

For Immediate Release

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20TH CENTURY INDIAN PAINTINGS

Indian and Southeast Asian Art Including 20th Century Indian Paintings

September 17, 2002

New York – This year’s 20th Century Indian Paintings section will include works that span the entire century. Starting with a section of works from the pre-independence era, the sale will offer many leading masters representing different movements and styles. Also included will be works by Tyeb Mehta, the first contemporary Indian artist to surpass the magical \$100,000 mark at auction. His majestic Celebration soared to \$317,500 in last year’s sale and set a world auction record for the artist and for any contemporary Indian painting.

Leading the pre-independence section are two large works by Raja Ravi Varma (1848 – 1906). Ravi Varma was the first Indian artist to master the British Academic painting style with an emphasis on naturalism and portrait painting. However, his choice of subjects remained distinctly Indian, as seen in the two examples here. Court Scene (estimate: \$100,000–150,000) shows a traditional scene of a princess listening to music, while Nala and Damayanti (estimate: \$100,000–150,000) recounts an important scene from the well-known mythological tale. Both paintings show Ravi Varma’s skill in creatively using light and shadow to effectively communicate a variety of textures and surfaces in the works.

The Progressive Artists are well represented, leading with Francis Newton Souza and Maqbool Fida Husain. A selection of seven works by Souza is available, ranging from his early landscapes, to the popular nudes and a still life. London at Night (estimate: \$18,000–24,000) is a strong example of his early cityscapes. His skillful use of color and strong brushstrokes effectively infuse the work with a luminescent glow. Lovers (estimate: \$40,000–50,000) from 1949 is a rare early

example of his work, and is extremely significant to the artist's oeuvre, as it was probably included in the first Progressive Artists Show held in Bombay in 1949.

There is a variety of works by M.F. Husain, with a strong emphasis on the early period. Her Daughter (estimate: \$20,000-25,000) and Padmini, Mohini, Shankhini (estimate: \$18,000-24,000) show Husain's emotional and artistic interest in the female form from the beginning. This is carried through in the two examples from his Mother Teresa series (estimates: \$80,000-100,000 and \$30,000-50,000).

A strong selection of Akbar Padamsee's early works are also on offer. Two early examples of the artist's signature Metascapes from 1964 (estimate: \$18,000-24,000) and 1965 (estimate: \$20,000-25,000) demonstrate the consistent use of color and treatment of canvas from these early days. A highly rare and unusual Cityscape from 1959 (estimate: \$50,000-70,000) is also included.

Two works from the well-known Chowdhury Family collection are important highlights of the sale. An early figurative Ram Kumar (b. 1924) from the 1950's (estimate: \$15,000-20,000) shows the artist's early pre-occupation with the state of the human condition as reflected in the desolate lonely figure. Gaitonde's (1924 - 2001) canvas from 1962 (estimate: \$65,000-75,000) shows this master abstractionist's exploration of the relationship between line and color to create a canvas that is at once serene yet energized.

Tyeb Mehta will be presented with another triptych from his famous Mahishasura series (estimate: \$80,000-90,000). The fabled battle between the buffalo-demon and the goddess Durga has been one of Mehta's main subjects in the 1990's. Here, he chooses to focus on the faces of the two characters, where they appear to come together with a grotesque yet harmonious rhythm, thereby becoming virtual extensions of the other.

Other highlights include two spectacular works by Jehangir Sabavala, two canvases by the recently deceased Bhupen Khakhar and two wonderful variations of Jagdish Swaminathan's Mountain, Tree and Bird Series.

*Auction: Indian and Southeast Asian Art
Including 20th Century Indian Paintings*

*September 17 at 10 a.m. and 2 p.m.
(paintings in the 2 p.m. session)*

Viewing: Christie's Galleries at Rockefeller Center September 12 - 16

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