

“This has been done before”

CHINTAN UPADHYAY



6th -17th APRIL, 1998 • SHAJAHAN ART GALLERY, NEW DELHI

WHAT IS CHINTAN UPADHYAY?

What, exactly, is Chintan Upadhyay? A frustrated phallicentric nerd out to prove the sexual connotations and escapades of everything surrounding him? Or a confused, overgrown kid, still in an animated awe of his trinkets and toys, but whispering voices of discontent against the system promoting their production? Is he just another faceless addition to a metropolis, coming to terms with the various layers of personae being gifted to him by the assemblage of cultures in a big city? Or is he simply an artist, sensitive to all things red, blue and green, exploring for an order in disorder despite his own sarcastic sneers against this search?

Try asking him, and he wouldn't have an answer! Though he might very well agree that he is, indeed, a nerd, kid and an artist, in any which order. To this agreement, he would add the intricate balance of tensions achieved from living so many lives simultaneously. He would, in fact, give a few more good, bad and ugly definitions for himself. And then, in all probabilities, he might also simulate the reverberation of the bruised presence of many a person, which he does not want to be, but which he is. Waiting for these echoes to blur, diminish and finally disintegrate, Chintan Upadhyay realises the continuous process of processing and reprocessing realities which define the very many extensions of his self. And the very many extensions of his art.

To his audience, Chintan's art does convey this self-consciousness. The on-going conflicts superimpose themselves comfortably on the tensile strength of the canvases to condition, and perhaps even restrict, the artist's conception and visualisation of his world. Equally aware and unaware of these collisions, Chintan attempts trotting his path by effectively synthesising the innumerable bits and scraps of his persona. As an immediate corollary, his self-consciousness ceases to remain static as the backdrop within his picture frames, and goes far beyond them.

And this is the reason why his art can not be judged in isolation, unless the artist himself is brought within the purview of the judgement. Try as he might, even Chintan can not negate his presence from his canvases. Like all faithful reportages, his works bear the marked stamp of the reporter, only a few shades too dark. So much so that the reporter invariably ends up becoming an integral part of the goings-on in his reportages without taking a 'moralistic' stance on the same. The mysticism, or the lack of it, in Chintan's art lies in this very exposition of his self, visible in varied intensities to the discerning viewer.

A case in point are the part-erotic, part-neurotic imageries in most of his recent canvases. While his choice of subjects fluctuates, ranging from *a multicultural face in a cosmopolitan city to a blue teapot and the red background to helicopter throwing somebody*, his concern remains the same. So, on one of the canvases, one witnesses the artist flicking his tongue rather psychotically over the passions of the metropolitan landscape. A second reading suggests that it is the artist's face which literally forms the backdrop of the picture and the landscape is just an illusion. At the same time, a subtle underflow of pathos hints at the solitary confinement of a man, any man, amidst multitudes of people in a big city.

The irrepressible phallic imagery has its own space in each of the paintings. Yet, it continues to make forced entries into Chintan's canvases. Be it the teapot handle or the telephone receiver or the artist's shoes, everything conveniently and very obviously metamorphoses into the same end product. But the artist is no pornographer obsessed with recording sexual innuendoes, and neither does he intend to iconify their denotations. His picture frames are converted into platforms to convey what he feels is "life's most natural emotion". The phallic signage, then becomes his version of this emotion though he takes care to depict many a countervailing image to complete the scenario. These sexual metaphors; at times subtle and subdued, at times loud and vociferous; flutter around casually from one picture frame to another, highlighting a rather humorous transformation of the surrounding objects. So finally, his images act as symbols and symbols act as images to underline that 'normalcy'.



They Hugged each other like a Sandwich

Mixed Media on Canvas

6' x 5', 1998

This personal mythology of the artist, if at all it can be termed thus, provides an acute sense of intrigue to his work, inviting the readers of his canvases to seek engagement with the painted picture as a whole. Incomprehensible graffiti and textured gobbledegook of rich colours share the stage with the artist's heads while manoeuvring their way through cheerful cloth designs. In this process, Chintan convinces the viewer, and more importantly, himself, that all his pictorial elements have the same aesthetic and intellectual stature, which also justifies the recycle and reuse of these elements.

Gathering information for the paintings are his drawings, revealing responses, reactions and reciprocations to issues both in his public and private spheres. The drawings possess a similar belief-system as their painted counterparts, and are as much potent end by themselves, giving an interesting and varied line of definition to the artist's works. The intensity of the drawings, again, have their core in the level of individuality articulated by Chintan. Hence, apart from the unapparelled ease behind the obscenities being



Graffiti writer

Dry Pastel on Paper

22" x 36", 1997

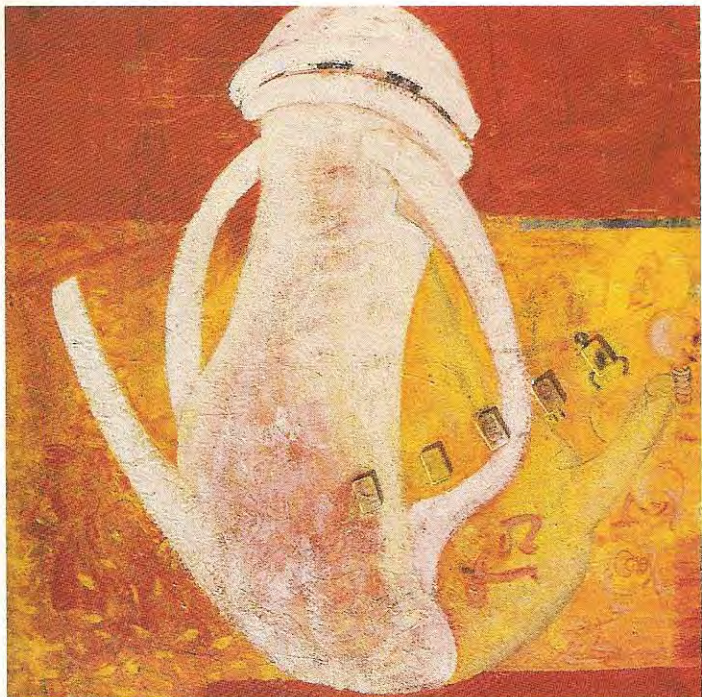
hurled by the *Graffiti writer*, what also comes across strikingly is the qualitative difference between the gelatinous head of the impish spermatozoa doubling as the graffiti artist and the transparent solidity of the test tube from which it is jutting out.

Chintan Upadhyay succeeds through the sheer curiosity raised by his paintings, springing out the viewer's own correlations with the picture subjects like the proverbial jack-in-the-box. However, the artist finds this *Quad Erat Demonstrandum* rather unconvincing for himself, for his concern does not lie in merely altering the shackled points of view. Positioned between his own creative sensitivities and the structures within the structures of the contemporary art world, Chintan wants his art to address issues important both to himself and to his environment; to artists, critics, art historians, galleries, buyers et al. Questioning the very identity of the *Indian* artist in the ever-shrinking world of the present day, he attempts to instil self-confidence in his fellow artists, and in turn, himself, to fight out well with the established norms. And therefore, the emergence of a *Common Minimum Programme* for the young artists. Therefore, the resigned, yet mocking sarcasm of *This has been done before* in this exhibition.

Therefore, in fact, this exhibition!

Vaibhav Vishal

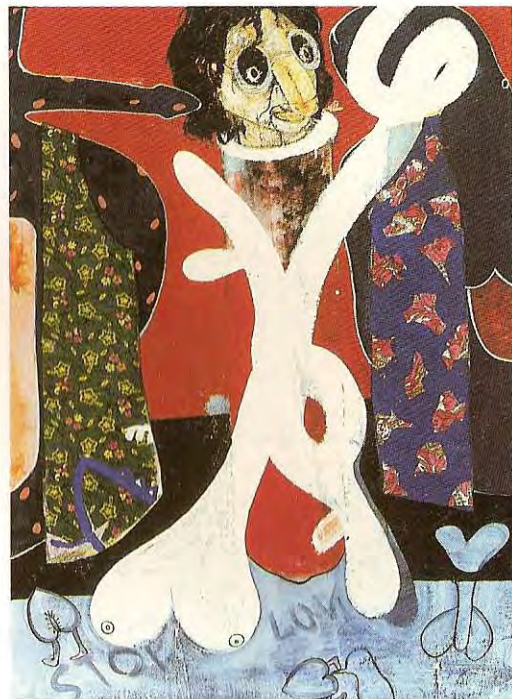
Vaibhav Vishal is a graduate in Fine Arts from the M S University of Baroda. At present, he is undergoing a post graduate Management Programme from the Narsee Institute of Management Studies, Mumbai.



Untitled

Mixed Media on Canvas

3' x 3', 1997



Stop Love

Mix Media on Canvas

3' x 4', 1998



Fast train in Mumbai

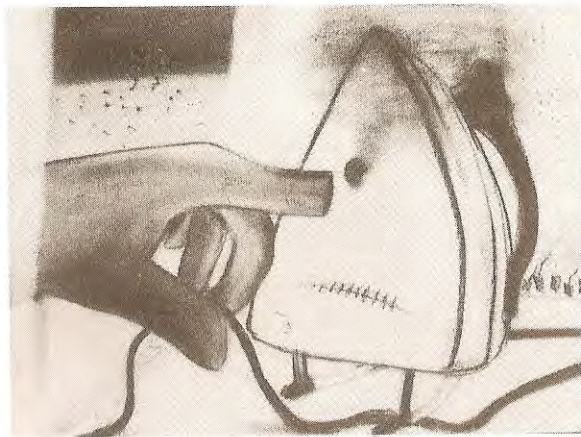
Mixed Media on Paper

2' x 5', 1998



Untitled

3" x 4", 1998



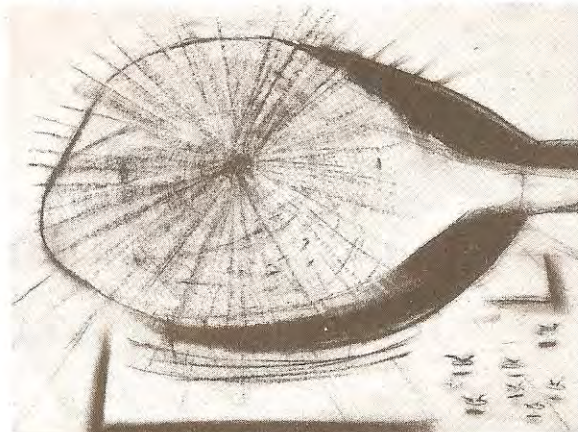
Untitled

13" x 10.5", 1998



Sandwich

13" x 11", 1997



Helicopter throing somebody

13" x 10.5", 1997



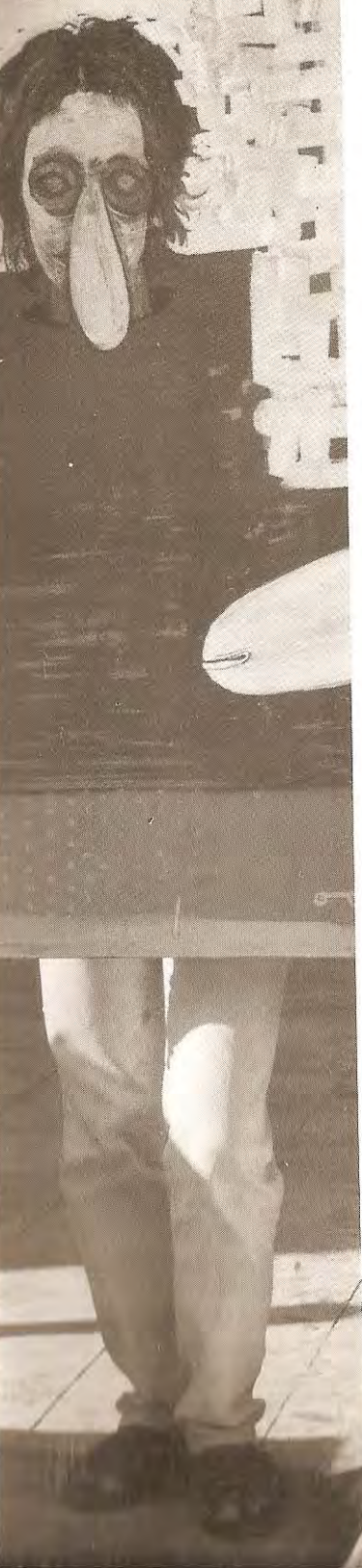
Untitled

13" x 10.5", 1997



Untitled

13" x 10.5", 1998



COMMON MINIMUM PROGRAMME FOR THE ARTISTS OF MY GENERATION

- This is essentially an address to my fellow brethren of the younger generation belonging to the world of art, though I do not mind if the *senior* artists also overhear me. I am talking to artists who feel they can do well in the coming century, provided we succeed to avoid, and do without, the biased and old fashioned attitude of the artists and art historians of the present century.
- Let's not just be *Indian* artists. Let's try being *artists* first; artists of the singular globe.
- Kick them who still talk about *Indianness* in the multicultural, ever-shrinking world of today.
- We have to fill up the gap which has been made in the name of Indianness.
- We shouldn't consider ourselves as *third-world* artists. We are *super-world* artists who do not have to wait to be recognised by the economically sound and dominating western world. The westerners are lazy and blind to appreciate the presence of other cultures and the contemporary art emerging from these cultures.
- We are not being *derivative* if there are any so called elements of the western art in our work. We are being sensitive, for we know the elements and can feel the historicity of both our land and the western world.

Post Script : Picasso and Gauguin are *derivative* artists, not us.

- Ignore the people who think we are much too young to experiment with our work.
- Working consistently according to our abilities should be our objective. There are no short-cuts to success. We should try utilising the maximum hours of the day on our work.
- Let us criticise each other in the presence of one another so that we can understand our problems/mistakes better.
- Thinking and perhaps even some bit of philosophising is good for our mental development. But let's not spend our time only in thoughts. We should believe in *action* as well.
- We have been thinking for the past fifty years. Let us, for a change, wake up, take our tools and act.
- We are the masters of our world.
- Let us understand our freedom and use it well.

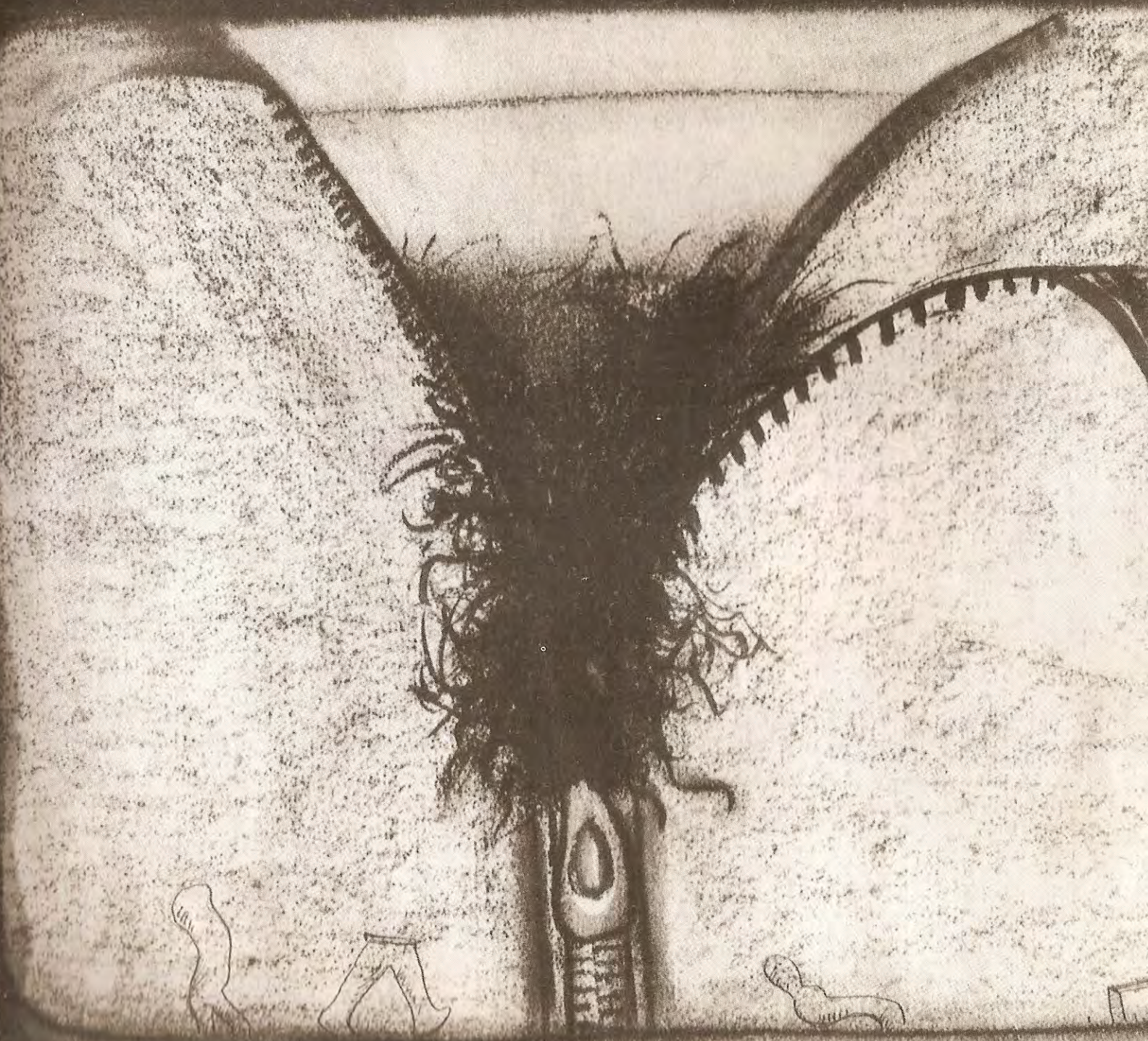
Chintan Upadhyay



Untitled

Mixed Media on Canvas

9' x 6', 1997





Multicultural face in a cosmopolitan city (Mumbai)

Acrylic on Canvas

10' x 6', 1998

CHINTAN UPADHYAY

EVEN THIS HAS BEEN DONE BEFORE!

I take this opportunity to express my gratitude to M Sashidharan and B V Suresh, my lecturers at the Faculty of Fine Arts, M S University of Baroda for always being receptive to my views on anything and everything under the sun.

Sashidharan has been an expert at changing roles, transforming from being a friend, philosopher and guide to lately, being my photographer as well! Thanks a lot!

My special thanks to Mrs. Aruna Shroff and Mr. Vijay Kumar Shroff for giving me studio space in Mumbai and to Mrunal V. Shroff for making a home out of the studio.

The Mumbai based artists have been more than kind to this new addition to their family. I thank them for their help, support and guidance.

I also thank Hema for her regular discussions with me regarding my work, not to mention the encouragement and moral support.

A word of appreciation for my old friend Vaibhav Vishal for continuing to understand me and my ideas.

Finally, I would like to thank my parents for being what they are!

Chintan Upadhyay

Born : 1972, Partapur, Rajasthan
M.F.A. in Painting from M.S. University of Baroda, 1997
B.F.A. in Painting from M.S. University of Baroda, 1995

Awards

Rajasthan Lalit Kala Academy for out standing drawing in All India Drawing Exhibition, 1998
Rajasthan Lalit Kala Academy for outstanding painting in annual exhibition, 1995, 1997
All India Avantika Art Exhibition, New Delhi, 1997
Gujarat Lalit Kala Academy for outstanding painting in annual exhibition, 1996
S.C.Z.C.C. for Painting, Nagpur, 1996

Solo Shows

Organized by Shajahan Art Gallery, New Delhi, 1998
Organized by Leela Gallery, Bombay, 1996

Group Shows

Harmony Show, Bombay, 1998
'Group of 1997' organized by lakeeren The Contemporary Art Gallery, Mumbai, 1997
Rajasthan Contemporary Art Exhibition organized by RKLA, Ahmedabad, 1997
Harmony Show, Bombay, 1997
Two Men Show, Jehangir Art gallery, Bombay, 1996
Group show Art Core, Baroda 1996
Zonal Art Exhibition organised by N.C.Z.C.C. at Rabindra Bhavan, New Delhi, 1996
Two Men show "...Circa Early Seventies", Baroda, 1995
Two Men show "Discount 33%", Baroda, 1994
Group show, Jaipur 1993, 1994
International Exhibition of Art organised by NLRA with ILSA and UWSCO, Jaipur 1993

Participated

50 Years of Indian Independence by IFACS, Ahamdabad, 1997
All India Drawing Exhibition by IFACS, New Delhi, 1997
State Exhibition, organised by RKLA, jaipur 1994
All India Student and Children Teracotta Camp., J.K.K., Jaipur 1994
All India Artists Camp organised by South Zone Culture enter, Madras 1993
All India Exhibition, Nagpur, 1993
Kala Mela, Jaipur, 1992
All India Artists workshop organised by RPG Group, Mumbai, 1997
Commissioned work done for O.N.G.C., Baroda & T.A. 811. Received first prize in T.A. Parade, New Delhi, 1994

Studio : 414, 414/B, Gulmohar, Ansal Vihar, Sympoli Road, Kastur Park
Borivali (W), Mumbai • Phone : (022) 8988638

Res. Address : 3/64, Malviya Nagar, Jaipur 302 017 • Tel. : 0141-525514, 523204

Sponsored by :
SHAJAHAN ART GALLERY

50, Basant Lok, Vasant Vihar, NEW DELHI-110 057

Phones : 6149460, 6149461, 6145875

The Gallery is Celebrating 50th Anniversary of Indian Independence