

A feast for the eyes

Ten Indian artists
make their creative
point at Kaam, the new
exhibition at ArtsIndia





MOB (Relocated) II, acrylic and oil, by Bose Krishnamachari

Upadhyay, Justin Ponmany, Jyothi Basu, Riyas Komu, Sudarshan Shetty, and TV Santosh.

"Some artists featured in the current exhibition were also part of the Bombay Boys exhibition," says Krishnamachari. "Ideally, I would have liked to have an entire new set of artists as I like each exhibition to be something very new.

"But many other younger artists I wanted were busy with something or the other," he adds. He has no qualms about repeating some artists in this exhibitions. "They are all very formidable talents," he says.

Two artists in the exhibition, V N Jyothi Basu and Riyas Komu, accompanied him to New York, and they shared an evening at Rubin Museum in Manhattan with four contemporary American painters, discussing the state of art in India and America. The discussion was also organized by ArtsIndia.

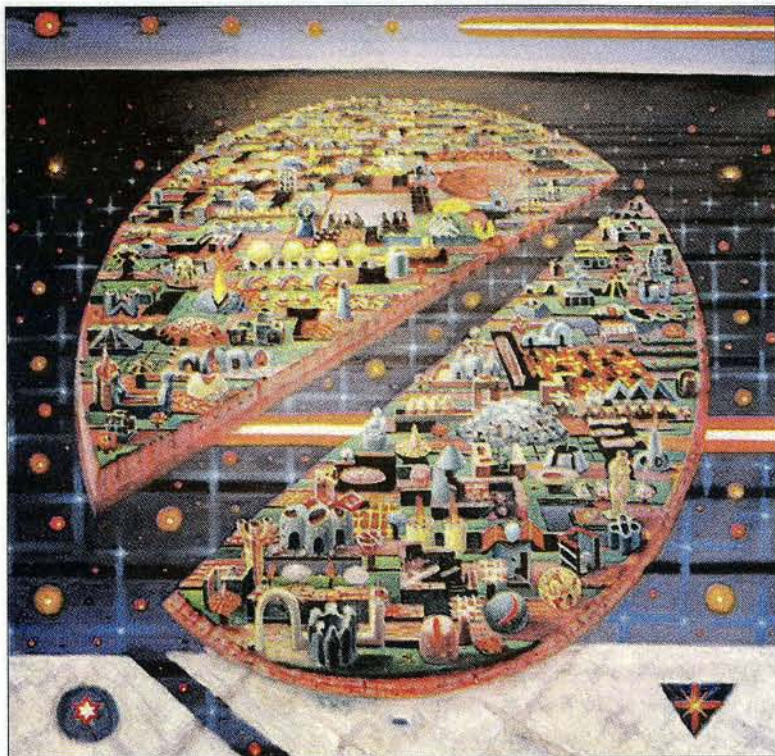
Krishnamachari chose the name Kaam for the exhibition for several reasons.

"It means work, for one thing," he explains. "We are truly working artists. Though some of the artists in this exhibition, say Jyothi Basu, have tried doing something else when they faced a lull in their creativity, by and large, we like to think of ourselves as workers on a daily basis."

The word *kaam* also means lust, he adds. "It is the lust for our profession that has kept us going on for several decades," he explains. "If we did not have this great pas-

A feast for the eyes

Ten Indian artists make their creative point at Kaam, the new exhibition at ArtsIndia **Photographs: PARESH GANDHI**



Invasion 1, oil on canvas, by Jyothi Basu (left); Designer Babies 1, acrylic and oil, by Chintan Upadhyay (right)

ARTHUR J PAIS

When he was growing up in Kerala, Bose Krishnamachari knew some of the good painters outside his state. But it was only when he went to study in Mumbai in the late 1980s that he discovered a completely new world of young Indian artists.

As his own career blossomed, especially after he returned to India with a master's degree in fine arts from Goldsmith College, London, in 2001, Krishnamachari began getting an urge to pool together the work of fine Indian painters from Mumbai; Baroda, another big center for new Indian artists;

and other cities in India.

"I was specially eager to take some of their work to Kerala," he says, sitting in the office of Gallery ArtsIndia in Manhattan where Kaam, the latest exhibition he coordinated, has just opened and will be on through January 22, 2006.

"When I grew up in Kerala, and on my subsequent return to my state, I felt there were not enough galleries in Kerala. People were not coming forward to build new ones in adequate numbers and host artists from across the country."

Just the other day, he organized an exhibition called Bombay Boys.

"Of course, I took the name from a popular movie," he says, chuckling. "But the

name also sent out the message that we are comparatively new to the scene. We are indeed the contemporary Indian artists."

Krishnamachari, born in Kerala in 1963 but now a Mumbaikar (see 20 Questions, Page 31), says another reason he took the initiative to put together the exhibitions was that he was dissatisfied with the way the curators judged newer artists.

"I think that when the artists themselves take the lead and hold their exhibitions," he continues, "there will be a profound change. It will be a slow process but it is bound to happen."

The artists whose works are exhibited at ArtsIndia apart from Bose, are Anandjit Ray, Anant Joshi, Baiju Parthan, Chintan

sion for our work we could not have persisted, despite all the setbacks and discouragements inherent in the system."

Most of the artists represented have already exhibited their work abroad in the past decade — in the Netherlands, Germany, the United Kingdom and Japan. But most are new to America. Their work will also be taken to San Francisco, where ArtsIndia has another gallery.

The brochure the gallery has produced to mark the occasion includes extensive interviews with the 10 artists conducted by the other artists in the group. These offer interesting insights into their mode of working, their inspiration, how their vision has been involving and their plans.

Anandjit Ray, for instance, discusses with fellow artist Baiju Parthan how his works straddle the absurd and the irrational, suggesting the gritty subterranean atmosphere of underground comic strips.

"Other than the underground comics," he says, "I also respond to our own Bollywood cinema, which also flirts with the absurd and the exaggerated."

Anant Joshi speaks of the evolution of his craft and his early struggling days in Mumbai when he lived in Dharavi, the largest slum in Asia. He did not live there to observe life and paint it, he says. He did not want to go around looking for a job or working at all to finance his studies at the J J School of Art, he explains.

Chintan Upadhyay, another participant in the Kaam exhibition, talks about how Internet pornography led him to use computer-generated imagery in his paintings.

Upadhyay, who grew up in rural Rajasthan helping in his father's artistic endeavors, described his links with his roots. On the one hand, he produces works consumed by the corporate world; on the other, he is also actively involved in community projects and art workshops in his village.

Krishnamachari says learning about the 10 Kaam artists should introduce the viewers into a new art world in India. It is filled with the potential many people will find difficult to imagine, he says.

Gallery Arts India
206 5th Ave, Fifth floor
New York, NY 10010
(212) 725-6092

KAAM: works by 10 artists

Gallery Arts India is presenting *Kaam*, featuring the works of 10 contemporary Mumbai and Baroda artists.

Kaam is one word for work, sex and death according to Suketu Mehta in his new book *Maximum City: Bombay Lost and Found*. The show was inspired by the wave that Indian artists are creating in the global art world.

Participating artists have broken through the boundaries of traditional schools and have created their own vocabularies.

The 10 artists are Anandajit Ray, Anant Joshi, Baiju Parthan, Bose Krishnamachari, Chintan Upadhyay, Justin Ponmany, Jyothi Basu, Sudershan Shetty, Riyas Komu and TV Santosh. The show will move through three major metropolises, Mumbai, New York and San Francisco. The exhibition began with a preview in Mumbai. It opened at Gallery ArtsIndia in New York on December 2 and runs through the end of the month. It then moves on to Arts India West in February of 2006.

The exhibition will display a range of approaches in form and content exclusively in the realm of painting from the current generation of Indian contemporaries.

The show explores the intensely personal relationship between the artists and their work. In order to understand the philosophical, political, and aesthetic positions of their work, the show is accompanied by a compilation of interviews where the artists speak about their inspiration, vicissitudes, victories and failures.

Dates: through December 31.

Place: Gallery ArtsIndia, 206 Fifth Avenue, 5th floor, Manhattan. (212) 725-6092; www.artsindia.com