THREADS OF TRADITION

THOTA VAIKUNTAM





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THOTA VAIKUNTAM
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INTRODUCTION

Threads of Tradition celebrates a remarkable collaboration between art and craft, where Thota Vaikuntam's iconic paintings are created under the skilled craftsmanship and intricate embroidery of the Shams family; the sixteenth-generation masters of India's Zardozi tradition. This project not only translates Vaikuntam's vibrant figures into rich, tactile form but also elevates the legacy of India's fine craftsmanship, paying tribute to the artistry, patience, and cultural continuity that define our nation's handmade heritage

THREADS OF TRADITION



Thota Vaikuntam's art radiates the vibrancy of rural Telangana, celebrating its people with devotion, dignity, and sensual grace. His figures, often draped in luminous hues and adorned with sacred intimacy, embody the timeless rhythm of tradition and everyday divinity. In a singular moment of convergence between canvas and craft, the vibrant and poetic paintings of Thota Vaikuntam come alive in the threads of three-dimensional embroidery. Under the guidance of Thota Vaikuntam, his paintings have been translated into textile masterpieces, created under the skilled craftsmanship of the Shams family of Agra, the sixteenth generation of masters practicing the regal art of zardozi for over three centuries, vesting silk thread, precious and semi-precious gemstones, and the ornate borders of India's finest metal-thread work. The family is known in the lanes of Basai Khurd and beyond to have carried forward a craft introduced to India by Empress Nur Jahan, refined through palace interiors, royal garments and decorative treasures. Their forebears were skilled architects to the Taj Mahal and tailors to regal courts, who evolved into the creators of dimensional embroidery. A patriarch, Sheikh Shamsuddin, pioneered the very technique of 3-D zardozi: a tactile, sculptural embroidery that casts its forms into relief, as though the embroidered might spring to life. Each embroidered artwork begins with Vaikuntam's painted composition and is transformed by the Shams artisans in line with his guidance into a richly layered textile narrative. The results are pieces that speak of fusion: Vaikuntam's vivid, lyrical imagery now given tactile presence through the Shams family's dexterity; threads and stones echoing brush-strokes and colour fields; the line between painting and textile art dissolving, as craft honours fine art. The preservation and revival of our cultural heritage through these fine craftsmen hold deep and enduring significance. In a world that constantly moves toward the contemporary, it becomes ever more important to nurture the roots that define our collective identity. These artworks are not merely objects of beauty, they are vessels of memory, knowledge, and artistry passed down through generations. Their intricate and traditional methods speak of a lineage of skill, patience, and devotion that continues to shape the visual language of India's heritage. What makes this journey truly remarkable is the coming together of artist and artisan; of vision and mastery. This creates a dialogue between the past and the present, ensuring that ancient techniques remain alive, evolving, and relevant. A living model of cultural sustenance - one that honours our heritage whilst inviting reinterpretation through modern perspectives, this exhibition invites us not to just look, but to linger as we witness more than an artistic creation. We see the revival of a tradition, the reaffirmation of community, and the continuity of India's timeless spirit. We acknowledge here the hands and hearts of the Shams family, Faizan Uddin, Raisuddin, Fardeen and all the artisans of that workshop, who perpetuate, transform and innovate in what can justly be called one of India's most precious living crafts. Through this, we acknowledge the vision of



Mr. Shams receiving PADMASHRI Award from President of India Mr. R. Venkat Raman

Thota Vaikuntam, whose paintings have found new form, and new life, through their hands. This exhibition and its accompanying publication serve as both celebration and documentation: of art, of craft, of heritage, and of collaboration across generations and disciplines.

Sanya Malik
Curator, Black Cube Gallery



Sheikh Shamsuddin (Award For Zari Embroidery) Receiving the award Prime Minister of India Mrs. Indira Gandhi, at New Delhi on 23-3-1973



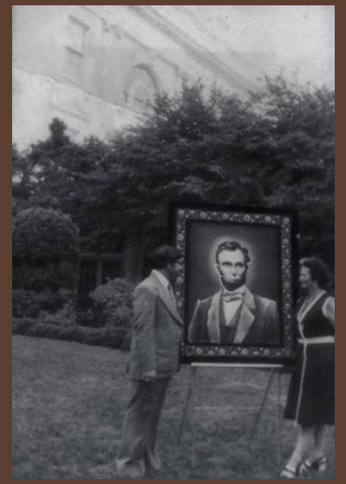
The artist (SHAMS UDDIN) Garlanding
Prince Charles of England at Agra

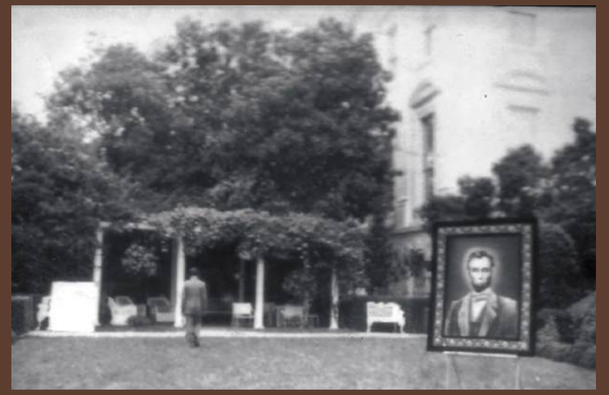


Artist showing his art to prince (1980)







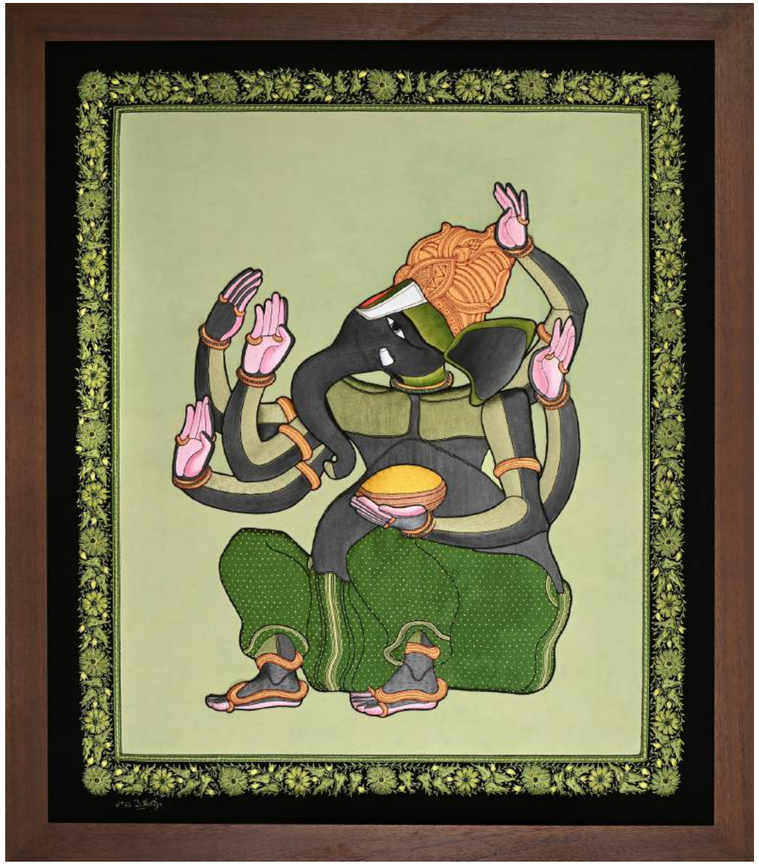


Mr. Rais, the son of Mr. Shams, presented
an embroidered picture of Abraham Lincoln
at the White House.

Silk embroidery on velvet, embellished with
precious and semi precious gemstones
Embroidery size: 48" x 30"
Frame size: 57" x 40"



Silk embroidery on velvet, embellished with
precious and semi precious gemstones
Embroidery size: 52" x 44"
Frame size: 61" x 52"



Silk embroidery on velvet, embellished with
precious and semi precious gemstones
Embroidery size: 48" x 38"
Frame size: 59" x 49"



Silk embroidery on velvet, embellished with
precious and semi precious gemstones
Embroidery size: 83" x 69"
Frame size: 93" x 80"



Silk embroidery on velvet, embellished with
precious and semi precious gemstones
Embroidery size: 52" x 44"
Frame size: 61" x 52"



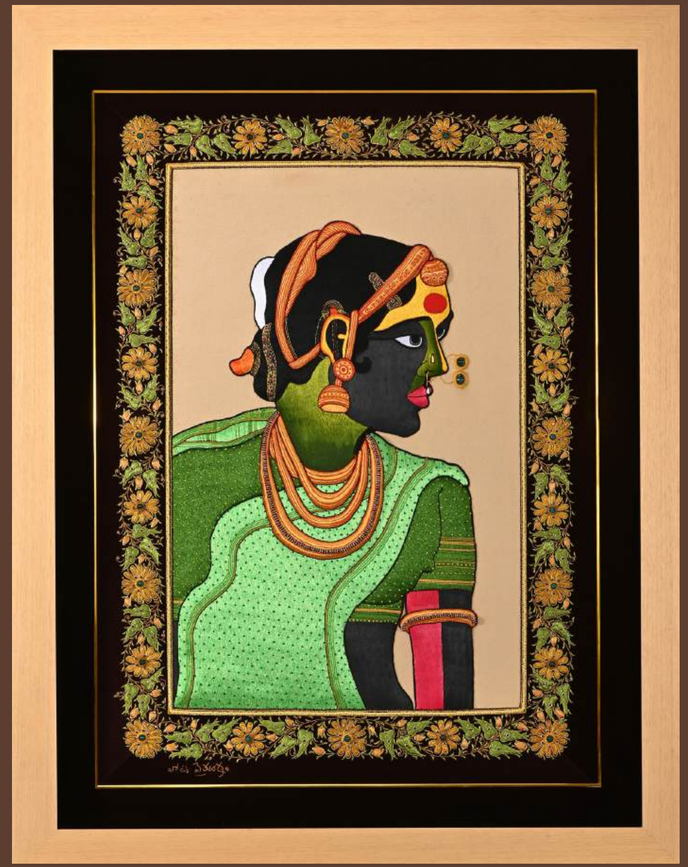


Silk embroidery on velvet, embellished with
precious and semi precious gemstones
Embroidery size: 31" x 29"
Frame size: 43" x 41"



Silk embroidery on velvet, embellished with
precious and semi precious gemstones
Embroidery size: 29" x 26"
Frame size: 41" x 38"

Silk embroidery on velvet, embellished with
precious and semi precious gemstones
Embroidery size: 32" x 23"
Frame size: 44" x 34.5"



“You are your own creator. You can’t base yoruself on others. It has to come from within you.”

THOTA VAIKUNTAM



Silk embroidery on velvet, embellished with
precious and semi precious gemstones
Embroidery size: 20" x 17"
Frame size: 30.5" x 28.5"









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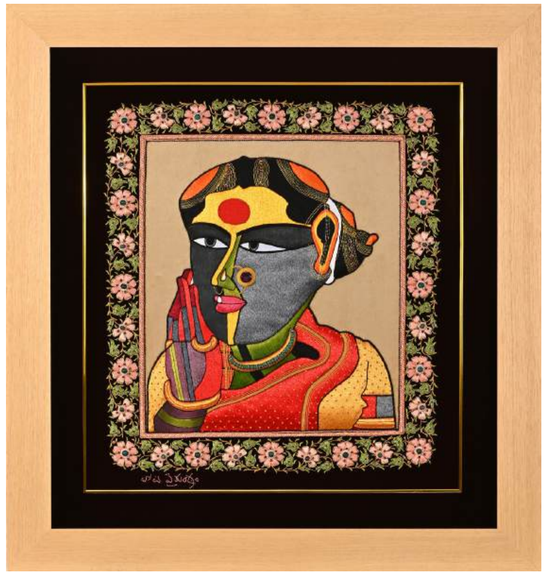
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“All my works are festive. My people are not rich, but they are a very happy people. They enjoy the small, beautiful things in life. I am a part of what I paint.”

THOTA VAIKUNTAM





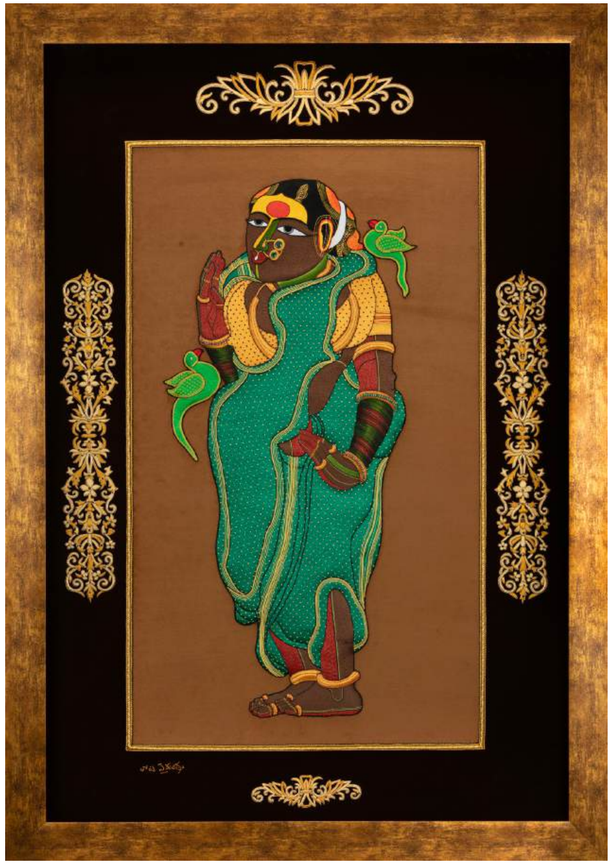
Silk embroidery on velvet, embellished with
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Frame size: 61" x 43"



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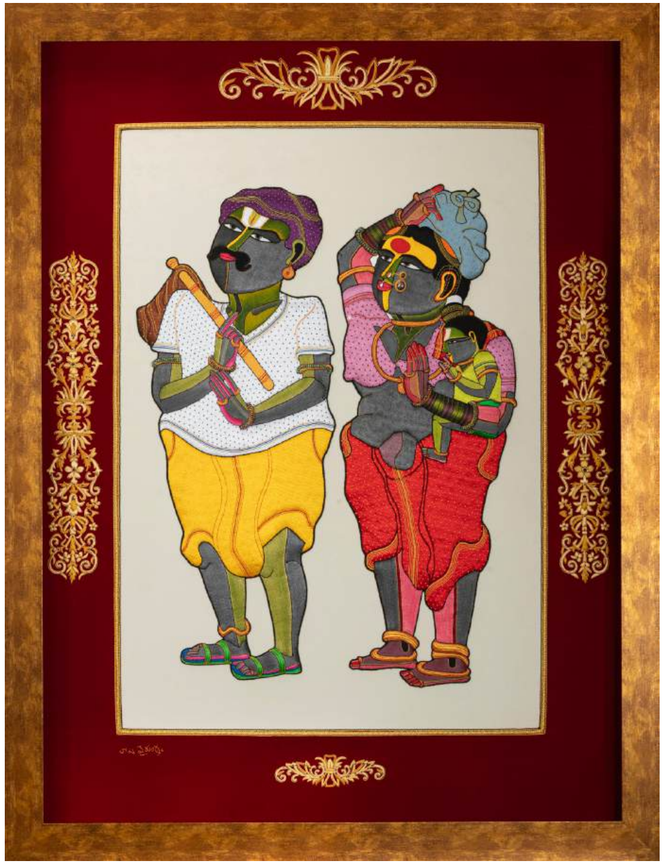
Silk embroidery on velvet, embellished with
precious and semi precious gemstones
Embroidery size: 55" x 42"
Frame size: 61" x 47"



Silk embroidery on velvet, embellished with
precious and semi precious gemstones
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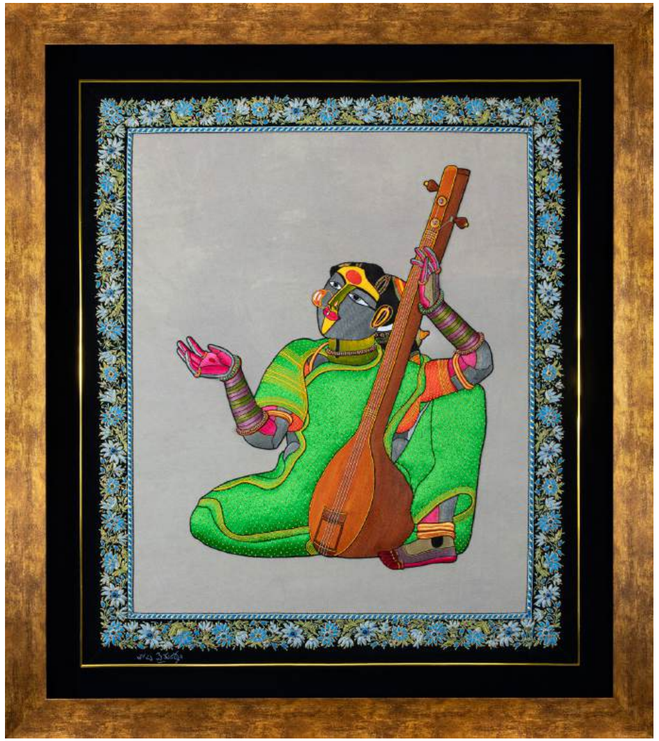
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Frame size: 61" x 47"

Silk embroidery on velvet, embellished with
precious and semi precious gemstones
Embroidery size: 72" x 90"
Frame size: 82" x 100"





Silk embroidery on velvet, embellished with
precious and semi precious gemstones
Embroidery size: 39" x 33"
Frame size: 52" x 46"



Silk embroidery on velvet, embellished with
precious and semi precious gemstones
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Frame size: 52" x 46"



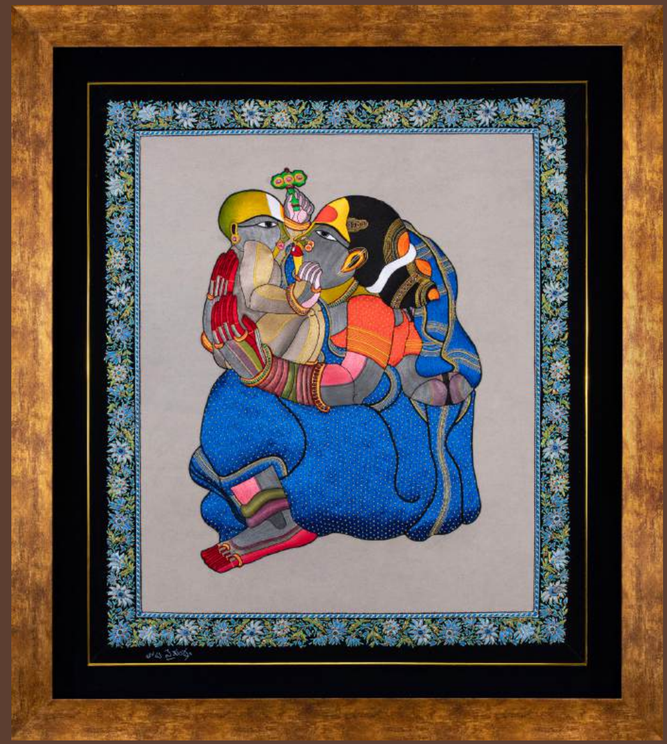
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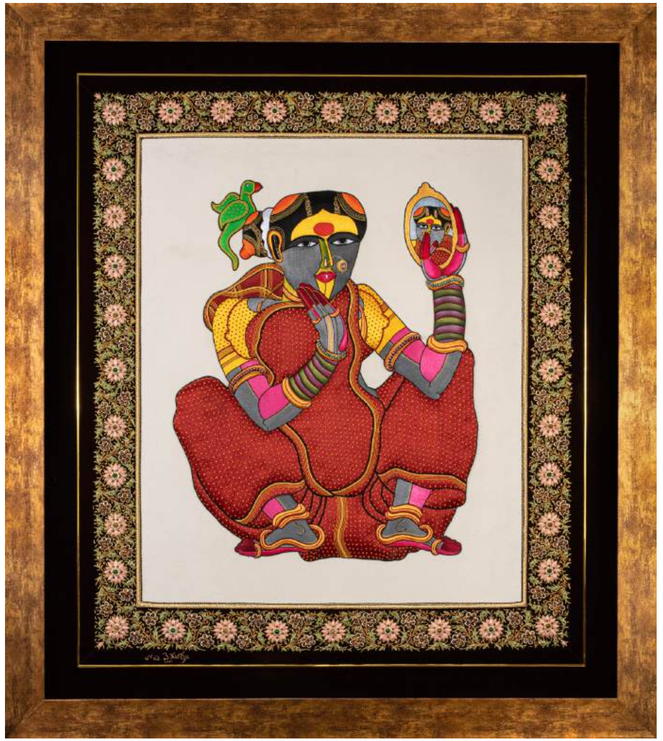
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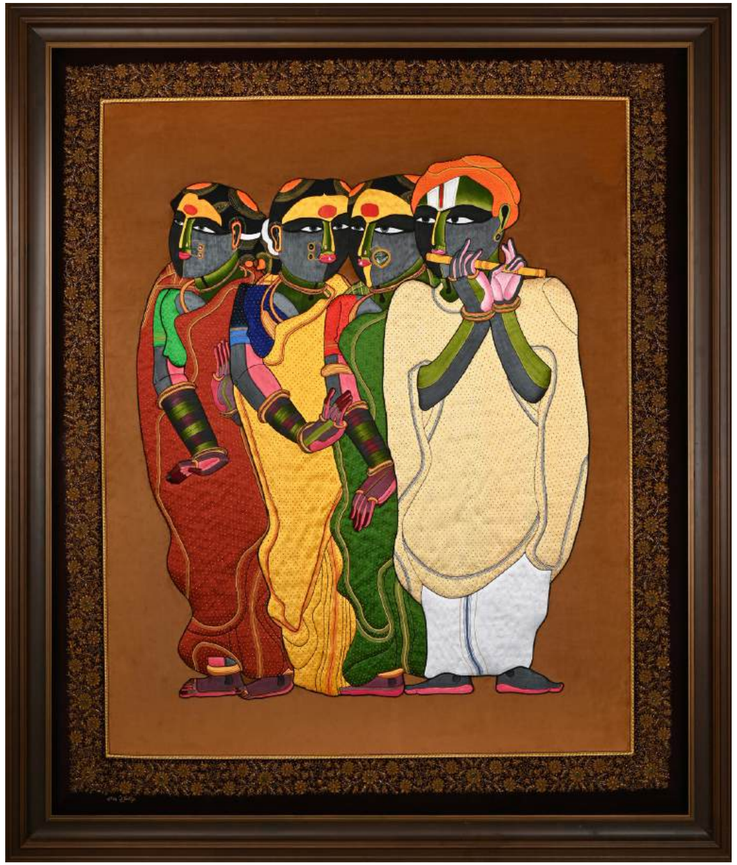




Silk embroidery on velvet, embellished with
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Frame size: 36” x 42”



Silk embroidery on velvet, embellished with
precious and semi precious gemstones
Embroidery size: 64” (diameter)
Frame size: 74” (diameter)



Silk embroidery on velvet, embellished with
precious and semi precious gemstones
Embroidery size: 81” x 67”
Frame size: 93” x 79”

Silk embroidery on velvet, embellished with
precious and semi precious gemstones
Embroidery size: 46" x 56"
Frame size: 54" x 64"



ABOUT US

Thota Vaikuntam Art LLP is established to preserve, promote, and extend the legacy of eminent Indian modern artist Thota Vaikuntam. The LLP organises with the artist the production, presentation, and promotion of his artworks across multiple forms, including bronze and fiber resin sculptures, signed prints, and collaborative projects that reinterpret his vision through allied mediums such as embroidery. Each initiative reflects the depth, dignity, and distinctiveness of Vaikuntam's artistic language, rooted in the cultural ethos of Telangana.

Through its activities, Thota Vaikuntam Art LLP provides a structured platform for the artist's works, ensuring their authenticity, accessibility, and sustained engagement with audiences in India and abroad. The company is committed to fostering long-term institutional collaborations, supporting scholarly research, and broadening the reach of Vaikuntam's practice for collectors, curators, and cultural institutions alike.

More information is available at www.thotavaikuntam.in

THOTA VAIKUNTAM
ART LLP

