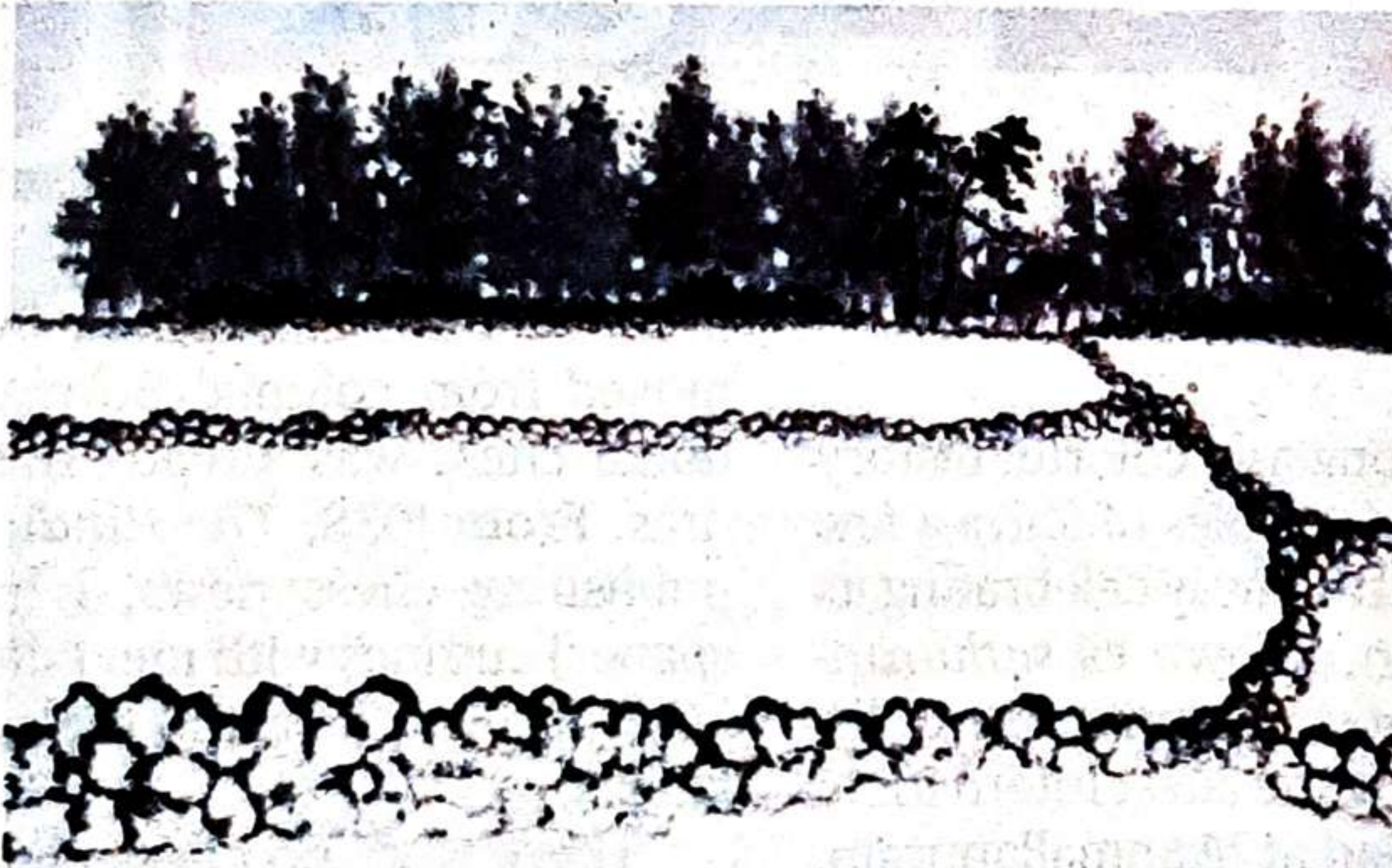


METROPLUS



Atop the **Hallasan**

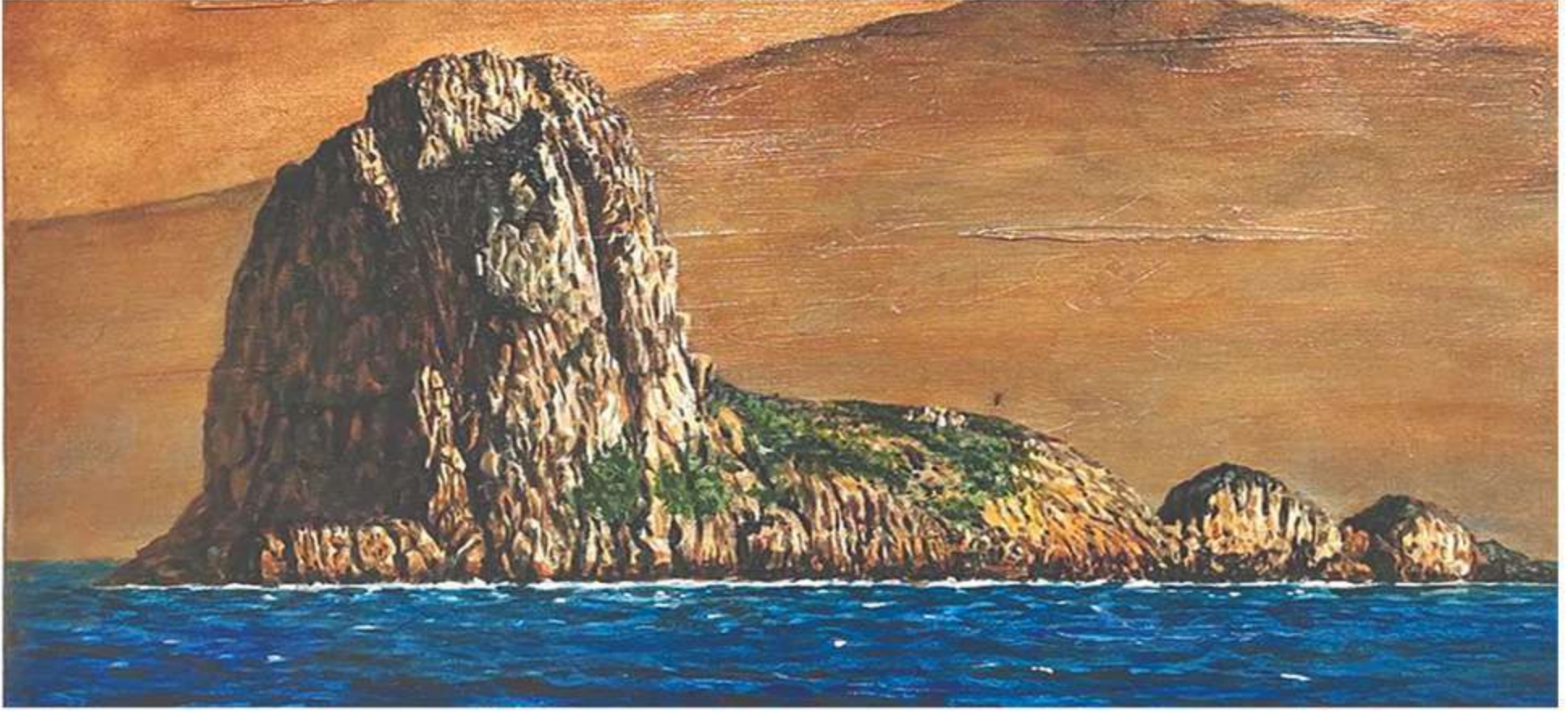
On the southernmost tip of South Korea lies the scenic Jeju Island, famed for its volcanic origins, pearl-diving, wild cliffs and surging ocean. Seven artists who live and work on the island, will bring their works to Chennai, as InKo Centre reopens its physical gallery. The exhibition pays tribute to the raw beauty and resilience of the island and the intimate connection between man and Nature. The Hallasan mountain, the Jeju oreum and olle trails, the Gotjawal forest, as well as myriad Jeju myths, burst into life in this exhibition that will be on view till August 28.

The exhibition will open at The Gallery, InKo Centre on July 28 at 6pm.

City

Into the Light: Korean artists' paintings displayed in the city

Talking to DT Next, Rathi Jafer, director, InKo Centre says, "The exhibition captures all the various moods and the life at Jeju Island. Be it landscape, community, culture, or even emotions. The artists have tried to paint a picture of what the island is like to outsiders."



Muskaan Ahmed

Published on : 6 Aug, 2022, 6:11 am

CHENNAI: The InKo centre has curated an art exhibition called 'Into the Light' featuring seven artists, Lee Yeon-jung, Oh Seung-eik, Park Sung-jin, Ko Eun, Ahn Jin-hee, Lee Su-mok, and Son Il-sam, who live and work in Jeju Island, South Korea.

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The exhibition pays homage to the raw beauty of the island's landscape and throws a spotlight on the most intimate connection between humans and nature through art. Climb Space by Lee Yeon-jung is a typical scenic valley with elements in white in the means of a bird, paper plane and lamp, while a red chair makes an appearance in all the paintings.



Oh Seung-eik's The Way to Mt. Halla captures the scenic mountain craters of Mt. Halla. Park Sung-jin's Embrace the Light displays the beauty of the island's winter. Ko Eun's Happy Scenery offers a peek into the lives of the people of the island and also retains the cultural essence of the place. Ahn Jin-hee's Jeju Island is abstract figures on wood with the incorporation of light play. Lee Su-mok's abstract portraits of scenery and Son Il-sam's The Sea of Jeju is a beautiful pictures of a man at sea.

"The exhibition seems like a symbolic way of the gallery opening up after a two-and-a-half-year hiatus owing to the pandemic, as the featured art is all about new beginnings, hope and transformation," says Rathi.



Photos: R Sriram

THE JOURNEY THROUGH JEJU

Seven artists from Jeju Island in South Korea display their works inspired by the land at InKo Centre's gallery

SAHANA IYER

For many of us, and for many reasons, international travel is a distant dream. It's the reason we revel in photos, videos and books that offer us any semblance of immersion into faraway lands. As I stood in front of a painting called 'Mt Halla-Trace', I soaked in the feeling of the deep blue waters, the crust of the towering volcano and the sun that delicately illuminated the mountain in Jeju Island — a vision created in acrylic paints and mixed media. This painting is among several others that line the walls of InKo Centre's gallery and bring alive the unique traits of the South Korean island for 'Into the light — an exhibition by artists from Jeju Island'.

The showcase marks the opening of The Gallery after a two-year hiatus. "This exhibition is special for us in more than one way because we are starting to come back and there is joy in doing that and meeting people. We have deliberately kept it in a small format as people are just coming back into the system. We thought a Jeju exhibition would be special because it is an island that is so symbolic of resilience and hope (values that sustained throughout the pandemic). You have female divers, man to nature

connection, and a beautiful space scenically and otherwise. We also looked at how to look at it in a variety of media — you have oil paintings, acrylic, wood-cut media, paintings on Korean paper but laminated that makes it look like a picture, and other Korean techniques as well," informs Rathi Jafer, the founder of InKo.

Walls that come alive

Indeed there is much to absorb in the small display area, most created between 2020 to 2022, in the midst of the pandemic. And every piece brings you a little something of the island. 'Mt Halla-Trace' is a creation by Oh Seung-eik, who has been working on the theme for over 15 years. "It is a work that tells the story of life and destiny of a Jeju citizen. Hallasan, which is alive in the long history of Jeju Island, has a similar yet different story for each individual. I have a painful story about my relatives and my mother. I depict Mt. Halla as the main axis of this story on canvas," says the artist. Another artwork by Ahn Jin-hee captures the scenery, in its unique medium of wood carving and layering. "Previously, I did various works such as Korean painting, printmaking, watercolour painting, and acrylic painting. Recently, I am trying a new work that encompasses all of



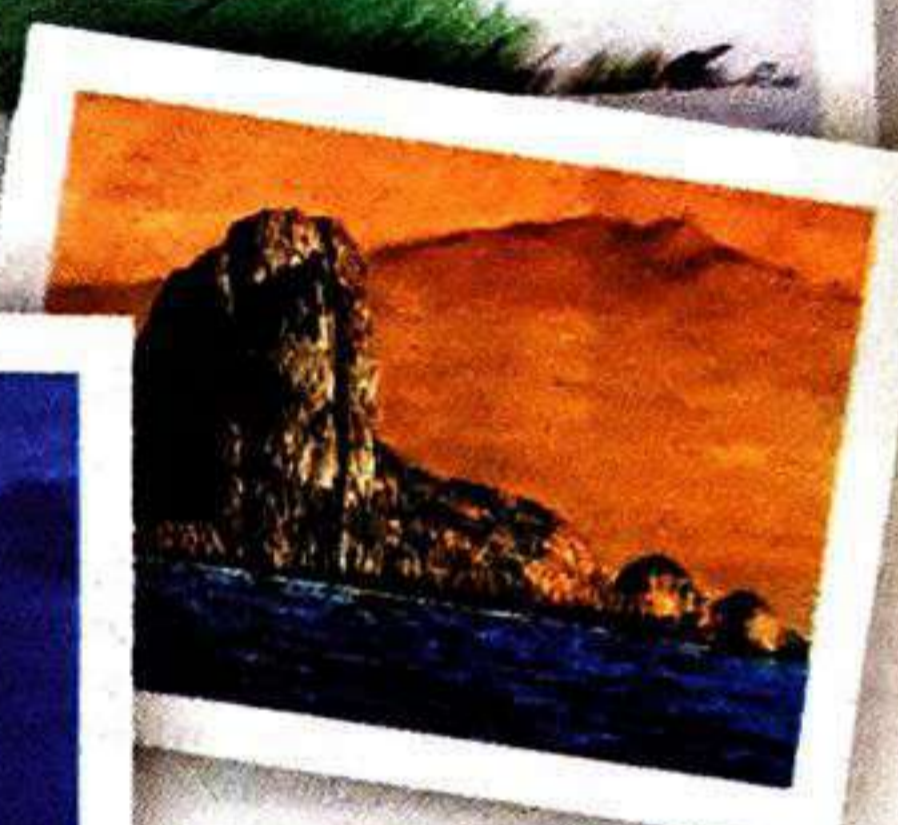
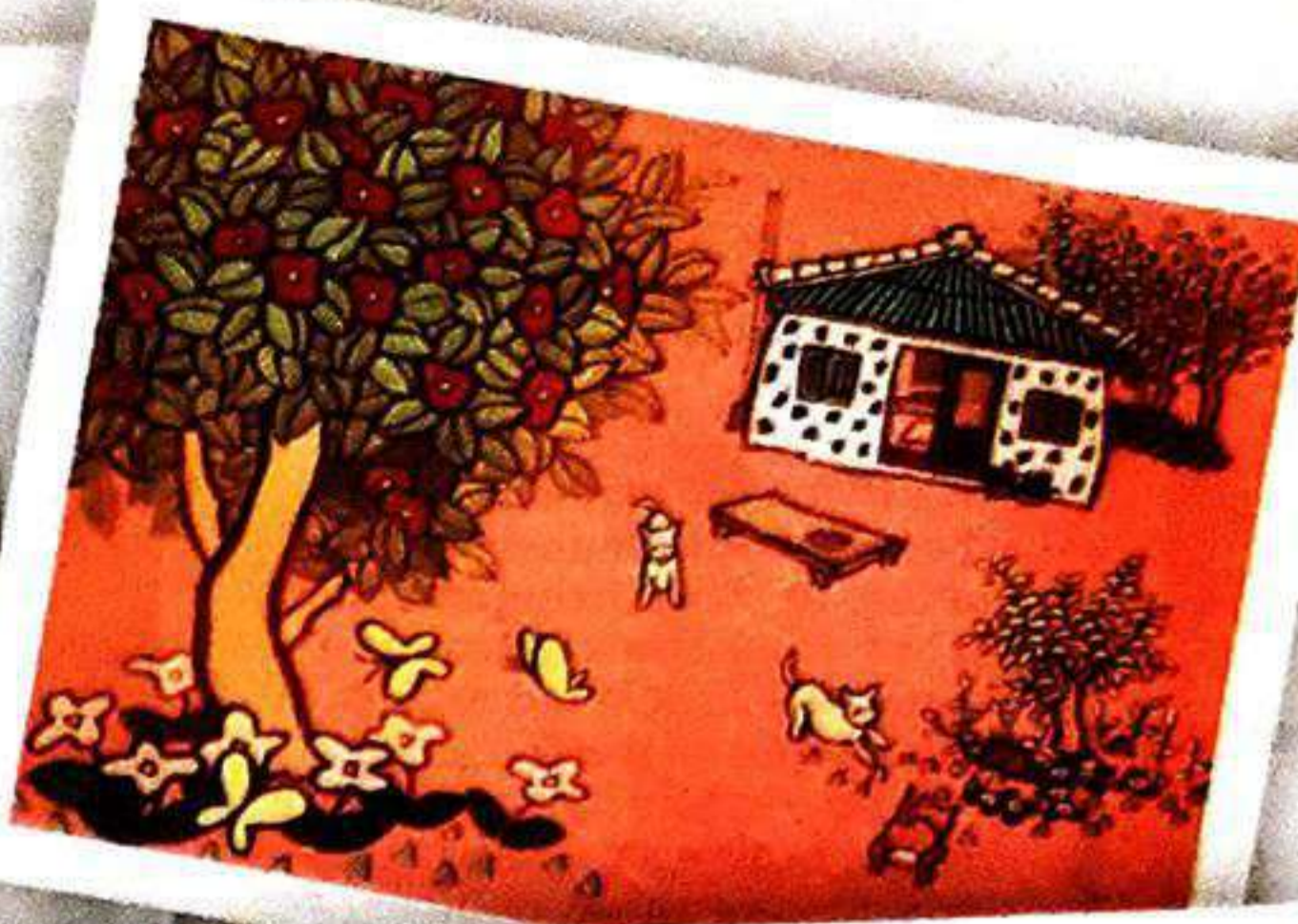
them. Using thin wooden boards, digging and drilling, it encompasses a flat work and even a three-dimensional work. I still have more room for improvement, but I'm struggling to show more sophisticated and profound artwork that moves others. The theme also aims to contain the many unique sentiments of Jeju, including history, culture, the natural environment, and even the mythology of Jeju in my life," says Jin-hee. Paintings by Park Sung-jin (monochromatic, simplistic works showcasing the winters), Lee Su-mok (vivid works on Korean paper) and Ko Eun (in a Korean technique that offers a childlike charm) also captivate the viewer.

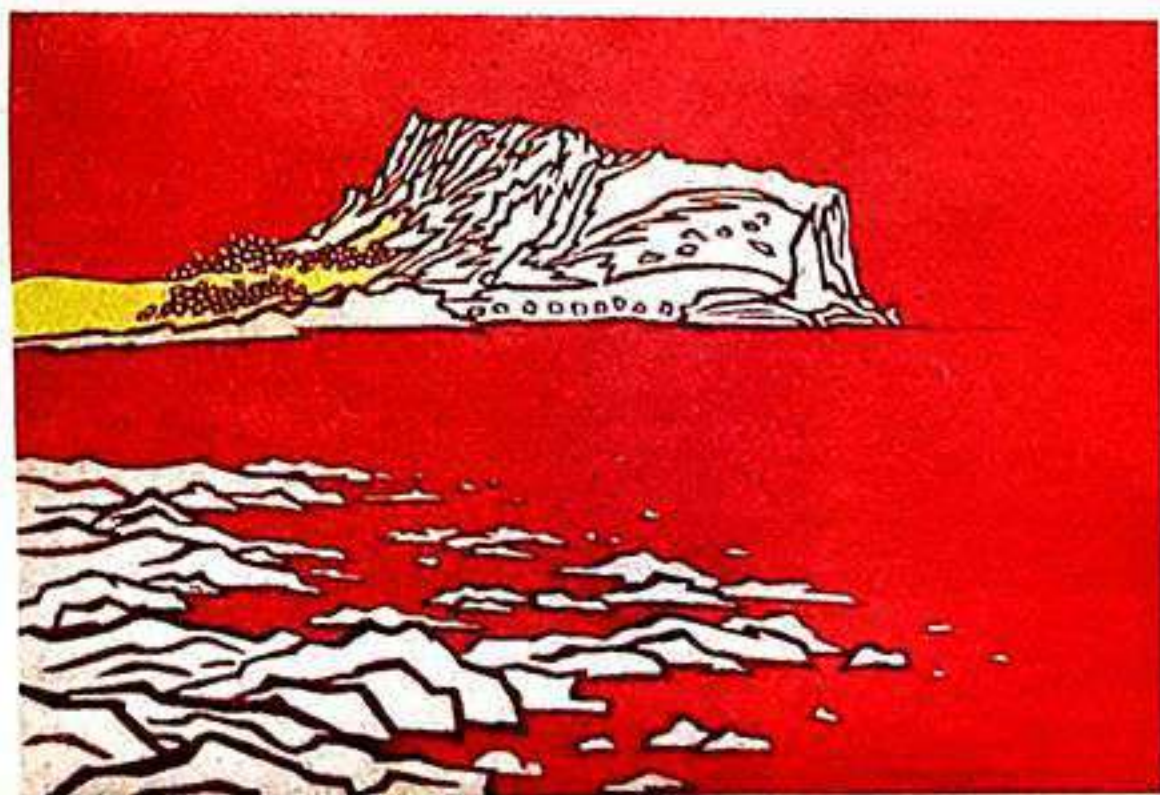
Transporting through canvas

In a corner, to which Rathi gestures, stands Son Il-sam's 'Sea of Jeju', an ode to a culture unique to Jeju. A serene blue takes over the canvas with a bright orange drawing the eye to the image of the divers in the dark. "It's interesting that almost all-women divers — some

quite old — go diving with skin suits early in the morning and return late at night. The lacquer they bring back is used in their lacquerware work called *Ott-chil*. It is the women who carry the tradition forward, passing it on from grandmothers to mothers to daughters," she explains. Where Il-sam brings you the people, Lee Yeon-jung puts forth the landscape of Jeju island. Showcasing *Oreum* or the hills, the artist takes you on a journey as you climb along the ridge of the *Oreum*. "As you climb, nature captures your vision, recalls nostalgia, and inspires you as a space where happiness and longing remain. For the people of Jeju, the *Oreum* is life itself, including memories, hope, and faith. Jeju *Oreum* is a place that brings joy, sadness, and pain because it is related to the story of the lives of the people of Jeju, and it is kept deep in the heart and immersed in memories. So I chose this landscape thinking that *Oreum* is all about Jeju Island," explains Yeon-jung. Perhaps, one day, I could climb the *Oreum* myself and understand what it means to those on the island, but for now, I will satisfy myself with the bright scenery on canvas.

The exhibition is on display till August 28 and will later be available on Prism, online.





Against the tide (Clockwise from left) Works by Lee Su-mok, Ko Eun and Anh Jin-hee ■ SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

to make another familiar and close relationship."

While portraying the elements that make Jeju what it is, Jin-hee says that the attempt was to open a window into the lives of the people of the island as well. Take Ko Eun's *Accept*, for instance: the child-like innocence of the work comes through in its playful colors and familiar characters. Her rendition of an oreum (a defunct volcanic cone that is usually seen around a mount, there are 368 of them in Jeju) is starkly different from Park Sung-jin's take which shows a snow-laden trail dotted by volcanic rock formations.

"The oreum, stone walls, wind, storms, sea, sun, and even the changing climate have become materials and subjects here. And among the people who embrace the sea, wind, stones, sun, and typhoons surrounding the island, are these artists," adds Jin-hee. Lee Su-mok's series titled *Embrace the Light*, is a deviation from the rest of the frames, in that it attempts to show the Jeju of today. Executed interestingly on Korean rice paper, the laminated frames have an ephemeral quality to them. In one, a bridge is the protagonist, set against a grainy purple backdrop.

Nature in Jeju can tell a lot of different stories. "In the painful stories about Jeju, Mt. Halla becomes a strong support that gives peace," says Jin-hee. It is also a spiritual symbol for the people of the island, and is diverse in its expressions, concludes Jin-hee.

Into the Light is on display till August 28 at Prism, InKo Centre, Adyar

:: GOWRI S

In Jeju, South Korea's largest volcanic island, both picturesque and populous, a group of women (some aged even upto 80 years) dives into the sea to gather shellfish like sea urchins and abalones. Called the Jeju haenyeo, these women divers harvest for upto seven hours a day without the help of an oxygen mask, making bird call-like sounds as they surface. They represent the silent resilience of Jeju, an island that is geographically volatile.

Back in Chennai, at InKo Centre's Prism Gallery, amorphous shapes reminiscent of the human form that is perhaps mid-dive, are melded into a wooden, hollowed out canvas by artist Anh Jin-hee: a striking, abstract tribute to these very women who embody the intangible cultural heritage of the is-

On an *olle* trail

Seven artists from Jeju Island in South Korea tell stories of resilience through varied mediums in this Chennai exhibit

land. Similarly, Oh Seung-eik's realistic landscapes that boast defined brushstrokes, and minute detailing take us to Mount Hallasan, a shield volcano which is also the highest point in South Korea. Thus, facets of Jeju island, that are testament to a sense of community and perseverance make up the display that has works of seven artists who live and work in Jeju, in varied mediums.

The idea was to open the gallery with a display that presses on the importance of hope, while also be-

ing informative, says Rathi Jafer. While natural marvels form the majority of the display, canvases that capture a simpler time also make appearances.

A similar culture

"We wanted to show the unique emotions of Jeju, including its history, culture and natural environment," says Anh Jin-hee, adding, "India and Jeju are similar in that they have numerous gods. We would like to take this opportunity

THE TIMES OF INDIA

Exhibition of works of artists from Jeju Island begins TNN / Jul 28, 2022, 14:26 IST

CHENNAI: 'Into the light - an exhibition by artists from Jeju Island' was inaugurated at The Gallery at InKo Centre in Chennai and online on Prism. The exhibition is presented by Inko Centre in association with K-Art International Exchange Association, Busan.

The exhibition focuses on the works of seven artists who live and work on Jeju Island, one of the most scenic and beautiful Islands located at the southernmost tip of South Korea.

The island is famed for its volcanic origins, its pearl diving, resilient women, wild cliffs and surging ocean, 'olle' trails that are walking paths adjacent to stormy seas and its 'oreums' or walkways on the rim of defunct volcanoes that dot the landscape.

The works featured in this exhibition pay tributes to the raw beauty and resilience of Jeju Island – of life there and the unbroken, intimate connection between man and nature.

The exhibition will be on view until August 28.

To view the exhibition online, click on www.inkocentre.org/Virtual_Connect_Infotainment.html
The link to view the exhibition will be accessible until August 28.

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Journey through Jeju

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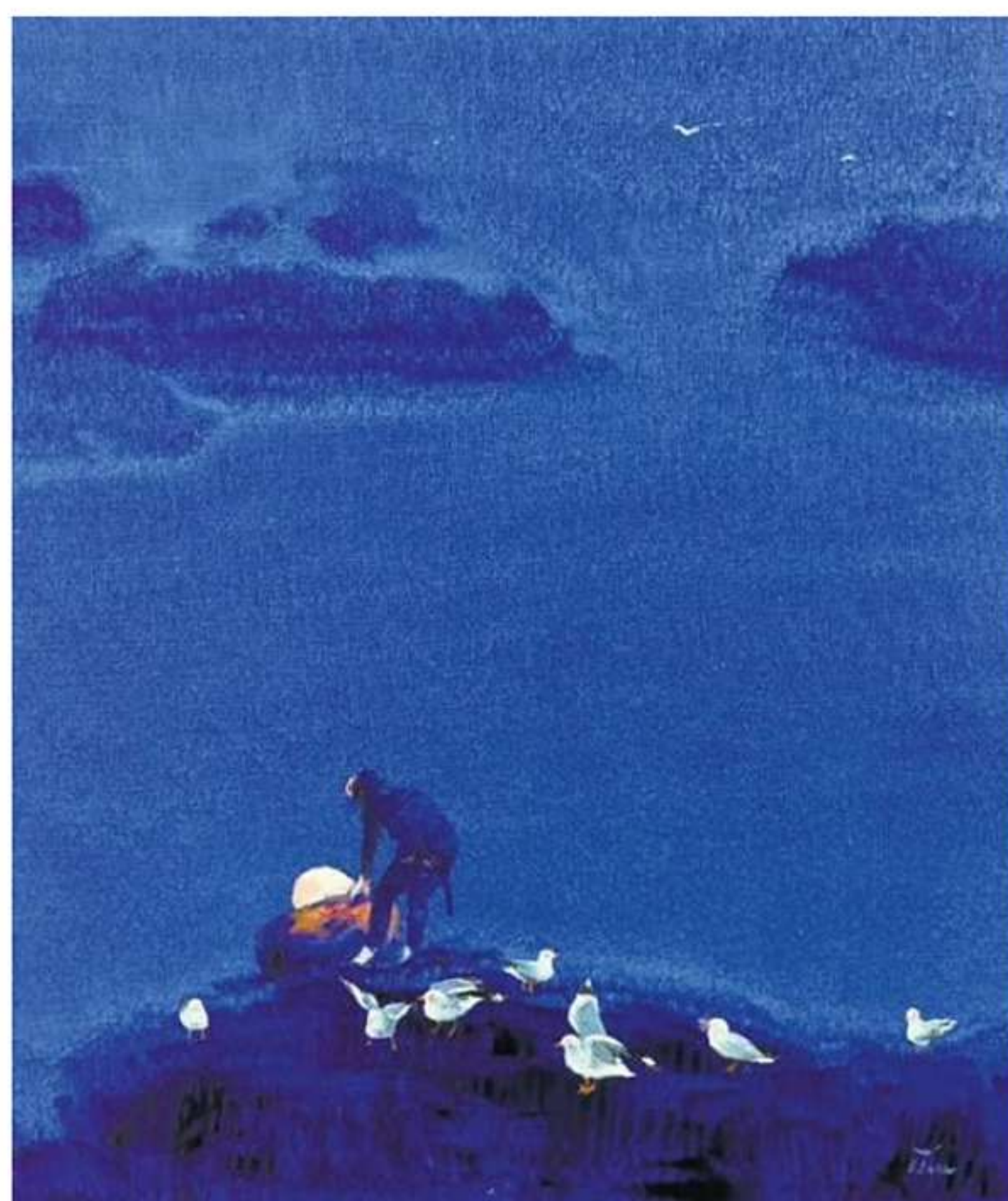
Photos: R Sriram

 By [Sahana Iyer](#)

Express News Service

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