



Shibu Natesan: Plein Air Views of India and London

12 May – 4 June 2023

Grosvenor Gallery
35 Bury Street
London SW1Y 6AU

Fake Bridge, Hampstead Heath, London, 2018

“No matter where I was in the world, I would step outside with my paints and materials and paint as if I were touched by a force that gave me an inner realization of the reason for living. There was no one else around. Just the cold wind or warm breeze, the empty landscape and me

Suddenly it was an awakening of all that lies within me and the confluence of the outside and inside being one. Inspired by the French painters of Barbizon, I am a plein air painter and the visions of landscape painting help me talk to my present, and also shows me how to really listen to the land I'm looking at and absorbing in all its beauty and wholesome details, anywhere in the world.”

-Shibu Natesan to Uma Nair, March 2023

We are delighted to announce our upcoming exhibition ‘**Shibu Natesan: Plein Air Views of India and London**’ in collaboration with **Saffronart**. The exhibition will open with a private view on **Thursday, 11 May 2023** in London from **6-8pm**. Shibū will be present during the preview in London.

“Natesan the landscape lover is an itinerant traveler. Whether he sits on the beach at Varkala in Kerala, in a small township in Udaipur, in the mountains in Ladakh, or in the vicinity of a temple in Tamil Nadu, his love for geographical features and relief details is something that beats like an eternal pulse within him.

In both canvasses as well as watercolors, each work has multiple vignettes and vistas that speak of the wind rustling through the trees that fill the landscape, which are as important as the temples or the architectural nuances, but creating a synergy that captures both mood and mooring and rhythms of being become his leitmotif.

Natesan's landscapes have the feel of impressionists of early years, but the setting is both Indian as well as European. His handling of subject and compositional clarity conjures up surreal and dream-like images from fragments of *plein air* observation that are at once multi-layered, as well as personally symbolic and mysterious. He has a keen understanding of changing light conditions, especially dawn and dusk.

Natesan's ability to make portraits of nature under the changing conditions of light and weather and season become a study in themselves. The oil on board as well as canvasses extols these virtues. He is deft with his strokes, both fluid and staccato, he alternates delicate daubs of black, brown, or powder blue or grey, which read as the ripples of waves or irregular patterning on variegated leaves. His mood is compellingly precise and one that invites deeper scrutiny.

These works have their own spatial distinctions such as inside/outside, private/public, or terrestrial/aquatic, thus exceeding as well as defining their geographical points of origin. Landscape emerges as a symbolic space through which Natesan claims the gendered tradition of painting *en plein air* not as a repertory of forms, but as a pictorial code open to reinvention. Natesan has his own code of pictorial goals. Painting from direct observation is intuitive and deeply immersive for Natesan.

These landscapes are more a reflection of how the light falls on the hills/plains or how the atmosphere changes the colour, or how an area feels when you observe it for long spans of time. After studying these landscapes, you realise that *plein air* seems to take on an added meaning because it becomes more about being in nature, about internalizing the landscape, before translating it onto the canvas. Natesan explains: “*Plein air* painting helps us ‘see’ things through other perspectives. When we add the human condition and personal experience, the same place I saw yesterday could be painted completely differently from one day to the next. We also realise the power and beauty of nature.”

-Excerpt from the catalogue essay by Uma Nair, March 2023

The works for London include places close to where Shibu lives, Finsbury Park, Clissold Park, Highbury and Islington, Stoke Newington, Alexandria Palace, Hampstead Heath and Regents Park amongst others.

The exhibition will also run simultaneously at Saffronart, Mumbai showing Landscapes from India.

A fully illustrated catalogue of the exhibition will be available at both venues.

The exhibition will also be a part of **London Gallery Weekend**

Opening Hours:

Friday 2 June: 10am-8pm

Saturday 3 June: 11am-6pm

Sunday 4 June: 11am-5pm



Finsbury Park, London, 2022



Near Highbury and Islington Tube Station, 2022

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Exhibition opening times:

Weekdays: 10am – 5.00pm

Saturdays (During exhibitions, by appointment):
12-4pm

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