

BOSE PACIA

December 27, 1998, New York - Bose Pacia Modern gallery presents an exhibition of **rare paintings of the Bengal renaissance**. The show will run from February 6 through March 27, 1999. The gallery is located at 580 Broadway, 2nd floor, in Soho. Gallery hours are Tuesday through Saturday from 12-6 p.m. and by appointment. A reception will be held on Saturday, February 6 from 6-8 p.m. The public is invited.

The art of the Bengal School was the seminal movement in modern Indian painting and was the singular artistic expression of the rising nationalist fervor that so invigorated the subcontinent at the dawn of the twentieth century. The Bengal School of painting was a visceral reaction to the artistic corollary of British imperialism in India known as Company School painting. In this school of painting, generations of Indian artists and craftsmen were subjected to indentured servitude by being forced to illustrate the occupation and oppression of their motherland by the British East India Company. It is only as a response to Company School painting that the art of the Bengal renaissance can be correctly interpreted.

Abanindranath Tagore and his followers, which included Nandalal Bose, Binod Behari Mukherjee, and Manishi Dey, formed the foundation for the Bengal School. These artists reflected the rising nationalist groundswell and rejected the artistic imperialism of the Company School. Instead, they embraced the vibrant earth-tone palate of the Ajanta Caves and the flat perspectives of Indian miniature painting. Even after the Bengal School came to an end, liberal references to the stylized line and volume rendering explored in Kalighat painting could be seen in the work of Jamini Roy.

Rabindranath Tagore, the prototypical figure of the Bengal renaissance, was quite disinterested in the nationalist tendencies of the Bengal School. His art was not intended to tell a story or convey a message. In fact, Rabindranath, India's Poet Laureate, did not paint his first painting until he was in his sixties. His art was the honest outpouring of creative energy in visual form, from a mind that could create with agility in any medium. From the beginning, Rabindranath's expressionistic paintings and bold, exquisite drawings have commanded tremendous international acclaim.

While the creative output of the Bengal School has been criticized as being overly sentimental by some of the great minds of Western art criticism, when analyzed in the proper historical context, the work of these pioneering artists proved critical in the development of modernism in India. It was not until the nationalist movement culminated in the independence of India in 1947 that Indian artistic expression could expand its vision to include not only national and Oriental influences, but begin to incorporate Western artistic trends, as well. Therefore, any attempt to understand the important post-independence art movements that followed, and the art of today's India must begin with the Bengal renaissance and its master painters.