Meta Real by Chandraguptha Thenuwara

Posted on



Hope.

Chandraguptha Thenuwara's annual memorial exhibition 'Meta-Real', running from July, offers a thought-provoking reflection on the nation's socio-political landscape since the 1980s. Significantly, this exhibition, held annually on the 23rd of July, commemorates the events of 'Black July', a series of Anti-Tamil Pogroms that occurred in 1983. 'Meta-Real' serves as a platform to bridge the gap between the past and the present, encouraging viewers to contemplate longstanding and unresolved issues that have persisted for four decades. The exhibition prompts contemplation on the potential implications for the democratic future of the country.

Each year, Chandraguptha Thenuwara exhibits a new body of work that documents and comments on the sociopolitical climate of present-day Sri Lanka. Chandraguptha Thenuwara's ongoing inquiry into themes deeply rooted in his political activism is encapsulated in these presentations.

This year, the artist's memorial exhibitions coincide with a contentious period in the nation's history, taking place in the months leading up to the presidential election. Recognizing the importance of this moment, Thenuwara draws parallels between the 'political dementia' of today and the narratives that have emerged in the past during periods of political instability.

Chandraguptha Thenuwara is renowned for an interdisciplinary practice that explores the politics of memory and violence. Thenuwara's diverse oeuvre includes paintings, drawings, installations, sculptures, public monuments, lectures, and curatorial and collaborative projects. He is the founder of the Vibhavi Academy of Fine Arts (VAFA), an artist-run school nurturing the burgeoning Sri Lankan contemporary art scene. His work has been featured in notable exhibitions, including most recently, 'Pop South Asia: Artistic Explorations in the Popular' at Sharjah Art Foundation (2022), 'Indra's Net' curated by Sandhini Poddar at Frieze London (2022), and 'Notations on Time' curated by Sandhini Poddar and Sabih Ahmed at Ishara Art Foundation (2023).

In 'Meta Real,' Thenuwara reaches back in time to depict landscapes of destruction in the aftermath of the 1988-1989 'Beeshanaya,' inviting contemplation into the trajectory of Sri Lankan history and drawing focus on the issues that continue to remain unresolved. The imagery of a cut-down tree, a blocked road, spread-out

lifeless bodies, and destroyed electricity wires exists within an atmosphere of stillness. Through an array of classical genres and mediums, including drawings, still-life paintings, figurative paintings, and a sculptural object, Thenuwara offers perspective as well as commentary, encouraging the audience to reevaluate the narratives that govern our socio-political climate and be reminded of the weight of history.

‘Meta-Real’ will run until 13.08.2024 at Saskia Fernando Gallery. The program for the exhibition will include a series of artist walkthroughs of the exhibition.



Landscape which cannot be escaped.



Tyre



Artist Chandraguptha Thenuwara.