



PRESS RELEASE

Stomach Studio

N.S. HARSHA

2 March – 2 May 2022

Vadehra Art Gallery

D-53 Defence Colony, New Delhi 110024

Monday to Saturday, 10 a.m. – 6 p.m.

Vadehra Art Gallery is pleased to present an exhibition by artist N.S. Harsha titled *Stomach Studio* at D-53 Defence Colony, New Delhi. Passionately engaged with the idea of art as social practice, Harsha tackles issues surrounding globalization and evolving cultural heritage by sensitively entering a dialogue between traditional Indian forms of painting as well as popular culture, thus expanding the locus of 'I' to include a broader definition of 'we' over time, space and definition. Often, his work features a metaphorical digestion or translation of the larger cosmos into individual experience through quotidian acts like sleeping and eating.

In an essay about the show and works titled *The Worlding of the Portrait*, art critic and curator Gayatri Sinha writes:

“N.S. Harsha gives us a manner of painting which has to be read rather than viewed. In the performative act of moving closer and then further away from each work, or reading it left to right, we engage with an extraordinary language of painting that asks us to look beyond the world of art. Drawing on resemblances across time to the painted panoramas of the East, temple architectural ornamentation of lesser beings, school rooms charts, quotidian acts of a rural economy or the schemata of the Indian miniature, Harsha creates a polyphony of portraits. Seemingly repeated in endless fashion, these nevertheless bear the consistency of music notes, all similar but different. One may sense in his body of work an appetite for a great, sweeping view of communities: in short, a worlding of the portrait.

The present suite of works renders Harsha’s view of the contemporary moment with deep compassion and a searing irony. This is the image of our time : rows upon rows of people being given the RT-PCR test, the tools of their occupation borne with both humour and vulnerability. At the core is the imaging of migration, the subject enshrined in epic literature and biblical lore as much as in the vast movements across borders in the 20th century. The uniformity of linear arrangements, so distinctive in his work, is broken as migrating families gather in huddled clusters, seeking the warmth of community. Human and animal forms – monkeys, elephants, rats, cows—appear virtually interchangeably, gesturing to the folkloric as much as an observation of quotidian acts of survival. Even as abjection is punctured by humour, the cosmos is always proximate, descending on his canvas with vast planetary mobility. The humble *diya*, the domestic wood fire and the distant star all come together to create pools of illumination. The trail of smoke across the canvas becomes an indictment of the reading of the dark times of the pandemic.

What we see then is a demonstration of enormous ability, of the dualities of chaos and order, of vast cosmologies and small human gestures, of darkness punctured by manifold natural sources of light. Standing at an inscrutable distance, Harsha says “An artist has to have that position otherwise we get consumed by the world and whatever it has to offer.”

We’re happy to welcome visitors to the gallery, where we’re undertaking all safety protocols, and are also pleased to make engaging with the show a virtual possibility as well. To view the show virtually, please visit our website for a multi-dimensional mapping of the show. An e-catalogue is also available on request.

As part of the show’s programming, N.S. Harsha will be in conversation with fellow artist and curator Anita Dube on Saturday, 5 March at 11:30 am at the gallery.

For all inquiries, please write to art@vadehraart.com.

ABOUT THE ARTIST

Born in 1969, N.S. Harsha completed a bachelor's of fine arts in painting from the Chamarajendra Academy of Visual Arts (CAVA), Mysore, and a master's of fine arts in painting from the Faculty of Fine Arts, Maharaja Sayajirao University of Baroda. A major survey of Harsha's work took place at the Mori Art Museum, Tokyo, in 2017. He has also had several noteworthy solo exhibitions, including the Dallas Museum of Art (2016); Victoria Miro, London (2015, 2009); Kule e.V. at DAAD, Berlin (2013); Institute of International Visual Arts (INIVA), London (2009); Bodhi Gallery, New York (2008); and Maison Hèrmes, Tokyo and Osaka (2008). His group exhibitions include the Kochi–Muziris Biennale (2014); the Moscow Biennial of Contemporary Art (2013); the Dojima Biennial, Osaka (2013); the Adelaide International Biennial (2012); the Asian Art Museum, San Francisco (2012); the Yokohama Triennial (2011); Lalit Kala Akademi, New Delhi (2011); the Bienal de São Paulo (2010); Goethe-Institut/ Max Mueller Bhavan, New Delhi (2010); La Casa Escendida, Madrid (2008); Museum of Contemporary Art, Antwerp (2008); the Chicago Cultural Center (2007); Auditorium Parco della Musica, Rome (2007); and the Museum of Fine Arts, Berne (2007), to name a few. He was also a participant in the major international touring exhibition *Indian Highway* at the Serpentine Gallery, London, in 2008 (followed by five major museums all over the world through 2012), and *Chalo! India: A New Era of Indian Art* at the Mori Art Museum in 2008 (touring to Seoul and Vienna in 2009). Harsha received the prestigious DAAD Scholarship in 2012, and was awarded the Artes Mundi Prize in 2008. The artist lives and works in Mysore, India.

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, Nalini 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.