

# Christie's auction comes to India

As the world's largest auction house hosts its inaugural auction in India on December 19, Sonal Singh, Specialist -- Modern & Contemporary Art at Christie's gives an overview of the works on sale

Fareeda Kanga

## What prompted Christie's to enter the Indian art auction market at this point of time.

We have had an office in India since 1994 and hold regular events. We also support charitable initiatives in addition to our international sales of Indian Art held in New York and London. It has long been our wish to hold sales in India but we have taken the time to ensure we fully understand what buyers within India are looking for and have all of the necessary licenses to operate. We believe India is a dynamic growth market with great potential, and wish to connect it with Christie's activities around the world. We believe that India, Indian collectors and Indian art will increasingly become a significant contribution to the future growth of Christie's internationally.



An untitled work by Vasudeo S Gaitonde. Photo credit Chrisite's Images Ltd 2013

## What can we look forward to in terms of the key works of art at the auction?

We have taken only the very best works and the sale will have a focus on the modernists, with paintings by Rabindranath Tagore and Amrita Sher-Gil, who are our national treasures, along with Tyeb Mehta, MF Husain and SH Raza. We also have a wonderful group of works from the estate of Kekoo and Khorshed Gandhi who did so much to nurture and shape the modernist art movement in India.



An untitled work by Syed Haider Raza

## Do you feel the Christie's name will push the prices of these works up just a bit or will these top-quality works hold their price at any auction?

We do business all over the world and part of our job is to provide a guide or estimate based on previous prices for what a work might sell for. However, once the sale is under way it is not us but the market that decides what a work sells for. That is what makes buying and selling at an auction so transparent. Those considering bidding in the sale are also made aware that they must take into consideration the buyer's premium which is charged on top of the hammer price. They need to calculate this when setting their upper limit, as this is a fairer reflection of what they will pay for the work.



Christie's Sonia Singh

## What are your current views on the Indian art market?

There is an ever growing awareness about Indian art both in India and from a more international group of collectors. One only needs to look at the success of the India Art Fair domestically or the growing number of Indian galleries who participate at international art fairs. Currently, Jitish Kallat is being shown at the San Jose Museum of Art, Nilima Sheikh is scheduled to have a solo exhibition next year at the Art Institute of Chicago, VS Gaitonde's retrospective is scheduled to open in 2014 at the Guggenheim in New York and Bharti Kher is scheduled to have her first museum solo exhibition at the Rockbund Museum in Shanghai next year. This is clearly an indication of the global position of modern and contemporary Indian art today.

## What are Christie's future plans for India?

Being able to conduct auctions in India has been an aspiration we have worked towards for many years and we are very excited and proud to have achieved this in 2013. We look forward to offering collectors in India more direct access to Christie's.

## Did the successful sales of Indian art at your auctions in London create a confidence level that prompted you to hold an auction here?

The sale will allow us access to a considerable piece of the market that, due to export restrictions, we cannot reach without a domestic auction. Christie's sales in India will allow our Indian-based clients more direct access to our global network and expertise. Indian collectors, especially those new to the art market, will have the opportunity to participate in our auctions, without having to travel overseas.