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Prospero

India Art Fair

A change is gonna come

Jan 31st 2012, 0:29 by J.E. | DELHI

INDIA revels in creating pockets of excellence out of urban noise, and at turning logic on its head. It also loves creating *tamashas* (spectacles). That is what has happened at the four-day **India Art Fair** (<http://www.indiaartfair.in/>), an event that saw families and young children mixing with serious art collectors and buyers, and which closed Sunday night in New Delhi.



“The mood of excitement to see things and to learn is palpable. There is tremendous spirit,” said Hugo Weihe, the head of Indian and South-East Asian Art at Christie’s, while standing in the middle of Sunday’s crowds of some 20,000. “You can feel the future of the Indian art market here.”

The event, previously called the Art Summit, is unusual on the international art circuit because it aims to both educate the Indian public about the art world and provide sales and high-value contacts for some 90 exhibitors (selected from over 250 applicants). This leads to some tensions, as high-end foreign galleries and Indian collectors would prefer a more exclusive audience of potential buyers, rather than a large public showing. Half the galleries came from India and the rest were international names such as Hauser & Wirth, Lisson, White Cube and Other Criteria, with artists ranging from Picasso to **Marina Abramovic** (<http://www.economist.com/node/17036088>), a New York-based Serbian performance artist. Other artists included renowned Indian masters, such as M.F. Husain and S.H. Raza, well as Anish Kapoor, **Damien Hirst** (<http://www.economist.com/blogs/prospero/2012/01/damien-hirst>) and Martin Creed.

Last year the fair was at a popular exhibition site in central Delhi; this time it was at a more remote



south-Delhi location, adjacent to a chaotically noisy traffic interchange and overhead metro station. In usual Indian style, once visitors escaped from the broken pavements and swirling traffic, the fair was serene and enthusiastic, spread across 12,000 square-metres in three tents.



Perhaps as a result of the fair's location, fewer visitors ended up making the trek this year. Last year some 128,000 people came, whereas this year the number had been whittled down to 80,000 over the four days. "We are happy with the total," said Neha Kirpal, the founder and director of the fair. "Almost everyone who came was genuinely interested in art, whereas last year there were people who just came to walk around." Earlier this year Ms Kirpal sold a 49% stake in the fair to two founders of Art Hong Kong, Sandy Angus, chairman of Montgomery Worldwide, and Will Ramsay, founder of the Affordable Art Fair. Together they are now planning an affordable fair for India in the autumn that might draw some of the more casual crowds. Some Indian collectors have suggested that the organisers of this fair could tighten the overall standard of works next year.

There were not enough buyers to boost India's sluggish modern and contemporary art market, but most galleries reported some sales or boasted negotiations for future deals. A few big Indian collectors were visible buyers, such as Kiran Nadar, who has set up a modern art museum in Delhi. Ms Abramovic appeared to be particularly popular for her video work, though it isn't clear whether any of her pieces have sold.

Hauser & Wirth reportedly sold a small neon sign by Creed that says "Love", priced at \$85,000, and a painting by Subodh Gupta, a leading Indian contemporary artist, for \$263,000. Other Criteria reported several sales of Damien Hirst's silkscreened Psalm prints with diamond dust, which come in runs of 50 and are priced at £3,500 apiece.

The Mumbai-based Sakshi Gallery has been negotiating to sell a six-foot-long buffalo-shaped work by Valay Shende, an Indian artist, priced at \$40,000. The work is a tribute to the impoverished farmers who have committed suicide in central India in recent years, and consists of thousands of photo-transfers of the farmers' faces on button-sized steel discs.



There were a number of special exhibitions arranged for the occasion, such as some works by Yoko Ono (who visited Delhi recently) at the Vadehra Gallery, a show of art from West Bengal at the Delhi Art Gallery and some Iranian art at the Devi Art Foundation, where the fair's boisterous closing party continued until the early hours of Monday morning.

The programme included some lecturers and discussions, including one about corporate art collections by Alistair Hicks, a Deutsche Bank curator, organised by the Chennai-based Apparao Gallery. Explaining why he was in India he said, "If you are interested in art, you come to the place where change is happening quickest".

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flymulla

January 31st, 09:32

"Why is the 99% biting the hand that is feeding them?"

They do not "feed", they "steal" your future."I give thanks to the top 1%, because thanks to them I have the funding to get an education". Do you know how much people can't pay off their debt for education because the crisis? "Be thankful for what you have because maybe tomorrow you will lose everything". Because of them you will lose everything tomorrow. This is, of course, not the only factor involved in the growth of the Top 1% as a part of the total economy - technology plays a role too - but it is significant. A system that benefits the wealthiest should allow for more redistribution to the ones who suffer as a result of policy decisions made against their interest. Q1. Since tyrants will always be marginally crueller to win any power struggle, how can the good people win without surpassing the tyrant's cruelty? Q2. Why are War & Famine found mainly in countries with straight-line borders? And the fox said to the little prince: men have forgotten this truth, but you must not forget it. You become responsible, forever, for what you have tamed. -Antoine de Saint-Exupery, author and aviator (1900-1945) I thank you Firozali A.Mulla DBA

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