



Cover & Back Cover:

11 miniatures Water Colour on Paper 1997, Sizes vary from 1 c.m. to 17 cms.

Works on paper

(1996-1998)

by  
VANITA GUPTA

on view at

JEHANGIR ART GALLERY

1813, K. G. Road, Mumbai 400 025

from

17th Sept. to 6th Oct. 1998







Works on paper

(1996-1998)

by

V A N I T A   G U P T A

on view at

JEHANGIR ART GALLERY

161-B, M. G. Road, Mumbai 400-023

from

30th Sept. to 6th Oct. 1998

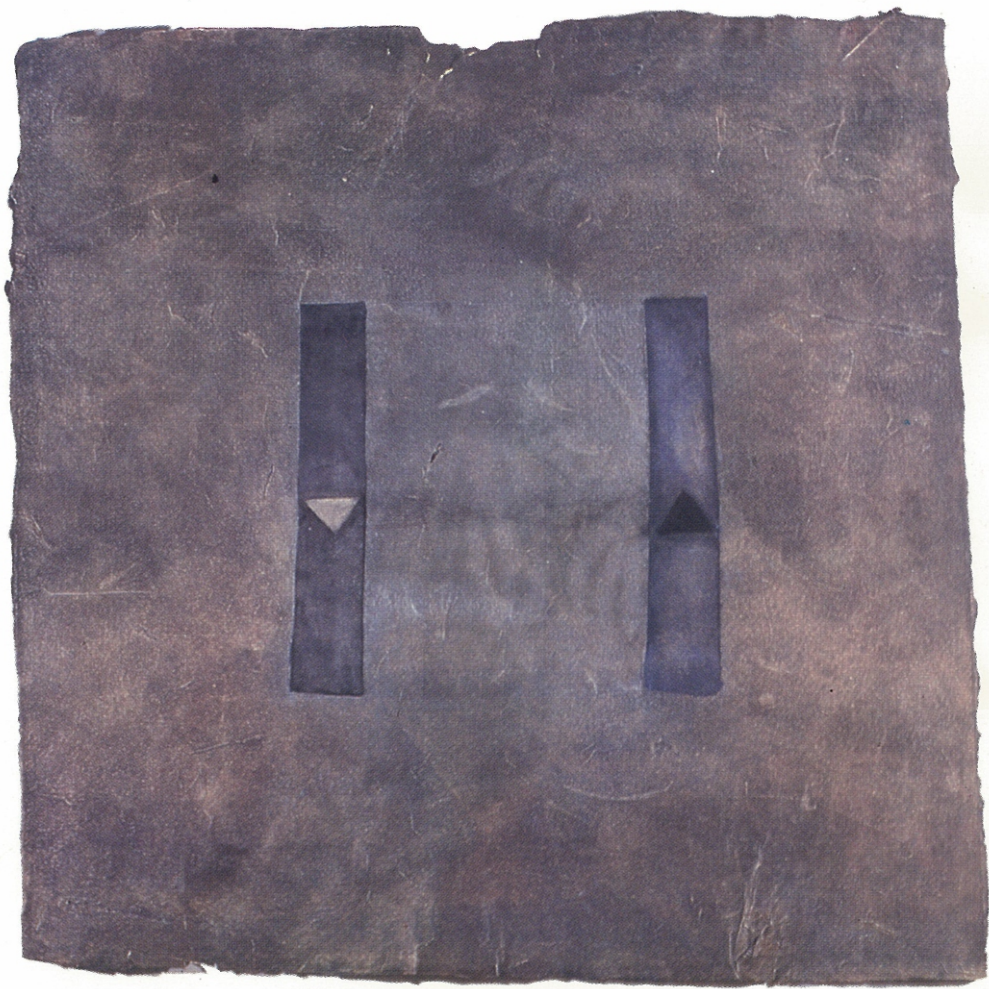


45 X 45 cms, Untitled, Water Colour on Paper 1998



13X17cms, Untitled, Water Colour on Paper 1997





57 X 57 cms, Untitled, Water Colour on Paper 1998



16 X 10 cms, Untitled, Water Colour on Paper 1996

## TRACEELEMENTS

### Vanita Gupta : Works on Paper (1996-1998)

Those of us who are addicted to the heroic in art -- to grandeur of scale, gravity of subject and flamboyance of execution -- tend to believe that any format smaller than the four - to six-foot frame is negligible. By this yardstick, we would have to dismiss the drawing, the miniature and the cabinet picture alike as insignificant measures of artistic prowess. And yet, these are the formats through which artists have most ingeniously conveyed the electricity of their encounter with the world : we have only to think of Vermeer, Miskin, Nainsukh and Giacometti, to test the truth of this proposition.

Despite this awareness, we persist in viewing habits that have been shaped by the dogma of the heroic : we have become used to the middle-distance viewing of framed and hung art-works that the gallery and the museum encourage, so that our relationship with paintings is usually a very formal one, even at its most cordial.

Delicate and seemingly fragile as they are, Vanita Gupta's works come to us from a completely different setting. These works dictate an intimate mode of viewing, address a sensibility that would treasure the album of drawings, the folio of miniature paintings. In this setting, each work must be lifted carefully from its wrapping and dwelt upon pensively, until it whispers its nuances to us.

Such a relationship with an art-work calls for a sensitivity to detail that is akin to that of the archivist, the jeweller or the geologist : a devoted attention to the small, the ephemeral, the fugitive. In a word, an attention to the trace, which is the key to lost ores of knowledge, vanished realms of sensation; which is a sign that we charge with the sympathy we feel for all the instinctive realities that the consciousness has dropped along its march to civilisation.

It is as though these rough-edged pieces of paper, which Gupta has ironed and worked over with watercolour, were records from ages beyond the recall of memory yet within the grasp of emotion. These surfaces remind us of brittle manuscripts that we might gently open in a library; or gems or rare minerals that we may sift from among the samples in a lapidary's glass case.

The hallmark of Gupta's technique is her skilled activation of colour and texture : in her works, the fragmentary image grows from multiple washes, laminae laid upon laminae. Her colours are subtle : greys, browns and ochres of every shade; black in all its resplendent allotropes; and, sometimes, a dilute pink, blue or green is slipped in like a bewitching clue. Each image is mounted against an expanse of white space, which allows it to breathe, to display the elegant simplicity of its presence.



We are strongly tempted to identify Gupta's forms, to give them a local habitation and a name. Are these ancient shells or shrubs that we see, animal or vegetable fossils hardened in millennial rock? Or are they, perhaps, relics or tablets preserved in caves by secret communities of apostles? And shall we regard the mystic symbols that she occasionally invokes as covenants with unknown forces, nuclei around which the hopes and terrors of a race have crystallised?

No amount of interpretation can, however, exhaust the vivid and magical immediacy of Gupta's images. This immediacy springs, in large part, from the intriguing series of effects that are sparked off by the encounter between the poetry of the painter's lyrical markings and the plain speech of her material. The most impressive of these is the unpredictable raggedness of edge, fold and knot, those borders at which the physicality of the painted surface translates itself into a compelling eroticism.

This eroticism, which has no object, is arguably one of the triumphs of abstractionist painting : it is a free-floating energy that attaches itself to outline, tonality and interface, not as a possessive force but as an illumination. This eroticism does not arrange its performance for the delectation of the gaze, but unfolds at its own rhythmic tempo, demands to be understood on its own ground. In Gupta's art, it emerges as a telling factor of surprise, an energy that few would suspect in the absence of radiant colour and over-saturated texture.

It is limiting, then, to define Vanita Gupta's works merely as watercolours, collages, montages, or even as permutations of these media. I should prefer, personally, to describe them as trace elements. The term has a precise meaning : as biochemistry tells us, trace elements are elements that are found in plants and animals in minute quantities, and play a critical role in their physiological processes. By this token, the trace element in art is an image that may not assert itself boastfully, but which nonetheless finds its way into the archive of forms that we cherish for the mysterious intimations they carry to us from afar.

**Ranjit Hoskote**

Bombay : Autumn 1998



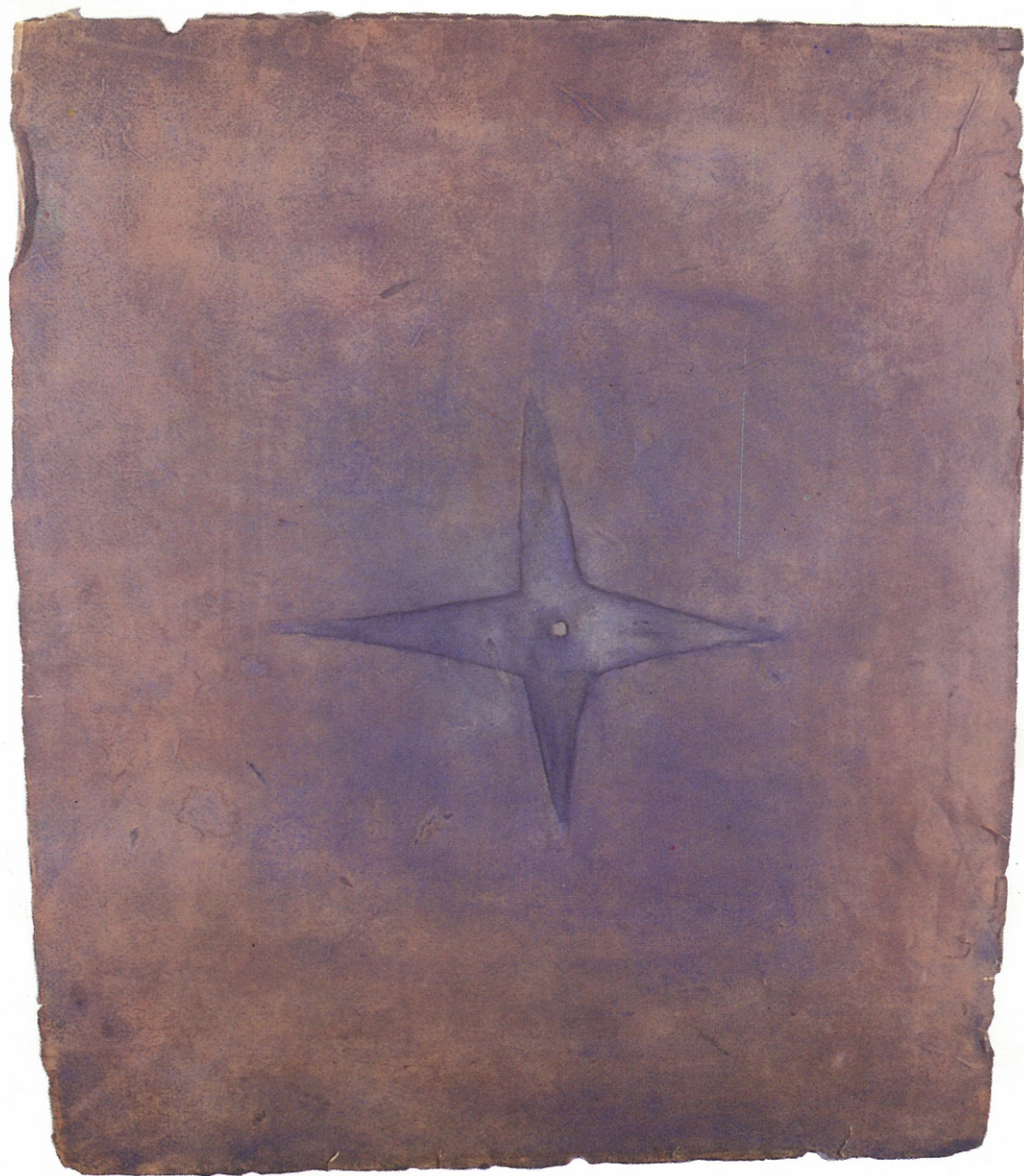
40 cms Dia, Untitled, Water Colour on Paper 1998



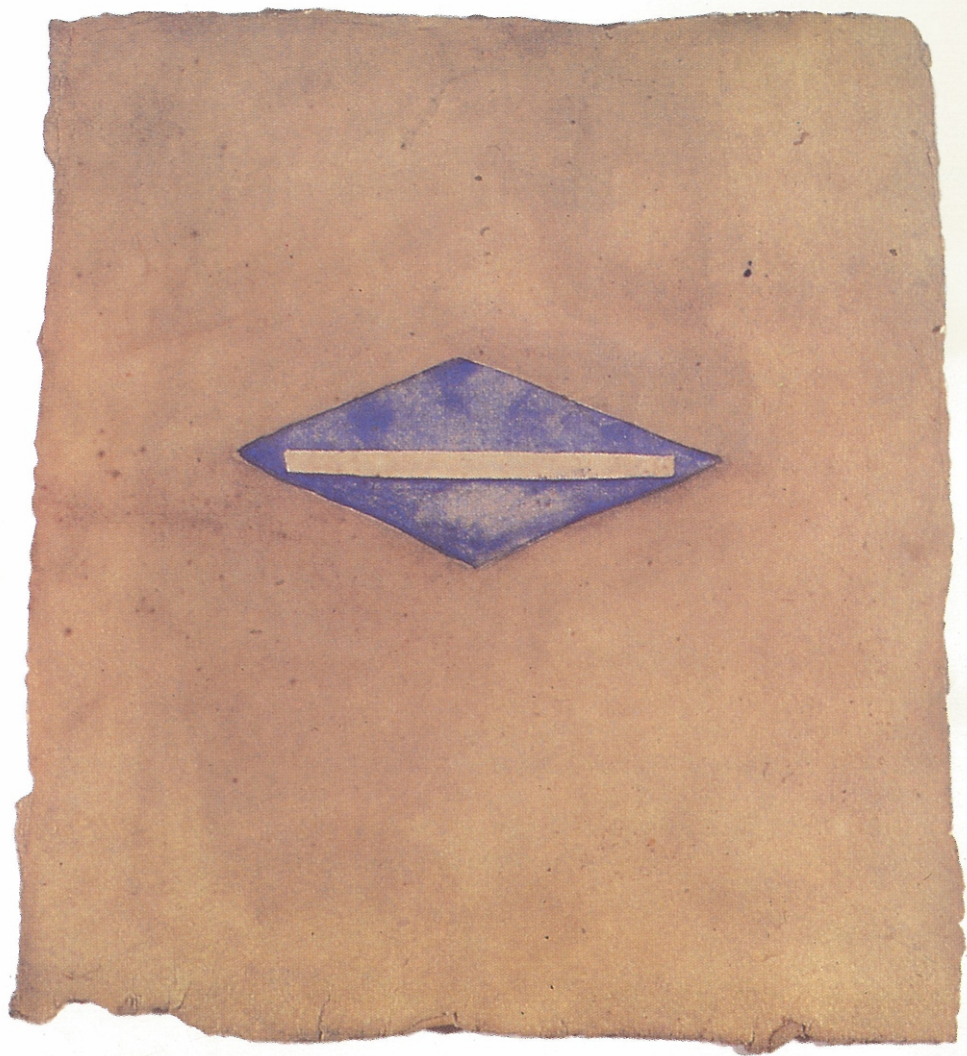


13X17 cms, Untitled, Water Colour on Paper 1997





65 X 56 cms, Untitled, Water Colour on Paper 1998



20 X 22 cms, Untitled, Water Colour on Paper 1997  
Part of a Triptich Painting



## VANITA GUPTA

- 1971 : Born  
1992 : Passed G. D. Art, Mumbai  
Exhibition : Group & others  
1991, 96 : Rashtriya Kala Mela, Mumbai and Calcutta  
1991 : 5th All India Contest SCZCC, Nagpur  
1992 : Citi Art Utsav, Mumbai  
1992 : 'Mile - Stone' at Artist Centre, Mumbai  
1992 : Bombay Art Society, Mumbai  
1993 : Monsoon Art Show, Jehangir Art Gallery, Mumbai  
1993 : Art Society of India, Mumbai  
1994 : 7th Indian Oil Exhibition, Mumbai  
1995 : Artist Centre, Group Show, Mumbai  
1996 : Woman 96' Jehangir Art Gallery, Mumbai  
1996, 97 : Miniature Show at Sans Tache Gallery, Mumbai  
1997 : Group Show at Cache art gallery, Mumbai  
1997 : 50 years of art in Bombay, N.G.M.A., Mumbai  
1998 : 'Essays in Time' at Nehru Centre, Mumbai  
1998 : 'Art Access' at Birla Academy, Mumbai  
Exhibition : Solo  
1994 : Jehangir Art Gallery, Mumbai.

### Artist Camp

Invited to participate in artist camp arranged at Lonawala by  
Artist centre, Mumbai, co-sponsored by L K A (Delhi).

### Awards

- 1990 : Certificate of Merit for on the spot pictorial composition (Camel)  
1992 : Certificate of Merit for Self-Portrait Bombay Art Society

### Collection

Mrs. Sangeeta Jindal

Mrs. Kerkar - Taj Hotel

Mr. Ajay Relan - Citi-Corp

Mr. Reddy - Bangalore

Mr. Karim Aftab - Stag Umbrella

Sistas

SCICI

Works in Private Collection in India

Studio : 2, Dipti Bldg., Aarey Road  
Goregaon (East), Mumbai-400063  
Phone : 8730738







# MANITA GUPTA

1981	Born
1981	Passed K. D. Art, Mumbai
Exhibition	Group & others
1991, 96	Rashtriya Kala Mela, Mumbai and Calcutta
1991	5th All India Contest SCZCC, Nagpur
1992	Citi Art Ursav, Mumbai
1992	'Mille - Stone' at Artist Centre, Mumbai
1992	Bombay Art Society, Mumbai
1993	Monsoon Art Show, Jehangir Art Gallery, Mumbai
1993	Art Society of India, Mumbai
1994	7th Indian Oil Exhibition, Mumbai
1995	Artist Centre, Group Show, Mumbai
1996	Woman 96, Jehangir Art Gallery, Mumbai
1996, 97	Miniature Show at Sans Tache Art Gallery, Mumbai
1997	Group Show at Cache, Mumbai
1997	50 years of art in Bombay, Sans Tache Art Gallery
1998	'Essays in Time' at Neim, Ranjit Hoskote
1998	'Art Access' at Birla Academy, Prakash Vishwasrao
Exhibition	Solo, Mukund Gawade
1994	Jehangir Art Gallery, Mumbai, Prakash Rao
Artist Camp	Prabhakar Kolte
Invited to participate in artist camp arranged at Lonavala by	Mummy & Shami
Artist camp, Mumbai, co-sponsored by L. K. A (Delhi)	
Awards	
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Collection	
Mrs. Sangeeta Indal	
Mrs. Ketkar - Taj Hotel	
Mr. Ajay Relan - Citi Corp	
Mr. Reddy - Bangalore	
Mr. Karim Afrab - Sing Umbrella	
Sistas	
SCICI	
Works in Private Collection in India	

## Acknowledgement

Sans Tache Art Gallery  
 Ranjit Hoskote  
 Prakash Vishwasrao  
 Mukund Gawade  
 Prakash Rao  
 Prabhakar Kolte  
 Mummy & Shami

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