



Chemould Prescott Road
CONTEMPORARY ART GALLERY

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Untitled (triptych), natural dyes and hand embroidery on cotton fabric

Signs Taken for Wonders

Lavanya Mani

Preview: Thursday | March 14 | 2019 | 7.00 pm onwards

March 15 - April 30, 2019

Lavanya Mani harnesses traditional domestic craft techniques to explore histories, trade, social dynamics. Having researched textile techniques through her college days, her chosen medium has remained to be *Kalamkari*. The Kalamkari technique itself is replete with its own history and Lavanya continues to layer the fabric with her manifestations of historic and miniature references combined with contemporaneity, providing her audience with an optic of both the past and the present.

"Signs taken for Wonders" is often regarded as the root of the quest for knowledge. Wonders can be extraordinary phenomena, an emotional state or a curious experience. The best-known manifestation of early modern wonder was the curiosity cabinet, often called *Kunstkammer* or *Wunderkammer*, or "wonder-rooms".

In the new body of work, Mani's use of colours is rich, and the paintings are filled with multispecies. The life of shells, herbarium, underwater life, snakes, fossils float gloriously on specially prepared layered surfaces.

Her work inhabited by these wonderous creatures is a world when multispecies had more agency.

The exhibition will also comprise of an installation of an ark – (a pre-modern Noah's Ark of you like). The Mughal miniature painting referenced here, Mani has looked at the work of Miskin (housed at the British Museum): *"The animals complain to the raven of their mistreatment at the hands of man"*.

The works in this show straddle myth, science, nature, art and history. Much like the cabinet of curiosities, and through the use of natural dyeing and handcrafting, they attempt to draw attention to the complex systemic phenomena that comprise a living planet. If modernism was the beginning of anthropocene, could the stories depicted within these works be seen as a cautionary tale?

As Donna Haraway says, "Earth/Gaia is both maker and destroyer, and is not a resource to be exploited or ward to be protected or a nursing mother promising nourishment. Earth/terra is made up of ongoing multispecies stories and practices of becoming - with in times that remain at stake, in precarious times, in which the world is not finished and the sky has not fallen — yet."

Lavanya Mani (b) 1977, Hyderabad

Lavanya obtained her Bachelor's and Master's degrees in painting from the Sir J.J. School of Art in Mumbai. In 2001 she received her Ph.D from the Department of Art History & Aesthetics at the Faculty of Fine Arts, Maharaja Sayajirao University, Baroda.

Lavanya Mani's multi-layered works are a collage of the artist's thoughts and ideas expressed through a combination of several different media, most notably various textiles that she has dyed, printed or otherwise worked on. The traditional textile-crafts like kalamkari that she references along with her muted palette give the artist's audiences a sense of nostalgia, while the iconic images she uses allude to very contemporary issues.

The Lavanya held her first solo show, 'In Praise of Folly', at Chemould Prescott Road, Mumbai, in 2009. Amongst the most recent group exhibitions in which her works have been featured are: 'Whorled Explorations': Kochi Muziris Bienalle, curated by Jitish Kallat, Aspinwall House, Fort Kochi, Kerala, India 2014; 'Drawing Seven Decades of Indian Drawing', co-curated by Prayag Shukla along with Annapurna Garimella and Sindhura Jois DM, celebrating 25 years of Gallery Espace, IGNC, New Delhi, 2014-15; 'Aesthetic Bind: Floating World', celebrating 50 years of Contemporary art, curated by Geeta Kapur at Gallery Chemould Prescott road, Mumbai, 2014-15; 'The Fabric of India', at the Victoria and Albert Museum, London, 2015; A Beast, A God and a Line curated by Cosmin Costinas, Dhaka Art Summit, Bangladesh, 2018; Para Site, Hong Kong, 2018 which travelled to partner institutions TS1 Yangon, Myanmar in 2018; Museum of Modern Art, Warsaw, Poland in 2018; Connecting Threads: Textiles in Contemporary Practice curated by Tasneem Zakaria Mehta & Puja Vaish, Dr. Bhau Daji Lad Mumbai City Museum, Mumbai, India, 2018-19

The artist lives and works in Vadodara and Gandhinagar, Gujarat, India

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******Some of the works follow in the next pages******



Herbarium (triptych), detail, natural dyes on cotton fabric, 72 x 48 inches