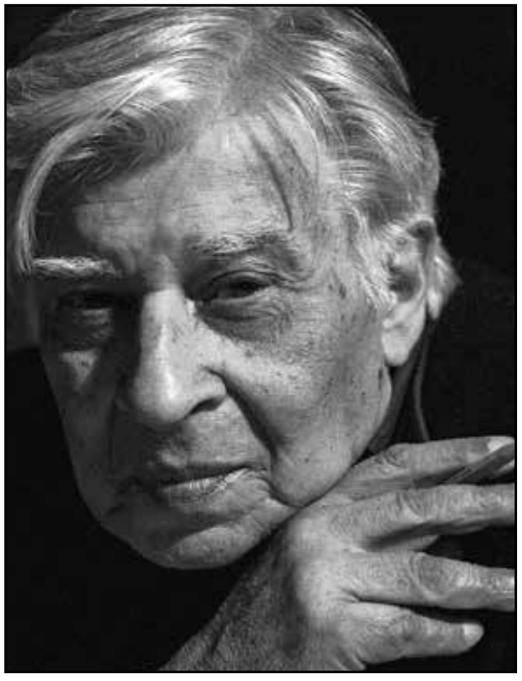






In my 100th year

AN ALBUM OF MEMORIES

K K Khanna

SAFFRONART ALEPH

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KRISHEN AT THE AGE OF ONE AND A HALF YEARS





Krishen Khanna has lived a rich life in every way possible. Such is the richness of his life that it has been a privilege that we have all shared. We have all been touched repeatedly by the softness of his heart and his larger-than-life laughter.

He has and continues to play every role of his life with utmost dignity and sincerity.

Among the numerous beautiful moments, each of which deserves its own book, we remember with fondness a few memories. Many remember stories about his compassion and courage, from Himmat Shah's recollections about how Krishen fought to stop him from being removed from Garhi Studio to his unending encouragement of all artists and never missing an opportunity to further their interests, even buying works himself to prove to them their worth.

Whenever we meet with Krishen for a meal, and he tastes something that he likes, he always thinks of his wife, Renu. It is only after we ask for the dish to be packed for him to take back home for her would he take the next bite. His love for his family and friends is unending and unconditional. It is wonderful to see the simplicity and joy in everything he encounters.

Recently we sent some mangoes to Krishen, and he called to tell us a story that enhanced our love for mangoes exponentially. He recalled an event from his student days in England when he received one single mango from home. Krishen shared that one mango among all his friends and professors without getting to taste it himself. He washed the seed and kept it wrapped in a handkerchief in his dorm cupboard so that he could unwrap and smell it to remind him of home. After hearing this, we now eat mangoes with a fresh sense of love and respect.

There are a set of unique art watches—a collaboration with a Swiss watchmaker and Krishen that is documented in this book. When Krishen finally came to see these timepieces, he had tears of joy rolling down his cheeks. Instead of us showing our gratefulness for his participation in the many projects that he has done with us over the last two decades, he ended up showing gratitude towards us and everyone who assists with his projects. No matter how small the contribution, his appreciation is always abundant.

Having Krishen as a part of our lives has been a blessing for us as it has been for everyone that has had the fortune to share their lives with him.

This book is an album of memories for Krishen to cherish and for us to remember how to live a generous and beautiful life.

-TANUJ BERRY & SAMAN MALIK
MAY 2023, NEW DELHI



For a quarter of a century, I have had the pleasure of looking after my father as well as his oeuvre of art works and his place as one of India's greatest modernists.

In the past few years, from shows in London as well as a stellar set of shows at Saffronart India, I have watched in silence the sophistication of his epoch of evolution and his love for painting everyday.

Even during the pandemic, he would reflect on his days with his friends, the Progressives, and narrate little anecdotes.

He is the 'last man standing.' As we embrace the 100th year of his life, this book is an album of memories along with some of his works--an attempt to create a personal aesthetic of remembrance. As an artist, a person, as a father, my father has been a perfectionist in every way. His life is one of devotion and service to the arts and I have watched him grow older with grace and elegance.

I thank Tanuj Berry and Saman Malik for this epic publication and their unstinting support all these years. I thank Pankaj Sahni for looking after the commercial aspect of his art over the last decade. I thank Dinesh and Minal Vazirani for their presence in our lives and their generosity of spirit. Also a huge thanks and everlasting love to all friends and family who have been around us and enriched our lives in so many ways.

I remain, as always, a son who admires his father through thick and thin…

Happy Birthday, Dear Dad!

-KARAN KHANNA



Dear Krishen,

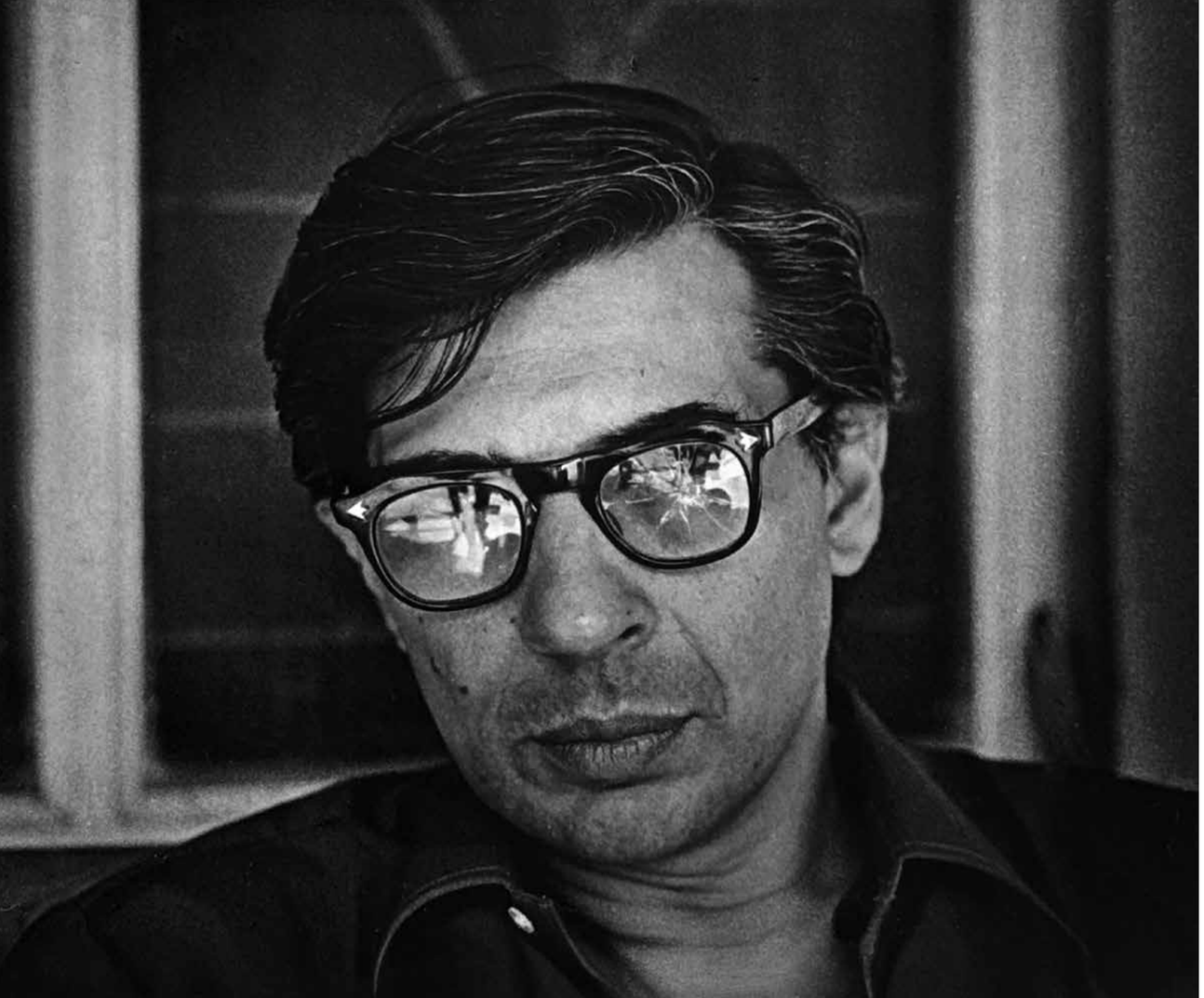
We have chosen to write this as a letter to you to say thank you for being a friend, a mentor, and a guide, and for endless conversations with your laughter and incomparable wit. As we write this in 2024, thinking back to our years together, we are also reminded that it's a fraction compared to your 99 years of age, experience, and living life in colour as you so often like to mention.

Having crossed continents to study in England, to returning to a newly independent India in the midst of a churning uncertainty, to rising in the world of banking and then to having the courage to step away and chart a pivotal career as an artist—you truly are, 'The gentleman of our time,' as your friend Souza would have emphatically stated!

We look to you now not only for your incredible contribution to Indian art over six decades, but also for your philosophy, your insight, and your role as a keeper of history. Your memories and stories about the early years of post-Independence Indian modernism and individual anecdotes about your contemporaries have fleshed out a past that informs our identity even now.

Thank you for your years of contribution, for sharing the sense of camaraderie that defined and supported the artists who, together with you, shaped the visual language of Indian art. Most of all, thank you for the art that has allowed an unparalleled creative expression. You are, and always will be, an inspiration and a guiding light.

-MINAL & DINESH VAZIRANI



AN ALBUM OF MEMORIES

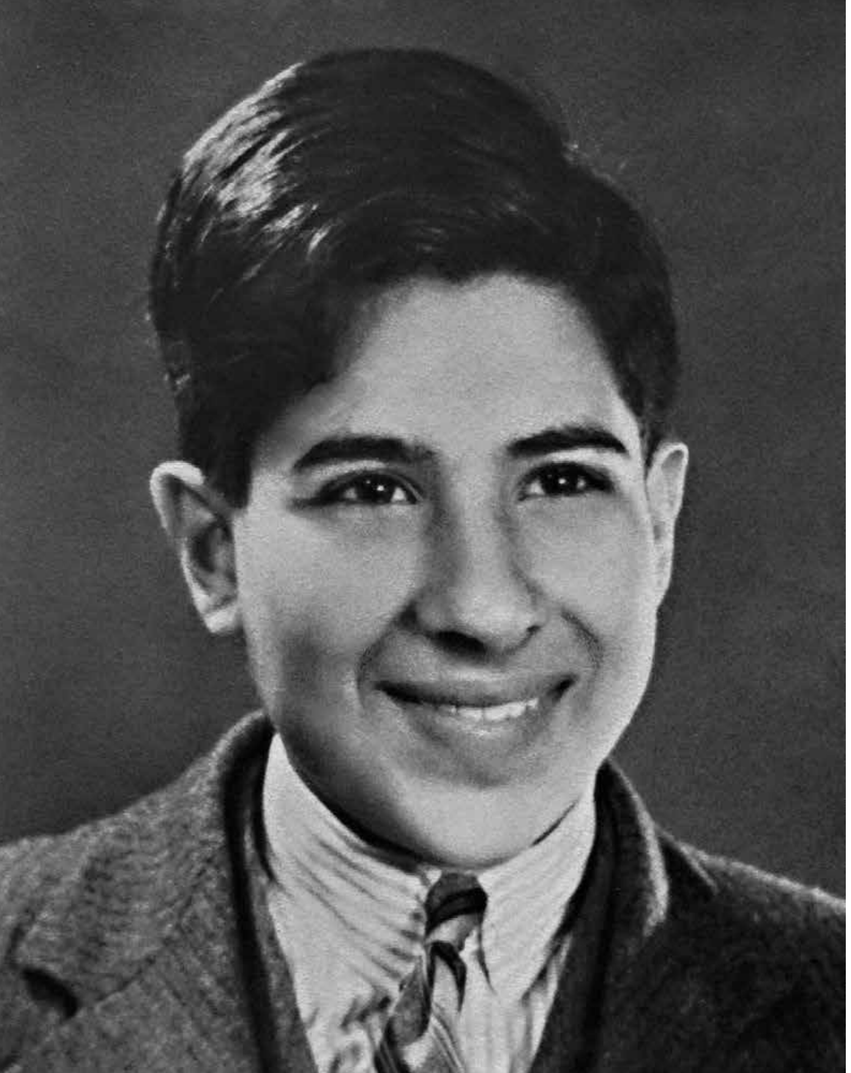
5TH JULY 1925...

~

FOR WHOM THE BELL TOLLS

No man is an island,
Entire of itself.
Each is a piece of the continent,
A part of the main.
If a clod be washed away by the sea,
Europe is the less.
As well as if a promontory were.
As well as if a manor of thine own
Or of thine friend's were.
Each man's death diminishes me,
For I am involved in mankind.
Therefore, send not to know
For whom the bell tolls,
It tolls for thee.

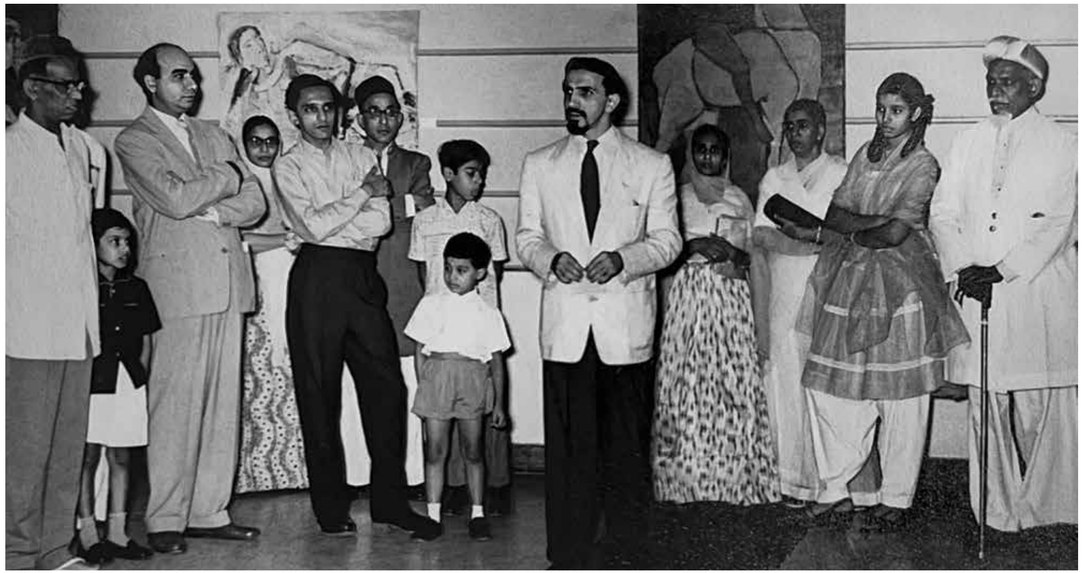
-'MEDITATION 17', JOHN DONNE



Krishen Khanna was born in Lyallpur (now Faisalabad, Pakistan) on 5 July 1925 to Kahan Chand Khanna and Shiela Seth. When he was two years old, his family moved to Lahore. His early studies were at the Sacred Heart High School in the city.

Krishen's father was a teacher in an intermediate college in Lahore. In 1930, he went to England to pursue his doctorate. He brought back to Lahore copies of Leonardo da Vinci's *Self Portrait* and *The Last Supper.* These two paintings were a seminal influence on Krishen's life and art.

Krishen moved to Shimla during the Partition of India in 1947. He then took up a job with Grindlays Bank in 1948 and was posted to Bombay. There, Krishen was invited to join the Progressive Artists' Group with whom he remained in active association for the rest of his time. He was invited to be a part of the PAG exhibition in 1951.



AT THE OPENING OF AN EXHIBITION

Krishen held his first major exhibition in 1949 and sold his first painting to Dr Homi Bhabha of the Tata Institute of Fundamental Research for a small sum of Rs 225. In 1953 he moved to the Madras branch of his bank. Over the next decade, he continued painting while working as a banker. He held his first solo show in the UK at The Leicester Galleries, London, in October 1960.
In 1961 he quit his job to become a full-time artist. 'In 1961, I quit Grindlays. On my last day at work, Husain, Gaitonde, and Bal Chhabda were at the door, waiting for me to emerge. The moment I came out, Bal Chhabda took my tie off, saying I won't need it anymore. We went out, had tea together to celebrate and then dinner at a place called The Coronation Durbar. Raza threw a party in Paris; they had all wanted me to quit,' said Krishen in an interview.



WITH M. F. HUSSAIN



WITH RENU



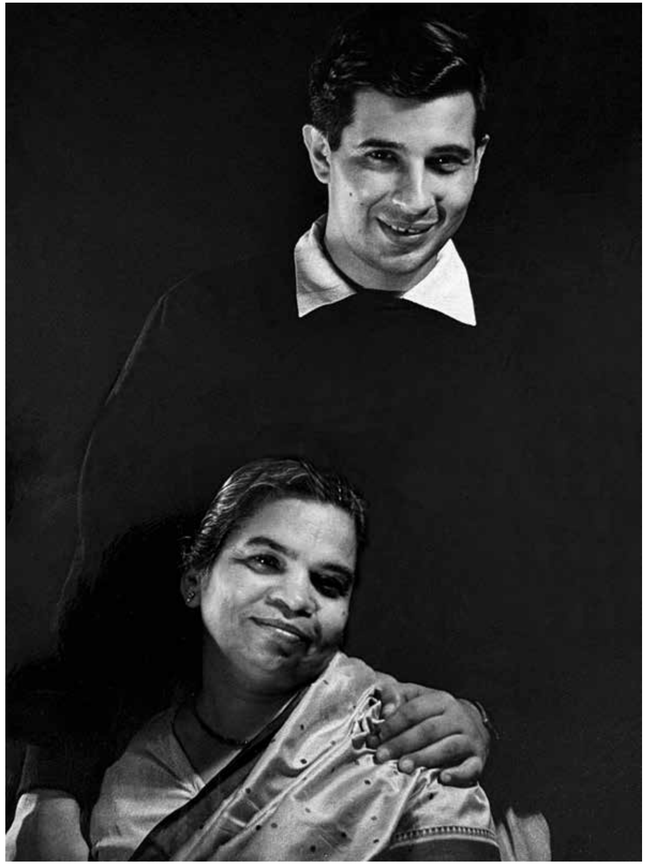
KRISHEN'S GRANDMOTHER, LOVINGLY KNOWN AS 'MAAJHI'





The following year Krishen moved into his family home in a resettlement colony in New Delhi called Nizamuddin.

In 1962, Khanna became the first Indian artist to be awarded the Council on Economic and Cultural Affairs fellowship (later renamed the John D. Rockefeller III Fund) and was artist-in-residence at the American University in Washington in 1963-64. These were his formative years as an artist. It was also during this period that his friendship with both artists and collectors worldwide was shaped, which in turn refined his sensitivity. A voracious reader and a lover of poetry, he is an eloquent speaker as well as an erudite writer.



KRISHEN WITH HIS MOTHER

‘Hope’ is the thing with feathers

‘Hope’ is the thing with feathers -
That perches in the soul -
And sings the tune without the words -
And never stops - at all -

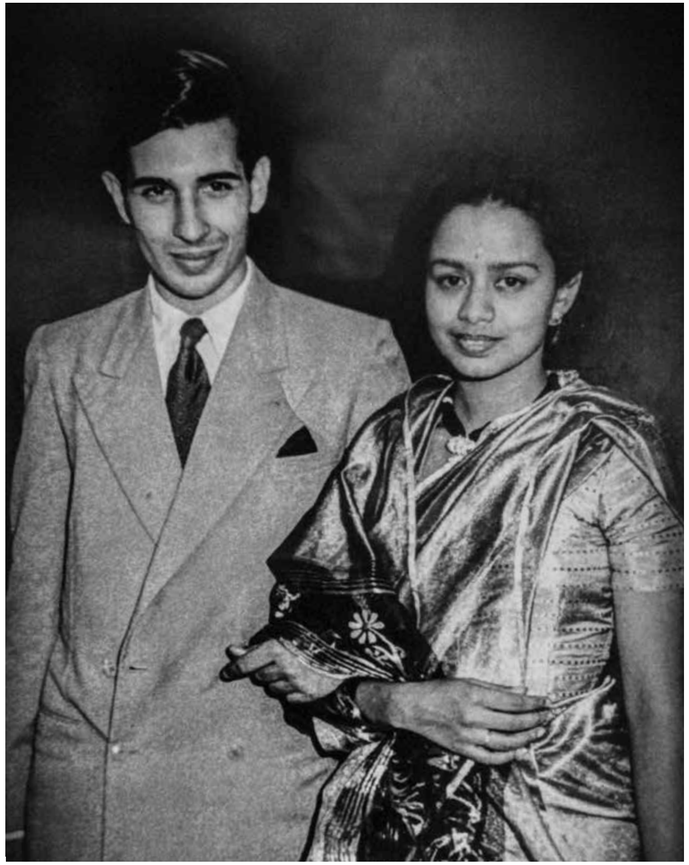
And sweetest - in the Gale - is heard -
And sore must be the storm -
That could abash the little Bird
That kept so many warm -

I’ve heard it in the chillest land -
And on the strangest Sea -
Yet - never - in Extremity,
It asked a crumb - of me.

-EMILY DICKINSON

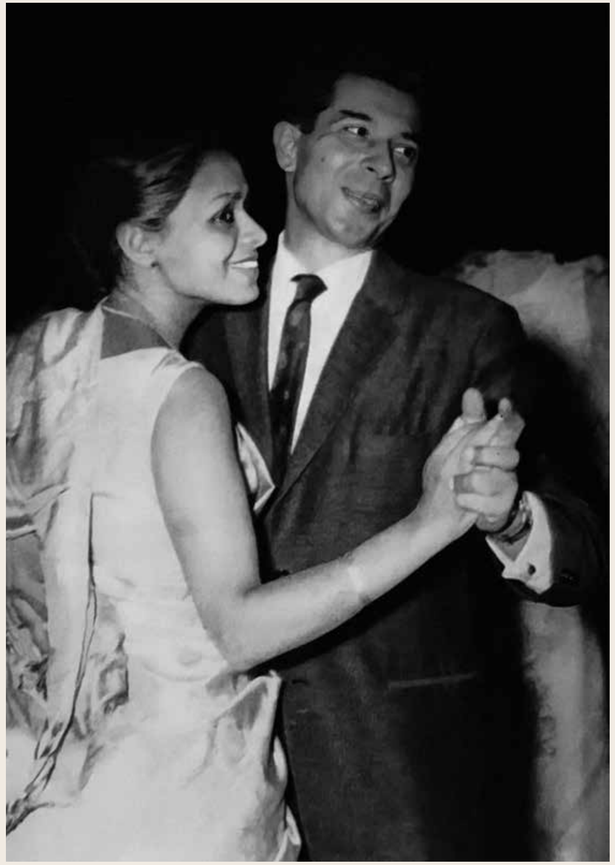
KRISHEN WITH RENU





‘If in the twilight of memory we should meet once more, we shall speak again together and you shall sing to me a deeper song. And if our hands should meet in another dream, we shall build another tower in the sky.’

–*THE PROPHET,* KAHLIL GIBRAN

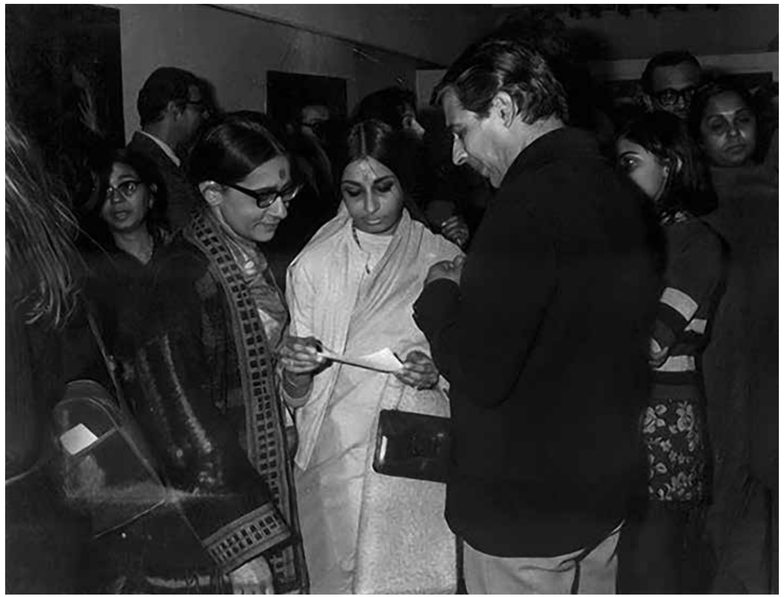




RENU AND MALATI



KRISHEN'S PARENTS



AT THE OPENING OF ONE OF HIS EXHIBITIONS

‘Our heads are round so that thoughts can change direction.’

-FRANCIS PICABIA



WITH SATISH AND KIRAN GUJRAL

FROM THE 1980s ONWARDS, KRISHEN BECAME ESPECIALLY INTERESTED IN THE FIGURE OF THE BANDWALLA, A MEMBER OF THE COLONIAL-ERA MARCHING BANDS THAT BECAME WIDELY POPULAR IN INDIAN WEDDING PROCESSIONS.

Exemplified by the vividly coloured Expressionistic painting series Bandwalla (1989–90), these musicians became a recurring subject in his work.

In the 100th year of his life, his Bandwallas are the symbol of a group of individuals who create music on a limited daily wage during the wedding season in India. With paintings, sculptures, bronze plates, and a historic set of ten unique watches as collectibles, the Bandwallas–have travelled a long distance and come full circle.

Krishen's oeuvre also comprises religious and mythological themes—as exemplified by the painting *Christ and his Apostles* and the Mahabharata series—and scenes from daily life, seen in paintings such as *Dhaba*. Between 1980 and 1984, he painted *The Great Procession,* a ceiling mural in the lobby of the ITC Maurya hotel in New Delhi that has achieved particular renown. Drawing on intimate personal experience, Krishen is also one of the few artists to have painted scenes from the Partition.



WITH ARTIST FRIENDS (M. F. HUSSAIN, NIRMAL VERMA, TYEB MEHTA) AND THEIR FAMILIES





KRISHEN LAUNCHING TYEB MEHTA'S BOOK AT VADEHRA ART GALLERY

All great art has to be local… At the same time, great art transcends the ordinary moment and strives to a moment in infinity.

-KRISHEN KHANNA



AT LUNCH WITH TYEB AND FAMILY. JEHAGIR SABAVALA IN THE BACKGROUND.

My drawings and paintings are also my treatise on art, where I recognize an artist's role as being part of his or her contemporary, I have always seen the artist as being part of a larger narrative that covers the history of art. Artists born in different centuries are as much my contemporaries as those who live and breathe around me. I don't believe in limiting myself to my limited existence. This is why my friendships always stayed even keel, a camaraderie that was contagious.

-KRISHEN KHANNA

KRISHEN AND RAM KUMAR



WITH DINESH VAZIRANI AND RAM KUMAR

How much we wrote to each other. Several of our letters to each other have been published but we shared so much more over long nights, as we smoked, drank and talked about what was happening in art in Paris, Bombay and London. All of us, in different parts of the world later, knew we were there for each other. Friendships for us were about sharing and caring.

-KRISHEN KHANNA



WITH S. H. RAZA

I'm left like the Ancient Mariner to tell the tales of my friends. S. H. Raza was one of my dearest friends. No one understood colour the way he did. We all grew old together—M. F. Husain, Bal Chhabda, V. S. Gaitonde, Tyeb Mehta, Ram Kumar, Akbar Padamsee—and now they are all gone. Here am I left all alone.

-KRISHEN KHANNA



WITH DINESH VAZIRANI



WITH SATISH GUJRAL



WITH S. H. RAZA



WITH (LEFT TO RIGHT) BAL CHHABDA, TYEB MEHTA, S. H. RAZA, AND M. F. HUSSAIN



WITH A. RAMACHANDRAN





KHANNA FAMILY IN MATHURA ROAD



KRISHEN WITH HIS MOTHER AND SIBLINGS IN LAHORE



KRISHEN AND RENU AT HIS STUDIO



WITH RAJENDRA MOHAN



RENU AND KARAN IN LONDON



WITH HIS FATHER AND KARAN



RENU SAILING IN MUMBAI IN THE EARLY 60S





AT A FAMILY CELEBRATION











CELEBRATING HIS BIRTHDAY DURING THE PANDEMIC



THE CELEBRATIONS CONTINUE...





CELEBRATING RENU'S 80TH BIRTHDAY





AT THE JOYOUS OCCASION OF
KRISHEN'S 95TH BIRTHDAY





RENU WITH INDU,
HER YOUNGER SISTER



WITH RADHIKA RELAN

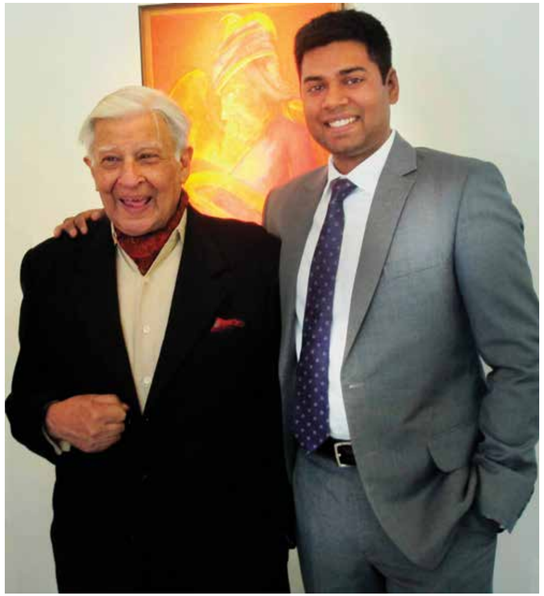


WITH KAJOLI, HIS GRANDDAUGHTER





WITH VIKRAM MOHAN



WITH VIVAAN, HIS GRANDSON



WITH HIS GRANDCHILDREN SONAL AND SHOM AT A WEDDING RECEPTION



WITH JAYA AND JIVAT THADANI



AT A PRIVATE VIEWING OF *A FAR AFTERNOON: A PAINTED SAGA BY KRISHEN KHANNA* IN LONDON



RAVENSDALE, KHANNA RESIDENCE AT SHIMLA



PAINTING WITH K. H. ARA IN MUMBAI



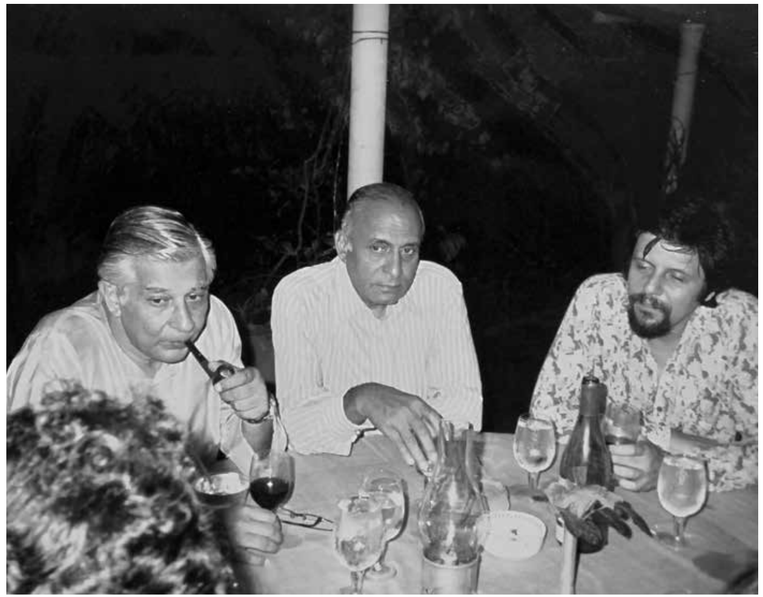
KRISHEN IN JAPAN



AT A GALLERY OPENING IN NEW YORK

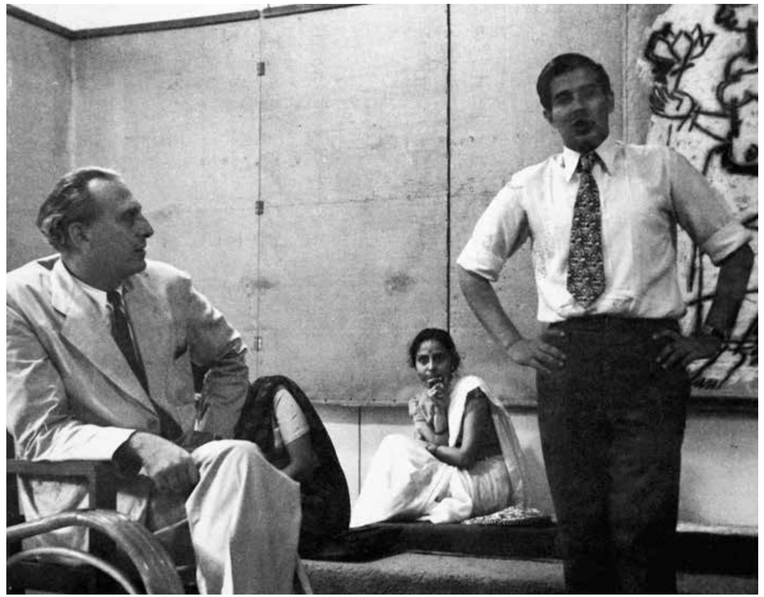


WITH J. SWAMINATHAN AND FRIENDS





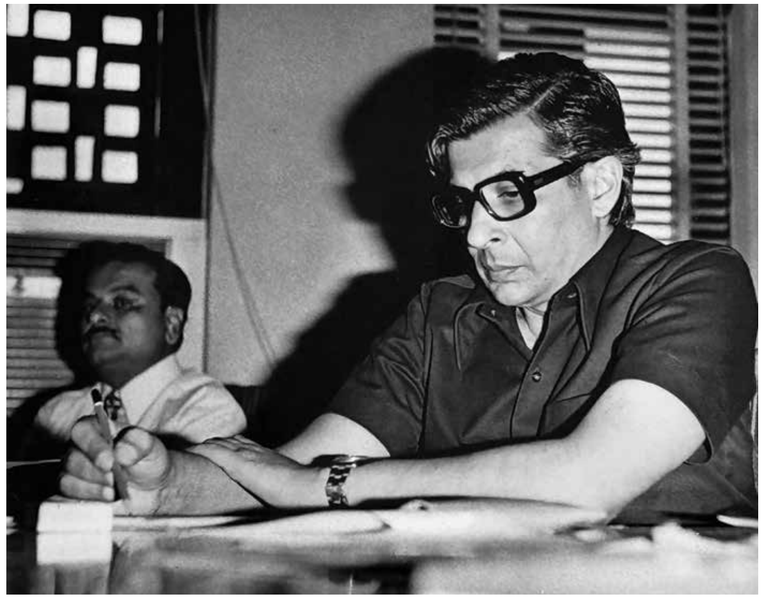
WITH J. SWAMINATHAN



WITH RUDOLF VON LEYDEN



KRISHEN SERVING AS A JURY MEMBER AT VARIOUS CONFERENCES





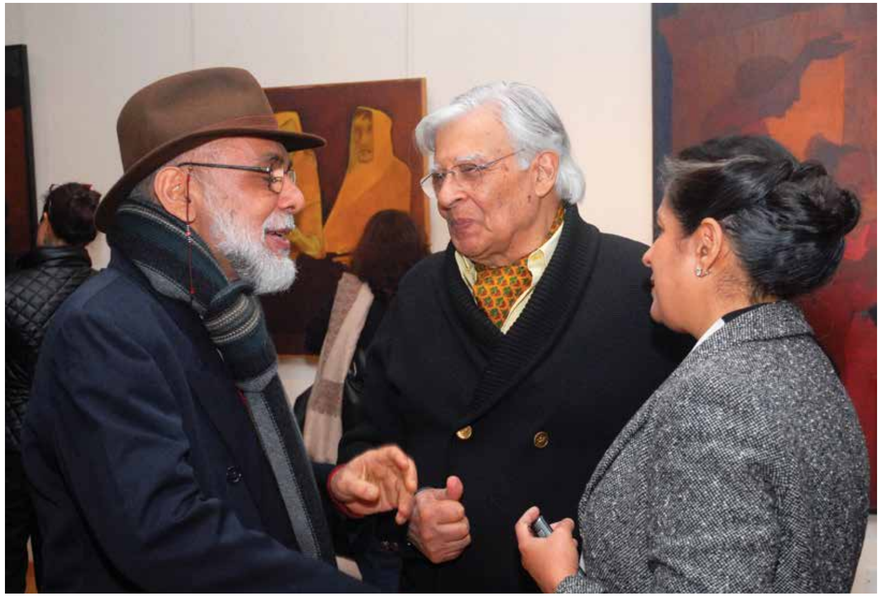
RECEIVING AN AWARD FROM THEN PRIME MINISTER INDIRA GANDHI



WITH THOTA VAIKUNTAM



WITH VIVAN SUNDARAM



WITH RANBIR KALEKA



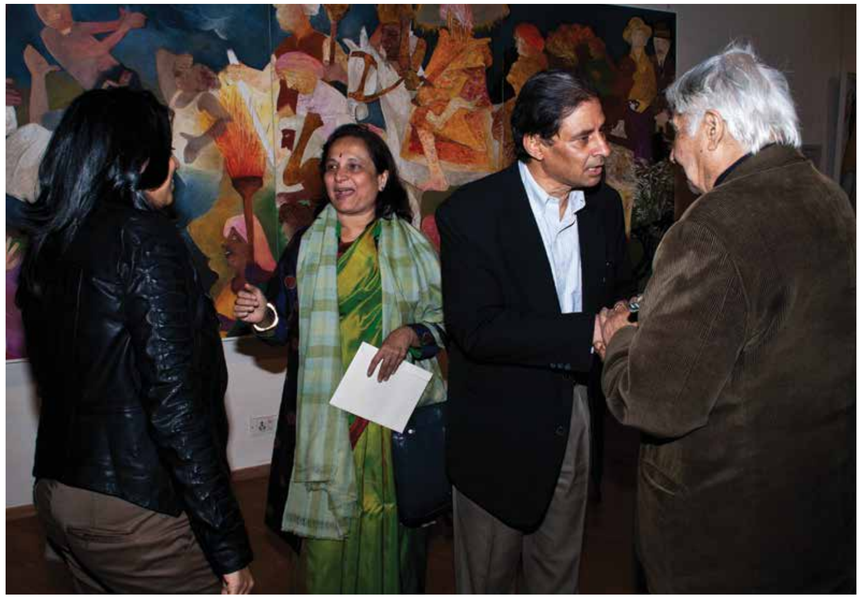
WITH MANU PAREKH AND VIRENDRA KUMAR

WITH KIRAN NADAR

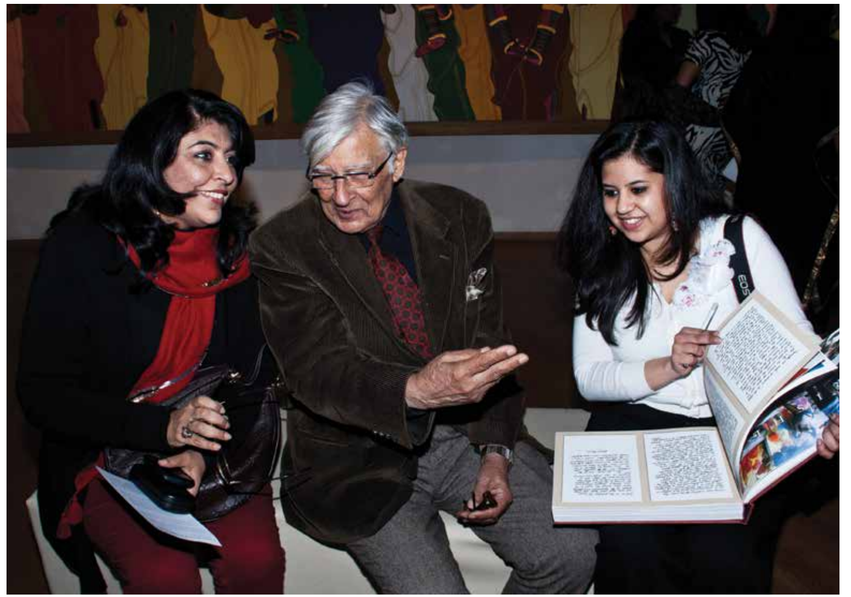
WITH KIRAN NADAR,
MINAL & DINESH VAZIRANI







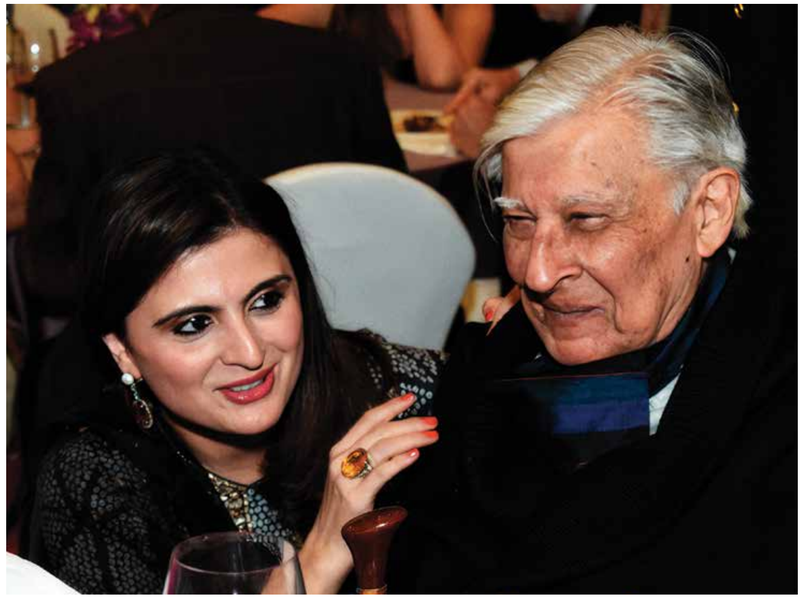
WITH MRS & DR ASHOK RAJGOPAL



WITH PUNAM CHOPRA AND AMISHA CHOWBEY



WITH SUJATA BAJAJ



WITH AVANTIKA CHOPRA



WITH KIRAN NADAR



WITH (LEFT TO RIGHT) KIRAN NADAR, VIVAN SUNDARAM, ROOBINA KARODE, AND HIMMAT SHAH



WITH UMA NAIR

WITH ARUN VADEHRA AND PARAMJIT SINGH

‘When the band began to play he packed up his bags and went away .’

WITH KARAN





LEFT TO RIGHT - PARESH MAITY, JAYASRI BURMAN, MANU PAREKH, RAMESHWAR BROOTA, MAITE DELTEIL, SAKTI BURMAN, AND MADHVI PAREKH WITH DR ASHOK SETH AND FAMILY



WITH FEROZE GUJRAL



WITH ABHA HOUSEGO AND PUNYA NAGPAL



WITH PANKAJ AND SHERYL SAHNI





WITH SWATI PIRAMAL

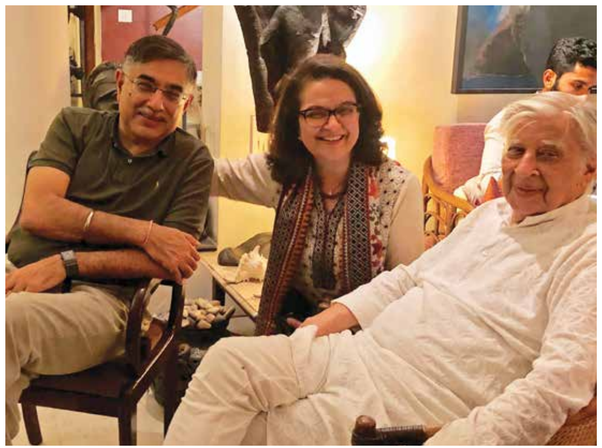
WITH K. P. SINGH, SWATI PIRAMAL, CONOR MACKLIN AND GRANDDAUGHTER KAJOLI







WITH TRIPAT KALRA

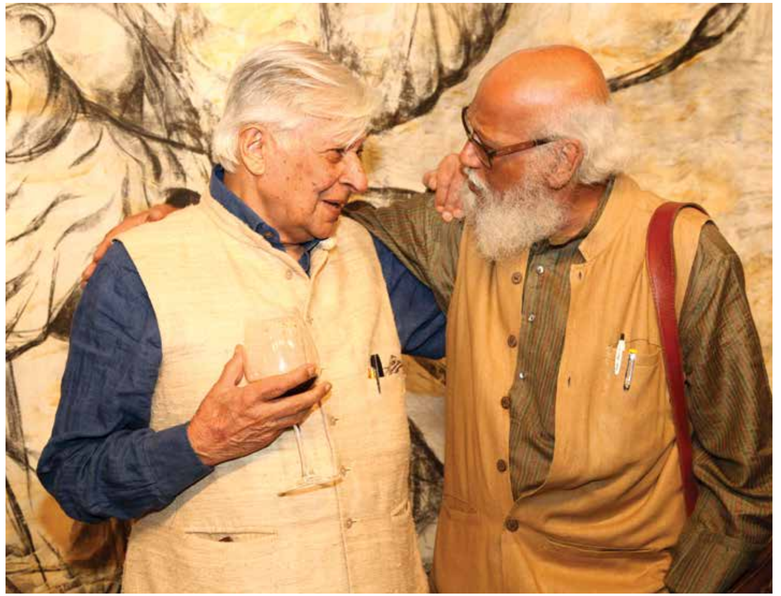


WITH NITA AND ARJUN KHANNA



KRISHEN WITH FRIENDS AND GALLERISTS





WITH JATIN DAS



WITH SAMAN MALIK AND FAMILY



WITH KALPANA SHAH'S FAMILY



WITH MANI DAWAR



WITH SAMAN MALIK



WITH RAJEEV SETHI



WITH PUNAM CHOPRA



WITH DR CHOWBEY AND FAMILY



WITH SANJEEV BATRA



WITH DR PRADEEP CHOWBEY







FAMILY CELEBRATIONS

KRISHEN AT EXHIBITIONS







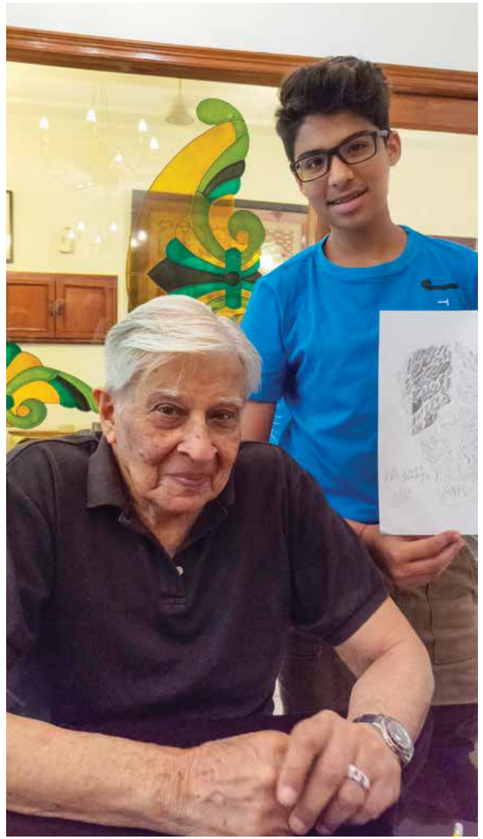
WITH SHAMA AND RAKESH BERRY



WITH SAKTI BURMAN AND MAITE DELTEIL



WITH MADHAV AND ABHIVARDHAN BERRY





WITH TANUJ BERRY



WITH DR VISHAL GUPTA, HIS FRIEND & DENTIST



WITH KAMINI KHANNA, HIS DAUGHTER-IN-LAW


Private Client Gro
on for your timeless





VIKRAM SETH AND NORBERT LYNTON AT KRISHEN'S OPENING AT THE ROYAL ACADEMY OF ARTS, LONDON



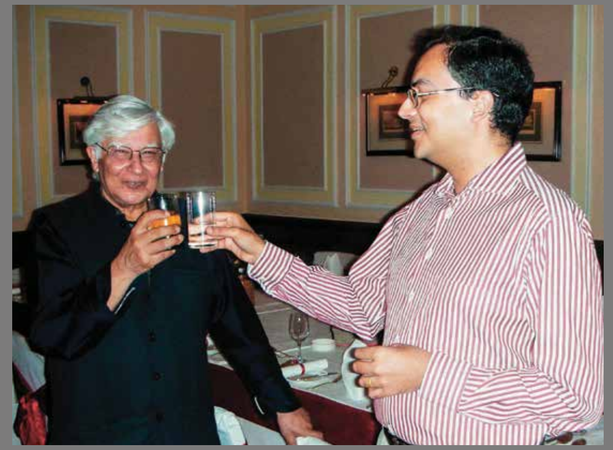
AT THE ROYAL ACADEMY OF ARTS, LONDON

WITH SANYA MALIK



CELEBRATIONS FOR
KRISHEN'S 85TH BIRTHDAY





AT THE ROYAL ACADEMY OF ARTS, LONDON



DINNER ON KRISHEN'S 85TH BIRTHDAY



AT A LONDON EXHIBITION

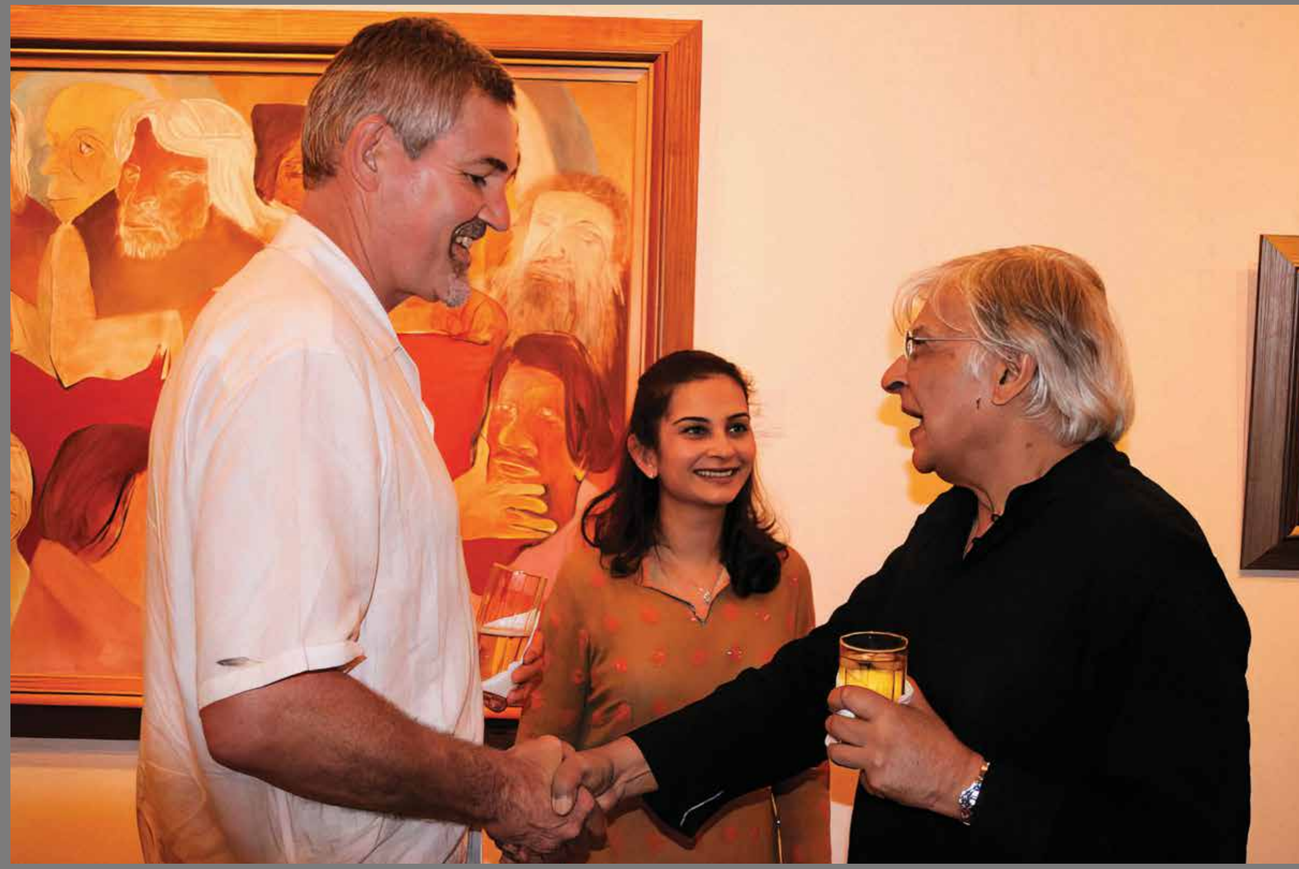


WITH SWATI PIRAMAL





DINESH VAZIRANI AND KIRAN NADAR
APPRECIATING KRISHEN'S PAINTING



WITH PETER OSBORNE AND MINAL VAZIRANI





KRISHEN AT VARIOUS EXHIBITIONS









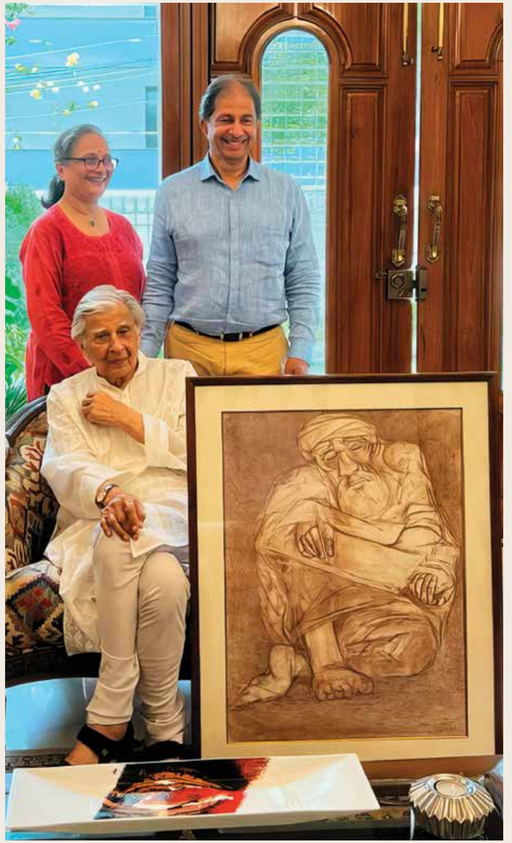




KRISHEN WITH FAMILY AND FRIENDS



PUNAM & ANIL CHOPRA



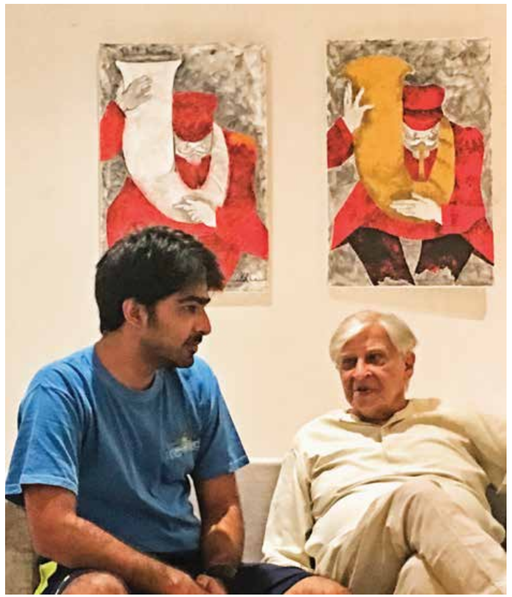
WITH MRS & DR ASHOK RAJGOPAL





WITH PATRICIA LOUSADA





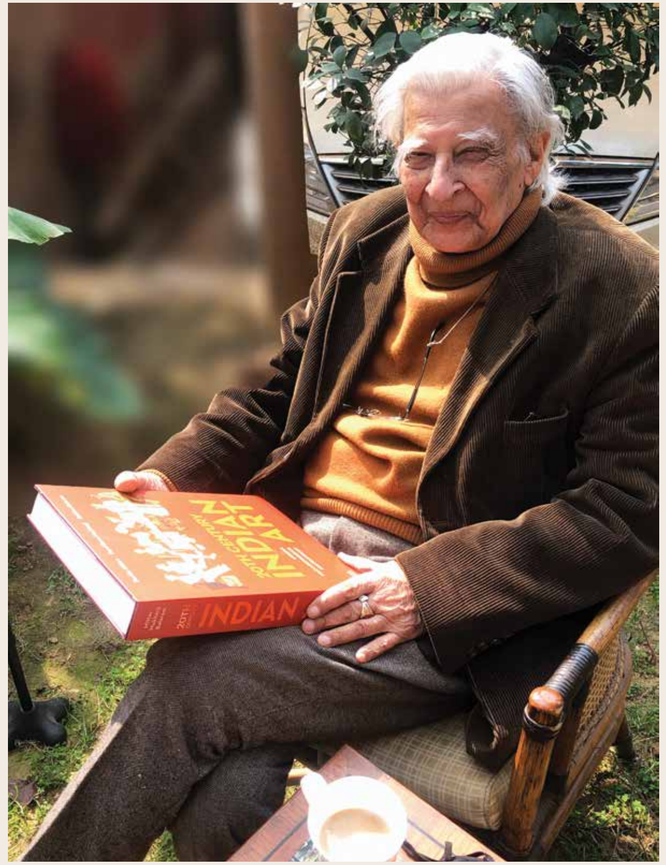
WITH RAGHAV MALIK



DHRUV & ANIL CHOPRA

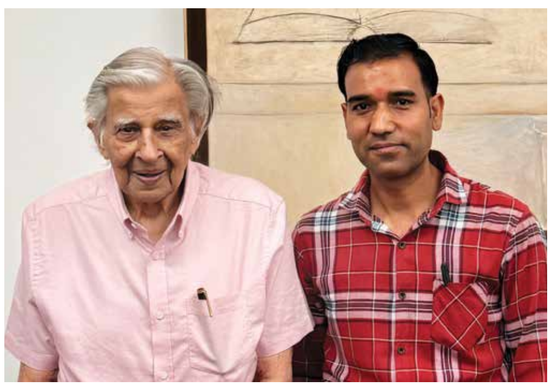


WITH RAM BALI CHAUHAN



And a youth said, Speak to us of Friendship.
And he answered, saying:
Your friend is your needs answered.
He is your field which you sow with love
and reap with thanksgiving.
And he is your board and your fireside.
For you come to him with your hunger,
and you seek him for peace.

–*THE PROPHET,* KAHLIL GIBRAN





WITH MURTI AND SAMISH AHUJA

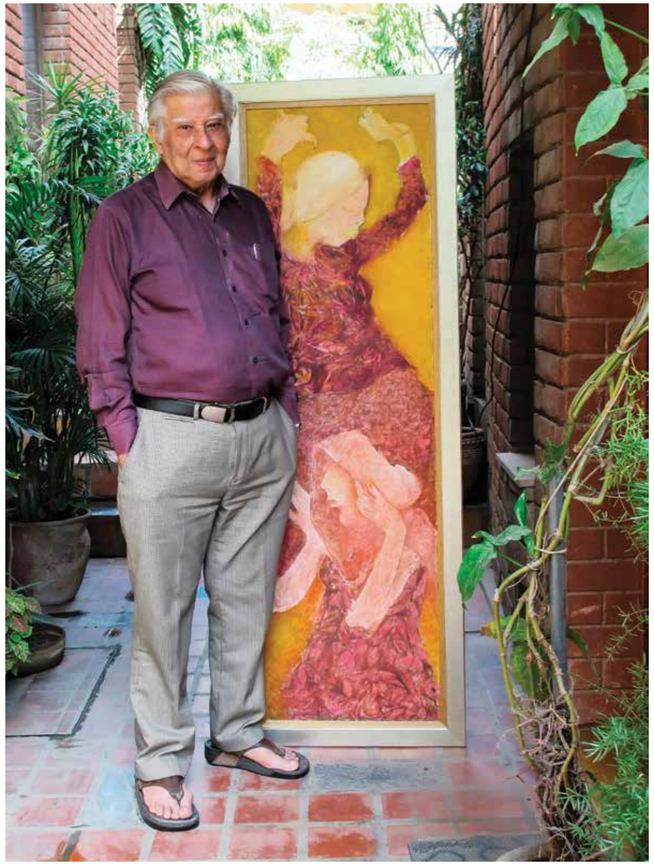


RECEIVING AN AWARD FROM RAM VILAS PASWAN



AKBAR PADAMSEE AND TYEB MEHTA LAUNCHING
KRISHEN'S BOOK AT SAFFRONART, MUMBAI

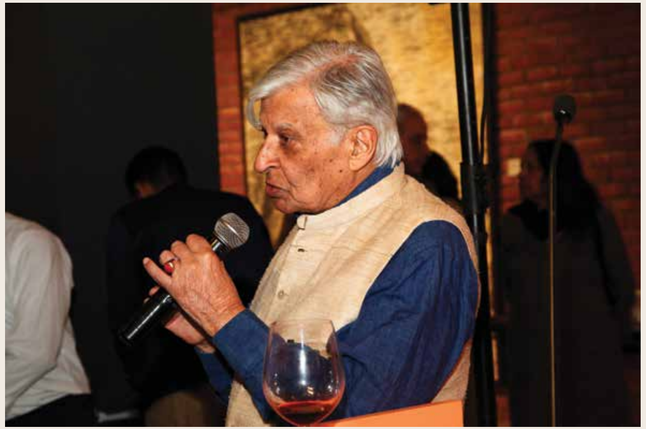


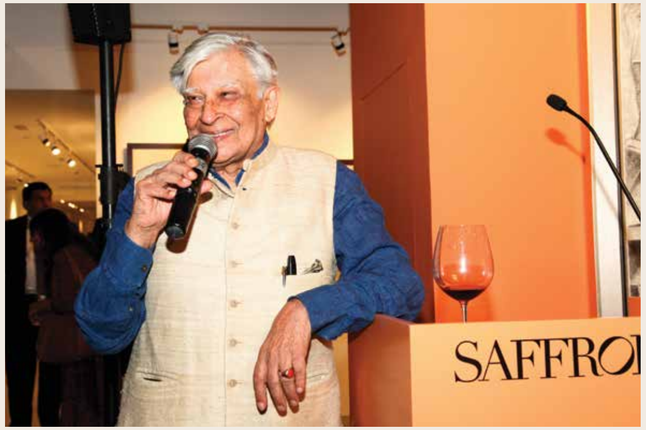




WITH ROHIT AND YASHIKA SUGANDH






SAFFRO



DINESH VAZIRANI AND KARAN



WITH DINESH, ARIA, AND ANAYA





KRISHEN RECEIVING ANOTHER DOCTORATE
FROM SHIV NADAR UNIVERSITY



WITH ROOBINA KARODE AND ANANYA MUKHERJEE

IN HIS STUDIO





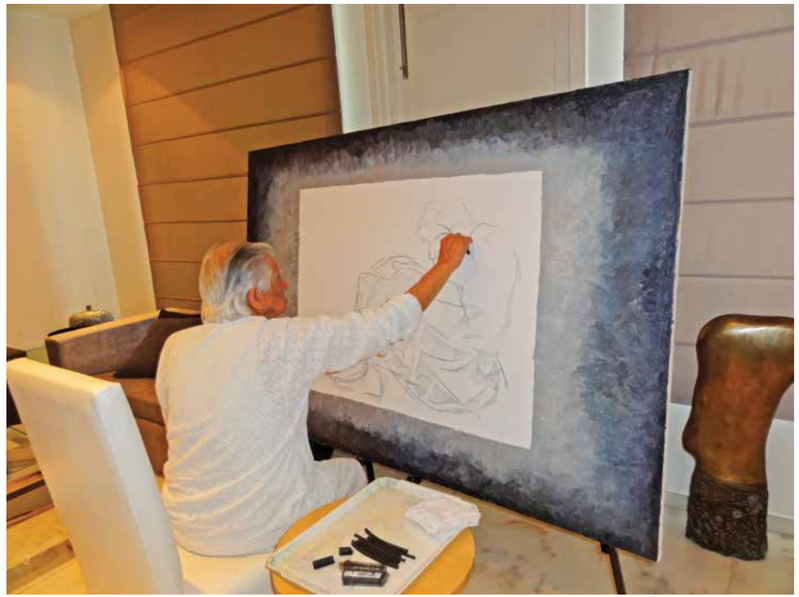
The artist's studio is without doubt a place to understand the moods and mysteries of Krishen Khanna's garden of thoughts. These images—both within his home as well as at exhibitions—of his works create a mosaic of magical moments that range from robust to mundane to heartwarming.


WN
Artists'
Oil Colour
Cadmium
Red Deep
097
SL A Series 4
37 ml e
1.25 U.S. fl oz.



Krishen, a lover of books, an erudite speaker, and a man of gracious fervour has been an iconic symbol of the last of the Progressives in India. When he painted the Grand Procession at ITC Maurya, the architect, Rajinder Kumar of ITC Maurya, said: 'Krishen Khanna is the think tank for the Progressives. It is his eloquence and his knowledge that brings him respect amongst his own friends in the Progressive circle.'









It is time that I wrote my will;
I choose upstanding men
That climb the streams until
The fountain leap, and at dawn
Drop their cast at the side
Of dripping stone; I declare
They shall inherit my pride,
The pride of people that were
Bound neither to Cause nor to State,
Neither to slaves that were spat on,
Nor to the tyrants that spat…

–*THE TOWER,* WILLIAM BUTLER YEATS



When painters have lived through that length of time, they have a lot to look back to and reflect upon. A retrospective is not about the high peaks of your career, it is about the lock, stock and barrel of it all. It's about the journey of time and tide as it were.

-KRISHEN KHANNA





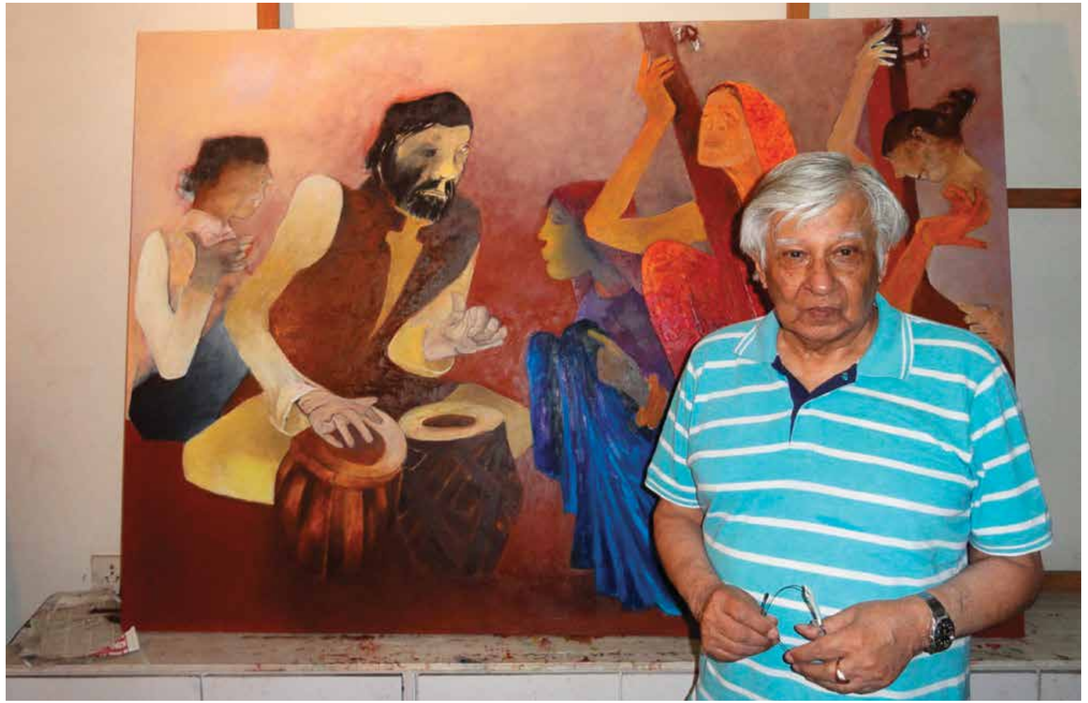




Jagdish Swaminathan, India's abstract guru and a friend of Krishen, made perceptive observations about his Bandwallas. 'There is something sad and ridiculous about the band. A legacy from our erstwhile English rulers, whether official or military in pompous regalia, or shabbily costumed when accompanying middle-class marriage processions in the cities, the band is a macabre comment on bourgeois existence.'

-UMA NAIR, *TIMES OF INDIA*





On the side of ‘everyday life’, we find musicians, truckwallas, daily wage labourers, and even silent passersby who symbolize poverty. In his vast album of characters, each figure stands for something. Krishen thus affirms the artist’s role in society as both observer and participant in life’s eternal stage.



Karan Khanna's photographs of his father, Krishen, are a veritable treat for those who want to peer into the life of one of India's modern masters. Over fifty years, Karan has captured Krishen in various moments of painting as well as in silent reverie.

These photographs show us that photography plays a key role in developing and defining an artist's odyssey and his reflective visual culture throughout his life. From a younger black-and-white portrait to the ninety-eight-year-old Krishen captured as an artist of depth and gravitas, each image is an evocative portrait. Krishen is happy creating in his own crucible of time as his son documents his life from day to day. Not only does Karan understand the nature of fame, he also allows his subject Krishen to play to the camera in moods and moments. But he keeps space and allows his father to be what he wants to be.

-UMA NAIR, *TIMES OF INDIA*





Krishen's portraits of his frontal image with his silky hair falling on his right temple are a beauty to behold. Amongst the many portraits that Karan has shot, these images are a stellar contribution to photography, particularly portraiture, because in the world today they are amongst the most far-reaching and influential of any of photography subjects of the human figure or form or face in contemporary setting and character.







The elegance, inventiveness, and probing nature of Krishen's eye for his own compositions can be seen in his silent smile in front of his own work created during the pandemic.









‘Art can provide you with the metaphysical answers that you have been looking for even while you are involved in its creation. They call it drawing. I really have no name for it. It’s a compulsion, an itch. The more I scratch, the more I want to continue. It is enjoyable but it can also hurt when nothing emerges but an incomprehensible mess. Yet, for me, art is the ultimate bliss.’

-KRISHEN KHANNA





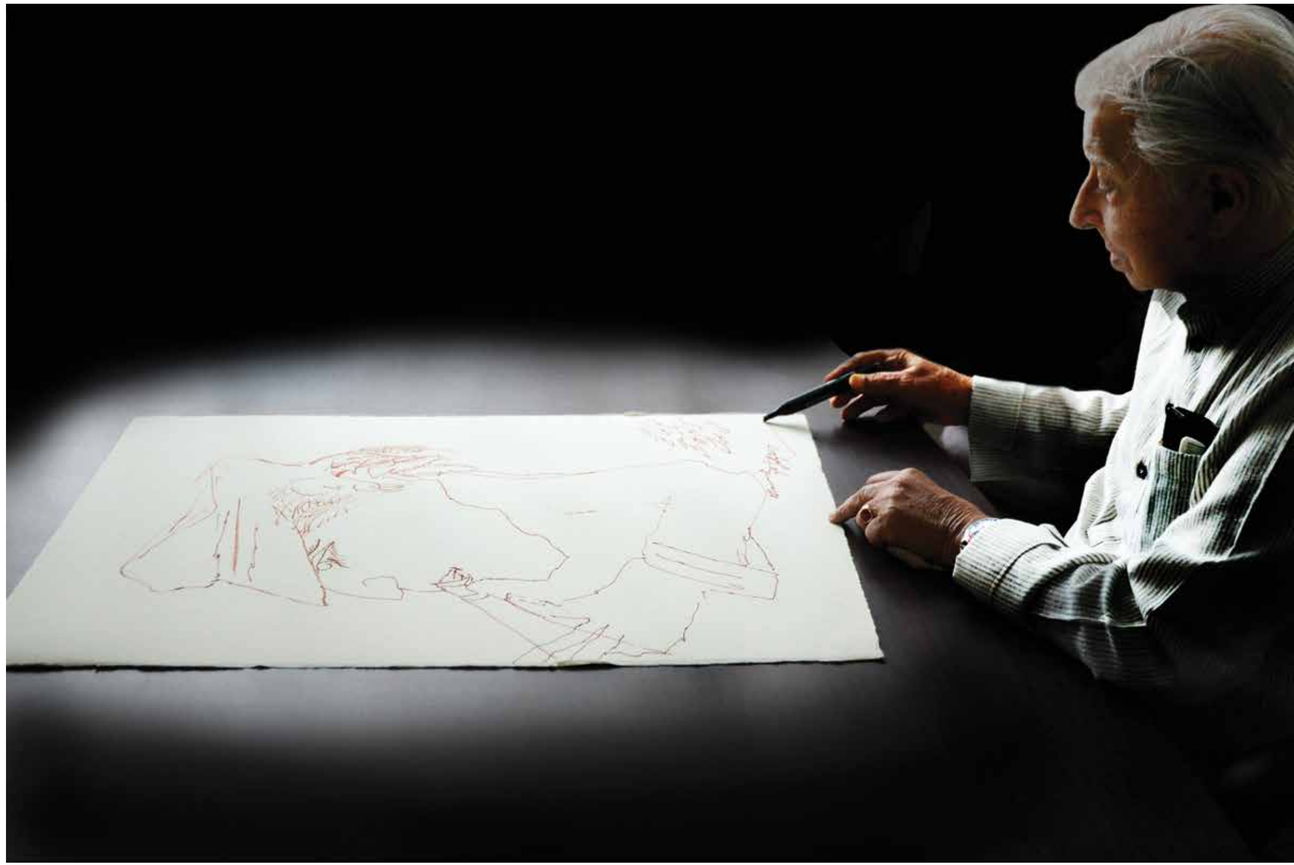






The function of art is not decorative. True art defeats time, place and people. Art must go beyond a pretty picture. My gaze is independent of my pencil-holding hand. I think I could shut my eyes without ceasing to scribble. People say, 'A map of an unknown galaxy', 'the pencil has become an extension of the nerves of my hand', and other such nonsense. Sustained scribbling achieves only a small inroad which may dislodge an image. Sounds dramatic, doesn't it? But it isn't always so. I would repeat the contours of a subject I have tackled before, which is not to say that I would not go back to the same subject in the hope of discovering another dimension.

–KRISHEN KHANNA





































For any artist, drawing is important to understand how structure functions, how it changes light and so on. You can't just slip around to make a pattern out of it,' says the veteran artist, who in 1964 had helped organize the drawings-only exhibition, 'Six Painters in Black and White' at Shridharani Gallery in Delhi.

-KRISHEN KHANNA















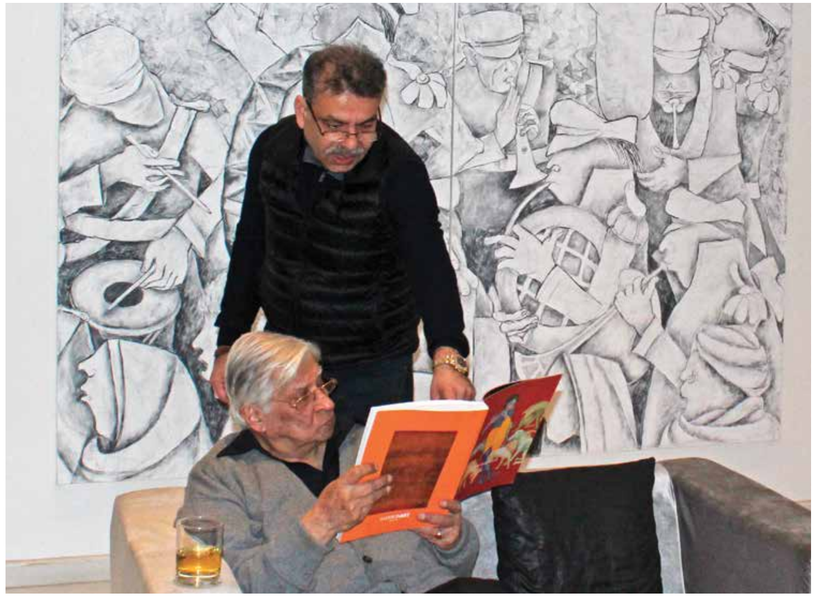














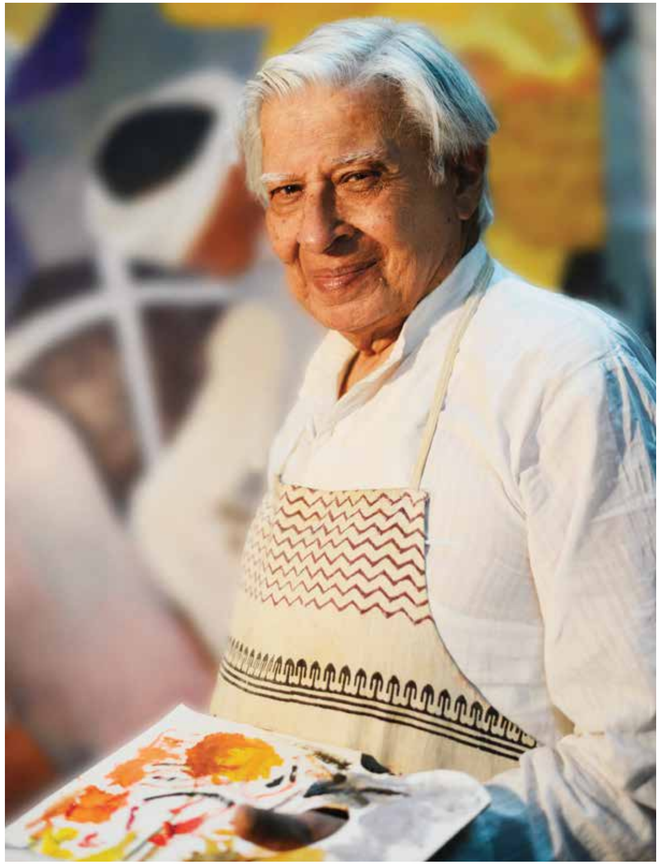












EACH PAINTING HAS
A HISTORY AND
A DESTINY.

~

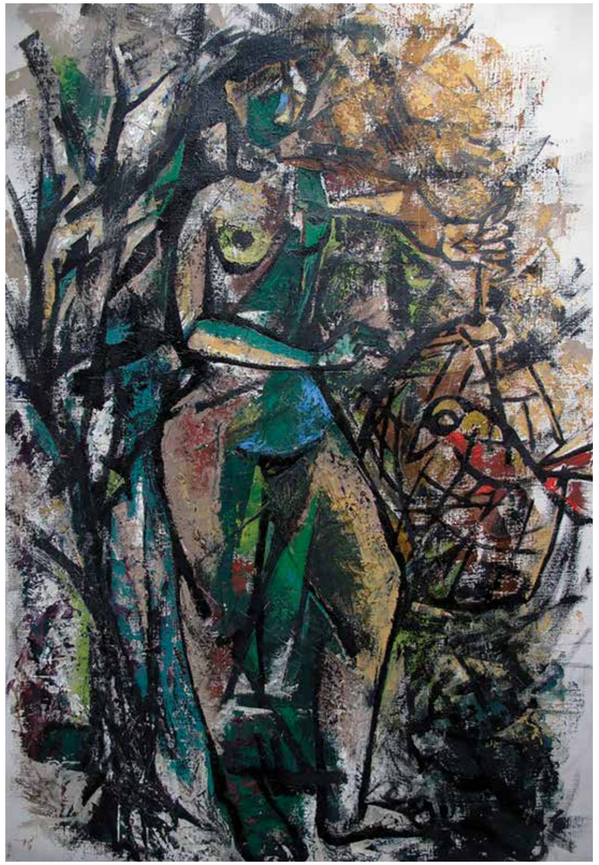
KRISHEN KHANNA



CHOLA MURAL MIGRATIONS

The large 6.75 feet high by 72. 5 feet long mural done by Krishen Khanna in pencil for ITC Chola in Chennai in 1976 is a historical celebration of the achievements of the Chola kings. 'The theme he chose for his mural is historical rather than mythical, celebrating the outgoing activities of the Chola, not the richness and beauty of what they established at home. He offers us a vision of families and animals on the land going about their various tasks amid palm trees and rocks, including carrying goods from ships, and then the ships and the men on them venturing forth into heavy seas. The figures here are strong, majestic even, once we accept this negative tonal idiom, and notice how the leaves of palm trees, or a dramatic black bird, can give this world its rhythmical cohesion.'

-NORBERT LYNTON



TWO PORTRAITS

Within the fabric of modernism, Krishen created portraits of wasp-waisted women and long tressed lasses. These two early portraits are evocative works that perfectly capture the vision of an artist whose has a 'kaleidoscopic series of life's experiences'. The mother combing her daughter's hair and the single image of the young girl are both gentle cubist contoured studies that do not hurt the eyes. At once here we have the simple illustration of the understanding the difference between the naked and nude. The aesthetic nuances of the feminine body are one of silent allure, dressed in the language of what is soft and sensual.

-UMA NAIR

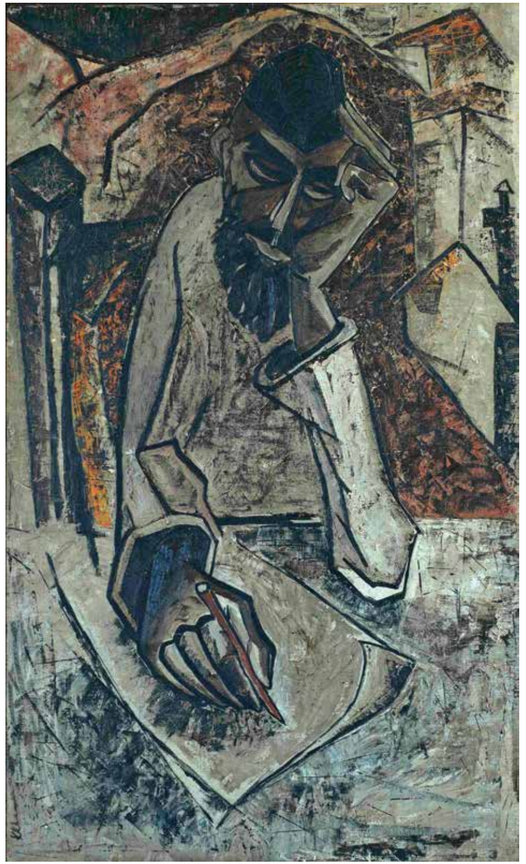
The boldly coloured outlines of superimposed lines within the human figures against solid lighter backgrounds echo the beauty of handling the feminine subject with graceful ardour. Krishen plays with the combination of simultaneously layered images, while pushing his subjects forward with a bold painterly idiom in which form and colour are distilled to their most essential. The result is a vivid vignette that is enlivened in our memory.



PORTRAIT OF HUSAIN

M. F. Husain was a dear friend, he made friends with my father too and would come to our home in Shimla. I recall many years ago, he bought a Volkswagen when he was in Germany. He drove all around and then went to Paris to meet Akbar Padamsee. When he was coming back to India, he wanted to sell the car and told Akbar to find a buyer. Akbar said he could buy the car. So M. F. promptly handed over the keys to him. No money dealing was ever done… Those days friendships were about the preciousness of being there for each other. Relationships had a closeness, a sense of comfort in the bonds that remained. Money did not matter to any of us, at that young age of 24-25 years, there was an eagerness to see and appreciate one another's work. Several letters were exchanged between M. F. and me in Urdu alas, now all lost.

-KRISHEN KHANNA



TWO NUDES

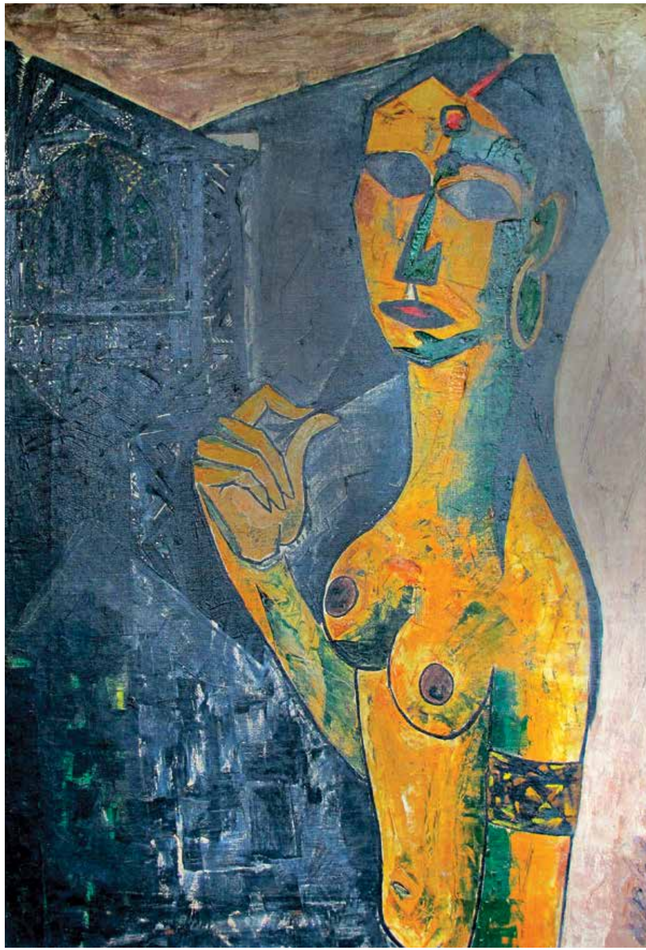
Krishen's early works in his nude studies have been distinguished by his use of contour and colour, with each one dominating various phases of his career. These works show a painterly use of colour, with the figure and the surrounding landscape created purely through his distinctive brushstrokes. Indeed, there is an innocent signature, a naive intonation that has its own refreshing note of nostalgia. The lady holding perhaps branches on her head is a study of sheer simplicity.

One finds a certain freshness in both paintings in the use of warm tonal shades, somewhat complementary… Although Krishen used bright colours in later years, this phase was one of subdued softness as well as compositional clarity. The nude Indian woman with the bindi standing against a latticed wall is one from the haunts of history. We sense an instinctive knowledge of natural indices that allow him create abstracted forms in the human figure which he went onto explore in later years.

This canvas was painted in conjunction with S. H. Raza when Krishen Khanna was visiting Paris in the mid-1950s, and bears the hallmarks of both artists' styles at the time. Khanna has inscribed a note explaining its history on the reverse: 'This painting was painted in Paris in September 1954. Raza began it then left it to meet his fiancée, Janine. As I was being left at the site on my own, Raza asked me to go ahead with the painting—I did so and this is the result of a joint effort—and who could be a more worthy recipient than Pran. Dear and old friend of us both.'

-UMA NAIR







NEWS OF GANDHIJI'S DEATH 1948

The Partition and its aftermath had a huge impact on Krishen. His painting *News of Gandhiji's Death (1948)* is a historic milestone in memory and impact on India's masses. In this painting, we see an array of Indians united in shock. Silenced by the tragedy, they stand reading the newspaper. We also note differences in clothing, class, and gender, amongst them—Muslim, Hindu, and Sikh figures standing and reading the news under a street light, surrounded by darkness.

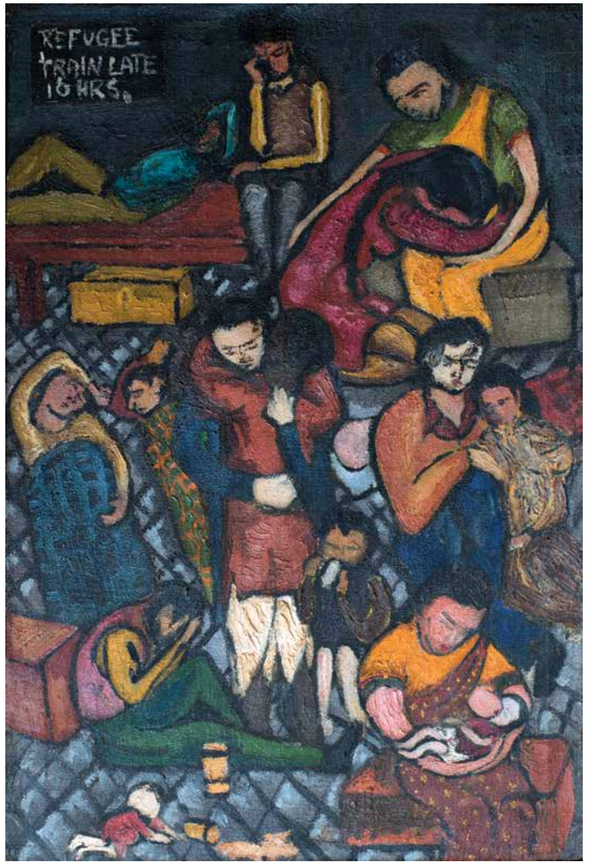
News of Gandhiji's Death was featured in a 1949 exhibition of works by the Bombay Progressive Artists' Group. He shared the group's search to apply modern aesthetics to describe the hopes and fears of independent India. *News of Gandhiji's Death,* for example, uses a painterly technique to define modernist distortions of perspective, colour, and figure, but maintains clarity and precision by representing the fraught and increasingly divided population of India.

-UMA NAIR

PARTITION CLASSICS

Refugees on a Train 16 Hours Late (Saffronart, Delhi), painted in 1947, is a tight choreography of characters where the despondency, the despair, the trauma, and the angst are deeply etched on the faces of each one. The grouping and the different stances, the expressions of their bodily discomfort—all have an air of despondency. 'Partition was traumatic,' says Krishen and adds 'the loss of our home in Pakistan with the Partition of India, the trauma of decolonisation, and social upheaval is something that stayed with me. I was seventeen years old then, had just returned from London, my parents called me to Lahore. When we came to India we moved to Shimla. I have great memories of Lahore.'

-UMA NAIR, *TIMES OF INDIA*





Newspaper Readers is a subject he kept going back to. In this image, he picks a daily morning habit and chooses to explore the amalgam of the abstract figurative to create a loosely ordered and impressionist style of painting that is uncommon in his body of work.

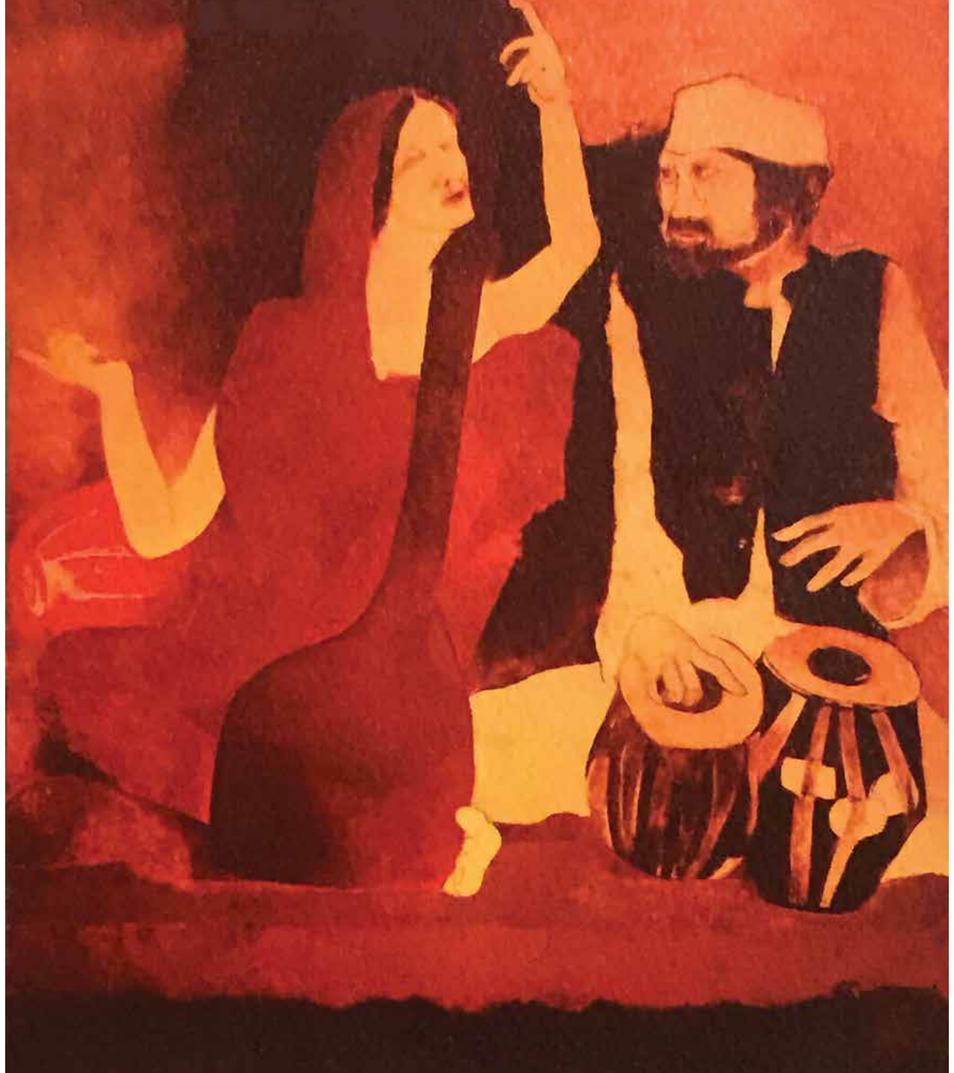
He captures the frame of the masses reading the papers and uses a series of warm colours of a soft azure and strokes of umber as he gives us subjects who are anonymous, creating an emotive evocation of the urgency of the news.



The tabla player and the singer with her tanpura—the rhythms of tonal variations and the light and shading all have a certain placement of purpose and an aura of the raga or the thumri or the kriti that would be performed. Here the khayal suggests its notes of longing as the soprano is lost in her range of nostalgic harmonies. Krishen used to host musical soirees at his home in Madras in the 1950s and says his fondness for music began when his friends took him for concerts both Carnatic and Hindustani.

In his musician series of Indian music performers, there is a clear choreography of the orchestration of the members who are singers as well as percussionists and tabla players. A consummate medley performs the melodic ripples of ragas that would be sung in the depths of devotion and the capacious notes of flats and sharps. The veena player is as robust as the flautist. The mridangam and the ghatam both aid the rippled rhythms. The musician series reveal his brilliance in creating the frames of human harmony in art and music.

–UMA NAIR





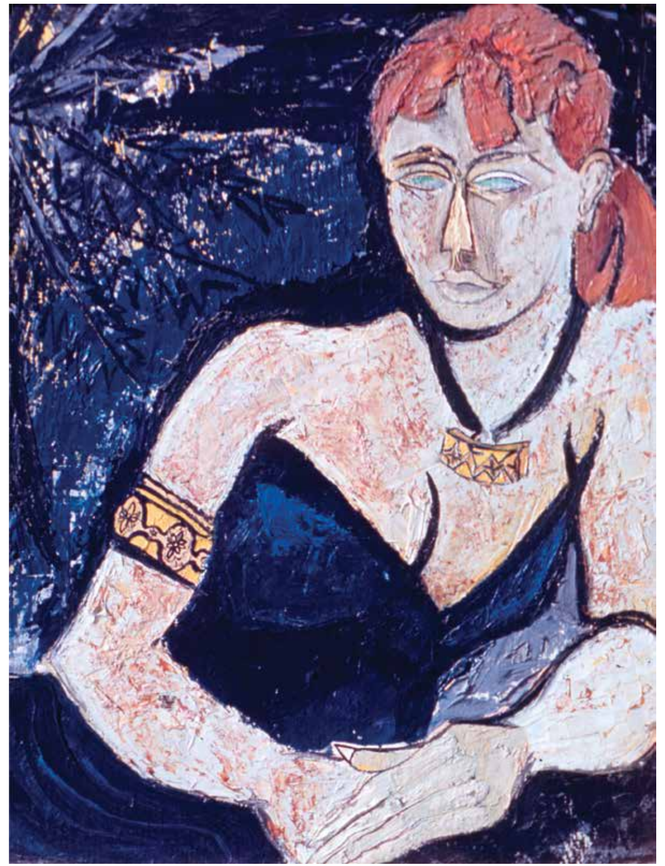



KK











BENEDICTION ON THE BATTLEFIELD

My paintings on the Mahabharata were important for various reasons because of the subjects I chose from within the multiple stories. I chose the blind king and his blindfolded wife because many that rule and are in power can see but are blind to the more important issues in life. I was also interested in the somewhat bizarre image of the blind head of state advised by someone who has voluntarily accepted blindness, the whole scene is in the dark, so to say.

-KRISHEN KHANNA

He confers upon these figures an unusual affinity that locates them within the story of the Mahabharata but also turns them into ordinary people. Krishen's paintings cater to the eyes of a cross-section of viewers and invoke a feeling of exhilaration. As an artist, he has been distinctive in accepting in his work multiple factors rather than focussing on the purely formal aspects of painting. This has made for an immense richness of metaphors and a variety of underlying emotions. Art is not seen as a separate or secluded aspect of human activity, not better than or worse than, but encompassing it as a whole.

-TANUJ BERRY







CHE GUEVARA

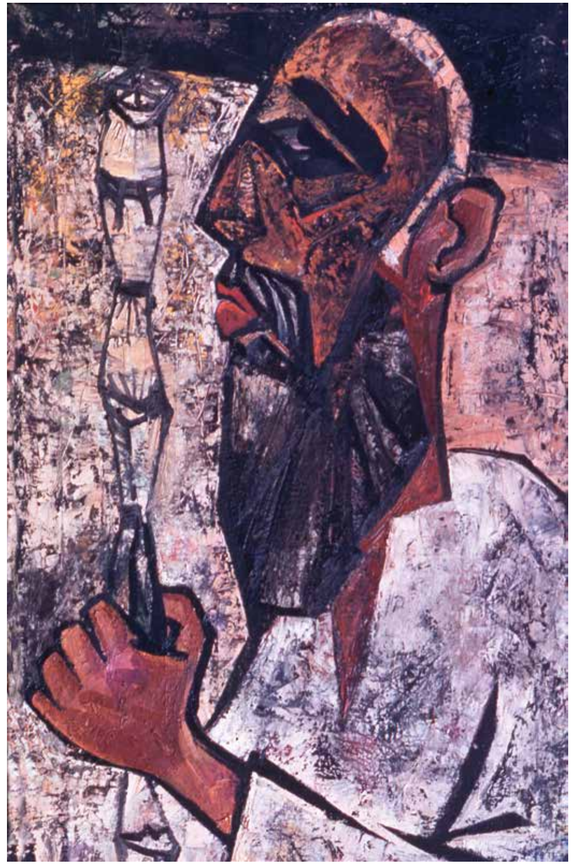
In 1969, Krishen began a series of works on Che Guevara that form part of a broader theme of marginalization in his work. The tender attention he grants the subject demonstrates both Khanna's respect and his incredible mastery over the human form.

'Krishen's phase of involvement with the theme of social realism coincided with his activist period…. Those that seldom attract a second glance, the non-persons of the Indian streets, become Krishen's unlikely heroes…. There is a marked change from the lyrical paintings of his early years to something approaching an obsession with brutality in public life.'

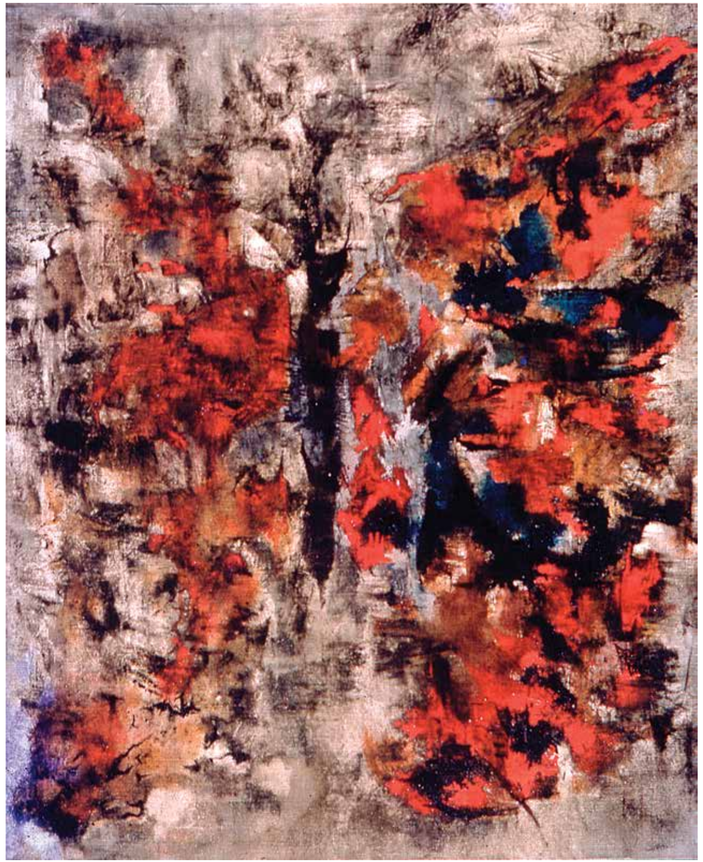
Krishen Khanna: A Critical Biography, Gayatri Sinha





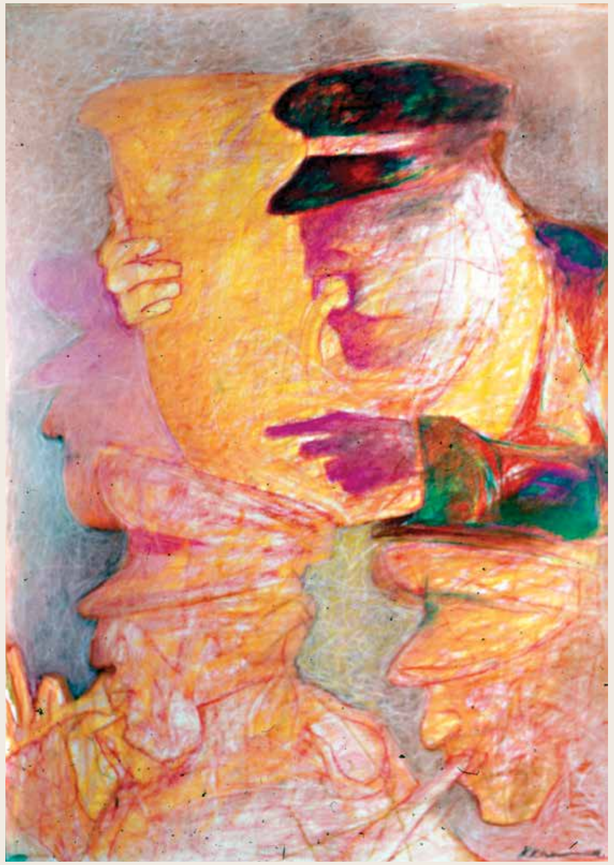












BANDWALLAS

One cannot forget Krishen stating that ‘the band is a macabre comment on bourgeois existence’. The Bandwallas have become a recurrent theme in Krishen Khanna’s oeuvre. Krishen’s choice of subject has mostly been inspired by the experiences of the daily life and pathos of the common man. The Bandwallas are an everyday sight all across the country, they are comic and bold, and his portrayal of them is superb in terms of their bright colourful uniforms and brass buttons, right down to their often-tired expressions as they belt out the same tunes repeatedly for one wedding procession after another.

-UMA NAIR





'I am moved by Chaplinesque situations which involve dual emotions. On the face of it, they can be very funny, even ridiculous. But there is a kind of pathos beneath it all. I see the Bandwalla as a relic of the past, appropriated by Punjabis and the northern population in general for their marriage processions and the like. They turn into areas of colour and have little correspondence with those who instigated them. Their cacophony too turns into a clash of colours, which I think is more coherent to the senses. It follows that my subject matter is important to me and is not fortuitous. Dependent on this choice are the means which will reveal it. Nor is it ever certain that every venture will be successful. What is certain, and which gives me some comfort, is that a moment of my life was spent in such absorption that bypassed time.'

-KRISHEN KHANNA

Art can provide you with the metaphysical answers that you have been looking for even while you are involved in its creation. They call it drawing. I really have no name for it. It's a compulsion, an itch. The more I scratch, the more I want to continue. It is enjoyable but it can also hurt when nothing emerges but an incomprehensible mess. Yet, for me, art is the ultimate bliss.

-KRISHEN KHANNA

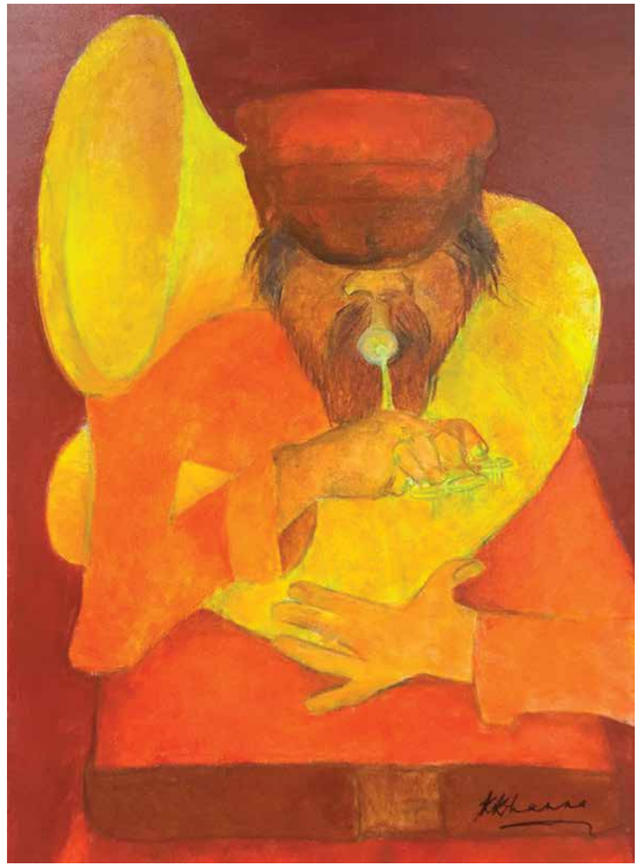




A FAR AFTERNOON 2014

I internalize what other people are going through…that is what I am going through also. I am not illustrating their lives. I used to see these fellows everyday… hundreds of trucks in Bhogal (in Delhi where many Sikhs migrated after Partition, most of them becoming truck drivers) and talk to them. It was their livelihood. They were also people who were victims of Partition and they had no place to live, so they lived in the trucks. They ate in the truck, and the truck was their home. The same thing with the bandwallas. They were dislocated like everybody else was. I have great sympathies with these people…. I was recalling Partition, even today we are going through the same upheaval, when Covid has pushed so many people out of their jobs, and they have gone back to their villages….

-KRISHEN KHANNA



'The function of art is not decorative. True art defeats time, place and people. Art must go beyond a pretty picture. My gaze is independent of my pencil-holding hand. I think I could shut my eyes without ceasing to scribble. Someone says, 'A map of an unknown galaxy', 'The pencil has become an extension of the nerves of my hand' and other such nonsense. Sustained scribbling achieves only a small inroad which may dislodge an image. Sounds dramatic, doesn't it? But it isn't always so. I would repeat the contours of a subject I have tackled before, which is not to say that I would not go back to the same subject in the hope of discovering another dimension.'

-KRISHEN KHANNA

'I don't build up my pictures from preliminary sketches. I work straight on the canvas. Yes, from the mental notes I make. When I smear the canvas or lay on the base paint, I make the first contact with the new experience and the image grows. Painting is really a capacity for image-making.'

-KRISHEN KHANNA TO RICHARD BARTHOLOMEW 1957





CELEBRATION
(ODE TO THE MONUMENTAL)

'Marriages are made in heaven', the saying goes. This one however was made right here in my studio amidst the tubes and jars of paint and messy palettes, paint-sodden rags, knives, brushes and liquids of all kinds emitting colours inimical in my lungs. How could one imagine that a happy marriage could emerge out of this combination? I take refuge from what a wiseacre once said: 'The lotus floats above a cesspool.'

-KRISHEN KHANNA

















THE HUMAN FIGURE

Khanna's paintings are usually large. They fascinate viewers with their magnitude of fervour and flavour in humanist codes. 'I like to paint large, because it is infinitely more rewarding to me as a painter. When you do not see the edges of the painting—it spreads like the Ajanta murals—that's very conducive to a narrative. When you tell a story it must have gravitas and its own integrity. I have always felt large canvases are a bigger challenge and you are glued in for a long period of time. Large pictures necessitate this penetrative way of looking. And the human figure has so many perspectives and generates so many emotions. The human figure has a multiplicity of attributes and is a compound of so many actions.'

Khanna reflected on his choice of the human figure. 'It's not easy being a figurative painter—you have to be true to space, colour, the drawing and, more than that, to the image that you're taking.' He drew upon eclectic references which encompassed everything from poetry to Indian miniatures, to the European masterpieces he's been revisiting since he was a boy. 'It is like ploughing and fertilizing a field, you don't know what crop will grow, but something does come out when you're completely switched to one line of thinking. This would have never happened if I had not left (banking). I might have become a good Sunday painter.'

-UMA NAIR



My love for these falcons comes from my reading habits. I feel they have an individuality that is foregrounded by their poise. When you look at literature and read between the lines, you notice that they have a rare conviviality that they share with male counterparts who are happy even to carry them on their shoulders.

I have always felt that the interdependence between man and nature has been so perfectly reflected in the position of these falcons and their human friends irrespective of the fingers or shoulders or heads on which they are perched.

-KRISHEN KHANNA









THE GREAT PROCESSION ITC MAURYA DELHI

This is a continuous procession, with no beginning and no end. If you look carefully, you may find yourself in it. And even if you don't, you will still be there, because it encompasses all, man, beast, bird, land, water, air and fire, and all emotions that flesh is heir to. The procession is a pilgrimage for some, for others a visitation on earth as spectators who will partake of what is there and prepare to enter the circular journey again.

–KRISHEN KHANNA







BAL CHHABDA

The friendship between Krishen Khanna and Bal Chhabda was one of depth and fellowship. In early interviews, Krishen had recalled how, many years ago, he and Bal Chhabda, who had the means, would often buy works by fellow artists to help them out. And thus, the two built a great personal collection of the most important era of modern Indian art.

When Bal Chhabda opened Gallery 59, it was Mumbai's first, short-lived art gallery to showcase artworks by the PAG members in 1959. Bal was Krishen's link to yesteryears.

These photographs taken by Krishen of Bal are spontaneous and impulsive. Bal was standing against the exposed red brick wall and the light fell on his countenance. Krishen at once snapped the images of his face and form against the light as well as in shadow.

Krishen decided he wanted to create a bronze sculpture out of it. The bronze sculpture looks like a façade on which is imprinted the face and torso of his dear friend Bal Chhabda.



‘When painters have lived through that length of time, they have a lot to look back to and reflect upon. A retrospective is not about the high peaks of your career, it is about the lock, stock and barrel of it all. It’s about the journey of time and tide as it were.’

–KRISHEN KHANNA







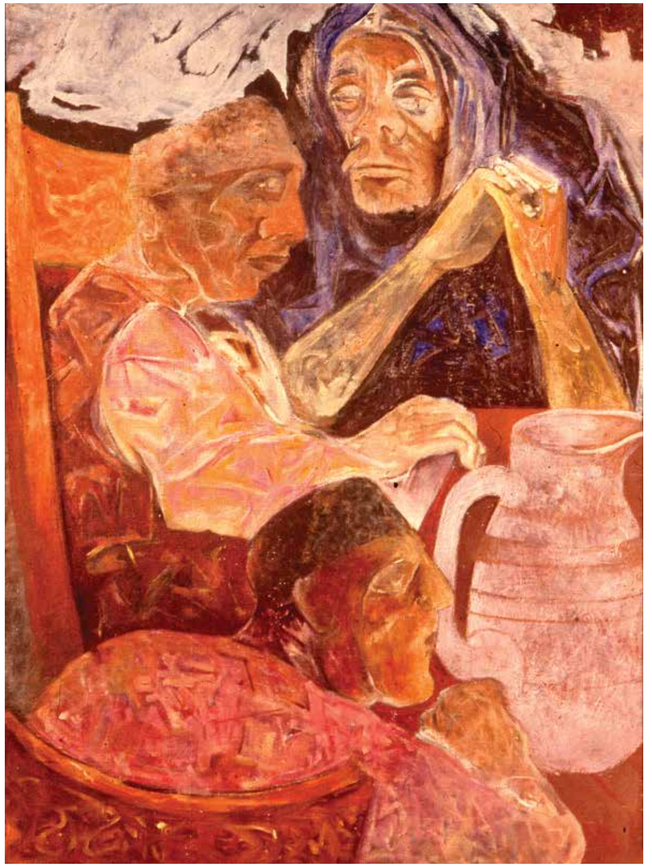




DHABA

A deeply humanist painter, Khanna frequently focused on the subaltern in his work. From rural migrants sleeping on the truck bed and exhausted musicians returning home at the end of the day, to huddled groups of refugees and labourers catching a short break at roadside tea stalls, the artist magnified and celebrated the unnoticed populations of Nizamuddin and Bhogal, where he lived and worked. 'Krishen's phase of involvement with the theme of social realism coincided with his activist period. During this period his themes drew from the little eddies and streams that feed the waters of Indian life. Those that seldom attract a second glance, the non-persons of the Indian streets, become Krishen's unlikely heroes.'

Krishen Khanna: A Critical Biography, Gayatri Sinha








OK
TATA



TRUCKWALLA

'All of these are street sites of restless movement. With the men's faces covered against the heat, their limbs and clothes apparently dust-laden in the hot incipient city, these paintings evoke the city only through acts of excruciating labour. The rootlessness of the migrant worker is imaged in the urgent sense of constant movement—of men, iron pipes and rods, or cattle packed into speeding trucks—and virtually caught in the lights of the rushing city traffic.'

Krishen Khanna: The Embrace of Love, Gayatri Sinha



REAR VIEW 1978

From the early 1970s, Khanna's work engaged with urban life as he experienced it in the rapidly expanding metropolis of Delhi, particularly through subaltern figures like the bandwallas, truckwallas, and manual labourers he encountered. The paintings in the truckwalla series were austere and more or less monochrome while the bandwallas were created in crimson yellow and scarlet with a dash of green. Krishen Khanna says: 'I got involved with painting the rear of trucks. In this series of grey and dusty pictures, he 'depicts the hard life of rural migrant labourers who form an important part of the urban landscape, in the late hours of the day when the privileged step out for a night of entertainment. Covered with dust, their identity obscured by a thick veil of grime, the figures in these monochromatic paintings seem to disappear into the fold of the city to which they migrated in the hope of a better life…. the truck becomes an on-the-spot home, on the move, emphasising rootlessness as well as alienation.'

'City Lights, City Limits—Multiple Metaphors in Everyday Urbanism', *Art and Visual Culture in India 1857-2007,* R. Karode and S. Sawant





DOUBTING THOMAS

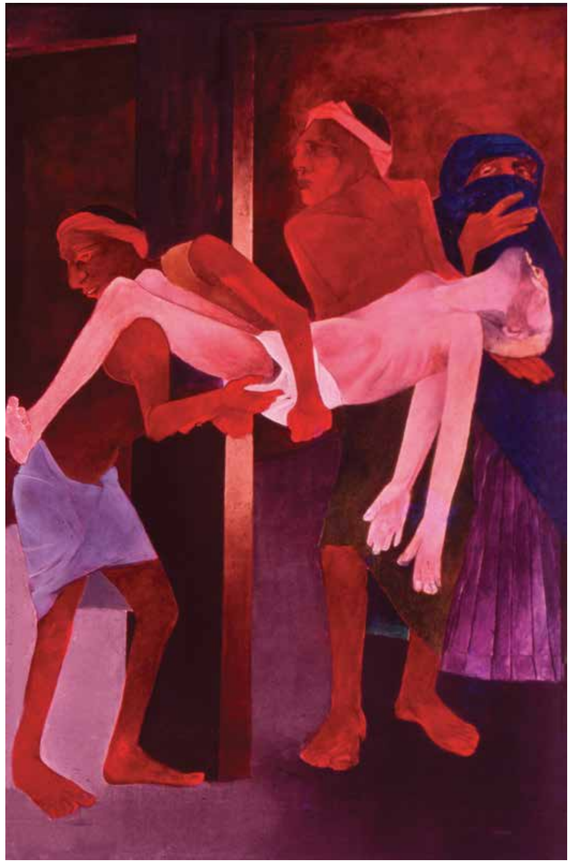
This moment, where doubt ends and belief begins in the resurrection of Christ for Thomas the Apostle is depicted literally by Krishen Khanna, but pushes the viewer to a translation of the artist's intention.

The fact that Khanna's labouring men are reimaged in the Christ cycle of paintings indicate how he brings the economically disenfranchised and the religious minority on the same plane. This reflects what Homi Bhabha describes: 'The social articulation of difference, from the minority perspective, is a complex, ongoing negotiation that seeks to authorise cultural hybridities that emerge in moments of historical transformation.' Homi K. Bhaba, *The Location of Culture*

'Christ becomes emblematic of resistance to persecution, and what Khanna speaks of as 'the tragic and perfidious in man.'… in using biblical allegory, Khanna brings the 'coherence of narrative and an explicit conflict with figures of authority, symptomatic of public life in the subcontinent…. The insecurity caused by communal riots in Gujarat, Moradabad or his own locality Bhogal and their resonance thirty years later at Godhra in Gujarat in 2003 motivates the sense of betrayal. Christ's absorption into the lumpen labour of the city is complete; this is neither the healing Christ, the divine worker of miracles of the haloed Son of God, but the persecuted figure within an oppressive system.'

Krishen Khanna: The Embrace of Love, Gayatri Sinha





BIBLICAL THEME

'The Christ series are set here in Delhi, Nizamuddin in fact, and appear as current happenings. He is wandering amongst us or sleeping with us. . . I painted Jesus, not in the image given by European painters, but as one of the fakirs one sees around Hazrat Nizamuddin.'

Krishen Khanna, Interview with Chanda Singh, India Magazine, September 1984

DEATH AND THE DYING

'A contemplation of the macabre, a preoccupation with sudden, violent death [occurs] in different periods . . . Krishen's involvement with the theme of social realism coincided with his activist period. Those that seldom attract a second glance become Krishen's unlikely heroes. Krishen painted the life of the street. It is notable that, like his fellow artist Husain, Krishen, in his subject matter, oscillates from the banal to the sublime. [By the early 1970s] Krishen's preoccupation with gentle, lyrical subjects changed dramatically to issues of social injustice and oppression, something approaching an obsession with brutality in public life.'

Krishen Khanna: A Critical Biography, Gayatri Sinha



PIETA

Another subject from the Christ cycle that Khanna returns to is the Pieta or the Mater Dolorosa, as she holds the exhausted Christ on his descent from the cross. He returns to it over the decades with different stylistic variations. The Pieta paintings relate to his concern with the subject of the dead and the dying as much as with the persecuted figure of the Christ. Khanna uses the essential composition of the seated Mother Mary cradling her son, as widely perpetuated by the Pieta of Michelangelo.

The Pieta is among the few maternal figures in Khanna's oeuvre, and his interpretation of the figure varies in its palette, as well as the reworking of the pyramidal structure.... [W]hat merits particular attention is the Mater Dolorosa's shift from a passive suffering figure to an active resisting one, a working class woman with the strong hands of her class, who protests the persecution of her exhausted son. The movement from the subordinate to a dominant position of heroism, from suffering to resistance is at this moment, complete.'

Krishen Khanna: The Embrace of Love,
Gayatri Sinha



THE LAST SUPPER

'I was barely seven years old when I was shown a print of Leonardo's 'Last Supper'. I recall the mess I made in trying to copy it in pencil on paper. I remember too how infuriated I became at my inability. I have never seen the original in Milan but have carried the image in my mind of the small print which still hangs on the wall of my studio in Shimla. More than the visual impact of the print is the sequence of events leading up to and going beyond the Last Supper. Quite often people ask me if I am a Christian. Understandably they are intrigued and find it difficult to reconcile my interest in so called Christian subjects with my obvious Hindu name. An English friend even went as far as to suggest that my name Krishen was a misspelling of Christian! Most people resort to creating categories to file away issues which they find difficult to resolve. I manage to live with an endless number of open ended thoughts…'

Krishen Khanna: Images in My Time





EMMAUS

'Khanna's engagement with biblical allegory and Hindu myth has served as his instrument of engagement during troubled periods in Indian polity.' ,

Krishen Khanna: The Embrace of Love, Gayatri Sinha

Bordering on the narrative, Khanna's *Meeting at Emmaus* is a quasi-historical representation. Through his use of the downtrodden man as inspiration, Khanna puts greater emphasis on humanity as opposed to divinity. Here, the three figures sit around an empty table; their skin tones, choice of attire, and bare feet immediately announcing that this version of *Emmaus* has deviated from traditional renditions. Khanna has reconceived Indian labourers as Christ and two of his disciples. Although Christ is easily identifiable through his beard and clasped hands at the head of the table, the three figures could just as easily be sitting and sipping hot tea on a cold winter morning in a small road-side dhaba off a North Indian highway.







WHO?

'From the late 1970's Krishen also developed on what has been described as the "tragic and perfidious" in man. In 1980 he exhibited on the theme of Christ's betrayal…Krishen's inspiration for his exhaustive resort to the Christ theme came to him almost fortuitously. While driving up to Shimla with his father, they stopped at a dhaba for tea when Kahan Chand remarked that any of the waiters at the café could be a Christ figure….'

'Characteristically, as a painter, Krishen makes a fluid transition from the subject of the ordinary to the sublime. Despite overwhelming biblical references, however, Krishen interprets the events in a wholly Indian context. The central figures, Jesus and his disciples, are like the ordinary rough hewn labourers of Delhi …Regarding the setting he said "All great art has to be local. When I say local I mean an artist has to draw from the things near him so that a certain passion comes through in his paintings. At the same time, great art transcends the ordinary moment and strikes a moment in infinity."'

Krishen Khanna: A Critical Biography, Gayatri Sinha





EXODUS

Krishen's treatment of the canvas, the flat angular strokes that define the people on his canvas have about them a dramatic air of urgency and emergency. Evocative echoes become the leitmotif of this brilliant work. He shows us people with babies with sadness and angst writ large on their faces. . . this is a masterpiece in itself. This work was then followed by Krishen's Exodus series.

'When I created my Exodus from Pakistan paintings I recalled the opening lines of C. Day-Lewis's poem, 'Departure in the Dark', 'Nothing so sharply reminds a man that he is mortal/ As leaving a place/ In a winter morning's dark…'. *Refugees* echoes Shakespeare during the reign of King Henry VIII: 'Imagine that you see the wretched strangers, Their babies at their backs and their poor luggage, Plodding to the ports and coasts for transportation …'

-UMA NAIR, *TIMES OF INDIA*





The Partition of the subcontinent and its aftermath had a deep effect on the young Krishen Khanna, who, in August 1947, was forced to flee the newly created state of Pakistan with his family and thousands of other Hindus.

This epic canvas reflects the sudden and mass exodus of people from Pakistan to India. An inscription on one of Khanna's early drawings tells the tale of his extended family's sudden 'flight from Pakpattan'. 'Someone came quietly at night and whispered that thugs were coming to murder and plunder in the morning. Taya Gokulchand sent for his sails to get the tonga ready for departure. It was loaded with essentials and then the family got in. Eighty-year-old Beybeyji was hauled in and then the journey began for the border, on reaching which they were stopped by the Border Guards who told Ali the saiees that if he ventured into India, they would shoot him. He told them to go ahead and shoot but he would see this family safely across. They did not shoot. Then Tayaji bade Ali farewell and gave him the tonga and the horse. '

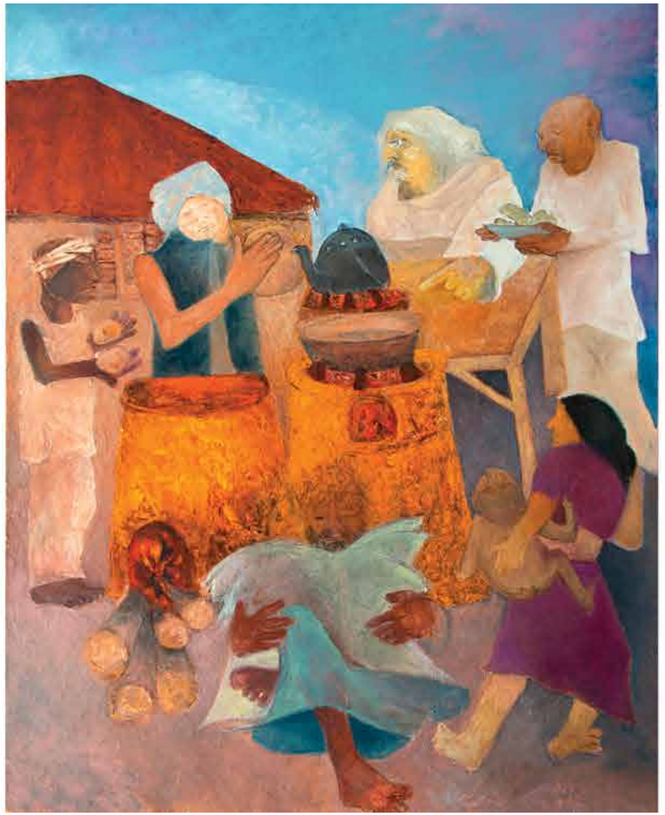
Krishen Khanna: A Critical Biography, Gayatri Sinha

In this painting the carriage rolls over a difficult terrain. The horse advances not on firm ground, but on uncertainty. That's how it was for thousands who crossed borders and managed to survive.

-KRISHEN KHANNA













MISS AMERY

An uncomfortably fat old lady would clamber up the staircase to our flat at 2, Maclagan Road, Lahore. She came daily to teach my mother English language and prepare her for the Intermediate examination. Her floral dress would almost merge with the chintz sofa covering she sat upon. She was keen to let us know that she was of a good English stock. She also made her love for India well known. Once, when a Congress procession was slogan shouting against British occupation, she sadly remarked, 'This is our home as well and I'm not hurting anyone.' She has stayed in my mind and I have painted and drawn her several times. She symbolizes those who are in the middle ground, without political affiliations or objectives, and who become vulnerable as they have no defences. This painting is substantially a drawing in oil. To have painted her in colour would have been unfaithful to her demeanour and her appearance. She was frugal, colourless but extremely precise.

-KRISHEN KHANNA





GAJA MOKSHA

The story of Gaja Moksha is harnessed within the structure of the elephant and the crocodile. Khanna creates an amalgam of strokes with his brush so that he can loop back in time to unravel his story. The two figures take centre stage like a pair of bodies in space filled with the energy of their own being.

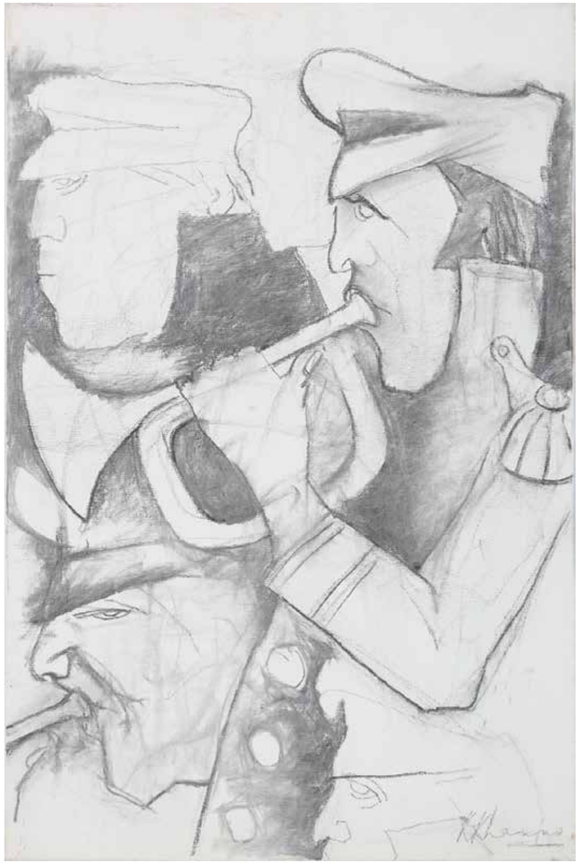
Khanna says: 'The story and its many manifestations is what endeared itself to me. The imagery is so stark and powerful: Gajendra ventured to a nearby lake, intending to pluck lotus flowers for a prayer dedicated to the revered deity Vishnu. I wanted to portray the lurking crocodile that emerged from the lake, seizing Gajendra's leg in a vice-like grip. This moment of combat is what I wanted to capture. The contradictions in society are ageless.' Khanna creates a choreography of the elephant's valiant efforts to break free and leaves it to us viewers to imagine the desperate pleas of his elephant companions. Ensnared in the relentless clutches of the crocodile, Khanna brings into vision Gajendra's plea as we imagine him holding a lotus aloft as a humble offering. Khanna's love for Indian miniature traditions as well as his own fetish for the narratives of the Puranas all come into play in this masterpiece in monochrome.

EXODUS 1947

Exodus created as far back as 1947 is a study of farmers leaving with their cattle. The Partition portrait is one of sadness amidst the struggle of migration and melancholia. The movement of farmers with their cattle one of uncertainty as well as loyalty and protection towards their cattle even as partition brought depression and struggles in its wake.

–KRISHEN KHANNA









LOVE FOR DRAWING

Krishen's love for drawing is seen in his monochromes. Like the old Venetian masters, in his drawings, he seeks pictorial effects through fragmented forms, he creates intuitive depictions of light and shade, and a concentration of atmosphere over a lack of precise detail. He provides a useful mid tone to create his own monochromatic effects of mood. Over the past seventy years he has created his own indemnity in a tradition that has emerged of small, medium, as well as large drawings made in conte, acrylic, or with a fine pencil. In his adoption, he allows broad forms and intense contrast, a good match for the white canvas or paper that remains his playground for ideas.

The simple beauty of the portraits belies the technical virtuosity with which it was made. With almost infinite subtlety on the cheeks, and in the shadows of the musical instruments, he gives us a web of short, dancing lines that render the texture. A few touches below the eyes and at the edges of the coats and hats provide hints of stronger light.

In a sense, his work is a graphic record, a visual documentation. What makes it art and lifts it out of the transient are the abiding elements of the tragic, the sublime, and the ridiculous which are woven into it.



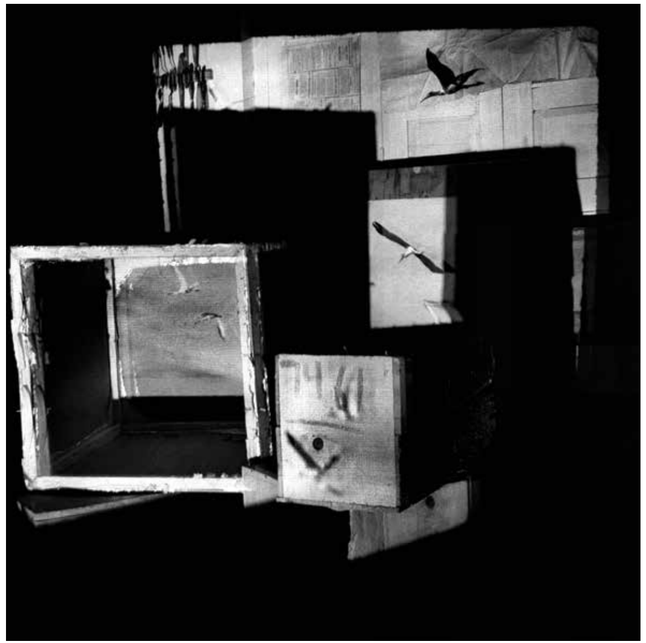
CAPTAIN DENTIST PESI KAKA

Another painting that recalls the years before Partition that Khanna spent in Lahore, and the people he knew there, this canvas features one of the artist's Maclagan Road neighbours. Fondly reminiscing about this Parsi dentist, Khanna explains, 'He too lived and practiced on Maclagan Road. An amiable man who would sit outside his clinic/home and watch the world go by. He was always at a loss to understand why good English suiting had to be destroyed to achieve independence. 'Why don't these fellows wear these fine suits instead of destroying them?' he would say. He deplored the destruction of good Scotch whiskey as well. 'The same results could be achieved if they passed on those bottles to me' he would mutter while stroking his bushy moustache. These people were happy if nothing changed.'

-KRISHEN KHANNA











PHOTOGRAPHS TAKEN BY KRISHEN IN HIS STUDIO 1973


پادشاهی جز تو ما را در گمان

















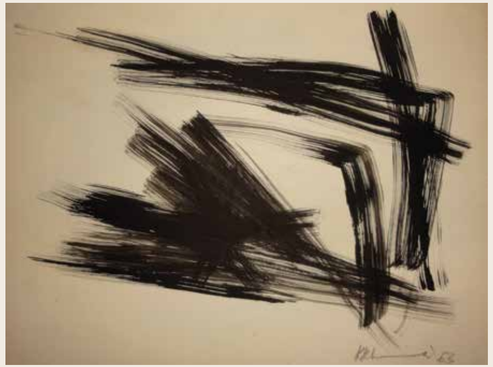


The ink wash painting technique of sumi-e that he encountered in Japan inspired him to create a body of work with ink on rice paper. He returned to India in 1964.

Like most of his contemporaries in the Progressive Artists' Group, Khanna had a strong commitment to figurative painting over abstraction. His works emphasized the human condition through figural depictions, drawing from everyday life as well as historical events. His paintings portrayed a diverse range of subjects, from mythological figures to migrant labourers. His literary bent of mind spurred compositions that would reflect life, the living, and the dead. Poetry and literature both became the catalysts for his series that spawned his love for holy books, his eye for capturing migrant workers, as well as people belonging to the socio-urban fabric of everyday living.

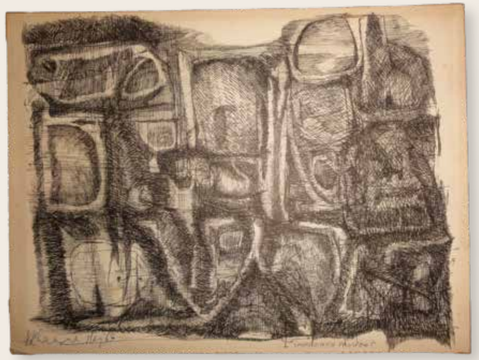
















SCULPTED

FROM PAINT TO PATINA





BANDWALLAS IN BRONZE

Krishen's Bandwallas in sculpted form as well as bronze plates are a series of works that play with the idea of form and translating imagery from one dimension into another. These bronze sculptures cast in London have their own aura of reflective reverie.

When they are cast as bronze relief plates, they have their own synergy in terms of the lexicon of communication and the freezing of a frame that speaks about a humble occupation, in the cultural fabric of India.























MAN WITH FALCON

In recent years, Krishen made significant alterations to his drawing style in order to convey a new sense of scale and ambition. From the acrylic and charcoal on canvas, as well as the drawings on paper, his sculpture of man and bird becomes an exploration of the third dimension that lends an equivocal tone of equipoise in the love of man and nature. The compositional dynamics and the textures of the feathery avian add to a charismatic character of building a rich narrative that Krishen has long been known for.





















KRISHEN'S SKETCHBOOK IN COLOUR

For decades Krishen's quandary has been 'to paint or not to paint'. Krishen has often said 'When I draw, I feel I should leave the drawing as is and also wish to paint it in colour'.

The foundation of these works is derived from this ever-present dilemma that Krishen has experienced throughout his career. A selection of Krishen's important drawings that still hold the yearning to be painted have been reproduced thereby producing three prints of each of the drawings. These large prints have then been hand painted in detail creating unique artworks while preserving the drawings that they have emerged from, which are displayed alongside these colourful artworks, displaying the origin of these paintings. Krishen's desire to add paint to these sketches has been accomplished. It may have taken him time, but Krishen has finally figured out how to have his cake and eat it too.

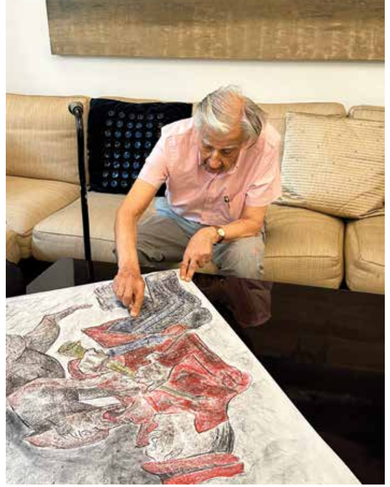










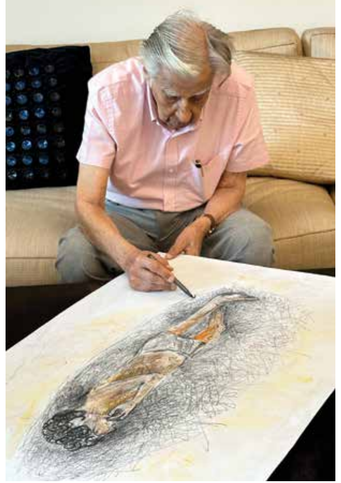
































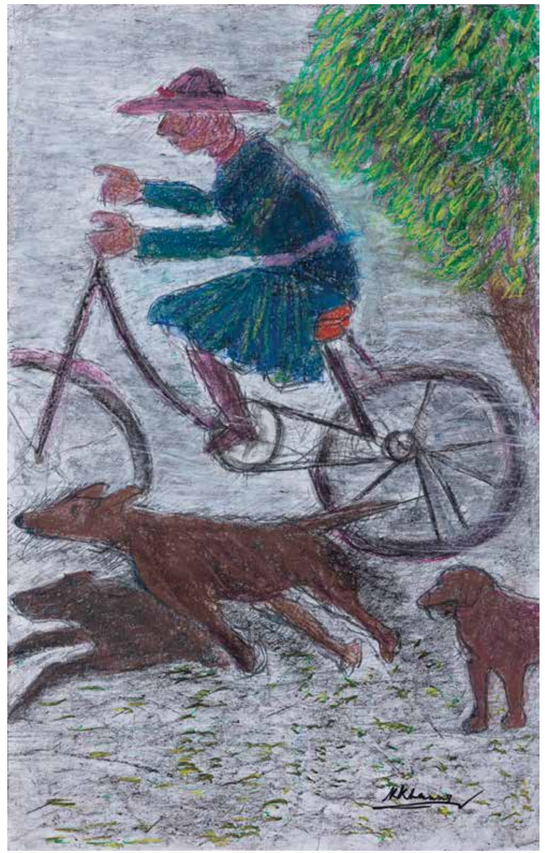














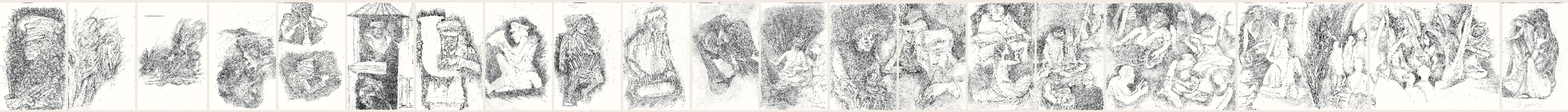






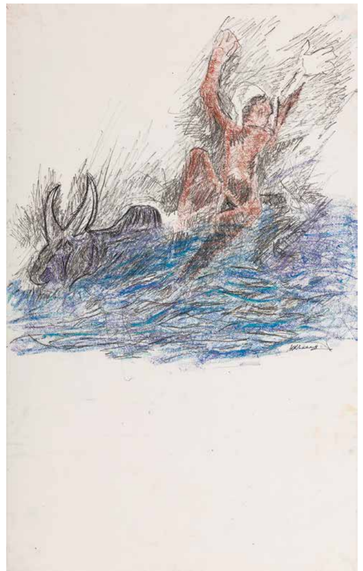






















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BANDWALLAS
IN HARMONY
WITH TIME



These unique watches are a collaboration between Krishen and some of the best craftsmen across the world.. Each watch carries Krishen's founding legacy of the bandwallas juxtaposed and gilded in 24-carat gold wire.

These watches withstand the demands of contemporary art as well as creating an insignia of the cultural fabric of our country. The bandwallas are omnipresent and tied to rituals of our country from birth to the end of life.

Showcasing Swiss craftsmanship at its finest, upholding the standards of 'haute-horlogerie' with a touch of elegance, these masterpieces are in a 40mm case, measuring just 9.2mm in thickness. Powering these timepieces is a Peseux caliber mechanical hand-wound movement. With seventeen jewels and a slim height of only 2.5 mm, this movement seamlessly combines allure with functionality—embodying Swiss precision, elegance, and a deep reverence for horological tradition.





The Grand Feu Cloisonné dial is a stunning example of enamel artistry. Crafted in Georgia by a highly skilled enamel master, it features intricate designs using 24-carat gold wire and a vibrant colour palette. The meticulous creation process involves up to nine firings at high temperatures, with each firing posing risks of cracking or distortion. Yet, the successful outcome is a testament to exceptional craftsmanship. The adaptation of art colours, executed with care, honour the original artwork's integrity. The dials showcase Georgia's mastery of enamelling in the face of the unpredictable nature of the process.







The strap, crafted from premium alligator leather in France, is as unique as the watch itself. Each strap boasts natural patterns and textures, adding an organic touch to the design. Carefully selected and coloured to complement the dial, the rich hues and subtle sheen enhance both the visual appeal and comfort for the wearer of the watch.

Deguiret, a custom watchmaking company, takes pride in crafting one-of-a-kind timepieces with a personal touch. Seamlessly merging Swiss watchmaking, Georgian Cloisonné Enamel 'Grand Feu', and French leather craftsmanship, each watch is an exclusive work of art.








DEGUIRET


DEGUIRET UNIQUE PIECE
WATER RESISTANT - SWISS MECHANICAL MOVEMENT - SAPPHIRE CRYSTAL
ALL STAINLESS STEEL




timepieces
art collaboratio


DEGUIRET
Genuine Alligator
DEGUIRET
Genuine Alligator

TAPESTRIES
CERAMICS AND
PENDANTS



















KRISHEN KHANNA

BORN

1925 Born in Lyallpur (now Faisalabad, Pakistan)

EDUCATION

1923-35 Schooling in Lahore at the Sacred Heart and Cathedral School. Passed two examinations of the Royal Drawing Society, London.
1936 Successfully competed for Kipling Scholarship to study in Kipling's old school located in Windsor.
1940 Imperial Service College, Windsor, England
1945 B.A (Hons.) from Punjab University, Lahore
1945-46 Worked at Studio One with Sheikh Ahmed, Lahore
1947-61 Covenented Assistant at Grindley's Bank, India.

SELECTED SOLO EXHIBITION

2022 *Krishen Khanna The Last Man Standing :* **Saffronart, New Delhi**
2020 *KKhanna 95 : Grosvenor Gallery, Artaholics, Karan Khanna .At ITC Maurya Sheraton*

2017 *Krishen Khanna Monochrome :* Saffronart, New Delhi
2016 *KrishenKhanna: Drawings & Paintings*, Vadehra Art Gallery, New Delhi
2015 *When the hand begins to play…*, Grosvenor Gallery, London
2013 *A Celebration of Lines*, Sakshi Gallery, Mumbai
2010 *KrishenKhanna: A Retrospective*, presented by Saffronart at Lalit Kala Akademi, New Delhi
2007 *Krishen Khanna @ The Royal Academy of Art London:* Saffronart & Berkeley Square Gallery, London
2008 *The Savage Heart*, Cymroza Art Gallery, Mumbai
2005 *Krishen Khanna:* Saffronart and Berkeley Square Gallery, Mumbai, New York, London
2004 *An Airing*, Pundole Art Gallery, Mumbai
2001 Kumar Art Gallery, New DelhiSaffronart and Pundole Art Gallery, New York
1995 Sakshi Gallery, Mumbai
1994 Vadehra Art Gallery, New Delhi
1991 Gallery Espace, New Delhi
1989 Centre for Contemporary Art, New Delhi
1986 Exhibition of drawings and paintings,Sarla Art Centre, Chennai
1983 *Exhibition of drawings*, Garhi Studio, New Delhi
1980 RabindraBhavan, Lalit Kala Akademi, New Delhi
1979 Dhoomimal Art Gallery, New Delhi
1975 Dhoomimal Art Gallery, New Delhi
1974 Black Partridge, New Delhi
1973 Pundole Gallery, Mumbai
1969 Photographs, Kunika-Chemould, New Delhi*Experimental Photographs*, Pundole Gallery, Mumbai
1966 Kumar Art Gallery, New Delhi
1965 Egan Gallery, New York
1964 Kumar Art Gallery, New DelhiWatkins Art Gallery. American University, Washington DC
1962 Kunika Art CentreLeicester Galleries, London
1961 Ashoka Gallery, KolkataJehangir Art Gallery, Mumbai
1960 Kumar Art Gallery, New DelhiLeicester Gallery, London
1959 Kumar Gallery, New Delhi
1958 Kumar Gallery, New Delhi
1957 All India Fine Arts and Crafts Society (AIFACS), New Delhi
1955 USIS, Chenna1946 J. Ray Bookshop, Lahore

SELECTED GROUP EXHIBITIONS

2019 Bronzed Paint to Patina, Bronze Sculptures, ICIA Mumbai
2015 *Abby Grey and Indian Modernism:Selections from the NYU Art Collection*, Grey Art Gallery, New York University, New York
2014 *Ode to Monumental: Celebration, Visuality, Ideology*, presented by Saffronart at Lalit Kala Akademi, New Delhi and Jehangir Art Gallery, Mumbai
2013 *Ideas of the Sublime*, presented by Vadehra Art Gallery at Lalit Kala Akademi, New Delhi*Edge of Reason and beyond, into pure creativity*, presented by Indian Art Circle at Lalit Kala Akademi, New Delhi*The Discerning Eye: Modern Masters*, Vadehra Art Gallery, New Delhi
2012 *Synergy 2012*, 12thAnniverseryShw, Tao Art Gallery, Mumbai*Crossings: Time Unfolded, Part 2*, KiranNadar Museum of ART (KNMA), New Delhi*Talking Heads*, Art Alive Gallery, New Delhi
2011 *The Art of Drawing*, The Guild Art Gallery, Mumbai*Masterclass, Dhoomimal Art Gallery, New Delhi**Ethos V: Indian Art Through the Lens of History (1900 to 1980)*, Indigo Blue Art, Singapore*Manifestations V*, Delhi Art Gallery, New Delhi*Roots in the Air, Branches Below: Modern & Contemporary Art from India*, San Jose Museum of Art, San Jose*Time Unfolded*, KiranNadar Museum of Art (KNMA, New Delhi*Celebration 2011*, Annual Exhibition, Kumar Art Gallery, New Delhi
2010-11 *A Collection*, Sakshi Gallery, Mumbai
2010 Sakshi Gallery, Mumbai
10 x 10, Gallery Threshold, New Delhi*Black is beautiful*, India Fine Art, Mumbai

Essential, Eclectic,… Ephemeral, The Harrington Mansions, Kolkata
Art Celebrates 2010: Sports and the City, represented by Art Alive Gallery at Lalit Kala Akademi, New Delhi to coincide with the hosting of the Commonwealth Games
Master's Corner, organized by Indian Contemporary Art Journal at Jehangir Art Gallery, Mumbai; India International Art Fair, New Delhi
Contemporary Printmaking in India, presented by Priyasri Art Gallery, Mumbai at Jehangir Art Gallery, Mumbai; Priyasri Art Gallery, Mumbai
Evolve: 10th Anniversery Show, Tao Art Gallery, Mumbai Annual Exhibition, Chawla Art Gallery, New Delhi
Bharat Ratna! Jewels of Modern Indian Art, Museum of Fine Arts, Boston
Master Class, The Art Trust, Mumbai
Sacred and Secular, India Fine ART, Mumbai
Kalpana: Figurative Art in India, presented by the Indian Council for Cultural Relations (ICCR) at Aicon Gallery, London; The Indian Council for Cultural Relations (ICCR)

2008-09 *Paz Mandala*, Lalit Kala Akademi, New Delhi

2008 *Harvest 2008*, organized by Arushi Arts at the Stainless Gallery, New Delhi*Faces*, Tao Art Gallery, Mumbai*Baisakh 08*, Polka Art Gallery, New Delhi

2004 *Concept and Form*, Vadehra Art Gallery, New Delhi

2003 Exhibition of drawings, Pundole Art Gallery, Mumbai*Transition* at UBS, London*Of Memories, Dreams, Reverses*, AnantArt Gallery, New Del**2001***Living Legends of Indian Contemporary Art,* Tao Art Gallery, Mumbai
In Conversations, Gallery Espace, New Delhi
Indian Art Circle, Habitat Centre, New Delhi
Saffronart and Pundole Art Gallery, New York

1999 *Mahabharat*, Gallery 7, Mumbai

1998 *The Probing Eye*, an exhibition of Photographs, Surendra Paul Art Gallery, New Delhi
Drawings, Guild Art Gallery, Mumbai

1997 *Tryst with Destiny, Art from Modern India 1947-1997*, Singapore Art Museum, organized by Centre for International Modern Art (CIMA), Kolkata*Six Modern Masters*, Kumar Gallery, New Delhi

1996 *A Tree in my Life*, Village Gallery, New Delhi
The Moderns, Inaugural Exhibition, National Gallery of Modern Art (NGMA), Mumbai
The Mahabharata, The Card Player and the Scribe, Kumar Gallery, New Delhi

1995 *Bombay,* presented by RPG Enterprises*Rive of Art*, Inaugural Exhibition, Art Today

1994 *Indian Drawing Today*, All India Fine Arts and Crafts Society (AIFACS), organized by Gallery Espace, New Delhi
The Solids, 2nd Drawing Biennale, exhibited as a Special invitee

1993 *Reflections and Images*, Vadehra and Jehangir Art Gallery, Mumbai

1992 *Masters of Indian Art*, Hotel Intercontinental, Mumbai

1991 *Remembering KaliPundole*, Pundole Art Gallery, Mumbai
Birla Academy of Art, Anniversary Exhibition, Kolkata
Addressing Gandhi, traveling exhibition by Sahmat

The Fifth Biennale, Havana Cuba

1989 *Timeless Art*, Exhibition and Auction *Sotheby's*, Mumbai
Artist's Alert, exhibition and auction by Sahmat, New Delhi

1988 First International Biennale, Lahore, Pakitan
Festival of India, Japan

1987 *Festival of India*, Japan
Coups de Coeur, Geneva

1986 Baghdad International Festival of Art

1985 *Ram Kumar and KrishenKhanna*, Gallery 7, Mumbai

1984 Inaugural Exhibition, Gallery 7, Mumbai

1982 *Modern Indian Painters*, Hirschhorn Museum, Washington DC
Contemporary Indian Art, Burlington House, London
Myth and Reality, Museum of Modern Art, Oxford, UK
International Triennale, New Delhi

1981 *Inaugural Exhibition*, Roopankar Museum, Bharat Bhavan, Bhopal
Indian Painting Today, Jehangir Art Gallery, Mumbai

1979 *Modern Asian Art*, Fukuoka Art Museum, Japan

1976 *Pictorial Space*, Lalit Kala Akademi, New Delhi
Indian Painting 1977, Chandigarh, organized by Black Patridge Gallery
25th Pugwash Conference, Chennai

1972 *Art Now*, KunikaChemould, New Delhi
One World through Art, Ben and Abbey Grey Foundation, St. Paul, MN, USA

1971 *Contemporary Indian Art*, Renwick Gallery (71 or 72?) Smithsonian Institute, Washington DC

1970 *Art Now*, KunikaChemould, New Delhi
Photographic Murals in Indian Pavilion, *Expo'70*, Indian Pavilion, Osaka, Japan

1969 *Contemporary Art, Dialogue between East and West*, Museum of Modern Art, Tokyo, Japan.

Indian Painters 69, Max Mueller Bhavan& Birla Academy, Kolkata

1968 New Art Centre, London
First International Triennale, New Delhi

1966 Lincoln Centre, New York

1965 *Ten Contemporary Artists from India*, Detroit Institute of Arts, Detroit; Travelled to University of South Florida, Tampa; Jacksonville Art Museum, Jacksonville; Issac Delgado Museum of Art, New Orleans; Hunter Gallery, Chattanooga; Colorado Fine Arts Centre, Colorado Springs; San Francisco Museum of Art, San Francisco; MIT Hayden Gallery, Cambridge; East West Centre, Honolulu; and New Jersey State Museum, Trenton
Annual Exhibition, Lalit Kala Akademi, New Delhi

1964*S ix Artists in Black and White*, Sridharani Gallery, New Delhi

1963 *Contemporary Painters from India*, Gallery 63, New York*Eight Contemporary Artists from India*, Lever House, New York

1962 National Exhibition, Lalit Kala Akademi, New Delhi
Venice Biennale, Indian Participation

1961 Tokyo Biennale

1960 Sao Paulo Biennale

1959 *Artists of Fame and of Promise*, Leicester Galleries, London
Trends in Contemporary Paintings from India, Graham Gallery, New York.
Modern Indian Art, Cairo
Contemporary Art from India, Essex, Dortmund, Zurich
Inaugural Exhibition, Gallery 59, Mumbai

1957 Tokyo Biennale

1956 *Eight Painters*, Indian and Eastern Newspaper Society Building, New Delhi

1954 With M.F Husain at All India Fine Arts and Crafts Society (AIFACS), New Delhi

1952-53 Progressive Artists at Madras College of Art, Chennai

1951 Exhibition at Progressive Artists Group at Jehangir Art Gallery, Mumbai

1949 Progressive Artist's Group, Chetna Restaurant, MumbaiProgressive Artist's Group, Artists Aid Centre

1946 Annual Exhibition, Punjab Art Society4
Mayo School of Art Annual Exhibition, Lahore

HONOURS AND AWARD

2024 **Honorary Doctorate from Shiv Nadar University.**

2023 **Lifetime achievement /award – Haryana Government**

2011 Padma Bhushan, Government of India

2004 Lalit Kala Ratna from the President of India

1997 Kala Ratna, All India Fine Arts & Crafts Society (AIFACS), New Delhi

1990 Padma Shri, Government of India

1989 Gold Medal, First International Biennale of Art, Lahore Pakistan

1989 Sahitya Kala Parishad Award, New Delhi

1986 President's Award at Baghdad International Festival of Art

1965 Award, Lalit Kala Akademi Annual Exhibition, New Delhi
Fellowship of the Council for Economic and Cultural Affairs, New York

1964 Artist-in-Residence, American University, Washington DC

1962-63 Fellowship Rockefeller Council, New York

1962 Travel Fellowship by Council for Economic and Cultural Affairs, New York

1955 Commendation, Bombay Art Society Award, Mumbai

1955 Saurashtra Government Award for Oil Painting

1946 Commendation, Mayo School of Art Annual Exhibition, Lahore.

SPECIAL PROJECTS

The Quartet of Life- - A painted mural – Adani Corporate Centre Ahmedabad
A Far Afternoon –A painted saga – Piramal Art Foundation
Laminated mural - drawing 7.6 feet x 80 feet mural at I.T.C Hotel, Chola Chennai.
Mural-Oil on canvas in dome of Hotel Maurya Sheraton. Completed after four years in 1987.
Déclaration Universelle Des Droits de l'Homme Liberté 1998.
Triptych, oil on canvas, The Legacy, British Council in India, 7 feet x 15 feet.
Circular floor mural in mosaic in W.W.F building in Mahim Nature Park, Mumbai.
Memorial to Salim Ali, W.W.F Nature Park-assemblage of stone and grass.
Painting of St. Francis with animals donated to W.W.F, auctioned.
Photographic murals for Shipping Corporation of India. M.M.T.C, India at Expo '70, Osaka, Japan.
Photographic mural at Zagreb, Trade Fair.

FILMS AND DOCUMENTARIES

Numerous films & documentaries on Work / paintings & mural done by different film makers

ABOUT SAFFRONART

Founded in 2000 by Minal and Dinesh Vazirani, Saffronart is a leading international auction house, and India's most reputed, with nearly five hundred auctions to its credit. Its flagship gallery is in Mumbai, with offices in New Delhi, London, and New York. At the forefront of selling Indian art, Saffronart has, over the past twenty-one years, held online and live auctions, exhibitions, and Dialogues in Art, working with collectors, gallerists, and artists to develop a strong market for art and aesthetics. Its focus is to bring transparency to the auction process and provide easy access and information to collectors around the world. Saffronart's services go beyond auctions to include private sales, appraisals, and valuations for clients. Saffronart has set several global benchmarks for online auctions and was the subject of a case study at Harvard Business School in 2005.

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SAFFRONART

When painters have lived through that length of time, they have a lot to look back to and reflect upon. A retrospective is not about the high peaks of your career, it is about the lock, stock and barrel of it all. It's about the journey of time and tide as it were.

KRISHEN KHANNA