

The Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj Vastu Sangrahalaya &

The Jehangir Nicholson Art Foundation

in collaboration with

The Kiran Nadar Museum of Art, New Delhi

present

# Re-citing land

## Ganesh Haloi : six decades of painting

Guest curated by Roobina Karode

12th November 2022 - 11th January 2023



Untitled, 1995, Ganesh Haloi, watercolour on board, Jehangir Nicholson Collection

This is one of the major monographic exhibitions on Ganesh Haloi, an artist and pedagogue who has through six decades or more, actively participated in comprehending the beauty and mystery of life, in his art.

*“The purpose of any modern or contemporary art exhibition is to provide an intimate experience with the artistic creation and its creator, and also enable visitors to understand the subject and message of the creator through his works and interpretation. The exhibition Re-citing Land: Six Decades of Painting is being organized at the Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj Vastu Sangrahalaya, Mumbai in partnership with The Kiran Nadar Museum of Art, New Delhi and the Jehangir Nicholson Art Foundation. On the occasion of our centenary, this is our humble tribute to one of the most eminent living legends whose works celebrate our harmony and interdependence with nature.”* - **Sabyasachi Mukherjee, Director General, CSMVS**

*“We are delighted to present the exhibition 'Re-citing Land' - an important milestone as the first retrospective exhibition of Ganesh Haloi. The exhibition is a collaboration between the CSMVS, JNAF & the KNMA. With this exhibition, we aim to shed light on an artist whose work could be read alongside the celebrated artists of the post-independence period and who has so far largely been overlooked by mainstream art history. Roobina Karode, guest-curator of the exhibition, has carefully put together a selection from decades of work by Haloi. The exhibition is beautifully faceted, like Haloi's work. Space marked with time, land - fractured, bounded and unbounded are presented as lyrical ruminations through Haloi's vision. Featuring almost a hundred paintings and a few unique sculptures by Haloi, the exhibition promises to give viewers a holistic experience of the tenors and nuances of Haloi's long career.”* - **Puja Vaish, Director JNAF**

## Curator's note:

"Isolation is the most important factor in these paintings. You are alone with nature, and then you become part of it –you participate in it."

— Ganesh Haloi

What is common amid poetry, music and non-representational imageries? Perhaps it is the limitation of prolix translation. Ganesh Haloi is one of the lone artists from his generation, who painted without being tied down by the compulsion of literally representing reality, whose works carry the essence of in-translatability. A life rich with migration experiences and travels that inspired corporeal and noetic shifts, Haloi's artistic pursuit began with mindful observations of idioms of the cultural past in Mughal miniatures and the Ajanta murals, in contrast with harsh realities in Kolkata (Calcutta) post-partition and the Independence of India. Inspirational stories of precursors and masters like Abanindranath and Gopal Ghose, shaped his language as a young artist, which later evolved along with associational working process drawing from modern Bengali poetry of the 1950s.

The mighty Brahmaputra river and her various moods, the marshy land and rich aquatic life would remain as mnemonic fragments whenever Haloi reminisced about his house on the riverbank in Jamalpur. The childhood memory of water entering the *aangan* (courtyard) with overbearing force during inundation was especially rooted in him and his later works. Haloi's visual imagination stretched this primordial form of spatial enclosure into an expansive field, with the closed boundary left broken or incomplete, allowing recollections to flood in.

His practice has resisted easy classification and categorization in terms of genre, style or content, neither claiming to be a landscape painter nor pure abstractionist. In his minimalistic works, one can register an orchestration of formal elements not laid out for simple delectation but posing new problems. Interpretation of colour pigment on paper, with the complex methods of layering them on the surface, appear as explorations he made in a playfully decentered world.

Resonating with the artist's practice, curatorially, the exhibition is conceived as a kaleidoscope, evoking Haloi's inscape of shifting configurations and vantage points.

- **Roobina Karode, curator of the exhibition**

## **About the artist**

Ganesh Haloi (b.1936) was born in Jamalpur, Mymensingh (now in Bangladesh). He moved to Calcutta in 1950 following the Partition of India. The trauma of displacement left its mark on his work as it did on some other painters of his generation. Since then his art has exhibited an innate lyricism coupled with a sense of nostalgia for a lost world. In 1956, he graduated from the Government College of Art and Craft, Calcutta. In the next year, he was appointed by the Archaeological Survey of India to make copies of Ajanta murals. Seven years later, Haloi returned to Calcutta. From 1963 until his retirement, he taught at the Government College of Art and Crafts. He has been a Member of The Society of Contemporary Artists, Calcutta since 1971.

He has participated in several group exhibitions in India, Documenta 14 at Athens & Kassel, Greece/Germany; Architecture of Life, at Berkeley Art Museum & Pacific Film Archives at BAM/PFA, Berkeley, California; 8th Berlin Biennale for Contemporary Art, Berlin; A Special Arrow Was Shot in the Neck, David Roberts Art Foundation, London; and over the edge, crossing the line five artists from Bengal at KNMA, Delhi. He is represented by Akar Prakar Kolkata and New Delhi, and has had various solo exhibitions in Kolkata, Delhi, Mumbai, Dhaka and New York including Re-citing Land at The Jehangir Nicholson Art Foundation, CSMVS, Mumbai in collaboration with KNMA, Delhi 2022; The Architectonics of Form at Akar Prakar Kolkata and New Delhi in 2022, Form & Play at Asia Week New York in 2020 to name a few. The artist lives and works in Calcutta, India.

## **About the collaborators**

### **Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj Vastu Sangrahalaya**

Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj Vastu Sangrahalaya, formerly known as the Prince of Wales Museum of Western India, is one of the premier art and history museums in India. CSMVS celebrated its 100 years' glorious journey as one of the premier, public enlightenment centres of the country on 10th January 2022. This was a landmark moment, not only in the history of the Museum but for the cultural movement of the country. In the last decade the Museum has undergone a profound modernization process with the idea to transform the Museum from a national level repository of antiquities to an

institute of international standards. In its Centenary year, CSMVS has put together a list of significant projects and initiatives which will be undertaken in and beyond 2022 to mark this landmark year and moment.

### **Jehangir Nicholson Art Foundation**

The Jehangir Nicholson Art Foundation is a non-profit art organisation. It is committed to preserving, documenting and updating one of the richest private collections of Art that reflects crucial phases of modern Indian art history. The collection comprises nearly 800 works of art, procured between 1968 and 2001 by Jehangir Nicholson, one of the earliest art collectors in India. It includes paintings, drawings, prints and sculpture by 250 artists, displaying the diversity of post-independence art practices in the country.

The JNAF entered into a collaboration with the Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj Vastu Sangrahalaya (formerly known as the Prince of Wales Museum) in 2008, where the collection is now housed. A new gallery of about 2000 sq ft bearing Nicholson's name was created at the Museum along with storage, office and library space. The JNAF forms the Modern and Contemporary Wing of the Museum where it hosts regular exhibitions and outreach programmes.

The JNAF seeks to build a connected research-based framework for its exhibitions, education and outreach programming, bringing the collection into conversation with relevant current local and global art-historical discourses, onsite and online. Through collaborations with international and national institutions and professionals, the JNAF aims to create a platform for diverse interdisciplinary cultural exchange.

### **Kiran Nadar Museum of Art, New Delhi**

Established at the initiative of the avid art collector and philanthropist Kiran Nadar, the Kiran Nadar Museum of Art (KNMA) opened its doors to the public in January 2010, as the first private museum of art exhibiting Modern and contemporary works from India and the sub-continent. Located in the heart of New Delhi, India's capital city, KNMA as a non-commercial, not-for-profit organization intends to

exemplify the dynamic relationship between art and culture through its exhibitions, publications, educational, and public programs.

The ever-growing collection of KNMA is largely focused on significant trajectories. Its core collection highlights a magnificent generation of 20th century Indian painters from the post-Independent decades and equally engages the different art practices of the younger contemporaries.

Sponsored by the Shiv Nadar Foundation, KNMA is plugging the lack of art promotion in the public sphere and is working towards encouraging art appreciation. KNMA aspires to become a place for confluence, through its curatorial initiative and exhibitions, school and college workshops, art appreciation discourses, symposiums and public programs. It is focused on bridging the gap between art and the public and fostering a museum-going culture in India. In order to activate the museum as a site for visual and intellectual dialogue, the museum aims to develop innovative programs that seek active collaborations from artists as well as the public.

**Exhibition Venue:**

Jehangir Nicholson Gallery  
Second Floor, East Wing  
Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj Vastu Sangrahalaya,  
159/161, Mahatma Gandhi Road,  
Fort, Mumbai 400023

**Timings:**

10:15 am - 6 pm

Open on all days

No charge for tour and activity

Museum ticket applicable:

150 INR for adults

35 INR for children ( 5 - 15 yrs)

## **BOOK LAUNCH & CONVERSATION**

In conjunction with the exhibition opening

CSMVS, JNAF in collaboration with Akar Prakar & Mapin Publishing

**Conversation with Natasha Ginwala, Roobina Karode, Jesal Thacker & Ganesh Haloi.**

### **‘Ganesh Haloi : A Rhythm Surfaces in the Mind’**

Edited by Natasha Ginwala & Jesal Thacker

Authors: Iftikhar Dadi, Adam Szymczyk, Lawrence Rinder, Soumik Nandy Majumdar, Roobina Karode, Natasha Ginwala and Jesal Thacker

Published by Akar Prakar and Mapin Publishing

Ganesh Haloi, born in Jamalpur, Mymensingh (now in Bangladesh), moved to Calcutta after the Partition in 1950. Witness to India’s resilient culture, freedom and struggle for its secular modernism, Haloi is among the artists of the generation who have played a significant role in the shaping of Indian modern art. Ganesh Haloi has cultivated a singular vocabulary of abstraction and landscape. This painterly world is textured with knowledge references that the artist is attuned to over decades—from realms as diverse as archaeology, ancient architecture, art history, sacred philosophy and poetry. His works are exercises in bringing life to the genre of landscape painting through the assembly of disparate symbolic forms. Throughout Haloi’s oeuvre, as in his thinking, there is never a separation between the nature within and the nature without. With extensive essays by eminent art critics and interspersed with previously unpublished illustrated folios and sketches of work from throughout his life, this monograph documents Haloi’s earth-toned abstract vocabulary that has drawn overtime on a vast breadth of iconography, ideas, and movements. In his paintings, Haloi is an itinerant traveller and so is the viewer. Within strangely unbound time, one takes passage across the vastness of the landscape, a floating geometry, the seduction of lines.

With 245 illustrations and 15 photographs.

### **About Akar Prakar**

Founded in 2004 by Reena and Abhijit Lath, Akar Prakar is a modern and contemporary art gallery with spaces in New Delhi and Kolkata.

As part of our gallery programming and extended engagements in the arts, Akar Prakar has hosted several visual art exhibitions through collaborations with international museums and curators, creating a space for indigenous representations of Indian modern and contemporary artists. Operating between its two galleries, Akar Prakar curates narratives drawn from the subcontinent's modern and contemporary art movements, representing artists such as Ganesh Haloi, Jayashree Chakravarty, C. Douglas, Manish Pushkale, Debanjan Roy and Debasish Mukherjee to name a few.

Over the years, Akar Prakar has participated in art exhibitions at institutions and museums in different parts of the world, including the National Gallery of Modern Art, Delhi; Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj Vastu Sangrahalaya, Mumbai; Kiran Nadar Museum of Art, Delhi; 8th Berlin Biennale; documenta 14; Musée des Arts Asiatiques, Nice; Musée National des Arts Asiatiques Guimet, Paris; DRAF, London; Hamburger Bahnhof, Berlin; Palazzo Madama, Turin; Museo d'Arte Orientale, Turin; Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam; and Marres, Maastricht to name a few. Other than curating exhibitions of Indian modern and contemporary artists, Akar Prakar has been involved with publishing projects in the form of monographs and books on masters and contemporary artists, co-published and distributed by Mapin Publishing. Akar Prakar is also supporting numerous award-winning children's book publications on Indian artists with Art1st Publications.

In 2019, Akar Prakar also launched the first edition of 'artVarta Research and Publishing Grant', a new initiative of the Lath Sarvodaya Trust, Kolkata, which has been actively engaged with art patronage for the past five decades. The grant supports the work and research of emerging scholars, curators and artists in the field of publishing in arts and culture.



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