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13th November 2021 - 16th December 2021





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Designed by Yashmi Kantak

Printed by Niyogi Press, Delhi

Published by Art Exposure

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Preface

Paresh Maity was born in 1965 in Tamluk, a small town in West Bengal with a remarkable heritage in terracotta art, which has been the true genesis of his entire oeuvre. Keenly inspired as a child, he made clay images of gods and goddesses, and sold them to earn money for his continued education.

Maity completed his degree in Fine Arts from the Government College of Art & Craft in Kolkata, and then graduated with a Master of Fine Arts from the Delhi College of Arts. Currently based in New Delhi, he is a prolific and popular artist with a remarkable mid-career profile. He has already showcased his work in more than eighty major exhibitions across India and the world. Some of his recent solo projects were featured at Art Central (2019) and the Visual Art Centre (2019) in Hong Kong; Jehangir Art Gallery in Mumbai (2017); "Forty Years of Watercolour" at the Lalit Kala Academy in New Delhi (2017); Art Stage Singapore (2017); Art 16, Olympia in London (2016); CIMA Gallery in Kolkata (2015); and the Sydney Contemporary Art Fair in Australia (2015).

Maity also produced the much-celebrated, longest mural painting in India which is titled "The Indian Odyssey" that spans over 850-feet across Delhi's Indira Gandhi International Airport. In 2014 the Government of India conferred upon him its fourth-highest civilian award, the Padma Shri, and he is also the proud recipient of several other accolades that include the Cartier Award in St. Moritz, Switzerland Art Masters, All India Fine Arts and Craft Society Awards at the 62nd "All India Art Exhibition" and the "Best Watercolour Painting" in New Delhi, the Governor's Gold Medal from the Academy of Fine Arts in

Kolkata, and the Jamini Roy Birth Centenary Celebration Award. His works are featured in several private and public collections, including the British Museum in London and the National Gallery of Modern Art in New Delhi.

Paresh's adventurous personality and experimental creativity has explored a variety of mediums, from drawing and watercolour to oil painting, sculpture, and mixed media and installation. Most recently he has even turned his eye to filmmaking. The uniqueness of his work lies in its constant rediscoveries of the magic integral to our inimitable India.

Stories in Bronze

Paresh Maity has a traveller's soul, reciting real and imagined stories which he crafts from experience and memory into both paintings and sculptures. Still embedded in the rich traditions of Bengali art and crafts, he continues to bring to life the cultural wealth of India's landscapes and history. Maity's sculptures demonstrate great versatility and a monumentalism that involves his original love of miniatures and tribal art. Indeed, he has reinvested his energies in the tactile dignity of village life and the natural world, drawing on narratives that have permeated rural consciousness for centuries.

In this exhibition we see a carefully curated repertoire of figures from secular life that allude to divine powers and are suggestive of the interconnectedness of all existence. The artist's signature motifs, including vegetation, faces, and animals, are here personified in bronze, brass, and copper, as if to emphasize that whatever manifests comes into being because of certain conditions, be they tangible or unseen, which are in turn shaped by other phenomena. What is under our noses and even on an energetic or psychological level, emerges from a vast, supportive, and everchanging continuum of unknowable causal relationships. And this unfolding of stories within stories, large and

small, is reiterated across human time and culture. A veritable theatre of figures and sensations seems to fascinate Maity, whose early intuitions have aimed to express an accumulated spirit of place and ambiance in the sculptural form:

"I was seven-years-old when I first watched the artisans in my native village - Tamluk in West Bengal - making idols of the Goddess Durga. I was totally mesmerised and decided then and there that I wanted to be an artist. So I began by making clay toys to sell in the village fairs and I kept this up throughout my adolescence to help fund my art education."

While painting has dominated most of Paresh Maity's artistic output, in the last fifteen years or so he has increasingly revisited sculpture and produced impressive installations. Adding exciting possibilities of lighting and location, so viewers can interact from various angles, he enjoys the challenge of creating new, multidimensional experiences. Indeed, designing for public and private spaces is clearly driving the market for global contemporary art, which demands evermore visual impact. Scale has become a defining factor in art content, and as we stand before works that are vastly larger than ourselves, we are somewhat humbled by their influence. But even with his most ambitious ideas Maity emphasizes smaller, elemental components that might otherwise escape our



worker ants for example - crawling over walls and provocatively titled *Procession* - are made from reappropriated Enfield motorcycle parts. Their instinctive, habitual, and apparently unconscious marching for resources and communication no doubt mimes the behaviours of our own industrialized and now digital societies.

attention. His giant installation of metallic

Conversely, Bengali architecture, terracotta modelling, Dhokra casting, and other plastic arts in their earliest forms served the specific aesthetic needs and spiritual purposes of its farming and artisanal communities, which used the abundant clays and metals of their deltaic lands. Particularly inspired by festivals, the artist has tapped into the social, creative, and environmental expressions of his birthplace. Durga Puja celebrations in West Bengal typically reverberate with the kind of frenzied productivity that brings cities and villages to a standstill. But Maity reveals a poetic sensibility that is quietly rendered in the sensuous contours of his sculptural forms, which are enlivened by myriad cultural allusions and interpretations. For instance, on a metaphoric level his Sangam (2019) work, from the Sanskrit samagama, connotes the ancient literature of South India and the three mass gatherings of poets, said to have distilled the best literary works from the greatest hearts and minds of the region.



On a material level, this piece incorporates the most fundamental "confluence" - parents and child as one - that shapes the human family. A cubic, maternal, and rustic countenance holds this union together, as Maity evokes a typically female dedication to social stability and harmony. Interestingly, a much broader narrative is communicated by entering a very familiar and relatable imaginative space.

The artist's **Four Pillars of Life** (2021) pays homage to an Indian aphorism that considers each person to be like a house with four rooms physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual. Our tendencies to live mostly in just one or two spaces reflects our fears or ignorance about our true potential and resources. Ancient Hindu thinkers had also divided the human lifespan into four age-related Ashramas (stages): Brahmacharya (student), Grihastha (householder), Vanaprastha (retired) and Sannyasa (renunciate). Maity's unpretentiously tiered column in bronze simply represents these complex ideas and also supports the Purusartha concept upholding the four goals of a fulfilling life, namely, Dharma (piety, morality, duties), Artha (wealth, health, resources), Kama (love, relationships, emotions) and Moksha (liberation, freedom, self-realization).



Four Pillars of Life H-72"x W-24"x D- 24" Bronze 2021

With touches of irony and whimsy, The Spice **Route** (2019), is an entertaining piece that looks like a playful take on contemporary globalization in a brass replica of the ubiquitous mini truck in India. Sacks full of chili peppers, symbolically noting the material value and legendary protective properties of chilies in many cultures, literally recall the medieval "Maritime Silk Roads" - linking the East with the West via Japan and Indonesia, around India and onto the Middle East, across the Mediterranean and finally to Europe. This life-sized installation also suggests the accumulation of costs as goods move over land from middleman to middleman. Vasco Da Gama's legendary discovery of a sea route to India (1497 to 1499) resulted in trade agreements that changed the course of geopolitics. Within a few decades, half of the Asian spice trade shifted from road to sea and subsequently triggered the means and contexts for colonization.

In the form of a massive but elegant gaur in brass and copper, *The Power* (2018) consists of countless bells displaying both the natural assets of the bulls in South India and the *ghanti* used in pujas for invoking divinity and driving away negative forces. Filling the mind with focused, subtle sounds in mantras and Vedic chants, bells drown noise and convey the all-pervasive nature of the supreme (Sarasvati). Signifying the phenomenal world that is all powerful but evanescent, like the sound of a bell, the artist





H-126" x L-282" x D- 54" Brass and Copper 2018



Androgyne H-72" x W-29" x D- 17" Bronze 2021

reminds us that this coveted quality can be perceived and experienced but not retained, and that we must ultimately relinquish our attachments. This idea is contrasted with the apparent solidity of the bull's stance, which also calls to mind Shiva's sacred Nandi, the purveyor of delight. When the world becomes evil, Shiva destroys it to make way for beneficial change. This much celebrated partnership in Hindu scriptures and art dates to the earliest cultures, where dairy farming was the most important and life-sustaining occupation. Maity's bull embodies a more nurturing, protective, and far more feminine energy than the brute optimism and volatility of the renowned Charging Bull icon found on Wall Street. And one cannot help but extend the narrative possibilities to arrive at the very real collective power of the people, as well as other inferences to much greater forms of supernatural influence.

As a timeless tribute to the interplay between male and female qualities, *Androgyne* (2021) serves as an elegant symbol of the blending of desirable characteristics. Contemporary fashion and pop culture across the world are rife with androgynous imagery but of course it has been there for centuries. Seen differently from different angles, this sculpture portrays the highest psychological competencies and holistic aspirations for both individual and societal evolution.





Rider (2021) is an intriguing bronze installation which seems to suggest the combination of elegance and strength, and the special bond between humans and animals. Hindu scriptures depict Lord Surya riding across the sky in a chariot led by seven horses, ushering in the cosmic rays that radiate life-giving warmth from our omnipotent Sun, with their reins as the earthly seasons. While the horse is clearly a universal symbol of freedom, travel, movement, and desire, here the artist has left us to ponder the significance of its invisible rider.



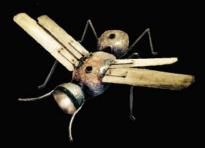
Rider H-68" x W-17" x D- 21" Bronze 2021



Along with such stylised forms, Maity has even conjured the romantism of the Indian landscape. His larger-than-life brass installation titled Golden Shower (2019) is based on the amaltas or Indian laburnum (Cassia fistula) tree. Manifesting nature's abundance in summer, by April it sheds its leaves and slender brown branches to reveal a medium sized and unassuming tree that looks bare. But in May yellow-green buds appear again and by June its dazzling pendulous blooms hang like chandeliers. The amaltas trees' exuberant sprays of gold, amber, and citrine hues famously revitalize the spirit. Considered a healing plant in Ayurveda, this tree is known as aragvadha ("disease killer") and its flowers have ritual significance. Perhaps our artist is invoking the transformative energy of hope, even when all appears lost.









Maity's *Vigour* (2020) acknowledges the intensely feminine influence of creative potential. Traditionally connected to nature, this evidently Indian figure appears to preside over the collective imagination. Both an earthy, sensual physiognomy and an ethereal quality add weight to the collaborative process and the uniquely complex relationship between a muse and her counterpart. No doubt, celebrating such partnerships with writers, musicians, filmmakers, and artists comes naturally to Paresh, who is married to acclaimed artist Jayasri Burman and is part of a prominent Indian art family. Aesthetically, these sculptures have evolved an exciting language that fluently incorporates classical traits, regional mannerisms, and contemporary life.

> © Rosa Maria Falvo October 2021



Vigour H-148" x W-75" x D- 124" Bronze 2020

Biography

Rosa Maria Falvo is an acclaimed writer, editor, and curator in Milan and Melbourne, specializing in Asia-Pacific and Middle Eastern contemporary art. She graduated with an Honours Degree of Bachelor of Arts (First Class) and a Diploma of Education (English Literature and Biology) from Monash University in Melbourne, Australia. After her first career as a leading teacher, she began travelling and later studied European avant-garde art at Perugia University in Italy. For the last 21 years, Rosa has published widely, working closely with artists, writers, galleries, collectors, foundations, corporations and cultural bodies in the production and promotion of art books and exhibition projects. She has been a guest presenter at numerous venues including the Chobi Mela International Photo Festival and Dhaka Art Summit in Bangladesh; Fotografie Museum in Amsterdam; Foreign Correspondents' Club in Tokyo; Shanghai & Beijing M Literary Festivals; India Art Fair Global Forum; National Geographic in Washington DC; BBC House in London; Oxford Centre for Islamic Studies and Brasenose College Oxford University; American Institute of Architects in New York; The Photographers' Gallery in London; Art Stage Singapore; Nanjing International Art Festival; National Art Gallery of Uzbekistan; Lahore Biennale; and the Bahrain National Museum, to name a few. Rosa regularly participates in the Prince Claus Awards in Amsterdam and is a board member of the Vasl Artists' Association in Karachi.