

An abstract artwork featuring layered, torn pieces of aged, yellowish-brown paper. A large, vibrant red wash is applied over the papers, creating a sense of depth and movement. The papers are marked with various black ink drawings, including stylized human figures and geometric patterns. The background is a solid, muted blue-grey color.

Celebrating— THE MODERN

A white circular logo containing a stylized black 'D' shape.

DAG

Celebrating— THE MODERN

The Coquette from Ravi Varma's Studio peeps out flirtatiously, unlike the nudes by modernists F. N. Souza, George Keyt, and Akbar Padamsee that gaze back unabashedly, as though enjoying the viewer's shocked embarrassment, even discomfort. M. F. Husain's unclothed figure picks up a narrative strand, while M. V. Dhurandhar's figure, seated in prayer in a private temple, is an example of a pose in the academic tradition. A formal portrait of a young aristocrat by travelling artist Benjamin Hudson completes a selection that could be a masterclass in the appreciation of figurative painting.

Elsewhere, Dutch artist Marius Bauer's busy riverine view of Benares in the orientalist tradition is a far cry from Avinash Chandra's *City*, his rendition of London soon after arriving here from India and making it his home. Zarina Hashmi's striking serigraph suggests her perpetual search for that elusive place called home, while Madhvi Parekh's painting recalls her memory of her childhood years in a Gujarat village that served as her muse.

The abstract occurs in several interpretations too—from G. R. Santosh's geometric neo-*tantra* allusions to the colour-field paintings of Sohan Qadri and Shobha Broota visualising a representation of energy that marks their artistic practices. Laxman Pai's watercolours done in Paris are a tribute to that city from where S. H. Raza too contributed his abstract landscapes steeped in emotion. Natvar Bhavsar's celebratory use of natural pigments and Shanti Dave's quest for lost civilisations quantify the depth to be found in works considered abstract.

'Celebrating the Modern' is DAG's ode to the vibrancy of Indian art with a hand-picked selection spanning a century that saw the development of Indian modernism through diverse movements and genres—a tribute to its appeal that has extended beyond time to be part of a distinctive global language.



Marius Bauer

(1867-1932)



Festival on the Ganges, Benares, India
(Feestdag aan de Ganges te Benares India)
Oil on canvas, c. 1912 or earlier
24.0 x 51.0 in. / 61.0 x 129.5 cm.
Signed in English (lower right) 'M BAUER'
Registered antiquity (non-exportable)

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This dreamy painting of Benaras by Dutch artist Marius Bauer brings out his ability to capture a landscape’s nuances while using it as a background for human activity. The riverfront here has just enough elements to identify the holy city while it is the river with its busy traffic that provides the subject of the painting. European artists coming to India were drawn to Benaras, but where Bauer succeeds is in portraying the ancient city with a vibrant present where religion and commerce go hand in hand. The launch he paints had earlier been used to ferry the Prince of Wales on his visit.

Natvar Bhavsar

(b. 1934)



TEJUS IV

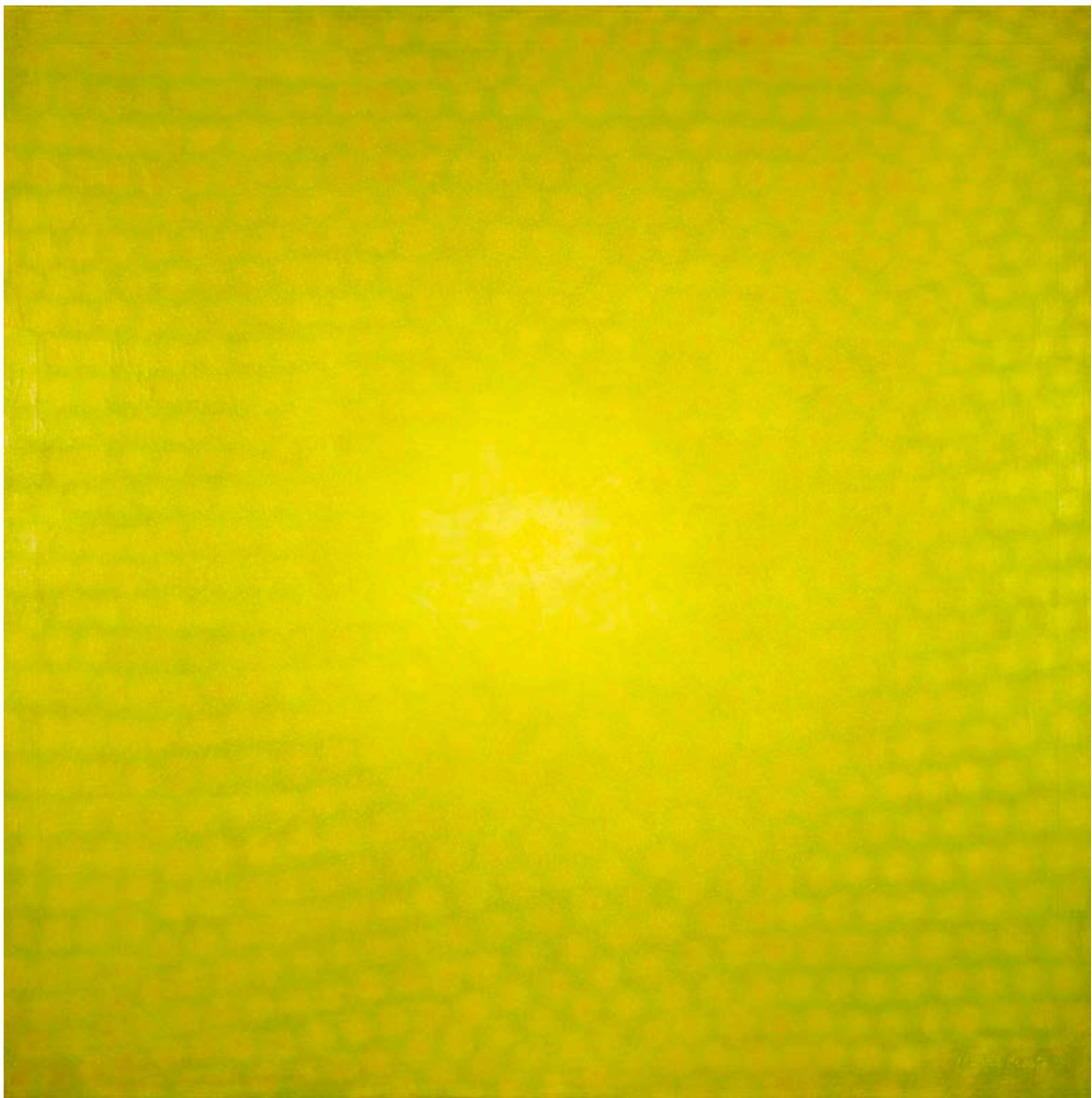
Dry pigments with acrylic mediums on paper,
1992
46.0 x 35.0 in. / 116.8 x 88.9 cm.
Signed and dated in English (lower right)
'NATVAR BHAVSAR / 1992'

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New York-based Natvar Bhavsar has earned renown for his colour-field paintings that are aligned to the American abstract expressionism that peaked in the 1960s—the decade when Bhavsar moved to the U.S. from Gujarat—as also to the rich colours of the land of his birth. What lends this work a captivating urgency is its quiet, consuming energy. The silent picture plane of the work is in the process of being consumed by a riot of advancing colours, reminiscent of Holi—the festival of colours—captivating for its use of pure colours. His paintings invariably have an Indian title, linking his works closely to the land of his birth and youth.

Shobha Broota

(b. 1943)



ORIGIN 41

Oil on canvas, 1992
50.0 x 50.0 in. / 127.0 x 127.0 cm.
Signed and dated in English (lower right)
'Shobha Broota / '92'

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The *Origin* series of works has been an important chapter in Shobha Broota's oeuvre, where she has turned her philosophical gaze on the theory of the origin of life. This series is characterised by pulsating points of energy, both in colour field works, as in the work under consideration, and those with geometric shapes. Her works create a sense of calm that transcends time and delivers us to the moment when the universe was created. Playing with colour, Broota imbues her works with a life force which, in this case, is a discernible beginning of time that slowly takes the viewer's eye to an expanding space of universe.

Sakti Burman

(b. 1943)



Cavaliers et Acrobates (Horsemen and Acrobats)

Ink and watercolour on paper

19.5 x 25.2 in. / 49.5 x 64.0 cm.

Signed in English (lower left) 'SAKTI BURMAN'

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This undated work by Sakti Burman quintessentially carries two of his defining markers—a fantastic imagery and pointillist rendition. Here, Burman presents a happy menagerie of jesters and riders in surrealist colours. The curtains in the backdrop suggest that this is a scene from a stage performance where the performers are going around in a circle to entertain the audience. The brilliance of the work lies in the smudges, just a few daubs of colour over those grey blotches, and selective pointillism, all of which make the figures appear as if they belong to quickly passing frames in a dream.

Sakti Burman

(b. 1943)



Chat et Acrobates (Cat and Acrobats)

Ink and watercolour on paper

19.5 x 25.0 in. / 49.5 x 63.5 cm.

Signed in English (lower centre)

'SAKTI BURMAN'

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Paris- and New Delhi-based Sakti Burman, like most of his contemporaries whose careers flowered in the French capital in the previous century, is known for blending European and Indian imagery. However, he evolved a unique language that does not have a parallel among his peers. Filled with fantastical imagery—featuring a cat and acrobats in this work, for instance—Burman's works acquire added depths of fabulation with his use of the marbling effect, which he discovered accidentally when once water spilled on an oil work that he was creating; in this work, Burman makes the figures ethereal by smudging them in a carefully constructed pattern.

Avinash Chandra

(1931-91)



City

Oil on Masonite board, 1958
24.0 x 31.7 in. / 61.0 x 80.5 cm.

[ENQUIRE HERE](#)

At the start of his career, in the mid-1950s, Avinash Chandra gained early recognition, joining Delhi Silpi Chakra to showcase his oil paintings. These were works that were handled with a joyful abandon, allowing Chandra to create his own formula and technique in colour, line, and form. This particular work, made soon after Chandra shifted to London, carried forward his enquiry into abstraction that had begun during his Delhi days. Many of these works, though recognisable as landscapes, seemed to grow out of the earth like futuristic buildings, geometrically patterned, abstract looking forms that created inquisitiveness in the mind of the viewer.

Jogen Chowdhury

(b. 1939)



Reclining Woman

Dry pastel and charcoal on paper, 2007

19.5 x 39.2 in. / 49.5 x 99.6 cm.

Dated in English (upper left) '2007', signed in English (upper right) 'Jogen Chowdhury' and signed and dated in Bengali (lower centre) 'Jogen Chowdhury / 2007'

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Figuration has remained central to Jogen Chowdhury's practice, something the artist puts down to his humanistic approach and attachment to human life. If most of his work carries the scars of social and political upheaval in the form of the body, the rare departure such as this one forms a welcome respite. The woman here rests indolently in a classical pose, palm supporting her chin. She is fully clothed, there is nothing that hovers uncertainly about her to take away the innocence of her stance, no sense of danger looms...a welcome exception in Chowdhury's oeuvre.

Shanti Dave

(b. 1931)



Untitled

Oil and encaustic on canvas, 1967

68.0 x 68.0 in. / 172.7 x 172.7 cm.

Signed and dated in English (lower right)

‘Shanti Dave/ 67’

ENQUIRE HERE

A muralist extraordinaire, Shanti Dave’s career as an abstract painter has been without precedent. Working with thick encaustic and casts, his paintings have a tactile materiality at once reminiscent of murals as of layers of history captured through fragments of calligraphed text and sacred figures. Dave creates a tenuous relationship between these, filling up the space with tumbling forms, like ancient cities lost to mankind, and transparent layers of paint recording the passage of time. This outstanding painting bears him out as a history watcher content to observe changing times from an exceptional perspective that lies beyond time.

M. V. Dhurandhar

(1867-1944)



Todi Ragini

Watercolour on paper, 1919

12.5 x 8.2 in. / 31.8 x 20.8 cm.

Signed and dated in English (lower right)

'M Dhurandhar / 20.12.19...(indecipherable)';

title in Marathi (lower right) 'Todi Ragini'

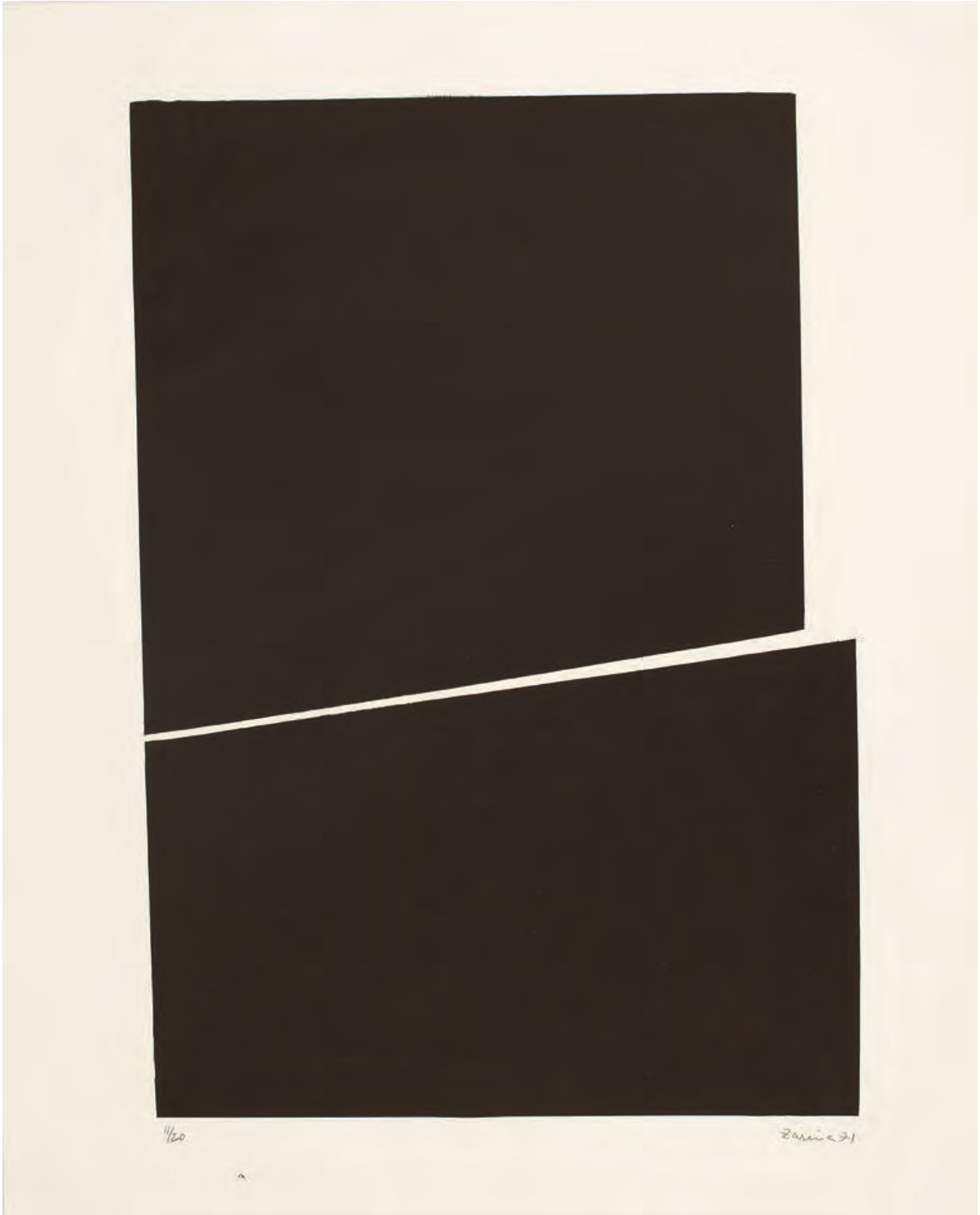
Registered work (non-exportable)

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M. V. Dhurandhar made this work when religious subjects were popular among painters of the Bombay Presidency. They were encouraged by their patrons to render images of temples, pilgrimage spots, and even altars within their homes, as depicted in this watercolour. It shows a woman praying to Lord Krishna, her stance of folded hands suggesting she is singing a *bhajan* (a devotional song). The title of the work, *Todi Ragini*, establishes music as the central theme of the work—*ragini* referring to the feminine attribution of *raag* or melodic mode in Indian classical music, an example of which is *Todi*.

Zarina Hashmi

(1937-2020)



Untitled

Serigraph on paper, 1971

18.2 x 12.5 in. / 46.2 x 31.8 cm.

On print: Inscribed in English (lower left)

‘11/20’ and signed and dated in English

(lower right) ‘Zarina / 71’ Edition 11 of 20

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In an entirely abstract manner, New York-based Zarina Hashmi’s printmaking articulated a notion of space that could stand for, or recall for her, her home, city or country in the Indian subcontinent with their flexible, changing borders. In her urge to find ‘home’, Hashmi’s engagement through her art was with space, a personal journey that questioned identity, the meaning of home, the urge for roots, memory and history, charted through lines. Her emphasis on space, on a minimal, geometric language, allowed a sense of spatial purity to seep into it.

Benjamin Hudson

(c. 1823-1900)



Untitled (Portrait of Bonsha Gopal Nandi)

Oil on canvas, c. 1854-62

30.2 x 25.0 in. / 76.7 x 63.5 cm.

Signed in English (lower right) 'B. Hudson'

Registered antiquity (non-exportable)

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English artist Benjamin Hudson is known to have lived in Calcutta between 1856 and 1862 and painted portraits of the members of the ruling family of Burdwan during this period. According to research by an auction house, Bonsha Gopal Nandi, the sitter, was the brother of the wife of Maharaja Mahtab of Burdwan. As they did not have any children, they wanted to adopt this young man as heir. However, he died early, and his son was adopted to be the next ruler of Burdwan. Besides throwing light on a little known story, this portrait is remarkable for showcasing the exquisite skills of the artist, many of whose portraits are part of public museums in England.

M. F. Husain

(1913-2011)



Untitled (Nude)

Oil on canvas

47.7 x 23.7 in. / 121.2 x 60.2 cm.

Signed in Hindi and Urdu (lower right) ‘Husain’

[ENQUIRE HERE](#)

M. F. Husain’s work often fused the gap between the sublime and the sacred. His figures—whether ordinary people or drawn from mythology—were imbued with something that instantly made them captivating. Here, Husain has used a rich palette of colours to build up the figure through careful rendering of form. The dark overtone, the head of the woman turning to look over her shoulder, one hand raised prominently (in alarm?) alludes to a strange presence that she is not comfortable about. The most striking aspect of the work, however, is the signature Husain line that runs fluidly across the canvas.

M. F. Husain

(1913-2011)



That Obscure Object of Desire- 21

Watercolour and graphite on paper, 1982
20.0 x 14.2 in. / 50.8 x 36.1 cm.

Titled in English (lower left) “That Obscure Object of Desire”-21’ and signed and dated in English (lower right) ‘Husain / 82’

[ENQUIRE HERE](#)

When the Franco-Spanish film, *That Obscure Object of Desire*, was released in 1977, it had caused a worldwide sensation. Director Luis Buñuel had cast two actresses to play the female protagonist. The experiment fitted well with the lead female character’s capricious life. It underscored the film’s message that the world, after all, is illusory. For an artist like M. F. Husain, who was strongly inspired by ancient Indian mythology, this concept of illusion or *maya* must have been an irresistible subject. He painted several works as an ode to this film, each conveying the idea in various different ways.

George Keyt

(1901-93)



Untitled

Oil on canvas, 1971

33.2 x 28.0 in. / 84.3 x 71.1 cm.

Signed and dated in English (upper left)

‘G Keyt / 71’

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Born in Sri Lanka but equally at home in India, George Keyt evolved a highly individual vocabulary rooted in the traditional ethos of the land yet inspired by Western modernism. He rooted his thematic content in local tradition, drawing from Hindu and Buddhist mythology, and Indian erotic iconography. His figural compositions celebrated the female form. He developed a distinct visual vocabulary by melding a modernist stylistic formula with Fauvist and tropical colours, and an expressive vocal line. His Cubist imagery consisting of a sharp angularity that he quelled with a ballooning, gracefully rounded line, forming the faces and torsos of the women he created, made his works liminal.

Laxman Pai

(1926-2021)



Untitled

Gouache and ink on handmade paper, 1956
14.0 x 10.0 in. / 35.6 x 25.4 cm.

Signed in Marathi and signed, inscribed and dated in English (lower right) 'Laxman Pai / Paris / 56'

[ENQUIRE HERE](#)

In Paris, Laxman Pai explored modes of formal expressiveness via gestural brushwork. Many of the Indian artists, including Pai, in the 1940s and '50s, were influenced by the works of Paul Klee, Marc Chagall and Joan Miró, and attempted a productive tension between indigenous content and modern techniques to negotiate the past with the present. In this phase, Pai's creative process was instant and flamboyant with free and loose compositions. Every painted image was like a page from a diary. In this *Untitled* work, the gestural brush strokes are overwhelming yet contain within them a vivid landscape, which could allude to his native Goa whose imagery never really left his oeuvre.

Laxman Pai

(1926-2021)



Nude

Gouache and waterproof ink
on handmade paper, 1956

14.5 x 10.5 in. / 36.8 x 26.7 cm.

Signed in Marathi and English and inscribed
and dated in English (lower right)

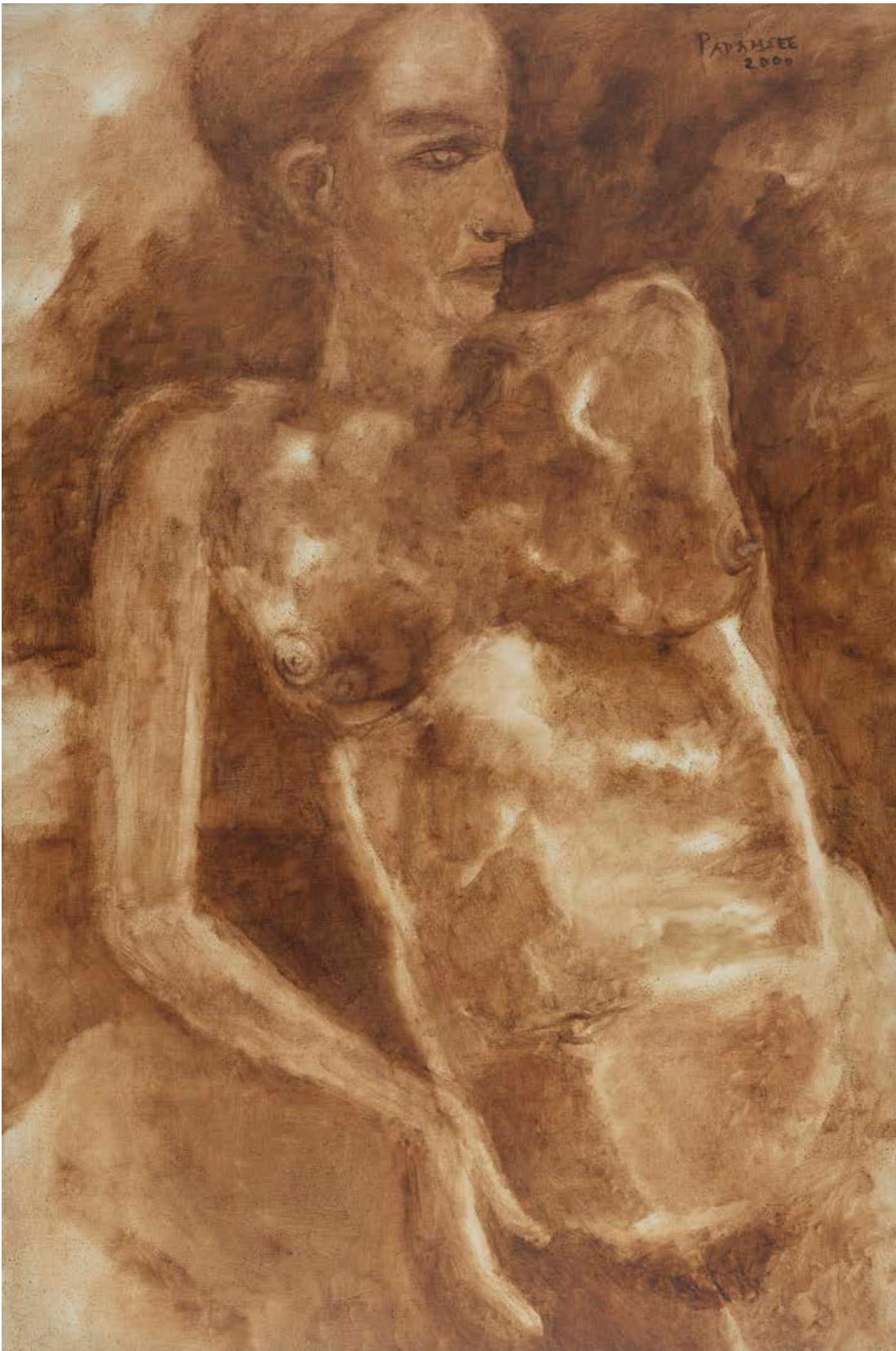
‘Laxman Pai / Paris / 56’

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After graduating from Sir J. J. School of Art in Bombay, Laxman Pai spent ten years in Paris. The exposure helped him in forming an individual artistic language that incorporated elements like angular simplification, flatness of the pictorial surface, the use of expressive, rhythmic lines and its lyrical qualities. The figure in this work, for instance, is stylistically Indian yet blends seamlessly in an abstract, modernist background. The figure is almost a part of the background, yet the force of the line shines through in the graceful stance of its limbs, as if dancing in a trance.

Akbar Padamsee

(1928-2020)



Untitled

Oil on canvas, 2000

42.0 x 28.0 in. / 106.7 x 71.1 cm.

Signed and dated in English (upper right)

'PADAMSEE / 2000'

[ENQUIRE HERE](#)

The continuing debate of the 'naked' and the 'nude' in a country that celebrates its heritage with aplomb but rages furiously when an artist represents it, reflects personally in Akbar Padamsee's life. Decades ago, a legal case of obscenity was filed against Padamsee's painting, *Lovers*, which he successfully defended. In his distinguished career as an artist, Padamsee returned to the nude form intermittently, viewing it with a certain dispassion while finding in it a sense of proportion and natural grace. It also allowed him to stay in touch with the basics of art, where he used only a few brush strokes to evoke an emotive form.

Madhvi Parekh

(b. 1942)



Playing with Animals

Oil on canvas, 1989

45.0 x 55.2 in. / 114.3 x 140.2 cm.

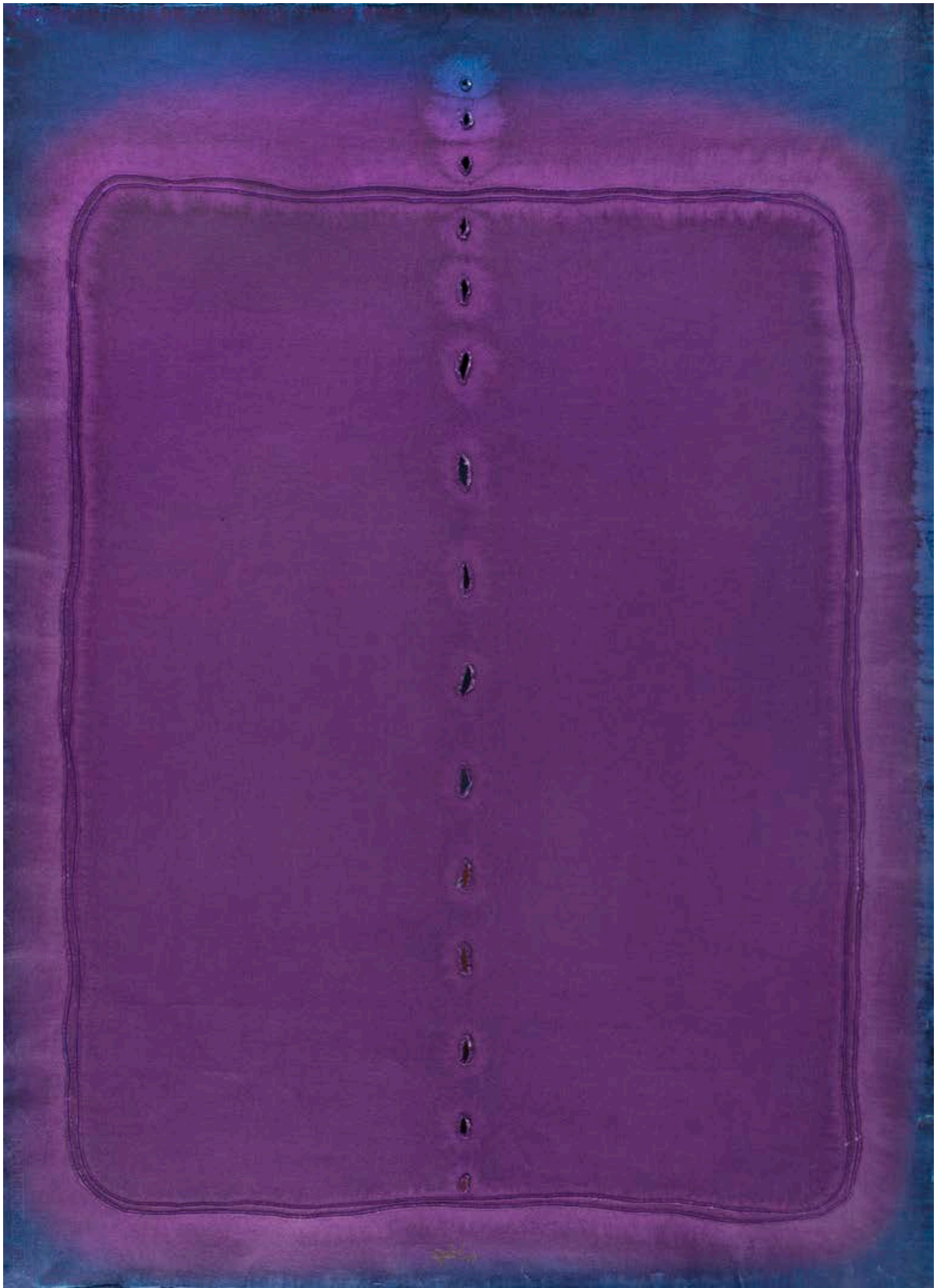
Signed in Hindi and dated in English
(lower left) 'Madhvi / 89'

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As a chronicler of village life, Madhvi Parekh turns not to toil as much as to leisure, to play rather than to work—manifestations of a happy childhood in which one was free to run around at will, intermingling with creatures feathered as well as four-legged. Parekh's gender would not have allowed her to play as freely as the protagonists of her paintings, but she reminisces with affection about a life in which all living beings were as well regarded as inanimate objects. Here, friends gather together to play with animals, giving the work its evocative title.

Sohan Qadri

(1932-2011)



Untitled

Ink and dye on handmade paper, 2003
42.0 x 31.0 in. / 106.7 x 78.7 cm.
Signed and dated in English (lower centre)
'Qadri / 03'

[ENQUIRE HERE](#)

As was characteristic of many painters of his generation who were influenced by the mystic culture of Hindu *tantra* and *yoga*, Sohan Qadri's works portray a flight from the finite moment into the infinite. A *yogi* who turned to art to give expression to his spiritual quest, Qadri's work was a result of deep meditation and succeeded in evoking a meditative state in the viewer's mind. In search of transcendence, he created works imbued with *tantric* symbolism and philosophy, giving rise to his own abstract, modernist vocabulary. His art was minimalist and rendered in vibrant colours. From the 2000s, his works on paper combined ink and dye with vivid tones, striations, scarring and holes to redefine the language of *tantra*.

S. H. Raza

(1922-2016)



Naga

Acrylic on canvas, 2002

18.0 x 21.5 in. / 45.7 x 54.6 cm.

Signed and dated in English (lower centre)

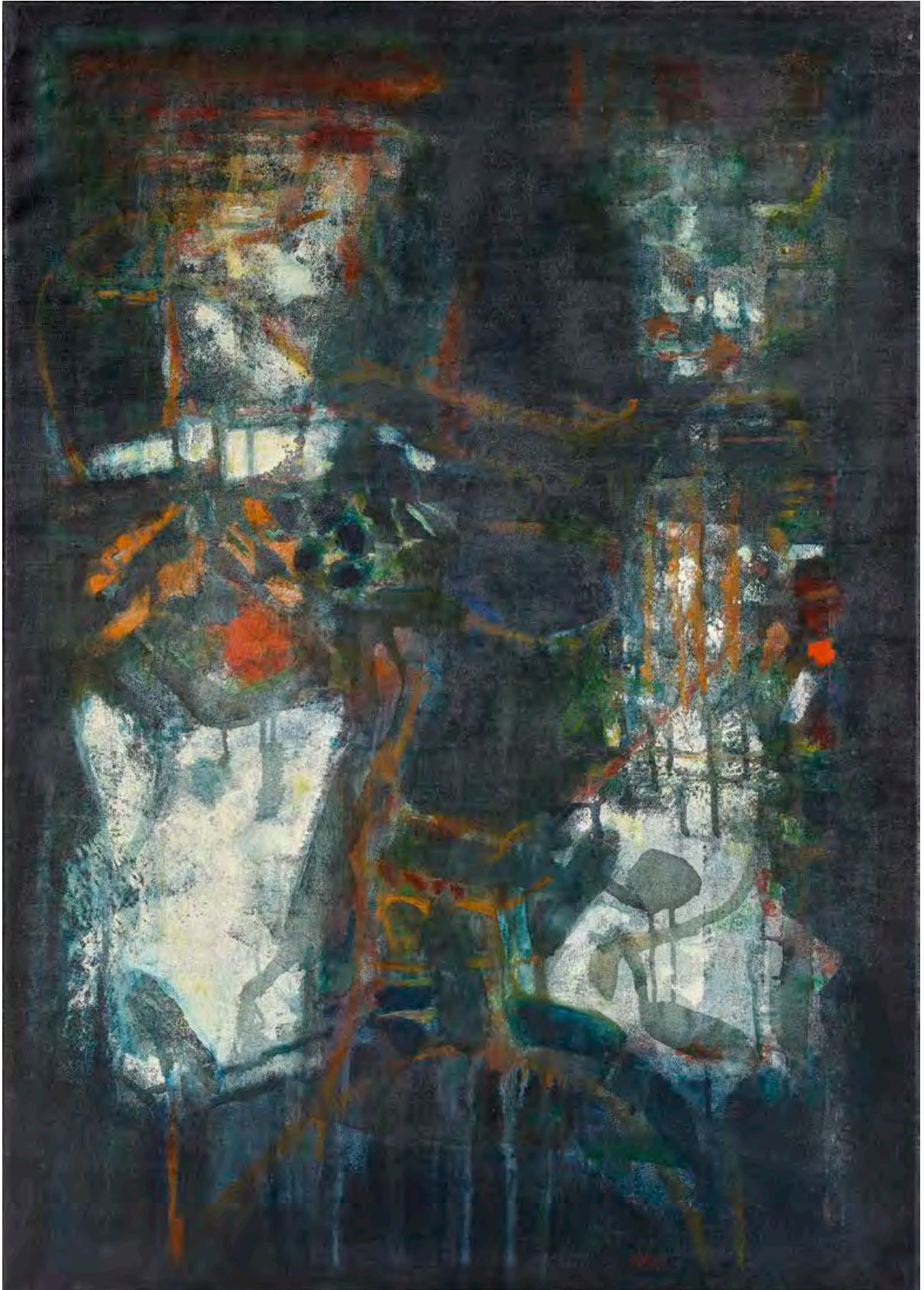
'RAZA / 02'

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The focus on the dot or *bindu*, an exercise that S. H. Raza began as a child when his schoolteacher asked him to concentrate in class, became the artist's contemplative gaze to understand art from a personal standpoint. The *bindu* denoted to Raza the creative matrix and source of all energy. He builds up the canvas in *Naga* to create dense and solid circles that evolve into concentric orbs of energy, resembling *tantra* imagery. The coiled serpent forms become symbolic of rebirth, rejuvenation and the cycle of life.

S. H. Raza

(1922-2016)



Untitled (Bois des Amants)

Oil on canvas, 1964

36.0 x 25.5 in. / 91.4 x 64.8 cm.

Signed and dated in English (lower right)

'RAZA / '64'

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This painting by Raza, *Untitled (Bois des Amants* or Lovers' Wood), shows us two white figures cloaked in nature and its colours. Painted in 1964, soon after he met Mark Rothko, Hans Hoffman and other contemporaries, the work displays the influence of abstract expressionism. The landscape is made with Raza's expert use of colour and has been recognised for its differing use of abstract form, especially in its allusion to human presence, which was conspicuously absent from most of his work. It has been suggested that the work could be a nod to the famous 1960 French film, *Les Bois des Amants*.

Jamini Roy

(1887-1972)



Untitled

Tempera on cardboard, c. mid 20th century

21.2 x 16.5 in. / 53.8 x 41.9 cm.

Signed in Bengali (lower right) 'Jamini Roy'

National Art Treasure (non-exportable artwork)

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Jamini Roy remains one of the most easily recognised artists of the country because of his distinctive signature style that bordered on the folk. Roy epitomised the restlessness among his generation of Indian artists wanting to break free of their European academic training and its overwhelming influence, to create a truly Indian syntax for modern art. Roy turned to the *patua* artists of Bengal, including those of Kalighat, to develop a stylisation and a narrative that captured the earthiness of the characters in his art. In this work, he captures two cats—playful yet competitive—fighting for a lobster that they both want to claim.

G. R. Santosh

(1929-97)



Untitled

Oil on canvas, 1969

36.0 x 36.0 in. / 91.4 x 91.4 cm.

Signed in Hindi and dated in English
(lower left) 'Santosh / 69'

[ENQUIRE HERE](#)

G. R. Santosh's meditations on the Shiva-Shakti principle in Kashmiri Shaivite tantric philosophy led him to create works that depicted the energy of their union. Santosh came to be one of the foremost practitioners of the genre termed neo-*tantra*, a modernist response to *tantra*'s tenets. Art, for Santosh, was meditative, spiritual. This painting reflects that mystical union, represented through the pure white centre, encompassed by several squares and the luminous, fluid form embedded within. The practice of harnessing colour to depict light aids the viewer further in meditation.

F. N. Souza

(1924-2002)



Untitled (Landscape)

Oil on canvas pasted on cloth, 1964

35.7 x 42.7 in. / 90.7 x 108.5 cm.

Signed and dated in English (lower left)

‘Souza / 1964’

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Painting was an emotional experience for F. N. Souza, and his strong, energetic brushstrokes, particularly in his landscapes, conveyed his radical ways to look at art from a personal perspective. This landscape shows the rich influence of Souza’s favourite Western masters—Vincent van Gogh and Chaïme Soutine. The buildings lean close, almost huddled in a passionate embrace, while trees convey an impression of swaying gently, almost in a rhythm. The red colour on the other hand, evokes the geographic region south of Luxembourg known for its iron-laden soil; Europe figured prominently in Souza’s landscapes, even though he was to settle permanently in New York around this time.

F. N. Souza

(1924-2002)



Untitled (Seated Nude on Blue Armchair)

Oil on fabric pasted on canvas, 1962

70.5 x 45.5 in. / 179.1 x 115.6 cm.

Signed and dated in English (upper left)

'Souza / 62'

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This overwhelming painting by F. N. Souza, the founder of the Progressive Artists' Group, is one of the most extraordinary nudes of his career. Everything from the size of the painting to its nature claim the viewer's attention, rendering it potent with Souza's inherent vitality and vigour. Belonging to a period when he was at the peak of his practice, the 1962 nude is distorted but not deformed, her seated posture and primly crossed legs marking it out as one of the most desirable of his paintings from this genre. The striking subject, the controlled palette and Souza's familiar brushstrokes claim the viewer's attention.

Studio of Raja Ravi Varma

(Late 19th century-early 20th century)



The Coquette

Oil on canvas

30.2 x 22.7 in. / 76.7 x 57.7 cm.

Signed in English (lower right) 'R C Tumbooran'

Titled in English (lower left) 'The Coquette' and
inscribed outside the painted oval in English

(lower right) 'by Revi Varma Coil Tumbooran /
Travancore'

Registered Antiquity (non-exportable)

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It is rare to chance upon a painting that is among the best produced by a generation of artists in a country, with the additional mystery in which the artist can only be alluded to. This exquisite work is attributed to the Studio of Raja Ravi Varma, the artist having painted two versions, one of which is in the NGMA. Dispatched to an exhibition in England, it has only recently returned to India where research indicates the hand of the master behind its making—though this is as yet unproven.

About DAG

India's most respected art company began its journey not as an art gallery but as an art institution right from its very inception, choosing to build up 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, tell the story of Indian art through iconic exhibitions curated to provide art historical overviews and document India's tryst with modernism.

In the almost 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 masters 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 and had an amazing response from viewers. DAG has also run exhibition programmes with the National Gallery of Modern Art, the Bhau Daji Lad Museum in Mumbai, as well as at Jawahar Kala Kendra in Jaipur, the Lalit Kala Akademi in Chandigarh, and other important institutions.

DAG's galleries are located in Mumbai, New Delhi, and New York.



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