

BOSE PACIA

THE KEEHN COLLECTION

Important Early Works of Indian Contemporary Masters

August 21, 1997, New York - Bose Pacia Modern gallery celebrates Fifty years of Indian independence with an exhibition of early works by important contemporary Indian artists from the collection of **Thomas & Martha Keehn**. The show will run from September 13 to October 23. The gallery is located at 580 Broadway, 2nd floor, in Soho. Gallery hours are Tuesday through Saturday from 12-6 p.m. A reception will be held on Saturday, September 13, from 5-8 p.m. The public is invited.

In 1952, Thomas Keehn, encouraged and supported by Nelson A. Rockefeller, embarked on a mission to identify and support social, cultural, and economic grassroots activities in India. A one year assignment extended to eight years. During this period he provided assistance to the Indian Cooperative Union (of which Central Cottage Industries Emporium in New Delhi was one part), set up the International Cultural Center and expanded his family by four children. He became friends with many young Indian artists struggling for recognition at that time, and promoted and collected their works.

This was a period when India was assimilating its adolescent independence from centuries of foreign domination. The various facets of the Indian society and its institutions were absorbing the new-found freedom with diverse appetites. Among the artists emerging at that time, the Calcutta group was easing into the modern era without abandoning the traditional while simultaneously there was a young and bold group of artists in Bombay who explored this freedom with a profound sense of rebellion against the establishment. It was the artists from the latter, the Progressive Artists Group, that were avant garde but devoid of an audience in their own society that caught the eye of Tom Keehn. They were Vasudeo Gaitonde, Maqbool Fida Husain, Syed Haider Raza, Ram Kumar and Krishen Khanna, among others, who welcomed him as a supporter and friend. One significant event on which they collaborated was the Eight Painters Exhibition held in New Delhi in 1956.

On exhibit here is a carefully nurtured collection of formative works from 1950s to the 70s of the foremost artists in the Indian contemporary art scene. The meditative enticement of Gaitonde's work draws the viewer into an introspection, evoking a spiritual experience that transcends the abstract spectacle of form and color. The golden glow of the sky hovers above the deep, cool blue in an illuminating abstract landscape by Ram Kumar. The textured surface of warm earth colors and decisive brush strokes outlining the absorbed musicians of Krishen Khanna's "Quartet" harvests a still moment of music. A pristine Jamini Roy adorns the exhibition like the tiara. About half the works on display are by the most celebrated contemporary Indian artist - M.F.Husain. The range of his works is presented here. His expressionistic strokes, the vibrant colors, the indigenous forms and symbolism, all combine to deliver the vitality of Husain that has enlivened Indian contemporary art. Here are some of his formative works from the mid fifties, to portraits of the Keehn family, to the works exhibited at the Sao Paulo Biennale.

Proceeds from the sales of selected works will go to World Education in Boston, which began its work in India in 1952. Tom Keehn is the former President of World Education, and spent many years with his wife Martha fostering learning and nonformal education worldwide, including in India, Thailand, southern Africa and the U.S.