

Rare Gaitonde pushes hope

It is expected to fetch \$2 million to \$3 million at Sotheby's sale in New York today

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MODERNIST Vasudeo S Gaitonde's painting is estimated to fetch \$2 million to \$3 million in international auction house Sotheby's sale of modern and contemporary south Asian art in New York on Wednesday.

Gaitonde is set to be the subject of a major retrospective at New York's Guggenheim Museum this autumn, making him one of the first modern Indian artists to be honoured with a retrospective in the US.

A representation of the artist's *Painting No 3* was displayed as part of a travelling exhibition here earlier this year. This work is the only painting by the artist currently on the auction market and is part of the series of monochromatic works that Gaitonde showed in New York in the 1960s.

"Because of the upcoming Guggenheim retrospective there is also a lot of accelerating interest in the Gaitonde works," Yamini Mehta, international director of Indian and south east Asian art said.

"I think it will be a very interesting idea to reunite this painting with *Painting No 1* and *Painting No 4*, which is in Moma collection in New York. It would be interesting to see how it will look in a room," Mehta said.

In June 2013, *Painting*



ON SALE: Painting No3 is part of the series of monochromatic works that Gaitonde showed in New York in the 1960s

No1 was sold at over Rs 6 crore (\$1,088,403) to a private US collector and topped Sotheby's modern and contemporary sale.

"Back in June last year the painting from the same series made over a million dollars and it was the highest priced work in that auction season," Mehta said.

In December 2013, a jewel toned landscape painted by Gaitonde in 1979 fetched a world record for modern Indian art when it was sold for a whopping Rs 23.7 crore (\$3.7 million) at auction house Christie's debut sale in India.

Mehta said works by Gaitonde were achieving higher prices at auction because of the rarity factor. "...The fact that there are not that many works by Gaitonde out there compared to other artists from his generation — be it MF Husain or SH Raza or FN

Souza, who perhaps maybe bigger household names — may be part of the reason that the prices are what they are," Mehta said.

Also part of the March 19 sale are contemporary works by artists like Jitish Kallat and Ravinder Reddy, that were in several important exhibitions in Europe and America. Artists such as Anju Dodiya and Seher Shah complete the contemporary offerings.

Dodiya's *Victor* is a diptych featuring a delicately painted enigmatic ruler (with elements of self-portraiture) paired with historical textbook illustrations (estimated at \$30,000 to \$50,000).

The sale is culled from a variety of private collections and is notable for a number of rare works, most of which have never before appeared on the market, the auctioneers said.