

ECHO de la BOURSE BRUXELLES

17 JUILLET 1956
COCKTAIL à PARIS

par S. Dulac

Le Prix de la Critique fait autorité. Il a été décerné cette année au peintre hindou Raza. Jamais jusqu'à présent ce prix n'a été à un artiste « abstrait ». Les œuvres de Raza, et d'autres concurrents sélectionnés, sont exposées à la Galerie Saint-Placide.



Raza's portrait by Professor Langhammer.

When Schlesinger was told about it, he immediately offered him a job in his company saying: "and you can paint what you like and when you like."

During the following years Raza toured throughout the length and breadth of the country, literally from Kashmir to Cape Comorin, recording on his canvases the rich and varied landscapes of India.

Soon Raza's was a household name in thousands of Indian homes. That was because Schlesinger's firm, Indo-Pharma, pioneered the idea of reproducing modern paintings on blotters and calendars distributed to their clients.

In 1950, after he had bagged almost every available prize to artists in India, Raza went on a year's French Government scholarship to Paris. The scholarship was extended by another year and then followed four years of hard and, sometimes, bitter struggle for existence, as the appreciation of the critics and the public made slow progress.

Schlesinger, who has followed Raza's progress very closely, feels that he has now developed from "an emotional painter to a cerebral modernist." Raza's paintings are still based on brilliant colour effects, but he has discarded all traditionalism in his application of colour, and his paintings today, according to Schlesinger, have the effect of a stained-glass window.

Leading critics all over Europe have forecast a "brilliant"

future for Raza. That should be a matter for pride, not only for Schlesinger but for all of us.

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★ PROUD ACHIEVEMENT

WE in Bombay today are proud to think that our artists have led the movement in modern art. But not so long ago the small group of our progressive artists who dared to break away from old traditions had to face the charge that what they produced and tried to pass off as works of art were pale and uncouth imitations of what was being done in Paris and other art centres in Europe.

Most of us thought then that modern art was not in keeping with the spirit of India, but we felt, however, without realising it, that art, particularly in the twentieth century, was "art without a country," that it had refused to be confined to national boundaries, and that, Cubism, for instance, was also not in keeping with the national traditions of France.

But despite all opposition and despite the lack of patronage, our avant-gardists like Newton, Hussein, Ara, Raval, Bakre Padamsee, Raiba, Almelkar, Hebbur, Paisikar, Pai and Raza, persisted in their "experiments."

By now several of them have gained fame abroad, and some of them are better known and appreciated in Paris, London and Tokyo.

even more than they are in Bombay.

And last month came news that must have gladdened the hearts not only of the members of that small group of progressive artists to which Raza belonged, but also of those few who had "dared" openly to support them. In June Raza was awarded the critics' prize in Paris, the most coveted prize in Europe.

But the one person to whom Raza's success meant more personally to him than to any of

his other friends was Mr. E. Schlesinger, the philosopher, guide and a genuine friend of our progressive artists.

As most of our young artists, who were venturing into new and uncharted fields, had no private means, they naturally needed some encouragement and support. Schlesinger, who had hobnobbed with modernists in Vienna and Paris, easily gained the confidence of our young artists. They had an easy access to his books on painting and to his vast collection of prints of modern and ancient paintings in every country.

He organised lectures to popularise modern art in general and the works of our artists in particular; he organised their exhibitions and even found them patrons.

★ URGE TO PAINT

RAZA came to Bombay from Central India and like most of our artists, he came from a poor family. He had always felt a compelling urge to draw and paint, and after he had sold one of his paintings for Rs. 2 at an exhibition organised by the Art School at Nagpur, he decided to make painting his career.

Schlesinger first saw Raza's paintings at an exhibition of the Art Society of India in 1942. His trained eye immediately detected in Raza's work a certain freshness, an artistic quality which marked him as a talented young artist.

"Will you paint some pictures for my firm?" Schlesinger asked Raza. But working as he did as a draughtsman in a block-makers' studio, Raza was not free to take on outside jobs.

Sunday Standard
Bombay 1956-