



SALES AND ENQUIRIES

PREVIEW AND COCKTAILS

Thursday, 11 January 2018 12 - 24 January 2018

pm 11 am – 7 pm, Monday to Saturday

Sunday by appointment

Ina Puri in conversation with

Senaka Senanayake Saffronart,
Saturday, 13 January 2018 The Claridges

3 pm 12 Dr. A P J Abdul Kalam Road, New Delhi 110011

SALES TEAM AND EXHIBITION ENQUIRIES

SAFFRONART

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SENAKA SENANAYAKE

som in 1951, Senaka Senanayake is one of Sri Lanka's eading artists. He achieved early fame with an exhibition of Kori Lanka's rainforests, Senanayake draws the viewer's strention to their rapid depletion. Each canvas takes two to three weeks to complete, as layer upon layer of baint is added, creating depth and luminescence.

Speaking about his passion for the rainforest, Senanayake says, "About twenty years ago my cousin, an environmentalist living in Ecuador visited us in Colombo and inspired me to paint images of Sri Lankan fauna and flora. I opted to paint the positive aspects of the rainforest rather than the destruction of it. As an artist I felt I could use my medium to highlight the need to preserve the remaining rainforests of Sri Lanka where we have lost about 70% of this spectacular and irreplaceable environment."

Senanyake has held over a hundred exhibitions around the world. His work has been commissioned for the White House in Washington, DC, and the United Nations in New York. Senanyake's paintings are part of several private and public collections.



BEYOND THE RAINFORESTS

"We don't create the world. It's God's world, he made it. We depict it, we try to understand it. And a longing like that doesn't disappear in one generation. Art is about correspondences—making connections with the world and each other. It's about love in that sense. That is the origin of the erotic quality of art."

- DAVID HOCKNEY

Making the distant intimate has been Senaka Senanayake's forte over the last many decades he has been painting. Having grown up on the beautiful island of Sri Lanka he was drawn to the wilderness and wild life even as a boy, often travelling with his family to distant parts of the island to see the magnificent animals and birds that made the depths of the woods their habitat. No wonder, then, that creatures mighty and meek made their way to his canvas from the time he first started painting.

Over the decades, it was especially the idea of the rainforest that began to concern him more and more. So much had changed since he first visited the forests, so much was destroyed thanks to natural and manmade causes and his worst fears about the impending destruction of these forests were proven to be correct when environmentalists concurred and agreed that unless awareness was raised urgently it would soon be an ecological disaster. The once verdant and lush rainforests were slowly disappearing. If the country did not address the crisis it would be too late. To create awareness and educate the younger generations, Senaka began his series on the country's rainforests but as years passed the zecame his personal mission, his nor manificent obsession.

Looking at Senaka's canvases, typically very vivid and pure, you get the impression that you're standing at the edge of the tangled wilderness, with tall trees reaching up to the skies. There is no mist anywhere, no haze blurring the sharp contours of the plants, trees, flora and fauna. Was the artist concerned about the geology or even the precise topography of the region? Not really, Senaka is quick to point out. The artistic perspective was more focused on atmosphere, the virtual experience of space. The abstracted shapes and forms in the depths of the rainforest evoke memories of his boyhood, since this was, after all, a space he had frequented and claimed as his own ever since he first visited the woods. In his painterly narrative, Senaka prefers a large format canvas, painting his much-loved forestscapes from memory, the branches of the ancient trees stand tall, their leaves and twigs forming origami patterns in the infinite skies.

There is seemingly a constant interplay between canvas and vista in his art and if you are at his studio, it is fascinating to watch this unfold. The morning could begin with a composition of butterflies but by the noon, the arched wings would take on resplendent hues and out of nowhere a grasshopper would make an appearance, perched delicately on the leaf of a plant. You step out into the garden and it is almost like you are in one of Senaka's paintings, surrounded by flowering trees, birds and fishes. A marvellous surprise awaits you when you step back into the studio, translucent light has changed the scene and the artist is busy with a canopy of leaves that weigh the branches down!

For a moment there is a silence in the painted garden. Then, gradually, household noises filter in and Senaka is surrounded by laughing grandchildren and on cue, as



Sir Charles Wheeler, President of the Royal Academy London, and British artist Dame Laura Knight, with Senanayake at Upper Grosvenor Galleries, 1966

it were, his dogs run in, all demanding his attention at once. The canvas against the wall waits in anticipation, and amongst the violet shadows, yellowing leaves gather. In the summer afternoon, the interrupted painting is forgotten momentarily and the artist listens patiently to his babbling grandchildren while the painted butterfly on his canvas waits without the slightest motion.

On vacation with his family, many miles away from home, Senaka had his first tryst with the rainforests. The adolescent Senaka Senanayake was already a well-known artist by then and had already had his first exhibitions receiving praise from critics and art lovers everywhere.

It is already well known that Senaka was a child prodigy who started painting very young. He was only six years of age when his confident brushstrokes and compositions caught the attention of an astute art teacher who encouraged him to paint and participate in children's art shows. At home, his mother recognizing his gift made sure that he was given all the support he required with

art materials, etc. Senaka despite all this encouragement was himself unsure about where his own heart lay. He was a meritorious student and a promising cricketer who dreamt of making it to the national team someday. Tom between different pursuits the young adolescent realized that that he had to make a choice when it came to building a career and it was after many a sleepless night that he chose to devote all his time to art.

It was a wise decision, in retrospect. Senaka, over the years, became a household name and earned a reputation as one of Sri Lanka's top arrists. Each show in the country and abroad was critically acclaimed and his paintings were acquired by important collectors. The early figurative works made way for abstractions and erotic series that were sensuous and somehow more realistically engaging. His success manifested itself with invitations to the UN, The White House, and prestigious galleries in London, Moscow and Paris. This was a period when the young boy was at school and could



paint mostly over the weekends! While commissions came from distant corners of the world, Senaka was still intermittently dreaming of quitting art and taking up studies in the field of medicine. Senaka laughs when he recalls those days of dilemma when for some reason he was quite determined to try his hand at becoming a doctor, a plastic surgeon, in fact! Ultimately, he stuck to painting. This may have also been because he had by then met his beautiful bride-to-be Jenny who simply loved his art.

Important critics such as L P Goonetillake wrote: "We are without courage, without freedom, without passion and joy if we fail to follow the lyricism and brilliance of his brush. Colours were never so pure, so positive, so pleasing."

Deeply spiritual, Senaka is a practising Buddhist who is equally respectful of other faiths. He quotes a saying of Buddha when you ask him about the vagaries of life and fame, "Do not dwell in the past, do not dream of the future, concentrate the mind on the present moment."

The present suite of work represents in all likelihood Senanayake's best works in recent years. The artist has been working in single-minded isolation for a while now, taking short respites to Galle or the rainforests to meditate and relax. He doesn't like to wander too far away from his beloved island country and prefers to spend his days in his studio-home with his family. The



Senanavake, circa 193

rambling rooms spilling over with art, bric-a-brac, potted plants, silver statuettes and antiquities bustle with life as the household go about their many chores. Songbirds nest in the trees outside and their raucous trilling often has the dogs in a tizzy. Yet, as you step away from this warm space into Senaka's studio, it is quiet and cool. The outside world recedes and on the canvases the painted humming birds, hornbills and cockatoos stand alert, as if poised to take sudden flight. Distilled from the natural world it is the essence of the forests and its creatures that make Senaka's painterly narrative so mystical. He is familiar with the flora and fauna and flight of the fireflies that cast their solitary trail of light in the dark wilderness. His nightscape with the black lotus bears testimony to those times. The palette usually so vivid and radiant is bleached of colour then and is mysteriously dark.

Senanayake is engaged with an idyllic world that is slowly disappearing. His art captures the contours of a dream, the recurring theme he seems to convey time and again is that there is still hope and cause for optimism no matter how trying the circumstances.

It is fitting to conclude with the words of Colin Wilson, "Whether civilization improves or declines, the simple, intuitive artist will go his way, recording that basic harmony as naturally as a bird sines."

— Ina Puri

Ina Puri is a well known writer and art critic based in Delhi. She is currently working on a book about Senaka Senanayake.



Rice Cultivation, 1966, oil on canvas, 150 x 274 cm
Painting at the East Entrance to the Delegates Lounge at the United Nations
Building, New York



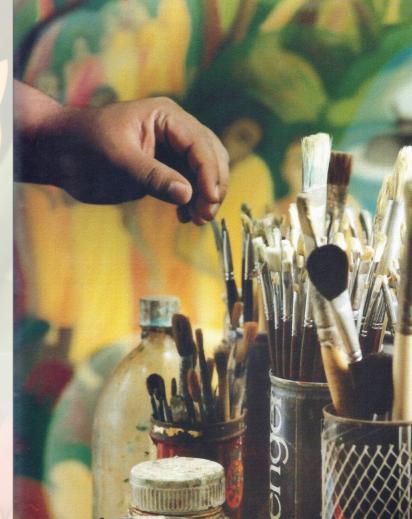
Garden of Eden, 1993, oil on canvas, 185 x 935 cm Collection of Eden Hotel, Beruwela, Sri Lanka





RAINFOREST

Signed and dated '2017 Senaka Senanayake' (lower left) 2017 Oil on canvas 36 x 60 in (91.4 x 152.4 cm)





WINGED RADIANCE

Signed and dated '2017 Senaka Senanavake' (lower right)

Oil on canvas

72 x 72 in (182.8 x 182.8 cm)

'Children need to start asking questions about environment'

@timesgroup.com

There are over 75 varieties of the ginger plant in the world and 95% of them are found in the rainforests of southeast Asia," says Sri Lankan artist Senaka Senanavake. An avowed advocate for preservation of rainforests in the world, Senanayake has made them the subject of his paintings for the last 20 years. This was after a visit to a Sri Lankan rainforest with a cousin opened his eyes to a whole new world of birds, reptiles and plants.

"Rainforests are being destroyed everywhere, be it in Indonesia, where thousands of trees are being cut for oil palm plantations, or Amazon in Brazil for oil drilling. I feel my generation has ruined the world in the name of materialism, forgetting we have one



PUSHING FOR PRESERVATION: Sri Lankan artist Senaka Senanavake hopes his paintings will raise awareness among children

While materialism and rampant consumerism may have the 65-year-old artist worried, he chooses to talk about the glaring problem in a positive way. "As an artist, I could have chosen to show the problem of rainforest destruction in a negative way. I have been asked by people why I don't

world to live in." he says.

show chaos in my work. But we are inundated with negative news on a daily basis, which is why I decided to paint the beauty of these forests instead. I believe I can create more impact by focusing on the positive," says Senanayake. He finds inspiration for his paintings in the Singapore Botanical Gardens and

the lush garden he has cultivated in his Colombo home.

His technique of 'painting layers and layers of thin colours' on canvas, an arthe's perfected over years, lends an almost digital quality to the paintings. Not surprisingly. the vividity of the works are reasons why kids love them. "I have young children getting excited about the paintings. They wonder if the plants and animals are real." says Senanayake, admitting that he is glad about the reactions his paintings elicit from the young ones, "Kids need to start asking questions about their environment because they are the ones who can change the world."

Senanayake is showing his works at an exhibition, Homage to The Rainforest, at Gallery Sumukha. Wilson Garden. It is on till August 30.

With Paint and Brush. He Fights for the Planet Beautiful





The rainfor

ake about 20 years ago when he visited his cousin in Ecuador

3

BUTTERFLIES

Signed and dated '2017 Senaka Senanayake' (lower left) 2017

Oil on canvas

36 x 36 in (91.4 x 91.4 cm)





PURPLE PROSE

Signed and dated '2017 Senaka Senanayake' (lower left) 2017

Oil on canvas

36 x 36 in (91.4 x 91.4 cm)





FEEDING HUMMING BIRD Signed and dated '2017 Senaka Senanayake' (lower left) 2017

36 x 24 in (91.4 x 60.9 cm)

Oil on canvas

SUNLIT SPLENDOUR
Signed and dated '2017
Senaka Senanayake' (lower left)
2017
Oil on canvas
36 x 24 in (91.4 x 60.9 cm)



THE MORNING BLOOMS

Signed and dated '2017 Senaka Senanayake' (lower left)

Oil on canvas

60 x 84 in (152.4 x 213.36 cm)

Sri Lankan artist SENAKA SENANAYAKE has long been on a crusade to save rainforests in the way he knows best. through painting. At the India Art Fair in Delhi, he tells MONA MEHTA that he invokes gods and saints to save nature







SAVE The Rainfore

few years ago, walking into an art gallery in Delhi I chanced upon a series of paintings of luscious green rainforest and saffron-robed ranguil Buddhist monks strolling in here. With the Buddhist chant Om naney padme hum reverberating hrough the gallery, the ambience was o mesmerising that I actually bought hat music to relive the experience at vill. It was an exhibition by Sri ankan artist Senaka Senanayake; and of my prized possessions

Ganesha Helps

Senanayake's works appeared in Deli once again at the recently concluded ndia Art Fair. The theme now being the colourful flora and fauna of the rainforst - multi-hued butterflies and parots, passion flowers, elephants and verlant landscapes. One work that intersted me particularly was Ganesha chillng in the forest with his little mouse for

"I have not moved on from painting he monks to Ganesha; it is just that beng a Buddhist, I also recognise the panheon of Hindu gods, and Ganesha has lways been part of my life," says the artist. Senanayake is a man with a mission

- to highlight the positive aspects of

green heritage."We have lost 70 per cent of our forest in Sri Lanka and as you know, without the rainforest there will be no rain and an is-

land like Sri Lanka cannot survive without rain. So the next question is: How do we go about preserving the rainforest? Since I am an artist, I do it through the medium of my art," he says.

The best thing he thought he could True Colours he catalogue of that show became one do is to show the happy and positive aspect of the rainforests and inspire young people to get interested in them. "I could show the destruction or the

ruination of the rainforest, and the damage that does to people, but it will not inspire anybody. It will only make people upset about what is happening; so what I do with my work is in the hope that young people will respond to it and they will encourage their parents and elders to take some

world. That has to be done," says

Senanayake strongly believes that we live in one world and so we can't say we are a separate country and that what we do is our business. What hapespecially in the young, about the need Lanka, affects the whole world, espe- whole world is beginning to realise the Speakingtree in 26 March 2016.

to preserve our cially in so far as the environment is concerned."The environment belongs to everybody. But we have to build consciousness. I feel the people of our generation have ruined the forests; they are only interested in materialism, instant gratification and are not thinking about the future. I am a grandfather and I often wonder what kind of future we are giving to our new generations. They will probably have to live in a concrete. plastic world," he says.

Often, young people have flocked to his exhibitions and wondered whether the artist has been imagining the colours in the forest."The truth is that every one

of those birds, butterflies and flowers are from nature, those are the real colours. The only artistic license I take is that I sometimes mix up things that do not necessarily grow together in the same environment. So, the next question that they ask is, 'If they are real;

action to preserve the rainforest of the people realise 'O my God! Large parts of such forests are gone and very soon, whatever little there is will also disappear' - that is when they get all excited and upset. That's how I inspire elders to pay attention and do something about dwindling forests. As you know, he rainforest; to create public awareness, pens in Brazil, or Indonesia or in Sri climate change is taking place and the



MACAWS', OIL ON CANVA importance of conserv ment and I think it is m

But what have rain with gods and holy n Ganesha and other deit ple into the rainforest ar to be happy and cont laxing time, I am tryin ple to think, 'If the go are happy, I too could

to focus on this," says

Inspired by a trip to where can I see them', and then Australia, Senanayake ishna playing his flute love birds, galahs and co ing around. The idea v somehow saving the ra other themes too somet come back to the rainf

Signed and dated '2017 Senaka Senanayake' (lower right) 2017

Oil on canvas

72 x 72 in (182.8 x 182.8 cm)



9

THE BENEVOLENT GAZE

Signed and dated '2017 Senaka Senanayake' (lower left) 2017

Oil on canvas

48 x 48 in (121.9 x 121.9 cm)





10

ABSTINENCE

Signed and dated '2017 Senaka Senanayake' (lower left) 2017

Oil on canvas

48 x 48 in (121.9 x 121.9 cm)



RARE

Signed and dated '2017 Senaka Senanayake' (lower left) 2017 Oil on canvas 60 x 84 in (152.4 x 213.36 cm)



12 LOVEBIRDS

Signed and dated '2017 Senaka Senanayake' (lower left) 2017

Oil on canvas

36 x 24 in (91.4 x 60.9 cm)

12

SCARLET MACAWS

Signed and dated '2017 Senaka Senanayake' (lower left) 2017

Oil on canvas

36 x 24 in (91.4 x 60.9 cm)





WHITE LOTUS

Signed and dated '2017 Senaka Senanayake' (lower right) 2017 Oil on canvas 48 x 72 in (121.9 x 182.8 cm)

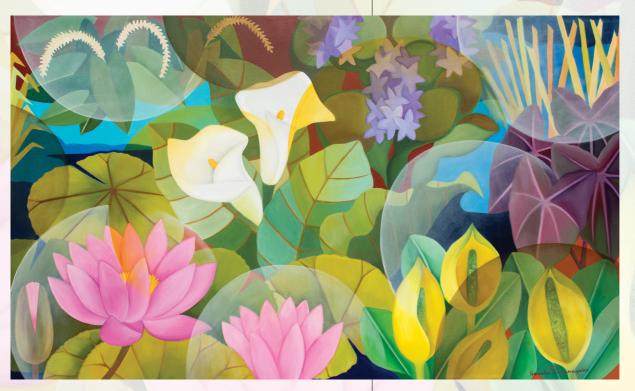


FLUORESCENCE

Signed and dated '2017 Senaka Senanayake' (lower right) 2017

Oil on canvas 48 x 42 in (121.9 x 106.6 cm)

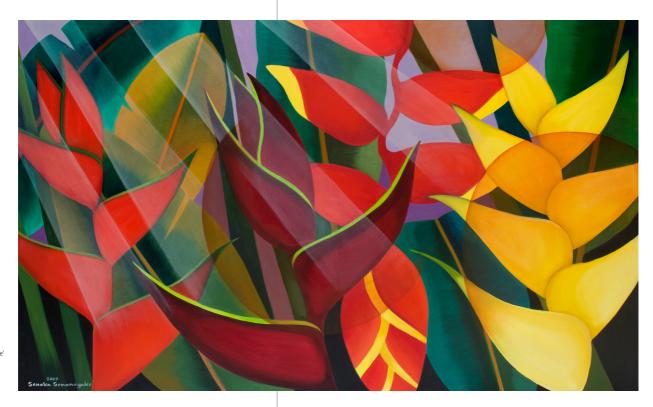




16 WATER GARDEN

Signed and dated '2017 Senaka Senanayake' (lower right) 2017

Oil on canvas 36 x 60 in (91.4 x 152.4 cm)



17
HELICONIAS
Signed '2017 Senaka Senanayake'
(lower left)
2017
Oil on canvas
36 x 60 in (91.4 x 152.4 cm)





SENAKA SENANAYAKE

Born 1951, Sri Lanka

Education

Bachelor of Fine Arts, Yale University, 1968 Received a scholarship to pursue his studies

Select Exhibition

1959 Solo exhibition, Colombo, Sri Lanka

1961 Yonkers, New York, Sponsored by UNESCO

1965 Asia House, New York and Washington Gallery of Art

Upper Grosvenor Gallery, London

1966 One Man Show, Paris, on invitation by the French Cultural Ministry

1967 West Berlin, on invitation of the Berlin Senate

1969 Canada

1970 Ceylon Through The Ages, National Geographic Society, Washington DC

1974 8 Foremost Artists in the British Commonwealth, Commonwealth Institute of London, UK

1978 Travelling exhibition organized by the Smithsonian, Washington DC

1982 Inaugural exhibition, Sharika Art Gallery, Sri Lanka

1989 National Art Gallery, Beijing, on invitation by the Chinese Government

1996 100th Solo Exhibition at National Convention Centre, Colombo

2002 Habitat Centre, New Delhi

2003 Seoul, South Korea

2004 Yeosu City, South Korea

2005 Museum Gallery, Mumbai

2006 Habitat Centre, New Delhi

Fashion and Art Show with Satya Paul, Singapore

2007 1x1 Art Gallery, Dubai

2009 Paradise Lost, Art Alive Gallery, New Delhi

2011 Lost Horizons, Patrimonio Art Gallery and Art Alive Gallery, Mumbai

2013 India Art Fair, New Delhi

In An Iridescent Land, Patrimonio Art Gallery and Tao Art Gallery, Mumbai

2014 Grosvenor Gallery, London

2015 Arts House, Singapore, organised by Grosvenor Gallery, London

2016 India Art Fair Solo Booth, New Delhi. Represented by Grosvenor Gallery

2017 India Art Fair, New Delhi. Represented by Grosvenor Gallery

Dharmachakra, Grosvenor Gallery, London

Other Exhibitions between 1961 and 1990 include those held in:

USA

New York, San Diego, Washington DC, Los Angeles

Europ

Rotterdam, Holland

Brussels, Belgium

London, Birmingham, Glasgow and Manchester, UK

Prague, Czechoslovakia

Moscow, Russia

Paris, France

Bremen, Cologne, Stuttgart, Berlin and Hamburg, Germany Rome, Italy

Aaia

Tokyo, Osaka, Yokkaichi, Japan

Paintings are part of collections in

The White House, Washington, USA

United Nations Building, New York, USA

National Geographic Headquarters, Washington, USA

Berlin State Museum, Germany

Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden, Smithsonian, USA

Virginia State Museum, USA

President, Parliament and major buildings, Sri Lanka

International Post Office, Berne, Switzerland

National Panasonic Headquarters, Osaka, Japan



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