SLOKA SCENES
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Sripathi Sridhara Swamy lived in absolute silence as an ascetic for 18 long years while he studied holy scripture and turned the profound knowledge enshrined in their verses into excellent paintings. When he passed away at age 77 in June, 1990, he left behind a legacy which anyone rooted in India's culture and tradition ought to be proud of: about 175 oil paintings, exquisite in line and color conveying the inmost thoughts of the saintly composers of the verses.

Sridhar Swami began painting when he was a child and eventually received training from competent persons. The inspiration to transform slokas in praise of Lord Venkateswara into paintings came from Pramacharya Sri Sri Chandrasekhara Swamy Varu of Kanchi Kama Koti Mutt who, impressed by his presentation of devotional texts through painting, asked him to continue. He took this blessing as a mission and vowed to carry it out by observing absolute silence all the while. He stuck to his vow for 18 years, by which time he had completed a major part of the mission.

The slokas were drawn from works such as the Venkateswara Suprabhatam, Sri Adi Sankara's Kanak-dhara Sthotram, Devadasa Jyothirlinga Sthatram, Bala-krishna Leelalu and the Ramayana, and the subjects range from Sesha Naga (King of Serpents) with his thousand expanded hoods to Lord Venkateswara seated on Garuda, Rama, Sita, scenes from the epics, etc. Swamy would spend months to understand the deepest meaning of each verse before picking up his brush. The paintings are admired for the quality of light in which they bathe, the feeling for the Gods represented as evocative of the early Vedic period and the slokas' poetry.

The artist's four sons have today made it their life's mission to introduce to their

father's work to the world, and now seek to fulfill his dream: the building of a gallery to show and teach traditional art to children.

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