



# Iconic

MASTERPIECES OF INDIAN MODERN ART

EDITION 03



DAG



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From 1797, when British artist Thomas Daniell painted his masterly landscape of Mahabalipuram, to 2003, the year Rameshwar Broota's painting pitching man against metal resulted in a powerful image, the Indian art world has seen a succession of artists and movements that have enriched its vocabulary in more ways than one. Disruptions caused by the arrival of European artists resulted in native hybrid styles such as the elegant Company School and the evocative Early Bengal School, powered resistance that was experienced through the stylisation of the Bengal School, echoed the emergence of naturalism in the Bombay School, and the great leap to modernism as conceptualised by the Progressives and later modernists.

Covering over two centuries of art practice in the subcontinent, this exhibition reveals the extent of that journey through works of art that represent the most notable achievements of these key movements and artistic interventions. From the talented Sita Ram representing the pinnacle of the Company School to the genius of Raja Ravi Varma, from the excellence of a portrait executed by an artist from the Studio of Bourne and Shepherd to Western orientalists, from the delicacy of watercolour washes to the mystical vocabulary of abstract art rooted in Indian soil, from the creation of an 'Indian' art to its extensions that broke all rules while keeping the grammar intact, this is a joyous celebration of the diversity of Indian art across two centuries of change, amalgamation, and experimentation.

As in previous editions, 'Iconic Masterpieces' allows viewers to experience the pinnacles of Indian art through its lens of quality, historicity, and rarity—to which the element of surprise adds an unexpected piquancy. An 'Iconic' exhibition from DAG is like a museum tour where the best Indian art can be enjoyed through a lively and perceptive curatorial eye that acknowledges and helps extend our knowledge of it. As you view these works of art, we hope they evoke in you the same visceral sense of the periods and milieus of history, and of the consequent choice of subjects and mediums, as experienced and reflected by the artists at the time of their making.

# –Thomas Daniell–



Thomas Daniell, along with his nephew, William Daniell, arrived in India in 1786 and spent the next eight years travelling throughout the country, and then creating some of the earliest and well-known views of India. This oil painting by Thomas Daniell was the first view of Mahabalipuram to be publicly exhibited in Britain at the Royal Academy in 1797, and then reproduced two years later as an aquatint in Volume V in their famous series, *Oriental Scenery*. Depicting the bas-relief known as ‘Descent of Ganga’, and/or ‘Arjuna’s Penance’, on the cliff face at Mahabalipuram, it also shows details of the surrounding landscape such as the Pancha Pandava Mandapa and the Perumal Temple.

THOMAS DANIELL  
(1749-1840)

*Hindoo Antiquities at Mahavalipuram, E. Indies*

Oil on canvas, 1797

48.0 x 72.0 in. / 121.9 x 182.9 cm.

Verso: Inscription and artist’s name in English  
‘A View [sic.] of the Subteraneous [sic.] Temple  
at Mauveleporam [sic.] / T. Daniell’; sticker of  
Christie’s and tag of Christie’s with inscription in  
English ‘THOMAS OR WILLIAM DANIELL’  
Registered work (non-exportable)

## EXHIBITION

Royal Academy Exhibition, London, 1797

## LITERATURE

Maurice Shellim, *India and the Daniells: Oil Paintings of India and the East by Thomas Daniell RA, 1749-1840, and William Daniell RA, 1769-1837* (London: Inschape & Co Limited with Spink & Son LTD, 1979), ill. p. 50  
Mildred Archer, *Early Views of India: The Picturesque Journeys of Thomas and William Daniell, 1786-1794* (London: Thames & Hudson, 1980), ill. pp. 182-83

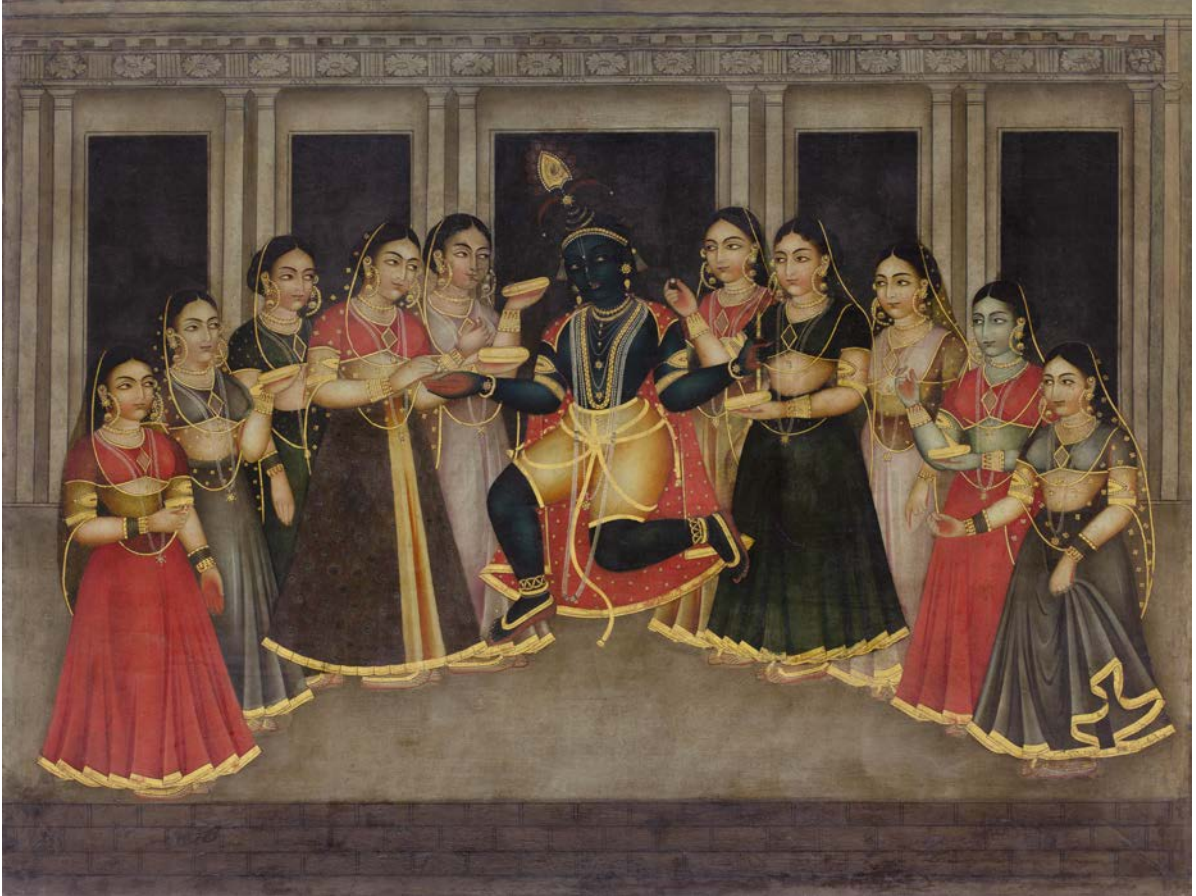
# — Sita Ram —



Not much is known about the artist Sita Ram. Hailing from Bengal, he seems to have been trained in the late Mughal school at Murshidabad. The first Marquess of Hastings, Francis Rawdon, who became the governor general of India in 1813, commissioned Sita Ram to accompany him and his family while they went on a long expedition, starting from Calcutta to the north of the country and then back. Sita Ram also travelled with Hastings on further travels in 1817 and 1821. During the journey, Sita Ram painted 229 watercolours, covered in ten albums, depicting buildings and landscapes that they passed on the way. Recently, evidence has come to light of Sita Ram working for other patrons, leading to the discovery of paintings such as this—a view of the forecourt of the Imambarra in Lucknow—thereby extending our knowledge of more paintings made by him.

SITA RAM  
(late 18th-early 19th centuries)  
*Roomee Durwaza and Entrance to the  
Emambarra at Lucknow*  
Watercolour on paper, c. 1815-25  
13.0 x 19.7 in. / 33.0 x 50.0 cm.  
Title in English (lower centre) 'Roomee Durwaza  
and Entrance to the Emambarra at Lucknow'  
Registered work (non-exportable)

# EARLY BENGAL SCHOOL — Unidentified Artist —



Early Bengal oils, which were primarily done by unnamed artists, cover religious and mythological themes, and began to emerge in Bengal in the late eighteenth-early nineteenth centuries. This example depicts Krishna, who is seen off the ground in an animated, playful posture, amidst the *gopis*, instantly grabbing the spectator's attention. The artist attempts to establish symmetry with the placement and position of the figures, further enhanced by the uniformly balanced and laid-out architectural backdrop in the picture. These architectural elements were common in aristocratic homes across Bengal from the late eighteenth century onwards. The figures with their posture and attire remind us of the miniature painting traditions of India. The use of gold pigment in this work attests to its creation for Calcutta's elite, which could be a Marwari business family as evident from the western Indian style of clothing of the subjects.

UNIDENTIFIED ARTIST  
(Early Bengal School)  
(19th century)  
*Krishna with Gopis*  
Oil highlighted with gold pigment on canvas,  
middle to late 19th century  
30.0 x 40.0 in. / 76.2 x 101.6 cm.  
Registered work (non-exportable)

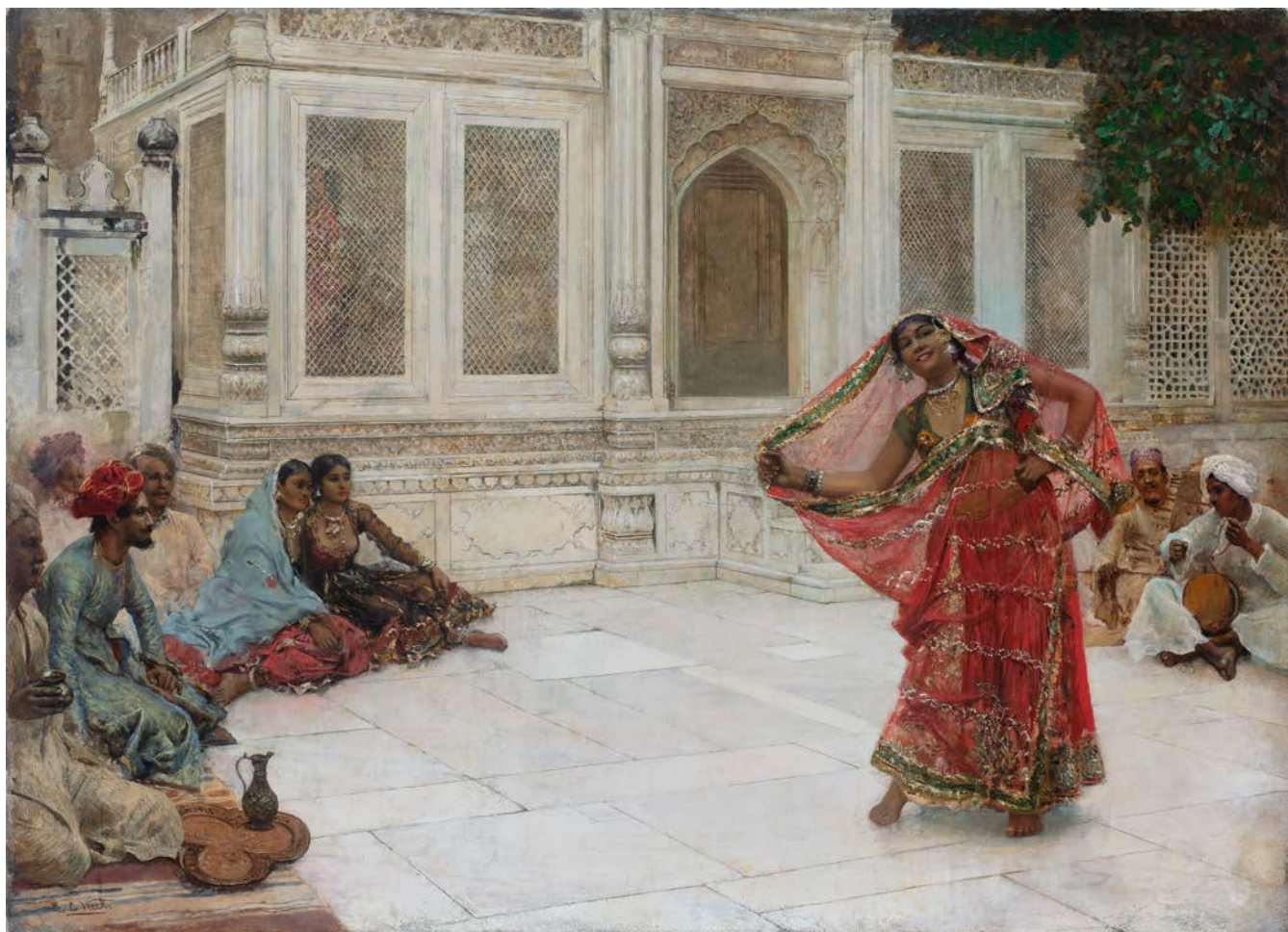
## EXHIBITION

'Manifestations VIII: 75 Artists | 20th Century Indian Art', DAG, New Delhi, 2012  
'Indian Divine: Gods and Goddesses in 19th and 20th Century Modern Art', DAG, New Delhi and Mumbai, 2014  
'Ghare Baire: The World, The Home and Beyond | 18th - 20th Century Art in Bengal', DAG, Old Currency Building, Kolkata, 2020-22  
'The Babu and the Bazaar: Art from 19th and Early 20th Century-Bengal', DAG, New Delhi, 2023

## LITERATURE

Kishore Singh, ed., *Manifestations VIII: 75 Artists | 20th Century Indian Art* (New Delhi: DAG, 2012) pp. 82-83, ill. p. 83  
Kishore Singh, ed., *Indian Divine: Gods and Goddesses in 19th and 20th Century Modern Art* (New Delhi: DAG, 2014), pp. 178-79, ill. p. 179  
Kishore Singh, ed., *Ghare Baire: The Home, The World and Beyond | 18th - 20th Century Art in Bengal* (New Delhi: DAG, 2020), ill. p. 75  
Aditi Nath Sarkar and Shatadeep Maitra, *The Babu and the Bazaar: Art from 19th and Early 20th-Century Bengal* (New Delhi: DAG, 2022), ill. pp. 198-99

## — Edwin Lord Weeks —



The first American orientalist to travel to India, Edwin Lord Weeks made detailed observations in his book about an invitation he received from the Maharaja of Benaras to watch a *nautch* dance show. *Nautch* dances fascinated Western travellers to India, and Weeks has made at least two paintings on this theme, this work being one of them. *The Dance*, which he has painted against the backdrop of the tomb of Mohammad Shah Rangeela in Delhi, depicts a woman dressed in a red and green *ghagra-choli*, ornate jewellery and a *bindi*, dancing gracefully. Two people, part of the music group, can be seen behind her, while men and women enjoy the performance. The white marble flooring and the background exude a sense of balance and harmony. The architectural details have been beautifully delineated by the artist.

EDWIN LORD WEEKS

(1849-1903)

*The Dance*

Oil on canvas

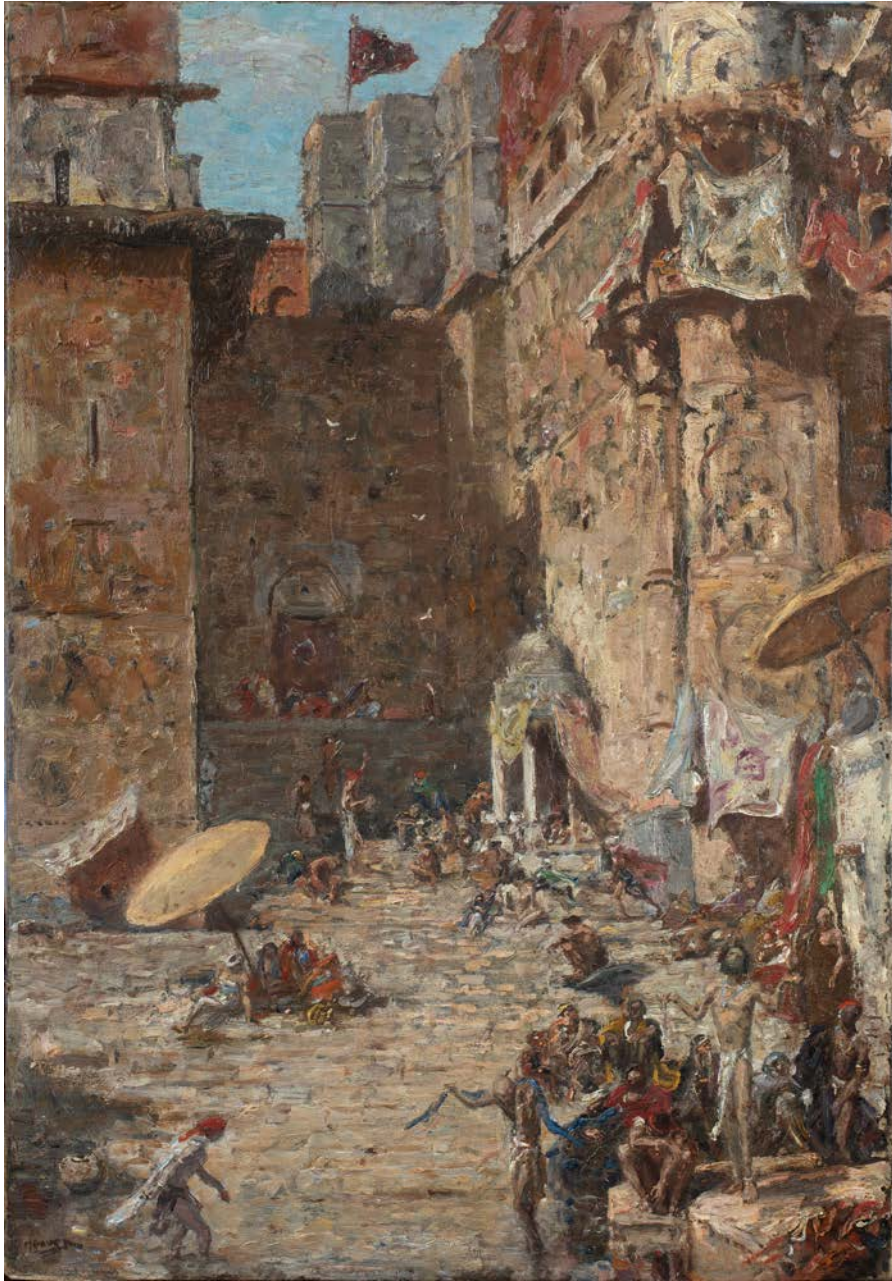
29.0 x 39.5 in. / 73.7 x 100.3 cm.

Signed in English (lower left) 'E. L. Weeks'

Verso: Four labels with artist's name, inscription and indistinct title in English 'Edwin Lord Weeks / (1849-1903), / Dancing Gi...[indecipherable]

Registered work (non-exportable)

# —Marius Bauer—



The famed Dutch orientalist Marius Bauer travelled to India twice to paint. During these trips, he visited Benares, along with other cities in the north, filling his sketchbooks with drawings and notes, which served as the basis for later paintings. This work, *Benares*, was also completed later and appears to be a view of Rana Mahal Ghat, built in 1670 by Maharana Raj Singh of Mewar. Standing in the middle of the range of *ghats* in the city, Rana Mahal Ghat, despite later renovations, remains unchanged, especially the flight of steps that rises directly from the water to a shaded passage between two buildings. The figures that animate the scene include a group clustered under a straw umbrella on the steps; another around a *chhatri* that houses a *lingam*; an ascetic in a loincloth offering prayers; and an old man wrapping a blue cloth around his shoulders as he emerges from his ablutions.

MARIUS BAUER  
(1867-1932)

*Benares*

Oil on canvas, c. 1911-12

24.0 x 16.5 in. / 61.0 x 41.9 cm.

Signed in Dutch (lower left) 'M BAUER'

Verso: Label of Stedelijk Museum with artist's name, title and inscription in Dutch 'kunstenaar:

M. A. J. Bauer / titel: Benares / eigenaar:

Mur: Schellms V Wyck / expositie: EINDH -VERZ:  
van 5/11 tot 12/12';

label of E. J. Van Wisselingh & Co. with inscription, artist's name and title in French 'No. 1318 X / ARTIST M. A. J. BAUER / TITEL BENARES'

Registered work (non-exportable)

# — Allah Bux —



Known by the sobriquet 'Krishna Painter', Allah Bux was commissioned by royal families and the wealthy elite to paint scenes from Hindu mythology in the naturalistic tradition of European art. This scene in soft pastel tones depicts Krishna amidst the *gopis* of Brindavan that breaks away from traditional iconography. The painting formed part of the collection of the kingdom of Bansda in western India, a time when the artist was associated with the court of Baroda, where he undertook commissions in the late 1920s.

ALLAH BUX  
(1892/95-1972)  
*Untitled (Krishna with Gopis)*  
Oil on canvas, c. late 1920s  
21.7 x 29.7 in. / 55.1 x 75.4 cm.



STUDIO OF  
— Bourne & Shepherd —



The legendary Studio of Bourne and Shepherd in Calcutta had a hoary history spanning over a century-and-a-half. During much of its early years, it became known for its studio portraits of *maharajas* and *nawabs*, many of which were hand-tinted by artists to render in colour. Over time, it hired artists who could paint portraits based on these photographs, of which this is an excellent example. The Nawab of Malerkotla, the only Muslim ruler in Punjab, is depicted here in his stunning jewels and silk tunic in the interior of a palatial setting that exudes the romanticism associated with an Eastern potentate.

Studio of  
BOURNE & SHEPHERD  
(1840-2016)  
*Nawab Mohammad Ali Khan Bahadur*  
*(1881-1947) of Malerkotla, Punjab*  
Oil on canvas, 1930s  
96.0 x 54.5 in. / 243.8 x 138.4 cm.  
Inscribed in English (lower left)  
'Bourne & Shepherd.'

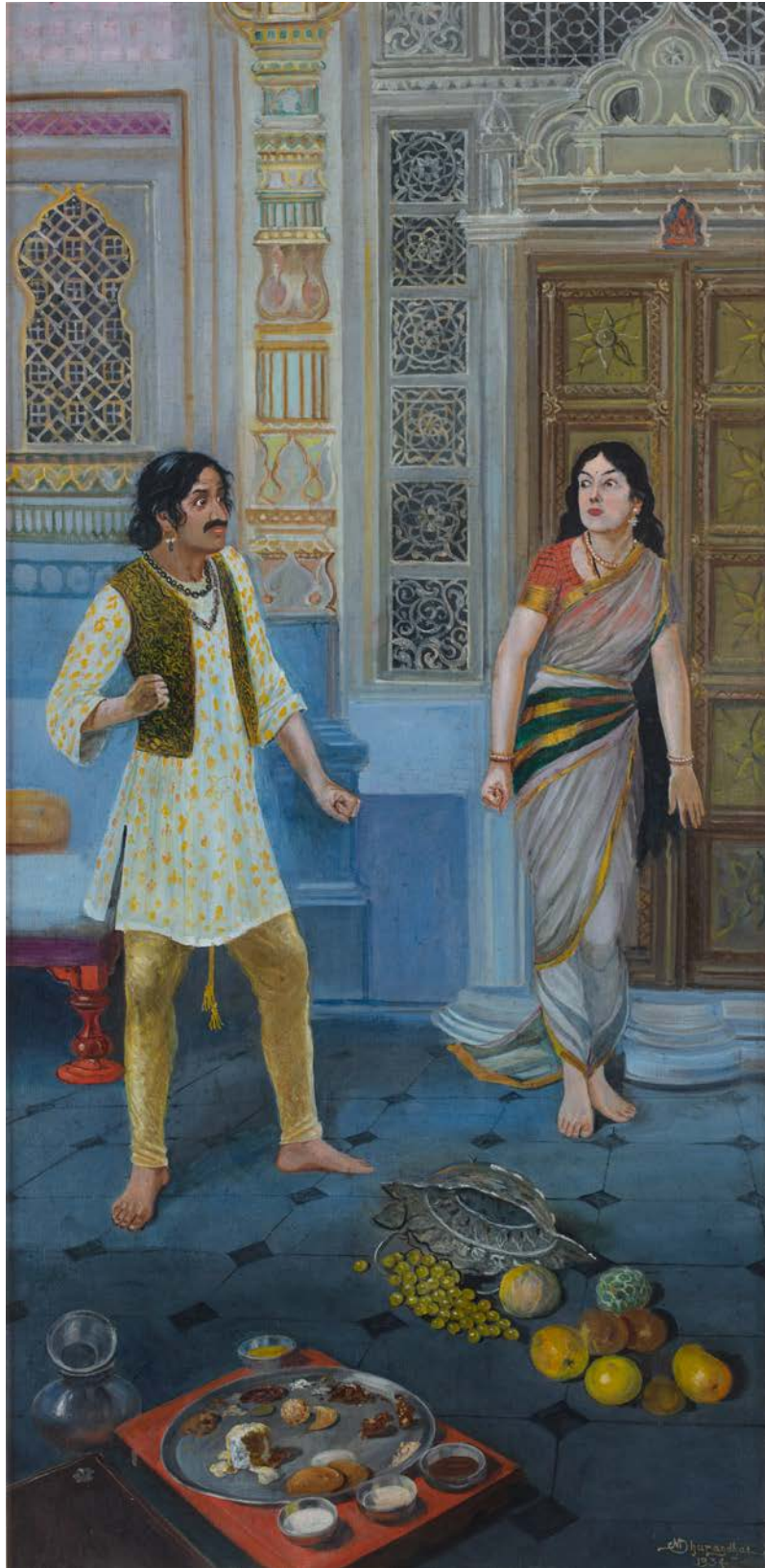
EXHIBITED

'Portrait of Our People', a museum-exhibition at Drishyakala, Red Fort, Delhi, organised by DAG in collaboration with the Archaeological Survey of India, 2019-22

LITERATURE

Sharada Dwivedi, *The Maharaja & the Princely States of India* (New Delhi: Lustre Press, 2007), ill. p. 119

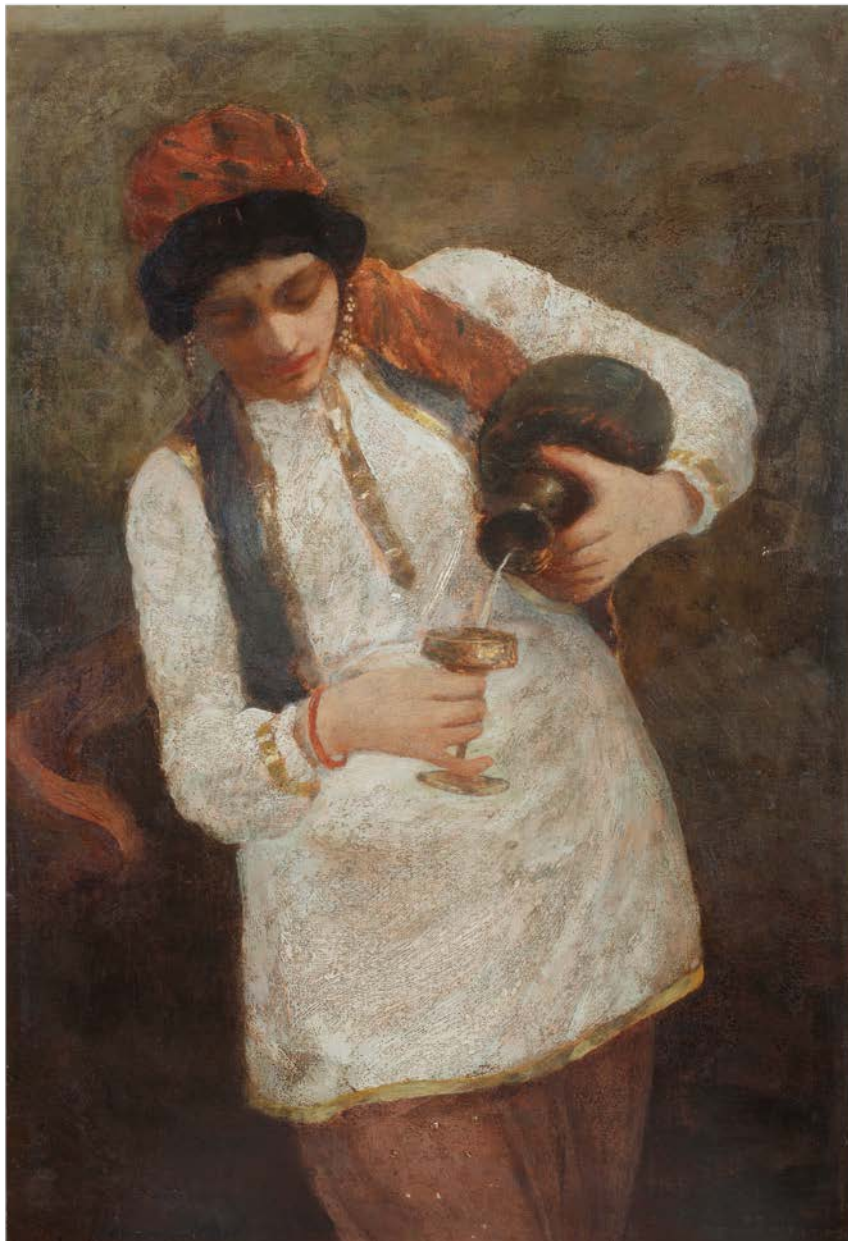
## — M. V. Dhurandhar —



One of India's most-awarded artists whose association with Sir J.J. School of Art in Bombay as both alumnus and faculty inspired and influenced generations of artists, M. V. Dhurandhar famously followed in the footsteps of Raja Ravi Varma as a portraitist and history painter. Where he differed from his senior peer was in his representation of the Pathare Prabhu community by way of clothes, jewellery and architecture in setting his mythological scenes. In this dramatic anecdote from the Mahabharata, Draupadi, in her disguise as Sairandhri, confronts the amorous Keechaka, a scene painted earlier by Ravi Varma.

M. V. DHURANDHAR  
(1867-1944)  
*Untitled (Keechaka and Sairandhri)*  
Oil on canvas, 1934  
64.0 x 32.0 in. / 162.6 x 81.3 cm.  
Signed in English and dated (lower right)  
'M Dhurandhar / 1934'

# — Hemendranath Mazumdar —



Hemendranath Mazumdar excelled in the academic style and acquired popularity for his sensuous depictions of women. In a departure from that theme, his *Saaqi*—a barmaid in a tavern who was represented, in fantasy, as a companion or a courtesan in *The Rubaiyat of Omar Khayam*—is shown here in clothes that conceal her sexuality. The *Rubaiyat*, translated into English by Edward Fitzgerald, was further translated into Bengali, and its couplets clearly inspired Mazumdar. In the painting, the *saaqi* is depicted pouring wine into a goblet for a person whose presence is indicated without being included in the composition.

HEMENDRANATH MAZUMDAR  
(1894-1948)  
*Saaqi*  
Oil on board, 1930s  
19.5 x 13.5 in. / 49.5 x 34.3 cm.  
Signed indistinctly in English (lower left)  
'H Mazumd(ar)'

#### EXHIBITED

'Manifestations II: Indian Art in the 20th Century', Jehangir Art Gallery, Mumbai, 2004; DAG, New Delhi, 2004.

#### LITERATURE



Bengali monthly journal *Basumati* published by Jaminimohan Kar, Calcutta, March 1944, ill. p. 427  
Roobina Karode, ed., *Manifestations II: Indian Art in the 20th Century* (New Delhi: DAG, 2004), pp. 150-51, ill. p. 151

## – M. A. R. Chughtai –



Lahore-based M. A. R. Chughtai trained under Samarendranath Gupta, a student of Abanindranath Tagore, later studying under the master, too, in Calcutta. However, his stylised watercolour paintings and washes differed from the Bengal School in their larger size. Chughtai's paintings have an almost fragile delicacy and a soft patina that combine the sacred with the sensual. Here, a worshipper whose identity remains hidden from the viewer, can be seen at an altar marked by a lamp from which smoke rises up sensuously. The presence of a snake may be merely incidental or a marker of Shiva's presence.

M. A. R. CHUGHTAI  
(1897-1975)

*Worship*

Watercolour wash highlighted with  
gold pigment on paper, c. 1940  
21.7 x 15.2 in. / 55.1 x 38.6 cm.

# – Nandalal Bose –



Nandalal Bose was based in Santiniketan by the time this preparatory drawing was made, complete with markings for colours to be used in the finalised painting. One of the greatest exponents of the Bengal School, which he renounced in favour of the expressionistic style in his later career, he was often called on to make paintings with mythological themes, including Durga—here represented as the fighting goddess with ten hands that hold weapons. The dramatic drawing is distinct in spirit and style from his early historical and mythological paintings that foregrounded fortitude rather than retribution, the latter giving it nationalist legitimacy.

NANDALAL BOSE  
(1882-1966)  
*Untitled (Preparatory Drawing of  
Mahishasuramardini)*  
Graphite and gouache on paper, c. 1944  
46.7 x 30.5 in. / 118.6 x 77.5 cm.  
National Art Treasure (non-exportable work)

#### EXHIBITED

'The Art of Santiniketan', DAG, New Delhi 2015; Mumbai, 2016  
'Ghare Baire: The World, the Home and Beyond, 18th-20th Century Art from Bengal', DAG in collaboration with  
Archaeological Survey of India, Old Currency Building, Kolkata, 2020-22

#### LITERATURE

Kishore Singh, ed., *The Art of Santiniketan* (New Delhi: DAG, 2020), ill. p. 129  
Kishore Singh, ed., *Ghare Baire: The World, the Home and Beyond, 18th-20th Century Art in Bengal* (New Delhi: DAG,  
2020), ill. p. 125

# —Jamini Roy—



One of India's most-loved artists, Jamini Roy is primarily known for forging a unique aesthetic for modern Indian art by bringing together elements of traditional Bengali folk art and Kalighat *patachitras*. He also often experimented with several other styles, as attested by the work in consideration. This *Untitled* work resembles the Tibetan Buddhist art and iconography of a *thangka* or hanging scroll. The central figure in this work corresponds with a *dralha*, a fierce protector deity depicted as a warrior on horseback. Pictorially, the work conforms to the conventions associated with the Tibetan tradition in a style not usually associated with Jamini Roy.

JAMINI ROY  
(1887-1972)

*Untitled (Dralha)*

Natural pigment on cloth

46.0 x 28.2 in. / 116.8 x 71.6 cm.

Signed in Bengali (lower centre) 'Jamini Roy'  
National Art Treasure (non-exportable work)

## – Laxman Pai –



The decade of the 1950s was important in the career of Laxman Pai, since it was during this time that he started to evolve and formalise his unique visual art vocabulary. This painting, *Nude*, depicting a standing female figure against a semi-abstract background, displays several distinctive stylistic elements that he came to be known for. The flattened, two-dimensional space in this work is animated by the fluid interaction of line and colour. The nude figure, whose face is shown in profile, is created in daubs and smears of paint; the body's orientation evokes both Egyptian art and Jain miniatures. This work was created in London in 1959, while Pai was on his way back to Paris from a trip to Bombay.

LAXMAN PAI  
(1926-2021)  
*Nude*  
Oil on isorel, 1959  
48.0 x 26.3 in. / 122.0 x 67.0 cm.  
Signed (lower right) in Hindi 'Laxman Pai' and  
signed, inscribed and dated in English  
'Laxman Pai / London / 1/1/59'

# —J. Swaminathan—



Known for establishing the multi-arts complex Bharat Bhavan in Bhopal, and for foregrounding tribal art on the Indian art horizon, J. Swaminathan took up the arts professionally only much later in life, despite an early aptitude towards drawing and painting. His use of the triangle, square and circle, the staples of the visual representation of the philosophy of *tantra*, suggested to viewers that his early works were derived from the fundamentals of tantric art, but what appealed to him as sources were the pictorial directness and pithy idiom of folk and tribal art or ritual graffiti on village walls. In this *Untitled* work, we find similar geometrical patterns and intriguing symbols, a remarkable visual order in a vivid colour palette that allows us to enjoy the textured surface revealing subtle chromatic balance.

J. SWAMINATHAN  
(1928-94)  
*Untitled*  
Oil on canvas, c. 1960  
24.0 x 36.0 in. / 61.0 x 91.4 cm.

#### EXHIBITED

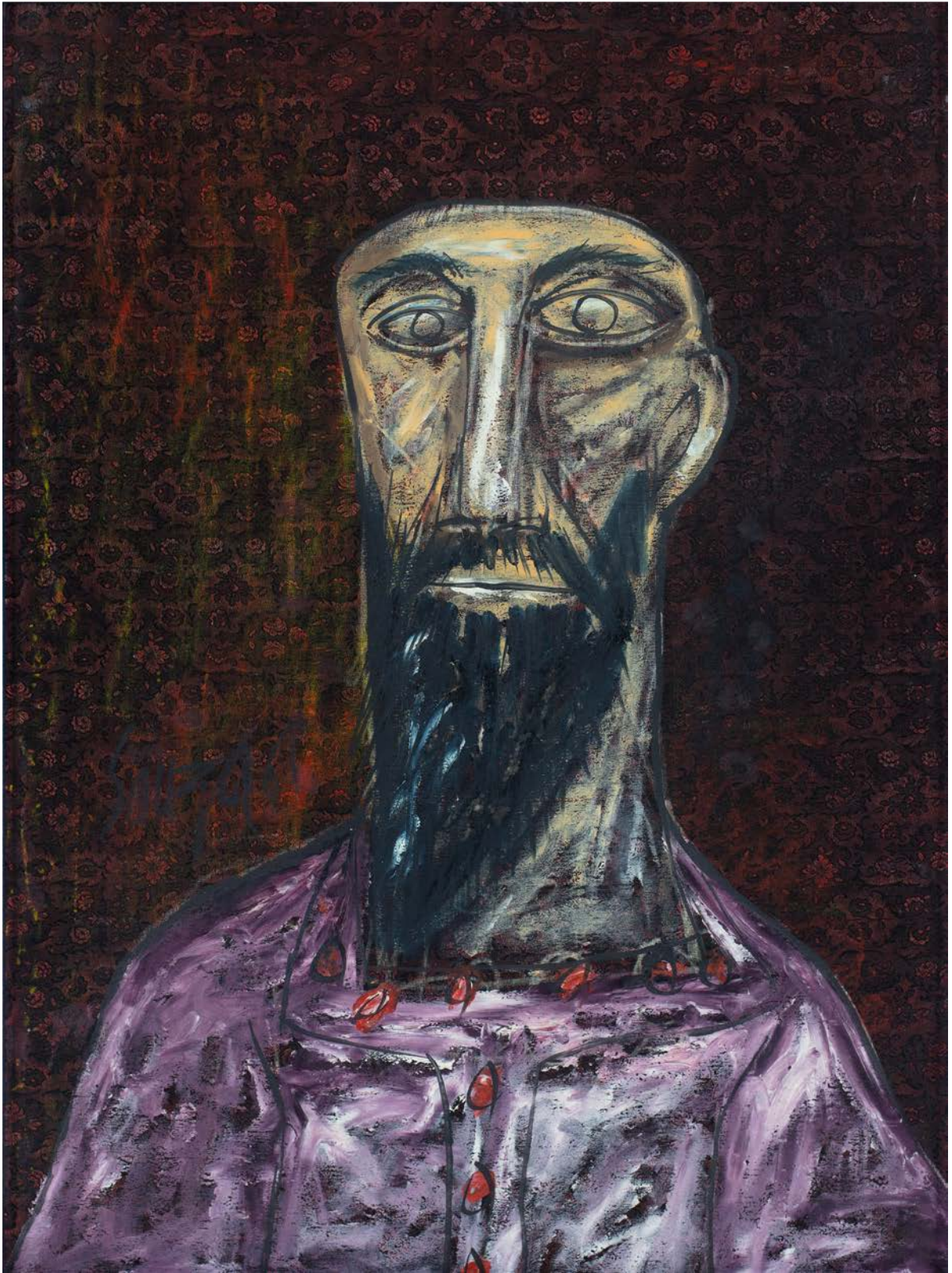
'Group 1890: India's Indigenous Modernism', DAG, New Delhi, 2016; Mumbai, 2016-17; New York, 2017  
'Tantra on the Edge: Inspirations and Experiments in Twentieth Century Indian Art', DAG, New Delhi and Mumbai, 2022

#### LITERATURE

Kishore Singh, ed., *Group 1890: India's Indigenous Modernism* (New Delhi: DAG, 2016), ill. p. 207  
Kishore Singh, ed., *J. Swaminathan | Masterpieces of Indian Modern Art* (New Delhi: DAG, 2019), ill. p. 36  
Madhu Khanna, *Tantra on the Edge: Inspirations and Experiments in Twentieth Century Indian Art* (New Delhi: DAG, 2022), ill. pp. 190-91



— F. N. Souza —



F. N. Souza, the iconoclast, produced several works on Christian themes that were mostly a sharp critique of figures of authority, especially the clergy. From the mid-1950s, Souza started drawing and painting a series of heads, mostly with contorted facial features to produce grotesque visages. This painting, *Head of a Man*, rendered in 1961, veers away from Souza's more radical gestures and depicts a man with an elongated face, a high forehead, and bulbous eyes. Following a visit to Rome in 1960, he painted a series of works based on his Italian trip that were exhibited in London, and this portrait seems to hint at a senior church official in his formal vestments.

F. N. SOUZA  
(1924-2002)  
*Head of a Man*  
Oil on fabric, 1961  
31.0 x 23.0 in. / 78.7 x 58.4 cm.  
Signed in English and dated (centre left)  
'Souza / 61'  
Verso: Artist's name in English and date  
'F. N. SOUZA / 1961'

# –J. Sultan Ali–



Best known as a ‘folk-modernist’, J. Sultan Ali came to be known for his visually powerful wielding of totemic animal forms and his acumen as a colourist. During the 1960s, the search for an authentic ‘Indian’ modernist expression led the artist to create works related to the ‘rural’. This 1962 oil painting, *Cage Birds*, features a woman and a man, rendered large against a backdrop of a few trees and carrying upon their heads two bird cages, each with small, captive, native birds. Likely to be from the nomadic Lambadi community in rural Andhra Pradesh, the itinerant community made its living doing odd rural jobs; the couple here captures and sells birds and are perhaps on their way to the nearest small town or big city to sell the birds as pets.

J. SULTAN ALI  
(1920-90)  
*Cage Birds*  
Oil on canvas, 1962  
30.0 x 24.0 in. / 76.2 x 61.0 cm.  
Signed in Hindi and English and dated (lower left)  
‘Ali / Sultan Ali / 1962’  
Verso: Inscription, title, and artist’s name in  
English ‘F/2 7/79 24” x 291/2” / Cage BIRDS /  
J. SULTAN ALI’; two stickers of Christie’s  
on stretcher

#### EXHIBITED

‘Madras Modern: Regionalism and Identity’, DAG, Mumbai, 2019  
‘Primitivism and Modern Indian Art’, DAG, Mumbai, 2019-20; New York, 2020-21

#### LITERATURE

Ashrafi Bhagat, *Madras Modern: Regionalism and Identity* (New Delhi: DAG, 2019), ill. p. 225  
Giles Tilottson, *Primitivism and Modern Indian Art* (New Delhi: DAG, 2019), p. 250-51, ill. p. 251; Edition 2 (2021),  
ill. p. 180

# – Rabin Mondal –



During the 1960s, Rabin Mondal seems to have been in the quest for a liberating modernist language. This oil on canvas painting titled *Brothel II*, from 1962, can be viewed in the context of the artist's later emergence as a painter of bold, forthright, and often brutal expressions. This work was preceded by another similar work, titled *Brothel I*, which was also painted in the same year. Both these works may be considered among the most important cubist-based paintings from mid-twentieth century India that address the stifling confinement of enslaved women in Rabin Mondal's inspired, individualistic, and powerful language. In terms of colour and figuration, *Brothel II* seems to be a relatively restrained image, suggesting a moment yet to explode, a lull before the storm.

RABIN MONDAL

(1929-2019)

*Brothel II*

Oil on canvas, 1962

33.0 x 43.0 in. / 83.8 x 109.2 cm.

Signed in English (upper right) 'Rabin'

Verso: Signed in English 'Rabin'; label with artist's name, title and inscription in English and date 'Rabin Mondal / Title: BROTHEL – II / Medium: OIL ON CANVAS / size: 110 x 84 cm / Year of Execution: 1962'; title, inscription, date, and artist's name in English on stretcher  
"BROTHEL-II" / OIL / (1962) / 110 x 84 cm / RABIN MONDAL'

## EXHIBITED

'Manifestations II: Indian Art in the 20th Century', DAG, New Delhi, 2004  
'After the Fall: Time, Life and Art of Rabin Mondal', DAG, New Delhi, 2005

## LITERATURE

Roobina Karode, *Manifestations II: Indian Art in the 20th Century* (New Delhi: DAG, 2004) pp.152-53, ill. p. 153  
Santo Datta, *After the Fall: Time, Life and Art of Rabin Mondal* (New Delhi: DAG, 2005), ill. pp. 85-86  
Kishore Singh, *Kingdom of Exile: A Rabin Mondal Retrospective* (New Delhi: DAG, 2014), ill. pp. 200-01

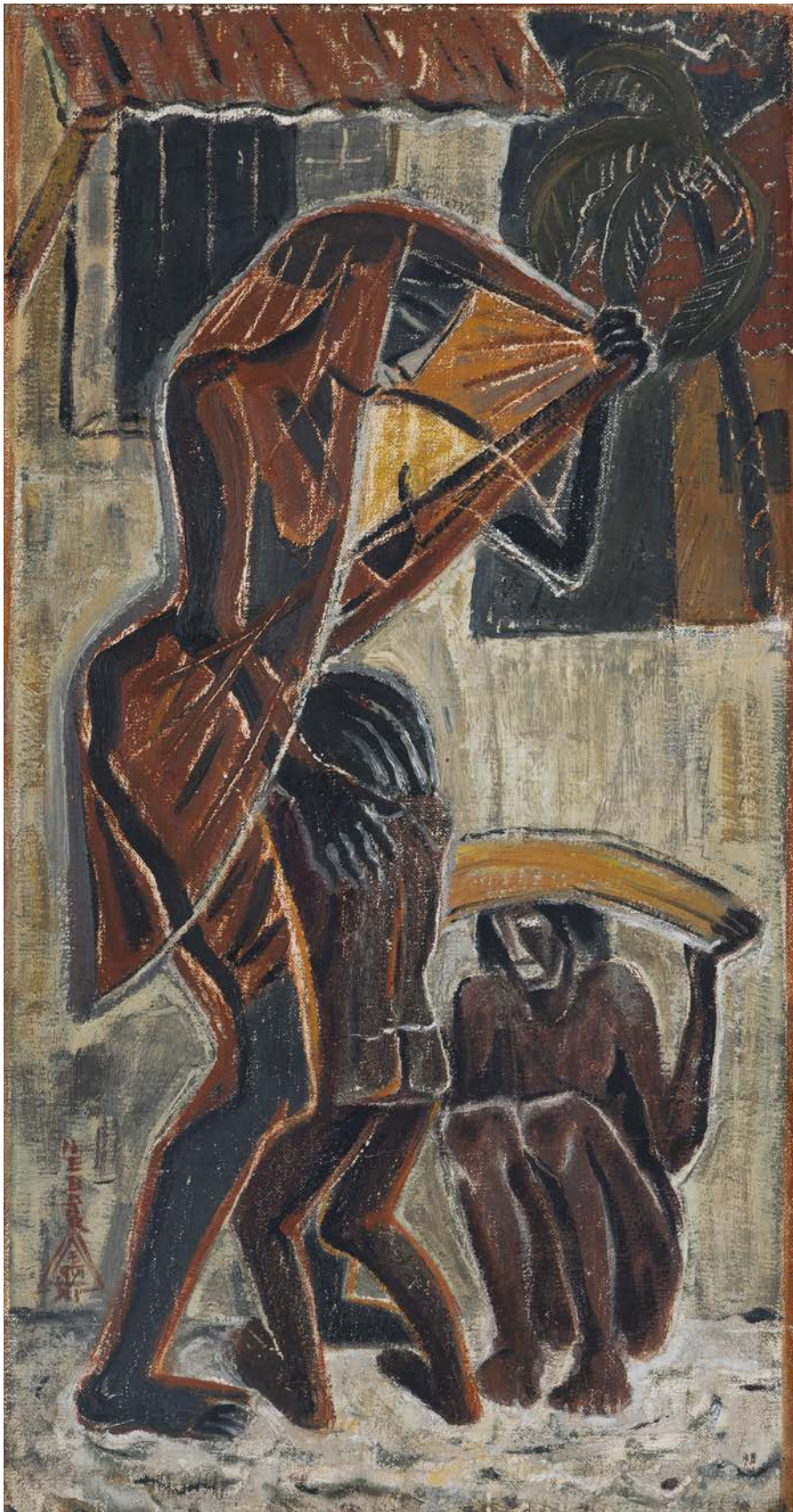
— S. H. Raza —



This *Untitled* work by S. H. Raza comes from a turning point in his legendary career. This was the year when he travelled to the U.S. to teach at the University of California, Berkeley was exposed to the full potency of the gestural paint methods of Jackson Pollock and Mark Rothko. Soon, his encaustic landscapes started getting replaced by gestural abstraction, as evident in this painting. The brilliant colours owe their origin to the artist's inspiration from Basohli miniatures and the desert landscape of Rajasthan.

S. H. RAZA  
(1922-2016)  
*Untitled*  
Oil on canvas, 1962  
25.5 x 32.0 in. / 64.8 x 81.3 cm.  
Signed in English and dated (lower centre)  
'RAZA / '62'

## – K. K. Hebbar –



A keen observer of life, K. K. Hebbar focussed on quotidian activities of people almost all through his painterly career. The artist often depicted the growing city of Bombay, the alienation of the individual, the struggle and social conditions of the working classes, and their humble living spaces. *Monsoon* depicts a mother and her two children caught unawares by the torrential rain and captured by the artist in the act of covering themselves from the downpour. The angular movements of the figures are aesthetically arranged against the architectural background of the locale, staged like a two-dimensional theatre set. A dynamic image, it shows the artist's concern for the underprivileged, despite his own privilege.

K. K. HEBBAR  
(1911-96)  
*Monsoon*  
Oil on canvas, 1964  
22.0 x 11.5 in. / 56.0 x 29.0 cm.  
Signed vertically in English and dated  
'Hebbar / 64'

# — Akbar Padamsee —



A pioneer of modernism in Indian art, Akbar Padamsee experimented with subjects and mediums all throughout his career. This *Untitled* painting from 1965 has all the marks of Padamsee's brilliance. A lean figure is at the centre of the image. Slightly hunched, with hollowed-out eyes, the figure may appear frail but also embodies the dead weight of a zombie. Richly textured, with assured strokes, the palette consists of burnt reds, dark and emerald greens, and black. Like many of Padamsee's oils, this work is also characterised by its vivid intensity and incandescence. This painting was likely made in Paris, where Padamsee was based till 1965. Later that year, he moved to New York on a year-long John D. Rockefeller III Fund grant.

AKBAR PADAMSEE  
(1928-2020)

*Untitled*

Oil on canvas, 1965

36.0 x 36.0 in. / 91.4 x 91.4 cm.

Signed in English and dated (upper left)

'PADAMSEE / 65'

Verso: Torn label of Pundole Art Gallery with  
inscription in English 'ARTIST / (T)ITLE /  
MEDIUM / 2948 / ... (indecipherable) / TOTAL'

## EXHIBITION

'India's Rockefeller Artists: An Indo-US Cultural Saga', DAG, New York, 2017; Mumbai, 2018  
'India's French Connection: Indian Artists in France', DAG, New Delhi, 2018

## LITERATURE

Kishore Singh, ed., *India's Rockefeller Artists: An Indo-US Cultural Saga* (New Delhi: DAG, 2017), ill. p. 141  
Kishore Singh, ed., *India's French Connection: Indian Artists in France* (New Delhi: DAG, 2018), ill. p. 204

# —Tyeb Mehta—



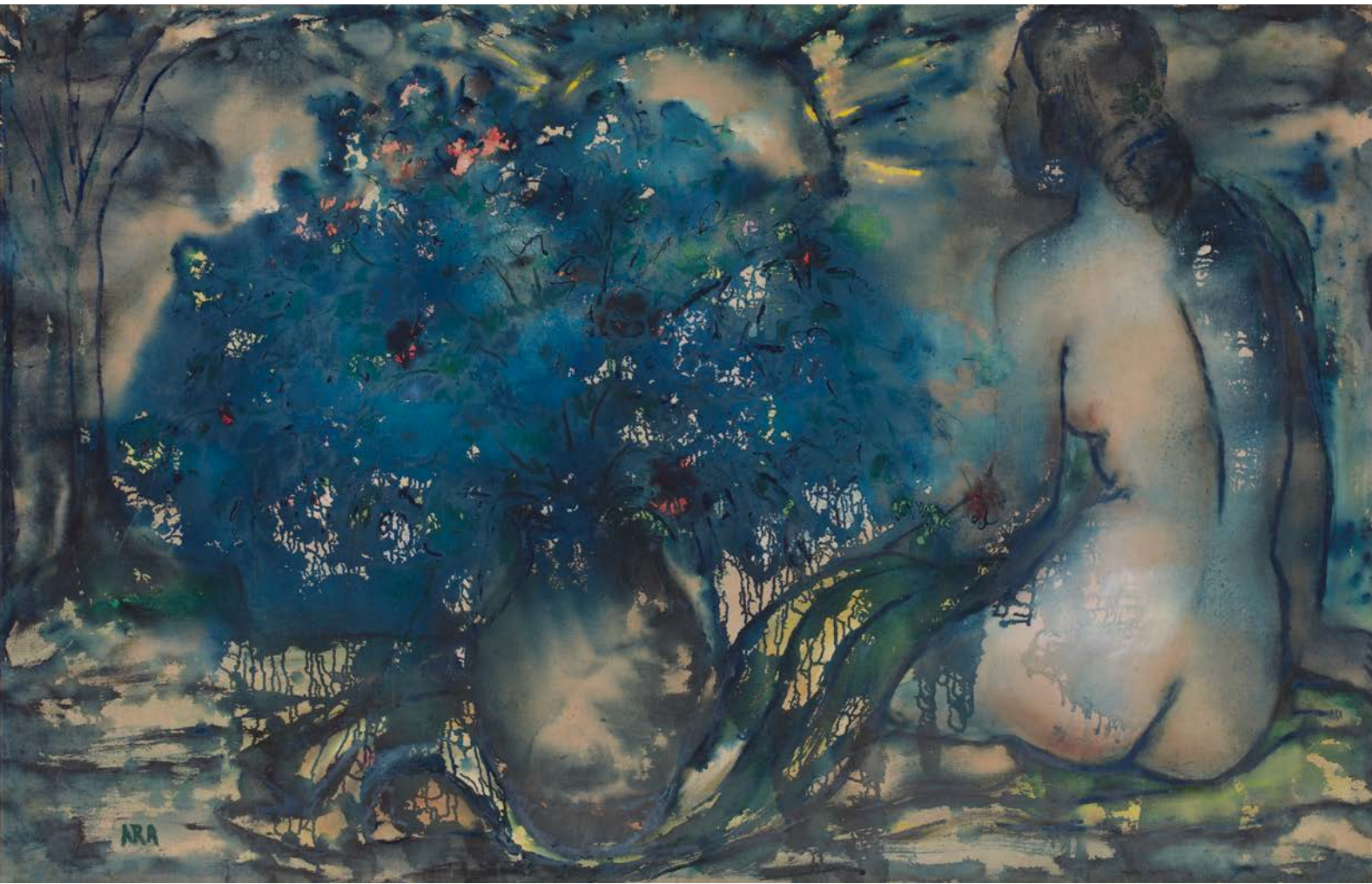
The late Sixties was a seminal period in the career of Tyeb Mehta, much like the early Sixties was for the career of his fellow Progressive, S. H. Raza. It is often referred to as a breakthrough in Mehta's career, when his first encounter with an original Barnett Newman work at the Museum of Modern Art in New York spurred him onto the path of creating distorted figures in flat planes of colours slashed by a diagonal. In that sense, this *Untitled* work featuring a huddle of anguished figures is iconic, coming from a threshold moment of his career, almost as a precursor to the focussed, slashed flat-plane figures of the following period.

TYEB MEHTA  
(1925-2009)  
*Untitled*  
Oil on canvas, 1966  
48.7 x 58.0 in. / 123.7 x 147.3 cm.

## LITERATURE

*Tyeb Mehta: Ideas, Images, Exchanges* (New Delhi; Vadehra Art Gallery, 2005), ill. p. 77

# — K. H. Ara —



K. H. Ara was an artist for whom every facet of life was immersed in the world of art—he painted without hesitation, his works appearing to flow effortlessly from his brush, whether nudes or still-lives. Ara painted both subjects over and over again but it was in their nuanced rendition that he excelled. In this particular work, he brought together the still-life and the nude, giving them equal importance but placed the vase centrally, making it the focal point of the work. Saturated with the colour blue, with only hints of other colours, this large work on canvas—a departure from his usual watercolours on paper—is exceptional for a juxtaposition in which the vase and flowers loom larger than the figure, the disparate elements adding charm to the composition.

K. H. ARA  
(1914-85)

*Nude Lady with Flower Vase*

Oil and natural pigment on canvas

42.0 x 66.0 in. / 106.7 x 167.6 cm.

Signed in English (lower left and lower right)

'ARA'

#### EXHIBITED

'Masterpieces: 100 Years of Indian Art',  
DAG booth at India Art Fair, New Delhi, 2020  
'Ways of Seeing: Women Artists | Women as Muse',  
DAG, New Delhi, 2021

#### LITERATURE

Kishore Singh, ed., *Ways of Seeing: Women Artists | Women as Muse* (New Delhi: DAG, 2021), ill. p. 205



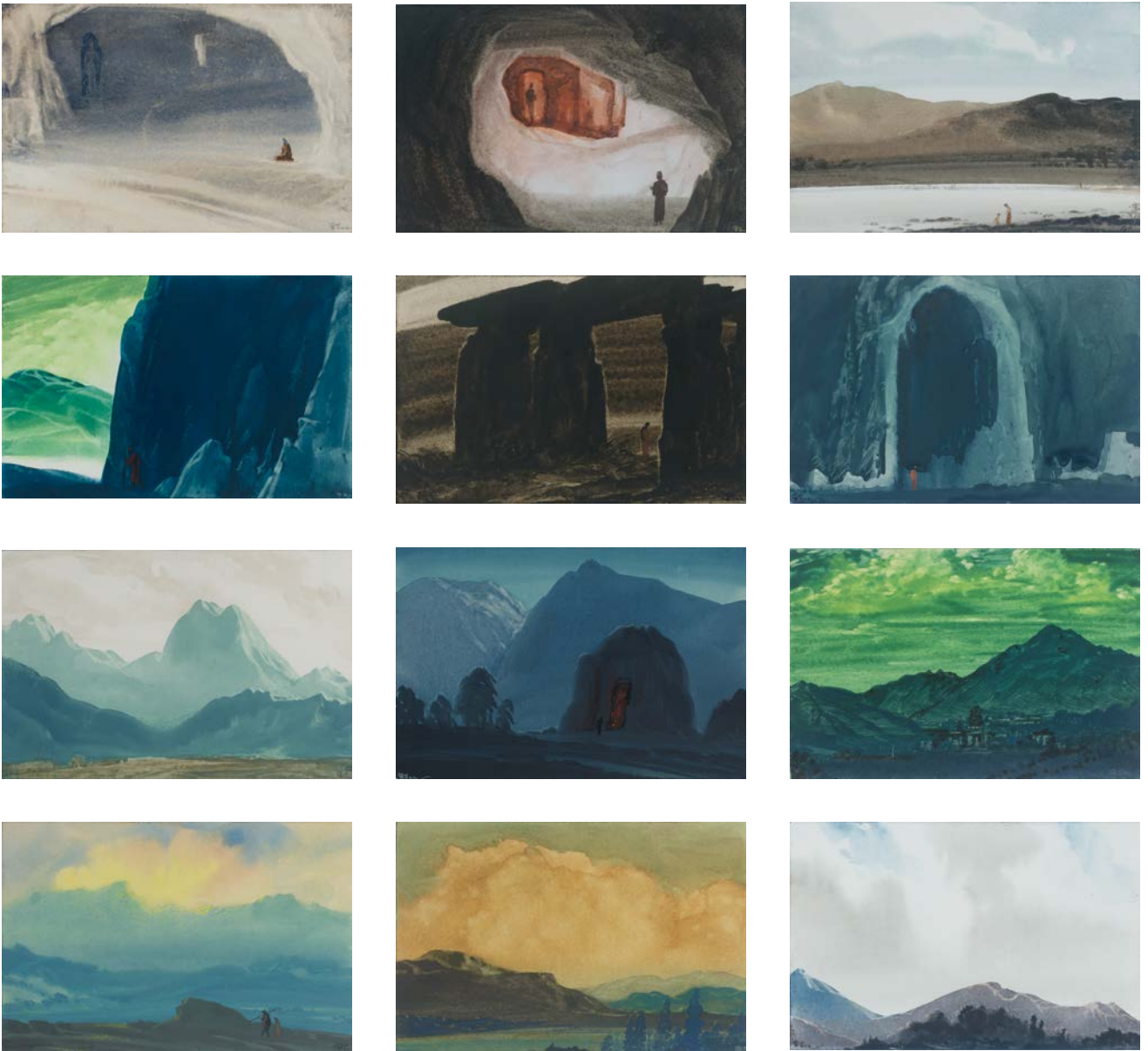
# – S. K. Bakre –



S. K. Bakre the sculptor was also a phenomenal painter. During his London decades, he made a number of paintings in the course of a multi-faceted career. In this large, abstract painting, the focus is the triangle, a geometrical entity that the artist was obsessed with in the 1960s and explored abundantly in both his sculptures and paintings. While the muse may have been the same, Bakre composed the two subjects differently, giving an insight into the wide range of his thought process. An abstract composition, the painting also has a sculptural quality, quite likely because of the forms and the manner in which they have been placed in layers, one upon the other.

S. K. BAKRE  
(1920-2007)  
*Untitled*  
Oil on Masonite board, 1960s  
48.0 x 48.0 in. / 121.9 x 121.9 cm.  
Verso: Inscription in English '(H)'

# – Bireswar Sen –



Bireswar Sen was, inarguably, the most astounding of modern Indian miniaturists. He created loftiness in his minuscule paintings by reducing the mighty Himalayas almost to scale. At the same time, he lifted the miniature format to a hitherto unthought of height by encapsulating the ethereal and sprawling landscape of the world's tallest mountains into its confines. Enamoured with watercolours since childhood, he drew inspiration from Abanindranath Tagore and Nandalal Bose but was most influenced by his meeting with Russian artist Nicholas Roerich, well-known for his Himalayan landscapes. The distillation of these stellar influences showed brilliantly in his miniatures such as the twelve works in this set.

BIRESWAR SEN  
(1897-1974)

A set of 12 watercolours  
Variously titled by the artist and signed  
Gouache on paper, the works are dated  
between 1965 and 1972  
2.2 × 3.5 in. / 5.6 × 8.9 cm.  
(with minor variations)

## – Nirode Mazumdar –



Trained in both Calcutta and Paris, Nirode Mazumdar is an extraordinary artist whose twentieth-century modernism is expressed through agitated brushstrokes to reflect his view of social conflicts and violence that impacted the lives of ordinary people. His language is immediately evident in the rendering of *Diabolical Dance*, an interpretation of the dance of Kali—whose dance of destruction, which ultimately leads to regeneration and rebirth—depicted through the ghoulish features and gory masks of its chief protagonists, with figures in the background resorting to violence in a composition teeming with chaos and confusion.

NIRODE MAZUMDAR  
(1916-82)  
*Diabolical Dance*  
Oil on hardboard, 1970-74  
47.0 x 34.7 in. / 119.4 x 88.1 cm.  
Signed in Bengali (centre right) 'Nirode'  
Verso: Artist's name, title and inscription in  
English on stretcher 'NIRODE MAZUMAR [sic.] /  
DIABOLICAL DANCE. / Rs. 2000/-'

# – Shanti Dave –



This large oil and encaustic painting won Shanti Dave the gold medal at the 1975 International Triennale in New Delhi, crowning a hugely successful career that saw him accepting commissions for murals and paintings in India and overseas. The constellation of slabs with an indecipherable script and a pattern of varied boulder-like shapes was typical of his highly encaustic work from this period. If it were ever possible to make a captivating, aesthetically brilliant work of art to represent a combined understanding of how history and geography inform each other, then it would be Shanti Dave who could accomplish this feat. What makes the work astounding is its brilliant colour harmony that presents a palimpsest of layers of history past and present.

SHANTI DAVE  
(b. 1931)  
*Sansar Dhawaj*  
Oil and encaustic on canvas, 1974  
118.5 x 67.0 in. / 301.0 x 170.2 cm.  
Signed in English and dated (lower left) 'Shanti  
Dave. / 74'

— G. R. Santosh —



That G. R. Santosh was the pioneer of neo-*tantra* in Indian modern art is a well-known fact. But the complex compositions of his *tantra* works are not so easily understood because his was not a simplistic rendition of this complex philosophy in an aesthetic presentation. After an epiphanic moment at the Amarnath cave in Kashmir in 1964, he immersed himself in the study and practice of Shaivite philosophy, and his paintings became expressions of meditative and intuitive reflections of mantric reverberations that he followed with a sense of discipline. The form symbolises a seated being in a meditative posture, experiencing the union of Shiva and Shakti, or Purush and Prakriti, the male and female principles. The colour purple represents the crown *chakra* or *sahasrara chakra* in Hath Yoga.

G. R. SANTOSH  
(1929-97)

*Untitled*

Oil on canvas, 1979

60.0 x 49.5 in. / 152.4 x 125.7 cm.

Verso: Signed in Hindi, dated and signed in English 'Santosh / 79 / SANTOSH'

# — Madhvi Parekh —



With the recent international success of Madhvi Parekh’s art—global fashion house Dior used artworks by the artist and her husband Manu Parekh as tapestries at its spring/summer 2022 showcase in Paris, followed by a further showing in Mumbai in 2023—its endearing quality has come to be studied through a serious academic lens, catapulting her to the top of current Indian modernists who have successfully forged an amalgam of indigenist and modernist vocabulary in their work. While the evident narrative of an idyllic, long-lost time in her native village of Sanjaya in Gujarat makes it charming, it is the successful expression of a primitivist vocabulary in controlled strokes and composition that establishes it emphatically as a part of Indian modernism.

MADHVI PAREKH

(b.1942)

*Happy in the Green Field*

Oil on canvas, 1982

40.0 x 66.0 in. / 101.6 x 167.6 cm.

Signed in Hindi and dated (lower right)

‘Madhvi Parekh / 82’

Verso: Artist’s name and title in English and date on stretcher ‘MADHVI PAREKH / ‘HAPPY IN THE GREEN FIELD’ / 1982’ and torn label of Dhoomimal Gallery with inscription and artist’s name in English on stretcher ‘CON NO. ... / PRICE ... / TAX ... / ARTIST NAME Madhvi Parekh / TITLE Oil / SIZE 40” X 66”’

EXHIBITED

DAG booth at Expo Chicago, Chicago, 2019

LITERATURE

Kishore Singh, ed., *Iconic Masterpieces of Indian Modern Art, Edition 2* (New Delhi: DAG, 2023), ill. p. 776

## – Satish Gujral –



In referring to his wood sculptures as 'bruntwood' sculptures, Satish Gujral was pointing not just to the brunt force of the organic material, a strength that can be moulded into softness, but also to the brutality he witnessed in the 1970s and '80s that informed these works. The textural quality of these relief works also exemplify the various phases of the medium's journey, quite akin to the way a human life shapes up through its highs and lows. Gujral started working on the series of scorched or burnt wood sculptures after 1975, following the imposition of Emergency in India. The earliest works in this series reflected the tension of the times, while the later ones, such as this *Untitled* one, started moving towards a more fluid harmony and stillness.

SATISH GUJRAL  
(1925-2020)

*Untitled*

Burnt wood and mixed media on plywood, 1988  
80.7 x 75.0 x 6.0 in. / 205.0 x 190.5 x 15.2 cm.  
Signed in Hindi and dated (lower left) 'Gujral / 88'

## – Bikash Bhattacharjee –



Like most modernists of twentieth-century India, Bikash Bhattacharjee, too, achieved success through blending the country's cultural and philosophical ethos with Western realistic perceptions. He excelled in the genre of realism, and his *Durga* is a realistic depiction of the immense power that a common Indian woman wields. She is the nourisher, a tireless worker, with the power to unleash her wrath, if required. In this captivating portrait, she clings to the body of a child whose limbs dangle limply as she hopes to provide it protection and succour.

BIKASH BHATTACHARJEE  
(1940-2006)  
*Durga*  
Oil on canvas, 1989  
68.0 x 47.7 in. / 172.7 x 121.2 cm.  
Signed in English and dated (lower right)  
'Bikash / '89'  
Verso: Titled in English and dated  
'DURGA / 1989' and inscription in English  
on stretcher 'ANAND AGARWAL'

### LITERATURE

Kishore Singh, ed., *Masterpiece XXXI: At A Social Gathering | Bikash Bhattacharjee* (New Delhi: DAG, 2018), ill. p. 17



— M. F. Husain —



It is not difficult to fathom why and how M. F. Husain became the most well-known of all Indian artists across generations. It was due to his unmistakable ability to present complex subjects through paintings that were simple and spoke straight to the viewer. *Bharat Bhagya Vidhata*, an ode to the dispenser of India's destiny, borrowed from the country's national anthem penned by the Nobel-laureate Rabindranath Tagore, and succinctly encapsulates the idea of India. Through familiar symbols and images, it creates a vision of a modern nation. The female figure—presumably Mother India—represents the country, while images such as that of Gandhi and the rocket connect its destiny with the past as well as its vibrant present.

M. F. HUSAIN  
(1913-2011)  
*Bharat Bhagya Vidhata*  
Acrylic on canvas, 1990  
78.0 x 69.0 in. / 198.1 x 175.3 cm.  
Signed in English (upper left) 'Husain'

# — Meera Mukherjee —



Meera Mukherjee's greatest ability was to be able to surprise viewers while creating works linking indigenist communities with modern practices. This large sculpture, which can be viewed from two diametrically opposite sides, comprises four parts that have been welded together, with the welding marks left deliberately visible to add texture, context and character to the work. *Balance* has two women balancing water pots on one side, while the other features a seated man with a pair of scales. This ethnographic work draws from the artist's vast experience of working with the tribal communities of central India at the prime of her career and is a tribute to their tradition of art and crafts practice that is millennia old.

MEERA MUKHERJEE

(1923-98)

*Balance*

Bronze, 1995

53.5 x 36.5 x 12.5 in. / 135.9 x 92.7 x 31.8 cm.

The sculpture can be viewed from two sides,  
both featuring independent works in relief

#### EXHIBITED

'Masterpieces of Indian Modern Art', DAG booth at India Art Fair, New Delhi, 2019

'Ghare Baire: The World, the Home and Beyond, 18th-20th Century Art in Bengal', DAG in collaboration with Archaeological Survey of India, Old Currency Building, Kolkata, 2020-22

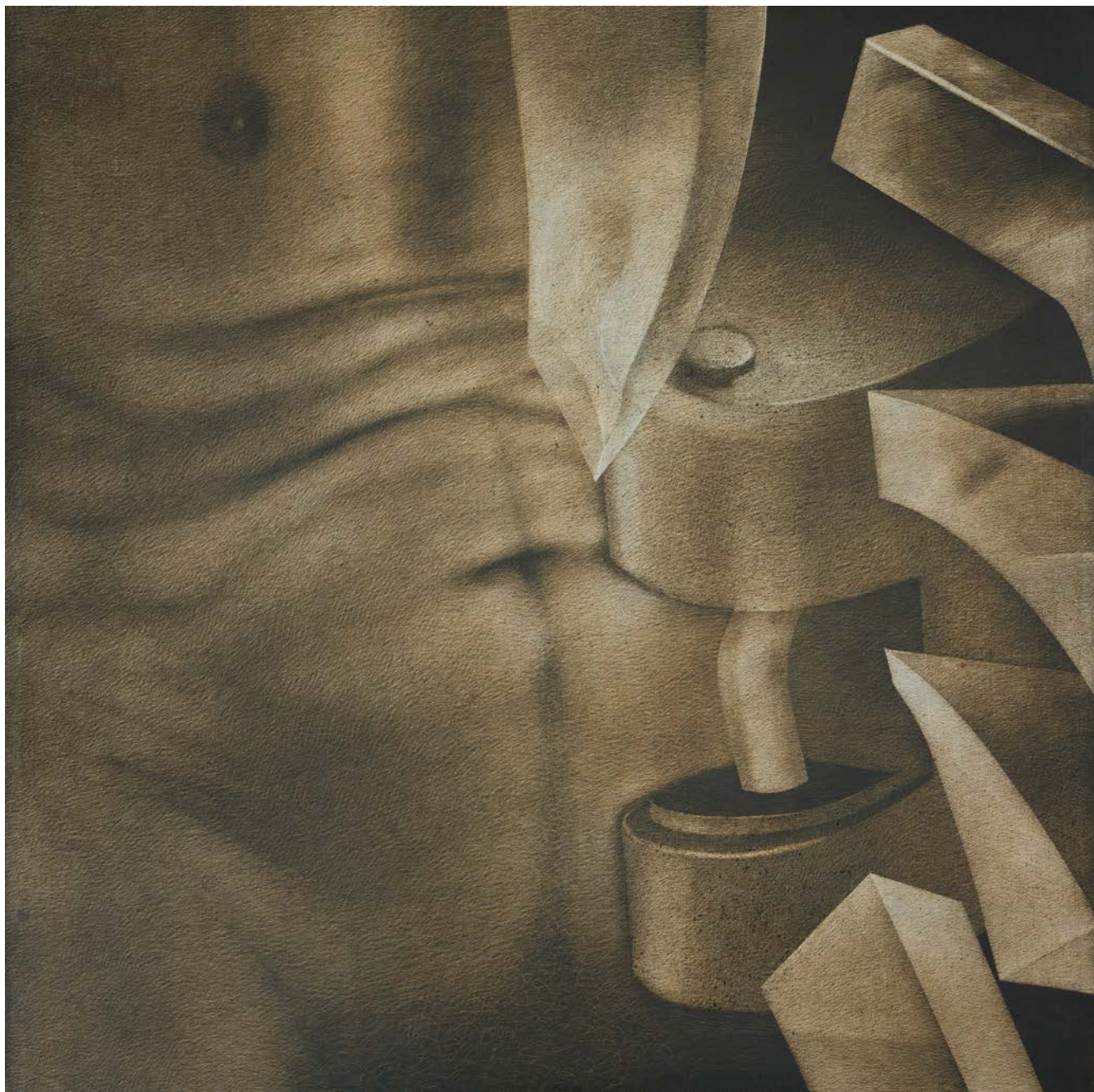
#### LITERATURE

Kishore Singh, ed., *Meera Mukherjee: Masterpieces of Indian Modern Art* (New Delhi: DAG, 2019), complete book, ill. cover, pp. 4, 7, 46

Kishore Singh, ed., *Ghare Baire: The World, the Home and Beyond, 18th-20th Century Art in Bengal* (New Delhi: DAG, 2020), ill. pp. 210-11

Uma Prakash, 'Meera Mukherjee: The Modern Sculptor Who Lent Elegance to the Tales of Ordinary People', *The Punch Magazine*, 29 April 2022

# – Rameshwar Broota –



With technological advancements, humans find themselves in a struggle with the very things they have created for their own ease, unleashing opposing forces of confrontation and a will to survive. Rameshwar Broota's Confrontation series, of which this work is an example, deals with this encounter between man and machine. The artist explains that the man looms large over the machine parts in this work because he believes 'man is inherently a fighter, someone who will face struggles unequivocally, even against steel and cement structures that are invincible'.

RAMESHWAR BROOTA  
(b.1941)  
*Confrontation-2*  
Oil on canvas, 2003  
50.0 x 49.5 in. / 127.0 x 125.7 cm.  
Verso: Signed, inscribed and titled in English  
and dated 'R. Broota. / RAMESHWAR BROOTA /  
CONFRONTATION-2 / 2003 / NEW DELHI'

# About DAG

India's most respected art company began its journey by choosing to build a formidable inventory of works by Indian artists from the nineteenth century onwards. In acquiring artists' studios and estates, it paid homage to their legacy and created a large pool of twentieth-century artists and artworks that, taken together, told the story of Indian art through exhibitions curated to provide art historical overviews and document India's tryst with modernism. More recently, it has begun to include eighteenth century masters as part of its distinctive curatorial process and exhibitions.

In the three decades since DAG's foundation, the Indian art world has seen far-reaching changes in which the company has played a stellar role. Its pathbreaking exhibitions have brought to the fore important artists neglected through the passage of time. It has documented critical art movements and collectives. New generations of art lovers have been able to reclaim the inheritance of forgotten artists thanks largely to support from DAG through curations at its galleries as well as participation in international art fairs and support to biennales and other art-related events and collaborations. These include critical alliances with museums and cultural institutions in India and abroad.

At the heart of DAG's programming is an ongoing research curriculum responsible for lending support to art writers and curators, a rigorous publishing calendar with an impressive library of books that document Indian art history, workshops to engage the public—particularly school children and the specially-abled—in art-related workshops, commissioning of videos and films in relation to artists and their work, and engagements with artists, critics and the art community at large. DAG's contribution to the understanding and dissemination of Indian art remains without parallel.

An important aspect of DAG's collaborative efforts has been to work with institutions and museums, whether through the loan of its works for the purpose of exhibitions, or for establishing comprehensive public-private museum exhibitions such as those it had undertaken at Delhi's Red Fort (*Drishyakala*) or Kolkata's Old Currency Building (*Ghare Baire*) with Archaeological Survey of India. Set up as museums, these exhibitions ran for periods of three years and two years, respectively, garnering amazing response from viewers. DAG has also run exhibition programmes with the National Gallery of Modern Art, the Bhau Daji Lad Museum in Mumbai, Jawahar Kala Kendra in Jaipur, the Lalit Kala Akademi in Chandigarh, and other important institutions.

DAG recently acquired Jamini Roy's studio-cum-house in Kolkata and is in the process of setting up its first single-artist museum dedicated to the National Treasure artist. It has galleries in Mumbai, New Delhi, and New York.



**DAG**

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