

## David Sequeira Song Cycle 2020-2021

During the long Melbourne lockdowns, David Sequeira could often be found in his home studio with a pencil, a compass, tubes of gouache and a bundle of blank sheet music. In the centre of each sheet he would draw a small geometric pattern of intersecting circles and apply jewel-like concentrations of vivid colour. These modest compositions, what the artist calls 'songs', became sources of illumination and resonance in a world that had turned grey and silent.

Each song is a compact fusion of simple elements. Where circles intersect, their individual colours blend to create distinct chromatic transitions and new shapes within shapes. The effect is one of light passing through overlapping lozenges of translucent pigment, giving a sense of looking into something crystalline and bottomless. The circular compositions contrast with the musical staff, whose horizontal black lines spread insistently across every page. Sequeira's paintings bloom over these lines, from their centres out, like still points on an infinite current of time.

For the National 4 he presents 340 of these songs in a grid along the gallery walls. The 15-metre-long display does not represent a culmination of the project – like the fugue in music, where the melodic theme is continually repeated with minor deviations, the *Song Series* has no logical end. Each painting is a rephrasing of what he calls 'the same work'. Inside the parameters of coloured gouache and the geometry of the circle, Sequeira finds endless room for variation.

The fugue has some resemblance to an Indian musical form called the *raga*. Although the performer of a *raga* must follow a set framework, they can improvise to enhance the given theme, which might be the mood of a season or time of day. No one *raga* will therefore sound the same. This emergence of the singular and distinctive out of the structured and predictable is a source of fascination for Sequeira and what propels the *Song Series* forward. Each song is an exercise that draws him closer to the bare logic of creation, to the bliss of witnessing difference unfold out of sameness.

The word *raga* comes from the Sanskrit word 'to dye' and the *raga* is understood to 'colour the mind' of the listener with emotion. This is close to Sequeira's own understanding of the relationship between sound and colour, which is about metaphorical correspondence, rather than synaesthetic experience (perceiving sound as colour and vice versa). He describes colour as a 'verb' that 'has a kind of energetic force or presence'. For Sequeira, colour has the same resonant power as music and can seep into our consciousness.

He extends this idea to language in the *Song Series* by including titles in pencil at the bottom of the works. 'Song for the absolute', 'Song for expansion', or 'Song for immunity' come from words that he encounters and collects – concepts that take up space in the mind and colour the passing of a day. Sequeira knows we can't see these concepts, just as we can't hear any song: this gentle confounding of expectations is an invitation to contemplate the abstract nature of inner experience, to behold the chorus of intangible resonances that shape our realities.

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