



drawn with thread

an exhibition of recent works
by

gopika nath

19th february - 12th march, 2009

gallery seven art ltd.

everyday she excavated herself,
uncovering the lies of yesterday;
in search of that sacred space...

This is not a place or a feeling but a state of being which though experienced remains elusive in the conundrum of city life. The quest is for a certain equipoise that allows me to flow seamlessly despite the fetters and constraints of social integration.

Drawn with thread on fragile organza and chiffon, paired with roughly hewn cotton; dance here, is a metaphor for life. Its grace is an inspiration while it's disciplined practice an aspiration. The graceful dancer; gliding from one role to the next, one emotion to the next, one tempo to the next, with effortless ease, is evocative of that state of being which I refer to as 'that sacred space'. Embroidering upon stretched seer-sucker or chiffon, with loosely held, long stitches that distort once the fabric is returned to its original state, characterizes the sense of dysfunction in being which is felt and perceived. There appears to be no code of ethics for contemporary life in the ever-growing, ever-rising metropolises of urban India. Living in this world, adapting to it, has made us

fragile but cutting like a knife; our instinctive goodness tempered with large doses of cynicism and distrust. The discomfort is not with the city, but what it does to us, distorting the way we want to be.

I have worked from drawings commenced 15 years ago. During dance performance, sitting in the darkness, unable to see either paper or pencil, compelled me to stop trying to draw, but experience the rhythm. I drew not what I could see but what I felt; sometimes just letting the music and footsteps guide me. I got into the mode of dance; focussing on its transient but flowing essence.

The idea of dance has been extended to encompass the physicality of working with needle and thread, where the movement of fingers as they embroider fabric, evokes the rhythm of a choreography rooted in the Indian tradition of hand-crafting. Via the video entitled 'Re-Thread', you are invited to re-view hitherto perceived notions of hand-crafting where the artisan is valued merely for his skill in executing the craft. Presenting 'Textile as Art' suggests a possible re-definition of the notion of craft where the ancient ideal of the craftsman, performing the dual role of defining the concept with the appropriate skill in the art of making, manifests in a contemporary vein. Through a return to tradition, re-invoking the ancient, stepping back to move ahead is the context of this dance; confronting the challenge of reconciling traditional practices with modern concepts of thinking, where the physicality of doing divulges the truth of our postures of being; in the spirit of the ideal that "movement does not lie".

Dance in this context is not a performance for entertainment but a journey into the spirit of being, where there is scope for contemplation, for questioning the events of the day, uncovering its lies; observing the mind at work and play. Where, in thus excavating oneself, we discover our very own sacred space.

Gopika Nath | February 2009

Photos Madhavi Swarup | Display Vihal K Dar | Video Karm Chawla (Film & Editing)

Poems by Gopika Nath



Loose Ends I

Internal shrieks
beginning with a low bass
rising higher and higher
Hitting B flat
with that piercing crescendo
Shattering glass, tinted
with carnelian waters, whose
shards abandon purple orchids
to bleed calluses
treading dangerously
for a taste of rich dark
Belgian chocolate



Conjoined

Stacked on beams
 prised ten feet apart
sardines packed
thirteen stories high
Un-insulated nerves and noises
creating cables of unwanted connectivity
Fragile hearts
bled dry
with rising prosperity.



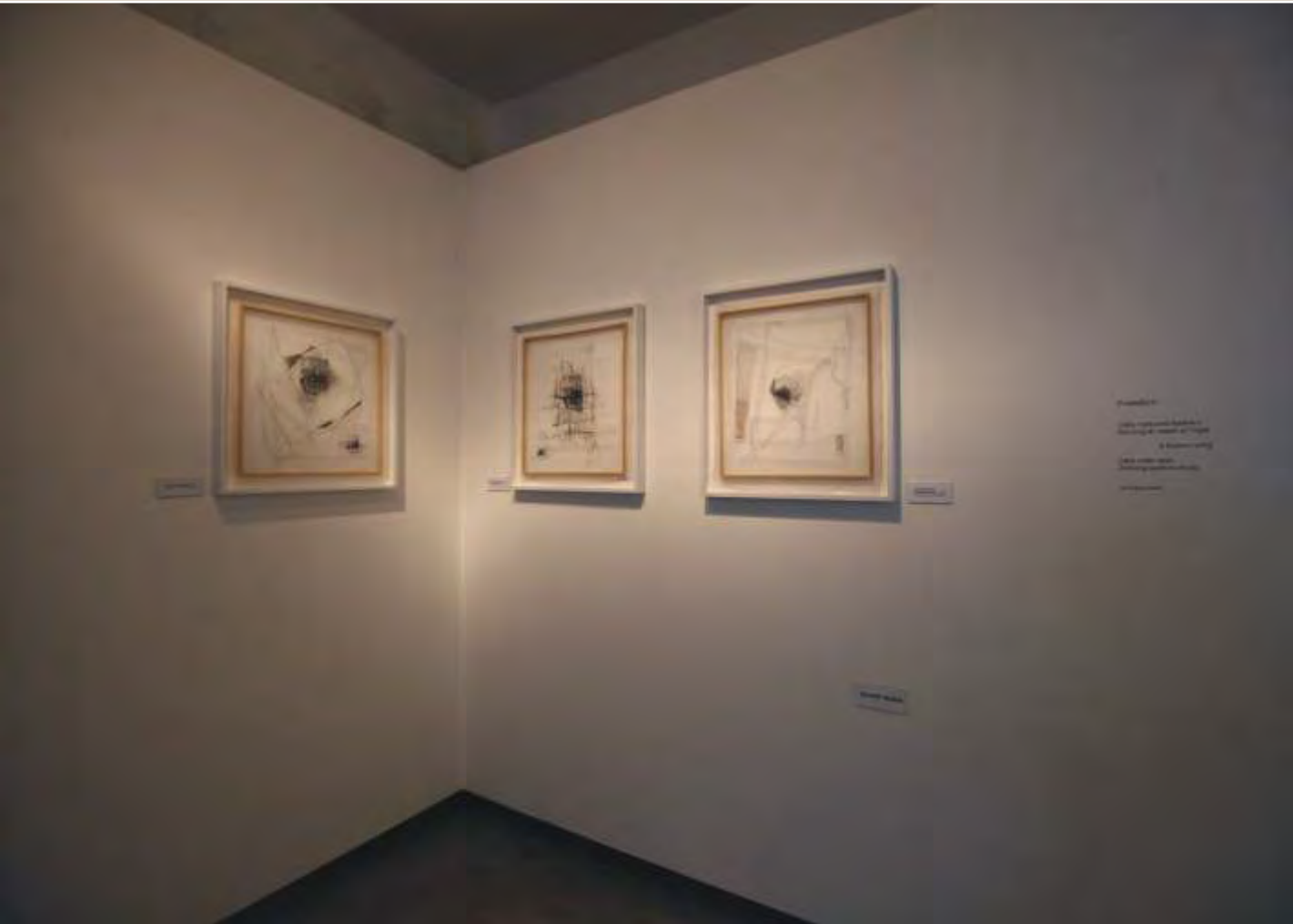
Windows

Every window tells a story
Some spin yarns, dressed
in lacy fairy tales, others are
saucily spiced, like the
crushed velvet they caress
while some, blinded by the
glare of the world, remain darkly
draped in their insecure lies
Somewhere a curtain is parted
friendly eyes beckon, but
explosive nerves lead
to frayed ends



1950-1951
1952-1953
1954-1955
1956-1957

1958-1959



Freedom

Gaily coloured feathers
Pecking at seeds of hope

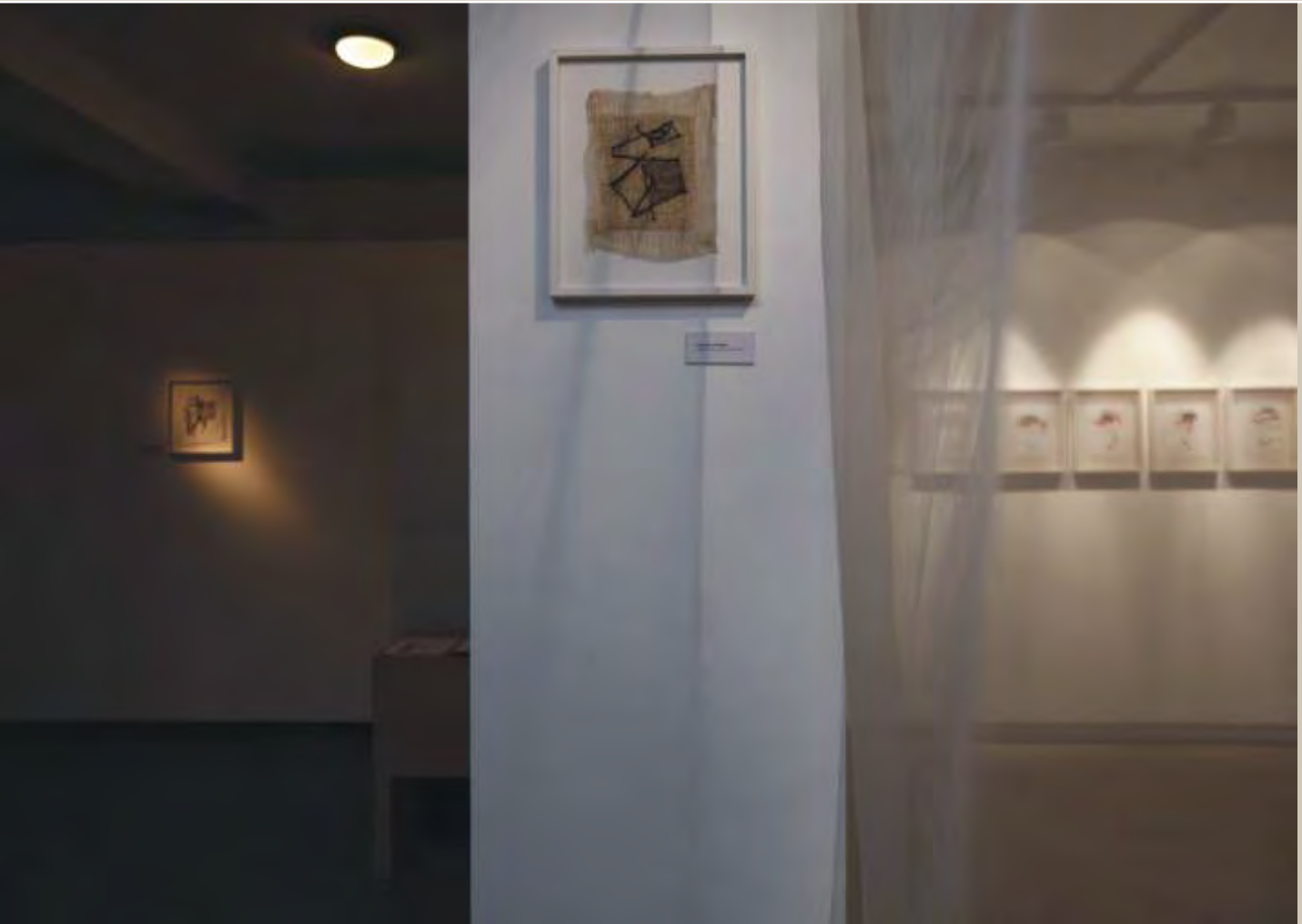
A broken wing

Gate wide open
Drinking eyefuls of sky



Art House
1970
1970

1970



Loose Ends II

Stones
 mud
 loose tarmac

Rain
 sludge
 tread of tyres
 toes
 reeboks

gnarled pigeon feet
and corrupted hearts
warping the hellish darkness
with popcorn whiteness
tracing the edges
of fantasy



Urban Cages

Green tendrils gather
a curtain of leaves
masking iron cages
of cemented lives

Junipers may reach out
and poinsettias dazzle
but can't wish away
the concrete bars



Devi

Conceived of Raudra
Born of indignation
the goddess emerged to battle
Her syllables cut through flab
of impropriety, sloth and cowardice
enlightening the thoughtless fools
who defiled her living paradise



Small label on the wall below the row of five illustrations.



Shivaa

As Neelkanth she drank
the kalakutta of your lies.

Raging the fire of Raudra
flattening the façade
of arrogance, it is Shiva
as her, dancing the tandava.

Is it Shiva, as you
that will meet her
eyes, powered by truth?



Loose Ends III

Steel
 glass
 neon
Potholes
 garbage
power outages
murdered daughters
betrayed wives
Growing tall
Reaching for the skies
Raining mud
 mosquitoes
 disease and
disappointment
Clogging
 dreams



Whispers of Freedom

Get away
from this plodding stillness, of
tantrums and affectations
posing for posterity
Tyres screeching
from one time zone to the next
proposing newer and newer
ideas for discontent

Breathe beyond stagnation
Listen to the wind
as it whistles and trembles
whispering its way
into every nook and cranny
not those loudspeakers
blaring bhajans in the name of prayer
Be light and weightless
without the burden of remorse
seamlessly flowing, from
one season to the next





Re-thread

[3 minute, looped single channel video
screened on specially prepared gauze fabric]

The idea of dance has been extended to encompass the physicality of working with needle and thread, where the movement of fingers as they embroider fabric, evokes the rhythm of a choreography rooted in the Indian tradition of hand-crafting. The culture of its hands has changed from being those of rural Indian skilled labour to a globally driven, urban intellectual dialogue. Via the video entitled 'Re-Thread', the viewer is invited to re-view hitherto perceived notions of hand-crafting through fingers that play the music of Robert Schumann's 'Kinderscenen' on the piano and also execute the embroideries on display.