

For Immediate Release

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PRIME PRIVATE COLLECTIONS TO HIGHLIGHT THE SALE OF MODERN AND CONTEMPORARY INDIAN ART AT CHRISTIE'S

Modern and Contemporary Indian Art September 20, 2006

New York – Christie's, the world's leading art auctioneer, set a stellar performance in the field of Modern and Contemporary Indian Art in the Spring 2006 season, with sales in New York, Hong Kong and Dubai totaling over \$26 million, clearly establishing itself as the unsurpassed market leader. An impressive series of record prices achieved over the years, combined with a greater presence in India, have made Christie's one of the world's most prominent promoters of the importance and universal appeal of 20th and 21st century Indian artists. As part of Christie's New York's Asia Week, the sale of Modern and Contemporary Indian Art will take place on September 20 and will offer major works from the collections of Robin Howard, C.B.E., Madame Krishna Riboud, and Mrs. Fanny D. Tata amongst numerous private collections from Europe, America and India including paintings by the major Progressives: Tyeb Mehta, V.S. Gaitonde, Francis Newton Souza, Maqbool Fida Husain, and Akbar Padamsee. The sale is expected to realize in excess of a conservative \$12 million.

Connoisseur of the avant-garde: Krishna Riboud (1927-2000)

Widely traveled, with impeccable taste, the Indian-born Krishna Riboud became one of France's most avid supporters of avant-garde art, exploring a passion which was extraordinarily eclectic and broad but also focused on work by her fellow countrymen in a time when Indian artists were relatively unknown outside of their native country. A descendant of the Tagores, one of India's most renowned artistic families, her vision and taste helped form the collection of Asian antiquities and textiles of the Musée Guimet in Paris. The sale offers two sublime works by Vasudeo S. Gaitonde which reflect her refined connoisseurship. Although Gaitonde adamantly rejected the

constricting title of abstractionist, his complex paintings conjure a highly codified version of the natural world and show structure and control amid the stream of consciousness. The two works offered, both painted in 1971 and both *Untitled* (both estimates: \$500,000-700,000) were created during one of the artist's most revered periods and reveal Gaitonde's signature capacity to reduce the world to its most primal elements while elevating it to spiritual heights. Also from the Riboud estate is *Untitled* by Akbar Padamsee, 1963 (estimate: \$100,000-150,000).

The Arts as passion and life-enhancer: Robin Howard, C.B.E. (1924-1989)

Determined and passionate, the British epicurean, businessman and connoisseur, Robin Howard, made art the beating heart and engine of his life. Apart from modern dance – his main love - his convictions also extended into the visual arts which culminated in his patronage of Gallery One, a one-time London gallery noted for its focus on Outsider Art. It was Howard who persuaded the Goan-born Francis Newton Souza, today one of the most venerated 20th century Indian artists, to exhibit in several celebrated solo shows at Gallery One. Souza founded the legendary Bombay Progressive Artist Group and was eager to penetrate his work with the ideas and styles of Western Modernism. The sale offers four Souza paintings formerly from the Howard collection of which the monumental *Nyasa Negress with Flowers and Thorns* (estimate: \$400,000-600,000) encapsulates the artist's complex attitudes towards women, religion and erotica. This sculptural, almost mask-like nude exhibits a bold and unrestrained sexuality capturing influences of Expressionism, Primitivism as well as a stylistic ode to Picasso. *Man and Woman*, 1954 (estimate: \$300,000-500,000) featuring Souza's portrait will also be offered, as will two landscapes, *Untitled (Landscape)*, 1960 (estimate: \$300,000-500,000) and *Row of Red Houses with Trees*, 1957 (estimate: \$250,000-350,000). It is in his landscapes that Souza demonstrates the inherent tension between nature and civilization and both paintings evoke an atmosphere of dissonance and conflict. Two of the works in this collection was published in the seminal Souza catalogue by Edwin Mullins.

The sale will further include a large and magnificent work by Tyeb Mehta, *Untitled (Figures with Bull Head)*, circa 1984 (estimate: \$800,000-1,000,000), featured in the 1987 exhibition in Geneva, *Coups de Coeur*. It prefigures Mehta's later work on the subject of Durga and Mahishasura. A superb group of works by Syed Haider Raza spans his career from early figurative landscapes to abstract expressionism to his geometric phase. Also bound to create waves are significant works by Bhupen Khakhar and Arpita Singh—two critically acclaimed artists whose works are highly coveted by collectors. Bhupen Khakhar's *Artist's Studio*, 1995, (estimate: \$200,000-300,000) is an expressive dreamy autobiographical work indicative of his late style upon revealing his homosexuality. Arpita Singh's *Bhishma* (estimate: \$150,000-200,000) references and depicts a modern day take on the horrors of warfare and violence using the epic tale of the *Mahabharatha*, as an allegory. Looking to the future is a strong selection of top contemporary artists including Subodh Gupta, Atul Dodiya,

Anju Dodiya, Nataraj Sharma, Jitish Kallat, Justin Ponmany, Hema Upadhayay, Aisha Khalid and Nusra Latif Qureshi.

Reflecting Christie's full dedication to the expansion of the *Modern and Contemporary Indian Art* collecting field, Dr. Hugo Weihe, International Director Asian Art, announced following developments in the *International Modern and Contemporary Indian Art* department. Specialist and Head of Modern and Contemporary Indian Art, **Yamini Mehta**, who has overseen the record-breaking sale established by the \$1.6 million garnered for Tyeb Mehta's *Mabishasura* and the hugely successful \$15 million March 2006 auction that remains a record total for the field, will now be based in London, King Street, where she will further develop the strong U.K. and European interest in the market as well as continue to liaise with the clientele in India and the Middle East. In London, she will be supported by Junior Specialist **Menaka Kumari-Sagar**, originally from Mumbai, who coordinated the *Arts of India* auction in 2005 and was part of the Dubai team focusing on developing non-resident Indian clients. She will continue in her role as a client advisor to this growing segment. In New York, **Veronica Collins**, a graduate of New York University who previously worked at *ArtReview Magazine* and the Chelsea-New York based James Cohan Gallery has been appointed Junior Specialist. Working very closely with Christie's India Representative, Ganieve Grewal, the newly expanded department will continue to showcase the best of Indian art in new and innovative contexts catering to an ever-widening international market.

Auction: Modern and Contemporary Indian Art

September 20 at 10 a.m.

Viewing: Christie's Rockefeller Center

September 15 - 19

About Christie's

Christie's is the world's leading auction house, a name and place that speaks of extraordinary art, unparalleled service, and 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 nearly 1,000 sales annually in over 80 categories, including all areas of fine and decorative arts, jewelry, photographs, collectibles, wine, cars and more. Prices range from \$200 to over \$80 million. Christie's has 90 offices in 30 countries and 16 salerooms around the world including in London, New York, Los Angeles, Paris, Geneva, Milan, Amsterdam, Tel Aviv and Hong Kong. Most recently, Christie's has led the market with expanded initiatives in emerging markets such as Russia, China, India and the United Arab Emirates, with successful sales and exhibitions in Mumbai, Dubai and the branded sale in Beijing. In 2005 Christie's annual global sales increased 38% to \$3.2 billion, the highest total in company history and propelling the auction house into global market leadership.

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Images available on request

Visit Christie's Web site at www.christies.com

More information about Christie's sale of *Modern and Contemporary Indian Art* can be found on www.christies.com. All lots from the sale can be viewed online along with full catalogue descriptions on Lotfinder®, which also allows clients to leave absentee bids. www.christies.com provides information on more than 80 sale categories, buying and selling at auction, complete auction results, and Christie's international auction calendar.