

# RASA: ESSENCE OF INDIA

Natasha Kumar abstracts the colours and contrasts of Rajasthan

## THE RASA SERIES BEGAN

about ten years ago, when Natasha Kumar first started sketching the *chhatri*, an essential element of North Indian architecture. Often ornate, intricately carved, the *chhatri* rapidly became a central theme in her work.


Clockwise from above: *Rasa Mandala Series VIII*, *Rasa Sphere Series VIII* (detail), *Red Rasa* (detail), *Rasa Sphere Series X*.

The elegant symmetry of the pillars, the detailed carving of the base, splashes of raw pigment left behind after a *puja*, all fascinated. To express the moods evoked by the *chhatris* at different times in the day, she took colours and contrasts from everyday Rajasthani life – bold fluorescing pinks and oranges, dark russet and turquoise.

Over time, village street art, *raga* music cycles, and stories from the Hindu pantheon all competed as subject matter for her, until drawing the Royal Chhatris at Bundi, Rajasthan, Natasha looked up and discovered the concentric circles carved on the underside of a *chhatri* dome. And so the *RASA* collection began.



“In Hindi, *rasa* is essence or emotion,” she explains. “For me, the *RASA* collection is a new exploration into this ancient Indian aesthetic. It is also an important stage of my artistic development: figurative representation to abstract sensibility. I feel the collection is not just about visual display but also how individuals respond to it.

This is *rasa swadana* – literally the tasting of flavour.” 

*RASA: Essence of India* continues at the Southbank Centre to 1 October. Natasha Kumar is participating at the Affordable Art Fair in Battersea from 23 to 26 October.