

ALWAR BALASUBRAMANIAM
Mirror on the ground

February 7 – July 1, 2023

Talwar Gallery, New Delhi is thrilled to present *Mirror on the ground*, an exhibition of recent works by Alwar Balasubramaniam (also known as Bala). The exhibition will open on Tuesday, February 7 and will be on view until July 1, 2023.

The works in *Mirror on the ground* represent burgeoning in Bala's already-fertile career. Since returning to live in the countryside near Tirunelveli in Southern India, his work has grown in an ever deepening and evolving conversation with the environment around him. Nurtured by this relationship and his indefatigable curiosity that has sustained several decades of inquiry, this blooming appears across the varied works of *Mirror on the ground*, which include painting, sculpture, drawing, in addition to works that blur the distinctions between media. Like the spokes of a wheel, each reaching in its own direction but joined at their center, Bala's recent works move outward in many directions, even as they testify to a common origin-point.

Developing the artist's recent return towards painting, *Mirror on the ground* includes paintings that are a product of nearly two years of continuous effort. Connected by the horizon mediating between the land and sky these paintings culled from memory, blurred and abstracted up close, diverge from the traditions of landscape painting, inviting the viewer to enter and create their own experience of the simultaneous vastness and preciousness of the natural world. Another body of works builds outward from Bala's ongoing efforts to create while inviting a collaboration with nature, which subtly but completely remake the environments we inhabit. Preparing his canvases, like the surface of earth, Bala employs the forces / processes of nature to shape the surface of his works. *Mirror on the ground* also includes works which are painted with pigments derived from the elements of the landscape that they depict, these works move beyond illustrating the environment as conventional landscape paintings do—making it, rather, a substantial actor in their making. In the process, the forces of nature reveal themselves in a form of striking abstraction—one which remains materially, even elementally, grounded in the land, soil, and air it represents.

This interest in abstraction bridges Bala's work in two- and three-dimensions. *Cloud Stone*'s paint-like washes of blue and turquoise adhere to the surface of a work that is also a sculpture—a cavity cast from a recess in the stony mountain nearby the artist's home. Like the recess, *Cloud Stone* was repeatedly filled with pigment-tinged liquid, as rings of vibrant hue emerged from water's transmutation into air. Other sculptural works invite viewers to dwell on the ways time becomes encrusted within material—the sedimented rings of the sandstone of *Blown Away*, a nine-part stone sculpture or the rusted patina of the cast iron work, *Time Twist*. Still others trace the evolution of ideas in space—*Dot, Line, Space, Shadow of the Shadow* tracks the astonishing complexity wrought in space by single dot chased by light.

Lost Light, a singular work within *Mirror on the ground*, brings this meditation on time to a poignant, if open-ended, pitch. At the center of a field of rusty ochre ground, a simple earthen pot appears, broken cleanly; out of its opening a trail of black-brown soot rises, darkened by the continuous flickering of a light now extinguished. Resuming an inquiry of fire's aesthetic potentialities from decades earlier in his career, here Bala draws on its association with life's rituals and fragility.

Across the three decades of his career, Bala has become known for his continuous investigation of the material and natural world, along with our capacity to explore, identify and comprehend it. Keenly interested in ways of accessing those parts of life too small, too vast, or simply too everyday to be readily seen, his works challenge viewers to expand their ways of seeing and refocus their habits of attention.

Bala's works have been featured in exhibitions and collections worldwide, including The Metropolitan Museum of Art (MET), New York; The Museum of Modern Art (MoMA), New York; The Phillips Collection, Washington, DC; Guggenheim Museum, New York; Mori Art Museum, Tokyo, Japan; Kiran Nadar Museum of Art (KNMA), New Delhi, India; Seattle Art Museum, Seattle, Washington; École des Beaux Arts, Paris, France; Lalbhai Museum, Ahmedabad, India; Essl Museum, Austria; National Portrait Gallery, Canberra, Australia, 1st Singapore Biennale; and 18th Sydney Biennale. In 2001 he was given the Joan Miro foundation award accompanied by a solo exhibition. Bala has been a guest lecturer at the Art Department of Cornell University in Ithaca, NY and a featured speaker at TED.

Alwar Balasubramaniam (Bala) was born in 1971 in Tamil Nadu, India. He received a BFA from the Government College of Arts, Chennai, India, in 1995 after which he continued his studies in Edinburgh and Vienna. In 1998 he was artist in residence at The MacDowell Colony in NH after which he returned to Bangalore, where he lived and practiced till 2015. Subsequently Bala moved to the countryside near Tirunelveli in Tamil Nadu where he created his home and studio and continues to live and work.

For further information please call the gallery at (011) 4605 0307 or visit talwargallery.com