

Progress of the Progressives

This was a group that shattered the definition of art. The Bombay Progressive Artists' Group formed in 1947 midwived modern Indian art, with Francis Newton Souza, M.F. Husain and S.H. Raza as its earliest members. The group reached the peak of its creative ferment in the 1950s with the support of two key patrons in Bombay—Kekoo Gandhy of the Chemould Art Gallery and Kali Pundole of the Pundole Art Gallery. By 1956, when the group disbanded, all the artists, including V.S. Gaitonde, Akbar Padamsee, Ram Kumar, Tyeb Mehta and Mohan Samant, had found their own distinct modernist idioms, and some of them had exhibited their art in India and outside.

The 1950s marked a phase of self-discovery for Indian artists. Around the same time, the faculty of fine arts, The Maharaja Sayajirao University of Baroda, had given rise to a new modernism, also, like the Bombay Progressive movement, a merging of European formalism and Indian traditions.

Sanjukta Sharma



◀ Bombay Progressive Artists' Group members—(front row, from left) F.N. Souza, K.H. Ara, H.A. Gade; and (second row, from left) M.F. Husain, S.K. Bakre and S.H. Raza.