RAMESH MARIO
NITHIYENDRAN
POLYMORPHOUS FIGURES
ARTIST STATEMENT

Within these new works, I have referenced smaller scale idols and figurative sculptures found in domestic, architectural and various other contexts. I have studied South Asian sculptural vernacular including figures adorning the exteriors of temples, contemporary iterations of sexual symbols as well as depictions of monkeys, birds and fish. I’ve explored a broad range of themes related to idolatry, queer politics and aesthetics, the polychrome and manual forms of production.

The series includes a large collection three-legged figures – all produced in 2020. This third-leg motif has been recurrent in my practice. I’m interested in this symbol as it is simultaneously sexual, structural, architectural and animal. When I look at the collection of works together in my studio – they seem sentient. They are at times an army, a series of warriors, mythical beings or deity-like forms.

Each sculpture is hand built and glazed in my studio in Rydalmere in Western Sydney. I’ve attempted to incorporate a more a painterly language in these ceramic surfaces. I’ve included coarse brush marks, drips, transparent layers and expressive lashes of glaze. This is reflective of my renewed interest in painting as a core methodology and language in my studio practice.

Ramesh Mario Nithiyendran, 2020
In his new body of work, Ramesh Mario Nithiyendran combines multiple elements into sculptures and plates to create figures with multiple personalities. *Polymorphous Figures* combines sexual, structural, animal and architectural forms - moving past his previous dualities into polymorphous figures that occur in several different forms and stages.

Such hijacking of hegemonic institutions is one of Ramesh trademarks. By carefully replicating and blending the appearance of these figures, Ramesh’s ideas and concepts transform into multi-faceted narratives that reflect the artist more than ever before. These concepts made in clay defy traditional representations of Eastern idols and Western tropes, offering an incomparable understanding of power and representation. Bold and multifaceted, colourful and confident, glazes and gestures mimic the artist himself.

Glazes are another unique feature of the Ramesh’s practice. This body of work pushes into an increasingly painterly style. More gestural and enigmatic, symmetry and smoothness make way for distorted forms and rough, mark making that signal the artist’s origins as a painter. Gestural marks give the impression of movement within the works, combining abstract markings with his figurative forms to soften the hard surfaces and infuse life into the clay.

*Nithiyendran has proved adept at expanding the sculptural possibilities of ceramics in materially complex, visually beguiling, and entertaining ways. – Toni Ross, Artforum, 2020*

Where some artists working with clay whisper, Ramesh shouts. *Polymorphous Figures* takes on the form of an army, with troops forming a loud symphony of colours and patterns - a bright beacon of joy to help us through these surreal times.
Multi Breasted Figure, 2020
earthenware, glaze, lustre and synthetic hair
110 x 45 x 28 cm
(RMN2020-24)
Figure with Red Crown, 2020
earthenware, glaze and rope
109 x 35 x 37 cm
(RMN2020-01)
Blue Seated Figure, 2020
earthenware, glaze, lustre and synthetic hair
92 x 35 x 30 cm
(RMN2020-27)
Three Legged Blue Figure with T-shirt, 2020
earthenware, glaze and lustre
71 x 36 x 21 cm
(RMN2020-06)

360° view: https://vimeo.com/405231717
PW: RMN
Multi Figure 1, 2020
earthenware, glaze and lustre
69 x 29 x 19 cm
(RMN2020-31)
Multi Figure 2, 2020
earthenware, glaze and lustre
65 x 30 x 25 cm
(RMN2020-26)

360° view: https://vimeo.com/405234146
PW: RMN
Pink Figure with T-shirt, 2020
earthenware, glaze and lustre
65 x 38 x 22 cm
(RMN2020-05)

360° view: https://vimeo.com/405233423
PW: RMN
Orange Figure with Bi-head, 2020
earthenware, glaze and lustre
67 x 35 x 23 cm
(RMN2020-12)
Bi-head with White T-shirt, 2020
earthenware, glaze and lustre
65 x 33 x 22 cm
(RMN2020-23)

360° view: https://vimeo.com/405230514
PW: RMN
Caramel Figure with Snake, 2020
earthenware, glaze and lustre
67 x 45 x 20 cm
(RMN2020-10)
Brown Figure with Snake, 2020
earthenware, glaze and lustre
65 x 42 x 24 cm
(RMN2020-30)
Figure with Mask, 2020
earthenware, glaze and lustre
63 x 39 x 23 cm
(RMN2020-33)

360° view: https://vimeo.com/405232588
PW: RMN
Silver Seated Figure, 2020
earthenware, glaze and lustre
65 x 40 x 28 cm
(RMN2020-29)
Cat with Brown figure, 2020
earthenware, glaze and lustre
39 x 21 x 30 cm
(RMN2020-11)

360° view: https://vimeo.com/405235464
PW: RMN
Green Dog with Gold Figure, 2020
earthenare, glaze and lustre
46 x 26 x 27 cm
(RMN2020-28)

360° view: https://vimeo.com/405236579
PW: RMN
Copper Dog, 2020
earthenware, glaze and lustre
32 x 16 x 27 cm
(RMN2020-03)

360° view: https://vimeo.com/405234880
PW: RMN
Yellow Dog with Brown Figure, 2020
earthenware, glaze and lustre
36 x 22 x 25 cm
(RMN2020-09)

360° view: https://vimeo.com/405237613
PW: RMN
Two Headed Figure, 2020
glaze on bisc plate
27 cm diameter
(RMN2020-14)

Bi-figure, 2020
glaze on bisc plate
27 cm diameter
(RMN2020-22)
Seated Figure with Red Background, 2020
glaze on bisc plate
27 cm diameter
(RMN2020-17)

Three Figures, 2020
glaze on bisc plate
27 cm diameter
(RMN2020-18)
Red Dog, 2020  
glaze on bisc plate  
27 cm diameter  
(RMN2020-19)

Silver Figures, 2020  
glaze on bisc plate  
27 cm diameter  
(RMN2020-20)
To accompany Polymorphous Figures, Ramesh has designed two unique unisex shirts. These shirts include imagery featured on specific recent paintings on both sides.

Please see next page for designs and sizing details.
Design 1
poly jersey long-sleeved shirt
S, M, L, XL
oversized fit
edition of 50

Design 2
poly jersey long-sleeved shirt
S, M, L, XL
oversized fit
edition of 50

Sizing Guide (cm/inches)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Size</th>
<th>HPS</th>
<th>Chest</th>
<th>Waist</th>
<th>Shoulder</th>
<th>Sleeve</th>
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<td>106.5/42</td>
<td>16.5/6.5</td>
<td>65.5/25.75</td>
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<td>112/44</td>
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<td>66.7/26.25</td>
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<tr>
<td>L</td>
<td>79/31</td>
<td>124.5/49</td>
<td>117/46</td>
<td>17.8/7</td>
<td>68/26.75</td>
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<tr>
<td>XL</td>
<td>80.5/31.75</td>
<td>129.5/51</td>
<td>122/48</td>
<td>18.4/7.25</td>
<td>69.2/27.25</td>
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</table>
Ramesh Mario Nithiyendran
b. 1988, Colombo, Sri-Lanka; lives and works in Sydney

Sri Lankan-born, Sydney-based artist Ramesh Mario Nithiyendran creates rough-edged, vibrant, new-age idols that are at once enticing and disquieting. He experiments with form and scale in the context of figurative sculpture to explore politics of sex, the monument, gender and organised religion. He capitalises upon the symbolism of clay as fundamental corporeal matter. Formally trained in painting and drawing his practice has a sculptural emphasis which champions the physicality of art making. These works are often stacked to form totems or perched atop customised plinths. While proceeding from a confident atheist perspective, Nithiyendran draws upon his Hindu and Christian heritage as reference points as well as a large range of sources including the internet, pornography, fashion and art history. Self-portraits make frequent appearances and the dual presence of male and female organs suggest gender fluid realms of new possibilities.

Recent solo presentations include Dhaka Art Summit, Dhaka, Bangladesh (2018) and Encounters, Art Basel Hong Kong 2018, Hong Kong (2018). In 2016 Nithiyendran exhibited Mud Men at the National Gallery of Australia, Canberra. At the time he was the youngest artist in the NGA’s history to have a solo exhibition at the gallery. In the same year his solo exhibition, In The Beginning, was presented at the Ian Potter Museum of Art, Melbourne.

Nithiyendran’s work is held in various collections, including the National Gallery of Australia, Art Gallery of Western Australia, Art Gallery of South Australia, Art Gallery of New South Wales, Ian Potter Museum of Art and the Shepparton Art Museum.

Nithiyendran holds a BA(UNSW), BFA (Hons. Class 1) and a Master of Fine Arts (research) from UNSW Art & Design. He has acquired various grants including the Freedman Foundation Travelling Art Scholarship, Artstart, The City of Sydney’s William Street Creative Tenancy, the Australian Artist’s Grant (NAVA), a travel grant from The Ian Potter Cultural Trust and an Australian Postgraduate Award.
RAMESH MARIO NITHIYENDRAN
b. 1988, Colombo, Sri-Lanka; lives and works in Sydney

EDUCATION
2012-13 Master of Fine Arts (Research), College of Fine Arts, University of New South Wales
2011 Bachelor of Fine Arts/Bachelor of Arts, College of Fine Arts, University of New South Wales

AWARDS AND PRIZES
2019 Sidney Myer Creative Fellowship
2019 Sulman Prize, Finalist
2019 Archibald Prize, Finalist
2019 Ramsay Art Prize, Finalist
2018 Winner, Melbourne Art Foundation Young Artist Award
2018 Sir John Sulman Prize, Finalist
2017 National Self-Portrait Prize, UQ Art Museum, University of Queensland
2015 Sidney Myer Fund Australian Ceramic Award, Winner
2015 The Ian Potter Cultural Trust, Grant
2014 NSW Visual Arts Fellowship (Emerging), Winner
2014 Australian Artist’s Grant, National Association of the Visual Arts
2014 ArtStart, Australia Council of the Arts, Grant
2013 The Tim Olsen Drawing Prize, Highly Commended
2012-13 Australian Postgraduate Award, Recipient
2012 The Freedman Foundation Traveling Art Scholarship, Recipient
2012 Arc Art and Design Grant, Recipient
2011 The Tim Olsen Drawing Prize, Winner
2011 COFA Dean’s Award for Academic Excellence, Recipient
2011 The Gallery Barry Keldouls Award, Winner
2011 The Lloyd Rees Youth Memorial Award, Commended
2011 Faculty of Arts and Social Science Dean’s Award for Academic Excellence, Recipient
2010 COFA Dean’s Award for Academic Excellence, Recipient
2010 Arc at COFA Emerging Artist and Designer Award, Highly Commended
2009 Arc at COFA Emerging Artist and Designer Award, Highly Commended

RESIDENCIES
2019 Parramatta Artist Studios
2015 Clayarch Gimhae Museum, Korea
2014 City of Sydney, William Street Creative Tenancy
2012 Throwdown Press, Sydney
COLLECTIONS
National Gallery of Australia, Canberra
Art Gallery of New South Wales, Sydney
Art Gallery of Western Australia, Perth
Art Gallery of South Australia, Adelaide
Museum of Applied Arts and Sciences, Sydney
Ian Potter Museum of Art, Melbourne
University of New South Wales, Sydney
Shepparton Art Museum, Shepparton
Artbank, Australia
Private collections Australia and overseas

SELECTED SOLO EXHIBITIONS
2020 Polymorphous Figures, Sullivan+Strumpf, Sydney
2019 False Gods, Sullivan+Strumpf, Sydney
2019 Creator: Ramesh Mario-Nithiyendran, Casula Power House Arts Centre
2018 R@ME$H Volume II, Sullivan + Strumpf, Singapore
2018 Dhaka Art Summit, Dhaka, Bangladesh
2017 R@MESH, Sullivan+Strumpf, Sydney
2016 In the Beginning, The Ian Potter Museum of Art, Melbourne
2016 Mud Men, The National Gallery of Australia, Canberra
2015 Archipelago, Shepparton Art Museum, Victoria
2015 Bad Plates, Gallery 9, Sydney
2014 One Hung Bitch, Volume II, Canberra Contemporary Art Space
2014 DOG god, Gallery 9, Sydney
2014 One Hung Bitch, Kudos Gallery, Sydney
2013 Dickheads, Firstdraft Gallery, Sydney

SELECTED GROUP EXHIBITIONS
2019 Brisbane Brief, Festival House, Fortitude Valley, Brisbane
2019 Poor Imagination, Sullivan+Strumpf, Singapore
2019 Art Basel Hong Kong, Sullivan+Strumpf, Hong Kong Exhibition & Convention Centre, Hong Kong, China
2019 Annual Group Show, Sullivan+Strumpf, Sydney
2019 Taipei Dangdai, Taipei City, Taiwan
2019 Idols, Perth Festival, Fremantle Arts Centre
2018 South/East Interference Volume 2, Bega Valley Regional Gallery
2018 Craftivism, Dissident Objects & Subversive Forms, Shepparton Art Museum, Victoria
2018 India Ceramics Triennial, Jaipur, India
2018 Sydney Contemporary, Carriageworks, Sydney, Australia
2018 Sculpture Park at Madhavendra Palace, Nahargharh Fort, Jaipur, India
2018 Breaking Ground, The Indian Ceramics Triennale, Jawahar Kala Kendra, Jaipur, India
2018 We are all connected to Campbelltown, one way or another, Campbelltown Arts Centre, Sydney.
2018 Encounters, Art Basel Hong Kong, Convention & Exhibition Centre, Hong Kong
2018 Group Show, Sullivan+Strumpf Sydney, Australia
2017 The National: New Australian Art, Carriageworks, NSW
2016 The 2016 Adelaide Biennial of Australian Art: Magic Object, The Art Gallery of South Australia in partnership with the Anne and Gordon Samstag Museum of Art
2016 The 4th Jakarta Contemporary Ceramics Biennale, National Gallery Indonesia, Jakarta
2015 21, Casula Powerhouse, Sydney
2015 Group Exhibition, Clayarch Gimhae Museum, Busan, Korea
2015 Vipoo’s Choice: Contemporary Australian Ceramics, The Australian Ceramics Triennale, Beaver Galleries, Canberra
2015 Collector’s Space, Art Month Sydney
2014 Sideshow - UTS Gallery, Sydney
2014 The Freedman Foundation Travelling Art Scholarship Exhibition, Galleries UNSW
2014 The 62nd Blake Prize, Galleries UNSW, Sydney (Finalist)
2014 Seoul-Sydney, Contemporary Korean and Australian Prints, Galleries UNSW
2013 FACE 2 FACE | self-portraits & portraits of other artists, Robin Gibson Gallery, Sydney
2013 Underbelly Arts Festival, Cockatoo Island, Sydney
2013 Drunken Lustre, Artsite, Sydney
2013 Unreal! Artbar, Museum of Contemporary Art Australia, Sydney
2013 ICAA Fundraiser, Archive Space, Newtown
2013 Launch Sequence, Kudos Gallery, Sydney
2013 Mirror, Mirror, COFAspace, Sydney
2012 Hatched: National Graduate Show, Perth Institute of Contemporary Art, Perth
2012 The Freedman Foundation Travelling Art Scholarship for Emerging Artists Exhibition, Kudos Gallery, Sydney
2012 Jenny Birt Award, COFAspace, Sydney. (Finalist)
2012 & 2013 The Tim Olsen Drawing Prize, Kudos Gallery, Sydney
2012 & 2013 The Kudos Award, Kudos Gallery, Sydney (Finalist)
2011 The Final Word, College of Fine Arts, University of New South Wales, Sydney
2011 The Tim Olsen Drawing Prize, Kudos Gallery, Sydney

SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY
2018 ‘Features: Ramesh Mario Nithiyendran’, Art Asia Pacific, 15 May
2018 Wes, Hill. ‘Neo-Expresisonism, then and now’, Eyeline Contemporary Visual Arts, No. 8, 1 March
2018 Rasheed, Zaheena. ‘Finding new bearings in uncertain times, via art’, Al Jazeera, 13 February
2018 Tong, Valencia. ‘Highlights from Art Basel Hong Kong 2018’, The Artling, 27 March
2018 Haaris, Gareth. ‘Dispatch from Dhaka: five highlights from the fourth Art Summit’, The Art Newspaper, 5 February
2018 McDonald, John. ‘Dhaka Art Summit 2018: The most unusual ‘must-see’ on the global art circuit’, The Sydney Morning Herald, 7 February
2018 Bower, Ric. ‘Sex is a Useful Way to Start the Conversation’, CCQ, 1 April
2017 Clark, Garth. ‘Ramesh Nithiyendran: A Wild and Gentle Carnival’, C-File, 27 March
2016 Ramirez, Diego. ‘Super Phalluses and Western Clutter’, Art and Australia, 2 December
2016 Soldani, Bianca. ‘Culture, religion and phallus-worship’, SBS Lifestyle, 29 November
2016 Fairley, Gina. ‘Dissident Demi Gods Rock the Ceramic World’, Artshub
2016 Musa, Helen. ‘Giant Mud Men Invade the NGA’, Canberra City News, 29 July
2016 Beech, Isobel. ‘Ramesh Mario Nithiyendran is Breaking the Traditions of Ceramic’, Artlink, Issue 31:1
2016 Roelants, Altair. Material Thinking and Sustainability in Contemporary Ceramics, Artlink, Issue 31:1
2016 Slade, Lisa. Every Artist is a Conjuror, Magic Object: 2016 Adelaide Biennial of Australian Art, published by the Art Gallery of South Australia. pp. 17 - 68
2015 Briers, Anna. Subversion, Intervention and Extension: Clay in a Contemporary Context, Sidney Myer Fund Australian Ceramic Art Award Catalogue
2015 Rainforth, Dylan. Ramesh Mario Nithiyendran wins $50,000 Sidney Myer Fund Australian Ceramic Award, The Sydney Morning Herald Online
2015 Cathcart, Michael. The Sidney Myer Fund Ceramics Prize on Books and Arts, Interview on ABC Radio National
2015 Sebel, A. Interview: Ramesh Mario Nithiyendran, Art Almanac Australia, Issue: August 2015 (Cover)
2015 Rule, Dan. Forecast: Ramesh Mario Nithiyendran, Vault Magazine, Issue 9, April, pp. 140 - 142 (cover)
2015 Cunningham, Daniel Mudie. ‘Cool Hunter Prediction: Ramesh Mario Nithiyendran’, Australian Art Collector, Issue 71
2014 Broker, David. One Hung Bitch: Volume II (catalogue essay)
2014 Roberts, Harry. ‘Culture Buffed: Ramesh Mario Nithiyendran’, Belle Magazine, Issue: January
2014 Pugliese, Joseph. In the Midst of Dog God (catalogue essay)
2013 Carsley, Gary and Nithiyendran, Ramesh. in conversation, What a Difference a Gay Makes, Das Superpaper, Issue 29, pp. 78 - 83
2013 Bradshaw, Lydia. 'Profile-Ramesh Mario Nithiyendran', Framework, Issue 2, pp. 6 - 7
2013 Imperfect Architecture, Spectrum, The Sydney Morning Herald, 13 -14 April, p. 12
2013 Gall, Naomi. Thrown in the Deep End, Catalogue Essay
2012 Benton, Penelope and Nithiyendran, Ramesh (interview), Doodles, COFAtopia, Volume 1 (Cover)
2012 Throwdown Press (Interview), First Edition