

Emami Chisel First Art Auction - A One of a Kind Debut to Watch Out for in February

...on February 02 at Hotel Taj Mahal, New Delhi. Other previews...at The Grand Central (ITC) Mumbai on February 10, and Emami Towers in Kolkata from February 16 to 22...Ganesh Pyne, Jogen Chowdhury, K. G. Subramanyan, Krishen Khanna, Bhupen Khakhar, Himmat Shah, Prabhakar Kolte, B. Prabha, Ram Kumar, Rameshwar Broota, Satish Gujral, Anupam Sud, Nalini Malani, Nilima Sheikh, Amit Ambalal, Sakti Burman, Manu Parekh, Madhavi Parekh, T. Vaikuntham, Ganesh Haloi, Amitava Dhar, A. Balasubramanian, Chintan Upadhyay, G. Ravinder Reddy, Jagannath Panda, Sekhar Roy, Farhad Hussain, Chhatrapati..

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Just when the spring is about to arrive in full bloom, Emami Chisel Art is bustling with activities of a new kind. It's adding final touches to the preparation for the long awaited event - the first auction of Indian Modern and Contemporary Art on Feb 23rd, 08 to be held at Emami Chisel Art, Kolkata. The online bidding, which starts from Feb 16, the sale is targeted to embrace bidders from India and around the world."

A preview is slated for art aficionados before the hammer actually comes down on the prized collection. One can take a look at the impressive array on February 02, 2008 at Hotel Taj Mahal, New Delhi. **Other previews will be held at The Grand Central (ITC) Mumbai on February 10, 2008** and Emami Towers in Kolkata from February 16 - 22, 2008.

For those yet to get acquainted, Emami Chisel Art (in short ECA) has been formed out of collaboration between two diverse business groups - the reputed Emami Group and Kolkata's well-known art outfit Chisel Art; the parent company of Aakriti Art Gallery.

Among the highpoints of the auction are Tyeb Mehta's 'Kali III' (4-5 crore), F.N. Souza's 'Manor House' (1.5-2 crore), M F Husain's 'Safdar Hashmi' (2-2.5 crore) which was painted in reaction to the cultural activist's gruesome assassination. This was also the first painting from an Indian artist to cross the Rs10 lakh mark in 1987. Besides, there's a rare landscape by Raza made in 1953(80 lakhs -1 crore).

The other biggies are J. Swaminathan (80lakhs-1 crore), Bikash Bhattacharjee (Over The Dark Clouds 40-50 lakh), a couple of Manjit Bawa's oil on canvas (40-50 lakhs each), two charcoal drawings by Amrita Sher-Gil (12-16 lakh each), and a bronze head by Akbar Padamsee (16-20 lakhs).

There are some veritable delights too, for example watercolours by Nandalal Bose and Deviprasad Roy Chowdhury. The fresh spring like quality in Shibu Natesan's watercolour and the sensuous study in oil by Paresh Maity are certainly collector's item.

Other important names in this auction include Ganesh Pyne, Jogen Chowdhury, K. G. Subramanyan, Krishen Khanna, Bhupen Khakhar, Himmat Shah, Prabhakar Kolte, B. Prabha, Ram Kumar, Rameshwar Broota, Satish Gujral, Anupam Sud, Nalini Malani, Nilima Sheikh, Amit Ambalal, Sakti Burman, Manu Parekh, Madhavi Parekh, T. Vaikuntham, Ganesh Haloi, Amitava Dhar, A. Balasubramanian, Chintan Upadhyay, G. Ravinder Reddy, Jagannath Panda, Sekhar Roy, Farhad

Hussain, and Chhatrapati Dutta.

In fact, Samindranath Majumdar, Sekar Roy, Chhatrapati Dutta, P. R. Narvekar, S. K. Shahajahan, Sunil De, and Ganesh Chandra Basu are the first-time entrants in an auction that lists number of works - 89, participating artists - 70, total sale high estimate - 22,48,80,000 (US \$57,66,154), and total sale low estimate - 17,77,10,000 (US \$45,56,667).

From its very inception, the central most idea of ECA and its young team has been to take creativity out of the gallery walls and permeate our homes, influencing our lifestyle and aesthetic sensibilities. From another viewpoint, it's a novel way, a desirable option, to weave our lives around art, which offers creativity and an open forum for meaningful enduring dialogues as values, perception and mindsets go through shifting changes with the spirit of time.

To begin with, the most unique feature ECA has to offer on its debut auction day is the simultaneous bidding process; both physical as well as virtual to all art enthusiasts. It's by far the most ideal situation for art collectors whether they're in India or abroad. As a feast for the eyes and the senses; the auction promises a diverse selection to choose from. It comprises 89 lots of handpicked art works from 70 odd artists across India. With competitive pricing, it will be one of its kinds of gathering where paintings of contemporary young sparks will vie for attention amidst modern masters. Another huge advantage ECA is hoping to leverage for art collectors is that of transparency and tax rebates. Kolkata, unlike other centres, does not levy 12.5 % VAT on art, which means here is a lucrative benefit for art lovers to splurge on art, yet saving a huge chunk of money on tax.

As things stand, ECA plans to stage about three to four auctions every year. With the first one kicking off in February, there'll be two more auctions in September and December this year. "While the debut auction will encompass modern and contemporary art, the others should revolve around different exclusive genres like sculptures, drawings, prints and contemporary art," says Mr. Vikram Bachhawat.

According to Vikram Bachhawat, the director of ECA, "Our focus is to build a collector's base and we have some very significant and high quality works outsourced from collectors in different parts countrywide. They will now be accessible to art lovers."

Today contemporary Indian art is on a robust growth curve. The size of the Indian art market, including the auction market, has been pegged at Rs 500 crore. It is growing at 35-50 per cent annually, according to sources.

At the confluence there is a willing audience to nurture and patronise the movement. To reiterate Tagore's words, "this is a world of wild storms, kept tamed with the music of beauty"; ECA with an event like this is trying to bring artists' voices to the broadest audience.

However, there's more to ECA than an auction house. According to Mr. Vikram Bachhawat, ECA has also a full-fledged art centre encompassing a gallery, library, archive, bookshop, publication wing and a future plan for museum. Another significant facet of this project is an 'art banking division' which will be manned by a consultant to guide buyers through the process of parking funds in rare artworks. The works, in turn, will be put up at the auctions when they appreciate and are likely to draw healthy bids," says Mr Vikram Bachhawat.

Before wrapping up, this is to remind all art enthusiasts that, online bidding will begin from February 16, 2008 on www.emamichisel.com, with the final auction being conducted both live and online on February 23, 2008. Watch out for some glorious weeks ahead!

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