

ASUO2

ARA

BAKRE

GADE
HUSSAIN
RAZA

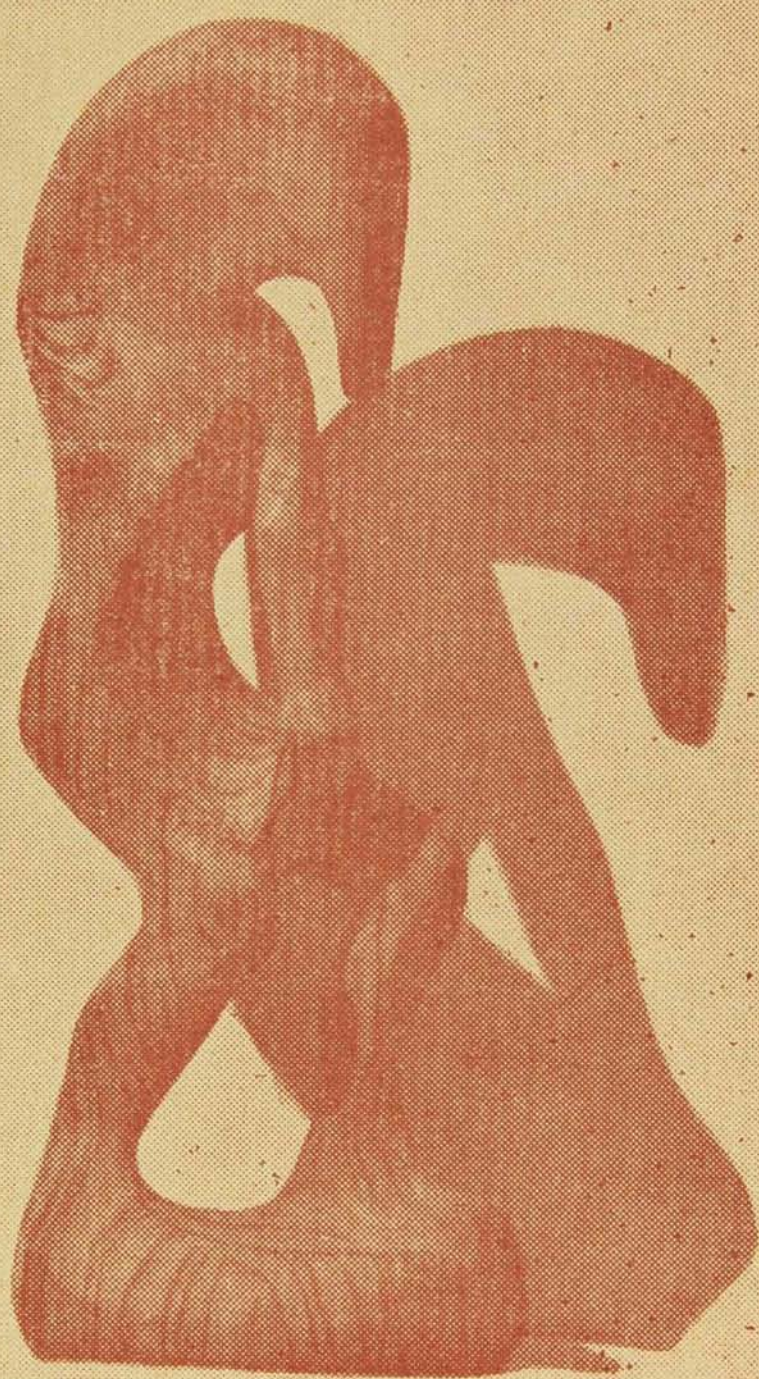
SOUZA

PROGRESSIVE ARTISTS' GROUP



Beggars (Detail)

Ara



Centaur

Bakre



The Street

Gade



Mother & Child

Hussain



The Bridge

Raza



Somaskanda

Souza

PROGRESSIVE ARTISTS' GROUP

" . . . all the noblest arts hold in perfection but for a very little moment. They soon reach a height from where they begin to decline, and when they have begun to decline it is a pity that they cannot be knocked on the head; for an art is like a living organism—better dead than dying. There is no way of making an aged art young again; it must be born anew and grown up from infancy as a new thing, working out its own salvation from effort in all fear and trembling."

Samuel Butler (1835-1902)

I do not quite understand now, why we still call our Group "Progressive". Not that the most retrogressive institutions call themselves so, but we have changed all the chauvinist ideas and the leftist fanaticism which we had incorporated in our manifesto at the inception of the Group: "To bring about a closer understanding and contact between different sections of the artists' community and the people . . ." we found this in the course of working an impossibility, because there is not only a permanent rift between sections of artists, between Meissonier and Whistler, Munnings and Picasso, Achrekar and Jamini Roy; but the gulf between the so-called "people" and the artist cannot be bridged.

Art will, as long as it remains, be esoteric. It can be utilitarian—functional manufactures of house-hold commodities; didactic—illustrational for school books or party journals; socialist—putative art of the Soviet Union; and religious—of the sort we see to-day, painted clay Ganapatis and blond operatic Christs—but then it is mercenary, pedagogic, political and devotional, but never pure intrinsic "Art".

Today we paint with absolute freedom for contents and techniques, almost anarchic; save that we are governed by one or two sound elemental and eternal laws, of aesthetic order, plastic coördination and colour composition. We have no pretensions of making vapid revivals of any school or movement in art. We have studied the various schools of painting and sculpture to arrive at a vigorous synthesis.

To return to Samuel Butler, the Erewhonian artists, he says, were not only taught to paint but also to sell their works. Since we have never had such training, we have got the secret ambition of discovering Butler's 'Erewhon' which is anagrammatically "No Where".

Francis Newton Souza
Secretary

ARA

K. H. Ara was born in 1914 in the Deccan. He is self-taught. He has neither secondary-education, nor art-training, and yet has more knowledge than a matriculate, and a sounder proficiency in aesthetics than the average painter with a diploma. Born in penury, working intermittently at odd jobs, from errand-boy to motor-cleaner, he ultimately became the inveterate painter he is today. He has been one of the first Indian painters directly influenced by the French Impressionists Pissarro, Monet and Renoir. His work is determined by an immediate free and human attitude to his subjects which makes it 'popular', in the right sense amongst many classes of people. He won the highest awards in local art exhibitions, such as the Governor's Prize at the Bombay Art Society in 1944, and the Trophy of the Art Society of India in 1949. His pictures attracted considerable attention at the U. N. E. S. C. O. Exhibition in Paris.

BAKRE

S. K. Bakre was born at Baroda in 1920. He graduated from the Bombay School of Art where his bright career won him the Mayo Gold Medal. His sculptural works include portraiture in the clay-pellet technique and free-standing figures in mass-planes. Although he does not indulge in unrepresentational forms, or unashamed distortions of Brancusi or Moore, his works on the whole are expressional and experimental. He works in metal and wood, clay and plaster. He has recently taken to painting.

GADE

H. A. Gade was born in 1917 in Berar. He graduated from the Nagpur University in Science. His preliminary training in art he received also in Nagpur, the graduation of which culminated in Bombay. His media are opaque watercolour, and sometimes tentative oils. His subjects are invariably landscapes, the compositions of which are based on Cezannian principles. He paints for values far beyond the sphere of realism. With intuitive feeling for colour, and deliberate formal organisation he achieves aesthetic order. Of late he has been gradually accepted by the art-lovers, and awarded prizes by the Art Societies.

HUSSAIN

M. F. Hussain was born in 1916 in the Deccan. How he came to be a painter is an enigma. Years ago he painted cinema-hoardings for a living, and now he works as a nursery-furniture designer. He wears a long black beard. He reads the Koran regularly, and is often mistaken for a maulvi. He paints indefatigably after office hours, late into the night. Although his paintings are genre and portraits, they are composed with intent of solids and spaces. Some of the most powerful principles of German Expressionism, of Beckmann, Hofer and Nolde, are incorporated in his work.

RAZA

S. H. Raza was born in the C. P. in 1922. He studied at the Nagpur School of Art and later at the Bombay School of Art. This academic training had little effect on him because out-door painting was not in the school's syllabus. Travelling has taken him to many places in India from Kashmir to Travancore. His early paintings have the spread of voluntary quickness and unvariegated colours. His recent work is a constructive development under the compulsion of form creation. His pictures are exceptionally popular, and he has enjoyed recognition at twenty-seven which Corot did not get at sixty-seven. He won gold medals at Bombay, Calcutta and Nagpur.

SOUZA

PROGRESSIVE ARTISTS GROUP

SOUZA

Francis Newton Souza was born in Goa in 1924. He was until lately well-known (or notorious) by the surname Newton. The name Souza which his father had unintentionally discarded, he took from his grandfather. His reason for this is, should posterity talk of Newton there would always be the irritating enquiry : "the Mathematician or the Painter ?" Working in water colours and in oils he is in style eclectic and protean. His subjects range from communistic propaganda to religious iconography. Despite diverse influences from Hshieh Ho and Hokusai, Indian sculpture particularly Gupta, Cezanne and Rouault, Indonesian and Mayan plastic arts, traces of acute individuality can be determined, and a sure promise of a revolutionary and original achievement in maturity.