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## Watercolor studies by Indian artist K. Venkatappa

James J. White

### Abstract

The Venkatappa Art Gallery in Bangalore in south India contains some watercolor studies of plants by one of India's leading artists, K. Venkatappa (1886 or 1887–1965). A portrait of the artist and one of his studies are reproduced.

The Venkatappa Art Gallery (Fig. 1), erected in 1974 in Bangalore by the government of the south-Indian state of Karnataka, displays watercolors, drawings and sculptures by one of India's leading artists, K. Venkatappa (1886 or 1887–1965) (Fig. 2). The Gallery contains his landscapes of trees and mountains painted in the hill station of Ootacamund in the neighboring state of Tamil Nadu in the 1920s and his plaster-of-paris relief panels depicting mythological figures and animals. There also are three frames consisting of 12 simple and elegant watercolor drawings on paper depicting flowers in lavender, golden brown, yellow, mauve, blue, salmon, purple and pink. These unidentified decorative images, such as the one resembling *Dianthus* (Fig. 3), bear a resemblance to woodcuts or linoleum block prints, such as those by the late California printmaker Henry Evans. The studies might seem to be patterns for the inlay in marble of precious and semi-precious stones.

When he was a boy and assisting his artist father in his work at the palace in Mysore, Venkatappa attracted the eye of Maharaja Krishnaraja Wodeyar IV. The Maharaja encouraged Venkatappa's studies at the Government College of Fine Arts in Calcutta (1909–1916), where Venkatappa and Nandalal Bose became prominent students of Abanindranath

Tagore. At age 20 Venkatappa returned to royal patronage in Mysore. At age 60 in 1946, after the demise of the Maharaja, Venkatappa left the palace and moved to Bangalore. Also a skilled veena player, Venkatappa is remembered for his modesty and truthfulness, intolerance of any injustice, and independent disposition.



Figure 1. Venkatappa Art Gallery, Bangalore.



Figure 2. K. Venkatappa (1886 or 1887–1965).



Figure 3. Flower study resembling *Dianthus* by K. Venkatappa.

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