

AICON GALLERY OPENS IN WEST END

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by Deeksha Nath

ART DEALING BROTHERS PRAJIT AND PROJUL
K. Dutta inaugurated their new London gallery dedicated to contemporary art from the Indian subcontinent with the opening of Aicon Gallery in March in a 4,000 square-foot two-floor space in the heart of the West End, near the Royal Academy of Arts. The space was previously occupied by international franchise Gagosian Gallery. Aicon's inaugural exhibition, "Other," was a dialogue between two artists, Indian Riyas Komu and American Peter Drake, who met in New York and have a shared interest in outspoken political commentary.

The gallery's presentation of rising Bombay star Komu, included in Robert Storr's Venice Biennale (SEE P. 84), is a bold move. Komu comes from the communist state of Kerala, and this background has informed his multi-pronged attack on market-led economies and moralities. The new work on display at Aicon included a massive wooden sculpture of a missile inscribed in Urdu alongside *Emmanuel*, a large-scale painting of

a young shirtless boy sewing a football.

Aicon, abbreviated from Arts India Contemporary, is the Dutta brothers' third gallery, after New York, established in 2002, and Palo Alto, California. Formerly known as Arts India, the whole group will now be referred to as Aicon. While the North American galleries have shown a combination of modern and contemporary Indian artists, the new London space will focus primarily on solo exhibitions for young artists. When asked about the split programming, Prajit K. Dutta explained, "The division creates a cleaner line for our viewers and clients for whom it may be a first encounter with Indian art."

The gallery opens at a time of sharp increase in interest in contemporary Indian art. In October 2006 Grosvenor Vadehra, a collaboration between Vadehra Gallery, New Delhi, and Grosvenor Gallery, London, opened in London and has already had three successful group exhibitions. Berkeley Square Gallery, founded in 1988, has since 2005 focused on exhibiting modern and contemporary artists from India. Saffron Art plans to open a gallery in London this year. Institutions such as the Baltic Centre in Gateshead and Tate Modern in London have presented solo shows for Subodh Gupta (SEE AAP 48) and the modernist painter Amrita Sher-Gil (SEE P. 123), respectively. While Indians based in London have fuelled much of the interest so far, galleries are betting that increased recognition will expand the market further.