

SIGNALS · SIGNPOSTS · VOYAGES

4 from the
MADRAS
MOVEMENT

C Douglas
K Muralidharan
S Nandagopal
Rm Palaniappan

Director's Note

The brochure focuses on the four artists in this show namely C.Douglas, K.Muralidharan, S.Nandagopal and R.M.Palaniappan who have succeeded in making an important distinction in contemporary Indian art and more specifically to the development of the Madras Movement.

They have established an art which is significantly at variance with mainstream Western art. They have brought forward the pictorial which has characterized traditional Indian art at both the classical and folk levels over the years. That they were able to accomplish this against the strength of contemporary critical schools makes the achievement considerably significant.

The development which these artists had advanced started in the early fifties, in the context of the Madras Movement. The Movement proclaimed an art that was 'Indian in spirit and world-wide contemporary'. It has taken over forty years for the development to arrive at the present state of pictorial realization, from the initiatives taken in the fifties at Madras. The work and deliberation connected with it took place mostly at the Government College of Arts and Crafts, Madras (the oldest art institution in the country) where these artists had been at work as students. Some of it spilled over to Cholamandal Artists' Village where two of them from the group settled after their college days.

A development like this which is of significance on its own, cannot be considered as something in isolation, as one might have in the sixties and seventies. The notion of an art 'Indian in spirit and world- wide contemporary' has since grown into a strong trend. This group has therefore drawn strength from each other and negotiated a contemporary art of greater specificity and distinction.

- Biswajit Banerjee

C Douglas

Can you trace your journey as an artist with roots in the historical legacy of the Madras Art Movement? Have you transitioned from that lineage towards your own brand of internationalism and eclecticism?

Yes indeed, I can.

All new art movements begin to renew the language and vocabulary, eternally and recurring. In time they lose the fragility and turn out to be less moving. They stand still ending the osmosis and the discourse. Osmosis is perhaps the right word. The thin porous threshold no more allows the flow. The Madras Art Movement continues. The line as figure had been practiced by the early masters of this Movement. Its characteristic is expressionistic.

Where do you place Indian art of today vis a vis contemporary, international mainstream art?

Art history is not a singular monologue. Indian art today is within the dialogue.

How do you position your art practice in the globalized Postmodern scenario? Do you consider your artistic oeuvre as a part of a universal enquiry?

The individual-universal, universal-individual continuity have been the power and quality of great art.

Your paintings seem to pulsate with personal associations which are cathartic, nostalgic and self exploratory. Are your paintings a means of intense self-examination or do they present a poignant platform for social concerns?

Man is a social being. I and the other are interrelated. My works are certainly about self examination. I cannot possibly isolate them from other artists' works - a non hierarchical surface indeed. A collage work like Barthe's "Lovers Discourse"

Your works deal with poetic and metaphoric references of contemporary and urbanized sensibilities. Do you consider a work of art autonomous or are the original idea and the manifestation of an artist's intention intrinsically tied to it?

My paintings are lyrical. The works I have been doing for some time present the blind poet and butterflies; butterflies stare at you, from the fragments of poet's writings, words, with their eye like marks on their wings, which are, apparently to intimidate the predator. The poet is not blind! The inter-connectedness is moving, meaning and it is real. The egg, caterpillar, pupa, butterfly, is the becoming. Like a word reaches poet and he keeps writing, a word needs another word to make meaning. In Ramanujam's works the windows and doors are eyes observing you. His floating women, around him too have their gaze on you. Ramanujam is always looking at faraway distance. Then you travel with him to return with faith.



The Blind Poet and Butterflies



Mixed Media - Paper Mounted on Canvas



Size: 2



C DOUGLAS

Born 1951, Kerala

1971 - 76 - Diploma in Fine Arts, Govt. College of Arts and Crafts, Madras.

SOLO SHOWS

- 1982 - Gallery Am Horwath Haus - Murnau, Germany
- 1983 - Bayerisches Verines Bank, Garmish
- 1986 - European Patent Office Gallery, Munich
- 1992 - Sakshi Gallery, Madras - Bombay
- 1993 - Schoo's Gallery, Amsterdam
- 1996 - Sakshi Gallery, Bangalore, Madras & Bombay
- 2006 - Ashvitha Gallery, Madras 2006 - Akar Prakar, Calcutta - Jehangir Gallery, Mumbai
- 2012 - Focus Art Gallery, Madras

GROUP SHOWS

- 1995 - View from the Edge - Sakshi Gallery, Artists Beyond Boundaries, Netherlands
- Water Colour, A Wide Spectrum, Gallery Chemould, Mumbai
- 1996 - Looking Glass Self - Lakeeran Gallery, Bombay
- Indian Art Since Post Independence - Vadera Art Gallery, Bombay
- 1997 - Rediscovering Roots, Lima, 1998 - Cryptograms - Lakeeran Gallery, Mumbai
- 1999 - Embarkations, Sakshi Gallery, Mumbai
- 2000 - Intersection - Guild Gallery, Mumbai
- 2003 - Sites of Recurrence, Dakshinachitra, Chennai and Boras Museum, Sweden
- 2012 - Tactile - Latitude - 28, New Delhi

AWARDS

- 1980, 1990 - L.K.A. Madras, Bharat Bhavan Biennale Award, Bhopal
- 1991-93 - Government of India - Cultural Fellowship.
- 1992 - National Award for Painting, LKA, New Delhi
- 1994-96 - Cultural Fellowships, Government of India, New Delhi.
- 1994 - Invitation to work in Ceramics, UNESCO-Aschberg, Bursary for Visual Arts, European Ceramics Centre, Netherlands; Charles Wallace Trust Award, UK.