

HOFSTRA UNIVERSITY MUSEUM

Where Art Inspires and Transforms

Indian Art After Independence: Selected Works From the Collections of Virginia & Ravi Akhouri and Shelley & Donald Rubin



Maqbool Fida Husain (b. 1915), *Untitled*, From the *Wings of Desire* Series, January 1989,
Acrylic on canvas, 58 1/2 in. x 45 in., Courtesy of Shelley & Donald Rubin

**October 13-December 18, 2009
Emily Lowe Gallery, South Campus**

Exhibition curated by Rebecca M. Brown, Ph.D.,
Professor of History of Art, Johns Hopkins University

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India is a country marked by extraordinary geographic, linguistic, religious, and cultural diversity. The works in this exhibition reflect the complexity of this country, its history and its contemporary challenges.

The post-independence artists of India sought to articulate a modern and individual identity for their nation. They wove aspects of many artistic styles into their works in new ways to express their rich heritage as well as 20th-century realities.



▲ **Krishna Shamrao Kulkarni** (1916-1994)
Deity, 1970s
Acrylic on paper
29 in. x 21 in.
Courtesy of Shelley & Donald Rubin

INTRODUCTION

In the latter half of the 19th century, the British, who ruled India for nearly 200 years, established government-operated art schools throughout India. These vocational schools concentrated on academic drawing to train artists for colonial services. During the first half of the 20th century, however, as the independence movement led by Gandhi was gaining momentum, Indian artists rejected the colonial dictates of academic art and sought new modes of expression. Some of the artists included in this exhibition were directly involved in this anti-colonial movement that led to independence in 1947. A number of these artists sought to foster a cultural nationalism and/or a return to indigenous aesthetics in their work, while others saw themselves as members of an international avant-garde. The political upheavals of the 1940s and 1950s were reflected by a period of great aesthetic experimentation, and this eclecticism has continued to characterize Indian contemporary art, as seen in the work of later artists whose work is also shown in this exhibit.



▲ **Jangarh Singh Shyam** (1962-2001)
Untitled, c. 1990
Oil on canvas
37 in. x 53 in.
Courtesy of Virginia & Ravi Akhoury

Below are terms and definitions that may help further your understanding and enjoyment of the works on view. Rebecca M. Brown, Ph.D., curator of the exhibition and professor of history of art at Johns Hopkins University, has provided wall text with specific information on each work.

SCHOOLS

Artists of India struggled to find a voice to help define their new world. They formed schools and art centers seeking ways to celebrate their heritage and connect to the global world.

Bengal School of Art: Established during the early 20th century in reaction to the British academic style, its goal was to create a national artistic voice. It heralded the beginning of modernism in the art of India, producing new, uniquely Indian art based upon ancient Indian painting traditions.

The Faculty of Fine Arts, Baroda: Many of India's best known and most respected artists have their roots in this esteemed art college founded in 1950 to foster Indian modernism.

Calcutta Group: Formed in 1943 in Kolkata (previously Calcutta) in reaction to the Bengal School of Art, this group of modern artists looked further afield for inspiration as it sought a new artistic voice, often turning to South Asian art.

Progressive Artists' Group (PAG): This influential group of avant-garde artists, centered in Bombay, emphasized individuality rather than the national vision that the Bengal School of Art had promoted. Formed in 1947 and disbanded in 1956, this group of artists looked to assimilate traditional Indian forms with Western artistic influences, along with highly personal approaches.



▲ **Bari Kumar** (b. 1966)
Namaste America, 2002
 Oil on canvas
 62 in. x 48 in.
 Courtesy of Shelley & Donald Rubin

INDIAN REFERENCES

Bengal: This geographical region in the northeast Indian subcontinent is renowned for its rich artistic and cultural heritage. Kolkata (previously Calcutta) is the largest city in Bengal and the second largest city in India. After British rule ended in 1947, India was divided into two countries that had different predominant religions: India (Hinduism) and Pakistan (Islam). East Bengal became a province of Pakistan (later becoming Bangladesh), while West Bengal remained part of India.

Hungry Generation: Responding to the frustration, strains and poverty of mid 20th-century society, this Bengali avant-garde movement was born in the early 1960s.

Kathakali: This classical dance-drama art form rooted in Hindu mythology and originating in South India is known, in part, for its elaborate use of make-up, costumes and gestures.

Mughals: These Mongol conquerors, mostly Turkish Muslims, ruled the Indian subcontinent from 1526 until the 19th century, when British rule began. **Mughal painting** refers to a style of Indian art developed during this period featuring miniatures. These miniature, illuminated images of exquisite, detailed everyday scenes were heavily influenced by Persian miniature paintings.

Namaste: This form of a greeting demonstrates humility and the belief in the equality and sacredness of all.



RELIGIONS OF INDIA

Religion plays an important role in India. The majority of people are Hindus (more than 80 percent). Muslims are the next largest religious group (12 percent), followed by Christians (3 percent) and Sikhs (2 percent). Jains, Zoroastrians or Parsis, and Buddhists also live in India.

Hinduism: Hinduism is one of the oldest and largest religions in the world. Hindus believe in reincarnation and worship many gods and goddesses, each a different manifestation (avatar) of the Supreme Being, **Brahman**. The three main forms of Brahman are **Brahma the Creator**, **Vishnu the Preserver** and **Shiva the Destroyer**. **Krishna** is an incarnation of Vishnu and one of the most popular gods, with many tales told about his deeds.



Jamini Roy (1887-1972)
Gopi and Krishna, c. 1950
 Tempera on board
 21 in. x 15 in.
 Courtesy of Virginia & Ravi Akhoury



▲ **Nandalal Bose** (1882-1966)
Rural Home, c. 1940s
Gouache
10 in. x 5 in.
Courtesy of Virginia & Ravi Akhoury

Islam: Islam was brought into India by Muslim invaders such as the Mughals. Muslims believe in one God, Allah, and follow the teachings of the prophet Muhammad (570-632 BCE). The **Qur'an**, the main sacred text of Islam, is the word of God as revealed to Muhammad. **Sufism** is the more spiritual and mystical dimension of Islam.

Sikhism: Founded by Guru Nanak in northern India about 500 years ago, Sikhism combines aspects of Hinduism and Islam. Sikhs worship one God and believe in reincarnation and meditation as a way of life.

ART TERMS

Cubism: One of the most influential and revolutionary art movements of the 20th century developed by Pablo Picasso and Georges Braque in Paris (1907-1914). Cubist artists attempted to represent all aspects of what exists in three dimensions on a flat, two-dimensional surface. The style is characterized by distorted space and forms that are broken into angular shapes.

Gouache: A painting medium in which watercolor is mixed with opaque white pigment. Gouache is more opaque and less transparent than watercolor, producing the suede finish and crisp lines characteristic of many traditional Indian paintings.

Modernism: An art movement characterized by the abandonment of traditional subjects (i.e., history and religion) and embracing innovative forms of expression in which color, space, and light are of primary importance.



◀ **Francis Newton Souza**
(1924-2002)
Head, 1964
Oil on canvas
35 in. x 26 in.
Courtesy of Shelley &
Donald Rubin

TIMELINE

- 1526-1858 Mughal rule in India
- 1858 India comes under direct rule of the British crown after failed Indian mutiny
- 1864 British take over School of Industrial Art, Calcutta, renaming it Government School of Art (today known as the Government College of Art and Craft)
- 1901 Rabindranath Tagore establishes the open-air Shantiniketan School (becomes Visva Bharati University in 1951)
- 1907 Abanindranath Tagore establishes the Bengal School of Art
- 1943 The Calcutta Group is founded
- 1947 Independence and partition create the sovereign states of the Dominion of Pakistan and the Union of India; Jawaharlal Nehru is sworn in as first prime minister of India
- 1947 Progressive Artists' Group is founded in Bombay
Delhi's Shilpi Chakra, an artists' cooperative/gallery, is created
- 1948 Mahatma Gandhi is assassinated
- 1950 Faculty of Fine Arts (a college) is established in Baroda
- 1954 Lalit Kala Akademi (National Academy of Art) is established in New Delhi. National Gallery of Modern Art is created in Delhi
- 1956 Country reorganizes along ethnic and linguistic lines
- 1971 Wars with Pakistan
Creation of Bangladesh
- 1993 Centre for International Modern Art opens in Kolkata
- 1995 Christie's Auction House opens in Mumbai; other international art activities gain momentum



Map of Modern India

EXHIBITION CHECKLIST

All works in this exhibition are provided courtesy of Virginia & Ravi Akhouri and Shelley & Donald Rubin. Unless otherwise noted, all dimensions are stated in inches.

Abdulahim Apabai Amelkar (1920-82)
Drying the Nets, undated
Ink and pastel on paper
25 x 17
Courtesy of Shelley & Donald Rubin

Manjit Bawa (1941-2008)
The Murder of Hashmi, 1989
Acrylic on canvas
68 5/8 x 48
Courtesy of Shelley & Donald Rubin

Narayan Shridhar Bendre (1910-1992)
Times Square, 1950
Gouache
14 x 18
Courtesy of Shelley & Donald Rubin

Nandalal Bose (1882-1966)
Rural Home, c. 1940s
Gouache
10 x 5
Courtesy of Virginia & Ravi Akhouri

Hari Ambadas Gade (1917-2001)
Going to the Temple, undated
Gouache
15 x 14
Courtesy of Shelley & Donald Rubin

Hari Ambadas Gade (1917-2001)
Untitled, 1946
Gouache on paper
20 x 12
Courtesy of Virginia & Ravi Akhouri

Gopal Ghose (1913-1980)
Berhampur, 1952
Watercolor on paper
24 x 21
Courtesy of Shelley & Donald Rubin

Gopal Ghose (1913-1980)
Untitled, undated
Gouache
10 x 6
Courtesy of Virginia & Ravi Akhouri

Kattingeri Krishna Hebbar (1911-1996)
Hungry Soul, 1952
Oil on canvas
24 x 18
Courtesy of Shelley & Donald Rubin

Maqbool Fida Husain (b. 1915)
Arjuna and Draupadi, undated
Acrylic on canvas
39 x 48
Courtesy of Virginia & Ravi Akhouri

Maqbool Fida Husain (b. 1915)
Untitled, From the *Wings of Desire Series*, January 1989
Acrylic on canvas
58 1/2 x 45
Courtesy of Shelley & Donald Rubin

Anil Karanjai (1940-2001)
Untitled, 1969
Oil on canvas
37 x 46
Courtesy of Shelley & Donald Rubin

Seema Kohli (b. 1960)
Untitled, 2005
Mixed media on canvas
48 x 72
Courtesy of Shelley & Donald Rubin

Krishna Shamrao Kulkarni (1916-1994)
A Peasant in the City, 1960s
Oil on canvas
21 x 30
Courtesy of Shelley & Donald Rubin

Krishna Shamrao Kulkarni (1916-1994)
Deity, 1970s
Acrylic on paper
29 x 21
Courtesy of Shelley & Donald Rubin

Bari Kumar (b. 1966)
Namaste America, 2002
Oil on canvas
62 x 48
Courtesy of Shelley & Donald Rubin

Ram Kumar (b. 1924)
Untitled, 2005
Acrylic on paper
21 x 29
Courtesy of Shelley & Donald Rubin

Nalini Malani (b. 1946)
Three Girls at Play, 1987
Watercolor on paper
13 x 9
Courtesy of Shelley & Donald Rubin

Anjolie Ela Menon (b. 1940)
Untitled, 1982
Oil on board
24 x 18
Courtesy of Virginia & Ravi Akhouri

Akbar Padamsee (b. 1928)
Untitled, 1991
Oil on canvas
36 x 24
Courtesy of Shelley & Donald Rubin

Sudhir Patwardhan (b. 1949)
The Fall, 1998
Oil on canvas
60 x 42
Courtesy of Virginia & Ravi Akhouri

Shyamal Dutta Ray (1934-2005)
Prayer, undated
Gouache on paper
22 x 19
Courtesy of Shelley & Donald Rubin

Syed Haider Raza (b. 1922)
Les Quatre Horizons, 1969
Acrylic on canvas
40 x 32
Courtesy of Virginia & Ravi Akhouri

Syed Haider Raza (b. 1922)
Untitled (Temple Scene), undated
Watercolor and pencil on paper
17 x 19
Courtesy of Shelley & Donald Rubin

Jamini Roy (1887-1972)
Gopi and Krishna, c. 1950
Tempera on board
21 x 15
Courtesy of Virginia & Ravi Akhouri

Sadequain (1930-1987)
Man with Brush and Head in Hand, 1972
Oil on canvas
31 x 18
Courtesy of Shelley & Donald Rubin

Paritosh Sen (1918-2008)
My Pet, undated
Acrylic on canvas
28 x 38
Courtesy of Virginia & Ravi Akhouri

Jangarh Singh Shyam (1962-2001)
Untitled, c. 1990
Oil on canvas
37 x 53
Courtesy of Virginia & Ravi Akhouri

Francis Newton Souza (1924-2002)
Head, 1964
Oil on canvas
35 x 26
Courtesy of Shelley & Donald Rubin

Francis Newton Souza (1924-2002)
Pope Blessing the Crowd, 1963
(Sic Transit Gloria Mundi -- Pope Paul VI in Saint Peter's Square)
Oil on canvas
45 x 63
Courtesy of Virginia & Ravi Akhouri

Abanindranath Tagore (1871-1951)
The Poet, 1904
Gouache
8 x 12
Courtesy of Virginia & Ravi Akhouri

Rabindranath Tagore (1861-1941)
Face, c. 1930s
Mixed media
10 x 5
Courtesy of Virginia & Ravi Akhouri

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