

**JEHANGIR SABAVALA, RICORSO**  
AICON GALLERY

Sabavala – according to Niru Ratnam, just appointed as Aicon’s London director and cheerfully waving me around his new domain – is now in his eighties, and a big deal in India, with his attachment to rustic landscapes and the unchanging traditions of Indian life given shape in an equally comfortable, old-fashioned modern style. There are two types of painting

in this show of works from the last two years. The best are intriguing landscapes structured according to an underlying grid, in which the subject is broken down into simplified, interlocking shapes and sweeping, stylised line. There’s a strain of cubist vision here – which points to Sabavala’s importance in the development of Modernism in India, or Indian Modernism, depending on your politics – but driven more by the possibilities of pattern and rhythm to evoke vastness and vibrancy of the living landscape. Sabavala’s landscapes are engaging and filled with an idealising celebration of sunlight and rolling land, but his fractured, faceting style runs into problems in his portraits of women, which are staid in comparison; as if Sabavala cannot allow his figures and faces to break up, as if that would be to violate their placid, introspective serenity. It’s not every day you see such wholesome concerns in a London gallery, though Sabavala’s wholesomeness veers too easily to self-satisfied naivety.