

Tagore Takes on Film

Not many art dealers can call themselves fledgling movie directors, but **Sundaram Tagore**—who operates branches of his gallery in New York, Los Angeles, and Hong Kong—recently debuted

his first feature-length film. An impressive documentary about an Indian artist he has represented for the past decade, *The Poetics of Color: Natvar Bhavsar, An Artist's Journey* follows

the life and work of **Natvar Bhavsar**, whose large, brilliantly hued paintings owe their vitality to both

the Color Field movement and traditions of ornament in his native land.

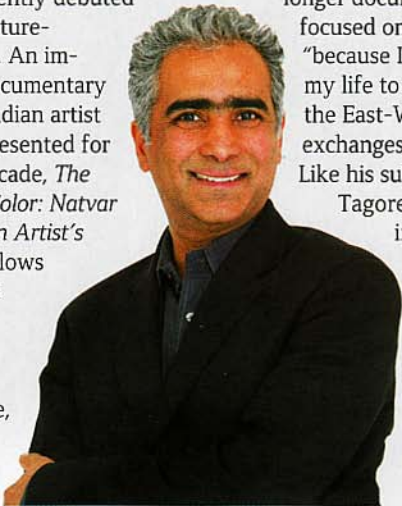
Tagore, who has always been interested in film, bought a professional camera several years back, before realizing he needed to learn

more about the craft of filmmaking. Five years ago, he began taking classes at the New York Film Academy and produced a couple of short films before attempting a

longer documentary. He focused on Bhavsar “because I’ve devoted my life to the idea of the East-West cultural exchanges,” he says. Like his subject,

Tagore was raised in India and lives in New York. *The Poetics of Color* smoothly cuts between scenes of Bhavsar at work to shots of India—

traditional dancers, festivals of color, the Taj Mahal—and interviews with such experts as art historian **Irving Sandler** and **Alexandra Munroe**, senior curator of Asian art at the Guggenheim Museum.



Art dealer Sundaram Tagore has made a film on artist Natvar Bhavsar called *The Poetics of Color*, 2010. A still from the documentary (top).



A great admirer of the famed Indian director **Satyajit Ray**, Tagore says he’s not much taken with the Bollywood phenomenon, but he has learned a few things from the genre. “In a Bollywood film, every 10 or 15 minutes there’s a dramatic scene and then it segues into song and dance,” he says. “I took that idea—having dialogue for a while and then breaking away to a different scene—and tried to make it intensely visual.” He also looked to artists like **Edward Hopper** for notions about how to bring saturated color to cinematic images.

Next up for Tagore is a film about **Louis Kahn**, the world-renowned architect, who died in 1974. Although Kahn’s son made a documentary, called *My Architect*, about his father’s complicated personal life, Tagore says he’s more interested in “the architectural part of the story”—and, again, in the East-West cultural exchange, this time involving an American who worked for years in South Asia.

“In India and the subcontinent, they used architects and city planners to make these grand political and social statements,” he says. The buildings Kahn created there—the Indian Institute of Management in Ahmedabad and the National Assembly Building in Dhaka, Bangladesh—constitute “his magnum opus,” says Tagore. “People in India called him the guru architect because he arrived at a level of spirituality through his work.”

Having finished a treatment, Tagore now has to write a script. He estimates it will take two years to complete the documentary. Asked how he finds time to run three galleries and pursue a difficult alternative career, he shrugs off the accomplishment: “The commercial side allows me to do all these things, so I don’t have to raise funds to underwrite the movies.”

—Ann Landi