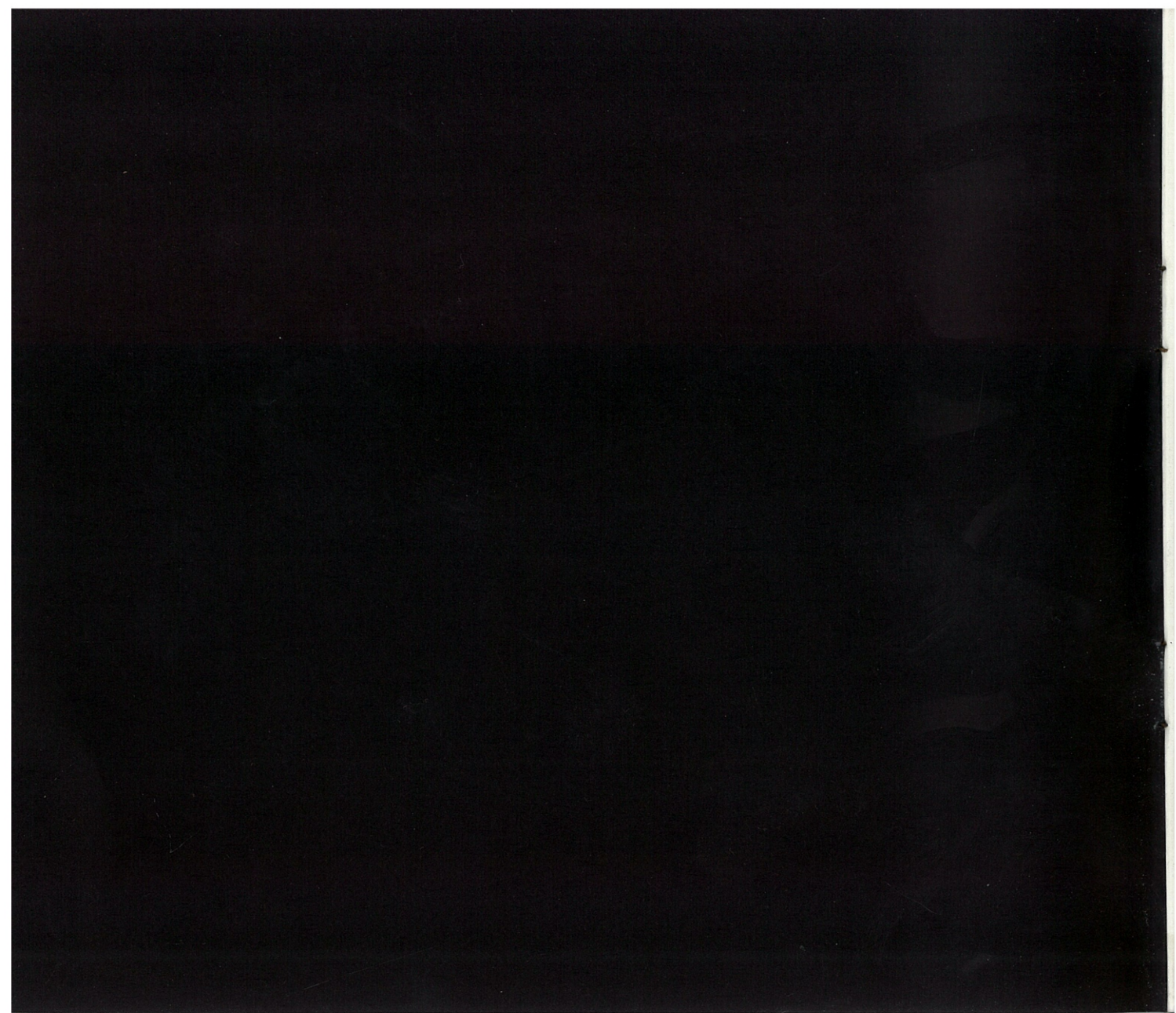


vanita gupta



vanita gupta

drawings



7 oct - 23 oct 2004



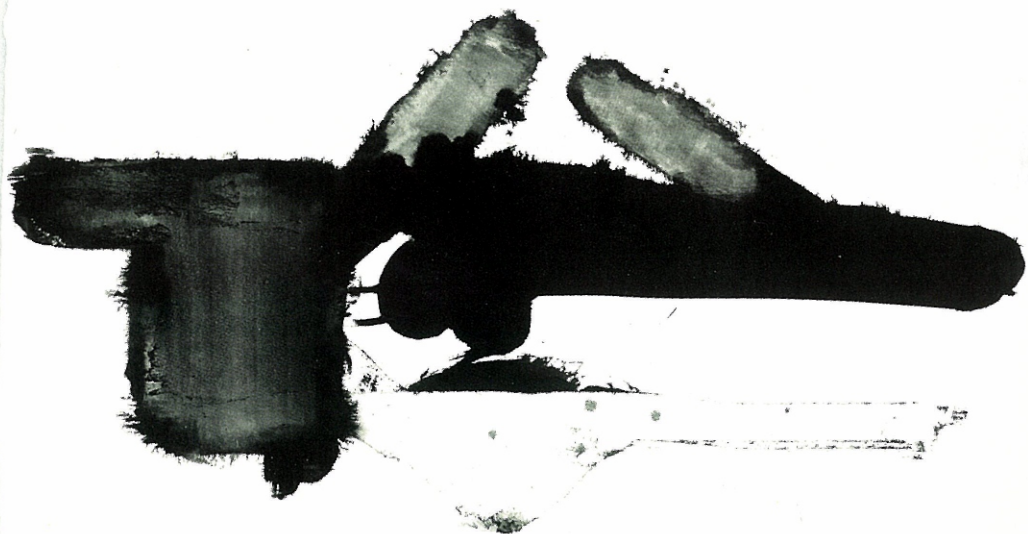
pundole art gallery

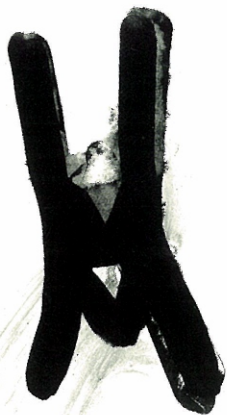
369 dr. dadabhai naoroji road , mumbai 400 001

tel: 2284 1837 telefax: 2204 8473

e-mail: pundole @ vsnl.com

22 “ x 30 “ >



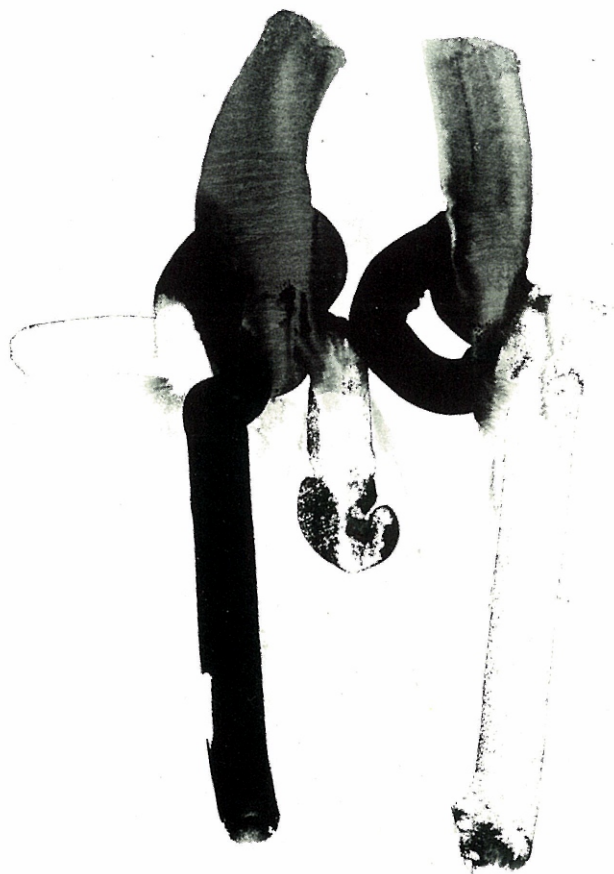


^ 13"x 18"
^ 13"x 18"
13"x 18" >





^ 22"x 30"
 < 16"x 22"
 25"x 35" >

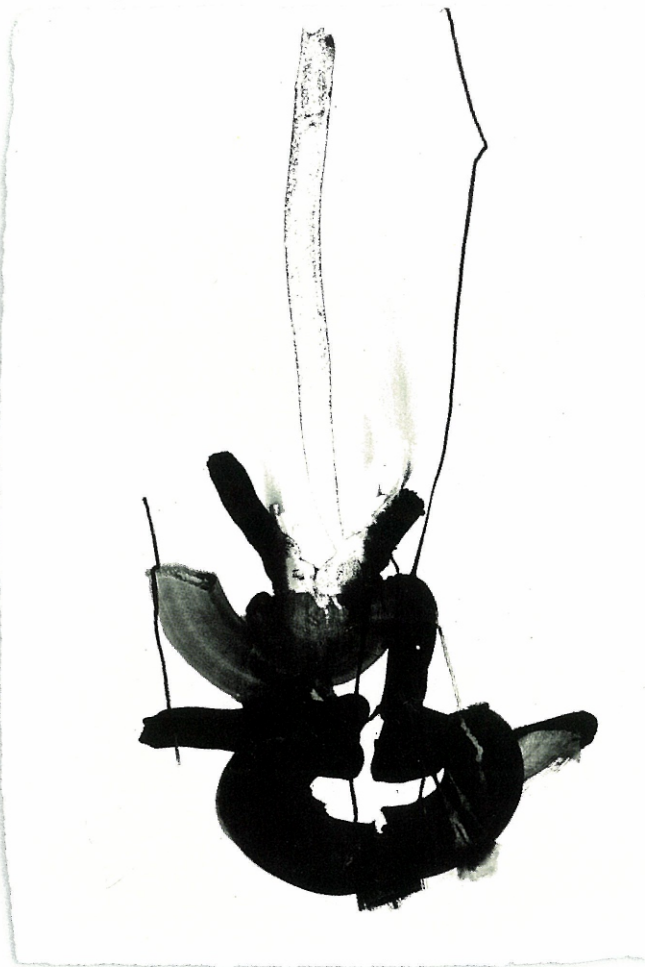


28 " x 42 " >



28 " x 42 " >



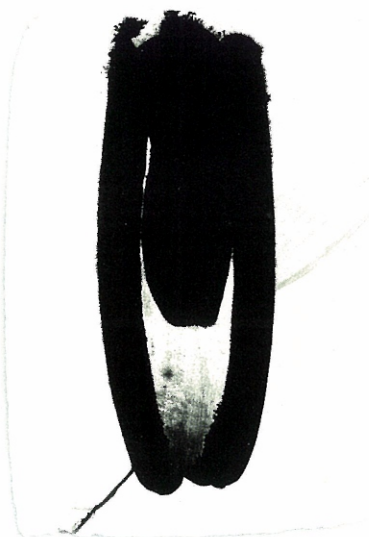


< 28"x 42"
22"x 30" >

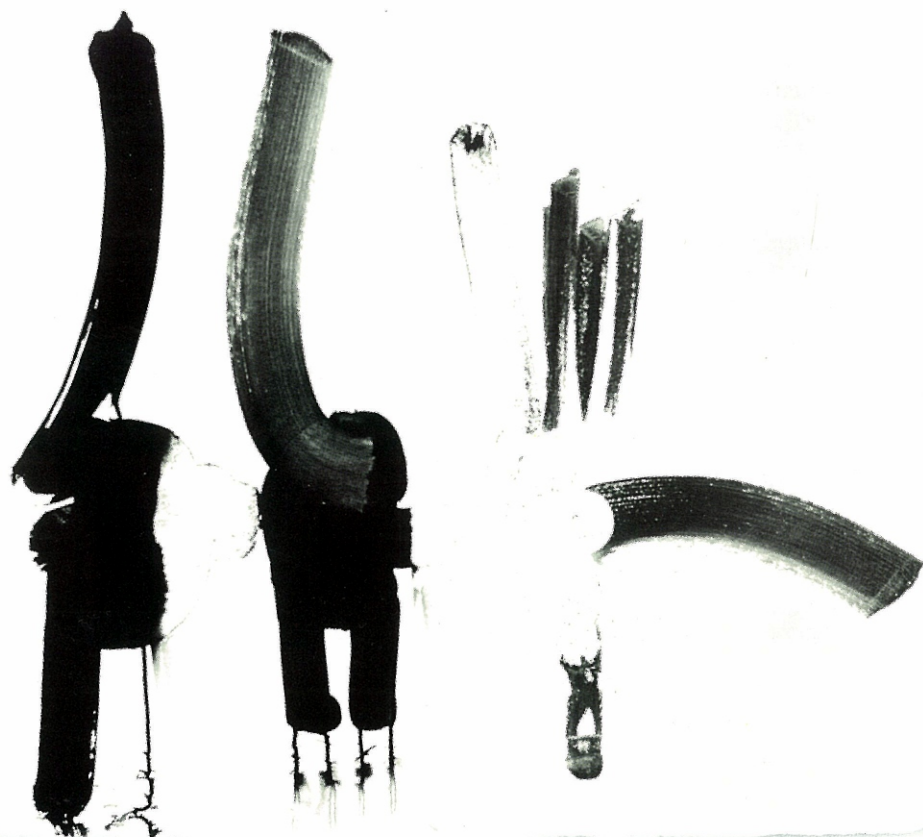




< 16"x 22"
13"x 18" >
13"x 18" >



28"x 42" >



Comets of Thought:
Vanita Gupta/ Recent Works on Paper

Working quietly in her studio, exhibiting her work at infrequent but carefully chosen intervals, Vanita Gupta has practised a somewhat *arte povera* approach to her materials and methods. Paper pulp and dark colours, the steam iron and the sponge, Indian ink and the deckle edge: these have served her well. From such an artisanal simplicity of means, she has developed a rich spectrum of allusiveness. In her current works on paper, too, the artist restricts herself to black ink laid on handmade Poona and Jaipur paper with brushes of varying thickness; all she does by way of preparation is to size the paper with glue and treat it with a tea wash. Other than these elements, it is water, usually taken for granted in such an idiom, that plays a vital shaping role in Vanita's working process: it promotes many effects, whether through the wash or the drip, the splash or the drizzle, each sparking off a small event of transformation in the viewer's eye.

A sequence of mottled images grows on the paper through this interplay of black and white: sometimes the image grows slowly, as the water smears and blurs the crisp passage of the ink; at other times, the tempo of creation is faster, as the stroke of ink slices through the white space of the paper. Sometimes, all that remains to tell of the brush's transit is a thin edge of black, from which trails a greyness of drained colour. At other times, the surface gains its value from a hard black stain that seems to indicate the brush in repose; but which is really the imprint left by the brush in a surge of energy. In the present suite of works, Vanita retains the intimacy of mood that has marked her work for a decade, whether in the ephemeral, rough-edged watercolour traces of 1996-1998 or in the dyed, shredded and gauzed paper sculptures of 2000-2002. And yet she summons forth an intriguing play of scale here, essaying small and medium-sized as well as larger surfaces, varying Her treatment in each register. Taken together, these recent works dramatises a constantly shifting dialogue between the solidity and boldness of the mass and the fluidity and elusiveness of the veil.

Through her pursuit of an athletics of line and wash, veil and mass, Vanita expresses her delight in gestural play, not necessarily as a symbol of any other force, but rather, as its own object. Of course, as viewers, many of us are reluctant to let go of the last traces of the familiar; correspondingly, we tend to be suspicious of forms that do not refer to the world of recognisable things, and read them to our taste. From such a viewpoint, it is possible to read Vanita's gestures in these works as markers of the figurative. Occasionally, we may even congratulate ourselves on having decoded these forms,

believing that we have discerned faint suggestions of the human body, like elements of a lost anatomy briefly glimpsed on an X-ray plate.

Vanita plays quite deliberately with this fallibility of the viewerly eye when she employs blots of the kind associated with the Rorschach testing procedure, in conjunction with an elementary wet-fold technique, to achieve intriguing mirror images. Her works may seem to encourage us in this quest for readable forms at some level, but they practise a subtle deception. The hints of the figurative vanish as startlingly as they presented themselves, apparitions erased by washes that reaffirm the primacy of the play of gesture. In actuality, the image here does not refer to an extra-pictorial reality so much as it is the trace of the moment in which it was made. In this sense, each stroke in Vanita's suite of works is its own occasion, a comet of thought: a precipitate expressive of the *kairos* of the moving brush, driven by the energy of the *kshana* of execution, articulating the primal acts of reaching, holding and connecting before they vanish in the river of time.

Within the broader rubric of gestural abstraction, Vanita's is an aesthetic of lyrical minimalism. This must not mislead us, however, into expecting an irrepressible buoyancy in her art; the apparent lightness of her strokes only accentuates the meditative intimations of evanescence, extinction and renaissance that her works convey. As though imbued with a Zen sensibility, her art develops its images through a calibrated alternation between speed and patience, disclosure and silence. Of these, the quality of silence is surely the most significant for Vanita's art. Her works demonstrate that abstraction, while it is stereotypically posed in opposition to realism or figuration, stands also in opposition to language: it can act as a gentle refutation to the claim, advanced by the early and too-dogmatic Wittgenstein, that "all that can be said, can be said clearly; that which cannot be said must be passed over in silence". An abstraction such as Vanita Gupta's shows us that silence, too, can be a mode of inquiry, a means of approaching the condition of understanding. In the face of the play of mass and veil, phantom grisaille and opaque density, we find our explanations evaporating, our questions melting away. What remains as a residue of our encounter with these works is a trace of passage in the mind, like the tail of a comet that is already burning away to nothingness as we look at it, across a distance of light-years that is really a measure of the irreversibility of time's logic of dissolution.

Ranjit Hoskote
Bombay: Autumn 2004

1992: Passed G.D/ Fine Arts/ painting, L S Raheja School of Art, Mumbai

Exhibition: Solo

1994, 1998 and 2002, Jehangir Art Gallery, Mumbai

Exhibition: Group and Others

1991: Rashtriya Kala Mela, Mumbai

1991: 5th All India Contest SCZCC, Nagpur

1991: Citi Art Utsav, organised by Citi Bank, Mumbai

1992: Bombay Art Society, Mumbai

1993: Monsoon Art Show, Jehangir Art Gallery, Mumbai

1993: Art Society of India, Annual show, Mumbai

1994: 7th Indian Oil Exhibition, Mumbai

1996: *Women 96*, Jehangir Art Gallery, Mumbai

1996-2000 : *Miniature Format Show*, Sans Tache Gallery, Mumbai

1997: *50 years of Art in Bombay*, N.G.M.A, Mumbai

1998: *Essays in Time*, Nehru Center, Mumbai

1998: Art Access, Birla Academy, Mumbai

1999: Art Jumboree, Lakeeren Art Gallery, Mumbai

2000: *Ideas and Images*, N.G.M.A, Mumbai

2001: West Zone exhibition, Tao Art Gallery, Mumbai

2001: National Exhibition of Art, Lalit Kala Academy, Delhi and Ahmedabad

2001: Kala Ghoda Festival, N.G.M.A, Mumbai

2002: Women's Show *Shakti*, Hacienda Art Gallery, Mumbai

2002: Group Show at Indigo, Mumbai

2003: *Art for Heart's Sake*, Auction by Bowring's, Jehangir Art Gallery, Mumbai

2004: National exhibition of Art, by Lalit Kala Academy, Kerala

2002, 2004: *New Paradigms* at Habitat Center, by Gallery Threshold, Delhi

2004: Women artists *Ideas and Images*, NGMA, Mumbai

Artist Camp:

1995: at Lonavala arranged by Artist Center Mumbai, co-sponsored by L.K.A Delhi

2003: at The Oberoi, Mumbai, by Gallery Beyond & Gallery Art Resource Trust

2004: at Le Royal Meridien, by Gallery Beyond & Gallery Art Resource Trust

lives and works in Mumbai





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