

V&A to Host Husain's Last 9

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For the first time, the last nine paintings by the celebrated Indian artist, MF Husain (1915-2011) will go on public display at London's Victoria & Albert Museum this summer.

The Indian Civilisation series comprises eight monumental triptych paintings, each measuring 12 feet wide by six feet high. The paintings capture India's vibrant cities, colourful Hindu festivals, iconic figures and historic events. These imposing, large-scale works will be presented alongside a single painting of the Ganesha, which serves as the symbolic beginning of the series. The Indian Civilisation series, also known as Vision of India through Mohenjo Daro to Mahatma Gandhi, was commissioned by steel magnate Lakshmi Niwas Mittal family in 2008 and have never been on public display. Usha Mittal, LNM's wife, has lent the paintings to the V&A, where Husain completed a residency in 1990, to showcase the final works of this remarkable artist, often dubbed 'the Picasso of India'.

"Spanning mythology, architecture and popular culture, the Indi-



One of the nine of paintings of the Indian Civilisation series.

an Civilisation Series is the final achievement of MF Husain, an artist whose work was continually inspired by the traditions of India. I was privileged to see this series as it was created and am delighted that it will be shown at the V&A, a lasting tribute to Husain Sahib and his vision," Usha Mittal said in an email statement.

The paintings were made in London, where Husain spent his final years, immersing himself in books about Indian history, which fed into the varied themes of the paintings. Each panel explores a different theme, together creating a personal vision of India, which Husain called 'a museum without walls'.

Interweaving religious and symbolic iconography with historic figures and events, the paintings also incorporate memories from the artist's own life. Indian Civilisation is a tribute to the country Husain loved but had to leave after his life was threatened for portraying Hindu deities in the nude.

Husain's handwritten notes, describing his ideas, themes and stories for each painting and explaining the scenes depicted, will be included in the exhibition guide. A short film directed by Husain, Through the Eyes of a Painter (1967), which won the Golden Bear at Berlin film festival, will also be shown.