

“TUG OF WAR” WITH THE ART PIECE OF YOUR EYE

Walk into New York gallerist, Sundaram Tagore’s life as he shares his journey through art, the impact it has had on his life, and how you can become a collector.

By [Anjali D'Mello](#)



The secret to buying art is falling in love. Well it is, according to renowned art historian, gallerist and now, award-winning director, Sundaram Tagore.

Tagore claims that a first encounter with a piece of art, as with another human being is important. “It’s just an attractive force,” he says. But if you’re looking to invest in a piece, he suggests spending a little bit of time with it as well as familiarizing yourself with the artist. In other words, “Do your homework!” Submerging yourself into galleries and talking to collectors will help more than you know, especially if long term collection is something you are

interested in.

Tagore and his reach

People outside the art world or those just entering the community may not know much of Tagore. However, this Indian native has built a reputation as a gallerist who promotes East-West dialogue through curated works, film, poetry, talks and more by hosting artists from the world over. This aim, of bringing cultures together through art, is now a reality thanks to Tagore's three galleries in New York, Beverly Hills and Hong Kong. His fourth gallery will open here in Singapore and it's definitely one to be excited about.

Tagore had always felt a pull towards the arts but initially resisted dabbling in the field because of the sheer number of artists in his family. When asked if his roots helped develop his interest, he claimed that being immersed in it throughout his life has blurred the source of where his inclinations sprouted. Pieces that really speak to him are those that portray an intercultural dialogue and it is art like that that adorn the walls of his galleries and make up his collection.

"Overall, I'm very much attracted to abstract art, to installation work (as well as) attracted to the visual side of the story," he said. Tagore has a strong opinion about what defines art. According to him, art should have an element of hand involved in it. Otherwise, the definition of art becomes extremely murky. Besides owning art galleries, Tagore has also written for many art publications and worked with numerous arts organisations, including The Peggy Guggenheim Foundation in Venice, Italy and the Metropolitan Museum of New York. He has also served as an advisor for the Museum of Modern Art (New York) and the United Nations. Besides pulling his own weight in the art world, Tagore is a descendant of one of Bengal's famed sons, Rabindranath Tagore.

Asian art

Did you know that cross-cultural dialogue between the East and the West has been in existence since about mid-15th century? Tagore mentions that Dutch painter Rembrandt (who died in 1669), was a collector of Mughal Indian paintings. Theosophist Helena Blavatsky (Madame Blavatsky) and philosopher Rudolf Steiner were students of eastern philosophy from Vedanta (the Upanishads) onwards. "...through their artistic discourse, they accepted people like Piet Mondrian (and) Wassily Kandinsky, his treaties on spirituality and art was composed through these kind of discourse," he said.

He added that Western was inspired a lot (by Eastern art). This cross-cultural trend also continues today with a lot of Chinese art being picked up by people from the West, when they travel to China on business. However, Tagore said that this is not the case for India as Indian art is being snapped up by Indians living abroad. Travel clearly plays a big part here as it one of the main reasons people collect art. So if collecting is what you want to get into, pay attention to Tagore's advice and take a trip somewhere. You never know what you might find.

Tagore's latest documentary "The Poetics of Color: Natvar Bhavsar An Artist's Journey", based on artist Natvar Bhavsar's life, recently premiered at Sinema.