

# *The Outlier*

## VN Jyothi Basu

**12 June — 23 August, 2025**

VN Jyothi Basu was the very first artist to be represented by the gallery. This dates back to even before we had a physical space in India. My mother, Usha Mirchandani, met Jyothi and saw the work he had been making from 1998 onwards (after he had been on a decade-long break from painting). Fascinated, she organised a solo exhibition of his work. Titled *Healing Properties: VN Jyothi Basu's Landscapes of the Self*, the exhibition was held at the Artists' Center in Mumbai in 2002, and created a sensation.

For Jyothi, what he achieved on his canvas was a revelation even for him. He once described these instances as being nothing short of euphoric. It must have been a constant battle though. What was it that manifested as nature bursting and multiplying, but where even the thorns were voluminous?

Born 1960 in Kerala, Jyothi Basu studied at the College of Fine Arts, Trivandrum and the Faculty of Fine Arts, MS University, Baroda. He was one of the founding members of the Indian Radical Painters and Sculptors Association, which held their inaugural exhibition, *Questions and Dialogue*, in Baroda in 1988.

The current exhibition in Delhi includes works from Jyothi's *Resurrection* series from the late 90s, alongside the intensely captivating charcoal drawing *Tempting Night* (2003), and the iconic oil-on-canvas painting *Farewell Party* (2004).

In an essay published in 2006, Jonathan Goodman wrote: "Symbolism combines with landscape in ways that reaffirm the essential independence of Basu's vision, which idiosyncratically accommodates many different kinds of thinking, in both a visual and a thematic sense." He goes on to say: "It is the concomitant presence of several different kinds of time that makes Basu's paintings and drawings so compelling, for the work cannot easily be placed in any particular epoch, thus emphasizing its ability to occupy different times and places at once. Such is the strength of a symbolic landscape."

Jyothi has never chosen to maintain a constant studio practice. This is an artist who says what he has to say, then stops — until he chooses to start again. Nonetheless with the work he has made, he has opened up new avenues for generations of painters in India. To my mind, he is an outlier.

Ranjana Steinruecke