

# CHRISTIE'S

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**PODDAR FAMILY, FRIENDS & PATRONS TO CONTEMPORARY INDIAN ARTISTS,  
TO SELL 41 WORKS FROM PRIVATE COLLECTION**

**MOST WORKS ACQUIRED DIRECTLY FROM ARTISTS & NOT SEEN FOR MANY YEARS**

**7 LOTS BY 'NATIONAL TREASURE' ARTISTS WHOSE WORKS  
CANNOT LEAVE INDIA**



*The Poddar Family at home with Tyeb Mehta's Untitled (Diagonal), 1975. Photo © Mahesh Bhat  
Estimate: INR10,00,00,000-15,00,00,000 / US\$1.5-2.2 million*

**Mumbai** – 41 works from the private collection of Abhishek and Radhika Poddar, among India's greatest patrons of the arts, will be offered at Christie's fourth consecutive India Sale to be held in Mumbai, on 18 December at the Taj Mahal Palace Hotel in Mumbai. Highlights will be on free, public exhibition in New Delhi at the Taj Mahal Hotel from 2-4 December. The works chart the collecting career of a family who provided friendship, patronage and creative freedom to some of India's leading artists including Tyeb Mehta, Vasudeo S. Gaitonde, Ganesh Pyne, Meera Mukherjee and Bhupen Khakhar. Among the group are 7 lots by artists designated as 'National Treasures', an indication of the importance of the artists to Indian cultural heritage, and as such, are unable to be exported. Each lot comes with an immaculate provenance, either acquired directly from the artist or from leading gallerists including Kekoo Gandhi of Gallery Chemould. Credit Suisse continues to be Christie's partner in India.

The Poddars are perhaps best known in India for Tasveer Gallery, dedicated to photography and for their lifestyle store, Cinnamon, housed in a 19<sup>th</sup> century Chettar Bungalow, painstakingly restored by the family. Abhishek was born in Calcutta with the collecting 'bug', inherited from his father and was brought up around Raj-period landscapes, classical stone sculpture, silver, textiles, porcelain and modern Indian art. His father gave him a modest annual budget

and encouraged his son to begin his collection as a teenager. As a pupil at The Doon School he launched an art magazine and made it a point to meet and thank all of the artists who contributed, setting in motion friendships that influenced the course of his collecting.

At the heart of the collection are 7 works by Manjit Bawa, whom Abhishek met when he visited the artist's studio in Delhi in 1987. Introductions followed to artists including Tyeb Mehta, Jagdish Swaminathan, Arpita Singh, Paramjit Singh, Ravinder Reddy and Pritpal Ladi among others, many of whom are represented among the works in the sale. He also met and befriended Maqbool Fida Husain in a chance encounter and at only 23 curated his first exhibition, including works by this new group of friends, in Mumbai.



Perhaps the family's greatest contribution was providing artists with a retreat at their home in Coonoor, a town in the hills of Tamil Nadu, where artists met, discussed their practice and influenced one another. These gatherings, known as 'art camps' are recalled in lot 138, a large canvas painted during the third art camp in 1998, and representing the joint efforts of nine artists. A blue goddess painted by Manjit Bawa, with her arms spread wide and fiery red tongue presides over the camp. Below her, Pritpal Ladi's Trojan horse is being pulled into place by an army of Lilliputian figures, welcomed by Ravinder Reddy's version of the goddess Laxmi standing on her lotus. Observing this incursion are Surendran Nair's enigmatic swan-man from the land of Cuckoonebulopolis, two reclining nudes by Nalini Malani and Dhruva Mistry, Mistry's spatially aligned Hanuman holding up an invisible mountain, and a seated figure in deep meditation by Malani. The lush landscape this motley group inhabits is painted by Paramjit Singh, and detailed with lotus ponds and bumpy paths by Arpita Singh and Jayashree Chakravarty (Lot 138, estimate: INR 40,00,000-60,00,000 / US\$ 60,400-90,600). This large painting was a gift from the artists to the Poddars.

Joking that he was soon going to run out of wall space, Poddar convinced his artist friends to experiment with other media and genres through his commissions, including designs for textiles, carpets and dhurries, jewellery, screens, etched mirrors, silver and crockery. Manjit Bawa's (lot 135) woollen dhurrie showing a lion-like figure from the early 1990s is included for INR 8,00,000-112,00,000 (US\$ 12,100-18,000). The sale also includes several bronzes by Meera Mukherjee highlighted by *People in a Row*, acquired from the artist in the late 1980s (lot 122, estimate: INR 50,00,00,000-70,00,000 / US\$ 75,000-106,000).



Ganesh Pyne's *Untitled (Laxmi Emerging from the Ocean)*, from the late 1960s shows the goddess dressed in crimson robes floating out of the waters of *kshirsagar* or the ocean of milk, under the light of Chandra, the pale moon. Associated with wealth, fortune and prosperity, the crowned goddess carries a golden fern in her right hand and a pot adorned with jewels in her left. Again, the work was acquired directly from the artist (Lot 141, estimate: INR 80,00,000-1,20,00,000 / US\$ 121,000-181,000).



The highest valued work from the collection is **Tyeb Mehta's *Untitled (Diagonal)*, 1975** Which shows two human figures from the artist's diagonal series (Lot 111, estimate: INR 10,00,00,000-15,00,00,000 / US\$ 1.5-2.2 million – shown in the background of the photograph on page 1). This was an important acquisition for the Poddars from Kekoo Gandhi's highly respected Gallery Chemould in Mumbai. Several photographs of the family at home have the work in the background. It was at Chemould that the Poddars also acquired the Gaitonde in the sale, a 1973 abstract work (Lot 129 estimate: INR 9,00,00,000-12,00,00,000 / US\$ 1.3-1.6 million).

## NOTES TO EDITORS

### **Christie's Indian Art Sale**

18 December

At the Taj Mahal Palace Hotel in Mumbai

### **Preview exhibitions**

New Delhi – 2 to 4 December at The Taj Mahal Hotel, Number One Mansingh Road

Mumbai – 15 to 17 December at The Taj Mahal Palace Hotel

**Press Contact: Alexandra Kindermann | +41 79 1014196 | [akindermann@christies.com](mailto:akindermann@christies.com)**

### **About Christie's**

Christie's, the world's leading art business, had global auction, private and digital sales in the first half of 2016 that totalled £2.1 billion / \$3 billion. Christie's is a name and place that speaks of extraordinary art, unparalleled service and expertise, as well as international glamour. Christie's offers around 350 auctions 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 \$100 million. Christie's also has a long and successful history conducting private sales for its clients in all categories, with emphasis on Post-War & Contemporary, Impressionist & Modern, Old Masters and Jewellery.

2016 marks Christie's 250<sup>th</sup> anniversary. Founded in 1766 by James Christie, Christie's has since conducted the greatest and most celebrated auctions through the centuries providing a popular showcase for the unique and the beautiful. Click [HERE](#) to view a short film about Christie's and the 250<sup>th</sup> anniversary.

Christie's has a global presence in 46 countries, with 12 salerooms around the world including in London, New York, Paris, Geneva, Milan, Amsterdam, Dubai, Zürich, Hong Kong, Shanghai, and Mumbai. Christie's has led the market with expanded initiatives in growth 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. Sales totals are hammer price plus buyer's premium and do not reflect costs, financing fees or application of buyer's or seller's credits.*

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*Images available on request*

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