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# Indo-Korean art exhibition celebrates shared artistic journeys

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Artworks of Korean and Indian artists at the InKo Centre.

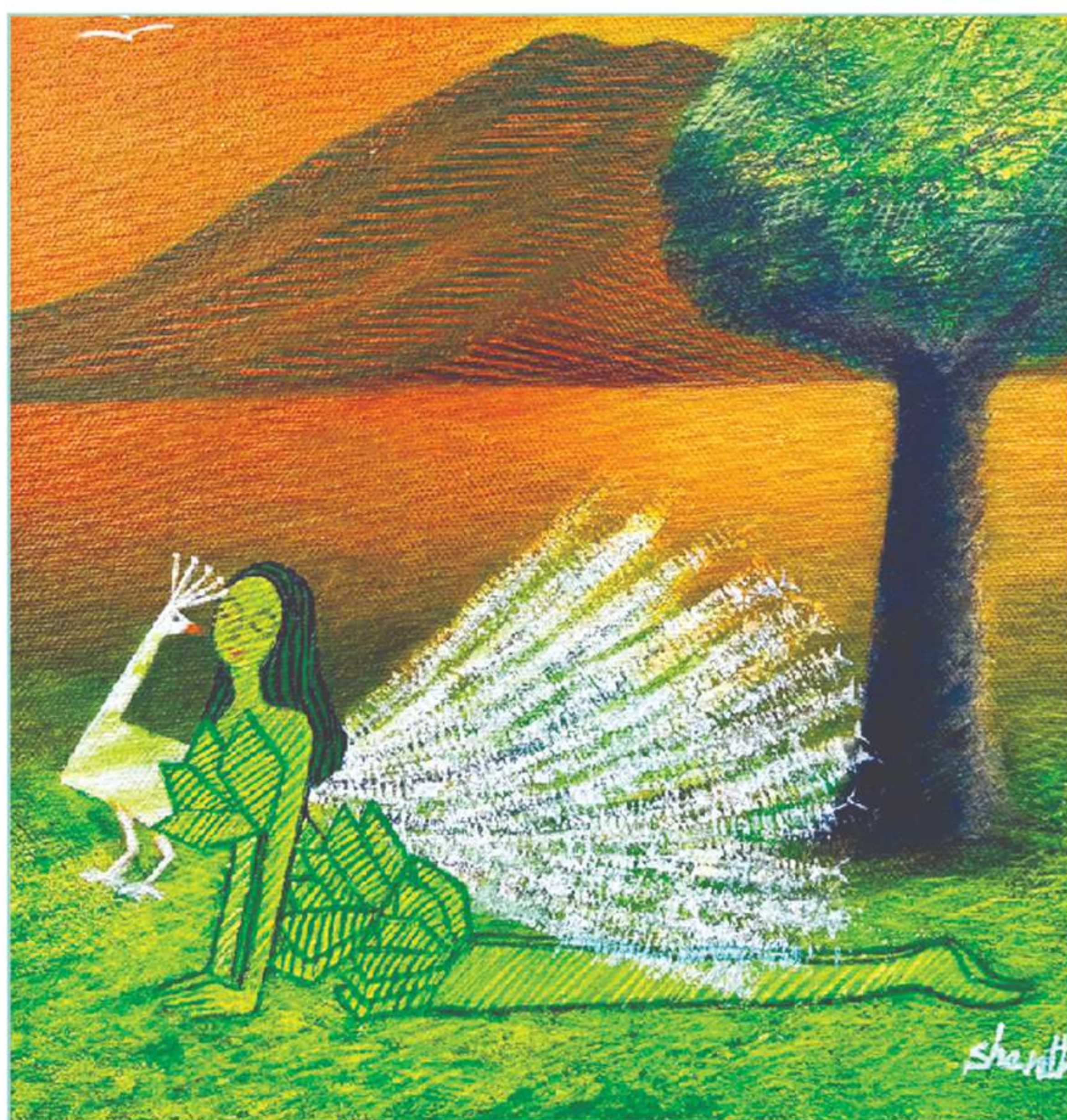
**CHENNAI:** Onwards... Together, an Indo-Korean exhibition delves into the unique yet intertwined artistic paths of India and Korea. The exhibition, first held in Pyeongchang, Korea, is now presented in Chennai.

Soonyoung Yang and Bongmyoung Choi, the Directors of Pyeongchang ARTccc, have visited India on eight occasions to immerse themselves in Indian culture and engage with Indian artists.

Their primary focus has been on Tamil Nadu, a region they believe shares a profound cultural kinship with specific areas in Korea. The collaboration between Pyeongchang ARTccc and InKo Centre commenced with a Korea-India art exchange exhibition in 2019.

Now, in 2023, this collaborative initiative returns with an exhibition, shedding light on the creative work of Korean and Indian visual artists. The exhibition is on view till November 10 at the InKo Centre.

"Art draws inspiration from life experiences rather than just other art forms. It reflects an artist's perspective, shaped by their cultural and geographic surroundings. The 'Onwards... together, India & Korea Art Exchange Exhibition' brings together 30 artists from India and Korea, each offering a unique blend of creativity inspired by their surroundings. For viewers and artists alike, this exhibition offers a chance to explore new visual and cultural expressions. From the Indian side, there's a mix of seasoned and emerging artists from various parts of Tamil Nadu, working across different visual styles. The Korean artists, known to Chennai audiences through InKo Centre, complement and enrich the exhibition. Despite their diverse sensibilities, these artists, both Indian and Korean, share a common dedication to their craft," says Indian curator Gita Hudson.



According to Korean curator Soonyoung Yang, the Korea-India exchange exhibition holds particular importance as it aligns with the 50th anniversary of diplomatic relations between the two countries.

"It embodies the spirit of 'Culture Bibimbap,' aiming to foster special exhibitions and cultural experiences by merging our respective cultures and arts. It's a significant occasion as the 'Onwards... together' exhibition returns to InKo Centre and Jinbu Culture and Arts Studio, following '2022 Come together...'. We anticipate that these encounters will continue to flourish. The artworks of each artist are showcased here with the hope that they will create a unique and culturally enriching experience for visitors. Having visited Tamil Nadu on eight occasions, I've found striking resemblances between the landscape and experiences there and the customs and nostalgia I remember from my youth in the Pyeongchang area. This connection always brings back vivid memories of people's lives," shares Soonyoung Yang.

# Gangwon-do on my mind

**Fifteen artists from Pyeongchang** in South Korea join hands with veterans of the Madras Art Movement to create new work, currently on display in the city



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**T**he quietude of the humble art gallery at InKo Centre compliments what occupies its walls. A motley collection of canvases, photographs and paper embodying varying emotions, themes and stories are on display, all with an invitation to look inward. Imagine a pristine sunrise at the Geumgang mountain range in North Korea handpainted across a paper fan, or a verdant green hill range on a canvas that sets a contrast, bringing the focus back to more familiar terrain, by R Solairaj. Or a couple of fabric scrolls that charts out a bird perched on the branches of perhaps a cherry blossom tree in fine Korean ink with impressive detailing.

Back in Cholamandal Artists Village, the very same unlikely group of artists are busy with new canvases: ideas are exchanged in an art camp, as onlookers gather, to create collaborative work. The veterans of the Madras Art Movement shake hands with contemporary artists from across Korea. Here, we can see artist PS Nandhan stooped over a small paper



canvas lending finishing touches to what seems to be two figures in motion, while a Korean counterpart SoonBeom Kwo carefully chisels on a mass of marble.

The art exchange was to initiate a cultural dialogue between the two nations. For this, 15 artists from Gangwon-do in South Korea, and 15 from Chennai were selected, says Soonyoung Yang from Pyeongchang ARTccc, curator of the Korean leg.

"Tamil Nadu was a place where I felt the same nostalgia that I have for Pyeongchang (South Korea) where I grew up. What struck me most is their kindness. Although it was an extremely personal experience, it felt like I had found home. Also, their languages and pronunciations are familiar, and the special foods we cook every holiday remind me of my life when I was



**Bound by colour** (Clockwise from top left) PS Nandhan with the Korean artists; a scene from the camp; and one of the artworks on display at InKo Centre. SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

young," says Soonyoung who has visited Tamil Nadu eight times. It is on one of these journeys that she met Gita Hudson, who was the curator then at DakshinaChitra.

All the work on display at InKo Centre are eight-inch, small format canvases. Soonyoung sees this exchange as something more than just a liaison. "It's also about getting to know each other. We strive to respect each other more and make each other's culture more valuable."

Gita, curator of the Indian leg, says, "Over the two days that they were at Cholamandal Artists Village, the eight artists who had come thoroughly enjoyed the institution, considering its legacy. The museum, galleries and the space gave them an idea of what the institution stands for."

Everything had to be observed visually since there was a language

barrier. Artists, over the course of the camp, invited visitors to work, and even meddle around with some canvases-in-the-making. Veteran calligraphy artist Junho Kim made seven calligraphy scrolls at the Cholamandal camp. Some unusual mediums also made their appearance at the camp – imagine paper cups held together with paper clips to create a what seems like a meticulous web.

"It was a learning experience for us, since both groups are not familiar with each others' mediums. The Korean ink and rice paper were interesting mediums to experiment with," says Gita.

The display at InKo Centre will be on view till November 10. Artworks from the camp will be on display at the Indigo and Labernum galleries at Cholamandal Artists Village till October 21.