

An abstract painting by Jagath Weerasinghe, featuring a complex composition of colors and textures. The upper portion is dominated by warm, golden-brown and ochre tones, with some white and light blue brushstrokes. Below this, there are vibrant green and dark brown areas, interspersed with white and pinkish-red strokes. The overall style is expressive and layered, suggesting a sense of depth and history.

JAGATH WEERASINGHE
Discovery of Histories

PRSG

138 Galle Road Colombo 03

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09.01.2025 - 13.02.2025

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In *Discovery of Histories*, Jagath Weerasinghe presents a gradual yet profound shift in his artistic practice, which spans over four decades. Shifting from his earlier critique of the ethnolinguistic nationalism that fueled decades of violence in Sri Lanka, the works in this exhibition engage with the wider, increasingly fragmented political landscape of the world. Created between 2020 and 2024, these new works reflect the deep social and political upheavals brought on by the COVID-19 pandemic and political turmoil in Sri Lanka, alongside growing global unrest. Weerasinghe's gestural brushstrokes, sporadic and charged with energy, mirror his attempt to grasp the bewildering and flawed logic behind global liberalism and its repercussions. Through these works, he explores how systemic injustices have created an escalating wave of violence and suffering for innocent people worldwide.

The series *Under the Dark Sky* poignantly captures the uncertain and unsettling atmosphere that emerged in the wake of the pandemic. The works in this series reflect not only the social and economic upheavals caused by COVID-19, but also other globally destabilizing forces; the political uprising in Sri Lanka during the economic crisis and the war in Gaza. The sombre palette and discordant brushstrokes essays a pervasive sense of anxiety and discord, as the artist grapples with the turmoil of the past decade. Weerasinghe not only contends with the reckoning that has emerged in the face of mass suffering but also notes the possibility for optimism and change driven by collective action. The series imagines a future in which the people's struggle causes disruption to the status quo, disrupting existing power structures.

In *Discovery of Histories*, Weerasinghe revisits the motif of the 'ruined' stupa, which has been a recurrent motif throughout his practice. In earlier series, the stupa represented the artist's disillusionment with the way Buddhism's peaceful teachings were often appropriated to justify violence. In *Discovery of Histories: Ruined Stupa*, however, Weerasinghe reimagines the stupa as a symbol of optimism and strength. He represents the stupa as a relic rising tall against the sky, its ancient form a testament to the passage of time and the possibility of a new beginning. This reimagined stupa serves as an emblem of possibility, calling for a rethinking of historical trajectories and the construction of a new political order in Sri Lanka—one that transcends ethnic divisions and attempts to reconcile the lingering scars of the past. Thus *Discovery of Histories: Explorers Have Eyes and Guns*, with its colonial figures standing against the ruins is a call to rethink histories and build new trajectories. The artist Weerasinghe asserts the need to take control of our narratives, and assert our enduring presence within it- while rethinking our histories.

Weerasinghe's works are deeply autobiographical, often positioning himself as both a helpless bystander who passively observes the unfolding chaos and the victim within a flawed system that mobilises religious fervour and rhetoric to perpetuate violence. The artist evokes the image of the bull, referenced in Pablo Picasso's work, to draw stark parallels between the historical and contemporary climates of political carnage.

The bull, ensnared between the proverbial dragon and snakes, becomes a poignant symbol of the struggle of the masses, caught in the crossfire of competing forces beyond their control. Through this powerful imagery, Weerasinghe highlights the enduring and tragic intersection of power, religion, and violence.

While the artist's early works were marked by an inability to comprehend the brutal violence and bloodshed that defined Sri Lanka's post-independence landscape and the guilt of witnessing ethno-nationalist violence unfold, *Discovery of Histories* shifts focus to the underlying forces that drive such violence. The artist's gestural language, once dominated by youthful anger and righteous frustration, now captures the disarray and confusion that has characterised his attempt to rationalise the seemingly irreconcilable political and social dilemmas. His works no longer merely reflect disillusionment but evolve into an observation of the systemic issues that perpetuate extremism and violence, offering a critical view of the forces shaping contemporary global conflicts.



Discovery of Ceylon : Ruined Stupa, 2024 Mixed Media on Paper 42 x 30 cm



Discovery of Ceylon : Ruined Stupa 2, 2024, Mixed Media on Paper, 42 x 30 cm



Discovery of Ceylon : Ruined Stupa 3, 2024, Mixed Media on Paper, 42 x 30 cm



Discovery of Ceylon : Ruined Stupa 4, 2024, Acrylic on Paper, 39 x 30 cm



Discovery of Ceylon : Ruined Stupa 5, 2024, Acrylic on Canvas, 152 x 97 cm



Discovery of Ceylon : Ruined Stupa 6, 2024, Acrylic on Canvas, 152 x 97 cm



Discovery of Ceylon : Ruined Stupa 7, 2024, Acrylic on Canvas, 152 x 97 cm



Discovery of Ceylon: Explorers Have Eyes and Guns 1, 2024 Mixed Media on Paper, 42 x 29 cm



Discovery of Ceylon: Explorers Have Eyes and Guns 2, 2024 Mixed Media on Paper, 42 x 29 cm



Discovery of Ceylon: Explorers Have Eyes and Guns 3, 2024, Mixed Media on Paper, 42 x 29 cm



Discovery of Ceylon: Explorers Have Eyes and Guns 4, 2024, Mixed Media on Paper, 42 x 29 cm



Discovery of Ceylon : Explorers Have Eyes and Guns 5, 2024, Mixed Media on Paper, 42 x 29 cm



Under a Pale Sky: Weapons and Moths, 2024, Mixed Media on Paper, 72 x 70 cm



*It All Happened on a Very Sunny day Under a Clear Sky, But You Didn't See it
Happening, 2024, Mixed Media on Paper, 35 x 150 cm*



Under the Dark Sky : We Were Once Here 1, 2024, Acrylic on Canvas, 60 x 60 cm



Under the Dark Sky : We Were Once Here 2, 2023, Acrylic on Canvas, 91 x 91 cm



Under the Dark Sky : Doge 1, 2024, Acrylic on Canvas, 50 x 50 cm



Under the Dark Sky : Doge 2, 2024, Acrylic on Canvas, 50 x 50 cm



Under the Dark Sky : Head, 2024, Mixed Media on Canvas, 50 x 50 cm



Under the Dark Sky : Doge 3, 2024, Acrylic on Canvas, 50 x 50 cm



Under the Dark Sky 10, 2023, Acrylic on Canvas, 30 x 50 cm



Under the Dark Sky 11, 2023, Acrylic on Canvas, 30 x 50 cm



Under the Dark Sky 12, 2023, Acrylic on Canvas, 30 x 50 cm



Under the Dark Sky 13, 2023, Acrylic on Canvas, 30 x 50 cm



It All Happened on a Very Sunny day Under a Clear Sky, But You Didn't See it
Happening 2, 2024, Mixed Media on Paper, 35 x 25 cm



It All Happened on a Very Sunny day Under a Clear Sky, But You Didn't See it
Happening 3, 2024, Mixed Media on Paper, 35 x 25 cm



Caught in a Mess, 2024, Pen on Paper, 35 x 25 cm



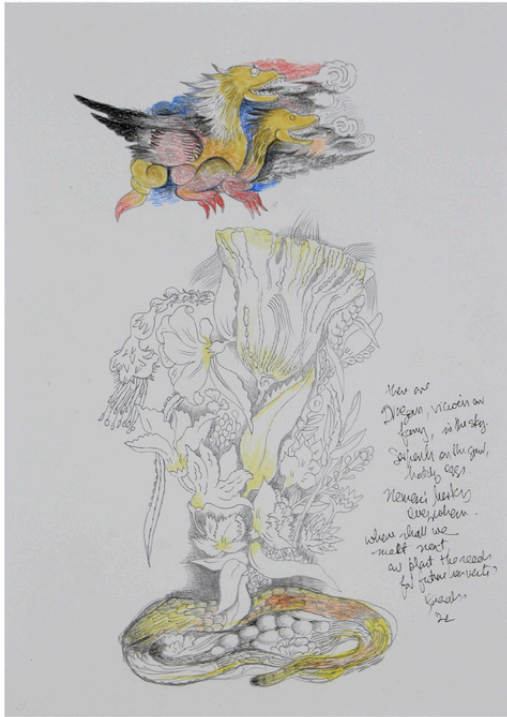
Dragons in the Sky, Snakes on the Ground I, 2024, Mixed Media on Paper, 42 x 29 cm



Dragons in the Sky, Snakes on the Ground 2, 2024, Mixed Media on Paper, 35 x 25 cm



Dragons in the Sky, Snakes on the Ground 3, 2024, Mixed Media on Paper, 35 x 25 cm



Dragons in the Sky, Snakes on the Ground 4, 2024, Mixed Media on Paper, 35 x 25 cm



The Bull in Between, 2024, Mixed Media on Paper, 35 x 25 cm



Untitled 26, 2023, Mixed Media on Paper, 35 x 25 cm



Untitled 27, 2024 Mixed Media on Paper 25 x 35 cm



Under the Dark Sky 1, 2020, Mixed Media on Paper, 61 x 91 cm



Under the Dark Sky 2, 2020, Acrylic on Paper, 61 x 91 cm



Under the Dark Sky 3, 2020, Acrylic on Paper, 61 x 91 cm



Under the Dark Sky 4, 2020, Acrylic on Paper, 61 x 91 cm



Under the Dark Sky 5, 2020, Acrylic on Paper, 61 x 91 cm



Under the Dark Sky 15, 2022, Acrylic on Canvas, 107 x 137 cm



Under the Dark Sky 16, 2022, Acrylic on Canvas, 107 x 137 cm



Under the Dark Sky 17, 2022, Acrylic on Canvas, 107 x 137 cm



Figure 2, 2020, Acrylic on Paper, 122 x 91 cm



On a Forsaken Land 3, 2020, Acrylic on Paper, 91 x 61 cm



On a Forsaken Land, 4, 2020, Acrylic on Paper, 91 x 61 cm



Under the Dark Sky 6, 2020, Mixed Media on Paper, 61 x 91 cm



Under the Dark Sky 7, 2020, Acrylic on Paper, 61 x 91 cm

Education

- 1991 Master of Fine Arts Degree in Painting, American University, Washington D.C.
- 1988 Conservation of Rock Art, Getty Conservation Institute, Los Angeles, USA
- 1985 Conservation of Wall Paintings, International Center for the Scientific Study and Restoration of Cultural Property (ICCRUM)
- 1981 Bachelors of Fine Arts. Honors in Painting (Second Class Upper Pass) Minor: Sculpture, Institute of Aesthetic Studies University of Kelaniya, Sri Lanka

Solo Exhibitions (selected)

- 2023 Impetus | Saskia Fernando Gallery, Colombo, Sri Lanka
- 2020 April Works: Backpacks, Bombs & Borders | Saskia Fernando Gallery, Colombo, Sri Lanka
- 2018 Writing a letter to you | Curated by Liz Fernando | KHOJ, India
- 2018 Belief: The Promise of Absence | Saskia Fernando Gallery, Colombo, Sri Lanka
- 2018 Days without a Night | Curated by Kanika Kuthiala and Leonhaerd Emmeling, Goethe Institute, New Delhi, India
- 2018 Dream for Me | Curated by Liz Fernando | KHOJ, New Delhi, India
- 2016 With or Without Me/aning | Saskia Fernando Gallery, Colombo, Sri Lanka
- 2015 Paradise Road Galleries, Colombo, Sri Lanka
- 2014 Decorated Breese Little | London, United Kingdom
- 2014 Decorated | Saskia Fernando Gallery, Colombo, Sri Lanka
- 2009 Shiva Nataraja | Saskia Fernando Gallery, Colombo, Sri Lanka
- 2006 The Reading Room: Thousand Shivas and Thousand Mikes | Singapore Biennale curated by Fumio Nanjo, Sharmini Perera, Eugene Tan and Roger McDonald, Singapore
- 2005 The Celestial Underwear | Phenomenal Space Gallery, Colombo, Sri Lanka
- 2004 Urban and the Individual | Group Show, Phenomenal Space Gallery, Colombo
- 2003 Paradise Road Galleries, Colombo, Sri Lanka
- 2000 (My) Inability of Painting Woman' | Gallery 706, Colombo, Sri Lanka
- 1997 Recent Paintings | Paradise Road Galleries, Colombo, Sri Lanka
- 1997 Yantragala and the round pilgrimage | Heritage Gallery, Colombo, Sri Lanka
- 1995 Lionel Wendt Art Gallery, Colombo, Sri Lanka
- 1992 Anxiety | National Gallery of Art, Colombo, Sri Lanka

Group Exhibitions (selected)

- 2019 Shades of Black and White | J.D.A Perera Gallery, Colombo, Sri Lanka
- 2019 Crossing Place | Baik Art Gallery, Los Angeles, CA
- 2018 Art Dubai | Saskia Fernando Gallery, Dubai, UAE
- 2017 A Tale of Two Cities: India & Sri Lanka | Gallery Espace, New Delhi, India
- 2017 Portraits of Intervention: Contemporary Art from Sri Lanka | Curated by Bansie Vasvani | Aicon Gallery, New York

- 2016 Serendipity Arts Festival Goa | Goa, India
- 2016 Portraits of Resistance | India International Centre, New Delhi, India
- 2016 India Art Fair, New Delhi, India
- 2015 Cinnamon Colomboscope: Shadow Scenes | Rio Hotel and Cinema, Colombo, Sri Lanka
- 2012 Drawings | Breese Little, London, UK
- 2012 Mediated (Data Art) | Saskia Fernando Gallery, Colombo, Sri Lanka
- 2012 Art of Resistance | Espace Gallery, New Delhi, India
- 2012 Colombo Art Biennale | Colombo, Sri Lanka
- 2011 Contemporary Art From Sri Lanka 2011 | Asia House, London, UK
- 2009 Artful Resistance: Crisis and Creativity in Sri Lanka | Museum fur Volkerkunde Wien, Vienna, Austria
- 2009 Designing Peace | Marian Pasat Roces, MCDA, Manila, Philippines
- 2007 Theertha Red Dot Gallery, Sri Jayawardanapura, Sri Lanka
- 2005 Ten Artists from Sri Lanka | Group show, Milles Garden, Stockholm, Sweden
- 2004 Aham Puram | Jaffna Library, Jaffna
- 2002 Arts South Asia Show | Liverpool University Gallery, Liverpool
- 1999 Asia-Pacific Triennial, Queensland Gallery, Australia
- 1997 Dialogue | With Christa Webber, Gallery Mount Castle, Colombo, Sri Lanka
- 1996 Die Welt zu Gast | Spiel Bank, Dortmund, Germany
- 1994 4th Asian Art Show | Fukuoka Asian Art Museum, Fukuoka, Japan
- 1994 New Approaches in Contemporary Sri Lankan Art | National Art Gallery, Colombo, Sri Lanka

Residencies

- 2019 Baik Art Residency, Davidson College Art Galleries, North Carolina, USA
- 2000 International Artist Workshop, Khoj, Modi Nagar, India

Collections

- Los Angeles County Museum of Art (LACMA), USA
- Fukuoka Art Museum, Japan.

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