

JHAVERI CONTEMPORARY

Vasantha Yoganathan: A Myth of Two Souls

14 March—4 May 2019

Jhaveri Contemporary is delighted to present Paris-based photographer Vasantha Yoganathan's debut solo exhibition in India, *A Myth of Two Souls*.

Yoganathan's ongoing body of work is ambitiously divided into seven photo books, each dedicated to a chapter in *The Ramayana*. Drawing from the imagery associated with this mythical tale, Yoganathan traces a journey from north to south India to offer a contemporary re-imagining of the epic that sits somewhere in between documentary, fiction, and mythology.

'When Yoganathan first visited India in 2013, he began to comprehend the pervasiveness of the epic and the complicated layering of history, religious mythology, local folklore and everyday life that collapse into each other in the tale's many tellings and retellings. In an interview with the *British Journal of Photography*, he noted: 'I realised the distinction between truth and falsehood wasn't important. This was an important discovery for me, that this is where my photographs should lie – in this in-between world between physical reality and the imagined.'¹

Shot entirely in analogue, using large or medium format cameras that intentionally slow down the creative process, Vasantha's project harnesses a distinctive colour palette based on natural light. He is interested in painting, and this has led him to work around the genres of portrait, landscape, and still life, and to engage with local artists like Jaykumar Shankar, with whom he has collaborated to revive the tradition of hand-tinted photographs.

In *A Myth of Two Souls*, classic colour photographs are paired with black-and-white prints painted by Jaykumar, who adds layers of fiction and make-believe to the images by approaching them without a brief: 'Jay has a tendency to go towards pinkish skies and very soft and muted colours. As a result, the hand-painted photographs dialogue very well with my own colour photographs which use a pastel colour palette. Again, the idea is to confuse the reader. Is he looking at real photographs or something between painting and photography?'²

¹Vasantha Yoganathan quoted in Diane Smyth, 'Arles 2017: The Promise by Vasantha Yoganathan shortlisted for the Author Book Award', in *The British Journal of Photography*, 3 July 2017

²Vasantha Yoganathan quoted in Sunil Shah, 'Vasantha Yoganathan: A Myth of Two Souls' in *American Suburb X*, October 19 2017

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Vasantha Yoganathan was born in Grenoble in 1985 to a Sri Lankan father and French mother. The book form has been central to his work since the beginning. In 2014, he co-founded the publishing house Chose Commune and published his first book, *Piémanson*. His project *A Myth of Two Souls* will be published across 7 books (2016-2020) by Chose Commune. The first four chapters, *Early Times*, *The Promise*, *Exile*, and *Dandaka*, have already been published.

Exhibitions include, 'A Myth of Two Souls', Musée de l'Elysée, Lausanne (*solo*, ongoing) and 'A Myth of Two Souls', Chanel Nexus Hall, Tokyo (2019, *solo*, forthcoming); 'Vasantha Yoganathan: A Myth of Two Souls', The Photographers' Gallery, London (*solo*, 2018-2019); 'What's Essential', Jhaveri Contemporary, Mumbai (2018); 'Illuminating India 1857-2013', Science Museum, London (2017).

Vasantha is the recipient of many awards, including: Camera Clara Award (2018); Foam Talent Award (2017); ICP Infinity Award as Emerging Photographer of the Year (2017); The Prix Levallois (2016); and Magnum Photos International Award (2015).

Vasantha Yoganathan will be in conversation with Aweek Sen at the gallery on Friday 15 March 2019 at 6pm.