

# KRISHNA REDDY:

## The Many and the One

Textured and web-like, Krishna Reddy's prints resemble biomorphic, kaleidoscopic patterns, made by acid etching and hand-carving the metal plate.

Krishna Reddy (1925–2018) is celebrated for his innovation of the 'viscosity' technique of simultaneous colour printing. He profoundly expanded the experimental scope of printmaking and popularised the medium within art communities in India and abroad in the mid-twentieth century. The exhibition explores Reddy's legacy alongside artists within his orbit. It traces how, among the first Indian artists to move West after Independence, Reddy developed a distinct formal language that intersected with multiple modernisms, while his role as artist, teacher, and facilitator made him a conduit for fellow artists.

The latter half of the 1940s was marked by new freedoms and internationalism. India gained Independence while Europe emerged from the Second World War, creating possibilities for artistic travel and exchange. Several Indian artists, including Reddy, studied abroad on scholarships. Ideas moved across borders, generating new dialogues between India and the wider world.

Ideas of universalism in art were connected to the circulation of philosophies across continents. Zen Buddhism, Theosophy—advanced by Helena Blavatsky during her travels to India, and Jiddu Krishnamurti's teachings, which reached audiences across India, Europe, and America, found points of convergence with post-war artistic thought and abstraction.

Reddy's work reflected the changes of the time. He made posters for the Quit India movement and was among the artists who recorded the devastation of the Bengal famine. His imagery draws from nature, from microscopic cells to cosmic forms.

Works like *Jellyfish* were inspired by the machine age, specifically Sputnik, the first space capsule, while *Demonstrators* responded to the 1968 Paris protests and *Violence and Sorrow* to the Gulf War. His years at Santiniketan, his study of botany and biology, and his association with Krishnamurti as well as artists such as Nandalal Bose, Henry Moore, Giacometti and others reflect a search for universal forms rooted in lived experience.

Originally a trained sculptor, Reddy brought a sculptural sensibility to printmaking. Though a metal plate is only a few millimetres thick, he 'sculpted' it in multi-level relief, allowing hard and soft rollers to deposit inks of different viscosities onto different levels enabling several colours to be printed in a single go. As colours mix directly on the plate, no two viscosity prints are exactly alike.

Reddy became a central figure in international printmaking. Atelier 17 in Paris where he was co-director, and Color Print Atelier in New York that he founded, among several spaces where he taught, became meeting grounds for artists across the world.

Printmaking, a medium often regarded peripheral because of its scale, production of multiples, and its requirement for laboratory-like infrastructure, was sustained by these informal spaces.

The exhibition revisits Reddy's legacy alongside works by Atelier 17 artists, prints by Indian artists who embraced abstraction and travelled to the West, and image reproductions documenting international artists Reddy encountered. In doing so, 'The Many and the One' aims to expand the story of modern art beyond individual artists to the networks and informal spaces through which artistic practices grew.

- Puja Vaish