

M. F. Husain | *Husain at Hundred*

An Exhibition in Honor of the 100th Birthday of M. F. Husain

September 17th, 2015 – October 24th, 2015

V.I.P. Reception & Press Preview: Thursday, September 17th, 6:00pm – 8:00pm

35 Great Jones Street, New York N.Y. 10012

“... in '48 I came out with five paintings, which was the turning point in my life. I deliberately picked up two or three periods of Indian history. One was the classical period of the Guptas, the very sensuous form of the female body. Next was the Basohli¹ period, the strong colors of the Basohli miniatures. The last was the folk element. With these three combined, and using colors very boldly as I did with cinema hoardings, I went to town. That was the breaking point ... to come out of the influence of the British academic painting and the Bengal Revivalist School.”

—M. F. Husain (*P. Nandy, The Illustrated Weekly of India, December 4 - 10, 1983*)

Aicon Gallery, New York proudly presents *Husain at Hundred*, an extensive retrospective of India's most iconic Modern painter, **M. F. Husain**, in honor of what would be the artist's 100th birthday this year, featuring landmark **masterworks on canvas** from every decade of Husain's career. The exhibition traces the growth and advancement of the artist's unique figurative style, as well as his pioneering and ever-evolved merging of Western Modernist techniques with themes from India's epic historical and mythological texts, along with its ongoing struggle for an independent modern identity and stability in a post-colonial world. We are also honored to host a discussion with **Sumathi Ramaswamy**, Professor of History & International Comparative Studies at Duke University, concerning Colonialism and Independence in Husain's art during the Opening Reception.



M. F. Husain, *Untitled (The Three Muses, Maya Series)*, 1960s, Oil on canvas, 68 x 60 in.

Long considered a pioneer of Modern Indian art, Husain initially made a living as a billboard painter and children's furniture designer, painting at first in his spare time until joining the **Bombay Progressive Artist's Group (PAG)** in 1947. His background in billboard painting gave rise to two pivotal aspects of Husain's future practice: first, an understanding of how to communicate visually with the 'everyman' of India; and second, a strong appreciation for the high drama of Bollywood. The PAG grew to be the most influential group of Modern artists in India, seeking new forms of expression to capture and convey India's complex past, along with its emerging post-colonial future. The fusion of Indian subject matter with Post-Impressionist colors, Cubist forms and Expressionist gestures forged a synthesis between early European modernist techniques and the ever-shifting cultural and historical identities of India.

Since his beginnings in the **1940s**, Husain sought to radically redefine and redirect the course of Indian painting, paving the way for Modern Indian art's now recognized presence on the international stage. In the **1950s** and **1960s**, Husain began moving away from heavily gestural and thick impasto techniques, simplifying and stripping his subjects of overt detail through confident but visceral line-work. A master of radiant and saturated colors paired with earthen tonalities, Husain's use of color became a distinguishing element of his

¹ **Basohli**: School of Pahari miniature painting that flourished in the Indian hill states during the late 17th and 18th centuries, known for its bold vitality of color and line.



M. F. Husain, *Durga*, 1976, Acrylic on canvas, 89 x 55.5 in.

style, but one he would leave and revisit continually throughout his career. Gradually drawn to the expression of inner feelings and emotions through color and brushstroke, he moved away from representations of reality, into abstraction and expressionism, to become the prolific artist known as the “Picasso of India” (*Forbes Magazine*). His odyssey to find the most immediately communicative elements of painting drew him to the residual remains of Cubism, earning him an invitation in 1971 to exhibit alongside Pablo Picasso for the Sao Paulo Biennial. He was later awarded the Padma Bhusan in 1973. Thus, a rising star by the early **1970s**, Husain reached a level international prestige unparalleled by any other Indian artist of his time. Husain himself became a legend in his lifetime – an imposingly tall, bearded, and perpetually barefoot man with a shock of white hair, often brandishing an oversized paintbrush – who elevated himself from the ordinary man to a distinctive icon.

Entering into the **1980s** and **1990s**, Husain painted his country with the eye of a man who knew his subject uncomfortably well; he knew India’s insecurities, blemishes and inner turmoil. Beyond the controversy that eventually led him into exile, he was above all an artist radically and permanently redefining Indian art, while remaining unafraid to confront

the growing social and political issues of his country’s transformations. Regardless of these conflicts, Husain won the Padma Vibhusan in 1991. Between **1990** and **2006**, his paintings increasingly stirred resentment from Hindu nationalist groups, who campaigned against Husain’s religious paintings of the 1970s. By **2007**, charged with hundreds of suits citing indecent portrayals of Hindu deities, Husain’s past obscenities warranted his arrest. Husain lived in self-imposed exile from 2006 until his death in 2011.

In addition to his prolific output of canvases and drawings, Husain was also well known for the many series of limited edition prints, serigraphs and silkscreens he produced in collaboration with his most active patrons. Two important projects in particular, one with **Chester and Davida Herwitz** in the U.S. and another with **Anil Relia** in Ahmedabad, brought Husain’s iconic style and most popular themes such as the Ramayana, Mahabharata and the artist’s impressions of Mother Teresa to a wider audience than ever before. In addition to the canvases, the current exhibition features a select set of large format serigraph scrolls from Husain’s collaboration with Relia, drawn from his well-known Mother Teresa and Horses series, being shown for the first time in the United States.

Husain, both the artist and the iconoclast, was known for his boldness; he never shied away from expressions of critiques of modern India, which helped lay the foundations for the pervading themes of Modern and Contemporary Indian art to this day. The artist consistently explored the blending of folk, religious, political and mythological subject matter to create unprecedentedly unique, vibrant and sometimes controversial works. His endless quest for his cultural roots and willingness to absorb diverse influences from both the Eastern and Western art historical canons made M. F. Husain arguably the most prolific and recognizable figure of Modern Indian art, and an artist long overdue for a serious reevaluation on an international scale.

Please contact Aicon Gallery (Andrew@Aicongallery.com) for more information.

M. F. Husain



M. F. Husain, *Untitled (The Three Muses, Maya Series)*, 1965, Oil on canvas, 60 x 60 in.

M. F. Husain



M. F. Husain, *Untitled (Tribal Woman)*, 1968, Oil on canvas, 47.5 x 36 in.

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M. F. Husain, *Untitled (Three Heads - Green)*, 1957, Oil on canvas, 20 x 33 in.

M. F. Husain



M. F. Husain, *Three Donkeys*, 1971, Oil on canvas, 26.5 x 44 in.

M. F. Husain



M. F. Hussain, *Visages*, 1972(?), Oil on canvas, 19 x 56 in.

M. F. Husain



M. F. Hussain, *Women in Yellow*, 1970, Oil on canvas, 53 x 29 in.

M. F. Husain



M. F. Husain, *Durga*, 1976, Oil on canvas, 89 x 55.5 in.

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M. F. Husain, *Untitled (Pieta with Mother Theresa)*, 1994, Oil on canvas, 71.5 x 95 in.

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M. F. Husain, *Horses*, 2001, Oil on canvas, 48 x 72 in.

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M. F. Husain, *Untitled (Mother Theresa Series)*, 2002, Oil on canvas, 36 x 30 in.

M. F. Husain



M. F. Husain, *Women from Yemem*, 2006, Oil on canvas, 58.5 x 46.5 in.

M. F. Husain



M. F. Husain, *Autobiography Pechwei*, Oil on canvas, 60 x 69 in.

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M. F. Hussain, *Horse - III*, 2005, Screenprint in 11 colors, 84 x 40 in.

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M. F. Hussain, *Mother - V*, 2007, Screenprint in 17 colors, 84 x 40 in.

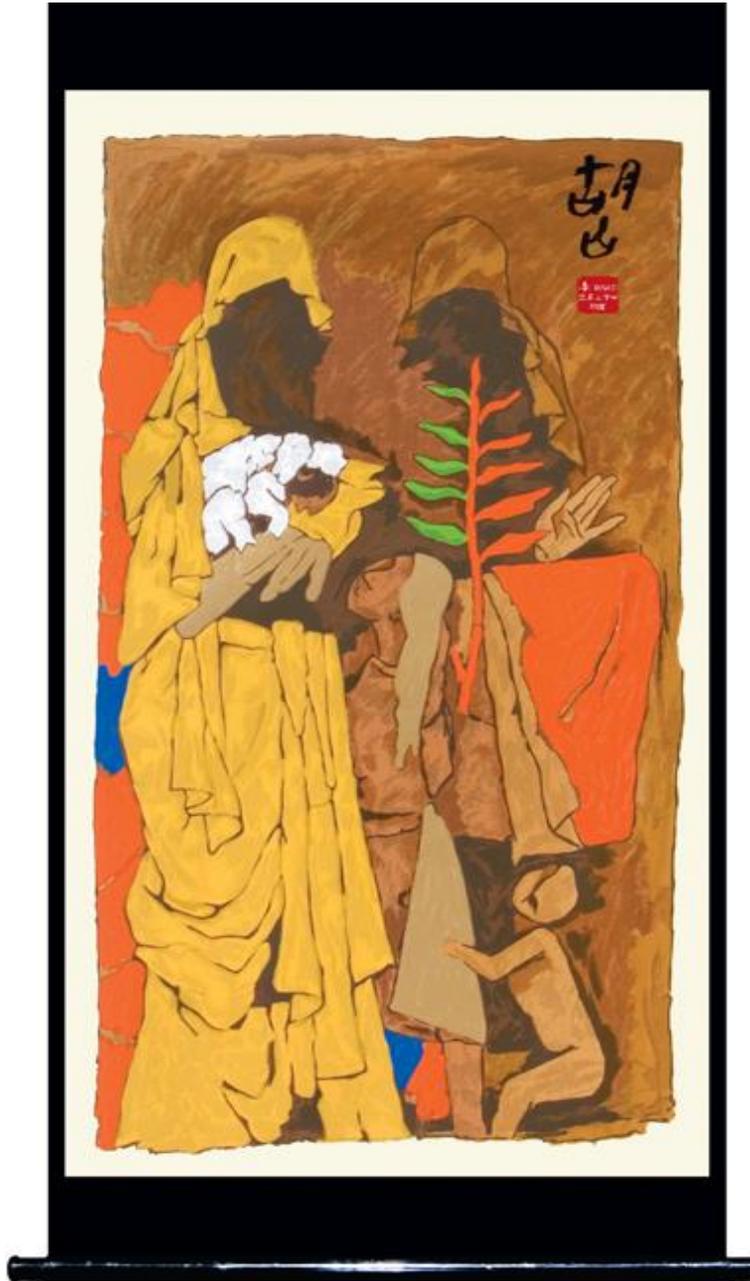
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M. F. Husain, *Horse - X*, 2007, Screenprint in 25 colors, 84 x 40 in.

M. F. Husain



M. F. Hussain, *Mother - XVIII*, 2006, Screenprint in 31 colors, 84 x 40 in.

MAQBOOL FIDA HUSAIN (1915 – 2011)

The endless exploration of his cultural roots and his willingness to absorb diverse influences, from both the Eastern and Western art historical canons, made **M. F. Husain** arguably the most celebrated and internationally recognized Indian artists of the 20th century.

Long considered a pioneer of Modern Indian art, Husain initially made a living as a billboard painter and children's furniture designer, painting at first in his spare time, until he joined the Bombay Progressive Artist's Group (PAG) in 1947. The PAG grew to be the most influential group of Modern artists in India, seeking new forms of expression to capture and convey India's complex past, along with its emerging post-colonial future. In his early work, Husain harked back to his roots, incorporating themes that blended folk, tribal and mythological art. He also received recognition as a printmaker, a photographer, and a filmmaker.

Husain, both the artist and the iconoclast, was known for his boldness; he never shied away from expressions of critiques of modern India, which helped lay the foundations for the pervading themes of Modern and Contemporary Indian art to this day.

Select Solo Exhibitions

- 2015 *Husain at Hundred*, Aicon Gallery, New York
- 2015 *M.F. Husain: Paintings and Drawings from a Private Collection*, Grosvenor Gallery, London
- 2013 *Maqbool*, Sovereign fze, Dubai
- 2012 *Between 2 Lines*, organized by Doha Bank and Blue Mosaic, Doha
Gallery Basilio, Bangladesh
- 2011 – 2012 Presented by Institute of Contemporary Indian Art (ICIA), At The Arts Trust, Mumbai
- 2011 *A Tribute to MF Husain*, Royal Academy of Arts, London
Celebrating Husain, Delhi Art Gallery, New Delhi
- 2010 *M.F. Husain 2010 – The World is my Canvas*, organized by Museum of Islamic Art (MIA), Qatar Foundation
M.F. Husain: Early Masterpieces 1950s–70s, sponsored by the Year of India, the Cogut Center for the Humanities, and the David Winton Bell Gallery at David Winton Bell Gallery, Providence
- 2006 – 2007 *Epic India: Paintings by M.F. Husain*, Herwitz Collection of Contemporary Indian Art,
Peabody Essex Museum, Salem, MA
- 2006 *Early Masterpieces 1950-70's*, Asia House Gallery, London
- 2004 *And Not Just 88: Husain in Oils*, National Gallery of Modern Art (NGMA), Mumbai
'Husain: Graphic 2004, Pictures and Frames, Mumbai
- 2003 *'88 Husains in Oils 2003*, Vadehra Art Gallery, New Delhi
Thief of Baghdad, Pundole Art Gallery, Mumbai
'88 Husains in Oils 2003, Gallerie 88, Kolkata
- 2002 *Madhuri as Saratchandra's Chandramukhi: The Eternal Enchantress of Devdas*, Tao Art Gallery, Mumbai
- 2000 *Paintings, Murals and Drawings, Husain Ki Sarai Collection*, New Delhi
- 1998 *Husain Now*, Centre for International Modern Art (CIMA), Kolkata
- 1996 *From Sinhasan to Peacock Throne to the Chair of the 21st Century: M. F Husain and Jehangir Nagree Exhibition of Furniture*, Taj Mahal Hotel, Mumbai
- 1995 *A Visual Script of 'Untitled Film on Madhuri*, Pundole Art Gallery, Mumbai
- 1994 *Tapestry Show*, Vadehra Art Gallery, New Delhi
Oils on Canvas, 31st Anniversary Exhibition, Pundole Art Gallery, Mumbai
- 1993 *Let History Cut Across Me Without Me*, organized by Vadehra Art Gallery,
New Delhi at National Gallery of Modern Art (NGMA), New Delhi
- 1992 *Six Days of Live Painting*, Tata Centre, Kolkata
- 1991 *Knight Watch*, Vadehra Art Gallery, New Delhi
Shwetambari, Installation at Jehangir Art Gallery, Mumbai
Front Page, Centre for Contemporary art (CCA), New Delhi
- 1989 *Calcutta 300*, Vadehra Art Gallery, New Delhi
- 1988 *Husain*, Hunter Museum of Art, Tennessee, USA
- 1983 *Story of a Brush*, Pundole Art Gallery, Mumbai
- 1981 *Les Otages – Mere Theresa*, Galerie Jourdan, Montreal, Canada
- 1980 *Mother and Child: A Tribute to Mother Teresa*, Calcutta Art Gallery, Kolkata
- 1979 *Husain in Malaysia*, The Hilton, Kuala Lumpur
- 1978 *Sufi Paintings*, Pundole Art Gallery, Mumbai
Retrospective, Lalit Kala Akademi, New Delhi

- 1974 Commonwealth Art Centre, London, UK
Moscow Museum of Oriental Art, Moscow
Paintings by Husain, Worcester Art Museum, USA
- 1973 *Retrospective*, Birla Academy of Art and Culture, Kolkata
Espace Cardin, Paris
- 1972 *Paintings 1971*, Pundole Art Gallery, Mumbai
- 1969 *21 Years of Painting*, Jehangir Art Gallery, Mumbai
- 1967 New York, Poland and Czechoslovakia
- 1965 *Drawings: The Arab Image*, Gallery Chemould, Mumbai, Kolkata and New Delhi; Gallery Waisty, Baghdad and Kabul
- 1964 Dhoomimal Art Gallery, New Delhi
- 1961 Gallery Chemould, Mumbai
- 1960 – 1961 Gallery Palse, Rome
Kunst Kabinet, curated by Hanna Bekker vom Rath, Frankfurt, Germany
Tokyo
- 1956 Gallery Palette, Zurich
Gallery Mannes, Prague
- 1950 Bombay Art Society, Mumbai

Select Group Exhibitions

- 2015 *Approaching Figuration: Pt. I*, Aicon Gallery, New York
- 2015 *Abby Grey and Indian Modernism: Selections from the NYU Art Collection*, Grey Art Gallery, New York University, New York
- 2014 *Shifting the Paradigm*, Aicon Gallery, New York
Remaking the Modern II, Aicon Gallery, London
Immutable Gaze Pt. I, Aicon Gallery, New York
Post-Picasso: Contemporary Reactions, Museum Picasso of Barcelona, Barcelona
- 2013 *Pioneers of Modernism*, Sovereign FZE, Dubai
Remaking the Modern, Aicon Gallery, London
Ram Kumar and the Bombay Progressives: The Form and the Figure Pt. II, Aicon Gallery, New York
Past Parallels: The Art of Modern & Pre-Modern India, Aicon Gallery, New York
Ideas of the Sublime, Vadehra Art Gallery, New Delhi
The Discerning Eye: Modern Masters, Vadehra Art Gallery, New Delhi
The Naked and the Nude: The Body in Indian Modern Art, Delhi Art Gallery, New Delhi
- 2012 *Iconic Processions*, Aicon Gallery, New York
Through the Ages: South Asian Sculpture and Painting from Antiquity to Modernism (Part 2), Aicon Gallery, New York
Gallery Collection, Vadehra Art Gallery, New Delhi
Indian Highway VI, organized in collaboration with the Serpentine Gallery, London, and the Astrup Fearnley Museet, Oslo, Norway at The Ullens Center for Contemporary Art (UCCA) Beijing
Crossings: Time Unfolded, Part 2, Kiran Nadar Museum of Art, New Delhi
- 2011 – 2012 *The Body Unbound*, Rubin Museum of Art, New York
Indian Highway, Museum of XXI Century Arts, Rome
- 2011 *Continuum*, Delhi Art Gallery, New Delhi
Roots in the Air, Branches Below: Modern & Contemporary Art from India, San Jose Museum of Art, CA
Time Unfolded, Kiran Nadar Museum of Art (KNMA), New Delhi
Modern Masters, Aicon Gallery, New York
The Path of the Lotus: Indian Art, Grosvenor Gallery, London
Manifestations VI, Delhi Art Gallery, New Delhi
States of Departure: Progressives to Present Day, Aicon Gallery, London
- 2010 – 2011 *Figure/Landscape: Part One*, Aicon Gallery, London, New York
The Modernists, RL Fine Arts, New York
The Progressives & Associates, Grosvenor Gallery, London
From Miniature to Modern: Traditions in Transition, Rob Dean Art, London in association with Pundole Art Gallery, Mumbai
Symbols and Metaphors, Centre of International Modern Art (CIMA), Kolkata
Masters of Maharashtra, collection from Lalit Kala Akademi, New Delhi at Piramal Gallery, National Center for the Performing Arts (NCPA), Mumbai
- 2010 *Evolve: 10th Anniversary Show*, Tao Art Gallery, Mumbai
Manifestations IV, Delhi Art Gallery, New Delhi
- 2009 – 2010 *Master Class*, The Arts Trust, Mumbai
- 2009 *Bharat Ratna: Jewels of Modern Indian Art*, Museum of Fine Arts, Boston
In Search of the Vernacular, Aicon Gallery, New York

- Long Gone & Living Now*, Galerie Mirchandani + Steinreucke, Mumbai
Kalpna: Figurative Art in India, presented by The Indian Council for Cultural Relations (ICCR) at Aicon Gallery, London
- 2008 – 2009 *Progressive to Altermodern: 62 Years of Indian Modern Art*, Grosvenor Gallery, London
Modern India, presented by Institut Valencià d'Art Modern (IVAM) and Casa Asia, in collaboration with the Ministry of Culture at Valencia, Spain
- 2008 *Indian Highway*, presented in Collaboration with Astrup Fearnley Museum of Modern Art, Oslo at Serpentine Gallery, London; Herning Museum of Contemporary Art, Denmark
Winter Moderns, Aicon Gallery, New York and London
- Frame Figure Field: 20th Century Modern and Contemporary Indian Art*, Delhi Art Gallery, New Delhi
Modern and Contemporary Indian Art, Vadehra Art Gallery, New Delhi
Multiple Modernities: India, 1905-2005, Philadelphia Museum of Art, Philadelphia
Freedom 2008 – Sixty Years of Indian Independence, Centre for International Modern Art (CIMA), Kolkata
Tales, Reflection and Constructs, Galerie 88, Kolkata
Moderns, Royal Cultural Centre at Amman, Jordan; organized by Lalit Kala Akademi, New Delhi, with Embassy of India, Amman, Jordan
- 2007 – 2008 *From Everyday To The Imagined: Modern Indian Art*, Museum of Art, Seoul National University, Seoul
- 2007 *Epic India: Paintings by M.F. Husain*, Peabody Essex Museum, Massachusetts, USA
From the Vault, Aicon Gallery, London and New York
Gateway Bombay, Peabody Essex Museum, Salem, MA
- 2006 *Pictorial Glimpses*, National Gallery of Modern Art (NGMA), Mumbai
Summer Show, Centre for International Modern Art (CIMA), Kolkata
M.F. Husain: Early Masterpieces 1950s-70s, Asia House, London
The Moderns Revisited, Grosvenor Vadehra, London
Shadow Lines, Vadehra Art Gallery, New Delhi
Making of Divinity, Sakshi Gallery, Mumbai
- 2005 *Manifestations III*, curated by Delhi Art Gallery at Nehru Center, Mumbai, and Lalit Kala Akademi, New Delhi.
Drishti/Vision: Indian Contemporary Artists, Valentine Willie Fine Art, Kuala Lumpur
Evoking Rasa in Luminous Visions: Indian Art, Worcester Art Museum, Worcester
Ashta Nayak: Eight Pioneers of Indian Art, Aicon Gallery, New York
- 2004 *20 / 20 – A Vision: Looking Back / Looking Forward*, Apparao Galleries, Chennai
Jiva / Life, Bodhi Art, Singapore
Manifestations II, Jehangir Art Gallery, Mumbai and Delhi Art Gallery, New Delhi.
Concept and Form, Vadehra Art Gallery, New Delhi
- 2003 *Manifestations I*, Delhi Art Gallery, New Delhi.
- 2002 *Colors of India*, organized by Birla Academy of Art and Culture, Kolkata at Mumbai
- 2001 *Anniversary Return to Eden*, Art Musings, Mumbai
Modern Indian Art, Metropolitan Pavilion, New York
- 2000 *Distillations*, Birla Academy of Art and Culture, Kolkata
Timeless Vision: Contemporary Art from the Herwitz Collection, Haggerty Museum of Art, Milwaukee, WI
New Works, The Fine Art Resource, Berlin
- 1998 *Ruminations*, Apollo Apparao Galleries, Mumbai
The Window, Mumbai
- 1997 *The Indian Beast*, Apparao Galleries, Chennai
The Keehn Collection: Important Paintings of Post Independence India, Bose Pacia, New York
Colors of Independence, National Gallery of Modern Art (NGMA), New Delhi
- 1995 *Art India Now: Important Contemporary Artists*, Bose Pacia, New York
- 1994 *Pundole Art Gallery*, Mumbai
- 1993 *Reflection and Images*, Mumbai
Wounds, Centre of International Modern Art (CIMA), Kolkata
- 1991 *National Exposition of Contemporary Art*, National Gallery of Modern Art (NGMA), New Delhi
Husain, Husain and Husain, Egypt
Nine Indian Contemporaries, Centre for Contemporary Art (CCA), New Delhi
- 1988 *Festival of India*, Takoka Municipal Museum of Art & Meugro Museum of Art, Tokyo
- 1987 *Festival of India*, Russia
Coups de Couer, Halle de l'île, Geneva
- 1986 *Indian Art Tomorrow*, The Phillips Collections, Washington D.C
Contemporary Indian Art, Grey Art Gallery, New York
- 1985 – 1986 *Festival of India*, Exhibition of Contemporary Indian Art, New York University, NY
Indian Art Today: 4 Artists, Washington D.C, USA
- 1985 *100 Jahre Indische Malerei*, Altes Museum, Berlin
Six Indian Painters, Tate Gallery, London
- 1982 *Indische Kunst Heute*, Kunsthalle Darmstadt
Contemporary Indian Art, Festival of India, Royal Academy of Arts, London

- India: Myth and Reality*, Aspects of Modern Indian Art, Oxford, UK
Modern Indian Paintings, Hirshhorn Museum, Washington, DC.
 Pundole Art Gallery, Mumbai
- 1972 *A Painter Makes a Film*, Pundole Art Gallery, Mumbai
- 1971 São Paulo Biennale, special invitee with Pablo Picasso, Brazil
- 1967 *25 Years of Paintings seen in Bombay*, Mumbai
- 1966 Commonwealth Art Exhibition, London
Art Now in India, London and Brussels
- 1964 *Indian Paintings Now*, London
- 1961 Gallery Chemould, Mumbai
- 1960 Tokyo Biennale, Japan
- 1959 São Paulo Biennale, Brazil
 Tokyo Biennale, Japan
- 1958 *Eight Painters*, International Culture Centre, New Delhi
- 1955 *National Exhibition*, Lalit Kala Akademi, New Delhi
 Venice Biennale, Italy
- 1953 Venice Biennale, Italy
- 1948 – 1956 Group Exhibitions with Progressive Art Group

Awards and Honors

- 2007 Raja Ravi Varma Award, Government of Kerala
- 2004 Lalit Kala Ratna, Lalit Kala Akademi, New Delhi
- 1991 Padma Vibhushan, Government of India
- 1973 Padma Bhushan, Government of India
- 1966 Padma Shree, Government of India
- 1959 International Biennale Award, Tokyo
- 1955 Padma Shree, Government of India
 First Prize at National Exhibition of Art, Lalit Kala Akademi, New Delhi
- 1947 Bombay Art Society, Mumbai