

# Rubric



gallery-g

ISSUE 09 DECEMBER 2015

## Merry Christmas. And A Happy New Space!

### RE-LOOK

We've done some remodeling and decorating to give the Gallery a new look and functionality to keep pace with how our service palette has evolved this year.

**Gallery g** is directly involved with the setting up and running of The Raja Ravi Varma Heritage Foundation (TRRVHF) and so locating its office here made sense, in view of the Foundation agenda which will include exhibitions and discussions kicking off in early 2016. About which, we will keep you posted of course.

### GREEN SEASON

The equally eco-relevant change though, as you'll see when you visit is outside: what was once a bare 16 ft. wall has been transformed into a vertical garden, a bio-wall as it's called. For some time, it's been our feeling that this grey concrete expanse could become a backdrop to the art inside, yet have its own green identity.

Our landscape designers experimented with the

wall's surface, creating paneled patterns with locally available bamboo mats called *chape*. These mats were customized by local bamboo vendors for the pattern combinations we wanted.

Using traditional material on the concrete signifies the modern-and-heritage connect of our contemporary collections and TRRVHF's traditional ones. We then added the plants to soften the effect.

Finally, bamboo water spouts set into the bio-wall, along with a water pond and a planter at the foreground and hand-painted tiles, added the finishing touches. A green way to end one year and to carry us forward into the years ahead.

Come and see. And while you do, catch our discount sale (upto 60% off) is on till the 31st. All good wishes for the season.

Gitanjali Maini





*The Keys in the Hand* Chiharu Shiota

# THE VENICE BIENNALE 2015

## ALL THE WORLD'S FUTURES

**C**ruising past the stunning, mostly uninhabited Croatian coast, Rama Basappa had landed in Venice, which at the time was hot, overcrowded and suffocating. As she walked towards Harry's Bar she noticed the posters that read 'Arsenale' and 'Giardini'.

And so, as she says, things started looking up from that point. The next two days were filled with amazement and awe as she realised what the human being endures and how he expresses it, with the help of art.

The Biennale theme, *All the World's Futures*, a collection of installations that examine the impact of our fractured and diverse world on human sensitivities and inner desires, was interpreted by the artists who had to use three overlapping 'filters' or sub-themes – 'Garden of Disorder', 'Liveness-on-Epic-Duration' and 'Reading Capital'.

## REAL AND MOTILE

Okwui Enwezor, the Biennale's curator said, 'With each

filter superimposed on the other, the art exhibition will delve into the contemporary global reality as one of constant realignment, adjustment, recalibration, motility and shapeshifting.'

Combining multiple media such as paintings, performance art, video installations, lighting, photography and moving images, there seemed to be no boundaries placed on the artists or creators.



## MULTIPLE NARRATIVES

Simple and brutal in its underlying message, Ghanaian artist Ibrahim Mahama's *Out of Bounds* was a collection of over a thousand hessian cocoa sacks, metal tags, knotted ropes and scribbles all stitched together which spoke of the hard life, labour and penury in the unregulated cocoa industry in his country. All marked with the names of their previous owners, the sacks built up an accretion of personal and collective narratives. Installed in an exterior corridor, this project featured as a 'live' component that constantly changed with the direction and strength of the sun, rain, and the moisture-laden sea air.

*Paperwork and the Will of Capital* by Taryn Simon resurrected global agreements, contracts and treaties drafted to influence systems of governance and economics.

## Day-Glo Wasteland

 Katherina Grosse



Rama Basappa

Simon noticed that in archival photographs of these signings, powerful men consistently flanked 'innocent' floral arrangements. These in turn became the silent observers to

man's determination to not only control the fates of nations but also the natural world. She recreated these with botanical specimens that she sourced from Aalsmeer, the world's largest floral auction house. At the Biennale, she presented her photographs of the floral arrangements with a brief of the historic event each witnessed along with the component dried flower. In this beautiful gesture she retraced the means by which Nature is 'pressed' into the service of the human ego.

Katherina Grosse, a graffiti artist, used the space given to her wisely as a canvas itself. Applying luminous and almost hallucinogenic washes of paint with a spray gun, she rose above the traditional limitations of paint and brush. *Day-Glo Wasteland* which was an enormous cavernous space including textiles, mounds of earth and furniture was sprayed by her with an almost childlike innocence and as Nature added its own dimensions, one could see the earth break forth in gay abandon and fresh sprigs of grass almost challenging the notion of wasteland.

Xu Bing's *Dragon*, from construction-site debris, was a fitting epithet to China's growth-at-all-costs story.

The Giardini installation by Glen Ligon and Oscar Murillo of flags painted in oil and dirt perhaps showcased how most wars seemingly fought today overtly or covertly, are about controlling just one resource – oil.

### KEY FIGURES

Berlin resident artist Chiharu Shiota, creator of the Japan Pavilion, used the realm of memory to



**Out Of Bounds**  
Ibrahim Mahama

create *The Keys in the Hand*, an astoundingly impactful and visually stunning installation. Keys were used as the symbolic connection to unlock memories and also to unlock relationships between people, the two wooden boats as ways to transport people across the world, and the yards of red yarn draped the boats (in Japan red is the colour for 'expelling demons and illness'), almost protecting them.

These were but a smattering of impressions made over two days at an exhibition that needed greater time and engagement. It was 136 artists, 88 of whom were showing for the first time, from 53 different countries, celebrating a 120-year history of the arts. Salute!!

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LD'S WORLD  
RESFITTING



**Dragon** Xu Bing





# ONEMININTROS: M.F. HUSAIN: COLOUR AND PROVOCATION

**M**aqbool Fida Husain was a modern painter who was often referred to as the Picasso of India. He was the founding member of the Progressive Artists Group of Bombay and is certainly the most celebrated and internationally-recognised Indian artist of the 20th century. Born on 17th September 1915, in Pandharpur to a Sulaymani Bora family, he lost his mother when he was one-and-a-half years old. His artistic ability first began to find expression when he was studying calligraphy at a madrasa in Baroda.

He was primarily self-taught and painted cinema posters in Mumbai early in his career. In his younger days, he used to earn himself extra money by designing and making products for a toy company.

## MEMORABLE

He painted, primarily after the Cubist style, sketched, was a printmaker and also a photographer and filmmaker. His works – often done serially – depicted Mahatma Gandhi and Mother Teresa, the Ramayana and Mahabharata, scenes of Indian urban and rural scenes and, most memorably, horses. He is said to have painted over 6,000 paintings.

He directed movies like *Through the Eyes of a Painter* for which he received the National Film Award for best experimental film and also a Golden Bear short film award. In 2004, he directed *Meenaxi: A Tale of Three Cities* which was screened in the Marché du Film section of the 2004 Cannes Film Festival.

Husain was awarded the Padma Bhushan in 1973 and also the Padma Vibhushan in 1991. In 1986, he was nominated to the Rajya Sabha. He became the top-selling Indian painter when his triptych *The Battle of Ganga and Yamuna* sold for \$1.6 million at the 2008 Christie's New York auction.

He died on June 9th 2011 at the age of 95 following a heart attack and was buried in Brookwood cemetery on 10th June 2011 in Surrey, England.

## EXTENSIVE OEUVRE

His unexpected portrayals of the Indian pantheon ignited the controversies that dogged him through his life. From 2006 until his death, he lived in self-imposed exile, in Doha and London, staying away from India but always expressing a strong urge to return, despite fears for his life since he was charged with 'hurting people's sentiments' for his nude portrayals of Hindu gods and goddesses.

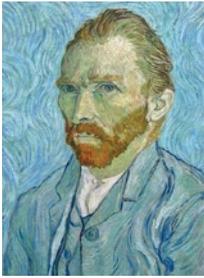
M. F. Husain's was a life at least as colourful and unconventional as the works that are his legacy.

– Aakash Menon

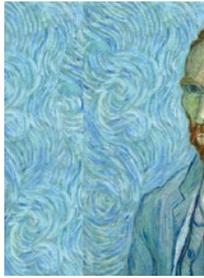


# ART HA

Like nearly everyone else at this time, we also felt like channeling Star Wars just a bit. So the picture of Yoda as Vincent Van Gogh (right) from Pinterest and on from there, for a quick game of *Updating the Classics*. As for instance, Vincent at the auction (below left) or asking for a wake-up call for a Wham concert long, long ago in a kingdom far away (below right). Grant Wood's 1930 masterpiece *American Gothic* fast-food forwarded (middle row left); Edvard Munch's *The Scream* giving the Home Alone star the treatment he deserved (middle centre); Whistler's *Mother* sitting more happily for her portrait with a smartphone for company (middle right) or Salvador Dali's *The Persistence of Memory*'s recall factor yummied up with chocolate chip cookies (bottom left).



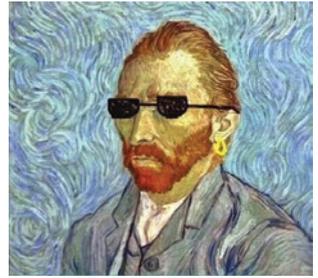
Van Gogh



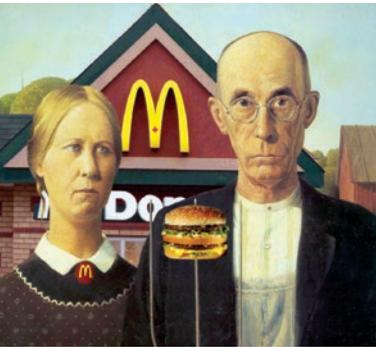
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Van Gone



Wake me up before you Van Gogh Gogh



## ART'S UP, DOC?

An artist asked the gallery owner if there had been any interest in his paintings. 'I have good news and bad news,' replied the owner, 'the good news is that some gentleman enquired about your paintings and asked if it would appreciate in value after your death, and of course I said yes.' He then proceeded to buy all 15 of your paintings. 'That's great, but what's the bad news?' replied the artist. 'Oh, the guy was your doctor.'

BIBLIOGRAPHY The Venice Biennale: 2015 <http://www.labiennale.org>  
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<http://pettyartist.tumblr.com/post/64824942746/van-gogh-van-goghing-van-gone>  
<https://www.pinterest.com/momteachesart/parodies-of-famous-art>

# ART CHAAT

## POWER TWO POWER 100

Year-end's always a time for stocktaking and all the listmaking that usually result are eagerly awaited by those concerned. It's just the same in art and *ArtReview* magazine of the UK brought out its Power 100 list for the year. We were very pleased to see our Kochi Muziris Biennale (KMB) friends Bose Krishnamachari and Riyaz Komu on it. They're in some extremely stellar company, like the Chinese artist-activist Ai Wei Wei and Nicholas Serota, director of the Tate as well as their peer Okuwei Enwezor; this year's Venice Biennale curator.

### FORMAL ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

ArtReview is an international contemporary art magazine based in London. In its citation, it said, the KMB's first edition was a 'sharp learning curve... but the second, drawing on Kochi's maritime history and the fourteenth-to-sixteenth-



century Kerala School of Astronomy and Mathematics, with works by 94 artists from 30 countries, had garnered widespread respect by the time it finished its run.'

All this has been well-documented here and every one of us acknowledges Bose and Riyaz's stupendous efforts. Still, it's significant that the global art establishment has seen fit to honour their impact as well: this will have an incremental effect on the inputs and outcomes of the KMB's third edition, in terms especially of public and sponsor perception. Congratulations to them both.

### AND SMART CASUAL

(And also to Bose – whom we had the pleasure of working with last month in Goa doing another of his *Stretched Bodies* series live on-the-spot paintings at an event produced by **Gallery g** – for being cited as one



of *GQ India's* Most Stylish Men.)

*A-List: Kochi Muziris Biennale founders (left) Riyaz Komu and (right) Bose Krishnamachari*

# GIFT NEWS AT G:

## ROLE OF THE COASTER

What's Christmas without an irresistible gift suggestion or two?

At **Gallery g** we've developed the perfect ones in collaboration with The Raja Ravi Varma Heritage Foundation. First is a set of four coasters that each have one of Ravi Varma's famed portraits of women from mythology and the epics: Varma's damsels as they were called. The set comes in a red silk pouch to make for festively complementary packaging.

### PRINTS CHARM

There's also available an authorized set of prints of the Varma portrait of *Damayanti and Hamsam* which



also make memorable seasonal presents. These are high-quality prints made and issued by the Foundation, so their authenticity's assured and they're exclusive to TRRVHF. Keepsakes for the heritage-art-lovers you know who, in their turn, will know they won't find these anywhere else.

*Mainy thanks to Editorial Team Aakash Menon and Sonny Abraham, and to Rama Basappa for the Special Feature. If like Rama, you, too, have something to share on art, your views on it and your experiences with it, we look forward to your sharing them with us. This is your newsletter, so write to us at this ID. Gitanjali Maini, gitanjalimaini@gmail.com*



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