



Eyes Wide Shut

A series of sculptures
and paintings on
contemporary issues

Mohan
Luthra



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**This is an Interim
Catalogue. Four paintings
and four sculptures are to
be added.**

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About the Artist

Mohan Luthra (Manmohan Singh Luthra) lives in London and has had a varied career as a senior Civil Servant, as a senior Academic and as an Author. In addition, he has continuously sustained his art education by studying part time at a local Art College and has continued to produce works since he migrated to the UK as a young adult in the seventies.

Mohan was born in Amritsar, India where he acquired his early art education from the artist Mrs. Phulan Rani and was significantly influenced by artists such as Thakur Singh and Sobha Singh. He was also inspired through exposure to Indian Cinema Art. The fact he has been living in Europe has meant that his work has been invariably influenced

by exposure to Western art whilst continuing to retain a strong Eastern flavour. His work is infused with a freedom unconstrained by theme or style or culture. It arises from what he finds exciting or some object or event which may be imbued by a certain mood, or a meaning or a significant change or something that moves him. In so doing he uses techniques and styles suited to the content or the concept.

He is not afraid of aesthetics in his works and feels that the aesthetic aspect and the capability of an art work to evoke, educate or challenge something in the viewer is not mutually exclusive. Mohan has exhibited in West London galleries, in Kent as well as in Glasgow.

The Series

The series of sculptures were conceived, and rough figures were developed, during the artist's visits to India in the wake of the Arab Spring protests in Egypt, and the Delhi protests, following the brutal rape of a young woman, and the ongoing parallel debates about what not to wear in both Europe and India.

The paintings have been developed over the years in response to different events, sometimes based on sketches which were converted into paintings many years after the occurrence of these events. Some of the paintings have been adapted by digital reproduction or otherwise to embed a message. Other works such as "The Intimacy Challenge", "The Thinker's Despair" and "The Diminished America" are broader observations and project the feelings of the artist in respect to universal issues.

The Style, Technique and Materials

The sculpture work is mostly semi-figurative or figurative and symbolic, initially creating pieces in clay and then replicating them in Fiberglass, for ease of transportation. A lot of preparation, layering work, correction and modification goes into the quality production of the surfaces, in particular to get to the right desired reflection of the concept and the feeling underpinning a given piece.

The paintings have been completed using a range of mediums—watercolour, acrylics, oil paints, digital or mixed mediums. Some original paintings have been enlarged by repainting original smaller watercolours to amplify the effect.

'The best of us still have our aspirations for the supreme goals of life, which is often mocked by prosperous people who now control the world. We still believe that the world has deeper meaning than what is apparent, and that therein the human.'

- RABINDRANATH TAGORE

Our Intimacy Challenge

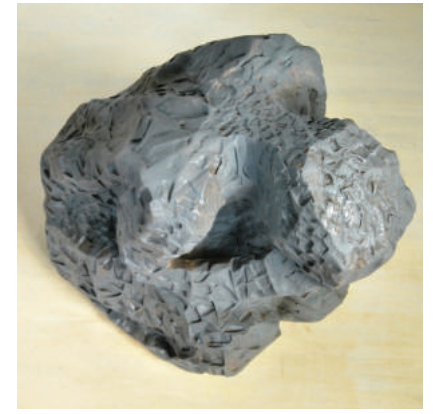
Inspired by the classic sculpture 'The Kiss' - a life size piece which attempts to look at intimacy between men and women at a time when women's power relationship with men, their self-definition, as well as their perception of their own sensuality is rapidly changing. Relationships in postmodern times are more transient, like melting ice, requiring a fresh look at current societal (normative) models of coupledness. These issues arise from the fact we are living longer and women are becoming more self-reliant; as a result expectations and standards of relationships has been heightened with more being demanded in the relationship between couples.



TITLE: Our Intimacy Challenge
MEDIUM: Fiberglass
DIMENSION: 16 X 42 inches
PLINTH SIZE: 29 X 54 inches
YEAR: 2014 - 2018

The Thinkers Despair

Thousands of years of religious philosophy and almost three centuries of post renaissance enlightenment, including cumulative scientific progress, has failed to save us from our capacity to self-harm in the multiple arenas of our life i.e. health, environment and mental well being. The abuse of both technology and science has cultivated a sense of collective despair represented in this piece of work.



TITLE: The Thinker's Despair
MEDIUM: Fiberglass
DIMENSION: 40 X 25 inches
PLINTH SIZE: 24 X 48 inches
YEAR: 2014 - 2018

The Staining of Taj Mahal

The Taj Mahal, an iconic building, flanks a garbage-strewn river and is often enveloped by smog from belching smokestacks and vehicles in the northern city of Agra. The uncontrolled growth of industries over the decades has led to acid rain which interacts with the marble (calcium carbonate) to produce the yellow tinge. The Government of India announced a clean air plan in 1995. As a result of this plan over 2000 industries switched over to the use of less harmful fuels.

India's Supreme Court has recently instructed the government to seek foreign help if need be to fix what it described as a worrying change in its colour. Chastising the Government the court justice retorted "Even if you have the expertise, you are not utilizing it or perhaps you don't care."



TITLE: The Staining Of Taj Mahal
MEDIUM: Mixed media on canvas
DIMENSION: 30 x 25 inches
YEAR: 2010

The Golden Temple Challenge

The Golden Temple in Amritsar, India, is overrun by domestic tourists' over-congestion competing with devotee visitors. It appears to be under siege from long queues. The cumulative bio-impact of so many bodies passing through it presents a challenge to its elegant and intricate interiors while the likelihood of high rise buildings being erected nearby threatens its skyline. This is true of many attractive faith buildings all over the world where planners, conservationists and tourism promoters struggle to maintain a cohesive and protective balance in the environment within and surroundings of such spectacular historic buildings.



TITLE: The Golden Temple Challenge

MEDIUM: Acrylic on canvas

DIMENSION: 33 x 45 inches

YEAR: 2016

Sinking and Overrunning of Venice

This painting represents the current situation in Venice. People protested a few years ago against the historic city being overrun by tourism led commercialism by staging floating coffins in it's waters. Experts assert that the rising sea levels are due to climate change responsible the city of Venice slowly sinking.

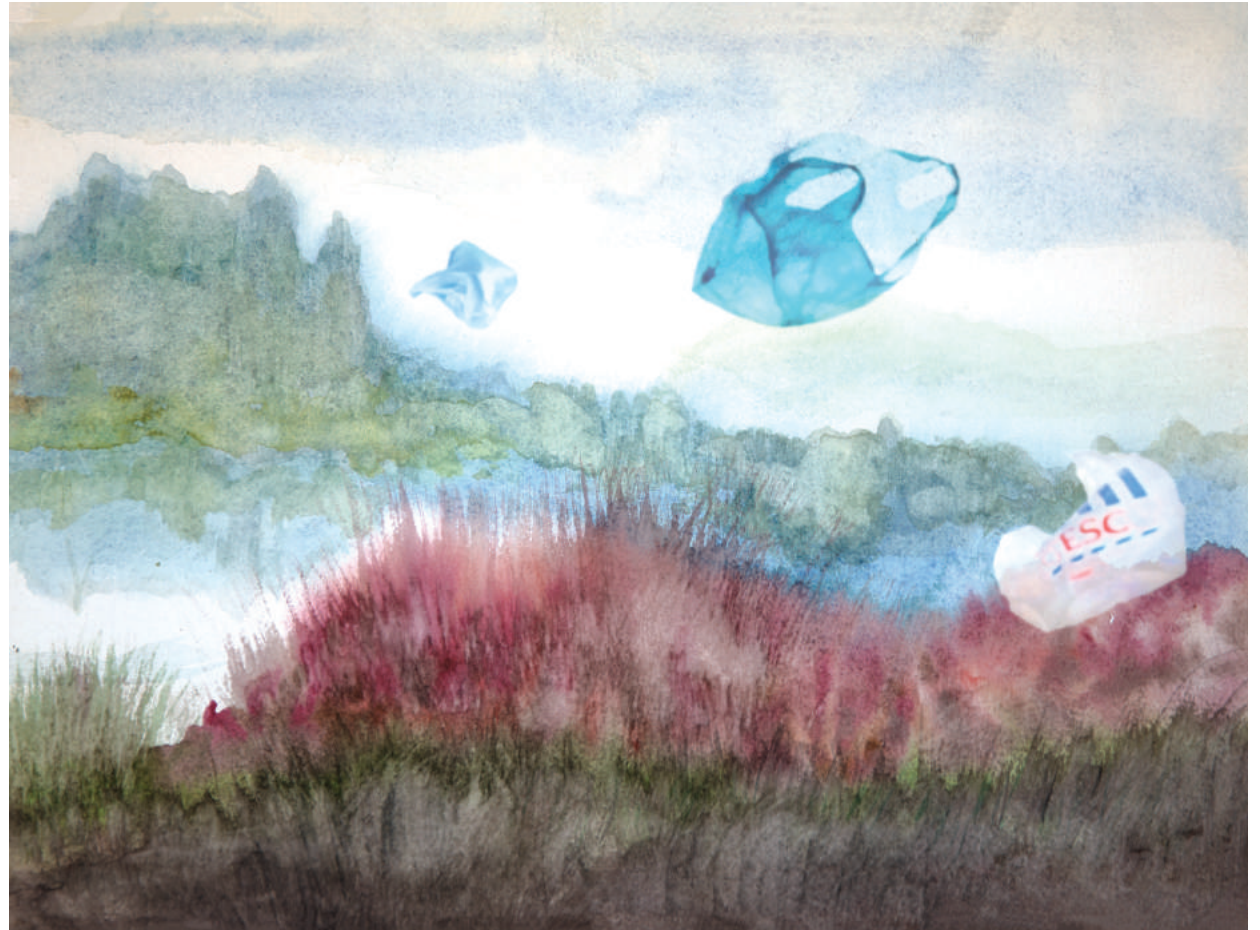


TITLE: Sinking and Overrunning of Venice
MEDIUM: Oil paint on canvas
DIMENSION: 38 x 25 inches
YEAR: 2016

A Plastic Paradise

At the verge of losing all paradise, we have waged a war against our forests due to mining and logging to the point of extinction. The forest cover in Asia and South America in particular has been heavily curtailed as a result.

Similarly our continued use of plastics for large scale unnecessary convenience is a curse and a significant threat to the sustainability of our planet.

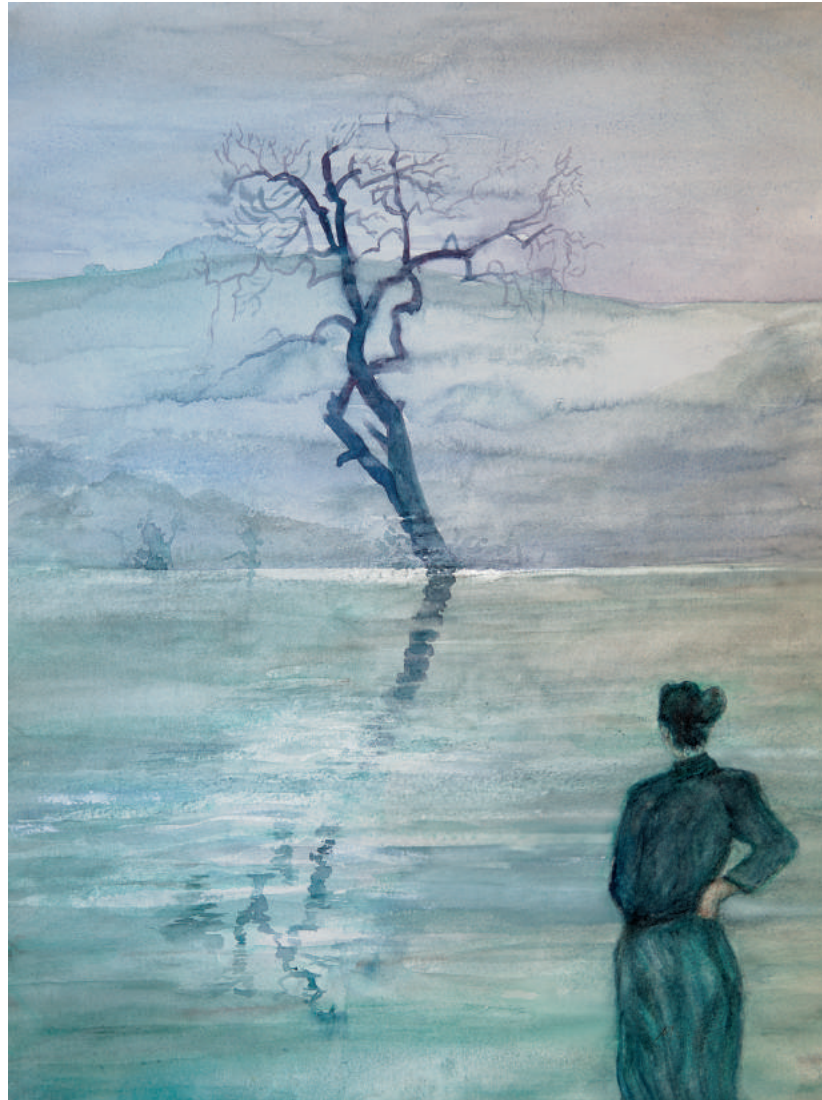


TITLE: Paradise Lost
MEDIUM: Watercolour on paper
DIMENSION: 16 x 12 inches
YEAR: 2000

Contemplation in Cold

Colder regions of our planet with their hills, tranquil waters and monasteries can help connect us with our peaceful inner sense of solace and invoke a spiritual connection with nature inviting contemplation and closeness to huddle and cuddle our loved ones in a group setting. This painting attempts to capture this.

The climatic changes to these regions are not only going to diminish future generation's prospects of experiencing these spiritual havens but also present formidable and distressing challenges to local inhabitants whose environment is being eroded.



TITLE: Contemplation in Cold
MEDIUM: Watercolour on paper
DIMENSION: 12 x 16 inches
YEAR: 2016

Water Water Every Where But

The abuse of water and environmental damage has led to predictions of water wars. The overuse of agrochemicals has undermined the quality of water, making it toxic and unusable in certain places in the world. This means that the scenes such as those depicted in the painting may not exist for our children to see. Forest cover has been receding globally whilst water abuse has been turning some fertile lands into arid wastelands. Water scarcity and flood risk management both continue to remain major challenges for us.



TITLE: Water Water Every Where But
MEDIUM: Watercolour on paper
DIMENSION: 16 x 12 inches
YEAR: 2015

The Yogin: A Mind and Technology Challenge



The popularisation of meditation as a means of mindful introspection in our quest to improve our happiness now runs concurrently with the overwhelming use of alluring and immersive technology. This presents a potential challenge of dissonance but can also be an opportunity for humankind to challenge itself to wield the power of technology in a thoughtful way and with the focus of improving the well being of humankind. With work as we know predicted to be disappearing from our lives in the future how will we perceive free joy time? And will we be able to manage actualisation in this time with the help of integration of technology and meditation?



TITLE: The Yogin
MEDIUM: Fiberglass
DIMENSION: 30 x 36 inches
YEAR: 2014 - 2018

Technology and Change

Technology can be a force for good but we are not good at predicting the long term impact of technology on social change. The adverse effect of technology may be difficult to reverse.



TITLE: Technology and Change
MEDIUM: Oil Painting on canvas
DIMENSION: 22.5 x 33 inches
YEAR: 2012

The Diminished America

In terms of both hard and, in particular, soft power the United States seems to have diminished after the Vietnam, Iraq and Afghanistan wars. It is no longer the torch bearer of democracy or an open home for the huddled masses from the suffering world. It has been growing fat, isolationist and irrelevant in the world as the East surges economically and militarily.



TITLE: The Diminished America
MEDIUM: Fiberglass
DIMENSION: 30 x 18 inches
YEAR: 2014 - 2018

No Entry to Outsiders

There are many reasons why people leave their homes to settle in, or escape to, another land, often adding a diverse dimension to the local cultures. Hateful nativism combined with demagogic populism stalks the planet othering weaker and minority sections of humanity. The associated painting is about a church converted into a mosque which the planners allowed in order to preserve the building. The scene painted by the famous artist Lowry almost 100 years ago has been recreated in a 21st Century setting in the painting.



TITLE: No Entry To Outsiders
MEDIUM: Mixed medium on canvas
DIMENSION: 34 x 25 inches
YEAR: 2008

The Women's Spring

Inspired by the Tiananmen Square, the Arab Spring and the Delhi Nirbhaya agitations, this work celebrates the role of urban young women in protests to aid, in particular, the development of a fair and inclusive secure democracy. The Arab Spring fizzled away to remain dormant and the protests in Delhi did spawn many changes in response to the violation and security of women but considerable challenges remain in respect of the negative and repressive male attitude towards women.

The face was conceived after much research as a universal representation not belonging to any continent as the issues are considered to be global.



TITLE: The Women's Spring
MEDIUM: Fiberglass
DIMENSION: 3.25 x 11.5 ft
YEAR: 2014 - 2018

What Not to Wear- a Continuing Debate



This work was conceived during the fierce debate about what not to wear and the climate of fear which existed among women in Delhi at the time of the artist's stay.

A number of films and plays sought to challenge the notion that women's clothing can be read as an invitation to molest by a male predator. Therefore she needs to be circumspect and mindful about giving the wrong signals. This is a statement piece about not being told 'what to wear' or 'what not to

wear' drawing on terms of form. It draws inspiration from how casually the rural women squat to change their clothes.

The West also responded to the what not to wear debate by passing laws to ban the burqa, though a tiny minority of women still wear it, and in some countries even the Hijab—a scarf popular amongst Muslim women which was also worn by post-war European working women to stay warm and as well as a fashion item.



TITLE: What Not to Wear
MEDIUM: Fiberglass
DIMENSION: 20 x 37 inches
YEAR: 2014 - 2018

The Curse of New Slavery

The painting depicts a tired street worker choosing to sit down on the pavement to be available. Whilst liberal democracies have been preoccupied with ISIS, the exploitation of women and with the what not to wear debate and the related equality legislation, cruel trafficking of women for sexual purposes continues at a scale mirroring the slave trade in 19th century.



TITLE: The Curse of New Slavery
MEDIUM: Watercolour on paper
DIMENSION: 12 x 16 inches
YEAR: 2000

Invisible Chains

This painting depicts the abuse of drugs addiction control and the inappropriate use of technology by the handlers. Apart from seizing passports, issuing threats, and coercion, traffickers use online means to advertise and use Global Positioning Systems on cell phones to track their victims as well as utilise encrypted messages to communicate with accomplices.

Tech giants such as Apple and Google have come under scrutiny after changing their operating systems in 2014 to encrypt users' data by default. This boosted privacy for users online but made it harder for the law enforcement agencies to extract information from the smart phones to aid prosecution.



TITLE: Invisible Chains
MEDIUM: Poster colour on paper
DIMENSION: 30.5 x 25 inches
YEAR: 2014

The Hollowness Within

The painting depicts a runaway patient due for ECT or electric convulsive treatment. This is a true incident which occurred while the artist was on the Board of a Mental Health Trust.

An estimated 350 million people worldwide suffer from depression of one sort or the other. It will be the number one cause of disease worldwide by 2030. One person is known to commit suicide every 40 seconds.

The relative absence of recognition and compassion for mental illness, the stigma attached, a shortage of talking and clinical therapies and specialist health care all add up to a desperate scenario for sufferers and their families. Additionally the young generation are becoming increasingly more vulnerable with stress, competition, the complexity of multiple demands of modern life and psychological insecurity and self esteem issues.



TITLE: The Hollowness Within
MEDIUM: Acrylic on canvas
DIMENSION: 23.5 x 33 inches
YEAR: 2014

Pain and Devotion

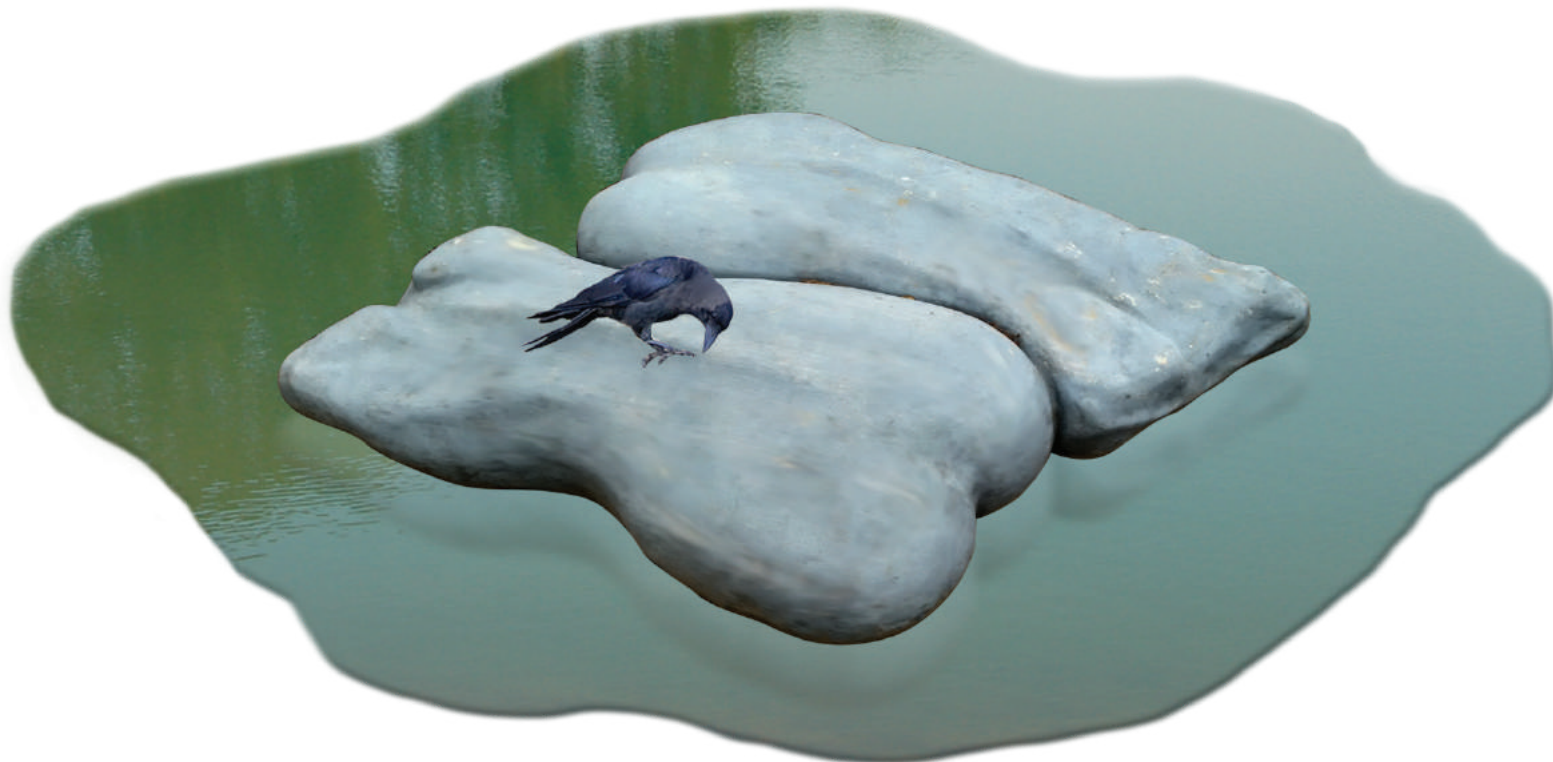
Wars, civil cruelty and famine in modern times continue to create immense suffering, particularly for female and child refugees. The painting is based on an early sketch from the 80s showing a widow of the 1984 brutal killing of Sikhs in Delhi; she is meditating with dedicated devotion to console herself and manage her grief and loss.



TITLE: Pain and Devotion
MEDIUM: Acrylic on card paper
DIMENSION: 23.5 x 33 inches
YEAR: 1990

The Hoodwinked Populations

This piece aims to depict how the ruling elites keep the populations submerged in unawareness and with so called alternative truth or manipulations in the media about what is really going on. The people are mentally kept in the dark or misled whilst the elite/ ruling classes peck and feast on the wealth of these nations.



TITLE: The Hood Winked Populations

MEDIUM: Fiberglass

DIMENSION: 37 x 29 inches

YEAR: 2014 - 2018

The Dove and the Fear

This piece was conceived during the period in which there was a raging debate about the security of women in the wake of women protesting at the brutal rape and murder of a Delhi woman in a moving bus. The country's women felt they were stalked by constant fear and insecurity leading to a feeling of being second class citizens.

The male expectations about wanting women to be constantly alert and manage their fear rather

than address infrastructural societal issues, enraged modern urban women whilst adding to the insecure atmosphere they encounter every day. The piece draws inspiration from a wounded dove in a state of fear in the process of healing itself.

The figure represents the notion of the care-taking and nurturing part of the mind always having to be alert to cope with this persistent sense of insecurity and fear.



TITLE: The Dove And The Fear
MEDIUM: Fiberglass
DIMENSION: 40 x 12.5 inches
YEAR: 2014 - 2018

The Vulnerability of Old Age



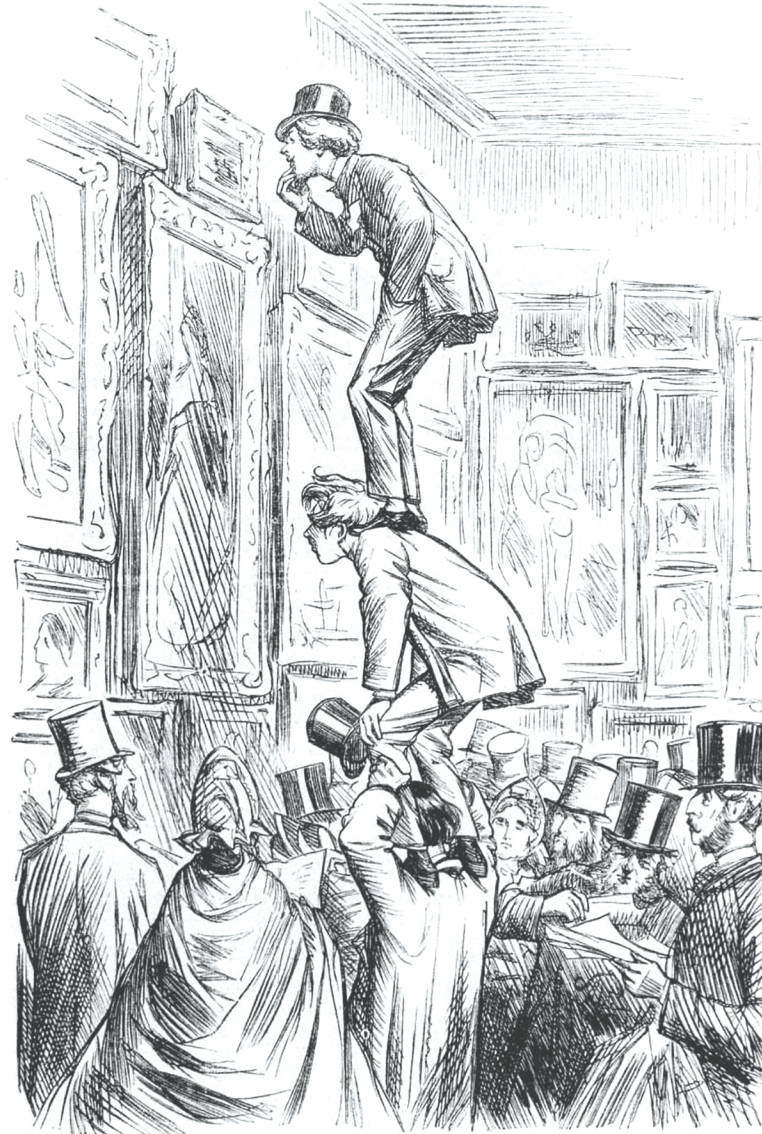
The world's aged population is growing at a rapid rate challenging well endowed welfare states as well as families caring for elderly relatives who are living longer and struggling with mental health decline, isolation loneliness and depression. Family breakdown, dispersal of children and life cycle poverty along with rampant ageism and atomization of society all put older people in undignified and vulnerable situations leading to isolation and premature death.

The work depicts a once powerful human withering away with the lashings of time.

Our average age has increased very substantially over the last century making us vulnerable to many diseases including the dreaded cancer and Alzheimer's. This is at a time when reverence and respect for the elderly is on the wane and more and more elderly people yearn to live on their own with dignity and self respect.

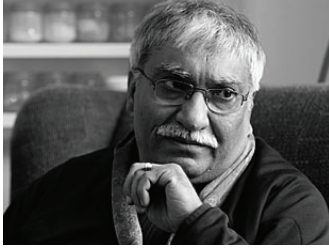


TITLE: The Vulnerability of Old Age
MEDIUM: Fiberglass
DIMENSION: 26 x 23 inches
YEAR: 2014 - 2018



Artist Reviews >>

Artist Reviews



'Refreshing contemporary thinking' - SIDHARTH

Eyes Wide Shut A metaphorical term, Sure I agree most the world has eyes wide open but still shut as they see what they want to see and when they see do they look. An aware being of his time here is the work of an artists who throws many a surprises through the medium of art objects in real living space of sculptures which are performing acts like humans but all figures communicating profound issues.

The Artist Mohan Luthra has surprised me with his creation, and his devotion to creating these works over the years. His work is underpinned by his refreshing contemporary thinking and sleek style of handling the medium with his wide open eyes in today's times when the bang bang of information and social media influences occupy so much mental space in our lives. It seems that one's sanctity and sanity are both always at risk, especially when you come from one culture to a very different another culture and live in

each without clinging to the past of the either culture. For an artist like him who treads two cultures it is an act of a courageous self expression to weld the two and look at the world through cosmopolitan eyes.

Looking at **What not to wear** piece of work and the perpetual debate which haunts us to date, a thought bubbles up that our body a beautiful gift of nature which needs clothes to protect it from elements and secondarily to endow aesthetics upon us. Now we have become preoccupied with spending enormous sums on clothing often for the purpose of status enhancement and at the same religious interference and moral pontificating has become prevalent and disturbing even in liberal societies We the humans keep on creating comforts and have paradoxically become much more uncomfortable collectively.

The Yogin addresses the issue of overlap between virtual space of technology and that of our mind. We are lost in techno-materialism. Now we know more about iPhone hence are less in touch with the inner being the "I".

Whilst looking at this body of work it is evident that he is not afraid of creating and his art emanates from a free flowing spirit and his work resonates with the way he express himself passionately among the friends in daily interactions. His social concerns, his

sensitivity towards fellow beings, his intense dissection of wider scenario of day to day events shows that how a beautiful aware human has evolved into his being now presenting his universal concerns and struggles through art.

Mohan Luthra is making the onlooker



'An amalgamation of the east and west, a union of another kind of renaissance' - LOLITA DUTTA

Mohan Luthra is an evocative and versatile artist. His obvious interest in the mediums he explores, manifests its self in the gamut of work being showcased.

He has transcended his craft in diverse ways, from working in fiberglass to varying mediums. Accomplishment does not merely mean technique; there is enough technique in Mohan's work, what stands apart is the sensitivity with which he has approached his concepts.

think and see around and today that's what is the role of an artist to hit straight and to the point.

Sidharth Art

www.sidharthstudio.com

Sidharth is a well established senior artist in Delhi who currently has as studio in Noida.

Almost all his work is derived from astute observations and understanding of a human psyche. His art makes a definitive social statement. He has keenly visualised his thought process into relevant social statements. Yet some of his pieces like the 'Taj Mahal' and the 'Golden temple' are ethereal in their rendition. His sculptures are well conceived, and thought provoking.

It is not often we have an artist, who is a master craftsman, Mohan fits into the mould, almost like one of his art forms, where mind body and soul juxtapose into versatile creations.

His is a well travelled journey, an amalgamation of the east and west, a union of another kind of renaissance.

Lolita Dutta

Lolita Dutta is a well known Delhi based design professional, art writer and an academician with over 35 years of experience in these fields.

Art Production Environment

'The Reva', established by a group of artists is a nature-based residential consortium situated on the lush green bank of the sacred River Narmada in Gujarat. It is where Mohan Luthra has worked and created his sculpture pieces over the last few years.





The Title

It is an evocative play on words on the common phrases 'eyes wide open' and 'eyes wide shut'. It can mean different things to different people. In this context it has been used as a metaphor to represent the notion that one can be completely oblivious and ignorant of the obvious situation around oneself even when apparently the eyes might be 'open', the mind itself may not want to see the self evident important events or facts in one's surroundings.

'Seeing comes before words. The child looks and recognizes before it can speak.' But there is also another sense in which seeing comes before words. It is seeing which establishes our place in the surrounding world; we explain that world with words, but words can never undo the fact that we are surrounded by it. The relation between what we see and what we know is never settled.' - JOHN BERGER

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