

With two exhibitions showing in the city,
H S Raza looks back on his artistic evolution. In
conversation with Georgina L Maddox



insideout

■ Back in Mumbai, H S Raza gazes into the green lawn from a window at his present sanctum, the CEAT guest house.

Looking back on his years of creativity, he says: "Marking significant milestones, I think I can divide my journey as an artist into three main spheres." The first began with the Rajput and Mughal miniatures that he was studying, back in the 1950s. "I used to make cityscapes in gauche, based on my experience of the miniatures. I feel it was an important phase. I painted *Haut De Cagnes* and *Italian Village* in 1953," he says.

■ From those early days, he moved on to his adventure with French art.

"I realised that I didn't want to only practice what I had learnt in India. I wanted to learn more and, like the saying goes, 'Let noble ideas come from all sides'. I turned to oil and acrylic paints, I wanted to discover all the secrets that the great masters like Cezanne, Van Gogh, Gauguin and Picasso had given to France," he says. His interest in nature persisted and he executed many paintings of the French landscape.

■ Despite several shows in Sao Paulo, New York and Canada, he felt a void, a missing connection...

"In the solitude of my studio, I asked myself, 'Where are you in your work? Where is the seed of your origin, your genetics?' In 1975-78 I revisited the land of my birth. I returned to my village in India, Babaria," he says. Here he remembered the bindu that his first teacher, Nandalaji Jhoria introduced him to. "At a tender age, it was my teacher who gave me a sense of direction. I was a bad student. He took me out to the veranda and drew a bindu on the wall. 'Look at this bindu,' he told me. I realised, later on, how important the bindu is for the visual arts, the same way *Om* is for music."

■ The bindu became the symbol of the origin of life — and the beginning of his third phase.

"It was in the 1980s that I began to paint using all the fundamentals of what I had learnt in France — using colour, line and balance with the essence of all my being. The Bindu. Now, I have reached a stage where I want to eliminate all but the essentials. People may get a little surprised when they see my white and off-white paint-

Playin the cit

LOTS discussing urban life's labyrinthine problems. Monologues making candid comments on society's insensitivity towards marginalised people. Stories subtly lambasting our attitudes towards the absurdity of war, or environmental degradation. The plays showing at the Kala Ghoda Art Festival, in a sense, reflect the eclectic nature of metropolitan life.

Divya Bhatia, who conceived the festival's theatre segment, says:

"Originality and the contemporary nature of the performances — both in content and style — were two important criteria for the selection of the plays. Almost all the plays — in English, Hindi and Marathi — are by young directors and new productions in their initial run of shows."

It kicks off with Zubin Driver's *Toba Tek Singh*, based on Saadat Hasan Manto's acclaimed story set in a mental asylum in Lahore. Says Driver: "*Toba Tek Singh* symbolises the hate which engulfed the subcontinent during Partition, when even inmates at a mental asylum were divided on the basis of religion. We are fighting with the same dark forces of hate and prejudices today." This director also presents *Stump*, a monologue which discusses the existential problems of a vagrant. "It's an attempt to look at the life of an

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You can also
Heiner Muller n
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Zuleikha Allana