

[FOR PRESS]

The Kiran Nadar Museum of Art  
Presents two exhibitions for the spring reopening

**K RAMANUJAM: INTO THE MOONLIGHT PARADE...**  
&  
**ATUL DODIYA: WALKING WITH THE WAVES**

**Preview: 22 March 2022**  
**At KNMA, Saket**  
145, DLF, South Court Mall, Saket

The Kiran Nadar Museum of Art (KNMA) is delighted to announce the reopening of the museum to visitors after a yearlong pause on holding onsite exhibitions, affected by the worldwide pandemic situation. The days are turning brighter with the spirit of restoration and springing back to normal courses of life, the two exhibitions '**K Ramanujam: Into the Moonlight Parade...**' and '**Atul Dodiya: Walking with the Waves**' curated by Roobina Karode (Chief Curator and Director, KNMA) wishes to bring forth recreations through an array of visual stimuli. Two artists are spaced by distinct junctures in Indian art, and yet connected through underlying chords of hope and resilience.

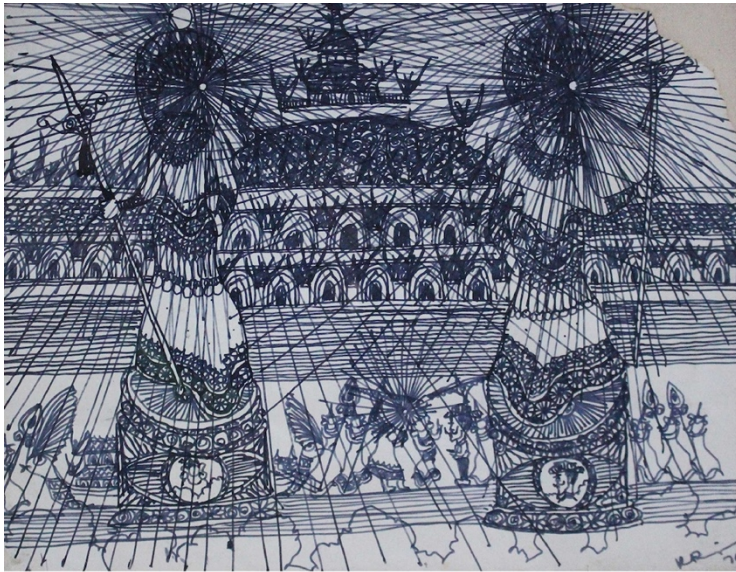
Paying homage to K Ramanujam, an exceptional figure of Indian modernism, the exhibition '**K Ramanujam: Into the Moonlight Parade...**' provides the audience a unique opportunity to view rare drawings and paintings of the artist including his awe-inspiring 13-foot panorama 'My Dream World' (1973).



K Ramanujam, Untitled, Gouache on paper  
Collection: KNMA

K Ramanujam's mythopoetic universe appears to be an impenetrable fortress dimly lit by a solitary crescent; a nocturnal world guarded by "an army of muses" to use the artist's own expression. Perhaps the most enigmatic and underrepresented figure from Indian modernism, the late Tamil artist was a member of the largest artist's commune in India – the Cholamandal Artists' Village founded in 1966 by painter-pedagogue KCS Panicker. Despite proving himself to be a draughtsman and colourist of exceptional calibre from the time he was a student of Panicker, Ramanujam found it difficult to find a world sensitive to his congenital anomalies and alleged schizophrenia, which often made

him choose the life of an outcast. Born with a speech impediment into a conservative Tamil Brahmin/Iyengar family and a middle school dropout, young Ramanujam sought solace in reading *Chandamama* ('Uncle Moon'), a South Indian children's magazine renowned for its 'Puranic' stories and intricate illustrations. As an adult, driven away by relatives and with nowhere to go, the penniless art student used to sleep on the pavement surrounded by Tamil cinema posters and gigantic hoardings, and frequented film shooting locations in Chennai's Kodambakkam by showing special interest in the spectacular set work of musical and mythological dramas. Further enriched by a unique Vaishnavite symbolism and the Bhakti poetic tradition of Tamil *Alvars*, that Ramanujam must have been introduced to when he was a kid. All these experiences took sublime forms in drawings and paintings, but in a scale and proportion that were extremely modest and minuscule because of the artist's financial constraints.



K Ramanujam, Untitled, 1970, Ink on paper  
Collection: KNMA

These works often portray Ramanujam himself proudly sporting a cowboy hat and English moustache, cheerfully drifting or lounging in the company of nymphs and sea monsters. But in reality, Ramanujam's quest for love and companionship, not to mention social dignity and financial security, went in vain, forcing him to take his own life in 1973, when the artist was just 33 years old. With a curatorial conviction of bringing forth, un-sung aspects of a creative soul who left without much applause, a selection of works in a variety of mediums, such as ink and gouache on paper, unconventionally rendered by the artist, will constitute the display. In order to retell lesser-spoken stories from Indian art history, and introduce the younger generation to the

brilliance of an artistic voice that was unusual and perhaps ahead of his time, the exhibition will focus on the intricacy and complexity of his rich repertoire of images.

'**Atul Dodiya: Walking with the Waves**' an exhibition with recent works of Atul Dodiya generated from the current pandemic will open parallel to K Ramanujam's show at KNMA, Saket.



Atul Dodiya, Untitled, 2020,  
Watercolour on paper  
Image courtesy: Artist

The exhibition will look at a body of intimate and small-format watercolours produced by Dodiya during the past two years of continuous Covid crisis. As the world shut down in response to the epidemic, the artist also had to retreat to his inner world, his sanctuary. With a fund of time at hand while quarantined at home, Dodiya began his exploration of the world outside, one, which is rooted in the real, yet silently allowing the fantastic to enter the image-scape. So far, what had only been subjects of routine observances had turned into remote recesses. What he had not realized was the power of the subconscious to dredge up, from the depths of the mind, extemporaneous views of trees, creepers, plants, sky, clouds, water bodies and waves of imagination. Familiar sights from his morning walks transformed into magical landscapes with faceless mystic figures engaged in otherworldly gesticulations, and the pervasive city disappearing from the configurations. Eventually, as the simple act of daily morning walks became precarious, these watercolours on his pad became repose for the recluse. Conversing through impeccable silence, the painted characters are relatable now, and unreachable in the next moment.



For an artist known for large-scale, at times photo-real renderings, this sudden interlude presents an opportunity of transition from the imposing to the fragile. References from books, cinema, and art that he had engaged with, have been a significant constituent in his art, yet this time Dodiya finds himself 'tapping a less busy but more innocent wellspring inside him'. He explores not just the 'small-scale' but also newer forms of techniques in these works. In what can be considered as mindscapes, these watercolours are quiet but playful introspections into the creation of spaces, forms, transmutations, and transformations. An attentive selection from almost 270 works from the series, the exhibition will introspect on the idea of this 'space of innocence and freedom' as Dodiya puts it. The waves of turmoil and the waves of change are perhaps the only perpetuity of human existence and the world around that these works inform.

The two exhibitions together will reveal intricacies and profundities that solitary creative minds can reach and bring out for the onlooker, by touching upon unforeseen emotions and sensibilities that can only arise from a period of great crisis and a subsequent respite brought in through healing.

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Atul Dodiya, Untitled, 2020,  
Watercolour on paper  
Image courtesy: Artist