

From Earth to Earth: Devotion and Terracotta Offerings in Tamil Nadu.

An Exhibition of Photographs by Julie Wayne (Making and Ritual Installation of Terracotta Figures of Ayyanar Cult) organised by Indira Gandhi National Centre for the Arts and Sanskriti Pratisthan, New Delhi

Date & Venue: 20th February – 6th March 2015, Exhibition Hall, 11 Mansingh Road, IGNCA
10th March – 24th March 2015, Sanskriti Museums, Anandagram, New Delhi

Components: Exhibition and Demonstration by award winning artisans from Tamil Nadu

The Concept: In Tamil Nadu, terracotta offerings gifted to the Tamil god Ayyanar are among the largest in the world. Spectacular, majestic and often astonishing, they are a fundamental element of Tamil village tradition and culture, where agriculture is the foundation of life. Presented to Ayyanar each year during elaborate festivals, these offerings are made to assure the protection and the well-being of villagers, their families, their cattle and the harvest. From the characteristic life-sized terracotta horses towering within secluded shrines to humble, foot-high clay “dolls” and cows amassed under a centuries-old *neem* tree, the earthen gifts celebrate the cycles of nature and bridge the mortal to the divine.

The exhibition of photographs “From Earth to Earth: Devotion and Terracotta Offerings in Tamil Nadu” presents for the first time a visual documentation of the manifold aspects of the living cult to Ayyanar: the creation of offerings by specific potters; the festivals honouring Ayyanar and the installation of the offerings inside the god’s sacred abode; the exceptional clay figures and the stylistic diversity of craftsmanship; the always surprising shrines wherein lie the accumulation of offerings as they age, deteriorate and decompose to ultimately return to the earth from which they were born.

Photographer Julie Wayne spent ten years exploring both the material and immaterial aspects of the living cult to Ayyanar, surveying and documenting more than seventy shrines, participating in more than fifty festivals and spending countless hours watching and recording the potters and their sacred craft.