



Bride's Toilet by Amrita Sher-Gil which won the Gold Medal at the annual exhibition of the Bombay Art Society in 1937.

Homecoming for Amrita

Dubbed as India's Frida Kahlo, Amrita Sher-Gil is one of the nation's most celebrated female modern artists. Her body of work will be on display in the city

JULIE SAM

THE ASIAN AGE

It was in 1936 that Amrita Sher-Gil's *Group of Three Girls* won a gold medal at Bombay Art Society's 46th annual exhibition. This was just one of the milestones that the late 28-year-old artist achieved. To mark the centenary celebration of Amrita's career, the National Gallery of Modern Art (NGMA) launched a month-long exhibition titled *Amrita Sher-Gil: The Passionate Quest* on Saturday.

Art historian Yashodhara Dalmia has curated the exhibition, which comprises 95 works. Yashodhara divided the works into four perspectives: Threshold, Icon and Iconoclastic, Hungarian Manifestation and Indian Journey.

At the age of 16, Amrita shifted to Italy with her mother after she expressed her desire to learn painting. There she studied at the Grande Chaumière under Pierre Vaillant and Lucien Simon and later at École des Beaux-Arts (1930-34) where she was



An unfinished painting by Amrita Sher-Gil

inspired by artists Paul Cézanne and Paul Gauguin. Her works during her Parisian years are also a part of the current exhibition. Yashodhara said, "The outstanding works, when she just started painting, present such sensuousness and elasticity. You see a glimpse of her in her works, whether she was troubled or excited, she was always intensely involved

ARTISTIC BENT

- In 1932, one of her most important works, *Young Girls*, got her to become an associate of the Grand Salon in Paris in 1933.
- She is known as the most expensive woman painter of India. Amrita Sher-Gil's 1939 painting *Village Scene* earned ₹6.9 crore at Sotheby's auction in March 2006.
- Though she was friends with Jawaharlal Nehru, she never painted the Prime Minister because she thought he was "too good looking".
- She is said to be the inspiration behind the famous Urdu play, *Tuandhi Amrita* (1992), starring Shahana Azmi and the late Farooque Shaikh.

with each of her works. She merged her Western training with Indian art. This is the magnitude of her achievement, where she crosses boundaries with her language."

In 1934, the artist came to India, after she believed that "in some strange way that there lay my destiny as a painter." It was on her return that she rediscovered and reinvented herself as an artist. Her trips to Ajanta and Ellora

brought about a marked change in her works — she introduced classical Indian art in her work. Her works during this time-period include *Bride's Toilet*, *Brahmcharis*, and *South Indian Villagers Going to Market*.

The artist, decided to shift to Lahore with her husband Victor Egan in 1941, which was considered to be a major cultural center, and very much a part of India. However, just days before her first solo show in Lahore, she met with a tragic death in December. Pheroza Godrej, chairperson of advisory committee of NGMA said, "There is variety, depth and physicality in her works. One should look at the number of self-portraits that she has painted. She was a maverick, enigmatic, a daredevil, a feminist and more. She experienced life to the fullest. She formally started her work at 16 and left us at 28: What a body of work she has left behind." The exhibition was showcased in Bengaluru and New Delhi before it came to the city.

From June 1 to June 30, At NGMA, Fort



(top) Amrita Sher-Gil Self-portrait (7) 1930 - 1932; and *Three Girls*, 1935 by the artist