

# CULTURE

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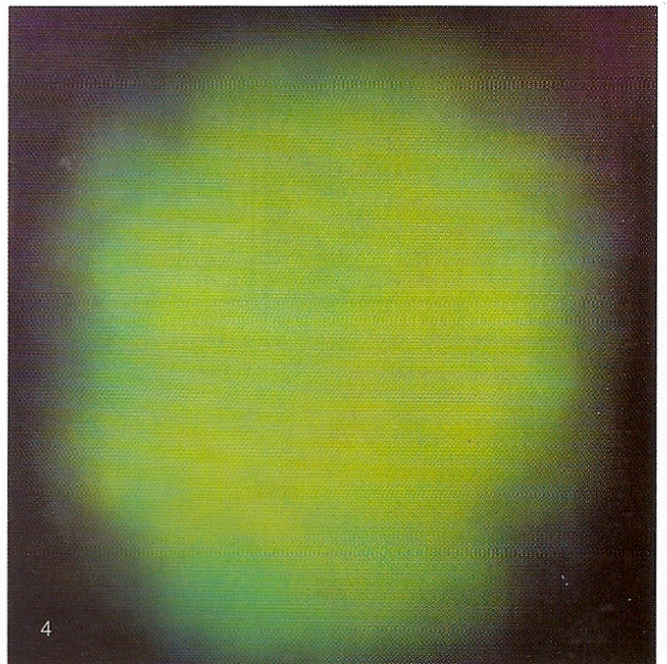
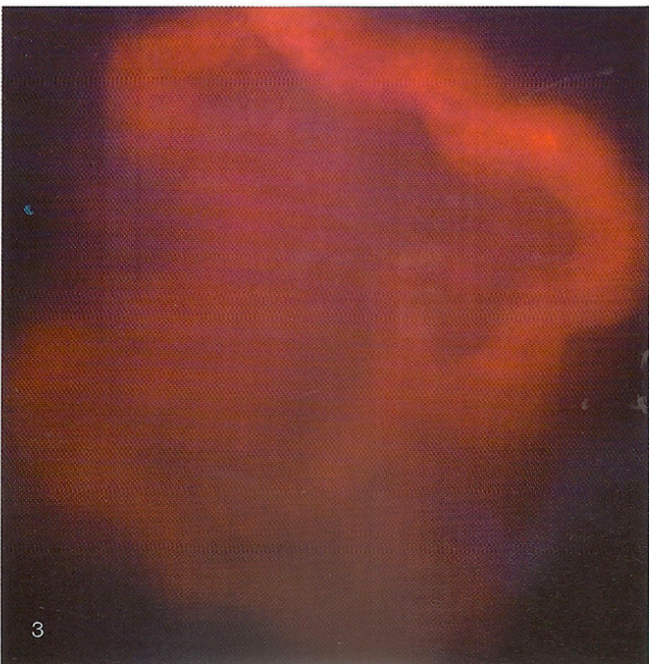
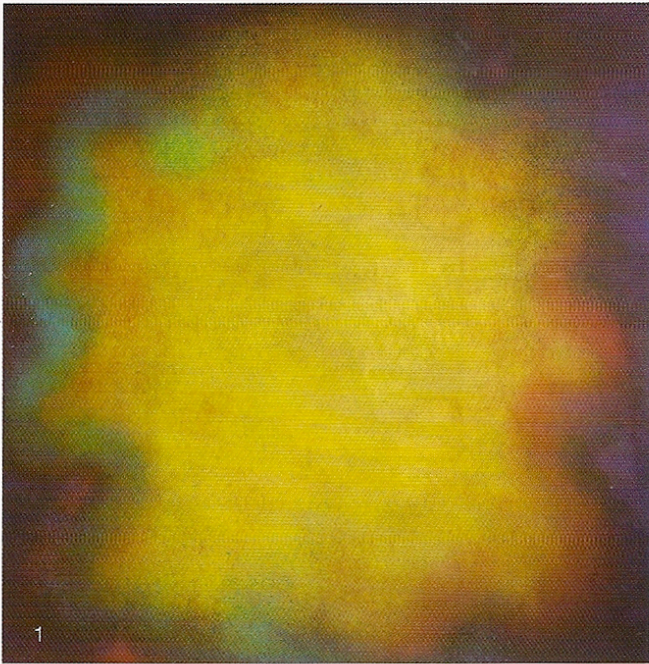
ISSUE 63

## The Poetics of Colour

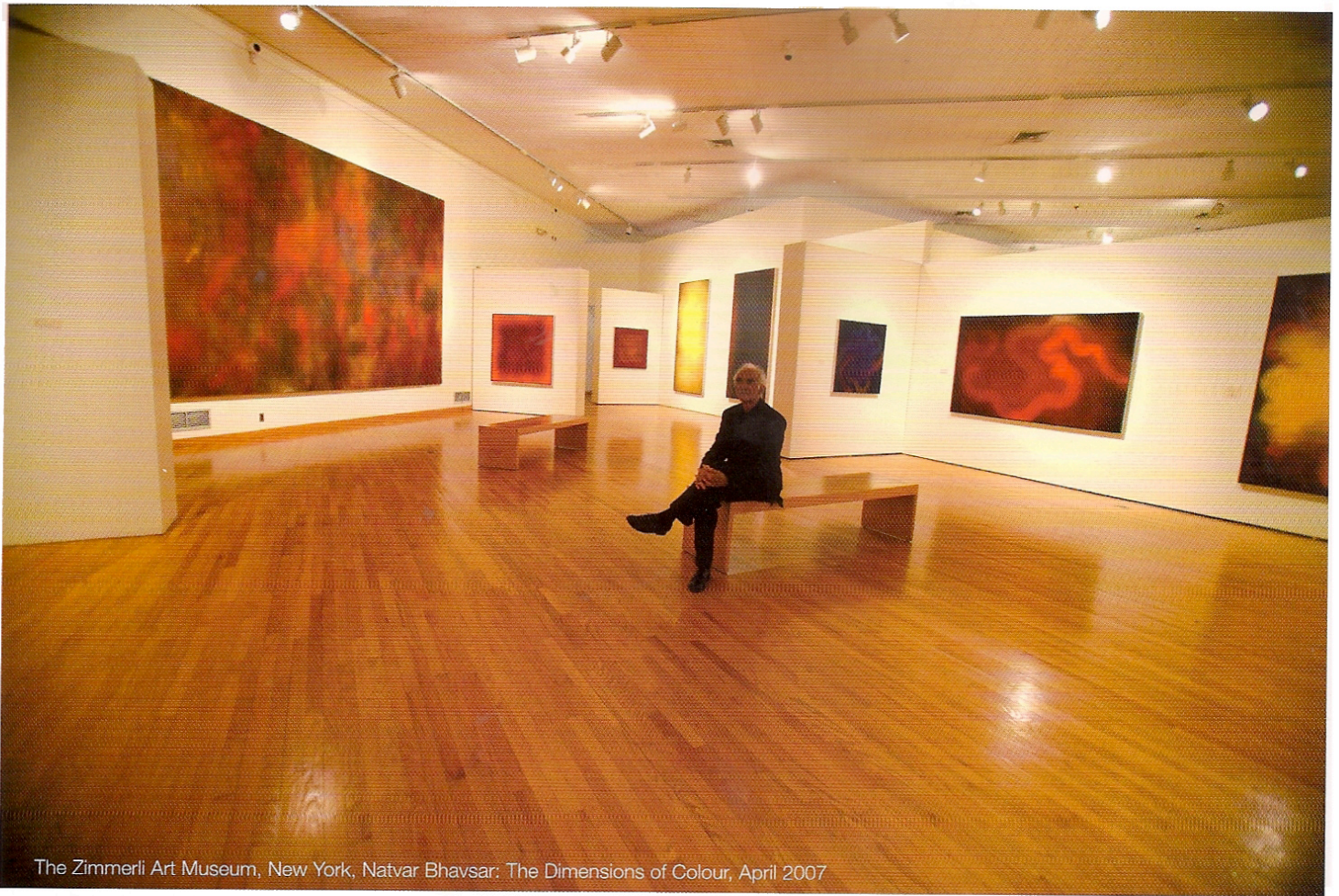
Natvar Bhavsar

Text by Sundaram Tagore

Photos courtesy of Sundaram Tagore Gallery







The Zimmerli Art Museum, New York, Natvar Bhavsar: The Dimensions of Colour, April 2007



Today, more than forty years after his arrival in the United States, Natvar Bhavsar is recognized by critics and historians as having extended the language of abstract painting.

Two important aspects of this exploration left indelible impressions on him, as did a variant of Abstract Expressionism that he saw in India's museums

Natvar Bhavsar was born in the Western state of Gujarat in 1934 and gained his early artistic education at the C.N. School of Art in Ahmedabad. In 1962 he left India to further his education in the University of Pennsylvania's Department of Fine Arts. Since 1965, he has been an active member of the New York School of Colourists, producing non-objective art with all-over fields of variegated, fluid, dense colour. To this process, he has brought a uniquely Indian sense of colour.

Prior to his arrival in the United States, Bhavsar explored India's numerous ancient artistic sites and folk and ritual cultures. Two important aspects of this exploration left indelible impressions on him, as did a variant of Abstract Expressionism that he saw in India's museums. Firstly, he studied the cave temples of Ajanta, Ellora and the Sun Temple of Modera. Secondly, and perhaps more importantly, the visual impact of the Holi and Rangoli, in which vibrantly coloured pigments play a central role, inspired him to explore the language of Colour Field painting.

In 1965, Bhavsar's aesthetic inquiries were recognized when he received a John D. Rockefeller Grant, which launched him into the New York art world. For an exhibition in 1970 at the Max Hutchinson gallery in SoHo, the art critic Carter Ratcliff wrote, "An extraordinary and very new aspect of these canvases is the way a surface will drift to its full dimensions without the 'justifications'

1) *AGAM III*, 2004  
Pure pigment on canvas

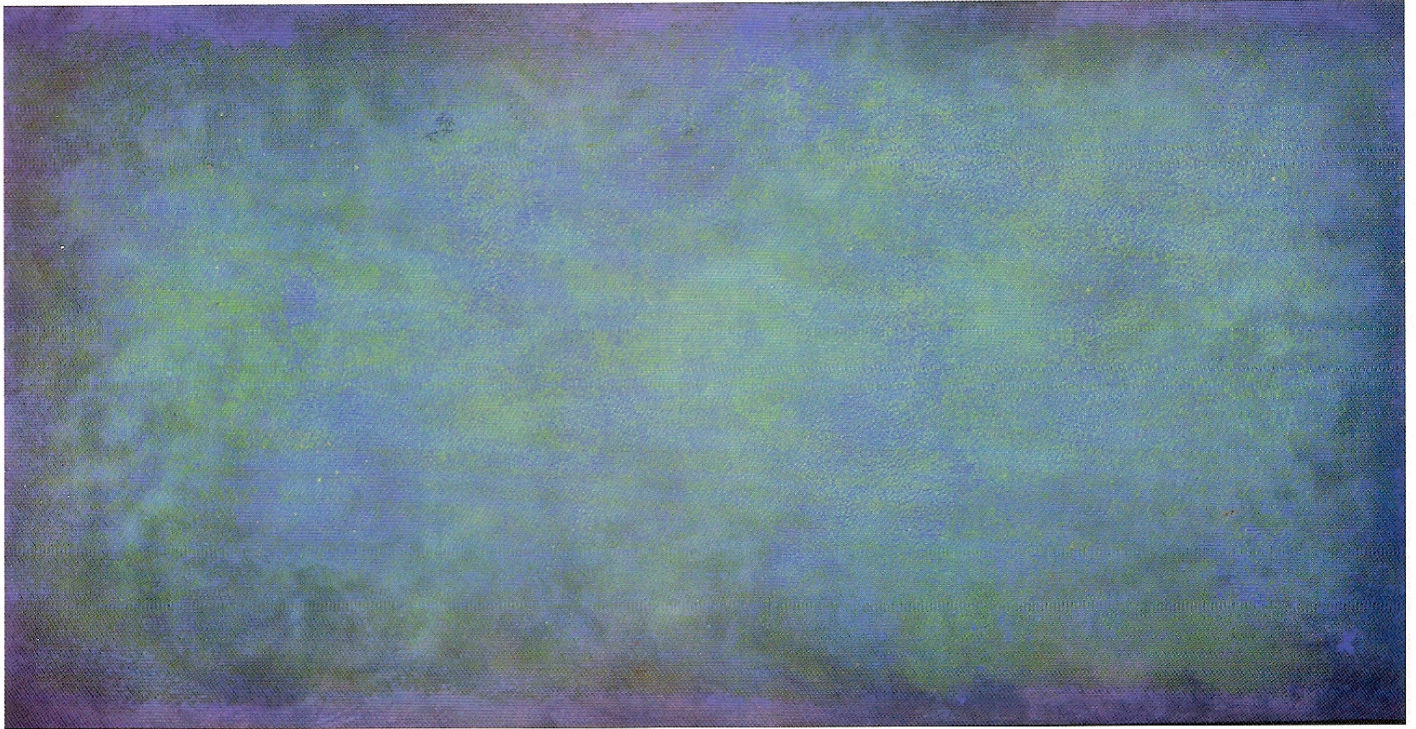
3) *KSHEETEE*, 2006  
Pure pigment on canvas

2) *VASOO II*, 1997  
Pure pigment on canvas

4) *ANANT*, 2008  
Pure pigment on canvas



## The Poetics of Colour



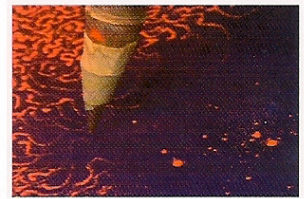
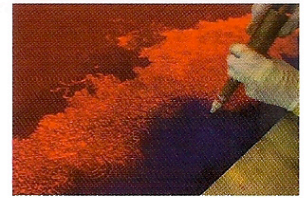
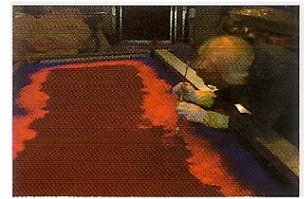
*KRITEE*  
Pure pigment on canvas

For Bhavsar, the process of painting itself is of the utmost significance and his method of working with dry granules of pigment, though it may appear random, is in fact very deliberate and precise.






Sundaram Tagore Gallery, New York, Natvar Bhavsar, Poetics of Colour, March 2006



Film still of Natvar Bhavsar in his New York studio a documentary

of colour-logic." Bhavsar's aesthetic was further endorsed when he won a Guggenheim Memorial Fellowship in 1975. In the 1990s, Bhavsar was the subject of a monograph, *Painting and the Reality of Colour*, by the renowned art historian Irving Sandler, who examined his work in the context of post-war modernism.

For Bhavsar, the process of painting itself is of the utmost significance and his method of working with dry granules of pigment, though it may appear random, is in fact very deliberate and precise. As the then-director of the Wichita Museum in Kansas said while watching him at work, "...as he moves the screen strainer about over the paper or canvas field, he must control the rhythm of his own body movement." What emerges, are canvases that are deeply pictorial in nature. These monumental paintings, some of them more than thirty feet in length, are lyrical, abstract attempts to reveal both the microcosmic and the macrocosmic universe. The fields appear as drifting colour-spaces of indeterminable dimensions akin to cloud formations or the Milky Way—spatial configurations of dense hues that emanate a spiritual aura. The art critic Christopher Andrae aptly wrote, while reviewing Bhavsar's exhibition at the Jewish Museum in New York, "It is expressionism which arises in a strange paradox somewhere between extremely felt sensuousness and extremely felt contemplation. A visual equivalent, perhaps, of eloquent silence." 

Natvar Bhavsar's works are in more than 800 collections across the globe, including those of the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, and the Whitney Museum of American Art, New York; and The Museum of Contemporary Art, Sydney. Skira, the leading Italian art publisher, recently released a major monograph on Bhavsar for worldwide distribution.

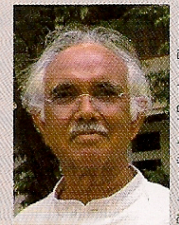


Photo credit: Janet Broskius Bhavsar

Sundaram Tagore is a New York-based art historian and gallerist. A descendant of the influential poet and Nobel Prize winner Rabindranath Tagore, he promotes East-West dialogues through his contributions to numerous exhibitions as well as his eponymous galleries and their multicultural and multidisciplinary events.

Natvar Bhavsar's solo show entitled "RANG" is being featured at the Sundaram Tagore Galleries until March 28.

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