



PRESS RELEASE

Migrations

PRANEET SOI

18 November - 31 December 2021

Vadehra Art Gallery

D-53 Defence Colony, New Delhi 110024

Monday to Saturday, 10am - 6pm

Vadehra Art Gallery is pleased to present an exhibition by artist Praneet Soi titled *Migrations* at D-53 Defence Colony, New Delhi.

The body of work on display consists of paintings on canvas, created in the artist's studio in Amsterdam and while in residency at the Luceberthuis in Bergen-Binnen, in North Holland. It includes ceramic tiles that were painted and drawn upon by Soi at a ceramic atelier in the region of Le Maupas, in Sussey, France. Soi used his time in rural Burgundy to work en plein-air, allowing his

hand primacy in the images that were etched out in special ceramic pencils, wash like under-glazes and deep over-glazes upon the tiles.

Migrations, the name given to this exhibition underlines a conversation between pattern and figuration, an exploration that has been strongly marked by Soi's work with craftsmen over the course of the last decade in the valley city of Srinagar, in Kashmir. These engagements have renewed within his work a sensitivity to pattern. While working with motifs gleaned from the city's rich Sufi culture the thematic of a bird appeared. Soi proceeded to explore this thematic over the body of works displayed in this exhibition, which marks his return to Delhi after a period of 5 years.

Birds migrate, as do patterns and images, filtered as they are through the innumerable communications that result from their transmission. Attuned to migration, Soi oscillates between the Netherlands and Kolkata. His family, originally from Lahore moved to Bengal during the partition of the country in 1947. The push and pull of such movements ignites a desire for stability - one that can only be attained through hybridity. The works on display across *Migrations* articulate this thinking, wedding a polymorphic narrative to the semantics of image construction.

Across the exhibition the exploration of the patterns that form the bird motif is distributed across a tableau of imagery that has Soi pointing to his recent journeys in the Occupied Palestinian Territories. The large canvas titled *The Bull-Bull and the Olive Tree* is emblematic of this. The branches of an ancient olive tree said to have been planted by Romans in Sebastia (Palestine), frames a bird motif, that of a Bull-Bull within which a view of the city of Srinagar is inserted.

The works also utilize his immediate landscape, that of Amsterdam and underline how differing landscapes often butt against each other. *My Coordinates - I* which has the central leaf like pattern, gleaned from the tomb of the Sufi saint Bul-Bul Shah in Srinagar, juxtaposed next to a triangle in which plants from his back-yard are laid in in a soft grisaille. This triangular shape, who's proportions refer to a painting by De Chirico titled *The Enigma of Fate* that Soi examined often in the Kunstmuseum in Basel also reappears in the nocturne, as does the striped blue pattern laid out in gentle washes that fragments the composition, an abstracted façade of the Twin-Towers. Within *Nocturne* this same pattern is inserted into a human outline, one that Soi often uses within his oeuvre, that of a man carrying another piggy-back. Such migrations also allow for experimentation. Soi was a student In the United States when the events of 9/11 unfolded. The image of the man carrying another originates from a media image of a subsequent blast in Kabul. As he says, "the imagery originating from Ground Zero looked like that from an action movie, while imagery from the subsequent invasion of Afghanistan pictured a medieval culture". Soi makes note of the harsh lens of representation embedded within the media-image.

Soi's narratives are open ended. Patterns serve as ground upon which images, wrought in different registers, are laid out. Washes, patterns laid out in low relief and drawings, often executed en plein-air mark a return to materiality, to the primacy of the hand. Upon the canvases the drawings are etched out in silverpoint, a medieval technique. Unlike graphite it is permanent and cannot be erased. Silver oxidizes over time and these drawings will grow warmer over the years, a gradual transformation that allows Soi to link his use of photography in collecting material to his extensive use of drawing. Within *Migrations* two photographic images from his archive, used as references

within this body of work have been placed as keys, shedding a light upon how he sees images as being composite structures.

ABOUT THE ARTIST

Born in 1971 in Kolkata, Praneet Soi completed a BFA and MFA in painting at the Faculty of Fine Arts, Maharaja Sayajirao University of Baroda, following which he worked in the advertising industry in New Delhi. He went on to do a second master's from the University of California at San Diego. Oscillations of place have framed Soi's practice, which identifies over time patterns that emerge from an investigation of his extended social and economic landscape.

Soi has had several solo exhibitions, including the Mosaic Rooms, London (2019); Calouste Gulbenkian Museum in Lisbon, Portugal (2018); CCA Deri Londonderry, UK (2017); Dr Bhau Daji Lad Museum, Mumbai (2017); Vadehra Art Gallery, New Delhi (2016, 2011 and 2009); Van Abbe Museum, Eindhoven, Netherlands (2016); Experimenter, Kolkata (2015); Martin van Zomeren, Amsterdam, Netherlands (2012); Museo Experimental El Eco, Mexico City, Mexico (2011); and ARTSPACE, Sydney, Australia (2011), among others. His group participations include the Museum of Modern Art, Warsaw, Poland (2018); Dhaka Art Summit, Bangladesh (2018); 6th Asian Biennale, Taiwan (2017); Sharjah Biennale, UAE (2016); Sursock Museum, Beirut, Lebanon (2016); Kochi–Muziris Biennale, Kochi, India (2016); Today Art Museum, Beijing, China (2016); the 5th Guangzhou Triennial, China (2015); the Witte De With Centre for Contemporary Art, Rotterdam, Netherlands (2014); the National Gallery of Modern Art, New Delhi (2013); the Kiran Nadar Museum of Art, Noida, India (2012); and the 54th Venice Biennale, India Pavilion (2011), to name a few.

His work is included in several collections, including the Ishara Art Foundation and the Prabhakar Collection, Dubai; the Van Abbe Museum, Eindhoven; the Kiran Nadar Museum of Art, New Delhi; the Irish Museum of Modern Art, Dublin; and the Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam.

Soi has also completed several residencies, most recently at the Irish Museum of Modern Art in 2017; the Pompgemaal Atelier (Den Helder), Mondriaan Foundation, Netherlands in 2015; and Stiftung Laurenz-Haus, Basel, Switzerland in 2014. He was also granted a research fellowship at the Smithsonian Institute in Washington DC for studying illuminated manuscripts at the Sackler and Freer Galleries in 2014.

The artist lives and works in Amsterdam.

ABOUT VADEHRA ART GALLERY

Established in 1987, Vadehra Art Gallery is among the most well-respected art galleries in India representing a roster of artists spanning four generations. Modern masters like M.F. Husain, Ram Kumar, S.H. Raza and Tyeb Mehta find prime spot in the gallery's calendar alongside the subsequent generation of modernists like Arpita Singh, Nalani Malani, Gulammohammed Sheikh and Rameshwar Broota. VAG's contemporary programme includes some of the most exciting names in Indian art such as Atul Dodiya, Shilpa Gupta, Anju Dodiya, N.S. Harsha, Jagannath Panda, as well as young emerging talent. As a key artistic interlocutor to audiences in India the gallery expanded its exhibition programme in 2007 to exhibit important names from the international contemporary art scene. Since then VAG has

exhibited works of significant international artists including Yoko Ono, Wolfgang Laib, Bernd and Hilla Becher, Francis Bacon and Lucian Freud. Vadehra Art Gallery ventured into publishing in 1996, finding a crucial need for adequate documentation, critical writing, and quality reproduction of images. In the last two decades the gallery has published hundreds of illustrated exhibition catalogues, and several important artist monographs, some in collaboration with international publishing house, Prestel.