

Rubric



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THE YEAR OF CLASSICS

It's been a year of Classics and one in which **gallery g's** standing and reputation in the art industry was enhanced to a high level. Over the last two decades or so, interest in classical or masterpieces has increased and if anything, has reached exponential status in the last five years.

As a gallery that understands and recognizes the value of art, and holds artists in high esteem, classics, for us at **gallery g**, is the pinnacle. In simple terms, we define classics as an artwork created by an established Indian artist whose body of work is so



The Progressive artists group assembled at the Bombay Art Society in 1947. Seen are HS Raza, FN Souza, Gaitonde, Ara, MF Husain and Tyeb Mehta. Raza's impression of Kashmir can be seen in the image. Pic courtesy: Private collection.

distinct that collectors seek it for two reasons: Firstly, for the skill and subject detail and secondly, the pride in owning a piece by the master artist.

Having studied and recognized the trend, **gallery g**, has over the last five years, been making steady and successful acquisitions of these classics from different sources. Some are from homes which housed these treasures and have been handed down generations, some preserved, some derelict, yet unmistakably a priceless treasure.

Some others have been sourced out from palaces, all falling into our specified idea of a classic. These are rare pieces of work with historical significance for the connoisseur while also becoming a means of 'super' investment for those with an eye for art and one for the future.

Sourcing out these classics isn't a simple process; identifying, authenticating, mapping out the provenance to ensure the work is genuine and more importantly, help preserve it for future generations.

At the very basic step is a scientific, visual and physical inspection of the work with proper authentication methods. Fakes of masterpieces with stunning similarities abound, not just in India, but globally as well and it is with this in mind we have set up a panel of experts to help identify and further authenticate the work as original or not before we acquire it.

Broadly put, we assume the mantle of the last guardian of authenticity, for, anything that goes through our process gets the stamp of authority for acquisition as well as selling.

Over the last five years, **gallery g** has built up its credibility by offering the best price to sellers and in turn, providing the end-buyer with a reasonable price. The intention is not just to sell the classic, rather to find an appropriate home for the artwork where it is admired, appreciated and preserved for posterity. We would like to believe that we are like a foster home to these art pieces, scripting a stable path between the owner and the final buyer or destination. We have grown multifold in this process knowing fully well art is an emotional journey, respecting both the seller and the buyer.

In conclusion, as we move strongly towards more acquisition, we would consider it our privilege if you have any information related to the classic shortlist given below.

Do reach out to me at gita@galleryg.com

We are happy to begin a conversation around it.

The Indian artists in our collectors' classic short list for 2019:

Raja Ravi Varma	Zarina Hashmi
Rabindranath Tagore	Krishnaji Howlaji Ara
Gaganendranath Tagore	Ram Kumar
Abanindranath Tagore	Surendran Nair
Sculptures by Ramkinkar Baij	Anish Kapoor
Amrita Sher-Gil	Subodh Gupta
M.F. Husain	Jitesh Kallat
V.S. Gaitonde	Sudarshan Shetty
Somnath Hore	Riyas Komu.
F.N. Souza	Bose Krishnsmachari
S.H. Raza	Atul Dodiya
Meera Mukherjee	Ravindra Reddy
Bhupen Khakhar	Bharti Kher
Ganesh Pyne	Dayanita Singh

Gitanjali Maini
Founder & Managing Director.

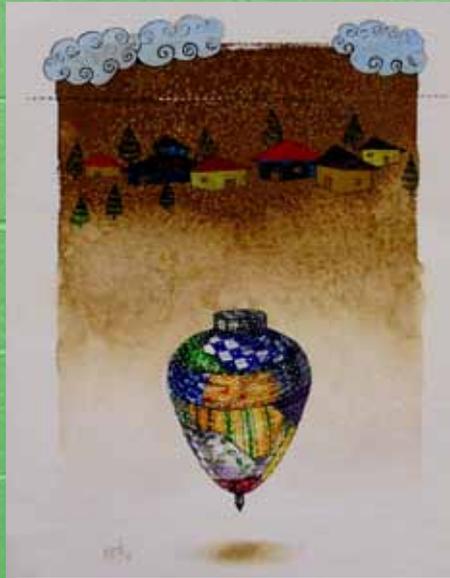
ON OUR WALLS

Art thrives only when artists have the freedom to let their imagination soar and a medium to convey their message; there is a message in every artist's work, some are simple, some are quixotic, yet some are a collage of thoughts.

At gallery g, the core essence of our belief is not just to showcase their works but more to the point, promote and popularise the artist. In this issue of Rubric, we bring you an eclectic mix of three artists, whose works are as diverse as they come, yet meaningful and moving in their themes.



SANGEETA ABHAY



RAMACHANDRA KHARATMAL



PRADIP DAS

Peace. Calmness. Tranquility. In a nutshell, these describe Sangeeta's works. At peace with herself and the world, the artist's works, inspired by the teachings of Buddha radiate a feeling of thoughtfulness and embraces the viewer with a sense of a belonging. In her own words, she envisions a world without negativity and in her works she seeks to drive home the point of positivity and the deep-rooted virtues of Buddha. Sangeeta's works have been displayed world over and her *piece de resistance* is set to be the Venice Biennale display in October 2019. Last year, Sangeeta was featured in a BBC documentary Civilization, a nine-part series which was telecast in the United States. Her works were shown under the title God and Art in the third episode of the series.

An artist often expresses on canvas the impressions from his formative years. The story is no different with Ramachandra Kharatmal. His parents were tailors and having spent his childhood watching them sew, it is but obvious that stitches form the theme in his work. The Solapur-based artist is passionate about human forms and quilts. Just as a quilt is woven/stitched from different fabrics, his art is sewn in with meaningful tales. Like all good artists, the story in each of his painting is unique and challenges the viewer to channelize his thought processes to understand the painting. His perceptions are deep and dark at times. The use of colours on his canvas are stunning; they are not random but much like the 41-year-old artist himself, they are meticulously and painstakingly achieved.

Fusion is what flashes in one's mind when you stand in front of Pradip Das' extraordinarily large canvas. Each work is like a fusion of ideas, thoughts, colours, textures, figures and forms. At first glance, the thoughts appear random, mind-boggling even, but his works are challenging for both the artist and viewer. They coerce you to think beyond the realms of the ordinary and delve into the depths of the artist's mind to understand his vision. Being a near-abstractionist might have limited the scope of one's individuality, but not with Pradip Das - the sheer sophistication of his works sets him apart. Das references everyday objects, political practices and historical events that shape the way we perceive ourselves. A clash between capitalism and nature is evident, and long-rooted traditions are challenged by an assertively virtual world.





FOR NAVRATRI

The 9 days of Maha Pujo or Navratri bring to mind an explosion of colours, bright vermilion, stunning images of Goddess Durga, vibrant scenes from Bengal's pandals, festive moments and days spent worshipping the powerful Goddess.

At gallery g we celebrated the joys and colours of the 9-day festivities with an aptly titled exhibition '9 Gems' specially curated by Kolkata-based gallerist Kallol Bose and Bengaluru collector Sujatha Jayadev. The works on display were of mixed medium, the common thread being their ode to the Mother Goddess.

A series of 9 canvases in large size were done by Ashok Rathod.

Rathod loves to paint mythological characters with bold colours. His creations of cattle with colourfully striped horns are the trademark for this series. The artist painted the 'Navadurga' or the nine forms of the goddess on the bull, on the tiger and on the lion which, according to scriptures are her vehicles.

Rathod says: "Since childhood I have been closely associated with nature and religion; Nandi means a 'joyous or happy person'; the bull is also a symbol of wealth, strength and happiness. The bull is also a means of transport in India and it is the principal follower of Lord Shiva. My aim is to maintain tradition and culture and showcase animals like the cow, bull, elephant and narrate a particular scene to the devotee/viewer when hung on wall."



Apart from this series on canvas, other artists from Kolkata like Payal Acharjya, Parthasarthi Bhattacharya, Kowshik Coomar and Sabyasachi Bohra also showcased works based on goddess Durga in the 'Navadurga' form, but each of these series were done in different styles and medium.

Payal Acharjya, a student of Ajoy Ghosh, showed 9 paintings of Durga in a series inspired by Ganjifa Cards. Quite aptly, the name Ganjifa comes from the Persian word "Ganjifeh" which means playing cards. The specialty of these cards is that they are traditionally hand-painted and are typically circular, although some rectangular decks have also been produced.



Hence each of Payal's painting of the Goddess was done inside an oval frame, further enhanced by a complementary coloured backdrop. The paintings are all done in Tempera style.

Similarly, Bhattacharya showed a series on the 9 forms of Durga in Tempera style, but inspired by the Bengal School of Art and their facial and structural forms. Hence, each of the works of Durga bore a distinct oriental feel to it, while each painting was done in the washed down tones typical to Tempera.

Coomar showed three works, one of the Mother Goddess slaying the demon Mahishasur, along with two of her attendants (one in each painting) dancing and celebrating her victory. These works were also done in Tempera style.

Bohra had two small works on display - one of Goddess

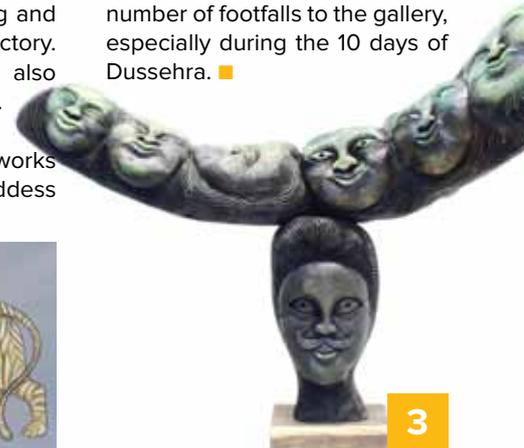


Durga as 'Smashana Kali' and the other of her as 'Mahishasura Mardini'. Both works, though small, were filled with intricate details, showing the Goddess's jewellery and posture with precision.

One guest artist - Subrata Gangopadhyaya - showed a scene celebrated on the final day of Durga Puja. His work titled 'Sindoor Khela' showed married Bengali women celebrating and anointing each other with vermilion on the day of Vijaydashmi.

Along with these works that graced the walls of the gallery, there was also a collection of bronze sculptures on display by artists like Suvajit Samanta, Chandan Roy and Sukanta Pal.

The exhibition saw a record number of footfalls to the gallery, especially during the 10 days of Dussehra. ■





KOCHI MUZIRIS BIENNALE PRIDE & PEDIGREE

It's the pride of the country and into its fourth edition. India's only biennale isn't just an art festival, but importantly, a celebration of ideas and amalgamation of new thoughts to create a platform for artists belonging to different genre.

Conceived with the general idea of promoting art and culture and spreading educational activities, Kochi Muziris Biennale has become the talking point and destination for all artists, Indian and international. There are art exhibitions and there is KMB; it's unique and it's special. Basic amongst the reasons for KMB to get a special status so early on is the unwavering belief of the organisers that the Biennale should and needs to be curated by an artist.

Many Biennales/exhibitions are curated by art critics and there is a section that believes that KMB also needs to go that route, but no, for the Kochi Biennale Foundation, the NGO which runs the show, there is a strong sense of belonging by involving an artist to curate the event.

With Bose Krishnamachari, the co-founder of the Biennale, spearheading the festival, the 2018-19 edition threw open the doors of the Aspinwall House to open the nearly four-month long exhibition on Dec 12, curated by the renowned and highly regarded Anita Dube.



L to R: Tanzania born, London-based Lubna Chowdhary's 'Metropolis' has come in for rave reviews, Installation by Sri Lankan artist Anoli Perera who works primarily with fabrics, Madhvi Parekh's work on display at Aspinwall House and 'Message from the Atlantic Passages', an installation by South African artist Sue Williamson at Aspinwall House

Dube, 60, is a contemporary artist acclaimed for her conceptually rich and politically charged work with shows at several venues across the globe. Her works are thought-provoking, yet driving home a point that only artists can conjure up. Having represented her work at the inaugural Kochi Biennale in 2012, Dube's journey has come a full circle, in a manner of speaking, taking on the curator's role for the fourth edition of the event.

The genesis of Dube's curation for this year's event – "Possibilities of a Non-Alienated Life" is in many ways to break the hierarchy, the barriers and the differences, perceived or otherwise and bring together the artists on a common platform. None is above, all are equal; there is no master, there is no slave, in the curator's own words.

Whenever we talk of art and culture, education, in general and pedagogy in particular is a way of elucidating and influencing the viewers through a narrative that is far-reaching and invigorating.

In her choice of works, a 'symphony of ideas' as she terms it, Dube has put on display a wide genre of artists, who speak their mind through their art. The acclaimed Tania Bruguera's work is on display but given the stand-off with her government, the Cuban, in a show of solidarity to other repressed artists in her country, decided against making the journey to Kochi.

There is a strong international flavour with 64 foreign works on display along with 46 Indian artists of the likes of Kausik Mukhopadhyay, Probir Gupta, Anju Dodiya, Annu Palakunnathu Matthew, Sonia Khurana, Shilpa Gupta, Vicky Roy and Jitish Kallat, the curator of the second edition in 2014, to name a few. Amongst the international artists are Tania Bruguera, Tania Candiani, Mireille Kassar, Goshka Macuga, Juul Kraijer and the Guerilla Girls from the USA.

The show goes on until March 29, 2019 and like the three editions that preceded it, the fourth promises to be a blockbuster. ■



Top L to R: Gargi Raina's Murals, Installation by Priya Ravish Mehra at Aspinwall House. Bottom: William Kentridge's work featuring a cast of silhouetted figures

FOSTERING ART & HERITAGE

Less than two years since inception, the Sandeep and Gitanjali Maini Foundation has made a strong presence. Established with the avowed aim of fostering art and culture and to build on gallery g's activities, SGMF in the short span of time has come to play a pivotal role in the art world.

Established in June 2017 with the blessings of Maini Group founder, Dr. SK Maini, SGMF has slowly but steadily built up its reputation. A patron of the Hasta Shilpa Heritage Village Museum, Manipal, SGMF is proud to be associated with HSHV which houses the largest heritage collection of art in the world. Handpicked by Vijayanath Shenoy, the collection in HSHV is awe inspiring.

Art has no barriers and going by that principle, SGMF has spread its wings to reach out to deserving and needy ventures, in the process making new associations with like-minded organizations.

Having partnered with Kochi Muziris Biennale, the country's only art festival from the inaugural edition, albeit in an individual capacity until 2016, SGMF has been elevated to the level of Platinum Patron. The current edition of the KMB is under way at Fort Kochi and SGMF has strengthened its association and brand value by embarking on several measures.

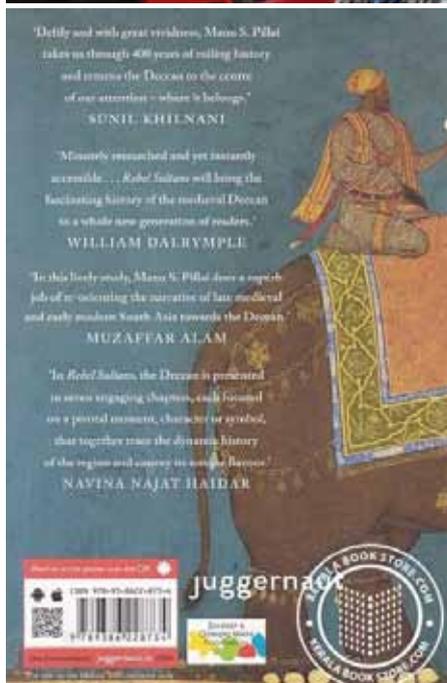
KMB is widely acclaimed and has become a global talking point given that the country is and has been home to artists of all genres. SGMF, which firmly believes in supporting young talent, is one of the Education Partners for the Student Biennale which runs concurrently with the main theme.



The Foundation also supported author Manu Pillai, who at 27 has not written one, but two successful books. Published by Juggernaut, SGMF supported the author's research and partly funded the publishing of 'Rebel Sultans'. The book has sold more than 15,000 copies and has been translated into Malayalam, Marathi and Hindi. Due to its tremendous sale the book and author have been a part of all the leading literature festivals across India, thereby underlining SGMF's motto of supporting young talent.



Spectators through the venue of the Student Biennale on the inaugural day



Continuing in its endeavour to support like-minded entities, the Foundation donated a painting by reputed artist Bose Krishnamachari worth Rs 3.5 lakh, to Artmantram, owned and operated by former IAS officer Ms Jija Hari Singh. The painting was then auctioned by Artmantram to raise funds and support young artistic talent.

As part of its revivalist activity, SGMF procured a rare volume of books, sketches and manuals on Aerospace and Aircrafts from Ms Sujatha Jayadev, whose father was the owner of the original collection. Having been maintained as a family collection, SGMF, realising its true value and importance, acquired the collection and subsequently donated it to the Air Force Technical College in Bengaluru. ■



A Student Biennale activity at Fort Kochi

A SLICE OF MEXICO IN BENGALURU

rural life such as weddings, agriculture and fishing activities and religious festivities. The skilled Nahuas start by often outlining their design with black ink and then give it a colourful finish using bright tints to reflect the profusion of vegetation, the colourfulness of the birds and the variety of traditional dresses.



THEMES

RELIGION: Religion is an essential part of tradition in the small towns of Mexico. In many of the paintings the church is portrayed as an important place for the town's people to attend mass. Alongside religious celebrations, weddings are also a big affair. Many of the Amate paintings illustrate these ceremonies depicting the enthusiasm and the involvement of the town people.

BIRDS: The indigenous people of Guerrero, the Nahuas, transferred many of their pottery painting designs onto Amate paper making it easier to transport and sell. Painted designs initially focused on birds and flowers. These types of Amate drawings do not have a structured frame; the bird design itself creates a special type of border.

VILLAGE SCENES: Amate painting is a tradition passed down through generations. In Guerrero, the native people learn the craft from their elders and start from a young age. The indigenous people paint scenes related to rural community life such as farming, fishing, animal fights, celebrations, weddings and other religious festivals. A structured frame is normally drawn for these landscape paintings. ■

It's an ongoing effort at **gallery g** to evolve its collection and display, and to educate its patrons. In association with the Embassy of Mexico in New Delhi and the Honorary Consulate of Mexico in Bengaluru, **gallery g** showcased 'Mexican Amates', an exhibition of traditional art done on Amate Paper. This travelling exhibit was previously displayed at Dr. Bhau Daji Lad Museum in Mumbai.

The Amate Paper (from the Nahuatu word *Amati*) is a type of bark paper which dates back to the pre-Hispanic times in Mexico. It's production as a commercial craftwork started following the merging of two indigenous traditions: the Otomi people, who manufacture the bark paper and the Nahuas people, who decorate it.

In contemporary Mexico, Amate can be found as a form of handcraft fostering tourism in the Otomi community of San Pablito, Puebla. The Otomi people sell the Amate paper to the Nahuas community in the state of Guerrero, where the artisans skillfully paint it using bright colours.

MANUFACTURING

Although there have been some minor innovations, Amate paper still uses the same basic method used in the pre-Hispanic period. The process begins by obtaining the bark to make the fibre. Traditionally, trees from the ficus family are used.

PAINTING

The Nahuas people were traditionally ceramic painters, but with the introduction of Amate paper, they began to paint on this material. At the beginning, the artisans would only hand paint birds and flowers; but with time they started to depict the events of their



RIJKS WHERE YOU NEED TO BE!



work in a gallery, and art has been my one secret love. Yet, the idea of walking through 30,000 square meters of museum space, laid out over 4 floors in a building that is 133 years-old was not my idea of holiday fun. With 80 galleries and 8000 objects on display, there's never enough time to view this complete collection of treasures; but there was no way I was skipping this gallery of masterpieces. Hence I devised a way (all thanks to the museum's digital presence on Google Arts & Culture) and created a must see list of the top attractions at Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam.

I AMSTERDAM

The sad news is that the Amsterdam City Council removed this stunning red and white signage in early December 2018, claiming that it gave a wrong 'individualistic' message to people and had become more of a nuisance 'selfie' spot. It's a shame we say, no trip to Amsterdam was complete without that picture finding way to your Instagram feed. Yours Truly managed just managed to beat the takedown in September! Maybe someone reading this will change their mind and have the letters installed again?

THE PASSAGE

Only in a city like Amsterdam can one see cyclists speeding through the passageway connecting the two parts of the museum atrium! It's true, Rijksmuseum's passageway is open to cyclists, who make the most of the lofty ceilings that allow wind to buffet through them, and whiz past unsuspecting tourists as they try to get their bearings on how to enter the museum. This passage is also an acoustic dream - street performers love to use this space for the lofty ceilings echo their beautiful melodies in the most complementary manner.

THE SECOND FLOOR: REMBRANDT, VERMEER, STEEN AND HALS

Patience is not my middle name and there's no way I could save the best for the last. I just had to see it first! So it was straight to the second floor to see the most famous paintings by Dutch Masters. I had read and heard so much about Rembrandt's 'The Night Watch', his largest and most famous painting. On first glance you miss most of the details. You need at least 20 minutes of calm and patience to absorb all the details in. The large-scale painting depicts guardsmen getting into formation, with a young girl in the foreground rumoured to be modelled on Rembrandt's wife. The opulent space is dedicated to Rembrandt's vision and talent, complete with a frieze commemorating key moments in the artist's life. Spend some time reading interesting stories about the painting's details and anecdotes about its history (next to the painting you can find a handy guide on what to pay attention to and it is available in several languages, including Hindi).



Go south from the room where 'The Night Watch' is exhibited and you will enter the Gallery of Honour and find a stunning collection of paintings by Rembrandt, Vermeer, Steen and Hals.

"The Milkmaid" by Johannes Vermeer might be a relatively small painting, but it's breathtaking given the details Vermeer has managed to capture on that tiny canvas. Admire the



intensely saturated blue and yellow tones and the artist's beautiful handling of natural light, which led generations of art historians to comment on the artwork's photographic realism. The milkmaid looks so peaceful and absorbed in her work that you can almost hear the silence in the artist's studio. The white of his paint is luminous, the details so intricate you can see the seeds on the loaf of

bread and droplets of milk spilling out of the jug as she pours. Take your time and stop in front of each and every painting in the Gallery of Honour – it's worth it!

The next room to the right is a showcase of early paintings of Rembrandt that only prove how brilliant he was from a very young age. Take a look at his self-portraits and note how he applied experimental techniques, such as scratching the surface of the paint to portray the structure of his curly hair.

Frans Hals' portrait of the couple believed to be Isaac Massa and Beatrix van der Laen is one of the Dutch master's more unusual compositions. When it was painted in the 17th century, wedding portraits were unwaveringly stiff and stoic – the smiling and comfortable body positioning of this couple caused quite the scandal.

THE THREATENED SWAN

This painting by Jan Asselijn was the first piece purchased by the Nationale Kunstgalerij (the Rijks-museum's predecessor) but that's not all that's special about it. The swan fiercely defending its nest from a dog was later understood to represent Johan de Witt who fought against enemies of the state. The swan has since become a symbol of Dutch national resistance. ■



- Archana Shenoy

ART TRENDS

If the astronomical sale of Salvator Mundi left the art world spellbound towards the end of 2017, then serial prank artist Banksy left them shell shocked with his shredding of Girl With Balloon at Sotheby's in October 2018. True, art has always something to inspire, invoke and instill some new faith in us but Banksy, the elusive English artist, known only to a select few, garnered attention like none other with the dramatic sale and instant disintegration of the famous art work, replicated several times over.



The shell-shocked audience as Banksy's artwork begins to shred automatically after the winning bid at Sotheby's.

The last item on the bidding list at Sotheby's in the October auction, connoisseurs were 'Banksy-ed,' according to Alex Branczik, Sotheby's senior director and head of contemporary art in Europe.

A few seconds after Girl With Balloon was sold to an anonymous buyer, the canvas began to pass through a shredder installed in the frame by the artist himself. Surprise turned to shock and stunned disbelief as the lower half of the painting turned to shreds. Then it stopped, the top half remained intact.

Was Sotheby's in on it? Banksy denied their complicity but admitted in an Instagram post that the shredding didn't go according to plan. In rehearsals, the painting had been completely destroyed but somehow, the storyline turned around in the final sale. Yet, value of the work, officially re-authenticated "Love Is In The Bin", has gone up several times over the staggering \$1.4 million paid for, by the buyer. And yes, the anonymous art collector has chosen to keep the piece as a unique, one-off standout.

YEAR OF THE WOMEN ARTISTS

In many ways, 2018 was the year of the woman artists and particularly at Art Basel where they outnumbered and outshone the male artists. Booth after booth was taken over by established and young women artists, sending a strong message to the world. Now that Basel has taken a huge step, the next couple of years will reveal how the trend metamorphoses.

For one male artist, however, 2018 was a watershed year. David Hockney's Pool With Two Figures, smashed all expectations and records selling for an unprecedented \$90.3 million, the most expensive for a living artist. At 81, Hockney, whose work initially sold for \$18,000 in 1972, won't benefit from the windfall at Christie's, London, but the fervent bidding ensured that the prices for the English artist's works in the future auctions would be at stratospheric levels.

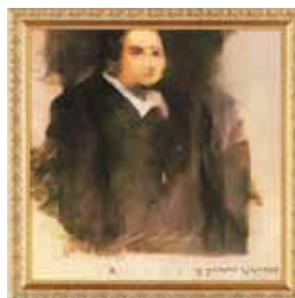


Above: Art Basel proved to be a defining moment for women artists. Below: David Hockney's Pool With Two Figures smashed the existing record for any living artist.



AI ART MAKES ITS BOW

Lastly, but not the least, Artificial Intelligence made its way into the art world. Who would have thought such a thing would even be possible? But like the fast-paced changes in our society, driven intensely by the galloping social media, Obvious, a French art collective of artists and AI researchers, drove home a point successfully selling a portrait produced by AI at Christie's New York, The portrait titled Edmond de Belamy, from La Famille de Belamy went under the hammer for \$432,500, over 40 times its estimate of \$7,000-10,000 (Below).



Bought by an anonymous bidder over phone, the distorted portrait was marketed by Christie's as the first portrait generated by an algorithm to come up for auction. Auctioning the work seemed to be a test by Christie's of the traditional art market's interest in AI art. It remains to be seen if this is one-off or there is a spurt in this form of art. Interesting times ahead. ■

- Ravi Chakravarthy

