



Gallery view - wall work, 530cm wide



residency + exhibition  
**1shanthiroad Gallery**  
Bangalore  
January 24 - February 15, 2015



**University of the  
Sunshine Coast**  
Queensland, Australia

**in situ\_India**  
paintings and wall works

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Generative art is concerned with images or forms created by an underlying structure or program and my interest in this aspect of art was prompted by a curiosity regarding connections between Islamic and digital art, which I first explored during a year-long residency and visit to Malaysia in 1995. Both art forms share a connection through the use of mathematics and geometry; the underlying geometric forms of Islamic art and the underlying program structure in the computer.

The computer-based image can thus be seen in the context of a longer tradition that mostly involves the use of geometry to generate religious imagery. The Mandala in the Buddhist tradition and cathedral windows in the Christian tradition are good examples. Connecting digital technology with religion might seem paradoxical, particularly in the West where science/technology is sometimes considered the antithesis of religion. However, there are persistent historical/cultural currents operating in and through digital art.

In India the everyday construction of Rangoli has a generative characteristic and the Vastupurusamandala is thought to be a generative source in Hindu architecture, particularly for temples. Rangoli were called painted prayers in Stephen P. Huyler's book<sup>1</sup> of the same name and in this sense art becomes an action or process that has value.

Although the generative approach to making art works might appear rational, the structure allows for an extra-rational engagement, much in the same way that prayer connects pattern, repetition and experience. In this sense art is a verb - an action that is the experience of creating.

The same underlying geometric form generates the paintings and the large wall work for in situ\_India. This work continues with the same geometric form used for too perfect to be natural, exhibited in New York in 2010 and the nature of (in) perfection, exhibited in Bangalore in 2012. This exhibition is the first in a series planned for locations where there is a tradition of generative art and different works will be exhibited and constructed in Istanbul (June 2015), Kathmandu (February 2016) and Colombo (June 2016). The wall works will be constructed in situ over the period of the each exhibition.

The work explores the relationship between consciousness and materiality and the extent to which hypofrontality is created by the structure and the process of painting and drawing. The wall work evokes a sense of space that is both close and immense and suggestive of time, with the viewer invited to participate in a dynamic through the spatial relationships and the performative aspect of the artwork. The flatness of the art works also evokes a style of religious art that creates a spatial tension between the second and third dimensions.

Kevin Todd



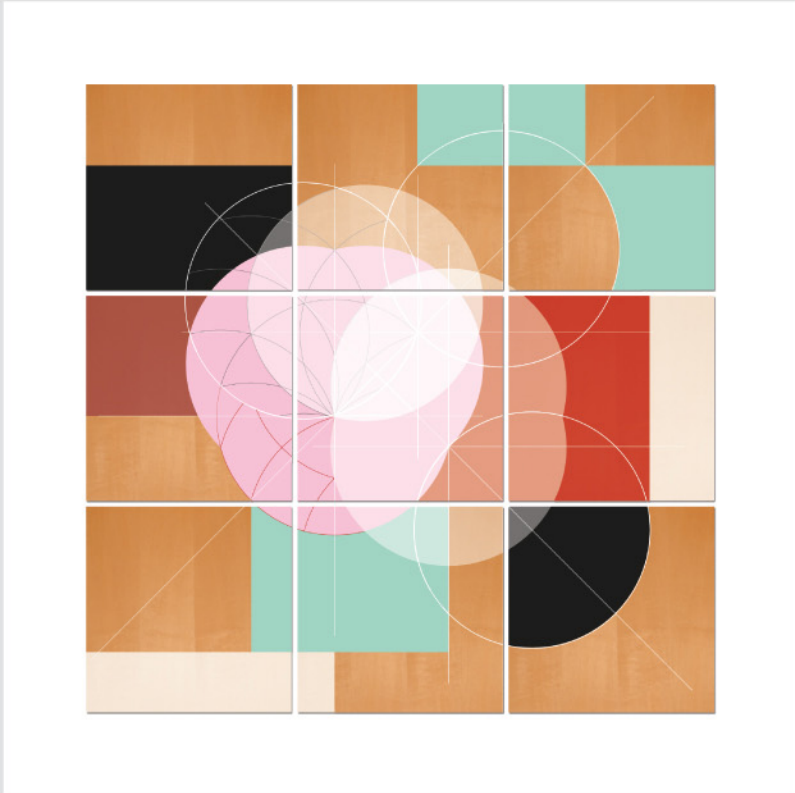
Rangoli, Hampi, Karnataka, India

Prayer stone, Gougane Barra, Co. Cork, Ireland

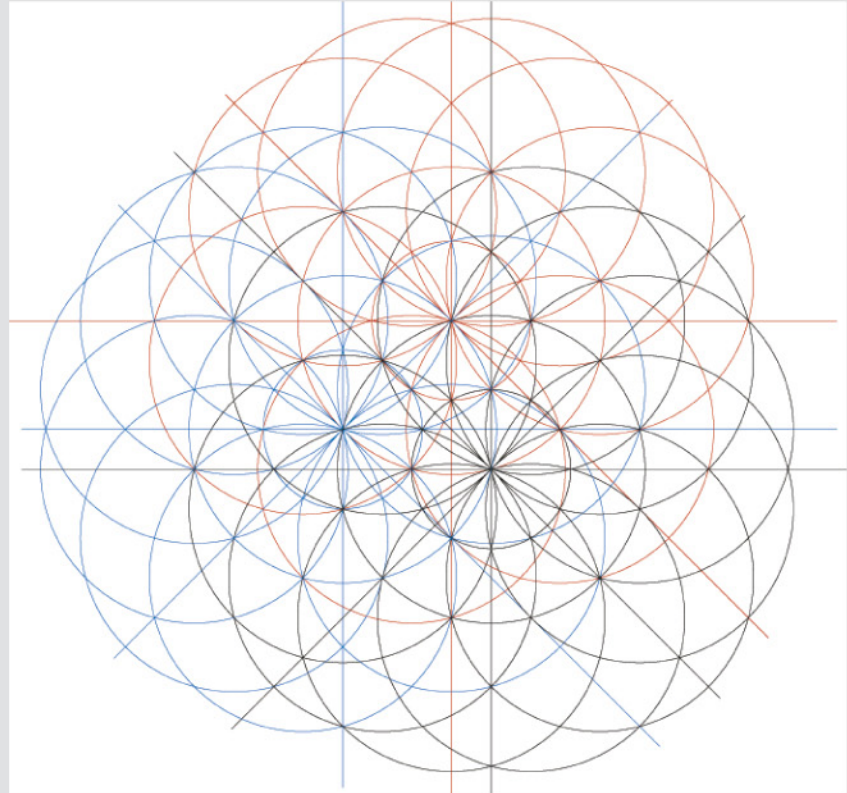


Rangoli, Hampi, Karnataka, India

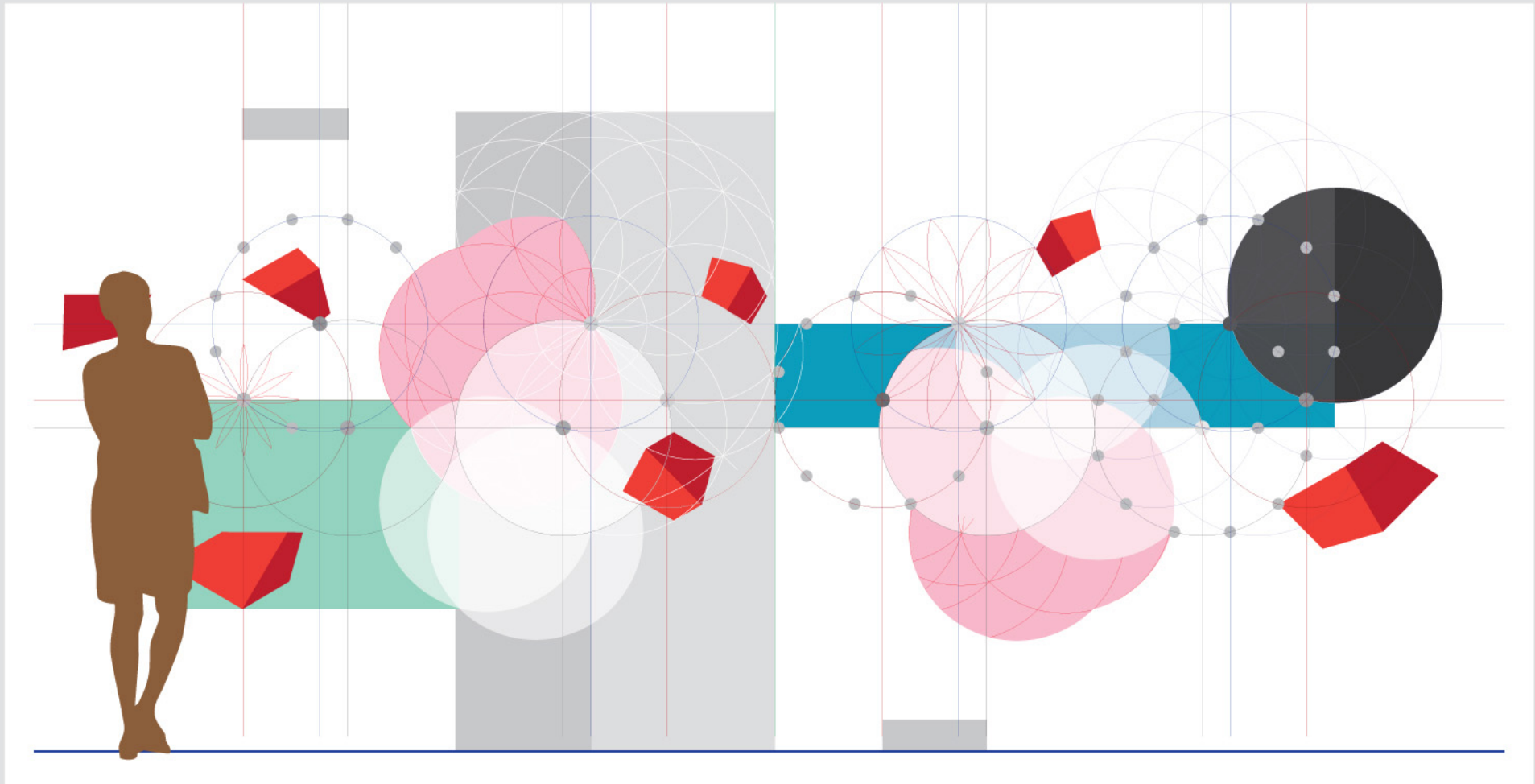
1. Huyler, Stephen P., Painted Prayers: women's art in village India, Rizzoli International, NY, 1994



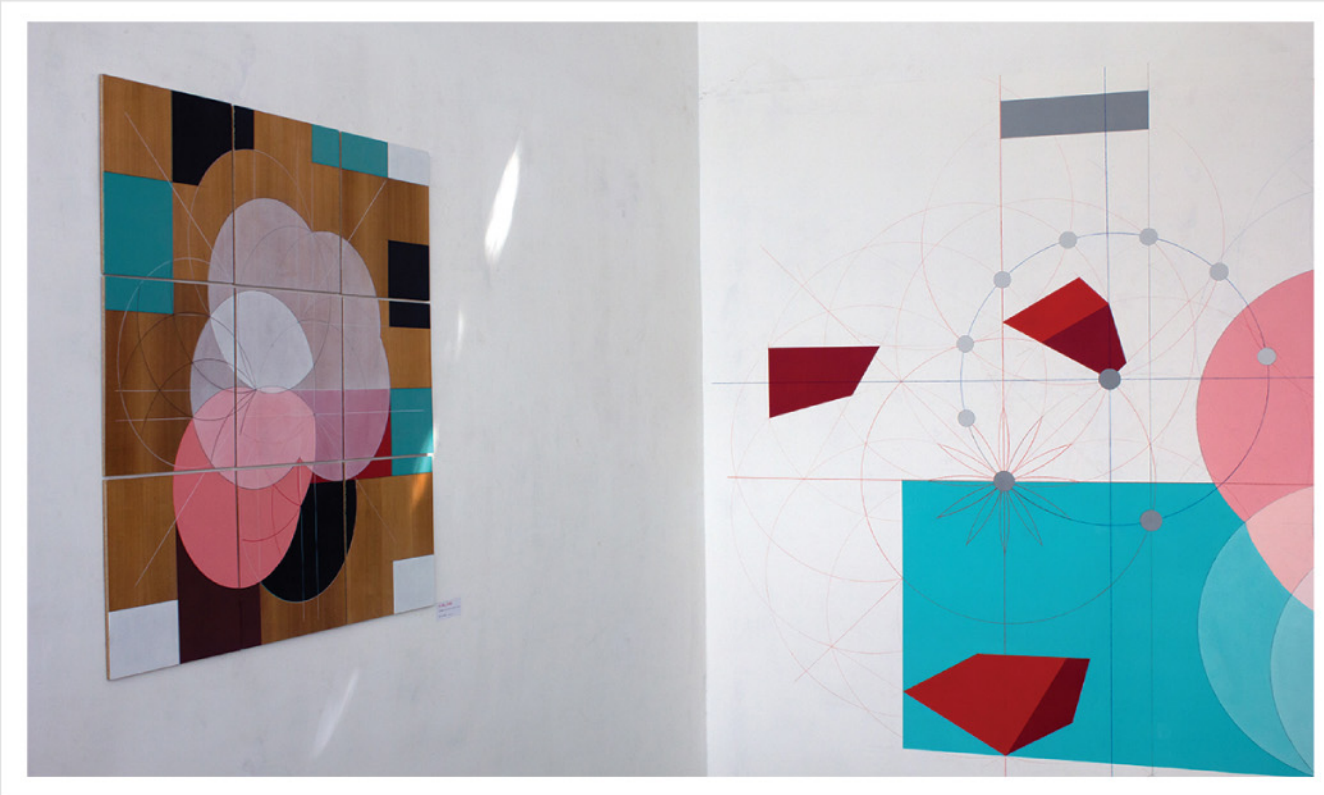
*PI\_India*, Oil and pencil on timber, 90 x 90cm



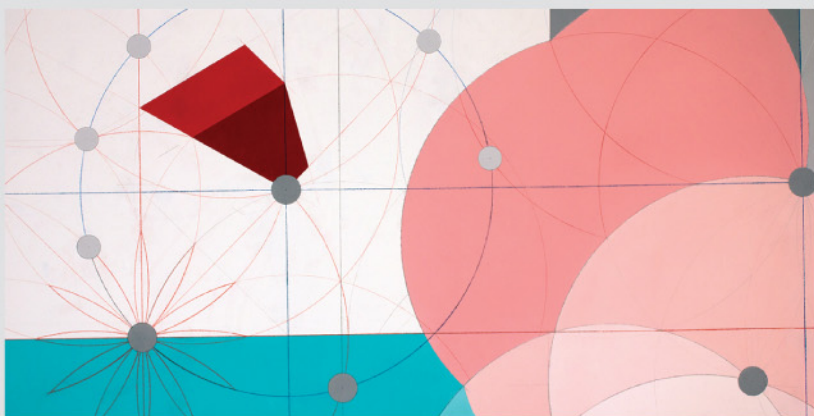
Geometric form for paintings and wall work



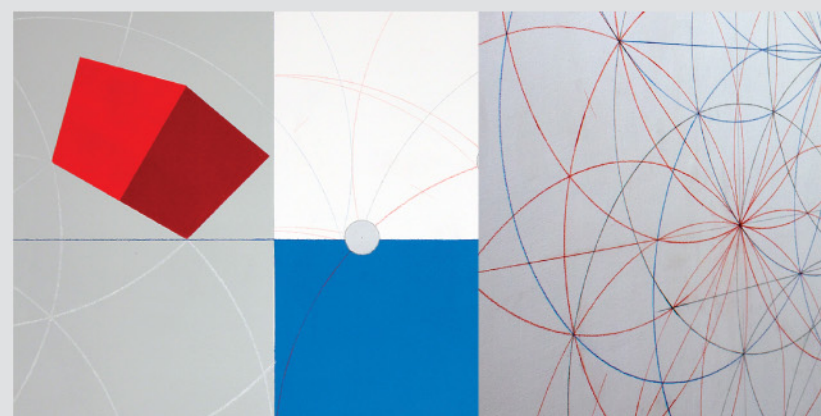
wall work\_concept design



Gallery view



Wall work detail



Wall work detail

Wall work detail

Rangoli is a pan-Indian tradition emerging from the inner courtyards of homes to the streets. They flourish to celebrate the fecund rhythms of nature and abstracted patterns. The basic idea is to create patterns using a grid of dots, lines and at times color. The ancient treatise of painting Chitralakshana states that the crafts should seek rhythm in life, colour and harmony in composition. The artist should perfect the object or pattern and provide visual pleasure. Essentially, to evoke Rasa - an aesthetic experience.

The ubiquitous Rangoli are the most public visual arts practiced in contemporary times. It is ephemeral and can stop you in your tracks, a perfect pattern that comes from a "parampara"- a living tradition of practice that is a visual delight. Rangolis celebrate the earth's abundance and evoke divine blessings. They welcome visitors to homes and make a statement about the skills of the women in the house.

These traditions have been part of the pan Indian reality that continues to survive despite many changes in aesthetics, space and urbanisation. In a city like Bengaluru with its pockets of villages, humble middle-class homes and a few vibrant slums, rangoli is an essential ritual, it asserts identity and tradition, and occupies public space and connects the home to the street. Mostly women practice this craft, but there are a few exceptions when men participate and create Rangoli in different dimensions to celebrate local festivals.

The origin of Rangoli is a symbolic abstraction of a deity. The making of the Mandala is the process of evoking a certain order that corresponds with certain elemental geometry - dot, circle, square, triangle etc. It involves fluent movement of the hand and coordination of the eye and the material (powdered rice, chalk). The essence of creating a Rangoli is to have a calm meditative sensibility; this is the ritual of making Rangoli part of a meditative process to bring order in oneself amidst the chaos. The symmetrical patterns exude energy and the repetition creates a field of good vibrations to the eye and the mind. In mundane reality, it is a ritual that connects the terrestrial to the cosmic order. The women have auspicious days for specific patterns to coincide with seasons and other prominent festivals. Spiritually the impermanence of the Rangoli corresponds to our own mortality.

One watches a woman in her chores creating a Rangoli between making coffee, breakfast and sending kids and husband to school. It needs practice and patience, a skill that has been taught from mother to daughter which we call "parampara" in the arts. The physical aspect of bending down to draw with the calculated amounts of rangoli power that slips into dots and patterns that finish in a flourish needs practice. Like music, Rangoli needs riyaz. Once you master the basics of the rhythms, you can be creative and explore the unlimited possibilities of the grid and move beyond tradition. And every woman has her bad days, and this is apparent in the way Kolams look.

A fine Rangoli is an eye-catcher and onlookers make mental notes to replicate it. Imitation is a kind of flattery; coping is another way of leaning. Some of the Rangolis begin with a dot (Bindu) which is defined as the centre of the universe and the Rangoli creation around it is likened to the journey of self expression or creativity. There is also the aspect of impermanence that each day the Kolam of the previous day is cleaned away and a new one takes its place, akin to the belief we have about the impermanence of the human body.



Suresh constructing his rangoli

It is interesting to see that these Rangolis are part of everyday ritual, and if a home does not have one, it is an indicator of absence, "out of station", thus inviting untoward incidents! But clever and friendly neighbours have saved many a home from burglary by extending their skills to decorate the house-front with a Rangoli as an indicator of human presence. Lakshmi the goddess of wealth is associated with this tradition. A home that is welcoming with Rangoli is believed to attract the right vibrations of wealth. A home without Rangoli is often one that has had a tragedy or the family is in mourning.

Earlier, the tradition of Rangoli was done with rice powders that were eaten by ants, this tradition has fast decreased. Currently, Rangoli powder is a kind of chalk used widely. Innovation is rampant to keep the tradition afloat, Rangoli stencils, stickers and sieves make instant Rangoli in the age of instant food. But if Rangoli tradition is to survive, we need to use it in the contemporary context.

But what is it with patterns and the human mind? If we look back at what Einstein said, "Everything is energy and that is all there is to it." I found an interesting correlation between resonance and Rangoli. The higher the vibration, the more intricate the pattern becomes. Everything is energy vibrating at different wavelengths, unconditional love being the highest of them all. So raise your frequency and connect the dots.

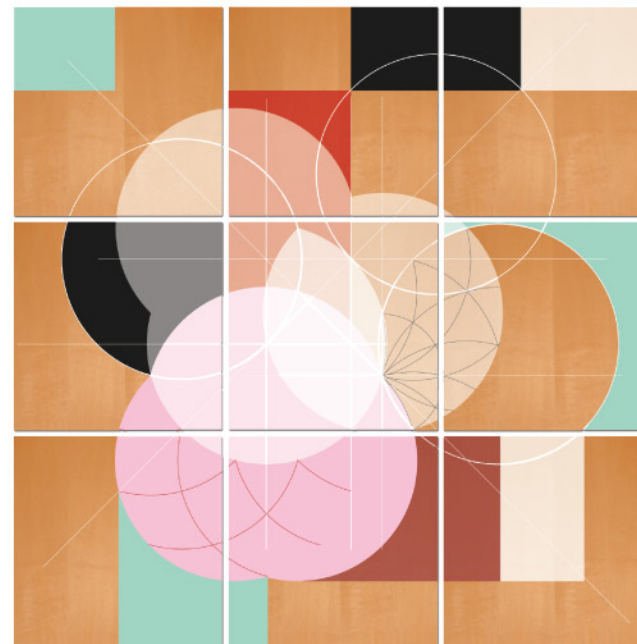
Suresh Jayaram, Director, 1 Shanthi Road Gallery,



Ningamma with her rangoli and Kevin



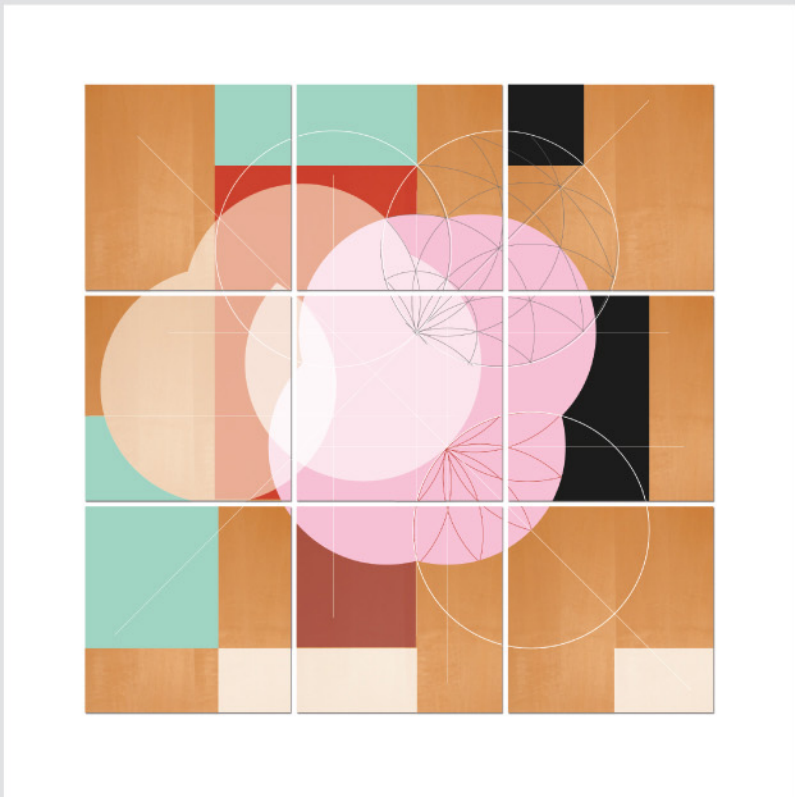
Kevin, Ningamma, Suresh and Mona



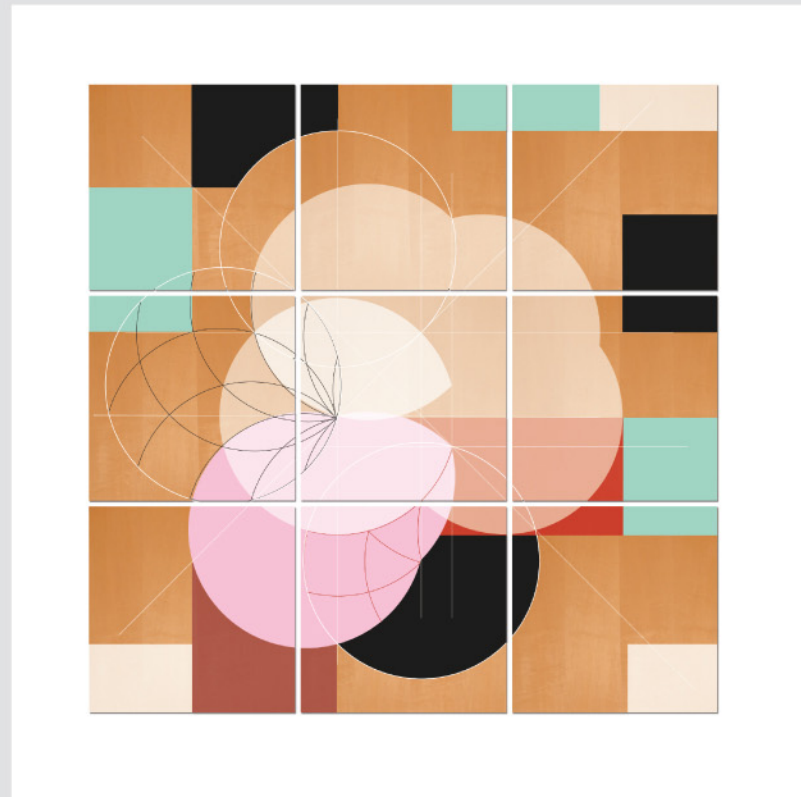
P5\_India, Oil and pencil on timber, 90 x 90cm



Rangoli, Shanthi Nagar, Bangalore, 2015

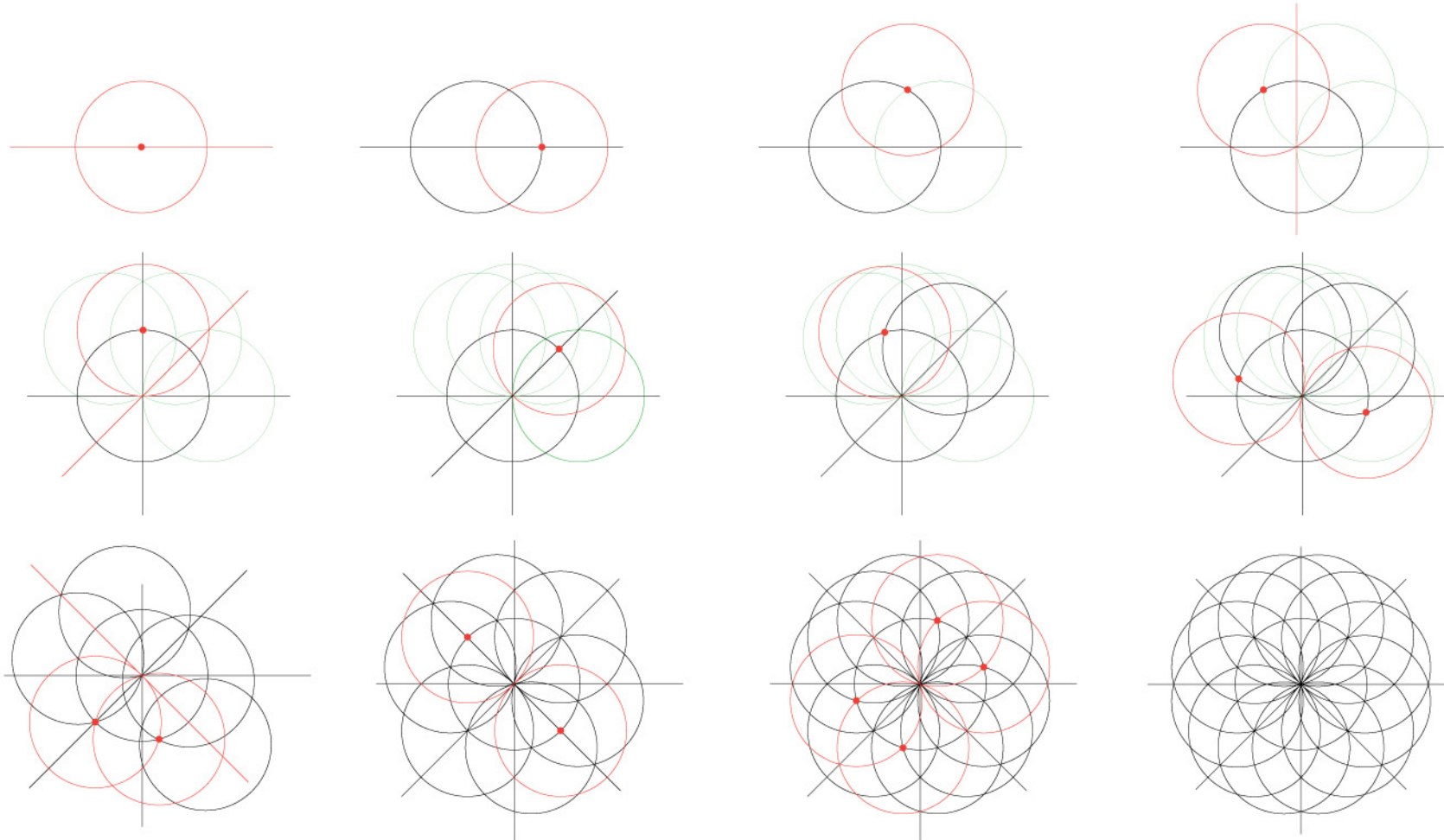


*P2\_India*, Oil and pencil on timber, 90 x 90cm



*P7\_India*, Oil and pencil on timber, 90 x 90cm

construct the form with a compass and ruler by drawing the red lines at each step. (green lines aid construction only)



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