

Press Release

CHRISTIE'S

For Immediate Release

15 August 2008

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**CHRISTIE'S NEW YORK PRESENTS AN OUTSTANDING SALE OF
SOUTH ASIAN MODERN + CONTEMPORARY ART**



**South Asian Modern + Contemporary Art
16 September 2008**

New York – After the spectacular success of Christie's South Kensington sale on June 2008 which set numerous world auction records, this season Christie's New York is pleased to announce the sale of *South Asian Modern + Contemporary Art* on 16 September. The sale will offer major works from modern masters like Tyeb Mehta, Maqbool Fida Husain, Ram Kumar, and Jagdish Swaminathan, to cutting edge artists such as Subodh Gupta, Riyas Komu, Jagannath Panda, and Rashid Rana. The sale of over 120 lots is expected to realize in excess of \$12 million.

South Asian Modern

After establishing the world auction record at \$1.9 million Christie's will be putting Tyeb Mehta in the spotlight again with *Untitled (Yellow Heads)*, 1979 (right image on page one- estimate: \$600,000-800,000). Since his early years as an artist, Mehta has used the canvas to express images in his most unique formal treatment that illustrates the struggles of contemporary society. His encounter with minimalist art, especially Barnett Newman, during his year long stay in New York in the late 1960s, has had far reaching influence in the entire opus of the artist's career. By selectively utilizing formal elements of both minimalism and abstraction, Mehta, through a balance of form and color, reconstructs the figure in a lyrical synchronization—creating a style uniquely his own.



Self-taught artist, Maqbool Fida Husain, played an instrumental role in the development of modern and contemporary art in India. Referred to as the 'Picasso of India' by *Forbes* magazine and a founding member of the revolutionary Progressive Artists Group (PAG), Husain developed a style that merged Cubism, Expressionism, and Abstraction with traditional Indian forms and iconography. *Ritual*, 1968 (image left- estimate: \$600,000-800,000) is one of the most significant works by Husain and a suburb example of the fusion of Indian themes and Modernist style. Adopting the formal attributes of sculpture, Husain gives weight to each line and color constructing an image of female elders in a style which highlights the integral role of women in Indian society. Last spring, Christie's once again proving its dominance in the market, achieved the world auction record for the artist at \$1.6 million.

The sale also features an important figurative work by Ram Kumar who drew upon the influences of Amedeo Modigliani, Edward Hopper, and Fernand Legér. The record for the artist was established at Christie's when Kumar's *Vagabond* was auctioned for \$1.2 million. *Untitled*, 1961 (image right- estimate: \$400,000-600,000), depicts a young girl against a dark backdrop. The artist utilizes the characteristically pure line of Modigliani in the oval face and deep dark eyes, balanced delicately on an elongated neck. In this painting spatial depth is created with tonal variation and texture that translates into the artist's later landscapes; making this work a critical bridge between the two stylistic idioms. This enigmatic and suggestive portrait is a simple yet forceful characterization by a master.



Writer, political activist and painter Jagdish Swaminathan, was known to draw inspiration from folk and tribal art, miniatures and Indian mythology for his paintings. His painting, *Untitled (Bird)*



Mountain Series), 1973, (*image left*- estimate: \$300,000-500,000) is an expression of the artist's perception of the "virginal state" of nature. Mountains, trees, rocks, and birds juxtaposed against pure expanses of color- induce a meditative stillness. Swaminathan's vision of his mystical landscape with weightless apparition-like forms floating in a luminous space brings to mind images of Paul Klee and

Pahari miniatures paintings. A cornerstone to one of Swaminathan's most well known series, *Untitled*, 1973, epitomizes the artist's ability to capture the poetic grandeur of the natural world and immeasurable vastness of the spiritual realm in a solitary intimate reflection.

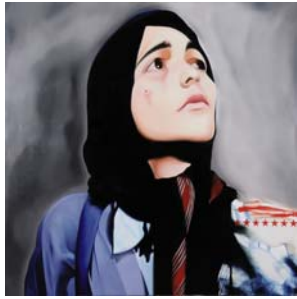
Contemporary Art

Among the contemporary art offerings, Subodh Gupta takes center stage with four works of art. Gupta draws heavily from his own experience in culling material for his art, recasting traditional objects of Indian culture in contemporary media and contexts. This is evident in the stainless steel canisters and utensils used in *Miter*, 2007, number three from an edition of three, (*left image on page 1*- estimate: \$600,000-800,000). These everyday, utilitarian forms are taken out of their normal context and elevated to the status of luxurious commodities. In turn these utensils celebrate Indian tradition and culture through its very exploitation. In June 2008 at Christie's London, the similar sculpture *Untitled*, achieved \$1.18 million setting a new record for the artist. Like Jeff Koons' charmed hearts and balloons, the shiny reflective quality ensures that the surrounding environment becomes part of the work. A true multimedia artist, Gupta moves between sculpture and paintings. In his painting, *Steal 2*, 2007 (*image right*-estimate: \$800,000-1,000,000) Gupta displays his virtuosity as a painter by combining pop and photorealist aesthetics into a uniquely Indian style.



Another highlight comes from Rashid Rana, Pakistan's most celebrated and well-known artist. *Two Dimensions*, 2007, (*image left*- estimate: \$80,000-120,000) depicts a monolithic skyscraper is a composite image made from 'pixels' of everyday Pakistani street scene. Rana uses his native urban environment of Lahore for inspiration and combines single tableaux of day-to-day life in grand compositions of contemporary existence. The duality of the image along with the 'double take' it creates is a key feature of Rana's digitized imagery. Rana's work has been showcased internationally and was featured at the *Grid* <>

Matrix held in 2006 at the Kemper Art Museum alongside masters such as Piet Mondrian, Agnes Martin, Robert Rauschenberg and Andreas Gursky.



Already holding Riyas Komu's world auction record, set in Hong Kong, Christie's is pleased to be offering *Designated March of a Petro - Angel (or Desert March)*, 2006, (*image left*- estimate: \$60,000-80,000). Exhibited in the Arsenale of the 52nd Venice Biennale, 2007, this work is part of a larger series of six works featuring the actress from the Iranian film '*Circle*' gazing in different directions. This painting addresses the plight of humanity in societies targeted by larger power-hungry nations or 'neo invaders'. Komu depicts the actress enrobed in a head scarf, her gaze transfixed on an unknown object or person beyond the edge of the canvas. Through her anonymity, she becomes the symbol of universal womanhood and Komu's composition becomes a tribute to the spirit of ordinary people with the extraordinary strength to survive.

Auction: South Asian Modern + Contemporary Art

16 September

Viewing: Christie's Rockefeller Galleries

12-15 September

About Christie's

Christie's is the world's leading art business with global art sales in 2007 that totalled £3.1 billion/\$6.3 billion. This marks the highest total in company and in art auction history. For the first half of 2008, art sales totalled £1.8 million / \$3.5 billion. Christie's is a name and place that speaks of extraordinary art, unparalleled service and expertise, as well as international glamour. Founded in 1766 by James Christie, Christie's conducted the greatest auctions of the 18th, 19th and 20th centuries, and today remains a popular showcase for the unique and the beautiful. Christie's offers over 600 sales annually in over 80 categories, including all areas of fine and decorative arts, jewellery, photographs, collectibles, wine, and more. Prices range from \$200 to over \$80 million. Christie's has 85 offices in 43 countries and 14 salerooms around the world including in London, New York, Los Angeles, Paris, Geneva, Milan, Amsterdam, Tel Aviv, Dubai, Hong Kong and Zurich. Most recently, Christie's has led the market with expanded initiatives in emerging and new markets such as Russia, China, India and the United Arab Emirates, with successful sales and exhibitions in Beijing, Mumbai and Dubai.

*Estimates do not include buyer's premium

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Images available on request

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