

BIO-DATA

Francis Newton Souza was born in Goa, India in 1924. He studied at the J J School of Art, Bombay; Central School of Art, London; Ecole des Beaux Arts, Paris. His major works upto 1962 are reproduced in a monograph : SOUZA by Edwin Mullins. He has had numerous shows in India, Europe and America, and retrospective exhibitions in London '51, New Delhi 65, Leicester '67, and Detroit '68. His published writings include articles in **Encounter** magazine, **Studio International**, **Art News** and **Review**, **Illustrated Weekly of India** and an autobiography. **WORDS AND LINES**, (1959). He founded the Progressive Artists Group in 1947 (Ara, Raza, Husain and most of the mainstream artists today were sometime members of PAG). Souza won the Italian Government scholarship, Guggenheim Award, the John Moore's (Liverpool) Prize and Bombay Art Society Prizes. He is listed in **who's who International**, **who's who in the world**, **who's who in Art** and **numerous reference books**. His paintings are in the Baroda Museum, Baroda, National Gallery, New Delhi; Tate Gallery, London; Wakefield Gallery, Wakefield; England. National Gallery, Melbourne. He now lives in New York, U.S.A.

For CULTURE, AND NOT OTHER VULTURES, IN DUBAI

Not being a Linda Blandford, a "modified hangout journalist" belonging to the "other camp", there's no reason for me to be critical of the Arab world which is causing envy in the West by its growing power.

The Dubai airport is a neat architectural structure, a cross between a tent and a mosque, if such a construction is possible.

My hosts and sponsors, Dr. & Mrs. Aziz Kurtha received me at the airport. I had met him and his family in Pakistan last year and in my mind, had the possibility of a group portrait done in a "diptych."

Having got the group portrait off my brushes as it were, I began taking a look at Dubai and its environs. I noted that Fahidi Fort which was formerly a jail is now a museum. This I thought is very encouraging for artists who are often mistaken to be vagrants.

Then there are these fashion shops and restaurants with suggestive, chichi names like Miss Egypt and !! Pop-Eye, but for sex a verile man can hardly find anything more uplifting than the painted plaster-of-Paris mannequins, with rigid nipples, dressed in see-thrus staring vacantly out of shop windows in stores like "The Hostess."

I mean that coming from New York City as I do, that randy, no holds barred megalopolis of skyscrapers wedged between the Hudson and the East River, I find Dubai a peaceful, salubrious, asexual town quietly settled by the creek that makes me feel I ain't being sent up it. In short, I like this town. The stress of mercantilizing has not yet become frenetic enough to cause the coronaries it does in America.

But Dubai could do with more art, the right kind. In my thirtyfive years of experienec in the field of art, I have come to realize that there are not many people who can differentiate Fine Art from *Kitsch*. i. e. art or literary works, etc., having broad popular appeal but little or no aesthetic merit. The difference of course is also in the long run: Fine Art appreciates in value. Needless to say, kitsch depreciates, becoming junk.

Fine Art has, frankly, yet to find a place in the culture of the United Arab Emirates. There are great Muslim artists living in Pakistan today : Sadequain, Ahmed Parvez, among others. In India two of the best known painters are Muslim : M. F. Husain and S. H. Raza. In the past Islamic art has depicted even the prophet riding into paradise, as in Persian minitures. So strictly speaking, image-making is not forbidden in Islam. Those who object to art on religious grounds could be doing it on ignorant grounds.

This first exhibition of my work is hopefully the beginning of cultural strides that will I believe soon follow in the U. A. E. making the Middle East a growing center of art and culture for which it certainly possesses all the natural cum financial resources.

F. N. SOUZA

Dubai, January 1977