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## theReview

INTO THE LIGHT  
Gallery shines on  
despite the art  
slump P10



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10 Arts

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# Let the sun shine on

A Hong Kong gallery is taking an upbeat attitude by presenting major names in its exhibitions, writes **Le-Min Lim**

The saffron-yellow, ink and dye on paper artwork, torch-bright against Hong Kong's summer light, has eyes on it – holes that were dug by its creator, Sohan Qadri.

Its vibrancy recalls sun, sea and the smell of coconut oil in suntan lotion. Yet Qadri's 2008 work *Adya I* is about meditation, says Faina Goldstein, a manager at Sundaram Tagore Gallery, where the piece is part of its summer exhibition.

Meditation? Notice the horizontal slashes across the 99cm-by-140cm piece; Qadri made these repetitive cuts with sharp tools to still the mind, says Goldstein.

Even as galleries along the city's arts and antiques hub, Hollywood Road, axe shows and offer fewer high-priced works to tide over the global credit crunch, Sundaram Tagore continues to showcase major pieces by the artists it represents.

India-born, Copenhagen-based Qadri, 76, is an artist, poet and tantric guru, according to a statement from the gallery, which represents him. Initiated into yogi practices at the age of seven, Qadri ran away to a Tibetan Buddhist monastery as a teenager in search of higher truth; he has held 40 one-man exhibitions and shown his works in the Peabody Essex Museum in Massachusetts and the National Gallery of Modern Arts in New Delhi, the statement says.

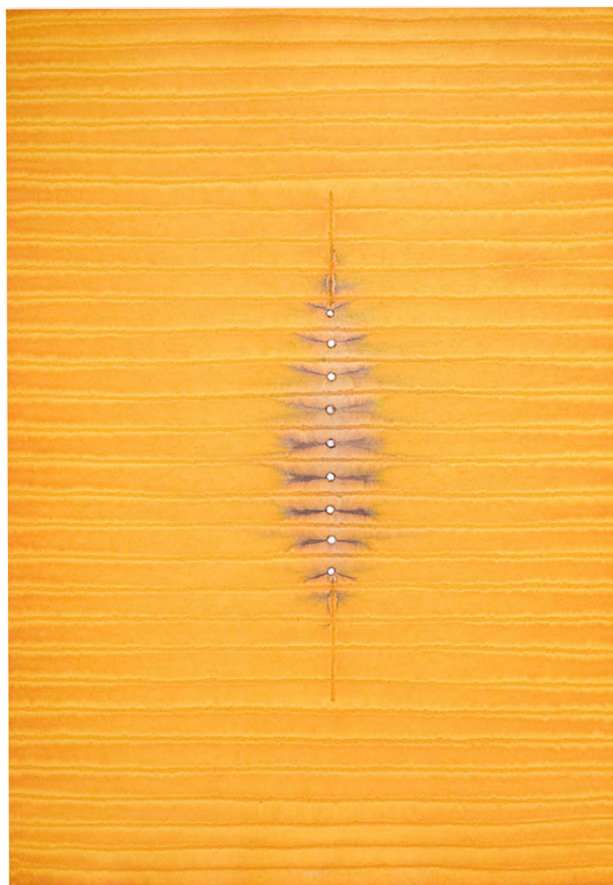
Qadri has moved through several mediums, including oil painting, which he left in favour of ink and dye on paper in the 1980s because it's odourless, says Goldstein. Qadri also prefers his new medium because it can only be done once, while oils can take endless coats of paint, she says, adding that another bonus is



the uncertainty rendered by the drying process.

Collectors who seek simple composition and vibrant hues in their abstract art would take to Qadri. The gnashes on the HK\$426,000 *Adya I* resemble the frayed tissues of torn fabric; its colours are brazen, its lines, clean. "Adya" means primordial or original in Sanskrit. Unlike the oil paintings of Chinese abstract artist Zao Wouki, which absorb viewers with their tumultuous swirls of colour and scabrous texture (from layers of paint), Qadri's pieces grab attention, without hoarding it.

The vigour of Qadri's work is matched only by Navar Bhavsar's indigo-and-coral piece, 2007's *Dhairya*, made by sifting more than 100 layers of colour pigments on the 280cm-by-151cm canvas. Like a chameleon, the HK\$1.7 million painting shows hues of peacock blue and wine as the lights upon it dim and brighten, revealing its depth



of colours.

"This painting would go to sleep and wake up in light," Goldstein says. "It's truly amazing."

Bhavsar is one of several painters the gallery will profile with solo shows in Hong Kong in the coming year, according to Sundaram Tagore, president and curator of his namesake gallery.

This exhibition, which ends at the end of August, is a taste of what to expect and also features artists such as Stan Gregory, Nathan Slate Joseph, Vittorio Martino, Ricardo Mazal, Lee Waisler and Susan Weil.

"We have Asian artists who are reaching out to the West and Western artists tapping into the East," says Goldstein.

Among their works, there's no ignoring Waisler's. Staring with hooded, haunted eyes at a herbal store across the road from the gallery's display window is Waisler's 2008 portrait of writer Franz Kafka, which is priced at HK\$356,000.

The American artist, best known for his portraits of figures such as Albert Einstein and Marilyn Monroe would use wood strips to limn the outline of his subjects and load the canvas with layers of paints to create a meringue of pigments, which he would then ridge.

Waisler's art is in the permanent collection of the Metropolitan Museum of Art and the Jewish Museum in New York, and London's Victoria & Albert Museum, among others.

*Bloomberg*

*Summer Group Show, Sundaram Tagore Gallery, 57-59 Hollywood I  
Inquiries: 2581 9678. Ends Aug 29*