

Christie's Hong Kong sale to feature 27 Indian works

Christie's spring 2008 sales of Asian contemporary art in Hong Kong May 24-25 will feature a selection of 27 significant works by Indian artists along with those of their counterparts from China, Japan and South Korea.

The inaugural evening sale of Asian contemporary art on May 24 is a first for the category worldwide and an eagerly-awaited new element to the sale series in Hong Kong this season.

It will feature a selection of top-tier works by the likes of Subodh Gupta, Jitish Kallat, Anju Dodiya and Atul Dodiya. A day sale May 25 will offer a further selection of works from these and other noteworthy Indian contemporary artists, including Shibu Natesan, T.V. Santhosh, Justin Ponmany, Jagannath Panda, Hema Upadhyay, Baiju Parthan and Talha Rathore, and the duo of Jiten Thukral and Sumir Tagra.

The Indian modern and contemporary art category has grown exponentially, with increasing global demand seen in every one of Christie's sales in New York, London and Hong Kong.

Since launching modern and contemporary Indian art sales in New York in 2000, Christie's worldwide sales in this category have grown from \$656,000 to \$36 million in 2007.

Among the highlights is Atul Dodiya's 'Woman from Kabul', estimated at \$114,400- \$153,800. Regarded as one of the leading artists of his generation, Atul Dodiya has become a widely recognised figurehead in contemporary art, influencing many of India's burgeoning younger artists.

Born in and still residing in Mumbai, the culture and history of India plays an important role in shaping the barrage of images infused in his works. Created soon after the US declared war on Afghanistan, 'Woman from Kabul' comments on the suffering and devastation borne by the common Afghan during this time. The stylised figure in this work reminds one of the medieval scribe from his 'Tearscape' series who warns us of our actions - good or bad - and their eventual historical interpretation.

Gupta draws heavily from his own experience in culling material for his art, recasting traditional objects of Indian culture in contemporary media and context. In 'Untitled (Pot)', Gupta documents the daily life of the bazaars with his photo-realistic rendition of a vessel stall. It has been estimated at \$192,300-\$256,400.

Filtering through his cache of symbols, the stainless steel vessel is an iconic emblem of Gupta's work and epitomises his ability to find tension and irony in the mundane. The artist regularly employs the stainless steel bucket and cooking implements, using forms in both painting and as a kind of Duchampian readymade. He recasts the pots, dishes, and pans in a number of incarnations.

Also from Gupta is 'Saat Samundar Paar X' (Across the Seven Seas), the 10th work in a series undertaken by the artist on the theme of migration and the return home. It has been estimated at \$192,300-\$256,400.

Luggage, luggage carts and airport conveyor belts become overarching metaphors for the hopes and dreams invested in these journeys as well as the psychological baggage borne by the migrant

worker vacillating between homesickness, alienation and assimilation.

From Anju Dodiya come 'Circus of Insomnia', estimated at \$115,400-\$153,800. Anju Dodiya includes aspects of self-portraiture in many of her works. The protagonists of her meticulous watercolours, intense charcoal drawings and sumptuous acrylic paintings on upholstery and mattresses are all imaginary alter-egos cast into a variety of whimsical, theatrical and sometimes violent scenarios.

Masquerade and theatre are central motifs, and objects and personas from these imaginary realms - elaborate masks, costumes, magicians, actors, and harlequins - all permeate the paintings. Her compositions and imagery are drawn from a wide spectrum of sources ranging from Medieval and Renaissance painting and tapestry, Japanese Ukiyo-e prints to European films and mass media images.

Also of note is Kallat's 'Rickshawpolis 9', a cacophonous rendition of the artist's urban environment in Mumbai, which is meant to convey pure sensory overload. It is estimated at \$64,100-\$89,700.

The rickshaw in Kallat's title symbolises the old India. In the new 21st-century order, with a rapidly changing India marked by rampant consumerism, environmental decay and overcrowding, these ubiquitous vehicles compete with buses, trucks, people, cows and cars in an ever-growing swell of traffic. The exhaust fumes, the congestion, the daily bumps and accidents render urban life dysfunctional, even as the population swells with more arrivals from the countryside.

The painting 'Rickshawpolis 9' is mounted on bronze sculptures, re-creations of gargoyles from Mumbai's Chhatrapati Shivaji Terminus. These humorous gargoyles symbolise the bystander or the artist himself, a daily witness to this constant clamour of the streets of Mumbai.

(© IANS / India eNews)