Rekha

Posted on



Brass wire offered the artist an exciting new avenue for bringing his artistic visions to life, transforming his lines into dynamic forms of sculpture (2025).

Paradise Road Saskia Fernando (PRSFG) Gallery hosts Tilak Samarawickrema's solo exhibition, Rekha. This presentation will bring together Samarawickrema's tapestries, line drawings, etchings, animated films, and sculptural work created between 1970 and 2025, celebrating the depth and breadth of his multi-disciplinary practice.

Over a nearly six-year career, Samarawickrema moved fluidly across disciplines with a polymathic vision rooted in heritage while synthesizing a distinct visual language that derived its sensibilities from European design movements. He collaborated with artisans to reinterpret geometry, color, and space, transforming traditional techniques and motifs to create a new artistic language that resonates with the dynamic expressions of a contemporary global landscape.

Tilak Samarawickrema is widely recognized for revitalizing Sri Lankan crafts through his work at the National Design Center of Sri Lanka and his collaborations with traditional weavers in Talagune, Udadumbara. Much of Samarawickrema's practice as an architectural student in Italy in the 1970s was shaped by exploration of the line and the curvilinear character inherent in the Sinhala alphabet and Sri Lankan mural painting. His drawings and etchings emulate the roundedness of the script with an animated quality, through which he conjured folk imagery, much of which was drawn from the fable of the court jester, Andare. In 1974, Samarawickrema expanded on the world of Andare with an animated film produced by Coronna Cinematografica based on his line drawings, which was subsequently presented as an Italian entry at the Oberhausen Film Festival.

Writing on the dynamic nature of Samarawickrema's work, legendary Italian designer Bruno Munari noted, "If Tilak suggests the head of an ox with a decorated horn and then depicts only a part of the back and then disappears, I see all the ox, and I also know that it is decorated and so I can think of a festivity. This mode of drawing of Tilak's is, therefore, an essential mode, not boring and pedantic, but stimulating so that also those who look at the drawing are compelled to participate with pleasure in the reading of the visual message."

Among his most iconic works are also the bold and contemporary Dumbara tapestries the artist created with Dumbara weavers from Thalgunne,

Udadumbara, over 35 years following his return to Sri Lanka. Samarawickrema was deeply influenced by his exposure to the design movements in Italy, particularly the Italian radical design movement in the 1970s, and incorporated the bold and geometric outlook of the movement into the reimagined tapestries. His tapestries drew worldwide acclaim and were exhibited at leading design museums, such as the Deutsches Textilmuseum in Krefeld and the Norsk Form Design Museum in Oslo. They were sold for many years at the MoMA Design Store in New York from 1992 to 2000. Tilak's textile range has been variously described as having an innate ability to join two worlds and two cultures together.

Samarawickrema's illustrious international career has included exhibitions at Gallery Ragini, New Delhi; KALĀ, Colombo; and Gallery Art Motif, New Delhi, this year.

In addition to these, his work was exhibited at the Norsk Form – The Architecture and Design Museum, Oslo (1998); Deutsches Textilmuseum, Krefeld (1995); Galerie Smend, Cologne (1994); Design Centre, Brussels (1994); SHED Design Gallery, Milan (1992); Rizzoli Gallery, New York (1979); and the 12th São Paulo Biennale (1973).

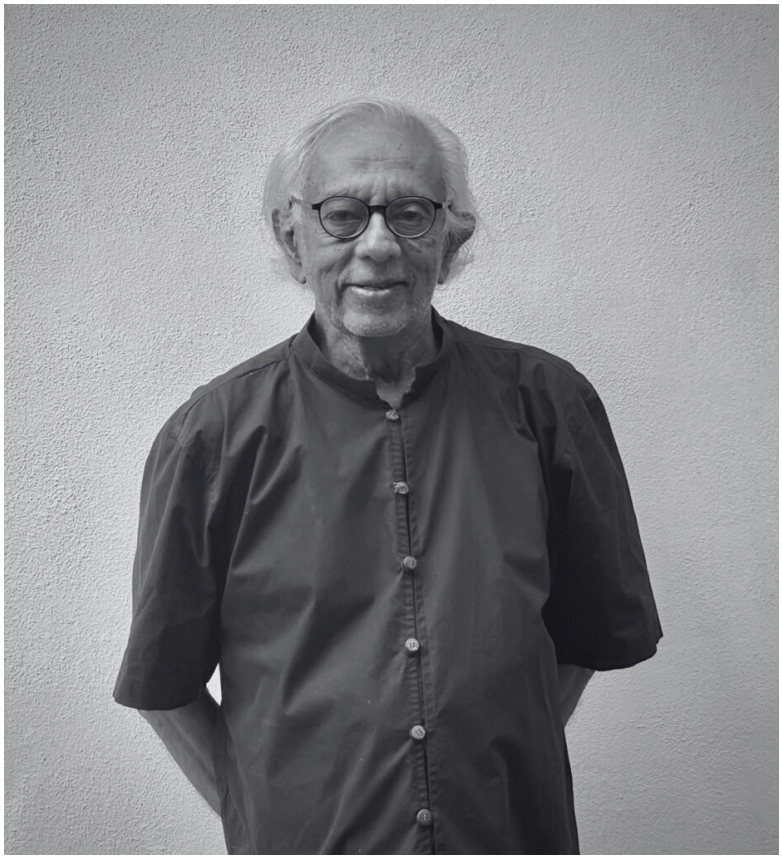
Till May 15, 2025
PRSFG, 138 Galle Road, Colombo 3. 10 am – 6pm



A line drawing boasts a captivating aesthetic that seamlessly combines sharp, dynamic lines with intricate details (1980).



The graceful curve of the line flows over the paper, a dynamic expression that resonates with life (1973).



Tilak Samarawickrema, Architect, Designer and Artist.



Vibrant handwoven cotton tapestries (2008).