

# Rubric



gallery-g

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## EYEING LONDON

April in London: it was spring and the flowers were out in bloom all over town. Outdoors the air was crisp and indoors, as always, there was lots happening. Few cities do art exhibitions and also the art of the exhibition as well as this, the world's most-visited one does, offering as many cultural inducements to stay indoors as there are horticultural and scenic ones out.

For me, the variety of shows on really left me spoilt for choice though I finally saw some of the most intriguing ones – at the Tate Modern and Christie's, as well as one at the Wellcome Gallery.

– Gitanjali Maini

(Above) London Eye (below left) Tate Modern Gallery (right) Sonia Delaunay *Sleeping Girl* 1907



# TATE OF THE ART

Just to approach Tate Modern is an eye-opener. Its sheer size, precise proportions and clarity of silhouette punctuated with a single, perpendicular tower dominate the skyline in the Bankside area of London near the Shakespeare Globe Theatre.

A former oil power station that was converted into an art gallery, Tate Modern's transformation is an object lesson in how public spaces can be meaningfully redesigned so they outlive their original function, but still retain their structural character. (The first of the Tate

Group's galleries, Tate Britain, was once a prison.)

Its soaring Turbine Hall foyer, dramatic enough in itself, is perhaps the only interior in the city that can showcase installations of the scale of Anish Kapoor's monumental horn-shaped trio, *Marsyas* (front cover lower left).



Turbine Hall, Tate Gallery

## ART-DESIGN CROSSOVER



### SONIA DELAUNAY

The show I saw at Tate Modern was of Sonia Delaunay (1885-1979). She was a multi-disciplinary abstract artist and a key figure in the Parisian avant-garde of the 1900's. With her husband Robert, Delaunay pioneered the Simultanism movement. (This had to do with simultaneous contrast, where colours look different depending

on the colours around them. For example, a grey will look lighter on a dark background than it does on a light one). The Delaunays geometricized form and focused on creating rhythm, motion and depth by overlapping patches of bright colour:

Delaunay was born to a Jewish Ukrainian family. At seven, she went to live with an uncle and aunt in St Petersburg, Russia, who gave her a privileged, cultured upbringing. Her childhood memories, though, of the bright clothes at Ukrainian peasant weddings remained a vivid influence: 'About 1911, I (made) for my son, who'd just been born, a blanket composed of bits of fabric like those I had seen in the houses of Russian peasants. The arrangement of the pieces seemed to evoke cubist conceptions and we then tried to apply the same process to other objects and paintings.'



Sonia Delaunay **Simultaneous Dresses (The three women) 1925**

Delaunay designed sets and costumes for plays and movies, and illustrated a *Vogue* magazine cover; she had her own interiors and fashion boutique, and a textiles label which sold all over the world.

*'I always changed everything around me... I made my first white walls so our paintings would look better. I designed my furniture; I have lived my art.'*

## CHRISTIE'S: CHINESE FINE DINE

**A**t Christie's I was lucky to see the setting up of a June show on Chinese antiquities: they don't usually encourage walk-in viewing. That apart, it's so important to discover as much of our combined heritages that's left in public view before it disappears into private collections, or what's really monumentally tragic, criminal, even – the way the 3,000 year-old city of Palmyra in the Syrian desert is being destroyed right now.

Anyway, looking at beautiful things like this Chinese porcelain bowl at Christie's always gives me something to hope for. It's from the Qianlong period (1736-1795), decorated after the famous 1748 painting *O the Roast*

I found her work fascinating in itself and how it bridged the divide between art and fashion which is something that preoccupies us as well now when traditional boundaries and parameters have become so blurred. Shows like this encourage us to look at things afresh and avoid the easy categorisation which is all too common these days.



*Chinese famille rose armorial punch bowl, circa 1750-55*

*Beef of Old England'* ('*The Gate of Calais*') by British painter William Hogarth. As Christie's says, an engraved version of his painting would have been sent to China for artists to copy, which they did with great accuracy.

## WHODUNIT THE FORENSICS EXHIBITION: WELLCOME COLLECTION, LONDON.

**A**nother exhibition I saw was *Forensics: the Anatomy of Crime*, at the Wellcome Gallery, on till 21st June.

I think everyone's perennially fascinated with crime, murder and detection partly because the books, movies and TV shows we see invariably have the solutions neatly worked out well in time for the ending. It's very reassuring, this tidiness in an untidy world. It makes us feel a bit better about how things in real life aren't quite so simple. This exhibition explores the history, science and art of forensic medicine reminding you very clearly just how precise crime detection really is.

(Below) *H. R. Mack, Lady in the Bar*  
(Bottom left) *The Nutshell Studies of Unexplained Death*



Is this art? In a way, yes because routine forensic work uses artistic techniques: whether it's the sketching used to draw portraits of perpetrators or victims, photographs of a crime scene which, as shown here, was pioneered by a late 19th century French criminologist and photographer Alphonse Bertillon, or miniature sets of crime scenes used in some police forces as teaching tools.

This apart, there's the fact that *Forensics* certainly touched on a subject that I feel very strongly about: that curating, mounting an exhibition, is an art in itself, something we don't give enough attention to here in India.

*Articles on this spread: Gitanjali Maini*



# GENRE QUICK GUIDE:

## MODERN ART

### MODERNISM

**M**odernism was the breakaway from a traditional forms and approaches to art and a search for new modes of expression. It ushered in a period of experimentation in the arts from the late 19th to the mid-20th century, particularly in the years following World War I.

It can be said to have begun with the painter Édouard Manet (1832-1883), who, beginning in the 1860s, discarded the prevalent notions of perspective and subject matter, increasingly focusing more on line, form, and colour.

The avant-garde movements that followed – including Impressionism, Abstraction, Cubism, and Surrealism – are generally defined as Modernist.

### IMPRESSIONISM



Impressionism originated in Paris in the late 19th century. Impressionist paintings rarely use the colour black. For a darker tone, complementary colours are mixed and used. A lot of importance is given to natural

lighting. In the days much before colour photographs, Impressionist paintings were considered as an alternative to photography.

### ABSTRACTION

It's a real product of radical thought. It is art that illustrates anything, but not in its truest of forms. People, things and scenery are represented on the canvas by colour or shapes or both. An artist might augment the shape with simple exaggerations. Colour also represents emotion.

### EXPRESSIONISM

This type of painting relates to emotions and feelings;

either as an expression of the artist's own or it could also be intended to evoke an empathetic response from the viewer.

### CUBISM

In this style, geometrical solids play a crucial role. The final picture will be a blend of the actual form of the object and a geometrical shape. As Post-Impressionist Paul Cezanne (1839-1906) put it, 'Everything in nature takes its form from the cone, the sphere and the cylinder.'



### SURREALISM

It includes writing and many styles of visual artworks. The primary feature is its element of surprise. Illogically placing two abstract concepts together is another feature of Surrealism: this is known as juxtaposition.



## EASTERN ART

### CHINESE

This involves techniques used in calligraphy and it is the oldest artistic tradition in the world. Oil is never used, but coloured inks are, on silk and paper. **Gong Bi** – meaning meticulous – uses precise and detailed brushstrokes and **Shui-Mo** – meaning ink-and-wash, basically painting with watercolours – are the two techniques mainly used.



Artists look to capture the soul of the subject portrayed, the energy within and the Spirit as well, not just the appearance. Vibrant and extravagant colours are also kept in check.

Traditional Chinese painting, sometimes known as

voiceless poems, has six basic principles:

**Spirit Resonance:** The flow of energy without which, said Xie He, 6th century AD writer, art historian and critic, 'There was no need to look further.'

**Bone Method:** Brushwork and the link between handwriting and personality. Calligraphy was inseparable from painting.

**Correspondence to the Object:** Shape and line.

**Suitability to Type:** Applying colour – including layers and tones.

**Division and Planning:** Composition

**Transmission by Copying:** From works of – what was even then considered – antiquity.

## JAPANESE

Japanese painting, one of the oldest and most refined Japanese art forms, was influenced by indigenous aesthetics as well as Chinese art and, from about the 16th century onwards, there was an exchange of influences with Western art as well. Its schools of thought and styles included:

**Suibokuga** where artists only painted with black ink, a direct result of the influence of Chinese art and Buddhism;

**Kano**, another school of art whose tenets were in direct conflict with Suibokuga. Kano encouraged the use of vibrant colours;

**Shijo** which produced paintings more cynical and realistic in tone and

**Nanga** that developed in 18th century Japan, distinguished by subjects like landscapes, flowers and Chinese cultural influences.



# SHOULD ARTISTS FRAME WORKS?

Framing usually makes the painting look much more professional and finished to the average viewer but it might not always be the better option. The only way to ascertain if framing is needed or not is to look at some of the advantages and disadvantages of framing. In the end however, it's but a personal choice.

## ADVANTAGES

When a picture is framed, the artwork seems more enhanced. The picture sometimes comes to life, you could say. Sometimes, unframed works could seem off-putting for some buyers, who are looking for 'finished' artworks.

Framed paintings are much sturdier and less likely to fall. It's much easier to sell art that is framed. Framed paintings sell at a higher rate. The frame adds value to the painting. (Beauty is in the eye of the beholder; so it's personal).

## DISADVANTAGES

Sometimes it's hard to find the right frame, as it may not go with the artwork itself. Sometimes the buyer might change the frame altogether to suit his fancy. You as an artist would charge him for the frame as well, but it just saves the time it takes to frame the artwork if the buyer

is going to change it anyway.

Framing can be expensive, so it's wise to choose the right frame, which is not as easy as it sounds. If the frame is not right, it would distract the viewer from the actual artwork itself.

Articles on this spread: Aakash Menon



To frame or not: in this case, I personally like the unframed one better





# THE INDIAN COLLECTOR



Art collectors are very different. I'm not talking about individual art collectors who vary in their

likes or dislikes from one to another, but about art collectors from a particular country or region.

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## A UNIQUE PROFILE

Art collectors in India, or just people who buy art here, are very different from people who buy art in America, Europe or anywhere else. This is on account of things like upbringing, culture, interests and lifestyles, especially with regard to the kind of homes they live in, among other considerations.

The size of the house. The wall space available. The average income of people here. Inflation. Prices of works. All these have a major influence on what art we as Indians buy here in India.

Most of what we buy, from the clothes we wear to the car we drive, though functional, also reflects our national or regional character. Art is no different. The art we buy is as much about who we are as it is about the artists who create it.

## MODERN WORLD

Indians have now started buying more contemporary art while people abroad have now started being influenced by Tanjore or Mughal paintings. People's interests develop or change overtime. People who are born and brought up in India might have spent the majority of their lives appreciating works that come from elsewhere in the world. So as time goes by, circumstances change, and what we buy also changes.

Indians are now also investing in Surreal art, or Surrealism, for their households

We've noticed that

Indian art collectors are getting more modern in their preferences. Nowadays they'd much rather buy contemporary works by the rising stars for their new houses or offices than works by Indian or foreign old masters as they used to before. Apart from changes in taste, this can be attributed to changes in environment, globalisation, and even in some cases, consumerism.

## A SIGNIFICANT SHIFT

Many collectors of Indian art tend to be young and educated professionals. With the gradual shift in cultural upbringing and values, they have a better eye for aesthetic worth.



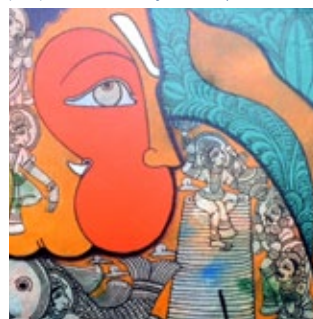
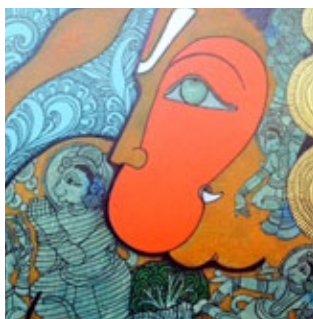
Many of them are considerably new to the art market, which is also why the profile is changing. As I mentioned above, more young and educated working professionals see it necessary to invest in art, not like their grandparents or even parents. These young individuals have been around

the world and have seen much of its best art, and hence there's a big shift in likes and dislikes. And these changes are of course never permanent. Collectors, like everything else in art, will always be in a state of constant change.

— Aakash Menon

At gallery g, we engage most with the new art collectors through our Artist Initiative Programme (AIP), where we foster up-and-coming artists. AIP provides the former access they might not otherwise have to the work of people like Sachin Jaltares (centre image) and Ramesh

Gorjala, (all other images), work that's modern, dynamic, affordable – and very collectible.



# CSR

We're always looking to see who in the next generation's going to carry the baton. Among our CSR associations this year was *Hooked On*, an initiative by three committed people whose ideals we endorse, as Silver Patrons of their summer arts programme:

## HOOKED ON SPORTS

**H**ooked On is an initiative that aims to show schoolchildren how holiday time can be meaningfully and enjoyably spent, discovering and developing aptitudes and skills in various forms of sport, and culture ranging from art to pop music.

**April '14.** *Hooked On* began as a high-concept summer sports camp, *Hooked On Sports*, for coaching and exposure to new sports as well as various art forms in a convenient five-hour, five-day-a-week format that could build friendships too. The curriculum was located in a context of quality coaching, venues, food, security and safety. The response was overwhelming – 100 children between the ages of 5 and 14 from both Indian and international schools – at two locations, Hebbal and Whitefield. The camp also attracted considerable corporate support.

## HOOKED ON ARTS

**April '15.** This year, *Hooked On* curated the first art camp of its kind in the country, in a similar format for a similar target audience. The agenda introduced participants to art, photography, theatre and music. They then collaborated, as a group, with local artists and performers, on canvases, learning the basics of photography, music genres old and new (there was a DJ session on mixing) and a foray into theatre.

Behind *Hooked On* are Roshini Thadani, of play activity area *Hide & Peek* and publisher of *Kid's Directory*; Suruchi Baljee, lawyer, and camps curator and Adhip Bhandary, who conducts football and cricket for three-to-17 year-olds, and sports programmes at international schools.



*Hook, line and sink (clockwise from top right): painting, photography (sink image), pottery, music lessons, summer easels*



# BUZZMUMBAI

## INDIA ART FESTIVAL 2015

The Indian Art Festival (IAF) is held every November in Mumbai. This year, its 5th, it's from the 26th to the 29th. It showcases modern and contemporary art and is held at Worli's Nehru Centre.

The ground floor will host art galleries' booths while the second floor will showcase individual artists.

In the last four editions, the IAF attracted a little more than a hundred thousand visitors. This year organisers expect more NRI's, executives, companies, sightseers, collectors, and students apart from the usual stakeholders.



Anupam Kher at last year's IAF

# BUZZBANG

**15 April '15 Taj West End.** *The Discerning Eye*, the first Saffronart live auction, demonstrated amply to Dinesh Vazirani, the man behind it, that the innumerable Bangalore hits for his gallery's online auctions were a sign that this city wanted more of Saffronart's eclectic mix of art and lifestyle product.

The art on auction ranged from S.H. Raza, M.F. Hussain, and K.G. Subramanyan to folk and tribal and there was jewelry and a sampling of Indian and international furniture design to round out the mix.

As Vazirani said, 'Bangalore is a discerning and interested market Saffronart wants to explore. There's a demand here that seeks a responsive art and lifestyle product resource and this successful auction is, we're sure, the first of many.'



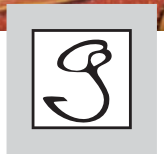
Painting: S.H. Raza

# LAST EYEFUL

We leave you with a quick look at some of Thota Vaikuntam's sumptuous, primary-coloured paintings, we've been showing in the gallery recently, one of which one sold last January. Born in 1942 in Andhra Pradesh, Vaikuntam is one of our most vivid stylists and his elaborate oeuvre is reminiscent of temple friezes and also the elaborate make-up of the theatre groups that he saw as a child.



Palettes, parrots: Vaikuntam luxuriant



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