



EMAMI ART

# *Play* FORMS

Recent works by  
**Partha Pratim Deb**

**June 27 – August 9, 2025**  
Gallery 2, Ground Floor

"As I age, a host of different ideas swarm into my mind, and I can't help but wish it had happened sooner in life. Back then, I had my family and finances to worry about. Now, as a senior citizen and pensioner, I feel a newfound freedom and an urge to create — it arrives almost like a responsibility. Selling art is no longer my priority; creating something meaningful is. My years of teaching at Rabindra Bharati University have granted me a fulfilling retirement, allowing me to live and work independently. I now realise I have a profound obligation to art."

Partha Pratim Deb



The above quote by Partha Pratim Deb, an excerpt originally in Bangla from his diary, speaks to his artistic lateness and the heroism of intransigence reflected in all his works on display. After he retired from Rabindra Bharati University, where he had taught for more than three decades, Partha Pratim Deb (b. 1943) devoted himself entirely to creating art, freely and without abdicating its rights in favour of the demands of the art market. Deb works daily and has produced an immense body of work — the energy, prolificity, and delicacy of which prove that ill health and old age do not necessarily produce senility/serenity. There is no over-arching scheme of thought behind his works; they are created spontaneously, as days pass by, becoming more wayward and eccentric, without proposing wholeness. For Deb, it is not great ideas but artistic habits that hold his late works together, give them unity, and make them more than a mere collection of fragmented creations. For him, art is what an artist does.

Working across mediums, from painting to assemblage, Partha Pratim Deb has developed his artistic style, combining elements of radical avant-garde practices from the West with the teachings of his renowned mentors in Santiniketan and Baroda. Santiniketan, where he explored dance, music, and theatre beyond visual art, was an occasion for him to discover his artistic self. He learned a great deal from the masters, particularly Gauri Bhanja, Nandalal Bose's elder daughter, who taught design and textiles at Kala Bhavana. Her ingenious dexterity, Deb recalls in one of our conversations, in linear decoration — the ability to transform an object — a flower or a leaf — into a design motif with the help of a few flowing lines, always surprised him. If his obsession with bold, rhythmic lines and patterns has some connection to Santiniketan, Gauri Bhanja, and Benodebehari Mukherjee, it was KG Subramanyan in Baroda who sparked critical thinking in Deb, encouraging him to work in diverse, often unconventional materials. Partha Pratim Deb's art embodies a remarkable effort at eclecticism, a thoughtful synthesis of styles and ideas, mediums and approaches from diverse, incommensurable sources. An admirer of Marcel Duchamp's nominalist spirit, he patiently studied Nandalal Bose's drawings alongside the Pop and OP art grammar without subscribing to their ideologies.





For Deb, art is a pure event or activity and can begin without preplanning or a theme. It is the reason why he does not name his artworks, which are invariably titled 'Untitled'. He prefers to start simply by allowing his hand to move freely (a skilful habit), creating lines, strokes, and form — in short, the graphic event — or incorporating chance elements like throwing or spraying paint (an accidental event). While the initial stage relies largely on automatism and the unconscious, the later stage shows the artist gradually gaining control over his work. He develops it through a playful additive process, ending up either with an abstract or a figurative composition. The figures are mostly human beings, male figures, wearing humorous faces and making gestures. When asked why they appear comical, like clowns, Deb replied that it is because they are the inhabitants of the strange and imaginary landscape he had created for them. Working in a style that is hurried and spontaneous, he prefers mediums that are quick to dry, such as waterproof ink and acrylic.

Unlike his paintings and drawings, his intriguing three-dimensional objects at the show, which oscillate between the realms of toy and sculpture, have not been widely shown. Deb, who firmly believes in the afterlife of objects, reuses discarded items to create art. He prefers ordinary household materials, such as old shirts, trousers, and socks, often stuffed with cotton and newspapers and stitched together. In this, Deb fuses modernist assemblage with handicraft in his near-abstract forms, which link objects and materials, articulating a personal and cultural history. At the heart of these works, which shed new light on Deb's artistic practice, lies the idea of frivolity — a playful urge to create curious forms devoid of deeper meaning out of materials regarded as banal and unworthy of aesthetic exaltation.

- Arkaprava Bose



Partha Pratim Deb's vibrant paintings, featuring an arrangement of bright colours, are characterized by a playful style and unconventional approach, evoking a sense of artistic freedom.

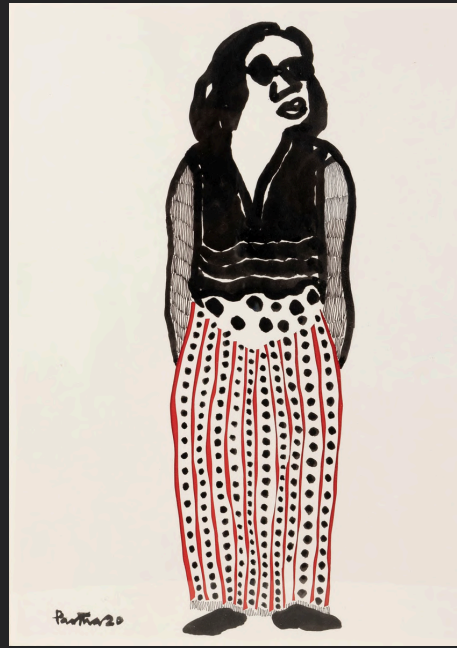


*Untitled*

Acrylic on canvas  
59 7/8 x 59 7/8 in.  
2015



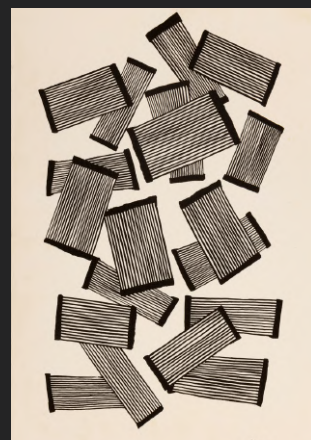
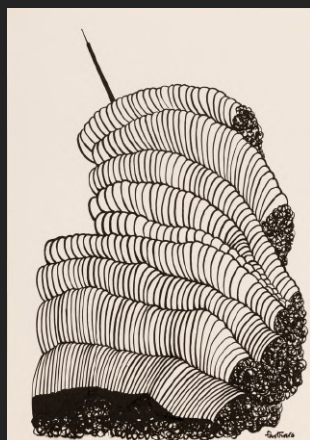
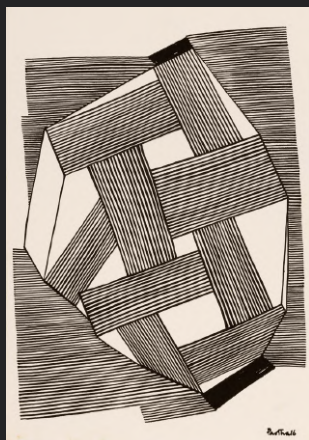
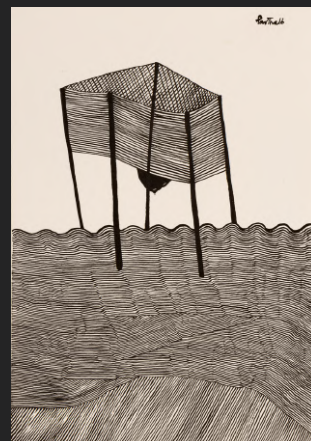
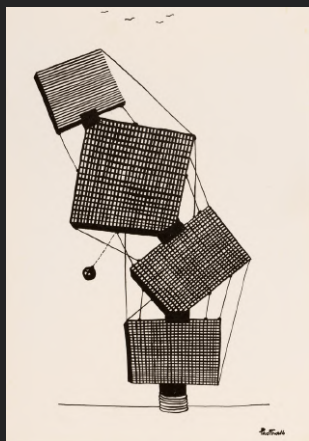




Untitled  
 Ink on paper  
 16 1/2 x 11 5/8 in. each  
 2020







*Untitled*

Ink on paper

20 x 14 in. each

Set of 8 works

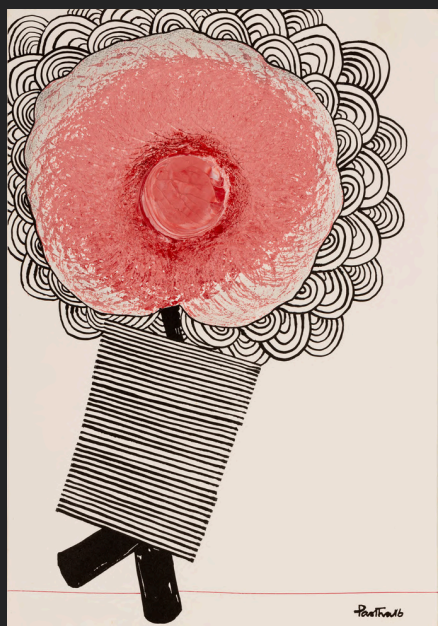
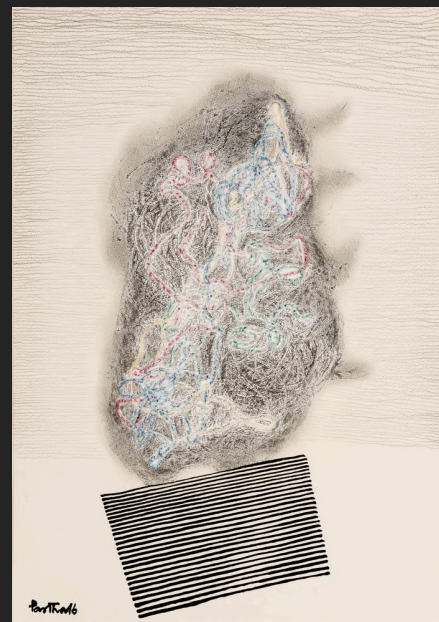
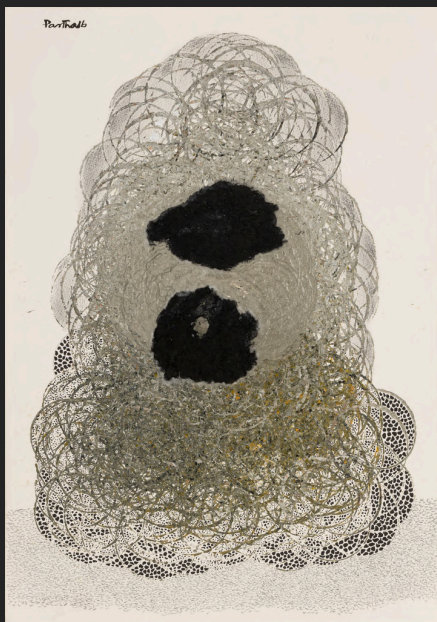
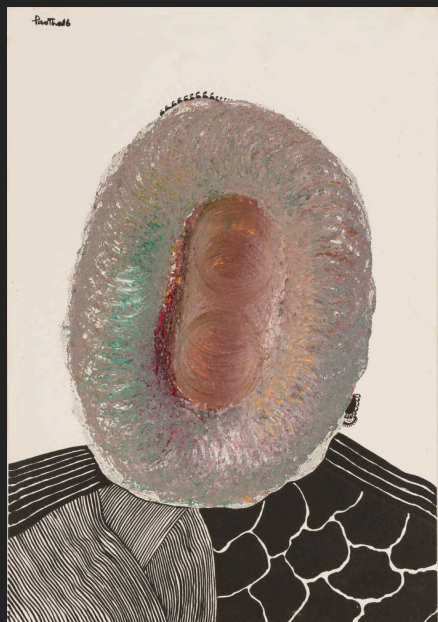
2016

Partha Pratim Deb's drawing is a graphic event, a free mark-making process that unfolds without pre-planning. Working with ink and acrylic, which dry quickly, he creates lines and shapes that reveal the trajectory of his inner psychic processes, unencumbered by specific ideas or concepts. This approach showcases his experimental attitude and willingness to let the unconscious play an equal role to consciousness. Deb's drawings are powerful design architectures composed of fluid lines, pigments, and impressions.





Without pre-planning or adhering to specific themes, he lets his mind and hand act freely, allowing the artwork to unfold organically. Consequently, he refrains from titling his paintings, emphasizing their origin in action rather than in thought or concept.



*Untitled*  
Acrylic and ink on paper  
20 x 14 in. each  
Set of 6 works  
2016

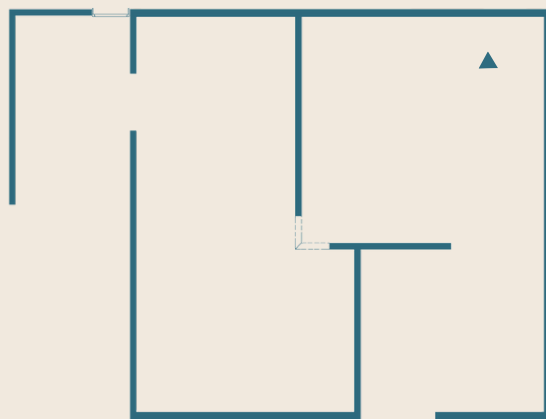




Featuring figures in an unfamiliar landscape, his works blend action and conception, abstraction and figuration, freedom and control. The paintings don't narrate a specific story; instead, they reveal their creative journey, showcasing the joyful artistic adventure that brought them into being.



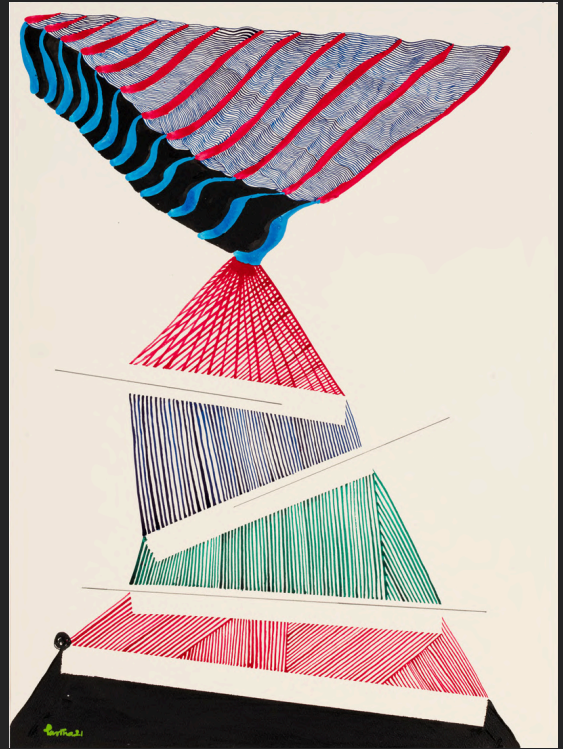
*Untitled*  
Acrylic on canvas  
72 x 72 in.  
2019







*Untitled*  
Ink, acrylic ink and acrylic and graphite on paper  
24 x 18 in.  
2021



*Untitled*  
Ink, acrylic ink, acrylic and graphite on paper  
24 x 18 in.  
2021



*Untitled*  
Ink, acrylic ink and acrylic and graphite on paper  
24 x 18 in.  
2021



*Untitled*  
Ink, acrylic ink, acrylic and graphite on paper  
24 x 18 in.  
2021



The small paper-mesh figure, resembling a toy, embodies a complex blend of real and imaginary forms. Deb's creative process is characterized by spontaneity, with no preconceived themes or plans, allowing his playful interaction with materials to shape the final outcome.



*Untitled*

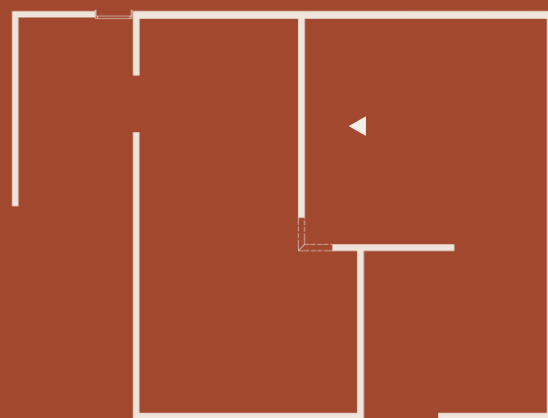
Cotton thread, papier-mâché, and  
enamel paint

20 1/4 x 10 3/8 x 4 3/4 in. approx.

Late 1980s – Early 1990s



*Untitled*  
Acrylic on canvas  
36 x 36 in.  
2011





Partha Pratim Deb's drawings showcase bold figuration executed in a hurried, spontaneous style. In his work, the process is considered more significant than the end product. As a keen observer, he captures the essence of human expressive gestures, attaching no specific meaning to them.



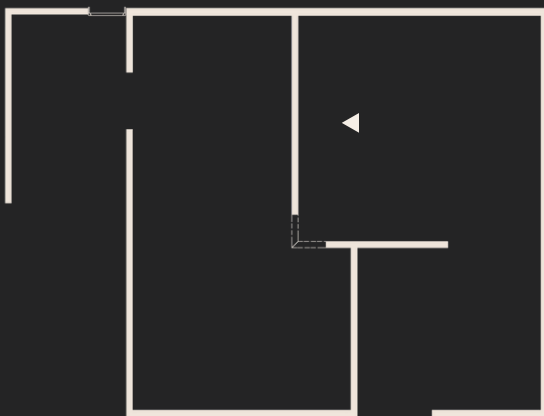
*Untitled*  
Ink on paper  
20 x 14 in.  
2016



*Untitled*  
Ink on paper  
20 x 14 in.  
2016



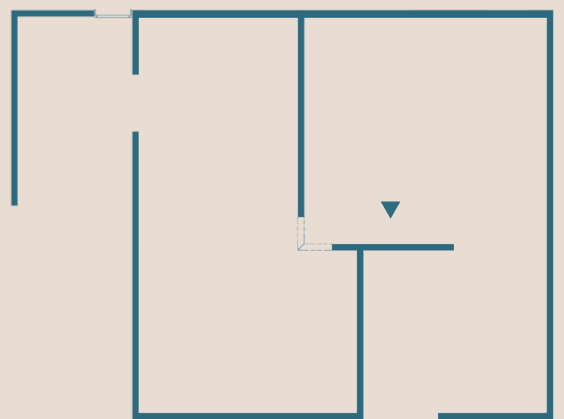
*Untitled*  
Ink on paper  
20 x 14 in.  
2016







*Untitled*  
Acrylic on canvas  
60 x 59 7/8 in.  
2017







*Untitled*

Used trousers, glass bottles, found objects, fabric, threads, and cotton

21 3/4 x 40 3/8 x 19 3/4 in. approx. - overall

Set of 9 works

2023

Besides his paintings and drawings, marked by a playful and spontaneous style, Partha Pratim Deb is also renowned in Bengal's art community for his sculptural assemblages crafted from familiar household objects (ephemera, bottles, newspapers). These works blur the line between toys and sculptures, as he delights in transforming mundane objects and their meanings into something aesthetically unique. In this piece, he used old trousers, fabric, glass bottles to create a sculptural installation, combining craft with free imagination.







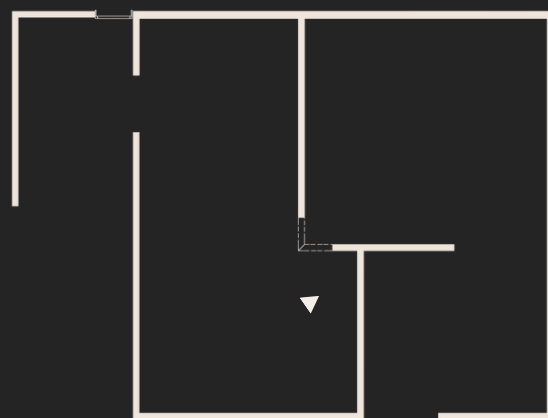
*Untitled*

Fabric, thread, and cotton

36 1/4 x 15 3/4 x 18 7/8 in. approx.

2023

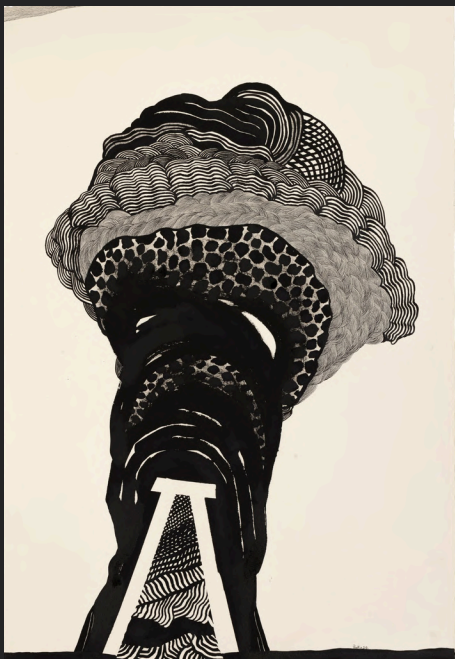
Partha Pratim Deb repurposes found objects and materials, transforming them into art objects that unlock new forms and meanings. Rather than adhering to conventional methods, he explores the latent potential of everyday things. The fabric sculpture made of old socks, resembling a toy, embodies a complex blend of real and imaginary forms.





*Untitled*  
Ink on paper  
44 1/8 x 30 1/4 in.  
2022

Working with ink, he creates lines and shapes that reveal the trajectory of his inner psychic processes, unencumbered by specific ideas or concepts. This approach showcases his experimental attitude and willingness to let the unconscious play an equal role to consciousness.



*Untitled*  
Ink on paper  
44 1/8 x 30 1/8 in.  
2022



*Untitled*  
Ink on paper  
44 1/8 x 30 1/4 in.  
2022



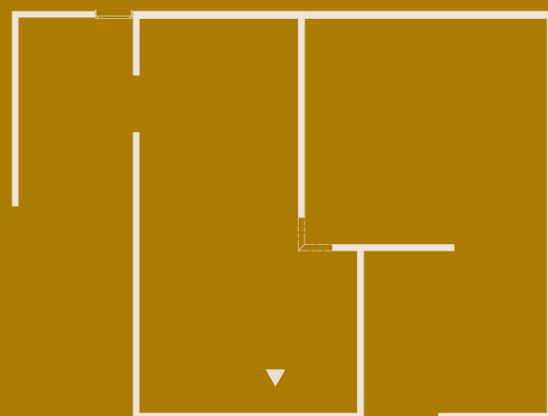


"An artist is free to work as he pleases but the colours he uses also have their own freedom. They mingle into one another and create fascinating combinations and textures. I have always tried to retain that in my work."

Partha Pratim Deb



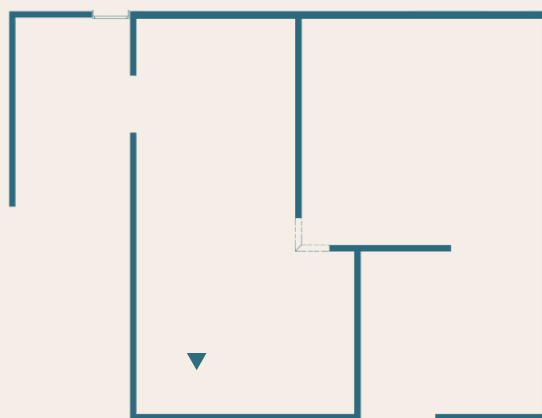
*Untitled*  
Acrylic, and paper pulp mixed  
with sand on canvas  
59 7/8 x 60 in.  
2017







*Untitled*  
 Acrylic, and paper pulp mixed with sand on canvas  
 59 7/8 x 60 in.  
 2017







*Untitled*  
Ink on paper  
44 x 30 in.  
2022



*Untitled*  
Ink on paper  
44 1/8 x 30 1/4 in.  
2022



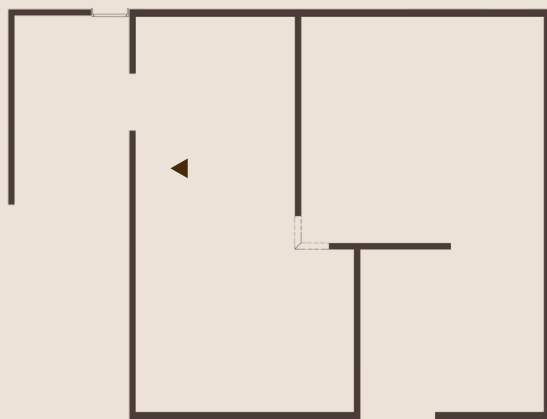
*Untitled*  
Ink on paper  
44 x 30 1/4 in.  
2022



*Untitled*  
Ink on paper  
44 x 30 1/4 in.  
2022



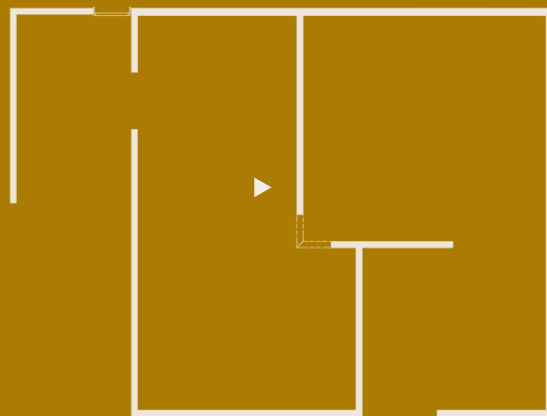
*Untitled*  
Acrylic on canvas  
30 x 30 1/8 in.  
2007



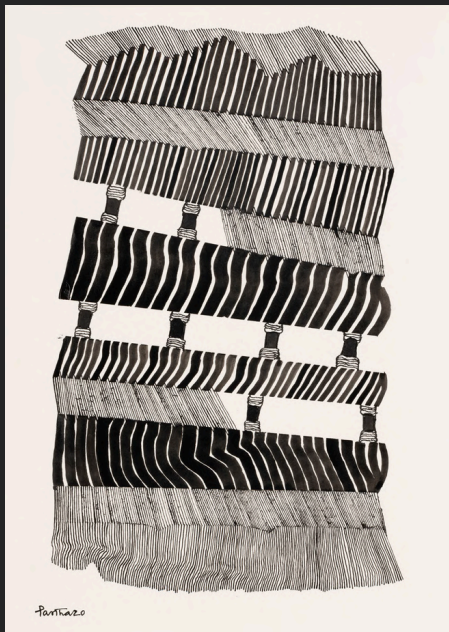




*Untitled*  
Acrylic on canvas  
36 1/8 x 24 1/8 in.  
2014







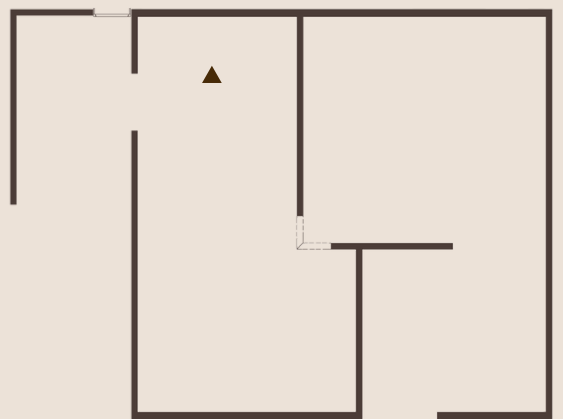
Untitled  
 Ink on paper  
 Overall dimension variable  
 16 1/2 x 11 3/4 in. each  
 Set of 6 works  
 2020







*Untitled*  
Acrylic on canvas  
72 x 60 in. (182.8 x 152.5 cm.)  
2014

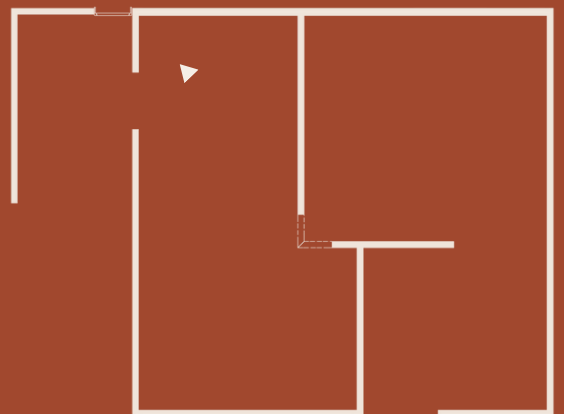




*Untitled*

Fabric, thread, acrylic, and newspaper  
22 1/2 x 63 1/4 x 10 7/8 in. approx  
2020

In this particular piece, he used an old shirt and fabric scraps stitched together and stuffed with newspaper. Without preconceived notions of form or shape, the artwork unpredictably emerges from his playful engagement with materials, oscillating between familiarity and strangeness. In spirit, this work resonates with Abanindranath Tagore's *Kutum Katam*, merging craft with post-war contemporary art's use of unconventional and often discarded materials.







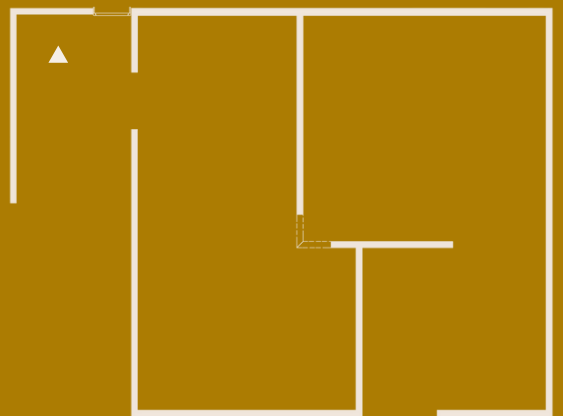
Alongside his paintings and large drawings, Partha Pratim Deb has sketched profusely throughout his career, amassing an almost unending number of sketchbooks. His sketches range from pensive to comical; the mediums change, and the forms mature over the years. He finishes his sketchbook rapidly, often within a few days, swiftly moving on to the next. For this he prefers quick-drying mediums like ink, acrylic, and collage. He also repurposes printed catalogues as sketchbooks, experimenting with mixed media.







*Untitled*  
Acrylic on canvas  
36 1/8 x 24 in.  
2014







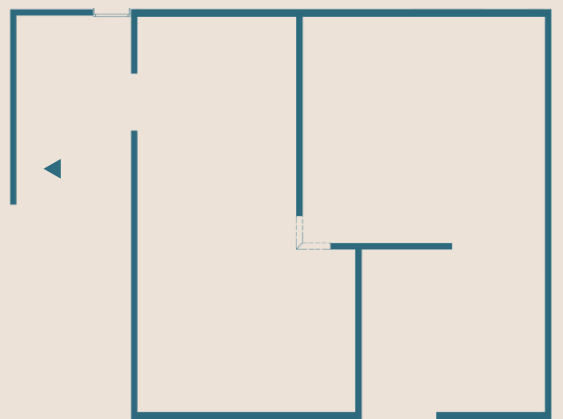
*Untitled*  
Acrylic on canvas  
50 x 50 in.  
2024







*Untitled*  
Acrylic on canvas  
29 3/4 x 29 7/8 in.  
2008







Tap to watch the artist talk about his practice

**Partha Pratim Deb** was born in 1943 in Sylhet District, now in Bangladesh, to a mathematician father. The family migrated to Agartala, Tripura, in 1948, soon after the Partition – where he completed his school education. In Agartala, he received private training in painting from renowned artist Shailesh Chandra Deb Barma, a disciple of Nandalal Bose. Deb later studied fine arts at Kala Bhavana, Visva Bharati, Santiniketan, and MS University, Baroda. Between 1972 and 2005, he taught painting at Rabindra Bharati University and served as the Dean of the Faculty of Visual Arts, RBU from 1998 to 2003. Deb has been the subject of numerous solo exhibitions, including *Gestures*, Emami Art, Kolkata (2020); Aicon Gallery, New York (2006); *Play for Joy of Seeing*, Aakriti Art Gallery, Kolkata (2006); Birla Academy of Art & Culture, Kolkata (1997); and Academy of Fine Arts (1974, 1976, 1978). His work has also been showcased in various duo and group exhibitions, such as *Leela* at Aakriti Art Gallery, Kolkata (2009), *Indian Surrealism, Diversified Fantasy, Endangered Earth* at Aakriti Art Gallery, Kolkata (2008); *Glimpses of Contemporary Bengal Art* at Birla Academy of Art and Culture (Kolkata, 2006); *Folk in Modern* at Aakriti Art Gallery (Kolkata, 2006); *Lines* at Birla Academy of Art & Culture (Kolkata, 2005); *New Wave in Bengal Art* at Akar Prakar (Kolkata, 2005); *Contemporary Art Exhibition* at Chitrakoot Art Gallery (Kolkata, 2002); and *Art of Bengal* at CIMA (Kolkata, 2000), among others. A member of Painter's Orchestra, an artists' group in Kolkata, Partha Pratim Deb lives and works in Kolkata.