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SJMA Presents Landmark Exhibition of Modern And Contemporary Art From India



Bari Kumar, NOTHING (ELSE) MATTERS, 2008. Oil on canvas, 48 x 72 inches. Collection of Dipti and Rakesh Mathur. Photo: Courtesy the artist.

SAN JOSE, CA.- [The San Jose Museum of Art](#) presents a landmark exhibition of modern and contemporary art from India from February 25 through September 4, 2011. *Roots in the Air, Branches Below: Modern and Contemporary Art from India* is drawn entirely from eleven private collections in the San Francisco Bay Area. The exhibition showcases important works of modern and contemporary South Asian art that are rarely seen on the West Coast. Included are paintings by renowned modernists such as Maqbool Fida Husain, Tyeb Mehta, Francis Newton Souza, and Sayed Haider Raza. Today's contemporary generation of rising talents and global trendsetters is represented by Rina Banerjee, Zarina Hashmi, Jitish Kallat, G.R. Iranna, Bari Kumar, and Surendran Nair, among others.

“Indian art is a dynamic and fast-growing presence on the international art scene, yet it is still rarely explored in museums in this country,” said Susan Krane, Oshman Executive Director at SJMA. “We are pleased to introduce the diverse audiences of Silicon Valley

and the Bay Area to this important and exciting project, which is the result of close collaboration with many community partners. For those most familiar with the traditional arts of India, *Roots in the Air, Branches Below* offers a fascinating and perhaps surprising overview of the art of our times, and that of post-colonial India.”

“The dramatic economic and social transformation of India since 1947, when it gained independence from British rule, has bred a similar explosion of activity in the visual arts,” said Kristen Evangelista, curator of the exhibition and associate curator at SJMA. “These artists embrace both the international art world (with its penchant for artistic innovation) and the spiritual roots of Indian art. They draw on a multifaceted artistic heritage of political engagement, popular culture, classical mythology, and folk traditions.”

Roots in the Air, Branches Below includes more than thirty paintings, as well as approximately ten drawings and watercolors and seven sculptures. The exhibition begins with paintings by the leaders of the cosmopolitan, avant-garde Progressive Artists’ Group, which was formed in 1947 in Mumbai. One of the leaders of this movement is Maqbool Fida Husain (b. 1915), among India’s most famous painters. Husain has been called “the Picasso of India” (Forbes). His themes and symbolism are inspired by Indian mythology. His expressive brushwork and angular forms, however, unmistakably echo European modernism. Husain’s galloping creatures with reared heads in *Untitled (Horses)*, ca. 1970, for example, become an allegory for India’s new, unbounded freedom.

Other modern artists whose works are included in the exhibition are: Majit Bawa (1941-2008), Vasudeo S. Gaitonde (1924-2001), Krishen Khanna (b. 1925), Ram Kumar (b. 1924); Tyeb Mehta (1924-2009); Mahhvi Parekh (b. 1942); Ganesh Pyne (b. 1937); Sayed Haider Raza (b. 1922); Jamini Roy (1887-1972); Jehangir Sabavala (b. 1922); Francis Newton Souza (1924-2002); K.G. Subramanyan (b. 1924); and Jagdish Swaminathan (1928-1994).

Contemporary artist Vinod Balak (b. 1982) adapts the stylization of Indian miniature painting in his large-scale canvas, *Vishnu with Bonsai* (2006), an updated portrayal of the Hindu god. Vishnu is shown clad in a track suit and exhausted from his “workout” of protecting the universe.

Contemporary artists represented include: Dhruvi Acharya (b. 1971); Rina Banerjee (b. 1963); Ashutosh Bhardwaj (b. 1981); Anju Dodiya (b. 1964); Vibha Galhotra (b. 1978); Chitra Ganesh (b. 1975); Zarina Hashmi (b. 1937); G.R. Iranna (b. 1970); Jitish Kallat (b. 1974); Anish Kapoor (b. 1954); Suhasini Kejriwal (b. 1973); Alexis Kersey (b. 1977); Bari Kumar (b. 1966); Sheila Makhijani (b. 1962); Surendran Nair (b. 1956); Aparna Rao (1978) and Soren Pors (b. 1974); Kaz Rahman (b. 1973); K.P. Reji (b. 1972); Rekha Rodwittiya (b. 1958); Nilima Sheikh (b. 1945); Valay Shende (b. 1980); Anjum Singh (b. 1967); and Chintan Upadhyay (b. 1972).