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### **Acharya Vyakul: Works on Paper at Lawrence Markey**

On view through February 24, 2006

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**Acharya Vyakul** (1930-2000), whose name means “the excited one” in Sanskrit, walked miles every night but painted only a few times a year when it “overwhelmed” him and his eyes caught “fire.” So writes the French poet Franck André Jamme in his 1993 monograph on the artist. Jamme describes meeting Vyakul in the artist’s private curio museum in Jaipur, India and asking to see the director. Vyakul showed him his own paintings, read his horoscope and the next day, after a second visit, the artist said, “I am going to tell you a secret. I have been waiting for you a long time. A very long time.”

Vyakul was a guru and Sanskrit scholar; he was a collector of religious objects and had his own museum. Because he favored abstraction, he considered himself a modernist rather than a contemporary artist. His work has uncommon directness. It is fantastical and perfumed with mysticism that gently pushes us into familiarity with the nuances of the artist’s culture. The forms in his drawings range from simple—a blue and orange egg shape—to complex—a monstrous figure with delicate swirls of paint. Strange, spirited little men walk on thin legs across Vyakul’s paper. Painterly gestures are studied yet, unburdened.

How do we read Vyakul’s work in light of its folkish mythology, and how should we read his art? His tantric paintings featured prominently, but anonymously, in books for years. When **Jean-Hubert Martin**, however, put Vyakul’s work in the notorious 1989 exhibition *Magiciens de la Terre* in Paris, the artist had a new kind of career. Today he does not hold the place of shaman or orientalized visionary that he did in the *Magiciens* exhibition, rather Vyakul’s whispery paintings fit perfectly into Lawrence Markey’s aesthetic of understated elegance that goes beyond Minimalism.

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