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## ‘Anjolie Ela Menon: An art exhibit’

By Chetna Singh

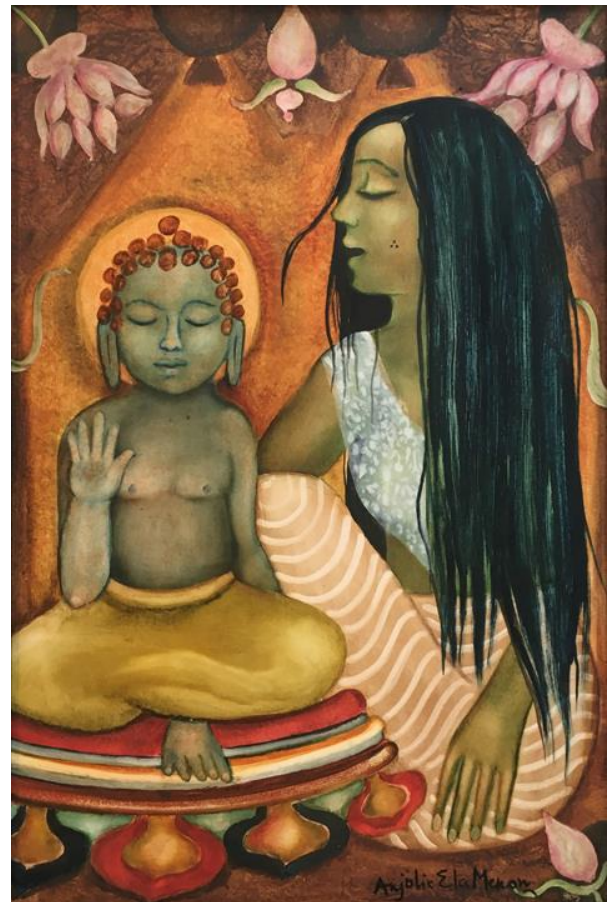
I am not a connoisseur of art but I do appreciate it and when I was invited to Anjolie Ela Menon’s opening night at Aicon Gallery, I could not let the opportunity pass.

A career spanning over five decades, Menon’s aim, as is witnessed in her bio is to “defy categorization”, which she has successfully achieved. Her work has distinct influences of Byzantine art, her figures reminiscent of icons seen in early Christian art with beautiful rendering of Indian themes. The amalgamation of the western style with the eastern subject is a visual treat for the senses and I wandered around the exhibition trying to soak up everything in one day.

A figurative painter, her paintings have very distinctive features. One of my favorite series in this large collection of her works was that of the “Divine Mothers”. Most of the models for the paintings were from a village close to where she lives. She is a part of the community in the village, and the children call her “dadi” (grandmother).

The series honors the mothers of sons who are worshipped, and Madonna with Christ mingles seamlessly with Parvati and Ganesh.



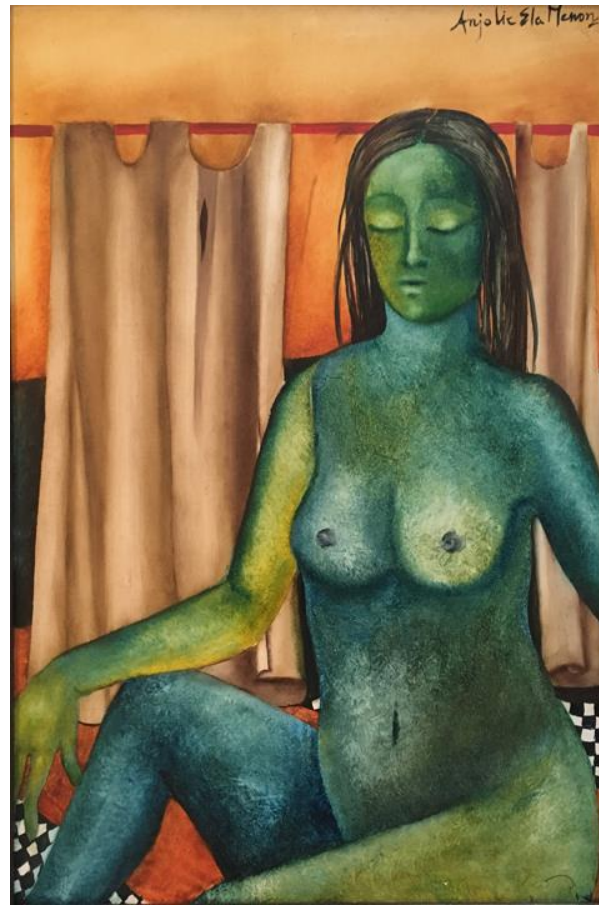




Exhibited for the first time, the triptych “Goatherds” painted with oil on masonite board. The depicted subjects are indigenous to the area where her studio is located in India.

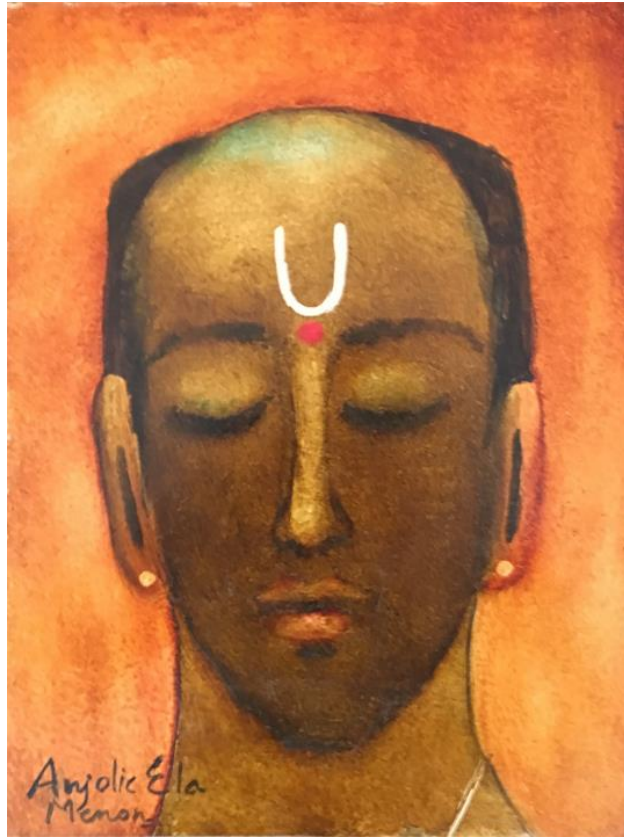


The beautiful nude which evoked a sense of empathy that I have never experienced with other artists, perhaps because there is such a simplicity and perhaps because it is done by a woman artist.



Born to a Bengali father and an American mother, Anjolie married Raja Menon, a Naval officer from Kerala. One sees the influences of her life in her paintings and the Namboodri Brahmins priests from her husbands native land are seen in several pieces at the exhibit.





The artist's experimentation with kitsch and calendar art was the first of its kind and has bridged the gap between what is considered high end art and that at a lower end. This has led to a huge fan following and a whole new movement in Indian art.



There are so many pictures that I could put here but if I were to choose a favorite it would have to be the one below which is a part of the maquettes for Mumbai International airport (in collaboration with late Robyn Beeche). I don't know whether it's my physician side that loves the anatomically perfect inner chambers of the heart or if it is just the expression on the subject's face but there is something about this painting that I find myself inherently drawn to.



I was privileged to meet the artist herself and wish I had more time to talk to her about her work.



VANDANA MENON

Anjolie Ela Menon outside Aicon Gallery

An avant garde Indian artist, who has changed the scene for contemporary Indian art. If you have the time, visit Aicon gallery In New York, the exhibition runs through June 24th and there is phenomenal collection of over 40 pieces of work from the artists oeuvre.