



ART CENTRIX SPACE
presents

Archival photographs by **SANJAY DAS**
Terracotta installations by **RAHUL MODAK**



Curated by **Monica Jain**
Essay by **Uma Nair**

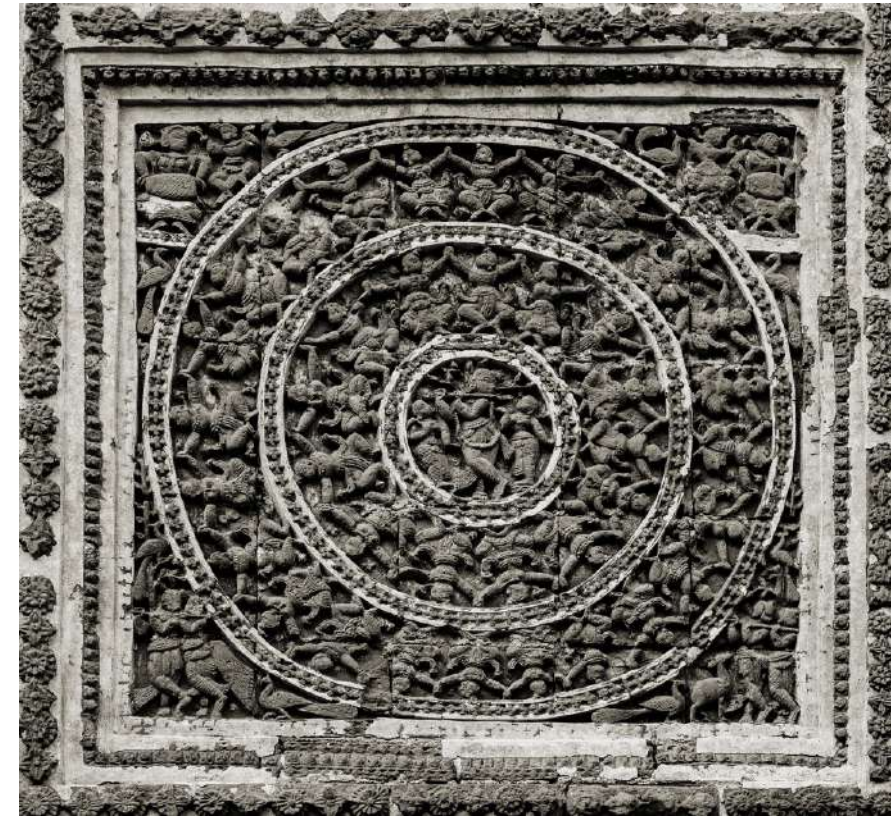
MONUMENTAL TERRACOTTA

I have an undying love for the timeless. The more ephemeral it is, the more everlasting my appreciation of it. I like to catch the fleeting and wonder if it can become permanent. The dichotomy fascinates and engages me. How does an artist make the ephemeral, eternal? The hands that built with stone knew they were building for eternity. But what of terracotta? Did the hands that mould the soft clay in Bishnupur hundreds of years ago, know that it would last this long? How does such a soft, impermanent material transform into buildings of such breathtaking beauty that have survived till today? Perhaps it is that many events must come together for us to witness these vestiges of history. Perhaps, those events are made up of a series of epic moments when some put their hands together to shape soft clay that stands the test of time and some, like Sanjay Das pick up the camera.

With the photo-archival works of the terracotta temples of Bankura and Murshidabad district in West Bengal, Delhi based photographer Sanjay Das builds a case for such a paradox. 'Engineered' with locally found, fine alluvial clay baked to hardness, these temples have withstood the passage of time. In some of his photographs one can still find a devotee bowing before the gods in reverence. Some four hundred years of time has lapsed between the making and the mulling and yet the devotee and the contemplated stand under the long exposure of the sun as equals. The series of his works exhibited at this show is a culmination of decades of travelling, shooting, documenting and studying them and bears testimony to his depth in the field and breadth of experience.

Through the riveting repository of his works, the terracotta edifices of the past once again relive their moments of medieval glory in the hope for survival, preservation and continuity into the future. Sanjay, a master lensman has conjured up images of hitherto, rarely known temples in rarer mediums and formats such that the skill and artistic vision that was required in building these edifices lends itself to a narrative in the contemporary visual language.

-Monica Jain



Rasamandala

30 x 36 in

archival print on paper

no. of edition: 1/10

“ I do love these ancient ruins:
We never tread upon them but we set
Our foot upon some reverend history.”

John Webster



TERRACOTTA TEMPLES

Picture this: Last year a team from the University of Hong Kong's architecture faculty created a pavilion from [3D-printed](#) bricks, made from terracotta to show the potential of this technology in architectural production. Over 1,500 [terracotta](#) blocks were intricately [carved](#) and stacked to create this [installation](#) in [Milan](#), which architects hoped would provide visitors with a moment of solace.

Modern architects are using patterned terracotta facades- diamond and floral motifs are cut through the terracotta facade fronting to create walls that filter light and shade. US firm Machado Silvetti has used jade-coloured terracotta tiles to sheath an extension to an Asian art centre on a museum campus in [Florida](#). The building is sheathed in more than 3,000 deep-green tiles made of glazed terracotta. The distinctive cladding was conceived in response to the client's request for a "new monumental entrance," said Boston-based [Machado Silvetti](#). Ridged terracotta tiles and louvred terracotta facades are being used by architects and designers all over the world. Terracotta as a material for architecture has never gone out of fashion but modern day architects are looking at longevity.

Flashback : Rewind to the 16th century to the colonial kingdom of Bengal. Historically, we know that the Malla kingdom had shifted its capital from Padampur near Joypur to Bishnupur in the first half of the 16th century. Post-transition, all the major temple-building projects - both in terms of variety and artistry - were undertaken in and around Bishnupur. However, Joypur was not left barren. The grandest and probably the largest laterite stone temple, the Gokulchand shrine, was built here during the reign of Raghunath Singh in 1643. Equally important is the Shyamchand temple. There are also plenty of family-owned terracotta temples from the post-Malla period.”

Sanjay Das captures the magic and caprice of the terracotta temples of Bishnupur in a timeline of images that pitch the beauty and power of the past with the present. But in capturing the intrinsic timelessness of architectural details there is also a poetic decadence that unravels as an architecture of humanism in the history of one of India's most ageless temples.

Architecture's transience

Ruins are a reminder of architecture's transience, but they also embody important projections of meaning and memory. The pictures of the doors itself freeze a moment of history in the tapestry of time. For centuries, ruins have been gazed upon and parsed for amusement, gratification and instruction, but ruins are an especially hardcore objectification of certain kinds of matter and atmosphere. Ruins are effectively architecture's memento mori, imbued with an unsettling melancholic charge that speaks to our deepest existentialist fears and fantasies. The *Fleet of Ducks* and the terracotta plaque of elephants, animals and warriors reflect an understanding of cultural dynamics and lifestyle.

' Ruins embody a set of temporal and historical paradoxes', writes the art critic Brian Dillon. 'The ruined building is a remnant of and portal into the past, its decay is a concrete reminder of the passage of time.'

Patina of time

The *Dasavtara* are a riveting odyssey of the patina of time in the annals of faith and belief. The terracotta figurines in the panel stand as an example of a tottering tableaux of ruins. We need a movement of the active cult of the ruin - preserved, studied, idealised and fetishised.

Char Bangla II
30 x 45 in
archival print on paper
no. of edition: 1/10

next page.
Terracotta Panel III
53 x 95 in
archival print on paper
no. of edition: 1/10



The ideas that ruins awaken in me are great ones', intoned Diderot in 1767. 'Everything turns to nothingness and everything passes. Only the world remains. Only time continues.' The terracotta ruins in the *Krishna Leela* are a way of seeing, embodiments of meaning projected onto heaps of materials created in the concentrics of circular geometry. Precision becomes the key to the figurines balanced in the harmony of the symbolism of precision.

The *Mahishasura Mardangini* is a tale that stands testimony to time. But the slow process of dismemberment that characterised the relics of antiquity and industry, allowing them to stand out of time as historic 'exemplars', is now at odds with the brutal rapidity of the modern ruin's span. The Char Bangla and the Krishna Temple are relics of history.

These archival photographs by Sanjay Das become Modernism's indelible visual epitaph, cementing its epic 'failure' in the minds of architects, critics, politicians and the wider public. The temples of Bishnupur reflect architecture as an optimistic cultural activity. The terracotta ruins exemplify the temples as a moment of sublime equilibrium between man's heavenward stretch and nature's erosive downward pull. What becomes clear is that the heritage ruin is not only a remnant of the past, but that its fragments contain a history of the future as well.

Rural rhythms

Most of the temples sit on their traditional low plinth, and the temples rise like a beautifully proportioned rural hut, their roofs curved in the elegant sloping thatched roofs style so common of villages on the western side of Ganga in Bengal. When the *chalas* are topped with *shikharas* (or tower-like spires) they are of *ratna* variety; a temple with one tower is called *ekratna*; one with five is *pancharatna* and so on. Most of the temples are in clusters enhancing the overall perspective. It is the harmony of the image that invites the human gaze.

Burnt brick and laterite

The architectural charm of Bishnupur temples is remarkable and unique. Basically, built with burnt brick and laterite stone, their façade, walls and pillars are adorned of intricately designed terracotta panels of mythological details. The clay of virtually every tile had been painstakingly sculpted before being fired to an almost indestructible permanence. It was an incredible sign of innovation and ingenuity of local artisans and architects, who had to make do with whatever meagre local raw materials they could use. The arduous labour and craftsmanship is what is charismatic.

What entices is when we examine the sculpted panels and plaques slowly. Apparently, complexities and quality of art work developed with time. While the relatively older temples had tiles of abstract and floral designs, subsequent ones depicted independent scenes from everyday life or mythological episodes. It appears, when finally, the artisans acquired adequate skills, they tried out sequential panels depicting scenes from whole epics.

Wall friezes show multi-oared ships set out for other shores, seeking trade, conquest. Other panels show deer, monkeys, horses, tigers and boars. Elephants trumpeted, lions roared, hunters, courtesans, courtiers, kings, queens and people were frozen in the zest of everyday life. There is so much enchantment here, such a feeling of joyousness, a vigorous attention to detail. The sculptural ruin is a new realm of art for India's heritage as well as for tourism.

Historic preservation has obvious implications for tourism. How, and when, do we limit access to the site to prevent damage? Should historic buildings be preserved as something static or as part of a living culture? The ASI must balance aesthetic concerns with historic preservation, economic development and ethical concerns that arise from tourism.

UMA NAIR
ART CRITIC



Terracotta Panel VI | Terracotta Panel VII
20 x 30 in (each)
archival print on paper
no. of edition: 1/10

NOTES FROM HISTORY:

Temple structures which originated during the 16th century and lasted till the 19th century, A.D. used burnt bricks as the main building material. Terracotta panels were used to decorate the temple surfaces. The rise of these Terracotta Temples was influenced by the Vaishnava Movement particularly focusing on Radha-Krishna cult. Evolution and variation in temples began under the patronage of the Malla rulers of Bishnupur and from there the styles got dispersed to different parts of West Bengal. The variation in the temple architecture came about due to their external appearance and not because of their structure. Use of different roof structures in each temple determined the external form of these temples, which were generally classified as:

Modified Rekha Deuls – with tower rising vertically up and gets curved at the end.

Chala Temples – with sloping roofs which is further divided into:

Do-chala – having two sloping roofs with a central ridge.

Jor-Bangla – twin 'Do-chala' attached to each other.

Char-chala – having four sloping roofs

Aat-chala – having a smaller 'char-chala' added over a bigger 'char-chala'.

Ratna Temples – having a miniature tower above the main shrine. This can be 'Ek-Ratna' – for one tower, 'Pancha-Ratna' for five such towers which went up to 'Pancha-Vimsati' Ratna for twenty-five towers.

Bishnupur in Bengal is known as 'Temple Town' and used to be capital city of Mallabhum state in the past. This state used to be expanded throughout Bankura, Burdwan, Medinipur, Murshidabad and some parts of Bihar's Chhotanagpur plateau. There are four important terracotta temples situated in this place and these are architecturally magnificent and significant. Particularly terracotta plaques fixed on temples comprises valuable elements for reconstructing the mythological, historical and socio-cultural heritage. It is only in Bishnupur in the whole of West Bengal that such a concentration of temples in numbers and varieties can be found.

Jor-Bangla: This temple has many plaques which have pictures of animals like tiger, lion, deer, and fight between two elephants. As Bishnupur is surrounded with forest areas and tribal peoples, the temples are covered with pictures of tribal peoples hunting pigs by shooting arrows, pictures of tribal women binding braids with their hair. Apart from these pictures of social life there is picture of palanquin drawn by the soldiers to carry the zamindars in the battlefield, the riding of the king in a camel. There is a famous plaque known as 'nabonarikunjo', where nine women are standing to create the shape of an elephant. There are mythical pictures in the temple as well, such as the picture of the blind sage and his son Shraavan kumar, the death of Shraavan kumar through the arrows of king Dasharath, the curse given to latter by the former's father, the birth of Rama, the breaking of haradhanu, the marriage of Rama and Sita, the stories of Hanumana, Bali-Sugriv dual, death of Bali, Rama-Ravana dual, all these popular scenes from Ramayana have been inscribed in the terracotta plaques of this temple. Moreover, the *śaraśayyā* of Bhishma, gadayuddha between Veema and Yurdhoyana, Bhishma-Arjuna dual, Krishna leela are also there that has been taken from Mahabharata. Apart from that, here we can also found many scenes related to fight, soldiers with gun in their hands; pirates with guns in their hands, the scenes of their visit on



Dashavata
(set of 10)

their way to fight wearing war costumes.

Ek-Ratno: This temple which is also known as Madan-mohan temple is also famous for the terracotta architectures. In this temple we can also observe mythical pictures like Rama-Ravana dual, Dashavatar of Vishnu, just as the Jorbangla temple. Apart from that several pictures on Krishnaleela are also there, and in this temple social picture is also engraved on the terracotta plaques like-- the picture of a lady washing clothes in the basin of a pond, the dancing of men and women with drums, royal court, king of Bishnupur and the commoners of Bishnupur, battlefield, going towards to battlefield riding in a mare or in an elephant, hunting and many a few pictures on 'nama samkirtana' have been manifested through the engravings in the temple.

Char-Bangla: Rani Bhabani, the queen of Nator, a province that became part of Bangladesh post 1947, had built some exquisite terracotta temples in Murshidabad. The district incidentally was the capital of undivided Bengal, Bihar and Orissa till the British East India Company defeated Siraj ud-Daula, the last independent ruler of the state, in the Battle of Plassey in 1757. It is a cluster of four temples on raised platforms forming an inner courtyard. 'Char Bangla' indicates the number of structures that were built in the form of a typical Bengal village. Char (four in Bengali) means there are four houses. Each one is built on a 1.5 feet high foundation and is *dochala* (2 roofed) hut shaped. Each temple has three doors and three Shiva Lingas inside. The Northern and the Western temple are most exquisitely decorated with terracotta. The eastern temple is decorated with lime and mortar reliefs.

Motifs in the Terracotta Plaques

Motif is one of the important matters to be focus while someone having a discussion on terracotta art. In the following we have mentioned the detail of the motifs used in the architectures of these four above mentioned temples:

a. Motifs related to Plant World: As it is told already, there are 108 doors in the Rashmancho temple, in the two sides of the door there are motifs of lotus flowers. Even in the lowermost fringes of the pillars there are designs of lotus and other flowers as well as leaves. In Pancharatno temple there are motifs of the buds of lotus and there are motifs of other flowers. In Jorbangla temple also there are motifs of lotus and other flowers and trees in the doors. Even in the ektratno temple there are also motifs of wheel like lotus flowers, in the back side of the temple there are motifs of trees with flowers particularly flowers which have four leaves in each branches.

b. Motifs related to Animal World: Among the motifs related to animals, the pictures of swan, peacock in Rasa-mancha; in Pancharatno temple there are pictures of fish, tigers, lions, monkeys, elephants, horses, ostrich birds etc. In the Madan-mohan temple there are pictures of swan, peacock, monkeys, tigers, lions, snakes, pigs, horses, elephants etc.

c. Motifs related to Solar World: In the terracotta architecture of these temples surya or sun, chandra or moon, tara or stars have taken positions.

d. Geometrical Motifs: Moreover one can find there many geometrical motifs and patterns in the temples like triangular, square, circle, half-circle, lines, rectangular etc. Geometrical motifs are architectural designs characterized by several horizontal bands about the circumference covering the entire vase. Between these lines the artist used a number of other decorative motifs such as zigzag, the triangle, the meanders, and the Swastika.



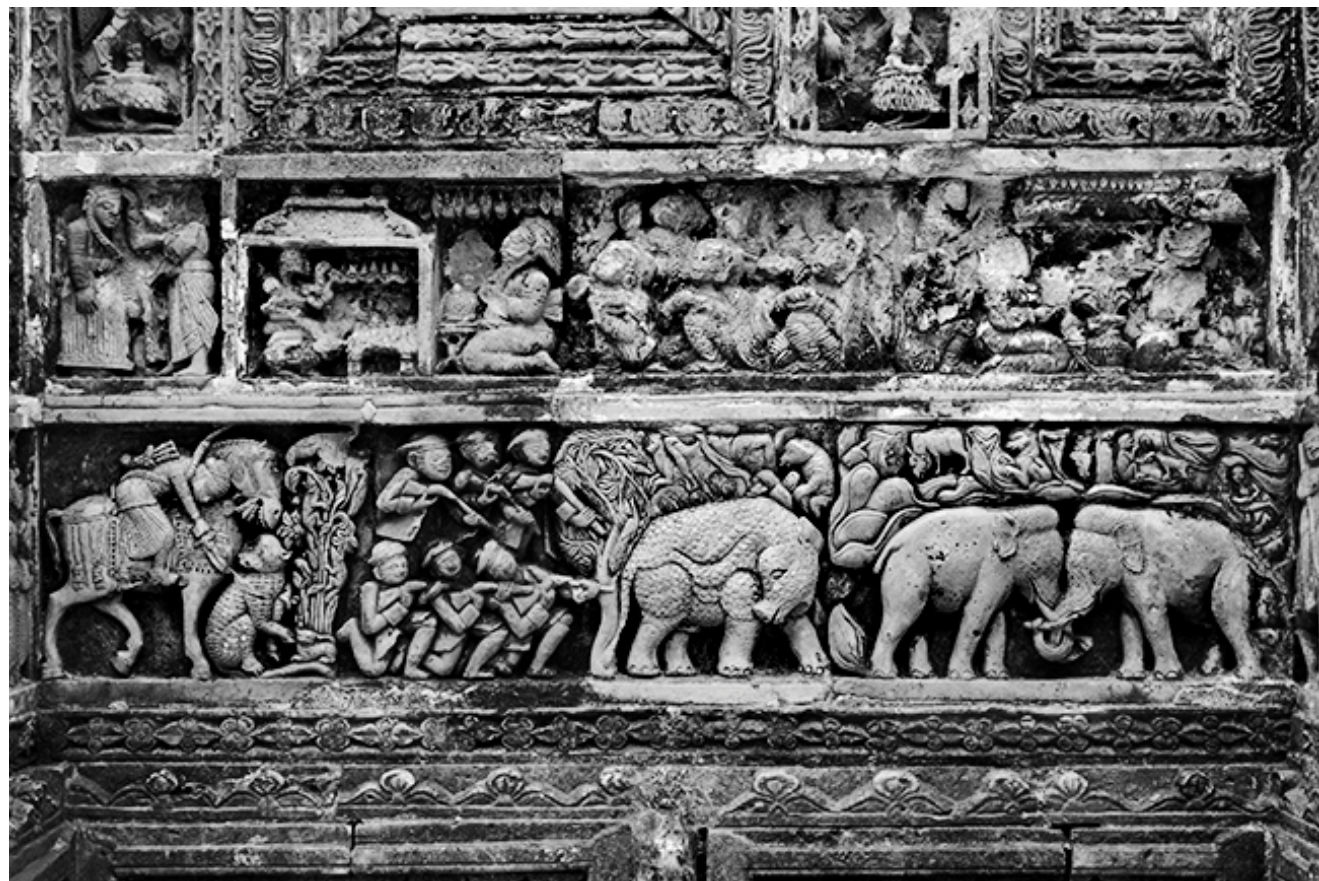
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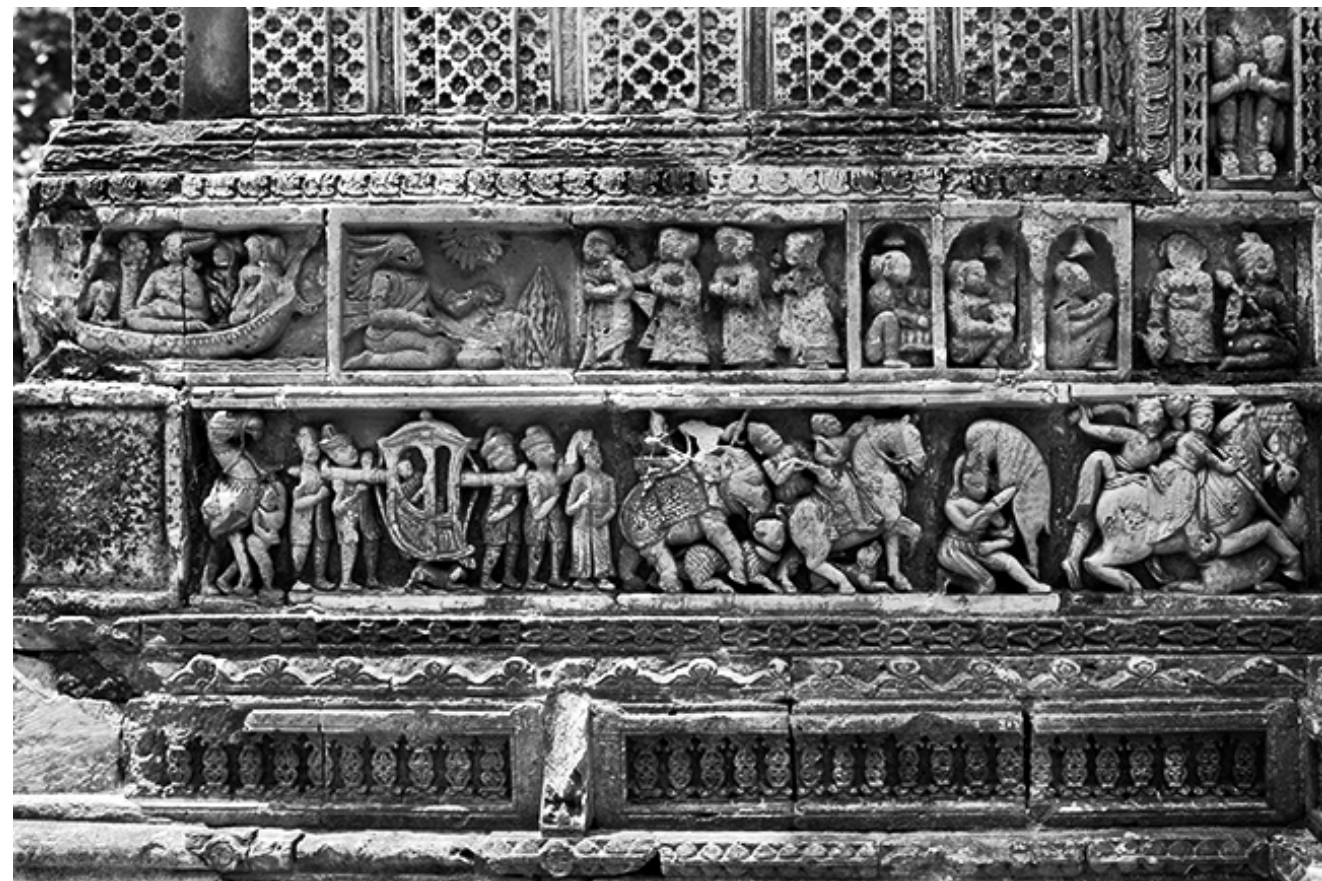
Terracotta Panel VIII
20 x 30 in
archival print on paper
no. of edition: 1/10



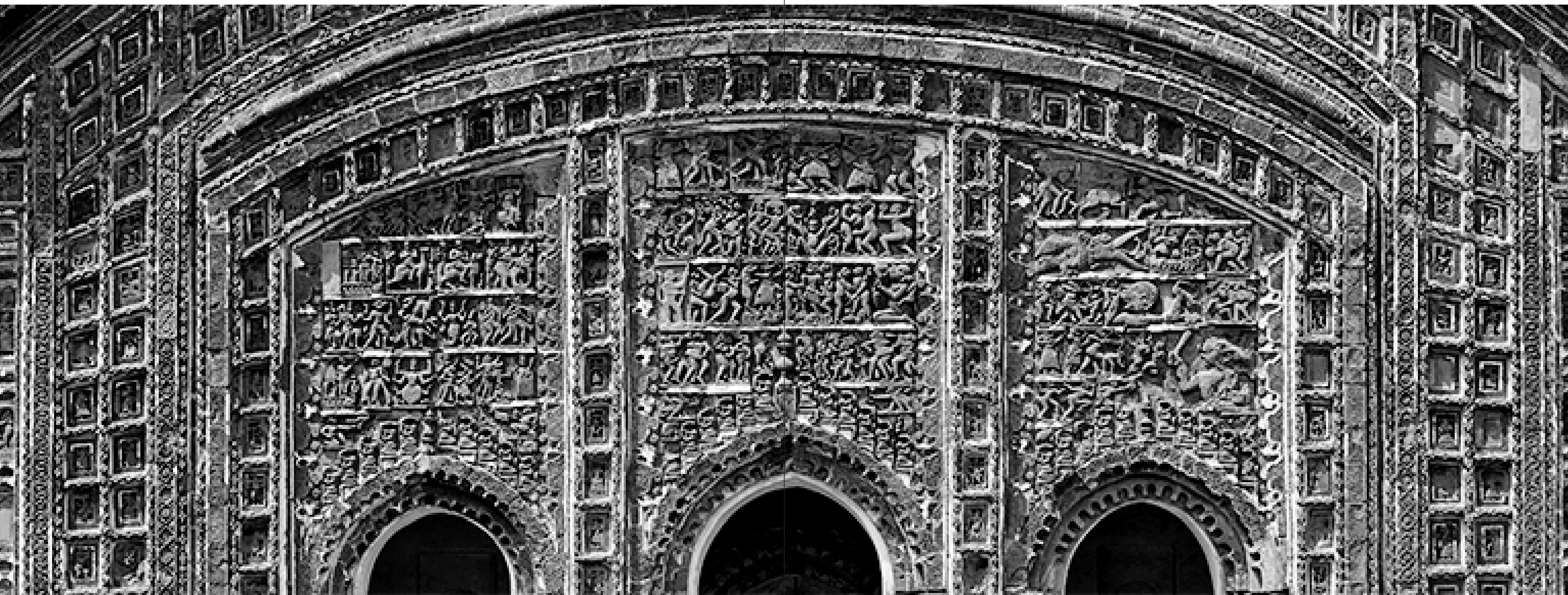
Terracotta Panel VIII
20 x 30 in
archival print on paper
no. of edition: 1/10



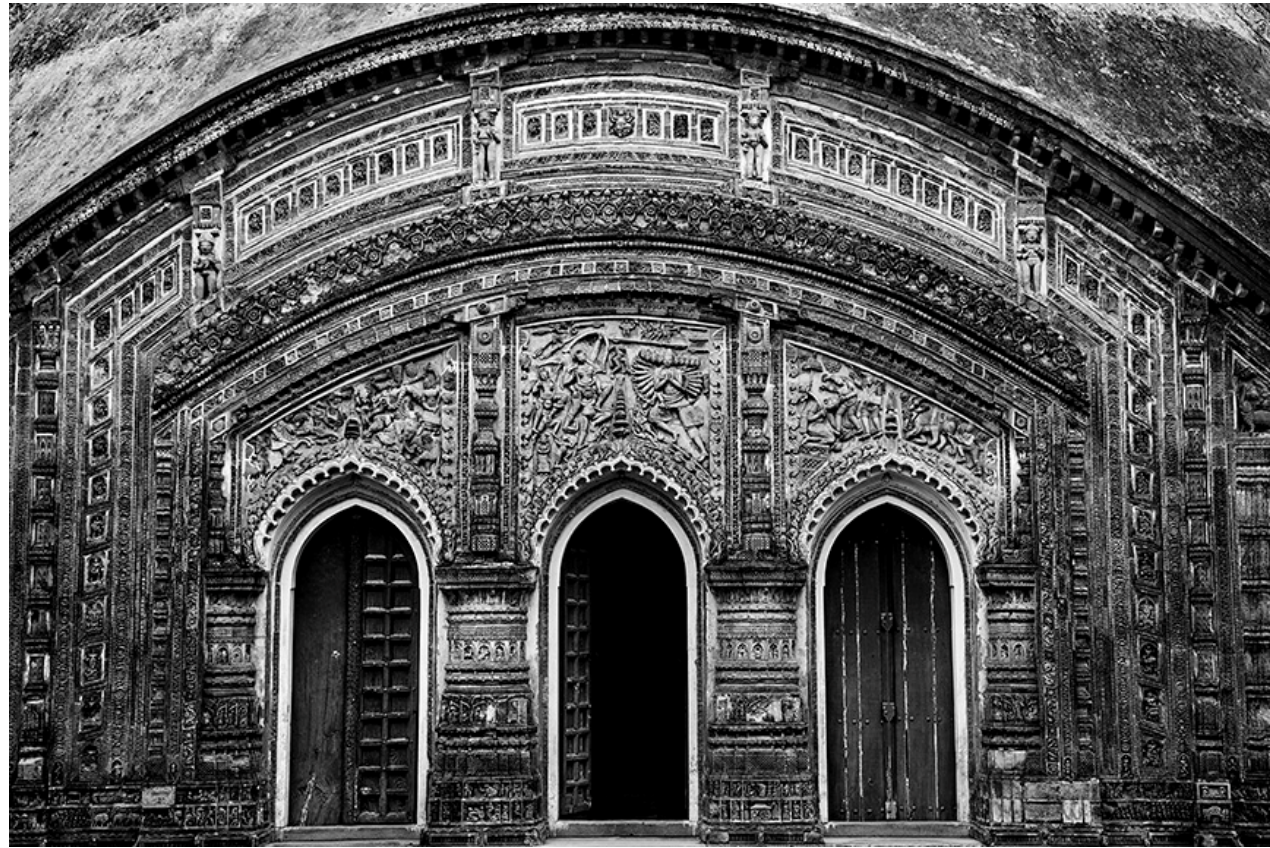
Terracotta IV
20 x 30 in
archival print on paper
no. of edition: 1/10



Terracotta V
20 x 30 in
archival print on paper
no. of edition: 1/10



Terracotta II
27 x 72 in
archival print on paper
no. of edition: 1/10



Char Bangla I
45 x 48 in
fine art print on tempered glass
no. of edition: 1/10



108 Shiva Temple
15 X62 in
archival print on paper
no. of edition: 1/10



Timeless Facade I
16 x 18 in
archival print on paper
no. of edition: 1/10



Timeless Facade II
16 x 18 in
archival print on paper
no. of edition: 1/10



Krishna Temple I | Krishna Temple II
10 x 15 in (each)
archival print on paper
no. of edition: 1/10



Mahishasura Mardini
20 x 30 in
archival print on paper
no. of edition: 1/10



Untitled I
29 x 16 in
archival print on paper
no. of edition: 1/10



Untitled I
29 x 16 in
archival print on paper
no. of edition: 1/10



Rahul Modak

Fire Altar
96 in dia. , 53 in h.
Terracotta



Monumenta II
18 x 22 x 22 in
terracotta & iron



Monumenta I
88 x 22 x 14 in
terracotta & iron



Offering I, II
variable
terracotta

SANJAY DAS

The artist works with photographing, documenting and archiving ancient heritage sites of India especially, West Bengal where he hails from. Sanjay completed his BFA applied art from College of Art, New Delhi. He has been creating works of art in photography for over two decades. An avid traveller, he has been documenting the culture of West Bengal in terms of ancient sites, art forms that are getting lost in history, while working continuously along the areas lying on coast of Bay of Bengal. India's rich cultural diversity and its many unique customs and traditions have been a major source of inspiration for the photographer. It has always been his endeavor to bring forth the untold stories that this country has to offer and showcasing them to the world at large. The objective is to create imagery that tells a story – in color, in texture, in light and in shadow and form a unique blend, which is spiritually as well as mentally rewarding. Sanjay's works are a merger of theoretical and conceptual assertions with experiences, interests or fascination which finally forms the image and its meaning. Sanjay have been a part of many national and international shows.

His solo show at Art Centrix Space is slated to open in September 2018. In 2017, his works were showcased at the show titled, Once Upon A Time in Black and White curated by Monica Jain at Art Centrix Space. This year his works were part of a group show with Gallery Ragini at the India Art Fair, Edition 2018.

This year his works were exhibited at the show titled "Those Days - An Exhibition of Indian Vintage Photography" at Art Konsult, New Delhi, 2018 and "Women of Yesterday, Today and Tomorrow" at Art Konsult, New Delhi, 2018, "One Soul Many Lives" at Bikaner House, New Delhi, 2018. "Looking Beyond" at Art Pilgrim Live, Gurugram, 2018. "India Art Fair" New Delhi, 2018." His works were part of various groups shows in the capital and other major cities in India. Earlier he exhibited with gallery Wonderwall. His solo shows have been titled "Rediscover Bengal" at India Habitat Center, New Delhi, 2014 and "Beautiful Bengal" (Solo Show) at Muktheadhara Art Gallery, New Delhi in 2013. "Faith" (Solo Show) at Muktheadhara Art Gallery, New Delhi in 2013. "Closeup India" (Solo Show) at Open Palm Court, India Habitat Center, New Delhi, 2009. "Closeup India" (Solo Show) at Shridharni Triveni Kala Sangam, New Delhi, 2009. "Breathing Space" (Solo Show) New Delhi, 2007.

The artist currently lives and works in Delhi.

RAHUL MODAK

Rahul's oeuvre emerges from his memories. From Kalinarayanpur's rustic-ness to Naihati's industrial atmosphere, from the poetic trance at Santiniketan to the daily-life struggle in Baroda to finally fulfilling a dream as an artist in the 'ultra-urbanization' of Delhi, each chapter of his life has its own significance and inspiration. Each of the memory calls to mind, fragmented nostalgia that end in 'collective memory', which gives birth to his works he fondly calls as his brain children. Every phase is an identity crisis for the artist, wherein the question of 'who am I' constantly boggles him. From here the prime overtone of 'Existentialism' transforms into a cultural identity crisis. It evokes a quest to find the individual self. While shifting from one place to another, he carried the feeling of 'homelessness'- thus his works are primarily centered around cultural migration. As an alumnus of Shanti Niketan, he had the privilege to live in rustic settings, thus developing a deep relationship with nature and natural materials. The rustling sound of the dry leaves made him conscious during unconscious walks in the rustic alleys of Santiniketan and he found himself in contemplation among those 'dry leaves.' Many of his works represent the 'post situation' of an organism or individual. He chose terracotta, the eternal and enduring rural medium to express his concerns. From the prehistoric era to the modern age, this particular art form has survived by the passage of time. Terracotta ('baked earth', 'hard-baked clay') is omnipresent in human culture and has immense archaeological significance. At the India Art Fair 2018 Edition, the terracotta and ceramic works of Rahul Modak were highly appreciated.

Born in 1983, Rahul completed his Masters in Fine Arts in 2006 from Kala Bhavan, Viswa Bharati, Shantiniketan. His first solo show titled, "Mysterious Terracotta" was at Niv Art Centre, New Delhi in 2013. His works were also part of many group shows in New Delhi, Kolkata and Hyderabad. He has participated in workshops, camps and residencies across India. He is the recipient of the Junior Fellowship from the Ministry of Culture in 2013-2014. Earlier, he was awarded with merit scholarship from Kala Bhavan, Viswa Bharati 2003-2008. He is working towards a solo show at Art Centrix Space in 2019.

Currently the artist lives and works from Kolkata, West Bengal.



Art Centrix Space is a unique 3500 sq ft. space in a stunningly landscaped 2 acres environment in the heart of South Delhi's Vasant Kunj. It is a place to enjoy and appreciate Art in a relaxed environment and to view art in relation to space. The indoor environment has a formal gallery to exhibit art and a modern Art Lounge 360, complete with furniture and well designed interiors to view art, as it would look in your own space, The outdoor sculpture garden is a natural setting for installations and sculptural works and is a hub for artistic get togethers, interesting events & conversations.



ART CENTRIX SPACE

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Fleet of Ducks

15 x 62 in
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