

## ***Arabian Sea, My Rasa Rekha***

Initially the Rasas were developed as a system of gestures for ancient Indian performance, however Rasa theory has evolved into a sophisticated system of interpretation (Chari 2004, 251), based on the emotional condition of mind or 'moods,' known in Rasa theory as Bhavas. All Rasas are derived from Bhavas and given visual representation through the physical embodiment of an artist or performer. In the practice of Rasa Rekha, the embodiment of various rasas and emotional states through an artist's placement in nature is transformed into line through the physical act of drawing. Specifically as a location of transfer between nature, the self and material and immaterial representation, the practice of Rasa Rekha is both a record and interface where line represents existence. Each stroke made is a registration of time and the passing of mortal life. Within this methodology mark-making and gesticulation is a sign of all the force, longing and emotions of the self as artist. In the process of Rasa Rekha emotions are signifiers demonstrated through the flow and rendering of kinetic lines that create new forms and signs. In Rasa Rekha, the rasa is gesticulated becoming the drawn 'line' or the 'rekha.' The rekha is matter a material form, demarcated by the open space around it. In Indian philosophy, space, 'ether' or ākāsa is one of the five great elements constituting the nature of our body— the Panchamahabhuta. This ākāsa ensconces the phenomena of 'ego' and its emanation, the 'self' known as the ātman and is transformed into energy, leading to animation, movement, velocity and direction. What is essential in the process, is the act of 'drawing', where to 'draw' as the verb, becomes the signifier in the act of 'reclaiming' (Gangar, pers. comm.) – as a feat of mark-making', drawing a line on an open space. As an evocation of the emancipation derived from embodiment (my embodiment and felt experience of the rasas), the drawn line becomes a bridge between material and immaterial realities, allowing myself as artist to portray nature and subjective experience. In this way, the process of mark-making represents the reclamation of selfhood, as an act of engagement with the experience of self and of belonging in accordance with nature.

In the practice of Rasa Rekha, as all lines are kinetic and imbued with the force of Rasas, I am able to communicate to a viewer my experience of speed, *Gati* or motion and all manner of immaterial existence, while assigning this a new visual and material form. An example relating the process of Rasa Rekha is a recent work titled *Arabian Sea* (2015), a site specific work completed at various remote beach in Kerala. This work of art is a large-scale (70 feet x 3.5 feet apprx) drawing installation on transparent silk material, the fabric

used in the installation is a representation of space or *akasa*. The work is site-specific in the sense that it was created, physically, in the water.

As I step into the water my awareness and senses are concentrated at my feet, the skin on my feet sensing, my nerves responding to the water and I become lost. I am lost into the world of water, where energy, movement, speed and velocity overwhelm my senses. I experience an irresistible pleasure and words are rendered with insufficiency for me to express anything, the experience evokes feelings similar to catharsis, a catharsis as a single point and confluence of emotion, intimately connected to the expression of Rasa. At this moment I transfer my existence with the water into lines. All my feelings and my senses connecting with the force of the sea, waves giving expression and form through my act of drawing. Each mark on the silk material that is made becomes a representation of the vibration of my body as it encounters the current and velocity of the ocean. The whole process directed by my pleasure and joy.

This example of Rasa Rekha practice is analogous to a biological process, as I am transferring and transmuting all the feelings experienced through my interaction with the environment and through the neural pathways of my brain, where they are ordered into signals that I transfer into lines. In this way drawing becomes an extension of the order of the natural world, where a sense of the ego as self connects to the larger macrocosm of ecology and the bionetwork.

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## ***Insomnia Series***

As a collective of works, the *Insomnia Series* (2015) express my feelings of an elusive state of mind that drives me to imagine unusual imagery. In the insomniac space all realistic forms appear in desirable, yet unfamiliar and surreal forms. Insomnia (for me) is not merely a disease of sleeplessness, rather, it is a state between levels of consciousness where deep thoughts arise from my subconscious and take on new metaphoric form. The works continue to express a poetic stance where realism and abstraction exchange appearances as I translate the experience of *rasas* into lines and drawing.

The connections between the lines in the drawing form a larger network that takes on a visual form similar to the neural pathways and synapses of the brain. The multifarious and interconnected network of memories also expresses the *rasa Adbhuta* or wonder. I was amazed at the similarity between the organic armature of the shrub or bush to that of the architectural infrastructure used to build houses. The branch from the shrub, like the building process, connects to another branch through a natural joint that is wider and can carry the weight of the botanical network. The work captures a transition between biological forms, the study of botanical matter through the process of *Rasa Rehka*, becomes a rhizomic display of neural forms. The transparent and translucent surfaces of the drawing's armature and white material reinforce a feeling of intangibility that the work attempts to portray, like memories, the embodiment of *rasas*, however fleeting, is subtle.

The *Insomnia Series* (2015) is also influenced by the natural form of coconut tree. Tree has strong linear forms that are able to occupy space, but move within that space. The movement of the natural linear forms through space is an ideal subject for the *Rasa Rehka* drawing method. The coconut tree represent elongated, unknown forms that occupy the void space, creating an environment reflecting the *rasa* of *Adbhuta* (wonder).

By observing the tree and embodying the *rasas* in a sleepless state, I imagine all manner of unusual form, scale and juxtaposition. It is one of the emotional pleasures of the insomniac state. My experience of insomnia is like being in a liminal space, in-between sleep and wakefulness.

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