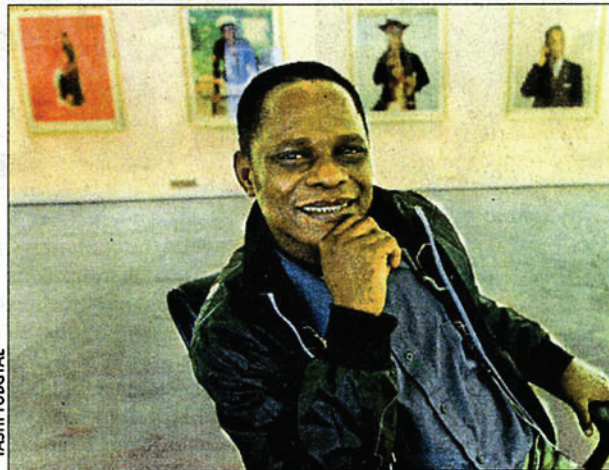


World Vibe

Post meltdown, the sheen has worn off contemporary Indian artists. Collectors are now exploring works of international masters



VANDANA KALRA



TASHI TOBGYAL



Eastward Bound: (Above) Fosso, (left) a lithograph by Picasso; (below) McGarrell; (far left) Dall's *Profile of Time*; (centre, below) a still from Bunuel's film



AMIT MEHRA



Garrell addressed the audience. "Not everyone would be following McGarrell's work in India and an interaction leads to interest," notes Panika.

For Siddiqui, presenting the work of European masters is also an initiative that promotes art awareness. "People want to see the best of world art," says Siddiqui, who had art from Pakistan along side Indian works at her last exhibition. Ceramics may not be the most popular medium in India, but Mamta Singhania from Anant Art Gallery was not apprehensive

when she invited Australian artist Pippin Drysdale to showcase her porcelain work in an exhibition titled 'Nothing Alike and Much In Common' that is on at the Lado Sarai gallery. "There is appreciation for good art and each medium develops its set of collectors," observes Singhania.

However, at a time when 'investment' has become a buzzword, the logistics play an important role in planning each exhibition. Gallerists admit that showcasing foreign artists is an expensive proposition. "The cost includes transport of the artwork and insurance. The returns may or may not come," states Modi. Panika points out that prices quoted by internationally renowned artists are occasionally at par with much younger Indian artists who sold work at inflated prices during the boom. "Each watercolour by McGarrell was priced at Rs 1.35 lakh. This is lower than what younger Indian artists were commanding before the correction in Indian art prices," notes Panika.

Will the eastward swing continue? The current set of exhibitions may just be indicative of a time when Damien Hirst's butterflies will share space with Subodh Gupta's utensils, not in New York but in New Delhi.

LESS than a month ago, when Gaurav Assomull was unwrapping the first batch of Salvador Dalí sculptures and Pablo Picasso lithographs that were flown to Delhi for the inaugural exhibition of his company Marigold Fine Art, the young gallerist was more than a little anxious. "I was unsure if international artwork will find takers," he recalls. However, Assomull's concern turned out to be misplaced. On the opening night itself the exhibition was sold out with work of relatively lesser-known European artists finding takers along with the masters, and Assomull is now flooded with enquiries from collectors regarding the arrival of the next set of artworks. "The demand may have existed earlier but no one brought well known foreign artists to India," observes Assomull, now much more confident about the reception for his second exhibition slated for early next year.

While Indian artists have shared common displays with their foreign counterparts in galleries across the globe, right from New York to London, back home exhibitions were bereft of names other than those of Indians—until now when the tide seems to be taking an eastward direction. The global art mart may be experiencing a slump with prices of Indian art also on a downslide, but the connoisseurs in India can no longer complain of lack of works of internationally acclaimed artists. If in Mumbai Farah Siddiqui Contemporary Art gallery is currently playing avant-garde films from the 1920s and '30s by masters like Salvador Dalí, Louis Bunuel, Hans Richter and Francis Picabia, in Delhi, Khoj has organised the capital's first public art festival that includes installations by Slovenia and US-based Andrej Zdravic, Toronto-based Chrysanthe Stathacos and Tomas Saraceno from Argentina. Self-portraits of African photographer Samuel Fosso are suspended on the walls of Photoink gallery and at Gallery Espace, Renu Modi is gearing for an exhibition by women artists that will include works of US-based Maxine Henryson and Catherine Mosley.

"With globalisation of the art market, regional preferences are fading," observes Mukesh Panika, head, Religare Arts Initiative that had a solo of American artist James McGarrell at Arts.i gallery earlier this month. To familiarise Delhiites to the postmodernist's oeuvre, he organised a workshop where Mc-