

Emerging markets

New York-based Indian gallery comes to London

Aicon joins growing number of dealers selling South Asian work

LONDON. The opening of Aicon (Arts India Contemporary) Gallery in the Heddon Street space formerly occupied by the Gagosian Gallery, is the latest and most high profile manifestation in London of the booming market for Indian contemporary art. The gallery opens on 15 March with an inaugural show of the work of Riyas Komu (until 19 April), one of a group of young Mumbai-based artists known as the "Bombay Boys". Although it is Komu's first show in London, his work has been selected by director

Robert Storr for the 2007 Venice Biennale and he is the latest Indian artist to be embraced in the west.

Work by Peter Drake, a New York artist who has collaborated with Komu in the past, will also be in the opening show. Future plans include shows for artists such as Jayashree Chakravarty, Ashim Purakayastha and Shibu Natesan, as well as group shows of Pakistani and Turkish contemporary art.

Arts India Group, which is behind the new gallery and which has branches in New

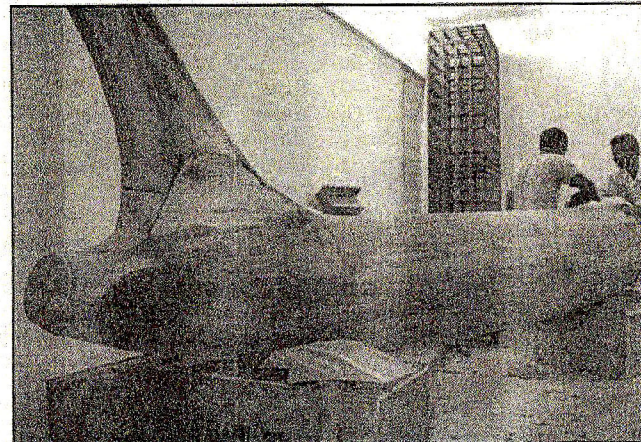
York and Palo Alto in California, is run by brothers Prajit and Projjal Dutta. Prajit Dutta, who is a professor of economics at Columbia University in New York, told *The Art Newspaper* that while the New York gallery will concentrate on modern work, the London gallery will show younger contemporary artists. "For a long time there has been an apologetic attitude to the promotion of contemporary Indian art, but now we feel that artists are producing work that can hold its own on the international stage," he said.

For the past five years modern and contemporary Indian art has been undergoing a resurgence as wealthy Indian collectors around the world have rushed to invest.

Although some of the biggest collectors are based in the US, London, where many rich Indians have second homes, has always been an important hub for the market. Until recently this revolved around the auction houses, but there are now signs that commercial galleries in the city are tapping into a market perceived to have a huge potential beyond high priced modern masters like Husain, Souza and Metha, among others.

"There is so much interest among curators and critics, as well as collectors," says Prajit Dutta. "Many people who have been priced out of the market for Chinese contemporary art are looking at what is coming out of South Asia."

Last year London also saw the launch of Grosvenor Vadhra in Ryder Street, a col-



The work of Riyas Komu, seen here in his studio, goes on show in London this month

laboration between Grosvenor Gallery and Delhi-based Vadhra Art Gallery which is currently hosting "Here & Now: Contemporary Voices from India" (until 11 March).

Also in Mayfair, Peter Osborne has been holding regular exhibitions of Indian contemporary art in the Berkeley Square Gallery and at Osborne

Samuel in Bruton Street. The arrival of Aicon seems set to give Indian art a footing in London's contemporary art scene in a way that these more conservative galleries are not attempting and may provide a window onto a generation of young and exciting artists as yet unseen in the UK.

Lucian Harris