

PRESS RELEASE

SOUZA in the 40's
London | Goa | Delhi

Saffronart, Grosvenor Gallery and Sunaparanta are delighted to announce a landmark exhibition of works by **Francis Newton Souza (1924-2002) from the 1940s to the 1950s**. The exhibition will be taking place simultaneously across the three galleries; **Grosvenor Gallery in London (14 December 2018 – 25 January 2019)**, **Sunaparanta in Panjim Goa (17 December 2018 - 30 January 2019)**, and **Saffronart in New Delhi (19 December 2018 - 18 January 2019)**. The exhibition will be accompanied by a fully illustrated catalogue and informative text about this little known but very significant period of Souza's early artistic career.

Francis Newton Souza was born in Saligao, Goa and joined the **J.J. School of Art** in 1940 after being expelled from St Xavier's College for truancy and doing pornographic drawings in the toilets. He did not last long at the J.J. School of Art either and was again expelled in 1945 by Charles Gerrard the British principal, as Souza and his friends had taken down the Union Jack and started a riot. By then Souza was a member of the **Quit India Movement** and about to join the banned communist party. The movement was launched by Mahatma Gandhi for *Satyagraha* (Independence). The movement was accompanied by a mass protest on non-violent lines, in which Gandhi called for an orderly British withdrawal from India.

*"I underwent an abortive art training. The teachers were incompetent. I was expelled from the School of Art. I was banished from a secondary school. Shelley was expelled once, Van Gogh was expelled once. Ostrovsky was expelled once. Palme Dutt was expelled once. I was expelled twice. Recalcitrant boys like me had to be dismissed by principals and directors of educational institutions who instinctively feared we would topple their apple-carts."*¹

This rebellion was just the beginning for Souza. He, along with some fellow artists then set about challenging the Annual Bombay Art Society, where the art exhibits were old fashioned and native artists had to wait in line behind the white memsahibs. Souza and his fellow artists forged an alliance and published their manifesto in 1948. They called themselves '**The Progressive Artists Group' (PAG)**. The group comprised of Francis Newton Souza, Maqbool Fida Husain, Krishnaji Howlaji Ara, Hari Ambadas Gade and Sayed Haider Raza. "**Pro**" means forward and that is where they wanted to go, forward. As Souza wrote "We were out to paint the town of Bombay not only Red but with rainbow colours."

¹ F.N. SOUZA IN THE CATALOGUE OF HIS EXHIBITION OPENED BY E. SCHLESINGER AT BOMBAY ART SOCIETY SALON, MUMBAI, NOVEMBER 1948, UNDOCUMENTED

They wanted to draw a line in the sand with the art of the past and declared:
*“Amrita Sher-Gill hybrid, biologically as well as aesthetically. George Keyt was also a hybrid biologically, and aesthetically he derived from Picasso as Amrita Sher-Gil derived from Gauguin. We dismissed them both as unsuitable examples for the promulgation of our ideas in art. Shantiniketan was too sentimental and Jamini Roy too unsophisticated.”*²

The group went about painting the reality of Modern India; namely what they saw on the streets in the 1940s; the beggars, the untouchables, the forgotten of the society etc. *“We were bold and full of fire... We were forging a modern Indian art with a blast!”*³

During the 1940s, Souza had four successful solo exhibitions under his belt. On the 15th of August 1947, India declares Independence as the British leave India for good. The Partition of India happens at the same time causing further chaos and disorder.

Souza abandoned the Communist Party in 1948. *“I left the Communist Party because they told me to paint in this way and that. I was estranged from many cliques who wanted me to paint what would please them. I don't believe that a true artist paints for coteries or for the proletariat. I believe with all my soul that he paints solely for himself.”*⁴

In 1949 the Progressive Artists Group had their first shows in Baroda and then in Bombay. The Revolution in Art had begun.

With the success of these shows came attention and in 1949 Souza had his works removed from the Indian Art Society on the grounds of obscenity, and the police raided his studio. The painting in question was a 7 foot high naked self portrait.

In July 1949, partly hounded out by the ‘prissy’ censors but more importantly because he wanted to be part of the art scene he left for London.

The exhibition ends with some of his works done in London from 1949.

² F.N. SOUZA, PATRIOT MAGAZINE, FEBRUARY 12, 1984

³ F.N. Souza, *Red Trees, Black Skies*, Times of India, June 4 1989

⁴ F.N. Souza, A Fragment of Autobiography, *Words and Lines*, Villiers London, 1955 , p. 10

SAFFRONART

**Grosvenor
Gallery**



LONDON

Private View: 13th December 2018
14 December 2018 -25 January 2019
10 am - 6 pm, Monday to Friday
Saturday by appointment (12-4pm)

PANAJI

Private View: 16th December 2018
17 December 2018 - 30 January 2019
10 am - 7 pm, Monday to Saturday

NEW DELHI

Private View: 18th December 2018
19 December 2018 - 18 January 2019
11 am - 7 pm, Monday to Saturday
Sunday by appointment

VENUE:

Grosvenor Gallery
35 Bury Street, St. James's
London SW1Y 6AY

VENUE:

Sunaparanta, Goa Centre For The Arts
63/C-8, Near Army House
Altinho, Panaji, Goa 403001

VENUE:

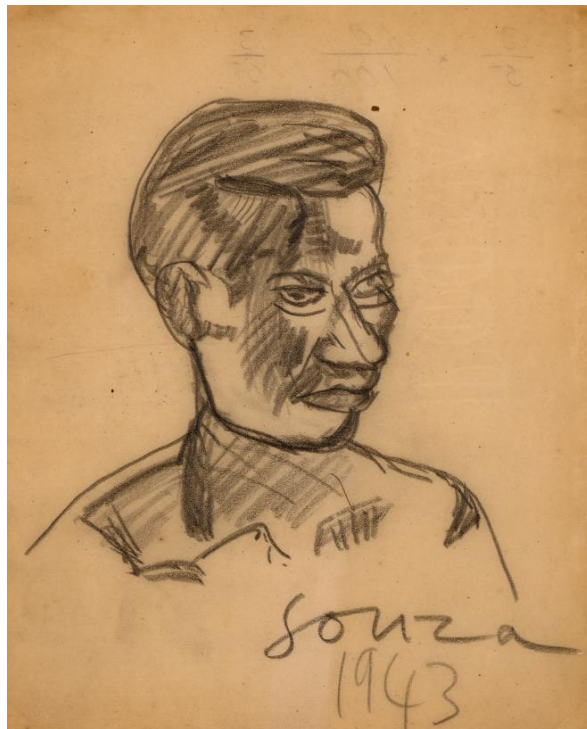
Saffronart
The Oberoi, Dr. Zakir Hussain Marg
New Delhi 110003

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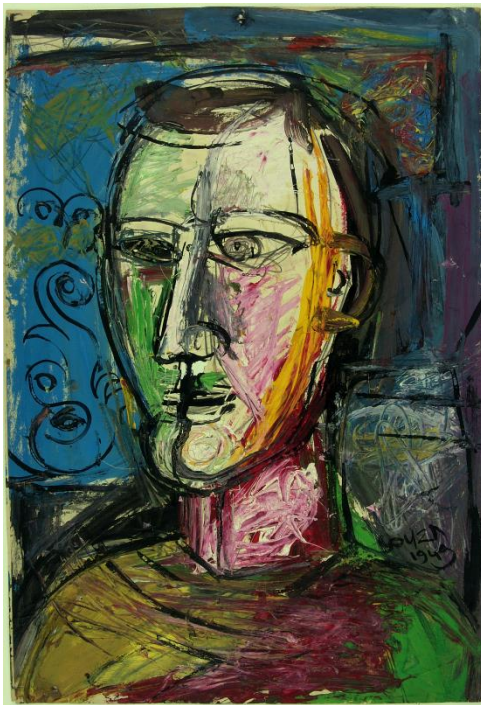
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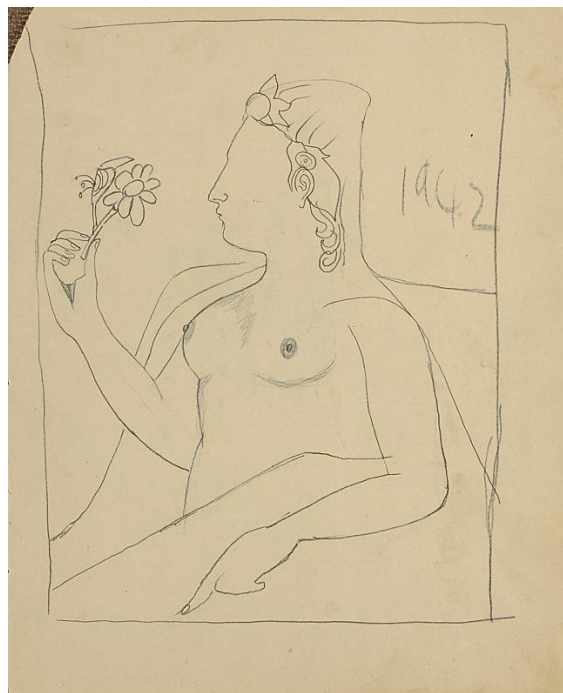
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Captions:

Image 1: Untitled | 1946 | Gouache on paper | Size TBC

Image 2: Untitled (Self Portrait) | 1943 | Pencil on paper signed and dated 'Souza 1943' lower right | 18.7 x 15 cm. (7 $\frac{3}{8}$ x 5 $\frac{7}{8}$ in.)

Image 3: Untitled, (Head of a Man) | 1949 | Gouache and acrylic on paper | Signed and Dated 'Souza 1949' lower right | 56 x 38.5 cm | 22 1/8 x 15 1/8 in

Image 4: Untitled (Nude with a flower) | 1942 | Pencil on paper | Dated '1942' upper right | 20.3 x 16.5 cm 8 x 6 1/2 in