



Comprising six members, the young painters challenged conservative Indian art establishments and chose to take an unpaved road. It is no surprise that the six founder members — Ara, Souza, Raza, Husain, Gade, and Bakre are some of the giants the shoulders of whom modern Indian art now stands upon.

The PAG primarily challenged the Bengal School of Art and reiterated the need for moving ahead. While it may seem like a cultural paradox, both movements in their respective time contributed in moulding the Indian identity. This close observation surely absolves any seeming contradictions.

As a member of PAG, the six artists experimented with styles and techniques popular in contemporary western painting, and made a perfect blend with indigenous Indian art until they discovered their signature styles.

Husain felt comfortable in cubism, symbolism and animal imagery. His vibrant works were a ceaseless blend of folk and tribal art with elements and figures that were striking and much ahead of his time. Throughout his career that spanned almost seven decades, Husain held on to roots and inculcated a truly multi-media style.

He always felt an urge to experiment and cross boundaries that even he himself may have created. While the images of horses in particular periods resembled the Islamic imagery from the tragedy of Karbala, in other points of his career, he just drew them in pure cubist forms.

Husain's works are often overwhelming, drawn through bold lines, reverberant colour, and distinguishable brush-work — "Husainesque," as some termed it.

"M F Husain Journey in Graphics" shall feature some of the more important works of Husain.

M F Husain had a penchant for topics that influenced the lives of the common Indian. The deep-rooted religious beliefs of the people stirred the inner being, but while he was meticulous in selection of theme Husain was also scything in his portrayal of dogma. His depiction of Hindu gods and goddesses, often in nudes or sensuous poses, stirred controversy time and again to the point where he was forced to go on a self-imposed exile, shifting between his newfound homes in Qatar and London.

While Hindu mythology in his paintings became one of the most talked about topics of modern Indian art, Husain was also inspired by Islamic tradition, evident in his series calligraphy. As a painter influenced by the world around him, M F also could not shy away from addressing politics. His visual satires, some to the extent of being comical, made bold statements, and some of his most controversial paintings are on politics!

His stalwart depiction of a faceless Gandhi creates a drama that is unmistakably global. One cannot help but

wonder whether the Gandhi is simply an Indian icon or a free spirit found in the soul of all human beings, a pacifist existence we all nourish deep within. The faceless but obvious portrayal of St Teresa, one of the subjects Husain felt worth visiting over and over again, may also be interpreted from a humanitarian view — possibly he found Teresa in every heart and thus facial features became redundant.

Printmaking was something MF took up early and his obsession for working in long series is apparent even in his lithographs and serigraphs, each as remarkable as any of his paintings. He was known for his fascination for serigraphs in particular, which he believed 'gave artists more freedom of expression and reached people easily'. He was even quoted saying, "Over the years, the price of original paintings has gone beyond reach. I have to think twice to own my paintings. A print is for people with taste rather than money."

"M F Husain – Journey in Graphics" shall feature some of the more important works of Husain: iconic horses, images of St Teresa, and gods and goddesses, tracing his journey in this media since the late '60s until the mid-2000s.

Also on display will be some works, such as the 'Varanasi' — a series of black prints done in the '70s focusing on myriad images from the riverbanks of one of Hinduism's most sacred cities. Equally striking are the self-portraits in the 'New York' series; or the 'Twenty litho twenty poem', a series of abstracts done in lithography as early as 1969, that will also be on display.

By Mannan Mashhur Zarif
Image Courtesy: Galleri Kaya

GALLERI KAYA CELEBRATES 101 YEARS OF M F HUSAIN

In the last 14 years, Galleri Kaya, one of the leading art galleries in Bangladesh, has arranged almost a hundred shows. As organisers of various art trips, camps and workshops they are also active in promotion of Bangladeshi art.

Beginning 24 January, 2018 the gallery will hold a solo graphic art exhibition, "M F Husain – Journey in Graphics" by the late Indian master painter.

"Husain", Goutam Chakraborty, Director, Galeri Kaya says "is not just an Indian artist, but an iconic painter of global significance. Our initial plan was to hold the exhibition on a grander scale with screening of films and display of books on Husain highlighting his contribution to contemporary art. Unfortunately, this plan could not be materialised. The prints on display are all declared, limited editions with impeccable provenance. The time span covers a significant part of Husain's life when he was already an icon." Even in his own lifetime, Husain was a member of the Million Dollar Club, his artworks regularly realising the elusive seven figure mark. After his demise interest in his life and works has increased exponentially and hopefully will continue to surge.

Chakraborty believes that this venture by Galleri Kaya will give viewers an opportunity to satiate their thirst for appreciating creativity and see the various sides of MF as a printmaker.

The exhibition, M F Husain – Journey in Graphics, will be open for all between 24 January, 2018 and 31 January, 2018. The show is sponsored by ADN Group and Suhana & Anis Ahmed Foundation.

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