

# DRAWING ROOM

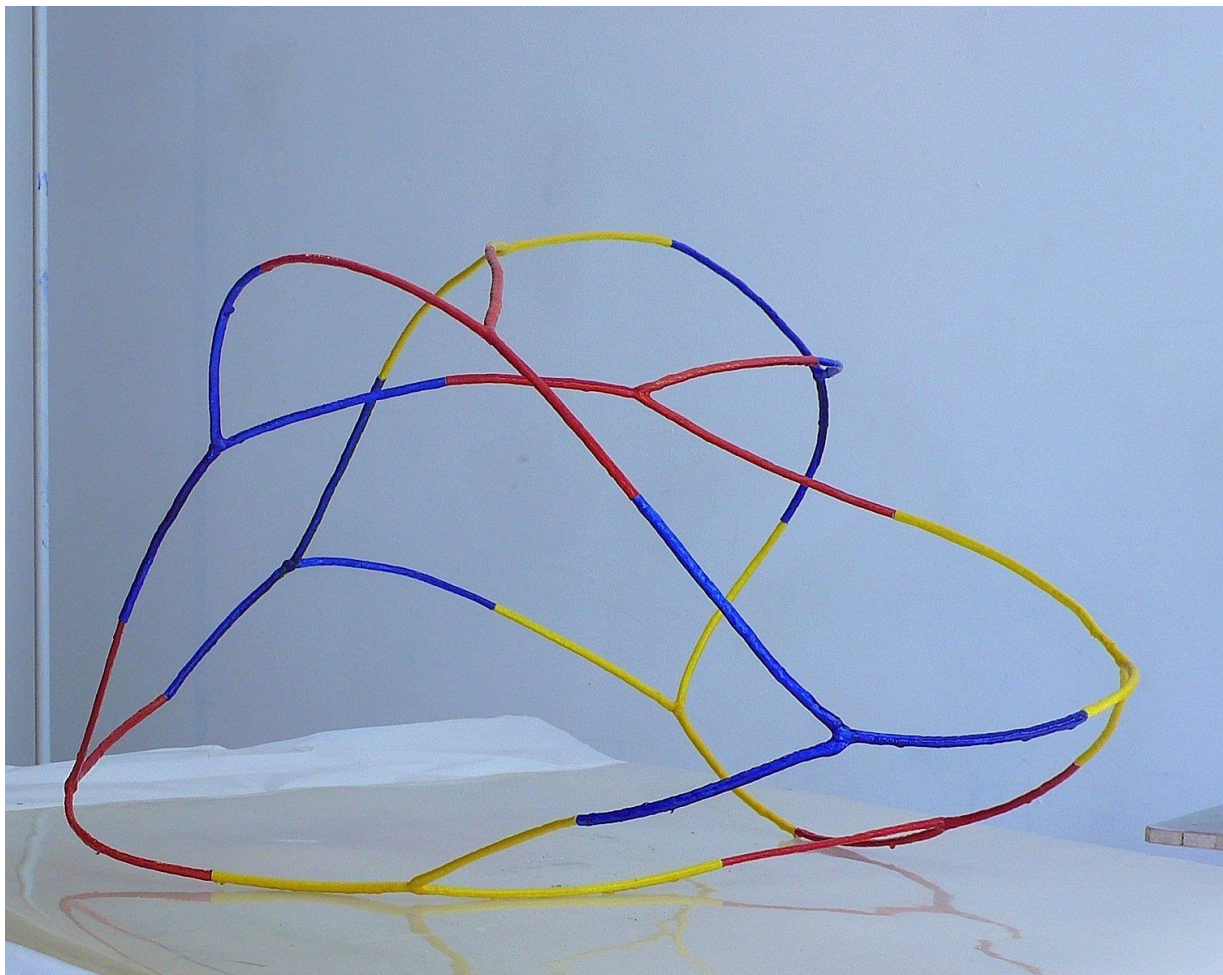
## Thinking Tantra

Contemporary artists explore Tantric drawings

24 Nov 2016 - 19 Feb 2017

Opening Wednesday 23 November 6 – 8.30pm

Prabhakar Barwe, Tom Chamberlain, Shezad Dawood, Nicola Durvasula, Alexander Gorlizki, Goutam Ghosh, Prafulla Mohanti, Jean-Luc Moulène, Anthony Pearson, Sohan Qadri, Prem Sahib, G.R. Santosh, Richard Tuttle, Acharya Vyakul and Claudia Wieser.



Jean-Luc Moulène, *Bifurcated Figure*, 2010. Courtesy the artist and Thomas Dane Gallery, London.

Famously introduced to the West by Ajit Mookerjee in his seminal 1967 *Tantra Art*, Tantric drawings have an unwritten history that is explored here for the first time. A complex body of beliefs and practices, Tantra enables individuals to conjoin with cosmic forces and inhabit alternative dimensions. Omnipresent to those that are attuned, there are tools that facilitate tantric transcendence: rituals, sculptures, drawings, maps, and chants, to name but a few. At different times, in different places, and in different ways, artists have taken up elements of Tantra and adapted or incorporated them into works of contemporary abstraction. Art historians and art dealers have been responsible for categorising and defining Tantric drawings in the west; this exhibition presents artworks, in a range of media, that suggest a range of alternative perspectives.

Starting with anonymous Tantric drawings from a span of two to three hundred years, the exhibition continues with work from the '60s, '70s and '80s by Indian artists who either practiced Tantric rituals or customs, were part of the Neo-Tantra movement, or appreciated Tantra as a socially relevant form of self-expression: Prabhakar Barwe, Prafulla Mohanti, Sohan Qadri, G.R. Santosh and Acharya Vyakul. 'Thinking Tantra' speaks to the impulse Tantric drawings inspire in many artists to explore multiple dimensions. This exhibition brings together drawings made in the Tantric tradition, with works by artists who know these drawings well, respond to them, and actively relate them to their own practice. The artworks take varied forms including colourful works on paper in watercolour and coloured pencil by Nicola Durvasula, Alexander Gorlizki and Claudia Weiser; reliefs in wood and other materials by Richard Tuttle; linear sculpture by Jean-Luc Moulène; works on vintage fabric by Shezad Dawood; repeated mark-making onto a paper surface by Tom Chamberlain; and solarisations by Anthony Pearson.

The exhibition is a collaboration between Rebecca Heald, Amrita Jhaveri and Drawing Room, London. A first iteration of the exhibition was at Jhaveri Contemporary, Mumbai, in early 2015.

Wed 23 November: 4:30pm – 6:00pm: Panel discussion including Thinking Tantra artists Shezad Dawood, Nicola Durvasula and Claudia Wieser with Amrita Jhaveri.

#### NOTES TO EDITORS:

The type of Tantric drawing that features in this exhibition, thanks to its geometry and use of bright colours, has become popular in the West. The symbols and patterns used are distillations of forms first known to have appeared in ancient Sanskrit texts. Copied from generation to generation, their combination of refined shapes and palette makes the drawings appear curiously familiar, leading many to make instinctive links to western abstract art. Yet they are made according to very different motives. Though abstract art in the west is often spoken about in metaphysical terms, it is predominantly aimed at enabling an individual (the artist) to find her/his place in the world. It is free from the collective sign system used in Tantra. Tantric drawings are made as tools for meditation and complex psychological rituals. Conventionally they are made anonymously by people who would not describe themselves as artists, often on found paper, and they are used to connect with a myriad of cosmic forces, in order to visualise Ultimate Reality, or Nirvan.