

# SENAKA SENANAYAKE

## PAINTING THE BEAUTY OF LIFE

BY HIRANMAYI AWLI MOHANAN



Sugar Cane Workers, 1964  
Oil on canvas  
117 x 102.5 cm



Farmers  
Oil on canvas  
93 x 93 cm

**B**orn in 1951 to an illustrious family in Sri Lanka, Senaka Senanayake was born to paint. He was celebrated as a child prodigy, whose work was first exhibited in Colombo in the late 1950's. Often compared to Mozart's childhood genius in music, Senanayake redeemed his early promise and went on to become one of the most sought-after painters of Asia, crossing international boundaries, a mystifying combination of technical skills and a dewy-eyed child looking at life around him as if for the first time. Subsequently, at the tender age of 10, he held his first international one-man show in New

York. At the age of 14, Senaka clambered up the steps of the White House in Washington D.C. His painting The Outer Harbour Colombo adorned the wall of the place to keep company with a number of masterpieces of the past and present. He went on to become the most accomplished and famous artist Sri Lanka has

ever produced. Senanayake's innate talent led him to continue painting and as a teenager, he held numerous exhibitions in Sri Lanka, Europe, the USA and Asia. However, it was only after he received formal training at Yale University, where he studied art and architecture, that he decided to surrender to art and painting. Soon after graduating, he moved back to his roots in Sri Lanka, where he has since established himself as one of the region's most important living artists. Fuelled by the plight of the Sri Lankan rainforests, his recent works encircled the subject, including intense deforestation to make way for tea plantations.

Senanayake's works show a fervent passion for nature's beauty and a great knowledge of the flora and fauna of the rainforest. His works have been shown in most parts of Europe and South Asia with critical acclaim. To date, he has more than 100 solo shows to his credit, and numerous group shows in the countries of Europe, China, Australia, Japan, Singapore,

Czechoslovakia, Korea and Egypt to name a few. His work has been documented by Metro Goldwyn, British Movietone News, BBC TV, London, Yeo Soo TV, South Korea, TV Austria, and Star TV, India. Various journals, magazines and newspapers such as The New York Sunday Times, Washington Post, London Times, Weser Kurier, Germany, UNESCO Features, Paris, National Geographic Magazine, Asia Week and many others, have devoted their mediums to document Senaka's work. He lives and works in Sri Lanka.

This particular work, entitled 'Sugar Cane Workers', was painted almost like a celebration to life. Multicoloured swishes form the background of the painting while in the foreground, silhouettes of the sugar cane workers were painted in white and captured in motion, coming off almost like their dancing. It's an uplifting and energetic work.