

San Francisco Anjolie Ela Menon's 6-month solo show at Asian Art Museum

By Jyotirmoy Datta

In a rare tribute to a living Indian painter, the renovated Asian Art Museum (AAM) of San Francisco will present a selection of 11 paintings by Anjolie Ela Menon, who is arguably not only India's best-known woman artist, but also perhaps the closest technically to the great masters of surrealism, such as Salvador Dali, with a range of photo-real yet unworldly imagery unmatched by any living Indian painter. The paintings will be on display through December 17, 2006, in Gallery 5 of the museum's South Asian gallery suite, located on the third floor.

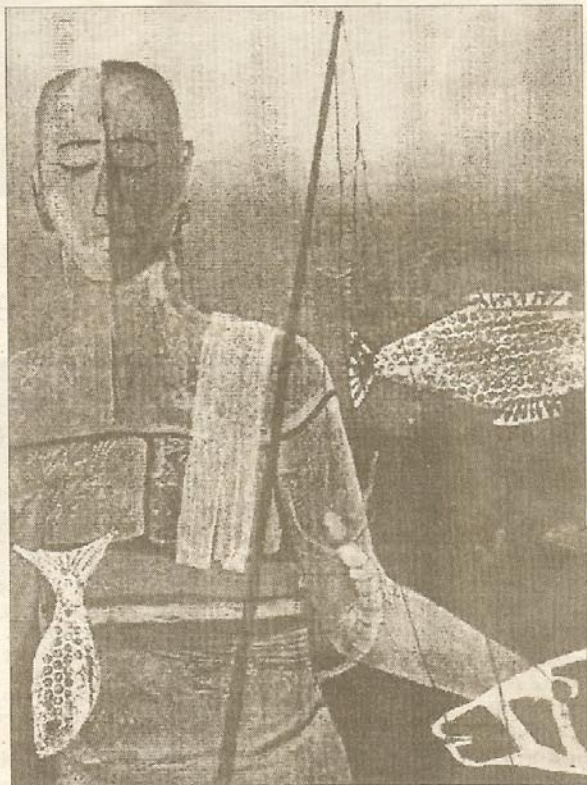
In conjunction with the museum show, Gallery ArtsIndiaWest is presenting a collection by the artist at a 1-month show beginning May 19. The artist was expected to be at the Asian gallery suite. The centerpiece of the AAM installation is *Yatra* (2004), a large oil painting on masonite board recently acquired by the Asian Art Museum. This triptych depicts various figures that can be identified as participants in a north Indian Hindu pilgrimage, or *yatra*.

"Menon's interest in these pilgrims stems from both a sense of admiration and from her view of their devotional act as an unbroken bridge linking India's ancient past with its rapidly modernizing present," said the Asian Art Museum press release. "Accompanying *Yatra* are 10 other paintings drawn from Menon's most recent body of work—all borrowed from Gallery ArtsIndia, New York. The loan works elucidate various aspects of the new acquisition. They convey a sense of the artist's rich artistic repertoire, while also highlighting her sustained engagement with the aesthetic and intellectual themes evident in *Yatra*."

"These themes—the past and the present, tradition and modernity, and the interplay between popular and elite practices and prejudices—have guided Menon's work throughout her long career."

Unlike the Bengal School of Calcutta or the Progressives of Bombay, Menon has been a peripatetic, diverse, cross-line artist. Born in Bengal in 1940, Anjolie went to school in the Nilgiris, studied at the Sir J.J. School of Art in Mumbai, Delhi University, and the Ecole des Beaux Arts in Paris. She has had over 35 solo shows in India, the U.S., Russia, Germany, France, and England. In 2002, a retrospective of her work was held at the National Gallery of Modern Art, Mumbai. Menon has been awarded the Padma Shri (2000), one of the highest honors in India. The artist lives and works in Delhi.

The Asian Art Museum is a public institution whose mission is to lead a diverse global audience.



SIMULTANEOUS SHOW: Anjolie Ela Menon's painting, 'Fisherman's Story' (2005, 24" X 36" oil on masonite), is one of the paintings which will be on display from May 19 at ArtsIndia West in Palo Alto, CA. The exhibition will be on till June 11.

(Photo: Courtesy: ArtsIndia West)