

Manu Parekh 60 Years Of Selected Works at the NGMA Mumbai Major retrospective opens with accompanying book



Banaras Landscape VII. Photo courtesy of the artist, Art & Soul gallery and NGMA, Mumbai

February 2018: Art & Soul Gallery, Mumbai is pleased to present the retrospective **Manu Parekh 60 Years of Selected Works** with over 150 works at the **National Gallery of Modern Art, Mumbai (NGMA)** along with an accompanying book of the same title in collaboration with Ministry of Culture, Government of India. The preview of the exhibition is on **12 March 2018 at 6pm** and the exhibition will run until 15 April 2018.

Manu Parekh is one of India's most inventive painters. His early work explored the relationship between man and nature, which according to him was an energetic link that had to be celebrated. Since then, contradictions have formed the basis of his artistic practice, no matter the subject or genre of his works. Polemics have always intrigued Manu Parekh – the energy of the organic form and the inherent sexuality within these forms are intangible elements in his works. His paintings provoke viewers to take notice of the world around them through the emotion, pain and anguish expressed in the subjects of his paintings. His colors and forms exude a volatile energy that can barely be contained within the confines of the canvas, and become an extension of his personality.

“This exhibition is the first comprehensive survey of artworks spanning nearly six decades of a long creative career that demonstrates the depth and diversity of Parekh's practice. For this exhibition, the artist presents key series entitled Early Works, Rituals & Abstract, Animals, Still Life, Heads and Banaras Landscape. This show also includes a collection of drawings that illustrate his creative process. Manu Parekh is an important modernist known for his remarkable work related to the city of Varanasi that reflects upon his knowledge of the landscape, mapping significant sites of personal and social importance.” **Adwaita Gadanayak, Director General, National Gallery of Modern Art**



Eminent architect Shri Balkrishna V. Doshi will inaugurate the exhibition and painter Shri Sudhir Patwardhan will release the book - **Manu Parekh - 60 Years of Selected Works**. The book examines the complete breadth of Parekh's career, from the 1960s to the present time. Over 250 of his works are included, representing every important aspect of his oeuvre. We see his exploration of ritual in the late 1970s, the legendary paintings inspired by the Bhagalpur blindings and his enduring fascination with the holy city of Banaras which he has explored in great depth over many decades. The book also includes a late career highlight, a monumental work of 'heads', completed in 2017, that is based on Leonardo da Vinci's *The Last Supper*. Through its exploration

of the rich body of Parekh's work this book provides unique insights into one of India's most important painters.



Landscape 1, Photo courtesy of the artist, Art & Soul gallery and NGMA, Mumbai

“To gauge the breadth and depth of Manubhai's oeuvre is unfathomable. His journey has been long and deeply enriched and influenced by his diverse experiences, amidst crafts people in rural India, and these are now woven onto his canvases. His preoccupation with the landscape of Benaras is well known, while his portraits and seminal works on the Bhagalpur blindings, add a lesser known facet to this collection of artworks, marking 60 years of his journey. We also present his sketch books, which are fascinating narratives of his day to day life and weave a story of their own, no less fascinating than a dialogue with this mesmerising personality. We hope that through this large exhibit of 150 works at the National Gallery of Modern Art, Mumbai, Manu Parekh's art be seen contextually in the unique space it occupies in the cultural landscape of contemporary Indian art and painters.” Tarana Khubchandani, Director, Art & Soul Gallery, Mumbai

Vivid colours and prominent lines are an integral part of Parekh's work and each exudes the energy that he attempts to capture. Parekh admits to being very strongly influenced by his surroundings. His stay in the city of Calcutta, for instance, drew him towards Santiniketan and the old masters of Indian art, Ram Kinkar Baij and Rabindranath Tagore. His appreciation of their work, more at a perceptual level than stylistic one, urged him to delve deeper into the thoughts that informed his own oeuvre. Banaras as a city came to play an integral role in Parekh's work after his first visit following his father's death. This holy city of hope, of faith, of tourists offered him a vast number of contradictions in one location. Parekh also highlights his relationship with his wife Madhvi, who is a self taught artist, and his admiration for Picasso as key influences on his works.



Banaras, The City of Lights

Photo courtesy of the artist, Art & Soul gallery and NGMA, Mumbai

Exhibition Preview

Monday, March 12, 2018 at 6:00pm

National Gallery of Modern Art

Sir Cowasji Jehangir Public Hall, MG Road, Fort

Mumbai - 400032

The exhibition will run until 15 April 2018

Artist note by Sumesh Sharma

As an artist, Manu Parekh's career has shown a diverse section of form and material. Parekh formed his career after independence in an India that reflected great divisions and confluences as well as a tryst with numerous tragedies and he sought his solace in the metaphysical, much like the millions of Indians who followed similar paths to explain complex lives.

Manu Parekh's canvases consume colour, space and figuration, flowers turn into human heads that can inhabit a canvas like a temple dome dominates the landscape of Benaras. For Parekh his native Ahmedabad, his city of awakening Bombay, his muse Kolkata, and Delhi where he resides, all come together in Benaras. Each can claim the city and also not be part of it. As a city of convergence and great divide, it is becoming a muse that Parekh has pursued for more than three decades. An artist who draws from spirituality, its ritual and inherent modern exploration and form and medium, his culmination with Benaras is natural.

It is here that he witnesses an absurd architectural scape on the banks of the rivers, minarets, temples and palaces jostled with each other, on the banks where people wash, bathe, cremate corpses and offered aratis and lights to the river. Parekh watching the maze and chaos Benaras offered the bereaved cremating their loved ones alongside the enthusiastic pilgrim commissioning a ritual through a priest, decided he would paint this city. This resulted in a vast body of works and the inspiration that emanated from the orange hues of the setting sun on the glistening waters of the Ganges, never lost its fascination for him. Portraits of mourners in Benaras, the common man, and other heads describe the emotions we gather in the same perspective, like a miniature painting in the same moment and time.

Manubhai's use of animals corresponds to times of violence, as animal head approaches a plant, that may be devoured or he superimposes these heads onto portraits that resemble humans with great affinity and despise. He also decides to draw a still life of a flower vase in a Benaras Landscape, or offerings of orchids and a lamp that are set amidst a landscape. We must regather his early watercolours where simple lines abstracted faces, these flower studies are similar to portrait studies, often resembling humans where the flowers replace hair-dos.

The Flower Vase gives away to a portrait of Francis Newton Souza. Parekh's anoints the iconoclast Souza with sainthood, Souza held much disdain with the clergy, but much admiration among artists. His 'Poet' resembles MF Hussain and his various appearances but we are unsure. Parekh draw vibrant lines between Gandhi's belief in non-violence and a landscape of pain.

The year he went back to Madhubani in the 1980s, the Bhagalpur blindings happened where 31 under trials where blinded by police as a form of justice but also in the most inhuman manner. Parekh protested with a series of heads termed 'Man Made Blinding 1981' ' Man-Made Blindness 1990' , 'Man-Made Suffering III 1990' 'Looking Beyond' 1990 and many portraits of what could have been the faces of the prisoners who had been blinded. From 1982 a portrait of woman in Black with a black horizon perhaps is the portrait of the Dusadh artist Shanti Devi Paswan, it was here Parekh was committing himself to their upliftment through art he names it 'Offering' 1982.

His latest series comes back to a rendition of the 'Last Supper' from 2017 that depicts the caricatures of men in varied emotions. His bronze casts from 2006 take elements of aesthetics from vernacular folk forms from Bastar, Chattisgarh. Parekh is best defined with a conscious versatility in his practice that is erratic but interesting.

At the National Gallery of Modern Art, Manubhai's audience will be composed by the collecting elite and thousands who are dropped to its doors each day by bus tour operators who bring day tourists from rural India excited to visit the city, but each one of them will find a resonance in the life of the artist who paints all of our visions onto the canvas. Parekh in his narrative tells us about an extraordinary life told in the most quotidian manner. Among the painters of India, he binds us as the very many who seek through art.

Sumesh Sharma , Bombay 2018

Sumesh Sharma (1983) is an artist, curator & writer. He co-founded the Clark House Initiative, Bombay in 2010. His practice is informed by alternate art histories that often include cultural perspectives informed by socio-economics and politics. Immigrant Culture in the Francophone, Vernacular Equalities of Modernism, Movements of Black Consciousness in Culture are his areas of interest.

Note to the editor

Manu Parekh

Manu Parekh is among India's best-known contemporary artists. He received his diploma in Drawing and Painting from Sir J. J. School of Art, Mumbai, in 1962, and has held several solo shows and participated in a number of group exhibitions in India and abroad. He has been Member of the Society of Contemporary Artists, Kolkata; Member of the General Council, Lalit Kala Akademi, New Delhi; and Member of the Advisory Committee, National Gallery of Modern Art, New Delhi. Parekh received an honorary Doctorate in Literature from Rabindra Bharati University, Kolkata, in 2013. He was awarded the President of India's Silver Plaque and the All India Fine Arts and Crafts Society Award, New Delhi, in 1972; the National Award from the Lalit Kala Akademi, New Delhi, in 1982; and the Padma Shri in 1992. The artist lives and works in New Delhi

Art & Soul gallery, Mumbai

art & soul is an art space in the heart of Worli, Mumbai and enjoys the privilege of working with a huge cross section of artists. Founded in 2004, **art & soul** is recognized by the artist community with uniquely conceptualized and well executed art events. This is reflected in their large database of artists and the gallery showcase of works of over 100 established artists, spanning 8 decades. The artist relations are fostered through reputable tie ups in the domestic and international art scenarios. **art and soul's** responsibilities to their clients are met by raising art consciousness and awareness amongst primary investors, through consultations, workshops and dialogue with artists, art historians and art critics and through a unique format of social initiatives involving artists of different genres.

National Museum of Modern Art, Mumbai

The genesis for the starting of the National Gallery of Modern Art (NGMA) was mooted immediately post the Indian Independence and the first NGMA was opened in the National Capital New Delhi at the historic Jaipur House, one of the premier architecture edifices of Lutyens' Delhi, by the Vice-president, Dr. S. Radhakrishnan, in the presence of Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru and artists and art lovers of the city on March 29, 1954. The NGMA is a repository of the cultural ethos of the country and showcases the changing art forms through the passage of the last 160 years starting from about 1857 in the field of Visual and Plastic arts. This is run and administered as a subordinate office to the Ministry of Culture, Government of India which has two branches one at Mumbai and the other in Bengaluru.

The National Gallery of Modern Art, Mumbai was opened to the public in the year 1996. It is located in the precinct of the former auditorium the Sir Cowasji Jehangir Public Hall and the Institute of Science. This architecturally marvellous building was designed and built by the famous British architect George Wittet which has been completely redesigned keeping only the facade edifice that was the Public Hall. It hosts various national and international exhibitions and also has its own art collections comprising paintings, sculptures and graphics with a focus on Indian and International artists mainly from the progressive art group like K.H. Ara, F. N. Souza, V.S. Gaitonde, S.H. Raza and M.F. Hussain. NGMA, Mumbai has a great history and has also been able to host several spectacular exhibitions in the past, which we are continuing today. Some of the recent exhibitions include the highly successful the Bombay Art Society exhibition, which covered the landscape of the historic Bombay Art Society's existence over 125 years. NGMA, Mumbai has also hosted other notable exhibitions which among others, include Rabindranath Tagore, Amrita Sher-Gil and Jamini Roy, Nicholas Roerich, the Parsi exhibition and a major exhibition on A. A. Almelkar from the collection of NGMA Mumbai.

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