

For Immediate Release
Tuesday, 1 June 2010

Press Release

CHRISTIE'S

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**MOST VALUABLE MODERN INDIAN WORK OF ART
EVER OFFERED AT AUCTION:
Seminal Masterpiece by Syed Haider Raza Leads Christie's
South Asian Modern + Contemporary Art Sale this June**



**South Asian Modern + Contemporary Art
Wednesday, 10 June 2010 at 2.00pm**

London – On 10 June, the day after Christie's unprecedented sale of art works selected from the Estate of Francis Newton Souza, the momentum continues with Christie's *South Asian Modern and Contemporary Art* auction. The renewed confidence in the market for this category was signalled by the success of the New York sale in March, which realised \$8.9 million and was 95% sold by value, with many new private collectors bidding. The international appeal of this field continues to grow, with participation from buyers in Singapore, Hong Kong, U.A.E, the United States and Europe. The London sale is led by *Saurashtra*, 1983, a seminal masterpiece by **Syed Haider Raza** (b.1922) (estimate: £1.3 million-1.8 million), which is the most valuable modern Indian work of art ever offered at auction, *illustrated above*. This auction presents an exhilarating array of important works from private collections, with excellent provenance by the leading Indian and Pakistani artists of 20th and 21st century. Featuring the celebrated masters of the Progressive Artists Group, through to the biggest names in contemporary art, attractive estimates cross the spectrum of artists, styles and media with estimates ranging from £1,000 to £1.8 million. The sale is expected to realise in excess of £4 million. *Please see the separate press release for details on the sale of art works selected from the Estate of Francis Newton Souza.*

Yamini Mehta, Christie's Senior Specialist, Director, South Asian Modern + Contemporary Art, London: *"The global art market is receptive to the best. As international collectors converge in London this June prior to heading to Art Basel, where an increased number of South Asian Art will be on view this year, we are thrilled to be offering iconic works by the masters as well as important contemporary works, including examples by Pakistani artists. It is important that Christie's, as well as galleries, art fairs and institutions, continue - as they do - to broaden concepts of what constitutes Sub-Continental art."*

MODERNISM: The top lot of the sale is the most valuable modern Indian art work ever to be offered at auction: **Syed Haider Raza's** *Saurashtra*, 1983, (estimate: £1.3 million-1.8 million), from a Private French Collector who acquired it directly from the artist, *illustrated above*. This large work (78¾ x 78¾ in. / 200 x 200 cm.), by one of India's leading modern masters, belongs to a key period in Raza's career when his artistic path brought him full circle and he began to integrate vital elements of his Indian childhood and cultural heritage into his paintings. Combining powerful and expressive brushstrokes with a very rich palette, *Saurashtra* provides a transitional bridge into his structured geometric works which are characteristic of his most recent body of paintings. Exploring landscape and nature; gesture and expression; geometry and spiritualism, this painting is one of Raza's most ambitious works to date. This is a remarkable opportunity for collectors and institutions around the world.

Further modern highlights:

- *Untitled (Arjuna and Krishna)*, circa 1980s, by **Maqbool Fida Husain** (b.1915) (estimate: £500,000-700,000) which portrays the heroes of the Hindu epic, the *Mahabharata*. The strong influence of classical Indian painting and sculptural traditions upon Husain is evident in this work, which exemplifies the characteristic energy of Husain's canvases.



- *Falling Bird*, 1999 is a *tour de force* by **Tyeb Mehta** (1925 -2009), one of India's greatest Modernist masters (estimate: £400,000-600,000) *illustrated left*. Having executed only a relatively small body of work, it is very rare that such an important example comes to auction. With mythological thematic roots, this work skilfully combines concept, line, colour and composition.

- *Untitled (Gulammohammed Sheikh with Tom Hancock)*, circa 1970s by **Bhupen Khakhar** (1934-2004) (estimate: £100,000-150,000). Gulammohammed Sheikh was Khakhar's lifelong friend; Tom Hancock (1930-2006), a British architect who taught at Baroda during the seventies and designed the Battersea Peace Pagoda in London, also became part of the artist's circle. Drawing inspiration from the West and India, this painting stylistically alludes to early Italian painting and Bengali pata painting from Kalighat, but also imbues the spirit of Henri Rousseau and David Hockney.

CONTEMPORARY WORKS:

The strong array of contemporary art featured provides collectors with an opportunity to acquire significant works by some of the best known South Asian practitioners today. **Subodh Gupta** is one of India's leading contemporary artists, whose powerful vocabulary is firmly rooted in the vernacular of everyday India. *Chimta*, 2003, (estimate: £200,000-300,000) *illustrated right*, transforms hundreds of stainless steel tongs or 'chimta' - a common Indian kitchen staple used for handling chapatti and naan bread - into a metallic explosion of wonder. Offered from a private European collection, this semi-globed constellation continues the legacy of Duchamp's ready-mades whilst simultaneously revealing the sensuous splendour of familiar objects, as if they are precious or luxurious commodities. Gupta stirs questions about the dramatic changes and shifts that accompany India's strengthening economy and its effect on the country's deeply spiritual and ancient culture.



Further contemporary highlights:

- *Untitled* by **Ravinder Reddy** (b.1956) (estimate: £90,000-120,000), who contemporises traditional Indian goddesses, whilst referencing Jeff Koons and playing with the American concept of "super-sizing." Through such transformations and re-appropriations of ancient Indian temple sculpture, the artist is possibly commenting on how India's religious and cultural histories are being diluted and Westernised by the surge of 'progress.'



- *Dis-location 3*, 2007, by **Rashid Rana** (b. 1968) *illustrated left* (estimate: £60,000-80,000) who charts a new course with his 'Dis-location' series by using one location photographed over a duration of twenty four hours to create the large composite image of the same location. Disorienting the viewer's sense of time and place, the 'pixels' of the work illustrate the frenetic nature of busy street life in contemporary Lahore, whilst the overall image possesses the charm of a historical photograph.

For full details on the many other important works in the sale as a whole please view the online catalogue attached below:
<http://www.christies.com/eCatalogues/index.aspx?id=2EBD651DD471DFC88525766B00579736>

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Images available on request

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NOTES TO EDITORS:

Sale dates and public viewing: South Asian Modern + Contemporary Art

Viewing: 4 - 9 June 2010: Christie's South Kensington, 85 Old Brompton Road, London, SW7 3LD

Sale: Wednesday, 10 June 2010 at 2.00pm: Christie's South Kensington, 85 Old Brompton Road, London, SW7 3LD

Christie's holds the current world auction records many for South Asian Modern + Contemporary artists including:

> **Syed Haider Raza** (b.1922), set at Christie's London, June 2008, when *La Terre, 1973* sold for £1,273,250 (\$2,487,931). This is the joint highest price at international auction for any Modern Indian art (along with *Birth*, 1955, by **Francis Newton Souza** (1924-2002), which was also sold in London, June 2008).

> **Tyeb Mehta** (1925 -2009), set at Christie's London, June 2008, when *Untitled - Figure on Rickshaw, 1984*, realised; £982,050 (\$1,918,926).

> **Maqbool Fida Husain** (b.1915), set at Christie's New York, March 2008, when *Battle of Ganga and Jamuna, Mahabharata 12* (diptych) fetched \$1,609,000 (£808,543) .

About Christie's

Christie's, the world's leading art business had global auction and private sales in 2009 that totaled £2.1 billion/\$3.3 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 450 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 53 offices in 30 countries and 10 salerooms around the world including in London, New York, Paris, Geneva, Milan, Amsterdam, Dubai and Hong Kong. More 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