



# The Great Outdoors

Nayana Kanodia

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Art Alive Gallery  
S-221, Panchsheel Park, New Delhi

**art**alive  
GALLERY

# The Great Outdoors

– Uma Prakash

In spite of the lure of the sophisticated creature comforts indoors, man embraces nature. Ideas flow; senses come alive, when man becomes one with nature. Nayanaa Kanodia explores this aspect in her visual narrative *The Great Outdoors*. Her body of work shows the close bond man has with nature. A union that helps him regain his lost innocence, enjoying a solace that can be derived from the peace and quiet of nature. Although a number of the paintings are set indoors trees, foliage and birds are skillfully integrated. The works evoke the light and sensation of wandering in an ornamental garden.

Nayanaa's work is a salient artistic combination of a still life composition with a message. She is a painter of women who are on the cusp of telling their story. The excitement of what is the story going to be. The woman on the bicycle opens up a pastoral picture of married life with a dog that brings a smile to the face. It is an interesting mixture of east and west, the open umbrella accentuating the lure of the woman. Still life compositions of domestic middle class interiors with a collection of flowers are an interesting oddity when put in context of soulful women in saris. It is as if two genres work successfully side by side, a surprise at every turn of the page. No wonder that her collection enjoys such popularity. What is so special that so many of her women look as if they are about to tell a story but never start or finish it. The imaginative journeys started by her creations can never have an end.

*The Musicians* portray beautiful songs and sounds by the lake. Three committed musicians bring nature closer and closer to the music which eventually finds its way into the three music scores on display in the foreground.

Immediately, we wonder what it is that grasps the creativity of the three men in contrasting waistcoats. Is it the wind that blows through the hills and ripples the waters of the lake or is it something more mysterious as the rolling hills in the background? Our eyes are particularly drawn to the musician with a flute. One is only to look into his eyes and see that he is in another world, dreaming distant and beyond. What is he playing? As John Keats said

“Heard melodies are sweet, but those unheard are sweeter! Therefore ye soft pipes play on, not to the sensual ear, but more endeared, Pipe to the spirit ditties of no tune.”

In *The Victor* we hope that this magnificent beast will be forever away from the guns of the shikar. There was a time when the tiger was the finest trophy during the British Raj. We can see the pride in the mustached face of the hunter. Solar hat on his head, rifle by his side, he was the conqueror of a world now lost forever. The power and passion still lingers even though our world has changed.

In *My Companions* Kanodia uses the ridiculous to make observation on life and society. Startling to the eye is the thrust of three cheetahs that flock around a woman dressed in diaphanous night clothes, completely at ease with these creatures. The artist has deliberately made the walls green with a tiny pattern to create a feel of the forest indoors. It is a meeting of opposites, the wild life in a city surrounding telling a message of peaceful co-existence.

In *Self Admiration* the mirror gives hope to the woman as it suggests happier days in a home blooming with flowers within and luxurious greenery without. Here is a quiet beauty

offering a sustained contemplation about the mysteries of life.

Through the sheer vibrancy of the images Kanodia captures significant events in ordinary life in *Ganpati-Visarjan*. Here is a family sitting in a yellow taxi carrying an image of Lord Ganesh, on their way to immerse the image in the sea as they seek his blessings. On top of the car's bonnet is the image of a huge Ganesha sheltered under an umbrella. Will he protect them and make their dreams come true?

Daisy, Daisy gives me your answer do.  
I'm half crazy all for the love of you.  
It won't be a stylish marriage,  
I can't afford a carriage,  
But you'll look sweet,  
Upon the seat,  
Of a bicycle made for two. (Harry Dacre 1892)

From the wonder on her face, of course the girl in the red sari will say yes but let us gift her those joyful times, with their beloved dog and their tasty picnic food. The azure blue skies where different elements of nature indulge in a friendly dialogue is mirrored in the luminous pond, unfolding a world that is tranquil in *The Sunday Outing*.

There are several layers in Kanodia's paintings titled *Utopia*. It appears to be a still life study

of a complete family with paintings of girls looking on. But on a second look the details that the artist has shown evoke several ideas. For instance they say that 5-7 fish in a gold bowl is good feng shui for a home. And what home could be happier than the lifestyle of a relaxed husband and wife clearly enjoying an evening with a special drink. The apples in the foreground are a juicy treat but the dog has eyes solely for his master.

In *My Golden Couch* Kanodia actually takes her protagonist into nature, seating them on golden couch. Behind them a stream runs with floating lotuses. Around them are rows and rows of vegetation. They are flanked on either side by a tiger and swan. Not to forget the little monkey clinging on to woman's arm. ! Although the couple is formally dressed the soaring kites in the skies above insinuate a freedom that can only be linked with nature.

Kanodia adds a dash of humor to ordinary situations with color and intricate designs. She captures the yearning for nature of the urban individual as she portrays strange and comic moments of their lives. Much more is happening beyond the confines of the frame as she unfolds countless experiences and situations in her work. All this is brought alive by her careful use of color, patterns and details always revealing the power of nature over time.





Utopia 36" x 48"  
Oil & Glitter on Canvas



Planned urbanization and mechanization remain crucial for human progress, and yet these advancements lead to a gradual loss of control. The more man craves technological progress with all its modern day comforts, the more alienated he becomes from his roots, over ourselves and our environment. In turn, we instinctively urge for the outdoors. Part of us yearns to connect with nature and feel the rejuvenating effect it has on our psyche. Unlike the constant obligations that demand something of us, the great outdoors gives something to us- a sense of coming home, of regaining our lost innocence, of finding peace at last.

My paintings are varying angles of a single prism. At first glance, you see a humored portrayal of a quaint scene; upon further examination, an integrated, multi-layered expression reveals itself. One can grasp the complexity and nuance of my vision only after abandoning our typical notions and then keenly observing the relationships and components at play. The projected images serve as a veneer, behind which an infinite number of experiences and interpretations are possible. Each painting has the potential for several meanings; one revealed by the presence of colours juxtaposed carefully to form a harmonious whole, one revealed by the intricate patterns and details, and one revealed by the underlying content and narration. Thus, what appears to be a choice of method (a technique involving four layers of colour) proves to be the seeds, sun, and water of a highly complex organism of construction.

The paintings intend to make you feel that you are watching a snapshot of life at maximum authenticity- exuberant and packed with bursting energy. There is one optical illusion born of another. Is the focus the scene at hand, the shapes and details that surround the people, both, or something else entirely? I seek to challenge the viewer to modify the typical way of reading conventional signs and patterns.

The conversation I hope to create in my work is a certain truth of life and on a deeper level, a well thought philosophy. I construct fantastic versions of accessible scenes, both rural and urban utopias. Individuals may interpret my paintings in vastly disparate ways and each view will be equally logical and plausible, thought provoking and intriguing. A picture of the moment is built in which whole relationships are made visible. My work is all about time. And through my paintings, time is movement stilled.

Society continues to forge ahead in scientific advancement, seeming to accelerate the divide in our connection to nature. And yet, we find ways to bring the outside back into our lives, at times subconsciously, at times with great perspective and intention. Ultimately, the goal and thus the journey remains the challenge to balance the polarity of the worlds in which we reside.

*Nayanaa Kanodia*



Gubbarewala 30" Dia Oil on Canvas





Peeping Tom 48" x 36" Oil & Glitter on Canvas



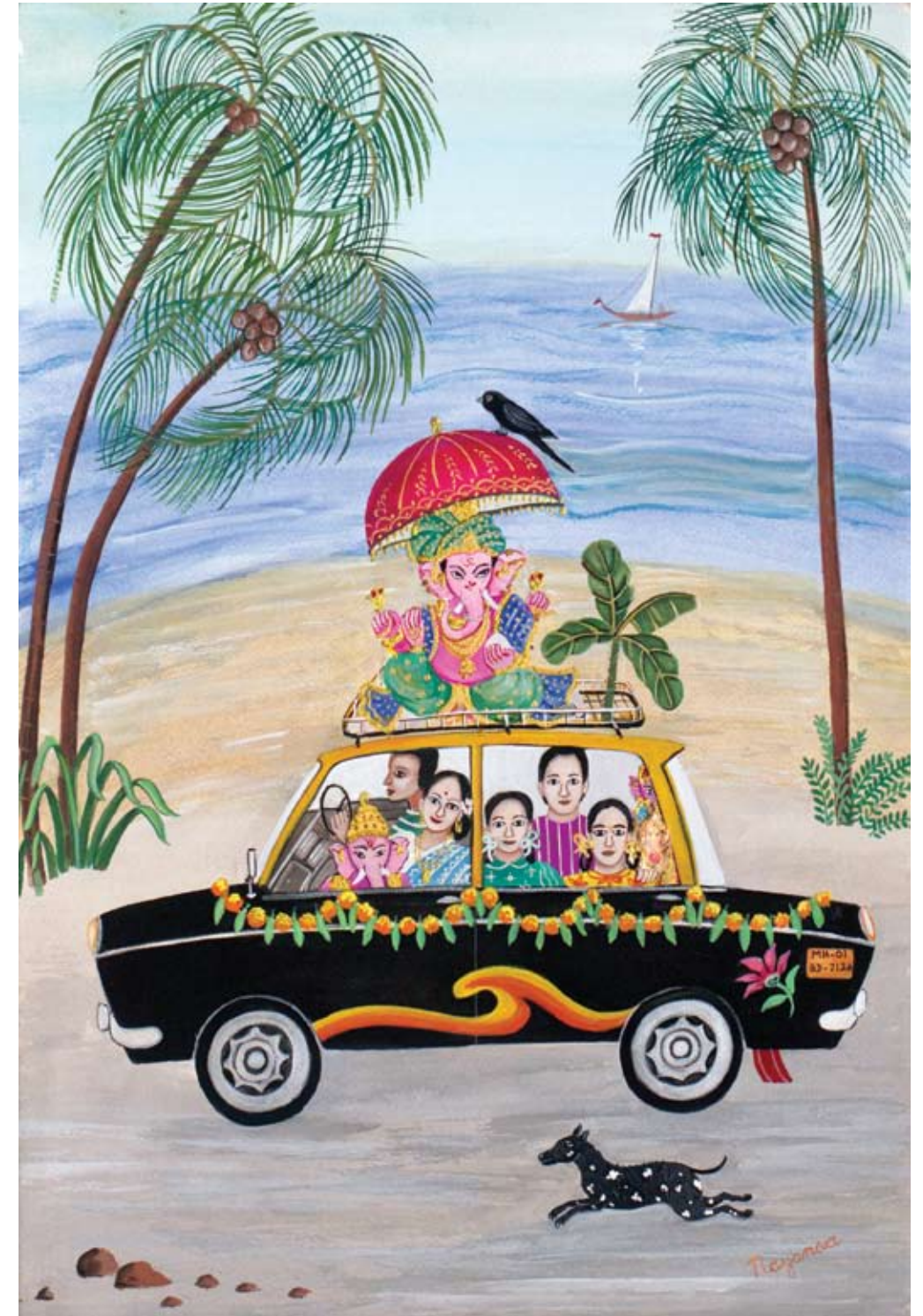


My Companions 48" x 36" Oil & Glitter on Canvas





Who is Faster? 22" x 15" Mixed Media on Paper



Ganpati Visarjan 22" x 15" Mixed Media on Paper





The Sunday Outing 36"x 30" Oil & Glitter on Canvas





My Comfort Zone  
26"x 30" Oil on Canvas





The Environmentalists 24" Dia Oil & Glitter on Canvas



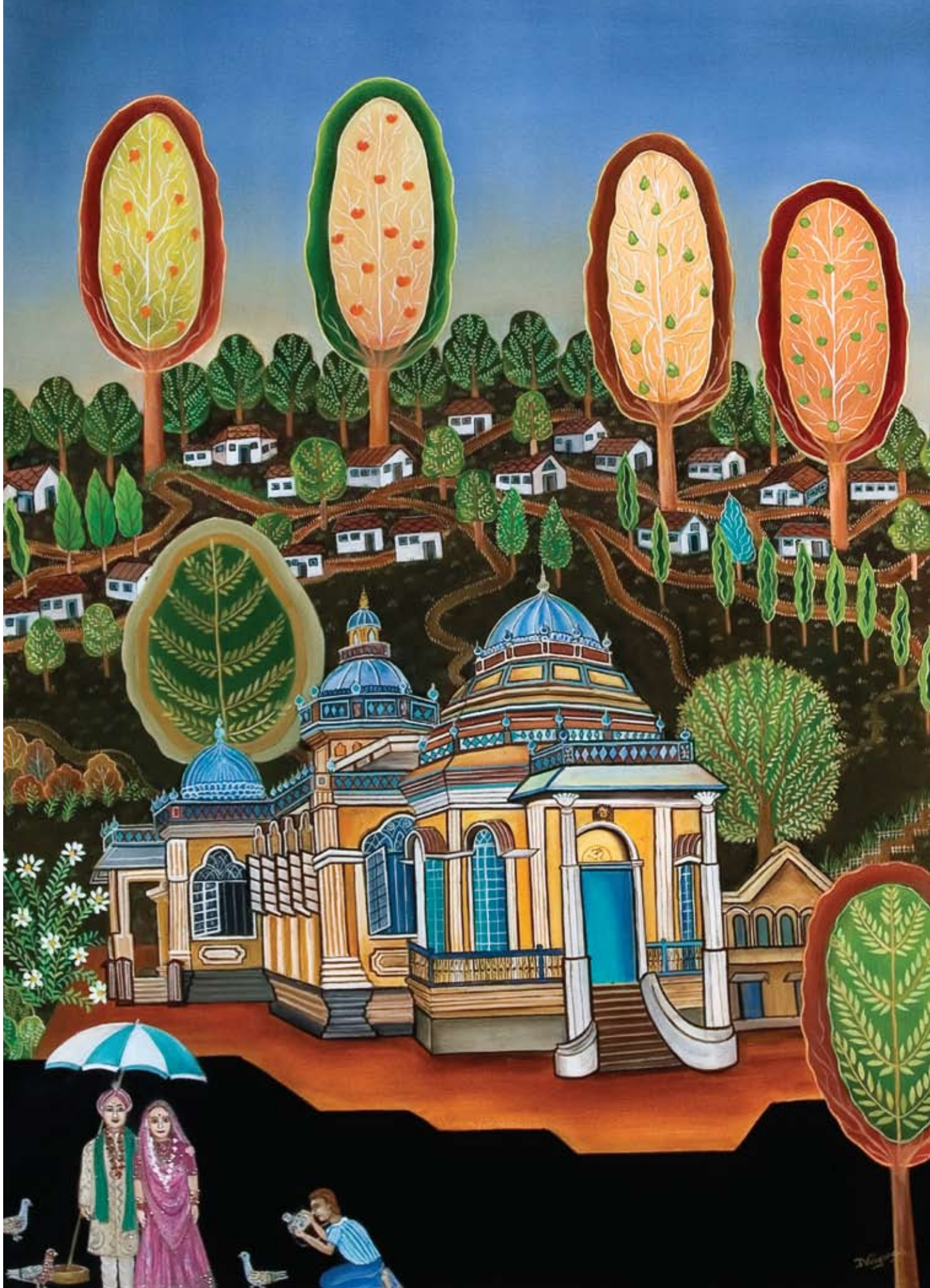
The Victor  
40" x 20" Oil on Canvas



QualityTime 20" x 48" Oil & Glitter on Canvas







Just Married 48" x 36" Oil on Canvas





The Musicians  
36"x 42" Oil & Glitter on Canvas





Self Admiration 42" x 36" Oil & Glitter on Canvas





My Golden Couch 15"x 22" Mixed Media on Paper





Most Desirable 42" x 36" Oil & Glitter on Canvas





The Banana Plantation 30" x 30" Oil & Glitter on Canvas





Partners for Life 48" x 36" Oil on Canvas





Unconditional Love 36" x 30" Oil & Glitter on Canvas





## Nayanaa Kanodia

Nayanaa Kanodia was born in 1950 in Pune, Maharashtra. She has had no formal training in art except for a year's apprenticeship with Anjolie Ela Menon. She had her first solo show in Mumbai in 1986 and has held numerous exhibitions since then in India and Abroad. In 1998, she was selected by The Commonwealth Institute for a solo show in their newly renovated complex in London.

In 2001 she was invited by the Victoria and Albert Museum, London to exhibit her work and to give a demonstration of her technique. She has also participated in many group show nationally and internationally including the ones in New York in 1988; National Gallery of Modern Art, Mumbai in 1997 & 1998; Dubai in 1998; London in 2001, 2002 & 2006; 'Museum of Modern Art', Sete, France in 2001; Washington in 200; Paris in 2002; Hong Kong in 2005; 'The Ueno Royal Museum', Tokyo in 2007; South Africa in 2007; Singapore in 2006 & 2011.

Nayanaa is the first Indian of Non-British origin whose works are in the collection of a British Museum. Her paintings feature in a recently published international book 'Women in Art' by Reinhard Fuchs. Besides this, Nayanaa is the first Indian of non-British origin whose works are in the collection of the 'Paintings in Hospitals', UK. Erica Jong, a famous author, recently acquired her work. Her work is held in many public and private collections in India and abroad including the *Musée International d'Art Naïf*, Paris.

She lives and works in Mumbai.

### Credits

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