



Souza 1977

Raza —
see mention overleaf.

Paris 1-17-77

With compliments

F. N. Souza

THE CRITICS on Francis Newton Souza

DAVID SYLVESTER : The importance of Francis Souza, is that he has resolved the dilemma of style as no other modern Indian painter has done. He has crossed Indian bazaar-painting with the Paris School to produce a manner that is at once individual and consistent, and which might be said to suggest a caricature of a Byzantine icon. Some of his paintings are, in fact, of Christian subjects and all the portraits look as if their subjects were unfrocked saints. He is also a writer of uncommon power and precision, a truly and terrible comic writer, profoundly original, appallingly honest. These qualities, and they are qualities of genius come through in his drawings The packed pen strokes and the wicked crooked shapes get a hypnotic grip on the eye.

LONDON TIMES

ANDREW FORGE : Somewhere behind any serious portrait painting there is a wish to gain command of the person portrayed, abrogated no doubt by many a clown of Modern Art. But in Souza you can see the real thing operating. You can see him closing in on his images as though they could save his life or backing away from them as though they could kill him. Souza himself has said that he has made of his art "a metabolism". "I express myself freely in paint in order to exist". I am interested to know why this art which is extremely private in its function and extremely exotic in its forms should appear, as it does, relevant and telling. I think that the main reason is the sight of art at work, of paintings made from dire necessity.

THE LISTENER (U.K.)

TERENCE MULLALLY : Whether or not one admires Souza as an artist he can not be ignored. Not that there is much chance of his wild and often very large works being ignored by anyone seeing them. Their impact is immediate and disconcerting. Here is an obviously gifted artist with considerable abilities as a draughtsman how has developed a very personal manner. The sinister twist to Souza's imagination tends to express itself either in excessive violence or, distastefully, in pornography. Pictures such as "Seated Warrior in Japanese Armour" or "Beasts of Prey" are undeniably forceful. Unfortunately the savagery expressed in most of his religious paintings is without redeeming spiritual qualities.

THE DAILY TELEGRAPH (U. K.)

JAMES BURR - In Souza's paintings, the darkened image of Man emerges, virulently depicted, with malignancy of character pervading and eroding his features into strangely disturbing ornamental patterns. This horrific formalization has no precedent in contemporary imagery and remains convincing and potently revealing whenever Souza chooses to strike.

ART NEWS (U.S.A.)

EDWIN MULLINS :

Souza's treatment of the figurative image is richly varied. Besides the violence, and the satire, there is a religious quality about his work, a terrible grandeur which even Rouault and Sutherland have not equalled in this century —

MONOGRAPH ON SOUZA

GUY BRETT :

Most critics and dealers and people whose job it is to spot emerging talent cherish the belief that, quite independent of activities of the so called *avant garde*, there are and always will be great figurative painters. Somewhere or other, they feel, there must be a man, a Van Gogh, who is really painting from the bottom of his heart. Rouault was one, although he was at first neglected, even by dealers. F. N. Souza seems the perfect candidate for this category.

THE GUARDIAN (U. K.)

DAVID THOMPSON :

By some curious law that seems to operate among great painters, those with the most macabre or violent images to express often paint in an unusually exquisite or even tender manner. In his new painting, F. N. Souza, an artist always remarkable for harsh and thorny imagery, and able to use it to express feelings of anguished rage, paints with a sort of acid tenderness. The rage is still there. It bursts out in one or two pictures of hideous violence depicting monsters of a brave new, post-nuclear world. But the painting itself is subtler, more sparing and more controlled; it allows the existence of more humane feelings to be assumed — THE TIMES LONDON

JOHN BERGER :

How much Souza's pictures derive from Western art and how much from the hieratic temple traditions of his country, I cannot say. Analysis breaks down and intuition takes over. It is obvious that he is a superb designer and an excellent draughtsman. But I find it quite impossible to assess his work comparatively. Because he straddles several traditions but serves none. One can, of course, avoid the whole problem of what his work means by explaining its entire appeal in formal terms. His use of engraved lines, graffito-like, to enrich the surface of his paint, his sense of pattern tending towards the effect of dark brocaded silks, his method of modelling a figure solid by apparently burnishing the pigment and its tones until the result is reminiscent of a smooth, very simplified but full bronze statue, his occasional use of acid colour, quick and aerial as small flames, his awareness of the weight of the human body-belly keeping it to the ground: all this contributes to the impact of his work. But what about the arrows which stick so ungorily from the necks of his man, what about the sex of his women, triumphant and yet entirely uncultivated, what about his Byzantine looking towns and his cubist analysis of objects? Ignorant before the meaning of these phenomena we can only react intuitively—

NEW STATESMAN (UK)