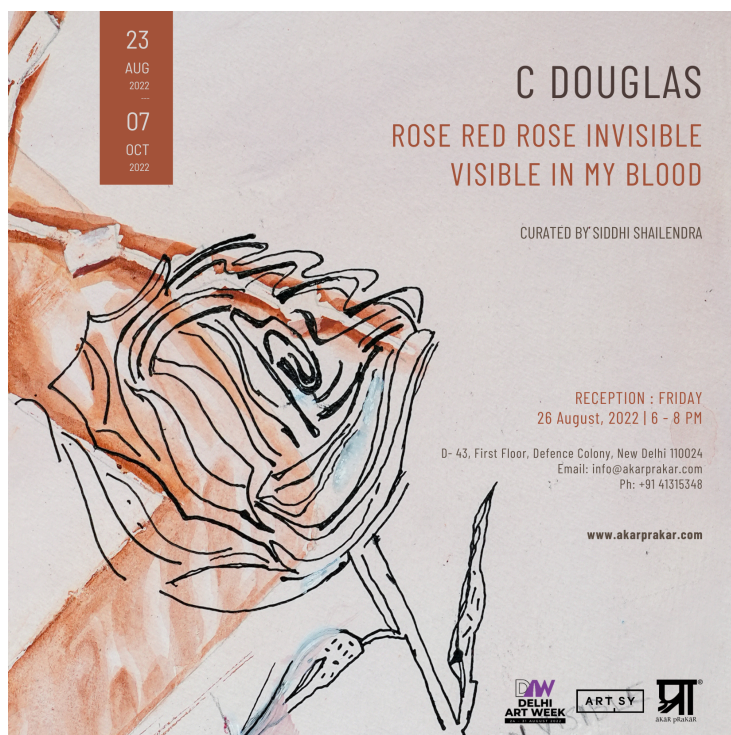


**C Douglas**  
***Rose Red Rose Invisible, Visible in My Blood***  
**23rd August – 7th October 2022**  
**Akar Prakar, New Delhi**

**Curated by Siddhi Shailendra**

**Reception: Friday, 26th August 2022 | 6-8 PM**  
**As part of Delhi Art Week**  
**On view online at Artsy**



### **Curatorial Note**

The exhibition 'Rose Red Rose Invisible, Visible in My Blood' takes the viewers on a poetic journey into the creations of artist C. Douglas while simultaneously asking them to look beyond the narrative of the subject. In Douglas' works, the real doesn't always inform his visuals, but his visuals perhaps can be imagined as a reality with the unknown and the fragmented.

Born in 1951 in Kerala, Douglas is one of the few artists still based at the Cholamandal Artists' Village. He took admission to the Government College of Arts, Madras in the year 1971, a few years after its principal KCS Paniker had retired after the initiation of the Cholamandal Artists' Village with thirty other artists. Soon, Douglas began spending his weekends at the Artists' Village, where he came in contact with K Ramanujam, a few years his senior at the college.



Over the years, his friendship with Ramanujam deeply inspired and influenced his own practice at the time. Ramanujam's ability to create fantastical worlds with the play of lines and patterns fascinated the budding artist within Douglas. However, Ramanujam's death in 1973, followed by Douglas' move from the Cholamandal Artists' Village to Germany and back to the village a few years later left a painful residue evident in his works of that period.

Subsequently, his use of lines, colour and texture to create his paintings began to take form with subjects inspired by the poetry and philosophies sharing his time with him at the isolated village. The colour palette turned darker with ashy grey compositions and a foreboding atmosphere. The subject matter with fragmented figures and faces, pierced bodies and broken mannequins and butterflies were reminiscent of surrealist abstractions.

Paper as his medium of choice, presented him with the opportunity to play beyond its even surface. Layering the paper with sand and crumpling his paper, were just some of the ways he was able to add a new dimension to his paintings. Often working with multiple media such as watercolour, acrylic, crayons and pencils, his compositions appear chaotic and dense. However, for Douglas, the chaos doesn't deter but invites the viewer to pause and re-assess their perceptions, to see deeper into the visuals and create their narrative.

The influence of books and literature in his practice take shape in the form of words and texts as part of his compositions. But paradoxically, the words may never lead to the understanding of the subject matter. As Douglas says 'The words are not there to describe the narrative, but to function as image itself. The written words dissolve into calligraphic representations, just as visible lines or geometry'. The 'Rose Red' series and the 'Blind Poet and Butterflies' series are hence inspired by the poetry of William Blake, T. S. Eliot and Fernando Pessoa. One sees motifs like 'the Blind Poet and Butterflies' and 'the Man with the Mirror' repeatedly present as subjects in more than two decades of his practice.

Taking its name from the inscription in a series of artwork, the exhibition 'Rose Red Rose Invisible, Visible in My Blood' highlights Douglas' practice from 1990 - 2022. The exhibition is a survey of more than three decades of the artist's practice and his use of poetics as a visual language.

- Siddhi Shailendra



## Artists' Bio

### C. Douglas

Born in Kerala in 1951, C. Douglas is one of the most collected artists of the Madras Art Movement. He was admitted to the Government College of Arts and Crafts, Madras in 1971, where he came in contact with K Ramanujam, who deeply influenced his practice during those years. Ramanujam's death in 1973 and Douglas' own relocation from the Cholamandal Artist's village to Germany, where he was caught between art and the real world, brought about a change in his outlook as an artist. It was in Germany that he was exposed to the genre of abstract surrealism. After his return from Germany in 1985, he has turned to figurative abstractions, and his works speak volumes about modernist poetry. He worked with paper, cloth, and tea stains, often walking on the paper and crumpling it in order to create a surface of his own.

C. Douglas has been honoured with several accolades, including awards from the Lalit Kala Akademi, Chennai (1980); Bharat Bhavan, Bhopal (1990); Lalit Kala Akademi, New Delhi (1992) and the Charles Wallace Trust (1994) to study ceramics in the Netherlands. He also received a Cultural Fellowship from the Government of India from 1991-93 and 1994-96.

Douglas has been a part of numerous solo and group shows across Europe and Asia. Some of his recent solo exhibitions include; In Search of Fragments, Akar Prakar, 2018, Ferrymen and Twilight, Nature Morte and Ashvita Arts, 2017; Words Need Words, Gallery Sri Parvati, 2014; Blind Poet and Butterflies, Focus Art Gallery, 2012; Missed Call, Akar Prakar and Ashvita Arts, 2008, Schoo's Gallery, Amsterdam, 1993; Works on Paper: Mixed Media, Sakshi Gallery, 1992 and European Patent Office Gallery, Munich, 1986.