PAPER TRAILS



PAPER TRAILS

Modern Indian Works on Paper

from the Gaur Collection

EDITED BY

TAMARA SEARS

WITH CONTRIBUTIONS BY

TAMARA SEARS
MICHAEL MACKENZIE
PAULA SENGUPTA
EMMA OSLÉ
DARIELLE MASON
REBECCA M. BROWN
JEFFREY WECHSLER
KISHORE SINGH and
SWATHI GORLE

Grinnell College Museum of Art

IN ASSOCIATION WITH

MAPIN PUBLISHING

First published in India in 2022 by

Grinnell College Museum of Art
1108 Park St, Grinnell, IA 50112, United States

in association with

Mapin Publishing Pvt. Ltd
706 Kaivanna, Panchvati, Ellisbridge
Ahmedabad 380006 INDIA
T: +91 79 40 228 228
F: +91 79 40 228 201
E: mapin@mapinpub.com
www.mapinpub.com

in conjunction with the exhibition '*Paper Trails: Works on Paper from the Gaur Collection*' from September 27 to December 10, 2022, at the Grinnell College Museum of Art, Iowa (USA).

Text © Grinnell College Museum of Art
Images © Umesh and Sunanda Gaur
except those mentioned under Sources of Illustrations on p. 232.

All rights reserved under international copyright conventions. No part of this book may be reproduced or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic or mechanical, including photocopy, recording or any other information storage and retrieval system, without prior permission in writing from the publisher.

The moral rights of Tamara Sears, Michael Mackenzie, Paula Sengupta, Emma Oslé, Darielle Mason, Rebecca M. Brown, Jeffrey Wechsler, Kishore Singh and Swathi Gorle as authors of this work are asserted.

ISBN: 978-93-94501-07-2

International Distribution

North America
ACC Art Books
T: +1 800 252 5231
F: +1 212 989 3205
E: ussales@accartbooks.com
www.accartbooks.com/us/

United Kingdom, Europe and Asia
John Rule Art Book Distribution
40 Voltaire Road, London SW4 6DH
T: +44 020 7498 0115
E: johnrule@johnrule.co.uk
www.johnrule.co.uk

Rest of the World
Mapin Publishing Pvt. Ltd

Copyediting:
Mithila Rangarajan / Mapin Editorial

Proofreading:
Marilyn Gore / Mapin Editorial

Design:
Deanna Luu

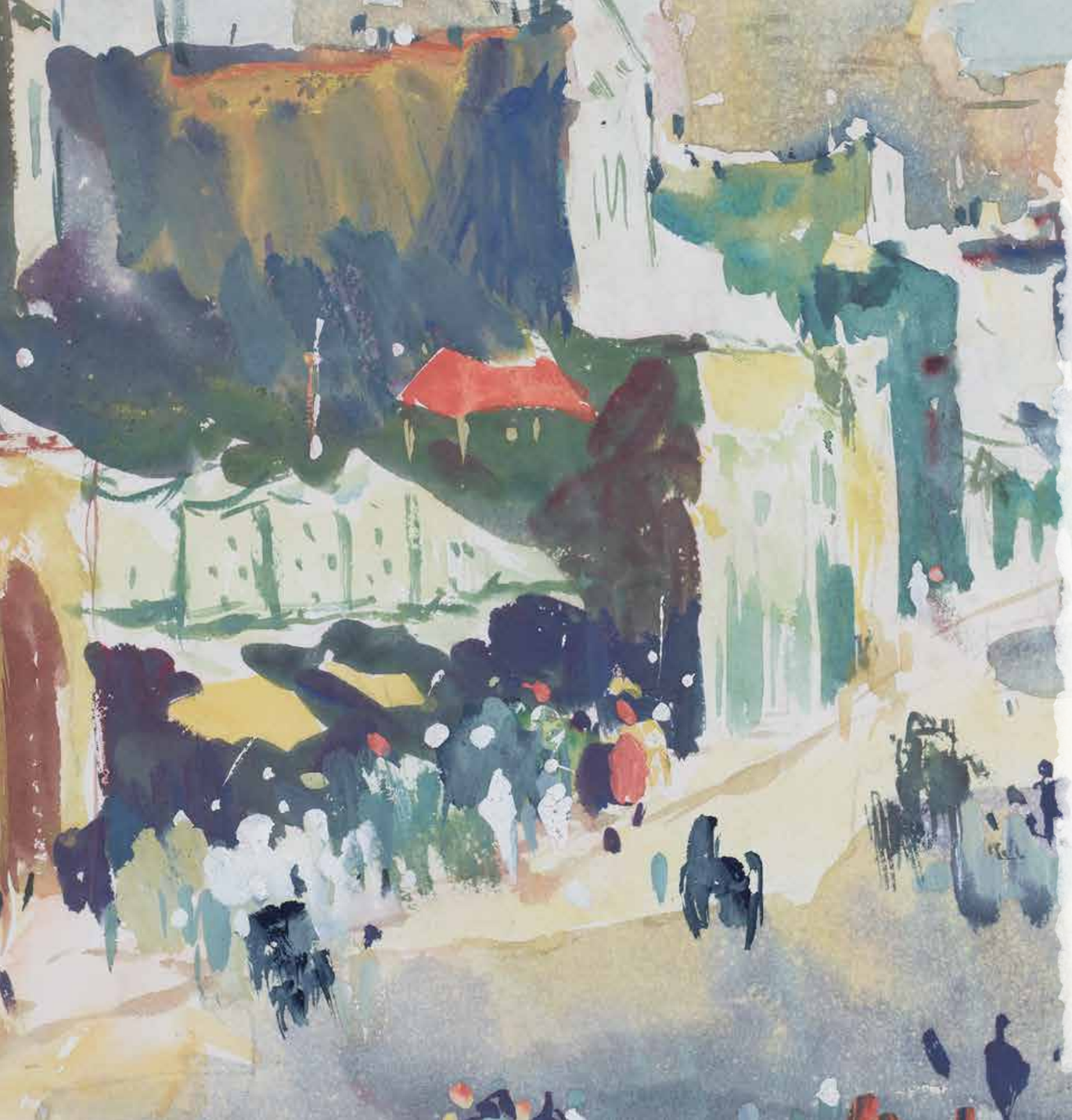
Production:
Mapin Design Studio

Printed in

Grinnell College Museum of Art

MAPIN PUBLISHING





Contents

8 Foreword — Anne Harris, President, Grinnell College

10 Director's Acknowledgement — Susan Baley, Director, Grinnell College Museum of Art

12 Curator's Preface and Acknowledgements — Tamara Sears

18 Introduction — Michael Mackenzie

24 The Intimacy of Paper — Tamara Sears

30 A Brief History of Printmaking in India — Paula Sengupta

38 An Aesthetics of Borders, Globalization, and Migration in Post-Partition India — Emma Oslé

48 Ancient Narratives of Devotion: Continuity, Transformation, Rejection — Darielle Mason

61 Cacophonies and Silence: Hearing Abstraction — Rebecca Brown

67 CATALOG

- 69 Topographic Engagements
- 99 Narrative
- 139 Politics and Social Critique
- 159 Myth and Religion
- 179 Portraits/Personas
- 205 Abstraction

225 The Collections of Umesh and Sunanda Gaur: Acquisitions and Aspirations for Modern Indian Culture — Jeffrey Wechsler

230 About the Contributors

232 Sources of Illustrations

Curator's Preface and Acknowledgements

Tamara Sears

The *Paper Trails: Modern Indian Works on Paper from the Gaur Collection* exhibition emerged through a collaborative pedagogical process, as the culmination of a semester-long seminar, conducted during the spring of 2019, aimed at workshopping curatorial practices at the master's and doctoral level. The course was designed to fulfill both a general elective requirement for the graduate programs in Art History at Rutgers University, New Brunswick, NJ, and a specific practicum requirement for our curatorial studies program. Although the final version of the exhibition reflects significant revisions to the ordering and interpretation of specific works, the original underlying conceptualizations and curatorial logics bear the indelible imprint of the intensely collaborative conversations undertaken that spring. Whereas the first half of the semester was structured around a series of readings and discussions, the second half unfolded as a practicum spent primarily in the Gaurs' gallery space. We engaged the collection hands-on, looking at each work and each artist individually as situated within both a post-colonial present and a longer history of aesthetic practice in the Indian subcontinent. As we did so, we thought through the various ways in which the works could also be connected, in terms of both creative practice and broader social, cultural, or political thematics.

Throughout the semester, students brought their own personal experiences and fields of expertise into conversation with both the scholarly literature on art in post-Partition South Asia and the works themselves. That proved to be a fruitful triangulation, which sometimes reinforced established frameworks for writing about and understanding works by many of the artists whose work is highlighted in the exhibition, but which also sometimes led in unexpected directions. For example, Emma Oslé's dual expertise in the academic study of modern and contemporary Latin America and the artistic practice of printmaking, which she had studied first-hand, added new layers to our understanding of the works included in the section dedicated to "Topographic Engagements." Whereas her scholarly rooting in the Global South, with a particular attentiveness to the complexity of borders, confirmed our sense that the experience of diaspora and migration offered many parallels across the post-colonial world, her experience as a printmaker brought new insight into the material processes through which artists such as Arpita Singh, Zarina, and Krishna Reddy engaged with these larger issues.

Similarly, Swathi Gorle's interest in South Asian intangible cultural heritage, and particularly in the relationship between religion, urbanism, and pilgrimage, framed our conversations about religious imagery, highlighting the ways in which traditional narratives were reoriented in order to engage post-colonial social, cultural, and political realities. Margo Weitzman and Sopio Gagoshidze brought their respective expertise in 14th- and 15th-century Italian and early medieval Georgian art to bear on engagements with Christian imagery and early modern European canons in works by artists such as F. N. Souza and Gulam Mohammad Sheikh. And, finally, William Green's rooting in Western modernism brought new dimensions to our engagement with abstraction, in thinking through the contributions of Indian artists to transnational artistic experiments in the nature of representation and the dissolution of form.

Organization of the Catalog

The exhibition design, as it emerged, mirrored an object-oriented pedagogical process. The themes that are represented in the catalog were not external superimpositions but rather those that emerged through our engagement with the works themselves. As much as possible, we tried to "listen" to the artists themselves, to understand their personal histories and intentions. We entitled the first theme "Topographic Engagements," as a way of capturing the complex geographies and mobilities, both imaginary and real, that were central to the experience of South Asia that followed both the trauma of Partition and the opening of the art world, which provided artists unprecedented opportunities to study, live, and travel elsewhere in the world. This is captured by Arpita Singh's striking evocations of international modes of transit, Zarina's commentaries on the notion of home in the diaspora, and Atul Dodiya's homage to the ongoing effects of communal violence fifty years after Independence. It also evoked the rapid transformations of India's urban landscape, beginning at the cusp of Independence, such as seen in works such as Sayed Haider Raza's 1945 *Untitled* (cat. 2) cityscape, and of the ongoing reckoning with India's past in the present, as seen through Gulam Mohammed Sheikh's prints in the collection. The complexity of Indian modernity, as a phenomenon rooted as much in rural as urban experiences, was evoked through M. F. Husain's *Yatra* (cat. 3), ca. 1950s, and Madhvi Parekh's *On Way to My Home* (cat. 7), made in 1999. As Chaitanya Sambrani noted in 2005, for South Asian artists, the "desire for place can be articulated as both a relationship with current locations and an aspiration for real or imagined places in which the artist has made an emotional investment."[1]

The next three sections on "Narrative," "Politics and Social Critique," and "Myth and Religion" are interconnected through the ways in which artists articulated present realities through



Paper Trails, Installation view, Gaur Gallery, 2019

engagements with past traditions by mobilizing practices of story-telling and visual world-building. From Avinash Chandra's exploration of modernity through the "sexualization of the city"[2] to Ganesh Pyne's highly complex reframing of a famous Mughal painting from the reign of the emperor Jahangir, the idea underlying "Narrative" is to allow space for artists to tell powerful tales. In some cases, the narratives were deeply personal and often metaphoric, as in Bhupen Khakhar's *Birth of Water* (cat. 21a), Anupam Sud's explorations of the relationship between genders, or Sudhir Patwardhan's *Wounds II* (cat. 13), in which the artist brought his long experience as a medical professional to bear on his evocation of societal wounds through the depiction of a contorted and broken body.

While many of the narrative works included in the initial concept possess elements of political and social critique, some represented more explicit ideological positions or commentary on specific events. These we moved to a new section on "Politics and Social Critique." Included among these are Somnath Hore's etchings and drawings, rooted in his early Marxist affiliations and motivated by the effects of war and famine on rural populations; K. G. Subramanyan's 2004 depiction of the Best Bakery incident during communal rioting in 2002 that resulted in the death of 14 people (11 of whom were Muslims); and Shyamal Dutta Ray's haunting evocation of urban decay and poverty in post-colonial Calcutta. "Myth and Religion" then turns to works that specifically draw upon the ongoing role of devotion in contemporary society. Here are featured M. F. Husain's re-imaginings of Hindu deities, including variations on Hanuman's siege of Lanka, and also his famous series on Mother Teresa, in which he drew together Catholic iconographies and Indic notions of mother



Paper Trails, Installation view, Gaur Gallery, 2019

goddesses to simultaneously universalize and personalize her history. Also included is Atul Dodiya's re-imagining of the story of Sabari, drawn from the epic *Ramayana*, Chittaprosad's woodcuts illustrating myths for children's books, and Jyoti Bhatt's explicitly religious prints.

Finally, the last two sections, on "Portraits/Personas" and "Abstraction," form a complementary pair. Whereas the former engages the myriad ways that modern artists approached the depiction of the human form, the latter brings together eschewals of figuration and experiments in the dissolution of representational form. Within Indian modernism, the two were not necessarily in contradiction. The approaches to figuration play around with elements of distortion and/or the dissolution of form in order to evoke the malleability of identity in an era of rapid urbanization and social, political, and economic change, such as in the works by F. N. Souza, Ved Nayar, and Jogen Chowdhury. The figures are variously individual and collective, global and local, urban and rural, affluent and indigent, educated and coarse, salacious and chaste, spontaneous and static. Some look outward, engaging the viewer, as in the works by Laxma Goud. Others turn away, building psychological tension and bringing the gaze inward, as in the work by Krishna Howlaji Ara and Paritosh Sen. The works included in "Abstraction" are more deeply philosophical and often spiritual. They transform the canvas into a space for exploring the very nature of existence and cosmic creation (Anish Kapoor); the ebb and flow of mortal existence (Ram Kumar); the raw, visual access to the infinity of divinity (Prabhakar Kolte); and the formless (im)materiality of the world (Krishna Reddy).

Introduction

Michael Mackenzie

It gives me great pleasure to introduce the catalog to the exhibition *Paper Trails: Modern Indian Works on Paper from the Gaur Collection*, curated by Dr. Tamara Sears. This is the second exhibition of works from the Gaur Collection of modern and contemporary Indian art to be held at the Grinnell College Museum of Art, the first being *Many Visions, Many Versions: Art from Indigenous Communities in India*, in 2017. That earlier exhibition focused on what are sometimes called the "non-canonical" arts of various tribal peoples in India. In this case, the works in the exhibition are fully "canonical," in the sense that they are part of the mainstream of modern and contemporary developments in India since Independence in 1947. The Gaurs have built up a collection of great depth and completeness, an almost encyclopedic overview of the complexity and diversity of art in India over the seven decades since Independence. The connoisseurship which they have developed in their collecting practice has enabled them to focus on the materiality of the art object, especially works on paper, and to be attentive to the skill of the printing, the freshness of the plate, the quality of the paper support, as well as the immediacy of the artist's touch, whether with burin, etching needle, or brush. An exhibition of such works, with their rich materiality and intimacy of scale, offers an American audience the opportunity to experience up close the diversity of the work of modern and contemporary Indian artists.

Although I myself am a specialist in European art, specifically German modernism in the 20th century, I have also been privileged to teach an undergraduate course on the history of Indian art for many years, most recently at Grinnell College. I was first smitten by the sensuous and expressive beauty of Indian art at a major exhibition of an important private collection of ancient and medieval sculpture at the Art Institute of Chicago in 1997. After I saw that exhibition, I rushed back to the classroom to share these aesthetic pleasures with my students, forgetting in the first flush of discovery that my scholarly discipline, and the theoretical positions of modern and contemporary art, had taught me to treat such subjective judgments with suspicion, and to avoid them as unprofessional. And, after all, my appreciation of premodern Buddhist and Hindu art was predicated on a certain Eurocentric, Orientalizing conception of Indian art as essentially static, its greatness located in an unrecoverable past. It had nothing to do with my primary work as a historian of modern art, and could not, so I presumed, trouble the categories in which I thought about that work. I was as yet unaware that there even *was* modern art from India. It was only after the appearance of Partha Mitter's history of Indian art, in 2001, which included several chapters at the end on modern and contemporary art, that I followed Indian art into the modern era.[1] And even still I persisted in thinking of it as some sort of secondary or provincial reflection of European modernism, peripheral to the main line of development. It took longer yet to begin to decenter or "provincialize" Europe and European modernism, to borrow a phrase from the post-colonial theorist Dipesh Chakrabarty.[2] Today, I try to think with my students about how the work of South Asian artists, those who work in Asia and those who work in Europe and America, is central to the story of modern and contemporary art, not peripheral to it.[3] What makes the Gaur Collection so important in the US, and what makes exhibitions like this one so important, is the opportunity to see and think about how Indian art is part of the story of modernism, to see Indian art that is not only beautiful but also aesthetically rigorous, powerfully expressive, and contextually complex.

Let us take up the thread of that story for a moment, if not at the starting point—for the question of starting points inevitably prevents the story from beginning—then at a crucial juncture. In 1919, two innovative art schools were founded, each with the goal of reforming not only art education, but the whole student and, eventually, the nation. One school was Kala Bhavana, the art school of Santiniketan University, outside the city of Calcutta (then the capital of the British Raj in India and now called Kolkata), founded by the writer and Nobel laureate Rabindranath Tagore. The other was the Bauhaus in Germany, founded by architect Walter Gropius. The two schools had similar objectives: to slough off an ossified academic system imposed by a spiritually inert imperial patronage, in order to allow a more authentic individual and national cultural expression to emerge. Tagore gathered what technical and industrial innovations he could from Europe and America to reform the practice of agriculture in rural Bengal, aiming at a unity of craft, farming, and village life that was, however, open to and benefitted from the wider world—a "cosmopolitan local" development not dependent on British imperial patronage.[4] At the Bauhaus, meanwhile, the idea of India was everywhere, especially in the early years. Students practiced meditation and breathing exercises, vegetarianism, and studied their chakras, hoping to harmonize industrial technology with spiritual practice. In preparing for his inaugural speech of the school, Walter Gropius made a note to himself to cite the Gothic cathedral and "India!" in the same breath.[5] Both European and Indian modernism looked to village, peasant life, and the spiritual life of the medieval past as a source of "authentic" cultural expression, freed from the vocabulary of realism and materialism imposed by the imperial rulers.[6] Each of the two art and design schools was fascinated by, and aspired to, their imagined perception

of the other culture. Santiniketan hosted an exhibition of Bauhaus works in 1922, organized with the help of Stella Kramrisch, a Viennese art historian who taught the history of Western modern art at Kala Bhavana. In 1923, there was, in return, an exhibition of Indian modernism in Berlin.[7] Tagore himself was revered at the Bauhaus, and in Germany generally, in the 1920s. Each school looked for a time to the other, reinterpreting the other as a model for achieving a higher unity of abstracted thought and representation, each pursuing its own purpose.[8] Sria Chatterjee calls the Bauhaus exhibition in Calcutta in 1922 an example of transcultural modernism, or "modernism-in-process." That is to say, rather than cultural transmission, or the influence of Western development on a backward, Eastern "other," there were "colliding perceptions of the other" on both sides, within a "network of object, interaction, and event."[9]

Later, in 1947, after World War II and the founding of independent India, when a group of modernist painters and sculptors joined together to form a group that called itself the "Progressive Artists' Group," they also had to navigate a network of interactions and events. The liberation and traumas of Independence and Partition, the conflict between nationalism and secularism in India, and the urgent tension between a modern, urban outlook and a rootedness in village life constituted their "modernism-in-process." The Progressives engaged directly with Western modern art, frequently traveling and studying in various Western art centers. Modernism in the post-war West was itself divided, not a unified, monolithic, static edifice. It was riven by innumerable fault lines, with artists embracing varying degrees of abstraction and figuration, formalism and social commitment, and ideological orientation. In other words, it was itself a modernism-in-process, not something finally arrived at. There were multiple centers, and everywhere was the periphery of somewhere else. Artists' styles were not static. They were pulled this way and that by competing, mutually exclusive imperatives of, on the one hand, New York Abstract Expressionism and Parisian Informel (and the work of smaller capitals in Northwestern Europe), and, on the other, Socialist Realism as practiced in the Eastern Bloc (and also in Paris). Several of the Indian Progressives worked in New York and Paris, where they formulated their perceptions of the European Other from their own perspective of an India that was rural for some, urban for others, modernizing for all of them. They had to rise above these internecine conflicts and internal divides with bemused self-sovereignty, a sort of aesthetic non-aligned position, reflecting India's political refusal to take a definitive side in the ideological struggles of the Cold War. Indian modernists had to negotiate, interpret, and choose. Nor was any choice necessarily permanent or irreversible. Their own positions were not static, but rather followed their multiple trails.

Take for example the career of Ram Kumar, a member of the Indian Progressive Artists' Group. He moved to Paris soon after the founding of the Progressives (as did Krishna Reddy and S. H. Raza, both also included in the present exhibition). Kumar studied with some of the early Cubists in Paris after the war, including Fernand Léger, who was following his own



Fig. 1
Ram Kumar
Townscape, 1991
Grey wash on paper
22 ¼ × 35 in (cat. 1)

winding way from Cubism, through stylized abstraction, to a kind of flat, colorful figuration depicting the simple joys of the working class. In Paris, Kumar joined the Communist Party, of which Léger was also a member.[10] Nor was he the only one of the Progressives to associate with the communists early on. Like his French associates, Kumar adopted the visual language of Socialist Realism for a time in Paris. But, after the death of Stalin, followed by a cultural thaw in Moscow and its dependent parties across Europe, Kumar, too, moved away from Socialist Realism. He began painting cityscapes, influenced by trips to various cities in Europe and Asia. But no place was more important to him or his artistic development than the holy city of Varanasi (or Benaras), which he first visited in 1960. The ritual, spiritual nature of this very particular riverine urban landscape, so profound for a Hindu like Kumar, was transformative. *Townscape* (fig. 1)(cat. 1), made in 1991, in the present exhibition, is a typical example of the work that resulted from this juncture. Ten years later he was awarded a John D. Rockefeller III scholarship to spend a year in the US. The purpose of this program was to bring Asian artists to New York City and so draw them closer to the Western cultural sphere and away from Soviet Russia, while at the same time strengthening New York's cultural hand, not against Moscow so much as against Paris. Kumar's sojourn in New York did encourage him to make works that were fully abstract. (Other artists in this exhibition who traveled to New York on Nelson Rockefeller III scholarships include Akbar Padamsee, Bhupen Khakhar, K. G. Subramanyan, and Krishen Khanna.)[11] This did not mean that Kumar no longer painted recognizable urban views alongside his abstractions; note that *Townscape*, in this exhibition, was made 15 years after the abstract acrylic paintings. The point is that Kumar had to negotiate a transnational modernism-as-process, from the liberation of Independence and

The Intimacy of Paper

Tamara Sears

As a medium, paper is deceptively complex. At first glance, its softness and crispness offer an aura of intimacy and a distinctive tactility that encourages viewers to closely contemplate the texture of its surfaces and the complexity of the artists' individual brushstrokes and lines. At the same time, its innate fragility requires a level of care and maintenance that goes beyond that needed for works produced on canvas or board. Because of its low cost and ready availability, paper has often been perceived of as a lesser medium. Yet, paper has also played an essential role in artists' creative processes, both in working through compositional details for larger commissions, and in the production of a fully finalized painting or drawing. Within the context of modern and contemporary India, paper offered artists a way of cultivating transnational modernist expression while continuing to explore the potentialities of a medium that had deeper roots in older traditions native to the subcontinent. Simply put, highlighting works on paper draws attention to the central role that the medium has played in the history of both Indian modernism and artistic production within the subcontinent.

The history of painting and drawing in India begins on the walls of Paleolithic rock shelters, with the most famous today located at the archeological site of Bhimbetka in Madhya Pradesh. Cave frescos remain crucial to the history of Indian pictorial representation through the end of the first millennium C.E., with particularly spectacular compositions surviving in the rock-cut temples and monasteries of Ajanta and Ellora. At the same time, artists became adept at producing elaborately illustrated manuscripts on palm leaf surfaces. With the establishment of the Sultanate states and the importation of Persian artists in the 13th and 14th centuries, paper grew in importance as a prime medium for painting in both courtly and mercantile contexts. By the 15th and 16th centuries, artists based in the courts of the Mughals, Rajputs, and their contemporaries were masters at producing highly detailed and beautifully arranged compositions on handmade paper. Within ateliers, pigments were also naturally produced from organic materials, metallic extracts, and a variety of precious and semi-precious stones, including lead, tin or zinc for white; indigo or lazarite for blue; cow urine for yellow; vermillion (mercuric sulfide) or red lead for red; verdigris (copper chloride) for green; and powdered gold and tin. Such works were typically intended for insertion in illustrated manuscripts or for *muraqqa* albums containing paintings and calligraphic text.

The advent of the British in the 18th century introduced the use of oil on canvas, which grew in popularity following the establishment of colonial art schools after 1850. Wealthy merchants and aristocratic patrons cultivated their Anglophone aspirations by commissioning well-known artists, such as Ravi Varma, to create oil paintings of family portraits and landscapes. By the late 19th century, works on paper had become increasingly relegated to the realms of commercial prints, bazaar painting, and folk traditions. This trend saw a brief reversal in the early decades of the 20th century, with the rise of the Bengal school of art, as artists such as Abanindranath Tagore rejected Western approaches in favor of reviving older Indian traditions. They emphasized an aesthetics of emotion (*bhava*) over Western classical ideals of realism in form (*rupa*), and re-embraced precolonial uses of paper, organic pigments, and calligraphic brushwork. Although many of the principles of the Bengal school came under critique by the 1920s and 1930s, and modernists began to experiment again in oil, the connection between paper and nation had become firmly entrenched, one of many associations upon which modern artists could draw meaning.

For the artists represented in the Gaur Collection, paper served in many different ways and had multiple connotations. For some, the materiality and history of paper has been central to their artistic production. Such is the case with Zarina, whose first retrospective, held at the Guggenheim in 2013, was entitled "Paper Like Skin." For Zarina, paper was not merely a surface well suited to the practice of printmaking, but "an organic material, almost like human skin."[1] Her works often played directly with the material, haptic, and olfactory properties of paper surfaces, and were frequently customized to enhance the visual impact of her finalized prints. The works included in the Gaur Collection reinforce this sensitivity and specificity of medium. Each work includes details regarding the composition and sourcing of the medium, or combinations thereof, in order to produce new layers of meaning. Printed on Okawara paper mounted on Somerset paper, *These Cities Blotted into the Wilderness* (cat. 9) creates a contrast that is both visual and semantic by juxtaposing a soft yet durable Japanese paper—produced of kozo, hemp, and pulp—with a highly popular stock produced by St. Cuthberts in Wells, Somerset, a mill with a long history dating back to the early 18th century. *One Morning the City Was Golden* (cat. 8b) strikingly brings together the contrasting surfaces of a naturally textured and colored Dutch hemp-based paper (zaan) with the synthetic hardness of sunboard.

For other artists, the immediacy of paper served as a medium for experimentation, for working through concepts and ideas for production on a grander scale. For example, the





Fig. 1 [left]

Akbar Padamsee
Untitled (Woman), 2004
Watercolor on paper
15 × 12 in

Fig. 2 [right]

Akbar Padamsee
Untitled (Head), 2004
Watercolor on paper
22 × 15 in

drawings by Krishen Khanna included in the exhibition and catalog represent close studies of individual figures who appear also in his larger paintings and murals. The Gaur Collection also includes two watercolor sketches by Akbar Padamsee, not included in the exhibition, that appear as small-scale studies, of efforts by the artist to convey complex human emotions through just a fleeting visage (figs 1 and 2). Delicately rendered in monochromatic tones, these sketches carry an intimacy that is often lost in his larger and more dramatic, polychromatic works.

The works by Ram Kumar included in this catalog present a counterpoint to the artist's oils on canvas, both of which are included also in the Gaur Collection. The untitled 1974 oil on canvas exemplifies the artist's growing obsession with the city of Varanasi (or Benaras), which he depicted with increasing frequency during the 1960s and early 1970s. Drawn by the city's "overwhelming impact on people," he described every sight as "like a new composition, a still life artistically organized to be interpreted in colors."[2] To capture the intensity of the city, he developed a new visual language, rooted in colorful abstraction, manifest through highly textured, almost sculptural blocks of interlocking and overlapping color suggestive of the riverfront that found expression most readily through the medium of oil on canvas. Ram Kumar consistently worked on both canvas and paper throughout his career, and the two media offered different opportunities. Whereas oil enabled him to experiment with abstraction almost in three dimensions (fig. 3), paper seems to have provided a flat surface for exploring the line between abstraction and representation. His works on paper, such as seen in this catalog, are often monochrome, rendered primarily in black and white, with the exception of his acrylics, which frequently include bursts of color that begin to hint at the content of the form (fig. 4). His *Townscape* (cat. 1), from 1991, exemplifies this process but also brings it full circle, capturing the city of Varanasi in a subdued gray wash that brings new emotional subtlety to his earliest efforts at capturing the city through pen and ink drawings in the early 1960s.

For artists such as M. F. Husain, the speed of working with paper facilitated the prolific nature of his artistic practice, allowing him to produce many iterations of similar compositions for circulation and sale. His images of Hindu deities, such as Hanuman and Ganesha, represented elsewhere in this catalog, appear in multiple versions, and his untitled *Yatra* (cat. 3) from the 1950s presents a variation on a theme that he revisited many times, most famously in a finished oil painting from 1955, now in a private collection.[3] Husain's facility in paper was no doubt fostered by his beginnings as a commercial art painter designing billboards and popular toys for mass consumption. And his continued dedication to the medium, even after achieving international acclaim, ensured that his work remained accessible to broader audiences. Despite their commercial associations, Husain's watercolors on paper are arguably almost as significant as his oils on canvas. They exhibit a spontaneity and freshness that would be impossible to capture in nearly any other medium.

Paper was also the medium of preparatory drawings in the more traditional sense of the painting process. A good example can be found in a drawing by F. N. Souza of the story of





Fig. 3 [left]

Ram Kumar
Untitled (Brown Landscape)
1974
Oil on canvas
33 × 60 in

Fig. 4 [right]

Ram Kumar
Untitled, 1986
Acrylic on paper
11 × 16 in (cat. 42b)

A Brief History of Printmaking in India

Paula Sengupta

The Gaur Collection of modern Indian works on paper is particularly notable for a remarkable variety of prints made by many of the subcontinent's most influential printmakers. These include intaglios, lithographs, serigraphs, and relief prints by such master printmakers as Zarina, Krishna Reddy, Anupam Sud, Laxma Goud, Chittaprosad Bhattacharya, Haren Das, Somnath Hore, and Jyoti Bhatt. The collection also possesses a number of prints by moderns best known for their work in other media, including Arpita Singh, M. F. Husain, F. N. Souza, and Anish Kapoor. The high representation of prints in a collection of works on paper may be linked to the surface qualities of handmade paper that lend themselves remarkably well to the tactile nature of print. This essay lays out a brief history of printmaking in India, with particular reference to artists in this collection.

From Reproductive to Creative

Printing arrived in India in the mid-1500s as a colonial import, first for evangelical purposes, and later to further economic and political ambitions. From "printing" emerged "printmaking" or "the art of the printed picture," as the demand for printed illustrations grew. By the mid-18th century, there was a thriving printing and publishing industry in Calcutta (now Kolkata), the capital of the British Raj in India. The advent of European artist-adventurers on Indian shores around this time led to the emergence of broadsheets, as opposed to illustration. Over time, a gradual infiltration of technology into the indigenous artisan community occurred, leading to the emergence of a vernacular print culture that manifested itself both in text and image. From the 19th to the early 20th century, we see vibrant schools of bazaar printmaking in the subcontinent, such as the Bat-tala reliefs in Calcutta and the Punjab lithographs from Amritsar and Lahore.

The 1850s saw the establishment of five art schools in Madras (now Chennai), Calcutta, Bombay (now Mumbai), Jaypore (now Jaipur) and Lahore. All these imparted instruction in printmaking as an industrial art, with the intention of developing an indigenous workforce to man British presses in India. Creative enterprise was discouraged, even though printmaking had been an active contributor to artistic enterprise in Europe since the Baroque period. However, the instruction that these students received in the art schools led them to establish art studios that practiced planographic printmaking for an Indian clientele. This gave rise to a huge wealth of popular pictures called the "Art Studio Pictures," catapulting artists such as Ravi Verma to fame and demand.

The first example of artistic printmaking occurred in 1917, with Gaganendranath Tagore publishing the lithographic cartoon album *Adbhut Lok* at Bichitra Club, the avant-garde salon in the Tagore residence in Calcutta. This marked a significant breakthrough, with printmaking being considered a medium of artistic exploration, rather than merely for purposes of reproduction.

Quest for a New Language

Explorations began in earnest with Rabindranath and Abanindranath Tagore's young prodigy Nandalal Bose assuming the reins at Kala Bhavana, Santiniketan as its first Principal in 1920–21. Nandalal's search was for a versatile new language in art that did not differentiate between "art" and "craft" as being synonymous with "high art" and "low art." His keen interest in printmaking was founded not merely in its techniques, processes, and grammar, but also in its democratic nature and aesthetic possibilities. He sought a new spontaneous language in printmaking that was concise, simple, and uncluttered. Instead of attempting to create the illusion of a three-dimensional surface in the print, Nandalal developed a relatively flat, two-dimensional perspective, evenly distributing black and white areas. The resultant prints are unusually crisp, the lines swift and taut, the blacks and whites in perfect unison. Despite continuing to remain subjectively realistic or representational, Nandalal's prints, due to their two-dimensional design, border on abstraction. By the 1930s, the mature Nandalal started to make significant reliefs, such as *Bapuji* (fig. 1), and the later lithographs of domestic pets and poverty-stricken humanity. Apart from artistic printmaking, Nandalal realized the potential of the medium as a means for mass communication. During the 1930s, Ramkinkar Baij and Nandalal printed political posters for the Non-cooperation Movement from cement blocks.



Fig. 1

Nandalal Bose
Bapuji, 1931
Linocut on paper
11 ½ × 7 in

Of Angst and Fury

It is in light of Nandalal's graphic work that we will consider the work of Chittaprosad Bhattacharya, better known by his first name, who had wanted to study under the master at Santiniketan. Though this desire did not materialize, it would seem from Chittaprosad's prints that Nandalal was his role model. Not only did Chittaprosad reference the two-dimensional design sensibility and crisp chiaroscuro of Nandalal's reliefs, but his later work resonates with Nandalal's references to folk and classical art traditions, and also the

master's later preoccupation with human suffering. It would seem that Chittaprosad seized upon Nandalal's realization of using printmaking as a medium for the masses in a manner that could be applied to political campaigns, as well as, later, to peace themes and children's book illustrations. In the turbulent years following Independence and Partition, Chittaprosad, with his strong socialist convictions, added direction and an unprecedented vitality and vigor to the idyllic art of the Santiniketan school. As Prabhas Sen describes him, Chittaprosad "was an artist of the people—the great multitude of India, poverty-ridden, exploited, but of unbounded vitality, keepers of its unique cultural heritage with a legacy of hundreds of years of stoic survival against all odds."[1]

Chittaprosad's work inspired the young Somnath Hore, who acknowledged him as his first mentor. As a member of the Communist Party of India (CPI), Hore traveled together with his comrades Chittaprosad, Zainul Abedin and Qamrul Hasan through famine-stricken Bengal, drawing and exhibiting to raise awareness of the widespread starvation. These years left an indelible impact on the psyche of the young artist, scars that haunted him and became his life's quest. An unbroken train of thought runs through the entire body of Hore's prints, right from the early reliefs to the final pulp prints—a preoccupation with "wounds." As in the prints in the Gaur Collection, Hore's journey begins with reliefs of famine-stricken victims, poverty-stricken rural Bengal, political rallies and meetings, victims of communal rioting—all images from Hore's impressionable years with the CPI. The middle phase is constituted of lithographs, etchings, viscosity prints, and metal engravings, with the artist moving progressively from indirect to direct processes in printmaking in his quest to realize his concept. The wounds grew deeper and more vicious with further forays into intaglio processes. As the acid bit further and further into the plate, the human figures struggled to survive. The form gradually disseminated, becoming a dark silhouette. What stood out were the deep wounds in embossed white. Gradually, the intaglio was almost done away with, both the figure and the wounds being printed in white on white, representing the final transition from the intaglios to the pulp prints. What followed were the pulp prints at the end of the 1970s. Hore had successfully done away with all representational elements, including form and color. What remained was the wound alone: a gash inflicted on the paper.

Of Yearning and Nostalgia

Haren Das, better known by his first name, was a contemporary of Hore, though radically different in temperament. He learned printmaking at the Art School in Calcutta, under the tutelage of Ramendranath Chakravarty of the Santiniketan school. In later years, Haren joined the faculty to teach printmaking. Educated in the strictest traditions of British academic art, Haren worked almost entirely from sketches from life, imagination rarely, if ever, playing a role in the conception of his images. While his avant-garde contemporaries in post-Independence India used their skills to evolve a new identity in art, Haren remained untouched by the turbulence of his times. What attracted him instead was the placid beauty of the Bengal countryside, particularly the lyrical life and landscape of East Bengal. At a time when India was struggling for her freedom, and artists and intellectuals joined ranks with freedom fighters, Haren continued his search for idyllic beauty. Though a calm, faceless impersonality characterizes all his work, Haren's nostalgic love of his motherland and the simple folk who tilled it is the essence and beauty of his work.

The Philosopher-Printmakers

Besides Hore, the quite different, though equally masterly, Krishna Reddy is considered amongst India's pioneer printmakers. Atelier 17, in Paris, where he and master-printer Stanley William Hayter worked, was where they pioneered the viscosity printmaking process. In India, viscosity became a popular method of polychrome intaglio printmaking due to the influence of Reddy, who tutored many an Indian printmaker in the 1960s and 1970s, conducting workshops widely across the country. Reddy, who had his early education in sculpture at Santiniketan, spent most of his career in Europe and the US but remained a frequent visitor to India.

Reddy viewed the worked intaglio plate as a sculptural object—a miniature moonscape, which he sought to color, exploiting inks having various viscosities or rollers of different firmness, which could reach the middle and lower levels of the plate. To Reddy art, nature and life were inextricably connected.



Fig. 2

Krishna Reddy
Jellyfish, 1963
Mixed color intaglio
14½ × 18 ⅜ in (cat. 45d)

It was not just Reddy's technical brilliance that attracted Indian printmakers, but also his abstract imagery and philosophy (fig. 2). It was radically different from the narrative trend that dominated Indian art of the 1950s and 1960s—it presented a new challenge, a new approach to aesthetic understanding. It is the essence of music, often seen as the most abstract of all art forms, that resonates through Reddy's works, amply demonstrated by the prints in the "Abstraction" section of this exhibition. The prints in the "Narratives" section are no exception, with Apu crawling in a rising crescendo or a rhythmic procession broken by a caesura when the line unexpectedly breaks.

Often seen as an abstractionist, Zarina Hashmi, who preferred to use her first name only, was a deeply political artist and very much a storyteller. One of the Indian subcontinent's many "midnight's children," Zarina lived in nine cities, yet had no place called "home." Loss was a reality and borders were drawn across her heart. Her politics and her art were shaped by this grim reality that she grappled to make peace with till her last breath. As a nomad or traveler, Zarina had long been a maker of maps and a marker of borders. The maps in *These Cities Blotted into the Wilderness* (cat. 9), from the Gaur Collection, are both personally and politically significant, rendered with restraint, almost like grids governed by Sufi thought and Zen practice, as in *One Morning the City Was Golden* (cat. 8b). Geometry, which Zarina regarded as a "sacred practice," is the basis of almost all her work, composed as it is within

An Aesthetics of Borders, Globalization, and Migration in Post-Partition India

Emma Oslé

Through their visual practices, artists from South Asia shape a distinct sense of place, engaging with migration, social geographies, and crossings in myriad ways. They invite viewers to look beyond the painted surface, to examine not only those boundaries that are explicitly depicted but also those which are not always visible. They highlight journeys and explore emotional connections. Sometimes their engagement is deeply personal, drawn from events in their own lives. Other times, they emphasize more broadly shared experiences of travel, diaspora, urban space, and the effects of globalization.

The South Asian perspectives seen in this catalog encompass a range of distinctive subjectivities. Artists featured in this exhibition have lived, either temporarily or permanently, as immigrants in 12 countries, including but not limited to India, England, France, Israel, Bangladesh, the US, Italy, Pakistan, Qatar, Thailand, Germany, and Japan. Many of these artists spent formative years of the late 20th century in Europe, particularly in Paris and in London.[1] Others spent substantial time in the US.[2] Of the 31 artists represented, 14 never left India even after Partition, and, of the 16 artists who did leave, 11 of them moved to at least two countries other than India, and in some cases many more than two. Some artists moved back "home," settling once more in India following their travels, and others stayed away indefinitely. Of those artists who are no longer living, many were buried within the borders of their chosen homeland rather than in their country of origin. Often, these artists did not inhabit the same diasporas, though crossover did happen, particularly within the Bombay Progressive Artists' Group and Stanley William Hayter's influential printmaking workshop, Atelier 17.

For artists of South Asian origin, for whom the 1947 Partition of India, Pakistan, and Bangladesh lives not in a distant ancestral past but as part of a collective present memory, ideas of migration, diaspora, and dispossession remain at the forefront of their studio practices. The artists featured in this collection and its resulting exhibition largely came of age in a critical post-Partition period of nation-formation, in which an imagining of territory and nation took place during a moment of global decolonization spanning from Asia to the Americas. Forms of mobility play a key role in the lives, careers, and work of these artists, including those who lived and worked in India for the bulk of their careers. The works featured in the "Topographical Engagements" section of this exhibition rethink notions of migration, diaspora, urban space, and globalization in an attempt to pinpoint their own sense of the modern in India.

Artist as Migrant

Diaspora, as an overarching concept, goes beyond a sense of simply "those who have left." Inherently, the experiences of diaspora refer to the consequences of globalization as they impact the individual and the community. Diasporic subjects are never one and the same, as diasporas are formed in disparate circumstances. Phenomena such as war, famine, violence, personal choice for various gains, exile, and capitalism shape experiences of migration in very different ways. Most diasporas do share one thing in common, however: a distinct resistance to full assimilation, and the desire to hold on to ancestral memories, cultural heritage, and communal identity.[3]

In the introduction to *The Migrant's Time: Rethinking Art History and Diaspora*, Saloni Mathur sets up an inquiry into the ways in which Art History as a discipline needs to reconsider and highlight the significance of migration and diaspora.[4] Mathur emphasizes the importance of understanding the condition of globalization as it affects artmaking practices in the 21st century, and the ways that migration informs political space without necessitating a tropic view or an overemphasis on dispossession and mobility. Migration, in Mathur's frame of thought, represents a social entry point that is entangled with issues of homeland, a lack or loss of belonging, and the search for community in a world "both inextricably interconnected and mercilessly blocked by the politics of barriers and boundaries for historiography, writing, and the narratives of art history."[5]

This collection features a broad constellation of artists whose work directly engages with conditions of globalization, migration, and diaspora that Mathur highlights. Their experiences are wholly heterogenous, making it impossible to pin down any single narrative or visual migratory sensibility. In the process of conceptualizing the exhibition, we were drawn to the repetition of certain forms and modes of subject formation, such as depictions of urban spaces and engagement with cartographical processes. We also noted a particular investment by many artists in conveying notions of journeying and travel by evoking a visual and mental sense of motion. These artists convey kinesis through inferred routes of travel, allusions to modes of transportation, literary referents, and the mental state of being in motion.



Fig. 1

Arpita Singh
I could see London through clouds, 2007
Multiple-plate etching
33 × 27 ¾ in (cat. 6a)

For instance, Husain's *Yatra* (cat. 3), ca. 1950s, depicts three figures riding across a landscape. Choppy, angular mark-making evokes a sense of movement, and houses seen in the distance give the viewer the impression that these figures are either moving into or away from the town behind them. In Hindi, *yatra* can be literally translated as "journey" or "travel," giving the viewer a clear understanding of the action in which the figures are partaking. Krishna Reddy's *Flight* (cat. 46B), from 1963, also alludes to travel and motion, even within its intense visual abstraction. In this print, Reddy captures the moment of exit, impact, or stoppage of an unknown object.[6] Though the object is unknown, the sense of fast motion, with an almost starburst-like explosive form to the far right of the image, appears to visually reference airplane contrails crossing and intersecting one another as if the moving streak could have come from a series of overlapping flightpaths.

Arpita Singh's prints undertake a different mode of representing journeys, making explicit reference to the ways the human body is affected by travel and motion. *I could see London through clouds* (fig. 1) (cat. 6a), from 2007, particularly depicts various modes of transportation, from automobile travel, to air travel, and even foot traffic, via the four main figures walking through the image. The mobility of these four central female figures is paused mid-action as they notably move across streets. The title of the work also directly alludes to the experience of flying from one geography to another, noting the way a cityscape, like that of London, may peek through or become hidden by clouds while flying into or out of that place. On bringing the city into her work, Singh said, "There are so many things happening all the time around you[.] .... You are also a part of them, so these things start coming into your mind and it is up to you to give importance to them, and elaborate your ideas about them."[7]

With the increasing speed of transit through air and ground transportation, personal experience becomes blurred and complicated, incorporating multiple spatial temporalities into a single sense of self. Increasing migration, cross-cultural exchange, hybridity, and travel can also dissolve a sense of geographically rooted belonging. In *This could be us, you, or anybody else* (cat. 6b), another print from 2007, Singh conveys a sense of the fast-paced nature of global movement and travel through the use of embedded textual elements. Literary statements such as "The aeroplane that takes me to your land, and you to mine," "The fruits I eat may be you too," and "This could be us, you or anybody else" make objects, places and people difficult to pin down. The text evokes a complicated web of interconnectivity in which the everyday is inscribed not into a specificity of place but into the logic of constant motion and high-speed travel.

Contested Lands

Other artists engage with the interwoven histories of decolonization and violence. The period of post-colonization, for many countries, was followed closely by tumultuous





periods of civil war, political unrest, and complicated attempts at nation-building, which, for some, continue today. These issues are inexorably linked to the larger problems that permeate through time and across borders, such as the reimagining of racial and/or cultural belonging, understandings of personal and national difference, and inter-community animosity.

Zarina's 2003 series of woodcuts, *These Cities Blotted into the Wilderness* (fig. 2) (cat. 9a–h), speaks not only to her connection with a multitude of cities through her personal history of migration, but also to the ravages of war and military violence. Zarina lived in a total of seven countries—India, Thailand, France, Germany, Japan, the US, and England—before permanently settling in New York City, where she witnessed the bombing of the World Trade Center first-hand. This series of woodcuts references cities with recent histories of violence. For example, *Grozny* indirectly comments on contested territory through the use of language. Whereas the Urdu text phonetically evokes the Chechen separatist name for the city, the Russian name of "Grozny" is written in English.[8] Here, Zarina directly engages with the larger issue of naming and renaming, which has been a cornerstone of nationalist reclaimings of place throughout the post-colonial world (fig. 3).

Fig. 2 [left]

Zarina
These Cities Blotted into the Wilderness (Adrienne Rich After Ghalib), 2003
Portfolio of nine woodcuts with Urdu text printed in black on Okawara paper and mounted on Somerset paper, Edition of 20, variable sizes, sheet size: 16 ¼ × 14 ¼ in (cat. 9)
Installation view, Gaur Gallery, 2019

Fig. 3 [right]

Zarina
Grozny, from *These Cities Blotted into the Wilderness (Adrienne Rich after Ghalib)* (detail), 2003 (cat. 9a)

Ancient Narratives of Devotion: Replication, Transformation, Rejection

Darielle Mason

When I was asked to write an essay on "religion and mythology" for this catalog, it seemed a straightforward task for a specialist in the art of historic India. I would point out some of the referents and themes—the ideas and iconographies—that demonstrated links with the past and popular religion, and explore how artists selected and recontextualized them. I soon found the task nowhere near so simple. Characters or stories from the past, ancient and more recent, might be readily recognizable—Hanuman burning Lanka, Rama hunting the golden deer, Majnun being brought before Laila, St. Francis and the birds, the birth of the Ganges. But, for each artist, historical motifs are only a beginning point in their process to fuse the personal and political, societal and social, secular and sacred. Myth and religion become malleable tools so that their imagery deflects the hackneyed practice of forensically tracking iconography, showing up this art historical tactic as both limited and reflexive.

A part of my choice of artists and works of art for this essay is to acknowledge the role that chronology plays in the uses of iconographies drawn from narratives of devotion. Because of the time frame in which these artists work (1950s to the present), they consciously give themselves permission to pull from any period, place, religion, or culture—in other words they claim universal "ownership," as did and do modern and contemporary artists throughout the world.[1] What differs among them is not *that* they pull but *why* they pull and *what* they pull.[2] By looking for mythological references in their works, I came to understand that the term "mythology" applies equally to an artist's self-identity. Each of these practitioners knowingly inserts themselves into the lineage of not only Indian but also global art.

M. F. Husain's modernist imaging, his mature style alternately termed "expressionist" and "cubist," deliberately countered the realist-romantic vision of Raja Ravi Varma, which had created the elegantly bourgeois Hindu pantheon popular from early in the 20th century.[3] Reams have been written about Husain's fascination with Hindu mythology—praising and condemning, depending on the perspective—although he also engaged with the mythologies of Islam, Christianity, village India, colonialism, and Independence. His illustrations of the *Ramayana* and *Mahabharata*, as has often been noted, emerged from his own childhood. But Husain was drawn as well to the intrinsic narrative and spiritual power of these epic tales, recognizing in them the ability to express universal concepts embodying the new nation of which he proudly included himself as a citizen.

Throughout his oeuvre, Husain's images preserve their illustrative core, an icon remains an icon. Symbolism coexists, overlays, even submerges story, but never ruptures it. Veena Das writes,

> *... in the depiction of ... Ravan, Sita and Hanuman, the painting drips with narrative. In order for many who are steeped in these narratives, the eye must learn to see ... without the narrative ... Husain's oft-quoted remark that for villagers among whom his depiction of Ramayana was displayed, the story immediately provided the frame for 'understanding', is to belie the Modernist ... claim [to] the autonomy of the image ... Husain's images, intentionally or not, take a whole contentious past as part of their inheritance.*[4]

Das presents it as an imperative that viewers "learn to see" by piercing through this "dripping" narrative. She also questions Husain's awareness of the contested pasts his works embody. But is it possible in his densely narrative works ever to limit one's perceptions solely to the language of form? And could Husain, the barefoot sophisticate, have desired this even of his most elite audiences? Husain seems to raise larger questions that encompass the uses of the past and his role in defining the new nation. What *is* India's cultural heritage, he asks? Is it merely a selection of iconographies extracted by British archaeologists, thrown by post-Independence secularists, and fired by Hindu nationalists? Or is it the vast tangible-intangibility of the subcontinent's millennia-deep storied legacy, and the impact of that legacy on the world?



Fig. 1 [left]

Maqbool Fida Husain,
Hanuman-Nineteen, 1984
Ink and watercolor on paper
15 × 21 ¾ in (cat.29b)



Fig. 2 [right]

Maqbool Fida Husain
Untitled (Hanuman), ca. 1990s
Watercolor on paper
22 × 30 in (cat. 29c)





Fig. 3 [left]

Rama Chasing the Golden Deer Maricha, page from the dispersed 'Shangri' Ramayana series, Himachal Pradesh (possibly Mandi), India
ca. 1725–50
Opaque watercolor and gold-colored paint on paper

Fig. 4 [right]

Gulam Mohammed Sheikh
The Mappamundi Suite 4, Marichika II (detail), 2003
Gouache on inkjet digital collage
23 × 28 in (cat. 5b)

Husain's two depictions of Hanuman burning Lanka in *Paper Trails: Modern Indian Works on Paper from the Gaur Collection* forefront the same character and tell the same story, or seem to. Yet, in one, *Hanuman* (cat. 29c), the artist presents a puppet-play, while another, *Hanuman-Nineteen* (cat. 29b), represents the anger of cosmic destruction (figs 1 and 2). A third image from the many he did of this episode, now in the collection of the British Museum, shows yet another spin.[5] Here the black imperium silhouettes Hanuman's great golden body with his mace for a head. He raises one arm to bear the orb of the sun, which is sparked by his flaming tail. Muscular legs overstretch a diminutive earthly plane. Neither adorable nor terrible, this Hanuman epitomizes divinity, vast and awe-inspiring.

Though his visual vocabulary and rapid brushwork were, during most of his life and still today, considered by many as anti-traditional, Husain told tales of the mythic and the iconic in a relatively linear, coherent (and, in those ways, traditional) fashion. Gulam Mohammed Sheikh's narrative mode, on the other hand, is far from traditional, although his precise and often photorealistic vocabulary may lull the viewer into believing the opposite. Sheikh grabs, manipulates, juggles, and juxtaposes the devotional, historical, and everyday. His aim is to create from these independent motifs a larger, overarching mythology. Carefully slotting each image into an intricate mosaic, he conjures a complex, non-linear narrative.

In *Mappamundi* (cat. 5b), our focus is drawn first to the four large figures at the corners who seem to represent the passion and madness of faith. In the lower left, Mary Magdalene reaches toward an invisible resurrected Jesus. Above her, insane Majnun, in chains, approaches his beloved Laila, while Kabir sits across, weaving his own shroud. At lower right, a Mughal mystic torques in ecstatic dance. Even when the viewer cannot identify specific referents, the images share an emotion that seems emphasized rather than diminished by their stylistic dissonance.



Fig. 5

Gulam Mohammed Sheikh
Kaavad: Travelling Shrine (detail), 2008, Room with folding doors and walls (made of boards mounted on steel structure) painted in acrylic and oil
90 × 308 × 288 in

Persian, Mughal, and Rajput manuscripts inform Sheikh's overarching vocabulary as well as his process. He moves his viewers' eyes from color-block composition inward and inward toward ever-smaller details. In *Mappamundi*, he emphasizes certain other figures not by size but by repetition. St. Francis of Assisi, leaning forward in his brown cassock, stands stationed at each of the cardinal directions as he preaches to the birds, in variations on an early Italian Renaissance model. Does St. Francis represent care of the natural world as per his legend, or might his placement at the extremes of the compass imply the expansion of Europe's colonial conquest, or perhaps its messianic grasping of its flocks? Within and outside the circle, nine renditions of blue-skinned Rama stride forward, a crescent arrow notched on his great bow. Like other quotations the artist selects, the flat, bold profile makes this figure easily legible. The Rama figure is excerpted from an early 18th-century painting from the Himalayan foothills in which Rama hunts the golden antelope desired by his wife, Sita. In the story, his quest could be read as mistaken, since it leads to Sita's abduction, or as essential, since it leads to the death of Ravana and restoration of cosmic balance. But what is the purpose of the multiple Ramas here? Is he searching the globe, conquering it, or circumambulating it as a pilgrim? Sheikh intentionally opens these alternative meanings to his viewers (figs 3 and 4).

Mappamundi challenges the Eurocentric and Christian-centric worldview by implanting and integrating, or owning, imagery quoted from historical paintings located around Asia and Europe, works Sheikh saw in person or in photographs. Through placement and context, he imbues the images he selects with new and, at times, multivalent meanings. Do we understand the motifs as illustrations or as icons, as pictograms or as metaphors? Is the overarching subject of *Mappamundi* faith or conflict, history or lived experience—or all of these? *Mappamundi* evolved through a number of iterations from an accordion book into a human-scale inhabitable installation (fig. 5). Sheikh's montage-like compositions mine his visual universe. Never self-censored by fear of ownership, he draws historical imagery from

Cacophonies and Silence: Hearing Abstraction

Rebecca M. Brown



Fig. 1

Zarina
New York, from *These Cities Blotted into the Wilderness (Adrienne Rich after Ghalib)*, 2003
Portfolio of nine woodcuts with Urdu text printed in black on Okawara paper and mounted on Somerset paper, Edition of 20, image size: variable, sheet size: 16 ¼ × 14 ¼ in (cat. 9i)

Zarina's woodcut entitled "New York" (cat. 9i) required a precision in her hand and tools such that she carved away the wood of two perfectly vertical stripes, cutting edge to edge across the paper, itself in an orientation we often describe as "portrait" in distinction from "landscape" (fig. 1). The work is a landscape of sorts, but also a memory of rupture and breakage, a site of a moment of booming, crashing noise and one collective horrified intake of breath, both sound and silence echoing through the subsequent years and across the globe. An abstract form, yes, which one could compare to earlier, canonical, avant-garde, and modernist gambits in black and with vertical stripes, from Malevich's black square and Rothko's chapel to Barnett Newman's zips. Abstract and not. Portrait and landscape. Sound and silence.

Abstraction has long been a slippery framework for art historical thinking; very few works of art fall firmly into that category, and very few two-dimensional works fully escape a connection to the body, to history, or to representation. Zarina's *New York* might be one of the more "abstract" works in this exhibition, but at the same time its representation of the two towers, the wound on the surface of the woodblock and the darkness of the inky surround, suggests an emotionally poignant landscape and memory-scape. It invites us into a particular moment and its aftermath, reminding us of the empty space left by the towers and the dead, and, in part by labeling the work in both English and Urdu, bringing politics, history, and representation right back into the remaining black field.

Following Zarina's emotive, multi-sensory evocation of New York, I am inspired here to explore the Gaur Collection of works on paper through a similarly extra-visual approach to abstraction, specifically as something that might be heard, spoken, and read as much as seen. Like Zarina's maps, for example, Jyoti Bhatt's prints include text, both within the field of the print and, as is traditional for prints, across the bottom, where the artist writes his name, alongside the title, date, and number of prints. Bhatt's prints *Om Mani Padmaham* (cat. 30c) and *Om Mani Padmaham II* (cat. 30b) (figs 2 and 3) both center on the same bold black text, which appears as if written over a multifaceted field of symbols, drawings, and further texts. The title of each print is a version of the Sanskrit mantra associated with Avalokiteshvara, the Bodhisattva of compassion, and used quite widely across the Buddhist world. The script emulates—but does not fully embody—Tibetan (*uchen*) script. The dot that should indicate the nasal "m" in Om is missing, and the final hum seems to be entirely missing, unless one reads the large form at left as a version of that syllable, in the Devanagari script (used in many parts of northern, western and central India) instead of in Tibetan.[1] The text becomes more confusing as one tries to parse the other passages, which comprise what looks like the word "Rama" in a Tibetan-styled Devanagari, and what might be a version of the artist's first name in a mashup between Tibetan and Devanagari at right. The artist has successfully made us come closer to read the work, perhaps as we sound out the powerful Buddhist mantra alongside the name of a Hindu divinity, which is also often used as a mantra: Gandhi is said to have uttered "He Ram" as his last words. We struggle to read the text, even if we are fluent in Tibetan, familiar with the Buddhist mantra, or able to parse Devanagari. And then, as we lean in closer, we see text everywhere: inscribed on the two faces above, hiding amidst the symbols and forms underneath the bold text in the main field below. The faces seem to join us in our reading, with their open mouths perhaps intoning the text on their own faces: the Vaishnavite one, on the left, chanting "Rama" over and over; the Buddhist, at right, chanting the words of refuge (*sharanam*): *Buddham sharanam gacchami, Dhammam sharanam gacchami* (I take refuge in the Buddha, I take refuge in the Dharma). Bhatt has given us sound with the mantra, meant to be spoken and heard in one's head even if one reads it silently. But then he lets that mantra slide out of its specificity—as Buddhist, as Tibetan, as Devanagari, as read-able—and steps back to engage the question of words, writing, and sound as foundational elements of modern art and modernist abstraction.

Text, typeface, and calligraphy create a fascinating conjuncture for modernism and abstraction. Writing is, at its core, mark-making, and writing suggests a certain kind of meaning-making as well, when and if the symbols and marks coalesce into recognizable forms. These two elements, mark-making and meaning-making, also drive questions central to modernism across its long, international history, from the floating letters in the works of the Swiss-German Paul Klee to the calligraphic modernism of Sudanese painter Ibrahim El-Salahi, the ancient hieroglyphic forms of Uruguayan Joaquín Torres-García, and the pseudo-Chinese characters in the work of Xu Bing. Bhatt's work enters into that multifaceted experimentation with word, symbol, mark, and meaning, and brings that to bear on many of the different mantra practices associated with South Asia and the Himalayas. The forms of the letters then, especially as they dance on the edge of illegibility, crossing over between different scripts, repeating in scratches amidst swirling vegetal forms and spindly asterisks, embody the slipperiness of sound and meaning. We "read" *om mani padme hum*, but then realize that it's not quite right, and we read "Rama"

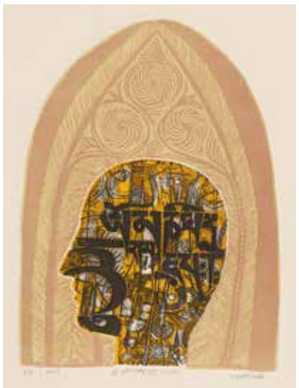


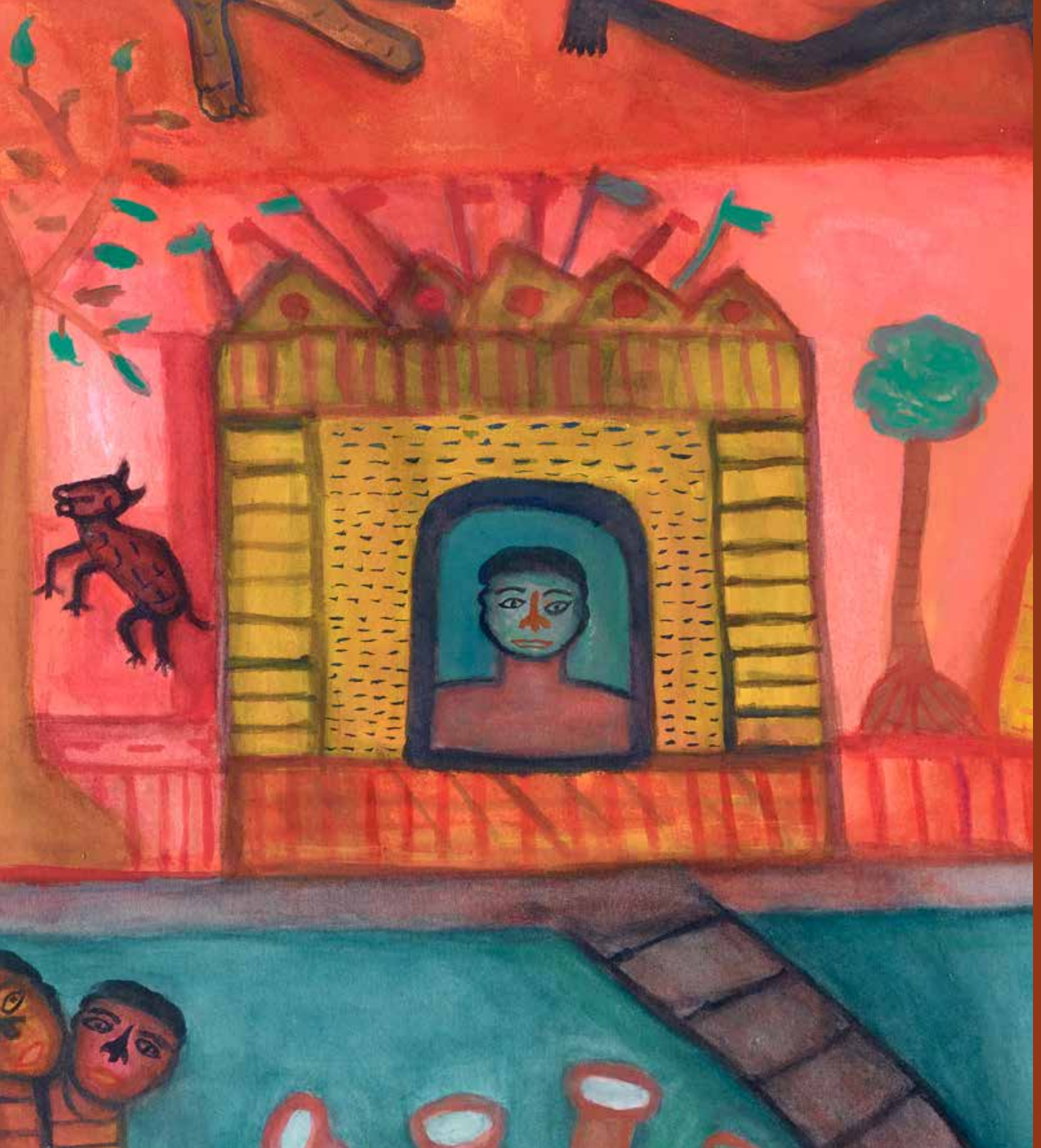
Fig. 2

Jyoti Bhatt
Om Mani Padmaham, 2014
Etching, 18 ¾ × 13 ½ in (cat. 30c)



Fig. 3

Jyoti Bhatt
Om Mani Padmaham II, 2014
Etching, 15 ¼ × 8 ½ in (cat. 30b)



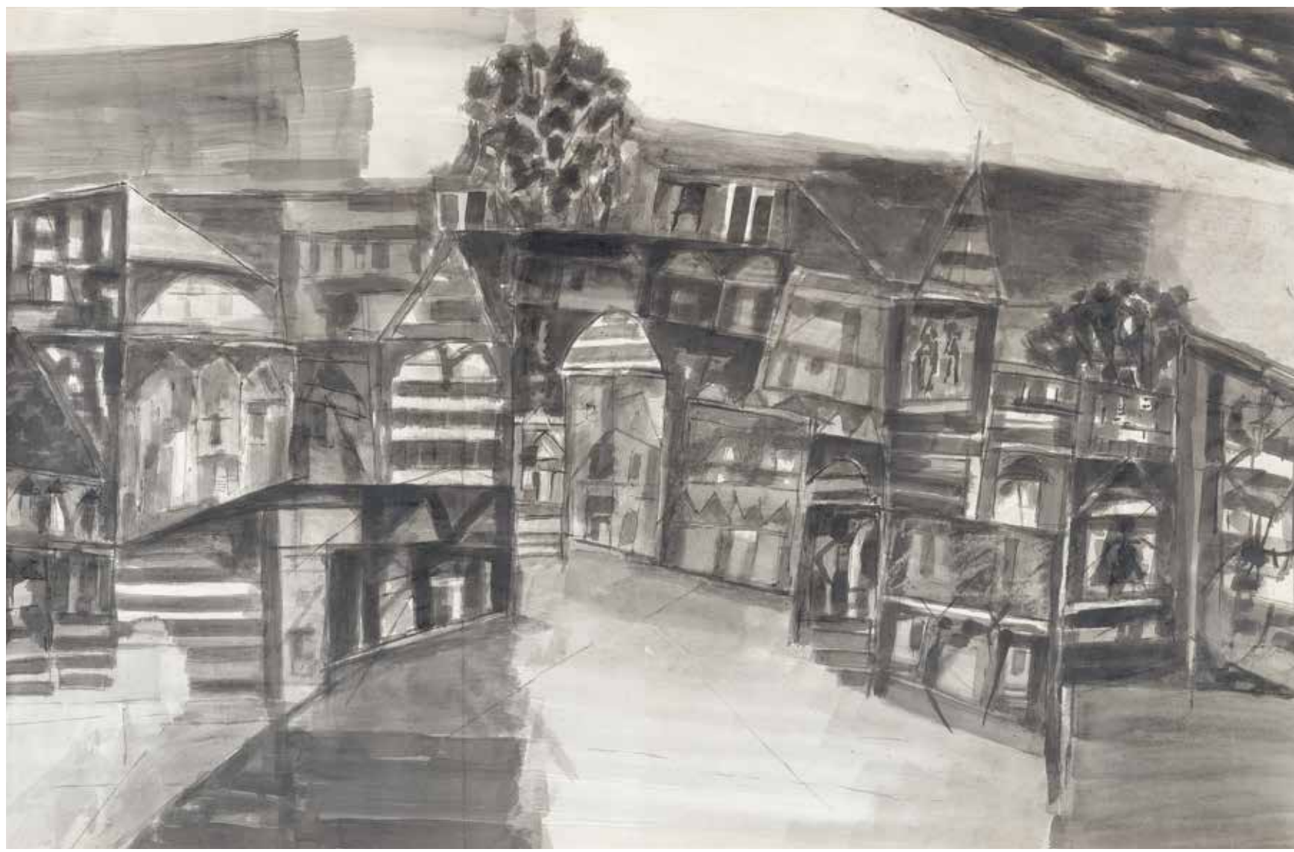
Topographic Engagements

Ram Kumar (1924–2018)

1
Townscape, 1991
Grey wash on paper
22 ¼ × 35 in

Born into a middle-class family in the scenic hill station of Shimla, Ram Kumar's trajectory as an artist took a direction very different from many of his contemporaries. After earning an advanced degree in Economics from the prestigious St. Stephen's College at Delhi University, he discovered a passion for art. In 1949, with encouragement from Sayed Haider Raza and to the consternation of his father, he resigned his lucrative job as a banker and set off to Paris to study painting under the tutelage of André Lhote and Fernand Léger. Ranjit Hoskote has written that "to trace Ram Kumar's evolution as a painter is to map the course of contemporary Indian painting: in the spiritual crises he has undergone, the choices of style he has made, we see reflected the tensions of an unfolding post-colonial modernity, full of surprises and uncertainties."[1] His early experiments in figuration, in the 1950s, gave way to increasingly abstracted cityscapes and landscapes in the 1960s and 1970s, often dissolving into metaphors through which planes of color and networks of lines evoked, rather than represented, the streets of Varanasi, the thick forests of the Shivaliks, or the nest of a bird.

In the 1990s, Ram Kumar's work took a turn back towards more recognizable forms. The city again began to appear through a discernable architectural framework, sometimes populated with select groupings of abstracted figures. *Townscape*, in the Gaur Collection, exemplifies this phase of Kumar's exploration. We are confronted by the façade of a riverfront city, whose tall buildings are reflected in the shimmering of the silvery waters that dominate the foreground. The flattened surfaces are almost transparent in places, inviting the viewer to look into and beyond the interior spaces. Here and there, one gets the impression that the city is inhabited by abstract yet vaguely human forms. On an upper-story terrace, to the right, a couple gazes downward, and elsewhere we see blurs of movements surrounding stick-like figures. Large outcroppings of trees and vegetation jut upwards beyond the city, penetrating the sky, dense with clouds, or perhaps smog. The choice of medium, of grey wash on paper, heightens the work's haunting beauty. The precise location is intentionally obscure. Kumar is presenting us with his characteristic composite city, one in which the "ghosts" of many cities—Varanasi, Delhi, Rome, Venice, Moscow, and Baghdad—intermingle. What is being represented is what Hoskote has described as "the city at the very moment when it is about to be overwhelmed by catastrophe," a place that offers habitation but not refuge.[2] *Townscape* exemplifies Kumar's remarkable talent for expressing the human condition, what he has described as "the tragedy of life and death" through abstraction.[3] [TS]



1 | *Townscape*

Zarina (1937–2020)

8a
Untitled, 1969
Relief print from collaged wood on handmade paper
22 5⁄8 × 21 7⁄8 in

8b
One Morning the City Was Golden, 1981
Etching with gold ink on zaan paper pasted on sun board, 28 3⁄4 × 24 in

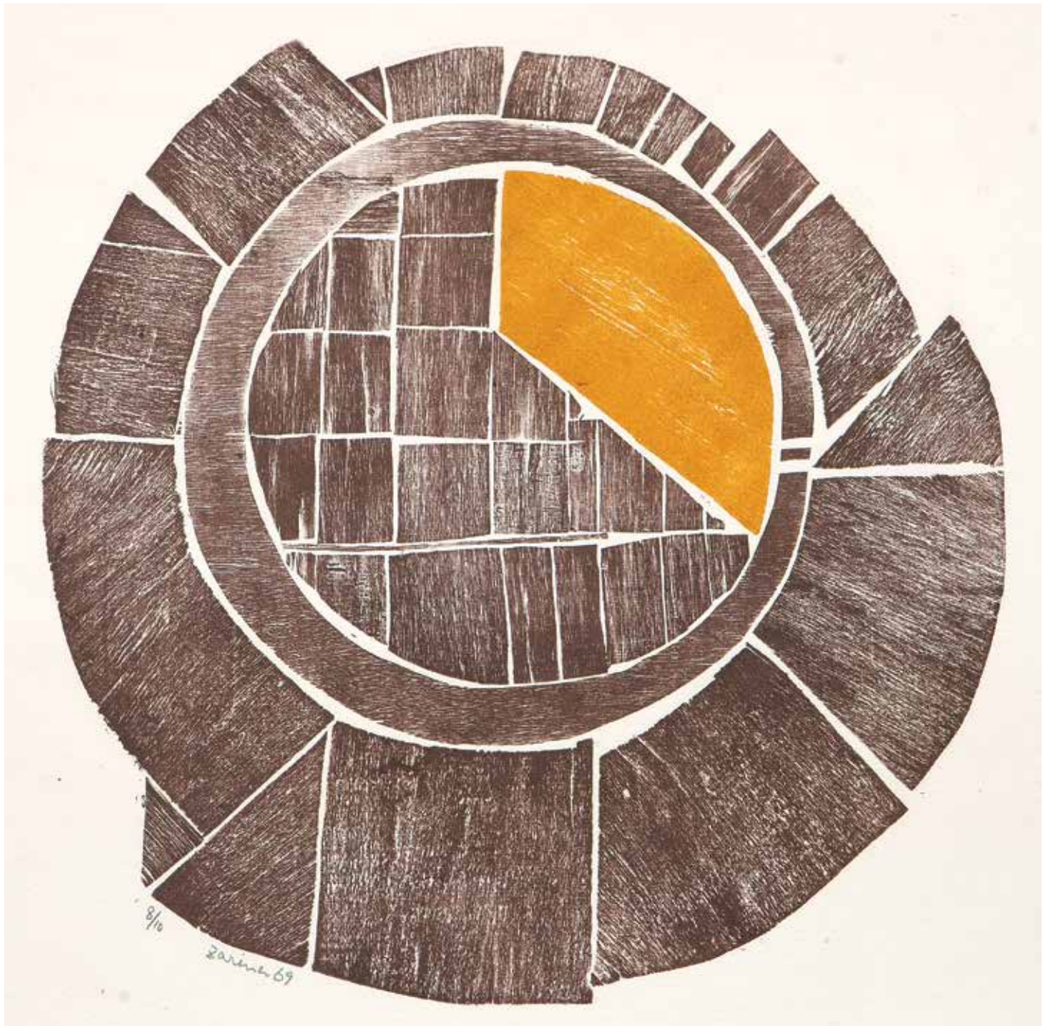
8c
Spaces to Hide, 1981
Embossed print of woven paper
16 × 13 in

Foremost a printmaker, Zarina was known for directly engaging with her personal migratory experience throughout her art-making career. During the Partition of India, in 1947, her family was forced, for their own safety, to relocate temporarily from their home in Aligarh to a refugee camp in Delhi. Zarina spent another ten years in India. She received a degree in mathematics with honors from the prestigious Aligarh Muslim University, where her father was a professor of history, and married a classmate who served in the foreign service. In 1958, she left India to follow her husband to a posting in Bangkok.

Between 1963 and 1967, Zarina studied printmaking during an apprenticeship with Stanley William Hayter at the experimental print shop in Paris known as Atelier 17. The experimental Parisian printmaking studio was massively influential, known for fostering major innovation in printmaking processes and for the slew of influential artists that made their way through its doors, such as Joan Miró, Pablo Picasso, Alberto Giacometti, Juan Cardenas, and Constantin Brâncuși. During Zarina's tenure there, she became an expert at understanding the various textures and densities of paper, as well as gaining a "confidence that empowered her to pursue her career."[14] Zarina also studied Krishna Reddy's unique intaglio technique, known as viscosity printing, going as far as to create her own copies of some of his iconic prints, such as *Flight I*.

Often associated with the Minimalism movement, Zarina's works, though largely personal and sometimes even narrative in nature, regularly teeter on the edge of formal description and rote abstraction. *Untitled*, for instance, created during her time at Atelier 17, foremost considers shape, composition, color, and texture. In this series of works, Zarina collaged thin pieces of wood onto a printing matrix, the physical surface which holds ink for transfer onto a paper substrate. This technique of collaging objects onto the matrix directly generated a linear wood grain texture in the resulting image, which would be difficult, if not impossible, to achieve by hand. Though the use of vibrant color and experimental processes largely left her imagery by the early 1970s, the influence of paper and printmaking as medium permeated her practice for the rest of her career.

Two later works from 1981, *One Morning the City Was Golden* and *Spaces to Hide*, feature constant repetition as means of forming the composition. The repetition of abstracted houses in *One Morning the City Was Golden* calls to mind the seemingly endless rows of cookie-cutter buildings in major cities undergoing heavy urban development. This satire of unappealing, repetitive houses printed with gold ink on an earth-toned substrate represents a "golden moment" for the city and offers a cheeky critique of manufactured urban spaces. *Spaces to Hide*, however, is a series that, in and of itself, is a repetition. Multiple works from this series reiterate similar triangle shapes, spaced out differently from print to print, and displaying more or less detail. The triangle shapes in this work contain a central shape, reminiscent of a door or tent flap. In this way, *Spaces to Hide* calls to mind the impersonal homogeneity of tents in a refugee camp, much like the one in Delhi within which her family resided shortly after the Partition of India.[15] [EO]



8a | *Untitled*



Narrative

Ganesh Pyne (1937–2013)

11
Untitled (The Dying Inayat Khan), 1983
Tempera over pen and ink on paper
17 × 13 ¾ in

A native of West Bengal, Ganesh Pyne began his career as an acolyte of the Bengal school of art, having trained at the Government College of Art and Craft in Calcutta (now Kolkata). He quickly developed a unique style of poetic surrealism that interwove characters inspired by Bengali folktales with a darkness rooted in the trauma of Partition that he experienced as a young child. Often small in scale, Pyne's work is notably layered and labor-intensive, as can be seen in this work, depicting a well-known episode from the memoirs of the Mughal emperor Jahangir (the *Jahangirnama*), which has been widely available in translation since the 19th century. The episode in question describes the death of the emperor's beloved servant Inayat Khan in extensive detail and as an extended process. The accompanying illustration, painted by the renowned artist Balchand, survives in the form of a preparatory drawing (Boston Museum of Fine Arts), as well as a completed folio (Bodleian Library, Oxford). It depicts Inayat Khan in profile, his body emaciated and slumped listlessly on his deathbed. The full text of the *Jahangirnama*, pertaining to this event, describes Inayat Khan having perished from the wasting away of his body due to chronic alcoholism and opium abuse, to the point at which he had become literally, in Jahangir's words, "skin stretched over bone."

Here, Pyne reframes "death" as an ongoing process, rather than as a final moment, and transforms the objectified courtier into a postmodern, post-colonial subject who remains fully aware of his viewer. Inayat Khan is positioned frontally, staring unflinchingly forward, his gaping mouth displaying an impossibly full set of teeth. As in the Mughal work, he rests against an embroidered cushion, but he sits



Dying Inayat Khan, Attributed to Balchand, Indian, active ca. 1600–1640, Ink and light wash on paper, 4 1/16 × 5 1/4 in

cross-legged, his knees bent and lower body folded almost completely into his torso. His face is skeletal, the flesh and skin already disintegrated. He has lost his hat, and his hair appears as unkempt columnar masses, extending down past his shoulders, as if they continued to grow even after his passing. The Inayat Khan that Pyne reimagines hovers in a liminal process between living and dying.

In its engagement with a Mughal past, Pyne's work also translates its subject for a contemporary audience. Although Inayat Khan ostensibly died of dissipation, purportedly due to alcoholism and opium overuse, "his countenance," as Ellen Smart has suggested, "is so close to that of a person dying from cancer or AIDS that it shocks the viewer at the close of the twentieth century."[20] At the same time, the clear emaciation of the body in contrast to the prominence of the skull calls to mind the tragic effects of famine in his native Bengal, as featured in the work of Somnath Hore, who was also based in Calcutta. An ardent member of the Communist Party, Hore became well known for his painstaking, and often graphic, documentation of the effects of war on marginalized communities. His experience during the Great Bengal Famine of 1943 spurred his life-long investment in portraying human suffering in emotionally arresting ways, as can be seen elsewhere in the exhibition through a series of etchings and prints dating similarly between 1975 and 1983. [TS]



11 | *Untitled (The Dying Inayat Khan)*

Anupam Sud

17a–17l
Zodiac Series - Aries, Taurus, Gemini, Cancer, Leo, Virgo, Libra, Scorpio, Sagittarius, Capricorn, Aquarius, Pisces
1992
Twelve etching and aquatint on paper
6 ½ × 6 ½ in each

Produced the same year as a remarkable work reimagining Purush and Prakriti, the masculine and feminine that come together to make up the universal single reality embodied in *brahman*, as a male-female couple, Sud's *Zodiac* series represents an engagement with Indic traditions of religion and philosophy.[34] In this series of etchings Sud conjures up the 12 signs of the zodiac in a spectacular array that probes the dynamics between regional and universal astrological systems. The series consists of 12 etchings, each of which captures the essence of the associated horoscope in vivid pictorial detail. Each etching also includes three symbols, representing the horoscope sign, its planetary ruler (Mars, Venus, Mercury, Jupiter, Saturn, the Moon, and the Sun), and its associated element (fire, water, earth). While the iconography of the Zodiac images is easily recognizable worldwide, the individual scenes cleverly draw from a wide variety of sources to play on the complex relationship between global universality and the specificity of regional cultural traditions.

For example, the image of Aries features a classically inspired scene, depicting a naked male youth running against the backdrop of a pair of embattled rams. Both the depiction of the nude figure, which is notably different from most of Sud's works, and his pose call to mind Greek painted portrayals of Jason and the Golden Fleece, which is often understood as the original myth behind the constellation of Aries, which was associated with the golden-haired ram at the center of the story.[35] He holds up a triangle representing the element of fire. In the lower right corner is the symbol associated with the planet Mars.

Her representation of Gemini, by contrast, combines multiple regional references to create a unique cultural collage. In it she represents the twins in three ways. In the center, the pair is imagined as a male and female figure etched in beautifully textured detail and depicted in profile facing away from one another. To their right and left, respectively, are a second pair, rendered again in profile, as a set of *kabuki* theater masks, a theme that Sud frequently employed following her residency at the Fukuoka Museum in Japan, in 1988. The choice of rendering the twins as male and female, rather than as the Greek and Roman brothers, is a play on the Indian solar correspondence of Gemini with the month of *Mithuna*, which can be taken as a pun on the term referring to the type of loving or amorous couples (*mithuna*)



Terracotta column-krater (bowl for mixing wine and water)
ca. 470–460 B. C. E., Attributed to the Orchard Painter



17a | *Aries*



17d | *Cancer*



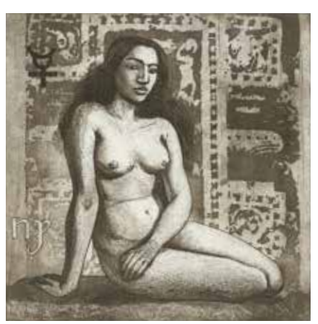
17b | *Taurus*



17e | *Leo*



17c | *Gemini*



17f | *Virgo*

found frequently in temple sculpture and featured, in a photographic transfer from a publication on Indian art, in the roundel at the top center of the composition.

Others still are recognizably Indian in their visualization. For example, the horoscope sign for Leo is depicted as a Hindu ruler, seated in front of the palace gateway with a sword resting in his lap. His regal bearing is reinforced through his rich clothing and strings of pearls, as well as by the lion kneeling at his feet. The distinctively Vaishnava *tilak* on his forehead serves a dual purpose. One the hand, its curving form resonates with the universal sign for the horoscope, which appears to the figure's left, at the edge of the composition. On the other hand, it may allude to the many Vaishnava dynasties, particularly in western India, who traced the origin to the god Rama, who belonged to the *Suryavamsha*, or lineage of rulers stemming from the Sun, the ruling planet associated also with Leo.

Elsewhere, the series is interlaced with moments of deep irony and humor, as seen in Sud's rendering of horoscope sign for Virgo. Here we encounter the virgin as a young girl, her hair flowing loosely down her back and against her shoulders. She is naked, but modest. She turns slyly towards the viewer, but her gaze is averted, and her arm drapes over her lap hiding her nether regions. An informed viewer, however, would recognize the incongruity of the setting, created through photographic transfer, and the significance of the architectural framing of her body. She is positioned against the sculpted surfaces of the 13th-century Sun Temple at Konarak, infamous for its sexually explicit imagery, featuring orgiastic scenes inserted into similarly ornamented niches. Although Sud's virgin maiden appears initially as a living figure, the rendering of the crease running across her stomach and the subtly abraded surfaces of her skin raise the question of whether she too might be read as a celestial seductress similarly sculpted in stone. [TS]



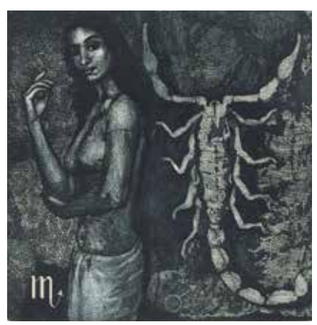
Yakshis from Bharhut



17g | *Libra*



17j | *Capricorn*



17h | *Scorpio*



17k | *Aquarius*



17i | *Sagittarius*



17l | *Pisces*



Politics and Social Critique

Somnath Hore (1921–2006)

26a – 26h
Untitled, 1983
Eight etchings
smallest 5 × 6 ¾
largest 10 ½ × 6 ⅞ in

26i
Untitled (Famine), 1978
Lithograph
17 ⅜ × 12 ¾ in

Somnath Hore was born in 1921 in Chittagong, where he spent an idyllic childhood. After a brief stint at the City College, Calcutta (now Kolkata) in his early youth, Hore returned to his village in Chittagong. While in Calcutta, Hore had begun making hand-written posters for the then banned Communist Party of India (CPI). Hore described those early years as a time of solidarity with peasants in the fight for freedom, for which it was exhilarating to produce art in the service of political mobilization. He wrote,

> *While growing up, I was surrounded by the indescribable miseries of the poor who labored endlessly only to see the fruits of their toil being enjoyed by the rich. An intuitive sympathy developed…. In Chittagong, almost the whole generation of young committed anti-British terrorists turned Communist…. We hated British rule and had close ties with the poorer sections of the people…. Soon the great famine of 1943 bared its fangs. Chittagong was a frontline area. The allied soldiers were everywhere. Suddenly there was food scarcity. Mass starvation was widespread… without food or medical care, they (the poor) were dying…. In such an atmosphere, it was exhilarating to be producing political posters with slogans and illustrations.*[48]

It was during this time that the young Hore met the renowned and charismatic Chittaprosad, who took him under his wing, encouraging him to directly sketch the people on the streets and in the hospitals. Appreciative of his talents and his abilities, the CPI made Hore a full-time member. Hore traveled through the villages and small towns of famine-stricken Bengal with his comrades, exhibiting his work to enthuse the people to help the starving poor. By early 1950, Hore, along with other artist comrades, began to grow disillusioned with the growing sectarian divisions within the CPI. "The urge for artistic creativity, lying dormant within me, had been awakened by my work for the CPI. But now, disassociating myself from active party work seemed inevitable if I was to pursue my passion for art."[49] In 1956, Hore ceased to be a party member.

Hore's experience with the trauma of famine-stricken Bengal haunted his experiments in printmaking, which he began in 1945 as a student in Calcutta, where he learnt from his teacher, Shafiuddin Ahmed. In 1954, Hore was invited by Atul Bose to set up a Graphics Department at the Indian School of Art. In 1958, he joined the Art Department of the Delhi Polytechnic as lecturer in charge of the Graphics Department. While in Delhi, he wrote,

> *I struggled to rise above subject matter and theme, but they refused to leave me completely. The Famine of 1943, the communal riots of 1946, the devastation of war, all the wounds and wounded I have seen, are engraved on my consciousness. The burin mercilessly cuts the surface of a wood block, acid ferociously attacks the zinc or copper plate, these exercises continue without any premeditated design, but in the end an icon of wounds emerges. This icon represents the helpless, deserted, starved and tortured.*[50]

Unlike the artists of the Santiniketan school, Hore's interest in printmaking as a preferred medium was connected not to its novelty but to his desire to express the injustice and untold suffering upon the poor. He wielded the burin or acid as weapons of destruction and devastation and explored its potentialities passionately to realize what he liked to describe



26a | *Untitled*



26b | *Untitled*



26c | *Untitled*



26d | *Untitled*



26e | *Untitled*



26g | *Untitled*



26f | *Untitled*



26h | *Untitled*

as his "concept." This sense of purpose had been hitherto unseen in Indian printmaking, perhaps with the exception of Chittaprosad. For the first time, printmaking had been chosen to achieve an aesthetic goal that specifically demanded it—this was a revolution in artistic thought, not merely the exploration of a new medium.

In 1967, Hore left Delhi for Calcutta, and in 1969, he joined Kala Bhavana in Santiniketan.

> *"The fast pace of Delhi life was replaced by tranquility and meditation…. A new awareness was created in me. In 1969–71, society was in a state of upheaval and chaos. A section of the youth was restless. There was panic and terror among the common people. Wounds is what I saw everywhere around me. A scarred tree, a road gouged by a truck tire, a man knifed for no visible or rational reason. A new concept was born. The object was eliminated; only wounds remained. White-on-white prints emerged from these wounds…. It was but an extension of the wounds a burin or acid would make on surfaces like wood or metal sheets."*[51]

The metal engravings, etchings, viscosity prints, and lithographs that followed in the middle phase of his career are true examples of Hore's enormous repertoire as a printmaker. The lithographs here predate the engravings, acting as prelude to what was to come. In the two lithographs from the late 1970s, we see skeletal male figures with emaciated bodies and enlarged heads. The only article of clothing on their bodies is a loincloth, while they hold in their hands a platter (*thala*), which they use to beg for food for their survival. The sad gaze of these malnutritioned bodies, contorted with hunger, are remnants of Hore's memories from the Bengal Famine that continued to haunt him. But equally, these works follow a few years after the Bangladesh War of 1971 that spurred a fresh influx of refugees into West Bengal, as also the Naxal uprising that shook Bengal in the late 1960s and early 1970s—both once again inflicting suffering and impacting the artist.

Even as Hore drew the suffering and wounded on the lithographic stone, he sought a method to inflict the scar more directly on his image-making surface. The direct process of engraving in metal, exemplified by this series from 1983, offered this possibility for producing particularly harsh images of the starving and the dying. Sharp lines slice across the surface of the plate like knife wounds slicing through flesh stretched thin over emaciated bodies, reduced almost to carcasses. The use of the medium is very purposeful and very literal; the dark patches of ink retained from reduced wiping of the plate appearing almost like bleeding gashes in the flesh. [PS]



26i | *Untitled (Famine)*

Chittaprosad Bhattacharya (1915–1978)

27a
Foundry workers
ca. 1960s
Linocut on paper
11 × 8 ¼ in

27b
Untitled (Bonded laborers)
ca. 1960s
Linocut on paper
15 × 11 in

27c
Untitled (Cane Weaver)
ca. 1960s
Linocut on paper
7 ½ × 8 ½ in

Born in 1915, Chittaprosad spent his formative years in the small towns of Bengal. In the early 1930s, he and his family moved to Chittagong, where he attended college and made posters, drawings and cartoons for the nationalist movement. In the late 1930s, Chittaprosad became actively involved in agitation against the British, particularly in protest of the "scorched earth" policy that led to food shortages and poverty during World War II. In 1940, he joined the Communist Party of India (CPI) that brought him first to Calcutta (now Kolkata) and later sent him to Bombay (now Mumbai). In 1943, he was sent by the party to cover the famine in Bengal, an experience that led to his famous drawings of 1943. These were published in the Communist journal, *People's War* (renamed *People's Age* after 1945) and later in a pamphlet called *Hungry Bengal* by the People's Publishing House of Bombay.[52]

Following his rift with the CPI in 1949, Chittaprosad ensconced himself in a modest room in a Bombay suburb and began experimenting with the wood engraving and linocut mediums. He drew inspiration from the work of Nandalal Bose, and particularly from his engagement with folk and classical Indian art traditions, but added a new dynamism and a certain angst. It is this spirit that exemplifies Chittaprosad's reliefs, most of which are heroic compositions in black and white. With unfailing honesty and great passion, Chittaprosad drew the rural and semi-urban folk of India engaged in their daily toil, surviving natural and man-made hardships with dignity and self-respect.

He brought to the graphic arts a sense of monumentality and solidity seen famously in the sculptures of Ramkinkar Baij. His prints have none of the tranquil calm and placidity of the Santiniketan school. Instead, they possess a sense of agitation, a sense of the human figures and their surrounding environment being propelled forward by forces beyond their control. This is especially evident in the untitled print depicting a massed column of bonded laborers brought to the city, advancing out of the picture frame towards the viewer. The man leading the column, possibly an educated individual dressed in an attire that Chittaprosad himself often wore, walks with his head held high despite his shackled wrists. To his right is a stocky, dark-complexioned man, who may be a member of the downtrodden Dalit community, who were often forced into bonded labor. The uniformed Bombay policemen, looming in the center of the column, shepherd before them a young boy and another disheveled man, both barefoot, while a motley crew of women and children shuffle behind. Debt bondage was a colonial inheritance in India, by way of which lenders forced borrowers to repay loans through labor—a system that was legally abolished, though not eradicated, by the Indian Government in 1976.

In the *Foundry workers*, three workers form a cohesive, monumental mass, indicative of the industrial proletariat, on whom the foundations of the new India rested in the decades following Independence. Clothed in protective overalls and ankle boots, unlike the semi-clad bonded laborers, the worker in the front wears a pair of protective eyewear and holds his shovel with a cloth while peering into what is clearly the burning heat of the foundry itself. His two companions stand alert behind him, resting on their shovels.



27a | *Foundry workers*



Myth and Religion

Maqbool Fida Husain (1915–2011)

28a
Mother (Mother Teresa), 1982
Crayon and pastel on paper
22 × 15 in

28b
Mother Teresa Series, ca. 1990s
Screen print
26 ½ × 38 ½ in

In addition to his scenes of rustic landscapes and his reflections on social policy and colonial histories, as seen earlier in catalog entries 3 and 23, Husain is well known for his engagements with India's diverse religious traditions. In these works, M. F. Husain translates India's composite culture and creates a new social space where diverse identities and ideas can be negotiated. The works seen here grapple with events and people that shaped history not only politically but also socially and spiritually.

Husain's works portraying Mother Teresa reside on the hinge of myth, religion, and narrative. While there is no denying that Mother Teresa is a religious figure, Husain's attempt at capturing visions of Mother Teresa was also driven by profoundly personal concerns. For Husain, Mother Teresa served as a symbolic surrogate for his own mother, Zaineb, who passed away when he was just two years old. While growing up, Husain was haunted by a story, told to him repeatedly, of his mother holding him tight one time when he was ill and pleading with God to take her instead of him.

Having lost his own mother at such a young age, Husain was left unable to recall her face. His decision to replace Mother Teresa's face with a void in *Mother* thus speaks to this loss of memory. At the same time, it also enables her to transcend the specificity of a single woman to embody the idea of motherhood more broadly. This effort to universalize Mother Teresa is reinforced by the abstraction of the body and the dematerialization of location and context. In initially conceptualizing this series, Husain attempted realistic portraits. However, he quickly abandoned that endeavor in favor of subtle abstraction as a more potent way of revealing Mother Teresa's spiritual dimension and maternal aura.

Husain's *Mother Teresa* series also engages a longer iconographic tradition associated with Christianity. It references and reimagines the Pietà, replacing the Madonna with three images of Mother Teresa: the modern Madonna, depicted as a faceless figure draped with her iconic light-blue-bordered white sari. While discussing his work, Husain stated: "I have tried to capture in my paintings what her presence meant to the destitute and the dying… That is why I try it again and again, after a gap of time, in a different medium."[53] [SG]



28a | *Mother (Mother Teresa)*



28b | *Mother Teresa Series*



29b | *Hanuman - Nineteen*



29c | *Untitled (Hanuman)*

Jyoti Bhatt (b. 1934)

30a
Images for Saurashtra Embroidery, 1994
Etching
9 ½ × 10 ¼ in

30b
Om Mani Padmaham II
2014
Etching
15 ¼ × 8 ½ in

30c
Om Mani Padmaham
2014
Etching
18 ¾ × 13 ½ in

30d
Two Faces
1998
Mixed Intaglio
9 ½ × 12 in

Photographs taken around the mid-20th century show an austere-looking Jyoti Bhatt, bright, keen, with a suggestion of humor—attributes his colleagues and students would come to know well over the years. But what marked young Bhatt apart from everyone else was an insatiable curiosity that saw him study painting among the first batch of students at the freshly minted Faculty of Fine Arts in Baroda (now Vadodara), and, later, at Banasthali Vidyapith in Rajasthan, where he trained in murals and fresco painting. He joined the Baroda Group of artists under the mentorship of his art teacher in Baroda, the renowned N. S. Bendre, in 1955, participating in exhibitions in Bombay (now Mumbai), where he was exposed to the glamourous world of art lovers and collectors for the first time, also catching the eye of national institutions.

The result was a scholarship in 1961–62 to study art at Accademia di Belle Arti in Naples, Italy, where, for the first time, he became acquainted with printmaking, spurring him on to apply for a Fulbright scholarship in 1964 to learn printmaking at the Pratt Institute in New York, later extended under a John D. Rockefeller III Fund fellowship. Bhatt's exposure to the medium was instrumental in his taking over of the printmaking department at his alma mater in Baroda on his return. He was also a member of the iconic Group 1890, founded in 1962 by artist and intellectual iconoclast J. Swaminathan, which had exhibited in New Delhi in 1963 under the mentorship of the poet Octavio Paz (then ambassador of Mexico to India), its artists presenting the first serious challenge to the formidable popularity of the Progressive Artists' Group that had preceded it by 15 years.

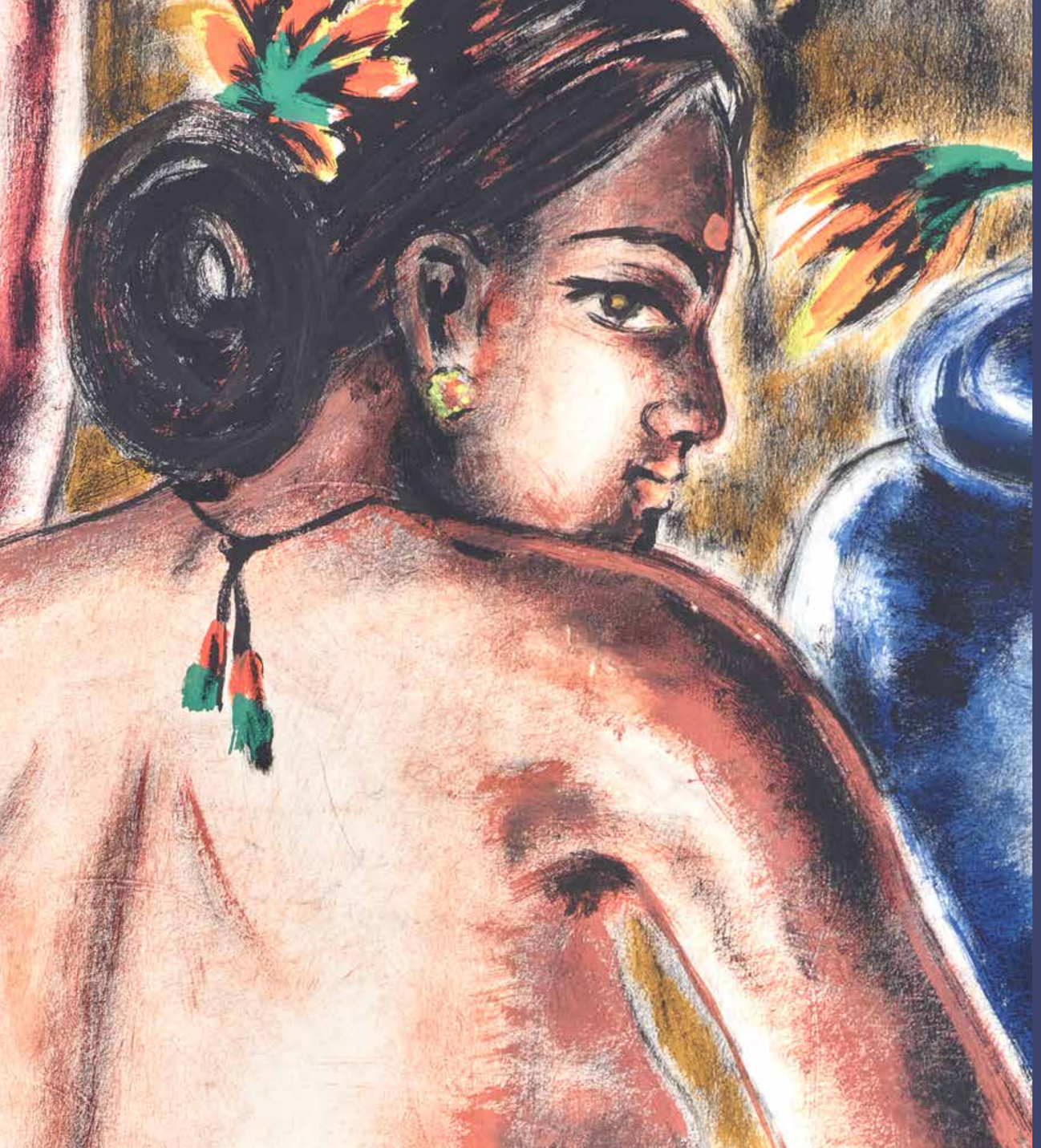
The mechanical processes in art making drew Bhatt into its web to such an extent that he devoted his practice largely to printmaking and—from the late 1960s onwards—photography, particularly of a documentary nature. His printmaking reflected the popular zeitgeist tinged with a sensibility linked to the bazaar—an Indian rendition of pop that crossed high art with street posters and signs to create playful works that often caused the viewer to chuckle. Fellow Baroda artist and co-faculty at the art school in Baroda, Nilima Sheikh would write about him: "Jyoti Bhatt's visual intelligence and pertinacity had the potential to uplift the form to obfuscate questions of function."

The prints in the Gaur Collection pay homage to this visual lexicon. In *Images for Saurashtra Embroidery*, Bhatt draws from his own photographic archive of the textiles and crafts of the arid desert region in his native Gujarat that were beginning to fade away as a result of urbanization. The folk motifs in the etching combine elements of bead and thread embroideries with designs for the wall and floor drawings painted by women using rice flour or white chalk paste on their mud-washed homes. Many of these images are sacred, though Bhatt does not give them any special religious connotation, preferring to fill in busy details into the print as a representation of life in the region.

Bhatt's other enduring fascination has been with depicting faces in profile, which he imbues with distinctive inner personalities. In *Two Faces*, he evokes the polar opposites of day and night through the feathered creatures that inhabit



30a | *Images for Saurashtra Embroidery*



Portraits/Personas

Jogen Chowdhury (b.1939)

33a
Untitled (Head), 1977
Pastel and ink on paper
15 × 14 ⅞ in

33b
Man with Piece of Paper, 1986
Pastel and ink on paper
15 × 11 in

Born in a small village in present-day Bangladesh, Jogen Chowdhury's family relocated to a refugee camp in Calcutta (now Kolkata) in 1947 following the Partition of Bengal. After graduating from the Government College of Art and Craft in 1960, he began work as a teacher in a secondary school in Howrah Zilla. A gifted writer and poet, as well as a visual artist, he spent his free time painting and organizing a literary and cultural group that published its first journal in 1961. In 1967, he went to Paris and studied at the École nationale supérieure des Beaux-Arts in Paris and in Stanley William Hayter's Atelier 17. When he returned to India, in 1968, he relocated to Madras (now Chennai) to work as a textile designer in the Handloom Board, where he remained until 1972, when he shifted to Delhi to take on the position of curator of the art collection at Rashtrapati Bhavan. In 1987, he returned permanently to West Bengal to take on the post of professor of painting at Kala Bhavana in Santiniketan.

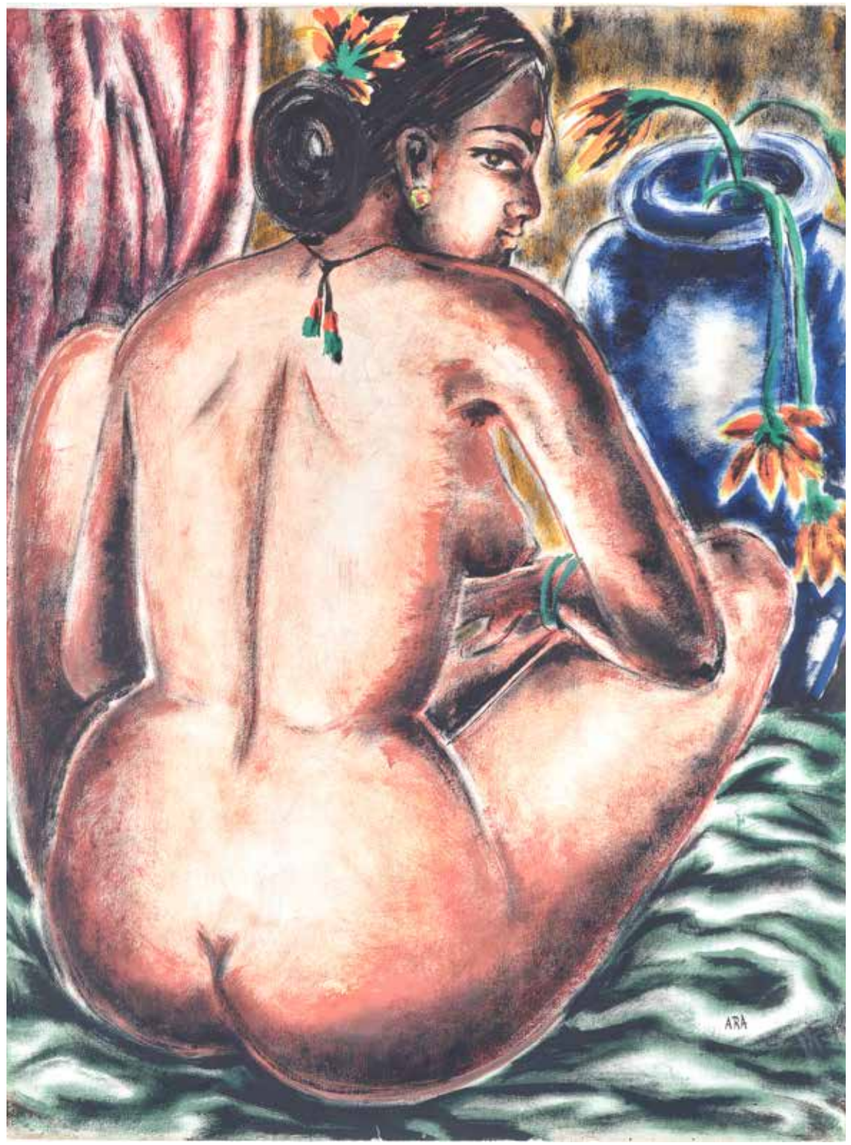
Deliberately individual in his approach to art making, Chowdhury defied shifting artistic trends towards abstraction in the 1960s and 1970 to hone and perfect instead a unique vocabulary for figural representation. In a recent interview with Nawaid Anjum, he noted, "I believe that abstraction exists also in 'real' forms, in the human figures or any other object."[58] A close observer of people, he was drawn particularly to the facial expressions and bodily gestures associated with elevated emotive states of joy and agony, which he captured through his mastery of texture and emotionally charged line, and also through the intentional distortion of heads and bodies. He has described these intentionally distorted figures as metaphors for the social and economic imbalances that have characterized Indian society since Independence. The gaze of Chowdhury's frequently introverted figures is often focused inward, at an angle, or away from the viewer. He is best known for his portrayals of single figures, closely cropped within the composition, and set against a dark and seemingly empty background that focuses the viewer's attention on the main subject, while also eliding a specificity of place.

The two works in the Gaur Collection are outstanding examples of Chowdhury's technical prowess and discerning eye. *Man with Piece of Paper* features exactly that: a middle-aged man, likely an intellectual, with a receding hairline, stares off into the distance, while holding a sheet of paper closely against his chest in an elongated, almost Mannerist, hand. His head is tilted upward and his eyes are slightly crossed, as if his thoughts were turned inward in a state of deep contemplation, an impression that is reinforced also through his furrowed brow and the taut contours of his face. His state of dishevelment suggests that he remains oblivious to the world around him: half of his shirt buttons have come undone, and his collar crookedly frames his neck. The subject of his contemplation remains unknown, as the paper that he grasps is elusively blank.

The untitled work from 1977 portrays a man in profile, with an almost impossibly large and lumpy head resting upon strangely misshapen shoulders. The figure is stripped of any identifying markers save a pair of thin wire spectacles tucked behind a disproportionately tiny ear. Like the paper in the 1986 work, the spectacles suggest that the man being represented is an intellectual. Here, Chowdhury's mastery of the line is evident in both the delicate definition of key facial features: the eyes, the nostrils, the ear, the chin and the upper lip, as well as in the use of dense cross-hatching to



33a | *Untitled (Head)*



34a | *Seated Female Nude*



34b | *Untitled (Woman with Birdcage)*



Abstraction

Krishna Reddy (1925–2018)

45a
Three Graces, 1958
Mixed color intaglio
9 ½ × 19 in

45b
Flight, 1963
Mixed color intaglio
13 × 19 in

45c
Two Forms in One, 1954
Mixed color intaglio
15 ¼ × 12 in

45d
Jellyfish, 1955
Mixed color intaglio
17 × 13 in

45e
La Vague, 1963
Mixed color intaglio
14 ½ × 18 ⅜ in

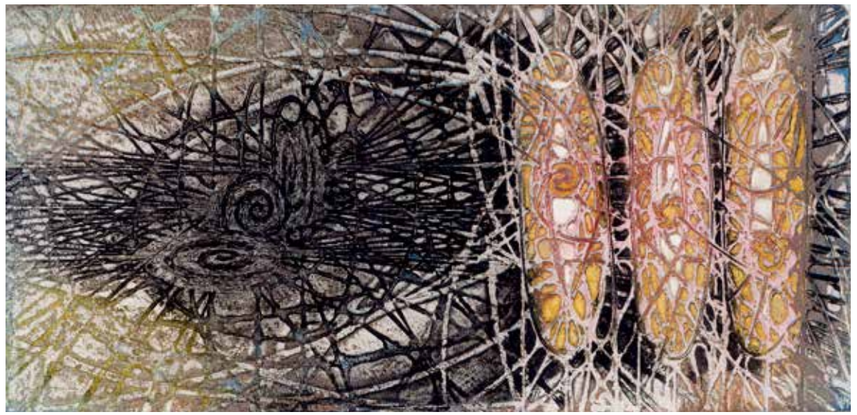
Krishna Reddy created his dazzling prints with a complexly layered and innovative printing technique, first gluing various materials to the plate, then inking over and between the networks of raised textures. Mixing different colors of ink with different quantities of linseed oil kept the colors from running together, resolving the overall abstract pattern into distinct pictorial elements, a form of simultaneous color printing that Reddy called "viscosity printing" (sometimes also called "collagraphs," from the word for glue). A master printer, Reddy had a long and influential career as a printmaking teacher in art departments across the US, retiring as head of the printmaking department at New York University in 2002.

Reddy was born in rural Andhra Pradesh in 1925. His father was a farmworker, but also made sculptures of gods for the local Hindu temple; Krishna began copying the temple's mural paintings at a young age. As a boy he attended a school founded by Krishnamurti, with a curriculum shaped by theosophy, that had a lasting influence on him. He subsequently studied at Rabindranath Tagore's innovative Kala Bhavana art school, at Santiniketan, with its goals of integrating craft design and agricultural village life, and synthesizing art, modern science, and Hindu spirituality. These early influences were very much in evidence in Reddy's own pedagogy. In his notes for a lecture titled "A New Form," from the 1950s, he wrote,

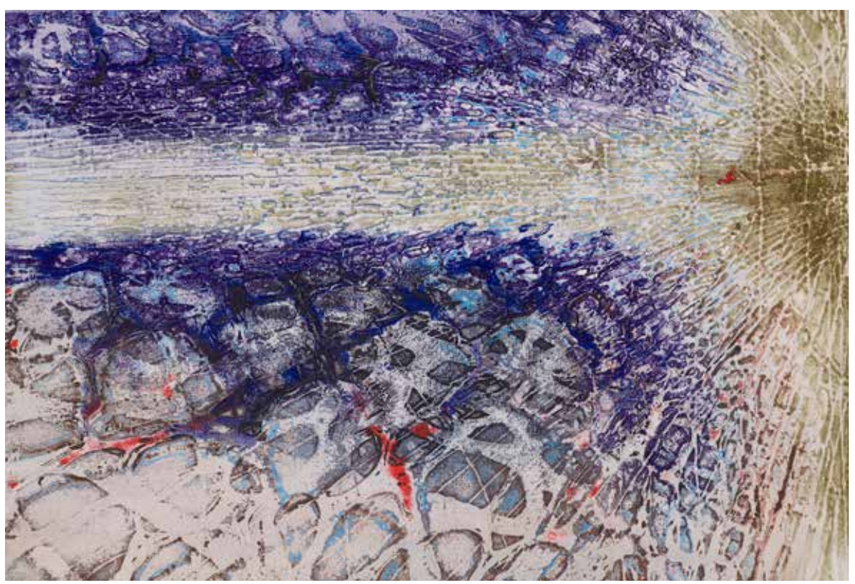
> *If the tree, standing on the earth, is real to our eyes and the image of the tree with all its roots, we know of, radiating like the sun's rays—from the seed to the flowers—is real, why not the whole being of the tree—the whole machinery, the cells, the molecules, the atom, and the whole structure that we have understood be revealed. To see the flame of the tree radiating like a fountain, so are nature's every form and the space itself. Like the dance of the Nataraja, space beats out a form and the form creates space.*

The elemental nature imagery, the branching, root networks, and cellular patterns, began to appear in his prints around the time that he wrote these lines in the 1950s. In *Two Forms in One* and *Jellyfish* the layering of materials builds up the composition, but also scratches and etches away at it. Black ink fills the spaces between the raised tendrils of the materials glued down to the plate, which in turn print as gaps and fissures in the dense skeins of dark lines. Starbursts and red flares punctuate the disordered compositions, which refuse any formal organization, transcending human meaning and morality.

In 1949, two years after Independence, Reddy left India to study sculpture with Henry Moore at the Slade School of Fine Arts, in London, and continued on to Paris in 1951 to work with the Russian modernist sculptor Ossip Zadkine. There he discovered printmaking and studied at the influential



45a | *Three Graces*



45b | *Flight*



45c | *Two Forms in One*



45d | *Jellyfish*

Endnotes to the Catalog

1 Ranjit Hoskote, "The Poet of the Visionary Landscape," in Gagan Gill, ed. *Ram Kumar: A Journey Within* (New Delhi: Vadehra Art Gallery, 1996), 36.

2 Ibid, 41.

3 Yashodhara Dalmia, *Journeys: Four Generations of Indian Artists in Their Own Words*, 2 vols. (Oxford, New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), vol. 1, 122.

4 Yashodhara Dalmia, *Journeys: Four Generations of Indian Artists in Their Own Words*, 2 vols. (Oxford, New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), vol. 1, 48.

5 Zehra Jumabhoy and Boon Hui Tan, eds., *The Progressive Revolution: Modern Art for a New India* (New York: Asia Society Museum, 2018), 100–101.

6 For an example, see Yashodhara Dalmia, "The Rise of Modern Art and the Progressives," in *The Progressive Revolution: Modern Art for a New India*, Zehra Jumabhoy and Boon Hui Tan, eds., 28–39 (New York: Asia Society Museum, 2018), 33, fig. 10.

7 E. Alkazi, *M. F. Husain: The Modern Artist & Tradition* (Art Heritage: New Delhi, 1978), 17.

8 Yashodhara Dalmia, *Journeys: Four Generations of Indian Artists in Their Own Words*, 2 vols. (Oxford, New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), vol. 2, 143.

9 Sumathi Ramaswamy provides a wonderful analysis of the *Tearscape* series, as well as a summary and illustration of the 1992 panting in "The Wretched of the Nation," Third Text 31, no. 2–3 (May 4, 2017): 213–37. On the *Tearscape* series, see also Ranjit Hoskote, "Atul Dodiya: Tearscape: Recent Watercolors" (Berlin: The Fine Art Resource, 2001); Ranjit Hoskote, Enrique Juncosa, Thomas McEvilley, and Nancy Adajania, *Atul Dodiya* (New Delhi: Vadehra Art Gallery, 2013).

10 Cóilín Parsons, "Mapping the Globe: Gulam Mohammed Sheikh's Postcolonial Mappae Mundi." *English Language Notes* 52, no. 2 (2014): 189–98; p. 190.

11 See also Alfred Hiatt, "Ebstorf in Baroda: The Mappae Mundi of Gulammohammed Sheikh," in *Dislocations: Maps, Classical Tradition, and Spatial Play in the European Middle Ages*, Studies and Texts 218 (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Medieval Studies, 2020), 262–280; Marcia Kupfer, "Worlds Enmeshed," in *At Home in the World: The Life and Art of Gulammohammed Sheikh*, ed. Chaitanya Sambrani (New Delhi: Tulika Books and Vadehra Art Gallery, 2019), 278–93; and Peter Maddock, "The Imagini Mundi of Gulammohammed Sheikh," *Third Text*, 20, no. 5 (2006), 539–553.

12 Gayatri Sinha, "Women Artists: Making a Subject Space in India," in *A Companion to Feminist Art*, Hilary Robinson, Maria Elena Buszek, and Dana Arnold, eds., (Newark: John Wiley & Sons, Incorporated, 2019), 53–68.

13 Yashodhara Dalmia, "Arpita Singh," in *Journeys: Four Generations of Indian Artists in Their Own Words*, 2 vols. (Oxford, New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), vol. 2, 72.

14 Allegra Pesenti, "Zarina: Paper Like Skin," in *Zarina: Paper Like Skin* (Los Angeles, CA: DelMonico Books-Prestel, 2012), 14.

15 Asma Naeem, "Zarina Hashmi: Refugee Camps, Temporary Homes," *Asian Diasporic Visual Cultures and the Americas* 3, no. 3 (October 4, 2017): 345–53, https://doi.org/10.1163/23523085-00303005.

16 Ibid., 346.

17 Aamir R. Mufti, "Zarina Hashmi and the Arts of Dispossession," in *The Migrant's Time: Rethinking Art History and Diaspora*, ed. Saloni Mathur (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2011), 174–95.

18 Aamir R. Mufti, "Zarina's Language Question," in *Zarina: Paper Like Skin* (Los Angeles, CA: DelMonico Books-Prestel, 2012), 152.

19 Oliver Basciano, "Krishna Reddy Obituary," *The Guardian*, August 30, 2018, sec. Art and design, https://www.theguardian.com/artanddesign/2018/aug/30/krishna-reddy-obituary.

20 Ellen Smart, "The Death of Ināyat Khān by the Mughal Artist Bālchand." *Artibus Asiae* 58, 3/4 (1999): 273–79; p. 274, https://doi.org/10.2307/3250020.

21 Karin Zitzewitz, "The Moral Economy of the Street: The Bombay Paintings of Gieve Patel and Sudhir Patwardhan," *Third Text* 23, no. 2 (March 1, 2009): 151–63, https://doi.org/10.1080/09528820902840623.

22 Sudhir Patwardhan, "Three Questions: Amlanjyoti Goswami with Sudhir Patwardhan," *Urbanisation* 6, no. 2 (November 1, 2021): 172–79, https://doi.org/10.1177/24557471211047115.

23 Ranjit Hoskote, *Sudhir Patwardhan: The Complicit Observer* (Mumbai: Sakshi Gallery, Synergy Art Foundation, 2010), 36–37.

24 See for example, a poignant story about a man named Ram Lubhaiya, a doorman, whom Khanna refers to as "a wonderful man," whom he imagined as "the person who found homes and places," recounted in Yashodhara Dalmia, *Journeys: Four Generations of Indian Artists in Their Own Words*, 2 vols. (Oxford, New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), vol. 1, 75.

25 For illustrations, see Norbert Lynton, The Great Procession: *A Mural by Krishen Khanna* (Ahmedabad: Mapin, 2007), 89, 92, 109.

26 For examples, see Norbert Lynton, "The Betrayal and the Flagellation," and Ranjit Hoskote, "The Secular Miracle: On Krishen Khanna's The Raising of Lazarus," in *Krishen Khanna: Images in My Time* (Ahmedabad: Mapin, 2007), 8–23, 52–63.

27 Nilima Sheikh, "A Post-Independence Initiative in Art," in *Contemporary Art in Baroda*, Gulam Mohammed Sheikh, ed. (New Delhi: Tulika, 1997), 53–144; p. 139.

28 Laxma Goud's personal experience with the district and his knowledge of this courtly history is related in Akshaya K. Rath, *Secret Writings of Hoshang Merchant* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2016), 108, 149. See also Gayatri Reddy, *With Respect to Sex: Negotiating Hijra Identity in South India* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2010), 9–10.

29 The interview was published by Geeta Doctor in *A Meeting with Laxma Goud* (Bombay: Cymroza Art Gallery, 1991), quoted here from Susan S. Bean, *The Art of K. Laxma Goud* (New Delhi: Art Alive Gallery, 2012).

30 Shukla Sawant and Subba Ghosh, "In Conversation with the Artist," in *Transgression in Print: Anupam Sud*, four decades, Geeti Sen, ed. (Palette Art Gallery, 2007), 127–149: pp. 144–145.

31 Geeti Sen, *Feminine Fables: Imaging the Indian Woman in Painting, Photography and Cinema* (Ahmedabad: Mapin Publishing, 2002), 164.

32 Paula Sengupta, "The Soul (Un)Gendered: Referencing the body as a site of power and vulnerability," in *The Soul (Un)Gendered: Anupam Sud, A Retrospective, Paula Sengupta*, ed. (New Delhi: DAG, 2020), 19–124: p. 94–95.

33 Shukla Sawant and Subba Ghosh, "In Conversation with the Artist," in *Transgression in Print: Anupam Sud, Four Decades*, Geeti Sen, ed. (Palette Art Gallery, 2007), 127–149: p. 135.

34 See Paula Sengupta, ed., *The Soul (Un) Gendered: Anupam Sud, A Retrospective* (New Delhi: DAG, 2020), 105.

35 See, for example, a terracotta column-krater, ca. 470–760 B.C.E., in the collection of the Metropolitan Museum in New York, Accession Number 34.11.7: https://www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/253427

36 Das has depicted the beaches of Puri dominated by the dark, looming figures of fishermen and their families in many of his prints.

37 A type of a relief printmaking tool like burin.

38 Shanay Jhaveri and Anthony Stokes, *Bhupen Khakhar: Works from a Private British Collection*, https://www.grosvenorgallery.com/exhibitions/21-bhupen-khakhar-works-from-a-private-british-collection/overview/

39 Timothy Hyman, *Bhupen Khakhar* (Ahmedabad: Mapin, 2006).

40 Sonal Khullar, *Worldly Affiliations: Artistic Practice, National Identity, and Modernism in India, 1930–1990* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2015), 194–200.

41 Karin Zitzewitz makes this point particularly well in *The Art of Secularism: The Cultural Politics of Modernist Art in Contemporary India* (London: Hurst & Company, 2014), chapter 5, esp. 136–142.

42 British Museum object number 1995,0406,0.3.

43 J. Huisman and Jan Hoet, *The Spirit of India*, exhibition organized by de Bijenkorf and Inventure India (Amsterdam, Den Haag, Rotterdam, 1993).

44 Established by Robert Thomas, a Welshman who came to Calcutta in 1833. See Tirthankar Roy, "Trading Firms in Colonial India," in *The Business History Review* 88, no. 1 (2014): 9–42; p. 34; and Sarah Besky, *Tasting Qualities: The Past and Future of Tea*. (Berkeley: Univ of California Press, 2020) 55.

45 Sumathi Ramaswamy, *Husain's Raj: Visions of Empire and Nation* (Mumbai: Marg, 2016), 25.

46 Sanjukta Sunderason, *Partisan Aesthetics: Modern Art and India's Long Decolonization* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2020), 235.

47 Haimanti Dutta Ray, "Paintings and Water Colors..!" in *Reflections*, December 2021, https://reflections.live/articles/944/paintings-and-water-colours-3289-kxykmbpl.html, accessed 3/26/2022

48 Somnath Hore, *Wounds: Solo Prints Exhibition = Kshata* (Dhaka: Bengal Gallery of Fine Arts, 2011), 9.

49 Ibid, 11.

50 Ibid, 15.

51 Ibid.

52 Chittaprosad, *Hungry Bengal: a tour through Midnapur District in November 1943* (Bombay: 1944); Sanjoy Kumar Mallik, *Chittaprosad: A Retrospective 1915–1978*, 2 vols. (New Delhi: Delhi Art Gallery, 2011). See also Sanjukta Sunderason, Partisan *Aesthetics: Modern Art and India's Long Decolonization* (Redwood City: Stanford University Press, 2020), chapter 2.

53 Ila Pal, *Beyond the Canvas: An Unfinished Portrait of M F Husain* (New Delhi: Indus, 1994), 166.

54 Yashodhara Dalmia, *The Making of Modern Indian Art: The Progressives*, (Oxford, New York: Oxford University Press, 2001), 114.

55 Interview with Uma Nair, Bodhibuzz, February 2006.

56 Ibid.

57 Rabindranath Tagore, Sahaj Path, 3 vols. (Bolpur: Visva Bharati, 1930).

58 Nawaid Anjum, "Jogen Chowdhury: The Enchantment of the Everyday," The Punch Magazine (December 31, 2020), https://thepunchmagazine.com/arts/art-design/jogen-chowdhury-the-enchantment-of-the-everyday, accessed 4/14/2022.

59 Susan S. Bean, *The Art of K. Laxma Goud* (New Delhi: Art Alive Gallery, 2012).

60 Geeta Kapur, *When Was Modernism: Essays on Contemporary Cultural Practice in India* (New Delhi: Tulika, 2000), 292–293. Kapur includes an image of the 1976 untitled landscape, fig. 15d, p. 114, in this publication.

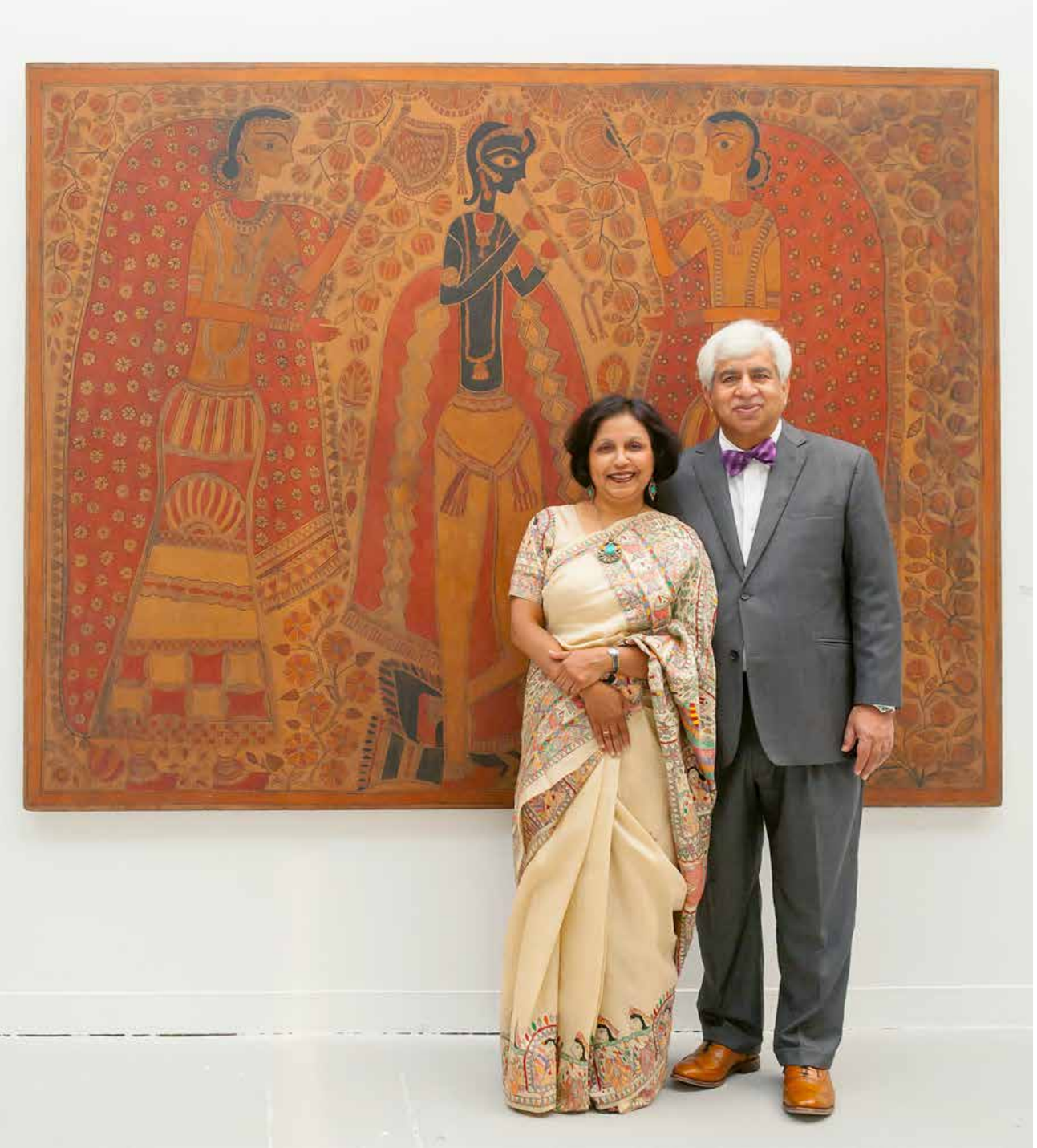
61 Yashodhara Dalmia, *Journeys: Four Generations of Indian Artists in Their Own Words*, 2 vols. (Oxford, New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), vol. 1, 229.

62 Ibid, 231.

63 Yashodhara Dalmia, *Journeys: Four Generations of Indian Artists in Their Own Words*, 2 vols. (Oxford, New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), vol. 1, 227–228.

64 Statement on the Center of International Modern Art website, https://www.cimaartindia.com/profile/prabhakar-kolte/

65 Prabhakar Kolte, *From Art to Art* (Mumbai: Bodhana Arts Foundation, 2008), 44.



The Collections of Umesh and Sunanda Gaur: Acquisitions and Aspirations for Modern Indian Culture

Jeffrey Wechsler

At the publication time of this catalog, the 2022 exhibition *Paper Trails: Modern Indian Works on Paper from the Gaur Collection* represents the most recent public presence of an exceptional private exploration of modern and contemporary art from India. Expanding from its first relevant acquisition in 1995 to a collection that numbered approximately five hundred items, the ongoing acquisition activities of Umesh and Sunanda Gaur have produced one of the premiere collections in its field. The significance of the collection has been widely noted; for example, the Gaurs were listed among the "100 Top Collectors" by *Art & Antiques* magazine in 2006 (fig. 1). In the same year, I had the pleasure of working with the Gaurs to organize an exhibition, which was, as a selection of work on paper, a predecessor of sorts of the current display. For that event, I wrote the following:

> *The creation of collections of art can become among the most significant of personal undertakings. To outside observers, the simple impact of quantity and value may be impressive in themselves. But the true worth of a collection may also be expressed in how a collector ultimately wishes a collection to function in relation to the world beyond the walls where the art resides. To some, collecting is a truly personal – indeed, an insular – enterprise, to be enjoyed by the collector alone, and perhaps a limited number of family members and friends. To others, the inspiration and joy behind the acquisition of objects is enhanced by sharing them with the wider community. … The latter category is paramount [for] Umesh and Sunanda Gaur.*

The Gaurs have continued to emphasize the potential for public education and enrichment, not only in growing their collection with a careful consideration for the historical impact of the art, but now further propelling their insight and passion for the art of their nation of origin into a vastly enlarged realm, through major donations of coherent sections of their collection to public institutions. This generosity further disseminates the historical, cultural, and aesthetic concepts that grounded the Gaurs' interests and acquisition priorities.

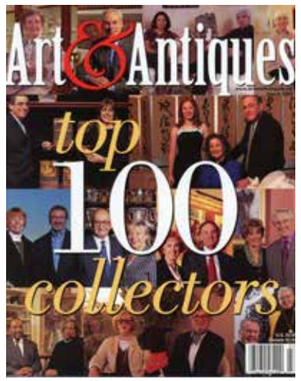


Fig. 1

Cover, *Art and Antiques* March 2003

Over time, with the growing presence and importance of Indian art within the international art community, the Gaurs' natural impulse toward exhibition and education of this cultural heritage led to another important step. As noted before, the Gaur Collection contains cohesive groups of works focusing on historical periods, artistic media, and cultural groups. Two of these subsets are photography and recent indigenous art. With great generosity, the Gaurs have made donations of these sizable collections to public institutions and have done so with careful consideration to which venues will best enhance their impact.

The photographs have been given to the National Asian Art Museum of the Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D.C., where they will complement large collections of photography from Japan and Iran, as well as the photographic estate of the major Indian photographer Raghubir Singh. In its introduction to the Gaur donation on its website, the museum states: "The subject matter and format of these photographs complement our archival collection of early Indian landscape and portrait photographs that circulated in popular ethnographic and tourist channels. With works dating from 1983 to 2013, the Gaur Collection not only documents South Asian contributions to the development of photography, but it also addresses critical issues affecting the broader global community."

The tribal art collection has been gifted to the Philadelphia Museum of Art, where Dr. Stella Kramrisch, a past curator at the museum, who did pioneering work in researching and collecting tribal Indian art, had donated her own collection. The Kramrisch Collection is considered one of the best and the largest collections of its kind, but mostly consists of objects created before the 1980s, when Dr. Kramrisch retired after a long tenure as the curator of Indian art at the Philadelphia Museum of Art. The Gaur Collection, which consists entirely of paintings which have been created in the last three decades, extends this significant collection to the current times. The Gaur donation also complements the already impressive general holdings in Indian art at the Philadelphia Museum of Art, which notably include illustrated manuscripts, as well as the remarkable Temple Hall of oversize sculptural pillar figures from Madurai. Thus, these examples of the Gaurs' collecting acumen will contribute to even greater appreciation of these aspects of traditional and modern Indian art.

The *Paper Trails* exhibition now takes its place within the continuity of acquisition, exhibition, education, and donation that sets the Gaur Collection apart from many other private collections. However, beyond creating exhibitions drawn entirely from their collection, the Gaurs have also offered their cooperation and participation in various other ways to spread the knowledge and appreciation of modern Indian art. Works from the Gaur Collection have been loaned to exhibitions of Indian art at significant cultural institutions, including the Peabody Essex Museum in Salem, Massachusetts and the Rubin Museum of Art in New York City. The Gaurs also spearheaded the development of *India: Public Places, Private Spaces*, a highly significant 2007 exhibition of Indian photography, held at The Newark Museum of Art, New Jersey.

The Gaurs' efforts also reflect a compelling characteristic that can be perceived in a considerable number of contemporary India-born artists who have gained prominence on the world art scene. Although many Indian artists use contemporary techniques and media, embracing abstraction and semi-abstraction, video and installation and related formats, a considerable proportion employ traditional Indian imagery, history and mythology to express personal concepts. Inheritors of a civilization going back millennia, these artists accept the validity of the past, even the distant past, to inform and strengthen their current visions. In a similar way, Umesh and Sunanda Gaur, born in India but living in the US, advance an East/West interaction and mutual respect, capturing the creativity of their homeland from recent years, and respectfully gathering it and then dispersing it so that more people can be enlightened by the ongoing production of a venerable creative wellspring that is fundamental within the cultural diversity of the world.

Other Exhibitions from the Gaur Collection

India—Contemporary Art from Northeastern Private Collections
Zimmerli Art Museum, Rutgers-New Brunswick, The State University of New Jersey (2002)

Post-Independence Contemporary Indian Art—Selections from Umesh and Sunanda Gaur Collection
Paul Robeson Gallery, Rutgers-Newark, The State University of New Jersey (2003)

Indian Paintings of the New Millennium
Quick Center for the Arts, Fairfield University, Fairfield, CT (2005)

Modern Indian Works on paper
Georgia Museum of Art (2006); Arthur Ross Art Gallery, University of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia (2007)

Looking In | Looking Out—Contemporary Indian Photography from the Gaur Collection
Stephen D Gallery of Massachusetts College of Art and Design, Boston (2015)

Many Visions, Many Versions: Art from Indigenous Communities in India
Ben Shahn Center for the Visual Arts, William Paterson University, Paterson, NJ (2015); Grinnell College Museum of Art, Grinnell, IA (2017); Surrey Art Gallery, Surrey, Canada (2018); Frost Art Museum, Miami (2018); Weisman Art Museum, Minneapolis (2018–19); McClung Museum, Knoxville (2019); Susquehanna Art Museum, Harrisburg, PA (2020); Leigh Yawkey Woodson Art Museum, Wausau, WI (2020)

Paper Trails: Modern Indian Works on Paper from the Gaur Collection
Grinnell College Museum of Art, Grinnell, IA (2022)

Smithsonian's National Museum of Asian Art in Washington, DC will present a series of thematic exhibitions, based upon the gift of the Gaur Collection of Contemporary Photography to the Smithsonian. The first exhibition in the series, entitled *Unstilled Water,* will showcase works of photo artists Atul Bhalla, Gigi Scaria, Ketaki Sheth and Ravi Aggarwal (December 2022),

Philadelphia Museum of Art will present a major exhibition featuring the Gaur Collection of Indian indigenous paintings gifted to the museum. The working title of the exhibition is *Running Up: Individuality and Indigeneity* (2024).