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| Khakhar, Bhupen (1934-2003) |
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| Born in the Baniya community of Mumbai and originally from an artisan caste, Bhupen Khakhar is often considered India’s first ‘Pop artist.’ Khakhar revealed his homosexual identity in 1982, and is widely considered to be India’s first gay artist, and as one of the first openly gay figures within the modern Indian cultural consciousness. Working as a chartered accountant while practicing his own art in 1958, Khakhar met the young Gujarati artist Gulammohammed Sheikh, who encouraged him to join the recently established Fine Arts Department at the M.S. University Bardoa. Following a brief enrolment in evening classes at the J.J. School of Arts in Mumbai, he completed his Master’s in Art Criticism in 1964, and began exhibiting paintings in both group and solo-exhibitions. His participation in the renowned ‘Place for People’ exhibition in 1981 and his involvement in the Baroda-based ‘figurative-narrative movement’ are often considered as the discursive events prompting Khakha to reveal his sexual identity. Having participated in a range of international exhibitions including Doucmenta IX (1992), Khakhar received the Indian Government’s Padma Shri Award in 1984 and the Prince Claus Award in 2000. Today, Khakhar is remembered for his poignant paintings (as well as many short stories) depicting India’s small-town bourgeois class, and for opening up the marginalised world of queer desire and identity in India. |
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| Further reading:  (Citron)  (Ezekiel)  (Hyman)  (Kapur, Bhupen Khakhar)  (Kapur, Contemporary Indian Artists)  (Panikkar, Bhupen Khakhar: The Issue of Queerness)  (Panikkar, Inter-Subjectivity/Intervisuality — Bhupen Khakhar among Friends and Foes: An Inquiry into Homophobia) |