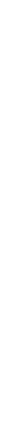


Reverie & Fantasia

SAKTI BURMAN
MAÏTÉ DELTEIL
MAYA BURMAN



Reverie & Fantasia

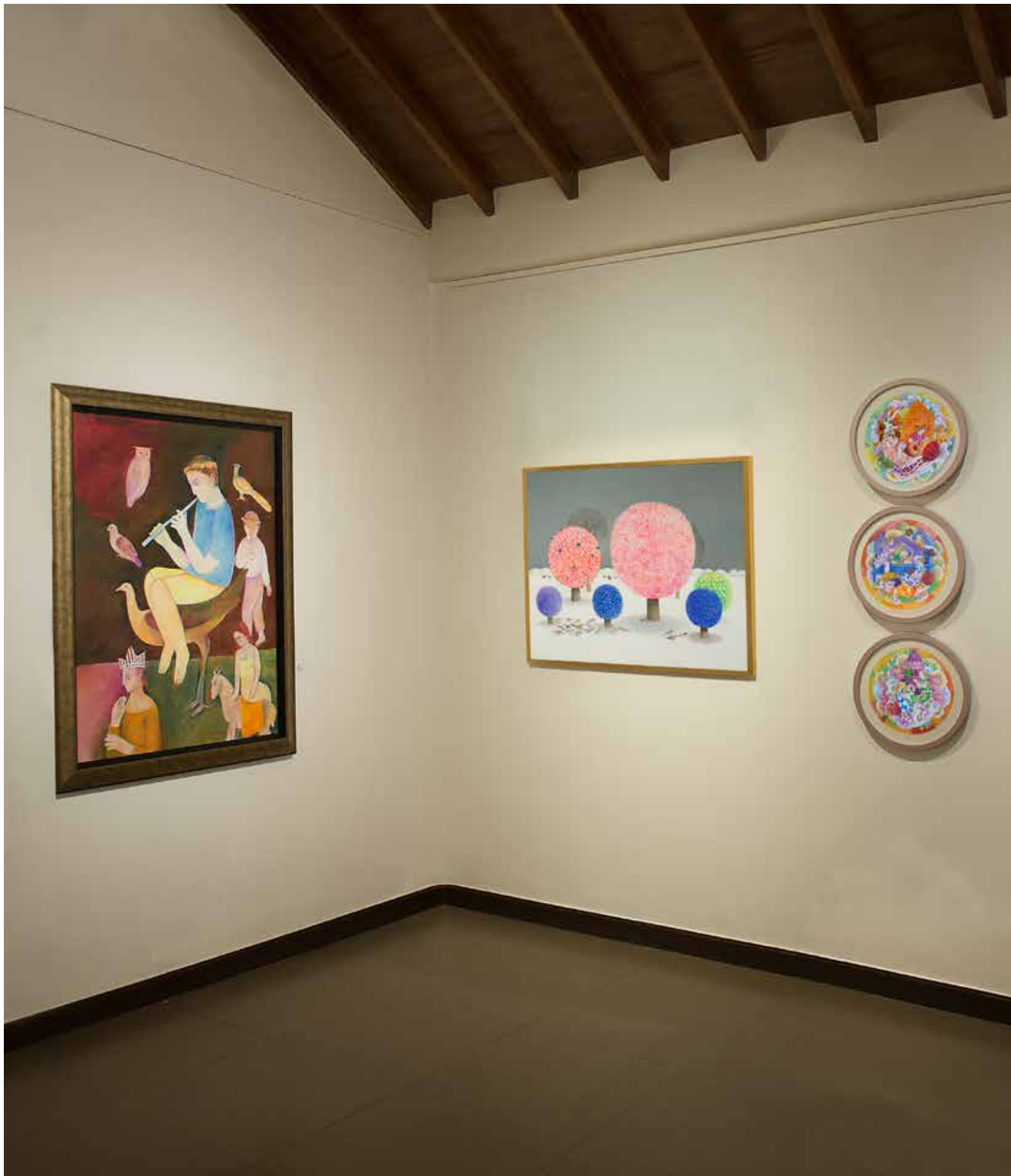


SAKTI BURMAN
MAÏTÉ DELTEIL
MAYA BURMAN



2023

ART MUSINGS



It's an honour for Art Musings to present a rare treat for art lovers in the city of Mumbai, with '*Reverie & Fantasia*', a group exhibition featuring the family of Indian master Sakti Burman, his illustrious wife Maïté Delteil and their gifted daughter Maya Burman.

In his capacity as curator, art historian and cultural theorist, Ranjit Hoskote has collaborated with Art Musings and written extensively about the works of all three artists. He had also curated the retrospective of Sakti Burman, presented by Art Musings at the prestigious National Gallery of Modern Art, Mumbai in 2017.

All the text extracts in this catalogue are taken from prior publications and catalogues written by him. As Ranjit has stated, "At the core of each of their practices is the confluence among mythologies, periods, and places. As they shuttle between societies and cultures, articulating in their work all the legacies they have inherited, the artists give themselves the freedom to select materials from the archive of global culture. Various Indian and European pasts inhabit their art, drawing from mythology, the Mughal miniature ateliers, from Kalighat as well as West European art history and Bengali popular culture."

We at Art Musings are privileged to have showcased the works of this family over several years, a collaboration punctuated by several landmark exhibitions. It has been an amazing journey spanning over three decades – a gallery-artist bond that goes beyond the boundaries that define it, to relationships cemented in deep trust and warm friendship.

Sakti-dada, Maïté and Maya, thank you for this privilege and pleasure.

Art Musings
Mumbai, 2023

SAKTI BURMAN







Sakti Burman is a pilgrim of complex allegiances. Birth relates him to India, and choice commits him to France. This is not a debilitating binary opposition. On the contrary, as he shuttles between societies and cultures, Burman gives himself the freedom to select materials from the archive of global culture. He shapes his paintings as fictions and allegories, which both clarify the present and predict the future. They register his trajectory through life, as he has re-defined himself to meet the stimulations and promptings of changing contexts. He celebrates a world that is moving towards a fascinating, unpredictable plurality. His art is an extended act of autobiography.

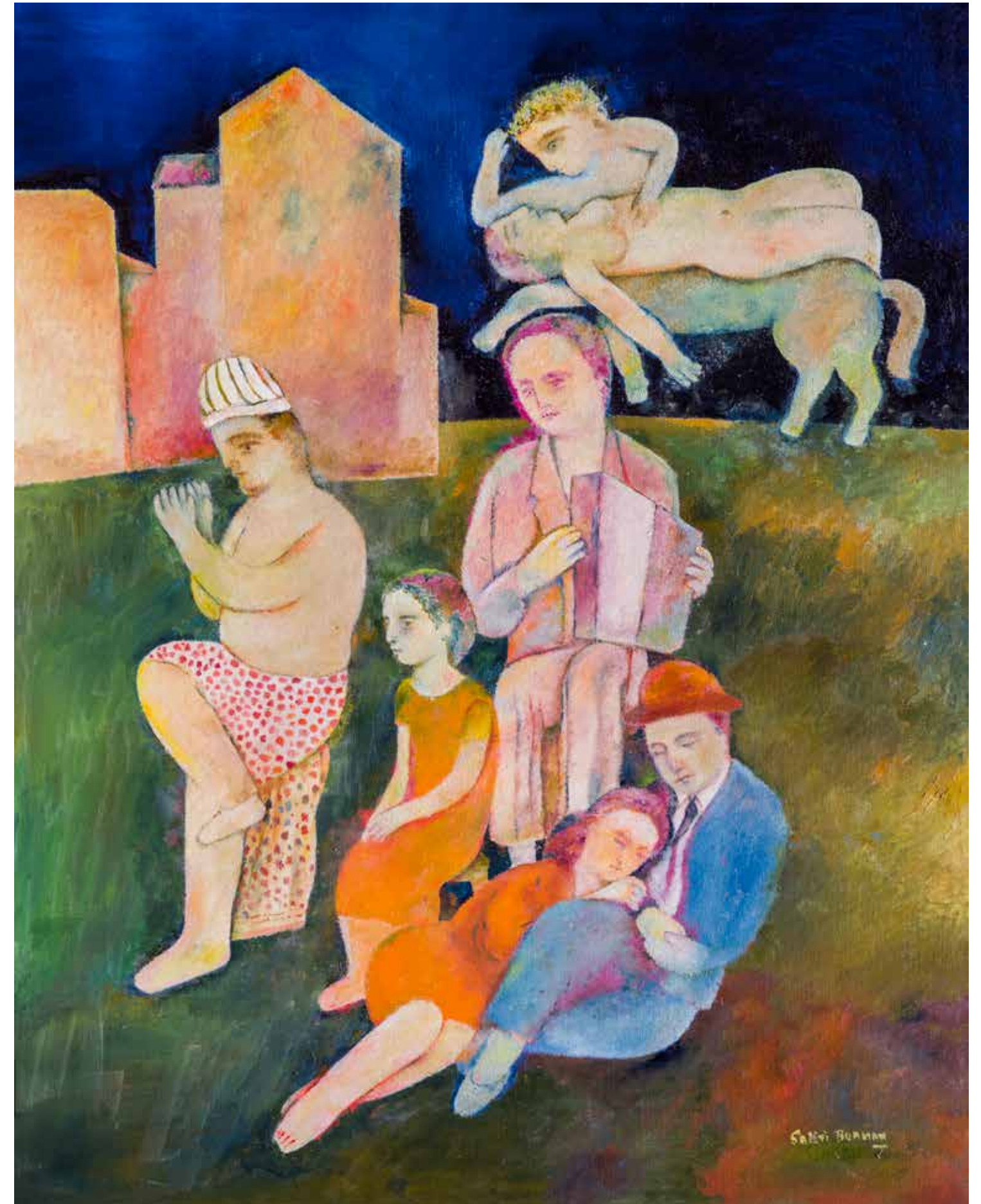
The confluence is the archetypal zone of crossing where energies of different kinds come together to generate something beyond themselves, something that is cumulative and contributory, life-giving and life-renewing. This is where rivers sprung from different sources meet one another and merge, flow towards the sea. In Sanskrit, the confluence is the *sangama-kshetra*, the place of communion; it is the *tirtha-sthana*, the bridge between now and eternity, here and the infinite. Sakti Burman's imagination is distinguished by an abundant confluentiality: through his vocabulary of images, which he extends through an ongoing sequence of permutations, combinations and improvisations, Burman orchestrates kaleidoscopic convergences among religions, cultures, mythologies, periods, and places.



Sakti Burman's paintings seem to exist outside the measurable flow of time, in a world of reverie and fantasia populated by mythic beings and personae that reflect the artist's self and his family circle. But the attentive viewer will find that the experience of entering Burman's world is never predictable. Sometimes, on encountering his oil paintings, we have the distinct sensation of having wandered into a theatre dominated by divine or archetypal presences: the goddess Durga, or the child Krishna, or an unknown god presiding over the cosmos in many-armed splendour.

Ranjit Hoskote





To enter Burman's landscapes and tableaux, is to submit to the measures of a dance that takes us deeper, not only into the recesses of a possibly shared mythic consciousness, but also into the complexity of the artist's particular life, as he has led it – in the space of excitement, exhilaration, anxiety and epiphany between two cultures.

Sakti Burman's art is resonant with the metaphor of the actor, the theatre, the masque. We have moved beyond *maya* or the play of appearances here. We are in the landscape of *lila*, world-producing play, where everyone plays a significant part and no detail is irrelevant. Burman the storyteller reinvigorates our imagination by reminding us we are not simply made of muscle, nerve and bone. We are also made up of the words and images, the poems and stories we inherit from countless previous generations.

Sakti has articulated in his work all the legacies he had inherited; the past is never past in Sakti Burman's art, nor is it ever singular. Various Indian and European pasts inhabit the floating present tense of Burman's paintings, drawings, lithographs, pastel works, and sketches, spoken and acted in his frames by protagonists drawn from Greek and Hindu mythology, from Biblical narratives and the passion plays of mediaeval Europe, from the puppet theatre, scroll painting, the Mughal and Rajput miniature ateliers, from Kalighat. Alongside West European art history and Bengali popular culture, he draws on the reservoir of family folklore.

RH



Studio studies: A Quiet Evening, watercolour on paper, 7.5" x 6.5", 2023





In Burman's deceptively buoyant and pleasurable paintings we may discern the perennial, the ongoing, the never-to-be-resolved but immensely productive dialogue of Here and There, Was and Not-yet, Self and Other. Indeed, these categories break down in the face of his work: he does not treat any identity as static or sacrosanct, preferring to traverse all grounds of identity to relay the paraphrase-resistant complexity of cultural belonging. The artistic imagination is no respecter of boundaries and checkpoints. Indian artists, like artists everywhere, create their own realities, which are not bounded by territorial or ideological conceptions like the nation-state.

If anything, it is in the play of appearances – or of *maya*, if you will – that Burman anchors himself. This is the point of vantage from which he sets in motion his stream of images. A seriousness of purpose sustains the making of these apparently playful works, which evolve through a meticulous sequence of formal decisions. This is attested to by his figures, drawn from richly hybrid origins and celebrating their plural nature. And by his surfaces, painstakingly built up in layers of application and in varying degrees of textural detail, of the palimpsest and the tapestry; of the tesserae of a mosaic floor; of frescoes and columns carved from veined porphyry and travertine. And by his spatial divisions, which transform the straightforward two-dimensional picture surface into intricate, cellular allusions to the honeycomb, the maze, the secret garden, and the neural circuitry of thought.

RH









Embedded in the currents of Burman's dream narratives are certain recurrent figures: a set of self-images or alter egos. Prime among these are Harlequin and Pierrot, the best-known characters from the repertoire of the *commedia dell'arte*. Proposed as opposites, Harlequin and Pierrot could certainly be understood as twin aspects of the same vexed personality, divided against itself. The *commedia dell'arte* emerged as a form of popular entertainment in Italy during the late 16th century, and spread rapidly across Europe, making itself particularly at home in French culture. It was an idiom of theatre featuring masked 'types', most of them representing the lower social orders engaged in a picaresque series of events. Rather than being programmed by a script, the *commedia dell'arte* gathered impetus from improvised sketches, which allowed its mass audience to poke fun at established social hierarchies and thus serve as a pressure valve to release and pre-empt potential *ressentiment* and unrest. Harlequin, wearing the chequered costume that is his signature, is the nimble-witted, smooth-talking, resourceful servant, a precursor of the romantic hero of later times. In sharp contrast, Pierrot is a melancholic figure. With his whitened face, black skullcap, loose-fitting white blouse and flared white pantaloons, he suggests the grave. Burman fuses the two figures, in his evocation of a pensive Harlequin-as-poet. In Burman's handling, Harlequin becomes a multi-purpose alter ego: the artist as one who is both participant and witness, actor and observer in his own dramas of creation, communication and being.

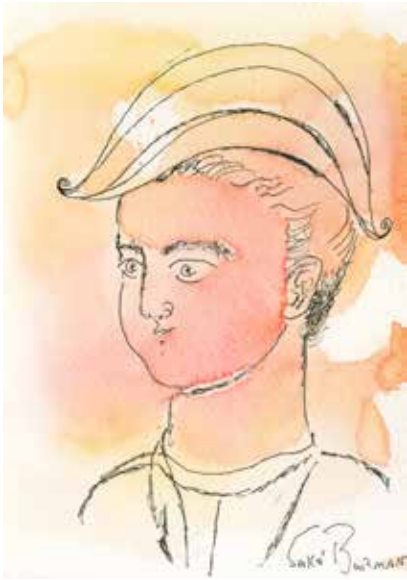
RH



Studio studies:
Harlequin, watercolour on paper, 7.5" x 6.5", 2023

Harlequin Thinking, oil on canvas, 10.5" x 9", 2022





Studio studies: Harlequin, watercolour on paper, 7.5" x 7", 2023



The Pensive Clown, oil on canvas, 10.5" x 9", 2022



The Rajasthani Puppet, oil on canvas, 14" x 10.5", 2022





Pan Avatar, watercolour on paper, 12" x 20", 1966



Young Girl with a Bird, oil on canvas, 7.5" x 9.5", 2022



Lady in Blue Dress, oil on canvas, 7.5" x 9.5", 2022



Birds and Trees, watercolour on paper, 9" x 12", 1980





The art of the Indian cave-mural painters, as much as the art of the Italian fresco-makers, has been a source of abiding sensual and intellectual nourishment to Burman. The mural has been a constant inspiration, reference, and presence in his work, invoking the immersive environments of Ajanta, Pompeii, Siena, the Scrovegni Chapel, and the Sistine Chapel. He activates the two-dimensional space of the painting, tuning it up to resonate with the glowing, wraparound ethos of an architectural interior covered with paintings. Often, at the centre of such evocations of the mural, Burman places the figure of the artist as child, as dreamer, as demiurge envisioning the world and populating it with figures, objects, situations, relationships.

The walls in Sakti Burman’s paintings are always membranes. Translucent, osmotic, swirling with speckled colour, alive with hints of figure and object, they mark, not the division, but the multiplication of space. The evocation of the mural, with its particular combination of modesty and ambition, serves Burman as a framework within which he can address the large questions of destiny and direction that confront humankind. The stories incarnate the hopes and dreams that societies have nurtured, and which have inspired them to quest on through the long nights of the spirit. A poet of pleasure and optimism who is intensely aware of suffering, Burman has applied himself consistently to invoking the sources of human joy and security, asking how humans survive and flourish even in the most unpromising circumstances.

RH

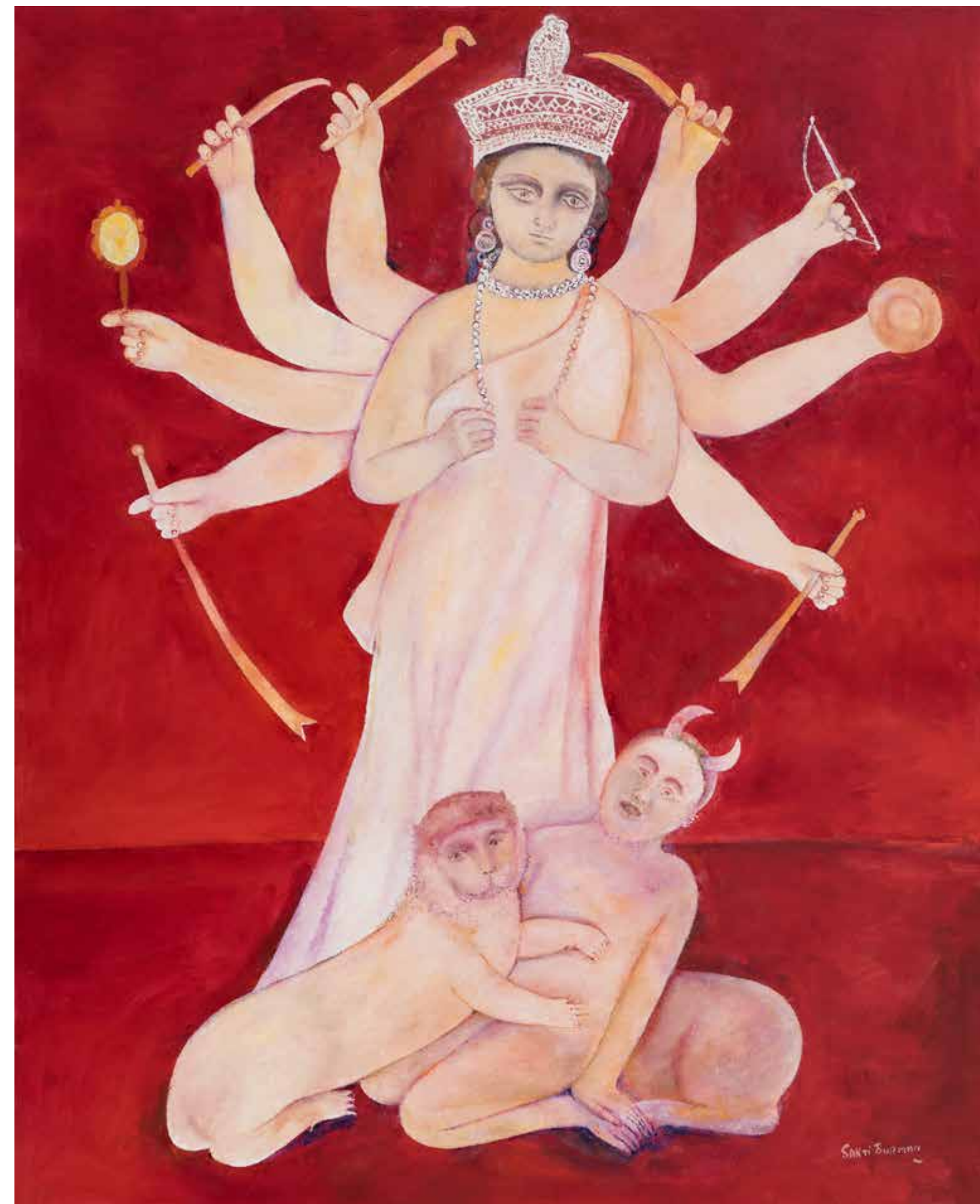
Studio studies: Musicians Dancing, watercolour on paper, 7.5” x 6.5”, 2023

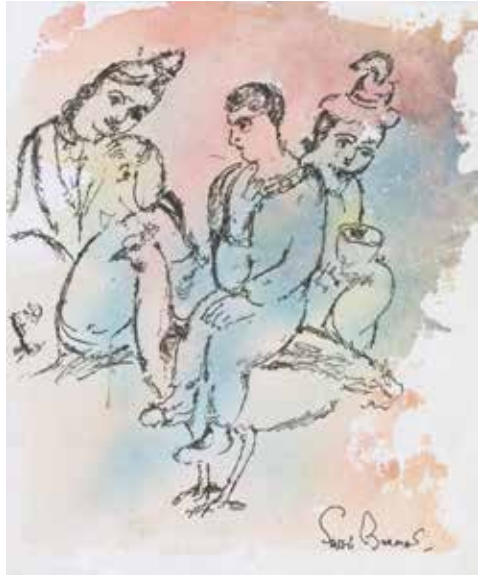


Musician, watercolour on paper, 12” x 9.5”, 2016



Studio studies: Musicians Dancing, watercolour on paper, 7.5” x 6.5”, 2023





Sakti Burman organises, in his art, a mutually replenishing relay between two levels of mythological narrative. On the one hand, we find the grand mythologies of the world, drawn from religious traditions and folklore and vibrant with their iconography: the Puranas, the Sanskrit epics, the Biblical accounts of the Old as well as the New Testament, and classical antiquity. On the other hand, there is the mythology that the artist creates around his private life: his autobiography is extended into fantasia and reverie; his frames are populated by his family and friends, cast as solitary figures or in groups, mingling on terms of easy familiarity with gods, nymphs, heroes, and celestial emissaries.

We sense, beneath the phantasmagoria of Sakti Burman's figuration, the deep-welling presence of a force that the artist describes as the 'unseen God'. This unseen God is not reducible to icon or scripture, not to be constrained within the specific outlines of any religious tradition. We think of Tagore's *jibon-devata*, the God of Life. We think, also, of Bergson's *élan vital*, the pulsing current of consciousness and life that animates the universe, offering all things animate and seemingly inanimate, organic and inorganic, the agency to organize themselves with greater complexity, to transform themselves, to participate in the cosmic dance of evolution.

RH



Vocabulaire (Series), watercolour on paper, 20" x 26", 1966 /67

Sakti Burman appears as a connoisseur of myth, who is laying out the elements of his painterly language; he has absorbed myth through literary text, painting, theatre, and festivity, and has begun to transform what he has absorbed into a private mythology. This portfolio of delicate aquarelles painted by Sakti Burman during 1966-1967 appears to have been rendered from mist, cloud and the shimmer of sunlight on the running water of a river. Here we see a group of nymphs; there, a variety of fantasy animals that shuttle between the feline and the avian; everywhere, fragments of the classical, including an aspect of the Venus de Milo and an aspect of a herm; and the beginnings of his great hero, Harlequin.

RH















MAÏTÉ DELTEIL



Maïté Delteil was born in the village of Martiloque, in France’s south-western province of Lot-et-Garonne. She grew up surrounded by nature’s plenitude, for the Lot valley, which extends up to Fumel, is a tapestry of fruit orchards, with its cherry, apple and quince trees, its promise of red currants, gooseberries and pumpkins. The high trees, the limpid stream, the fecundity of nature: little wonder that Maïté’s art is informed by a perennial awareness of the mystery of growth, efflorescence, decay and rebirth; of the smothering carpet of snow and the power of the fruiting tree to withstand and overcome it; of the simultaneous *tristesse* and *jouissance* of the cycle of life.

Maïté Delteil’s paintings are lit up by an unearthly resplendence, clothed in the delectable colours of particularity. At first glance, her works may appear to express a preoccupation with the genres of still life and landscape; but they are more accurately readable as meditations on the specificity of an experience that unfolds in the borderland between memory and fantasy, wakefulness and dream. The exquisite images that comprise Delteil’s body of paintings are the result of a perfected focus on the objects of experience, on the *thingness and thereness* of the world.

Delteil’s brush conveys into being the roundedness of cherries, the heavy pile of snow, the variegation of the plumage of hoopoes and finches, the particular serration and generic density of foliage. Delteil’s symbolist approach may be viewed in a line of descent that goes back, through the melancholia and mythic allusiveness of the *pittura metafisica*, to the balance of mortality and transcendence that marks the Dutch still life, and yet further back to the *vanitas*, the mediaeval allegory of life’s frailty and the transience of humankind’s works and days.

Delteil’s attentiveness to detail is a form of devotion: her paintings are songs of praise, in which she exalts the beauty of things even as they pass into decay and dissolution, as creatures of time. The artist’s imaginative choices are informed by an idealism of purpose, a desire to bear witness to values that supervene over the trauma and flux of everyday life in a world characterised by the malaise that the theorist Paul Virilio has named *l’urgence permanente*, the constant emergency.

Ranjit Hoskote





When we stand in the presence of Maïté Delteil's art, we recognise instantly that, at its core, there lie the regenerative powers of the garden, the orchard, the meadow, the pasture, and the forest. No matter what the scale of her paintings, each frame breathes the life force of an earth that has been tilled and harrowed, tended and nurtured, or protected from intervention. In her vibrant images, we encounter earth as it has been cultivated or left to its own ebullient devices; we find the earth's articulations as they emerge from the processes of replanting and pruning; we hear the voices of the natural world here, with the wind blowing through branches and the choric intimations of birdsong. The Attar-like parliament of birds that Delteil conjures up is symbolic of *community*; the quantities of meticulously rendered fruit in her paintings are symbolic of *abundance*; and the sheer materiality of the artist's light and colour, as though she were re-viewing the realm of nature through the stained-glass windows of a cathedral window, are symbolic of *beatitude*.

RH





The garden appears as a stage set in a dream; she delivers this space, at once public and private, through a play of scales and perspectives, phrased in variable shadows and sources of illumination. Anchored in this hortus, a setting calibrated somewhere between the pastoral and the sylvan, are figures suggestive of classical statuary. In Delteil's handling, Chirico meets Douanier Rousseau: we are offered a sense of security here, as though we were revisiting scenes from childhood, and yet there is an aura of mystery, a tinge of menace, to these paintings.

RH







Sky is Blue, oil on canvas, 20" x 24", 2023



The Season of Cherries, oil on canvas, 20" x 24", 2022

Maité celebrates the ability of plant life to survive snow and ice, to respond to summer rain, to bask in resurgent sunlight, to participate in the grand perennial cycles of growth, flowering, fruiting, decay, death, and rebirth. The universal principle of surging, pluriform vitality, the *élan vital* – in the philosopher Henri Bergson’s phraseology – achieves an efflorescence in these paintings, with their archetypal arboreal forms and their sumptuous palette of plum, crimson, cerulean, cobalt, and a gamut of yellows and greens. The key trope that inhabits these paintings is that of the *promise*. Commit yourself to the earth and its energies in a spirit of responsiveness and empathy, these paintings say to us, and the earth will share its treasures with you. There is a covenant at stake in these paintings, and an implicit call for symmetry: What the earth vouchsafes us has been sacrosanct; but we have failed the earth by not honouring our commitment to the mutual relationship with the natural world.

RH





In her paintings, Maïté immortalises the Tree of Life. It is both *arbor vitae* and *kalpavriksha*, connoting the two cultures in which the artist finds belonging, the France of her birth and the India to which she is connected through her husband, the artist Sakti Burman. The nature deities who populate her trees are denizens of two mythologies: they are, at once, naiads and Yakshis.

Often, Maïté sets her intimate psychic pageants of dream and nightmare in the garden, a *hortus* that carries hints of forest as well as meadow, a site where both a rampant wilderness and a gentler cultivation assert their claims. In this garden, the self sometimes appears as a sculptural fragment, a piece of broken classical statuary, come to rest among dreams fulfilled and dreams dashed, where wishes and fears manifest themselves as plants, creepers, flowers.

RH



Those who love Maïté Delteil's art cherish its exquisite gift for garnering detail, its sometimes startling juxtapositions of the natural and the human-made, and its ability to conjure the most extraordinarily delicate colours into being.

We revel in the evocations of the seasons here, and are puzzled by enigmatic dreamscapes that do not disclose their significance readily. We encounter symbolic transcripts of dream, as well as visceral engagements with the bodied self, its memories, desires, anxieties, and exhilarations.

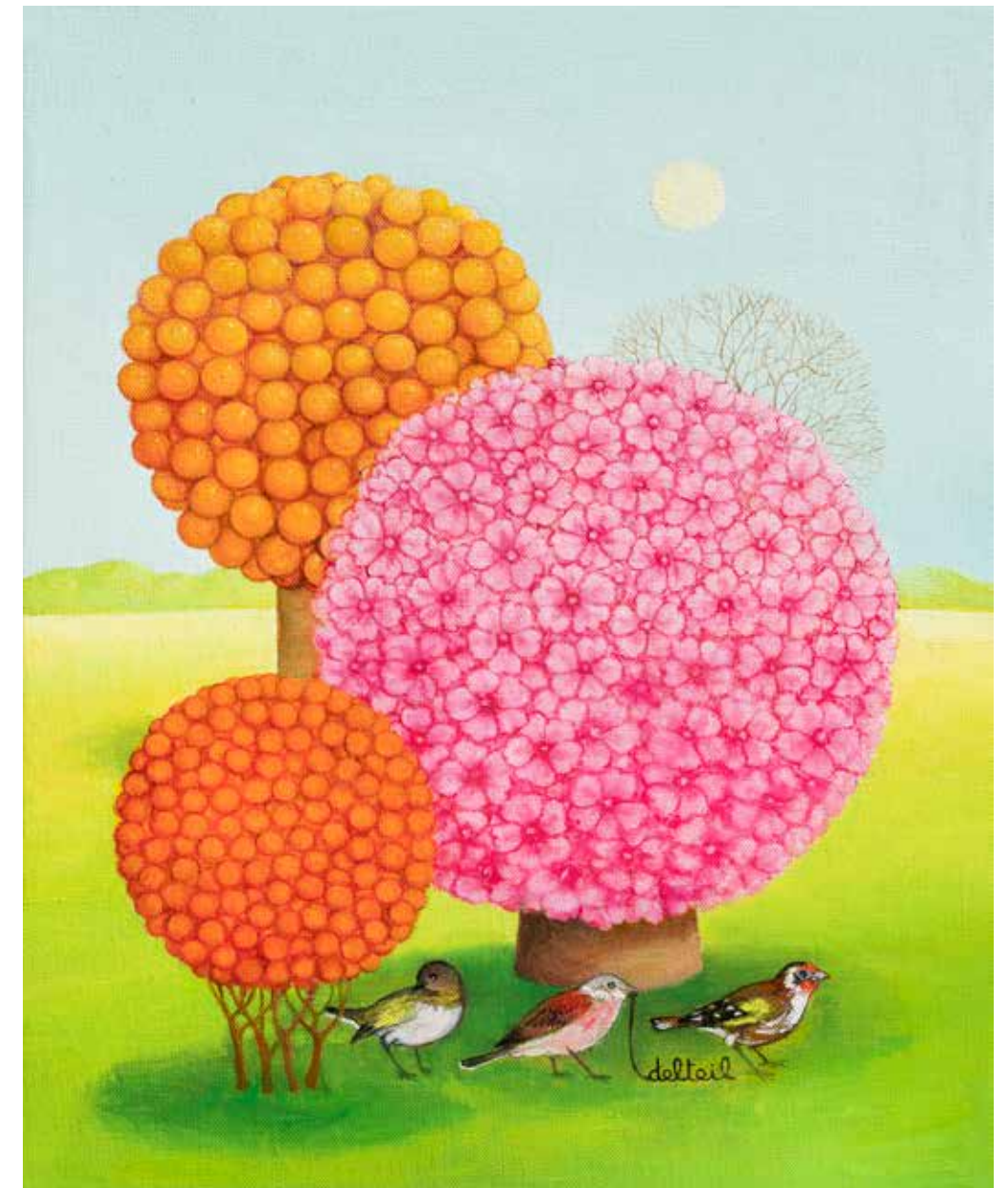
Here is the dreaming self, and here, too, is the guardian angel that is its twin, its *daimon*, its *eudaemon*. Here, also, is the *hortus*, the garden, with its mysterious and archetypal associations of Eden.

The garden a secluded retreat, a place of renewal: it enshrines a deep connection with nature and its abundance of flower, foliage and fruit, sculpted into a form and rendered at a scale suitable to urban design.

Her paintings assume varied tones: they can be hymns of praise, or elegies resonant with loss and longing; they can exalt the beauty of these present things even as they can lament the failure of hope, the dissolution of all that was loved and desired.

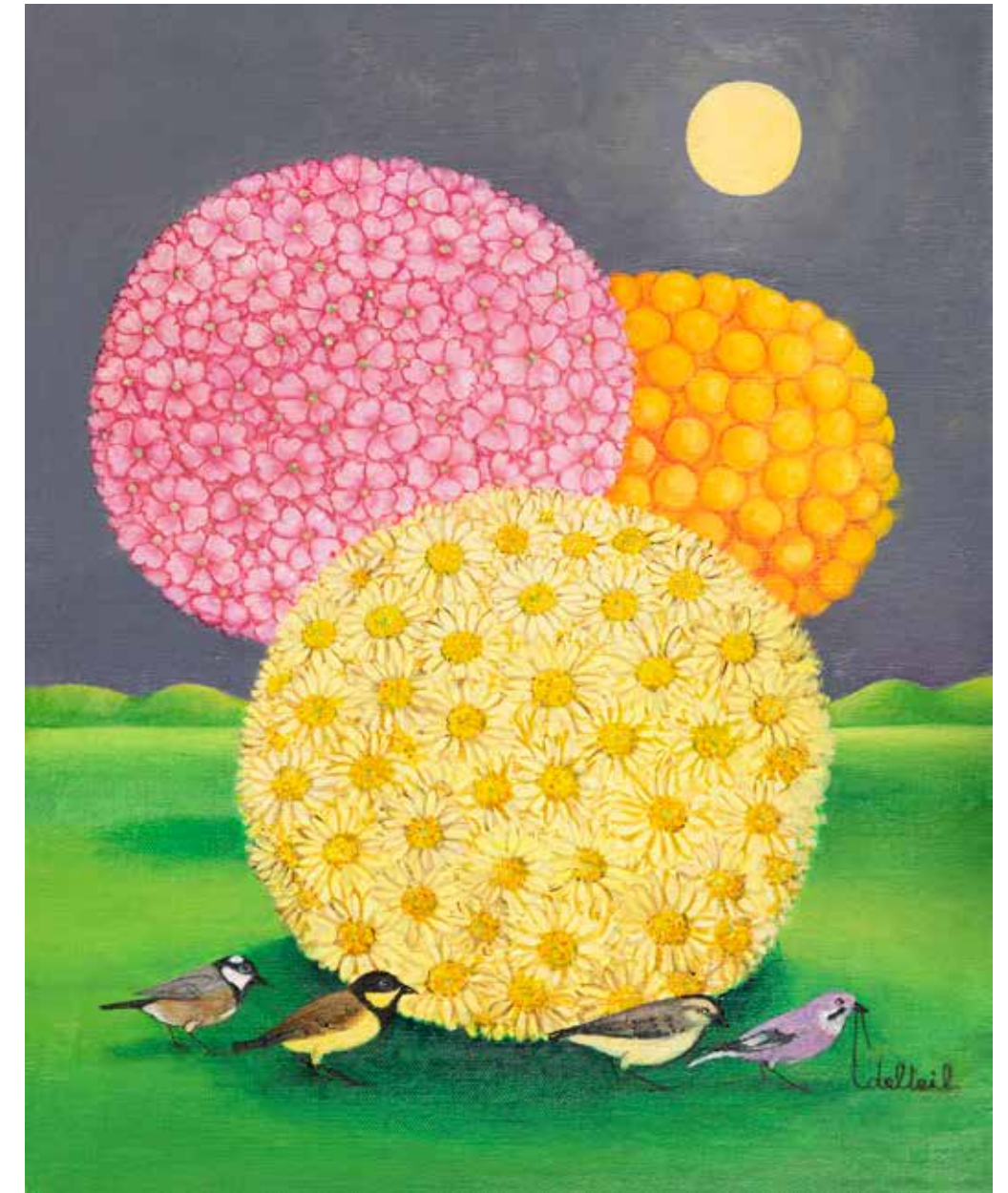
Maïté's art is informed by a perennial wisdom, one that has evolved around the mysteries of efflorescence, decay and regeneration, the *tristesse* and the *jouissance* of the cycle of existence.

RH





Garden of my Heart, oil on canvas, 10.5'' x 9'', 2023



Moonlight, oil on canvas, 10.5'' x 8.5'', 2023



After the Shower, oil on canvas, 10.5" x 14", 2023



Desire of Spring, oil on canvas, 20" x 24", 2022

Looking back into the artist’s records of her work, which extends across more than six decades, we come upon a suite of drawings that she made as part of her practice, alongside her painting, from the late 1970s to the mid-1980s.

Many of Maïté’s hallmark preoccupations will be found here. We revel in the evocations of the seasons here, and are puzzled by enigmatic dreamscapes that do not disclose their significance readily. We encounter symbolic transcripts of dream, as well as visceral engagements with the bodied self, its memories, desires, anxieties, and exhilarations. Here is the dreaming self, and here, too, is the guardian angel that is its twin, its *daimon*, its *eudaemon*. Here, also, is the *hortus*, the garden, with its mysterious and archetypal associations of Eden. The garden a secluded retreat, a place of renewal: it enshrines a deep connection with nature and its abundance of flower, foliage and fruit, sculpted into a form and rendered at a scale suitable to urban design.

Maïté draws with bubbles that have streamed in effervescent currents across a secret sea. This sea circulates a cargo of ephemera, among which are episodes from half-remembered dreams, fragments of memory, obsessive thoughts, phases of anguish and moments of ecstasy. Her drawings assume varied tones: they can be hymns of praise, or elegies resonant with loss and longing; they can exalt the beauty of these present things even as they can lament the failure of hope, the dissolution of all that was loved and desired.

RH



The Tears of the Earth, graphite on paper, 13” x 12.5”, 1970s

Tree of Life, graphite on paper, 12.5” x 9.5”, 1970s

Maya, graphite on paper, 10” x 9”, 1983



Nested into this suite of drawings, raised to the light of day from the artist's personal archive, is a sequence of drawings concerning the childhood of Louis XIII (1601-1643), King of France at a critical and turbulent moment in that country's history. While Maïté's evocations of incidents from the life of Louis XIII may seem like costume dramas, with doublets, ruffs, high collars, and veils setting her protagonists off from contemporary life and sealing them in another period, the perennial human situations involving fear, vanity, pride, courage, and ingenuity hold our attention.

We allow the traces of the historical record to accompany us as we consider other occupants of the artist's phantasmagoria: winged figures who officiate as guardian angels, earth goddesses who bless groves bursting with buds, birds acting as augurs of spring. We pass, almost without realising it, through a curtain of time, a shimmer of allusiveness, one state of matter to another, perhaps air to plasma. We find ourselves returning to Gaston Bachelard's elegant, eloquent meditations on the working of the poetic and artistic imagination: "In order for the milky image to come to the imagination in the presence of a tranquil lake beneath the moon, the lunar light must be diffused – the water must be agitated very slightly, and yet agitated enough so that the surface does not reflect crudely the landscape lighted by the moonbeams – in sum, the water must go from transparency to translucence, it must slowly become opaque, it must become opaline."

It is this *opaline* quality of Maïté Delteil's drawings that enthralls us, draws us to uncover their enigmas veil by veil, even as further veils are discreetly laid between us and the meaning we seek.

RH



Louis XIII Enfant (series), graphite on paper, 12" x 8", 1970s



MAYA BURMAN



Maya Burman's versatile artistic practice embraces diverse media and projects, including painting and drawing, as well as mural commissions posters, and illustrations for books such as *Fatik et le Jongleur de Calcutta*, the French translation of Satyajit Ray's novel, *Phatik Chand*. Born in Villeneuve sur Lot, France in 1971, Burman was trained as an architect at the École Nationale d'Architecture Paris – Villemin and the École Nationale d'Architecture Paris – Villemin during the 1990s. She spent a gap year at Centre for Built Environment, Kolkata, working on a survey of the historic North Kolkata residential quarter, associated with the Bengal Renaissance.

Burman describes herself as an autodidactic artist; but, as we know, the autodidact stretches herself to be more rigorous and systematic than her colleagues who have been shaped by a formal institutional itinerary. The artist's immersion in the European and Indic civilisations manifests itself, as does her lifelong exposure to the history of art, through the details of her works. She returns to the form of the tondo, a circular painting developed during the Renaissance; in her drawings, rendered with the Rotring, pen that was integral to her architectural education, she invokes the clay carts and puppet figures associated with her eastern Indian inheritance. Burman is not afraid of articulating the claims of the folk and the classical within the space of the contemporary.

Ranjit Hoskote





Holy Smoke, watercolour pen & ink on paper, 32" dia, 2022



In the Seed - I, watercolour pen & ink on paper, 16" dia, 2023



In the Seed - II, watercolour pen & ink on paper, 16" dia, 2023



The Blue River, watercolour pen & ink on paper, 16" dia, 2023



Hide and Seek, watercolour pen & ink on paper, 16" dia, 2023



The Green Birds, watercolour pen & ink on paper, 32" dia, 2022





Lotus Pond, watercolour pen & ink on paper, 22" x 72", 2023

Maya Burman's watercolour and pen and-ink works are peopled by pneumatic figures, usually depicted in moments of play, festivity or ceremonial, expressive of an abundant joie de vivre or what, in the Indic tradition, would be celebrated as *lila*, the cosmic spirit of play and creativity. The dancer, a key protagonist in Burman's art, draws on diverse genealogies, among them Degas' ballerinas and folk and classical dancers of eastern India. This is consonant with Burman's transcultural background: her mother is the French artist Maïté Delteil; her father is the Indian artist Sakti Burman, long resident in France.

The artist's immersion in the European and Indic civilisations manifests itself, as does her lifelong exposure to the history of art, through the details of her work. In a return to the approaches that were integral to her architectural education, she invokes monuments, both Indian and European, which have been important to her imagination.

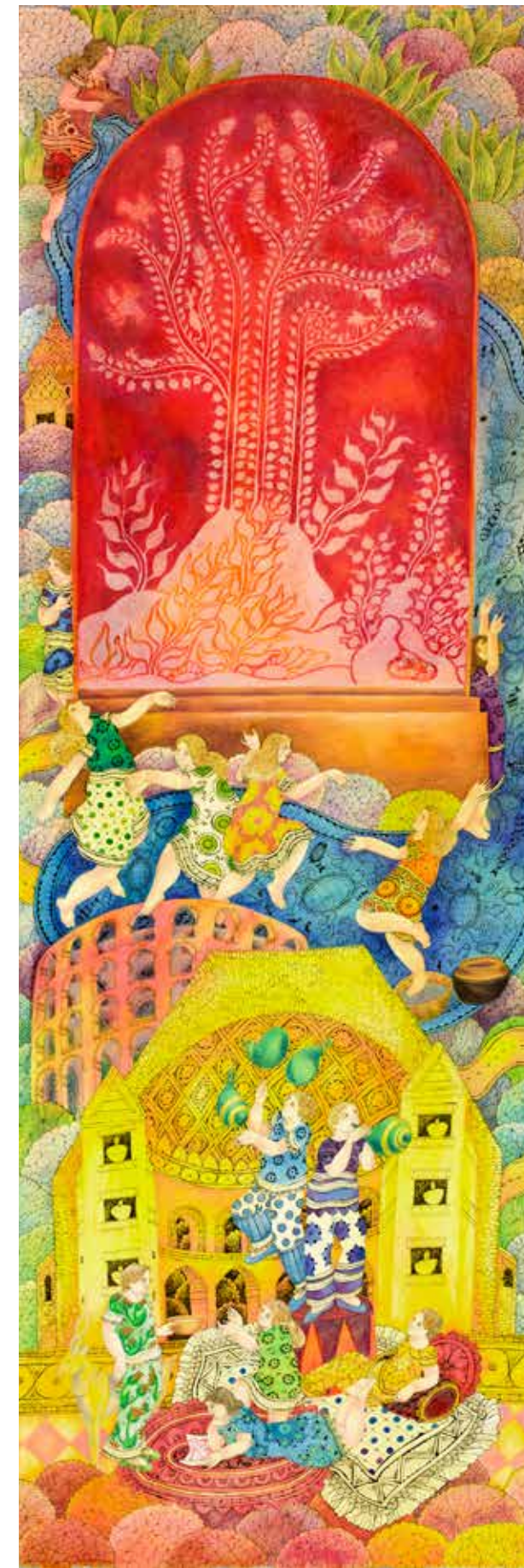
RH



Phoenix's Temptation, watercolour pen & ink on paper, 48" x 16", 2023



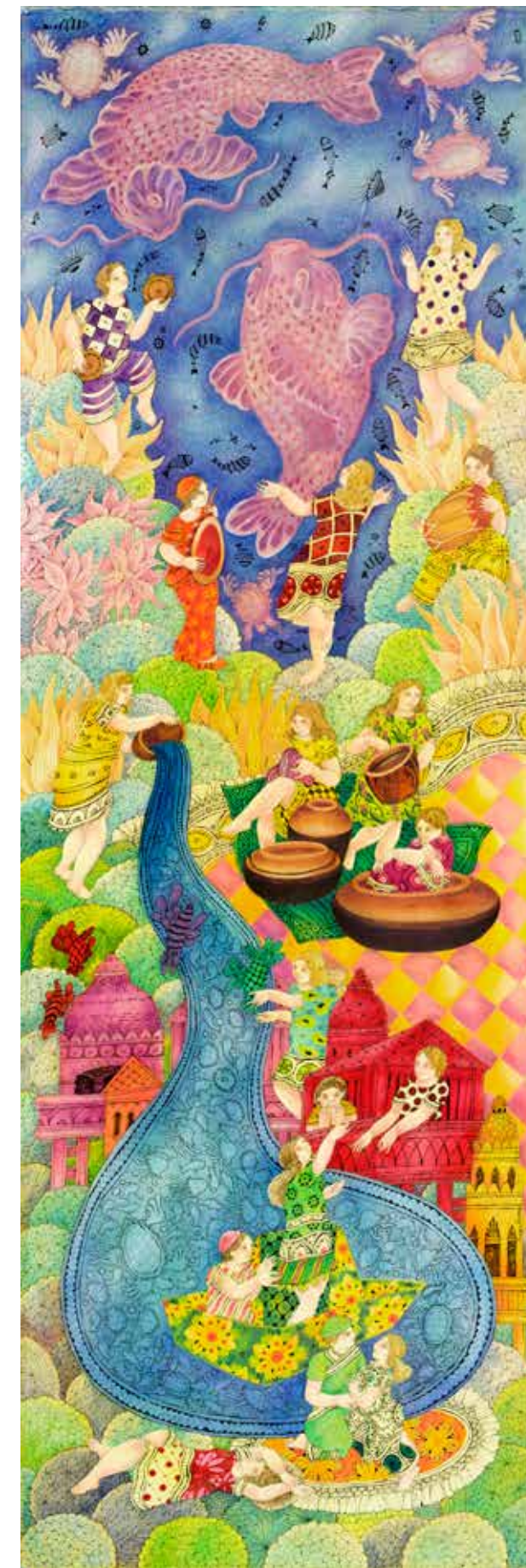
Cabinet of Curiosities - I, watercolour pen & ink on paper, 48" x 16", 2023



Cabinet of Curiosities - II, watercolour pen & ink on paper, 48" x 16", 2023



Just One Flower, watercolour pen & ink on paper, 48" x 16", 2022



The Fountain, watercolour pen & ink on paper, 48" x 16", 2023



Autumn Games, watercolour pen & ink on paper, 22" dia, 2023



Purple Tree, watercolour pen & ink on paper, 22" dia, 2023

In Maya's lively tableaux, time is measured out by reference to the successive stages of childhood, adolescence, youth, and maturity; its rhythms play out between the childhood world of toys and the grown-up world of built and engineered objects. Her buoyant figures encourage an identification, on the viewer's part, with the intimate dramas being performed in her paintings. We recognise the presence of vulnerability, and of fragility when faced with time's inexorable flow. And yet we sense and celebrate, at the same time, the creative energy that ripples through these images, born through pleasure and channelled through discipline. That energy promises us the power to shape and to re-fashion ourselves and our purposes, even within the stern directives of time. It offers us the gift of images and resonances that carry us on imaginative flights beyond the horizons of our historical present. These images and resonances will far outlive our physical and temporal selves. They connect us to levels and currents of reality beyond our own species and location: to trees and birds, to animals, to other languages and forms of life. That is the consolation we take away with us from the experience of these paintings.

RH







Enchantment – I, watercolour pen & ink on paper, 12” dia, 2022

Enchantment – II, watercolour pen & ink on paper, 12” dia, 2022

Enchantment – III, watercolour pen & ink on paper, 12” dia, 2022



Enchantment – IV, watercolour pen & ink on paper, 12” dia, 2022

Enchantment – V, watercolour pen & ink on paper, 12” dia, 2022

Maya's paintings are animated by a *joie de vivre*, expressed in the pneumatic bounce of the figures, the abundance of nature, the flowers that seem to cross over from the overhanging branches of trees to the patterns on the clothes of girls at play, the choreography of figures who shuttle between the frescos of ancient cities and the streets of present-day metropolitan centres, and the houses, streets, and neighbourhoods that the artist invokes.

Maya approaches life through the registers of the game, the feast, and the dance. As a game, it has a set of largely unwritten and unspoken rules that its protagonists must learn in the unforgiving theatre of experience, as they form a chain of figures devoted to plucking fruit, possibly forbidden, from a tree. As a feast, it lays a table of fruit and flowers for the unwary; the juice and the sap in them is a hostage to time, to decay, to extinctions produced by hungry diners as well as forces of deforestation. As a dance, life gathers up its participants into choric groups suggestive of Renaissance pageants or the Three Graces, their gestures enacted in an idyllic setting in which natural expanse and built form are not at odds but rather, in synergy. Maya portrays the protagonists of her paintings in postures of heightened play: leisure as a form of gracefully slowed down athleticism, expressing itself through a finesse of gesture in a pictorial space that appears to have been shaped as textile, as tapestry.

RH





Catalogue published by Art Musings for the exhibition ‘*Reverie & Fantasia*’
Sakti Burman, Maïté Delteil, Maya Burman

Exhibition Venue & Dates:
Jehangir Art Gallery, Mumbai, 29th November - 4th December ’23
Art Musings, Mumbai, 5th - 31st December ’23

Design
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Text Excerpts from:
Sakti Burman: ‘*What’s He going to be next?*’, 2016; ‘*Of Gods and Men*’, 2021; ‘*In the Presence of Another Sky*’, 2017
Maïté Delteil: ‘*Fruits of Grace*’, 2007; ‘*The Secret Sea*’, 2018; ‘*As the Seasons Turn and Return, the Sky*’, 2023
Maya Burman: ‘*Fête Champêtre*’, 2021

Photography
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Production & Printing
Pavan Java Studio

Project Team
Art Musings Gallery & Pavan Java Studio, Mumbai

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