



SERENDIB

PRIYANTHA UDAGEDARA





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An abundance of flora and fauna. A tropical ensemble of a myriad different colours and diverse forms and textures. Creatures of flight in their wingspread splendor; some perched momentarily. Beneath this camouflage, the sailing ships, the water front, colonial masters, ancient weapons and motifs, the fiery sun in its marigold magnificence. Entwining all, the silhouettes, the dark thorny maze.

In the signature piece from Serendib, the cerulean blue ocean is an enticing backdrop for the white-naped cranes, the butterflies and apes, among the multitude of flora and foliage, tropical and otherwise. Priyantha remarks that in this series of paintings, the point of view is always of the islander casting an outward glance, towards and beyond the sea.

The hallmark sailing ships dot the seafront, scenes of past invasion and occupation. The ancient ships signify the arrival of the colonial masters, seen atop hillocks in horse-mounted surveillance—the male gaze of the lone figures sizing up the hilly terrain for gainful cultivation. The artist's canvas capturing that bare instant before the colonizer tampered with the picturesque landscape. The moment before complete invasion, and destruction of the pristine wilderness; before the aura of the fabric-paint pointillism radiating forth from the horse rider completely dominates, for monetary gain.

“Between the trees are the bushes which often knit the whole jungle together into an impenetrable tangle of thorns,” Leonard Woolf's words resonate within the entwined whole of the landscape with its dark-hued thorns that twist and turn, piercing through the foliage, contrasting with the bright and sunny.

The colonial gaze. It is the underplayed subtext in most canvases, culminating with the centrally located gaze of Queen Victoria, camouflaged by the darkly engaging flora and fauna. The puzzle pieces of the collage of flowers rally round the Victorian gaze that attempt to thwart their blossoming. Without much success, though. Not only is the gaze partly concealed, it is subdued by the gazes of the creatures of the wild. Parallel to the half-concealed gaze, another canvas outlines the exuberant form of the queen in complete regal outfit. However the royal personage recedes further to the background with the silhouetted birds and creepers that dominate the foreground.

In this backdrop, the three depictions of oceanic vessels appear as detail—closeups of the silhouetted images in the fauna-centric collection of Serendib. The collage of neatly extracted vertebrae and the assortment of internal organs straight from a biology manual, some retaining their medical terminology within the image of the watercraft, add to the many readings of the artwork. Priyantha recalls his share of engagement with ancient and modern lore of pirates and other iconic seafarers and plundered wealth, alongside the mythical beasts, as the inspiration for the threesome of sailing-ship paintings.

It can be said that a leitmotif of Priyantha's recent artworks is nature in its diversity that finds expression through the arranged flower gardens as well as the exotic tropical wilderness in apparent disarray. These underpinnings, is a reminder of the need to re-focus on the environment, as we look beyond the colonial gaze into our present and the future.

- Gaya Nagahawatta



Serendib 1 (Previous page)
Mixed Media on Canvas
122cm x 245cm



Serendib 2
Mixed Media on Canvas
199cm x 153cm

Serendib 3
Mixed Media on Canvas
160cm x 120cm





Serendib 4, Serendib 5, Serendib 6
Mixed Media on Canvas
60cm x 60cm

Serendib 7
Mixed Media on Canvas
101cm x 80cm





Serendib 9
Mixed Media on Canvas
101cm x 152cm



Serendib 10
Mixed Media on Canvas
122cm x 245cm



Serendib 11
Mixed Media on Board
82cm x 113cm



Serendib 12
Mixed Media on Board
82cm x 113cm



Serendib 13
Mixed Media on Board
82cm x 113cm



Serendib 8
Mixed Media on Canvas
183cm x 77cm



Serendib 14
Mixed Media on Paper
30cm x 42cm



Serendib 15
Mixed Media on Paper
30cm x 42cm



Serendib 16
Mixed Media on Paper
30cm x 42cm

PRIYANTHA UAGEDARA b.1975

Education

- 2008 PhD Research Candidate, Faculty of Art and Society, Leeds Metropolitan University, Leeds, United Kingdom
- 2007 Masters of Art, Contemporary Fine Art Practice (Merit) Leeds Metropolitan University, United Kingdom
- 2006 Bachelors of Fine Art, Institute of Aesthetics, University of Kelaniya, Colombo, Sri Lanka

Solo Exhibitions

- 2017 Orientalism | Saskia Fernando Gallery, Colombo, Sri Lanka
- 2016 Garden of Earthly Delights | Grosvenor Gallery, London, United Kingdom
- 2015 Herbal Garden | Saskia Fernando Gallery, Colombo, Sri Lanka
- 2014 Priyantha Udagedara | Saskia Fernando Gallery, Colombo, Sri Lanka
- 2014 Paradise Lost | Norman Rea Gallery, York, United Kingdom
- 2012 Paradise Lost | Broadcasting Place Gallery, Leeds Metropolitan University, United Kingdom
- 2010 Exhibition of Painting | Paradise Road Galleries, Colombo, Sri Lanka
- 2007 M.A. Show | 6th floor H Building, Leeds Metropolitan University, United Kingdom
- 2006 Paradise Road Galleries, Colombo, Sri Lanka
- 2004 Barefoot Gallery, Colombo, Sri Lanka
- 2003 Paradise Road Galleries, Colombo, Sri Lanka

Group Exhibitions

- 2020 India Art Fair | New Delhi, India
- 2019 LA Art Show | Baik Art Gallery, Los Angeles, USA
- 2019 Shades of Black and White | JDA Perera Gallery, Colombo, Sri Lanka
- 2019 Crossing Place | Baik Art Gallery, Los Angeles, CA
- 2017 Portraits of Intervention: Contemporary Art from Sri Lanka | Curated by Bansie Vasvani | Aicon Gallery, New York
- 2016 Colombo Art Biennale: Conceiving Space | Colombo, Sri Lanka
- 2016 Disambiguation | Curated by Saskia Fernando | Art Dubai 2016, U.A.E
- 2014 Summer Dance | Breese Little Gallery, London, United Kingdom
- 2014 Emergency | Breese Little Gallery, London, United Kingdom
- 2009 Leeds Art Fair | The Light, United Kingdom
- 2007 Situation Leeds | Leeds, United Kingdom
- 2007 Interim Leeds Metropolitan M A exhibition | Old BBC building, Leeds Metropolitan University, United Kingdom
- 2005 An exhibition of Sri Lankan & Australian artists | The Cross Art Project, Sydney, Australia
- 2004 International Artist Camp | Habarana, Sri Lanka, Organized by George Keyt foundation
- 2004 Gangcey of Sri Lanka | Lalith Kala Academy Gallery, New Delhi, India
- 2004 Gap Zero 3 | The Lionel Wendt Art Gallery, Colombo, Sri Lanka
- 2004 Young Contemporaries | George Keyt Foundation, Harold Pieris Gallery, Colombo, Sri Lanka
- 2002 Young Contemporaries | George Keyt Foundation, National Art Gallery, Colombo, Sri Lanka
- 2002 National Painting & Sculpture Exhibition | Sri Lanka Kala Mandalaya, National Art Gallery, Colombo, Sri Lanka



SASKIA FERNANDO GALLERY