

## **Pramodbabu Ramteke**

The artist and pedagogue Pramodbabu Ramteke was born in Nagpur in 1944. The works of Ramteke are embedded with colorful harmonies, a deep mastery of material, and generosity - which produce true spiritual encounters with the visual realm. The beauty in his work echoes with this definition in the way that colours emerge, like diamonds in the rough, or the coarse geological outline of faces and limbs that are common in his Platographic prints. Ramteke is also known as an Ambedkarite activist and his work is infused with the spirit of worldly justice and freedom. The work of Ramteke is material evidence of the dignity that prevails and underlies social constructions of oppression.

In his paintings, the material and layering of pigmentation shows an elemental truth of the broken nature of the world. Colors shine through like precious metals – combining and swirling in one intermingled and interlaced surface. In *The Unexplored Tendencies* (2006) the profile of a human being is constructed out of a bricolage of animal and spiritual beings in the affirmation of the interconnectedness of our world. More abstract works such as *The Cerulean Odour* contain more subtle messages of the beauty of rusted nickel, dry riverbeds, or the geological traces of bone and glass. In watercolor on paper works such as *Untitled*, Ramteke exhibits a mastery of material seen in the confidence in application of black pigment. Conscious of its difficulty, he creates dazzling scenes of vermilions and blues.

From canvas to printmaking, Ramteke exhibits an extraordinary breadth of subject matter ranging from abstraction to figuration based on elemental references of Modernism. He famously worked with the technique of Platography which has become well-known in India. In a text by Dr. Piyali Paul, the technique of Platography is said to connect to the ancient art of lithography. 1 In Ramteke's work, a line of ancestral and primordial conditions is figuratively elaborated in creatures that are at once strange and recognizable. Uncanny heads emerge from shoulders and mouths gape. The primal energy of these forms recalls origin stories, fables and myths, and emerges from these nearly abstract forms. Stark color contrasts reveal a sharp eye for palette and the effect of color on emotion such as the piercing blue on yellow of *Consolation* (2010). The figures point towards modernist forms such as the animals of Marc Chagall, 2 the expressive mothers of Picasso's *Guernica*, or the graphic work of Estonian artist Jüri Arrak 3 that connects times and cultures across geographies towards basic and elemental human truths.

The process of printmaking is a labor-intensive and democratic art. The resulting editions contain the embedded value of the multiple that has been used as a revolutionary medium among communities across the world. The value of the multiple is democratic in its desire to reach many rather than an individual and to work with the value of resourcefulness. One such example of a socially-oriented printing studio is Havana's Taller Experimental de Gráfica 4 or Bogotá's many printmaking workshops that have pressed out work by

Beatriz González. 5 These social projects and renowned artistic centers affirm that printmaking is a form of working together. In 2016 Berlin-based artist Nasan Tur created a live printmaking workshop as the center of his solo-exhibition proposing that the act of printmaking should be considered an integral part of the artistic piece. 6 The studio produced suggestive texts that easily strike conversation through their openness and simplicity. In Ramteke's work, the prints contain memories of his pedagogical pursuits as a teacher and mentor, of the next generation of Indian artists being tutored with lively discussions and time for practice. In this way, from language to Ramteke's figuration, printmaking is a medium that transforms images into celebration. The joy and exuberance of those condemned by social oppression can find infinite beauty in producing their own scales of value.

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1 Dr. Piyali Paul, "Documentation of Platography Workshop." Visva Bharati University, 5 May 2021, (<http://www.ijsrp.org/research-paper-0521/ijsrp-p11332.pdf>)

2 See here examples and biography of Chagall: Guggenheim Collection, "Marc Chagall," (<https://www.guggenheim.org/artwork/artist/marc-chagall>)

3 See here examples and biography of legendary Estonian artist Jüri Arrak: NOAR, "Jüri Arrak" (<https://noar.eu/en/artist/juri-arrak/>)

4 Founded in the 1960's with the support of Che Guevara, the Taller Experimental de Gráfica still operates to this day. (<https://www.arte-sur.org/galleries/taller-experimental-de-grafica-de-la-habana/>)

5 González began as a traditional painter but began experimenting with graphic arts when her interest turned to the mass media. Growing up during "La Violencia" (The Violence) González' work was always political. Tate, "Who is Beatriz González?"

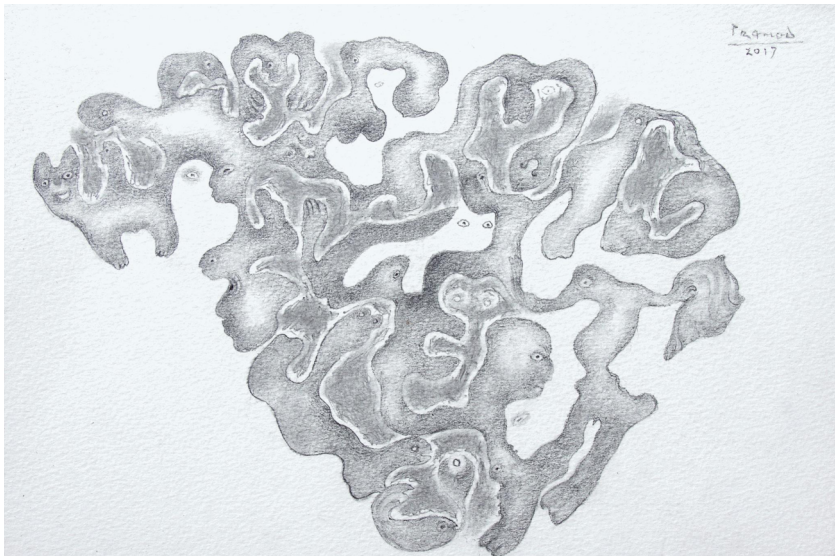
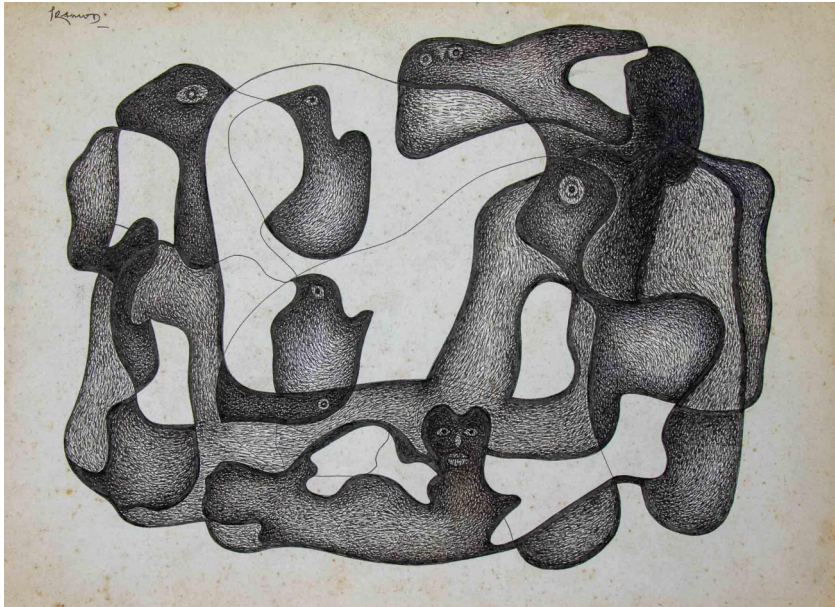
(<https://www.tate.org.uk/art/artists/beatriz-gonzalez-11980/who-is-beatriz-gonzalez>)

6 Artdaily, "Artist Nasan Tur Creates a Live Printmaking Studio", 2016.

(<https://artdaily.cc/news/91984/Artist-Nasan-Tur-creates-a-live-printmaking-studio-at-Blain-Southern-Berlin>)



The Unexplored Tendencies  
Oil & Acrylic on Canvas  
48" x 54" | 2000



1: Drawing 3 | Ink on Paper | 11" x 15" | 1985  
2: Untitled | Pencil on Paper | 8" x 11" | 2017