

# C. DOUGLAS

Mixed Media : Works on Paper  
1991-92



Untitled - 1992

80 x 127 cms

## Sakshi Gallery

Synergy Art Foundation Ltd.

'Raaj Mahal', 33, Altamount Road, Bombay-400 026.

11, Khader Nawaz Khan Road, Madras-600 006.

Phone: 474122 Telex: 041-7905 SGY IN.

'The Presidency', No. 82 (Old No. 1), St. Marks Road,  
Bangalore-560 001. Phone: 216293

The sketch that one starts with while making a picture serves to mark out the 'free' and the 'occupied' areas on the picture surface. The drawing establishes the differentiation and determines the lay out of the work. Workmanship then consists of crafting the graded stretches towards a total effect which stays on finally as the picture. This description of the art of picture making is, no doubt, strongly classical. It is thus the exceptional painter who is expressive with his craftsmanship, rather than with the rhetoric which it could incidentally give rise to.

In the series of drawings with which Douglas started nearly twenty-five years ago he tried to bring out a personal legend, one of extraordinary involvement and affliction. He drew with a lyrical, but strangely moving line and imaged it as something wholly unadorned, naked and unmitigated. Such has been the self-hood and subject that had suffered conception and birth in every picture he had made since then.

In the major series of paintings after the drawings, Douglas attempted to abstract it out. He broke up and straightened the line which held his image and reworked the whole surface into checkered patterns of sharply edged colour. The sorrow and the disconnection that he had announced in his drawings stood about refined into fine feeling, rarified over an idealised state of consciousness and vision. The workmanship that had brought this about stood married to the effect and was entirely expressive of it.

But when such states of the spirit get set into an attitude or principle, it starts to stand apart, no more part of the exigency which had called it forth. Douglas' drawing turned structural and schematic for this reason, too pure and straight to be touched by the expressive textures of his soiled colour. The

close finish which he had cultivated in order to hold back the oddity of his self-hood, had to be broken through if his mind was to persist with its eccentric introspections.

He made the move when in a sudden sharpening of sensitivity, Douglas softened the sharp edges and drew out the stiff structuring. That brought up the line of his earlier drawing, but disconnectedly this time, finely spread and in a variety of stresses. His colour spread through in delicate tones and transparencies, thickening and darkening where the content began to weigh. Altogether, it showed rare craftsmanship at work, clearing his mind of all frameworks and making it out freshly in personally vouched susceptibilities.

That achievement in mid-career established Douglas as a painter of exceptional spirit and perspicacity. The pictures of mysterious feeling which at this stage he could craft in exquisite detail brought him renown. But the suspense was wearing thin as it worked on and the artist was starting to see through the mute appearances. It was mythification, a presence of some power, which spirits one away and finally confounds; not unlike the idealisation that he had fought off earlier. Douglas searched it out at this stage in a brief burst of drawing and it left nothing for sure except the skill and the refinement.

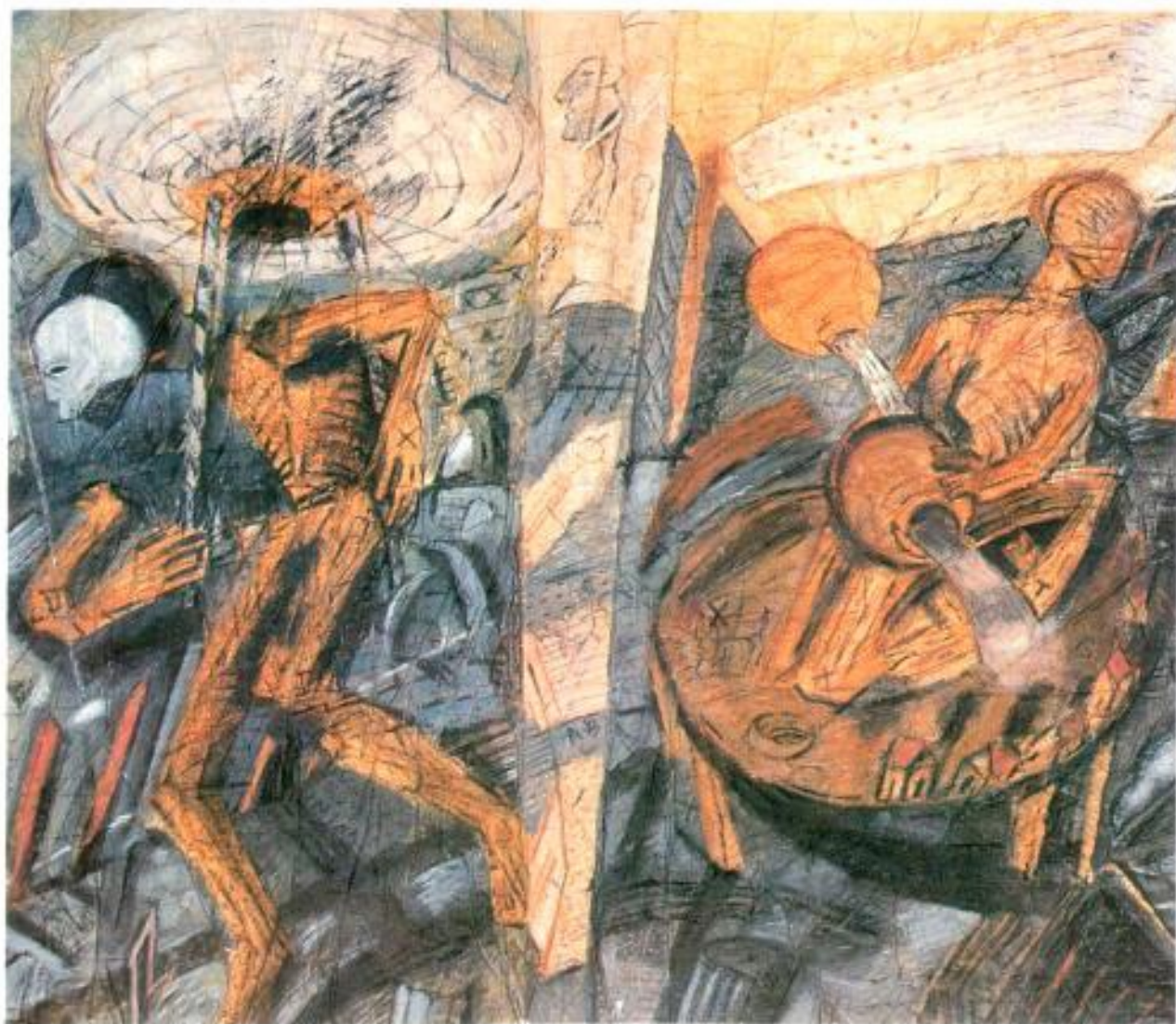
Currently Douglas seeks fresh exposure. One cannot go back on ones skills and sensitivity, and one need not. Precisely these have been expressive of the painter more than anything he might have done or undone with them. It is the reality which is created with it and the familiarity that it submits to that has to be passed through to keep clear and stay simple-hearted. One would be clearer to oneself, Douglas argues in his current work, in the open language of uncompleted recollections

and snatches of thought that occur. That leaves his craftsmanship to battle in these pictures with its own strengths and subtleties.

Douglas' arguments in his current series are acutely technical. It cannot be otherwise when the issue in it is technique itself. Any principled or poetic approach to the art of picture-making results inevitably in dissimulations that divert the artist from what his mind is weighed with. But neither can he clear his mind of such stratagems altogether because nothing can take shape without some kind of devising.

Taking the situation truthfully in, Douglas works on his technique, getting it to yield on its own and to acquiesce as it works on. It now interrupts itself as it goes on, and gives in to much that it might have otherwise crossed out or passed over. From being breathlessly on edge, Douglas turns conversational in these pictures, even awkwardly so at times. That probably is to feel poignantly for the lone, odd being which had been his from the beginning and through the transformations so far.

JOSEF JAMES



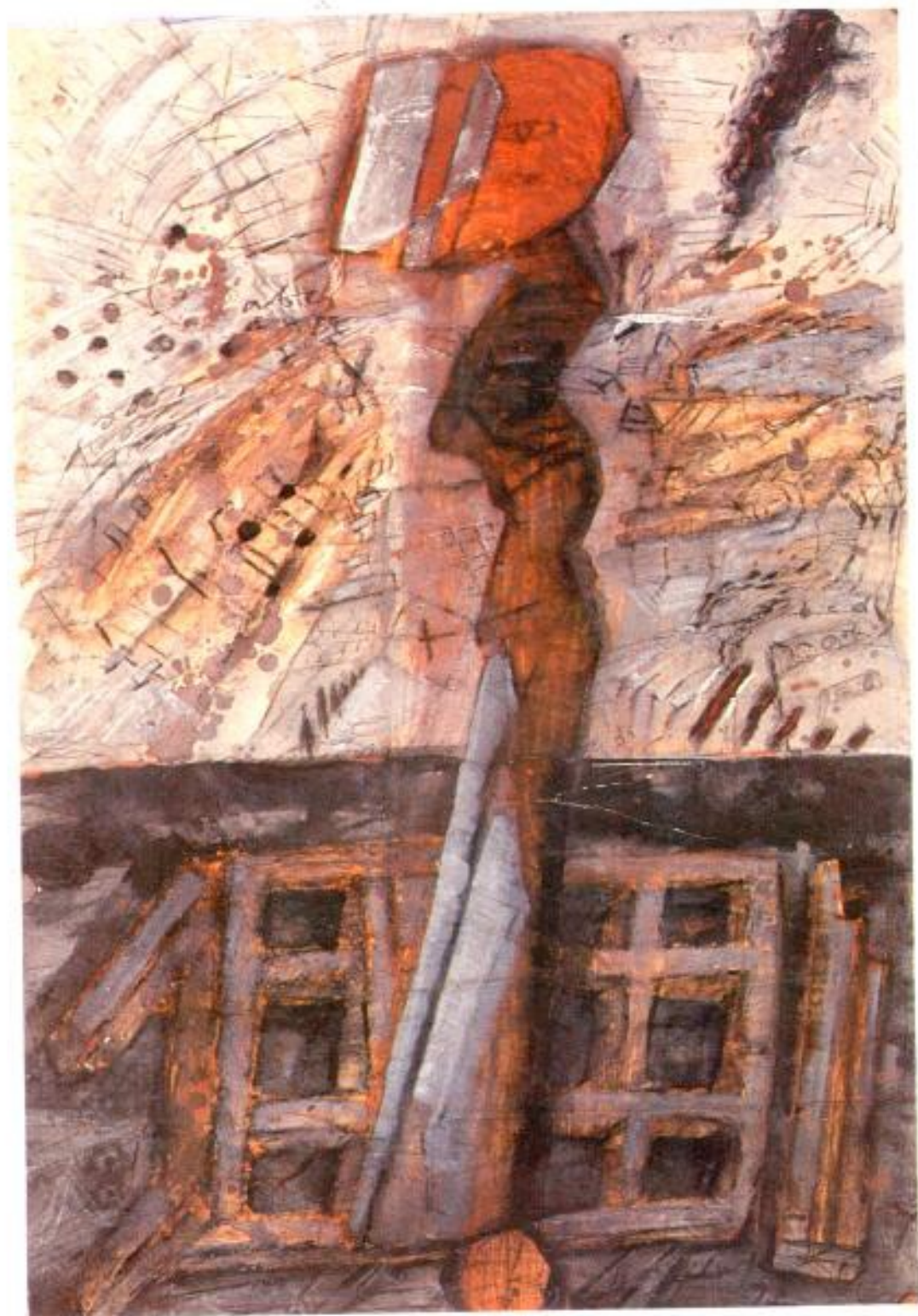
*Untitled - 1992*

122 x 105 cms.



Untitled - 1992

78 x 104 cms.



Untitled - 1992

52 x 107 cms.

## C. DOUGLAS

- 1951 Born, Kerala  
1976 Diploma in Painting, Government College of Arts & Crafts, Madras  
1981-88 Lived and worked in West Germany  
Presently living & working in Cholamandal

## EXHIBITIONS

### SOLO

- 1986 European Patent Art Gallery, Munich, Germany  
1982 Bayerischer Verins Bank, Garmish, Germany  
1981 Gallerie am horwath house, Murnav, Germany

### GROUP

- 1991 Rimbaud '91—Madras & Besançon, France—by Alliance Francaise De Madras  
1991 9 Indian Contemporary Artists—Gemeinde Museum, Arnhem, Amsterdam  
1990 Bharat Bhavan Biennale  
3 Indian Artists, European Art Gallery, Munich  
'Touchstone'—Sakshi Gallery, Madras & Bangalore  
1984-88 Munich Artists at Rathouse, Exhibition of the Professional Artists, Grosse Kunst Ausstellung, Munich, Germany  
1986 International Art from Munich Studios, Germany

## AWARDS

- 1992 National Award, Lalit Kala Akademi, New Delhi  
1991-93 Government of India Cultural Fellowship  
1990 Bharat Bhavan Biennale, Bhopal: Award  
1990 Madras Lalit Kala Akademi Award  
1989 Lalit Kala Akademi Research Grant  
1980 Madras Lalit Kala Akademi Award

## COLLECTIONS

- National Gallery of Modern Art, New Delhi  
Lalit Kala Akademi, New Delhi & Kerala  
Contemporary Art Museum, Ernakulam, Kerala  
Government Museum of Contemporary Art, Madras  
European Patent Art Munich  
Sakshi Gallery, Madras  
Lotus Gallery, Amsterdam  
In many private collections in India and abroad

