

GABIO, 9th August, 1987

My dear Krishna,

Receiving a letter from you, is indeed sheer delight. But the last one from Simla, dated 25th July, touched me deeply. I feel privileged that in a moment of exalted loneliness you communicated to me, your intimate feelings & ideas concerning life & work, simply & intensely. Once a while, no quotations, neither Eliot nor Shakespeare. You seem nearest to your inner world, the letter is heartfelt - truly poetic.

I am sitting under my beloved olive trees. In front is a small red canvas, paints & brushes, calling me irresistibly. I have chosen to concentrate on this blank sheet of paper. Yes I do write as I paint, with enormous concentration, and even if the worst ideas in the process of writing demand greater effort, both seem to be the natural result of living, working & thinking. I will like to give you news from here, my impressions of the Geneva Show & briefly my plans during the months to come.

To start with, I will send you the catalogue of the Exhibition "Coups de Cœur" organised by Mrs Helen Barbier. I attended the show on the 1st July & it was indeed very well presented. The vernissage was well attended, some 500 people, warm & enthusiastic reaction, enriched by the presence of Jehagir Nicholson, Chester & David Idemitz, Maghool Hussain, Rambir Kaleka, Ashna & Kekoo Gandhi & other common friends. The figuratives dominated, but with sufficiently significant work. You had 4 large paintings, formally sound & charged with feelings, which went beyond the narrative preoccupations of many others. I truly liked them. Kaleka's work was a revelation to me & his two large paintings along with Manjit Bawa's imaginative canvases showed new directions today open to contemporary Indian painting. And of course there was important canvases by Giree Patel, Bhupen Khakhar, Jogen Chowdhury, Subramanyam & of course Tyeb Mehta. I have great fascination for Tyeb's work, the strong form impact & colour & space coordination with its implied musical resonances. Gaitonde<sup>Ram</sup> & I were placed together. I was not so well represented, with the three canvases they chose from the Charter collection. I did not complain, I only look at the positive side of things & I know that this exhibition is also the



Shows in London, Oxford, Paris, New York + Washington are important manifestations + that Contemporary Indian art is seen on the world map in a big way. There were other galleries - Bal, Akbar, Shiekh, but every commission has the liberty to choose + <sup>has to</sup> take his responsibility. The overall impact was good + that is what matters to me in relation to art expression in India today.

Helen + Guy Barbier financed the catalogue + their efforts to make the show possible is most laudable. Your article makes a fine reading, a collection point of view + it is very stimulating in the context. I stayed two days in Geneva, alas Janine could not come - even for this short visit - as another just cannot be left alone. I had a vast room with two beds in a luxurious hotel, costing 1500 F.F. a day - Happily, I was a guest, was treated with great "égards", surrounded by kind friends + beautiful women. Only the other bed remained unused!

I returned back to Gorbio, where I have undertaken many reparations in the small piece of land where my studio was built + which is now a little paradise. It's extraordinary that we have been able to make it with meagre means, in the most traditional French provincial style, a "Lieu de travail", "un espace vital", which along with our home up in the village is a very convenient + working solution. I am so happy, being nearer nature, with my dress + plants, with my cat "Bonni" a village cat which came to us, as if from heaven. I also spend a lot of time in the garden, drawing from the earth, + admiring myshes + energy of the life force manifest all over. My recent preoccupation "Germination" is the logical "suite" of the "Bindu", the seed + my obsessions are real. I do believe that this the most important part of my life. But without false modesty, I must say that the dynamics of "ENERGY", both in life + in painting are not that simple to explain or express - either in words or in paint. And this is the objective towards which I will like to concentrate all my energy. The outer aspect is of little interest. Indian painting will not be important, if we paint indian things, either the lotus or the Indian people. Its significance lies in the concept, the vision + the vitality + a personal assimilation of things perceived. It's irrelevant what are the international currents, how many exhibitions one does, how many paintings ~~one~~ one sells + at what prices. Can we reach the utmost center of



gravity, situated deep within oneself, perceives it in silence + launch the first genuine cry - inaudible like a murmur. But who knows it can develop like an unknown, unheard + unpredicted music.

The small red canvas is staring at me. But the Gods are absent. You won't believe that I cannot work without the presence of divine forces. They are tangible + real. I have to pray before I start working. They are a link between known + unknown, they charge me to a state of "unawareness" + it is only in that "Sama", "Stimung", dream like state, that my best paintings come, without my fully knowing about how + why. It's a state of grace, inapplicable + often you have to wait. I am cancelling my Paris' exhibition scheduled for Nov. Dec. 87 at the Pierre Parat Gallery + will like to concentrate this year + next year in the programmes in India. In October I have to show in Norway, alas programmes of exhibitions here are fixed up in advance + invariably we have to respect them.

Last week, wednesday, Henning Holck Larsen visited us in Gorbio, with Meneka a French dancer. We had a great day together, talking on everything on earth, he looked at paintings, we lunched in the village restaurant, he climbed up the village to see our home, an old peasant farm, dating back 14th century. He will go to Geneva to see the Indian exhibition, he looked well + sturdy, though 80 years + his love of life is intact. It's wonderful we have known him, it's great that such intimate + warm relationships have been possible for me, for us, during our life time.

Krishna Gandhi too will be visiting us. I am ~~not~~ poorly represented in India with my latest work - the only period that matters, that I am again keen to bring recent works - I am seriously thinking to bring out another brochure with some latest paintings. So we will have much to talk about. Though isolated here, I have constant visits + of consequence. I hope that you too will come one day + see this part of France, how we live + work + how near I am to India. News from home - and I am connected, grieve me. The French press covers up only the sad, tragic aspects. Never, not only once, the positive aspects are presented. And they are there,

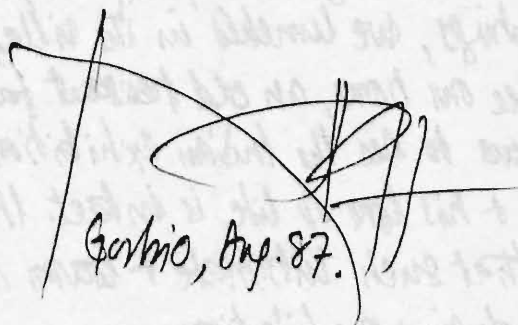


+ surely need projection, once a while.

This letter may be sent along with the catalogue. May be it will be sent separately. I am sending both to Simla. I had written to Ram - I sent him transparencies of my recent paintings. Perhaps he could not show you. Herewith enclosed some photographs of the studio - just for fun. I will come to visit Simla, its nice that you can leave Delhi & the heat & the innumerable preoccupations which though so necessary in our art world today, take such a lot of your time.

Please give my love to Renu, Rasika & Tarini. "EROT (1949)" to mother. I have always known you as a die-hard intellectual. I am so happy to discover a man with a lion's heart.

Imagine, this letter has been written in a single sitting. With all its faults & spelling mistakes - about which believe me I have no complex - only ideas matter - I am sending this, with my fond love.

  
Gorbio, Aug. 87.

Please note our address in Gorbio  
where we will stay till 5th October.

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