



## Front row DIARY

Mugda Godse walked the ramp for Pria Kataaria Puri on day one of LFW

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## The maestro speaks

Raza Saab is frail and when he speaks, one has to strain to hear him. Over the next days, it will be a treat simply to observe him at the international art camp

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I paint," he said. "It is difficult to speak." The frame was frail and the voice gentle. But he stood tall behind the lectern and he spoke. And Jaipur listened.

For art lovers at Kala Aawas-2010—the international art workshop organised by Bhoruka Charitable Trust from March 6-12—it was enough to hear Sayed Haider Raza recount his journey.

From the small town of Nagpur, as it was then in the 30s and 40s of the last century, to the Progressive Artists Group in Bombay (as it was called then), to

Paris and then of reversing his gaze to India in the 1980s and the *bindu* that has since centred his life.

Suman Sarkar/DNA



Going strong: SH Raza stands tall on day one of the art workshop at IIMHR

## We can bring him back...

... senior artists vent passionately to After Hrs about losing the iconic MF Hussain to Qatar and the Indian double standards on day one of Kala-Aawas 2010



Magical strokes: Artists Anwar Khan at the art camp and Akhilesh Verma (below)

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WHEN prominent artists are present on a single canvas—Kala-Aawas 2010—it is impossible not to talk about the 'Picasso of India', Maqbool Fida Hussain. Just the mention of his name brings up the recent controversy of Hussain's nod to Qatar nationality.

And while every artist shares the sorrow of losing the pre-eminent art personality, renowned artist Anwar Khan strongly feels that the painters should come forward and do something to bring back the legendary Hussain.

"Even now, if all the artists come forward together, we can bring him back," he tells After Hrs at the IIMHR campus, where the art camp is being organised. "It is sad that he was mentally harassed and forced to leave by just a handful of people." There is remorse in Khan's voice. "An artist can only be killed by destroying his work."





the bindu that has since centred his life.

However, the media strained, waiting for a bite on MF Hussain and the citizenship storm raging around him. "It is sad he has had to go away to another country," Raza said. "But I called Hussain and he spoke with confidence" about getting enough freedom to work in Qatar. "An artist should not consciously try to stay away from controversy," he went on. "An artist should just concentrate on work... never bother whether it is liked or disliked... and go beyond to an excellence higher than the mind and heart put together."

But, Raza gently pointed, "It is the artist's choice to decide how close to the society his creation is, or how profoundly it affects social opinion. What Hussain created was his decision."

There were artists other than Hussain in the country who had done good work, he said quietly.

In one stroke, the maestro had spoken on artistic freedom, the choices that they make and the social context they are removed from and yet part of like any other individual.

In its curtain raiser on Saturday, DINA had said it couldn't get bigger than this. For this writer first to hear the power of Wole Soyinka in his own voice at the Jaipur Lit Fest in January and now to simply see Raza Saab in his own skin... it was very heaven itself.

Over the next few days, there will be much to observe—how this master of abstraction develops his thematic oeuvre; what new ideas swirl and take form through the striking Viswanathan Velt's brush; or whether leads the engagement of international sensibility and Indian rootedness. But when many summers have passed, it will be enough to say... we were there in 2010!



I would say, don't buy for investment or speculation. Art bought with this idea can never be contextualised. Buy a painting for its content.

SH Raza

Khan's voice. "An artist can only be killed by destroying his work," come some strong words from Khan on fundamentalists vandalising Hussain's paintings and attacking his house.

As the Delhi-based painter talks of how Hussain used to walk the narrow streets of Nizamuddin in Delhi, Akhilesh Verma from Bhopal—who has recently penned a biography on Hussain—shares the emotion of bringing Hussain back to India. "Indian politics has double standards. On one hand, it protects Bangladesh's Taslima Nasreen and on the other, it shows the exit door to a man who changed the way people use to look at contemporary art in India," says Verma passionately.

Verma's book, *Maqbool* to be released at the camp on Monday, 10 years after it was compiled, is a collection of series of interviews with the man himself. Verma's book takes the authors on a journey that starts from Hussain's childhood and commences with his first marriage to Fazila.

Verma opines that though a lot has changed in the past 10 years, the forceful exile of Hussain in a country which gives its citizens the freedom of expression will undoubtedly discourage upcoming artists. "The Hussain episode is regrettable. I have been travelling a lot recently and young contemporary artists the world over are dominating the art scene," says Verma. "I believe that Hussain will come back to India again," ends Verma, hoping against hope.



Smita Sahas/DNA

EXCLUSIVE

## FASHION'S CZARINA

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**As the creative force behind one of the most sought-after labels, what sets you apart as a designer?**

I think I'm striking a balance between fashion, luxury and wearability that people are responding to. What makes our products unique is the research behind the fabrications and the high quality craftsmanship that the brand has excelled in for almost 90 years. We also have an incredible heritage and history that it is a great influence on my work and continues to set apart every new design I create.

**You once said in an interview—"Tom's obsessed with selling sex, and I'm not." How difficult was it to step into the footsteps of Tom Ford whose name was synonymous with the House?**

The biggest challenge was finding the right path to keep the House fresh and relevant. What I have tried to do in the last four years as creative director is to keep a strong connection with the house's unique heritage of quality and craftsmanship,



Photo courtesy: Gucci/WireImage

ship, but to infuse it with a modern spirit. At the moment, what feels right is a sense of confidence, optimism and sensuality that is soft, not aggressive. The blatant sexuality has been toned down to a more sensual approach.

**Tell us one thing about yourself that nobody knows.**

If I hadn't done this, I'd love to have

been a rock star. Unfortunately, there's really no chance of that: I have a terrible voice.

**You're involved with Madonna and Rihanna in their Raising Malawi and Unicef charities respectively. What was it like working with the pop queens?**

I have been lucky enough to get to know quite a few impressive people in that world through my job. I have had wonderful dinners and evenings out with Madonna, but the highlight was collaborating on our very successful fundraising event in New York on February 8th 2008 that raised 2.7 million dollars. Rihanna epitomizes the brand—confident, beautiful and smart. She can be tough, yet sensual at the same time.

**What creatively inspires you?**

Creativity is an ongoing process. It's not something that you can turn on or off. I am constantly observing everything around me. The people, places, objects that make an impression on me are the things that usually stimulate a creative response. It can be a great song, a beautiful view, a new film. I think what

makes artists unique is their personal interpretation of these outside impressions. I can get a million ideas just by looking at a particular door knob and they will be very different from someone else's vision. The key to creativity is to continuously be interested and curious.

**What are your thoughts on Indian fashion?**

I have wanted to visit India for a long time, as it is a very interesting and dynamic country filled with contrasts. The Indian culture is fascinating and provides a huge amount of creative inspiration all over the world. Personally I am intrigued by the vibrant colours of the country as well as its antique heritage in the arts. I am also following the careers of many Bollywood leading ladies such as Priyanka Chopra, Kareena Kapoor, Katrina Kaif, Bipasha Basu and of course Aishwarya Rai and Freida Pinto who I find very beautiful and very talented.



Frida Giannini

One of the most powerful women in fashion, Frida Giannini, on taking over from Tom Ford, working with Madonna and more...

