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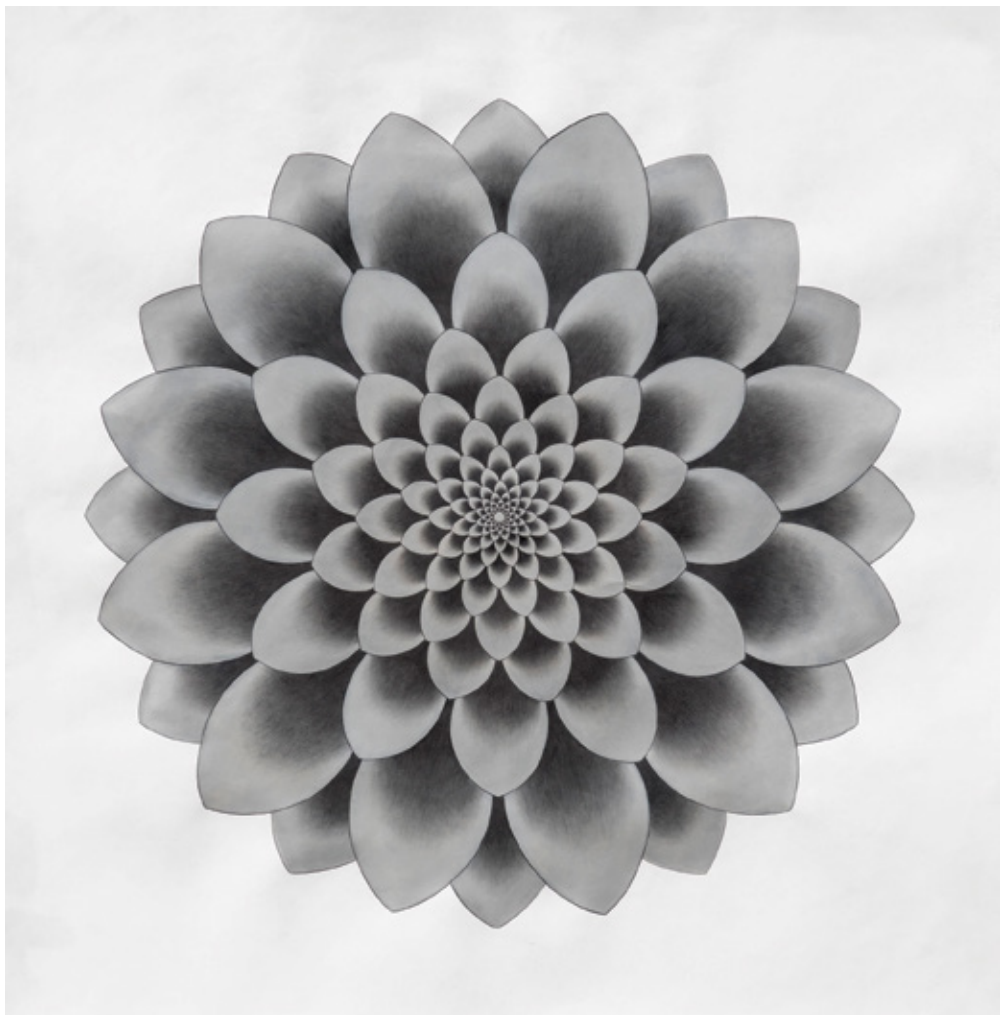


OLIVIA FRASER
THE LOTUS WITHIN

6—26 JUNE 2018

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The Lotus Within

Late in *The Gheranda Samhita*, an early eighteenth - century Sanskrit yoga treatise, advice is given concerning visualisation; the practice of envisaging landscapes in order to enhance the profundity of meditation achieved by the yogi:

The yogi should visualize a sublime ocean of nectar in his heart, with an island of jewels in its middle whose sand is made of gemstones. In every direction there are kadamba trees with abundant flowers...where the scents of malati, mallika, jati and sthalapadma flowers perfume every quarter... Bees and cuckoos buzz and call there.

The yogi should visualise a lotus attached to the pericarp of the great thousand-petalled lotus. It is white, luminous and has twelve seed syllables: *ha, sa, ksba, ma, la, va, ra, yum, ha, sa, kba*, and *phrem*, in that order.

These extraordinary passages are, clearly, painterly in their way of seeing. Their pristinized language, and what we might now call the hyper-realism of the attention they practise (the impossible noticing of *every* scent, *every* sound, *every* syllable), summons glinting dreamscapes into being. More precisely, their imagery and technique also closely echo the Indian miniature tradition of art from the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, with its lapidary investment in both the luminous and the numinous as they manifest in the living world.

Olivia Fraser's remarkable recent work, much of it gathered here, grows out of her deep engagement with both golden - age Indian miniaturism, and ancient forms of hatha yoga to which visualisation is central. Her skills in both of these traditions are formidable: she has spent years as an apprentice to the miniaturist masters, learning the "many layers and regulations" that guide the making of this art, and years exploring the literature and techniques of yoga.

The resulting art does not only imagine landscapes, it contains landscapes. Elements of place itself have been crushed, mixed and polished into these paintings: white chalk from the cliffs at Jaipur, nuts and sap gathered from trees, malachite ground to a glowing green powder. As the animals of Lascaux were present in the paint before they were painted on the chamber - walls (there as 'bone - black' and binding fat), so the more - than - human world is present in Fraser's art before it is even laid down.

These are 'visionary' works in the non - trivial sense of that word. They are born in the mind's eye of the artist, and they re - focus the mind's eye of the viewer. On first seeing 'The Scent of The Lotus II', in which a swarm of golden bees radiate in towards a central golden lotus blossom, I found myself drawn - no, *pulled* - into the image by its great centripetal force, and I also seemed to hear or feel, at some deep internal level, the vibration of the bees' wings as they move with order and urgency to their goal. 'On hearing the sound of a bee from within,' declares *The Gheranda Samhita*, 'lead the mind there.'

Pinwheels and starbursts, constellations and soul - maps, slow unfurlings and rich pulsations: Fraser's work somehow possesses at once a calm grace and a hallucinatory intensity. She practices what Glenn Lowry, director of the Museum of Modern Art in New York, has called "elaboration by simplification...they are no longer details magnified but details transformed". The result is a hugely powerful body of work that - to quote again from *The Gheranda Samhita* - "puts the self in space and space in the self."

—Robert Macfarlane

The paintings in this show have developed out of a deep and abiding interest in yoga and my practice of it. With yoga's current global popularity as a fitness regime and a means towards a perfect body, it is easy to forget its ancient historical roots in India based on a far more wide - ranging spiritual and philosophical practice and meaning.

The word yoga comes from the Sanskrit term meaning 'union' and is etymologically linked to the English word 'yoke'. It is about connecting the mind, body and soul and harnessing the senses in an ever - flowing movement towards liberation, or the Absolute, which in yogic philosophy lies as much within the body as without. One of the pathways to achieving this is meditation and within that the practice of visualization using images from landscape, in particular lotuses, and linking them with the metaphysical. This is partly to shut out everyday thoughts and emotions, but also partly as an aid in themselves to propelling one's inner focus forwards and upwards. This results in a clarity and peace far removed from the distractions and stresses of the everyday world.

In Indian art there is a tradition of assisting yoga practitioners to achieve this by providing what are in effect visual roadmaps to spiritual enlightenment. These take many different forms, ranging from mandalas and yantras, which are believed to store and generate positive energies, to maps of the Subtle Body, which represent the idea of the body as a microcosm of the universe. Inspired by this, I have painted a form of spiritual roadmap, Jambudvipa: Map for Lost Souls - and during the course of the show there is a visual, almost narrative development of the pathway towards enlightenment using the lotus within as the driving force and moving from ideas associated with gross meditation to the more profound subtle and luminous meditation and ultimately to creation.

I have drawn on tradition in a variety of ways all of which are linked to the symbol of the lotus as the archetypal icon of yoga used as a tool for visualization with its association with perfection, renunciation and spiritual growth. In different paintings I pull the lotus apart, deconstructing it,

iterating it, expanding and contracting it, unravelling it, isolating it into icons both large and small, exploring its association with colour and with the senses and its connection to the ground and the cosmos and to Indian philosophy and poetry. I am concerned with inner landscapes rather than external ones, so the majority of my works are painted or enclosed within a square format reflecting the idea of a mandala with its associations of energized space and meditation.

I feel there is a natural affinity between a traditional Indian artistic aesthetic, whether it be Tantric Art or miniature painting, and Western ideas of Minimalism, Op Art and Geometric Abstraction. All explore essence, sensation and perception. I have sought to combine these perspectives by focusing in on the iterative, pairing it down to the minimal and ultimately striving to reach for an essence while also pursuing the idea of movement which is innate in the texts and practices of yoga.

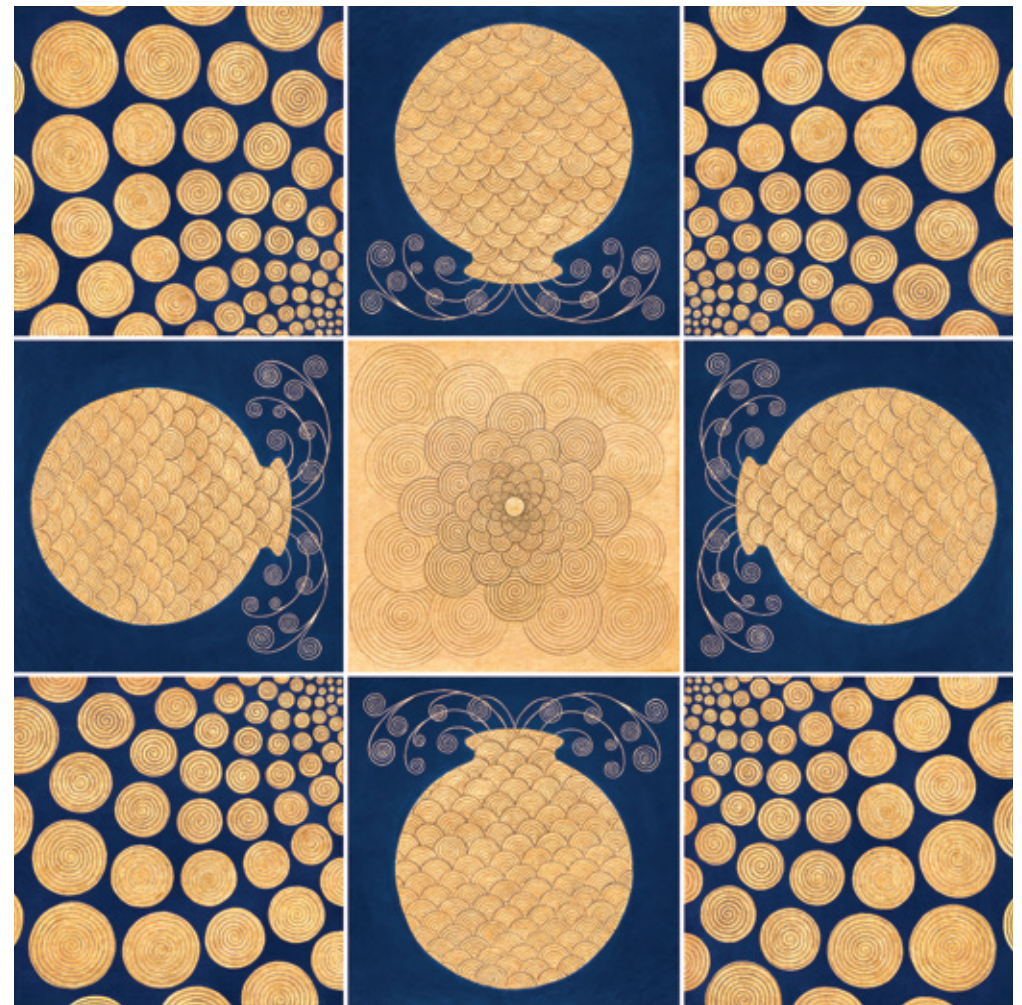
In an ever accelerating world bent on accentuating our differences, I feel that this slow art form, with its hand - made materials and its traditional process, and my subject matter of yoga provide an inspiring antidote emphasizing as it does the importance of slowing down and connecting, of being present in the moment.

— **Olivia Fraser, May 2018**

John Berger writes: “to emigrate is always to dismantle the Centre of the world, and so to move into a lost, disoriented one of fragments.”

Perhaps it has been particularly the idea of the hostile landscape, or rather seascape, that must be traversed by those searching for peace and better lives that has influenced me to create *Jambudvipa: Map for Lost Souls*. In Jain, Buddhist and Hindu Cosmology, Jambudvipa (The Rose Apple Tree Island) is the island or continent of the terrestrial world where ordinary human beings live. Surrounded by the Lavanasamudra or salty ocean whose swirling movement is regulated by the 4 tides from the 4 directions, from the North, South, East & West (traditionally depicted as the 4 patalas or pots), Jambudvipa is the only place where one can achieve enlightenment and as such provides an opportunity for salvation, for peace, for relief.

Drawing on tradition, I have created a cosmological map, as a form of abstract yantra, or sacred energized meditational space, where the central bindu, Jambudvipa, is the focal point surrounded by the frothing, fragmenting, iterating waves of the salty ocean. Here I am interested in pairing down, pulling apart and exploring traditional imagery, sacred form and colour. In an age so frequently blighted by tragedy and horror without, this is a map to seek consolation and peace within.



1. *Jambudvipa: Map for Lost Souls*, 2017

Stone pigments, Arabic gum and
gold leaf on handmade Sanganer paper
Consists of 9 individual panels

27.9 x 27.9 cm (11 x 11 in) each
91.5 x 91.5 cm (36 x 36 in) total

Traditional Indian miniature painting is dominated by images of human interaction, whether of the gods, of rulers, of holy men or just ordinary folk. As BN Goswamy writes about landscape, “painters constantly refer[s] to nature, drawing upon its details to echo human emotions - branches drooping, streams in flood, trees blossom, rocks piled one upon another, and the like - but seldom, if ever, does nature come to occupy the foreground”. I am interested in making nature, this “background”, the subject matter of my work exploring the traditional vocabulary of landscape - trees, flowers, sky, water, mountains etc. and investigating its ability in itself to communicate a sense of ‘rasa’ or sentiment, flavour so central to this tradition.

In this painting I wished to explore the feeling of being up in the mountains. The Himalayas have many ancient pilgrimage ways and I have journeyed up a few of these sacred mountains where the gods, in particular Lord Shiva, are said to reside. Here I have used shape, monochrome colour and the traditional imagery associated with mountainous landscape, deconstructing it and reducing it to its essence, to try and convey this feeling of giddiness/distance/vertigo within a sacred context. The petals are abstracted lotus petals - with the lotus as the ultimate goal to be reached.

I have been inspired by Malevich’s black and white squares and I am intrigued by his politics of Suprematism with its concentration on the supremacy of pure artistic feeling above all visual references and depictions. I am, however, interested in relating this universal imagery back to its Eastern roots with archetypal shapes - in this case the square - being related to the Tantric concept of the Earth within the 5 Elements and seeing how it can be used to communicate between East and West.



2. *Red Himalaya, 2015*

Stone pigments and Arabic gum
on handmade Sangner paper
68,5 x 68,5 cm (27 x 27 in)

The Lotus flower has ancient sacred associations within the art of India. As a flower that blooms out of the mud, it is associated with purity, perfection, resurrection and spiritual growth.

The shift in scale and minimalist isolation of the lotus floating within a field of intense blue is an attempt to test the abilities of the image to expand its meaning and become confrontational. This is a painting about iconography and texture and here I have contrasted flat plains of colour with minute brushstrokes made with a single-haired squirrel brush for the *prataj* or shading work. It is a form of shading particular to the Indian miniature painting tradition and involves rhythmic, slow, deliberate brushstrokes that feel almost meditative in their intensity and concentration.



3. *Lotus*, 2017

Stone pigments and Arabic gum
on handmade Sanganeer paper
91.4 x 73.7 cm (36 x 29 in)



This group arose from my interest in yoga and the visualizations of lotus chakras used in meditation.

The word yoga is related to the English word “yoke” and within Indian yogic tradition the practice of meditation is rooted in yoking visualizations mainly from landscape, in particular lotuses - and linking them with the metaphysical. There is a meditational ‘journey’ to be undertaken with the lotus used as a visual aid or tool to focus on in order to reach the absolute. Lotuses have their association with purity, spirituality and perfection partly because they are conceived as wonders of nature growing, as they do, out of murky waters.

In Indian philosophy there is the idea of the macrocosm within the microcosm - of the world within the body - with, in this instance, the lotus providing a roadmap to focus on up through the body to beyond.

Ancient India used numbers to organise information about and access an understanding of creation and of the divine. Even today numbers still have huge symbolic potency and significance particularly in their association with the sacred. Hence in these works there are 7 lotus chakras - all with a different number of petals - with the final 7th lotus representing the *sahasrara* or 1000 petalled lotus associated with liberation. Although the chakras are usually allocated their own individual colours, I have chosen to emphasize the sacred, ritual aspect to the practice of meditation by using gold leaf for them all. The malachite circle, while evidently connected to the physical idea of a lotus leaf, has metaphysical connotations within an Indian context as halos for emperors and maharajas are frequently depicted this colour. Also, the archetypal shapes of the circle within the square have associations with heaven on earth, sacred geometry and yantras. I have created these works on a large scale testing the form’s capacity to develop its meaning and become confrontational, timeless and iconographic.

4. *The Golden Lotus*, 2017

Stone pigments, Arabic gum and
Gold leaf on handmade Sanganer paper
Consists of 7 individual panels

91.5 x 91.5 cm (36 x 36 in) each
91.5 x 640 cm (36 x 252 in) overall

The red chakra is also known as the *muladhara* or root chakra and is the lowest of the 7 chakras. Located within the perineum area, this chakra is used in meditation as a tool to focus on to connect with the earth and as the source of energy.

I am particularly inspired by this visual aspect to meditation where colours, iconographic shape and visualized movement are essential. Here I deconstruct the root chakra to a single petal and am interested in exploring the idea of the movement of breath as well as the movement paradoxically inherent at the still center of meditation as one's focus rises up through the body. I am interested in the oppositional concepts of movement and stillness which are fundamental to Tantra and the practice of meditation and even to the practice of miniature painting itself. I use the innate rhythmic patterning that you often find used to describe nature in the backgrounds of Indian miniature landscapes but here I deconstruct that rhythm and repetition and make it the subject rather than the background of my painting.

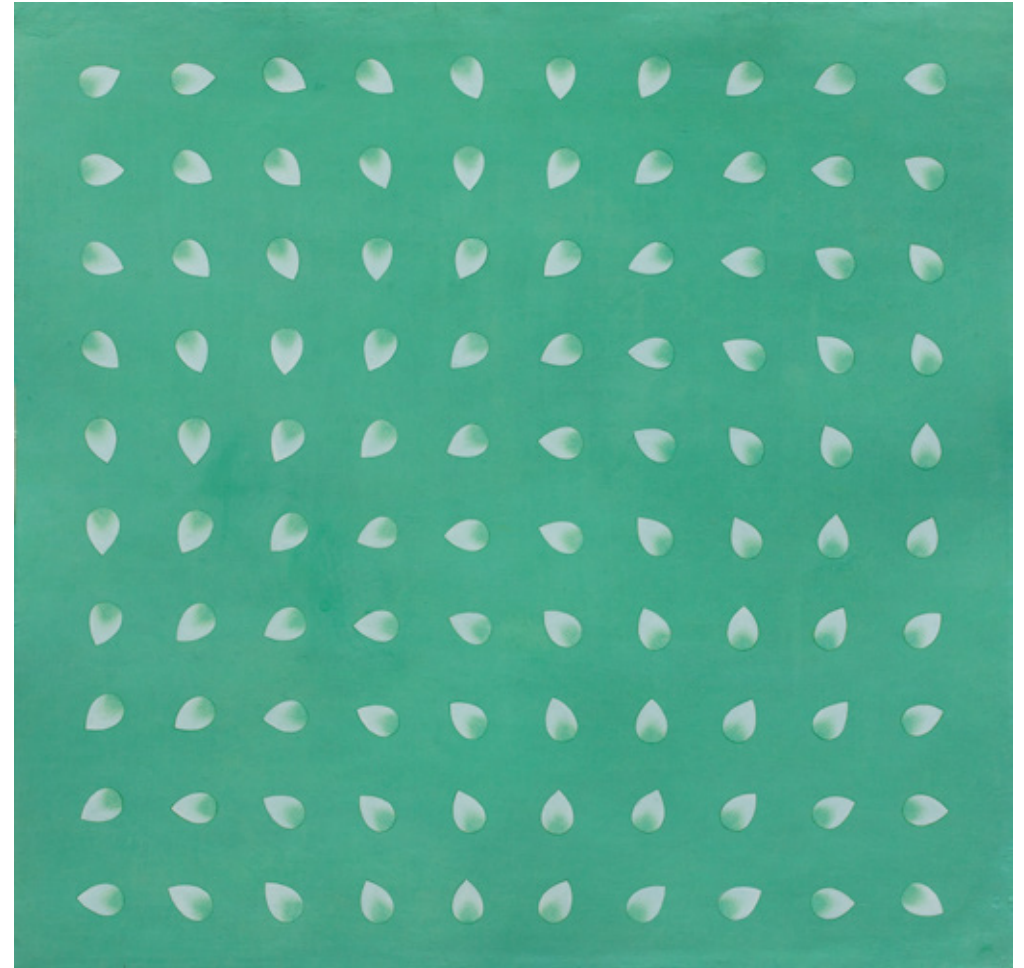


5. *Chakra-I*, 2013

Stone pigments and Arabic gum
on handmade Sangner paper
63,5 x 63,5 cm (25 x 25 in)

The green chakra is known as the *anahat* chakra, meaning the 'unstruck sound'. It is the 4th of the 7 chakras and is located within the heart. Considered a bridge between the upper and lower chakras it is associated with love, joy and compassion.

I am particularly inspired by this visual aspect to meditation where colour, iconographic shape and visualized movement are essential. Here I am deconstructing the heart chakra, using crushed malachite, to a single petal and am exploring the idea of the movement of breath and the movement paradoxically inherent at the still centre of meditation as one's focus rises up through the body. I am interested in the oppositional concepts of movement and stillness - which are fundamental to Tantra and the practice of meditation and even the practice of miniature painting itself. I use the innate rhythmic patterning that you often find used to describe nature in the backgrounds of Indian miniature landscapes but here I deconstruct that rhythm and repetition and make it the subject rather than the background of my painting.



6. *Chakra-II*, 2013

Stone pigments and Arabic gum
on handmade Sangner paper
63,5 x 63,5 cm (25 x 25 in)

The garden, an enclosed and cultivated area of landscape that is formalized and acted upon, is fundamental to my work. I take the vocabulary of landscape – trees, flowers; rivers, mountains and sky – and I deconstruct and reduce them to their essence. But I am concerned with inner landscapes rather than the external ones, so the majority of my works are painted or enclosed within a square format reflecting the idea of a mandala with its associations of energized sacred space and meditation.

This painting explores the idea of breath which is fundamental to Hatha yoga and is particularly central to the practice of meditation. Using the image of a lotus as an inner focus you watch or witness the flow of the inwards and outward breath all the while visualizing an opening and shutting lotus.

I am interested in isolating iterative landscape forms from within small miniature painting - like the lotus - and painting them on a much larger scale. As with my other works, this shift in scale and monochromatic reduction in colour tests the form's capacity to develop its meaning and become confrontational, timeless and iconographic.



7. *Breathe*, 2016

Stone pigment and Arabic gum
on handmade Sangner paper
91.5 x 91.5 cm (36 x 36 in)

Just as there is a continuous movement of the breath within yoga there is also breath - control. Some forms of yoga teach that breath - control may be able to bring about yoga's highest aims but in its basic form it is a purification technique.

I was rather intrigued by this extract from an early C18th Sanskrit text called the Gheranda Samhita: "Through breath - control the yogi gets the ability to move in the ether; through breath control diseases are destroyed; through breath control the goddess (Shakti) is awakened; through breath - control the mind enters the supramental state. Bliss arises in the mind and the practitioner of breath - control becomes happy."

In this painting I focus on exploring the idea of stillness, breath and time using the icon of the paired down, closed lotus.



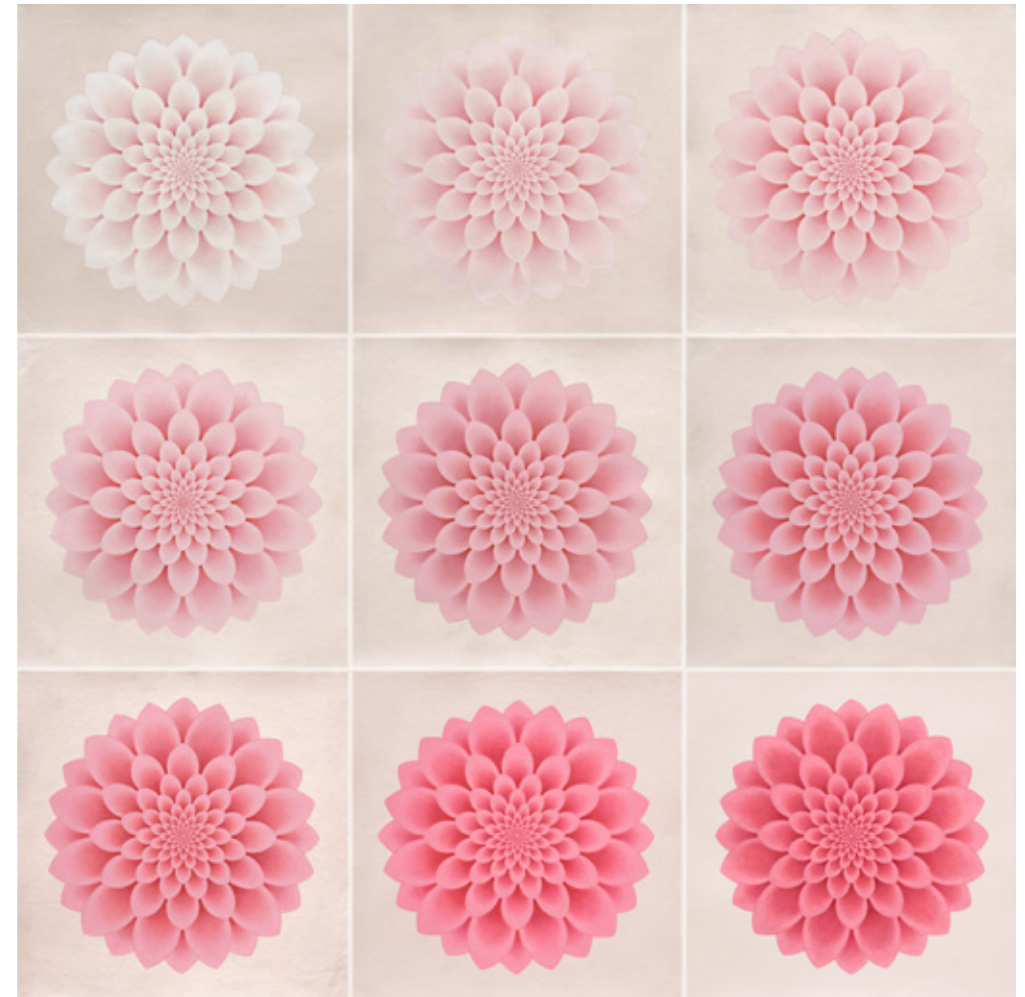
8. *Pause II*, 2016

Stone pigment and Arabic gum
on handmade Sangner paper

71.1 x 91.4 cm (28 x 36 in)

Yoga is central to my work, with meditation, the sensation of meditation, and dhyana (profound visualization and abstract meditation) being at the epicentre.

I have been reading the Gheranda Samhita a recently translated early C18th Sanscrit text on yoga and the sevenfold pathway to perfection. There is a wonderful bit in the section on Dhyana where the yogi is told to visualize an ocean of nectar in the middle of which there is “an island of jewels” on which, amongst groves of kadamba trees, there are seven scented flowers “perfuming every quarter”. Having learnt a very visual form of yoga with colourful visualizations using imagery culled from the garden - flowers, trees, animals etc. used as tools for meditation, I was intrigued and excited to learn about scent also being a focus for meditation. Along with the expected various forms of jasmine the *sthalpadma* flower was one of the seven mentioned perfumed flowers. Translated as “land lotus”, some sources say that it changes colour during the course of the day. Traditional Indian scents are oil based and, when applied to the skin, the perfumes amplify and intensify reflecting the body’s temperature over the course of a day. I am interested in exploring visually the idea of an ever-increasing scent, the essence of a lotus, reflected in an ever increasing saturation of the colour pink



9. *Sthalapadma*, 2017

Stone pigments and Arabic gum on handmade Sanganer paper Consists of 9 individual panels

58.4 x 58.4 cm (23 x 23 in) each.

175.3 x 175.3 cm (69 x 69 in) overall

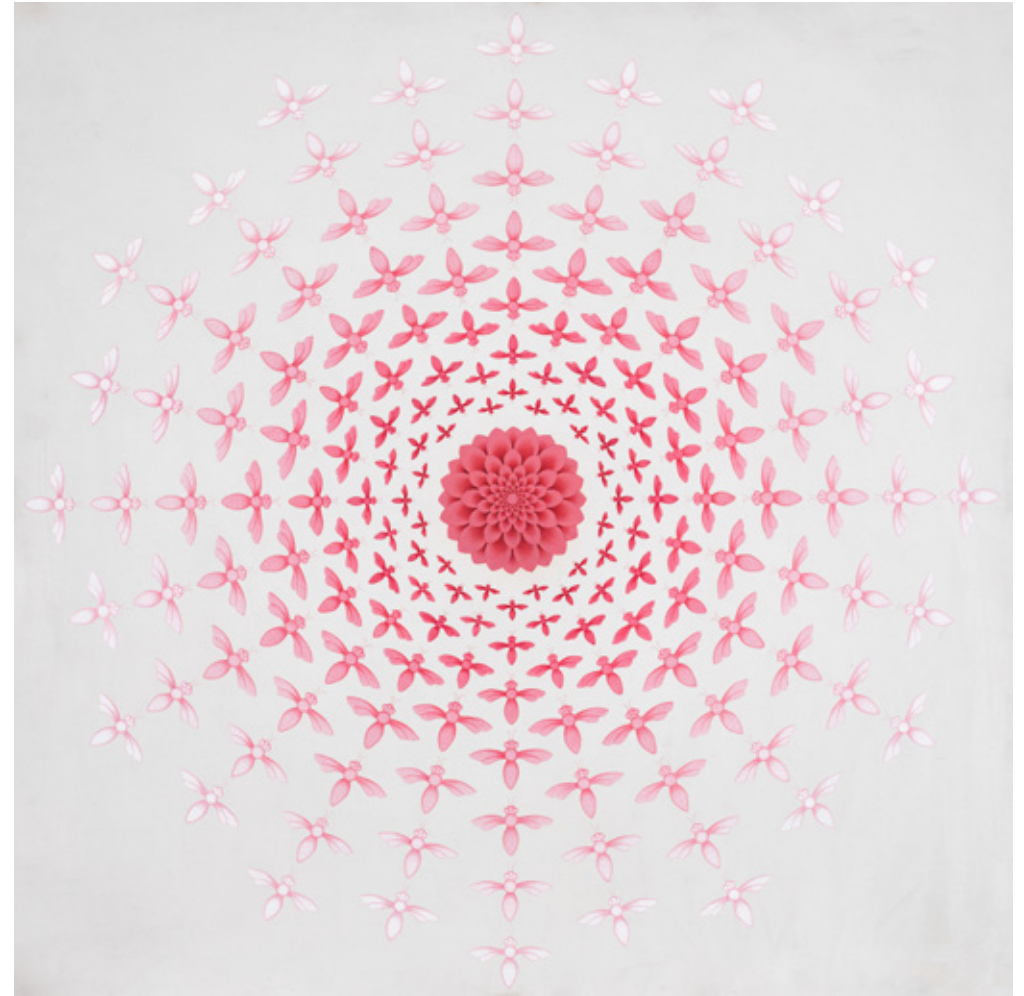
I love the idea that all the senses are harnessed during the course of meditation... including the sense of smell and that of sound. There is a wonderful description in the early C18th Sanskrit text, the Gheranda Samhita, which describes a yogi's visualization:

“In every direction there are Kadamba trees and abundant flowers and it is ringed with a thick Kadambari forest like a stockade, where the scents of malati, mallika, jati, champa, parijata and sthalapadma flowers perfume every quarter”.

But there is also an asana (a yoga posture) which involves the sound of bees:

“Slowly draw in air and perform Bhramarikumbaka, Exhale it very slowly and then the sound of a bee will arise. On hearing the sound of a bee from within, lead the mind there. Samadhi will occur, together with the bliss arising from the realization, ‘I am that’”.

The colours red and white are considered opposites in Tantric art with red representing the female principle and white the male one. I was interested here in trying to merge one colour with the other, the red with the white, and merge one subject with another, the bees with the lotus, to create a union of these opposites and, through iterative patterning to explore the Indian artistic concept of ‘rasa’- of emotion, flavour, essence... of scent.



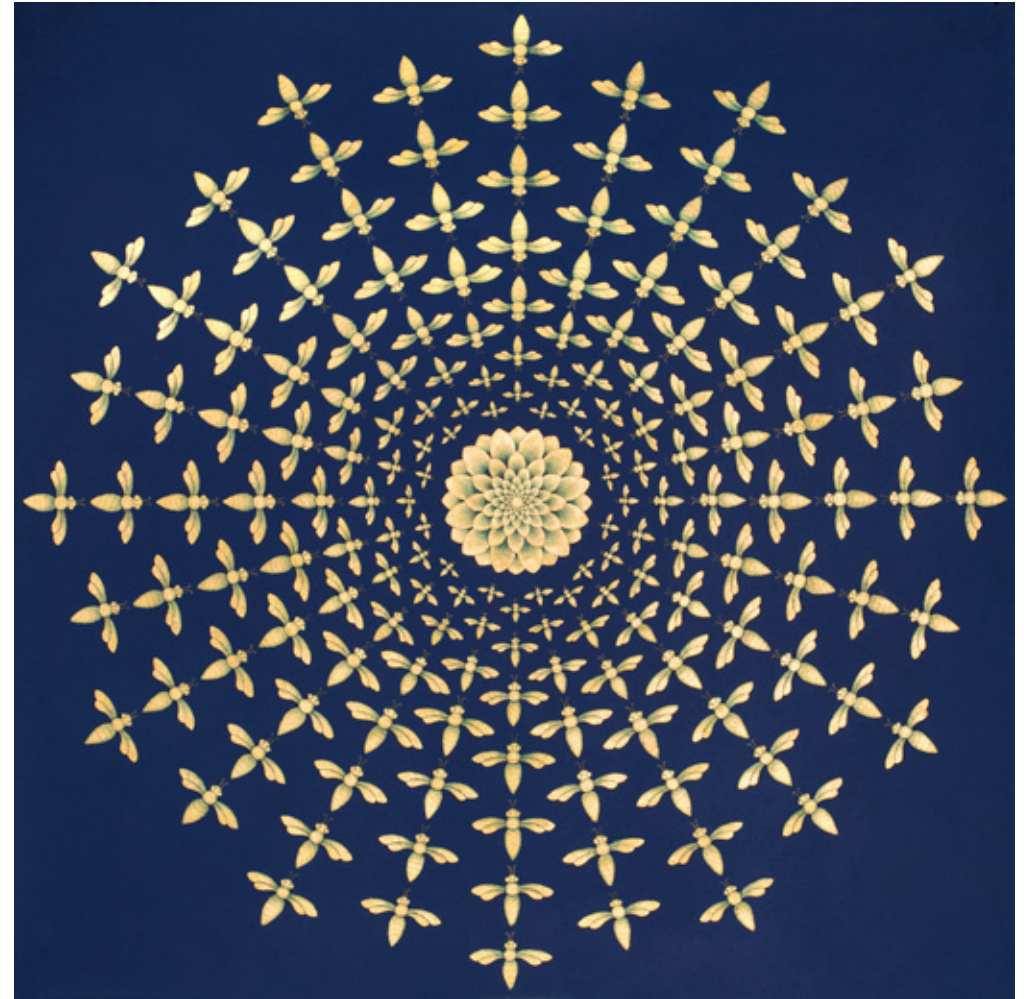
10. *Scent of the Lotus I*, 2018

Stone pigments and Arabic gum
on handmade Sangner paper
81.3 x 81.3 cm (32 x 32 in)

As with *Scent of the Lotus I*, I was interested in trying to merge one subject with another - the bees with the lotus. I wanted to create a union of these opposites and through iterative patterning and paired down monochrome colour I wanted to explore the Indian artistic concept of 'rasa' - of emotion /flavour / essence... of scent.

The colours blue and gold hold universal resonance with the sacred and in India the colour blue is especially associated with Vishnu - particularly in his incarnation as Krishna. Unlike the lotus there is not that much iconography centred around the bee in Indian art. There is, however, a vast amount of poetry, I continue to discover more and more, like this which I found in the *Govinda Lilamrta* since painting these paintings:

“When the Krishna bumblebee approached the lotus flower of Radharani’s face, He became completely maddened by its fragrance, buzzing He continually hovered about it”.



II. *Scent of the Lotus II*, 2018

Stone pigments and Arabic gum on handmade
Sanganer paper

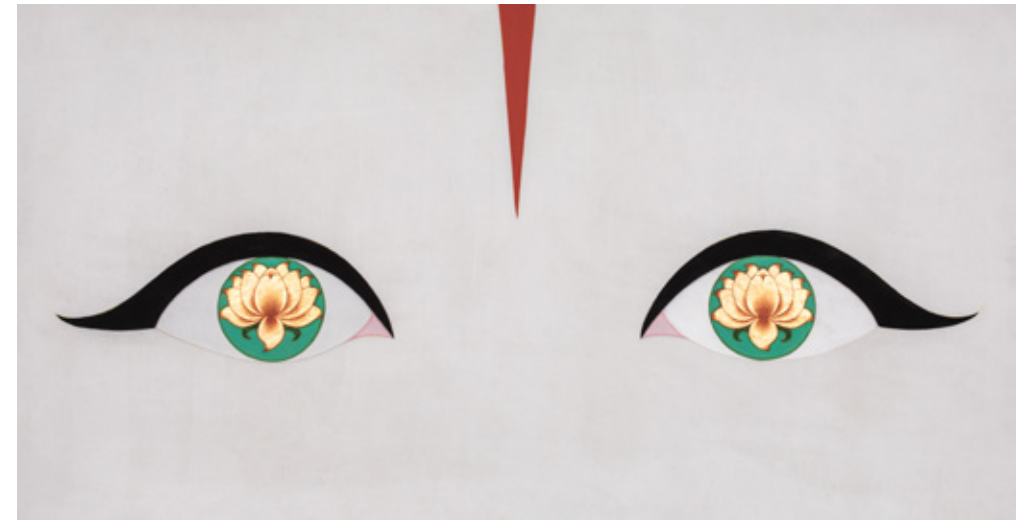
81.3 x 81.3 cm (32 x 32 in)

The word *darshan* means to see and be seen by the deity. It is a fundamental concept within Hindu worship where there is an active engagement between image and viewer. What John Berger calls “the reciprocal nature of vision” is here literally translated to the physical attributes of eyes. In Indian sacred art, eyes, whether in sculpted bronze effigies of gods, painted images of folk deities on cloth temples called *phads*, or in *pichwais* - cloth backdrops painted in the traditional miniature painting style to celebrate Krishna in his child avatar as Srinathji for the Nathdwara temple in Rajasthan, the eyes are always the final element added to the icon. And once there the image is said to transform into the God and devotees can then come, lock eyes with the image and perform *darshan*.

There is a wonderful poem by the 9th Tamil poet, Nammalvar:

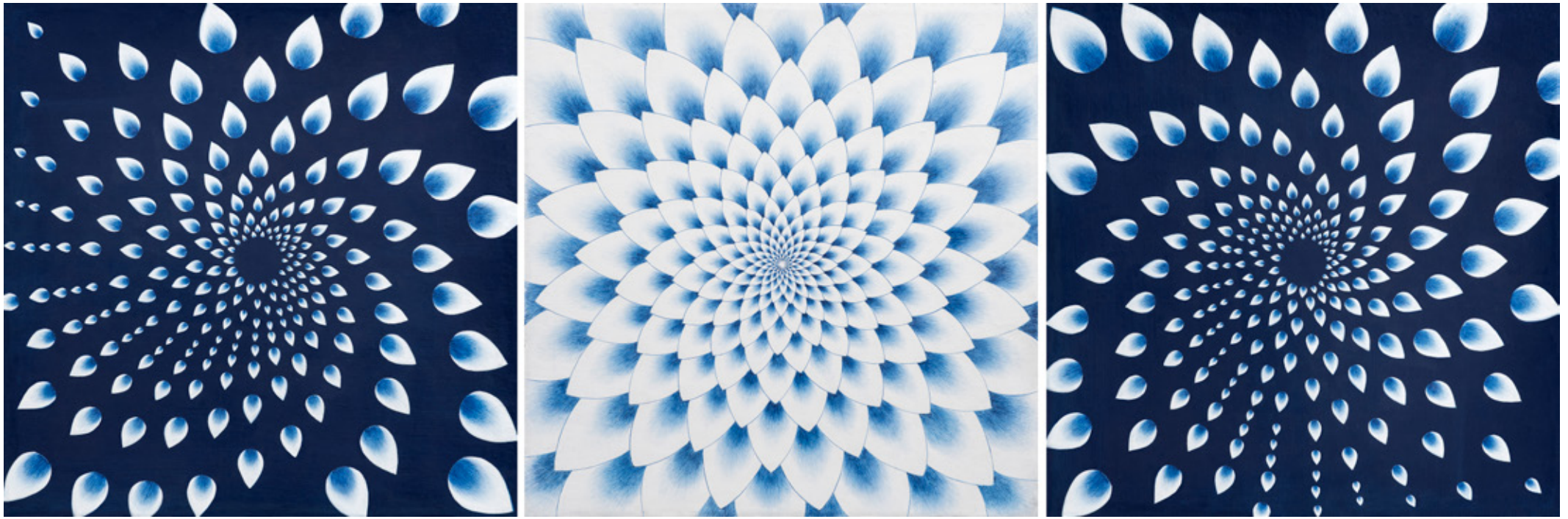
Lotus-eyed
He is in my eyes,
I see him now,
For his eyes cleanse my sight,
And all 5 senses are his bodies

Over the years I keep returning to eyes as I am fascinated by the idea within yoga of a vision within, a whole landscape within, the lotus within.



12. *Darshan II*, 2018

Stone pigments, Arabic gum and
Gold leaf on handmade paper
27.9 x 55.9 cm (11 x 22 in)



13. *Kalachakra*, 2016

Stone pigments and Arabic gum on handmade Sanganer paper Consists of 3 individual panels

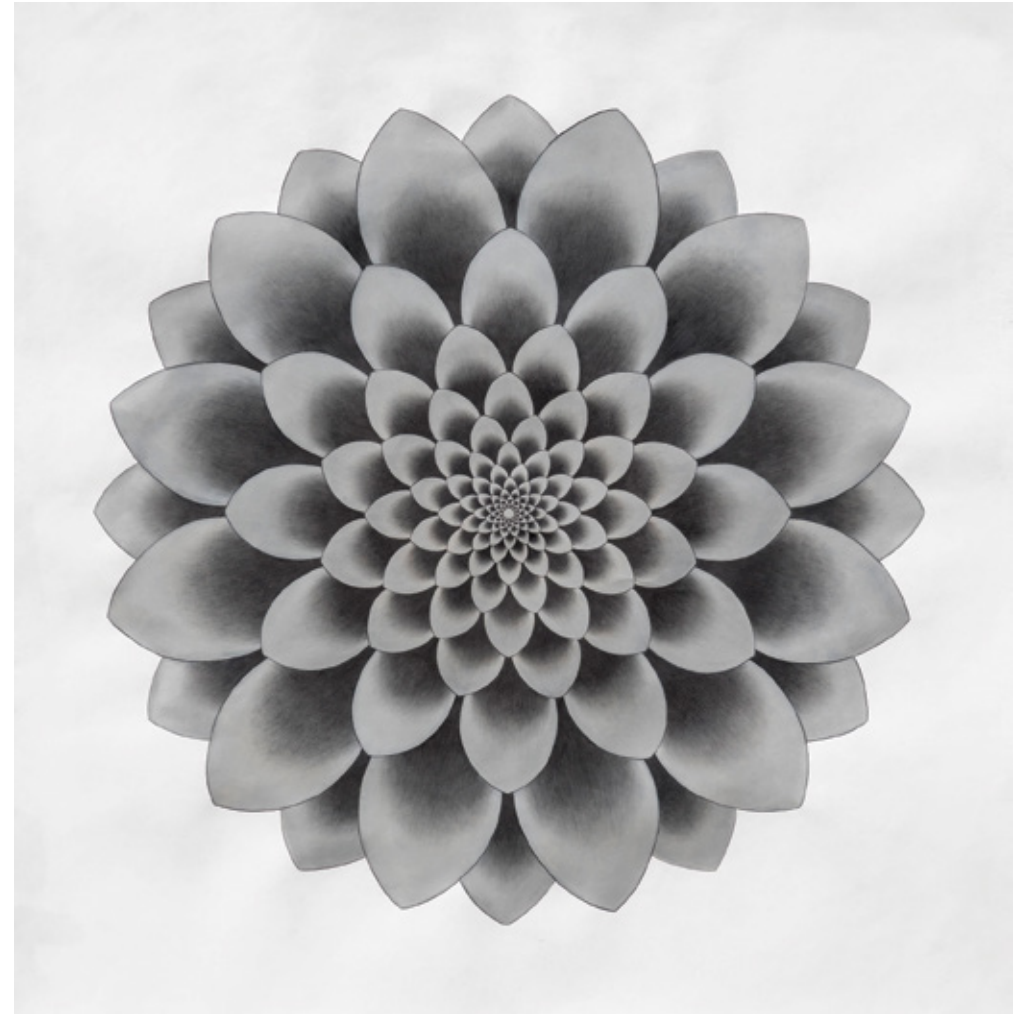
27.9 x 27.9 cm (11 x 11 in) each
27.9 x 83.8 cm (11 x 33 in) total

I have long been interested in exploring the possible meanings and interpretations of various colours and their associations with the sacred. Here I have used a dark indigo, associated with the gods, in particular Vishnu, and white, associated with the first 'man' Purusha, and in Tantra, with the male principle. The idea of the wheel of Time in Hindu philosophy is associated with the three male gods: Brahma, Vishnu and Shiva. In meditation there is both movement and stillness: this reflects, I think, what the concept of the wheel of Time is about. Here I wanted to explore the idea of Time and its revolving nature: from Creation (Brahma), through Preservation (Vishnu) to Destruction (Shiva). I wanted to express the sensation of Time, the sensation of its movement - depicted with spiralling lotus petals turning in one direction (Creation) and in the opposite direction (Destruction) - with both flanking an ever expanding stasis (Preservation) in the central panel. I am interested in exploring visually the essence of a complex philosophical idea.

According to the Gheranda Samhita, an early C18th yoga manual, “There are said to be three types of dhyana (profound abstract meditation): Gross [meditation] is of an image and luminous [meditation] is of light. Subtle dhyana is of a bindi”.

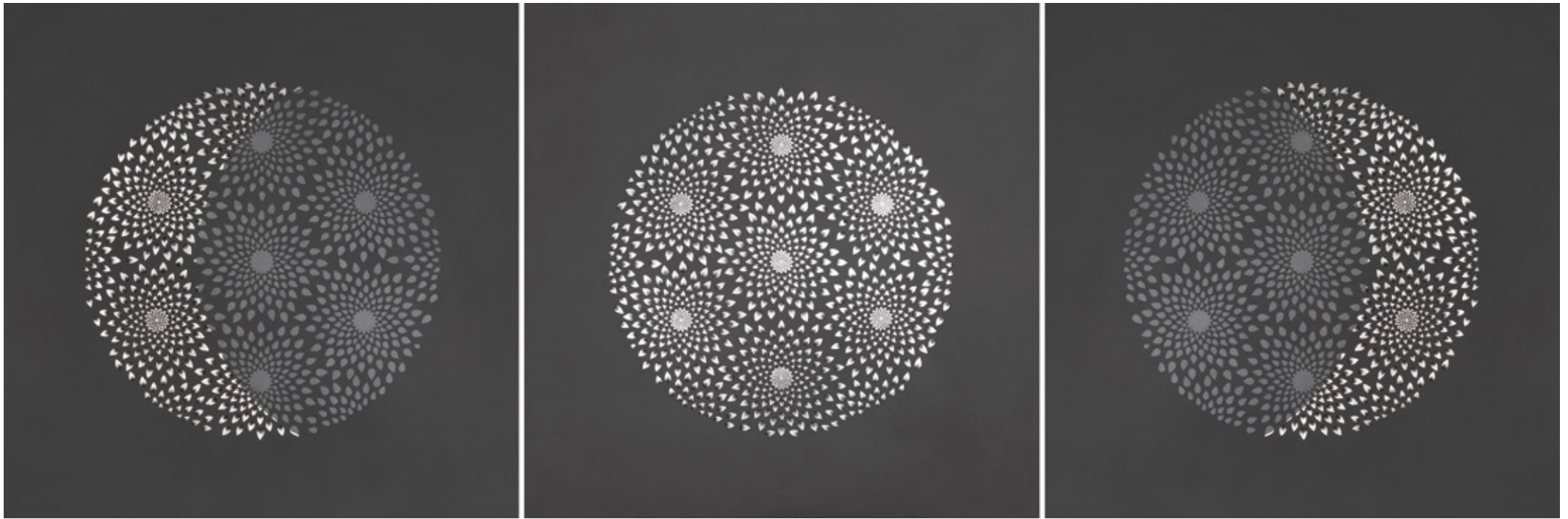
Having explored imagery connected to gross dhyana and both to ideas associated with the senses, I wanted to see if by shifting the scale of the image of the sahasrara, or 1000 petalled lotus, and by shifting its colour into monochrome black and white, I could develop and alter its meaning to evoke something cosmic and luminous - a star.

Again here I am also interested in iconography and texture and here I have contrasted flat plains of colour with minute brushstrokes made with a single - haired squirrel brush for the prataj or shading work. It is a form of shading particular to the Indian miniature painting tradition and involves rhythmic, slow, deliberate brushstrokes that feel almost meditative in their intensity and concentration.



14. *Black Star*, 2017

Stone pigments and Arabic gum
on handmade Sangner paper
91.5 x 91.5 cm (36 x 36 in)



There was an exhibition of early 19th Jodhpuri miniatures at the British Museum titled “The Garden and The Cosmos” in 2009 which hugely excited me. It connected spirituality with the landscape, man with the cosmos, portraying the cosmos within man and depicting the pathway to enlightenment using imagery and iconography derived from nature /gardens. Within Indian yogic tradition the 1000 petalled lotus (or *sahasrara*) is considered the ultimate lotus used as a visual aid or tool to concentrate on before reaching enlightenment.

Continuing with the theme of luminous dhyana, I was interested in showing the sensation of meditation through my imagery and linking it with the idea of this higher form of meditation. I have portrayed the cosmic bodies of the Moon as exploding /multiplying 1000 petalled lotuses to reflect a sensation of the pulse, rhythm and movement associated with contemplation. I decided to use platinum leaf here and was intrigued by how it appears and disappears depending on where you or the painting are placed in relation to light. Phases of the moon and numerology hold special sacred resonance within Hindu philosophy with the number three - a triptych - being one such sacred number.

15. *Moon*, 2018

Stone pigments, Arabic gum and
Platinum leaf on handmade Sangner
paper Consists of 3 individual panels

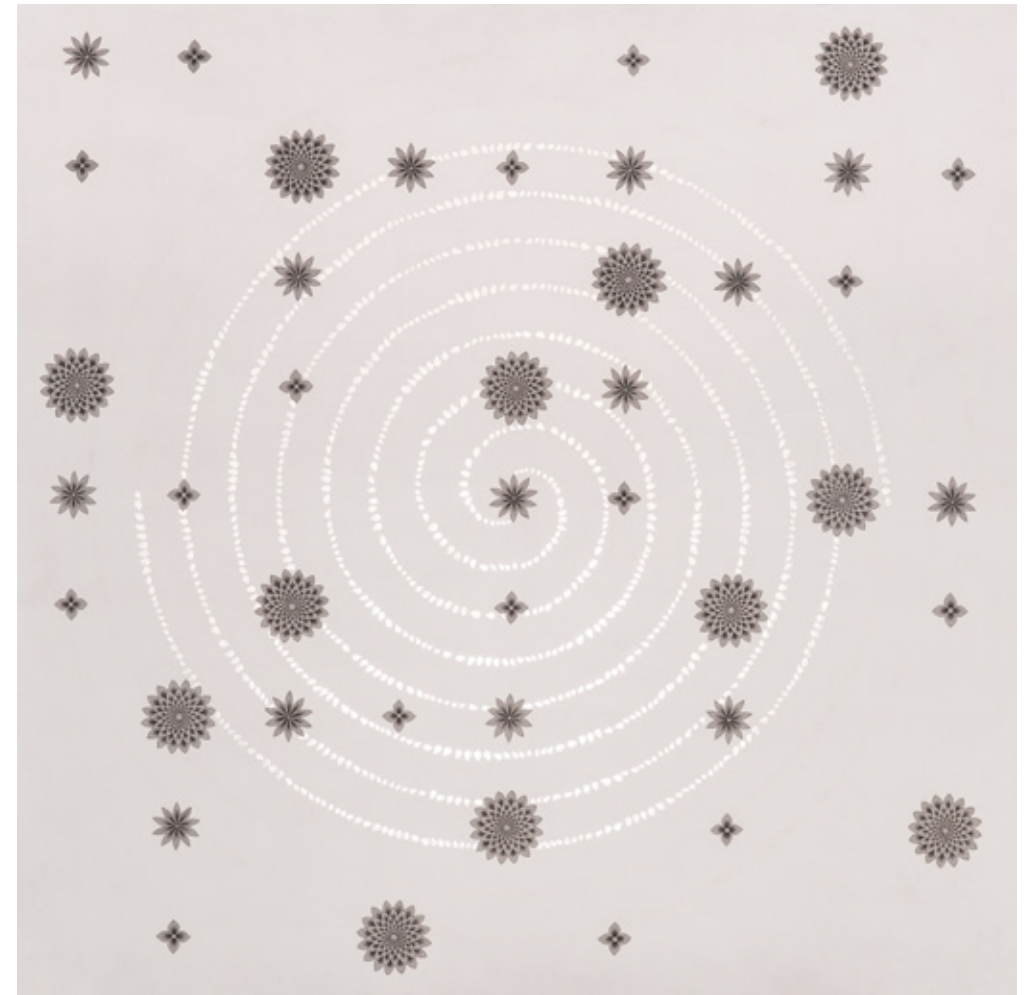
91.5 x 91.5 cm (36 x 36 in)
each 91.5 x cm (36 x 108 in) overall

This painting developed out of a wish to explore absence as well as presence.

Here, according to the Gheranda Samhita, I was interested in exploring the second “luminous” dhyana, using broken up iterative patterning based on three lotuses - the 3 knots or *granthis*. Our minds are trained to see and complete patterning even when it is absent and I was interested to explore this within the framework of yoga. The 3 granthis (knots) are used in a more subtle form of upwards breath - control within meditation. The knots represent 3 of the chakras within the Subtle Body - the base 4 petalled lotus, the middle 10 petalled lotus and the top one which resides between the 2 and the 1000 petalled lotus.

Traditional Indian painting frequently shows simultaneously different or impossible aspects of space as BN Goswamy writes in *The Spirit Of Indian Painting*, “So often in Indian painting, within the same work, points of view, lines of sight, are changed, all according to the needs of the situation”. Here I have two sources of direction within this painting: I include a binary travelling platinum spiral along with the vertical concept behind the 3 granthis to reflect both an upwards and an outwards movement.

This painting is a form of cosmic map, a constellation, exploring the rhythm of a journey, the pattern of following a path, the expansion and contraction of perception echoing perhaps that of the breath and of one’s striving, during meditation, to get “there”.



16. Constellation, 2018

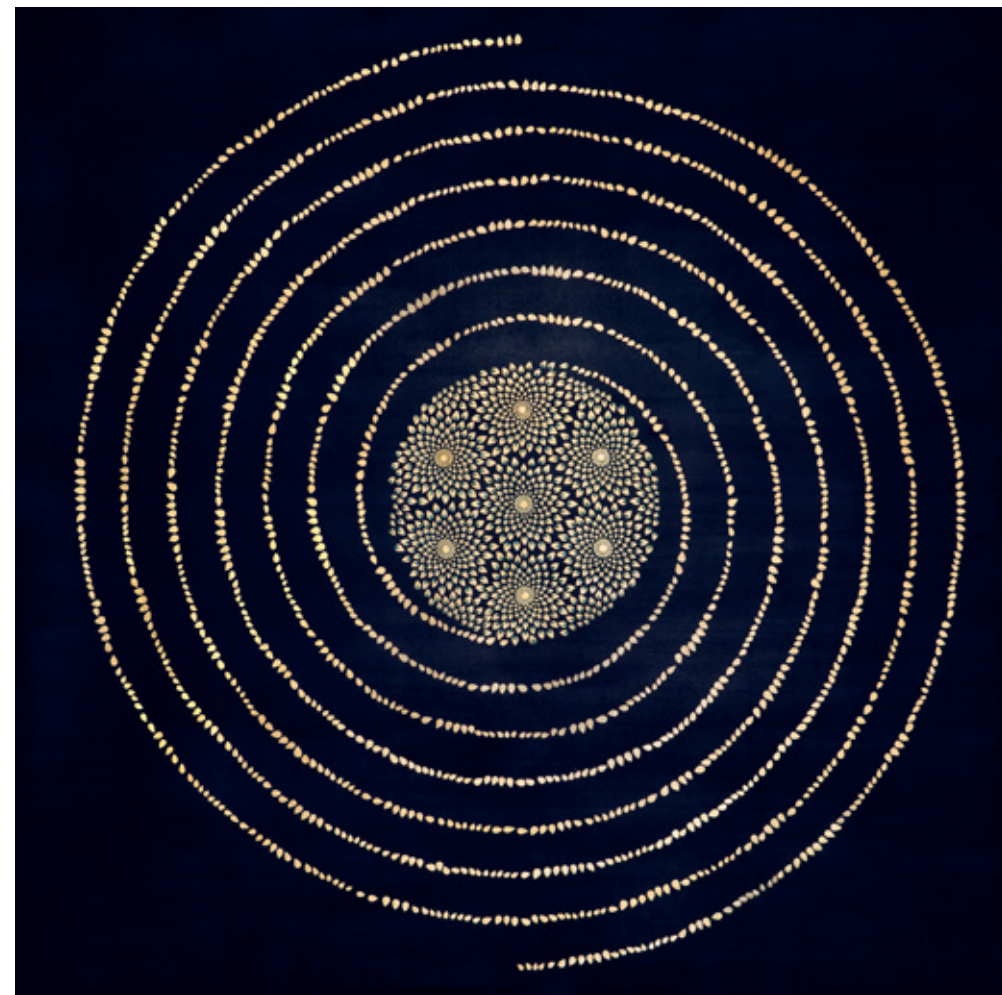
Stone pigments, Arabic gum and Platinum
leaf on handmade Sangner paper
91.5 x 91.5 cm (36 x 36 in)

In 2017 the Nobel Prize for Physics was given to a group of scientists who had just proved the existence of gravitational waves. There was a spectacular “light show” in the heavens when two neutron stars had a collision, called a ‘kilonova’, and consequently produced highly visible gravitational waves: cosmic energy in the form of ripples within the fabric of space and time.

I was fascinated by this discovery and by the fact that a kilonova is supposed to create gold.

Numbers have always been very important in Indian philosophical thought, with the number 7 having particular resonance (there are 7 chakras, 7 circuits of the yantra, 7 images of Krishna in the Pushti Marg /Path Of Grace etc).

I have drawn on these ideas to create a central image portraying Creation made up of 7 cosmic bodies of exploding/ multiplying 1000 petalled lotuses, ravelling outwards and inwards in 7 ever increasing and decreasing waves. I am interested in exploring the alchemy of creation using the materials gold and indigo associated both with new discoveries in physics and ancient philosophies from India.



17. Creation, 2018

Stone pigments, Arabic gum and
Gold leaf on handmade paper
91.5 x 91.5 cm (36 x 36 in)

Biography

Olivia Fraser, born in London and raised in the Highlands of Scotland, has lived and worked in India since 1989. Deeply interested in the techniques and vocabulary of traditional Indian miniatures, she combines mineral and plant pigments and handmade paper with forms and ideas inspired by modern Western art.

Following in the footsteps of her kinsman, James Baillie Fraser who painted India, its monuments and landscape in the early 1800's, Olivia set out to continue where he had left off, painting the architecture of Delhi and its people. James Baillie Fraser also commissioned local artists to paint what has become the famous 'Fraser Album' – the greatest masterpiece of Company School Painting portraying different types of people and their jobs, crafts or castes against stark white backgrounds. This hybrid form of painting, where Indian artists created works with mixed techniques and ideas from the East and West, greatly influenced Olivia's early work during the 1990s.

In 2005 she formally studied traditional Indian miniature painting under Jaipuri and Delhi masters. The use of gem-like stone colours, exquisitely detailed miniature brush work, and elaborate decorative and burnished surfaces became a major part of her oeuvre. Having been especially influenced by Nathdwara pichwai painting and early 19th century Jodpuri painting, Olivia has been exploring its visual language, reaching back to an archetypal iconography strongly rooted in India's artistic and cultural heritage that can breach borders and be relevant to her twin life between the East and West.

Her latest body of work is deeply rooted in her fascination with and practice of yoga and the ways in which yogic meditation involves visualisations of the garden, particularly the sahasrara (thousand-petaled lotus), which serves as a visual aid in reaching enlightenment.

Olivia's paintings have been shown in various galleries and art fairs around the world. They also reside in well-known collections in India, UK, France, Belgium (Museum of Sacred Art), UAE, Singapore, Australia, China (China Arts Museum) and the USA. Glen Lowry, Director of MOMA has been an avid supporter and collector of her works since the very beginning. Olivia's works were shown as part of *Frontiers Reimagined*, a collateral event of the 56th Venice Biennale in 2015 and at the Government Museum and Art Gallery, Chandigarh, India, in December 2016. Her work was most recently shown at a solo booth at Art Dubai in 2017.

SELECTED SOLO EXHIBITIONS

- 2017 Art Dubai Contemporary, Dubai
- 2017 Sacred Garden, Government Museum and Art Gallery, (Chandigarh Lalit Kala Akademi), Chandigarh
- 2016 *The Sacred Garden*, Sundaram Tagore, New York
- 2014 India Art Fair, Grosvenor Gallery Booth, New Delhi
- 2014 *Subtle Bodies*, in association with Art1821, Norwich
- 2014 *Olivia Fraser, M on the Bund*, Shanghai, China
- 2013 Sunaparanta Centre for the Arts, Goa
- 2012 *Miniatures*, Grosvenor Gallery, London
- 2007 Triveni Gallery, New Delhi
- 2003 Indar Pasricha Fine Art, London
- 1998 Indar Pasricha Fine Art, London
- 1994 Andrew Usiskin Fine Art, London
- 1991 Carma Galleries, New Delhi

SELECTED GROUP EXHIBITIONS

- 2018 Art NY, New York
- 2018 *Paradox and Play: Living Traditions in Contemporary Art*, Ojas Art, New Delhi
- 2018 India Art Fair, Grosvenor Gallery, New Delhi
- 2017 India Art Fair, Grosvenor Gallery, New Delhi
- 2016 India Art Fair, Grosvenor Gallery, New Delhi
- 2016 *Deck of Cards*, British Council, New Delhi
- 2015 *Unfolding Perspectives*, Deck gallery, Singapore
- 2016 *Gandhara Art*, Art Basel Hong Kong
- 2015 *Frontiers Reimagined*, Venice Biennale
- 2015 *Yoga Chakra*, IKA, New Delhi
- 2015 *Forms of Devotion*, China Arts Museum, Shanghai
- 2015 Grosvenor Gallery, India Art Fair, New Delhi
- 2014 *Kullu Perceived*, The Prince's Drawing School, London
- 2013 *Modern & Contemporary Miniatures*: Grosvenor Gallery, London
- 2013 *Miniature Rewind*: Art Dubai
- 2013 India Art Fair, Grosvenor Gallery, New Delhi
- 2012 Asian Art in London
- 2012 *Iconographic investigations: Nature Morte*, Gurgaon
- 2012 *Interrogating Conventions: Nature Morte*, New Delhi
- 2012 India Art Fair, Grosvenor Gallery, New Delhi
- 2011 *The Path of the Lotus*: Grosvenor Gallery, London
- 2010 Kathmandu Arts Centre, Nepal
- 2010 Apparao Galleries, Chennai
- 2009 Apparao Galleries, New Delhi
- 2008 Kathmandu Arts Centre, Nepal
- 2004 Presteigne Art Gallery, Wales
- 1999 The Portland Gallery, London
- 1996 The Clarendon Gallery, London

COLLECTIONS

Her works are included in Public and Private Collections in Australia, Belgium (Museum of Sacred Art), France, India, Singapore, UAE, USA (MOMA, NY) and the UK

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