

Visual Chronologies  
& Discursive Binaries  
SRUSHTI RAO

25<sup>th</sup> April to 1<sup>st</sup> May 2023  
Nehru Art Gallery

“I am keen to explore the relationship between time and space, and how that dictates human behaviour. The abstraction of moments captivate me like the ebbing and flowing of the sea waves. Space is forever and time is transient. This interlocking relationship between them is particularly fascinating to me. One is a steady aspect while the other changes. There is so much to explore within this, whether it is the stability or the mutability. My practice has evolved with time and I have worked across themes, but these two aspects are my favourite to work on.”

# Artist Statement

Art comes naturally to me; it is this innate drive to create, to paint. The lines represent the 'lifeline' of my thoughts; I have always visualized painting in this form.

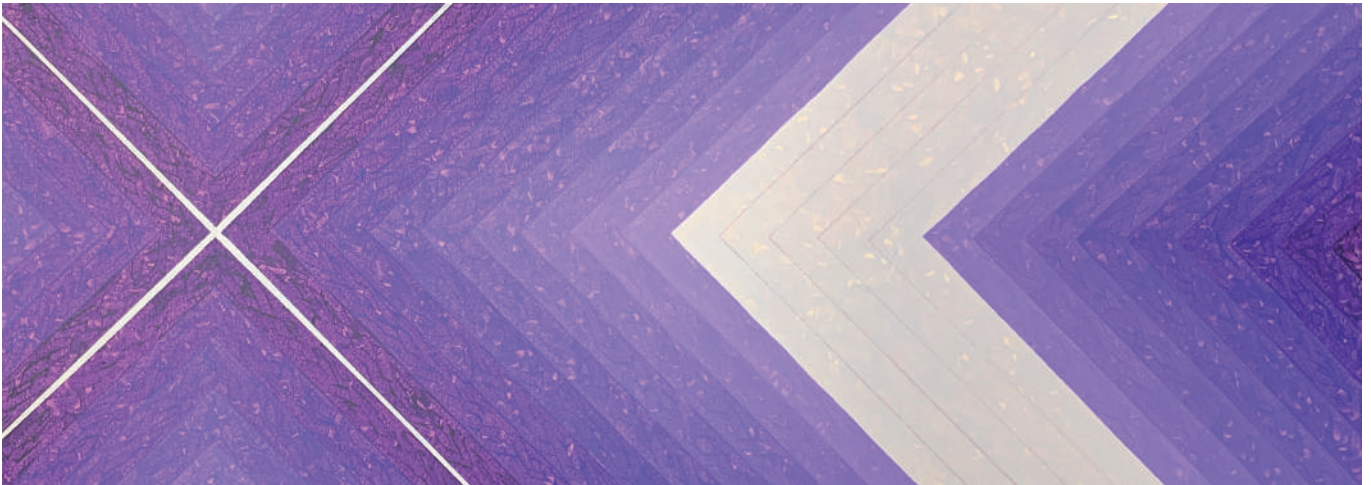
Life is complicated, and I like to simplify things, compartmentalize and action them sequentially. Maybe it is that subconscious personality trait that gets reflected in my painting style as well. I have depicted portraits, figures, compositions and now abstraction within these 'lines'. My art has been a constant companion in my journey of life and it has developed consequently, reflecting, emulating, challenging, and steadily progressing as I lap up my life experiences - the good, the bad, the ugly and the thought provoking.

I am a contemporary woman raised in the culturally rich country of India; I represent that global citizen, who is inherently Indian, dealing with the dilemma of a modern upbringing with a deep rooted sense of 'Indianess'. I constantly deal with the disparity in my thinking and that of the society that I am a part of. Having studied religion to quench the curiosity, I am agnostic, practising spiritual semblance, to keep sanity while combating anxiety.

# Visual Chronologies & Discursive Binaries

*There are two types of time*, says the French Philosopher Henry Bergson. Once Bergson qualifies as 'objective time' that could be measured and seen through the aid of a watch or calendar. Any kind of chronometer makes us aware of the objective time. The other time is the 'lived time,' a concept that frames it as 'duration.' While the former helps us to break time into pieces for our convenience, for the sake of documenting the self, the latter gives us a holistic view about time. The experiential quotient of the lived time is more unifying than dissecting and categorizing. It makes the experience a complex intensity that needs special mediums for expression. Srushti Rao has found that medium, her paintings.

Srushti's paintings objectify the lived times and they in turn live the objectified times too. Embedded in the object experiences between sunrises and sunsets, turning off the calendar pages and the changes of seasons are narratives that could be broken up like jigsaw pieces and recomposed with concentration and patience. Artists, especially the female artists often take up this way to express themselves but in Srushti's artistic journey she leaves the objective time behind and picks up the holistic experiential time that flows liberated from the objects and exists in the ensemble of feelings and emotions. Her works are like déjà vu sensations; being there and not there, a sense of duration but could not be pinned down to a particular place or event in the map of lived life.



This navigational impossibility however needs a suitable channel for release. Srushti finds those channels in the ruptures that occur in the seamless flow of lived experiences. She calls it 'A Chasm in Time.' An eternal flow of emotions, powerful and poetic but not romantic as in the case of poetry, had suddenly come to a halt with the pandemic. One of the most powerful images was a series of clocks showing the time clicked by different photographers on a virtual agreement in different parts of the world. Isolated from the relationships that human beings could make with the time contained in those clocks, they looked like static emblems or signage that showed nothing. However, Srushti did not try her hand at painting any object that could suggest the sudden halt of time due to the pandemic.

Srushti had painted the rupture! That was the chasm in time; the illuminated silence between rhythmic sounds, the echoing songs from a gorge or an angel's emergency landing in a strange land. Srushti's paintings always express a state of precariousness and the possible aesthetic solutions. She titled those works as 'Transposed'. Transposition is a way of dealing with life; it shows the possibility of interchangeability. But from the Transposed series Srushti reaches to an experiential field where she could not replace one with the other. Instead, she has to deal with the rupture; the sudden landing of the angel. The angel is nobody but time with history and the conglomeration of human experiences as its two wings.



A closer look at the works of Srushti reveals the painterly nuances that the artist adapts in order to create the visual effect. The predominant optical illusionism carefully constructed by the artist using dexterous use of colors and their diminishing and increasing shades is suddenly interpolated with tangentially moving sharp lines of the dominant color. These slashes illuminate the area around and attract the viewers' eyes for deep meditations. Structurally and formally speaking, this sudden introduction of lines that run against the visual patterns does not disturb the effect of its visuality nor does it generate a narrative that goes against the grain of the painting. Through the deliberate avoidance of narrative patterns Srushti gains for her works the pure quality of abstraction; the non-representative quality. The derivative essences that often constitute the formal visuality of the abstract paintings are removed for direct color and pattern applications. For Srushti, the artistic concern about time and its various manifestations is not a new thing. When she was in the 'Transposed' phase too she had dealt with it. But now in the new series Srushti has an added reason to speak of the time. In her poetic explanations that accompany some of her works, she speaks of the time directly but more in philosophical terms.

This mutuality between words and the optical experience given by the paintings functions as a key to enter the paintings for those people who demand a 'set of meanings' to be released by a work of art. People come before a work of art with monochronic ideas; they think that time is an incessant progress from one point to the other and culture develops in a linear way. But what Srushti offers in her paintings is a polychronic idea that transcends the time's linearity and takes it to the malleability of time and the cultural constructs.



'Transcendence' is another theme that Srushti regularly revisits. Transcendence is a conceptual idea pertaining to the religious faiths. The temporality and the resultant limitations of the human body is overcome by taking intellectual, mental and spiritual flights that alter the physical realities of existence. Srushti's paintings are meant to be experienced as a part of transcendence made possible through the visual effects of the paintings. The paintings and their visual contents created by Srushti are not static on the wall; they keep beckoning the viewer to have a considered look. And the viewers definitely would indulge in this 'looking' as the visual surfaces of these paintings are quite welcoming and enticing. While the artist remains in a permanent state of transcendence while working on these paintings and later while exhibiting them, the viewers get a feeling of such an exalted state of being upon meditating on Srushti's works.

Despite all visuality and spirituality that Srushti's paintings tend to reveal in terms of the painterly surfaces and the experiential take away respectively, the artist does not just reject the physical conditions of living and the ways in which life is understood by billions of people on the earth. She understands the binaries that people derive from their experiences with nature and living conditions, and deals with the precariousness and ambiguities of it in her series titled 'Transposed.' This series is visually powerful and demands more viewing time than the narrative-representative works done by many other artists of our times.

Primarily, the visuality is built upon gradations and patterns; one color of certain density functions as incoming patterns and the lighter shade of its edge employed for visual illusionism takes up a dominant place in the outgoing adjacent frame, at times two and other times four, sometimes in rhythmic multiplications and other times resorting to broken geometric and mathematical patterns.

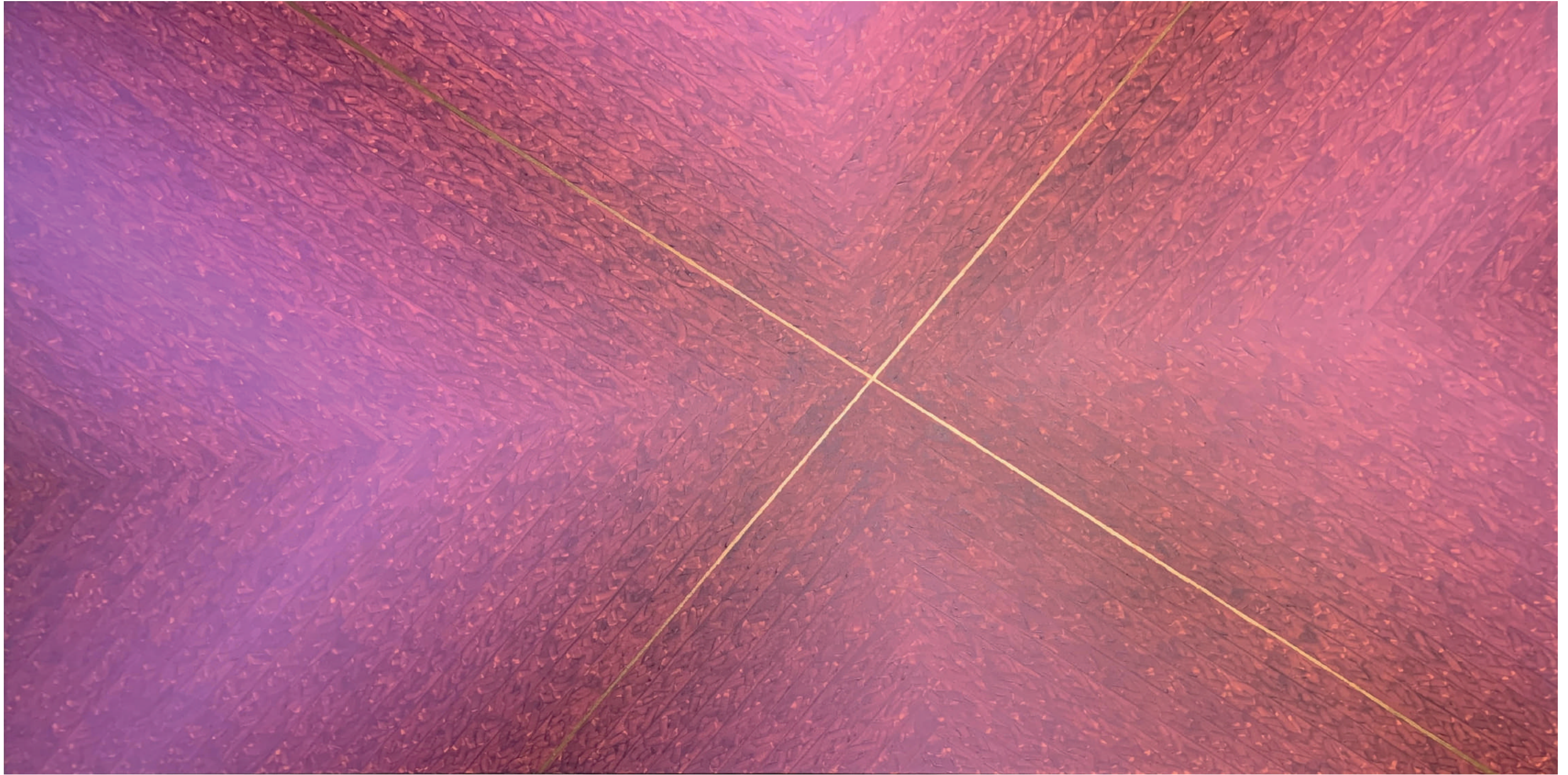
As the artist herself claims in one of the accompanying poems, life is a series of binaries and all these binaries are convenient productions in order to make life livable. When one has a methodological vision for seeing binaries everywhere he or she could only see binaries, and it is like the religious faith one has. When the frames of references are recurring binaries everywhere around life becomes easier. But Srushti has a different take on these binary constructs. In her works, through their visual plays, she actively puts these binaries into a zone of skepticism. Even if the patterns are mathematically repetitive, the visual content and intent are different, and the viewers are asked to confront this 'illusionary binaries' that they are always comfortable with. The precariousness of life lays open for public scrutiny in these works and the definitional instability, whether it is coming or going, it is inside or outside, it is light or dark, makes the viewer indulge in the painting the way they do the aesthetical unpacking of a poem or even a good meal!

Srushti's multifaceted creative intelligence has helped her to deal with life in various mediums both in mundane and exalted forms. While literature is more about the mundanity of life, visual art is a more sophisticated way of dealing with it, especially when the paintings are non-representative in character. Srushti's paintings resort to the scientific methodology of optical effects and at the same time she engages with the question of binaries and asks people to look beyond the binaries to see and enjoy life fully.

Srushti Rao lives in a transcendental plane as seen in her paintings but that doesn't stop her from capturing the ruptures caused by socio-cultural and economic changes caused by the calamities. That makes Srushti Rao a *sensitive artist*.

## JohnyML

Johny ML is a Delhi based Indian Culture Critic, Art Curator and Writer. He holds an MVA in Art History and Criticism from MS University, Baroda and MA in Creative Curating from Goldsmiths College, University of London.



A Chasm In Time XIV  
48in x 84in | 122cm x 213cm | Acrylic on Linen Canvas



# Transposed

are you arriving or are you departing?

are you preparing to stay or preparing to leave?

are you here or are you there?

are you pre-defined or are you original?

will you enter their clove or carve your own niche?

are you ascending or descending?

are you stable or erratic?

are you a reality or a dream?

can you exist and desist at the same time?

can you be this and that altogether?

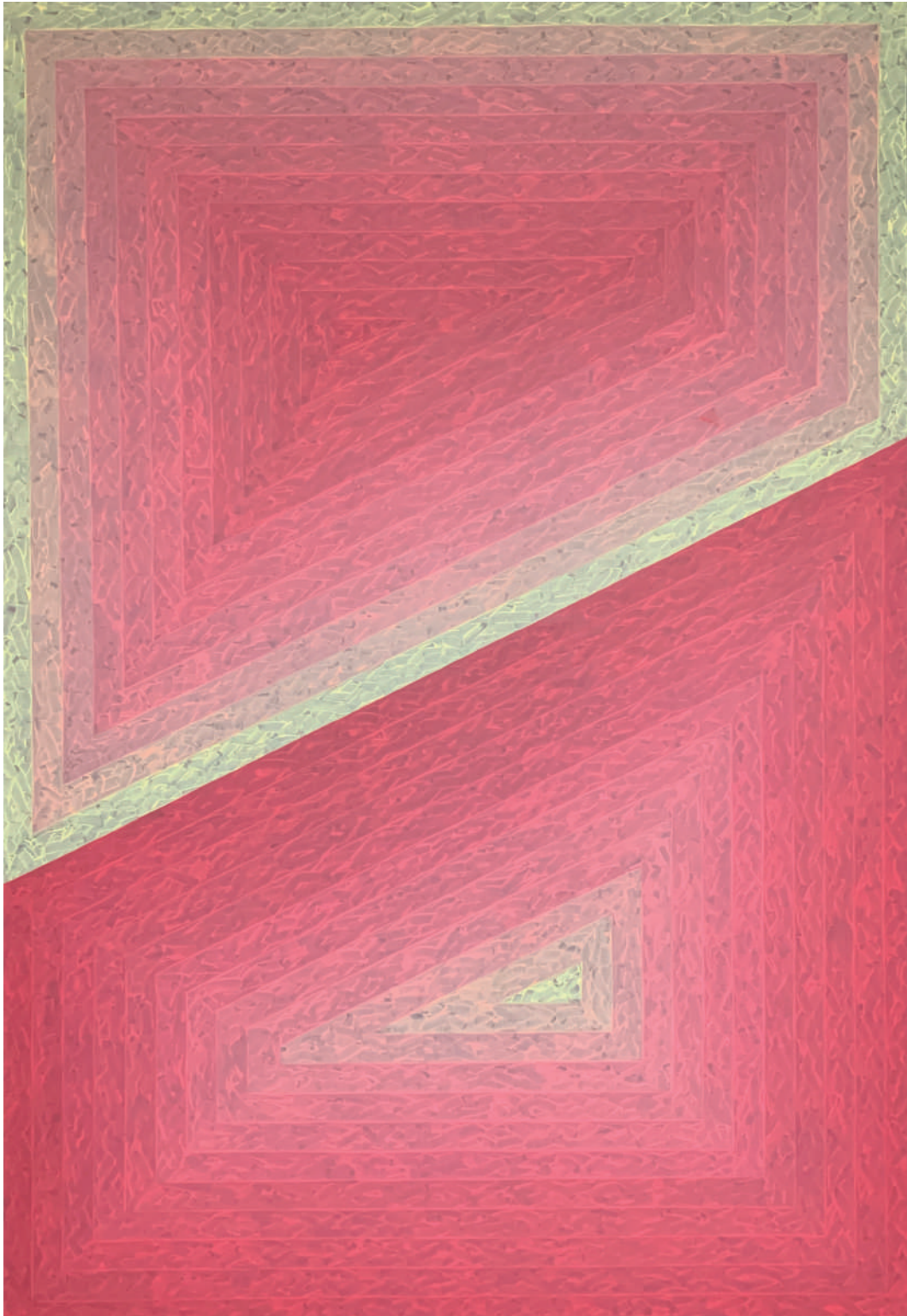
are you Transposed yet?



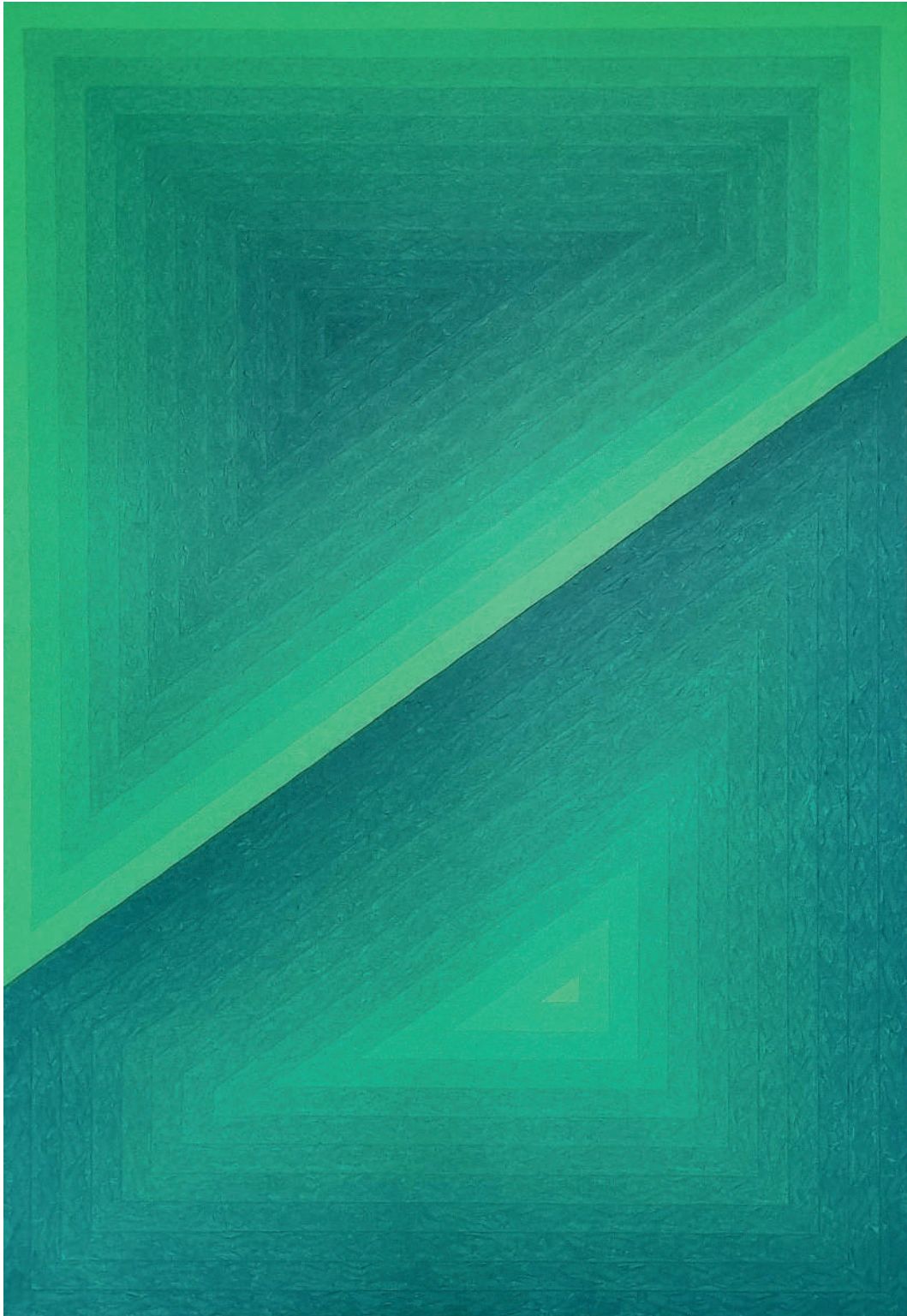
Transposed XXVIII  
48in x 72in | 122cm x 183cm | Acrylic on Linen Canvas



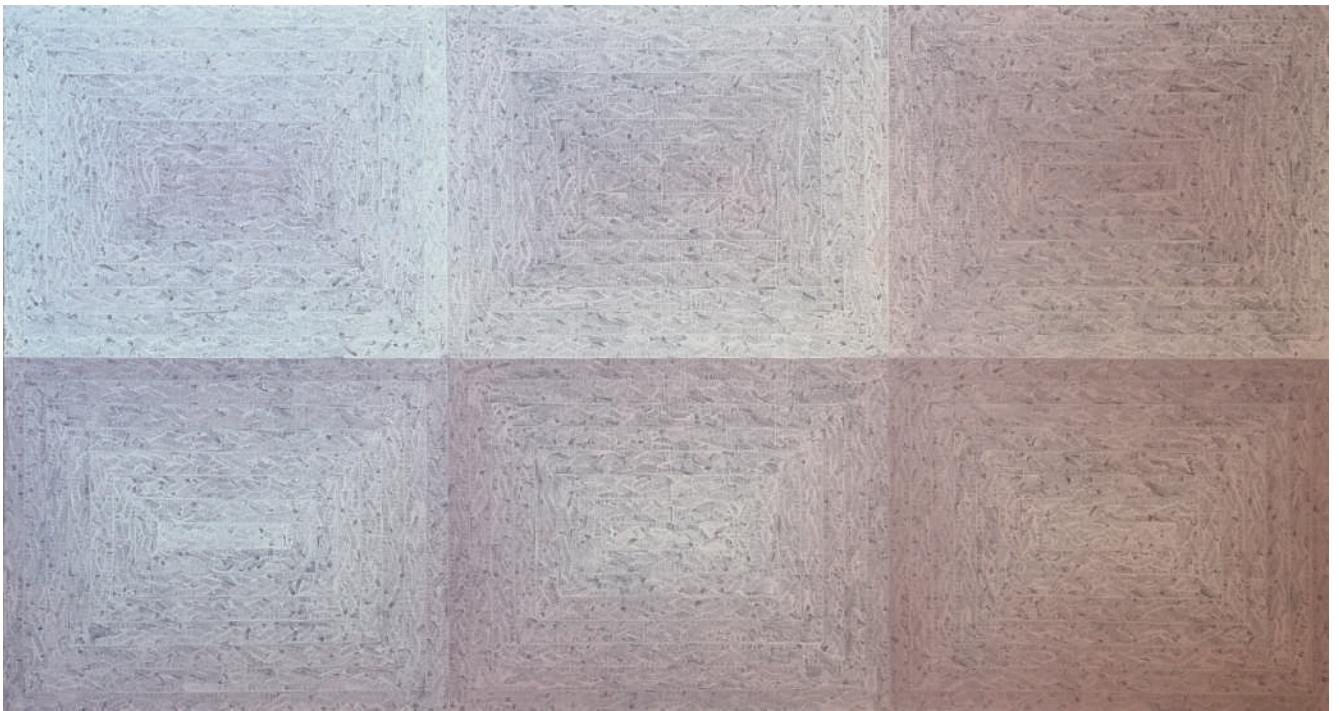
Transposed XXIV  
48in x 72in | 122cm x 183cm | Acrylic on Linen Canvas



Transposed XXV  
48in x 72in | 122cm x 183cm | Acrylic on Linen Canvas



Transposed XXIII  
72in x 48in | 122cm x 183cm | Acrylic on Linen Canvas



Transposed XXVII  
36in x 72in | 91cm x 183cm | Acrylic on Canvas

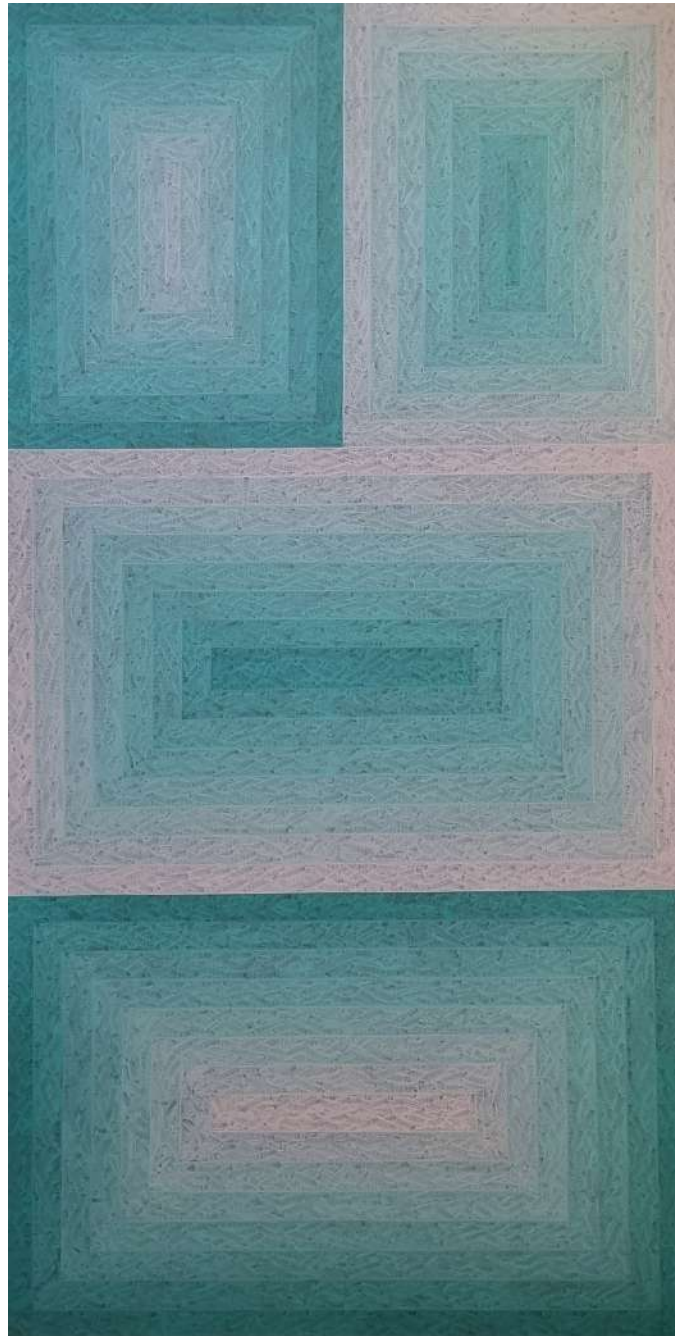


Transposed XXX  
36in x 72in | 91cm x 183cm | Acrylic on Canvas

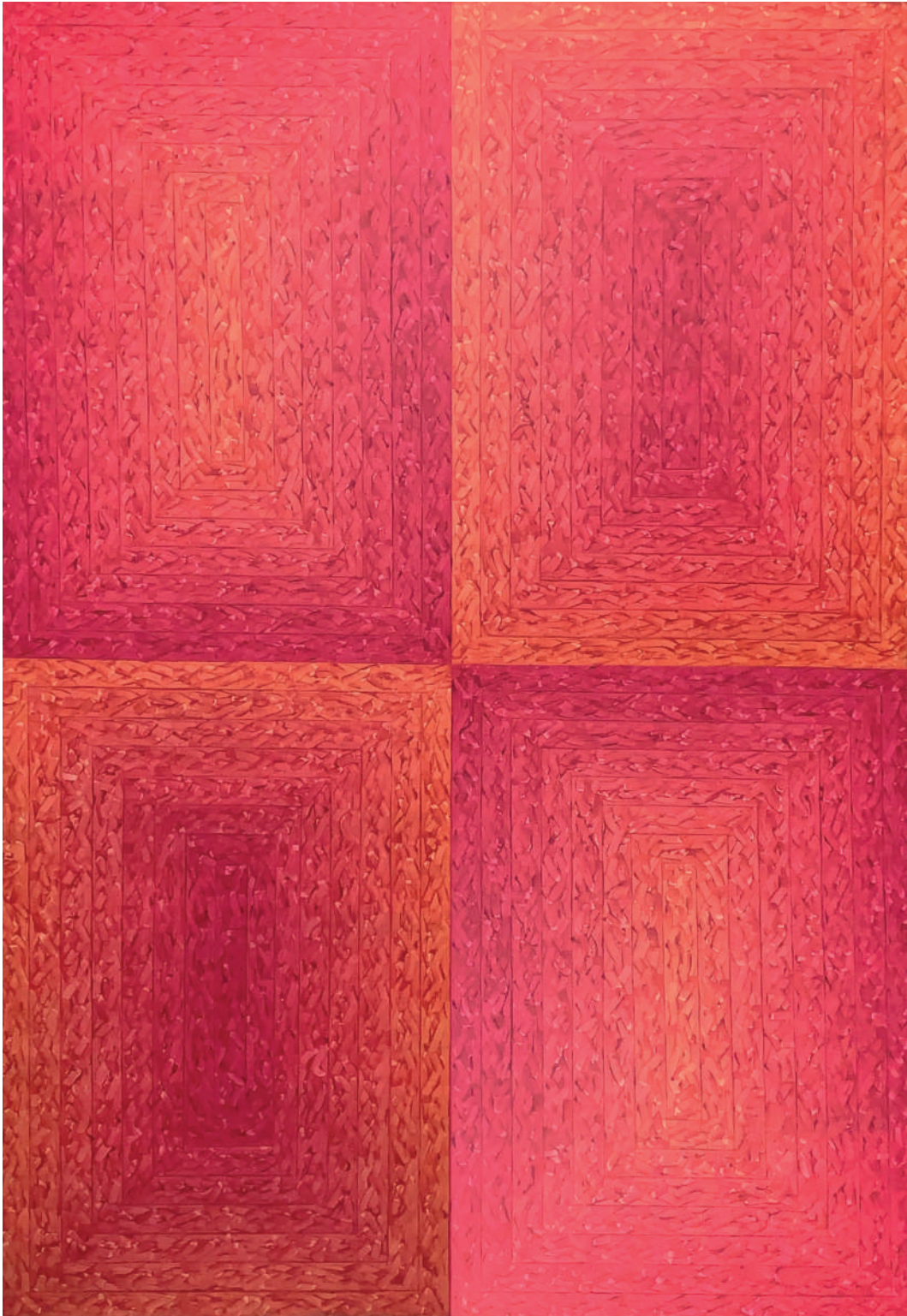


Transposed XXIX  
36in x 72in | 91cm x 183cm | Acrylic on Canvas





Transposed XXVI  
72in x 36in | 183cm x 91cm | Acrylic on Canvas



Transposed XX  
72in x 48in | 183cm x 122cm | Acrylic on Linen Canvas

# A Chasm In Time

this lockdown has had a profound effect on how we perceive time and it's worth in life.

the isolation proves that time is in fact relative.

the same 24 hours have, on some days, gone by in a blink.

being unusually short.

on other days, they have pricked and gnawed at us, reminding us of every second that exists in every minute of the hour.

being freakishly never ending.

these days have proven that time can split into Chasms, of glitters or shadows, of carefreeness or reflection, of consumption or abstinence.

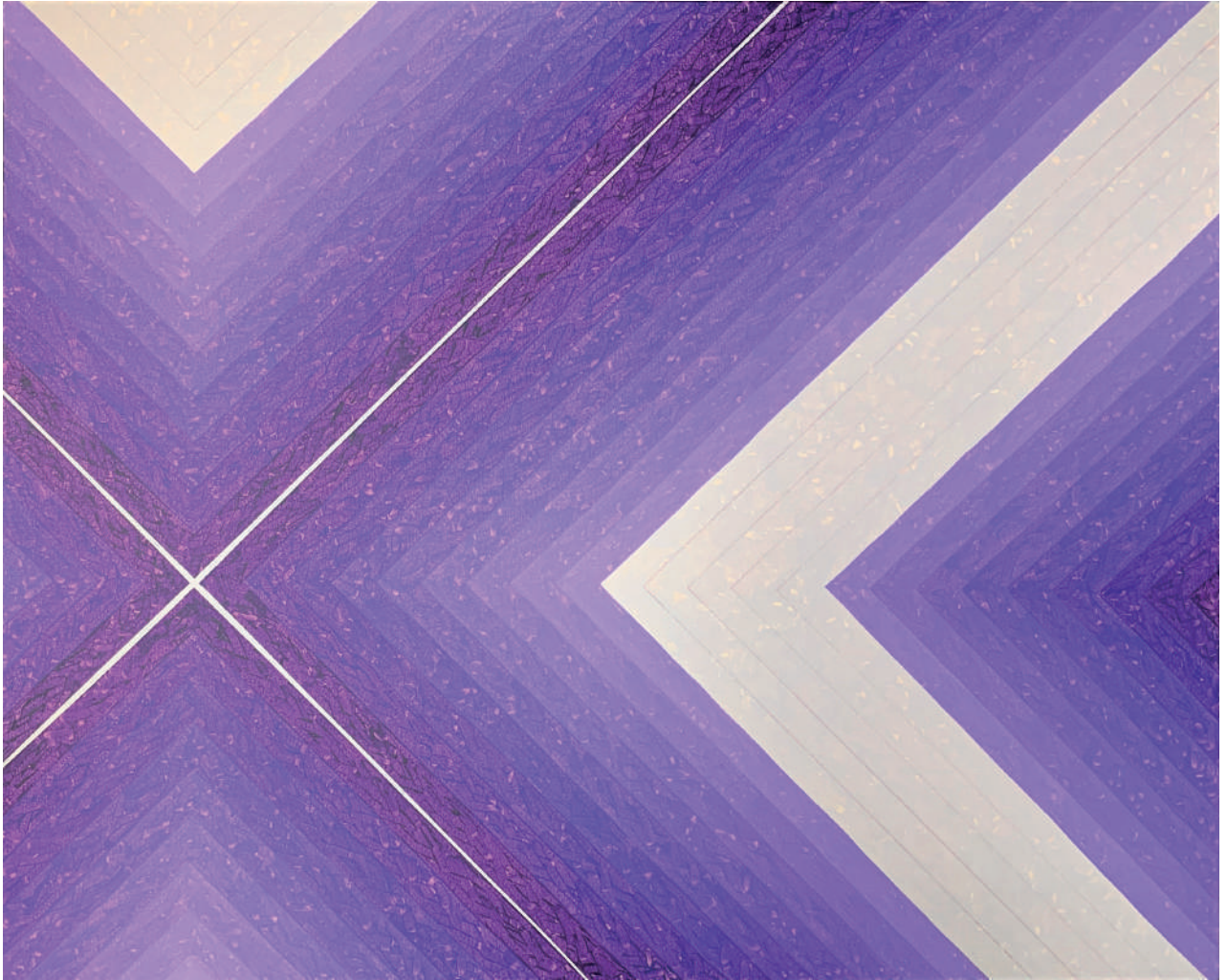
despite the polarity of time, this is all we have or we don't.



A Chasm In Time XIV  
48in x 84in | 122cm x 213cm | Acrylic on Linen Canvas



A Chasm In Time XV  
42in x 72in | 107cm x 183cm | Acrylic on Linen Canvas



A Chasm In Time XI  
48in x 60in | 122cm x 152cm | Mix Media on Linen Canvas

# Transcendance

the ebbing and flowing of rhythm  
the one that transcends all boundaries  
beyond the point of origin  
creating peripheral ripples of  
love and lust  
hungrily encapsulating the very  
space it began from  
transcending in directions  
cuddling the seed  
the meeting point of the  
creator and creation  
the very source of the rhythm  
the very cradle of creativity



Transcendence VIII  
84in x 72in | 213cm x 183cm | Acrylic on Linen Canvas



## **SOLO SHOWS**

Visual Chronologies & Discursive Binaries - April 2023, Nehru Centre Art Gallery, Mumbai

Relational Relevance - August 2022, Jehangir Art Gallery, Mumbai.

Trance of Beauty - January 2016, Sheraton, Saket, New Delhi, India

Windmills of Hope - May 2011, Kamalnayan Bajaj Art Gallery, Bajaj Bhavan, Mumbai

Faces, Mind & Body - June 2008, Kamalnayan Bajaj Art Gallery, Bajaj Bhavan, Mumbai

## **AWARDS AND RECOGNITION**

Women of Power in Arts and Crafts, Billennium Divas 2022

Emerging Artist 40 over 40 list, ShethepeopleTV.com 2021

Emerging Art for contribution in Art, Build India Award 2015

## **CHARITY EXHIBITIONS**

Exhibition 'Lightbulb Memoirs' at Academy of Fine Arts and Literature - New Delhi India.

Proceeds of this exhibition went towards building a care-home for children and adults infected with HIV/AIDS.

## INTERNATIONAL EXHIBITIONS

(un)fair Milano, April 2022, Superstudio Maxi, Milan, Italy

World Art Dubai, March 2022, World Trade Centre, Dubai, UAE

World Art Dubai, April 2021, World Trade Centre, Dubai, UAE

World Art Dubai, October 2020, World Trade Centre, Dubai, UAE

Exhibition '2 artists from India', July-August 2020, Galerie Waarkunst, Hoofdweg, Netherlands

AAF Milan, February 2020, Superstudio Più, Milan, Italy

AAF Amsterdam, November 2019, Kromhouthal, Amsterdam, Netherlands

AAF Milan, January 2019, Superstudio Più, Milan, Italy

World Art Dubai, April 2018, World Trade Centre, Dubai, UAE

World Art Dubai, April 2017, World Trade Centre, Dubai, UAE

11th Indian Art Exhibition, January 2011, National Art Gallery, Jakarta, Indonesia

Exhibited at GALLERY 44, August 2009. Paris, France

## PROFESSIONAL ART SHOWS

ReachOut Art Walk 2022, Oct 2022, ReachOut Multi Utility Gallery, Nashik

India Art Festival 2020, Jan 2020, Nehru Art Centre, Mumbai

India Art Festival 2019, Nov 2019, Thyagraja Hall, New Delhi

India Art Festival 2019, Jan 2019, Nehru Art Centre, Mumbai

India Art Festival 2018, Nov 2018, Thyagraja Hall, New Delhi

India Art Festival 2018, Feb 2018, Nehru Art Centre, Mumbai

India Art Festival 2017, Art: Dalliance (A group Show), Nov 2017, Thyagraja Hall, New Delhi

Cymroza Art Gallery, March 2017, Breach Candy, Mumbai

“The Art Enclave”, Index 2016, October 2016, Goregaon, Mumbai

Spectrum, Contemporary Artists exhibition, April 2016, West 10 Gallery, Navi Mumbai.

India Exhibition of Abstract and Conceptual Art, Sublime Galleria, Bangalore.

Colours of Spring 5 - 2015, Art Gate Gallery, Churchgate, Mumbai

“The Art Enclave”, Index 2014, October 2014, Bandra, Mumbai

Wassup Andheri - A Grand Art and Entertainment festival, March 2012, Andheri, Mumbai

Stree 2012-Art Show of Women's Day, March 2012, Art Mall Art Gallery, New Delhi

AWESOME 4 - 2011, Jehangir Art Gallery, Kala Ghoda, Mumbai

Vayam Group Show - 2011, Pritamlal Dua Art Gallery, Indore

## IN ADDITION TO ART

21+ years of work experience in Paintings, Writing, Marketing, Corporate Communications and Entrepreneurship

## AS AN AUTHOR

Srushti's first Contemporary Romance Fiction Novel was published in February 2020 titled - Of Unspoken Words and Half Said Truth by Rumour Publications.

## EDUCATION

- IKON Leadership Program, ISB Hyderabad 2021-22
- Senior Management Program, IIM - Ahmedabad, 2020 - 21
- Post Graduate Certificate in Indian Aesthetics Field Of Study Art & Aesthetics, Jnanapravaha Mumbai, 2017
- BFA (Paintings), Indira Kala Sangit Vishwavidyalaya, Khairagarh, Indore, 2001



ITEMMOM



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