

MEDIA RELEASE
Thursday 28 July 2016

RAMESH NITHIYENDRAN EXHIBITION OPENS AT THE NGA

An installation of five monumental ceramic sculptures by Ramesh Nithiyendran, *Mud men*, will be on display from this weekend until 29 January 2017. The work was commissioned specifically for the NGA.

Nithiyendran is a Sydney-based artist, primarily working in sculpture and installation. While he is a staunch atheist, Nithiyendran's work comments on the Hindu and Christian religions. He is known for his recurring use of the phallus motif to provoke discussion around sex, gender, religion and colonialism. Ramesh is at the forefront of an Australian ceramics revival which is challenging orthodox views of ceramics as 'craft'. His approach to making is experimental and explores the boundaries of what is possible with clay.

Mud men comprises five large-scale ceramic sculptures, including four new works alongside *Self-portrait with third leg 2* 2016. Each sculpture is positioned on a custom pedestal made by the artist. These are Nithiyendran's largest works, with the tallest measuring five metres.

'This installation is my most ambitious project to date. The works are of unprecedented scale and materiality, incorporating cement, concrete, sea shells, human hair, teeth, beads, cardboard, polystyrene, rubber snakes and other materials,' said Ramesh Nithiyendran. 'I have attempted to engage meaningfully with the architecture of the NGA, and have also thought deeply about the significance of presenting work in the context of Australia's national collection. I believe in the necessity of art for the creation of progressive societies and hope to excite visitors with a series of new age idols.'

'The NGA's new contemporary agenda begins with a focus on one of Australia's most impressive new talents,' said Jaklyn Babington, Senior Curator of Global Contemporary Art Practice. 'Drawing on a wildly diverse range of subjects from phallus worship and military monuments to grunge and self-parody, Ramesh's installation for the NGA is outrageous in all of the right ways.'

Born in Sri Lanka in 1988, Nithiyendran has lived in Australia since 1990. Nithiyendran graduated from the University of New South Wales College of Fine Arts in 2013. In 2015 he won the Sidney Myer Fund Australian Ceramic Award, the most prestigious ceramics prize in Australia. The artist will give a free public talk on Saturday 30 July at 2pm.

This installation was made possible with the support of the De Lambert Largesse Foundation. The work was produced during an artist-in-residence program at the National Art School, Sydney.

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