

# THE HINDU

Online edition of India's National Newspaper  
Wednesday, Dec 26, 2001

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## Southern States

[News: Front Page](#) | [National](#) | [Southern States](#) | [Other States](#) | [International](#) | [Opinion](#) | [Business](#) | [Sport](#) | [Miscellaneous](#) |

[Advts: Classifieds](#) | [Employment](#) | [Obituary](#) |

[Southern States - Kerala](#)

### A unique confluence of artists

By Our Staff Reporter

KOCHI, DEC. 25. The three-week-long painting and sculpture camp, Vishwa Kala Sangamom, which concluded last Sunday at the Changampuzha Park, Edappally, proved to be a pathbreaking event in the cultural history of Kochi which presented the city with priceless works of art created by reputed artists from all over India and abroad.

The camp has provided the Changampuzha Park the much-needed facelift which it had been deserving as a memorial for the greatest romantic poet of Malayalam literature.

About a dozen sculptures and 20 paintings that had been created during the camp will find a permanent place in the park, transforming the 1.40-acres bordering the NH-17, into a unique gallery of contemporary art in Kerala. Though many galleries and institutions in the State have good collections of contemporary painting, this will be the first instance when both paintings as well as sculptures by present day leading artists are kept for public viewing.

According to the organisers, the Changampuzha Cultural Forum which had already established itself as a dynamic centre of cultural activities, will become a permanent venue for the paintings and sculptures created during the workshop.

About 31 artists, including 10 sculptors, had participated in the workshop, including Mr. Sudarshan Shetty, one of India's leading young artists, Mr. Paul Litherland and Ms. Karen Trask, two established visual artists from Canada, Mr. Gu Bon Ju and Mr. Sung Dong Hoon, the Korean sculptors, the Japanese sculptor Ms. Reiko Nireki, and Mr. Tatsumoto Makato, a Japanese visual artist.

Mr. Rajasekharan Nair (Chennai), Mr. Alex Mathew (Thiruvananthapuram), Mr. Rajesh Sagare (Ahmedabad), Mr. Carl Anto (Ahmedabad), Mr. V.K. Rajan (Thrissur), Ms. Chinmoy Dutta (New Delhi) and Ms. Renjitha Chakravarthy, a student from Santiniketan were among the sculptors in the camp.

Among the painters were Mr. C.K. Murali (Ahmedabad), Mr. Lala Rama Nand Prasad from New Delhi, Mr. N.K.P. Muthu Koya (Bangalore), Prof. Ajayakumar (principal, College of Fine Arts, Thiruvananthapuram), Mr. K.K. Rajappan, and Mr. G. Rajendran from Thiruvananthapuram, Mr. M.K. Rajan, Mr. P.V. Nandan, Mr. C.S. Jayaram, Mr. Asanthan, Mr. V.J. John, Mr. Sidharthan, Mr. Sunil Vallarpadam and Mr. D. Binuraj from Kochi.

The senior artists, Mr. M.V. Devan and Mr. T. Kaladharan, who were also the main organisers also came out with their own creations in between the busy schedule.

### Stories in this Section

- [Resentment against League leadership](#)
- [A unique confluence of artists](#)
- [BSF jawan's body cremated](#)
- [CD ratio up in Kottayam](#)
- [Focus on domestic tourism](#)
- [SSS workers working overnight to keep Pampa clean](#)
- [Kalamandalam.com](#)
- [Kerala Travel Mart from Oct. 3](#)
- [Rules forbid alienation of tribal land](#)
- [Stop pilgrimage promotion in Sabarimala: study](#)
- [Anti-collision device for trains developed](#)
- [Vellappally-VS-Sudheeran spat has more meanings than one](#)
- [Need to market State as IT destination](#)
- [Saline water threat looms large over city](#)

### Archives

[Yesterday's Issue](#)

### Datewise

### Features:

[Magazine](#)  
[Literary Review](#)  
[Metro Plus](#)  
[Open Page](#)  
[Education](#)  
[Book Review](#)  
[Business](#)  
[SciTech](#)  
[Entertainment](#)  
[Young World](#)  
[Folio](#)

Though initially conceived as a 'Sculpture symposium,' with the association of Stone Foundation, Thrissur, and the Kerala Kalapeetom, Kochi, the project attained wider dimensions with the Changampuzha Cultural Centre also joining it. The result was a three-week long cultural fiesta which saw the whole population of Edappally thronging the park premises, especially in the evenings, watching and absorbing the newest trends of Indian contemporary art, along with classical and folk art forms of Kerala.

Many of the artists from outside were inspired by the legend of Changampuzha Krishna Pillai and Edappally Raghavan Pillai, the romantic poets of Malayalam, leading to works reflecting intimate references to the poets. Like Mr. Sudarshan Shetty's installation work which display the lines penned by the contemporary Malayalam poet Prof. K.G. Sankara Pillai with reference to Changampuzha's legendary poem, 'Ramanan.'

The Canadian artist, Ms. Karen Trask, had chosen four lines from 'Ramanan,' to be inscribed onto a granite slab which serves as a seating in the children's section of the park. Her work, called 'Under the Tree,' has cute little letters of Malayalam and English, made with paper, hanging down from the bows of a low, spreading tree under the shadows of which is placed the granite seat bearing the poem. There is also an open book, carved in red wood, bearing the first letter of Malayalam alphabet. The portrait of the poet has also found its way into the work of at least two painters, Mr. M.K. Rajan and Mr. V.J. John

Mr. Paul Litherland, the Canadian visual artist who specialises in photography, however, chose to create a unique work called 'Listener.' It is quite difficult to spot the 'work,' which consist of five pairs of ears, fixed on to branches of trees in the path. The pairs of ears startle people casting casual glances on the park trees, as if the tree was listening to their thoughts.

However, the most significant aspect of this cultural festival was the heavy rush, an unprecedented experience for all the participating artists. Notwithstanding the minor flaws in organising, which happened mainly due to the lack of experience in handling such a mega event, the Vishwa Kala Sangamam became a unique experience for both its participants and viewers.

According to Mr. K. Balachandran, general convener of the programme, a follow-up of the camp will be held in February, 2002, in the Park with a few selected artists, including a couple of artists from abroad participating.

A view of the Vishwa Kala Sangamom, a painting and sculpture camp held at the Changampuzha Park in Edappally recently.

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## Southern States

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