

Simply
Suhlas



Simply
Suhman

December 7 - 14, 2010

Open Palm Court Gallery
India Habitat Centre, Lodhi Road, New Delhi-110003

Suhas Roy

An Affectionate Master

Curated by
Swati Roy
Kumar Satyapriya

Edited by
Nostalgia Colours

Published by



77/2, NSC Bose Road
Kolkata-700040

Photography
Nepal Bhadra

Printing
ARCHANA
C 78 Okhla Industrial Area, Phase-I, New Delhi 110 020
www.archanapress.com

Painting
© Suhas Roy

Cover Painting
Radha • Oil on Canvas • 16 x 20 inch

© All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic or mechanical, including photocopy, without permission in writing from the publisher.

Transformation, Diversity, Skilfulness. Sketches in Western Academic style, graphics, landscapes; Crow, Jesus, Radha; aluminium paint on glass, acrylic on paper, egg tempera on canvas – where do we start? Where did he? There's a story at every turn in the journey, so let's start at the very beginning.

A little boy in Tejgaon, now in Bangladesh, lost his father when he was only a year and half old. One Kaji Saheb, who taught geography in the village school and doubled as the art teacher, took him under his wings. If the boy learnt to outline India on the blackboard, he could also draw papayas and brinjals. And everything he drew scored 10 on 10. "It seems you'll grow up to be an artist!" the teacher would say.

The boy loved to spend all his hours drawing and fishing. "How will these pleasures serve you in life?" the elders in the family would admonish him. The youth smiled in reply and went on to join the Indian Art College, studied new methods of printmaking under Somenath Hore and S W Hayter, visited Paris and Florence to study Michelangelo's David and Pieta, became a Painting teacher and joined Santiniketan... The lush green environs, the ponds and rivulets, the chirping birds and rustic villagers took him back to the childhood haven snatched away by the politics of religion. Suhas Roy, raised in the British Academic mood, riding the high tide of Modernism, debating whether to go Abstract or Semi-Abstract, started painting landscapes.

Yes, landscapes. Trees, birds, mountains, Suhas Roy painted them all, in flat dimensions. He painted elements identified with the genre but rather than borrow from Constable's Countryside or Monet's Lilies he looked at the overgrowth of shaluk and paanowrie in Bengal's backwaters, its ducks, storks and crows.

"Santiniketan gave back the opportunity to go fishing as I did in East Bengal, and I rediscovered the beauty and calming effect of Nature. It came as a relief to me, burdened as I was with the constant thought of 'What to paint?' Nature constantly changes. Besides, I found that appreciation of beauty is not confined to a class or profession – a doctor and a poet alike loves flowers. So I decided to go back to landscape, taking no note of whether it was in fashion or out, whether people will take it or not."

The Crow series became his signature in the '70s. The scavenger was an attraction because of its black feathers. Japanese watercolourist Taikan had come to 20th century Bengal with Okakura and helped Abanindranath Tagore master the medium. He'd done a black-n-white series on Mount Fuji. Chancing upon it in the Santiniketan library, Suhas Roy was so impressed as to reach for the austere palette. The crow readily lent itself to the scheme. In a departure from the practice in the medium, Suhas Roy would spray the canvas with acrylic paint before construing the image in watercolour. Then he'd use a Japanese colour stick to create tones and dimensions. The Far Eastern concept of an object in a wide, open space came to be highly appreciated and widely collected, including by Karan Singh.

For 10 years Suhas Roy kept doing landscapes. When he tired of that, his imagination sought out tribal girls. It was a natural progression, for women – especially tribal – have a symbolic if not symbiotic link with trees. Often he'd counterpoise a tree with a woman. Taru, he titled one of these done in a workshop Suruchi Chand organised for Hudco. From woman in a landscape to Radha was just one step. When Gallery 88 held an exhibition on Krishna, Suhas Roy played with the concept of the Blue God being the Ultimate Being, melding Purush and Prakriti. His canvas thus sported a nude woman against a dark blue background. The title? 'Radha.' It not only sold for an enviable sum, it set in motion an astonishing demand for the image that shows no signs of abating. Suhas Roy has been criticised for continuing to feed the appetite for Radha – but the master is far from apologetic. It is the very definition of icons, he points out: images of personalities deified by popular imagination – be they mythical, historical or social – are repeated again and again, generation after generation, in different styles and contexts. If one age worshipped them as bronze figurines and gold paintings, another flaunted them in oleographs and calendars. It has been so with Radha-Krishna, Ram-Sita, Buddha Jesus, even Gandhi Tagore and Teresa.

Jesus, however, entered Suhas Roy's world long before Radha. Sometime in 1969 he visited Florence to see David. He found the sculpture epitomising masculine beauty "too proportionate," and wandered into the church next door preserving Dante's Divine Comedy in parchment. There, in one corner, he saw the last work of Michelangelo – an unfinished Pieta. Such infinite pathos! The artist couldn't brush it off his memory even after he returned to Calcutta and one day its picture postcard inspired him to paint a Jesus. When he stopped, the canvas was sporting a contemporary pieta – Jesus without the head, his body descending from the heavens.

As a persona Suhas Roy has deep regards for Jesus. That is why such immense love, even when tinged with sorrow, pain or sadness, flows out of his veins. This prompted even Vatican to acquire his Jesus in 2006.

At some point in 1980s the artist found joy in glass painting. K G Subramanian had returned from Baroda to Santiniketan. For one Kala Mela he urged everybody to revive the ancient Indian tradition. Having earlier done some commercial work in the medium, Suhas decided to try enamel colours on glass. It lent a beautiful texture, and the tantalising outcome was acquired in bulk by Mahendra Jain of Delhi's Dhoomimal Gallery.

Rigidity, clearly, is a word unknown to Suhas. The changes have come spontaneously, and a good result has goaded him on. He has dwelt on a theme only until he'd besieged by another creative urge that could come in Khajuraho, or Turkey. Never shy of experimenting, his foremost concern has been meticulous quality. His temperas have, then, egg yolk with oil and Japanese porcelain; gelatine with resin and tamarind seed. If it imparts a finer texture to details, he will use a watercolour brush for oil paintings. For, he believes, "Good art will never lose its demand just as diamond will never lose its market."

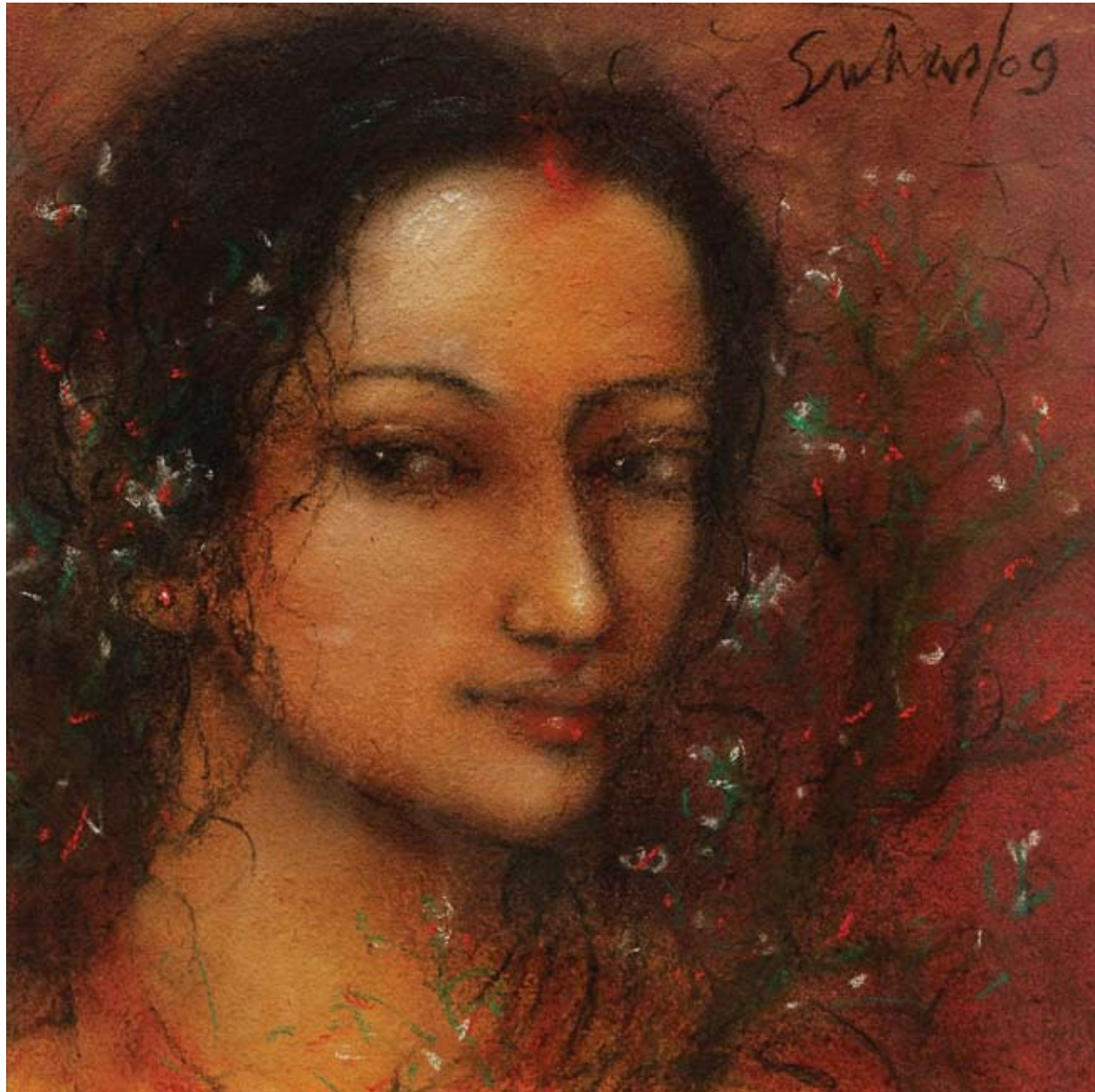


Does this imply that Suhas Roy exists in an ivory tower away from social realities? No, the septuagenarian has "never run away from it." Witness the Disaster series that followed a flash flood in Ilam Bazar. On one of his fishing ventures Suhas witnessed dead bodies being fished out of water! Haunted by the image, he painted the series showing landscape with shrouded bodies.

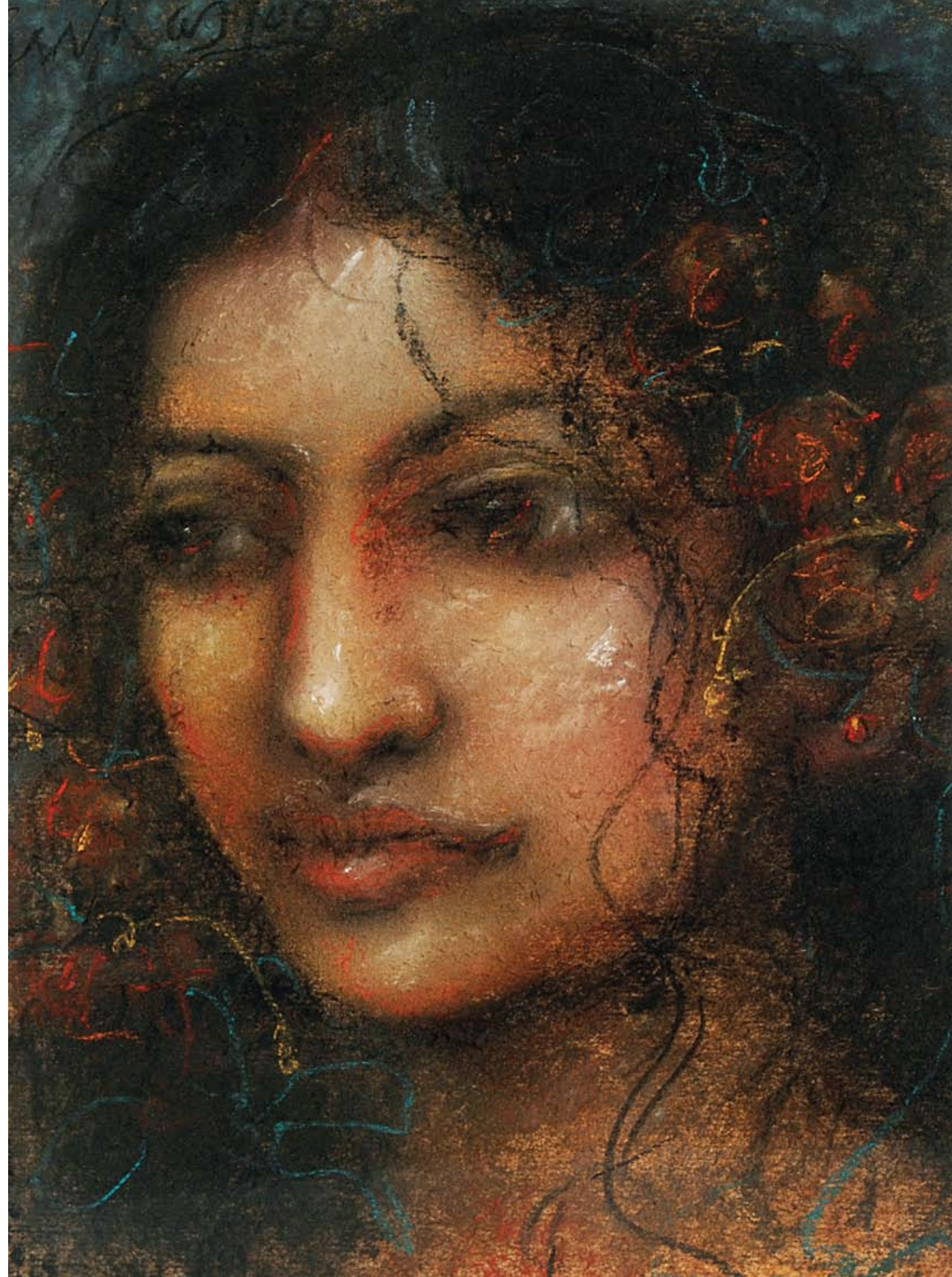
Indeed, ever since the Naxalite period gave rise to despondency, the artist has been "constantly haunted" by social reality. "But I realise, every turmoil, social or political – including Singur – will be shortlived. Documentation, including in contemporary art, will then be shortlived. Only when it transcends here-and-now can art have lasting value. I therefore focus on what has lasting appeal. Flowers blossom in the same fields that are crushed by battling soldiers. I will speak of the war through the Buddha who transcended war."

Small wonder, a collector tells Suhas Roy:

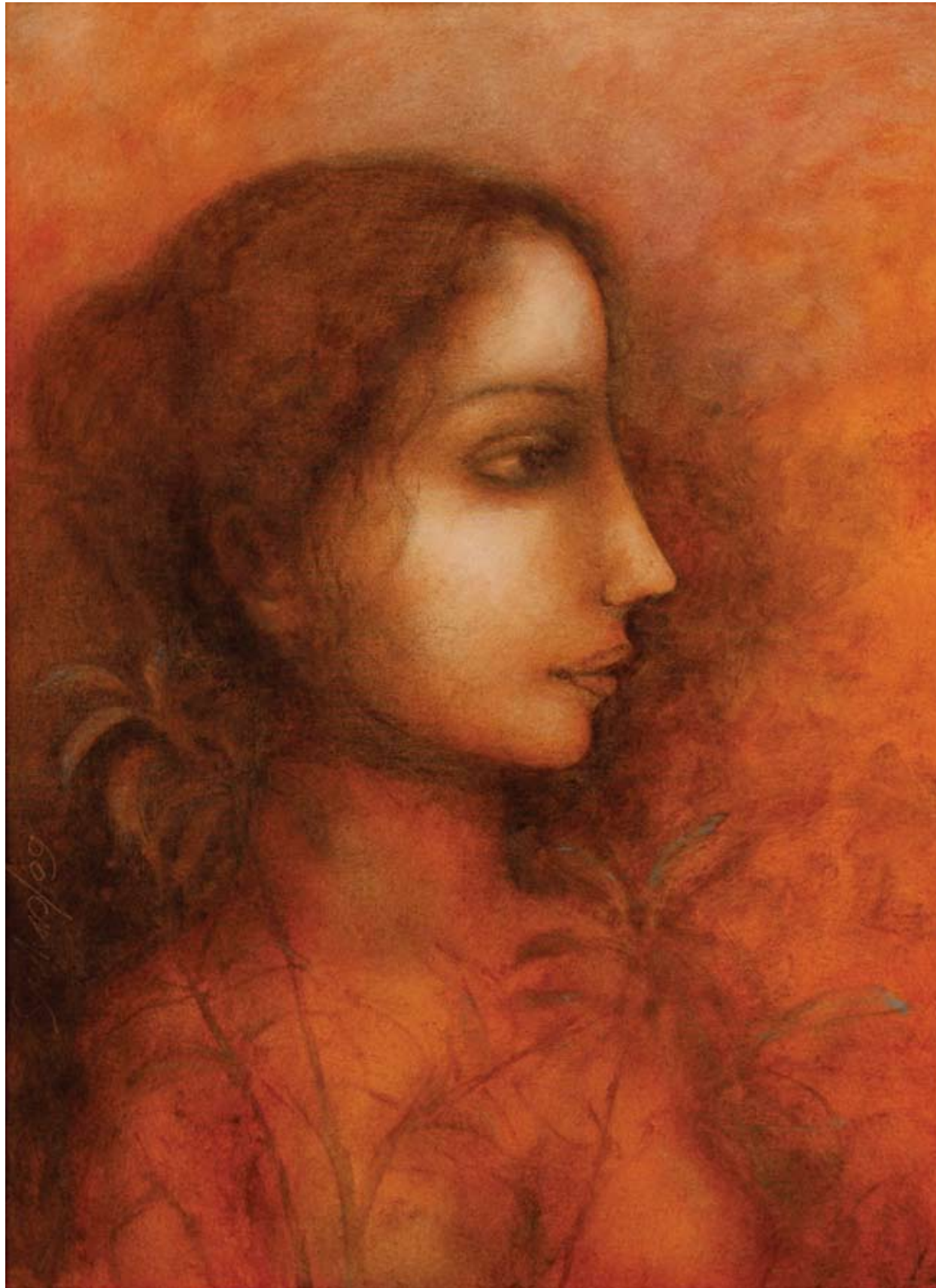
"When I'm tossed and tired of problems, I look at your paintings. They act like balms."



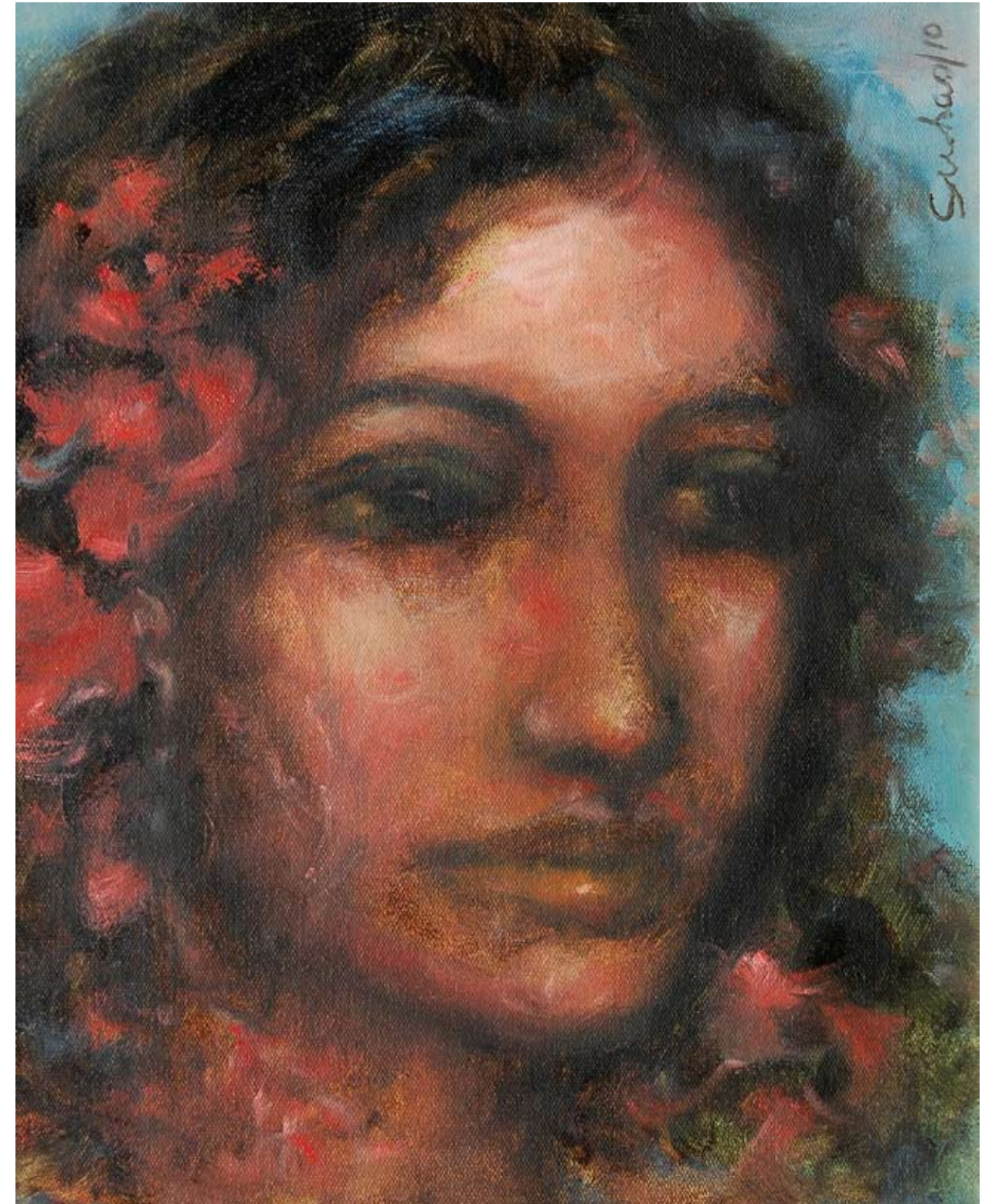
Radha
Pastel on Paper
20" x 20"
2009



Radha
Mixedmedia on Paper
10" x 12"
2009



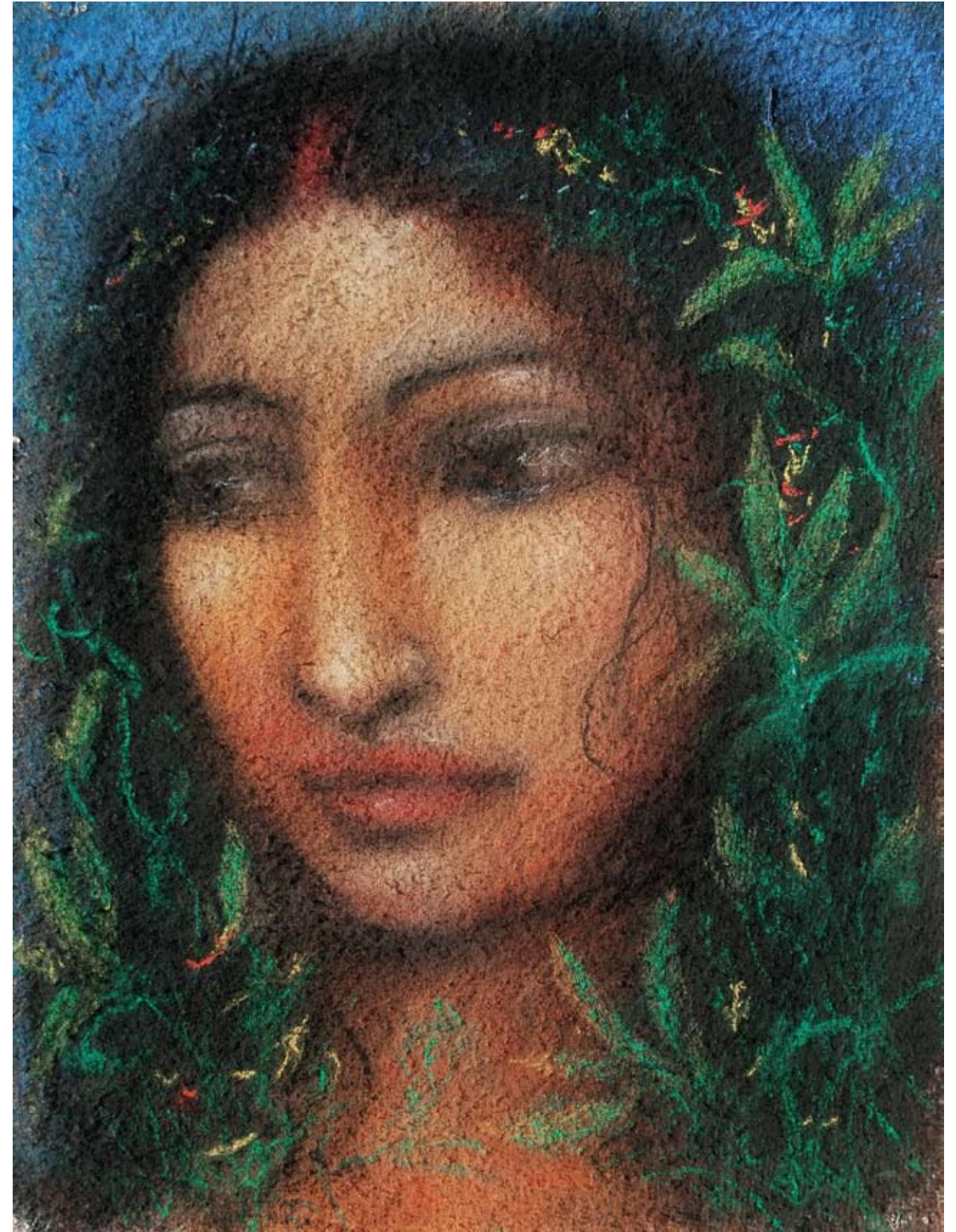
Radha
Oil on Canvas
36" x 48"
2009



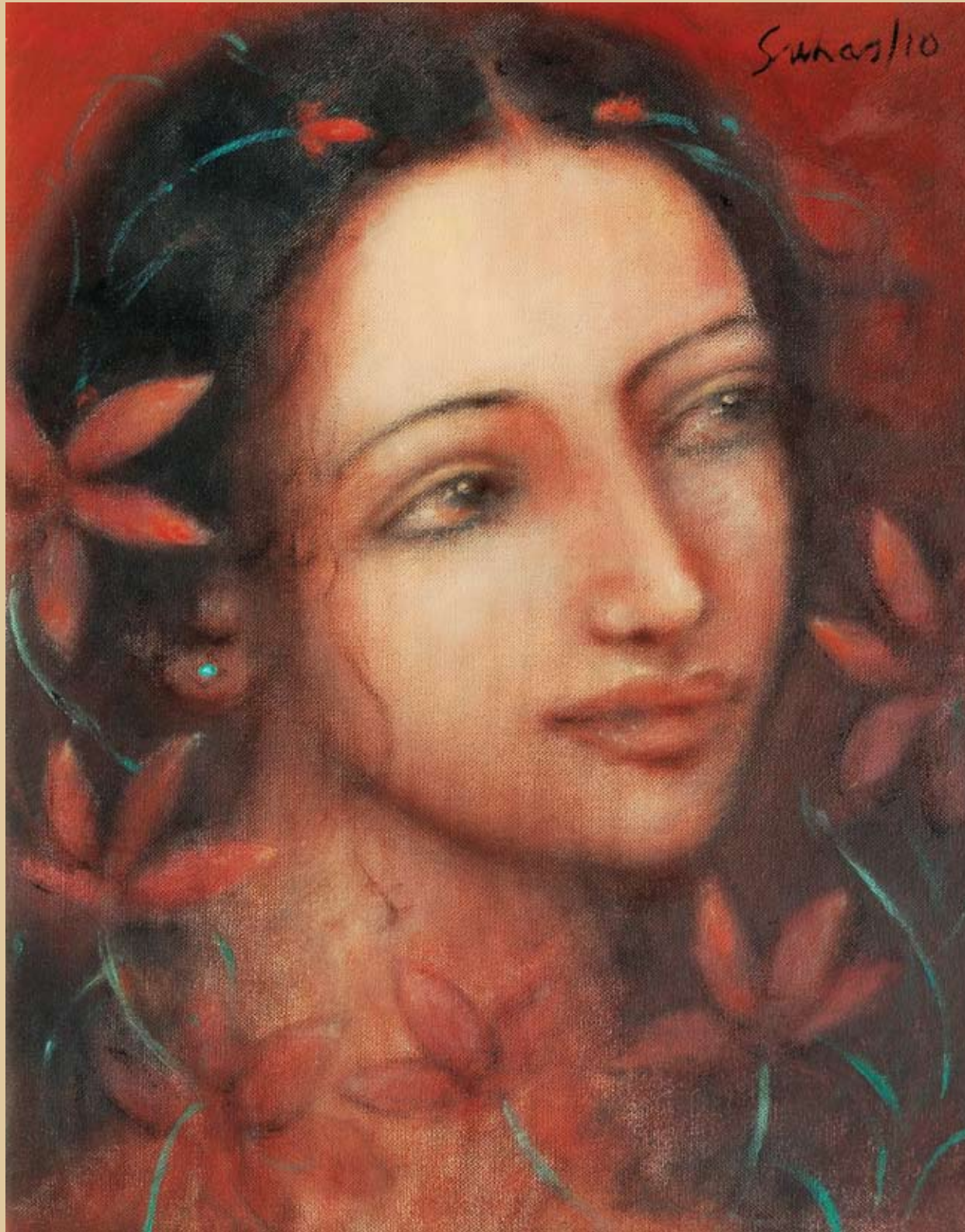
Radha
Oil on Canvas
10" x 12"
2010



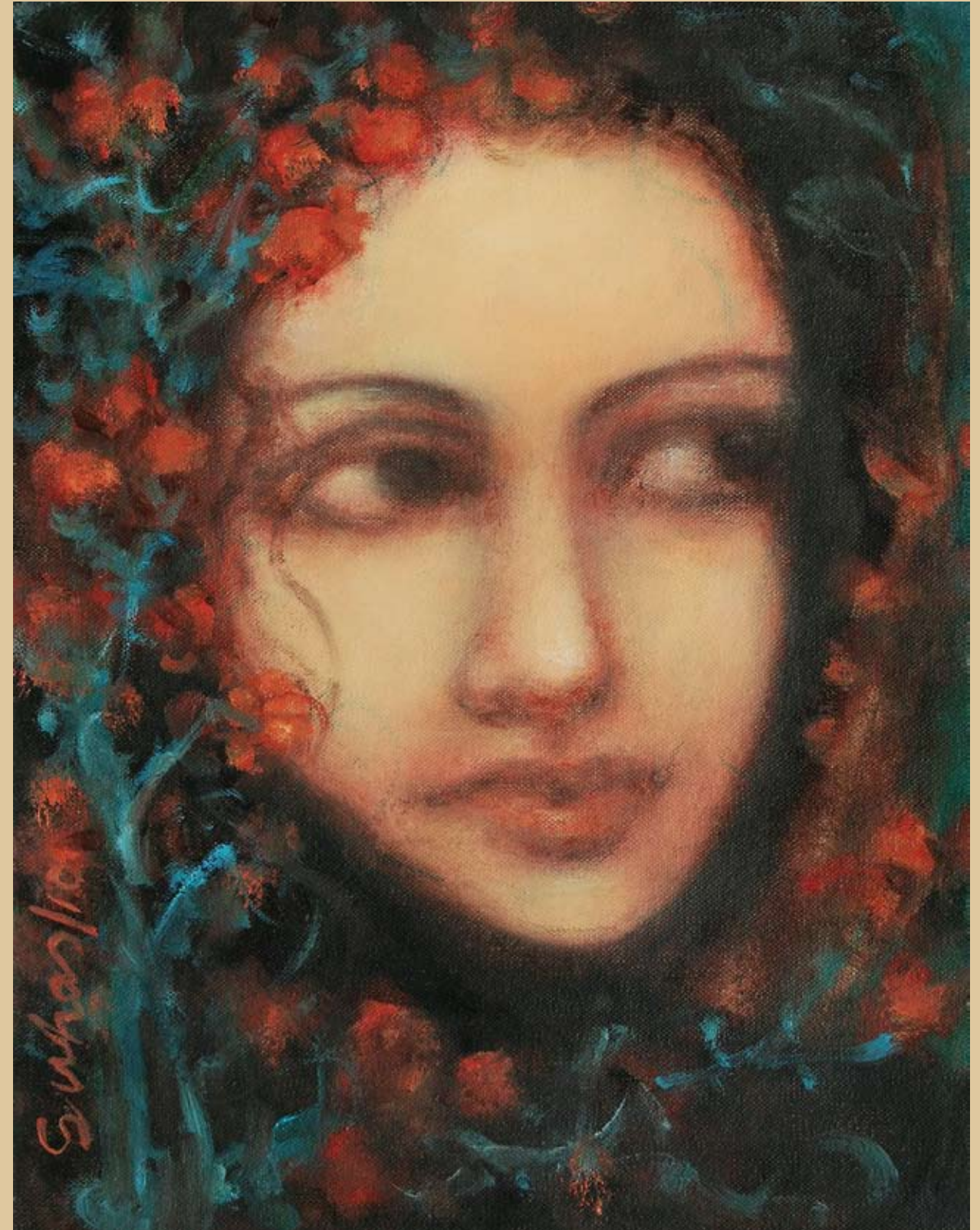
Radha
Watercolour on Paper
10" x 12"
2010



Radha
Mixed Media on Paper
12" x 15"
2010



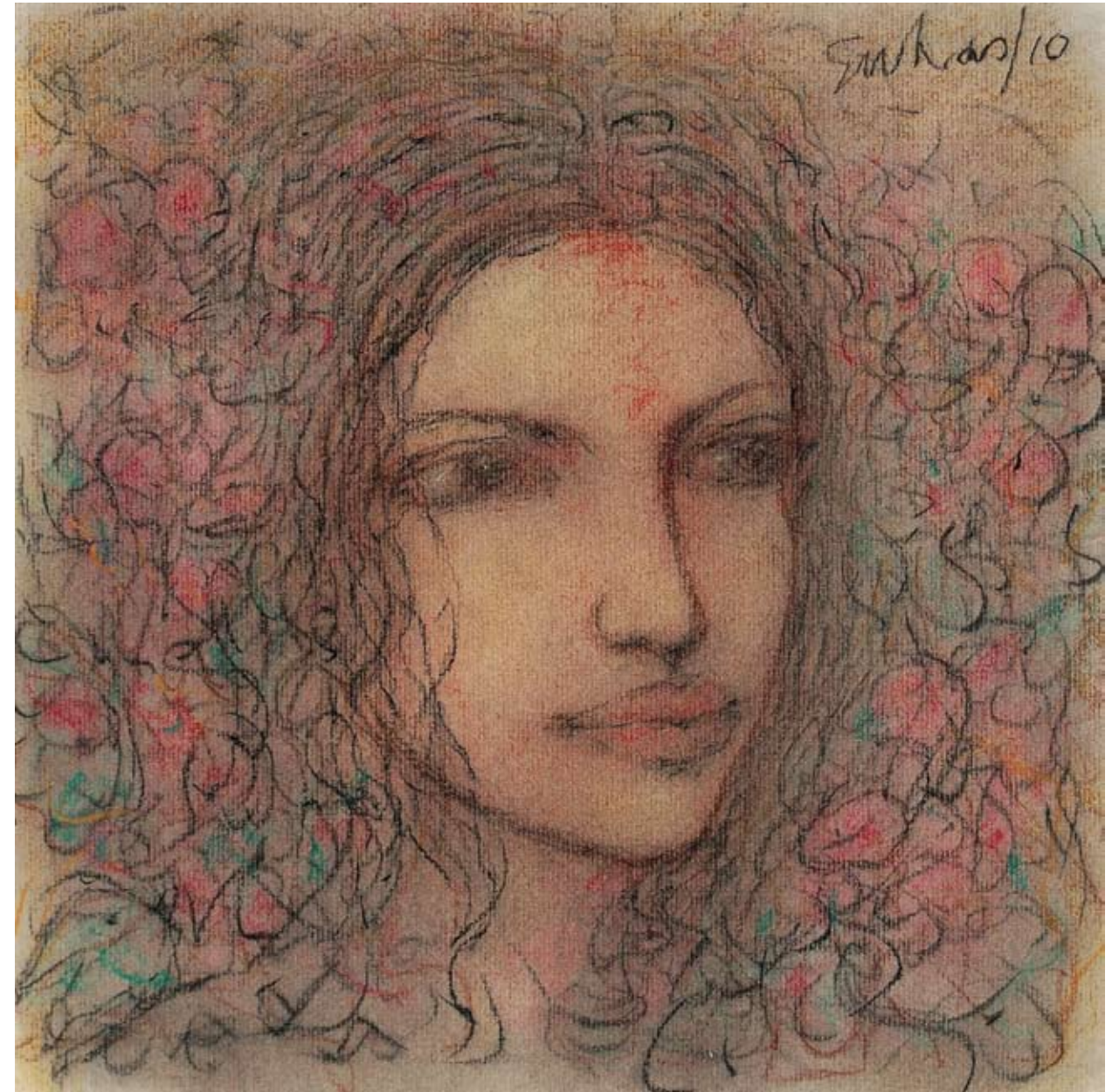
Radha
Oil on Canvas
16" x 20"
2010



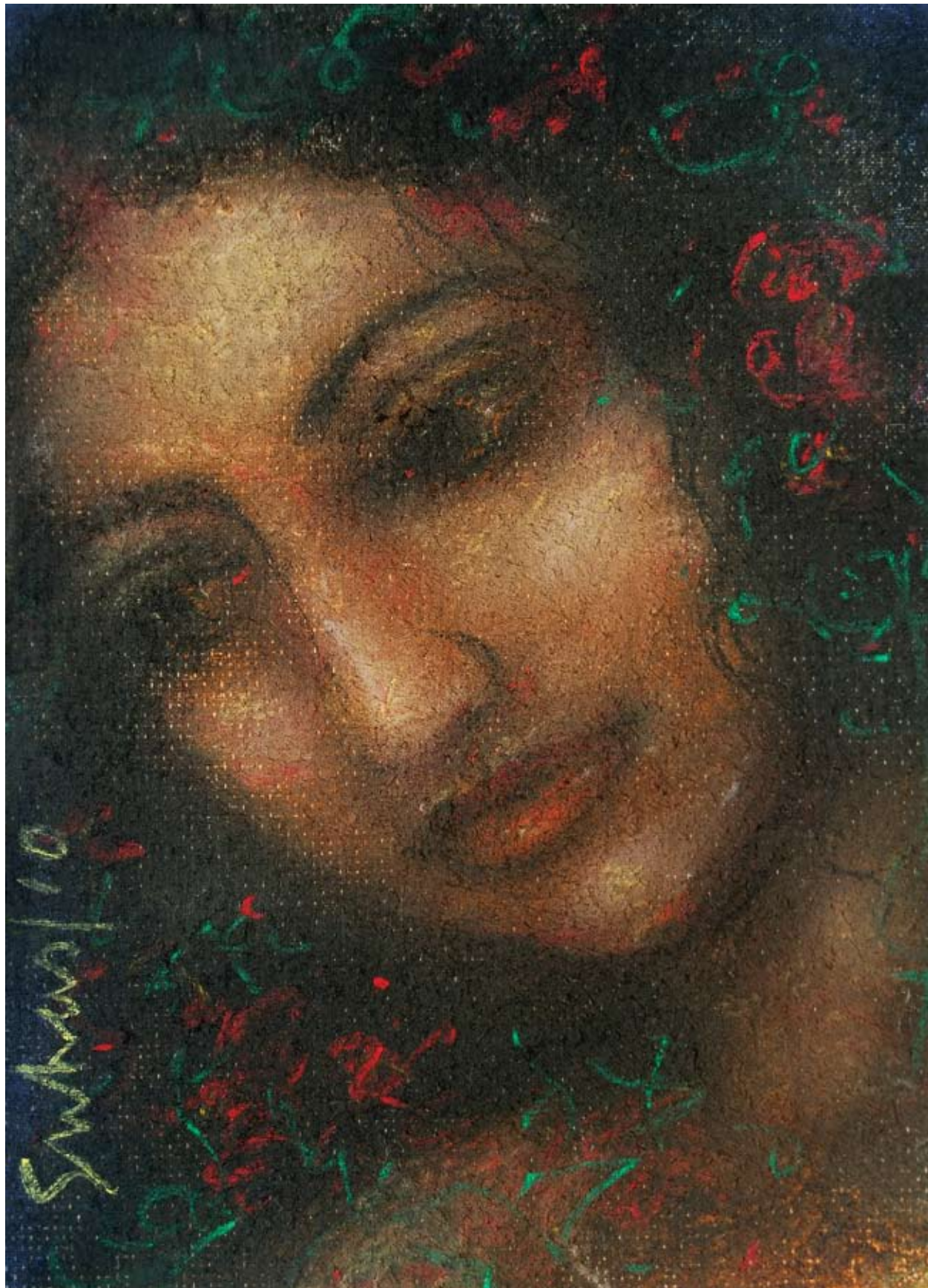
Radha
Oil on Canvas
12" x 15"
2010



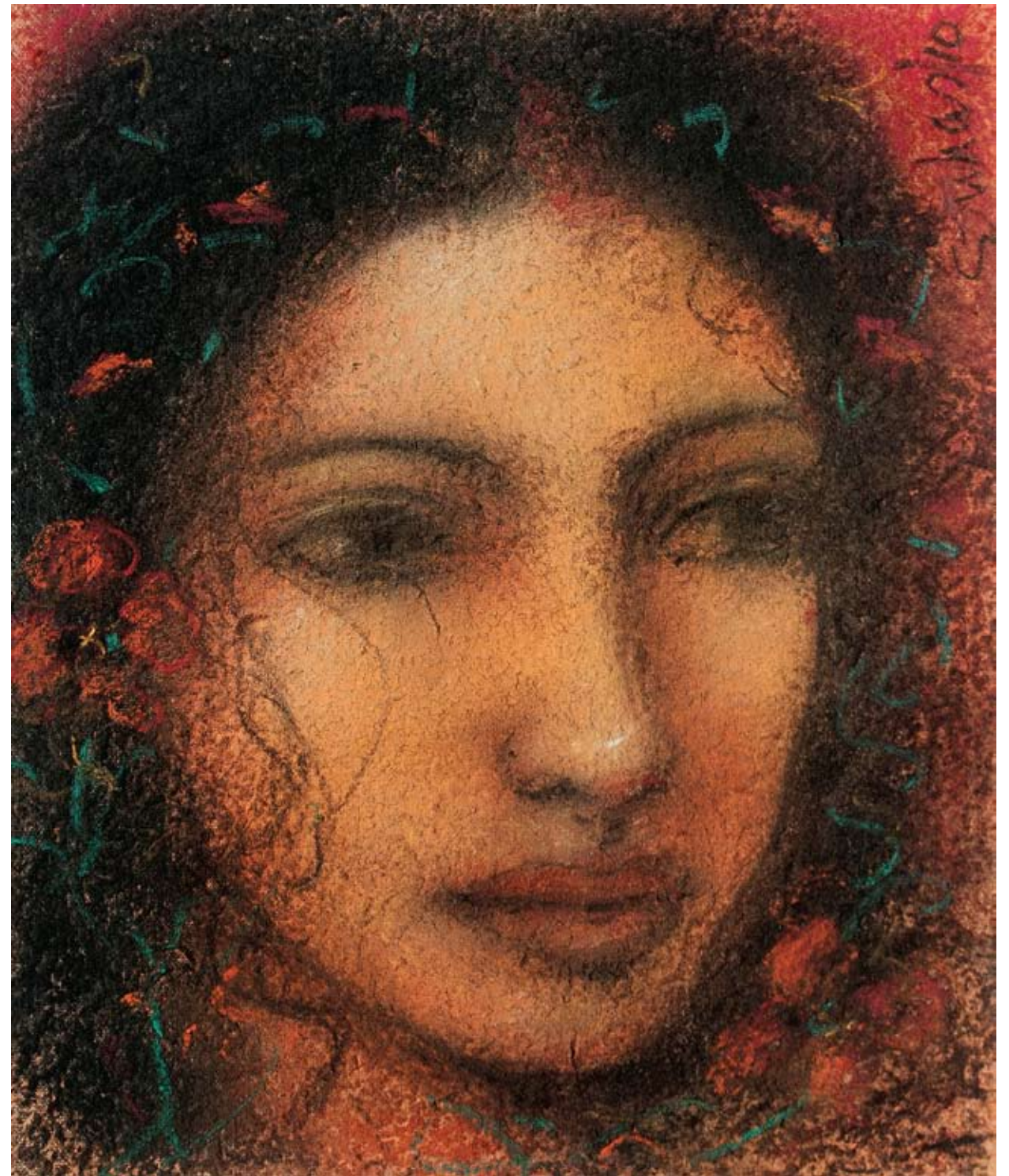
Radha
Oil on Canvas
20" x 20"
2010



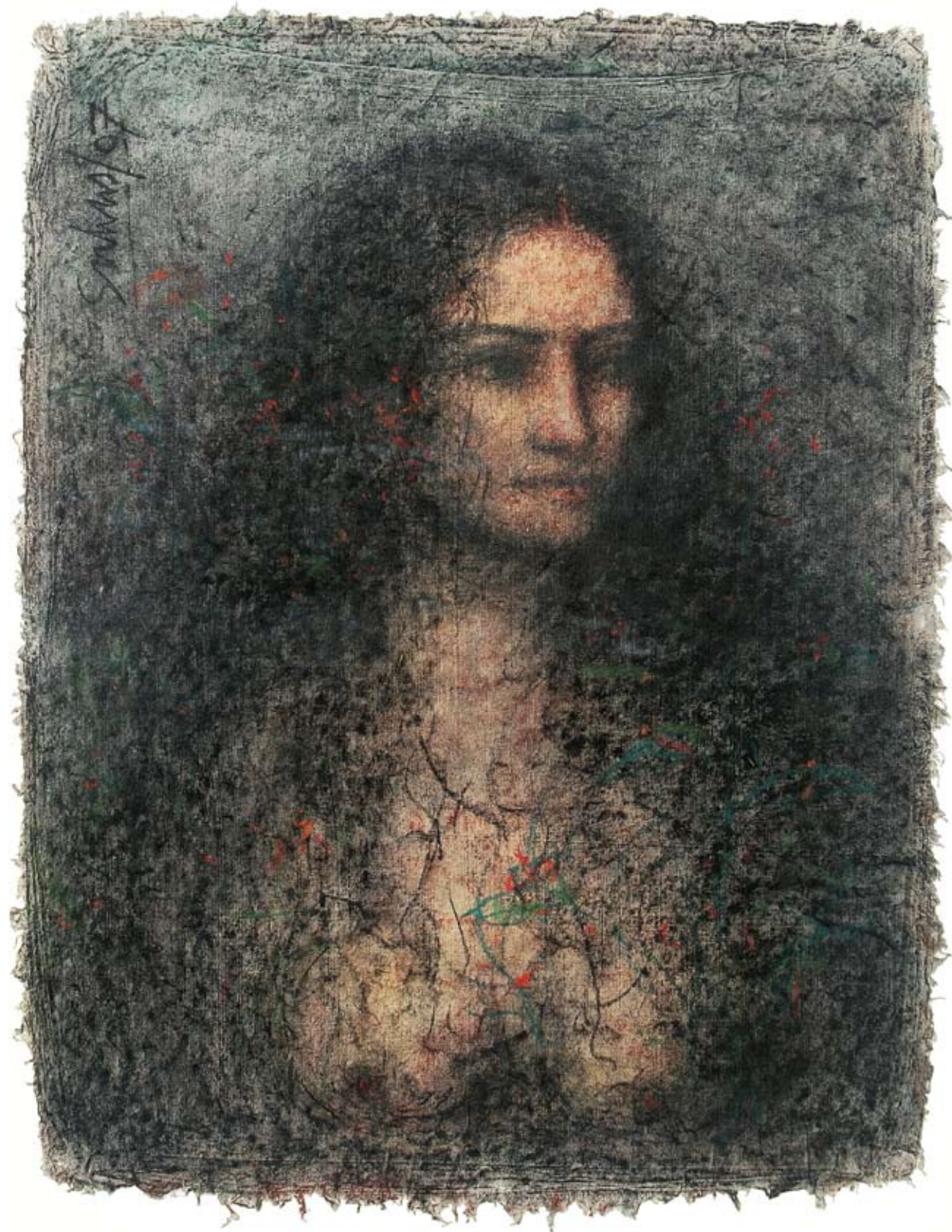
Radha
Pastel on Paper
20" x 20"
2010



Radha
Mixed Media on Paper
8" x 10"
2010



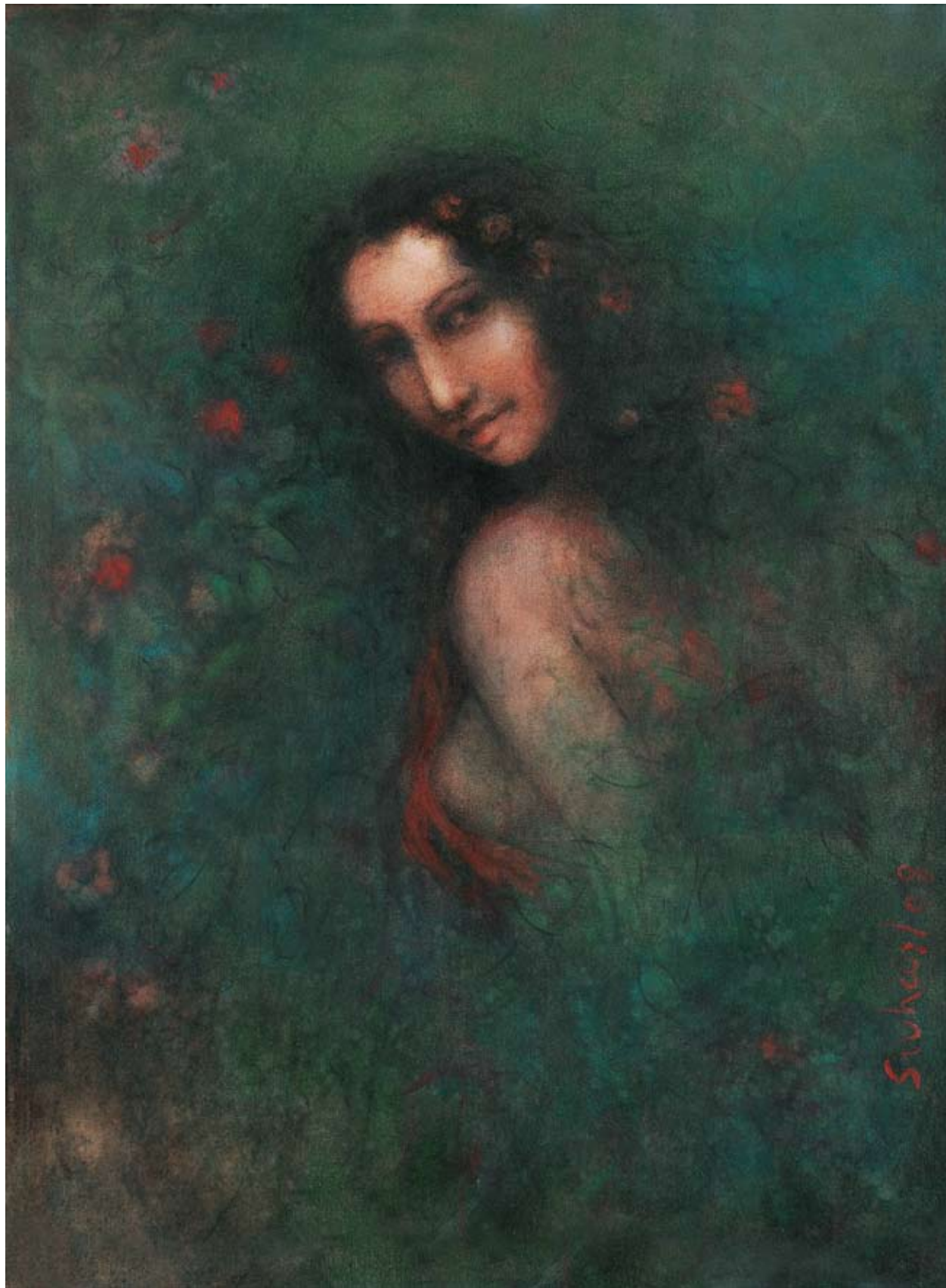
Radha
Mixed Media on Paper
10" x 12"
2010



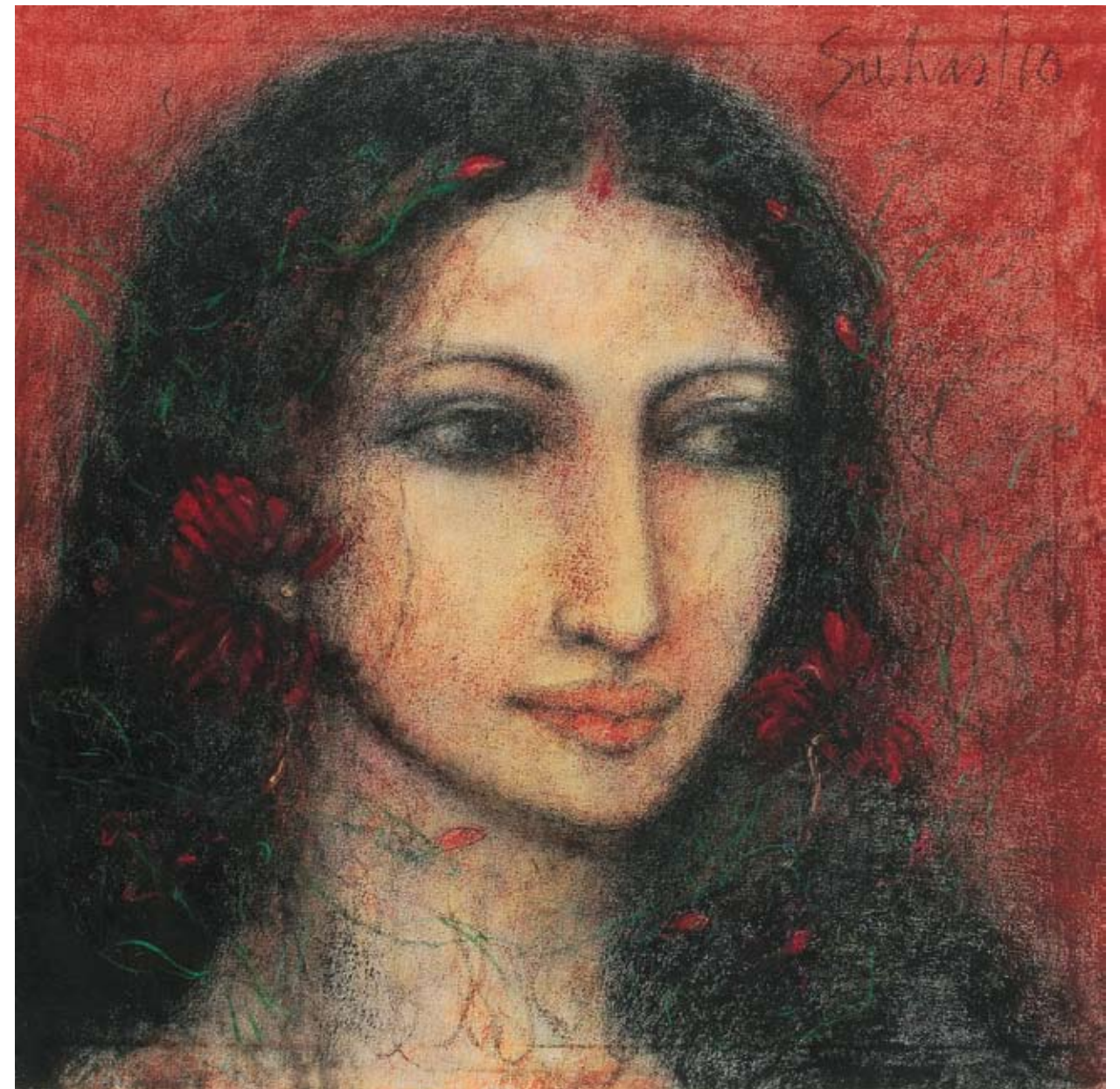
Radha
Mixed Media on Paper
22" x 30"
2007



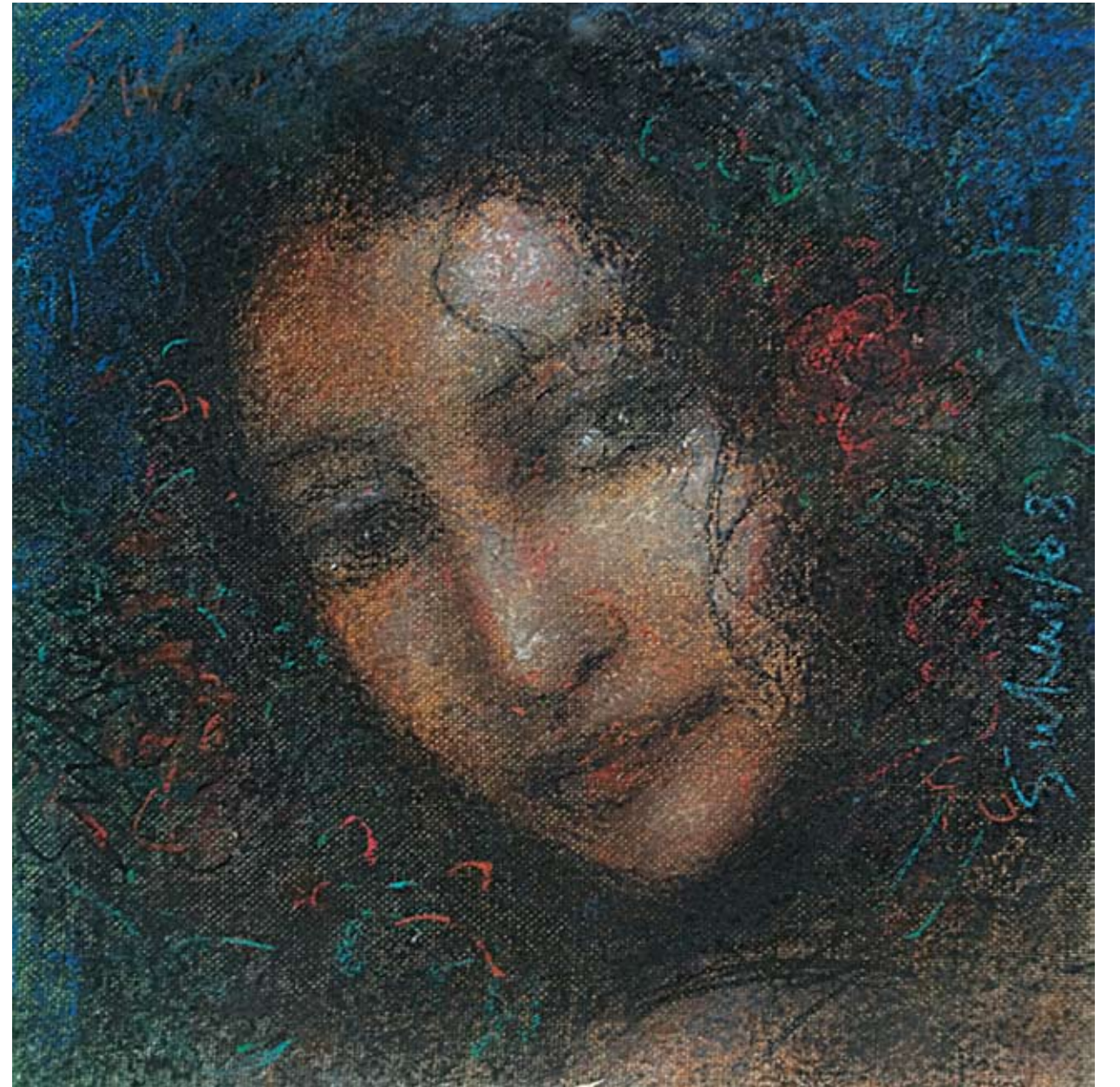
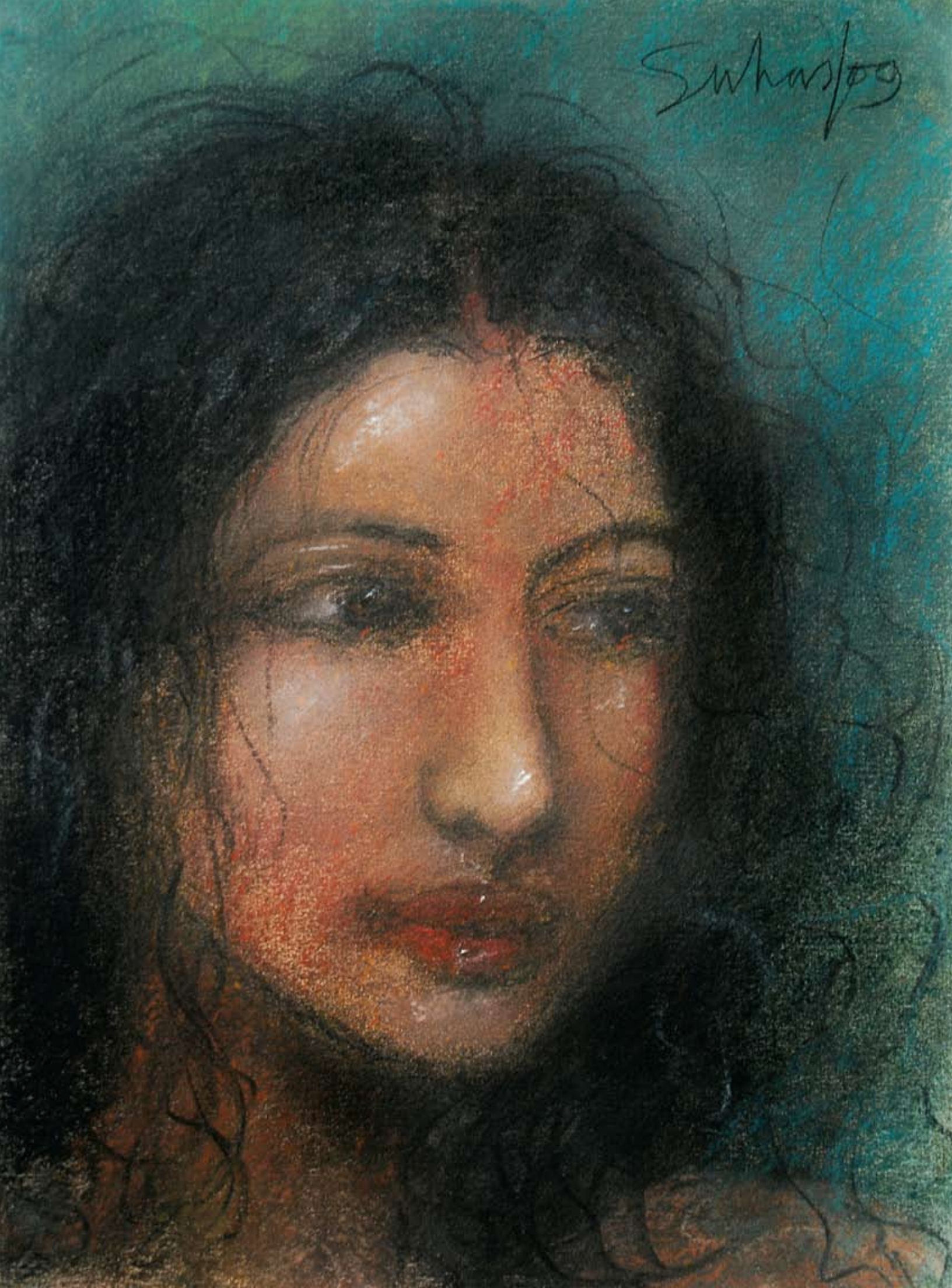
Radha
Mixed Media on Paper
22" x 24"
2006



Radha
Oil on Canvas
36" x 48"
2008



Radha
Mixed Media on Canvas
30" x 30"
2010

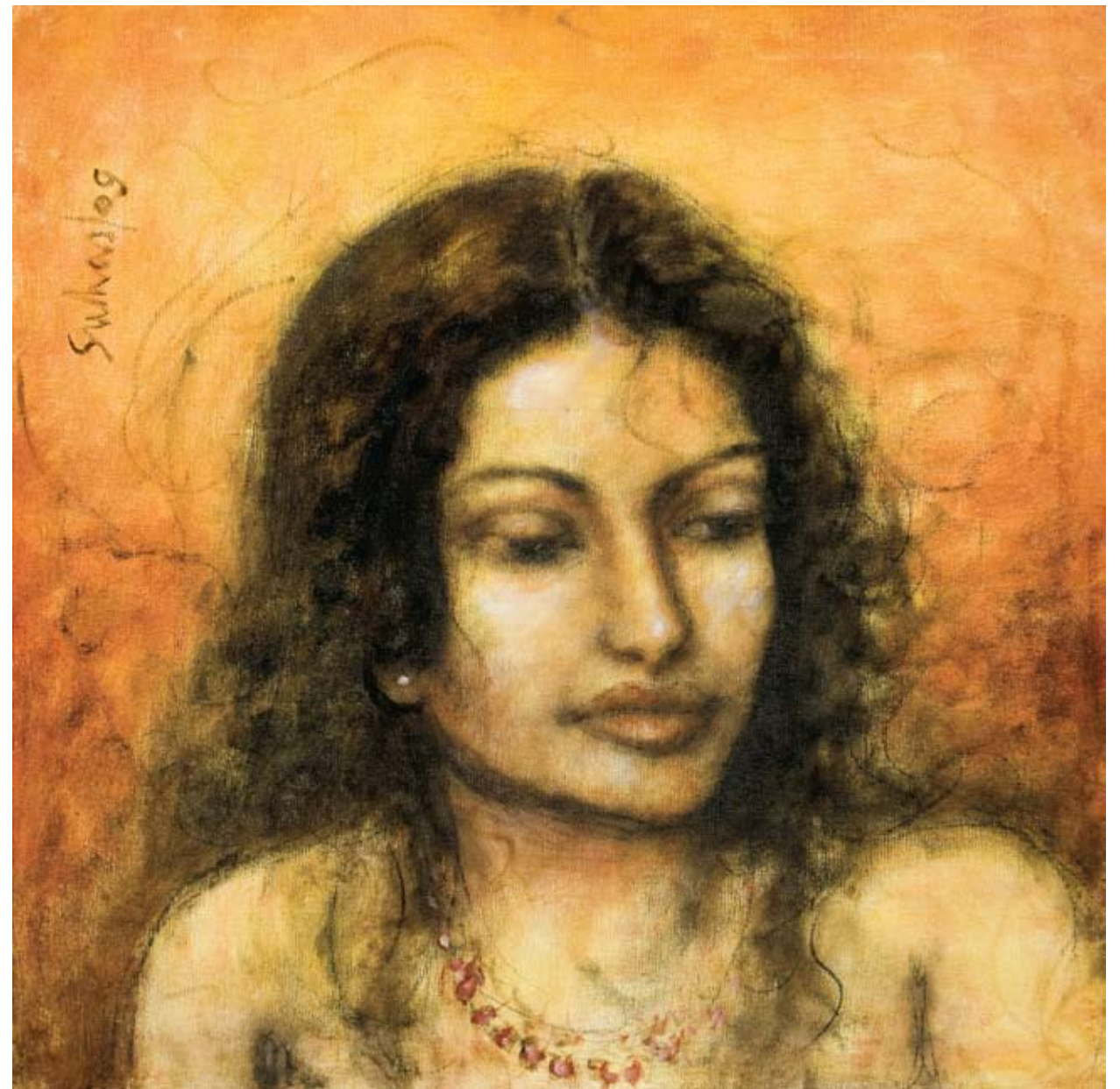


Radha
Mixed Media on Paper
12" x 12"
2008

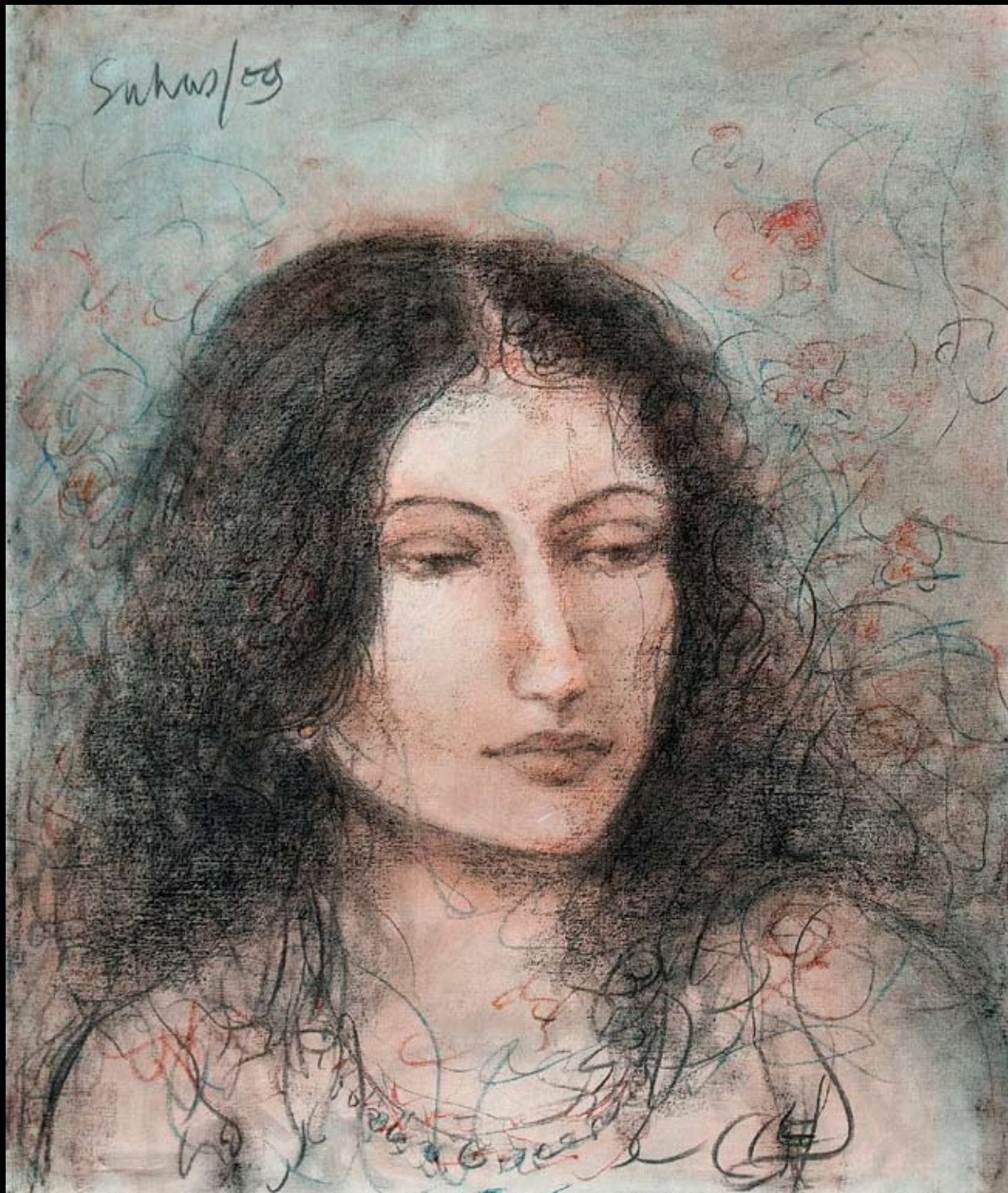
Radha
Mixed Media on Paper
12" x 15"
2009



Radha
Oil on Canvas
18" x 24"
2008



Radha
Oil on Canvas
30" x 30"
2009



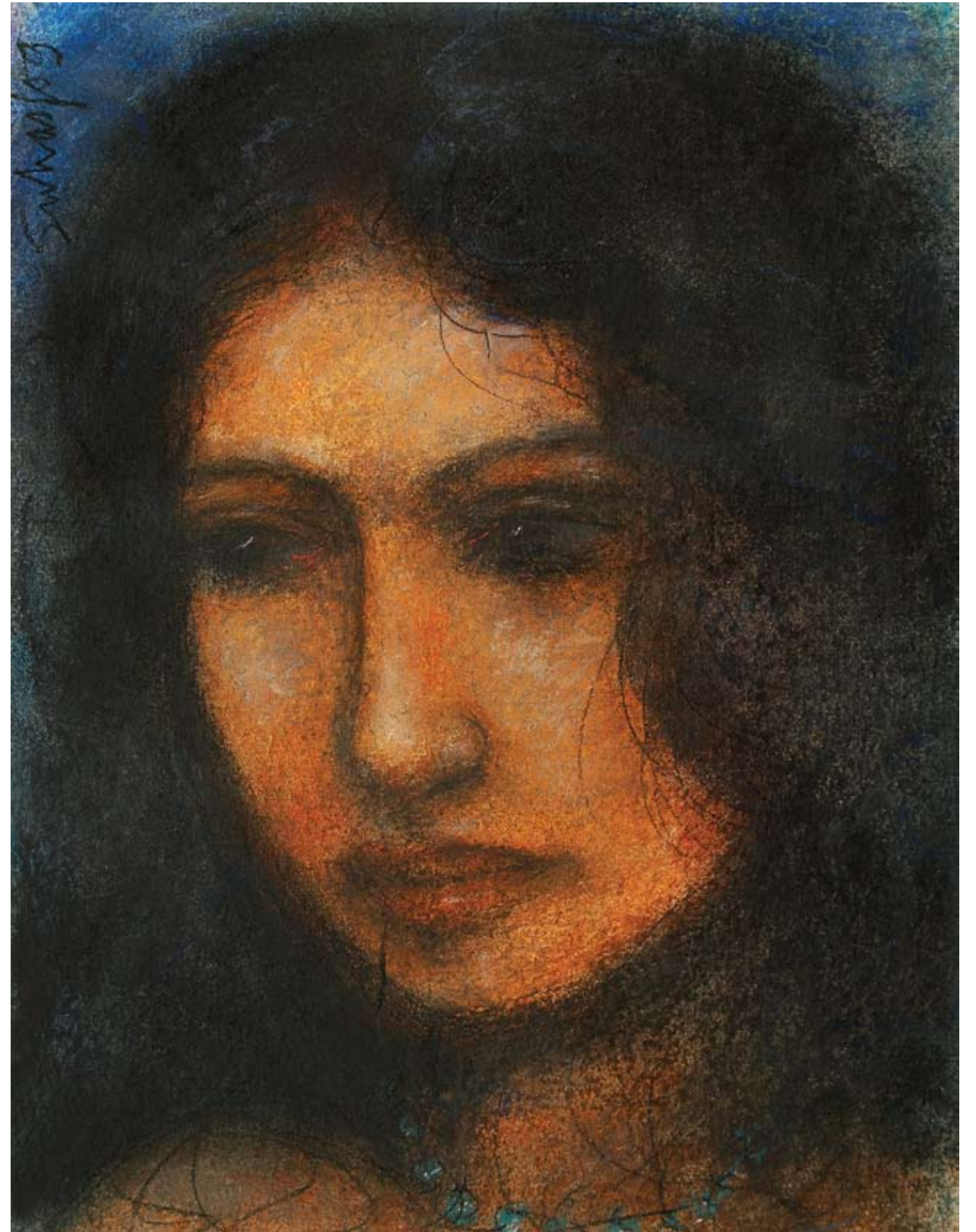
Radha
Mixedmedia on Canvas
30" x 36"
2009



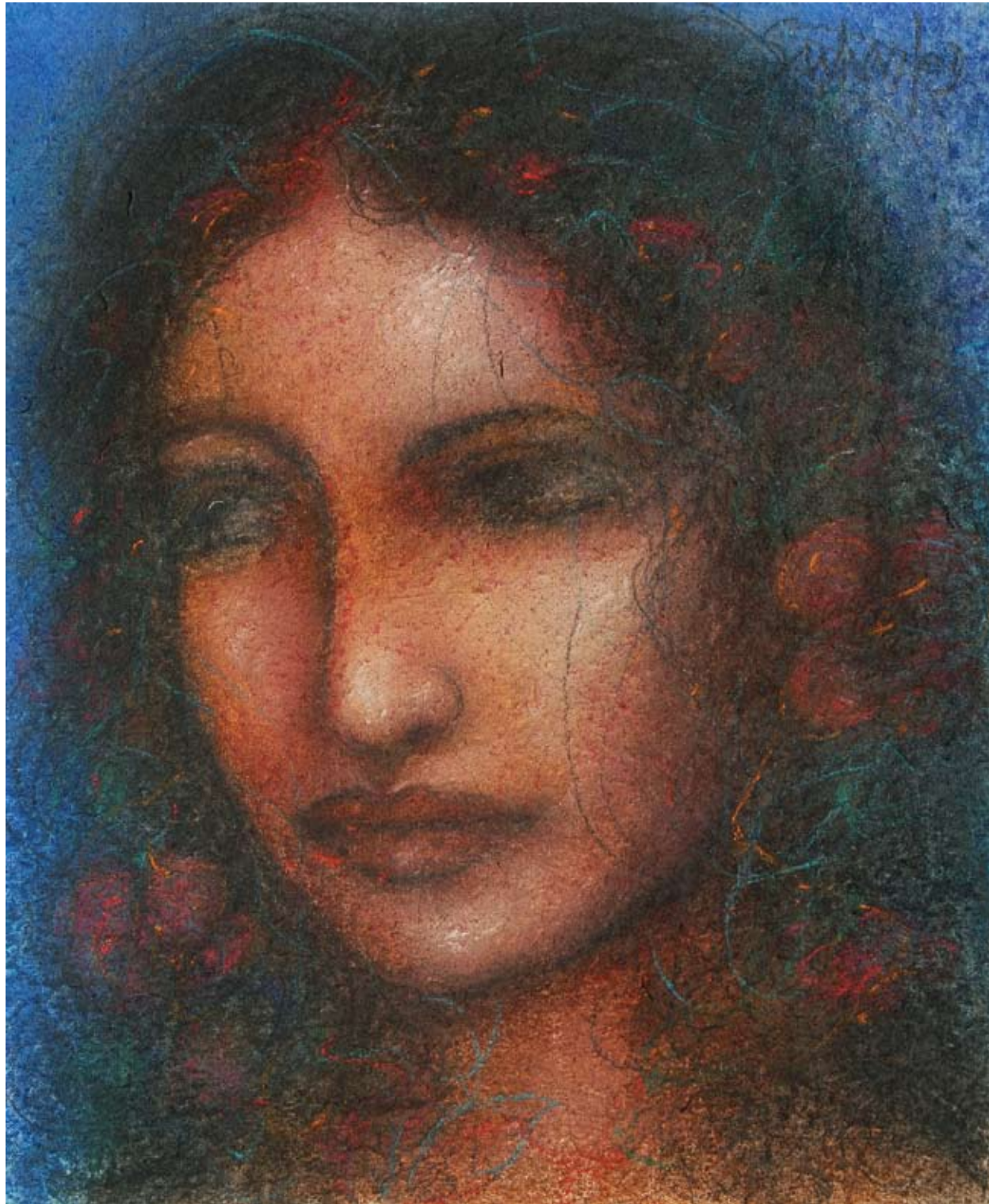
Radha
Pastel on Paper
20" x 20"
2009



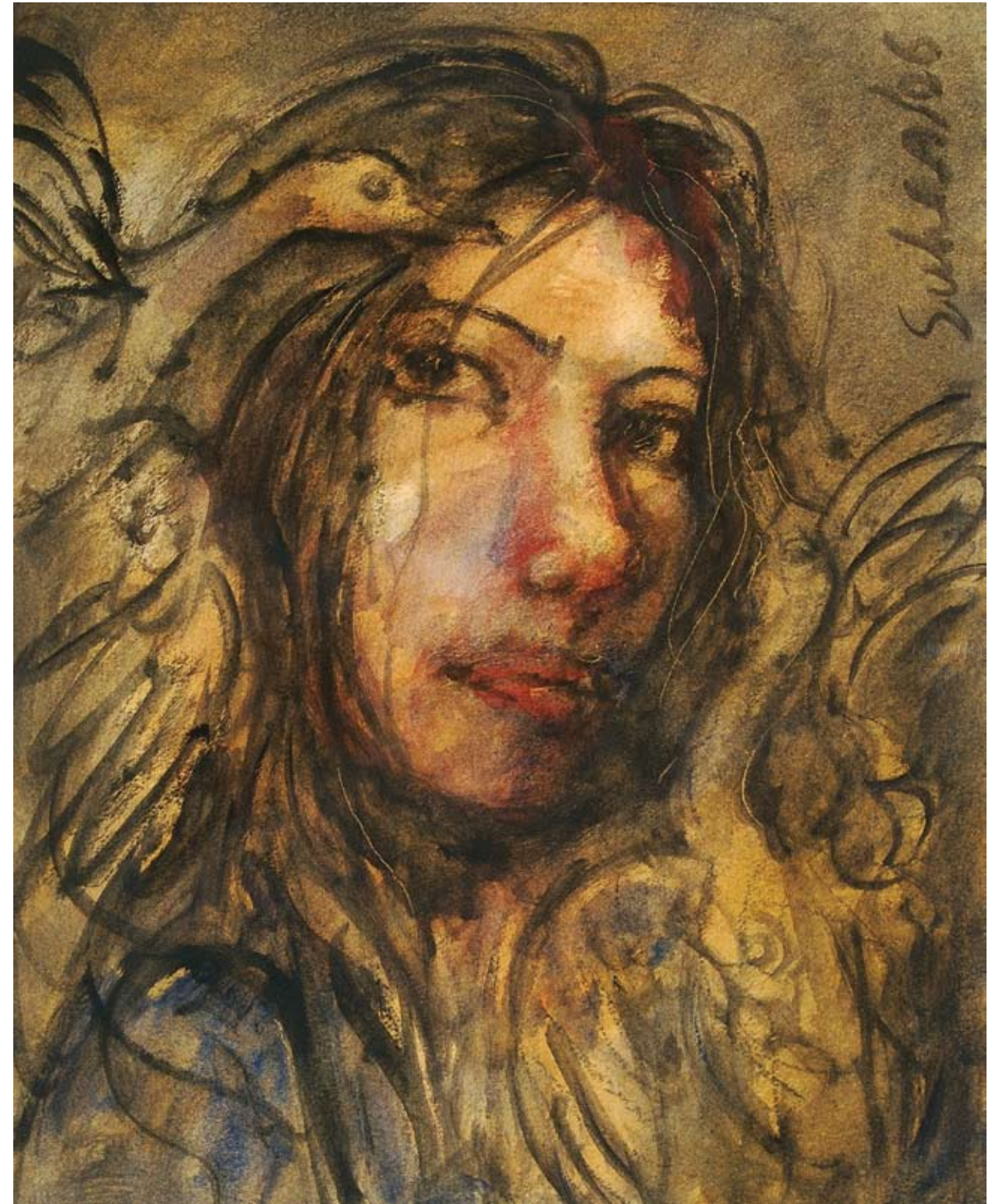
Radha
Mixed Media on Paper
12" x 12"
2008



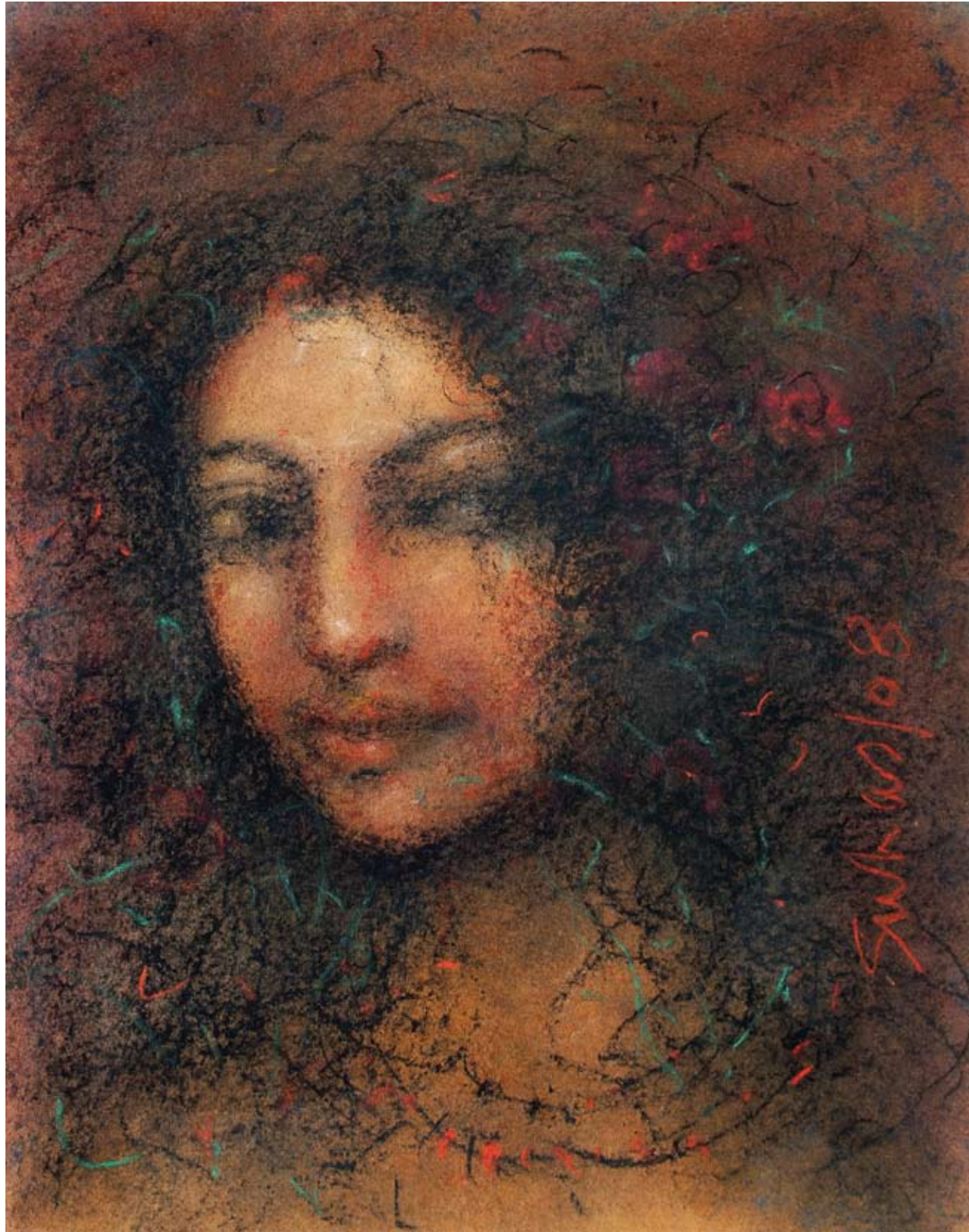
Radha
Mixed Media on Paper
10" x 12"
2009



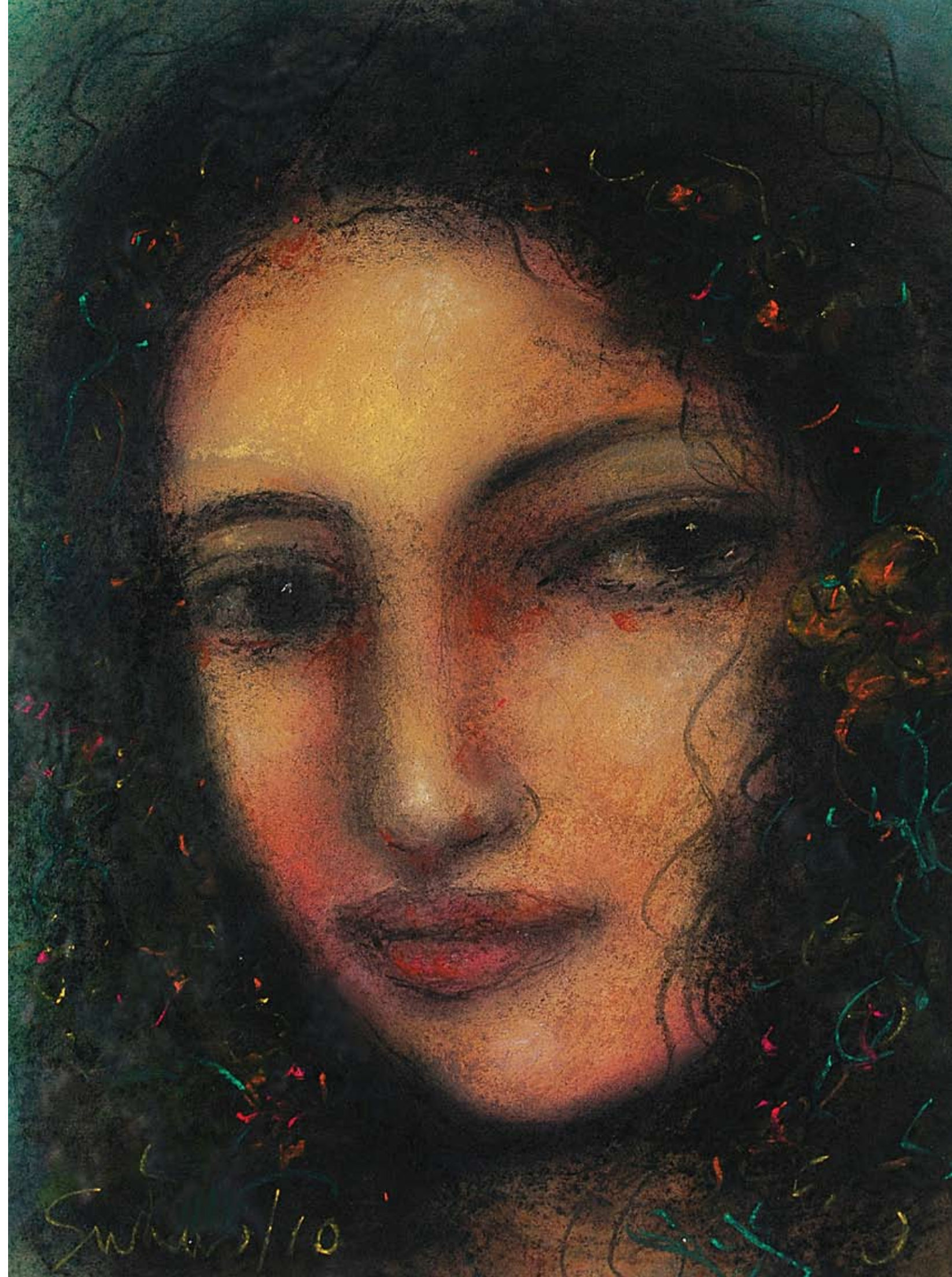
Radha
Mixed Media on Paper
12" x 15"
2009



Radha
Mixed Media on Paper
16" x 20"
2006



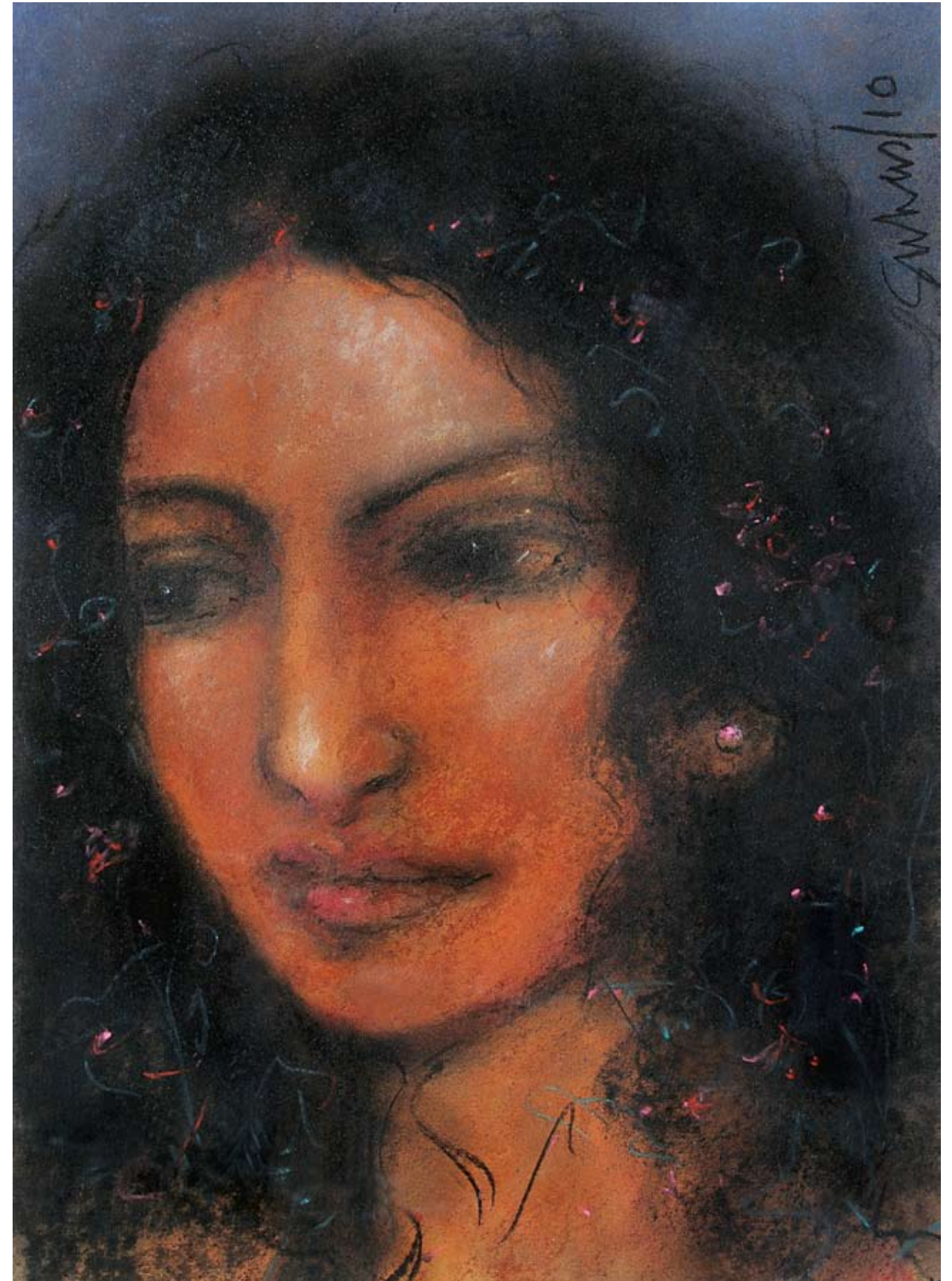
Radha
Mixed Media on Paper
16" x 20"
2008



Radha
Mixed Media on Paper
12" x 16"
2010



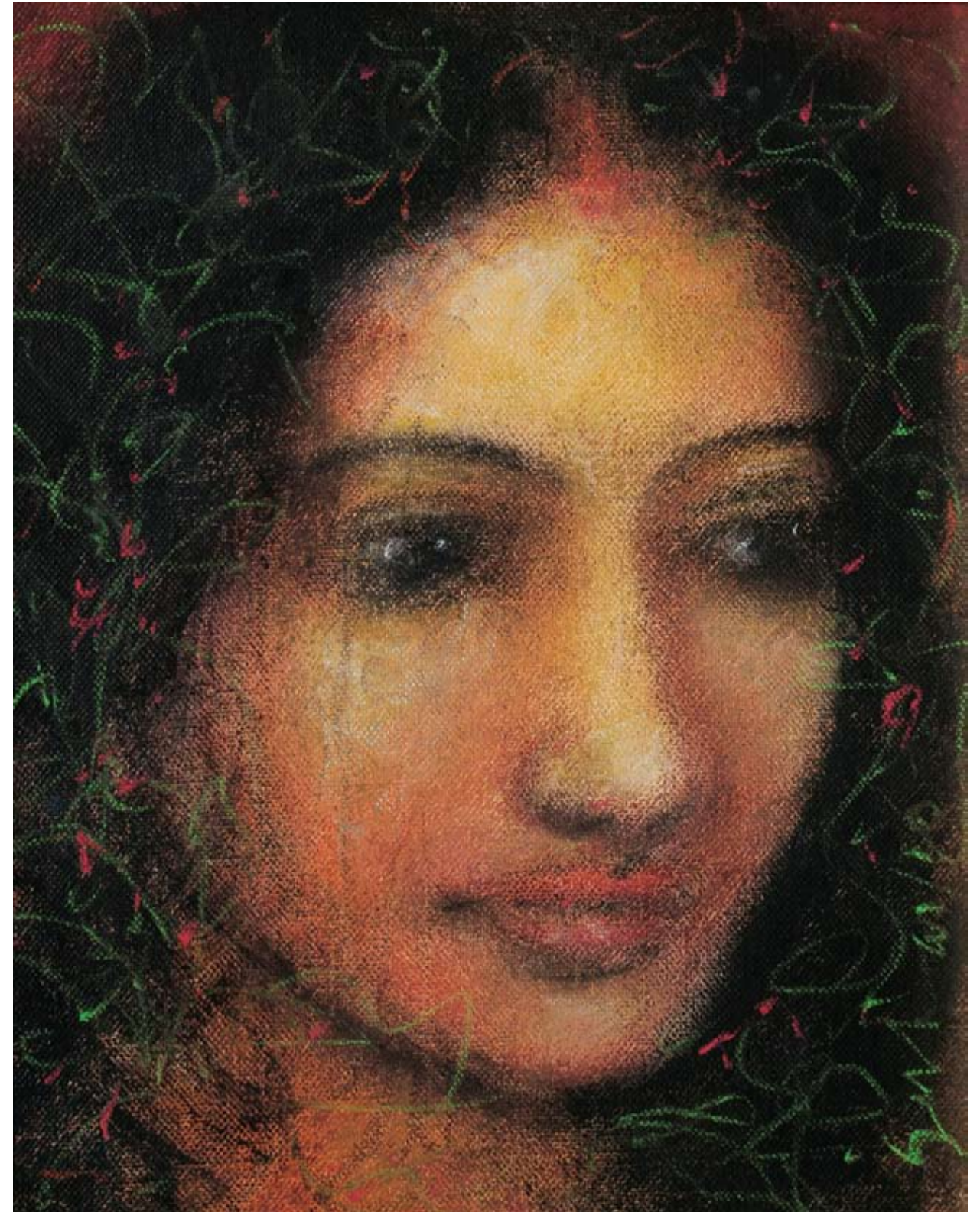
Radha
Oil on Canvas
10" x 12"
2008



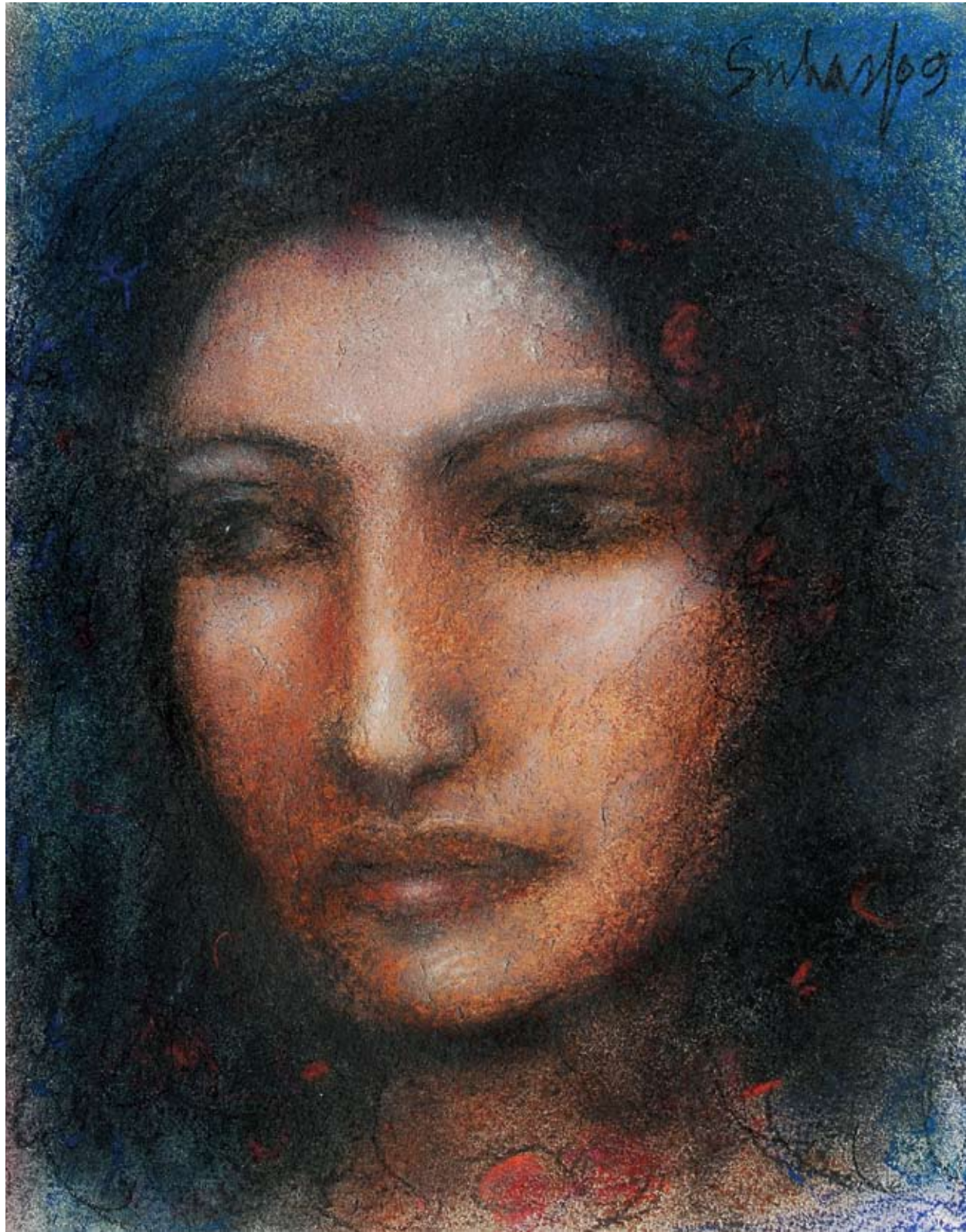
Radha
Mixed Media on Paper
12" x 16"
2010



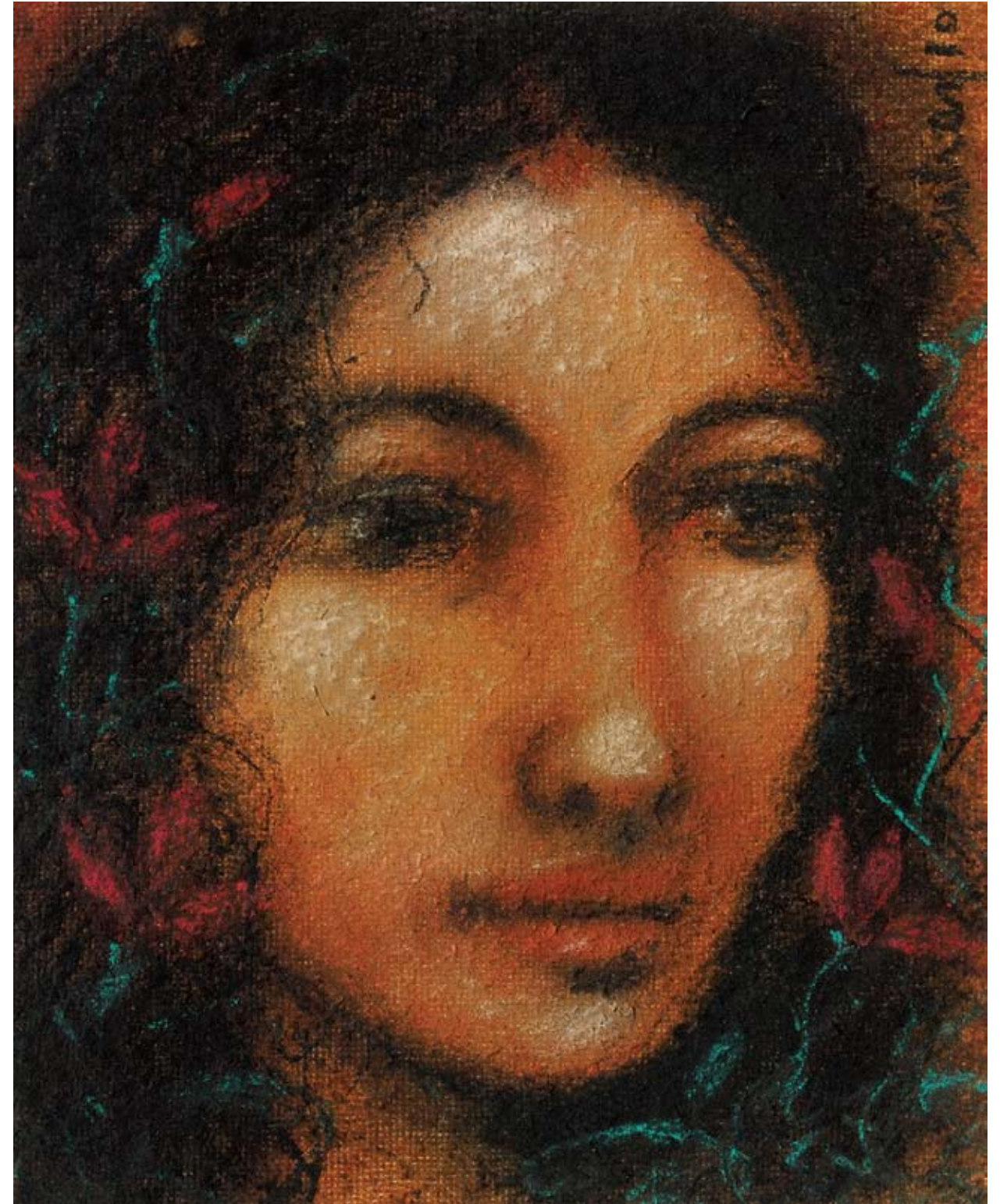
Radha
Oil on Canvas
10" x 12"
2010



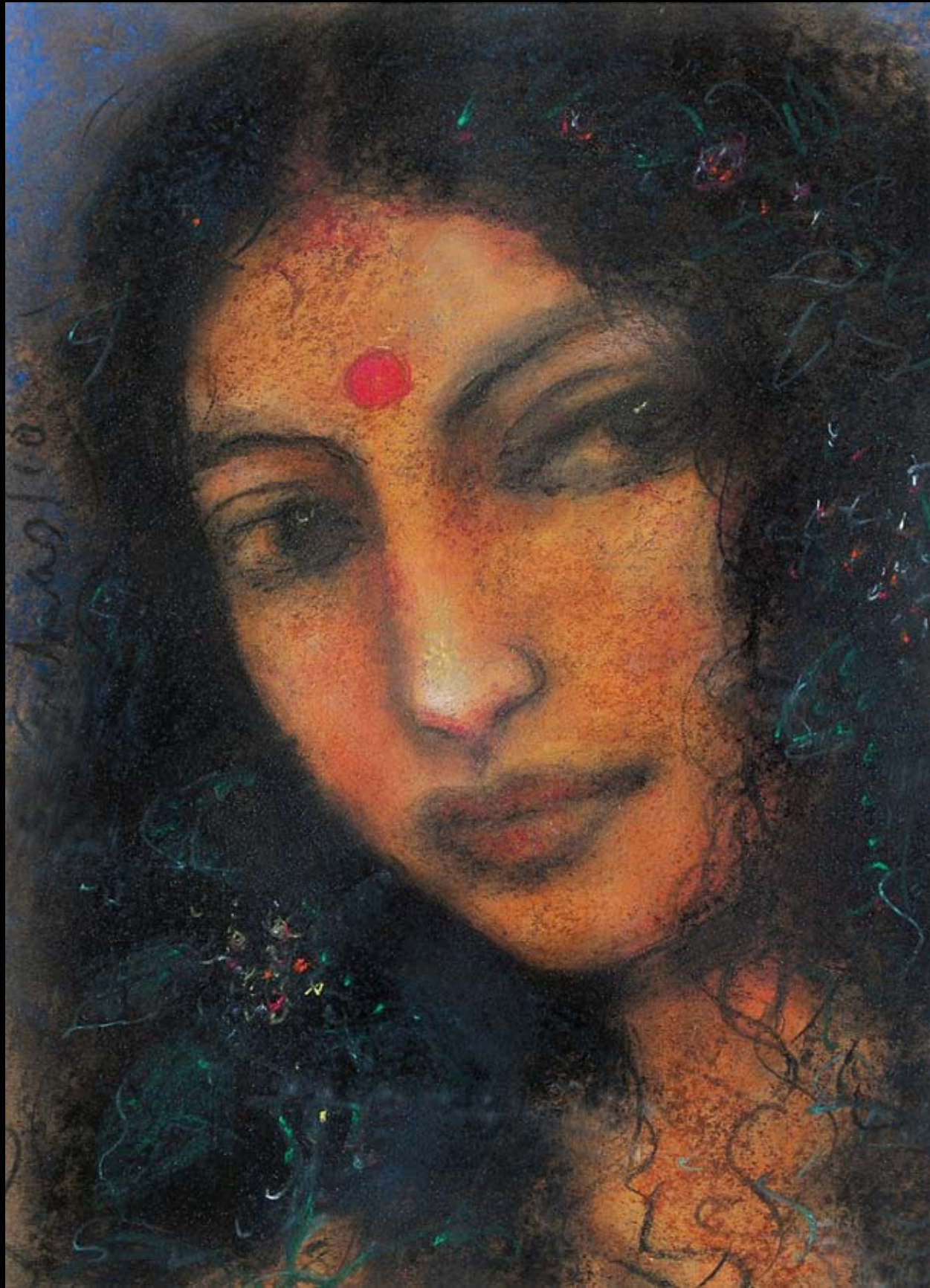
Radha
Mixed Media on Canvas
10" x 12"
2010



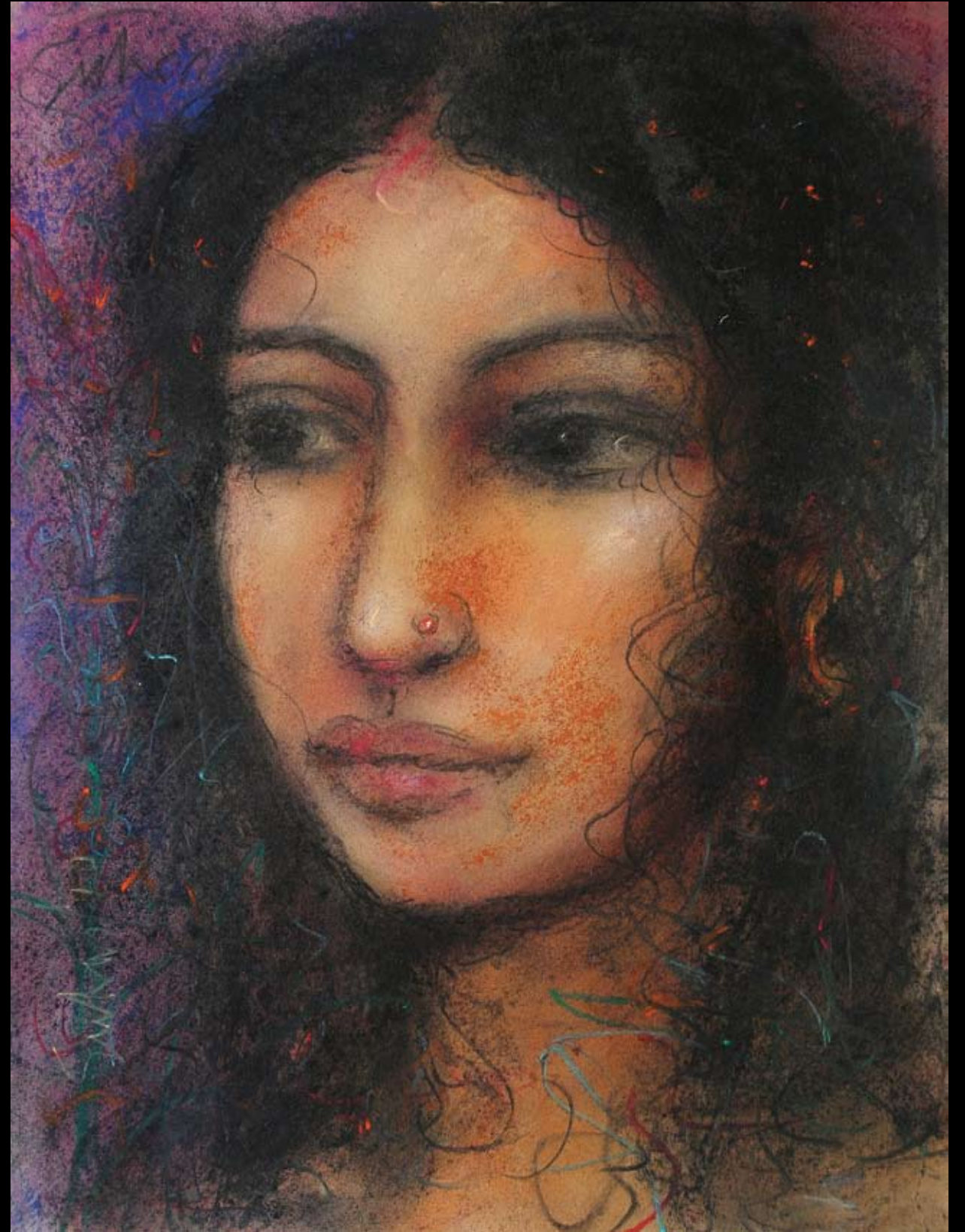
Radha
Mixed Media on Paper
12" x 16"
2009



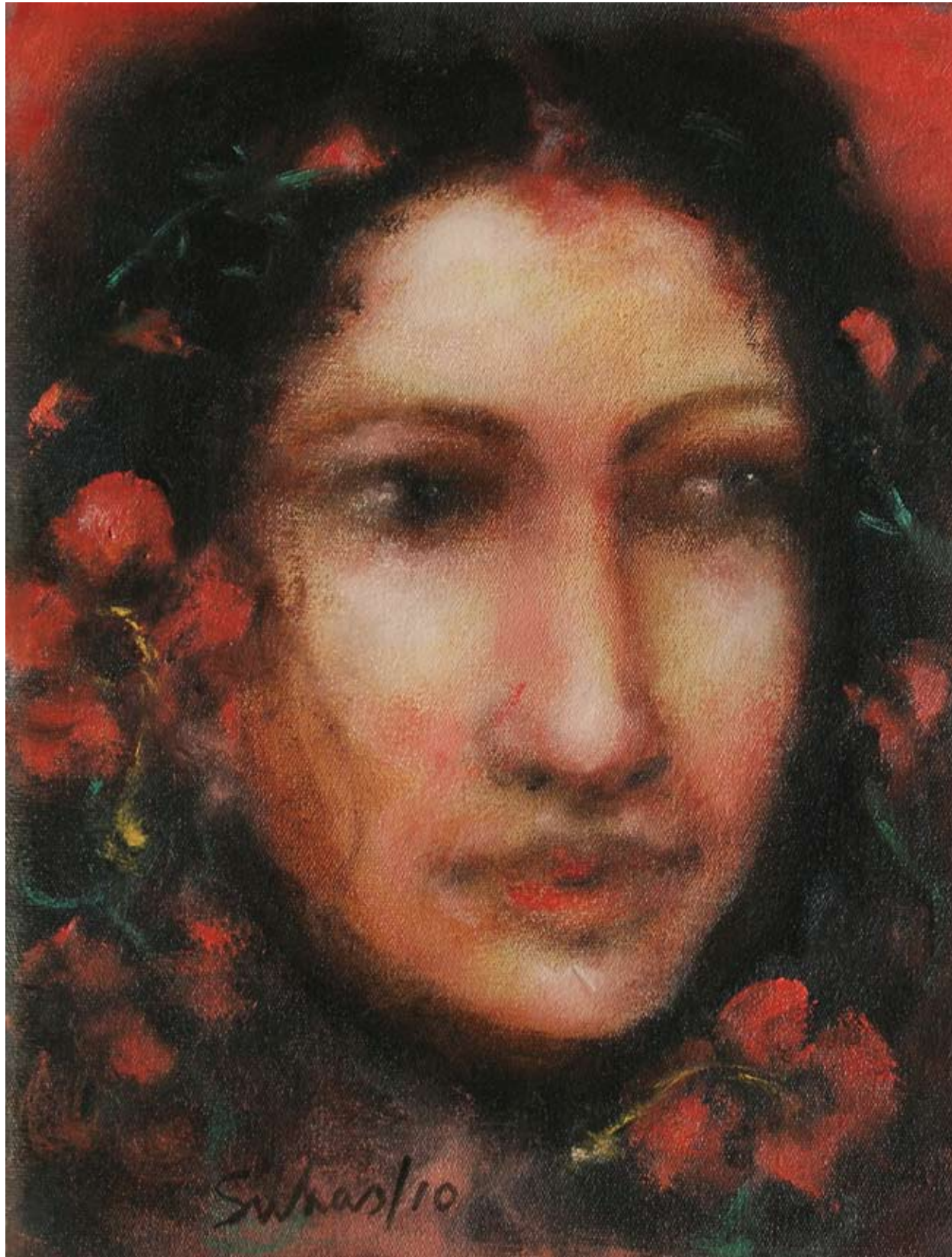
Radha
Mixed Media on Paper
10" x 12"
2010



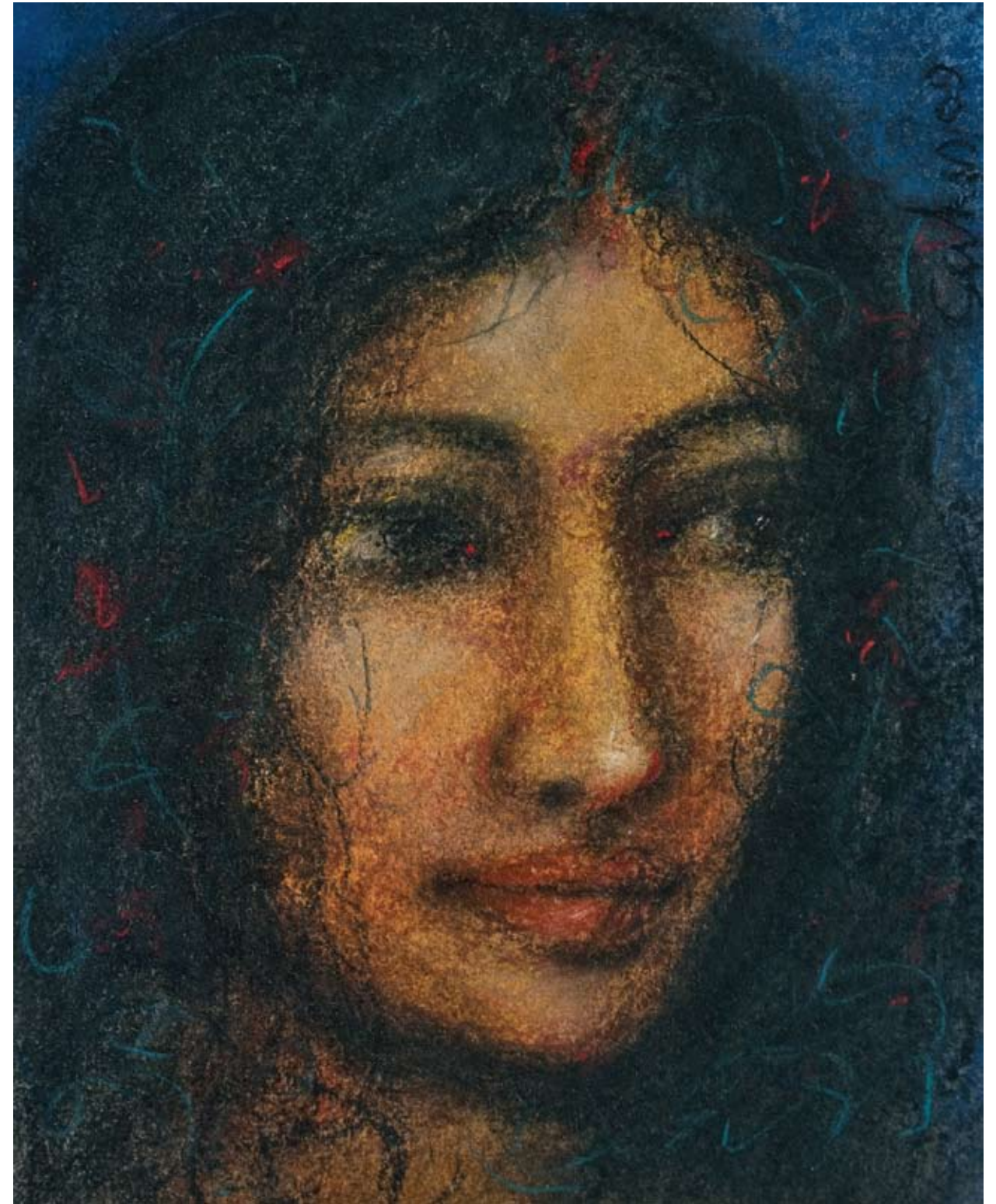
Radha
Mixed Media on Paper
12" x 16"
2010



Radha
Mixed Media on Paper
12" x 16"
2010



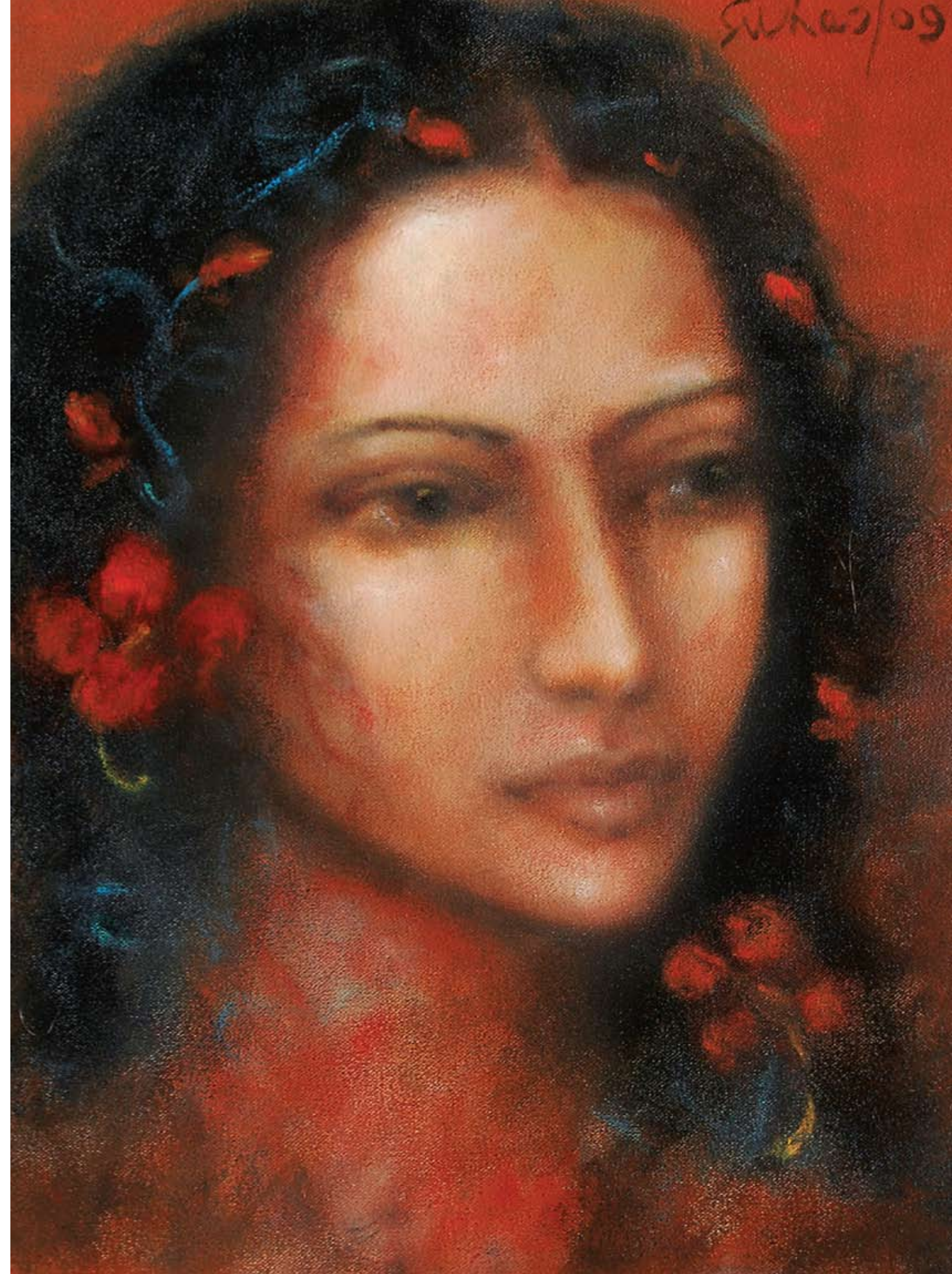
Radha
Oil on Canvas
10" x 12"
2010



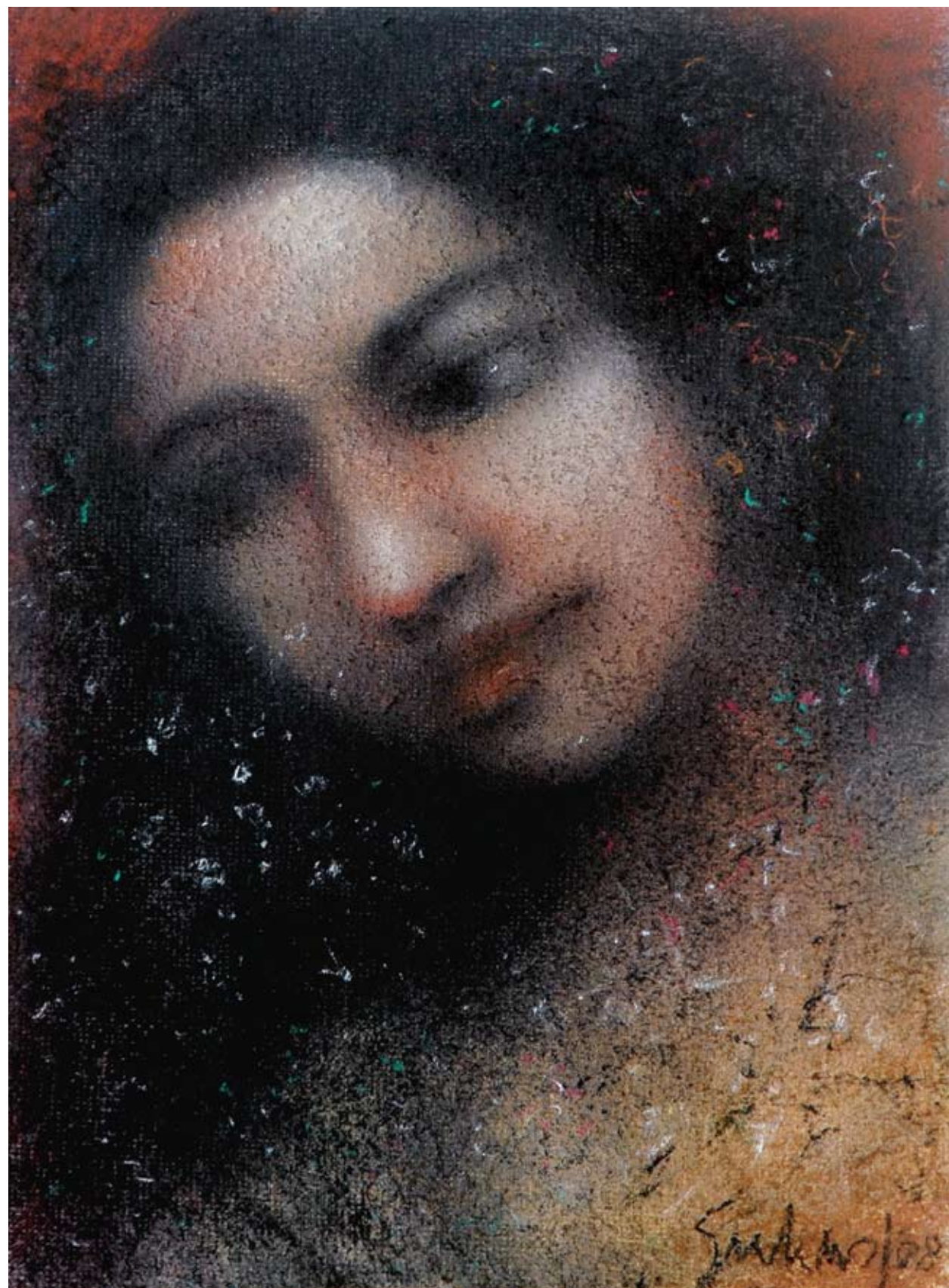
Radha
Mixed Media on Paper
10" x 12"
2009



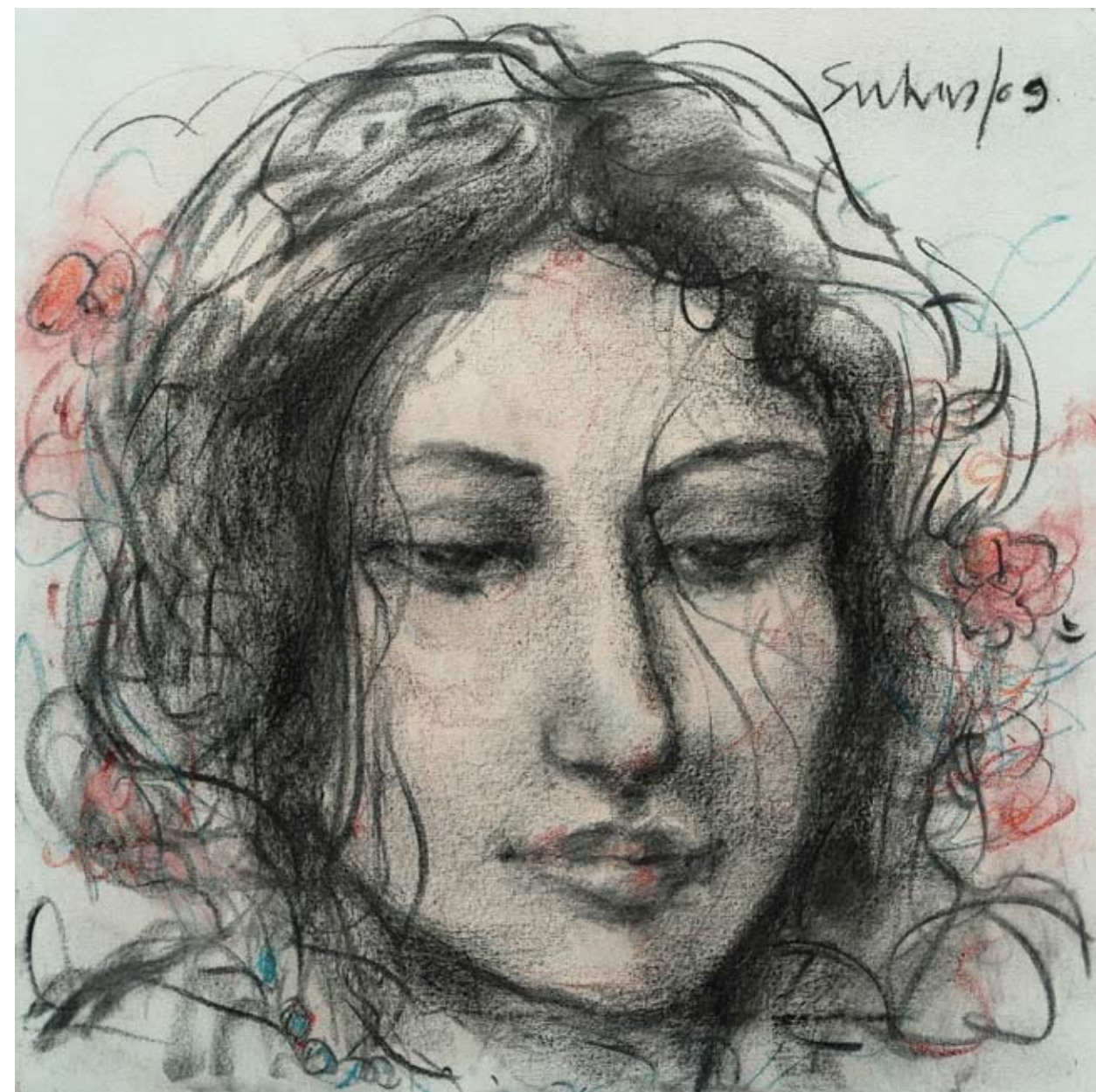
Radha
Mixed Media on Paper
8" x 10"
2009



Radha
Oil on Canvas
16" x 20"
2009



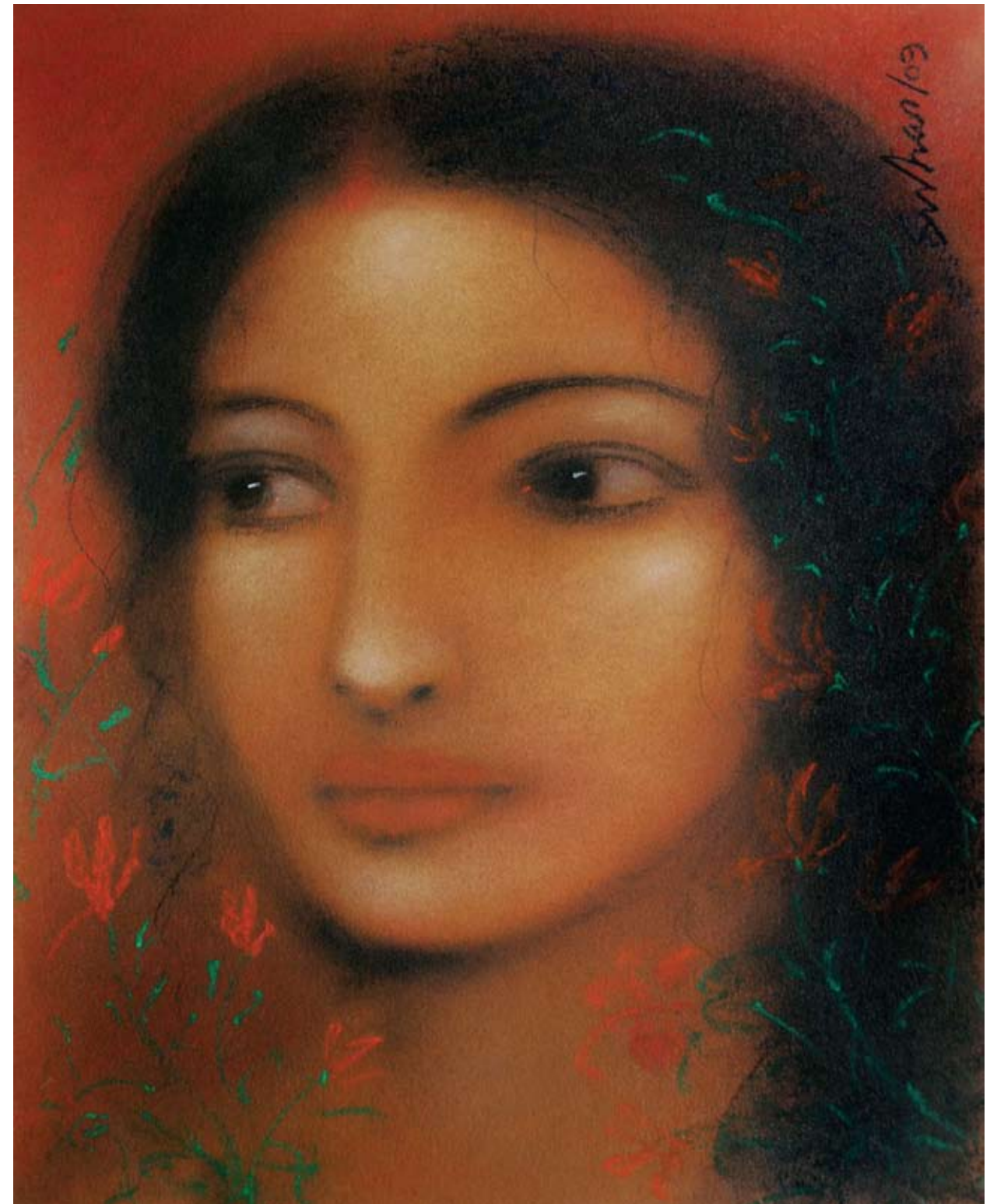
Radha
Mixed Media on Paper
12" x 15"
2008



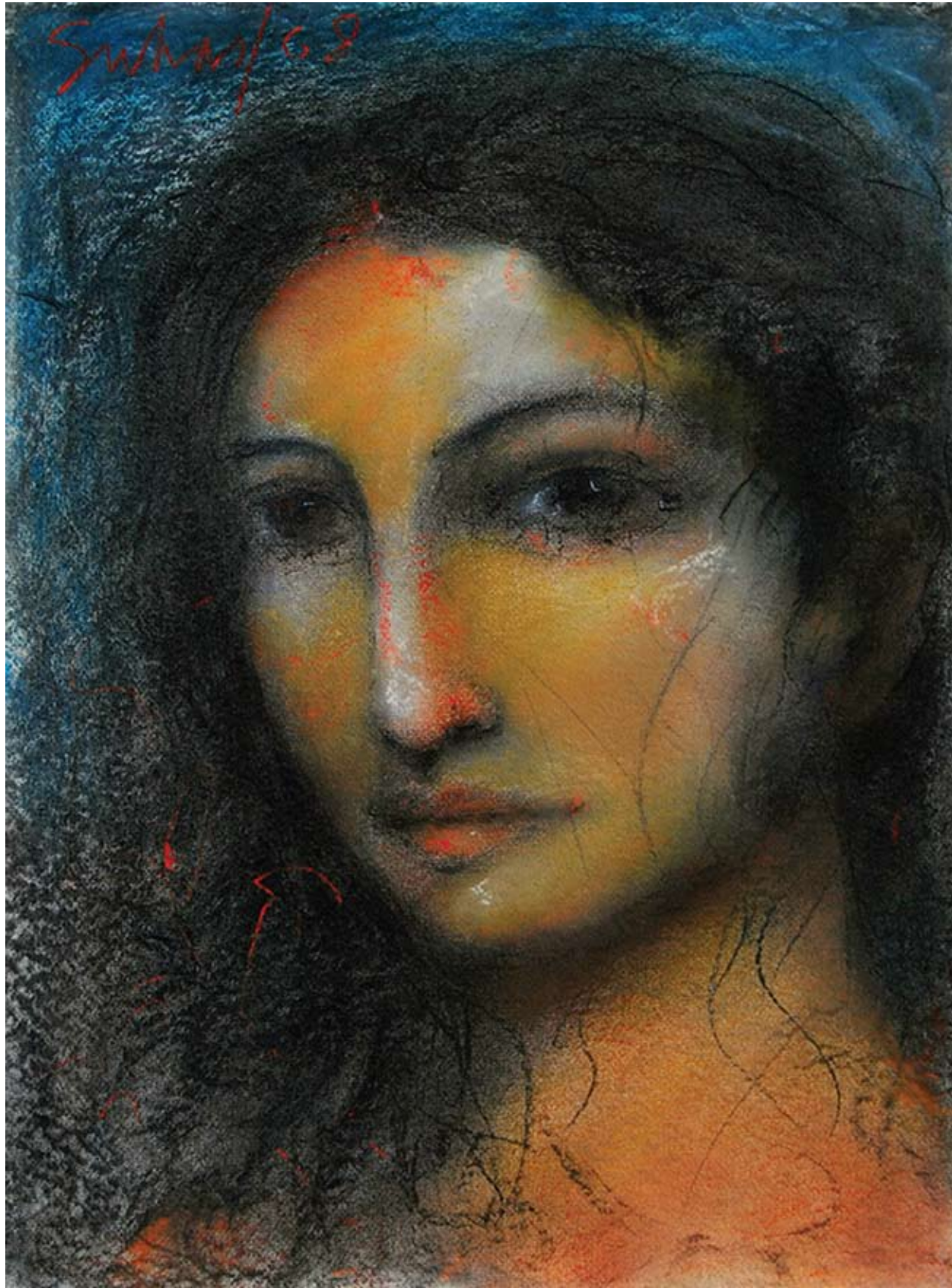
Radha
Charcoal on Canvas
20" x 20"
2009



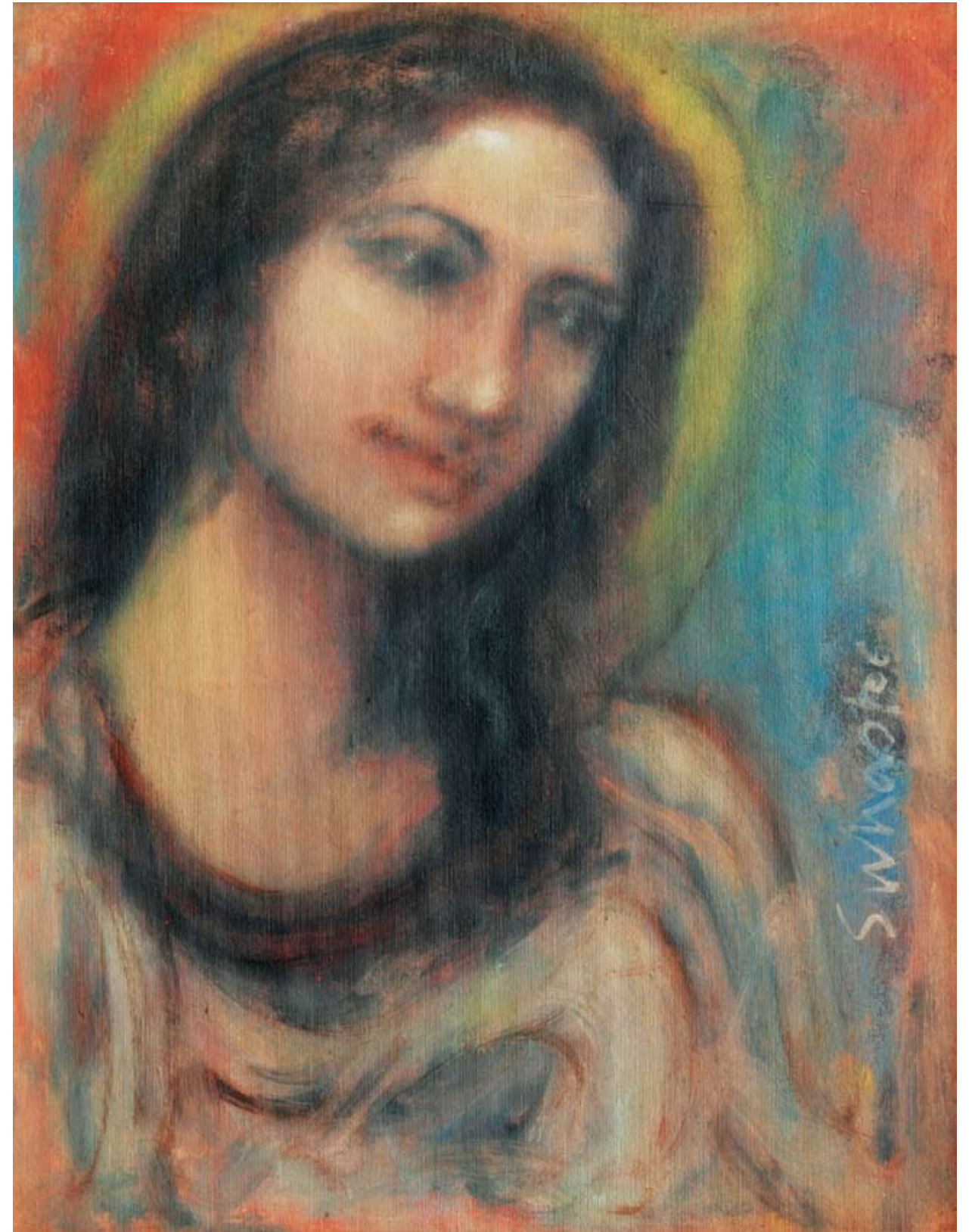
Radha
Oil on Canvas
48" x 48"
2009



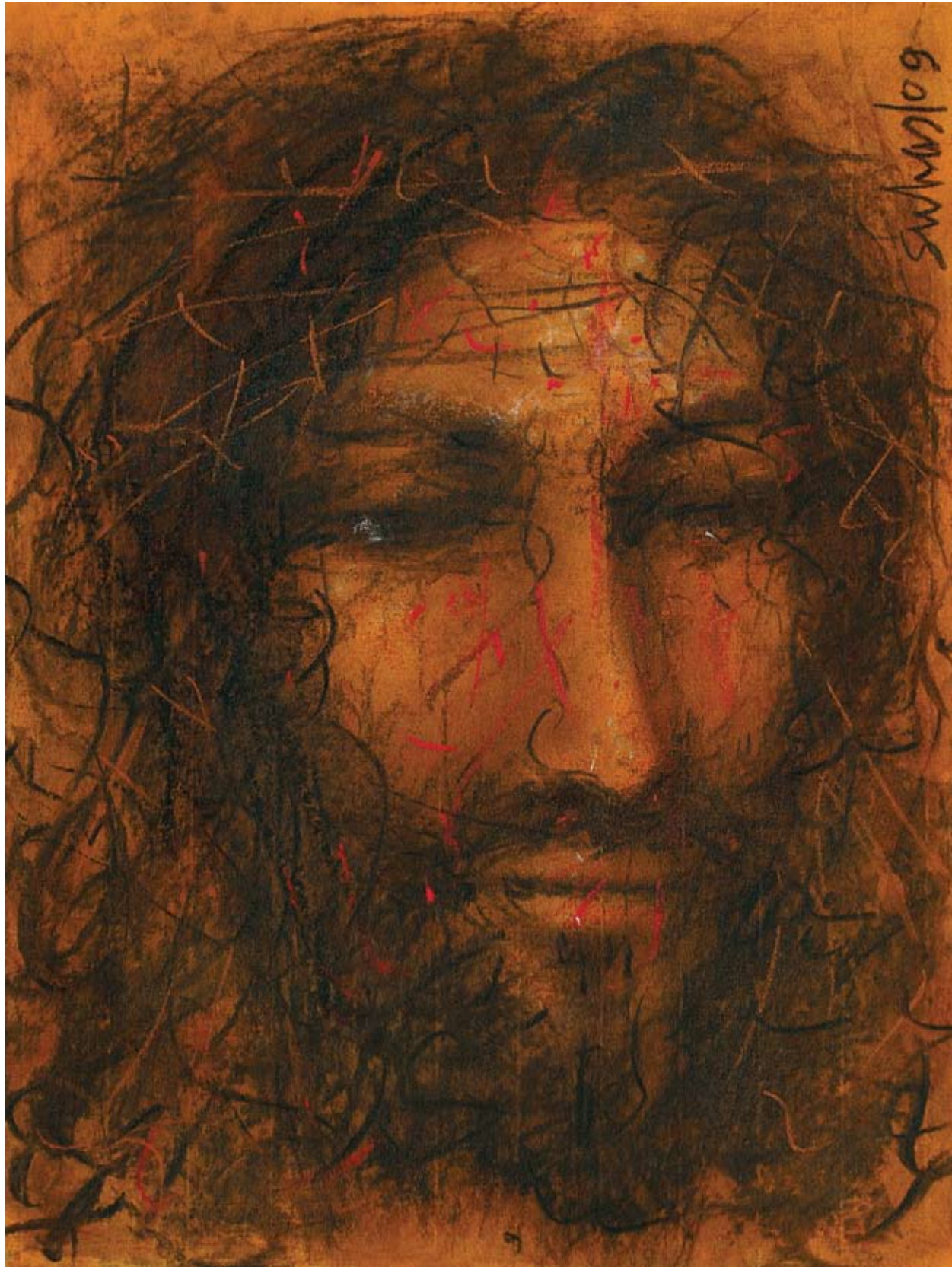
Radha
Mixed Media on Paper
12" x 16"
2009



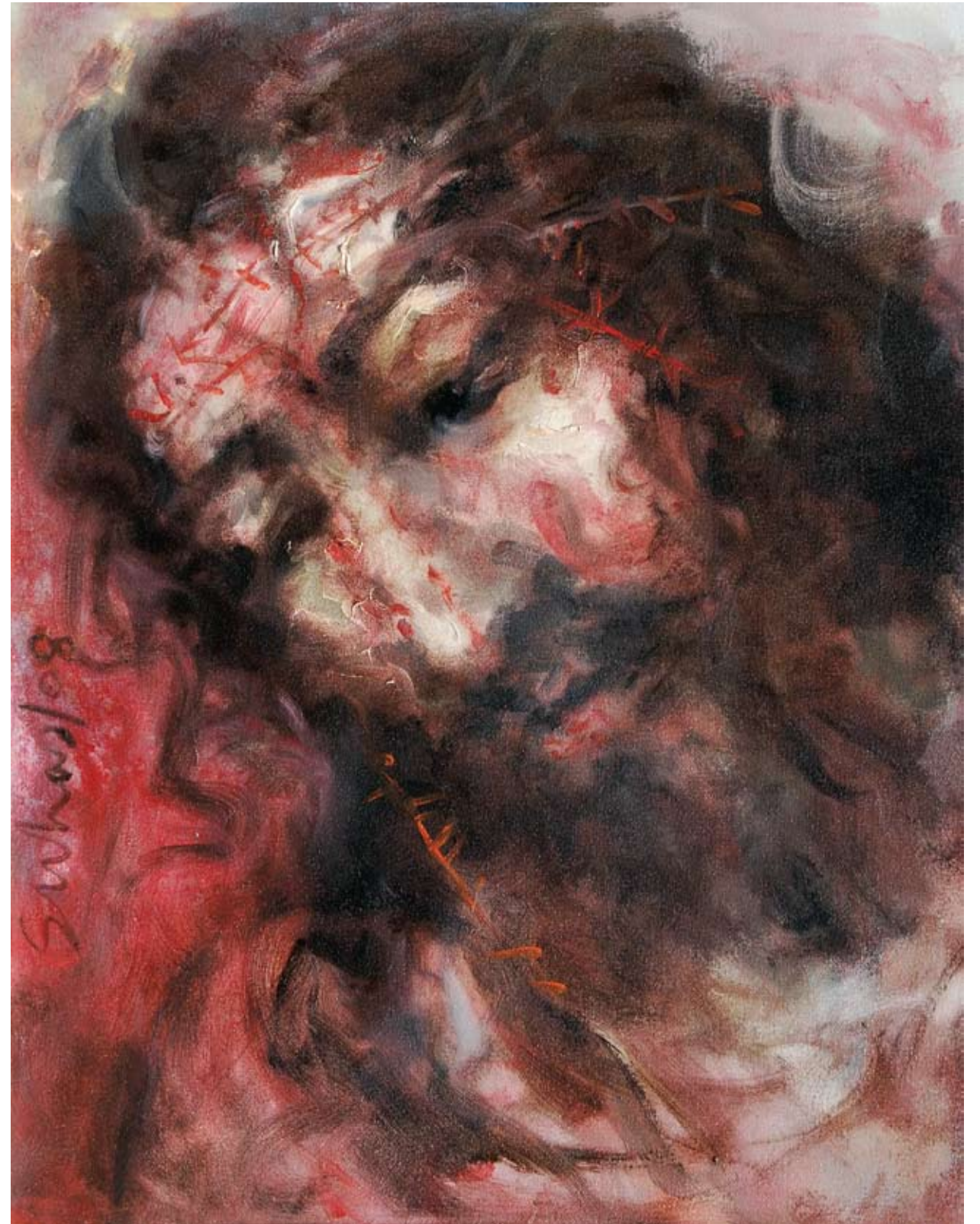
Radha
Mixed Media on Paper
22" x 28"
2008



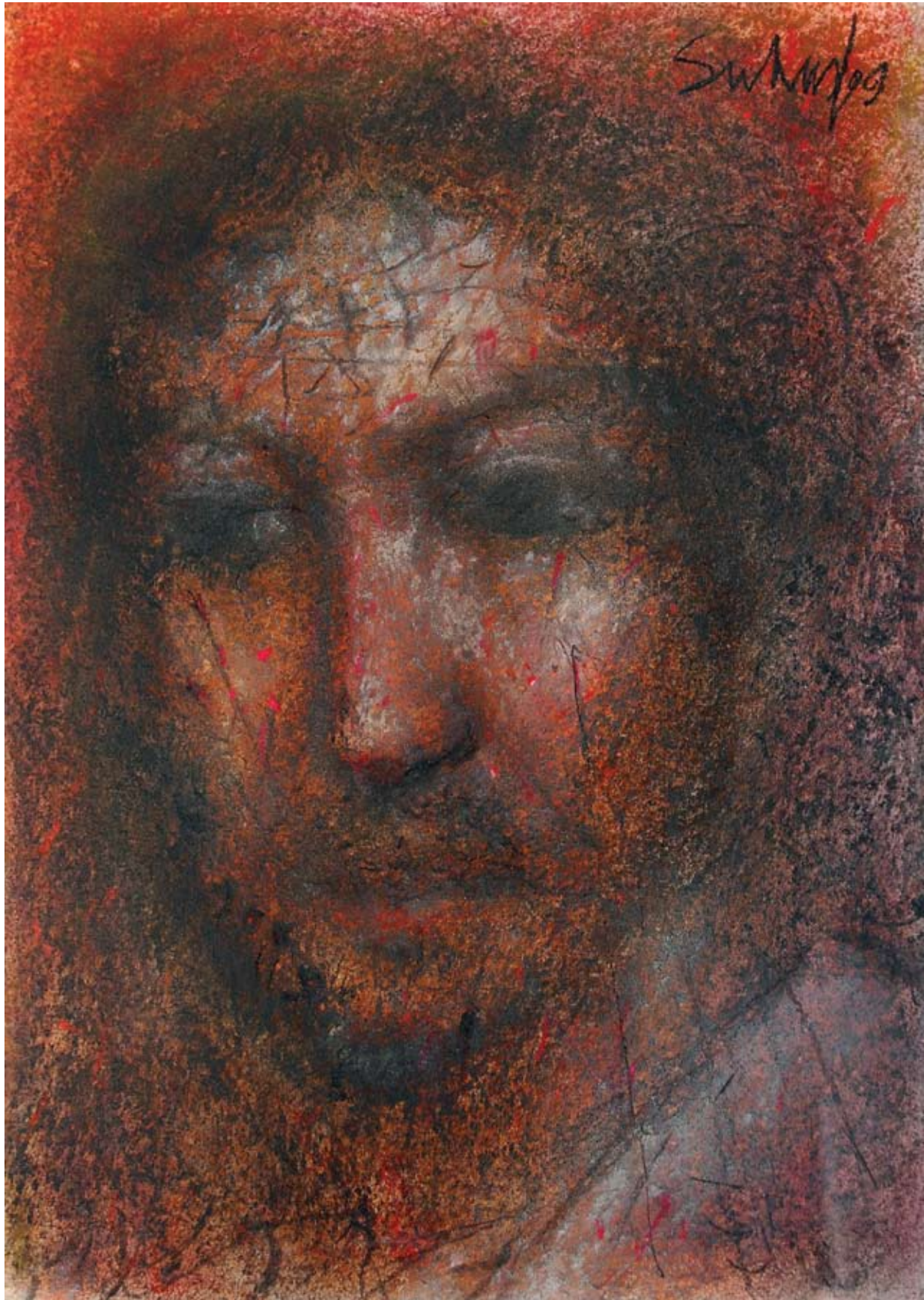
Virgin Mary
Oil on Canvas
16" x 20"
2006



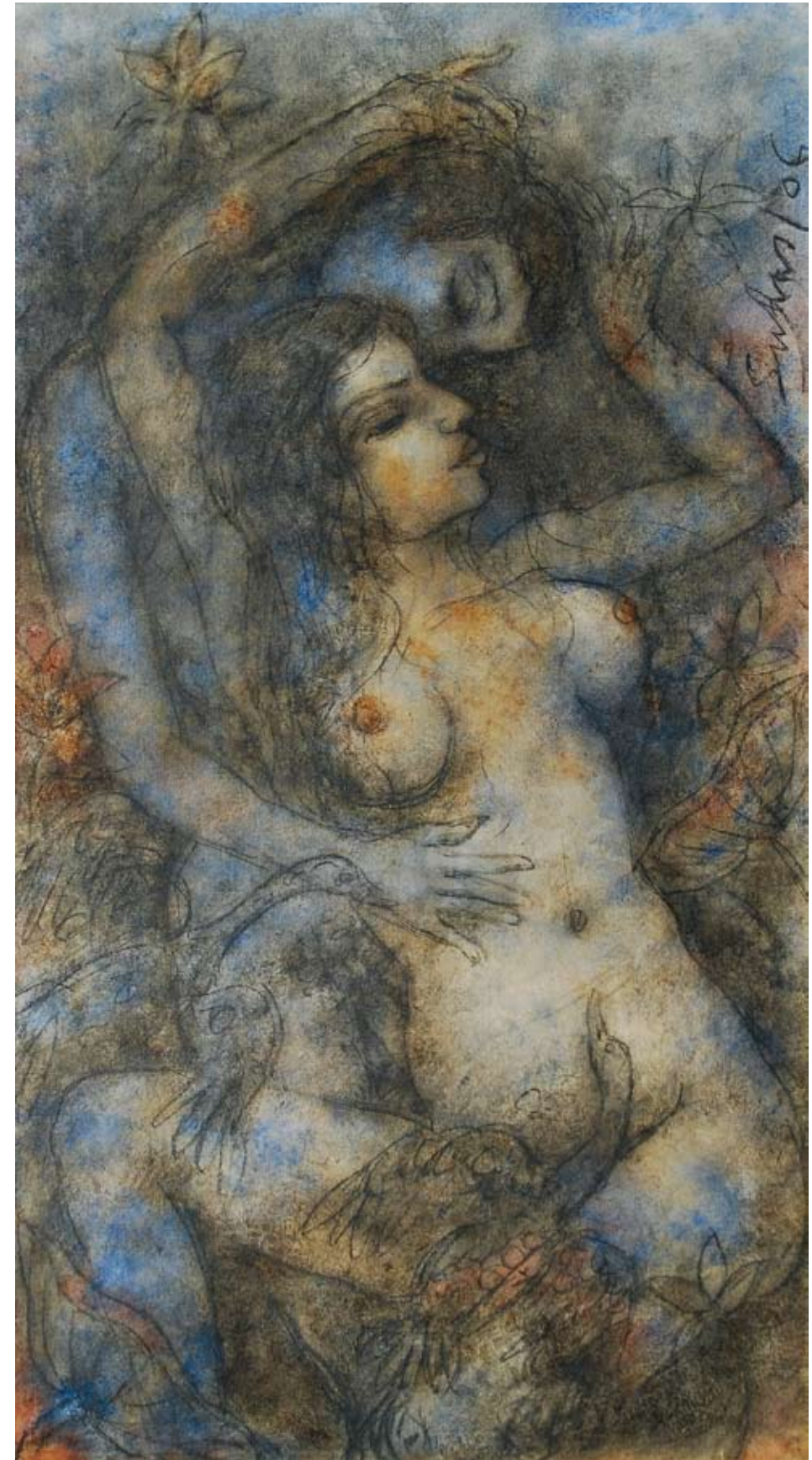
Christ
Mixed Media on Board
12" x 16"
2009



Christ
Oil on Canvas
16" x 20"
2008



Christ
Mixed Media on Paper
12" x 16"
2009



Midnight Blue
Oil on Canvas
30" x 52"
2006



Flower
Watercolour on Paper
11" x 9"
2010



Flower
Watercolour on Paper
9" x 11"
2010



Crow
Watercolour on Paper
16" x 20"
2010



Crow
Watercolour on Paper
16" x 20"
2010



Crow
Watercolour on Paper
16" x 20"
2010



Crow
Watercolour on Paper
16" x 20"
2010



Crow
Watercolour on Paper
16" x 20"
2010



Crow
Watercolour on Paper
16" x 20"
2010



Crow
Watercolour on Paper
16" x 20"
2010



Crow
Watercolour on Paper
16" x 20"
2010



Crow
Watercolour on Paper
16" x 20"
2010



Crow
Watercolour on Paper
16" x 20"
2010



Crow
Watercolour on Paper
16" x 20"
2010



Landscape
Oil on Glass
12" x 12"
2006



Landscape
Mixed Media on Paper
12" x 12"
2004



Landscape
Watercolour on Paper
12" x 15"
2009



My Friend, Father and Guru

I first met Suhas Roy in the house of our neighbour. So, until I got married to Suman, Baba was like any other 'Kaku' or 'Jethu', an avuncular acquaintance, not a celebrated contemporary master. What impressed me the most about him was his transparent laughter. True to his name, 'Suhas', he can actually laugh openly, whole-heartedly.

After my marriage I got to know both, Suhas Roy the man and the artist. Clad in a simple *lungi* and banyan he looks a deceptively ordinary human being. Intensely focused on the canvas, he is unconscious of even his bare chest. Shy, and reticent with outsiders, there's no mistaking one plain fact about him: he is a genuine, forthright person, with not a shred of pretence. And that means one helluva lot. Without ambiguity I can say, I came to respect him more than even my own father.

His lack of airs is probably what sets Baba apart from other contemporary masters, many of whom are his buddies. He is quite comfortable sitting in a roadside tea stall, sharing *chai* and conversation with equal ease. He is a man of strong opinions, but he is also receptive to criticism. I am a severe critic of his work, but he takes it in the right spirit. He is never dismissive, nor impatient. Without losing his cool he will explain things, give his side of the picture. And he speaks so well! The depth of his understanding and knowledge is remarkable – and its expanse is amazing. Politics or religion, culture or sociology, he can not only speak on the subject, he will have a fiercely independent perspective on it. And he is so liberal that I have no reservation in modelling for him.

The first time I saw a Suhas Roy painting was after I came into the family as his daughter-in-law. He is not the kind of person who will talk about his work. When I asked him, "Why did you become an artist?" he simply replied: "Because I wasn't good at maths, science or history." What really happened was that once, when he was ill and confined to bed, his eyes were riveted by a portrait of Tagore adorning the wall. "To idle away the hours I started drawing. Those who saw the drawing, liked it, and that marked the beginning of my journey," he says without much ado.

This simplicity of the man and his manners pervades his art, too. As an ordinary viewer, I find his paintings very pleasing. Neither flashy nor complicated, although of a highly resolved standard, they cause visual delight every time I look at them, without having to ponder over why I like them. It is perhaps no surprise that, amongst all his considerable body of work, my favourite is a Mother and Child.

No subject on earth has a greater appeal for a woman, particularly after she has herself become a mother. But what makes this work so special is the affection in the mother's face, her eyes, her look, her entire mien. I have no words to praise its beauty enough. I must add, I am also inordinately fond of a particular Radha that I have decided to bequeath to my daughter-in-law, when the day comes.

I therefore consider myself lucky that, at the start of my journey in art, I have the privilege of holding the fingers of a stalwart like Suhas Roy. I am secure in the knowledge that, if ever I stumble, there is a stout personality who can inspire me to carry on rather than buckle under. "When you embark on a battle, even if you face defeat, never leave the battle field," Baba has taught me. He has given me my life's mantra by saying: "When you look down upon the earth from the high altitude of an aeroplane in flight, everything from roads and rivers to man and mountain looks dwarfed. Likewise in life, when something unpleasant confronts you, transcend above it all, and they will lose their sting."

This retrospective exhibition is my tribute to Suhas Roy, a friend, father and guru in my life. And I am fortunate to be inspired in this journey by his son, my husband Suman Roy

- Swati Roy



Ever inspiring Suhas Roy

A chequered white lungi, bare body and a small unlit bidi in hand - that was the image when I first saw Suhas Da. I was quite bemused as till that time I had heard flattering details of his achievements. That he is one of the greatest names in Indian painting history, the father of female figurative forms, so on and so forth. For a moment my eyes refused to believe what I was witnessing as I had completely contrasting impression. Suddenly, I got his instruction to be seated and thus started our first conversation. It was a wonderful experience - so down to earth, so inspiring, full of virgin ideas. Little did I imagine then, that what had begun was not a conversation, but a journey.

I was introduced into the field of paintings by my mentor, my guru, my didi Swati Roy, who happens to be the daughter in law of Suhas Roy. Thanks to her influence, I started visiting Suhas da quite frequently. I started to enjoy watching him paint, talking with him. It was then that I found a new passion for getting associated with art. When I expressed my desire to Baba (the warmth of our conversations transformed 'Suhas Da' to 'Baba'), he questioned, "Can you Paint? If yes, then start painting. And, if not, then start promoting!" How true... The hands that cannot paint, can certainly promote it. I promptly took his advice.

Baba is 76 years of age today. He has undergone 2 bypass surgeries and has a pacemaker installed within him. He is also a victim of acute arthritis. While people normally would have stopped doing anything, Baba goes to his studio and paints for an hour or two. Religiously. Everyday. The size of the canvas he chooses may have reduced, but the zeal displays on it - is untouched and perhaps now, beyond natural.

Everyone who knows him, requests him to stop working, saying that he has had enough of this. But all arguments are put to rest when he replies with the same sentence and same childlike smile, "I feel most happy and relaxed when I paint".

I find Baba's ideas and attitude towards work, very unique in today's times. Being the last person to care about the rat race of inflating prices of paintings, he chooses to concentrate on reaching out to more and more people. And, he always succeeds. The clarity of his thoughts and the simplicity of his paintings are best reflected in his own words, "I want people to stand before my paintings, watch them and appreciate them rather than try to understand and remain confused."

Such is the simple greatness and the understated elegance of Suhas Roy.

Baba, I am immensely fortunate to know you, and feel blessed that today I have the opportunity to be co-curating an exhibition of your paintings.

Thank you!

- Kumar Satyapriya

Suhas Roy

Born : 1936 - Dhaka, Bangladesh



Education

- 1956-66 Studied Graphic Art under the guidance of S.W. Hayter, Atelier 17 and Mural Art at L' Ecole Nationale Superior Des Beaux Arts, Paris
- 1953-58 Diploma in Painting, Indian College of Art and Draughtsmanship, Kolkata

Exhibitions

Selected Solo Exhibitions

- 2010 'Beyond Radha', Siddhartha Art gallery, Kathmandu, Nepal.
- 2008 'Beyond Rasikpriya', Jehangir Art Gallery, Mumbai
- 2007-08 'Drops of Silence', Akar Prakar, Kolkata and Dhoomimal Art Centre, New Delhi
- 2007 Organized by Art Pilgrim at Gallery SW - 1, London
- 2006 Organized by Art Pilgrim at Gallery SW - 1, London
- 2006 Organized by Indian Fine Arts at Jehangir Art Gallery, Mumbai
- 1992 Centre Art Gallery, Kolkata
- 1992 Academy of Fine Arts, Kolkata
- 1988 Genesis Art Gallery, Kolkata
- 1986 Genesis Art Gallery, Kolkata
- 1986 Chitrakoot Art Gallery, Kolkata
- 1986 Dhoomimal Art Centre, Kolkata
- 1983 Calcutta Arts Gallery, Kolkata
- 1964 Arts and Prints Gallery, Kolkata

Selected Group Exhibitions

- 2009 'Chhayapath', organised by Nostalgia Colours at Lalit Kala Academy, New Delhi
- 2008 'Faces', Tao Art Gallery, Mumbai
- 2006 'Drawing Show an Act of Art II', Priyasri Art Gallery, Mumbai
- 1996 Organized by Gallery 88, Kolkata at Singapore, Hong Kong, Canada, New York
- 1995 Exhibition of Late Masters and Contemporary Masters organized by Art News and The Oberoi Grand, Kolkata
- 1995 Indian Contemporary Masters organized by Sarala Art Gallery, Chennai
- 1995 'Exhibition of Women In Indian Art', organized by The Gallery, Hong Kong
- 1995 Exhibition of Contemporary Masters organized by Sanskrit Art Gallery, New Delhi
- 1995 Gallery La-Mare, Kolkata
- 1995 Gallery Espace, New Delhi
- 1995 'Heads and Face', organized by Gallery Maya, Hong Kong
- 1995 'Highlights', organized by Centre for International Modern Art (CIMA), Kolkata
- 1995 Exhibition of Paintings by Rotary Club of Calcutta at Chitrakoot Art Gallery, Kolkata
- 1994 'Indian Printmaker', Centre for International Modern Art (CIMA), Kolkata
- 1994 Exhibition of Paintings by Rotary Club of Calcutta at Gallery 88, Kolkata
- 1994 Contemporary Masters, Centre for International Modern Art (CIMA), Kolkata
- 1993 'Help Age', Jehangir Art Gallery, Mumbai
- 1992 'Exhibition of 'Album', by Society of Contemporary Artists, Kolkata
- All India Collector's Choice Exhibition by Genesis Art Gallery, Kolkata and Art Gallery, Mumbai
- 1992 'India-a-Selection from the Words of Indian Painters', organized by Gallery 88, Kolkata at The Oberoi, New Delhi
- 1992 All India Exhibitions organized by Art Age Gallery, New Delhi
- 1992 'Bengal Art Today', organized by Arup Datta and Management Council, Hyderabad

- 1991 'Collectors Choice Exhibition', Indian Habitat Centre, New Delhi
- 1991 'Monsoon Show', Genesis Art Gallery, Kolkata
- 1989-90 Karnataka Chitra Kala Parishad, Bangalore
- 1989-90 Safdar Hashmi Memorial Exhibition, New Delhi
- 1989-90 'Drawing', Chitrakoot Art Gallery, Kolkata
- 1989-90 Society for Children Welfare sponsored by Chitrakoot Art Gallery, Kolkata
- 1988-89 'Art for CRY', Jehangir Art Gallery, Mumbai
- 1988-89 Birla Academy of Art and Culture, Kolkata
- 1988-89 College of Art, New Delhi

Participations

- 2009 Annual Exhibition, La-Mere, Sri Aurobindo Institute of Culture, Kolkata
- 1996 Annual Exhibition of Gallery 88, Kolkata
- 1995 Annual Exhibition, Surya Gallery, Hyderabad
- 1995 Annual Exhibition organized by Centre for International Modern Art (CIMA), Kolkata
- 1995 '29th Anniversary Exhibition', Birla Academy of Art and Culture, Kolkata
- 1992 'Silver Jubilee Exhibition', Birla Academy of Art and Culture, Kolkata
- 1991 Annual Exhibition, Sanskrit Art Gallery, Kolkata
- 1991 Annual Exhibition, Gallery 88, Kolkata
- 1991 All India Exhibition of 'Radha', Gandhar Art Gallery, Kolkata
- 1991 All India Exhibition of 'Krishna', Gallery 88, Kolkata
- 1991 Annual Exhibition, Society of Contemporary Artists, Kolkata
- 1958 Annual Exhibition, India College of Art and Craft, Kolkata
- 1st All India Graphics Exhibition organized by Group B
- Exposition of La Cite Internal Des Arts, Paris
- Exposition Des Arts Etogere Boursiers des Government of France, Paris
- 7th International Biennial Exhibition of Prints, Tokyo
- Exhibition of Graphics by Indian Artists, organized by Indian Council for Cultural Relations (ICCR), New Delhi at Poland
- Recent Art in India, organized by Lalit Kala Akademi
- 3rd Triennale, India

Honours and Awards

- 1986 Certificate of Merit, Symphony, Hoshiarpur
- 1973 Certificates of Birla Academy of Art and Culture, Kolkata
- 1970 West Bengal Academy of Drama and Fine Arts, Kolkata
- 1969 All India Fine Arts and Crafts Society (AIFACS), New Delhi
- 1968 1st All India Graphic Exhibition by Group 8
- 1957-58 Annual Exhibition, Indian College of Arts and Draughtsmanship, Kolkata

Collections:

- NGMA, New Delhi.
- Vatican City, Rome.
- Parliament House India.
- Birla Academy of Fine Arts, Kolkata.
- Chandigarh Museum. And many other Private Collections.





Nostalgia Colours
77/2, NSC Bose Road, Kolkata-700040
Ph.: 033-23110009
www.nostalgiacolours.com