

INDIAN MODERN ART

ART BASEL HONG KONG

Private Viewing 13-15 March, 2015

Public Viewing 15-17 March, 2015

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DELHI ART GALLERY



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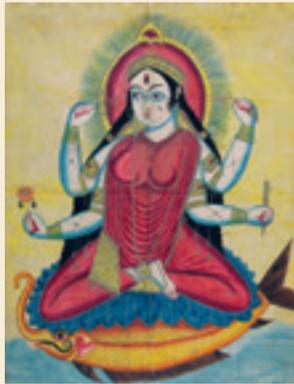
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A BRIEF HISTORY OF INDIAN MODERN ART



KALIGHAT PAT
(ANONYMOUS)



ABANINDRANATH
TAGORE

India's vibrant art ateliers up till the 18th century had absorbed foreign influences but had developed indigenously, largely in the form of miniature paintings on paper, and as localised folk styles that were mostly illustrative and intended as souvenirs for pilgrims. The arrival of the European landscape artist changed all that, since the colonial elite and then the rich Indians started to patronise them for their realistic works that used elements such as depth and perspective and chiaroscuro on large canvases painted with oil.

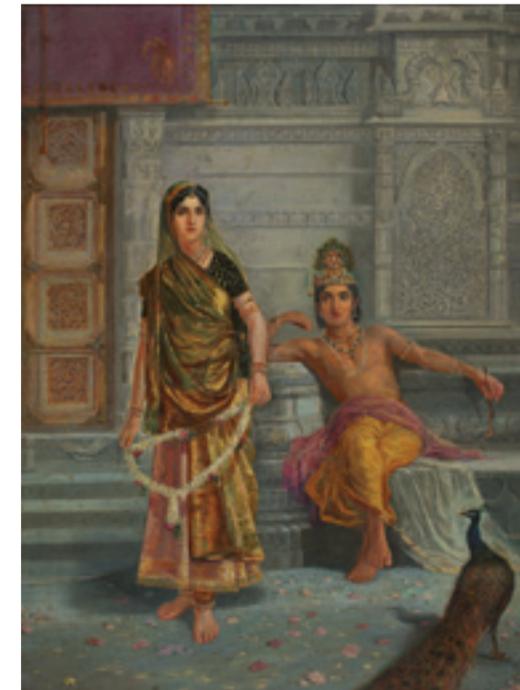
Indian artists began to teach themselves to paint in this foreign medium from the 19th century onwards, led by Raja Ravi Varma, and it wasn't long before the British set up art schools to train Indian artists to paint in the academic or realistic style based on Western precepts. The mastering of this form led to fewer European artists coming to India, and Indian artists began to enjoy the patronage of art lovers.

But artists could hardly stay outside the ambit of a society that was questioning colonial imperialism in all its aspects, whether political or cultural, and by the end of the 19th and start of the early 20th centuries, the imperial capital, Calcutta, became the fountainhead for a nationalist struggle that saw artists reclaiming their Indian heritage. This led to the first art movement in the country, resulting in the birth of revivalism under the Bengal School. This is characterised by a wash technique of painting on paper with exaggerated features of often mythological retellings creating the first identifiable body of modern Indian art under such stalwarts as Abanindranath Tagore, Nandalal Bose and Kshitindranath Majumdar.

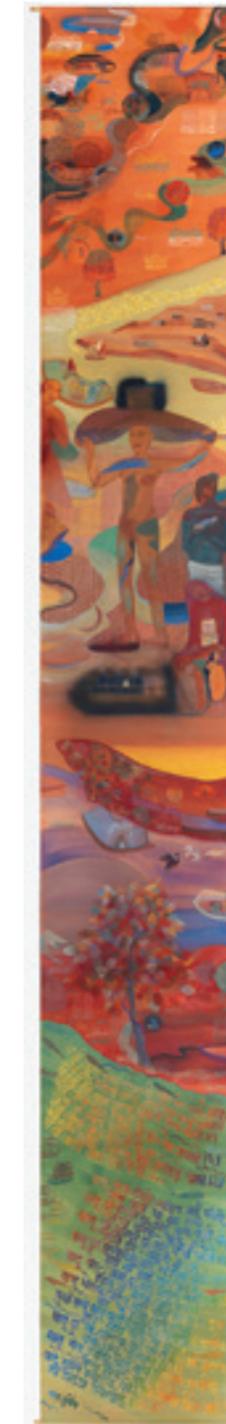
Critics have been divided whether revivalism is a stand-in for modernism, though its breakout under the Santiniketan School of expressionism and, particularly, the works of Ramkinkar Baij, or Benode Behari Mukherjee, the folk style of Jamini Roy, or indeed, the bold, mordant art of Nobel-laureate Rabindranath Tagore,



NANDALAL BOSE



M.V. DHURANDHAR



NILIMA SHEIKH



AMBADAS



M. F. HUSAIN



DHARAMNARAYAN DASGUPTA



PROKASH KARMAKAR

suggest a case for modernism that was organically born. Earlier, the Paris-educated, half-Hungarian Amrita Sher-Gil had made a case for Indian modernism when she renounced her salon style, replacing it with a striking palette and a stylistic rendering that had its roots in the miniature tradition.

Elsewhere, in Bombay, the Progressive Artists' Group with its strident Western approach and absence of ideology marked a significant departure from existing art styles in India, in 1947. This would become a marker for artists in, especially the 1950s and '60s, with F. N. Souza, S. H. Raza and M. F. Husain the most vociferous, while others such as Tyeb Mehta, Akbar Padamsee, Ram Kumar, Krishen Khanna and V. S. Gaitonde played a significant role in the creation of a bolder vocabulary for Indian art.

If the 20th century was marked by the establishment of the artists' commune of Cholamandal outside Madras led by Sultan Ali on the one hand, on the other, New Delhi emerged as a hub for a more eclectic group of artists such as J. Swaminathan, or G. R. Santosh, while Baroda, in Gujarat, came to be known for an eponymous style that engaged more closely with society and social issues around it. Indian artists living and working overseas made their mark, while those in India exhibited frequently, creating a vibrant environment in which art flourished, even though it lacked a market.

By the end of the century, however, the scene was changing, and infrastructure – following the economic reforms in 1991 – began to improve, creating an interest in collecting art. 20th century Indian modern art has since been at the forefront of collecting and investing in Indian art, and Delhi Art Gallery, which has the largest private collection of art, and artists, from this period, is at the forefront of organising scholarship and exhibitions that are seminal for their historical significance and documentation.



S. K. BAKRE

ABOUT DELHI ART GALLERY

Delhi Art Gallery was established in 1993, and has since grown to become a premier institution of art. It boasts of a distinctive and extensive collection of early-modern as well as modern and contemporary art, ranging from names such as Rabindranath Tagore and Nandalal Bose to F. N. Souza, M. F. Husain and S. H. Raza, from Avinash Chandra and G. R. Santosh to Sohan Qadri and Gogi Saroj Pal, from Chittaprosad to Haren Das, among the over 400 artists in its inventory.

Delhi Art Gallery employs a large number of professionals to manage the affairs of the company. It consists of a Research and Documentation division that creates superior publications and provides support for its exhibitions. A Sales and Marketing team brings art to people through an interface programme, managing art resources for companies and collectors whom it also advises on art purchases.

In the two decades since it was established and as one of the largest repositories of Indian modern art anywhere in the world, Delhi Art Gallery has become distinguished for its focus on 20th century Indian art. Its collections provide a critical link for everyone from art-lovers, collectors and investors to academicians,

scholars and researchers. It has traced, compiled, restored and archived entire collections. Documentation processes across various genres have resulted in some iconic exhibitions, known for their breadth of scale and depth of research. Extensive exhibition catalogues and books – part of its ongoing efforts on shedding new light on the well-established artists and their genres, but also on the lesser-known but equally talented painters and sculptors – is a measure of the seriousness of Delhi Art Gallery's effort of concentrating not just on the established names but also those artists who deserve their space on the same firmament.

Delhi Art Gallery has a flagship gallery in the heart of picturesque Hauz Khas Village in New Delhi, as well as a second gallery in the exclusive DLF Emporio. 2013 marks its debut in Mumbai in a standalone, historic building in the art precinct of Kala Ghoda, which opened with a seminal exhibition on the erstwhile Progressive Artists' Group in Bombay. In 2015, Delhi Art Gallery has expanded its presence with its first international gallery space in the historic Fuller Building at the heart of Manhattan's art and business district, opening with an exhibition that brings to New York the best of modern Indian art.

FEATURED ARTISTS

J. Sultan Ali

Ambadas

K. H. Ara

S. K. Bakre

N. S. Bendre

Bikash Bhattacharjee

Sakti Burman

Avinash Chandra

Sunil Das

Biren De

K. Laxma Goud

K. K. Hebbar

M. F. Husain

George Keyt

Krishen Khanna

Ram Kumar

Rabin Mondal

Akbar Padamsee

Laxman Pai

B. Prabha

Sohan Qadri

S. H. Raza

G. R. Santosh

Himmat Shah

F. N. Souza

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Front cover: S. H. Raza, *Untitled*, Acrylic on canvas, 1977

Back cover: K. K. Hebbar, *Untitled*, oil on canvas pasted on canvas, 1942





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