

READERS'

VIEWS

28.10.71

Indian Painting

To The Editor, The Times of India

Sir,—We have received a circular from the Museum of Modern Art, New Delhi stating that the paintings in its collection have been classified "in order to provide a comprehensive idea of the history of modern Indian art" as follows—the majority of the categories being:

1. The Followers of Cubism
2. The Followers of Expressionism
3. The Followers of Surrealism
4. The Followers of Abstract Art
5. Contemporaries in the Traditional Style

We can well imagine the stupefaction of visitors, Indian and foreign, who come to the museum to find room after room under the caption, followers of....followers of....followers of....

Mr. Laxmi Sihare, the newly appointed director of the museum has studied for over five years in the United States on a Rockefeller foundation grant and he should surely know the role played by American museums in creating the legend of their painters in the world.

Nobody can deny that the New American Painting which is acclaimed today in such unreserved terms owes its genesis to those upheavals in ideas generated by the Dada and Surrealist schools, but we are not aware of any American museum which has classified American painting as followers of Dada, Surrealist or any such school. It is the function of a museum to project as forcefully as it possibly can the originality and uniqueness of the work in its collection.

Is it not surprising, then, that the director of our own museum should belittle and insult the painters of his country by dubbing them followers of one school or another?

For the past one year, a large section of Indian artists have boycotted the Lalit Kala Akademi for its inefficiency and mismanagement—the latest *chef d'oeuvre* being the non-arrival of the Indian paintings at the Paris Biennale, though the secretary of the Akademi was duly present to honour the occasion. We have now the director of the most important art museum in the country insidiously working to sabotage contemporary Indian painting.

BAL CHABBDA, ADI DAVIERWALLA, P. DHUMAL, V. S. GAITONDE, RAM KUMAR, NALINI MALANI, GIEVE PATEL, and AKBAR PADAMSEE.

Bombay, October 27.