

Christie's sale of South Asian masters to fetch \$7 mn

Christie's sale of South Asian Modern and Contemporary Art here June 11 will feature 112 works including noted Indian artists like F.N. Souza and Tyeb Mehta. It is expected to fetch more than 3.7 million pounds (over \$7 million).

The works, including those offered from the Harmony Art Foundation in association with Barclays Wealth, will also feature artists from Pakistan.

Highlights include Souza's 'Birth' (1955, estimate - 600,000 to 800,000 pounds) and Tyeb Mehta's Untitled (Figure on Rickshaw) (1984, estimate - 300,000 to 500,000 pounds) which are museum quality masterpieces and timeless examples of 20th century classic Modern styles. It will also feature contemporary works such as Subodh Gupta's Untitled (2007, estimate - 300,000 to 500,000 pounds).

'Birth' is a masterpiece by Souza, the founder of the Progressive Artists Group. This painting exemplifies the artistic essence of Souza and is his most important work to come to the auction. The property of a private American Collection, this painting was submitted for The Guggenheim Painting Award in 1958 and was also part of the London Commonwealth Institute of Art's 'Indian Painting Now' touring exhibition in 1965.

Mehta's Untitled (Figure on Rickshaw), part of his iconic Rickshaw series, underscores the anonymity and isolation of the common labourers. His paintings reflect his own disillusionment with the world around him. The powerful content of Mehta's works is heightened by his unique formal treatment of the canvas. As with Souza's 'Birth', this painting played an important part in the development of Indian art and is museum quality. The work is likely to attract competitive bidding.

Another key work is Rameshwar Broota's 'Havaldar -III' (1980, (estimate - 90,000 to 120,000 pounds). This painting reflects Broota's visual transition from his earlier ironic 'Gorilla Man' to his 'Primordial Man', who symbolizes the universal substance of the human being. This was executed during the period when Broota discovered his signature technique of layering flat monochromatic pigment and then scratching and scraping at the surface with the sharp edge of a broken blade.

Other strong modern works include M.F. Husain's Untitled (1970, estimate - 120,000 to 160,000 pounds), and 'Gandhi - Man of Peace' (1969, estimate - 100,000 to 150,000 pounds), as well as S.H. Raza's 'Rajput House' (1965-1966, estimate - 80,000 to 120,000 pounds) and Sadequain's Untitled (1985, estimate - 20,000 to 25,000 pounds).

Among contemporary works, Subodh Gupta's Untitled (2007) is the star lot offered and is estimated to realize between 300,000-500,000 pounds. Epitomizing his artistic vocabulary, which is firmly rooted in the vernacular of everyday India, this work is made of stainless steel and stainless steel kitchen utensils - milk pails, washing buckets, tiffin boxes, chapatti tongs and daal strainers. Gupta sees these gleaming mass-market commodities as symbolizing India's struggle for an equilibrium between urban/rural, wealth/poverty, socialism/capitalism and religion/secularism.

Ravinder Reddy's sculpture 'Head' (est 60,000-80,000 pounds) explores the traditional and the contemporary in both theme and material. It is made from fibreglass and enamel paint rather than traditional materials such as clay, plaster and gold leaf.

Ashim Purkayastha, 'Attached Wings' (2004, est 40,000-60,000 pounds), is a stunning mixed media work which has been exhibited in [Mumbai](#) at the Sakshi Gallery's dedicated show in 2004 and also in London at the Aicon Gallery's New Wave-Contemporary Art from India show in 2007.

Another contemporary work is T.V. Santhosh's Untitled (2005, est 30,000-50,000 pounds), Justin Ponmany's 'Staple Agony-II (Plastic Memory)' (2006, est 30,000-50,000 pounds) and Anita Dube's 'Offering' (2000, est 5,000-7,000 pounds).

Christie's will also host an exhibition of 32 works from The Private Collection of Tina and Anil Ambani, June 10 for four days at South Kensington.

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