

# SULLIVAN+STRUMPF

## 'THE GUARDIANS'&NBSP;A SOLO EXHIBITION BY RAMESH MARIO NITHIYENDRAN OCTOBER 2021

Following major, recent sculptural commissions for The Art Gallery of New South Wales, HOTA and Dark MOFO, for this exhibition, the gallery will be flooded with an installation of cacophonous guardian and protector figures.

Produced in the artist's signature neo-expressionist and polychromatic style, these figures extend the artist's unconventional and irreverent approach to the medium. Ranging from larger-than-life sized to smaller scaled, they will embody elaborate building and glazing strategies the artist has experimented with over the past year.

The title of this exhibition gestures to broad histories related to sculptural and ritualistic icons designed to protect from evil. The artist is particularly interested in mythological narratives across the Asia Pacific. While he references imagery of Japanese Nio guardians as well as Hindu Dvarapala door gate guardians, his influences are diverse. He reflects upon the guardian figure as a relevant archetype for our current times. He states "the [guardian] figures' allusions to ideas around regeneration, renewal and even collapse are particularly pertinent in our current global climate defined by social, environmental and public health shifts/upheaval".

The works talk to a range of global sources that link to the artist's cultural background, the language of religious iconography and contemporary culture at large. "I was born in Sri Lanka to a wider family that practised Hinduism and Catholicism to varying degrees and have grown up in Australia. Hindu, Christian and Buddhist cultures have coexisted and been intertwined in Sri Lanka since the introduction of Christianity in the 1st century and Buddhism in the 3rd century. The work will mine some of these reference points."

For full details and larger images, please see the end of this document.



**Ramesh Mario Nithiyendran**

*Red Figure Birthing, 2020*

oil pastel on paper

84 x 59 cm

(RMN2020-50)

[View detail](#)



**Ramesh Mario Nithiyendran**

*Multi Legged Figure with Red Mask, 2020*

oil pastel on paper

84 x 59 cm

(RMN2020-52)

[View detail](#)

AUD\$ 3,300.00 Including GST



**Ramesh Mario Nithiyendran**

*Red Figure with Human, 2020*  
oil pastel on paper

[View detail](#)

84 x 59 cm  
(RMN2020-53)

AUD\$ 3,300.00 Including GST



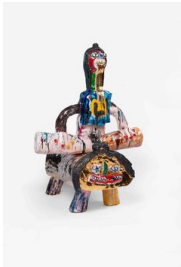
**Ramesh Mario Nithiyendran**

*Double sided chrome head, 2021*  
earthenware

[View detail](#)

75 x 44 x 46cm  
(RMN2021-32)

AUD\$ 11,000.00 Including GST



**Ramesh Mario Nithiyendran**

*Warrior with Quarduped, 2021*  
earthenware

[View detail](#)

75 x 52 x 47 cm  
(RMN2021-30)



**Ramesh Mario Nithiyendran**

*Double Sided, Multi Headed Figure, 2021*  
earthenware

[View detail](#)

76 x 50 x 29 cm  
(RMN2021-22)



**Ramesh Mario Nithiyendran**

*Spotted gold head, 2021*  
earthenware

[View detail](#)

71 x 55 x 45 cm  
(RMN2021-28)



**Ramesh Mario Nithiyendran**

*Spiky White Head, 2021*  
earthen ware

[View detail](#)

74 x 44 x 30 cm  
(RMN2021-23)



**Ramesh Mario Nithiyendran**

*Warrior with Helmet II, 2021*

earthenware

69.5 x 34 x 22 cm

(RMN2021-12)

[View detail](#)



**Ramesh Mario Nithiyendran**

*Four headed seated figure II, 2021*

Earthenware

137 x 50 x 44 cm

(RMN2021-27)

[View detail](#)



**Ramesh Mario Nithiyendran**

*Four headed seated figure, 2021*

earthenware

approx 119 x 41 x 35cm

(RMN2021-21)

[View detail](#)



**Ramesh Mario Nithiyendran**

*Reptile figure, 2021*

earthenware

64 x 34 x 32 cm

(RMN2021-24)

[View detail](#)



**Ramesh Mario Nithiyendran**

*Four horned figure, 2021*

earthenware

71 x 44 x 26cm

(RMN2021-36)

[View detail](#)



**Ramesh Mario Nithiyendran**

*Double sided green figure, 2021*

earthenware

67 x 58 x 26cm

(RMN2021-33)

[View detail](#)



**Ramesh Mario Nithiyendran**

*Blue spiky head with gold teeth, 2021*

earthenware

74 x 41 x 27cm

(RMN2021-18)

[View detail](#)



**Ramesh Mario Nithiyendran**

*Guardian figure with reptile crown, 2021*

earthenware

74 x 38 x 28cm

(RMN2021-19)

[View detail](#)



**Ramesh Mario Nithiyendran**

*Four legged figure with companions II, 2021*

earthenware

65 x 40 x 21 cm

(RMN2021-15)

[View detail](#)



**Ramesh Mario Nithiyendran**

*Triangular headed figure, 2021*

earthenware

136 x 53 x 42

(RMN2021-29)

[View detail](#)



**Ramesh Mario Nithiyendran**

*Mound with many protrusions 66 x 52 x 31cm, 2021*

earthenware

66 x 52 x 31cm

(RMN2021-20)

[View detail](#)



**Ramesh Mario Nithiyendran**

*Double Headed horned figure, 2021*

earthenware

70 x 42 x 19.5 cm

(RMN2021-17)

[View detail](#)



**Ramesh Mario Nithiyendran**  
*Multi limbed guardian, 2021*  
earthenware  
74 x 50 x 38  
(RMN2021-25)

[View detail](#)



**Ramesh Mario Nithiyendran**  
*Warrior with Helmet I, 2021*  
signed verso  
earthenware  
68 x 36 x 22 cm  
(RMN2021-11)

[View detail](#)



**Ramesh Mario Nithiyendran**  
*Double Headed Guardian, 2021*  
earthenware  
105 x 50 x 36 cm  
(RMN2021-26)

[View detail](#)



**Ramesh Mario Nithiyendran**  
*Guardian with crown I, 2021*  
earthenware  
50 x 36 x 18cm  
(RMN2021-34)

[View detail](#)



**Ramesh Mario Nithiyendran**  
*Guardian with crown II, 2021*  
earthenware  
43 x 35 x 15cm  
(RMN2021-35)

[View detail](#)

RAMESH MARIO NITHIYENDRAN  
*Red Figure Birthing*, 2020



oil pastel on paper

84 x 59 cm  
(RMN2020-50)

RAMESH MARIO NITHIYENDRAN  
*Multi Legged Figure with Red Mask*, 2020



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AUD\$ 3,300.00 Including GST

RAMESH MARIO NITHIYENDRAN  
*Red Figure with Human, 2020*



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RAMESH MARIO NITHIYENDRAN

*Double sided chrome head, 2021*



earthenware

75 x 44 x 46cm

(RMN2021-32)

AUD\$ 11,000.00 Including GST

Image 1/5

#### **Literature**

**Title:** The Guardians, October 2021

#### **Artist Statement and Description**

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commissions for The Art Gallery of New South Wales, HOTA and Dark MOFO.

For this exhibition, the gallery will be flooded with an installation of cacophonous guardian and protector figures made from ceramic and bronze. Produced in the artist's signature neo-expressionist and polychromatic style, these figures extend the artist's unconventional and irreverent approach to the medium. Ranging from larger-than-life sized to smaller scaled, they will embody elaborate building and glazing strategies the artist has experimented with over the past year.

The title of this exhibition gestures to broad histories related to sculptural and ritualistic icons designed to protect from evil. The artist is particularly interested in mythological narratives across the Asia Pacific. While he references imagery of Japanese Nio guardians as well as Hindu Dvarapala door gate guardians, his influences are diverse.

He reflects upon the guardian figure as a relevant archetype for our current times. He states *"the [guardian] figure's allusions to ideas around regeneration, renewal and even collapse are particularly pertinent in our current global climate defined by social, environmental and public health shifts/upheava"*

The works gesture to a range of global sources that link to the artist's cultural background, the language of religious iconography and contemporary culture at large. *"I was born in Sri Lanka to a wider family that practised Hinduism and Catholicism to varying degrees and have grown up in Australia. Hindu, Christian and Buddhist cultures have coexisted and been intertwined in Sri Lanka since the introduction of Christianity in the 1st century and Buddhism in the 3rd century. The work will mine some of these reference points."*



Image 2/5



Image 3/5



Image 4/5



Image 5/5

RAMESH MARIO NITHIYENDRAN  
*Warrior with Quarduped*, 2021



earthenware  
75 x 52 x 47 cm  
(RMN2021-30)

Image 1/2

**Description**

This work sits within the context of the artist's sculptures which explore imaginative connections between species. The artist explores various historical instances where various guardian figures are presented with animal counterparts. These counterparts have included rats, snakes and other mythological beings.

A warrior figure is presented on a four-legged mammal. This figure is sporting a fighting stance and has a painted red face. This expression is in humorous contrast to the friendly, almost cartoon-like appearance of the animal.

The work is highly adorned with gold and platinum details. This compliments the expressive, painterly applications of glaze.

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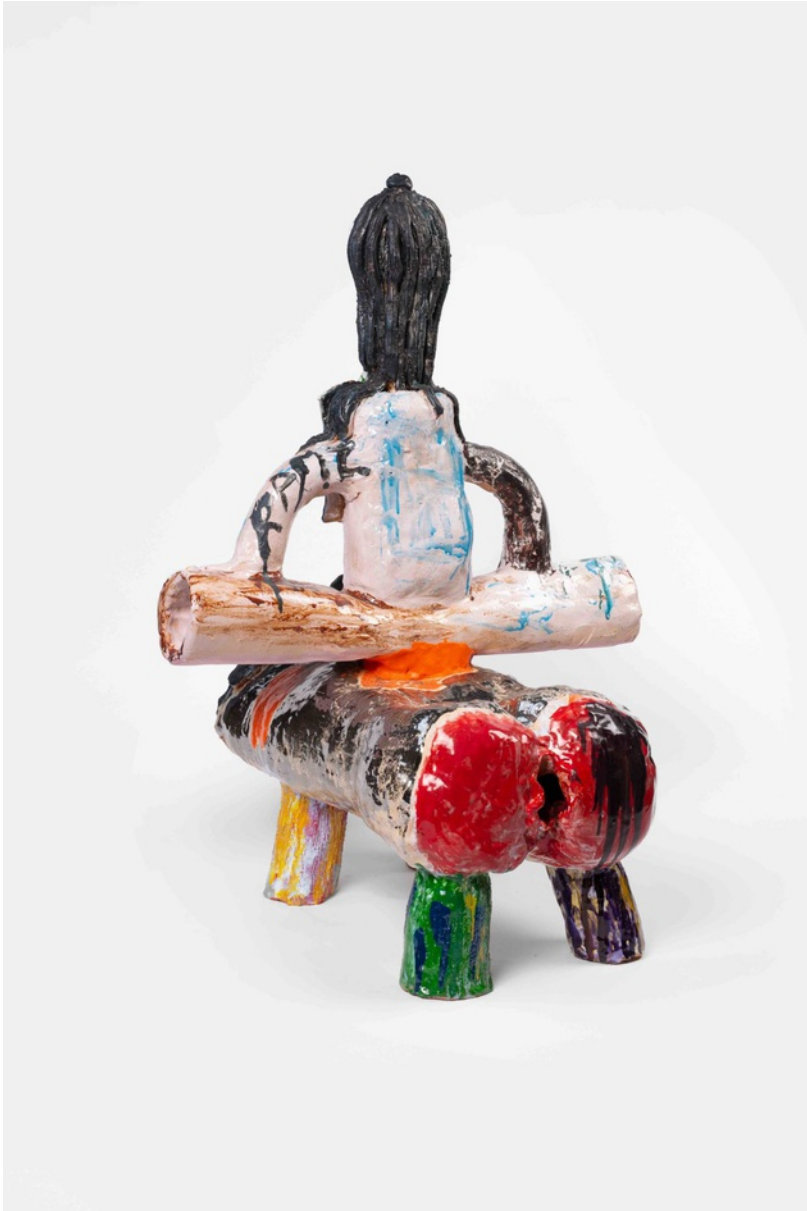


Image 2/2

RAMESH MARIO NITHIYENDRAN  
*Double Sided, Multi Headed Figure, 2021*



earthenware  
76 x 50 x 29 cm  
(RMN2021-22)

Image 1/2

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Image 2/2

RAMESH MARIO NITHIYENDRAN  
*Spotted gold head, 2021*



earthenware  
71 x 55 x 45 cm  
(RMN2021-28)

Image 1/3

### **Description**

This anthropomorphic form with various sized extrusions sits in the context of the artist's signature sculptures of heads or faces. It is a guardian figure with an ambiguous expression or function. A warning, an effigy or apparition... the work features imaginative references to plant and marine life (specifically to squid, and octopi). There is an ambiguity between the phallic and tentacle form.

The figure is glazed in a painterly way with various layers - some transparent and some opaque. Primary colours are the base coats and an

opalescent semi transparent white glaze covers the surface. Many bright gold spots adorn the surface.

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Image 2/3



Image 3/3



RAMESH MARIO NITHIYENDRAN  
*Spiky White Head*, 2021



earthen ware  
74 x 44 x 30 cm  
(RMN2021-23)

Image 1/2

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Image 2/2

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*Warrior with Helmet II*, 2021



earthenware  
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Image 2/2

RAMESH MARIO NITHIYENDRAN  
*Four headed seated figure II, 2021*



Earthenware  
137 x 50 x 44 cm  
(RMN2021-27)

Image 1/2

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Image 2/2

RAMESH MARIO NITHIYENDRAN  
*Four headed seated figure, 2021*



earthenware  
approx 119 x 41 x 35cm  
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Image 1/3

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Image 2/3



Image 3/3

RAMESH MARIO NITHIYENDRAN  
*Reptile figure, 2021*



earthenware  
64 x 34 x 32 cm  
(RMN2021-24)

Image 1/4

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Image 2/4





Image 3/4



Image 4/4

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earthenware

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RAMESH MARIO NITHIYENDRAN

*Double sided green figure, 2021*



earthenware  
67 x 58 x 26cm  
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Image 1/5

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Image 2/5



Image 3/5





Image 4/5



Image 5/5

RAMESH MARIO NITHIYENDRAN  
*Blue spiky head with gold teeth*, 2021



earthenware  
74 x 41 x 27cm  
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The works gesture to a range of global sources that link to the artist's cultural background, the language of religious iconography and contemporary culture at large. *"I was born in Sri Lanka to a wider family that practised Hinduism and Catholicism to varying degrees and have grown up in Australia. Hindu, Christian and Buddhist cultures have coexisted and been intertwined in Sri Lanka since the introduction of Christianity in the 1st century and Buddhism in the 3rd century. The work will mine some of these reference points."*



Image 2/3



Image 3/3

RAMESH MARIO NITHIYENDRAN  
*Guardian figure with reptile crown, 2021*



earthenware  
74 x 38 x 28cm  
(RMN2021-19)

Image 1/2

### Literature

**Title:** The Guardians, October 2021

#### Artist Statement and Description

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Image 2/2

RAMESH MARIO NITHIYENDRAN

*Four legged figure with companions II, 2021*



earthenware  
65 x 40 x 21 cm  
(RMN2021-15)

Image 1/2

#### **Literature**

**Title:** The Guardians, October 2021

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Image 2/2

RAMESH MARIO NITHIYENDRAN

*Triangular headed figure, 2021*



earthenware  
136 x 53 x 42  
(RMN2021-29)

Image 1/2

### **Description**

This large work sits within the context of the artist's series of larger-scale standing figures presented in contexts such as the Art Gallery of New South Wales and The National Gallery of Australia.

It is a complex, multi-headed form that combines geometric forms with irregular, amorphous shapes. This formal combination connects to architecture as well as the human body.

There is a polymorphous sense to the work. It has multiple arms, heads and legs.

Glazed in a polychromatic, expressive way, the big painterly gestures including pouring and gestural brushwork cover the surface. The first layers on the body include a ceramic pencil feature. This connects to the artist's love of drawing.

The artist's signature is glazes on the back of the work - with reference to tagging.

## Literature

**Title:** The Guardians, October 2021

### Artist Statement and Description

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Image 2/2

RAMESH MARIO NITHIYENDRAN  
*Mound with many protrusions* 66 x 52 x 31cm, 2021



earthenware  
66 x 52 x 31cm  
(RMN2021-20)

Image 1/3

#### **Literature**

**Title:** The Guardians, October 2021

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Image 2/3



Image 3/3

RAMESH MARIO NITHIYENDRAN  
*Double Headed horned figure, 2021*



earthenware  
70 x 42 x 19.5 cm  
(RMN2021-17)

Image 1/2

### Literature

**Title:** The Guardians, October 2021

#### Artist Statement and Description

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Image 2/2

RAMESH MARIO NITHIYENDRAN  
*Multi limbed guardian*, 2021



earthenware  
74 x 50 x 38  
(RMN2021-25)

Image 1/2

#### **Literature**

**Title:** The Guardians, October 2021

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Image 2/2

RAMESH MARIO NITHIYENDRAN

*Warrior with Helmet I*, 2021



signed verso  
earthenware  
68 x 36 x 22 cm  
(RMN2021-11)

#### **Literature**

**Title:** The Guardians, October 2021

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RAMESH MARIO NITHIYENDRAN  
*Double Headed Guardian, 2021*



earthenware  
105 x 50 x 36 cm  
(RMN2021-26)

#### **Literature**

**Title:** The Guardians, October 2021

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RAMESH MARIO NITHIYENDRAN

*Guardian with crown I*, 2021



earthenware

50 x 36 x 18cm

(RMN2021-34)

### **Literature**

**Title:** The Guardians, October 2021

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RAMESH MARIO NITHIYENDRAN  
*Guardian with crown II*, 2021



earthenware  
43 x 35 x 15cm  
(RMN2021-35)

Image 1/2

#### **Literature**

**Title:** The Guardians, October 2021

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Image 2/2

## BIO

Ramesh Mario Nithiyendran

(b. 1988 Colombo Sri-Lanka, Australia from 1989) he/him Sri-Lankan born,

Ramesh Mario Nithiyendran is a contemporary artist. He is interested in global histories and languages of figurative representation and their intersections with issues relating to the politics of idolatry, the monument, gender, race and religiosity. He has specific interests in South Asian forms and imagery. While he is best known for his inventive and somewhat unorthodox approach to ceramic media, his material vernacular is broad. He has worked imaginatively with a range of sculptural materials including bronze, concrete, neon, LED and fibreglass. His signature neo-expressionist and polychromatic style has been adapted for works in museums, festivals, multi-art centres and the public domain. This has included significant presentations at the National Gallery of Australia, The Art Gallery of New South Wales, The Dhaka Art Summit, Art Basel Hong Kong and Dark Mofo festival. His first major permanent public artwork was recently installed at the entrance of the new HOTA gallery in Queensland. While Nithiyendran is often presented to the public in a diverse range of print, online and television media related to art, culture and fashion, his contributions to contemporary art and culture have also been acknowledged in various ways. In 2019, he received a Sidney Myer Creative Fellowship which recognised his outstanding talent and exceptional professional courage. This same year he was included Thames and Hudson's book, '100 Sculptors of Tomorrow'; a global survey of cutting edge, sculptural practice and presented work in the largest historical survey of LGBTQ Asian Art at the Bangkok Art and Cultural Centre. Recently, The Art Gallery of New South Wales acquired his monumental work 'Avatar Towers'. This is an installation of 70 ceramic and bronze figures originally presented in the gallery's historic vestibule. His work is held in various other public collections including the National Gallery of Australia, the Art Gallery of South Australia, The Art Gallery of Western Australia, The Museum of Applied Arts and Sciences, The Ian Potter Museum of Art and the Shepparton Art Museum.