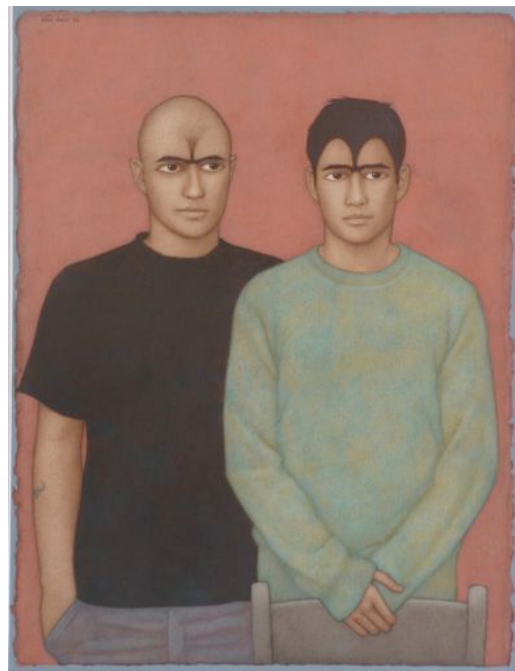




The artist with *The Route to Helmand*, 2010



Boys return from Helmand, 2010, Imperial War Museum

MAJOR PAINTING BY LONDON-BASED ARTIST SHANTI PANCHAL OF HIS TWO SOLDIER SONS NEWLY RETURNED FROM SERVING IN HELMAND PROVINCE, AFGHANISTAN, RECENTLY ACQUIRED BY THE IMPERIAL WAR MUSEUM, LONDON

SHANTI PANCHAL: Paintings of Exile and Home
15th May – 8th June 2013

In Shanti Panchal's current exhibition at the Piano Nobile Gallery, there are two paintings - deeply moving, tender and politically challenging as well as highly significant records of contemporary history - of his soldier sons who have served in the British Army in Afghanistan. One of these shows his two sons, along with a poignant image of a toy soldier, after they had returned to London after serving for a lengthy period as soldiers in Afghanistan. A companion portrait of his two sons, both in their twenties, newly returned from Helmand Province, was acquired in 2012 by The Imperial War Museum, London.

Panchal has strong opinions about the sociological damage that soldiers suffer when returning home from Afghanistan; "there is state support for those who come back wounded but many of them, only in their late teens, who return with their limbs intact are disturbed mentally and emotionally and are scarred for life" says the artist. 'I wanted to highlight the plight of those young men and their families'.

In the early 1980s Panchal developed a remarkably innovative way of painting, whereby 'watercolour is not just painted on the surface but injected into the paper many times, and I scrape that with hard oil-paint brushes and use blotting paper. The kind of depth you achieve is amazing.'

Born in Mesar, a village in Gujarat, India in the mid-to-late 1950s (his exact birth-date is unknown), he studied at the Sir JJ School of Art in Bombay before coming to England on a British Council

scholarship to study at the Byam Shaw School of Art, London from 1978-80. He has lived and worked in London since then with frequent trips back to India.

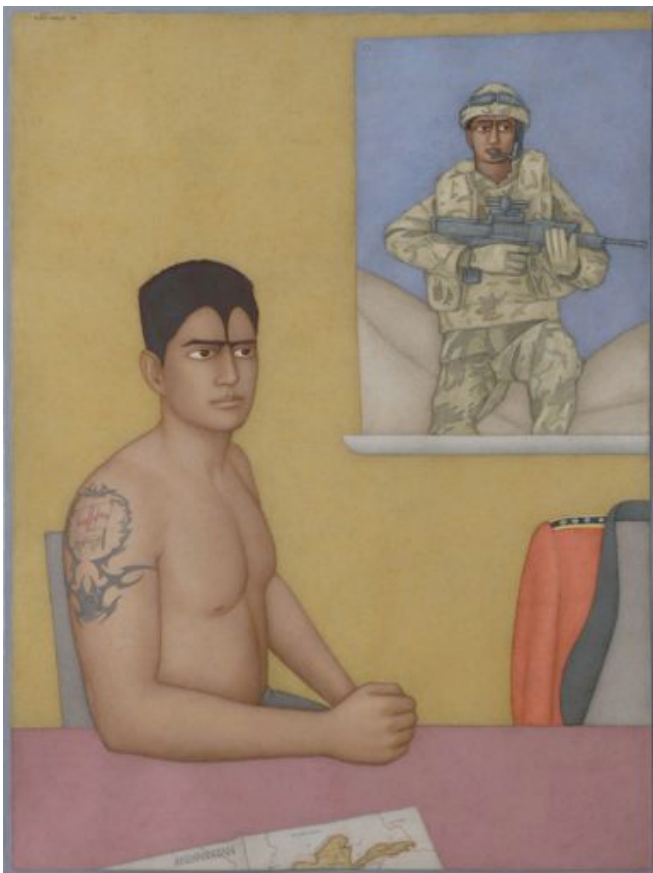
In the artist's own words, his figurative works are filled with a 'contemplative stillness and tranquility, which at first belies the complex interplay of emotions and relationships between the figures depicted.'

Panchel has had numerous one-person shows in British public galleries and abroad. He was awarded a prize at the BP Portrait Award at the National Portrait Gallery, and received First and (later) Second Prizes at The Sunday Times Watercolour Competition (in 2001 and 2012). His work is in many public collections, including Arts Council England, The British Museum and The Ruth Borchard Collection of Self-Portraits. The Imperial War Museum have acquired two major paintings by him for their collection.

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Marine, off duty from the front line, 2012