

Exhibition: INDIA MODERNA
IVAM Institut Valencià d'Art Modern
11 December 2008 - 15 February 2009
Curated by: Juan Guardiola

The exhibition, the result of the collaboration between Casa Asia, the Spanish Ministry of Culture and the IVAM, proposes an overview of modern and contemporary art in one of the most culturally dynamic country in Asia.

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The exhibition *India Moderna* (Modern India), which has materialised thanks to the agreement between Casa Asia and the IVAM, presents in Valencia the most important exhibition on an international scale of modern and contemporary art in India, one of the most dynamic countries from a cultural point of view. The exhibition, which comprises over 500 works made by over 100 artists, covers a period of more than two centuries and when it closes in February it will coincide with the contemporary art fair ARCO, in whose 2009 edition India is to be the guest country.

The exhibition addresses issues concerned with the history, culture, art and social reality in India from the late 18th century until the present day. The exhibition, divided into an introduction and five chronological historic areas, comprises a tour of the "colonial" past and the "global" present of India by means of texts, documentary objects, archive material and artistic proposals. *India Moderna* tells the story of modernity rooted in a rich solid artistic tradition that dates back to the Exchange between Europeans and Indian society and the influence they exerted upon each other. As the curator of the exhibition, Juan Guardiola, points out, "The major thesis of the exhibition shows that modernity was not only an artistic practice in the Western World, but occurred on an international scale, so we can speak about several simultaneous modernities, all of which nourish and configure a global modernity".

The catalogue of the exhibition reproduces the works displayed and contains six essays by the specialists John Falconer, R. Siva Kumar, K.G. Subramanyan, Deepak Ananth, Geeta Kapur and the curator of the exhibition, Juan Guardiola, and also publishes an anthology of 68 texts written by authors like Mark Twain, Rabindranath Tagore, Henri Michaux, Salman Rushdie, Le Corbusier, Jack Kerouac, Pier Paolo Pasolini, Shashi Tharoor and Arundhati Roy.

India Moderna

Eclipse of the British Raj. The fine arts in colonial India

The British presence in India, known as the Raj, was not consolidated until the 1857 uprising. On that date the dominion of the British East Indian Company in India came to an end and the territories then depended on the British Empire under the rule of a viceroy. The British legacy brought about the political unification of the subcontinent and the introduction of a Western educational system, centralised administration and a national network of communication infrastructures. The fine arts, along with photography and the cinema, introduced by the British are artistic media that illustrate the transformation of society in colonial India.

Modernity. The Bengala & Shantiniketan schools

At the turn of the century great interest in their cultural heritage began to spread among the Indian people. A cultural movement known as the "Bengali renaissance" was born in the late 19th century. Social reformers and intellectuals from the Indian bourgeois elite were at the head of this movement. It was in this renewal of traditions as cultural ideology of nationalism that the Bengali school appeared in the first decade of the 20th century. It was followed by the Shantiniketan school as the major centre of influence in modern art in India before it gained its independence.

Mother India. Culture in Nehru's State

The 15th August 1947, the era of British dominion came to an end. The new nations of India and Pakistan were born on that date. The division of the Indian subcontinent brought about the mass emigration of Hinduists and Muslims, on both sides of the border, and the genocide of thousands of people. After the murder of Mahatma Gandhi in 1948, the Prime Minister, Jawaharlal Nehru, established the basis of a modern national State with democratic politics, planned economy and a position of non alignment. This part of the exhibition narrates its discourse about the singularity of the art and culture produced in India under the idea of national identity.

Karma Cola. West travels east

Nehru died in 1964. By that time India was no longer an unknown country but had become a nation full of vitality. Art and spirituality in India were starting to attract a new generation of young people who, disenchanted with the West, were fascinated by oriental philosophy. After the summer of love in California and the incidents that took place in France in May, the trip to India became a rite of initiation that involved getting to know the country but also led to the "commercialisation" of its culture. This section deals with the impact of the Orient on Western art and culture in fields like literature, the cinema and psychedelic art.

State of emergency. Art under the Congress Party and Shiv Jena-BJP

In 1975 the Prime Minister Indira Gandhi declared a state of emergency and proceeded to censor the press and imprison dissidents, intellectuals and activists until it was called off in 1977. Here we see the art produced during that period, where, a far cry from the collective spirit of the years immediately after independence, a strong individualism came to the fore together with a return to painting as an artistic medium. The word

“emergency” not only alludes to the political situation but to the atmosphere of fundamentalist religious nationalism and ethnic violence in the decade of the nineties.

Global India. The Dispersión of a multicultural subcontinent

Today India is undergoing spectacular economic growth which has turned it into an up-and-coming power on a global scale. Economic reform has inundated the country with consumer goods and brought about the emergence of a prosperous middle class. In the field of computer technology India has become a world leader in the development of software, but despite such great progress, unemployment and poverty still exist along with the threat of nuclear armament. This last section narrates in the present tense the reality of India in an international context where the Exchange of ideas, commodities and people has done away with the concept of culture as national heritage.

The exhibition is structured in six sections. The first two are dedicated to colonial India and can be seen in Sala Pinazo; other four, focusing on India as an independent country, can be viewed in Galería 3.

Further information can be obtained at the website www.indiamoderna.es, where the catalogue of the exhibition may be viewed.