

People, places & practices

Exploring the art
of Jyoti Bhatt



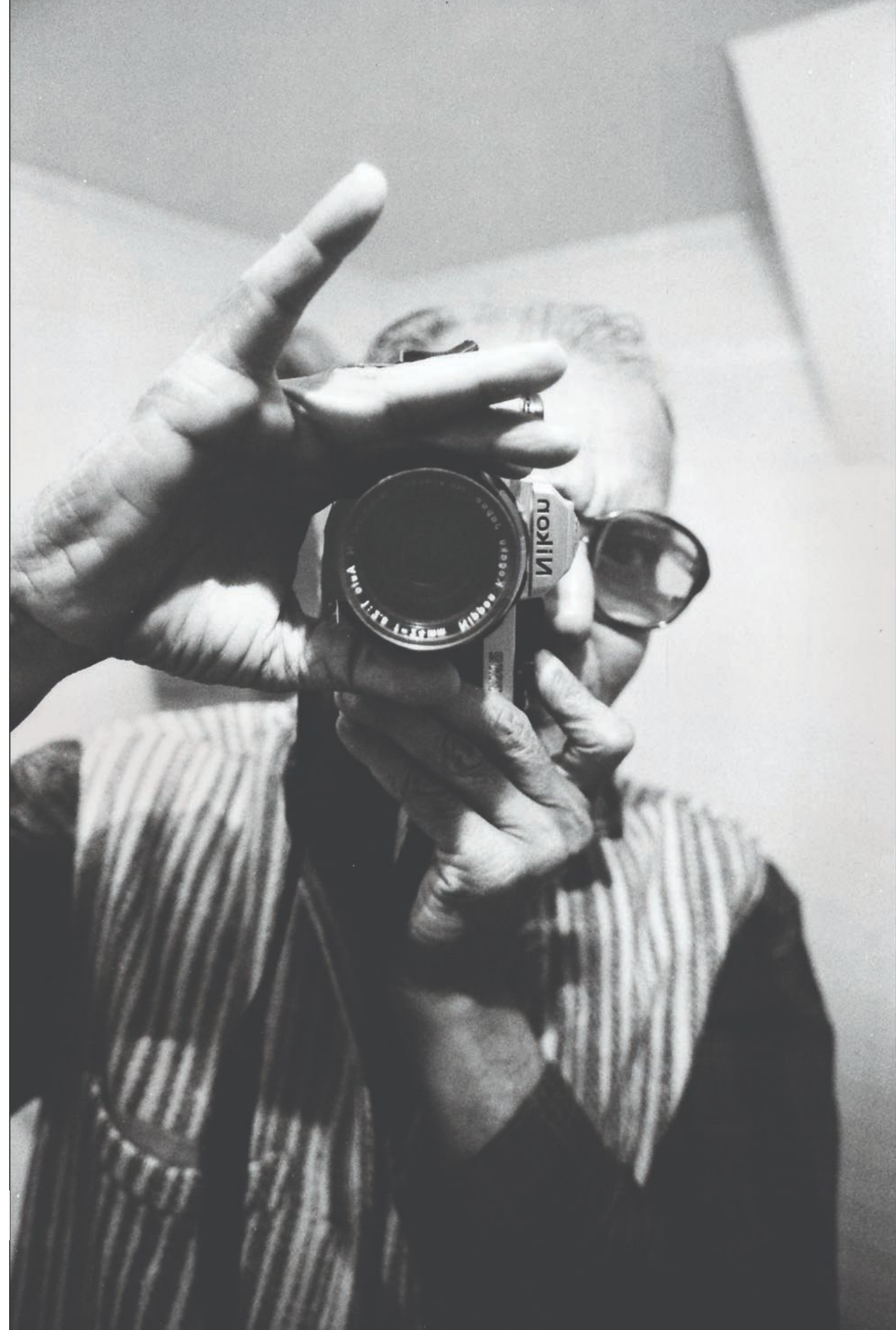
DISCOVER MAP

This is Jyoti Bhatt, an Indian artist known for his photographic, printmaking and painted works.

Here, Bhatt has taken a mirror selfie, before the word selfie was invented! Let's **look closely** at this image.

What can you tell about Bhatt by looking at it – physically or otherwise?

Why do you think his hands look bigger than his face here?





Jyoti Bhatt studied art in Maharaja Sayajirao University, Baroda. After his studies, he spent some time in Italy and the United States, learning printmaking from the best in the business.

In the 1960s, he returned to India to teach the same college he studied. This is when he also took to photography.

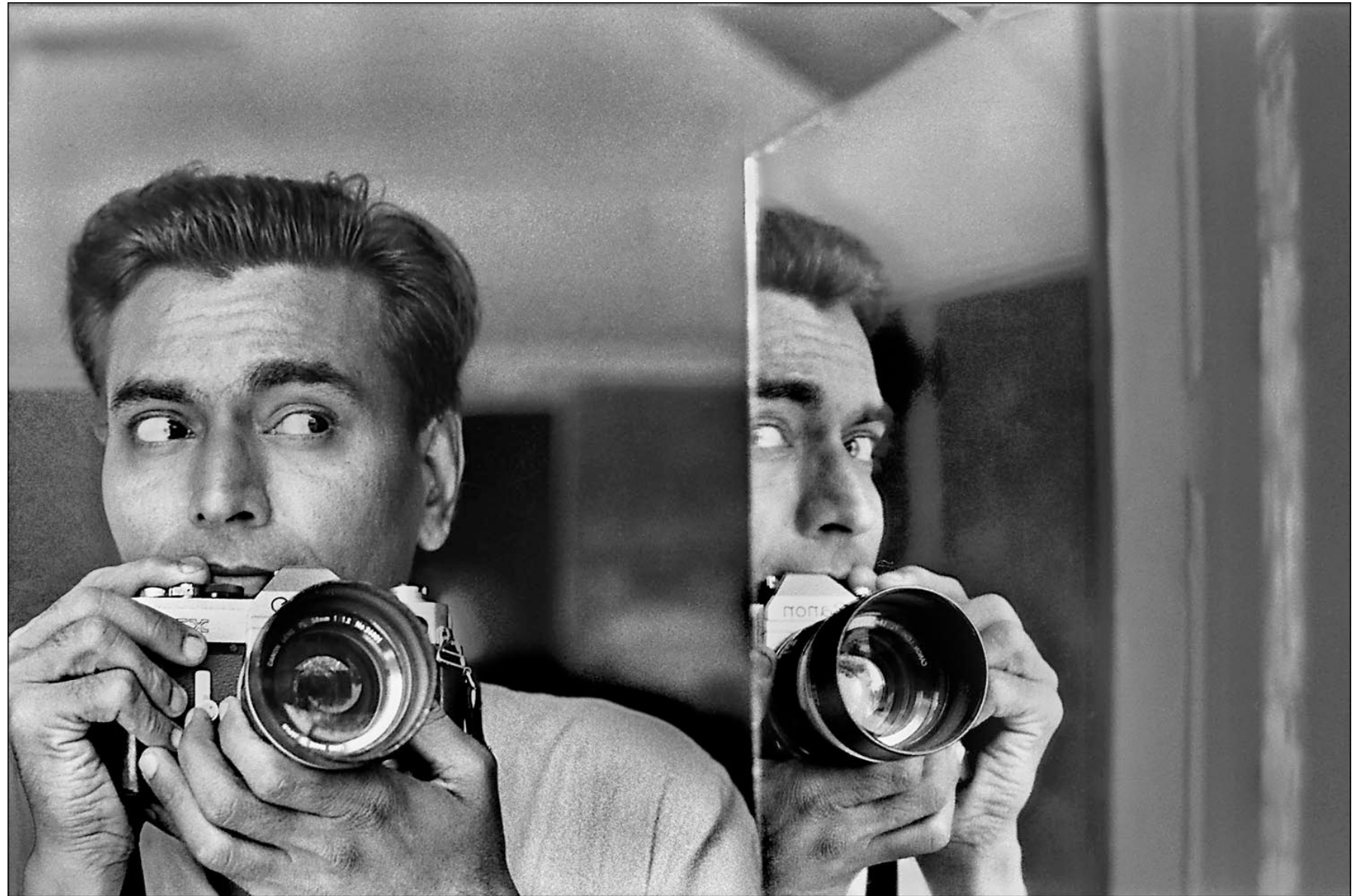
This is a photograph Bhatt clicked of his friends and peers from the university.

If you could give this image a title, what would you call it?

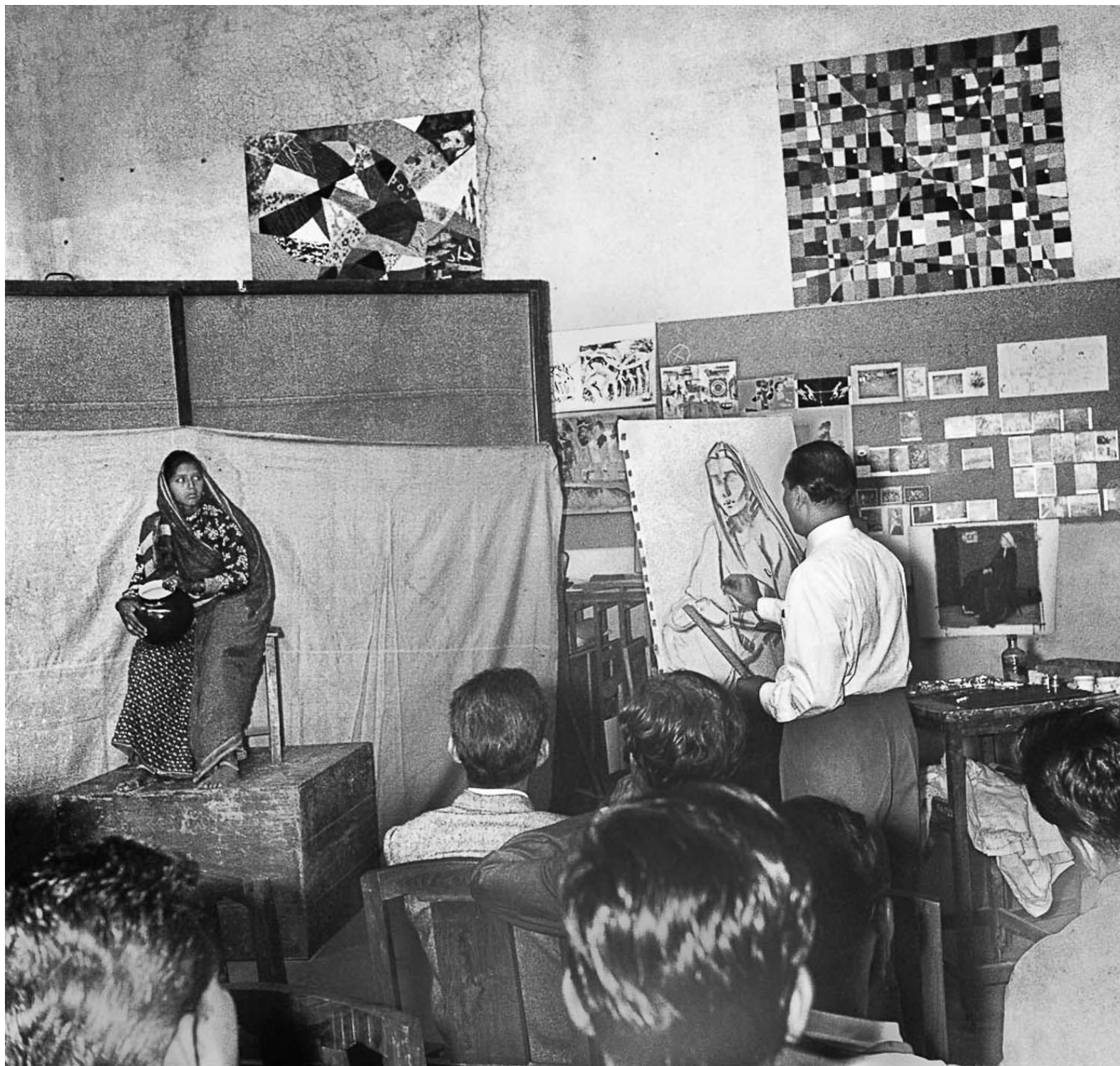
Jyoti Bhatt's new found love for photography made him pursue it passionately.

He took many self portraits or what we now call 'selfies'. In many of them his camera is part of the portrait as if also indicating its importance in his life.

Can you tell how we see two of him in the same photograph here?



EXTEND Find an item that describes you / your personality best and take a photograph with it.



In the early days, Bhatt was photographing what he saw around him. Eventually he began documenting the activities at the University. Here is a photograph from that time.

LOOK CLOSELY.

What do you think is being taught in this class?*

Can you figure out where Bhatt would have been, in order to create this frame?

*This is a fine arts class on live drawing.

Bhatt primarily worked in black and white photography, and often used a lot of contrast in his images.

ART SPEAK!

Contrast is a play of opposite elements in a composition. It can be light vs dark, smooth vs rough, hard vs soft, etc.

LOOK CLOSELY.

Do you see the play of contrasts in this image? How many kinds can you spot?

Can you what time of day this picture was taken in?



If you could touch the umbrella shape, what would it feel like? What do you think it is made up of?



Bhatt also made a number of portraits of his peers at the University, and their families.

His portraits were meant not only to show how a person looks, but often times, also represent elements of their personalities and professions.

THINK.

What would this person's profession be? Can you see a clue in the image?

What three words would you use to describe the person in this photograph?

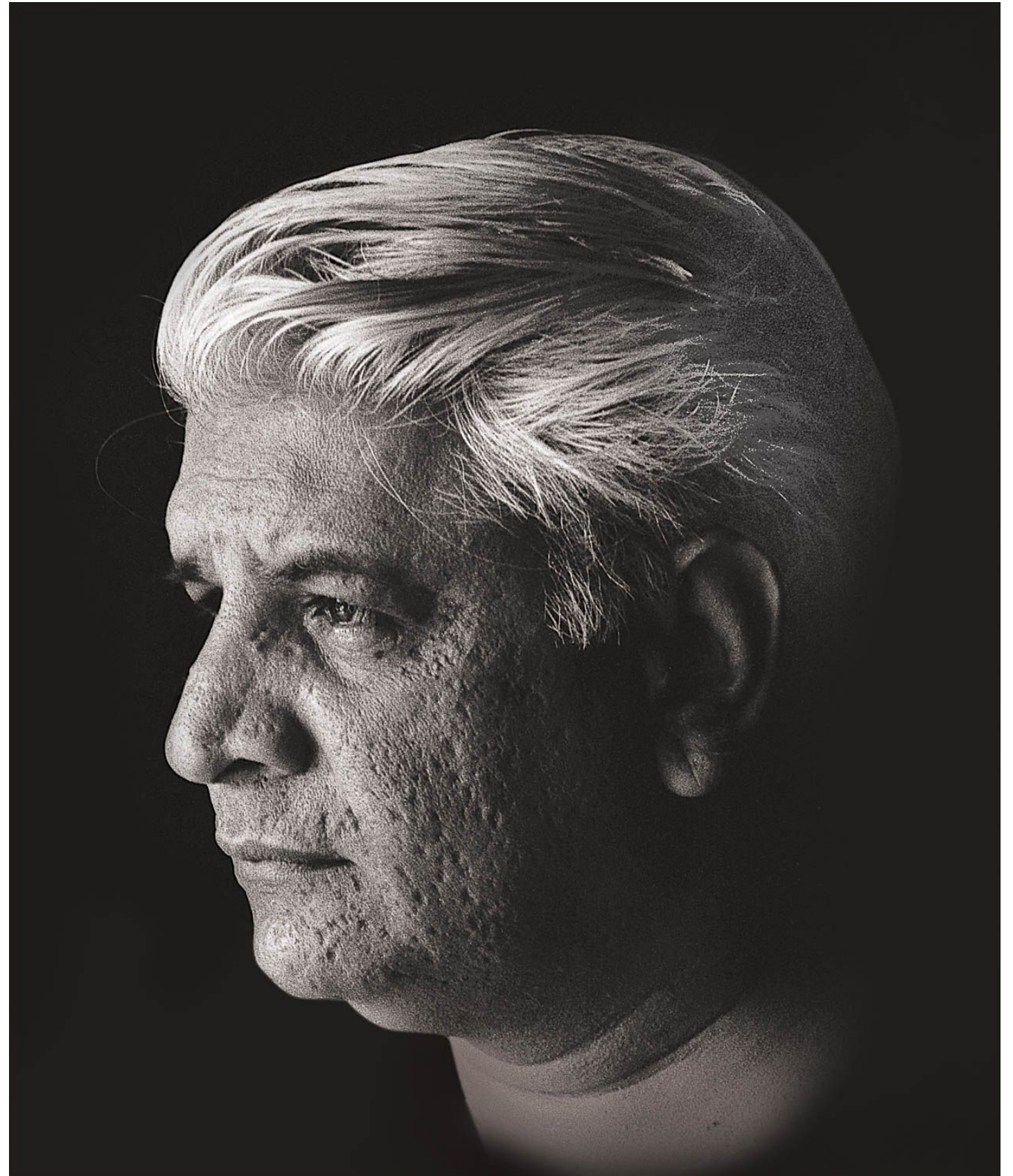
Here is another portrait made by Bhatt. This time, it is of his teacher and fellow modernist artist, N. S. Bendre.

LOOK CLOSELY.

- Can you guess where the light in this image is coming from?
- Can you see examples of contrast in this image? Where and of what kinds?

THINK.

- Based on the image, what do you think Bendre's personality might have been like?
- Why do you think the background is left blank and dark?





In addition to making images of others, Jyoti Bhatt clicked many self portraits as you've learned. He loved experimenting with his compositions as well.

You saw one selfie at the beginning of this pack. Here is another self portrait of the artist.

Do you spot the artist here?
Where in the frame do you see him? Do you spot any another person in this frame?

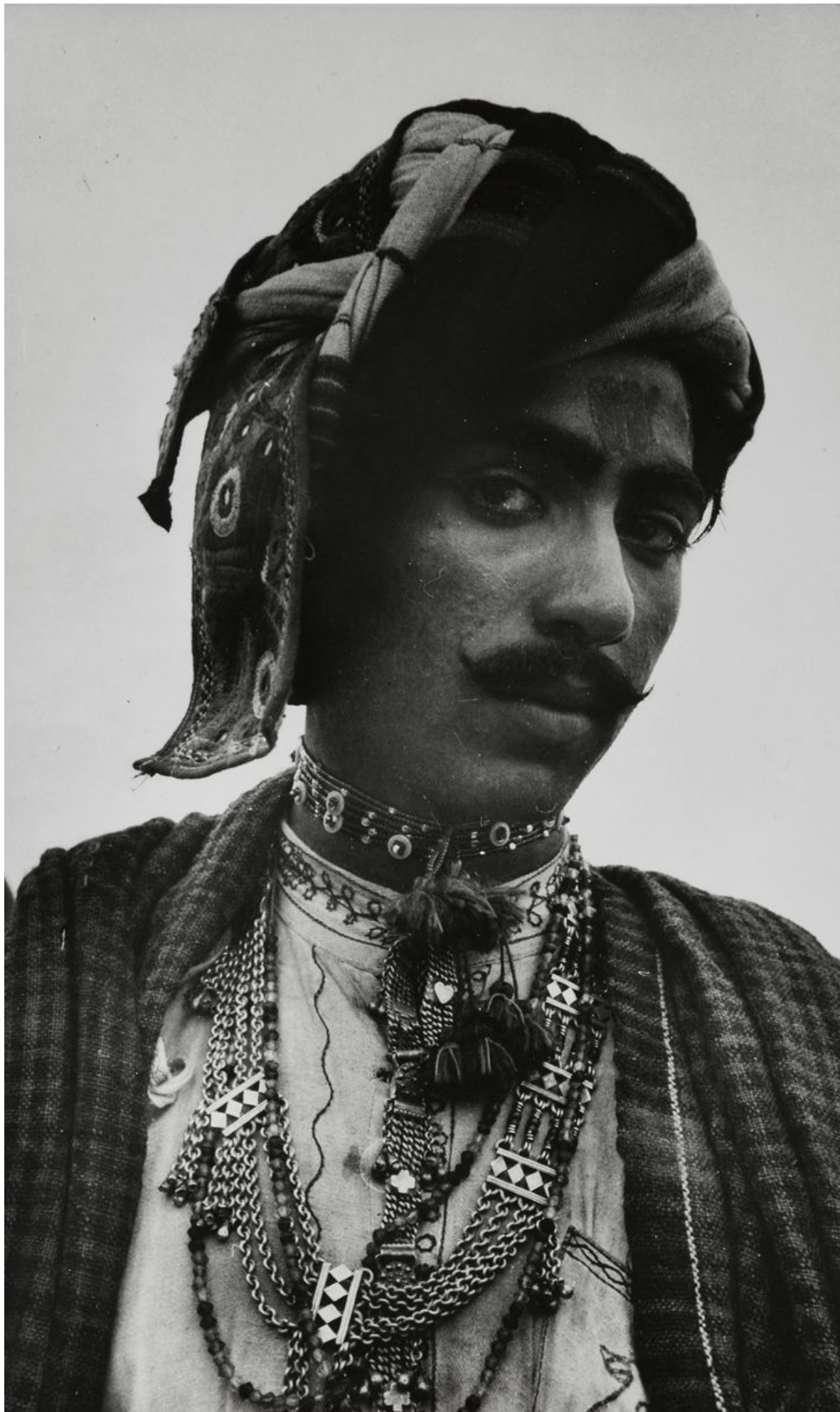
If this were a film poster, what do you think the film would be about?

Look at this work
titled Self Portrait.

What makes the artist
claim this as a self
portrait?

Head to the **MAP
Activity Worksheet**
to explore more!





An important part of Bhatt's photographic journey started in 1967 when he was given the task to document the **indigenous** art traditions of Gujarat.

Here is one image that he made during this project.

LOOK CLOSELY.

- Can you identify how many necklaces this man is wearing? Why do you think he is wearing this jewellery?
- Do you think his turban is made out of a single piece of cloth or more than one piece? What makes you say that?

ART SPEAK!

Indigenous art is the term we use to describe art made by the local communities or people of a particular region. It can be in form of drawing, weaving, crafting or even in the form of a performance.

Most indigenous artists learn from a senior family member and their form of art is, in these cases, passed on from generation to generation. They also usually use simple materials that are easily available around them in nature like wood, grass, mud, etc.

EXTEND.

Do you know of any indigenous art forms from where you live? Ask a grown up or look it up, if you don't!



Bhatt's task was initially limited to Gujarat. But he became interested in this subject even after the task ended and began documenting the many traditional art forms across India.

Here is a photograph that he took in Madhya Pradesh of people from the Bhil community, painting a wall mural.

How many creatures can you recognise in the mural?

Do you spot a unique thing that does not quite fit in with the rest?

What do the shapes in the border remind you of?





Here is another image made by Bhatt of the wall painting tradition of Rajasthan.

LOOK CLOSELY.

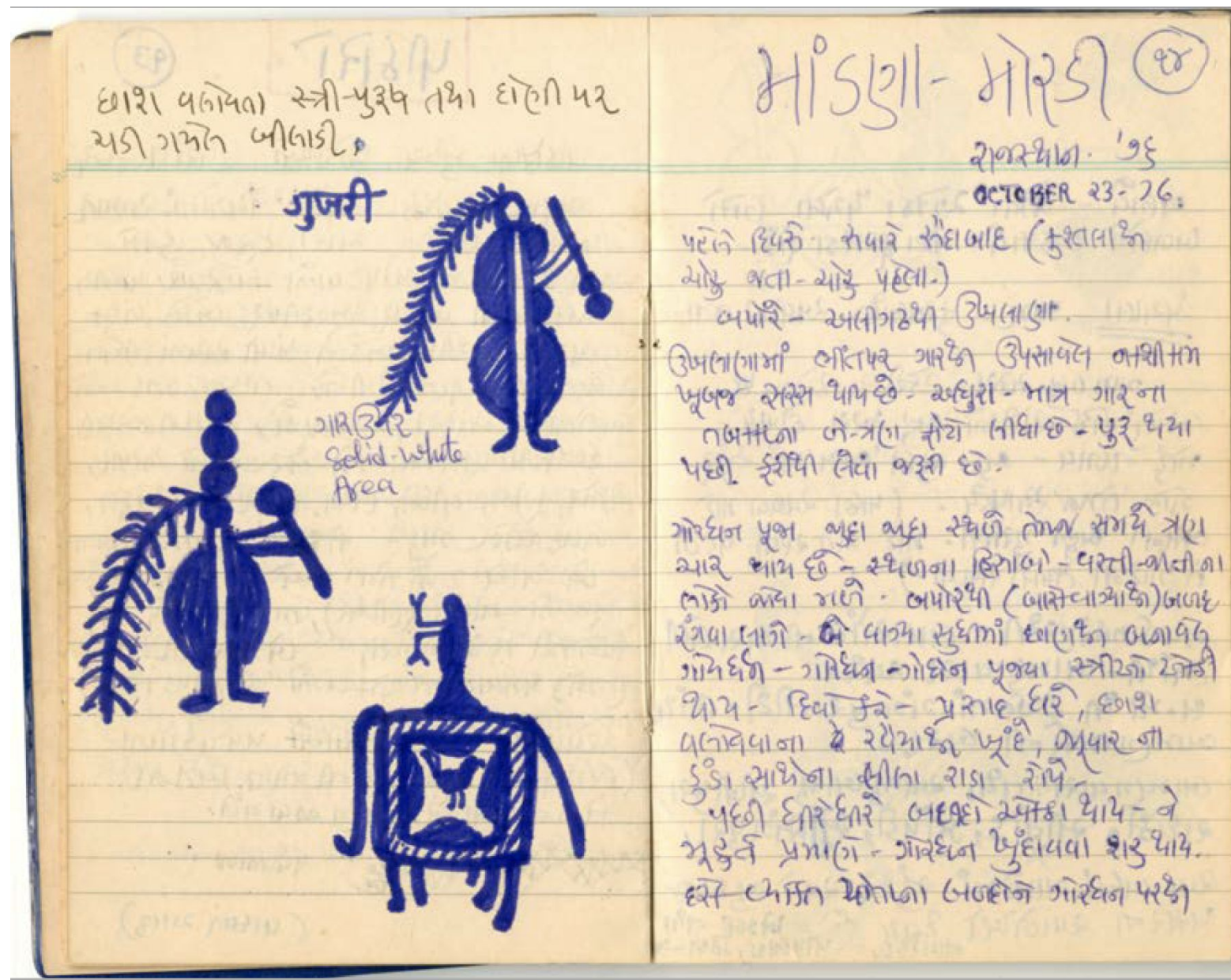
Can you guess what the little bowls and sticks in the foreground are?

Can you recognise any forms in the mural behind the woman?

Look at the woman's skirt - can you recognise this textile type?*

How many types of patterns do you see in the mural on the wall?

*The skirt is made using the tie and dye technique, also known as Bandhani.



What do you think the sketches in the left page of this diary are of?

Jyoti Bhatt was an avid journaler. He maintained diaries through his travels for over fifty years.

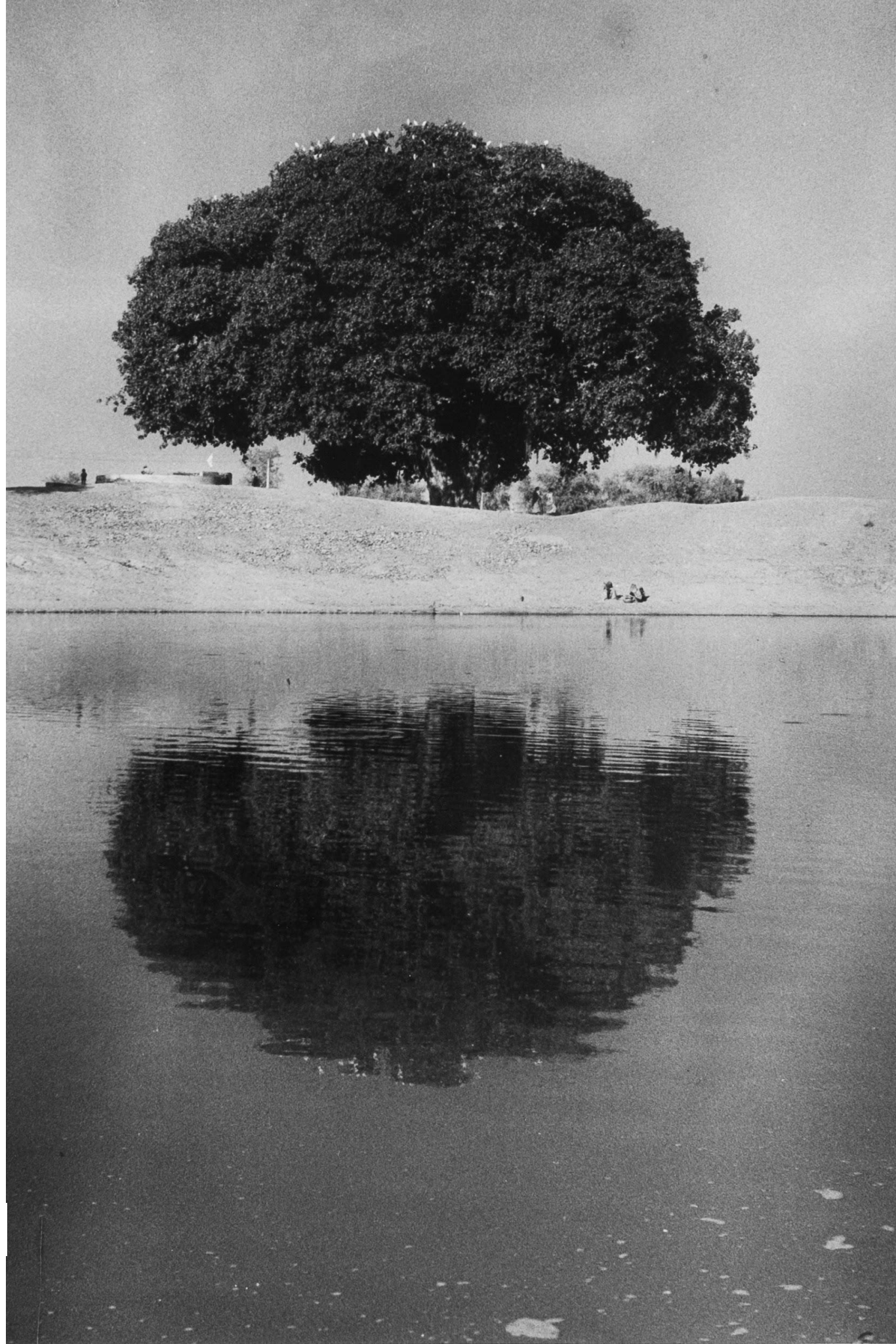
He wrote mainly in Gujarati, but also doodled a lot on the side. And used them to record all of his observations, ideas, and even designs and patterns he came across that inspired him.

They give us an interesting insight into how Jyoti Bhatt and his art were shaped by everything he saw and experienced in this world.

He was also a playful artist who experimented a lot with his work.

His experiments included:

- Using techniques like contrast or double exposure (bringing two images together in the same photo)
- Using elements like light and shadow or positive and negative space in interesting ways
- Pairing two different images together to create a new one
- Playing with perspective or point of view in his compositions
- Using designs and ideas across the mediums he worked



Here is a work that he reproduced in multiple mediums, for example.

This is a **serigraph** or **screen print**.

ART SPEAK!

A serigraph is a printing technique that lets you make multiple copies of a design or an artwork. Instead of using a printer, serigraph uses a frame with a silk mesh on, some ink and a squeegee for spreading the ink.

A stencil is made on the silk mesh, placed, on a surface like paper or cloth. When ink is spread on this stencil, using the squeegee, the design gets printed. You can repeat this to make as many copies as you need.



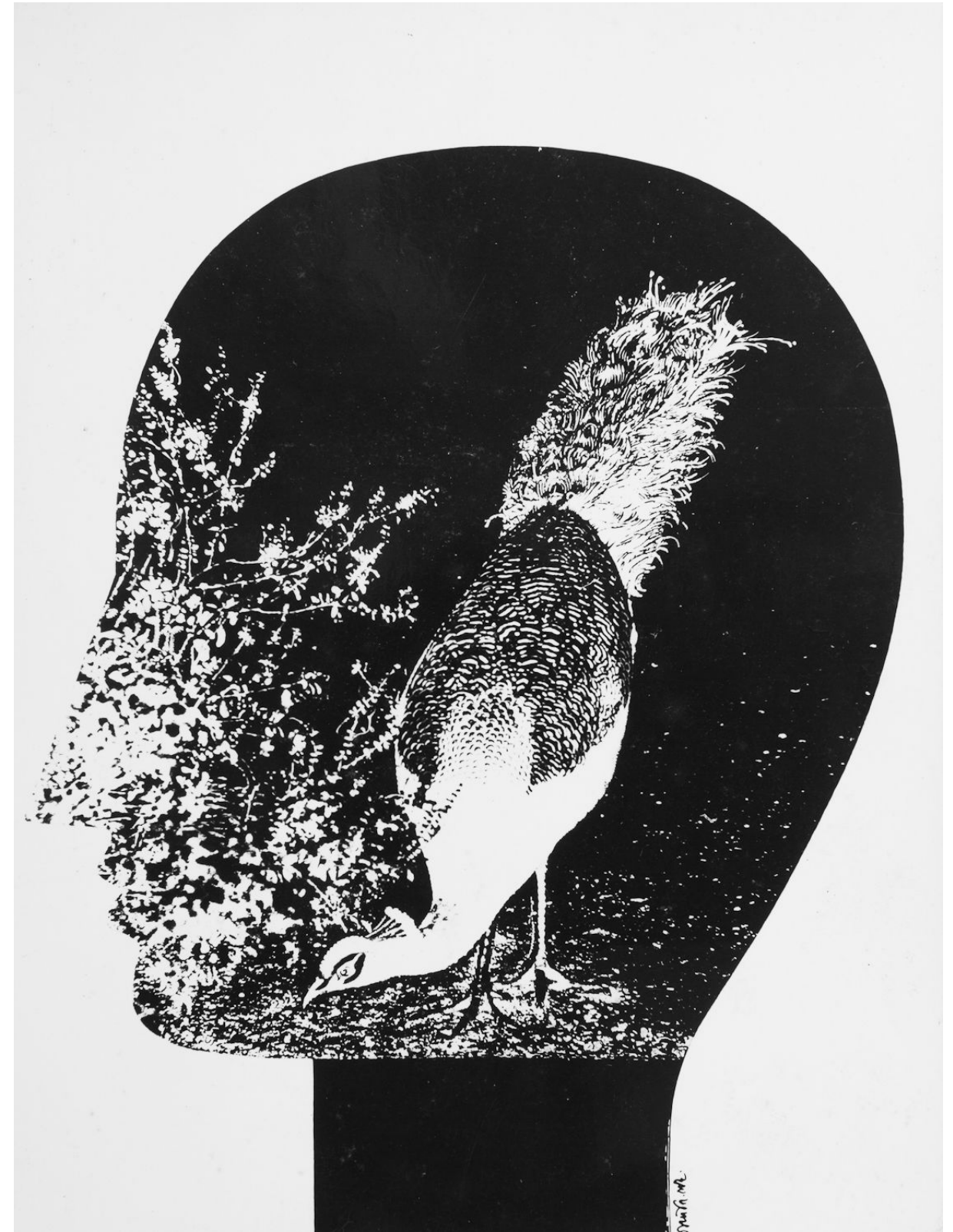
Look at this work now. This is a photographic print, but as you can see the design looks the same! Are there any differences between the two?

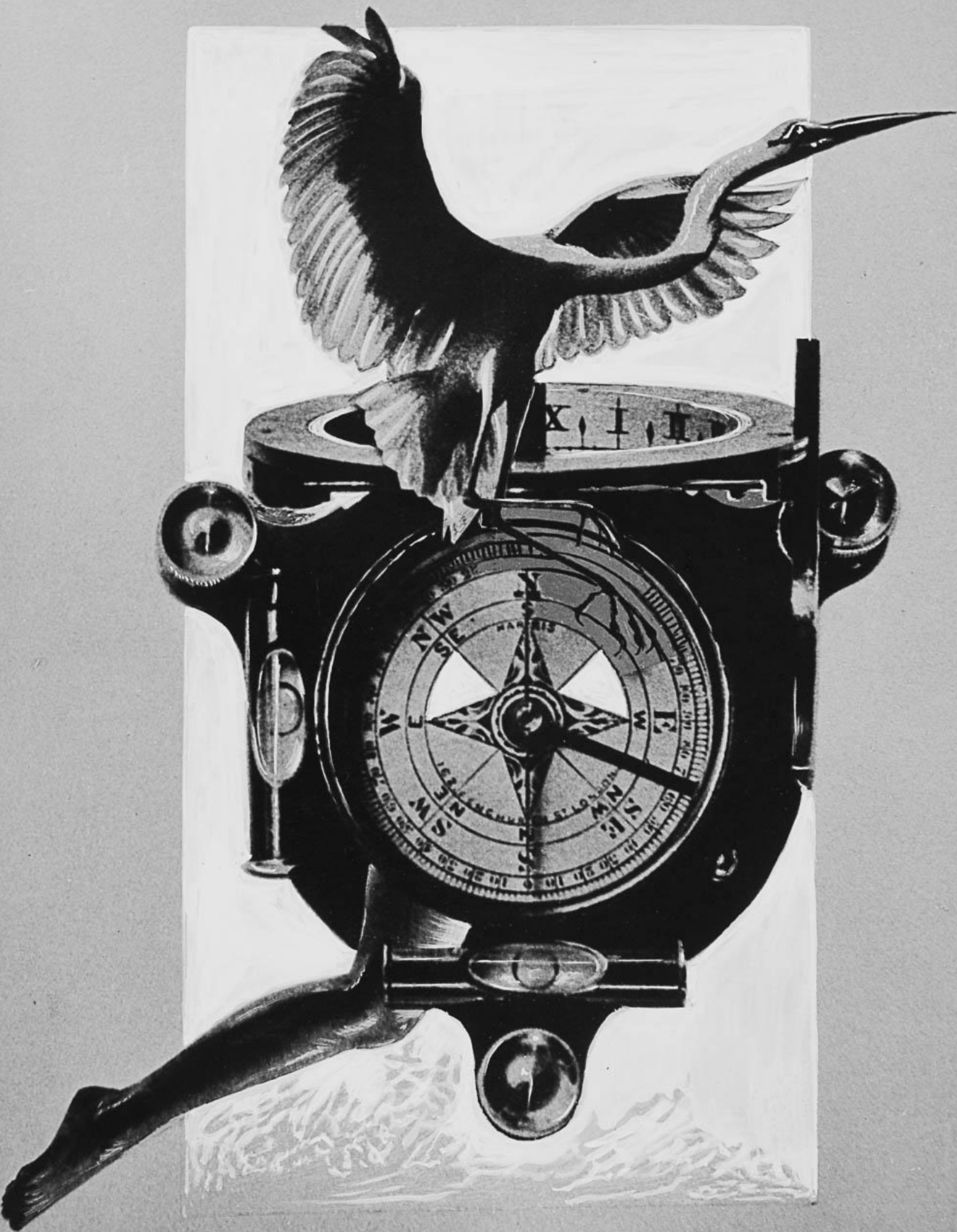
LOOK CLOSELY.

Do you recognise the creature in white? Notice how negative and positive space is used here.

Do you think there is a message that this image is conveying? If yes, what could it be?

If this image were the cover of a book, what would it be about?





Bhatt was also interested in creating experimental “photo-collages”. In these, he would layer photo prints in unique ways to create entirely new compositions. Something like what you see in this image.

How many different sources do you think he may have picked from to create this?

When brought together this way, do you think there can be new meanings attached to the image? What do you think he was trying to say here?

Head to our **DIY Extra** to get inspired by Jyoti Bhatt and create an experimental collage yourself!

Jyoti Bhatt always said that he was an artist interested in making images.

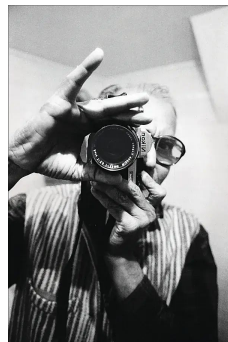
He didn't like being labelled or called a specific kind of artist, because whether photography, serigraphy or painting, his end goal was to create powerful pictures in a way that was best suited for that medium.

In combination with his experiments with form and composition, this makes him one of the most interesting modernist Indian artists.





A Santhal Village, West Bengal
Jyoti Bhatt, 1978
H. 18.6 cm, W. 28.2 cm
Silver gelatin print



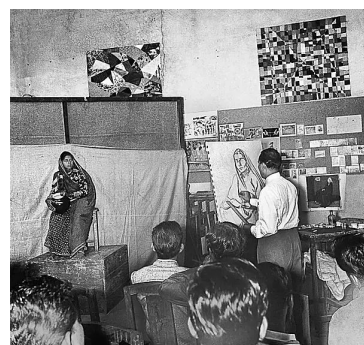
Self-portrait of Jyoti Bhatt
Jyoti Bhatt, 1995
Digital file



Artist Group, Faculty of Fine Arts,
Vadodara
Jyoti Bhatt, 1970
Digital file



Self-portrait of Jyoti Bhatt
Jyoti Bhatt, 1967
Digital file



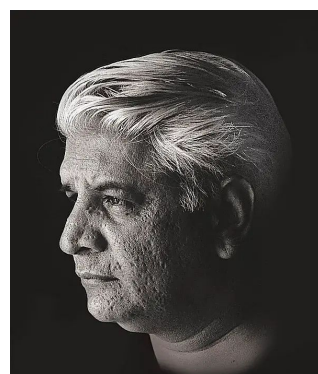
Demonstration of a Painting at the
Studio of Faculty of Fine Arts, M. S.
University, Baroda
Jyoti Bhatt, 1959
Digital image



The Umbrella
Jyoti Bhatt, 1977
H. 28.4 cm, W. 18.2 cm
Silver gelatin print



Sushma Pandya, Delhi
Jyoti Bhatt, 1961
Digital file



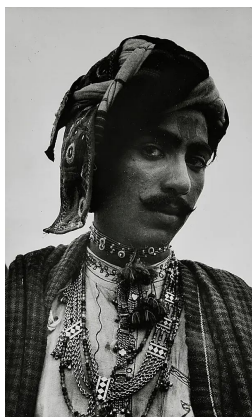
Portrait of N. S. Bendre
Jyoti Bhatt, 1958
Digital image



Jyoti Bhatt Taking a Photograph of an
Artwork at the Venice Biennale
Jyoti Bhatt, 1966
Digital image



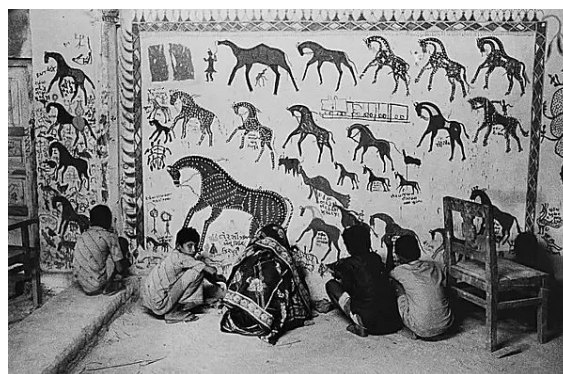
Self-portrait
Jyoti Bhatt, 1980
H. 16.7 cm, W. 24.8 cm
Silver gelatin print



Rabari, Saurashtra
Jyoti Bhatt, 1958
H. 23.6 cm, W. 14.4 cm
Silver gelatin print



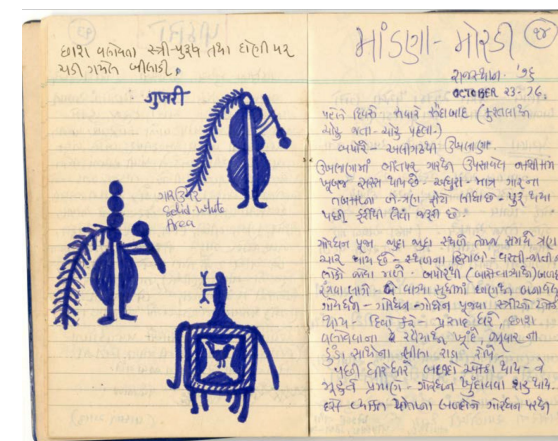
A Potter Woman Decorating a Pot,
Kutch
Jyoti Bhatt, 1975
H. 18 cm, W. 14 cm
Silver gelatin print



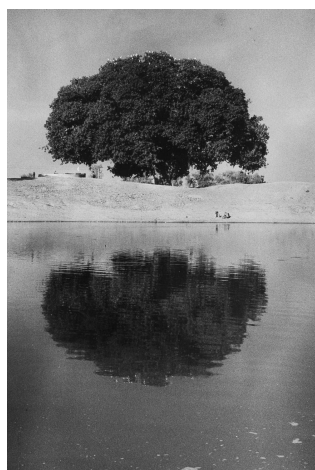
A 'Pithoro' Painting Inside a House
Jyoti Bhatt, 1978
H. 14.8 cm, W. 22.7 cm
Silver gelatin print



Rajasthani Artist in Front of her
Mural
Jyoti Bhatt, 1987
H. 22.5 cm, W. 15 cm
Silver gelatin print



Jyoti Bhatt Diaries
Jyoti Bhatt, 1975-1981
H. 10.5 cm, W. 16cm;
Handwritten diaries



Village Pond, Brahmanwada
Jyoti Bhatt, 1980
H. 27.9 cm, W. 18.8 cm
Silver Gelatin Print



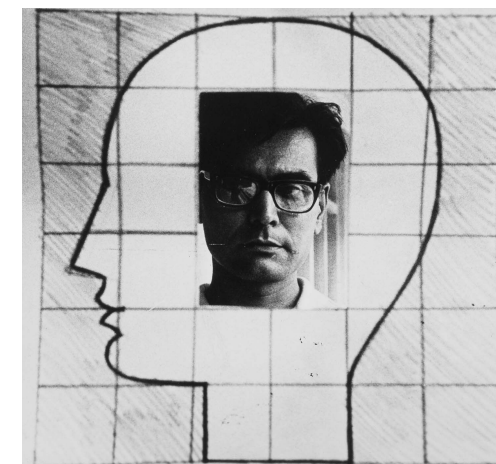
A Face
Jyoti Bhatt, 1979
H. 71.2 cm, W. 56.1 cm
Serigraph



Untitled
Jyoti Bhatt, 1969
H. 19.5 cm, W. 15.5 cm
Silver gelatin print



Collage
Jyoti Bhatt, Undated
H. 29.6 cm, W. 20.7 cm;
hand-coloured silver gelatin
print



Self Portrait
Jyoti Bhatt, 1969
H 10 cm, W 10.7 cm
Silver Gelatin Print

