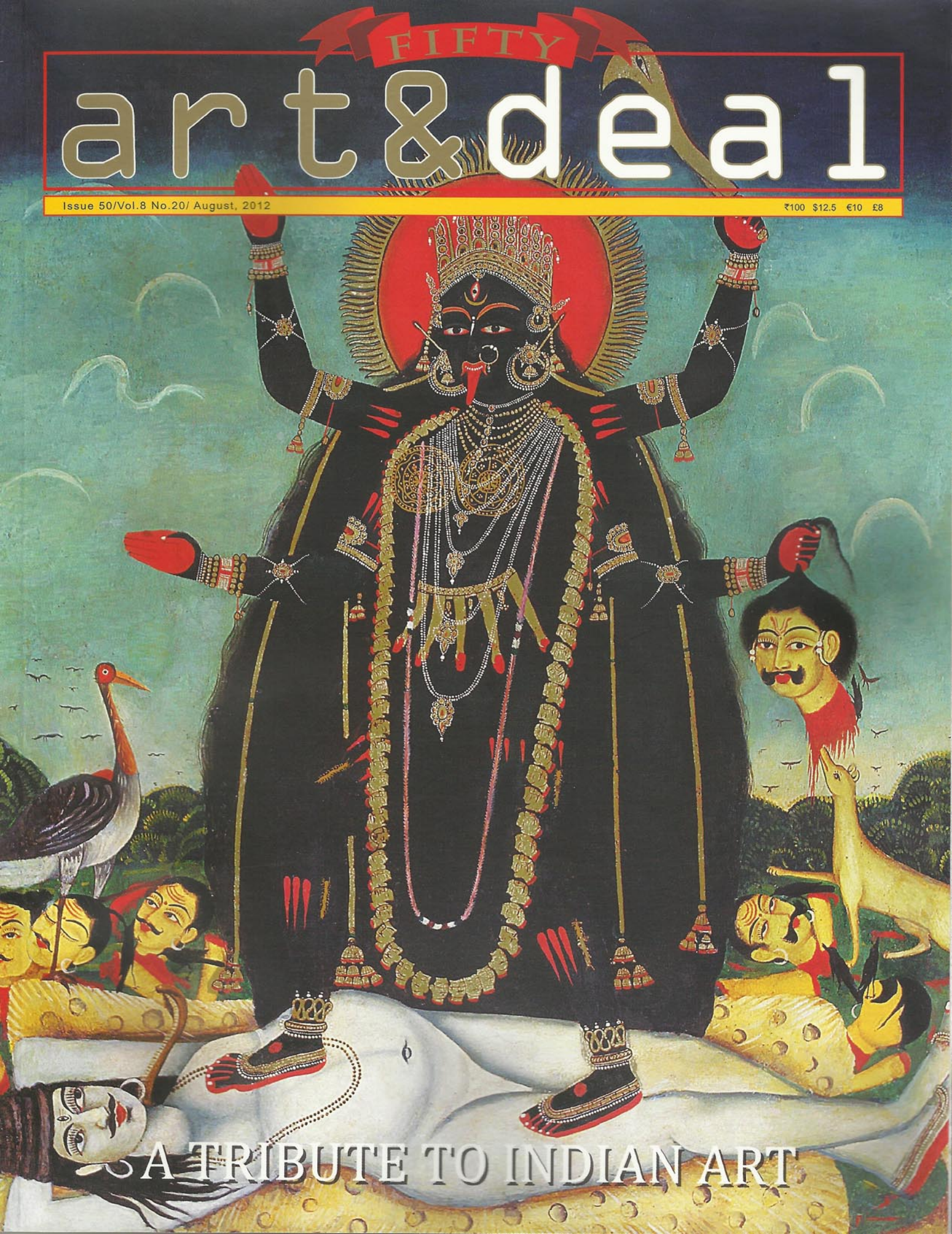


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Discourses of Prismatic Truths -II, 48" x 68"

Prismatic Discourses through Visual Metaphor

"Padavanarpisabahudallade padarthavanarpisalagadu" – Allamaprabhu, means only words can be offered, not the meaning.

For nearly 2000 years, the most generally accepted way of using metaphors was for rhetorical purposes. Metaphorical language was thought to be merely ornamental – the seasoning of language, exploited, for effect, by poets and politicians. It is now assumed, by linguists, that metaphors are important tools of cognition and communication, an essential process and product of thought, providing us with unfamiliar ways of conceptualizing familiar things, and familiar ways of conceptualizing unfamiliar things (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980; Ortony, 1979).

Being a keen observer, Ratnadeep is constantly exploring the human mind's meaning-making process, through perceiving

one thing in terms of another. He believes that there is a basic and pervasive need to invent and invest meaning in one's world. His paintings, in turn, are meaning-making processes which operate to create new meanings against a backdrop of existing ones. Making sense of experiences and its products comes about as we interact with our environment in our attempts to comprehend, construct and convey meaning. The core of those attempts is the fundamental act of symbolic transformation. To understand the experience, we must first abstract it, that is transform the experience into a symbol. We acquire knowledge about our world and ourselves by converting concrete experience into abstract manipulable units of that

experience that allow us to recognize it and refer to it. In Ratnadeep's work, experiential information (often fleeting) is bracketed and presented for contemplation and re-contemplation, and thus made available for the construction of meaning. According to Ortony, experiential information is not expressible in ordinary discourse, but, as is the case with visual metaphor, often the unnamable aspects of experience can get closer to being acknowledged.

Occasional remarks about metaphors have been made by Aristotle, Hobbes, Locke, and Nietzsche, among others, but the topic seems to have begun to receive continuous attention sometime after 1950. The significance of metaphors in philosophy

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and art has now been acknowledged. Derrida has claimed that, virtually, all statements are (in some sense) metaphorical; and Lakoff and Johnson have argued that the structure of thought itself is deeply metaphoric. Max Black, among others, holds that a metaphor can communicate a non-literal cognitive content in addition to a literal meaning.

Black believes that the key to understanding metaphors lies in understanding how its extra meaning is arrived at and how it relates to the literal meaning of an utterance. Rather than straightforward comparison (as in Aristotelian view), Black argues that the work of the metaphor takes place in the interaction between these two subjects. The current exhibition by artist Ratnadeep Gopal Adivrekar at Galerie Schlassgoart can be viewed, on this ground, as Extended Visual Metaphors which provide for an unspecified number of potentialities for articulation arising through interaction left for the viewer to explore. This interaction involves more than simply jamming one literal

meaning up against another. Ratnadeep's works assert that at the heart of a Visual Metaphor is the interaction between its two subject terms, where the interaction provides the condition for a meaning that neither of the subject terms possesses independently of the metaphorical context. His works open more avenues for constructing and de-constructing meaning, for vividness of subjective experience in formation of knowledge, for explaining cognitive construct in emotional response and for providing the thought for the inexpressible.

Ratnadeep's works can also be viewed on the basis of the Jain doctrine of Non-Absolutism, *anekāntavāda*, which is a logical system that functions, in part, to identify and refute views which claim to be absolutely true, although can be considered only partially true, according to Jain metaphysics and logic. *Anekāntavāda* refers to the principles of pluralism and multiplicity of viewpoints, the notion that truth and reality are perceived differently from diverse points of view, and

that no single point of view is the complete truth. It is tempting to try to comprehend the meanings used in Ratnadeep's Visual Metaphor by identifying that the metaphor and the referent have multiple origins. In his works, ideas are downplayed or highlighted, views are emphasized or de-emphasized, which explains the shift of focus; however, it cannot explain how an entirely new focus has come about.

Ratnadeep's paintings borrow from politics, history, history of art, concept of myth and expanded spirituality, which he then represents using complex imagery. His art is an illustration of ideas borrowed from various disciplines with an invitation to the discovery of further comparison through similarities and differences. In his paintings, a novel configuration has been produced by juxtaposition of two frames of reference, whose meaning survives at the intersection of the two perspectives that produced it. This juxtaposition leads to discourses between the two frames and the painting and also



Discourses of Prismatic Truths -V, 48" x 68"

the painting and the viewer. Ratnadeep's painting process seems to involve synthesis, an intuitive grasp of complex systems, simultaneous processing of concepts, inductive reasoning, use of imagination and generation of ideas by combining existing facts in new ways.

Ratnadeep's point of reference for representation comes from a bank of randomly collected photographs. A photograph bridges the gap between primal images and linear historicity, building images from the combination of discrete units. Photographs allow creation of images and the meanings they generate is taken at face value and not from interpretation that can be endlessly replicated and spread worldwide. A photograph is non-representational of what one sees; though it claims a pre-eminent role of visual perception, in his work, the sense of realness in the images is complicated as it loses its mechanical tie to a specific situation, as there is an interaction between

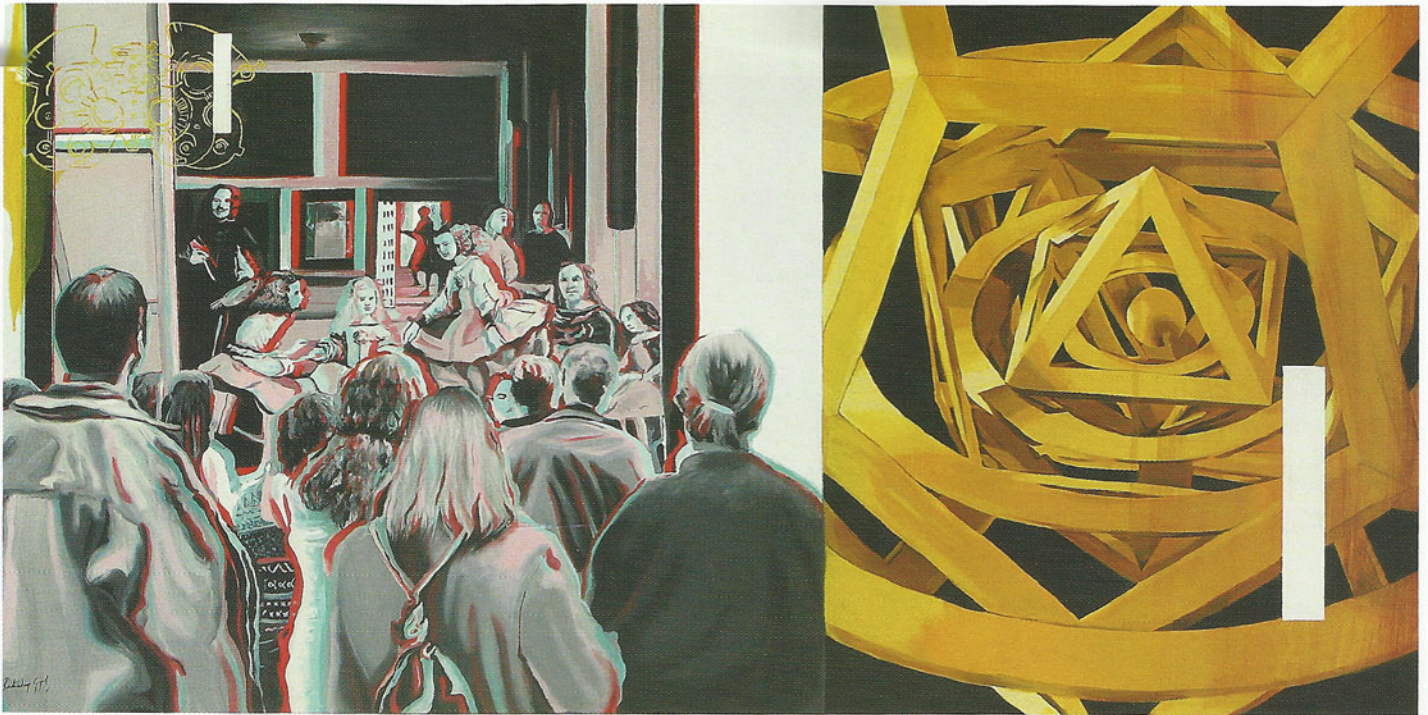
what is real and what is perceived through pragmatic discourses.

Ratnadeep reduces the information content of a concept by using abstract forms and, at the same time, light referential assertions through suggestive symbols are made. The dynamism of perceptual symbol system, particularly the notion stimulator, provides for an elegant account for change in discourse between the painting and the viewer. The correspondence is established for the purpose of understanding the more abstract in terms of the more concrete. The viewer is involved as a personal participant and is encouraged to draw from various dimensions of his own experience. The most primitive form of world-presentation underlay the more civilized cultural form presenting an ontological riddle. The views are shaped by the socio-cultural beliefs and attitudes of a specific culture, our translation of this visual phenomenon is based on the 'cognitive equivalence' where Ratnadeep's

Visual Metaphor must be looked at as cognitive constructs representing instances of how people conceptualize their experiences, attitudes and practices, and record them. Although, cognition plays a very important role in Ratnadeep's Visual Metaphor, emotional overtones cannot be ignored.

In the above painting, the image on the left is of viewers in a museum looking at Diego Velazquez's painting, *Las Meninas* (Spanish for *The Maids of Honour*). The image is painted in a 3D anaglyphic effect. Anaglyphic images are used to provide a stereoscopic 3-dimensional effect when viewed with glasses where the two lenses are of different (usually chromatically opposite) colors, such as red and cyan. Images are made up of two color layers, superimposed, but offset, with respect to each other, to produce a deep effect. The brain blends together the images it receives from each eye and interprets the differences as being the result of different distances.

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The work's complex and enigmatic composition raises questions about visual metaphors and reality, and creates an uncertain relationship between the viewer and the figures depicted. The elusiveness of *Las Meninas*, suggests that art, and life, are an illusionary metaphor. Velasquez embraces two modes, each of which constitutes the relationship between the viewer and the picturing of the world differently. The artist positions himself on the viewer's side of the picture surface and looks through the frame of the world - which he then reconstructs on the surface of the picture by means of geometric conventions. The second mode is not a window, but rather a surface onto which an image of the world casts itself. In place of an artist who frames the world to picture it, the world produces its own image without a necessary frame. The looker within the picture - not only looks out, but is also the artist. The painting intends to be both a view of the world and a framed representation of what it means to look at in the world.

On the right is a detail of the platonic solid model of the solar system from the *Mysterium Cosmographicum*. *Mysterium Cosmographicum* is an astronomy book by the German astronomer, Johannes Kepler, about the theory that the structure of the universe reflects God's plan through geometry. Kepler proposed that the distance

between the six planets, known at that time, could be understood in terms of the five platonic solids. The work plays with the fields of depth of reality and the unreal, depicted by the diagram of the eye testing apparatus and white poles on the top left corner.

To grasp what the artist is trying to convey requires extra exertion, sometimes beyond, and in addition to, what is required otherwise. Even if the points of references are relatively specific and fixed, it is still true that metaphorical import often seems open-ended and is unable to be captured in a tidy paraphrase. The viewer is involved as a personal participant and is encouraged to draw from various experiences from his life. The use of metaphor influences perception and interpretation as well as attitude; it is a stimulator as it highlights and downplays the shift in focus from one plane to another. This process leads to an entirely new feature and meaning, making the painting into an event or an ever-changing phenomenon. The viewer cannot completely explain the entire reasoning of positing of elements. It requires a higher and deeper level of involvement. The power of Visual Metaphor lies in its potential to further our understanding of the meaning of experience, which defines and defies reality.

In art and in language, metaphors urge us to look beyond the literal, to generate

association and to tap new, different and deeper levels of meaning. As a viewer you will find that, like linguistic metaphors, visual metaphors influence attitudes and behavior, and also alter perspectives. Ratnadeep's extended visual metaphor is a system of shared ideas and associated commonplace. His Visual Metaphorical process recognizes and vivifies; it paradoxically condenses and expands; it synthesizes often-disparate meanings. In this process, the attributes of one entity are transferred to another by comparison, substitution, or as a consequence of interaction. They serve as 'organizing images' that give emphasis, selectively restructuring, as well as interpreting our perceptions. In all of these functions - the evocation of attitudes, the guidance of behavior, the interpretation of experience, and the 'organization of perceptions - there is a Prismatic truth exploring the parallel nature of probability of reality and existence through contradiction. With the help of visual metaphors and the meaning they generate, our experiences can be enriched and better understood, and our realities, thereby, broadened.

(Ratnadeep Adivrekar's solo *Discourses of Prismatic truths* was shown at Pavillon Du Centenaire Luxembourg September-November 2011) 