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AUCTION | Sarju Kaul

Indian art by smaller masters is London hit

London: Indian art is the flavour of the season. Not just the established artists like M.F. Husain, F.N. Souza, Tyeb Mehta, A. Ramachandran, V.S. Gaitonde, Akbar Padamsee, Satish Gujral and S.H. Raza, serious collectors are keen on the emerging talent in the younger generation too.

The auction market for Indian art alone, according to Bonhams, has almost tripled from £26 million in 2006 to its current rate of £75 million.

To celebrate the 60th anniversary of Indian Independence, *Tehelka* organised an auction of the works of emerging artists here on Monday.

The Emerging Indian Masters in the Art for Freedom line-up was auctioned at Asia House by Bonhams auctioneer James Knight on Monday.

The highlights of Monday's auction were some unique collaborations between the emerging artists and Indian and British celebrities from diverse fields.

Explaining the concept that led to these unique collaborations, restorer and historian Aman Nath said, "It's not a well-known fact, but artists collaborate a lot to charity. And if a celebrity can add to a piece of art by collaboration, then it's a worthwhile process."

A collaboration can work in many ways, he added. It can be a process where the celebrity and the artist spend some time together and develop the piece, but it is rare.

In other cases, the celebrity can send a few hours with the artist and contribute a bit to the painting. Sometimes, due to lack of time and other reasons the celebrity can just endorse a painting after it has been painted by the artist.

Explaining the process of pairing an artist with a celebrity for a collaboration, Mr Nath said: "In some cases, the pair knows each other personally and take it from there. But mostly, many don't know each other. It's much like an arranged marriage. What the facilitators so is to try and pair up people with similar personalities. Some celebrities insist on working with artists who they admire."

However, whatever the type of collaboration, an endorsement by a celebrity adds a buzz to the painting and that helps a charity cause, Mr Nath said.

The best option in a collaboration is to get the celebrity to paint something on a canvas, he added. "A painter can always incorporate that into the final concept."

The first part of the auction, sale of 35 paintings, mostly works by established masters and a few collaborations, took place on last Thursday.

The highlight of the first auction was a "live collaboration" on a painting by M.F. Husain and filmstar Shah Rukh Khan. The painting was auctioned for £160,000.

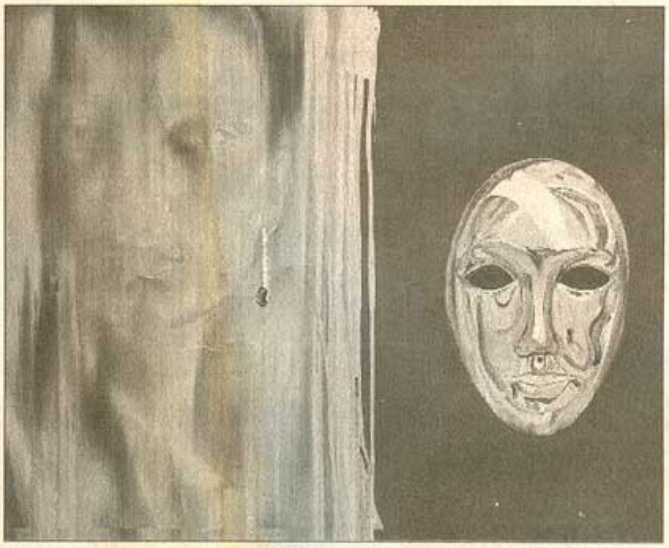
As the works of legends like Husain, Tyeb Mehta and Satish Gujral command expensive prices in the world market, buzz has shifted to emerging artists like Partha Shaw, Seema Kohli, Subrata Kundu and Vasundhara Tiwari Broota.

The proceeds of the sale will go towards Tehelka. The artists, who contributed their paintings for the auction, too will get a percentage from the proceeds.

Elated by the response to both the auctions and two-day seminar, Challenge of India, hosted in association with Asia House at the Royal Society of Arts, editor-in-chief Tarun Tejpal, when asked if the auction and the forum would be an annual event, said that it is likely.

The response to Monday's auction was amazing. Works by Abdul Qadir, Ashoke Mullick, Krishnendu Porel, Lalitha Lajmi (filmmaker Guru Dutt's sister), Laila Khan Rajpal, Mohan Malviya, Neeraj Bhakshi, Nupur Kundu, Partha Shaw (painter Lalu Prasad Shaw's son) got great response from the buyers.

Others who were appreciated were Seema Kohli's collaboration with young British lawyer Nipun Gupta, Somenath Maity's collaboration with Avtar Lit, Vasundhara Tiwari Broota, Veer Munshi, Vishal Joshi and Tehelka's in-house artist journalist Sankarshan Thakur.



CELEBRATING INDIA: Paintings from The Emerging Indian Masters in the Art for Freedom line-up at the auction. The painting above is titled *Naika*. ASIAN AGE photographs

