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Male Body in Ceylonese Painting

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Abstract

The male body became both a subject and an object in early twentieth-century Ceylonese art, particularly in the contexts of village, city, landscape, seascape, portraiture, nudity, and models. The 43 Group was a significant turning point in the articulation of the male body as they exhibited a complete break from the engagement with temple murals. However, this study focuses on the aesthetic response of David Paynter's art, relating to the depiction of the male body. Paynter was a prominent Sri Lankan painter who lived from 1900 to 1975. He was born in Almora, Uttar Pradesh, India. Paynter did paintings entitled *The Addict*, *Setunge*, *Nepali Gypsi*, *Boy with Pumpkins* and all these models are his servants. The servant and the model are also the projection of 'the other' who became inferior to the master/ the artist. Therefore, the artist and his subject have become very important since the artist chose human models as his major subject. The artist's works were heavily involved with human bodies, especially male bodies. Interestingly, many of these models were his servants or his students or young men from his orphanage. Hence, this study attempts to come to grips with the complexities of the relationship between the artist and his model through a close reading of the paintings, employing the multiple threads of representational politics or power relationships.

Keywords: Artist; Ceylonese Art; David Paynter; Model; Nude Males