



PAPER TRAIL

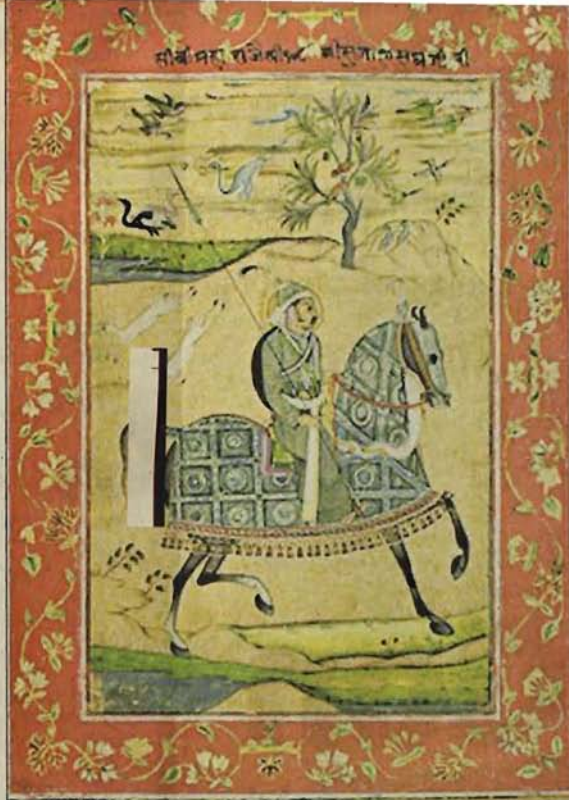
The hammer comes down on a single owner collection that brings together art from the 16th to the 19th century, from the Deccan to Pahari schools of art

VANDANA KALRA

IT IS supposed to be a leaf from an interpretation of the Harivamsa series that tells tales of Krishna. Painted by a Kangra artist sometime after 1830, the watercolour has a raging Indra waging a war on Krishna. The bone of contention is a Parijata tree that has caught the attention of their respective wives. The serene pastel backdrop is the battleground, with the deities on their chariots. Estimated between £20,000 and £30,000, the Pahari illustration is among the 50 lots on sale at the Christie's auction "India on Paper – A Private Collection of Paintings".

Coming from a single owner collection of a Swiss collector, the online sale that closes on June 12 comprises works from six major Indian schools of paintings, ranging from the Himalayan foothills to Karnataka,

dated between the 1600s and the early 19th century. "Its diversity is one of the highlights of the collection. There may not be different mediums like jewellery, silver ware or metal, but there is substantial range within paintings," says Romain Pingannaud, Head of Department, Islamic Art, Christie's. Among his favourites is a painting from Bikaner titled *A Princely Couple on a Terrace*.



PHOTOS COURTESY, CHRISTIE'S

(From far left) An illustration from the Harivamsa series; an equestrian portrait of Raja Sujana Singh; *Princely Couple on a Terrace*



Shiva and Shaivite. The opaque pigments on paper from Punjab depict a multi-armed and ash-covered deity seated on a pink rug, holding various weapons in his radiating arms with coloured clouds above; the other has a red-skinned goddess seated on a pink lotus, lavishly dressed with a cobra coiled about her head.

The auction house is also doing its bit to generate interest in its archives. "To initiate new buyers in the segment, we at times put them with modern and contemporary works at displays," says Pingannaud.

As personal collections become public, the number of quality artwork in the market will escalate, he says.

Dated 1710 AD, the pastel work estimated between £8,000 to £12,000 is probably an illustration from the Bharamasa or Ragamala series. "It makes you feel the love. The couple seated in marble pavilions, with a detailed floral carpet on the floor, makes for a wonderful picture," says Pingannaud.

While the Harivamsa work leads the auction, the other highlights include two paintings

from the 86-page Ragamala series identifiable through tomato-red borders and the striking palette of colours. Possibly painted as early as 1640, these could have been painted for one of the semi-independent Hindu provincial courts of the northern Deccan and a precursor to the "mixed" Deccani-Rajasthani style of Aurangabad. Meanwhile, estimated between £3,000 to £5,000 are two illustrations of

MASTER'S TOUCH

ONLINE BIDS are being invited for artwork from India of the past, but in a grand hall in London, coming under the hammer on June 11 will be works of masters and contemporaries. Leading the sale of Modern and Contemporary South Asian art will be FN Souza's *Man & Woman Grind-*

ing Their Teeth (see left pic). Estimated between £1,000,000 and £1,500,000, the 1957 work borrows from traditional African art and Cubism with both figures painted with mask-like faces and elongated features.

The other highlights include a SH Raza painted in

1958, before he turned to more abstract landscapes, MF Husain's *Untitled (Horses)* from 1965 and Tyeb Mehta's vivid portrait in orange and blue, *Untitled (Seated Woman)* from the 1960s. Representing the contemporaries are biggies Atul Dodiya, Jitish Kallat and Subodh Gupta.