

K. S. Kulkarni
Home and Away

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



K.S. Kulkarni, *Untitled (Figure Under Tree)*, 1974, acrylic on canvas, 44 x 48 in.

Aicon Art New York is delighted to present *Home and Away*, the debut solo exhibition by **Krishna Shamrao Kulkarni (1918 – 1994)**, an influential figure in the history of modern Indian art. The exhibition will be Kulkarni's first gallery solo exhibition in North America.

Presented in collaboration with the artist's family, the exhibition comprises canvases and works on paper that Kulkarni created between his New Delhi studio and his travels around the US during the 1970s and 1980s. His use of expressive line, full-bodied color and simple forms distinguishes the artist as one of the foremost painters to have left their mark on Indian modernism.

K.S. Kulkarni was a founding member of the avant-garde **Delhi Shilpi Chakra** movement and sought to develop an idiom that was both grounded in the “soul of the people” and also aligned with the “process of progress.” His works garnered

appreciation both in his native New Delhi, but also in the many places he travelled and absorbed influences. Keeping pace with time and the environment were key views of the Chakra artists. In the words of **Pran Nath Mago**, another key founding member, “The Chakra set to work according to its declared belief that art and culture belonged to all, and not only to a fortunate few; that the artist had a role in bringing the message of creative experience to the people; and that the artist himself could grow through a developed art awareness among people.”

Working largely between figuration and abstraction, K.S. Kulkarni evolved his work greatly over the course of his career. With several solo shows around the globe— across the US, Europe, Japan, and Egypt— K.S. Kulkarni absorbed life outside of his home only to return to India after every journey to continue to refine a style authentic to his origins. While the artist heavily embraced the bold, deliberate lines utilized by fellow global architects of contemporary art, he did not conform to stylistic orthodoxy. His way of working continually progressed. While welcoming the vitality and flexibility of a converging, cosmopolitan modernism K.S. Kulkarni experimented with the brush, studying subjects close to home such as the classical figures of the Ajanta murals and the Chola Bronzes. The allusion to the miniatures of Kangra in many of Kulkarni's works -

especially in his treatment of foliage - is unmistakable. This is evident in works like *Untitled (Figure Under Tree)*, 1974 that combine the evocative composition and form of miniature painting with a modernist idiom. In his later works, the stylistic imprint of Picasso's Cubism holds equal bearing with the forms of traditional Indian folk and tribal art.

K.S. Kulkarni was born in Belgaum, Karnataka in 1918. Despite facing numerous challenges early on, beginning with the death of his father at a very young age, Kulkarni defied the odds of his circumstances, and in 1940 he was awarded a diploma in Fine Art from the Sir J.J School of Art in Bombay. Following his education, the artist moved to Delhi where he began to work in textile design. There he met artists shaped greatly by Partition, and he eventually took up membership among the All India Fine Arts and Crafts Society. He would continue to develop as a leader within the local arts scene—becoming a founding member of the Delhi Shilpi Chakra, chairing the Lalit Kala Akademi, Lucknow from 1972-78, and serving as vice-chairman of the Lalit Kala Akademi, New Delhi from 1973-78.



K.S. Kulkarni, *Untitled (Cityscape)*, 1971, acrylic on Masonite board, 36 x 48 in.

In the years thereafter, he traveled around many parts of North and South America – spending a significant period in the US. Kulkarni spent many years 1969 – 1972 as a visiting professor at Skidmore College in New York. His extensive travels to South America especially pushed his visual vocabulary with Mayan and Etruscan art, and the simplicity of children's art. As can be seen in *Untitled (Cityscape)*, 1971, the artist would paint a cityscape like a stack of blocks using bold outlines and strokes. The mundane was often turned into the focus of his works. In his own words, "But, beyond the influence of Indian culture and its ethos, my horizons are universal. I am interested in the universalizing of the human spirit. My concepts are not regional or tribal-spiritual and material is the matrix of my creative intent. My art springs from within and flows from my perception of the rhythm of life around me in the global context."

As a result of his prolific output Kulkarni has held solo exhibitions and participated in multiple group exhibitions internationally. His works have been acquired by major museums, private collections and corporate collections in India and abroad. His works have been exhibited at such prestigious venues as the Sao Paulo Biennale, United Nations Plaza in New York and the Berkshire Museum in Massachusetts. This exhibition will be Kulkarni's first solo exhibition in North America in over a decade.

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