

Rubric

art



gallery-g

ISSUE 06 FEB 2015

ANNIVERSARY SONG

Welcome to Issue Six which comes in time to celebrate our twelfth anniversary, with lots of other news to share. Two exciting new shows, one of botanical art, a first for us. We also share



views with a peer curator; and images of some of the works at the Kochi Muziris Biennale, which you should go to if you haven't yet: there's just a month left.

We've also listed for you the titles of a few books that'd be useful to collectors and buyers' coffee tables and bookshelves.

Next on our itinerary: World Art Dubai (WAD), the newest, and very much awaited, global art event. It's on from the 8th to the 11th of April.

We've curated a special collection of paintings in three sizes for WAD by Asit Sarkar, as well as other new works by his fellow

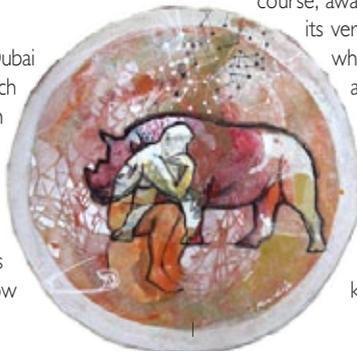


On to Dubai. Above: Debabrata Sarkar's *Visual Perspective*; left: one from Asit Sarkar's *Gitanjali* series painted specifically for World Art Dubai and below, Pradip Das's *Untitled*.

Bengalis Debabrata Sarkar and Pradip Das. All three are eminently eligible to represent India at a global forum: Das is showing works in circular formats, and Debabrata Sarkar has done studies in abstract realism.

We asked Asit to create a series of portraits in homage to Rabindranath Tagore's poetic opus *Gitanjali*. Asit's lushly romantic style is so evocative, it could've been a collaboration. His paintings bring to mind what Tagore said: 'That training is the most intricate which leads to the utter simplicity of a tune.'

Gitanjali is rich inspiration for any artist (Tagore was, of course, awarded the Nobel for Literature for it), its verse universal in an innately Indian way, which will make Asit's work all the more appropriate for a fair that's meant to be accessible, as its organizers say. There's a growing momentum to make art conclave more inclusive, even as they continue to push creative boundaries and develop business: a triadic balancing act of the kind that engages us all.



GOOD HOMES GREAT ART



We're looking forward to March end when our next two shows begin, showcasing two exciting genres. The first, at Lavelle Road, has paintings by Ajoy Ghose, contemporary master of the Bengal school, and the second, *Walking the Green Carpet*, botanical art by American artist Leslie Johnson at the Taj West End Art Corridor. The latter will be for exhibition only; Ghose's work is on sale.

Both these will help kick off *Good Homes for Art Week*, an event by the Times of India magazine involving leading art galleries around Bangalore.

ENDURING IMAGERY: AJAY GHOSE

The Bengal school's fineness and subtlety are exemplified in Ghose's work. Born in 1938, he cites Bengal modernists Abanindranath Tagore (Rabindranath's nephew) and Nandalal Bose as his inspirations. While Abanindranath was more of a realist, Nandalal's themes tended towards the mythological – and sculptural: Ajanta and Ellora. My work is a mix of both.'

His pictures (on paper) are largely peopled with figures from Indian mythology and the epics: Arjuna kneels before Krishna, while others portray Ahalya, Karna and

Kunti, and in *Way to Egypt*, Joseph and Mary, with the baby Jesus, fleeing King Herod's tyranny.

MASTER TECHNIQUES

Ghose works in tempera and wash, both mediums characterised by their softened, layered colours; which he uses is dictated by the painting's subject.

Tempera is coloured pigment mixed with a water-soluble binder like egg yolk which keeps colours fast longer. The medium dates back to at least the 1st century AD, being first seen probably in early Egyptian sarcophagi. Popular thereafter in medieval Europe, it was eventually supplanted by oil paints, invented at the beginning of the 16th century.

In the early 1900's, tempera became popular in India, especially among Tagore and Bose's peers, and then in mid-century, by artists like Jamini Roy and Ganesh Pyne.

The Bengal school wash technique to soften colour; on the other hand, was what Abanindranath Tagore learnt in 1903 from two visiting Japanese artists. Ghose, who gives his paintings about 15 to 20 washes, says the medium finds fewer and fewer practitioners, owing to the time and labour involved. 'It's also about a really skilled hand at drawing.'

Above: Ajoy Ghose's portrait of Lord Krishna and Arjuna; Below: Way to Egypt; right: Leslie Johnson



CHIPS AHOY: LESLIE JOHNSON

How can art share our environmental concerns? *Walk the Green Carpet* is one answer, a show of wood chip installations, chief among them the green carpet of the title.

Leslie Johnson majored in art from Connecticut and studied and worked in Sweden. She has also exhibited in Moscow and New York and at present teaches at Srishti School of Art, Design and Technology, here.

ECO STEPS

The theme subverts the red carpet's supposed glamour and spectacle, its pop notions of aesthetics. The green carpet evokes the sensation of walking outdoors. It's made of thousands of wood chips, painted in a diversity of greens, contrasting the aesthetics of artifice with what's 'natural' and 'green'. Johnson asks should we be disturbed by this, or just walk the walk?

She has also expanded on the theme in ways that challenge viewer perceptions. At the Agricultural History Museum in Molndal, Sweden, Johnson added a video of a mechanical woodchipper. In *Nature: A Good Idea*, another show in Sweden, a chandelier made from pieces of burnt wood hung above the green carpet.

Now, that green carpet will be placed beneath the crystal chandeliers of the Art Corridor at Bangalore's Taj West End Hotel. This will be Bangalore's first botanical art show: hopefully it will egg us on to remember and nurture our Garden City's heritage.



TRENDS & SALES OF AUCTIONS 2013-2014

GLOBAL

While New York continues to dominate the global art world, London has always been important in categories such as Old Masters or Chinese art. However, the past years have seen a shift in taste for more modern works, with prices higher than Old Masters' or Impressionists'.

Noted with interest were the active participation and impressive results the February London sales delivered last year with £413 million being spent over a five-day period only on Impressionist and modern art. The following week a further \$350 million was spent on post-war and contemporary art.

According to *ArtPrice*, there was a new high of \$12.05 billion transacted in 2013. Despite the spread of global wealth and the new entrants into the art market, there remain two key players: China and the United States. Buyers from these two nations accounted for two-thirds of all 2013 purchases. China held the top spot again for the fourth year running. Following these two powerhouses were Britain, France, Germany and Switzerland.

INDIAN

While India's art market lags behind China's, it's comparable in size and analysts have said confidence in the India market has been at its highest since 2008. However, as auction house Christie's said, our art scene has suffered from cumbersome regulations and import duties, Beijing understanding and wielding this sort of soft power much better.

Still, Christie's Deepanjana Klein said the market for modernist Indian works was 'extremely robust.' Thirty-five per cent of the buyers at Christie's last India auction were new registrants; an auction that rang up sales of over \$15 million (about Rs. 92 crores).

<http://www.familyofficereview.com/lifestyle/art-wine-collectibles/article/1396/global-trends-forecast-art-sales-in-2014>

<http://artradarjournal.com/2014/04/04/sothebys-spring-sale-2014-results-trends/>

<http://www.scmp.com/news/asia/article/1661301>

<http://economictimes.indiatimes.com/articleshow/45346607>

THE EMOTIONAL VS. THE ENGINEERED COLLECTOR

Smritee Rajgarhia-Bhatt is curator at Swaraj Art Archive, Noida, which is owned by Vijay Kumar Aggarwal, a passionate collector and patron of the arts for over 40 years. She is also a part of the Serendipity Arts Trust, a Munjal initiative.

STEP ONE

While doing some research on how collectors around the world address the very idea of collecting art, I came across a wikiHow page that, through images, actually spells out the process of collecting in 29 steps. The last step states, 'Above all, ensure that you amass a collection that you will love and can live with (potentially) for the rest of your life.' Maybe this should be the first step.

When I joined collector Vijay Kumar Aggarwal 12 years ago with little knowledge about Indian art, I was introduced to a new world, a world where you connected with images because they make you happy or sad, a world where art and its context move you, and where art is bought for pure love and for sheer enjoyment.

Mr. Aggarwal's enjoyment still endures after 30 years as he collects with passion and fervour. Breaking all boundaries and laws about collecting, he acquires, as he always has, everything that gives him pleasure but never with the primary idea of investment. Knowing an artist in the collection is doing well (marketwise) is only a notional bonus, as he winces at the very thought of parting with an artwork.

CONNECT

When a true collector buys art, he does so because of a connection that he forms with the particular artwork. It may make him question something about himself, or stimulate him to ponder the world or his place in it, or evoke a certain nostalgia. It's a kind of dialogue with the artwork that forms the essential connection between you and the piece. When you find you have



such a connection and you acquire it, it's something to be treated with due importance.

There are many lessons that I learned from Mr. Aggarwal, things no book or wikiHow entry could teach any collector or, indeed, anybody wanting to start a collection. Most basic of them all is that you need to immerse yourself in this love for art, to give yourself time and space to engage with it.

Having become attuned to my own 'collector's gene' after working with Mr. Aggarwal, I've come to believe that collecting is about developing one's sensibility to be receptive to art, to what you as a person react to. It involves the person acquiring an artwork asking himself how he connects to it.

BASIC

On a more basic level, the collector should always research the artist concerned, the painting's history and its authenticity before making the final decision but eventually it all becomes intuitive. The more you see, the more you fine-tune your sensibility and develop the focus on your own likes and dislikes. Everyone can acquire art, no matter their budget: the bottom line is that they should be true to their own sensibility and always buy what they like.

As an endnote to all new collectors, I'd like to remind you that you don't have to speak the academic language of art to appreciate a painting. Sometimes your immediate reaction – a smile, a pause, or even just the few more seconds that you gaze at it – is enough for the artwork to become a part of you.

– by Smritee Rajgarhia-Bhatt as told to Gitanjali Maini

ARTREAD

In this issue of Rubric, I'll be talking about four must-read books for new and upcoming collectors of art.

—Aakash Menon

COLLECTING CONTEMPORARY ART

Lillian Davies, Andrea Bellini and Cecilia Alemani
Publishers: JRP| Ringier

This volume gathers interviews with 40 collectors from Europe, the Americas and Asia. Some of the collectors being interviewed in the book are Blake Byrne, Ivo Wessel and David Roberts.



THE ART FAIR AGE

Paco Barragán
Publishers: Charta Edizioni

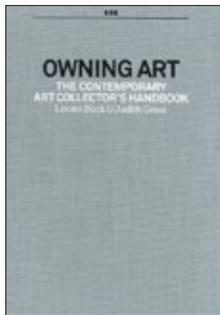
In this book, the Madrid-based independent curator Paco Barragán analyses the phenomenon in chapters like 'The Curated Art Fair', 'The Art Fair Curator' and also 'Art as an Investment'.



OWNING ART: THE CONTEMPORARY ART COLLECTORS HANDBOOK

Louisa Buck and Judith Greer

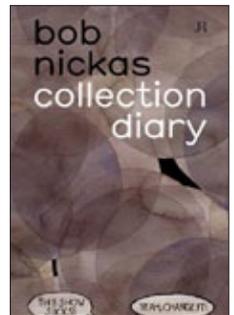
What makes *Owning Art* an interest to armchair travelers as well as its ostensible target market is that there is a supreme analysis of buyer's interests and responsibilities. (This also includes a section on how artists see the market and how collectors should treat them.)



COLLECTION DIARY

Bob Nickas
Publishers: JR

Respected curator and critic Bob Nickas puts his money where his eyes are and decides to become a collector by buying one work of art per month from an artist he has never written about or exhibited before. In this book he tracks the changes in his relation to art, when the commitment becomes one of the wallet and not just the mind and words.

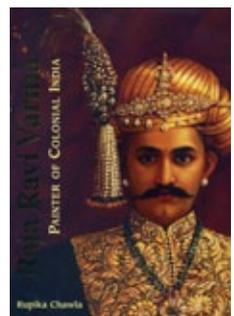


And finally, one which is a favourite of ours, invaluable to anyone interested in modern Indian art's evolution:

RAJA RAVI VARMA: PAINTER OF COLONIAL INDIA

Rupika Chawla, Mapin

A luxurious treatment of Varma (1848–1906)'s work, India's best-known modern classical painter, one of the first to successfully apply Western realism to portray Indian mythology. His use of chromolithographs, or oleographs, was a canny securing of his legacy. Rupika Chawla, a curator who has restored many of his works, contrasts this aristocratic itinerant painter's traditional background against the modernization of colonial India.



<https://www.artsy.net/post/collecting-artbook-slash-dap-selects-eight-must-read-books>
<http://www.flipkart.com/raja-ravi-verma>



KOCHI MUZIRIS BIENNALE: A WRITER'S TAKE

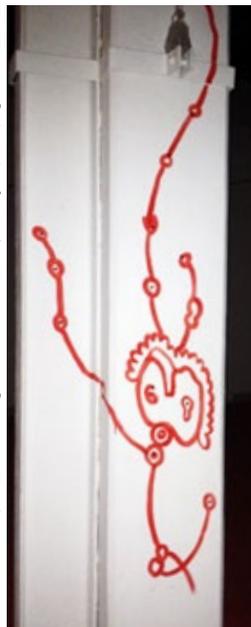
The Kochi Muziris Biennale (KMB) was an event that could have only been carried out in Kochi and that is what happened. A uniquely localised combination of factors – the spaces, the culture, the heritage and even the seaport – was what made such a large-scale event go on.

A JOB WELL DONE

The people working for the Biennale, organisers,

volunteers and paid employees alike, all working overtime to make the show a success, just goes to show how much the Biennale meant to them and to Kerala. It was the first Biennale ever in India, and they staged it for the second time: I feel it was a job very well done.

With all the limitations, restrictions, obstacles they have managed to overcome, they put on a great spectacle. Being a part of the Biennale and seeing all the artworks and installations have just shown me that the utmost dedication has been put into the event, not to make a profit, but for the sake of art and creativity



*Main picture: We Are All Astronauts (2013) Julian Charrière, Germany;
Above: I Have Only One Language: It Is Not Mine (2014) Mithu Sen, Delhi
'Remnants' from a video installation based on a performance
Left: Erasure (2011) Dinh Q Lê, Vietnam
Video, found photographs, wooden boat fragments etc.*



Detail from Julian Charrière's work (see page 6)

alone. The works that took my breath away were Anish Kapoor's 'water vortex', *Descension*, in Aspinwall House and the *We Are All Astronauts* installation by Julian Charrière which is at the Durbar hall in Ernakulam.

MAKING THE MOST OF FORT KOCHI

Another lovely thing about the KMB is that most of the venues are around the Fort Kochi region which allow tourists and art lovers to move around from venue to venue without much of a hassle though the autotrikshaw riders are a bit pricey and like to rip the tourist off from time to time.

Though there have not been as many footfalls as expected earlier, the event has been pulled off on a grand scale and could compete with any other Biennale out there.

The venues open by around 11 am and close by 7 pm which allow enough time to check out each venue. This three-month art event will put Kerala on the art map and we wish it all the success and hope to see Kerala being the host of many more Biennales to come.

Left: World on its Hind Legs (2009) William Kentridge; steel

Below: Descension (2014) Anish Kapoor, UK; water vortex. Below left: Another installation





The Art Path: At a **gallery g** mentoring class, Gitanjali Maini with young participants drawn to challenging new career options in the art industry. The business of art is becoming increasingly globalised and professionalised and few other arenas offer its creativity, dynamism and heritage values.

EDITORIAL

JOURNEY, DISCOVERY

It's been just one year for me at **gallery g** and a very big learning experience to say the least. In this much time, I've already gained an extent of experience in this field more than I would have anywhere else. This whole year has been filled with not just the day-to-day work of the gallery which is varied enough but also with curating projects and major international events like the Singapore Art Fair and the Kochi Muziris Biennale which I wouldn't have attended otherwise or probably not even heard of, if I hadn't been here at **gallery g**.

Working in art: sourcing, marketing, dealing with artists, buyers and industry stakeholders like other gallery management, have motivated me to go out, explore, network and in doing so have also boosted my confidence in my ability to think on my feet and handle all kinds of various tasks, essential in today's competitive, fast-paced world. I discovered for myself that experience really is the best teacher.

I've also learnt how to see, properly: which is what the visual arts are all about. I found out that reading,

researching and often just watching were great ways to learn, too. Being at the gallery has encouraged me to pick up books I would not have typically picked out at the library. Books on art, artists, collectors and investors are ones I never thought I'd ever read. They led me onto dive deeper into this fascinating, complex world and in doing so I've found something of interest to me that I wouldn't have imagined as a career earlier.

Art is one of the most exciting and challenging industries there is and it gives you opportunities the way few other industries do. Being here has taught me about so much, most of all about myself.

UPCOMING

Later this year as mentioned, I'm looking forward to attending World Art Dubai 2015, as well as the Beirut Art Fair. These two major events would put the gallery on the map as we are participating in both of them. So a hectic year coming up guys, wish us luck.

– Aakash Menon



gallery-g

Maini Sadan, 38 Lavelle Rd, 7th Cross,
Bangalore 560 001.

Ph: +91 80 2221 9275, 4095 7559
gitanjalimaini@gmail.com

Visit us at www.gallerygbangalore.com

Like us at galleryg

Follow us on gallery_g_arts

VOICE OF TODAY: RAJESH MEGHRAJ

For **gallery g**, Rajesh Meghraj's advice has always been timely and clarifying. He's been a guide to us since 2011. His interests in astrology and spiritual energies are inspirational to many: he's internationally-known and is much sought out by public figures and opinion-makers.

You can reach out to Mr. Meghraj on

Twitter: @voiceoftoday • BBM: 2BC4E24F • What's App: +919782233000

