

Dilip Ranade & Anandajit Ray
Recent Works

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16 - 31 October, 2006



Pundole Art Gallery



Dilip Ranade – *Adam and Eve in the Museum*, acrylic on canvas, 25.5 x 20.5 cm, 2004

The Curator in His Labyrinth: Recent Works by Dilip Ranade

Dilip Ranade is a curator of all that lurks powerfully at the edge of what we regard as the actual and the plausible. His paintings and drawings usher us into a museum of exquisitely tongue-in-cheek artefacts, subtle paradoxes, quiet paranoid and bizarre riddles. And he is not content with being a compiler of annotations or an arranger of displays; no, he plays the role of the acrobat who swings among objects and their missing or replaced reflections, patient creatures and their ravenous opposites; he sets up occasions for the archaic to collide with the futuristic, and tenses the membrane of the fabular until it speaks cryptically, yet cogently, to a present beset by historic vexations and psychic upheavals.

We will meet the monk in his renunciate's robe here, his placidity threatened but also made significant by an exuberantly horned bull-demon. We will run, also, into one of Magritte's black-coated and bowler-hatted strangers, anonymous as a detective; his reflection falls upon the river of time as a Poona brahmin in his characteristic red headgear, while a white swan, a hamsa denoting the eternal soul, wings its way above the unsuspected twinship and duality of the contemporary self.

A bull ponders, a philosopher among bulls, on the massed silver-grey cooling towers of an industrial installation, a fortress of capital. Beyond this binary opposition of farmland and city, a third option emerges: in the distance, out of sight and reach of the animal as well as the surveillance apparatus of the chemical plant, but visible as utopia and paradise to us, a snatch of tenderly delineated landscape. A place of low hills and a sky rendered in variations of viridian and purple, with a star suspended above; a setting for the birth of the Promised One.

And what does a man do when overmastered by delusion and dilemma, when he must go in search of himself? He becomes no more than a green shirt, ripping itself open in the shape of a body coming apart; as Ghalib wrote in his brilliantly sophisticated manner, "I am no more than the sound of a man going to pieces." Below him, below Ranade's persona in this painting as much as below Ghalib: the quicksand, already sucking at a pair of reluctant feet.

Elsewhere in Ranade's universe, minatory trees stride on like the council of a dead emperor: green senators, faces resolving themselves from the wind-brushed leaves, spectres from an earlier age that is not yet dead. What has been abandoned for dead is never so, argues Ranade in these profoundly disturbing propositions, all the more compelling for being rarely larger than cabinet pictures. That hand: surely, sir, you saw it move; surely you saw it clench like a hair-clip clinging to vanished hair, like a crab out of water and on the way to its next victim? Ranade's fictions are possessed of the palpable reality of the haptic: the artist has grasped his imagined objects as firmly as though they were made of flesh or clay, and communicates them to us with the same force.

And what is that dog doing; he seems to have leaped out of the poems of the radical, the abrasive, the ferocious Kabir: the saint-poet who saw jackals chasing tigers and lions yoked to the plough. Ranade, following in the artistic lineage of Kabir, delights in overturning the settled order of things, so that victim becomes aggressor, meek becomes strong, the wingless fly and the winged ones come to earth with a bang.

But the dog, as I was saying: the dog has put his muzzle into a man's mouth and appears to be probing it. Dr Dog, I presume? Well, don't. Not yet. It's possible that the man is trying to bite the dog, with his toothless mouth. Stranger things have happened before. Those entrails draped on a chair, for instance, are what a man is when you reduce him to essentials. And what happens when you split a fluorescent yellow frog wide open, make an accordion of him to demonstrate the vivid perfection of bifid symmetry for the taxidermist's aesthetic pleasure? What happens? It turns out to be a frog with impeccably Modernist, not to say Theosophist, tastes. The frog's insides unfurl slowly, they've been crumpled so long. Red, white, blue, quadrilaterals and bars. It's a crumpled Mondrian.

And everywhere in Ranade's universe, which is built on the perception of menace and strangeness, we find the sword: a rain of swords falling slowly on a parliament of geese; a man seen in cross-section, every rib a sword, the red field invading the body in a tide of mud, the body opening out to the field in a burst of blood. More dogs, too: augurs of war to great Caesar's ghost, their muzzles pointed at the sky, their howls piercing the ears of the stars. And the man weighed down by his halo, the saint-man, he also looks up with them, awaiting a sign; in exile, perhaps, from that glimpse of a landscape with its single star, which we passed when we passed the chemical plant with its silver-grey towers.

Sometimes, Ranade offers us redemption from this Kabiresque logic of topsy-turvydom and tumult. Two men face each other with their tongues out: sharp as swords, pink as bananas (they grow pink bananas in these parts). In the first frame, tigers leap off their tongues, their own tongues sticking aggressively out, the action framed by an arched alcove. The next time around, there are no tigers; the tongue-tips meet. These encounters could be read as aspects of a sexual confrontation, of course, but they could also bear reference to moments when violence is enacted in the name of antique hatreds translated for the present; then transcended in the interests of a provisional understanding.

And we retreat briefly into Genesis too, to the threshold of sin, guilt and fall: Adam and Eve stand in a museum that is also a proscenium stage; they are only torsos, their heads, arms and legs long sacrificed to the passage of time. But the core survives viewers and onlookers, commentators and archivists; the torso is not a broken icon but a presence, as Rilke knew when he looked at and was looked at by the archaic torso of Apollo, which transfixed him and said, "You must change your life."

As he explores the corridors and annexes, the cupolas and rotundas and galleries of his universe, Ranade has realised that it is not the orderly museum that catalogue-driven managers dream of. It is, instead, a labyrinth that grows with every thought you think and every breath you take as you circle through its spatial possibilities. He cannot and will not abandon his labyrinth, for he is its curator: etymology commits him to his line of duty. He must take care, he must care for, he must be careful, he must care. From the evidence of his painterly expeditions into its further and enigmatic recesses, Dilip Ranade has demonstrated both the courage and the persistence to probe deep into the self and its motivations, and to present his eloquent testimony.

Ranjit Hoskote

Bombay, October 2006



Anandajit Ray – *U.T. Tiger Painting*, water colour and gouache on paper, 36 x 78 cm, 2006

'The Witness'

In a stable which is almost in the shadow of the new stone church, a man with grey eyes and grey beard, lying amidst the odour of animals, humbly seeks death as one would seek sleep. The day, faithful to vast secret laws, is shifting and confusing the shadows inside the poor shelter; outside are the fields and ditch clogged with dead leaves and the tracks of a wolf in the black mud where the forest begins. The man sleeps and dreams, forgotten. He is awakened by the bells tolling the Angelus. In the kingdom of England the ringing of bells is now one of the customs of the evening, but this man, as a child, has seen the face of Woden, the divine horror and exultation, the crude wooden idol hung with roman coins and heavy clothing, the sacrificing of horses, dogs and prisoners. Before dawn he will die and with him will die, and never return, the last immediate images of these pagan rites; the world will be a little poorer when this Saxon has died.

Deeds which populate dimensions and space and which reach their end when someone dies may cause us wonderment, but one thing, or an infinite number of things dies in every final agony, unless there is a universal memory as the theosophists have conjectured. In time there was a day that extinguished the last eyes to see Christ; the battle of Junin and the love of Helen died with the death of a man. What will die with me when I die, what pathetic or fragile form will the world lose? The voice of Macendio Fernandez, the image of a red horse in the vacant lot at Serrano and Caracas, a bar of sulphur in the drawer of a mahogany desk?

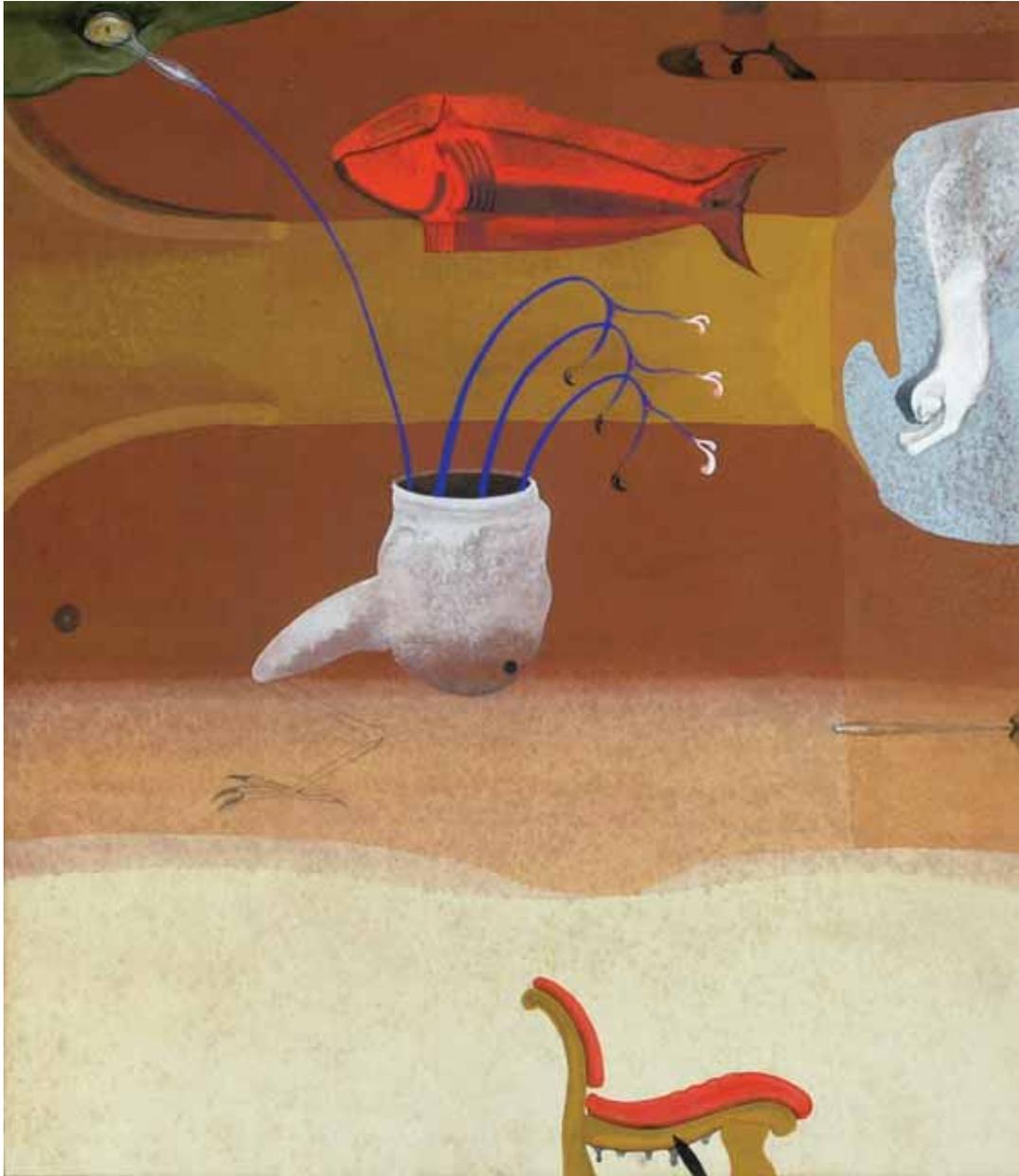
Jorge Luis Borges.



Anandajit Ray – *Flitting Fetish V*, water colour and gouache on paper, 65 x 50cm, 2006



Dilip Ranade – *A Peasant*, acrylic on canvas, 25.5 x 30.5cm, 2005



Anandajit Ray – *Flitting Fetish II*, water colour and gouache on paper, 36 x 31cm, 2006



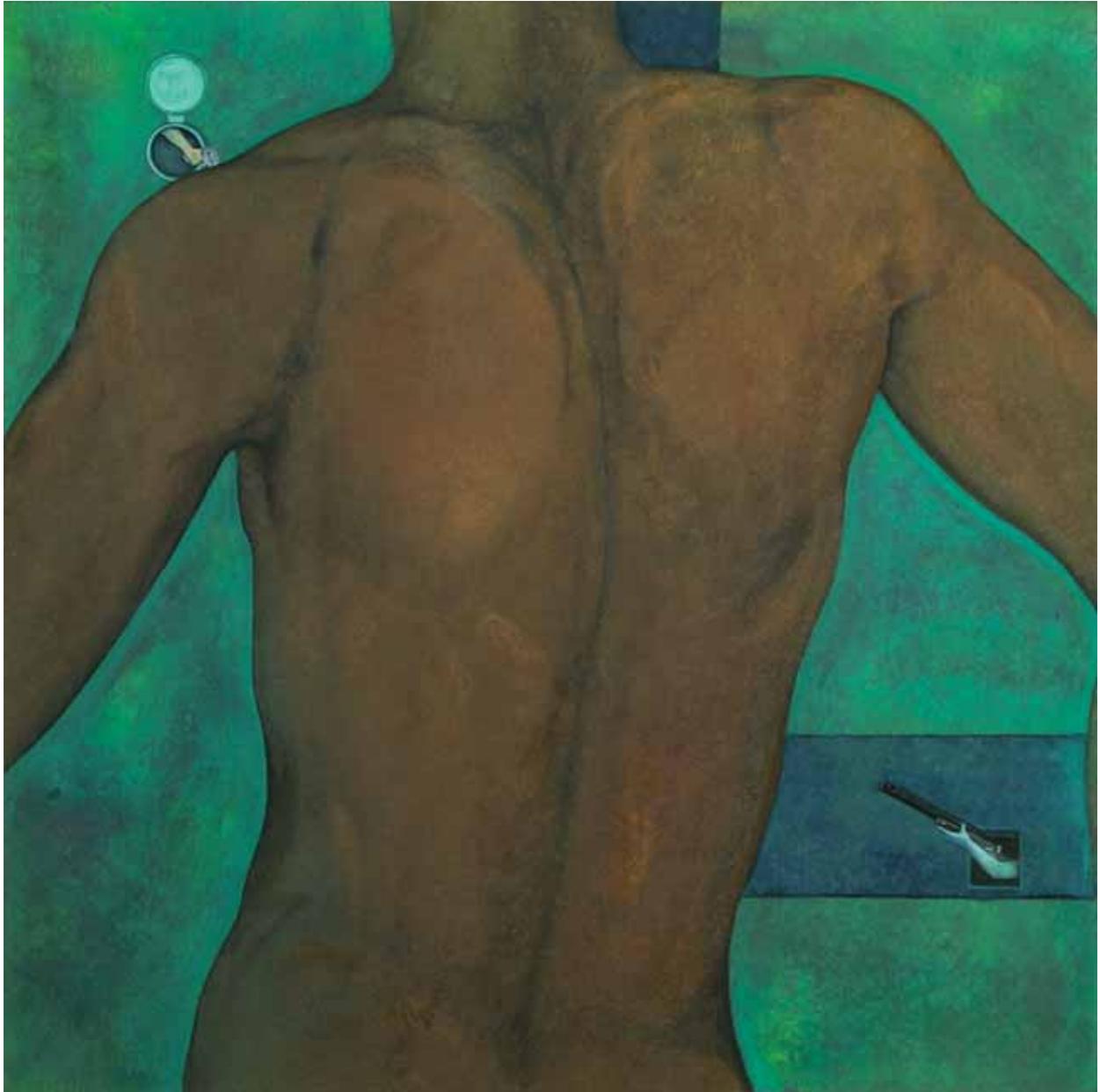
Dilip Ranade – *Man and Dog*, acrylic on canvas, 20.5 x 25.5 cm, 2004



Anandajit Ray – *Untitled*, water colour and gouache on paper, 76.5 x 57 cm, 2005



Dilip Ranade – *Tongues*, acrylic on canvas, 25.5 x 30.5 cm, 2005



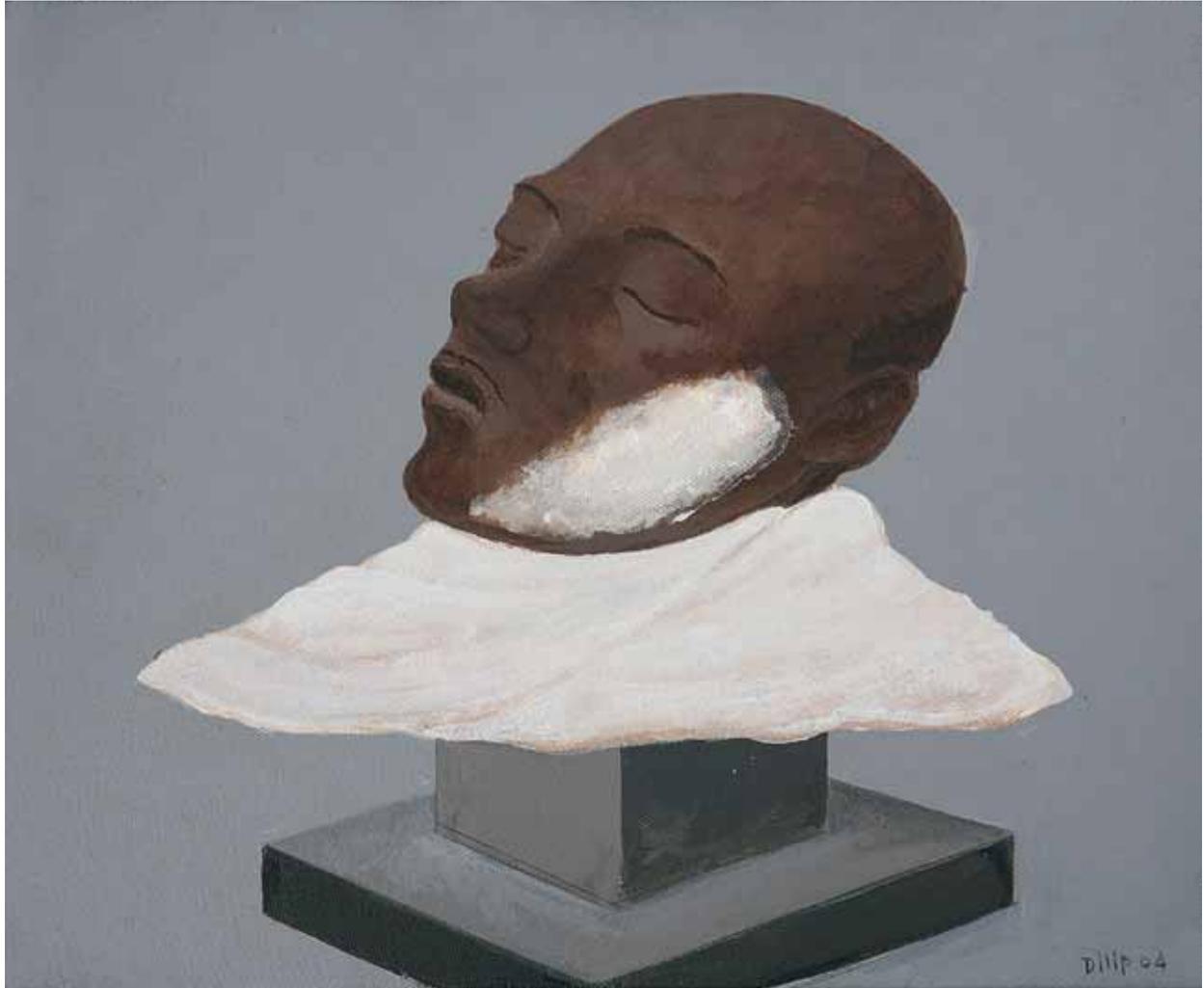
Anandajit Ray – *Torso*, water colour and gouache on paper, 22.5 x 22.5cm, 2005



Dilip Ranade – *Man and Shirt*, acrylic on canvas, 20.5 x 25.5 cm, 2006



Anandajit Ray – *Dignity*, water colour and gouache on paper, 76 x 57cm, 2006



Dilip Ranade – *Bust of a Man who was being Shaved*, acrylic on canvas, 25.5 x 30.5 cm, 2004



Anandajit Ray – *Flitting Fetish I*, water colour and gouache on paper, 26 x 36cm, 2006



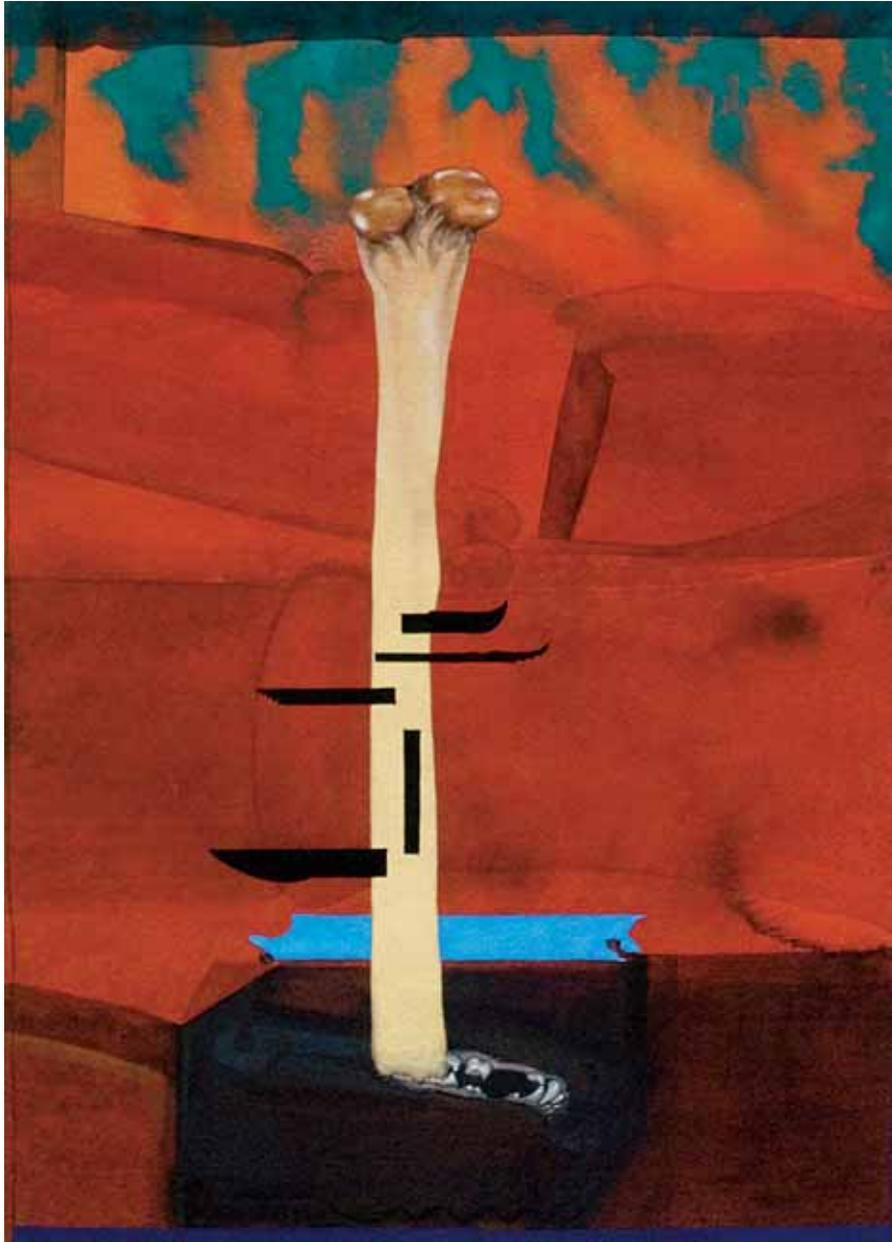
Dilip Ranade – *Magritte and Brahmin*, acrylic on canvas, 30.5 X 38 cm, 2006



Anandajit Ray – *Flitting Fetish IV*, water colour and gouache on paper, 65 x 49.5cm, 2006



Dilip Ranade – *A Thinker: Bull*, acrylic on canvas, 30.5 x 38cm, 2006



Anandajit Ray – *Flitting Fetish III*, water colour and gouache on paper, 36 x 26cm, 2006



Dilip Ranade – *Frog and Mondrian*, acrylic on canvas, 20.5 x 25.5 cm, 2004

Dilip Ranade

Born in 1950, Dilip Ranade received his Diploma in Drawing and Painting from Sir J. J. School of Art, Mumbai (1971). He is currently Senior Curator, European Paintings at the Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj Vastu Sangrahalaya (formerly Prince of Wales Museum), Mumbai. He has held solo as well as participated in group exhibitions at Jehangir Art Gallery, Mumbai (1972, 1978, 1980 & 2004) and Pundole Art Gallery, Mumbai (1979, 1981, 1989, 1996 & 1999), Cymroza Art Gallery, Mumbai (1999) and Total Museum, Seoul (2003). He lives and works in Mumbai.

Anandajit Ray

Born in 1965, Anandajit Ray received his B.F.A and M.F.A. from the M. S. University, Baroda. He received the Elizabeth Greenshield Scholarship (1991) and the Sanskriti Award (2000). He has held a few solo exhibitions Sakshi Gallery, Mumbai (1993 & 2002) and Bangalore (1994), Eicher Gallery, New Delhi (1995), 'Syrup', Sakshi Gallery, Mumbai (1998), 'S.M.T.W.T.F.S.', Nazar, Baroda (1999), Gallery Espace, New Delhi (2002), Gallerie '88, Kolkata (2002) and '4 the Future 11', Sakshi Gallery, Mumbai (2004) and his group participations include 'View From The Edge', Sakshi Gallery, Mumbai (1995), 'Private Languages' curated by Ranjit Hoskote, Pundole Art Gallery, Mumbai (1997), Bangladesh Biennial, Dhaka (1997), a joint show with Debnath Basu, Pundole Art Gallery, Mumbai (2001), 'In conversation' curated by Gayatri Sinha, Gallery Espace, New Delhi (2001), 'New Indian Art-Home, Street, Bazaar, Museum' curated by Gulam Sheikh & Dr. Jyotindra Jain, Manchester Art Gallery, Manchester (2002), 'Kapital & Karma', Kunsthalle Wien, Vienna (2002), Fine Art Resource, Berlin (2002) and 'Kaam', ArtsIndia, New York (2006). He has also illustrated a book of short stories 'Wildfire' by Bonophool, a Seagull publication, Kolkata (1998). He was nominated for the Sotheby's Award. He lives and works in Baroda.



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