

# The 'same' Nandalal hangs in NGMA, goes under hammer

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## SPOT THE DIFFERENCE



Painting at auction, taken from website of Bid & Hammer



Painting with NGMA, taken from NGMA's catalogue

**A**BSORBED in deep thought, the woman sitting under a tree in Nandalal Bose's wash and tempera presents a peaceful picture. She is oblivious of the controversy that now surrounds her. She is not one of a kind. She has a twin — al-

legedly fake.

Two versions of the work are available — with the National Gallery of Modern Art (NGMA) and with auction house Bid & Hammer. The one with Bid & Hammer features in the list of works that are set to go under the hammer at the "Significant Indian Art" auction to be held

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## 'Same' Nandalal hangs in NGMA

in Delhi on June 27.

Titled *Woman Sitting Under a Tree*, the 20x33.2 cm work with NGMA is currently on display. "The painting in question with Accession No. 1101 with the National Gallery of Modern Art... has a seal of the artist on the painting and is currently on display at the NGMA. The (other) work in question would need to be verified and authenticated," Rajeev Lochan, director of NGMA, told *The Indian Express* in an email response.

But Ankush Dadha, director of Bid & Hammer, said he is certain about the authenticity of his 17x11.5 inch work. "It comes from a distinguished collection, where it has been for over 30 years. I have not seen the work in the NGMA and would not like to comment on it," he said.

A Kolkata-based collector of Bengal art, who did not want to be named, said, "Photographs and prints have edi-

tions, not paintings. Why would Nandalal have two copies of the same work?"

Comprising 86 lots, the Bose tempera is not the only work in the auction that is generating a debate. Artist Samindranath Majumdar, grandnephew of Hemendranath Mazumdar, also raised questions. "Three of works of Hemendranath in the auction appear to be copies. I haven't seen the works physically but from the image they don't seem to be works made by him. I am strongly doubtful. I'm also not sure about an Abanindranath Tagore hand print with signature and many other works," he said.

Majumdar is using Facebook to discuss the works that come under hammer. Details of the three works have been uploaded to invite discussion. In case of the 1917 oil *Aviman*, he said that the "thickness of pigment and ageing of surface" in the canvas is missing.

His reference point is an image of the work that appeared in the album "Art of Mr H Mazumdar" published by The Indian Academy Of Art.

Another work in question, according to him, is an oil from the "After Bath Series" in the auction. "Hemendranath had two versions of several works, one in water-colour and another oil. The oil of this work sold at Christie's in 2002," said Majumdar.

Bid & Hammer's Dadha said both the works in the auction are from distinguished private collections and he has the sale and gift certificates in his possession. "The oil from the 'After Bath Series' was in the collection of Chandan Malakar, who was an associate of Nandalal Bose. Samindranath Majumdar has no credence or background to question the authenticity and provenance of the works," he said.

On Lot Number 28 in the auction — a 1941 portrait of

Abanindranath Tagore on the personal letterhead of Hemendranath that has misspelled

"HEMEN"EN"DRANATH" — Dadha said, "There is a slight smudge with ink, the artist could have just continued writing it over again. It is on the letter head and cannot be questioned."

"We have the required papers in place and each work in the auction is checked by our team of experts and us. We do not have doubts about the authenticity of the works," he said.

This is not the first time Bid & Hammer has found itself the midst of an art controversy. In 2010, concerns were reported on a FN Souza and Rabindranath Tagore that featured in an auction. The auction house is also fighting a court battle with art collector Kiran Nadar over a work that she bid for and later retracted because she had doubts about its authenticity.