



# JAMINI ROY

## MONOCHROME

**Grosvenor  
Gallery**



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29 APRIL - 16 MAY, 2025

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“His line has decision and is taut with power... Direct and clear minded, he admits from his work all but the essentials of form and content...

The components of his pictures are few but authentic; there is no weakness in his wide curves, no emptiness in his spacious surfaces.

His work is built on solid ground, open and without pretence; it is based on universals of form which are understood by all who know art, whether from the east or the west.”

Stella Kramrisch's forward for Bishnu Dey and John Irwin's essay, *Jamini Roy*, first published by the Indian Society of Oriental Art in 1944, reproduced in *The Art of Jamini Roy*, Calcutta, 1987





We are delighted to be presenting a collection of Jamini Roy's monochrome works at the gallery for the first time, and to be exhibiting an important 1930s canvas, around which the rest of the exhibition has come together.

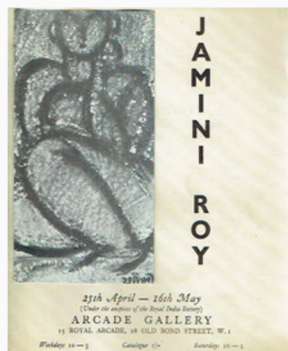
His work has for many years been desired and highly sought-after, and looking back at auction catalogues from the 1990s, it is remarkable the prices for which Jamini Roy's would sell for, especially when compared to prices for other artists such as Gaitonde, Souza, Raza etc.

Jamini Roy's first London exhibition took place in May 1946 at Paul Wengraf's Arcade Gallery, organised by John Irwin and the India Society, and inaugurated by E.M. Forster. The catalogue cover featured a monochrome depiction of a seated woman, which is now in the collection of the V&A Museum, London.

Over the years we have seen and handled many works by the artist, and they often have a magnetic quality to them. You are drawn in by the precision, the imagery, the colours and the storytelling. I imagine natural pigments play a part in this drama as his paintings often twinkle in the light.

We are extremely fortunate to be exhibiting the Humphrey House Jamini Roy, as canvases of any date are rare, let alone those painted in black and white. We hope this small presentation draws attention to Roy's monochromatic paintings, which lack the vibrancy of his best known work, but which are captivating in their elegance and subtlety of line.

Charles Moore, April 2025



Jamini Roy, Arcade Gallery, 1946

Jamini Roy  
1887 - 1972

1. *Untitled (Seated Woman)*, Circa 1935

Signed lower right  
Tempera on canvas

59 x 40.5 cm  
23 1/4 x 16 in

Provenance  
Acquired by Humphry House in Calcutta in 1936;  
Thence by descent

“Peace is not good for an artist, Art is born of experience,  
of stress and strain, wrestling with problems, intellectual,  
and physical.”

Jamini Roy, 1944





Humphrey House (1908–1955) was a British literary critic, academic, and scholar, educated at Repton School and later at Wadham College, Oxford, where he studied Classics and English Literature.

His academic prowess and critical insight positioned him early on as a rising intellectual voice within English literary circles. While an undergraduate at Oxford in the late 1920s, he was friends with Isaiah Berlin and Stephen Spender.

In 1936, House moved to India to lecture at the University of Calcutta (Kolkata). During this period, he became part of a circle of progressive Indian and British intellectuals, writers, artists and disaffected colonialists, which included John Auden, Michael Carritt, Judge Amir Ali and Jamani Roy, from whom he purchased several paintings directly.

Whilst in Calcutta House was suspected of being a spy and became an early target of the colonial government's culture of repression, police surveillance, and suppression of free speech in the late 1930s. He contributed to the academic journal *Parichay* and in 1937, published a satirical pamphlet titled *I Spy with My Little Eye* – a critique of censorship and state scrutiny – which was subsequently banned by the Raj.

Due to his tone of voice in the pamphlet, he was asked to leave the University of Calcutta, and moved to Presidency College, where he taught for a further year before returning to England, where he continued his academic career until his death in 1955.



Humphrey

Photographed by his father Harold House







Jamini Roy  
1887 - 1972

2. *Untitled (Dancing Gopini)*, Circa early 1940s

Signed lower right, with inscription on the backboard  
'Bought by TWB India 1942'  
Tempera on paper

51.6 x 21.6 cm  
20 1/4 x 8 1/2 in

Provenance  
Private British Collection, acquired in Calcutta circa 1942

“If we turn to ancient Indian sculpture, we recognise certain postures as characteristic; such as the out-turned hand at right angles to the arm, the wide hips slightly tilted, the general rhythm of the body. In a simplified form Jamini continues this tradition.”

Stella Kramrisch's forward for Bishnu Dey and John Irwin's essay, *Jamini Roy*, first published by The Indian Society of Oriental Art in 1944, reproduced in *The Art of Jamini Roy*, Calcutta, 1987

*A red sandstone figure of a celestial woman*  
Rajasthan or Madhya Pradesh, 10th–11th century





Jamini Roy  
1887 - 1972

3. *Untitled (Gopini with Offering)*, Circa early 1940s

Signed lower right  
Tempera on paper

51.6 x 21.6 cm  
20 1/4 x 8 1/2 in

Provenance  
Private British Collection, acquired in Calcutta circa 1942

“This gradation in double tone gives a miraculous effect, enlivening the figure with a three-dimensional effect. The sense of volume is purely Indian in character which actually swells from within.

Authorities like Stella Kramarisch and Benjamin Rowland call this feeling of swelling ‘prana’, that is, the life giving force.”

Prodosh Das Gupta, *The Art of Jamini Roy*, Design, June 1972, Vol. 16, No. 6







Jamini Roy

1887 - 1972

4. *Untitled (Puja)*, Circa 1950s

Signed lower right

Tempera on card

53.3 x 31.8 cm

21 x 12 1/2 in

Provenance

Private Collection, California, USA





Jamini Roy  
1887 - 1972

5. *Untitled (Leaping Deer)*

Signed lower right  
Tempera on paper

28.3 x 44.9 cm  
11 1/8 x 17 5/8 in

Provenance  
Private British Collection

“Here was perfect technique of brushstroke, beginning with a broad firm pressure of the brush and ending the curve with a light fine gradation...

Jamini carries out these themes in ash-grey line on a background graded from grey to white, giving the effect of figures emerging from a shadowy room or animals leaping across a wide plane.”

E. Mary-Milford, *A Modern Primitive*, Horizon Review of Literature and Art, London, Vol.X, No. 59, 1944











Jamini Roy  
1887 - 1972

6. *Untitled (Mother and Child)*, Late 1950s

Signed lower right  
Tempera on card

44 x 31 cm  
17 3/8 x 12 1/4 in

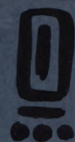
Provenance

Collection of Toby Falk, acquired from the Artist's studio in the 1960s;  
Thence by descent

Stephen John "Toby" Falk (1942–1997) was a specialist and independent consultant within the fields of Oriental art and Indian paintings. He played a pivotal role in advancing the study of Indian art, particularly through his engagement with Indian miniature painting.

His work at Sotheby's and later as an independent scholar helped to elevate the field with a rare combination of connoisseurship, scholarship, and passion. His scholarship, marked by precision and empathy, brought new life to the art of India and continues to shape its study today.





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