

KUMAR GALLERY



SOUZA

**SACRED &
PROFANE**

SOUZA

SACRED & PROFANE

Exhibition: 1st February – 16th February 2026

KUMAR GALLERY
Palm Drive, Sainik Farms
New Delhi - 110 062

Edited by
Tarun Kumar Jain

Published by
Sunit Kumar Jain, Kumar Gallery
Sunder Nagar Market, New Delhi - 110 003
Tel : +91-98102-91129
Email : info@kumargallery.com
Web : www.kumargallery.com

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Inscribed by Souza in a catalogue of Kumar Gallery's 1997 show,
Six Modern Masters

Passing the Millennium & Millennium Passing!
For Virendra Kumar, my art dealer for 40 years!
– F N Souza March 1999

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FOUNDER'S STATEMENT

Virendra Kumar Jain

January 2005

The achievement of Independence in India ignited the same phenomenal desire for change in the matter of art and culture that Europe exhibited throughout the earlier half of the twentieth century. The shifting of paradigms necessarily affected all realms of culture around the world. Evidence of the manifestation of the incredible stimulus for experimentation and growth in Modern Indian Art is but hinted at in the endeavors of quite a few spirited artists, individually and jointly, such as in the Calcutta Progressives and the Progressive Artists' Group in Mumbai.

Many would agree that, at the time, the affliction from the legacy of colonial rule remained. In the midst of a cataclysmic transformation in political mindset, the conservative structural systems resisted. Artists struggled, even group movements failed to be as effective as envisaged, primarily due to the lack of patronage and appreciation. The only appreciation came from a few specialists. In this context, Souza's view seemed more pessimistic, as he wrote, "We have no continuity in our culture, no development, it has been invaded successfully and destroyed by vandals, missionaries, conquistadores, and Victorians. Nor have we had the vitality to give birth to new traditions, to create new forms, literary and artistic, springing from the waste and dilapidation that surrounded and still surround us. I do not know if the invaders successfully castrated our aesthetic potential or if we just dwindled on our own and became culturally impotent" [1]. As a volcano's destructive lava leaves behind ash, which makes the soil fertile, so too did these seemingly insurmountable appearances conceal behind them the seeds for a renewed force. Redemption of the situation could not be ruled out; it merely required the necessary healing and cultivation of vitality. So, while the situation compelled many progressive minded artists to go to Europe and the United States, there were many artists who continued to persevere in India.

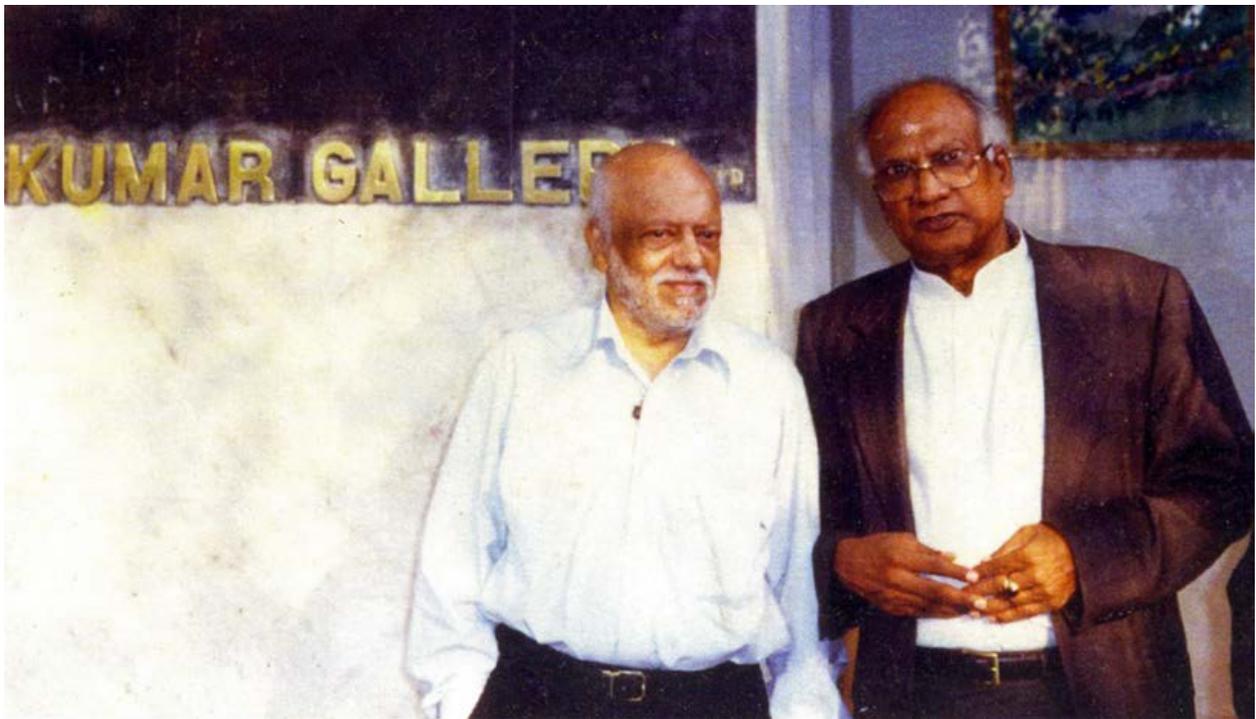
Souza, in 1949, headed for London a meager two years after forging the Progressive Artists' Group. He remarked, "It's all very well to talk in metaphors about having roots in one's own country. But roots need water from clouds forming over distant seas, and rivers having sources in different lands." Akbar Padamsee, Sayed Haider Raza, Tyeb Mehta, Mohan Samant, Ram Kumar, Sohan Qadri, Avinash Chandra, Natwar Bhavsar, Krishna Reddy, Paritosh Sen, Sakti Burman, and Velu Viswanathan are among the artists I knew who left India. Husain held his ground, preferring to make frequent visits abroad instead.

The migration of Indian artists to Europe alone, however, did not ensure their place. Between the years 1955 and 1962, Souza achieved a height of success and recognition in Europe which, at the time, no other Indian artist had yet reached. He received the Guggenheim International Award in 1958 as well as generous patronage from Harold Kovner and Gallery One. He was also admitted into the Tate. Stephen Spender included his autobiographical notes, *Nirvana of a Maggot*, in *Encounter* magazine, followed by the publication of *Words and Lines* in 1959. Edwin Mullins, in 1962, brought out the book entitled *Souza*. In the lingering memories of the titans of Modern European art, such accomplishments were no small feat. The intensity of Souza's artistic and literary zeal was so great that it was akin to being rebellious. As an artist, he felt a compulsion to paint, a compulsion given to him by Nature, a compulsion that became his muse of inspiration. His art reflected his unique perspective of reality, and his greater understanding of Nature.

Souza's work may require a conscious effort to see his art in a broader perspective. To me, his art creates a sense of tension and friction through the interplay of form and distortion. Figurative art has the power to relate to the viewer through a defined subject, be it religion, man, or woman. This friction is not meant to make his figurative art destructive and grotesque. Souza seemed to view sex as the genesis of life, an act of beauty. As friction is the cause of ecstasy in the act of love, the friction in Souza's painting intends to transcend its face value and become the impetus for creation. His artwork also aims at playing with the viewer's conception of beauty and ugliness. For, as Souza holds, "Beauty is the ultimate nuance of Nature" [2]. Souza breaks the preset notions of plastic values, preferring

instead to find his own meaning, hidden in the nuances of his work.

After holding his first one-man show at Kumar Gallery in 1962, and having had numerous discussions with Souza in both Delhi and New York over a span of forty years, I am completely certain of Souza's importance as a Modern Master. Only now, after the emergence of a tremendous interest in Souza's work across the globe, are art historians and critics waking up to truly evaluate his work. His contributions as an artist and thinker enriched the whole spectrum of Modern Indian Art in the second half of the twentieth century. In the times to come, Souza's life will undoubtedly continue to act as a constant source of inspiration for artists in their creative endeavors.



Virendra Kumar and F N Souza at Kumar Gallery, Sundar Nagar in 1999

SOUZA

Edwin Mullins

From Kumar Gallery's 1962 Catalogue

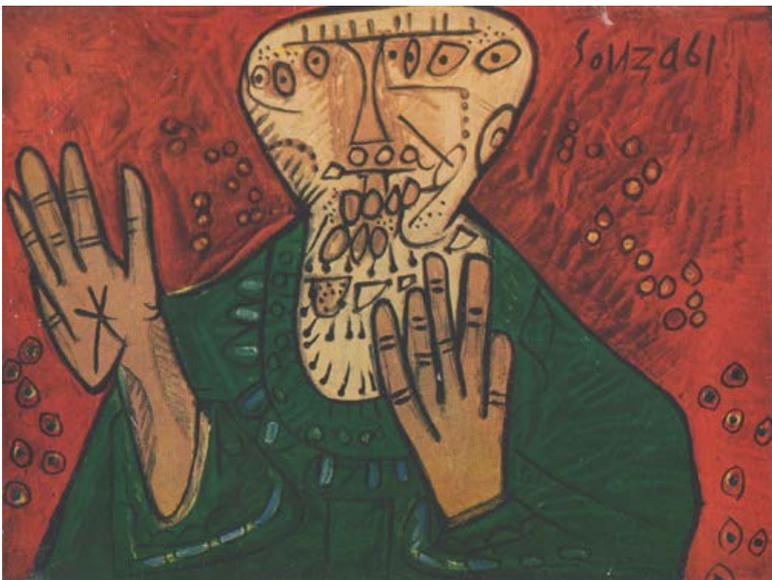
SOUZA is an image-maker like Rouault and Francis Bacon. His art lies in his power to strengthen the eye's image of this world by distorting it, until it becomes merely the language by which his own mental images are expressed, and the common ground on which we may come to terms with them. For although Souza is a figurative painter, nothing about his art is descriptive; there is no celebration of nature, no attempt to capture the effect of a sunset, no concern whatsoever with what is "particular" in life. Above all, there is nothing romantic about his paintings. "I hate the smell of paint," Souza has written in his brilliant autobiographical statement, WORD AND LINES: "Painting for me is not beautiful. It is as ugly as a reptile. I attack it."

It is not a critic's job to ask why an artist paints as he does. At the same time, one cannot walk into a roomful of Souzas without at once being forced to participate in certain passions and fears which make these violent distortions of the visual world explicable and sympathetic. Frequently these passions are not only violent but destructive, as though each painting liberated the artist from a nightmare. His art is full of strange perversities and contradictions, too. On a superficial level this has led him to paint landscapes on cheap, tarty fabrics picked up from the outsize department of a women's dress shop; or to paint a portrait over a colour-photograph of the Canadian prairies or the House of Parliament. But the contradictions go deeper than this; all his most successful work seems to contain something of an emotional clash—vulgarity and tenderness, or agony and wit, pathos and satire, aggression and composure. They have some of the sheer inventiveness of Picasso—specially Picasso's late graphic works—and the same unresolved tumult.

Souza is an Indian, yet to explain away his paintings in terms of an Indian tradition is to explain it away. He has lived in this country for thirteen years, and

before that was educated in a Bombay that was “more Victorian than Victoria,” as he describes it, and whose intelligentsia thought more highly of Royal Academy bluebell woods than their own mighty sculptures of Khajuraho. If one looks for the true roots of Souza’s art one must look towards Rouault and Picasso, and more particularly towards Spanish and Portuguese Byzantine imagery, which made up a deep impression on him in the small Catholic enclave of Goa where he was brought up. Much of his art still retains the stiff, hieratic quality of Byzantine church imagery.

All the same it would be foolish not to recognise some debt to Indian miniatures, bronzes and stone carvings; the emphasis on definitive line to trace the twist and movement of the human body; the ritual treatment of the erotic; and the intuitive understanding of a flat surface and what it demands—these have their roots in classical Indian art. Yet no more than Mario Marini has his roots in Donatello.



F. N. SOUZA

KUMAR GALLERY

SOUZA is an image-maker—like Rouault and Francis Bacon. His art lies in his power to strengthen the eye's image of this world by distorting it, until it becomes merely the language by which his own mental images are expressed, and the common ground on which we may come to terms with them. For although Souza is a figurative painter, nothing about his art is descriptive; there is no celebration of nature, no attempt to capture the effect of a sunset, no concern whatsoever with what is "particular" in life. Above all, there is nothing romantic about his paintings. "I hate the smell of paint," Souza has written in his brilliant autobiographical statement, WORD AND LINES: "Painting for me is not beautiful. It is as ugly as a reptile. I attack it."

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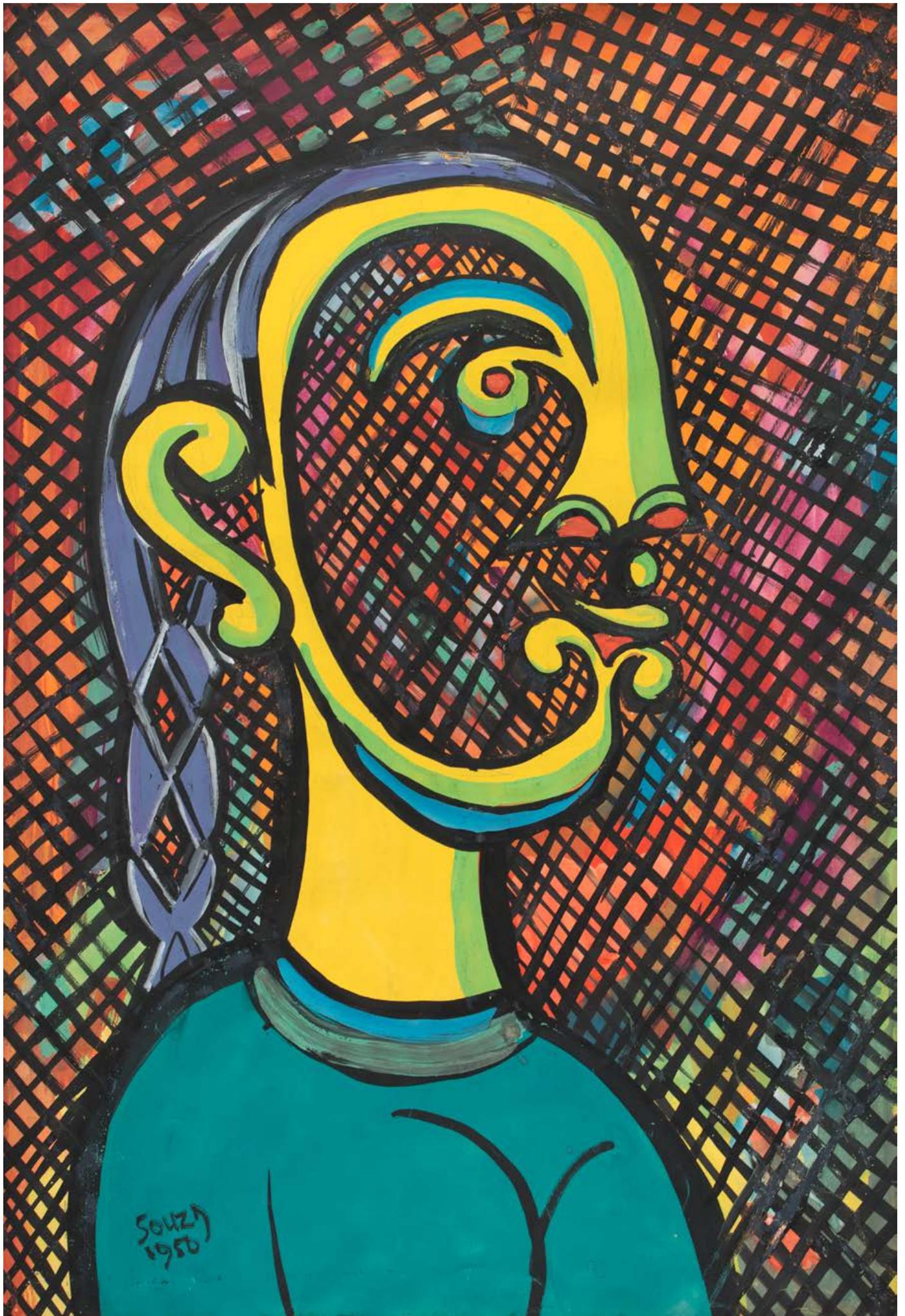
All the same it would be foolish not to recognise some debt to Indian miniatures, bronzes and stone carvings; the emphasis on definitive line to trace the twist and movement of the human body; the ritual treatment of the erotic; and the intuitive understanding of a flat surface and what it demands—these have their roots in classical Indian art. Yet no more than Mario Marini has his roots in Donatello.

EDWIN MULLINS.

KUMAR GALLERY

11 SUNDER NAGAR MARKET NEW DELHI-11
 ASHOKA HOTEL NEW DELHI-21
 GRAND HOTEL CHOWRINGHEE CALCUTTA-13
 1774 No. ORANGE GROVE AVE HOLLYWOOD-46

CATALOGUE



Untitled (Woman) 1950 Gouache on paper 22 × 15 in



Profile 1950 Mixed media on paper 22 × 15 in

EXHIBITED AND PUBLISHED

F N Souza: Retrospective I, Kumar Gallery, 1999

Spirit Set Free, Kumar Gallery, 2005

Cubism in Asia, Tokyo-Seoul-Singapore, Aug 2005-Apr 2006

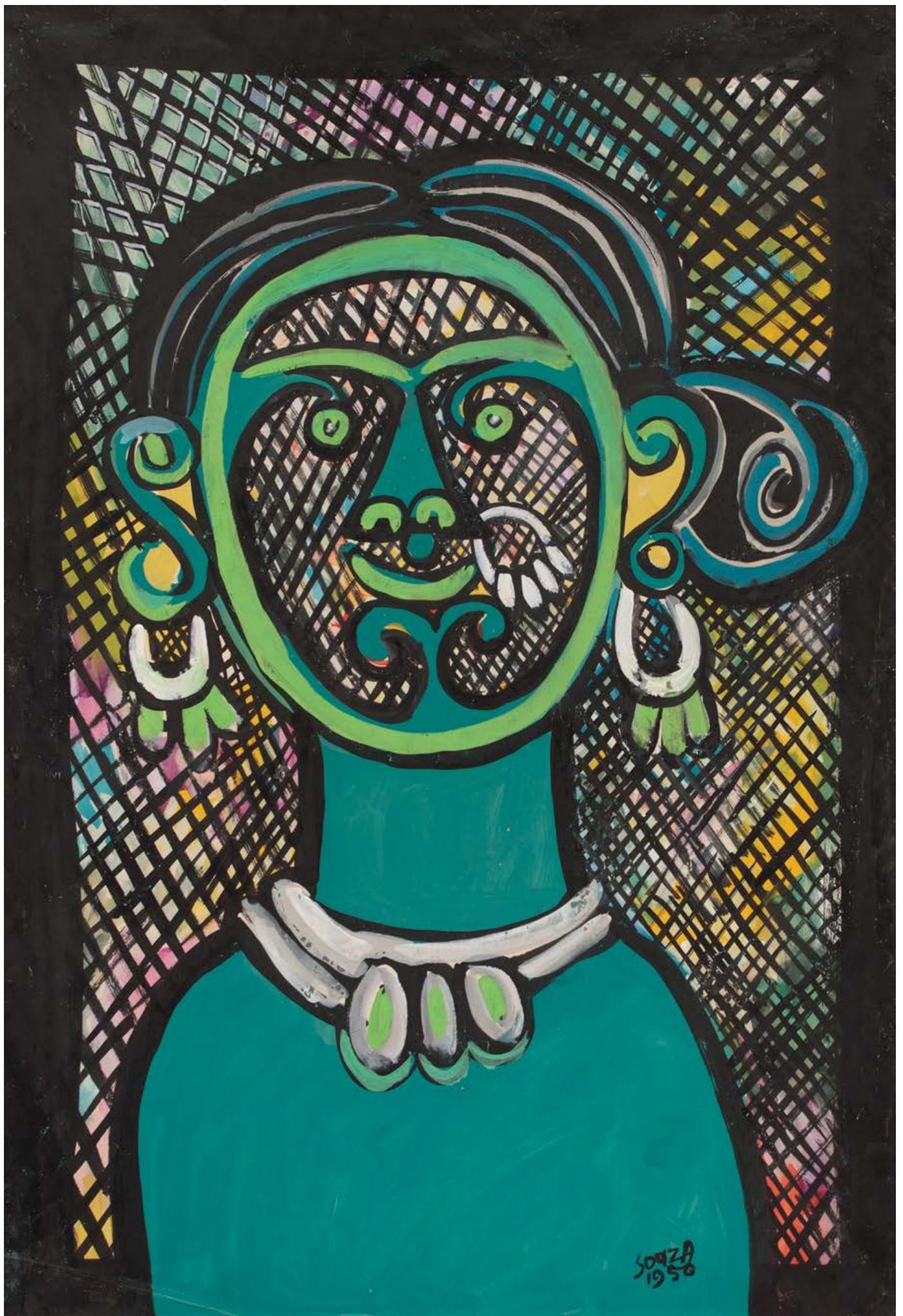
PUBLISHED

Souza: A Legend in Modern Art, TK Jain, 2024, p73

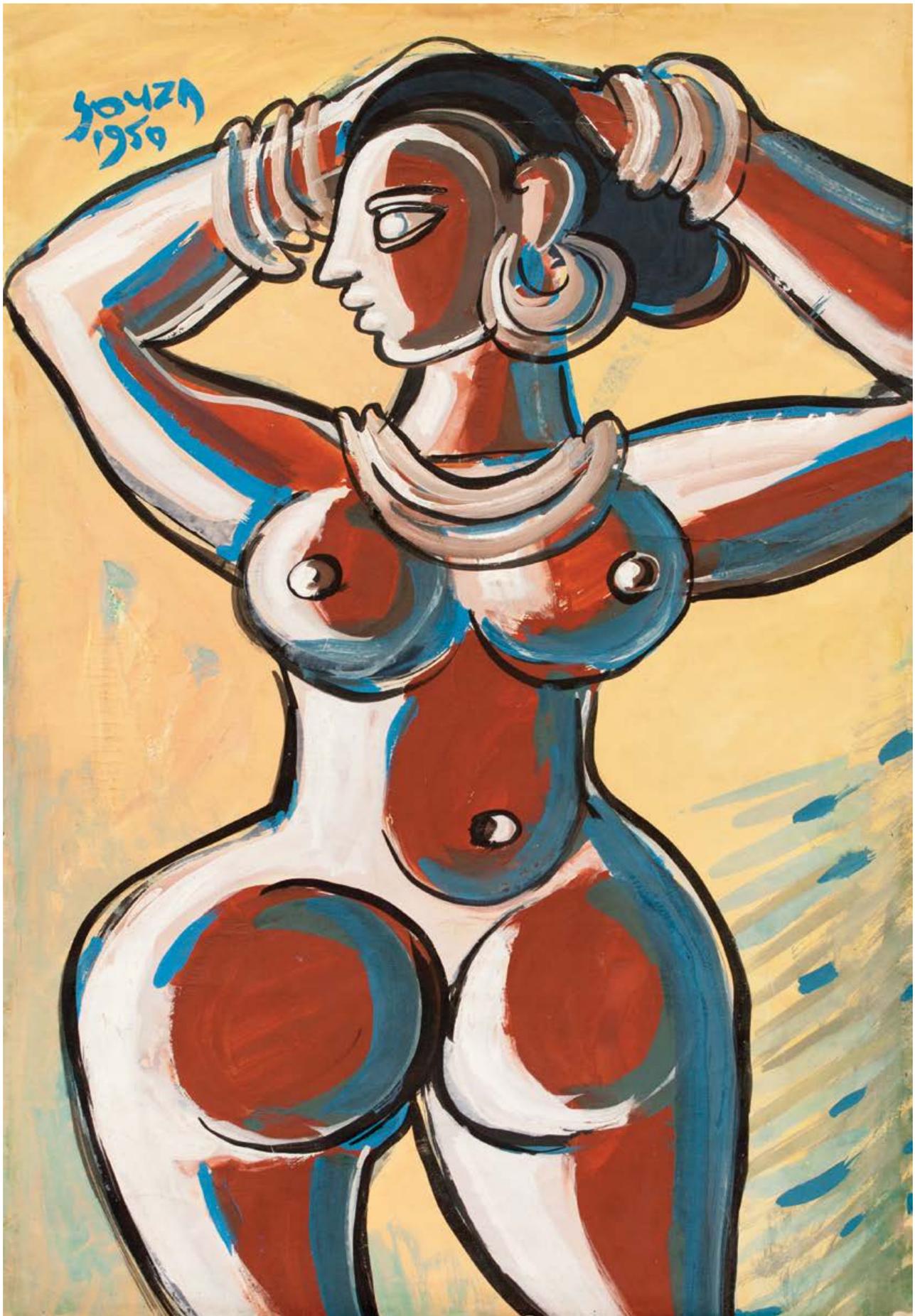
Pioneer, 27 Oct 1999

EXHIBITED

F N Souza: Retrospective III, Kumar Gallery, 2001



Untitled (Tribal Woman with Nose Ring) 1950 Gouache on paper 22 × 15 in



Front and Back of a Young Woman 1950 Gouache on paper 22 × 15 in

PUBLISHED

Souza: A Legend in Modern Art, TK Jain, 2024, p71
Art India 21 (2), 2017

EXHIBITED

F N Souza: Retrospective III, Kumar Gallery, 2001



Untitled (Bride) 1951 Gouache on paper 16 × 13½ in

EXHIBITED AND PUBLISHED

F N Souza: Retrospective II, Kumar Gallery, 2001

PUBLISHED

Art + Review, Delhi, 13 Oct 2000





Still Life with Vessels 1962 Oil on canvas 30½ × 37½ in

EXHIBITED AND PUBLISHED

F N Souza: Retrospective I, Kumar Gallery, 1999

Ten Modern Masters, Kumar Gallery, 2025

PUBLISHED

Souza: A Legend in Modern Art, TK Jain, 2024, p110

EXHIBITED

F N Souza: Retrospective III, Kumar Gallery, 2001

100 Years of Souza, Kumar Gallery, 2024



Untitled (Priest with Vessels) 1952 Graphite on paper 10½ × 8½ in





Untitled (Still Life with Fish) 1964-66 Oil on canvas 19½ × 27 in

EXHIBITED AND PUBLISHED

F N Souza: Retrospective II, Kumar Gallery, 2001

Celebration 2008, Kumar Gallery, 2008

Celebration 2011, Kumar Gallery, 2011

Celebration 2024, Kumar Gallery, 2024

PUBLISHED

Souza: A Legend in Modern Art, TK Jain, 2024, p112

Art India, 12 (3), 2007

EXHIBITED

100 Years of Souza, Kumar Gallery, 2024



Untitled (Silver Head) 1965 Oil and spray paint on canvas 32 × 25 in

EXHIBITED AND PUBLISHED

27 Masters, Kumar Gallery, 2023

PUBLISHED

Souza: A Legend in Modern Art, TK Jain, 2024, p241

EXHIBITED

F N Souza: Retrospective III, Kumar Gallery, 2001

100 Years of Souza, Kumar Gallery, 2024





Untitled (Cardinal, Man with Red Hat) 1965-66 oil on canvas 23 × 34 in

EXHIBITED AND PUBLISHED

F N Souza: Retrospective II, Kumar Gallery, 2000

A Tribute to Virendra Kumar Jain, Kumar Gallery, 2022

PUBLISHED

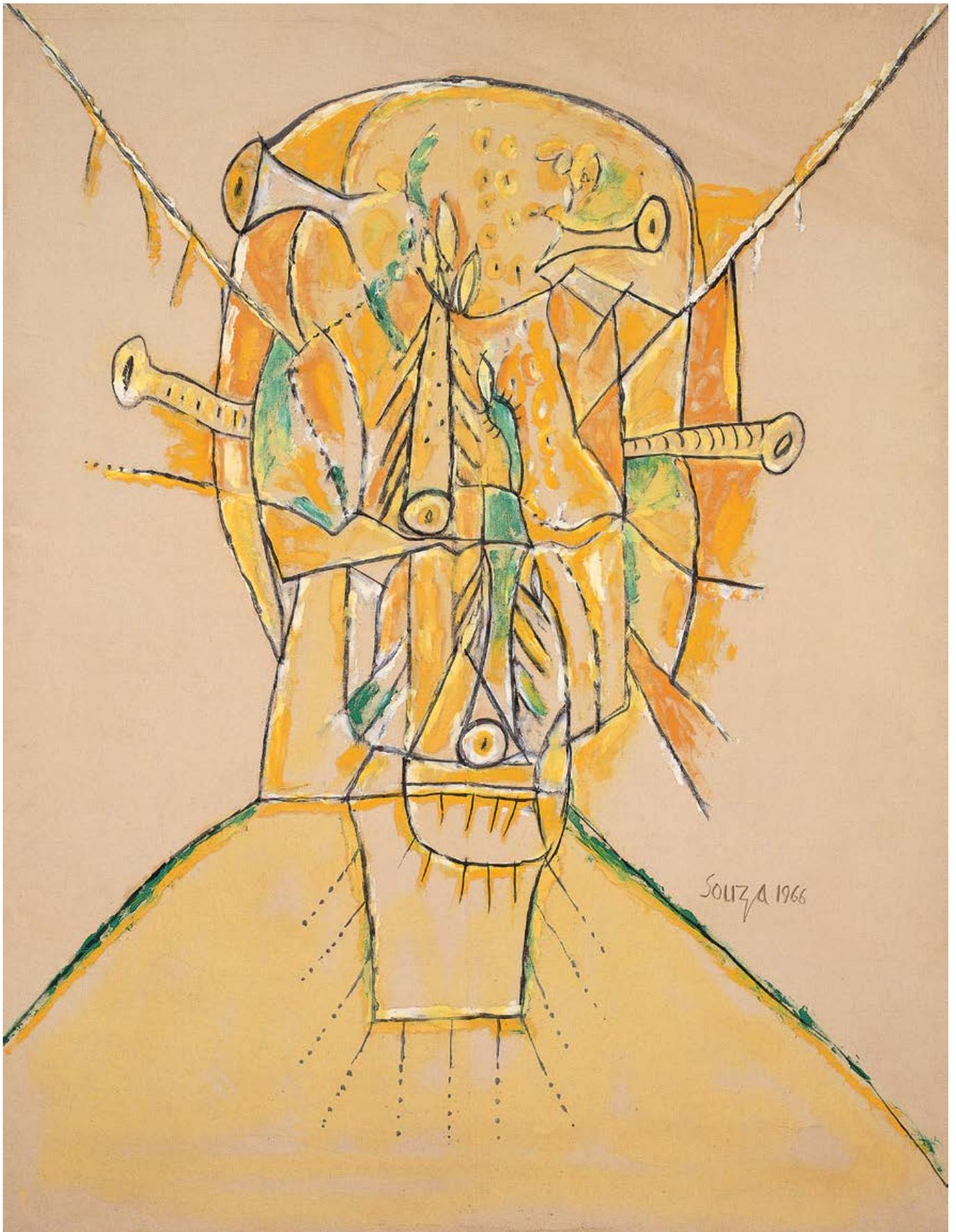
Souza: A Legend in Modern Art, TK Jain, 2024, p216

Souza, the modernist, the man, and more, Gayatri Sinha, 2002

EXHIBITED

F N Souza: Retrospective II, Kumar Gallery, 2000

100 Years of Souza, Kumar Gallery, 2024



Untitled 1966 Oil on canvas 60 × 46 in

EXHIBITED AND PUBLISHED

Treasures of the Masters, Kumar Gallery, 2025

PUBLISHED

Souza: A Legend in Modern Art, TK Jain, 2024, p203

EXHIBITED

F N Souza: Retrospective III, Kumar Gallery, 2001

100 Years of Souza, Kumar Gallery, 2024

THE ARCHITECTURE OF APOTHEOSIS

F N SOUZA

Untitled (Head), 1966

Oil on Canvas, 60 × 46 in

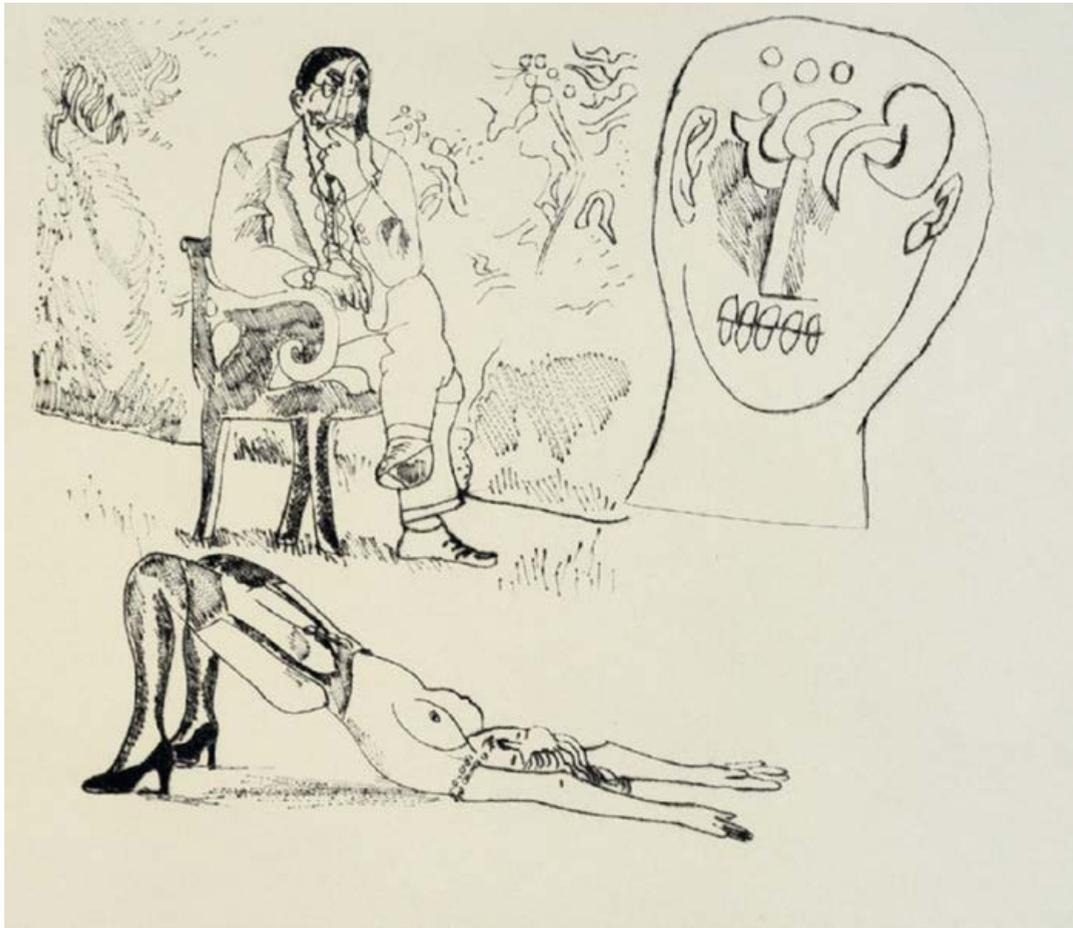
In his heads, Souza achieved an extraordinary emotional evocation unmatched by any artist in history. Not only did he powerfully distort facial features; he invented altogether new facial anatomies in which visceral intensity and symbolic meaning became indivisibly intertwined. The raw sensational power of these unprecedented physiognomic forms was counterbalanced, in part, by the relatability of their human scale¹. It is therefore notable that in three monumental heads from the 1960s, inclusive of the present work, Souza breaks this implicit yet functional covenant regarding figural scale. Proportionally, these heads would belong to an entity approximately 25 feet tall. They are heads befitting a titan or demon, perhaps even a deity or god.

Souza's monumental heads were heralds to some of his most important aesthetic breakthroughs: the Nuclear Head devised in 1961, his pioneering use of Spray Paint in 1963, and in the present work, the Fetal Head conceived of in 1963. That these colossal heads were specifically intended to take on an apothotic stature is demonstrated unequivocally in a lithograph produced in 1965, titled *Biography* [Ref 1]. In the composition, a suited man sits on a chair, legs crossed, and hand to his chin as he dispassionately appraises a topless woman in garters and heels performs some kind of burlesque act. Towering over this provocative scene drenched in human impulse stands a large, disembodied head. As is explicated in detail in our recent publication², this head is the symbolic form of the viewer's witnessing consciousness, reflecting Souza's engagement of Tantra from 1965 onwards. In his review of the book *Tantra Art*, published by Ravi Kumar and Kumar Gallery, Souza directly references the Godhead, writing, "The transformation of the worshipper to Godhead is commenced in sadhana (ritual worship) and completed in yoga (union). When a unitary consciousness in which ecstasy (samadhi) or transcendent experience is achieved, the difference between worshipper and the worshipped ceases". The Fetal Head's role in the constitution of the Godhead is further illustrated in a 1968, drawing by Souza of Viśvarūpa, the universal form of Vishnu, which he depicts as the integration of a Fetal Head with multiple eyes and a with shadow [Ref 2].

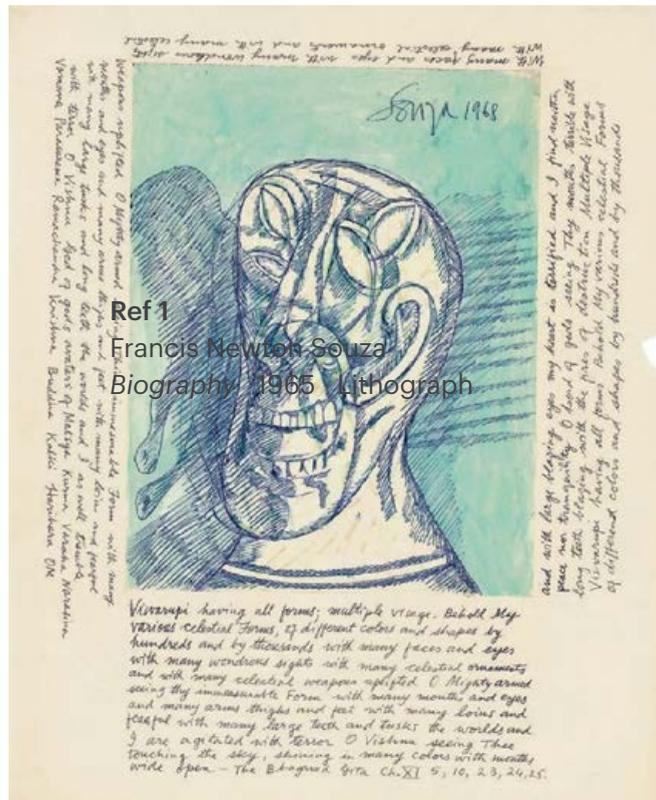
The most prominent features of the present work are the three pairs of sinuous tubular protrusions extending from the face in lieu of its nose, ears, and eyes. Exhibiting mild bilateral symmetry, each pair is rendered with variations in material and shape. Souza's substitution of normal sense organs with tubular protrusions

1 Even in his largest works, including *Birth* of 1955 and *Crucifixion* of 1963, the figures remain of human scale. The paintings are larger because (1) the full bodies of the figures are depicted and (2) the scenes are more elaborate.

2 See Chapters 8 and 9 of *Souza: A Legend in Modern Art*, Dr. Tarun Kumar Jain. Kumar Gallery, Pvt. Ltd. 2024



Ref 1
Francis Newton Souza
Biography 1965 Lithograph



Ref 1
Francis Newton Souza
Biography 1965 Lithograph

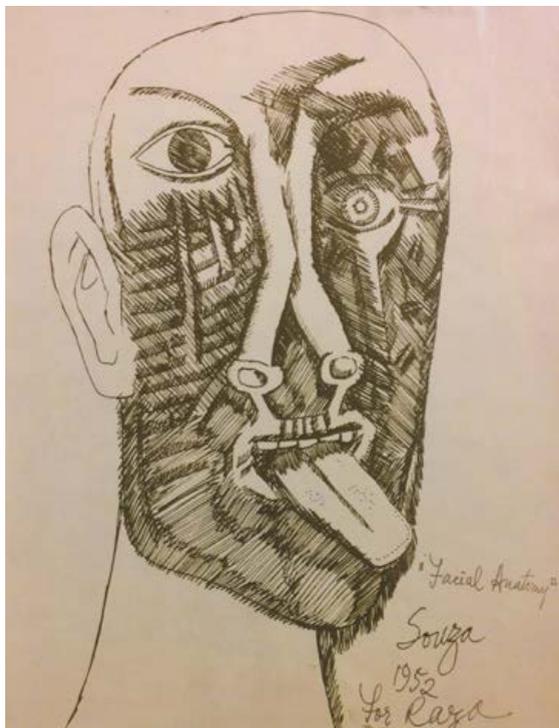
Ref 2
Francis Newton Souza
Viśvarūpa 1968
Quotes directly from the Bhagavad Gita

emphasizes their function as conduits for exchanging information through an active feeling-out and self-extension into the world. Most significantly, the nose is depicted with cross-hatching on either side, directly identifying it as an expressions of his “God Particle”. Souza defined his God Particle visually as two parallel lines with cross hatching on either side, and symbolically as a schema (yantra) by which the creative potential of the divine (circle) differentiated into identities (convex-male / concave-female) that could combine genetically to account for the vast diversity of form in the world¹. Thus, central to the symbolism of the Fetal Head is the stitching together of the God Particle into a Fetal Nose attached to the head.

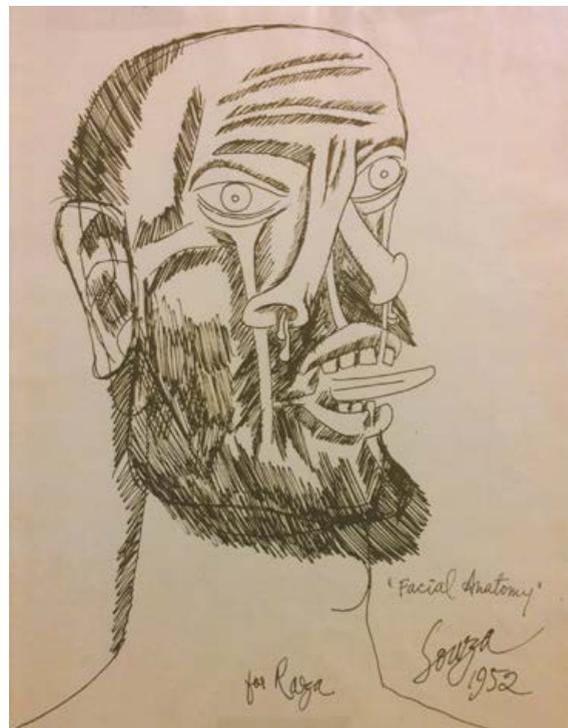
A pair of drawings made in 1952 titled *Facial Anatomy* and dedicated to Raza [Ref 3, 4], reveal that Souza’s tubular anatomies were invented in the same year as his Yantra of the God Particle. The drawings feature prominent, bifurcated noses resembling umbilical chords. Souza visited Paris for the first time in 1951 to execute a portrait of a woman he was commissioned for. In Paris, the reunion with Raza and his meeting with the legendary Picasso re-ignited for Souza the ambitious aesthetic vision that led him to assemble the legendary Bombay Progressive Artists’ Group²:

“We were ambitious, and even in worst economic desperation we did not relinquish our art. We evolved an art which was immediately Indian, as well as Modern. We were conscious of the fact that we were producing an art far superior to the hybrid Greco – Gandhara sculptures and later, the Anglo-Patna paintings... We were also sure that we were bridging the hiatus between all the great Mogul, Pahari, Bali schools, and the great South Indian bronze casters, over the void, abyss and chaos that was the condition of Indian Art from almost the inception of the British regime up to the late thirties or so of this century.” - F. N. Souza

- 1 See Chapter 4 of Souza: A Legend in Modern Art. Dr. Tarun Kumar Jain. Kumar Gallery, Pvt. Ltd. 2024
- 2 Paris Portrait. Francis Newton Souza. Thought. Siddhartha Publications, 1951.



Ref 3
 F N Souza
 Inscribed: “Facial Anatomy”
 Souza, 1952. For Raza



Ref 4
 F N Souza
 Inscribed: “Facial Anatomy”
 Souza, 1952. For Raza

In gifting *Facial Anatomy* to Raza, Souza was telling Raza he considered his *Fetal Head* to be a profound and ambitious breakthrough of utmost aesthetic and historical importance for Indian Modernism itself. Indeed, the symbolism of the head was not just a distillation of Godhood. It also embodied the journey where such Godhood culminates from the nurture of care, culture and history. This is because the *Fetal Head* gave symbolic form to one of Souza's deepest memories, rooted in his connection with his mother: "My mother, she's a strapping, handsome woman. She smells richly of the womb. I have the nose of a foetus... I have the memory of a foetus...". The thus gave significance to the fetus-nose conflation was the concept of motherhood. In fact, a drawing from 1968 [Ref 5] helps refine this conceptualization: the sinuous and tubular sense organs are visually externalized conduits of information exchange, that very specifically are embodiments of singular non-exchangeable gifts like the caring bond between a mother and her child.

Remarkably, it was after a long gestation of nearly eleven years that, in 1963, the "Fetal Head" emerged as a new physiognomic type in Souza's oeuvre. In part, extraordinary emotional vitality and visceral presence of Souza's art derived precisely from his strategy of nucleating distorted forms as individuated anatomical types with symbolic meaning Souza broke through the London scene in 1955, in part because the invention of the *God Particle* had finally become well integrated the heads in his oil paintings. The distortion of his rival and contemporary Francis Bacon – as described by the philosopher Gilles Deleuze – relied on the arbitrariness



Ref 5
F N Souza
Untitled (Mother and Child) 1968

of random asignifying marks that liberate the figure from the history of images. For Souza, however, it was the capacity of the “gift” to create its own positive history; history itself is constructed from the sequence of mutations resulting from non-exchangeable singularities (gifts) by the very fact that the transformation of a gift is subversive on those historical priors. Thus, so emotional was the motivation, so complex the symbolic meaning, and so alien the final anatomical form, that the Fetal Head could only have emerged after such a long and arduous journey.

Now, the present work displays remarkable sophistication and stylistic adaptations that harmonize the intent to create an apotheotic head with the symbolism of the Fetal Head. In particular, the conjunction of geometric faceting in black line with luminous transparent oil washes as well as flourishes of expressionistic color in green and orange pigment is notable. This is not a head built as an amorphous mass of impasto scars, rather it is one with an intentional, though inscrutable, geometric structure that gives the face an architectural grandeur. The duality of transparency and structuralism further accentuate the complex symbolic anatomy of the face, and allude to the nature of witnessing consciousness. In addition to the three pairs of tubular sense organs, the present work also subsumes the Nuclear Head anatomical type with its five convex eyes placed along the central axis of the head. This combination is also seen in Souza’s 1968 drawing of *Viśvarūpa*. Towards the bottom is a long blocky beard, which endows the portrait with a spiritual gravitas without the encumbrance of a religious identity. One further adaptation are the subtle serpentine stitches that extend vertically through the head. Since Souza’s mother and first wife were both skilled as couturiers, these stitches appear as a grotesque symbolic form designed to augment the apotheotic nature of the head and the connotations of the Fetal Head.

Souza augments the structural rendering of this apotheotic head with a unique construction of its optical space. The two diagonal lines at the bottom defining the head’s shoulders, and the two strong diagonals at the top defining the sky-ceiling are the only markers constructing the optical space within the painting’s plane. In contrast to the shallow interior spaces that Souza places his figures in, the diagonals in this work converge toward a vanishing point at a distant horizon that grants the figure unlimited spatial dominion. Moreover – with the upper diagonals merging into the figure’s architectural physiognomy, and the bottom two diagonals literally defined by the shoulders – the head does not simply occupy this infinite horizon but rather constructs it through its very form. While he typically uses perspectival lines defined by the materiality of ancillary features, in this singular painting the entire concept of optical space is defined by the Head and the symbolic system that undergirds its own constitution.

Untitled (Head), 1966 is a rare and significant painting that bears witness to a remarkable intersection: the intimate memories of his mother and his childhood, which are associated with the gifts and traumas of historicity; the ambitious vision that led to his founding of the Progressive Artists’ Group and desire to create a new Indian Modernism; a crescendo in his long quest to integrate his profound genetic symbolism into distinct physiognomic typologies; and the creation of a Head that uniquely recruits his artistic skills to produce a transcendent, apotheotic work.



Ref 6
Jean Michel Basquiat
Untitled (Skull) 1982



SOVIET



Untitled (Business Tycoon) 1966 Oil on canvas 35 × 23½ in

EXHIBITED AND PUBLISHED

Spirit Set Free, Kumar Gallery, 2005

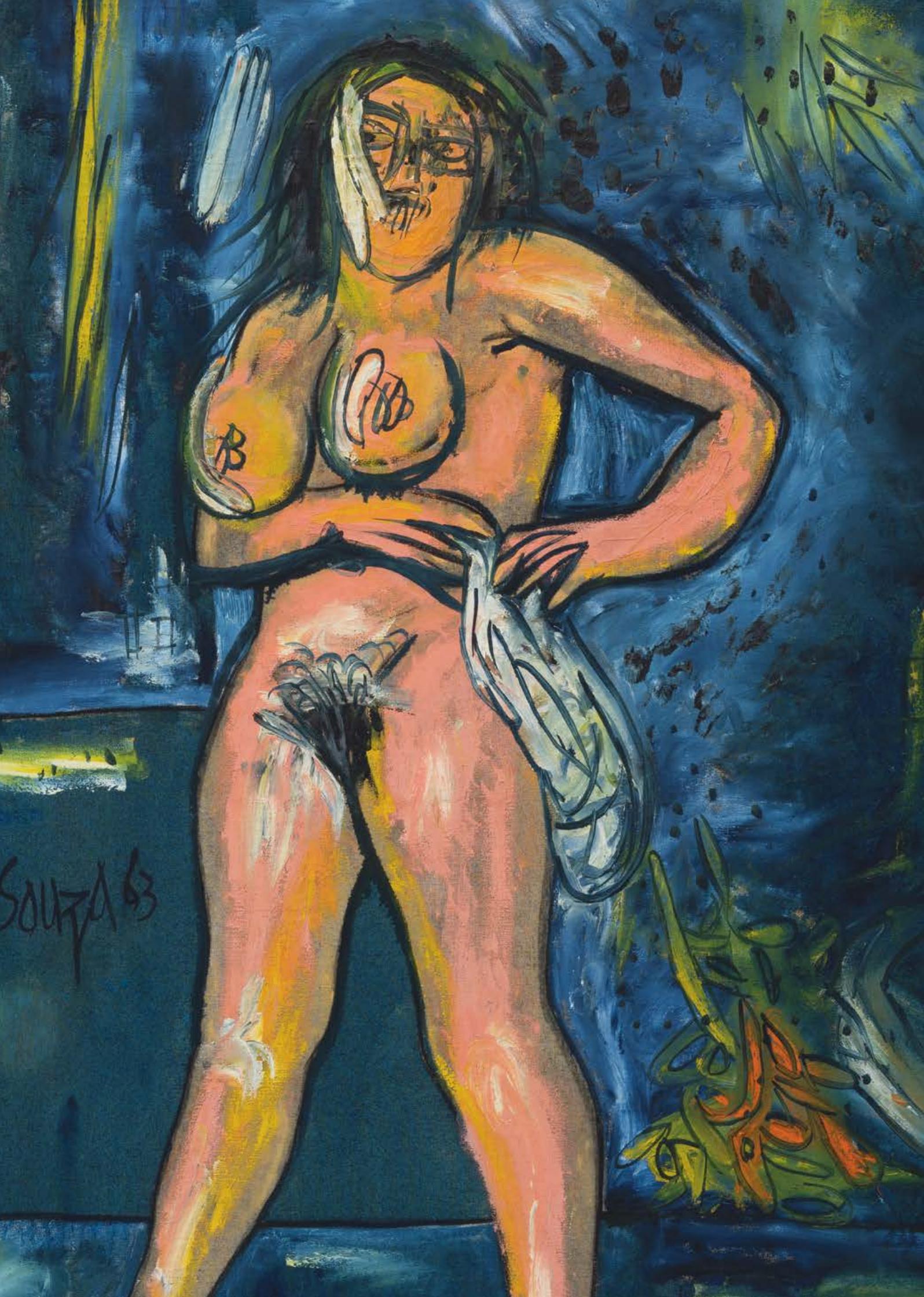
PUBLISHED

Souza: A Legend in Modern Art, TK Jain, 2024, p63

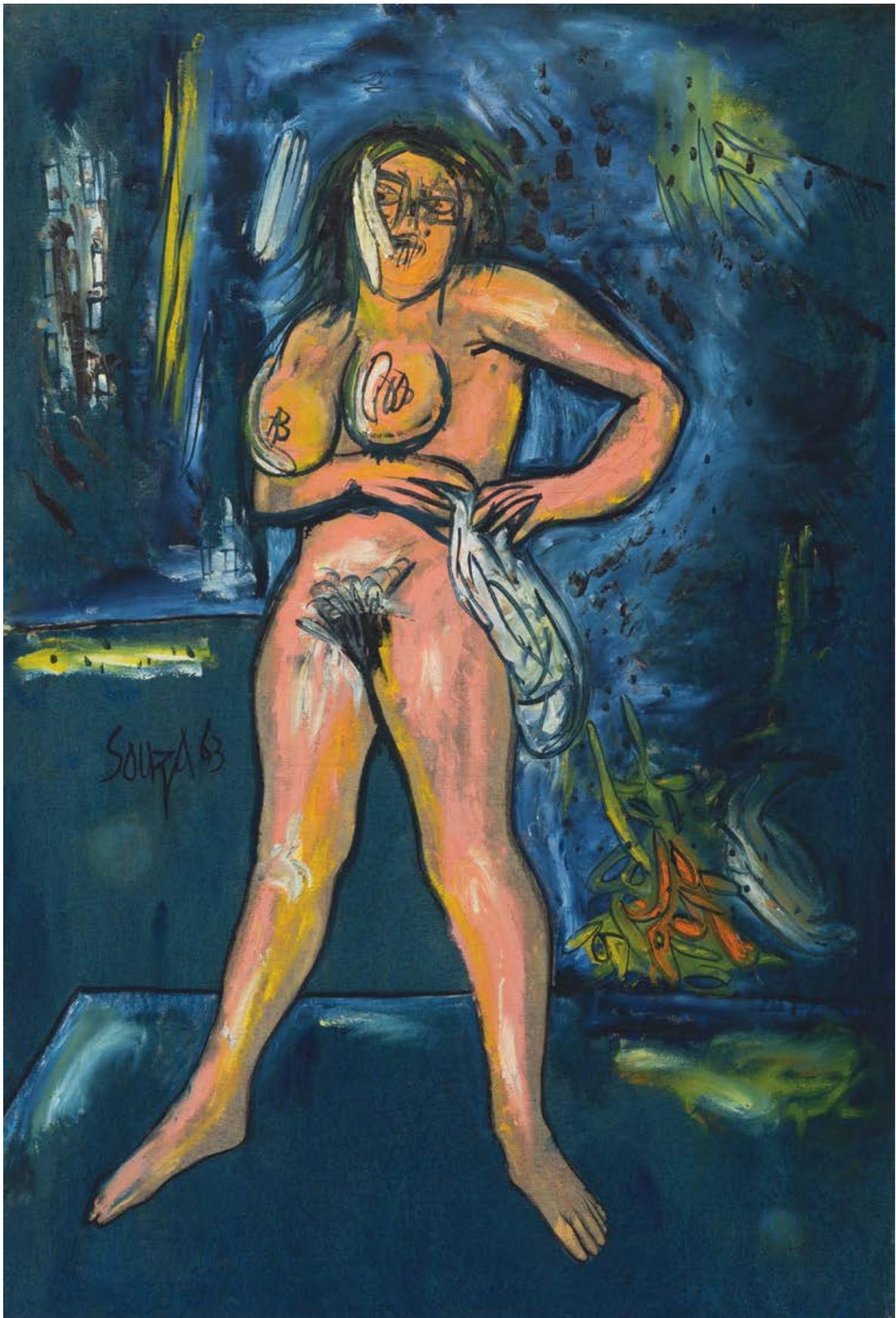
EXHIBITED

F N Souza: Retrospective III, Kumar Gallery, 2001

100 Years of Souza, Kumar Gallery, 2024



SOUZA '63



Untitled (Henrietta Moraes, Striptease) 1963 Oil on canvas 50 × 33 in

EXHIBITED AND PUBLISHED

Celebration 2016, Kumar Gallery, 2016

PUBLISHED

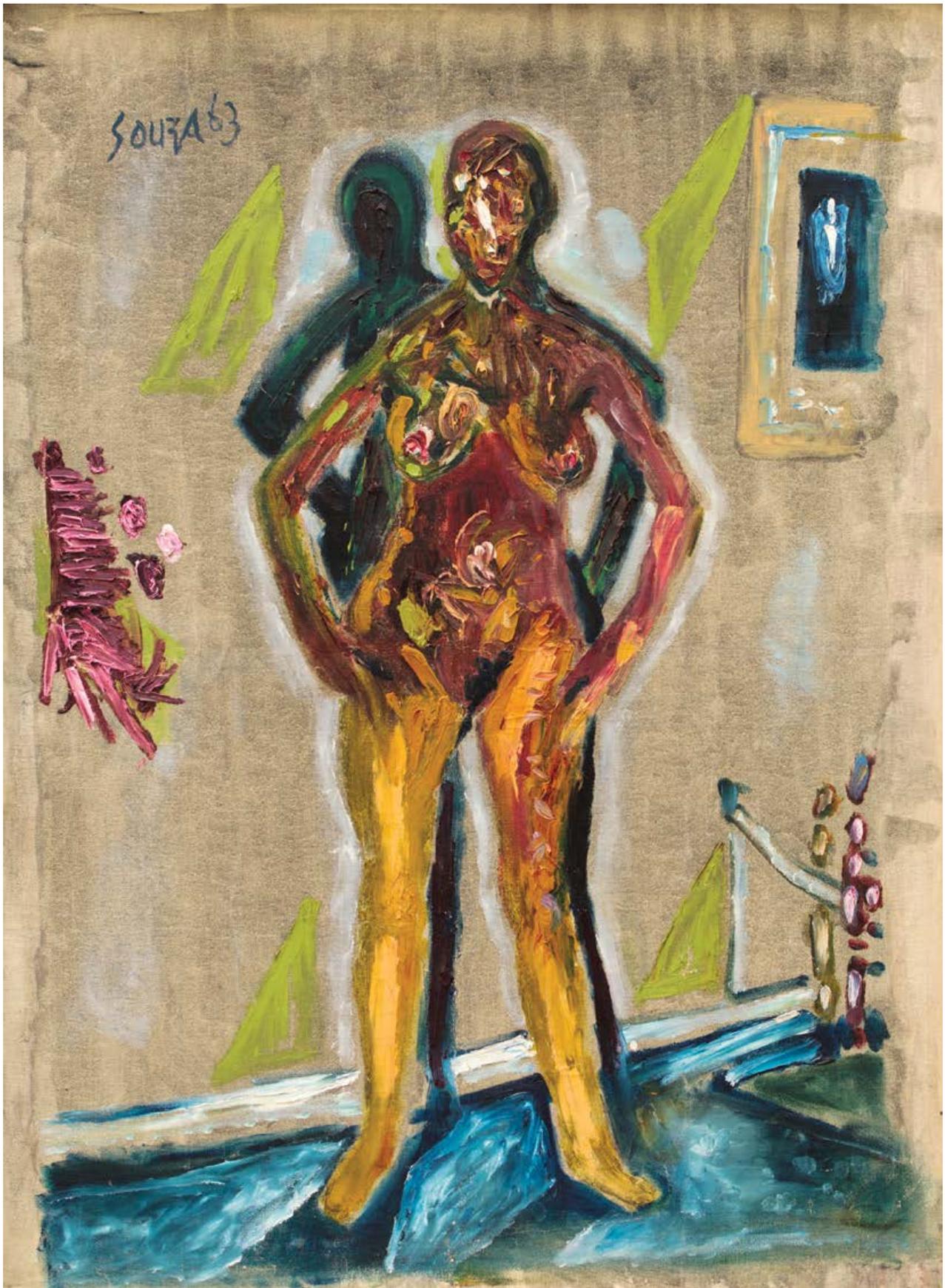
Souza: A Legend in Modern Art, TK Jain, 2024, p227

Art India, 2016

EXHIBITED

F N Souza: Retrospective III, Kumar Gallery, 2001

100 Years of Souza, Kumar Gallery, 2024



Untitled (Nude with her Shadow) 1963 Oil on canvas 39 × 29 in

EXHIBITED AND PUBLISHED

Spirit Set Free, Kumar Gallery, 2005

Celebration 2024, Kumar Gallery, 2024

PUBLISHED

Souza: A Legend in Modern Art, TK Jain, 2024, 231

EXHIBITED

F N Souza: Retrospective III, Kumar Gallery, 2001

100 Years of Souza, Kumar Gallery, 2024

Souza 64





Untitled (Frolic) 1964 Oil on canvas 24 × 36 in

EXHIBITED AND PUBLISHED

Celebration 2016, Kumar Gallery, 2016

PUBLISHED

Souza: A Legend in Modern Art, TK Jain, 2024, p174

Souza, the modernist, the man, and more, Gayatri Sinha, 2002

Art India, 18 (2), 2014

EXHIBITED

F N Souza: Retrospective III, Kumar Gallery, 2001

100 Years of Souza, Kumar Gallery, 2024





Blue Moon 1962 Gouache on paper 17 × 22 in

EXHIBITED AND PUBLISHED

F N Souza: Retrospective II, Kumar Gallery, 2000

PUBLISHED

Souza: A Legend in Modern Art, TK Jain, 2024, p140

Art India, 21 (2), 2017





Townscape 1966 Oil on canvas 20 × 32 in

EXHIBITED AND PUBLISHED

Spirit Set Free, Kumar Gallery, 2005

PUBLISHED

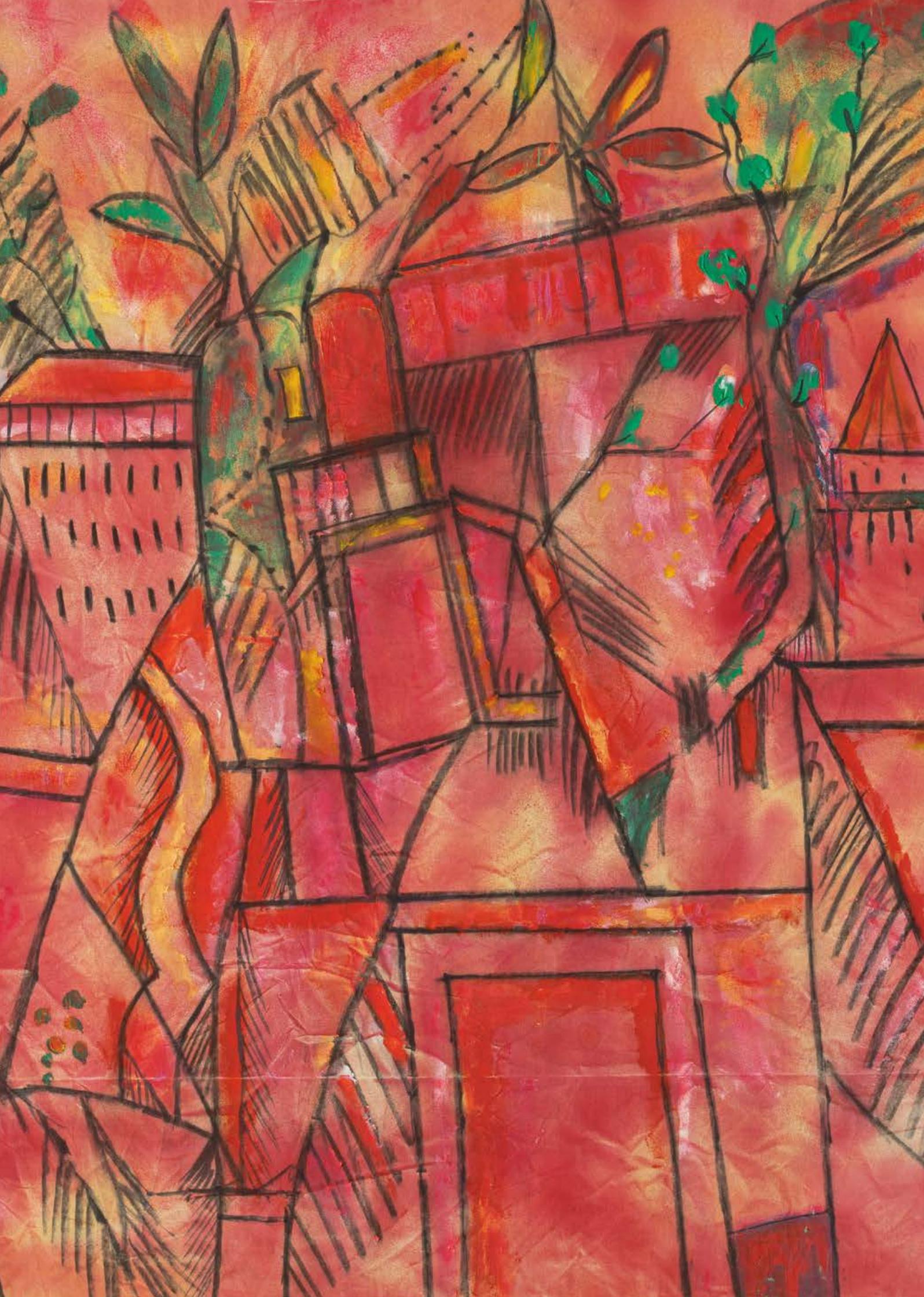
Souza: A Legend in Modern Art, TK Jain, 2024, p148

EXHIBITED

F N Souza: Retrospective III, Kumar Gallery, 2001

F N Souza: A Tribute, Kumar Gallery, 2005

100 Years of Souza, Kumar Gallery, 2024





Red Moon 1966 Oil on canvas 44 × 60 in

EXHIBITED AND PUBLISHED

F N Souza: Retrospective I, Kumar Gallery, 1999

Celebration 2011, Kumar Gallery, 2011

PUBLISHED

Souza: A Legend in Modern Art, TK Jain, 2024, p144

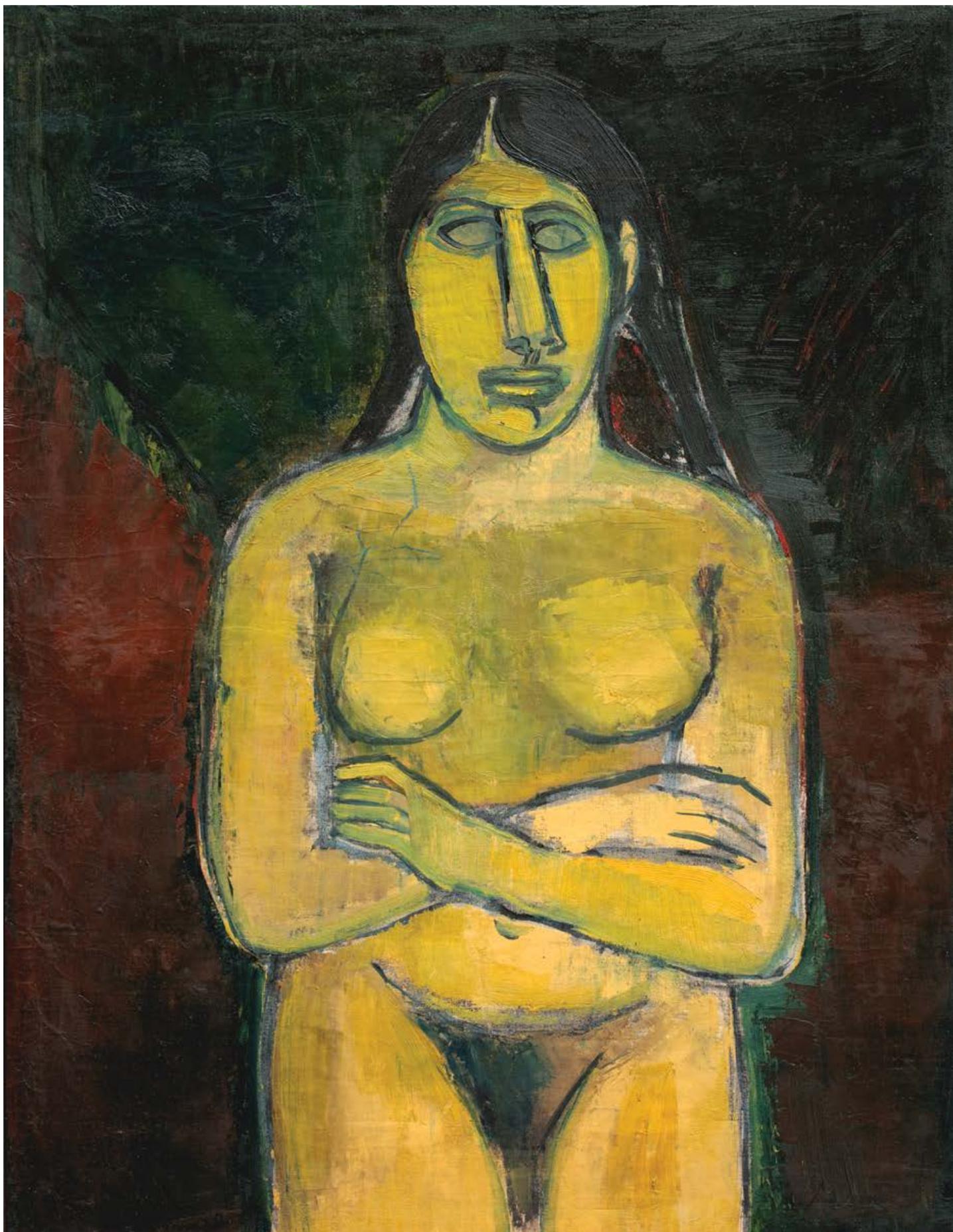
Asian Age, 20 Oct 1999

EXHIBITED

F N Souza: Retrospective III, Kumar Gallery, 2001

A Tribute to Virendra Kumar, Kumar Gallery, 2022

100 Years of Souza, Kumar Gallery, 2024



Female Nude 1960 Oil on canvas 34 × 26 in

PUBLISHED

Souza: A Legend in Modern Art, TK Jain, 2024, p177

EXHIBITED

F N Souza: Retrospective III, Kumar Gallery, 2001

100 Years of Souza, Kumar Gallery, 2024



Untitled (Viewers) 1964 Oil on canvas 42 × 33 in

EXHIBITED AND PUBLISHED

F N Souza: Retrospective II, Kumar Gallery, 2000

PUBLISHED

Souza: A Legend in Modern Art, TK Jain, 2024, p221

Hindustan Times, 22 Oct 2000

EXHIBITED

F N Souza: Retrospective III, Kumar Gallery, 2001

A Tribute to Virendra Kumar Jain, Kumar Gallery, 2022

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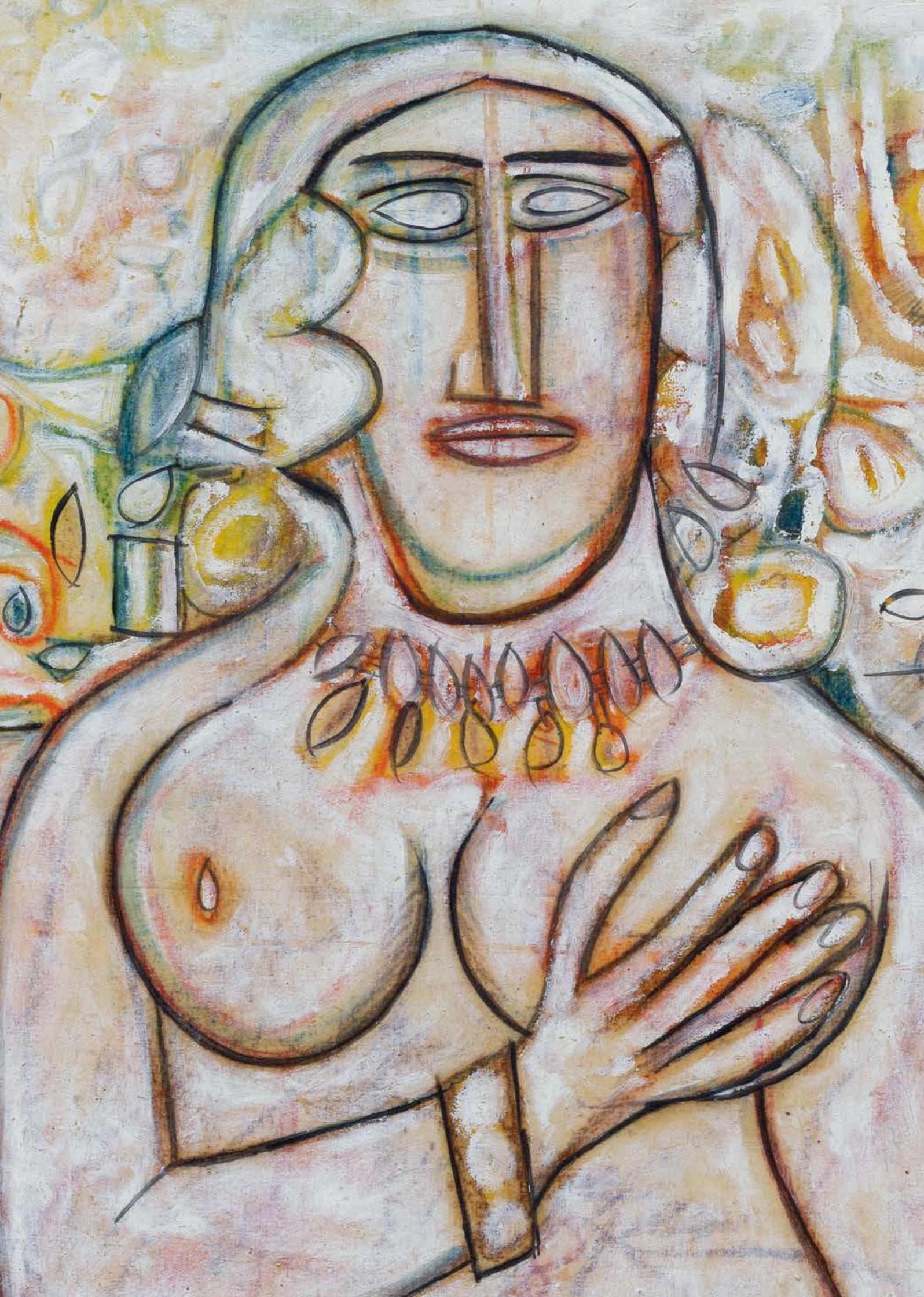
Untitled (Emperor) 1964 Oil on canvas 35 × 26 in

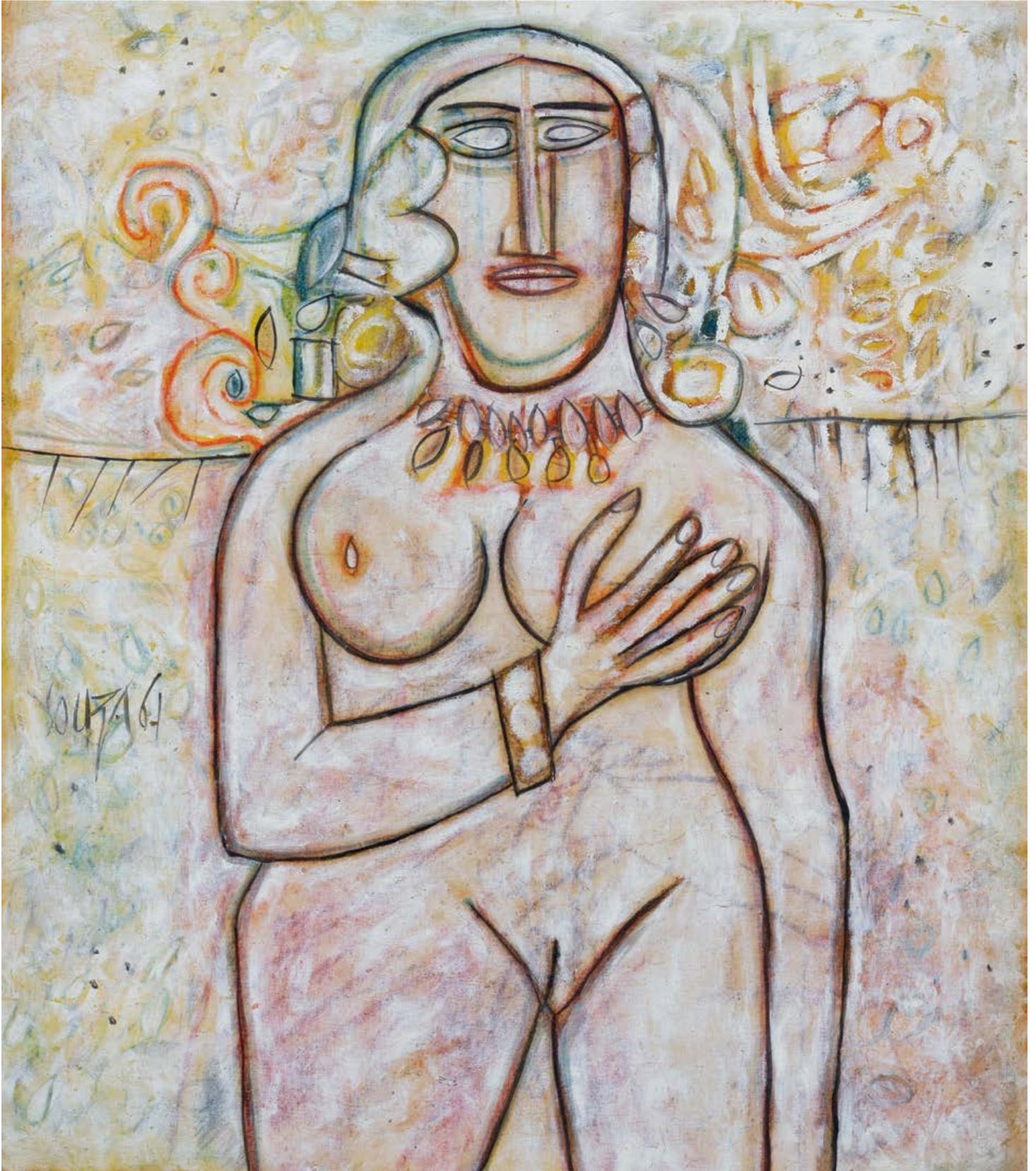
EXHIBITED AND PUBLISHED

A Tribute to Virendra Kumar Jain, Kumar Gallery, 2022

EXHIBITED

100 Years of Souza, Kumar Gallery, 2024





Untitled 1961 Oil on canvas 42 × 36½ in

PUBLISHED

Souza: A Legend in Modern Art, TK Jain, 2024, p177

EXHIBITED

F N Souza: Retrospective III, Kumar Gallery, 2001

100 Years of Souza, Kumar Gallery, 2024



Untitled (Portrait of my Mother) 1966 Oil on canvas 32 × 24 in

PUBLISHED

Souza: A Legend in Modern Art, TK Jain, 2024, p201

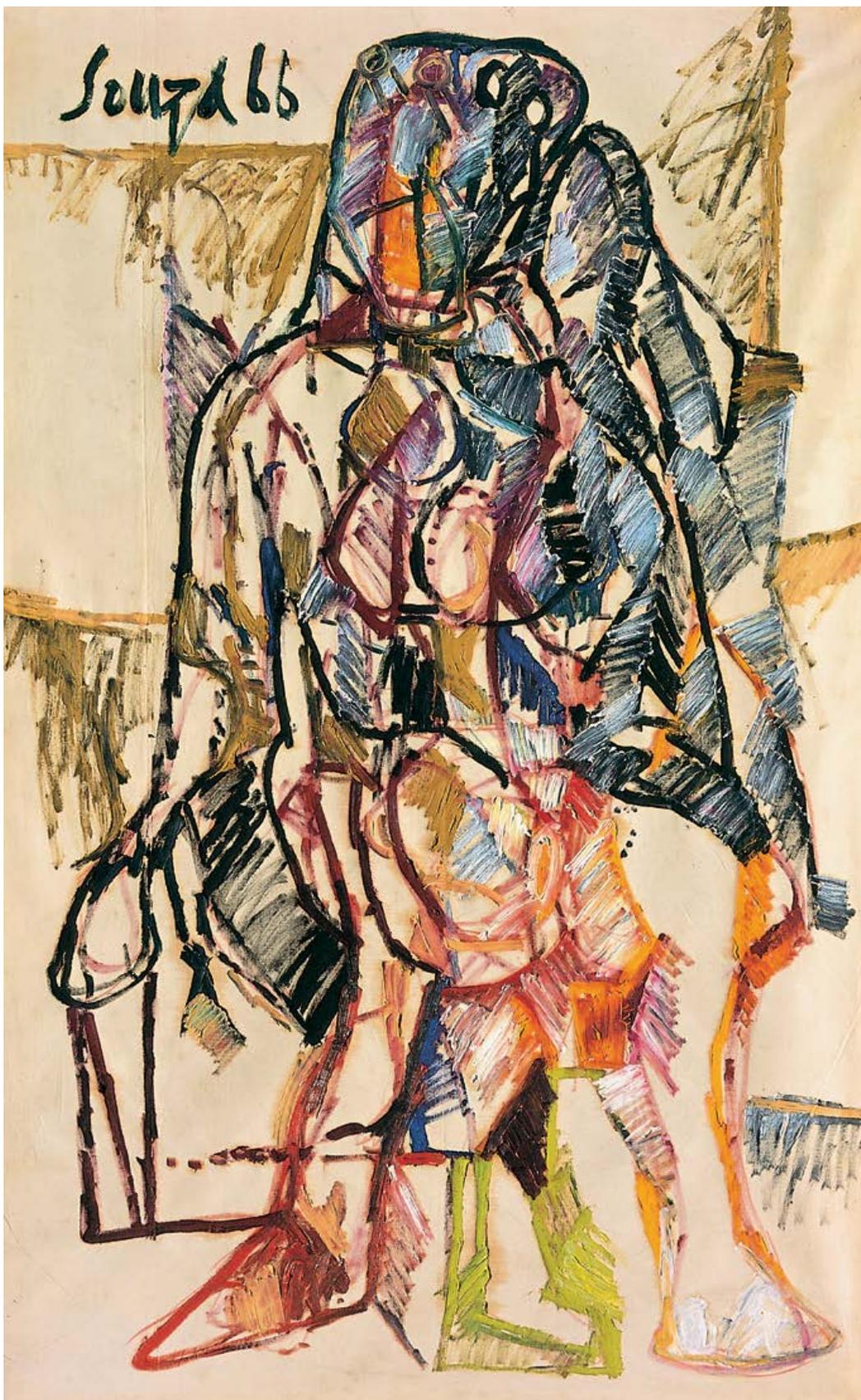
Souza, the modernist, the man, and more, Gayatri Sinha, 2002

EXHIBITED

Celebration 2010, Kumar Gallery, 2010

100 Years of Souza, Kumar Gallery, 2024





Untitled 1966 Oil on canvas 60 × 36 in

EXHIBITED AND PUBLISHED

Spirit Set Free, Kumar Gallery, 2005

PUBLISHED

Souza: A Legend in Modern Art, TK Jain, 2024, p214

Art India, (4), 2005

Hindustan Times, 30 Jan 2016

EXHIBITED

F N Souza: Retrospective III, Kumar Gallery, 2001

100 Years of Souza, Kumar Gallery, 2024



Untitled (Embryonic Head) 1966 Oil on canvas 40½ × 29½ in

EXHIBITED AND PUBLISHED

Spirit Set Free, Kumar Gallery, 2005

PUBLISHED

Souza: A Legend in Modern Art, TK Jain, 2024, p65

Art India, (4), 2005

EXHIBITED

F N Souza: Retrospective III, Kumar Gallery, 2001

100 Years of Souza, Kumar Gallery, 2024



Untitled (Nude) 1966 Oil on canvas 42¾ × 31 in

EXHIBITED AND PUBLISHED

Celebration 2016, Kumar Gallery, 2016

PUBLISHED

Souza: A Legend in Modern Art, TK Jain, 2024, p261

EXHIBITED

F N Souza: Retrospective III, Kumar Gallery, 2001

100 Years of Souza, Kumar Gallery, 2024



Untitled (Head) 1966 Oil on canvas 35 × 27 in

EXHIBITED AND PUBLISHED

Celebration 2011, Kumar Gallery, 2011

PUBLISHED

Souza: A Legend in Modern Art, TK Jain, 2024, p261

EXHIBITED

F N Souza: Retrospective III, Kumar Gallery, 2001

100 Years of Souza, Kumar Gallery, 2024



Untitled (Fall) 1964 Oil on canvas 27 × 35 in

EXHIBITED AND PUBLISHED

27 Masters, Kumar Gallery, 2023

Celebration 2007, Kumar Gallery, 2007

EXHIBITED

F N Souza: Retrospective III, Kumar Gallery, 2001

100 Years of Souza, Kumar Gallery, 2024



Untitled (Grasshopper) 1962 Oil on paper 14 × 10½ in

EXHIBITED AND PUBLISHED

27 Masters, Kumar Gallery, 2023

PUBLISHED

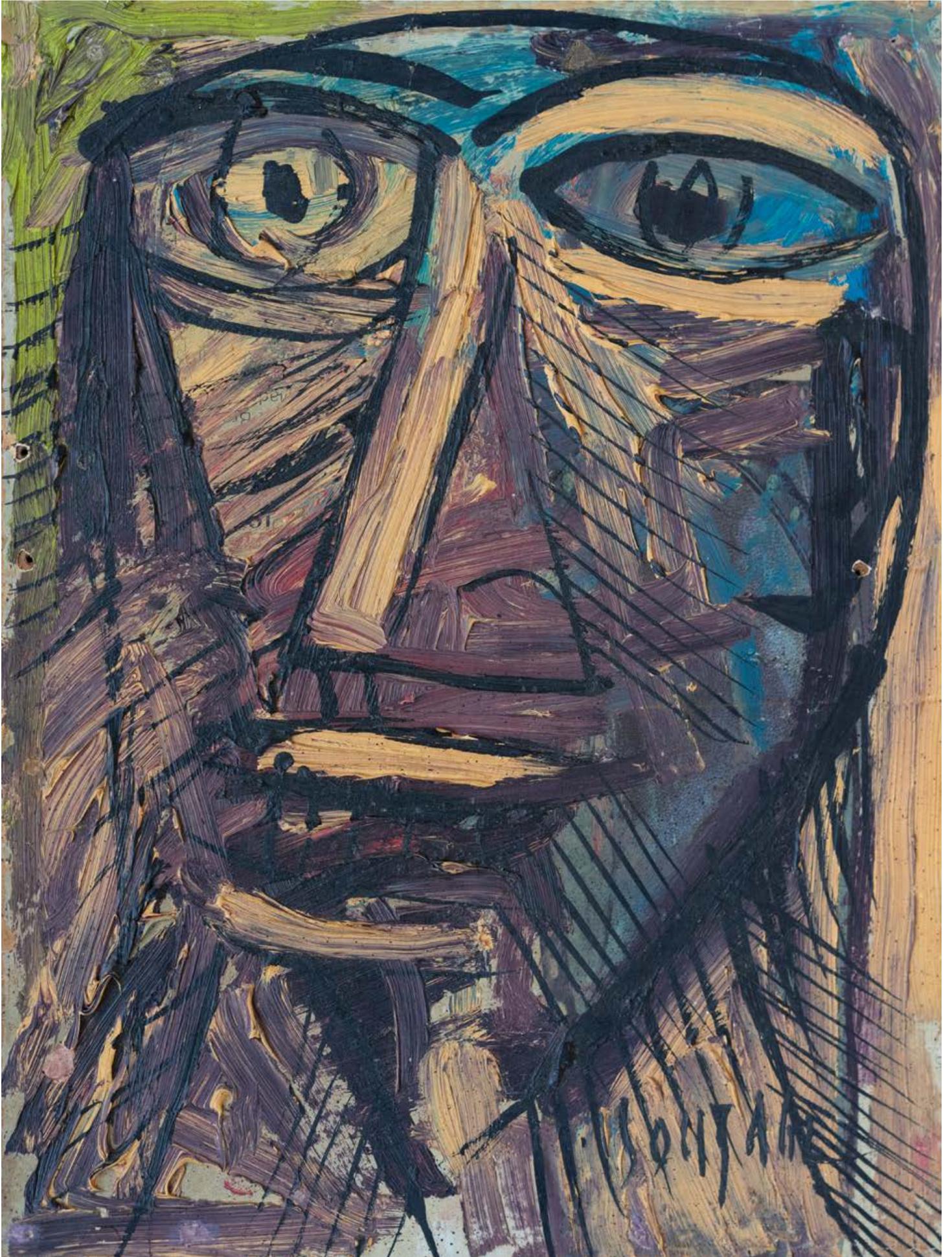
Souza: A Legend in Modern Art, TK Jain, 2024, p144

Art India, 21, 2017

EXHIBITED

F N Souza: A Tribute, Kumar Gallery, 2005

A Tribute to Virendra Kumar Jain, Kumar Gallery, 2022



Untitled (Head) 1962 Oil on paper pasted on board 12 $\frac{3}{4}$ × 9 $\frac{3}{4}$ in



Untitled (Head) 1962 Oil on paper 11½ × 8½ in

EXHIBITED AND PUBLISHED

F N Souza: Retrospective II, Kumar Gallery, 2000

EXHIBITED

A Tribute to Virendra Kumar Jain, Kumar Gallery, 2022





Untitled (Still Life) 1962 Oil on paper 16 × 21 in

EXHIBITED AND PUBLISHED

Celebration 2016, Kumar Gallery, 2016

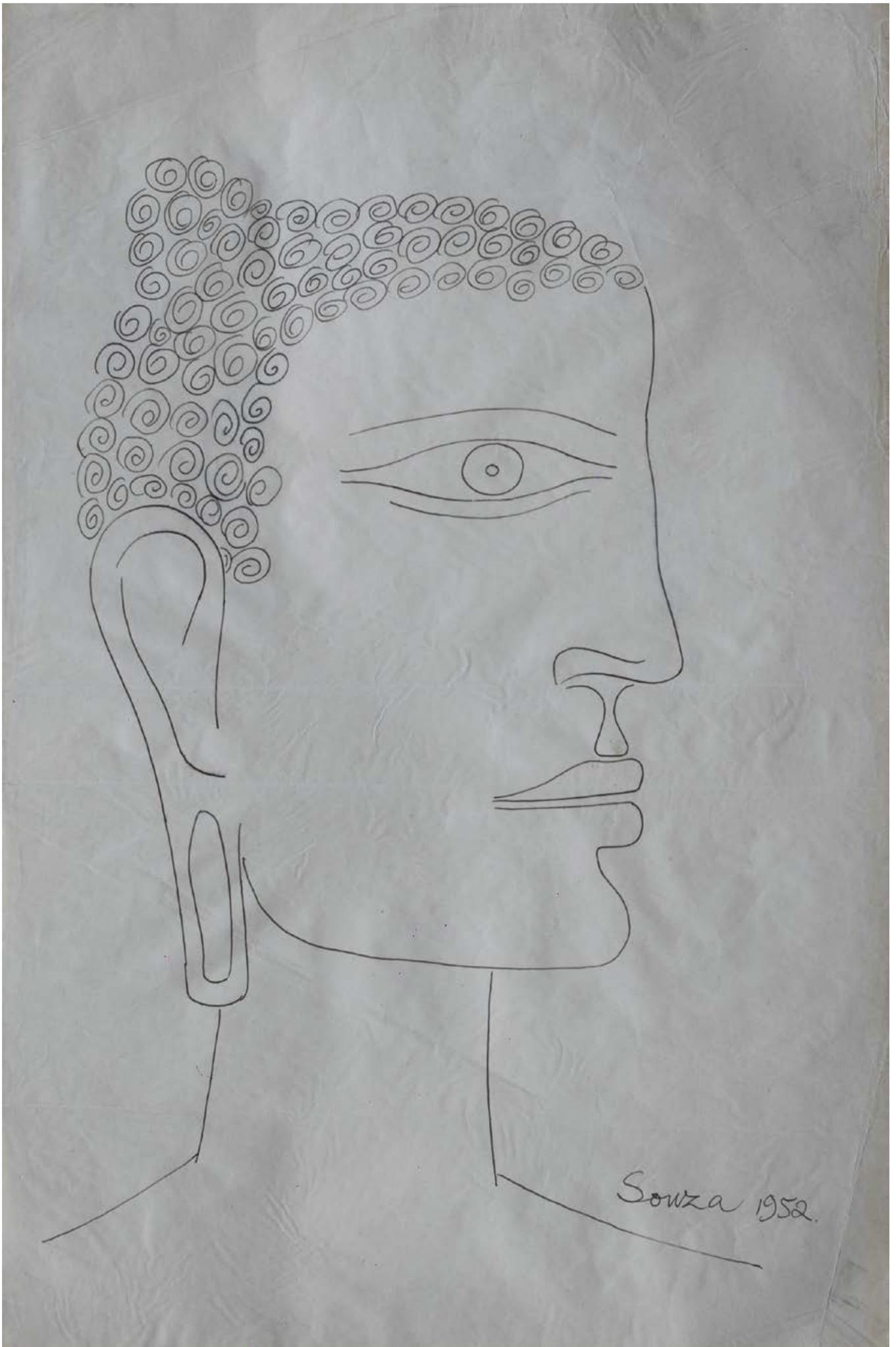
EXHIBITED

F N Souza: A Tribute, Kumar Gallery, 2005

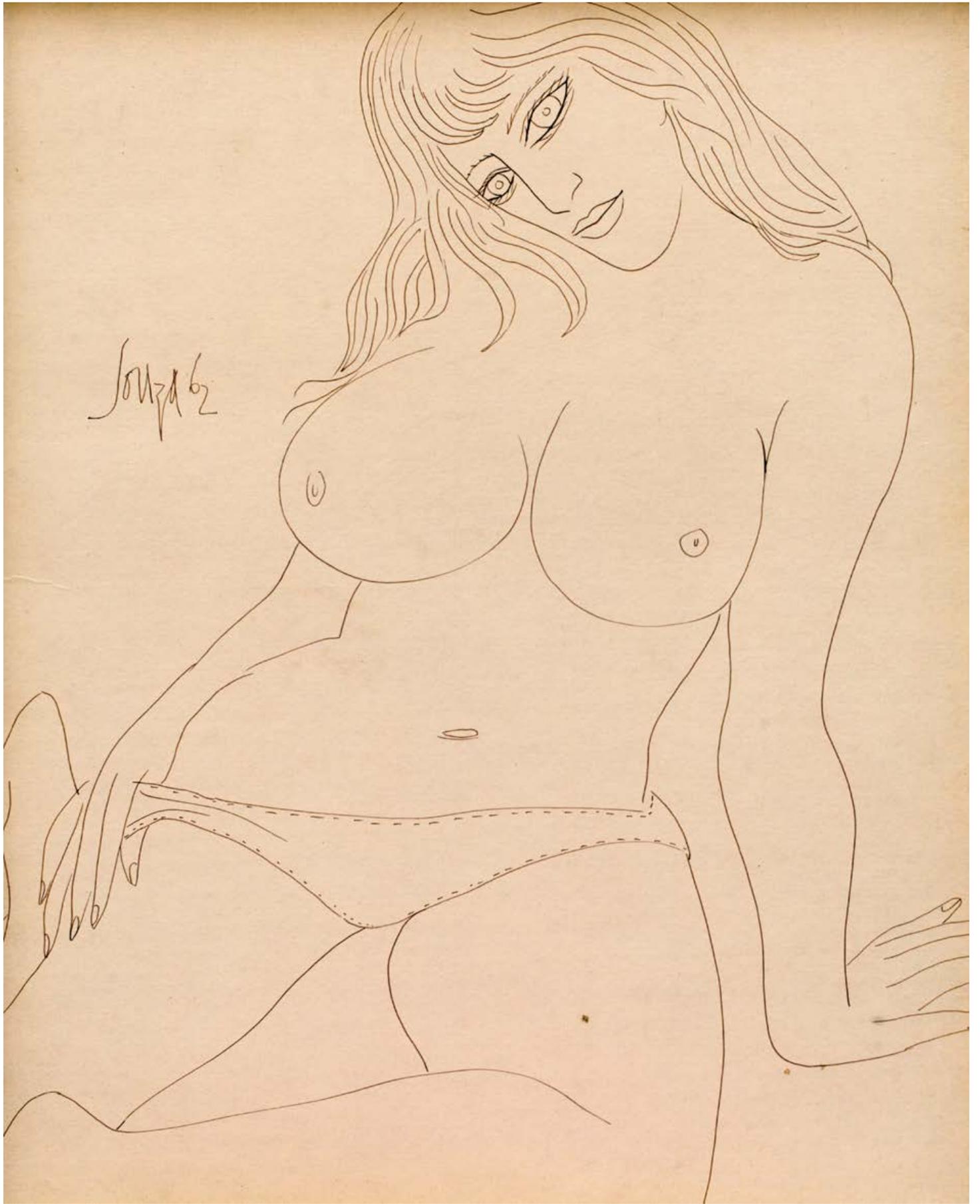
F N Souza: Retrospective I, Kumar Gallery, 1999



Untitled (Head) 1962 Graphite on paper 13 × 8 in



Untitled (Buddha) 1952 Ink on paper 15½ × 9 in



Untitled (Woman in underwear) 1962 Ink on paper 19½ × 15½ in

FRANCIS NEWTON SOUZA

AN APOCALYPTIC VISION

Yashodhara Dalmia

In the corridors of Modernism, Francis Newton Souza's ghoulish heads, voluptuous women and cataclysmic landscapes create their own scatological space as they unnerve the viewer with their bolting realizations. In the breaking down of conventions, exposure of hypocrisy and sheer animal urges, Souza was to privilege the lateral, the underbelly, the detritus of existence. The charged membranes of the forms glisten with an energy which is evil, animal and hedonistic. His agile draughtsmanship, which brought this about with great economy of line and with reinvention of form, would mark a place for him in the matrix of Modernism.

The earliest images which Souza made were of the Church and the clergy which became *fait accompli* to his devilish language. His priests were not holy men but devouring and corrupt, the popes were skeletal remains of an obnoxious existence, Christ was impaled on the Cross where far from arousing anguish, he is monstrous with sharp razor-like teeth, bulging eyes and slashing, stabbing lines for body which aroused revulsion rather than piety. Far from being sacred their hypocrisy and their venal stances made them the devil's advocate and relegated them to purgatorial positions. These images were made from the depth of his soul.

Souza was born in Portuguese Goa and as a child had a strict Catholic upbringing. But far from growing into a devout Christian he became ferociously anarchic against the rigidities and the corrupt practises of the Church. He perceived Christ with awe but also as vengeful, for this was the god of Romanesque Churches in Spain — both dark and powerful. As he stated, 'As a child I was fascinated by the grandeur of the Church and the stories of tortured saints my grandmother used to tell me...The Roman Catholic Church had a tremendous influence over me, not its dogmas but its grand architecture and the splendour of its services.' [1] The dual streak of violence and tenderness would



Souza
1953

underlie Souza's most rebellious works and create elegiac renderings of the magnificent. But it was mostly the simmering evil—not in the trenches of war but at the doorstep — that he was preoccupied with and would expose its entrails in order that it be faced squarely in all its darkness. He describes his fascination graphically, 'It is the serpent in the grass that is really fascinating. Glistening, jewelled, writhing in the green grass. Poisoned fangs and cold-blooded. Slimy as squeezed paint. Green hood, white belly from chin to tail, yellow eyes, red forked tongue, slimy; careful not to put your foot on it; treacherous like Satan yet beautiful like Him.' [2]

Souza's liturgy of hypocrisy however acquired depth and dimension when he impasted on this an adult revulsion of power and corruption. His growing skill in revealing the grotesque resulted in heads that were to bare the canker within the soul as it were. The forehead is replaced by cold, soulless eyes, the mouth is a container of gnashing teeth, and the face is a ridged, rocky terrain bounded by ferocious lines: in sum, a head petrified by its own violence. As many of the works in this show reveal, the heads are distinctive, powerful and wholly nefarious. The denouement of the upper classes with their vestments of polite behaviours and their underlying corruption impacts the viewer. In time to come the foetus heads, as Souza would have them, became tubular, then dotted with wriggles and squiggles and finally composed of octagonal shapes connected with funnels. In the present exhibition we see the whole repertoire of these ghoulish faces in their various phases of transformation. Even as the heads became increasingly inventive in their devilish visage, they also began to exchange some of the earlier energy and passion to exploit more ingeniously devised compositions. Yet in their heyday they were to arouse the sheer horror of man's inhumanity to man.

THE DEVIL'S ADVOCATE

The artist's ingenuity lay in constructing an extraordinarily mobile and virile visage with the sheer simplicity of the line—two parallel strokes cross-hatched on either side. And he was not unaware of this 'I have created a new kind of face. 'In *The Last Supper*, there are two or three faces and they are drawn in a completely new iconography, beyond Picasso. As you know, Picasso redrew the human face and they were magnificent. But I have drawn the physiognomy way beyond Picasso,

in completely new terms. And I am still a figurative painter. These fellows gave up after Picasso and became abstract or they started painting garbage cans, thereby avoiding the whole problem of draughtsmanship. He stumped them and the whole of Western world into shambles. When you examine the face, the morphology, I am the only artist who has taken it a step further.' [3] Even if the comparison with Picasso's achievements was decidedly exaggerated, it could be said that his inventive heads were a powerful painterly arsenal in the flaying of the well-heeled and the corrupt.

Souza had reached London in 1949 and despite the considerable material hardships of the early years had created a stir with his dynamic, demonic forms. Indeed the post war angst of the smog-ridden city had conflated with his own views of the loss of the soul of humanity. His multiple, complex and provocative forms could well be compared with Francis Bacon's nihilistic paintings. Both artists related to a shadowy, back street London which could almost recall a Dickensonian world of fog and gaslights, rag and bone men and eerie sounds. In Bacon's works like *Three Studies for Figures as the Base of a Crucifixion* the slimy, hideous figures at the base mourn a black nothingness, an absence and brutal violation of humanity. The painting was first exhibited in 1945 just as the war was drawing to a close and linked to the devastation and the horrors that it had brought about. In this and in other works Souza's *zeitgeist* against humanity provoked similar reactions where his expressive morbidity revealed the hidden distortions within. His work could also be linked to that of Graham Sutherland, the reigning deity of British art at the time whose landscapes were filled with strange organisms and communicated a sense of foreboding. But they differed from Bacon and Souza in that Sutherland was concerned with reviving and modernising the imagery of Christian art post-war and Bacon used that very imagery to denigrate the veritable existence of a godly figure and to revel in man's baser instincts. With Souza the sinister humans and fanged gods created with such vigor and dynamism would reveal the dehumanized and desensitized man. According to the art historian Toby Treves, 'It is certainly the case that the themes of eroticised violence and brutality that have often been attributed to Bacon were also applied to Souza, and indeed both men had a taste for self-dramatisation which played on these perceptions. Yet while neither would deny that these themes exist in their work, both would contest the moralising reading which cast them as nihilists. In



found a reverberation in Souza and kindled his sense of simmering evil in man which he delineated with a devilish energy. His works could be said to have reached their apogee and would arouse considerable attention.

NIRVANA OF A MAGGOT

Souza sent his autobiographical essay, *Nirvana of a Maggot* to Stephen Spender in 1954 who had recently founded the well known magazine *Encounter*. Spender, impressed by Souza's literary flair published it the following year. He also visited him, bought a painting and introduced him to Peter Watson who selected his works for an exhibition at the Institute of Contemporary Arts. Watson exhibited it alongside Bacon, Sutherland, Henry Moore, Ivon Hitchens and others and found that all three of Souza's paintings sold! He was invited to hold an exhibition by Victor Musgrave at Gallery One in February 1955 and this coincided with the publication of his essay *Nirvana of a Maggot*. The exhibition was a great success and noticed by several critics. The famed art critic John Berger wrote in the 'New Statesman' 'How much Souza's pictures derive from Western art and how much from the hieratic temple traditions of his country, I cannot say. Analysis breaks down and intuition takes over. It is obvious that he is a superb designer and an excellent draughtsman. But I find it quite impossible to assess his work comparatively because he straddles several traditions but serves none.' [6]

Souza's works were spotted at a Paris gallery in 1956 by a rich American Harold Kovner who made him an offer: if Souza sent him a few paintings every month, he would in turn send him enough money to live well — an arrangement which lasted for four years. The fifties and sixties proved to be the most fertile period of Souza's career when his work with its taut, vigorous strokes and its critique of the upper classes reached its apogee and he was free of financial worries. By this time his personal life had taken a turn and he was living with the Czech theatre actor and Jewish refugee Liselotte Kristian. His marriage with Maria Figueiredo, who was a couturier of some repute, which had taken place in Bombay and had come to London with, had come to an end. But Maria continued to deal with and support his paintings and in 1975 opened the gallery Arts38 where his first show was a sell out. She also exhibited a wide spectrum of artists with a special focus on Indian artists like Avinash Chandra, Praful Dave and Balraj Khanna.



THE HEADY YEARS

Souza had met Liselotte in 1954 and their relationship which spanned over a decade was known, according to their eldest daughter Keren Souza Kohn, as the 'Belsize Park years'. As a young woman Liselotte had reached England in 1939, fleeing from the Nazi occupation of her homeland, with just seven shillings in her pocket. She had acted on the British stage and in the spy film *Odette* with Peter Ustinov, Marius Goring and others and later for BBC Radio. After the war, Liselotte had set up home at Belsize Park in Hampstead, famous for its white stucco fronted houses and trees which were often reflected in Souza's paintings. Not only was the area a hotbed of intellectuals and Jewish émigrés from Central Europe but the two formed part of the Bohemian set in London frequently entertaining poets, artists and musicians at their home. The renowned Armenian photographer and wife of Victor Musgrave, Ida Kar, was a frequent visitor and took many photographs of the family. Her many images of Souza, an emblem of respectability in the midst of the clutter of his studio, or in front of his jaw-breaking, sinister men and women reflected the hypocritical stances of the suited and booted which the artist's paintings also speak of. As Clare Freestone points out, 'Their shared milieu was one that disregarded convention. Both Souza and Kar had come to London from seemingly exotic roots...Multicultural London was where both Souza and Kar's work found recognition; it was this city that became their home during their rise to prominence.' [7]

Souza's relationship with Liselotte came to an end in 1964 when he left her and their three daughters. He married Barbara Zincant, a young woman and emigrated with her to the United States in 1967 where they had a son but the marriage was to break up after a few years.

Yet his best works of women are made during the 'Belsize Park' period and draw upon not just his considerable draughtsmanship but the sensuality within. As many works in this exhibition reveal, the swift, smooth curves of the form, the women's contours in their sensual voluptuousness, and their elegant demeanour seem to reflect a homage to the feminine and the graceful. Was Liselotte his muse and had unlocked the uncharted depths of his feelings for the woman? Souza stated during this time, 'My thanks...to Victor Musgrave of Gallery One for



this and that; to Harold Kovner and Mr.X for sustenance; to the two L's, the one who gave me life, that is birth, the other who gives me love, that is bed and not bad...And then of course there's God to thank for who first makes Life possible and then impossible' [8]

GODDESSES AND DEMONESSES

But he had also watched his mother bathing through the keyhole, metaphorically. He wrote, 'I've always had a curious feeling of an ancient guilt that I had inadvertently killed my father because he died so suddenly soon after my birth. My mother was like the mother of Oedipus; spartan in shape. She was temperamentally unpredictable and very sophisticated. I used to watch her bath herself through a hole I had bored in the door. I was afraid if she thrust something in, I might get a bleeding eye-ball. I drew her on the walls and prudes thought I was rude. I can't see why, because as far as I can recollect, I had even painted murals on the walls of her womb.' [9]

It was inevitable then that Souza would draw his women with a sense of bravado, a rebellious child who was doing something forbidden. The flip side of this would be the reverence and fear with which he would view women. Perhaps his mother was his first muse and the unwitting generator of his dual attitude of awe and irreverence for women.

Souza's mother, Lily Mary had been a seamstress who had come to live in Bombay after her husband died. She eked out a living by earning a modest amount but managed to get her son admitted to a Jesuit school. A born rebel Souza was, however, expelled both from the school as well as the J.J.School of Art. On the day he was made to leave the art college in 1945, he went home and started painting furiously with a palette knife on his mother's sewing cutting board. The painting that emerged was of an awesome feminine figure which he titled *The Blue Lady* which was bought by Dr.Herman Goetz and still hangs at the Baroda Museum.

The awe in which Souza held women coincided with the classical streak in him and transfused his work with the graceful lines of the sculptures he saw in India of dancers and divinities. It must be noted that the earliest works which



inspired him were the South Indian bronzes and the high relief erotic carvings of the Khajuraho temples, which he saw in reproductions in art books. Apart from the puritanical attitude of conventional society which he wanted to flout, Souza also turned away from the academic and rigid art taught in art schools in India and turned towards the great art available to him. As Edward Mullins points out, 'He found in classical Indian sculpture and miniatures a tradition of erotic art incomparably more sensitive and pure than the lifeless figures after Raphael so admired by art-professors, and Hoffmann's 'blond operatic Christs and flax-haired shy Virgins' which as a child he had been encouraged to imitate at the Jesuit school in Bombay. [10] The ritual treatment of sensuality, the stylisation which overlooked incidental details, the assured handling of line to define the bends of the body and the treatment of the flat surface as movement rather than depth seem to have been influenced by classical Indian art. But he was no Orientalist and he derived from the classical to create, particularly in his early work, figures of women bound by stiff hieratic lines inspiring awe and grandeur. The demonness with savage expressions and claws for hands would also be present in his work. The later years, however, was to see these looming women with pendulous breasts and pneumatic bodies bereft of passion and energy in their anemic reality. The works in this exhibition cover his entire oeuvre of women from the goddess to the whore and reveal his complex engagement with this genre.

The couple in coitus in Souza's early works are for him a ritual act, resonant of the sublime *mithuna* postures of temple sculptures, but these gradually transform to a power game—with each trying to supersede the other. In a few works, however, we have the man-woman relationship treated as part of a vast landscape. In these engaging mixed media works, the couple are locked in embrace, indistinguishable from each other, and the glowing fields are the territory of trance or reverie.

The affinity with the subliminal can also be seen in Souza's occasional prophet drawn with less ferocious lines and sage expressions. Interestingly enough it is his still lifes, mainly of liturgical objects and biblical references, which retain the sense of the sacred so consistently drained from his human beings.

ERUPTING LANDSCAPES

Conversely Souza's landscapes are far removed from his awe-struck vision and seem to be driven by a volcanic, erupting force which tears things asunder. At first his cityscapes were simple rectilinear shapes, but in the sixties they gave way to an apocalyptic vision. The houses seem to be exploding by seismic undercurrents, of a world of Holocaust and nuclear threat where nothing remains stable or consistent. Souza also experimented with chemical paintings, most effectively during the Bangladesh war, where he would take forms from *Time* magazine and others and, through bleaching and dissolving the images, make marks of mutilated realities.

In his diverse experiments with gouache, pen and ink, mixed media, oil on canvas and board and chemical paintings Souza's brilliant draughtsmanship creates a world of burning embers and sizzling disasters which have a profound effect of disarming conventions. The line is his *forte* with which he constructs his scathing scaffoldings, but his use of colour remains uninventive and conservative. In the sombre blacks, browns and blues however, we are reminded of the paintings of the Old Masters which are juxtaposed with the avant-garde and the anarchic in his oeuvre.

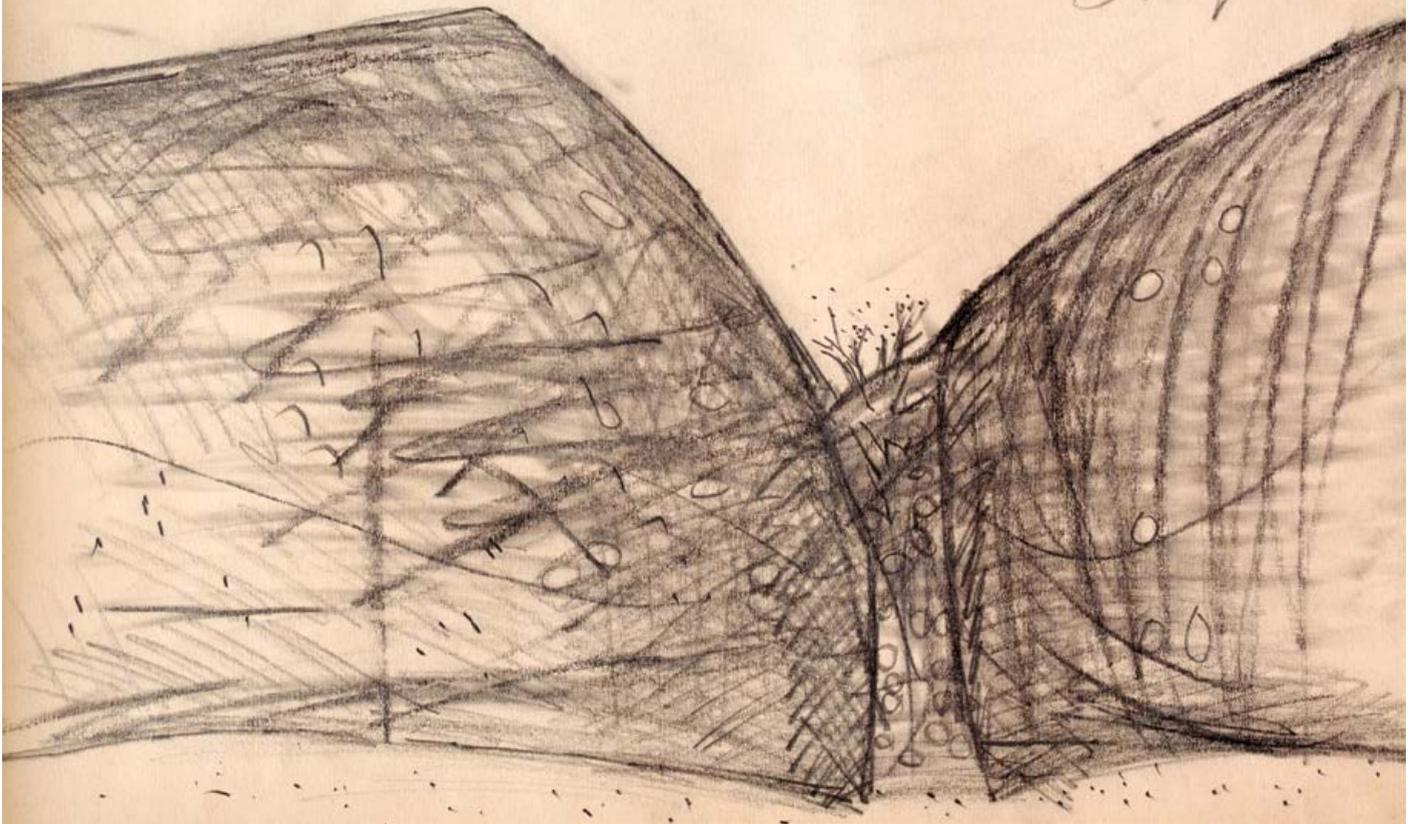
Souza had been the founder of the Progressive Artists' Group in Bombay in 1947 which consisted of artists like M. F. Husain, S. H. Raza and others. The Group was critical of the effete revivalism of the Bengal School, and the academic styles taught in art colleges set-up by the British and squarely took historical reality into account in their art. In course of time they would not only be center-stage on the art mainstream in India but also act as an exemplar of an emergent non Euro-American modernism. Much of the energy of the Group originated with Souza and was considerably depleted when he left for London. Yet, his main achievement lay in creating the pantheon of Modernism in India and for its critical interventions.

NOTES

1. F.N.Souza, *Words and Lines*, Nitin Bhayana Publishing, New Delhi, 1999
2. F.N.Souza, *Ibid*, p. 10

Valldemosa, Mallorca

Souza 61



3. Interview with the author, Mumbai, 1991
4. Toby Treves, *Bacon, Freud, Mehta, Souza* exhibition catalogue, Grosvenor Vadehra, August 31st—September 20th, 2007 New Delhi
5. F.N.Souza, *Words and Lines*, op. cit. p.24
6. John Berger, *New Statesman*, London, February 25, 1955
7. Clare Freestone, *Nirvana in London, The Coinciding Worlds of F.N.Souza and Ida Kar*, Grosvenor Vadehra, London-India, 2011
8. F.N.Souza, *Words and Lines*, op.cit.
9. F.N.Souza, *Ibid*, p.25
10. Edwin Mullins, *F.N.Souza, An Introduction*, p.44, Anthony Blond, London,1962

REBEL WITH A CAUSE

Keshav Malik

**a life is little as a dropped feather
but hearing which words a voice vehemently protests :**

*if you mean to lump my life
with the one of that fallen feather, forget
for I still loom large in the present tense
still making my mark
on those walls across the borders
as these in the neighbourhood
indeed everywhere where artists congregate
and assert art's immortality—
of art as art, art as gusto, art's high gossip*

*artists, like self, do not pass out
but rather are they feared
for what they may set afoot:
those alarming gales tearing through
the staid orderly drawing rooms of the smug,
gales and hurricanes
pulling out pell-mell
skeletons safe behind cupboards
or hid in stale words*

*artists ? — their deeds speed through
like express trains, discomposing
long lasting cobwebs, as the smell of must,
and revealing truth naked
as a new born babe
but the which a cowardly lot
desperately tries to bury
under foot in damp graves,*

but they all invariably fail

*me ? — I'm of that doughty breed
whose genealogy stems
not from the routine family tree
but lies rather in that unknown
which from time to time
blesses mothers to deliver
mutinous children as likely as not
to upset the apple carts of privilege and pelf*

*accordingly, I too flew
right in the face of such cruel deception and cant
for I had in me the need to pay heed to the legitimate promptings
of the human heart*

*step by step it was as how
my vision grew to a red hot dot
brooding as I did over the ragged millions
on the Gangetic plain
or as when I walked the fancy gateway of India by the bay
eyeing the super sahibs riding high
on the creaking backs
of the voiceless meek of the land
behind whom the great lords traipsed
and still further behind whom
were the ji-hazooring jackals*

*there and then I vowed to bring down
both the masters and their henchmen
by my pencil and pen
neither awed nor wowed by the emperor
or his regalied minions, my eyes bored through
facades, my vigorously swishing brush
was my scimitar — me no namby pamby adorer*

*of sickly eastern beauties, but rather the purveyor
of the explosive facts of life and death —
in my lungs ozone, my blown out breath
jerking a somnolent literati
out of its torpor*

*my canvases literally were packed with punchy strokes
and bearing the which fuddy duddies of the realm
fell off their pretty perches
thus was cleansed the House of Imagination
and the true art enthroned
as the coming of the sovereign individualhood
into its own*

*yea, a terror caused not by mortar or gun
but by the hearty paint box—
reality so scrubbed clean
it disclosed life's true design*

*my straight spine defined
the true painter and poet
for they alone are the cauterizers
of blunted consciences
as the redeemers of the putrefying mass*

*so then, not to forget
that my mission was to salvage
the human spirit
while my white flag carried the twin emblems
of freedom and courage
so that I bow to none
other than the genius-lighting
Marys and Marias
and above them all the mother of mothers —
Earth Mother*



ebbbe

On the whole, for artistic appreciation, the third person singular is both more sober and suitable than the first. The insidious 'I' creeps between the subject and the audience, and only too often, one is left with a bad portrait of the subject in question rather than a good one of the object of the study. Nevertheless, it is somewhat difficult to speak of Francis Newton Souza objectively, at any rate, for me—and that for two reasons. I knew him or of him, for over half a century or more, either closely or distantly, as painter and as man. It would therefore be mere pretence to assume a cool and general attitude of impassive judgment. I leave that to other—and more scholarly—critics, who have already (or may still do in future) written on him with the approved classic distance. For me, as for some others, Souza was a painter and a person who disturbed as much as exhilarated—infuriatingly so. The ambivalence that his art set up in one's reactions is extreme, to say the least. So that whatever follows hereunder with its inconsistencies, and even repetitions or reiterations, is liable to revision at a later date.

But, and even as I take the fatal plunge, I can assert that Souza's art is essentially simple. Except that this is true of every work of art that has withstood the test of time. The reason is that the 'true' artist is concerned with the expression of his inward obsessions in the most direct and most befitting manner. In this way, Souza discarded everything that was not essential to the full realization of his 'gut' impulses, allowing him to express them in a tangible and concrete form.

Only a few other Indian artists of the day have attained a similar precision. Well, this is certainly true of most of Souza's works, a large number of them executed already in his earlier period, namely the late fifties to the early seventies. That period, to my mind, was his artistic zenith in terms of quality rather than quantity. After that, the graph shows a comparative decline — notwithstanding the abrupt spurt or flaring up of the old spirit, now and then. If it be contended that his field of observation was limited as compared to some other artists of the day, this does not necessarily impair the standing of his intrinsic power. Given the right hunger for experience, you can concentrate a whole lifetime into the back of a bronze mirror, as was the habit of some of the great Chinese craftsmen. To achieve supreme greatness, it is not necessary to indulge in scene painting. Masterpieces can be painted on the small canvas. Is it possible to count Souza's

scope as 'limited' when it embraces—again and again—the instinctual binary opposites of man and woman or, that is to say, the dynamics of life creation itself. At least he denied himself nothing of the ardours, the complications, and the bare simplicities of life, as they eternally are on earth. In other words, his scope embraced life as it is lived, enjoyed and suffered by men and women.

By this one does not imply that the painter was a crass hedonist, or that he was a self-egoist; nor does it imply that the only face he could see was his own, or that he was only interested in making an impact on the public at any cost. If there is some truth in criticisms of Souza, it still does not annul his triumphant major works, in which he overcame his weaknesses with flying colours.

At this point it ought also to be stated that what sometimes has been regarded as his cold-blooded hunting of Eves, is in fact, at moments, the exact opposite. Souza could paint with complete absence of carnal passion. It was not his private life but that of his characters in paint that he was really after. When he painted, his first and compelling duty appeared to have been to eliminate Souza, and in the choicest of his compositions he succeeded, quite as he did in his 'cardinals' and other grotesque city-types in all their sub-human or sinister miens. And this is truest of his landscapes or cityscapes where he evinces a purity of intent, which proves the existence of his contemplative eye.

Then, once again, when Souza paints Biblical subjects there is neither sentimentalism nor self-pity nor any false emotion in sight; nor is there any sign of Souza's own personal sympathy or despair. Souza's sorrow remains his own, and in consequence such works come out with a stark conviction that allows us no easy quarters or religious piety. It is this classic quality, the hardness, which conceded nothing to the maker but everything to the thing made.

The view that Souza was incapable of true feeling was in part generated by the censure of his character as a man. All his life he was pursued by this attack—an attack in part justified by his recklessness and bluntness. When he wrote on himself, and so brilliantly in the fifties, he had in effect written his confession as much as his credo. He regarded himself as being as little as possible amenable to outside dictation. Then, even in his youthfulness, little did it matter to the artist that the man in him would in certain eyes appear culpable.

He could only palliate or remove the offence at the cost of deadening his own self, his artwork, and his character. Well, he would just not. And for this reason he is deemed brilliant but uncouth.

So too he dealt with his friends and other artists. He brought the same magnificent neutrality to bear. He was not really swayed by personal vendetta as and when he opined on this person or that, or on sundry social issues. No sadism led him to expose real or fancied intimacies with women.

It was his life, just that. It was life, and Souza held death off, while he permitted life to unfold in its vigour with the natural impulse of a pagan dancer leaning back. But still, it is argued that great art is no defense of the breach of intimacy, nor does it justify the man even though it may explain the artist. To dispel the legend of his vanity and selfishness that surrounded him is, of course, not easy.

So then, for me at least, there emerges from all the tittle tattle about him and his own testimony against himself, a whole different portrait of a man whose genius rode him on the snaffle. He could put up the defense of exaggeration, flippancy, and apparent callousness against everything but that genius. So with infinite patience and unflagging obedience he set himself down to whatever that cruel and lively inner dictator commanded—and such as bids fair to pass into history as the man who painted many pictures and wrote with gusto, but never really—or legally in his own self defense as the cautions do.

In the long run however, it is not the painter but what he made that will prevail. This could be his answer to misrepresentation, whether of his own seeking or imposed upon him. So when the body snatchers grope among Shelley's ashes for some proof of infamy, he is safe 'with his profuse strains of unpremeditated art'. The same way that Byron refuted calumny where he 'walked in beauty like the night'. And so too, Souza, pacing Columbus Circle in New York, Oxford Street in London, or Connaught Place in Delhi, need not abide the present day critical voices—or the voices yet to come. He is free, as he was when he had on him the habit of his mortal body.

Souza may be said to close an epoch of easel painting which dealt largely with the particular rather than the general or the nebulous. It stated aesthetically



the visual world with an accuracy which was largely dependent upon facility of manipulation, sureness of draughtsmanship, and knowledge of craftsmanship rather than those later developments of the epoch which has been seeking the general or abstract expression of mental conception of emotions, of states of being visually conceived from natural and optical forms.

But Souza, often figurative as he was, was not a figural painter so understood. It was, perhaps, inevitable that the works like those of Hogarth, Toulouse Lautrec, Degas, and of course Picasso, should influence him. So too were his extreme distortions in keeping with the time spirit of the twentieth century. And so too may the irony and the incongruity, which is the theme of many of the illustrations by these men, have roused him to paint the way he did. Many of his works thus show almost the stink of a corpse, the masquerade of love making, and the farces of his high-ups and authority, whether sacred or profane. This way many of his paintings indulged his love of the incongruous, whether it was the seemingly virtuous sitting in judgment, or the naked girl faced with a hypocrite in black clothing.

In many such works Souza shows how etiquette or birth are of greater importance in the scheme of things than valour or virtue. Souza faced up to the incongruous and mocked it with a fiercer passion. 'Respectable' therefore he could never be, he had had enough of Indian or Anglo-Indian smuggling and officialdom. He 'enjoyed' the echoes of unechoed opinions, that resounded down the stale corridors of power. And then he turned them to artistic account.

Souza, as if on the rebound, also painted nudes with a vengeance. And these paintings may well be judged on the same plane as those by Goya, Boucher, Manet, or Renoir. It is a tour de force on a subject which has been painted a million times and yet it is something new in outlook, perspective and application of paint, simplification of form, and a masterly management of light and colour. The earthiness of Souza's nudes is really earthy, and unabashed.

The painter evidently delighted in women's beauty and girls' prettiness. And he did not quail at the wrinkled foreheads either, which he put down to plucked eye-brows or mascara. And, once again, his love of incongruity made him paint clever women especially those of the Amazonian type, and some of his greatest

paintings are of these very women. In all these his love of incongruity made him bold, his figures thus are almost laughing personalities, triumphant. These works show no sign of rigidity and are as elastic as can be, sensitive but also roguish with a wink.

The art of figural painting is one which by nature must be impure, or rather, a mixed one as many of the modern examples prove. The mere mapping of a face is of course never enough; the mere creation of a pattern or decorative effect is not enough; the study of pure form or lighting is not enough; manual dexterity is not enough; likeness is not enough; photographic representation is not enough; technical agility is not enough. To be a great work of art, figural expression must have what can only, at a pinch, be termed the neo-literary quality, which by means of the physiognomy of effect and expression achieves an abstract value equivalent to a reading of the soul of a person from real life. This demands a knowledge of life, which I believe Souza had, and so he could appraise human characteristics that amounted to a sixth sense, an intuition or an X-ray eye and a knowledge of psychology that is usually found among grand old men and women, or of course shamans and so on. Even then a 'know-how' woman with an angel face can have the thoughts and characteristics of fiends or malicious imbeciles; often benevolent looking gentlemen are ruthless criminals. And indeed it is these that are often portrayed in a large body of his 'men of the day' studies. They are criminals at heart or else egoists. Faces are capable of endless disguise, for the revered statesman may often enough be a Satan in disguise. So though a bird is known by its song, and a man by his tongue, it by no means follows that the face of either sex is an open book. It was the business of Souza as painter to interpret the personalities of his men and women, and to convey his characters by their appearances, poses, and expressions, while at the same time not to insult them too much. Some of his 'figurals' are inclined to see themselves as Napoleons—strong and ruthless with the charity of Christ, the respectability of a Cambridge don, with the dare-devilry of a don Juan. This business is indeed most complex. But Souza did not personally have a disgust with humanity in the mass. His gift for sympathy came earlier, just as much as his whip of a tongue against the hypocrites. His lack of reverence again made it possible for him to tackle many a subject that would have overwhelmed a more timid artist. He painted

men in their masquerades. The robed officials he painted with all their trappings and with gusto. And so he relished satire, the sting that lacerated a person with unfair advantages. This startled the public, no doubt of that. Souza had no use for the servile, the unjust, the too genteel.

Few painters of the Indian scene are so difficult to place as Souza, for the good reason that he had an amazing facility with the brush and a freedom of the wandering gypsy, as it were. His was not the naiveté of a Rousseau. His draughtmanship was unerring, accurate, vital, and never halting. Because his paintings have a life content, call it neo-literary, he was criticized by some who go merely for form and colour. Then, because he was successful, he was condemned for his progressivism, earlier on, in India. Souza never cut himself off from the times in which he lived and so his work throbs at the best of times.

And then, because he was superbly articulate to the point of an uncanny intuition, he is thought to have been verbose. Since he developed his technique upon a definite tradition, that of Western art, he was condemned by those that preferred the exotic or the Eastern art formulae alone. Because he was sufficiently strong as a painter not to have cliques or claques, he made the locals unhappy. But he was, let us not forget, never a victim of the latest art vogues. Souza was a true realist and he painted things and people with his full, not half, self. His abstractions or distortions were only a means. He was comprehensible. Because he was an artist, he used paint as the greatest means of expressing himself, or rather, of expressing his potent-most thoughts. He was not painting to be written about, to be puzzled over, confused or embarrassed. He was not for a mixture of musical conundrum making harmonies, cacophonies, and rhythms; nor melodramas, architectural constructions, significant forms, or mathematical casuistries. All that he did not do, or did not want to do. He was rooted in earth, and in commonsense. In a period of time of a heady chaos, of absolute abstraction, and much else besides, Souza painted reality—the human subject in all his or her glory or downfall. Of this certainly he was a master.

Thinking of Souza, or artists like him, one can say that something is radically wrong with the productions of many recent painters whose works cannot be understood without a good deal of explanation. And which works, after a lapse



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of time, cease to convey anything even to their producers. It is not profundity but poverty of thought that such painters seek to hide beneath a complicated method of expression or publish with a boast of incomprehensibility. Now some thought that Souza boasted. There is some truth in this charge, but his was a boyish boast not seriously meant. Souza was for fun, for pranks, for slang. He capered, he play-acted, he burlesqued. There was a buskin in him, and this way he made his presence felt jocularly. What strength Souza and his work had, was kin to the highly rhythmical dancers of Africa – jerky, jumpy, frenzied, but invigorating, jolting and body-centred; full-blooded, and totally undistanced from the human sense. His style was a ballad, a drum-beat, being extreme and flexible; insolent and clowning; a pantomime and a mimicking; staccato, activist and enthusiast. His pulse galloping for sheer pleasure. A painter of broad daylight, steady of eye, but not merely cerebral. His hammering was bent upon troubling the blue stockings of the world. His tautly colloquial style was crackling with erotic excitement; at times it was exclamatory; a histrionic art come of vital hormones, of tactile vision, as of an agile athletic body, overpowering with its deadly humour. His work has an almost physical, of a density, a weightiness which has significance and notability, one that cannot be easily brushed aside from the viewer's awareness.

As against the above, many younger artists offer us ingenuity in place of art; artifice in place of lucidity; perplexity instead of lucidity. These take the most direct way to rid themselves of its content in a concern for form. On the other hand, Souza's power lies in feeling things more passionately than many. His were not brilliant and original methods of expression. After all, the virtue of any art work is not to be found merely in its technical excellence. That is only the outward expression of the inward emotion—the artist's intuition—and is inseparable from it. It will be observed how, in time, Souza's technical methods developed and became more interesting as his vision became more mature and more intense, or fiercer than it already was. As has already been hinted at, he reached his high water mark as an artist early in his late thirties or thereabouts. It was a meteoric rise, and then there was a slow decline—but yet, the full curtain never came down. He could still surprise us with select works from time to time. The unity of conception and frank expression, both in paint and the written

word, that he attained to, was astonishing. Reason? - he was his own man, never slavish, never merely clever. He stuck to the legitimate business of painting, that is, the realization of received impressions. If there was a facile cleverness in any of his works, it soon detached itself from the unabashed force of the style. His life—of whatever genre it may have been—was inseparable from his art. The kind of subjects he chose for his paintings may not appeal to some people, but those subjects nevertheless carried the charge of his passions and vision, as could not be denied by the most hostile of his critics.

Souza had ideas. He was well versed in modern scientific ideas and ancient lore but he was not a dry-as-dust intellect. He brought feeling to his ideas and much passion, and indeed also an oblique fun at his own cost. He was not a remote aesthete. In his case, ever since his Goa days, his art and his life developed together. At every moment of his life, and that even in New York when he had fallen on bad days, he was practicing his art, or when even not so deeply interested in people—he was for the people, above all. This is why, despite his landscapes, his pictures are a picture of human beings, of simple separate persons, and he painted them with a full clairvoyance, though they may now be placed in distant or dusty tomes. Here, thus, was a drama of the human soul, of the human presence in time. In it was no emptiness. Feeling was expressed with varying degrees of intensity in all his works, whether majestic or else vulgar. They all invariably conveyed that same mood. It is clear that Souza was essentially a rebel, a man of independent spirit who refused to follow the example of his prosaic and conventional fellow Indians of either the middle or else the lower middle class, nor did he follow the English, for that matter. His work, thus, was infused with a powerful personality. In this way he was among the first of the ‘modern’ Indians. Souza, it must be re-emphasized was basically human and therefore far from perfect as a person, but there is no necessity here to tear the rose to pieces to discover the source of its beauty or scent!

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Now in what follows below I will comment on certain of Souza’s Delhi exhibitions over the years. It was Kumar Gallery that put up his first ever show in the city, in nineteen hundred and sixty two, and from this one it became clear

that here at long last was an articulate painter; a painter who was trying to come closer to mankind than flee from it. A hazardous preoccupation at a moment when every one fled either into the microcosm or the macrocosm. But then, this was no social message art—amounting to illustrations of moral messages—either. In these works Souza tried successfully to express his obsession and appetites, or his vision of the persecuted individual. The finest of these works clearly proclaimed their independence of the hand that had painted them. If in one way these works were obviously not positive emotions, and the presence of humans spelled individuals bound down by social restrictions or inhibitions, what Souza nevertheless created was a sense of awe, not of self-distrust. His works such as *Philosopher* or *Woman* were naked truth, so to speak, while the *Crucifixion* was like a mosaic of a hard, pitiless feel. The distortions of the subjects had been carried out expressly, very deliberately, as if to midwife a sense of guilt in the viewer.

Incidentally, the composition titled *Woman* was painted as Souza saw women in all their individual characteristics and peculiarities, but yet this was no offence against good taste. A depth of feeling in such compositions could not be denied.

Later, in nineteen hundred and sixty five, with Kumar Gallery's exhibition of Souza's work at its own gallery, as well as at Shridharani Gallery, I was to notice that Souza's style boasted of an uncommon hewn stone quality. This tough masculinity—the penchant for the exposed, raw outlines, the violence of vivid colours—was matched by an equal vigour on the thematic plane. Souza, as a painter was, thus, well within historic time, as distinct from the so called timelessness of the 'pure' painters. Souza therefore had little visual music, and enacted much drama. And even when there were several 'still lifes' and 'landscapes' included in the exposition, these were really brief respites from the ordeal of the works with what may be termed pagan or Christian subjects. But why the so called ordeal? The presentation of the last two perennial subjects, no doubt also of many a painter in the West was done in a defiant style, one all but verging on the barbarically powerful. Here the artist was seen obsessed with torture, physical, virtual, or imaginative, and in this way he was in line with the temper of a war-scarred century. But sometimes it seems as though he was



rendering man's latent sadism or atavism too. Of course here Souza offers no purgation, only the unredeemed sight of spilled blood and the beast lurking in man. Thus there are no angels or, rather, angelic faces, in his compositions. But then this may be because of the twentieth-century individual's extra vivid recapitulation of the martyrdom, not only of man but also of God.

In the late eighties, Souza flung a surprise, by this once working out some of the gods or goddesses of the Pauranic pantheon. The exhibition had a good response in Karachi, of all places. But some of us felt that he was out of his true element, that he was trying on a new suit but which looked most awkward, and indeed garish. Surely an erratic fit of absent mindedness that artists undergo in the course of long journeys!

In nineteen hundred and ninety, I pondered afresh over Souza and his past, given that there was a new show at C C A Gallery. I felt that for so long had Francis been wont to 'assault' our senses with his bold images that it now appeared too late for him to move on to some different spiritual plane. The painter's brief love affair with the stock-in-trade Indian gods and goddesses earlier had whimsical bearings and was not indicative really of a change in artistic faith. Logically therefore his latest offering was a reversion to the well ingrained habit of daring his viewers. I remember how, once in my teens, in nineteen hundred fifty in Westbourne Park Terrace in London, he had hung one of his works in my digs. He just needed wall space. Well, timid soul that I was, his life sized nude right in the middle of the bed-sit alarmed me no little. Exhibitionism and expressionism can, at a pinch, be taken as synonyms. That's the sort of artistic persona this recent Indian art history making painter at root had, by and large. To repeat, already early on, he had acquired so firm a grip on his brush, palette knife or whatever, that this grip was used to expressly disconcert, more often than not, his viewers via the botched human heads or human figures that he so forcefully impressed on paper or canvas.

In his chosen style there was nothing hid, no understatements. He'd rather drop a ton of bricks on you and chuckle. That's a lively boyishness, that of a very precocious but in some ways an unevolving-to-the-next-stage human being. This assertion was testified to by the works in the then show too. Those of us who

had enjoyed his offerings over the years should know that these latest ones were still only assortments of what the painter was at his peak (and this also went for the set of his chemical paintings at the L T G Gallery, earlier). He had therefore been only conjuring the past, of his own 'once self'. The repertoire within did not appear to have expanded, enlarged, transformed, or transmuted. So the usual comparison with the late Spanish master is not quite apt. In one respect alone was it just—the pursuit of the grotesque.

This manner, for some artists, became an ego ideal almost, in the aftermath of the World War I. This was the way the expressionists tried to make their mark on the twentieth century's largely passive mass—the human group bereft of all faith in self. In an environment which had no heart to speak of, and only a furiously ticking brain, the artist willy nilly turned foe, not friend of mankind. He took recourse to extreme measures as if to shake up deadened viewers. And so, the rather crude third degree methods became likely in works where the graces of life seemed like self-kidding in the face of an abrasive reality. To the slum-bred youth the only right attitude is to challenge all comers. Obviously art too reflects the human spirit in varying stages of health and sickness.

Those several orders of artistic expression were each notable in its own place. Yet, in the end, only work which moves with horror, but also pity, affords a glimpse of a transformative vision. Otherwise, violence is no more than momentary. This is because our lives are each moment under threat, so they are at each moment in need of making life-bestowing sense. This is especially true in an age which has the mark of uncertainty, or of absurdity as well as of Cain written on its forehead. If the English Francis (Bacon) had brought us of an absolutely successful horror, or terror's dark night of the soul (though without the pity), our own Francis too followed suit in the wake of the stance which had resulted from the profound split between mind and body, the rational and the irrational.

The neo-prophet in this painter—of which some signs were read in his verbal pronouncements in another context—were yet to metamorphose the spirit of his otherwise powerful art. The masculine principle in the arts is good up to a point; beyond which it too has got to surrender self, as a gender. William Blake's

robustness of word and image was not for itself, but only in honour of divinity, or of the life of the community.

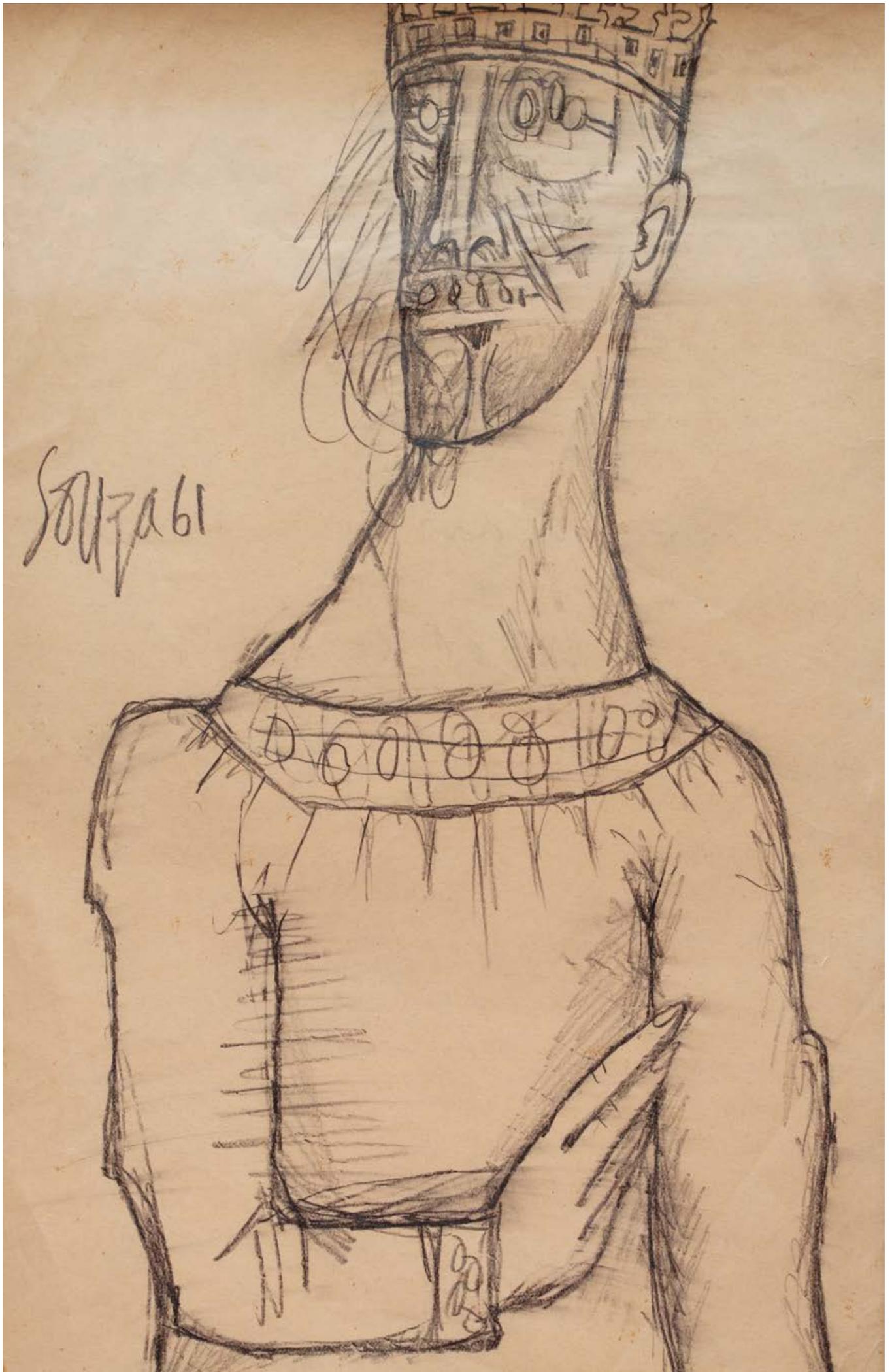
If some of Souza's recent works were as good as those of yore, in no essential sense did they humble us, humble the cussed human soul. But the great moments in art do just that. Yet in these too we—in the end—admired our painter, after all he was one of our tribe.

Then, going over the artist's afresh works in nineteen hundred and ninety six, I had wondered for the umpteenth time as to which was Souza's characteristic stance over the decades. For me the answer was 'emphaticness' his ram-rod straight *dramatis personae* being poised frontally looking up as if into the viewer's eye, confronting you head on. The works never did wobble, so crisp were they. At the same time, they would seem to have known no indirection, no warded looks. Thus, no femininity either in his artistic spirit, or in his person. This therefore was the work of a man, a male—one bent on mastery and thereby overtly willful.

The Eves the painter laid his paint on, showed he was self assured, with no self-doubts or inhibition whatever. And thus he invariably went for the most muscular spirit whether that same value be reflected in a saint, a sculptor or a Noor Jahan. Souza's Eves are thus self-willed, as willful as his landscapes, being so very chiselled as though being cutout in *pietra dura*.

In Souza's veins would seem to run a trace of the determined Vasco da Gama blood. He too seemed to have been baptized in the church of the bull-painting Iberian master—signs of whose bequest were palpable in no few of Souza's compositions. But, thus inspired, the painter made the same influence an article of genuine belief and it became him. The same forthrightness, may be bluntness, is observed in his own work.

That well-mounted exhibition was perhaps among one of the best of the painter's in Delhi. It had some of his choicest works from what may be deemed his 'key' period—the fifties and sixties. There was no steep falling off after that date, but too often though there was a reenactment of what once was at its most virile, most expressive. If works shown in his last few years were still reenacting 'old themes', they proved his mastery in the oil medium, and they also showed



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that he fanatically put it to traumatic uses as if he meant to cow you down with a display of unbridled uninhibitedness.

But why recall all that. For, as in *Moonstruck Scientist* (1955), *St. Peter and St Paul* (1992), *Seated Roman* (1962) and some other large paintings, we not only had power and punch but also artistic decorum. Here the artist was not a boyish show off virtuoso, or the athlete of paint and brush. Rather he was controlled by his vision. *Moonstruck* took possession of me completely. This early work was not about a scientist alone, it bears on our common humanity—that is, when transfigured by the sublime.

But despite, or because of, the awe, Souza had too his quota of fun to the brimful, and that same fun informed Souza till late. His work therefore would not age, even if the artist body underwent the usual wear or tare.

And then Kumar Gallery held an important, inclusive exhibition of his work (1950-1999) in 1999 itself, and I was to inscribe my last scribblings on him, and his works that year. Though, thereafter, the year before he was gone, I had a three hour long conversation with him for a video, and which tête-à-tête was marvelous as well personally enlightening for myself.

At any rate, then, thinking of an artist like Souza for so long, the following lines had straightaway formed in my head:

*Give madness, Lord God, words
frothing at the mouth;
the standard of the world
in shambles, suave lips twisted
in knots, meanings mixed up
in bizarre brilliance, the parts
of the rational sentence broken down
and reassembled in shocking re-couplings.*

*Madness my Lord
dismiss the old order,
and make it be the opposite world
of the mirror on the wall—*

the right and left turned about complete.

*It is so my heart demands,
demands madness in the cause
of health, demands
the smashing up of your great juggernaut
machine into bits of vibrating impulse,
demands the separating of parts,
all to be on its own.*

*Demands blindness Lord,
to see your world with the private eye —
the madness without a method,
the revisiting of the dark
 unvisited places;
all in an unfamiliar light,
floods of red blood fed into the brain,
the eye its own spectator.*

*Give deafness also Lord,
the world's loud gong refused audience
and only heard the confused dance
of the bees within,
as the singing sting of the mosquito.*

*Madness madness...
flying ants up lumbering like gargantuan jumbos—
mountains crushed down into moles,
moles inflated till they touch sky,
all sizes falsified.*

Artistic madness? — yes the necessary madness, that profound dissatisfaction with things as they are, or else with one's own inability to bring forth a truly creative production. Said Plato: "He who, without the Muses' madness in his soul, comes knocking at the door of poesy and thinks that art will make him anything

fit to be called a poet, finds the poetry which he indites in his sober senses is beaten hollow by the poetry of madness.”

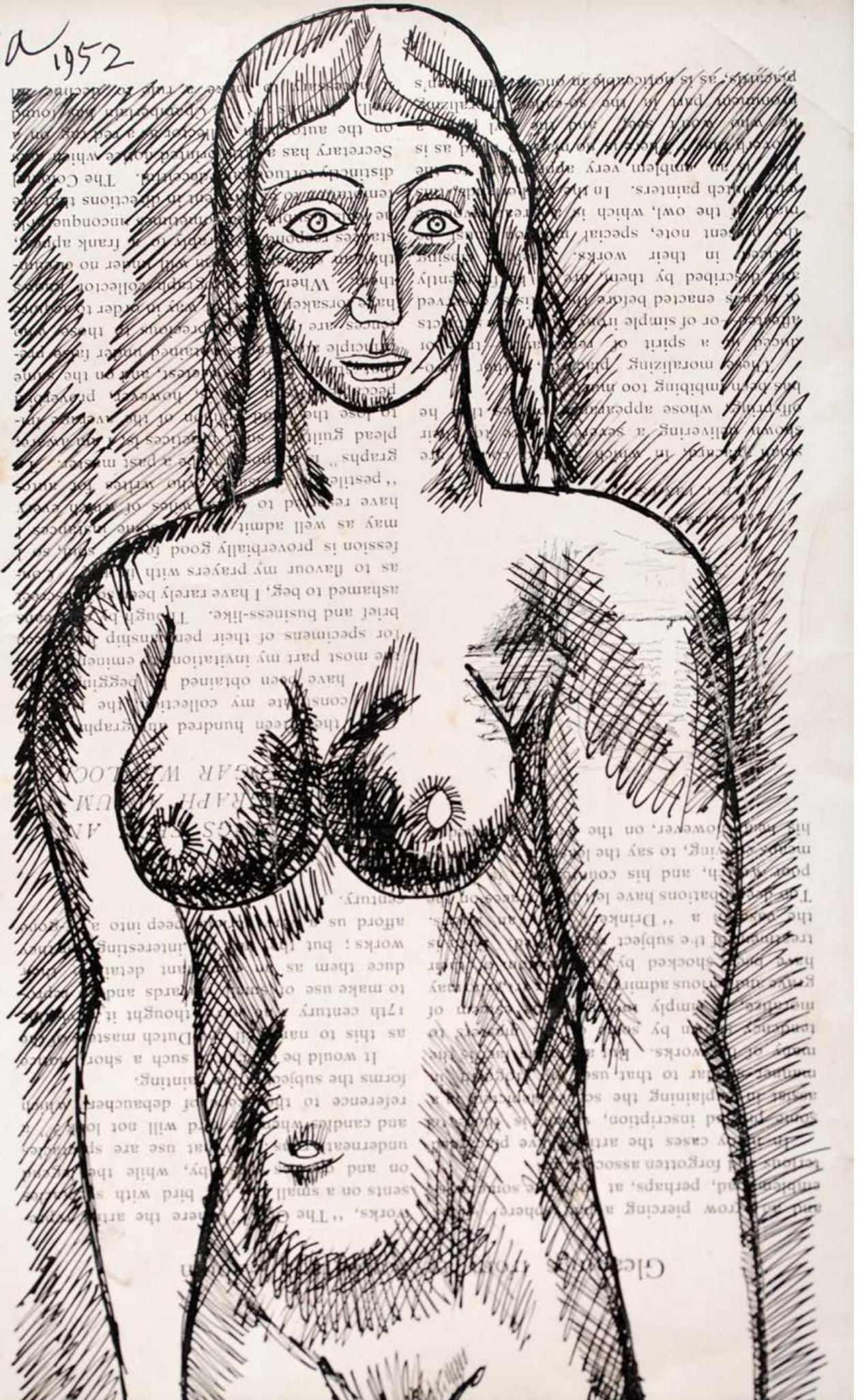
Fifty years exposure to this painter’s artistic persona had led one to believe that, for good or evil, the man had been exceptionally possessed for a fair length of time. From which fact alone flowed the seeming professional deformations, in his art or life at select moments. But then, we are here to commemorate a large, consistent body of triumphs of the human spirit and not to carp.

Souza’s blunt, crazy style was by now well known. Question is, how it came about? Could it truly be that, among other things it was the profound indolence of our own society that made him violently react, and reach for earth-shaking action and emphatic directness, as much as for clarity and unambiguity in his images? Evidence suggests that the activating motor feelings were especially strong in his basic personality structure; and that the life of his spontaneous impulses had not died out despite his living for long under the constraints of deadening, hide-bound, or else artificial societies, as the case may be.

In an all too rationalized existence, instinctual emotions are taboo. Emotion is the name given to the power-factor revealed in a body in excitement. This is the root energizing element and you may as well call it a kind of madness in the face of a forbidding, or else moribund, order. Perhaps in view of this itself Souza’s salient works are charged with the electricity of emotional excessiveness. And this ‘electricity’ goes on to serve a great purpose: that of cauterizing or needling a middling, insincere ethos. At the best of times he meant to shock with a pointed aim—in other words, to bring us back to the real life of our own body, so that we begin to react to human surroundings. Souza’s expressionism, if it may be dubbed that, was not a show off, after all, but the replay of his basic radicalism—his essentially mutinous nature. And, if sometimes seeming salacious, or if egotism becomes apparent in some of his artistic offerings (or in anecdotes connected with him personally), these same traits can only have been the obverse of his sterling qualities—that of sticking to his guns and not donning the dubious mask of respectability. He was no social climber.

Souza, child of a dire century—with its warts and all—was one whose head would just not bow. No wonder that his figures invariably look straight at you,

Souza 1952



unabashedly. No side glances or shifty eyes for them. This same life attitude braces us, here in India, where only a few call a spade a spade, manliness of manner being in such short supply. This is the key quality for which one may well be penalized under a morality that abets in deviousness.

As and when he had not been self-imitating, this painter's imagination was seen to be working at high, insane tension, as though actual pictures were now passing before his eyes with preternatural vividness, as though these impressions were retained on the retina of his eyes with an unusual luminousness. Is it not thus we witness those of his dazzling configuration, as are as if writ in a blaze of lightning?

Art, such as Souza's, is not made by mere artistic efficiency. The painter's extraordinary general craft-wise competence was, I think, made necessary by what made him paint in the first place—an underlying unease with his times. In such work, it must surely take a great deal of artistic efficiency to cope with violence: as to keep its pressure under check. And, to record, such artistic efficiency had not failed him. Only occasionally he descended to the level of the precocious child's annoying tricks.

No, the best of his works are an intensely sensuous and emotional experience, but still never being a naïve cry from the heart. Souza, as I said, could control and manipulate most of his experiences, even the most terrifying—like that of madness, of being tortured. And so, these experiences—and not only of his landscapes—were manipulated with an informed and intelligent mind. On his higher register, he never was narcissistic, never shut in upon himself. Contrariwise never was he either overwhelmed by the pictured sacral or the mundane dimensions. All these states of being were, as if savagely hewn out in paint with an insatiable lust for life, to borrow words applied to the life of another artist.

The pleasure of Souza's work, thus, arrives from its very texture as its ebullience—it gleaming with a rich beauty. In this particular collection there hardly was a work that lacked a vivid image, or memorable nuance. And remember too, that his was no facile or slick style of the smart empty painter; nor was it that of a timid intellectual; nor had it either the intricate jewellery of the aesthete.

At its chosen best it was crystalline, razor-edged. So designed, it could well cut through the substance of our own largely torpid life of the upper and middle classes. It was not painting for painting's sake alone. For, too often, it circled round the pit of modern misery and degradation, parallelly it was a big dig, as I already implied, at our own moral bankruptcy, our national inanition. No wonder those 'corrective measures': saints and prophets appearing in the work from time to time, as also other pregnant with meaning biblical personages.

Thus, there was a pulse, and much impulse—a stream of running blood—behind Souza's creative will. It was a will to life that creates a potent art. The earliest of his works, in a 'prose' style as they were, already had that potency, and this continued unabated, without repetition or self-copying. On the contrary, Souza was, as ever, irritated into glorious fury time and again—but yet—his feet being firmly planted in the ground beneath. Ah well, his mind's eye had for long scanned larger than life figures in the landscape, and thereby came these bold gestures. But this preoccupation with the figurative was not the social didactic of exhortatory art, nor was it that of any narrow moral lessons. Rather, it was one man's zeal and fervour worked out in the sharply defined individual life detail. On an earth now burdened with gargantuan statist organizational systems as eat up humans as well as destroy truth in the name of this or that creed and ideology, he asserted the sovereignty of the lone, defiant individual. It is over here we sense his 'madness' -- one which, however obliquely, propagates the courage to be in a levelling steam-roller civilization.

We applaud this stance at a moment of time when the truth of life is sacrificed at the altar of pure abstractions. If the painter--like most artists--had borrowed widely from a range of painters, he nevertheless had done so only in order to support his own chief characteristics, that of turning the world upon its head. It is only in this way we are alarmingly challenged. But pray why? For Souza would have us stand on our own two feet. His art teaches this lesson by indirection not in so many words, but by its openness of gesture, and its frankness. Of course, doing so, he often left his flanks open. But he could not care less. By his mad throwing off caution to the winds, he shamed the cowardly among us. That is artistic service enough, one should think. O art, thou strange necessity!

SELECT ARCHIVES

Traveling Shows in America

RAVI KUMAR

1961 — 62

Galleries and Collectors across the USA, including New York, Chicago, Texas, and Los Angeles



Ravi Kumar at the Green residence in Chicago on Christmas day, 1961

F. N. SOUZA
7 Belize Square
London N.W.3.
1-2-62

Dear Mr Kumar:

I am in regular correspondence with Ravi. He seems to be getting on well in the States.

"I am in regular correspondence with Ravi. He seems to be getting on well in the States."

F. N. Souza
1 Feb 1962

F N Souza

RAVI KUMAR

April 1962

Edmonton Gallery, Canada

NEWSPAPER ARTICLE

Edmonton Journal, 13 Apr 1962, p17

Mr. Ravi Kumar shows Mrs John H Chaplin a canvas by the contemporary artist, F. N. Souza, one of the paintings to be exhibited next week at the Edmonton Art Gallery, opening Sunday. The exhibition, first of its kind in Canada, is arranged by the Earl of St. Andrews chapter, IODE, of which Mrs. Chaplin is a member.

Excerpt from Kumar Gallery's Oct 1962 exhibition catalogue of F. N. Souza listing one-man show in Edmonton, Canada

International Award.

"Religious Theme" Exhibition, Tate Gallery, London.

Also exhibited in New York, Dublin, etc.

1959 Exhibited in Bradford, Cleveland, U.S.A., Aldeburgh.

One-man shows London, Stockholm and Frankfurt.

1960 Exhibited Paris, Stuttgart, Bradford, Norwich, Cairo and London.

1961 Collectors' Choice, Wakefield Museum.

Four Centuries of Indian Painting, Sao Paulo and Rio de Janeiro.

1962 One-man shows Edmonton Gallery, Edmonton, Alberta, Canada,

Stone Gallery London, Kumar Gallery New Delhi, .



F. N. SOUZA

KUMAR GALLERY

October 1962

Sundar Nagar, New Delhi

EXHIBITION CATALOG

Cover and Excerpt



F. N. SOUZA

KUMAR GALLERY

11 SUNDER NAGAR MARKET NEW DELHI-11
ASHOKA HOTEL NEW DELHI-21
GRAND HOTEL CHOWRINGHEE CALCUTTA-13
1774 No. ORANGE GROVE AVE HOLLYWOOD-46

F. N. SOUZA

KUMAR GALLERY

October 1962

Sundar Nagar, New Delhi

NEWSPAPER ARTICLE

Souza is a compelling modern

Times of India, 17 Oct 1962

Francis Newton Souza who exhibits his oils at the Kumar Art Gallery is a painter comparable in pictorial imagination with Picasso and in imagery with Rouault. But in India he was not understood; his paintings were rejected; he was considered vulgar and esoteric; finally, when disappointed, he left India to seek fame outside and settled down in London.

Before Souza's paintings one cannot remain indifferent, however strong the prejudice against modern art. Seeing his painting is experiencing the willing suspension of disbelief: the gates of perception opening in knowledge of persons who seem to have seen the truth of their lives. Suffering has made these men and women of Souza ugly.

The woman in "The Blue Robe" painted in sensuous yellow in the manner of Modigliani, knows the truth of her flesh; her stance, her exposed genital her oversized breasts are not the facts in their definition of physical appearance.

Souza is not a figurative painter in that sense. One has to see the "Prophet" and "The Weeping King" to realise this. "Prophet" being in the attitude of prayer is silent, having the eyes but not seeing and the mouth sealed in despair. "The Weeping King" is simply an arabesque of thick black lines, the ultramarine blue of the surface reminding us of the power that he was.

His landscapes seem to have been painted for escaping from this sordid reality of life: and it is for this reason that they lack consistency of outlook. They are composed of diverse elements: decorative ("Landscape in Red"), expressionistic ("Valldemosa Mallorca"), linear ("St. Paul's London"), and abstract ("Landscape One" and "Landscape Two").

But they all hint extraordinary visual insights of planar structure and composition. For instance in "London Landscape" or in "Las Ramblas Barcelona" the most complex of structures is suggested by symmetrical forms.

The exhibition will remain open till October 21



F. N. SOUZA

KUMAR GALLERY

October 1962

Sundar Nagar, New Delhi

NEWSPAPER ARTICLE

Souza's Exhibition

Jagdish Swaminathan, 21 Oct 1962

The season's first interesting shows are no doubt those of the works of Reddy and Souza. (There was of course an exhibition of Husain's drawings at the Kunika some time back but excepting a few, they were hackneyed and dispirited). Francis Newton Souza is an Indian painter now living and working in London. Of the few Indian artists who have made an impact in the international sphere, Souza is outstanding. The exhibition of his works which opened at the Kumar Art Gallery last week, however, cannot be said to represent him at his best. Perhaps the better works find their way into the European and American markets, and only the lesser ones could be spared for the Indian show.

That is not to suggest that the exhibition was of an indifferent order. One of the first things that strikes the viewer is the extreme competence of the artist. How thoroughly he is in tune with the medium and the materials he uses ("I hate the smell of paint," says Souza, but he has a nose for it all right!) is evident in every canvas.

Souza is a painter of cityscapes and religious themes. While in the latter he is loaded with a troubled presentiment, in the former he is singularly devoid of emotive inhibitions. Unlike the cityscapes of Ram Kumar which ooze a silent melancholy and flare warmly from amidst the gloomy shadows of all-consuming time, Souza's cityscapes are congealed visions of a mysterious world. Whether standing stolidly in enamelled petrification or delineated in thin colour with calligraphic into nations, the cityscapes of Souza are purely plastic entities with no reference to memories or mirrors.

In the rendering of the human figure, Souza presents a very different aspect of his personality. While the extreme Picassoesque distortions of his earlier works add the thick enameled impasto are absent in the paintings exhibited at the present show, they still carry the trauma of a soul in torment over the eternal conflict of good and evil. A remarkable painting on show is that of a nude, with a strange Chagall-like quality to it.

F. N. SOUZA

KUMAR GALLERY

October 1962

Sundar Nagar, New Delhi and after that at the Grand Hotel, Calcutta

JOURNAL ARTICLE

Thought, Siddharta Publications, 20 Oct 1962

Elements making up a good painting are known but those that lend it a mystery akin to that of God are a matter of perception. A critic cannot share this perception; perhaps a poet can, but the discipline of poetry is different from that of painting.

Francis Newton Souza, whose paintings are on show at the Kumar Art Gallery, makes a mystery of painting. Yet there is nothing mysterious about them. They have a language; their communication is articulate. Only, they have many levels, laden as they are with metaphors.

Take, for instance, his landscape—a genre of painting, simple as employing a statement of visual pattern and nothing more. Yet one is struck by a feeling of being in the presence of something that is more than a painting. His colours have the violence that of Van Gogh's landscapes — there is the same restlessness and tumult, the same sense of awe and wonder when nature is around and confronting.

Souza's landscapes are, however, not painted in celebration of nature. He makes them a private statement of his world whose warp and woof are derived from the world of outside appearances.

Compare, for instance, "View from the Studio" with "Valldemosa Mallorca" and the altogether different functions colour has been put to. In "Valldemosa Mallorca" colour is the wildest yellow, while in "View from the Studio" arabesque patterning of something like cameo brightness emphasizes structure and space—boundless, running out from the left corners. Besides, the structure is inventive of a pattern that is totally symmetrical.

In "Las Ramblas Barcelona" and "London Landscape" the structure is totally symmetrical. The latter is painted in flat, translucent, fluid colours—so soft, as if it were a mental shadow or a washed out painting. The diluted black lines suggestive of architectural shapes make a symmetrical rectangular pattern which is broken up by church spirals:

Art

ELEMENTS making up a good painting are known, but those that lend it a mystery akin to that of God are a matter of perception. A critic cannot share this perception; perhaps a poet can, but the discipline of poetry is different from that of painting.

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the space statement is made to the left at bottom. In contrast to this, in "Las Ramblas Barcelona" four trees stand symmetrically in frontal plane. Some distance away from these trees is the row of houses lost behind the florid leaves. Unlike in others patterning of architectural shapes here is done in dry umbers, brush-lines of more or less even thickness overlapping each other, thereby making the pattern an inscape.

Another landscape which stands apart from the others is "Houses in Red". Over a dull red surface closed shapes of varying sizes are drawn in chiaroscuro and their relationships made complex by giving them an equal power of attracting attention. A rule of thumb method but with what effect! "Landscape in Red" is perhaps the only landscape which may be said to be linearly decorative.

These are some of Souza's simple landscapes. His men and women are like visitations of apparitions. They have their bodies; but their faces are made up of images that look like nightmares—Souza's own. They belong as much to us. The flesh of the woman in "The Blue Robe" is like the cross which every man and woman bears; it is warm and sensuous in the manner of Modigliani. "The Weeping King" is like an empty cage reminiscent of another painting of his "The King Crowned", which was exhibited in 1956 in Eight Painters Group Show (who were then in revolt against what may be called the official academy). His "The Prophet", like everybody else's, prays for his own life.

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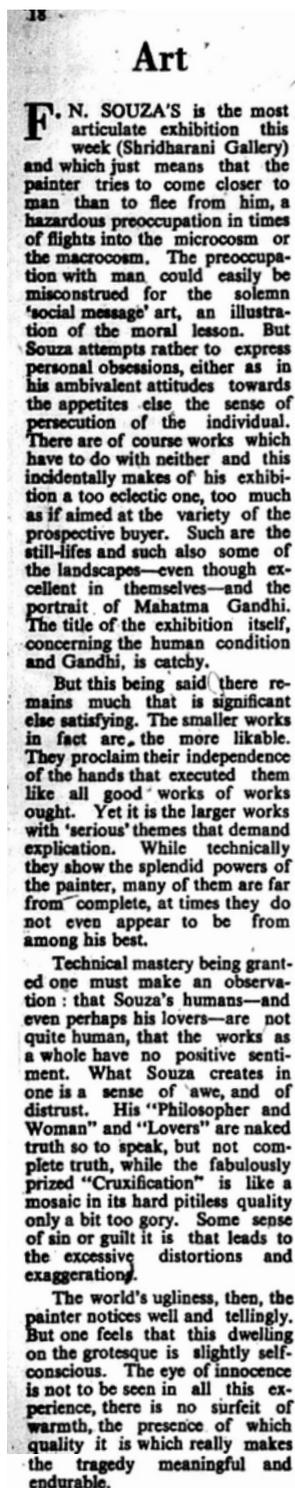
Retrospective

Gandhi and the Human Condition

KUMAR GALLERY

February 1965

Sundar Nagar and Shridharani Gallery, New Delhi



JOURNAL ARTICLE

Thought Magazine, Siddharta Publications, 20 Feb 1965

F. N Souza's is the most articulate exhibition this week (Shridharani Gallery) and which just means that the painter tries to come closer to man than to flee from him, a hazardous preoccupation in times of flights into the microcosm and macrocosm. The preoccupation with man could easily be misconstrued for the solemn 'social message' art, an illustration of the moral lesson. But Souza attempts rather to express personal obsessions, either as in his ambivalent attitudes towards the appetites else the sense of persecution of the individual. There are of course works which have to do with neither and this incidentally makes of his exhibition a too eclectic one, too much as if aimed at the variety of the prospective buyer. Such are the still-lives and such also some of the landscapes—even though excellent in themselves—and the portrait of Mahatma Gandhi. The title of the exhibition itself, concerning the human condition and Gandhi, is catchy.

But this being said there remains much that is significant else satisfying. The smaller works in fact are the more likable. They proclaim their independence of the hands that executed them like all good works of works ought. Yet it is the larger works with 'serious' themes that demand explication. While technically they show the splendid powers of the painter, many of them are far from complete, at times they do not even appear to be from among his best.

Technical mastery being granted one must make an observation: that Souza's humans—and even perhaps his lovers—are not quite human, that the works as a whole have no positive sentiment. What Souza creates in one is a sense of awe, and of distrust. His "Philosopher and Woman" [4] and "Lovers" [5] are naked truth so to speak, but not complete truth, while the fabulously prized "Crucifixion" [2] is like a mosaic in its hard pitiless quality only a bit too gory. Some sense of sin or guilt it is that leads to the excessive distortions and exaggerations.

The world's ugliness, then, the painter notices well and tellingly. But one feels that this dwelling on the grotesque is slightly self-conscious. The eye of innocence is not to be seen in all this experience, there is no surfeit of warmth, the presence of which quality it is which really makes the tragedy meaningful and endurable.

Retrospective

Gandhi and the Human Condition

KUMAR GALLERY

February 1965

Sundar Nagar and Shridharani Gallery, New Delhi

NEWSPAPER ARTICLE

A Painter who Shocks People

Times of India

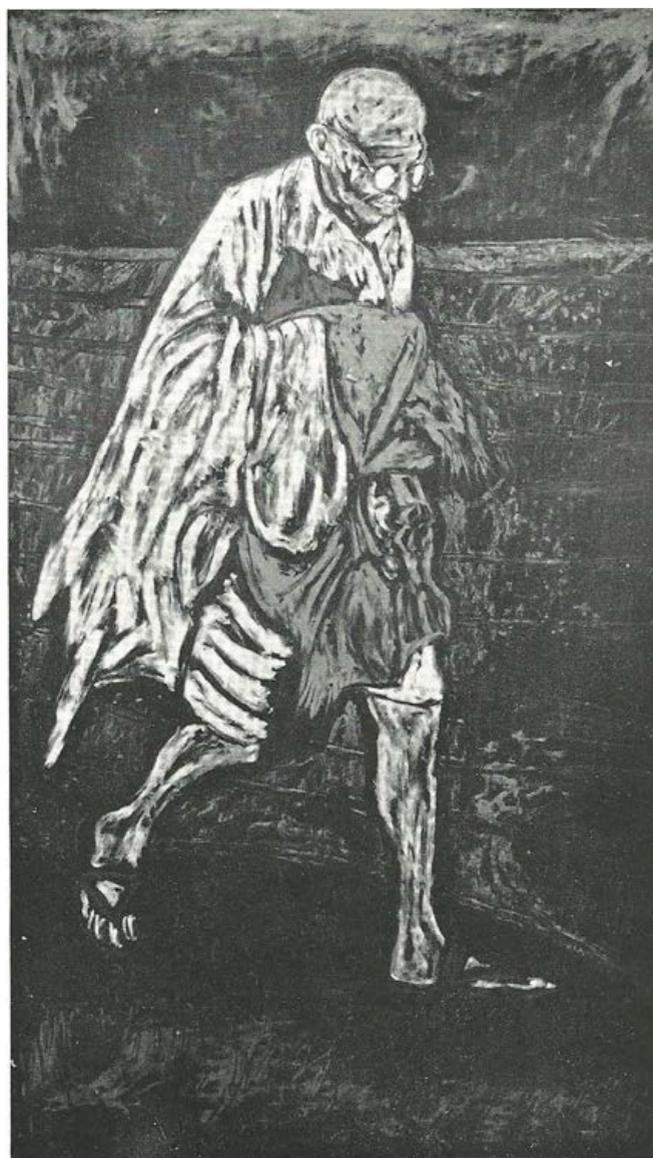
14 February 1965

As a painter Francis Newton Souza loves to shock people. This is his weakness. That people are so easily shocked by his treatment of the nude gives him a feeling of moral strength, probably. He thinks that he is exposing people.

Though the attack on our senses is bold and direct (Souza once said that a canvas is like a reptile, Souza attacks it when he paints), there is the inevitable by-product the stance of the exhibitionist of the showman who is muscling up to the wield a sledge hammer on a slimy slug.

By herself the female nude is Souza's particular brand of mania. She is fully nude, as in **"Nude Girl" [6]** or provocatively half undressed, as in **"Italian Girl" [7]**. There is a feline watchfulness about this particular female's eyes. Her mouth is sensuous, but it is not drawn sensually. As draughtsmanship the line is formal, firm and free. In such work the pin-up has been elevated to the level of the theatre poster, and Souza makes a subtle compromise between caricature and art expression.

This is not so with the other kind of Souza nude which is stanced to indicate amorous action or the recovery from amorous action, and which is supplied to our senses in the Souza-form capsule. In such works as **"Lovers" [5]**, **"Sitting Nude" [3]** and **"Reclining Nude" [8]**, the Souza mania becomes an apparition, a fateful and frenzied nemesis, full of lymph but not nymph like. She is the embodiment of the mortal coil. She is coiled with sex-springs and with tissues which remind its of "gives promise of pneumatic bliss" T. S. Eliot's phrase.



[1] *Portrait of Mahatma Gandhi*

Retrospective

Gandhi and the Human Condition

KUMAR GALLERY

February 1965

Sundar Nagar and Shridharani Gallery, New Delhi

(cont. from prev. page)

GOOD DRAUGHTSMAN

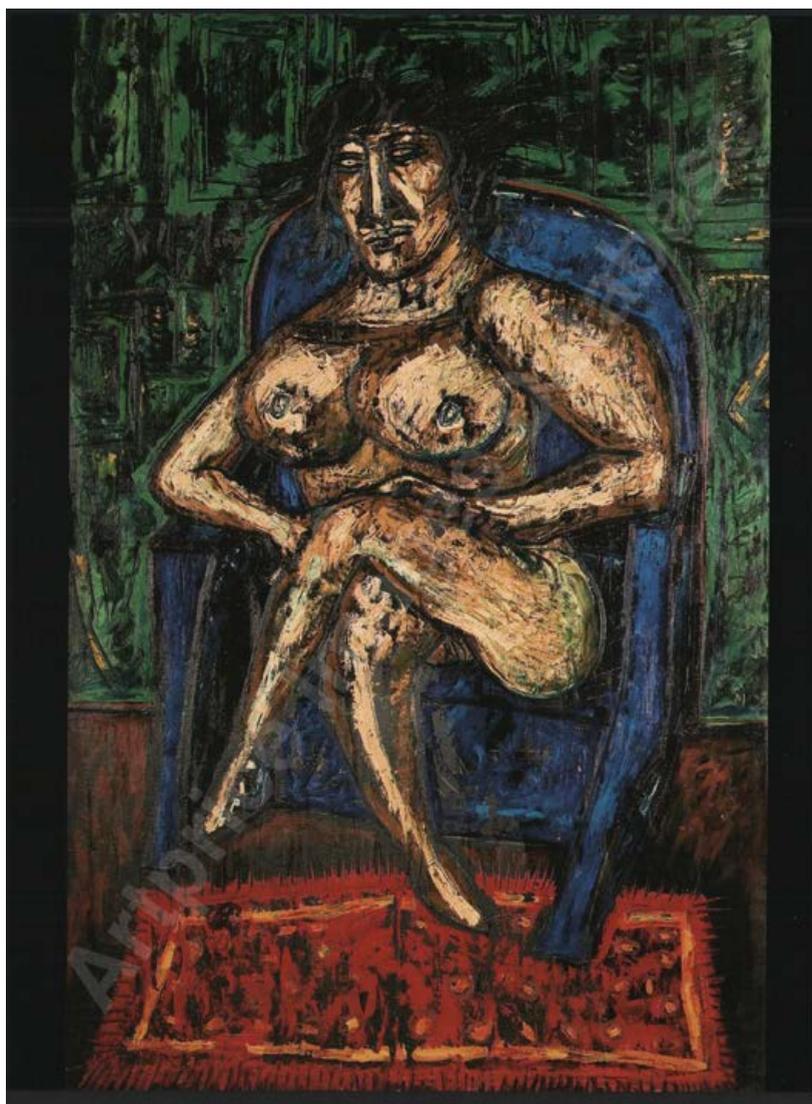
Souza is a good draughtsman; he is a bold and competent painter. His paint has a cruel stringency, and he piles sensation on sensation (unnecessarily, I believe). He does this when he is defeated in the search for an inner or spiritual structure. This happens when he has no theme but only a subject or a shell of a subject.

For instance, the **"Sitting Nude"** [3] is an apparition which is seated with crossed legs on a lush blue sofa. The sofa is placed over an equally lush red carpet. This horror fixes the spectator with a horrific eye.

"Nude on Sofa" [9] is even more provocative. The ordinary spectator no doubt gets the shock that Souza intends to transmit. This attitude, or that sex life at some level amounts to this kind of traffic. We are disturbed because Souza prostitutes the female figure. This is not the result of moral indignation. The bad

taste left in the mouth does not spring from the fact that the subject matter has been treated subjectively. It is Souza's objective as a painter that seems objectionable. Souza does not score over us, as he might think he does. He has merely placed very carefully the noughts in the game of naughts and crosses in his mind. The sensual man or the sensationalist in him has killed something of the humanist. For who can paint human figures without a sense of humanism? It is trite to tell us that dolls and goddesses have clay feet. We get to know that Souza is raking up muck, because of fascination or anger.

In contrast to this side, we have the Souza who is the painter of the **"Reclining Nude" [8]**. In this work the woman has been reduced to a symbol, a ferocious, frenzied dummy which can be inflated by pumping into a trailing gland or duct. This work is good. It is good not because of the literary quality. It is good on aesthetic grounds as well. An idea has been converted into an image.



[2] *Sitting Nude*

Retrospective

Gandhi and the Human Condition

KUMAR GALLERY

February 1965

Sundar Nagar and Shridharani Gallery, New Delhi

(cont. from prev. page)

By far the best work in this one-man show is a *wall-size painting called "Crucifixion"* [2]. *The Byzantine and the primitive meet in a vision which has a kind of apocalyptic fire. The streaming blood is animal. It sprouts hair. Freed from these trailing ropes of blood the Good and the Bad Thieves and the Saviour, all merit the equality of death. There is a passionate deposition from the cross. The Christ-cross is large, flat and obviously fit for the son of a carpenter. The sky rockets blue fire. The Virgin, in the blue of Mary's colour, is everyone's mother and everyone's maid.* This is an instance of the symbol not transfixed but transformed. The themes which obsess Souza find him a resolution in the sacrifice of a bachelor son before the eyes of a virgin mother. Nature triumphs over nature. And Ashoka-like trees in many wonderful shades of colour sprout from the rocks of Calvary. We have the feeling that Souza's perturbed spirit is at rest here.



[3] *Crucifixion* Unique in this work are the streaming, trailing ropes of hair-sprouting blood.

ARTIST'S DOCUMENT

F N Souza

List of selected solo exhibitions with handwritten annotations by F N Souza c.1990

1964	Grosvenor Gallery, London
1965	Retrospective, Shridharani Gallery and Kumar Gallery, New Delhi
1965	Taj Art Gallery, Bombay. Introduces Souza's Kalam

Review of Tantra Art

Published by Ravi Kumar, Kumar Gallery

F. N. SOUZA

1966

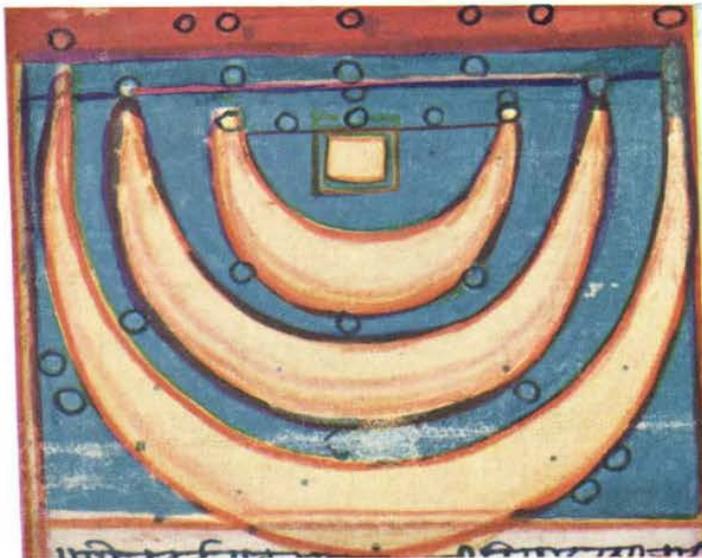
Studio International, Magazine, 1966

Tantra Art

A review article by F. N. Souza



Above *Manas-Chakra*, the eight divisions of the mind
Painting on cloth, 1769
Rajasthan



Facing *Brahmanda* Stone Banaras
Within the *Brahmanda* is the sound generating
the rhythms which sustain every form

Above *Koti-Chakra*, symbol of sound
Painting on cloth, 1769
Rajasthan

Ravi Kumar has published an incredible art book.* The pictures are very pretty, and when you look for parallels you will be absolutely astonished to find that parallels to pop art, op art, even Rothko and Mondrian were done some centuries ago, in India of all places. You will be saying again and again: 'It's all been done before' as you look through this amazing book. Unfortunately, the text is rather poor, and does not explain clearly and sufficiently what Tantric Art is really about.

Historical note: Tantrism began about the fifth century as a new and curious cult associated with fertility rites and worship of female deities. It became more widespread from the eighth century onwards. It was strongest in north east India, having close ties with Tibet, some of its ritual doubtless coming from Tibetan practices. Emphasis on the female energy of *Shakti* and mother goddess cults suggest that Tantrism was rooted in pre-Aryan culture, which is quite possible considering that it originated in non-Aryan parts. It claimed to be a simplification of vedic cults, and was anti-orthodox in that it was open to all castes as well as to women. Apparently Tantra not only opposed the rigours of Brahmanism, but also the strict puritanism of Buddhism. It originated in a conscious and deliberate opposition to orthodox Hindu ritual and the 'caste-iron' Brahmanical ordering of society. It reacted by indulging in forbidden practices such as drinking wine and eating meat. Also, as women were permitted within the sect, there was ritual fornication among castes, otherwise forbidden by the draconic Laws of Manu. The cult being what it was, secret meetings became necessary and the sect was denounced by orthodox Hindus and Buddhists for depravity.

Note on Tantric Art: There is little or no reference to Tantric Art by any of the well-known authorities on Indian Art. Coomaraswamy, Stella Kramrisch, Vincent Smith, Herman Goetz, E. W. Hevel and W. G. Archer do not mention it at all. The Pelican History of Art mentions Tantra about five times briefly, but erroneously classifies it with *Kali* a harridan goddess of skulls and death. Whereas the expression of Tantric Art is that of life on the level of creation, cosmic and sexual which is rendered as a mystical concept executed in figurative and

**Tantra Art* by Ajit Mookerjee, 160 pages, 58 colour plates, 36 illustrations in monochrome, published by Ravi Kumar, 42 avenue du Président-Kennedy, Paris 16e, £11 5s

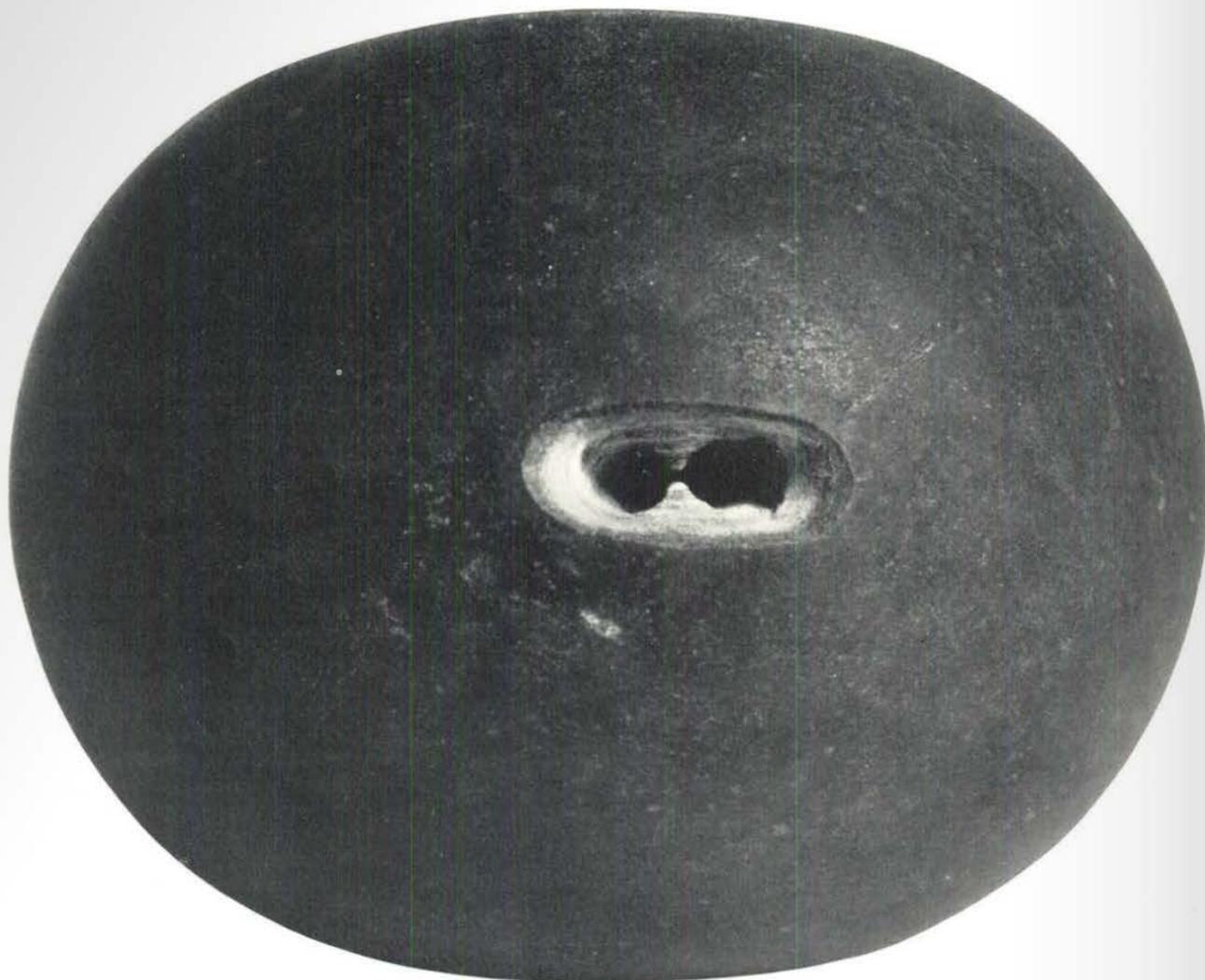
Review of *Tantra Art*

Published by Ravi Kumar, Kumar Gallery

F. N. SOUZA

1966

Studio International, Magazine, 1966



non-figurative imagery. Mr Ajit Mookerjee, the author of this book under review, claims that Tantra is made up of fifty sounds, each corresponding to a particular colour, and Tantric Art is more or less a reproduction of a sound in form and colour. I cannot fall in with this theory, and it has been attempted in Paris in the 1920's in a movement called Orphism, and before that, even by Goethe and Rimbaud. Such attempts are surely arbitrary and therefore fail. Because if you imagine the vowel A to be of a yellow colour, I can equally imagine it to be blue.

I got some of my historical details on Tantrism from *A History of India* by Romila Thapar and some of the best information I could find on Tantric Art itself was in an old volume of 'Indian Art and Letters', in an article by Sir John Woodruff: *The Psychology of Hindu Religious Ritual*, published in 1925. I also found that Mulk Raj Anand in his *Hindu View of Art* (1957) quotes from this article at length.

Indian mystics believe that thoughts and sounds are material and can be transmuted into matter: syllables

have corresponding colours according to the vibration of the hue. This sound-form system of Tantric Art can perhaps be better understood from what Dr Timothy Leary, in a recent interview in *Playboy* (September 1966) described as the effect of LSD 25 while listening to music: 'You not only hear but *see* the music emerging from the speaker system—like dancing particles, like squirming curls of toothpaste. You actually see the sound, in multicoloured patterns while you're hearing it. At the same time, you *are* the sound, you are the note, you are the string of the violin or the piano. And everyone of your organs is pulsating and having orgasms in rhythm with it.' (Dr Leary describes himself as a Hindu, but this could hardly be possible because it would create the problem of providing him with an appropriate caste, and caste depends entirely on birth.)

Tantra is a vedantic logic that mind and matter, e.g. thought and form, are one: and that mind is always an object, that is to say, there is no vacuous mind. It is further held that the mind is not a conscious mental entity, but an unconscious, quasi-material force, having

Review of *Tantra Art*

Published by Ravi Kumar, Kumar Gallery

F. N. SOUZA

1966

Studio International, Magazine, 1966



Above:
Symbol of Devi
Stone, c. sixteenth century
Jammu-Kashmir
Photo: Archaeological Survey of India

Facing:
Salagrama, or Cosmic Moon
Stone
Banaras

Review of Tantra Art

Published by Ravi Kumar, Kumar Gallery

F. N. SOUZA

1966

Studio International, Magazine, 1966

The Universe and the Terrestrial Atmospheres: Painting, c. 1800 Rajasthan
The red background signifies spatial mass consisting of atomic particles



the power to limit itself, i.e. to assume the habits and forms of the environment into which it is put, and, to the extent of such limited experience, to *appear* to be unconscious of its limitations. In apprehending things the mind takes the forms of the objects apprehended and builds up a world, the reality of which it dogmatically assumes and never questions. 'By meditation on anything as *Self*, one becomes that thing,' says the Gandharva Tantra. Which reminds me of one of the first psychedelic or mind-manifesting expressions uttered under mescaline by Henri Michaux. 'I put an apple on the table; then I put myself into the apple: *Quelle tranquillité*.' This psychological truth is stated by the Tantra: 'The mind must have an object which again shapes the mind.' The *sadhaka* (worshipper) meditates on and worships that. Sincere and prolonged efforts bring about a transformation of the worshipper into a likeness of the divinity worshipped. For just as he who is always thinking bad thoughts becomes bad, so he who thinks divine thoughts becomes 'divine' himself. The Chhandogya Upanishad says: 'As a man thinks, that he becomes'. A man can thus shape his mind for good or bad. The transformation of the worshipper to Godhead is commenced in *sadhana* (ritual worship) and completed in *yoga* (union). When a unitary consciousness in which ecstasy (*samadhi*) or transcendent experience is achieved, the difference between worshipper and the worshipped ceases. Since divinity cannot be seized by the mind anymore than air can be hung on a hook, it becomes necessary to have something placed before you as an object of devotion. This may be an external object or even a mental image.

The rite is called 'gross' or 'subtle' according to the quality of the object, external or mental. But the word 'gross' does not mean coarse. It is merely used as a contrast to the word 'subtle'. Yet there is an important difference between the two modes of worship: the grossest is that in which there is no call upon the imagination, such as worship before realistic images made of three dimensions, plates 57, 58, and 61. Less so are flat paintings rendered in two dimensions, such as the frontispiece, plates 12-30, plate 43, plates 45-48, and the astonishing flat paintings, plates 53 and 95. Then come the emblems such as the *shalagrama* stones, plates 34, 35, 44 and 66, and lastly the *yantra* which is a symbolic diagram of a prayer verse (*mantra*), itself a geometrical formula for each god of the Hindu pantheon, plates 7 and 8. In other words, a *yantra* is a diagrammatic presentation of a divinity, and *mantra* is its sound-expression. The former is the body of the latter.

Mr Mookerjee explains that Tantra is derived from the Sanskrit root *Tan* meaning to expand. But Tantra is combined with *mantra* and *yantra* in a scheme forming a sort of trinity, therefore expanding knowledge combining the three. *Mantra* is a prayer, a liturgy of life-transforming words which, to be effective, must be actually heard from the mouth of the *guru* or spiritual preceptor. The nearest analogy is transubstantiation, when a Roman Catholic priest consecrates the host by whispering into it the words of Christ: "This is My Body."

A *yantra* is a pattern or form either carved or painted, which is supposed to be the exact likeness of a particular

Review of *Tantra Art*

Published by Ravi Kumar, Kumar Gallery

F. N. SOUZA

1966

Studio International, Magazine, 1966

mantra, just as the host changes into 'the exact likeness' of the Body and Blood of Christ in Mass. *Mantras* are grouped in a definite order to reveal the pattern of thought forces. Hidden in them are secret guides which unfold visionary images. The astonishing pictures in this book are depictions of these hidden images.

V. S. Naipaul, in his grim book on India, *An Area of Darkness*, says: 'Nearly every Indian who writes on Indian Art feels bound to quote from the writings of European admirers. Indian Art has still to be compared with European; and the British accusation that no Indian could have built the Taj Mahal has still to be rejected as a slander. Where there has been no European admiration there is neglect.'

This is quite true, for the discovery of the Indian past was largely the work of Jesuits in India, and of Europeans employed by the East India Company. This book on Tantric Art, however, seems to be the exception to Mr Naipaul's criticism, as this field of Indian Art has so far not found many European admirers. So this book, the joint product of an Indian scholar and collector and an enterprising firm of Indian Art dealers, the Kumar Galleries run by the Kumar brothers, will no doubt, on publication, attract European (and American) as well as Indian admirers.

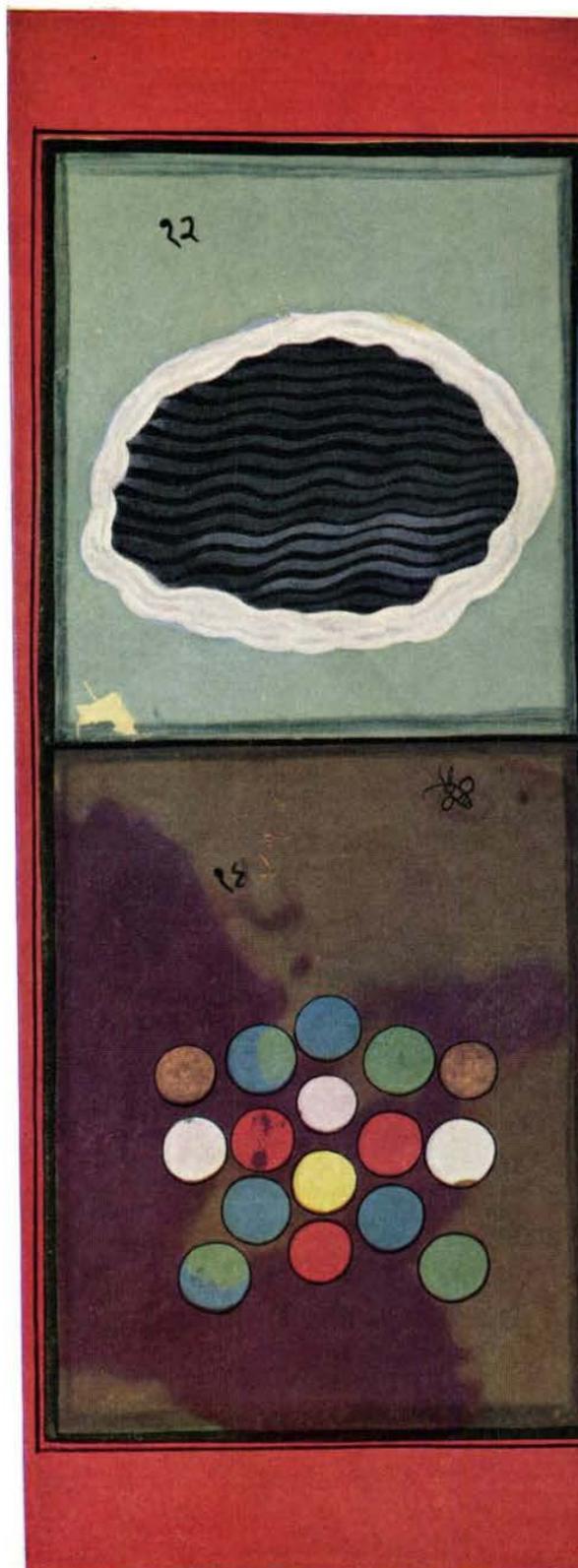
Admiration and patronage of the Arts is a European interest both in aesthetic and monetary terms. Indians have never come to regard art with admiration. Nor have they regarded it as good investment. Usually quick to imitate, they have never, until in recent years, invested in art, mainly because it would mean spending money on something of doubtful value.

I criticized the text earlier on. I find it not only poor but inadvertently comic. The plates are another matter, and if the book is worth anything at all it is because of the plates.

Beautifully printed, these pictures are bound to astonish the Western art world, because they are so relevant to the present art scene. A Rothko from Rajasthan done in the nineteenth century, plate 95. A painting of atoms done in Rajasthan in the eighteenth century, plate 12. A Hard Edge painting more beautiful than any Hard Edge painting I have seen in the West, done in Rajasthan in the eighteenth century, plate 20. Two Martin Bradleys painted on cloth in Rajasthan in 1769, plates 47 and 48. A Bascholi stone goddess, plate 44, done incredibly in a nonfigurative iconography, in fact a sixteenth-century sculpture in abstract-cubism. A stone carving, Cosmic Moon, plate 35, done by a Banaras Barbara Hepworth and plate 34, a Banaras Brancusi. And plates 79 and 80 are incredible discs done by an unknown eighteenth century Marcel Duchamp from Jaipur, who is better than his contemporary parallel. Plates 40 and 53 are eighteenth century Rajasthan Picassos and Mondrians. And examples of Pop art in plates 77, 83, 86, 87, 89, and 94 are all done unbelievably more than a hundred years ago.

The author concludes: 'It is not astonishing that many great Indian artists finally become saints.' After seeing this book, it will be difficult for any of us to hope to achieve this kind of sanctity, whatever it may be. □

The Primordial Waters
Painting, probably 18th century Rajasthan



Greetings to Kumar from New York

F. N. SOUZA

1968
Souza sends the Kumar family a photo montage after his move from London to New York



Retrospective I

KUMAR GALLERY

October 1999

Sundar Nagar, New Delhi



PHOTOGRAPH

Souza and the Kumars

(L-R) Praveen Kumar, Kamal Kumari, Sunit Kumar, Virendra Kumar, and Vinit Kumar
at Kumar Gallery's Retrospective I, 1999

Millenium Party

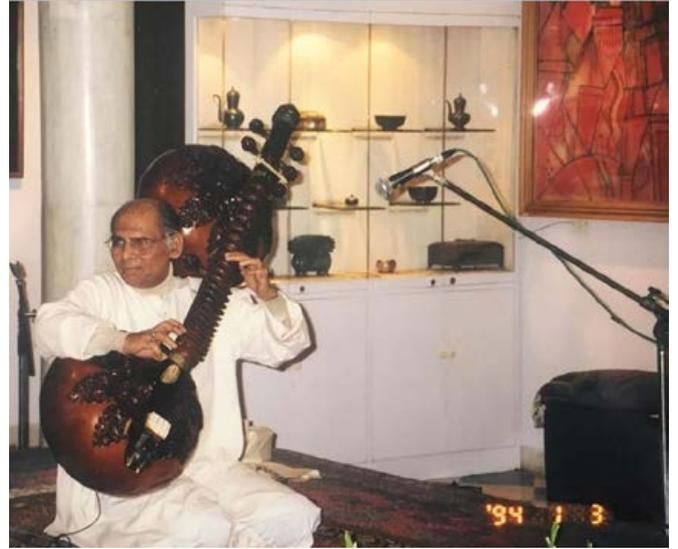
KUMAR FAMILY

December 31, 1999

Kumar Family Home, New Delhi



Sunit Kumar and F N Souza

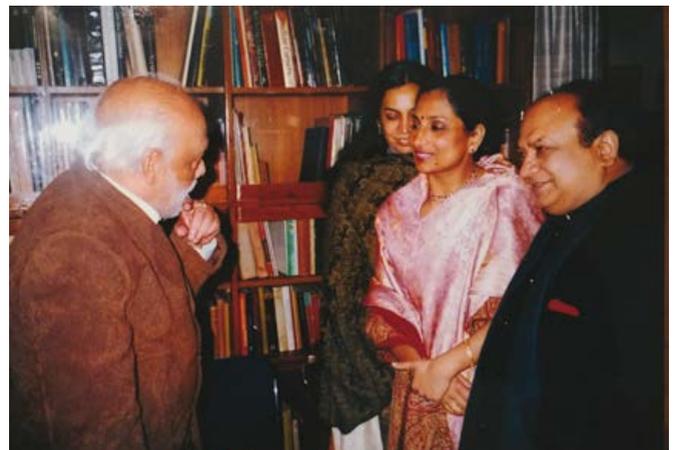


Ustad Asad Ali Khan
on Rudra Veena with
Souza's painting *Red
Moon* behind him



Kumar Family Home

(L-R)
F N Souza, Arpana Caur,
Bina Jain, and Navin Kumar



Retrospective II

KUMAR GALLERY

October 2000
Sundar Nagar, New Delhi

NEWSPAPER ARTICLE

Gayatri Sinha
Paintings Bristling with Energy
The Hindu, 20 Oct 2000



catalogue, especially the most expansive part of transposing an exhibition. The publishing of art books which looked to my a few years ago is now coincident with hard-nosed realism. If an artist wants a catalogue he now has to directly participate in the costs of production. For the artist, however, this is a poor time for documentation in financial terms. Ironically, government agencies like the Lalit Kala Akademi with their national exhibitions, whose buying power and prize facilities were viewed as indications by the power of the market, are now in no position to induce that lagging bottom line.

Paintings bristling with energy
Some of these aspects became prominent at the ongoing show of Francis Newton Souza at Kumar Gallery—the second annual retrospective of an kind mounted at the gallery. Kumar, the Director of Arts, has been a keen collector of Souza for nearly five decades. The fact that he is painting several works from his nearly 150-strong Souza collection is very in itself significant. Kumar began to collect Souza in the final period in London, nearly a decade after the artist had left the Country. The earliest painting, 'The Professor' (1945), is a gentle Indian palette of orange and green, then back to Souza's redolent color period. In the light of the figure, there is already a hint of the artist's style and observation that was to follow.

NEWSPAPER ARTICLE

Uma Nair
Return of the Firebrand Artist
The Asian Age, 6 Oct 2000



RETURN OF THE FIREBRAND ARTIST
BY UMA NAIR
It's not often that artist like F.N. Souza come to Delhi all the way from New York. Last year, when Souza was in the city, he spoke about music, art and nature and the place we humans have in it. He was with his long-time friend and collector Virendra Kumar and the Souza who opened up that night was nothing short of amusing and poised. "You believe in God, don't you?" he asked with rock solemnity. "I am a different; I do not believe in God, I laugh at God. I believe in nature. What lives forever is not God, it is nature. It is nature that is continuous. It is nature that sustains us anywhere and everywhere. It is nature that sustains my economy, my life, my colors, even the affairs I have with women."

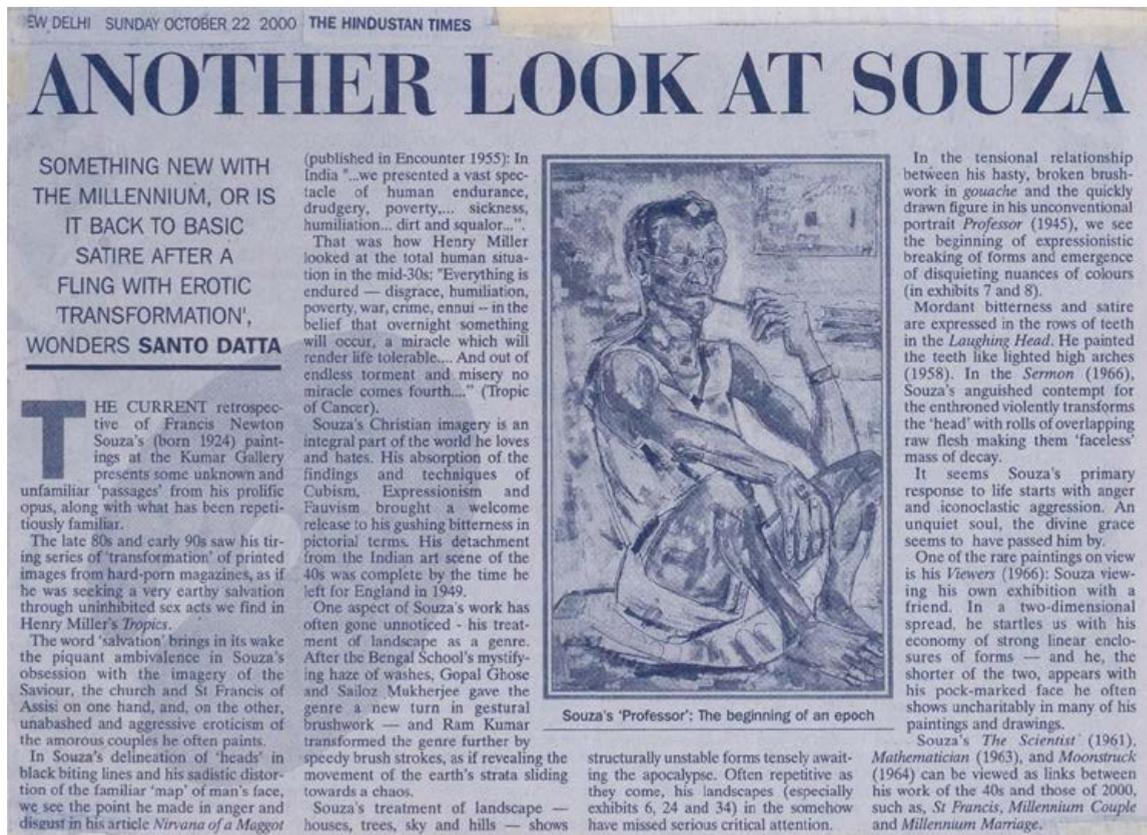
Souza proved that even if he did not love the Gods, he not only loved life but was an animated speaker of the erotic impulse. Now, when a retrospective collection of his works at the Kumar Gallery, his words swing back and forth and so do his works that span all the way from 1949 to 2000. In an astonishing series that reflects the brilliance in the rainbow-possessed painter, you see the movement of phases and the ideological definitions that made Souza the firebrand that he was. Six landscapes in the show reflect his love for nature; but this Wordsworth is not soft and gentle, he is instead harsh and imposing. While one work in the Cuban phase goes back to 1958, the other has been done in 1969; both of them are challenging and exhilarating; both of them speak of the openness of posture and the unshelved nature of the grand old man. The contrast here is both of figurative works and landscapes; while at times you can feel the pulse of the painter you can also admire the raw and visceral responses that throbb and thrive in him. While the landscapes reflect an eternally curious mind which borders on the scientific edge of curiosity, the figurative pieces with an unadorned certainty that is Souza's alone.

every stroke, every scratch and every tone in colour is a celebration of the human form; the distortion of the romantic music and the wildness of colour as applied in colour. His favorite line of quotes is Proverbs and maxims are infallible. I take them and twist them around. Years ago when he wrote about art and his work he said, "I hate the smell of paint. Painting for me is not beautiful. It is as ugly as a rapist. I attack it." And when you look at all the Souza in this show, he compels you to become a part of his drastic attack. He forces you to understand the nature of his impulse and his view of the world that can come off and come on in his and pieces. When he looks at the human form, he presents the Rorschach-like variations of the thickened line; he also presents the razor-edged rawness of intent that can never belong to romantic melancholia, and the split open end of a prophet who walks the road of distortion. Sometimes when you look at all the works you realize that this artist is full of contradictions and he is passionate about them; at the same time he says that he is purely scientific. In his thought process, that is why for him the paradoxical contrasts of destruction and creation must exist side by side. Would it be true to say that painting for Souza is an act of liberation? Maybe to liberation, one must also add the clash of several emotions that must be translated onto the canvas that he partakes of. So many contrasts, so many inherent opposite forces that look at tendencies that would never be adjacent; you have erosiveness and you have tenderness; you have satire and you have tragedy; you have the soft soothing tranquility of composer and you also have the throbbing urgency of aggression. For him, art is modern when it does not imitate. He hates the Bengal School; according to him, the Bengal school knew nothing about drawing or colour; it was moribund! So radical was he that he got thrown out of J.J. School Of Art. However, poetic justice prevailed: he learnt hard and he learnt early that the happiest thing in life was freedom. From all the shackles imposed by society it was important to make one's own track.

No work in the show is simple, soothing or humble. For him, art is modern when it does not imitate. He hates the Bengal School; according to him, the Bengal school knew nothing about drawing or colour; it was moribund! So radical was he that he got thrown out of J.J. School Of Art. However, poetic justice prevailed: he learnt hard and he learnt early that the happiest thing in life was freedom. From all the shackles imposed by society it was important to make one's own track. He says that he was educated in Mumbai which was once "Victorian than Victoria". However, the Byzantine tradition echoes through this old painter's works; the Catholic church's architecture is part of his blood and his thought process; the mastery quality surfaces as if to mock at him and say: I live in your work if you see it! The show provokes the painter who had hot blood running through his veins; it also tells us about the intuitive understanding of tragedy and the sensual feel of an artist's identity sought through the break effectiveness of a modern painter who has become a seer. This show cannot be missed!

NEWSPAPER ARTICLE

Santo Datta
Another Look at Souza
The Hindustan Times, 22 Oct 2000



NEW DELHI SUNDAY OCTOBER 22 2000 THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

ANOTHER LOOK AT SOUZA

SOMETHING NEW WITH THE MILLENNIUM, OR IS IT BACK TO BASIC SATIRE AFTER A FLING WITH EROTIC TRANSFORMATION, WONDERS SANTO DATTA

THE CURRENT retrospective of Francis Newton Souza's (born 1924) paintings at the Kumar Gallery presents some unknown and unfamiliar passages from his prolific opus, along with what has been repetitiously familiar. The late 80s and early 90s saw his tiring series of 'transformation' of printed images from hard-porn magazines, as if he was seeking a very earthly salvation through uninhibited sex acts we find in Henry Miller's *Tropics*. The word 'salvation' brings in its wake the piquant ambivalence in Souza's obsession with the imagery of the Saviour, the church and St Francis of Assisi on one hand, and, on the other, unabashed and aggressive criticism of the amorous couples he often paints. In Souza's delineation of 'heads' in black biting lines and his sadistic distortion of the familiar 'map' of man's face, we see the point he made in anger and disgust in his article *Nirvana of a Maggot*

(published in *Encounter* 1955): In India "...we presented a vast spectacle of human endurance, drudgery, poverty, sickness, humiliation... dirt and squalor...". That was how Henry Miller looked at the total human situation in the mid-30s: "Everything is endured — disgrace, humiliation, poverty, war, crime, ennu — in the belief that overnight something will occur, a miracle which will render life tolerable... And out of endless torment and misery no miracle comes fourth..." (Tropic of Cancer). Souza's Christian imagery is an integral part of the world he loves and hates. His absorption of the findings and techniques of Cubism, Expressionism and Fauvism brought a welcome release to his gushing bitterness in pictorial terms. His detachment from the Indian art scene of the 40s was complete by the time he left for England in 1949. One aspect of Souza's work has often gone unnoticed — his treatment of landscape as a genre. After the Bengal School's mystifying haze of washes, Gopal Ghose and Sailoz Mukherjee gave the genre a new turn in gestural brushwork — and Ram Kumar transformed the genre further by speedy brush strokes, as if revealing the movement of the earth's strata sliding towards a chaos. Souza's treatment of landscape — houses, trees, sky and hills — shows



Souza's 'Professor': The beginning of an epoch

In the tentional relationship between his hasty, broken brushwork in *gouache* and the quickly drawn figure in his unconventional portrait *Professor* (1945), we see the beginning of expressionistic breaking of forms and emergence of disquieting nuances of colours (in exhibits 7 and 8). Mordant bitterness and satire are expressed in the rows of teeth in the *Laughing Head*. He painted the teeth like lighted high arches (1958). In the *Sermon* (1966), Souza's anguished contempt for the enthroned violently transforms the 'head' with rolls of overlapping raw flesh making them 'faceless' mass of decay. It seems Souza's primary response to life starts with anger and iconoclastic aggression. An unquiet soul, the divine grace seems to have passed him by. One of the rare paintings on view is his *Vewers* (1966): Souza viewing his own exhibition with a friend. In a two-dimensional spread, he startles us with his economy of strong linear enclosures of forms — and he, the shorter of the two, appears with his pock-marked face he often shows uncharitably in many of his paintings and drawings. Souza's *The Scientist* (1961), *Mathematician* (1963), and *Moonstruck* (1964) can be viewed as links between his work of the 40s and those of 2000, such as, *St Francis, Millennium Couple* and *Millennium Marriage*.

Retrospective III

KUMAR GALLERY

December 2001
Sundar Nagar, New Delhi

NEWSPAPER ARTICLE

Rana A. Siddiqui
A rebellious melange of abstract and realism
Tribune, 21 December 2001

4 FRIDAY, DECEMBER 21, 2001

NCR Tribune

A rebellious melange of abstract and realism

RANA A SIDDIQUI

Very few artists call a spade a spade, or paint a spade a spade, if you will. Francis Newton Souza has become popular in Delhi because of his blunt style of painting.

Born in the land of scenic beauty, Goa in 1924, Souza is

few things, namely, Christ, women, houses and huts. Many of his artwork shows Christ being tortured.

His paintings have a mix of abstract and realism in human forms. The Christ paintings are a welcome change, done suitably in hues of black, brown and green. We also find various huts and townscape in his paintings.

Blunt and clear as he is, he often paints Saint Assisi in hues of black and yellow.

The artist tries to teach no moral lesson. In fact, he probably attempts to hint at the suffocation, moral and societal degradation, captured well in his houses as in Indian joggis with Indian ink and pen; unattractive 'Fall' landscape, and 'Friends at Pub' and 'Priest'.

Though at times, he sits pretty and cool. So his 'Head in blue' is a mix of bright and dark shades, his blue moon (gouache on paper) is cool, overseeing various bright buildings and trees of unnatural colours like yellow and black. Through such bright houses, lanes and towers, this artist travels to his dreamland. He owes his allegiance to the small catholic enclave he lived in.

That's why we find recurring houses, townscapes, priests and Byzantine church imagery in his paintings. However blunt, his red moon is impressive. It lends true colour to the entire environs of the city.

His 'Still life with vessels' is a play with wineglasses, containers of various shapes and



Red Moon, 1966, oil on canvas

sizes. The interplay of demerit

orange shades with blue/red seems to be the status of mind when wine is consumed. Interestingly, various figures of humans, homes and windows peep through these glasses, making them all the more symbolic.

Surprisingly, all his paintings adorn the walls of Kumar Gallery at Sainik Farms—a place far from the main city. Why keeping the artist's admirers away from his paintings? "Because of security reasons. These paintings are priceless and private collections.

Some of them are borrowed from close friends, and are not for sale. These cannot be exhibited in unsafe places," says Mr Virendra Kumar Jain, the gallery owner.

But, despite being at such a place, Souza's admirers are regularly coming to visit the gallery, says a visibly satisfied Vinit Kumar Jain, the Director of the gallery. The exhibition is on view till December 22.



Still Life with Vessels, 1962, oil on canvas

also a founder of Progressive Artists Group, Mumbai (1947). Winner of Guggenheim International Award (1947) and Kalidasa Samana (1998-99), the artist is known for his maverick paintings.

His works of early fifties to the sixties are showing at Kumar Gallery, Sainik Farms.

Souza's figures are too explicit, specifically when it comes to portray a female form. Like Picasso, he seems to know a woman well.

Being favourably inclined towards the Ajanta Alora female figures, his women also get the similar obsession in his sketches and colours. You cannot dare see them eye to eye. They are too bold, unabashed.

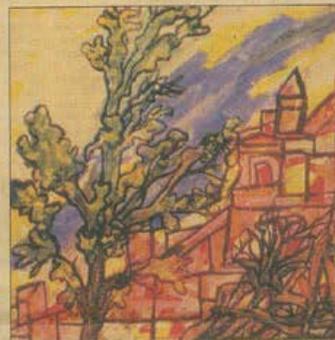
The artist is obsessed with a

The artist often reacts with emphasis in his paintings. He is even violent. He is "sticking to his guns and not donning the mask of dubious respectability," says eminent art critic Keshav Mailil.

He proves it through his NP (oil on canvas), a man with an astroeratic wear and a disfigured face in dark and bright shades. The meaning is conveyed well.

The artist also depicts forcefully that most well-beeled people are of dubious persons—do I trust them!

He even says that he does not like painting. In his autobiographical statements, Words and Lines, he says, "Painting for me is not beautiful. It is as ugly as a renick. I attack it."



House on the River, 1991, acrylic on paper

A Homage to Souza

KUMAR GALLERY

April 2000

Sainik Farms, New Delhi

INVITATION

to a viewing of Souza's selected works at Kumar Gallery, Sainik Farms

Homage to the pioneering Indian modernist

Francis Newton Souza

12th April 1924 - 28th March 2002

*Directors of Kumar Gallery
request your presence at a viewing of
Souza's selected works*

On Tuesday 9th April 2002 at 7 p.m.

at

Kumar Gallery

165 A, Western Avenue Sainik Farms, New Delhi-110062

Souza, the modernist, the man and more

One of the best known painters of the 20th Century, F.N. Souza passed away this past week. GAYATRI SINHA put together a tribute...

Francis Newton Souza — 1924-2002.

FOR SEVERAL decades now, Indian art has been happy to regard Francis Newton Souza as famous and terrible. In his life as in his work, he was seen to function with a reckless fearlessness. And in general perception, if Souza resembled the premier 20th Century modernist, Picasso, it was perhaps more on account of his absolute freedom from doubt than in his artistic formulations.

Souza died of a massive heart attack in Mumbai this past week, barely weeks after he showed with Rajiv Pathani in a two-person show in Mumbai. In his passing, modernism in India has lost perhaps its most uncompromising proponent. Any Indian visitor to the Tate Modern gallery in London would be proud to see on view Souza's image of Christ. It was typical of Souza's paintings of the central Christian icon — beheading and distorted in thick dark impasto paint. Arguably, Souza entered the hallowed chambers of the Tate over and above any other Indian because he had the right credentials as an internationalist. He was born in a Portuguese Goan family and had lived abroad since the late 1940s, living subsequently in London and New York, experiencing first hand Western art trends that so many of his compatriots only saw in reproduction in the American library.

For the same reason, Souza stands somewhat apart from the Indian mainstream. In the main his large body of work ignored issues of indignation and the debates in the 1950s and 60s around a national art. As he said, "I express myself freely in paint in order to exist. I paint what I want, what I like, what I feel". His position vis-à-vis his subject matter was frequently antagonistic. In fact, Souza's vitriolic depictions of society do not have a comparison in Indian art — his fellow artists who deal with the human figure extensively are much more celebratory — M. F. Husain — or humane — Krishna Khanna. In that sense, Souza's modernism was built on the plank of a more equitable world view and just social order, that drew from a genuine socialism even a broadly left-winged social stuper.

Souza assumed an uninteresting position fairly early. In an episode that has assumed almost mythic proportions, he was expelled from the El School of Art in 1945. A few years later he had founded with a small number of like-minded artists the Progressive Artists Group, which aggressively challenged the legacy of the Bengal school. Souza's early



F. N. Souza... a loss for modernists. — Pic by Vinodra Kumar.



Some of the works of Souza displayed at Kumar Gallery.



Some of the works of Souza displayed at Kumar Gallery.

paintings bearing titles like "After Work the Whole Day in the Fields We have no time to eat" had a didactic edge that mutated and gained accretions with the passage of time, accretions that owe as much to Rousseauque icons as much as to the questioning spirit of modernism.

Yet even over a period of five decades, the spirit informing his work held in a kind of a state of supreme functionality. In the damned human condition the only pleasure is a voyeuristic exposure of the brutally exposed female body, or else a frantic animal coupling that allays anxiety or lastly in the period of the belief act. In fact, Souza's tone of

chastisement, his high moral ground in depicting the powers that corrupt, like the clergy, the capitalist and so on, come a cropper when it comes to his depiction of women. Of course there are some quiet, even dignified nudes. But nobody who is familiar with Souza's work comes away with the searing memory of female images so violent that even the act of viewing appears like a transgression.

As he said, famously — "the brute force of an expressionist painting of a large distorted, suggestive naked lady can overwhelm the bravest abstract painting — no doubt about it — because humans will be humans and sadism in sport, in the movies, in theatre is where the meat is and the pleasure". That is not however the only way in which he will be remembered. Souza worked for over five decades with an extraordinary energy bringing a pulsating vitality to his still life, landscapes, his Christian images and, of course, his portraits. Like Picasso, Souza's subject matter is fairly conventional —

with a predictable virility. Souza's style, an emboldened line, and highly disengaged disorientation enabled this and has been variously described. Writing on him in The New Statesman (1987), David Sylvester said that Souza was unique among Indian artists in striking a balance between Picasso and Indian bazaar painting. If that sounds oddly inaccurate, Geetha Kapur comes closer to the truth when she says that Souza "uses the line like an armature for an effigy and achieves his purpose remarkably acting as a contemporary 'exorcist' — in the essay 'Mid Century Irruptions from When was Modernism'". Souza was given to philosophical enquiry; in the last two decades he made a case for hedonism as the ideal philosophy and closer to his death, he argued about the distance between one and two. His sudden death will force assessments of his work, and hopefully an understanding of his influence on Indian art, which may ensue if not in style then at least in volume.

NEWSPAPER ARTICLE

Gayatri Sinha

Souza, the modernist, the man, and more

The Hindu, 5 Apr 2002

An article paying tribute to F. N. Souza after his passing

A Tribute to F N Souza

KUMAR GALLERY

January 2005

Sundar Nagar, New Delhi



PHOTOGRAPH

The Kumars

(L-R) Sunit, Vinit, Praveen, Virendra, Kamal, Ravi, Pradeep, Navin

100 Years of Souza

KUMAR GALLERY

April 2024

Sainik Farms, New Delhi



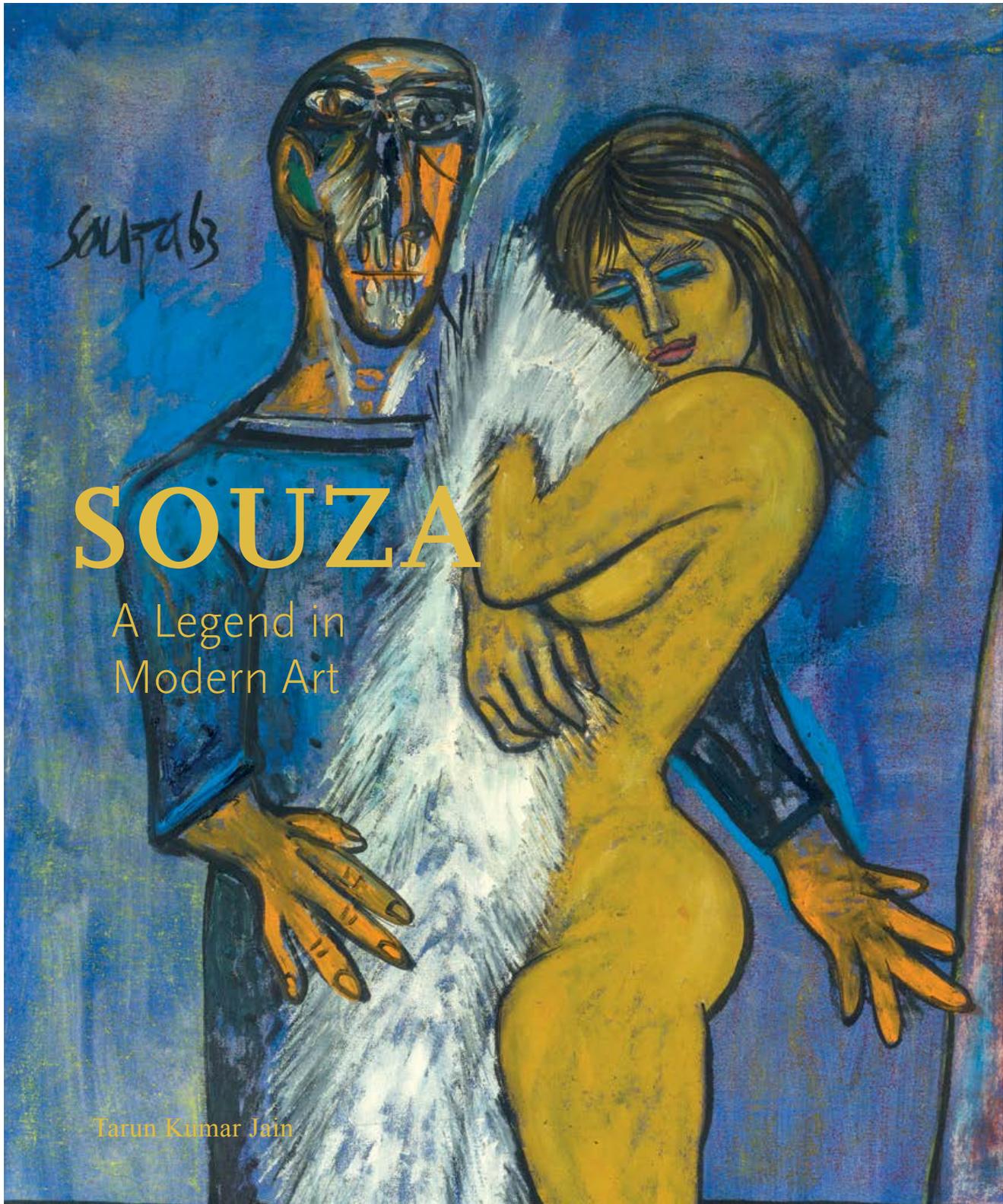
INSTALLATION VIEW

100 Years of Souza

KUMAR GALLERY

April 2024

Sainik Farms, New Delhi



PUBLICATION

Tarun Kumar Jain, Kumar Gallery
Souza: A Legend in Modern Art

A commemoration of Francis Newton Souza's birth centenary, and 63 years of shared history between F. N. Souza and the Kumar family

F N Souza: The London Years

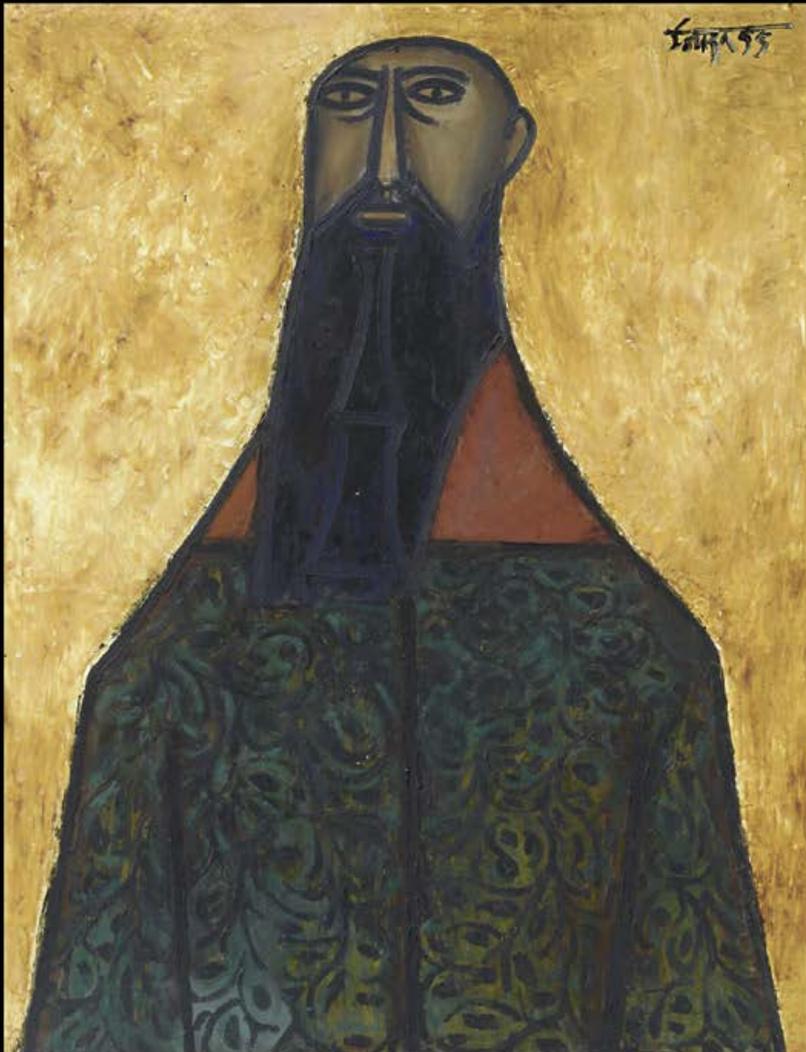
Masterworks from the Collection of Navin Kumar

CHRISTIE'S

September 2024

Rockefeller Center, New York

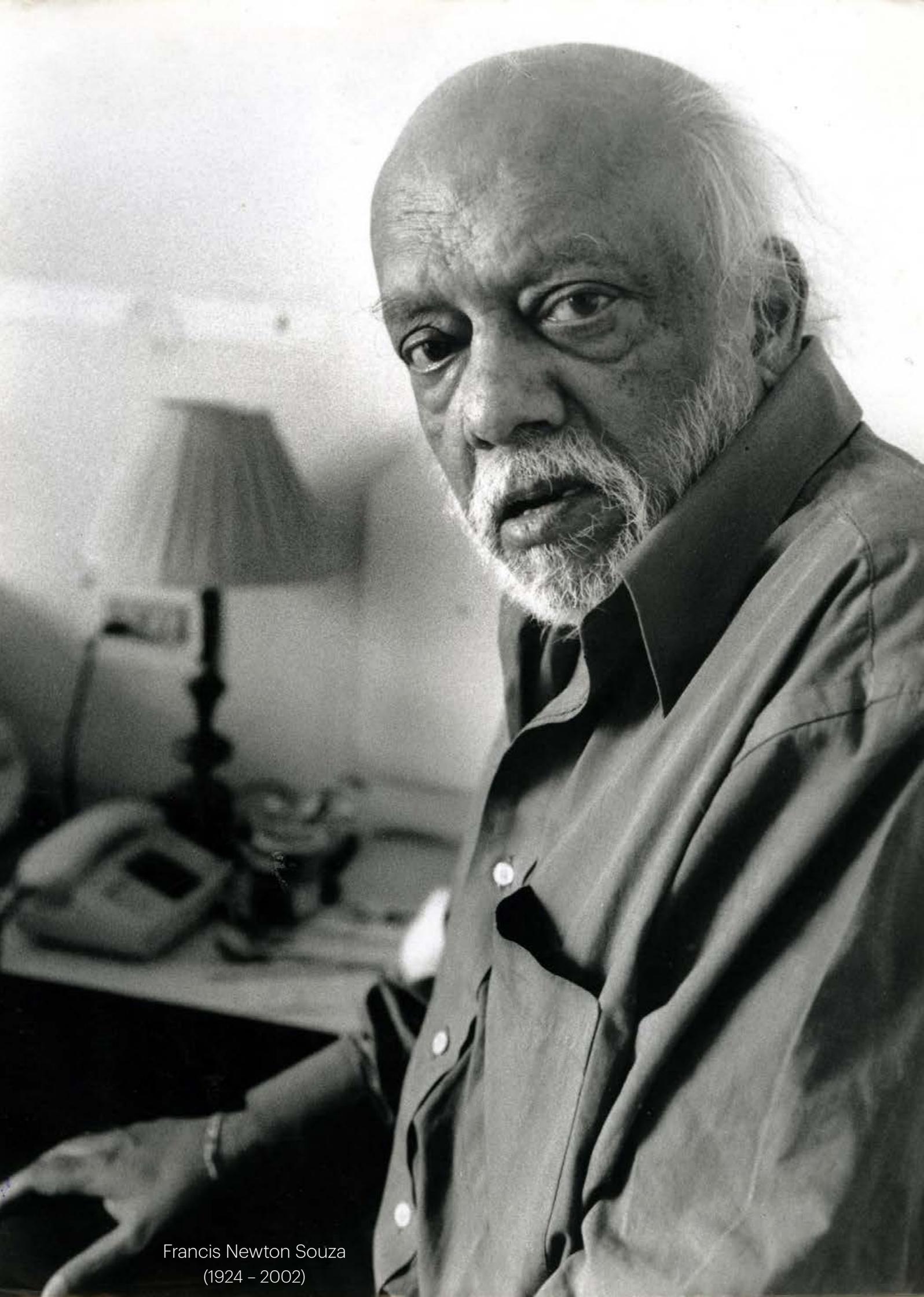
CHRISTIE'S



Francis Newton Souza: The London Years
Masterworks from the Collection of Navin Kumar

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Francis Newton Souza
(1924 - 2002)