

ART MUSINGS



"That's all Folks!"

RAGHAVA KK

1980, Bangalore, India

Select Solo Exhibitions

2013 - *That's All Folks* - Art Musings, Mumbai, India
2011 - *Exquisite Cadaver* - Art Musings, Mumbai, India
2010 - *The Last Child in the Woods* - KYNKYN, Bangalore, India
2009 - *Brooklyn Bound R Train* - Art Musings, Mumbai, India
2009 - *The Issues of Chronic Abstraction* - Skotia Gallery, NM, USA
2008 - *Drawn and Quartered* - Art Musings, Mumbai, India
2007 - *Not Another Wedding in Goa* - Gallery Art Chamber, India
2007 - Carre d'Art: Musee d'Art Contemporain, Nimes, France
2007 - Gallery 27/ Visual Art UK, London, England, UK
2007 - *Venice Suite* - Crimson Art Gallery, Bangalore, India
2006 - ARTANA Gallery, Boston, USA
2005 - Time and Space Art Gallery, Bangalore, India
2004 - *Atypical Attitudes* - Ashvita Gallery, Chennai, India
2004 - The Gallery at the Courtyard, Mumbai, India

Select Group Exhibitions

2013 - *India Art Fair* - Art Musings & Volte Gallery, Delhi, India
2012 - *Designing Tomorrow* - Volte Gallery, Mumbai, India
2012 - *India Art Fair* - Art Musings, New Delhi, India
2012 - *Loss for Words* - Art Musings, Mumbai, India
2011 - *India Art Summit* - Art Musings, New Delhi, India
2011 - *Artstage Singapore*, Singapore
2010 - *LA Art Fair* - Skotia Gallery, Los Angeles, USA
2010 - *Public Space / Private Face* - Giacobetti Paul Gallery, USA
2010 - *Crow Moon* - SKOTIA Gallery, Santa Fe, USA
2010 - *Contemporary Artists* - Art Musings, Mumbai, India
2010 - *ART TIGER* - Rashtrapathi Bhavan, New Delhi, India
2009 - *Transformation* - BAG Art Gallery, Brooklyn, NY
2009 - *India Art Summit* - Art Musings, New Delhi, India
2009 - *Goddess* - Under Minerva Gallery, Brooklyn, NY, USA
2009 - *Purdah-EnGendered* - New York, New York, USA
2008 - Gallery Art Positive, New Delhi, India
2008 - *Purdah-EnGendered* - Lincoln Centre, New York, USA
2007 - Mahua Art Gallery, Bangalore, India
2007 - *Young Masters* - Galeria de Belas Artes, Goa, India
2006 - *1001 Art Money* - Øksnehallen Gallery, Denmark
2006 - *Spectra* - Gallery Katayun, Kolkata, India
2003 - Peter Louis Arts, Chicago, USA

Select Lectures and Talks

2013 - TEDMED 2013 - 'The Intersection of Art and Science' - Washington, D.C., USA
2013 - TED 2013 - 'Brainwave Art' - Long Beach, CA, USA
2013 - *Participatory Art Lab* - Art, technology, and participation - NuVu studios, MIT, Cambridge, USA
2012 - WIRED Conference - 'Brainwave Art', London, UK
2012 - Cities Summit - Tel Aviv, Israel
2012 - TedxSummit - 'What's Your 200 Year Plan?', Doha, Qatar
2012 - *Brain Studio* - Art & Bio-feedback - NuVu studios, MIT, USA
2011 - DOT conference - 'Shaking Storytelling', Toronto, Canada
2011 - TEDGlobal - 'Shake up Your Story', Edinburgh, Scotland
2011 - NYU Stern School - 'Art & Entrepreneurship', NY, USA
2011 - 'Entrepreneurs' Organization, Hyderabad, India
2011 - 'Young Presidents' Organization, New Delhi, India
2011 - ISTE Conference - 'Unlearning from the World', USA
2011 - Saatchi & Saatchi Conference, New York, USA
2011 - *Entrepreneurship and / vs. Art* - Indian School of Business, India
2011 - *Viral Video, Blueprint* - NuVu studios, MIT, Cambridge, USA
2010 - KHOSLA VENTURES conference, San Francisco, USA
2010 - TED 2010 - '5 Lives of an Artist' - Long Beach, CA, USA
2010 - INK conference - Lavasa, India
2010 - TEDxCMU - Carnegie Mellon University, Pittsburgh, USA
2010 - Young Presidents Organisation, New Delhi, India
2010 - *Shaking Storytelling* - NuVu studios, MIT, Cambridge, USA
2010 - STERN School, New York University, New York, USA
2007 - Ecole des Beaux - Arts, Nimes, France
2006 - New Hampshire Institute of Art, New Hampshire, USA
2006 - *Changing Perspectives* - Stella Maris College, Chennai, India
2006 - Copenhagen Business School, Denmark

Select Collaborative Projects

2011 - Paul Simon (musician), New York, USA
2011 - Erykah Badu (musician), New York, USA
2011 - Morley (musician), New York, USA
2010 - Yann Vasnier (fragrance artist), New York, USA
2010 - Dan Barber (celebrity chef), New York, USA
2007 - London Fashion Week - Ravage Bricolage - collaboration with designers (Ravage) to create art-inspired fashion line
2005 - Sand installation with Andres Amador, San Francisco, USA
2003 - Mural with Farid Belkahlia, Bouznika, Morocco



RAGHAVA KK

Performance Art Shows

2010 - Performance piece with Mandeep Raikhy for the Engendered Dance Festival, New York, USA
2007 - Collaboration with flamenco singer Pepe Linares, France
2005 - *Anthropomorphism: When Paintings Dance* - San Jose Convention Centre, San Jose, CA, USA

Entrepreneurship / Mentorship

2012 - Mentor, Innoz, India
2012 - Co-founder, Flipsicle.com, USA
2012 - Chair, INK Fellows Program, India
2012 - Mentor, Singularity University, CA
2012 - Mentor, TED Fellows Program, USA
2011 - Visionary / Mentor, Shaken Media Collective, Canada
2010 - Director, Raghava KK Inc., USA
2010 - Board of Advisors, INK Conference, India
2010 - Board of Advisors, NuVu Studio, Boston

Apps

2012 - Sw.pe
2011 - Pop-It

Panels

2012 - Diaspora Conference, USA
2010 - BBC's panel on creativity - New York, USA
2010 - #class at the Winkelman Gallery, New York, USA

Others

2012 - Curator, TED Ads Worth Spreading, USA
2011 - Curator, TED Ads Worth Spreading, USA

My visual metaphors in 'That's All Folks' come about through the emotional mapping of the three disparate works (The Cartoon, The Historical, The Meme). By this, I mean that I will not map literal characters or events, but an emotional response to them. My intention in bringing these worlds together is to exaggerate the flatness of Indian school history using the further flattening medium of Caricature and the indoctrinatory nature of Memes. Although one of the major efforts of our time is to create more well-rounded knowledge through crowd-sourcing, this collectively deployed knowledge runs the risk of being disinterested, as it loses personal stake. Therefore, I see a reluctance in integrating collective knowledge into pedagogy.

I would like to argue that the common "flat" knowledge, which is deployed by the individual (school, historian, institution, etc), becomes a caricature of all knowledge itself, as it is limited and invested with a personal stake. The act of recognizing the personal stake and bias in the teaching of history is, I believe, the first step towards establishing a new structure of knowledge, rounded by a sphere of exaggerated flat perspectives.

In these works, I wish to explore the taxonomizing of history, which, by breaking events into subdivision of approach (such as causes, events, and effects), renders it flat. However, I am constrained by my knowledge of Indian history, my ICSE school history. Is it now possible for me to surmount this deficiency by acquiring further knowledge? If it is not, do I limit myself to that which I know and of which I can speak of with authority? If there were no memes, nothing would "take." The vast majority of Indians will never meet. Yet, I feel there is a basis for a commonality that is separate from any other nationality. Much of this is driven by print culture, as in Benedict Anderson's Imagined Community. Print culture and mass media cultivate memes, which are capable of fostering and maintaining even communities.

Therefore, the Indian-ness that I feel has its historical origins in the creation of the Indian meme. Nehru, Sardar, Gandhi, and Bose may have argued about many things, but their commonality gave rise to the Indian meme. Winston Churchill is famously quoted as saying, India "is merely a geographical expression. It is no more a single country than the Equator." So, in my eyes, India is more of a meme than it is a nation formed on commonality. I see 'That's All Folks' as my historical documents where the linearity of time has been distorted and rearranged like a big knot creating parallel and orthogonal universes.

Raghava KK



01



02



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RAGHAVA KK

guernica 2.0

acrylic on canvas, 188 x 80 inches, 2013

01



ART MUSINGS

RAGHAVA KK

octo-dad

acrylic on canvas, 52 x 85 inches, 2013

02



ART MUSINGS

RAGHAVA KK

heiress tigress

acrylic on canvas, 29 x 40 inches, 2013

03

ART MUSINGS

RAGHAVA KK

olympia 2.0

acrylic on canvas, 29 x 43 inches, 2013

04





ART MUSINGS

RAGHAVA KK

the trial of daffy duck

acrylic on canvas, 65 x 144 inches, 2013

05



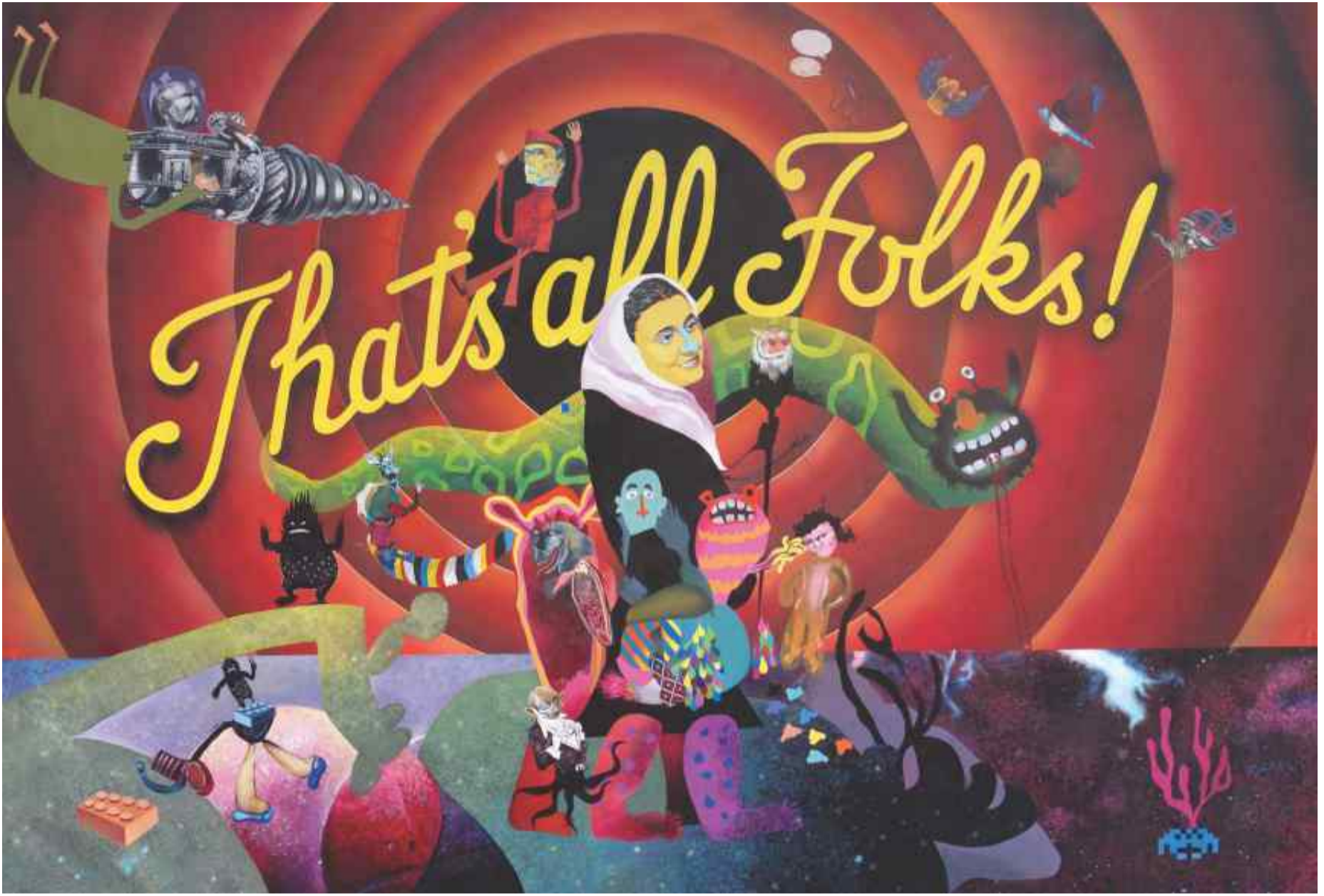
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RAGHAVA KK

fidelio act two

acrylic on canvas, 27 x 41 inches, 2013

06



ART MUSINGS

RAGHAVA KK

that's all folks!

acrylic on canvas, 57 x 85 inches, 2013

07

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RAGHAVA KK

born again

acrylic on canvas, 32 x 51 inches, 2013

08



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RAGHAVA KK

apple picking

acrylic on canvas, 24 x 27 inches, 2013

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RAGHAVA KK

why trouble the iyer with complex ideas

acrylic on paper, 23 x 16 inches, 2013



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RAGHAVA KK

haters gonna hate

acrylic on canvas, 24 x 27 inches, 2013

11

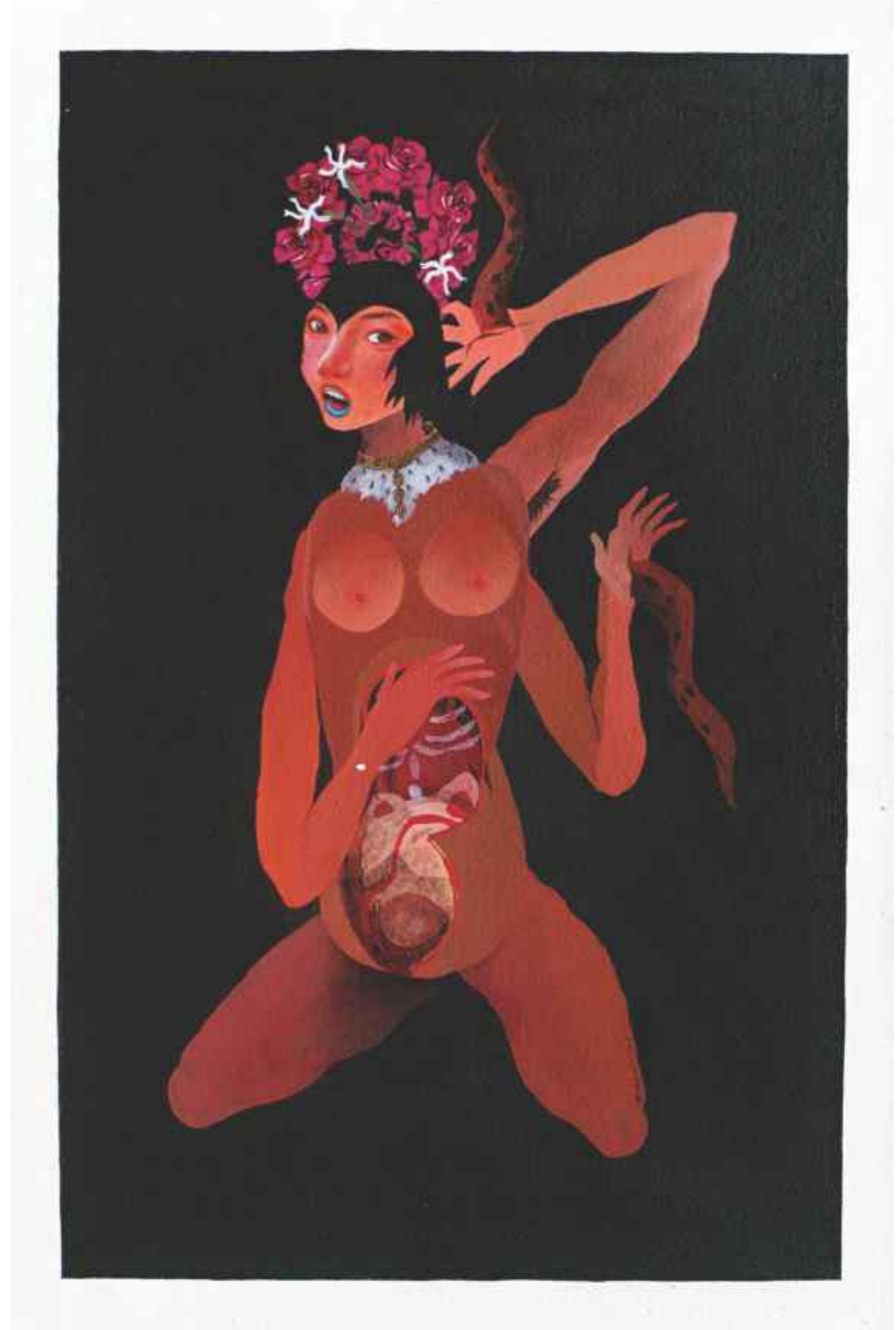
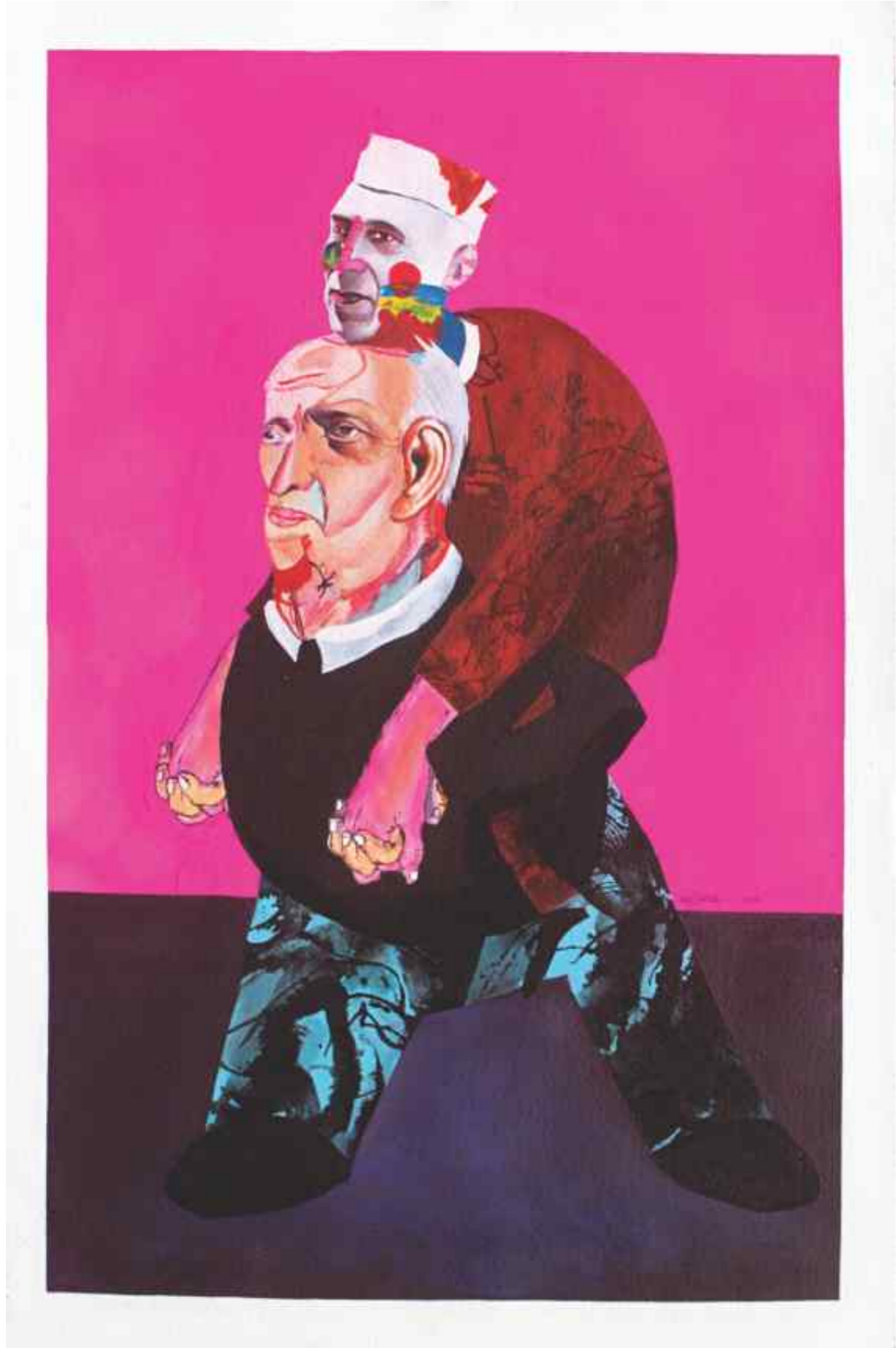
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RAGHAVA KK

study-philosoraptor

acrylic on paper, 24 x 16 inches, 2013

12





ART MUSINGS

RAGHAVA KK

study- apple picking

acrylic on paper, 24 x 16 inches, 2013

13



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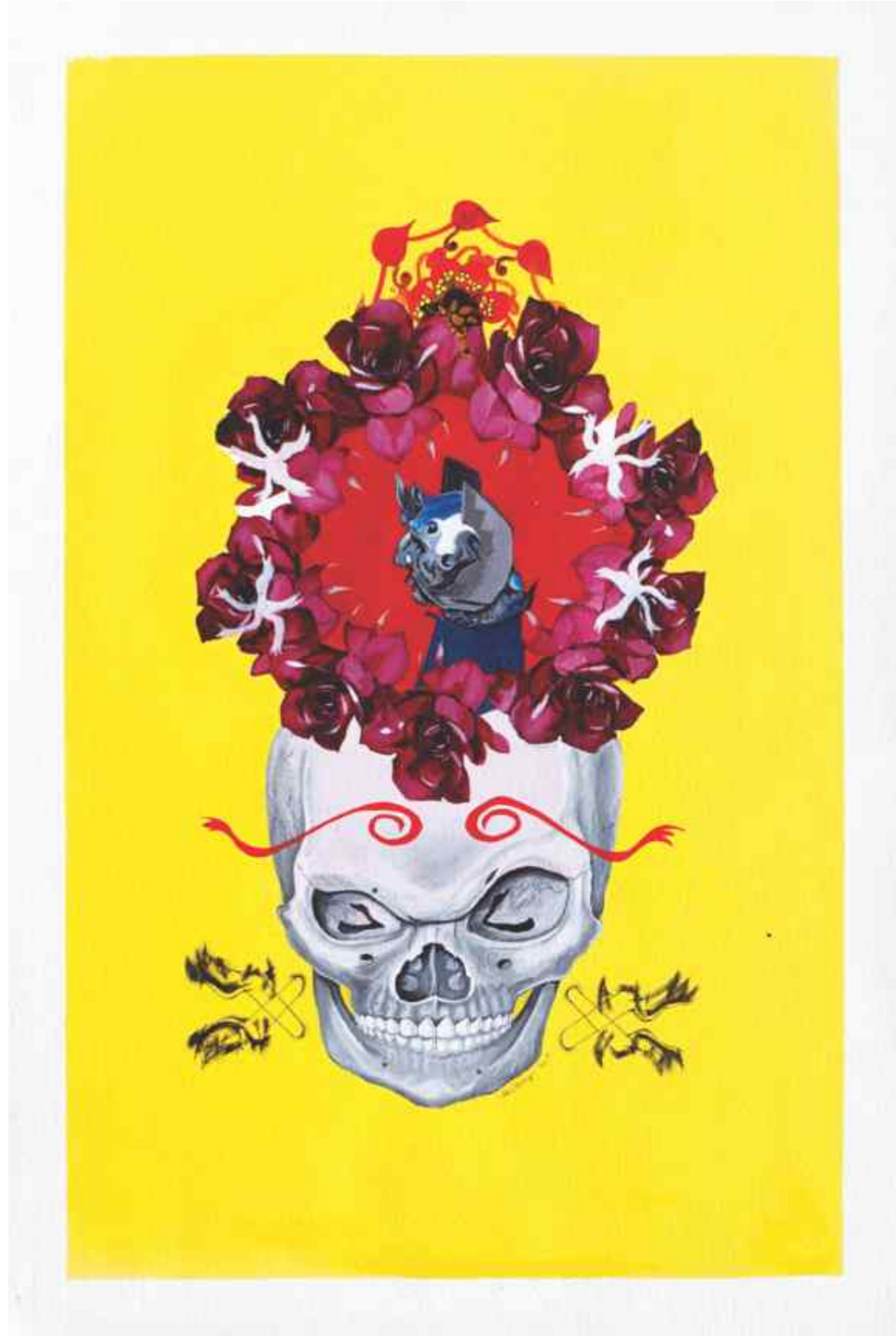
RAGHAVA KK

precipice dawn

acrylic on paper, 24 x 16 inches, 2013

13

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study - ambassador

acrylic on paper, 24 x 16 inches, 2013

15

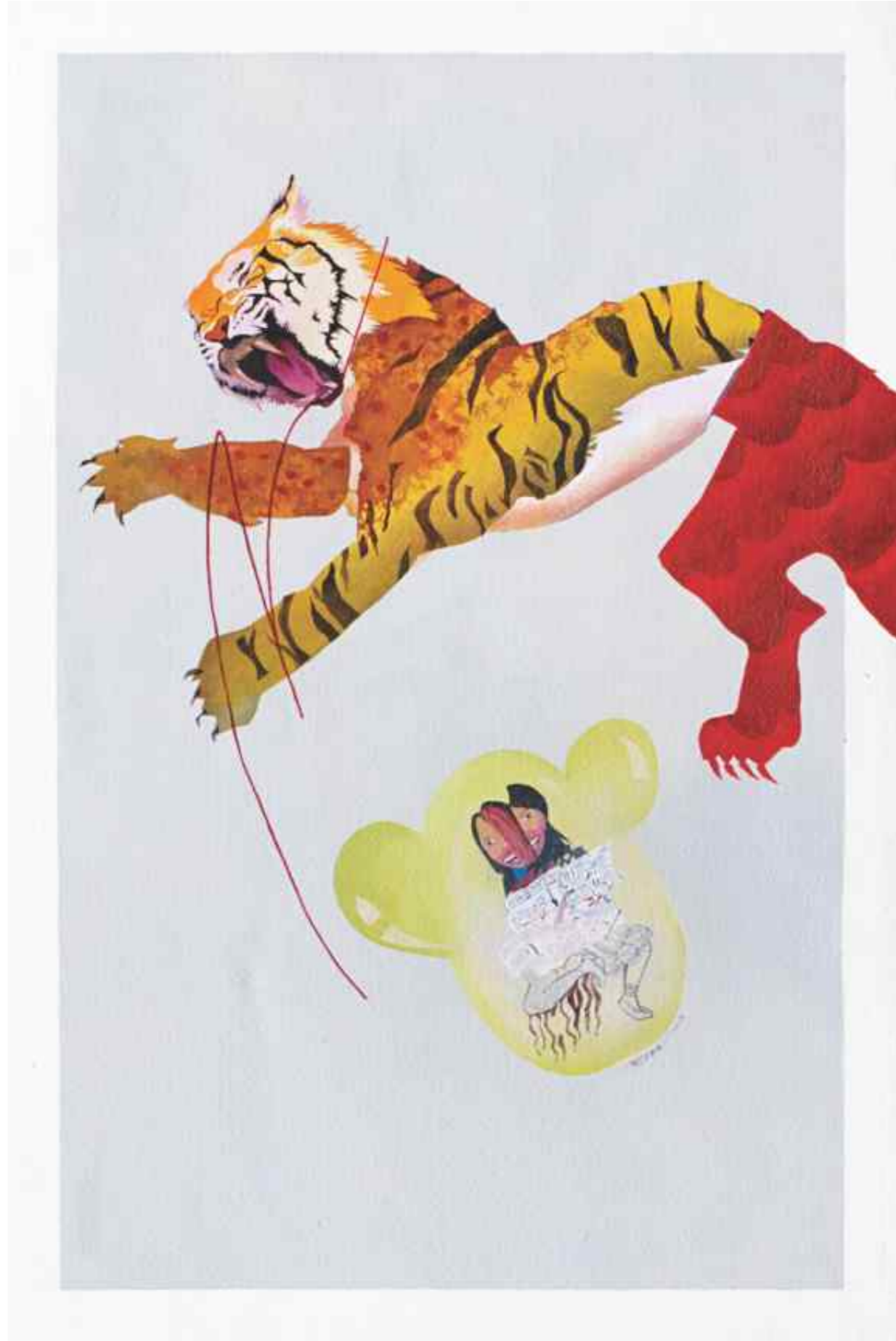
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ma-ya-ma

acrylic on paper, 24 x 16 inches, 2013

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RAGHAVA KK

in stealth mode

acrylic on paper, 24 x 16 inches, 2013

17



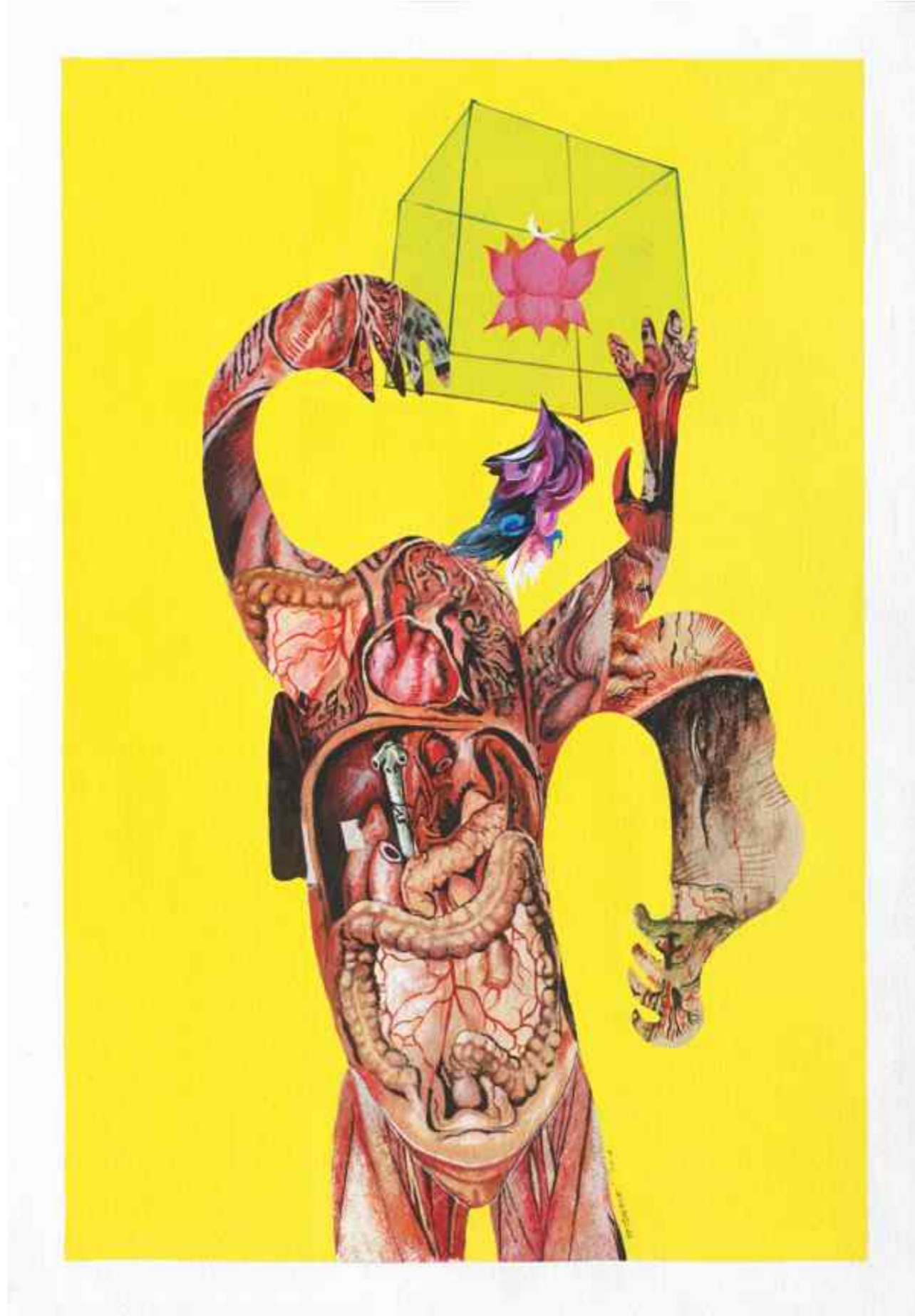
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RAGHAVA KK

fearful symmetry

acrylic on paper, 24 x 16 inches, 2013

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RAGHAVA KK

haters they know I'm a beast
acrylic on paper, 24 x 16 inches, 2013

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ART MUSINGS

RAGHAVA KK

a cubic ton of silence
acrylic on paper, 23 x 16 inches, 2013

20

I

That's All Folks, a comic and oft-repeated ending to a cartoon, stuttered and stammered by a pudgy pig, or indolently drawled by a bucktoothed rabbit, emerges from a dark hole of black nothing. Coming from nowhere, the words float endlessly, harkening the end.

For Raghava KK, floating amongst a distended visual culture, historical reification and caricaturization of everyday life is the emotive and personal pull of storytelling, where the production of totalities can be subverted. From the textbook to the comic book narrative to a meme going viral within a virtual space, Raghava KK uncovers a space of alienation and schizophrenic subjectivities in his paintings. The images are some of the most complex the artist has ever produced, as they hover on the brink on negation, verging on the disavowal of both medium and reference. It is in this unique moment of decontextualization, however, that Raghava KK conceives a redemptive space, where potential emerges from decay.

II

How can barren ground generate something new? The splinter in your eye is the best magnifying glass, Theodor Adorno said in his work *Minima Moralia: Reflections from a Damaged Life*.

In this text, a collection of moments and aphorisms, built upon one another, swinging between linear and tangential, Adorno speculated on the state of everyday life. In the face of violence and exile, he did not consider the sweeping waves of history outlined in texts and indoctrinated in national rhetoric. Instead Adorno looked to the small matters of those exiled, the daily grind, grappling with the edges of the familiar in an imminent un-belonging.

III

Raghava KK's paintings, much like Adorno's writing, convey the uneasy denaturing of the visual space, which once removed from its context, can be instrumentalized for different purposes. As an immigrant himself who left India years ago, Raghava KK has used the gift of distance in his own analysis of India's history. He introduces the idea of memes into his paintings, placing them against historical figures and art historical references, democratizing the space within his pictures where high art and other aspects of culture meet head on.

A meme as a concept has existed for some years but has only gained mass popularity with the advent of hyper-connectivity through the Internet. Memes are images, characters, sayings, or ideas, which through social networking and other mediums, can change and evolve in multiple forms instantaneously. The question of authorship and ownership becomes a tricky one, as memes can exist within any context, and are often evoked in ways totally divorced from their original meanings. Raghava KK incorporates a variety of memes in his works, including Gay Seal, Pedobear, and Haters Gonna Hate to mention a few. These are interspersed with animations from cartoons and children's books,

In the image *Octo-dad*, Gandhi's body is elongated in the center of the picture. While his eight heads point to the deification of Gandhi as a historical figure and the Father of India, he

¹ Theodor Adorno, *Minima Moralia*, 1951.

floats through the picture in a world far removed from the one he lived in. Raghava KK is sensitive to the manner in which the Gandhian tropes for life and self-reliance are distorted and stretched to fit another narrative. But which narrative? Not one of small details, or microscopic interests, for "the totality produces and reproduces itself out of the antagonistic interests of its members."¹ It is as clear as Gandhi's face printed on the Indian Rupee.

And so an image or face, even one as revered as Gandhi's, is turned into a caricature of its original significance. Raghava KK creates parallels between the cartoons and flattened renditions of historical heroes and memes, which can be appropriated and reappropriated as instruments of power, invoked in the name of various political agendas.

IV

Art Historical imagery has been similarly hijacked within the hyper-layering of our visual culture. The reproduction of the great work of art is not a new phenomenon, where appropriating and subverting the status quo being central to the dialogue of artistic production in throughout the Twentieth Century. Raghava KK pushes this notion one step further by converging traditional ideas of art with memes, and in essence making them interchangeable. Images as distinct as Picasso's *Guernica*, Manet's *Olympia*, and Garafolo's *Annunciation* are unraveled and incorporated into a personal story of Raghava KK's interaction with these images.

V

The Trial of Daffy Duck stands out as one of the most complex works in the series. Within the painting, Raghava KK layers memes and archetypes from art history and popular culture. The image is structured like a religious work from the Renaissance. While the angel in the center of the painting directly references an *Annunciation* painted by Benvenuto Tisi da Garofalo from 1528, the holy spirit hovers above in the form of *Mighty Mouse*, while *Spiderman* and *Batman* are in attendance like two archangels. *Daffy Duck*, the unexpected protagonist, is undeniably an anti-hero, both befuddled and darkly amusing.

It is possible that Raghava KK is considering the direction of his own life, as he returns to the country he left years ago. Raghava KK revealed a private conversation he had with Raj Mohan Gandhi, the grandson of Mahatma, where Gandhi recalled the fact that his grandfather, though revered as a father of the nation, was in fact an NRI who spent much of his youth living outside of India. This, in a sense, was Mahatma's gift. Only such a distance could allow Gandhi to construct a narrative to bring so diverse and complex a group of people together. What role will those outside of India play in its emerging story in the future?

Daffy Duck and the other characters that inhabit his paintings are offered to the audience as invitations, familiar in both their imagery as well as their circumstances. The moment of judgment is part of Raghava KK's commitment to collaborative storytelling, as he bids the audience to consider their narratives as he locates his own. For Raghava KK, he finds himself at an interesting cusp in his own creative process, embarking on a path of new beginnings.

Avni Doshi

ART MUSINGS

Avni Doshi is an independent art historian living between Mumbai and New York. After a BA in Art History at Columbia University in New York, she did her Masters in the History of Art from University College London. Avni writes for several publications including *Art Asia Pacific*, *Art India* and *Take on Art* as well as the website *ArtSlant.com*. Avni curated a group exhibition 'Loss for Words' at *Art Musings* in January 2012. She was awarded the 2013 Tibor Jones South Asia prize for her upcoming novel, 'Girl in White Cotton'.