 'male' and 'female' opposites. Metaphysically, they operate on a similar principle: 'The Laws of Creation are of a mathematical order.'²² Mondrian's work was generated by a strong inner force, which manifested itself in a highly self-conscious plastic style, still concerned with the interrelationship of the parts.²³ This is not comparable to *Yantras*, which maintained a tradition of objective, diagrammatical illumination of Tantric texts.

Kandinsky's philosophy is also akin to eastern speculation. He too became very interested in Theosophy and more particularly in Rudolf Steiner's anthroposophical concepts. His work and writing reflect a concern with cosmogony which suggests comparison with Tantric theories. Tantra considers dimensions of space, time, sound and light. Its texts state that sound activates form via vibration, so that sound is a reflex of form and form is a product of sound; every thought or idea originates in sound. By creating patterns and curves, luminous sound makes the enclosure and definition of space possible. All objects are sounds of various densities and every object is a concentration of light in pattern—so forms

emerge in light. *Mantra* employs the power of sound vibrations. Sound creates light at a vibratory level because light is sound at a particular frequency; therefore every vibratory sound has a certain colour.²⁴ So all *Mantras* have a corresponding colour and form. Kandinsky was extremely interested in the symbolic associations of sound with form and colour: '... sound then is the soul of form which comes to life only through sound, from the inside out.' His ideas on the repetition of sound echo the Tantric concept of *Mantra*: 'The repetition of a word... will intensify the eternal structure and bring out unsuspected spiritual properties in the work itself. ... Frequent repetition... deprives the word of its external reference.'²⁵ Following his principle of 'inner necessity', forms have a sound of their own, as illustrated by the musical titles Kandinsky gave to his paintings.

The symbolism of his geometric forms is ostensibly similar to those of *Yantras*; for example, his interacting triangles 'with their particular spiritual perfume'²⁶, his use of circles for their integrating properties, 'the synthesis of opposites', combining the static

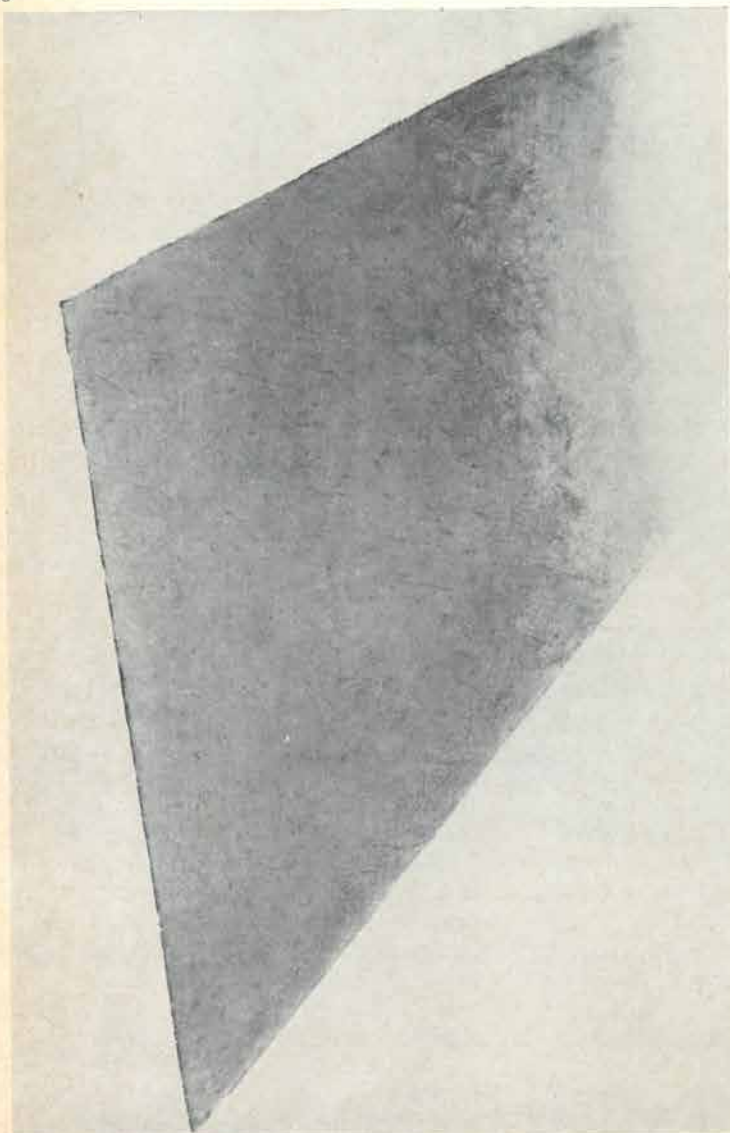
with the potentially dynamic. He associates colours with forms to evoke psychological effects. This practice suggests a strong influence, both philosophically and pictorially, from the psychological 'thought-forms' drawn and discussed by Theosophists. A thought-form is described as 'a living-entity of intense activity animated by the one idea that generated it'.²⁷ Drawings of such illustrate the Theosophist belief that forms are made by sound vibrations in the matter of the mental body which then emits an infinite play of colour combined with floating forms and radiating patterns. The quality of the thought determines the colour, and the nature of the thought determines the form. The 'accordion' movement of space vibrating backwards and forwards from Kandinsky's canvas surface relates closely to the vibration across the colour and pattern fields of Tantric *Kshetras*, depicting the eternal flux and divine play of cosmological space. Similarly, his extraordinarily 'mythological' space in works of the twenties like *Yellow-Red-Blue*, *Black Accompaniment*, *Quiet* and *Black Increasing*, reflect space as depicted in the Tantric sculptures of Konarak

and Khajuraho, in which situation, gestures and emotion transcend the phenomenal, relative order of *Maya* to exist in an absolute, timeless State of Being.

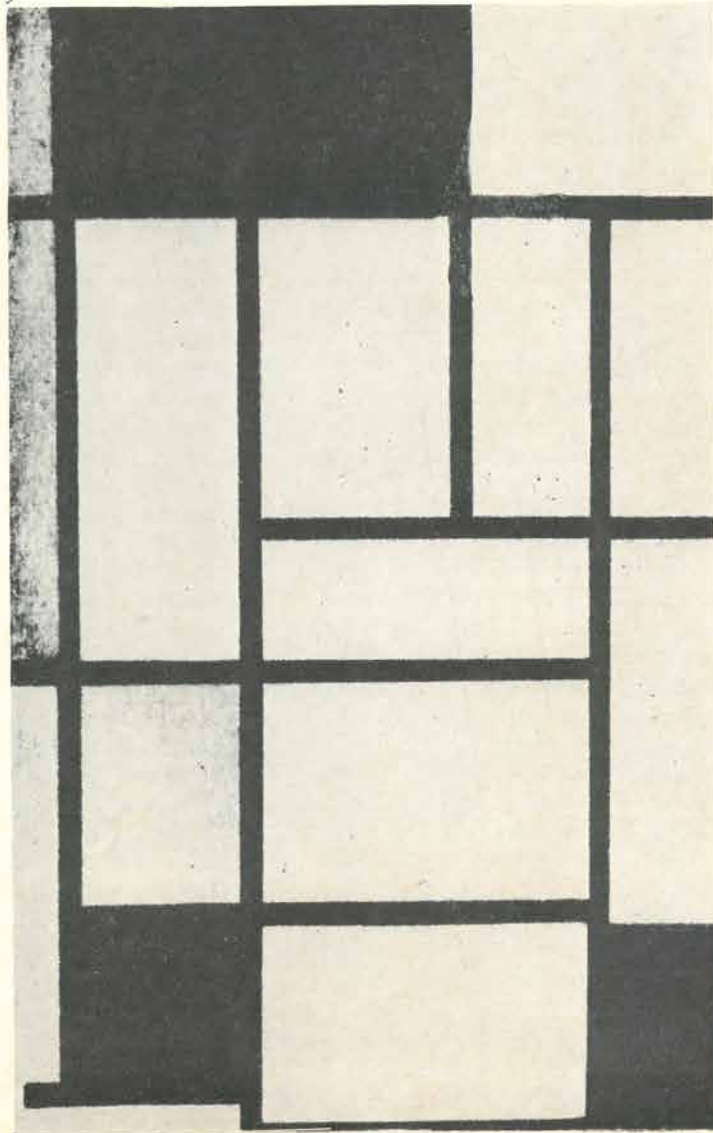
Therefore, apart from the pictorial affinities suggested, I have tried to show that metaphysical links between western abstract painting and Tantric imagery can only be intimated on the general level of a common concern with the spiritual.

Since universals can exist only at the level of structure and not at the level of manifest fact, the only valid attempt at a philosophical comparison of the two creative languages would need to find a common structure within which both could be contrasted. As in anthropology, 'there is nothing profound to be learned from the comparison of single isolated cultural items, but only from the universal patterning of relationships which correlates sets of human creative activity.'²⁸ This would, therefore, only be possible if a western artist underwent Tantric initiation and then found certain phenomena which could be related structurally. □

8



9



¹ *The Tantric Tradition*, Agha Hananda Bharati.

² *Yoga Immortality and Freedom*, Mircea Eliade.

³ 'Maya': the incomplete dualistic world as conventionally viewed, the continuous process of Becoming as conditioned by the relativity of time, space and motion.

⁴ 'Supreme Reality': the infinite unconditioned state of Being in which past, present and future are one, fused in one single moment: the actual Now.

⁵ Ms: *pancamakara*, five things commencing with the letter M used in the ritual—*madya*: liquor; *matsya*: fish; *mamsa*: meal; *mudra*: cereal/aphrodisiac; *mithuna*: sexual union. Before these, *vijaya*: hemp, is frequently taken.

⁶ *Anthology of Mysticism*, F. C. Happold.

⁷ Mantra: mnemonic device of chanting, 'magical instrument by which immediate reality is wrought'. *Myths and Symbols in Indian Art*, Zimmer.

⁸ *Ibid.*

⁹ *The Psychological Attitude of Early Buddhist Philosophy*, Lama Anagarika Govinda.

¹⁰ *The Theory and Practise of the Mandala*, Giuseppe Tucci.

¹¹ *The Secret of the Golden Flower*; 'Concerning Mandala Symbolism. Psychology of the Unconscious.' Vol. 9, C. G. Jung.

¹² *The Way of Zen*, Alan W. Watts.

¹³ Introduction to the Hague Gemeentemuseum's exhibition catalogue of Minimal Art, E. Develing.

¹⁴ Eliade, *op. cit.*

¹⁵ e.g. Stein, Joyce, Beckett, Satie, Schönberg, Boulez, Cage, LaMonte Young, Warhol, Morris, Smithson (see *ABC Art*, B. Rose).

¹⁶ *Repetition*, Kierkegaard, 1843.

¹⁷ Interesting to note Brancusi's reverence for Milarepa: tantric mystic and magician of Tibet. (*L'Oeil*, 1956.)

¹⁸ Picabia's *Mechanical Compositions* of 1919 contain lines of tension which tremble and twist from circle to circle as if on a journey like that of the *Kundalini* rising through the energy centres, depicted in nineteenth-century Rajasthani images. Tantric compositions of a biomorphic, abstract nature which describe cosmological concepts of terrestrial atmospheres, planetary orbits, primordial waters, constellations, etc., possess curious pictorial and literal affinities with surrealist works, particularly those of Ernst and Miró. Several of these 'cosmic fields' reveal calligraphic tracery comparable to the gestures and marks of Pollock, Tobey and Michaux.

¹⁹ *The New Art*, Lucy Lippard. In 'Eros Presumptive' Lippard wrote: 'While there is no question of direct influence or even of interest, repetition, inactivity, simultaneous detachment and involvement, understatement and self containment are qualities shared by the arts of India and of today.'

²⁰ *Marcel Duchamp or the Castle of Purity*

Octavio Paz.

²¹ *El Lissitzky*, Nasci, 1924 (see Joost Baljeu's article: 'The Problem of Reality with Suprematism, Constructivism, Proun, Neo-Plasticism and Elementarism').

²² *Positive Mysticism*, Schoenemaeker.

²³ What Stella has called: 'Relational Painting' (see interview with Bruce Glaser in *Minimal Art*).

²⁴ *Tantra Art*, R. K. Mookerjee.

²⁵ *Concerning the Spiritual*, Kandinsky.

²⁶ *Concerning the Spiritual*, Kandinsky.

²⁷ *Thought forms*, Annie Besant, C. W. Leadbeater.

²⁸ *Lévi-Strauss*, Edmund Leach.

8 Kasimir Malevich

Yellow Quadrilateral on White c. 1917

Oil on canvas 41½ × 27½ in.

Coll: Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam

9 Piet Mondrian

Composition in Red Yellow Blue 1921

Oil on canvas 80 × 50 cm

Coll: Gemeentemuseum, The Hague

10 Jambu-dvīpa

Painting

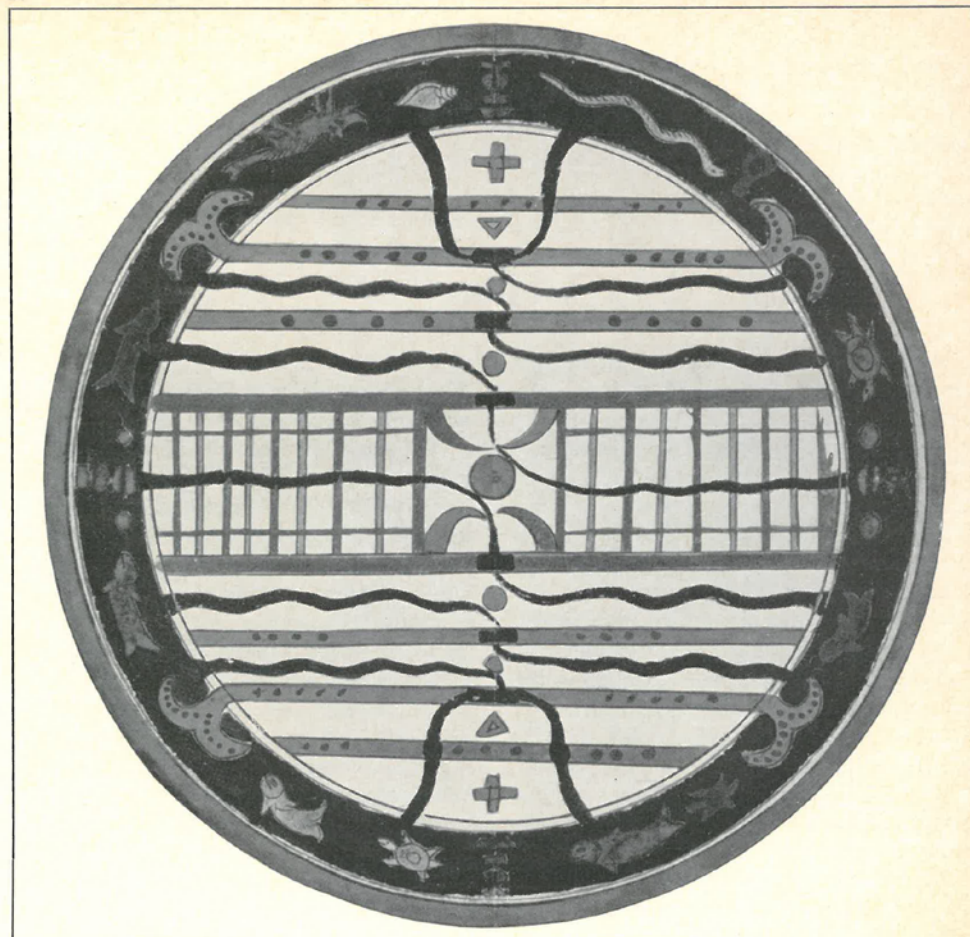
Rajasthan, c. eighteenth century

Private coll. Courtesy: Ravi Kumar

11 Wassily Kandinsky

Tantra Asana by R.K. Mookerjee will be published this April by Ravi Kumar, 42 Avenue du Président Kennedy, Paris.

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Reflections on 'Tantric Imagery: Affinities with Twentieth Century Abstract Art'

Virginia Whiles

Not having read the article I wrote for *Studio International* in 1971, four years ago I was invited to write a catalogue for an artist whose work relates to tantric imagery.¹ It made me reflect on the case made in the original article for more or less dismissing the possibility of any 'serious' comparative study between tantric images and the modernist abstraction of certain artists.² *Thinking Tantra* offers space for further reflection.

In the *Studio International* piece, after a lengthy introduction to the philosophy and imagery of tantra, three tantric concepts were selected as a basis for a pictorial comparison with twentieth-century abstract art: the reductive forms of yantra diagrams, negative language and the use of repetition. Reference was made to Jung's recognition of the mandala as an archetypal image, born from a collective unconscious and reproduced by his patients as a sign of reintegration with the 'wholeness of Man'. Contemporary interest in reduction and primary form seen in Minimalism and Systemic art was cited. The specificity of experience expressed in process art or earthworks and the emphatic focus on the immediate, the 'now', were proposed as examples of parallels with both tantric and Zen concepts of time. Poetic and political statements by artists were given to illustrate the shift towards the dematerialisation of art, whereby the lack of material content is the content. In spite of such evidence, I concluded by saying that however similar these directions may appear: '... any allusion to a metaphysical analogy can only be superficial because the semantic precision defining the word "void" in tantric texts is not at all compatible to the nebulous concept of 'nothingness' iterated by the Minimalists'. Whereas yantras are via-media on the void, art objects are often declared to be via-media in the exercise of changing perception. The question I posed was whether such an exercise has metaphysical implications.

The major part of the 1971 article concentrates on ostensible parallels with tantric philosophy manifested by four earlier artists: Malevich, Kandinsky, Duchamp and Mondrian through their pictorial affinities and their concern with the metaphysical. I argue that their references to theosophy and Neoplatonism share a spiritual idealism, that their imagery shares an affinity with basic yantras, an interest in cosmogony, in the synthesis of opposites, in symbolic dimensions of colour, sound, thought and space. I ask if this is a terrain comparable to that intended by tantric practice since yantras have a specific function as tools or aids in meditation whereas abstract forms in western art are often perceived as free-floating signs, even described as 'illegitimate abstraction'.³ Clearly enthusing over my lists of potential analogies, I nevertheless dismiss these by saying that neither aesthetic enjoyment nor the perception of a process has anything in common with the aims of tantric imagery.

On re-reading my article, I find the correspondences credible and wonder why I held them so much in check. How much was this due to the contemporary zeitgeist? My interest in structuralism seems curiously confused with the modernist code of distinct disciplines. But after all this was the early seventies, a time

when 'Fine Art' was still self-contained. Art history was only just beginning to be rewritten by feminists, and the discipline remained Western-centric, with hybridity and intercultural dialogues still hovering on the horizon.

With the hindsight graciously afforded by age, I would now question my rejection of this inter-cultural comparison. Since 1971 I have gained experience from interweaving ethnographic studies into art practice and theory.⁴ The release from disciplinary boundaries offers an anthropological perspective on cross-cultural aesthetics that reframes the rapport with the 'other', crucial to our era of a post-colonial art history.

Inspiration /Appropriation/Exploitation/Transformation?

One issue that arises within critique of the globalised artworld relates to the practice of transcultural inspiration. In her lucid survey of contemporary Indian art, *When was Modernism* (2000), Geeta Kapur writes about the positive shift into new ideologies of narration: '...in its transgression what is retroactively called the postmodern impulse opens up the structure of the artwork... the new narrators rattle the bars of national tradition and let out the parodic force suppressed within it'.⁵ She underlines Hal Foster's demand that postmodernism acts through a critique of origins rather than a return to them. To avoid exploitation of cultural codes there must be a critical questioning of tradition, in Kapur's words: 'I hope to find affinities for Indian art beyond the simulacra and towards a historically positioned aesthetic'.⁶

Reflecting on her words leads me to regret not having explored the Indian neo-tantric movement in my *Studio* text inasmuch as an argument in their defence might well move beyond the formal 'simulacra' and into a 'historically positioned aesthetic'. This would be based on the notion of Kali Yuga, the contemporary dark age, described aptly by Wendy Doniger as: 'The Losing age, the time when all bets are off'.⁷ Texts on the Kali Yuga state that the search for sense takes place within the modern experience: one seen either as a fallen condition or as a vehicle for experiential transformation. The latter is the vision set out by the tantric doctors in their rejection of the orthodox Brahmanic tradition and their return to the pre-Vedic cult of the Sakti as Great Goddess. Certain writings by neo-tantric artists might well evoke a correspondence to this rebellious search for an alternative route to enlightenment.⁸

East/West and Comparative Aesthetics.

In my catalogue text of 2012 I question the dualist perception whereby western critics have frequently framed the spiritual in art as existing elsewhere or in another time.⁹ There is profuse evidence that such qualities may be found in the history of western imagery, not only in abstraction but also in figurative representation. I cite an exhibition of medieval illuminated manuscripts in the British Library, wherein a miniature of a 'Diagram of Consanguinity' made in 1320 shows a mandala format containing rows of empty circles, highly comparable to both yantras and certain paintings by John Baldessari. I also note that my 1971 text had drawn severe conclusions from Claude Levi Strauss that '... according to Levi-Strauss, there needed to be a common structure to compare two creative languages, it would only be possible if a western artist underwent tantric initiation and found phenomena which could be related structurally'. I added that, in this case, the artist had

undergone initiation into 'tantric inspired miniature painting' and that the formal and metaphysical affinities in her practice intimated a 'comparable pattern of relationship with the spiritual'.

How valid is this opinion coming from a western art critic, however intimate she may be with this terrain? What do I mean by a 'comparable pattern of relationship'? Rebecca Heald, curator of *Thinking Tantra* writes in her introduction:

One tendency in the small literature that exists on tantra is to methodically compare and contrast Western practices that have an affinity with tantric drawings, yantra diagrams or mantras and systematically detail how they align or differ. It is a method that betrays western art historical methods which rely upon having two slide projectors side-by-side when lecturing: 'This is like this; this isn't like that'.

Mea Culpa! Particularly due to having taught 'non-western' art history for over four decades, often throwing in the odd slide of a western art object to compare.

Debates around comparative methodology within anthropology and art history are fascinating for their differences of perspective on aesthetics as a cross-cultural category. A main theme of the anthropological argument is that of contextualisation: the situation of objects in the world. Material culture is given prominence. Many anthropologists perceive western aesthetics as a phenomenon of European modernism that isolates the art object from its context in order to focus on its form rather than on its function and so judges beauty according to principles of taste. As a consequence, art works from non-western societies are categorised or valued according to an art historical neo-Kantian aesthetic, evolved through an academism imbued with social and class discrimination as outlined by Pierre Bourdieu in *Distinction*.¹⁰ Inevitably this has set up a split between anthropologists and art historians, one that needs to be addressed by a closer conversation between the two.

Play: Sacred and Mundane

Perhaps it is through the neo-Dada reflections of John Cage that a step towards reconciling the two views can be taken if we dare compare two sentences on the art object coming from radically different backgrounds: Kant's declaration that it had 'purposiveness without purpose' and Cage's comment that 'There is no point or the point is nothing' are curiously similar. The shiny white elephant in the room is surely transcendence – should we criticise an art object as we would anything else? Is the idea that calling something 'art' immediately raises it above the everyday?

This is where tantric imagery calls our bluff, because its very use is towards transcendence, it is a tool that is at once social and spiritual. Cutting across dualist categorisation, tantric practice aims at revealing the illusion of opposites, the sacred in the mundane.

The social history of western art has its origins in Marxism but was expanded in the late sixties by feminist art historians. Economic factors fanned out towards a thicker contextualisation embracing the critical issues of gender and cultural identity. By the mid-eighties, due to diverse social and economic crises arising with neoliberalism, western critical art and theory reached a stage

of rejecting the modernist concern with absolutes and beauty and took to an 'anti-aesthetic' turn. The gradual reversal of this turn has re-opened a dialectical exchange between aesthetic experience and critical reflection. One example is Jacques Ranciere's proposal in *Aesthetics and its Discontents* (2009) that aesthetics is the basis of politics as a *sensus communis* whereby art's aim is to liberate from labour through the sense of play: here lies an interesting correlation with the notion of *Lila* / Sacred Play in Indian aesthetics.¹¹

Beautification of objects exists in all cultures, even in those where the term 'art' is absent. As has been shown by Alfred Gell, elaborate decoration of an everyday object is undertaken to empower the agency of both the object and its maker, rarely categorised as an artist.¹² Its use serves its sense and its aesthetics. The problem is for the outsider to understand the specific nature of 'other' aesthetics without depending on a westernised ideology. Can we therefore address aesthetics comparatively? Should we not adopt interpretive methodologies from the indigenous culture? This raises language difficulties.¹³ How to compare and contrast without a Eurocentric ear and eye? (Perhaps this is where we need a third eye?)

It would appear from certain curatorial practices that one response to the conundrum is to exhibit art works from 'other' cultures in a manner long favoured by famous collectors: that of the cabinet of curiosities. As illustrated by the curator Jean-Hubert Martin with his exhibition *Magiciens de la Terre* (1989) and several other shows,¹⁴ this mode combines two frameworks of representation: either as spectacularly different, since it is far easier to describe an artist as "... magical or mythical simply because to deconstruct such assumptions takes time and effort" (Susan Hiller) or as spectacularly comparable to western 'masterpieces', aligned side-by-side to prove a universalist aesthetics via the 'wow!' factor. More or less data is added according to mode and mood.¹⁵ As Edward Said pointed out years ago, an important feature in the appreciation of 'other' art and literature is the kind of ignorance that leaves space for the viewer to imagine a self-identification through fantasy.¹⁶

In my 1971 *Studio International* text I use Levi-Strauss as a guardian against such facile appreciation by quoting his structural principles. In my shift of approach I would question this anthropological probity by indicating that with postmodernism, even anthropologists accuse themselves of usurping 'ethnographic authority'. For example, 'The Poetics and Politics of Ethnography' were re-imagined by various contributors to *Writing Culture* (1986). Its editor James Clifford made a dramatic plea for experimentation through dialogic, polyphonic texts and eventually heteroglossia: 'a carnivalesque arena of diversity'.¹⁷ Similarly, Fredric Jameson's early reflections on postmodernism (1991) gave a neo-anthropological, post-structuralist perspective on the crisis of representation.¹⁸ His sceptical view signalled a catch-22 predicament by which the postmodernist risks a self-made trap of pastiche where all floats in a state of partiality and flux. Although Levi-Strauss referred to aesthetics throughout his writings, he does this by a critical reflection on his own methodology and his own discriminatory judgements. As observed by Peter Gow, Levi-Strauss '... uses his aesthetic not for comparison with the aesthetics of other cultures, but as a perspective on other cultures'¹⁹ thus opening a perspective on aesthetics itself. Consequently the current mood in ethnographic writing pushes for a more self-reflexive approach, a method that would not come amiss with art historians, critics and curators.

The hegemony of western academic discourse has produced a fixed idea of aesthetics, yet other cultures have their own traditions. There exist indigenous aesthetic traditions that have nothing whatsoever to do with Eurocentric culture and history. Asian civilisations have aesthetic codes that were initiated and evolved long before the eighteenth-century western conception. The problem is that there exists no common language, or metalanguage, with which to translate cross-culturally; our language, based on modernist value systems, pervades such attempts. The need is for an anthropological critique of an art history that still tends to compare, contrast and judge whilst neglecting art's political and social meanings and functions. Whereas western aesthetics still tends to decontextualise art from everyday experience, Asian aesthetic codes, particularly those in India, are situated within social contexts that include the crucial notion of play.

This is evident with the tantric texts translated so meticulously by Agehananda Bharati.²⁰ However his careful linguistic analysis of terms in *The Tantric Tradition* (1965) has not been more profitable, 'For at bottom Tantra is not a matter of rationalized terminology, but of inner facts of experience to which terms are only pointers: different terms may, and frequently do, indicate similar facts.'²¹

A phenomenon sensed instinctively by these artists inspired by tantric imagery.

Notes

- 1 *A Passionate Quest*. Exhibition of Olivia Fraser at Nature Morte. New Delhi. March 2012
- 2 Tantric practice dates from the 7th century A.D. and exists in Hindu, Buddhist and Jain forms. Its practitioners believe in the possibility of reaching enlightenment within a single lifetime through the rituals of a specific yoga that includes meditation, aesthetic appreciation, sexual energy and social actions that challenge the caste system.
- 3 Gadamer, H.G., 'Aesthetic & Hermeneutics' in Linge, D.E. (ed) (1976) *Philosophical Hermeneutics*. Berkeley
- 4 *Art & Polemic in Pakistan* (I.B.Tauris, 2010) is my ethnographic study of contemporary miniature painting.
- 5 Kapur, G., (2000), *When was Modernism: Essays on Contemporary Cultural Practice in India*. New Delhi: Tulika Books, pp. 314-319
- 6 Ibid.
- 7 Doniger, W. (2009), *The Hindus: An Alternative History*. New York: Viking Penguin, p.57
- 8 My discussion with the neo-Tantric artist Viswanadhan in his Paris studio in the 1990s suggested this. His huge abstract grid paintings corresponded to his expansive personality and open ideas.
- 9 Fabian, J. (1983) *Time and the Other: How Anthropology Makes its Object*. New York: Columbia University Press.
- 10 Bourdieu, P., *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste* was first published in 1979
- 11 Within Indian aesthetics, lila/ divine play is perceived as a serious principle of construction, "play as the first move towards the creation of a parallel reality", Hoskote, R. (1998) *Of Tradition and Contemporaneity* (Art India Vol 3 Issue 2)
- 12 Gell, A. (1998) *Art and Agency. An Anthropological Theory*. Oxford: OUP
- 13 Craig Clunas stated in a debate that in Japan and China there will soon be '... an art historical world which will operate quite comfortably without the medium of English... conversely the catastrophic decline in language skills in Britain creates a real risk of an art history here which in terms of research can operate only on that material where the sources are in English'. James Elkins (ed.) (2007) *Is Art History Global?*, Oxford: Routledge.
- 14 From *Partage d'Exotismes* (2000) to *Theatre du Monde* (2014) to Martin's recent paramount spectacle/ exhibition: *Carambolages* (2016) at the Grand Palais, Paris.
- 15 'It is the lack of shared history that produces authenticity – the less history shared the more genuine the outsider'. Sullivan, N. (1995) 'Inside Trading' in Marcus, G.E. & Myers, F. (eds) *The Traffic in Cultures*. Berkeley: University of California Press, p.285
- 16 Said, E. *Orientalism* (1978), pp. 94-5
- 17 Clifford, J. "On Ethnographic Authority" *Representations* 1.no.2 (1983) p.140
- 18 Jameson, F. *Postmodernism, Or, the Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism* (1991), p.369
- 19 Gow, P. (1996) 'Aesthetics is a cross-cultural category' in *Key Debates in Anthropology*. London: Routledge, p.271
- 20 Born as Leopold Fischer in Vienna, Bharati spent many years in India and became a Sanskrit scholar and anthropologist, Professor at Syracuse University in New York. Magnum opus: *The Tantric Tradition* (1965)
- 21 Philip Rawson (1973), *The Art of Tantra*. London: Thames & Hudson, p.18

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Prabhakar Barwe

b. 1936, Maharashtra, India, d. 1995

Studied at Sir J.J School of Arts, Mumbai. Selected posthumous exhibitions include: *Abby Grey and Indian Modernism: Selections from the NYU Art Collection*, Grey Art Gallery, New York University, New York, USA (2015); *Prabhakar Barwe: Works 1955 to 1995*, Percept Art, Mumbai, India (2013-14); *One Eye Sees, the Other, Feels*, The Viewing Room, Mumbai, India (2012); *Legacy: A-Vanguard*, Gallery Threshold, New Delhi, India (2010); *Masters of Maharashtra*, National Centre for the Performing Arts (NCPA), Mumbai, India (2010). Selected solo exhibitions include: Contemporary Art Gallery, Ahmedabad, India (1982); Taj Art Gallery, Mumbai, India (1968, 1967); Book Bay Gallery, Wisconsin, USA (1963). Selected group exhibitions include: *Reflections and Images*, Vadehra Art Gallery, New Delhi and Jehangir Art Gallery, Mumbai, India (1993); *Modern Indian Paintings*, Hirshhorn Museum, Washington D.C, USA (1983); *Pictorial Space*, Rabindra Bhavan Galleries Lalit Kala Akademi, New Delhi, India (1977); *Inaugural Exhibition*, Grey Art Gallery, New York University, USA (1975); *Indian Painters*, Gallery Coray, Zurich, Switzerland (1970); *Indian Painters*, Hamburg, Germany (1970); *Man and His World*, Indian Pavilion, Montreal, Canada (1969-1970); *5th International Young Artists Exhibition*, Tokyo, Japan (1969).

Tom Chamberlain

b. 1973, Barton on Sea, UK

Currently lives and works in London and Mexico. Studied at Royal College of Art, London, UK. Selected solo exhibitions include: *If not now*, Aurel Scheibler, Berlin, Germany (2015); *Some Other Time*, Aurel Scheibler / ScheiblerMitte, Berlin, Germany (2011); *Clockwise From the Left*, Laika, Cluj, Romania (2009); *Painting and Drawings*, Aurel

Scheibler, Berlin, Germany (2008); Kontainer / Mihai Nicodim, Los Angeles, USA (2008); *Sleeping standing up*, Andreiana Mihail, Bucharest, Romania (2007); *Undone*, Chung King Project, Los Angeles, USA (2006); Kontainer Gallery, Los Angeles, USA (2004); *Beside Myself*, Percy Miller, London, UK (2001; 1999). Selected group exhibitions include: *Open and shut*, Obra en Obra, Mexico City, *Nulla dies sin linea*, Satellite, Berlin, (2016); *Tantra Drawings*, Jhaveri Contemporary, Mumbai, India (2016); *Domino Dancing*, Plan B, Cluj, Romania (2014); *Théâtre du Monde*, La Maison Rouge, Paris, France (2013) and MONA, Hobart, Australia (2012); *Mrs. Darling's Kiss*, Arch 402, London, UK (2011); *I watered a horseshoe as if it were a flower*, Mihai Nicodim, Los Angeles, USA (2010); *Drawings A - Z*, Museu da Cidade, Lisboa, Portugal (2009); *Invisible Cities*, Jerwood Space, London, UK (2009); *Closer Still*, Tom Chamberlain and Serban Savu, Kontainer, Los Angeles, USA (2008); *Small Wonder*, Andreiana Mihail, Budapest, Hongria; *If it ain't baroque don't fix it*, Studio 1.1, London, UK (2006).

Shezad Dawood

b. 1974, London, UK

Currently lives and works in London. Studied at Leeds Metropolitan University PhD, Royal College of Art, London, UK, and Central St Martin's College of Art & Design, London, UK. Selected solo exhibitions include: *Why Depend on Space and Time*, Galerist, Istanbul, Turkey (2016); *The Room*, fig-2, ICA, London, UK (2015); *It was a time that was a time*, Pioneer Works, New York City, USA (2015); *Towards The Possible Film*, Parasol Unit, London, UK and Leeds Art Gallery, UK (2015); *Sadler's Wells & Tate Visual Art Commission*, (2014); *Sadler's Wells*, London, UK (2014); *Trailer*, Art in General, New York, USA (2013). Selected group exhibitions include: *Biennale, Future Light*, Museum Angewandte Kunst (MAK) (2015) and Kunsthalle Wien,

Vienna, Austria (2015); *Doris Duke's Shangri La: Architecture, Landscape, and Islamic Art*, Honolulu Museum of Art, Honolulu, USA (2015); *Own Land/ Foreign Territory*, 7th Moscow Biennale, Manege, Moscow, Russia (2015); *Blow up*, Albertina Museum, Vienna, Austria; *Sous nos yeux*, MACBA, Barcelona, Spain (2014); *Where are we now?* Marrakech Biennale 5, Morocco (2014); *Moving Images*, Art Dubai, UAE Eastwing Biennial (2014); *INTERACT: Deconstructing Spectatorship*, Courtauld Institute, London, UK (2014); *Thread*, MMKA, Arnhem Museum, Netherlands; *The Great Acceleration - Taipei Biennial 2014*, Taipei Fine Arts Museum, Taipei, Taiwan (2014); *Blow-Up*, Photo-Museum Winterthur, Germany; *Conflict and Compassion* 3rd Asia Triennial Manchester, IWM North, Manchester, UK.

Nicola Durvasula

b. 1960, Jersey, British Isles

Currently lives and works in Walmer, UK. Studied at the Kent Institute of Art & Design, Canterbury, UK, Institut National des Langues et Civilisations Orientales, Paris, France, Atelier Gravure, Ecole des Beaux-Arts de Paris, France and Ecole des Beaux-Arts du Havre, France. Upcoming exhibitions include: *The Museum of Rhythm*, Muzeum Sztuki, Lodz, Poland (2016); *The Kochi-Muziris Biennale*, Kerala, India (2016). Selected solo exhibitions include: *I Am Here*, Galerie Mirchandani, Paris, France + Steinruecke, Mumbai, India (2012); *Blame it on the Sun*, Rachmaninoff's, London, UK (2011); *Static lines and where they take you*, Thomas Erben Gallery, NY, USA (2007); *Galerie Rue Montgrand*, E.S.B.A.M, Marseille, France (2004); *Indian Rope Trick*, Centre 19, Montbeliard, France (2002); *Max Mueller Bhavan*, Hyderabad, India (1994). Selected group exhibitions include: *Thinking Tantra*, Jhaveri Contemporary, Mumbai, India (2016); *The Sahmat Collective: Art and Activism in India since 1989*, Smart Museum of Art, Chicago, USA

(2013); *Homespun*, Devi Art Foundation, Gurgaon, India (2012); *Watercolour*, Tate Britain, London, UK (2011); *The Acceptance World*, Rachmaninoff's, London, UK; *Lila/Play: Contemporary Miniatures and New Art from South Asia*, Cultural Festival of the Melbourne, Commonwealth Games, Melbourne, Australia (2006).

Goutam Ghosh

b. 1979, Nabadwip, India

Currently lives and works in Santiniketan, India. He received his MA, Fine Arts from Oslo Academy of Fine Arts, Oslo, Norway, and from Maharaja Sayaji Rao University, Baroda, Gujarat, India. Selected solo exhibitions include: *Project 88*, Mumbai, India (Forthcoming 2017) ...*ASCRIBING TO THEM BIRTH, ANIMATION, SENSE AND ACCIDENT...*, Standard, Oslo, Norway (2015); *Søyle gallery*, Oslo Academy of Fine Arts, Oslo, Norway (2013). Selected group exhibitions include: *Between the Ticks of the Watch*, The Renaissance Society, Chicago, USA (2016); *Thinking Tantra*, Jhaveri Contemporary, Mumbai, India (2016); *Dal Dizionario*, Galleria Raucchi/Santamaria, Naples, Italy (2015); *Shoe show*, Gallery Podium, Oslo, Norway (2013); *Graduation show at Kunstnerne Hus*, Oslo, Norway (2015).

Alexander Gorlizki

b. 1967, London, UK

Currently lives and works in New York, USA. Studied at the Slade School, London, UK, M.F.A. and Bristol Polytechnic, Bristol, UK, B.A. Selected solo exhibitions include: *Subtle Bodies, Saucy Lines*, Galerie Kudlek, Cologne, Germany (2016); *Variable Dimensions*, The Crow Collection, Dallas, TX, USA (2015-2016); *We Are One*, Galerie Eric Mouchet, Paris, France (2014); *What Gives?* Baldwin Gallery, Aspen, Colorado, USA (2014); *For Immediate Release*, Van Doren

Waxter, New York, NY, USA (2013); *We Like It Here, We're Not Moving*, Jhaveri Contemporary, Mumbai, India (2012); *Terms and Conditions Apply*, Kudlek van der Grinten, Cologne, Germany (2011); *Pattern Farming*, Baldwin Gallery, Aspen, Colorado, USA (2011); *Pre-existing Conditions*, John Berggruen Gallery, San Francisco, CA, USA (2011); *The First Time I Heard You Blink*, Greenberg Van Doren Gallery, New York, NY, USA, (2011); Recent group exhibitions include: *Traversing Traditions*, Charter Oak, Hartford, CT, USA (2016); *Contemporary Drawn*, Musée des Arts Décoratifs, Paris, France (2016); *Diamonds and Doughnuts*, Geoffrey Young Gallery, MA, USA (2014); *40 Years At The Daniel Weinberg Gallery*, Ambach and Rice, Los Angeles, CA, USA (2013); *Considering Collage*, Jhaveri Contemporary, Mumbai, India (2013); *Approaching Infinity: The Richard Green Collection of Meticulous Abstraction*, Crocker Art Museum, Sacramento, CA, USA (2012); *Embellished Reality: Indian Painted Photographs*, Royal Museum of Ontario, Toronto, Ontario, Canada (2012).

Prafulla Mohanti

b. 1936, Orissa, India

Currently lives and works in London. Studied architecture at Sir J.J School of Arts, Bombay. Solo exhibitions include: *4th International Triennale*, New Delhi, India (1978); *nl;k Academy of Fine Arts*, Calcutta, India (1976); *National Exhibition*, New Delhi, India (1976); *3rd International Triennale India*, New Delhi, India (1975); *2nd International Triennale India*, New Delhi, India (1971); Gallery Chemould, Bombay, India (1970); Kumar Art Gallery, New Delhi, India (1970); Institute of Contemporary Arts, London, UK (1970); Kumar Art Gallery, New Delhi (1972); University of Leeds, Wakefield City Art Gallery, Woodstock Gallery, London, UK (1964-69); *Modern Indian Paintings exhibition*, Hirshhorn, Museum and Sculpture Garden, Washington D.C, USA (1982).

Jean-Luc Moulène

b. 1955, Reims, France

Currently lives and works in Paris, France. Studied at Université Paris 1 Panthéon-Sorbonne, France. Selected solo exhibitions include: Centre Pompidou, Paris, France (2016); Thomas Dane Gallery, London, UK; *Il était une fois*, Villa Medici, Rome, Italy (2015); *Jean-Luc Moulène*, Galerie Greta Meert, Brussels, Belgium (2014); *Endwards*, Extra City Kunsthal, Antwerp, Belgium; *Works*, Beirut Art Center, Beirut, Lebanon (2013); Modern Art Oxford, Oxford, UK (2012); *Fénautrigues*, Galerie Chantal Crousel, Paris (2012); *Jean-Luc Moulène*, Ecole de Recherche Graphique, Bruxelles, Belgium (2012); *Jean-Luc Moulène: Opus + One*, Dia Beacon, Beacon, New York, NY, USA, (2011); Dan Flavin Art Institute, Bridgehampton, New York (2011); Galerie Greta Meert, Brussels, Belgium (2011); Galerie Pietro Spartà, Chagny, France (2009); *Jean-Luc Moulène - Le Louvre*, Museum of Cycladic Art, Athens, Greece (2009); *Jean-Luc Moulène - collection of the MAMVP*, Musée d'art moderne de la ville de Paris, Paris, France (2009), *Objets de grève*, Paris Sorbonne 8 University gallery, Saint Denis, France (2009).

Badrinath Pandit

b. c. 1915, d. 1999

Anthony Pearson

b. 1969, Los Angeles, USA

Currently lives and works in Los Angeles, USA. Studied at University of California, Los Angeles, CA, USA, MFA and California College of the Arts, Oakland, CA, USA BFA. Selected solo exhibitions include: *South Loop*, Shane Campbell Gallery, Chicago, USA (2016); *Anthony Pearson*, Marianne Boesky Gallery, New York, NY, USA (2015); *Anthony Pearson*, David Kordansky Gallery Los Angeles, CA, USA (2014); *Anthony*

Pearson, Marianne Boesky Gallery, New York, NY, USA (2013); *Anthony Pearson*, Contemporary Art Museum St. Louis, MO, USA (2012); *Solarizations*, Midway Contemporary Art, Minneapolis, MN, USA (2008); *Anthony Pearson*, David Kordansky Gallery, Los Angeles, CA (2007). Selected group exhibitions include: *The Sun Placed in the Abyss*, Columbus Museum of Art, Columbus, USA (2016); *Thinking Tantra*, Jhaveri Contemporary, Mumbai, India (2016); *Let There Be Light, Revisited*, Gazelli Art House, London, UK (2015); *Space and Matter*, Sperone Westwater, New York, NY, USA (2015); *Organic Sculpture*, Alison Jacques Gallery, London, UK (2015); *Variations: Conversations in and Around Abstract Painting*, Museum of Contemporary Art Los Angeles, CA, USA (2015); *Transmogrification of the Ordinary*, Angeles Gallery, Los Angeles, CA, USA (2014); *(Nothing But) Flowers*, Nathalie Karg Gallery, New York, NY, USA (2014).

Sohan Qadri

b. 1932, India, d. 2011

Studied at the Government College of Art in Simla. Selected exhibitions include: *Transcendence*, Sundaram Tagore Gallery, New York, USA (2016); *Being There*, Sundaram Tagore Gallery, Singapore (2015); *Winter Group Show*, Sundaram Tagore Gallery, Hong Kong, China (2015); *Summer group show*, Sundaram Tagore Gallery, New York, USA (2014); *Inside Out: A group show*, Sundaram Tagore Gallery, India (2013); *Spectrum: East/West/Beyond*, Sundaram Tagore Gallery, India (2012); *Continuum: A Group Show*, Sundaram Tagore Gallery, India (2011); *Constellation: A Group Show*, Sundaram Tagore Gallery, Hong Kong (2011); *Facing East Contemporary Asian Art*, Sundaram Tagore Gallery, New York, USA (2011).

Prem Sahib

b. 1982, London, UK

Currently lives and works in London. Forthcoming solo exhibitions include Lorcan O'Neill, Rome, Italy (Winter 2016); *Prem Sahib in collaboration with Celia Hempton*, Southard Reid, London, UK (Spring 2017) and Kunstverein in Hamburg, Hamburg, Germany (Summer 2017). Recent solo exhibitions include: *Cruising the House, Sunday 11 September*, curated by Milovan Farronato, residency at Inclusartiz, Rio de Janeiro, Brazil (2016); *Grand Union*, Grand Union, Birmingham, UK (2016); *Side On*, ICA, London, UK (2015); *END UP*, Southard Reid, London, UK (2015); *performance and presentation of work made in Stromboli as part of Forget Amnesia* curated by Milovan Farronato and Haroon Mirza, Fiorucci Trust, Italy (2015); *Tongues*, Jhaveri Contemporary, Mumbai, India (2014); *Night Flies*, Southard Reid, London, UK (2015); Group exhibitions include: *Cruising*, SALTS, Switzerland (2016); *NEON: The Charged Line*, Grundy Art Gallery, Blackpool, London, UK (2016); *Prediction*, curated by Milovan Farronato, Mendes Wood DM, São Paulo, Brazil (2016); *Secret Surface*, KW Institute for Contemporary Art, Berlin, Germany (2016); *Thinking Tantra*, Jhaveri Contemporary, Mumbai, India (2016); *The Ultimate Vessel*, Koppe Astner, Glasgow, UK (2015); *Sensorium*, Sunaparanta, Goa Centre for the Arts, India (2015); *fig-2 25/50 in collaboration with Celia Hempton and Cecilia Bengolea*, ICA Studio, London, UK (2015); *Britain Can Make It*, Hayward Gallery, London, UK (2015); *I am here but you've gone*, curated by Milovan Farronato and Stella Bottai, Fiorucci Art Trust, London, UK (2015); *Burning Down The House*, Gwangju Biennale, Korea (2014); *LISTENING*, Hayward Touring Contemporary Open, BALTIC Centre for Contemporary Art, Newcastle, UK (2014); *Do Not Disturb*, At the Invitation of Elmgreen & Dragset, Gerhardsen Gerner, Oslo, Norway (2014). Performances include Bijou, Grand Union, Birmingham (2016).

Gulam Rasool Santosh

b. 1929, India, d. 1997

Studied Fine Arts under N.S. Bendre at the MS University. Selected group exhibitions: *Masterpieces of Indian Modern Art*, Dag Modern, New York, USA (2016); *The Naked and the Nude: The Body in Indian Modern Art*, Dag Modern, New York, USA (2015); *India Modern - Narratives from 20th Century Indian Art*, Dag Modern, Mumbai, India (2015); *Approaching Abstraction: Works from the Herwitz Collection*, Aicon Gallery, New York, USA (2015); *Dag Modern at Art Stage Singapore*, Singapore (2016); Delhi Art Gallery at Art15, London, UK (2015); Delhi Art Gallery at Art Basel in Hong Kong, Dag Modern, China (2015); Delhi Art Gallery at Art Stage Singapore, Dag Modern, Singapore (2015); *South Asian + Chinese South Asian Contemporary + Modern*, Christie's China (2013).

Richard Tuttle

b. 1941, New Jersey, USA

Studied at Trinity College, Hartford, Connecticut, B.A. Selected solo exhibitions include: *Richard Tuttle*, Pace Gallery, 510 West 25th Street, New York, USA (2016); *Richard Tuttle: The Critical Edge*, The Met Fifth Avenue, New York (2016); *Richard Tuttle: The Recent Drawing Groups*, Annemarie Verna Galerie, Zurich, Switzerland (2015); *Both/And Richard Tuttle Print and Cloth*, Fabric Workshop & Museum, Philadelphia, USA (2015); *Richard Tuttle: Separation*, Modern Art, London, UK (2015); *Richard Tuttle: Wire Pieces*, Pulitzer Arts Foundation, St. Louis, Missouri, USA (2015); *Richard Tuttle*, Hauser & Wirth, Somerset, London, UK (2014); *I Don't Know, Or The Weave of Textile Language*, Whitechapel Gallery and Tate Modern, London, UK (2014); *Richard Tuttle, 1, 2, 3*, Galerie Nicolai Wallner, Copenhagen, Denmark (2014); *Richard Tuttle: Looking for the Map*, Pace Gallery, 32 East 57th Street, New York, USA (2014); *Richard Tuttle: Matter*, Marian Goodman Gallery, Paris, France (2013); *Walking in Air: An*

Exhibition by Richard Tuttle, TAI Gallery, Santa Fe, Mexico (2013); *The Thrill of the Ideal: Richard Tuttle* (2013); The Reinhart Project, Pocket Utopia, New York, USA (2013); *Richard Tuttle*, Tomio Koyama Gallery, Kyoto, Japan (2013); *Richard Tuttle: Slide*, Bergen Kunsthall, Norway (2013); *Richard Tuttle: Werke aus Münchner Privatsammlungen*, Pinakothek Munich, Germany (2012); Richard Tuttle: Systems, VIII–XII, Pace Gallery, 534 West 25th Street, New York, USA (2012).

Acharya Vyakul

b. 1930, India, d. 2000

Selected exhibitions include: *Tantra, Anonymous, and Vyakul*, Cavin-Morris Gallery, New York, NY USA, (2015); *Outsider Art Fair*, Paris, France, represented by Cavin-Morris Gallery, Paris, France (2013); *Works on Paper*, Lawrence Markey Gallery, San Antonio, TX, USA (2006); *Works on Paper*, Lawrence Markey Gallery, New York, NY, USA (2000); John McEnroe Gallery, New York, NY, USA (1998); *Works from Magiciens de la Terre*, Annina Nosei Gallery, New York, NY, USA (1998); Jariwala Gallery, London, UK (1997); IFA Galerie, Bonn, Stuttgart and Berlin, Germany; Fondation pour la Culture et l'Art, Istanbul, Turkey (1995); New Town Gallery, Johannesburg, South Africa (1994); Galerie du Jour Agnès b, Paris, France (1993); School Gallery, Amsterdam, Netherlands (1993); Jaliyan Gallery, London, UK (1993); Jaliyan Gallery, London, UK (1991); *Tantra*, Frith Street Gallery, London, UK (1990); *Magiciens de la Terre*, Centre Georges Pompidou, Paris, France (1989).

Claudia Wieser

b.1973, Freilassing, Germany

Currently lives and works in Berlin. She studied at the Akademie der Bildenden Künste, Munich. Selected solo exhibitions include: *Container*, Sies+Höke, Düsseldorf (2014); Galeria Casado Santapau, Madrid (2014); Galerie Kamm, Berlin (2013); *Furniture*, Kiosk, Ghent (2012); *Poems of the Right Angle*, The Drawing Center, NY (2010); *Ich und Du*, with Bernd Ribbeck, Kunstverein, Oldenburg, Germany (2009). Selected group exhibitions include: *Das Interieur in der Kunst der Gegenwart*, Kunsthalle, Nuremberg (2015); *Drawing Biennial*, Drawing Room, London (2015/13); *Goldrausch*, Villa Merkel, Esslingen, Germany (2013); *Jesse Jones, Lucy Skaer, Claudia Wieser*, Signal - Center for Contemporary Art, Malmö, Sweden (2013); *Goldrausch*, Kunsthalle, Nuremberg (2012); *Asche und Gold*, Marta Herford, Herford, Germany (2012); and *Kosmos Rudolf Steiner*, Kunstmuseum, Stuttgart (2011).

Author Biographies

Rebecca Heald

Independent curator and tutor in Curatorial Practice at the Royal College of Art, London. She is currently co-curator with Tamsin Dillon on The King's Cross Project, a series of major commissions for the King's Cross development site, working for the King's Cross Central Limited Partnership. Other recent projects include *The House of Ferment* with Grizedale Arts and Science Gallery London (2015) and Trevor Paglen's *An English Landscape (An American Surveillance Base near Harrogate)* (2014). Recent exhibitions include: *Points of Departure* at the ICA, London (2013) and *Bodies that Matter*, Galeri Mana, Istanbul (2013). Between 2009 and 2013 she was Director of New Contemporaries, the UK's foremost organisation working with new and emerging artists. She has worked across curatorial and education departments at Sadie Coles HQ, Tate Britain, and the Hayward Gallery.

Dr. Virginia Whiles

PhD. Anthropology SOAS. Trained as a painter, art historian and anthropologist, Whiles has worked as critic, curator and lecturer in cultural studies for over forty years in the UK, France and South Asia. Author of *Art and Polemic in Pakistan - Cultural Politics and Tradition in Contemporary Miniature Painting* (I.B Tauris 2010), she has written many articles and curated exhibitions in India, Japan, Switzerland and France. Critical texts published in Third Text, Art Asia Pacific, Art in America, Art Monthly, Studio International, Quinzaine Littéraire, Artforum, Artscribe, Contemporary, Flash Art, Sohb, The Friday Times, Dawn (Pakistan), Times of India. Currently Associate Lecturer at the University of Arts London and at NCA (National College of Art) in Lahore, Pakistan she lives in London and Southern France.

List of Works: Thinking Tantra

Anonymous Tantric drawings

Gayatri yantra

Ink on paper
Rajasthan, India, 19th century
57 x 54.5 cm

Mantra page

Gouache on paper
North India, 18th–19th century
48.5 x 43 cm

Mantra page

Gouache on paper
North India, 18th–19th century
49 x 42.5 cm

Cosmic circle

Nepal, second half nineteenth century
Ink and watercolour on paper
28 x 28 cm

Cosmic egg (brahmanda) studies

Gouache on paper
Northern India 18th – 19th century
Three works, each 29 x 15 cm

Untitled, 1999

Unspecified paint on found paper
Udaipur, Rajasthan, India,
33 x 29 cm

Untitled, 1993

Unspecified paint on found paper
Udaipur, Rajasthan, India
34 x 24.5 cm

Salagramas

Ink and gouache on paper
Northern India 18th – 19th century
107 x 81 cm

Cosmic egg (brahmanda) study, c.1960

Pigments on paper
29 x 15 cm

Prabhakar Barwe

Untitled, c.1960s

Acid colour on Dupioni silk
105 x 104 cm

Untitled, c.1960s

Acid colour on Dupioni silk
84 x 85cm

Tom Chamberlain

Tell Me Later (II), 2016

Coloured pencil on paper
25 x 30.5 cm

Turning In, 2016

Pinpricks in paper
25 x 30.5 cm

Untitled, 2015

Watercolour on paper
56 x 65.2 cm

Untitled, 2015

Watercolour on paper
38.2 x 46 cm

Shezad Dawood

YTR I, 2010

Acrylic on vintage textile
125 x 165 cm

Nicola Durvasula

Graphic Notation 1 (Brockley Variation), 2015

Watercolour, gouache, pencil on paper
16.5 x 22.5 cm

Graphic Notation 2 (flux), 2015

Watercolour, pencil on paper
16.5 x 22.5 cm

Graphic Notation 3 (Rhapsody On - a flimsy foundation), 2015

Watercolour, pencil on paper
16.5 x 22.5 cm

Graphic Notation 4 (sruti), 2015

Watercolour, pencil on paper
16.5 x 22.5 cm

Untitled (241), 2009

Watercolour, ink on paper
27.4 x 20 cm

Untitled (copy tantra), 2010

Watercolour, gouache, ink on paper
31.9 x 23.5 cm

Untitled (78), 2009

Ink, gouache, pencil on paper and ledger book cover
33 x 21.2 cm

Untitled (two pink stripes), 2014

Watercolour, gouache, gummed brown tape on paper
27.2 x 24 cm

Untitled (black), 2009

Ink, pencil, gummed brown tape on paper
29.3 x 20.5 cm

Untitled (dot), 2009-2015

Acrylic paint, fluorescent pen, pencil on stone
5 x 8 cm diameter

Untitled (black dot), 2014

Acrylic paint, ink on stone
3 x 4.5 cm diameter

Alexander Gorlizki

Airhead, 2015

Pigment on paper
31.7 x 21.5 cm

Equal Measure, 2016

Pigment on paper
22.2 x 32.5 cm

Escapades, 2015

Pigment on paper
30.4 x 25.4 cm

Experiment, 2014

Pigment on paper
38.1 x 30.5 cm

Eye is I, 2016

Pigment on paper
23.4 x 79.2 cm

Long Form, 2016

Pigment on paper
21.6 x 51.4 cm

Outside In, 2016

Pigment on paper
17.25 x 13.25 cm

Phased In, 2015
Pigment and gold on paper
29.2 x 41.9 cm

Plain Speaking, 2015
Pigment on paper
33.5 x 43.1 cm

Plump Plop, 2014
Pigment on paper
45.7 x 25.9 cm

Shrink to Fit, 2016
Pigment on Paper
33.1 x 20.3 cm

Take It And Leave It, 2016
Pigment on paper
30.4 x 23.4 cm

The Kiss, 2015
Pigment on paper
33 x 22.2 cm

Thinking Aloud, 2016
Pigment on paper
33.5 x 25.9 cm

Touching Base, 2008
Pigment and gold on paper
32.2 x 19.6 cm

Undercurrent, 2016
Pigment on paper
17.1 x 25.9 cm

Goutam Ghosh

While dancing stay in the circle, 2015
Gouache on newsprint glued on cotton textile
113 x 122 cm

Prafulla Mohanti

Creation, 1980
Watercolour, ink and gouache on hand made paper
77 x 57 cm

Jean-Luc Moulène

Big Bifur, 2010
Epoxy resin, cotton wire
50 x 80 x 80 cm

Badrinath Pandit

Salagramas, Mid 20th century
Gouache on paper
Each 13.5 x 11.5 cm

Anthony Pearson

Untitled (Solarization), 2012
Framed solarized silver gelatin photograph
43.1 x 32.2cm

Untitled (Solarization), 2010
Framed solarized silver gelatin print
44.4 x 33.5cm

Untitled (Solarization), 2010
Framed solarized silver gelatin print
44.4 x 33.5cm

Untitled (Solarization), 2010
Framed solarized silver gelatin print
44.4 x 33.5cm

Untitled (Solarization), 2012
Framed solarized silver gelatin photograph
43.1 x 32.2cm

Sohan Qadri

Untitled, 1984
Ink and dye on handmade paper
39.4 x 35.6 cm

Untitled, 1987
Ink & dye and silver paint on handmade paper
48.3 x 30.5 cm

Prem Sahib

Doubles I, 2016
Gouache on paper
48 x 37 cm

Athlete VII, 2016
Gouache on paper
48 x 37 cm

Athlete VIII, 2016
Gouache on paper
48 x 37 cm

24-7, 2016
Green neon, digitally programmed
dimmer
64 x 39 x 14 cm

G.R Santosh

Untitled (Pencil I)
Pencil on paper
60.9 x 43.1 cm

Untitled (Pencil II)
Pencil on paper
60.9 x 43.1 cm

Richard Tuttle

Source of Imagery V, 1995-2010
Acrylic on plywood, wooden block
45.7 x 77.5 x 50.8 cm

Source of Imagery VI, 1995-2010
Paint on plywood, wooden block
108.9 x 83.8 x 27.3 cm

Source of Imagery VII, 1995-2010
Plywood, styrofoam block
114.3 x 96.5 x 32.4 cm

Separation (Group 3, Number 2), 2015
Styrofoam board, pine moulding, acrylic paint, synthetic batting, synthetic fibre, wire, bamboo skewer, transparent tape

Separation (Group 3, Number 3), 2015
Styrofoam board, pine moulding, towel, acrylic paint, wood glue, bamboo skewers, wire, synthetic fibre, synthetic batting, transparent tape
58.4 x 50.8 cm

Separation (Group 3, Number 4), 2015
Styrofoam board, pine moulding, synthetic batting, synthetic fibre, acrylic paint, coloured pencil, bamboo skewer, nail, transparent tape
58.4 x 50.8 cm

Claudia Wieser

Untitled, 2015

Colour pencil on colour paper
33 x 33 cm

Untitled, 2016

Colour pencil, gold leaf on paper
46 x 33cm

Untitled, 2016

Colour pencil, gold leaf on coloured paper
46 x 33cm

Untitled, 2015

Colour pencil, gold leaf on colour paper
46 x 33 cm

Untitled, 2015

Colour pencil, gold leaf on colour paper
33 x 33 cm

Untitled, 2016

Ink, acrylic paint on wood
25cm

Untitled, 2016

Acrylic paint on wood
60 x 25cm

Untitled, 2016

Ink, acrylic paint on wood
35 x 11 cm

Untitled, 2016

Ink, acrylic paint on wood
52 x 18 cm

Untitled, 2016

Ink, acrylic paint on wood
70 x 12 cm

Untitled, 2016

Gold leaf on wood
20 x 15cm

Acharya Vyakul

Untitled, c. 1980s – '90s

Pigment on paper
22 x 18 cm

Untitled, c. 1980s – '90s

Pigment on paper
24 x 17 cm

Untitled, c. 1990s

Pigment on paper
16.5 x 24cm

Untitled, c. 1980s - '90s

Pigment on paper
16.5 x 24cm

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Mary Doyle and Kate Macfarlane, Co-Directors, Drawing Room

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