

Souza in Hampstead

19 - 23 June (Closed Saturday 22)

Burgh House, New End Square, London NW3 1LT

10 am to 4 pm



Grosvenor Gallery proudly announces the exhibition *Souza in Hampstead*, celebrating the centenary of India's most important and influential Modern painters of the 20th century - **Francis Newton Souza** (1924-2002).

One of the founders of the Progressive Artists' Group, it was Souza who shaped the soul of modern Indian art. Having moved to London and joined a post-war British art scene alongside the likes of Lucian Freud and Francis Bacon, Souza remained an influence to many of his contemporaries in India. He dismissed all labels, refusing any form of compartmentalization of his subjects and technique that contributed to the uniqueness and complexity of his body of work. Art critic John Berger has written, "*How much Souza's pictures derive from Western art and how much from the hieratic temple traditions of his country, I cannot say... because he straddles several traditions but serves none.*"

Souza moved to London in 1949, arriving at Tilbury docks with only a few pounds and spent several years re-shaping his art to a new audience. He had exhibitions in Paris, but it was not until 1955 that he was found by Gallery One, owned by Victor Musgrave, to show and represent him. Musgrave was a visionary dealer who showed some of the most exciting artists of the day, Bridget Riley's first show, Yves Klein, Ben, Metzger and Enrico Baj amongst others, but his most successful artist was Souza. They had several shows which were sellouts and he placed Souza's works in several museums and with the intelligentsia and the progressive crowd of architects, writers, lawyers and judges, who supported contemporary art in London at the time.

Souza first lived in Paddington, then North Kensington, and was in Hampstead in the mid 1950's. By 1961 after making waves in the arts scene, he bought a mansion at number 9 Belsize Park, where he lived and worked (he sublet the ground floor Souza made three important paintings at the time flat to Keith Vaughan). Souza remained in Belsize Park until 1968 when he emigrated to New York.

Souza was an expressionist artist and one of the greatest post-war British artists who conveyed the fear and anguish of the generation. His distorted, tormented, spiky figures took London by storm, for example, *The Crucifixion*, is one of the masterpieces at Tate Britain.

However, by 1961 he was deeply disturbed by the resumption of nuclear testing, which saw global civil protests such as the Aldermaston Marches and Pauling's March in the US. Like several of his contemporaries Souza was compelled to protest, and he did so in paint.

The Mad Prophet of New York, The Apocalypse and *Oedipus Rex*, which we have re-united for *Souza in Hampstead*, were painted in this period.

Souza writes: "*The Mad Prophet in New York, Why Mad? Why New York? Why the radiation-bitten hands? The only effective action to halt the drift to nuclear war is civil disobedience – NOW. Or these are the last days of mankind.*"

The works show a forewarning of the terrors of nuclear and atomic radiation and Souza's disbelief in this decision... In *The Apocalypse*, he shows Christ with the stigmata raising his arms in surrender and in *Oedipus Rex* the prodigal son again fulfils his prophecy this time representing humanity's betrayal by the powers that be to resume nuclear testing.

Another key work is Souza's contemporary parody of Picasso's *Demoiselles d'Avignon* of 1907. In Souza's work of 1962, his version is firmly planted in North London and titled *Young Ladies of Belsize Park*.

The exhibition is in partnership with Kiran Nadar Museum of Art, Saffronart, Grosvenor Gallery and Harper Collins all part of Souza Centenary. It opened with *In/Of Goa: Souza at 100* in Goa, followed by this exhibition in London then Mumbai in November and finally in New Delhi, coupled with the launch of an illustrated book, published by Harper Collins India. The book will include essays on Souza by Elena Crippa, Murtaza Vali, Roobina Karode, Jesal Thacker and Dr Zehra Jumabhoy.

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Souza outside No. 9 Belsize Park



Contact sheet of images '7 Belsize Square'



F.N. Souza, *The Mad Prophet of New York* (1961)



F.N. Souza, *The Apocalypse* (1961)



F.N. Souza, *Oedipus Rex* (1961)



Linus Pauling leading an Anti Nuclear march
In the US, 1962



Bertrand Russell in Trafalgar Square London
at the London to Aldermaston March, 1959



F.N. SOUZA, *Young Ladies from Belsize Park*, (1962)

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