



AV Ilango - Artist statement

A.V. Ilango made his debut in 1973 on completing his Masters in Mathematics at the Bangalore University.

Inspired by his childhood memories, he set off with a colourful palette.

From seven to sixteen years, he had spent his childhood in Gobichettipalayam, a market town in the hinterland of Tamil Nadu. It is situated in picturesque plains richly covered with paddy fields and coconut groves with the canal meandering lazily across the fields and the hazy blue mountains frame the backdrop. In the town, the white-washed houses with red-tiled roofs line the narrow streets.

Everyday life is orchestrated with agricultural activities, trade and also religious celebrations. Thus the harvest, fairs and festivals resound with folk songs, music and dances. People sing and dance, and patiently queue before the shrines. All their movements are tuned to the drumbeat and tinkling ankle bells. Clad in ochre dhotis, musicians and dancers enliven the crowd with leaps and swirls in ecstasy.

The bright costumes, pulsating music, bellowing traders, echoing loud speakers... The artist vividly recalls those scenes on his canvas.

The last decade saw his palette mellow.

The decorative elements disappeared.

Minimalist compositions were etched in the sublime harmony of black and white positive and negative spaces, space and form.

Some works have caught the dramatic moment of an action. Whereas in others, forms merge into the space. The artist opines that his way of conceptualizing, as a

mathematician, has contributed a lot to his artistic research. He values the linear quality in his oeuvre, and the development of a concept and the motif. Each theme evolves in such a way that the presentation is distinguished from period to period or at the same time.

Besides human figures, the artist has been studying for the past few years, the most familiar animals of the Indians. According to him, cows and bulls form the very idiom of primitive, folk and classical arts of India. The Indian species which inspire him are not robust, forming an angular structure. The horns are highlighted. Alone or in a herd they are seen everywhere, in the countryside as well as in the metropolis. This series Bull and Beyond evoke meditative poses of bovine creatures rendered in earthy hues.

Now Ilango goes beyond the bull which is the mascot of Lord Shiva, called Nandhi. In hindu philosophy, the bull symbolizes the human prowess. In everyday life, it is used as beast of burden and for transport, sport, manure, hide, meat and milk. Many sketches and paintings bring out the subtle harmony in these compositions.

-Chandra Ilango

“I am fascinated by the form of space.

I go with them on a voyage of discovery

to understand their complexity and simplicity.

Finally, I see things existing in the purest of forms.

Space and form are interwoven, merged into one another,

until the original form becomes intangible, imperceptible, sublime...”

-A. V. Ilango