In the Heart of a Woman’s Art

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Highly detailed women’s portraits

With a simple love for the recreation of expressions, her’s is a quest, built over years of travelling the world and believing in the purity of experiences.

Words Sonali Kadurugamuwa

“When I look back on what I have seen and wanted to share them with as many

people as possible; that’s when I put them on canvas.” To Henrietta Wickramasinghe the inspiration behind the exhibition is women in general. Therefore, women should be given more focus and prominence in society and in life “and hence”, she explains the choice behind the themes on ‘women’ and the ‘female figure’ in her work. Furthermore, the many expressions of the unfolding human face and specially those of women who have been subject to many hardships and adverse weather conditions are what shape the brush strokes on her portraits.

For the past decade Henrietta had the privilege to be based in Indonesia and Thailand. This gave her the opportunity to explore some of the Eastern countries, visiting the ethnic communities of Bali, Manado, Jawa and Sumatra. Whilst in Bangkok she even visited the ethnic communities of Vietnam, Cambodia and particularly the ‘Long Neck’ or Kayan tribes that originated from Myanmar. Although Henrietta had travelled extensively through Europe, the Americas, Africa and Asia Pacific, she only paints people from the countries and cultures that most inspired her.

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Myanmar she recollects as a place where time had stood still. “It is like stepping into a time machine and going way back in time. The serene beauty is breathtaking,” while, in Vietnam the colours and vibrancy of the ‘Red Dao’ people, originating from 12th Century China, was a truly cultural experience for her. The hill tribes of Akha, Karen, Hanong Yao, Lisu, Lawa and Lahu tribes had contributed immensely to her paintings.

In Africa, Henrietta had been fascinated by the unique beauty and structure of its people and this was why many of her paintings also feature African women.

Apart from the oil and acrylic paintings and portraits, Henrietta extends her art materials to charcoal drawings. “However,” she continues, “these are limited to my close family members only.” The exhibition, however, showcases a collection of paintings where the use of colour expresses the moods of the art work, according to Henrietta. Since the Long Neck Tribes wear colourful attire and alongside a vibrant culture, “those paintings are more colourful and vibrant.” In comparison, the

paintings of Latin Dancers are similarly bright; exuding the enthusiasm in their rich culture and environments.

Speaking on her ongoing ground work Henrietta says that she is preparing to open her own gallery showcasing her paintings, handicrafts and jewellery made from semi-precious stones from around the world. Bringing to reality a lifelong dream ‘Eastern Treasures’ will see light in the near future with the launch scheduled for the end of this year.

Henrietta Wickramasinghe intends to set-up another exhibition once she has completed more paintings, within the next two years. “My ambition is for the next exhibition to be in the Middle East. In the meantime, ‘Eastern Treasures’ will give the patrons an opportunity to bask in a comfortable and relaxing milieu of an array of handmade arts and accessories; to make this not just a gallery to display art, but display a place for every woman to be in.”

Art Exhibition, ‘A Tribute to Women’ will be held on March 14th and 15th at the Lionel Wendt Gallery

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