

THE ASIAN AGE

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Introspecting lives

THE ASIAN AGE. | PRIYANKA CHANDANI

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After a successful second iteration at three venues in Chennai this year, the retrospective is now at NGMA.



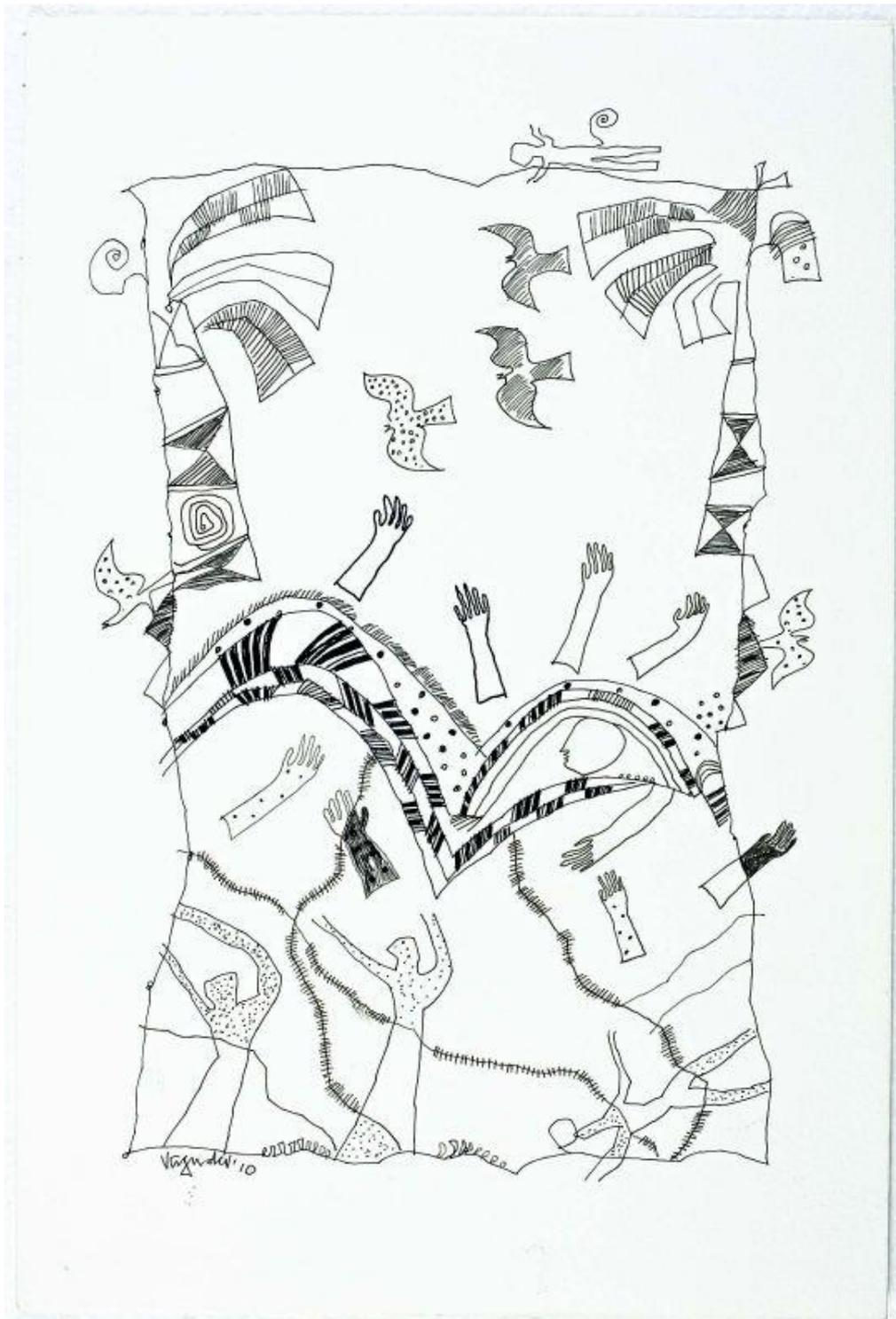
The artist was in the city during the opening days of his ongoing painting exhibition titled Inner Resonance – a return to sama: Six decades of cyclical rhythm, at National Gallery of Modern Art, NGMA.

In the mid-sixties, when a young graduate of the Madras Arts College dared to break away from the then urban conventions of modern art practices and created Cholamandal – an art village on the outskirts of Madras — it was noted as a radical move. And since then, veteran painter SG Vasudev’s work has never failed to take us into the thick of the debates and turmoil the sixties grappled with, though it was confined to the margins in mainstream Indian art.

“The retrospective of any artist who has consistently been at work for over five decades, is no longer about the artist per se. It also becomes the narrative of a nation, a region, a school, a style,” says SG Vasudev, while talking about his retrospective art and native vocabulary in his work.



The artist was in the city during the opening days of his ongoing painting exhibition titled Inner Resonance – a return to sama: Six decades of cyclical rhythm, at National Gallery of Modern Art, NGMA. Bringing together over 400 works, including some from the collections of the NGMA and private collectors, the exhibition maps the inner rhythms and spiralling resonance of the musical cycle that keeps returning to sama — (first beat) before it spins off the next avartana – (turn over). “Much of my work is triggered out of my deep response to classical Carnatic music. It has a resonance and I have used music as a symbol to bring together my five decades of interconnected work,” says the artist.



A parallel to veteran artists like Madhvi Parekh and Jatin Das, the subsequent five decades of the artist's work is seen through distinct periods with specific themes – Maithuna, Vriksha, Tree of Life, Tree of Life &

Death, Humanscapes, Earthscapes, Theatre of Life, She and He, and Rhapsody – a journey that defines his preoccupations with relationships, transience, nature and ecological concerns, performative aspects of life and the fire of desire.

“It comprises about 57 years of my work, I started in 1962 and I have gone through nearly seven series of different aspects of our daily life. All the feelings have been enveloped in these paintings,” explains the artist.



While the artist has stayed rooted to the medium of oil on canvas and drawings, he has also made significant departures into mediums like copper plates and tapestry, fostering new dynamics. However, the artist finds his solace in being traditional. “As an artist, I have gone on my way. I like artists experimenting with new things and involving technology in their work. However, I feel a great connection with drawing and painting in a traditional manner. My work is on paper and canvas. I use the traditional method in pursuing my art but make it contemporary so that people can connect to that,” he shares.

When asked about his source of inspiration, the artist reveals that he follows his imagination and experiences. “My ideas come from various sources be it music, literature or drama. I believe that as an artist, I am open to every idea and person as they can inspire you for your work,” muses the close friend of veteran playwright and actor Girish Karnad. “He exposed me to the best of literature in 1963 when he produced his

best work. I evolved with all the work that I have created while meeting a lot of people he introduced me to," adds Vasudev.

As of now, the artist is overwhelmed by the response of visitors belonging to all age groups. "People have evolved and they are admiring the way this exhibition is curated. I am surprised to see youngsters taking an interest in visual art," smiles the artist. The ongoing exhibition will conclude with a series of curated events in music, dance, theatre, film screenings and discussions.

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