

A photographic encounter with Bharatanatyam

Two French artists – photographer Dominique Guillemain d'Echon and Bharatanatyam dancer Maya – have created an exceptional alliance between visual art and dance. In February 2009, Maya took part in the Natyanjali festival held in honour of her guru Kittappa Pillai. She was one of the master's last disciples and the only French dancer at the festival. For many years, Dominique has been following Maya's career in France. The two worked together on a photography project for the Natyanjali festival. Their goal is "to capture the intimate relationship between life, art and the elegant way of living expressed by the Bharatanatyam dance form". Back in France, the result of this work was a book titled *Lumière de l'Inde du sud, voyage dansé au Coeur des temples*, featuring photographs by Dominique with complementary text by Maya. It was selected by the Board of National Museums in France.

Now the two artists have gone a step further. Based on an original dance exhibition concept, Maya performs excerpts from her recital, appearing to step out of the book as she dances among the displayed photographs. Her dancing and the magic of the photos recreate the mystical atmosphere of the temples.

Shiva's Eye, the name chosen by Dominique and Maya for this dance-exhibition, travelled around France, after showcasing at the famous Guimet Museum of Asian Art in Paris. Inspired by the sumptuous display of photographs hung on the museum bookstore's walls, Maya gave a performance in front of a magnificent Nataraja from the Chola period. An enthusiastic crowd was at hand to meet and applaud the two artists. Until the end of March, *Shiva's Eye* was presented at Espace Kuoni in the centre of Paris. On the opening night, this contemporary gallery was transformed into the heart of an Indian temple,



Dominique Guillemain

as the spectators embarked on a journey to India to the rhythm of Bharatanatyam.

A number of cultural institutions in France – including media libraries, schools, the National Book Centre, bookstores and museums – evinced interest in showcasing the photographic exhibition cum encounter with south Indian classical dance.

Dominique and Maya are keen to present their work to a Tamil audience. Their dream is to present their collaboration in Chennai during the music and dance season.

A SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

Maya dancing amidst the exhibition at the Muséum in Paris

DOMINIQUE GUILLEMAIN D'ECHON

