

FIVE
DECADES

NATVAR BHAVSAR

NATVAR BHAVSAR: FIVE DECADES

OCTOBER 21 - DECEMBER 12

2015

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Installation View of Natvar Bhasvar: Five Decades, 2015

Natvar Bhavsar's Threshold of Purity

Robert C. Morgan

An exemplary artist and prolific painter, Natvar Bhavsar is readily known for the manner in which he applies the spectrum of color to his superbly crafted paintings. Color is the mainstay of his art. Metaphorically speaking, his paintings evoke the life-breath that resonates through India's centuries old poetic masterpiece, the Bhagavad Gita – a text that gives spiritual credibility to the ongoing mythical legacies of India. Bhavsar's paintings depend on a keen ability to sustain the complex maneuvering of pure mineral pigments. Every motion of the hand and arm is carefully intuited. His attention is perpetually focused on integrating the tactile, intellectual, and spiritual attributes that hover in the mysterious zone between art and life. Here Bhavsar proceeds to construct a magisterial terrain of fervent color, thus opening a visionary pathway into a burgeoning global awareness.

The exhibition, Natvar Bhavsar: Five Decades, begins with two important paintings, THEER-A-THEER-A (1970) and VAATRI (1969), both initially shown at the Jewish Museum in New York in 1970. The former, THEER-A-THEER-A, translated from the Sanskrit to mean "Slowly, Slowly." This suggests an attempt on the part of the artist to encourage viewers to spend time with the work, to get close to it, rather than far away. For Bhavsar, his paintings – no matter how large or small – presuppose a sense of intimacy, specifically in relation to the quality of one's experience while viewing the infinite density of color on the surface. The sensory array of color without shape in THEER-A-THEER-A is a phenomenon that extends beyond the manner in which one perceives the everyday world of mediated imagery. The other, slightly smaller "mural-size" painting, titled VAATRI, painted one year earlier, carries a similar affect. While the Cara Gallery exhibition is the first time VAATRI has been shown since 1970, THEER-A-THEER-A has been shown on three occasions since the Jewish Museum. The venues include the Max Hutchinson Gallery in Houston (1978), the Wichita Art Museum (1979), and most recently an exhibition of Bhavsar's work shown in the lobby and penthouse of Tower 49 in midtown Manhattan (2014).



THEER-A-THEER-A, 1969
Pure Pigment, Oil & Acrylic on Canvas
81.5x360in.

There are times when Bhavsar's color appears to have arrived from elsewhere, from another time and space, a meditative space (Samadhi) and a lost time, temporally displaced by the current trend to invest in the counter-ecologies of global materialism. Yet Bhavsar's paintings continue to hold their own in the history of abstract art. Whether seen from near or far, from an Eastern or Western point of view, they indulge our rhythmical desire for spiritual and sensory sustenance. Bhavsar's paintings offer a threshold of purity, a cleansing distillation of human consciousness, as seen, heard, and felt within the great traditions of India

To this affect, the artist painted three versions of KONARAK (1977), paying homage to one of India's truly magnificent medieval temples constructed in the eleventh century. The realistic stone carvings of male and female deities intertwined on the walls of this temple are poetically rendered as a companion to the erotic spirituality found in the Gita Govinda of Jayadeva. In general, Bhavsar's painterly message is one of considerable importance not only for heightening the sensory affects of color, but as a means to inform diverse populations in the throes of embarking on a new age of global exchange. This kind of involvement through art is always indirect. Therefore, Bhavsar concentrates his creative efforts toward the immediate transmission of color as a pure sensation that will induce the possibility of a positive change in the world today.



KONARAK, 1977
Pure Pigment, Oil & Acrylic on Canvas
108x45in. (each)

Influences in the Pursuit of Painting

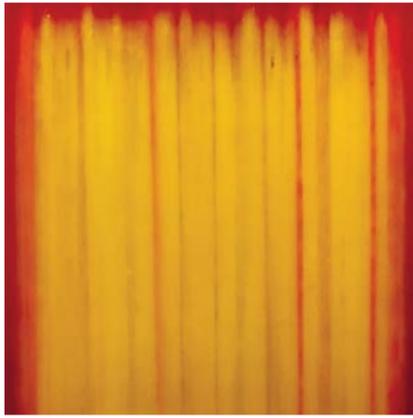
Bhavsar recalls his early influences while growing up in Gujarat more than a decade before landing in the United States in 1962. There were two sources: One, the multiplicity of brilliant textiles, dyed and sewn, spread out on the grass, when he visited his grandparent's village; and two, the festival of Holi, celebrated once a year for two days in March. The function of Holi is to celebrate the ancient, mythical story, known as Ramayana. The drama is a reenactment of the story in which Sita, the wife of Rama, is captured and imprisoned by a treacherous king and finally liberated from captivity through the agency of a monkey god, named Hanuman. The ceremonial finale

involves large quantities of colored pigment dispersed over the crowd who stand waiting for a symbolic sign to celebrate the joy of Sita's release.

Bhavsar reflects on both of these events, the first carries a deeply personal memory, and the second ignites an exciting, festive occasion. Each retains a profound impact on his visual thinking and on his search for an expressive ethnicity. As a young student at the art school in Ahmedabad, the goal was to discover his true self through art. His journey took him to the United States where he discovered a way to make art by layering color. This process inadvertently revealed an awareness of a spiritual sensibility related to the Hindu tradition, but also borrowing from early Zoroastrian thought. Through his reconciliation with the past, Bhavsar eventually discovered the meaning of how to live happily as an artist while attending to the resonant interludes of color as a phenomenon that occupies space/time and is known to equivocate between matter and light.

Upon Bhavsar's arrival in the United States in the early sixties, his conversations with American and European painters played a significant role in his introduction to various forms of abstract painting. As a result, he began to think about his work from a Western point of view. The discourse among painters (including critics and collectors) was something Bhavsar found attractive at the time. Most likely this open-minded engagement with new ideas began – at least, in New York – in the bars and public panels among well-known abstract expressionists, such as Robert Motherwell and Barnett Newman – artists that Bhavsar eventually met through the Italian painter Piero Dorazio who, at the time, was teaching at the University of Pennsylvania where the young artist was completing his MFA degree.

Bhavsar would eventually become an intelligent commentator in his own right, not only in addressing the concerns of painting, but his comments on scientific developments and philosophy as well. Even so, Bhavsar never separated himself from his role as a painter. His ultimate ground is the studio where he spends numerous hours at work on his paintings – the ongoing process of clarifying his position on color as a means of giving light. One might say that Bhavsar lives and breathes painting, and when not in the studio, he maintains an uncanny ability to retain images of exact proportion and description within his mind's eye. Whether from the sixties, the nineties, or from the current year, his paintings exude precision, depth, and accuracy. Bhavsar would like his paintings to transform space and to exude energy wherever they are seen. For many who have seen Bhavsar's color, the sensory and retinal experience happens in such a way that few painters have been able to imitate.



MAALWA IV
1982
Work on Paper
49.5x45in.



MAAYAN
2014
Pure Pigment, Oil & Acrylic on Canvas
108x48in.

The Resonance of Painting in Pure Pigment

In tandem with the artist's energetic output and deeply concentrated approach, the dry pigments are carefully applied between specially prepared oil and acryloid binders. This allows the structure of his paintings to evolve as an interior embodiment of form. Take KALINGAA (2007–2008), for example. The contours and fractals on the edges of the blue interior shift in accordance with the application of each layer of pure pigment. Through the persistent layering of these color variations, the artist goes in search of an alternative closure that reveals a sensibility derived from his culture: India. Once Bhavsar's complex color is fixed in time and space, a painting, such as KALINGAA, may further reveal complex subtleties suggestive of ancient wisdom as siphoned through the artist's trans-sensory ability to capture the sound of Sanskrit through color. In this sense, color plays an intrinsic role – a harmonic tuning – as it evolves into an ecstatic aura, which would also apply to MAALWA (1982) and AJANTA VI (1983). Here the aura appears in the process of becoming a vital accompaniment to an extraordinary aura of ritualistic sound.

Recognizing this process might be difficult for Western viewers to sense, Bhavsar does not insist on seeing his paintings from a single point of view. Alternatively, his paintings may reveal color as a transformative agent for those keen on the notion that every variation of hue or value of color has an emotional correlation. While this notion is distinctly a Western one, it offers a beginning by which to reach beyond a solely material understanding of pigment into the realm of color as a manifestation of spiritual thought. In India, particularly among the Brahmin class, there is no distinction between material and spiritual realities. They exist together on the same plane as one single reality, the sacred OM, resounding through the hillsides and mountain passes, through the streams and valleys, and into the dark grottos and sunlit forests. The single reality is nature where the balance between the material and the spiritual are eternally resounding.

Two early works, CHAITYA (1978) and MRINAL (1979) celebrate the display of this tendency. Bhavsar's paintings are never static. Each painting reveals traces of color submerged into a spectral greyness or elevated into a textured whiteness. In CHAITYA and MRINAL, the feeling of the paint remains vital despite the layered density of color. For the most part, Bhavsar's painting are conceived in transit through as he is continually moving around his canvases distributing overlays of color, which are then fixed in an acryloid compound. In contrast to the earlier "white" paintings, MAAYAN (2014) is built around a dominant, organic red shape. Bold and direct, it has the appearance of twisting through space. Some would compare such a painting to the American abstract expressionist Mark Rothko, but often the comparison is a superficial one.

AA-KASH, meaning "sky" in Sanskrit, is a series of pastel works on paper that Bhavsar completed between 1981- 89. The small-scale size is deceiving to the extent that they suggest monumental-scale paintings. Not

only are these abbreviated paintings important for their originality, coherence, and ebullient manner in handling color, but also in their awareness of contemporary painting by an artist who at the time was literally on the cusp of the emerging multicultural art world. Bhavsar's color aesthetic had matured much earlier by way of a cultural position that was distinctly removed from the formalism of the "color field" painters, largely affiliated with the Corcoran Museum in Washington DC. Painters, such as Morris Louis, Kenneth Noland, Paul Reed, Thomas Downing maintained a formalist approach to painting as the critic Clement Greenberg would make apparent in his writings from 1960 onward.

The important point is this: Natvar Bhavsar was not coming to art from an American academic perspective. He was coming from India with a different history and a vastly different aesthetic point of view. He was not interested in working according to a formalist method. Rather he was in search of his own method by which to communicate the past in relation to the present, and, by doing so, to establish a context to give his paintings a life of their own. Some critics argue that Bhavsar's presumed expressive content was closer to the chromatic abstraction of Rothko than color field painting, but even that aesthetic speculation is problematic. In essence, Bhavsar's art is his own, which is the better way to understand his approach.

PR-KRITEE III (2011), one of the most striking paintings in the current exhibition, alleviates the need to think beyond the surface of the sensual glow this painting delivers. The hollowed interior space of the blue interior offers immense potential in its ability to extend beyond the limits of shape. It is a tactile painting that offers an alternative to what appears the status quo of the present. PR-KRITEE III transfers a sense of history from one place to another. It connects with memories of the past that still retain the possibility of extending into future time and space. This is what art should provide the viewer, a sense of being possessed by a heightened sense of imaginative reality where hope abides, where the challenge of the future is retained and where personal freedom is intact.

A Tactile Response To Virtual Reality

What does this mean in today's world? Caught in the throes of speed and excess, the perpetual onslaught of digital imagery, information coming from all directions, conflicts real and imagined entering into the fray of daily life, fraught with constant panic, vapid deregulations, with multiple stress in family life trying to cope with the cost of living – What is the role of art in all of this? Some would argue that art has no immunity, that the billions at stake in art are part of problem. Many will point to contemporary art, especially, which has been given over to violence, greed, absent morals, and abundant excess.

But, in fact, there is more to the story, and this is precisely where the paintings of Bhavsar hold significance. They reflect the need to discover a balance between the encroaching virtual world of digital information and the tactile or haptic world of human experience, memory, sensory cognition, and qualitative standards in professional and everyday life. Tactility refers to touch, which is physical, emotional, perceptual, and psychological. Art is a part of this. The color-saturated paintings of Bhavsar function as a tactile network. To spend time in a viewing environment where these works are comfortably shown offers the potential to have a real experience. Although abstract, we are unlikely to forget what we have seen and felt. They enter into our storehouse of memory, not so much as fragmented images, but as a totality. They are about the interface of color, space, form, texture, and light.

I would argue this is not simply a formal enactment, but something direct. As previously suggested, Bhavsar's paintings have a trans-sensory aspect. They move between the senses, as light touches the retina, we may recall sounds of nature or they emanate from the sitar, zither, or harmonium. To remember is the recall an experience that contextualizes all that we know at that moment. From the Eastern perspective there is no real distinction between intelligence and the creative mind, the sensitive mind. The task at hand is to find art that elevates these qualities, art that makes us aware that our human sensory organs, sight, sound, and touch, can procure forms of cognition and call forth complex components in our thought process. Haptic memory derives through the senses. What we hear may become what we see, and what we see may transform into what we hear. For Bhavsar, the

sound of Sanskrit recalls memories of the past, including sacred memories, in which the artist became awe-struck through the sensory awareness in the natural world that surrounded him.

Bhavsar's paintings are profound. They are not entertainment. Rather they serve another purpose, and function on a different level. They have remained over the years within the realm of beauty and have allowed minds to relax and enjoy the human possibility to feel the passage of nature through art. In this sense, these paintings are meant to touch the soul. They constitute nothing less than a threshold or purity, a place of healing and cleansing, an approach to art that rehabilitates the past in relation to the present.

Robert C. Morgan holds advanced degrees in education, fine art, and art history and currently teaches at Pratt Institute in Brooklyn and the School of Visual Arts in New York. In 1999, he was awarded the Arcaele prize in Spain for art criticism; in 2005, he became a Fulbright Senior Scholar; and in 2011 he was inducted into the European Academy of Sciences and Arts, Salzburg. He is an exhibition artist, poet, and painter and the author of many books, essays, and reviews on contemporary art.

WORKS

1969 - 2011

Natvar Bhavsar: An Interview with Irving Sandler

AM: You obviously know Natvar very well and have for a long time.

IS: Since the 60s.

AM: I wanted to know firstly, how you two met and what drew you to his work?

IS: The art world there was really very, very small so you really pretty much got to know everybody in it back in the 50s. I once counted up all of the artists in the New York school, the number was about in between 200 and 250 and that was the art world. There were only 20 galleries, 12 uptown worth seeing, 8 artists' cooperatives downtown, you could do it in an afternoon. With Natvar, it may have been at the time of his show, I was simply very moved by the work and then, my own role in the art world was to do anything and everything that nobody else wanted to do and to know it all. And when I saw work of an artist that interested me, and Natvar did from the very start, I immediately searched the artist out we talked and became friends.

AM: And what drew you to his work?

IS: Well first of all, its freshness, you know in that moment artists' were beginning to really investigate color as they hadn't before and here was an artist who came up with a very fresh indeed, original image using a kind of color field with also a very interesting technique of creating it and that just grabbed me, simple as that.

AM: What drew you to being a writer and critic and that direction in this field of that world?

IS: Well in my case, it was kind of an epiphany. I was in a shipwrecked period of my life, my marriage had broken up and my academic career was going nowhere and I had no money at all except I did inherit a card, a membership card to the Museum of Modern Art, and I was living in a room paying 8 dollars a month and to get to the Modern was just a delight and I spent as much time as I could there. I wasn't terribly interested in art but when you are in the museum you wander around and I literally had an epiphany with a painting by Franz Kline. I didn't know what it was but I knew it was very important. But in those days we were living on nothing, in the 19th century it would have been called a Bohemian life. So I was able to track Kline down, the painting down, but first Kline. Found out he hung out at a place called the Cedar Street Tavern, and began to frequent it.

AM: Looking for him...

IS: Well, I found him very quickly - he spent a lot of time there! One of the waiters, where I worked in Provincetown, was an artist, Angelo Polito, and we became friends and he was terribly important in my life. But he took me to the Cedar Street Tavern, he introduced me to Franz Kline and I sat with Kline the whole evening, you didn't have to say a word with Kline, he was a great raconteur and I was so slowly drawn into this milieu; and the more I was drawn in the more I knew I wanted to be there - but what was I going to do? Well I ended up running the Tanniger Gallery, which was the leading artist cooperative on 10th street, writing for art and I was running the now historic Artist Club - that brought me into the community.

AM: There is something about Natvar's work, I think when people see his paintings it is immediately in the future always recognizable that this is Natvar Bhavsar.

IS: Yes!

AM: What do you think it is about his style and his technique that makes the work so obviously unique and at the same time sort of ubiquitous throughout his oeuvre?

IS: In that it relates to really what is going on in New York at a critical time when art was literally changing very rapidly and he was part of that change. But nonetheless the work is uniquely his. I think a good deal has to do with a certain kind of color that I couldn't describe that he uses - and also very much a technique of throwing paint, which of course has an Indian dimension as well, that gives him a particular and peculiar type of surface that is unmistakable. It gives the color a certain body while not detracting from the color.

AM: Going towards the show for a moment here, we have along with Natvar, decided to call the show, Five Decades because we're showing 50 years of work. Having been around him throughout that period and having seen his career unfold, how would you say he has evolved?

IS: First of all the evolution has been very organic so you can look at the very last work and also relate it to the early work. And when you are in his apartment where he has the earliest work up along with the latest work you see it. I think what would be one of the most interesting things is what happens to his work recently. Where he begins to introduce shape without losing the field and that's really quite a move for him and the work has changed and is really very beautiful. But his work has done that in subtle ways over 50 years.

AM: I think that's an interesting thing that we've also been discussing - I wouldn't say it's a dilemma but just a discussion because we've had that question of whether we can show early works alongside late works and I think with him, more so than a lot of painters, it works actually, you can do that. And yet still see the development and change in between.

AM: How from the perspective of an art historian, how do you think Natvar's work will be remembered five decades from now?

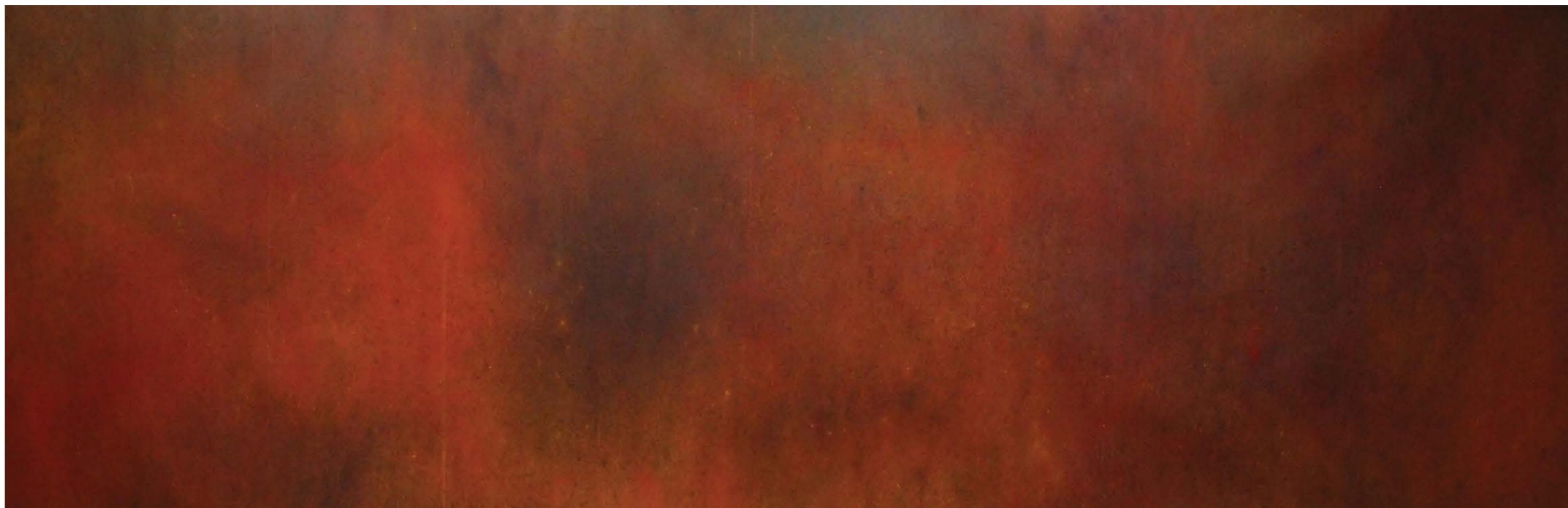
IS: I would be hard put to answer that because I kind of have, as I say, an image of an organic development - and it's this, the moves are very subtle but they're there. I think it would be the essential quality of the work - the fact that this is a color field painter, or a color painter - and he would be remembered in that vein. Also, I should point out that I spent a lot of time with Natvar; you know we travelled India together and that was quite wonderful.

AM: We've managed to touch base with you, with Robert C. Morgan and with Carter Ratcliff and it's interesting that the three of you have been such strong proponents of his career. I think it is also interesting that you three patrons of his work, let's call it, are really coming together coinciding with this show, behind him. Why is it do you think that you were all drawn to him in similar ways, and why, I don't know, maybe it is sort of serendipitous to say this, but for all three of you to come together now while we are doing this for what we hope to be a very important show for him - there's timing behind it.

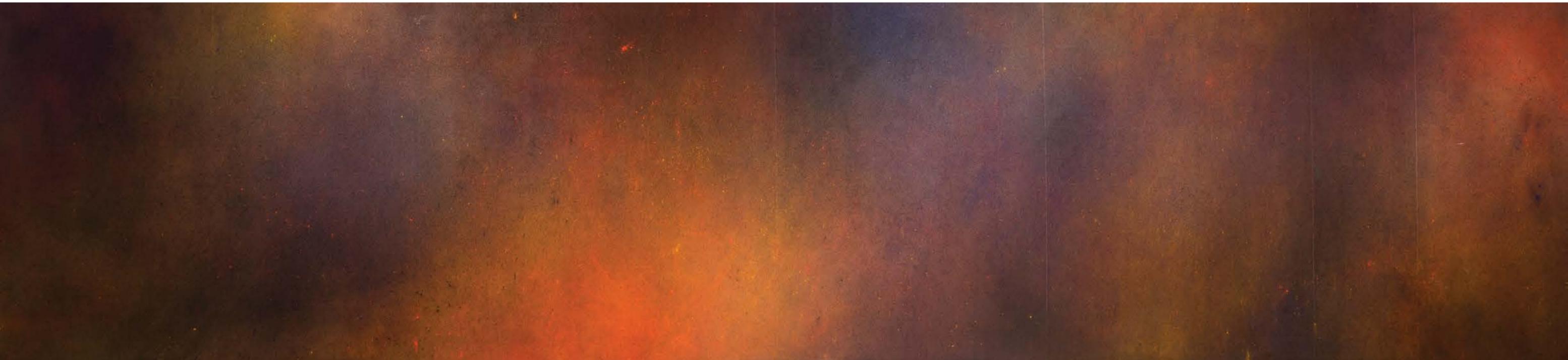
IS: I can't speak for either Carter or Robert - I mean I've known them both for a long time, particularly Carter because we go back much further and their response could have been exactly the same or it could have been entirely different. I mean I can imagine someone coming upon Natvar's paintings and saying I haven't seen anything like this before and either deciding that it's not art or deciding it's marvelous and something new, something fresh. The whole idea, particularly back in the 60s, of taking an avant-garde stand of making it new literally, was very important. And we were very sensitive to artists who were making it new at the time, whether they were pop or minimal, or post-minimal or abstract art or color field or hard edge abstraction. So it's not surprising that if you're, how shall I put it, predisposed to new art, you would respond to something new. And if it didn't move you profoundly you knew enough not to reject it but to begin to ask yourself questions, what is it about this work that is getting to me in a negative way.



VAATRI
1969
Pure Pigment, Oil & Acrylic on Canvas
108x192in.



SAMA-LAA
1969
Pure Pigment, Oil & Acrylic on Canvas
81.5x240in.



THEER-A-THEER-A
1969
Pure Pigment, Oil & Acrylic on Canvas
81.5x360in.

AM: This is something that I think that I share with Natvar - that we're both people of Indian origin but really formatively grew up in, not just America but New York. And I've always sort of felt between two worlds and not wanting to be placed as one or the other, which is something I think that Natvar relates to as well.

IS: Yes, I think so!

AM: So, the question being, how do you think it is possible that the international art community can get past placing an artist into one background or the other and should they do that? And if they should where do you feel he falls?

IS: Well I think we are moving into an interesting period where art is becoming increasingly international and these kinds of nationalist distinctions are literally no more. I mean, you get an artist coming out of Nigeria, El Anatsui, who is creating some of the most remarkable painting being done today and just recently had a major beautiful retrospective of his work at the Brooklyn Museum and suddenly has created an international reputation.. And I just saw a show of an Ethiopian artist, pretty much across the street from you, wonderful painting. It can literally come from anywhere and I think this is really very much going to help the reception of Natvar's work. I think he did face a problem that in New York he may have looked a little bit too Indian for us and in India he looked a little bit too American for them and has run into that problem. But Natvar himself lives in both places, and in India he was very Indian and in New York he was very New Yorkan and yet he didn't change at all...

AM: For your purposes, just opinion, would you call him a New York artist?

IS: Absolutely. He's not an Indian artist - I don't think there's anything like his painting in India that you could relate it to in the way that you could relate it to New York painting.

AM: This scene in New York that you painted in the 50s and 60s, a small group of artists - some of his great contemporaries have had, obviously, incredible success. Natvar has as well in his own way, he's had great critical acclaim and commercial success as well for a painter as well who hasn't maybe, taken the same routes as some of the people he was side by side with. You know, people speak of Rothko and Barnett Newman.

IS: Well they of course were an older generation.

AM: Well yes, a little bit, but why do you think that he hasn't quite risen to that level in the art world? I think we all know the ability is there very much.

IS: To be absolutely frank I haven't a clue. Take an artist like Al Held who has really strong support within the art community and his position is akin to Natvar's. Then you have Alex Katz here who is an international art star, and deservedly so - but why Al Held is not yet there although his supporters, the director of the Guggenheim Museum for example, wrote a book on him and that's the Guggenheim - I don't know how these things happen.

AM: Natvar and Janet are incredibly generous people who bring many people into their lives and into their home and into the studio. How do you think, not just his life but his work reflects this quality in him because it is a very elemental quality for him I believe - to be generous in life.

IS: I think so, yes!

AM: And do you see it in his work? Somehow sort of mirroring that?

IS: Well I think it is work that he certainly would hope to make a very positive effect on people... And respond to it in a sensuous and poetic way. Yes I think that is critical in his work.

AM: Because that's something else I had here, that I generally want to believe that, not always, but most of the time, the art that an artist creates reflects their energy. He certainly has that positive energy and I believe his canvases do as well.

IS: And from what I know of our fairly close relationship he is a horrendous worker - he's in the studio, how shall I put it, quite, he's just in the studio! If you can come up with an adjective for that...

AM: I think that's well described for what he's doing! So speaking of, well, what I hope is an interesting question. Speaking of him and Janet, who have a wonderful story themselves.

IS: Yes!

AM: How do you think she has influenced his work?

IS: As an influence I don't know, but certainly as a companion, very much. She's there for him and has done anything she can to make his life easier enough so that he could paint and also make his social relations easier because she is a very, very friendly person. I will say one thing about our trip to India and you would know this.

AM: Probably...!

IS: You walk down an Indian street and run into women in saris and you really begin to understand color!

AM: That's very beautifully put.

AM: Speaking of color, to me at least, color is something so subjective. Not just physically but also philosophical, because, and this is where it gets interesting for me - I'm actually colorblind. Of course I see colors, but what I see is probably different from what everybody else sees - now that happens to be a genetic trait but I do firmly believe that even two people who aren't colorblind see different things, they're just, again, by induction taught that they are the same thing over time, which is how we learn.

IS: But even if they saw the same thing their response would be different.

AM: That's what I'm getting to, exactly. So the question in there is how do you think this significance of the response and the subjectivity of color influences how we view different works and pertaining to his oeuvre, specifically.

IS: We're moving back to the subjective responses of individuals and the psychology of individuals and I'm not sure we really can know. I do know this and I've just written about it - that when people talk about quality they talk about taste so people who can respond to quality in work are thought to have superior taste. There's something else and I truly believe this, it's called appetite - you have appetite for certain kinds of art.

AM: So we'll stay on the subjectivity for the moment, tell me what you see when you look at Natvar's paintings.

IS: I'm really very emotionally moved by what the color does and I don't have any particular sort of scenario for it. Except that I may find myself - being an art critic and following artists as closely as I have - thinking in terms of my art experience and how Natvar fits into that. And again the thing we talked about, the newness, the freshness, very much comes in. I like something that is fresh, something that moves me, something that challenges me, and Natvar's work did that from the start.

CHAITYA I
1978
Pure Pigment, Oil & Acrylic on Canvas
53x72in.



MRINAL
1978
Pure Pigment, Oil & Acrylic on Canvas
72x57in.



VENRA
1978-83
Pure Pigment, Oil & Acrylic on Canvas
57x78in.



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AM: So we'll stay on the subjectivity for the moment, tell me what you see when you look at Natvar's paintings.

IS: I'm really very emotionally moved by what the color does and I don't have any particular sort of scenario for it. Except that I may find myself - being an art critic and following artists as closely as I have - thinking in terms of my art experience and how Natvar fits into that. And again the thing we talked about, the newness, the freshness, very much comes in. I like something that is fresh, something that moves me, something that challenges me, and Natvar's work did that from the start.

AM: That just brings me to thinking about the other arts, the visual arts as well but music, dance, multimedia.

How do you think the other arts influence his work and vice versa and also why do you feel we create these boundaries between them when they can actually be all incorporated into each other?

IS: Well, I will say this, Natvar would occasionally have talks and concerts for friends in his studio and I've heard more than one concert of Indian music. So I do know that certainly Indian music means a great deal to Natvar because he's constantly involved with it.

AM: I see music in his work very much.

IS: But it would be kind of slow rhythms.

AM: You know to me, it evokes the, when you have Indian music you have the drone behind it which is played by the sitar, which is a very basic, slow pulse. And I see that in his canvases.

IS: Absolutely! Natvar also very much is well read in Indian literature and in American literature as well, but certainly in Indian literature.

AM: This may be a trickier one but we talked about some of his influences, the colors of India, that just being inherent in the culture, music, is there anything else you would specifically site as...

IS: What was happening in the art world in the 1960s, that would be very important. The people he was meeting, the artists he was meeting, art he was looking at, and his own ideas sort of percolated in this milieu - that was really very important.

IS: In my day, I didn't have to look beyond the bounds of Manhattan because I was, we all believe there was nothing going on beyond Manhattan and there was nothing as far as we were concerned.

AM: Well I suppose that's the globalization of it now.

IS: Yes, and I think that is going to work for Indian artists and could certainly work for Natvar.

AM: I think something that's been difficult in his career is this dichotomy of New York, India, American, not American, might actually end up being a strength.

IS: There is a real good possibility for that, yes.

AM: Would you say that, maybe in a way that, until you saw that country and that culture, it gave you a new understanding of his work? Or shined a light maybe?

IS: Yes, well, made it interesting in that way to see where it came from or at least where some of it came from. You know but it kind of, he in a way grew up in a country that I don't think they would have had a word for art. Just seemed to be everywhere.

AM: The country is art.

IS: Yes, and then of course finding out about Holi was just fascinating.

AM: The festival of colors - that is something special - you've never been there for that have you?

IS: No, I wish I had.

WORKS AND PASTEL ON PAPER

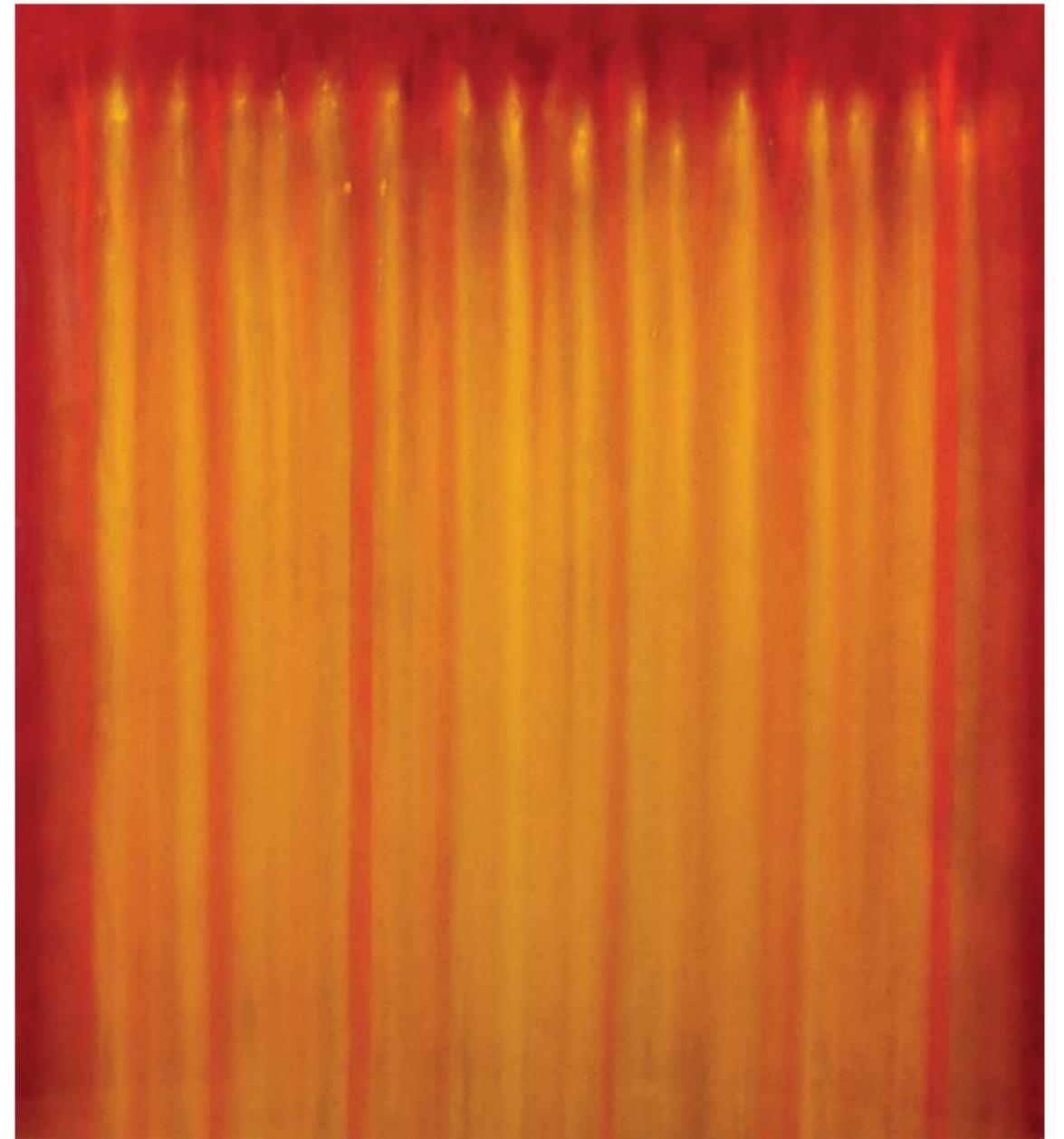
1980 - 2000

GANDHARA I
1980
Work on Paper
49.5x41.5in.





MAALWA III
1982
Work on Paper
49.5x45in.



MAALWA IV
1982
Work on Paper
49.5x45in.

KAILASH XIII
1987
Pastel on Paper
37x31in.

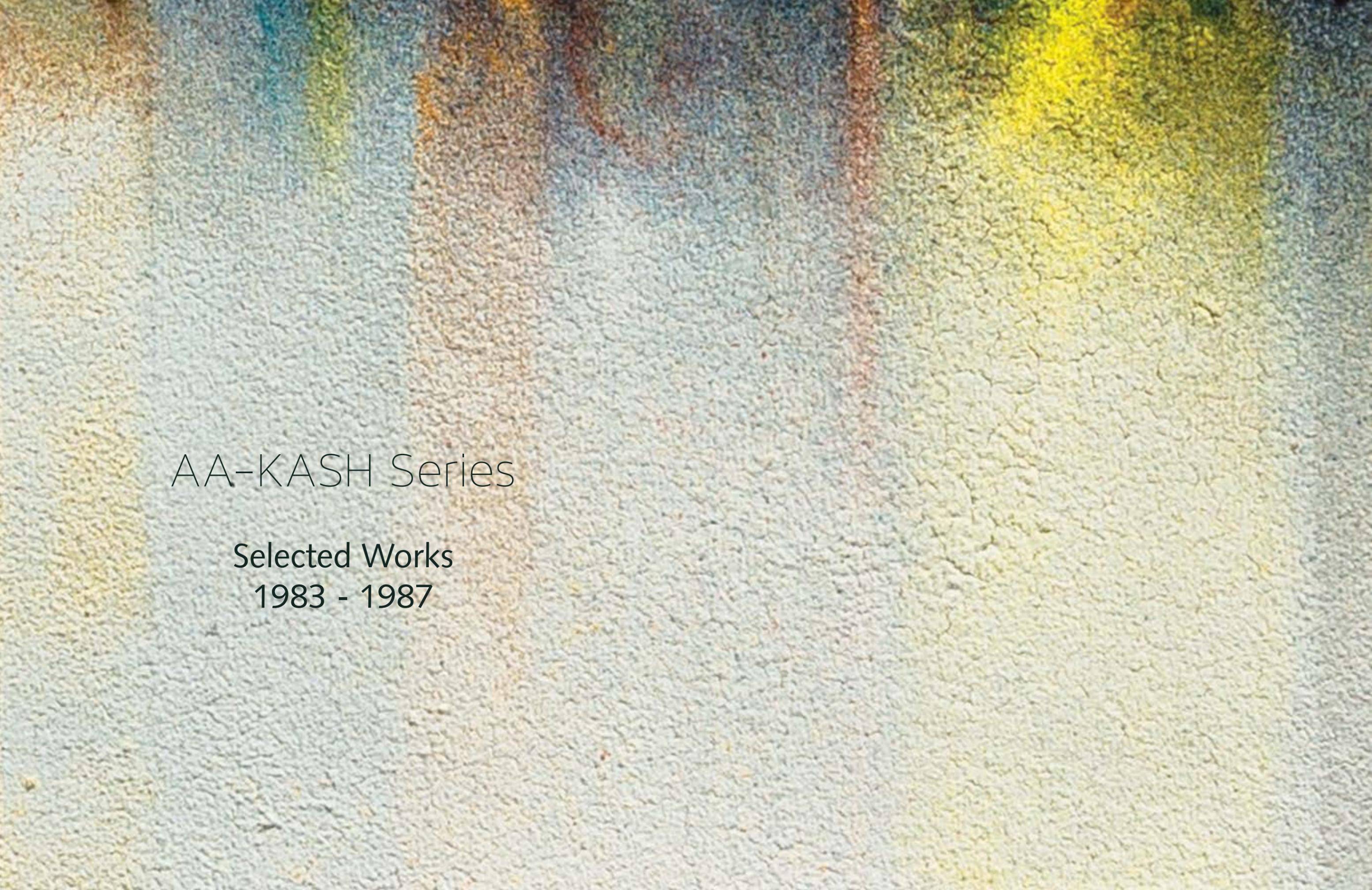


DHEERA X
2000
Pastel on Paper
37x31in.



DHEERA XIV
2000
Pastel on Paper
37x31in.



The background is an abstract composition of vertical color bands. From left to right, the colors are: a light tan/brown, a pale blue, a light green, a light blue, a light brown, a light blue, a light brown, a light green, and a light yellow. The entire surface has a fine, cracked, and textured appearance, similar to aged paper or a stone surface.

AA-KASH Series

Selected Works
1983 - 1987

AA-KASH III
1983
Pastel on Paper
20.75x16.75in.



AA-KASH IV
1981
Pastel on Paper
20.75x16.75in.



AA-KASH V
1984
Pastel on Paper
20.75x16.75in.



AA-KASH VI
1986
Pastel on Paper
20.75x16.75in.



AA-KASH VII
1987
Pastel on Paper
20.75x16.75in.



IC: It might be a simple question but what is the feeling of seeing us, very young, getting into such a project and getting into this exhibition for Natvar?

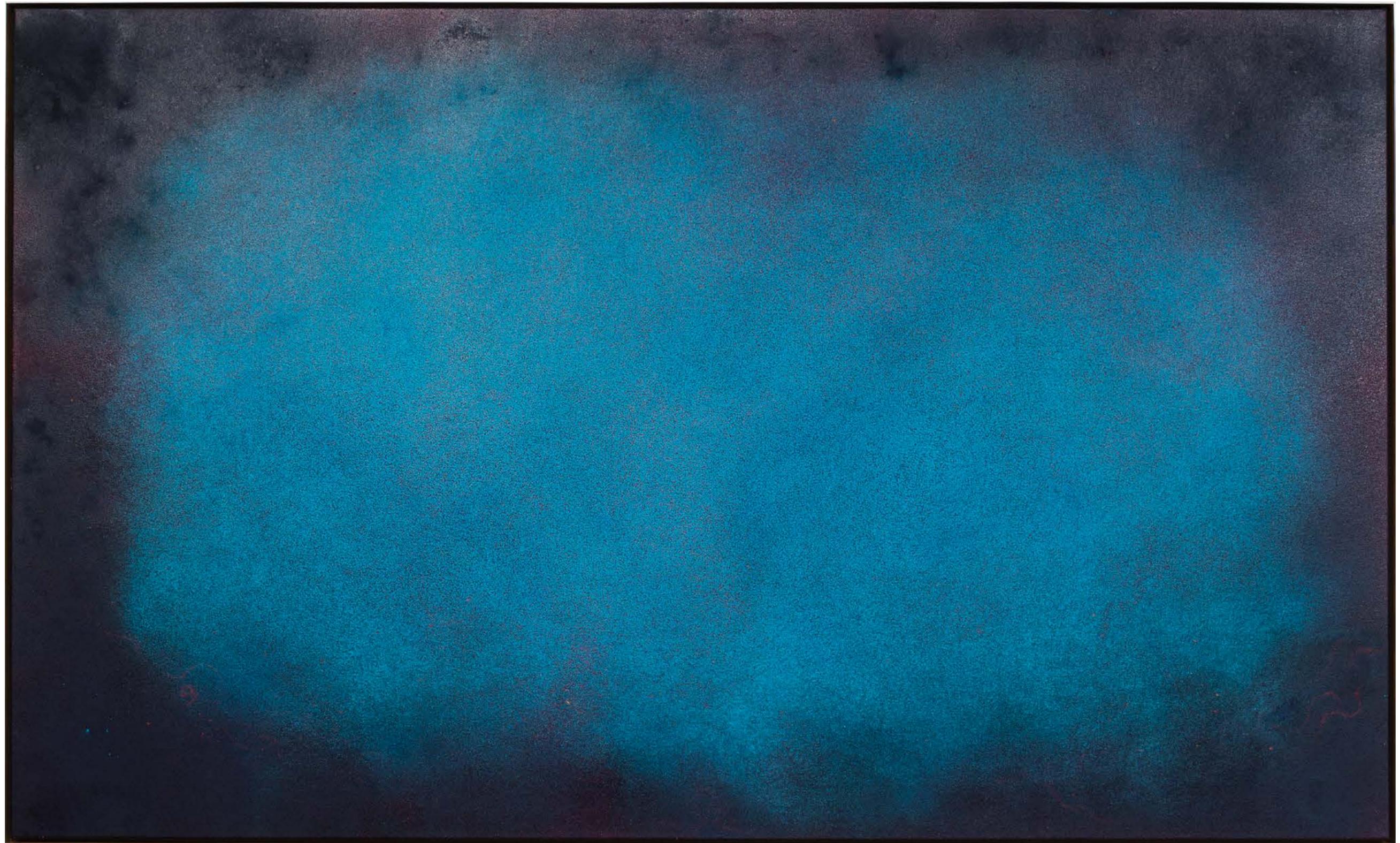
IS: That doesn't surprise me at all - you know because perception of art can really come at any age for any artist. I'm really not surprised because I came from an un-art world background. In college while I had taken my courses for a doctorate I had taken only one course in art and it wasn't in art, it was in aesthetics. No slide was shown, it was only aesthetic theory - and here I encountered this work by Franz Kline and it changed my life, literally. Then when I saw de Kooning and Rothko it all built up even more. So I don't think age is very much a consideration.

AM: Maybe it is sort of integral in its own way though, because as you described it the work is fresh.

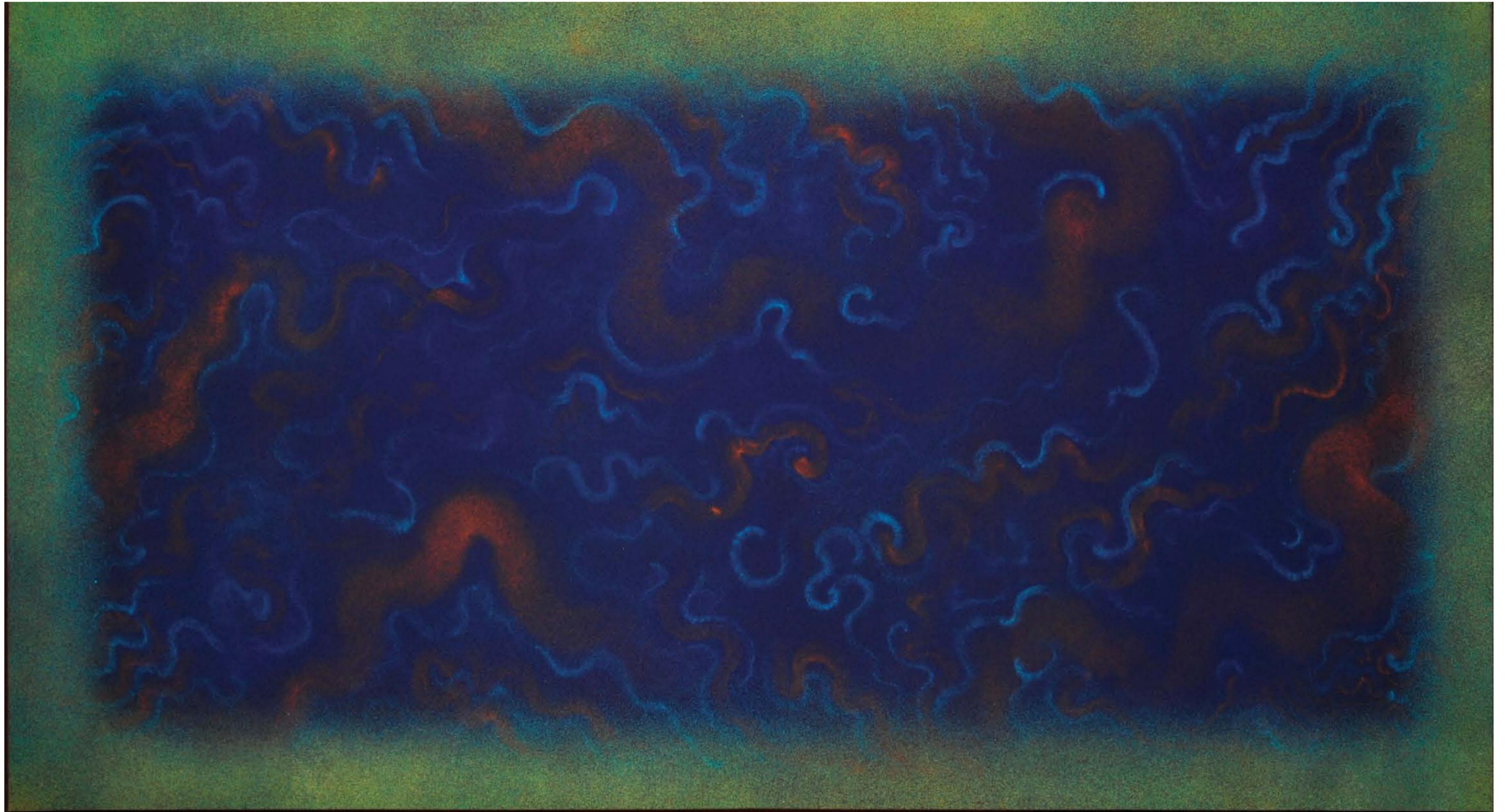
IC: Timeless.

AM: Yea, and maybe it requires a younger generation to rebirth it.

IS: It could, it could because now abstract expressionism is sort of out of fashion literally, will it come back, of course.



PR-KRITEE III
1987
Pure Pigment, Oil & Acrylic on Canvas
55x91in.



KALINGAA
2007 - 2008
Pure Pigment, Oil & Acrylic on Canvas
57x108in.



HEMANTAA
2009 - 2010
Pure Pigment, Oil & Acrylic on Canvas
54x108in.

Biography

Natvar Bhavsar

Born 1934

SOLO EXHIBITIONS:

2015

Five Decades, Cara Gallery - NY

2014

White Symphonies and Red Flowers, Wichita Art Museum - Wichita, KS

Color Immersion, Baker Sponder - Boca Raton, FL

2013

Color Immersion, Sponder Gallery - Miami, FL

Energy of Color, Freedman Art - New York, NY

2012

Resonance of Color, Contessa Gallery - Cleveland, OH

2010

RANG, Sundaram Tagore Gallery - Hong Kong, CN

2009

RANG, Sundaram Tagore Gallery - Beverly Hills, CA

2008

RANG, Sundaram Tagore Gallery - New York, NY

2007

The Dimensions of Color, Jane Voorhees Zimmerli Art Museum - New Brunswick, NJ

2006

Poetics of Color, Sundaram Tagore Gallery - New York, NY

2005

Small Scale Paintings, Sundaram Tagore Gallery - New York, NY Mira Godard Gallery - Toronto, CA

2004

Small Scale Paintings, Sundaram Tagore Gallery - New York, NY

2003-2004

ACP Viviane Ehrli Gallery - Zurich, CH Art-Garage - Zug, CH

2003

Sundaram Tagore Gallery - New York, NY

2002

Sundaram Tagore Gallery - New York, NY

2001

Sundaram Tagore Gallery - New York, NY

2000

Art-Garage - Zug, CH

World Economic Forum, Annual Meeting 2000 - Davos, CH

1999

Art Cologne, International Art Fair, ACP Viviane Ehrli Galerie - Cologne, DE

1998

Art Cologne, International Art Fair, ACP Viviane Ehrli Galerie - Cologne, DE

1997

Paintings, ACP Viviane Ehrli Galerie - Zurich, CH

1996

Pastels and Paintings on Paper, Bose-Pacia Modern Gallery - New York, NY

1992

Paintings, Gloria Luria Gallery - Bay Harbor, FL

1988

Pastels - Paintings on Paper, Pundole Art Gallery - Bombay, IN

Pastels - Paintings on Paper, Contemporary Art Gallery - Ahmedabad, IN

1985

Pembroke Gallery - Houston, TX

Twenty Years of Work on Paper, The Wichita Art Museum, Wichita, KS

1984

Getler/Pall/Saper Gallery - New York, NY

1979

Color Experiences, The Wichita Art Museum - Wichita, KS

1978

Max Hutchinson Gallery - New York, NY Max Hutchinson Gallery - Houston, TX Gloria Luria Gallery - Miami, FL

1977

Max Hutchinson Gallery - New York, NY Kingpitcher Gallery - Pittsburgh, PA

1974

Kenmore Gallery - Philadelphia, PA

Max Hutchinson Gallery - New York, NY

1972
Max Hutchinson Gallery - New York, NY Gallery A - Sydney, AU

1971
Max Hutchinson Gallery - New York, NY

1970
Max Hutchinson Gallery - New York, NY Gallery A - Sydney, AU
Gallery Chemould - Bombay, IN

GROUP EXHIBITIONS:

2014
Hoerle-Guggenheim Gallery - New York, NY

2012
Abstract Expressionism, National Art Gallery - Canberra, AU

2011
Facing East, Sundaram Tagore Gallery - New York, NY
Forces of Nature, Sundaram Tagore Gallery - Beverly Hills, CA

2010
RASA Contemporary Asian Art, Sundaram Tagore Gallery - Hong Kong, CN
Mirrors of Continuous Change, Seonhwa Art and Culture Foundation Gala - Seoul, KR
75 Years of Collecting American Art, Wichita Art Museum - Wichita, KS

2009
Infinitum, Museo Fortuny, Fondazione Musei Civici di Venezia - Venice, IT
Gallery A, Campbelltown Arts Center - New South Wales, AU
The Third Mind, Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum - New York, NY
Late 20th Century Abstraction from the Collection, Boca Raton Museum of Art - Boca Raton, FL

2008
Dimensions of Color, Sundaram Tagore Gallery - Beverly Hills, CA
In Your Mind's Eye, Sundaram Tagore Gallery - New York, NY
East/West: Grand Opening Group Show, Sundaram Tagore Gallery - Hong Kong, CN
Drishti: Pan-Asian Group Show, Sundaram Tagore Gallery - New York, NY
Midnight Full of Stars, Visual Arts Center of New Jersey - Summit, NJ

2007
Colors, Sundaram Tagore Gallery - New York, NY
Inner Journey, Sundaram Tagore Gallery - New York, NY
Back to the Future Contemporary American Art from the Collection, Mead Art Museum - Amherst, MA

2006
Next Level, Sundaram Tagore Gallery - New York, NY
East/West, Sundaram Tagore Gallery - New York, NY

2005
Sundaram Tagore Gallery - New York, NY

2004
Time and Material, Sundaram Tagore Gallery - New York, NY

2003
Continuous Connection, Sundaram Tagore Gallery - New York, NY
Seeing Red, Hunter College Times Square Gallery - New York, NY
Sundaram Tagore Gallery - New York, NY

2002
India: Contemporary Art from Northeastern Private Collections, Jane Voorhees Zimmerli Art Museum, Rutgers University - New Brunswick, NJ
Compass Points, Sundaram Tagore Gallery - New York, NY

2001
The Inner World, Sundaram Tagore Gallery - New York, NY
Art Cologne, International Art Fair - Cologne, DE

1998
3 Immerzeit 3, ACP Viviane Ehrli Galerie - Zurich, CH

1997
Abstraction INDEX, Condeso/Lawler Gallery - New York, NY

1995
La Raccolta D'Arte Contemporanea, Le Nuove Donazioni, Museo Civico - Taverna, IT

1991
Nel Piu' Ampio Cerchio, Angolazioni E Prospettive Della Visione Nell'Arte Contemporanea, Centro Museografico - Taverna, IT

1981
Fifth Triennial - New Delhi, IN

1979
Works on Paper, U.S.A., Rockland Center for the Arts - West Nyack, NY

1978
Painting and Sculpture Today, Indianapolis Museum of Art - Indianapolis, IND

1974
Ruth S. Schaffner Gallery - Los Angeles, CA
Eight from New York, Reed College - Portland, OR

1973
Works on Paper, Max Hutchinson Gallery - New York, NY
American Academy of Arts and Letters Art Gallery - New York, NY

1971

New York Survey, Purdue University - Lafayette, IN

Beaux Arts, Columbus Gallery of Fine Arts - Columbus, OH

Aspects of Current Painting, University of Rochester - Rochester, NY

1970

Some New York Painting, Reese Paley Gallery - San Francisco, CA

Selections by Guest Curator, School of Visual Arts Art Gallery - New York, NY

Beautiful Painting and Sculpture, Jewish Museum - New York, NY

Whitney Annual, Whitney Museum of American Art - New York, NY

Painting and Sculpture Today, Indianapolis Museum of Art - Indianapolis, IND

Highlights of the Season, Larry Aldrich Museum of Art - Ridgefield, CT

Recent Acquisitions, Whitney Museum of American Art - New York, NY

1969

Concept, Vassar College of Art Gallery - Poughkeepsie, NY

1966

Contemporary Indian Arts, American Society for Eastern Arts, Lincoln Center - New York, NY

Fifteenth Biennial Print Exhibition, Brooklyn Museum - New York, NY

1964

Regional Painting and Sculpture, Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Art - Philadelphia, PA

1961

National Art Exhibition - Amritsar, IN

COLLECTIONS:

Boston Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, MA

Whitney Museum of American Art, NY

Metropolitan Museum of Art, NY

Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, NY

Wichita Art Museum, Wichita, KS

UBS Art Collection, Zurich, CH

Alliance Bernstein LP, NY

American Express Company, New York, NY

Boca Raton Museum of Art, Boca Raton, FL

Exxon Office Systems Co, NY

Freeport-McMoRan Inc., Phoenix, Arizona

Goldman Sachs, NY

JPMorgan Chase & Co.

National Gallery of Australia, Canberra, Australia

Massachusetts Institute of Technology, Cambridge, MA

Mead Art Museum, Amherst College, Amherst, MA

Museum of Contemporary Art, Sydney University, Sydney, Australia

Ulrich Museum of Art, Wichita State University, Wichita, KS

Volvo Corporation of America, NJ & NY

Philadelphia Museum of Art, Philadelphia, PA

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C A R A G A L L E R Y

508

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