



S.H. Raza, **Untitled**, 1971, acrylic on canvas, 54.1 x 64.8 cm. Image: Courtesy of India Art Summit.

A New Face On The Block

The rapid internalization of contemporary Indian art over the past decade has been impressive indeed. Not only has the gallery and museum infrastructure changed profoundly, but so, too, has the world of auction. Joining this is the first art fair called the India Art Summit, to be held August 22-24, 2008, at the Pragati Maidan in New Delhi. This fair will not only showcase the best of contemporary Indian art but it will also provide a unique platform for those who make up the Indian art world within which to interact.

By Uma Prakash

A further boost to the confidence in the Indian artistic identity will emerge for the first time with the *India Art Summit* when thousands of people in India—and from abroad—will be able to see in one large setting some of their own country's best art. The Summit celebrates Indian art's increased popularity at home and abroad, through an international art fair that has been a long-time coming.

This art fair is a unique opportunity to view painting, sculpture, photography, and installation and video art by various leading artists and from the best galleries in a way that was hitherto not viable. The works of numerous artists from all over India under one roof will surprise many, even those who believe that they have a fair grasp of the breadth of contemporary Indian art. While this is also an excellent opportunity to enjoy the creations of up-and-coming artist, many of whom are exhibiting together for the first time, it is

also a rare chance to absorb the works of many old masters whose works are not often seen in public. Furthermore, the fair is also an opportunity for the public to interact with artists, critics, dealers, curators, and art historians. And apart from the platform the *Summit* provides the public, artists themselves will be able to interact with one another in an unusual setting.

The increased positioning of art fairs around the world as central to the development of the modern and contemporary art market has given many people the opportunity to showcase the art of their own countries and regions that would not have been possible just a decade ago. So it is with the organizers of the first *India Art Summit*, Hanmer MS & L, who have high hopes for the market.

"After viewing the expansion of Indian art in India and internationally we decided to make a global platform for the art fraternity in India. We have received phenomenal support from artists, galler-

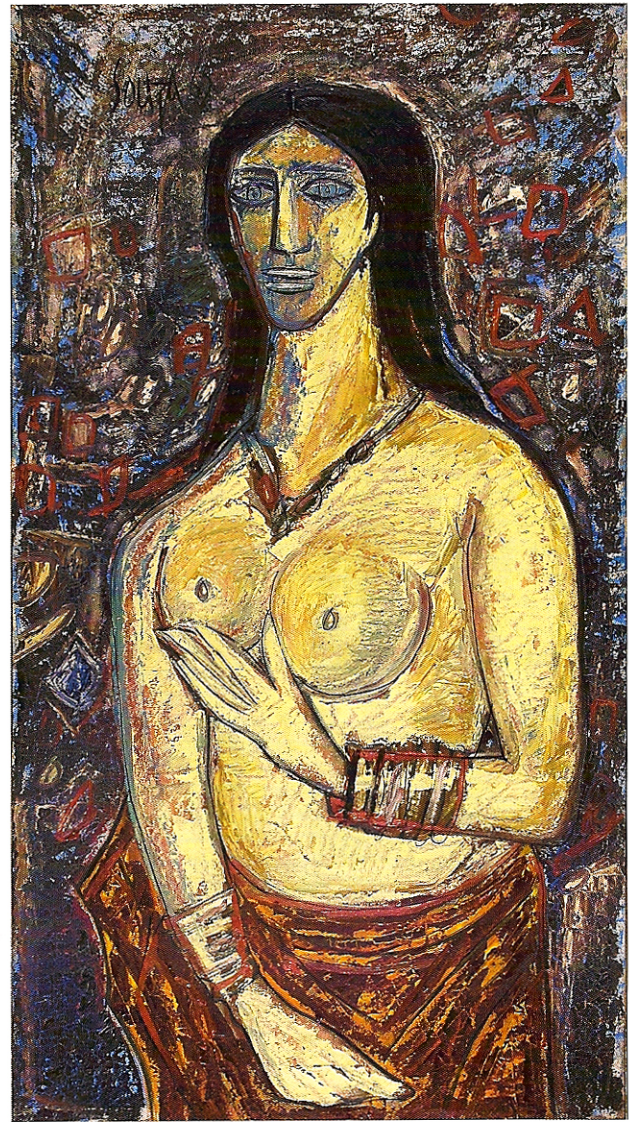
ies, publications, and sponsors. For our reference we attended other international art fairs. Besides the big buyers we wish to bring art to ordinary people. We would like people to visit the fair and appreciate the art," says Sunil Gautam, group managing director of Hanmer MS & L, who promise to make it the most exciting art fair India has ever seen.

"In India right now, there is no uniform thought or clarity as to how Indian art should be developed. The art events we see are mostly free-for-all affairs, sponsored by individual units, most of which are galleries. No one, especially the corporate sector, seems to have a clear idea what direction Indian art can take. In such a scenario, I hope this summit will be a guiding force for everybody," says artist Krishen Khanna.

With 33 galleries from India and abroad participating in an area of 1,400 square meters, it is expected to attract many thousands of people during the three days of the fair. Although relatively short for an



M.F. Husain, **Harvest**, 1971, oil on canvas, 94 x 61 cm. Image: Courtesy of India Art Summit.



F.N. Souza, **Nude**, 1962, oil on canvas, 143.5 x 79.5 cm. Image: Courtesy of India Art Summit.

international art fair, there are numerous activities planned. The art exhibition will include an Art Forum and networking opportunities. The first *India Art Summit* is, for many concerned, India's answer to art fairs such as Art Basel, FIAC, in Paris, Art Dubai, the Shanghai Art Fair, Contemporary Tokyo, and Art Hong Kong. The timing is just right, as Indian art's buoyant annual growth rate is estimated to be 30% to 35% within the country and worth around Rs1,500 cores.

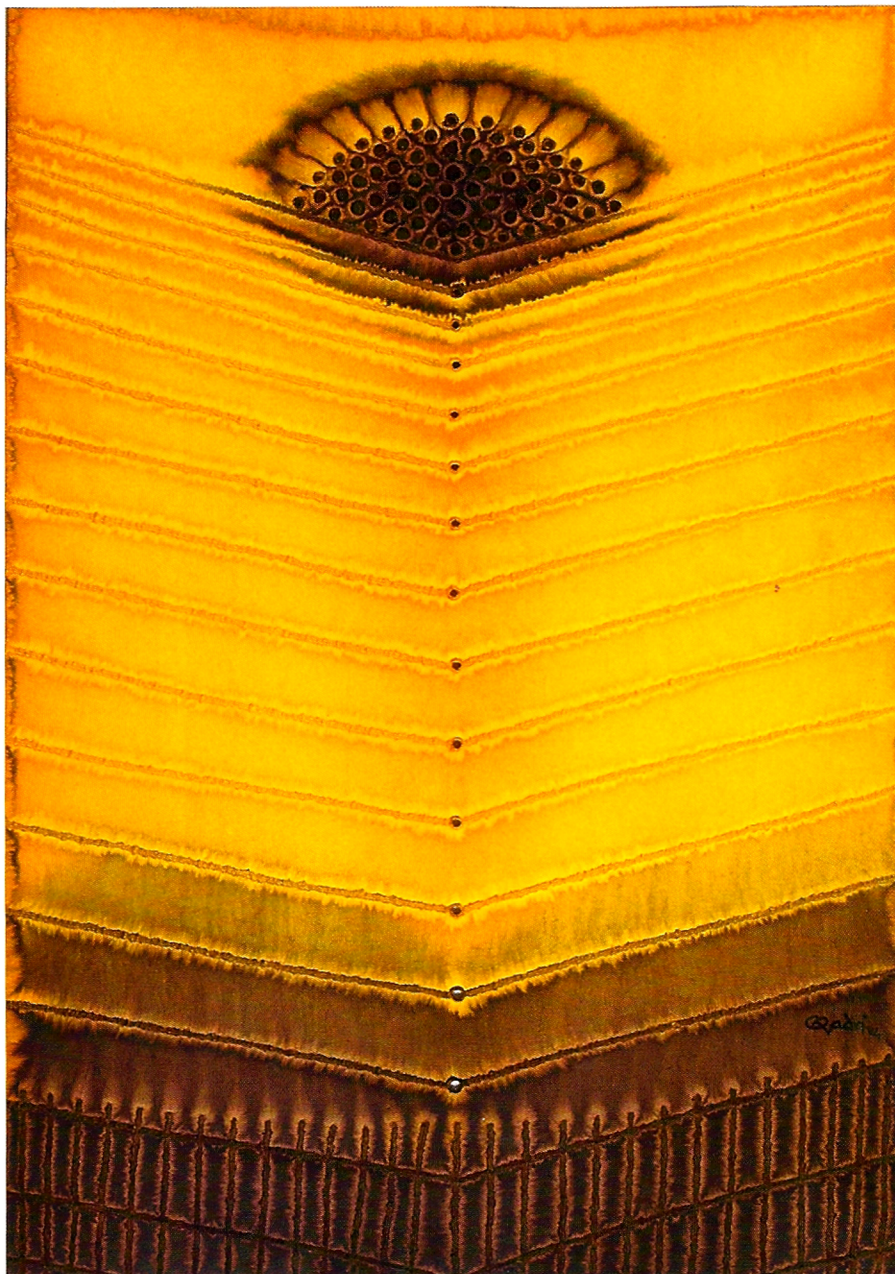
There is great excitement about the *Summit*, both generally and personally, and that a broad range of modern and contemporary Indian art is being shown. For many artists this is a chance to make art

that expresses something of their unique personalities. "Fairs like this have great potential. Art Dubai began in a small way and has now gained international status," says artist Kriti Arora (b.1972), who will be shown by Rob Dean Art (UK). "I think there is great art coming from India. There is so much diversity. India is changing so fast, there is a combination of ancient art with the new. More needs to be written about the different forms of art instead of the value. Appreciation of art by critics is more important than just quoting the price. Art is not only about investment. I am doing an installation tracing a journey that includes my father's poem, *Tar and Light*."

A meeting in one place of so many artists from all over India is an very exciting event in itself, with many artists, who may

have heard of one another but never met, coming together for the very first time. For Arzan Khambatta (b.1966), a sculptor from Mumbai, who will be shown for the first time in Delhi, this is an exciting prospect and one filled with personal expectations. "I feel very honored to exhibit in a location as prestigious as Pragati Maiden. Being in the capital is also very exciting," he says. "I hope this paves the way to a solo show of my own."

The sense of excitement about the fair runs through all levels of the Indian art world. As young artist Manil Gupta (b.1978), who will be exhibited through Palette Gallery, says, "With the *India Art Summit* there will be more interaction among artists, galleries, and curators. We have never witnessed such a fair in India.

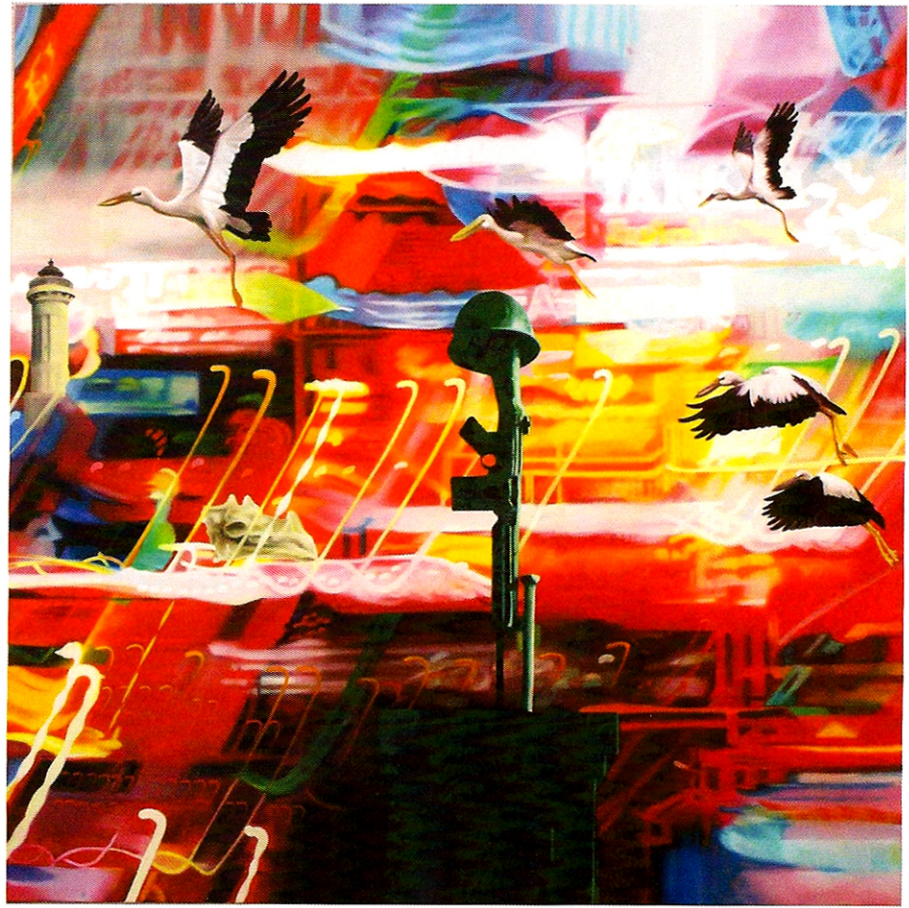


Above: Ganesh Gohain, *Letter to Father*, bronze with patina, gold foil, wood with color, 108 x 17 x 17". **Above right:** Sohan Qadri, *Untitled*, 2004, ink & dye on paper, 101.1 x 69.8 cm. Images: Courtesy of India Art Summit.

It will also be a novel experience for the audience. Indian art has come a long way. With the masters having created a legacy with their creative endeavors and simultaneously having made a smoother path for the young contemporaries, the onus is now on the young to take the voice of a new, radiant India to the global audience with aplomb. Although we have already made our presence felt internationally, I feel that it is crucial not to get swayed by just the 'mind-boggling economics' or the lure of 'international acclaim.'"

Anjolie Ela Menon (b.1940), one India's most outstanding contemporary artists and one of the patrons of the *India Art Summit*, along with such people the artists S. H. Raza, Krishen Khanna, and art critic Keshav Malik, sees this fair as a gateway to the future representation of modern and contemporary Indian art. "A bridge-building effort like the *Summit* is a great beginning, and I am happy that private players are showing interest to take Indian art to the next level," she says. "The other good thing is that the platform will provide an opportunity for people to interact with artists, something that rarely happens." Ela Menon's sentiments are echoed by Renu Modi, of Gallery Espace. "It's high time that India offered an art fair to the world. I will be exhibiting young artists as I want to give them exposure. I also believe art is for everyone. Having a fair at Pragati Maidan is ideal to make art more accessible to a wider range of people."

The works of established artists such as M.F. Husain, S.H. Raza, Vaikuntham, Sohan Qadri, France Newton Souza, Atul Dodiya, and Riyas Komu will be well

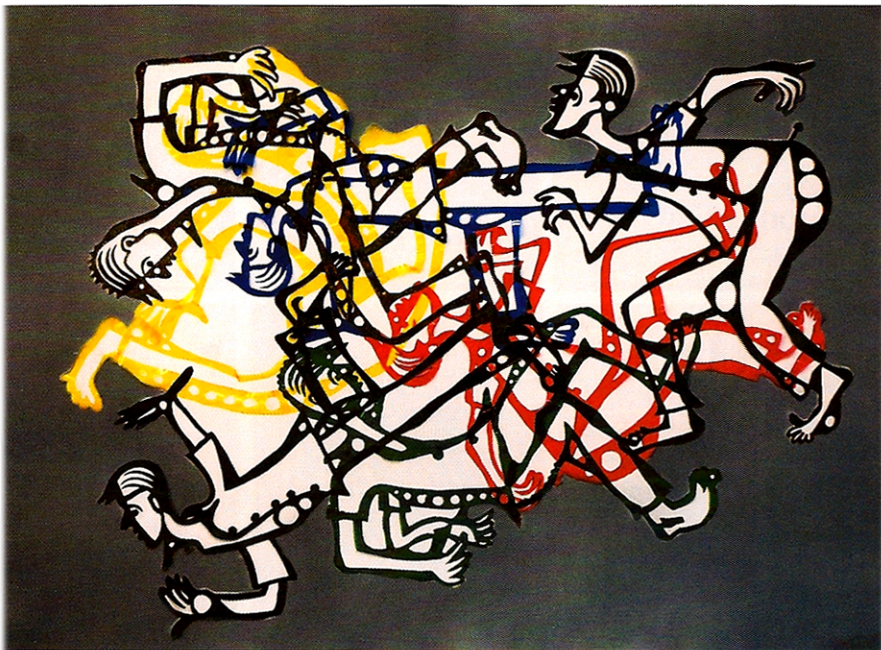


Murali Cheeroth, *City Fossils*, oil on canvas, 66 x 66 inches. Image: Courtesy of Art Alive Gallery.

displayed. Younger artists such as Babu Xavier, Thukral and Tagra, Birendra Pani, Mekhala Bahl, Rooshika Patel, Sara, Tanmoy Samanta, Apurva Desai, C.F. John, Debraj Goswami, Pratul Dash, Murali Cheeroth, T. M. Azis, Raqs Media Collective, and others will help to bring a new audience to the art market. Among the

sculptors whose works will be shown are Nagji Patel, Saroj Kumar Singh, and Arzan Khambatta. Installation art by Kriti Arora and Vibha Galhotra will also be exhibited. Speakers at the Art Forum range from Rajeev Lochan, director, National Gallery of Modern Art; art critics Geeta Kapur and Gayatri Sinha to Robert Storr, dean, Yale School of Art and Deepak Ananth, curator and writer; Hugo Weihe, Christie's head of Asian Art, and Henry Claude Cousseau, director, Ecole Nationale Supérieure des Beaux-Arts, Paris.

The *Summit* will see the convergence of many art galleries under one roof for the first time. Apart from numerous galleries from Delhi such as Delhi Art Gallery, Nature Morte, and Art Alive, galleries from different parts of the country will be represented in the *Summit*, among them Cymroza Art Gallery, Tao Art Gallery, The Fine Art Company from Mumbai; Aakriti Art Gallery, Gallery Sanskriti from Kolkata; Art Folio from Chandigarh; Karma Art Gallery from Ahmedabad, and Apparao Galleries from Chennai. To add to this illustrious list are some British-based galleries such as Rob Dean Art, Emerging Art, and Art 18/21 that will be showing Indian art. The presence of the prestigious *National Gallery of Modern Art and Lalit Kala Academy* will further enhance the first *India Art Summit*. Δ



Apurva Desai, *Untitled*, mixed media collage on paper, 22 x 30 inches. Image: Courtesy of Art Alive Gallery.