

Tantric

The Corporeal and the Cosmic

December 8, 2016 – January 14, 2017

Press Preview & Opening Reception: Thursday, December 1, 6:00pm – 8:00pm

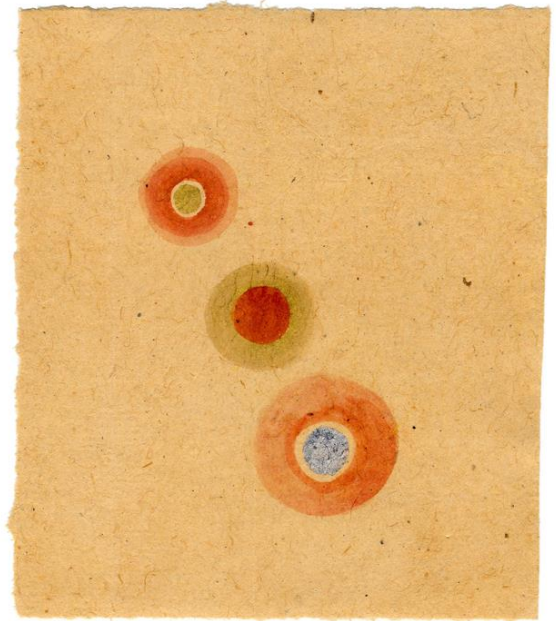
35 Great Jones Street, New York, NY 10012

Abstract art must look to the East if it is to have a future...There is a serious need for a truly international – not just Euro-American – and with that, a truly universal abstraction...grounded in archetypal rhythms and structures rather than avant-garde novelty. – Donald Kuspit, 2010.

Aicon Gallery New York is pleased to present **Tantric / The Corporeal and the Cosmic**, an exhibition exploring the parallel yet intertwining evolutions of Tantric abstraction in Modern South Asian art, inspired by the painting traditions of the 17th through the 19th centuries. In tracing this path both backwards and outwards, however, one must first understand that the wide scope of Tantric-inspired visual art practices are themselves derived from complex and diverse interpretations of Tantric texts, rituals, and ideologies, which weave together elements from religious and meditative traditions traversing major religions such as Hinduism, Islam and Buddhism and spanning across centuries.

The exhibition takes as its starting point a set of historic tantric drawings and diagrams from the 18th and 19th centuries and examines their links to two sets of **Anonymous Drawings** made by artisans working in **Rajasthan** from the 1980s onwards. These anonymous works, along with works by better known tantric masters **Badrinath Pandit** and **Acharya Vyakul**, have been inspired by centuries old Tantric visual traditions, yet appear radically modern in their geometric abstraction, particularly given their derivation from traditions pre-dating the advent of European Modernism by more than a hundred years. However, the existence of such a tradition may be less surprising in its origins than in its uncannily modern abstract compositions, when one understands that the motivation behind their creation is an expression of the spiritual and mystical as opposed to the formal academic explorations that would take place in the West. Indeed, the forms in these works act as visual conduits towards transcendence, born of intense meditation on the inner-spirituality of the human condition as it relates to the mythical and cosmic, rather than exercises in intellectual modernism.

The exhibition's second anchor point begins with the 1960s revitalization of neo-tantric modernism pioneered by artists like **G. R. Santosh** and **Biren De**, both widely acknowledged as founding figures in modern Indian Tantric painting, but both of whom have their artistic origins in semi-abstracted figural work. The early works of Santosh, rooted in his interest in applying the principles of cubism to abstracted Indian landscapes and figures, soon gave way to a fascination with the merging and combining of the male and female forms and energies, a central focus within Tantric traditions. In a series of large drawings representative of this period one can see the beginnings of what would become Santosh's iconic neo-Tantric style, where fully merged male and female figures are depicted almost completely as abstract shapes, comprised of geometric lines and colors, representing what he considered the combined and pure cosmic energy lying beneath the physical human form. Similarly, although he came to reject the Tantric label, Biren De's evolution can be seen as a journey from semi abstract figuration to completely non-representational works of intensely luminous shapes and patterns, which also seek to depict the combination of masculine and



Anonymous, Untitled (Tantric 45), ca. 1980 - 2014, Natural pigments on vintage paper, 6 x 5.5 in.



Anil Revri, *Pages from a Manuscript 4*, 2015, Mixed media on handmade paper, 12 x 9 in.

feminine energy that some Tantric traditions identify as the birth of the cosmos. The work of artists **Sohan Qadri** and **Prafulla Mohanty** continue these artistic attempts at capturing Tantric energies, while having largely been freed from the modernist transition through figuration pioneered by the generation before them.

Additionally, the exhibition seeks to include the work of a new generation of Contemporary artists working, in one way or another, with the repetitive and meditative energies and techniques, which can be traced back to the mystical and ritualistic pre-modern origins of Tantric practice. Perhaps this aesthetic evolution is most readily embodied in the work of **Anil Revri**, whom Donald Kuspit, in his quote above, considered an example of an artist working towards a revitalized 'universal abstraction' in the sense that he has drawn inspiration from Indian musical sources for his gestural forms, much as modernists such as Kandinsky drew upon western musical sources in their abstractions. The works of **Shobha Broota**, rooted in geometric compositions reminiscent of bindus and other fundamentally mystic forms, pulsate with the energy of their underlying tensions, addressing the balance between inner and outer reality, and echo the similar expressive tradition begun by Biren De. Whereas a set

of early drawings by the now well-known video artist **Ranbir Kaleka**, and part of the important **Chester and Davida Herwitz Collection**, speak to the same syncretic merging of the figurative and the elemental, which can be seen in the transitional drawings of Santosh. Other contemporary artists whose work can be viewed through the lens of tantric traditions include **Manisha Parekh**, **Alexander Gorlizki**, **Vijay Shinde**, and **Mohammed Kazem**, all represented in the forthcoming exhibition. Similarly, **Rachid Koraichi**, winner of the 2011 Victoria & Albert Museum Jameel Prize, from a family of Quranic scholars and copyists in a Sufi tradition, has made the written word, as a conveyor of spiritual philosophy, poetry and politics, his primary repetitive act in his paintings and tapestries. The usage of repetitive calligraphy as a means of interpretive transcendence evokes the mark-making of early Tantric mandalas.

Please contact Aicon Gallery (NewYork@Aicongallery.com) for more information.



Checkerboard Hari-Hara Yantra,, Early 20th c., Natural pigments on paper, 13 x 13.5 in.

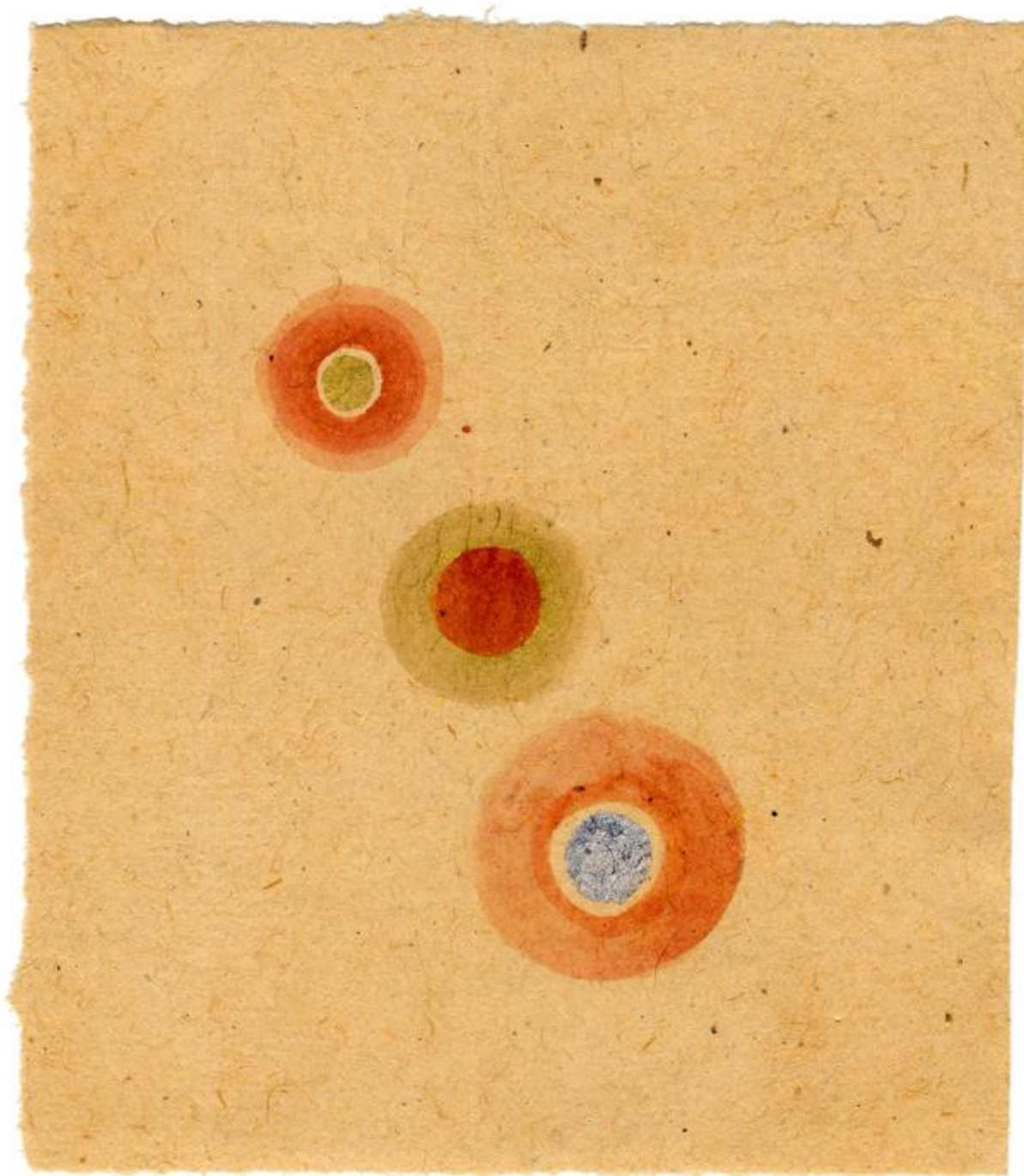


Laxmi Yantra, Early 20th c., Natural pigments on paper, 9.5 x 10.5 in.



Muruja Painting: A Place to Worship the Moon, 19th c., Natural pigments on paper, 16.5 x 12.5 in.

Anonymous



Anonymous, *Untitled (Tantric 45)*, ca. 1980-2014, Natural pigments on vintage paper, 6 x 5.5 in.

Anonymous



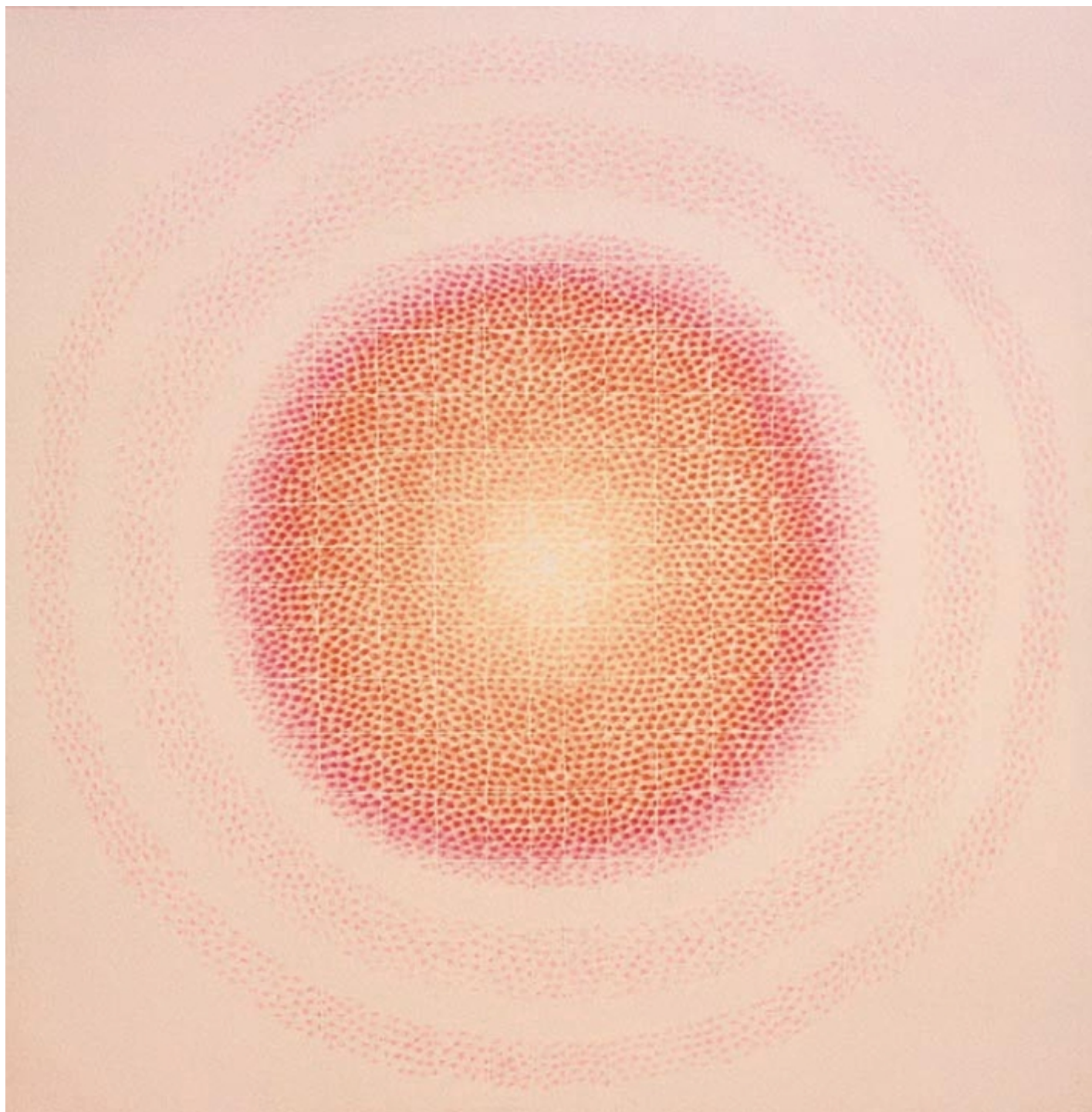
Anonymous, *Untitled (2)*, ca. 1990, Natural pigments on paper, 11.25 x 5.75 in.

Anonymous



Anonymous, *Untitled (Tantric 35)*, ca. 1980-2014, Natural pigments on vintage paper, 7 x 6 in.

Shobha Broota



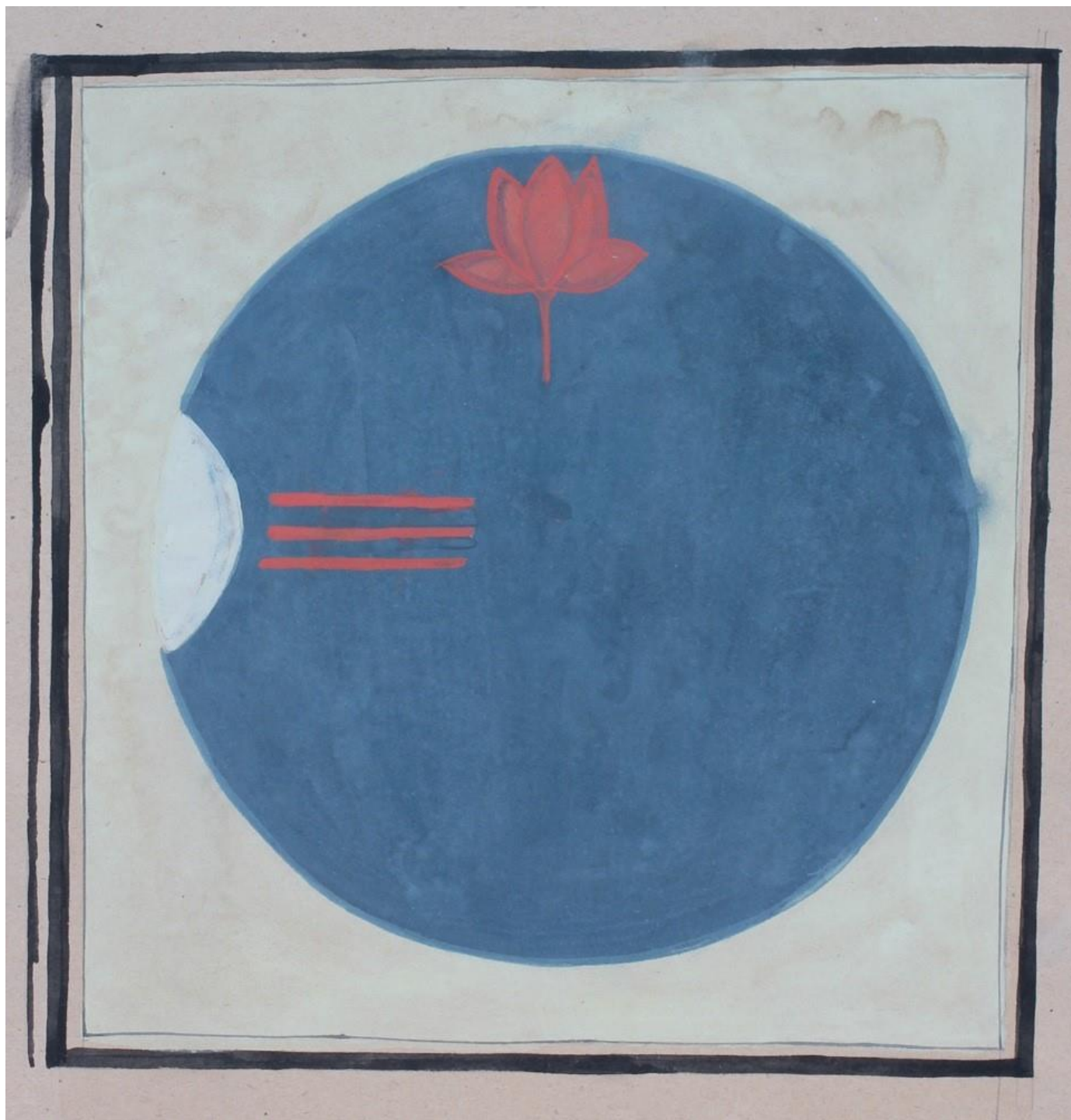
Anonymous, *Celebration*, 2007, Oil and acrylic on canvas, 72 x 72 in.

Badrinath Pandit



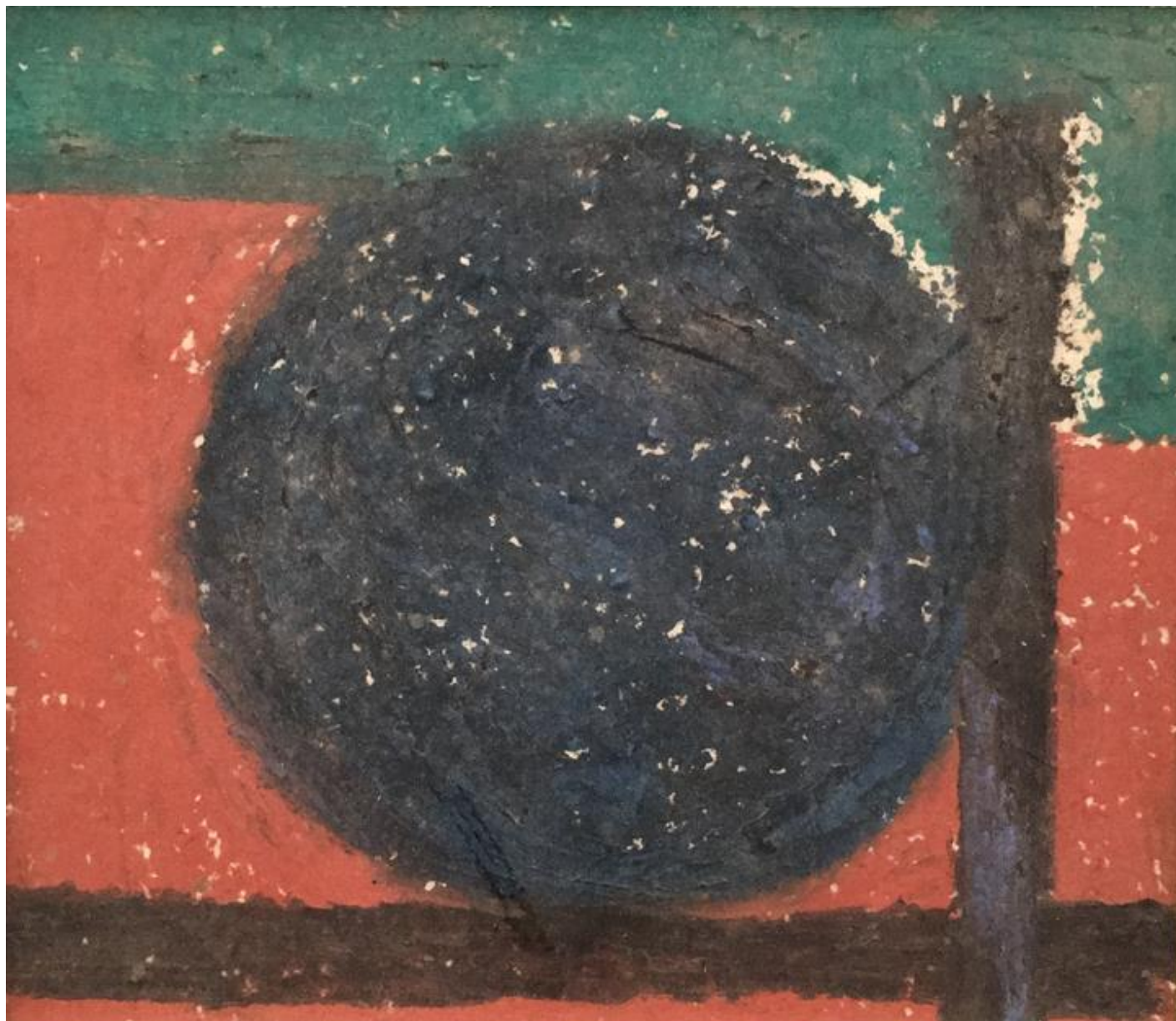
Badrinath Pandit, *Untitled (3)*, 1960s, Pigment on paper, 6.25 x 6.25 in.

Badrinath Pandit



Badrinath Pandit, *Untitled (4)*, 1960s, Pigment on paper, 6 x 6 in.

Biren De



Biren De, Untitled 5, ND, Crayon on paper, 3.5 x 3 in.

Biren De



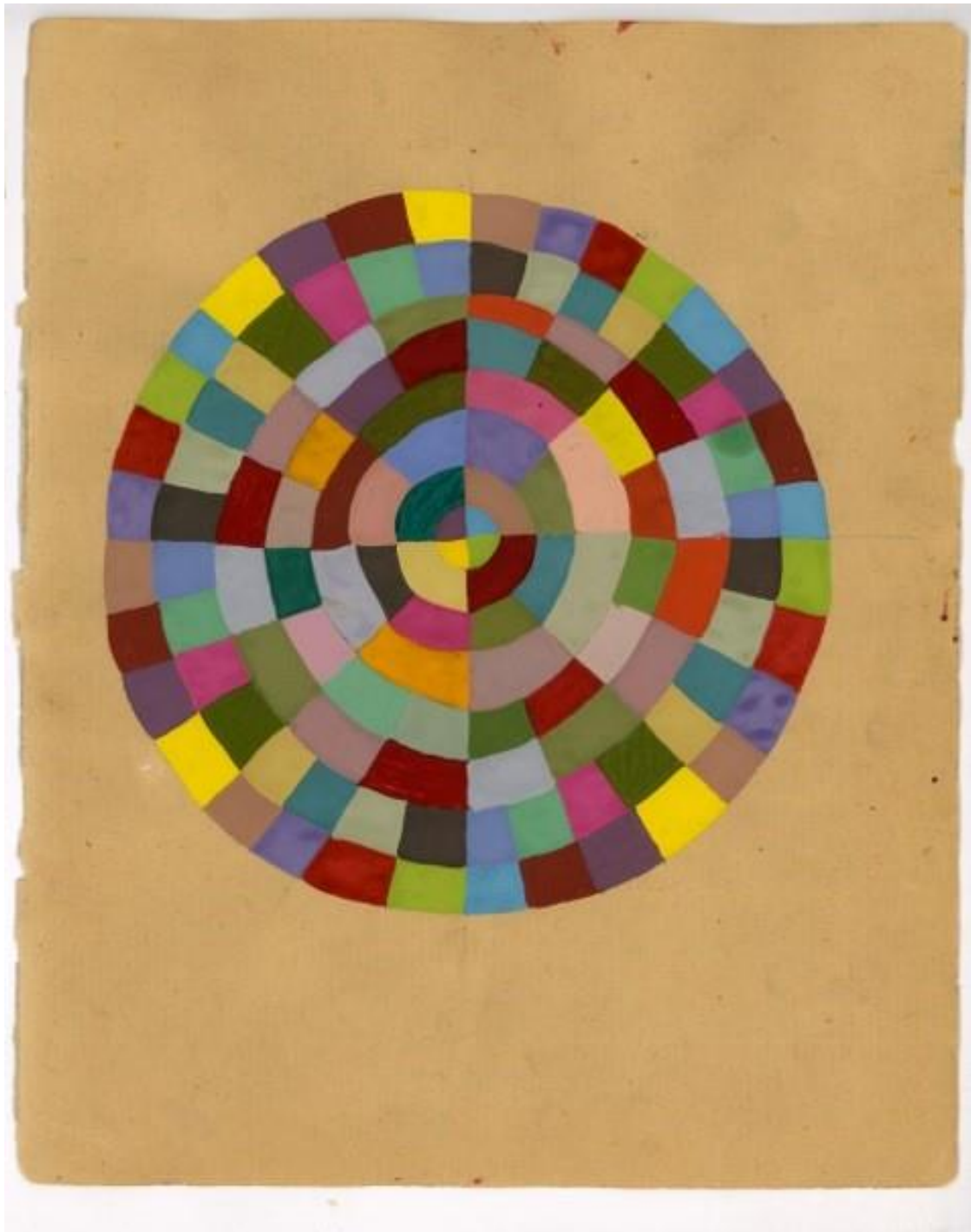
Biren De, *Untitled 82, ND*, Crayon on paper, 4.5 x 4 in.

Biren De



Biren De, *Untitled 6*, ND, Crayon on paper, 3.5 x 3 in.

Alexander Gorlizki



Alexander Gorlizki, *Colour Study*, 2007, Pigment on paper, 8 x 6.25 in.

Alexander Gorlizki



Alexander Gorlizki, *Plucking Petals*, 2007, Pigment on paper, 6.25 x 9.5 in.

G. R. Santosh



G. R. Santosh, *Untitled (Tantric Drawing 4)*, ND, Ink on paper, 15 x 11 in.

G. R. Santosh



G. R. Santosh, *Pyramid*, 1990, Oil on canvas, 42 x 28 in.

G. R. Santosh



G. R. Santosh, *Untitled (Tantric Drawing 5)*, ND, Pencil on paper, 28 x 20 in.

Ranbir Kaleka



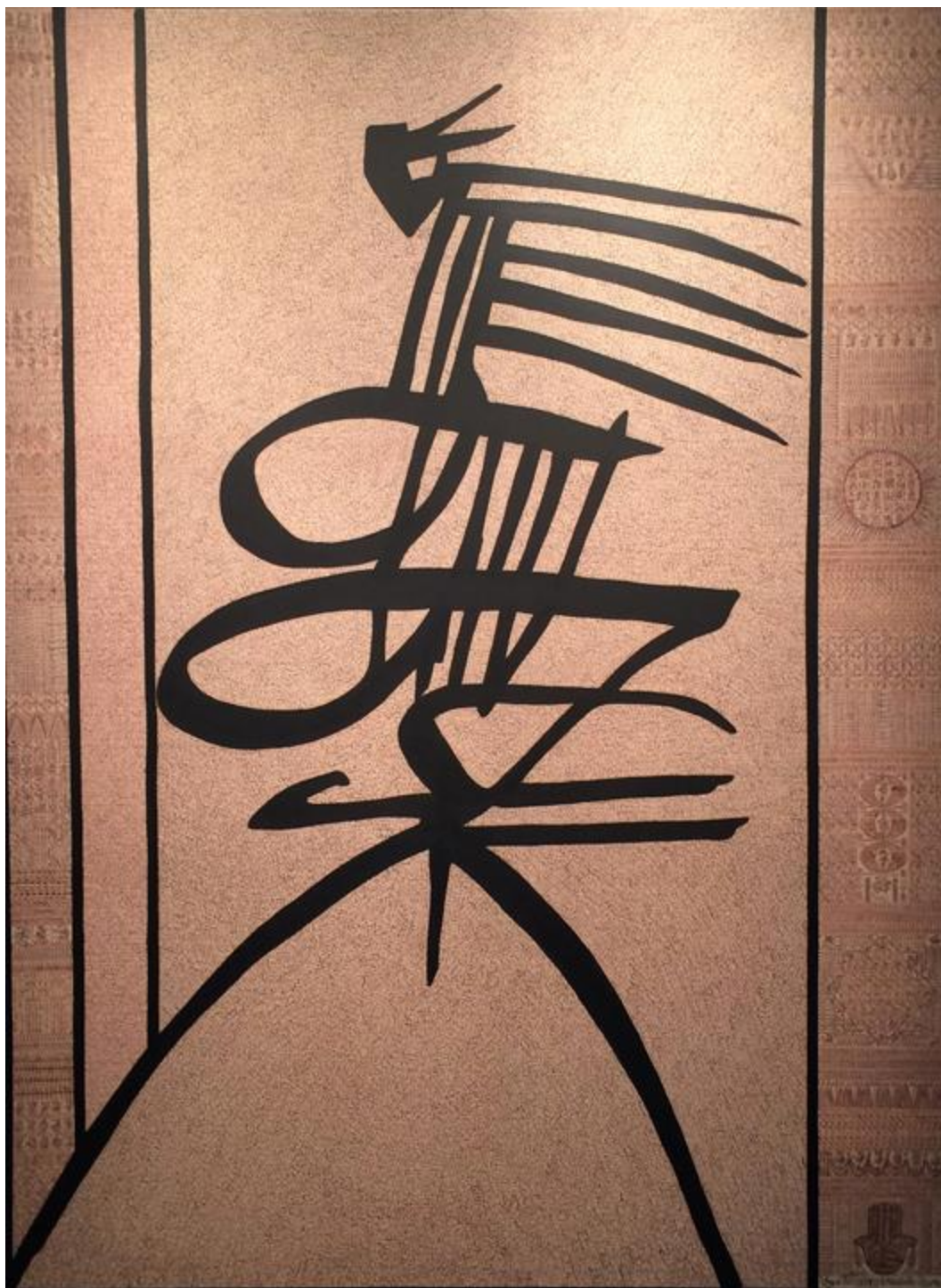
Ranbir Kaleka, *Untitled (Make Eyes 5)*, ND, Watercolor on paper, 10 x 7 in.

Mohammed Kazem



Mohammed Kazem, *Untitled (Red)*, 2015, Acrylic on scratched paper, 58 x 44.5 in.

Rachid Koraïchi



Rachid Koraïchi, *Love Side by Side with the Soul*, 2016, Acrylic on scratched paper, 78.5 x 59.5 in.

Manisha Parekh



Manisha Parekh, *Untitled (Calligraphic 22)*, 1994, Ink on paper pulp, 1.5 x 8.5 in.

Prafulla Mohanti



Prafulla Mohanti, *Untitled (Brown and Red)*, 1994, Oil on paper, 30 x 22 in.

Sohan Qadri



Sohan Qadri, *Untitled (3)*, ND, Watercolor on paper, 8 x 8 in.

S. H. Raza



S. H. Raza, *Prarthana*, 2013, Acrylic on canvas, 40 x 40 in.

Anil Revri



Anil Revri, Pages from a Manuscript 5, 2015, Mixed media on handmade paper, 12 x 9 in.

Vijay Shinde



Vijay Shinde, *Untitled (Grey and Black Abstract)*, ND, Oil on canvas, 27 x 27 in.

Acharya Vyakul



Acharya Vyakul, Untitled (46), 1990s, Pigment on paper, 10.5 x 8 in.

Acharya Vyakul



Acharya Vyakul, Untitled (41), 1990s, Pigment on paper, 6 x 9 in.