

# LEON MORROCCO

FROM MUMBAI TO MADURAI

2 - 31 October 2009



**JM  
LONDON**

All paintings available  
on receipt of catalogue

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Temple Sculptures, Chennai

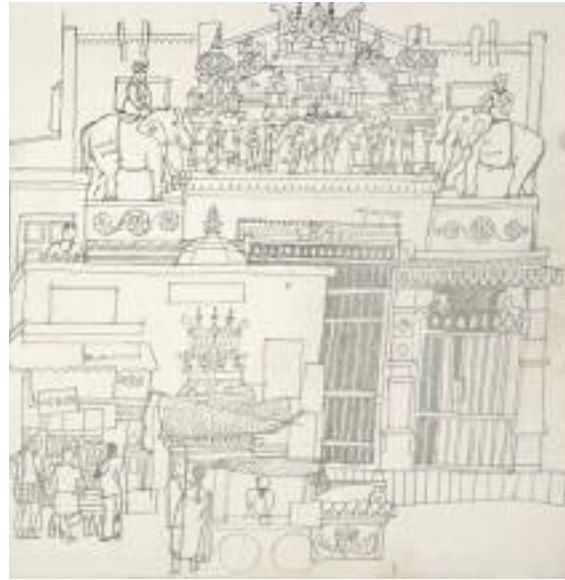
pencil on paper 11¼ x 11¼ ins 28.5 x 30 cms

Leon Morrocco's determination to paint in India has been with him since the early 1960's. It first developed while a student at the Slade, from a friendship with the writer and philosopher, Madhuri Santanam Sondhi, who at the time was studying at the London School of Economics whilst also modelling for Leon's father, the painter, Alberto Morrocco. It was Madhuri and her circle of friends that stimulated Leon's interest in India as a subject; yet, it was also this circle that introduced him to the counter-arguments of whether in the post-colonial era, an artist from a European background could create anything other than a superficial account of the Sub-Continent.

It is a problem that has often troubled Western artists as it has writers. It seems to be usually resolved by interpreting India through a series of accurate observations of the country and its people. For writers it takes the form of a travel journal, or an historical, sociological or geographic account; for artists, it invariably ends up as a detailed description of places and people. In a country as complex as India, the non-Indian artist, never fully confident in their knowledge will invariably compensate by being over-meticulous in the details. The fear of 'getting it wrong' is confused with disrespect; and caution is never a good starting point for any work of art.

In spite of the overwhelming artistic logic for Morrocco to work in India, he remained apprehensive about jumping into an environment that artistically and culturally was so different to the European tradition. It was a dilemma that was only resolved forty years later when his son, Theo, took a medical position at a hospital in Chennai. Somehow this association through the hospital and, latterly, through the Joe Homan orphanages in Tamil Nadu which Leon and Jean Morrocco support, provided a chance to slip into India under the cultural radar, so to speak, giving them a purpose and relevance to being there without the burden of artistic responsibility.

Becoming involved in a charity like Joe Homan gave Leon the freedom he needed to approach India on his own terms, immersing himself in the country as a purely visual experience, as he was used to doing in Europe. The sketches and colour notes from the first trip were not intended for specific paintings, rather they became a way for him to find his bearings in a country whose collective consciousness lies, as he says, at the upper end of the colour spectrum. The streets of Southern India are like pigment laboratories and his sketchbooks quickly filled with hurried notes of colour clashes



Temple in Madurai

pencil on paper 11¼ x 11¼ ins 28½ x 30 cms

and combinations, like a chef discovering new flavours. And where else, he says, can an artist have access to such a quantity of material and time enough to record it in a sketchbook? It meant that aside from the static buildings, shops and temples there was always a figure or animal to draw: sleeping tuctuc drivers, resting market traders, patient elephants, goats, tethered dogs and holy cows sitting in the road. Looking through these sketchbooks, one is struck by the palpable sense of delight in every observation, driving the artist onwards, page after page.

With so much material the difficulty arose back in the studio, editing these unconnected records into paintings that work in their own right. As always, the achievement of Morrocco's work lies in his ability to assemble the numerous incidents of his sketchbooks into a single convincing image on the canvas. They are successful because colour and composition always comes before topographic accuracy. Morrocco freely admits that the lettering and figures in temples may all be in the wrong place yet unencumbered by meticulous detail he can create paintings that work as paintings. He is creating an exhibition not an assignment for the National Geographic and by taking nothing away from his own artistic judgement he thereby takes nothing away from his subject. They are paintings that are about the surface of India, without being either superficial or naïve. In the simplicity of his approach and his unshakeable belief in the supremacy of his visual sensations, Morrocco has perhaps uncovered the only way to engage with the complexities and depths of this extraordinary country.

John Martin

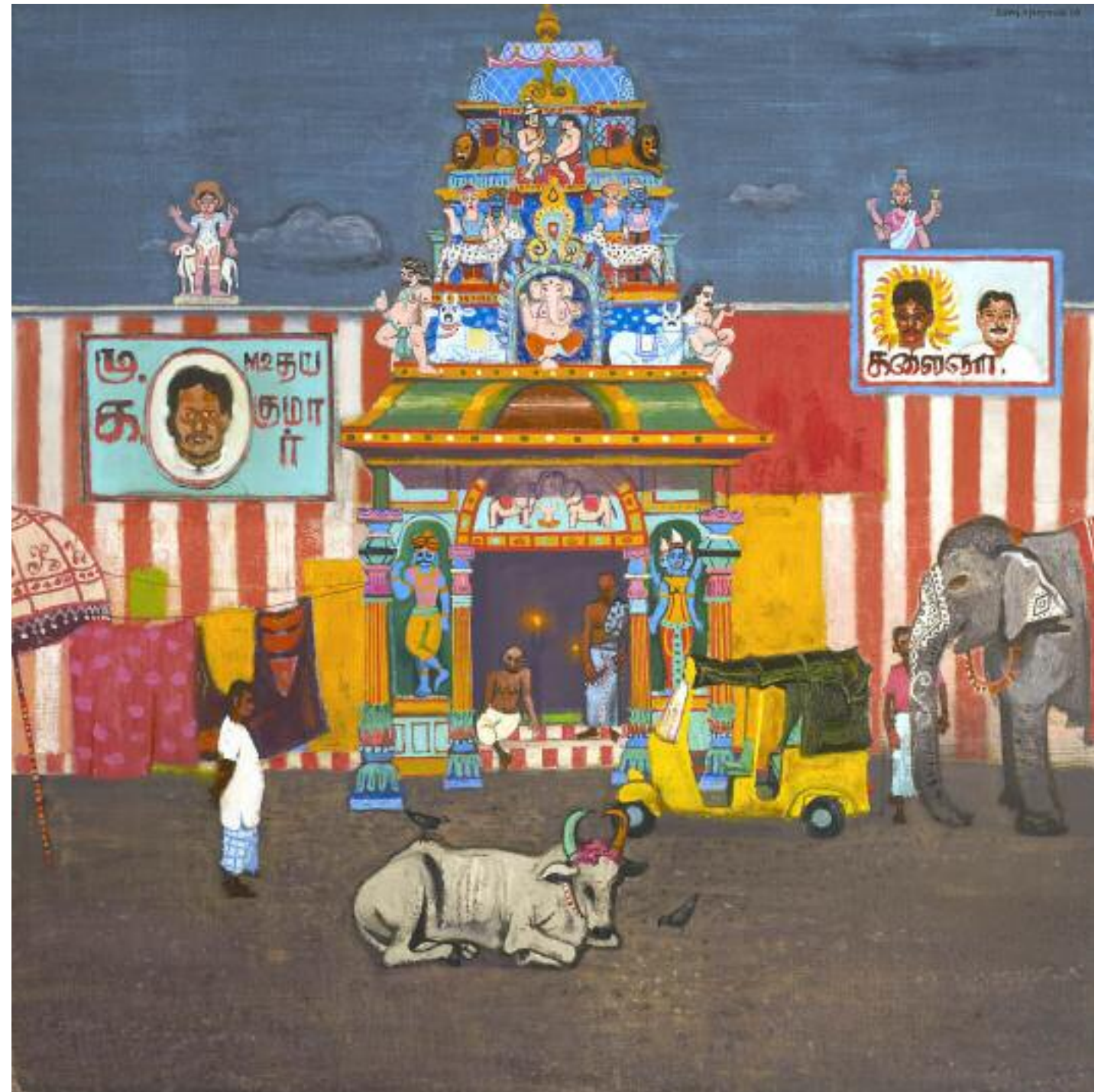
August 2009

The Joe Homan Charity

Established in 1965 in Tamil Nadu, the Joe Homan Charity works in partnership with local Non-Government Organisations across South India and Thailand, raising funds for projects offering relief from poverty and supporting disadvantaged children.

Please visit [www.joehoman.org.uk](http://www.joehoman.org.uk) for more information

Temple in Madurai  
oil on canvas 50 x 50 ins 127 x 127 cms





Sleeping Temple Attendant, Madurai  
oil on canvas 24 x 30 ins 61 x 76 cms

Resting Rickshaw Driver, Madurai  
oil on canvas 28 x 36 ins 71 x 91.5 cms





Entrance to a Shrine, Chennai  
oil on canvas 24 x 40 ins 61 x 101.5 cms



Three Deities & Cows  
oil on panel 10 x 15 ins 25 x 38 cms



Two Sleeping Stallkeepers - Crawford Market, Mumbai  
oil on panel 10 x 15 ins 25 x 38 cms





Busy Street, Madurai  
oil on canvas 24 x 40 ins 61 x 101.5 cms

Blue Temple, Madurai  
oil on canvas 34 x 36 ins 86 x 91.5 cms





*left* Three Men Sewing  
oil on panel 10 x 10 ins 25.5 x 25.5 cms

*right* The Maharaja of Benares and His Coach  
oil on panel 10 x 10 ins 25.5 x 25.5 cms

*left* Loading Bananas, Madurai  
oil on panel 10 x 10 ins 25.5 x 25.5 cms

*right* Boats and Fishermen, Marina Beach, Chennai  
oil on panel 10 x 10 ins 25.5 x 25.5 cms

Sleeping Rickshaw Driver, Chennai  
oil on canvas 24 x 36 ins 61 x 91.5 cms



In Front of the Temple  
oil on canvas 24 x 36 ins 61 x 91.5 cms



Dusk at Marina Beach  
oil on canvas 24 x 42 ins 61 x 107 cms





Stall & Monkey, Marina Beach  
oil on canvas 24 x 39 ins 61 x 99 cms

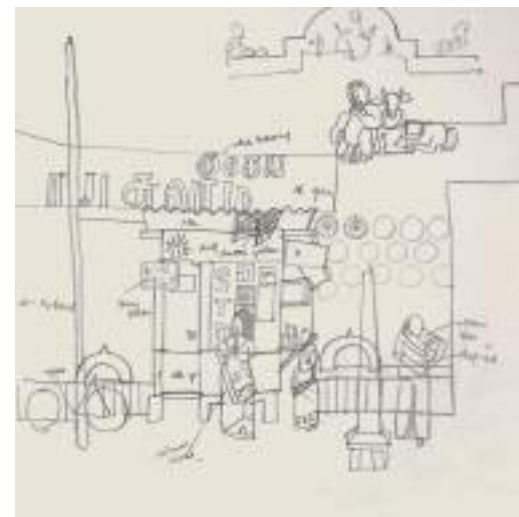


Fishing Boats - Marina Beach, Chennai  
oil on canvas 20 x 30 ins 51 x 76 cms

Rickshaw at Nightfall, Marina Beach  
oil on canvas 24 x 36 ins 61 x 93 cms







*left* Old Man Sleeping in a Park, Mumbai

pencil on paper 11¼ x 11¼ ins 28.5 x 30 cms

*right* Auto-rickshaw, Mumbai

pencil on paper 11¼ x 11¼ ins 28.5 x 30 cms

*left* Telephone Booth in front of Temple Wall

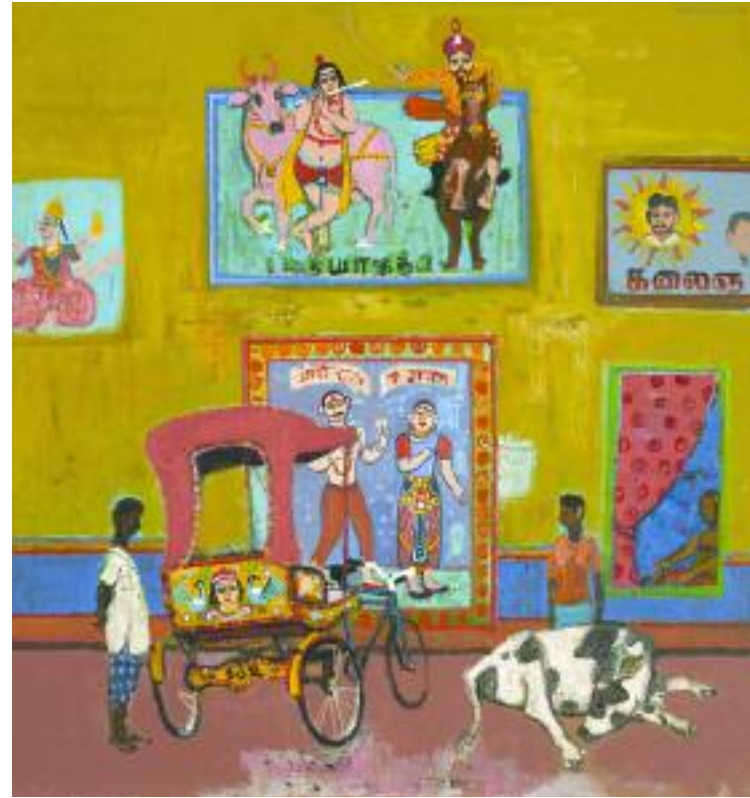
pencil on paper 11¼ x 11¼ ins 28.5 x 30 cms

*right* Parked Rickshaw, Madurai

pencil & gouache on paper 11¼ x 11¼ ins 28.5 x 30 cms

Sleeping Man & Slogan  
oil on canvas 28 x 38 ins 71 x 97 cms





Film Posters, Madurai  
oil on canvas 22 x 30 ins 56 x 76 cms



Holy Cow, Benares  
oil on canvas 30 x 32 ins 76 x 81 cms

Little Temple & Rickshaws  
oil on canvas 30 x 40 ins 76 x 101.5 cms



Two Stalls, Madurai  
oil on canvas 24 x 36 ins 61 x 91.5 cms





Waiting for a Lift - Rickshaw Stand, Varanasi  
oil on canvas 24 x 40 ins 61 x 101.5 cms



*left* Posters on a Wall, Madurai  
pencil on paper 11¼ x 11¼ ins 28.5 x 30 cms  
*right* Temple Elephants, Madurai  
pencil on paper 11¼ x 11¼ ins 28.5 x 30 cms

Temple on the Ghat, Varanasi  
diptych  
pencil on paper 11¼ x 11¼ ins 28.5 x 30 cms each page

The Ghats, Varanasi  
oil on canvas 48 x 60 ins 122 x 152.5 cms







Reclining Women outside Crawford Market, Mumbai  
oil on panel 10 x 15 ins 25.5 x 38 cms



Family of Benares  
oil on panel 10 x 15 ins 25.5 x 38 cms

Waiting for a Fare outside the Temple, Madurai  
oil on canvas 24 x 36 ins 61 x 91.5 cms



Market, Tamil Nadu  
oil on canvas 24 x 40 ins 61 x 101.5 cms



Behind the Ghats, Varanasi  
oil on canvas 24 x 30 ins 61 x 76 cms





Farmer's Family - Vaigai River, Madurai  
oil on panel 10 x 15 ins 25.5 x 38 cms



Banana-Wallah, Crawford Market  
oil on panel 10 x 15 ins 25.5 x 38 cms

Temple Wall, Madurai  
oil on canvas 24 x 30 ins 61 x 76 cms



## LEON MORROCCO ARSA RGI

Born : Dundee 1942

Leon Morrocco was born in Edinburgh and studied at Duncan of Jordanstone College of Art, The Slade, and Edinburgh College of Art. In 1968 he won an Italian government scholarship to study at the Accademia di Brera in Milan. He was lecturer in drawing and painting at Edinburgh College of Art from 1965-1968, accepting a similar post at Glasgow School of Art from 1969-1979.

In 1979 he moved to Australia as Head of the Department of Fine Art at the Chisholm Institute in Melbourne. He resigned in 1984 to devote all of his time to painting.

Leon Morrocco, who was elected an Associate of the Royal Scottish Academy in 1971, had eight solo exhibitions in the UK before moving to Australia where he had a series of highly successful exhibitions in both Melbourne and Sydney.

In 1991, to herald his permanent move back to Britain, Leon held his first British Exhibition for twelve years; his paintings in oil, gouache and pastel, featured landscapes and still lifes from a year of traveling through Spain, France and Australia. His works reveal both his outstanding draughtsmanship and his passion for colour. In 1998 a monograph on his life and work, Leon Morrocco: Journeys and Observations was published (for details please contact the gallery).

His work can be found in many notable public and private collections, including The Scottish National Gallery of Modern Art, H.R.H Princess Margaret, The Scottish Arts Council, Leeds Art Gallery, The Nuffield Foundation, and Queensland Art Gallery.

## SOLO EXHIBITIONS:

- 2009 From Mumbai to Madurai, John Martin of London
- 2009 Strade di Roma, Open Eye Gallery, Edinburgh
- 2007 Morrocco's Morocco at Art London, John Martin of London
- 2007 The Sketchbooks & Paintings of Leon Morrocco, Open Eye Gallery, Edinburgh
- 2006 Havana, John Martin of London
- 2005 The Open Eye Gallery, Edinburgh
- 2003 Roman Paintings, John Martin of London & John Martin Chelsea
- 2000 Leon Morrocco, John Martin of London
- 1999 The Open Eye Gallery, Edinburgh
- 1998 Roger Billcliffe Fine Art, Glasgow, John Martin of London
- 1997 Open Eye Gallery, Edinburgh
- 1996 John Martin of London
- 1995 Open Eye Gallery, Edinburgh
- 1994 Loomshop Gallery, Fife  
Roger Billcliffe Fine Art, Glasgow
- 1993 Portland Gallery, London  
Roger Billcliffe Fine Art, Glasgow  
Open Eye Gallery, Edinburgh
- 1992 Australian Galleries, Melbourne
- 1991 Portland Gallery, London
- 1989 Australian Galleries, Melbourne
- 1986 Australian Galleries, Melbourne  
Bonython-Meadmore Gallery, Sydney
- 1984 Australian Galleries, Melbourne

- 1982 Stuart Gertsman Galleries, Melbourne
- 1979 Glasgow School of Art
- 1978 Stirling Gallery, Greenock Arts Centre  
University of Strathclyde, Glasgow
- 1976 University of St. Andrews
- 1975 The Scottish Gallery, Edinburgh
- 1973 The Loomshop Gallery, Edinburgh
- 1971 The Scottish Gallery, Edinburgh
- 1965 Douglas & Foulis Gallery, Edinburgh  
French Institute Gallery, Edinburgh  
Traverse Theatre Gallery, Edinburgh

## PUBLIC COLLECTIONS

- The Scottish National Gallery of Modern Art
- Scottish Arts Council
- Leeds City Art Gallery
- Lillie Art Gallery
- Australian Government Collection

## PUBLICATIONS

- Leon Morrocco: Journeys and Observations (ISBN 1 902761 006) London, 1998