

## Bringing art auction to southern India

A rare M.F. Husain for just \$35,000? Or a 1991 Souza for \$35,000 and a 1948 Souza for \$50,000 or a recent Raza for \$17,500? Yes, and that too, in [Chennai](#) and Bangalore.

For the inconspicuous but discerning collector, Bangalore-based auction house Bid and amp; Hammer is quietly bringing under the hammer an assorted ensemble of works of some famous Indian painters, beginning with very reasonable prices.

Their auction titled 'The Enduring Palette' will happen in [Bangalore](#) June 15 but was previewed in Chennai this week.

'Our effort is to bring art to buyers in southern India. We plan to hold 5 to 10 such auctions every year,' M. Maher Dadha, chairman and managing director of Bid and amp; Hammer, told IANS.

This is the second auction by the art auction house. The first was held in January this year with a preview in Delhi.

'Places like Bangalore are waking up to art as investment,' Dadha said, promising that such auctions would take place in Chennai too. No longer is [Mumbai](#) and Delhi the haven of curators, collectors and critics.

The auction will showcase a line drawing by India's costliest painter, done in 1988 for the Sanyogitaganj Higher Secondary School in Indore, where Husain had been a student in 1929. The 20-year-old work had to be relined, the signature is a bit smudged, but the emotional factor attached to this piece by Husain makes the work more than just an M.F. Husain - it is a rarity that any collector would like to snatch up.

Dadha clarified that the company did not own any of the 83 paintings that are to be sold. 'Parties who bring us the paintings are ready to sell, and we know some of them are at very low prices,' he said.

An oil on canvas by J. Swaminathan done in the 1960s and gifted to Santosh Sehrai was brought to the auction house for as low a price as Rs.500,000 but 'valued by our experts at about Rs.3 million to Rs.3.5 million'.

'We have to advise the seller on how they are undervaluing,' says Dadha. Of course, under such circumstances, if the seller gets twice the amount they are more than happy. If such a painting is finally auctioned at Rs.4 million, it means a huge profit for the auction house as well, explains Dadha, saying small auction houses have begun to do well in India now.

The experts panel that judges the paintings has noted South Asia expert Savita Apte, who has earlier worked with European auction houses and galleries.

'The Enduring Palette' brings together 91 years of spectacular work of Indian artists, spanning eventful moments in history, says Moutushi Chakraborti, researcher and curator. For example, the collection includes four of Ravi Kashi's intense work.

Noted southern artist K.M. Adimoolam's 1965 water colour has been valued at up to \$10,000 as a 2007 work, a little before his death.

It also includes a few from the Bengal Revivalists, a wash painting by Abanindranath Tagore, a Jamini Roy not in perfect condition but still valued at \$15,000, a 1957 Jogen Chowdhury valued at \$45,000-50,000.

A rare oil on canvas of Mahatma Gandhi, by Ramchandra Tandon, the translator of Jawaharlal Nehru's 'Discovery of India', has been estimated at \$6,250-8,750. The painting is so skilful that it even shows the fine hair on the head and body. Not many know that Tandon painted.

Said Sarah Abraham, in her 80s, the well-known Chennai-based collector who has been collecting since her 20s, 'This palette holds promise. People looking for the rare item may chance upon it here, though not all the works in this collection are noteworthy. But if you are searching, this may be the place where you can search.'

*Papri Sri Raman ( © IANS / India eNews)*