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Kuveni, the victim and the victor

Kuveni, the Queen of Lanka-- an exhibition by Anoli Perera. Curated by Annoushka Hempel

"I have an attraction for myth, memory, history and interpretation.... My work is about life, context, moments and action specific to women. Be it mythical, experienced or imagined, the idea of nostalgia lingers somewhere as a feeling, a desire or mood. My present series on Kuveni, somehow touches the woman in me," writes artist Anoli Perera on her current exhibition, the first at the newly opened Hempel Galleries at 30/3 Barnes Place, Colombo 7.

"I have taken immense liberties (artists like to feel that) in selecting or concocting forms that interpret or symbolizes such moments and moods. Vijaya is equated to a sea serpent coming from the sea with multiple serpent heads denoting his 700 men. Their phallic form emphasizes the heightened maleness that presents as a constant threat to conquer land, the earth and its inhabitants. Kuveni is presented with a heavy referent to vaginal form, specified as woman through embroidered and patterned surface painted in detail.

"It also refers to the mythicized animal Liger, which is posited in the mythical landscape of Kuveni. Totally blind, Ligers are presented as an army to be led by whoever has power. The works 'Liger Army with Kuveni' and 'Liger Army with the Sea Serpent' consciously emphasize the equations of power. As such, conquest is never presented as the closure or the end," she says.



Anoli Perera

Curator Annoushka Hempel says that for her, Anoli has always been one of Sri Lanka's most talented artists, curators and writers. "Her work ranges from staggeringly powerful 3D installations that have been exhibited and bought by international museums, to her newest creative expressive work, her intriguing photo-performances, and her long time relationship with the story of Kuveni. So I am delighted to finally have the chance to host a one-woman show by Anoli."



Anoli's Kuveni series touches her on many levels, Annoushka adds. On first sight the beauty is of the image of Kuveni, its organic and sinuous female shape enhanced by details of painted lace and embroidery. Her colours bright and vibrant amidst a watery wash, almost move and take you into this mystical world. These images are abstract but poetic depictions of woman in history through the life of Kuveni. These paintings tell stories of the power and the vulnerability of woman, the ever existing struggle of control and passion between man and

woman.

Allow yourself to enter this world if you dare, invites Annoushka. As the small male figures climb up to ambush the world of 'woman' with its varied shapes and mysterious places, Kuveni is victimized but also deified.

For more see www.hempelgalleries.com.

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