

it's friday!

The Sotheby's-backed India Art Summit establishes Delhi's place among the art capitals of the world

A NEW MART FOR INDIAN ART

by Archana

INDIA finally gets its own art fair. For long, movers and shakers of the Indian art world have hopped all over the globe visiting and attending fairs but there's one now right at Pragati Maidan. As the first-ever three-day India Art Summit gets underway today, there is an aesthetic buzz at the sprawling exhibition space of IPTO (India Trade Promotion Organisation).

As far as the pre-event hype is concerned, the organiser, Hammer MS & L, a communications and marketing company, has succeeded in doing all the right things, including keeping M.F. Husain out of the whole exercise, to ensure that the maiden art fair in India doesn't come under any attack by the fundamentalists (who shooed Husain into exile two years ago over his paintings of Hindu goddesses in nude). Though the arrangements have been given a thumbs-up by many participating galleries, it's a shame that an event, supported by the Ministry of Culture and the renowned auction house Sotheby's has succeeded in keeping away the most well-known modern Indian master.

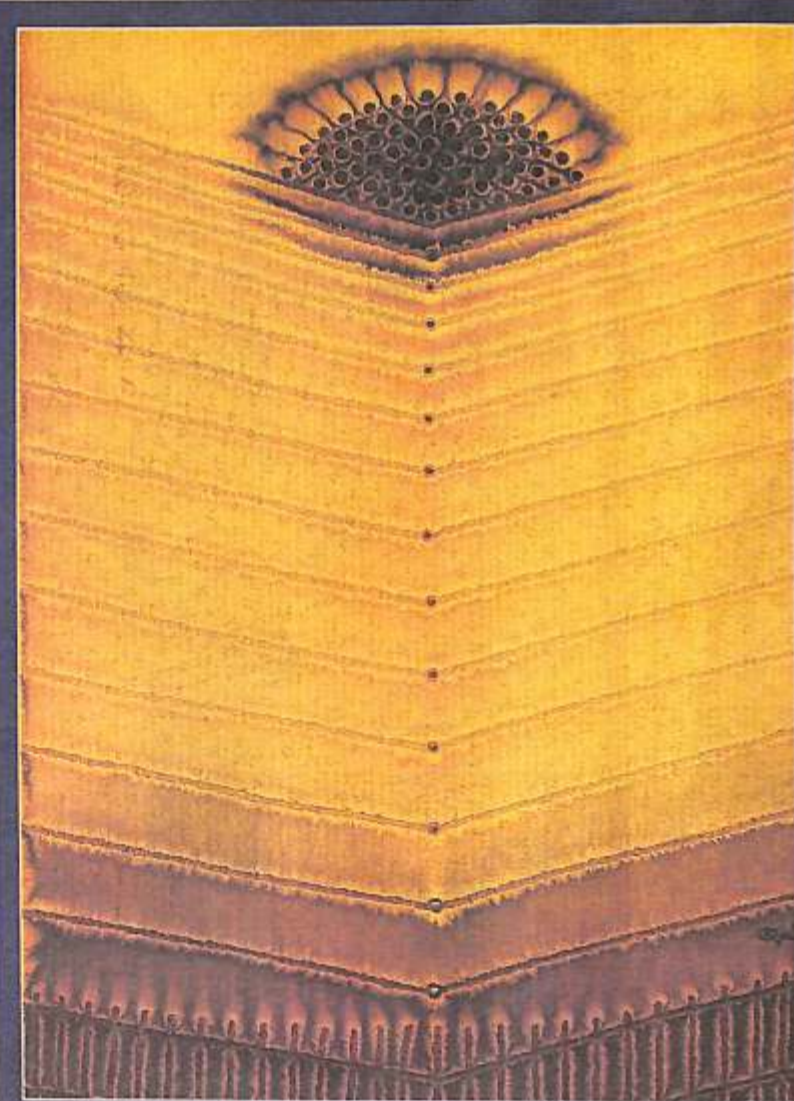
What does an art fair mean to a country? There are many answers to that question, most important being that art in India, which has been riding a crest for quite a few years now, has finally moved to the next level. An art fair attended by buyers, sellers, connoisseurs and the simply curious, is the obvious corollary to a growing art market. All the established art centres of the world boast of a fair to which millions flock to sample and buy art, interact with artists, brainstorm on various issues and of course, have an arty party.

And now that the first move has been made, trust more to happen on the theme. India's second art fair, being organised by Concern India, will be held in Mumbai from September 22 to 25.

The only thing that may be missing in this maiden fair in India is, perhaps, enough international participation, as is the case with established fairs abroad. Says Neha Kripal, Associate Summit Director, "It is, indeed, chiefly an Indian display. Since this is first attempt in India, we wanted to start small and focus on quality rather than on numbers. We received over 90 applications from all over the country and abroad out of which we short-listed 35. Again, as we prepared the show only in the past few months, a lot of galleries from abroad have not been able to participate. But this is first attempt and we hope to have more variety in the second edition next year." Out of a total of 35 participating galleries, only three are non-Indians. They are Art 18/21, Emerging World Art and Rob Dean Art, all from UK.

Sharan Apparao of Apparao Galleries, Chennai, who is participating in the India Art Summit and has earlier attended art fairs in Singapore and London, says "that more international participation in future will definitely lend a competitive edge to the art scenario in India. The scope of our market is quite small all right now and there are also import duties related issues as far as exchange of art is concerned. Hopefully, when we will compete with art dealers from abroad in future fairs, we will be able to work harder and lend professionalism to our functioning." Apparao is showcasing six contemporary artists at her stall at the fair.

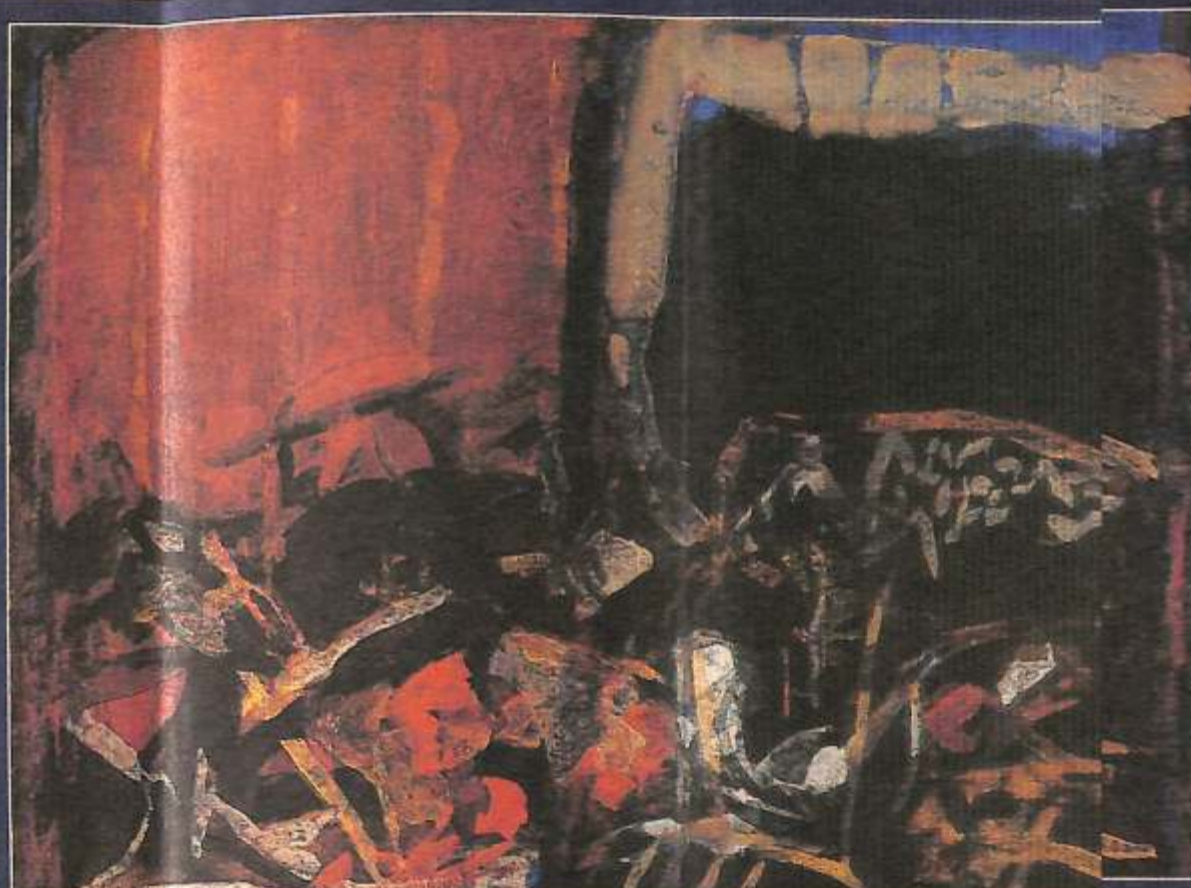
Sunaina Anand of Art Alive Gallery, a regular at fairs abroad agrees with Apparao on the issue of international participation. She says, "International Art Basel (in Switzerland) and French International Contemporary Art Fair in Paris, among others, and they are some of the best organised events in the world. But having an India-centric fair is a positive development for our country as it will bring



The Summit will showcase the work of young and unexposed as well as older, acclaimed artists. Connoisseurs, for instance, will get to sample the work of the renowned Copenhagen-based artist, Sohan Qadri, 76 (above)



This untitled canvas (left) by Manjunath Kamath, 36, will be part of the Gallery Espace showcase at the Summit. Delhi-based Kamath, who was born in Mangalore, is a rising star on the art horizon.



(Above) Paris-based S.H. Raza, 86, one of the masters who's the current toast of the auction circuit, will also be represented at the three-day Summit through his canvases



(Above) Journey-I, an acrylic on canvas by 32-year-old Ram Balli Chauthan, will be part of Delhi's The Mint gallery stall

(Right) The canvases of the late F. N. Souza (2) are expected to be among the biggest draws at the Summit

(Left) Painting by Murali Cheeroth, which will be showcased as part of the Metropolis And The Self group show by Art Alive gallery



Happy to be there

Various issues affecting the art world, like that of fakes, can be sorted out only when we have a common platform for gallery owners, art dealers and artists to interact. Such summits help collectors see a bigger variety of artists as represented by the galleries from across the country. We are using this opportunity to highlight our future auctions.



Vikram Bachhawat
Emami Chisel Art, Kolkata

Though there isn't much international participation at the India Art Summit, it is a good beginning. I hope it will develop into a more broad-based fair in the years to come. When we have more international competition, we'll tend to focus more on producing quality work. I hope this Summit gets an important place in our art calendar.



Sharan Apparao
Apparao Galleries, Chennai

This is the first time that I'm participating in an art fair and I hope to get to learn more about art. I am even looking forward to attending various discussion sessions as many important artists and curators are going to share their views. I'll be showcasing works by Riyas Komu, Viveek Sharma and Murali Cheeroth at the Summit.



Ashna Singh Jaipuria
Viart Gallery, New Delhi

I hope many collectors, especially new ones, will visit our stall. It is a good opportunity for even those just curious about art. The best thing about having a fair in India is that we will get to know about the work happening in other parts of the country, all under one roof. I only wish Pragati Maidan didn't wear such a dilapidated look.



Ambika Berry
Sanskriti Gallery, Kolkata

Highlights of the Summit

- M.F. Husain will be conspicuous by his absence. The artist, who was forced into exile by religious fundamentalists two years back, has been kept away from the event supported by the Ministry of Culture. The move is the result of a tacit understanding between the event organiser, Hammer MS&L, and galleries.
- As many as 35 galleries are participating in the Summit - 32 are Indian. The remaining three are from UK - Art 18/21 (Norwich), Emerging World Art and Rob Dean Art (London).
- On Day Two, the discussions will focus on the development of art and the art market. The first will feature Anjolie Ela Menon, Rajiv Lochan of NGMA, art critics Gayatri Sinha, Deepak Ananth and Geeta Kapur, Pooja Sood of Khoj, Abhay Sardesai of Art India, Deborah Swallow of Courtauld Institute of Art, London and Robert Storr from Yale University.
- Peter Nagy of Nature Morte, Arun Vadehra of Vadehra Art, Hugo Welhe of Christie's, Henry Sneyd of Sotheby's and Philip Hoffman of the Fine Art Fund Group will talk on the market.

about Indian art. That is all I'm looking forward to doing at the Summit." He will be showcasing a selection of established and upcoming contemporary artists.

THIS IS also the first participation ever at an art fair for Sanskriti Gallery of Kolkata, an established name in the field. Ambika Berry of the gallery, who visited the Dubai Art Fair earlier this year, feels that this will spur interest in Indian artists to understand how the art market functions in other countries. "I'm hoping to get many collectors and curators at the stall, including several new ones who may come simply out of curiosity," says Berry, who like several others, is looking forward to participating in the upcoming Shanghai Art Fair, being held from September 10 to 13. Each participating gallery is presenting a

set of artists, the number of which may vary from three to a dozen. Informs Kripal, "We have worked on the same model which other fairs work on. We invited the galleries and they in turn, have brought in a set of artists they would like to feature. Since most of the participating galleries have never participated in a fair before, we gave out a set of guidelines - we asked them to come with a tightly-curated show with fewer artists, to have artists that hang well together, we told them about the size and weight of canvases as they would hang on make-shift walls and so on." Electra, the company that produces Dubai Art Fair has handled production for India Art Summit too. The variety of works on display includes paintings, sculptures, photographs, prints, drawings, installations and mixed media and video works. Besides a general display of works of art, other components of the fair include a day-long expert speaker session and panel discussion on various issues concerning art

today. Titled Art Forum, this will be held on August 23, and will have discussions on two main themes - Development Of Art and Art Market. There will be a total of nine speakers on the former topic, including artist, Anjolie Ela Menon, Rajiv Lochan, Director of the National Gallery of Modern Art, Robert Storr, Dean, Yale University School of Art and curator/critic Gayatri Sinha among others. A total of five speakers will dwell on the subject of art market including Peter Nagy of Gallery Nature Morte, Arun Vadehra of Vadehra Art, Hugo Welhe from Christie's, Henry Howard Sneyd from Sotheby's and Philip Hoffman of the Fine Art Fund Group. India Art Summit is on at Hall No. 8 and 9, Pragati Maidan, from August 22-24. Interested people will have to buy a Rs 200 ticket at the venue to gain entry. It is valid for all the three days. For more details, log on to www.indiaartsummit.com archana.khare@mailtoday.in