

Fall 2009

# Visualizing Tagore: A Visual Study of Rabindranth Tagore's Writings and Philosophies

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*SIT Study Abroad*

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## **Visualizing Tagore**

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### **A Visual Study of Rabindranath Tagore's Writings and Philosophies**

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**SIT: Study Abroad**

**India Arts and Culture Program, New Delhi**

**Fall 2009**

## Acknowledgments

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The completion of this project could not have been possible without the help of the following individuals and institutions.

I would like to thank the SIT Arts and Culture Program in New Delhi for all of their support getting this project off its feet. This would not have been possible without the help and guidance of Dr. Mary Storm, Dheeraj Nakra, Guy McIntyre, Savita Borges, Arjun Singh Chauhan, Prahlad Kumar, and the rest of the SIT staff in New Delhi. In addition, I would like to thank the SIT staff in Brattleboro, Vermont for accepting me into this program and providing resources to the program center in New Delhi.

I want to send my thanks to Skidmore College, and my academic advisors Prof. Alma Becker, Prof. Katharine Graney, and Prof. Michael Marx for their support and encouragement.

My sincerest thanks go to my ISP advisor, Professor Tapati Guha-Thakurta, for meeting with me, believing in my project, and giving me invaluable advice for furthering my research.

I would like to thank Professor Uma Das Gupta, not only for her own research on Rabindranath Tagore, but also for meeting with me, discussing my project, and providing me with a contact at Rabindra Bhavan Library at Visva-Bharati.

I would like to thank Professor Shukla Sawant at Jawaharlal Nehru University for meeting with me in October to discuss art based on research; this preliminary meeting with incredibly helpful for me.

I send thanks to the Prof. Swapan Majumdar, Mr. Nilanjan Banerjee, the librarians, and the research assistants at Rabindra Bhavan at Visva-Bharati University in Santiniketan for allowing me access to rare books, archives, and photographs.

Thank you to all of the hotel/guest house owners who allowed me to turn their rooms into art studios. Specifically thanks to the Paragon Hotel in Kolkata, the Bon Pulak Guest House in Santiniketan, and the Aliment Hotel in Darjeeling.

I would like to send my sincerest thanks to Mrs. Nirmal Malik and her family for housing me in New Delhi during the two month SIT study program. I could not have asked for a better family to live with.

Thank you to my family and friends in America and abroad for reading drafts of this paper, critiquing my artwork, and being the most loving fans, and the harshest audience. To you I am forever grateful.

Galen Koch

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## Abstract

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*This paper describes my experience "Visualizing Tagore." It presents the objective of my study, to create a series of art pieces inspired by Tagore's writing and philosophies, and relates the project to Tagore's theories about the nature of art and the creative ideal. In order to conduct this study, I traveled from Kolkata to Santiniketan and then to Darjeeling, creating artwork and researching Tagore's personal history and accomplishments. This paper gives a brief description of Tagore's life in relationship to his world view and philosophies. It presents his philosophies of art and education, and relates these to my own experience creating art work based on Tagore. This was a successful project in which I created seventeen collage pieces inspired and influenced by Tagore's life and work.*

### Objective of Study

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Rabindranath Tagore's contributions to Bengali literature and the Indian modern art movement, as well as his philosophies and accomplishments as an artist, educator, and activist are widely known throughout India today. During the first half of the twentieth century, Tagore bridged the intellectual divide between East and West at a time when the Indian nation was struggling to break free from the oppressive rule of the British Empire. Tagore is a globally recognized poet and philosopher and his ideas about cross-cultural communication are relevant even today. He wrote prophetically about the dangers of globalization, commenting that "the modern age has brought the geography of the earth near to us, but made it difficult for us to come into touch with man."<sup>1</sup> Tagore presented his solutions to this modern globalization by encouraging "generous and creative" communication between nations. In this way he hoped that the global community could "come into touch with man" through mutual understanding and respect. In 1919, Tagore founded his international university, Visva-Bharati in Santiniketan in an attempt to unite the East and the West through education and creative thought.

It was in the tradition of Tagore's educational and global ideals that I embarked on a month-long independent study project in November of 2009. I traveled from Delhi to Kolkata to research a selection of Tagore's literary work, as well as his philosophies about arts, aesthetics, and education. This topic is profoundly broad, especially considering the popular Bengali saying: "It is impossible to finish reading in a lifetime all the Rabindranath wrote in one life."<sup>2</sup> The unifying theme of my research would be the creation of a series of mixed-media art pieces based

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<sup>1</sup> Rabindranath Tagore, "East and West" from *Creative Unity, Rabindranath Tagore Omnibus I*, New Delhi: Rupa & Co., 2003, p 147.

<sup>2</sup> Uma Das Gupta, *Rabindranath Tagore: A Biography*, New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2004, p 49.

on Tagore's thoughts and poetry. Through the creation of these works I hoped to explore Tagore's words and thoughts about artistic expression and the nature of art. In addition, I hoped to put Tagore's global ideal into practice, by understanding the accomplishments and philosophies of this important figure of Indian history through creative means. In his essay "East and West" Tagore wrote, "The West has come to us, not with the imagination and sympathy that create and unite, but with a shock of passion—passion for power and wealth."<sup>3</sup> My intention during this study was to explore Tagore's theories and artwork with an imaginative, sympathetic, and creative mind.

The results of my study were, in fact, successful. I traveled from Sudder Street in Kolkata, where Tagore wrote his collection of poems *Evening Songs*,<sup>4</sup> to Santiniketan, Tagore's home for much of his adult life. I then continued on to Darjeeling, where I hoped to come into contact with my own natural inspirations. In order to conduct my research I visited sites significant to Tagore's life, read a number of his essays, poetry, and autobiographies, met with scholars, and read essays and biographies by Tagore's critics, contemporaries, and followers. During the month long period, I completed seventeen art pieces influenced by Tagore's words, life, and philosophies. These pieces are, in many ways, meditations and celebrations of Rabindranath Tagore; through the creation of this artwork I was able to interpret and internalize Tagore's poetry and prose.

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<sup>3</sup> Tagore, "East and West," 149.

<sup>4</sup> Rabindranath Tagore, *My Reminiscences*, from *Rabindranath Tagore Omnibus II*, New Delhi: Rupa & Co., 2003, p 564-573.

This paper will describe my experience "Visualizing Tagore" and will aim to explain his philosophies about arts and aesthetics, and the value of creativity in education. I will begin by describing the circumstances that led to Tagore's philosophies, and then will proceed to outline his creative ideal and its relationship to his educational institutions in Santiniketan. Finally, I will discuss my artwork as inspired by his work and thoughts.

### *The Making of a Creative Ideal*

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Rabindranath Tagore was born in British India's capital of Calcutta in 1861. In the years that followed Tagore's birth, Indian identity experienced a dramatic shift. Activists, artists, and political figures were continually questioning what the "Indian identity" was and were seeking to define a coherent nation that could survive without British rule. Tagore describes this period of Indian history as a time when the "currents of three movements" were surging through the country. These three movements, defined by Tagore as "religious," "literary," and "national" revolutions, had a dramatic effect on the development of Rabindranath's poetry and accomplishments in his adult life.<sup>5</sup>

The spiritual leader Rammohun Roy led the religious movement that Tagore referred to. Tagore's father, Debendranath Tagore (1817-1905), was a devout follower of the "greatest man of modern India," Rammohun.<sup>6</sup> Rammohun preached an unorthodox reformation of Hinduism; according to Rabindranath "[he] was the first great man of our age with the comprehensiveness

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<sup>5</sup> Rabindranath Tagore, "Autobiographical," *Talks in China*, Santiniketan: Visva-Bharati Publishers, 1925.

<sup>6</sup> Rabindranath Tagore, "Ideals of Education," *Selected Essays of Rabindranath Tagore*, New Delhi: Rupa & Co, 2004, p 327.



of mind to realize the fundamental unity of spirit in the Hindu, Muslim, and Christian cultures.”<sup>7</sup>

Debendranath was deeply influenced by Rammohun and drew on the ancient scriptures of the Upanishads to define his worldview. The Upanishads emphasize a universal spirit (*Brahman*) and an individual soul (*Atman*) and define these as, ultimately, one and the same. It was in accordance with the teachings of such texts, and through the influences of Rammohun and his father that a young Rabindranath was presented with the ideals of Universalism and was able to develop his own philosophies about the unity of all.

The second movement that had a great effect on Tagore’s work and philosophies was the “literary revolution” established by the Bengali novelist Bankim Chandra Chatterjee. Tagore describes Chatterjee’s accomplishments succinctly: “He lifted the deadweight of ponderous forms from our language and with a touch of his magic wand aroused our literature from the age-old sleep.”<sup>8</sup> Tagore’s family not only followed in the footsteps of revolutionaries such as Chatterjee but also pioneered the artistic renaissance that would flourish in the late 19th to early 20th century. During the late 1800s “educated [Bengali] men were... keeping at arm’s length both the language and thought of their native land.”<sup>9</sup> These Indians were influenced by British colonists who encouraged Indians to reject their past “so that [their] intellectual allegiance to the [British] would be complete.”<sup>10</sup>

In reaction to this Westernization of Indian art, the Tagore family and other Bengali intellectuals supported “Bengali literature and customs” and cultivated the emerging nationalist

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<sup>7</sup> Das Gupta, *Rabindranath Tagore: A Biography*, p 3.

<sup>8</sup> Tagore, “Autobiographical.”

<sup>9</sup> Rabindranath Tagore, *My Reminiscences*, p 512.

<sup>10</sup> K.G. Subramanyan, “Modern Art in India and the West,” *Moving Focus*, New Delhi: A.K. Dutta Publishers, 1978, p 15-16.

movement in Indian art. From the early 20<sup>th</sup> century to the 1930s, Rabindranath, his 'nephew' Abanindranath Tagore (the son of Rabindranath's cousin Gunendranath), Nandalal Bose, and other modern artists supported and shaped the new concepts of Indian art in West Bengal. This movement in Indian art constructed a new creative ideal, "placing inspiration above training, self-expression above technical expertise, feeling above form."<sup>11</sup> Tagore was born into a political and artistic climate in which an artistic revolution was not only welcome, but was also encouraged by nationalist sentiments. The literary movement evolved, through Tagore, his family, and his contemporaries, into a redefinition of Indian art that allowed Tagore to pursue his own revolutionary ideas about art and inspiration later in his life.

The third movement that enveloped India during Tagore's childhood was national and, according to Tagore, "it was not fully political, but began to express our people who were trying to assert their own personality."<sup>12</sup> This personality was meant to differentiate the Indian from the British Empire. Tagore became involved in the Bengal Renaissance and eventually joined the Swadeshi movement in opposition to the partition of Bengal (1904-1905).<sup>13</sup> Tagore supported the notion of an independent Indian personality, but his support was contingent upon unity—an ideal that the Bengali independence movement did not uphold. The nationalist movement in India would influence Tagore's artistic work for most of his life. While he was a supporter of an independent India, Tagore did not support the nationalist sentiments that excluded and vilified the Western world. This movement would shape many of Tagore's philosophies of Universalism

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<sup>11</sup> Tapati Guha-Thakurta, "Visualizing the Nation," *Journal of Arts and Ideas*, No. 27-28: March 1995, p 20.

<sup>12</sup> Tagore, "Autobiographical."

<sup>13</sup> Das Gupta, *Rabindranath Tagore: A Biography*, p 4.

and inspired him to found Visva-Bharati University, an educational institution rooted in the ideals of cross-cultural communication and international harmony.

In addition to these three movements, Tagore was deeply influenced by his upbringing in North Calcutta. Tagore lived in the Jorasanko household, in a mansion built by his grandfather, Dwarkanath Tagore. When referring to his own emergence as a modern Indian artist Rabindranath's nephew, Abanindranath, "placed greatest emphasis on the spontaneous creative atmosphere of the Jorasanko household."<sup>14</sup> Rabindranath's childhood experiences revolved around the creativity of his family and household. "Most of the members of my family had some gift—some were artists, some poets, some musicians, and the whole atmosphere of our home was permeated with the spirit of creation."<sup>15</sup> This "spirit of creation" allowed Rabindranath to express himself in a variety of creative pursuits; he composed songs, directed and performed plays, and wrote poetry even as a young boy. Although he attended formal schooling only until the age of thirteen, Tagore received an extensive education in his own home, from the wisdom and creativity of his elder siblings and family members. "I was brought up in an atmosphere of aspiration, aspiration for the expansion of the human spirit."<sup>16</sup> It was in this atmosphere that Tagore experienced his educational ideal: "Education has its only meaning and object in

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<sup>14</sup> Tapati Guha-Thakurta, "Artists and Aesthetics: Abanindranath Tagore and the 'New School of Indian Painting,'" *The Making of a New 'Indian' Art*, Cambridge University Press, p 228.

<sup>15</sup> Rabindranath Tagore, "The Religion of an Artist," *Rabindranath Tagore Selected Essays*, New Delhi: Rupa & Co., 2004, p 286.

<sup>16</sup> Tagore, "Ideals of Education," p 328.

freedom.”<sup>17</sup> Tagore’s educational institutions in Santiniketan would be based on this ideal of freedom, creativity, and exploration.

In addition to providing Tagore with a unique educational ideal, his concepts of arts and aesthetics were profoundly influenced by his childhood. The philosophy of the Tagore family was “a kind of nature-mysticism within which ethics and aesthetic experience shaded one into the other; to live close to nature, open to its impulses, was to them near to religion.”<sup>18</sup> These philosophies and religious beliefs would influence Tagore’s own writing on arts and aesthetics during his adult life. In addition, Tagore was encouraged in his home to explore Indian art of the past and present. He became familiar with India’s art tradition, as well as with the modern art movement that was emerging. All of the circumstances, philosophies, and revolutions that Rabindranath experienced as a child encouraged him to contemplate his own definitions of art, education, and the Indian nation.

### *The Nature of Art and the Creative Ideal*

*“The principle of art is the principle of unity.” Tagore<sup>19</sup>*

*“It is for the artist to remind the world that with the truth of expression we grow in truth.” Tagore<sup>20</sup>*

Rabindranath Tagore’s philosophies about the nature of art and artistic inspiration are centered on “the principle of unity.” During his life, Tagore tried to create literary and visual artwork that was in unity with his surroundings, both socially and naturally. Tagore viewed art as

<sup>17</sup> Tagore, “Ideals of Education,” p 329.

<sup>18</sup> K.G. Subramanyan, “The Indian Artist and the Socio-Cultural Context,” *Moving Focus*, p 42-43.

<sup>19</sup> Rabindranath Tagore, “What is Art,” *Personality*, from *Rabindranath Tagore Selected Essays*, New Delhi: Rupa & Co., 2004, p 189.

<sup>20</sup> Rabindranath Tagore, “The Religion of an Artist,” *Rabindranath Tagore Selected Essays*, p 302.

a means of expressing an artist's relationship to the universe. He also emphasized that an artist should seek to express the truth of this unity through the expression of his or her "personality."<sup>21</sup>

For Tagore, these expressions of truth and unity are defined through Jiban-Debata or "Lord of my life." Jiban-Debata is the "creative power" of an individual; it is the divinity of an individual in relationship with that of the universe. Of this relationship Tagore wrote, "Whenever I feel the unity of the creative power within myself I also feel connected to the infinite creativity of the universe."<sup>22</sup> Tagore's sense of universal truth and unity inspired in him a deep appreciation and reverence for nature which is the "creativity of the universe." The Poet understood himself in relationship to nature; its divinity inspired his sense of the divine individual. "I have come to see myself as part of [the universe]... To understand that nothing, not even an atom, can survive without me."<sup>23</sup> This interdependency between himself (the individual), and nature (the universe) influenced Tagore's writing, philosophies, musical compositions, and paintings. The unity and divinity of man and nature is one of Tagore's central philosophies about the nature of art; art aims to express the truth of this seemingly intangible relationship.

Art exists not only to express this universal truth, but also as a means for man to express the self. Tagore defines this self-expression as the expression of "personality," which is the "consciousness of unity in ourselves" between the individual and the universe. Tagore asserts that this consciousness "becomes predominantly distinct when coloured by joy or sorrow, or some other emotion... In the creation of art, therefore, the energy of an emotional ideal is

<sup>21</sup> Rabindranath Tagore, "The Creative Ideal," *Creative Unity*, from *Rabindranath Tagore Selected Essays*, p 20-27.

<sup>22</sup> Rabindranath Tagore, *Atmaparichay*, p 14-16, translated by Uma Das Gupta, *My Life in My Words*, New Delhi: Penguin Books India, 2006, p 322-323.

<sup>23</sup> Tagore, *Atmaparichay*, p 14-16, from Das Gupta's, *My Life in My Words*, p 322-323.

necessary.”<sup>24</sup> For humans, these emotional energies far surpass our own capacity for feeling. Art is a necessary outlet for this “surplus” of emotional feeling and for the overflow of our personalities.<sup>25</sup> Tagore believed that cultures and civilizations were built upon this surplus in man, which manifests itself in artistic expression.

Tagore’s philosophies about the nature of art were also influenced greatly by aesthetics. In his essay “The Poet’s Religion” Tagore describes his personal religion in regards to the Keats poem “Ode on a Grecian Urn.” Tagore is especially moved by Keat’s famous line, “beauty is truth, truth beauty.”<sup>26</sup> Despite Tagore’s philosophies about art as an expression of truth and a reaction to the surplus of man’s personality, he also recognizes the truth in art that is “purely decorative” and expresses no ideal. “The decorations carry the emotional motive of the artist, which says, “I find joy in my creation, it is good.”<sup>27</sup> Tagore acknowledges the truth in images of beauty, as well as the beauty in images of truth, such as paintings that depict tragedy and suffering. For Tagore, the “beauty of truth” is our consciousness of reality, which can be expressed through an artist’s visual interpretation of the universe. “[Art] only proves that every object which fully asserts its existence to us because of its inherent finality is beautiful.”<sup>28</sup> This philosophy relates directly to Jiban-Debata and universal divinity; we are divine, the universe is divine, therefore any expression of our reality is a divine truth.

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<sup>24</sup> Tagore, “The Creative Ideal,” p109.

<sup>25</sup> Tagore, “What is Art?” p 184.

<sup>26</sup> Rabindranath Tagore, “The Poet’s Religion,” from *Rabindranath Tagore Selected Essays*, p 11.

<sup>27</sup> The Creative Ideal p 111

<sup>28</sup> Rabindranath Tagore, “Thoughts from Rabindranath Tagore,” *English Writings of Rabindranath Tagore: Volume Three*, ed. Sirir Kumar Das, Sahitya Akademi, 1996, verse 157, p 72.

According to Tagore scholar and Santiniketan alumn K.G. Subramanyan, "[Tagore's] aestheticism coloured [his] social philosophy, his ideas on education, his whole concept of an environment."<sup>29</sup> Tagore's philosophies of art and the role of the artist in society were practically applied at his school in Santiniketan. The Santiniketan School was founded in 1901 at his father's Brahmacharya Ashram near Bolpur in West Bengal. The school was initially created with only five students and five teachers with the goal "that man could become truly human by responding creatively and sympathetically to his environment."<sup>30</sup> Tagore encouraged students to explore the philosophies of Jiban-Debata and Universalism by putting them in direct contact with nature. At the Santiniketan School, classes were conducted in the open-air, and students were free to discover their own interests and to develop a curiosity about their natural and social environment.

In 1918, Tagore founded Santiniketan College, which would become the international institution of Visva-Bharati in 1921. In the tradition of the Santiniketan School, classes were held in the open-air and students were encouraged to respond creatively to the environment. In addition, Tagore's ideals of cross-cultural communication were realized at Visva-Bharati. The school was open to the international community and it was Tagore's hope that, through sympathy and creativity, students from the East and the West could share ideas and build relationships. Tagore wrote that Visva-Bharati "will not be a mere school, it will be a pilgrimage. Let those coming to it say, Oh what a relief it is to be away from narrow domestic

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<sup>29</sup> Subramanyan, "The Indian Artist and the Socio-Cultural Context," p 42-43.

<sup>30</sup> Das Gupta, *Rabindranath Tagore: A Biography*, p 15.

walls and to behold the universe.”<sup>31</sup> Tagore’s global ideal did not encourage a “uniformity” of cultures, but rather a “harmony.”<sup>32</sup> Tagore envisioned a world in which the East and the West had open and creative communication, without the negative effects of cultural assimilation. This goal is presented in Visva-Bharati’s *Aims and Objects*, which describes the objectives of the school:

To seek to realize in a common fellowship of study the meeting of the East and the West, and thus ultimately to strengthen the fundamental conditions of world peace through the establishment of free communication of ideas between the two hemispheres.<sup>33</sup>

At Visva-Bharati, Tagore hoped that his global, creative, and educational ideals could be fully realized and expanded upon by an international community.

The international and creative environment of Visva-Bharati during the 1920s and ‘30s allowed teachers and students to practically apply Tagore’s creative ideal in the making of artworks. Nandalal Bose, one of the great leaders of India’s nationalist modern art movement, was one such artist who benefitted from Tagore’s philosophies and writings. Bose served as the principal of Visva-Bharati’s art school, Kala Bhavan, from 1920 to 1951. During his time in Santiniketan, Bose was continually influenced by Rabindranath, not only aesthetically, but also contextually. It was under Tagore’s influence that “[Nandalal] realized that an art that responded to the everyday realities of contemporary life and environment could be a more authentic form of national art.”<sup>34</sup> At Visva-Bharati, Bose was able to explore the role of nature and the community in his artwork. Tagore inspired Bose to find beauty in the insignificant, “Nandalal was one of the

<sup>31</sup> Das Gupta, *Rabindranath Tagore: A Biography*, p 31.

<sup>32</sup> Rabindranath Tagore, “An Eastern University,” *Creative Unity*, from *Rabindranath Tagore Selected Essays*, p 74.

<sup>33</sup> Published by Ranajit Ray, *Visva-Bharati and Its Institutions*, Santiniketan: Visva-Bharati Publishers, 1961.

<sup>34</sup> R. Siva Kumar, “The Making of a Contextual Modernism,” *Santiniketan: The Growth of a Contextual Modernism*, New Delhi: National Gallery of Modern Art, 1997.



first interpreters of Rabindranath's poetry... Like the Poet, he found place even for the humblest wild flower in his art."<sup>35</sup> It was in the tradition of Rabindranath's educational institutions in Santiniketan, and the visual interpretation of his poetry and thoughts by artists such as Bose that I began my own project Visualizing Tagore.

### Visualizing Tagore

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I completed seventeen mixed-media art pieces during my month-long study of Rabindranath Tagore. These collages were created in the tradition of artists such as Nandalal Bose; they are visual interpretations of Tagore's words and thoughts. The creation of these artworks was the most beneficial aspect of my independent research. I was able to approach Tagore not only as a scholar, but also as an artist. The work is, as Tagore would say, an expression of "a feeling aroused in [my] heart which is far in excess of the amount that can be absorbed."<sup>36</sup> In order for me to emotionally and intellectually absorb Tagore's writings, these collages were not only useful, but necessary. They are an outward expression of my connection to Tagore's text.

In order to conduct my visual study, I selected a number of Tagore's writing to base my work on. Like many first-time readers of Tagore, my introduction to the Poet's literary work was the Nobel Prize-winning collection of poetry *Gitanjali*. Tagore translated *Gitanjali* into English in 1912 from various Bengali poetry books, including *Gitanjali*, *Gitimalya*, *Naivedya*, and *Kheya*.<sup>37</sup> These poems are at once profound and simplistic, full of vivid images and

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<sup>35</sup> "Rabindra Bhavan Museum," dir. Prof. Swapan Majumdar, Santiniketan: Visva-Bharati University.

<sup>36</sup> Tagore, "What is Art," p 184.

<sup>37</sup> Rabindra Bhavan Museum.

philosophical insights. In addition to this collection, I created work inspired by the poems of *Shesh Lekha* and Tagore's "thoughts," collected from a number of his writings.<sup>38</sup>

It would be impossible to describe my artistic process in "the mere language of words."<sup>39</sup> These collages are meditations on Tagore's writing; each stitch sewn, each line or color applied is connected to the verse or text that I chose to interpret. The resulting collection<sup>40</sup> is a cohesive body of work with a distinctive style. Though some of the pieces are more successful than others, the artworks relate to one another as a series because of the themes expressed in each piece. These collages celebrate nature and Tagore's philosophies about the divinity of the universe through visual means.

Though my visual study of Tagore was successful, it was not without complications. A particular complication arose when I traveled from Kolkata to Santiniketan. I had not anticipated that a shift in "studios" (hotels) would result in a creative block, but that is exactly what happened. During the first days at Santiniketan, I forced myself to create the piece "Rabindra #2"<sup>41</sup> based on a section of Tagore's essay "An Eastern University." I struggled through this collage and, though I was initially dissatisfied with the sloppiness of the piece, I now recognize it as necessary for the artwork that followed. This piece led to the creation of one of my favorite collages, "Rabindra #3."<sup>42</sup> I began to focus more on Tagore's philosophical writings about art and on my own form. Tagore's writings allowed me to feel less self-conscious about creating

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<sup>38</sup> Including, but not limited to, *My Reminiscences*, *My Boyhood Days*, *The Creative Ideal*, *The Religion of Man*, and *Thoughts of Rabindranath Tagore*.

<sup>39</sup> Tagore, "An Eastern University," p 89.

<sup>40</sup> Please see Appendix A, Figures 1 – 17.

<sup>41</sup> Appendix A, Figure 5.

<sup>42</sup> Appendix A, Figure 6.

pieces that seem "purely decorative." As previously stated, Tagore views these decorative creations as expressions of an individual's joy in creation.<sup>43</sup> This idea freed me from my own trepidation about creating purely "beautiful" artwork. If there is joy in creation then, inevitable, the artwork carries meaning and that meaning is joyful.

Another complication arose upon the introduction of photographs into the work. One of my primary goals while doing research at the Rabindra Bhavan Library at Visva-Bharati was to collect old photographs of Santiniketan and Tagore. I was able to get photo copies of some images, but found that the photographs complicated the simplicity of my images. The piece "Shesh Lekha #1" is an example of this.<sup>44</sup> This piece seems somewhat contrived because there is no fluidity between the image, the text, and the other elements of the piece. The answer to this problem was more technical than anything else, but was dependent upon the text itself. In the next seven pieces I utilized the photographs in response to the text.<sup>45</sup> In this way the image becomes a necessary part of the finished product and does not seem contrived or superfluous.

The last seven artworks of this series are, in my opinion, the most successful pieces. This is not because they are the most aesthetically appealing, but because they achieve my creative objective. These collages integrate Tagore's text, photographs, and my personal style more cohesively than the previous works. I am curious to experiment with some of the earlier styles,<sup>46</sup> but am also pleased that I could maintain my own artistic voice in relationship to Tagore's text.

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<sup>43</sup> Tagore, "The Creative Ideal," p 111.

<sup>44</sup> Appendix A, Figure 10.

<sup>45</sup> Appendix A, Figures 11-17.

<sup>46</sup> Appendix A, Figures 1-3, Figures 7-8.

## Conclusions

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Through the creation of these collage pieces I found a connection to Tagore's philosophies and words that will continue to influence my work in the future. Tagore's philosophies about the divinity of the individual and the universe provided me with new insight into the nature of art; I have found a deeper respect for the "insignificant" and the inspiration of nature in my work. In addition, I found *meaning* in the act of creation—a meaning I have always felt but never fully understood. Through Tagore's theories, I understand the necessity of creativity in day-to-day life. During this study I consistently felt the emotional "surplus" that results in creative expression.

In his essay "An Eastern University," Tagore writes:

In former days the great master-craftsmen had students in their workshops where they co-operated in shaping things to perfection... that was the place where knowledge could become living—that knowledge which not only has its substance and law, but its atmosphere subtly informed by a creative art, in which the man exploring truth expresses something which is human in him—his enthusiasm, his courage, his honesty, and his skill.<sup>47</sup>

In my study my "knowledge could become living" through creative expression. The words and thoughts of Tagore became the subject of my exploration of truth; in this way I not only studied Tagore but also experienced the humanity of his words. Through this study I was able to put into practice Tagore's educational ideals. Through the creativity and sympathy of my creations I was able to understand the philosophies and history of one of India's greatest minds.

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<sup>47</sup> Tagore, "An Eastern University," p 83.

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### **Recommendations for Further Study**

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This study can be expanded upon in a variety of ways. An interesting study would be an examination of contemporary artists who use Tagore's writing and philosophies in their own work. In addition, there is an endless amount of work from Tagore to study and read.

For more information/research assistance please contact:

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## Appendix A

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*Figures 1 – 17 of Appendix A created by Galen Koch, Nov. 2009.*





Let all the strains of joy mingle in my last song-  
 the joy that makes the earth flow over in the riotous  
 excess of the grass, the joy that sets the twin brothers,  
 life and death, dancing over the wide world,  
 the joy that sweeps in with the tempest, shaping  
 and waking all life with laughter, the joy that  
 sits still with its tears on the open red  
 lotus of pain, the joy that throws everything  
 it has upon the dust, and knows not a word.

Rabindranath Tagore.

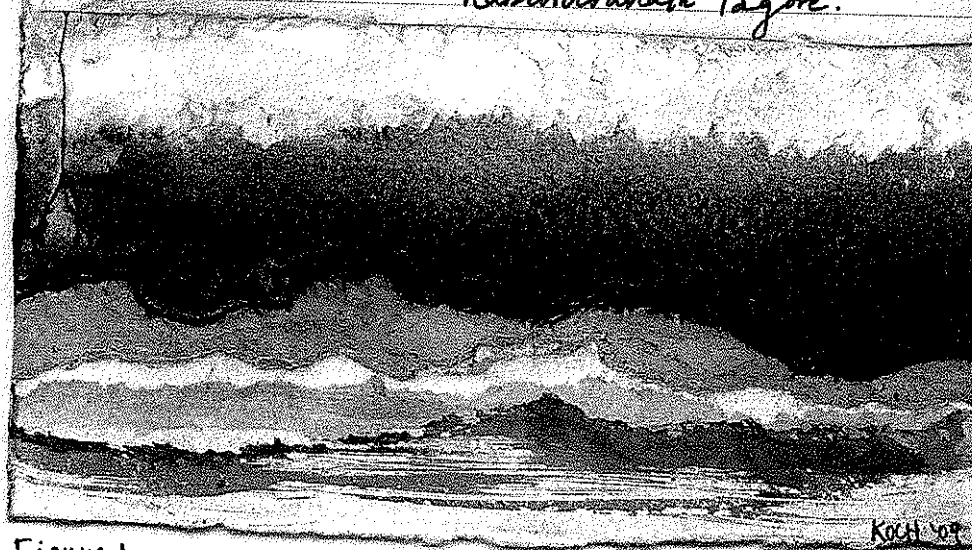


Figure 1

Gitanjali #1  
 Mixed media: paper,  
 thread, charcoal, ink,  
 pigment  
 5" x 7"  
 Nov. 2009, Kolkata

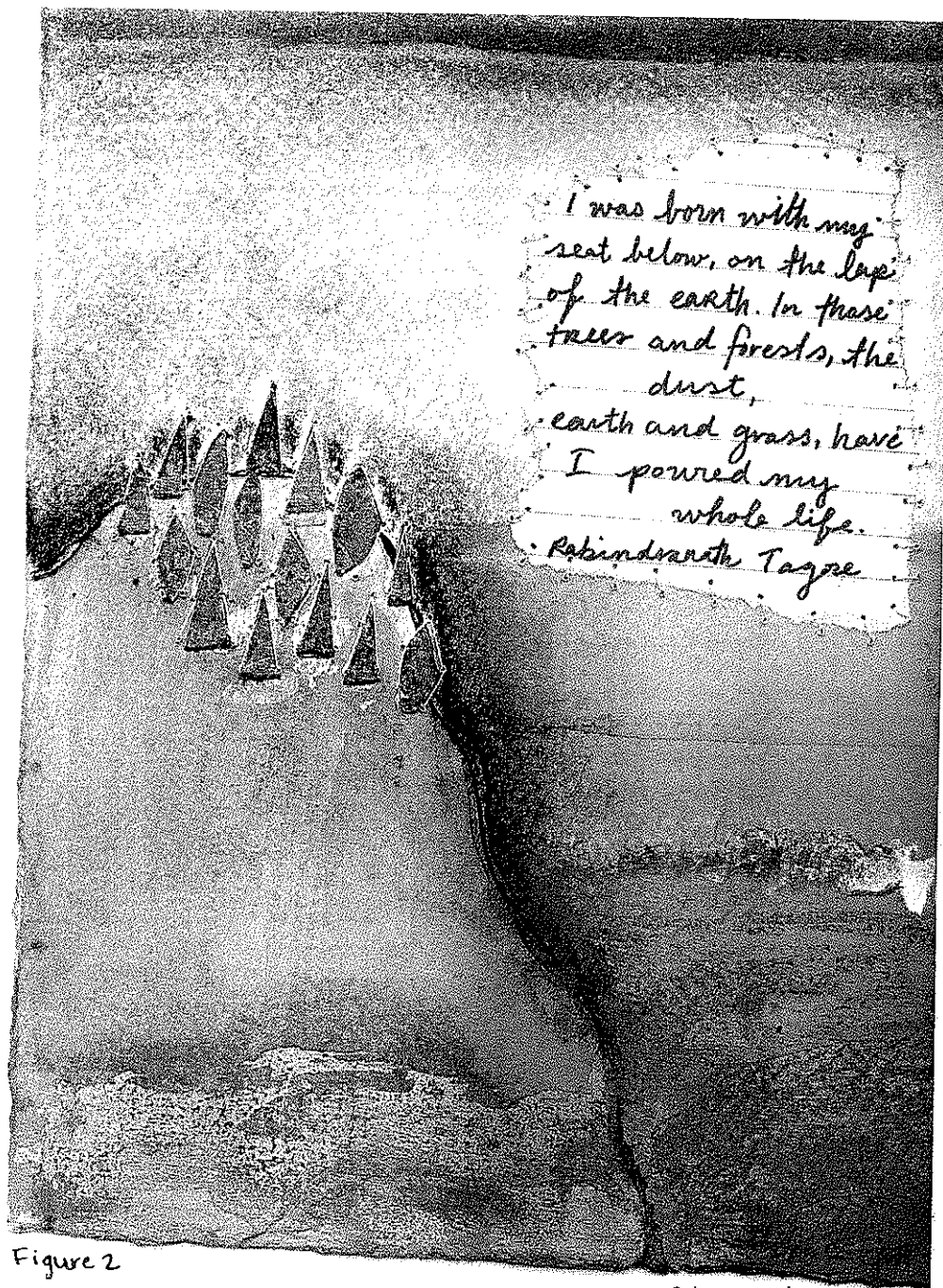
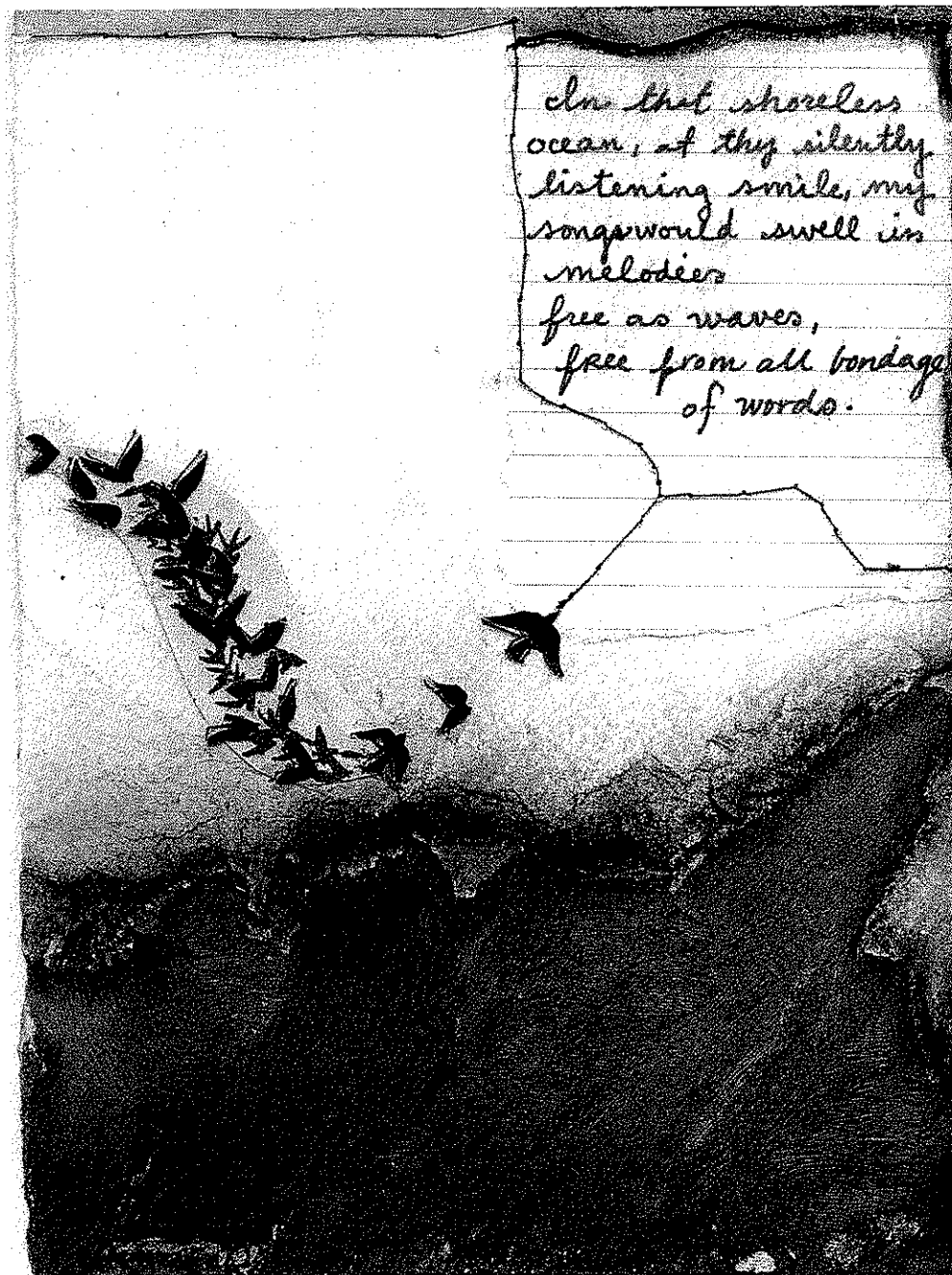


Figure 2

Rabindra #1  
Mix'd media: Pigment, oil  
pastel, paper, thread, soft  
pastel, ink  
5" x 7"  
Nov. 2009, Kolkata



On that shoreless  
ocean, at thy silently  
listening smile, my  
songs would swell in  
melodies  
free as waves,  
free from all bondage  
of words.

Figure 3

Gitanjali #2  
mixed media: kite paper,  
ink, charcoal, pastel,  
thread  
5" x 7"  
Nov. 2009, Kolkata

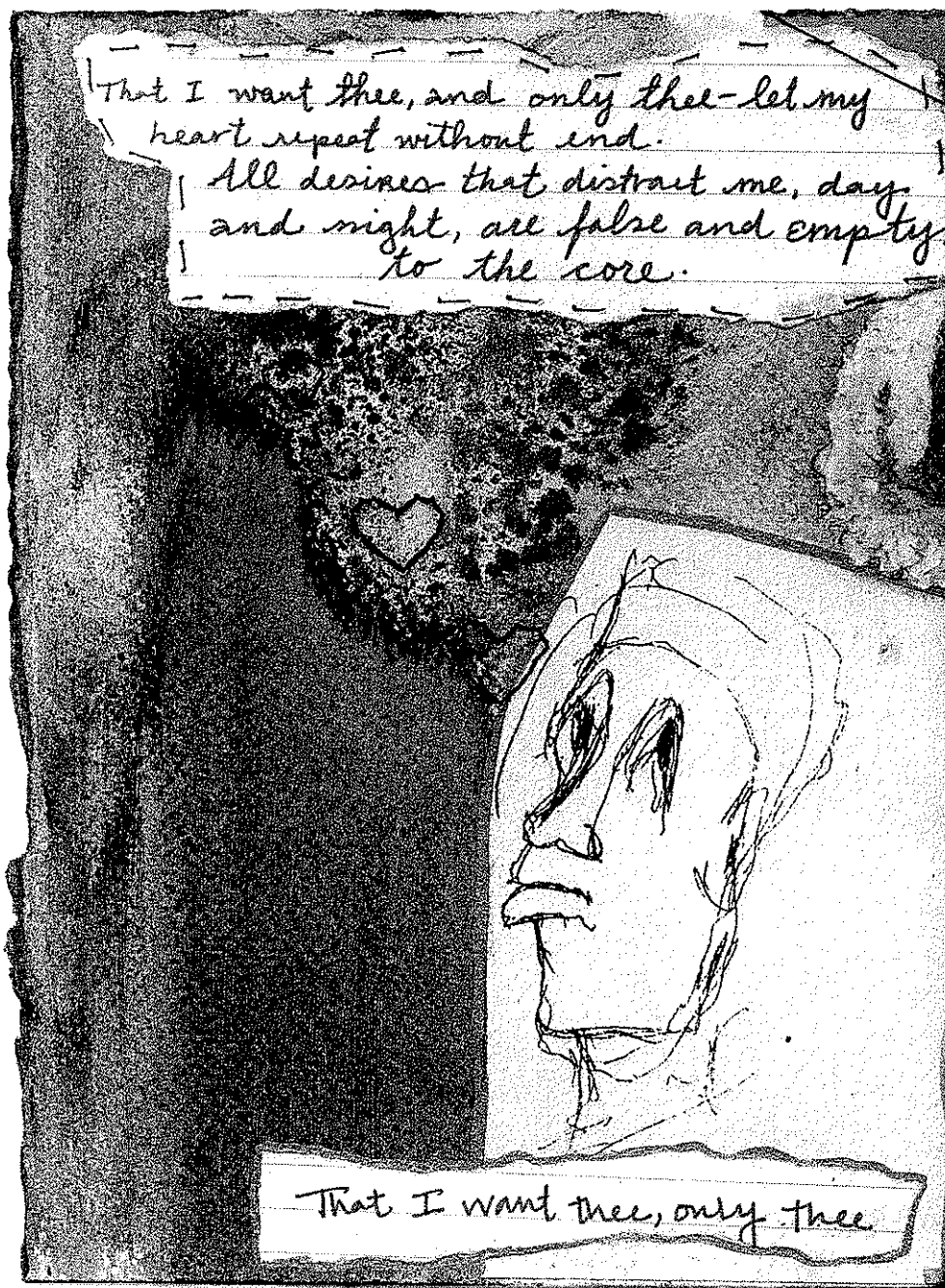


Figure 4

Gitanjali #3  
Mixed media: Paint, pigment,  
paper, thread, Tagore drawing  
5" x 7"  
Nov. 2009, Kolkata