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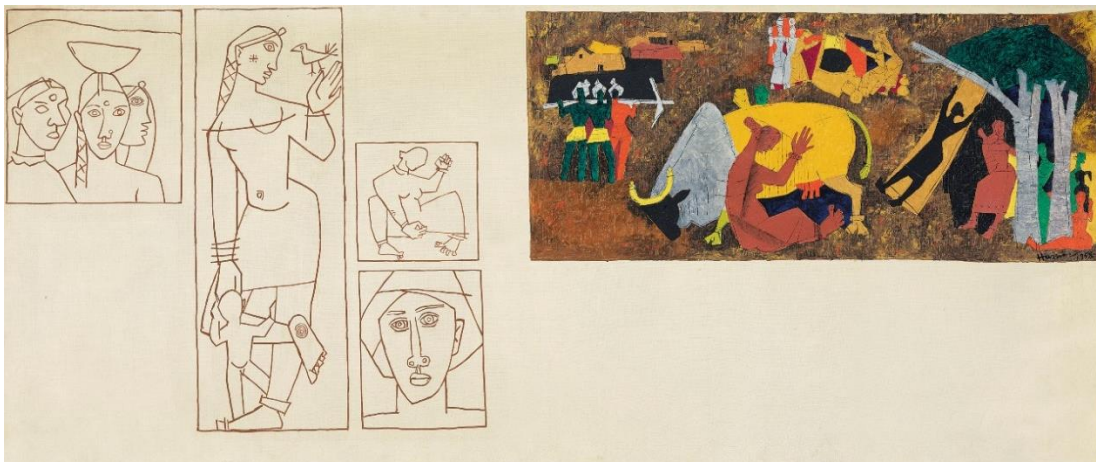
A CELEBRATION OF INDIAN AND PAKISTANI ARTISTS OF THE LAST 100 YEARS IN THE UPCOMING SOUTH ASIAN MODERN + CONTEMPORARY ART AUCTION TO TAKE PLACE IN LONDON ON 11 JUNE



London - Christie's annual summer auction of *South Asian Modern + Contemporary Art* comprises 77 lots, almost entirely from private collections from Europe, India, Asia, US and Australia. Following India's participation and Pakistan's debut at this year's Venice Biennale, this year's auction will celebrate art from both countries.

The auction is led by the striking *Falling Figure with Bird* painted in 2002 by **Tyeb Mehta** (1925-2009). This compelling composition manifests the sense of angst, helplessness and fear that Mehta felt at the societal violence and tragedy he experienced in the aftermath of partition. This image draws its power from a cinematic sense of suspense, freezing the action in an eternal moment of helpless free fall. Both deeply personal and politically poignant, this virtuoso painting distils complex psychological and metaphysical notions of suffering and trauma with the economy of line, form and colour characteristic of Mehta's work. Here, the entwined avian and human figures draw perhaps from literary characters like Icarus or Phaethon, who failed in their quests of flight and union with divinity (estimate: £1,500,000-2,000,000).

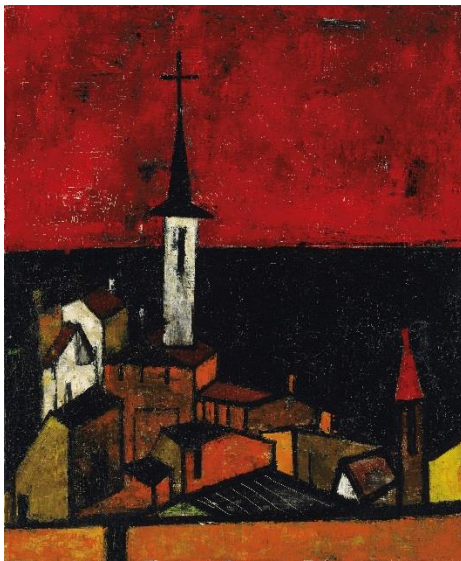
The sale also includes exceptional paintings by members of the seminal Progressive Artists' Group and their associates, which are completely fresh to the market and provide new documentation of the critical formative period in the development of Indian modern art. These new discoveries are jewels in the auction and highlight the touching friendships that inspired these Indian artists in the 50s and 60s on the path to becoming the leading modern masters they are recognised as today.



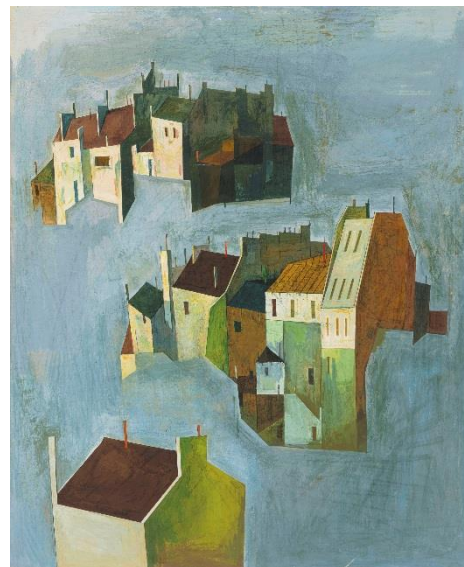
These include **Maqbool Fida Husain's** (1913-2011) colossal, eight feet, 1958 painting, *Untitled (Village Scenes)* (estimate: £500,000-700,000) which provides a visual almanac of the artist's early oeuvre. Each constituent vignette in this multipart composition represents Husain's most iconic tropes, quintessential to his artistic output, establishing his assured draftsmanship and mastery of line and colour. It was acquired directly from the artist

during a diplomatic posting in Delhi from 1956-58 where the family and Husain became close friends. From his unconventional beginnings as a billboard painter in Bombay in the late 1930s, Husain successfully developed this unique vocabulary to become one of India's leading modern masters. *Untitled (Village Scenes)*, is from a rare and seminal series of large scale works encapsulating the charm and vibrancy of the Indian countryside creating a storyboard of the nation. Husain represented India at the 1956 Venice Biennale with a work from the same series that holds the world auction record for the artist. Significantly, *Zameen*, another painting from the same series and period seen by many as his most important work has been included as part of the India Pavilion exhibition, *Our Time for a Future Caring* at the Venice Biennale this year, more than sixty years later.

A further 1966 Husain entitled *Gopees and Krishna* (estimate: £250,000-350,000) was acquired directly from the artist by the Seventh Earl and Countess of Harewood and represents the close friendship they developed over several visits to India in the 1960s and 70s. They became lifelong friends and Husain visited Harewood House in Yorkshire where the painting was exhibited in 2007 only a few years before his death.



Lot 18: Raza, *Untitled (Church in landscape)*



Lot 19: Raza, *Untitled (Cityscape)*

The auction offers two exceptional works by **Sayed Haider Raza** (1922-2016) from the early 1950s coming from the collection of his close friend and classmate at the École Nationale Supérieure des Beaux Arts in Paris, Lydia Lavrov-Nordentoft. Through recently discovered letters it is revealed that Nordentoft's support and friendship sustained Raza during the early 1950s allowing him to develop into the modern master he is recognised as today. Even after she returned to Sweden in 1952, Nordentoft and Raza remained close friends regularly corresponding in support of each other's artistic careers. The ever-supporting friend offered to buy Raza's paintings and they eventually agreed that she would pay for one and be gifted another. In a touching letter from January 1955, Raza proudly describes each work as he prepares to send his two favourite paintings to his loyal friend.

Each painting extolls Raza's love of his quintessential genre, landscape, in unique and contrasting ways. *Untitled (Church in Landscape)*, estimated at £150,000-200,000 is an iconic example of Raza's early landscapes on canvas. The bold palette in red and black, and geometric flattened forms betray the Post-Impressionist influences he so admired. This painting was so dear to the artist that he stood carrying it in a photograph that now appears on the cover of *S H Raza Catalogue Raisonné 1958- 1971 (Volume I)*.

The *Untitled (Cityscape)* (estimated: £150,000-200,000) is a delicate rendering of rooftops executed in gouache. It was this work that Raza sent as a token of his gratitude and affection. It is from a small series of experimental works produced in 1951-53. These flattened cubist forms of Parisian rooftops float across a pale blue sky. These were most likely the rooftops seen from Raza's apartment window in Paris.



The auction will also feature a key example of **Ram Kumar's** restrained portraits of the 1950s (*Untitled*, illustrated left) that express the artist's despondent reaction to the harsh realities of urban life that he came face to face with at the time in France and India. In this painting dating from the 1950's (estimate: £180,000-250,000), the central figure, a young man in a grey suit, becomes a universal symbol of this disenchantment, and sense of individualism being subsumed by the anonymous homogeneity of the city Kumar portrays him in. The painting was acquired directly from the artist by the eminent author and critic Shamlal who authored a series of monographs on Indian artists, known as the *Sadanga Series on Modern and Contemporary Indian Art*.



Francis Newton Souza's *The Prophet* (illustrated right) was painted in 1955 at the apex of his career in London. Souza depicts an austere anguished man

dressed in a business suit, pierced by a single arrow in his neck, representing the fundamental themes of religion, sinners, saints and martyrdom. The arrow in the neck betrays Souza's allusion to St. Sebastian the martyr and venerated saint of the Catholic Church. Historically, St. Sebastian importance grew during the plague in the 14th Century when people prayed to him as their protector and source of recovery from pestilence. Souza himself nearly perished as a child from small-pox, and it is possible that he identified with St. Sebastian as a protector from illness. In the painting, Souza reinterprets the renowned religious icon by depicting St Sebastian as an autobiographical product of 1950s London.

The auction features the largest ever selection of modern and contemporary works by artists from **Pakistan** and its diaspora, spanning the period of colonial rule in the Subcontinent to the present. This comprehensive selection include works by Abdur Rehman Chughtai, Allah Bux, Anwar Jalal Shemza, Sadequain, Rashid Rana, Shahzia Sikander, Imran Qureshi, Waqas Khan, Ali Kazim and Bani Abidi among others.



Lahore based artist, **Rashid Rana** (b. 1968) is one of Pakistan's most celebrated contemporary artists, and his work has been widely exhibited internationally. Known for his mosaic-like montages of miniature photographic images, Rana started to work on a series in 2002 in which he plays with notions of duality and *gestalt* theory by creating visual icons, often inspired by Pakistani historical figures and forms, composed of a digitised pixilation of subversive images. In his seminal *Red Carpet* series, the artist resurrects the patterns of traditional woven carpets from the region, recognised internationally for their high quality and craftsmanship. On closer examination of these works, however, the viewer

realises that the overall image is constructed of several smaller images taken in various slaughterhouses, lending their blood-red colour to the carpet (estimate: £120,000-180,000).

For the first time Christie's will offer at auction a folded steel sculpture *No 426* (estimate: £20,000-30,000) by the British based Bangladeshi artist **Rana Begum** (b. 1977). Begum has created an impressive corpus of artworks in which she explores the mediums of painting, sculpture and installation and has most recently featured at Frieze Sculpture Park in 2018.

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