

Priyasri Art Gallery

presents

‘Judgment in the Trial of Akbar Padamsee’

Supported by the veteran artist’s wife Bhanu Padamsee, the exhibition talks about the landmark 1954 court case, a seminal moment in the life of Akbar Padamsee, in which he was acquitted in the Lower Court and once again in the Higher Court.

On his older brother Nicky's advice, Akbar returned from Paris for his debut solo show. Akbar, then 25, was charged under section 292 of the Indian Penal Code (IPC) for two paintings – Lovers 1 and Lovers 2 – that were exhibited in his debut show at the Jehangir Art Gallery. Both paintings – currently in the possession of two established art collectors – showed a man’s hand on a woman’s breast. The instinctive expression of love on canvas had been labelled as obscene and seized by the police. But a defiant Akbar wouldn’t take this lying down and was keen to fight the battle for artistic freedom.

This story is retold by arts journalist Reema Gehi Desai using original archival material (diary notes, court judgements, newspaper clippings, police correspondence and letters) that was meticulously documented by Akbar’s sister-in-law, Shahbibi Padamsee.

One of the highlights of the show is a short theatrical performance – directed by Quasar Thakore Padamsee – told through the voice of Shahbibi, sharing important vignettes of the year-long trial.

Stepping beyond traditional exhibitions, the gallery will be video-projecting Lovers 2. The projection will be accompanied by another original work from the show, Man in Cityscape, 1953. Incidentally, the painting, which is at present in the possession of a leading art collector in Mumbai, was published on the invite of Padamsee’s debut show at Jehangir Art Gallery, where he had displayed two of the Lovers’ series. The second half of the exhibition, ‘Chronicle of Lovers’ Series in the 1980s’— comprises works from the Lovers’ series in the 1980s and 2017.

- Exhibition presented by PRIYASRI ART GALLERY.
- Diary notes, court judgements, police correspondence, letters and additional newspaper clippings from the archives of Bhanu Padamsee.

About Akbar Padamsee

Artist Akbar Padamsee was born in Bombay in 1928. Padamsee studied at the Sir JJ School of Art in Bombay. After completing his art education, Padamsee was persuaded by one of the founding members of the Bombay Progressive Artists' Group, artist SH Raza, to travel with him to France in 1951. All of 21, Padamsee rented a small room in a hotel in Paris and converted it into his studio. In 1952, he was awarded a prize by André Breton, monikered as the Pope of Surrealism, on behalf of the *Journal d'art*. His first solo show was at Jehangir Art Gallery, Mumbai in 1954.

In 1962, Padamsee was awarded a gold medal from the Lalit Kala Akademi, and in 1965 a fellowship from the JD Rockefeller Foundation. Subsequently, he was invited to be an artist-in-residence by Stout State University, Wisconsin. In 1967, a solo exhibition of his paintings was held at the Montreal Museum of Contemporary Art, Canada, after which he returned to India. Padamsee's oeuvre is a formal exploration of a few chosen themes — prophets, heads, couples, still-life, grey works, metascapes, mirror-images and tertiaries across a multitude of media – oil painting, plastic emulsion, watercolour, sculpture, printmaking, computer graphics, and photography.

In 1969-71, with the Jawaharlal Nehru Fellowship funds, Padamsee set up the inter-art Vision Exchange Workshop (VIEW), where artists and filmmakers could freely experiment across various disciplines and practices. Padamsee himself made two abstract films – *Syzygy* and *Events in a Cloud Chamber* – in which he animated a set of geometric drawings.

In 1980, a retrospective of his work was organised by the Art Heritage Gallery in Mumbai and New Delhi. In 2010, he was awarded the Padma Bhushan by the Government of India. The artist currently lives and works in Mumbai.

About Priyasri Art Gallery

Priyasri Art Gallery is a contemporary art space located on the seafront in Madhuli, Worli. Founded in 2004, Priyasri Art Gallery has been responsive to the evolving language of art and is nurturing a gamut of artistic practices and expressions. The gallery is dedicated to its role of exhibiting modern, contemporary and experimental artworks. Besides being committed to promote young artistic talent, the gallery represents veteran artists such as Akbar Padamsee and Jogen Chowdhury. Priyasri Art Gallery also provides artists with a studio facility in Baroda called AQ@Priyasri. The artist studio in Baroda has been providing space

and housing for young artists since 2003. It has recently launched a separate printmaking practice wing.

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About Mumbai Gallery Weekend (MGW) 2020

MGW is an initiative started in 2012 by nine of the then leading contemporary art galleries of Mumbai. MGW is a unique enterprise and effort by the city-gallerists to draw diverse art aficionados, while broadening the approach to contemporary art. The upcoming edition will be held from January 9, 2020 - February 12, 2020, and will host multiple art events and walkthroughs from January 9, 2020 - February 12, 2020. There will be buses arranged to travel to various midtown and south Mumbai galleries.

Duration: January 9, 2020 - February 12, 2020; 11 am to 7 pm

Venue: Priyasri Art Gallery, 42 Madhuli, 4th Floor, Dr Annie Besant Rd, next to Poonam Chambers, Shiv Sagar Estate, Worli, Mumbai

Contact: 022 2494 7673

The exhibition is dedicated in memory of the late Artist Akbar Padamsee.