

MONTAGE OF MEMORIES

An exhibition of collages



S G Vasudev

Gallery Sumukha



Gallery Sumukha
presents

Montage of Memories
An Exhibition of collages

S G Vasudev

3rd to 27th March, 2021

Celebrating 25 years of Gallery Sumukha



Gallery Sumukha, Bangalore



Gallery Sumukha Bengaluru, India

Gallery Sumukha, Bengaluru begun in 1996, has evolved over the years and is currently housed in the largest private gallery space of South India.

Sumukha caters to a wide audience, nationally and internationally, and has a history of working with external curators and artists from various parts of the world. It supports artists in terms of commissions and relevant spaces to expose their conceptual thinking, thus marking it as an international space. Simultaneously it presents Indian Contemporary artists abroad through exhibitions and participation in International Art Fairs.

Gallery Sumukha is a platform for established and next generation artists to showcase all forms and media of Contemporary Art, and offers a significant collection of contemporary work in all mediums – paintings, graphics, sculptures, drawings, and new-media such as installation, digital prints & digitalized photography etc., and presents on an average, a show a month.

The lighting & display system are state of the art which enables Sumukha to hold slide shows, lectures and interactive sessions, which are well attended by the students of the local art schools, as well as art lovers and others.

S.G VASUDEV

Born in Mysore (Karnataka) in 1941, S.G.Vasudev received recognition as a painter early in his career. While he was a student of the Government College of Art, Madras, he won the National Award from the All India Lalit Kala Akademi in 1967.

He has been honoured with awards from State Academies of Karnataka, Tamil Nadu and Kerala, besides prestigious Karnataka Rajyotsava Award, Venkatappa Award and Paniker Puraskaram.



Photo credits : Mallikarjun Katakol

Vasudev is a founder-member of the Cholamandal Artists' Village on the outskirts of Madras (now Chennai) where he lived and worked till 1988. He now lives and works in Bangalore.

Vasudev works in various mediums (drawings, paintings, reliefs in copper and tapestries in silk). He became well-known for his "Vriksha" (Tree of Life) series, which evolved over nearly a decade, turning into the Tree of Life and Death in the latter half of the 1980s. He also explored the theme of "Maithuna" (Act of Love) through a series of drawings, paintings and copper reliefs. Eventually his tree grew into faces titled "Humanscapes" and "Earthscapes." The tree is still sometimes visible in his series titled "Theatre of Life," and "Rhapsody"

Vasudev has participated in several important group exhibitions in India and abroad. In addition, he has held solo exhibitions in different parts of India and the world (including the USA, Canada, England and Germany). Exhibitions of his drawings based on the late A.K. Ramanujan's poetry and translations, titled "Tribute to Ramanujan," have been held in Bangalore, Chennai, Delhi, London and Chicago.

Vasudev has held two retrospective exhibitions "*Inner Resonances: A Return to Sama*" at National Gallery of Modern Art, Bangalore in 2018 and Mumbai in 2019.

Vasudev is founder and managing trustee of Arnawaz Vasudev Charities, a non-profit organisation providing financial assistance to young artists and art-related initiatives since 1989. He has helped in establishing Visual Art Department at the Bangalore University, National Gallery of Modern Art Bangalore, Ananya Drishya and Art Park, both, artists' initiatives.

MONTAGE OF MEMORIES

'O angel pluck that small flower of healing!

Craft a vessel to contain it!

~ Rainer Maria Rilke, *The Fifth elegy, Duono Elegies*

The artistic space unspools with stories as you enter its multidimensional territory. A concatenation of events, forms, lines and colour begin their slow, mesmeric dance. You watch with awe as images glide past the darkness like shoals of luminescent thoughts swimming in a dark sea. Paper and lines, light and colour converge to recount stories. Stories suffused in abandon and a spirit of play. The works are extraordinarily lithe and seek to revisit and recalibrate forms and techniques ideas and beliefs, honed over decades, in order to create something new and electrifying.

Vasudev 's recent collection of works titled "Montage of Memories," are a series of collages. They are allegorical, rich with memory, resplendent with allusion, imbued with myth and metaphor. Done over the past five months, they are endearingly child-like in spirit and their energy is infectious. The legends and lore that have been part of his canvas for decades, the leitmotifs that feature as constant refrains from the paintings, copper work and tapestries are still the central themes. What sets these collages apart is the weaving of new stories into the old. In seeking to rework the archival in his art, he strives to retain the echoes and traces of the past, while introducing the new.

The collage is not a medium you expect him to work with. In the past four decades, Vasudev has worked on oils, copper, silk tapestries, on pen and ink among others. His has been a truly syncretic effort in bringing together, media, and forms, themes and ideas. He has worked as Art director for art house Kannada cinema in the 60's and 70's. His paintings have inspired poets and in turn he has been inspired by poetry and theatre. Some years ago, a series of line drawings were inspired by the poetry of renowned poet and close friend, A K Ramanujan. He has collaborated with various crafts persons and truly believes in the interconnectedness of the arts. New forms of art are an integral part of his all-encompassing vision. Therefore, it comes as no surprise when he explores alternative horizons now and then. It is indicative of the sheer suppleness and strength of his trajectory.

"The very idea of using torn paper creates a different dimension. In a collage I am able to recreate stories with aspects that are not there in my painting. The collages contain features that do not figure in my paintings." He remarks that he used to create pen and ink drawings for the Indian Express in the 60s." My doodles and drawings made at the time were interesting and paved the way for making collages. Mixing of media is exciting. Sometimes the paintings bear a semblance of a weave, the copper resembles paintings. It depends on how you treat the medium "he says.

Vasudev began to work with collages in the past year, when the pandemic confined him to his home studio. They were grim times and he was looking for something to lighten the mood, infuse gaiety and create positive affirmations.

One morning he found some beautiful paper from invitation cards and used them in his drawings. "The results were startling and I decided to do more drawings and collages." He says with a smile. The torn papers and the bits of material act as the pen or brush to shape his pictures. The textures, the roughhewn or fine gloss of papers juxtaposed against the fluent, tensile line evoke suppleness and depth.

"I love collecting material and picking up visuals cues from anywhere. The collage is a very flexible medium. You can collect any amount of material but to imagine it in art takes effort, you have to fluidly compose and use your material well."

Unlike paintings or sculptures or tapestries, the imagery in a collage is created not just by the artists' imagination but also by available bits of cardboard, cloth, any material. In the hands of the artist, it can be astonishingly powerful. In Vasudev's collages you are jolted into viewing a striking snippet of a jazz musician, a black model from an old advertisement, a statue from an old sepia tinged paper. It is fascinating and even disconcerting. Baroque roses sit lightly aside the Vriksha, allowing it to billow into something magical. Bright fuchsia and electric blue fragments of paper are embedded like precious jewelry or glittering shards of enamel. There is a touch of fantasy and even the theatrically absurd in the pictorial juxtaposition of seemingly contrary things. The themes of Vriksha, Maithuna or Human-scapes meld easily into the anthropomorphic imagery of birds, monkeys, roots, trees and skies. An air of the celebratory is evident and a sense of immediacy prevails. A blitheness and amour de la vie lifts the mood. The collages are effusive, filled with banter, wry wit and an occasional odd quirk. And yet for all the lightness, an endearing vulnerability makes the collages memorable.

For any collage maker, the collection of paper, scraps of material is as important as preparing a brush or canvas. The anecdotes about Picasso, for instance, are legendary. For Picasso, every scrap, every napkin, every yellowing piece of paper was worthy of preservation. He lent the collage the touch of his genius and along with Braque coined the term collage from coller which means to glue. Picasso incorporated the collage extensively in his works. A work like, "Women at their Toilette ", a 14-foot collage made in 1938 almost entirely out of wallpaper, is now immortalized at the Musee Picasso in Paris.

Others have used the collage luxuriously as well, especially the Surrealists, the Cubists and Dadaists who made it popular in the post World War-1 period. Collages, decoupage, assemblages, photomontages have often been used to highlight the textural and the tactile in art. Even Matisse used brightly coloured paper to create his collages. Although, the collage is seen as a recent art form due to its prolific use in contemporary times, its origins are hoary. Nordic folk used to cut the felt barks of trees and decorate tombstones, the Japanese used rice paper on their art as far back the 11th century. Vasudev's predilection for the unusual is evident in the way he uses the acrylic marker pens for his line drawings.

Vasudev's predilection for the unusual is evident in the way he uses the acrylic marker pens for his line drawings.

“The silver and gold acrylic contour liners were picked up in Dubai, in 2018. I found their effect unusual and decided to pick them up for future use. When I first used them last year on the collage drawing, the effect was magical.”

Just as startling is his revelation that he tore up pages from his book, Vriksha, the artistic biography that describes forty years of his art.

The tearing apart of the book can be seen as an act of catharsis. He is amused by his own act of sabotage.” I felt that if I am using images made by others, I could use my own images too. I sacrificed one copy of the book Vriksha, but the result was satisfying.”

Vasudev reminisces about his early experimentation with the collage as a medium. In the 70s, he began to use paper cuttings in his work. Four collages made in the 70s were displayed in the retrospective featuring over four decades of work exhibited at the National Gallery of Modern Art across the country, in 2018 and 2019. When you look at them, you are struck by the continuum of form and technique. The works done in 1978 and 1979 are a seamless progression of the collages created in the last year. They are outside the demarcation of chronological time, unfazed by its continual shifts and turns.

In the collection, Montage of Memories, you notice departures from his earlier themes and techniques. These works are an impassioned chronicle of our times, depicting fragility and fragmentation and the ability to transcend them. For Vasudev, the progression has always been organic and deeply internalized. He follows his intuitive spirit. The dialogues are within himself, never with the world outside. Therefore, you see him work out narratives close to the essence, the true and the raw.

The themes that dominate this collection, like Vriksha, Humanscapes, Maithuna, retain their distilled essence. They grow, change and keep transforming. Sometimes they return to the point of origin, sometimes they move away. The visual ideation and the imagery evolve but the inner concerns, the intellectual and emotional constructs remain as constant as an *idee fixe*.

This dynamics between change and constancy is what rivets a viewer to the work of Vasudev. For a serious viewer who follows his art, there is an instant recognition of the familiar constructs and premises. And yet, the discovery of the new and unexpected is always delightful. The movement of growth and transmutation, the cycles of creation, dissolution and renewal are gentle and graceful.

As in his pen and ink drawings, the dominance of the line is clearly evident in the collages. As someone who believes in the power of drawing, Vasudev makes the line pivotal to his work. The line charts its own course. It is the bare bones, the point of reference beneath the picture making. Tethered to the line, the works glide and soar, creating numinous and luminous imagery. It is the line that controls the flow, the giddy heights and perilous lows. It remains as an elemental force, defining the artistic integration and unity of the work.

In the same way, The Tree of life or Vriksha is a vital and visceral force too. Through Vriksha, Vasudev, explores nature as a force to reckon with. Its power to assimilate and grow is equal to its power to destroy. Vasudev reiterates these concerns each time he depicts the Vriksha as a living, evolving metaphor of change. Whether it is the depleted environment, the destroyed forests, disjointed relationships, the issues are addressed as allusive references. They run like underlying threads of ideas across the various media he chooses to work upon. These ideas metamorphose with a seeming will of their own but the transmutation is slow mulled and unhurried. In a Vasudev work, repose and balance, cohesion and order take precedence, over most else.

In the past decades his work has veered towards silence and harmony, towards a thoughtful inwardness. There has been a glimmer of meditative light. We can never tell, perhaps this is how the future will unravel in his works. But for now, in the collection of collages, the mood is *fey*. It seeks to seize all the light, all the radiance and jubilation the world offers, a *carpe omnia*, a harvest of all things joyous.

These are dark and dreary times besieged by uncertainty and weariness. The collages are a delightful detour with their lustrous sparkle. We are captivated by their affirmations and notations of joy. These works done in the year 2020, amidst confinement and disruption could have so easily dissolved into darkness. Instead, they are incandescent and vibrant, breathing hope, energy, light and colour. They reaffirm our faith in the ability of art to rise above the quotidian and the fleeting.

”Everything you can imagine is real” said Picasso. Vasudev makes us believe in the power of the imagination to unfetter the spirit of resurgence.

MANJU PRASANNAN PILLAI

2021



Tree
Collage on Paper
16.14 x 12.20 inches
2020



Man-Animal
Collage on Paper
16.14 x 12.20 inches
2020



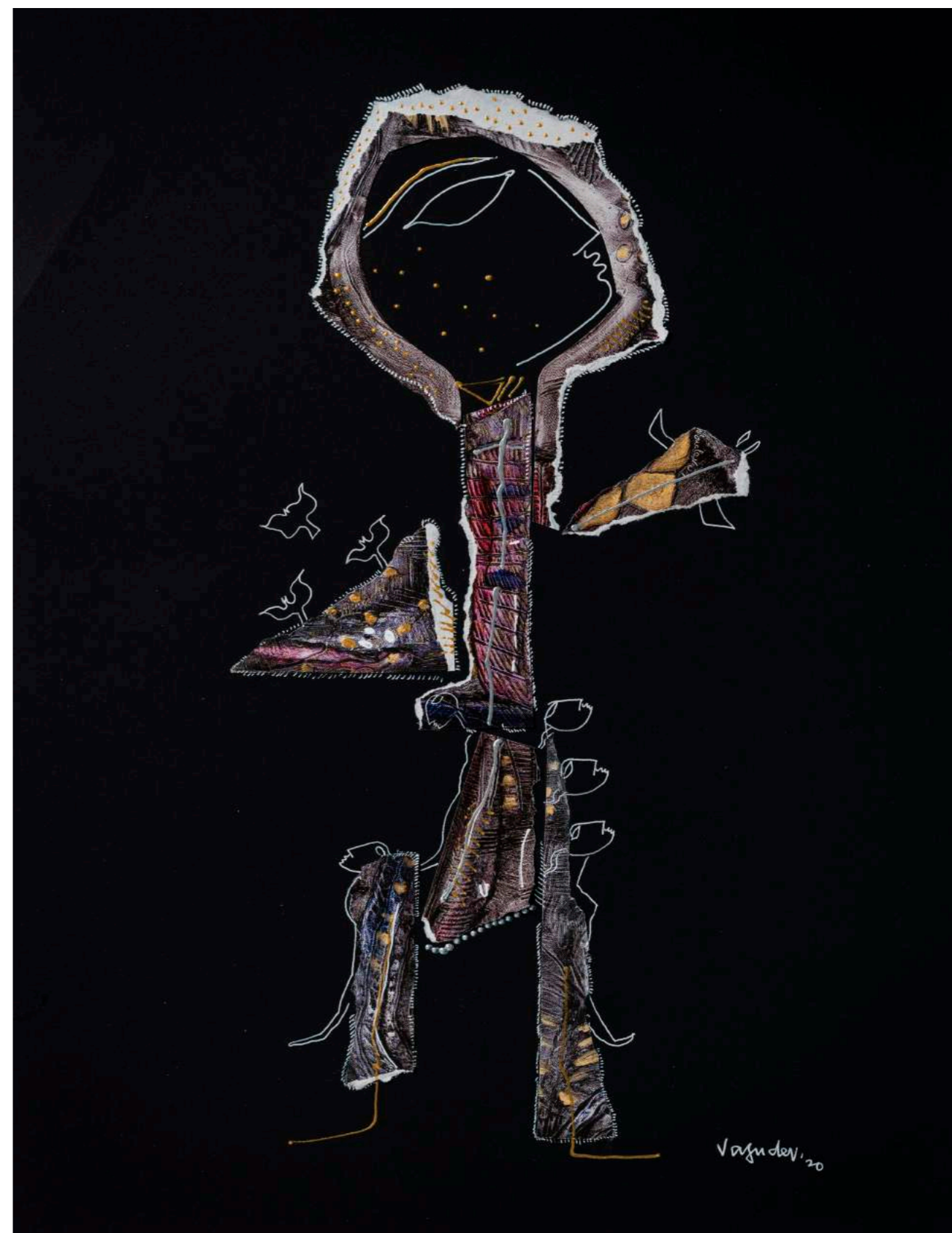
Dancer
Collage on Paper
16.14 x 12.20 inches
2020



Man
Collage on Paper
16.14 x 12.20 inches
2020



Dancer
Collage on Paper
16.14 x 12.20 inches
2020



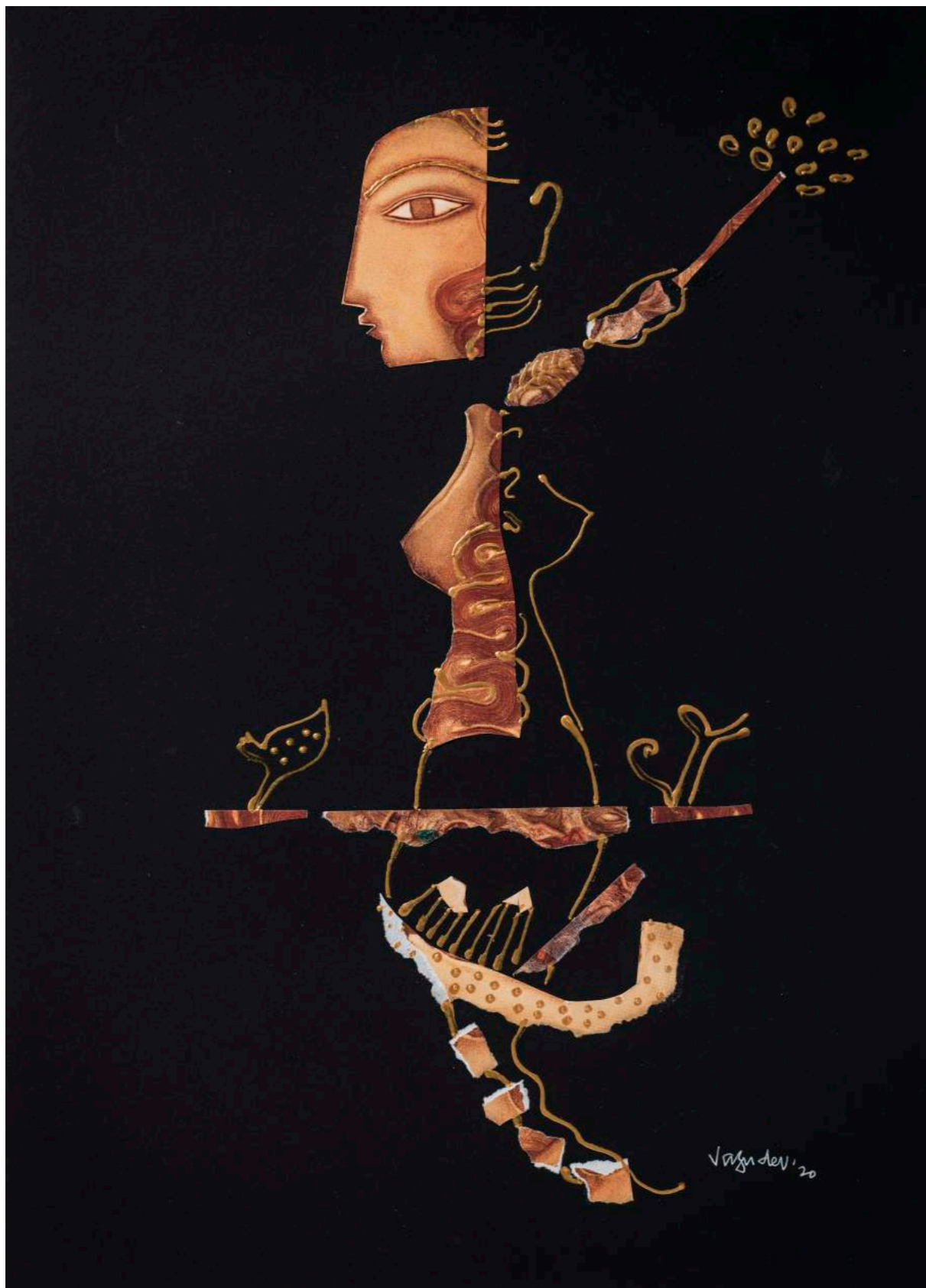
Magician
Collage on Paper
16.14 x 12.20 inches
2020



Dancer
Collage on Paper
16.14 x 12.20 inches
2020



Dancer
Collage on Paper
16.14 x 12.20 inches
2020



Dancer
Collage on Paper
16.14 x 12.20 inches
2020



Dancer
Collage on Paper
16.14 x 12.20 inches
2020



Rhapsody
Collage on Paper
16.14 x 12.20 inches
2020



Chair
Collage on Paper
16.14 x 12.20 inches
2020



Durga
Collage on Paper
16.14 x 12.20 inches
2020



Tree
Collage on Paper
16.14 x 12.20 inches
2020

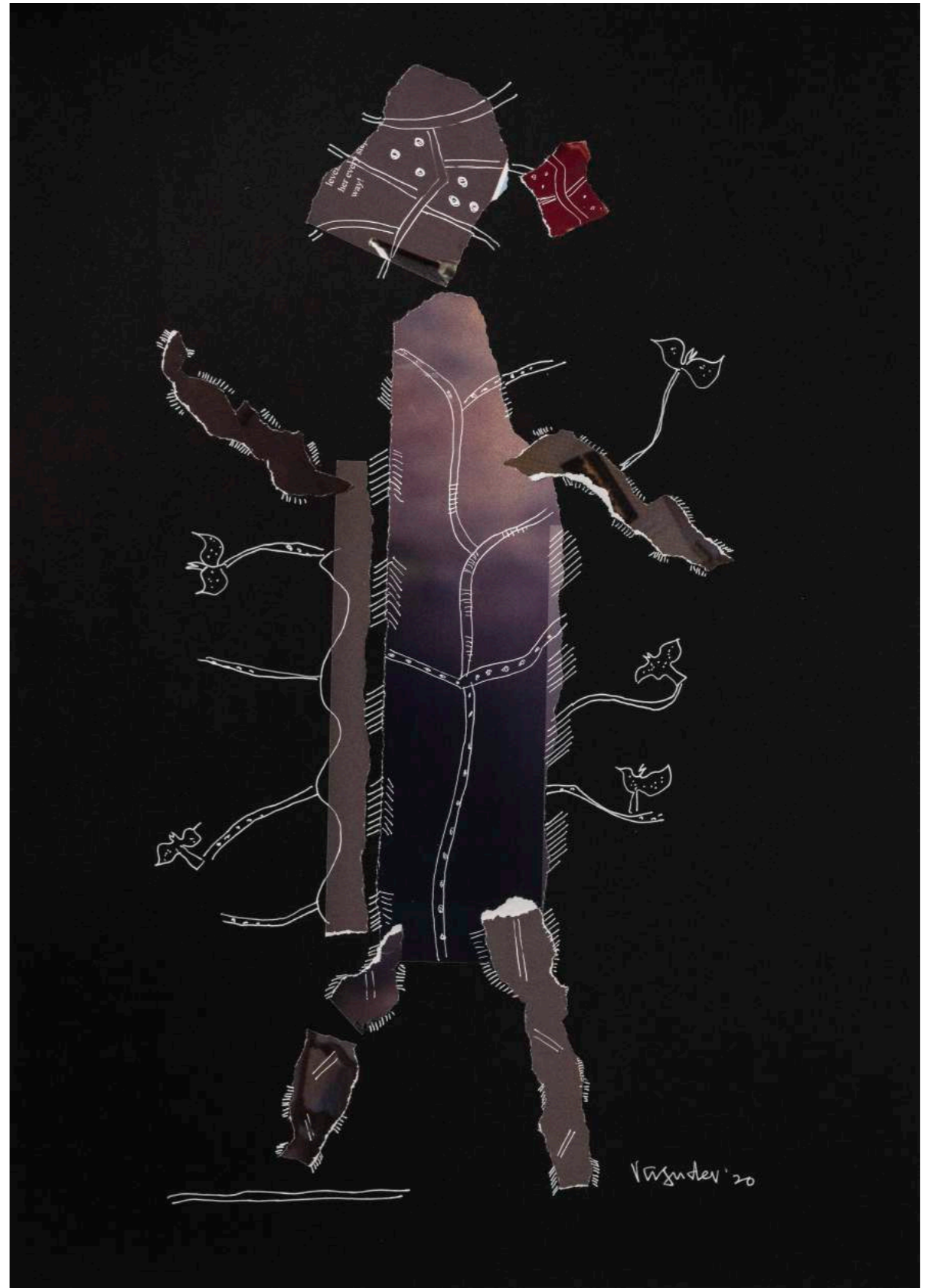


Tree
Collage on Paper
16.14 x 12.20 inches
2020

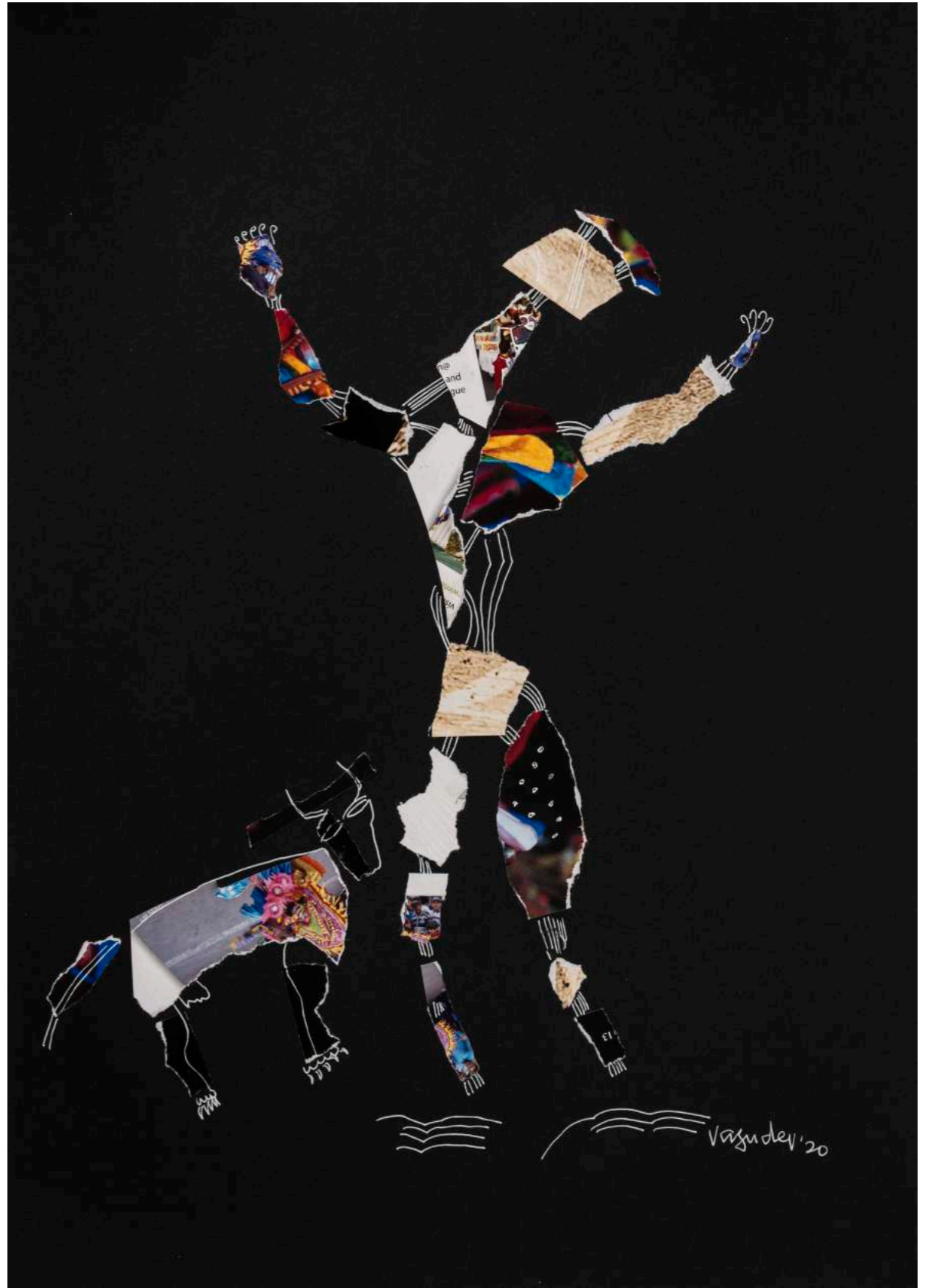
Tree-Man
Collage on Paper
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2020



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Collage on Paper
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2020

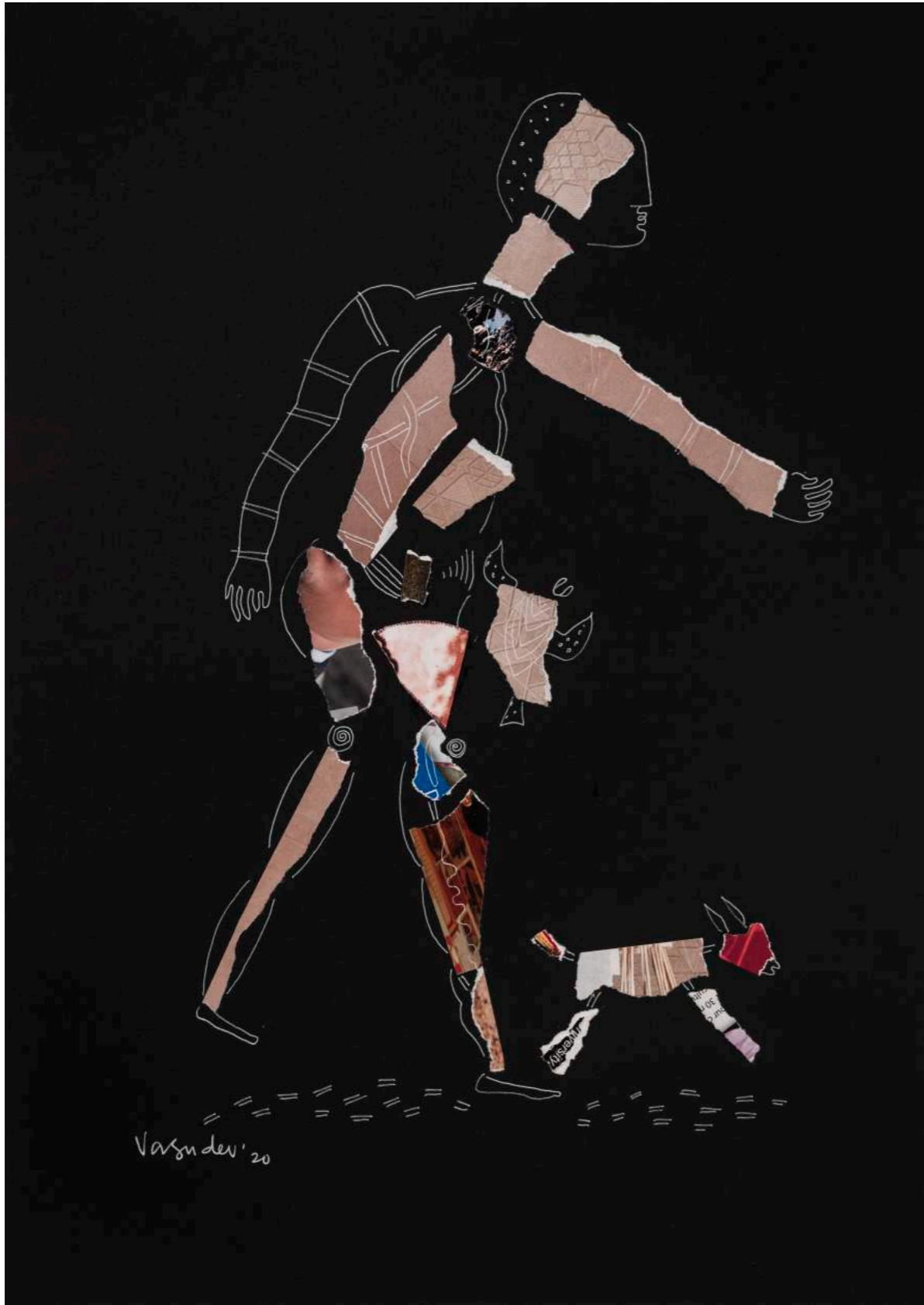


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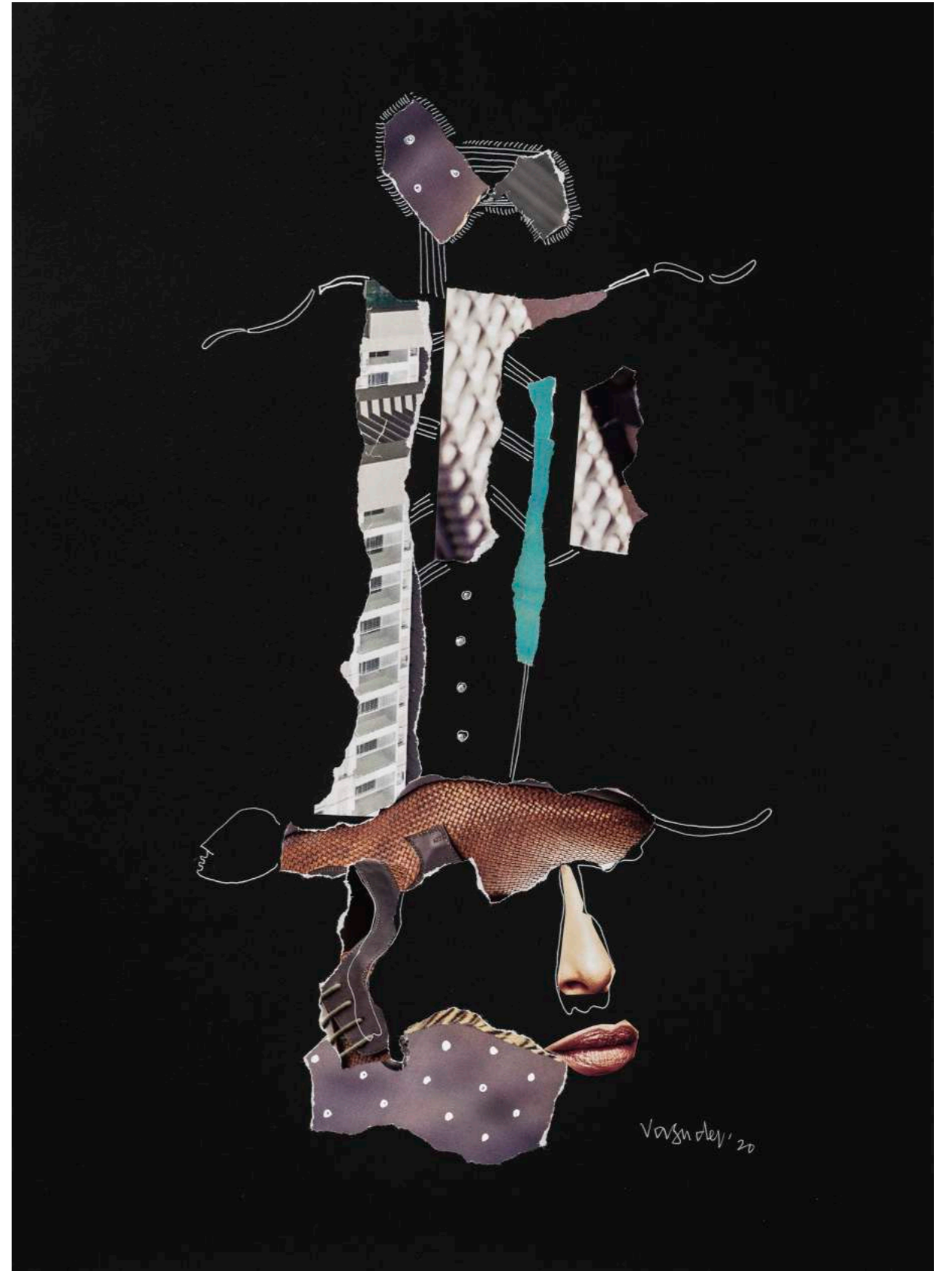


Magician
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Man-Animal
Collage on Paper
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Man-Animal
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Man-Animal
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2020



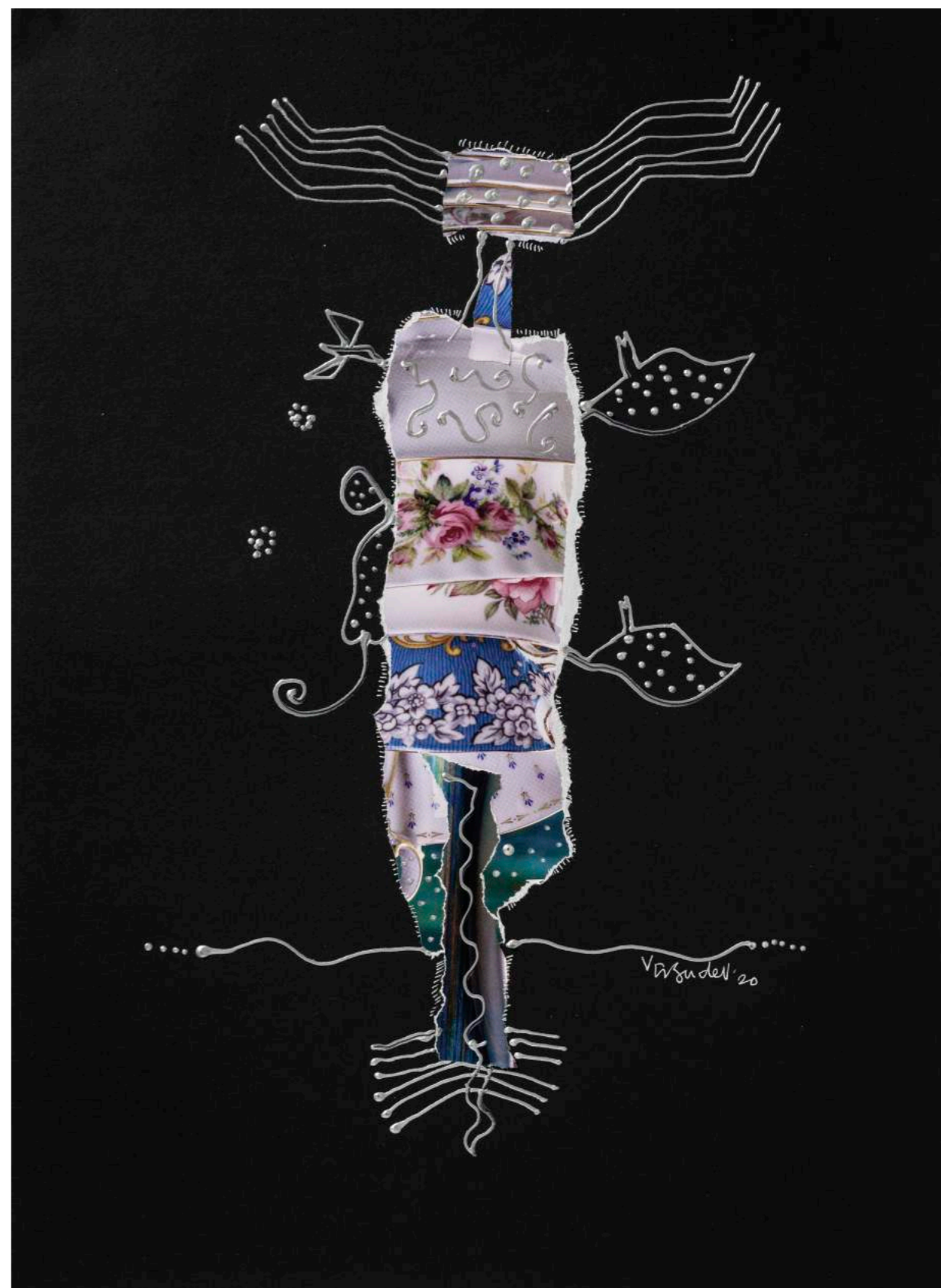
Rhapsody
Collage on Paper
16.14 x 12.20 inches
2020



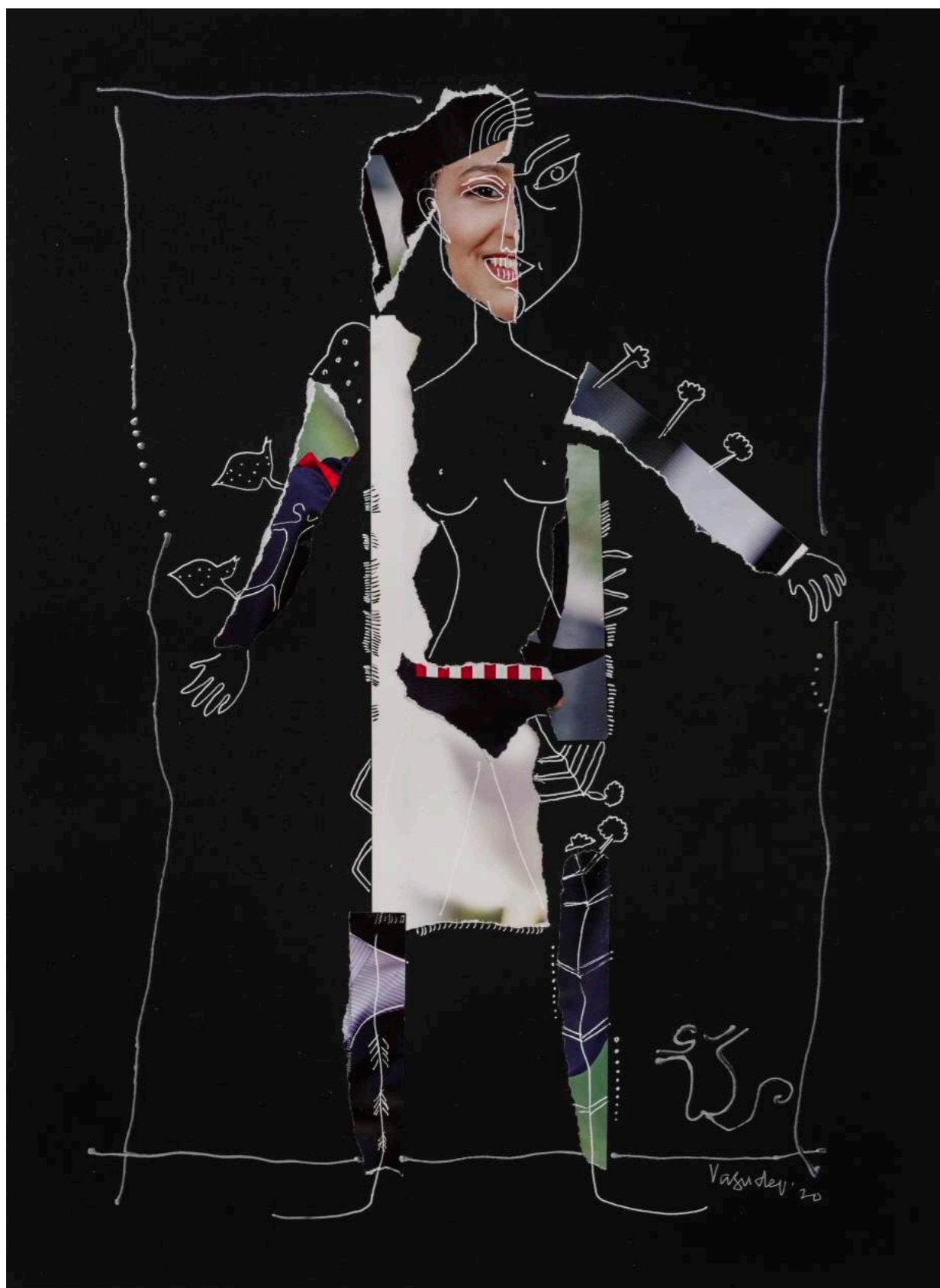
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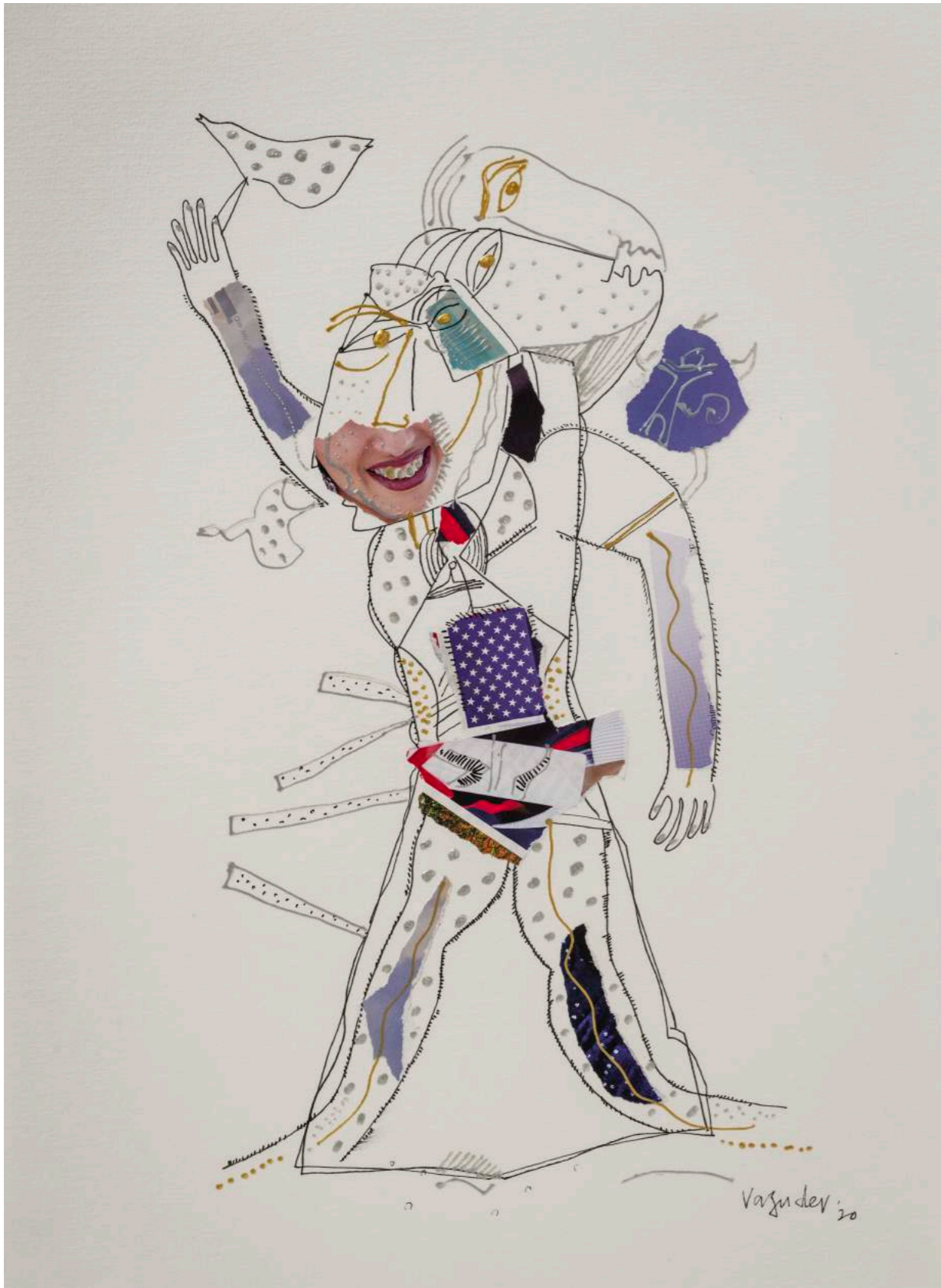


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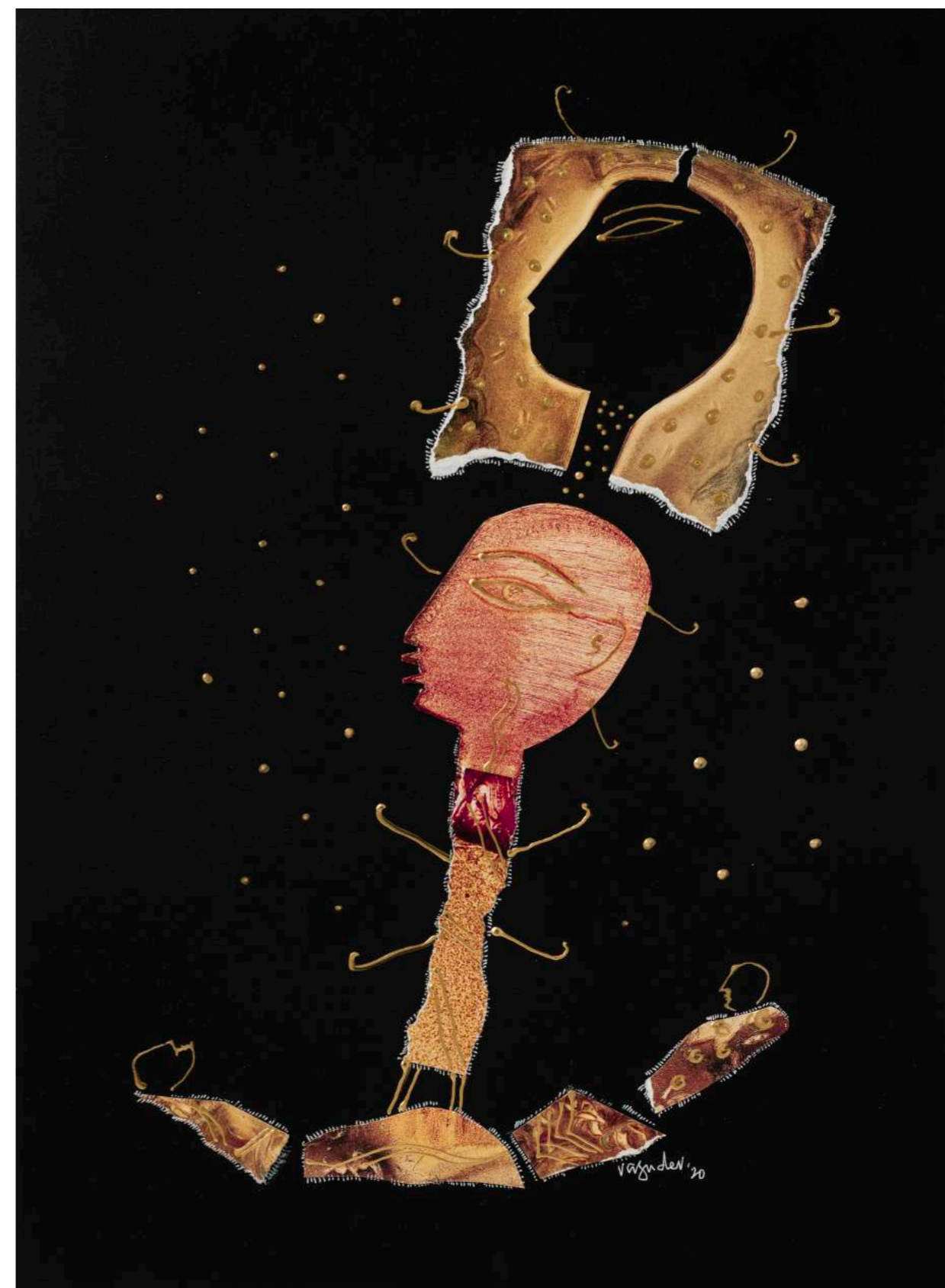
Magician
Collage on Paper
16.14 x 12.20 inches
2020



Magician
Collage on Paper
16.14 x 12.20 inches
2020



Tree-Man
Collage on Paper
16.14 x 12.20 inches
2020



Surya
Collage on Paper
16.14 x 12.20 inches
2020

Reflection
Collage on Paper
16.14 x 12.20 inches
2020



Reflection
Collage on Paper
16.14 x 12.20 inches
2020

Reflection
Collage on Paper
16.14 x 12.20 inches
2020



Reflection
Collage on Paper
16.14 x 12.20 inches
2020



Deity
Collage on Paper
16.14 x 12.20 inches
2020



Deity
Collage on Paper
16.14 x 12.20 inches
2020



Magician
Collage on Paper
16.14 x 12.20 inches
2020

Credits

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Deity, Collage on Paper, 16.14" x 12.20", 2020