



P.D. Dhumal, *Looking Back*, Wood engraving on fine art paper, 11 x 15 in, 2014

## PRESS RELEASE

**P.D. DHUMAL**

*Nocturnes: Woodcut Engravings and Etchings*

21 August – 5 October 2026

Vadehra Art Gallery

D-40 Defence Colony, New Delhi, 110024

Gallery Hours: Monday–Saturday, 10 a.m.–6 p.m.

Vadehra Art Gallery is pleased to present *Nocturnes*, a first major solo exhibition of woodcuts, wood engravings, linocuts, and etchings by artist and educator P.D. Dhumal, who served as dean of the Faculty of Fine Arts at M.S. University, Baroda, for 7 years, over an illustrious teaching tenure of 38 years. Bringing together nearly 80 prints produced over the last two decades, the exhibition presents Dhumal's sustained engagement with printmaking as both an artistic and pedagogical medium. Dhumal's deep tactile skill with the printmaking form extends beyond his technical prowess with the matrix (carved block or surface) and manipulating its pressures to yield stark contrasts between black-and-white colour fields. His work gives expression to the primal energy of his subjects, whether human, animal, or anthropomorphic, through surrealist fluidity and heightened chiaroscuro drama, which he expertly achieves in his compositions using a single woodblock, many of which are included in the exhibition from his archive.

The history of printmaking as a medium is shaped not only by artists, but also by masters who enabled them to explore its collaborative possibilities. In the 1920s, Fernand Mourlot's atelier in Paris became

a laboratory for Picasso, Matisse, Miró, Chagall and Braque. In the following decades, Stanley William Hayter's Atelier 17 brought artists together around experimental printmaking, while Aldo Crommelynck's technical partnership with Picasso produced some of the artist's most important late prints.

In India, P.D. Dhumal belongs to this distinguished tradition of being a master printmaker, educator and collaborator. At the Faculty of Fine Arts, M. S. University, Baroda, he played a pivotal role in the development of printmaking in post-Independence India, working closely with artists including K.G. Subramanyan, Gulammohammed Sheikh, Nilima Sheikh, Nasreen Mohamedi and Bhupen Khakhar. For 38 years, Dhumal taught in the university's printmaking department, contributing significantly to the development of printmaking as an artistic discipline in India.

Dhumal's career as a printmaker and educator began at a pivotal moment in the history of Indian printmaking when the medium was shifting beyond its reproductive utility towards artistic autonomy and experimentation, before which printmaking occupied a relatively modest position within Indian art education. Choosing to work in the exacting mediums of woodcut and linocut at a time when prints were rarely exhibited or collected, Dhumal remained steadfast in his commitment to both his artistic practice and the transmission of printmaking knowledge, unwavering by the pursuit of personal acclaim. Over the years, Dhumal has remained more committed to teaching than to his own artistic practice, mentoring generations of artists and printmakers through his five-decades-long knowledge and expertise of the medium. Many of his works were originally produced as demonstrations for his students, revealing a practice in which creating and teaching have been inseparable, through which he fostered an environment that encouraged interdisciplinary approaches, collaborative print portfolios, papermaking experiments, and community engagement in printmaking, helping shape the evolution of printmaking into the rigorous artistic discipline it continues to be among new generations of artists.

Drawing inspiration from both ancient and modern artistic traditions, Dhumal forged a visual language in which desire, instinct, and the natural world became deeply intertwined. For him, the uninhibited presence of erotic imagery in Indian public monuments, together with the modernist artistic language emerging around him, offered a profound understanding of desire as an integral aspect of lived experience rather than a subject of concealment. The exhibition traces his long-standing engagement with the erotic, further informed by his encounters with the ancient sculptural traditions of the Konark and Khajuraho temples, as well as influence from a previous generation of modernists such as F.N. Souza, Jeram Patel and Laxma Goud, who shaped his artistic imagination. Much of this work unfolds within nocturnal landscapes, where figures, animals, and pastoral forms are outlined in marks that allude to both presence and absence, emerging from dense fields of black, creating an intensity akin to a stage illuminated against darkness.

Dhumal's monochromatic works on paper are conceived with an intentional theatrical sensibility, drawing images from the ecology of Vadodara. His prints are populated by bulls, snakes, birds, and other creatures that recur throughout his vicinity and visual vocabulary. Within these bucolic fragments, Dhumal explores the feral, unbridled energies of the sentient world. Human and animal

forms frequently converge embodying an amalgamation of physical strength, ferocity, tenderness, and erotic energy. Such dialogue between instinct and sensuality recurs across his prints, lending them a vitality that is playful, symbolic, and deeply rooted in observation.

As P.D. Dhumal himself elaborates:

"I want to create images the way you would see a black and white film (or movie) in a theatre, where there is complete darkness and the image (can be) very strong. The same film on television is not the same experience. The story remains the same, the music remains the same, but the experience is not the same. When I create my images, I am trying to create that kind of intensity, particularly because much of my work is night landscape, very dark, with figures and animals in black and white.

But beyond that, the most important thing for me is always that the viewer has an opportunity to create their own image, their own meaning. I am not narrating. I am giving something to look at which affects you, what you make of it is yours (to imagine)."

*Nocturnes* opens on 21 August 2026 at the gallery's D-40 space alongside Defence Colony Gallery Night and will be on view until 5 October 2026.

Note to Editors:

An e-catalogue with more information on the exhibition, artworks and artist is available on request. For general inquiries, please write to [art@vadehraart.com](mailto:art@vadehraart.com). Please credit the gallery appropriately when making use of any material shared by us.

## ABOUT THE ARTIST

Born in Gwalior in 1950, Purushottam Dhumal studied painting and printmaking at the Faculty of Fine Arts of the Maharaja Sayajirao University of Baroda between 1965 and 1971. Spanning over five decades, his practice has continually expanded the expressive possibilities of printmaking, moving fluidly between painting, wood engraving, etching, and drawing while remaining deeply attentive to the relationship between image, memory, and observation.

Dhumal often attributes the evolution of his visual language to the study tours he undertook during his years at Baroda. Visits to the temples of Konark and Khajuraho left a profound impression on him, introducing him to the uninhibited presence of erotic imagery within sacred architecture. These experiences gradually found their way into his work, with erotic imagery becoming a recurring element of his practice. A huge part of his oeuvre comes through his sustained engagement with the Uttarayan Art Foundation near Vadodara. Frequent visits at dawn, dusk, and late into the night

immersed him in an environment where blue bulls, monkeys, snakes, and dense vegetation became part of his everyday visual experience. This encounter with the landscape shifted his approach to image-making. Rather than illustrating narratives, his works invite open-ended interpretation, allowing forms to emerge through the viewer's imagination.

In 1976, Dhumal joined the Department of Printmaking at the Faculty of Fine Arts, Maharaja Sayajirao University of Baroda, where he taught until his retirement in 2012. During this period, he also served as Dean of Faculty for seven years, contributing significantly to printmaking education in India.

Since the early 1970s, Dhumal has presented numerous solo exhibitions across Delhi and Mumbai and has participated in several printmaking workshops, beginning with the Smithsonian workshop in Delhi and later in Udaipur, Hyderabad, Baroda, and other cities. He received the Best Print Award from the Gujarat Lalit Kala Akademi in both 1970 and 1971. Before embarking on an academic career, he founded Screenprints, an industrial printing enterprise based in Vadodara. Invited by the French Government in 1997, Dhumal visited France and has since participated in and coordinated numerous workshops and art camps across India and abroad. For over twenty years, Dhumal has served as advisor to the Uttarayan Art Foundation, in Jaspur, near Vadodara.

In 2023, Dhumal was conferred the Raja Ravi Varma Award for Excellence in Visual Arts (artist and academician) and was honoured by H.H. Shubhangini Raje Gaekwad of the Royal Family of Baroda at the Laxmi Vilas Palace, Vadodara.

The artist lives and works in Vadodara, Gujarat.

## ABOUT THE GALLERY

Founded in 1987, Vadehra Art Gallery is a pioneer of South Asian art, representing artists across four generations from the Indian Subcontinent and its diaspora, helping to shape it as a celebration of culture, identity and intellect. As a confidante to art history and a champion of contemporary creativity, the gallery nurtures a dynamic and flourishing ecosystem where the artist and their work take centre stage, promoting a legacy of artistic expression that resonates with global audiences.

With a commitment to active engagement and thoughtful curation, Vadehra Art Gallery presents regular exhibitions across two prominent locations in New Delhi, complemented by events, dialogues, and workshops along with a consistent digital presence, including an online shop. With a maturing global presence, the gallery participates in major international art fairs including Frieze and Art Basel, while also hosting frequent exhibitions in London and collaborating with institutional venues worldwide.

The gallery's publishing arm, launched in 1996, addressed the vital need for comprehensive documentation, critical writing, and high-quality reproductions in South Asian art. Over the years, Vadehra Art Gallery has published numerous books and monographs in collaboration with major

publishers like Penguin, Prestel and König, along with innumerable exhibition catalogues, contributing significantly to a growing archive of South Asian art and history.

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