



Soumya Netrabile

Featured Artist

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Air*," Visual Art



Soumya Netrabile paints exuberant landscapes throbbing with vegetal life. Her hallucinatory scenes, often bordering on the edge of abstraction, begin with an intense period of immersion in nature. Upon returning to the studio, she draws from written notes detailing her experiences to construct the arrangements of vegetal forms that viscously ooze across her canvas surfaces. Although not painting from direct observation, Netrabile's work responds to the tradition of painting *en plein air* in its concern with rendering the experience of a landscape at a distinct moment in time — the feeling of standing in the field, rather than its veritable likeness — into something tangible through color and form. *Windy Day*, one of four paintings by Netrabile accompanying this issue, presents a highly subjective view of a landscape teeming with undulating greenery, verdant biomorphic forms extending upward toward an acrid mustard sky. A movement of gestural red marks sweeping across the background emphasizes the centripetal thrust of the composition. This rhythmic repetition of elements is echoed throughout the composition, imbuing the scene with an illusion of movement and a sensation of levity. The vivid palette and dynamic spatial organization of *Windy Day* have an enlivening effect — suffusing the scene with a restrained feeling of euphoria, not unlike the invigorating sensation of a crisp breeze blowing against your face from across the lush green fields of the valley on a windy day.

-- The Editors

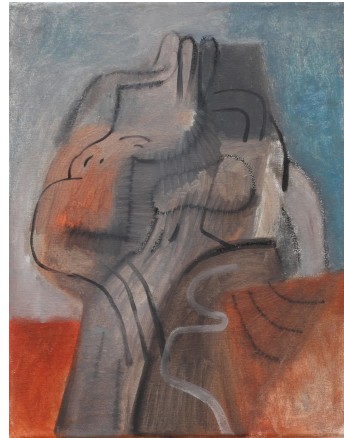


Soumya Netrabile, *Dissemination*, 2020, Oil on canvas.

Years ago when I started painting full-time, I set out to learn as much as I could about handling paint. As I grew comfortable with it, I allowed the paint to lead the way in my exploration of formal elements. It was important for me to keep my process organic and unattached to any preconceived ideas. Over time I saw my hands repeatedly retreating to creating forms that alluded to the figure. This recognition was the start of my consideration of how my body might be broken and reconfigured as landscape and vice versa. An avid hiker since youth, I have developed strong emotional connections to land and terrain, likely boosted by my tendency towards invention and attraction to stories about the earth. Often I look at a terrain and see figures or body parts in the landforms. A rocky mountain may appear as a woman hunched over, a man twisting his torso, or an unidentifiable beast crouching. Sometimes these figures take on a mythical quality in my imagination. Forms and internal narratives emerge organically and spontaneously. Land and body become interconnected, functioning as one organism.

This year, my fascination with terrain and rock forms moved into the exploration of organic elements that make up a land-, garden- or mountain-scape. I have always taken down detailed notes during my hikes, documenting anything that thrills me or stokes my curiosity. These include qualities of light, the forms that engage my attention, and harmonies and contrasts of color. After returning from long nature trips, I will spend time making numerous sketches to later use to help trigger my memory. These notes have become an important part of my practice. They help me remember my experience of the environment and also serve as a reference of forms and shapes to play with while I am painting or working with clay.

In 2020, just before the pandemic began, I started to experience vivid dreams about plants interweaving with human bodies. I do not doubt the strong influence of these dreams mingling with my actual experience of the natural world. My recent botanical paintings are mostly invented or fictionalized plants. Vines, leaves, bulbous forms, and pods merge into one another, evoking the body. These elements create their own emotional language. Plants, like landforms, allow me to continue to build my experience with painting and color, where I can further explore the invisible strings that connect my emotions to medium and form.



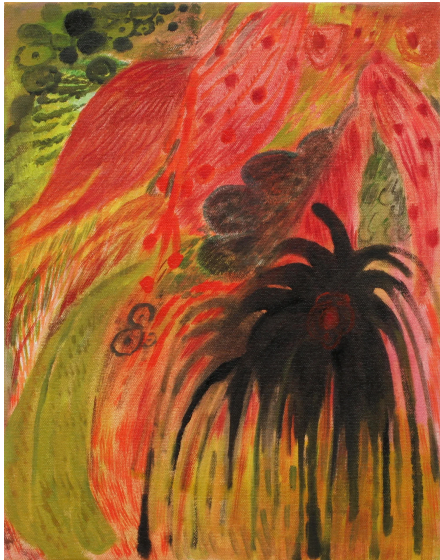
Soumya Netrabile, *Rock Formation*, 2019, Oil on canvas.



Soumya Netrabile, *Pink Curtain*, 2019, Oil on canvas.



Soumya Netrabile, *The Rise of the Conspiracists*, 2020, Oil on canvas.



Soumya Netrabile, *The Spell*, 2020, Oil on canvas.



Soumya Netrabile, *Umbilicals*, 2020, Oil on canvas.



Soumya Netrabile, *The Windy Day*, 2020, Oil on canvas.