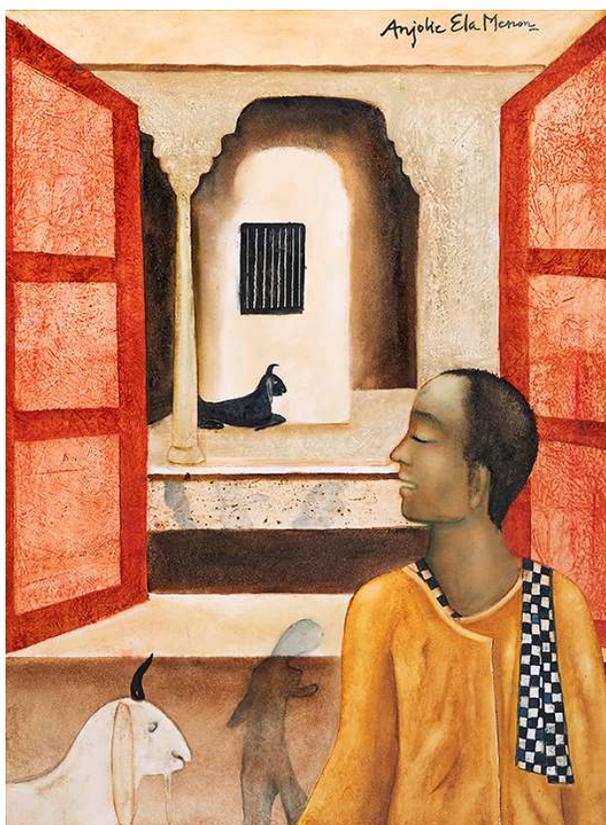


Anjolie Ela Menon *By the River*

Aicon Art Exhibition: August 19 – September 18, 2021

Press Preview & V.I.P Reception: Thursday, August 19, 6-8 pm

35 Great Jones St, New York NY 10012



Anjolie Ela Menon, *Haveli*, 2020
Oil on masonite board, 48 x 36 in.

Aicon Art is proud to present *By the River*, a major New York solo exhibition by renowned Indian painter **Anjolie Ela Menon**. Throughout a career, now spanning over fifty years, Menon has steadfastly remained a pioneering figurative painter, often in defiance of current trends. Her work metamorphosizes the visual matrix of our times through her use of a renaissance-like technique, which has earned her the sobriquet of 'Wanton Fabulist' from New Delhi based curator and critic Gayatri Sinha.

The current exhibition features over 25 paintings from the artist's oeuvre, featuring scenes divined from the milieu along with tender portraits. Menon is known to imbue her work with a quiet melancholy, even in scenes of celebration. In *Haveli*, she re-visits a familiar theme – the consonance of man and animal, the unity that maintains a delicate balance. Created in the midst of a global pandemic, Menon invokes the wholesomeness of touch and intimacy as a way to heal from the isolation and uncertainty of her surroundings.

Throughout her artistic career, Anjolie Ela Menon has re-envisioned her role as an artist and has produced various bodies of work toward her aim to defy categorization. Menon's early paintings, mainly portraits, evoke inspiration from the likes of Modigliani, Van Gogh, Amrita Sher-Gil, and M. F. Husain. She comments on her approach of using flat areas of thick bright color with sharp outlines, which were done "with the vigor and

brashness of extreme youth."

Menon's studies in Paris in the 1960s exposed her to the techniques of medieval Christian iconography, particularly Byzantine art. A period of experimentation led to a muted palette of translucent colors. Using the traditional technique of *pentimento*, Menon layers thin glazes of oil paint onto hardboard. The finely textured surfaces are further enhanced by burnishing the finished work with a soft dry brush, creating a glow reminiscent of medieval icons. As her style continues to evolve, Menon has developed the distinctive features of early Christian art - namely the frontal perspective, the averted head, and the slight body elongation. Her work often takes the female nude as a subject – resulting in a dynamic relationship between eroticism and melancholy. The artist has developed her approach to distance and loss in her later works through her thematic depiction of black crows, empty chairs, windows, and hidden figures.

The current exhibition covers diverse themes and re-visits some of Menon's iconic motifs. A series of pastoral landscapes is inspired by the rural community where her studio in Delhi is located. The goatherds and indeed the goats are ubiquitous this neighborhood - the almost biblical figures of the tribe reminiscent of a bygone era. Menon has been known for her icon like portraits and a suite of these small vignettes embellish this collection. The portraits of Namboodiri priests from the temples of South India have been an oft repeated subject in Menon's pictorial narratives and are seen here in abundance. From a recognizable oeuvre of other figures of a religious bent – Madonna and prophet figures, Menon blends the key tenets of her work - "pastiche, parody, irony and playfulness." As Sinha has observed,

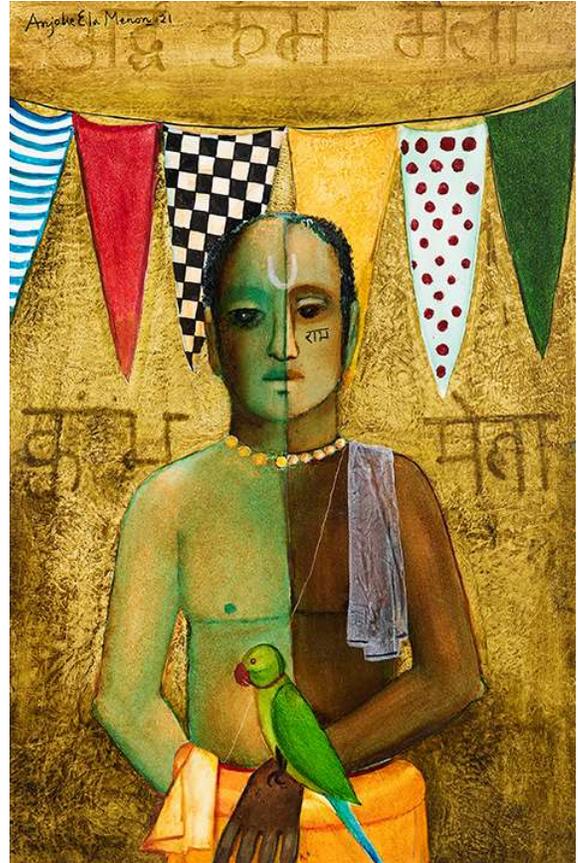
"Menon is particularly distinct because she has debunked the reigning credos of representing the contemporary Indian city – its areas of deeply conflicted urbanism or the smart slick representation of modernity, to revert to images of non-space, non-time, the evocation of pastiche and cross cultural references."

Menon's prolific output has resulted in numerous solo and group exhibitions internationally. Her works have been acquired by major museums in India and abroad and reside in both private and corporate collections. She is also well known for her murals and has represented India at the Algiers Biennale and in Sao Paulo, Brazil. Solo exhibitions include the Winston Gallery, Washington, USA; Doma Khudozhnikov, U.S.S.R; Rabindra Bhavanand Shridharani Gallery, New Delhi; Academy of Fine Arts, Calcutta and a major solo exhibition at the Asian Art Museum, San Francisco in 2006.

Anjolie Ela Menon's works can be found in the Peabody Essex Museum, Salem, MA, Asian Art Museum, San Francisco, National Gallery of Modern Art, New Delhi, the Kiran Nadar Museum of Art, New Delhi, the National Gallery, Singapore, Bharat Bhavan, Bhopal and the Chandigarh Museum of Art.

This exhibition represents the second major exhibition of the artist's work in the U.S.

Please contact Aicon Art (erica@aicongallery.com) for more information.



Anjolie Ela Menon, *Kumbhmela*, 2021
Oil on masonite board, 36 x 24 in.