Lancelot Ribeiro
Out of Chaos Comes Cosmos

Curated by Marsha Ribeiro
December 8, 2026 – February 6, 2027 | Opening Reception Tuesday, December 8, 6 – 8 pm

AINA Gallery is proud to present *Out of Chaos Comes Cosmos*, an exhibition of works by the late Lancelot Ribeiro (1933–2010). The exhibition takes viewers through Ribeiro's deep exploration of materials from the late 1950s to 2009. Some styles, such as his early townscapes and psychedelic heads, will be familiar to the New York audience. At the same time, his later, increasingly abstract, almost frenetic landscapes offer new insight into Ribeiro's practice. The artist's daughter and curator of the exhibition, Marsha Ribeiro, offers the following insight into Ribeiro's oeuvre:

A relative visiting my father in London related an exchange he had upon seeing a painting in his studio. "Lance, that is chaotic!" he said, to which my father, Lancelot Ribeiro, replied, "Out of chaos comes Cosmos."

I am delighted to have been invited to curate the first solo exhibition in AINA's new gallery inspired by that encounter. Those words my father uttered not only captured, for me, how his expressionistic visions unfolded but also his desire to manipulate the alchemy of his medium. Both of these forces underpinned my curatorial choices, to demonstrate that at the heart of each surprising shift and turn was one constant: the elemental chemistry of materials that fed an imagination.

Our exhibition opens with a 1964 oil and polyvinyl acetate (PVA) townscape which had been rolled up, undiscovered, for decades. It marks a bridge between his pre-1963 works and those which followed, and its sheer scale dwarfs his other townscapes. Stylistically, the 1964 piece bears notes of his architectonic ink drawings and early oils with their stained-glass touch. His quest for the 'right' medium, through the adoption of polyvinyl acetate, introduced a new fluidity into his work as well as a light-filled palette—as in the 1964 scene. The imprint of his ancestral roots is everywhere and, as he explained, was inspired by the Catholic Church in Goa. Even after PVA took him increasingly down the path of abstraction, there was still that odd hilltop church, steeple or dome evoking Goa's Indo-Portuguese past. Homage to the cosmos, too, weaves through his works with the odd simmering sun, red moon or implied light of dusk.



Untitled (Townscape), 1964, Oil & PVA on canvas, 71 ⅓ x 70 ½ in



Destruction, 1966, Oil & PVA on canvas, 97 ⅔ x 55 ⅞ in

Ribeiro's heads also underwent a metamorphosis. Two oil and PVA paintings on display illustrate the contrasting ways he harnessed his medium. *Crowned King* (c. 1964)—a monumental portrait of a corrupt king—is rendered in a thin PVA application dyed with rich hues of orange, outlined with a chalky white to bring the face into focus against its dark-stained canvas. For *Destruction* (1966), he pushes abstraction to its furthest point, in which the marbling, swirling reactions of oils mixed with PVA elevate the ghostly figure with the odd enlarged limb from its backdrop. The adhesive properties of PVA preserve the viscous nature and chemistry of the paint. Both—as in many of Ribeiro's portraits—carry timeless warnings on the abuse of power and the plight of humankind.

Also on display for the first time at AINA are Ribeiro's playful compositions in PVA wash, which are best understood in his quest: 'I needed to discover or evolve a form.' His 1972 lecture, *Indian Art through the Ages*, for the Commonwealth Institute proved instructive. They point to how the undecipherable scripts and pictorial representations of the Indus Valley, along with the decorative elements of temples, sculptures, cave paintings, and carvings from India's pre-colonial past, bred this new hieroglyphic signature style. Unsurprisingly, these pieces were used by Ambassador Salman Haidar (then of the Indian High Commission) for the covers of the 1964 and 1965 India Annual Reviews.

Similarly, the tantric paintings of the late 1960s marked a return to his Indian roots. It was the mystique of Tantric thought, he would write, 'without which I could not have done these paintings.' The glazed ceramic effect he achieved with PVA inspired a desire to celebrate the sheer chemistry of paint on canvas, contained within deliberate forms placed to evoke harmony and spirituality, occasionally enhanced with poured liquid acetate. This opened the way to a new chapter of hard-edged geometric paintings, such as *Vanishing Point* (1969), that focus the eye on celebrating line and form.

From the late 1970s onwards, his approach to landscape painting took multiple forms and was so unlike any of his other work. PVA-rendered aerial views of land, inspired by travels across North America, left an enduring impression. 'Indescribable just indescribable,' he would write. 'No painting or poem could phrase or frame such a picture.' Yet he sought to replicate the stratification and contortions of rock in earthy blues, purples, and browns. Works such as *Terrain Strata* (1979) carried the meandering image across multiple canvases.

Contemporaneously, he began small naturalistic watercolors, most of which were inspired by the English countryside of his adopted home. These were increasingly detailed studies of geology, light and seasonality and, as he would confide, 'gave me a lot of joy, were extremely relaxing and perhaps levitational.' It would herald surrealist compositions born of the surprising results of applying watercolors, inks, and varnish to the laminated backs of his old exhibition catalogs. The results led to explosive townscapes reduced to the base of the image, sitting beneath active and sometimes violent skies.

By the end of the decade, my father would return to working large scale using modern acrylics alongside his old stock of PVA. Now, his figures and faceless heads were often placed within his familiar style of landscape. There were other threads of continuity too in the messaging. *Turning to No End* (1991) shared a note of despair with *Paranoid* (1965) of three decades earlier.

As to why he constantly drove himself to reinvent his medium, style, and form, I had to return to his words. Rebelling against fashions, he fiercely criticized those he saw 'happily ensconced within the established mainstream of the day.' Describing his own practice, his lifelong artistic approach is best summed up in a moment of reflection:

'I could go on endlessly to produce painting after painting—interesting perhaps—but somewhat meaningless and self-plagiarizing.'

Lancelot Ribeiro's legacy came under focus at the Lancelot Ribeiro: A Risen Voice Symposium *at the Victoria and Albert Museum in 2026. His work was also celebrated in London as part of South Asian Heritage Month.*

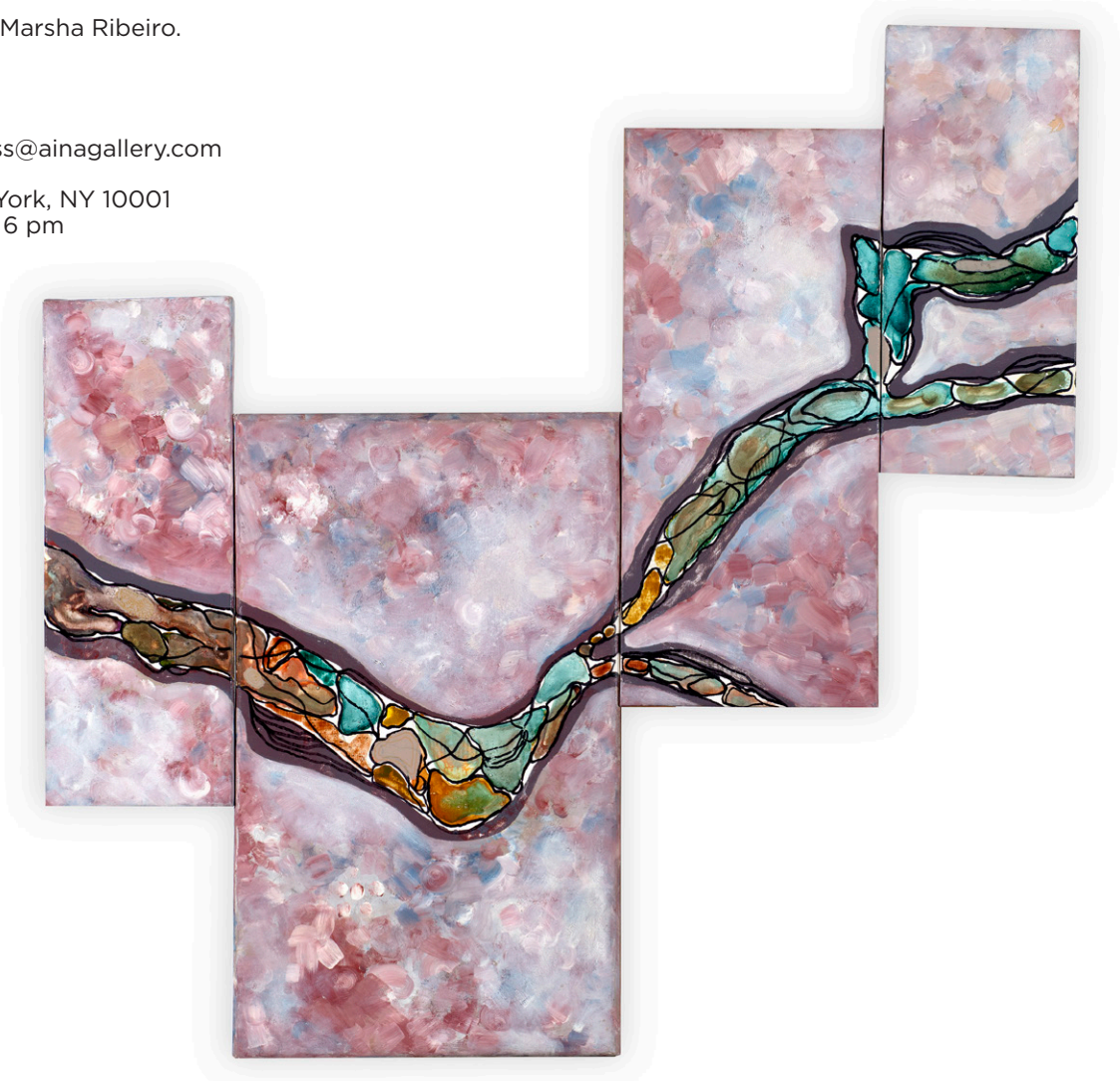
Out of Chaos Comes Cosmos is presented in collaboration with 108 Art Projects.

The exhibition is curated by Marsha Ribeiro.

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Terrain Strata, c. 1977, Oil & PVA on canvas, Approx. 31 ¾ x 31 ⅔ in