

Celebrating a century of enterprise

THE national capital is all set to witness an exciting art auction this week. Bid & Hammer's 'Significant Indian Paintings' auction is scheduled in Delhi on June 27 and will feature works by 'early masters and modernists'. The auction celebrates '100 Years of Enterprise' by the Dadha Group, whose range of enterprises in India, include an art gallery and the Bid & Hammer auction house in Bangalore. The upcoming auction, with its wide selection of artworks, offers collectors the opportunity of bidding for rare works by some of the biggest names in India's art world. The selection of 'early masters' include works by Hemendra Mazumdar, Rabindranath Tagore, Jamini Roy and Sailoz Mookerjea, while the 'modernists' are represented by MF Husain, Vasudeo Gaitonde, Tyeb Mehta, SHRaza, FN.Souza, KH Ara and others.

A painting by Gaitonde may be considered as leading the pack. It was almost a year ago that this artist's abstract landscape was sold for Rs 23.7 crores at a Christie's auction. In Bid & Hammer's auction, Gaitonde's work has been estimated at a modest Rs 1.8 and 3 crore. In this 1980 painting, the artist has chosen to use a palette knife in preference to brushes in his earlier paintings.

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HIGH HORSE: Husain's famous white horses

One of the more important and interesting works being offered is Ram Kumar's sublime 1963 oil-on-canvas from his *Varanasi* series, which has been estimated at a price between Rs.45 -75 lakh. *Varanasi* continues to be the theme also for Raza's 1947 oil on canvas, titled *Benaras*, which has been estimated between Rs12-15 lakh. Considering that *Varanasi* is now much in the news, it would not be at all surprising if both these paintings fetch higher prices.

What would an auction be without Husain? This prolific painter is seen at his best in an acrylic on canvas creation of his favourite subject — horses. Created in 1977, the work shows three white horses against an orange background and is estimated between Rs 1-1.5 crore. Husain had presented filmstar Namrata Shirodkar with some paintings, which are now being sold to raise funds for the Heal-a-Child Foundation espoused by Namrata's husband, Telegu star Mahesh Babu.

The auction will also offer 'important works from the estate of Nandalal Bose,' and it is one of the works of this eminent Bengal School artist that has now become the focus of a controversy. It has been said that the painting listed as being auctioned is similar to a painting which is part of the Nandalal Bose collection at the National Gallery of Modern Art, New Delhi. The only difference being that the one being auctioned is in full colour while the painting at NGMA is in monochrome. I believe it is pertinent to mention here, that artists are known for doing a sketch first in monochrome and later, if they are happy with the outcome, to repeat the same subject in colour.

Other art works at the auction include works from an art collection bequeathed in its entirety to her grand-daughter, by renowned social worker and freedom fighter, Radha Devi Goenka. Also worth seeing will be the works from the private collection of Varsh & Dinesh Thacker, known for their keen interest in art. And while it seems unfortunate that the Bid & Hammer auction has managed to stir up an unnecessary controversy, it might well serve to make the event more interesting.

(The writer is an author and a former art gallery owner)