



Mangroves of Bolgoda

Ifthikar Cader first picked up a paint brush to dabble in water colours at the age of 16. However, it would be many decades later that a career blossoms out of painting his heart's desire with oils on canvas. Self-taught in the many nuances of art, today he presents his ninth exhibition, 'Tradition of Plein-air Realism', with a collection of up to 60 paintings.

Words Prasadini Nanayakkara

Only since his retirement from the shackles of the corporate world in 1993 could Ifthikar Cader delve into the world of art. Simply aware of impressionist painting as a teenager, the film of Vincent Van Gough played by actor Kirk Douglas left a lasting impression and spurred him on to experiment with oils. However, fortune wasn't in favour of his first choice of career as an artist and instead saw him enter into the world of business. "But my heart was in art," says Ifthikar.

With much time on his hands following his retirement decades later, Ifthikar took up oil painting with relish, painting simply for the pleasure it gave him. "I surprised myself at how disciplined I became," he reflects. In the early days the advent of the Internet paved the way for much needed access to resources. Soon he found his niche in painting landscapes, while developing techniques and styles. He describes it as impressionistic

realism, where the essence is captured on site and the more detailed work is laboured on in the studio. "There is much difference between painting from life and painting from a photograph," he explains, where a photograph lacks the spontaneity and emotions that nature imparts and doesn't reveal subtleties such as the shades even in shadows.

His first exhibition held in 1996 proved to be of much success and he hasn't looked back since. Gradually it is in the winter of his life that Ifthikar cultivated a wealth of knowledge on the many aspects of art right down to the selection of the right brands of artist colours. With a versatile collection of landscapes around the Island, his pieces comprise of lush greenery, beaches, lakes and wildlife and impressions from a visit to the Himalayan regions of Pakistan. A lone elephant in Wilpattu peacefully feeding in the wild, a breathtaking view of the Dalada Maligawa, the swamp in Bolgoda Lake are among a vivid and captivating portfolio. To the untrained eye, these paintings simply encompass an evocative beauty conveyed through fine brush strokes and blends of natural hues. "There is no end to learning painting," he enthuses. "And I have never been happier in my life than when I started painting professionally," he adds.

Ifthikar Cader's latest collection will be displayed to the public at his next exhibition titled "Tradition of plein-air realism", on December 8-9, 2012 at the Lionel Wendt.

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