



*Life and The Art*  
of Vikash Kalra

A book of Vikash Kalra  
by Sagar Jain  
[www.vikashkalra.com](http://www.vikashkalra.com)  
Phone (Vikash): +91 98992 27002  
Phone (Sagar): +91 85277 63302  
New Delhi



# CONTENTS

Vikash and his Poems (one life don't think)

Alchemy of landscape paintings

Sojourning in the truth of life and art

Seeing individual talent against tradition

Collages of conquest

Neo-Constructivist sculptures of Vikash

Shows since 2005

# Preface

This book is not just a chronicle of an artist's journey—it is a quiet revolution in the making.

Vikash Kalra, self-taught and spiritually rooted, has been creating works of raw, uncompromising power since 2005. His paintings and sculptures are not bound by convention—they emerge with a force that is timeless, meditative, and deeply human. With each brushstroke, Kalra gives us a piece of truth. A vision unfiltered, a voice unshaken.

This book presents his life's work—paintings and sculptures that mark two decades of relentless pursuit and pure expression. But it is also a call to those who understand that great art is not just seen, but believed in.

I believe Vikash Kalra's work will not only find its rightful place in museums and collections around the world, but also appreciate in value many times over—thirty, even forty times. For those with vision, this is the time to look closely.

Because when great minds come together—an artist's truth, a collector's trust, and a patron's power—history is made.

JUNE, 2025

SAGAR JAIN





## VIKASH KALRA

---

Vikash Kalra, Delhi In 1973, completed his graduation from Delhi University in Commerce. A self-taught artist, Vikash firmly believes that art is an organic entity and one who passion for art can learn from it like an organic experience and with sustained dedication and hard work, become a practitioner, Painting is life for him. It makes him feel joyous The more he paints, the more he wants to paint. When he started his journey as a painter, he was not aware about the outcomes and his perspective of understanding paintings was different from the results he got. He first painted his thoughts and feelings but with a passage of time he found out that he was also trying to express himself and his surroundings.

He was also escaping the illusions which surrounded him for years. He never gets exhausted while painting. With the course of time he learnt a lot and it provided him some amount of wisdom; the wisdom to forget and forgive everything, the wisdom to get lost in the process.

He finds no obstacles in this path.

As he says, "Every time I paint, I float like a boat, it doesn't require any effort, and it doesn't require any kind of force. For me painting a philosophy which my mind feels and heart understands With painting Vikash has inclined towards spirituality. In the event of any illusion, he takes refuse in art which opens him to clarity on things and new possibilities in life For him paintings are a medium of telling stories and this is one thing he aims for He looks for the emotions and energy more than the subjects. He looks to catch the emotions and allow the viewer to connect with those emotions.



Vikash Kalra, 2018

His practicing yoga and meditation also gives him energy for doing brush strokes more efficiently Known for his fluid, abstract paintings and sculptures, Vikash Kalra explores difficult themes in his works. And his works, according to critic exhibit a subliminal quality He counts masters such as Pablo Picasso and F.N. Souza amongst his early influences.

The artist's works have been widely exhibited across India and are held in several private and corporate collections. He lives in New Delhi with his wife and two children, His other hobbies include music. As a music lover, he has a good collection of musical instruments procured from different parts of the country and he plays them occasionally as well.

Goodness is both an ethical and an aesthetic standard. To be genuine and pleasing, art must be honest as well as good. In fact, honesty should and has always been the most important criterion for art. Art is an incarnation of the artist's honesty of presenting what he wishes to and how he does so. It penetrates the surface of things to portray them as they really are from the point of view of the artist. Our self-taught artist Vikash Kalra is nothing if not utterly frank and explicitly honest about his art, as indeed he is about himself and his goals in life. Art communicates truth in various ways. Sometimes it tells a story, and the story is true to human experience - it is an incarnation of the human condition. Sometimes art tells the truth in the form of propositions. Art can also convey emotional and experiential truth, and it can do this without words, as is the case with visual art.



53 x 46 inch, Acrylic on canvas, 2023

But whatever stories it tells, and whatever ideas or emotions it communicates, art is true only if it points in some way to the one true story of what the artist wishes to express for the sake of pure artistic expression and an adventure into the realms both of the tangible and the intangible, to the exclusion of all else, undertaking a visual vocabulary that might first challenge but eventually satisfy the artist. So it has been with Vikash, while emulating the senior artists. A frequent traveler at one stage in his life, his wool gathering of sights and sounds has been mostly in course of his work and travel. Once the excessive movement began to wear him down, he craved for some stillness, an urge to slow down, have time to read, think and engage in inner dialogue. All the while he had followed art shows and the huge prices the art works commanded inspired him.

An inner voice told him he could do it, too—be creative with a purpose. It was learning time and he began with the study of great masters, Indian and international. He is completely disarming when he states simply that added to his creative urge and the release he was hoping to find, was the incentive to earn more for a better life for his family- wife and two young boys. It was with belief in himself that he turned to creative pursuits in 2006. Ask him who influenced him in those early days of learning and names pour out without pretension, stopping at FN Souza and Pablo Picasso. If his drawings and paintings are recollections of some of the great masters, it is probably in obeisance to the much venerated guru-shishya parampara or teacher-pupil tradition of India.

Whether in the east or the west, we can treasure our traditions and encourage those seriously exploring avenues of expression with both depth and range in the training process. The multi-dimensional Vikash has trained. A mood inspired colour palette, Vikash paints in thick coats of color, his brushwork executing the dictates of perception and moments in memory, gushing forth like a mountain spring. Though he does paint human symbols of faith and habitation, his heart by way of painting, is moored in nature-dark, brooding. bright or alternately fiery, ensconcing all of human life. Minus the straight jacket of institutional training, Vikash retains the natural passion and intensity to paint and draw as he wishes, sans boundaries. Which at this stage of his art practice comes easy to him, as one who has no birth of subjects, revel as he does in the magic of life. Vikash composes well, and his handling of perspective, division of space and use of light appear as efficient and as effortless. Family, friends and acquaintances people his life, everyday encounters inform it, eventually emerging in his drawings. A habitual doodler, he has of late organised himself, focusing on thematic unity. "I draw characters, as they appear to me in conversation, behavior and body language.

That is how I can juxtapose a human form with a donkey's head. Human relations are vital for me, as is the man-woman relationship. The woman's form is beautiful, one that continues creation, goes on to become mother and child..." As he paints, so does he draw, in quick energised strokes in spontaneously guarded lines, articulating musculature, face and form with great efficiency, manifesting his natural talent as much as his thrill in drawing. There is power and boldness both in his brushwork and his lines. Neither instructive, didactic, nor propagandistic, his paintings are a means of communication-therapeutic, healing, even purgative, his drawings alternating between amusement and sensuality.



11 feet tall, Fiber glass, 2022

It is Vikash's honesty and positivity that make him produce meaningful art and connect with his audiences. For all of this, however, the artworld network is the ground of possibility for anything to appear as art for us today. What makes something an artwork is not an observable property in an artwork itself. The work is merely a node in a network of forces without which it would be unrecognizable-- literally invisible. No form of expression need be deplored, only inferior representations in the name of art; and Vikash Kalra most certainly does not fall into that category.



5 feet tall, Fiberglass sculpture

*The waves of the ocean hit the shores dash & fall, since a thousand years endlessly, again and again they rise and crash and fall retreating and approaching again crashing and retreating again just like life for thousands of years has been rising and falling.*

*The desire is doubtlessly to rise up, reach a goal but they crash against the cliffs and are destroyed forever newer waves then reinstate their place and they too crash against the cliffs only to be destroyed the ocean of life has been for millions of years trying to rise above, struggling, and crashing everyday, what must be the motive behind this?*

*It must be a conspiracy to rise and reach a new level of consciousness must be a scheme to search the deepest depths there must exist in this cycle of existence an effort to create elevated lives.*



33 x 42 inch, Acrylic on canvas, 2023

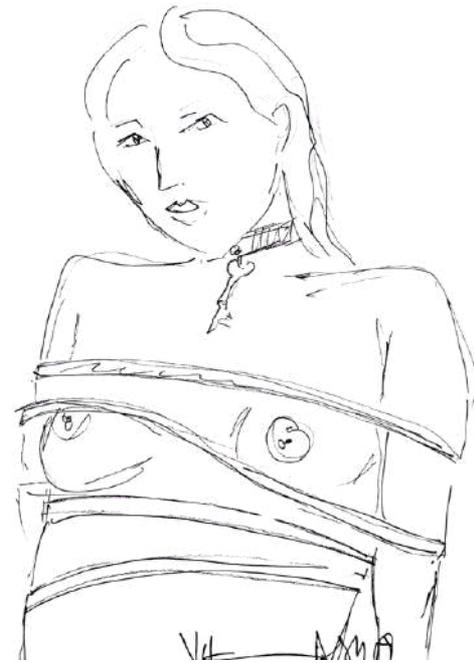
*I hold on to faith and proceed  
Will I reach my goal or wander?  
What is today?  
A long tale of sorrow*

*Tomorrow what shall I hold as I sit  
Pain or some solace  
Some peace  
Some love  
Some simplicity*

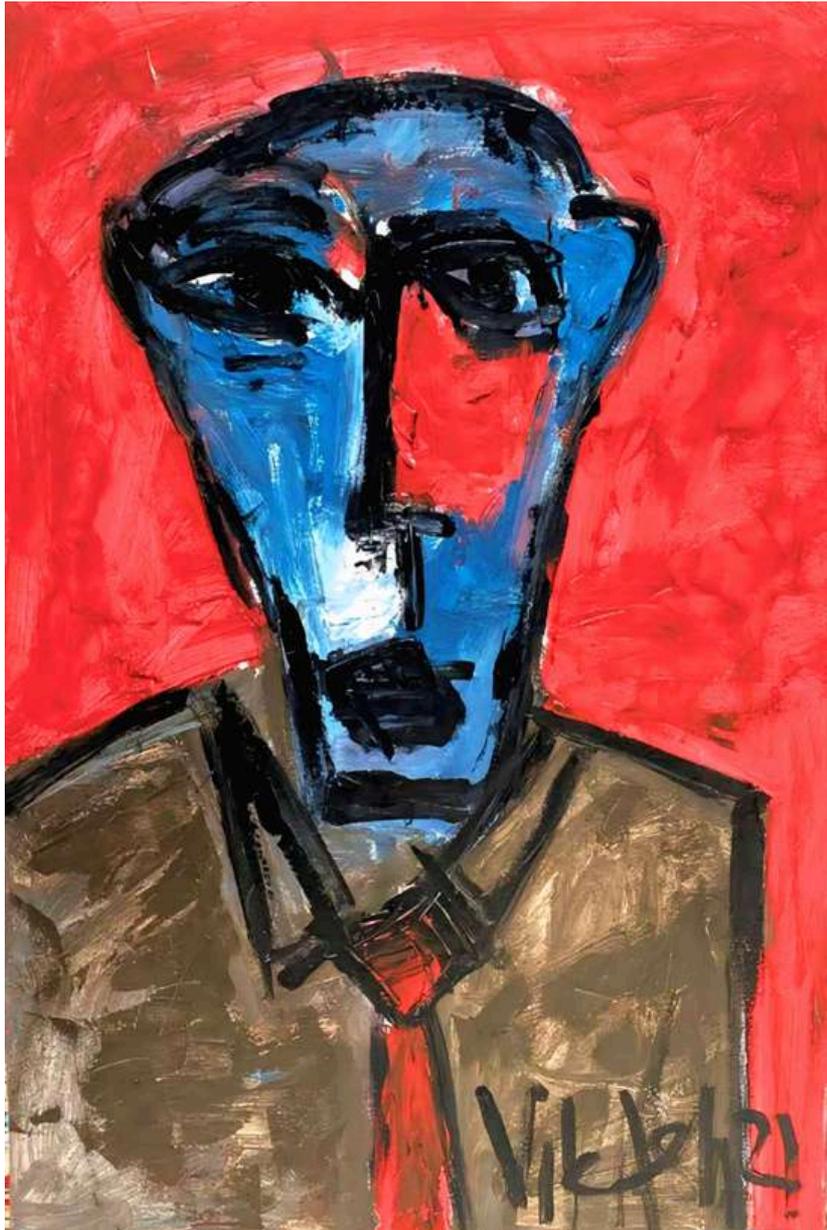
*Stop a bit, rest a little I say everyday  
But....*

*The day ends  
Destination out of sight  
Night approaches  
I go on  
Holding on to faith...*

*One life.. Do not Think  
Ring out the old  
And bring in the new  
Do not get stuck  
The path of life is too long  
Life is one; only one  
But friends are many  
Wherever life is hold it tight  
Do not leave then  
Life is one; only one  
Let it flow like sweet water  
One life, let it blow like cool breeze  
One life, let it sway like sweet music  
Move on, do not stop  
One life and many thoughts  
Wherever life is, stop  
Sit, sleep and think  
Yet again stop, sleep and think*



*Something new is calling you  
Something old is keeping you  
Do not stop  
One life, do not think  
Fly the new and  
Think the old  
One has to laugh and one has to cry  
There are children and flowers  
There are friends and there is fragrance  
There is a beloved and there is life  
Do not think  
One life, do not think  
Something new is calling you  
Something old is keeping you  
One life, do not think.*



36 x 24 inch, Acrylic on canvas, 2021

*Today is a new dawn  
Today is a new sun  
Today is a new breeze  
Today is a new nation  
Today is a new society  
Today is a new excitement*

*Today is a new life  
Today is a new imagination  
Need to gain a new life, yes  
Leave all those decayed past*

*Capture the new*

*Today is a new sun  
Look at it  
Understand it  
Appreciate it*

*Then walk with trust  
We have to gain the Himalaya  
Of our own lives  
And see the valleys  
Standing at the peak of it*

*Appreciate it that  
Today is a new dawn  
Today is a new sun  
And Today is a new life.*

## Holding the Hand of Trust

*Holding the hand of trust, I walk*

*Will I reach my destination?*

*Or will I keep wandering?*

*What is it today?*

*Sorrow: is a long story*

*When it goes, what it brings*

*What are you waiting for?*

*Pain or a little tranquility*

*Peace and a little love*

*Simplicity too*

*Every day I say this much*

*Hey there! Stop for a while*

*Come, sit and rest for a while But..*

*The day is getting over*

*Night is coming closer*

*Do not know my destination*

*Yet I walk*

*Holding the hand of trust*



## I was Dead

*It was six in the evening  
There came two people  
Bringing a white shroud along*

*I was dead*

*The air was a bit hot  
Children were playing  
Wife was taking a bath*

*I was dead...*

*On the tree in front of my studio  
Birds were coming back to roost*

*It was six in the evening  
There came two people  
Bringing a white shroud along  
And I was dead..*

*The noises out there were on  
And the world was on its move  
All my thirst and all my fights  
All my pleasures and dreams*

*All my friends*

*All my enemies*

*All those give and takes*

*The people who fought with me*

*And the people I fought with*

*Everyone and everything was over*

*It was six in the evening  
There came two people  
Bringing a white shroud along  
And I was dead.*

*To gain a life it is better to leave one*

*I left it and watched it*

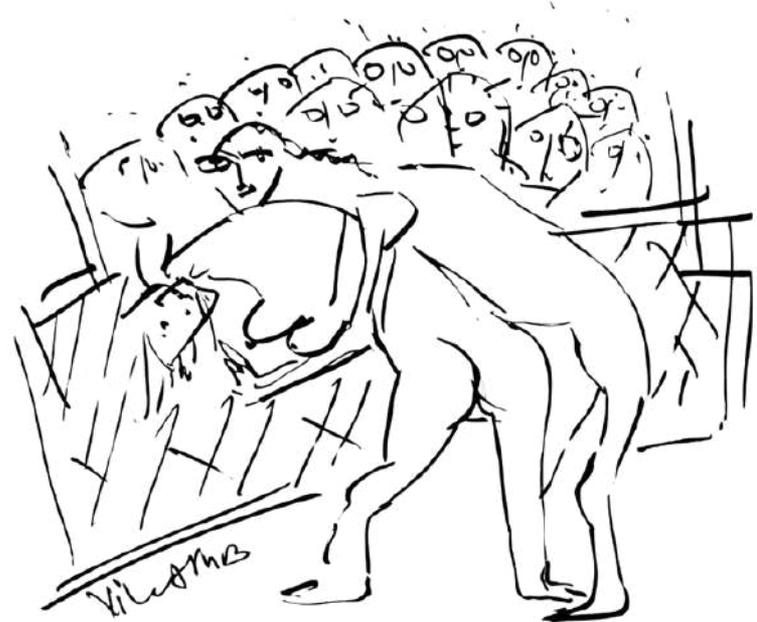
*There is nothing to it; to this life*



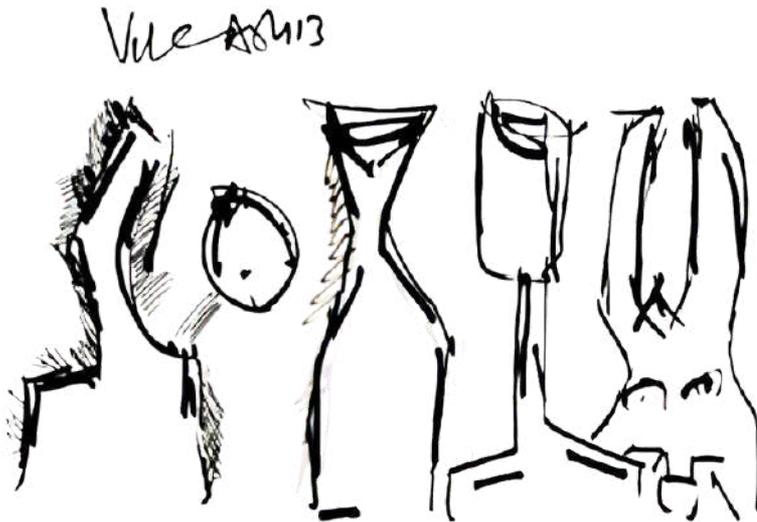
43 x 24 inch, Acrylic on canvas, 2020

## What's More?

*What resides there in these eyes,  
What could I say, more water or more thirst?  
Those water laden clouds in the sky  
Shed tears on this earth  
I do not know, water or thirst  
That resides in these frightened eyes  
What resides there in these eyes,  
What could I say, more water or more thirst?  
In a flash of moment a smile comes to your lips  
And in the next, tears flow down from your eyes  
What resides there in these eyes,  
What could I say, more water or more thirst?  
Like sunlight and shadows hope and despair  
Come in a moment and vanish the next*



11.5 x 16 inch, Pen & ink on paper, 2013



8.5 x 13.5 inch, Ink on paper, 2013

*I make my stories  
And the dreams are lost  
What can I say, in those stories  
Is there more despair or trust?  
What resides there in these eyes,  
What could I say, more water or more thirst?  
To gain a life it is better to leave one  
I left it and watched it  
There is nothing to it; to this life.  
What can I say,  
Is there more original or fake?  
What resides there in these eyes,  
What could I say, more water or more thirst?*

## Nothingness/Empty

*What she said cannot be said I have come to hear that I  
closed my eyes and she too closed her eyes And we sat..*

*she said I have come to hear that What cannot be said  
eyes were closed and I was quiet She too did the same  
and quiet We lost ourselves in some fun Far away....*

*in nothingness We fused into one in that nothingness*

*But there were no noises/voices Words were not forming on  
the lips Voices were not reaching the ears  
But there was something for sure Like in some universe of  
moon and stars We sunk in the  
ocean of a galaxy Eyes were closed but  
tears trickled down For almost half an hour*

*Later we both got up and saw each other Strange meeting  
and a beautiful meeting Nothingness as we were with no  
words*

*Of course there were tears in that meeting She said,  
I have to come listen to that Which cannot be said or heard.*



5 feet tall, Fiberglass sculpture

## The Struggle of Life

*Water comes out of the mountain  
Flows dancing down, playing  
Fighting, taking care of itself  
And taking care of others  
Seeing and showing  
Falling, getting up and  
For all round twenty four hours  
Shouting and screaming  
To become Ganga  
To shatter one's own existence;  
The story of becoming Ganga  
The desire to become the stream of Ganga*



11.5 x 16 inch, Pen & ink on paper, 2013



*That effort  
That pain  
Forgetting all those  
I flow to meet the ocean  
That is life  
The struggle of life  
If I stop, I would not become Ganga  
Nor the sea  
Therefore I keep moving  
Moving, twenty four hours  
Non-stop.*

## One

*One ray is enough  
To reach out to the sun  
One path is enough  
To reach the destination  
Life is a festival  
Full of music and dance  
Let us welcome it  
Let us live and see it  
Deem it full of thorns  
But flowers too are not less  
One fragrance is enough  
To take one to the garden  
One ray is enough  
To reach out to the sun  
One path is enough  
To reach the destination.  
Deem it, loud are the noises  
Of Storm and typhoon  
The ocean of life  
Play out music too  
One thirst is enough*

*To reach up to the ocean  
One prayer is enough  
To see the vision of Lord  
One ray is enough  
To reach out to the sun  
One path is enough  
To reach up to the destination.  
Life is a chance  
Let us live it all full  
Words could be turned into  
Expletives or lyrics  
Curse is not life but a boon  
Let us drown in the essence of it  
For a revolution to rise  
Only an ember is needed  
Diligence is what is needed  
To attain deliverance  
One ray is enough  
To reach out to the sun  
One path is enough  
To reach up to the destination.*



48 inch tall, Fiberglass

## What if

*Someone laughs When she comes to me Someone cries When she comes to me Telling me.*

*You are the river And you are the mountain You are my ocean and You are my cool breeze' Someone laughs When she comes to me Someone cries When she comes to me When she goes back And climbs down my steps Taking a hope along That she would gain a life With that someone laughs When she comes to me And someone cries When she comes to me If I could go somewhere.*

*And climb down steps Holding on to a hope And could see it aloud 'You are my river, You are my river You are my ocean And you are my cool breeze' What if.. Someone laughs When she comes to me Someone cries When she comes to me.*



30 x 30 inch. Each, Acrylic on canvas

## Effort

*Sea waves dash against the shores for thousands of years, the waves keep coming, dashing against the shore and return, retract and go back only to return,*

*Life too rises and falls and dashes like the waves since infinity,*

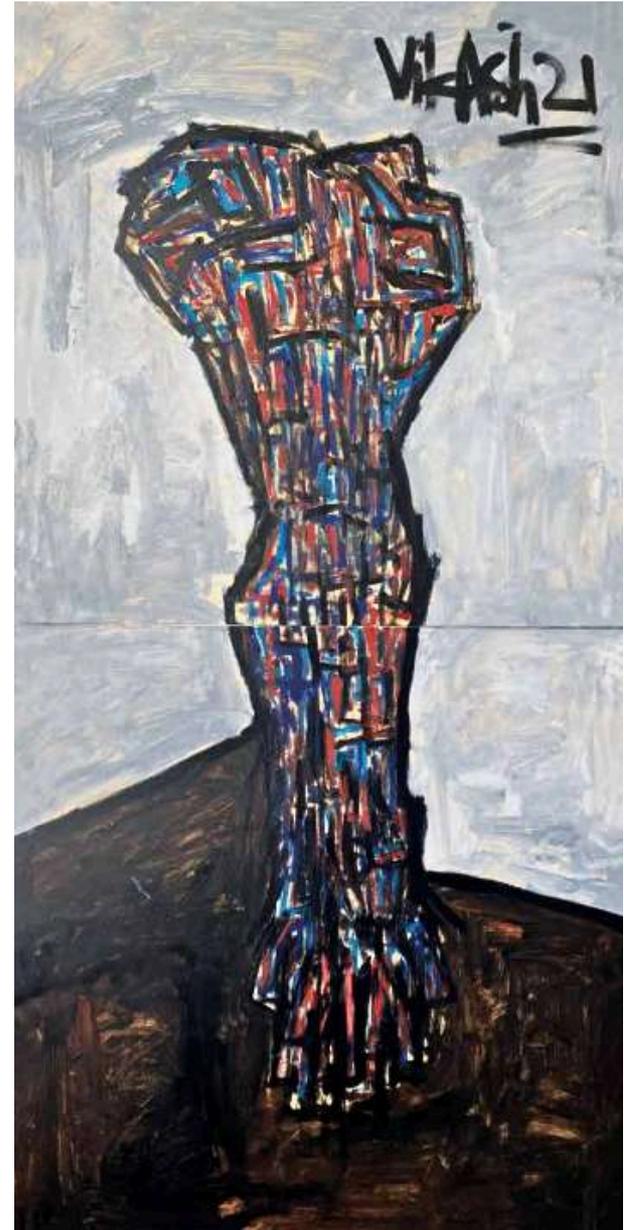
*surely like the sea waves, life too wants to rise and reach somewhere higher, but they dash against the shores and are destroyed..*

*The ocean called Life has been dashing time and again, putting up a fight, rising and falling every day..*

*what could be the reason for this?*

*Surely the reason behind this is its effort to touch the sky, an effort to fathom the depth of it..*

*Definitely the effort is to see if this one life creates a better life for the future..*



86 x 43 inch. (diptych), Acrylic on canvas, 2021

## What's the answer...Silence

*There are a lot of questions But what is the answer There is an answer But you will have to pay The answer is....silence  
When you cease to speak You lose the goddess of speech  
Inside us there is emptiness Silence inside us The answer of all questions*

*Is the same.....silence There is peace in that silence There is comfort and bliss in it There are enough questions But there is only one answer...silence There is bliss in silence There is the experience of life Everything breaks one by one, slowly  
And come out, by providence  
Like digging a well;  
First tough rocks, Then rubbish, rejects Then the dry sand, then mud  
And then water, sweet water*

*For everyone There are enough questions But only one answer...silence  
Flowers silent, thorns silent  
Gardener silent,  
Questions remain silent*

*In themselves Silent is sun and night is hushed up  
Like thick darkness silent is silence None talks, neither me nor you*

*My questions are over The state of emptiness  
In our silence itself Resides my Buddha, my Shiva*

*My Krishna, my end too  
In my silence I too end*

*I am emptiness Silence is emptiness Silence is the answer of life Everything breaks, everything cleans  
Everything flows in silence There are enough questions But answer is one.....silence.*



30 x 33 inch, Acrylic on canvas, 2023



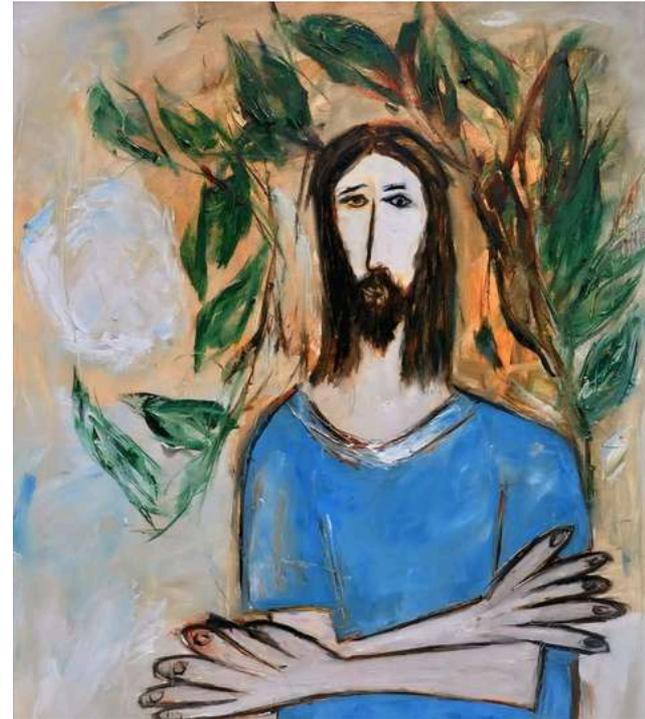
45 x 25 inch, Acrylic on canvas, 2024

## Experience

*The one that cannot be seen  
Is to be watched  
The one that does not come to thoughts  
Is to be experienced  
Closing the eyes one has to look  
Open the eyes, you see the world  
Want to see the power of Ganga!  
Where does it take me  
Want to see the cool of moon  
How does it make me sleep  
Want to feel the heat of sun  
How much does it burn  
Want to see the pool of peace  
Does the mind provide peace?  
Want to see the fire of anger  
How much does it burn all and sundry  
Want to see everything  
The ones that cannot be seen  
The ones that do not come to thoughts  
There is no good and bad in experience*



48 x 65 inch, Acrylic on canvas, 2024



48 x 36 inch, Acrylic on canvas

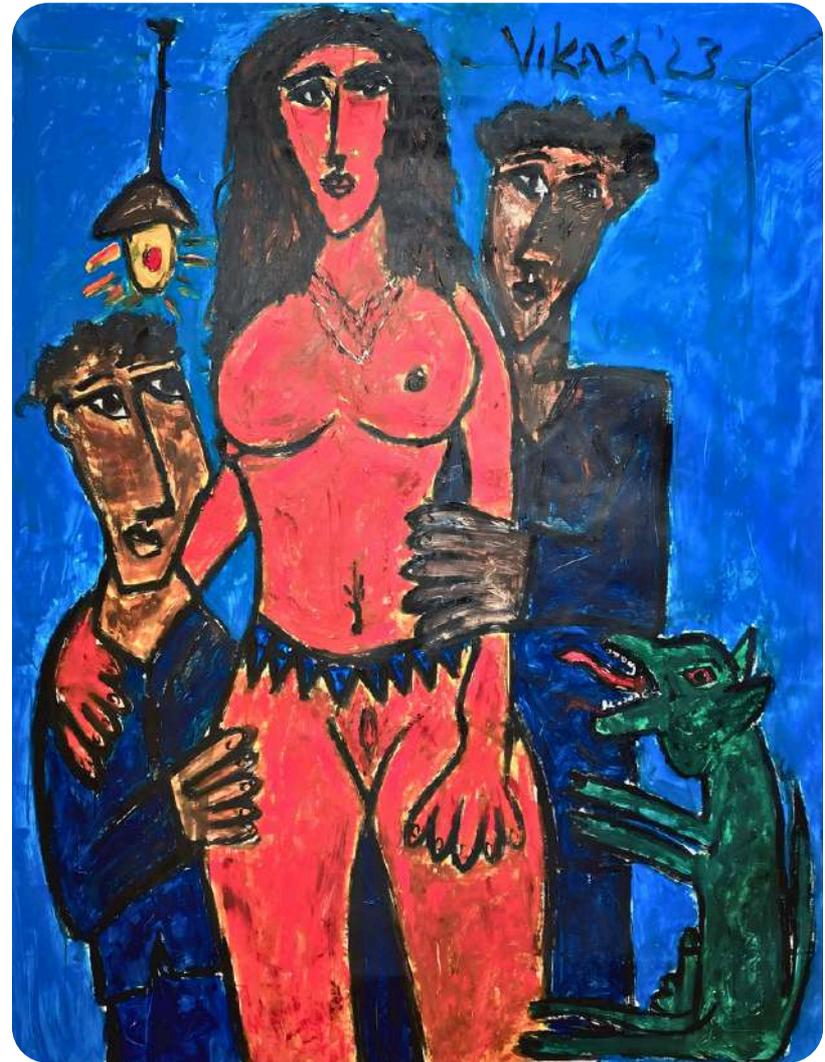
*Because experience is experience Need to  
make my own path, all by myself Whatever  
needs to be done, should be done all alone  
Whatever  
I want to become, to be done all by myself  
Wherever I need to go, I have to go all alone  
Whatever I need to know, I have to know all by  
myself Within us, there resides our own  
emptiness Our own light Want to see that  
which is not seen Want to think that which is  
not thought Want to gain Peace  
Emptiness/nothingness Silence My own.*

## Love for Life..

*Life should be in love with life  
It is the necessity of life  
Who says that death  
Should be the eventuality  
How could life find its end  
In Death, how could it?*

*How it could be otherwise?  
Can life become death?  
It is impossible  
Life makes bigger life  
Out of its own webs  
Life can be made only out of life  
A mango tree, bears mangoes only*

*How could there be the fruits of  
death  
On a tree of life?  
If you see the fruits of death  
Then there is a problem in seeing!  
In the tree of life the fruits  
Can only be those of life  
Death is like changing clothes  
Life ushers in bigger life  
Who says that death should be the  
end of it all  
Life should be love with life itself.*



61 x 76 inch, Acrylic on canvas, 2023

## Today I Met a Direct Hitter

*Today someone made a pass at me  
He hit me directly, very directly  
But he was fake, he did not have the guts  
He does dealing in fakes  
He meets fake people  
How can he hit me down?  
He does not listen to the original  
Because he cannot hear it patiently  
He talks because he can only talk  
What is there inscribed in history  
He kept on repeating  
And barking what he had learnt  
What is history  
Is it all about the thoughts of  
Those three or four who are dead and gone  
What is it today, what is today is present,*

*Present that has not been lived by himself  
What he could do to me with history  
I have the ability to make history  
He told me, he made me  
understand*

*Don't be afraid, come on  
Come on, friend, you can make it  
You can undertake this journey  
You could speak about it  
You could write a history, anew  
You have stuff in you, he showed me  
Today I met someone  
Who could hit me directly.*



36 x 48 inch, Acrylic on canvas, 2020

*I could change the course of a river  
The ability to join the thread of life with life  
He hit me today directly  
Because he was selfish  
He was weak, he was frightened,  
He had joined hands with people  
And was shaken to the hilt  
But I know that...*

## Life is a Game

*Life is a game  
Do not take it more than that  
If you take it you are gone  
Just take it as a play act  
What is the problem in acting  
Play the role well that you have got  
Just deem it as a game/play  
Why get tangled....*

*Everything is fake  
Whatever is there today  
Is not seen tomorrow  
Tomorrow does not come*

*Life is a game  
Do not take it more than that  
If you take it, you get caught  
It is Ramleela....*

*Ravan, Ram, Sita  
Hanuman, monkey, bear  
Demons, you need to be everyone  
Brother, it is just a play  
Remove the curtain*

*You see both Ram and Ravan  
One and the same, even friends  
They may be tea-mates or bar mates  
They could be friends of day or night  
Sita sits in between them  
No tussle of stealing her or saving her*

*There is no golden Lanka  
What is truth and what is lie  
Life is a game, a play  
Do not take it more than it  
If you do, you will get caught up  
Life is a role, a play , just keep acting  
Act it happily in abandon*

*Do not get frustrated  
Sometimes you are before the curtain  
And at times behind it  
Sometimes you are a king  
And sometimes a servant  
What is the difference  
Today you are young  
Tomorrow you could be old  
Today you are a hero  
Tomorrow, you could be zero  
Life is a play, a game  
Just act*

*Curtain goes up and comes down  
Just see what you are up to  
How do you do the role of life  
What you get is the reward of  
nothingness  
What you get is the reward of perfect  
beauty  
Life is a play, do not take it more than that  
If you do, you are ensnared.*



## I am Lost in my own Thoughts

*I am lost in my own thoughts  
And seen as insane before others  
To welcome the universe  
I stand with my hands spread out  
I see and listen but I do not want to  
Think nor do I want to understand  
Just stand there with hands spread out  
To receive....  
I will not be tired till you do not come  
I have a ray of hope in my mind  
I have the faith to remain lost in my thoughts  
You would come, definitely, with  
The universe in your hands  
There is no selfishness in it  
Nor there any frivolity  
There is the essence of life  
And the thirst to meet it  
There are the peaks of mount Kailash  
There is a sweet lingering music  
When we meet flowers will bloom  
Moon will turn cold and night will prolong  
Time would stand still ...  
Everything will be in peace  
Just you and me  
The universe will look at us and love us  
This meeting will be wonderful*

*Will be filled with love  
Just like the way we used to meet initially  
Selflessly; in it hidden are you and me  
This is happening and it is in the making  
This meeting will definitely happen..  
I am lost in my own thoughts  
And am seen insane before others  
I am here standing with hands spread out  
In order to welcome the universe  
I want to take the boat of life  
To the other shore with others  
Where there is no time, no pride  
Nor there is the desire to become  
Nor there is the need to gain  
Nor there is a need to be something  
No thoughts, just to become Shiv  
I am waiting for your arrival  
I am sure that you would come  
You will come;  
And will take me away with love  
I will not be able to say anything  
Will not able to think something  
Because I am here standing  
I am lost in my own thoughts  
And am seen insane before others.*



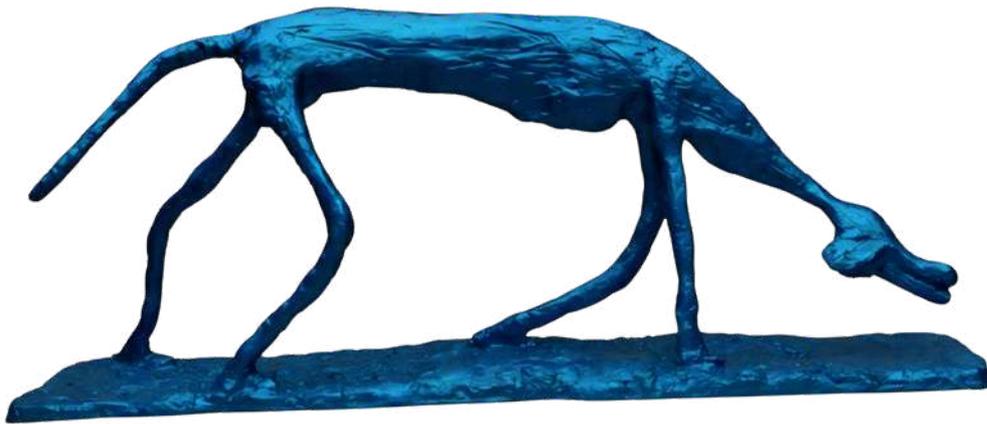
## Chicks of a Bird

*In a tree right in front of my studio A bird was raising its own chicks In the nest the chicks grew up day by day One day when the chicks came out Of the nest for the first time I was looking at them They just sat on a branch, frightened Thoughtful and restless, in trepidation.. They could not make the steps forward. Their mother was calling out from a distance Chee chee chee..*

*The chicks had not even opened their wings They kept on thinking....*

*Would we be able to fly or not Would our wings open or not Frightened they looked back at their nest From a distance the mother was still calling Chee chee chee chee They looked at the nest They looked at the bird But the mother was calling in trust She kept on calling and calling They spread their wings Trusting the call of their mother They just moved a little bit away from the nest Confidence rose a bit and they opened the wings They rose up in the air, and... they came back Confidence just grew...*

*and they flew Since then I do not know, the nest is there But where are the birds Kids also muster up courage To spread their wings and fly up in the sky One day one has to leave the old Then why not today? There is pain in the new Those children of the bird who have flown away Wouldn't they be afraid?*



5 x 2.5 feet long, Fiberglass Doggie

*Won't they be frightened by the blowing winds It rained at night They must be sitting without their nest Their wings must be drenched They must be feeling cold What if they were still in the nest, Wouldn't it have been really good? But when one flies in the air All pain and cold are forgotten Chicks of the bird The ones who fly with their mother They also pay their price and gain their life Those who pay their price gain theirs...*

*With the new pain is also good However, peace is with the old Slow suicide, nothing else What is there to leave What will be erased When nothing is earned How do you say something is lost? So search it, and search it With all your trust Till you could spread your wings....*

*Even the pain of new is good Old is nothing but suicide Before it becomes a habit Do something and wake up Do some adventures The adventure of going with the new The courage to go into the unknown The way the kids of the bird fly away The way children leave their mothers' home Even the failure becomes victory with the new But even the victory is a failure with the old This is not an imagination but experience Those who gain the new Would gain the knowledge of flying... You just live for the new Prepared and enthusiastic always*



I believe in the “complete interlocking of image and paint” so that each movement of the brush on the canvas alters the shape and connotation of the image. My works are a result of unconscious choices and I tend not to have control of how the end result would look like. I feel paintings tend to be pointless if the paint itself were not eloquent. Francis Bacon said “I think of myself as a maker of images. The image matters more than the beauty of the paint... I suppose.



40 x 66 inch, Acrylic on canvas, 2024

It is difficult to know where to start when writing about the artwork of Vikash Kalra, indeed how to put down on paper for others to read, about the man himself, the artist and the creative brain that produces the paintings we see. This is because to consider Kalra and his artistic output is to enter a world so full of energy and obsession, of moving from one idea to the next, from one room to the other, from book to book, landscape, portrait, poem, sculpture. He navigates these positions with ease sliding from one to the other whilst we are left trying to catch our breath. That is until as the viewer, we enter the world of Kalra's landscape paintings, his journeys, our sojourns, where we are given the freedom to explore and the space to linger and enjoy. Kalra is a new talent in the International art world. An enigma, he fits none of the definitions of an academic artist. Self-taught, he freely explores the ideas intrinsic to the work of those who inspire him. Like some of these masters, once a brush, a pen or palette is in his hand, he begins his performance working at speed and with fluidity as he starts his journeys, throwing out images of things seen or glimpsed and spilling them onto the canvas. So what do we see in his paintings, what does he give us?

The answer to this is surprising, particularly when we are presented with a series of works which for the purpose of this introduction we will call landscapes. Some would call these works of Kalra's abstract or abstracted paintings. This is not strictly true and to consider them in this way would be to miss the essence of the offering Kalra is inviting us to explore. A true abstract work refers to nothing other than itself. Abstracted images in a pure academic sense are attached to real things; to places, objects and people that exist in real time. However, before thinking about the content of the paintings that we are looking at it, is important to consider the physical landscapes both real and imagined that inform Kalra when he starts to paint. Based in South Delhi, both the outside and the inside spaces of Kalra's studio share visual references. Whilst in a leafy suburb, the studio in Delhi could never be considered rural or primarily containing large tracts of 'free space'. It is urban, busy, noisy, colorful and brimming with life. Entering Kalra's studio entails a journey; through alleyways and up numerous flights of stairs.



Vikash Kalra in his studio, Kalkaji, New Delhi

On entering, the studio mirrors this landscape and moving through it parallels the journey. The viewer is faced with room upon room piled high with paintings, canvases, piles of stuff, boxes, music and it is peopled by the figures staring out of Kalra's numerous figurative canvases that line the walls. The artist surrounds himself inside and outside both physically and mentally. He creates journeys and celebrates the turns and twists. In this process the artist routinely rewards himself. The brain likes repetition. It particularly enjoys visual repetition and pays itself with a regular injection of dopamine. In other words, as humans, the more we see and do something and repeat the process the more our brain rewards us and it feels good.

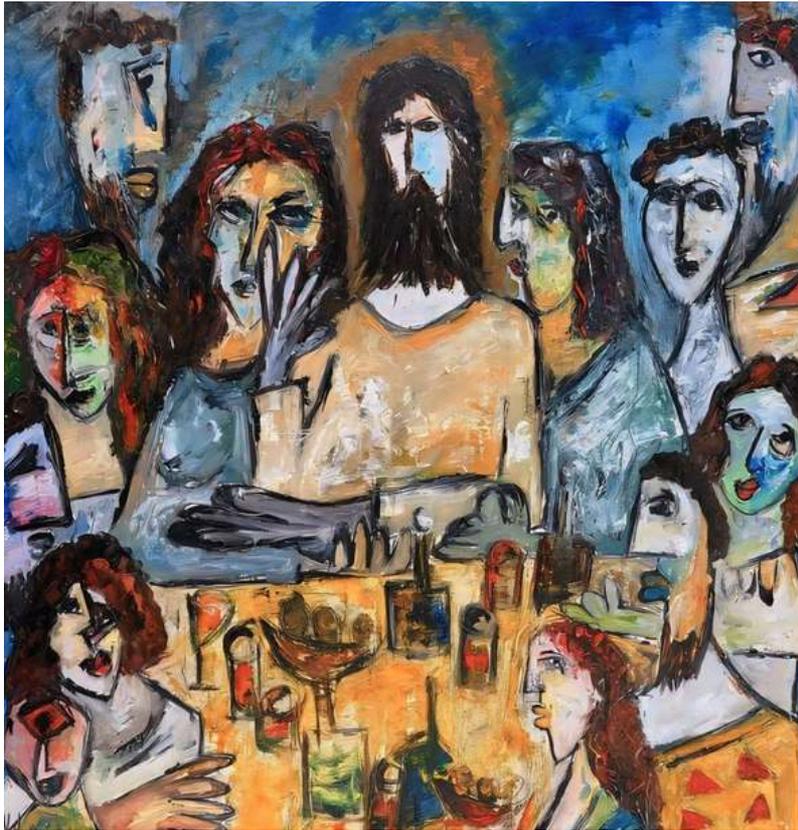


60 x 156 inch, Oil on canvas, 2012

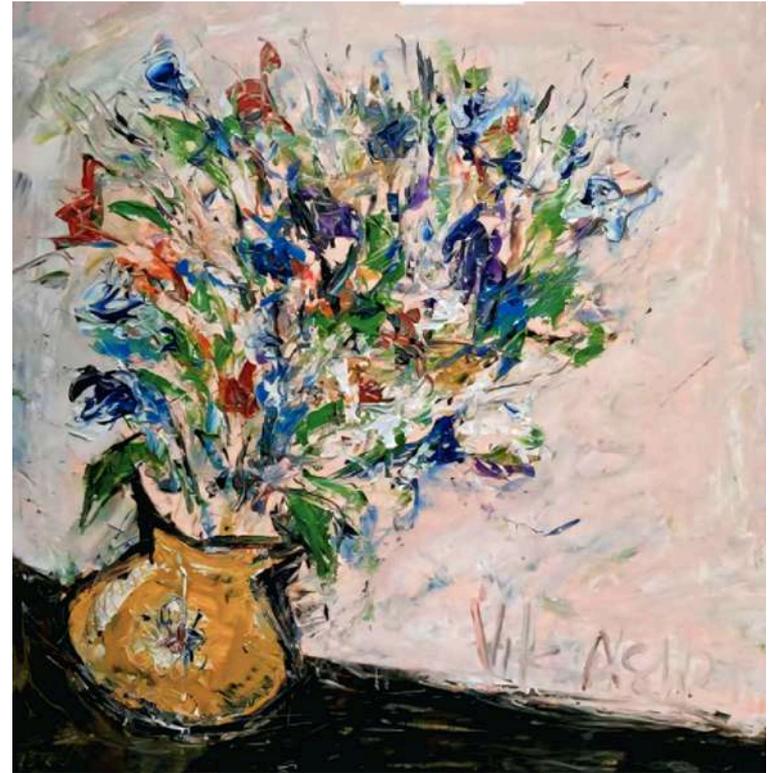
We can then go back to the question what do we see in Kalra's landscape paintings or more to the point what are we offered? In all the paintings we are invited to take the journey with the artist. Our eye is drawn across the canvas following the suggestion of trees, fauna and buildings that skit across the space. This is the journey that Kalra is creating for us as he remembers things seen, feelings, colours, smells and sounds. We are invited to enjoy but most importantly we are offered resting space. Somewhere across the painted surface, details become sparse and are reduced to brush strokes as Kalra allows us time to enjoy the journey.

We can move in and out of this contemplative space and back to 'the action' as we choose. This becomes an interesting dichotomy as this would appear to be the opposite of how the artist produces, as he allows himself no time between this work and the next which is already lined up and ready to go.

The availability of space for the artist is almost non-existent between his thoughts, processes and the laying down of paint on canvas. So as his flow of ideas across the canvas speeds-up, he has no time to differentiate shapes and forms so all buildings become representational, three-line images and other reference points become defined purely by mark-making. And strangely in this erratic and thought-filled exercise, by contrast, Kalra eases our journey for us as he skips over excess and leaves us with just enough. The contemplative energy in Kalra's paintings is furthered in the artist's use of colour. Whilst every painting is different, what they give the viewer in terms of choice of colour is a reduced palette. So each work sits easily with itself and our brain is not asked to struggle with too many options but is instead given the freedom to enjoy the harmonies created.



60 x 72 inch, Acrylic on canvas



39 x 39 inch, Acrylic on canvas, 2021

Kalra does not let the viewer off quite so easily as he just pushes some of our journeys and makes us work just that little bit harder to walk the path with him.

Just like Jackson Pollock's painting *Summertime*, we the viewer are asked to participate in the action, as in order to see the detail we need to get that little bit closer and in this coming forward we are forced by the artist to literally walk the journey as we move from left to right and ultimately follow in Kalra's footsteps.

## Alchemy of Landscape Painting

Vikash Kalra is a time traveler, reincarnating himself at times as words and at other times as symbols, and never lets himself be carried away to the combination of both which other artists have already done. Words come to him in the form of poems that he recites before a mirror and when a mirror is not available, before a lens. Camera catches his moving lips and the sounds that those lips make and together they come out as, poetry as performance and performance as poetry. Vikash does not distinguish or discriminate; instead he reaches out to people through Youtube and other social networking sites. For this artist, these technological interfaces are new landscapes where people wander, some with fixed aims and some without any aim at all. In the real Indian tradition, Vikash Kalra's words and symbols wander around without any fixed aim. on a pilgrimage without any shrine or destination.



48 x 36 inch, Acrylic on canvas



40 x 60 inch, Acrylic on canvas, 2025

And during this journey all what the artist sees, he captures in his memory, later on his canvases, and remember, they are never the same. What is important for him is the transformation of the words to performance and memories to images. These acts of mutation and reincarnation of memories and experiences are somewhat complicated. A landscape of Vikash Kalra is a journey, perhaps undertaken by everyone who witnesses it but somehow failing to translate it in the way that the artist does. These landscapes done in an expressionist fashion is one of the pivotal components of Vikash Kalra's oeuvre, which otherwise also includes faces, couples, erotic scenes, chemical drawings, figurative sculptures as constituting elements.

In this focused exhibition of his landscapes, one could see the artist bringing all his experiences and memories into condensed landscapes. Though Vikash does not like to be known as a landscape artist, depicting them is one of the most exciting artistic processes for him.

For a devoted landscape artist, any kind of land becomes a trigger; he could elaborately paint it with all the details or abstract it to its essence. But for majority of the artists landscape painting is something unavoidable.

Whether it is Benode Behari Mukherjee or Ram Kinkar Baij, Zarina Hashmi or Nilima Sheikh even when they practice a different sort of painting, landscapes occur in their creative processes, at times challenging them with its beauty or at times cajoling them with its simplicity. Those artists who would like to go beyond the academic restrictions and theme based practices are charmed by the allurements of landscapes and painting landscapes gives them a sort of freedom that they do not otherwise get from their abstract or figurative works. Expressionists, unlike the figurative artists bring out landscape as very strong memory registrations.



33 x 42 inch, Acrylic on canvas, 2023

Vikash Kalra's landscapes belong to this tradition of landscape painting. For the artist landscape painting or painting landscapes opens up two possibilities before him; one, it is a relationship between individual nature and the 'nature' of nature. Two, it is about the absence of individual nature and it is also about the negation of one's own nature and letting the other nature dominate. In the former sense, it is confrontation between the artist and the landscape. This confrontation or the ensuing relationship need not necessarily be a smooth and happy one. The artist could treat landscape as quite oppressive, unlike the conventional landscape paintings.



65 x 44 inch, Acrylic on canvas, 2025

He also could use it as a very benevolent one. And at the most it could be used as something to express the immensity of human existence and its hidden possibilities. But in the latter sense, the relationship between the artist and the nature is that of slave and master, devotee and the divinity, worshipper and the worshipped. Here the artist has to submit his own self before the power of nature and allow himself to be led wherever the nature wants him to go.

Both these possibilities come to play in Vikash's works. But what I take interest in is a third possibility; the possibility of landscape to be contemporary without showing a trace of contemporary element. One has to be retreating to remote areas in order to paint landscapes today without contemporary elements. Otherwise one has to depend completely on the creative and imaginative faculties of human mind to conjure up such landscapes.



Watercolour on paper, 2024



Pen and ink on paper, 2025



Pen and ink on paper, 2025



Pen and ink on paper, 2025



Pen and ink on paper, 2025



As I have mentioned elsewhere in this essay Vikash is an artist who transforms the experiences of the journeys into memory and from there to landscapes. This alchemy of transforming intangible memories into tangible paintings is something unique especially for an artist who does not particularly feel like travelling for the sake of doing landscapes. For me, then these landscapes are contemporary ones, originating from his experiences of the urban landscapes around him and even within him as he lives in an urban space, but take an absolutely different and even romantic form when they come on to the canvases. This happens when the artist erases all what is contemporary from his memories. But understand it as an artistic/creative technique through which he could bring forth a series of landscapes that have the contemporary vibrancy and classical feel.

This is an absence technique or a technique of erasure, and at times replacing the present with the past. Can it be called a mental photoshopping of experiences and images? The experiences of the contemporary are set up in the mind of the artist as a backdrop and from there the details of architectures and urban scenes are erased slowly and meticulously. At times, the architectural forms are altogether removed or at times they are replaced by ancient looking structures.



44 x 65 inch, Acrylic on canvas, 2025



44 x 65 inch, Acrylic on canvas

This technique of absencing or erasure allows the artist to make these landscape paintings quite fluid; they could take vertical and horizontal forms, and large or small formats. Interestingly, when the erasure is done in the mind, the dynamics that constitute an urban feeling or image remains as it is and this dynamics is transported to the pictorial plane using animated brush strokes.

Also, depending on the mood of the artist, he takes a lot of freedom in using/choosing the colour. Of late, Vikash has been using a lot of blues, yellows and oranges unlike his early blacks, greens and reds, though the shades of these colours appear quite often in his works. This contemporary dynamism that Vikash creates, for me is a way to understand the artist's grip not only on the contemporary life around him but also his knowledge about the classical and modern landscapes. A generally initiated viewer may see these landscapes of Vikash as expressionistic ones and also they could connect these works to some mid 20th century Indian masters. But a deeper look by an informed viewer would help him/her understand how Vikash uses landscapes from Renaissance to now, as seen in the art history.



44 x 65 inch, Acrylic on canvas, 2025



48 x 36 inch, Acrylic on canvas, 2025

He refers to these art historically acclaimed landscapes not as a deliberate ploy to make his works grand but this reference comes as a spontaneous outreach to history. In some of the vertical landscapes one could see how Vikash uses the Renaissance landscape keeping the foreground, middle ground and background structures intact.

From a closer distance they look two dimensional to be distinguished, however a mere repositioning of the viewer's body would bring a different feel about the work and they start vibrating like a three dimensional painting. The more one looks for classical references the more one could see them in Vikash's works. Right from Da Vinci to Van Gogh to Turner, Vikash's works subconsciously pay homage to all these masters.

Vikash has brought in two distinct elements for intensifying the feel of his landscape paintings; one is a video and the other is a set of ceramic wares with Vikash's images glazed on to them. In the video work, Vikash travels through the suburbs, wastelands, barren as well as fertile stretches along the highways and the images caught on camera from the window of a moving vehicle are played directly in a looped video.



45 x 65 inch, Acrylic on canvas, 2025



36 x 36 inch, Acrylic on canvas, 2025



30 x 55 inch, Acrylic on canvas, 2024



65 x 44 inch, Acrylic on canvas

It is a sort of going round and round in the same place but giving away the feel of an extensive travelling.

This is exactly the feeling that Vikash's landscape paintings impart to the viewers; the paintings as a whole look like they are going round and round the same theme but a relook reveals that it is an extensive journey undertaken by a creative mind that resides in a frenzied creative personality like Vikash Kalra.



*Vikash Kalra making landscapes in the studio, 2014*



Nagpur teak wood + Fiber glass characters

Vikash Kalra's work is dynamic, vibrant and showcases his commitment to a lifelong process of innovation. He creates passionate art, which is truly humanistic. He experiments with styles and continues to reinvent himself. His work is reminiscent of the words of Picasso "Whenever I wanted to say something, I said it the way I believed I should." The subjects covered in Vikash's paintings comprise of still life, landscape and nudes. He expresses his ideas with bold strokes, which are at times violent, and at other times overtly sexual.

Komal Sibal - art aficionado

The artworld is developing with time and technology. Buying artwork at present is not everything. People are evolving to such an extent that they are trying to understand the concept of the art and the thinking of the artist before buying an art piece. This change in the art world influenced the artists in the positive ways but the people who were eating the market like an ant is fearing from this change. If we research in the art-world in India, we will find that the need for the artist is incomplete and void. The struggle to reach the top is conjured and the hard-works of most of the artists are going in a void. In other sense, the artworks and artists both are suffering badly in India. Even in some cases, they are struggling to fulfill their basic needs. In such a situation, choosing to be an artist is more than the daring decision one can take. These situations are not present in the world wide scenarios but in India is the truth and an artist have to face the truth, there is no option for him/her. If you are choosing fine art as your career then you have to pay the price and the price will be more than your hard work, patience, blood, and sweat. It will cost your soul to survive in this art-world. Here you will get more attention and appreciation for the fake arts than the real one.



50 x 66 inch, Acrylic on canvas, 2020

You will earn on the grave of the artists. When they die, they become a legend and this situation doesn't generate instantly in the 21st century. This the bitter truth and the art-world have to realize it. But if we think deeply then it is not going to happen soon.

It will take time, maybe decades, or maybe even a century will be not enough for the people to understand the impatient artist's passion for the art and their death for this sole purpose. Do you need an example? Just Google it and you will get the hundreds of names who got the cult value only after their death. It is the place where the devil lives long and the good die young. Even in the present scenarios of the artworld, Vikash Kalra is trying his best to provide the support and needs of the disadvantaged society near him.

The best thing about his initiative is that he is developing thinking of giving more than he takes. This kind of thinking is amazing in the 21st century and it makes him stand among the best personality of India, such as Azim Premji, Ratan Tata, and N.R. Narayan Murthy. He promised himself that he will donate at least 10 crore rupees to the multiple NGOs for the support of the poor and laborers. Amid the Corona pandemic, his decision will be fruitful for the Indian society. The difference in the mindset makes him stand out among the artist of his generation.

*Abhinath Maurya*  
Art Critic, New Delhi

IF THERE ARE ANY SIMPLE TRUTHS ABOUT ART AND THE ARTIST-IT IS AS PICASSO STATES PAINTING IS A BLIND MAN'S PROFESSION HE PAINTS NOT WHAT HE SEES, BUT WHAT HE FEELS, WHAT HE TELLS HIMSELF ABOUT WHAT HE HAS SEEN THE SAME HOLDS TRUE FOR VIKASH KALRA. HIS ART IS A DEPICTION OF THE TURBULENCE THE CLIMAX AND THE ACHE IN HIS LIFE HIS STROKES ARE BOLD, DEFINITE A BURST OF EMOTION TREATED WITH ALMOST A CHILD LIKE QUALITY BUT THERE IS NOTHING CHILD LIKE ABOUT ITS DEPICTION. THE SUBJECT'S NAKED SCARS, THEIR HAUNTED EYES AND THE IMPREGNABLE SILENCE AS YOU STAND BEFORE IT. HIS ART IS DIFFICULT. IT IS DEMANDING. IT OFFERS YOU A GLIMPSE OF THE INTRINSIC NATURE OF MAN, OF WOMAN, OF RELATIONSHIPS AND THEIR TEMPESTUOUSNESS. IT WILL NOT ALLOW YOU TO REMAIN PASSIVE OF THE MAN, THE ARTIST. HE EXISTS WITH THE CARELESSNESS OF SOMEONE AWARE OF HOW TRULY TRANSIENT LIFE IS HE IS ENFRAMED BY HIS PHILOSOPHY, HIS EXPERIENCE AND HIS DABBLING HAND WHICH STOPS FOR NO ONE HE HAS RISEN, FALLEN, LOVED AND BETRAYED HE EXISTS FOR

ALL TO SEE, AS DOES HIS ART AND THEREIN LIES HIS TRUTH - TO EXPECT LITTLE BUT TO DENY LIMITATION. IT IS IN THIS CONTEXT THAT ONE CAN APPRECIATE THE SUBLIMINAL QUALITY OF HIS WORK WHICH TAPS INTO THE REMNANTS OF A FORGIVEN YET INESCAPABLE PAST. STILL IT OFFERS YOU HOPE HOPE BECAUSE BY WITNESSING ITS EMOTIVE FAMILIARITY AND BY VALUING EACH MOMENT FOR ITSELF, WITH EACH STROKE AND EACH EXPRESSION, YOU ARE IN FACT FREED BY IT. THE DAY HAS NOT BEEN WRITTEN NOR HAS THIS LIFE. FINALLY, TO APPRECIATE THE BEAUTY OF HIS WORK, PREPARE TO REVEAL SOMETHING OF YOURSELF ART IS AFTER ALL FOR VIKASH, AN INTIMATE CONVERSATION BETWEEN THOSE WHO WERE ONCE STRANGERS IN THIS UNPREDICTABLE LAND OF OURS

*Trupthi Basavaraj*

*Ex. member of the trinity art community  
university of Cambridge, U.K.*



48 x 144 inch, Acrylic on canvas, 2024



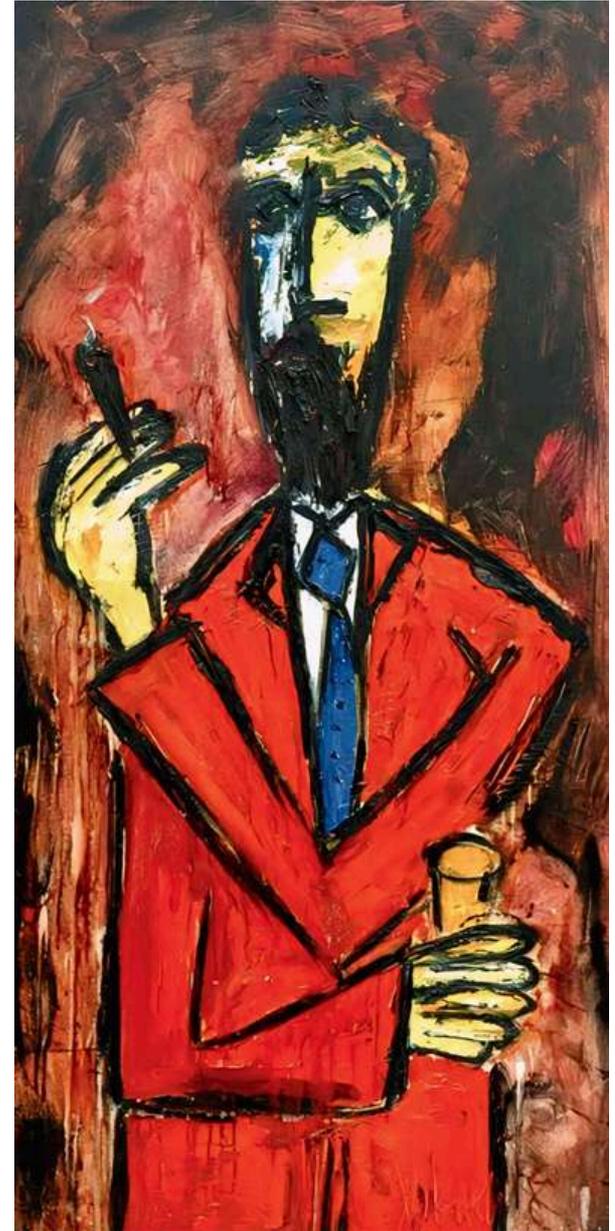
40 x 60 inch, Oil on canvas, 2018



32 x 22 inch, Acrylic on canvas, 2023



58 x 39 inch, Oil on canvas, 2023



24 x 48 inch, Acrylic on canvas



Sculpture by Vikash with Almost Gods



Pen & ink on paper, 2025



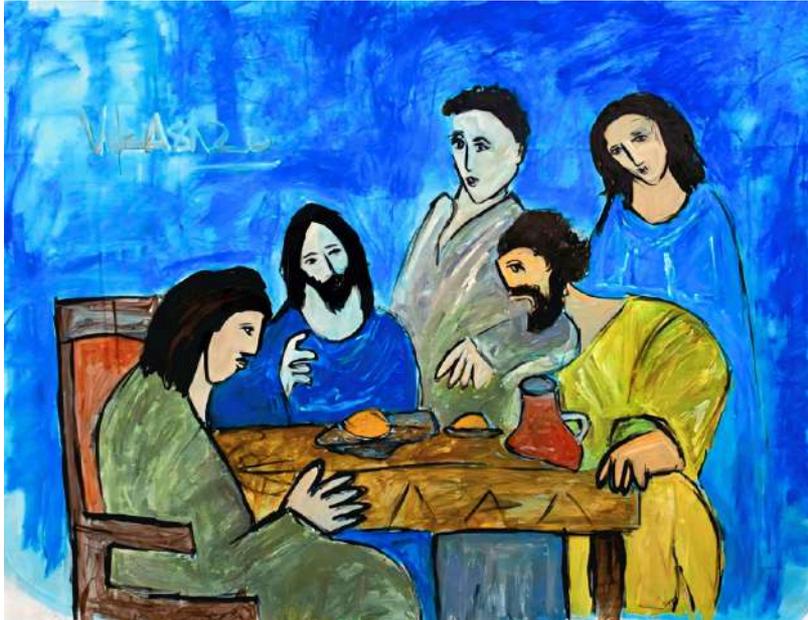
83 x 20 inch, Acrylic on canvas



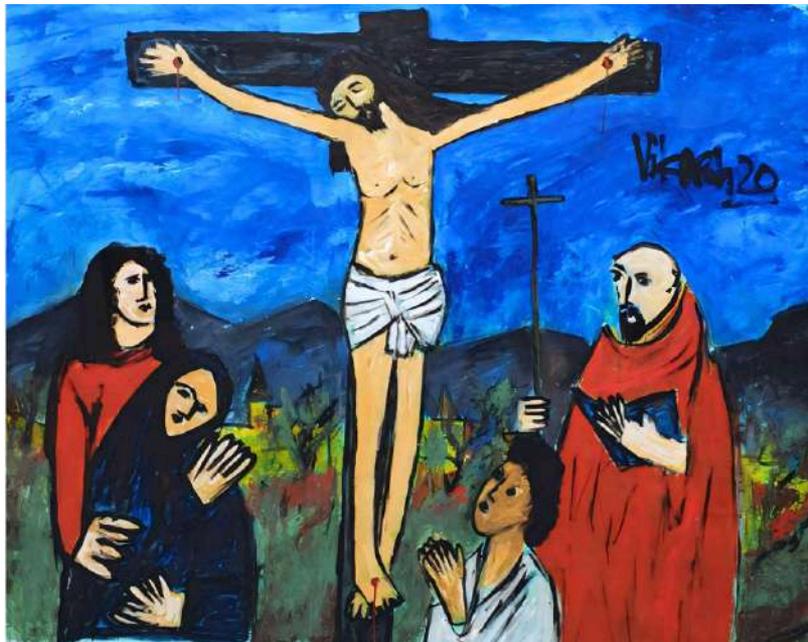
Pen & ink on paper, 2024



Pen & ink on paper, 2024



50 x 66 inch, Acrylic on canvas, 2020



50 x 66 inch, Acrylic on canvas, 2020



48 x 48 inch, Acrylic on canvas, 2020

*This not art, drawing a thing or two without passion and energy is not art. It is just an illustration. Let it be like an illusion if it is. There is no country which produces their artist and kills their passion and ambition between the road. There are no options for the people who want enjoyment only and does not want to sacrifice anything for their passion.*

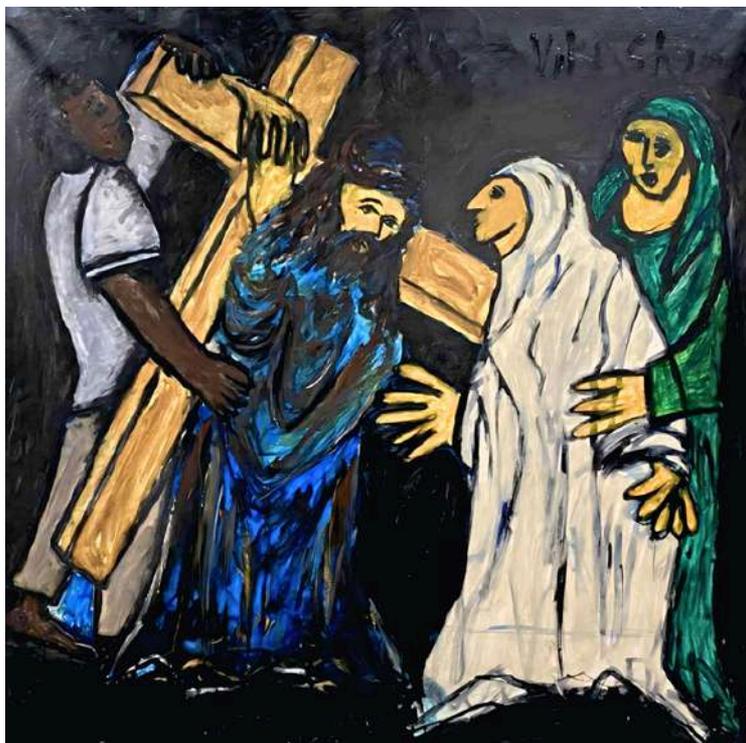
*- Vikash Kalra*



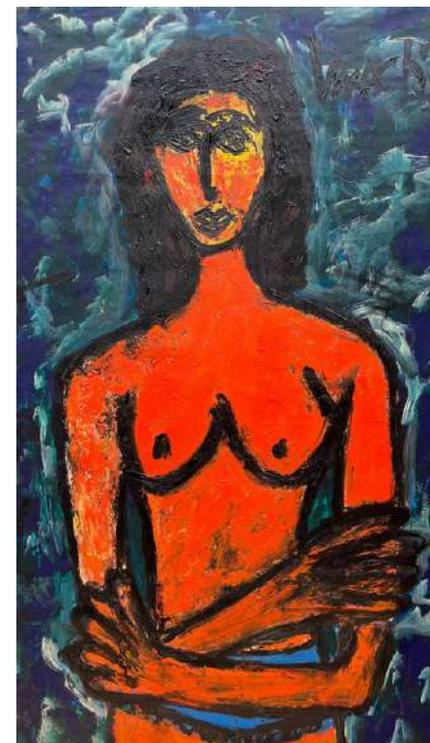
20 x 70 inch, Acrylic on canvas, 2020



66 x 27 inch, Acrylic on canvas, 2020



65 x 65 inch, Acrylic on canvas, 2020



50 x 36 inch, Acrylic on canvas

# LONG LIVES THE DEVIL, THE GOOD DIE YOUNG.

Can drawings be the works of art dreaming in black and white? Drawings essentially, are abstract structures that embody the possibilities of a fully formed work of art whether it is a painting or a sculpture, a digital work or an architectural edifice. When an artist makes a drawing, which is as spontaneous as his breathing and blood flow, it becomes the real expression of his physical as well as mental state of being; a sort of simultaneous witnessing, visualizing and translating with complete concentration and awareness or with total automatism.

This is a sort of mark making with or without a purpose, often resulting into a body of registrations with autonomous existence even if they are not realized into other mediums.

A visual artist, like a writer, makes all the efforts to hide and edit out than expose and in the process his drawings are generally kept away from the public eye, and are let out only when the artist makes deliberate attempts to show them for public perusal in privately held shows or publicly proliferated through digital mediums.

This self baring comes with a price tag, of dignity, integrity and aesthetical permissibility because many of the drawings of an artist could carry highly objectionable and unpalatable visuals within their formats, which would eventually bring either public wrath or private scorn for him.

However, when an artist dares to bare his drawings, especially with an introspective intention, that very effort becomes commendable for such exhibition/ism could make or break his creative career; it could bring total outrage or absolute embrace.



Vikash Kalra at the studio

## नमो वृक्षेभ्यो हरिके शेभ्यः

*Once the Parameshwara Shiva wanted to create something for his joy. For this, he engaged his soul's energy to create but his energy manifested as Shakti and she reflected Parmashwara Shiva as an image within her. This only is known as 'creation' and every creation can be seen as the Vishwamaya Shiva's body parts. Namaskar to Bhagavan Shiva!!! He is the only truth in this world.*



Vikash Kalra on the Gods



72 x 48 inch, Acrylic on canvas, 2020

## Sojourning in the Truths of Life and Art



What if one artist is not gallivanting along the corridors of various styles and not indiscriminately adopting them to make a mark of his own? What if he has yielded his creative energies to a pursuit that suits perfectly to his purpose? What if an artist does not want to do anything in visual art other than painting or sculpting using the feverish expressionistic style of the above mentioned modern masters? What if this artist has been consistent during the last ten years, which is the total number of years of Kalra as a creative artist so far and still wants to continue in the same vein but with natural evolution of the works which is not apparent to the untrained eyes but is manifested before the careful onlookers?

Then we should accept that artist with a heightened sensitivity and allow ourselves to see his works in a new light. Vikash Kalra paints with passion and his passion is driven by a vision; a vision perhaps realized through life experiences. He has two ideals in his creative life- Pablo Picasso and Francis Newton Souza. Despite his open acknowledgement of the fact that he is 'seriously' influenced by these modern masters, many art lovers still look at his works with a certain amount of curiosity that verges into the zone of accusing the artist of plagiarism. By now he has learned to overlook such negative outlook of people with a smile as he knows thoroughly that his art does not come from copying his beloved masters.



60 x 72 inch, Acrylic on canvas

What if someone cannot stray from certain stylistic features not because he is a slave to the style but because it is the only way he could express himself? Looking at the paintings of Vikash Kalra, which is prolific in output as he works like a possessed man day in and day out, one could say for sure that it is neither market nor critique on his works that sets his creative spirit ringing. There is something that is beyond all the materialistic considerations that makes this artist to work through conducive and difficult times.

Perhaps, in Kalra's own words, there is no time which is difficult for an artist. He believes in what Picasso had famously said once: Someone had put a question to Picasso. Had he been confined in a cell with no provision to draw or paint what could he have done? To which, Picasso said he would have painted the walls of the jail with his tongue.

This statement could be a fig of imagination on the part of the person who had recorded it or it could be purely an undisputable truth. Whatever may be the case, the statement of Picasso contains a greater aspect of his approach towards art and life as an artist. Picasso did not think about the longevity and durability of his works. His whole idea was to create works of art. And each work of art as he believed had its own life once liberated from the mind and hands of the artist. The perennial duty of the artist is to work irrespective of the materialistic gains that it could bring to him as it lives through or goes further in the art circuit including the art market. A decade long creative career of Kalra also reveals the same attitude of the artist.



40 x 48 inch, Acrylic on canvas, 2013



30 x 30 inch, Oil on canvas, 2018

A visit to his studio or a careful study of his innumerable sketchbooks would tell us how this artist believes in working incessantly, without a break, without thinking of the future of his works. To understand Kalra's works one has to have a general idea about this artist's life before he decided to become an artist around ten years back. Born to a middle class family in Delhi, Kalra was not a child prodigy.

He never drew anything or never attempted painting his notebooks with the cheap color pencils that a child generally gets during the growing up years. Not being an exceptionally gifted student, Kalra scraped through his academic studies and obtained a degree in Commerce from the Delhi University.

When he remembers his childhood and growing up years, he does not have any qualms to accept that he was not good at anything particular.

His father's untimely death had destabilized the financial prospectus of his family. That was one reason why he got involved in the distribution of newspapers. Not a grand job to do or a grand profession to boast off, distributing newspapers was a 'shadow job' for him or to be precise, a job done by shadow people.

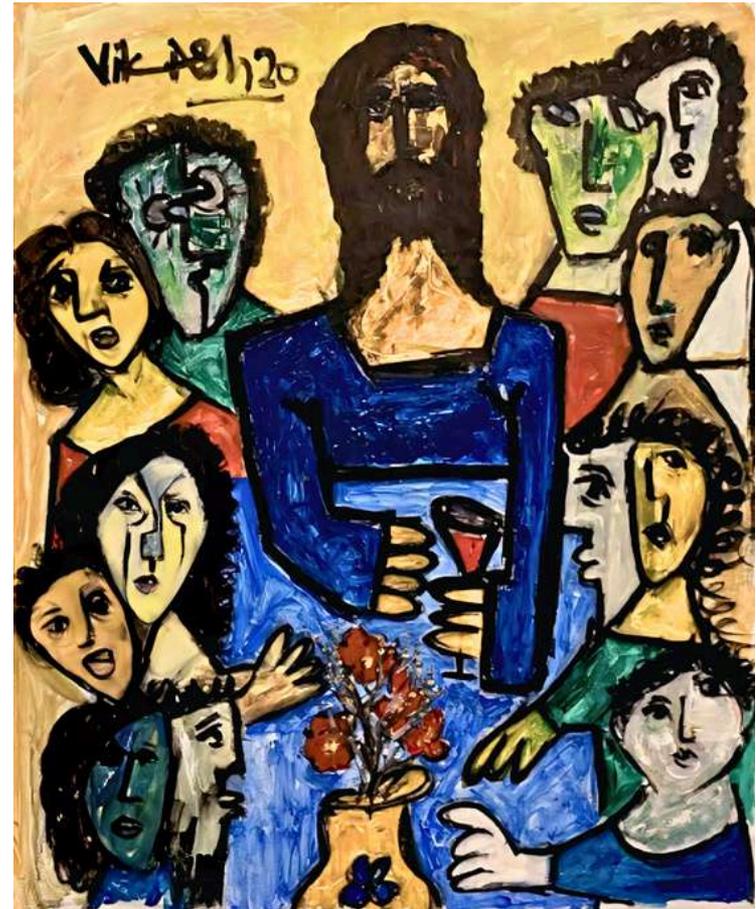
Newspaper boys or the newspaper agents do not have a face to show to the people.

They gather themselves at certain key locations where the mini trucks from the newspaper printing factories unload their daily issues in bundles, and sort them out for different localities.

Kalra did this successfully along with his brothers and gained access to various business houses that wanted to distribute their pamphlets along with the dailies.

This was not only an additional income for Kalra but also a way of developing his networks, which he did not know when he would put to use.

Kalra, in his previous avatar as a newspaper boy was not planning to spend the rest of his life in a shadow profession.



35 x 43 inch, Acrylic on canvas, 2020

He got into second hand car business which brought him enough money. He travelled all over the country as part of procuring and delivering second hand cars. Soon he grew tired of it and set up a restaurant in Delhi with his brothers as partners.

Success as a restaurant owner was not helping him much as something else was happening in/to him. Kalra sold his restaurant to someone else and moved on. In between he put his fingers into property dealing.

During all those years he kept on recognizing the fact that each successful moment was supposed to be followed by a moment of failure. He saw money coming in bundles and disappearing without leaving a trace and rendering him a pauper in a few months' time. Providence was such that Kalra found himself once again sitting with newspapers and magazines in a booth in a busy South Delhi market. He had bought an unsuccessful second hand bookshop with pavement rights from a failed businessman.

Sitting amongst stacks of second hand books, newspapers and magazines, Kalra entered into a new realm of life; a life of knowledge. Idle hours spent amongst books, while the patrons were still taking a nap in the housing colonies around the market, Kalra sat under the sun and kept reading books written by authors whom he had never seen or heard before. Success was still in pursuit of this failing businessman.

Kalra became one of the top procurers of second hand books from publishing companies all over the world as he started receiving a stream of patrons who were placing orders for different kinds of books.

Today, if Kalra has a well-stocked library of art books at his home and studios, the reason is his sojourn in life as pavement bookseller. Art would have been a remote thing for Kalra had it not been his chance encounter with a second hand book on Picasso at his pavement bookstall. Restless and confused, he flipped through the works and something got burst in his mind; certain floodgates were opened. Like someone possessed by a spirit, Kalra started drawing on the magazines that he was supposed to sell.



How its made in Vikash's lab, 2020



43 x 43 inch, Acrylic on canvas, 2018

His attention turned from selling books to drawing on those books and magazines. Nights and days passed in drawing and within a week's time Kalra had covered around three thousand pages with his drawings.

In his typical style he sold off his thriving second hand book business to some other person and walked off to a world which he was absolutely new. And he did not know that that world was much harsher and competitive than the worlds that he had got involved himself, right from paper distribution to second hand car selling, from restaurant to second hand book selling. It was time for him to deal with something very fresh and he did not know how to go about it.

There are some people in the world, if they don't find success in the existing methods of business operations they would set up their own methods to gain success. In the case of art Vikash did not have any new methods to success.



44 x 66 inch, Acrylic on canvas, 2024

From his feverish and fervent studies of Picasso, as by that time he understood his expressions matched very well with that of Picasso at least stylistically and formally or later with Francis Newton Souza, he understood that he needed a studio; that was how artists operated, he found out. Kalra, unlike other artist in town, was financially stable and he had a couple of flats at his disposal to convert into an art studio. Thus Kalra's journey as an artist began.

He equipped himself with studies which he had missed when he was really a student in school and college. Each juncture of his creative career was ridden with problems as he could not find enough patrons to support him. But his experience as a businessman came handy whenever he found a problem. And he had a few shows in the meanwhile. But when he put up his first solo show, critics came forward to condemn him as a Picasso or Souza impersonator.

Any artist, at the face of such severe criticism could have dropped the stylistic affinities with those masters then and there. But Kalra stuck to his guns/brushes. Even today he believes that he is a self-taught artist and whenever he paints he does not paint to create a Picasso or Souza but a Kalra himself.

Self-taught artists, I have observed in my career as an art curator, have a tendency to go either for abstraction or for raw Expressionistic language. Abstraction, though I understand it as an effort to capture the core essence of forms, for many it is a handy formalism.



36 x 96 inch, Acrylic on canvas, 2023

It helps them to 'play' with surfaces and colors and with certain spiritual jargon put into it adequately to pep up meaning, they often get away with such abstraction. But in reality, an artist reaches to abstraction when he or she has a tremendous hold on the forms and this formal understanding of shapes and structures helps them to undo them and to go into essence that functions as the basis of all structures. Regarding Raw Expressionism, the knowledge of basic form is very strong in these kinds of artists but their lack of academic training does not allow them to formulate the forms the way such training would have done. So they depend on the raw energies of lines and colors and the totality of abstraction that they create in unison. While some artists depend on impasto technique, where color blobs are liberally used to create thick lines and forms, some others use strong lines to create the contours of forms which they would fill in at a later stage.

Kalra is self taught and he could have easily gone into abstraction. But as we know by now, Kalra's initiation into art happened through random drawings which he realized resembled those of Picasso and Souza. This made a huge impression on his mind and today with ten years of practice by his side, we cannot call him that he is raw and untrained. His training is now well founded and is in a style and formalism which are faintly similar to Picasso and Souza. Kalra's works could be divided into five major categories: Landscapes, Faces, Couples, Female nudes and combination of human and animal forms. To understand these categories within which Kalra expresses himself, though there are no steadfast rules, one has to see primarily that the artist does not intend to represent anything.



68 x 76 inch, Acrylic on canvas, 2023

Except for a few self-portraits that the artist has done, he has never tried to give any very semblance of his sitters, objects, scenes or spaces to the paintings. Hence the landscapes that we see in Kalra's oeuvre are not the landscape that could be seen in the outer world. If at all there are some referential landscapes painstakingly found out by someone in due course of time, the artist does not follow any rules to represent them in his works. As they are landscapes mostly infested with Gothic churches and buildings, we cannot say that Kalra represents his immediate surroundings. In my view, Kalra's landscapes are imaginary fields that he conjures up within his collective experience. If at all they represent anything, they represent the artist's inward journeys and we don't have any reasons to dispute the fact that he does see such places in his surroundings as he internalizes them in his own fashion.

Or they could be the essence of the landscapes that he has seen and hoped to see in his journeys. In the beginning of his creative career, Kalra as obsessed by/with the works of Picasso and Souza had turned to human faces as a field that could well capture the emotions that were intensely felt by human beings. When a person feels something inside him, what his countenance expresses need not necessarily show the same intensity of that feeling. We the human beings are capable of camouflaging our interiority using various masks of different expressions.

Kalra in his multi-faceted business career had come across so many people who were benevolent on the one hand and ruthless on the other. He had seen faces of people that were apparently cherubic but had hidden devilish intentions.

All these faces that we see in Kalra's works are his reflections on the faces that he has come across in his life.

Interestingly most of them are those of men; men who appear as men, men who appear as devils, men who appear as angels and men who appear as absolutely lost in the world.

These faces are captured in strong lines and color patches. It is interesting to notice that he signs his paintings 'Vikash' in bold letters, at times bigger and thicker than the contours of the work itself.

In my view, it is an act of taming and possessing all what he has seen and experienced while witnessing the faces of the people in his thrilling journey through life. With his signature he possesses them and owns them and through this owning of another self, he controls them.

Each Face painting is a moment of reconciliation and an act of interiorizing of certain unpalatable experiences and transcending of the same.

Kalra is a family man who has a wife and two children. His idea of spending time with family is all about creating a happy atmosphere. As a music lover he has a good collection of musical instruments procured from different parts of the country. Without any training he plays them; the same philosophy that he lives in his paintings, of painting without knowing how to paint.

He plays them without grammar and he says that he plays those instruments to muse himself. Besides amusing himself with various musical instruments, he also entertains his children with his musical skills. While the children play 'grammatical' music, he plays without any grammar. Kalra, sitting at home as a satisfied young man with kids and wife, playing music them would make happy picture.

But for the artist the happy picture of a family is just one side of all family pictures. He understands that family lives are ridden with troubles, fights and confusions. Families are power structures and in a way is a jail where one returns happily.

His never ending enthusiasm to paint the Couples starts from this identification with the family life both as a heavenly experience and a torturing social system. In each Couple painting, he brings in a male and female conjoined by fate or by choice but caught in a different set of rules that they were not expecting while the act of coming together was done initially. They look independent, defying the presence of the other in the same frame, but at the same time caught in a set of invisible rules and power relationships.

Kalra says that his Couple paintings are an effort to understand family as an accepted but contested socio-political and economic system.



47 x 37 inch, Acrylic on canvas, 2023



24 x 72 inch, Oil on canvas, 2014



60 x 146 inch (diptych), Acrylic on canvas, 2024

In one of interviews of Kalra, he made a general statement which caught my imagination by force. While comparing the Nude paintings of Picasso with those of Souza, Kalra observed that Picasso's nude paintings were 'happy' nudes. They are nudes that dispel the power relationship with the artist and the sitter. The sitter looks happy even in her subdued and distorted identity while the invisible face of the artist also looks happy. But when it comes to the nudes done by Souza, they look really agonized. Each nude seems to be writhing in pain as if they were caught in a situation which they really did not want to be in. There is always a forcing of the artist palpable in them. Kalra explained further saying that each painting had an entry point and if the artist could come out with certain level of achievement other than carnal pleasures, the painting would turn out to be a happy painting. In Picasso's nudes one could see the happiness of the artist who enters and exists at the right moment without exercising power or coercion while in Souza one could see the artist struggling with his carnal instincts as well as aesthetic drives. Though I do not take Kalra's views as art historical altruism there is a grain of truth in his observation.

Each nude painting in the history of art has a history of power politics too. This politics of power is operational between the sitter (the woman who is forced to strip or willingly does that for the artist for love or against a fee) and the artist (who within the given situation holds the right to gawk and gaze therefore to objectify the sitter). Kalra goes by Picasso when he does his female nude paintings.

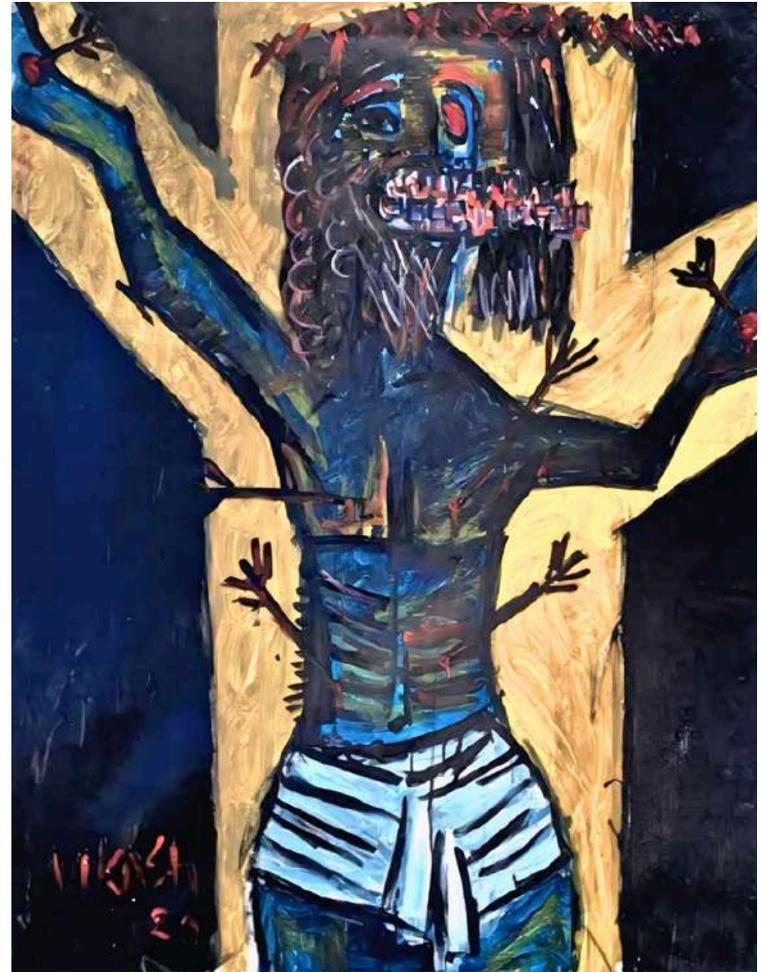
In Kalra's works one could come across several nude paintings. A bit of prodding reveals that the artist does them with a lot of love.

Many paintings are done in an imaginary plane where the sitter is absent and the whole aspect of painting it relies on the emotional state of the artist at that given moment. When an artist imagines a nude and paints it from his imagination, the politics of power could be pre-meditated.

The nude could be done with a lot of care and tenderness as it involves a sort of yearning and nostalgia. But when the nude is right in front of the artist, the man-woman relationship in an actual plain comes into play though both the parties do not intentionally want to acknowledge it. In Kalra's case, his nudes painted out of models sitting for him are done with the same tenderness as he painted them out of his imaginations.

Painting nude is a field of contestation as well as a social contract and trust. When it is a field of contestations, as seen above, the nudes could turn out to be very painful and when it is done on trust it could be beautifully pleasing. As Kalra's nudes do not represent any existing or imaginary woman, but they are the representations of the 'woman' idea in him and his responses to this idea, he confesses that he has even taken the liberty to paint the nudes a bit 'violently'.

For him violence means a manifested state of anger and repression. But he reiterates that his nude paintings are the representation of those ideas than bringing the model and the artist into an imbalanced power relationship.



66 x 52 inch, Acrylic on canvas, 2020

The combination images of human beings and animals are an interesting part of Kalra's paintings. When one sees a Last Supper painting, considering the history of the artist, it is easy to come to a conclusion that he is obviously inspired by Souza who had done the theme, Last Supper at various stages of his creative career. Though Kalra accepts that his inspiration also comes from Souza, he points out that the idea of Last Supper comes more to him from the Christian mythology and from the Renaissance master, Da Vinci. The Last Supper, according to the artist, is a moment of trust and betrayal of a social contract. Whether there is God or son of God is present as the central image, a communion of people on a dinner table has a lot to do with trust. As he has seen a lot of breaching of trust in social situations, he finds it a strong and emphatic theme to work upon. He consistently and persistently goes back to the theme of Last Supper, at times leaving several of such paintings unfinished.



30 x 55 inch, Acrylic on canvas, 2024

According to him, the very theme itself is a revelatory one. In his Last Supper theme paintings, Kalra replaces human beings with animals so that the painting itself becomes an allegory of human traits and characters. Though sarcasm and irony are hardly seen traits of this artist, when he treats Last Supper, they surface as if a critique of human characters were there in him throughout. At times Kalra feels like giving individual space to certain animal figures.

As he does not represent a particular animal, whenever he does it, like an ape or dog or donkey or monkey, he feels that it is an expression of an unavoidable state of being at least temporarily and once he finishes a painting like that he could flush it out of his own system.



83 x 21 inch, Acrylic on canvas, 2024



It would be interesting to have a look at the sculptures of Kalra. Once again, his lack of training in sculpting comes handy here too. An idea of creating something in three dimensional led him work on something with clay.

It did not start off as making a 'sculpture' but as a simple play with form. With no drawing in hand to emulate, Kalra went on shaping the clay till he achieved a human shape out of it.

Experiments followed one after another and today Kalra does sculptures regularly that show human beings rendered in an Expressionist style. It is sure that while he was elongating the figures or giving them rugged skin textures, he was particularly thinking of Giacometti or Ram Kinkar Baij. But the results show that Kalra is in the lineage of these two sculptors, who were equally possessed and obsessed by their creative energies.

When we look at the works of Vikash Kalra done during the last one decade as a whole, we come to feel that this artist has grown from formalism of masters to a style that could, in coming years, definitely define his own creative output. What prompts me to cast my vote for him is his persistence in doing his works, his devotion to the history of art, and his perennial belief in human good. Lack of academic qualification could be a boon at times provided if that does not make an artist fill his or her works with unnecessary meanings and make the work of art a beast of burden.

Here we have an artist in Vikash Kalra, who bothers least about the possible meanings created out of his viewers but bothers quite a lot about the practice, which for him today is his only life line that sustains him both materialistically and spiritually.



Sketch pen on paper, 2024



23 x 30 inch, Acrylic on canvas, 2024



Sketch pen on paper, 2024



Vikash Kalra, 2019



Sketch pen on paper, 2024



36 x 36 inch, Acrylic on canvas, 2021



Oneness is not a principle. It is created by the union of several elements. In the human, as in all things, it is the union of opposites that constitutes oneness. Each individual is only one-half—or in fact one-third—since it is the spark of joy, voluptuousness, and experience of the divine state that constitutes the third element, humankind's *raison d'être*.

– Alain Daniélou

## Seeing Individual Talent against Tradition

Learning is all about unlearning, especially when it comes to the academic training that an artist gains over a considerable period of time. Often an academically trained artist strives to achieve a sort of perfection of rendering and style through a persistent deconstruction of the canons of historical art styles. However, for those academically untrained artists, canons come as natural as air as they approach art from the basic human instinct to express in an available and proficient medium.

Tenets of modern and modernist art have been set and followed by many though they have reached the pinnacles of it through the iconoclastic efforts on their training. But it is interesting to notice that untrained or self-taught artists reaching such heights without the conscious attempts towards iconoclasm and negation of set styles. Their struggle is with their natural instinct to express; express in truest and effective ways. Their fight is against the so called sophistication of art that often bogs down an artist with its dead weight.

Vikash Kalra, a self taught artist with a lot of experience flaunts his excellence in the modernist Expressionistic and at times Cubistic and Fauvist idioms with such an ease that any onlooker of his works would take his works for the creation of a master who has learned to unlearn the academic training. Vikash, a graduate from Delhi University, is a humanist and a keen listener to the internal human emotional commotions. He approaches his canvases with the verve of a child and with the craftsmanship of a modernist master. One could recall the styles of Andre Derain, Pablo Picasso and even that of William de Kooning.

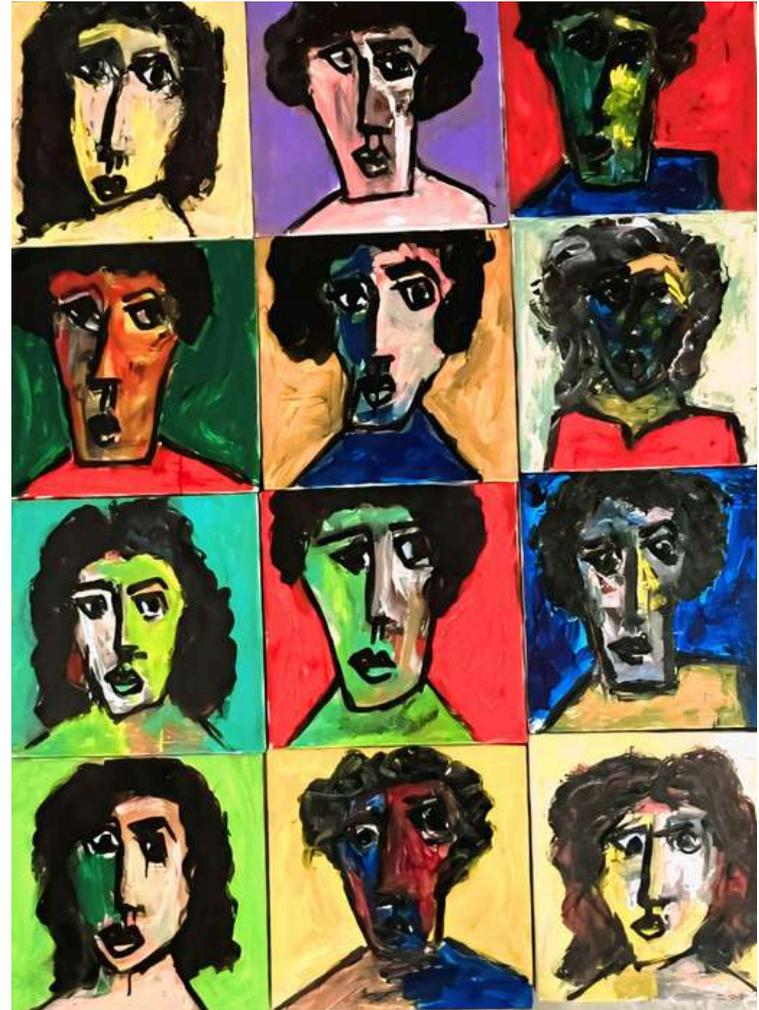


In the making, in studio



61 x 76 inch, Acrylic on canvas, 2023

However, a closer look at the works of Vikash would reveal the fact that these works are not done with the deliberate efforts to emulate such styles, instead they come quite natural to the artist as he finds them capable of expressing his philosophical as well as aesthetical concerns. In Vikash' works intimate human relationships, landscapes and expressionistic portraits of distinct individuals come up quite often as thematic priorities of the artist. These priorities could be seen as the distilled quantification of the artist's observations of the human beings in general and their relationship with the material world. However, within these materialistic relationships, one could see Vikash searching for the spiritual thread (not in a religious sense) that connects them to be a part of the general backdrop that he creates with colors and highly charged emotional brushworks. The artist uses extremely intense colors like the Fauves during the early twentieth century. In order to bring in the spiritual beauty of nature, the Fauves had used intense and unrefined colors. Vikash captures the same feel quite spontaneously in his works while emphasizing the almost same artistic intentions. In the visual world created by Vikash human relationship functions in a very unique way as he chooses two protagonists, a male and a female in order to embody this relationship. As in the famous series of 'Artist and Model' by Pablo Picasso, there is an interesting encounter between the male and the female within these pictorial frames. More than a relationship, it highlights the intimacy between the opposite genders as if they were enacting a scripted scene of love. The relationship between them is enigmatic as at times, the male seems to be subservient to the female and at other times the female seems to be aggressively possessed by the male. This alluring game of mutual submission goes on in most of the frames and quite interestingly, the art historical references become so obvious that the artist unintentionally becomes a learner and un-learner of 'training' as mentioned elsewhere in this essay.

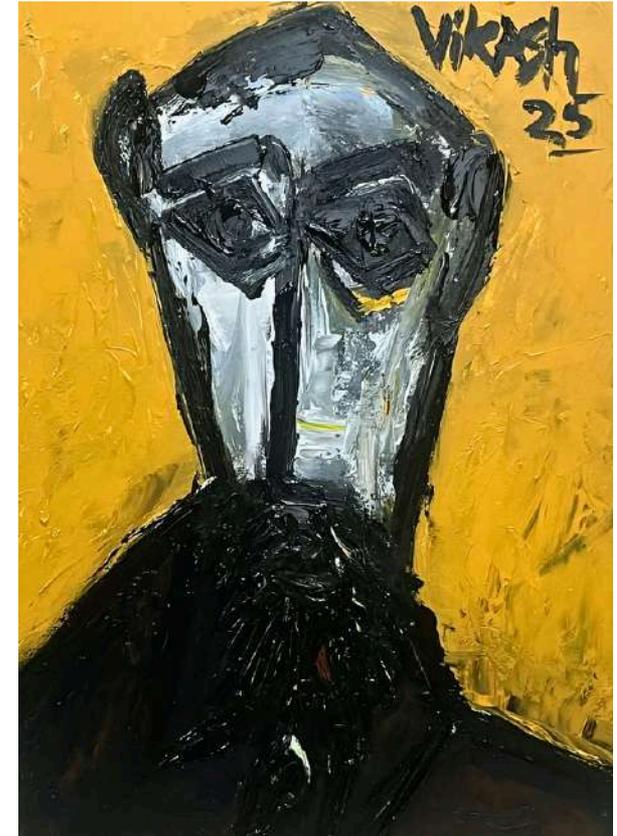


*Life is a play, do not give it more than a play if you give more, frustration may come take it just as a play and keep acting*



48 x 36 inch, Acrylic on canvas, 2025

However, thematically speaking, the male-female relationship and the power play involved in it seems to be one of the most interesting topic for Vikash as he creates quite a lot of chances within his pictorial frames, which are predominantly red and hot, for their chance and deliberate encounters. As an onlooker of his works, one could get the sense of this modernist magnanimity of ideas and rendering from these works though the spatial arrangements of the protagonists within the pictorial frames are considerably different from those spatial divisions created by the modernist masters of the twentieth century. The drama, if one could call it so, in Vikash's works happens within closed and cloistered rooms, almost reminding one of the similar situations in artist's studios where the artist and his model or the artist and his admirers come to experience intimate encounters.



30 x 20 inch, Acrylic on canvas, 2025

*Pain is good with the new so is relaxation  
with the old but it is slow suicide...  
Nothing else*



36 x 36 inch, Acrylic on canvas, 2023

*Some one new is calling you and something old is keeping you*

Landscapes in Vikash's works embody a sublime category. These are not the real representations of the places that we see around or these are not even the artist's romantic aspirations to live in such dreamy landscapes. The intense, hot and deep landscapes that Vikash creates in his works are the places that exist everywhere but camouflaged by the quotidian nature of life. Such sublime landscapes are abundant and present even in the middle of a city but one needs special eyes, inner eyes to see them separate from the surrounding.



12 x 16 inch, Acrylic on canvas



40 x 42 inch, Acrylic on canvas, 2024

Gifted with this artistic vision, Vikash traces out such landscapes as a part of his aesthetic mediation and meditation and with a sort of happiness he repeatedly paints them in many successive frames.

If one looks at the works of Vikash carefully, one could also discern this fact that the very same landscapes reappear in an inconspicuous way, in most of his works against which the protagonists are placed in isolation or in pairs.



20 x 34 inch, Acrylic on canvas, 2024

Secure and confident in their secluded positioning both within the society and in the pictorial frames, these portraits of men and women, which I would like to call as the spiritual portraits of the familiar people, invite the viewers to a different world of experience where they could encounter people like themselves but more true to their selves.

These are spiritual portraits of people because what Vikash tries to achieve in them is not the very likeness of anyone, instead he attempts to get the internal feel of the people; most of them, unlike the portraits of people done by Ram Kumar in 1960s, are not bogged down by gloominess or a sense of hopelessness.

On the contrary, the portraits of Vikash exude a sort of energy, which is at once playful and intense and assume an iconic status within the aesthetic frame work placed by the artist. One could see a sort of joviality that the artist wants to highlight while doing these works as he intentionally places them against the colors indicative of the aforementioned sublime landscapes as if they all were Mona Lisa's from a different age.

Despite the hot colors that Vikash uses to build up his images and backgrounds, these paintings have a sense of happiness. This is where Vikash differs considerably from the modernist idiom of paintings, which highlighted the existential problems of the people rather than the happy moments from there life.

Vikash, without giving hagiographic details, paints the portraits of everyman so that anyone could identify with the images in these works especially an informed viewer would find parallels, affiliations, mergers and divergences with the established canons.

The kind of spontaneity that Vikash celebrates in these works tells the viewer of his strong urge to express without too much deliberation towards idiomatic sophistication. For the artist, here both the brush and its wooden end become equally handy as he proceed with the human images.



42 x 82 inch, Acrylic on canvas, 2024

The randomness of strokes ends up in the constitution of solid images and with the swirling movements of the other end of the brushes, the artist creates contours and outlines.

He even lets the paint to drip in its own course to preserve the natural rhythm of the image as well as the actions that constitute such images. Going back to the initial arguments that I set at the beginning of this essay, I would call Vikash Kalra a fast learner and a different sort of un-learner. As a self taught artist, he imbibes the high points of modernist tradition and makes use of them in his works.



30 x 17 inch, Acrylic on canvas, 2024



48 x 65 inch, Acrylic on canvas, 2024

Without any intention to recreate the 'feel' of the modern, he journeys closely with the modern masters. It is said that each point in art history is a point where an icon is broken and a new icon is created. This iconoclastic tendency of modernism functions in Vikash Kalra as a critique of the post-modern (as in his deliberate efforts to stick to the medium and style of his liking rather than pursuing trends) and an assertion of tradition as an ongoing process. And in his scheme of aesthetics, Vikash incorporates the best moments from the twentieth century art history, paying tribute to the masters while retaining his individuality as an Indian contemporary artist, responding to the changes of our times in ways which he deems to be desirable and feasible. I will close this essay with a quote from 'Tradition and Individual Talent', an essay written by T.S. Eliot in 1919: "No poet, no artist of any art, has his complete meaning alone. His significance, his appreciation is the appreciation of his relation to the dead poets and artists. You cannot value him alone; you must set him, for contrast and comparison, among the dead. I mean this as a principle of aesthetic not merely historical criticism."

## Collages of Conquests

Vikash Kalra is an energetic young self-taught artist who entered the creative world for his love of art. He has attained mastery with his brush and canvas within a very short span. He has done solo exhibitions and a number of group shows in India and abroad. He has got representation from well-known art galleries of India including Art Konsult. His works have been part of prestigious art fairs, His works have sold through noted auction houses of India like Art Bull, Art Chutney and many more. Several noted art collectors from India, UK, USA, and France have made collection of his works. Vikash Kalra's images alternate between the human figure and the landscape, and between primary and tertiary colours – anchors that allow him to enjoy an aesthetic variety to successful conclusion.

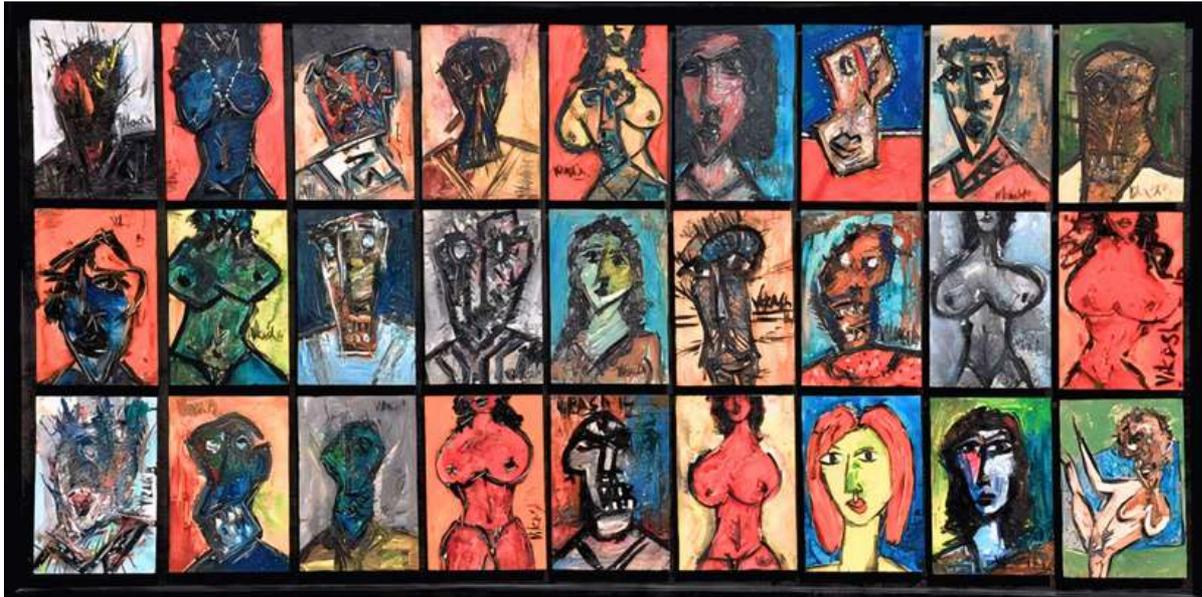
Rich in textural experiment, the images reveal different methods of construction using brush and palette knife. His city and landscapes mirror his emotional world; as the artist turns inward, his works become increasingly contemplative.

From the somber structures of his early paintings, to the gentle lyricism and joyous optimism of his mature landscapes, each transition has been carefully measured. Painted in greys and browns, his landscapes are concrete and palpable, with recognizable architectural forms. Linked to one another, the schematized houses are suspended in empty space under a blazing sun.



64 x 41 inch, Acrylic on canvas, 2024

The landscapes are imagery and timeless, alerting Kalra's preference for a more conceptual vision of nature. Soon, nature becomes something not to be observed or imagined, but to be felt. Summer and winter, night and day, darkness and light- an austere paintings in grey and black- where the artist constructs a vision of summer in broad strokes of orange, reds, yellows, and oranges. His creative approach was humanist rather than ideological. Desperate, lonely, alienated men and women were the subject of his early fiction.



40 x 72 inch, Acrylic on canvas

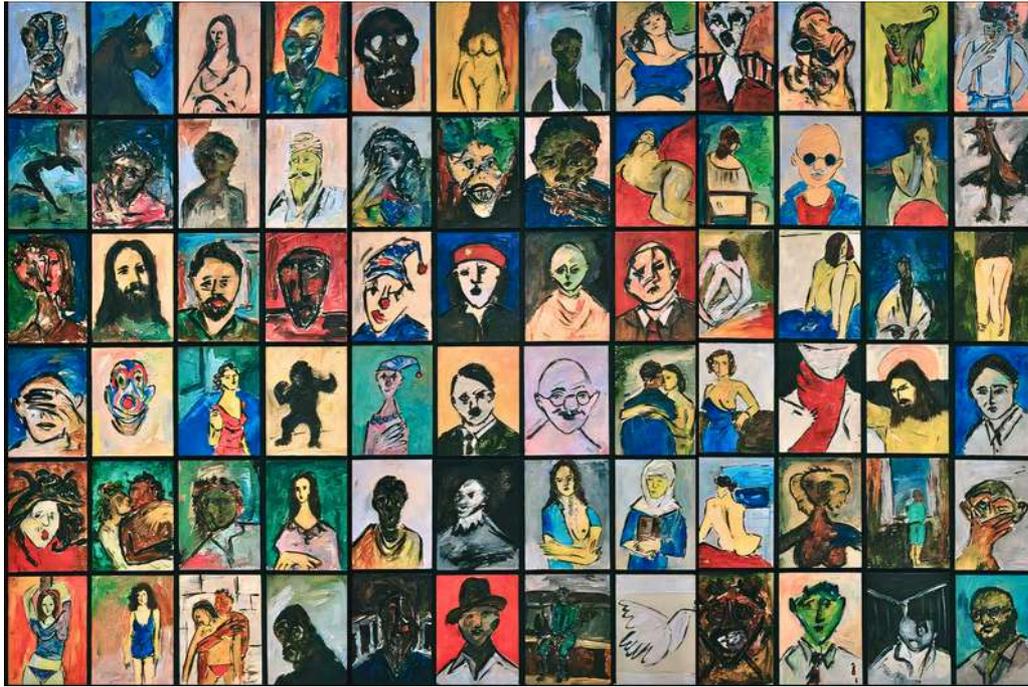


46 x 21 inch, Acrylic on canvas

Kalra has abandoned the figures temporarily in favor of his landscapes and cityscapes, creating shadowy outline of dilapidated houses and roofs using heavy impasto in his expressionist style. Vikash Kalra is deeply influenced by this quote of Aristotle. He has also done a handful figurative works and enjoys the representation of the objects with distorted anatomy. It's not by choice but it's the gaze which he does not want to negate to. He does not go with the rulebook depicting the pleasant faces and visually pleasant works, rather he always intent to come out with the feeling he sees around. The artist says that he paints what he sees. He does not want to manipulate the bad in to good, in fact he peeps in to the mind of the soulful creatures of society and feels the various emotions undulating in the inner self and shows it on his canvas. He unveils the pain behind the pleasant looking human beings. He paints with bold strokes using broad brush normally incorporating pulsating colours to the canvas devoid of the restrictions of medium.



42 x 34 inch, Acrylic on canvas, 2024



96 x 192 inch, Acrylic on canvas



33 x 43 inch, Acrylic on canvas, 2024

The best thing about his works can be seen is the flow, the flow of artists' mind, the brush and the strokes. These flows accumulate in to the rhythm and the artist feel contented after these creations and hopes the viewer also feel the same.

Finally I must say that the new creation of the landscape and exclusive figurative works with a diverse size, forms, colours and composition offers a visual delight to the viewer.

*The aim of art is to represent not the outward appearance of things, but their inward significance.*

*- Aristotle*



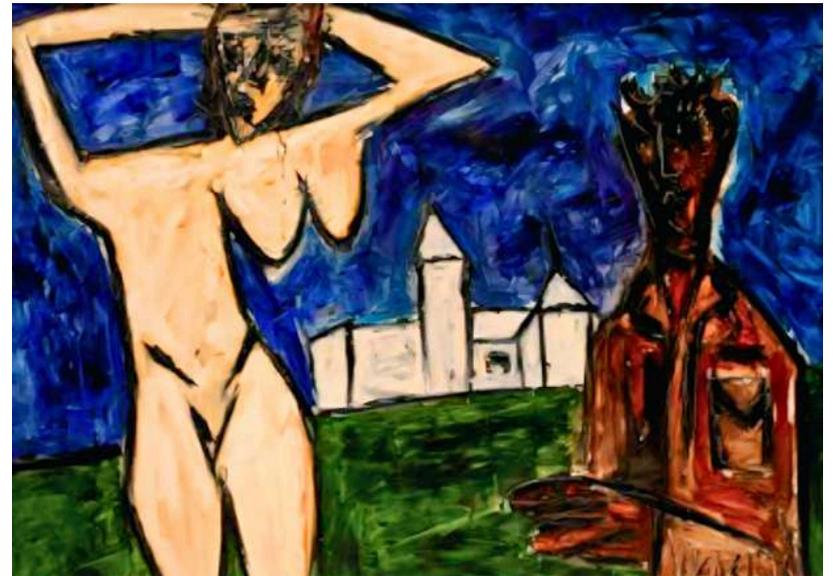
40 x 42 inch, Acrylic on canvas, 2024



Visual Art Gallery, Indian Habitat Centre, New Delhi



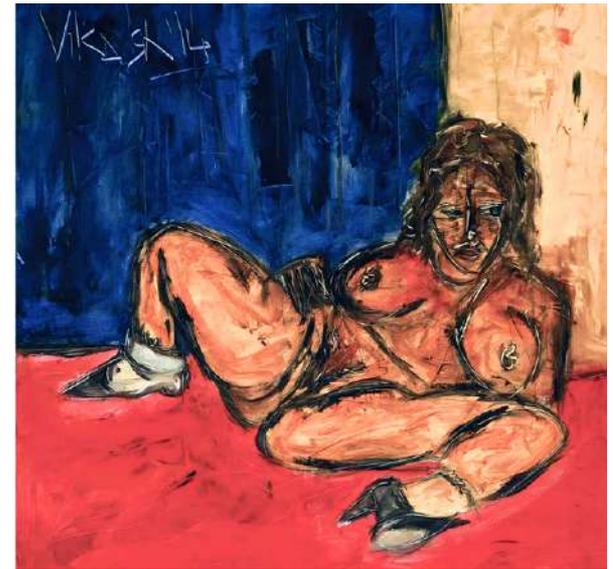
60 x 78 inch, Oil on canvas, 2016



40 x 48 inch, Oil on canvas, 2018



12 inch each, Acrylic on canvas



45 x 45 inch, Oil on canvas, 2014



40 x 66 inch, Acrylic on canvas, 2024



43 x 50 inch, Acrylic on canvas, 2025



40 x 48 inch, Oil on canvas, 2018



Collage experimental, Acrylic on canvas



39 x 29 inch, Acrylic on canvas, 2020



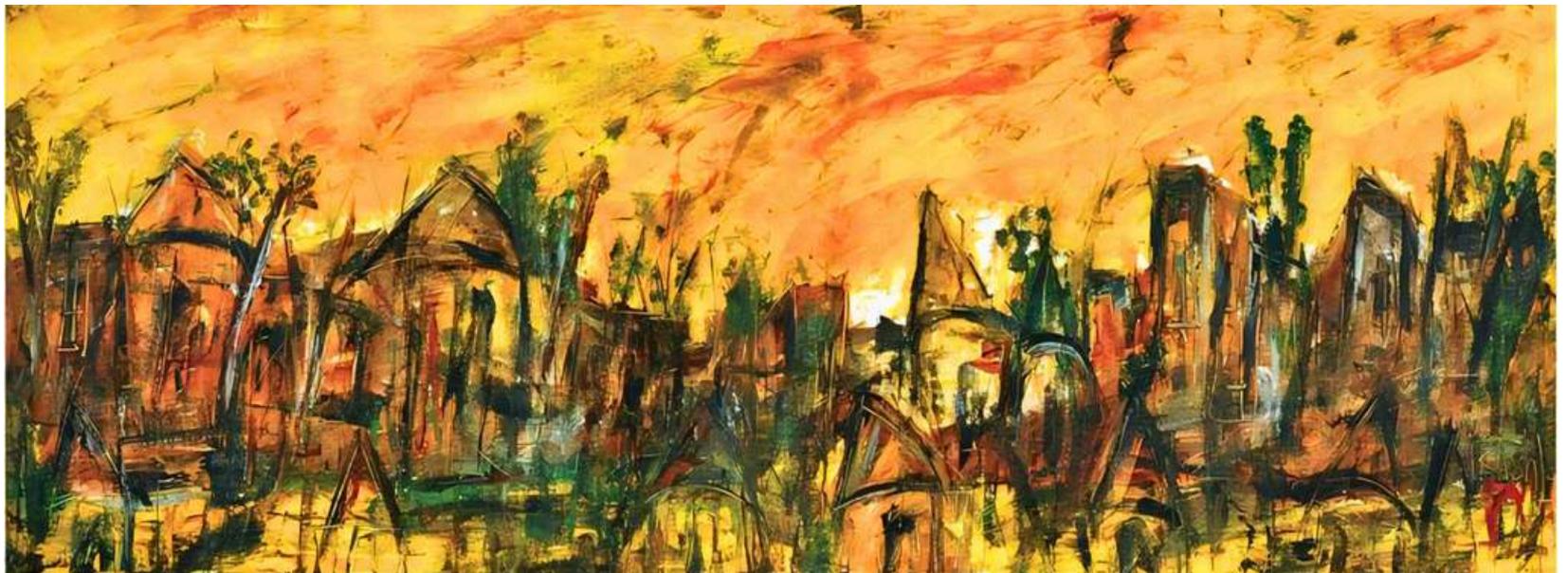
78 x 60 inch, acrylic on canvas, 2023



60 x 72 inch (diptych), Oil on canvas, 2019



36 x 120 inch, Oil on canvas (diptych), 2011



36 x 96 inch, Oil on canvas, 2012



48 x 72 inch, Oil on canvas, 2014



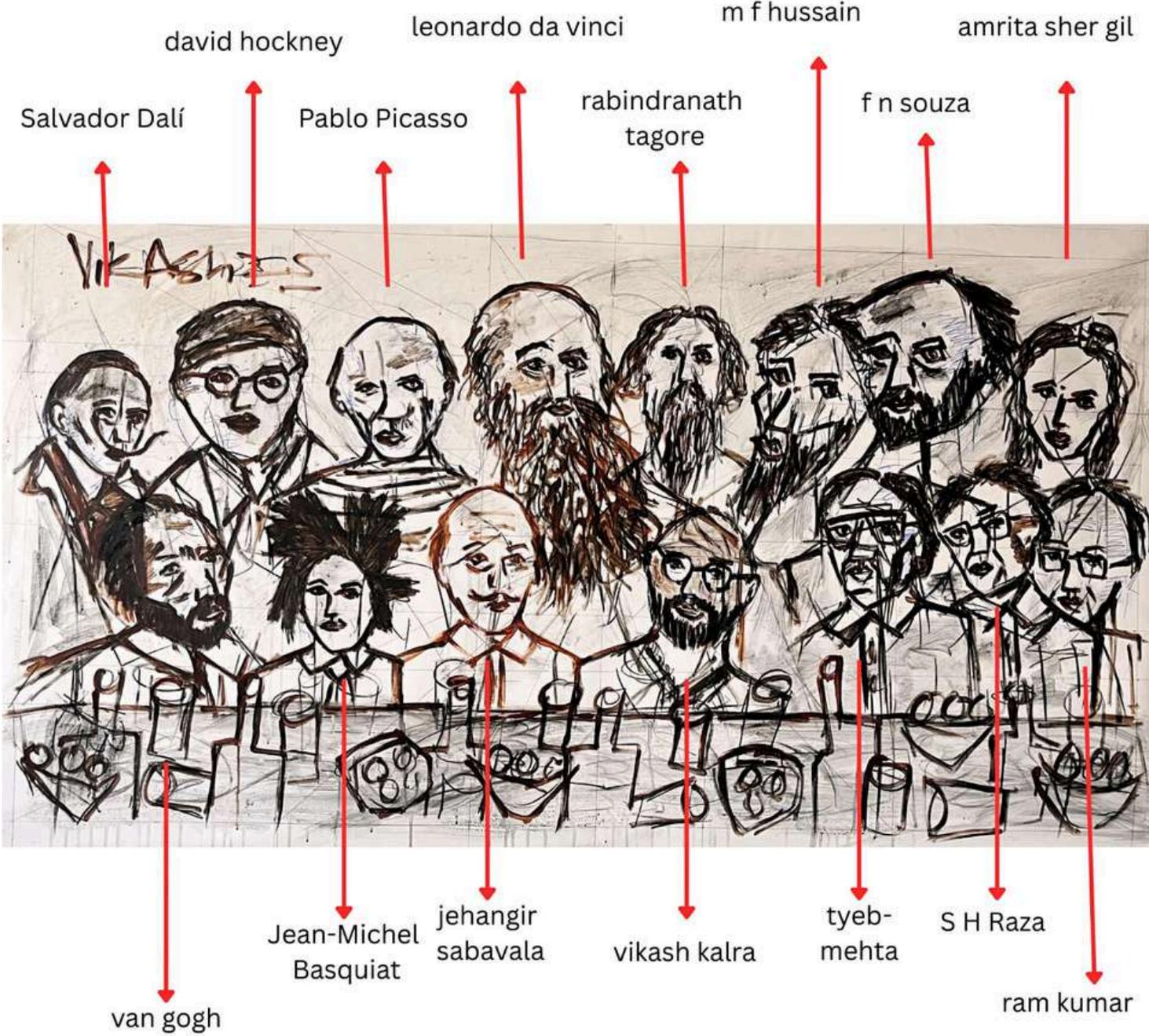
60 x 87 inch, Oil on canvas, 2019



50 x 80 inch, Acrylic on canvas, 2025



37 x 72 inch, Acrylic on canvas, 2025



## Neo-constructivist sculptures

The latest stainless-steel sculptures fundamentally differ from the earlier sculptural outings by Vikash Kalra. These monumental works are post-modern in nature, deconstructing and challenging the possible narrativizing of sculptural images.

The sculptures that do not tell any stories are sculptures that stand like architectures in the contemporary times. Postmodern architecture that uses pastiche style, hand picking erstwhile architectural styles and mixing them up for divesting them of all the meanings in order to generate an absolutely different meaning, which looks like a 'meaning' in itself but does not signify much.

Frederic Jameson, who has forwarded this theory of post-modernism clearly says that in the evolving economic conditions, post-modernism carries both positive and negative qualities, factoring a new reality that collapses any effort to make grand narratives and grand meanings exactly the way where financial assets are liquidated for the survival of a company through a factor agency.

Kalra's sculptures stand like post-modern architectures, in the present context surrounded by an architectural space which is a combination of modern and post-modern styles.

The stainless-steel surfaces of these sculptures, slashed and rearranged/ constructed, evoking the cubist experiments during the Constructivist phase of Euro-Russian Modernism, however do not reflect the surroundings exactly the way a mirror like steel surface would do. The sculptures are not meant to reflect anything including their 'truth'. They stand in their absolute object value, the quality of a pure structure/sculpture before allowing it to any further semiotic interpretations.



Open air steel sculpture installation



Grace, 55 x 30 x 78 inch, Steel

Beyond the sculptural object-hood, they let the viewers discern the images that are in a way constructed or embedded in the construction itself, and they are the images of male and female human beings. In a couple of sculptures, they are fused into one, as if they were posing together for a photograph or even disinterestedly existing in one place/space, fused yet detached from one another. And in others, they are a single image of either a male or a female human being. Before going into the art historical and theoretical nuances of these sculptures, it is pertinent to know how the artist himself embarked on a journey that resulted into these sculptures. According to him, the encounter with the material, stainless-steel was quite accidental.



Making of Steel sculpture in studio



Making of Steel sculpture in the studio

While visiting a fabricating unit run by one of his friends in the outskirts of South Delhi, he found how fabrication was happening there for other purposes. The material evoked something in the artist, which he never thought existed in him; an ambition to make monumental sculptures. Welded sculptures needed armatures and they function as the basic skeleton of the works. Kalra knew what the sculptures would look like eventually but he did not know how to create armatures for them. The initial experiments did not yield him what he wanted. Abandoning all those sculptures, Kalra went on constructing those armatures which eventually gave him satisfaction. Applying flesh and blood to those fundamental structures was easy for him for he knew the flesh and blood were made of steel and he just needed to weld them together to completion. Successful finishing of one work led to the other and Kalra became so absorbed into the making of these sculptures that he decided to put away everything aside in order to make them.



Confidence, 57 x 54 x 101 inch, Steel, Open air installation



Ambition, 42 x 2 x 92 inch, Steel

Artistic productions, whether they are paintings or sculptures, or works done in any other medium do not happen in a vacuum. They carry art historical continuities whether the artists are conscious about it or not. Some artists make deliberate attempts to pick up elements, ideas and approaches from art historical materials and some others are so immersed in their studies and researches that when they do their art the influences come to them. Yet another set of artists do art that actually resonates with the art historically relevant works because they come to the artists as a part of the collective consciousness.

Here, Kalra seems to have undergone all these three conditions while doing this body of works. As I mentioned elsewhere, Kalra has taken a postmodernist approach of pastiche, where the language of Russian Constructivism as used by Vladimir Tatlin and Naum Gabo are picked up for his purpose. The Constructivist ideas definitely come to the artist first and the reference comes later. However, in Kalra the deliberation could be 'accidental' and 'subconscious' though the resultant works have got the predominant Constructivist feel. Constructivism does not work on the idea of 'construction' alone. It constructs with the dominant material of the time. Steel is an industrial product that revolutionized the world as we see today.

Despite the invention of different materials and methods, steel has not lost its charm or purpose. In the case of materials, steel touches everybody on a daily basis. The famous advertisement of SAIL, the Steel Authority of India Ltd, says that there is a little bit of steel in everybody's life, with or without our knowledge. Our thinking, movement in a space, our life in the public and private domains are in a way designed and controlled by steel. Kalra brings in this factor while working with this material, which is contemporary, dominant and does not carry a meaning of its own.

It is not a catalyst either. Steel is like water; it takes the form of the container. Stainless-steel takes the form of a steel product. Kalra's work is steel and no-steel at the same time. It is steel when seen as a material of his work. But it is not steel when seen as an image. It is a combination of the material and image, and above all the style of its construction makes its material presence. Its monumentality is defined not just by its sheer size but by the presence of the material itself. Post-modernism contains Constructivism in many ways.



Joker in making, Steel

First of all, post-modernism has an immediacy with the time; it is temporal and also in a constant flux to generate its own meaning, while the efforts to make meanings are thwarted at every stage. Postmodernism opens up avenues for micro-narratives to manifest but the sheer volume of such narratives disperses the possibility of deriving a unified meaning. However, Constructivism which finds its theoretical foundations in Cubism, does not fail to evoke the art historical links within the perspectival zone of Kalra's works. Today, artists are generally on a hunt for new materials because the changing times demand the new ideas to be expressed in new materials as well. Most often such artists tend to create narratives around them. The uniqueness of Kalra's works lies in their ability to arrest the narrativizing efforts and help the viewers focus on the works as a materialistic manifestation. The reflective surfaces of Kalra's stainless-steel sculptures, as aforementioned, dispel pure reflections of the surroundings, instead give an illusionary solidity, and invite people to see an absolutely different 'truth' about the art itself. This boils down to a sort of formalism. Kalra orients his works between formalism and aesthetical expressionism. While his paintings yield interpretations, paving way to possible narratives, his sculptures done in stainless-steel obliterates narratives but places a sense of fragmented reality before us. These fragmentations are not just about the reflected surroundings, broken and distorted, but they are the realities of our own times, so fragmented and displaced, making it almost impossible to make sense. Vikash Kalra's these monumental sculptures are emblematic of our times. They are monumental, spectacular, tall, constructivist and material based, establishing the late capitalistic contemporary logic of life.

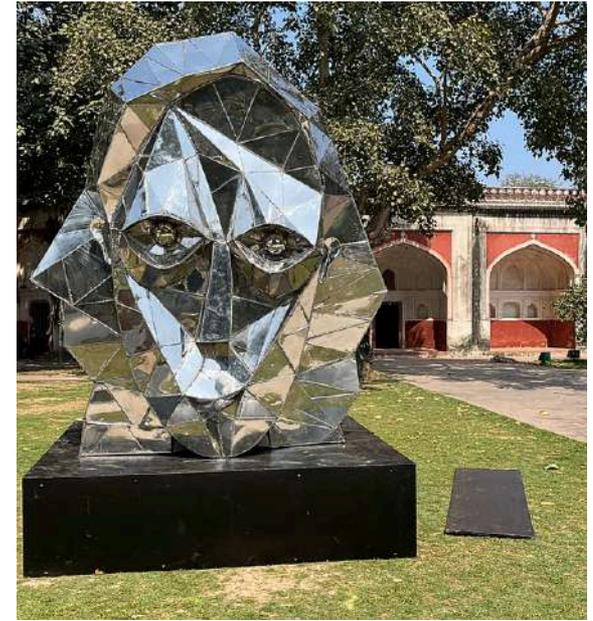


Obverse in making, 56 x 26 x 80 inch, Steel

*One life... Let it flow like sweet water*

*One life... Let it blow like cool breeze*

*Onle life... Let it sway like sweet music*



Maa, 100 x 65 x 140 inch, Steel. Open air installation



Shiv and Ghanesha, Steel



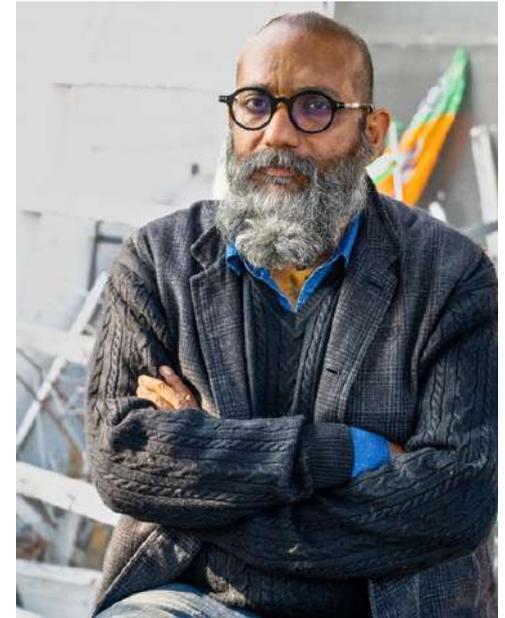
Confidence, 57 x 54 x 101 inch, Steel



King, 33 x 18 x 90 inch, Steel



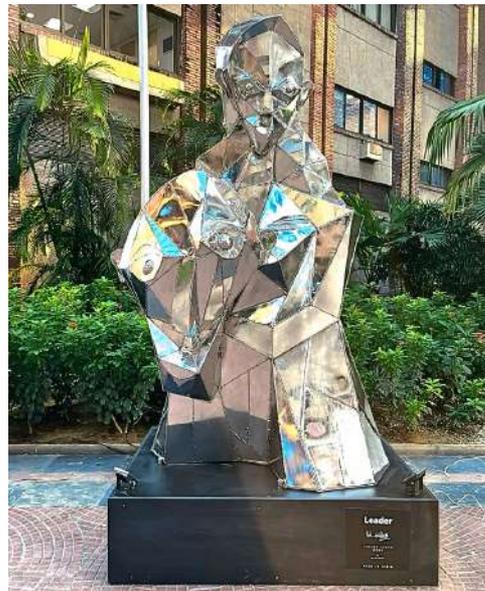
Almost gods collaboration, selling price ₹25,000



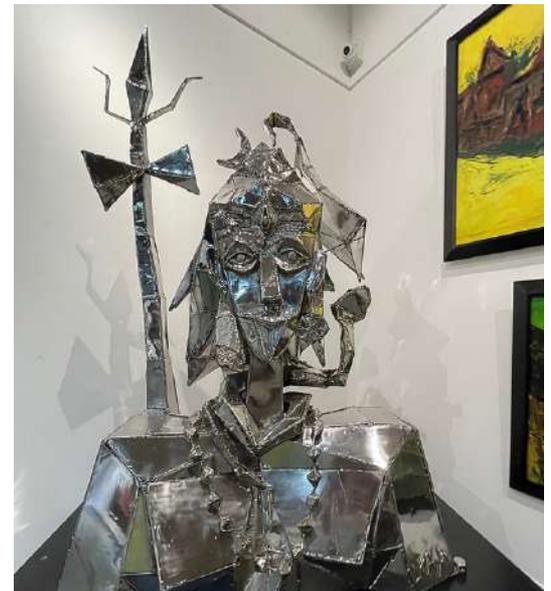
I am Artist Vikash Kalra



Small Ganesha, Steel



Leader, 55 x 40 x 120 inch, Steel



Shiva small version, Steel



72 x 480 inch, Oil on canvas, 2014



Painting in public, Mall of India, Noida  
2021



25 x 21 inch, Acrylic on canvas, 2024



40 x 64 inch, Acrylic on canvas, 2024



42 x 34 inch, Acrylic on canvas, 2024



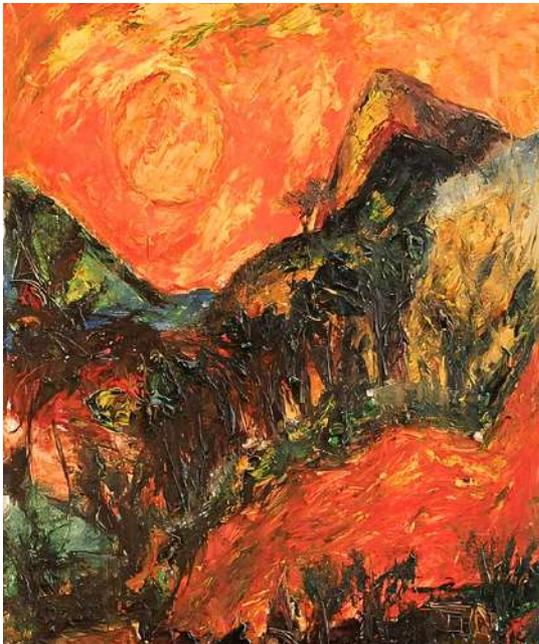
Pen and ink on paper, 2025



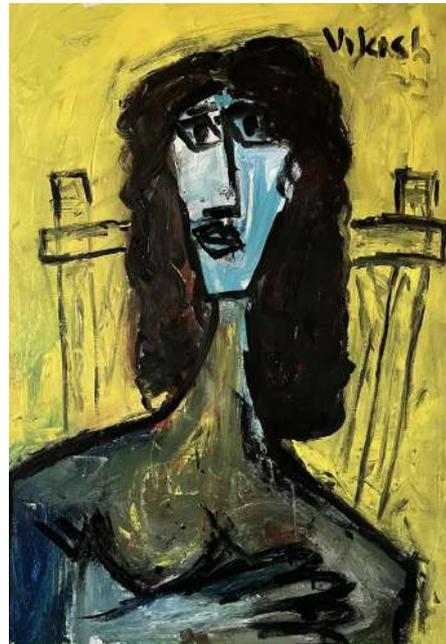
Pen & ink on paper, 2014



Pen and ink on paper, 2025



30 x 35 inch, Oil on canvas



33 x 43 inch, Acrylic on canvas, 2024



22 x 30 inch, Acrylic on canvas, 2024

## Shows (2024 - 2005)

---

- Urban Thoughts: Art in open spaces at India Habitat Centre - Steel Sculptures
- Collaborated with Diljit Dosanjh for Almost Gods - Worn Jacket and Pants
- Saffron Art - No reserve auction of modern and contemporary art Story Ltd July, 9
- Saffron Art - No reserve auction of modern and contemporary art Story Ltd June, 24
- Saffron Art - No reserve auction of modern and contemporary art Story Ltd Feb, 20
- India art fair display at Young collector program all most gods 'Wings of Ascension' copper installation
- Group Show - Imagine Fest - Easel Stories
- Introduction of Chess (at Imagine Fest) with Dhoomimal Gallery
- Astaguru Auction sept- 23-24
- Artix - Aurshi Art Hyderabad The Park
- Saffron Art - No reserve auction of modern and contemporary art Story Ltd July, 18
- Saffron Art - No reserve auction of modern and contemporary art Story Ltd April, 4
- Saffron Art - No reserve auction of modern and contemporary art Story Ltd Feb, 7
- Saffron Art - No reserve auction of modern and contemporary art Story Ltd Jan, 24
- Saffron Art - No reserve auction of modern and contemporary art Story Ltd jan, 10
- Solo show -Shiva,Shiv And tantra , Artries Auction - powered by Dhoomimal Gallery , 10 July to 31 July
- Artries Auction - powered by Dhoomimal Gallery - solo auction Vikash Kalra 20th - may
- Artix - Dhoomimal Gallery - Taj Palace New Delhi
- Saffron Art - No reserve auction of modern and contemporary art Story Ltd November, 22
- Saffron Art - No reserve auction of modern and contemporary art Story Ltd September, 22
- Saffron Art - No reserve auction of modern and contemporary art Story Ltd May, 24
- Saffron Art - No reserve auction of modern and contemporary art Story Ltd Feb, 8
- Saffron Art - No reserve auction of modern and contemporary art Story Ltd November, 16
- Saffron Art - No reserve auction of modern and contemporary art Story Ltd June, 29
- Saffron Art - No reserve auction of modern and contemporary art Story Ltd February, 2
- Installation of art on the facade wall of the sculpture court - Dhoomimal Gallery Oct 14-Mar 21 – Apr 4, 2021
- Solo Show - Presented by Easel Stories Art Gallery at Artsy- 16 May 2021
- [https://www.artsy.net/show/easel-stories-art-gallery-vikash-kalra?sort=partner\\_show\\_position](https://www.artsy.net/show/easel-stories-art-gallery-vikash-kalra?sort=partner_show_position)
- Saffron Art - No reserve auction of modern and contemporary art Story Ltd May, 12
- Saffron Art - No reserve auction of modern and contemporary art Story Ltd April, 21
- Rebuilding India Brick by Brick Habitat for Humanity and Art Alliance
- Solo Show at " The Artist " at Artaholics Art Galley SOUZA & VIKASH - 40 drawings of F N Souza & 40 drawings of Vikash Kalra
- Saffron Art - No reserve auction of modern and contemporary art Story Ltd Jan, 23-24
- Saffron Art - No reserve auction of modern and contemporary art Story Ltd Apr, 16-17
- Saffron Art - No reserve auction of modern and contemporary art, Story Ltd Jul, 09-10
- Saffron Art - No reserve auction of modern and contemporary art, Story Ltd Aug, 20-21

- Saffron Art - No reserve auction of modern and contemporary art Story Ltd Oct, 22-23
- Group Show with Dhoomimal Art Centre
- Group Show with Dhoomimal Art Gallery
- Delhi Airport - Painting displayed at IGI Airport, Gallery Navya
- Painting and sculptures displayed at Dhoomimal Art Centre
- Painting displayed at Bihar Museum, Plural India, Curator - Anjani Kumar Singh
- Apparel Range for Almost Gods : Last Supper Painting- printed on Almost Gods Jackets.
- Group Show - Indian Art Festival, Nehru Centre, Bombay - February - Gita Art Gallery.
- Solo Show - Endless Communication: Solo Show – March – Gita Art Gallery.
- Solo Show Decade: A painter's journey a retrospective of works by Vikash Kalra Visual Art Gallery, IHC
- Solo Show - Limited edition prints & sculptures– March – Visual Art Gallery – Prints Villa.
- Solo show - Thinking Big: Contemporary Sculpture and Installation by Vikash Kalra – March – Visual Art Gallery
- Solo Show - Paintings & sculptures – May – Courtyard Marriott Gurugram The Art Floor.
- The Whitefield Art Collectives 2017 VR Punjab by Vikash Kalra
- The Whitefield Art Collectives 2017 VR Punjab – November – Punjab Art Initiative.
- Public Art (Installation) 10 Sculptures- VR Mohali Punjab
- Book Launch Jeevan Ek Soch Matt (Poem book) by Vikash Kalra – March – Visual Art Gallery.
- Book Launch Jeevan Ek Soch Matt (Poem book) by Vikash Kalra – 6th Amdavad National Book Fair May 2017.
- Short film Beginning of a journey artist vikash kalra ( <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0Hpt-Uftrmg> )
- Solo show - Tribute to Picasso & Souza by Vikash – August – Dhoomimal Art Centre.
- AP'PRAA (LIMITLESS) – Public Art (Installation) 26 Sculptures – VR Bengaluru
- Public Art (Installation) 26 Sculptures- VR Surat,
- Whitefield Art Collective & Art Chutney – February and April.
- VIKASH KALRA - A TRIBUTE TO PABLO PICASSO & FRANCIZ NEWTON SOUZA / Dhoomimal Art Centre (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=958IrsQJMaE&t=1s>)
- Short film on Sculptures "LIMITLESS"- by Vikash Kalra (Youtube link: <https://youtu.be/06kAJx3zINw>)
- Short film on Art and spirituality – Speaker- Vikash Kalra ( Youtube link: <https://youtu.be/cMFsYX-9x2w>)
- Live interview, DDNational – Good Evening India – 4.30pm Aug26 (Youtube link: <https://youtu.be/PleoERUJGE0>)
- Group Show - Aparajita (Beti Bachao Beti Padhao) – Voluntary Health Association of India – Visual Art Gallery, IHC, New Delhi.
- Solo Show - Tales from the Soul Marrow – April – Art Indus, New Delhi.
- Solo Show - JOURNEYS – January – Indian Art Fair, New Delhi – by Art 18|21, UK.
- Group Show - The Gandhi –Indian Art Fair, New Delhi – by Art Indus, New Delhi.
- Short film on Tales from the Soul Marrow – ( Youtube link: <https://youtu.be/3jarP3ihvvg>)
- Short film on INDIA ART FAIR 2015 – Solo show JOURNEY by Vikash Kalra (Youtube link: <https://youtu.be/4uY-nleNam4>)
- DDNational – Good Evening India – Vikash Kalra – 16th Jan 2015 (Youtube link: <https://youtu.be/yOV-DRqZGHU>)
- Talk on Feminism in art share views with Geeti Sen (Writer, Cultural Historian, Critic, Editor) (Youtube link: <https://youtu.be/6x-QcUxE9sE>)
- Solo show- in Indian Art Festival, 27th – 30th Nov 2014. Nehru Centre, Worli Mumbai.
- Solo show- THE ALCHEMIST – a monographic exhibition – August 2014, Art and Aesthetic, Lado Sarai, New Delhi.
- Four Walls - Exhibition of India's contemporary art – Taj Westend, Bangalore from 4th -13th April 2014, with Artchutney.

- Group show - at Art and Aesthetic "A Tribute to MASTERS & MASTERPIECES – History Revisited", 29th Jan – 28th Feb.
- Group Show - Gallerie Nvya, The Winter Tale 2013. Dec 15, 2013 to Feb 03, 2014.
- Group show - Dhoomimal Art Centre
- Solo Show - Indian Art Festival, 19-22 Dec. Nehru Centre, Bombay.
- Group Show - Artchutney, Coimbatore on 23rd – 24th November, 2013.
- Group Show - Voice on Art, "Centurion 2013" 9th Nov to 15th Nov, at Visual Art Gallery, IHC, New Delhi.
- Group Show - Gallerie Nvya, 9th Anniversary Show "NAVA" Sep 06 to Nov 07 2013
- Group Show - Art Chutney " Varicolored " The Taj West End, Bangalore. 14th July.
- Group Show - Gallerie Nvya, New Delhi, May 15, 2013 to July 27, 2013.
- Solo Show - Angels of History, Art Konsult, Visual Art Gallery, IHC, New Delhi.
- Group Show - The Pune Art Gallery, Pune.
- Art Auction Modern & Contemporary Indian, Art Chutney, Bangalore.
- Group Show - India Art Fair 2013, Art Konsult, New Delhi.
- Art Bull, Autumn Auction.
- Group Show, Art Bull, Lado Sarai, New Delhi.
- Group Show at United Art Fair, New Delhi.
- Group Show, Surya Hotel, New Delhi.
- Solo Show Into The Void Art Konsult.
- Group Show Art Konsult at India Art Fair 2012,
- Group Show, Salar Jung Museum, Hyderabad.
- Group Show, Art Konsult - The Dramatics of Diverse Interpretations/ Perspectives
- Group Show, Arts of The Earth, Open Palm Court, India Habitat Centre.
- Short Film, Obsessions
- The World of Vikash Kalra by Vinod Bhardwaj previewed at Art Film Festival, NGMA, New Delhi (Youtube link: [www.youtube.com/watch?v=EM2a64YWdEY](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EM2a64YWdEY)).
- Short Film on Vikash Kalra, Dreams on Canvas previewed on Doordarshan (Youtube link: [www.youtube.com/watch?v=8wBeDTFeCfc](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8wBeDTFeCfc))
- Group Show, Lalit Kala Akademi, New Delhi.
- Group Show, Arts of The Earth, Open Palm Court, India Habitat Centre.
- Autumn Auction, Artbull India Habitat Centre , New Delhi.
- Museum Collection-3, Group Show, Art Konsult, Visual Art Gallery, India Habitat Centre, New Delhi.
- The Art Corridor, The Taj, by Art Chutney, Bangalore (50 Works, 25 Artist, 10 States).
- Solo Show – Nostalgia/Memory, Visual Art Gallery, India Habitat Centre & Art Konsult, New Delhi.
- Group Show, The Taj, Art Chutney, Bangalore.
- Solo Show – The Artist The Man-IV, Open Palm Court, India Habitat Centre, New Delhi.
- Group Show, Meharangarh Fort, Rajasthan.
- Solo show Vivid Hues, Epicentre, Gurgaon & India Habitat Centre, New Delhi.
- Solo Show – The Artist The Man-III, India Habitat Centre, New Delhi.
- Group Show, Rooh – The Journey Within, Visual Arts Gallery, India Habitat Centre, New Delhi.
- Solo show Line of Control, Online Show with [www.rangartgallery.com](http://www.rangartgallery.com)
- Group Show Lalit Kala Akademi, New Delhi.
- Group Show Palm Court, India Habitat Centre, New Delhi.

- Group Show Travancore Art Gallery, New Delhi.
- Solo – The Artist The Man-II, VAG, India Habitat Centre, New Delhi.
- Solo Show Chehare (Faces) with Rang Art Gallery - Online Show with [www.rangartgallery.com](http://www.rangartgallery.com)
- Group show - 60 Years of Independence, Rashtrapati Bhawan, New Delhi.
- Group Show, Visual Arts Gallery India Habitiat Centre , New Delhi.
- Solo Show The Artist The Man, Palm Court, India Habitat Centre, New Delhi.
- Group Show Lalit Kala Akademi, New Delhi.
- Group Show Lakhotia Art Gallery, New Delhi.
- Group Show Rabindra Bhavan, New Delhi.
- Group Show with Art Konsult Triveni Gallery, New Delhi.
- Group Show with Art Konsult Visual Art Gallery, India Habitat Centre, New Delhi.
- Group Show with Art Konsult Palm Court, India Habitat Centre, New Delhi.
- Solo Show – Chehare (Faces) Rang Art Gallery, Delhi.
- Group Show with Art Konsult Lalit Kala Akademi, New Delhi.
- Group Show with Art Konsult Triveni Gallery, New Delhi
- Group Show with Art Konsult Open Palm Court, India Habitat Centre, New Delhi.





*Mindscape/ size 72x32(each) / Acrilcy on canvas /Artist Vikash Kalra*