

# Sampler a broad taste of India

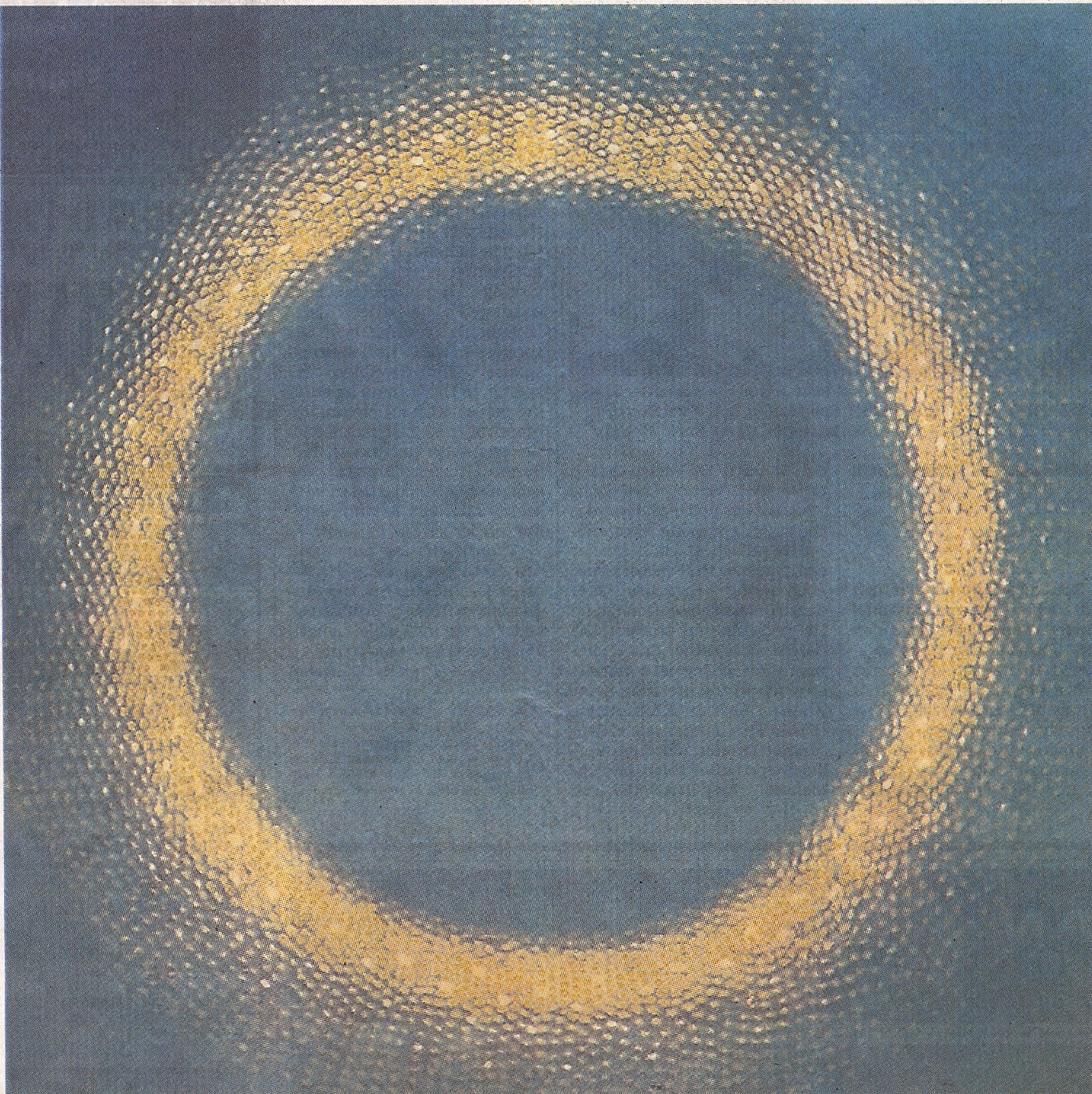
By HOLLY MYERS  
Special to The Times

**“Contradictions and Complexities: Contemporary Art From India,”** on view at both d.e.n. contemporary and Western Project, takes a straightforward approach to an impossibly broad subject, presenting not an argument, overview or analysis but rather a tantalizing sampler: six artists whose names you may not know but whose work deserves your attention.

The show’s two abstractionists — **Santana Gohain** and **Shobha Broota** — prove a handsome pairing at Western Project. Gohain’s large, script-covered panels, made with layers of chalk, graphite and paper in shades of slate gray and white, have an air of esoteric significance reminiscent of ancient tablets or plates from an aged printing press. Broota’s canvases, comparable in scale, are airy and meditative, characterized by concentric circles and squares cast in genial shades of pink, orange and sky blue, some painted, others wrapped in strips of shaggy, garland-like fabric.

The work at d.e.n., by contrast, is primarily photo-based and conceptual. **Sheba Chhachhi**’s roughly two dozen photographs document a nomadic band of female ascetics, exploring the process by which personal identity is renounced and eradicated in favor of a divine purpose.

**Mithu Sen**, who is a generation younger, adorns photographs of people, body parts and a variety of vaguely erotic objects (a pair of shoes, a lock of hair, a mannequin) with



Western Project

**ABSTRACT:** New Delhi-born artist Shobha Broota’s “The Majestic Path” is an airy, meditative canvas that is included in “Contradictions and Complexities: Contemporary Art From India” at Western Project and d.e.n. contemporary.

rhinestones and other decorative elements to draw out aspects of both the fanciful and the grotesque.

**Anita Dube** is one of the more established artists in the group, and the dynamic scope of her production is difficult to

grasp from the handful of mixed-media pieces on view here. (The gallery’s copies of her previous catalogs are well worth a perusal.) Her one video piece, however — a 15-minute, single-channel projection in which the artist assumes the

persona of a male shopkeeper to expound on such topics as love, religion, politics, art and fascism — is among the show’s highlights.

Another is the contribution of **Chitra Ganesh**, an artist in her early 30s who was actually

born and raised in New York City (most of the others live in New Delhi). In a hauntingly strange and beautiful photographic triptych — the artist appears in a wooded landscape, nude but for a pair of ruffled briefs and a crone-like



d.e.n. contemporary art

**PHOTOGRAPHS:** “Ganga’s Daughters” is one of 12 prints by Sheba Chhachhi.

mask with long black braids — as well as in several digital collages that appear to be based on old Indian comic-book panels, Ganesh explores a sort of mythologically inflected erotic surrealism, with both political and poetic implications.

That all six of these artists are women was apparently incidental but lends a subtle sense of cohesion to the exhibition. Organized by Patricia Hamilton and Peter Nagy, both dealers (here and in New Delhi, respectively), the show reflects an infectious degree of curatorial enthusiasm but succeeds primarily — as such shows should — because of the distinction of its artists.

**d.e.n. contemporary**, 6023 Washington Blvd., Culver City, (310) 559-3023, through Aug. 2. Closed Sundays and Mondays. [www.dencontemporaryart.com](http://www.dencontemporaryart.com).

**Western Project**, 3830 Main St., Culver City, (310) 838-0609, through Aug. 2. Closed Sundays and Mondays. [www.western-project.com](http://www.western-project.com).