

# Rubric



gallery g

ISSUE 12 MAY 2017

## TWELFTH NICETIES

And here's our twelfth issue. Many of you've been with us since our first issue three years ago, the others have joined us since and your interest has been the best motivation there could be.

As so often happens here at **gallery g** there's nonstop activity for a while and we then catch our breath and try to sum it all up in these eight pages. Rubric has therefore become a key part of our documenting process and, besides, we know you like hearing from us.

### AN EVENTFUL START

We began the year getting ready for Rukmini

Varma's show *Opulence and Eternity* and its attendant programmes (a feature's on the next page). From there we moved onto other projects, a couple of which are covered here.

We're also doing many more offsite curating projects where we work with builders, architects and the clients themselves to curate artworks for corporate and residential spaces. There's an increasing recognition that art doesn't just complement but, rather, amplifies an interior or exterior design concept.

### AFFIRMING – ART FOR ALL

Large-scale projects aside, individuals, too, now buy art for their living and work spaces. No longer is it seen as an indulgence, or a cultural posture: it's an integral part of living – not just painting and sculpture, but environmental genres that integrate with vertical gardens, for instance, and even newer technology-based genres like those that use LED light. There's something for everybody and that's as true of budgetary considerations as it is of the aesthetic ones.

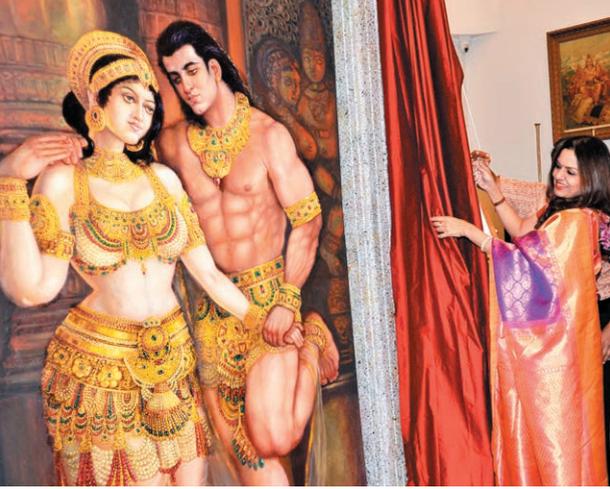
Art's many-faceted role is something that we've always believed in of course, so it's heartening that more and more people are acting on their convictions. Enjoy this issue too, please, and tell us so!

– Gitanjali Maini

### LADY WITH VIOLIN

We're thrilled and pleased to announce the arrival of this masterpiece by Raja Ravi Varma here at **gallery g**. Representative of the great artist at his most inspired, *Lady with Violin*'s been hailed by art experts like Shri Nanjundah Rao, K.K. Gupta and Rupika Chawla.





# ART ETERNAL

## RUKMINI VARMA'S TRIUMPHANT RETURN

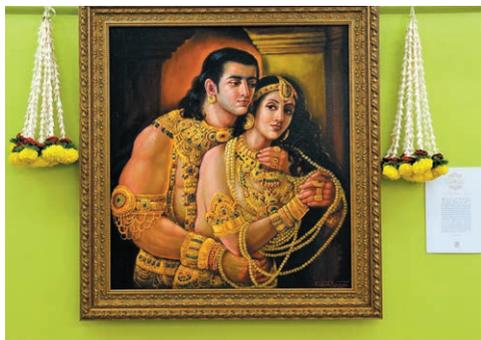
Rukmini Varma's first show since 1982 was much anticipated and, as such, an absolute triumph. A sumptuous opening, ten compelling larger-than-life canvases and *Thus Far*, a brief documentary on her work by Parvathi Menon, former Chief Producer and CEO of the Children's Film Society India. Three outreach programmes including an interview with Rukmini and a live portrait-painting session added dimension and excitement to her resumption of her public life.

*(Below) Plighting the Troth (below right) TEAM O&E: Gitanjali Maini, Parvathi Menon, Manu Pillai, Rukmini and Jay Varma*

*Measuring nine feet by six, The Emperor's Proposition, the keynote painting being unveiled by Guest of Honour Sangeeta Jindal. Chief Guest S M Krishna commissioned Rukmini Varma about thirty years ago to use Vijayanagar as a setting in a painting as she did in The Emperor's Proposition. The painting's frame evokes the period.*

Rukmini's last shows in 1982 were in Mumbai's Taj Mahal Hotel and Jehangir Art Gallery. Her hugely-acclaimed London exhibition was opened by Lord Mountbatten at India House in 1976. He asked her to paint him, but fate intervened when he was assassinated in 1979.

She now lives and works in Bangalore and her paintings hang in collections all over the world. Growing up amongst court painters and artists, Rukmini was also influenced by Rembrandt, Rubens and Caravaggio,





(Above and left) Joseph Dolderer, his model and a section of the audience at the live portrait painting outreach.  
(below) Dr.S.K Maini and a guest



as well as by her heritage. Self-taught, she calls her style Romantic Representative Realism where beauty is paramount.

The underlying intent is enhancement of the human form, with skin tones contrasting with jewelry and silk.

## GLITTERING

The preview on a Thursday evening in February was glittering, jampacked and very lively. There were the Chief Guest and former Chief Minister of Karnataka and Minister of External Affairs, S.M. Krishna and Guest of Honour Sangeeta Jindal, Chairperson JSW Foundation whose art and conservation initiatives, especially at Hampi, are widely admired. Art-lovers and Rukmini's family and friends, including her son Jay, from Philadelphia, (a well-known artist in his own right) turned out in strength.



Ivory Throne wrote, these were "strong, beautiful women, in scenes of charged sensuousness" with the cynosure being the painting of Vishnuvardhan and Shantala, twelfth-century emperor and empress of the Hoysalas, in poignant parting at the great Belur temple.

Manu Pillai chatted with Rukmini Varma at an outreach programme a few days later and Joseph Dolderer, the Philadelphia painter, painted a portrait in front of the invited audience at another: Rajender Maru, of the Karnataka Numismatic Society, spoke on *Coins from Bygone Realms*, coins from the eras the paintings were set in.

Gravitas and a good time: a rare combination. Rukmini Varma's engaging warmth had the audience charmed and made a scintillating start to 2017's event calendar; one that'll be long remembered.

(Bottom left to right) Manu Pillai and Rukmini Varma in conversation, with images from the early days; Nirupama Rao, former Foreign Secretary and Ambassador to the US and China, and Jay Varma; Gitanjali; Ritz Magazine's Aruna Radhakrishnan, unveils their February cover; Sudha Murthy with Rajender Maru; floral tribute





# SERGEI SHCHUKIN'S MASTERPIECE ICONS OF MODERN ART AT THE FONDATION LOUIS VUITTON PARIS

The immensely successful and just-concluded *Icons of Modern Art: Shchukin Collection* in Paris's Fondation Louis Vuitton, (on Avenue de Mahatma Gandhi, incidentally), was a landmark for many reasons.

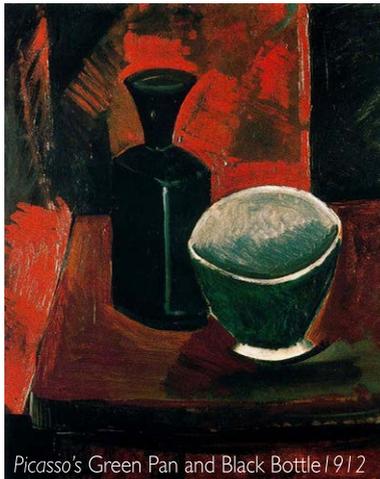
For one, it showcased one of the world's most important, but relatively unknown, collections owned by one of the early 20th century's greatest art patrons, Russian Sergei Shchukin, a collector of French Modern – mainly Impressionist and Post-Impressionist – art. Historically, the show also formed part of the energetic, centuries-old, Russian-French exchange of art's ideas and expressions.

## A COLLECTOR'S WORK

This was the first time these works were being collectively

(Above) *The Fondation*; (right) *Cornelius Krohn Portrait of Sergei Shchukin 1915*

shown outside Russia, where they'd been "nationalised" in 1918 after Shchukin fled Russia to live in Paris. The works were then hung at the State Museum of Modern Western Art until Stalin banned them as "bourgeois". In 1948 they were divided between Moscow's Pushkin Museum and the Hermitage in St. Petersburg.



*Picasso's Green Pan and Black Bottle 1912*

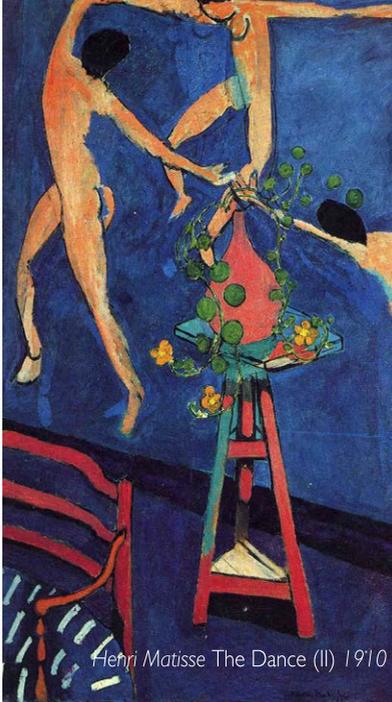
## FROM IMPRESSIONISTS TO THE AVANT GARDE

In 1908, Shchukin, a wealthy businessman, began to open the galleries of paintings in the Trubetskoy Palace where he lived, to the public every Sunday. Among the many visitors were young Russian artists who flocked to see his extensive collection of Monets,

Rousseaus, Gauguins, Matisse's and Cezanne's, the modernists he so admired.

While his young visitors were enthralled, their rather more avant-garde worldview prompted Shchukin's interest in Cubism which led to his buying about thirty of Picasso's works between 1912 and 1914.

This was acknowledged in the exhibition's last space where Cézanne's *Mardi Gras* and Picasso's *Green Pan and Black Bottle* hung alongside works by the Russian avant-garde Kazimir Malevich, Olga Rozanova and Ivan Kliun evoking, as *Wallpaper* magazine said, a "new harmony from certain shared elements".



Henri Matisse *The Dance (II)* 1910

gave rise to" while the *New York Times* said the show "made the case that Shchukin himself was an artist and thus his collection itself was his masterpiece".

It was mounted in the Fondation complex, one designed by Frank Gehry, who's been called the most important architect of our age. The building looks like an iceberg galleon that's set sail and together, collection and the museum exemplify the unique synergy that sparks between extraordinary art and architecture.

<https://www.lvmh.com/news-documents/news/sergei-shchukin-portrait-of-a-visionary-patron-of-modern-art/>



Kazimir Malevich, *Woman with Pails: Dynamic Arrangement* 1912-13

## SHOCKWAVE REDUX

*Icons of Modern Art: Shchukin Collection* brought together 130 works on loan from the Hermitage. Collectively they demonstrated Shchukin's "daring artistic choices" and vision. As Bernard Arnault, LVMH president noted, *Icons of Modern Art* came partly from the desire to "re-create the visual and emotional 'shockwave' that Shchukin's collections

## ROMA LOISEAU

Paris-based friend of **gallery g**, Roma J. Loiseau is an independent advisor to French-Indian companies. Originally from Delhi, she graduated from Lady Shri Ram College. Travelling the world with her diplomat husband, her linguistic fluency has deepened her insights into various cultures.

"Paris, the city of lights, has been an epicentre of art and culture for centuries. Living here is a privilege I never take for granted. Some of the most revolutionary and exciting ideas about painting were developed here, especially in the years from 1860-1930, a phase of early modernism when one art movement after another was born the legacies of which still influence us today.

Though art's often culturally specific, visiting museums and looking at art from different cultures and countries opens up new perspectives. Art is a medium for political, spiritual and philosophical communication and a personal voyage to explore beauty, the emotions and ideas of different artists from different parts of the world."



# TEMPLE CHARIOTS: A NEW MOVE



The chariot's always been more than just a means of carriage: it's signified a wealth of meaning: mythological, epic and historical.

It was the emblematic carrier of gods, goddesses and demons and in ancient times, it conveyed warrior kings, generals and archers into conquest, combat, sport and the hunt.

## RATHA AND RITUAL

The *Vishnu Tattva Samhita's* opening verse says, "The chariot is an embodiment of God, an embodiment of all gods and an embodiment of all yajnas, the ritual sacrifices." The Vedas refer to it as the vehicle of good fortune.

The scholarly text *Vishvakarmiya Rathalakshanam* lists three types of chariots, the Patrakalpa for the gods, the Chitrakalpa for kings and the Ratnakalpa for the aristocracy.

An important part of Indian temple festival and ritual and known as chala-alaya, the chariot is considered a temple on wheels. Its size and ornamental detail express the vibrant ratha or teru tradition enshrined in hymns, ballads, legend and folklore.

Temple chariots, wooden and sometimes sheathed in silver (some affluent temples like in

Udupi and Tirupati have golden chariots) vary in size, with the more monumental – and ornamental – ones used for the annual festivals. The woodwork, usually in the local style and painstakingly embellished, is oiled and decorated for ceremonial processions. Chariots that were abandoned, usually on town outskirts, have always been salvaged by museums and collectors. We're proud to say we've just acquired one.

While we do work with antiquities such as Tanjore paintings and Tibetan thangkas, this is an exciting departure and we look forward to sharing the discovery with all our friends and the art-loving public.

## FABLED SHOWING

We plan to show the collected fragments here next January after which the exhibit will tour around the country and be available to museums abroad. Part of *The Chariot: The Fabled Vehicle* project will be documenting the chariot fragments (over a hundred) and so provide material for a book-cum-catalogue art apart from hopefully shedding further light on its history, design, material, and use.

It's being curated by Dr. Choodamani Nandagopal, author and UNESCO Fellow for Art History, assisted by Dr. Gomathi Gowda, a fellow art historian who will also document some of the major temple festivals as an accompanying exercise.

(Top left) Rama hands Hanuman the ring; (left) Horserider (above) Woman with swan.



*Chariot: The Fabled Vehicle* Dr. Choodamani Nandagopal <http://www.thehindu.com/features/friday-review/watching-temple-chariot-is-an-aweinspiring-experience/article6245119.ece#>



# BIENNALE FINALE



*At the closing ceremony, Anita Dube (extreme left) is inducted as the curator for the next Biennale*

**29 MAR 2017** And so another edition of the Kochi Biennale came to an end, the third in what's become a successful and definitely long-running series. The response has been as tremendous as it was for the first two editions and it was wonderful to see all the art sites thronged with visitors on the last few days.

and local community – are responsive and completely committed to their cause.

As our involvement with the Biennale extends from one edition to the next, we plan to increase our presence at it and be more participative at various levels.



## A WOMAN'S VIEW

We look forward to the next edition in 2018 for that reason and for another – the next curator is a woman, Anita Dube. About time, we'd say. Anita will bring her own viewpoint, as distinctive as the curators before her were: Sudarshan Shetty and Jitesh Kallat. While she is known as a radical, she's also likely to be inclusive in a way that promises an evolutionary advance for India's art scene courtesy its very own Biennale.

– Gitanjali Maini

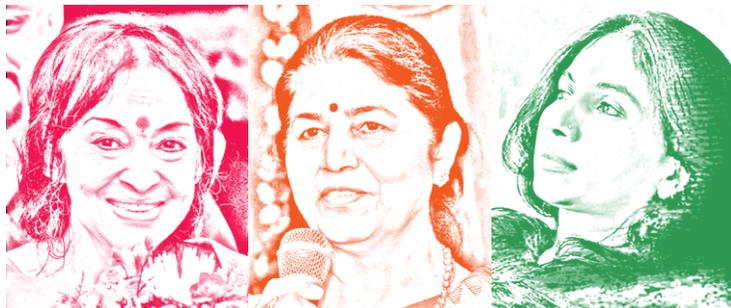
*(Left) A work by Anita Dube; (below) Bose Krishnamachari, Sudarshan Shetty curator, KMB 2016-17, Riyas Komu*

At the closing ceremony at the Durbar Hall, Founder Riyas Komu was gracious enough to publicly acknowledge our role, and its extent, in the Biennale this edition.

For us, associating with the Biennale has been a revelation of the most heartening sort: to see how every effort of ours can be really effective when all the stakeholders concerned – organisers, government



# THE SUPERCURATORS



**H**ow does it work behind the scenes here at **gallery g**? There are a lot of people who make things happen and this issue I'm introducing some of them.

Curating is a fascinating challenge that I love tackling. Still, the scope of **gallery g**'s work has grown so much beyond what I originally envisioned when I started out in 2003. We curate many kinds of art for different purposes and locations and so now I look for counsel and information to some valued associates and friends on whose expertise and experience I've come to rely on completely: people I've been fortunate to have met and worked with over the years.

They are Rukmini Varma, painter-artist and cultural icon, whose knowledge of romantic realism and its historical



sculptor and founder-trustee of the Kochi Muziris Biennale and Ganesh Shivaswamy, legal luminary, whose collection of Raja Ravi Varma lithographs is as extensive as his knowledge of the works themselves.

– Gitanjali Maini

## AND – TEAM GAL G

The family group: all of us got together for a quick photo op post-*Opulence and Eternity*'s marathon preparations. It was a great show and its successful mounting was due to everyone on this team. My band of superheroes!



**gallery g**

Maini Sadan, 38 Lavelle Rd,  
7th Cross, Bangalore 560 001.  
Ph: +91 80 2221 9275

info@galleryg.com • galleryg.com

galleryGarts gallery\_g\_arts

A Print Brew publication  
mainprintbrew@gmail.com

The editorial team includes  
Sonny Abraham and Herbert Paul