

In his solo exhibition, artist Vikram Varghese chronicles his travels through India

Backed by three decades of professional artistic experience, Vikram Varghese's exhibition Treasures of India is at the Cholamandal Artists' Village in Chennai

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Vikram Varghese | Photo Credit: Special Arrangement

"I love travelling. I like to explore. Whether it is the narrow bylanes of George Town, Chennai, or the teeming ghats of Varanasi, I like walking around with a sketchbook and pen in my hand," says Chennai-based artist Vikram Varghese. He adds, "Sometimes I wonder whether I am an explorer who is setting out to paint, or an artist gearing up to explore."

Vikram's solo exhibition, Treasures of India, currently on at Cholamandal Artists' Village, chronicles his travels through India. A set of 100 paintings, this includes watercolours and pastels.

"When I come across anything that stirs up strong emotions in me, I quickly make a sketch and take some notes. These could be anything — a *sadhu* in Varanasi, meditating, oblivious to the chaos around him, secrets whispered by an abandoned heritage building, sights seen and stories told by an old louvered window from the British Raj. To me, all these things have an essence of timelessness that cannot be captured fully by a photograph," says the artist, who had his first solo exhibition in 1995. "But it is only when I get back home and begin to convert these sights and emotions onto canvas that these experiences acquire meaning and depth," he adds.

"My father was a student of the Sir JJ School of Art, Mumbai. Art was always his first love, but he was never able to take it up as a career, and only dabbled in art as a hobby. When he saw my passion for art, he encouraged me to take it up as a profession and told me he will support me financially till my career stabilised," says Vikram.

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Vikram Varghese's work | Photo Credit: Special Arrangement

In 1995, Vikram started training with the well known artiste, theatre personality, and director of Indra-Dhanush Art School, AV Dhanushkodi. .

"Dhanushkodi sir was a real inspiration. He taught me the finer nuances of sketching, water colours and pastels. He used to always tell me, 'train your heart to see more than what your eyes perceive'. That is essentially at the core of what I try

to do," says Vikram.

On his preferred medium of painting, Vikram says, "Watercolour is a difficult medium to work with, but for me, it is all about the transparency and luminosity that you can achieve with it. Another unique characteristic of painting in watercolour is the sense of free flow. Often, it is in this freeness of allowing the paint to flow a bit by itself that can turn an artwork into one filled with unexpected surprises."

@Cholamandal Artists' Village, Injambakkam. The exhibition will be inaugurated at 4pm on January 26 and will be on display till February 4.