

MASTERPIECE

LONDON 27 JUNE TO 3 JULY 2019

NEW DELHI
MUMBAI
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DAG

A Tour de Force of Indian Art

Exemplary works from 20th century India

The significant strides taken by artists in twentieth century India are represented by way of the art they left behind – a visual tour that spans different styles, periods, mediums and geographies in the range handpicked by way of DAG's selection for Masterpiece London 2019.

The list includes artists from erstwhile Calcutta where the eponymous Bengal School took root in the early years of the turn of the century all the way up to its tryst with high modernism in later decades (Bikash Bhattacharjee), the Bombay-based Progressive Artists' Group which represented the benchmark for Indian modernism (F N Souza, S H Raza), the indigenous modernism of the Madras Art Movement (J Sultan Ali), folk-like modernists (Madhvi Parekh), the meditational neo-tantra (Biren De, G R Santosh) and other abstractionists (Shanti Dave) as opposed to those known for their academic realism (Hemen Mazumdar), sculptors (Dhanraj Bhagat, Adi Davierwalla, Satish Gujral), those practising overseas (Avinash Chandra, Sohan Qadri), and a wonderful suite of miniature watercolour landscapes by (Bireswar Sen) who trained in the wash style before teaching art in Lucknow.

The works encompass roughly a century of art practice and are representative of the diversity and range of Indian modernism. The language is, for most part, universal, with a pronounced orientalism exhibited by a few of them.

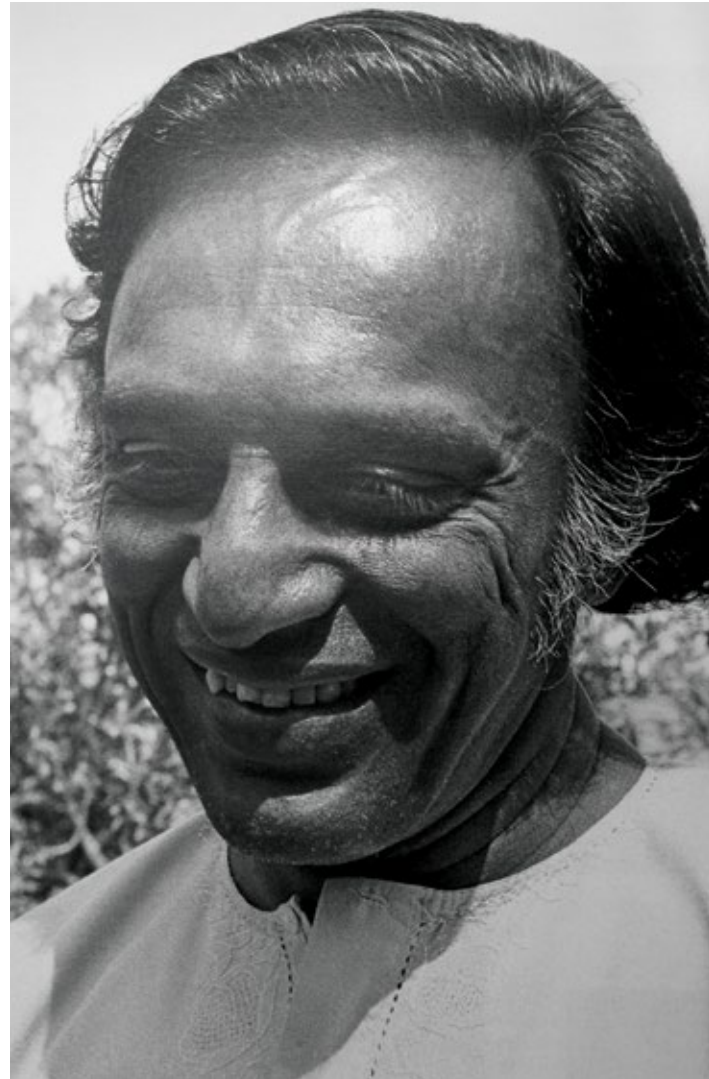
Though much of the art on display has a well-entrenched context within the Indian milieu, which gives it its unique quality, equally, it belongs to the world irrespective of narrow mindsets and claustrophobic geographies. It is a celebration of some of the best instances of Indian modern art and has a place in every part of the world and in the hearts of every person who seeks – and finds – enjoyment in art.



Tyeb Mehta

1925 - 2009

Born in Gujarat, Tyeb Mehta closely followed the Bombay Progressive Artists' Group formed in the landmark year 1947 by F. N. Souza, S. H. Raza, M. F. Husain, among others. He worked as a film editor in a cinema laboratory in Bombay until his interest in painting took him to Sir J. J. School of Art where he studied painting from 1947 to 1952. It was here that he made friends with his contemporaries who, along with him, went on to become synonymous with modernism in India. Tyeb Mehta's early works show strong influence of Western modernist painters, and Francis Bacon remained a significant inspiration for the artist. The artist was obsessively meticulous about his work and remained introverted despite the enormous attention his works received over the years.



He received a fellowship from the John D. Rockefeller 3rd Fund in 1968, also in the same year, a gold medal for paintings at the first Triennial in New Delhi, and in 1974 the Prix Nationale at the International Festival of Painting in Cagnes-sur-Mer, France, and the Padma Bhushan in 2007. Mehta's work has been exhibited in the Museum of Modern Art, Oxford, England, and the Hirshhorn Museum amongst other museums and are coveted by the most prominent collectors of Modern Indian art worldwide.

About the Artwork

Tyeb Mehta discovered the power of the diagonal in 1969. In an anecdote that he loved to retell, the artist came to it quite fortuitously one evening in Delhi, after a spirited argument with his close friend and celebrated fellow artist, M. F. Husain. Apparently, Husain had been disappointed with Mehta's work of that period, pronouncing it to be static and urging him to make a fresh start (in that generation, Indian artists offered one another the gift of candid and constructive criticism). Mehta knew his confrere was right—he had come to an impasse in his handling of the relationships between figure, field, and color. Frustrated and angry, he picked up a brush, loaded it with black paint, and struck out at the painting on his easel. To his amazement, the streak he had painted was a diagonal. Slashing through figures and space, it generated a sense of movement and reorganized the painting in a startling, dynamic manner.

The diagonal would become a key device in Mehta's paintings. It enabled him to activate his tableaux while also becoming symbolic of a deep sense of scission, of tearing apart and twinning, which he experienced in the aftermath of Partition. As an Indian of Muslim background, as an artist committed to modernist and international strategies of artmaking yet also profoundly engaged with local cultural realities, he had several cultural agendas to manage and reconcile into a larger totality.

The diagonal is the most prominent expression of this schismatic psychology, which haunted Mehta all his life. In the present painting, the red diagonal acts as a sword, dividing a seated figure from other elements of its consciousness, or from other presences within its lifeworld.



Diagonal Series
1972
Oil on canvas
35.5 x 45.2 in. / 90.2 x 114.8 cm.

Provenance
Gallery Chemould, Bombay, 1976
Christie's, London, October 5, 1999 (lot 74)
Eminent private collector, New Jersey, USA, 2018
Private collection, New Delhi

F. N. Souza

1924 - 2002

F. N. Souza was expelled from school, then college (Sir J. J. School of Art, Bombay) and later, as he insisted on saying, from his own country. He would shift continents before settling in New York, for the Goa-born artist, who was brought up by his Catholic mother to become a priest, showed early signs of the rebelliousness that was to become an integral part of his life. His mutinous nature made him join the Communist Party, which he soon rejected, and the founder member and spokesperson of the Progressive Artists' Group, which he later abandoned to pursue a painterly career in Europe.

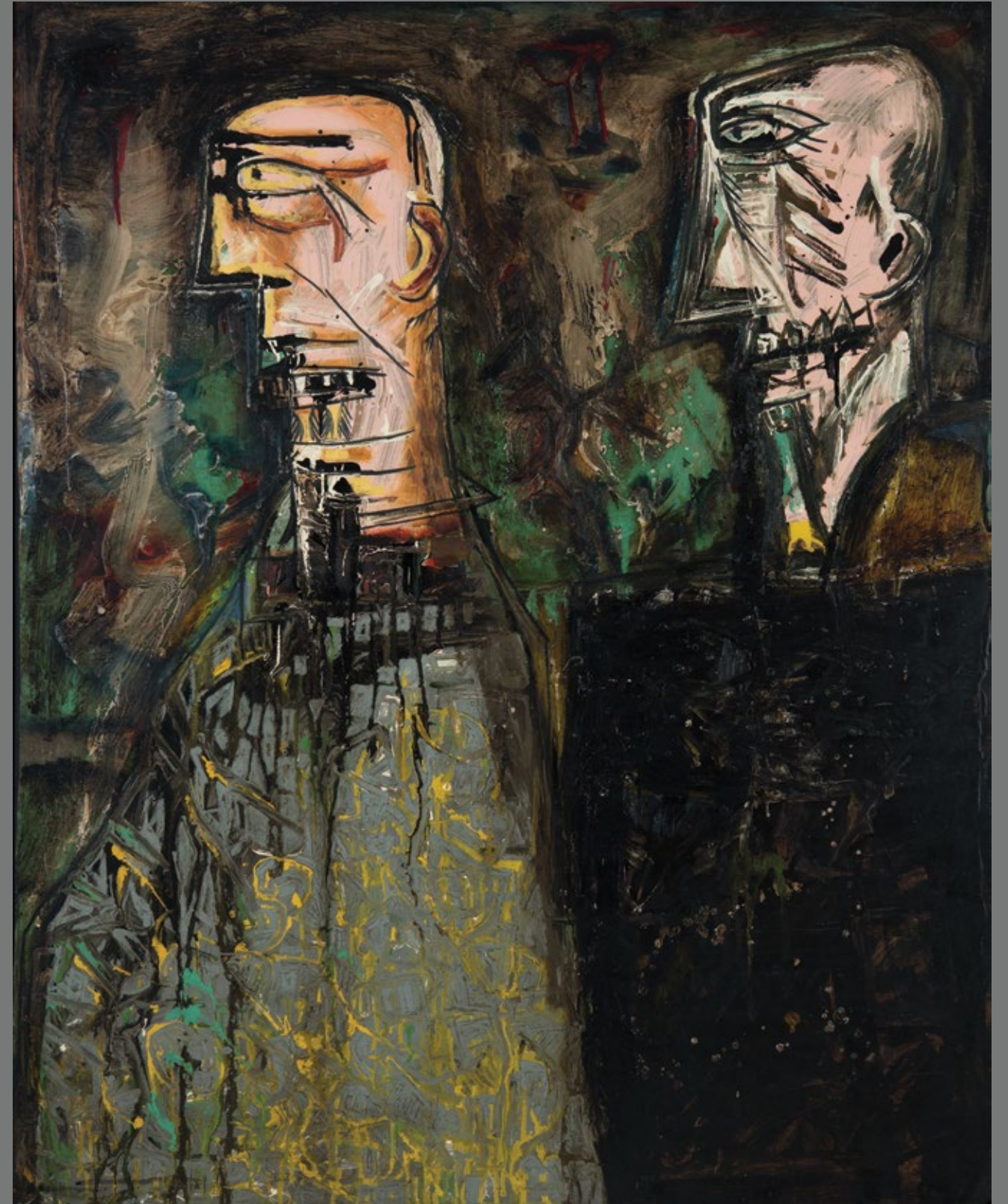


Souza found his own blunt, extreme style by combining the expressionism of Rouault and Soutine with the spirit of cubism and the sculptures of classical Indian tradition. He combined fierce lines with cruel humour. Nudes, landscapes and portraits – he painted in every style and in every medium, even inventing 'chemical alterations', a method of drawing with the use of chemical solvent on a printed page without destroying the glossy surface. This helped the artist to experiment with the layering of multiple imagery, thus creating several simultaneous narratives. Widely exhibited and feted around the world, F. N. Souza's pugnacious nature and work failed to win him recognition in the country of his birth, where he was noted but never rewarded.

About the Artwork

India's foremost modernist, Francis Newton Souza rendered a number of savage, satirical studies of male heads through his career, of which the present work is a marvellous example. Apart from politicians, his subjects included priests and businessmen—indeed, all types of patriarchs. W. G. Archer interpreted the heads in psychological terms, relating them to Souza's Catholic upbringing in Goa and the death of his father when he was an infant as a result of which Souza grew up with a sense of life as cruel, violent and unjust.

The late 1950s and early '60s is understood to be Souza's most creative period when his best works were created. He was on a retainer during this period that liberated him from having to paint for a market, and therefore able to indulge himself. A master of the virile brushstroke, he began some of his most excoriating enquiries into the canker that infested business, politics and the clergy at this point. He was unsparing of the naked surge for power and corruption in society, resulting in his finest series of heads and portraits. This painting points to this pestilence, the corrupting influence represented in the dislocation of elements of the face that began to become pronounced from this time on. Despite the naked hunger for power represented in this painting, its strength holds the eye and draws the viewer in – a hallmark of a powerful painting.



Untitled (Politicians)
1959, Oil on board
47.7 x 38.7 in. / 121.2 x 98.3 cm.

Provenance
Acquired from the artist
Private collection
Christie's, New York, March 21, 2018
Private collection, New Delhi

Bikash Bhattacharjee

1940 - 2006

Born into a middle-class Bengali family, Bikash Bhattacharjee went on to become prolific in a style that was simultaneously traditional as well as realist. His subjects consisted of portraits of people from different walks of life. He gathered his visual and intellectual ideals from the politically charged atmosphere of Forties' Calcutta where his family had settled. Like a lot of his contemporaries, he was sympathetic to the principles and objectives of the Communist Party, sharing their cultural values. But his highly individualised perception and interpretation of the world differed from the imagery representing either political leaders or suffering people. Bhattacharjee's characters were treated as more than just representative of their class, but were imprinted as individuals, each with a well etched subjectivity.

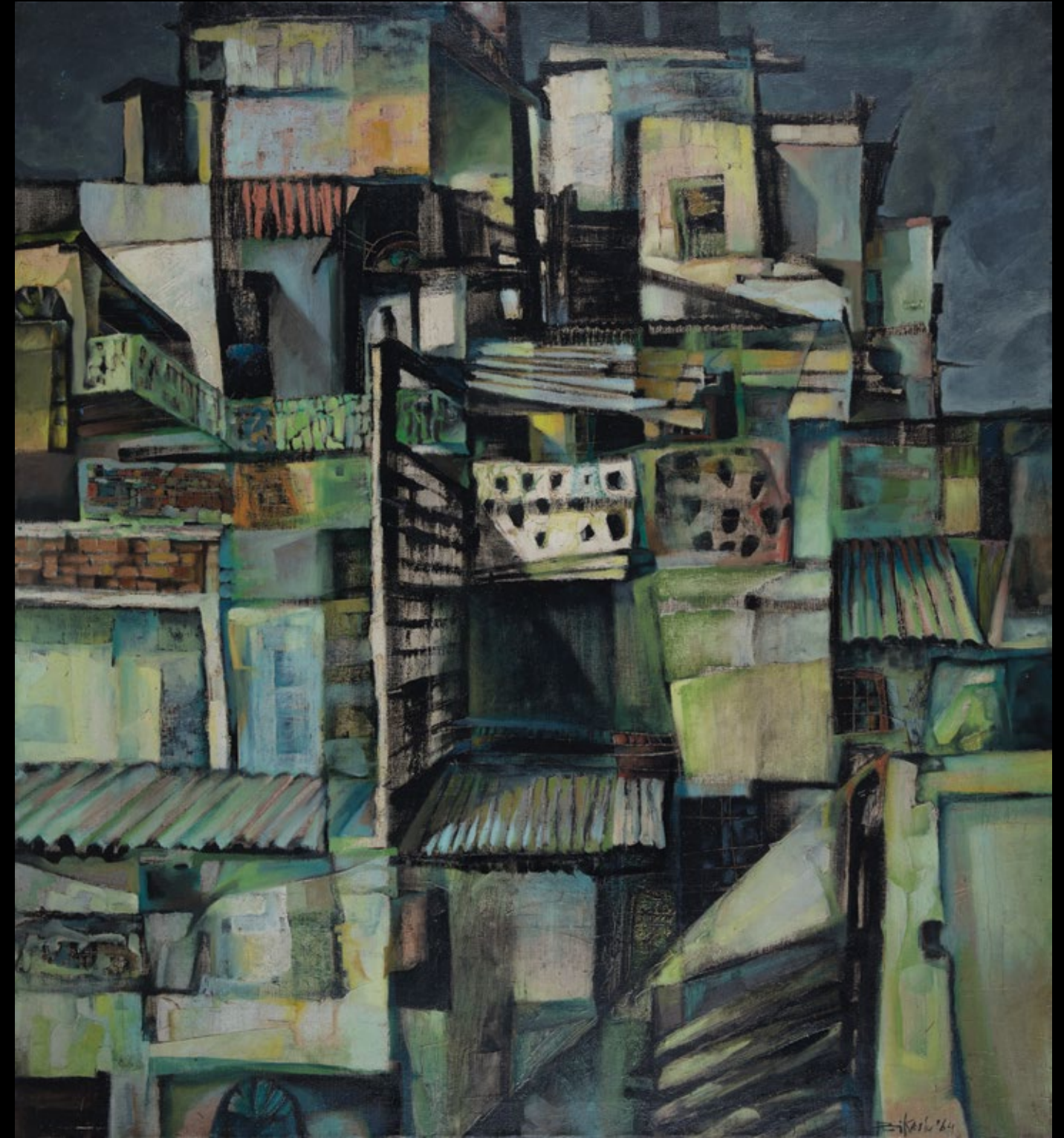


The end of the Sixties up to the mid-Seventies was marked by a series of surreal paintings, with a subtext of the demonic or subhuman in a setting of either dark fantasy or farce. The allegoric vision of the subverted feminine in his portraits of prostitutes, middle-class women, or women with extreme sexual appeal, is a subjective theme in his work. Bikash Bhattacharjee was widely awarded in life – by the Academy of Fine Arts, Calcutta in 1962, Lalit Kala Akademi's National Award in 1971, the Bangla Ratna from the state government in 1987 and the Padma Shri by the Government of India in 1988.

About the Artwork

Bikash Bhattacharjee spent his early adolescence wandering the streets of his native north Calcutta, once opulent with the *baaris* or townhouses of wealthy zamindars, but which over time had ceded to middle-class tenements. Later, the artist used the terrace of his home that overlooked this desultory cityscape made magical, even theatrical, when the morning or evening light shone on the walls, pointing not to their increasingly decrepit state but burnishing them a bright gold. A master colourist, he used the play of shadow and light to render his views three-dimensionally.

This painting of buildings glimpsed from his roof terrace, Bikash Bhattacharjee was a chronicler of the city's urban habitations in the early 1960s. Invariably, these paintings were devoid of human presence, though it was alluded to through open doors and windows. This was a calm period before Bikash would get drawn into painting the darker aspects of city life and society. The cityscape would slowly disappear, replaced entirely by human figures. Which makes this a rare painting from a period that was short but poignant in the artist's career.



Untitled (Rooftops)
1964, Oil on canvas
50 x 47 in. / 77.0 x 112.0 cm.

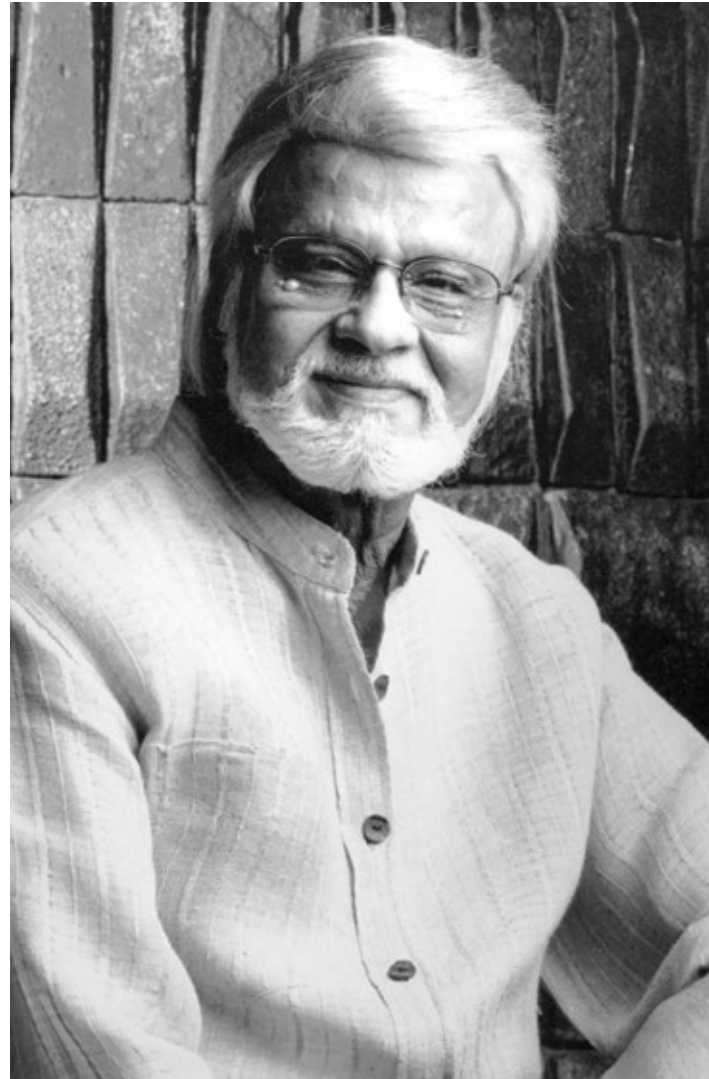
Provenance

Acquired from the artist - Calcutta, c. 1970's
Collection of Herb and Helen Gordon
(Herb Gordon was assigned to the American Embassy in New Delhi and Calcutta.
His wife Helen Gordon was a patron and collector of Indian art)
Sothebys, New York, March 19, 2018 (Lot 8)
Private collection, New Delhi 2018

Satish Gujral

B. 1925

Born in Jhelum in pre-Partition west Punjab, trained at the Mayo School of Art and, later, in 1944-47 at Sir J. J. School of Art in Bombay, Satish Gujral has won international recognition over the years for his versatile creativity that runs through his varied expressions in painting, graphics, murals, sculpture and architecture. The turbulence of the early years – the illness which affected his hearing and the trauma of the country's Partition – had a deep impact on Gujral's artistic expression. Though Gujral came into contact with the Progressive Artists' Group, he found it difficult to reconcile with their techniques, and began a search for a modernism that was deeply rooted in the Indian tradition.



A trip to Mexico on a scholarship and interactions with Diego Riviera inspired his art practice, influencing it heavily with the subject of human suffering which resonated with the artist's personal experience of Partition. 1952-74 saw Satish Gujral organising solo shows of his sculptures, paintings and graphics across the globe. Since the late Eighties, his paintings and sculptures have shown a greater expansion, both in terms of materials as well as content. The artist began creating large-scale murals, mostly in mosaic and ceramic tiles. Later, the tiles were overtaken by machined steel elements. Gujral's sculptures in burnt wood come across as visceral exposure of human and other forms.

Widely collected in India and abroad, Satish Gujral has received numerous awards including the da Vinci Award for lifetime achievement from Mexico, honours from the Lalit Kala Akademi, and a Padma Vibhushan from the Government of India.

About the Artwork

The 1970s saw Satish Gujral experimenting with materials like industrial metals and forms that he used for making sculptures. At the same time, he was also grappling with the idea of tantra, which he represented through these sculptures but not in his paintings. This was the only period when he worked on abstract constructs. In using machine-made objects, he was a votary of Marc Duchamp and a precursor by several decades of Subodh Gupta.

Experimenting with the quasi-spiritual theme of tantra, he opted to represent it using sharply angular, geometric forms: rectangles, squares, hexagons, lines and circles. Disinterested in the ritual aspect of tantra, he nevertheless found its concept of nature and energy challenging. In this sculpture, he has worked with found/discarded parts of industrial material, the smooth surface with its pristine sheen a contrast from its original, blighted or corrugated surface. He made few standing sculptures of this nature. A similar work is in the collection of the National Gallery of Modern Art in New Delhi.



Untitled
1974
Metal
44.0 x 15.5 x 15.5 in.

Provenance
Acquired from the artist by
Prof. Joseph W. Reed, USA, c.1976
Estate of Joseph W. Reed
(Prof. J Reed was an academician,
writer and a patron of arts in US)
Private collector
Sotheby's, Mumbai, Nov 29, 2018 (lot 29)

Avinash Chandra

1931 - 1991



If there was ever an artist who seemed destined for greatness, it was Avinash Chandra. His forceful personality and great talent shone through early, when he seized the opportunity as a student vacationing — and painting — in Srinagar to also hold an exhibition — his first — on a whim. His first formal exhibition in New Delhi was appreciated and he became a recipient of the first national awards of Lalit Kala Akademi, the selected work becoming a part of the permanent collection of National Gallery of Modern Art. Nor did his charmed life cease then, as he found himself able to accompany his wife to London where he quickly established himself as an artist of no mean merit, finding acceptance from both galleries and collectors. Important commissions came his way, and it seemed that Chandra was on a roll.

Avinash Chandra's recurrent theme has been the female body. He began with elegant line drawings which evolved throughout the Seventies to implicit, erotic coloured drawings. Sexual imagery may have played a vital role in his art but was introduced as part of a much larger experience in a wider context. Employing the primitivist trope, Chandra often reduced female anatomy to shapes as though suspended in a space invaded by phallic forms. Chandra was the first Indian artist to exhibit at one of the most important art events worldwide – Documenta in Kassel, West Germany, in 1964. Widely collected, especially by museums in the U.K., Chandra won fellowships in the Sixties to the John D. Rockefeller III Fund and Fairfield Foundation.

About the Artwork

The 1960s was a period that saw Avinash Chandra's transformation from a painter of landscapes to painting people in the abstract. His landscapes gradually developed into humanscapes, an organic journey with one style replacing the other through a process of layering and replenishment. Much of his work from this period is seen as a benchmark of what an artist could achieve with layers of 'over-painting' to create 'physical depth'.

This momentous change was brought about as a result of popular imagery in London. Critics in London hailed him as one of the finest painters to have emerged from India. *Moon in the Pink* is a precursor to *Stars Above, Stars Below* that he painted in 1962 – regarded as his career best. Both paintings seem to coalesce the two subjects he is best known for – landscapes, and human compositions, here merged into one entity. Unlike his other works, the thrust in this painting is vertical instead of lateral, as the figures rise totemic, composite and robotic, identifiable as human forms in a suggested landscape. *Moon in the Pink* probably marks the start of this transition. It is a masterful painting that cheekily references Paul Klee and Joan Miro in his own inimitable way.



Moon in the Pink
1960, Oil on canvas
36.0 x 28.0 in. / 91.4 x 71.1 cm.

Provenance
Saffronart, May 11, 2006 (lot 17)
Private collector, New York, 2015

Shanti Dave

B. 1931

Born in 1931 in Ahmedabad, Shanti Dave grew up amongst a large and loving family. His travels to a Devi temple near his village, his closeness to his uncle, his father's brother who was a priest, his observation of a ruined city that was excavated near his village—these would leave an indelible mark on his practice. His artistic aspirations led him to M. S. University in Baroda where he pursued a postgraduate diploma in painting, despite having a family to support. He was the first batch to join the Faculty of Fine Arts, Baroda, where he studied under N. S. Bendre. Later, he became one of the founding members of the Baroda Group in 1957. Murals interested him at the start of his career (an aesthetic that persists even in his later works) and he executed several of them, including some for Air India in their London, New York and Delhi offices. His concerns are modernist, evident in the formal abstraction in his works, and the focus on the medium and its possibilities, as opposed to incorporating ideological concerns. Still later, he began working in printmaking in part due its more democratic nature as a medium.



Shanti Dave received the Padma Shri in 1985 and the Sahitya Kala Parishad in 1986. Among several awards and honours, he received Lalit Kala Akademi's National Award thrice, in 1956, 1957 and 1958. He was also a member of the executive board of the Lalit Kala Akademi. He has been exhibited widely in India as well as internationally. The artist lives in New Delhi.

About the Artwork

An abstract artist, Shanti Dave's encaustic paintings bring to mind simultaneous memories of glimpsed landscapes, lost worlds, underwater explorations, alien manuscripts, and esoteric cults. One senses in his works a building up (or peeling back) of fragments of excavated worlds that can be discovered layer by enigmatic layer. What at first appears otherworldly can equally point to the familiar. His use of luminous colours and calligraphy alongside tablets and seals empowers his works with an overwhelming sense of mysticism and mystery.

This undated painting, probably from the 1980s, is a mature example of Shanti Dave's work. If the first thing that draws a viewer is its colour, what retains it is the high infusion of encaustic that combines elements of calligraphy and seals. Simultaneously, Shanti Dave paints the background to create a sense of transparent layers. This gives the painting additional depth, marking the encaustic as a bedrock of civilizational debris. A pleasant composition, it shows Dave at the height of his career as an abstract artist.



Untitled
1975, Oil and encaustic on canvas
61.0 x 41.0 in. / 154.9 x 104.1 cm.

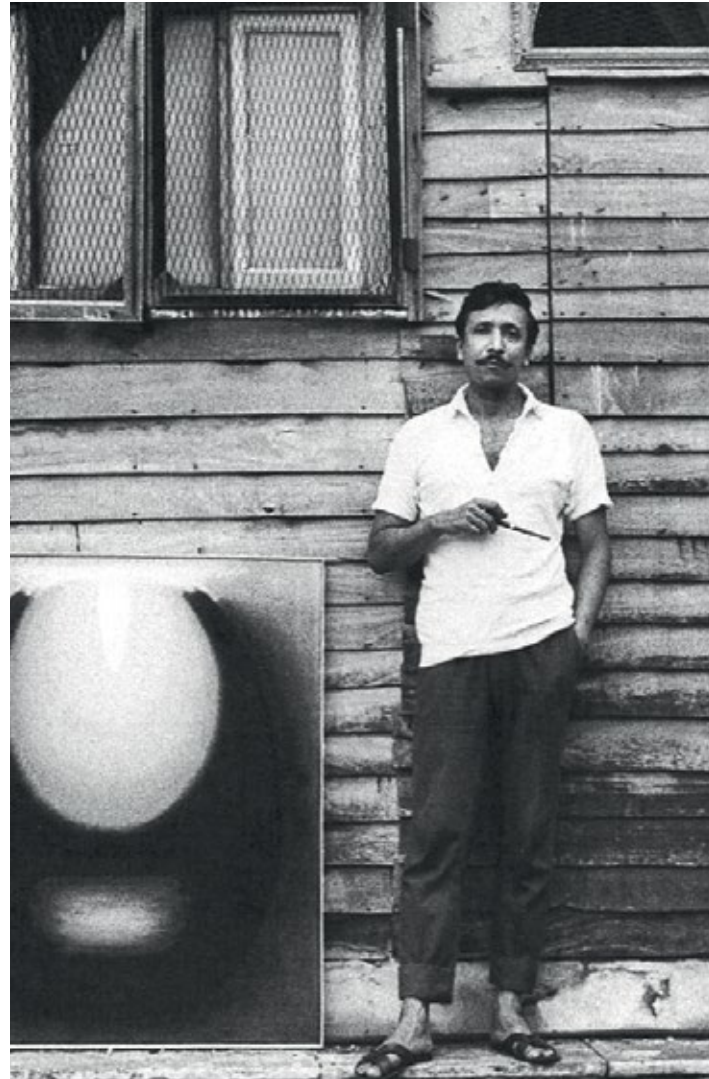
Provenance
Acquired from the artist, New Delhi, 2017

Biren De

1926 - 2011

Hailing from Faridpur, Bangladesh, Biren De went to Calcutta where, in 1949, he completed his graduation in fine arts from the Government College of Art. Later, years spent in New York and extensive travelling over continents would enrich his artistic expression with new forms.

From 1956 onward, his figurative compositions began to fragment, turning into free shapes and units. Around this time De, along with some of his contemporaries, drew away from the styles of their predecessors, urging their peer group to initiate an individual vantage based on their inner experiences. De's imagery began evoking a metaphysical introspection through recurrent symbols of the lotus, the sun, the wheel and bursting seeds. His paintings captured the implosion of energy devoid of any agitated movement; only a blinding effulgence at its heart. The physical union of man and woman was abstracted into symbols: a 'u'-like form representing the female principle and the straight and wedge-like shape representing the male.



The artist oscillated between deep blues and blazing reds, his final aim being the awakening of the psyche towards an undivided consciousness. Averse to the 'hard edge' abstraction of the West, De's fluid and suggestive geometry was about dispersion, diffusion and dematerialisation. His works *Apparition* and *Dying Ogre* won National Awards from the Lalit Kala Akademi, New Delhi. A Fulbright fellow, Biren De has painted many commissioned portraits for public and private collections in India.

About the Artwork

The fusion between abstract geometric components and a philosophically-rooted, conceptual basis were recurrent themes in Biren De's work. Colour, in his hands, became translucent enough to convert into light. From the illuminated core in this painting, an intense hypnotic light radiates out, forming a flower-shaped aura. A *tantra* artist, Biren De refrained from the use of symbols in his practice. Here, the luminiscence spreads in all directions, moving from a core of yellow and white, towards cooler hues of blues and black.

One of the earliest protagonists of the neo-tantra movement begun in the mid-'60s by G R Santosh, Biren De willfully denied the use of tantric symbols in his works. Instead, he chose to concentrate on the effulgence of energy that responds to the highest planes of human consciousness. In this painting, his use of cool tones is particularly noteworthy. It draws attention to the energy core at the centre of a halo, even as its source is indicated in a rare reference to tantric origin – the co-joining of male and female principles. In this, it is one of few rare instances in which both source and result appear in the same painting.



August '88
1988, Oil on canvas
46.0 x 31.8 in. / 117.0 x 81.0 cm.

Provenance

Private collection, Dubai
Bonhams, London, October 24, 2018 (lot 24)

Hemendranath Majumdar

1894 - 1948



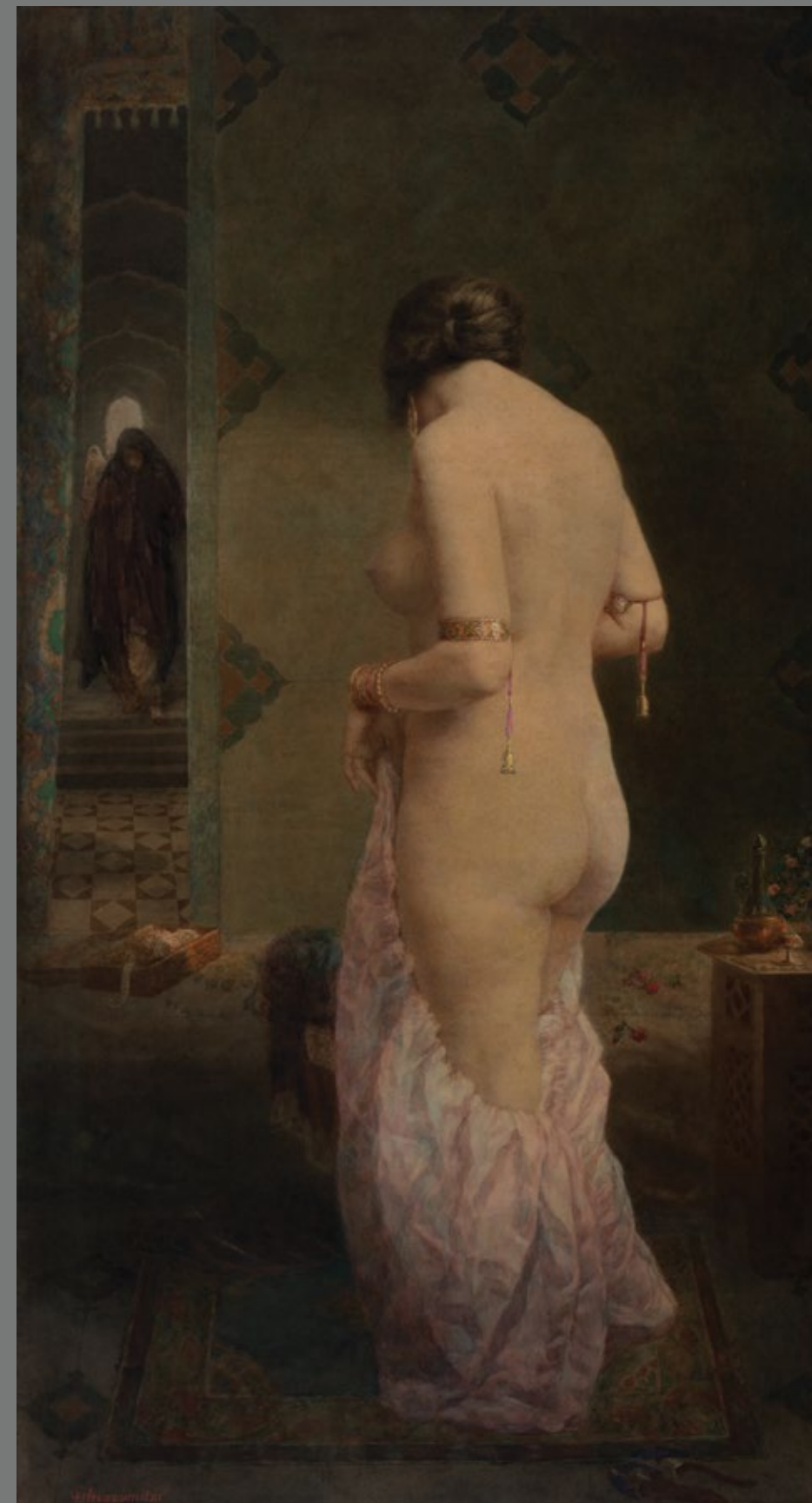
A notable artist of the rebel Jubilee Art School, (training its students in British academic style, breaking away from Abanindranath's Orientalist emphasis), Hemendranath Majumdar enjoyed great artistic success. Painting in European academic realist language, he was one of the co-founders of the Indian Academy of Fine Arts in 1919. Early in his career, he was known for his portraits of Indian royalty and paintings of women, whom he painted in diaphanous clothes.

After Ravi Varma, he became the most sought-after artist for oil portraits. His large oils of partially clothed or nude women, with their air of voyeuristic eroticism attracted the Maharajas of Jaipur, Bikaner, Kashmir, Patiala and other princely states as clients who threw open their palaces to him. Most commonly a single woman is seen in these works in wet drapery and idealised romantic settings, emphasizing their sensuous appeal. In his last exhibition at the All India Exhibition, Calcutta in 1948, Majumdar presented rural Bengal life with amazing realism, a far cry from the royal portraits and beauties.

About the Artwork

Hemen Majumdar was an award-winning artist who was recognised in his lifetime and patronised by the colonial elite as well as India's many royal families. He was particularly celebrated for paintings of the female form, of which this is an excellent example. The anatomical representation bears the confidence of a master. In this painting, he places the body unapologetically in the centre of the work. Most of his paintings tended towards a voyeuristic tendency in slyly concealing the female form behind wet clothes clinging to it. In freeing the body of garments for the most part, the artist has rendered a bold representation in conservative 1930s Calcutta – condoned by its reference to some kind of Arabian Tales narrative.

A painter in the realistic mode even at the height of Bengal's revivalist style, Hemen Majumdar's painting of a woman in a state of undress reflects his intimate association with the sensuous. A veiled figure moves in the direction of the woman—and us. This contrast illuminates the woman's luminous body, glittering jewellery and folds of her garment, amplifying the suppressed erotic implied in the image. Majumdar's choice of the seductive made him an obvious preference for aristocratic families patronising works that implied their progressive values.



Untitled
c. 1930s
Water colour on board
49.0 x 27.0 in.
124.5 x 68.6 cm.

Provenance

Collection of Maharaja of Burdwan (most likely His Highness Sir Udaychand Mahtab, the Maharaja of Burdwan Raj - last ruler of Burdwan which was an old Zamindari estate that flourished in Bengal between 1657 to 1955)
Nihar Chakravarty, Kolkata (Industrialist and collector of Bengal School)
Private collector, Delhi

J. Sultan Ali

1920 - 1990

Born into a Bombay-based business family, Ali's first act of rebellion was to leave the safety of the family trade and join sculptor-teacher D. P. Roy Chowdhury in Madras to learn art. After training in painting, textile design and photography, Ali learnt not only the strict discipline of classical art, but also engaged, along with other artists, in an intense search for a modern Indian idiom for the arts.

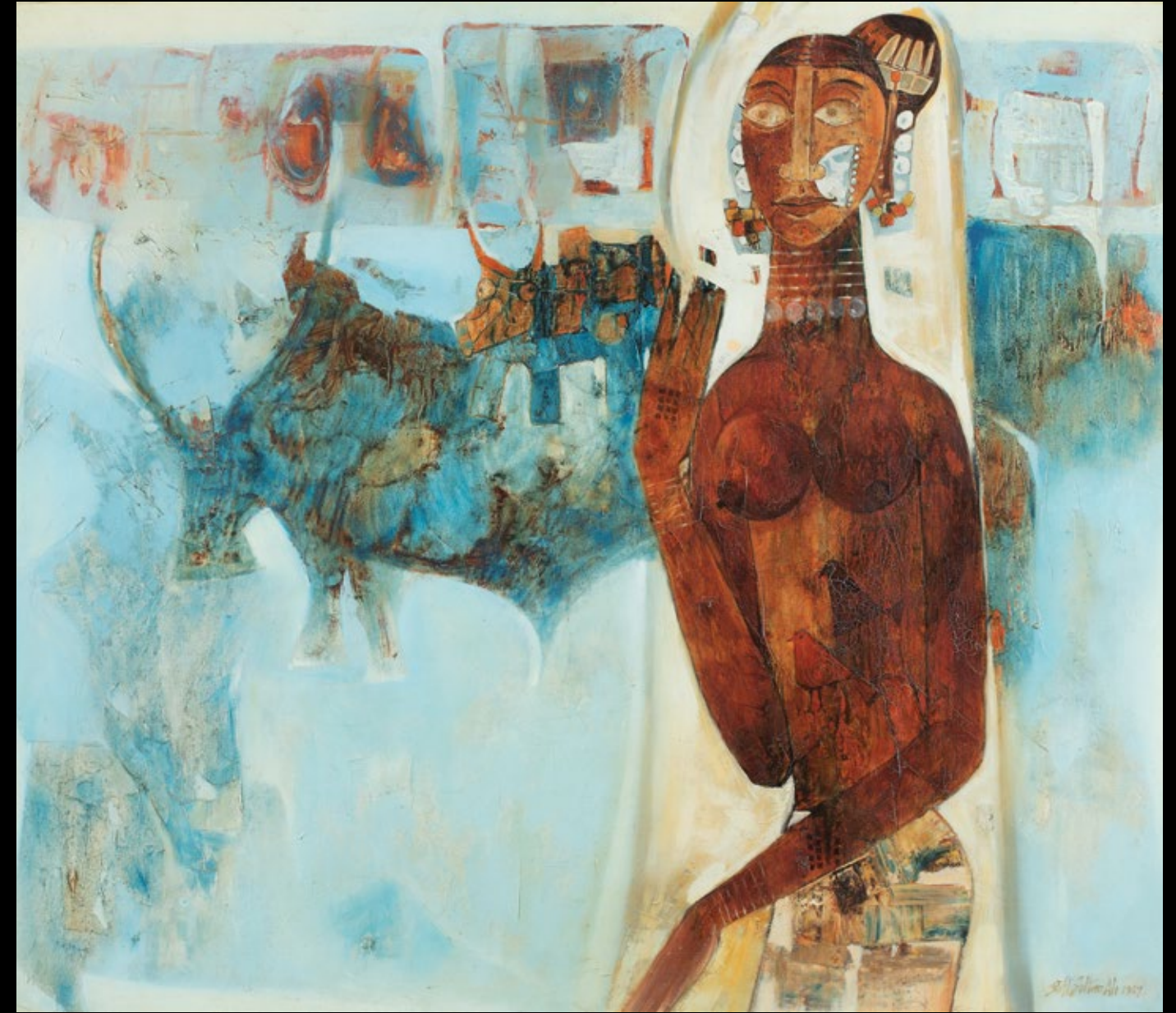
In search of his own style, he discovered Indian tribal art and was struck by its freshness and directness. Further inspiration came from reading the works of Verrier Elwin on cultures that used symbols in fresh ways, distinct from the established norms of classical art. Excited by his readings, Ali engaged in communication with the Bastar tribal community and from then on, the artist began perfecting this newly-found style. Sultan Ali drew inspiration from Hindu mythology, studying deities in the complexity of popular worship, narratives and iconography, in particular studying the techniques of folk-artists. A further search for new imagery had him turn to calligraphic symbols of words and sounds to convey their philosophical depth. Critics have often viewed Ali's works as primitive and grotesque, describing them as expressionist. Ali joined the Progressive Painters' Association, Madras, in 1954, and taught art at the Rishi Valley School in the early Fifties. He was honoured with the Lalit Kala Akademi National Award in 1966 and 1978.



About the Artwork

Sultan Ali's portrayal of a woman of the Muria tribe is almost dream-like, framed delicately in a veil of white. The Muria tribe traces its origins to Bastar district in India's heartland. If the woman represents the goddess of fertility, Sultan Ali's iconic motif of the bull forms the backdrop for this iconic painting. The artist was known to contextualise mythology with indigenous representations of folk forms. This tableau of mythic memory is reminiscent of the seals unearthed in Mohen-jo-daro featuring terracotta images of bulls.

Sultan Ali was one of the main protagonists of the Madras Art Movement in the 1950s and '60s begun by his teacher, KCS Paniker, and among its seniormost artists. Assigned to the central Lalit Kala Akademi, a national institution based in New Delhi, he was exposed to the finest art in India. His interest in tribal societies was spurred by anthropologist Verrier Elwyn's book. This painting combines some of the most iconic elements of his practice – a tribal figure, bulls (harking back to the idea of the Indus Valley Civilization) and a pictographic script. He and another Madras Art Movement Redepa Naidu peer introduced the 'script' within the narrative of their compositions. The late '60s, of which this painting is an instance, marks his mature period, when he shifted from New Delhi to Cholamandal Artists' Village, a commune of which he was a founder member. From the '70s onwards, Sultan Ali's works became monochromatic, robbed of the lively palette he was celebrated for in the '60s – as this painting contends.



Muria Maiden
1967, Oil on canvas
32.7 x 38.2 in. / 83.1 x 97.0 cm.

Provenance
Shapiro auctioneers, Sydney, May 07, 2014 (lot 83)
Private collection, Sydney, Australia
Leonard Joel, Australia, November 27, 2018 (lot 77)

Adi M. Davierwalla

1922 - 1975

A pharmaceutical chemist by training, Adi M. Davierwalla gave up his job in a factory three years after holding his first show in 1956. A self-trained artist, he did not follow the contemporary fashion of plaster and preparing a mould for the final bronze product and took to carving directly in wood, lead, steel, stone and marble. Influenced by Henry Moore, his earliest work saw a tendency towards conventional idealisation of the human form.

The artist was inspired by ancient Indian sculpture, Western myth, the grandeur and mystery of Christ themes, and works like *The Foundling*, *Oedipus Rex* and *Judas*, for instance, are proof of such influence. Many of his later works acquired a more abstract language, seen, in fact, as an echo of Barbara Hepworth's work. With use of contemporary and unconventional materials, aiming at a fusion of the geometrical and the metaphysical, his abstract works are an example of great simplicity, beauty and grandeur.

Working in metal in the later years, Davierwalla's works acquired a more impersonal, intellectual and a symbolic tone. At one stage, none of the artist's works were getting sold. Yet his conviction never faltered. He was an artist with extraordinary grit and tenacity of purpose, remorselessly committed to the pursuit of his vocation, with no recrimination or self-pity.

About the Artwork

Adi Davierwalla's short but prolific career was important for redefining modern Indian sculpture. Starting out with Henry Moore-sque stylised human figures and Christian themes in wood, he soon moved to using scrap iron, 'futuristic' materials such as aluminium and perspex to create sculptures that were an assemblage of parts, working in his last phase with a greater abstraction, mainly in metal. This *Untitled* work, rendered in a minimalist style, is the artist's poignant representation of the crucifixion rendered as a dramatic evocation.

This angular, minimal sculpture of Christ's crucifixion is a smaller rendition of a theatre backdrop that Davierwalla created for Ebrahim Alkazi's play, *Murder in the Cathedral*. It is not known what happened to the backdrop. Davierwalla's frequent travels to Europe drew him to Christian themes, and the Crucifixion was a theme he re-visited. The lean airiness of this sculpture, however, sets it apart from other versions. Davierwalla was not particularly prolific, and his short life meant there are few works that come into the market.



Untitled
1955, Copper sheet with
wood and metal armature
Height 20 1/2 in.
height with pedestal 25 3/4 in.

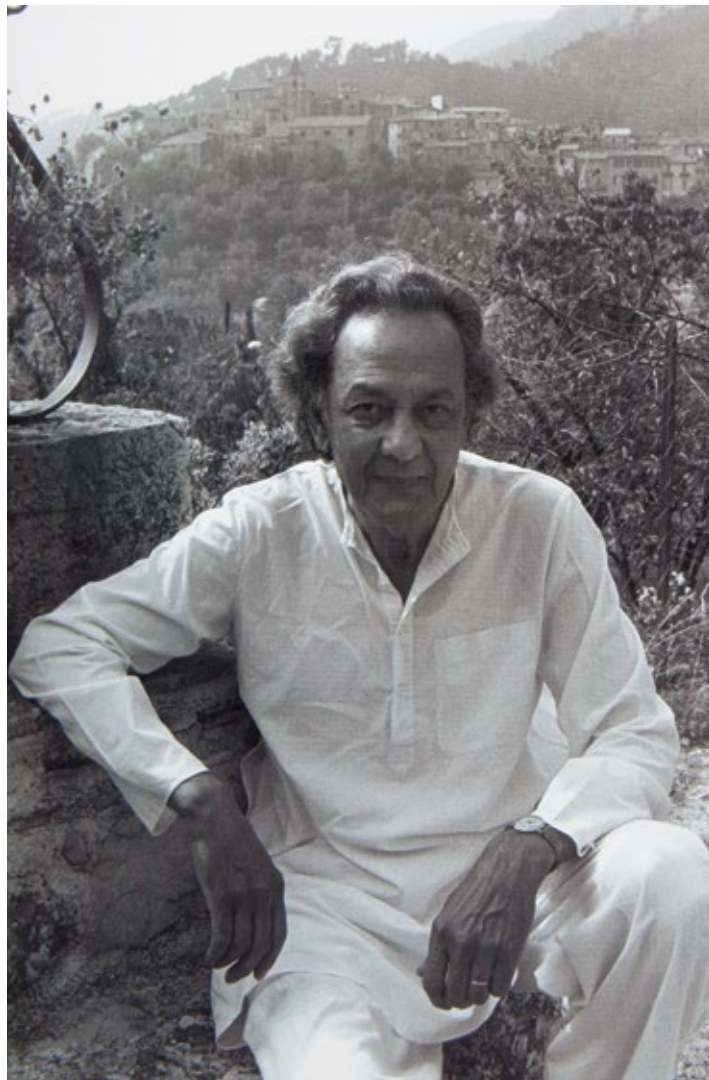
Provenance
Collection of Zarin Walsh
(Zarina Walsh is the granddaughter of freedom
fighter Khan Abdul Gaffar Khan and daughter of
pashto poet and artist Abdul Ghani Khan)
Pundole's, Mumbai, November 22, 2018 (lot 46)

S. H. Raza

1922 - 2016

S. H. Raza is among the few artists of the Progressive Artists' Group who almost exclusively excluded the human figure in order to build up his aesthetics. Instead, he was fascinated with landscapes, with which he began his career. His enrollment at the Ecole Nationale des Beaux-Arts, Paris, was to be the turning point in his career. In 1956, he became an overnight sensation across Europe after receiving the award Prix de la Critique.

In the Sixties, Raza drifted away from realistic landscapes towards 'gestural expressionism', a form of abstraction that was inspired by the works of American artist Rothko. Ultimately, the themes and forms for Raza's paintings evolved from his childhood memories and impressions – life in the densest forests of Madhya Pradesh, close to the river Narmada and in proximity of nature, the bright colours of the Indian market, and a black dot to meditate on drawn by a schoolteacher for the six-year-old Raza. Those visions and forms he carried in his memory were animated on the canvas through the use of geometrical lines and intense patches, bursts of colour. The black dot became a starting point that transmitted into a series of Raza's paintings known as Bindu – a symbol of divine and artistic creativity, the essence of any form and movement. Widely collected across Europe and U.S.A., Raza was awarded the Madhya Pradesh government's Kalidas Samman in 1981, the Lalit Kala Akademi's Ratna Puruskar in 2004. He has been honoured with both the Padma Shri and the Padma Bhushan by the Indian government.



About the Artwork

In a painting from an important cusp in his career, Paris-based Raza combines elements that define his new interest—gestural abstraction as well as a fascination for India's miniature tradition. The *bindu* occupies the centre of the composition, representing the seed of life as well as the void of the black hole. It is surrounded by water, air, fire and earth, making up the quintessential landscape represented by its five elements. The surrounding abstraction recalls an upheaved earth bringing to mind furrowed fields and greenery, the heat and dust and energy of India and her diverse culture.

Raza painted the first of his *bindus* only in 1979, making this one of the earliest instances that would mark a radical departure from his previous work. The *bindu* and the solid colours that surround it would grow to represent the five elements – a constant in his work from this point on. His previous travels through India had exposed him to Rajasthan and Saurashtra, whose landscapes form the frame around the *bindu*, representing Raza's continuing tryst with landscape painting. It is painted in the manner of 'gestural abstraction' that appealed to him. The borders around the landscape bear the influence of Basohli miniature paintings, which attracted his attention around this time. A composition that combines, therefore, the *bindu* and the five elements, the abstract concept of a landscape, as well as Basohli-inspired borders, makes this a work of rare assimilation.



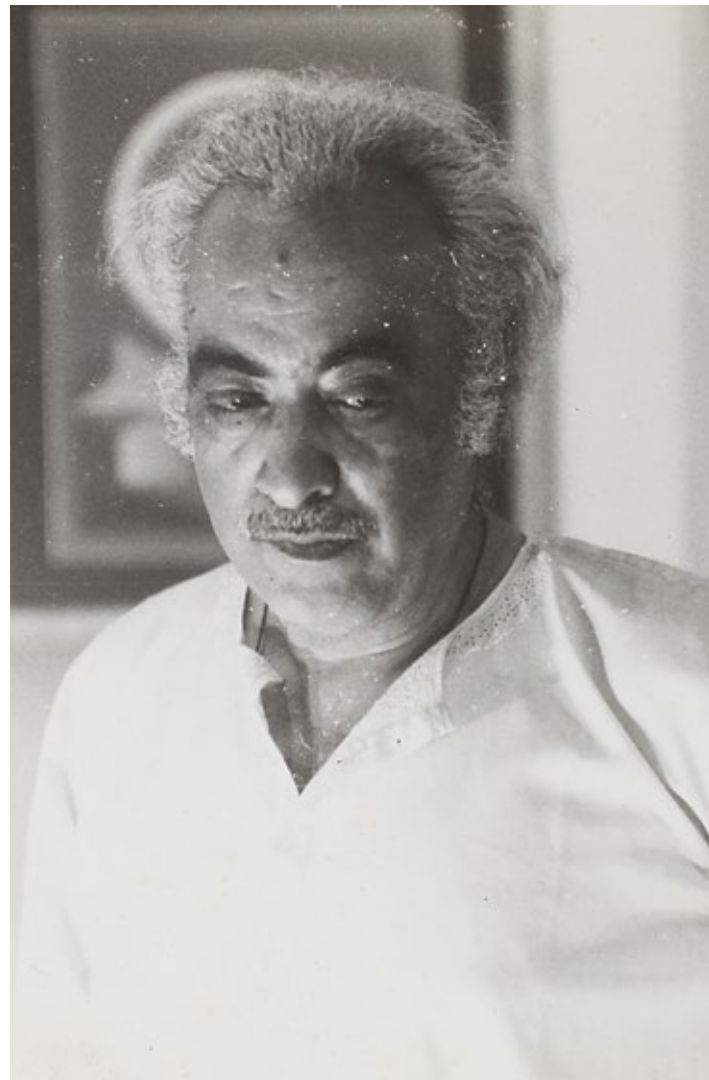
Untitled (Bindu)
1980, Acrylic on canvas
39.2 x 39.2 in. / 99.6 x 99.6 cm.

Provenance
Acquired from the artist
Christies, New York, March 23, 2011 (lot 554)
Christie's Private sale, 2018

G. R. Santosh

1922 - 2016

Born GulamRasool Dar in a lower middle class Shia Muslim family in Srinagar, Kashmir, the self-taught artist took on his wife's Hindu name 'Santosh' as his own, in a move opposing patriarchy and religion. His father's death propelled a young Santosh into early work as a signboard painter, papier-mache artist and weaver. He learnt to paint watercolour landscapes from Dina Nath Raina in Kashmir before studying under the eminent painter N. S. Bendre at M. S. University in Baroda.



In Kashmir, Santosh found inspiration in the Hindu and Buddhist tantric cults that had coexisted with the region's Sufi mysticism for centuries. On a visit to the Amarnath cave in Kashmir in 1964, Santosh had a deeply moving spiritual experience that made him turn towards tantra. Driven by a deep rooted esoteric worldview based on the primordial purusha-prakriti concept of cosmic creation, he created forms that fused the sexual and the transcendental. He started painting in what came to be known later as the neo-tantric form or school. An acclaimed writer and poet in Kashmiri, Santosh built his pictorial and poetic world around this transcendental philosophy. Writing in Kashmiri and Urdu, Santosh attained acclaim as a novelist and poet, and wrote extensively on the tantric philosophy in English. Recognition for Santosh came from Lalit Kala Akademi, the state governments of Madhya Pradesh and Jammu and Kashmir, the Sahitya Kala Parishad, AIFACS, and the Government of India, the latter in the form of the Padma Shri.

About the Artwork

From the mid-1960s on, G. R. Santosh set off on a quest that led to the pioneering of neo-tantric abstract visual art in India. Based on Kashmir's Shiva-Shakti philosophy of cosmic creation, it was founded on the principles of female and male energy merging into a supreme consciousness. Santosh's exploration led to an awareness of symbols that he incorporated successfully into his practice to create a form of indigenous abstraction. The mystical union of Shiva and Shakti in this painting result in a transcendental experience that is the basis of all life.

A two-year hiatus in the mid-1960s marked a period of intropection, research and change for G R Santosh. Having studied the Shavite philosophy of his native Kashmir, it marked the period when Santosh's work would undergo a radical transformation. Tantra entered the lexicon of modern Indian art for the first time in general, and for Santosh in particular, at this point. It led to the birth of what has since come to be described as neo-tantra art of which Santosh was a pioneer. This incredible work is one of the earliest instances of Santosh's early tantra paintings belonging to his Shiva-Shakti series. In this transition work, his penchant for landscapes from his early career are beautifully represented by way of references to human anatomy. In later works, the circle, square and triangle become symbolic of tantra, but here the idea of nature and procreation are visualised in a manner that is simultaneously suggestive and surrealist.



Shiva-Shakti Series (Early Tantric Period)
Oil and acrylic on canvas
50.5 x 40.2 in. / 128.3 x 102.1 cm.

Provenance

Collection of Chester and Davida Herwitz, USA
(Chester Herwitz, owner of a leather company, and his wife Davida were eminent collectors and patrons of Indian art)
Sotheby's, New York, March 19, 2008 (lot 30)

Madhvi Parekh

B. 1942



Madhvi Parekh was born and raised in a village in Gujarat. With no formal education in art, her art evolved from childhood memories, popular folk stories and legends of her village. Art formed a part of her consciousness through the forms of painting that were part of her family's everyday rituals, such as the traditional floor designs of rangoli. Inspired by her artist-husband Manu Parekh and artists such as Paul Klee and Miro, Madhvi began painting in 1964. Her paintings are unplanned, unfolding like a story where she adapts each work to the scale it demands, developing from a point into vast narratives.

Apart from folk motifs, legends and figures, Parekh also uses imaginary characters in figurative and abstracted orientations in her compositions – a similar engagement seen in her printmaking as her painting, and revealing the use of rhythm and repetition. In most of her works, she utilises the settings of Kalamkari and Pichwai where she enshrines the main character of the composition in the centre and fills the minor or secondary ones in the borders. A documentary film on Madhvi and her husband Manu Parekh, *Dwitya* was made by Suraj Purohit in 1992. Madhvi Parekh lives and works in Delhi.

About the Artwork

Madhvi Parekh's style can be compared to Joan Miro's automatism. She works her way intuitively across the canvas, filling up space with creatures that spring from her subconscious. This naïve, childlike painting depicts an underwater fantasy complete with soft, protean forms, glowing red coral, and a tint of seaweed flourishing in murky water. While Parekh's work is an echo of rural Gujarat where she spent her childhood, it also informs the viewer of how she is an inventor and a painter of exceptional calibre.

The 1970s was a period when Madhvi Parekh evocatively painted her memories of growing up in rural Gujarat. The naivete of her forms was reminiscent of happy days spent with siblings and friends. Her imagery came entirely from her own consciousness. Having shifted from Gujarat to Bombay to Calcutta, where this was painted, these works are redolent with the idea of happy motherhood – creatures within forms representing pregnancy – while others were lively notations of the nature of storytelling that she exulted in. An extraordinary quality of this painting is the manner in which it humanises all forms – whether piscine, faunal or reptilian, knitting in all nature into one warm, loving embrace.



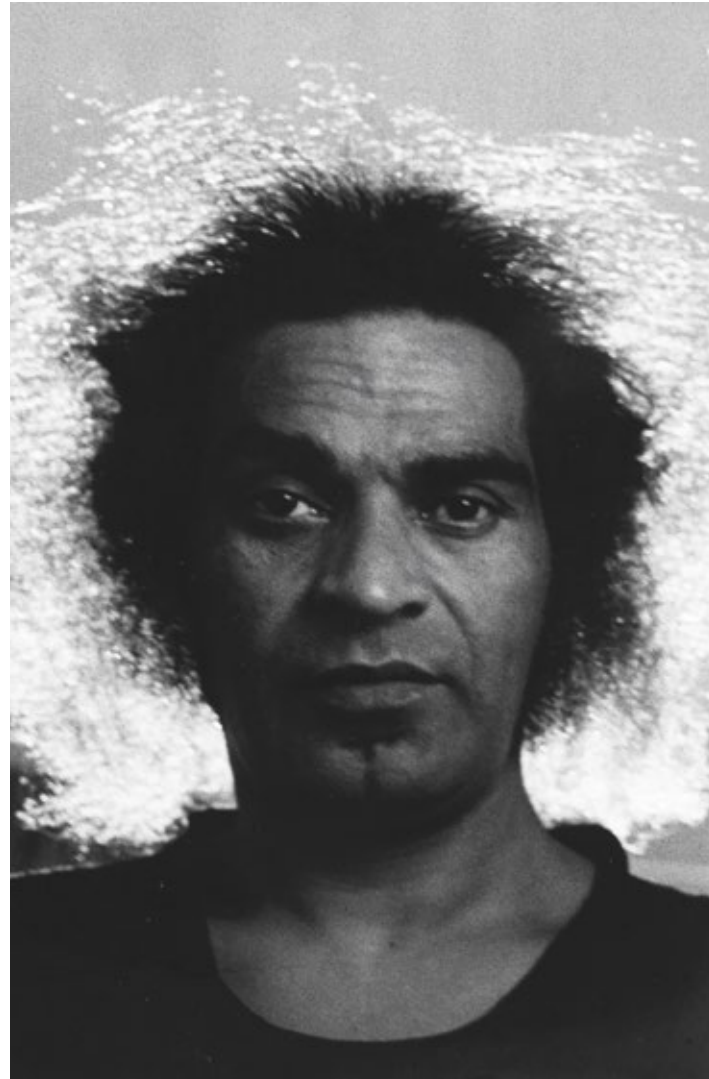
Fantasy (Under Sea)
1979, Oil on canvas
42.0 x 36.0 in. / 106.7 x 91.4 cm.

Provenance
Acquired from the artist, New Delhi, 2015

Sohan Qadri

1932 - 2011

Sohan Qadri was born to a wealthy farming family in the village of Chachoki in Punjab, near Kapurthala. At the age of seven, he came across two spiritualists living on the family farm – Bikhram Giri, a Bengali tantric-vajrayan yogi, and Ahmed Ali Shah Qadri, a sufi. Both gurus had a tremendous impact on young Qadri and taught him spiritual ideals through meditation, dance and music. His association with them heralded a lifelong commitment to spirituality and art.



Escaping from the assigned duty of farming, young Qadri first fled to the Himalayas and then made his way into Tibet, staying in monasteries for several months, living among spiritualists and forest dwellers. On being compelled to return, Qadri took up painting. The visual language upon which he and his contemporaries built their vocabulary was already defined by the Calcutta Group and the Progressive Artists' Group in Bombay. However, they rejected the reliance on figuration considered 'authentically Indian' and veered towards abstraction, with several of them eventually abandoning representation altogether in a search of transcendence or a new expression. 'When I start on a canvas,' Qadri is known to have said, 'I first empty my mind of all images. They dissolve into a primordial space. Only emptiness, I feel, should communicate with the emptiness of the canvas.' His Dot series is a visual manifestation of the artist's meditative abstraction.

Qadri's works are part of collections in Cologne, New York, Salem, New Jersey, Paris and, of course, India. A longtime resident of Copenhagen, where he painted and taught yoga, Sohan Qadri passed away in Toronto, Canada, in 2011.

About the Artwork

In the 1960s, Sohan Qadri's exploration into the tenets of tantra and yoga led to some of the finest works in Indian abstraction. Qadri embarked upon this series using varied materials, including encaustic, to create textured surfaces—applying wax and oil pigment on canvas to achieve alternate areas of smoothness and surface intensity. What looks like an island in the middle of nowhere in this painting could as easily be a representation of the artist's understanding of life's breath during the process of meditation.

Rare encaustic works from the 1960s by Sohan Qadri are among the finest examples of abstract art in India at a time when Indian artists were experimenting with the genre. Unlike most, he preferred to create a textured minimalism that was unusual for the time. This painting is unusual for having a pale field, anathema for an artist known for his use of bright colours. In placing the encaustic in only a small part of the painting, Qadri was drawing attention to it – an eruption characterised by dissonance. In a career spanning almost six decades, canvases by him remain rare, the artist preferring to work on paper for most of it.



Untitled
1969, Oil and encaustic on canvas
38.5 x 37.5 in. / 97.8 x 95.2 cm.

Provenance
Bruun Rasmussen, Denmark, December 06, 2017 (Lot 1452)

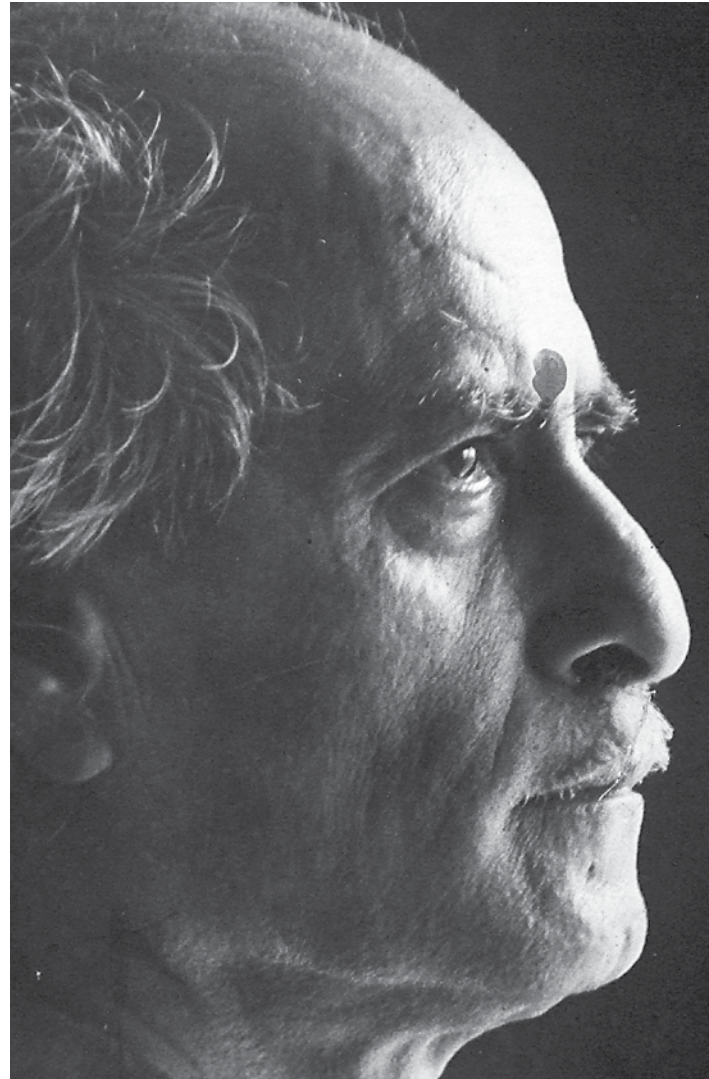
Dhanraj Bhagat

1917 - 1988

Clay was the first medium sculptor Dhanraj Bhagat began working with while studying at the Mayo College of Art, Lahore, but the medium left him uninspired. For him, its amorphous nature held little individuality. It was when he got his hands on wood with its uniquely tactile qualities that he felt inspired to carve and create.

Bhagat's early wood sculptures bore liquid, stream-like forms of the sensual feminine, with smooth, elongated lines charged by lyricism and the sensitivity of a young man not yet been traumatised by the horror of Partition. Post the cataclysmic event, the artist's oeuvre is marked with works that acquire rough edges and unsmoothed chisel marks. These works are deeply moving, charged as they are with the intensity of the artist's experience of as a Partition refugee.

In the Fifties, Bhagat began experimenting with different mediums that transformed the figures he created. He experimented with cement, papier mache, aluminium, copper and brass, the inherent qualities of each medium suggesting to him new forms and contexts. His female figures became large and heavy forms steeped in sorrow, far from the lyrical and smooth wooden ones of before. A series of mostly large, powerful sculptures executed in concrete marked his evolution towards abstraction. Having won various prizes, he won the National Award of the Lalit Kala Akademi in 1961, was awarded by the Sahitya Kala Parishad in 1969, and was honoured with a Padma Shri by the Indian government in 1977.



About the Sculpture

A great innovator, Dhanraj Bhagat belonged to a period of experimentation in Indian sculpture and became known for his distinctive expression that was led as much by his intuition as by training. His work was an ode to his ideas of truth, reality and spirituality. Mounted on a pedestal, the sculpture here evokes an iconicity at odds with its modest size. Consisting of geometric recesses and grooves, it ignites the viewer's mind to a discovery of its anthropomorphic form.

Displayed as part of a recent retrospective of the artist at National Gallery of Modern Art in both New Delhi and Mumbai, this sculpture is evocative of Dhanraj Bhagat's interest in architecture, interior spaces as well as human forms. This anthropomorphic form is reminiscent simultaneously of a constructed space as if is of a totemic figure of authority. It is in the medium he loved most dearly – wood. The asymmetrical rhythm in the work is his response to modernism at a time when Indian sculpture was still steeped in sentimentalism. Very few works by Dhanraj Bhagat are available in the market.

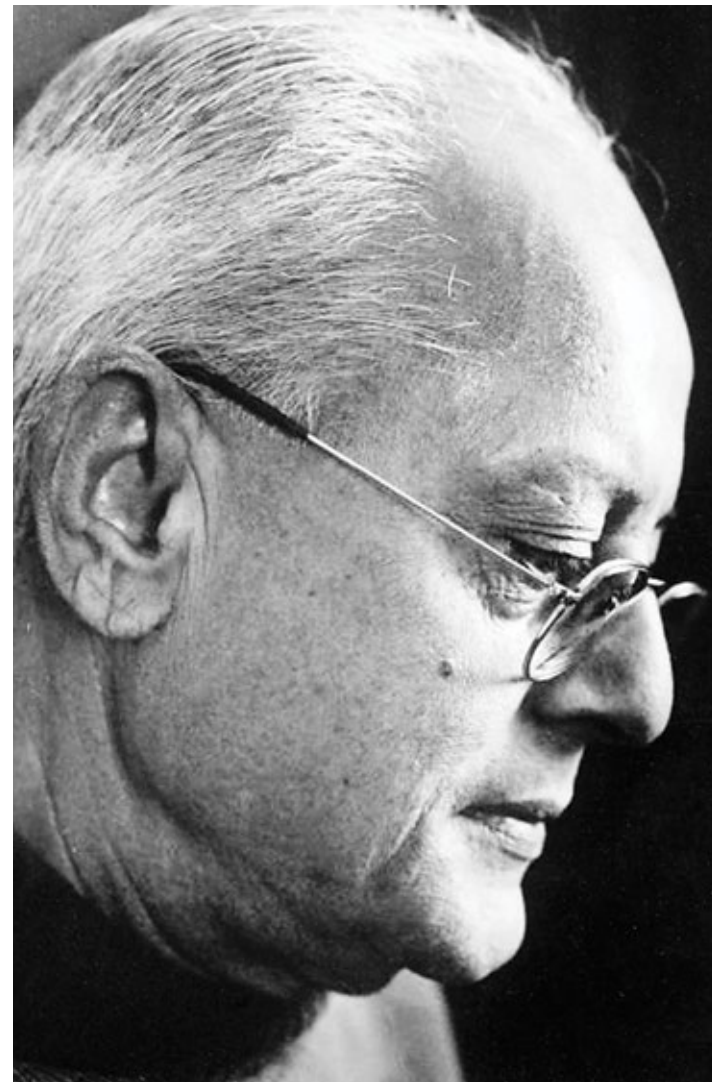


Untitled
Wood and metal
31.7 x 10.0 x 7.5 in.

Provenance
Acquired from the artist, Delhi
Osians, Mumbai, 2014

Bireswar Sen

1922 - 2016



Among the more gifted of artist Abanindranath Tagore's students, Bireswar Sen started painting in the tradition and style of his teacher and drew his inspiration from the Japanese masters Taikan and Kampo Arai. His fascination for painting did not compete with his deep interest in English literature, to which he dedicated equal attention and energy.

A meeting in 1932 with Russian painter and philosopher Nicholas Roerich proved a turning point in Sen's life, when he began to paint Himalayan landscapes, marking a new era in Indian painting. His Himalayan landscapes were painted in miniature format, 2 1/2 x 3 1/2 inches. Though compressed in a small space only slightly larger than a matchbox, the landscapes do not create an impression of crowding. Au contraire, he painted infinite spaces as well as lofty Himalayan snow peaks.

It was not his intention to imitate nature but, as he said, to take from it that which 'best accords with his [artist's] own intentions'. The task of the artist, he believed, is to add to nature 'what it does not possess: the mind and soul of man'. Bireswar Sen was a miniature painter par excellence and his works are exhibited and included in various museums and private collections.

About the Artworks

Bireswar Sen began painting in the Bengal wash style of his teacher Abanindranath Tagore, drawing inspiration from the Japanese masters Yokoyama Taikan and Kampo Arai. A meeting in 1932 with Russian painter and philosopher Nicholas Roerich marked a turning point and he began to paint Himalayan landscapes in the miniature format. Their miniscule scale evoke lofty spaces noted for their nuanced depiction of light and colour. These mountainscapes are neither realistic nor entirely imaginary, finding their essence in a manner that 'best accords with his [artist's] own intentions'.

Bireswar Sen painted these jewel-like watercolours at a time when both the subject and the medium had gone in decline. As a master of the wash style, Sen chose to retain the element of realism in his practice even as distortion and expressionism was growing as an interest. His amazing talent lay in painting these works in a minuscule, half-postcard size. Drawn mostly to Himalayan landscapes, he also painted the vast plains of India, as works in this set testify. The most characteristic element in these works is the artist's engagement with horizon and perspective, accentuated through light. The set is an exemplary instance of the delicacy of watercolours as a medium for painting landscapes.



A.



F.



B.



G.



C.



H.



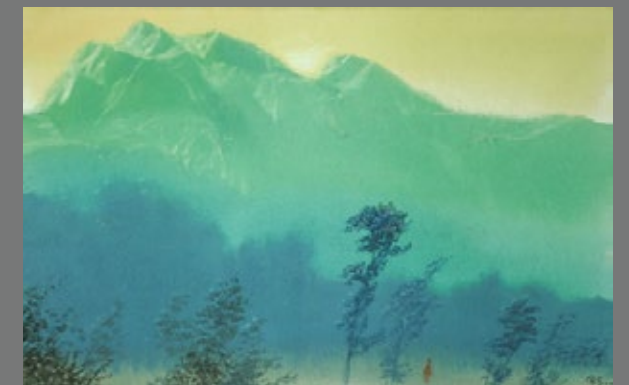
D.



I.



E.



J.

- | | |
|--|---|
| <p>A. Kumaon Hills
1971
Water colour on paper
2.2 x 3.5 in. / 5.6 x 8.9 cm.</p> | <p>F. In the Footsteps of the Guru
1968
Water colour on paper
2.5 x 3.5 in. / 6.3 x 8.9 cm.</p> |
| <p>B. Temptation
1972
Water colour on paper
2.2 x 3.5 in. / 5.6 x 8.9 cm.</p> | <p>G. Huge Cloudy Symbols of High Romance
1972
Water colour on paper
2.2 x 3.5 in. / 5.6 x 8.9 cm.</p> |
| <p>C. The Ruined Temple
Water colour on paper
2.2 x 3.5 in. / 5.6 x 8.9 cm.</p> | <p>H. Trailing Clouds of Glory
1970
Water colour on paper
2.2 x 3.7 in. / 5.6 x 9.4 cm.</p> |
| <p>D. He Cometh Not
1969
Water colour on paper
2.5 x 3.5 in. / 6.3 x 8.9 cm.</p> | <p>I. Verge of Dawn
1968
Water colour on paper
2.2 x 3.5 in. / 5.6 x 8.9 cm.</p> |
| <p>E. The Enchanted Pool
1972
Water colour on paper
2.5 x 3.5 in. / 6.3 x 8.9 cm.</p> | <p>J. Hills of Jade
1970
Water colour on paper
2.2 x 3.5 in. / 5.6 x 8.9 cm.</p> |

Provenance

(A - I) Acquired from Bireswar Sen Family Trust
Anant Art Gallery, New Delhi, 2010

(J) Private Collection, New Delhi 2011



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