

## Firi Rahman

### Unconventional Beauty

Firi Rahman's series of hyper-realistic portraits focus on the unexpected and unusual, playing with additional elements that attempt to overexpose natural beauty. A new entry into the local art scene, Rahman is a self-taught and incredibly skilled draughtsman. This, his first show will feature a series of fifteen drawings on paper.

#### **When did you start drawing?**

Drawing has been my childhood hobby. I used to draw when I was a kid and when I was school. I quit drawing after my O Levels because I wasn't very happy with what I was doing. My parents wanted me to do something more like business management. Then I started drawing again when I was twenty-one and when I was in college in the UK.

#### **What was it that inspired you to begin practicing photo-realism?**

I went to a gallery when I was studying in UK. It was an exhibition of drawings by Paul Cadden. He is a great artist from Scotland. He does really hyper-realistic drawings. I walked around inspecting all his drawings and I learnt that he used grid techniques. When I got home, I immediately started learning as much as I could about grid techniques and how to use them. It inspired me to use this technique and create drawings using them. I learned more about other artists who use similar techniques such as Kelvin Okafor. He mainly does portraits and that made me want to try drawing people. My first hyper-realism drawing was a A4-size landscape and the response I received was great.

#### **Why do you choose to draw only with pencil?**

Pencil is so simple and I want to keep things simple. It is a kind of magic because you can create so many tones, textures and illusions with just one lead. It is also easy to carry with me wherever I go.

#### **What kind of unique techniques do you use?**

Other than the usual range of pencils and erasers, for textures I sometimes make brushes, cotton buds and tissue paper. Basically whatever I can my hands on around the house. I like to see what kind of different things I can do with what is around. All my techniques are self-taught from just experimenting and trying new things. This helps create my own style.

#### **Would you begin using other mediums in time?**

When I was studying, I did use other mediums. I wanted to try everything so I did work with watercolours and acrylic. It didn't interest me much because I want instant results when I do something. Whenever I draw something with pencils, I know exactly how it will turn out. In the future, I will begin working with acrylics for portraits.

#### **What inspires you the most?**

I follow artists I admire such as Kelvin Okafor. Once he saw one of my drawings on instagram and he gave me feedback saying 'you're doing really great'. I am inspired when people encourage me and support my work. Different and challenging faces also inspire me. Very detailed faces as well as I like working on tiny details like wrinkles. I also talk to my subjects and try to get to know them before I begin my work.

#### **Are you a full time artist?**

I am freelancing at the moment and the aim of course is to become full-time.

#### **How long does it take you to complete a drawing?**

It takes me a minimum of 24 hours and everyday I spend about 6-8 hours drawings. It depends on size but on average one portrait takes me four to five days.

***Exhibition will be open from 24 July 2015 to 21 August 2015 at Saskia Fernando Gallery, 41, Horton Place, Colombo 07. Tel +94 11 7429010, OPEN DAILY 10am to 6pm***