

Connecting Pieces of Memory

Posted on

What goes on inside an artist's mind is known only by them. Their complex thoughts translated into art tells a story. It is a reliving of the past. An attempt at self-healing and self-searching, which only the artist, as the composition's author, can interpret. Often, where one sees mangled matter, membrane-like contours, or a labyrinth is an artist's interaction with their thoughts and innermost promptings. Thabendran Krishnapriya is doing just that with her latest collection of paintings titled Fragmented, her second solo exhibition on display at the Barefoot Gallery, which will run till July 23, 2023.

Words Jennifer Paldano Goonewardane.



Transmit – VI

To transfer from one person or place to another, to pass on by or as if by inheritance. It relates to connecting with the mother and child.

Our past shapes our character and future. Krishnapriya is an artist whose work is a mirror of her past. Her journey as an artist is like an uncanny novel. She was a child born from chaos. 1987 Sri Lanka was volatile, in the south and north, two extreme points of turmoil wrought by insurrectionists. In the north of Sri Lanka, an Indian Peace Keeping Force had landed per the Peace Accord signed between India and Sri Lanka. Amid the chaos and movement restrictions, a woman goes into labor, but the ground circumstances prevent her from reaching a hospital in time, forcing her to give birth at home. The new mother, deprived of requisite medical care, succumbs, leaving the infant to be brought up by her extended family. Narrating her life story is vital for Krishnapriya because her lifelong desire for her mother, whom she never knew, defined her art. Growing up, she would watch other children receive their mothers' love, which she yearned dearly and searched for in her life.

She channeled her lifelong search for a mother's love into art. Art became an outlet for setting off her deepest emotions on paper, a blank space as a "mobility cane" to transform her invisible thoughts into visible ideas. It was a release of sadness

brought about by a profound loss that had created a deep recess in her that she hoped art would help heal. So, art became a healing process of trying to understand a mother's love for her child. The membrane-like drawings that have become the focal point of her artistic expressions are Krishnapriya's interpretation of the fetal membrane that protects the life growing within, the only known connection she has to her mother. Although she couldn't enjoy the physical warmth of her mother in this world, she was once the closest to her while growing inside her body.

Her unusual style is described by her Pakistani mentor Ali Raza as "arbitrary doodling", meticulous lines of a cartographer that grow into organic patterns and clusters. Behind her unusual art form of using microbiological diagrams is the influence of school science lessons, where her artistic prowess got channeled into drawing raw microscopic matter with artistic precision. She is the alchemist using intermittent color changes as if to depict various regions. But her lines are poetic and psychologically stimulating. Her drawings also bear political connotations. The turmoil brought about by political maneuverings changed the ground that they lived, causing countless deprivations, her mother and herself being victims of political power play.

Her unique style begins oddly. The initial framework is sketched with her nail that she fills with uneven squares, scribbled circles, wavy lines, short lines, and dots with contrasting colors, a complex cartography that captures the beauty of emotions, from grief to joy, in acrylic, pen, and ink. A professional artist and visiting lecturer at Jaffna University, Krishnapriya obtained her BA in Fine Arts from the University of Jaffna, followed by an MA in Art and Design from Beaconhouse National University in Lahore, Pakistan. What defines her art is not just the designs that are alluring and mysterious. Their miniature forms compel the connoisseur to appreciate them at close range to understand the minuscule shapes as metaphors for something more profound. She describes her work as a vast territory ranging from mystical experiences to visualization of events and everything.

She is inspired by Japanese artist Yayoi Kusama, recognized for her use of recurring patterns and psychedelic images to express multiple themes. Looking at Kusama's paintings, their inspirations, and their message, it is unsurprising that Krishnapriya takes after her style as she explores numerous themes, expressing her innermost feelings and channeling her experiences and visions into artistic productions. Their style similarities also echo congruency. They both have been molded by childhood experiences. Leaving Kusama's bizarre surrealist representations behind, Krishnapriya's art exudes a sense of magic and strange beauty, a relic of memory

perpetually locked in an untouched past. In narrating her experiences and inner thoughts and communicating to the world, Krishnapriya has cultivated an individualistic art form from the unknown, a much-prized personal visual language.



“Wholesome II and IV”

“This means contain substances necessary for growth, health, and good condition. If I describe something as wholesome, I approve of it because I think it will likely positively influence human’s behavior or mental state.”



Artist Thabendran Krishnapriya.



“Inner III”

Situated inside or further in internal, mental, and physical.



Configuration – III

An arrangement of parts or elements in a particular form, figure, or combination.



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