

THE ART ROUTE GALLERY

presents

songs of the earth

Rediscovering Traditional Narratives

In Collaboration with

THE GONDWANA ART PROJECT

Curated by

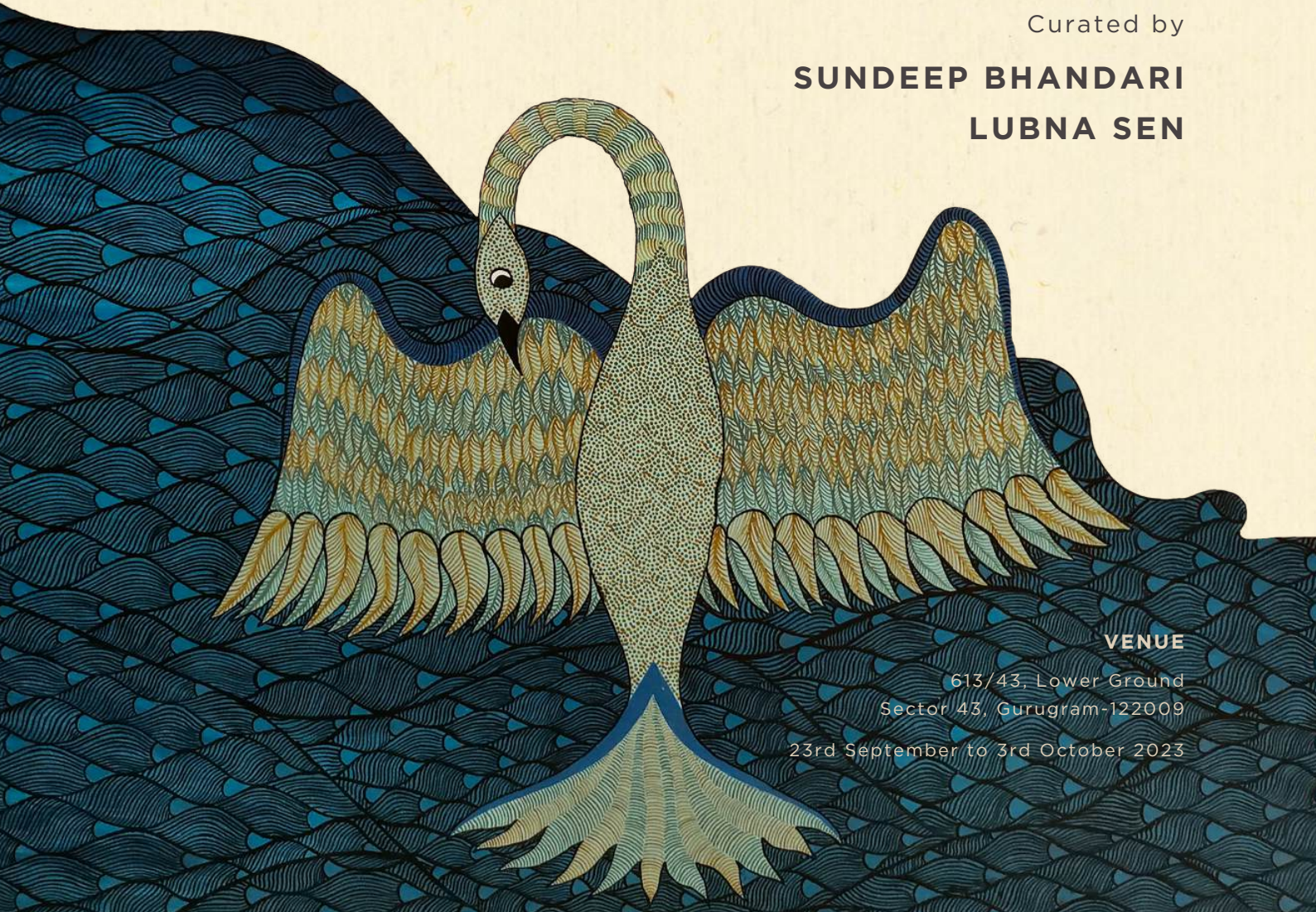
SUNDEEP BHANDARI

LUBNA SEN

VENUE

613/43, Lower Ground
Sector 43, Gurugram-122009

23rd September to 3rd October 2023



songs of the earth

Rediscovering Traditional Narratives

ARTISTS

Anita Balu Mhase
Anita Shyam
Chandrakali Pusham
Geeta Bhariya
Jyoti Uikey
Rahul Singh Shyam
Rajesh Mor
Ram Bai Tekam
Ramesh Singh Vyam
Santoshi Shyam
Sita Meda
Suresh Dhurve

CURATORS

Sundeep Bhandari
Lubna Sen

ASSISTANT CURATOR

Pratima Pandey

ORGANISED BY

The Art Route Gallery

IN COLLABORATION WITH

The Gondwana Art Project

VENUE

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23rd September to 3rd October 2023

the
artroute



CRAFT AND
COMMUNITY
DEVELOPMENT
FOUNDATION

FOREWARD

The curatorial vision of “Songs of the Earth - Rediscovering Traditional Narratives” aligns seamlessly with our mission at The Art Route Gallery. It has always been our endeavour to promote under-represented art forms and artists to ensure that they receive the recognition they merit. Through our various initiatives we have been consistently striving to increase public engagement and foster deeper appreciation and patronage of deserving artists and art forms.

The exhibition “Songs of the Earth” is in collaboration with The Gondwana Art Project, a foundation committed to uplifting tribal artisans from the Gondwana Region in Central India. The organisation promotes the rich traditional art forms of Gond, Bhil, Warli, Sohrai, Kohvar, and Baiga. The artisans are encouraged to work with contemporary designers to explore innovative compositions in their art. The resulting artworks are a testament to the convergence of tradition and innovation, a visual symphony that reflects the spirit of our times.

“Songs of the Earth” is firstly a celebration of the bond between man and nature. Secondly, it is also a tribute to the resilience of our traditional artists. By building a bridge between the past and the present, the show attempts to revisit the traditional narratives through contemporary eyes.

The Art Route Gallery is excited to host this unique exhibition which will encourage a dialogue between the artists, the viewers, and the larger art community; fostering a deeper understanding of India’s diverse cultural tapestry.



LUBNA SEN
Organiser & Co-Curator
Director, The Art Route Gallery

CURATORIAL NOTE

Songs of the Earth is a selection of Bhil, Gond and Warli paintings from the Gondwana Art Project, that provide a refreshing array of the modern and contemporary, yet based on traditions, folklore and customs of the tribal communities from central India. These tribal art practices have thrived through their expression of lifestyle, lore and culture, over generations. There is intrigue in the depiction of the folklores and life forms in the most simplistic yet artistic styles using intricate design, patterns, lines, dots, motifs and colour. The artists thread stories from their world into nuanced thoughts of modernity and progressiveness, keeping the authenticity of the art forms intact.

These rich visual traditions and legacies that are bequeathed from one generation to the next, carry the very flavour of our earth more so than any other form. Capturing the homegrown beliefs and values of traditional communities, it is tribal and folk-art that rhythmically beat as the heart of our land, as visual stories that not only form the foundation of India's cultural heritage but continue to contribute diverse perspectives as they depict their evolving experiences.

With harmony of simplicity and ingenuity, the indigenous stories of the tribal communities woven into a visual representation of the more globalised modern styles, the artists from the Gondwana Art Project demonstrate how traditional craft can be uplifted through modern composition and styles, and spurs within us the realisation that what existed in the past doesn't end with the past but can evolve and thrive with the present, challenging the boundaries that exist between indigenous and modern art.

SUNDEEP BHANDARI

Co-Curator

Founder, CCDF & The Gondwana Art Project

THE GONDWANA ART PROJECT

The Gondwana Art Project is an initiative of Craft and Community Development Foundation (CCDF), a not for profit entity set up with the aim to support and fund projects that enhance livelihood for communities focused on the art and crafts sector. The Foundation takes up projects for skilling artisans by introducing new concepts and design, keeping intact the authenticity of their art.

The Gondwana Art Project is an ongoing effort focused on tribal artisans from the Gondwana Region in central India, practicing Gond, Bhil, Warli, Sohrai & Kohvar art. The project was initiated considering the cultural importance and significance of the tribal art forms being practiced across India and despite the skill and the talent of the artists from tribal communities, there appeared to be a fatigue factor in the markets. People felt most of the tribal art showcased at various art fairs, galleries, mela's or bazaar's was very similar to what they have been seeing over the years. The tribal artists seemed to be stuck in time and were afraid to try anything new or experiment with their art form. Most Gond artists were trying to create art similar to that of the great master Gond artist Jangarh Singh Shyam, leading to many artists creating similar art. The value of tribal art was looked down upon and it was relegated to cheap art that one would buy at a mela or a bazaar.

The Gondwana Art Project was conceived with the objective of experimenting with the tribal art forms by skilling talented artists on new design concepts and colour palette, introducing new methods and techniques and to create a platform for these tribal artists to present their work and their perspectives demonstrating their creativity and craftsmanship, and showcase the artworks to a global audience, opening new markets for these traditional art forms.

The artists engaged in The Gondwana Art Project create artworks, under guidance and mentoring by designers, providing them a regular stable livelihood and allowing them freedom to express. The project aims to ensure that the artworks are unique pieces of tribal art incorporating design elements keeping in mind a wide range of global audiences.

JYOTI UIKEY



The Swan | Acrylic on Canvas | 36 X 48 Inches | 2020 | Gond

"The artist depicts a scene of a hillock near a water body with a couple of swans searching for their meal in the water. The masterful brushwork combined with a harmonious color palette and innovative design elements, imparts a distinctly modern flair to this remarkable artwork."

SANTOSHI SHYAM



Valley of Flowers | Acrylic on Canvas | 36 X 48 Inches | 2021 | Gond

"Gond people believe that spirits reside within various facets of nature, from towering hills to the boundless sky and ancient trees. This artwork expresses the Gond tribe's deep reverence and adoration for the sacred essence inherent in the natural world."

SANTOSHI SHYAM



Enchanted Doe | Acrylic on Canvas | 36 X 48 Inches | 2020 | Gond

"This artwork portrays a serene doe wandering through a peaceful woodland beneath a star-studded night sky. The artist skillfully communicates the doe's enchantment with the celestial beauty through its unique use of colors and patterns. This portrayal challenges stereotypes, revealing a sense of calm and serenity uncommonly associated with these creatures."

SANTOSHI SHYAM



Butterflies in the Garden | Acrylic on Canvas | 36 X 48 Inches | 2023 | Gond

"Butterflies in the Garden is a beautiful depiction of a garden scene with wild colorful flowers and butterflies floating in the air. The artist has used Gond motifs and has created her own unique style."

SITA MEDA



Vibrations | Acrylic on Canvas | 36 X 48 Inches | 2022 | Bhil

"This is a stylized modern and contemporary work demonstrating the immense possibilities of using the pointillism technique that the Bhils have used in their art since centuries."

RAMESH SINGH VYAM



Underwater Creatures | Acrylic on Canvas | 36 X 48 Inches | 2021 | Gond

"With a rich palette of colors, this artwork brings to life the diverse hues found in underwater realms. The infusion of unique Gond motifs and meticulous detailing infuses a contemporary vibrancy into this mesmerizing artwork."

RAMESH SINGH VYAM



Fantasy I | Acrylic on Canvas | 32 X 43 Inches | 2022 | Gond

"This diptych work exemplifies the boundless versatility of Gond art, showcasing its capacity to seamlessly blend with the realm of modern contemporary expression."

RAMESH SINGH VYAM



Fantasy II | Acrylic on Canvas | 32 X 43 Inches | 2022 | Gond

"This diptych work exemplifies the boundless versatility of Gond art, showcasing its capacity to seamlessly blend with the realm of modern contemporary expression."

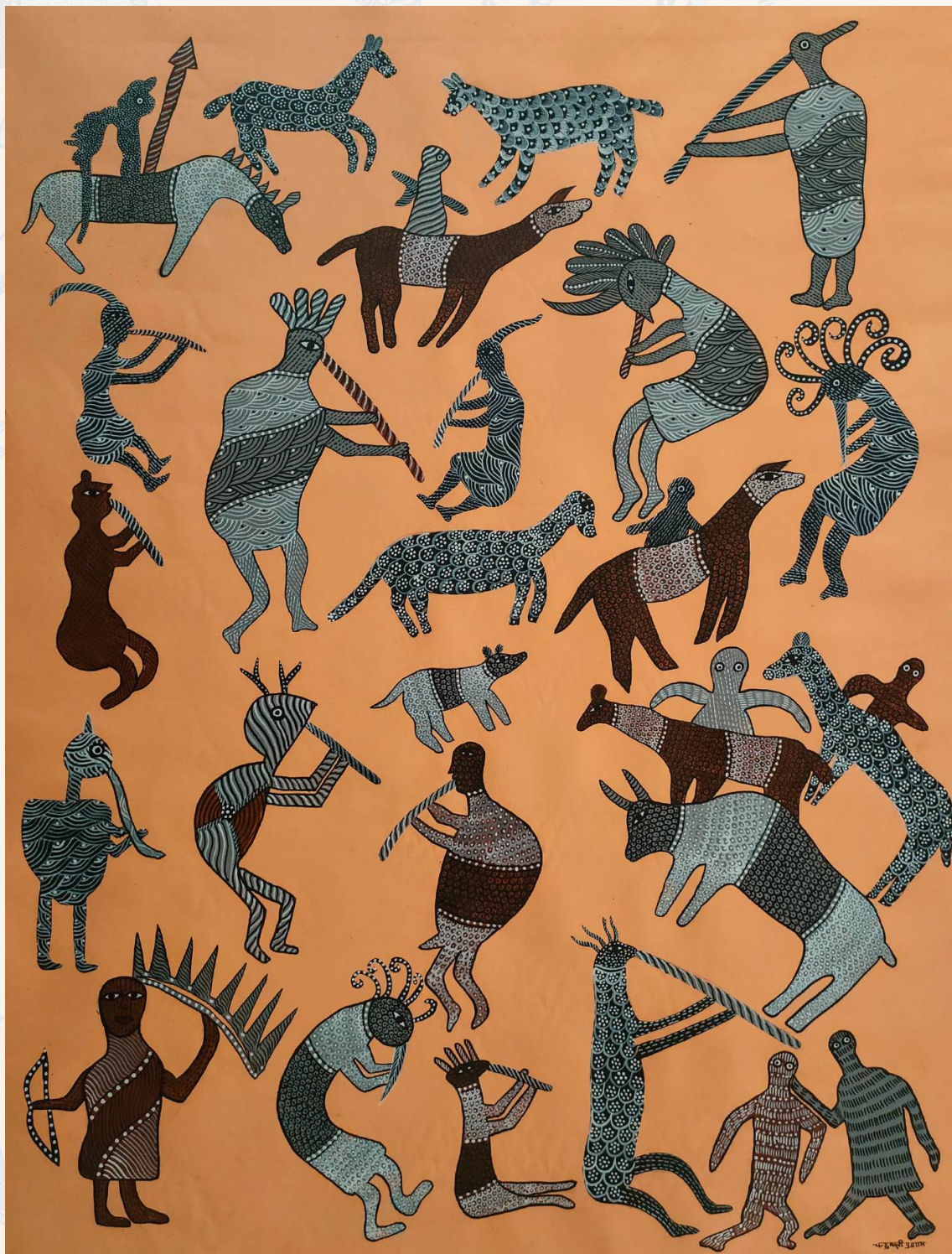
CHANDRAKALI PUSHAM



Birds of Paradise | Acrylic on Canvas | 36 X 48 Inches | 2022 | Gond

The artist explores the awe-inspiring connection between birds and the boundless beauty of the natural world. Through these paintings, she captures the essence of these magnificent creatures as they revel in the splendor of our planet, traversing continents and oceans to reach the most exquisite destinations.

CHANDRAKALI PUSHAM



Tribal Mela | Acrylic on Canvas | 36 X 48 Inches | 2022 | Gond

"Tribal Mela is full of people in different costumes and their cattle and animals decked up. Inspired from the tribal festivities, she has painted this artwork where the characters come to life as they engage in playing melodious tunes, play with toys, and take part in games."

CHANDRAKALI PUSHAM



Illusions | Acrylic on Canvas | 72 X 48 Inches | 2023 | Gond

"Illusions is an abstract artwork by Chandrakali Pusham, depicting various events unfolding simultaneously in the universe around her. The artwork conveys the complex interplay of phenomena and emotions, each layer of paint representing a facet of this multifaceted existence."

RAMESH SINGH VYAM



The Dancing Deer | Acrylic on Canvas | 48 X 36 Inches | 2020 | Gond

"Gond art, known for vivid colors and expressive storytelling, shines in this artwork. Two dancing deer, painted with unconventional blue hues, stand out against the backdrop's natural shades, giving the artwork a whimsical touch. The dynamic use of colors and patterns breathes life into the painting, evoking a genuine sense of movement."

ANITA SHYAM



Fish and Crab | Acrylic on Canvas | 48 X 36 Inches | 2019 | Gond

"This Gond artwork portrays a dynamic scene where a fish and a crab coexist. The crab is depicted outside its aquatic realm, perhaps on the sandy shores, highlighting its remarkable ability to inhabit both land and sea. Meanwhile, the fish is captured in mid-air, seemingly leaping out of the water's embrace, a moment frozen in time. The fish's fins are adorned with a myriad of colors and patterns, accentuating their vibrant movement."

ANITA BALU MHASE



Belvat Kanya | Acrylic on Canvas | 48 X 36 Inches | 2019 | Warli

"A princess named Bael Kanya develops affection for a wandering prince. One night in the wilderness, the girl attempts to bring the thirsty prince some water but instead gets trapped inside a Bael fruit. A watchful bird aids the oblivious prince, carrying him to his lost love. Using the sword, he releases the princess. Together they fly home, love setting them free."

SANTOSHI SHYAM



Harmony | Acrylic on Canvas | 48 X 36 Inches | 2020 | Gond

"This artwork depicts the blissful union of the old souls of deer. A lovely resonance is produced throughout the wide expanse of the universe by their pleased feelings as they lie contentedly in the lap of nature. The antlers also add a sense of oneness to the artwork. The colours throughout the piece bring out a sense of tranquility and joy."

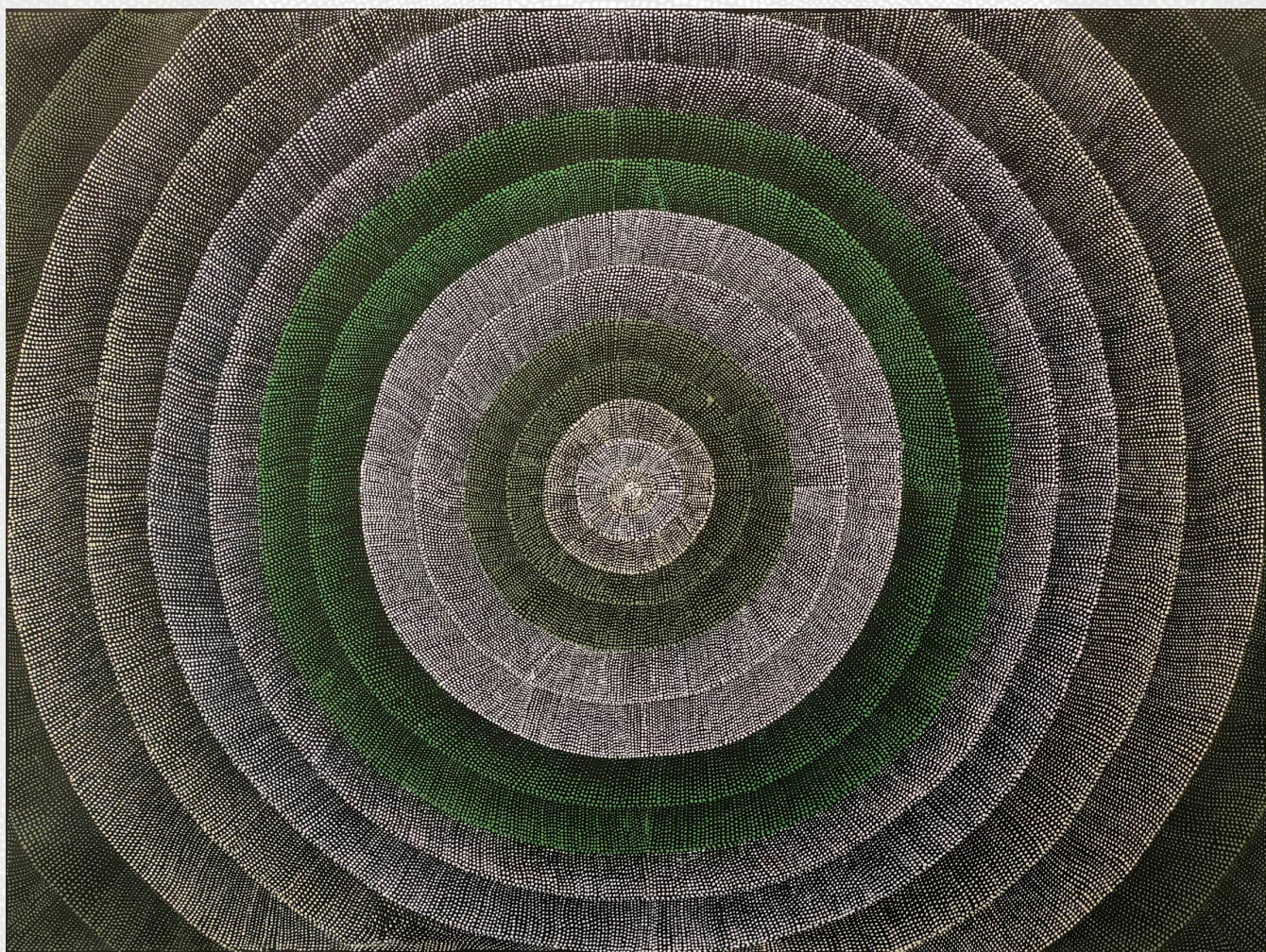
RAJESH MOR



Warli Dancing | Acrylic on Indigo dyed cloth | 54 X 40 Inches | 2020 | Warli

"This unique Warli artwork is done on Indigo dyed cloth. The artist has depicted the village celebrations and the different dances that are done during festivals. The artist has shown the villagers dancing in the sun enjoying themselves."

GEETA BHARIYA



Core | Acrylic on Canvas | 48 X 36 Inches | 2021 | Bhil

"The painting illustrates the core of the universe as imagined by the artist. It is done in a modern color palette to create a Bhil painting in contemporary style."

SITA MEDA



Warrior | Acrylic on Canvas | 50 X 38 Inches | 2021 | Bhil

"This Bhil artwork illustrates a warrior with his family, perhaps ready to go out for a hunt or for a battle. The use of dots for Bhil artwork is similar to the aboriginal art practices in Australia."

RAHUL SINGH SHYAM



Bull Fight | Acrylic on Canvas | 48 X 36 Inches | 2022 | Gond

"The artwork depicts a Bullfight under the radiant glow of a full moon. Among the Gonds, there exists a dedicated celebration known as 'Pola' to honor these Bulls. These majestic creatures hold a special place of reverence within the community, serving as both a source of sustenance and a powerful symbol of resilience and vigor."

RAMBAI



Elephant | Acrylic on Canvas | 48 X 36 Inches | 2020 | Gond

"This modern and contemporary artwork by Rambai has been done in pastel colors using fine dots and lines technique. The Elephant as a subject is often used by the Gond artists in their paintings."

JYOTI UIKEY



Turtles | Acrylic on Paper | 19 X 13 Inches | 2021 | Gond

"Known for their wisdom, patience and strength, Turtles are symbols of good luck, longevity and protection. Here, the artist has painted a group of turtles perhaps swimming in the water together."

SURESH DHURVE



Octopus | Acrylic on Paper | 19 X 13 Inches | 2021 | Gond

"The artist's apparent exposure to exotic creatures, facilitated by increased connectivity with the broader world, has birthed a truly remarkable creation. With an exquisite palette of colors and intricate patterns, the artist breathes life into the canvas, weaving a vivid narrative. Beyond the strokes and shades, the octopus emerges as more than just an organism; it possesses a distinct personality, a testament to the artist's unparalleled creativity."

SURESH DHURVE



Untitled | Acrylic on Paper | 13 X 19 Inches | 2022 | Gond

"The artist skillfully employs black and white canvas in his creative canvas. Amidst this gray scale palette, vibrant red blossoms emerge, captivating the viewer's gaze and leading them into the intricate depths of the artwork."

SURESH DHURVE



Owl III | Acrylic on Paper | 13 X 19 Inches | 2020 | Gond

"This painting is a translation of an owl in the Gond style. An owl, considered a wise, observant being with a whiff of mystery and superiority, has been expressed in this painting. The patterns, colours, stylised features and the stance accords all of its character traits."

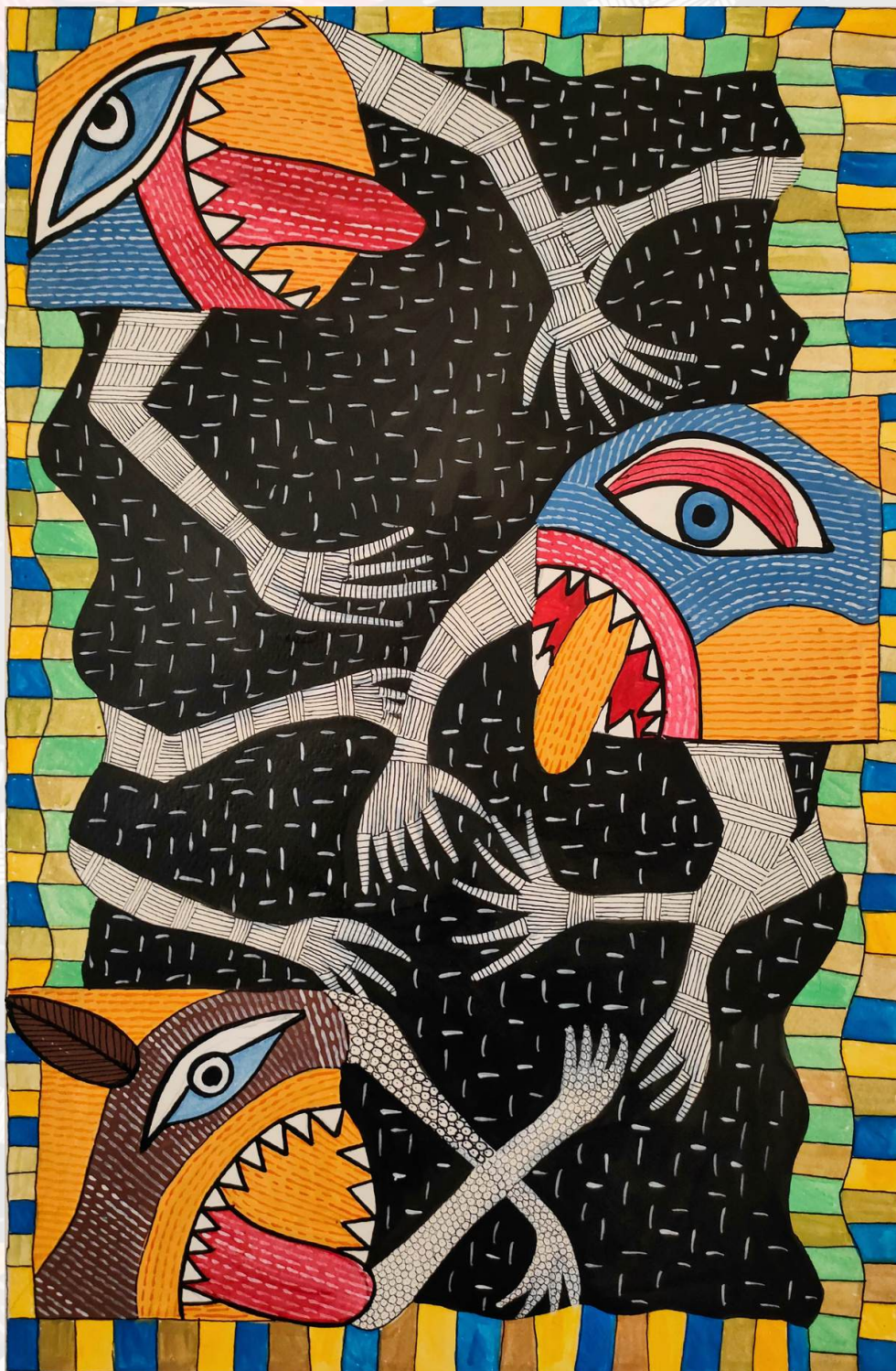
SURESH DHURVE



Earthlings | Acrylic on Paper | 14 X 20 Inches | 2021 | Gond

"This series is a depiction of different forms of life as imagined by the artist. The artworks demonstrate the versatility of the Gond art-form and its adaptation to modern styles."

SURESH DHURVE



Earthlings - II | Acrylic on Paper | 14 X 20 Inches | 2021 | Gond

"This series is a depiction of different forms of life as imagined by the artist. The artworks demonstrate the versatility of the Gond art-form and its adaptation to modern styles."

RAHUL SHYAM



Chakra | Acrylic on Paper | 15 X 22 Inches | 2020 | Gond

"The artist has depicted the cycle of life in this painting. Drawing inspiration from the beliefs of the tribal community, the artwork invites contemplation of the idea of rebirth, the transcendence of one existence into another."

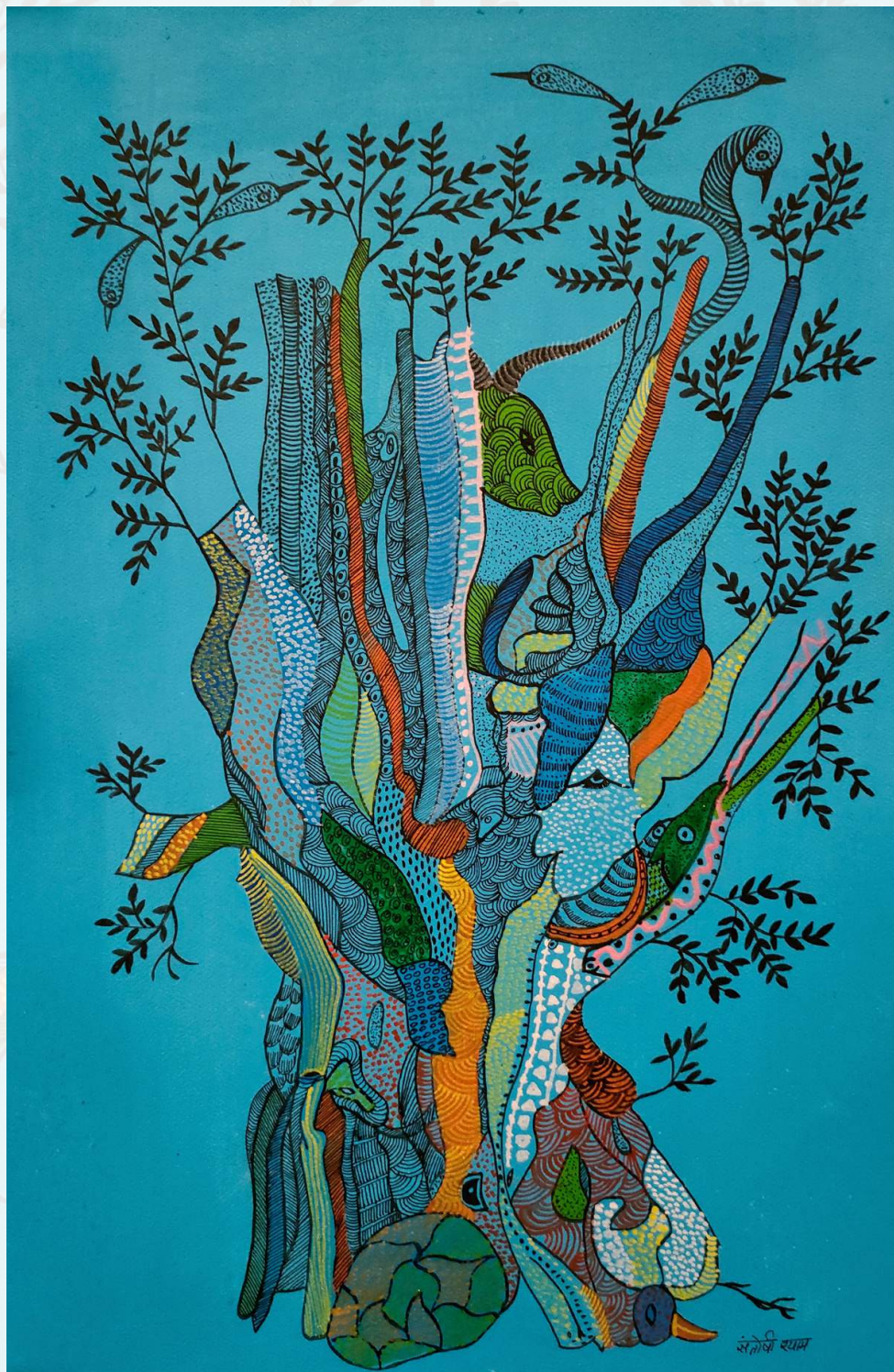
SANTOSHI SHYAM



Deer Herd | Acrylic on Paper | 13 X 19 Inches | 2022 | Gond

"The Gond tribe lives close to the jungles and often their art depicts jungle life. Here the artist has painted a Deer herd as one usually sees them together in a group."

SANTOSHI SHYAM



Jungle File III | Acrylic on Paper | 13 X 19 Inches | 2022 | Gond

"The Gond tribe lives close to the jungle and most of their art is inspired from the inhabitants of the jungle, its flora and fauna. This artwork is part of a series based on Jungle life rendered in a modern contemporary style."

SANTOSHI SHYAM



Jungle Stories II | Acrylic on Paper | 13 X 19 Inches | 2022 | Gond

"Inspired by childhood tales and the rich folklore of the Gond community, artist Santoshi Shyam presents a modern and contemporary series of paintings, celebrating the mystical allure of jungle stories. She brings to life the vibrant narratives and offers a captivating glimpse into the heart of the wilderness."

SANTOSHI SHYAM



Jungle Stories III | Acrylic on Paper | 13 X 19 Inches | 2022 | Gond

"Inspired by childhood tales and the rich folklore of the Gond community, artist Santoshi Shyam presents a modern and contemporary series of paintings, celebrating the mystical allure of jungle stories. She brings to life the vibrant narratives and offers a captivating glimpse into the heart of the wilderness."

SANTOSHI SHYAM



Jungle Stories IV | Acrylic on Paper | 13 X 19 Inches | 2022 | Gond

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SANTOSHI SHYAM



Jungle Stories V | Acrylic on Paper | 13 X 19 Inches | 2022 | Gond

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SANTOSHI SHYAM



Jungle Stories VII | Acrylic on Paper | 13 X 19 Inches | 2022 | Gond

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SANTOSHI SHYAM



Jungle Stories X | Acrylic on Paper | 13 X 19 Inches | 2022 | Gond

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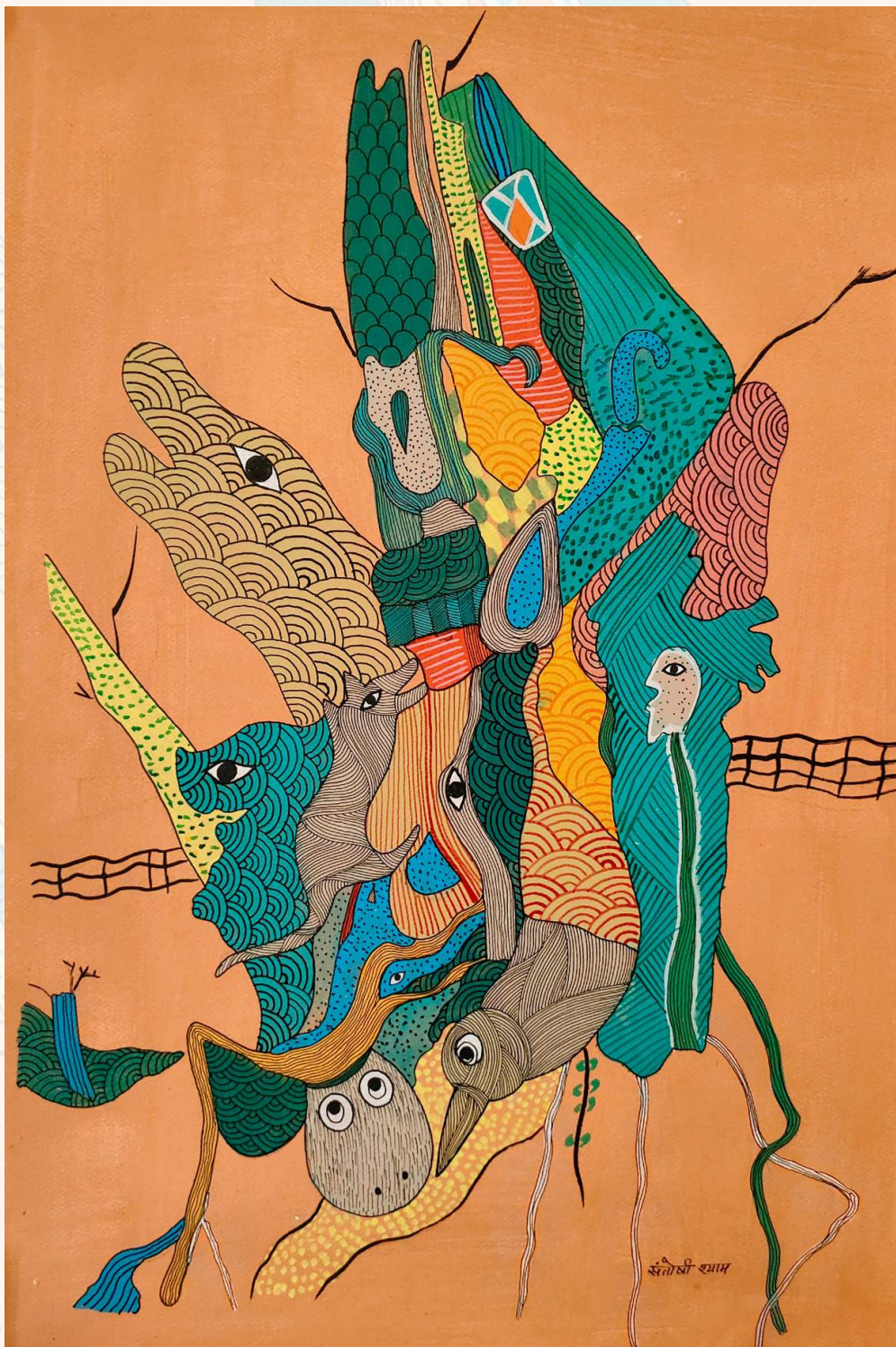
SANTOSHI SHYAM



Jungle Stories XII | Acrylic on Paper | 13 X 19 Inches | 2022 | Gond

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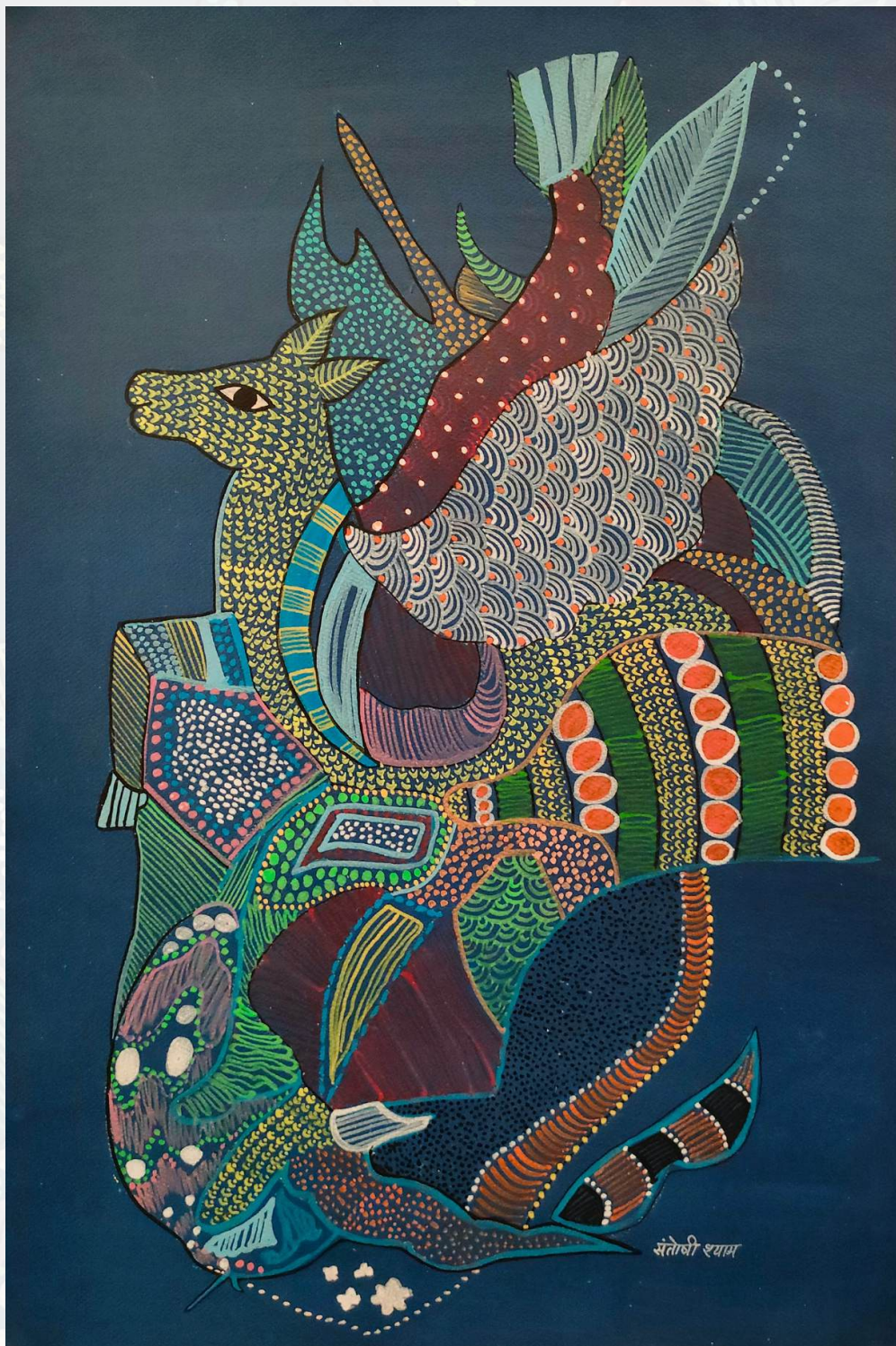
SANTOSHI SHYAM



Jungle Stories XIII | Acrylic on Paper | 13 X 19 Inches | 2022 | Gond

"Inspired by childhood tales and the rich folklore of the Gond community, artist Santoshi Shyam presents a modern and contemporary series of paintings, celebrating the mystical allure of jungle stories. She brings to life the vibrant narratives and offers a captivating glimpse into the heart of the wilderness."

SANTOSHI SHYAM



Jungle Stories XIV | Acrylic on Paper | 13 X 19 Inches | 2022 | Gond

"Inspired by childhood tales and the rich folklore of the Gond community, artist Santoshi Shyam presents a modern and contemporary series of paintings, celebrating the mystical allure of jungle stories. She brings to life the vibrant narratives and offers a captivating glimpse into the heart of the wilderness."

ARTISTS





ANITA BALU MHASE

Dahanu, Maharashtra

Warli artist Anita Balu Mhase from the village of Dahanu in Maharashtra has revolutionary thinking and ideas. She is a graphic designer by profession and a storyteller by default. She narrates humor in the most tribal form, reflecting every bit of her personality. Anita narrates topics over society and women empowerment. Her artworks reflect power, progress, and passion for storytelling, in a bold & humorous style. She is a revolutionary tribal artist with powerful thoughts trying to bring a positive change.



ANITA SHYAM

Bhopal, Madhya Pradesh

Hailing from a village near Bhopal in Madhya Pradesh, Gond Artist Anita Shyam has a zeal to impact society with her stories and culture. She aims to represent the folklores which are long forgotten, to let the new generation acknowledge them. Her way of storytelling is tribal, and she has great enthusiasm for representing them on the canvas. All indigenous stories and characters can be found in her artworks.



CHANDRAKALI PUSHAM

Madhya Pradesh

Gond artist Chandrakali Pusham started painting sometime in 2003 after her husband Uday Singh Pusham passed away. She picked up the art studying the images of the artworks done by her husband, as she had two children to look after and needed a regular source of income. Very soon her talent was recognised and Chandrakali was selected to do one of the outer walls of the Craft Museum, New Delhi and the artwork remains one of the most iconic Gond artworks on display at the Crafts Museum.



GEETA BHARIYA

Bhopal, Madhya Pradesh

Bhil artist Geeta Bhairya belongs to a very conservative tribe from a village of Bhopal in Madhya Pradesh. She holds herself with poise and pride, while her artworks are bold and bespoke. Her thought process represents the modern Indian woman. She is a tribal, who takes pride in her community, but holds her belief boldly against stereotypes. Her artworks are a delightful journey of a progressive and independent woman.



JYOTI UIKEY

Bhopal, Madhya Pradesh

Gond artist Jyoti Uikey is from Patangarh in Madhya Pradesh. She is a self-taught artist, who discovered her talent knowing the basic skills of her craft by watching other artists. Her paintings bring life to customs, traditions, and ancient stories of the Gond tribe. Her art reflects her understanding of nature and life which mostly features human and animal figures. She draws inspiration from life and is very joyful to display that in her paintings.



RAHUL SINGH SHYAM

Bhopal, Madhya Pradesh

Gond artist Rahul Shyam lives in Jabalpur in Madhya Pradesh. He was trained by his uncle Bhajji Shyam and he became an independent artist in 2014. Rahul's ability to create new designs depicting the traditional Gond folklores is his forte. He is a very versatile artist having a good sense of color and design.

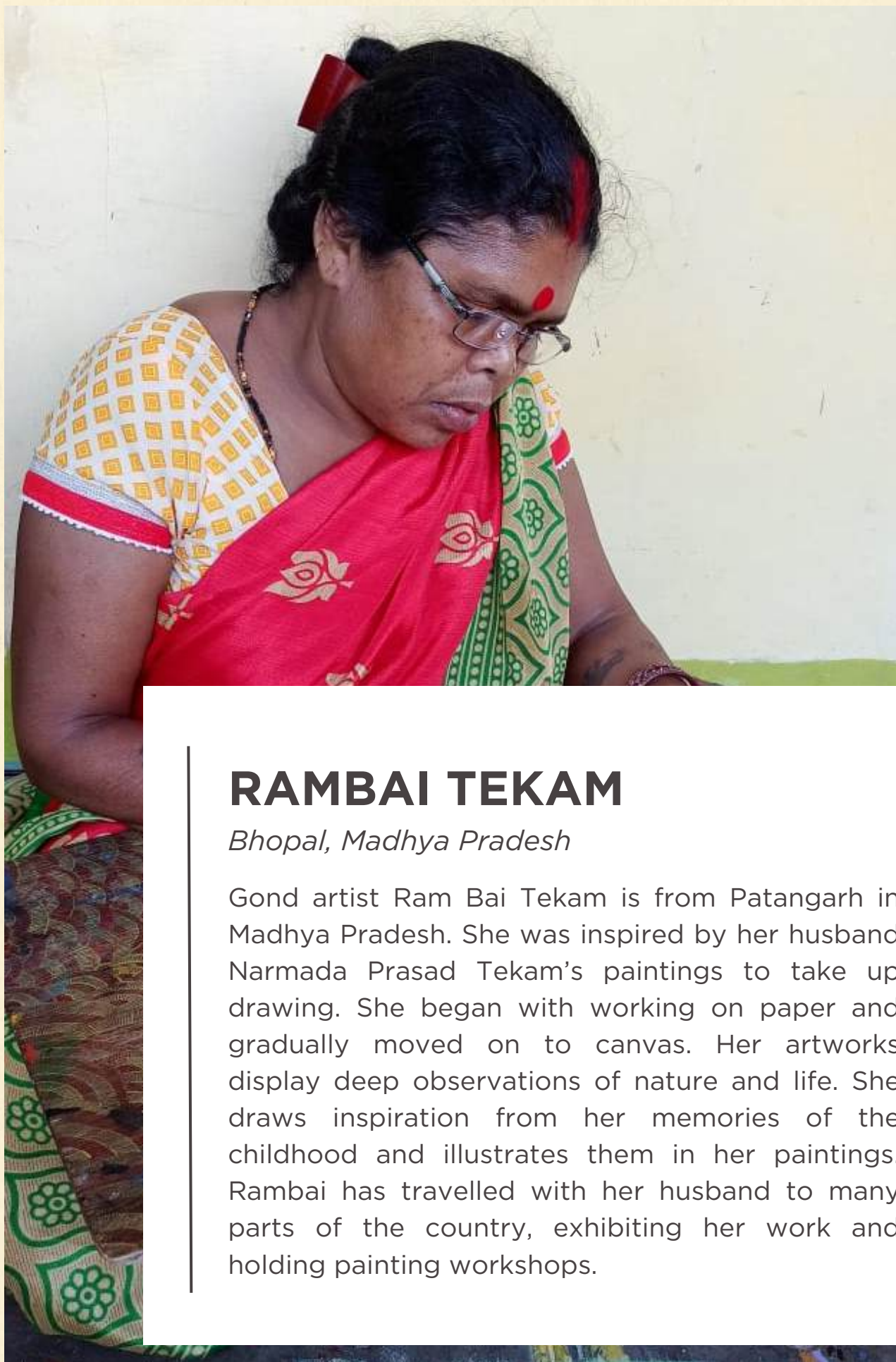




RAJESH MOR

Dahanu, Madhya Pradesh

Warli artist Rajesh Mor from the village of Dahanu in Maharashtra, a talented skillful artist in the tribal community, with the courage of experimentation, makes his art stand out. With his experience and skillset, he creates artworks of philosophical and traditional background, with new composition and color theories. His artworks reflect the society and self from tribal to modern life.



RAMBAI TEKAM

Bhopal, Madhya Pradesh

Gond artist Ram Bai Tekam is from Patangarh in Madhya Pradesh. She was inspired by her husband Narmada Prasad Tekam's paintings to take up drawing. She began with working on paper and gradually moved on to canvas. Her artworks display deep observations of nature and life. She draws inspiration from her memories of the childhood and illustrates them in her paintings. Rambai has travelled with her husband to many parts of the country, exhibiting her work and holding painting workshops.



RAMESH SINGH VYAM

Bhopal, Madhya Pradesh

Gond artist Ramesh Singh Vyam is from Bhopal in Madhya Pradesh. His art reflects the simplicity and distinctive quality of tribal art. His artworks are full of vivid colors and motifs depicting the expressive emotions of the painting. His subjects are mostly inspired by animal figures and folktales of Gond Community.





SANTOSHI SHYAM

Bhopal, Madhya Pradesh

Gond artist Santoshi Shyam is from Patangarh in Madhya Pradesh. She started drawing at the age of six when she was inspired by her parents, Narmada Tekam and Rambai. Her paintings reflect her fascination with the cultures and rituals of the Gond tribe. She draws inspiration by observing the environment. The main motif in her work is nature in all its aspects.





SITA MEDA

Jhabua, Madhya Pradesh

Bhil artist Sita Meda is from Jhabua in Madhya Pradesh. she was inspired by her family to take up painting where she began working on various tribal concepts. Her artworks display a sacred relationship of dots and shapes in bold colours. Her favourite themes revolve around nature and life. Sita Meda has travelled to many parts of the country, exhibiting her artworks.





SURESH DHURVE

Dindori, Madhya Pradesh

Gond artist Suresh Kumar Dhurve belongs to the village of Dindori in Madhya Pradesh. He has assisted and worked with Master Gond Artist Jangarh Singh Shyam in Bhopal during his early days. He has a remarkable distinctive style of making patterns in his paintings. His artworks are based on mythological and tribal stories that are vibrant and alive with colors and composition.



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