

For Immediate Release

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Contact: Bendetta Roux

212 636 2680

broux@christies.com

**CHRISTIE'S HIGHLIGHTS MODERN AND CONTEMPORARY ART
FROM SOUTH ASIA****South Asian Modern and Contemporary Art
September 20, 2007**

New York – In its 7th New York year now and still as strong as ever, the *South Asian Modern and Contemporary Art* sale features prominently on the Christie's Asia Week calendar. On September 20, the spotlights will once again shine on the works of India's greatest 20th and 21st century artists. From the Progressive Movement through to cutting edge contemporary, the sale will not only focus on prime examples of many different movements and styles but will also make apparent the connecting lines and dots which link tradition with creation, the early 20th century revolutionary modern with the limit-pushing contemporary of tomorrow.



The Progressive Movement cycle of artists is represented by major works of Mehta, Souza and Raza. Tyeb Mehta's *Mahisasura*, 1996 (estimate: \$750,000-1,250,000) is part of the body of work which the artist embarked upon after he abandoned his expressionistic style and which have been characterized by a diagonal divide that allowed Mehta to use a single figure but adopt a different form on each side. *Mahisasura* is a far reminder of Mehta's diagonal period and the painting's subject matter is taken from Hindu mythology. However, in Mehta's language, the original messages and figures are being transferred to a world of universal emotions and in *Mahisasura*, the divide really runs between the masculine and the feminine; between the divine and the mortal, between the bestial and the human.

By Raza, the sale offers *La Terre*, 1980 (estimate: \$350,000-500,000), a prime example of Raza's boldly expressive and saturated use of golds, reds and blacks. The painting relies on color to convey warmth and lyrical message and the art historian Geethi Sen pointed out: "Geometrical forms are used to map the universe."

Souza's highly personalized style comes to the forefront in *Untitled*, 1958 (estimate: \$200,000-300,000). The painting expresses Souza's fascination with Catholicism, but only to break it down and to mainly show the lack of substance and content – the face of the ecclesiastic figure portrayed here reveals an immense void rather than any hopeful message. The style is the typical combination of Rouault and Soutine, the thick-set heavy black lines that then get used in a very Souza-esque way. *Nude with Fruit*, 1958 (estimate: \$300,000-400,000) however, possess a fullness and a tranquility rarely seen in Souza's oeuvre.



Among the highlights of a next generation of artists, Bhupen Khakhar's *I, Me, My Village* (estimate: \$200,000-250,000) stands out. The artist employs the devices of popular Indian religious imagery, early Italian painting, Byzantine icons and Indian Miniature painting and, in this work he juxtaposes scenes of Indian village life with Hindu imagery identified in the painted portrait of Shiva, alongside more allegorical elements including a quaint townscape in distance which seems drawn from fiction rather than reality.

Atul Dodiya, with Khakhar regarded as one of India's most important artists, has become a widely recognized figurehead in South Asian contemporary art influencing many of the country's burgeoning younger artists. The sale will present *Three Painters* (estimate: \$150,000-200,000), a work in which Dodiya shows himself and Bhupen Khakhar standing ironically before a depiction of *La Réproduction Interdite* (*Not To Be Reproduced*), 1937, by René Magritte. An antiquated and Picasso-esque sculpture of a pregnant female hovers surreally near Dodiya, suggesting that he has been impregnated by the ideas of these two artistic greats.



From the collection of Mitchell and Laurie Schwarz is Avinash Chandra's *Untitled*, 1969 (estimate: \$150,000-200,000). This work embodies the saturated palette, ethos and ebullient energy of the

West during the 1960s. It possesses a sexual virility and joie de vivre executed on a scale that makes this a masterpiece in the artist's oeuvre. Still a young artist, Chandra was the first painter to sell a work to the newly-opened Museum of Modern Art in New Delhi and in 1965 was the first Indian-British artist to be featured in a show in the Tate Gallery in London.

The sale also features Anish Kapoor's *Untitled* (estimate: \$35,000-50,000), a watercolor executed in 2000 and one of these beautifully ethereal works in which saturation creates undulating pools of color the viewer is magically drawn into; and Rameshwar Broota's *A Chance Encounter*, 2007 (estimate: \$180,000-220,000), a prime example of the artist's working method whereby he creates texture by scraping away layers of monochromatic paint.



The sale offers a superb selection of contemporary art, including photography, print, mixed media and oil on canvas. Rashid Rana's *A Day in the Life of a Landscape*, 2004 (estimate: \$50,000-70,000), is a great example of the oeuvre of one of Pakistani's most promising artists who was recently featured in an exhibition on minimalism Grid <> Matrix, alongside masters such as Piet Mondrian, Agnes Martin, Robert Rauschenberg and Andreas Gursky. The grid as well as the pixel play a major role in *A Day*, whereby the work becomes an exercise in perception. From a distance the work is a landscape, from the midpoint it breaks down in a mass of colors. Rana used gritty photographs of metropolitan Lahore to recompose *Rural Canal*, a landscape painting by the beloved Lahore School painter Khalid Iqbal.

N.S. Harsha's *Untitled*, 1997 (estimate: \$60,000-80,000), shows the artist's preoccupation with feet – he sees the foot as a representation of the human condition, while also acknowledging its place as the representation of the transitory presence and unknowable and inexpressible divine in Hindu and Buddhist texts.



Jitish Kallat's *Covering Letter* (estimate: \$40,000-60,000); Justin Ponmany's *Elixir* (estimate: \$30,000-40,000); Aisha Khalid's *Behind the Curtain* (estimate: \$8,000-12,000); Shibu Natesan's *Montage I* (estimate: \$60,000-80,000); T.V. Santosh's *Across An Unresolved Story* (estimate: \$30,000-40,000) and Chitra Ganesh's *Secrets* (estimate: \$7,000-9,000) will also feature in the sale.

Auction: South Asian Modern and Contemporary Art
Viewing: Christie's Galleries at Rockefeller Center

September 20 at 10 a.m.
September 14 – 19

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