

Reflections of the World Around Them

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“Delightful Colours” was a teacher-student collaborative exhibition of paintings in rich, evocative colors.

Words Jennifer Paldano Goonewardane.

A great smattering of colors across canvasses, human faces in transcendence, animals, and nature in surreal beauty, portraits and abstracts raving in sublimity and sanguine moods. Artist R Kouwshigan and six students transformed the ordinary into a visual pageant of imagery and colors when they displayed 78 paintings under the theme “Delightful Colours,” providing a glimpse into a collective collaboration of creative minds. The exhibition was the 13th for Kouwshigan, a dream come true after three years of pandemic-induced constraints, which opened at the J D A Perera Gallery, Colombo, inaugurated by Jagath Ravindra, Dean and Senior Lecturer, Faculty of Visual Arts, University of the Visual and Performing Arts.

As an art instructor, Kouwshigan opened the doors to his students to display their work with his, making it a collaborative exercise where the teacher and his students shared equal ground and visibility. This time three young Sri Lankan artists, Joshitha Raj Kumar, Swathi Sivanesan, and Sai Dhinakar Kouwshigan, displayed their work along with three Indian counterparts, Kriti Kashyap, Alefiya Jafferjee and Eesha Sinha. Their works recreate the ordinary with great style and grandiose exaggeration to provide remarkable visual experiences.

The artists have explored varied themes in their paintings. Together, they have explored various art forms, dabbled in Indian folk art, and showcased Sri Lankan culture, tradition, and places. In the teacher’s words, the paintings displayed the best “masterpieces” of the artists, a personal interpretation of some everyday images and scenery, reflecting their take on something that had emerged in their universe of unending imagination. They range from the divine to the awe-inspiring, in acrylic and black pen, in rich blues, greens, reds and electric and golden yellows,

and shades of pink and fuscia, embracing multiple themes, artists playing at various interpretations, the Buddha's serene countenance, the geometric designs of Mandala art woven into cars and bridges and nature, of trees in autumn, sunsets and ballerinas and Kandyan dancers, birds in flight and on trees and dreamlike portraits of human faces. Human emotions captured on canvas are evocative. They explore the beauty of the natural world. There is a great appreciation of nature. R Kouwshigan's 3D clay art mural on canvas, a stylized horse, and the influence of the extravagance of Thanjavur art reflect an artist's journey into widening his creative repertoire.

An art teacher for 40 years, Kouwshigan proudly claims to be a self-taught artist who cut his teeth in the field by working in print media as an illustrator and cartoonist. He persevered in his quest to expand his talent into a scale that would take him to India's artistic capital of Shanthi Nikethan in Calcutta in 2018. The renowned home of Nobel Laureate and India's beloved polymath of art and literature, Rabindranath Tagore was chosen by Kouwshigan to display his work with a student, becoming the first professional Sri Lankan artist to do so. He vows to continue his journey as an artist and a teacher, painting the beauty of nature and everything that evokes imagination worthy of drawing on canvas.

