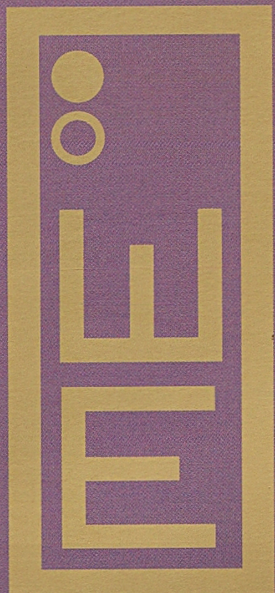


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SUNDARAM TAGORE

辛達林泰戈爾：藝術意味

Text by **Payal Uttam**

Image courtesy of **Sundaram Tagore Gallery**

“My ball rolled down the hill and when I ran after it I saw tiger cubs. That was what made me aware that we had been living in a jungle all this time,” says Sundaram Tagore with a smile emerging on his lips.

It was 1967 in the middle of tribal Orissa (a state on the Eastern coast of India) and this was one of many month-long stints where Tagore had been plucked out of school by his father. An artist, poet and writer, Tagore’s father was fuelled by an insatiable wanderlust. On other occasions, Tagore even remembers sailing for days on end and falling asleep under the stars.

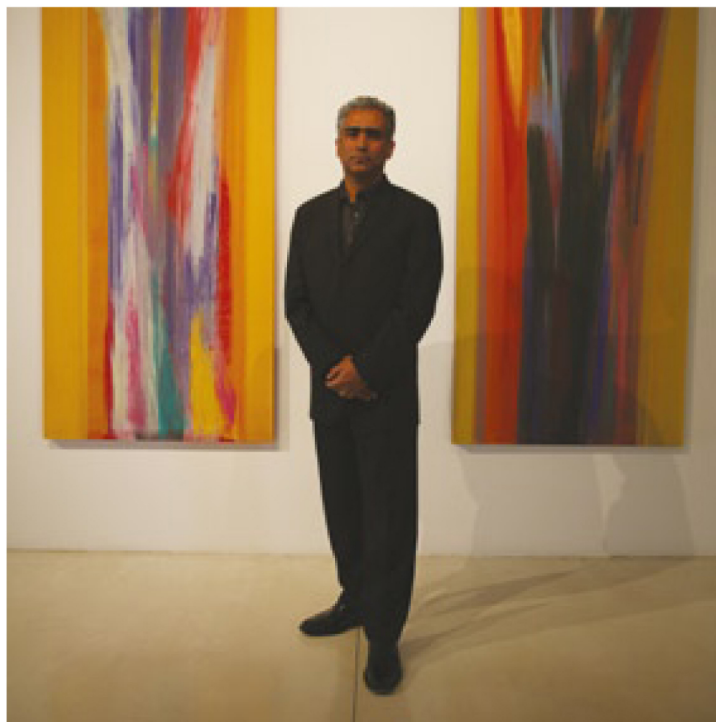
46-year-old curator and gallerist Tagore was born into a family with a rich history of 14 generations of artists. He is the great grandson of Rabindranath Tagore — the first non-westerner to win a Nobel Prize. A legend in his own right, Rabindranath Tagore was a famous poet, artist, composer and playwright, among other things.

Tagore fondly recalls his childhood as both exciting and confusing. A stream of artists, intellectuals, poets and journalists would constantly flow in and out of his home in Calcutta (which has been now tuned into a university and a museum). Evenings were particularly lively. “From eight in the evening till two in the morning they would just drink and talk,” he explains “Essentially it was an open house, in local language this is called *adda* which is a discussion group,”

This devotion to art and dialogue courses through Tagore’s veins. “Art should go before commerce,” he declares passionately. “Commerce flattens everything and if it continues everything will become Banana Republic.” In an effort to bring art back to the forefront, he runs three eponymous galleries in New York, Beverly Hills and Hong Kong with the goal of sparking cross-cultural dialogue.

Tagore’s foray into the gallery world was as at the New York Pace Wildenstein Gallery where he acted as a director. Before opening his own galleries, he also served as a consultant for the United Nations, the Museum of Modern Art, The Peggy Guggenheim Foundation, Venice, the Metropolitan Museum and the National Gallery of Modern Art in New Delhi.

Today the Oxford-educated curator scours the globe to find art that is meaningful and significant. His galleries carry a mix of diasporic artists and ones who engage in conversation between East and West. “Why show world art?” he prompts. “Because we live in a world city, I am trying to show these impulses that exist.” Tagore is unconcerned with what is seen as hip and trendy. Rather, he is drawn to art which he describes as endearing with longevity and a lasting power.



Among his impressive lineup of artists is Natvar Bhavsar, an Indian artist who moved to New York in the late 1960s. Without laying a finger onto the canvas, Bhavsar creates mesmerising paintings as he sifts layer upon layer of bright dry pigments onto surfaces forming radiant fields of colour.

Another compelling Tagore artist is Sohan Qadri, who has been described as a modern tantric. The Copenhagen-based Qadri says he paints in meditative states: “I start from emptiness, then the two emptinesses (mine and that of the paper) communicate”. His process begins by saturating paper in dye and once it is swollen with liquid, he rhythmically scores the surface.

Not only does Tagore showcase thoughtful artistic projects but he also uses his gallery spaces as a cultural hub for poetry, dance performances, book launches, theatre and film. Stretching beyond the art world, the gallerist founded the Tagore Foundation International which disperses ten scholarships to disadvantaged students across the globe each year. Philanthropist, Tagore says that charitable missions have always been important in his family. “My art is much more of a spiritual vehicle and the idea is to plough it back into the system!”

www.sundaramtagore.com

