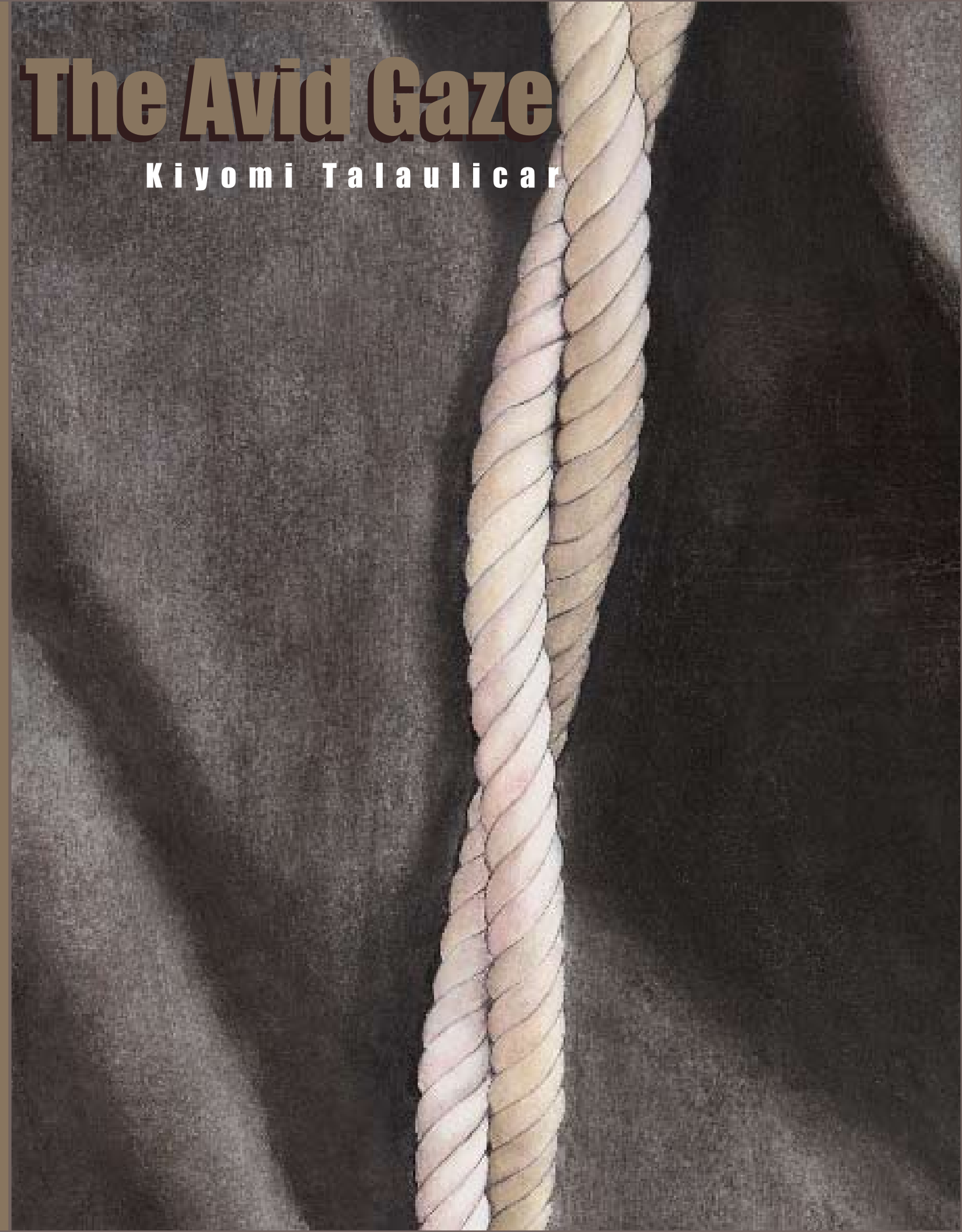


The Avid Gaze

Kiyomi Taulicar



Chemould Prescott Road
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KIYOMI TALAULICAR

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Synecdoche Pacifism

Thus far Kiyomi Talaulicar's pictorial quiet has found itself placed slap bang in the middle of abstraction. But with *The Avid Gaze*, one intends to relocate her works in the pacifist idiom. That said no effort has been directed towards entirely uprooting her linkages with abstraction. The two dispositions coexist, and allow the artist's new body of work to be read in a manner more vigorous than that allowed by mere rhetorical exchanges, which labour unendingly over matters of luminosity and other such.

Pacifism, of course, is easier said than done. And in Talaulicar's quasi-abstract still-lives we witness this tussle, followed by a steady migration towards equilibrium. With the application of each restrained layer, the artist endeavours to countervail pessimism and other signs of discord that may have inflected her milieu, her temperament, and subsequently her work. At the end of this fairly longwinded route, Talaulicar's paintings appear as though they have been cured by the sun and roundly weathered by the biosphere.

Since the politics of the personal was first thrown into relief, we have rarely encountered a dearth of anti-war sentiments in the contemporary arts, both Indian and otherwise. At the nucleus of Talaulicar's work rests the philosophy of pacifism, which announces itself as restraint in the business of everyday life. In her practice, the artist conveys this trajectory by yielding to her creative instinct. Surrender is critical to all artistic progress and process but often this natural arc is disrupted when foresight is blockaded by the temptation to fall in line with faddish and aggressive manoeuvres. Talaulicar chases this principal plot of capitulation with an eye that gathers details.

Talaulicar is not tethered to the highly esoteric and the highly individual in contemporary art. However, it would be erroneous to suggest that her work reveals itself immediately. In her preference for metaphor over re-enactment, the artist nurtures a beguiling taciturnity, which aims for the gut.

Talaulicar does not pledge to expose the amorphous and the dangerously mystical 'ecstatic truth' proposed by Werner Herzog. Instead she tackles quotidian crises and ensures that they don't leave a bad taste in the mouth. In a scene where painterly tchotchkes that cause one to flinch are the mainstay, Talaulicar through her process-oriented ethic, attempts to unravel the odd bits of unspeakably modest and almost-invisible benevolence that shine a light on our cartwheeling reality. Despite this unassuming character, each painting is a serenely autonomous crepuscular, which prefers breathing in the mellowness of twilight and not the definiteness of night and day.

The Avid Gaze is as, if not more, impressionistic than Talaulicar's earlier works. It is impressionistic in that peculiarly emotional manner that a lot of music is. And like music it inaugurates a series of free associations. This essay is a chronicler of some of the many associations that are provoked by key concepts – such as beauty, equipoise, and pacifism - that the artist has dwelt on at length.

First things first. The new suite is reminiscent of the *Metamorphosis* cycle from Philip Glass' *Solo Piano* (1989). *The Avid Gaze* parallels *Metamorphosis*' minimalism and love of repetition. From the intimacy of layering to a resolute departure from the Eliotian tradition of "the dark embryo" as the font of creative vigour and the eventual arrival at a junction lit by lightness, in Talaulicar's practice, metamorphosis manifests itself both physically and subliminally. The *Abode* sequence – which houses a levitational embryo – is a case in point.

Despite the above drawn parallels *The Avid Gaze* is truly only comparable to a cappella experience. In addition to their noticeable summoning of music, the note spangled *Moonlight Prophecy*, the suspended flute in *Nightfall* and the closely knitted cadence of *Written in Stone* call to mind the euphonious vocal stylisations of a cappella band busking on eternal roads. There is not very much here that is extraneous. It is almost as though the artist is attempting to translate an eminently organic occurrence she stumbled upon at some point in her life.



Faith - 2006

Talaulicar plays the guitar. And her interactions with the instrument have been detailed in earlier works titled *Resonance* (2001) and *Mahogany Sound* (2005). From the strings that hold together the guitar to the strings that map the sounds of the harp, the relay of association continues. In Kon Ichikawa's *The Burmese Harp* (1956), we find the mirror image for Talaulicar's *The Avid Gaze*. In this supremely pacifist film we journey through the trenches of a puissant war and emerge into an atmosphere of stunning quietude. The footprints gliding across *The Pilgrim's Journey* (2007) resonate the film's protagonist monk's travels.



Waiting - 1999

Although the figure is absent from *The Avid Gaze*, it has been a spectral presence in Talaulicar's past works such as *Waiting* (1999), *How she perceives herself to be, is what holds in her the thread that can free* (2006), *Faith* (2006), *Transience* (2006) and *Hieroglyph* (2007). An astute shape maker, Talaulicar's avoidance of anthropomorphic representations calls to mind Buddhist art's early aniconic phase where the Buddha was represented as an umbrella, a set of footprints, a throne and a wheel among other things. Similarly, the rained-on quality of *Liquid Light*, the quietly kinetic globe in *The Silent Rush* and the marmoreal edge of *Stone Glow* convey the artist's philosophy, and subsequently the human presence, by adopting synecdoche. In the interiority of these paintings, composure is groomed by painterly qualities such as patience. Talaulicar's loyalty to pacifism makes her work sui generis.

Gitanjali Dang

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Gitanjali Dang is an independent curator and critic. From 2005-08 she was art critic at the *Hindustan Times*, and currently contributes to publications such as *Art India*, *The Economic Times* and *Mid-Day*.



Transience - 2006

The Turning, 2008, acrylic on Arches paper, 44.25 x 72 inches

