SPACESCAPES

SUJATA BAJAJ


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sujata bajaj

spacescapes



Jointly published by
Gallery Art & Soul, Mumbai, India
Namtech Fine Art, New Delhi, India
Galerie Patrice Trigano, Paris, France

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Text essays
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French and Norwegian to English: Rune Jul Larsen

Photography
Artworks: Marc Domage, Paris and Suyash Tajane, Mumbai
Portraits: Deepika Rai (Oslo), Rémy-Pierre Ribière (Paris) and
Priyanka Vohra Anand (Dubai)

Print production
Archana Advertising Pvt. Ltd., New Delhi

Every
breath we take,
every beat of our heart, every
thought that crosses our mind, is a
testament to the cosmic dance of atoms and
molecules that make up our being. We are not
just observers of the universe; we are the universe
observing itself. The atoms in our bodies were once
part of distant stars, scattered across the cosmos
in spectacular supernova explosions. They travelled
through space and time, eventually coalescing to
form our planet, and ultimately, us. The oxygen we
breathe, the carbon that forms the backbone of our
DNA, the calcium in our bones, the iron in our
blood, all were forged in the heart of stars.

We are, quite literally, made
of stardust.

•

CARL SAGAN



Artist's note

In 2019 I happened to come across a NASA image taken from the Hubble telescope showing the Andromeda galaxy. I connected with the photograph without knowing what it actually was. The seed of Spacescapes was planted. I understood that this journey would require the use of new techniques as well as experimentation. Thereafter, I explored other images taken from the James Webb telescope.

The next five years were a period of great involvement in this fresh creation. These paintings are my discoveries during this time period.

The journey is ongoing. It would not have been possible without the constant support and encouragement of many people: first and foremost my husband and pillar Rune Jul Larsen, my daughter Helena Bajaj Larsen as well as my dear friends and art collectors Laila & Rustom Jehangir.

I also wish to express my gratitude to all the knowledgeable contributors to this book. Their enthusiastic reaction and willingness to engage with the rediscovery of the cosmos through my paintings has reaffirmed my understanding that in the infinity of deep space abstraction and reality are one.

Sujata Bajaj
Paris, 1st of January 2025



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Astrophysicist and science popularizer
David Elbaz
Paris, France

spacescapes

I used to think that only black holes possessed the power to play with time. Yet I leave Sujata Bajaj's artist's studio with the sensation that **time is slipping away from her paintings** and from those who look into them.

The train takes me away, a voice indicates the stations, a few passengers wait on the platform. They live, they travel, some think, others speak. For them, everything is normal.

A man on the left is dozing, the voice doesn't wake him. The others are already gone, traveling by thought through the electronic circuits of their cell phones. For them, everything is normal.

We pass an oncoming train, travelers rolling their suitcases onto the platform, **everyone seems to know where they're going, but none of them are going to the same place.** For them, everything is normal.

I look up at the sky, it's white, impossible to see through the cotton clouds. **Without the stars, how can I know where I am, where I'm going and, above all, where I come from?** The world escapes us, the stars fade away, obliterated by lights and artificial clouds. We walk, we run, we swim, we fly, to go where?

An advertising poster calls out to me, “Welcome to the present”. Colorful graffiti speaks to me in a language I don't understand. The trees seem to follow me, to accompany me, they're everywhere, their branches waving as I pass. Is it the wind, or are they trying to speak to me? Is this normal?

I realize that no two greens are the same, no two trees the same, no two leaves the same. I used to see only trees, but now I see individual beings, rich and complex. Their shapes and colors speak to me in an unknown language. **I have the impression that colors speak to us,** is this normal?

What if the answer to all our questions was there before our eyes all along, written in the ink of light, encoded in the leaves of trees, in stars and nebulae, in clouds and galaxies, in atoms and molecules? Who can translate for us the language of clouds and nebulae, of stars and galaxies, the language of our origins and destinies?





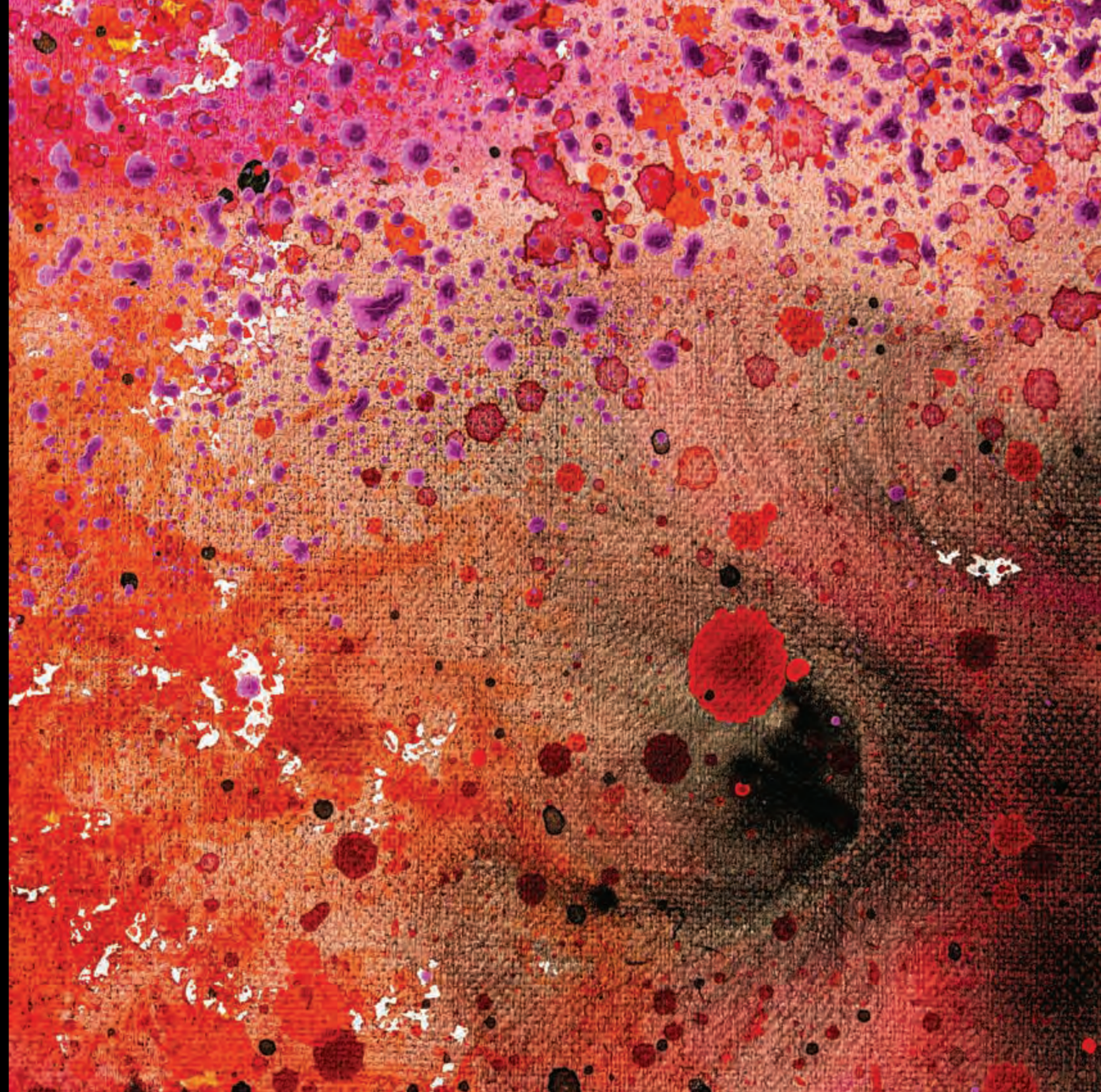
The scientist or the artist? And why should we choose, closing one eye and opening only one, looking at the world flat, as if it had no depth? What if the answer lay at the crossroads, where perspectives mingle and intertwine, where the world takes root in an unsuspected depth? **Who is speaking? In what language?** That of shapes and colors, or that of numbers and their mathematical relationships? That of mirrors and lenses, or that of the gaze and inspiration?

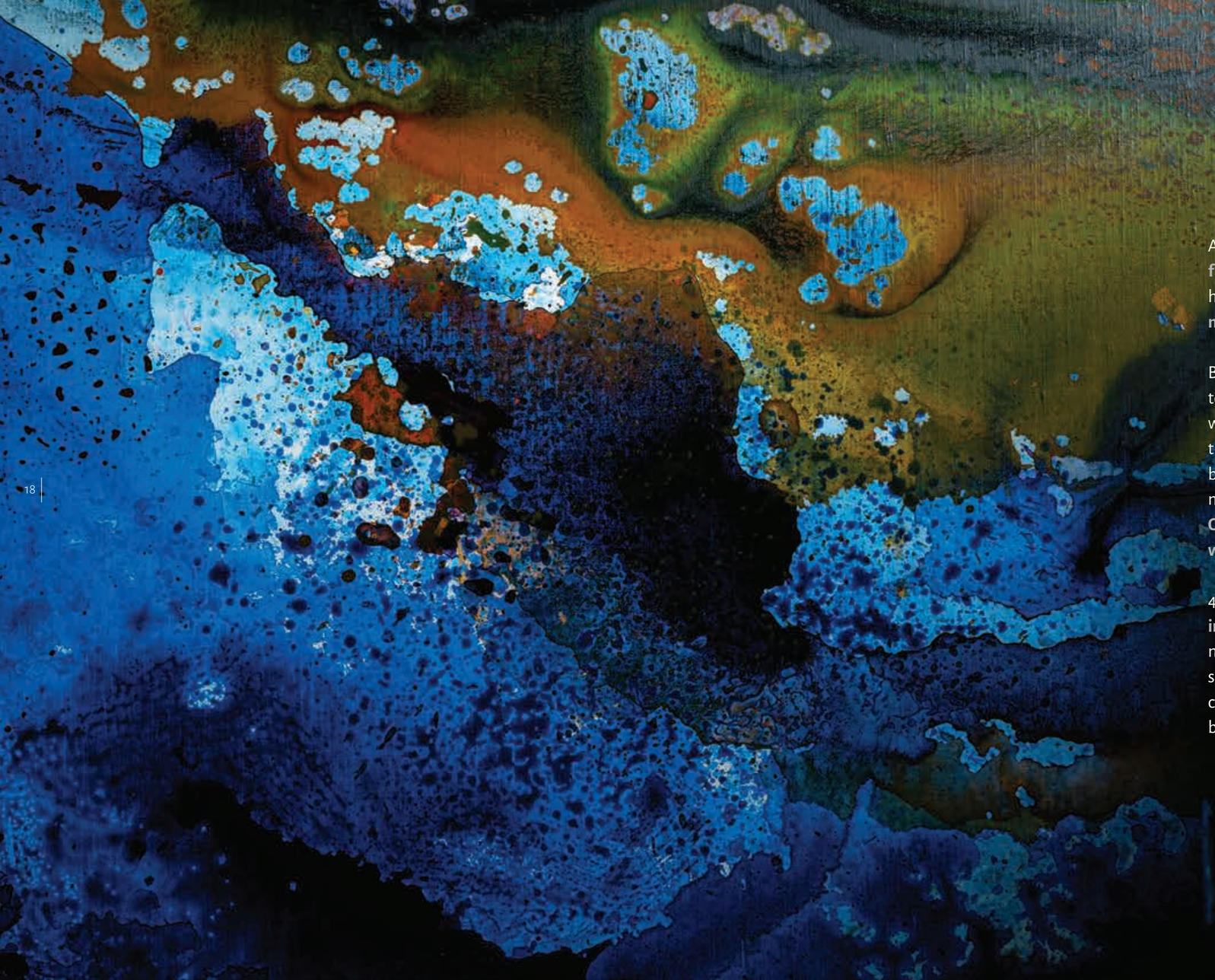
"What is love?" asks the disciple. "Love is wanting to love," replies the master. **And beauty? Is it also a child of desire, or a reality as concrete and material as a flower or a mountain?**

The astrophysicist plunges his gaze into the depths of the sky, in search of a stray particle of light willing to bear witness to what he has seen in the distant past. He knows he mustn't succumb to the all-too-human temptation to weep or jump for joy. He must keep a cool head, and entrust his fingers with the task of transmitting facts and their logical consequences to his computer keyboard. Stick to the facts, nothing but the facts. The color red? No, no, don't think of it as poppy or blood, but as the presence of the sulfur atom excited by the ultraviolet radiation of a young, massive star, just before it explodes into a supernova. The

blue color? No, no, it's not the color of the sky or the ocean, but that of hydrogen, the simplest of atoms. What about green? What about oxygen? You wouldn't want to forget the atom that allows you to breathe, would you? And yet, these colors, these facts, these photons captured in droplets strangely resemble those canvases painted by Sujata Bajaj, and they're beautiful, don't you think? It's strange, my breathing seems to be free of a weight, as if my body can read the language of shapes and colors. **Are these canvases paintings or re-creations of the universe?** Do they speak of the infinitely distant or the infinitely near? Who are we? Who am I? Who is Sujata Bajaj? Is she an artist, a translator, a visionary, a mathematician-physicist-biologist with the power of numbers to govern arrangements? **Is it necessary to understand beauty in order to savor its flavors, when it carries us away to an inner place that makes sense?**

But wait... I know this image, I've carried it with me for so many years. What is this reflection? A star or a sheet of silver? What color is it? The color of hydrogen and oxygen atoms ionized by budding stars, or the pigment of acrylic? What is this growth? The emergence of a planet or the superimposition of layers of paint?





And here, at the top right of the canvas, **look how space imposes itself, freed as it seems by the light** of a cluster of young stars that have just hatched in the cosmos. **Or is it an immaculate space, guardian of the memory of the original canvas?**

But wait... There I see it, that star I recognize - it's the one that gave birth to us. And isn't this red, which recalls the red of our blood, the blood shed when the star died? Oh sure, it's not liquid blood, no, but its color is that of the iron that gives our blood its red hue. A drop of blood, a single drop of blood, is to the universe what a hard disk is to a computer. A memory. The memory of our celestial origins. Here, death marks the end of an existence. **Out there, in the recesses of heaven, death celebrates the birth of new worlds,** the emergence of complexity.

4.56 billion years ago... I repeat... 4.56 billion years ago, **a star was floating in space, where this painting by Sujata Bajaj now stands.** That star is no more, but if we had witnessed its explosive demise, what we would have seen is, to the drop of paint, the same shape, the same image, the same colors, as this painting. In the universe, an explosion is a place of death and birth, one always accompanied by the other.



The colors seed space with a new complexity, a people of atoms ready to give birth to planets and, why not, life. **The phenomenon of explosion is not destructive,** and why would it be destructive where nothing yet exists? On the contrary, it's a source of creation, collecting atoms and molecules, bringing them together and generating new stars surrounded by a procession of planets. We were born in the explosion of a star. We, the animals, the plants, the Earth and the Sun.

When we plunge into the blackness that flows between the colors of a Sujata Bajaj painting, we enter the lair of cosmic creation, where proto-stars and other pre-stellar cores germinate. **We are witnesses to a re-creation... And for our minds preoccupied with the torrential pace of passing time, it's a recreation.** We plunge into the cosmic void, full of infinite possibilities, where we all come from.

Look closely at these swirling colors, from which the shapes of the universe emerge, as in the volutes of an erupting volcano. We don't discover them, we recognize them, we carry them inside us, in our blood and in our skin.

We are made of this paint, and we are beautiful.

Manuel Rabaté

Director, Louvre Abu Dhabi, UAE

When we met in Abu Dhabi, Sujata Bajaj suggested that I contribute to this book, a proposal I gladly accepted because of the singular interest her work arouses. At the Louvre Abu Dhabi, our primary mission is to bring to life a space where cultures meet and engage in dialogue. Working between India, France and the Middle East, Sujata Bajaj also fully embodies the role of a cultural intermediary.

Trained under S.H. Raza, Sujata Bajaj carries forward a tradition of profound reflection on the world through abstract painting. This connection resonates with Louvre Abu Dhabi, where Raza became the first Indian modern artist represented in its collections with his canvas Bindu (1986). Raza regarded painting as a form of meditation, a legacy that Bajaj extends while infusing it with her own distinctive and personal technique. In Spacecapes, she blends dripping techniques with collages of gold and silver leaf, imbuing her works with a striking material presence.

Inspired by images from the James Webb Space Telescope, she captures and interprets the dynamic of the cosmos: the movement of dying stars, expanding nebulae, and clusters of comets. This intense pictorial expression, balancing science and imagination, resonates with the artistic exploration we stand for at Louvre Abu Dhabi, especially in our current exhibition *Imagining the Cosmos* at the Children's Museum, where creativity opens a window to infinity. Spacecapes reaffirms this essential link between humanity and the universe.

In this space where reality and abstraction meet, Bajaj celebrates the fusion of artistic creation and scientific discovery, reminding us that art, like a telescope aimed at the stars, reveals what escapes our perception and feeds our sense of wonder.



Francesco Buranelli

President of the Permanent Commission for the Trustee of Monuments and Artists of the Holy See, Rome, Italy

Those accustomed to confronting the works of Sujata Bajaj will be surprised and incredulous at the new paintings in the Spacescapes series.

An explosion of lights and colours that become an abstract and fluctuating expressive force of unstable balances governed by an apparent primordial chaos that takes us back to the origins of the creation of the world:

"The earth was formless and empty and darkness was over the surface of the deep" (Genesis 1,2).

Works that, in the wake of twentieth-century abstractionism, project us into a space without boundaries, in continuous becoming, dominated by the vital energy of a planet on the brink of climatic collapse, ravaged by human egoism.

Spacescapes thus becomes a metaphor and a denunciation of the crisis of the existence of planet Earth, in which Sujata's universe relives all its dramatic topicality that cyclically has to be renewed in order to face ... tomorrow.

Genesis
Acrylic on canvas
with gold and silver leaf
150 x 150 cms, 2024

across the universe

Girish Shahane
Art Critic, Mumbai, India

Sujata Bajaj's canvases from her Spacescapes series, large in size and vast in scale, take on the most immense subject of them all, the cosmos itself. These spectacular paintings mark the latest change of direction in a career that has embraced a number of significant shifts over four and a half decades, constituting what is perhaps her most ambitious project in a life full of challenging undertakings.

The Spacescapes are dramatic, uninhibited orchestrations of pigment by a colourist at the peak of her powers. They flow organically, without the structure offered by drawings or predetermined patterns. Appropriate to the sublimity of outer space, they are deep-hued with a prominent application of black, balanced by high-key areas radiating vitality. A few of the works contain vortex-like cores, while the majority possess more amorphous contours. In both cases, the artist has attended equally to all parts of the surface, covering the canvas with layers of paint such that a viewer focusing on any section of a picture will find material to transfix their gaze. These are paintings that reward exploration from a series of vantages, beginning from a reasonable distance, moving in close and then back again.

Sujata's connection with the stars was formed early, during her childhood in the city of Jaipur where, in the hot season, families slept on cots in the courtyard under the open sky.

Brought up in a Gandhian family devoted to education and social work, she was sent during her vacations to Wardha district in Central India where Vinoba Bhave, one of Mahatma Gandhi's foremost followers, had established the Pavanar ashram not far from Gandhi's own Sevagram. Ashram life was ascetic, with residents expected to rise before dawn. Frequently, Sujata would be woken even earlier, at three in the morning, and taken to a rooftop to gaze at the heavens through a telescope under the tutelage of Shivaji Bhave, Vinoba Bhave's younger brother. During those warm, clear nights spent learning to identify the constellations, she developed a lifelong affinity with the night sky. To this day, when she travels to the countryside in her adopted home in France or in places as far-flung as Tanzania's Serengeti National Park, Lake Titicaca in the Andes mountains, or the Lofoten Islands in northern Norway which offer the perfect location to view the Northern Lights, she times her visits with moonless nights to witness the Milky Way in its full glory.

Stargazing is now so impeded by dirty air, light pollution and airliners crisscrossing the skies that even the most sophisticated observatories located in remote regions of the globe are affected, spurring the launch of instruments into outer space. The latest and greatest of these, the James Webb telescope, placed at a point 1.5 million kilometers from earth to peer long and deep into what the naked eye would perceive as tiny, almost empty bits of space, produced images that were revelatory for Sujata. Her visual memory of the sky as a calm, dark hemisphere speckled with twinkling lights was now complemented with a very different perception of a tumultuous universe where creation and destruction, though occurring on time scales far beyond human lifespans, left traces that could be rigorously mapped. Although she already possessed this understanding at an intellectual level, and was familiar with photographs from the Hubble Space telescope, the James Webb images galvanized her artistic imagination and catalyzed the creation of Spacescapes.

Those images, as released to the public by NASA, are not photographs in the way we commonly understand the term. The Webb telescope is dedicated to surveying the infrared spectrum, which the human eye cannot see. NASA makes the darkness visible through processes and filters involving human intervention and creativity. The technicians creating the images pay attention to aesthetic qualities while trying to stay true to the raw data. For instance, they base the orientation of each image on compositional conventions, there being no up or down in space.

The Spacescapes, too, have no pre-defined markers of up and down. Sujata approaches paintings in the series from all directions, placing the canvas on the floor and adding layer upon layer of acrylic pigment. What emerges is as different from the NASA pictures as those are from raw data. She works without any specific reference image, letting shapes and relationships emerge naturally, employing her own chosen palette.

A number of the paintings are dominated by striking hues of her favourite colour, red – crimson, scarlet and vermillion – while blues and greens hold sway in other canvases. As an evocation of starlight, she employs silver foil made to her specifications in varying levels of shininess. She has frequently used gold foil in her paintings, having the material customized by a Jaipur artisan after ensuring the gold's purity in order to achieve her desired shade, and has put a little gold into the Spacescapes as well. The silver and gold leap from the canvas while darker shades recede, generating complex interactions of surface and depth across the picture plane.

On earth, blue substances like lakes and seas tend to be cool, and red substances like fire hot. Based on our lived experience and the genetic inheritance of thousands of generations, we perceive reds as warm and tending to advance on canvas and blues as cold and tending to recede. The electromagnetic spectrum operates in the opposite fashion, with reds having longer wavelengths and lower frequencies than blues. Since the universe is expanding rapidly, light from distant objects



gets stretched as it approaches earth, shifting to the red end of the spectrum, with the 'red shift' being most pronounced in bodies receding at the fastest speed. In other words, within the context of astronomy, red recedes and is relatively cool, blue advances and is relatively warm.

Unlike visualisers working for NASA, Sujata has no need to consider how to reconcile these paradoxes. She paints intuitively, creating a theatre of fire and ice that evokes star clusters, supernovae, interstellar clouds and galaxies.

These expansive vistas could hardly be more different from her early paintings. She studied fine art in Pune, receiving gold medals for academic excellence in her Bachelor's and Master's degrees. At that point, after a sheltered childhood and adolescence, her intrepid nature asserted itself as she embarked on a Ph.D. in tribal art which took her to some of the most materially deprived, though culturally rich, parts of the country. Her paintings from this period are marked with folk motifs, a style that gradually gave way to quiet, slightly melancholy figurative paintings in muted shades featuring female protagonists leading secluded lives.

She has worked in so many forms and formats since then that a detailed enumeration would be tedious but certain milestones may be identified: A transformational meeting with the great painter S.H. Raza leading to her move to France; study in Paris under Claude Viseux engendering the creation of monotypes using found materials; an embrace of abstraction and mixed media compositions; a richer palette drawing on the colorful fabrics and facades of her home state Rajasthan; the development of uncommon vertically-oriented layouts; the incorporation of Sanskrit text from sources like the Gita and the Vedas; a brief turn toward representation in paintings of the deity Ganesha; and a growing comfort with large-scale compositions.

Her best-known works are identifiable not only by their colour schemes but by her gestural, sometimes calligraphic, brushwork. Her paintings, especially those in larger formats, have often been marked by sharp, strongly linear divisions. For Spacescapes, she has thinned the paints so each stroke blends into the next, fashioning rhythmic forms that induce the viewer's eyes to scan the entire picture surface without clear breaks.

The cosmos has inspired creative individuals from a time when art did not exist as a discipline in its own right, but we now appreciate artefacts of the distant past independently of the belief systems that inspired them. Although we don't know the ritual roots of the Nebra Sky Disc, discovered in Germany at the turn of the millennium and dating back some 3600 years, we can admire its elegant framing of a golden sun, crescent moon and stars against a patinated bronze sky. Artists have been particularly fascinated by comets, 29 of which were recorded in the 2200-year-old Book of Silk from Han Dynasty China. Halley's comet made an appearance in the Bayeux Tapestry dating from the 11th century AD, and Giotto showed the Star of Bethlehem as a comet three hundred years later.

The most celebrated treatment of the sky in the modern era is doubtless Vincent van Gogh's Starry Night, depicting a firmament in ferment above a tranquil village. In our time, Yayoi Kusama's Infinity Mirror Rooms have captured the public's imagination, with long lines forming to experience them wherever they are exhibited. Contemporary artists who have worked on cosmic themes, whether Thomas Ruff and Angela Bulloch or India's Jitish Kallat, Raqs Media Collective and Rohini Devashar, have tended to utilise photography or modern technology like programmed LED lighting.

The Spacescapes take their place within this venerable lineage while augmenting and modifying it, just as they augment and modify Sujata's own oeuvre and the genealogy of abstraction. Although they unmistakably conjure the impression of deep space, no spectator will absorb these compositions without recalling aerial views of earthly phenomena: the calderas of volcanoes, icy fjords, mangrove-lined estuaries, cities lit up at night. To put it another way, her Spacescapes are also in some sense landscapes.

It is apparent from the descriptions and analysis presented so far that Sujata's recent paintings depart both in form and content from what preceded them. There are, however, common threads that tie the new work to the old. Interpretations of outer space by artists, authors and film-makers are replete with portrayals of peril and of endless, silent coldness, but she is not interested in delving into emotions such as depression, fear and anxiety. Her art has for decades been predominantly celebratory and that remains true of her current suite of canvases.

A further clue to unifying features across her entire output is found in the title she has attached most commonly to her paintings over the years: Energy. There are two words in Sanskrit and its descendant languages that relate to energy, ऊर्जा (Urja) and शक्ति (Shakti), both of which have complex connotations. In brief, Urja is the vital, generative essence of things, while Shakti is the force underlying the universe, conceived as feminine in Hindu philosophy. Sujata's compositions over the past decades, from small-scale abstracts to the immersive views of infinity that are her Spacescapes, have all been committed to evoking and exalting these elemental, creative forces, and it is a commitment she seems certain to sustain throughout her further engagement with the subject of outer space as well as every future phase of her progress as an artist.

The universe
is under no obligation to
make sense to you.

NEILL DeGRASSE TYSON



WORKS

When I began experimenting with Spacescapes, I realised that the technique I had developed over the years could no longer be used. To convey the depth of space and the fluidity of cosmic events and phenomena I needed to completely rethink my relationship to color. Ultimately I found that the use of more liquid, fluid hues without the presence of delimiting lines needed to be explored. Thinner layers of color were applied in order to render elusive gas clouds and the formations of nebulae. In contrast, a different technique with a high number of overlapping strokes was required to create the impression of depth and infinite distances. Furthermore, to depict stars both as singular cosmic objects and as indistinguishable clusters, I resorted systematically to a mix of gold and silver leaves.



Nebula Rubra 1
Acrylic on canvas with gold and silver leaf, 130 x 300 cms, 2022



Supernova 1
Acrylic on canvas
with silver leaf
150 x 150 cms
2023



Supernova 2
Acrylic on canvas
with silver leaf
150 x 150 cms
2023

In one of the many Hindu versions of creation mythology, Prajapati – the progenitor of the Universe – sacrifices himself to create it. In much the same way, massive stars in nebulae are born from dying stars, and new stars are born in nebulae. 'Nebula', Latin for 'mist', 'vapour', 'fog', 'smoke', 'exhalation', is a celestial object that seems to be cloud-like on telescopic inspection. Gas and dust expelled during a supernova form some nebulae. Others are made through clouds of cold starry gas and dust. Gaining adequate density, these collections deliver new baby stars. Therefore, nebulae are sometimes referred to as stellar nurseries.

Supernova 3 Acrylic on canvas with silver leaf, 150 x 150 cms, 2024





Supernova 6
Acrylic on canvas
with silver leaf
100 x 100 cms
2023

Right:
Supernova 7
Acrylic on canvas
with silver leaf
100 x 100 cms
2023

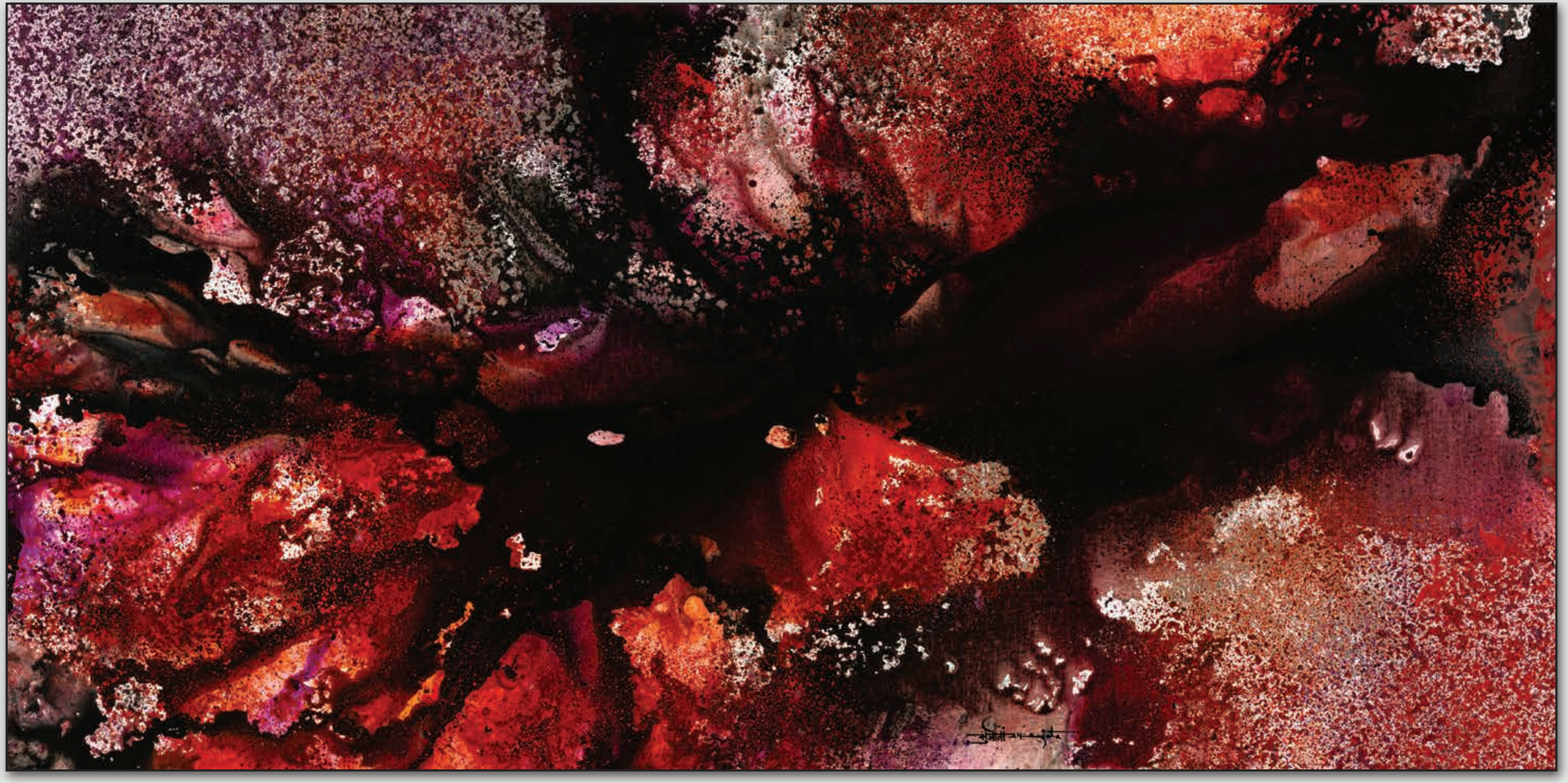


The closest star to us? Our Sun, of course, is 150,000,000 km. In closest proximity to it is Proxima Centauri, at about only 39,900,000,000,000 km! Even though it is a little more than 4 light years away which is less than the distance of Sirius, the brightest star in the earth's sky, the red dwarf is too dim to be seen with the naked eye unless it is going through one of those solar flares, typical of red giants. Apparently, it is inching closer towards us, and will be only 3 light years away after 27000 years!

Supernova 4 Acrylic on canvas with silver leaf, 150 x 150 cms, 2024



Nebula Obscura Magna 1
Acrylic on canvas
with gold and silver leaf
150 x 300 cms
2024





Stellar Nursery 2
Acrylic on canvas
with silver leaf
150 x 80 cms
2022



Cosmic Filaments 1
Acrylic on canvas
with silver leaf
200 x 100 cms
2023

Almost always visible in the Northern Hemisphere, Ursa Major, along with Ursa Minor, is a spangled treat for star-gazers. The largest northern and third largest constellation, the Great or Larger Bear, lends seven of its brightest stars to form the Big Dipper which is one of the most recognisable patterns in the night sky. The asterism – group of stars – is known in many cultures as the Plough, the Great Wagon, Saptarishi and the Saucepan. Catalogued by Greek astronomer Ptolemy in the 2nd century, the constellation is mythologically associated with Callisto, a nymph that Zeus' jealous wife Hera sent packing into the skies as a bear.



Cosmic Filaments 2
Acrylic on canvas with silver leaf
150 x 80 cms

Cosmic Filaments 3
Acrylic on canvas with silver leaf
150 x 80 cms

"We have been collectors of Sujata's works for over 20 years. It has been incredible to see her journey as an artist, to see her grow as an individual and to see her work evolve through the years. Her bold and deft use of color has added drama and vibrance to many of our homes.

Spacescapes is the culmination of her deep and multifarious relationship with the use of color as an art form."

AYESHA THAPAR & NIKESH ARORA
Art Collectors, California, USA



Nebula Obscura
Acrylic on canvas with silver leaf
140 x 180 cms
2024

Nebula Obscura Magna 2 Acrylic on canvas with gold and silver leaf, 175 x 175 cms, 2024



For once, the starry-eyed might be closer to cosmic truth where blue is not cool, and red is not hot. In fact, the hottest stars are blue and the coolest, red. The colour of a star indicates how hot its visible surface is. The more gases fuel a star, the hotter it burns. As its temperature increases, the colour changes from orange, through yellow to white. Our own golden ball of fire, the Sun is yellow when seen from the earth, mainly due to the latter's atmosphere. Once in space, it appears white rather than any single colour.

Nascence 1 Acrylic on canvas with gold and silver leaf, 150 x 150 cms , 2024



"According to me,
Sujata is the best colourist
that India has…"

M.F. HUSAIN
Painter



Nascence 2
Acrylic on canvas
with gold and silver leaf
140 x 180 cms
2024

Words in any language are stars that form their own planetary systems of related expressions and ideas over time. So many such wordy planets orbit the word 'nebula'. The Latin *nebula* (mist or fog), the Sanskrit *nabha* (cloud, mist, sky) and the Greek *nephos* (cloud) come from the same root word. Nebuliser – a device that converts liquids into a fine mist, is yet another. *Nuance* in French refers to a small difference that comes from *nuer* – to shade, which in turn is related to the Latin *nubes* – mist or cloud.

Cosmic Filaments 4 Acrylic on canvas with silver leaf, 80 x 150 cms



Stardust 15 -20
Acrylic on canvas with silver leaf
50 x 50 cms

15



16



17



18



19



20



"I've known Sujata Bajaj for well over 30 years, have had the pleasure of seeing many of her exhibitions, in Norway, in Paris, in Dubai and even in Mumbai, and I've written about them.

Sujata has always had both feet firmly planted on the ground. That does not prevent movement. Ever new journeys in the realm of colour. Bursting colours of energy along earthy colour scales. Red and gold against the deep darkness.

Working with the palette's strongest colours, as Sujata has done for a long time and continues to do in SPACESCAPES, is demanding and can meet resistance. It requires boldness, a kind of fearlessness, which Sujata has proven she possesses. According to Per Krohg, Norway's great modernist, red is the most difficult colour for a painter.

With her canvases as sails, Sujata is now travelling into outer space. To regain our inner strength. To feel the origins of creation. To capture the colours of the universe. A journey into the unknown that cannot be limited by the narrow spectrum available to the human eye.

But with both feet still firmly planted on the ground."

KNUT STENE-JOHANSEN
Professor, Writer and Art Critic, Norway



Supernova 5 Acrylic on canvas with silver leaf, 150 x 150 cms, 2024

Our solar system inhabits the Milky Way galaxy, the massive, spiral shaped collection of hundreds of billions of stars. One of the billions of galaxies in the discernible universe, the Milky Way gets its name from the Greek myth of Hera, who produced milk to feed her son Hercules and the milk splattered to create the misty appearance of the galaxy in the night sky.

Dissolution 1 Acrylic on canvas with silver leaf, 150 x 150 cms, 2023



Nebula Rubra 2 Acrylic on canvas with silver leaf, 150 x 150 cms, 2023



Up above the world so high, like a diamond in the sky... an early 19th century English lullaby by Jane Taylor has illuminated the nursery years of many a generation. But ever wondered why does the little star twinkle, or does it at all? Stars twinkle when the starlight passes through different layers of a turbulent atmosphere. But their twinkling – scintillation is the official term – is only an appearance from the earth because of their distance. Seen from space, they are steady points of light.



Stellar Nursery 1 Acrylic on canvas with gold and silver leaf, 100 x 200 cms, 2022

"Sujata reveals a direct perception of form and colour in a very personal concept. To my mind, her work is an important and original contribution to contemporary Indian Art."

S.H. RAZA
Painter



Stellar Nursery 3
Acrylic on canvas with gold and silver leaf
100 x 200 cms
2023

Mayans of Central America knew something about bringing heaven to (h)earth! They envisaged the lower portion of the Orion constellation, belt and feet (the stars Saiph and Rigel), as the hearthstones of creation, similar to the triangular three-stone hearth which is at the centre of all traditional Mayan homes. Nebula 42 or Orion's nebula lying at the centre of this triangle is for them the *kak*, a smudge of the glowing Fire of Creation surrounded by smoke. Long before any telescopic confirmation, the Mayan viewed this blur as the creative force which indeed it is – an enormous cloud of dust and gas providing to the modern eye – naked and scopic – the best view of stellar birth in action.

1



2



Gestation 1 & 2
Acrylic on canvas
with silver leaf
100 x 100 cms
2022



Dissolution 2
Acrylic on canvas with gold and silver leaf
100 x 200 cms
2022



Nebula Magna 3
Acrylic on canvas
with gold and silver leaf
120 x 275 cms
2024

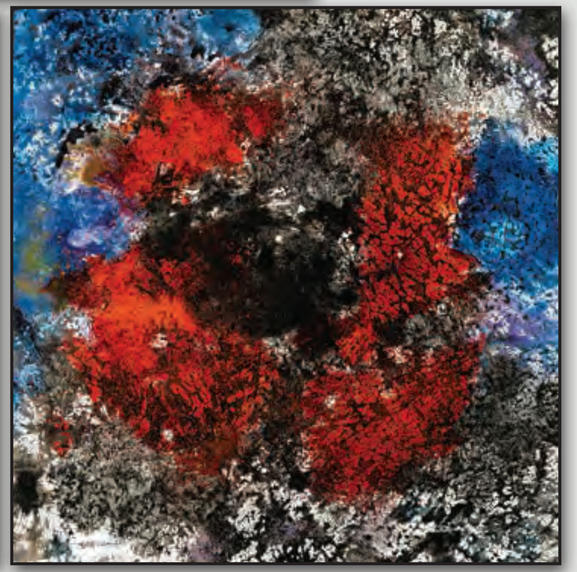
A star—quite like our Sun—when dying turns into the strange but remarkable Eye of God, tamely called the Helix Nebula. The eye can peer into the future and possibly know what's going to happen to our solar system in a few billion years. While the heart of the star—a tiny blue dot—is evolving to become a White Dwarf, the nebula itself turns into a beautiful flowery image in blue-green and red. The Eye of God is deemed to be only about 650 years away from another planet called Earth if its denizens travel at the speed of light!

Nebular Gestation Acrylic on canvas with silver leaf, 125 x 200 cms, 2023





Dissolution 3 Acrylic on canvas with silver leaf, 150 x 150 cms, 2023



Gestation 3 Acrylic on canvas with silver leaf, 150 x 150 cms, 2023

"I believe that I may have been the first person in France to acquire Sujata's paintings. It was a time when I had just emerged from a long spell of work with Peter Brook on the Mahabharata, and I found in young Sujata the vibrant echoes of that great epic in which India has always sought, and often found, herself.

In India, everything is cosmic. Regardless of what we think, no gesture here is merely human, no word stands alone. Unknown to us, the fundamental notion of dharma knits all our thoughts and actions into the entire universe…the crucial mission of establishing such a link is central to all of Sujata's work.

Colour springs from her as if by surprise. It is her need, her necessity, her deepest nature…When I look upon some of her works, I feel she invented the colour red…And then we have these sudden, inexplicable yet essential spots and white shafts piercing a mass of dark, tangled matter, which, until that moment, appeared to be looking for light… Her unmistakable concern is not to make something new, but to make something come alive."

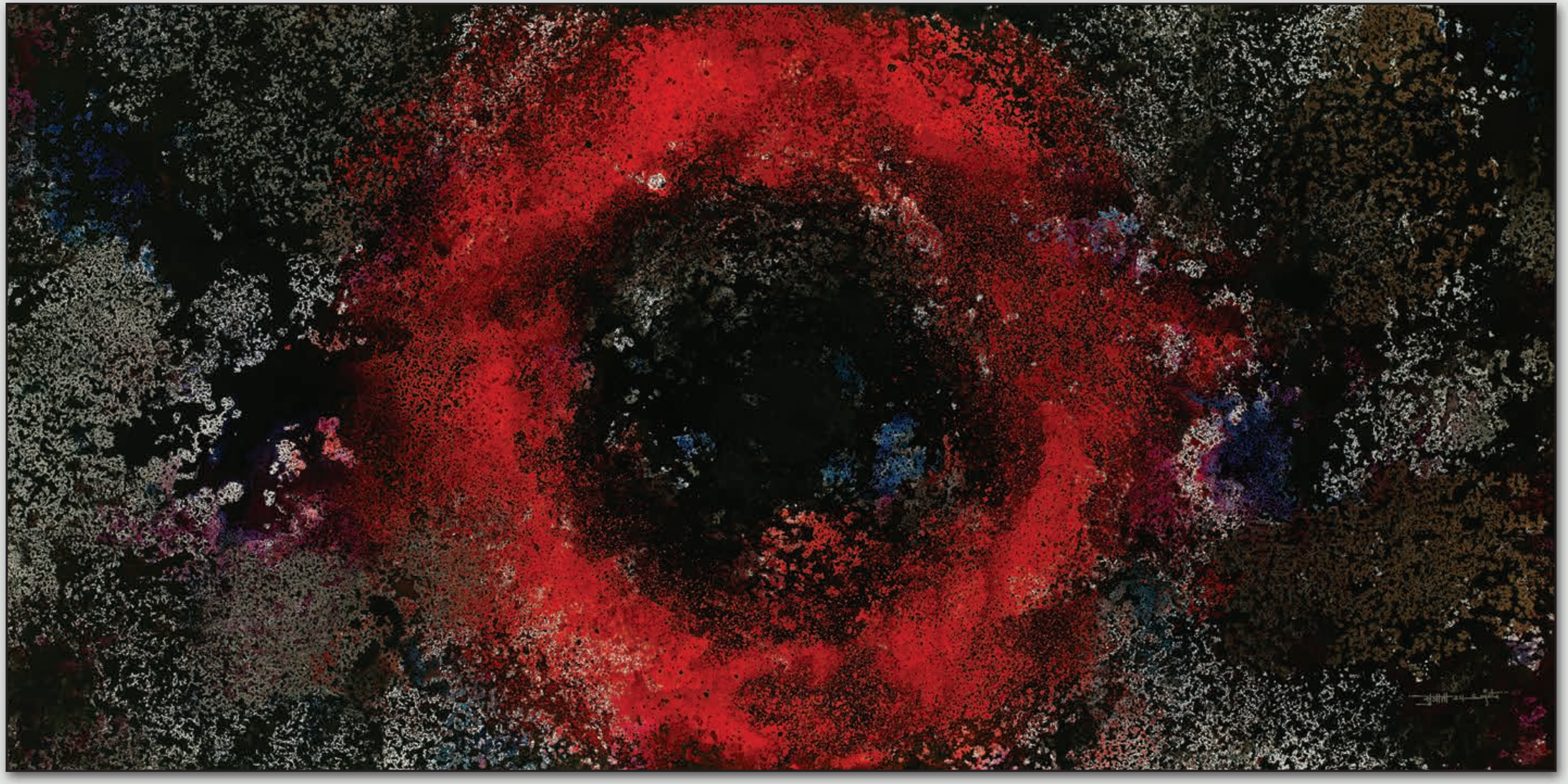
JEAN-CLAUDE CARRIÈRE
Screenwriter, novelist and actor, Paris, France



Nebula
Acrylic on canvas with gold and silver leaf
140 x 180 cms
2024



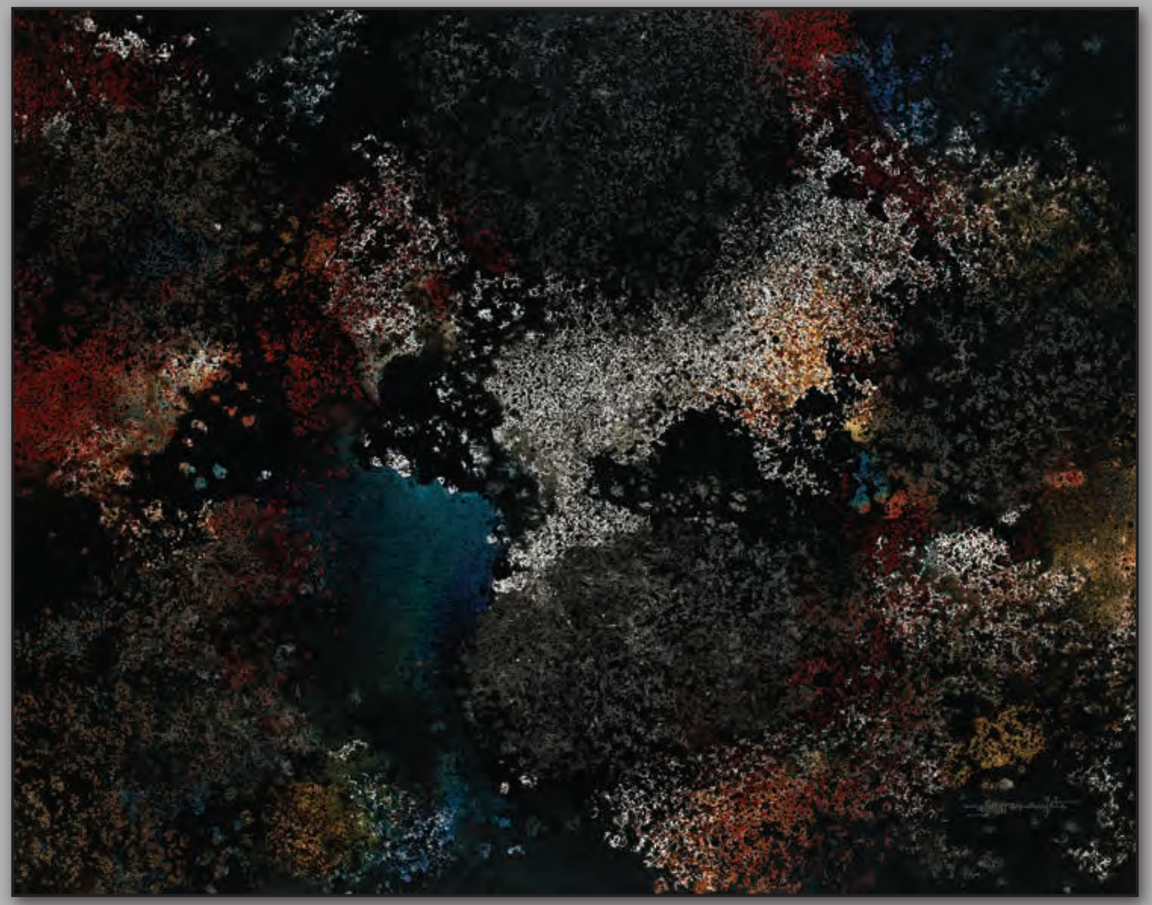
Nebula Magna 1
Acrylic on canvas
with silver leaf
150 x 300 cm
2023



Nebula Magna 2
Acrylic on canvas with gold and silver leaf
150 x 300 cms
2024

It is dark and mysterious. An invisible form of matter, it is estimated to be five times more copious than ordinary matter. It is all over the Milky Way galaxy and far beyond. It is dark because it does not interact with light, and so, human telescopes cannot reach it. Its nature or composition is not known yet. Though undetectable, it can be inferred by its gravitational effect on visible matter. The dark matters – at least as things stand today!

Receding Void Acrylic on canvas with gold and silver leaf, 140 x 180 cms, 2024





Stardust 1
Acrylic on canvas
with silver leaf
50 x 50 cms



Stardust 2
Acrylic on canvas
with silver leaf
50 x 50 cms



Stardust 3 Acrylic on canvas with silver leaf, 50 x 50 cms

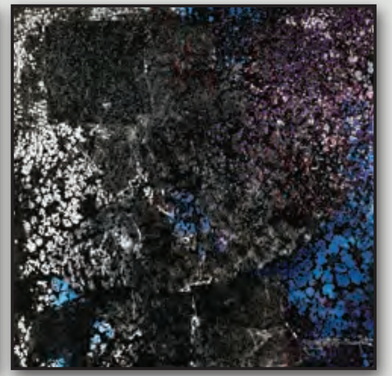
While the dark matter still continues to be, well, dark, its applications hold thrilling possibilities. One of them is matter as fuel. If a spacecraft could scoop up dark matter, it would serve as perfect fuel that would make it possible to reach speeds close to the speed of light. That would mean dramatic reduction in the time taken to travel interstellar space. To reach Proxima Centauri, the star closest to our Sun, for instance, could be just a 5-year plan!

Stardust 4-8 Acrylic on canvas with silver leaf, 50 x 50 cms

4



5



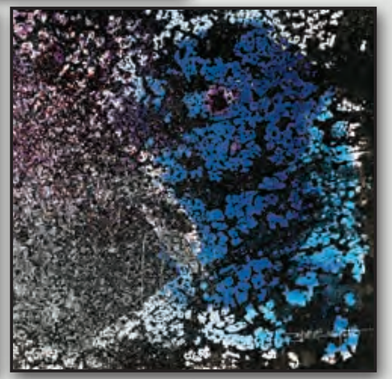
6



7



8



Cosmic Metamorphosis 1 Acrylic on canvas with silver leaf, 100 x 100 cms, 2023



Even though it is mostly bleached silver, the Moon is coloured in many colours. Earth's reflected light can make it look bright white to a peachish hue. Closer to the horizon, it can take on a red or an orange tone. The iron oxide in its soil turns its surface a delicate reddish-brown. From space, it may don many shades of grey, with some areas coloured slightly blue or purple. In the crescent phase, it is a subdued grey and a bright white when it is full.

Cosmic Metamorphosis 2 Acrylic on canvas with silver leaf, 100 x 100 cms, 2023



Cosmic Metamorphosis 3 Acrylic on canvas with silver leaf, 100 x 100 cms, 2023



Subject of numerous myths across cultures, the Pleiades or Seven Sisters, is a bright blue cluster of young and hot stars, visible from almost every part of the globe. Merely 440 light years away from Earth, the name Seven Sisters does little justice to a cluster which is over 1000 stars, of which six are usually visible to most people. In both myth and science, the Pleiades are siblings, born from the same cloud of gas and dust. The ancient Greeks saw them as seven daughters of Atlas. A Polynesian legend says the Pleiades was once a single star – the brightest in the sky. The Polynesian god Tane punished the star for bragging about its beauty and smashed it into pieces – which now make a cluster.

Cosmic Metamorphosis 4 Acrylic on canvas with silver leaf, 100 x 100 cms



Nebula Azura 3
Acrylic on canvas
with silver leaf
80 x 150 cms



Nephele and nebulae. If the words sound similar, it is possibly because one is derived from the other. In ancient Greek myth, Zeus the god of heavens, thunder and rain (thought to be the counterpart of Indra in Hindu mythology) transforms a nymph into a cloud to impersonate Hera, his wife. Seeing that Hera is at the receiving end of the unabashed passion of King Ixion, a refugee in the house of Zeus, the latter decides to test the integrity of his guest. Ixion's lust gets the better of him as he assaults Hera's phantom, the cloud nymph Nephele. She goes on to give birth to the tribe of Centaurs in a rain shower upon the slopes of Mount Pelion.

Cosmic Metamorphosis 5 Acrylic on canvas with silver leaf, 100 x 100 cms, 2023



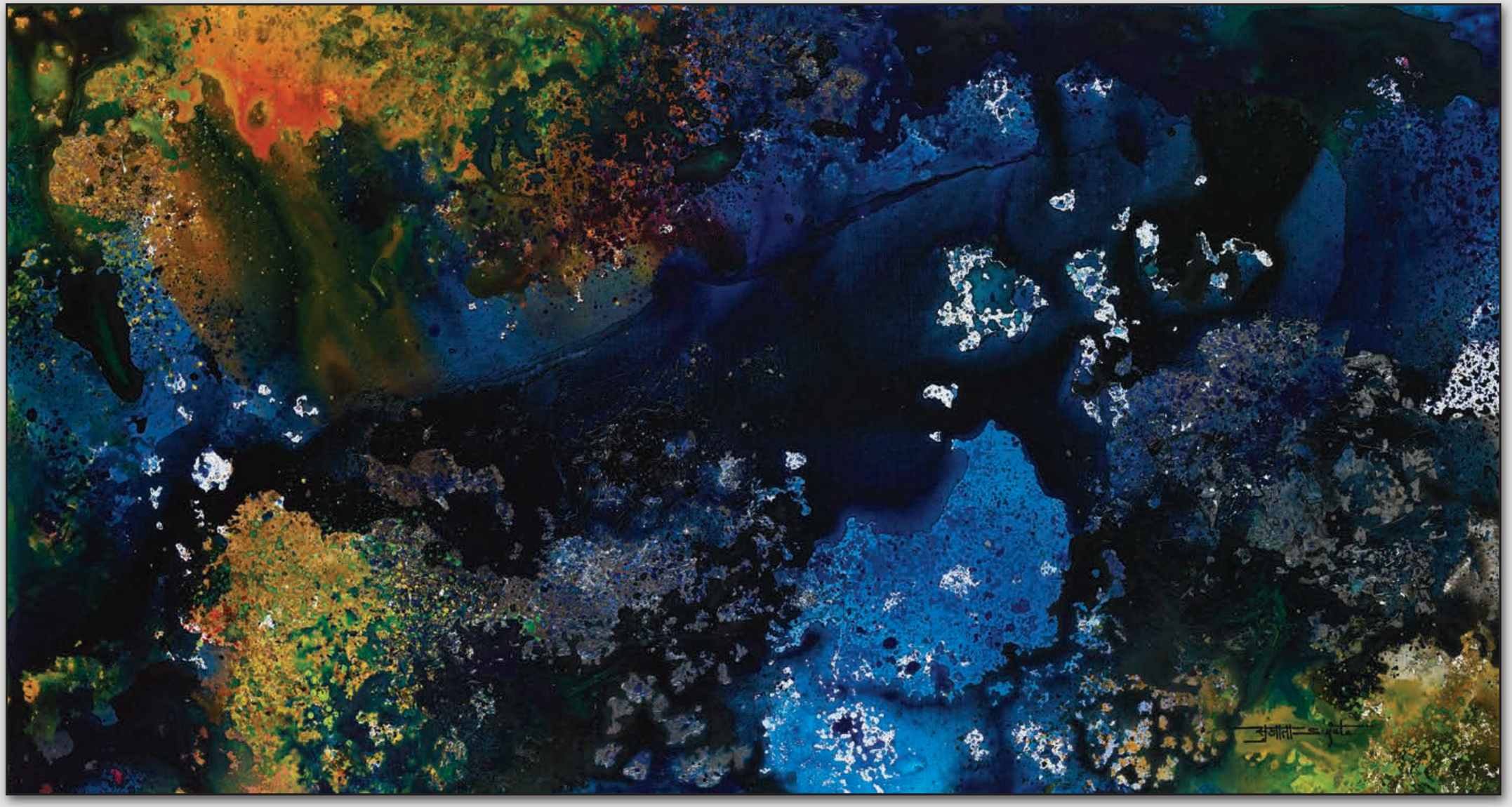


Nebula Azura 1 Acrylic on canvas with silver leaf, 120 x 275 cms, 2023



Nebula Azura Magna
Acrylic on canvas
with gold and silver leaf
150 x 300 cms
2024

When the celebrated Hubble Space Telescope gazed at the Eagle Nebula, it gave us a stunning, if a starry, parallel to Indian and Biblical philosophies: Three Pillars of Creation. Three magnificent spires of cosmic dust and gas, sitting at the heart of the Eagle Nebula, cradle countless baby stars in their long, delicate arms. In an optical light image, blue comes from oxygen, red from sulphur and green indicates both nitrogen and hydrogen. Are they the foundations the Bible speaks of as supporting the Earth and preventing it from sinking into primordial waters? Or, the Trinity in the Hindu scheme of things, Brahma, Vishnu and Mahesha symbolising creation, maintenance and destruction? Or the three primary rays of light that create all the colours? Only the stars can tell.



Nebula Azura 2
Acrylic on canvas
with gold and silver leaf
80 x 150 cms

Stellar Emergence 1 Acrylic on canvas with gold and silver leaf, 150 x 150 cms, 2024



If you thought that the word 'asterisk' in the English language bears some relation to a heavenly body, you have acquired a star. It is derived from *asterikos*, a Greek word that means 'little star'. Asterisk has been illuminating the language since, at least, the late 1300s, says Merriam-Webster. But it isn't the only one. The Greek *aster, astro,* and *astrum* (all meaning star) continue to perform stellar roles in English by way of words such as asteroid, astral and, even, disaster. The last, it seems, originally meant 'an unfavourable aspect of a planet or star'.

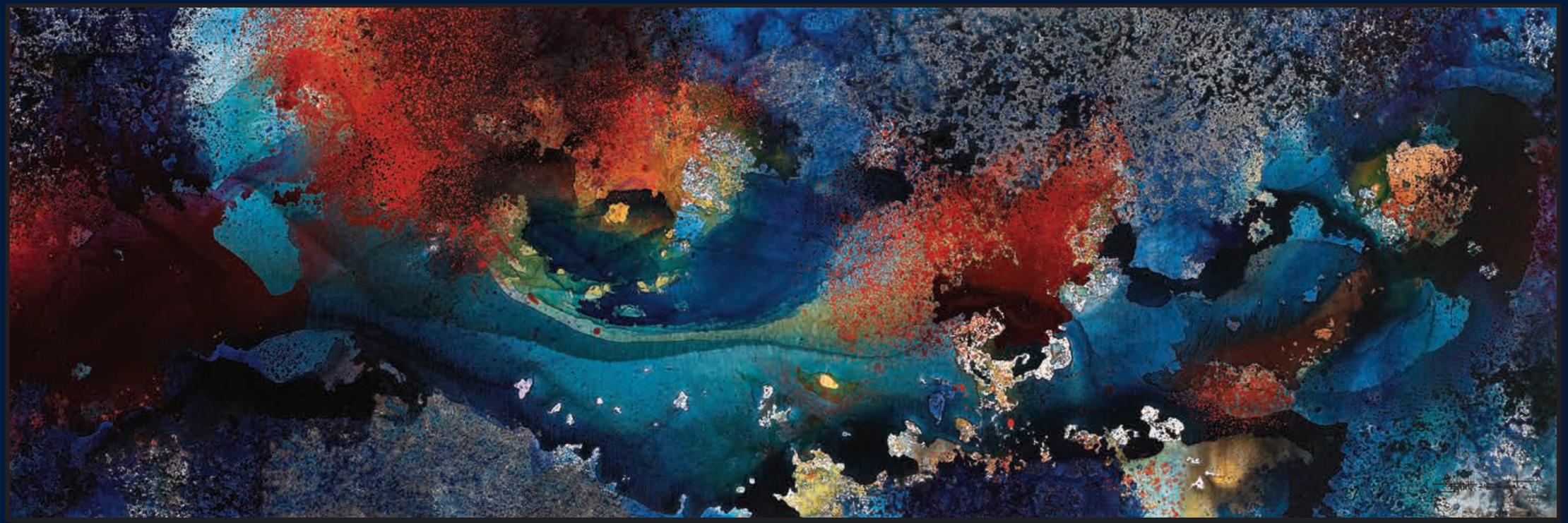
Stellar Emergence 2 Acrylic on canvas with gold and silver leaf, 150 x 150 cms, 2024





Celestial River 1
Acrylic on canvas with gold and silver leaf, 120 x 275 cms, 2024

From deep darkness come murmurs of awakening... goes an evocative Hawaiian creation chant. Following the recent discovery of a gigantic super bubble sitting in the colossal cosmic backyard, astronomers have called it Ho'oleilana, a Hawaiian word that loosely means "murmurs of awakening". A couple of years ago, astronomers at the University of Hawai'i stumbled upon the gargantuan bubble within a known web of galaxies which, in turn, is but a fragment of a great cosmic web that is thought to fashion our universe. The discovery – thought to be a fossilised remnant from just after the Big Bang, could well be a murmur, or more, initiating us into the mysteries of the universe.



Celestial River 2
Acrylic on canvas with gold and silver leaf, 100 x 300 cms, 2024



Light Unfolding 1
Acrylic on canvas with gold and silver leaf , 130 x 300 cms, 2024



Genesis 2-5
Acrylic on canvas
with gold and silver leaf
100 x 100 cms

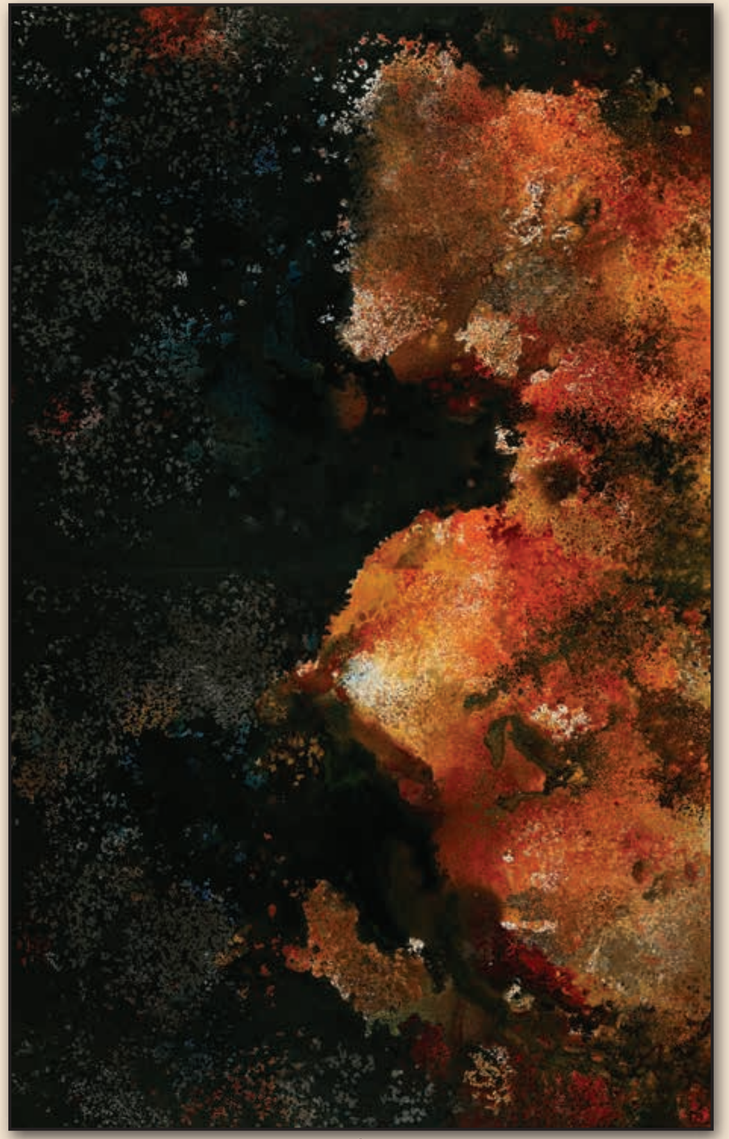
Facing page:
Genesis 6
Acrylic on canvas
with gold and silver leaf
100 x 100 cms

“I've known Sujata Bajaj for a long time, and over the years, I've come to view her as a true cultural ambassador for India in France. As an artist, she stands out with her unique style, and my family and I are fortunate to have her paintings in our homes. They bring us a sense of joy and inspiration, with a remarkable ability to convey the idea that anything is possible.

We take pride in knowing that her works are appreciated by collectors both in India and abroad.

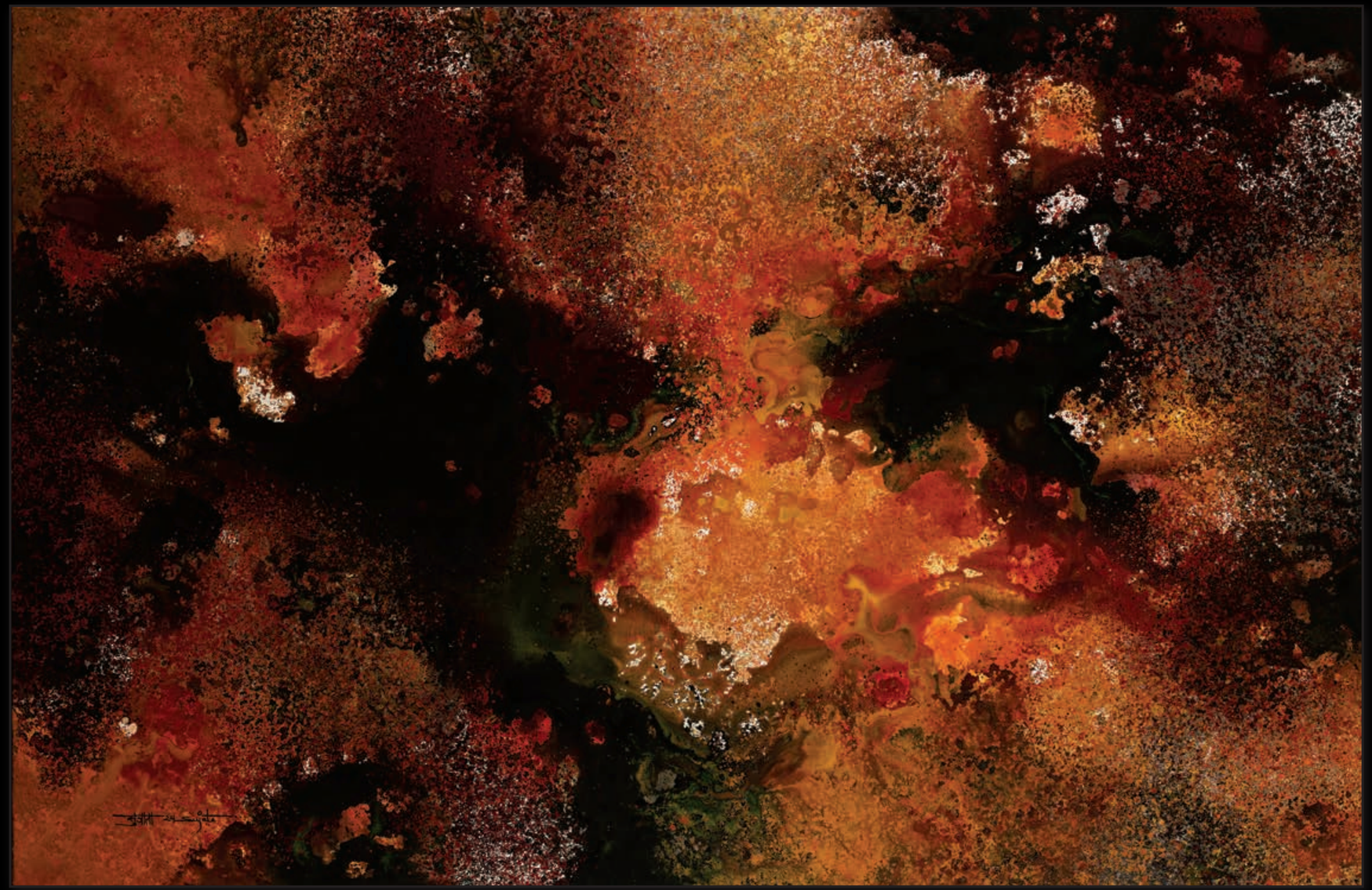
Wishing her continued success and even greater heights in her artistic journey in the future.”

SANGITA JINDAL
Art Collector, Mumbai, India



Diptych
Light Unfolding 2 and **3**
Acrylic on canvas
with gold and silver leaf
280 x 180 cms
(140 x 180 cms each)
2024

It is dim. But it is Polaris. The one steady shine in a sky that changes in a twinkle. In Hindu mythology, as Dhruv Tara, it represents steadfastness, spiritual guidance and immortality. It is named after a young prince who persevered in his devotion to Lord Vishnu despite his many challenges, his devotion becoming a guiding light for spiritual seekers and earning him a place among the stars in the firmament. Even though Polaris is only the 50th brightest star, the unique location of the yellow supergiant, which is on its way to puffing out into a red supergiant, makes it prominent for sailors and explorers. That said, Polaris may not always have been the pole location. It is believed that nearly 5000 years ago, the faint star Thuban was closest to the pole. Ancient Egyptians believed it was the gateway to heaven for their deceased Pharaoh. Given that the Earth's axis drifts slowly in a process called precession, we will sometimes have a pole star, and sometimes not. In 12,000 years, the bright Vega will have the pride of place as our pole star.

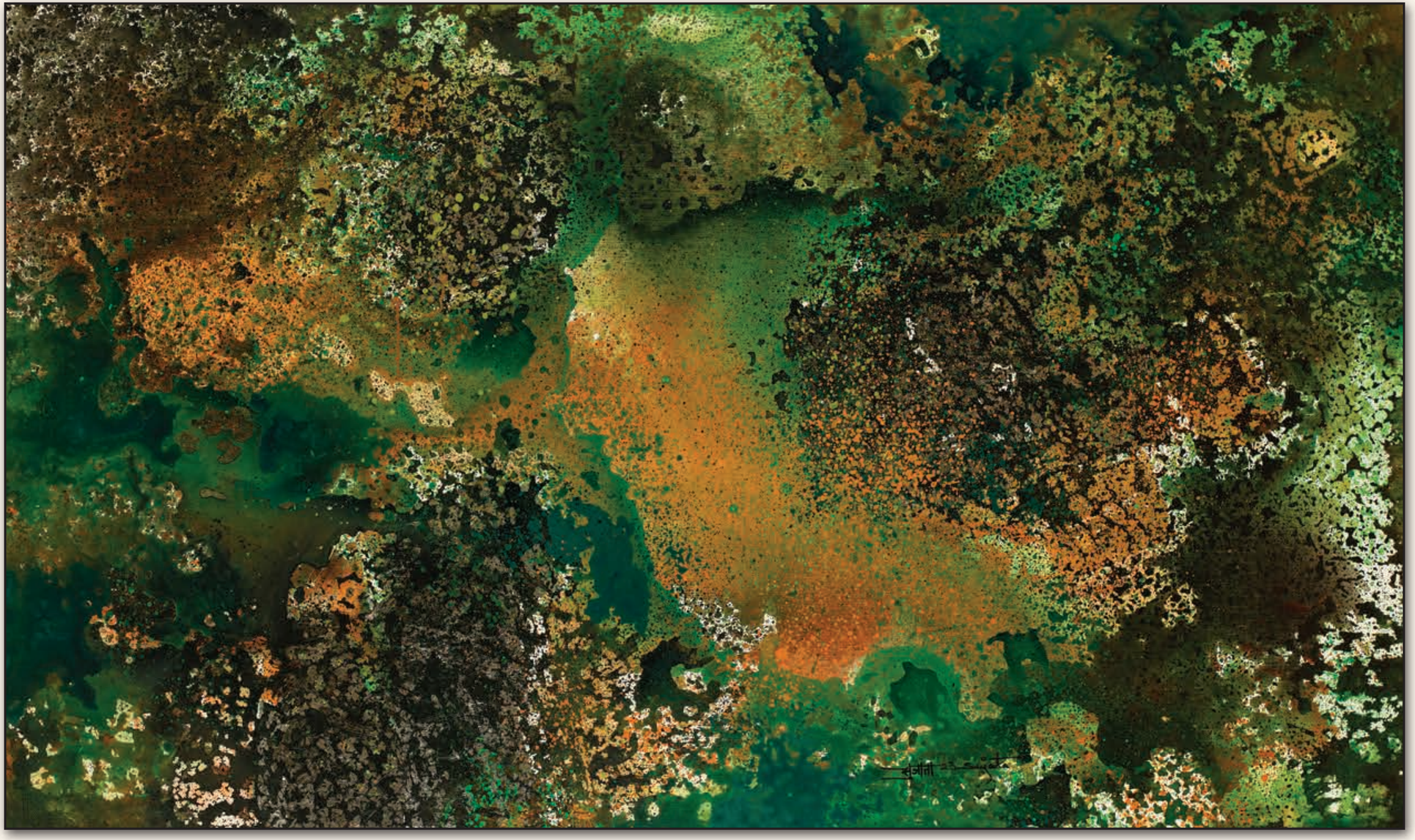


Light Unfolding 4
Acrylic on canvas
with gold and silver leaf
140 x 215 cms
2024

Light Unfolding 5 Acrylic on canvas with gold and silver leaf, 150 x 150 cms, 2022



Do we live in the past even though we feel we live in the present? Yes, says research in psychological sciences. Yes, say the stars too. The distances between stars and Earth are so vast – even the nearest ones are at immense distances – that it takes several light years for their twinkle to reach our eye. It means that we see them as they were in the past, not as they are now. It also means that they continue to shine even after they are a long time gone.

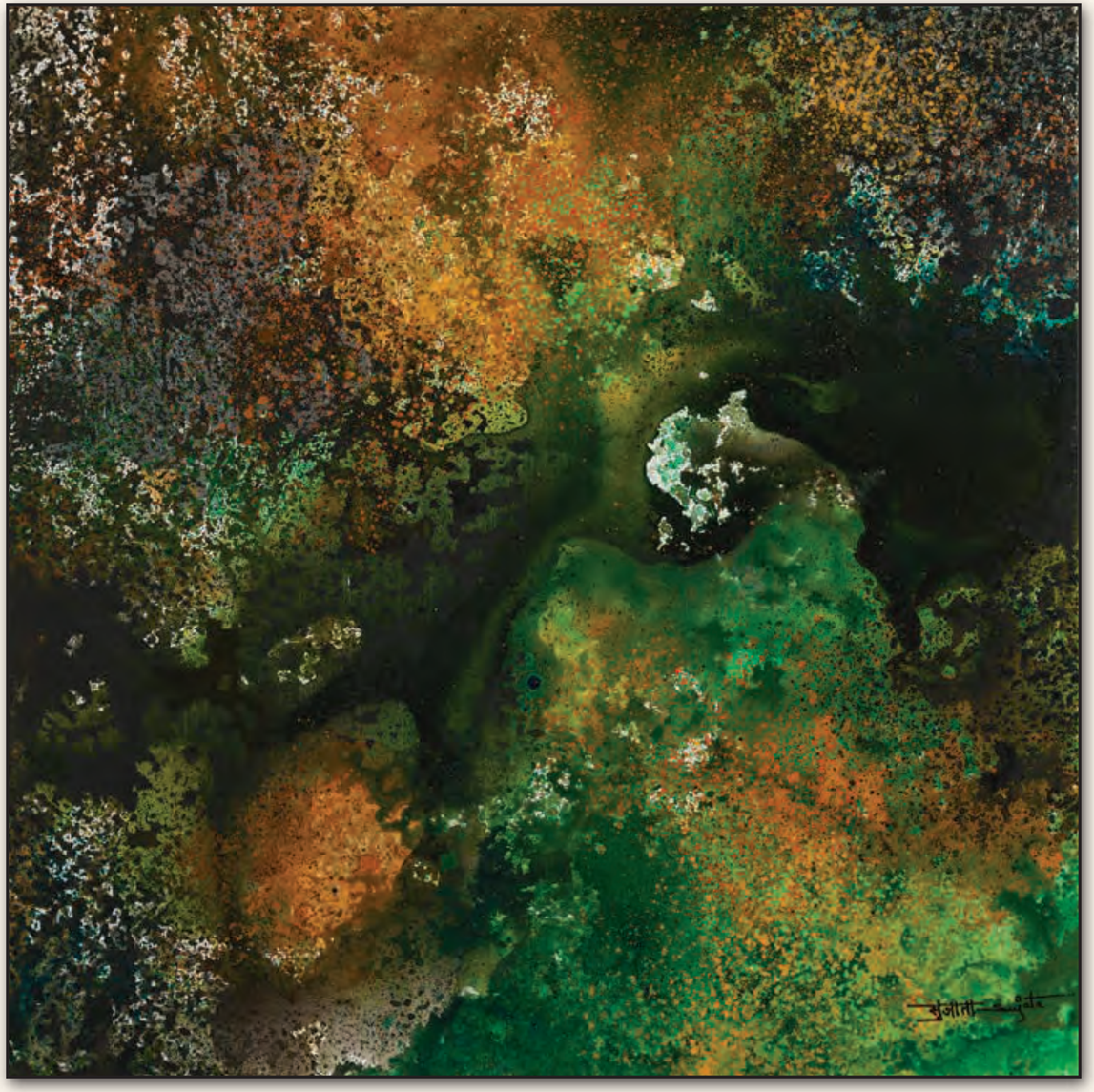


Stellar Alchemy 1
Acrylic on canvas
with gold and silver leaf
100 x 130 cms
2023

Stellar Alchemy 2 Acrylic on canvas with gold and silver leaf, 100 x 100 cms

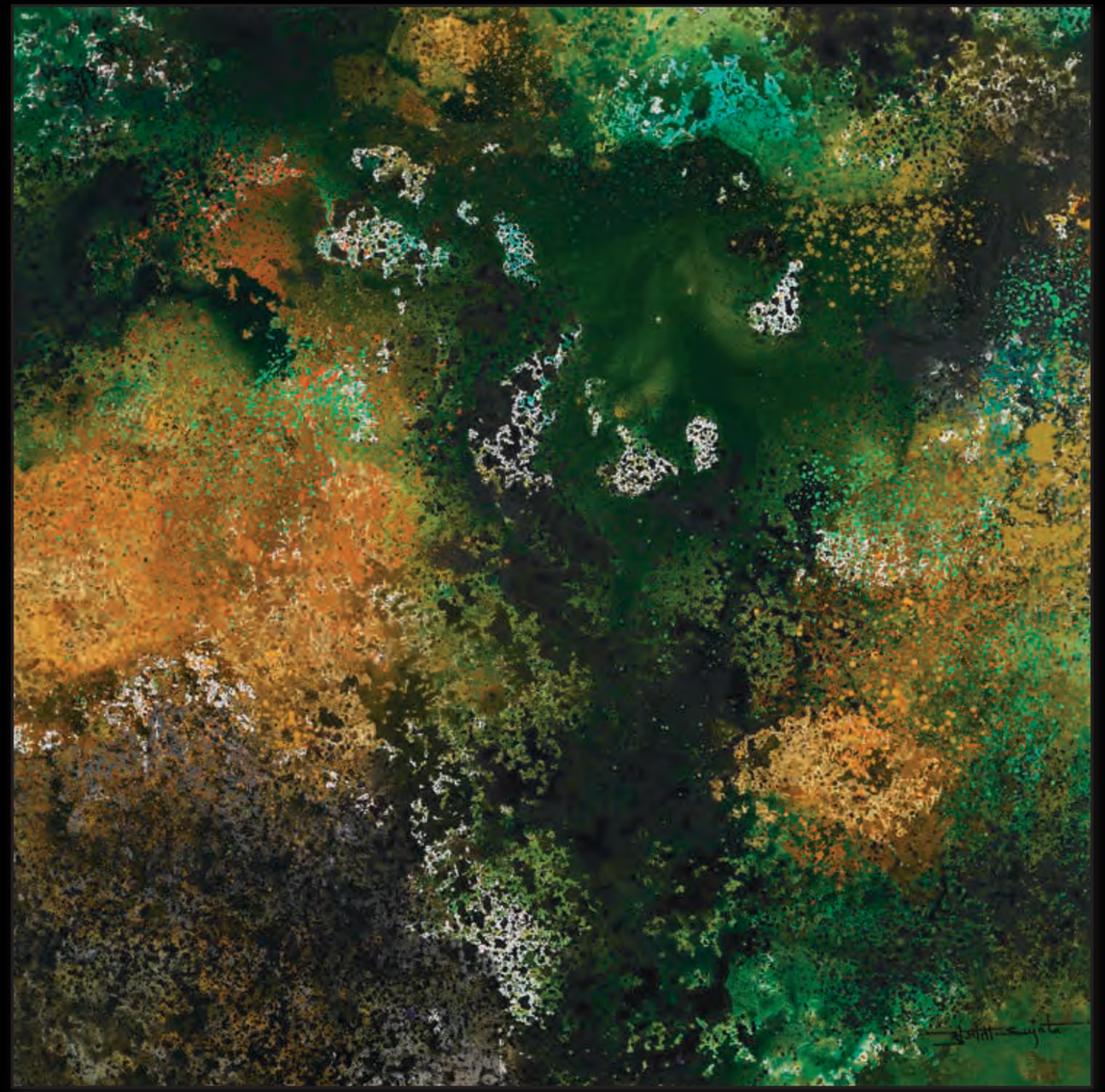


Stellar Alchemy 3 Acrylic on canvas with gold and silver leaf, 100 x 100 cms

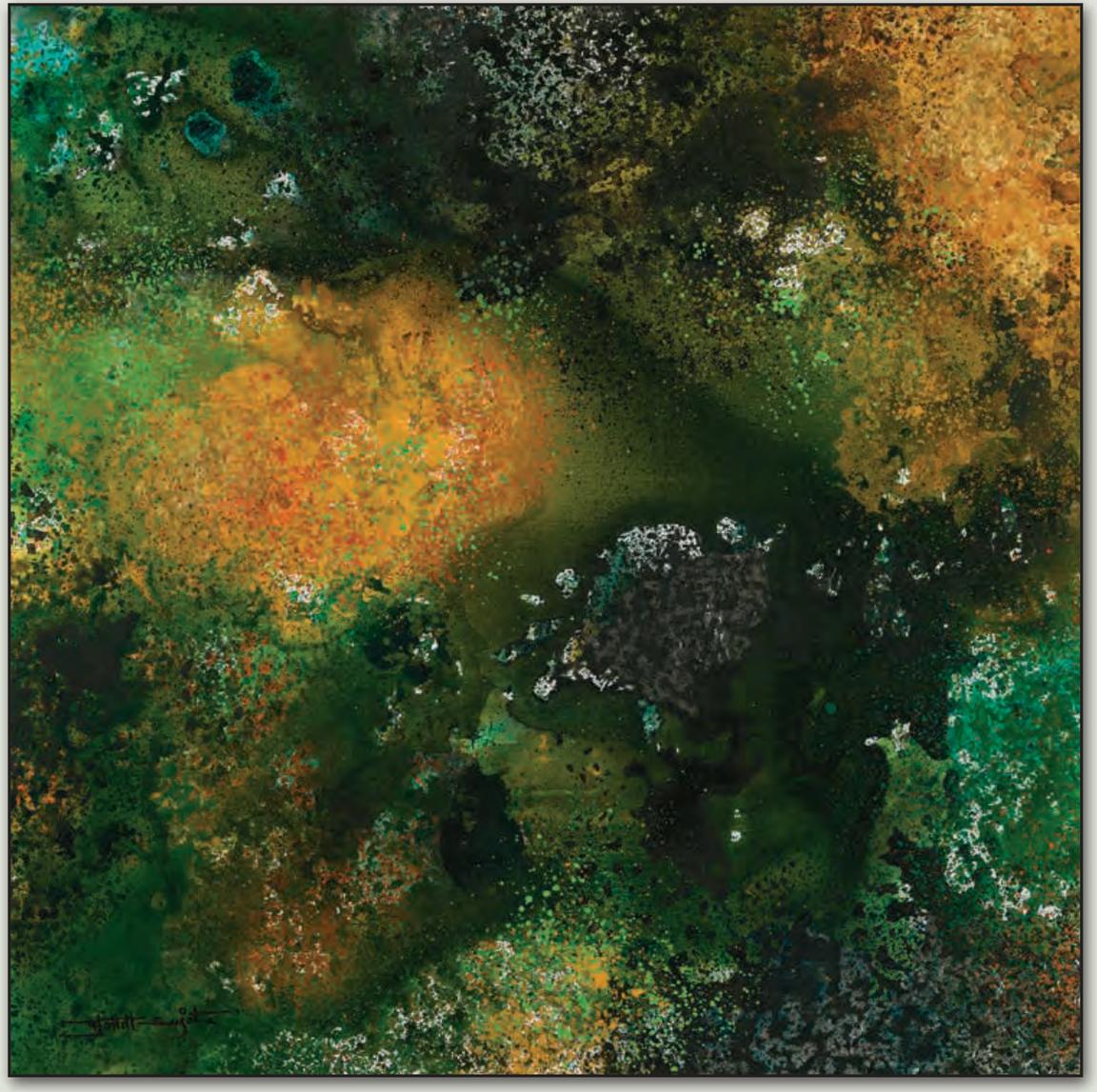


That's a serious CV for a star – or shall we say, Sirius CV! It is 25 times more luminous than our Sun. And only 8.6 light years away from us. It is a rainbow star because the colours of light dispersed by the air in the Earth's atmosphere are most easily seen because it is so bright. The brightest in the earth's night sky – it is outshined by only a few planets, the full moon and the International Space Station. Ancient Greek astronomers put it down in their books. Egyptians based their calendar after it and called it the Nile Star because it heralded the coming of the nourishing floodwaters. It is the Dog Star responsible for the dog days of hot July and August. And it has the closest known white dwarf, a stellar corpse, as a binary companion.

Stellar Alchemy 4 Acrylic on canvas with gold and silver leaf, 100 x 100 cms



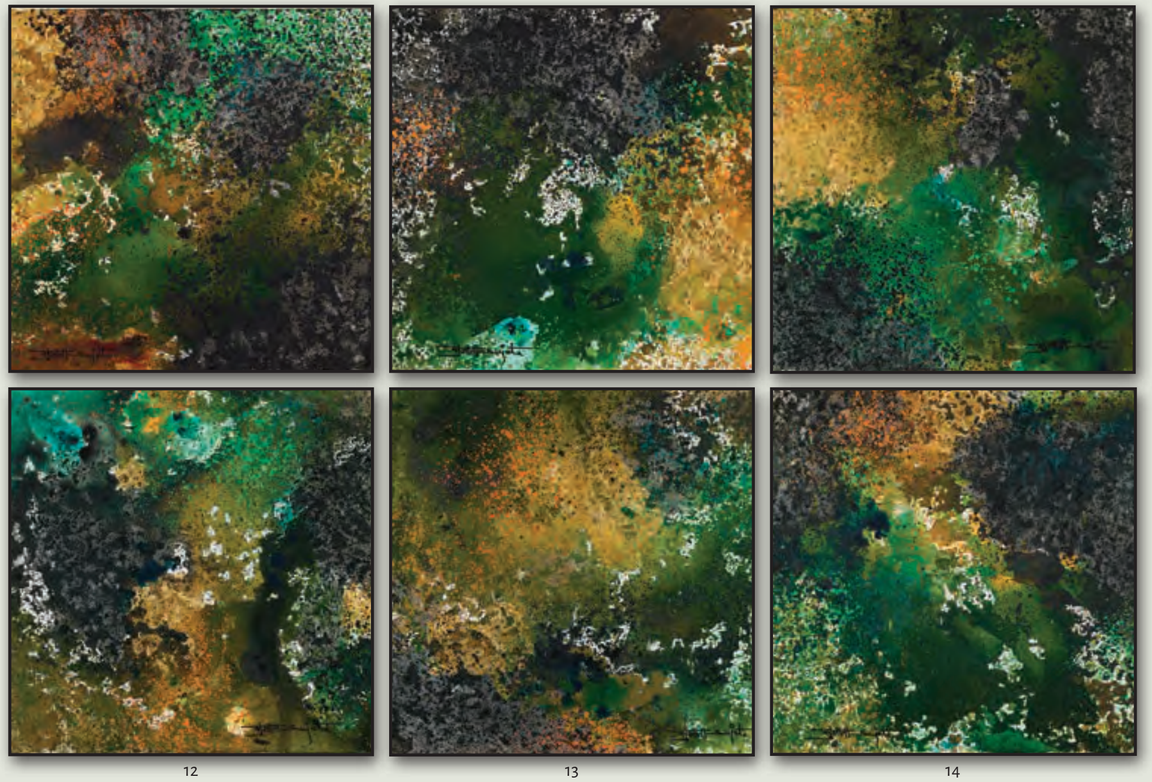
Stellar Alchemy 5 Acrylic on canvas with gold and silver leaf, 100 x 100 cms



When abstract artists finds their cosmos, it leads to vastness with four corners. Sujata's new works highlight her continuing journey into the unknown, into the limitlessness of abstraction, and what more can one find than the universe itself. An indication of someone who is joyful comes through in how they see the world around them.

Sujata has displayed her exuberance through her new series of works "Spacescapes" which is how she sees the sky and the space beyond. Joyfulness is rather contagious; it is naturally caught by simply gazing into these Spacescapes. Sujata is reinventing; rather simply moving on without the need to look back. Yet, she remains connected to her roots, but not as a restriction or bondage but something that seems to give her the courage to carry on without having to justify anything at all. This is the beauty of art, the magnificence of vastness that emerges from her Spacescapes.

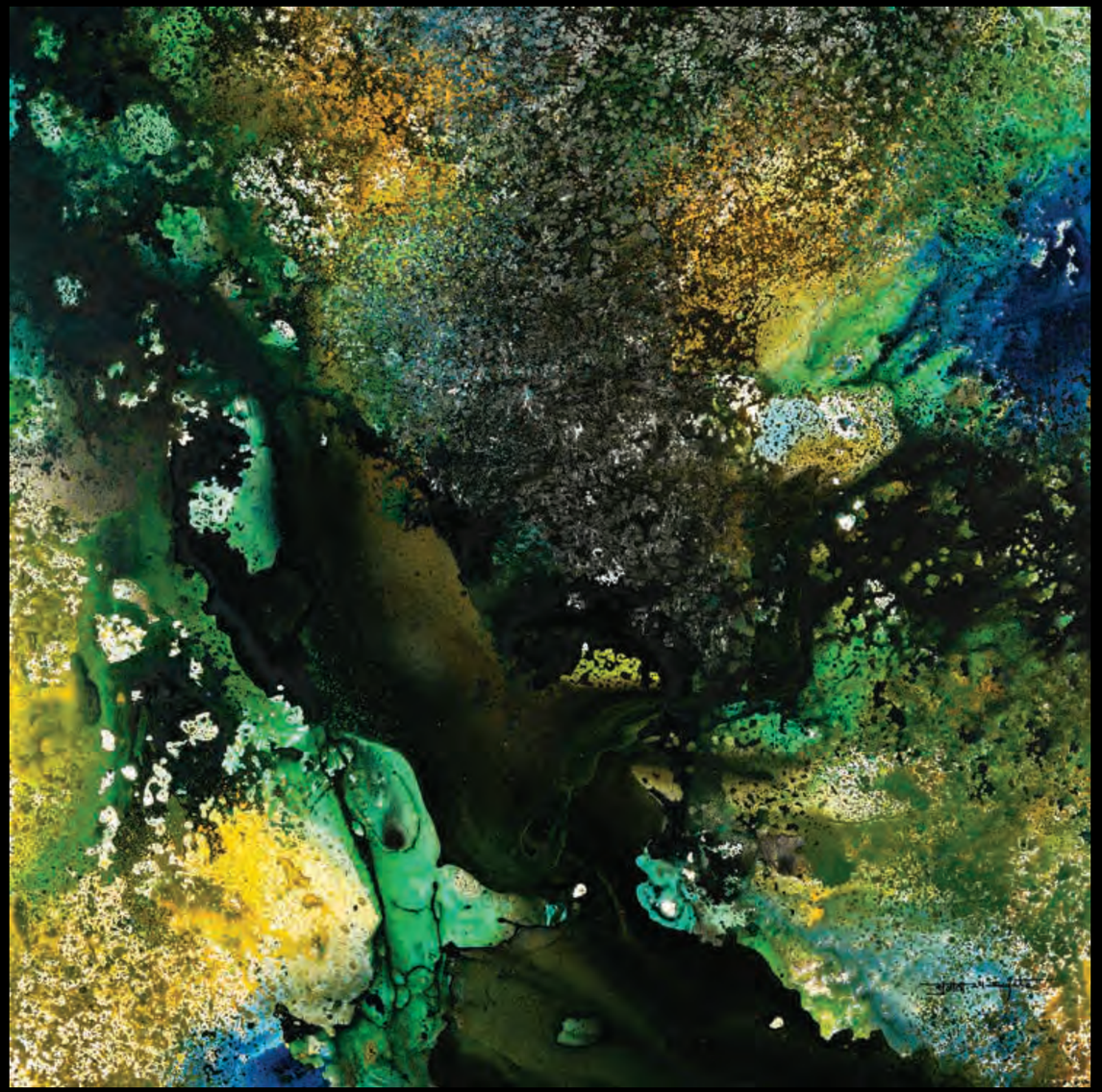
TANUJ BERRY
Art Collector, New Delhi, India



Stardust 9-14
Acrylic on canvas with gold and silver leaf
50 x 50 cms

Van Gogh, who was one of the very few to meet the challenge of painting the sky (as in his famous work *Starry Nights*), once said that we take death to reach a star. A star – like our Sun – takes style to reach death. According to some scientists, in another few billion years from now, the Sun will swell into a red giant before collapsing quietly into a white dwarf, the fate of every star with some exceptions. It will devour Mercury, Venus and possibly, the Earth, in the process and become a dim reminder of the existence of our solar system. But a newer model of stellar death tells us that the Sun will create a beautiful ring of gas and dust – a planetary nebula – before going out, though it will still be visible from neighbouring galaxies millions of light years away.

Cosmic Alchemy 175 x 168 cms Acrylic on canvas with gold and silver leaf, 2024



my mother

Helena Bajaj Larsen
Textile Artist & Designer
Paris · Dubai · India

What was it like growing up with Sujata Bajaj as a mother?

The first term which comes to my mind is "Force of Nature". I sense many who have had the fortune of crossing paths with her, would agree she did not leave them feeling indifferent. She shows up in the form of a current. A current built upon insatiable curiosity, unwavering faith, uncompromising creativity and infinite kindness.

I am quite certain the young girl from Jaipur never imagined her playground getting quite this big – moving to Paris, marrying a Scandinavian diplomat, eventually even adding a home base in the Middle East. Her life is as complex a composition as her paintings, filled with layers and colours which go far beyond what meets the eye.

One of her many traits I admire is the ability to seamlessly embody both wisdom and innocence. She pairs her vast experience of the world with a pure, childlike curiosity for all it has to offer and gets increasingly hungrier for life with every passing year. While I watch most from her generation slowly opt for quieter surroundings, my mother only seems to have one desire: do more, see more, be more. Though her family, my father and I, would like to think we are fluent in Sujata Bajaj, she really never ceases to catch us by surprise. She will without notice sign us up for a month-long Raku ceramic course in Kyoto; she will, in rural Uzbekistan, hop between textile workshops 12 hours



a day whilst sleeping in a hostel, to discover the birthplace of ikat. She will sit through a four-hour boat ride on Inle lake in Burma to access Lotus Silk weaving studios on stilts.

Witnessing, and eventually sharing, this passion for creativity has been the greatest privilege of my life as her daughter. It is a mutual love for all the beauty this world is capable of generating, and a joint quest to find ways we can be a part of the process.

Though many may choose to view her as a citizen of the world, if anyone knows my mother at all, they will say she is a daughter of India first and that NRI is her least favourite acronym. She was born to a Gandhian family amidst a society defined by pure concern for the greater community and a core kindness which is difficult to put into words. Stemming from this very honest world of Wardha's ashrams and entering a creative industry not so known for being particularly humane – I have always been in awe of just how much she preserved her absolute true self, no matter the place, the people, the circumstance. She has without exception treated everyone she encounters in her career, and personal life of course, with the same level of respect; be it an art student, a collector or a critic. They would all walk away having met the same person, because, though you won't find a more multifaceted character, it all comes together to make one sole true version of Sujata Bajaj.

In addition to helping her build this unshakably strong identity, her upbringing contributed largely to her faith: If she believes in something, it happens and when it doesn't, she gracefully accepts that it will later. It serves as a robust thread of passion which has protected her through every chapter of a tumultuous journey; in many ways it is a spiritual gift – a direct result of her never-wavering connection to her homeland.

When it comes to her artistic practice, in terms of pushing the boundaries of her vision – I have watched as she concerns herself less and less with the limiting effects of external opinion. Her creativity remains one anchored in constant discovery, linking back to the innate joy she finds in tackling the unknown. She has from her first exhibition at the age of 18 until today experimented with just about every medium under the sun. Any tool, any material kind enough to lend itself to her process, she adopted and mastered until she was on to the next. Time and time again, throughout her illustrious career she has allowed herself to surrender to new visual arenas without fear, and this has opened doors for her to many mediums and audiences beyond the one that initially shaped her artistic voice. She does it again this time, with Spacescapes. A singular new dialect of an already perfected language is born.

Lastly, as I attempt to build my own name in a similar space, I am for the first time catching a glimpse of some of the difficulties she may have faced. The choice of a life so unconventional comes with an isolation people tend to speak less of. It is an acceptance that most around you do



not understand what you are doing and you will relentlessly attempt to illuminate them with your ideas only to be faced with the reality that you can in fact only do this for yourself. If someone relates and if someone is touched by it, then that is a secondary win. In this sense, my mother is fortunate that beyond the hard work and resilience, it all, over time, converted into a loyal international audience of people who have taken pride in watching her grow as well as contributed in their own way to what she has become today.

She is a fighter and possesses a form of inner conviction I have yet to spot elsewhere. She moves me every day and in many ways she is my compass, both moral and creative.

There is a temple in Jaipur, Moti Dungri, and my mother used to go there every Wednesday during her school years. Funnily enough, many many years later, I have started spending a considerable amount of time in Jaipur and I too, try to go there every Wednesday. Is it because I believe in Ganeshji or because I believe in the power of Sujata Bajaj? That remains to be seen.

sujata bajaj

- Daughter of Radhakrishnaji & Anasuyadevi Bajaj, Wardha, India
- Born and schooled in Jaipur, India
- Higher education from Pune, India
- First Class, First in B.A. and M.A. (Art and Painting), S.N.D.T. College, Pune
- Ph.D. in Fine Arts, S.N.D.T. University. Thesis on Indian Tribal Art
- 1988-89 French Government Scholarship
- Studied at École Nationale des Beaux-Arts, Paris
- Worked in Studio Claude Viseux, Paris
- Married to Rune Jul Larsen. Daughter: Helena Bajaj Larsen
- Lives and works between Paris, Dubai and India

Achievements

2024 'Paris Olympics 2024: France and India', Paris Olympics 2024, and JSW Group, unveiled the painting at Marie du 7e Arrondissement, Paris, France

2023 Maharashtrian of the Year, Lokmat Media Group, Mumbai, India

2003 Raza Award

1991 Bombay Art Society Award

1986 Selected for International Youth in Achievement, Cambridge

1986 Best painting award, Nasik Kala Niketan

1985 Painting selected for inclusion in the National Collection

1984, 1979 State Art Award, Maharashtra

1983 Outstanding Young Person of Maharashtra

1982 Outstanding Young Person of Pune

1979 Chancellor's Award, S.N.D.T. University, Mumbai





International solo exhibitions

2020 Alliance Française, Dubai
2019 Ganapati, Saffronart, London
2018 Ganapati, Embassy of India, Rome
2017 Ganapati, The Royal Suite, Waldorf Astoria Palm Jumeirah, Dubai
2014, 2010, 2008, 2006, 2005, 2004, 2002 Galleri Sult, Stavanger, Norway
2013 Illumina, Indian Ambassador's Residence, Paris
2013 Indigo Blue Art, Singapore
2009 Galerie Patrice Trigano, Paris, France
2008 Saffronart and Osborne Samuel Gallery, London, U.K.
2004 Galerie Art & Littérature, Paris, France
2003, 2000, 1997, 1993 Galleri Nordstrand, Oslo, Norway
2001 Galleri Tendenes, Stavanger, Norway
2000 Varatun Gaard, Stavanger, Norway
1999 Atlantic Gallery, New York, USA
1999 Stavanger Kunstforening, Norway
1998 Galleri Aakern, Kongsberg, Norway
1998 Galerie Mohanjeet, Paris, France
1995, 1993, 1992 Galerie Art & Data, Frankfurt, Germany
1994 Galerie Argile, Bruxelles, Belgium
1994, 1991 Galerie Christine Marquet de Vasselot, Paris, France
1993 Maison de Norvège, Paris, France
1989 Galerie Bernanos, Ministère de l'Éducation Nationale, Paris, France
1989 Galerie Jean-Louis Voisin, Pourville-sur-Mer, France
1989 Centre d'accueil des étudiants du Proche-Orient, Paris, France
1988 American Cultural Society, Washington DC, USA
1988 Mac-Robert Art Centre, University of Sterling, U.K.
1988 Commonwealth Art Gallery, Edinburgh, U.K.

Selected international group exhibitions

2025 Shakti, MOSA Museum of Sacred Art, Belgium
2024 The X Tashkent International Biennale of Contemporary Art, Uzbekistan
2022 Art Dubai, Volte Art Projects, Dubai
2018 IMA 30 Years, Institut du Monde Arabe, Paris
2018 Art Stage, Singapore
2018 Kala Sutra, Sanchit Art, The Arts House, Singapore
2018 Art Central, Hong Kong
2017 Kala Sutra, Sanchit Art, Visual Arts Centre, Hong Kong
2015 Art Bahrain, Manama, Bahrain
2015 Visual Art Centre, Hongkong
2015 Forms of Devotion, Museum of Sacred Art (MOSA), Belgium, Chulalangkorn University, Bangkok, and China Art Museum, Shanghai, organised by MOSA
2017, 2013, 2010, 2009 Brafa Art Fair, Brussels, Belgium
2011 Bologna Art Fair, Italy
2010 Twenty Windows to the World, Ministry of Education of Saudi Arabia/ UNESCO, Paris and Riyadh
2010 Art and Design Fair, Paris
2009 Gallery Soul Flower, Bangkok, Thailand
2009 The Power of Peace, UNESCO, Bangkok, Thailand
2009 Musée des Arts Asiatiques, Nice, France
2009 The Art of India, Galerie Neumeister, Munich, Germany
2008 Art Singapore, Singapore
2008 Shanghai Art Fair, China
2008 The Journey, New York Academy of Art, New York, USA
2007 Diverse Voices, Galeria and Visual Art Center, Hong Kong
2007 London Art Fair, U.K.
2007 Fact and Fiction, Art Pilgrim, London, U.K.
2007, 2006, 2005 Art Miami, Art Palm Beach, Florida, USA
2007 The Ueno Royal Museum of Modern Art, Tokyo, Japan
2007 The Power of Peace, United Nations in Bali, Indonesia
2007, 2006, 2005 Event Show, Tate Britain, London, U.K.
2006 Chelsea College of Art, London, U.K.
2006 Roop Adhyatma, Bodhi Art Gallery, Singapore
2006 Art Space, Dubai, Hong Kong
2005 S.H. Raza and Sujata Bajaj, Aicon Gallery, Palo Alto, Ca, USA
2005 S.H. Raza and Sujata Bajaj, Aicon Gallery, New York, USA
2004 Contemporary Indian Art, Galerie Muller and Plate, Munich, Germany
2004 Regard sur la peinture indienne contemporaine, Gorbio, France
2004 Comparaisons, Espace Auteuil, Paris, France
2003 L'eau, UNESCO, Paris, France
2002 Cinq peintres indiens en France, Boulogne-Billancourt, France
2002 Art Singapore 2002, Singapore
2001 Indian Contemporary Fine Art, Los Angeles, USA
1998 Indian Spring, Hong Kong
1998 50 years of Independence, Hong Kong
1996 Within the Frame, Visual Art Centre, Hong Kong
1995 UNESCO, Paris
1994 Ausstellung Indische Kunst, Frankfurt, Germany
1993 Contemporaines, Grand Palais, Paris, France
1992 Salon Découvertes, Grand Palais, Paris, France
1992 University of Frankfurt, Germany
1992 Galerie Christine Marquet de Vasselot, Paris, France
1992 Galleri Bryggen, Bergen, Norway
1991 Salon des Indépendants, Normands, France
1991 New York Art Fair, USA
1991, 1990, 1989 Salon Art en Bray, Neufchâtel-en-Bray, France
1989 Salon de mai, Grand Palais, Paris, France
1989 Neuf Artistes de la Cité Universitaire, C.I.U.P, Paris, France
1989 La Société Plurielle Égalitaire, Galerie Bernanos, Paris, France
1989 Artistes indiens à Paris, Galerie du Cygne, Paris, France
1989 Galerie de la Maison des Beaux-Arts, Paris, France
1988 L'Exposition de Peinture Contemporaine Indienne, Tarbes, France

Talks on tribal art

1991 École Nationale des Beaux-Arts, Paris, France
1990 Ulster University, Belfast, U.K.
1990 Mandapa, Paris, France
1989 Centre d'accueil des étudiants du Proche-Orient, Paris, France
1988 Commonwealth Centre, Edinburgh, U.K.
1988 London and Hartland, U.K.
1988 American Cultural Society, Washington DC, USA
1988 Princeton University, Princeton, USA
1988 George Washington University, Washington DC, USA

Solo exhibitions in India

2025 Spacescapes, Art & Soul, Jehangir Art Gallery, Mumbai
2019 Celebrate artist Sujata Bajaj, Residence of France, Ambassade de France en Inde, New Delhi
2018-1991 Birla Academy, Kolkata
2018 Ganapati, Gallery Veda, Chennai
2018 Ganapati, Jagriti Art Initiative, Welcome Art Gallery with Art & Soul and Park Hyatt, Kolkata
2017 Ganapati, Kalakriti Art Gallery, Hyderabad
2016 Ganapati, Spazio Panchshil Realty, Pune
2016 Ganapati, The Mona Lisa Kalagram, Pune
2016, 2012 Ganapati, Gallery Art & Soul and Jehangir Art Gallery, Mumbai
2016 Ganapati, Art Alive Gallery and Visual Art Gallery, India Habitat Centre, New Delhi
2011 Art Alive Gallery and Palette Art Gallery in association with the French Embassy, New Delhi
2007 Sublimation (ceramic creations), Gallery Art & Soul, Mumbai.
2007 Tao Art Gallery, Mumbai
2007 Palette Art Gallery, New Delhi
2006 Transcendence, Gallery Art Musing, Mumbai
2005 Fire and Water, Chemould Art Gallery, Mumbai
2002, 1995, 1993, 1991 Apparao Gallery, Chennai
2002, 1995, 1985 Triveni Kala Sangam, New Delhi
2000, 1996, 1992, 1989, 1984, 1980, 1979 Jehangir Art Gallery, Mumbai
1988 Sarala's Art Centre, Chennai
1987 Karnataka Chitra Kala Parishath, Bengaluru
1987, 1979 Kamalnayan Bajaj Art Gallery, Mumbai
1986 Taj Art Gallery, Mumbai
1982 Academy of Fine Arts, Kolkata
1987, 1985, 1984, 1982, 1980, 1978 Bal Gandharva Art Gallery, Pune

Selected group exhibitions in India

2024, 2023 Art Mumbai x Art & Soul, Mahalaxmi Race Course, Mumbai
2024 Shakti: Fair and Fierce, NGMA National Gallery of Modern Art x MOSA Belgium, New Delhi & Mumbai
2023 Equus, Exhibition and Publication, Saffronart and Aleph
2023 Art of India, Times of India x Art & Soul, Snowball Studios, Mumbai
2020, 2019, 2018, 2017, 2016, 2015, 2014, 2013, 2012, 2011 Anniversary Show, Tao Art Gallery, Mumbai
2019 Last Supper, Exhibition and Publication, Saffronart and Aleph
2019 Breaking Barriers, Art & Soul, Jehangir Art Gallery, Mumbai
2019 Creative Disruptionists, ITC Maurya and Art Aesthete, New Delhi
2018 Soulmate, Easal Art Gallery, Visual Art Gallery, New Delhi
2017, 2016, 2015, 2014, 2013, 2012, 2011, 2010, 2009 India Art Fair, New Delhi
2015 Forms of Devotion, Lalit Kala Galleries, New Delhi (MOSA, Belgium)
2014 Ode to the Monumental, Saffronart, Lalit Kala Galleries, New Delhi and Jehangir Art Gallery, Mumbai
2013 Palette Art Gallery, New Delhi
2012 Aqua, Gallery Beyond, Mumbai
2012 Aviram: Celebrating S.H.Raza at 90, Visual Art Gallery, New Delhi
2012 Diamond Jubilee Show, Jehangir Art Gallery, Mumbai
2012 B-Seventy, tribute to Amitabh Bachchan, Mumbai
2011 Form and Formlessness, Gallery Art Alive, Gurgaon
2011 Art and Jewellery for Save the Children, Gallery Art & Soul, Mumbai
2011 Looking Back to Look Forward, Nitanjali Art Gallery, New Delhi
2010 Besides Paris, Birla Academy of Art and Culture, Kolkata
2010 Flying Carpets, People for Animals, New Delhi, Mumbai
2010 Save the Tiger, Seven Art Limited, New Delhi
2009 Manthan, Nitanjali Art Gallery, New Delhi
2008 X @ Jehangir, Art Musing and Jehangir Art Gallery, Mumbai
2007 Power of Peace, Tao Art Gallery, Mumbai
2007 Tale of Two Cities, Sanskriti Art Gallery, Kolkata
2007 Vistaar, Limited Editions, New Delhi
2007 Swasti Roop, Art Alive Gallery, New Delhi
2006 Sensuality, Galleria, New Delhi
2006 Roop Adhyatma, Palette Art Gallery, New Delhi
2005 Roop Vidhan, Art Alive Gallery, New Delhi
2005 Roop Adhyatma, Tao Art Gallery, Mumbai
2005 Papermark, Visual Arts Gallery, India Habitat Centre, New Delhi
2004 Anticipations, The Fine Art Resource, Mumbai
2004, Sacred Space, Tao Art Gallery, Mumbai
2004 Apparao Gallery, Chennai, Delhi and Mumbai
2004 Generation, Saffronart and the Guild, Mumbai
2004 Gallery 88, Kolkata
2004, 2003 Gallery Art Musing, Mumbai
2003 Performative Texture, Jehangir Art Gallery, Mumbai
2003 Apparao Gallery (Tie exhibition), Bengaluru, Kolkata, Chennai, New Delhi and Mumbai
2003 S.H.Raza and Sujata Bajaj, Gallery Guild, Mumbai
2003 Peace, Tao Art Gallery, Mumbai
2003 Seven, Bengaluru, Chennai, New Delhi and Mumbai
1999 S.H. Raza and Sujata Bajaj, Gallery Seven, Mumbai
1999, 1998 White on White, New Delhi and Mumbai
1993 Souvenirs d'en France, Lalit Kala Galleries, New Delhi
1989 Indian Eclectics, Lalit Kala Galleries, New Delhi
1978 to 1988 Lalit Kala Akademi, Bombay Art Society, Nasik Kala Niketan, State Art Exhibitions, Hyderabad Art Society, All India Exhibitions of Fine Art



Books on the artist

2025
Sujata Bajaj: Spacescapes
Lead essay by David Elbaz, Girish Shahane, Manuel Rabaté and Helena Bajaj Larsen
Published by Gallery Art & Soul, Mumbai, India
Namtech Fine Art, New Delhi, India
Galerie Patrice Trigano, Paris, France

2016
Sujata Bajaj: Ganapati
Lead essay by Jean-Claude Carrière
Artist-interview by Kishore Singh
Published 2016 by Gallery Art & Soul, Mumbai;
Art Alive Gallery, New Delhi;
Galerie Patrice Trigano, Paris;
India Media Group, Paris

2009
Sujata Bajaj: Mains et merveilles
Text by Michel Waldberg
French edition, Éditions de la Différence, Paris, 2009
English edition, Éditions de la Différence, Paris, 2009

2007
Sujata Bajaj: L'Ordre du monde
Texts by Jean-Claude Carrière, Lorette Nobécourt,
French edition, Albin Michel, Paris, 2007
English edition, Albin Michel, Paris, 2007; reprinted 2009

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Original French text

David Elbaz

Directeur Scientifique du Département d'Astrophysique, CEA Saclay, Paris

Je pensais que seuls les trous noirs possèdaient le pouvoir de se jouer du temps. Pourtant, je sors de l'atelier d'artiste de Sujata Bajaj avec la sensation que le temps glisse sur ses tableaux et sur ceux qui y plongent le regard.

Le train m'emporte, une voix indique les stations, quelques voyageurs attendent sur le quai. Ils vivent, ils voyagent, certains pensent, d'autres parlent. Pour eux, tout est normal.

Un homme sur la gauche est assoupi, la voix ne le réveille pas. Les autres ne sont déjà plus là, ils voyagent par la pensée dans les circuits électroniques de leur téléphone portable. Pour eux, tout est normal.

Nous croisons un train en sens inverse, des voyageurs font rouler leurs valises sur le quai, chacun semble savoir où il va mais aucun ne va au même endroit. Pour eux, tout est normal.

Je lève les yeux vers le ciel, il est blanc, impossible de voir à travers les nuées de coton. Sans les étoiles comment savoir où je suis, où je vais, et surtout d'où je viens. Le monde nous échappe, les étoiles s'éteignent effacées par les lumières et les nuages artificiels, on marche, on court, on nage, on vole, pour aller où ?

Une affiche publicitaire m'interpelle "bienvenu dans le présent". Des graffitis aux couleurs bigarrées me parlent dans une langue que je ne comprends pas. Les arbres, on dirait qu'ils me suivent, qu'ils m'accompagnent, ils sont partout, leurs branches s'agitent à mon passage, est-ce le vent ou cherchent-ils à me parler ? Est-ce normal ?

Je réalise qu'il n'y a pas deux verts identiques, pas deux arbres identiques, pas deux feuilles identiques. Je ne voyais que des arbres, mais je vois maintenant des êtres individuels, riches et complexes. Leurs formes, leurs couleurs me parlent dans une langue inconnue. J'ai l'impression que les couleurs nous parlent, est-ce normal ?

Et si la réponse à toutes nos questions était là devant nos yeux depuis le début, écrite à l'encre de lumière, encodée dans les feuilles des arbres, dans les étoiles et les nébuleuses, dans les nuages et les galaxies, dans les atomes et les molécules ? Qui saura traduire pour nous la langue des nuages et des nébuleuses, celle des étoiles et des galaxies, la langue de nos origines et de nos destins ?

Le scientifique ou l'artiste ? Et pourquoi devrions-nous choisir, fermer un oeil pour n'en ouvrir qu'un seul, regarder le monde à plat, comme s'il n'avait pas de profondeur ? Et si la réponse était à la croisée des regards, là où les perspectives se mêlent et s'entremêlent, là où le monde s'enracine dans une profondeur insoupçonnée.

Qui parle ? En quelle langue ? Celle des formes et des couleurs ou celle des nombres et de leurs relations mathématiques ? Celle des miroirs et des lentilles, ou celle du regard et de l'inspiration ?

Qu'est-ce que l'amour, demande le disciple ? L'amour, c'est de vouloir aimer, lui répond le maître. Et la beauté ? Est-elle aussi une enfant du désir, ou bien une réalité aussi concrète et matérielle qu'une fleur ou une montagne ?

L'astrophysicien plonge le regard dans la profondeur du ciel, en quête d'une particule de lumière égarée qui accepterait de témoigner de ce qu'elle a vu, dans un lointain passé. Il sait qu'il ne doit pas succomber à la tentation trop humaine de pleurer ou de sauter de joie. Il doit garder la tête froide, et confier à ses doigts le devoir de transmettre au clavier de son ordinateur les faits et leurs conséquences logiques. S'en tenir aux faits, rien qu'aux faits. La couleur rouge ? Non, non, n'y voyez pas celle du coquelicot ou du sang, mais la présence de l'atome de souffre excité par le rayonnement ultraviolet d'une étoile jeune et massive, juste avant qu'elle n'explose en supernova. La couleur bleue ? Non, non, il ne s'agit pas de la couleur du ciel ou de l'océan, mais bien de celle de l'hydrogène, le plus simple des atomes. Et le vert, alors ? Mais l'oxygène, enfin, vous ne voudriez pas oublier l'atome qui vous permet de respirer quand même ? Pourtant, ces couleurs, ces faits, ces photons captés au compte-goutte ressemblent étrangement à ces toiles peintes par Sujata Bajaj, et elles sont belles, vous voyez ? C'est bizarre, ma respiration semble libérée d'un poids, comme si mon corps savait lire le langage des formes et des couleurs. Ces toiles sont-elles des peintures ou des re-créations de l'univers ? Parlent-elles de l'infiniment lointain ou de ce qui nous habite infiniment près ? Qui sommes nous ? Qui suis je ? Qui est Sujata Bajaj ? Est-elle une artiste, une traductrice, une visionnaire, une mathématicienne-physicienne-biologiste détentrice du pouvoir des nombres qui régissent les arrangements ? Faut-il comprendre la beauté pour en goûter les saveurs dès lors qu'elle nous porte et nous emporte vers un lieu intérieur qui fait sens ?

Mais attendez... Cette image, je la connais, je la porte en moi depuis tant et tant d'années. Quel est ce reflet ? Celui d'une étoile ou d'une feuille d'argent ? Quelle est cette couleur ? celle des atomes d'hydrogène et d'oxygène ionisés par des étoiles naissantes ou le pigment de l'acrylique ? Quelle est cette excroissance ? L'émergence d'une planète ou la superposition de couches de peinture ?

Et là, en haut à droite de la toile, regardez comme l'espace s'impose, libéré semble-t-il par la lumière d'un amas d'étoiles jeunes qui viennent d'éclore dans le cosmos. À moins qu'il ne s'agisse d'un espace immaculé, gardien de la mémoire de la toile originelle ?

Mais attendez... Là je la vois, cette étoile je la reconnais c'est celle qui nous a donné naissance. Et ce rouge, qui rappelle la couleur rouge de notre sang, n'est-il pas le sang versé lors de la mort de l'étoile ? Oh bien sûr il ne s'agit pas de sang liquide non, mais sa couleur est bien celle du fer qui donne sa couleur rouge à notre sang. Une goutte de sang, une simple goutte de sang, est à l'univers ce sur le disque dur est à l'ordinateur. Une mémoire. La mémoire de nos origines célestes. Ici la mort signe la fin d'une existence. Là-bas, dans les recoins du ciel, la mort célèbre la naissance de nouveaux mondes, l'émergence de la complexité.

Il y a 4,56 milliards d'années... Je répète... 4,56 milliards d'années, une étoile flottait dans l'espace, là où se trouve maintenant ce tableau de Sujata Bajaj. Cette étoile n'est plus, mais si nous avions assisté à sa fin explosive, ce que nous aurions vu est à la goutte de peinture près, la même forme, la même image, les mêmes couleurs, que ce tableau. Dans l'univers, une explosion est un lieu de mort et de naissance, l'un s'accompagne toujours de l'autre. Les couleurs ensemencent l'espace d'une complexité nouvelle, d'un peuple d'atomes près à enfanter des planètes et pourquoi pas de la vie. Le phénomène de l'explosion n'est pas destructeur, et de quoi serait-il destructeur là où rien n'existe encore ? Non bien au contraire il



est source de création, il collecte les atomes et les molécules, les réunit et engendre de nouvelles étoiles entourées par des cortèges de planètes. Nous sommes nés dans l'explosion d'une étoile. Nous, les animaux, les plantes, la Terre et le Soleil.

Quand on plonge dans le noir qui coule entre les couleurs d'un tableau de Sujata Bajaj, on pénètre dans l'antre de la création cosmique, là où germent les proto-étoiles et autres cœurs pré-stellaires. Nous sommes les témoins d'une re-création... Et pour nos esprits préoccupés par le rythme torrentiel du temps qui passe, c'est une récréation. On plonge dans le vide cosmique, plein d'une infinité de possibles, là d'où nous venons tous. Regardez bien ces couleurs qui virevoltent, c'est de là qu'émergent les formes de l'univers, comme dans les volutes d'un volcan en éruption. On ne les découvre pas, on les reconnaît, on les porte en nous, dans notre sang et dans notre peau. Nous sommes faits de cette peinture là, et nous sommes beaux.



Original Italian text

Francesco Buranelli

President of the Permanent Commission for the Trustee of Monuments and Artists of the Holy See, Rome, Italy

Per chi è abituato a confrontarsi con le opere di Sujata Bajaj rimarrà sorpreso e incredulo di fronte ai nuovi dipinti della serie Spacescapes.

Una esplosione di luci e di colori che divengono forza espressiva astratta e fluttuante di equilibri instabili governati da un apparente caos primordiale che ci riporta alle origini della creazione del mondo "La terra era informe e deserta e le tenebre ricoprivano l'abisso" (Genesi 1,2).

Opere che, sulla scia dell'astrattismo del Novecento, ci proiettano in uno spazio senza confini, in continuo divenire, dominato dall'energia vitale di un pianeta sull'orlo del collasso climatico, scempiato dall'egoismo umano.

Spacescapes diviene così metafora e denuncia della crisi dell'esistenza del pianeta Terra, nel quale l'universo di Sujata rivive tutta la sua drammatica attualità che ciclicamente si dovrà rinnovare per affrontare ... il domani.

French text

Manuel Rabaté

Director, Louvre Abu Dhabi, UAE

Lors d'une rencontre à Abu Dhabi, Sujata Bajaj m'a proposé de contribuer à cet ouvrage, une proposition que j'ai acceptée avec plaisir en raison de l'intérêt singulier que suscite son travail. Au Louvre Abu Dhabi, notre mission première est de faire vivre un espace où les cultures se rencontrent et dialoguent. Travaillant entre l'Inde, la France et le Moyen-Orient, Sujata Bajaj incarne également pleinement un rôle de passeuse culturelle.

Formée auprès de S.H. Raza, Sujata Bajaj poursuit une tradition de réflexion profonde sur le monde à travers l'abstraction picturale. Autre point commun avec le Louvre Abu Dhabi, puisque S.H. Raza est le premier artiste indien de la modernité accueilli dans les collections, avec sa toile Bindu (1986). Raza considérait la peinture comme une forme de méditation. Bajaj prolonge cette lignée tout en y ajoutant une technique personnelle et singulière. Dans Spacescapes, elle mêle le dripping à des collages de feuilles d'or et d'argent, conférant à ses œuvres une forte dimension de matérialité.

Inspirée par les images du télescope spatial James Webb, elle capte et interprète la dynamique du cosmos : le mouvement des étoiles en fin de vie, des nébuleuses en expansion et des amas de comètes. Cette intensité picturale, entre science et imaginaire, résonne à nouveau avec la réflexion artistique que nous défendons au Louvre Abu Dhabi, notamment dans notre exposition actuelle Imaginer le Cosmos au Musée des Enfants, où la créativité devient une fenêtre sur l'infini. Spacescapes réaffirme ce lien essentiel entre humanité et univers.

Dans cet espace où le réel et l'abstrait se rencontrent, Bajaj célèbre la fusion de la création artistique et de la découverte scientifique, rappelant ainsi que l'art, à l'instar d'un télescope braqué vers les étoiles, révèle ce qui échappe à notre perception et nourrit notre émerveillement.

Original Norwegian text

Knut Stene-Johansen

Professor, Writer and Art Critic, Norway

Jeg har kjent Sujata Bajaj i godt over 30 år, har hatt gleden å se mange av hennes utstillinger, i Norge, i Paris, i Dubai og til og med i Mumbai og jeg har skrevet om dem.

Sujata har alltid hatt begge beina trygt plantet på jorda. Det forhindrer ikke bevegelse. Stadig nye reiser i fargenes rike. Sprakende koloritter av energi langs jordiske fargeskalaer. Rødt og gull mot det dype mørke.

Å arbeide med palettens sterkeste farger slik Sujata har gjort lenge, og fortsetter med i SPACESCAPES, er krevende og kan møte motstand. Det krever dristighet, en slags fryktløshet, som Sujata har bevist hun besitter. Rødt er den vanskeligste fargen for en maler i følge Per Krohg, Norges store modernist.

Med sine lerreter som seil reiser Sujata nå ut i det ytre rom. For å gjenvinne våre indre krefter. For å kjenne på skaperverkets opprinnelse. For å fange inn universets farger. En reise inn i det fremmede som ikke lar seg begrense av det smale spektrum tilgjengelig for det menneskelige øyet.

Men med begge beina fortsatt trygt plantet på jorda.





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SIZES IN CENTIMETRES

150 x 300



130 x 300



120 x 275



175 x 175



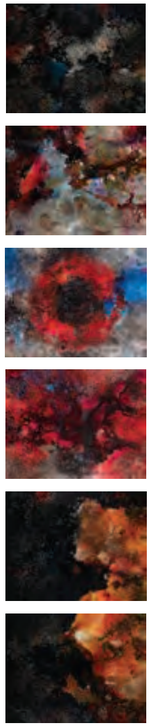
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100 x 300



140 x 180



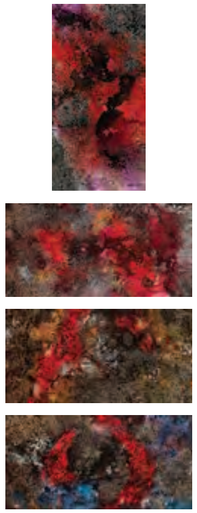
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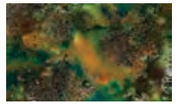
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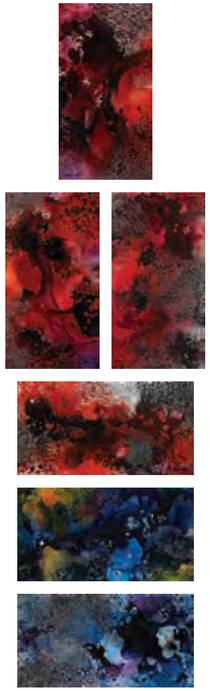
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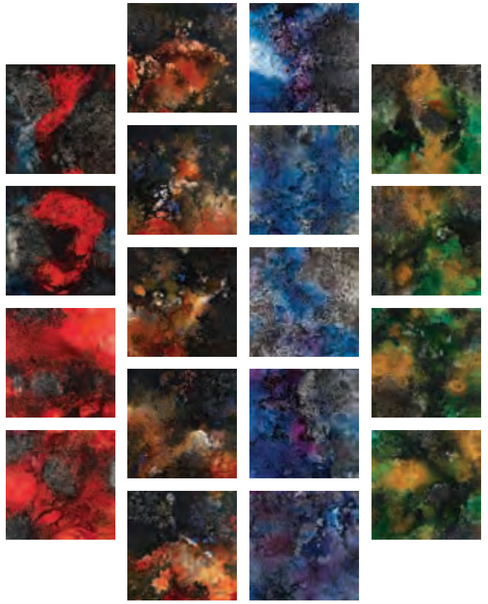
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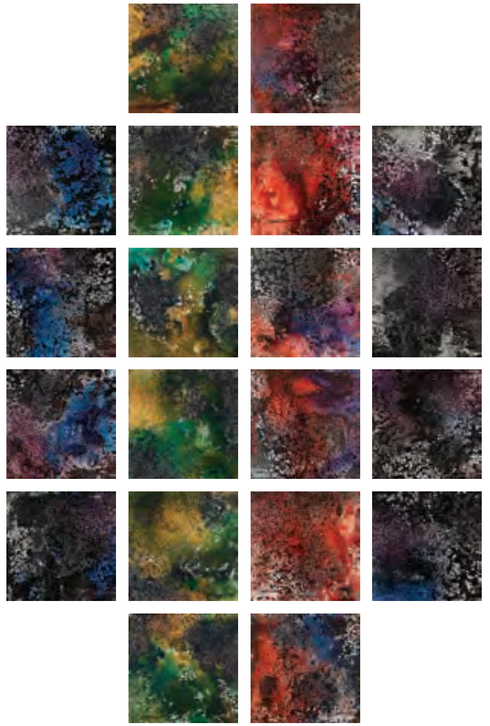
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100 x 100



50 x 50



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SIZES IN CENTIMETRES


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In the infinity of deep space,
abstraction and reality are one.

SUJATA BAJAJ