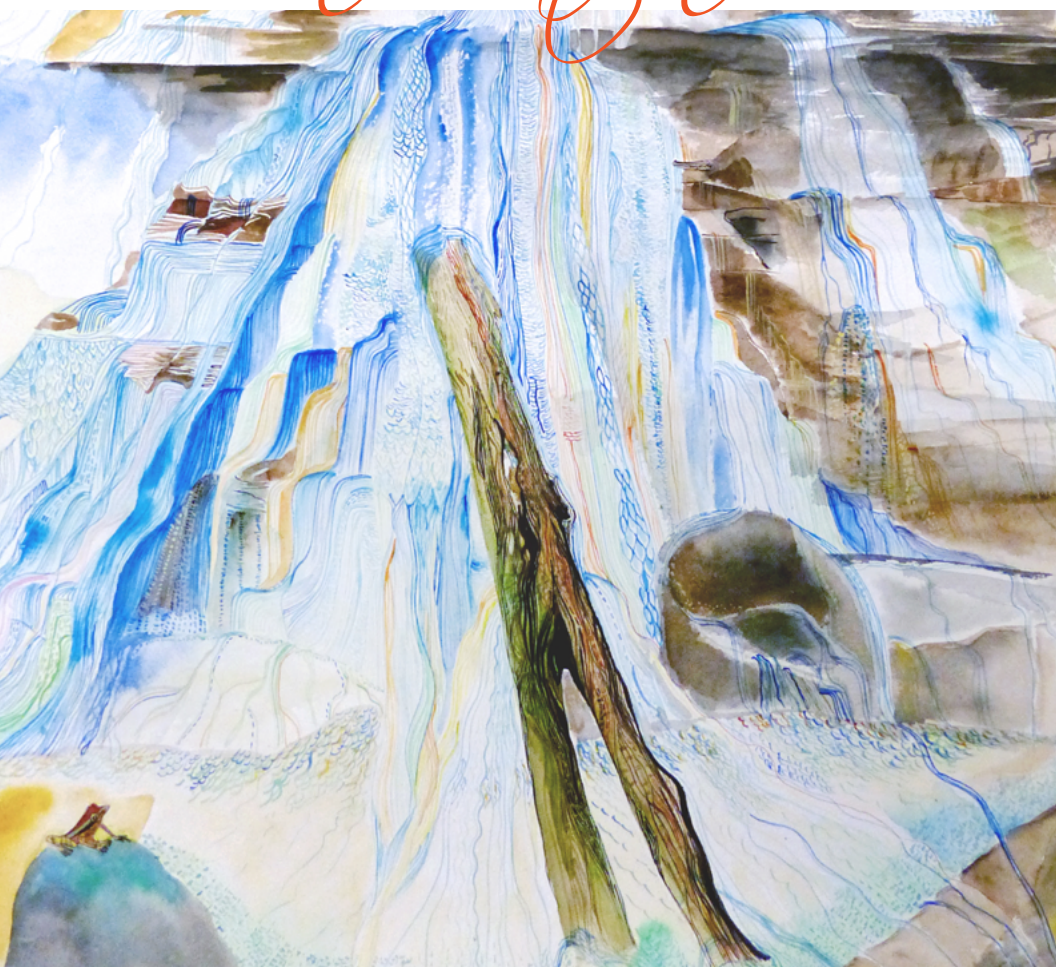


The Conversations



Srisrividhiya Kalyanasundaram (Srivi Kalyan)

Srishti Manipal Institute of Art, Design and Technology

*Cover Art: Coucal and dancing frog at Chingara waterfall,
Coorg by Srivi Kalyan*

February 2021

Designed by Srivi Kalyan

The politics of creative justice: Conversations on creative processes

Srisrividhiya Kalyanasundaram

Abstract

This exposition explores the question of creative justice in creative processes and pedagogy. Through an evolving conversation on a chat app, a mentor shares her creative process of a painting that she is emerging with her students at the Masters level. And interwoven through these, they evolve a pedagogy of artistic research, decolonization, reflective inquiry into self, aesthetic encounters with their own cultures, Indian aesthetics and philosophies, meandering and pondering together. The exposition is constructed in four parts.

Part 1: Utopia and the politics of creative justice.

Part 2: The Conversations through chats.

Part 3: Student responses and reflections.

Part 4: Teaching as philosophy of a way of being.

The mentor journeys through over twenty five years of her practice, inviting her students to participate, question, reflect and ponder with her, offering a creative pedagogy for artistic research that is also bound in the politics of creative justice.

Many thanks to my students - Ashwin Suresh, Hia Banerjee, Kaushik Kannan, Monica M Chandak, Mridul Verma, Nupur Agrawal, Pranav Sharma, Samridhi Pandey, Sonal Choudhury, Surabhi Singhai, for this participatory conversation and the contributions of their reflections in part 3.

Part 2

The
conversations
through chats

Coucal and Dancing Frog at Chingara, Coorg

Conversations on evolution and reflections on painting

Srivi Kalyan

(Srisrividhiya Kalyanasundaram)

9-26th Feb 2021

I would like to thank and acknowledge Dr. Priti Gururaja and Dr. K.V. Gururaja who invited me to be part of their research trip at Coorg and for Madhushri Mudke who was also part of the team where this beautiful encounter with coucal, waterfall and dancing frog happened.

A whatsapp conversation and engagement with Masters students from the graduating batch of 2021. (Minor edits have been made to the original messages for readability.)

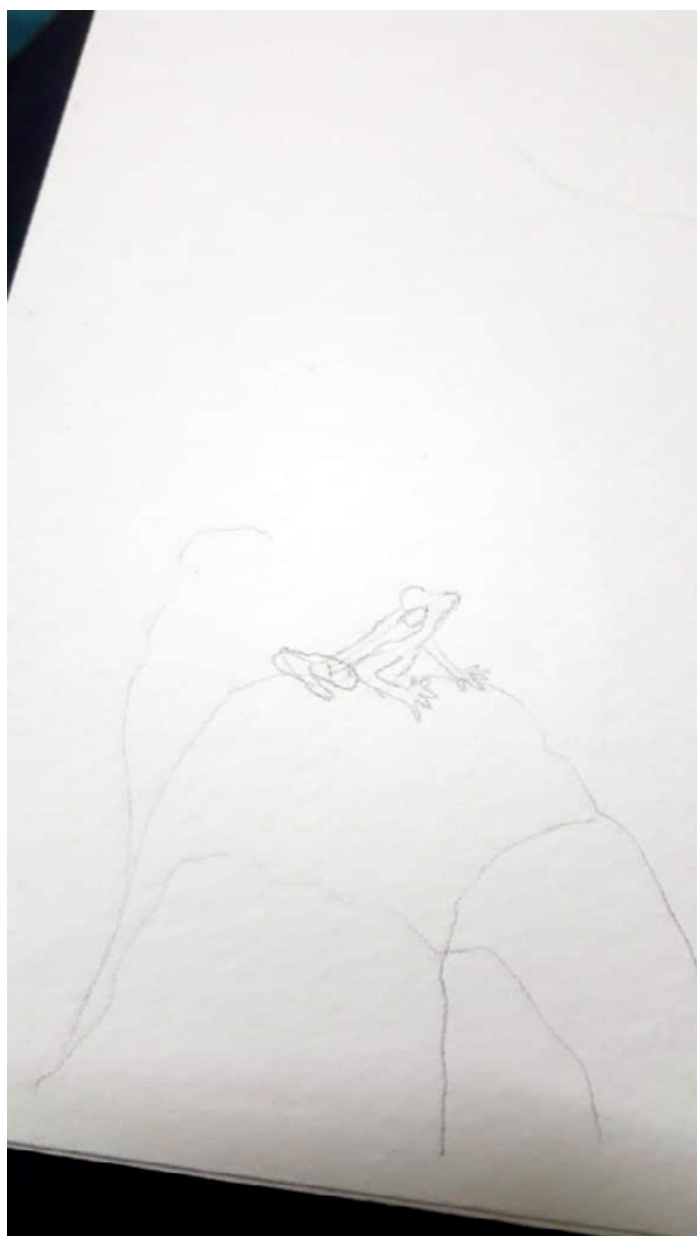
(Unfortunately most of the smileys and images we used during the chat could not be copied to this document. The vibrant world of whatsapp smileys are missed here)

[4:11 pm, 09/02/2021] Srivi Kalyan

All of you tend to doubt yourself. That's ok. Instead, trust art that has been gifted to you and that you have chosen. You don't have to trust yourself. That art has a 70,000 year old human impulse to it, and a cultural history that goes back thousands of years. Allow art to happen to you and trust it.



[9:17 pm, 09/02/2021] Srivi Kalyan: Coucal and Dancing frog at Chingara waterfall, Coorg





[9:17 pm, 09/02/2021] Srivi Kalyan: Starting a watercolor work after a long time. 18 x 24 inches, around A2 size



[9:18 pm, 09/02/2021] Srivi Kalyan: At Chingara Waterfall, Coorg, 2017



[9:18 pm, 09/02/2021] Srivi Kalyan: Going to give form to this doodle that I shared earlier in December with all of you.



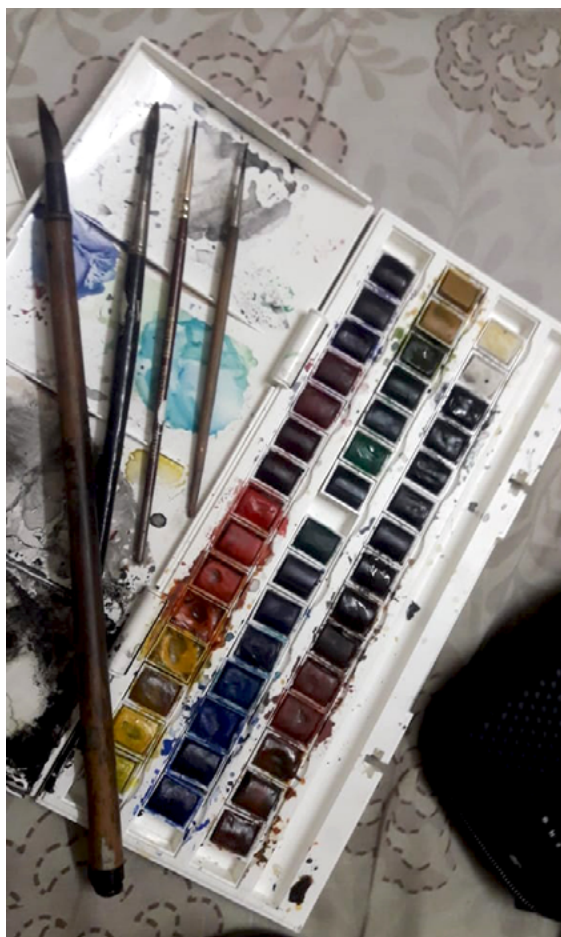
[9:31 pm, 09/02/2021] Srivi Kalyan: A memory from 2017... suddenly flashed in my mind. Greater Coucals are most fascinating to watch. They belong to the crow family. They are full of smart strutting and fun and mischief. This one strutted down the ledge of the waterfall before running back into hiding quickly. The misty drops from the waterfall were rising up and the grayness and freshness of monsoon inside the rainforest made it mysterious. And way down the stream from the waterfall, we spotted this little dancing frog.

[9:40 pm, 09/02/2021] Srivi Kalyan: When I start the painting, this is all I have, the flash of a vivid memory, a vague yet rich feeling. I have no idea whether I can do justice to either of these. Am I a little nervous as I start my work? Definitely, Yes!

I think about my composition. I draw and erase the coucal a few times; I don't want it to be too big or too small. I want the sheer magnificence of the waterfall, but at the same time it is difficult to let go of the marvelous form of the coucal. This creates a tension in my composition and then there is the dancing frog, the real life size of which is about the size of a nail. I want these contrasts to play out. These are my thoughts as I set out on the painting. I know I might mess it up. It is a risk. I even worry about the cost of the paper that I have preserved for three years waiting for the right moment and the right painting. But I feel driven to paint today... and so I decide to take the risk and have some fun...

[9:47 pm, 09/02/2021] Srivi Kalyan: Watercolor is a difficult medium to handle and it scares me every time. There are no second chances with watercolor. You can mask a few mistakes perhaps with clever tricks, but not much. How much should be wet on wet, how long should a section dry before painting on it, what should the base layer coloring be? You cannot do more than 3 to 4 layers with water color as it is very easy to get the colors into a dirty dull shade. I am worried about all this every time I start a watercolor painting. But I know I have to be patient and let the painting happen to me. The coucal and the frog have vested interest in coming to life in the painting. So I befriend them as I do with the waterfall, the rocks and the fallen branch. I entice them with our shared memories and take the plunge.

[9:55 pm, 09/02/2021] Srivi Kalyan: I wonder at the fear though, in some sense it is more like a healthy respect for both the medium and the natural world, a surrender to all these forms, inviting them to enter my body and mind.



[10:01 pm, 09/02/2021] Srivi Kalyan: My tools.

[10:02 pm, 09/02/2021] Srivi Kalyan: Am going to try and make my creative process visible as I develop the work over the next few days. Hope it opens a window to all the challenges, fears and planning that goes into my work also.

[10:03 pm, 09/02/2021] Srivi Kalyan: Even after 35+ years of being at it!

[10:07 pm, 09/02/2021] Srivi Kalyan: Kumar Gandharv singing Raag Malkauns (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-HXSIDYYw28>) in the background.

[10:11 pm, 09/02/2021] Srivi Kalyan: Now that I am making my process and work visible to all of you, there is also an addition fear and embarrassment as I wonder- what if this painting turns out to be a disaster?

[10:17 pm, 09/02/2021] Pranav Sharma: This is way too inspiring! Takes great amount of courage to share the process and acknowledge the vulnerability. We are lucky to witness the process :))

[10:20 pm, 09/02/2021] Hia: Would be waiting for the final painting.

[10:41 pm, 09/02/2021] Samridhi: Thanks for sharing your process Srivi



[11:09 pm, 09/02/2021] Srivi Kalyan: As I started working on the branch, my style of flowing inner lines begins to surface. I am trying to capture a hidden yet pervasive and pulsating life force that is there in all things as I try to bring them to life through art

[11:15 pm, 09/02/2021] Srivi Kalyan: I have used a 6 or, 2 pt and a 000/miniature painting brush along with chinese ink

[11:30 pm, 09/02/2021] Srivi Kalyan: I am waiting and pondering now as to what should I detail out next for the last 20 min. The coucal, frogs, rocks or waterfall. Here I consider, colors, tones, foreground, background tension and also what I should paint first, so I will be able to take the painting forward. Till this internal conflict subsides, I will wait. Paddy is visiting me and we are chatting away even as my hindustani playlist keeps me in my own zone for the painting

[11:31 pm, 09/02/2021] Srivi Kalyan: Playlist for the day: Hirna by Kumar Gandharv, raag shuddh shyam by him, raag Tilak kamod by Bhimsen Joshi, 10 beat and 12 beat cycles

[0:01 am, 10/02/2021] Srivi Kalyan: What will happen if I paint the coucal first. Will he become too overpowering? But if I do the waterfall first, will the waterfall compete with the coucal? Do I want a misty mood in the painting or a lively starkness and freshness? I have decided to paint the frog last. But I cannot yet take a decision between the coucal and the waterfall.

[0:02 am, 10/02/2021] Srivi Kalyan: The coucal has rust, blue, black in its body and a sharp red in the eye. What colors would complete the waterfall then. Do I want it to complement with pastel colored tones or show a vividly playful narrative reflective of my mood.

[0:06 am, 10/02/2021] Srivi Kalyan: I am still conflicted and pondering my decisions. My playlist moves to Raag Jogiya and then to Raag Durga both sung by Bhimsen Joshi. I am delighted when Raag Durga starts. This song has always provided intense and focused creative energy for me. I breathe in the Raaga into my body hoping for another day of magic from it. Even otherwise I don't feel restless in my pondering anymore. I feel embraced and connected to something greater than me when I hear this song. I didn't plan for it. It just happened to come along on my playlist and there is an instant recognition like meeting an old friend. The paper and the painting become part of this flow and a slow rhythm that flows through all life.



[0:44 am, 10/02/2021] Srivi Kalyan: Decided on the coucal first.

[0:58 am, 10/02/2021] Srivi Kalyan: The coucal is in a diagonal and dynamic relationship to the fallen tree . This is great for me to set a rhythm and movement in the painting. The coucal is in a horizontal movement while the fallen tree is in a vertical position over which water and light slide and dance. The waterfall will cut through the geometric nature of these lines with its organic playful flow. I hear the lines like music in my head. There is also the monsoon rains and the clouds invisible in the painting, but right above this space, and a downpour is going to happen anytime. The rich dark grey, means every little shade of green, orange, yellow and blue will sparkle and give off an almost luminiscent light and call out their presence. This is the thrill and delight of monsoon for me. This is how my interpretation of colors happen. They are part symbolic, part impressionist, and part intuitive feeling and sound.



[1:05 am, 10/02/2021] Hia: I feel you expressed what goes on in my mind. But I cannot articulate it.

[1:05 am, 10/02/2021] Srivi Kalyan: It has taken many years of practice between then and now to adapt, embrace, play with, be confident about and find a certain situatedness to these lines that emerged through oils, acrylics, watercolors, inks, pencils, crayons and pen...

[1:06 am, 10/02/2021] Srivi Kalyan: Practice based phd for 6 years

[1:09 am, 10/02/2021] Srivi Kalyan: Also 7 years of trying to understand how to teach students in Srishti and what to make visible to them. But have to thank your group where I feel i have found a heartwarming and warm group of ppl whom I can trust and share with and also think through many of my thoughts with.so thanks and kudos to all of you for also creating this space of trust with me.

[1:12 am, 10/02/2021] Srivi Kalyan: Now I will pay heed to my body and close for the day. The vision for the painting came sometime mid afternoon and I let in sink in for almost 4 to 5 hours before I knew I could not resist painting it. So finally restarting painting after almost a year. And 4 hours of being at it for today. Hopefully will continue tomm... and have a meeting at 10 o clock in the morning....

[1:15 am, 10/02/2021] Hia: Good night srivi. <3

[1:19 am, 10/02/2021] Srivi Kalyan: <3

The music moved on to Gundecha brothers singing dhrupad, then Kumar Gandharv's jhini chadariya. Now Shafi Faqir, a Manghaniar singer from Sindh is singing a beautiful Kabir bhajan- na jane tere. And the next song is perfect to end the day as Vidya Rao sings Yeh tan that Tambure in thumri, a quiet meditative and gentle rendition.

[7:34 am, 10/02/2021] Sonal:

Dear Srivi,

I woke up to this highly inspiring process that you have shared. It felt like I was entering the different windows in your mind, and with you opening up the ones that were closed.

The description is so vivid that what separates us perhaps from the experience is only not physically doing it, otherwise it is like we are a part of the coucal and the waterfall, Misty or not...

I always thought, thoughts can't be made visible, and I remember all the times artists said "a lot of thought has gone into the painting" but I resonant with it more now when you have made it visible. Thank you for sharing the truth and vulnerability of approaching a blank paper, of ruining material, and of the painting differing in reality from imagination. Thank you for echoing our sentiment each time we begin to paint or sketch.

I am going to hold onto this for a long time, and now I also have access to such beautiful music. Thank you for always giving so heartily.

Best,
Sonal <3



[10:48 am, 10/02/2021] Pranav Sharma: Coming out beautifulllllly

[10:49 am, 10/02/2021] Srivi Kalyan: Had forgotten to send this pic yesterday

[10:51 am, 10/02/2021] Sonal: So so so lovely!

[11:02 am, 10/02/2021] Surabhi: This is so beautiful... Thank you so much for sharing your thoughts, process, art and music.. Loving this!!

[11:32 am, 10/02/2021] Nupur: It's so difficult to believe you also have these thoughts like us. But everything has come out so beautifully Srivi

[11:35 am, 10/02/2021] Srivi Kalyan: I keep telling you all and you don't believe me...

[0:00 pm, 10/02/2021] Srivi Kalyan: Hia, Thanks for hanging around and messaging me yesterday night. Felt a lovely sense of conversation.

[0:03 pm, 10/02/2021] Srivi Kalyan: I will be slightly scared till I finish and everything really comes together.

[0:56 pm, 10/02/2021] Nupur: So it seems we never get over this.

[0:56 pm, 10/02/2021] Srivi Kalyan: Precisely!

[0:58 pm, 10/02/2021] Srivi Kalyan: When I make those silly creatures, I am not too worried because they are anyway silly and accommodating of my foolish self

[0:59 pm, 10/02/2021] Nupur: But what is silly for you has turned out to be too precious for us

[1:02 pm, 10/02/2021] Srivi Kalyan: It is precious to me also. But they make my world lighter, funnier and let the child in me live happily

[1:03 pm, 10/02/2021] Srivi Kalyan: All of you please consider this sharing an invitation to dialogue and ponder with me

[1:03 pm, 10/02/2021] Srivi Kalyan: You are also welcome to share your journeys and work if you feel like

[1:07 pm, 10/02/2021] Pranav Sharma: Definitely. Will do soon

[1:50 pm, 10/02/2021] Srivi Kalyan: I used to enjoy painting on walls and large canvases when we had a workshop in my masters where we were asked to work with the miniature style. It was a sudden insight that happened during the workshop, that the energy of the large vibrant strokes I liked to create could be created and contained in miniature lines. It opened and deepened my observation of miniature paintings while also opening a whole new style and possibility in my paintings.

[1:50 pm, 10/02/2021] Srivi Kalyan: It has taken many years of practice between then and now to adapt, embrace, play with, be confident about and find a certain situatedness to these lines that emerged through oils, acrylics, watercolors, inks, pencils, crayons and pen...

[1:52 pm, 10/02/2021] Srivi Kalyan: And sorry about flooding this chatbox. Please let me know if it is disturbing to any of you. I am also happy to shift to mail, if so.

[1:55 pm, 10/02/2021] Sonal: Glad you are sharing and pouring your heart Srivi... it feels good to have this conversation linger and fill us with so many insights...

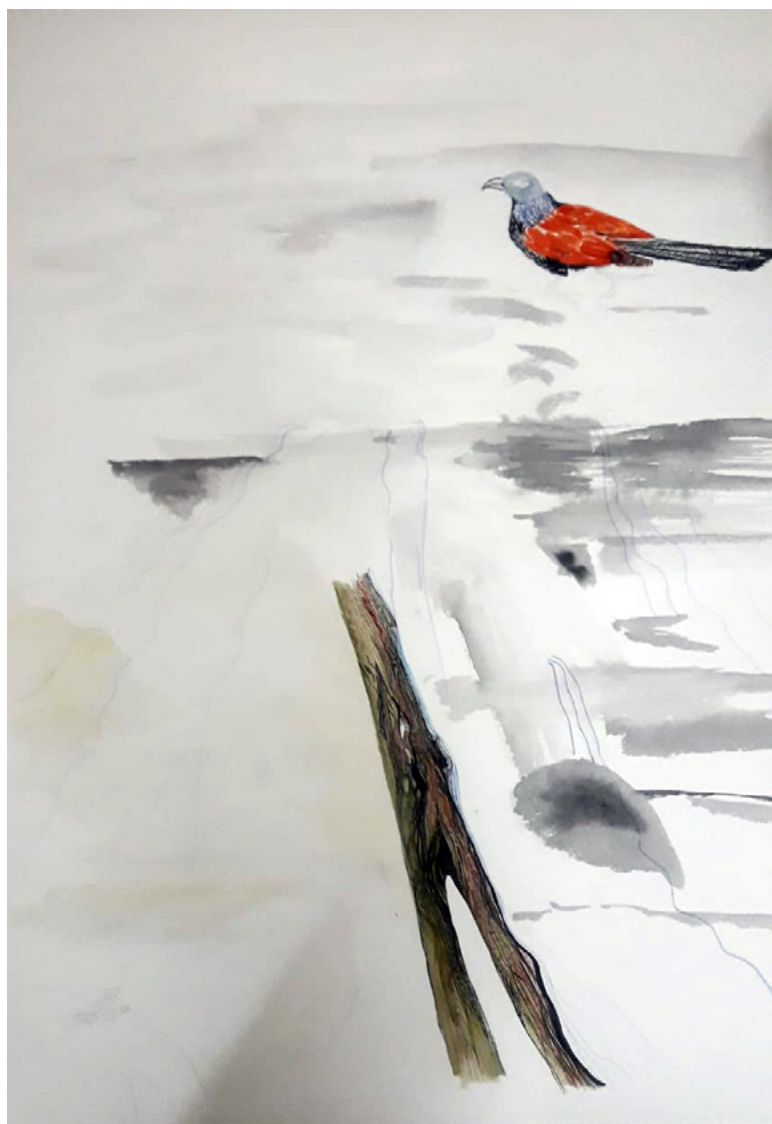
[2:24 pm, 10/02/2021] Srivi Kalyan: <http://nawangkhechog.com/universallovecd.php> _ today's playlist. Haven't started painting yet. Was busy with admin work till now.

[2:26 pm, 10/02/2021] Srivi Kalyan: I love Nawang Khechog's work. Universal Dance of Kindness, one of the pieces from this playlist has held me in tight embrace and beauty on many days, tough ones, gentle ones, and on days when my inner quieter worlds have to collide with the messy loudness of everyday life and work.

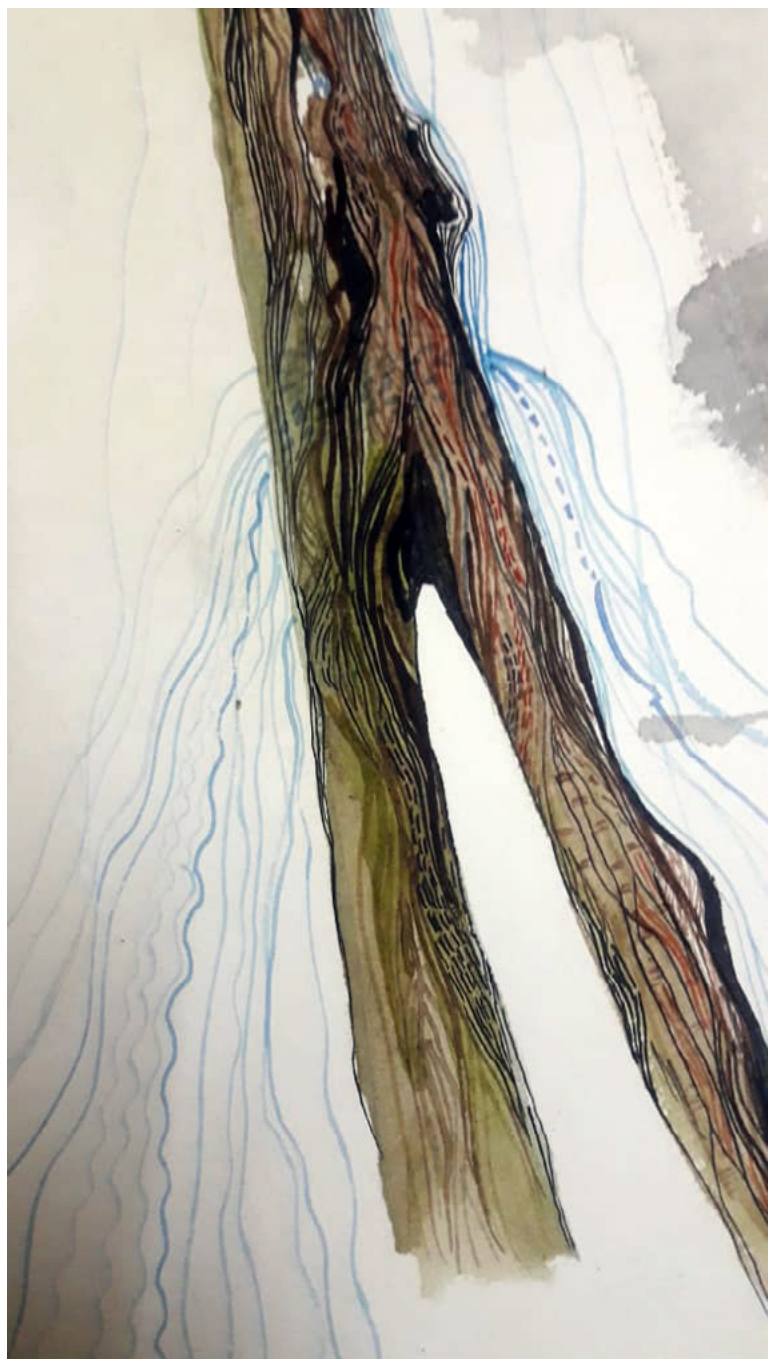
The Wish-Fulfilling Jewel in the Himalayas · Nawang Khechog <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=S4XBbFVCTo0> - listening to this one right now.

[2:29 pm, 10/02/2021] Srivi Kalyan: This sound, is the sound of water I want reflected in my painting. I will listen till the sounds become colors and lines and are ready to float through my body back into my work. I might even sleep and let it happen in a subconscious state. I didn't sleep much yesterday night. So I don't have enough energy to start painting yet. So I am letting the quiet solitude and yet welcoming warmth of this music leave its impressions in me, and gently embrace me with its many sweet and simple secrets.

*[2:38 pm, 10/02/2021] Srivi Kalyan: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=V1Kn6m0ox8I>
Universal Dance of Kindness*



[8:31 pm, 10/02/2021] Srivi Kalyan: Beginning the waterfall. Framing the basic flow and force of water









[8:38 pm, 10/02/2021] Sonal: Very very beautiful Srivi... just love the details and how it is slowly becoming... can't wait to see it finish...



[8:56 pm, 10/02/2021] Srivi Kalyan: I deepen the blue in the coucal's neck. I chose a rather brilliant and vivid shade that is typical of what you see when light falls on wet feathers.

[8:57 pm, 10/02/2021] Srivi Kalyan: As the blue on the neck deepens, the edge of the waterfall beckons me back and I know how to intensify the connection that the coucal, the ridge and the waterfall share. I begin by matching the blues and the oranges of the coucal to the flow and colors of the waterfall





[8:59 pm, 10/02/2021] Srivi Kalyan: And that's how an internal conversation begins to happen in the painting between th beings that inhabit it. It transforms into a sacred live space for now they are all stirring to life and one must be gentle and quiet in entering this space now



[9:08 pm, 10/02/2021] Srivi Kalyan: Water slides, slips, pounds, slithers over, shimmers, separates, meets, merges, defines rock, unifies it, shapes it, embraces it, withdraws into it, breaks forth from it, splinters against it... watching water is to be in observation of leela (cosmic play)... the sound is so subtle, yet visually thunderous in each of these sections. How does one even sense, comprehend, experience and partake in a waterfall... and as I shape each section of rocky ledge, water flow, fleeing feather and leaf, swimming tadpole...my insights, memories, visions deepen, yet simplify, become layered yet focused.

[9:09 pm, 10/02/2021] Sonal: I hope you will document this process for yourself... you are so present with what you are doing... it's so inspiring

[9:09 pm, 10/02/2021] Srivi Kalyan: Yeah will do. Might make it into a paper when I finish.

[9:31 pm, 10/02/2021] Srivi Kalyan: Is it time for the frog to wake up too. I am too sleepy, as much as he is starting to pester me, he must wait till tomorrow. He is excited now and wants to pick his colors. I can see him leaping on to my watercolor box sitting on the edge and pointing out the shades he wants to be painted in. Too much excitement leaping all over the place! Shooooooooo I say sleepily and he is frustrated. I promise to paint him brilliantly tomorrow as I fade into the night

[9:32 pm, 10/02/2021] Pranav Sharma VC: :))

[9:37 pm, 10/02/2021] Srivi Kalyan: The very lovely Nalu the moon rider, by Riley lee and Andy Rigby plays on :)

[9:43 pm, 10/02/2021] Srivi Kalyan: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Yo28M_KK9hQ Spring from Nalu the moon rider

[9:44 pm, 10/02/2021] Pranav Sharma VC: How did you find this Srivi?? ..just curious

[9:46 pm, 10/02/2021] Srivi Kalyan: My sister was introduced to this music by visiting profs in her college years around 97 I think. It became my favourite and she gifted me the cd 10 years ago.

[9:48 pm, 10/02/2021] Srivi Kalyan: I have to check with her.

[9:49 pm, 10/02/2021] Pranav Sharma VC: okayy.

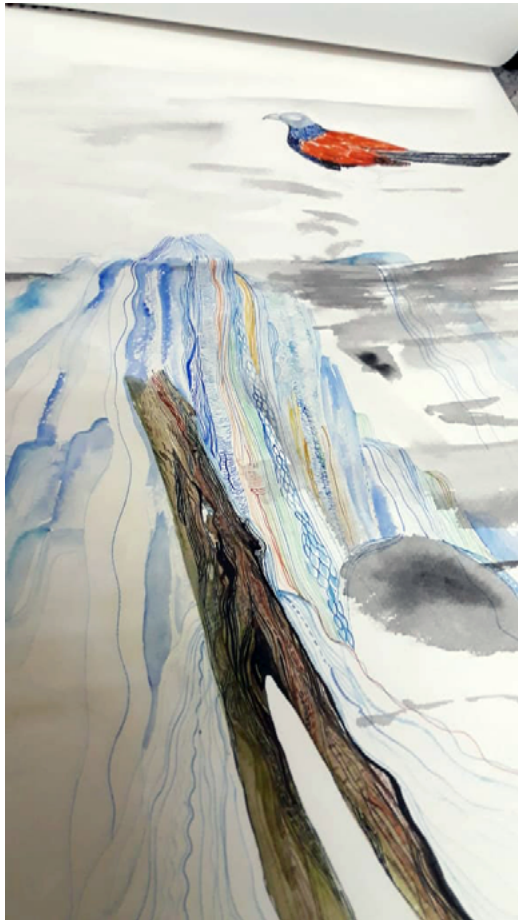
[9:55 pm, 10/02/2021] Srivi Kalyan: And in those days before the internet craze began, we also went around hunting in cassette shops looking at covers and names that were unique and inspiring and found unexpected pieces of music like that... don't quite remember how she found out about Riley Lee. She even wrote to a Japanese professor in those days to get his research recordings of the sound of sand in the desert and another professor for the song of the humpback whales... we were crazy like that in our quest for sound and life.

[9:56 pm, 10/02/2021] Pranav Sharma VC: Amazingggg...

[11:42 pm, 10/02/2021] Srivi Kalyan: Apparently she found the instrument shakuhachi mentioned in Zen Buddhism then searched for recordings of it

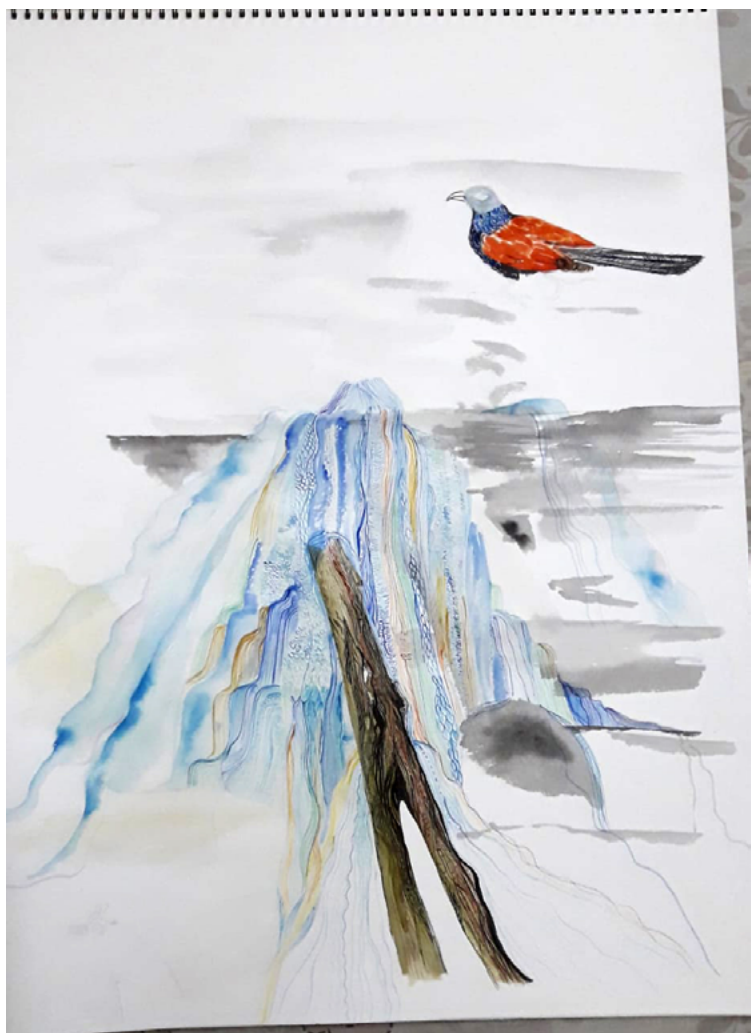
[11:52 pm, 10/02/2021] Pranav Sharma VC: Shakuhachi! okay..

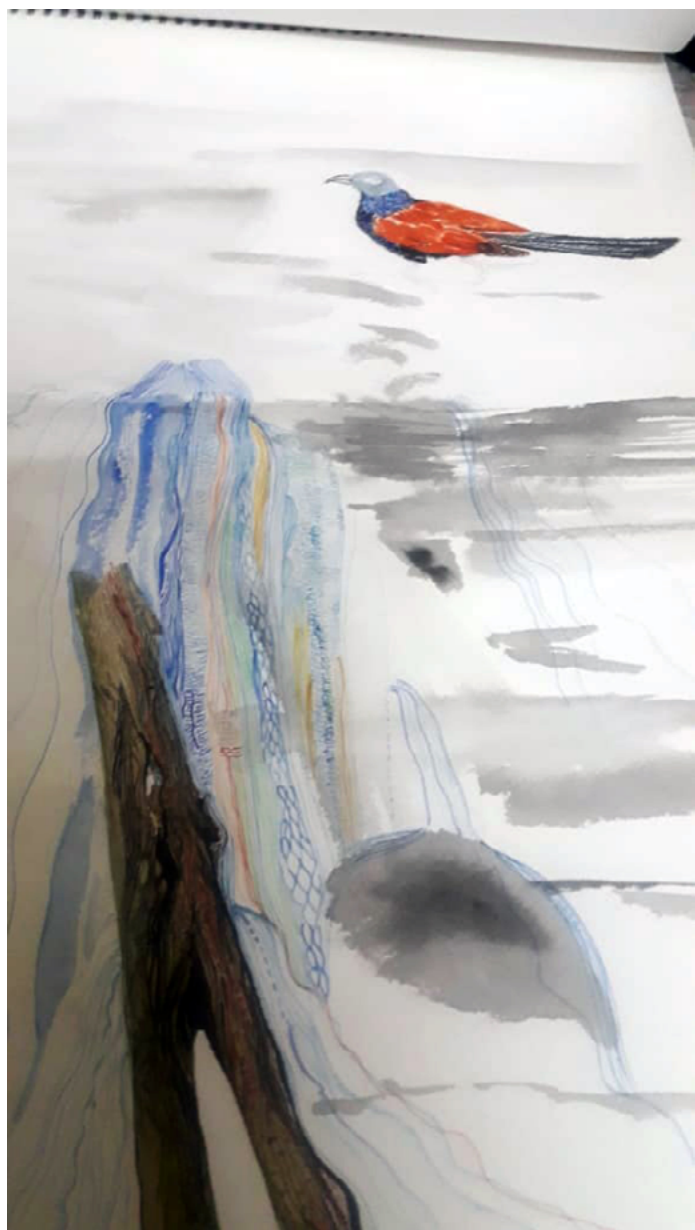
[11:56 pm, 10/02/2021] Srivi Kalyan: It is a Japanese flute. Riley lee however is an Australian? who learnt it, I think. Please check.









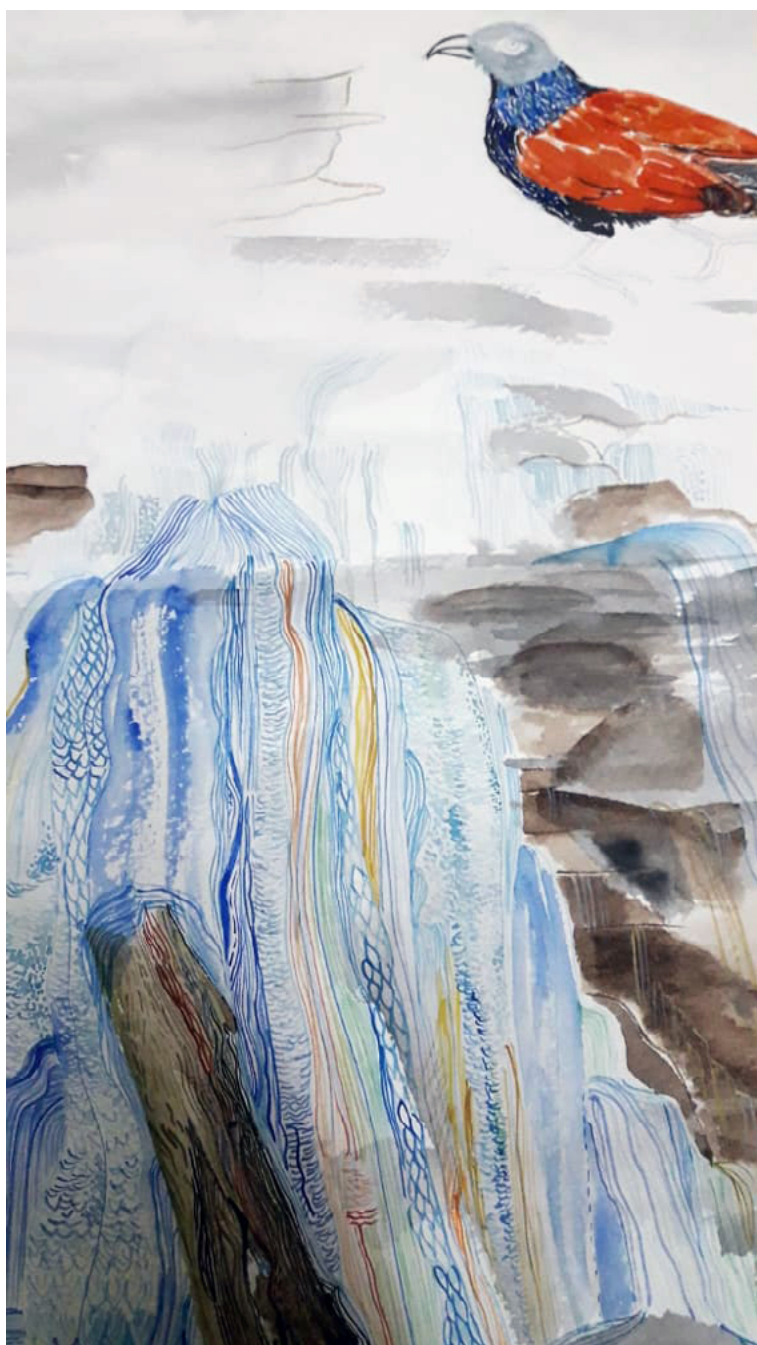




[6:26 pm, 11/02/2021] Srivi Kalyan: I spent a few hours at Chingara, waded right into the waterfall, steeped myself in its laughter, gaiety and glory, walked between tadpoles, and root systems, rocks and fallen leaves looking for frogs. There is no one photographic moment of the waterfall in my memory. There are many many moments and each section of the waterfall, rocky, ledge, slip and fall of water that I spent few minutes on, in deep intensity. These many moments fuse into a new harmonious, undivided singular aesthetic time in the painting. The moment when I saw the reflections of foliage in the water, the moments when sunlight sparkled through water droplets and spray, the moment when light seared a naked piece of glistening rock, the moment when two falling lines of water danced, waving in and out of each other making new patterns with the wind, the moment when a cloud covered the sunlight and the entire mood of the waterfall shifted, the moment when mist covered us briefly creating a haze and intensifying the sound, the moments as each sense experience opened and flowered one after another like a navaragamalika, an ecstatic yet mellifluous symphony... it is this nuanced and interior aesthetic space-time that I seek to paint and find form in my art.













[11:52 pm, 11/02/2021] Sonal: It's beautiful to flow with your conscious as you paint and write... Thank you Srivi

[0:50 am, 12/02/2021] Srivi Kalyan: Water cascades, step by step light-footed like a pixie, playful like a little girl playing hopscotch, graceful like the moon gliding across the sky, sometimes mysterious like a spy, at other times like a gorgeous woman making her way down staircases... one can watch for hours all the rhythms and beats of water flowing down against each crevice, each bend in the rock, chiseling mountain and rock over centuries...shaping land and channeling winds.

Reflective exercise to understand the evolution of style in Coucal and Dancing Frog at Chingara Waterfalls.

Srivi Kalyan

Fri, Feb 12, 2021

From a continuing conversation with
Mdes IAIDP 2021 batch

[11:44 am, 12/02/2021] Srivi Kalyan: <https://birdsoftheworld.org/bow/home> - free bird encyclopedia

[11:44 am, 12/02/2021] Srivi Kalyan: Nothing like watching birds to ponder about form.

[11:46 am, 12/02/2021] Srivi Kalyan: I am waiting for my paper on Bird and Line to be published soon. In that I ponder through bird watching, Indian aesthetics and artistic practice on how one can develop an ecosophy (Ecological philosophy) through this process.

[11:50 am, 12/02/2021] Srivi Kalyan: on another note, I was looking at the evolution of my work in this particular style and technique of the current work over the last 18 or so years.

[0:11 pm, 12/02/2021] Srivi Kalyan: Should I flood your chat boxes with 10 or more paintings and reflections? Please let me know before I post.

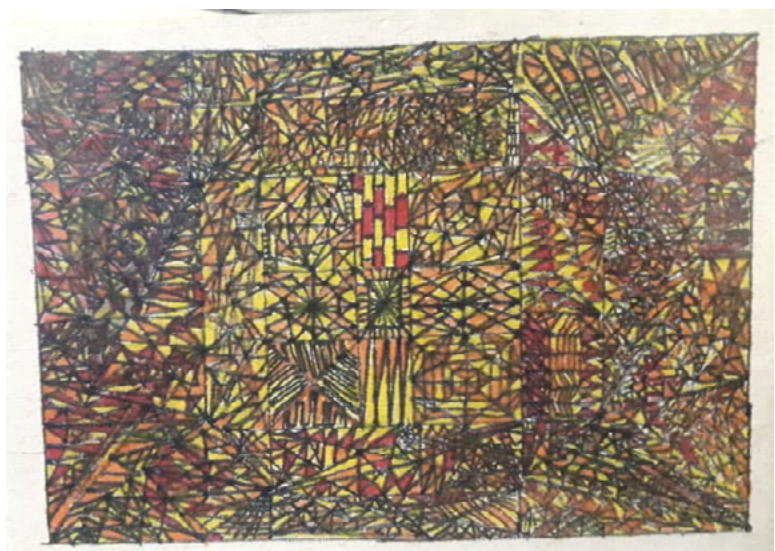
[0:12 pm, 12/02/2021] Pranav Sharma: Please do! By all means :D

[0:14 pm, 12/02/2021] Surabhi: Yes yes.. eager to see and read

[0:30 pm, 12/02/2021] Srivi Kalyan: Ok. I will take that as a yes for now. And at any point, anyone feels it is too much, please message me.

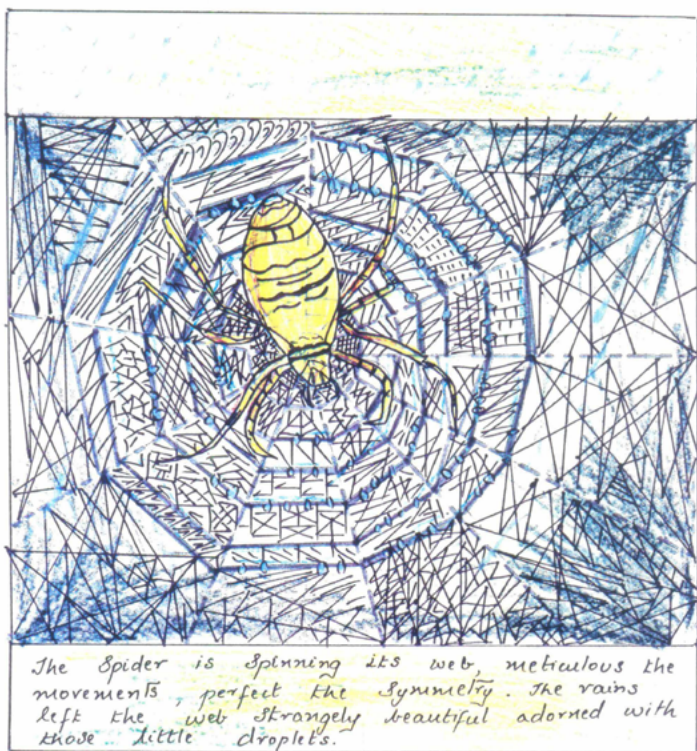
[0:30 pm, 12/02/2021] Srivi Kalyan: I tried to look back and see when this particular style started in my work in a distinctive manner and tried to trace back to older works. From 8th or 9th grade doodles when I used to do geometric patterns, my pursuit of many elements of what now forms a unique style seem to have evolved. And how they have been evolved through both writing and visual pursuits. It is fun to look back and also note how long a journey it is for the artist. People often miss these long inquiries into form and technique that an artist goes through in the evolution of their style(s). Also, the pieces discussed here are the finished works that I have documentation of. Between creating pieces and initial experiments, there are tons of sketches, simple repetitive exercises of trying out different lines, color play trying to get shades and tones and hues that I like, exploring multiple forms, sketching from different inspirations.

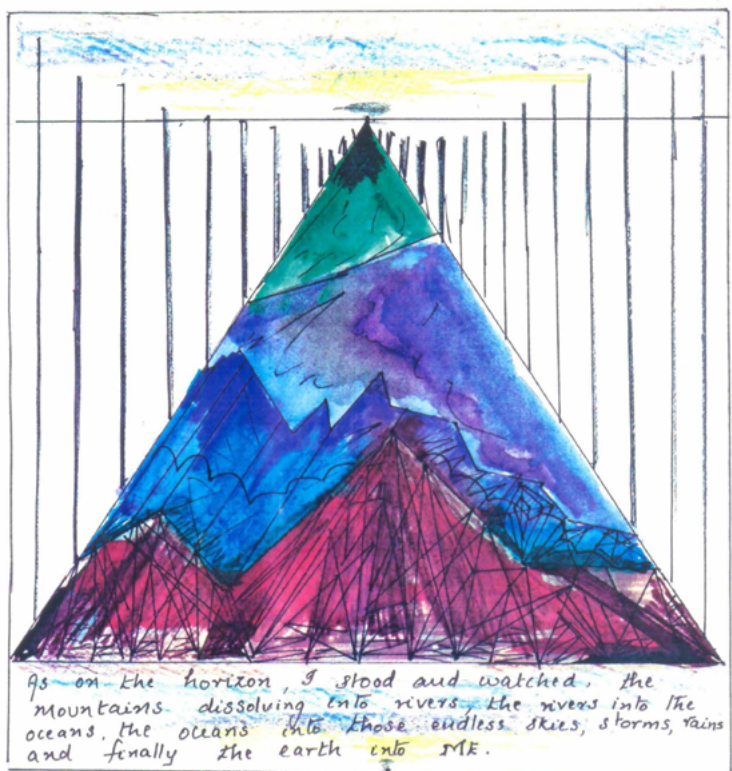


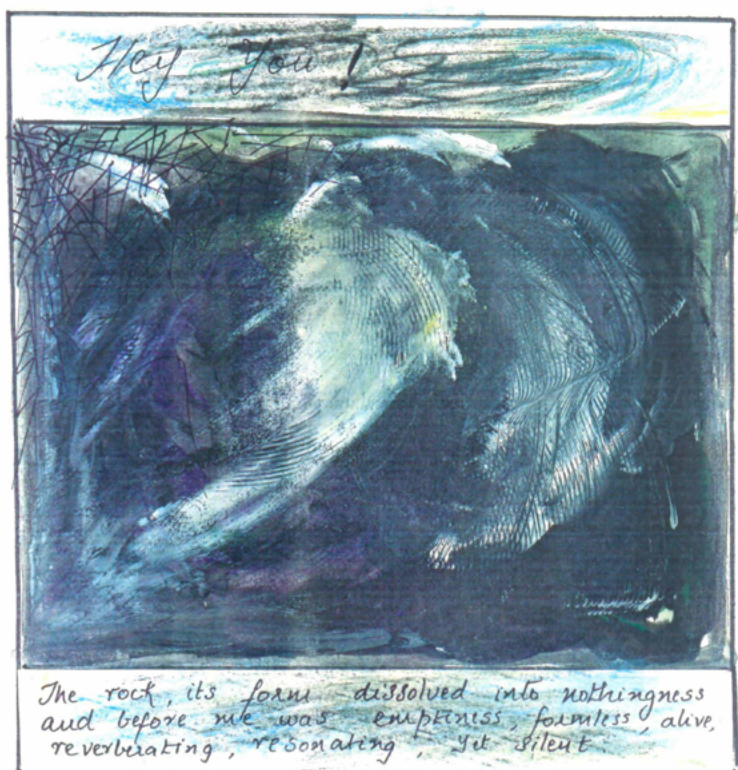




[0:35 pm, 12/02/2021] Srivi Kalyan: I will use this essay “Why not be different” as my starting point. Written in my 11th grade, must have been 17 years old, I suppose. http://www.sriviliveshere.com/uploads/1/9/6/2/19626401/why_not_be_different.pdf - this is when through a blending of writing and image, I looked closely into and asked questions on dissolution of form, being and non-being, form and formless. This is where my philosophical and artistic quests emerge in their first integrated form and both in my writing and my art, my inquiries into the abstract and symbolic forms begin to meet.







[0:36 pm, 12/02/2021] Srivi Kalyan: I remember that these thoughts were clearly articulated in my mind very much as I am writing it now when I was 17 years old. This illustrated essay is my first rudimentary attempt to bring poetry, essay, art, philosophy, reflection and conversational writing together. It was a submission to a common wealth essay competition.

[0:39 pm, 12/02/2021] Srivi Kalyan: From my earlier doodles starting in 8th grade perhaps, which were purely geometric forms often, the illustrations here move into an inquiry of expanding those geometric forms into narratives, integrated with organic forms and the sharp and heavy sense of form, I seek to dissolve into a fluid and formless space of abstraction through the series.

[0:42 pm, 12/02/2021] Srivi Kalyan: A very distinct artistic inquiry as a writer, poet and artist emerged very clearly for me while writing and illustrating this essay. Some of the poems here were written independent of the essay and I integrated them into it while crafting the essay. IN some sense, when I look back, this seems like a precursor to the kind of practice based research and writing I have now done in my doctoral work.

[0:47 pm, 12/02/2021] Srivi Kalyan: I remember being so excited and kicked about it and tormenting my family on the great value of this essay, while my parents particularly as well as my teachers found it extremely abstract.

[0:47 pm, 12/02/2021] Srivi Kalyan: :)

[0:49 pm, 12/02/2021] Srivi Kalyan: I will place this as the beginning of a conscious journey into this particular artistic inquiry that has evolved to the current work, which I have been sharing with you.





[0:50 pm, 12/02/2021] Srivi Kalyan: Two pieces from a collection created in 1998 as part of my first exhibition that I had at Gangarams Gallery in Bangalore.

[0:53 pm, 12/02/2021] Srivi Kalyan: 1998 - Technical and style Inquiry was about how to blend the geometric and organic. How to create and expand the geometric forms in a way that somehow could be fluid enough to be organic? The answers, which I found in these paintings were part of conscious and unconscious inquiries that started with doodles and a collection of geometric pattern art from 8th or 9th grade or perhaps even earlier.

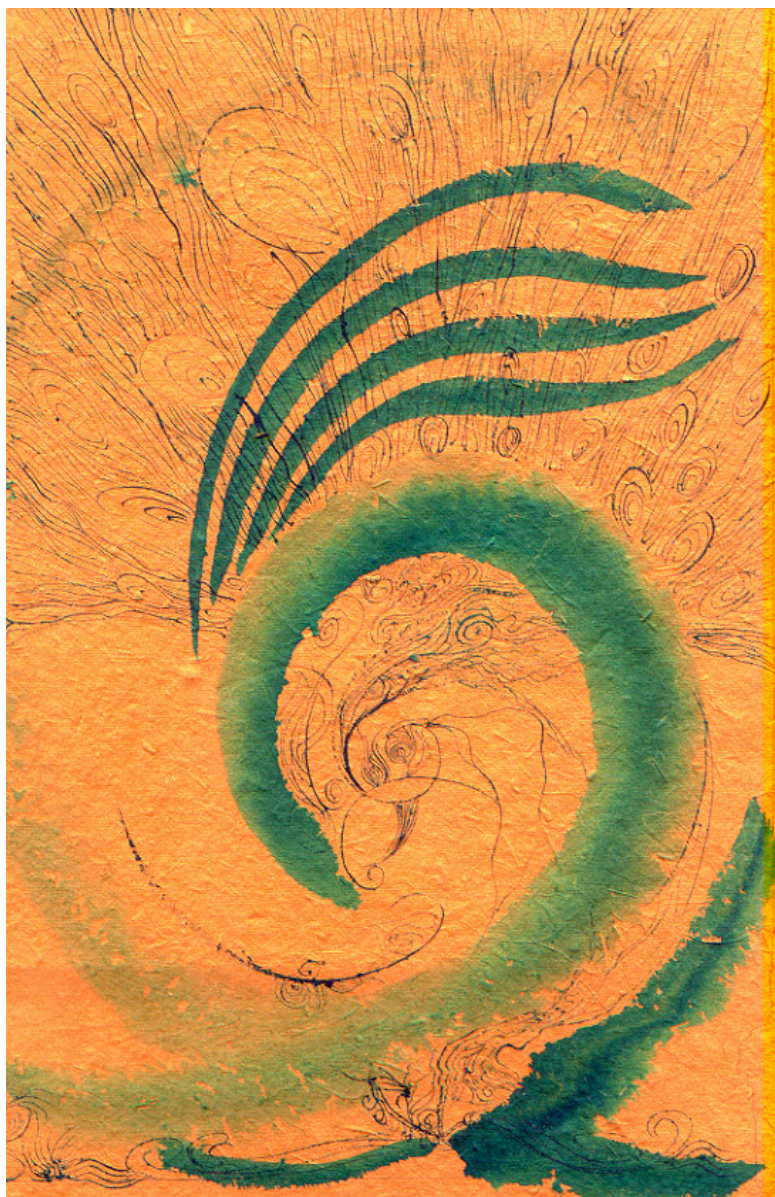
These paintings have emerged after 4 - 5 years of evolution and almost everyday practice.



[0:55 pm, 12/02/2021] Srivi Kalyan: This was the first painting I made in 2003 trying to get this particular style together in the masters workshop I had mentioned earlier. Drawing upon miniatures, patachitra and other folk art forms, blending it with my bold strokes and free painting style. My inquiry was - How to keep miniature painting lines but have painterly effect of conceptual and symbolic world?



[0:57 pm, 12/02/2021] Srivi Kalyan: Inquiry - Can I capture my sense of musicality of form through miniature lines? Mira - A continuation of paintings during and post the day-long workshop we had.



[0:58 pm, 12/02/2021] Srivi Kalyan: Inquiry- How to work with miniature lines in a contained form that still have the essence of my large painterly strokes. Mayil (peacock)?

[1:00 pm, 12/02/2021] Srivi Kalyan: Kirata and Arjuna (Kirata is Lord Shiva, a scene from the epic Mahabharata). Also part of the same workshop collection. Inquiry - How do I blend the kind of energetic strokes I had in my acrylics and oils with the gentler lines of miniature/ folk art forms? How do I bring it together in form? The bodies of both Arjuna and Kirata have those bold strokes, while the faces are inspired by patachitra. I also was looking at abstracting color into the composition as part of my style, using color to capture subtle motivations and moods of the characters/ subjects that I painted.





[1:04 pm, 12/02/2021]

Srivi Kalyan: This is from 2008. Made as a gift for a friend who was my muse for this work. Inquiry - How to paint the inner world of a person completely entwined in nature? I was trying to blend Tammylan (a character from Cherry tree farm by Enid Blyton, described as a wild man) fused with the God Krishna, the flute player who plays his flute and charms all wild creatures and my own intuitions about my friend as a nature lover. How to show this inner world of a person in love with nature, deeply entwined with it? How does color shift mood and form? Can a tree with blue leaves somehow reflect the inner sky of the character?





[1:07 pm, 12/02/2021] **Srivi Kalyan:** Painted in 2012. Ganga. Also as gift for a friend who I saw as an incredible woman and who had supported me with much compassion during a very difficult project that finally fell apart. Inquiry - How to capture tranquility while showing the raging, flowing, bountiful ganges and also reinterpreting and illustrating the legend that she drowned seven of her children before the last child, Bhishma in the epic Mahabharata?



[1:13 pm, 12/02/2021] Srivi Kalyan: Painted in Bali in 2010

[1:14 pm, 12/02/2021] Srivi Kalyan: Painted in response to music - Gamelan Bali and Western music fusion/improvisation workshop. Inquiry - How to capture the sounds of two different worlds, while focusing on the harmony?



[1:21 pm, 12/02/2021] Srivi Kalyan: Painted in 2013 as a gesture of thanks to wildlife film maker Shekar Dattatri who sent me 6 of his film CD's for a series of nature based writing and art workshops that I was conducting, some of these films are now available on his YouTube channel. This painting had two inquiries - How do I capture an entire forest and its subtle flows in a single painting? How does color, form, symbolism and line come together? 2nd was that- It was an inspiration from two of Shekar's films - "Nagarhole - Tales from and Indian Jungle" and to some extent - "Save our Sholas" . This painting also marks the beginning of a quest for ecological art in a more conscious manner in my work. My work underwent a tremendous shift from 2013, as I began a strong inclination towards conservation, species watching, understanding environmental issues and actively finding interventions through art, design and education... Much of which is now fine-tuned and articulated in my thesis, as well as the curricula I have designed, several workshops I have conducted outside Srishti and some of my illustrations and exhibition work as well.

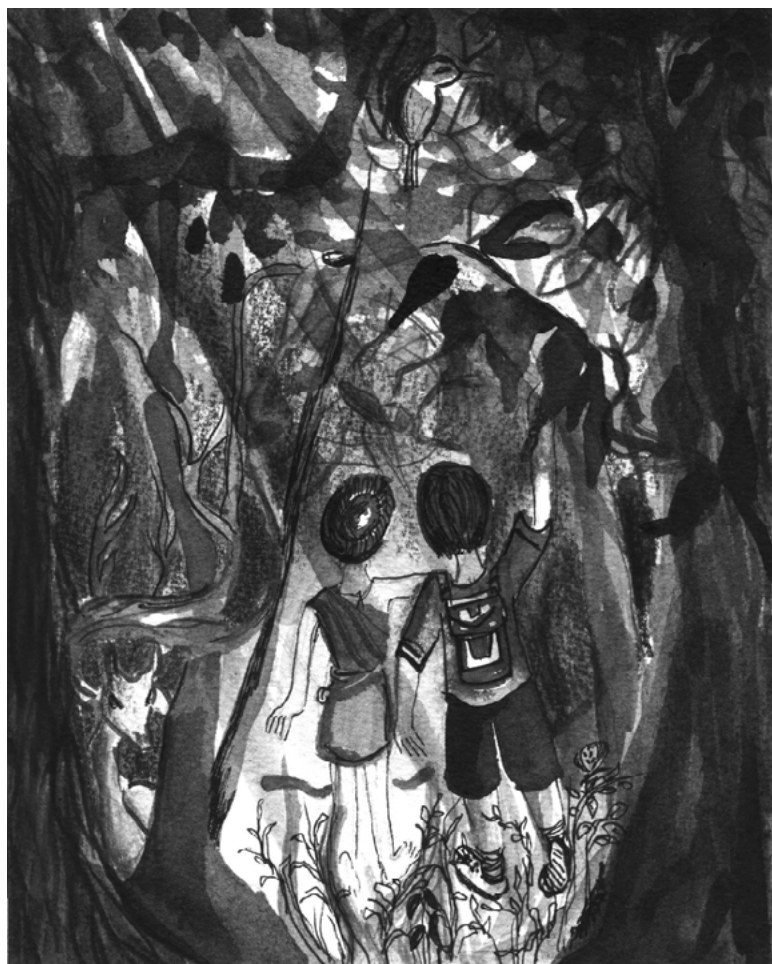


[1:24 pm, 12/02/2021] **Srivi Kalyan:** 2014 - Illustrations from *Jungu the Baiga Princess*.

[1:26 pm, 12/02/2021] **Samridhi:** Love this

[1:27 pm, 12/02/2021] **Srivi Kalyan:** In this set, a children's book, *Forests of Madhya Pradesh (Central India)*, naturalistic observations were all blended with the delicate style. The cover is in color, the rest of the images in black and white. Published by Zubaan.





[1:29 pm, 12/02/2021] *Srivi Kalyan:* <https://www.amazon.in/Run-Ranga-KathaBooks-ebook/dp/B087N89RNF>, Also from 2014/ 15 I think.

[1:30 pm, 12/02/2021] *Samridhi:* I love how ink can create such mysterious mood and still look so delicate

[1:30 pm, 12/02/2021] *Samridhi:* Thanks for sharing Srivi

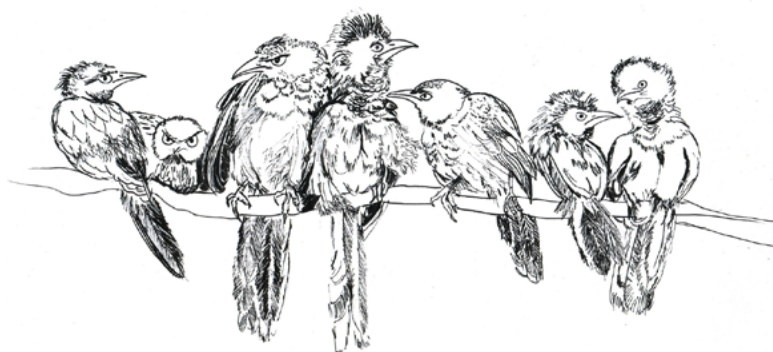
[1:30 pm, 12/02/2021] *Srivi Kalyan:* yeah, and such a pleasure to explore. That set was with indian ink

[1:32 pm, 12/02/2021] *Srivi Kalyan:* With the rhinos, I was looking for both a realistic and yet at the same time a free interpretation of the form of rhino. These were few years where I was sketching nature drawings, and trying to find my own form and style for wildlife art.









[1:34 pm, 12/02/2021] Srivi Kalyan: A series of explorations of birds in 2014, created for a grant with Auroville friends that didn't eventually come through.









[1:35 pm, 12/02/2021] Srivi Kalyan: Inquiring into how my naturalistic and folk styles could meet.

[1:41 pm, 12/02/2021] Srivi Kalyan: Acrylic Painting explorations between 2015 -17

[1:42 pm, 12/02/2021] Srivi Kalyan: Continuous inquiries in how to blend the naturalistic, abstract, symbolic and my inquiries into the porous self. All of these are inquiries into form and style

[1:44 pm, 12/02/2021] Srivi Kalyan: These evolved through my bird watching/ species watching, photography, nature journaling and sketching













Hoplobatrachus tigerinus
Indian Bull Frog

Presence- how does one find the lines that point the confident presence of a bull frog or the common Indian rood? There is an apparent heaviness to the form that seems to shove out at presence, but looking closer, it is again a light line. Then how do they project this presence. The posture, size, the sound they seem to project out of their body is loud, not just their call.

This is when one begins to see the sound that guides form and hence form rather than just see it.

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[1:45 pm, 12/02/2021] Srivi Kalyan: Watercolors from frog watching

[1:45 pm, 12/02/2021] Srivi Kalyan: Part of a collection from 2017 trips and phd work

Careless and unobservant and a seeming carelessness that contrasts this sense of precision. I find all these contradictions (or meeting to observe in fog). The Malabar man looking over a leaf and the Kachars night frog padding mud on his eggs show such unobservance in their bodies that it would be impossible to miss the high level of focus they are capable of. Elsewhere when I watch the Malabar gliding frogs or many others sliding over one another, carefully slipping over anything in their path, they appear mindless as if they don't care for any detail around them. Then you see precision that is extraordinary in the way they climb, march, lunge out, roll - and it shows you in a loop trying to figure out how they make choices about when they will be precise and when they will let go of detail. Are these conscious frog decisions, or human perceptions? Anyway, I continue to praise the artist's desire to inquire through line and am thrilled to see where my lines will flow and where they will stop. While others may wonder about this obsession, to me, this translates into my inner world. These lines that know how to slide, glide, stop in abruptness with delicate synchronicity - these are also now lines of the mind and how of consciousness.

Pedotus tuberculatus
Malabar Tise Toal



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Nyctanolis kamoharui
Kamoharui Night Frog

Frog sleep is indeed the greatest of meditations to encounter. Lizards was my favorite teacher in the five days I spent at Bala. It was amazing to watch him crouched in unlikely corners, most comfortable, nasal, and seemingly lost in a world of his own. One has spent many years in the cradles of the form of the Buddha and Dharma as ideal forms of meditation as crafted by artists of a rather human art. But I would not say, if the artist seeking the line for their form, honored some of his line from sleeping frogs. For I encounter the same quality of deep-time in their stillness as I do in paradox in them the meditative distance to some of time and space. In this meditativeness, they somehow locate their temporal and spatial qualities in that complex containment of being, and one is rendered into the time-as-space and in and through them.

Rhacophorus lateralis
Small Tree Frog



Completion

The frog tree
completes me
one from extending
into the other.

Meditativeness
seems to guide it
out

I wonder at him
and am moved whether to be
afraid for him or delight in him.
Then I meet the lateralis sleeping
in the deep jungle
and hear its golden-backed frog
singing
hidden in mud walls along forest
floor
and my doubts
and I am baffled at the

vulnerability of life.

The books are moral
and I think about responses
and all these things we want every
and kill without thinking
I cannot make sense.

I fall in love with trees
and think I must be a
Salabangka
Do not it matter?
That completes this
and this completes that
and nature is complete
and everything is complete



[1:54 pm, 12/02/2021]

Srivi Kalyan: This is pen work with ink created in 2016, for another friend for opening the world of Bandipur to me and her generous gifts of her love for nature, working in conservation, books and staying at her home in Bandipur and much more.

Hermit, that yogi is my guru
 who can untie this song.
 A tree stands without root,
 without flowers bears fruit;
 no leaf, no branch, and eight
 sky mouths thundering.
 Dance done without feet,
 tune played without hands,
 praises sung without tongue,
 singer without shape or form -
 the true teacher reveals.
 Seek the bird's, the fish's path.
 Kabir says, both are hard.
 I offer myself to an image:
 The being beyond boundaries
 and beyond beyond.

24, Page 49, The Bijak of Kabir



[1:56 pm, 12/02/2021] *Srivi Kalyan*: This work evolved from my Kabir series done between 2010 and 12. <http://www.sriviliveshere.com/mapping-ulat-bansi.html>. The inquiry here became particular to landscape, habitat, wildlife, and eco-art

[1:57 pm, 12/02/2021] *Srivi Kalyan*: This is the first complex integrated piece of my naturalistic and folk styles along with my nature observations and experiences



*[1:57 pm, 12/02/2021] Pranav Sharma
VC: I love this..*

*[1:57 pm, 12/02/2021] Srivi Kalyan:
Thanks :)*

[1:58 pm, 12/02/2021] Srivi Kalyan: While ofcourse there are many more works I could discuss, I think these are reflective of the critical pieces that have shaped the new work and the long journey of inquiries into form, style, line, technique, color and composition

[2:02 pm, 12/02/2021] Srivi Kalyan: So many individual inquiries through which I painted and figured out over 25 odd years, and now I can handle certain aspects of the style in a new work much better, because I know I figured out some resolution for how to use material, or technique in some other painting. So when I build a new work, there is both body memory and technical skill that have evolved. And the style continues to evolve while asking new questions of form, line, color and composition.

[2:04 pm, 12/02/2021] Srivi Kalyan: I am also able to pause and reflect and work more quietly compared to the frenzy before 2010 and even in some recent works. There is a sense of having completed a few of the jigsaw puzzles of my life. So now am able to pause and gently puzzle over new problems through my practice. So with this, I will stop with the reflective exercise behind the evolution of the style.

[2:12 pm, 12/02/2021] Srivi Kalyan: Thanks for listening :)

[2:15 pm, 12/02/2021] Srivi Kalyan: Request: Please don't share this randomly/ forward the works to your friends.

[2:16 pm, 12/02/2021] Hia: Ofcourse not.

[2:18 pm, 12/02/2021] Srivi Kalyan: Don't feel overwhelmed. Instead engage with me, ask questions, share thoughts.



[2:20 pm, 12/02/2021] Pranav Sharma VC: yess

[2:37 pm, 12/02/2021] Nupur: These are so nice srivi.. I absolutely love them. I've recently found out I don't like drawing animals but this just wants me to give maybe another try?

[2:38 pm, 12/02/2021] Srivi Kalyan: You should also start watching them in the wild.

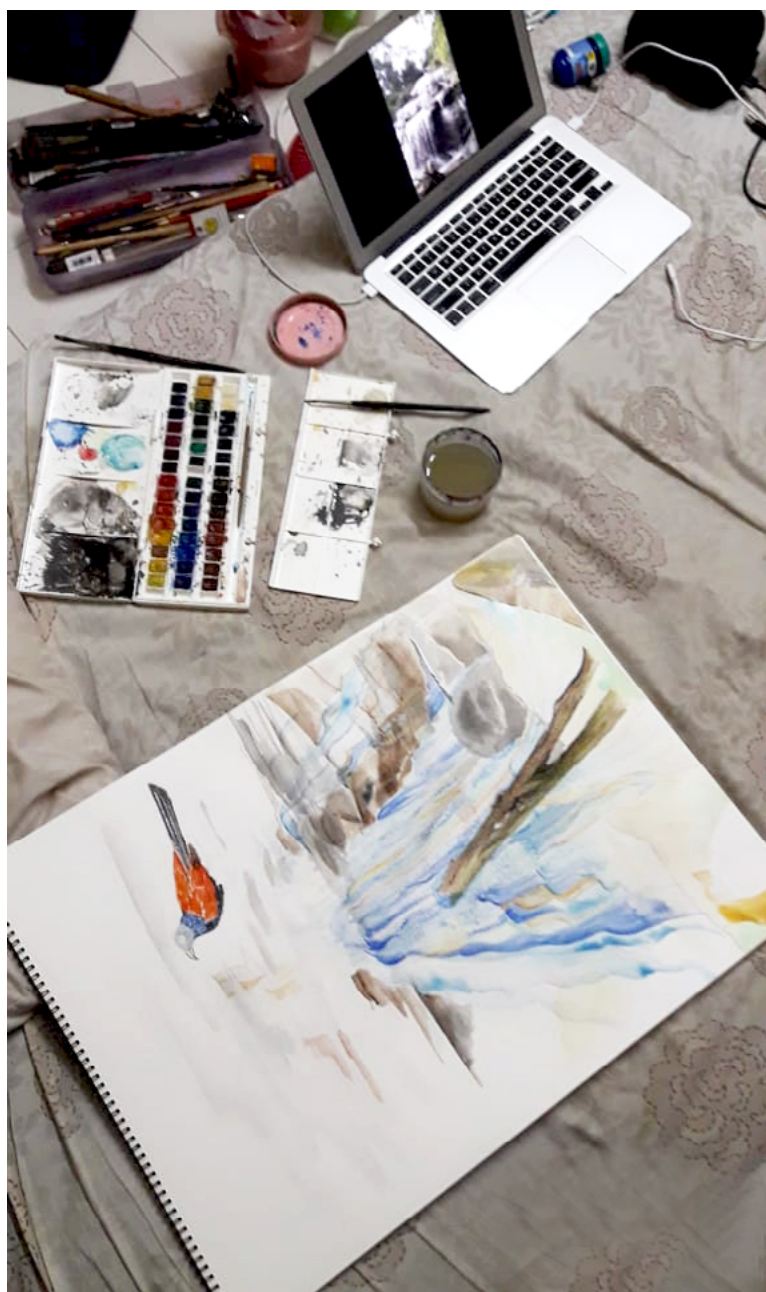
[2:39 pm, 12/02/2021] Srivi Kalyan: These sketches of babblers happened after I watched babblers apart from referring to the work of other photographers. But by then I knew babblers were cute and talkative and chatter away all the time. So it made it possible for me to find the expressiveness in their form.

[2:40 pm, 12/02/2021] Srivi Kalyan: It was also the beginning of my bird watching days. I still didn't know much. The first bird I spotted was a coucal, nice and huge :) All my life birds were = crows for me. I just watched crows endlessly. So I was so excited to have spotted a different bird only to find out it belonged to the crow family!

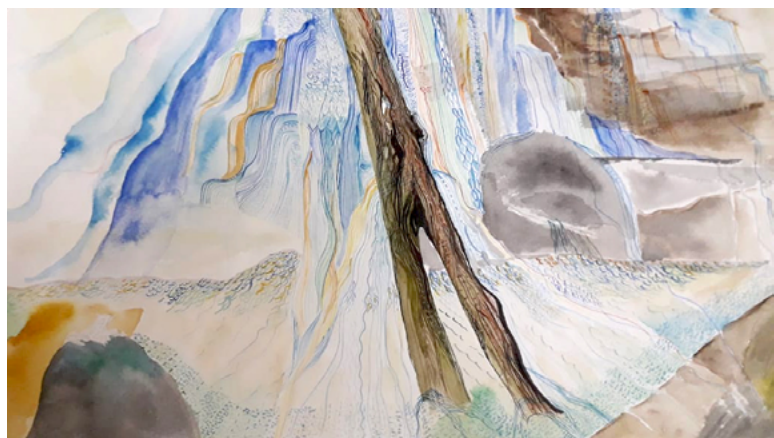
[2:41 pm, 12/02/2021] Srivi Kalyan: That's why both the painting and this pen work of the coucal show it in a startling bold manner.

Vulnerability is the key word :) Dialogue and conversation makes me also feel better and not so lonely in sharing an otherwise private world that is made of internal conversations and solitude and music.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OT5JDuCwfmA> Riley Lee and Andy Rigby - El sueno the Dream playing





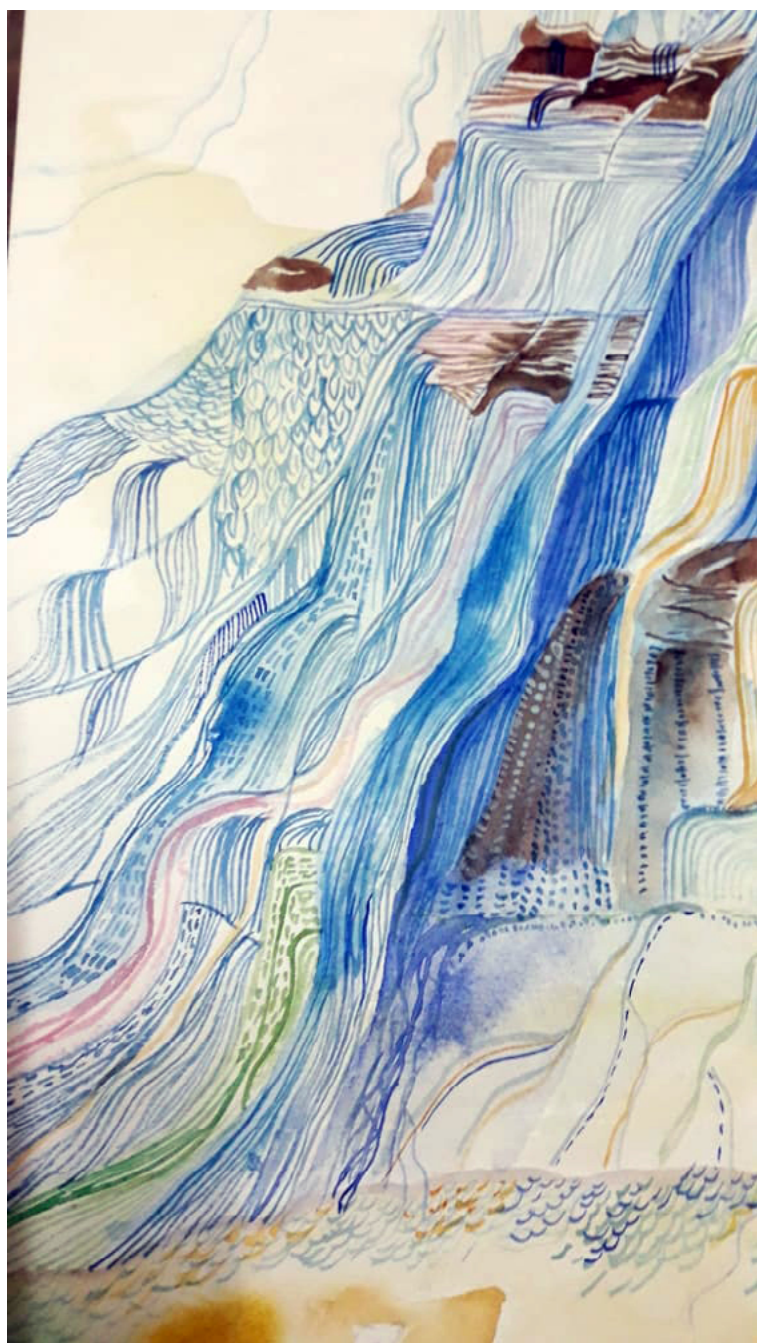


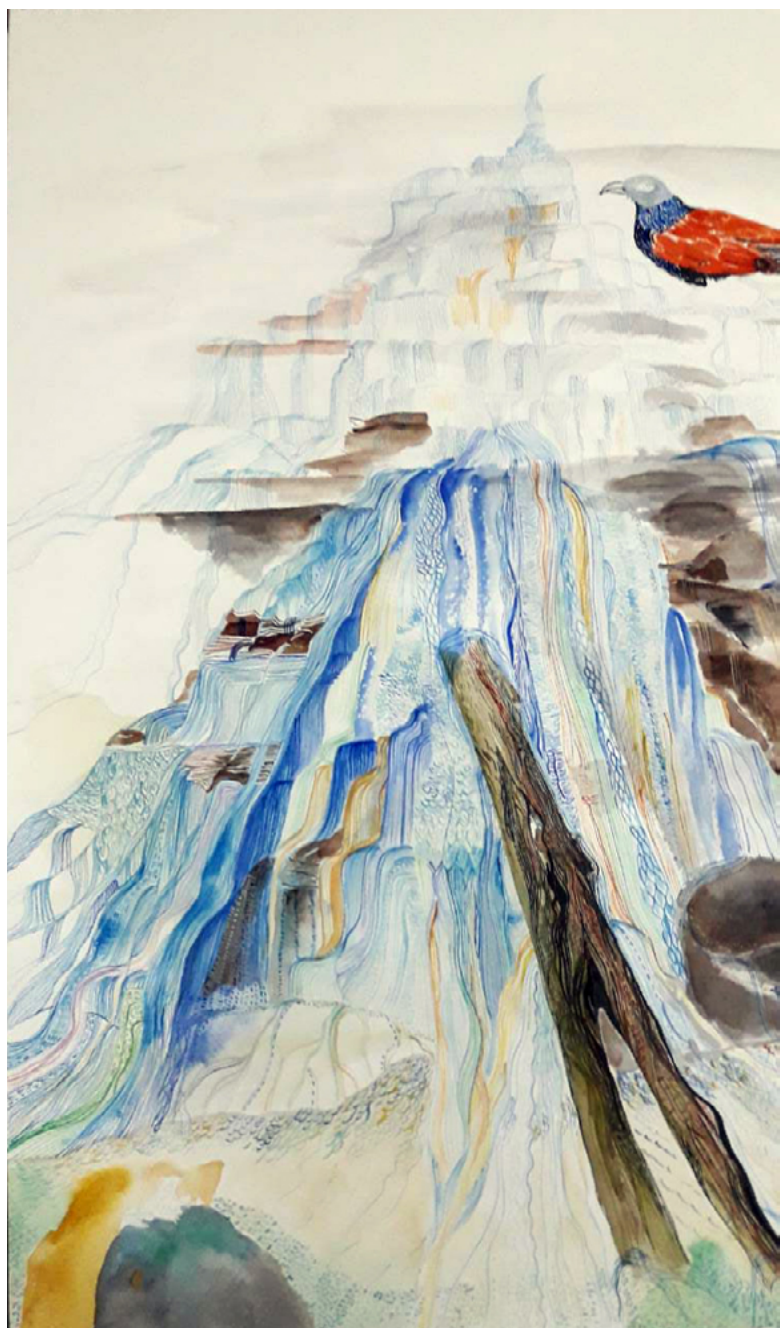


[6:15 am, 13/02/2021] *Srivi Kalyan*: Turquoise rock and emerald lake for the dancing frog to compete with the khembootha (coucal)

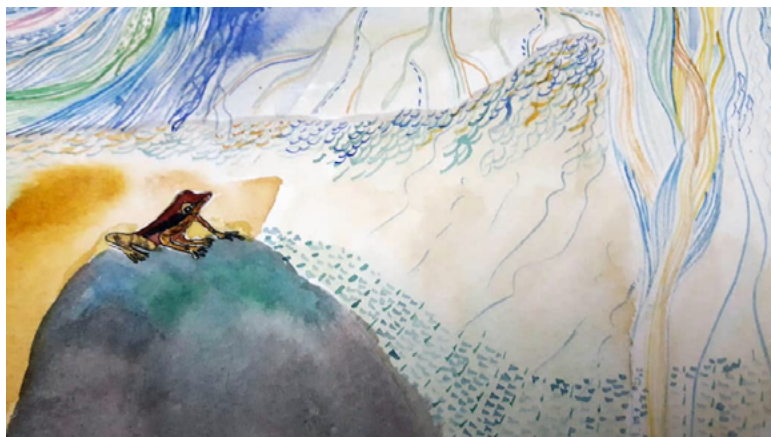
[6:16 am, 13/02/2021] *Hia*: Really like the harmony of colors

[6:31 am, 13/02/2021] *Srivi Kalyan*: :)









[7:47 am, 14/02/2021] Sonal:

Dear Srivi,

Good morning... Thank you for sharing that beautiful waterfall emerging one stroke at a time... In my moments of pause and wonder I read what you have written all over again and find meaning and unbound joy in it... Thank you for being so hearty in your giving...

I have reached home, and adjusting to the weather, with cold and a blocked nose... I have also been consumed by my nephew's incessant questions and demands and hence not been as active on the group...

Just wanted to say, you have someone silently listening to you always, even if I am not talking back as much...

Hope your parents are okay, and you are hanging in there... sending you my best always...

*Love,
Sonal*



[8:09 pm, 14/02/2021] Srivi Kalyan: Almost done. Will give it a rest for a few days to see what to highlight or deepen. And also let everything in the landscape settle in. They will each find their own comfort space and acceptance as well as relationship with each other. It takes a while for this internal magic to happen and one must let the work lie fallow for a while. Then they will call out one by one, asking me for a stroke here, a tinge of color there, the deepening of a hue.... now it is a time of waiting and pausing. Nature and the painting will take their own time now. And when it is time, I will wade and swim and get invited to partake in the sapphire waterfall, emerald lake, turquoise rock, pearl black ledges, fallen tree, amber coucal and golden frog conversations. Until then... Nawang Khechog travels with his flute breathing life into our worlds...

[8:18 pm, 14/02/2021] Srivi Kalyan: The porous self, tender, nuanced, subtle and vulnerable rocks gently as the last frontier between human and all things wild... melting, flowing, yielding and dissolving

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=S4XBbFVCTo0> - The Wish-Fulfilling Jewel in the Himalayas_Nawang Khechog



[8:41 pm, 15/02/2021] Srivi Kalyan: I had a lovely few hours thinking through other paintings I would like to make in this collection. One challenging composition that I am playing around in my mind is of about 6 to 8 hornbills landing and congregating on a fig tree at the base of Morni hills, near Chandigarh. I don't have a photograph of what I saw, and this was brief moment that I had a chance to encounter this phenomenal moment before the birds flew away. The sounds of their flapping wings in the silent forests of the Garhwal region were like mad elephants thundering down. Overwhelming beautiful, my first sighting of the oriental pied Indian hornbills in all their magnificence, I am playing around the possible compositions in my mind and how to compose 8 of them in a single painting. It is exciting and complex and scary at the same time.

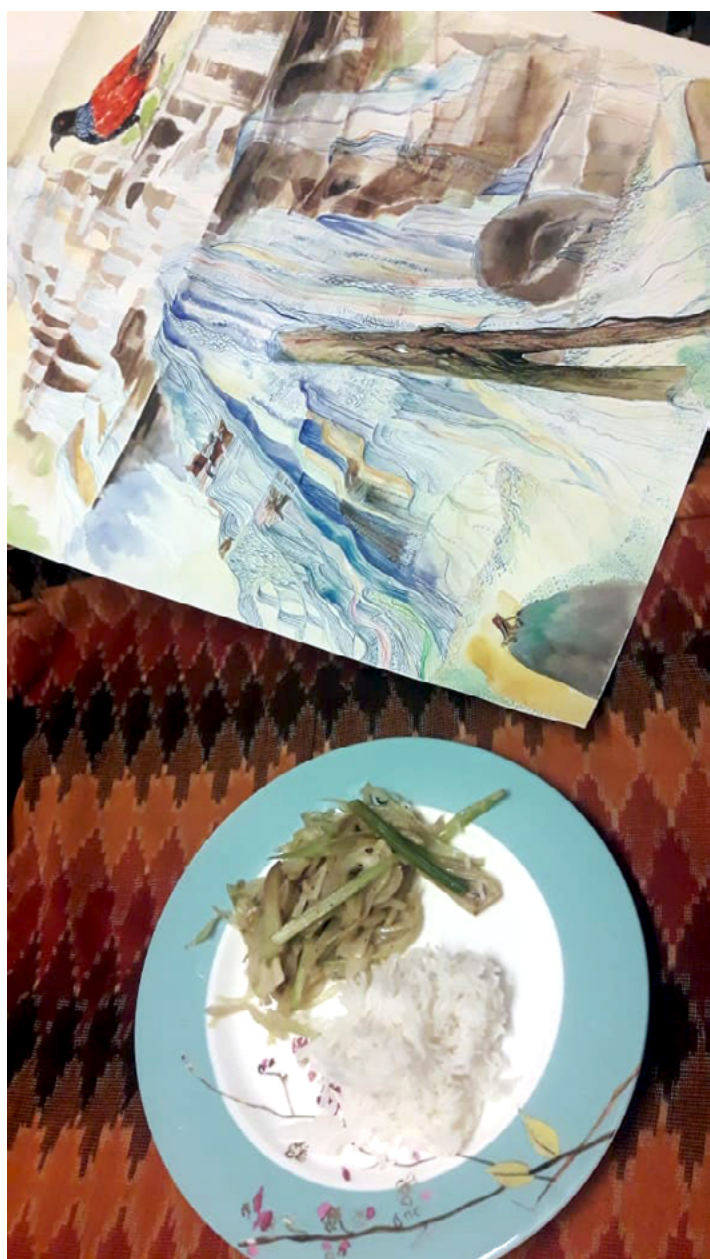


[2:53 pm, 18/02/2021] Srivi Kalyan: Fennel bulbs sliced and roasted with potato, garlic and onion and mildly flavoured with salt, pepper and ginger

[2:54 pm, 18/02/2021] Srivi Kalyan: As the painting finally starts growing on me and I dont feel it looks too terrible. The food is simple and yummy.

[3:14 pm, 18/02/2021] Hia laidp Mdes: The painting is slowly forming.

[3:15 pm, 18/02/2021] Srivi Kalyan: ... In it's own world and It's own world



[0:56 am, 19/02/2021] Srivi Kalyan: The water has begun to flow in the waterfall today....

[8:45 pm, 25/02/2021] Srivi Kalyan: That said, when I was talking to Surabhi I realised, I might have missed sharing this with you. After I painted the coucal, I left it against a wall and kept walking past it hour by hour trying to figure out whether I liked it or not. I could see all the mistakes I had made. The places where les had become thick and heavy, patterns had smudged, colors were wrong according to me. Then I panicked that the coucal was too big and then I got confused thinking- but I do want the coucal to be big.

As I was telling Hia, it reminded me of a painting I had done in my 10th grade for the Hindu young world painting competition. It was for one of the given titles "Beggar on the street" I drew a huge beggar dominating one of the busiest market areas in Chennai. By fortune or misfortune, the painting won the editor's special prize and got published in young world.

After that started the disaster. Everyone I knew told me it was a terrible painting and they couldn't imagine what had possessed the judges to give me a prize. I was upset and sad and my art teacher, who is the nicest person in the world also said, well...It is not very good in a very polite way. Then I wrote to my sister who was in Coimbatore and she being the kind and wonderful sister said that it was a wonderful painting, why else would I have been given a prize. Then I went to the award function in Vishakapatnam with my father and ran after every judge and asked them why they gave me a prize as everyone around me thought it was a terrible painting. That's how I first learnt the words to define and defend my work and also value my work for what it was, in all its messy silly glory.



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of the building to capture the scene below. There was no Central Station. Another prizewinning painting had the station building reconstructed with a most modern facade.

Every one of the entries for the topic, "Temple car festival", had the crowd of devotees, but more fascinating to look at were the highly decorated chariots carrying the 'utsavars' and the people pulling the 'cars' with devotion. A few paintings carried the deities on palanquins, and not chariots.

The very few entries for the fifth topic 'Beggar in the street' perhaps had a hint that Madras streets nowadays seldom see wandering beggars, though one can come across several of them near places of worship. Anyway, whoever had attempted this subject were sure of what they should picturise. The evidence of this confidence must have prompted the judges to pick up an entry from this lot for the special prize. It had the quality of a poster in graphic style. Strangely, there were more male beggars than women.

The few that were seen were mostly in front of street houses asking for and accepting alms. Some of the men sitting on the footpaths had spread a piece of cloth in front of them to collect the coins dropped by the passers-by. In one painting, the beggar was seen going about with his hat upturned. Rather realistic, though one wonders where he got the hat from.

This year's competition had attracted some handicapped children, and it was a sight to see them dexterously handling brushes and pencils with their toes. The challenge to compete with their normal counterparts was not too much for them and some of them did feature among the



[8:46 pm, 25/02/2021] Srivi Kalyan: Coming back to the coucal, it made me laugh thinking my beggar on the street and coucal on the waterfall haven't changed much and I accepted the overly large coucal affectionately remember the events from all those years ago in 1995.

[8:47 pm, 25/02/2021] Srivi Kalyan: And then eventually after a few days I decided that the painting was not too bad. I still don't consider it finished and hopefully in a few months, will be ready to sign it and complete it.





[3:59 pm, 21/02/2021] Srivi Kalyan: The fun and madness of painting a series, evolving a project, magical, suspenseful, frustrating, sweet...

[4:03 pm, 21/02/2021] Srivi Kalyan: And this kind of craziness and fun of making is what I want for all of you to enjoy and take pleasure in for your own projects. This is independent of assessment, reviews, audiences, design methods etc. It is simply you having fun with your project!





Thank you