



THE HINDU

SHOWCASE

Transcending a rarefied world

S.G. Vasudev's magnum retrospective chronicles his lifelong visual response to music, poetry and theatre

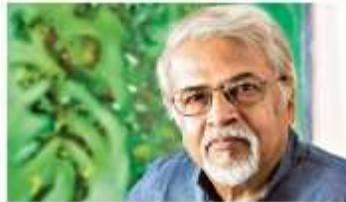
SHREYA KRISHNA

S.G. Vasudev has not created any new work in the last year and a half. He's taking a short break and it has served him well. "I am thinking what to do next," nominated the artist on a breezy afternoon. We were at the National Gallery of Modern Art, Bengaluru, home to *Inner Resonance - A Return to Sama*, comprising 300 works in multiple mediums. The retrospective had introduced art lovers to his complete artistic journey. With a canvas the expansive, Vasudev felt it ought to be shared with one and more people.

In *Inner Resonance*, edited by Sadanand Menon, travelled to Mumbai from Bengaluru. "I think it's important for a show like this to travel," said the 77-year-old artist who last showed in the city at Jehangir Art Gallery in 2011. "A retrospective is different from an exhibition because here people can see my complete journey. To put it all together has been quite a task which is why I haven't been able to do anything else. Now, I have written to NGMA Delhi and I want the show to travel there and also to Ahmedabad, Kolkata, Hyderabad, Kochi, and Goa."

Those familiar with Vasudev's art understand what he means. The desire to research is reflected in the innate sense to trigger dialogues and forge connections. The display of his work: paintings, copper reliefs and tapestries, bear testimony to that.

They are all his visual responses to poetry, music, theatre and craft traditions because Vasudev could never erode these influences.



Artistic evolution: (Top) 'Tree of Life', and (below) artist S.G. Vasudev. *SPICELAB/ANANDH*

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Close collaborations

Vasudev studied art at the Government College of Art, Chennai, when he remembers walking in any craft section he desired. His multidisciplinary approach took roots there. In K.C.S Pradeep, who was the then principal of the famed art college, Vasudev found a perfectly and mentor. The two envisioned a self-sustainable ecosystem along with S. Nandipati, Akkitham Narayanan, S. Paramashivan, Anila Jayash, A. Sekhraj, B.D. Sathish, C. Douglas, D. Venkatasubbu, P. Gopinath, V. Viswanathan, Premalata Seshach. The result was the Cholanmangal Artists' Village in Chennai, an important chapter in Vasudev's life. Ties with Cholanmangal remain intact to date as Vasudev regularly visits

his studio there. He has also had intense associations with writers and poets like U.R. Ananthamurthy, Girish Karnad and A.K. Ramanujan. The artist designed masks for Karnad's *Hayavadana* and theatrical sets for U.V. Karanth's plays. He was also engaged with Vamsi Yeliksa and Samskara adaptations of Ananthamurthy's novel directed by Pabitraama Reddy.

All this with his own astute world view and love for music set the artist on a very individualistic path. It's evident in his work starting with an early figurative done during his college days in his later series such as *Unhappy, She and He*, *Earthscapes*, *Manuscripts*, *Theatre of Life and Fantasy*.

On sight

It's hard to miss Vasudev's minimalist drawings based on A.K. Ramanujan's poetry with the works on display. After the celebrated writer and translator passed away in 1993, Vasudev selected

40-45 paintings based on his poems some of which are on display. Vasudev had designed the book jacket for Ramanujan's collection of poems, *Hokkavali Hondu* (*No flower in the Wood*) and the two had planned a collaboration which couldn't happen because of the poet's sudden demise.

Yet another crucial collaboration in his life has been with master weaver Subbarayalu. Unlike Bengaluru, there won't be a live-demonstration with Subbarayalu weaving in the gallery, but the viewers will be able to see the artistic tapestries bearing Vasudev's images.

Vasudev has taken art to the masses through *Ananya Dristya*, an art education initiative for students and art in the Park held on the first Sunday of every month in Bengaluru, in a park near to cultural institution Ravindra Kalakshetra, for everyone to come and see an artist closely at work.

He's always opted to take art beyond the confined world of scholars, fellow artists, poets, art buyers, writers and theatre artists. *Inner Resonance - A Return to Sama: Six Decades of Cyclical Rhythm* is ongoing at NGMA Mumbai, from until August 11.

Transcending a rarefied world

S.G. Vasudev's magnum retrospective chronicles his lifelong visual response to music, poetry and theatre

S.G. Vasudev has not created any new work in the last year and a half. He's taking a short break and it has served him well. "I am thinking what to do next," ruminated the artist on a breezy afternoon. We were at the National Gallery of Modern Art Bengaluru, home to *Inner Resonance - A Return to Sama* comprising 400 works in multiple mediums. The retrospective had introduced art lovers to his complete artistic journey. With a canvas that expansive, Vasudev felt it ought to be shared with more and more people.

So, *Inner Resonance*, curated by Sadanand Menon, travelled to Mumbai from Bengaluru. "I think it's important for a show like this to travel," said the 77-year-old artist who last showed in the city at Jehangir Art Gallery in 2014. "A retrospective is different from an exhibition because here people can see my complete journey. To put it all together has been quite a task which is why I haven't been able to do anything else. Now, I have written to NGMA Delhi and I want the show to travel there and also to Ahmedabad, Kolkata, Hyderabad, Kochi, and Goa."

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They are all his visual responses to poetry, music, theatre and craft traditions because Vasudev could never eschew these influences.

Close collaborations

Vasudev studied art at the Government College of Art, Chennai, where he remembers walking to any craft section he desired. His multi-disciplinary approach took roots there. In K.C.S Panicker, who was the then principal of the famed art college, Vasudev found a perfect ally and mentor. The two envisioned a self-sustainable eco-system along with S.Nandgopal, Akkitham Narayanan, S.Paramasivam, Anila Jacob, A.Selvaraj, BO Sailesh, C.Douglas. D.Venkatapathy, P.Gopinath, V.Viswanadhan, Premalata Seshadri. The result was the Cholamandal Artists' Village in Chennai, an important chapter in Vasudev's life. Ties with Cholamandal remain intact to date as Vasudev regularly visits his studio there. He has also had intense associations with writers and poets like U.R. Ananthamurthy, Girish Karnad and A.K. Ramanujan. The artist designed masks for Karnad's *Hayavadana* and theatrical sets for B.V. Karanth's plays. He was also engaged with *Vamsha Vriksha* and *Samskara*, adaptations of Ananthamurthy's novel directed by Pattabhirama Reddy.

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On sight

It's hard to miss Vasudev's minimalistic drawings based on A.K. Ramanujan's poetry with the works on display. After the celebrated writer and translator passed away in 1993, Vasudev selected 40-45 paintings based on his poems some of which are on display. Vasudev had designed the book jacket for Ramanujan's collection of poems, *Hokkulalli Hoovilla (No flower in the Navel)* and the two had planned a collaboration which couldn't happen because of the poet's sudden demise.

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Inner Resonance - A Return to Sama: Six Decades of Cyclical Rhythm *is ongoing at NGMA Mumbai, Fort until August 11.*

Link: <https://www.thehindu.com/entertainment/art/transcending-a-rarefied-world/article28414254.ece>