

Modern Art

———— July - 2021 ————





5
PRINSEPS

LIVE AUCTION

Modern Art

6th July, 2021

www.prinseps.com

Curator's Note

Prinseps is delighted to announce its summer modern art auction. We at Prinseps pride ourselves on being not just an auction house but a storehouse of knowledge. After in-depth research and analysis conducted by experts and constantly keeping an eye for sublime luxury, we present our summer auction.

The history of modern Indian art is often riddled with gaps and holes. Documentation is rather inadequate and sources seldom reliable. We believe that we can change that.... we plunge into these unknown, uncharted, and fascinating depths to discover treasure troves. Our focus is to bring forward extraordinary works that have been hitherto ignored.

The 1940s were a defining chapter for modern art in the country, with Indian artists practically blooming and blossoming ... experimenting with their individual style, expressing their creativity, making socio-political statements that would go on to be etched in time forever. It was an explosion of home-grown talent. These path-breakers were the “Progressive Artists” of India. Our modern art auction is essentially composed of three distinguished estates. Over the years, Prinseps has managed to acquire the estates of some avant-garde personalities, the most recent being the sole female member of the Progressive Artists' Group, Bhanu Athaiya.

This auction offers to the discerning connoisseur a cornucopia of art that was lost in the sands of time. Artists include M.F. Husain, a colourful and vibrant personality who has been feted and celebrated lavishly both in his lifetime as well as posthumously, Manjit Bawa, whose brushwork and fluidity set a different bar with his lyrical form and palette. There were also several unsung heroes, which Prinseps as a research institution is thrilled to present. Ashvin Rajagopalan's essay on Husain in the 1950s brings forth a completely new understanding of the artist, Ranjit Hoskote's deep insight sheds light on Bhupen Khakhar's encaustic painting. Anjum Siddiqui unveils Husain the person behind the persona.

With this catalogue, not only are we presenting rare works of art that are available for the first time or then maybe after decades, but we are also contributing and doing our bit for society. During these unprecedented and testing times, we believe we must help others less fortunate. Proceeds from four eminent works by renowned artists Gobardhan Ash and Sunil Madhav will go to the Masina Hospital in Mumbai as well as to the Welfare of Stray Dogs.

We at Prinseps take immense pleasure to present this catalogue of forty-three lots, each artwork significant and important, but most importantly, simply beautiful!

Let the bidding begin!

Brijeshwari Gohil

Modern Art

6th July, 2021

Auction is now open for written bids / proxy bidding

Live Auction commences at 7.00 pm on 6th July 2021

Lots will be auctioned sequentially.

Bids can be placed online, via telephone, or live on the auction floor

Lot Numbers	Closing Time (India)	Closing Time (US Eastern)	Closing Time (US Pacific)	Closing Time (UK)	Closing Time (Japan)	Closing Time (Hong Kong)
1 - 43	7.00 pm	9.30 am	6.30 am	2.30 pm	10.30 pm	9.30 pm

Lot No. 01

CONSTITUTION

THE CONSTITUTION OF INDIA

Manuscript
1950
17.1 x 12.5 in.

Estimate

INR 5,00,000 - 7,00,000

Provenance

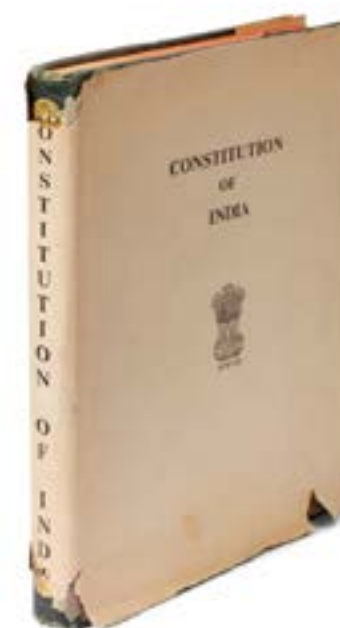
Private Collection

Lot Description

The Constitution Of India. Hathibarkala, Dehra Dun: Survey of India Offices, [1950]

The Constitution of India was inaugurated on January 26, 1950; one of the most amicable declarations of sovereignty the world had ever seen. Apart from declaring India as a sovereign democratic republic, the constitution also marked the beginning of one of the boldest political experiments of all time.

Lot number/01



Lot No. 02

GOPAL S. ADIVREKAR (1938 - 2008)

UNTITLED

Mixed media on canvas
Signed lower center
1977
36.2 x 36 in.

Estimate

INR 10,000 - 20,000

Provenance

Estate of Arun Kumar Das

Lot Description

Gopal S. Adivrekar was an unconventional abstract painter who set a new benchmark for the art of non-figurative painting. Born in 1938, in a Konkan village in Maharashtra, Adivrekar honed his skills at Sir JJ School of Art. After completing his graduation in 1963, Adivrekar worked as an art designer at the Weavers' Service Centre for over 22 years while pursuing a distinguished career as an abstract painter. His paintings are indelible creations of colors and abstract forms. This particular piece of art is a mixed media on canvas with a fascinating melding of hues and powerful imagery.

Lot number/02



Lot No. 03

GAUTAM WAGHELA (1936)

UNTITLED

Oil on canvas
Signed verso
36 x 30 in.

Estimate

INR 10,000 - 20,000

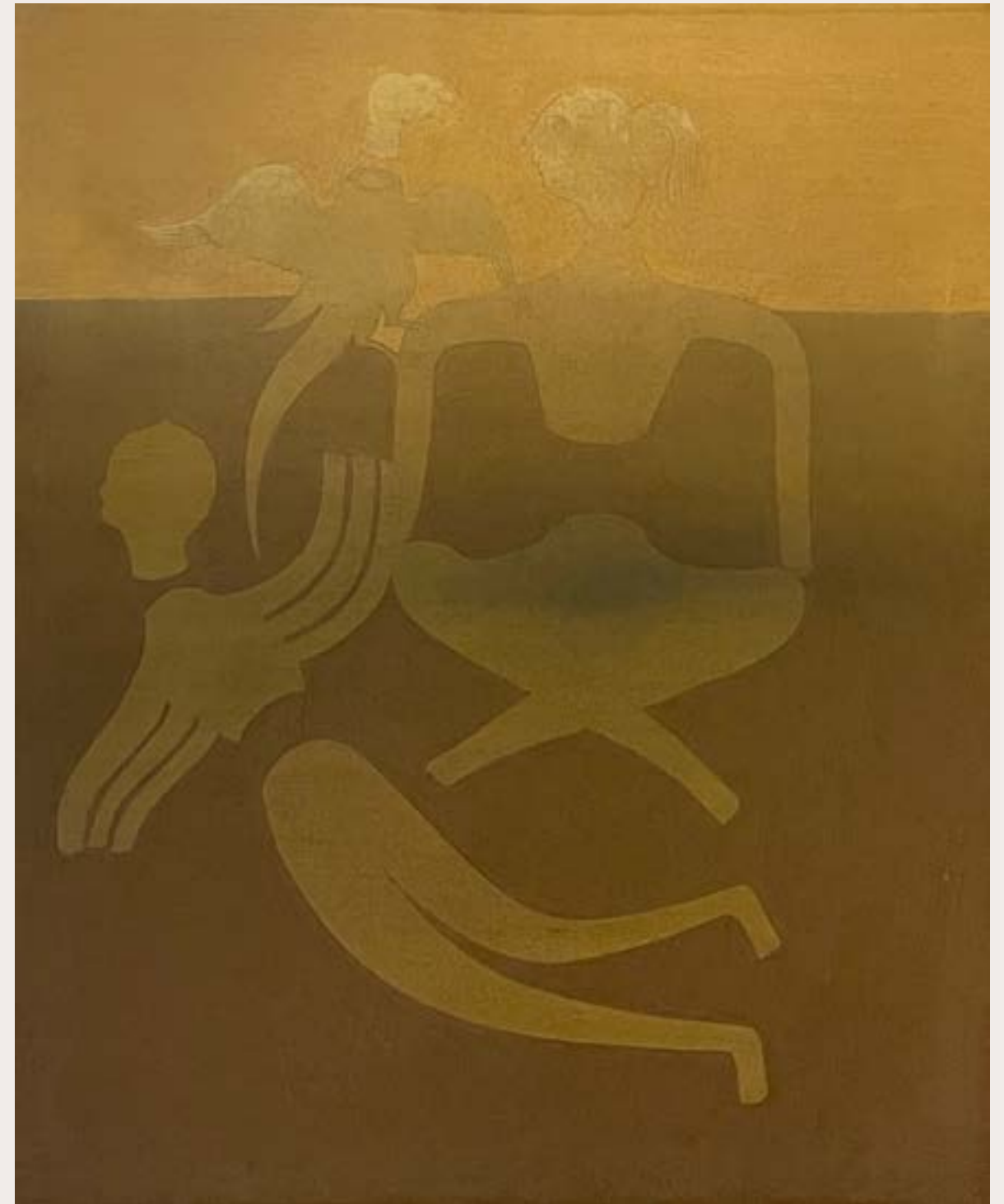
Provenance

Estate of Arun Kumar Das

Lot Description

Gautam Waghela was an avant-garde artist whose work intricately explores human values in a historical and cultural context. Born in 1936, Waghela received his early art education from the famed Sir JJ School of Art. Waghela was associated with the Weavers' Service Centre from 1962 to 1994, where he would document Indian cloth to create a cohesive record of weaves and textiles across the country. This was where he interacted with his contemporaries like Prabhakar Barwe, K.G. Subramanyan, and Ambadas Khobragade. Vaghela's artworks reveal his intense fascination with human existence and Indian culture. This particular work is an oil on canvas with the dominance of a single tone.

Lot number/03



Lot No. 04

RAMESH VAGHELA (B.1960)

ECHO WITHIN II

Oil on canvas
Signed verso
43.6 x 36 in.

Estimate

INR 10,000 - 20,000

Provenance

Estate of Arun Kumar Das

Lot Description

Ramesh Vaghela was an Indian artist born in 1960. He studied art and received his post-diploma in painting from the Maharaja Sayajirao University of Baroda in 1985. After settling in Bombay, he worked at the Weavers' Service Centre for a couple of years. This work is an oil on canvas with hues of muted colors and a morphed nameless face amidst two stone-like structures.

Lot number/04



Lot No. 05

RAMESH VAGHELA (B.1960)

UNTITLED

Oil on canvas
Signed and dated verso
1995
26.8 x 26.8 in.

Estimate

INR 10,000 - 20,000

Provenance

Estate of Arun Kumar Das

Lot Description

Ramesh Vaghela was a late addition to the artistic community at the Centre. His works have been displayed alongside artists such as Anand Mohan Naik, Prabhakar Barwe, Ajit Kumar Das, Shamendu Sonavane, Bhaskar Kulkarni, and Bhupendra Desai.

Lot number/05



Lot No. 06

R. AMBALKAR (B.1965)
UNTITLED

Etching
Signed and dated lower right
1998
19.5 x 19.3 in.

Estimate

INR 1,000 - 2,000

Provenance

Estate of Arun Kumar Das

Lot number/ **06**



Lot No. 07

UNKNOWN
UNTITLED

12 x 14 x 8.0 in. (Marble) ; 36 x 11 x 12 in. (Wood)

Estimate

INR 2,000 - 5,000

Provenance

Estate of Arun Kumar Das

Lot Description

*Set of two sculptures , artists unknown ; 12 x 14 x 8 in.
(Marble) ; 36 x 11 x 12 in. (Wood)*

Lot number/ **07**



PUPUL JAYAKAR AND THE WEAVERS' SERVICE CENTRE

Years ago, artists from various walks of life gravitated towards a creative structure near Mumbai's Opera House. **The Weavers' Service Centre was established in the 1950s by Pupul Jayakar.**

Pupul Jayakar had an undying passion for preserving the country's culture and weaving tradition. She was a writer and an advocate of crafts in Indian society. Her interest in rural arts and crafts, her eye for potential, and her unparalleled execution skills initiated a change in many areas of craft. Jayakar singlehandedly led the revival of arts and handicrafts in India. Hence, she established The Weavers' Service Centre formerly known as the Handloom Design Centre.

Masters such as Prabhakar Barwe, Anand Mohan Naik, Gautam Waghela, Ramesh Vaghela, and Gopal Adivrekar designed textiles at the center for years to support themselves while **exploring their identities as artists.** The first branch opened in Mumbai, followed by Chennai, Varanasi and eventually spread to weaving clusters all over the country. The Weavers' Service Centre nurtured a certain partnership between traditional weavers and trained artists to strengthen the handloom sector and reshape traditional weaving skills and design vocabulary. In 1955, Pupul Jayakar sought the young artist K.G. Subramanyan's help while trying to set up design centres of the All India Handloom Board. She would invite Subramanyan to visit the Weavers' Service Centre for three months every year.

Though I subscribed to the idea that creative artists and craftsmen are rare and especially endowed individuals, the idea of maintaining and presenting familial traditions of refined craft practice from one generation to the next intrigued me no end. [1]

– K.G. Subramanyan

The fact that Jayakar had unflinching support helped her set up the weavers' service centres, marketing structures, and institutions aplenty. Jayakar took it upon herself to associate with some of the brightest painters and sculptors in India. The selection process was rigorous where prospective candidates were interviewed, with a thorough scrutiny of their portfolios. Jeram Patel, Ambadas, Harkishen Lal, P. Mansaram,

Prabhakar Barwe, Jogen Chowdhury, Manu Parekh, Haku Shah, Arpita Singh, Praful Dave, Himmat Shah, Amrut Patel, and Reddeppa Naidu were some of the many artists associated with the WSC at some point in their artistic careers.

When you see or spot true talent, give it your total support and it will never let you down. I hope I have been able to do likewise with many young people. [2]

– Pupul Jayakar

Subramanyan mentioned that his stint at the WSC “turned out to be an education for me. It certainly introduced me to various areas of expertise I had so far been vaguely aware of. But most importantly, it brought me face to face with the problem of the survival of manual crafts in a modernizing world.” [3]

The nature of the challenge demanded a catalyst that would transform traditional skills of the weavers and their design vocabulary into a new contemporary framework. [4]

– Pupul Jayakar

Pupul would involve and support huge numbers of people in specialized areas of work from the handloom sector. However, in terms of the Weavers' Service Centre, she wondered “...whether the creative perceptions could absorb new skills and technologies without a diminishing of an original creative ground.” [5] Either way, artists such as Prabhakar Barwe, Anand Mohan Naik, Gopal Adivrekar, and Ramesh and Gautam Waghela found their true calling. Jayakar's Weavers' Service Centre was hence not just a space for contemporary artists to work with traditional weavers, but a pillar and enabler of artistic sustenance, growth, and independence.

References

1. K.G. Subramanyan, *Do Hands Have a Chance?* Seagull Publication Kolkata, 2007.

2. Malvika Singh, *The tapestry of her life*

3. Meera Menezes, *IN PRAISE OF A FINE YARN*, Art India|December 2019

4. Meera Menezes, *IN PRAISE OF A FINE YARN*, Art India|December 2019.

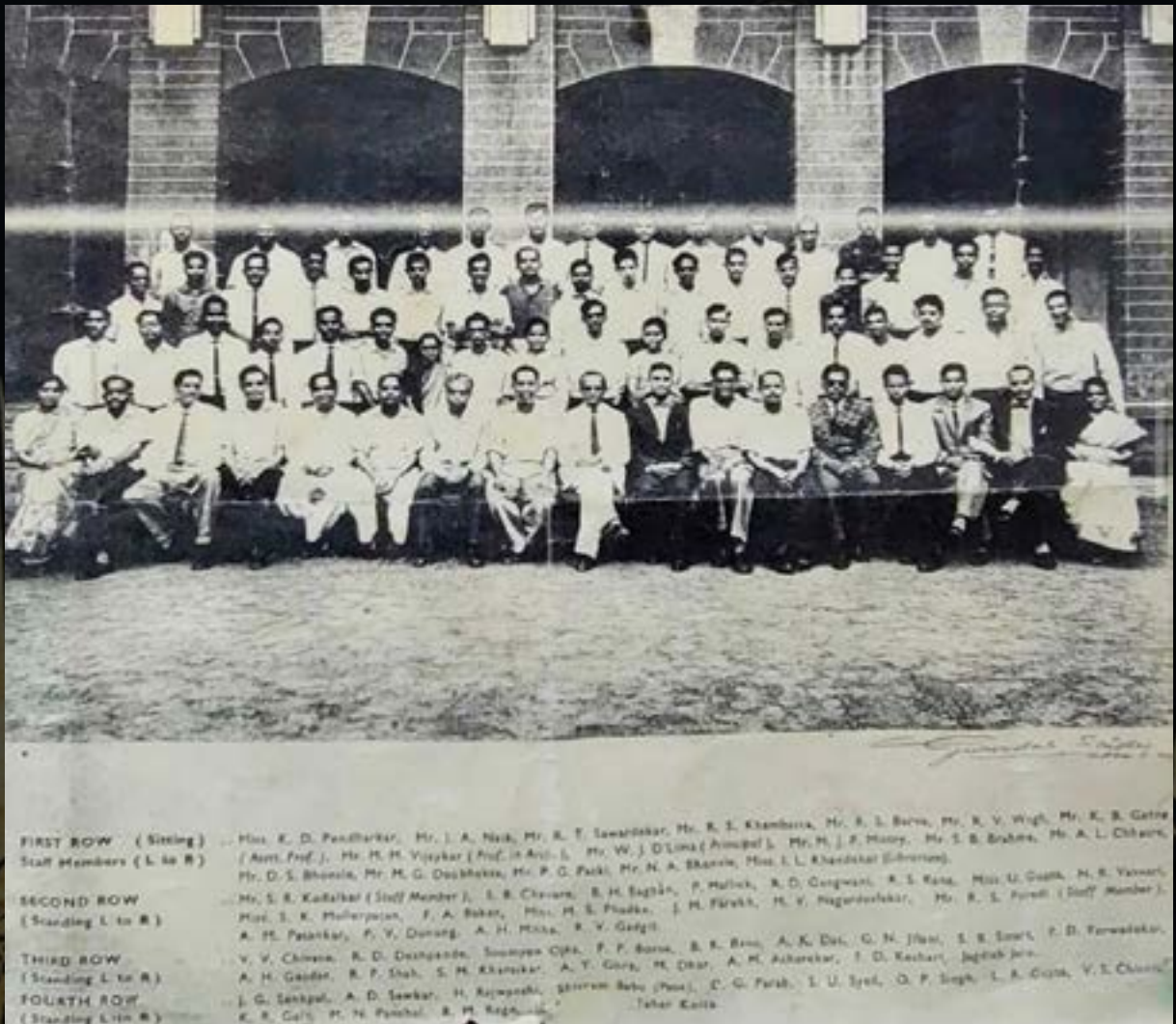
5. *Exhibition Catalog, Artists from Past to Present at the Weavers Service Centre, The Development Commissioner of Handlooms, Ministry of Commerce, New Delhi, 1985.*

AN INTERVIEW WITH
ARUN KUMAR DAS ON PRABHAKAR BARWE



RIP (1937 - April 21)

The late Arun Kumar Das who was also our consignor reminisces about his rendezvous with dear friend and artist Prabhakar Barwe. He fondly recalls his first meeting with the artist during the '70s and their prolonged conversations about life and paintings. Read on to know more.



Arun Kumar Das at his graduation ceremony (Third Row) from the prestigious JJ School of Art

Where/ when were you first introduced to the artist?

I first came across Prabhakar Barwe during the mid-1970s amidst the quaint lanes of Mumbai's Gamdevi.

How did you meet him?

I do not remember how I met Prabhakar Barwe, but it was a remarkably close friendship. I was staying in Gamdevi for almost two decades before I crossed paths with Barwe. I recall the name of that lane as Bhaskar Bhau. At that time, I just knew him as the man who would lock himself in his room and paint for hours after work with no rest. I had leased him a room in my own home and would often watch him paint.

Where did he work?

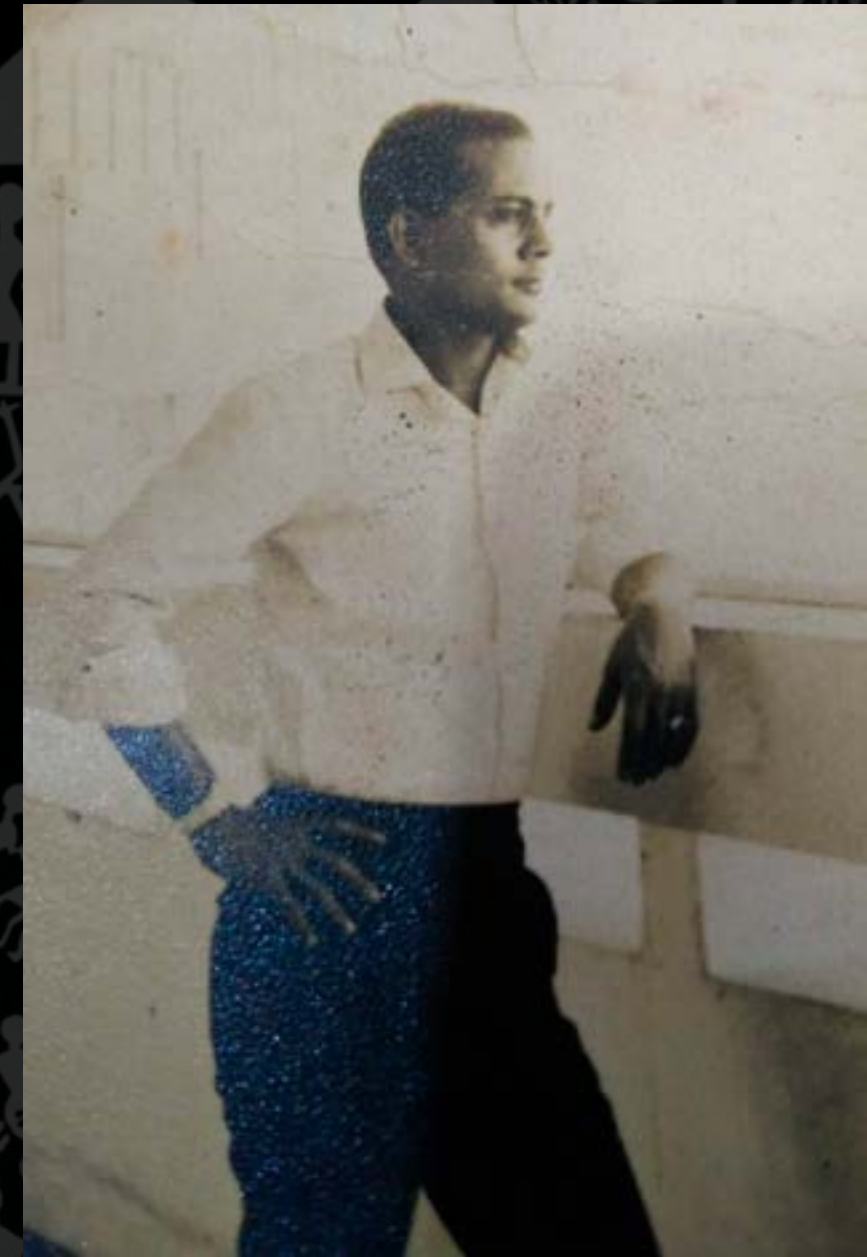
He worked at the Weavers' Service Centre. It was actually right across the road, quite nearby. It was between Charni and Grant Road. My wife Veera was a student at the Centre. She would do block printing on the fabric...she was there for around 4 to 5 years.

Can you elaborate on your friendship with Prabhakar Barwe?

Barwe and I were close friends. He would always tell me where he went in the evenings. And....he was like Van Gogh, or it seemed like he wanted to be like him. He had an incredibly sad life; he went through a bad stage of health problems. After retirement, he started living in a government-owned place. He was well to do later too. But his paintings were sold like anything. He would consult me, and one fine day he invited me for dinner. I think we went to Dadar or Sion.



Architectural drawing - Arun Kumar Das & Associates



By that time, he had stopped drinking but the drinking part I learned from him! We never fought; I have no memory of that. But I do remember that he used to go in the evening to Bhaskar Bhau Lane, that is where I had my pad, and he had his studio as well. And he and I would go opposite Wilson College, sit on a chair, and share stories about life and paintings. Then in the hospital, his office people came to donate blood. I was his close friend. I went every day to visit him at Sion Hospital. After it was shut, he was shifted to a nursing home nearby. There he would constantly wail in pain, after his death we took him to Sion Hospital and completed the formalities. I was close to him... that is it, more or less.

Lot No. 08

PRABHAKAR BARWE (1936 - 1995)

THE LABORATORY

Watercolour on paper
Signed and dated lower left
1992
12 x 19 in.

Estimate

INR 50,000 - 75,000

Provenance

Estate of Arun Kumar Das

Lot Description

Prabhakar Barwe was a self-effacing artist who extensively explored the relationship between space and form. Born in 1936 in Maharashtra to a family of artists, Barwe honed his skills at the Sir JJ School of Art. After he received his diploma in 1959, Barwe worked with the Weavers' Service Centre for over 20 years, designing textiles. In this watercolor painting titled "The Laboratory", Barwe breathes life into mundane objects, gifting each shape its own right to actuality.

Lot number / 08



Lot No. 09

PRABHAKAR BARWE (1936 – 1995)

WHISPERING GREEN

Mixed media on canvas
Signed and dated verso
1974
48.2 x 36.5 in.

Estimate

INR 50,00,000 – 75,00,000

Provenance

Estate of Arun Kumar Das

Lot Description

Prabhakar Barwe was known as a symbolic abstractionist, but did not conform to the mainstream notions of modernism and abstractionism. This vivid mixed media on canvas titled “Whispering Greens” was painted by Barwe in 1974. Barwe used match sticks to create uniform designs against a smooth green colour creating a striking resemblance to a collage component.

Lot number/09



Lot No. 10

ANANDMOHAN NAIK (B.1937)

UNTITLED

Tempera on paper
14 x 9.0 in.

Estimate

INR 2,000 - 5,000

Provenance

Estate of Arun Kumar Das

Lot Description

Anand Mohan Naik is an unassuming artist whose early works paved the way to abstraction in India. An artist of Goan descent, Naik graduated from Kalabhavan Shantiniketan in 1960. Naik was also closely associated with one of the doyens of Indian Art-Francis Newton Souza who was also a Goan artist and founding member of the Progressive Artists' Group. The versatile artist spent most of his life in Bombay. He worked with Prabhakar Barwe at the Weavers' Service Centre and would often host gatherings at his residence in the evenings with like-minded artists, including Barwe.

Lot number/10



Lot No. 11

ANANDMOHAN NAIK (B.1937)

UNTITLED

Mixed media on canvas
Signed lower right
15 x 11 in.

Estimate

INR 10,000 - 20,000

Provenance

Estate of Arun Kumar Das

Lot Description

Anand Mohan Naik is known as the master of many mediums. He worked with paper mâché sculptures painted with enamel oils and watercolors. Naik is also one of the very few artists to have mastery over a rare medium like "old egg tempera."

Lot number / 11



Lot No. 12

RAMESH VAGHELA (B.1960)

UNTITLED

Oil on canvas
Signed lower right
1994
16 x 11.8 in.

Estimate

INR 10,000 - 20,000

Provenance

Estate of Arun Kumar Das

Lot Description

Ramesh Vaghela plays with abstraction and faces on geometric sculptures set amidst a social construct in his works.

Lot number/12



Lot number/13

Lot No. 13

RAMESH VAGHELA (B.1960)

UNTITLED

Oil on canvas
Signed and dated verso
1995
17 x 35.5 in.

Estimate

INR 10,000 - 20,000

Provenance

Estate of Arun Kumar Das



Lot No. 14

ANIL SEN (D.2020)

UNTITLED

Wood

Signed and dated verso

1998

18 x 7.5 x 3.5 in.

Estimate

INR 10,000 - 20,000

Provenance

Estate of Arun Kumar Das

Lot Description

Founder member of the Calcutta Sculptor's Group.

Lot No. 15

ANIL SEN (D.2020)

UNTITLED

Bronze

Signed and dated verso

1998

19 x 4.0 x 4.5 in.

Estimate

INR 10,000 - 20,000

Provenance

Estate of Arun Kumar Das

*Lot number/***14**



*Lot number/***15**



Lot No. 16

UTTAM PACHARNE (B.1956)
UNTITLED

Marble
Circa 1990
20 x 9.5 x 6.0 in.

Estimate

INR 10,000 - 20,000

Provenance

Estate of Arun Kumar Das

Lot Description

Artist confirms the sale of the art work to the consignor approximately two decades ago.

Lot No. 17

M. SURIYAMOORTHY (1944- 2012)
UNTITLED

Ink on paper
Signed and dated upper left
1964
29 x 18.7 in.

Estimate

INR 40,000 - 70,000

Provenance

Property of an esteemed Collector

Lot Description

100 % of proceeds to Masina Hospital.

*Lot number/***16**



*Lot number/***17**



Lot No. 18

SUNIL MADHAV SEN (1910 – 1979)

UNTITLED

Watercolor on paper
Signed lower right
22.7 x 10 in.

Estimate

INR 50,000 – 70,000

Provenance

Property of an esteemed Collector

Lot Description

100 % of proceeds to Masina Hospital. Sunil Madhav Sen was a modern artist and a founder member of the Calcutta Group who derived his own creative idiom. His artistic oeuvre ranged from simple linear depictions, ink and wash techniques, and relief paintings in mosaic to metal collage.

Lot No. 19

AMINA KAR (1930 – 1995)

UNTITLED

Ink on paper
Signed lower right
13.4 x 9.7 in.

Estimate

INR 25,000 – 50,000

Provenance

Property of an esteemed Collector

Lot Description

100 % of proceeds to Masina Hospital.

Lot number / **18**



Lot number / **19**



Lot No. 20

BIKASH BHATTACHARJEE (1940 - 2006)

UNTITLED

Pastel on paper
1992
32.1 x 28.5 in.

Estimate

INR 15,00,000 - 20,00,000

Provenance

Property of an esteemed Collector

Lot Description

Bikash Bhattacharjee was one of India's finest classical modernist painters. His work was a window into the life of the average middle-class Bengali in a style that was simultaneously traditional and realist. This pastel on paperwork from circa 1992 demonstrates Bhattacharjee's preoccupation with female beauty. He explores the textural effects of crayons, pastels, and pencil in his canvases with a mastery over capturing the quality of light.

Lot number/20



Lot No. 21

MANJIT BAWA (1941-2008)

LADY WITH BIRD

Oil on canvas
Signed and dated verso
1999
42.5 x 42 in.

Estimate

INR 1,50,00,000 - 2,50,00,000

Provenance

Property of an esteemed Collector

Lot Description

Art work was acquired by the consignor from Sakshi Gallery in the year 2000 and has remained with him ever since. Manjit Bawa was the first artist in India to set his canvas ablaze with striking pinks, violets, and greens on large spaces. Having begun his career as a Silkscreen printer, he was not oblivious to the impact of strong and flat colours in the background. He felt constantly inspired to look for fresh colours on his palette, bringing in pastel hues that were not commonly explored by Indian artists. This oil on canvas titled 'Lady with Bird' shows a predilection for bright colours, the play with limbs and space, and an absence of anatomy and muscles – all distinctive features of his iconography.

Lot number/21



Lot No. 22

GOBARDHAN ASH (1907 – 1996)

FAMINE

Various
1943

5.0 x 8.5 in. ; 10 x 7.0 in. ; 5.75 x 9.75 in. ; 5.0 x 7.0 in. ; 4.13 x 2.56 in.

Estimate

INR 50,000 – 70,000

Provenance

Estate of Gobardhan Ash

Lot Description

100% proceeds to Welfare For Stray Dogs. Gobardhan Ash stripped bare the stark and uninhibited truth of the famine that hit Bengal in 1943 through scanty washes of earthy brown tones, reflecting endless human misery. Ash's famine series differed from his contemporaries. He used to paint in colour (oil and water), while artists such as Zainul Abedin and Chittaprosad Bhattacharya preferred black and white, or graphics medium.

Lot number/22



Recto



Verso



Lot number/22

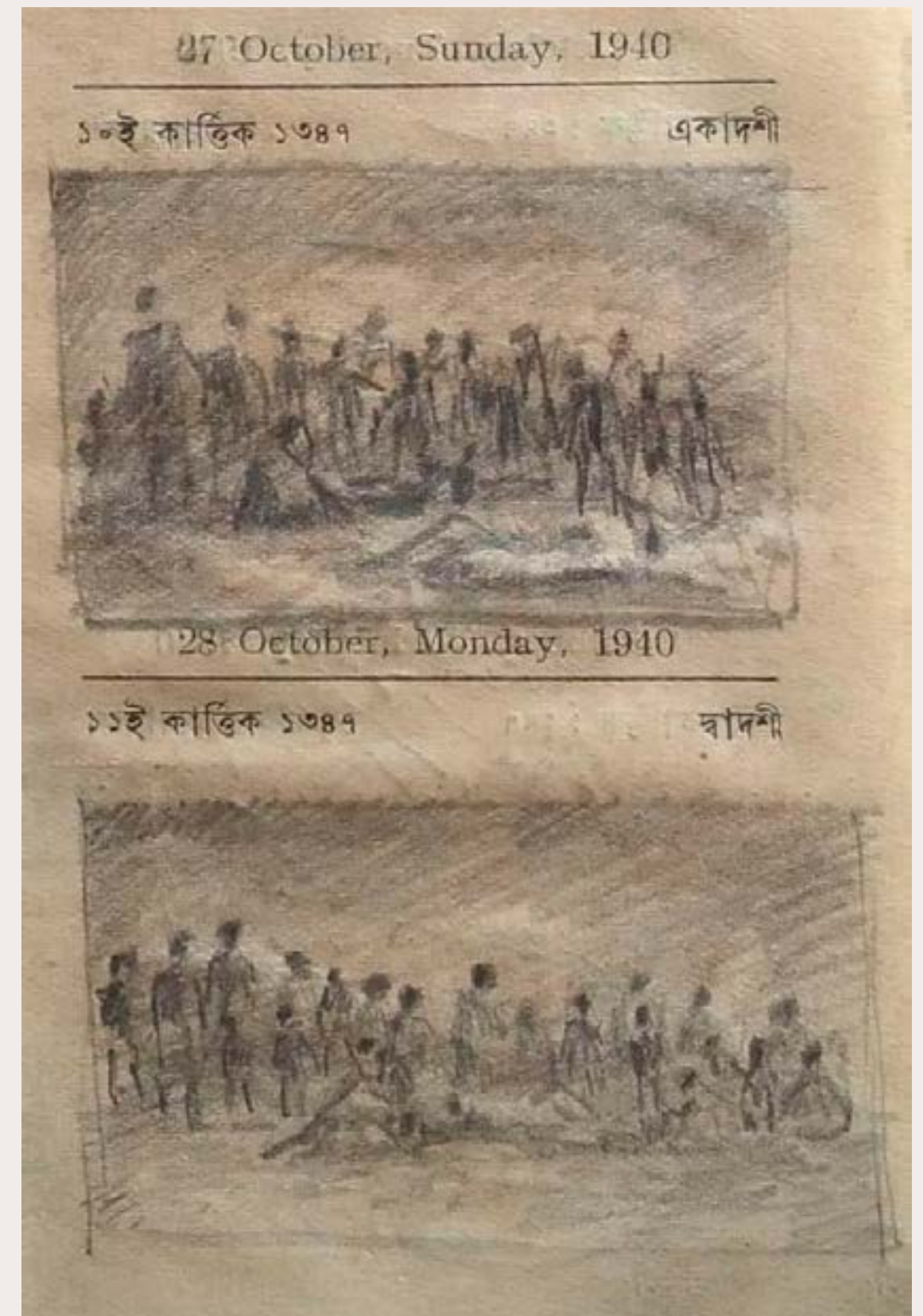


Verso



Recto

Lot number/22



UNCLE HUSAIN

- BY ANJUM SIDDIQUI

I had the good fortune of spending a larger part of my life in close association with M. F. Husain. Or Uncle H, as I called him. He was more than just a friend of the family.

He was part of the family. We all lived, painted, and went on vacations together. There were always the choicest of paints and canvases in the house while growing up, for which I am always thankful to him. I got to paint alongside him right from when I was 6 years old.



M.F. Husain's note to Anjum

As a child, he must have seen a unique creative spark in me. Or so he said to me in a note, written inside a book he sent me just a month before he passed away.

I remember the first time he noticed and commented on my work. It was the mid-70s, we had some prominent guests at home, and as everyone was busy in the living room with after-dinner tea and conversation, I busied myself with my crayons. Head burrowed in my colouring book, I was meticulously filling inside the lines, unaware that Uncle H was standing behind me. I clearly remember the colour

I was using – teal green. And just as I was done with it, he reached out to take my colouring book, “**Ek minute. Zaraa dikhaao (one minute, just show it to me).** Why did you use this particular colour?”, he asked. A very red-in-the-face 6 years old, I scrambled to come up with a correct answer to this giant of the art world. “It was a natural choice”, felt like a lame answer at that moment.

Nevertheless, He took my colouring book and was soon showing it to other guests, in rapt admiration.

”

Just look at the colour she has used! And the way it perfectly balances with the rest of colours.

Standing behind the door, I could sense the bewilderment of the guests. Mr. M. F. Husain, waving a kid’s colouring book with an earnest admiration! By then, the colour of my face had gone from an embarrassed-red to a mortified beetroot!

Such was this man.

Nothing was too small or too big for him,

as far as art was concerned. It was always serious business.

It is not that he was always appreciative of my works. There have been times when I was asked to, not just take my painting off the wall, but place it on the ground, facing the wall. “I can't bear to even look at it!”, he said.

This trait of his, giving an unfiltered critique, must have rubbed some people the wrong way. He would shrug and say, “if you ask me for an opinion on your art, I will always tell you the truth. You have to be prepared to listen to it!”

And I was always prepared for it. From time to time, I would visit him to show him my recent works. Sometimes, after every negative critique, he would try to soften the blow by saying “Don’t feel bad. I understand, a woman has many other responsibilities of the house, and it's difficult to manage taking time out for painting.” Then there were also times when he would jump up in a eureka sort of moment and thump my back, beaming in appreciation. And then bestow on me his entire selection of paints, brushes, canvases in his London studio.

He was my Godfather, my guru, and my teacher.

I chased after him to teach me watercolours. I would quiz him about his creative process. And how to approach a subject. To which he would seriously sit and draw to show me how the negative space is important. When I was in boarding school, he would send me detailed sketches of the recent paintings he had made.



Husain's sketch to Anjum sent from London



Husain's sketch to Anjum

Uncle H is the reason that I joined Delhi College of Art. He drove me up there in his car to register for the Bachelor of Fine Art Programme. He would often come to pick me up from college after my classes. All the art students would gather around him, asking him questions and interacting with them was a thing that he enjoyed immensely.

While in New Delhi, it was a dhaba near the Nizamuddin Durgah which was his favourite haunt. You would often find him there at the break of dawn, reading his paper, sipping chai, and having his bread-omelet. And while in London, it was the high tea at the fancy Dorchester Hotel. He was a man comfortable in his skin and was equally comfortable in either surrounding. To me, this unique, wonderful, and rarely found trait made

Uncle H was one of the most generous, down-to-earth men. He loved simply walking to places. Barefoot. Loved the feel of the ground beneath his feet.

him a great man. His humbleness, his interactions, and his naturalness made him a wonderful human being. The magic he created in his paintings. He could almost create an optical illusion with just flat planes of colour, giving you the impression that you can, at any moment, just walk into the painting.

Watching him paint was a treat. It may look to the unknowing eyes that there was aggression in his strokes. On the contrary, I saw a firm and steady tenderness in the way he handled the paint.

With an almost fatherly loving care, he would push the colour with his brush on the canvas. Lovingly. The revered devotion he gave to the process of creation, his paintings responded by giving him back tenfold, by looking magnificent. There was certainly magic. And this is what makes him the greatest artist of all times.

-Anjum Siddiqui

Anjum Siddiqui is an Indian artist, graphic designer, and visualiser with a passion and keen eye for the fine arts and has painted in various mediums. She also worked with and learned from M.F. Husain who was an Indian modern master widely acclaimed for modernising the Indian art movement.

THE KING OF HEARTS

- An Essay by Ashvin E. Rajagopalan

01

The only time I have seen M. F. Husain in person was at his exhibition in honour of singer M. S. Subbulakshmi at a gallery in Chennai (Madras) in 2004. Wearing

no footwear, except for thick black socks, and wielding a massive paintbrush in one hand, Husain was surrounded by a group of Chennai's socialites. I was patiently waiting behind them to meet Husain when he suddenly popped out and said, "Hello". I

was giddy with excitement and asked him to autograph the invitation card I had in my hand. He did so and quickly moved on to greet the next visitor.



M. F. Husain standing in front of his painting of M. S. Subbulakshmi at Lakshana Art Gallery, Chennai. Image Courtesy of The Hindu Images



M.F. Husain, age 21, sitting in front of a studio backdrop he had painted. Image Reproduced from: HUSAIN,

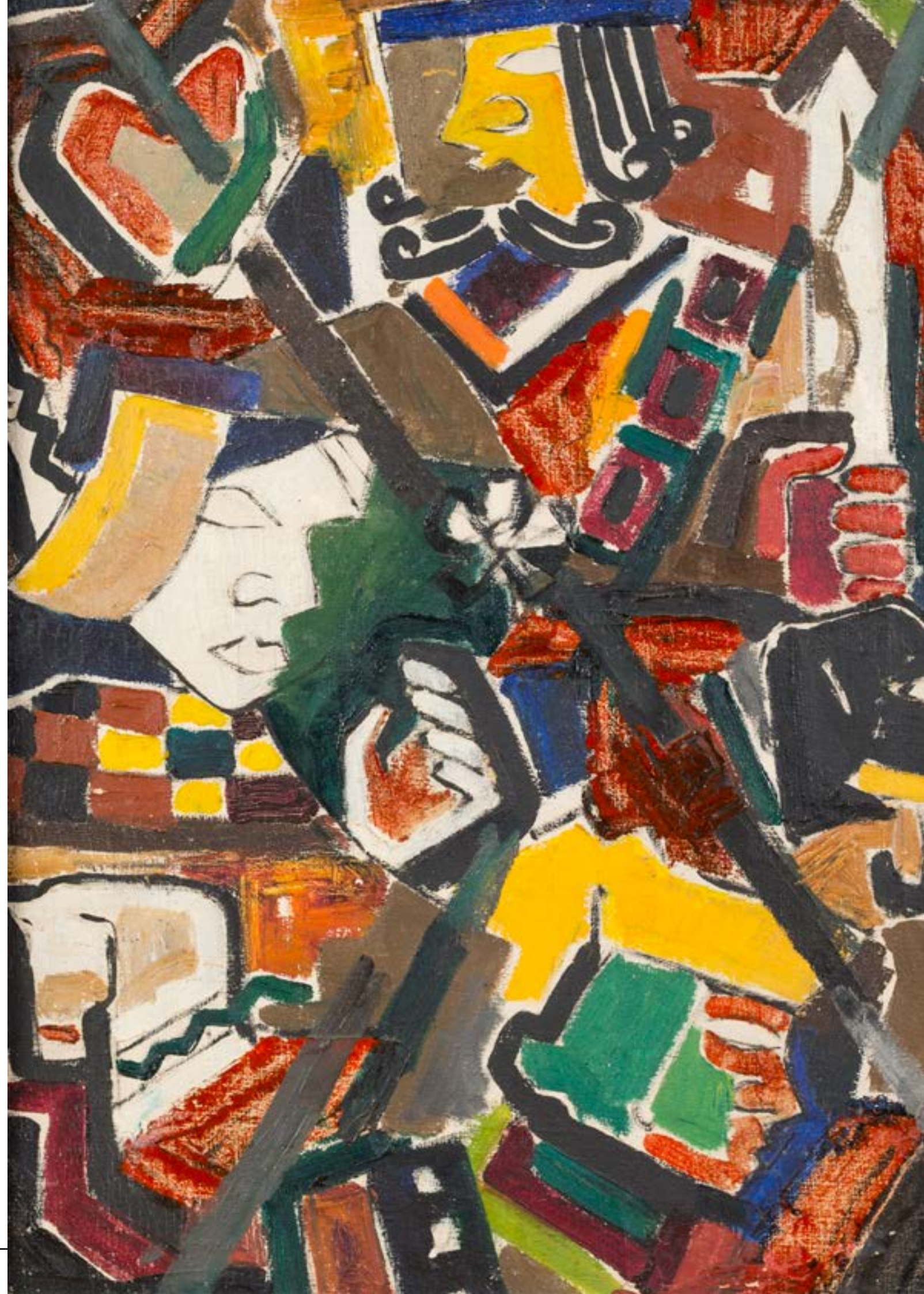
Husain, Maqbul Fida & Richard Bartholomew & Shiv S. Kapur

Husain was as excited to meet unknown gallery visitors as they were to meet him—the energy was amazing for a man who, at that time, was 91 years old. A year or so later, Husain left India, never to return.

While I never had the opportunity to gather biographical knowledge directly from the artist, I have had the fortune of engaging intimately with his artworks as a buyer, curator and art historian.

Accessing primary information on Husain, particularly about his earliest years as an artist, was a daunting task. To separate verifiable facts from myths, urban legends and fantastical stories about Husain, through a career span of over 70 years, took a lot of time. Peeling back these layers revealed a very interesting origin story about Husain that lends a fresh perspective to understand this 'Untitled (King of Hearts)' painting from 1950. [Fig.1] The title 'King of Hearts' is one that I have given this Untitled painting—for reasons I will explain through this essay.

Fig 1. M. F. Husain, *Untitled (King of Hearts)*, Oil On Canvas, 1950.



Establishing the significance of the School of Art, Indore, in the context of Husain and the overall impact it had on the development of Indian Modern Art is important at this point. Dattatray Damodar Deolalikar founded an artists training institute in Indore called Chitrakala Mahavidyalaya in 1927[Today his institute is called 'Devlalikar Kala Veethika' however, records from the 1930s and 40s show that he was referred to as D.D. Deolalikar.]. Shortly after, Yashwant Rao Holkar II, the Maharaja of Indore, provided a building to Deolalikar and it formally became the School of Art, Indore. [Fig.2] [



Fig 2. The School of Art, Indore, is today known as the Devlalikar Kala Veethika and is used as an exhibition space. The present Devlalikar Fine Arts Institute, run by the government, functions in a new building behind this one. Image Courtesy: Change.org.

Deolalikar graduated from Holkar College, Indore, with a degree in Sanskrit and then decided to follow his passion for art. So he attended Sir J.J. School of Art in Bombay where he learnt various techniques including the 'open-air' style of painting. The 'open-air school' had its origins in the British academic style of painting that was being practiced in Bombay at the turn of the 20th century. Besides teaching his students the foundations of art, it was this 'open-air' style that Deolalikar taught at his institute. Some of Deolalikar's early students such as, G.M. Solegaonkar, M.S. Josi, N.S. Bendre, Vishnu Chinchalkar and D.J. Joshi embraced this style and pushed the boundaries further. [Figs. 16-19] The key features of this Indore version was the use of bright colours, elimination of detail, broad brush strokes and a sense of sunlight created through the use of contrasting colours that gave an effect of light and shadow—almost photographic in the way light was captured. Deolalikar would frequently take his students on tours to popular locations near Indore such as Omkareshwar and Dhar to paint in open-air spaces. He would also travel with them to Bombay where they had to complete their annual examinations at Sir. J. J. School of Art—a system that continued till 1965[.

After completing a few initial grades at Indore, it was the practice of artists who wanted to follow a full-time career in art, to finish their diploma at Sir J.J. School of Art in Bombay. As students and after graduation, these young artists who studied at Indore and then Bombay, would regularly submit their artworks to the Bombay Art Society and the Art Society of India exhibitions that took place annually. Through most of the 1930's and 40's, the Indore artists won top awards including gold medals and the Governor's prizes. This Indore style of painting became very popular in Bombay among critics, patrons and art collectors who were partial to the western school of expressionism and modern art. This style also lent itself easily to artists who were exploring western ideas as a path towards

making modern art. The transfer of this style of painting from Bombay to Indore, where it was modified and then re-introduced into the narrative of modernist explorations in Bombay during the 40's, is what drove the next generation of artists to take a brave plunge into creating a new language for post-independence Indian Modern Art.[It is also important to credit the Indore School for this style of painting because of the impact it had on colleagues of Husain like S.H. Raza and H.A. Gade who started their careers with this style, long before their introduction to German Expressionist styles taught to them by European mentors in Bombay in the 1940's]

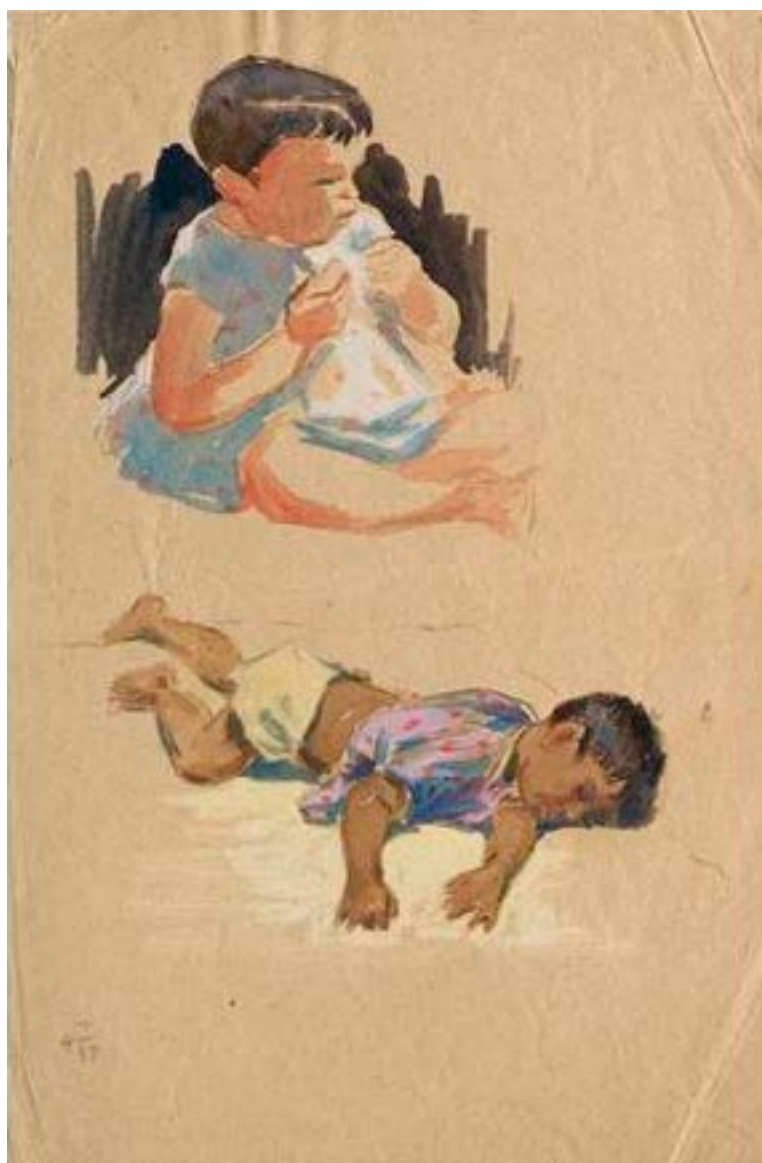


Fig. 3 M. F. Husain, *Untitled Portraits*, Watercolour on Paper, 1947.
Image Courtesy of Pundole's

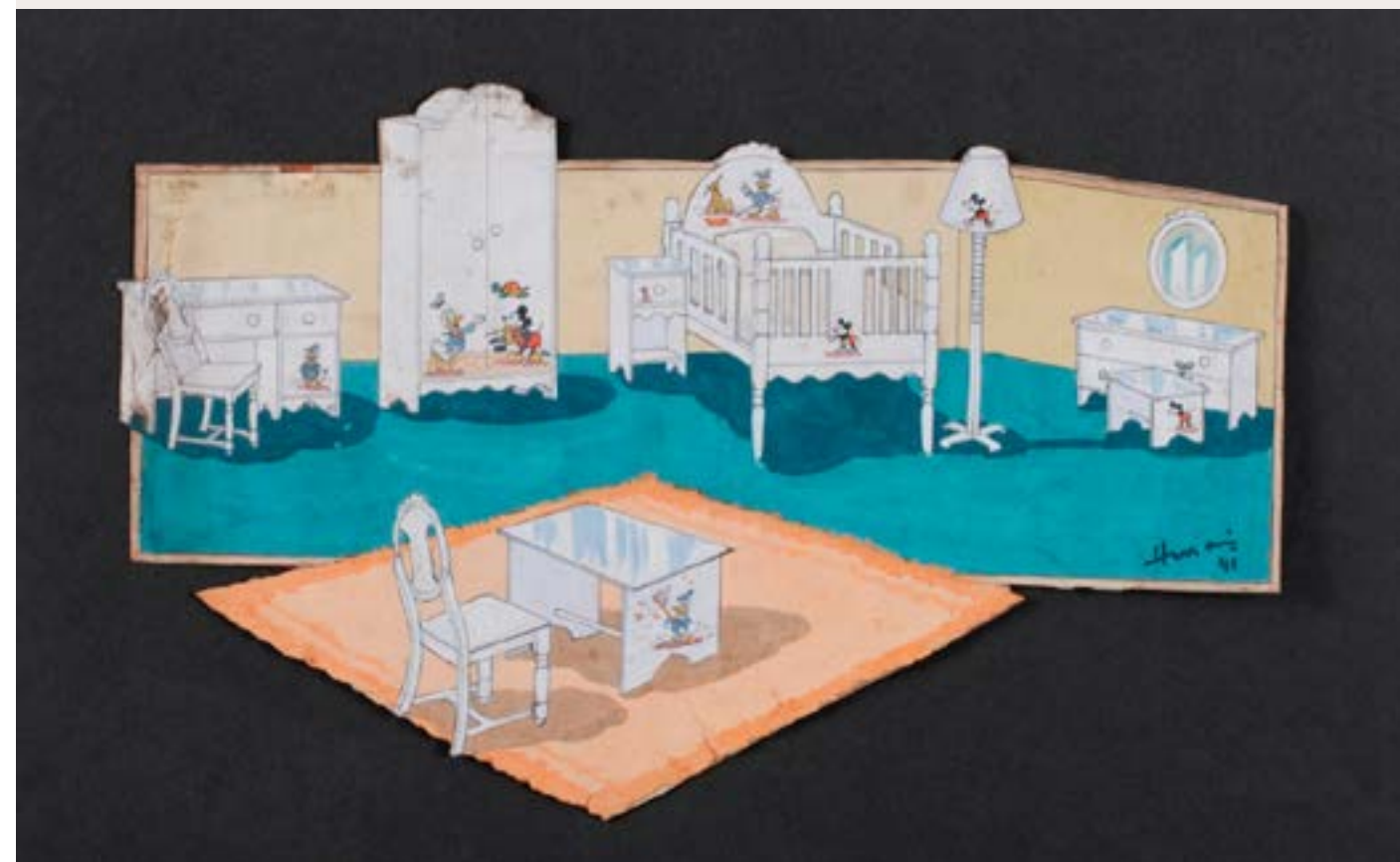
A series of misfortunes had cut short Husain's art education at Indore and he was forced to take up odd jobs to support his father's large family. While most scholarship on Husain states that he was self taught, this evidently isn't true. His small but significant stint at the School of Art, Indore, had contributed immensely to setting a foundation for his future career. A small watercolour [Fig.3] of Husain's children painted in 1947 is an exemplar of his days at Indore and provides a glimpse into Husain's strong academic skill.

Although Husain's formal education in art was disrupted, it did not deter him from following his ambition to become an artist.

Bombay being the metropolis that it was, familiar since the days of Husain's art school at Indore and filled with opportunities, would have been the natural choice for him to go there and try his luck to find employment to tide over his financial stress. In 1937 Husain moved to Bombay and joined a cinema poster painting workshop "with a meager start of six annas a day"[Husain, 1951, Exhibition Catalogue, Delhi.]. By 1941, Husain was married and due to this he needed a steady income and so found work as a designer/painter at a company that made children's toys and furniture. [Fig. 4-5] For some reason it is Husain's stint as a poster/billboard painter that has been ingrained in popular imagination. I suppose the storyline transitions better from a struggling billboard artist to India's most famous and successful modern artist when we picture him this way. Certainly, the story of a furniture designer with a steady paycheck turned artist isn't as glamorous an origin story!



Fig. 5 M. F. Husain, *Prince Charming*, 1944, Pen and Pencil on Paper, Image Courtesy of SaffronArt.



Before I continue further it would be good to review the various styles of art Husain was influenced by and was practicing till this point in the 1940's. This will help us understand how he approached modern art in the years to come. To make it easier, I am breakin it down into the following points:

A. Husain received a foundation level art education at Indore which gave him a basic set of skills that were dexterous enough to be deployed based on the tasks at hand. He would have learnt to draw and paint with watercolours proficiently. The legacy and influence of the Indore School's technique and their popularity in Bombay would have driven Husain to pursue a similar artistic path to make his entry into the Bombay art scene.

B. Husain's employment as a commercial artist, designer and billboard painter, for the first 9 - 10 years after moving to Bombay, gave him a completely different approach to making art. The skill set and methods of execution needed for these jobs were different from that of a fine artist. His furniture design relied heavily on precision/industrial drawing to define forms while the colour palette remained muted. The visual appearance of these works were a blend between architectural renderings and, the extremely popular, Walt Disney inspired cartoons. [Fig.6]



Fig. 6 Detail of a furniture suite designed by M.F. Husain, inspired by Walt Disney characters from Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs. M. F. Husain, 1943, Watercolour and Pencil on Board, Image Courtesy of Sotheby's.

Regarding Husain's billboard painting career, as there are no known examples, I can only hypothesize the impact this practice would have had on the artworks he went on to create as fine art. Based on the technique used by billboard painters even today, it would have been all about speedy execution and the use of 'cut-colour patches' to create almost photographic/graphic form, volume and light. Since these billboards had a very short lifespan, the customers would pay very little for them, which meant that the artists would have to work with very minimal materials yet provide the mass appeal needed to promote movies or products.

So when attempting to understand a work of fine art painted by Husain in this period, it can be theorized that a combination of the Indore painter's palette and it's fluid style along with the bright colors and flattened application of paint used to paint billboards, would have been the approach Husain took while making his artworks.

C. Husain not attending Sir J.J. School of Art after settling in Bombay also had an impact on how he approached fine art. Had he attended the college, he would have been under the tutelage of teachers like J.M. Ahivasi who were propagating the 'revivalist' style. Simply explained, this was a style of painting that encouraged the subject to have a nationalistic narrative which was executed through the combined visual and compositional influences of traditional miniature paintings and the murals at Ajanta & Ellora. In essence this school of painting was in stylistic opposition to what was being practiced by the Indore artists. The 'revivalist' style tended to be more Indian while the Indore style was more Western. Almost all of Husain's

contemporaries including V.S. Gaitonde, A.A. Rauba, B. Prabha, Bhanu Rajopadhye [Figs. 20-23] among many others had to negotiate their way out of this revivalist influence to arrive at their independent exploration of Modern Art in the years to come. Therefore, Husain's exploration of nationalistic naratives in his artwork, at the peak of the Indian independence movement, took a different approach as compared to his contemporaries. This means that the work we are trying to analyze in this essay was arrived at through an independent approach by Husain.



Fig. 7 A toy that depicts a horse similar to the one seen in the 'King of Hearts' painting. Image Courtesy of SaffronArt

D.

In the 1940's, possibly even after 1947, Husain was working on a personal project at his employer's workshop. He was making toys out of plywood cut-outs [Fig. 7] in themes that were from his younger days in Indore—images that represented rural domesticity. These toys were quite colourful and compositionally employed geometric patterns while retaining a wonderful sense of movement and animation. The subject of these toys interestingly retain their enquiry for several decades in Husain's practice.

Keeping this breakdown of Husain in mind, we can move forward to understand how he would have arrived at the 'King of Hearts'. But before that a few more things happened in Husain's career that had a significant impact on his artworks.

For any artist who wanted to take on the art world in Bombay in the mid 20th century, the first step was to submit their artworks to the Bombay Art Society and hope to be selected by the illustrious committee to exhibit at the annual exhibition at Sir Cowasjee Jehangir Hall. There were several categories for submitting works based on qualification, skill level and style of painting. In all probability Husain would have submitted his works under the 'Indian painting' category. He would have done this at some point towards the end of 1946 because his works were exhibited for the first time in January 1947 at the 56th annual exhibition of Bombay Art Society. It was only in 1947, at the dawn of India's independence and possibly after Husain's financial conditions were stable, that he made a complete shift towards exploring modernism.

It is here at this exhibition that Husain was identified by Francis Newton (Souza) [Francis Newton started to go by the name of F.N. Souza only from 1949 and therefore I have decided to call him by his name relevant to the period.]. Francis Newton was quite impressed by what he saw and decided to enlist Husain as his inductee into the Progressive Artist's Group (PAG)—a group for young artists united by a common goal, founded by Francis Newton, K.H. Ara and S.H. Raza, to explore the progressive and Western modernist ideas in art. While the PAG was established in 1947, Husain only officially joined and started to work with them in 1948.



Fig. 8 Detail of Kumhar by M.F. Husain. M. F. Husain, 1947. Oil on Canvas. Image Reproduced from: HUSAIN, Husain, Maqbul Fida & Richard Bartholomew & Shiv S. Kapur.

Looking for images of paintings from the 1947 exhibition I only could find the one reproduced in Husain's most important publications, titled Kumhar [Fig 8].

I started incessantly searching for more early works by Husain to see if I could find any that were similar to what he might have submitted to the Bombay Art Society's exhibition in 1947. I came across a set of 5 artworks that were on auction in a Bonham's 2007 catalogue. I was thrilled with the discovery because it was for the first time that I had come across works of Husain's from the 1940's before he joined the Progressive Artist's Group and that were not his commercial/design work. Three of these works [Fig.9-11] are particularly important because they have all the makings of the Indore School influence and in tune with the theme of paintings that were popular at the Bombay Art Society and other competitive exhibitions. Their style and execution was very similar to works done by S.R. Raza, N.S. Bendre and a whole host of others at the time.



Fig. 9 M. F. Husain, Market Stall, 1947, Watercolour on Paper, Image Courtesy of Bonham's.



Fig. 10 M. F. Husain, Market Barrow, 1948, Watercolour on Paper, Image Courtesy of Bonham's.

Reading the auction notes, I realized that these lots however were withdrawn from the auction and there could have been many reasons for the same. After thinking about them for a while, my line of thought generated three possible outcomes. First, the lot was withdrawn because of a breach in contract either by the seller

Fig. 11 M. F. Husain, Street Market, 1948, Watercolour on Paper, Image Courtesy of Bonham's.



or buyer. Second, the works were identified before the sale as fake, however I am fairly certain that these are original because of the stylistic similarities as well as the rock-solid provenance the works have. More so, for anyone

to make fakes of this period of Husain's works had to have seen other works similar to this of which there are none. Third, the artist himself could have objected to the sale of works from a period where he did not want them to

enter his narrative; a similar case when S.H. Raza also refused to authenticate early commercial / commissioned watercolours from the 40's as his works of fine art.

Either way, I believe these works to be authentic and they help to deepen our understanding of Husain's early career. As for the provenance of these three paintings, they were bought by an expat, Norman Alexander Gordon Neil, stationed in Bombay in the 1940's and early 50's, from an exhibition of Husain's works in 1951 in Bombay. These five paintings up for auction were among several other artworks of Husain bought by this gentleman at the same time. In a few instances I have now observed that artists tend to quickly dismiss works from their early career. Perhaps it has to do with bad memories of difficult times or it reveals an uncomfortable truth or it is a point of departure which the artist does not relate to anymore. In Husain's case, this discovery is a wonderful missing link.

1948 was a year of exploration for the artists of PAG.

Newton was organizing a few student shows at the Bombay Art Society Salon, Raza travelled to Kashmir as part of the political movement there and only towards the end of the year did Husain take a significant step towards realizing his artistic vision. Husain and Newton travelled to Delhi to see an exhibition of classical works that highlighted the best of Indian art from various Museum collections across India. This exhibition was a moment of great realization for both of them. It is after this trip that Husain's engagement and exploration of modern art really found a footing. He now knew that he needed to bring his engagement with the everyday life of people around him to the foreground to highlight his identity and enquiry with his nation.

1949 was the year that the PAG had their first group exhibition of the founding six members.

Husain's works were primarily on canvas at this point and he had moved on to painting with Oils. This was a fairly bold step because the usage of Oils on canvas to paint in a modernist style was a direct break from tradition of painting academically in this medium—it was in tune with the western idea of Modern Art.

1950 was an interesting year for the entire progressive artist's group.

On February 3rd 1950, Mr. Emanuel Schlesinger, an art collector, inaugurated M. F. Husain's first solo painting exhibition at the Bombay Art Society Salon on Rampart Row. In April 1950, Chetana, a cafe situated on Rampart Row, decided that it wanted to create a 'permanent' space in the city for artists to exhibit their works and for art-lovers to enjoy the art. A major exhibition was mounted by the PAG at Chetana and it was inaugurated by the Governor and his wife Rani Maharaj Singh on 23rd April. This was not officially a PAG member's exhibition but included a lot of their peers and guides like N. S. Bendre, Shivax Chavda, Palsikar and Pai among others. On August 10th, the PAG members held another exhibition at Chetana and it is possible that it was at this showing that the painting in discussion was sold.

Looking at artworks from 1950 that Husain made, a process starts to emerge.

From the very beginning of his explorations, he was engaged with the common man doing day to day tasks. Husain was in the thick of the moment of political independence for India but he seemed to be observing people and tasks that spoke of a certain lack of freedom. Starting from the work *Kumhar* that shows a potter making pots, his toys of rural domesticity and his large canvases showing daily lives of the underprivileged in the streets of Bombay, Husain had found his footing.

While researching hundreds of archival images of Husain's works from 1950 to study them in detail, I made some interesting discoveries. Thanks to the wonders of the Internet, all auction houses have their image resources online and I did not have to sit with hundreds of books searching page after page. The discovery was made at a Pundole's auction dedicated to M. F. Husain in which there were assorted sketches sold that at one point belonged to Husain's singular most important collector, Badrivishal Pitti. These sketches looked familiar and in no time I was able to match them to their painted canvas versions. I never realized that Husain was first making sketches [Fig. 12-15] and then working at his studio to paint. This is very different from how Raza, Ara and Gade worked.



Fig. 12 Preparatory sketch for *Peasant Couple*. Image Courtesy of Pundole's



Fig. 13 M. F. Husain. *Peasant Couple*, 1950. Oil on canvas. Image Courtesy of the Peabody Essex Museum, Salem, MA. Photography by Walter Silver



Fig. 15 M. F. Husain. *Woman*, 1950. Oil on canvas. Image Courtesy of Christie's.



Fig. 14 Preparatory sketch for *Woman*. Image Courtesy of Pundole's

Looking at these works from 1950, one now starts to understand the construct of 'King of Hearts'. The picture has everything in it. From geometric structuring of the toys, the cut-colour patches of the billboards, and most importantly the central figures of the King, Queen and their son Jack. The elephant and the horse have always been symbols of royalty and power. The heart clearly represents passion and playfulness. But Husain painting

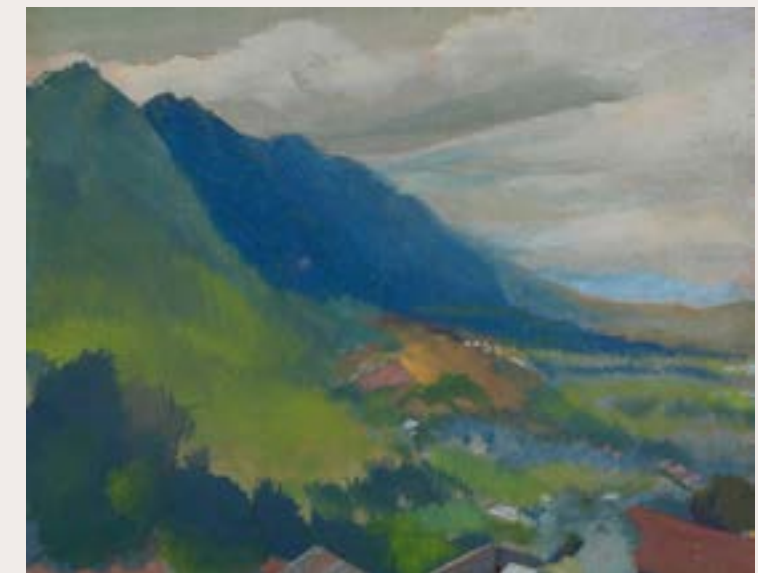


M. F. Husain painting in his studio in 1950. Image Reproduced from G. Kapur, Contemporary Indian Artists, 1978.

Fig. 16 N. S. Bendre, Watercolour on Paper, c.1940's. Image Courtesy of SaffronArt.



Fig. 17 G.M. Solegaonkar, Watercolour on Paper, c.1940's. Image Courtesy of Ashvita's.



a pack of cards represents his careful choice of depicting the common city dweller's habit of simple entertainment and perhaps their (or his own) gamble of fortune. It is for this complexity of thought and the ability of Husain to connect with his viewer that I called this essay the King of Hearts—Husain was an expert at knowing what his audience wanted.

Mulk Raj Anand sums it up perfectly in his review of Husain's first publication in 1955

”

I would like to suggest that in the work of M. F. Husain, since the years when he left off painting commercial posters, through the hard years of experimentation until now, there has been a more or less sustained effort to create an art of high pressure from within the depth of his Indian psyche, through his Indian experience, and in a new Indian idiom. This is not to deny that Husain has not borrowed almost his whole way of handling paint on canvas from Europe. But he has tried to submit the technical lessons of the West to his peculiarly earthy vision of India.” [Books - Paintings of Husain, Anand, Mulk Raj, Marg-art. org] And when you interpret it this way, Husain truly is the King of Indian Hearts.



Fig. 20 S. H. Raza, 1947, Watercolour on Paper. Image Courtesy of Sir J.J. School of Art.

Fig. 22 A. A. Raiba, Untitled, 1949, Watercolour on Paper. Image Courtesy of Ashvita's.



Fig. 19 M.S. Joshi, Udaipur, Bombay, Watercolour on Paper. Image Courtesy of Piramal Museum of Art.

Fig. 21 Bathers by Bhanu Athaiya. Image Courtesy of Prinseps.





Fig. 18 Deokrishna Jatashankar Joshi, Udaipur, 1946, Oil on canvas on board. Image Courtesy of Theodore Bruce, Australia.



Fig. 23 V. S. Gaitonde, Untitled, 1949, Watercolour on Paper. Image Courtesy of Piramal Museum of Art.

-Ashvin E. Rajagopalan

Ashvin E. Rajagopalan is the Director of the Piramal Art Foundation in Mumbai. He has played an integral role in setting up the Piramal Museum of Art alongside being an avid art collector, researcher and writer.

References

1. Based on his birth certificate Husain was born in 1913. However, Husain mentions that he was born in 1915 in a 1951 exhibition catalogue and 1916 is mentioned in a 1950 Progressive Artists Group Catalogue. I chose to go with the official record.
2. Husain, 1951, Exhibition Catalogue, Delhi.
3. Today his institute is called 'Devlalika Kala Veethika' however, records from the 1930s and 40s show that he was referred to as D.D. Deolalikar.
4. <https://shodhganga.inflibnet.ac.in/> Accessed on 18/05/2021
5. <http://johnnyml.blogspot.com/2009/02/devlalika-fine-arts-college-indore.html> Accessed on 20-05-21
6. It is also important to credit the Indore School for this style of painting because of the impact it had on colleagues of Husain like S.H. Raza and H.A. Gade who started their careers with this style, long before their introduction to German Expressionist styles taught to them by European mentors in Bombay in the 1940's
7. Husain, 1951, Exhibition Catalogue, Delhi.
8. Francis Newton started to go by the name of F.N. Souza only from 1949 and therefore I have decided to call him by his name relevant to the period.
9. Books - Paintings of Husain, Anand, Mulk Raj, Marg-art.org

Lot No. 23

M.F. HUSAIN (1915 - 2011)

UNTITLED

Oil on canvas
Signed and dated verso
Circa 1950
23.2 x 17.7 in.

Estimate

INR 45,00,000 - 60,00,000

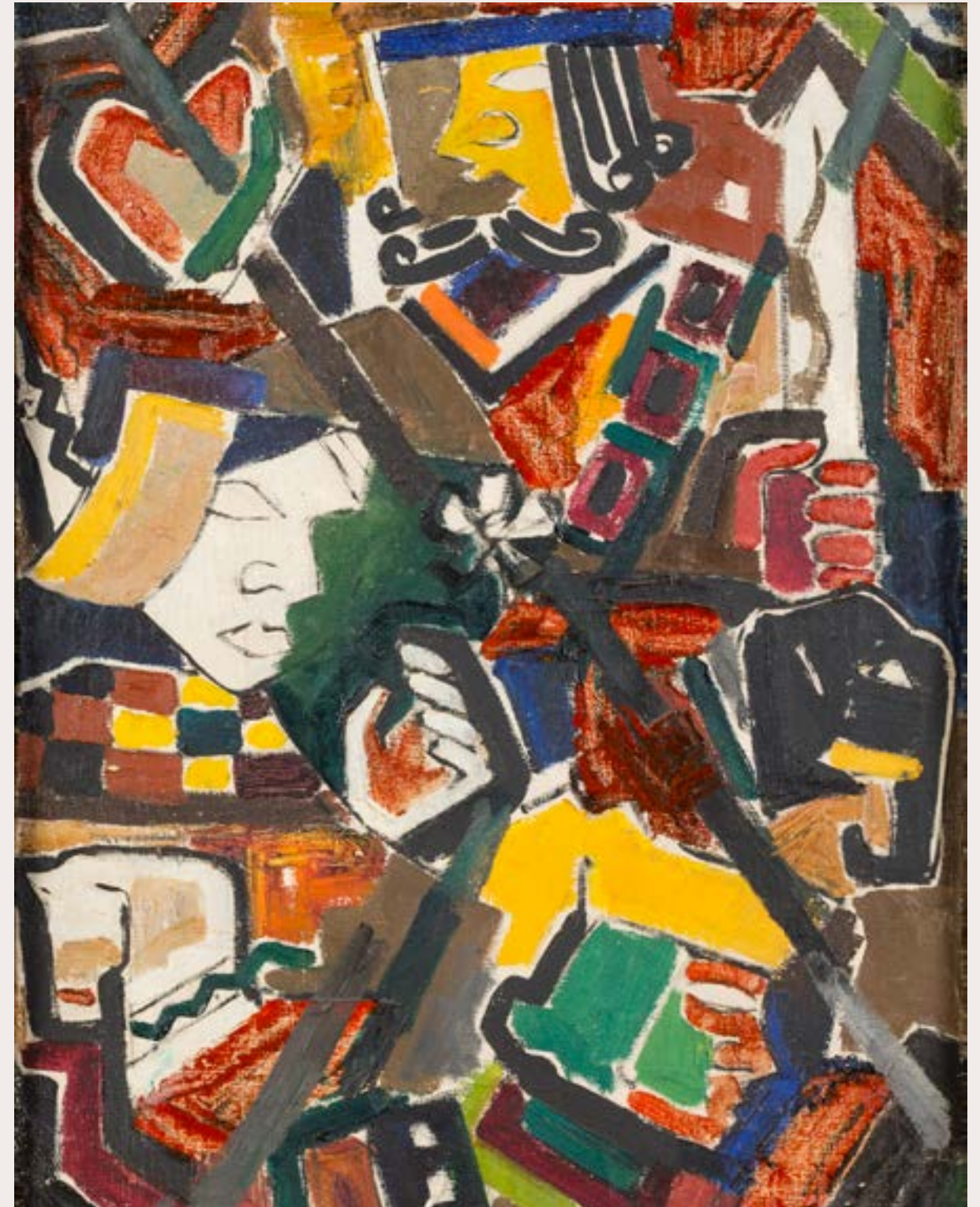
Provenance

Acquired by Leslie Albion Squires
Private Collection, Delhi
Private Collection, Bangalore

Lot Description

M.F. Husain's paintings from the 1950s demonstrate his sharp sense of design acquired from his early rendezvous with calligraphy. This early M.F. Husain painting reveals his artistic strength during his formative years and gives you a rare insight into the skills that would soon define his oeuvre.

Lot number/23



ON BHUPEN KHAKHAR'S

ENCAUSTIC
PAINTING

- RANJIT HOSKOTE

At first sight, this encaustic painting – rendered in heated beeswax, into which pigments of various colours have been mixed – seems to be worlds away from what most viewers know of Bhupen Khakhar's work. There are no limp-limbed yet curiously wide-awake men from a broad middle class; no domestic interiors laid out for erotic encounter; no playful or picaresque encounters among figures whose ordinariness is belied by some eccentric bodily feature or undecipherable gesture. No figures at all, in fact.

This work from the 1970s depicts a vermilion-smeared deity from a wayside shrine. Like many such deities, it is formless – the proper term is 'aniconic' – and looks out at the world through a pair of enamel eyes. Known technically as chakshu, from the Sanskrit for 'eye', these are presented as votive offerings at Jain shrines, to adorn the icons of the tirthankaras, as well as at Hindu shrines, especially for Krishna and also for the Devi in her varied manifestations. The eyes

in this work are of different sizes. Rather than having occult symbolic significance, this happenstance may simply reflect the spontaneous and accretive – rather than designed and programmatic – nature of worship and ceremonial at wayside shrines in India.



Hanuman, Mixed media oil on board, Circa 1960

When we compare this work with Khakhar's 'Interior of a Hindu Temple III' (mixed media on board, 1975). Coll. Museum of Art & Photography (MAP), Bengaluru, it takes its place in a phase of the artist's career when he was deeply interested in the everyday life of the gods of the street and the crossroads. 'Interior of a Hindu Temple III' combines elements of painting and collage to demonstrate a spectrum of icon-making practices, ranging from a near-aniconic emphasis on the divine, all-seeing eye that bestows on the worshipper the grace of darshan, to the mass-printed poster or calendar image of a multi-armed divinity.

Bhupen Khakhar (1934-2003) belonged to a generation of postcolonial Indian artists who devoted themselves to irony, allegory, and the playful subversion of bourgeois social pieties.

They embraced the local character of metropolitan and small-town India in all its roughness, precariousness, and makeshift awkwardness, representing the middle-class and working-class lifeworlds that had largely been excluded from the polite domain of art dominated by abstract and transcendentalist idioms. **A dramatist and fiction-writer in addition to being a painter, Khakhar participated in two coups d'état of representation.** During the 1960s, he brought the garish interiors and bricolage aesthetic of the non-Anglophone middle class into art; and by the 1990s, he had come out as India's first gay artist, revelling in such taboo subjects as the pleasures of homoerotic life and its picaresque dramaturgy.

Working through an interplay of voyeurism and clairvoyance in both phases, Khakhar remained committed to epiphanic portraiture, attentive to the small choreographies of interpersonal contact, the details of look, touch, and speech.

A connoisseur of the shifting balance between solitude and sociality, **Khakhar was a natural-born anthropologist who shuttled easily between the roles of participant and observer in the various interpersonal situations in which he found himself.** Khakhar tended to fuse his portraits of others with self-portraits so that his anxieties, exhilarations, and predicaments became interwoven with those of his subjects. Khakhar's deliberate use of seemingly naïve idioms acted as camouflage for a sophisticated retrieval of various styles, including the Rajput miniature, the Nathdwara pichhwai or backcloth, the cinema poster, and the wayside votive shrine. In the world of belief, Khakhar could be both the bhajan-singing devotee (memorably, he sings a devotional song in Arun Khopkar's 1990 film poem, 'Figures of Thought', dedicated to the work of Khakhar, Vivan Sundaram, and Nalini Malani) and the impish skeptic poking fun at the pieties of the faithful.

At the heart of Khakhar's universe, I believe, was the leela – the principle of divine play, which can present itself as a creative adventure and also as caprice or folly.

In India's Bhakti traditions – with their practices of ecstatic devotionism – the leela could range from stylised festivity to bawdy and anarchic celebration. In Khakhar's art, this double-edged spirit of leela took diverse forms. The high ritual of the yagna or sacrifice could, in his paintings, double as a gay marriage festival; the multiple erotic encounters of the Deity in the Pushtimargi raas krida could be translated into secular and even joyously profane terms. **In Bhupen Khakhar's encaustic painting of the aniconic vermilion deity with its masterful eyes, we are summoned back into the primeval world of the deity who could either harm or heal, depending on how it was propitiated and appeased.** The enigmatic sources of the religious imagination are not that far apart from the sources of the artistic imagination: the mystery requires a substantial degree of attentiveness and responsibility, for its proper articulation.

–Ranjit Hoskote

Ranjit Hoskote is an Indian poet, art critic, cultural theorist, and independent curator. He was honored with the Sahitya Akademi Award for lifetime achievement in 2004.

Lot No. 24

BHUPEN KHAKHAR (1934 - 2003)

HANUMAN

Oil on relief plaster, with incised and mixed media on board
42 x 42 in.

Estimate

INR 1,25,00000 - 2,00,00000

Provenance

Esteemed overseas based collection

Lot Description

Overseas lot. "This work from the 1970s depicts a vermillion-smeared deity from a wayside shrine. Like many such deities, it is formless – the proper term is 'aniconic' – and looks out at the world through a pair of enamel eyes." – Ranjit Hoskote. Born in 1934 in Mumbai, Bhupen played a prominent role in modern Indian art and was a key international figure in 20th-century painting. Khakhar's narrative paintings and works were deeply rooted in influences ranging from devotional aesthetics and street culture to European painting and pop art.

Lot number / 24



Lot No. 25

VELU VISWANADHAN (1940)

UNTITLED

Oil on canvas
Signed at back
2010
23.7 x 23.7 in.

Estimate

INR 4,00,000 - 5,00,000

Provenance

Esteemed overseas based collection

Lot Description

Velu Viswanadhan is an Indian painter, sculptor, and filmmaker. Born in Kerala and trained at the College of Arts and Crafts in Madras, Viswanadhan was a founding member of the Cholamandal Artists' village. His artistic oeuvre traces his still evolving unique style rooted in Tantric ideology and abstraction. This painting from 2010 is untitled, as are all of Viswanadhan's works - creating limitless visual possibilities for the viewer. Most of Viswanadhan's works are bathed in a lambent glow of casein, a paint made from proteins derived from milk.

Lot number / 25



Lot No. 26

KS KULKARNI (1916-1964)

UNTITLED

Oil on board
1980
22 x 29 in.

Estimate

INR 4,00,000 - 5,00,000

Provenance

Private Collection

Lot Description

Krishna Shamrao Kulkarni was a fine colourist whose artistic body of works oscillated between expressionism and neoclassicism. Kulkarni painted abstract landscapes with angular bold lines, smooth surfaces, and shaded areas to emphasize chiaroscuro in his works. He often combined his modern aesthetics with cultural and rural subject matter. Kulkarni used unexpected combos and experimented with fresh, bright colours to depict his work.

Lot number/26



Lot No. 27

CHINTAMANI KAR (1915-2005)

NAYEEKA

Bronze
2002
14 x 8.5 x 7.0 in.

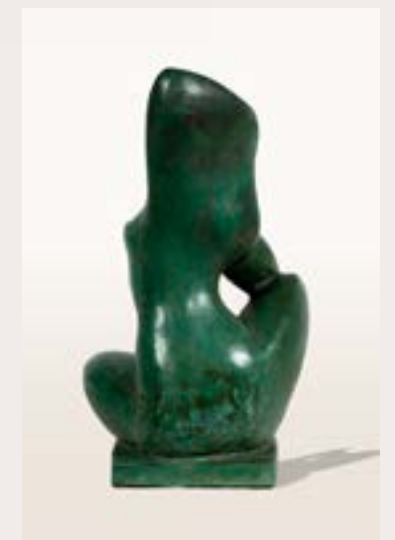
Estimate

INR 4,00,000 - 6,00,000

Provenance

Acquired directly from the artist

Lot number / 27



Lot No. 28

PRADOSH DASGUPTA (1912-1991)

LOVERS

Bronze
1978
4.7 x 14.5 in.

Estimate

INR 4,00,000 - 6,00,000

Provenance

Acquired directly from the artist's estate

Lot Description

Edition 2 of 9. Prodosh Dasgupta was a crucial figure of that mid 20th century generation of artists in Bengal who were giving shape to a new vocabulary modernism in Indian art. His role was particularly important in defining a distinct place for modernism in Indian sculpture, in advocating the concept of form as an independent identity in sculpture, and in pioneering a style of semi-abstract three-dimensional figuration.

Lot number / 28



Lot No. 29

SARBARI ROY CHAUDHARI (1933-2012)

HEAD OF A WOMAN

Bronze
1989
7.8 x 5.5 x 5.9 in.

Estimate

INR 3,00,000 - 4,00,000

Provenance

Acquired directly from the artist

Lot Description

Edition 7 of 9.

Lot number/29



Lot No. 30

SUNIL MADHAV SEN (1910 – 1979)

MAN WITH HOOKAH

Watercolor on paper
Signed lower right
30 x 19 in.

Estimate

INR 1,00,000 – 2,00,000

Provenance

Private Collection

Lot Description

Sunil Madhav Sen experimented with both Western and indigenous styles, evolving his work into a truly personal interpretation of Indian modernity. His artistic evolution traces an expansive spectrum, ranging from simple linear depictions, ink and wash techniques, and relief paintings in mosaic to metal collage.

Lot number/30



Lot No. 31

PRAN KRISHNA PAL (1915 – 1988)

THE PRIME MOON

Tempera on paper
Signed lower left
1936
9.4 x 7.8 in.

Estimate

INR 2,00,000 – 3,00,000

Provenance

Private Collection

Lot Description

Pran Krishna Pal was an artist and a quintessential member of the Calcutta Group which was formed in the aftermath of the Bengal Famine in 1943. Pal, along with members of the Calcutta Group resisted the romanticism and lyricism prevalent in the work of Bengali artists at that time and painted images evoking anguish and trauma to reflect the crisis of urban society. His early works demonstrate the influence of Mughal and Rajasthani style of painting.

Lot number/31



Lot No. 32

GOPAL GHOSE (1913 - 1980)

LANDSCAPE

Pastel on Paper
Signed and dated lower left
1959
9.0 x 14 in.

Estimate

INR 1,00,000 - 2,00,000

Provenance

Acquired directly from the artist's estate

Lot Description

Gopal Ghose was an artist and one of the founding members of the Calcutta Group. Ghose's artistic oeuvre reveals his dexterity in handling various mediums such as watercolor, tempera, pen and ink, and pastels. The "Indian wanderer" as Ghose would call himself became a legend for reinterpreting the genre of landscape painting.

Lot number/32



Lot No. 33

CHITTAPROSAD BHATTACHARYA (1915 - 1978)

UNTITLED

Ink on paper
1942
38.1 x 25.5 in.

Estimate

INR 2,00,000 - 3,00,000

Provenance

Private Collection

Lot Description

Chittaprosad Bhattacharya was an artist, avid storyteller, and poet. His body of works document human suffering, the labouring poor, and the marginalised. Chittaprosad's artistic oeuvre is a revolution against the tyranny of domination and social injustice at that time. In 1943 - 44, Bhattacharya blatantly depicted the grim realities of the Bengal Famine through profuse sketches in stark black and white, copies of which were seized and destroyed by the British.

Lot number / 33



Lot No. 34

JAMINI ROY (1887 - 1972)

UNTITLED

Tempera on cloth
Signed lower right
Circa 1930
34 x 15 in.

Estimate

INR 3,00,000 - 5,00,000

Provenance

Private Collection

Lot Description

Jamini Roy was one of the most iconic figures of modern Indian art in the mid-20th century. In the late 1920s and early 1930s, Roy, overwhelmed by folk nostalgia, rejected his bourgeois art-school-trained identity to create art reminiscent of folk forms providing a cultural root independent of the west.

Lot number/34



Lot No. 35

JAMINI ROY (1887 - 1972)

NAYIKAS

Tempera on cloth
Circa 1931
23 x 60 in.

Estimate

INR 10,00,000 - 15,00,000

Provenance

Private Collection

Lot Description

Jamini Roy's artistic diversity is revealed in dark-lined brush drawings and his play with mosaic effects. This tempera on cloth from circa 1930 titled "Nayikas" demonstrates the usage of local pigments, chrome yellows with rich blues and greens.

Lot number/35



Lot number/35

Lot No. 36

JAMINI ROY (1887 - 1972)

KRISHNA LEELA

Tempera on cloth
Circa 1932
18 x 52 in.

Estimate

INR 8,00,000 - 12,00,000

Provenance

Private Collection

Lot Description

Jamini Roy's artistic magnificence was deeply rooted in Bengali folk art. The quintessential Indian folk artist's name soon spilled over from the art world into a larger and public domain. This artwork is a tempera on cloth and dated circa 1930.

Lot number/36



Lot number / 36



Lot No. 37

GANESH PYNE (1937 - 2013)

UNTITLED

Ink on paper
Signed lower right
1979
5.5 x 7.5 in.

Estimate

INR 2,50,000 - 3,50,000

Provenance

Private Collection

Lot number/37



Lot No. 38

GANESH PYNE (1937 - 2013)

UNTITLED (JOTTING)

Mixed Media on paper
1995
9.4 x 7.8 in.

Estimate

INR 2,50,000 - 3,50,000

Provenance

Acquired directly from the artist

Lot Description

Ganesh Pyne was born in 1937 in Kolkata amidst the turbulent years leading to Indian Independence and partition. Pyne's works comprise intricate ink works, haunting temperas, and jottings.

Lot number/38



Lot No. 39

GANESH PYNE (1937 - 2013)

UNTITLED

Ink/pen on paper
Signed lower right
1983
5.0 x 6.0 in.

Estimate

INR 4,00,000 - 5,00,000

Provenance

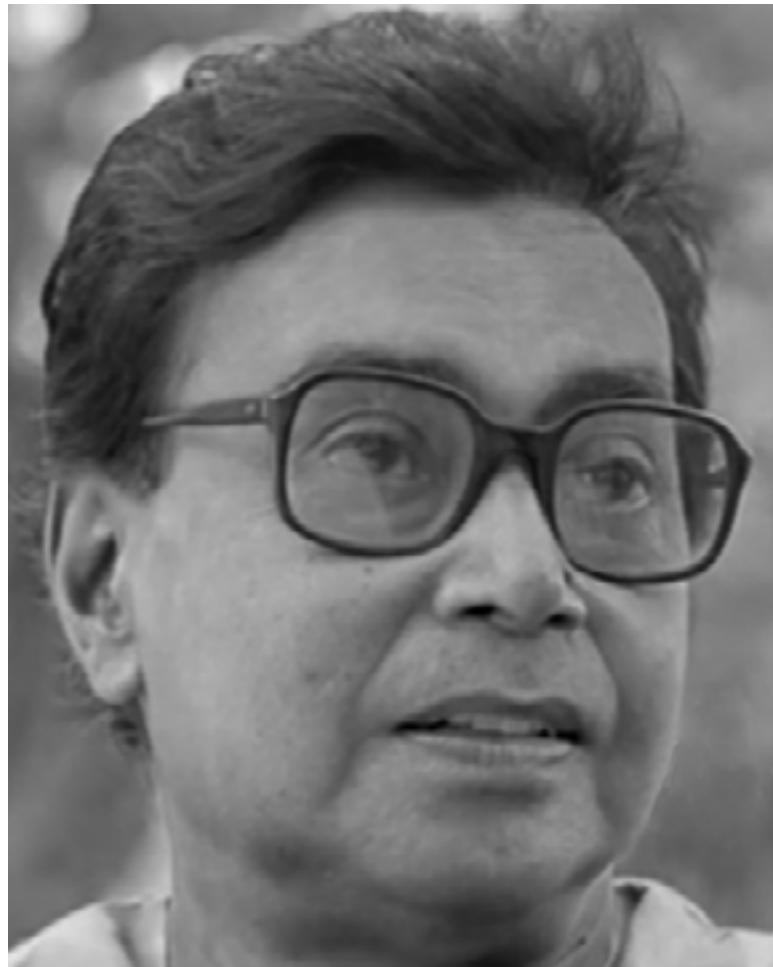
Private Collection

Lot Description

Ganesh Pyne was one of India's foremost modernists with worldwide recognition for his dark surrealism. This ink on paper drawing from 1983 demonstrates an inventive play of light and dark, with a quiet sense of the uncanny through distorted and exaggerated figures.

Lot number/39





Ganesh Pyne (1937 - 2013)

GANESH PYNE
Born in Calcutta. ~~1937~~

① ^{representational} Though a representational painter by nature, I keep my eyes open to the beauty created by prism and ~~ray~~ am eager to use the principles of abstraction in my works. Idealisation of forms, ornamentation and thoughts of my introvert mind often make my paintings ethereal and dreamy.

② It is rather difficult for a painter of today to evaluate the small contemporaneity in art. However, I feel that art nowadays is a ruthless struggle for invention. Unfortunately when these 'inventions' get together, we don't find much newness among them. 'Modern convention' still prevails and if anti-art is not the future or re-introduction of the older values is not the remedy, then we must look forward to progress.

③ This is a simple pen and ink drawing - the worn warrior holds his broken bow and rides his immobile chariot.
In the arrangement of forms, architectural harmony has been aimed at. It could achieve the desired beauty if the head, hands and wheels has proper relation. The purpose of pen and ink is to derive dotted light effect.

Early writings by Ganesh Pyne.
Image Copyright Akar Prakar Archives

Lot No. 40

GANESH PYNE (1937 - 2013)

DIARY

Ink on paper
Circa 1995
7.0 x 5.0 x 1.0 in.

Estimate

INR 40,00,000 - 60,00,000

Provenance

Private Collection

Lot Description

Ganesh Pyne was an artist with an ardent love for the written word. Pyne's fascination with literature spans over 350 pages of his diary from the 1990s. His notes reveal lines of poetry written by prominent personalities from all over the world, giving us an insight into his erudite personality. This diary is a window to Pyne's thoughts, musings, and motivations quintessential to his artistic oeuvre. The diary includes extensive inventory of sales made in the late 90s.

Lot number/40



Lot No. 41

ANNASAHEB RAJOPADHYE (-1938)

BAL GANDHARV ; OTHER PORTRAITS

Oil on canvas

Circa 1930

8.5 x 8.5 in. ; 16 x 11 in. ; 12 x 9.0 in. ; 3.0 x 5.0 in.

Estimate

INR 30,000 - 50,000

Provenance

Estate of Bhanu Athaiya

Lot Description

Set of 4 artworks [Bal Gandharv (8.5 x 8.5 in.) ; Annasaheb's Wife - Shantabai (16 x 11 in.) ; Annasaheb's Mother (12 x 9 in.), Unknown (3 x 5 in.)] Annasaheb's interest lay in portraiture, hence he painted images of family members, as well as of theatre greats such as Bal Gandharva from photographic references. Bal Gandharva ruled the Marathi musical drama world for almost half a century. He was a famed singer and stage actor whose artistic magnificence lay in performing a variety of feminine character roles on the stage.

Lot number / 41



Lot No. 42

FRANCIS NEWTON SOUZA
(1924 - 2002)

LETTERS

Ink on paper
1988
11 x 8.5 in. (3) ; 5.5 x 8.5 in. (1)

Estimate
INR 50,000 - 75,000

Provenance
Collection of Brij Sharma

Lot Description
Letters from F.N Souza in the summer of '88, expressing his views on Modern art.

Lot number/42



Lot No. 43

RABINDRANATH TAGORE
(1861 - 1941)

POEM

Ink on paper
Circa 1930
3.0 x 5.0 in.

Estimate

INR 3,00,000 - 5,00,000

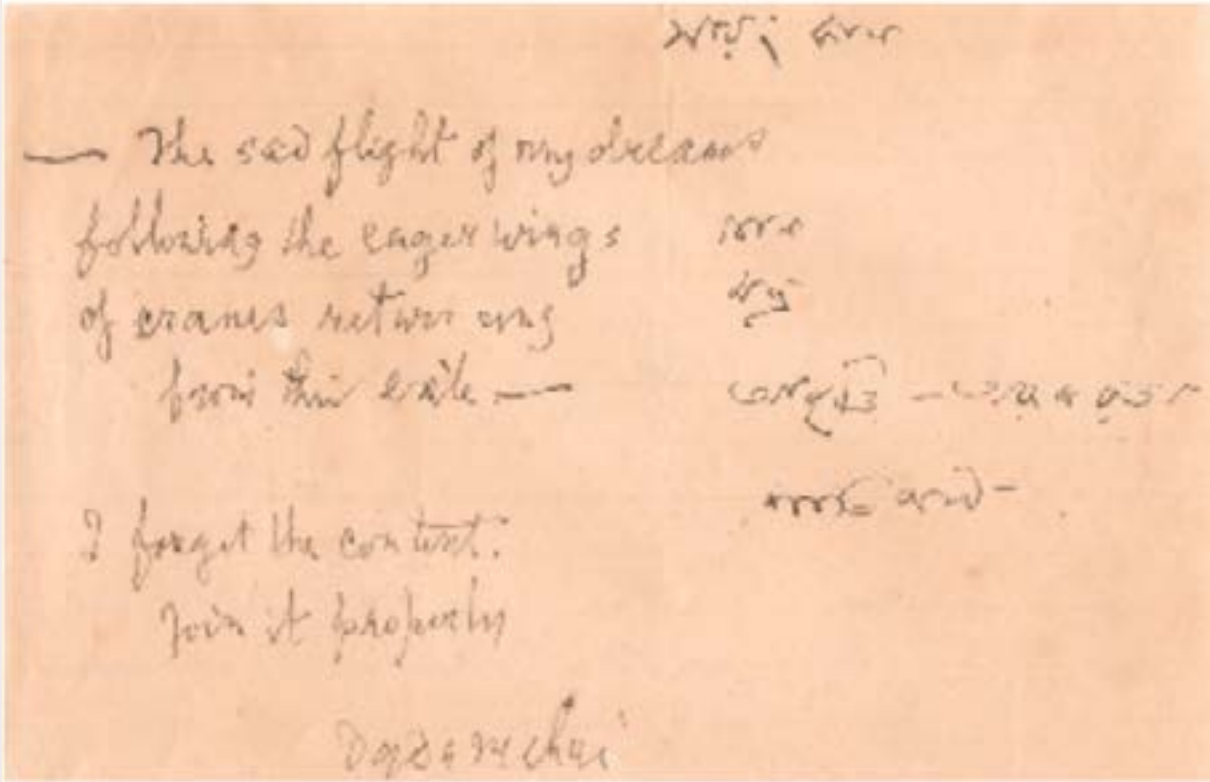
Provenance

Estate of Rathindranath Tagore - Mira Chatterjee

Lot Description

Translation from Bengali:
Evening time
Song
Chants
Recitation Arup Ratan (Formless Jewel)
Nitipath (Moral teachings)

Lot number/43



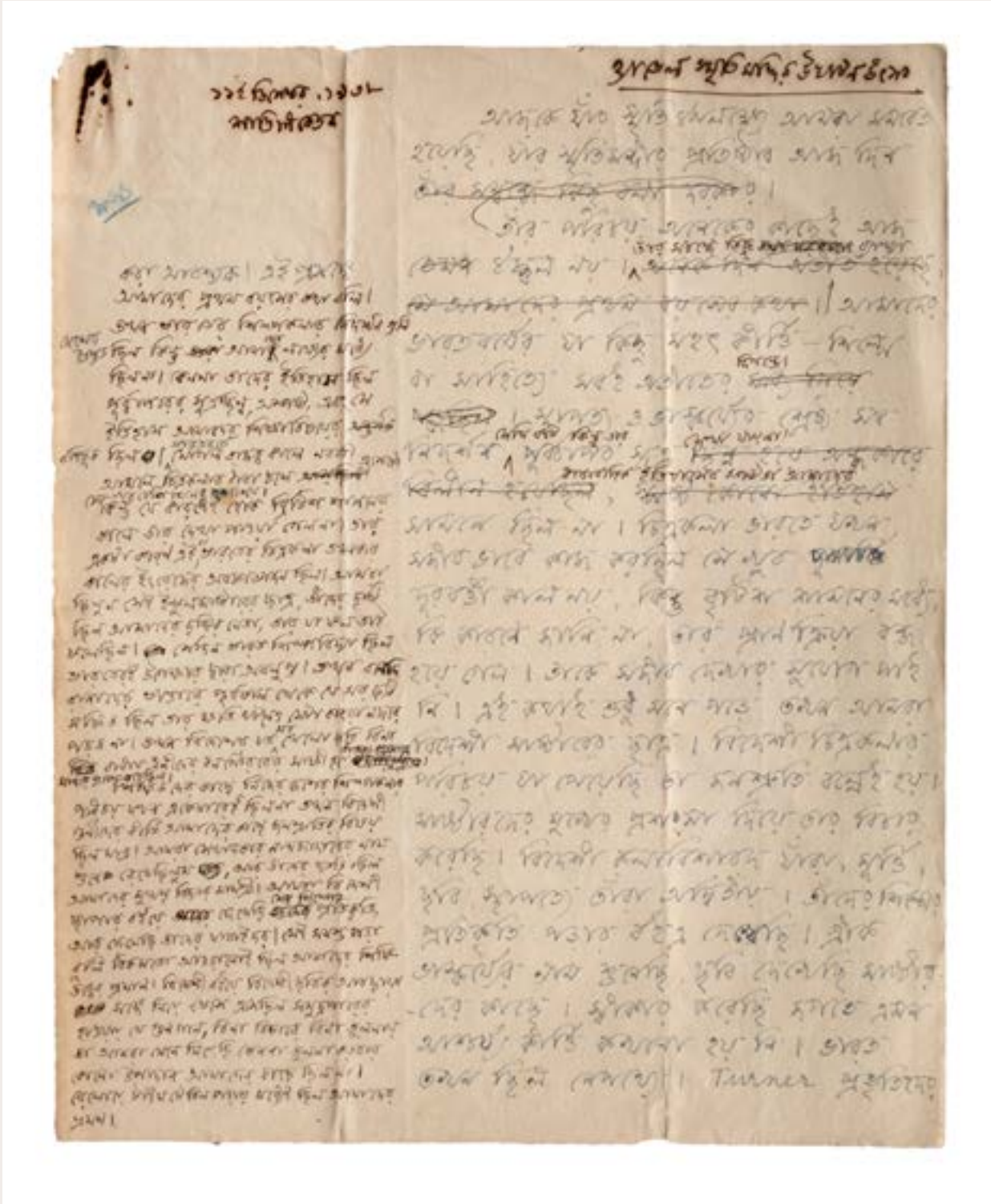
SHANKHA GHOSH -
IN MEMORIAM

The country just lost an eminent poet and a Rabindranath Tagore specialist. I had first heard of Shankho Ghosh from Raman Sivakumar at Santiniketan, who had suggested I take his help in annotating Rabindranath Tagore's speeches from the Rathindranath Tagore estate. Annotating Rabindranath is not an easy task, there are many nuances. These speeches were written in interesting times – independence movement, internal politics in Santiniketan, impending wars and leading up to the famous crisis of civilisations speech just before he passed away. It is purely politics that these speeches have remained in private hands as his son Rathindranath was forced to leave Santiniketan around the time of conversion to a centrally funded university – he took this important archival material with him to Dehradun.

Around the time, I had met Shankho da, the letter exchanges between Romain Rolland and Rabindranath Tagore were just published by Oxford University Press. Shankho da had agreed to move in a similar direction. Unfortunately, his health was not co-operating – problems in speaking made every discussion difficult. Still each time I visited Kolkata – I made it a point to visit him and of course each time was served with a platter of 'mishti' in style – Shankho da was a man of custom. He will be missed.

His demise leaves this project incomplete and since we are not sure if it ever will be completed, we are putting these in public domain. There are discussions on art, politics, doodles – a rare glimpse and an insight into his thinking. What is seen here are the raw speeches, written initially from an extemporaneous transcription and then corrected and re-written (and corrected via erasures and doodles) by Rabindranath himself.

-Indrajit Chatterjee



Translations available at Prinseps.com

[illegible]

যিনি শান্ত, যিনি দ্বিম, যিনি
আঁখি অঁখি অঁখি অঁখি অঁখি
পূর্ণ হতে চাহে ।
আম যদি চাহে
একটি অঁখি অঁখি অঁখি
যে অঁখি অঁখি অঁখি
করা যদি অঁখি হতে, তবে মনে
করা অঁখি অঁখি অঁখি
হল ।

2

১. প্রথম পর্ব
 ২. দ্বিতীয় পর্ব
 ৩. তৃতীয় পর্ব
 ৪. চতুর্থ পর্ব
 ৫. পঞ্চম পর্ব
 ৬. ষষ্ঠ পর্ব
 ৭. সপ্তম পর্ব
 ৮. অষ্টম পর্ব
 ৯. নবম পর্ব
 ১০. দশম পর্ব

८/११४०

८. सावित्रीकान्त प्रदिपित मीमांसा ३
श्रीधर प्रियमित्र, इलाहाबाद
इ.स. १९३३ (मुद्रित)





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LOT No.	Artist/Description	Maximum Bid Amount (INR)

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Telephone:

Signature:

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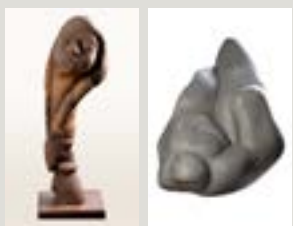
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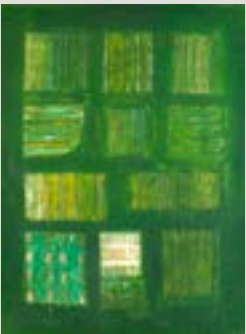
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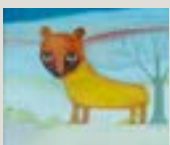
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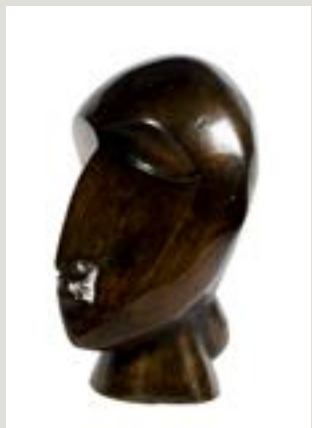
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WHAT'S NEXT

Prinseps is excited to announce the first auction of NFT's in India - Gobardhan Ash's 'Avatars' and Bhanu Athaiya's 'The Traditional and the New'. July will also see the auction of the Wadia Movietone estate.

Gobardhan Ash's 'Avatars'

Gobardhan Ash was a renegade, as seen in the artworks exhibited in the 1950s exhibition held jointly between the Progressive Artists and the Calcutta Group. His primitive and distorted art was an influence for many later artists.

The Prinseps Gobardhan Ash 'Avatars' auction will include 35 works on paper and 35 tokens. Gobardhan Ash carried out some path-breaking experiments way ahead of his time. As an auction house that prides itself on path breaking research, we feel excited in re-creating the 1950's exhibition in both physical and digital art form.



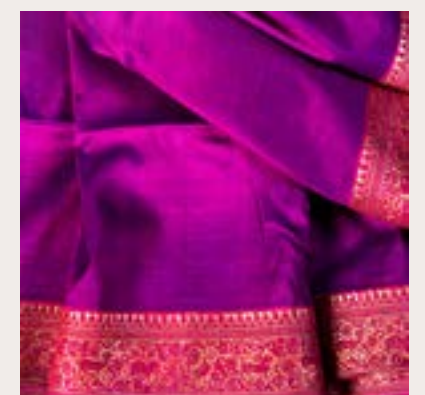
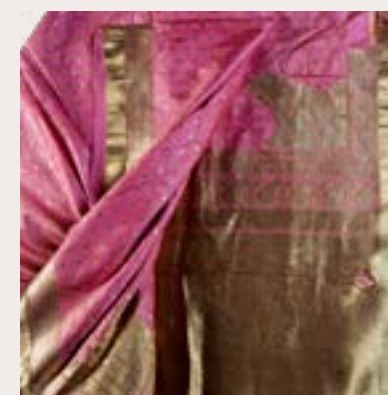
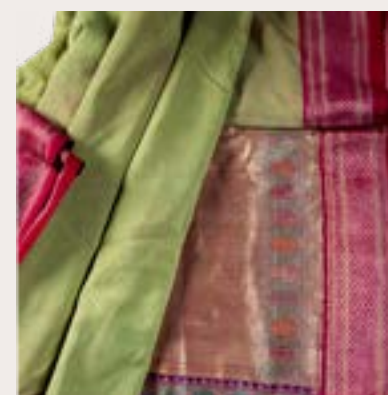
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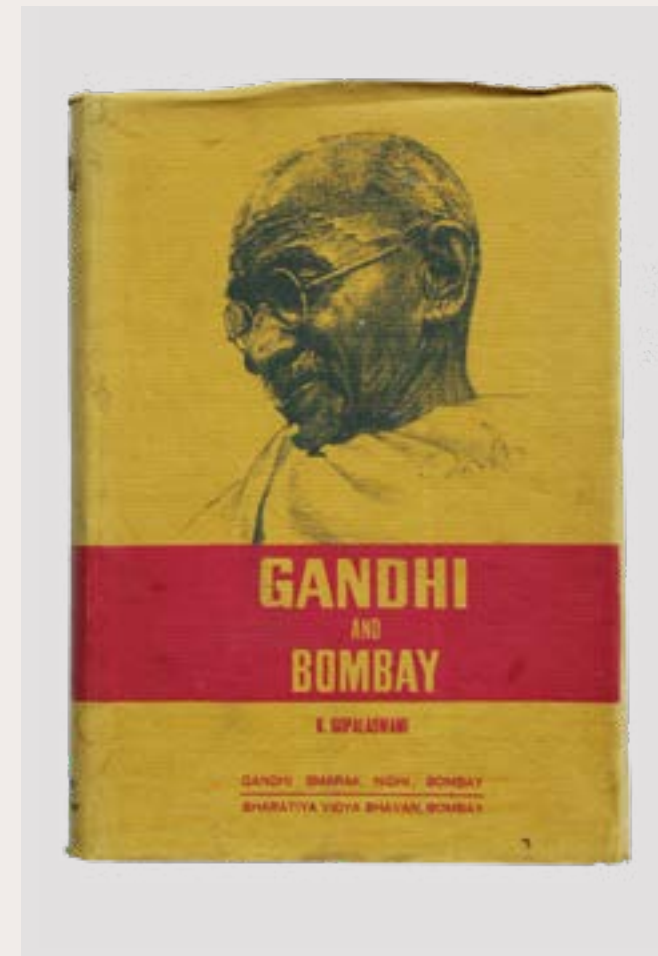


ORPHAN

Bhanu Athaiya - 'The Traditional and the New'

Bhanu Athaiya was India's first Oscar winner, with a career as a costume designer spanning six decades. Prinseps has been fortunate to have been consigned the estate of the Late Bhanu Athaiya, which includes beautiful antique sarees, woven intricately with gold and silver thread. In the Prinseps Saree Sale we bring to you the really old and the really new. With each well documented and described ancestral textile piece will be a corresponding NFT - a contemporary saree design by Bhanu.





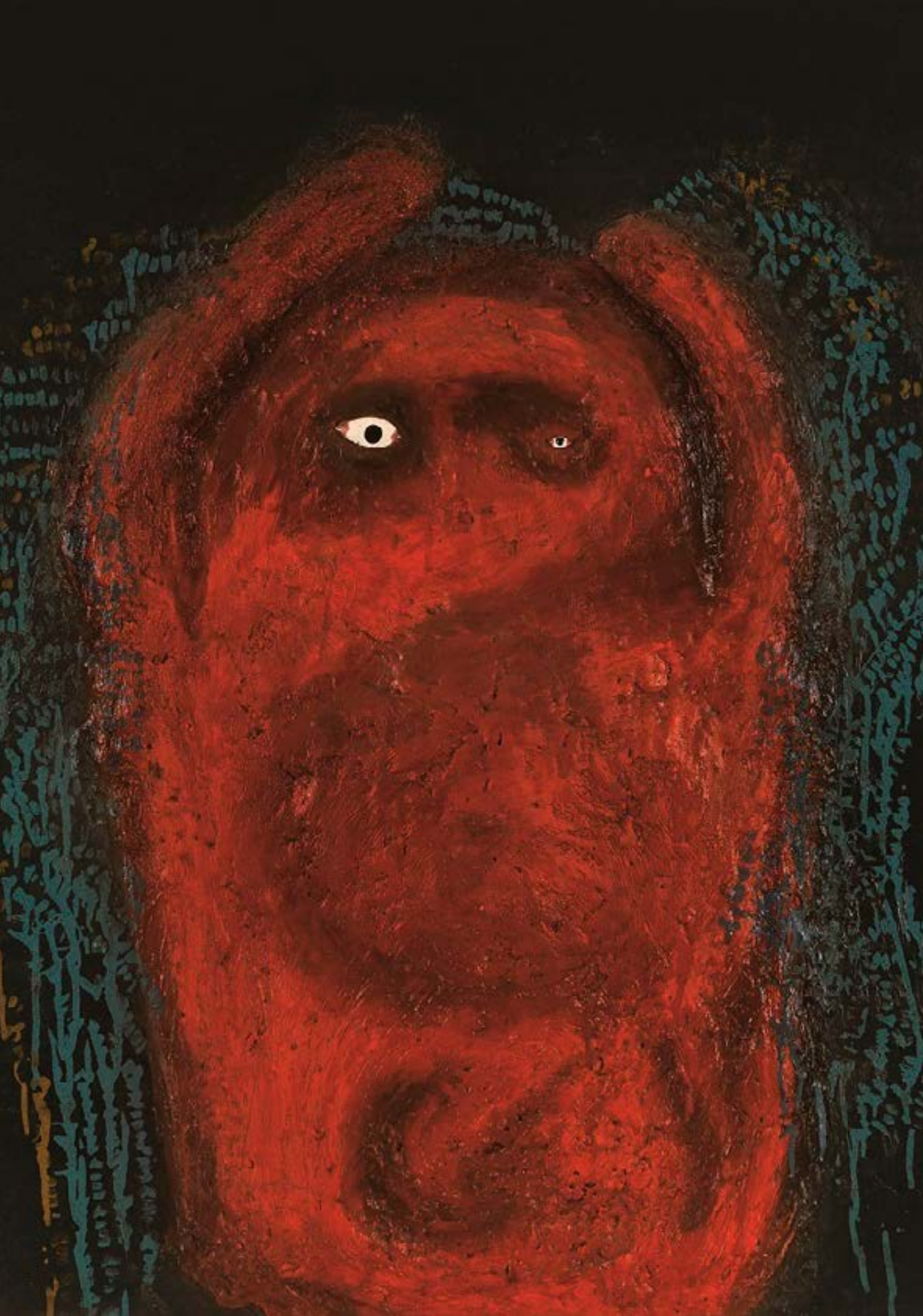
Nationalism Book Auction

Prinseps presents its annual no-reserve nationalism book auction. A collection that focuses on a difficult period – 1920s to 1960s. Most of the books are first editions and collectible besides being important historically and enlightening reading material. Mahatma Gandhi, Netaji, speeches, Constitution, international relations, manifestos, etc.

Wadia Movietone

Wadia Movietone, founded in 1933, was one of the first production houses in India. Significant in their films was the role of Fearless Nadia aka Hunterwali – a lead actress and a stuntwoman. Prinseps will be auctioning the historically important estate with rare original art and lithographed posters from various films.





७ माघ बदि रविवार २०४८

११ माघ रविवार

If all this ends up being nothing
a game, delineated during a solemn
study of one's reflection in a mirror,
with a lot of uncalled for vanity on the
hand, and a vague interest on the other
then it is ~~was~~ meaningless. It is ~~not~~
perfectly possible that it's meaningless
any day.

Ingeger Bergman.

Alone now I sit
in my black morning dress
To smile, drink tea and
Wag
A thin ~~finger~~ finger at the world:
Unwearing whether after tonight
The dawn breaks into
applause or silence.

Pleading guidance,
seeking assurance
Demanding solace
I travel into my world of dreams.



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