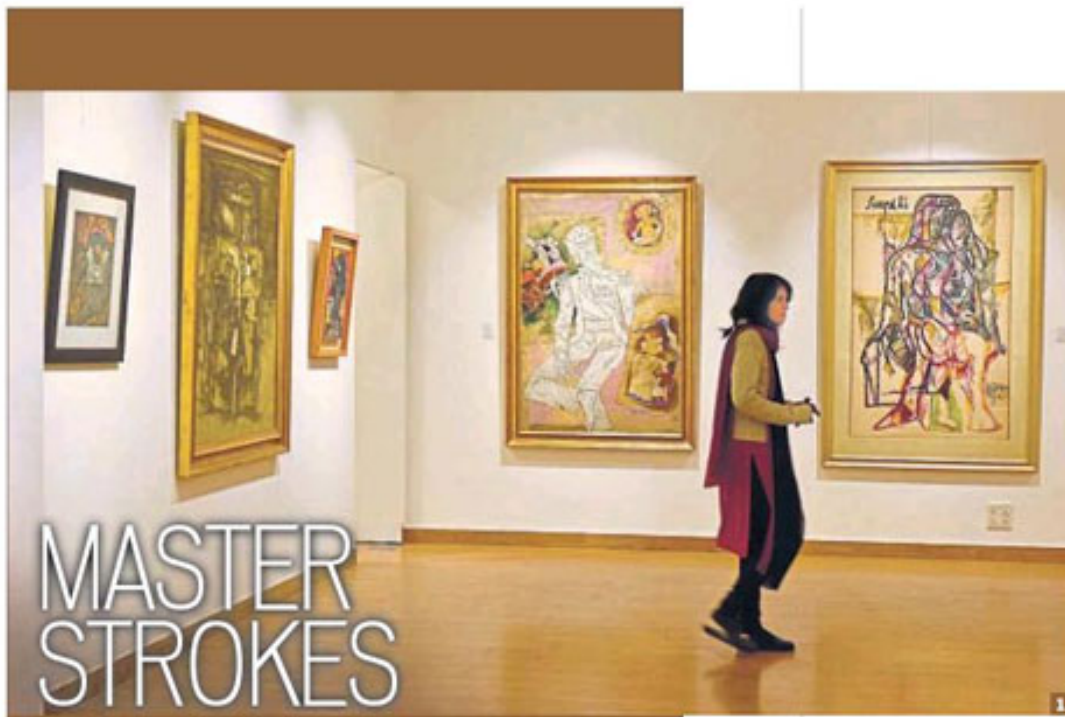


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MASTER STROKES

Two shows bring the work of Indian modernists to the city while also shedding light on the evolution of modern Indian art



SAHAR KHARDELMI/HT PHOTO

WEEKEND FIX

Namita Kohli

namita.kohli@hindustantimes.com

If the poem must be written for "poets' sake", and if the "obscure oils of poetry and truth" must not mix, as American literary critic Edgar Allan Poe argues in his essay "The Poetic Principle", then surely one must be granted the privilege of enjoying—pardon the cliché—art for art's sake too. The thought strikes me as I walk around Kumar Gallery, looking at the formidable collection of modern art by some of the starry pioneers such as MF Husain, FN Souza, Krishna Khanna, BS Kulkarni and Sohan Qadri.

In its 60th year, the city's oldest gallery is exhibiting 45 works of art, including the abstract and the figurative, the impasto and the tempera, that offer a visual narrative of a few pivotal moments in the evolution of modern art in post-independent India, as well as in the oeuvre of its "blue-chip" artists. A small room dedicated to "rare" works by Husain, for instance, provides a glimpse into his work during the 1960s and 1960s; another room dedicated to Souza acquaints one with his works from the 1960s. These works can help us trace the artists' evolution. For example, Krishna Khanna, whose works are full of colour, mostly also did Fisher Girl in 1958, which is in black and white," says Sunita Kumar, director, Kumar Gallery. Works such as these are being shown after a gap of many years—Fisher Girl for instance, is on display after 60 years.

The collection is replete with history from a 1908 work by Ransikumar Bajaj to hand-drawn canvases by the artists. In one of his works, Husain, who thought of himself as "Indus Picasso", addresses gallery founder Virendra Kumar as the "Kalambeater (gallery owner in Paris who promoted Picasso's work) of Indian art". The strength of the collection, however, lies in the works of the "young" masters such as Qadri, whose impasto is a rare sight,



or a B Prabha, whose work has been undervalued. "If the price of Husain's work in 1970 was ₹1000, it is about ₹5-crores today. The same can not be said of some of his contemporaries. Artists such as B Prabha have not gotten their due," says Kumar. If this collection piques one's interest in the works of modern masters, similar pleasures are to be had at Kolkata-based CIMA gallery's show of the works of Lulu Prasad Shaw and Ganesh Pyne, whose Shaw's rural sensibilities are juxtaposed with Pyne's urban angst. It's the season to enjoy art, even if it seems, in moments perhaps, for its own sake only.

ART SHOW

What: Celebration
When: 1pm-5pm; Till February 5
Where: 56, Sunder Nagar



1. On display at Kumar gallery are works of artists such as MF Husain (left) and FN Souza 2. Head, 1966, FN Souza. This work is from the artist's famous Head series 3. Drapadee by Ganesh Pyne, that will be on display at the Visual Arts Gallery, Pyne's canvases were inspired by mythological characters 4. Last sermon by Krishna Khanna, 1996 5. B Prabha's Fish Vendors, 1983 6. Toilet (seated nude lady with maid combing her hair), 1938, by Ransikumar Bajaj



What: Ganesh Pyne & Lulu Prasad Shaw: Two Faces of Bengal Modernism
When: February 1-6
Where: Visual Arts gallery, IHC