

Ramesh Mario
Nithiyendran
Idols of Mud and Water
Until - 21st April 2024



Part of
Glasgowlife



ALBA | CHRUTHACHAIL

Ramesh Mario Nithiyendran (b.1988 Colombo Sri-Lanka, Australia from 1989) crafts exuberant, ceramic sculptures inspired by global histories of figuration, idolatry and popular culture. Evoking ancient deities or totemic idols, his ritualistic sculptures gesture to shared histories, multiplicity and plural cultural identities. The artists colourful, hybrid, human-animal sculptures echo the coexistent belief systems that reflect his own ancestry, inspired by iconography and mythological narratives from across South Asia.

Exploring these themes through a contemporary lens, Ramesh's sculpture subtly incorporate detritus from popular culture as well as personal references.

Though they resemble ancient idols, his figures are often adorned with contemporary, urban materials or reflect queer sensibilities. Lathered in colourful glazes and adopting playful poses, they are often performative or engaged in some form of heightened display, introducing electricity, neon and other contemporary raw elements into an otherwise ancient visual language.

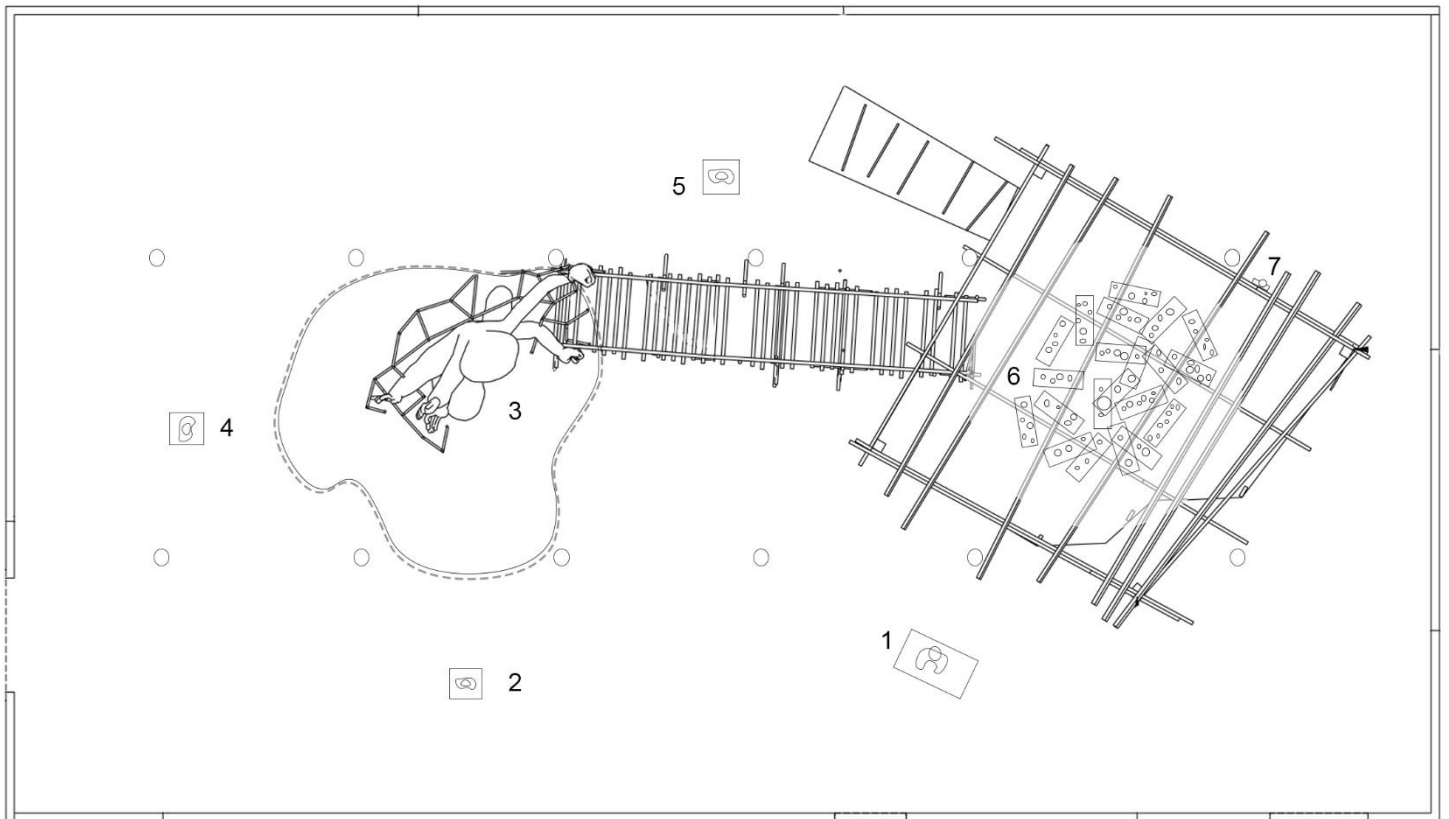
For *Idols of Mud and Water*, Ramesh dramatically populates Tramway's main gallery with a melange of multi-limbed, fertility, protector, joker and warrior figures. A giant Guardian made from cob (mud and straw) features prominently in the middle of a partially built fountain, whilst across the space a number of hand-formed, glazed ceramics reference a range of archetypes, from fertility deities, warriors and protector figures. A large ceramic sculpture at the head of the space incorporates figurative traditions ranging from early Gandharan Buddhism to Hinduism, echoing the ways in which figurative languages have merged over time.

A bronze sculpture made from an array of moulds of the artists previous works references ideas of the 'exquisite corpse' - a collaborative drawing approach first used by surrealist artists to create bizarre and intuitive drawings. Lit theatrically from above it welcomes audiences at the threshold of the space.

Made over a year in the lead up to the exhibition, the installation also includes a body of 97 terracotta sculptures nestled within an improvised, makeshift architectural 'temple' structure, made from a range of repurposed materials including bamboo, scaffolding and recycled timber. Connected by a narrative of mud and water, the installation evokes the feeling that visitors are entering a ruin or a space of dreams and divinations, simultaneously apocalyptic and optimistic. Tramway becomes, in the artist's words, a 'buzzing mythological playground' in which queer politics, anthropomorphism, monumentality and popular culture combine to create new, speculative mythologies.

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1. *Seated Bronze Figure with Masks*, Ramesh Mario Nithiyendran, cast bronze, beads, 2023, 136 x 104 x 95 cm

2. *Guardian Figure with Shields*, Ramesh Mario Nithiyendran, glazed ceramic, 2023, 85 x 65 x 45 cm

3. *Multi Limbed Mud Fountain*, Ramesh Mario Nithiyendran, mud cob, straw, paint, LED rope, electrical cable, 2023

4. *Multiheaded Figure in Drapery (King)*, Ramesh Mario Nithiyendran, glazed ceramic beads, fabric, 2023, 159 x 63 x 63 cm.

5. *Fertility Figure with Drapery (Queen)*, Ramesh Mario Nithiyendran, glazed ceramic beads, fabric, 2023, 165 x 65 x 39 cm.

6. *Terracotta Figures (1-97) and Head with Many Protrusions II*, Ramesh Mario Nithiyendran, terracota, glazed ceramic, beads. 2023 *dimensions variable.

7. *Terracotta Figure*, Ramesh Mario Nithiyendran, terracota, glazed ceramic, 2023 24 x 20 x 14 cm.