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"Lewensdale"

Simla 2

12th June 1968 -

Dearest Raza & Janine, I'm sorry that you haven't heard from me since I left Paris. The flight to Athens was pleasant and it was wonderful to find Rena waiting for me the other end. I felt awfully exhausted and spent the whole day in bed, sleeping. In the evening we went to see a Greek tragedy performed in the old Roman Theatre at the foot of the Acropolis. It was quite an experience and I would have meant more if I had been able to understand it! We spent a day in Corinth & lived amongst its ruins - saw the place where St. Paul first preached Christianity in Europe - all very interesting but really if I had to spend a lot of time amongst ruins I'd get bored & become a ruin myself.

It was wonderful - really wonderful coming back home again. Our plane landed in Bombay on the 2nd at 4.30 am. and sure enough Bal was there to meet us, so was Rena's brother. We were most warmly met and spent the day with Bal & Gai looking at their new work & talking. I must say that I am most impressed by Bal's recent work. His last 2 canvases are tremendous and I think that he is going to emerge as an important force in Indian painting. Gai too is good but I feel that the entire

Complex is too simple & not enough. But within its own limits it is inventive and moving. As Akbar put it "It doesn't need to be pushed, it is so much of the times that it will move itself."

I couldn't meet Ram in Delhi as he is in Tringal. Satish Gujral and his wife are here and I have spent a day with them. There was much talking, more from his side than from mine! In a way this was just as well as I have been out of touch & I wanted to hear more than speak myself! He is a complex character - really not a bad fellow, though his particular handicap creates unnecessary misunderstandings in his own mind. I was accused of being over friendly with Husain & all of us were responsible for making him into the public hero that he is. While it is true that we are very friendly, I don't see how I, or any of us, have been responsible for creating Husain's public image. In any case what the hell does it matter to us. What have we to do with anyone's public image. This in fact is Satish's problem, he is tremendously ambitious & is irked by the success of others. I tried to persuade him that there was no "clique" or "group" existed amongst us. We were asked to participate in various exhibitions and we did. He wanted to know why he had been excluded & the only conclusion that he came to was that we didn't think that he was good enough. Quite naturally he didn't share this view with us.

He also said that he was going to suggest that Indian artists living outside India should not be included in exhibitions which the Lalit Kala would send abroad. I asked him his reasons & he said that artists living abroad were forging opportunities for themselves which were not available for the painters living here. I didn't think that this was any kind of an argument & told him so. The idea in sending exhibitions abroad was not to give artists a "chance" but for the country to show its best. Satish said that we should leave personal friendships aside and think dispassionately that he was very friendly with you & Akbar but all the same he thought that other painters should be given a chance. It looks as if this maybe mooted in the Lalit Kala - I know that Sarayaal thinks along these lines too. I shall try & do whatever I can to make sense prevail but then I am not one of the eminent artists on the board of L.K. nor frankly do I really want to be. I am happy to be working on my own. I'm telling you all this because I think you should be in the know of what is going on. I personally think that if Satish is incorporated (God knows how) in exhibition in future & is given the feeling that no one is hostile towards him, he may prove to be quite useful. He is keen that we should all get together and build an institution which would eventually be a Museum of Modern Art. He said that he could get land in the heart of Delhi from the Municipality & then we would all contribute towards the building of a museum. There are people &

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firms who would be willing to give donations. The idea is not dissimilar to the one we discussed in Paris. ~~Let us~~ Discuss this with Akbar & let me have your views. I feel that we should for once do something instead of only making plans. — It looks as if Kunika is about to fold up. Richard, nice though he is, is really pretty inefficient and there has been a singular lack of policy in the running of this gallery. Kumar on the other hand is doing well — he has even been selling Sultan Ali who as you know is a clerk in Lalit Kala. I am told that paintings have been selling pretty well in spite of the Emergency.

I am enclosing a couple of cuttings from the ~~the~~ Times of India which will amuse you and Akbar. The reference to Leicester Galleries closing down was rectified by me by a letter to the Statesman which has appeared today. I don't know how Akbar will take the remark about him coming from a family of industrialists. It is just the kind of remark people used to make about me & the bank. I shall be writing to Akbar shortly, till then give him & Holang my love. I could not see Ayaz Peerbhoy in Bombay. I tried phoning him but there was no answer so I left the Courtenier catalogues with Bal to be delivered to Ayaz & I wrote to him as soon as I reached Simla. I'm expecting a letter from him. Maybe he will write to Akbar direct. I had also raised the question of exhibiting with him.

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Sonza created a stink in Bombay & everyone I have met has spoken about his publicity stunts. Anyway it seems that they worked and he sold his show. This reminds me - could you ask Akher to send me the photograph of Buffet's painting which Sonza used as a blue print. I left it behind in his studio. Avinash Chandra succeeded in breaking any friendships that existed in India. He is supposed to have said that there wasn't an Indian painter other than himself, who could even draw a line!

I shall be spending a fortnight or so in Delhi before I leave and a week in Bombay with Bal. I have not quite decided when I'll be in Paris but I expect that it will be sometime in the beginning of September. I hope that you & Akher will be in Paris as there is no other purpose in my coming. I expect that I shall be there for about four days or so - a short stay. Please do let me know if you are going to be in Paris at the time. I want to plan accordingly.

Haven't been able to do any work though I am constantly drawing.

It was absolutely marvellous to see the children again & we got a tremendous welcome complete with garlands & flowers. I must end this now. This has been a news letter - sometimes these are useful. I have received the same idiotic questionnaires from Raman to which I shall reply. You must do so too.

Fond love to you both - The ever same
Krishen