



DAG
Estd. 1993

Madhvi Parekh

A N A N C I E N T M O D E R N N E S S

FRIEZE MASTERS

BOOTH NUMBER **S24**

THE REGENT'S PARK, LONDON

12-16 OCTOBER 2022



Sea God

Oil on canvas, 1971

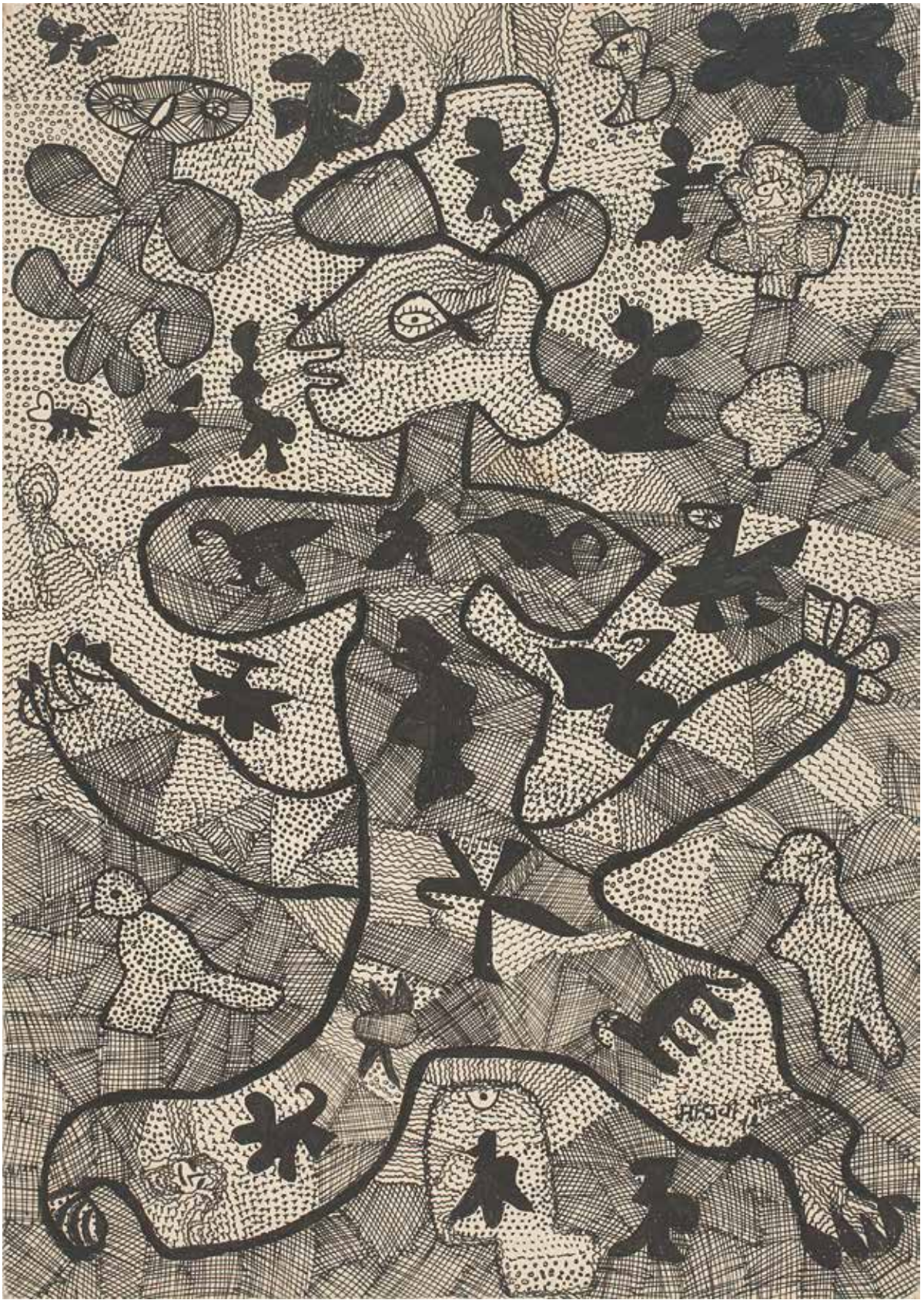
48.0 x 72.2 in. / 121.9 x 183.4 cm.

Signed and dated in English (upper right)

'Madhvi Parekh / 71'

Verso: Artist's name, inscription and title in English

The young couple Manu and Madhvi Parekh first lived by the sea—in Bombay (Mumbai)—between 1962 and 1964, but the creatures of the ocean kept appearing in her works till much later, often to educate their young daughters Manisha and Deepa. This work was made towards the last years of the family's stay in Calcutta (1964-75), a city that has left a profound impact on the art of both husband and wife. It is a mesmerising rendition of the aqueous ecosystem around a sea god, depicted as a powerful, stolid, three-legged being with four ears. The sea deity is surrounded by a tightly packed world of creatures, both of the land and the ocean, going about their lives contentedly as evident from the smiles on their faces.



Running Figure

Ink and marker on paper, 1972

13.2 x 9.5 in. / 33.5 x 24.1 cm.

Signed in Hindi and dated in English (lower right)

‘Madhvi Parekh / 72’

Verso: Dated and titled in English

Madhvi Parekh’s folk modernism is inspired by both village art and a modernist vocabulary, but belongs to neither. It traverses that elusive space where the elements from both mingle seamlessly, creating a lexicon that’s totally her own. Though *Running Figure* is bereft of colour, it is a busy work peopled with animals, birds, and trees, in an ecosystem of which the figure is a part, just like the universe of folk paintings. On the other hand, the dots, dashes, cross-hatching, and thick lines imbue it with universally appealing modernism.



Flying Figure

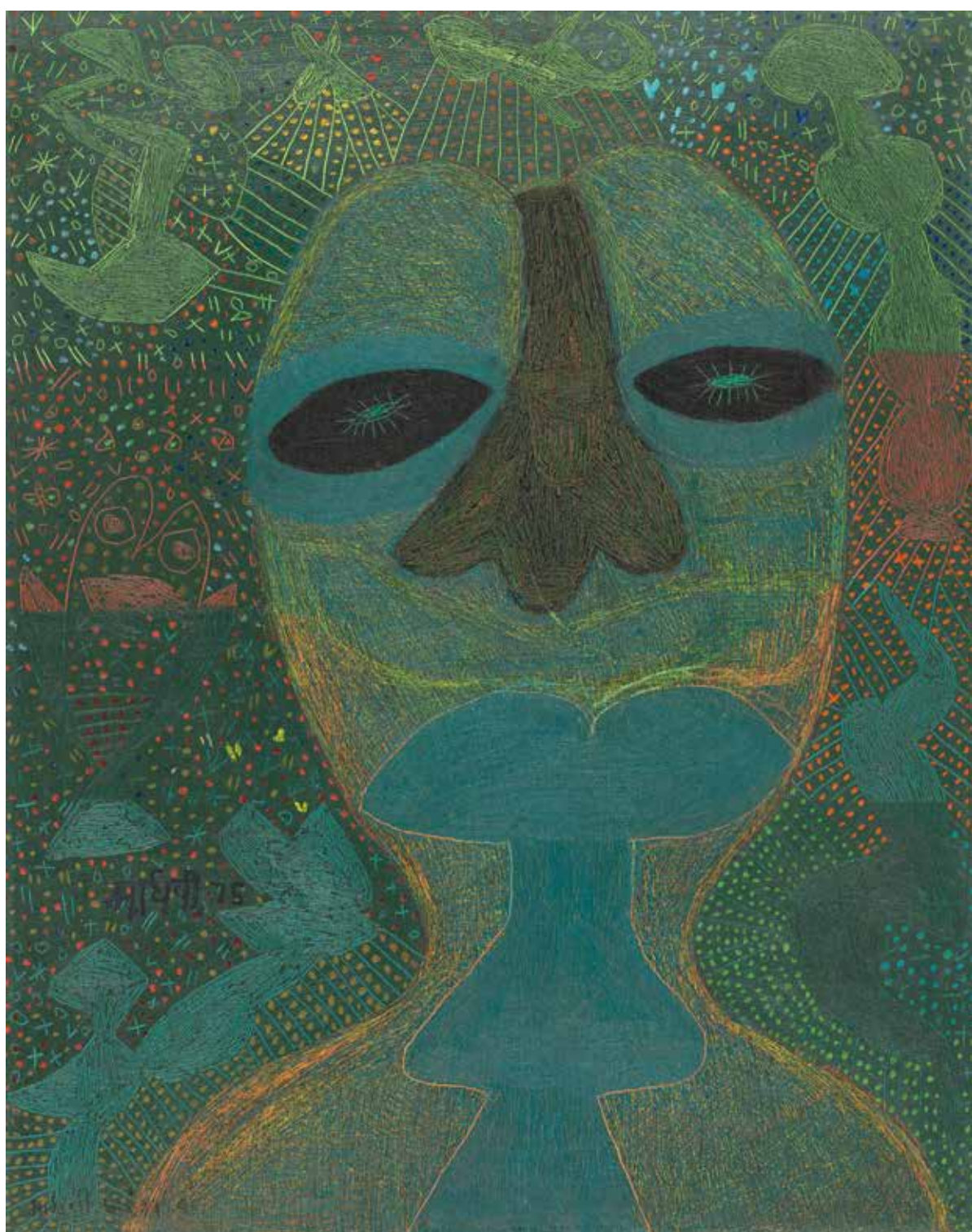
Ink on paper laid on tinted paper, 1974

14.7 x 10.7 in. / 37.3 x 27.2 cm.

Signed in Hindi and dated in English (lower right)

‘Madhvi Parekh / 74’

Madhvi Parekh’s early work, such as *Flying Figure*, was nuanced by the influence of the likes of Paul Klee and Joan Miró, using a language of stunted, stubbed lines and dots that create individual patterns while adding substance to the overall vision of the artist’s attempt to arrive at a complete narrative. Klee’s influence on Parekh’s art—through his picture book gifted to the artist by her husband—in setting her creativity in motion is much celebrated. However, Parekh individualised that influence by adding imagined folk elements uniquely her own, as amply evident in this busy ink work.

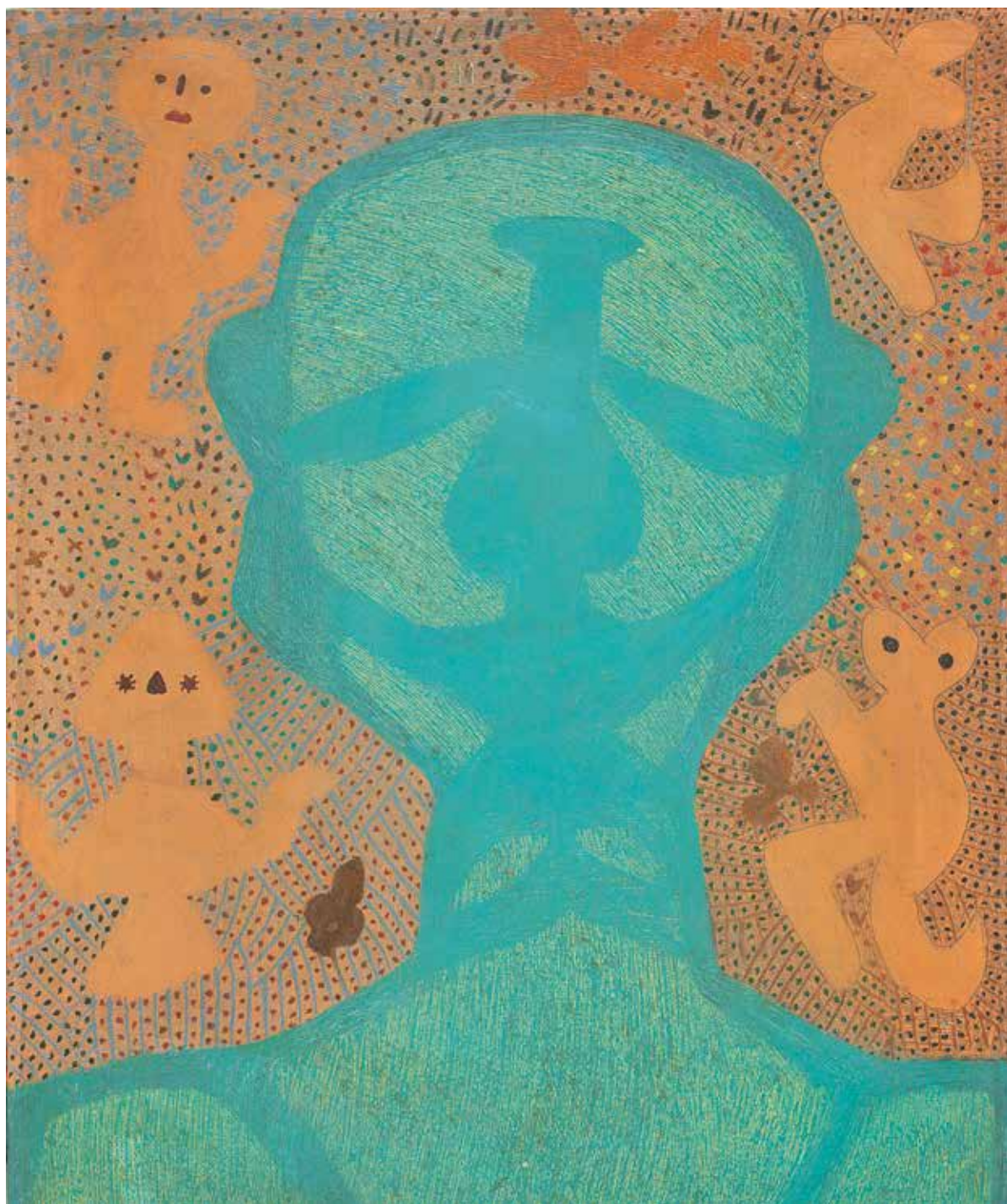


Head C

Oil on canvas board, 1975

19.5 x 15.5 in. / 49.5 x 39.4 cm.

Painted the same year that the artist moved from Kolkata to New Delhi, the *Head C* by the artist appears almost aboriginal, complete with a tattoo-like surface with patterns and an inner world she imagines for the person whose portrait this purports to be. The primitivist treatment is typical of her work from the 1970s and little separates the figure's head from the background but for the outline, thereby connecting all elements the way she likes, unifying the living as well as the non-living.



Head B

Oil on canvas board, 1975-76

20.0 x 16.0 in. / 50.8 x 40.6 cm.

Signed and dated in Hindi (lower left)

‘Madhvi Parekh 76’

Verso: Artist’s name, inscription, title
and date in English

By the time Madhvi Parekh made the head studies such as this one, it had been a little over a decade since she had begun painting, and her style had matured to seamlessly blend all the influences in her art that she had imbibed. *Head B* shows quite a few of those defining influences—the dots and dashes in the background are an ode to her first inspiration for art, Paul Klee, while ‘the head’ and the secondary figures behind are in ‘primitivist’ style that she had begun processing from the early 1970s. She would go on to display these studies in a joint show with husband Manu Parekh, titled *Heads*, in 1977.



Fountain

Sketch pen on mount board, 1976

15.2 x 11.7 in. / 38.6 x 29.7 cm.

Signed in Hindi and dated in English (lower left)

'Madhvi.76'

Verso: Dated and titled in English

Creating a busy universe with myriad creatures and activities has been Madhvi Parekh's forte since the beginning of her career. It's interesting how this self-taught artist is able to immaculately balance multiple figures and styles to create an aesthetic whole, as is the case with *Fountain*. Using cross-hatching lines, dots and dashes, Parekh centralises the fountain in the shape of a human who is swirling around streams of water within which a dense world of other creatures, chiefly birds, has come alive. These evoke many of her paintings featuring village common grounds that always remain a hive of activity.



Kangaroo

Sketch pen on mount board, 1976

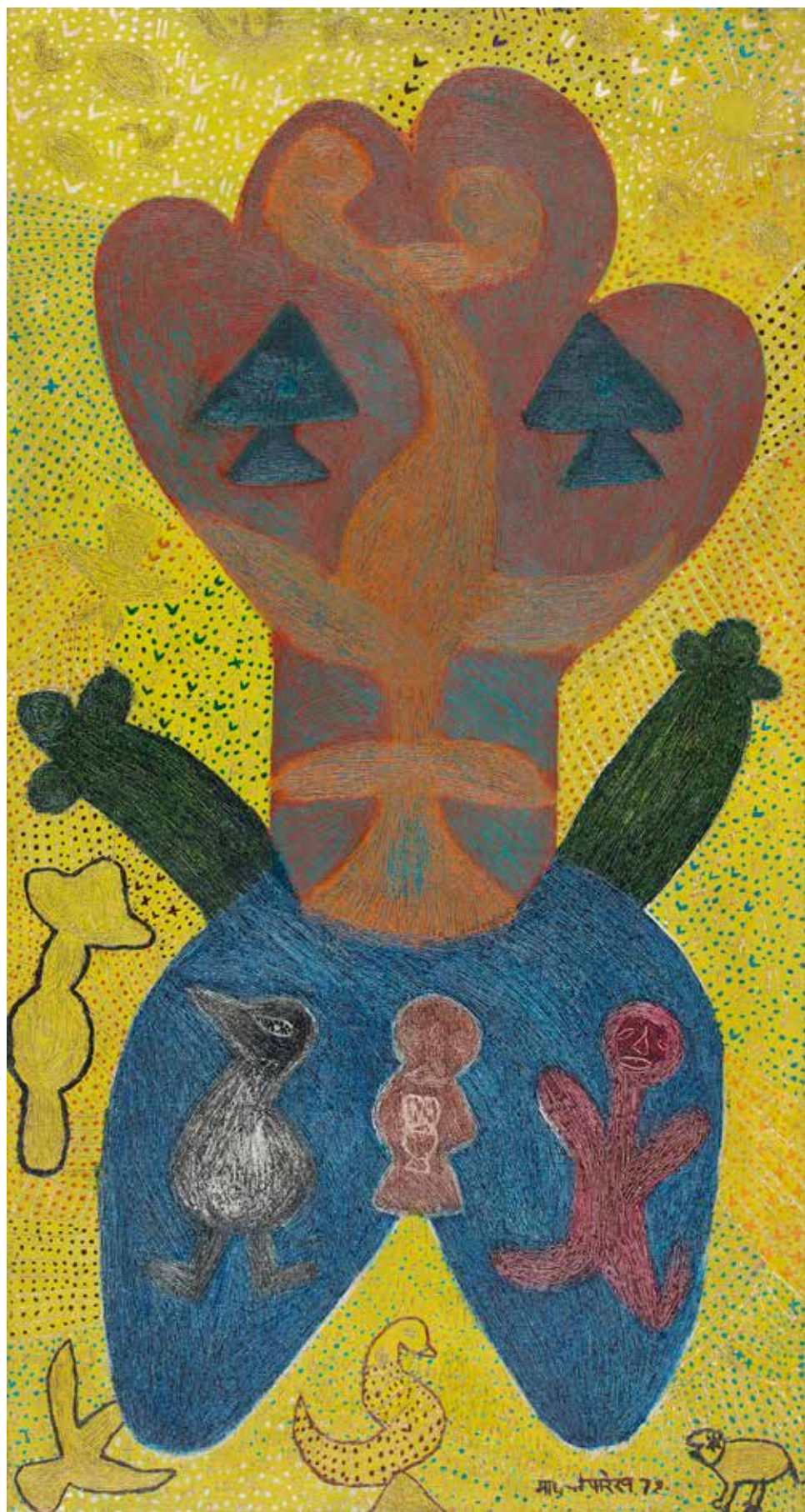
16.5 x 12.0 in. / 41.9 x 30.5 cm.

Signed in Hindi and dated in English (lower left)

‘Madhvi Parekh, 76’

Verso: Titled and dated in English

While celebrating the unique art of Madhvi Parekh, which has made her one of India’s leading contemporary artists, it’s her skill and self-education that are foregrounded. Her courage too needs to be underscored, the fearlessness she has shown in creating imagery that does not follow established canons. It is, perhaps, this plucky spirit that has given the world of Indian art quirky works such as *Kangaroo*, where Parekh creates an entire troop of the Australian natives frolicking in a landscape of Paul Klee-inspired dots and dashes, with other creatures, some of whom are even riding the pouched mammals.



Animal in the Sea

Oil and acrylic on canvas, 1978

28.0 x 14.7 in. / 71.1 x 37.3 cm.

Signed in Hindi and dated in English (lower right)

'Madhvi Parekh / 78'

Verso: Titled in English

Madhvi Parekh lived by the sea in Bombay (now Mumbai) from 1962-64, and in Calcutta (now Kolkata) from 1964-75, yet it was in landlocked New Delhi where she painted *Animal in the Sea*. Its motivation lay in storytelling for her young daughters for whom she created an imaginary universe, recalling for them the time when the family lived close to the sea. Like her terrestrial world, Parekh resorts to the fabular in which the large creature—its arms akimbo, open in embrace—might well be herself, her maternal world peopled with toys and dolls. The interior dialect of life and forms was her way of communicating the interdependency of nurturing relationships in which no creature, or sentiment, was more powerful than others.



Untitled

Oil on canvas, 1979

41.0 x 35.0 in / 104.1 x 88.9 cm.

No one could create a fantasy world the way Madhvi Parekh visualised it for her young children, busily peopled and creatured, like dolls within dolls, each with its own independent life, but also co-dependent on the others. Rising as much from her rich imagination as from folk tales, from mythology as well as escapist fare, it was rich and diverse and perfect for storytelling. Here, no one was stronger or weaker, larger or smaller, less significant or more important, or a mere cog in the wheel of life. Her works from the 1970s are a rich tribute to life beyond science.



Man Sitting in a Chair with Son

Oil on canvas, 1984

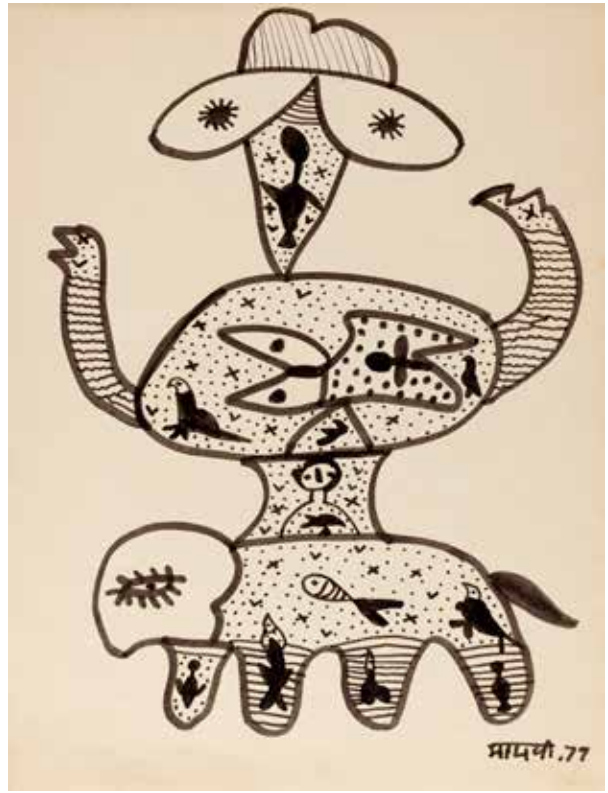
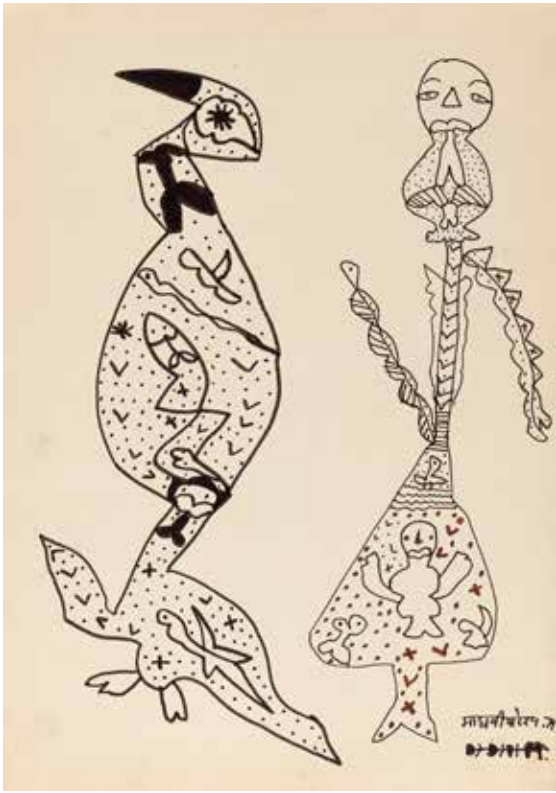
50.0 x 40.0 in. / 127.0 x 101.6 cm.

Signed and dated in Gujarati (lower right)

‘Madhvi’ / 84’

Verso: Titled in English ‘Man sitting [sic.]
in a chair with son’

Madhvi Parekh’s works are an exploration of relationships between people as well as their environment, emerging from her interest in art when she was pregnant with her first child. She went on to develop paintings that segued her maternal instincts with childhood fantasies to create works of magic realism. In this slightly later work, her protagonists are a father and son seated together while on the floor can be seen toys, feeding bottles and other accoutrements of childhood, marking her response to concerns about gender parity at home.



Untitled (Sketchbook)

Ink and sketch pen on paper, 1979
7.2 x 21.0 in. / 18.3 x 53.3 cm.

Since the start of her career, Madhvi Parekh has never been parted from her sketchbooks that she carries on her person when travelling and keeps beside her when at home. This 1979 sketchbook consists of the anthropomorphic forms that she was experimenting with in her paintings during this decade. Inspired by Paul Klee, these strange, fantastical 'beings' represent a delightful world of co-existence and fairy tales that was akin to the nature of stories with which she delighted her young children at the time.



Untitled (Sketchbook)

Ink, sketch pen and graphite on paper, 1979-80
7.2 x 21.0 in. / 18.3 x 53.3 cm.

Remarkable for the imagination she brought to her drawings, Madhvi Parekh has always turned to her sketchbooks as a way of practicing the figures and forms that wander off these pages to occupy a part of her compositions in her paintings. Her sketchbooks never contain the entire composite of a painting, but its many fragments can be found in these numerous books in which they seem to have a life of their own. The graphic quality of these drawings adds to their appeal.

About DAG

India's most respected art company began its journey not as an art gallery but as an art institution right from its very inception, choosing to build up a formidable inventory of works by Indian artists from the nineteenth century onwards. In acquiring artists' studios and estates, it paid homage to their legacy and created a large pool of twentieth century artists and artworks that, taken together, tell the story of Indian art through iconic exhibitions curated to provide art historical overviews and document India's tryst with modernism.

In the almost three decades since DAG's foundation, the Indian art world has seen far-reaching changes in which the company has played a stellar role. Its pathbreaking exhibitions have brought to the fore important artists neglected through the passage of time. It has documented critical art movements and collectives. New generations of art lovers have been able to reclaim the inheritance of forgotten masters thanks largely to support from DAG through curations at its galleries as well as participation in international art fairs and support to biennales and other art-related events and collaborations. These include critical alliances with museums and cultural institutions in India and abroad.

At the heart of DAG's programming is an ongoing research curriculum responsible for lending support to art writers and curators, a rigorous publishing calendar with an impressive library of books that document Indian art history, workshops to engage the public—particularly school children and the specially-abled—in art-related workshops, commissioning of videos and films in relation to artists and their work, and engagements with artists, critics and the art community at large. DAG's contribution to the understanding and dissemination of Indian art remains without parallel.

An important aspect of DAG's collaborative efforts has been to work with institutions and museums, whether through the loan of its works for the purpose of exhibitions, or for establishing comprehensive public-private museum exhibitions such as those it had undertaken at Delhi's Red Fort (*Drishyakala*) or Kolkata's Old Currency Building (*Ghare Baire*) with Archaeological Survey of India. Set up as museums, these exhibitions ran for periods of three years and two years respectively and had an amazing response from viewers. DAG has also run exhibition programmes with the National Gallery of Modern Art, the Bhau Daji Lad Museum in Mumbai, as well as at Jawahar Kala Kendra in Jaipur, the Lalit Kala Akademi in Chandigarh, and other important institutions.

DAG's galleries in India are located at The Taj Mahal palace in Mumbai, The Claridges in New Delhi, and in New York at The Fuller Building in downtown Manhattan.



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