



# PAPER TRAILS

Modern Indian Works on Paper  
from the Gaur Collection

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Grinnell College Museum of Art

IN ASSOCIATION WITH



First published in India in 2022 by

**Grinnell College Museum of Art**  
1108 Park St, Grinnell, IA 50112, United States

in association with

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706 Kaivanna, Panchvati, Ellisbridge  
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in conjunction with the exhibition '*Paper Trails: Works on Paper from the Gaur Collection*' from September 27 to December 10, 2022, at the Grinnell College Museum of Art, Iowa (USA).

International Distribution

North America  
ACC Art Books  
T: +1 800 252 5231  
F: +1 212 989 3205  
E: ussales@accartbooks.com  
www.accartbooks.com/us/

United Kingdom, Europe and Asia  
John Rule Art Book Distribution  
40 Voltaire Road, London SW4 6DH  
T: +44 020 7498 0115  
E: johnrule@johnrule.co.uk  
www.johnrule.co.uk

Rest of the World  
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ISBN: 978-93-94501-07-2

Copyediting:  
Mithila Rangarajan / Mapin Editorial

Proofreading:  
Marilyn Gore / Mapin Editorial

Design:  
Deanna Luu

Production:  
Mapin Design Studio

Printed in

**Grinnell College Museum of Art**





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# Foreword

Anne Harris, President, Grinnell College

The gathering of artists and audiences in this exhibition creates community around crucial issues of human experience and society. Through the vision of Umesh and Sunanda Gaur, Grinnell College has now had the honor of twice hosting the conversations, excitement, realizations, and further research that their collection of Indian art fosters. Coming to a small town in Iowa to think globally is not as paradoxical as it may first appear, for it speaks to the dynamic of the expansiveness of the art featured in this exhibition: Works on paper occupy a specific and most often physically small place but, through interactions, the exchange of ideas, and the enthusiasm of shared experience, they have an expansive reach into the human imagination.

The act of gathering in front of a work of art, or over the pages of this catalog, puts viewers in community with artists and with each other. In this sense—and in this exhibition—art simultaneously is and creates a site for a community of inquiry. Works on paper have their materiality in common with books, which they then manipulate in scale, intensity, color, and, of course, content. In the material *commonality* between works on paper and books, we find the idea of knowledge, as human societies have long used books to codify what is known, imagined, and desired. In the material *manipulation* that works on paper creatively engage, we find the element of wonder: that two dimensions could project and provoke such depth of emotion, so many perspectives, and reach out so far into human experience. Knowledge and wonder are at the dynamic center of a thriving community of inquiry, and this exhibition brings both at every turn.

In its work of gathering and creating community, and in that community being one of curiosity and connection, this exhibition is doing the crucial work that institutions like Grinnell College and other sites of inquiry engage: bringing people together in a shared experience to create knowledge and learn from it—ideally and practically for the betterment of the

human condition. In the brilliant work of curator Dr. Tamara Sears, this exhibition enacts the work of the humanities as well, engaging the human experience in terms of space and place, identity, critique, myth and religion, storytelling, and the open invitation of abstraction. It also engages the work of the humanities by asking questions of us through its content and curatorial arrangements. A viewer of this exhibition is a participant and can find all of the joys of discovery of being a student in the questions and issues the works of art bring forth.

Art creates community; it also creates time—welcome and necessary time to think, consider, and critique. In a fascinating simultaneity, art both takes *and* creates time: it takes time to make, to come into being, both intellectually and materially. Once the work of art exists, it creates time by being gathered in a marvelous exhibition such as this one and inviting viewers into contemplation, by stilling them to wonder, and engaging us in a different pace of thinking and feeling. We have to work, perhaps harder than ever, to find that time for critical thinking and we must, because it is in that time that our understanding of the human condition deepens, and it is in that time that our creativity in addressing the challenges to human thriving awakens.

I noted at the beginning of this foreword that this exhibition is the second one from the Gaur Collection that Grinnell College has had the honor to host. Active in this renewed partnership is the dynamic of relationships that I find important to acknowledge as we consider the works of art in this exhibition. Of the many experiences that art is and creates, that of being a repository of relationships is crucial to the fostering of a community of inquiry that is itself so important in institutions like colleges and human societies. Within the physical memory of these works on paper are the relational gestures of artists, gallery owners, collectors, and curators, atop of which are layered the gazes and words of viewers. Looking at the works of art in this exhibition will put you in relationships with its artists and its other viewers and the societies in which they all create and exist. In those relationships exist endless possibilities of connection, discovery, and realization as the emotional, intellectual, and social *work* of the work of art takes place. I warmly welcome you to Grinnell College and wish you deeply meaningful experiences and exchanges in your engagement with *Paper Trails: Modern Indian Works on Paper from the Gaur Collection*.

# Curator's Preface and Acknowledgements

Tamara Sears

The *Paper Trails: Modern Indian Works on Paper from the Gaur Collection* exhibition emerged through a collaborative pedagogical process, as the culmination of a semester-long seminar, conducted during the spring of 2019, aimed at workshopping curatorial practices at the master's and doctoral level. The course was designed to fulfill both a general elective requirement for the graduate programs in Art History at Rutgers University, New Brunswick, NJ, and a specific practicum requirement for our curatorial studies program. Although the final version of the exhibition reflects significant revisions to the ordering and interpretation of specific works, the original underlying conceptualizations and curatorial logics bear the indelible imprint of the intensely collaborative conversations undertaken that spring. Whereas the first half of the semester was structured around a series of readings and discussions, the second half unfolded as a practicum spent primarily in the Gaur's gallery space. We engaged the collection hands-on, looking at each work and each artist individually as situated within both a post-colonial present and a longer history of aesthetic practice in the Indian subcontinent. As we did so, we thought through the various ways in which the works could also be connected, in terms of both creative practice and broader social, cultural, or political thematics.

Throughout the semester, students brought their own personal experiences and fields of expertise into conversation with both the scholarly literature on art in post-Partition South Asia and the works themselves. That proved to be a fruitful triangulation, which sometimes reinforced established frameworks for writing about and understanding works by many of the artists whose work is highlighted in the exhibition, but which also sometimes led in unexpected directions. For example, Emma Oslé's dual expertise in the academic study of modern and contemporary Latin America and the artistic practice of printmaking, which she had studied first-hand, added new layers to our understanding of the works included in the section dedicated to "Topographic Engagements." Whereas her scholarly rooting in the Global South, with a particular attentiveness to the complexity of borders, confirmed our

sense that the experience of diaspora and migration offered many parallels across the post-colonial world, her experience as a printmaker brought new insight into the material processes through which artists such as Arpita Singh, Zarina, and Krishna Reddy engaged with these larger issues.

Similarly, Swathi Gorle's interest in South Asian intangible cultural heritage, and particularly in the relationship between religion, urbanism, and pilgrimage, framed our conversations about religious imagery, highlighting the ways in which traditional narratives were reoriented in order to engage post-colonial social, cultural, and political realities. Margo Weitzman and Sopo Gagoshidze brought their respective expertise in 14th- and 15th-century Italian and early medieval Georgian art to bear on engagements with Christian imagery and early modern European canons in works by artists such as F. N. Souza and Gulam Mohammad Sheikh. And, finally, William Green's rooting in Western modernism brought new dimensions to our engagement with abstraction, in thinking through the contributions of Indian artists to transnational artistic experiments in the nature of representation and the dissolution of form.

## Organization of the Catalog

The exhibition design, as it emerged, mirrored an object-oriented pedagogical process. The themes that are represented in the catalog were not external superimpositions but rather those that emerged through our engagement with the works themselves. As much as possible, we tried to "listen" to the artists themselves, to understand their personal histories and intentions. We entitled the first theme "Topographic Engagements," as a way of capturing the complex geographies and mobilities, both imaginary and real, that were central to the experience of South Asia that followed both the trauma of Partition and the opening of the art world, which provided artists unprecedented opportunities to study, live, and travel elsewhere in the world. This is captured by Arpita Singh's striking evocations of international modes of transit, Zarina's commentaries on the notion of home in the diaspora, and Atul Dodiya's homage to the ongoing effects of communal violence fifty years after Independence. It also evoked the rapid transformations of India's urban landscape, beginning at the cusp of Independence, such as seen in works such as Sayed Haider Raza's 1945 *Untitled* (cat. 2) cityscape, and of the ongoing reckoning with India's past in the present, as seen through Gulam Mohammed Sheikh's prints in the collection. The complexity of Indian modernity, as a phenomenon rooted as much in rural as urban experiences, was evoked through M. F. Husain's *Yatra* (cat. 3), ca. 1950s, and Madhvi Parekh's *On Way to My Home* (cat. 7), made in 1999. As Chaitanya Sambrani noted in 2005, for South Asian artists, the "desire for place can be articulated as both a relationship with current locations and an aspiration for real or imagined places in which the artist has made an emotional investment."<sup>1</sup>

The next three sections on "Narrative," "Politics and Social Critique," and "Myth and Religion" are interconnected through the ways in which artists articulated present realities through



*Paper Trails*, Installation view, Gaur Gallery, 2019

engagements with past traditions by mobilizing practices of story-telling and visual world-building. From Avinash Chandra's exploration of modernity through the "sexualization of the city"<sup>2</sup> to Ganesh Pyne's highly complex reframing of a famous Mughal painting from the reign of the emperor Jahangir, the idea underlying "Narrative" is to allow space for artists to tell powerful tales. In some cases, the narratives were deeply personal and often metaphoric, as in Bhupen Khakhar's *Birth of Water* (cat. 21a), Anupam Sud's explorations of the relationship between genders, or Sudhir Patwardhan's *Wounds II* (cat. 13), in which the artist brought his long experience as a medical professional to bear on his evocation of societal wounds through the depiction of a contorted and broken body.

While many of the narrative works included in the initial concept possess elements of political and social critique, some represented more explicit ideological positions or commentary on specific events. These we moved to a new section on "Politics and Social Critique." Included among these are Somnath Hore's etchings and drawings, rooted in his early Marxist affiliations and motivated by the effects of war and famine on rural populations; K. G. Subramanyan's 2004 depiction of the Best Bakery incident during communal rioting in 2002 that resulted in the death of 14 people (11 of whom were Muslims); and Shyamal Dutta Ray's haunting evocation of urban decay and poverty in post-colonial Calcutta. "Myth and Religion" then turns to works that specifically draw upon the ongoing role of devotion in contemporary society. Here are featured M. F. Husain's re-imaginings of Hindu deities, including variations on Hanuman's siege of Lanka, and also his famous series on Mother Teresa, in which he drew together Catholic iconographies and Indic notions of mother



*Paper Trails*, Installation view, Gaur Gallery, 2019

goddesses to simultaneously universalize and personalize her history. Also included is Atul Dodiya's re-imagining of the story of Sabari, drawn from the epic *Ramayana*, Chittaprosad's woodcuts illustrating myths for children's books, and Jyoti Bhatt's explicitly religious prints.

Finally, the last two sections, on "Portraits/Personas" and "Abstraction," form a complementary pair. Whereas the former engages the myriad ways that modern artists approached the depiction of the human form, the latter brings together eschewals of figuration and experiments in the dissolution of representational form. Within Indian modernism, the two were not necessarily in contradiction. The approaches to figuration play around with elements of distortion and/or the dissolution of form in order to evoke the malleability of identity in an era of rapid urbanization and social, political, and economic change, such as in the works by F. N. Souza, Ved Nayar, and Jogen Chowdhury. The figures are variously individual and collective, global and local, urban and rural, affluent and indigent, educated and coarse, salacious and chaste, spontaneous and static. Some look outward, engaging the viewer, as in the works by Laxma Goud. Others turn away, building psychological tension and bringing the gaze inward, as in the work by Krishna Howlaji Ara and Paritosh Sen. The works included in "Abstraction" are more deeply philosophical and often spiritual. They transform the canvas into a space for exploring the very nature of existence and cosmic creation (Anish Kapoor); the ebb and flow of mortal existence (Ram Kumar); the raw, visual access to the infinity of divinity (Prabhakar Kolte); and the formless (im)materiality of the world (Krishna Reddy).

Together, the sections of the exhibition move the viewer through a wide range of ways in which artists responded to social, political, and economic changes brought about by increasing globalization, urbanization, and migration following Indian Independence. In the process, they also represent a distinct history of modernism in South Asia as one that was not distinct from but engaged with contemporary aesthetic movements on a global scale. All born prior to 1950s, the artists included here brought their lived experiences of the ruptures of decolonization to bear on their engagements with complex presents. At the same time, many of them lived and traveled internationally, where they contributed significantly to the reshaping not merely of South Asian art but of modernism as a whole.

### **Acknowledgements**

This exhibition and catalog came together through a long and extended process, one that could not have been possible without the extensive labor of many institutions and individuals. Firstly, I am deeply indebted to my colleagues at Grinnell College, who have worked assiduously to ensure that both this catalog and the exhibition come to fruition at the Grinnell College Museum of Art. The planning began in conversation with Lesley Wright, Director, and Daniel Strong, Associate Director and Curator of Exhibitions, in the summer of 2021. They have been tireless in their support, submitting a successful application for a grant from the Carpenter Foundation to offset costs and providing endless support on site. Following Lesley Wright's retirement, the reins were passed seamlessly on to the new director, Susan Baley. I am also thankful to Professor Michael Mackenzie for his enthusiastic participation and his perceptive engagement as a specialist in modern European art.

The foundational conception of the exhibition could not have come together without the intellectual contributions and determination of the five Rutgers University art history doctoral students—Sopio Gagoshidze, Swathi Gorle, William Green, Emma Oslé, and Margo Weitzman—who participated in the initial conception and installation at the Gaur Gallery in the spring of 2019. Our weekly conversations over the course of the preceding semester vastly shaped the interpretation of individual works in the collection and the designation of the key thematics that structure the exhibition in the current form. The pilot installation would not have been the same without Jeffrey Wechsler, who lent his keen eye and long experience in exhibition design to the pilot installation in the Gaur gallery.

In its current state, the exhibition represents a recurated, expanded version of the earlier 2019 installation, in no small part due to a number of significant new acquisitions of the collection over the past few years, largely under the guidance of Ashish Anand, Kishore Singh and Sudarshana Sengupta at the DAG Modern Gallery. In addition to filling gaps in the collection, these works broaden the exhibition's scope and strengthen many aspects of the narrative by bringing underrepresented artists into

the conversation. Included among these are drawings and prints by artists such as Bhupen Khakhar, Jyoti Bhatt, Chittaprosad Bhattacharya, and Haren Das.

I am also grateful to the many insights gleaned through conversations in the gallery with Rebecca Brown, Deborah Hutton, Darielle Mason, Michael Meister, Gary Schneider, Cynthia Packert, Donna Gustafson, and, most memorably, Manu and Madhvi Parekh. Thanks are also due to Susan Bean, Karin Zitzewitz, and Sumathi Ramaswamy for sharing their thoughts beyond the galleries and providing publications that were central to the development of the catalog.

Last, but certainly not least, it would be impossible to overstate my deep gratitude to Umesh and Sunanda Gaur, both for their inimitable generosity and hospitality in opening up their home and collection to my students and for their unceasingly inquisitive spirit. They worked endlessly alongside the students, giving countless hours of their time, and opening their collection and impressive personal library of publications on modern and contemporary South Asian art for our exploration and research.

### **Notes**

1 Chaitanya Sambrani, "On the Double Edge of Desire," in *Edge of Desire: Recent Art in India*, 12–33 (Asia Society, 2005), 17.

2 See Kishore Singh's catalog entry later in this volume on p. 102.

# Introduction

Michael Mackenzie

It gives me great pleasure to introduce the catalog to the exhibition *Paper Trails: Modern Indian Works on Paper from the Gaur Collection*, curated by Dr. Tamara Sears. This is the second exhibition of works from the Gaur Collection of modern and contemporary Indian art to be held at the Grinnell College Museum of Art, the first being *Many Visions, Many Versions: Art from Indigenous Communities in India*, in 2017. That earlier exhibition focused on what are sometimes called the “non-canonical” arts of various tribal peoples in India. In this case, the works in the exhibition are fully “canonical,” in the sense that they are part of the mainstream of modern and contemporary developments in India since Independence in 1947. The Gaur Collection has built up a collection of great depth and completeness, an almost encyclopedic overview of the complexity and diversity of art in India over the seven decades since Independence. The connoisseurship which they have developed in their collecting practice has enabled them to focus on the materiality of the art object, especially works on paper, and to be attentive to the skill of the printing, the freshness of the plate, the quality of the paper support, as well as the immediacy of the artist’s touch, whether with burin, etching needle, or brush. An exhibition of such works, with their rich materiality and intimacy of scale, offers an American audience the opportunity to experience up close the diversity of the work of modern and contemporary Indian artists.

Although I myself am a specialist in European art, specifically German modernism in the 20th century, I have also been privileged to teach an undergraduate course on the history of Indian art for many years, most recently at Grinnell College. I was first smitten by the sensuous and expressive beauty of Indian art at a major exhibition of an important private collection of ancient and medieval sculpture at the Art Institute of Chicago in 1997. After I saw that exhibition, I rushed back to the classroom to share these aesthetic pleasures with my students, forgetting in the first flush of discovery that my scholarly discipline, and the theoretical positions of modern and contemporary art, had taught me to treat such subjective judgments with suspicion, and to avoid them as unprofessional. And, after

all, my appreciation of premodern Buddhist and Hindu art was predicated on a certain Eurocentric, Orientalizing conception of Indian art as essentially static, its greatness located in an unrecoverable past. It had nothing to do with my primary work as a historian of modern art, and could not, so I presumed, trouble the categories in which I thought about that work. I was as yet unaware that there even was modern art from India. It was only after the appearance of Partha Mitter’s history of Indian art, in 2001, which included several chapters at the end on modern and contemporary art, that I followed Indian art into the modern era.<sup>1</sup> And even still I persisted in thinking of it as some sort of secondary or provincial reflection of European modernism, peripheral to the main line of development. It took longer yet to begin to decenter or “provincialize” Europe and European modernism, to borrow a phrase from the post-colonial theorist Dipesh Chakrabarty.<sup>2</sup> Today, I try to think with my students about how the work of South Asian artists, those who work in Asia and those who work in Europe and America, is central to the story of modern and contemporary art, not peripheral to it.<sup>3</sup> What makes the Gaur Collection so important in the US, and what makes exhibitions like this one so important, is the opportunity to see and think about how Indian art is part of the story of modernism, to see Indian art that is not only beautiful but also aesthetically rigorous, powerfully expressive, and contextually complex.

Let us take up the thread of that story for a moment, if not at the starting point—for the question of starting points inevitably prevents the story from beginning—then at a crucial juncture. In 1919, two innovative art schools were founded, each with the goal of reforming not only art education, but the whole student and, eventually, the nation. One school was Kala Bhavana, the art school of Santiniketan University, outside the city of Calcutta (then the capital of the British Raj in India and now called Kolkata), founded by the writer and Nobel laureate Rabindranath Tagore. The other was the Bauhaus in Germany, founded by architect Walter Gropius. The two schools had similar objectives: to slough off an ossified academic system imposed by a spiritually inert imperial patronage, in order to allow a more authentic individual and national cultural expression to emerge. Tagore gathered what technical and industrial innovations he could from Europe and America to reform the practice of agriculture in rural Bengal, aiming at a unity of craft, farming, and village life that was, however, open to and benefitted from the wider world—a “cosmopolitan local” development not dependent on British imperial patronage.<sup>4</sup> At the Bauhaus, meanwhile, the idea of India was everywhere, especially in the early years. Students practiced meditation and breathing exercises, vegetarianism, and studied their chakras, hoping to harmonize industrial technology with spiritual practice. In preparing for his inaugural speech of the school, Walter Gropius made a note to himself to cite the Gothic cathedral and “India!” in the same breath.<sup>5</sup> Both European and Indian modernism looked to village, peasant life, and the spiritual life of the medieval past as a source of “authentic” cultural expression, freed from the vocabulary of realism and materialism imposed by the imperial rulers.<sup>6</sup> Each of the two art and design schools was fascinated by, and aspired to, their imagined perception



# The Intimacy of Paper

Tamara Sears

As a medium, paper is deceptively complex. At first glance, its softness and crispness offer an aura of intimacy and a distinctive tactility that encourages viewers to closely contemplate the texture of its surfaces and the complexity of the artists' individual brushstrokes and lines. At the same time, its innate fragility requires a level of care and maintenance that goes beyond that needed for works produced on canvas or board. Because of its low cost and ready availability, paper has often been perceived of as a lesser medium. Yet, paper has also played an essential role in artists' creative processes, both in working through compositional details for larger commissions, and in the production of a fully finalized painting or drawing. Within the context of modern and contemporary India, paper offered artists a way of cultivating transnational modernist expression while continuing to explore the potentialities of a medium that had deeper roots in older traditions native to the subcontinent. Simply put, highlighting works on paper draws attention to the central role that the medium has played in the history of both Indian modernism and artistic production within the subcontinent.

The history of painting and drawing in India begins on the walls of Paleolithic rock shelters, with the most famous today located at the archeological site of Bhimbetka in Madhya Pradesh. Cave frescos remain crucial to the history of Indian pictorial representation through the end of the first millennium C.E., with particularly spectacular compositions surviving in the rock-cut temples and monasteries of Ajanta and Ellora. At the same time, artists became adept at producing elaborately illustrated manuscripts on palm leaf surfaces. With the establishment of the Sultanate states and the importation of Persian artists in the 13th and 14th centuries, paper grew in importance as a prime medium for painting in both courtly and mercantile contexts. By the 15th and 16th centuries, artists based in the courts of the Mughals, Rajputs, and their contemporaries were masters at producing highly detailed and beautifully arranged compositions on handmade paper. Within ateliers, pigments were also naturally produced from organic materials, metallic extracts, and a variety of precious and

semi-precious stones, including lead, tin or zinc for white; indigo or lazurite for blue; cow urine for yellow; vermillion (mercuric sulfide) or red lead for red; verdigris (copper chloride) for green; and powdered gold and tin. Such works were typically intended for insertion in illustrated manuscripts or for *muraqqa* albums containing paintings and calligraphic text.

The advent of the British in the 18th century introduced the use of oil on canvas, which grew in popularity following the establishment of colonial art schools after 1850. Wealthy merchants and aristocratic patrons cultivated their Anglophone aspirations by commissioning well-known artists, such as Ravi Varma, to create oil paintings of family portraits and landscapes. By the late 19th century, works on paper had become increasingly relegated to the realms of commercial prints, bazaar painting, and folk traditions. This trend saw a brief reversal in the early decades of the 20th century, with the rise of the Bengal school of art, as artists such as Abanindranath Tagore rejected Western approaches in favor of reviving older Indian traditions. They emphasized an aesthetics of emotion (*bhava*) over Western classical ideals of realism in form (*rupa*), and re-embraced precolonial uses of paper, organic pigments, and calligraphic brushwork. Although many of the principles of the Bengal school came under critique by the 1920s and 1930s, and modernists began to experiment again in oil, the connection between paper and nation had become firmly entrenched, one of many associations upon which modern artists could draw meaning.

For the artists represented in the Gaur Collection, paper served in many different ways and had multiple connotations. For some, the materiality and history of paper has been central to their artistic production. Such is the case with Zarina, whose first retrospective, held at the Guggenheim in 2013, was entitled "Paper Like Skin." For Zarina, paper was not merely a surface well suited to the practice of printmaking, but "an organic material, almost like human skin."<sup>1</sup> Her works often played directly with the material, haptic, and olfactory properties of paper surfaces, and were frequently customized to enhance the visual impact of her finalized prints. The works included in the Gaur Collection reinforce this sensitivity and specificity of medium. Each work includes details regarding the composition and sourcing of the medium, or combinations thereof, in order to produce new layers of meaning. Printed on Okawara paper mounted on Somerset paper, *These Cities Blotted into the Wilderness* (cat. 9) creates a contrast that is both visual and semantic by juxtaposing a soft yet durable Japanese paper—produced of kozo, hemp, and pulp—with a highly popular stock produced by St. Cuthberts in Wells, Somerset, a mill with a long history dating back to the early 18th century. *One Morning the City Was Golden* (cat. 8b) strikingly brings together the contrasting surfaces of a naturally textured and colored Dutch hemp-based paper (*zaan*) with the synthetic hardness of sunboard.

For other artists, the immediacy of paper served as a medium for experimentation, for working through concepts and ideas for production on a grander scale. For example, the

# A Brief History of Printmaking in India

Paula Sengupta

The Gaur Collection of modern Indian works on paper is particularly notable for a remarkable variety of prints made by many of the subcontinent's most influential printmakers. These include intaglios, lithographs, serigraphs, and relief prints by such master printmakers as Zarina, Krishna Reddy, Anupam Sud, Laxma Goud, Chittaprosad Bhattacharya, Haren Das, Somnath Hore, and Jyoti Bhatt. The collection also possesses a number of prints by moderns best known for their work in other media, including Arpita Singh, M. F. Husain, F. N. Souza, and Anish Kapoor. The high representation of prints in a collection of works on paper may be linked to the surface qualities of handmade paper that lend themselves remarkably well to the tactile nature of print. This essay lays out a brief history of printmaking in India, with particular reference to artists in this collection.

## From Reproductive to Creative

Printing arrived in India in the mid-1500s as a colonial import, first for evangelical purposes, and later to further economic and political ambitions. From "printing" emerged "printmaking" or "the art of the printed picture," as the demand for printed illustrations grew. By the mid-18th century, there was a thriving printing and publishing industry in Calcutta (now Kolkata), the capital of the British Raj in India. The advent of European artist-adventurers on Indian shores around this time led to the emergence of broadsheets, as opposed to illustration. Over time, a gradual infiltration of technology into the indigenous artisan community occurred, leading to the emergence of a vernacular print culture that manifested itself both in text and image. From the 19th to the early 20th century, we see vibrant schools of bazaar printmaking in the subcontinent, such as the Bat-tala reliefs in Calcutta and the Punjab lithographs from Amritsar and Lahore.

The 1850s saw the establishment of five art schools in Madras (now Chennai), Calcutta, Bombay (now Mumbai), Jaypore (now Jaipur) and Lahore. All these imparted instruction in

printmaking as an industrial art, with the intention of developing an indigenous workforce to man British presses in India. Creative enterprise was discouraged, even though printmaking had been an active contributor to artistic enterprise in Europe since the Baroque period. However, the instruction that these students received in the art schools led them to establish art studios that practiced planographic printmaking for an Indian clientele. This gave rise to a huge wealth of popular pictures called the "Art Studio Pictures," catapulting artists such as Ravi Verma to fame and demand.

The first example of artistic printmaking occurred in 1917, with Gaganendranath Tagore publishing the lithographic cartoon album *Adbhut Lok* at Bichitra Club, the avant-garde salon in the Tagore residence in Calcutta. This marked a significant breakthrough, with printmaking being considered a medium of artistic exploration, rather than merely for purposes of reproduction.

## Quest for a New Language

Explorations began in earnest with Rabindranath and Abanindranath Tagore's young prodigy Nandalal Bose assuming the reins at Kala Bhavana, Santiniketan as its first Principal in 1920–21. Nandalal's search was for a versatile new language in art that did not differentiate between "art" and "craft" as being synonymous with "high art" and "low art." His keen interest in printmaking was founded not merely in its techniques, processes, and grammar, but also in its democratic nature and aesthetic possibilities. He sought a new spontaneous language in printmaking that was concise, simple, and uncluttered. Instead of attempting to create the illusion of a three-dimensional surface in the print, Nandalal developed a relatively flat, two-dimensional perspective, evenly distributing black and white areas. The resultant prints are unusually crisp, the lines swift and taut, the blacks and whites in perfect unison. Despite continuing to remain subjectively realistic or representational, Nandalal's prints, due to their two-dimensional design, border on abstraction. By the 1930s, the mature Nandalal started to make significant reliefs, such as *Bapuji* (fig. 1), and the later lithographs of domestic pets and poverty-stricken humanity. Apart from artistic printmaking, Nandalal realized the potential of the medium as a means for mass communication. During the 1930s, Ramkinkar Baij and Nandalal printed political posters for the Non-cooperation Movement from cement blocks.

## Of Angst and Fury

It is in light of Nandalal's graphic work that we will consider the work of Chittaprosad Bhattacharya, better known by his first name, who had wanted to study under the master at Santiniketan. Though this desire did not materialize, it would seem from Chittaprosad's prints that Nandalal was his role model. Not only did Chittaprosad reference the two-dimensional design sensibility and crisp chiaroscuro of Nandalal's reliefs, but his later work resonates with Nandalal's references to folk and classical art traditions, and also the



Fig. 1  
Nandalal Bose  
*Bapuji*, 1931  
Linocut on paper  
11½ × 7 in

# An Aesthetics of Borders, Globalization, and Migration in Post-Partition India

Emma Oslé

Through their visual practices, artists from South Asia shape a distinct sense of place, engaging with migration, social geographies, and crossings in myriad ways. They invite viewers to look beyond the painted surface, to examine not only those boundaries that are explicitly depicted but also those which are not always visible. They highlight journeys and explore emotional connections. Sometimes their engagement is deeply personal, drawn from events in their own lives. Other times, they emphasize more broadly shared experiences of travel, diaspora, urban space, and the effects of globalization.

The South Asian perspectives seen in this catalog encompass a range of distinctive subjectivities. Artists featured in this exhibition have lived, either temporarily or permanently, as immigrants in 12 countries, including but not limited to India, England, France, Israel, Bangladesh, the US, Italy, Pakistan, Qatar, Thailand, Germany, and Japan. Many of these artists spent formative years of the late 20th century in Europe, particularly in Paris and in London.<sup>1</sup> Others spent substantial time in the US.<sup>2</sup> Of the 31 artists represented, 14 never left India even after Partition, and, of the 16 artists who did leave, 11 of them moved to at least two countries other than India, and in some cases many more than two. Some artists moved back “home,” settling once more in India following their travels, and others stayed away indefinitely. Of those artists who are no longer living, many were buried within the borders of their chosen homeland rather than in their country of origin. Often, these artists did not inhabit the same diasporas, though crossover did happen, particularly within the Bombay Progressive Artists’ Group and Stanley William Hayter’s influential printmaking workshop, Atelier 17.

For artists of South Asian origin, for whom the 1947 Partition of India, Pakistan, and Bangladesh lives not in a distant ancestral past but as part of a collective present memory, ideas of migration, diaspora, and dispossession remain at the forefront of their studio

practices. The artists featured in this collection and its resulting exhibition largely came of age in a critical post-Partition period of nation-formation, in which an imagining of territory and nation took place during a moment of global decolonization spanning from Asia to the Americas. Forms of mobility play a key role in the lives, careers, and work of these artists, including those who lived and worked in India for the bulk of their careers. The works featured in the “Topographical Engagements” section of this exhibition rethink notions of migration, diaspora, urban space, and globalization in an attempt to pinpoint their own sense of the modern in India.

## Artist as Migrant

Diaspora, as an overarching concept, goes beyond a sense of simply “those who have left.” Inherently, the experiences of diaspora refer to the consequences of globalization as they impact the individual and the community. Diasporic subjects are never one and the same, as diasporas are formed in disparate circumstances. Phenomena such as war, famine, violence, personal choice for various gains, exile, and capitalism shape experiences of migration in very different ways. Most diasporas do share one thing in common, however: a distinct resistance to full assimilation, and the desire to hold on to ancestral memories, cultural heritage, and communal identity.<sup>3</sup>

In the introduction to *The Migrant’s Time: Rethinking Art History and Diaspora*, Saloni Mathur sets up an inquiry into the ways in which Art History as a discipline needs to reconsider and highlight the significance of migration and diaspora.<sup>4</sup> Mathur emphasizes the importance of understanding the condition of globalization as it affects artmaking practices in the 21st century, and the ways that migration informs political space without necessitating a tropic view or an overemphasis on dispossession and mobility. Migration, in Mathur’s frame of thought, represents a social entry point that is entangled with issues of homeland, a lack or loss of belonging, and the search for community in a world “both inextricably interconnected and mercilessly blocked by the politics of barriers and boundaries for historiography, writing, and the narratives of art history.”<sup>5</sup>

This collection features a broad constellation of artists whose work directly engages with conditions of globalization, migration, and diaspora that Mathur highlights. Their experiences are wholly heterogenous, making it impossible to pin down any single narrative or visual migratory sensibility. In the process of conceptualizing the exhibition, we were drawn to the repetition of certain forms and modes of subject formation, such as depictions of urban spaces and engagement with cartographical processes. We also noted a particular investment by many artists in conveying notions of journeying and travel by evoking a visual and mental sense of motion. These artists convey kinesis through inferred routes of travel, allusions to modes of transportation, literary referents, and the mental state of being in motion.

# Ancient Narratives of Devotion: Replication, Transformation, Rejection

Darielle Mason

When I was asked to write an essay on “religion and mythology” for this catalog, it seemed a straightforward task for a specialist in the art of historic India. I would point out some of the referents and themes—the ideas and iconographies—that demonstrated links with the past and popular religion, and explore how artists selected and recontextualized them. I soon found the task nowhere near so simple. Characters or stories from the past, ancient and more recent, might be readily recognizable—Hanuman burning Lanka, Rama hunting the golden deer, Majnun being brought before Laila, St. Francis and the birds, the birth of the Ganges. But, for each artist, historical motifs are only a beginning point in their process to fuse the personal and political, societal and social, secular and sacred. Myth and religion become malleable tools so that their imagery deflects the hackneyed practice of forensically tracking iconography, showing up this art historical tactic as both limited and reflexive.

A part of my choice of artists and works of art for this essay is to acknowledge the role that chronology plays in the uses of iconographies drawn from narratives of devotion. Because of the time frame in which these artists work (1950s to the present), they consciously give themselves permission to pull from any period, place, religion, or culture—in other words they claim universal “ownership,” as did and do modern and contemporary artists throughout the world.<sup>1</sup> What differs among them is not *that* they pull but *why* they pull and *what* they pull.<sup>2</sup> By looking for mythological references in their works, I came to understand that the term “mythology” applies equally to an artist’s self-identity. Each of these practitioners knowingly inserts themselves into the lineage of not only Indian but also global art.

M. F. Husain’s modernist imaging, his mature style alternately termed “expressionist” and “cubist,” deliberately countered the realist-romantic vision of Raja Ravi Varma, which had created the elegantly bourgeois Hindu pantheon popular from early in the 20th century.<sup>3</sup> Reams have been written about Husain’s fascination with Hindu mythology—praising and condemning, depending on the perspective—although he also engaged with the

mythologies of Islam, Christianity, village India, colonialism, and Independence. His illustrations of the *Ramayana* and *Mahabharata*, as has often been noted, emerged from his own childhood. But Husain was drawn as well to the intrinsic narrative and spiritual power of these epic tales, recognizing in them the ability to express universal concepts embodying the new nation of which he proudly included himself as a citizen.

Throughout his oeuvre, Husain’s images preserve their illustrative core, an icon remains an icon. Symbolism coexists, overlays, even submerges story, but never ruptures it. Veena Das writes,

*... in the depiction of ... Ravan, Sita and Hanuman, the painting drips with narrative. In order for many who are steeped in these narratives, the eye must learn to see ... without the narrative ... Husain’s oft-quoted remark that for villagers among whom his depiction of Ramayana was displayed, the story immediately provided the frame for ‘understanding’, is to belie the Modernist ... claim [to] the autonomy of the image ... Husain’s images, intentionally or not, take a whole contentious past as part of their inheritance.<sup>4</sup>*

Das presents it as an imperative that viewers “learn to see” by piercing through this “dripping” narrative. She also questions Husain’s awareness of the contested pasts his works embody. But is it possible in his densely narrative works ever to limit one’s perceptions solely to the language of form? And could Husain, the barefoot sophisticate, have desired this even of his most elite audiences? Husain seems to raise larger questions that encompass the uses of the past and his role in defining the new nation. What is India’s cultural heritage, he asks? Is it merely a selection of iconographies extracted by British archaeologists, thrown by post-Independence secularists, and fired by Hindu nationalists? Or is it the vast tangible-intangibility of the subcontinent’s millennia-deep storied legacy, and the impact of that legacy on the world?

Fig. 1 [left]  
Maqbool Fida Husain,  
*Hanuman-Nineteen*, 1984  
Ink and watercolor on paper  
15 × 21 ¾ in (cat.29b)

Fig. 2 [right]  
Maqbool Fida Husain  
*Untitled (Hanuman)*, ca. 1990s  
Watercolor on paper  
22 × 30 in (cat. 29c)



# Cacophonies and Silence: Hearing Abstraction

Rebecca M. Brown

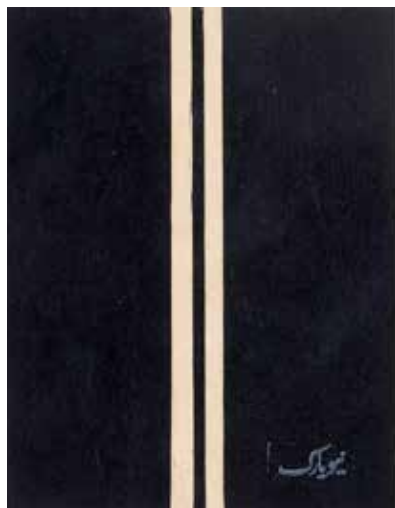


Fig. 1  
Zarina  
*New York*, from *These Cities Blotted into the Wilderness* (Adrienne Rich after Ghalib), 2003  
Portfolio of nine woodcuts with Urdu text printed in black on Okawara paper and mounted on Somerset paper, Edition of 20, image size: variable, sheet size: 16 ¼ × 14 ¼ in (cat. 9i)

Zarina's woodcut entitled "New York" (cat. 9i) required a precision in her hand and tools such that she carved away the wood of two perfectly vertical stripes, cutting edge to edge across the paper, itself in an orientation we often describe as "portrait" in distinction from "landscape" (fig. 1). The work is a landscape of sorts, but also a memory of rupture and breakage, a site of a moment of booming, crashing noise and one collective horrified intake of breath, both sound and silence echoing through the subsequent years and across the globe. An abstract form, yes, which one could compare to earlier, canonical, avant-garde, and modernist gambits in black and with vertical stripes, from Malevich's black square and Rothko's chapel to Barnett Newman's zips. Abstract and not. Portrait and landscape. Sound and silence.

Abstraction has long been a slippery framework for art historical thinking; very few works of art fall firmly into that category, and very few two-dimensional works fully escape a connection to the body, to history, or to representation. Zarina's *New York* might be one of the more "abstract" works in this exhibition, but at the same time its representation of the two towers, the wound on the surface of the woodblock and the darkness of the inky surround, suggests an emotionally poignant landscape and memory-scape. It invites us into a particular moment and its aftermath, reminding us of the empty space left by the towers and the dead, and, in part by labeling the work in both English and Urdu, bringing politics, history, and representation right back into the remaining black field.

Following Zarina's emotive, multi-sensory evocation of New York, I am inspired here to explore the Gaur Collection of works on paper through a similarly extra-visual approach to abstraction, specifically as something that might be heard, spoken, and read as much as seen. Like Zarina's maps, for example, Jyoti Bhatt's prints include text, both within the field of the print and, as is traditional for prints, across the bottom, where the artist writes his name, alongside the title, date, and number of prints. Bhatt's prints *Om Mani Padmaham* (cat. 30c)

and *Om Mani Padmaham II* (cat. 30b) (figs 2 and 3) both center on the same bold black text, which appears as if written over a multifaceted field of symbols, drawings, and further texts. The title of each print is a version of the Sanskrit mantra associated with Avalokiteshvara, the Bodhisattva of compassion, and used quite widely across the Buddhist world. The script emulates—but does not fully embody—Tibetan (*uchen*) script. The dot that should indicate the nasal "m" in Om is missing, and the final hum seems to be entirely missing, unless one reads the large form at left as a version of that syllable, in the Devanagari script (used in many parts of northern, western and central India) instead of in Tibetan.<sup>1</sup> The text becomes more confusing as one tries to parse the other passages, which comprise what looks like the word "Rama" in a Tibetan-styled Devanagari, and what might be a version of the artist's first name in a mashup between Tibetan and Devanagari at right. The artist has successfully made us come closer to read the work, perhaps as we sound out the powerful Buddhist mantra alongside the name of a Hindu divinity, which is also often used as a mantra: Gandhi is said to have uttered "He Ram" as his last words. We struggle to read the text, even if we are fluent in Tibetan, familiar with the Buddhist mantra, or able to parse Devanagari. And then, as we lean in closer, we see text everywhere: inscribed on the two faces above, hiding amidst the symbols and forms underneath the bold text in the main field below. The faces seem to join us in our reading, with their open mouths perhaps intoning the text on their own faces: the Vaishnavite one, on the left, chanting "Rama" over and over; the Buddhist, at right, chanting the words of refuge (*sharanam*): *Buddham sharanam gacchami, Dhammam sharanam gacchami* (I take refuge in the Buddha, I take refuge in the Dharma). Bhatt has given us sound with the mantra, meant to be spoken and heard in one's head even if one reads it silently. But then he lets that mantra slide out of its specificity—as Buddhist, as Tibetan, as Devanagari, as read-able—and steps back to engage the question of words, writing, and sound as foundational elements of modern art and modernist abstraction.

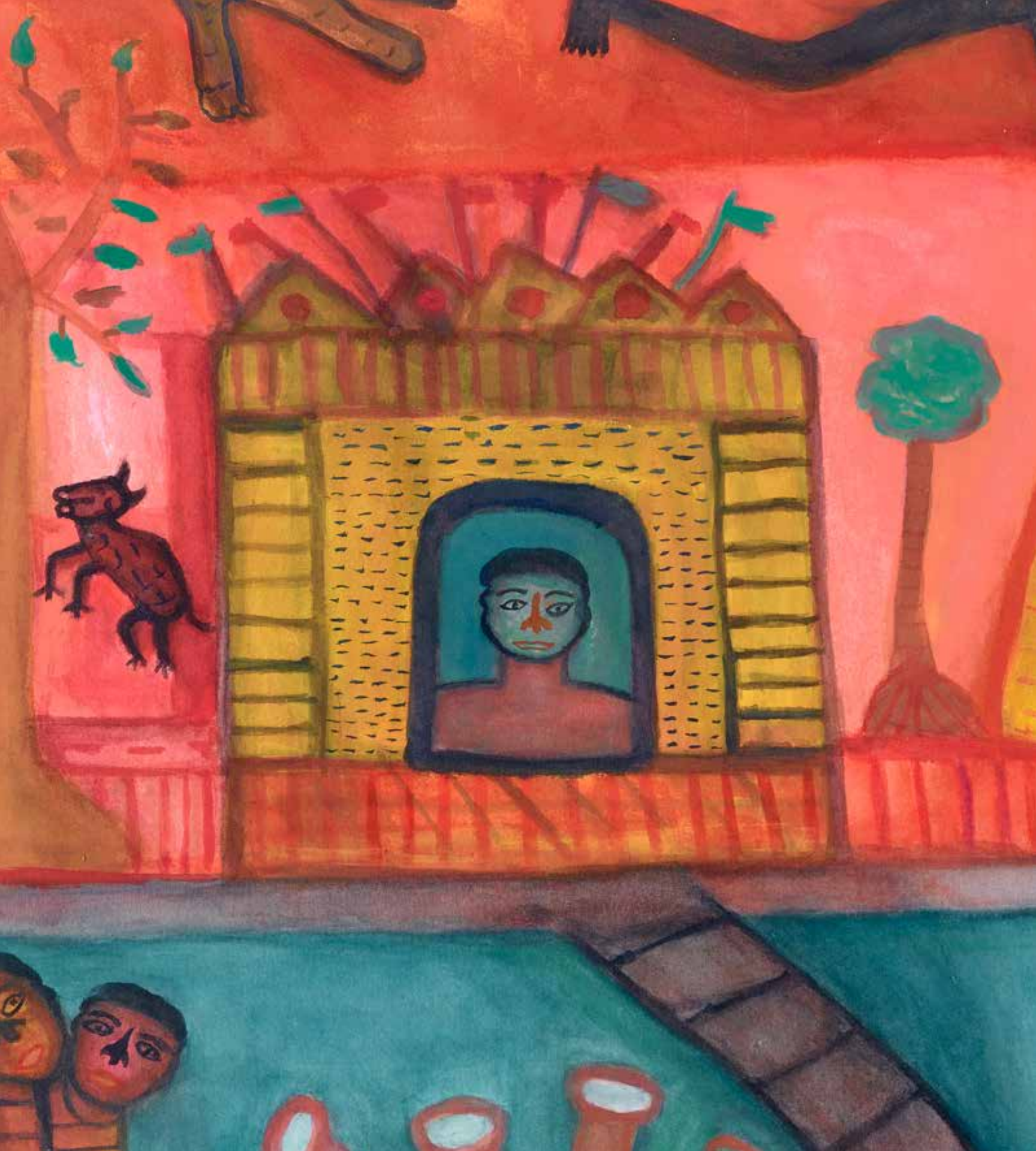
Text, typeface, and calligraphy create a fascinating conjuncture for modernism and abstraction. Writing is, at its core, mark-making, and writing suggests a certain kind of meaning-making as well, when and if the symbols and marks coalesce into recognizable forms. These two elements, mark-making and meaning-making, also drive questions central to modernism across its long, international history, from the floating letters in the works of the Swiss-German Paul Klee to the calligraphic modernism of Sudanese painter Ibrahim El-Salahi, the ancient hieroglyphic forms of Uruguayan Joaquín Torres-García, and the pseudo-Chinese characters in the work of Xu Bing. Bhatt's work enters into that multifaceted experimentation with word, symbol, mark, and meaning, and brings that to bear on many of the different mantra practices associated with South Asia and the Himalayas. The forms of the letters then, especially as they dance on the edge of illegibility, crossing over between different scripts, repeating in scratches amidst swirling vegetal forms and spindly asterisks, embody the slipperiness of sound and meaning. We "read" *om mani padme hum*, but then realize that it's not quite right, and we read "Rama"



Fig. 2  
Jyoti Bhatt  
*Om Mani Padmaham*, 2014  
Etching, 18 ¾ × 13 ½ in (cat. 30c)



Fig. 3  
Jyoti Bhatt  
*Om Mani Padmaham II*, 2014  
Etching, 15 ¼ × 8 ½ in (cat. 30b)



## Topographic Engagements

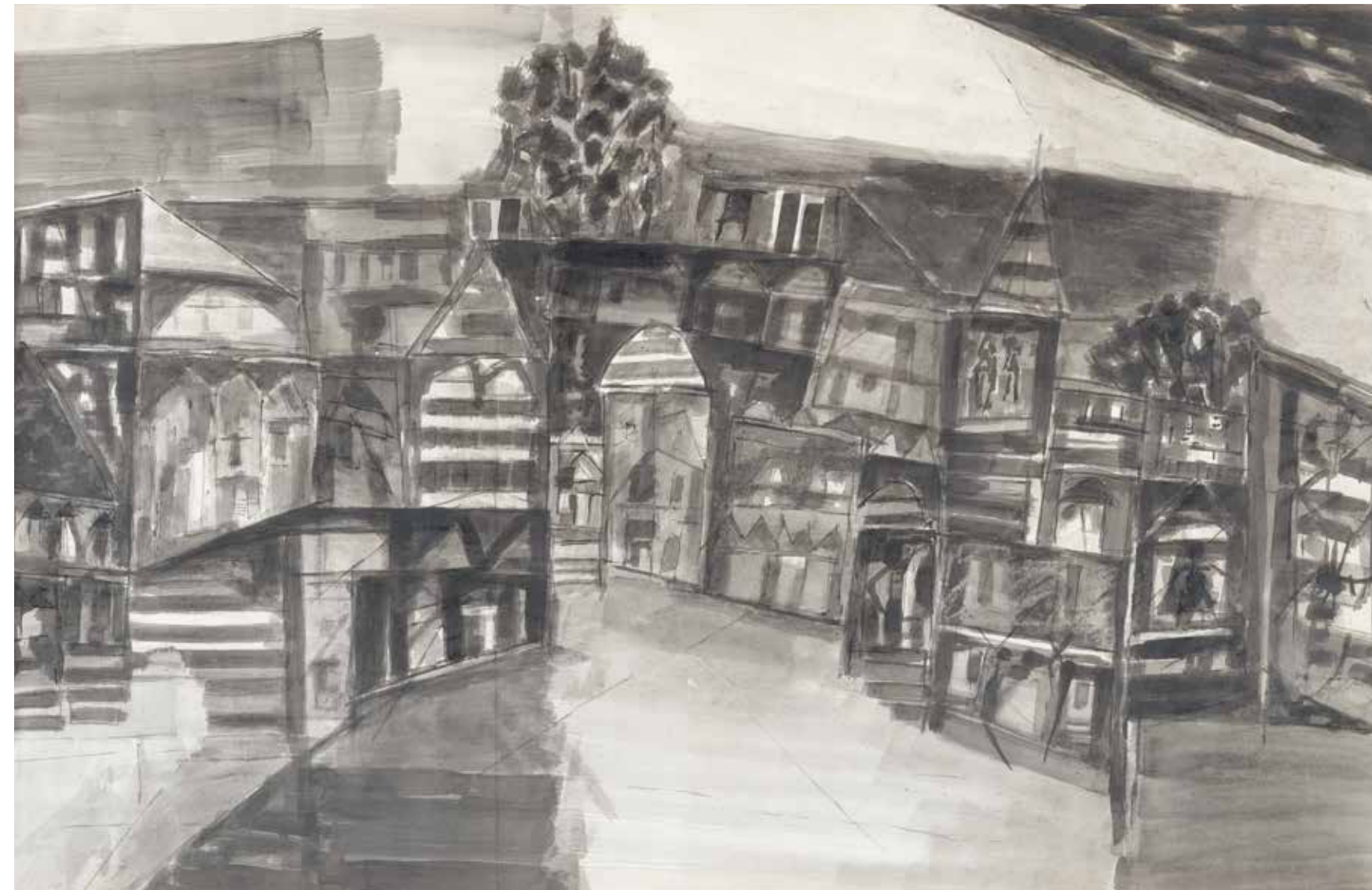
**Ram Kumar (1924–2018)**

1  
*Townscape*, 1991  
Grey wash on paper  
22 ¼ × 35 in

Born into a middle-class family in the scenic hill station of Shimla, Ram Kumar's trajectory as an artist took a direction very different from many of his contemporaries. After earning an advanced degree in Economics from the prestigious St. Stephen's College at Delhi University, he discovered a passion for art. In 1949, with encouragement from Sayed Haider Raza and to the consternation of his father, he resigned his lucrative job as a banker and set off to Paris to study painting under the tutelage of André Lhote and Fernand Léger. Ranjit Hoskote has written that "to trace Ram Kumar's evolution as a painter is to map the course of contemporary Indian painting: in the spiritual crises he has undergone, the choices of style he has made, we see reflected the tensions of an unfolding post-colonial modernity, full of surprises and uncertainties."<sup>1</sup> His early experiments in figuration, in the 1950s, gave way to increasingly abstracted cityscapes and landscapes in the 1960s and 1970s, often dissolving into metaphors through which planes of color and networks of lines evoked, rather than represented, the streets of Varanasi, the thick forests of the Shivaliks, or the nest of a bird.

In the 1990s, Ram Kumar's work took a turn back towards more recognizable forms. The city again began to appear through a discernable architectural framework, sometimes populated with select groupings of abstracted figures.

*Townscape*, in the Gaur Collection, exemplifies this phase of Kumar's exploration. We are confronted by the façade of a riverfront city, whose tall buildings are reflected in the shimmering of the silvery waters that dominate the foreground. The flattened surfaces are almost transparent in places, inviting the viewer to look into and beyond the interior spaces. Here and there, one gets the impression that the city is inhabited by abstract yet vaguely human forms. On an upper-story terrace, to the right, a couple gazes downward, and elsewhere we see blurs of movements surrounding stick-like figures. Large outcroppings of trees and vegetation jut upwards beyond the city, penetrating the sky, dense with clouds, or perhaps smog. The choice of medium, of grey wash on paper, heightens the work's haunting beauty. The precise location is intentionally obscure. Kumar is presenting us with his characteristic composite city, one in which the "ghosts" of many cities—Varanasi, Delhi, Rome, Venice, Moscow, and Baghdad—intermingle. What is being represented is what Hoskote has described as "the city at the very moment when it is about to be overwhelmed by catastrophe," a place that offers habitation but not refuge.<sup>2</sup> *Townscape* exemplifies Kumar's remarkable talent for expressing the human condition, what he has described as "the tragedy of life and death" through abstraction.<sup>3</sup> [TS]



1 | *Townscape*



Narrative



**Ganesh Pyne** (1937–2013)

11  
*Untitled (The Dying Inayat Khan)*, 1983  
Tempera over pen and ink on paper  
17 × 13 ¾ in

A native of West Bengal, Ganesh Pyne began his career as an acolyte of the Bengal school of art, having trained at the Government College of Art and Craft in Calcutta (now Kolkata). He quickly developed a unique style of poetic surrealism that interwove characters inspired by Bengali folktales with a darkness rooted in the trauma of Partition that he experienced as a young child. Often small in scale, Pyne's work is notably layered and labor-intensive, as can be seen in this work, depicting a well-known episode from the memoirs of the Mughal emperor Jahangir (the *Jahangirnama*), which has been widely available in translation since the 19th century. The episode in question describes the death of the emperor's beloved servant Inayat Khan in extensive detail and as an extended process. The accompanying illustration, painted by the renowned artist Balchand, survives in the form of a preparatory drawing (Boston Museum of Fine Arts), as well as a completed folio (Bodleian Library, Oxford). It depicts Inayat Khan in profile, his body emaciated and slumped listlessly on his deathbed. The full text of the *Jahangirnama*, pertaining to this event, describes Inayat Khan having perished from the wasting away of his body due to chronic alcoholism and opium abuse, to the point at which he had become literally, in Jahangir's words, "skin stretched over bone."

Here, Pyne reframes "death" as an ongoing process, rather than as a final moment, and transforms the objectified courtier into a postmodern, post-colonial subject who remains fully aware of his viewer. Inayat Khan is positioned frontally, staring unflinchingly forward, his gaping mouth displaying an impossibly full set of teeth. As in the Mughal work, he rests against an embroidered cushion, but he sits



*Dying Inayat Khan*, Attributed to Balchand, Indian, active ca. 1600–1640, Ink and light wash on paper, 4 ½ × 5 ¼ in

cross-legged, his knees bent and lower body folded almost completely into his torso. His face is skeletal, the flesh and skin already disintegrated. He has lost his hat, and his hair appears as unkempt columnar masses, extending down past his shoulders, as if they continued to grow even after his passing. The Inayat Khan that Pyne reimagines hovers in a liminal process between living and dying.

In its engagement with a Mughal past, Pyne's work also translates its subject for a contemporary audience. Although Inayat Khan ostensibly died of dissipation, purportedly due to alcoholism and opium overuse, "his countenance," as Ellen Smart has suggested, "is so close to that of a person dying from cancer or AIDS that it shocks the viewer at the close of the twentieth century."<sup>20</sup> At the same time, the clear emaciation of the body in contrast to the prominence of the skull calls to mind the tragic effects of famine in his native Bengal, as featured in the work of Somnath Hore, who was also based in Calcutta. An ardent member of the Communist Party, Hore became well known for his painstaking, and often graphic, documentation of the effects of war on marginalized communities. His experience during the Great Bengal Famine of 1943 spurred his life-long investment in portraying human suffering in emotionally arresting ways, as can be seen elsewhere in the exhibition through a series of etchings and prints dating similarly between 1975 and 1983. [TS]



11 | *Untitled (The Dying Inayat Khan)*



Politics and Social Critique

**Maqbool Fida Husain (1915–2011)**

23a  
*New Market R. Thomas & Co.* (from the *Raj* series)  
1986  
Watercolor and ink on paper  
22 × 30 in

M. F. Husain's engagement with India's complex and layered histories gave rise to works that can be understood as sharp and insightful political and social commentaries. In the mid-1980s, Husain was struck with a deep desire to revisit the British Raj, which he had inhabited in its twilight years. This led to the production of a vast array of images frequently referred to as his *Raj* series. In *New Market R. Thomas & Co.*, Husain evokes the vibrancy of New Market in Calcutta (today Kolkata), which served as the main commercial hub of the colonial city. Initially established in the 1830s, the broking firm of R. Thomas & Co. quickly became one of the controlling forces in the indigo trade until its bankruptcy in 1866 following the Indigo revolt of 1859. Thereafter, it was restarted as J. Thomas & Co., which today remains the oldest and largest tea auctioneer in the world.<sup>44</sup>

The upward angling of the neo-classically inspired buildings in the background emphasizes the dominating imperial force of the British "white town," as does also the scale of the British merchant, presumably the founder, Robert Thomas, in the lower left corner. Donning a stylish European suit and sporting full mustache and ample muttonchops, he looks outward, faceless yet imposing. He forms a stark contrast to the centrally positioned but comparatively tiny figures of a loin-cloth-clad native and a bull, both represented in classic Husain style but also referencing the ubiquity of Indian peasants in colonial-era representations of the British city. On the lower right corner is an impression of a one-paisa coin adorned with both Urdu and Bengali script, clearly labeled by Husain as depicting the coins of the East India Company, "struck from 1878 onwards at the insistence of Warren Hastings," who notably served as the first Governor

23b  
*100% Literacy* (from the *Kerala Experience* series)  
2001  
Offset serigraph  
14 × 20 in

of Bengal from 1773 until 1785, a post that he left in ignominy, as he faced impeachment and charges of corruption that led to a protracted trial back home in London. Together, the juxtaposition of these details serves as a sly and ironic recognition, as Sumathi Ramaswamy has suggested, "that the rise of the autonomous managing house also spelled the death knell of the monopoly that was the East India Company."<sup>45</sup>

*100% Literacy* represents one of a limited edition of eight prints commissioned by the Kerala Tourism Department, which invited Husain, in 2001, to tour the state and produce images that captured its essential qualities. Most of the prints represent Kerala's colorful village life and idyllic landscapes, which Husain purportedly described as "the ethereal beauty of 'God's own country.'" This print, however, highlights Kerala's remarkable history of promoting literacy, resulting in state-wide rates of over 95% for all adults, including, most notably, women. Husain makes the point by foregrounding the presence of both women and men, some urban and some rural. Juxtaposed in the center, between a sari-clad woman and a man with a western haircut donning a kurta, both wearing glasses, is a Hindu *brahmin* priest, with Shaiva markings (*tilak*), sitting on a chair and reading. In typical Husain fashion, there is more here than meets the eye. The composition strikingly evokes Krishen Khanna's famous 1948 painting *News of Gandhi's Death*, which depicted people of various social and religious backgrounds standing together, separate yet apart, reading newspaper reports of the assassination of the Mahatma at the hands of Nathuram Vinayak Godse, a Hindu nationalist with strong ties to the same political movements



23a | *New Market R. Thomas & Co.* (from the *Raj* series)



Myth and Religion



31a | *Sabari Throwing Rings into the Chakri*

used for cracking wheat, splitting whole beans for making *daal*, and pulverizing spices into a fine powder. As the title suggests, in *Sabari Throwing Rings into the Chakri*, Sabari is seen throwing her rings into a grinder, dramatically cleansing herself of material possessions. *Sabari with Birds* references Sabari's wedding feast, where her parents, in preparation for her wedding, slew several birds and, shocked by the bloodshed, Sabari renounced marriage completely and

devoted her life to being an ascetic. Crimson birds are shown perched on vein-like branches that emerge from Sabari's body, reflecting the wedding banquet and accentuating her association with animals and the natural world.

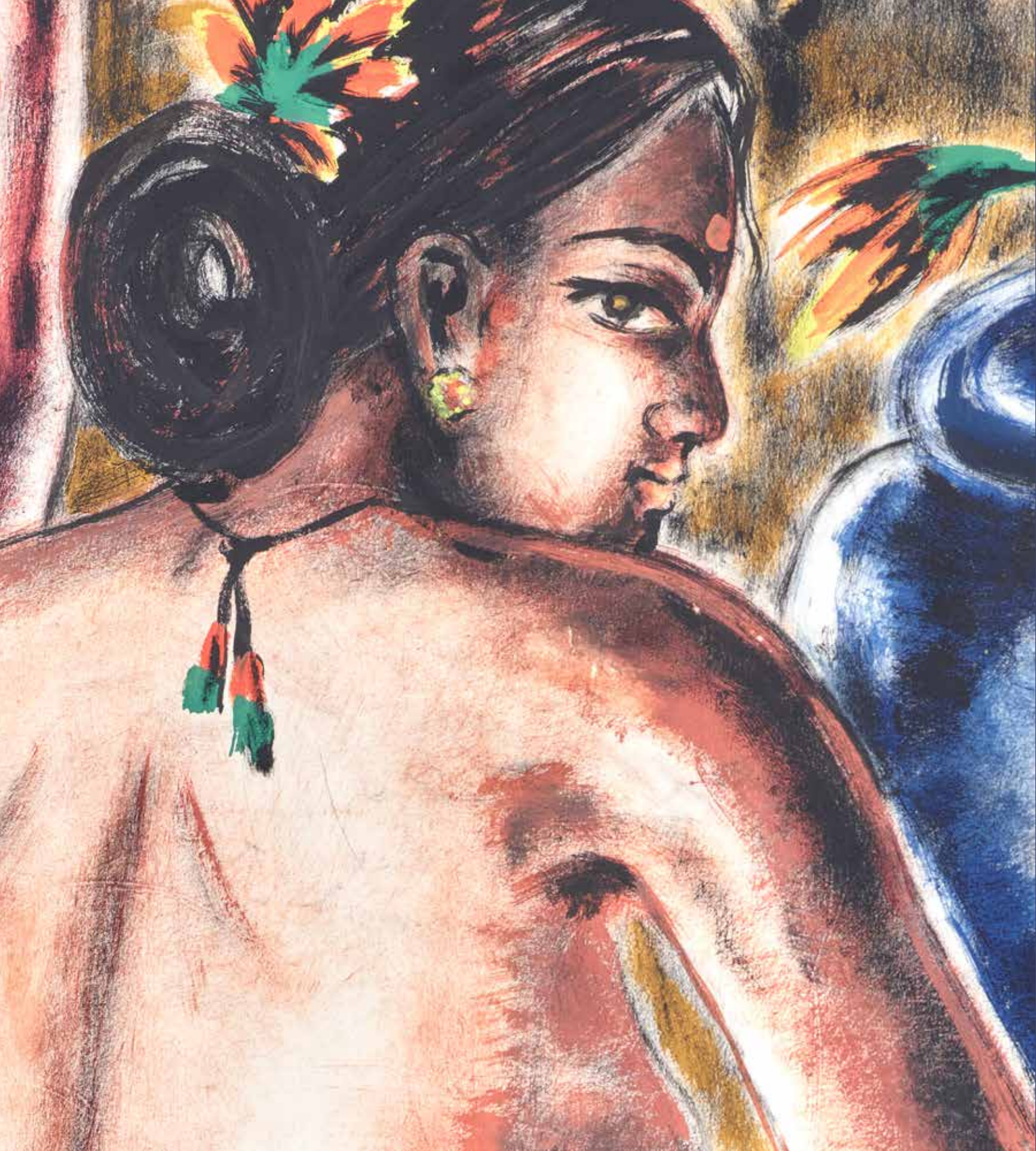
In both works, Sabari is visualized as a dramatically outlined linear figure with elongated features and an erect spine. Dodiya has described the spinal column as becoming



31b | *Sabari with Birds*

the "first alter image" and posing a fitting contrast to the traditional story. This mode of representation marks a distinct progression in his approach to the subject, which began in 1999 with a watercolor, *Woman with Chakki*, which he describes as "a subconscious quotation of Bose's *Sabari in her Old Age*." In the new version, he writes, "[This] time I decided that Sabari in my works would be someone special, she would be a creation of character, but she would also be

lyrical."<sup>56</sup> In reframing and contemporizing Sabari, Dodiya breathes new life into a character who has been bound to tradition and largely ignored by history. At the same time, he also simultaneously pays homage to a pioneering modernist, while establishing his own unique approach to modernizing Indian traditions. [SG]



Portraits/Personas

**Jogen Chowdhury** (b.1939)

33a

*Untitled (Head), 1977*

Pastel and ink on paper

15 × 14 7/8 in

33b

*Man with Piece of Paper, 1986*

Pastel and ink on paper

15 × 11 in

Born in a small village in present-day Bangladesh, Jogen Chowdhury's family relocated to a refugee camp in Calcutta (now Kolkata) in 1947 following the Partition of Bengal. After graduating from the Government College of Art and Craft in 1960, he began work as a teacher in a secondary school in Howrah Zilla. A gifted writer and poet, as well as a visual artist, he spent his free time painting and organizing a literary and cultural group that published its first journal in 1961. In 1967, he went to Paris and studied at the École nationale supérieure des Beaux-Arts in Paris and in Stanley William Hayter's Atelier 17. When he returned to India, in 1968, he relocated to Madras (now Chennai) to work as a textile designer in the Handloom Board, where he remained until 1972, when he shifted to Delhi to take on the position of curator of the art collection at Rashtrapati Bhavan. In 1987, he returned permanently to West Bengal to take on the post of professor of painting at Kala Bhavana in Santiniketan.

Deliberately individual in his approach to art making, Chowdhury defied shifting artistic trends towards abstraction in the 1960s and 1970 to hone and perfect instead a unique vocabulary for figural representation. In a recent interview with Nawaid Anjum, he noted, "I believe that abstraction exists also in 'real' forms, in the human figures or any other object."<sup>58</sup> A close observer of people, he was drawn particularly to the facial expressions and bodily gestures associated with elevated emotive states of joy and agony, which he captured through his mastery of texture and emotionally charged line, and also through the intentional distortion of heads and bodies. He has described these intentionally distorted figures as metaphors for the social and economic imbalances that have characterized Indian society since Independence. The gaze of Chowdhury's

frequently introverted figures is often focused inward, at an angle, or away from the viewer. He is best known for his portrayals of single figures, closely cropped within the composition, and set against a dark and seemingly empty background that focuses the viewer's attention on the main subject, while also eliding a specificity of place.

The two works in the Gaur Collection are outstanding examples of Chowdhury's technical prowess and discerning eye. *Man with Piece of Paper* features exactly that: a middle-aged man, likely an intellectual, with a receding hairline, stares off into the distance, while holding a sheet of paper closely against his chest in an elongated, almost Mannerist, hand. His head is tilted upward and his eyes are slightly crossed, as if his thoughts were turned inward in a state of deep contemplation, an impression that is reinforced also through his furrowed brow and the taut contours of his face. His state of dishevelment suggests that he remains oblivious to the world around him: half of his shirt buttons have come undone, and his collar crookedly frames his neck. The subject of his contemplation remains unknown, as the paper that he grasps is elusively blank.

The untitled work from 1977 portrays a man in profile, with an almost impossibly large and lumpy head resting upon strangely misshapen shoulders. The figure is stripped of any identifying markers save a pair of thin wire spectacles tucked behind a disproportionately tiny ear. Like the paper in the 1986 work, the spectacles suggest that the man being represented is an intellectual. Here, Chowdhury's mastery of the line is evident in both the delicate definition of key facial features: the eyes, the nostrils, the ear, the chin and the upper lip, as well as in the use of dense cross-hatching to



33a | *Untitled (Head)*



Abstraction



**Krishna Reddy** (1925–2018)

45a  
*Three Graces*, 1958  
Mixed color intaglio  
9 ½ × 19 in

45b  
*Flight*, 1963  
Mixed color intaglio  
13 × 19 in

45c  
*Two Forms in One*, 1954  
Mixed color intaglio  
15 ¼ × 12 in

45d  
*Jellyfish*, 1955  
Mixed color intaglio  
17 × 13 in

45e  
*La Vague*, 1963  
Mixed color intaglio  
14 ½ × 18 ¾ in

Krishna Reddy created his dazzling prints with a complexly layered and innovative printing technique, first gluing various materials to the plate, then inking over and between the networks of raised textures. Mixing different colors of ink with different quantities of linseed oil kept the colors from running together, resolving the overall abstract pattern into distinct pictorial elements, a form of simultaneous color printing that Reddy called “viscosity printing” (sometimes also called “collagraphs,” from the word for glue). A master printer, Reddy had a long and influential career as a printmaking teacher in art departments across the US, retiring as head of the printmaking department at New York University in 2002.

Reddy was born in rural Andhra Pradesh in 1925. His father was a farmworker, but also made sculptures of gods for the local Hindu temple; Krishna began copying the temple’s mural paintings at a young age. As a boy he attended a school founded by Krishnamurti, with a curriculum shaped by theosophy, that had a lasting influence on him. He subsequently studied at Rabindranath Tagore’s innovative Kala Bhavana art school, at Santiniketan, with its goals of integrating craft design and agricultural village life, and synthesizing art, modern science, and Hindu spirituality. These early influences were very much in evidence in Reddy’s own pedagogy. In his notes for a lecture titled “A New Form,” from the 1950s, he wrote,

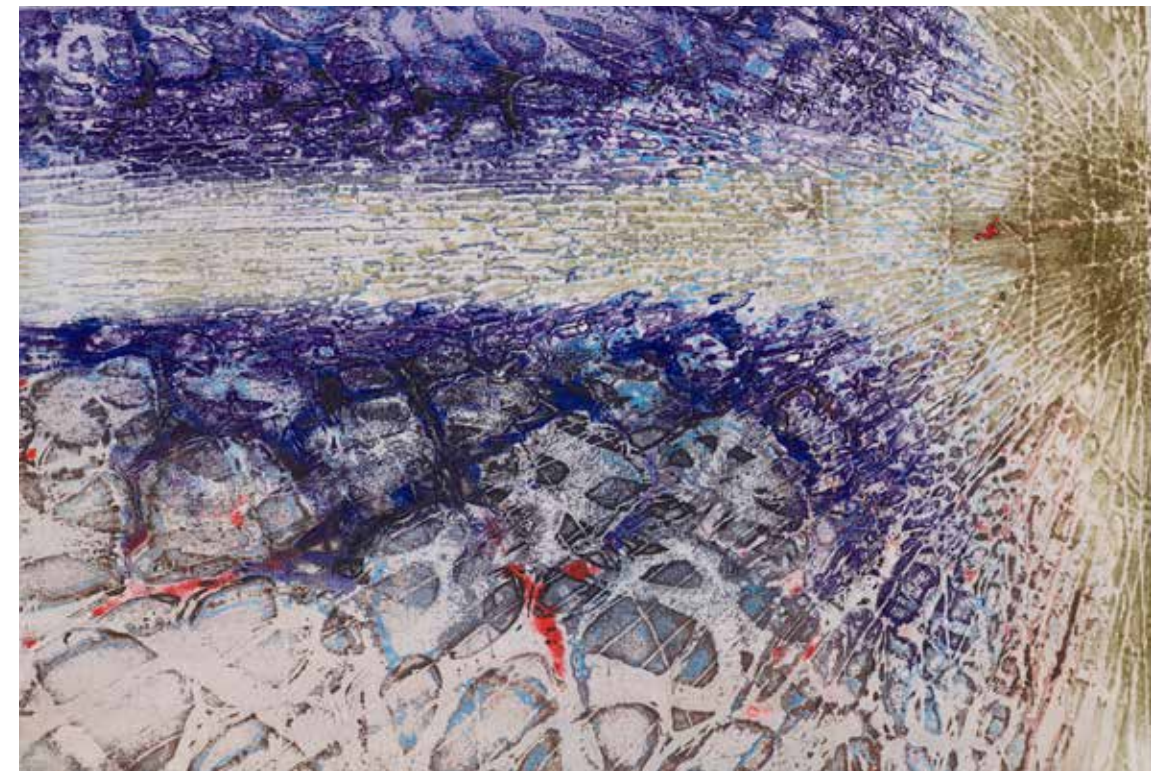
*If the tree, standing on the earth, is real to our eyes and the image of the tree with all its roots, we know of, radiating like the sun’s rays—from the seed to the flowers—is real, why not the whole being of the tree—the whole machinery, the cells, the molecules, the atom, and the whole structure that we have understood be revealed. To see the flame of the tree radiating like a fountain, so are nature’s every form and the space itself. Like the dance of the Nataraja, space beats out a form and the form creates space.*

The elemental nature imagery, the branching, root networks, and cellular patterns, began to appear in his prints around the time that he wrote these lines in the 1950s. In *Two Forms in One* and *Jellyfish* the layering of materials builds up the composition, but also scratches and etches away at it. Black ink fills the spaces between the raised tendrils of the materials glued down to the plate, which in turn print as gaps and fissures in the dense skeins of dark lines. Starbursts and red flares punctuate the disordered compositions, which refuse any formal organization, transcending human meaning and morality.

In 1949, two years after Independence, Reddy left India to study sculpture with Henry Moore at the Slade School of Fine Arts, in London, and continued on to Paris in 1951 to work with the Russian modernist sculptor Ossip Zadkine. There he discovered printmaking and studied at the influential



45a | *Three Graces*



45b | *Flight*



# The Collections of Umesh and Sunanda Gaur: Acquisitions and Aspirations for Modern Indian Culture

Jeffrey Wechsler

At the publication time of this catalog, the 2022 exhibition *Paper Trails: Modern Indian Works on Paper from the Gaur Collection* represents the most recent public presence of an exceptional private exploration of modern and contemporary art from India. Expanding from its first relevant acquisition in 1995 to a collection that numbered approximately five hundred items, the ongoing acquisition activities of Umesh and Sunanda Gaur have produced one of the premiere collections in its field. The significance of the collection has been widely noted; for example, the Gaurs were listed among the “100 Top Collectors” by *Art & Antiques* magazine in 2006 (fig. 1). In the same year, I had the pleasure of working with the Gaurs to organize an exhibition, which was, as a selection of work on paper, a predecessor of sorts of the current display. For that event, I wrote the following:

*The creation of collections of art can become among the most significant of personal undertakings. To outside observers, the simple impact of quantity and value may be impressive in themselves. But the true worth of a collection may also be expressed in how a collector ultimately wishes a collection to function in relation to the world beyond the walls where the art resides. To some, collecting is a truly personal – indeed, an insular – enterprise, to be enjoyed by the collector alone, and perhaps a limited number of family members and friends. To others, the inspiration and joy behind the acquisition of objects is enhanced by sharing them with the wider community. ... The latter category is paramount [for] Umesh and Sunanda Gaur.*

The Gaurs have continued to emphasize the potential for public education and enrichment, not only in growing their collection with a careful consideration for the historical impact of the art, but now further propelling their insight and passion for the art of their nation of origin into a vastly enlarged realm, through major donations of coherent sections of their collection to public institutions. This generosity further disseminates the historical, cultural, and aesthetic concepts that grounded the Gaurs’ interests and acquisition priorities.

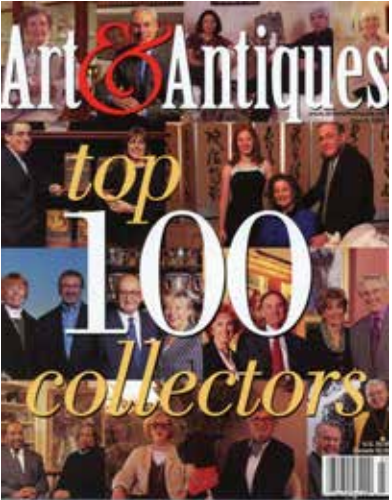


Fig. 1  
Cover, *Art and Antiques*  
March 2003

The art and culture of India, the homeland of the Gaur, has been a natural focus of their collecting. Although they have ventured into several aspects of Indian visual production, such as decorative art and even postage stamps, fine art eventually gained pride of place. The first major purchase in that field was a work on paper by M. F. Husain depicting Mother Teresa, acquired in 1995. The impetus for this selection was in good part due to Husain's status as perhaps the best-known of modern Indian artists. Husain was also a major figure in the Progressive Artists' Group, whose initial members included Francis N. Souza, Sayed Haider Raza, Krishna Ara, H. A. Gade, and Sadanand Bakre. Formed in 1947, the group was crucial to the gradual development and flourishing of modernism in post-Independence India. Given the fame and historical significance of the group, the Gaur realized that a substantial representation of these artists in their collection would create a coherent set of works with historical impact. Acquisitions of works by Husain, Raza, Ara, and Souza represented the core of the Progressive Group, and these were soon accompanied by other first- and second-generation Indian modernists, such as Ram Kumar, Tyeb Mehta, Akbar Padamsee, Krishen Khanna, Ganesh Pyne, K. G. Subramanyan, Jogen Chowdhury, and many more. Then, members of more recent generations were added, including major figures such as Jitish Kallat and Subodh Gupta. It is also important to note that the Gaur wished to properly call attention to the many talented Indian women artists who were making their mark within the contemporary art world: among these in the collection are Zarina, Bharti Kher, Arpana Caur, Reena Kallat, Nalini Malani, and Madhvi Parekh. Within the scope of modern Indian art, the Gaur were amenable to all two-dimensional methodologies, including paintings and works on paper in all media, such as drawings, watercolors, printmaking, and photography. Only a few sculptures are in the collection, and this is likely a purely practical decision based on the limited space for home display or storage. However, the Gaur's decision to consider their collection as a method of documenting various historical, stylistic, artistic media, as well as cultural subsets within the overall production of modern and contemporary Indian art, has become a hallmark of their acquisition procedures. The selection of specific works to enter the collection is a shared decision between Umesh and Sunanda. Working with the parameters of what they want the overall collection to illustrate, both halves of the duo must agree that a given piece is appropriate. Fortunately, as Umesh has commented: "Over the years, our tastes have synchronized."

As the collection grew, and its significance became increasingly evident, the Gaur determined to make their art available to a wider audience, through presentation of the work in public museums. The first large-scale instance of such a project was an exhibition of over a hundred works loaned by various private collectors of modern Indian art, shown at the Zimmerli Art Museum of Rutgers University in 2002. The exhibition concept was initiated by Umesh Gaur, who contacted the museum's Director and me to inquire whether a project of this sort would be possible or appropriate for the museum. Located in central New Jersey, the main campus of Rutgers University was within Middlesex County, which had the highest



Fig. 2  
Gaur Gallery  
*Looking In | Looking Out:  
Contemporary Indian  
Photography from the  
Gaur Collection, 2017*

percentage of its population with Indian heritage of any county in the US. Therefore, we realized this was a perfect fit to attract and involve the important regional Indian community, as well as to present a high-quality exhibition from a culture whose modern art was not well known to the general public. The exhibition received an enthusiastic response, and the press noted its status as the first major survey of contemporary Indian art in the US since a show at the Hirshhorn Museum in 1982. Building upon that success, the Gaur have initiated a series of exhibitions derived exclusively from their collections at many venues throughout the US. A list of these exhibitions appears at the end of this essay.

The Gaur's commitment to advancing the cause of modern Indian art through public display was not limited to sending the work far afield. In 2010, the Gaur built a new home, which afforded not only the opportunity to present more work within the family living spaces, but included an entire purpose-built level, designed as a gallery space for rotating exhibitions drawn from their art holdings (fig. 2). These exhibitions were available to the public by appointment, and the space was occasionally also used for various community events, further exposing the art to the regional population. At first, the gallery was called *Bindu Modern*, with an accompanying website. The word *bindu* means "focal point," suggesting the gallery as a center for the appreciation of Indian art. However, after the name began to suggest to some observers that the exhibition space was a commercial gallery, the name was removed. The educational potential of the collection was further realized in part through this exhibition at the home gallery, organized in conjunction with graduate students in art history from Rutgers University.

Over time, with the growing presence and importance of Indian art within the international art community, the Gaur's natural impulse toward exhibition and education of this cultural heritage led to another important step. As noted before, the Gaur Collection contains cohesive groups of works focusing on historical periods, artistic media, and cultural groups. Two of these subsets are photography and recent indigenous art. With great generosity, the Gaur's have made donations of these sizable collections to public institutions and have done so with careful consideration to which venues will best enhance their impact.

The photographs have been given to the National Asian Art Museum of the Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D.C., where they will complement large collections of photography from Japan and Iran, as well as the photographic estate of the major Indian photographer Raghubir Singh. In its introduction to the Gaur donation on its website, the museum states: "The subject matter and format of these photographs complement our archival collection of early Indian landscape and portrait photographs that circulated in popular ethnographic and tourist channels. With works dating from 1983 to 2013, the Gaur Collection not only documents South Asian contributions to the development of photography, but it also addresses critical issues affecting the broader global community."

The tribal art collection has been gifted to the Philadelphia Museum of Art, where Dr. Stella Kramrisch, a past curator at the museum, who did pioneering work in researching and collecting tribal Indian art, had donated her own collection. The Kramrisch Collection is considered one of the best and the largest collections of its kind, but mostly consists of objects created before the 1980s, when Dr. Kramrisch retired after a long tenure as the curator of Indian art at the Philadelphia Museum of Art. The Gaur Collection, which consists entirely of paintings which have been created in the last three decades, extends this significant collection to the current times. The Gaur donation also complements the already impressive general holdings in Indian art at the Philadelphia Museum of Art, which notably include illustrated manuscripts, as well as the remarkable Temple Hall of oversize sculptural pillar figures from Madurai. Thus, these examples of the Gaur's collecting acumen will contribute to even greater appreciation of these aspects of traditional and modern Indian art.

The *Paper Trails* exhibition now takes its place within the continuity of acquisition, exhibition, education, and donation that sets the Gaur Collection apart from many other private collections. However, beyond creating exhibitions drawn entirely from their collection, the Gaur's have also offered their cooperation and participation in various other ways to spread the knowledge and appreciation of modern Indian art. Works from the Gaur Collection have been loaned to exhibitions of Indian art at significant cultural institutions, including the Peabody Essex Museum in Salem, Massachusetts and the Rubin Museum of Art in New York City. The Gaur's also spearheaded the development of *India:*

*Public Places, Private Spaces*, a highly significant 2007 exhibition of Indian photography, held at The Newark Museum of Art, New Jersey.

The Gaur's efforts also reflect a compelling characteristic that can be perceived in a considerable number of contemporary India-born artists who have gained prominence on the world art scene. Although many Indian artists use contemporary techniques and media, embracing abstraction and semi-abstraction, video and installation and related formats, a considerable proportion employ traditional Indian imagery, history and mythology to express personal concepts. Inheritors of a civilization going back millennia, these artists accept the validity of the past, even the distant past, to inform and strengthen their current visions. In a similar way, Umesh and Sunanda Gaur, born in India but living in the US, advance an East/West interaction and mutual respect, capturing the creativity of their homeland from recent years, and respectfully gathering it and then dispersing it so that more people can be enlightened by the ongoing production of a venerable creative wellspring that is fundamental within the cultural diversity of the world.

## Other Exhibitions from the Gaur Collection

**India—Contemporary Art from Northeastern Private Collections**  
Zimmerli Art Museum, Rutgers-New Brunswick, The State University of New Jersey (2002)

**Post-Independence Contemporary Indian Art—Selections from Umesh and Sunanda Gaur Collection**  
Paul Robeson Gallery, Rutgers-Newark, The State University of New Jersey (2003)

**Indian Paintings of the New Millennium**  
Quick Center for the Arts, Fairfield University, Fairfield, CT (2005)

**Modern Indian Works on Paper**  
Georgia Museum of Art (2006); Arthur Ross Art Gallery, University of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia (2007)

**Looking In | Looking Out—Contemporary Indian Photography from the Gaur Collection**  
Stephen D Gallery of Massachusetts College of Art and Design, Boston (2015)

**Many Visions, Many Versions: Art from Indigenous Communities in India**  
Ben Shahn Center for the Visual Arts, William Paterson University, Paterson, NJ (2015); Grinnell College Museum of Art, Grinnell, IA (2017); Surrey Art Gallery, Surrey, Canada (2018); Frost Art Museum, Miami (2018); Weisman Art Museum, Minneapolis (2018–19); McClung Museum, Knoxville (2019); Susquehanna Art Museum, Harrisburg, PA (2020); Leigh Yawkey Woodson Art Museum, Wausau, WI (2020)

**Paper Trails: Modern Indian Works on Paper from the Gaur Collection**  
Grinnell College Museum of Art, Grinnell, IA (2022)

**Smithsonian's National Museum of Asian Art in Washington, DC** will present a series of thematic exhibitions, based upon the gift of the Gaur Collection of Contemporary Photography to the Smithsonian. The first exhibition in the series, entitled *Unstilled Water*, will showcase works of photo artists Atul Bhalla, Gigi Scaria, Ketaki Sheth and Ravi Aggarwal (December 2022),

**Philadelphia Museum of Art** will present a major exhibition featuring the Gaur Collection of Indian indigenous paintings gifted to the museum. The working title of the exhibition is *Running Up: Individuality and Indigeneity* (2024).

## About the Contributors

**Dr. Tamara Sears** is Associate Professor of Art History at Rutgers University in New Brunswick, where she has also been co-directing the Global Asias Initiative for the past three years. Her research focuses on the art and architectural history of South Asia, with a particular focus on the Indian subcontinent. Her first book, *Worldly Gurus and Spiritual Kings: Architecture and Asceticism in Medieval India* (2014), received the PROSE Award in Architecture and Urban Planning. Her essays have appeared in well over a dozen edited volumes and journals, including *The Art Bulletin*, *Ars Orientalis*, and *Archives of Asian Art*. Her research has been supported by grants and fellowships from Fulbright, the J. Paul Getty Foundation, the National Humanities Center, Dumbarton Oaks, and the Clark Art Institute.

**Dr. Michael Mackenzie** is Professor of Art History at Grinnell College. A specialist on German modernism between the two World Wars, he has also published on postwar art and architecture in divided Germany. His teaching has covered European modernism more broadly, including the history of modernist architecture, contemporary art and globalization, and the art of India. Significant publications include *Otto Dix and the First World War: Grottesque Humor, Camaraderie, and Remembrance* (2019) and essays on Leni Riefenstahl's film of the 1936 Berlin Olympics, and on painting and architecture in East Berlin in the early 1960s.

**Dr. Paula Sengupta** is Professor of Graphics-printmaking at Rabindra Bharati University. Trained as a printmaker, her repertoire as an artist includes broadsheets, artist's books, objects, installation, and community art projects. She is the author of *The Printed Picture: Four Centuries of Indian Printmaking* (2012) and *Foreign & Indigenous Influences in Indian Printmaking* (2013). Her curatorial projects include the landmark exhibition *Trajectories: 19th-21st Century Printmaking from India and Pakistan* (2014), *The Printed Picture: Four Centuries of Indian Printmaking*, (2012), *Popular Prints and the Freedom Struggle* (2019) and *Ghare Baire – The Home, the World, and Beyond* (2020).

**Emma Oslé** is an advanced Ph.D. Candidate in Art History at Rutgers University, New Brunswick, where she is also currently an Adjunct Lecturer in the Department of Latinx and Caribbean Studies. Her dissertation research examines Latinx visual production in the US post-World War II, with special interests in motherhood/mothering, indigeneity, race, and intersectional decolonial feminisms. Prior to beginning her doctoral program, she studied printmaking and sculpture, which appears in her work as an emphasis on process-based art making practices. Additionally, she has accumulated curatorial experience in several museums, including the Museum of Modern Art, New York, NY, Crystal Bridges Museum of American Art, Bentonville, AR, as well as multiple smaller institutions and private collections.

**Dr. Darielle Mason** is the Stella Kramrisch Curator and head of the Department of South Asian Art at the Philadelphia Museum of Art and Adjunct Professor of the History of Art at the University of Pennsylvania. Beginning with the study of India's historic temples, Mason's work spans two millennia of South Asian culture, from ancient to contemporary. Major exhibitions include *Gods, Guardians, and Lovers: Temple Sculpture from Northern India, A.D. 700-1200*, *Intimate Worlds: Indian Paintings from the Alvin O. Bellak Collection*, and *Kantha: The Embroidered Quilts of Bengal*, for which she won the College Art Association's Alfred H. Barr Jr. Award for outstanding museum scholarship. She led the curatorial team that transformed Philadelphia's South Asian Art galleries (2016) by breaking traditional museum boundaries of time and geography. She helped the Seattle Museum of Art achieve the same goal as consulting curator on the full re-envisioning of its Asian Art Museum (2020). Her recent monograph, *Storied Stone: Reframing the Philadelphia Museum of Art's South Indian Temple Hall*, uses Philadelphia's focal architectural ensemble to delve into a century of debate about exhibition, authenticity, and interpretation.

**Dr. Rebecca M. Brown**, Professor and Chair of the Department of the History of Art at Johns Hopkins University, is a scholar of colonial and post-1947 South Asian visual culture and politics. She has served as a consultant and a curator for modern and contemporary Indian art for the Peabody Essex Museum, the Walters Art Museum, and the Shelley and Donald Rubin Foundation. Her work examines urban space, modernity, visual political rhetoric, cultural diplomacy, and rhythm, motion, and time in art, visual culture, and exhibitionary contexts. Her many publications include *Displaying Time: The Many Temporalities of the Festival of India* (2017), *Rethinking Place in South Asian and Islamic Art, 1500-Present* (co-edited with Deborah S. Hutton, 2016), *Gandhi's Spinning Wheel and the Making of India* (2010), and *Art for a Modern India, 1947-1980* (2009)

**Jeffrey Wechsler** was Senior Curator at the Jane Voorhees Zimmerli Art Museum, Rutgers, the State University of New Jersey, retiring in 2013 after 36 years of service. Specializing in lesser-known aspects of 20th-century American art, he has organized well over fifty exhibitions in that field, including *Surrealism and American Art, 1931-1947* (1977), *Realism and Realities: The Other Side of American Painting, 1940-1960* (1982), *Abstract Expressionism: Other Dimensions* (1989), *Asian Traditions / Modern Expressions: Asian American Artists and Abstraction, 1945-1970* (1997), and *Transcultural New Jersey: Crosscurrents in the Mainstream* (2004). He has authored over fifty writings on a variety of art subjects for museums, galleries, and other art institutions, which have been published in catalogs, exhibition brochures, or journals. He has acted as a curator and consultant to the Gaur Collection since 2002.

**Kishore Singh** is a former journalist and editor, who has been columnist, documentary scriptwriter, and author of books that range from business and history to travel and art. He has written and edited several artist books in recent years, including monographs on Avinash Chandra, Natvar Bhavsar, Rabin Mondal, and M. F. Husain. He was an editor with *Business Standard* newspaper for 13 years where he wrote a column on art and was also an art writer for *Forbes India* and *GQ* magazines. In 2010 he joined DAG to head its exhibitions and publications program and continues to be associated with its content department.

**Swathi Gorle** is an advanced Ph.D. candidate in the Department of Art History at Rutgers University, the State University of New Jersey with a concentration in Cultural Heritage and Preservation Studies, specializing in religious heritage in South Asia. Her research examines contemporary notions of sacrality through pilgrimage circuits in Andhra Pradesh, India. Swathi's research looks at the relationship between the dynamics of rapid urbanization and pilgrimage experience and how lived religion and "living heritage" complicate work done in heritage studies that emphasize the presumed tensions between tradition and modernity and religious and secular futures.