“The exhibition, an initiative by director of MOSA Martin Gurvich, engages with continuity and change as reflected in various faiths, ideologies and cultures across the country”
- The Hindu

“The showcase seems to aim at a ‘spiritual’ union through the 400 odd works of art created by artists from across the country.”
- The Asian Age

“It has been conceptualised around the notion of spiritual and devotional in Indian art. It explores the theme through artistic creations in different forms and style, across ideologies and philosophies as well as faiths and regions of India.”
- Press Trust of India

“The show mirrors the layered mix of sacred culture through the prism of select metaphors in Indian art”
- The Times of India (Speaking Tree)

"From one artwork to another, each piece has a connection with religion yet an exhibition as a whole stands as a secular medium of expression.”
- Deccan Herald

"For Delhi’s art enthusiasts this weekend is the final chance to witness an impressive collection of artworks from The Museum of Sacred Art, Belgium.”
- Hindustan Times – HT City

"Martin Gurvich wants to showcase Indian artworks that celebrate the spiritual, devotional and religious manifestations, around the world.”
- The New Indian Express

“Mounted on a grand scale, Forms of Devotion is a travelling exhibition which is like pilgrims progress in rediscovering the majesty, meaning and mystery of sacred India”
- Art Soul Life

“The MOSA in Belgium, located in a castle in the Belgian Ardennes, will be launching a two volume book based on their upcoming show this month, titled Forms of Devotion”
- Hello India

“The Sacred Arts Festival brings together different styles of spiritual art and explores the confluence of art forms and spirituality”
- Forbes India

“The purpose of this festival is to break the barriers between urban and rural art and traditional and contemporary art; we want this art to become accessible to all.”
- Noblesse India

“The inclusive nature of the project runs through it’s ethos at various levels. It brings art from across cultures, faiths, genre and regions of the sub-continent and beyond, on a shared platform.”
- Art Bahrain

"Running successfully for almost a month, this art project exhibited various dimensions of spirituality and devotion in Indian Arts. This theme was explored through artistic creations across different genres and styles, ideologies and philosophies as well as faiths and regions of India.”
- Art & Life
## INDEX

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PUBLICATION</th>
<th>DATE</th>
<th>HEADLINE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>PRE-EVENT NEWS</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>ONLINE</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Hindu</td>
<td>13.02.14</td>
<td>Faith in focus</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Art Daily</td>
<td>14.02.14</td>
<td>Faith in focus</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Madhusree's Blog</td>
<td>10.03.14</td>
<td>Forms of Devotion - a cross cultural mission to spread faith in images</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Isckon News</td>
<td>08.08.14</td>
<td>Belgium's Museum of Sacred Art shows new galleries</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>EVENT NEWS</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>NATIONAL NEWSPAPER</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hindustan Times</td>
<td>24.11.14</td>
<td>A bit of Belgium on Delhi's canvas</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Financial Chronicle</td>
<td>12.12.14</td>
<td>Art attack</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deccan Herald</td>
<td>01.02.15</td>
<td>See spirited Indian art</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Asian Age</td>
<td>17.02.15</td>
<td>Thais set to get a taste of India</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hindustan Times</td>
<td>14.03.15</td>
<td>Pick of the week</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Indian Express</td>
<td>16.03.15</td>
<td>Spirit of things</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Indian Express</td>
<td>17.03.15</td>
<td>Points of view</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Statesman</td>
<td>18.03.15</td>
<td>Engaging art</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deccan Herald</td>
<td>20.03.15</td>
<td>Life transforming</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mint</td>
<td>20.03.15</td>
<td>Mint planner</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Times of India - Delhi Times</td>
<td>20.03.15</td>
<td>Art</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PUBLICATION</td>
<td>DATE</td>
<td>HEADLINE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------------------------------</td>
<td>----------</td>
<td>------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hindustan Times</td>
<td>21.03.15</td>
<td>Art</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hindustan Times</td>
<td>21.03.15</td>
<td>Spiritual art</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Millennium Post</td>
<td>21.03.15</td>
<td>Steeped in spirituality</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Hindu</td>
<td>21.03.15</td>
<td>Admit two</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Mail Today</td>
<td>22.03.15</td>
<td>What’s on</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Times of India - Delhi Times</td>
<td>23.03.15-31.03.15</td>
<td>Events</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hindustan Times - HT City</td>
<td>24.03.15-30.03.15</td>
<td>What’s on</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Hindu</td>
<td>24.03.15</td>
<td>A place where faiths co-exist beautifully</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Asian Age</td>
<td>26.03.15</td>
<td>Showcasing the spiritual in Indian art</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deccan Herald</td>
<td>27.03.15</td>
<td>Spirited art</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Mail Today</td>
<td>27.03.15</td>
<td>A spirited sojourn through shades of art</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hindustan Times - HT City</td>
<td>28.03.15-06.04.15</td>
<td>What’s on</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hindustan Times - HT City</td>
<td>15.04.15</td>
<td>What’s on</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hindustan Times - HT City</td>
<td>19.04.15</td>
<td>What’s on</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hindustan Times - HT City</td>
<td>23.04.15-25.04.15</td>
<td>What’s on</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Mail Today</td>
<td>29.03.15</td>
<td>Events</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Sunday Standard</td>
<td>29.03.15</td>
<td>Events</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Times of India - Speaking Tree</td>
<td>29.03.15</td>
<td>Sacred Arts Festival</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PUBLICATION</td>
<td>DATE</td>
<td>HEADLINE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------------------------------------</td>
<td>-------------</td>
<td>-----------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>NATIONAL NEWSPAPER</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deccan Herald</td>
<td>07.04.15</td>
<td>In the city today</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Hindu</td>
<td>10.04.15</td>
<td>From the diary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Hindustan Times - HT City</td>
<td>19.04.15</td>
<td>Art agenda</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Times of India - Delhi Times</td>
<td>01.04.15- 09.04.15</td>
<td>Events</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Times of India - Delhi Times</td>
<td>14.04.15- 25.04.15</td>
<td>Events</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deccan Herald</td>
<td>23.04.15</td>
<td>Thread that binds art and devotion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Hindustan Times - HT City</td>
<td>24.04.15</td>
<td>The final call for a spiritual tour</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The New Indian Express</td>
<td>26.04.15</td>
<td>Devotee of the sacred dimensions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Sunday Standard</td>
<td>26.04.15</td>
<td>Devotee of the sacred dimensions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Times of India - Education Times</td>
<td>25.05.15</td>
<td>Sacred Art</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Telegraph</td>
<td>07.08.15</td>
<td>Painted worship</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>MAGAZINES</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Art Soul Life</td>
<td>Nov 2014</td>
<td>For the love of God</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Platform</td>
<td>Jan 2015</td>
<td>India Art Fair</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hello</td>
<td>Feb 2015</td>
<td>Bravissimo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hello</td>
<td>Mar 2015</td>
<td>Sacred expressions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ideal Home and Garden</td>
<td>Mar 2015</td>
<td>Art attack</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vogue India</td>
<td>Mar 2015</td>
<td>Vogue loves</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Caravan</td>
<td>Mar 2015</td>
<td>Showcase</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Forbes India</td>
<td>Apr 2015</td>
<td>Forms of Devotion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PUBLICATION</td>
<td>DATE</td>
<td>HEADLINE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------------------------</td>
<td>------------</td>
<td>--------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jetwings</td>
<td>Apr 2015</td>
<td>Sacred Arts Festival and Seminar</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Forbes India</td>
<td>May 2015</td>
<td>When art becomes dialogue between faiths</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Noblesse India</td>
<td>May 2015</td>
<td>A Transcendent Escapade</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Architecture + Design</td>
<td>May 2015</td>
<td>Celebration of forms and spirituality</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Art &amp; Deal</td>
<td>Apr - May 2015</td>
<td>Performers at the Sacred Arts: A Festival curated by Teamwork Arts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Art &amp; Deal</td>
<td>June 2015</td>
<td>Forms of Devotion: The Spiritual in Indian Art on International Tour</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TAKE on art</td>
<td>July- Dec 2015</td>
<td>The contemporary and the sacred in Indian art</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TAKE on art</td>
<td>July- Dec 2015</td>
<td>Divinity over the ages</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Oberoi Group Magazine</td>
<td>Summer 2015</td>
<td>The sacred and spiritual</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indian Creative Minds</td>
<td>July- Aug 2015</td>
<td>Forms of Devotion: The Spiritual in Indian Art</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PENDING</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**ONLINE**

<p>| ACTFAQs                   | 21.10.14   | India Art Fair                                                           |
| Art Now Pakistan          | 23.10.14   | India Art Fair                                                           |
| Artehelka                 | 03.11.14   | A definitive India Art Fair seven                                         |
| Cassone                   | 03.11.14   | Book your flight to Delhi for India Art Fair                             |
| Business Standard - IANS  | 20.11.14   | Delhi to host Belgian museum’s Indian art exhibition                     |
| Chennai Online - IANS     | 20.11.14   | Delhi to host Belgian museum’s Indian art exhibition                     |
| Daijiworld - IANS         | 20.11.14   | Delhi to host Belgian museum’s Indian art exhibition                     |
| Delhi Online - IANS       | 20.11.14   | Delhi to host Belgian museum’s Indian art exhibition                     |
| I9live - IANS             | 20.11.14   | Delhi to host Belgian museum’s Indian art exhibition                     |
| Nerve - IANS              | 20.11.14   | Delhi to host Belgian museum’s Indian art exhibition                     |
| New Kerala - IANS         | 20.11.14   | Delhi to host Belgian museum’s Indian art exhibition                     |
| News Reporter - IANS      | 20.11.14   | Delhi to host Belgian museum’s Indian art exhibition                     |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PUBLICATION</th>
<th>DATE</th>
<th>HEADLINE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>ONLINE</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>News Room Post - IANS</td>
<td>20.11.14</td>
<td>Belgian museum's Indian art exhibition in Delhi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sify News - IANS</td>
<td>20.11.14</td>
<td>Delhi to host Belgian museum's Indian art exhibition</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tell Me Boss - IANS</td>
<td>20.11.14</td>
<td>Delhi to host Belgian museum's Indian art exhibition</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vancouver desi - IANS</td>
<td>20.11.14</td>
<td>Delhi to host Belgian museum's Indian art exhibition</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Web India 123 - IANS</td>
<td>20.11.14</td>
<td>Delhi to host Belgian museum's Indian art exhibition</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yahoo News - IANS</td>
<td>20.11.14</td>
<td>Delhi to host Belgian museum's Indian art exhibition</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Everything Experiential</td>
<td>21.11.14</td>
<td>Standard Chartered sponsors Forms of Devotion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>First Post - IANS</td>
<td>21.11.14</td>
<td>Delhi to host Belgian museum’s Indian Art Exhibition</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ACTFAQs</td>
<td>22.11.14</td>
<td>Forms of Devotion: The Spiritual in Indian Art</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Financial Chronicle</td>
<td>12.12.14</td>
<td>Art Attack!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Blouin Artinfo</td>
<td>30.12.14</td>
<td>The catalyst that changed India’s art universe</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Outlook</td>
<td>04.01.15</td>
<td>Books to watch out for in 2015</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deccan Herald</td>
<td>01.02.15</td>
<td>See spiritual Indian Art, brought all the way from Belgium</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Indian Subcontinent</td>
<td>01.02.15</td>
<td>See spiritual Indian Art, brought all the way from Belgium</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Outlook</td>
<td>04.01.15</td>
<td>Books to watch out for in 2015</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>eIndiadiary</td>
<td>03.02.15</td>
<td>Forms of Devotion at the 7th Indian Art Fair</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Pioneer</td>
<td>17.02.15</td>
<td>Festival of India in Thailand starts in Bangkok</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>News Nation</td>
<td>17.02.15</td>
<td>Festival of India in Thailand starts in Bangkok</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Asian Age</td>
<td>17.02.15</td>
<td>Thais set to get a taste of India</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vogue India</td>
<td>09.02.15</td>
<td>Art Attack: What’s new in the art world</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Art Bahrain</td>
<td>11.02.15</td>
<td>Forms of Devotion: The spiritual in Indian art</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Delhievents</td>
<td>14.02.15</td>
<td>Forms of Devotion: The spiritual in Indian art</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PUBLICATION</td>
<td>DATE</td>
<td>HEADLINE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-----------------------------------</td>
<td>--------</td>
<td>---------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Indian Express</td>
<td>16.03.15</td>
<td>Points of view</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Allevents</td>
<td>21.03.15</td>
<td>Forms of Devotion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BuzzinTown</td>
<td>21.03.15</td>
<td>Forms of Devotion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Hindu</td>
<td>21.03.15</td>
<td>Forms of Devotion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Times City</td>
<td>21.03.15</td>
<td>Lalit Kala Akademi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Hindu</td>
<td>24.03.15</td>
<td>A place where faiths co-exist beautifully</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Business Standard - PTI</td>
<td>24.03.15</td>
<td>Showcasing the spiritual in Indian Art</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Metro Vaartha - PTI</td>
<td>24.03.15</td>
<td>Showcasing the spiritual in Indian Art</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shafaqna - PTI</td>
<td>24.03.15</td>
<td>Showcasing the spiritual in Indian Art</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dandavats</td>
<td>25.03.15</td>
<td>Museum of Sacred Arts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Isckon News</td>
<td>26.03.15</td>
<td>Forms of Devotion art exhibit launches in New Delhi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Asian Age - PTI</td>
<td>26.03.15</td>
<td>Showcasing the spiritual in contemporary Indian art</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Speaking Tree</td>
<td>29.03.15</td>
<td>Forms of Devotion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Blouin Artinfo</td>
<td>02.04.15</td>
<td>Forms of Devotion in contemporary Indian art</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Headlines24</td>
<td>02.04.15</td>
<td>Forms of Devotion in contemporary Indian art</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Indian Express</td>
<td>15.04.15</td>
<td>Code green</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My Lineman</td>
<td>20.04.15</td>
<td>Forms of Devotion: The spiritual in Indian art</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dillikidiva Blog</td>
<td>20.04.15</td>
<td>Telling tales about Forms of Devotion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Forbes India</td>
<td>24.04.15</td>
<td>When art becomes a dialogue between faiths</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The New Indian Express</td>
<td>26.04.15</td>
<td>Devotee of the sacred dimensions</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
PUBLICATION | DATE | HEADLINE
--- | --- | ---
Art & Life | 27.04.15 | In search of spirituality - Belgian museum organized sacred art event in Delhi
Blouin Artinfo | 04.06.15 | Book Review: Forms of Devotion, The Spiritual in Indian Art by Sushma K. Bahl
The Telegraph | 07.08.15 | Painted worship

BROADCAST

Radio One | 21.03.15 | Forms of Devotion: The Spiritual in Indian Art
All India Radio - Indraprasth | 21.03.15 | Forms of Devotion
All India Radio - Indraprasth | 24.03.15 | Forms of Devotion
The Wall Art TV | 08.04.15 | Forms of Devotion at Lalit Kala Akademi

PENDING

CNC World TV and Doordarshan TV

Readership figures for publications can be found on their relevant coverage pages. Please note not all publications disclose these figures. (N.B. Circulation figures are always higher but readership figures are more accurate).

Magazine and Newspaper: total readership opportunities to view: 90,633,000

Online: total unique-user opportunities to view: 111,918,837

Broadcast: total listener figures (where available): 3,900,000

TOTAL OPPORTUNITIES TO VIEW: 206,451,837
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PUBLICATION</th>
<th>DATE</th>
<th>HEADLINE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>‘TREE OF LIFE’ NEWS</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ONLINE</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ANI News</td>
<td>12.04.15</td>
<td>PM Modi gifts French President Hollande ‘Tree of Life’ painting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Business Standard - PTI</td>
<td>12.04.15</td>
<td>Modi gifts ‘Tree of Life’ painting to Francois Hollande</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DNA - PTI</td>
<td>12.04.15</td>
<td>PM Modi’s gift to French President is ‘Tree of Life’ painting by Bhaskar Mahapatra</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IBN Live - IANS</td>
<td>12.04.15</td>
<td>PM Modi Gifts ‘Tree of Life' painting to French President Francois Hollande</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>India Today - PTI</td>
<td>12.04.15</td>
<td>Narendra Modi’s gifts ‘Tree of Life’ painting to French President</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jagran Post - PTI</td>
<td>12.04.15</td>
<td>PM Modi gifts ‘Tree of Life’ painting to French President</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Money Control - PTI</td>
<td>12.04.15</td>
<td>PM Modi gifts ‘Tree of Life’ painting to French President</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NDTV Online - IANS</td>
<td>12.04.15</td>
<td>PM Narendra Modi Gifts ‘Tree of Life’ painting to French President Francois Hollande</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Economic Times - PTI</td>
<td>12.04.15</td>
<td>PM Narendra Modi Gifts ‘Tree of Life’ painting to French President Hollande</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Indian Express - PTI</td>
<td>12.04.15</td>
<td>PM Modi gifts ‘Tree of Life’ painting to French President</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yahoo News - ANI</td>
<td>12.04.15</td>
<td>After successful France visit PM Modi gifts Prez Hollande ‘Tree of Life’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sify News - IANS</td>
<td>13.04.15</td>
<td>Modi gifts ‘Tree of Life’ painting to French President</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Tribune - PTI</td>
<td>13.04.15</td>
<td>China supports India’s desire to play bigger role in UN</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PUBLICATION</td>
<td>DATE</td>
<td>HEADLINE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------------------------</td>
<td>-------</td>
<td>---------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>‘GURU NANAK DEV’ NEWS</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ONLINE</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
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PRE-EVENT NEWS
ONLINE
“In the pipeline is a multi-disciplinary project that will demonstrate the comfortable co-existence of the past and the present”
Faith in focus

At a time when everybody is taking note of the contemporary Indian art world and its engagement with urban issues, here is an exercise taking an alternative route. Touching the spiritual dimension of India, Martin Gurvich, Director, The Museum of Sacred Art (MOSA) in Belgium, together with Sushma K. Bahl, has created “Forms of Devotion: The Spiritual in Indian Art (2015 – 2020)”, a project that focuses on devotional and spiritual art of the nation. A grand exhibition, a book and a film will take a definite shape by next year and will then be launched in India at the Indira Gandhi National Centre for the Arts. The project will then travel for five years around the world before it reaches its destination, the Sacred Art Museum in Durbuy. “By then our permanent building to house the Indian collection will be ready where it will be exhibited,” says Martin, whose interest in Indian art was triggered after he joined ISKCON. Even in Durbuy, the museum is located within the ISKCON campus.

In the last few years, he has been guided by curator Sushma Bahl in this zeal. “I know there is a danger of it being looked at as archaic but these works raise questions about today. Each work was selected for the ethos it evoked. Vivek Vilasini’s work is about devotion and how we treat it. We have also broken down the compartments of tribal, folk, contemporary, new media, etc,” says Sushma, who adds that the planned book would also have similar content. “It has 12 essays by people like Devdutt Patnaik, who talks about popular culture; George Michell talks about sculpture and architecture, Mushirul Hasan will give a historical perspective on it.” The two-volume book titled “Forms of Devotion” designed as a boxed set of 500-plus pages each, will document a substantive collection of Indian art held in MOSA in Belgium and its branch in Florence, Italy.

The collection comprises around 200 artworks by more than 100 artists from different regions of India. The works have been culled out by the curators from the exhaustive collection of Martin that boasts over a thousand works. In varied media and mostly by living artists, there are paintings, drawings, collage, digital work, sculptures, installations, videos, films, as well as sound, interactive, site specific, and mixed media works by the likes of S.H. Raza, Satish Gujral, Shuvaprasanna and senior artists Paresh Maity, Yusuf Arakkal, Arpana Caur, etc.

“There are Warli artists, Madhubani art, miniatures by artists from Udaipur, Pichwais, Gond art, Tanjore works. There is a project on the Ganga that three women artists had exhibited at IGNCA last year which has digital art, photography ad sculptures. The project on Kabir by Shabnam Virmani has videos and photos so it is really an exhaustive collection. What’s unique about India is that modernism and past co-exist well. And no matter how far it goes in terms of progress, its connection with spirituality will never go away and a lot of people around the world are eager to know more about this. The project will cater to those people,” says Martin.

Other elements
It will also have a film, “Studios of Devotion” by Goutam Ghose, which will probe the ‘nature’ of devotion and artists who make devotional art. It will give a glimpse into their world capturing what it is that inspires them.

A festival of spiritual arts is also on the agenda which with its representation of various faiths and their aural traditions aims to encourage inter-faith dialogue.

The project will be launched in India in January 2015.
"In the pipeline is a multi-disciplinary project that will demonstrate the comfortable co-existence of the past and the present."

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(Report by Shailaja Tripathi for The Hindu)
Forms of Devotion - a cross cultural mission to spread faith in images

“Reflective of this ethos, “Forms of Devotion”, is a large, inclusive and holistic exposition that celebrates the multiplicity, diversity, creativity, and vibrancy of devotional art of India in varied hues and forms”

New Delhi
Indian spiritual art — the earliest genre of visual exposition of life since the beginning of civilization nearly 5000 years ago — has been building bridges across cultures, philosophy, livelihoods, people, traditions and religious beliefs for millennia with invocation rituals around the icons and motifs expressed in this oeuvre.

Over the centuries, spiritual art has become the representative symbol of the progress of religious schools of thoughts leading to new and complex belief systems from the Vedic-era animism to the late Bhakti (devotion)-age iconography of gods and goddesses. The pan Indian religious ideals spanning Hinduism, Buddhism, Jainism, Christianity, Islam and Sikhism— together with epics like the “Ramayana” and “Mahabharata” integrate with the core iconography of Hinduism to form what is today defined as the "Indian sacred art".
The multiplicity of icons in the divine pantheons in turn has added teeth to spiritual art as a mature mainstream genre with "highly nuanced drawings, compositions of scales, stylizations, abstract iconographies and advanced art practices in a variety of medium and regimens - varying across physical terrain of the land”. The thread bindings the different traditions of Indian spiritual art is beauty — a lyricism, figurative complexities, rhythm and refined story-telling that is rarely found in other genres of Indian art. Mythology and epic are its sustenance.

Over the millennia, Indian spiritual art has travelled across the world to spread the spiritual gospel of Orientalism — but found an “empathetic” audience only in the last 100 years with the western art lovers and collectors appreciating the worth of the genre as a “mainstream collectible” for “visual display” in the high art space.

“Forms of Devotion”— an exhibition of 200 works of spiritual art by 100 artists curated from a collection of more than 1,000 art works by curators Sushma K. Bahl and Archana Bahl Sapra from the Museum of Sacred Art in Brussels — opened to a sneak preview in the national capital in the run-up to its formal inauguration at the Indira Gandhi National Centre for Arts (IGNCA) in January-February 2015.

The exhibition — featuring traditional spiritual expressions in multi-media and contemporary canvases — is at the heart of a festival of Sacred Arts in India that plans to bring back home genres of art that are “gradually losing their pre-eminence” amid the contemporary and new media arts movements in India.
MADHUSREE’S BLOG
10th March 2014, Online p.3
Forms of Devotion - a cross cultural mission to spread faith in images

Spiritual art in India has been struggling to find space in the country’s new artistic stage occupied with “universal themes of internationalism” and rendezvous with new technology to make the indigenous movements cutting edge and global.

“Art and spirituality are building many bridges between different art forms in India – opening inter-faith dialogues in many different ways. The Scared Art Project began in 2009 with a museum that I set up in Belgium with a focused collection of works from different spiritual streams of practises of India like Hinduism, Vaishnavism, the Shaivaite tradition, the miniature spiritual art of Mysore, Rajasthan and Mysore — created by contemporary artists who have keeping the sacred arts alive for generations through a combination “of the use of traditional imagery and its integration with new techniques and mediums,” says collector Martin Gurvich, who manages MOSA (Museum of Sacred Arts) in an 11th century chateau Louxemburg in Belgium, owned by the International Society for Krishna Consciousness.

Gurvich, the son of a Uruguayan artist of Jewish origin who settled in Europe, is a Krishna devotee inspired by the ISKCON movement.

His collection is grounded in his spiritual belief that India “represents the purest and the most plural form of faith that is at once inclusive, diverse and emancipating”. “In the first phase of collecting, I concentrated on the traditional aspects of faith and lot of tribal arts. But curator Sushma K Bahl opened my eyes to the contemporary aspect of spiritual art in the Indian context,” Gurvich said.
The collection is hosted at Chateau de petit Somme, christened as Radhadesh — after Krishna's muse—a sprawling heritage home owned by Gozelon de Montaigude, who plundered the abbey of St Hubert. After his death, his wife returned it to the abbey as an act of penance — after which it has passed down several owners till the Krishna cult acquired it as a retreat in 1979.

"The beginning museum is in the fact that several Vaishnavite paintings adorned the walls of the chateau for the last 30 years. They were original art works inspired by ancient Vaishnavite texts, realistic and classical in style. The idea was to build a dedicated space where the cultural roots of the Hindu sacred art and its broader connection to the world outside could be studied," Gurvich said.

Offering insights into the concept of the exhibition and the festival—being described as the first of its kind in India, curator Sushma K, Bahl says “India is a multicultural world, a plural society with multiple voices, identities, ideologies, cultures, faiths and denominations — many ‘India-s’ in one”.
Forms of Devotion - a cross cultural mission to spread faith in images

Its eclectic and fascinating mix of arts — essentially meditative, ethereal, spiritual, and assimilative, developed to a high level of sophistication that permeated its socio-cultural milieu that continues to be inextricably intertwined with life — from birth to death.

“The multi-dimensional project — Sacred Arts Festival — conceptualized around the notion of devotion and sacred, explores the theme through artistic creations in varied genres, from across faiths and different regions of India, in varied media, modes and manifestations - all recently created. It presents many facets of Indian art, its mystique and philosophies in today’s global context.

Reflective of this ethos, “Forms of Devotion”, is a large, inclusive and holistic exposition that celebrates the “multiplicity, diversity, creativity, and vibrancy of devotional art of India in varied hues and forms, curator Sushma K. Bahl said. The creative mosaic of the works that have been commissioned for the exhibition is a strange combination of “contemporary abstraction, expressionism and religious content that address larger issues relating to spirituality and society like — secular faith, environment, Dalit discrimination in Hinduism, deconstruction of popular icons to speak of new realities and continuity of living spiritual traditions.

“In an inter-disciplinary experimental mode, the collection comfortably floats between the local and the global, the old and the new; as it transcends various faiths and genres — figurative, mythological, abstractions, Hinduism, Buddhist, Jain, Christian, Muslim, Sikh, Zoroastrian, Sufi and Zen. As a continuum and popular resource, with multiple philosophical layerings, created for rituals and offerings, adornment and celebration, be it ascetic or ornate, mystical or provocative, rural or urban, old or new, bazaar art or high end creations, local or global; the assemblage includes representation of icons, epics, and ideas, in art interwoven with life,” the curator said.
There are two-dimensional works such as paintings, drawings, collage, digital work and photography for the walls, but also “sculptures, installations, videos, films, sound, and interactive, site specific, and mixed media works amongst others”.

The collection encompasses research based and conceptual art that explore the theme from different socio-cultural-philosophical perspectives. Contextualized in the history, philosophy and ideology of the culture they stem from, the works reflect the depth and substance of devotional and sacred Indian art imbued with pleasure, meditation and reflection, Bahl pointed out.

The project features over 200 works by some 150 artists - some “renowned masters and others emerging ones from across the country. There are some enormous works and some in miniature format, in varied media and modes — “exploring encounters and dialogue”; between ‘continuity and change’ and between “bhakti Shakti and Chintan”.

The traditions of spiritual art in India trace their origin to the early Vedic age with Shavite symbols and nature icons on rock faces, natural surfaces and palmyra manuscripts. Visual interpretations of the myths and the Vedic lores were important documents of India’s early scared arts.
Forms of Devotion - a cross-cultural mission to spread faith in images

It evolved over centuries into the Gandhara School of Art—of religious importance—along the silk route of India, Orient and central Asia. The Gandhara School of Art painted its canvases around the Shiva-Shakti and Buddhist visual imagery. The arrival of Vaishnavism in the later Vedic age inspired the artists with stories of the 10 avatars (manifestations) of Vishnu, the churning of the oceans to create the pantheon, the war between the gods and the demons and the epics.

The sacred arts thrived on royal patronage in the subsequent era—beginning 10th century (CE)—commissioned by the Hindu kings and later by the Mughal rulers.

Spiritual art drew its life vitals from the temples and epics. The sculptural friezes on the temple art were the earliest examples of sacred art in India—the best examples being the Nathdwara Temple in Rajasthan, the Vishnu and Shiva temples of South India and the Buddhist shrines in north, northeast and eastern India.

One of the most interesting aspects of sacred arts is its practitioners. Over the centuries, the traditions have been handed down the generations of artists—who have improvised to carry forward the genre. This journey has seen new generations of artists who have been influenced by local, foreign and contemporary movements to create a new idioms of sacred visuals around ancient themes to convey contemporary ideas of faith.

-Madhusree Chatterjee
“Forms of Devotion, a huge traveling MOSA exhibition featuring the devotional works of no less than 100 artists, will launch at Lalit Kala Akademi in New Delhi on March 21st 2015, then hit the road and appear in museums across the world.”
Belgium’s Museum of Sacred Art shows new galleries

The museum features several permanent pieces including three large framed wooden depictions of Lord Krishna’s universal form, Lord Ramachandra, and the Dasavatara (Krishna’s ten incarnations).

But its main offering is an annually rotating roster of exhibits that include sculptures, paintings, photography, video, and other art mediums.

A piece on Lord Jagannath from Timeless Art by Poosapati Parameshwar Raju

This year’s three new galleries were revealed on May 17th. The day began with a VIPs only event from 11am to 3pm, drawing some 150 local dignitaries, politicians and ambassadors.

First came a reception and cultural program, including musical performances by sitarist Subrata De and legendary Bansuri flute player Hariprasad Chaurasia.
Indian Ambassador to Belgium and the European Union Manjeev Singh Puri then ceremonially unveiled a new monument featuring lifesized murti forms of Lord Vishnu, Lord Nrismhadeva, and Lord Varahadeva donated by the Indian Embassy of Brussels.

The main event followed, with Puri opening the new MOSA exhibitions as the other VIPS followed and viewed the art for the first time.
Belgium’s Museum of Sacred Art shows new galleries

Raju’s exhibit also included his series on World Faiths, bringing together symbols from Christianity, Sikhism, Islam, Zoroastrianism and more to highlight the similarities between different faiths and inspire greater understanding and appreciation amongst them.

After viewing Raju’s exhibit, visitors could stop at a table where the artist himself expertly inscribed their names in calligraphy for them as they looked on in delight.

*Artist Poosapati Raju creates a calligraphy piece for the Indian Ambassador*

They then moved on to the second, smaller MOSA building to view Looking Within, a more abstract gallery by Shobha Broota. Here, through paint and other mediums, the artist depicted her personal spiritual journey of soul searching and meditation.

“We combine it with live bhajans daily, so that the whole atmosphere of the museum is more meditative,” says general manager Raya Ramananda Das.
After the VIPs concluded their visit with lunch at the Radhadesh restaurant, the community and the museum then opened its doors to around 700 people from the local municipality.

“Having the public there was good in terms of connecting to and integrating in the area, which is of course very important for the future of Radhadesh,” says Raya Ramananda.

Local dignitaries admire Shobha Broota’s exhibition ‘Looking Within’

The future of MOSA is bright too. The opening of a new branch in Villa Vrindavana, Italy is planned for next spring, with a stunning Mahabharata painting exhibition already completed.

And Forms of Devotion, a huge traveling MOSA exhibition featuring the devotional works of no less than 100 artists, will launch at the Lalit Kala Akademi in New Delhi on March 21st 2015, then hit the road and appear in museums across the world.
"We will also release a documentary about the lives of some of the artists and how their different backgrounds – urban, rural, rich, poor – affect their art, as well as two 500-page catalogs of the exhibits," Raya Ramananda says.

He explains that there are also long-term plans over the next ten years to house the whole collection permanently in a purpose-built museum in either Mayapur, India, or Radhadesh.

Meanwhile, the original MOSA in Radhadesh continues to draw 30,000 visitors every year, who see it as part of the community’s guided tours, and are frequently moved by it.

“One lady who visited recently had just gone through a health crisis, and she was so touched by the art that there were tears running down her cheeks,” says Raya Ramananda. “Many take catalogs of the exhibits home with them so that the experience they had in Radhadesh won’t fade over time. You can see that the museum has a very positive impact on people.”
EVENT
NEWS
NATIONAL NEWSPAPERS
A bit of Belgium on Delhi’s canvas

“The exhibition, Forms of Devotion: the Spiritual in Indian Art, will include about 300 works by over 150 artists chosen from over 1,600 works in the MOSA collection.”

The Museum of Sacred Art (MOSA) in Belgium is bringing a multidimensional arts project conceptualised around the notion of the spiritual and devotion in Indian art to the capital in March next year, the organisers said.

The exhibition, Forms of Devotion: The Spiritual in Indian Art, will include about 300 works by over 150 artists chosen from over 1,600 works in the MOSA collection. These works will be exhibited at the Lalit Kala Akademi (LKA) between March 21 to April 26, 2015.

“It explores the theme through artistic creations in different forms and styles, across ideologies and philosophies as well as faiths and regions of India,” said a statement.

The exhibition will be held in partnership with the akademi and will extend to all their galleries as well as open spaces at Rabindra Bhawan, in central Delhi’s lively cultural hub.

Initiated by Martin Gurvich, founder and director of MOSA, the exhibition will be curated by Sushma K Bahl, former head of arts and culture at the British Council and co-curated by Archana B Sapro, co-founder of Arts4All Trust, a non-profit organisation.

“This has been an amazing spiritual journey, full of discovery, joy, new relationships and friendships. I hope that such a project will bring great awareness of India’s vast and diverse culture and friendships,” said Gurvich.

The exhibition will tour internationally from mid-2015.
“A multidimensional arts project conceptualised around the notion of the spiritual and devotional in Indian Art.”
“Though at present the museum is exhibiting only one of its shows, Forms of Devotion: The Spiritual in Indian Art, it has a collection of 1800 works on Indian spirituality that are ready to be exhibited once the museum is in place.”
Thais set to get a taste of India

“Another important event at the Festival of India is a mega art exhibition, entitled Forms of Devotion. The exhibition features more than 200 works by 600 artists and deals with continuity and change.”
**Thais set to get a taste of India**

Rajasthan Josh and 1 Giant leap (above) perform together. PHOTO COURTESY: CHETAN

Companies in Thailand — ndorama, the Tat's and tila groups — as well the well-known Thai “CI” ood group, who have big business interests in India, were all sponsors of the festival. After all, the bilateral trade between the two countries reached $16.66 billion in 2014.

Other Indian artistes who will perform at the festival of India in Thailand, are Dakssha Seth and her troupe, including er Australian composer ashand Dwissaro, and hollywood asress and daughter Isha Sharvan. They will enact their exotic production ‘Sufi’ which traces the unique history of the Indian garment, and illustrates its various regional styles and textures.

Then, there’s the vibrant musician Raghu Dixit and his multi-lingual music band “Raghu Dixit Project,” who have wowed audiences at music festivals around the world. They performed at Queen Elizabeth’s Diamond Jubilee Pageant in 2012.

Dixit, who has a Master’s degree in Microbiology, is a self-taught musician and guitarist. He was awarded the “Best Newcomer” title in the “Songlines” of 2011. Dixit and his band play an amalgam of Indian and Western rhythms. This, together with their ethnic clothes and charismatic style, where they sport lungs, and Dixit wears ghungroos on his feet, make them a uniquely exciting contemporary musical ensemble.

A special feature of 2015’s Festival, is a literary event called Words on Water, featuring five top contemporary Indian writers. These include Vikas Swarup, the diplomat-writer whose book Q & A was translated into the Oscar-winning film Slumdog Millionaire, Amish Tripathi, the IIM- Graduate, who became famous with his hugely successful Shiva Trilogy, and Asha Sattar, who translated the Valmiki Ramayana, and recently founded “Sangam House,” an international writers’ residency programme near Bangalore.

There is also Charu Singh, former journalist she worked for Asian Age who has lived in Northeast India, and explores topics on Hinduism and Buddhism. And finally, there’s Shailendra Gulhati, a Jammu-based spiritual author, who has written two books including Naam Roop a Tribute to the Divine with artist Arpana Caur, as a jugalbandi between art and poetry.

It is not a coincidence that the Festival of India has a unique literary section. After all, the organiser of the festival are Sanjoy Roy and Teamwork Arts, who are best known for the world-famous Jaipur Literature Festival. In fact, in 2015, an award-winning Thai writer, Wipas Srithong, was selected to attend the Festival for the first time. He has not stopped raving over his interactions with famous authors of the world. Another important event at the Festival is the mega Art Exhibition, entitled “Forms of Devotion.” The exhibition features more than 200 works by 100 artists and deals with consistency and change, as reflected in various faiths and cultures, through a collection of traditional and recent works of art.

The mediums are totally mixed — paintings, drawings, collage, video, installations, sculptures. Curated by Dr Sushima Balh, the exhibition is being launched in Bangkok first, before it tours abroad (Europe, America, West Asia) and finally finds a permanent space in the specially-built MOSA (Museum of Sacred Art, Belgium).

The official Opening of the Festival of India in Thailand will be held on 6 March. It will uniquely celebrate the culture of a north-eastern Indian state Assam. Entitled “Celebrating Assam,” the programme will have a grand fashion show of five top Assamese designers (who are now known around the country), and are beginning to create international waves too, featuring the exotic textiles and jewels of the region. The fashion-show will be interspersed with local music forms as well as exotic folk dances like the Bihu and Jhumur dances, not to forget their famous classical dance Satritya. The Assam-focus was inspired by the visit of popular Thai Princess Mahachakri Sirindhorn to the north-eastern state of Nagaland in 2014. In fact, the Festival is commemorating the Thai Princess’ 60th birthday celebrations.

All in all, it’s a new and unique “Festival of India in Thailand,” which will, without a shadow of doubt, uplift the “Made in India” brand that Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi has been trying hard to promote.
Pick of the week

“The MOSA, Belgium presents, Forms of Devotion: The Spiritual in Indian Art, a multidimensional arts project conceptualised around the notion of the spiritual and devotional in Indian art.”
“Apart from an exhibition titled Forms of Devotion: The Spiritual in Indian Art to be held at Rabindra Bhavan from 21 March - 26 April 2015, there will be a seminar on March 23rd to discuss topics such as What is Sacred?”
“It will be a comprehensive festival. Three is a resurgence in forms of devotion the world over, and the festival will reflect that.”

IT ENCOMPASSES the entire cosmos — Vishnu in his grand avatar, representing the spiritual concept of all creation, diverse manifestations of a single essence. He occupies the centre, while rest of the elements are in the periphery. Thousands of painted images come together to form one. This is Manjunath Kamath’s depiction.
Points of view

FROM ART

MARCH 21: Inauguration and book launch with Vedic chanting from scriptures by students from the Department of Veda Sanskrit Institute, Varanasi, singing of hymns by vocal Rasta Acapella Ensemble and meditative bhakti and Kabir singing by Mahesh Ram & Group from Rajasthan

MARCH 22: Screening of Goutam Ghose-directed film Studios of Devotion and a concert by Mahesh Ram & Group

MARCH 28: A two-day woodcarving cut graphics workshop conducted by Ganguram from Bhopal, performance ‘Rage and Beyond: Irawati’s Gandhari’ by Sanjukta Wagh

APRIL 11: Workshop on Pichvai/Nathdwara painting for artists by Shyam Sharma, and bhajans by Chhuge Khan Mangniyar group of Jaisalmer

APRIL 26: Closing with Buddhist prayers by group from Loseling Monastery

For details, visit: http://formsofdevotion.org

The exhibition is at Rabindra Bhavan, Lalit Kala Akademi, from March 21 to April 26

The Indian Express
17th March 2015, New Delhi Edition p.2

...
Engaging art

“The project explores the theme through artistic creations in different forms and styles across ideologies and philosophies as well as faiths and regions of India.”
gramme will also include lectures, live demonstrations, art film screenings, discussions, gallery walks, digital outreach, performance and extensive educational outreach.

Forms of Devotion will be presented in India by not-for-profit organisation Arts4All on behalf of MOSA, jointly with the LKA. Besides the LKA and SNA, the ministry of culture and the Indian Council for Cultural Relations are also supporting the project. Standard Chartered Bank has come on board as sponsor of the project.

Set within the campus of a beautiful 90th-century chateau near the historic town in the Belgian Ardennes, MOSA has now expanded its brief to include contemporary Indian art from across different spiritual traditions and faiths. The museum has also opened a branch in Italy at Villa Vrindavan near Florence, where a magnificent heritage building has been restored to house MOSA.

Funded primarily by Martin Gurvitch, its founding director, the collection has been diligently built during his visits to India over many years. MOSA has over 1,500 artworks in its collection with paintings, sculptures, photographs, installations, digital and video art creations, representing major spiritual traditions of the world and hopes to encourage interfaith dialogue through the arts.

Director of MOSA and the Gurvitch Museum in Uruguay, Mahaprabhu dasa Martin Gurvitch is the son of renowned artist José Gurvich (1927-1974), and is an active member of ISKCON. Besides his major publication Living Traditions in Indian Art co-published with Mapin India, he has published several artists’ catalogues to document work in the devotional genre.

Sushma K Bahl, former head, arts and culture, British Council India, has been active on India’s art scenario in recent years with substantial publications, art co-ordination and art camps to her name. Archana B Sapra, a Delhi based architect and independent arts consultant, is co-founder of Arts4All Trust, an NGO that claims to promote dialogue across cultures through the support of artists.
“Lalit Kala Akademi India and MOSA Belgium and Italy cordially present Forms of Devotion: The Spiritual in Indian Art. A multidimensional project across artistic genres, media and sacred practices.”

Lalit Kala Akademi LKA (National Academy of Art) India and Museum of Sacred Art (MOSA) Belgium and Italy Cordially present ‘Forms of Devotion: The Spiritual in Indian Art’ A multidimensional project across artistic genres, media and sacred practices. Curated by Sushma K Bahl and Archana B Sapra. Workshops, performances and interactive sessions scheduled through the five weekends Details in the brochure available at LKA and on www.formsdevotion.org. Venue: Galleries, Lalit Kala Akademi, Rabindra Bhavan, Copernicus Marg, Mandi House on March 22 to April 20. Time: 11 am to 7 pm.

‘East-West’ Art Festival is an ambitious project for the next generation artists who, for the exhibition, explore an alternative view of our world. Seventeen international selected artists (India, France, Germany, Afghanistan, South Korea, Japan) cross their fields of experimentation through the variety of their artistic practice (Street Art, Performance, Installation, Photography, Dance, Video Art, Painting) to present a cutting-edge program of original exhibitions for the first time in India. As Dirk Baumann’s (Germany) shows a squeezed man who is...
“Nearly 100 artists will exhibit around 200 works in a multidimensional project focused on the spiritual and devotional.”
“Seema Kohli’s works are on view at Lalit Kala Akademi”

Event: Forms Of Devotion: The Spiritual In Indian Art
Seema Kohli’s multi-dimensional arts project
Date: March 21 to April 26
Venue: Lalit Kala Akademi
Event: #unexhibition
By The Portret Project
Date: March 22 to 28 (On March 22 the show will be on at A10/6, Vasant Vihar
Time: 8.30pm
Venue: AntiSocial, Hauz Khas Village
“Artist Seema Kohli who is participating in an arts project under the aegis of the MOSA, Belgium, is showcasing her work in an exhibition entitled ‘Forms of Devotion: The Spiritual in Indian Art.’”
Artist Seema Kohli will be participating in a multi-dimensional arts project under the aegis of the Museum of Sacred Art, Belgium, in a showcase entitled, *Forms of Devotion: The Spiritual in Indian Art* from March 21 to April 26, at Lalit Kala Akademi, in the Capital.

It is a multidimensional arts project conceptualised around the notion of the spiritual and devotional in Indian art. It explores the theme through artistic creations in different forms and styles, across ideologies and philosophies as well as faiths and regions of India. *Forms of Devotion* will feature a significant exhibition utilising the entire Lalit Kala Akademi (LKA) resources, alongside the launch of an accompanying illustrated book and film. This coincides...
Steeped in spirituality

With a festival of spiritual music and performance as well as an extensive education programme. Across all platforms, the project aims to engage with representations of icons and ideas of myths, folklore, popular culture and Sufi spirit in diverse forms and genres. The program will also include lectures, live demonstrations, art film screenings, discussions, gallery walks, digital outreach, performance and extensive educational outreach.

Seema’s body of work for MOSA is based on the intrinsic feeling of love flowing from faith, the feeling of serving mankind or this world created by one Supreme Consciousness, which is the bloodline of everything and everyone who is a part of this Universe. She says, “I have tried to touch different faiths and bring about the same essence of harmony whether it is through Jesus, Son of God, who is protecting us all as infinite skies; Krishna as Navgunjara who transforms himself into nine different beings as deer, elephant, cow, buffalo, tiger, snake, peacock, camel and a human being; or Dreams of Trishala where Trishala already knows in her dreams that a Thirthankar is on his way to come through her, who will guide and uplift his fellow beings. As she gets indications from the symbols in her dreams or Rumi who defied every norm of religion to give the message of love, brotherhood and peace taught to him by his master.

Seema will be showing Vishvarupa as a solo endeavor in different mediums of sculptures, paintings, paper works and videos at MOSA, Brussels this May 2015.
“Seema Kohli’s multi-dimensional arts project from the MOSA, Belgium, in a showcase, Forms of Devotion: The Spiritual in Indian Art from March 21st to April 26th.”
“Forms of Devotion: The Spiritual in Indian Art, is on disemploy at Lalit Kala Akademi.”
“Forms of devotion: The Spiritual in Indian Art, a group exhibition of artworks at Lalit Kala Akademi”
A place where faiths co-exist beautifully

“The exhibition, an initiative by director of MOSA Martin Gurvich, engages with continuity and change as reflected in various faiths, ideologies and cultures across the country.”
Showcasing the spiritual in Indian contemporary art

“...The showcase seems to aim at a ‘spiritual’ union through the 400 odd works of art created by artists from across the country.”

An uncanny wood charcoal rendition of the Goddess Kali, S H Raza’s iconic Bindu and an eclectic Jesus in oil are among artworks on display at an ongoing exhibition at the Lalit Kala Akademi here.

Titled, “Forms of Devotion”, the showcase seems to aim at a “spiritual” union through the 400 odd works of art created by artists from across the country, both celebrated contemporary artists and those who work on the streets. Spaced across three stories of the Akademi, the multidimensional exhibition contains a plethora of art mediums paintings in oil and water colours, sculptures in ceramic, brass, iron and glass, photographs, fabric scrolls, all concurring in a spiritual fervor.

Initiated by Martin Gurvich, director and founder of the Belgium-based Museum of Sacred Art (MOSA), the artworks on display have been collected from “not merely all of India but also across the world” over a span of three years.

“It has been conceptualised around the notion of spiritual and devotional in Indian art. It explores the theme through artistic creations in different forms and styles, across ideologies and philosophies as well as faiths and regions of India,” says curator Sushma K Bahl who is author of the book titled 5000 Years of Indian Art.

The exhibition is a manifestation of a journey that began with a handful of artworks, acquired by Gurvich and is centered around the theme of Vásudhaiva Kutumbakam (The world is one family).

“Martin initiated the project... the inclusive nature of the project runs through its ethos at various levels. It brings art from across cultures, faiths, genres and regions of the sub-continent and beyond, on a shared platform,” says Bahl.

A two volume illustrated book, co-published by MOSA and Niyogi Books, that includes contributions from Indian and international authorities on different aspects of devotional art and a film, “Studios of Devotion” directed by Goutam Ghose will also be launched during this five week long celebration of divine art.

During the course of the exhibition that continues till April 28, various performances are scheduled. Rage and beyond: Irawati’s Gandhari a retelling of the entire Mahabharata from the point of view of Gandhari, performances by Panchavadyam performers from Kerala, musical renditions by Chugge Khan and Mahesh Ram from Rajasthan, the Qutabi brothers who are significant qawwal artists are among the different performances to be staged within the exhibition complex.

Meanwhile, the exhibition is slated to travel to Bangkok and Shanghai among other venues before becoming a part of the permanent collection to be housed in MOSA’s new building in Belgium. — PTT
“Lalit Kala Akademi and MOSA Belgium and Italy present Forms of Devotion: The Spiritual in Indian Art”
A spiritual sojourn through shades of art

by Ashlin Mathew

THERE’S a perennial question in the minds of non-believers – how do the believers go about their life with the notion that there is somebody out there who will take care of your well-being? The omnipresent then spills into artworks that leave some in anger and some impressed.

Greeting you as soon as you enter the Lalit Kala Akademi is Paresh Maity’s ‘Metamorphic Mantra’ in bronze with 4005 bells and then Manjunath Kamath’s ‘Vishwaraopah’ made of 180 pieces. These are meant to leave you in awe for the rest of your walk. SH Raza’s ‘Prem Bindu’ in varying shades of orange ushers you in just after that.

Taking a look at divinity and spirituality in Indian art is ‘Forms of Devotion: The Spiritual in Indian Art’ multi-dimensional project as it explores the theme through 350 artistic creations in different forms and styles, across ideologies and philosophies. Organised in partnership with the Museum of Sacred Arts (MOSA), the artworks have been curated by Sushma Bahl and Archana Sapra and were chosen from nearly 3,000 works in MOSA in Belgium.

“We adjust our shows according to the interest in the region and the venue and here, there are nine sections. This is the first time we are in India, but most of our collection in Belgium has an Indian perspective. Our aim is to use art to diffuse the negative concept around religion. It is about time we found a balance. To counteract the tension, a long term solution has to be found where interfaith dialogue will be promoted. The government should put in money to encourage people to explore their faith deeper. That is the only way,” says Martin Gurvich, Director, MOSA, while walking past Nilofer Suleman’s ‘Sitaram Marriage Bureau’ – a painting in shades of pink with a tinge of humour in it.

With an intention to promote more than just paintings, the project has organised a Sacred Heart festival, which will see performances all through March and April. Vedic chanting by the department of vedic institute, hymns by Vocal Rasta, an acapella ensemble, and Sufi songs by Mahesh Ram & group will be ringing through the galleries at the Lalit Kala Akademi.

Ensure to take a walk around Lalit Kala Akademi until April 26, 2015, to take in the various forms of devotion.

“Organised in partnership with the MOSA, the artworks have been curated by Sushma Bahl and Archana Sapra, and were chosen from nearly 3,000 works in MOSA in Belgium”
“Exhibition Forms of Devotion: The Spiritual in Indian Art curated by Sushma K Bahl”

**EXHIBITION:** India Habitat Center: Iron installations by Gopal Namjoshi, Lodhi Road, 10am to 8pm

**DANCE & MUSIC**

*Habitat World:* Hindustani vocal recital by Omkar Havaldar, IHC, Lodhi Road, 7pm

*IIRCEN:* ‘Pravah’, a flow of dance and music festival of colourful dances, group dance presentation in Bharatanatyam style, Amphitheatre, Vasant Kunj, 6.30pm

**EXHIBITION**

*India International Centre:* ‘Sacred Geometry’, an exhibition of paintings by Neha Sharma, IIC Annex Gallery, Lodhi Estate, 11am to 7pm

*Art and Aesthetic:* A solo exhibition by Prema Jain (Delhi ‘O’ Delhi Foyer), ‘Inspired Duo’, an exhibition of paintings by Pankaj Nigam and Sourabh Mazumdar (Convention Centre Foyer), IHC, Lodhi Road, 10am to 7pm

*Aakriti Art Gallery:* ‘Lament, Networking on the wall Palestine’, a group art show, F-213 MB Road Lado Sarai, 11am to 7pm

*Museum of Sacred Art:* Exhibition ‘Forms of Devotion: The Spiritual in Indian Art’, curated by Sushma K Bahl, Lalit Kala Akademi, 35, Rabindra Bhavan, Ferozeshah Road, 10am to 6pm
“Exhibition Forms of Devotion: The Spiritual in Indian Art curated by Sushma K Bahl”
“Exhibition Forms of Devotion: The Spiritual in Indian Art curated by Sushma K Bahl”
“Exhibition Forms of Devotion: The Spiritual in Indian Art curated by Sushma K Bahl.”
“Exhibition Forms of Devotion: The Spiritual in Indian Art curated by Sushma K Bahl”
Events

“Forms of Devotion:-The Spiritual in Indian Art: workshops, performances and more”
“Artist Seema Kohli will be taking part in a multi-dimensional arts project under the aegis of the MOSA, Belgium, titled Forms of Devotion”
“The show mirrors the layered mix of sacred culture through the prism of select metaphors in Indian art.”
Art Agenda

“Forms of Devotion: The Spiritual in Indian Art, Lalit Kala Akademi”

With over 300 works by more than 150 artists, a multi-dimensional arts project is being held in town to explore the notion of spiritual and devotional in Indian art. A two-volume illustrated book accompanies the exhibition and includes contributions from Indian and international authorities on different aspects of devotional art. Where: Lalit Kala Akademi, Rabindra Bhavan, 35, Ferozeshah Road; When: Till April 26; Timings: From 11am to 7pm.
**Events**

“Forms of Devotion: The Spiritual in Indian Art, Lalit Kala Akademi”

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**EXHIBITION**

**Embassy of Brazil:** A group exhibition of paintings by young artists, 8, Aurangzeb Road, 10am to 4pm

**AIFACS:** ‘Yellowstone: The Artist’s Point’, an exhibition of photographs by Somesh Goyal, Gallery No 2, 1, Rafi Marg, 10am to 7pm

**Arpna Caur Gallery:** ‘Auric Vision’, a fine arts exhibition by Clairvoyant and Healer, Renoo Nirula, Academy of Fine Arts and Literature, 4/6 Siri Fort Institutional Area, 11am to 7pm

**Dhoomimal Art Center:** ‘Glimpses Of Varanasi’, a solo exhibition by Yashwant Shirwadkar, Connaught Place, 11am to 7pm

**NIV Art Centre:** ‘Before Our Own Eyes’, an exhibition of photographs by Hanifa Alizada,

Husain, Vishwa Yuvak Kendra, Pt. Umashankar Dikshit Marg, Chanakyapuri, 11am to 7pm

**Gallery Stupa 18:** ‘Jugalbandi’, a group art exhibition. Participating artists: Aika Raghuvanshi, Anita Kulkarni, Ranjeet Singh, Shridha Iyer, Sudhir Tailang, Vilas Kulkarni, 343, Sultanpur, near Pillar No 28-B, Sultanpur Metro Station, 10am to 7pm

**Museum of Sacred Art:** ‘Forms of Devotion: The Spiritual in Indian Art’, an exhibition curated by Sushma K Bahl, Lalit Kala Akademi, 35, Rabindra Bhavan, Ferozeshah Road, 10am to 6pm
“Forms of Devotion: The Spiritual in Indian Art, Lalit Kala Akademi”

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Museum of Sacred Art: ‘Forms of Devotion: The Spiritual in Indian Art’, an exhibition curated by Sushma K Bahl, Lalit Kala Akademi, 35, Rabindra Bhavan, Ferozeshah Road, 10am to 6pm
"From one artwork to another, each piece has a connection with religion yet an exhibition as a whole stands as a secular medium of expression."
Thread that binds art and devotion

DIVINE APPEAL Artwork in different mediums reiterates the theme of devotion at this exhibition.
The final call for a spiritual tour

"For Delhi’s art enthusiasts this weekend is the final chance to witness an impressive collection of artworks from The Museum of Sacred Art, Belgium."
Devotee of the sacred dimensions

"Martin Gurvich wants to showcase Indian artworks that celebrate the spiritual, devotional and religious manifestations, around the world."

By SUMATI MEHRISHI

Walls divide devotion. Wajaa separate worship and spiritual manifestations. In art, a wall cements them all. New Delhi-based artist Marimunjah Kamath a wall. He gives Vishnu serpent, a mambhoo work in water and tea stain depicting the grand avatar of Vishnu in return. Kamath meticulously put up the 1088 frames of different sizes together for Vusnuroopaa over three days with the help of assistants.

The work is part of Forms of devotion: The Spiritual in Indian Art, a diverse and multidimensional art project covering different genres, expressions, faiths, devotional practices and media in India and Indian art. The show, scooped from a huge collection belonging to the Museum of Sacred Art (MOSA), Belgium, was put together by noted curator Sushma K Ralhi and Archana B Sapa and displayed in collaboration with the Leitl Kala Akademi.

Martin Gurvich, 52, director, Museum of Sacred Art, Belgium and Italy, says, "During the initial years, the collection was mainly traditional Indian art. I thought something was wrong with contemporary Indian art. My whole consciousness changed. I opened up to western contemporary art. We saw the traditional influence. My father (Urguayan painter, potter and musician Jose Gurvich) died young. He had a huge collection of works."

Gurvich's collection is a gentle pilgrimage of sorts for viewers exposed to the concept of high and low art, styles, textures, and approaches. He says, "This collection was my donation to MOSA. I acquired the works from various artists through the sales of my father's works. That's art for art. A lot of pieces were kept in Uruguay (in a museum in Montevideo which is named after his father). I would like to bring up a permanent museum in Belgium. The display of 1080 works is an ice breaker for the uninitiated. On this particular day, Kamath's Vishnuroopaa became the first point of reference to contemporary and tribal art for a group of students from a Delhi school. It's a great start."

"The calligraphic works from Dhrupad exponent Ustad Wasifuddin Dagar and his sister Qamar Dagar gave a glimpse of their well-rounded perception of expression and an immense search for musicality on paper. At Forms of Devotion, your faith, my faith, his faith, and her faith dissolve in the colours, a language of motifs, moving stories in sculptures, that fine stretch of the nib dipped in ink, and devotion. Gurvich adds, "There are four different attitudes to religion in general. One is old fashioned and sectarian, not attractive to many. Then, you have those who want to reject religion altogether, the extreme secularists; there are those who want to merge the spiritual and traditional. You can be spiritual and religious, at the same time, and you also appreciate the other."

Forms of Devotion ends at April 28

"I acquired the works from artists through the sales of my father's works. That's art for art." MARTIN GURVICH Director, Museum of Sacred Art, Belgium
“Forms of Devotion: The Spiritual in Indian Art, a diverse and multi-dimensional art project covering different genres, expressions, faiths, devotional practices and media in India and Indian art. The show, scooped from a huge collection belonging to the Museum of Sacred Art (MOSA), Belgium, was put together by noted curator Sushma K Bahl and Archana B Sapra and displayed in collaboration with the Lalit Kala Akademi.”
Sacred Art

Curator Sushma Bahl talks to Malini Sen about the inspiration behind the exhibition titled, ‘Forms of Devotion: The Spiritual in Indian Art’

How did you decide on the theme?

The initial idea comes from Mina Choudhury, director of the Museum of Sacred Art (MOSA) in Belgium, who is an Indian follower and whose father, Joes O'Quinck, is a well-known South American artist. The theme and vision of the exhibition was then developed by us, Archana Sengupta. We are proud to be able to bring all of the art forms and genres, from Indian to European and other traditions, to the Indian public.

Why did you select Sri Raja’s hands as a symbol for the exhibition?

We chose Raja’s work as the lead artist because of his incredible talent and the museum’s desire to showcase the work of such a respected and talented artist. His work represents the essence of religious culture and the concept of devotion, which is at the heart of this exhibition.

What do you take art to the masses?

To reach a wider audience, we must also make sure that the museum is accessible to everyone, so that people can experience the art and understand its significance. The museum has been designed to accommodate people from all walks of life, so that everyone can enjoy the art and learn about its history and importance.

When did you get interested in art?

Art has always been a part of my life, and I have always been fascinated by the beauty and complexity of art. I was drawn to art because of its ability to express emotions and ideas and to connect people from different backgrounds.

The exhibit, consisting of 84 works by nearly 200 artists from a large number of Indian and British organizations, has something for all age groups and all kinds of interests. Practitioners worked with students and art enthusiasts on indigenous styles such as Guatemalan and Mayan culture. It was a great opportunity to see families with children, artists, students, politicians, and even people in the gallery enjoying the exhibition.
Painted worship

It is not often that a compendium of artwork offers one the chance to learn about a section of India’s modern art that has not been quite as feted or visible as other, more lucrative contemporary art. Sushma K. Bahl’s FORMS OF DEVOTION: THE SPIRITUAL IN INDIAN ART (Niyogi, Rs 9,995) gives one that chance. It also chooses to focus on India’s critically-important spiritual essence at a time when people are more interested in contemporary Indian art’s focus on global and political problems.

This collection, spread over two tomes and more than 1,000 pages, stems from a project of the Museum of Sacred Art in Belgium, whose director, Martin Gurvich, joined ISKCON and began to take an interest in Indian art. Close to 3,000 tribal, modern and traditional artists find their works represented here. Gurvich says that meeting Bahl gave him the opportunity to discover “devotion in contemporary art from India”. He chose to heed a “strong desire to go to India” where he would find his “spiritual path”.

Bahl travelled to the corners of the country to discover and record the spiritual art that flourishes everywhere. Its practice is robust and goes well beyond the works of the artist with whom spiritual art is closely associated, Raja Ravi Varma. One of the greatest triumphs of the work is its minute detail; the representation of visual devotion by modern Indian artists is vast.

These images are interspersed with traditional art, thus taking the work several notches higher. The fact that Bahl highlights the works of anonymous traditional artists alongside contemporary spiritual artwork is what gives the book its perfect balance. She also takes care to identify the artists whose creations feature in the work.

The collection reveals another significant thing: artistic styles and practices have vastly evolved over time, but the articulation of worship has largely remained the same. Beyond Varma, there are other varied, visually calming depictions of devotion, such as Kanchan Chander’s image of a yogini in acrylic, sequins and Swarovskis on canvas (left) or Anuradha Upadhyay’s imagining of Mahamaya in acrylic on canvas (right). All the images are juxtaposed with essays — contributed by Devdutt Pattanaik, Desmond Lazaro and Mushirul Hasan, among others — that show that spiritual art in India has a hitherto unexplored richness, intensity and vigour.

It is heartening that Bahl, in her investigations, gives importance to artists across faiths. In his essay, the Dean of Studies at Bhaktivedanta College in Belgium, Kenneth R. Valpey, points out that Islam might be believed to discourage “any graphic representation of divinity”, but “the rendered visible form is by no means rejected; rather, the divine messages... take form in the written word, in marks that appear as an elegant, swirling dance of devotional affirmation.” Such calligraphy can be seen in the works of Mohammed Zubair (middle).
MAGAZINES
“Mounted on a grand scale, Forms of Devotion is a travelling exhibition which is like pilgrims progress in rediscovering the majesty, meaning and mystery of sacred India”
For the love of God

From Kangra to Kalighat, from Thanjavur to Mughal art, from Madras to Bengal and Baroda schools, we must be the only country where contemporary artists continue to create visual representations of the divine in new and refreshing ways. Says Martin Gurvich, founding director, Museum of Sacred Art (MOSA), Brussels, “Indian culture has never been fully separate from spirituality. Unlike the West, the genre of spiritual art is alive and flourishing in India.” Gurvich, a Hare Krishna devote who prefers to be called by his religious name Mahaprabhu Dasa, says Indians know how to celebrate the presence of the divine even amidst the mundane and the material. It is primarily this belief that this gentleman with lofty ideals is working on 24X7 and 365 days giving shape to what he calls “Forms Of Devotion, a traveling exhibition.” He says it will offer a magnificent
opportunity to revel in Indian culture and highlight the artistic achievements of one of the world’s most aesthetically accomplished regions. “We’ve planned a spiritual festival of performing arts, workshops and lectures,” reveals Gurvich. “It’s a huge project and we need both blessings and funds to make it a success.” Gurvich doesn’t mind meeting Prime Minister Narendra Modi, who is “a very positive person” and anyone who’s willing to contribute to the cause. He says the holistic project assumes a special significance in today’s multicultural, but strife ridden global context. While it presents and promotes diverse Indian artistic endeavours from around the country on an international platform, it also supports non-violence and spiritual upliftment for mutual trust amongst people and societies. “Given the inherent ability of the arts to bind the mind and the spirit, the platform is especially appropriate for the ‘other’ and the ‘self’ to co-habit in harmony with each other,” he says. With its strong focus on the spiritual and the devotional art, the project engages with continuity and change as reflected in various faiths, cultures and ideologies across the country. “The collection and the exhibition features recent and original works of
Indian art – the traditional, contemporary, folk and popular,” he informs, adding, “The themes from socio-cultural-philosophical perspectives will be explored.” The exhibition, along with a film, a book and spiritual arts festival is scheduled for a grand launch in early 2015 at Indira Gandhi National Centre for Art, New Delhi. It will then tour internationally for mega showings in different galleries and museums in Americas, Europe and the Far East. “It shall feature musical concerts of Sufi, Bhakti, Gurbani and Christmas carols, dance performances and hands on art and yoga workshops to widen the reach and help appreciation and understanding of devotional and sacred art,” he informs. The programme will also include lectures, live demonstrations, art film screenings, discussions, gallery walks, digital outreach, performances and more, as appropriate for each venue.” Clarifying that none of the works are antiques, curator Sushma Bahl says, “The idea is to promote Indian art globally. The show will cut across faiths and cultures. We have raised various issues and have also gone local.” For instance, Vivek Vilasam’s work Count Me Out,
which shows a temple gopuram decorated with people instead of deities, highlights the issue of closing temple doors to people from other faiths. Yusuf Arakkal’s painting Last Supper shows Christ with chapattis instead of the traditional bread. Adding a touch of humour is a work called Sita-Ram Marriage Bureau. On display at the exhibition will be mixed media works Kali by Shantamani Muddaiah and a meditative work made of blunt iron scissors called Meditation by fashion designer Rajesh Pratap Singh. “It may seem that a large number of works are on Hindu themes or that the artists are mostly Hindus. But that’s only because the majority in India is Hindu. We have included works that depict other faiths too,” says Gurvich. “The idea is to include works of modern contemporary artists, who have something nice to say in a beautiful way on the theme of devotion.” The curation of works has necessitated that Gurvich spends days on end in India. “However, meeting artists and finding good representative pieces have been both challenging and rewarding,” he says. “I can say for sure that even today there are great artists completely devoted to their spiritual tradition. Visiting their simple studios and witnessing their humility has served as a great inspiration to us in creating this project, of presenting Indian devotional art to the West.” As for himself, Gurvich says India has greatly influenced his life—born to Lithuanian parents who immigrated to Uruguay, he grew up in Montevideo and New York where his artist father relocated. “My parents were Jews and I was raised with an open mind and an attitude of respect and tolerance for all religions,” he says. As a student in the US, he wanted to know more about one of the world’s most ancient and rich cultures. Gurvich says as a student in the US, he got interested in the Hindu philosophy. “But I didn’t know who to turn to for answers to my questions.” And like hundreds of foreigners, Gurvich, too, came to India on a spiritual quest. “After I finished my studies in Political Science from Syracuse University, New York, I travelled
For the love of God

to Paris for vacations. There I bumped into Hare Krishna devotees, who presented me with a copy of Bhagavad Gita. I didn’t have to pay anything for the book that changed the course of my life,” he recalls. “I haven’t looked back since that day.” He came to India and lived here for several years at a commune before settling in Belgium.

Gurvich says before he could lay his hands on Gita, what struck him most was the lack of knowledge about one of the world’s most ancient and richest cultures. “So I decided to study as much as I could about Indian art and religion and have been trying to and promote it in Belgium. But how did he think of starting a museum? He says the idea was to create a dedicated space where visitors could experience and learn the cultural roots of Vaishnava art and its connection to the broader world of Hindu philosophy. His personal inspiration in developing the museum came from the experience of growing up in an atmosphere permeated with art. “My father, José Gurvich, was a renowned modern artist and a student of Joaquín Torres García. This background enabled me to see the similarities between Indian and Western artists—the desire to represent beauty and uplift the consciousness of human society.” The setting for the Museum of Sacred Art could not be better: a thriving spiritual community in a beautiful
For the love of God

nineteenth-century château near the historic town of Durbuy, in the Belgian Ardennes. “The meeting of old and new in this historic setting creates a unique backdrop for developing a love of devotional art,” he says. “I have been exposed to art right from childhood and over the years I’ve realised that art helps you tell your stories about your spiritual quest. Care has been taken not to purchase art, which goes beyond being art. Some artists provoke for the sake of provocation to shock people. I’ve tried not to go beyond a point where art becomes too commercial or agitates others.” Gurvich says the main focus of the museum at Radhadesh, about 100 km from Brussels, which opened in 2009, is on living art forms rather than historical pieces, even though it presents quite a broad selection of devotional traditions from India. “There are some old miniatures from Rajasthan, but most of the pieces are from the 20th and 21st centuries,” he says. “The collection focuses on works by Indian artists and includes devotional paintings by ISKCON artists. A few works from Nepal, Tibet, Thailand and Indonesia are also a part of it.” From Nepal and Tibet there are some exquisite metal icons, ceremonial artifacts and sacred objects that represent Hindu and Buddhist Newari art. Two panels of leather cutouts depicting Rama and Sita, represent Thailand in the museum. The style reflects the traditional depiction of Rama and Sita in Ramakien, Thailand’s national epic, derived from the Indian Ramayana, which remains popular as performance drama even today. The museum has also opened a branch in Italy at Villa Vrindavan near Florence where a magnificent old Villa is being transformed to house MOSA.
India Art Fair

“YES Bank will be hosting a series of talks and events in the YES Bank Lounge including…. a book launch for Forms of Devotion with Sushma Bahl and the Museum of sacred Art.”
“Forms of Devotion: The Spiritual in Indian Art is a multi-dimensional arts project conceptualised around the notion of the spiritual and devotional in Indian Art.”
Sacred expressions

“The MOSA in Belgium, located in a castle in the Belgian Ardennes, will be launching a two volume book based on their upcoming show this month, titled Forms of Devotion: The Sacred in Indian Art”
EPIC PORTRAITURE
The legendary BG Sharma’s pigment-on-board work, Krishna Desurtsi’s Vrindavan (above); Chhotu Lal’s The Divine Song, gouache-on-acid free-paper (top right); Anil Chaitanya Vangel’s pigment-on-cotton work, is referred to as Untitled 2 (right).
Sacred expressions
CELEBRATING MASCULINE AND FEMININE DEITIES
Bharti Dayal’s Saraswati ii oil-on-canvas (above); Gopal Swami Khetanr’s Krishna-lifting Govardhan; (left, below); Arbinda Samanta’s Yugasvatar acrylic-on-canvas (below, right)
Sacred expressions

TRANSCENDENTAL BONDS
MS Anand's Ganesha, Shiva and Parvati pigments and gold-leaf on canvas; Jitendra Dangi's Untitled; mixed media-on-canvas (below)
Sacred expressions
“Presenting partner Yes Bank hosted a series of talks and events in the Yes Bank lounge - including Forms of Devotion with Sushma Bahl and the Museum of Sacred Art.”
Another noticeable feature of this year's event was the significant percentage of sales made to new buyers. With 80,000 plus visitors attending, sales were recorded on average as 25 per cent stronger than the 2014 edition — with six sell-out booths, and figures indicating that the top two per cent collectors spent over ₹30 crore collectively.

A majority of the galleries were able to report new collectors and clientele coming not just from the capital but also from Ahmedabad, Chandigarh and Jaipur. Besides, India Art Fair 2015 hosted over 1,100 artists, of which many were from Tier II and Tier III cities. The latter not only enjoyed the opportunity to exhibit on a prestigious international platform but enjoyed positive sales as well.

There was an interactive performance by Le Méridien and LM 100 member Esther Maasdam — the global latte artist along with visual artist, Sohan Jakhar. The event was India's introduction to the newly-launched annual Inspiration Brewed Here campaign.

"India Art Fair acts as a catalyst for progress, driving deeper understanding of the country's artistic history as well as the latest contemporary works from across India, stimulating dialogue, debate, understanding and interaction not only with art specialists, but with the wider public and collectors of tomorrow," says Neha Kirpal, Founding Director, India Art Fair.

This important element of India Art Fair's mission extends to all ages and the fair was pleased to welcome 16 school groups and thousands of students who visited from Delhi and around the country to learn and engage with art in India.
“The MOSA in Belgium travels to India this month with its exhibition Forms of Devotion, at the Lalit Kala Akademi in Delhi.”
“The MOSA, Belgium, in association with the Lalit Kala Akademi, will present a multi-dimensional arts project about spiritual and devotional notions in Indian art.”
"This multi-dimensional theme has been conceptualised around the notion of the spiritual and devotional in Indian art."
Forms of Devotion: The Spiritual in Indian Art

“This multi-dimensional theme has been conceptualised around the notion of the spiritual and devotional in Indian art.”

Focusing on spirituality’s potential for peace and unity and combining it with the outreach of art, Martin Gurvich, Founder and Director of The Museum of Sacred Art (MOSA) in Belgium, announced his new initiative ‘Forms of Devotion: The Spiritual in Indian Art’. As a multidimensional arts project conceptualised around the notion of the spiritual and devotional in Indian art, the show explores the theme through artistic creations in different forms and styles, across ideologies, philosophies, faiths and many different regions in India. Showcased at the Lalit Kala Akademi (LKA) in New Delhi, the exhibition, curated by esteemed curator Sushma K. Bahl and co-curated by Archna B. Sapra (Co-Founder of Arts4All Trust), includes about 300 works by over 150 artists chosen from over 1600 works in the MOSA collection. “This has been an amazing spiritual journey, full of discovery, joy, new relationships and friendships. I hope that such a project will bring great awareness about India’s vast and diverse culture and friendships. May it bring people of different faiths closer together in the spirit of unity in diversity,” said Gurvich.
Encompassing art works created for rituals and offerings, adornment and celebration, be it decorative or provocative, rural or urban, old or new, bazaar art or high end creations, local or global, the conciliatory or the provocative; the exhibition and the project engage with representations of icons and ideas, in myths, folklore, popular culture, or Sufi spirit, in diverse forms and genres.
Forms of Devotion: The Spiritual in Indian Art

MANJUNATH KAMATH, VISHVAROOPA, WATERCOLOUR AND TEA STAINS ON PAPER, INSTALLATION WITH 1008 WORKS
The inauguration of the show coincided with the Festival of Spiritual Arts (curated by Sanjay Roy of Teamwork Arts, the Sangeet Natak Akademi and the LKA), encompassing music, performance and an extensive education programme. It was also accompanied by the launch of a two-volume illustrated book with contributions from Indian and international authorities on different aspects of devotional art, co-published by MOSA and Niyogi Books. *Forms of Devotion* has also commissioned a film, ‘Studies of Devotion’ directed by Goutam Ghose with Jagannath Guha as Associate Director and script and presentation by Desmond Lazaro. The film captures artists at work across India to help audiences understand their aesthetics and working methods.

For a society plagued with shrinking boundaries, *Forms of Devotion*, through its detailed study on the origin, development and influence of spirituality and sacred art in India, presents a solution that, in its entirety, is both evocative and hope-inspiring.
Sacred Arts Festival and Seminar

“The Sacred Arts Festival and Seminar will run in conjunction with Forms of Devotion: The Spiritual in Indian Art.”
When art becomes a dialogue between faiths

“The Sacred Arts Festival brings together different styles of spiritual art and explores the confluence of art forms and spirituality”
When art becomes a dialogue between faiths

Martin Gurvich is the founder of the Museum of Sacred Art in Radhadesh, Belgium. The son of famous Uruguayan artist José Gurvich, Martin’s deep involvement with spirituality and the Iskcon movement has found manifestation in the ongoing Sacred Arts Festival at New Delhi’s Lalit Kala Akademi, which has been curated by Sushma K Bahl. Excerpts from an interview:

Q What made you start the Museum of Spiritual Arts?
Martin Gurvich: It is a spiritual journey that started after my university studies in the US and after many years of practicing Gaudiya Vaishnava and serving Iskcon. The art part came out because of my previous life. My father was a very well-known artist and from there arose the interest. And there was a connect with Indian art, and Indian spiritual art. That connection started about five years ago with the humble attempt to have a gallery or a museum in Radhadesh, where I live. It just focussed on traditional art, mainly Vaishnava art from Rajasthan and Gujarat. Then it became a journey... one spiritual journey within another spiritual journey. I made a big collection of spiritual Indian art, including contemporary, tribal art. It was a small project with maybe 100, 200 works of art.

There is now one museum in Belgium, one in Italy. We are hoping to open more branches where there are different Iskcon projects. And now we have this big art project called ‘Forms of Devotion’ in India this year.

Q How did you get introduced to Indian art?
MG: It was quite abrupt. I was studying political science at the University of Syracuse in the US, and although it was not overnight, but quite suddenly, I began to feel the need for spiritual practice and philosophy. So I started to read books on Buddhism and Hinduism, different interpretations of Hinduism. And then my interest became quite strong, and my interest for my regular studies and in other things dwindled. There was a very strong calling from within me to go to India, and I began to make arrangements to come to this country.

I had seen the Hare Krishna movement in New York, when I lived in Manhattan for many years, but I was a child at that time. I met the devotees in a serious way in Paris in 1982. In 1989, I came to Mumbai, and although I had been a devotee for seven years by then, it was still a cultural shock when I came here. Since then, I have been coming to India very often, for pilgrimages of course, and we have a large Indian boutique in Radhadesh and I had been shopping for that for the past 15 years.

Q When did the process of gathering Indian art for Mosa (museum) begin?
MG: For the last five years, we have travelled with the art project, and have met a lot of artists in small villages, in big cities, famous artists, young artists. I began in 2007 when the focus was on traditional art. So I would travel a lot to Rajasthan and Mysore, and started with a collection of art in the Tanjore and Mysore styles, pachitra, Rajasthan miniatures, pichwai.

We officially started the museum (Mosa) in 2010—Hariprasad Chaurasia came for the inaugural concert—and it was the beginning of a small project. But it didn’t stop there. I wanted to do more about spirituality; not only traditional, but in a bigger context. But I had a lot of apprehensions about contemporary art, not just in the Indian context, even internationally.

Q What was the reason for this apprehension?
I had a lot of prejudices against it; I thought it was straying from the real aesthetics of art... basically, it was generalisation that is never good in any field, not even in art.

I am involved in a museum of my father’s work since 2001 in Montevideo, Uruguay, and its focus was mainly on modern art and the masters. I didn’t want to do much with contemporary art. The openness to contemporary art came from the Indian side... I was introduced to it by Sushma [Bahl], and then, it was a whole lot of opening up to such art in the Indian context and also in the South American context; we now do shows of contemporary artists in Uruguay. It had an impact on my Western art sensibilities.

And it has been a journey of discovery, of India, of painting styles, of media, like sculpture and installations and video. The more we travelled, the more we saw how wide the spectrum of Indian art and Indian spiritual art was. That is why the book [a two-volume book called Forms of Devotion: The Spiritual in Indian Art accompanies the show] became so big; because we kept travelling, and kept discovering Indian artists.

Sushma Bahl: Once we had this discovery, it led us to the spiritual tradition. It was another strand that was quite revealing.

MG: We started with traditional art, mainly Hindu and Vaishnava. But then we went through contemporary art, and after meeting artists, we discovered so many different spiritual traditions within the Indian context which represent...
When art becomes a dialogue between faiths

Q What kind of overlaps have you seen between the different faiths and painting traditions in India? Between symbolism and characters and narratives?

SB: We have seen a lot of overlaps. Especially in the way contemporary artists are borrowing from traditions, and traditional artists are taking from contemporary art. For example, the works of Mahavir Swamy show Ganesha sitting with his family and flying kites. His style is that of Bikaner, and he uses very traditional colours.

MG: There are many Hindu artists who work on non-Hindu themes and non-Hindu artists who work on Hindu themes. We have wonderful Muslim artists who work on Krishna themes, like that of the Kamdhenu. There is a lot of overlapping in faith and symbolism.

(Bahl shows an image of a sculpture made by fashion designer Rajesh Pratap Singh. It depicts Gautam Buddha seated in a meditative posture, but it is made entirely of brass scissors, something that Singh uses extensively in his own profession. Not only is it an entirely contemporary take on the traditional form of the meditating Buddha, it also represents the clash of Buddhism’s non-violent philosophy and the inherent violence embodied in an instrument like the scissor.)

SB: This is what is so exciting, to see that traditional art is not stuck. Most people think that traditional art is dated, it is not dated. It is as contemporary as contemporary art that is being made today.

MG: That is what is unique to India: You have modernity and tradition co-existing; sometimes with a little tension, but many times with no tension. There are contemporary artists who don’t think highly of traditional artists, but there are also a lot of contemporary artists who respect good traditional artists for their work, dedication and quality.

Q Where else are you planning to take the exhibition?

MG: Funding is always a major obstacle. I invested my own money to a certain degree to invest in the research project, to buy the initial art of the main project, and also commission a film by Gautam Ghose. [The film, titled Studios of Devotion, captures artists at work across India.] But we would like to travel with the exhibits [about 300 of them]. The show is according to the venue, and the interests of the venue. We are flexible about how the show can manifest; we would like to retain the main theme, but, the works that are on display can vary, depending on the venue, whether it is more traditional or contemporary.

SB: It is definitely going to Thailand and Montevideo (Uruguay). We are talking about Kolkata and Mumbai, but it depends on the space we get.

At Lalit Kala Akademi, for instance, we could have a gurbani on one day, and sufı music on another. There will be performances along with the exhibition of paintings. And we don’t plan to show the exhibition in separate chunks; like this is Hindu art, this is Islamic art, or this is digital art and this is traditional art. It will be all inclusive and thematically connected; for example, a theme of telling tales, or of pilgrims and pilgrimages. And we won’t worry about what medium, what styles, what faiths. It is all about the philosophy of ‘live and let live’.

The Sacred Arts Festival is on at the Lalit Kala Akademi, New Delhi, till April 26
A transcendent escapade

“The purpose of this festival is to break the barriers between urban and rural art and traditional and contemporary art; we want this art to become accessible to all.”

By Priyanka Aggarwal

A member of the Hare Krishna movement (ISKCON) and a social and cultural crusader, Martin Gurvich is the Director of the Museum of Sacred Arts in Belgium and Italy. Noblesse India catches up with him as he brings the Forms of Devotion show to New Delhi for the first time from 21st March to 26th April 2015.

How did you foray into the world of art?
In my late teens, I was struggling to find a spiritual path, considering my mom was Catholic and my dad was Jewish. My father, who was an artist himself, was the first to lead me into the world of art. In 1982, I started following a guru who further influenced my connection with art and spirituality.

What influenced you to conduct the Forms of Devotion show in India?
The purpose of this festival is to break the barriers between urban and rural art and traditional and contemporary art; we want this art to be accessible to all. In India, museums are not a common choice of recreation, whereas the countries in the west have millions of visitors every year. We are hoping to cultivate this culture in India.

Which is your favourite artwork? Could you tell us the story behind it?
I love all the artworks. This time, we have carried 350 pieces of art for the Forms of Devotion exhibit, but one of the highlights is a piece by the famed artist, Manjunath Kamath. It has been created by joining 1,008 pieces that transform into a depiction of Lord Vishnu from Hindu Mythology.

This is the first time you are showcasing your art outside Belgium through the Forms of Devotion show and India is a natural choice, but what made you choose India?
The Forms of Devotion exhibit is a part of the Festival of India, which is organised by Sanjoy K. Roy, who is in the process of producing 17 performing and visual arts shows in 21 cities across 11 countries, including Australia, Germany, Hong Kong, Italy, India, Israel, Singapore, South Africa, Spain, UK and USA. With no particular reason, we unanimously decided to conduct the Forms of Devotion show in Thailand as well.

What are your future plans with respect to exhibiting your art?
We are planning to have festivals in Shanghai and other places around the world in 2015 and early 2016.
“Initiated by Martin Gurvich, director MOSA, ‘Forms of Devotion: The Spiritual in Indian Art’ is an arts project conceptualised around the notion of the spiritual and devotional in Indian art.”
Performer at the Sacred Arts- A Festival curated by Teamwork Arts
Vocal Rasta has been active for the past few months and was recently seen at the Zee Jaipur Literature Festival and Sounds of Freedom where they performed in front of Binoy Varghese and Velamkanni Matha. Comprising of 15 performers singing Acapella (only voices), trained by Antoine Redon and Subhadrab Kamath, the group brings together a rich repertoire celebrating the freedom of creative expression through a popular rendition of songs and their own compositions, “Freedom”, “Love”, “Respect”, “Chain”, “Right left”.

Behrupiyas make their livelihood by enacting different characters out which monkeys seem to be the most popular. Their performance was presented in front of K. Bhaskar Rao’s Hanuman puppet.

The Panchavadyam performers would lead the been players into the venue space depicting that the Panchavadyam performers are rooted in the South Indian tradition and the been players are the outsiders. Panchavadyam, literally meaning an orchestra of five instruments, is a temple art form that has evolved in Kerala. Of the five instruments, four — thimila, maddalam, ilathalam and idakka — belong to the percussion category, while the fifth, komba, is a wind instrument. The performance was held in front of Vivek Vilasini’s temple.

Yoga session Vayu Shiva Shakti form of devotion was conducted by Vayu Yoga with Suresh Dutt Sharma and Capucine Redon. The idea behind it was that by connecting the centers of our hearts, we are sharing our Vayu, and letting the wind of love flow... "Letting the heart lead"... till the ultimate union, it is an inner dance of love.

In the Sacred Art Festival section, Rage and Beyond: Irawati’s Gandhari
Performers at the Sacred Arts- A Festival curated by Teamwork Arts

REPORT

Jaishree Sethi has developed and led many creative teams and launched a few radio stations. As a passionate media and communication trainer with teaching experience in renowned institutions like Amity University and Jamia Millia Islamia, she has ventured into the world of stories by setting up Story Ghar. Her journey has still not ended, in fact, it has just begun. Post the completion of her thesis in Storytelling and Language Development, she went on to pursue a PhD in the former.

Meditative and mesmeric are the qualities of Mahesha Ramji's music. Unhurried and not in an eager rush to please the public, he slows you down and compels you to step into his rhythm. Belonging to Chhatangadh, a village near Jaisalmer in Rajasthan, he represents the folk style of the Meghval community, who are the traditional carriers of the poetry of many bhakti poets including Kabir, keeping it alive through a powerful oral tradition.

Kathakali: Duryodhana Vadham (Scene from Epic Mahabharata) By Vayaskara Aryan Narayan Moosad (1841-1902) describes the following.

Scene 1: Krishna and Draupadi - Krishna is about to go to Duryodhana's place when Draupadi arrives. She deplores the idea of any settlement with the Kauravas, and reminded Krishna that everything will turn out as she wishes as Duryodhana will never agree to an honorable settlement.

Scene 2: Duryodhana, Dussassana & Krishna - Duryodhana is in court with his counsellors. He tells them that Krishna will arrive shortly, but no one should show any respect to him as he is coming to plead for the Pandavas. He departs, and when Krishna arrives the whole assembly rises in adoration and pays homage to him. Krishna tells Dhritarashtra the purpose of his visit, and he in turn advises Duryodhana to obey Krishna. He leaves and Krishna delivers Dharmaputra’s message. But Duryodhana is not prepared for any agreement with the Pandavas. He questions their parentage, and Krishna points out that Duryodhana's origin are also dubious. Unable to stand this insult, the latter orders Dussassana to tie up Krishna in ropes, whereupon Krishna shows his Viswarupa (the cosmic form of Vishnu) and dazzles Duryodhana and Dussassana who fall to the

Performers at the Sacred Arts - A Festival curated by Teamwork Arts

ground in a faint. Mumukshu, a pious Brahmin, appears and starts praising Krishna then advises Duryodhana to obey Krishna. Krishna departs. War is now inevitable. Scene 3: Roudra Bhima and Dussassana – In order to enable Bhima to fulfill Draupadi’s curse on Dussassana, Krishna gives him special powers. Bhima appears in a terrifying form called Roudra Bhima, blazing with anger as he searches for his number one enemy, Dussassana. Soon he finds him and there is a fierce battle. After killing Dussassana, Bhima drinks his blood, pulls out his entrails and roars. Bhima summons Draupadi to the battlefield so that she may see what has happened to Dussassana, and ties up her hair with his hands which are dripping with her enemy’s blood. Vengeance is, thus, complete. Krishna now appears before Bhima, who prays to him for forgiveness for his outrageous behavior. Krishna forgives and blesses him.

In this performance crew members are as follows - Draupadi : Kalamandalam Anilkumar, Srikrishnan : Thiruvattar Jagadeesan, Duryodhana : Kalamandalam Ramankutty, Dussassanan : Kalabharathy Kalyanakrishnan, Roudra Bhiman : Evoor Rajendran Pillai, Vocal Music : Sadanam Rajagopal, Kalamandalam Manikandan, Chenda & Edakka : Cheruthazham Kunhirama Marar, : Sadanam Abhishek Marar, Maddhalam : Parassinikadavu Manoj, : Sadanam Vijeesh, Chutty and Costumes : Kalamandalam Sunil Kumar, Ms Rajani Ramankutty, Green Room Assistants : G Govindan ICK, : Satyanaarayan ICK. Unnikrishnan Pillai ICK

Kathakali: A Scene from Kalyana Saugandhikam (An episode from Epic Mahabhara) By Kottayath Thampuran (1645 -1716), describes the following scenes. Scene 1: Bhima & Draupadi - Bhima is sitting in the Narayanasrama forest with his wife Draupadi. Whilst they are chatting amorously, a flower drops from the skies and Draupadi picks it up. It is so beautiful and has such an exquisite fragrance that she asks Bhima to fetch her some more flowers of the same sort. The Saugandhika flowers grow in the garden of Kubera, and the garden is out of bounds to human beings. But Bhima does not know this and, full of confidence in his strength and power to overcome all obstacles, he sets off to find the flowers. As he strides through the forest, he describes the mountains which he climbs, his awe at the sight of the forest, and the wild animals he encounters on his way: an elephant being stalked by a python and then by a lion, and such other sights. Scene 2: Hanuman in the forest – Hanuman and Bhima were stepbrothers, both being sons of Vayu, the god of wind. After the coronation of Rama and Sita, Hanuman retired to the seclusion of a reserved forest to spend his days in meditation on his lord, Rama, the gods having conferred immortality on him. Hanuman is disturbed by the racket of

Manivel, Watercolor on Paper, Image Courtesy: Forms of Devotion
Performers at the Sacred Arts: A Festival curated by Teamwork Arts

The Qutabi brothers are the one of the most significant Qawwali artists in the contemporary Indian music scene. Haji Mohammad Idris and Mohammad Ilyas were born into the illustrious family of the Sarawana Gharana. They are the inheritors of a 750 year old tradition, nurtured and developed over several generations by such luminaries in the Indian musical horizon. The brothers can be found at Darbar Astana Hazrat Qutbuddin Bakhtiar Kaki-R.A., New Delhi. They have been awarded their title from the dargah sharif and they present the sufiana styles and Astana Gayeki as well as the modern Qawwali Tradition. Haji Mohammad Idris and Mohammad Ilyas are amongst the 'A' grade artists at All India Radio and also have performed for Doordarshan. They have been numerous recordings of their famous Qawwali released by famous cassette companies like T-Series, Venu, Max, Qutub Audio and many others. Haji Mohammad Idris and Mohammad Ilyas also performed in India International Center and Jahane Khusru festival in Delhi at Humayun's Tomb-front for former President A.P.G. Abdul Kalam. The accompanying artists were Haji Mohammad Idris Qutb, Mohammad Ilyas Qutub, Aijaz Ahma, Fahim, Danish, Sohail, Arshad, Gulam Qutbuddin, Adnan and Moin.

A skilled maestro of Rajasthani folk singing and music, Chugge Khan was born in the village of Baishra, in the Thar Desert in Rajasthan. His musical skills, singing and many instruments, were taught to him by his father, Hamir Khan, in the traditional way from an early age, along with the rich repertoire of songs and music of the Manganiyars. Previously nomadic, this caste of artists and musicians have traversed the desert of Northwest India for centuries, performing for the Moghul rulers and Rajput princes as well as at village weddings, birth celebrations and feasts. Today, their lives and music embrace traditional and contemporary styles and fusions, performed and celebrated internationally. Chugge began performing internationally from the age of thirteen and was a member...
Performers at the Sacred Arts- A Festival curated by Teamwork Arts

of the well-known group Musafir for 6 years. He is a master of traditional Rajasthan instruments - Morchang, Khartaal and Bhapang. Chugge is also a skilled writer/lyricist. As well as Rajasthan folk, he plays and sings Sufi, Punjabi and fusion music. He formed Rajasthan Josh in 2009. Chugge is a versatile artist who has played with a wide range of international artists and bands - with A R Rahman in Los Angeles in 2006; Shiv Mani, Susheela Raman in London, South Africa and many times in India; with Shye Ben Tzur in Israel, Canada, India and Australia and together with Jonny Greenwood in London; Natacha Atlas in France, Prem Joshua, Dub Colossus, Indian Ocean, Trans-global Underground, Titi Robin, Cheb e Sabbath, and many more in both traditional and contemporary styles. He has been invited to collaborate and play with classical Indian musicians, Vidya Shah, Vikku Vinayakaram, Gulam Ali, Sonam Kalra and the Sufi Project. Chugge has appeared at Festivals and toured in many countries across the world over more than a decade, including: Australia, Canada, Czech Republic, Germany, Egypt, France, Italy, Israel, Mexico, Morocco, Singapore, Spain, Switzerland, Sweden, Finland, South Africa, UK, USA. He has played at the Fez Sacred Music Festival, WOMAD, Womex and many others. Chugge played with Nusrat Fateh Ali Khan on the album Alvida and with Indian Ocean on Bhumi, which was also a Hindi film. Chugge appeared in the live theatre musical production Hindi Love Story for Teamwork Productions that toured to South Africa, Spain, Germany and Egypt. Chugge has received awards for his music from BBC Wales, Intec India, University of Jaipur (2012), Maharaja of Jaisalmer - Jaisalmer Desert Festival - Singing Competition (2008), also from the Maharajah of Jodhpur at the Rajasthan International Folk Festival in 2011. On 29 January 2014 Chugge was honoured with a Surilo Rajasthan Award, presented in Jaipur at the Birla Auditorium in recognition of his outstanding contributions towards music in India. Chugge Khan is a dynamic and creative musician, charismatic in performance and extremely popular with audiences. Students come from around the world
Performers at the Sacred Arts- A Festival curated by Teamwork Arts

to learn and practice with him at his home in Jaisalmer, which also houses his Sidher Vikash Sansthan Institute where he teaches traditional music and singing free of charge to local community children. He has recently formed the Jaisalmer Boys, a group of young boys who have been learning to sing and play with him. They were part of the morning opening concert at Jaipur Literature Festival 2015 and joined Chugge Khan and Rajasthan Josh on stage at the Evening Opening Concert of the Festival’s World Music Program at Clarks Amer.

Music completely permeates their lives and is their expression of respect for all that is divine. Their songs and music grow from an oral culture that sees stories and songs continually passed on from parents to children. This powerful and seductive traditional music, is in constant demand for national and international performances and in the electronic media, where it now inspires contemporary styles and interpretations.

A highly versatile entertainment company, Teamwork has roots in traditional and contemporary performing arts, social action, and the corporate world. For over 24 years, Teamwork has presented the finest of Indian performers, artists and writers. Every year, we produce 21 performing and visual arts and literary festivals in 11 countries, including Australia, Canada, Egypt, Germany, France, Hong Kong, Israel, Scotland, Singapore, South Africa, Spain and USA. Teamwork produces one of the world’s largest literary gatherings, the annual Jaipur Literature Festival. Our musical extravaganza, Bollywood Love Story - A Musical, continues to tour the world and has had sold out shows in Austria, Germany, Netherlands, South Africa, Spain and Switzerland. Their international festivals in India have included the bi-annual Bonjour India, festival of France with more than 200 events across 18 cities in India and featuring over 250 artists, designers, researchers and entrepreneurs, and OZ fest - a festival of Australia in India.
“Forms of Devotion closed last weekend in Bangkok after a successful run following the much heralded show in New Delhi at the Lalit Kala Akademi in April where it was enjoyed by families, scholars, dignitaries and artists alike.”
Forms of Devotion closed last weekend in Bangkok after a successful run following the much heralded show in New Delhi at the Lalit Kala Akademi in April where it was enjoyed by families, scholars, dignitaries and artists alike.

The Bangkok show was the focal part of the Festival of India in Thailand organised by Teamwork Arts and included a live painting performance with artist Satish Gupta as well as workshops and performances. The opening was attended by H.E. Mr. Harsh Vardhan Shringla (Indian Ambassador to Thailand), Professor Dr. Apinan Poshyananda (Permanent Secretary for Ministry of Culture, Thailand), and Professor Dr. Santi Chantavilasvong (Assistant to the President for the Art and Culture, Chulalongkorn University) amongst others.

The New Delhi show was the start of the international tour of Forms of Devotion which also hopes to be exhibited in Shanghai, Singapore, Antwerp and Uruguay. The works will eventually take up permanent residence in the Museum of Sacred Art, Belgium. The show was enjoyed by a wide range of dignitaries including the cultural minister from Andhra Pradesh, Sheila Dikshit, ambassadors of Belgium and Uruguay, President and DG of ICCR, Chairman of the India Today group, CEO of Prasar Bharti, Rajeev Sethi and artists including Anjolie Ela Menon, Satish Gujral and S H Raza.
REPORT

Forms of Devotion: The Spiritual in Indian Art on International Tour

So far, Forms of Devotion has shown over 350 works in two different venues, attracted over 8000 visitors, over 20 school and special interest groups (including Shriram School, Udayan Trust, Salaam Baalak Trust, Salwan School, Mayur Vihar School, Global Jindal Institute and a group of doctors from AIIMS) and has included 17 concerts, performances and workshops as well as a major scholarly seminar at the start of the New Delhi show. It has been widely appreciated for its multi-faith representation and has appealed to a wide ranging audience.

Whilst the works will ultimately reside in the Museum of Sacred Art (MOSA), Belgium, the exhibition also leaves two great legacies for the public: firstly, a two volume illustrated reference book with contributions from Indian and international authorities on different aspects of devotional art including Devdutt Pattanaik, George Michell, Jaya Jaitley and Madhu Khanna amongst others; and secondly a four part commissioned film, Studios of Devotion directed by Goutam Ghose with Associate Director Jagannath Guha, presented by Desmond Lazaro. The film captures artists at work across India to help audiences better understand their aesthetics and working methods. Both the book and film provide unrivalled documentation of the art and artists explored throughout the show.

The Museum of Sacred Art (MOSA), Belgium organized Forms of Devotion: The Spiritual in Indian Art, a multidimensional arts project conceptualized around the notion of the spiritual and devotional in Indian art. It explores the theme through artistic creations in different forms and styles across ideologies and philosophies as well as faiths and regions of India. Forms of Devotion was featured a major exhibition utilising the entire Lalit Kala Akademi (LKA), alongside the launch of an accompanying illustrated book and film. This coincides with a festival of spiritual music and performance as well as an extensive education programme. Across all platforms, the project aims to engage with representations of icons and ideas of myths, folklore, popular culture and the sufi spirit in diverse forms and genres. The exhibition showcased about 350 works by over 150 artists chosen from over 1600 works in the MOSA collection at the LKA, New Delhi from 21 March to 26 April 2015. Held in partnership with the LKA, the exhibition was extended to all their galleries as well as open spaces at Rabindra Bhawan, central Delhi's lively cultural hub.

Initiated by Martin Gurumurthy (Director of MOSA), the exhibition was curated by Sushma K Bahl (former...
Forms of Devotion: The Spiritual in Indian Art on International Tour

K. S. Shreeshari, Krishna and Rukmini Riding on a Chariot, Pigments and Gold Leaf on Paper, 40 x 50 cm. Image Courtesy: Forms of Devotion

Dr Madhu Khanna amongst others. It is being co-published by MOSA and Niyogi Books. Forms of Devotion has also commissioned a film, Studios of Devotion directed by Goutam Ghose with Jagannath Guha as Associate Director and script and presentation by Desmond Lazaro. The film captures artists at work across India to help audiences understand their aesthetics and working methods.

A Festival of Spiritual Arts curated by Sanjoy Roy of Teamwork Arts, the Sangeet Natak Akademi (SNA) and the LKA was run in conjunction with the exhibition and will include music and dance performances inspired by specific works and staged in and around the gallery and the Meghdoot theatre. The program also included lectures, live demonstrations, art film screenings, discussions, gallery walks, digital outreach, performance and extensive educational outreach. Forms of Devotion will be presented in India by not-for-profit organization Arts4All on behalf of MOSA, jointly with the LKA. Besides the LKA and SNA, the Indian Ministry of Culture and the Indian Council for Cultural Relations are also supported the project. Standard Chartered Bank has come on board as sponsor of the project.

Martin Gurvich said, “Forms of Devotion has been an amazing spiritual journey, full of discovery, joy, new relationships and friendships. I hope that such a project will bring great awareness of India’s vast and diverse culture and friendships. May it bring people of different faiths closer together in the spirit of unity in diversity.”

“The inclusive nature of the project runs through its ethos at various levels.
Forms of Devotion: The Spiritual in Indian Art on International Tour

It brings art from across cultures, faiths, genres and regions of the sub-continent and beyond, on a shared platform. Put together in partnership with so many different institutions, it highlights both the rootedness and the innovation in Indian spiritual art,” said Sushma K Bahl.

The Museum of Sacred Art (MOSA) at Radhadesh, Durbuy about 100 Km from Brussels opened in 2009 with a dedicated focus on the traditional and living arts of India revolving around the theme of devotion. Set within the campus of a beautiful nineteenth-century chateau near the historic town in the Belgian Ardennes, it has now expanded its brief to include contemporary Indian art from across different spiritual traditions and faiths. The museum has also opened a branch in Italy at Villa Vrindavan near Florence where a magnificent heritage building has been restored to house MOSA.

Funded primarily by Martin Gurvich, its director, the collection has been diligently built during his visits to India over many years. The museum provides a unique platform for the exposure of Indian art to the West. Work by masters and young artists MOSA has over one and a half thousand artworks in its collection. There are paintings, sculptures, photographs, installations, digital and video art creations, representing major spiritual traditions of the world. It is hoped the collection will encourage interfaith dialogue through the arts. In the new galleries at Radhadesh, exhibitions of works from the collection are held from time to time. And when the new purpose-built museum is ready, it will house the main collection. Meanwhile a selection of the works that make the Forms of Devotion exhibition part of the project will tour museums around the world.

Martin Gurvich, Director of MOSA and the Gurvich Museum in Eugene, Martin studied Political Science at Syracuse University, USA. He has travelled extensively and is an active member of the Hare Krishna movement (ISKCON). Mahaprabhu dassa Gurvich represents the Hindu Forum Belgium and Europe including Estonia and is a Member of the URI (international interfaith organization). His passion for art comes from his lineage, as the son of renowned artist José Gurvich (1900-1974), who died young leaving behind an impressive art repertoire, some of which is housed in the Gurvich Museum in Uruguay. Besides a major publication Living Traditions in Indian Art published with Mapin India, he has published several artists’ catalogues and documentation work in the devotional genre.

Sushma K Bahl
Former President
Art & Culture, British Council India

^ Anjolie Ela Menon, Christ, Oil on Masonite, 33 x 23 cm, 2014
Image Courtesy: Forms of Devotion
honoured with an MBE, is an independent arts adviser, writer and curator of cultural projects. She led on the festivals of India in the UK and South Korea as well as numerous artists' residencies, exhibitions and collaborative cultural projects in India and internationally. Sushma is the author of 5000 Years of Indian Art. She has also edited and written for catalogues and artists’ books including those on Thota Vaikuntam, Paresh Maity, Satish Gupta, Sarla Chandra, and Shuvaprassanna.

Manjunath Kamath, Vishvaroopam, Watercolour and Tea Stains on Paper, Installation with 1,908 works, Various Sizes, 2014

Image Courtesy: Forms of Devotion
BOOK REVIEW

01

The contemporary and the sacred in Indian art

Dr Seema Bawa

Book Title: Forms of Devotion: The Spiritual in Indian Art, 2 Vol. Set
Edited by: Sushma K. Bahl and MOSA
Published by: Niyogi Books
Hardcover
Price: ₹ 13,780/-

It is well established that the foundations and the origins of ancient Indian art lie in the domain of the sacred. The production of icons of gods and goddesses have been meticulously compiled, not only to glorify the deity but because perfection of the image was a prerequisite for it to embody the sacred. Sundays, or aesthetic quality ensured that the gods came and resided in the material image created by the artist as prescribed in the specialised textual tradition of the shilpachakras or the vastuachakras or the more eclectic collection of myths, pilgrimage sites and images ascribed to the divine described in Puranas such as Vishnuavatararnam Panam and the Agni Purana.

One can trace a distinct disjuncture within and from this tradition when we reach modern and contemporary art, given that modernity privileges rationality and post modernity, the deconstruction of reality, and art practitioners read this as being antithetical to religious art. The two volume book Forms of Devotion: The Spiritual in Indian Art, edited by Sushma Bahl, accompanies an exhibition of the same name created under the auspices of the Museum of Sacred Art in Belgium and tries to retrieve the sacred in the contemporary arts of India. However, it is not limited by this project, and the articles also explicate on the myriad traditions that provide not only the background but also continuities in the manifestations of the divine in Indian art. As Bahl puts it, “The indelible connect between art, faith and art transcends stylistic, geographical, chronological and ideological boundaries, beyond past and present, human studies and sciences, or classical/folk/traditional and contemporary art.”

The collection of articles in the first volume offers an overview of the sources of spirituality and divinity in Indian arts: George Michell excavates the interweaving of the architectural contexts of temples, mosques, dargahs, garudwaraas and churches with construction plans and techniques and spiritual themes. Kenneth Valpey delves into the theological tenets of various religious traditions and their relationship with some of the art works on display from traditional ateliers as well as tradition inspired artists who experiment with the religious art forms such as Pechwais of Shrinathji of Nathdwara or Pahari miniatures, looking for meanings and signifiers within these works.

Another powerful source of devotional art unearthed by Jaya Jaitley is craft and textile tradition where the very act of production is an act of obeisance and offering to the gods. The lord Brahma, turns the wheel of creation, like the potter on the potter’s wheel, the everyday acts of lopana or painting the walls and floors with auspicious designs invites the gods to dwell on earth, and like Kabir says, the weaver weaves intricate patterns of life and only in death the bonds of desire released. The deep interplay of life cycles, art and devotion are replicated in popular arts as shown in Devadutt Patnaik’s article which dwells on the use of spaces in urban Mumbai, roadside shrines and domestic and private units, sometimes with comic effects and at others with great profundity.

The second volume concentrates on particular manifestations of the divine as made visible in Vaishnava art through Dasavatara imagery; each avatar rescuing the created world from evil and destruction. Madhu Khanna goes on to explore Tantricism as a system and as a meta-narrative along with its reincarnation in the works of neo tantric artists like S H Raza and G R Santosh through the re-use of mandala and yantra with deep and intricate symbolisms embedded in the works. Mushirul Hasan dispels the long held belief that Islam is anti-art and reveals its deep spiritual quest through the word, song, dance and built environment.
Divinity over the ages

Amrita Varma

When the Museum of Sacred Art made its presence felt at the India Art Fair one was curious as to what that meant for Indian Art. We had no idea what was to take place a few months later. One of the largest scaled exhibitions launched this side of the country so far, *Forms of Devotion* had works from over 150 artists largely Indian by origin, with works ranging from the traditional to the contemporary and abstract. The scale of the exhibition and its installation is monumental and one has to give credit to the curators and the director on making such a task work out to such a fine art.

As one enters the exhibit, one is welcomed by a large sculpture of a human head made from brass bells, a reminder of the ancient temple culture resounding with its title *Metamorphic Mantra*. Manjunath Kamath’s gigantic watercolour impresses you with its monumental depiction and detail on the legend of the *Vishnupada* and Vineet Kacker’s sculptural installations are a delight in its texture and form.

There is the heritage art of the Tanjaur paintings juxtaposed with the works of the contemporary artist V Ramesh and the
miniatures from the traditional schools of art. The important thing here is that the curation has been done with such an eye for detail that the works do not clash with each other and in fact create a dialogue where the past, present and future styles and forms of art, along with the wide variety of mediums, seem to blend in one harmonious chorus.

The inclusion of the traditional artist with their contemporary colleagues on an equal platform has opened up a new understanding to perceptions on Indian art at one end and has also seen both push themselves towards the other in the conceptualization of their work while keeping their flavours alive.

While artists like Vivek Vilasini, Satish Gujral, Shuvaprasanna, Sujata Bajaj, Rajesh Pratap Singh, Arpna Caur, Sanjay Bhattacharya, Satish Gupta, Ramesh Gorjala and Dinesh Khanna showcased the spiritual aspect by sticking to their known styles, others like abstractionists Manish Pushkale and Shobha Broota got more thought towards to expand and have produced exceptional works for the exhibition as a result.

One could get to see Raja Ravi Varma’s lithographic calendar prints with the works of Souza and Anjolie Ela Menon. GR Santosh and Raza’s works add a nuance to the thread of the entire exhibition.

Binoy Verghese’s rendition of Mother Mary on canvas showed an experimentation in his style of work. One was pleasantly surprised at the return of the true artist in Paresh Maity in The Tranquility which is a pure joy to see as it brings his work style out of its stupor of the past couple of years where the same subjects were delved into with an unnecessary stress on the saturation of colours especially using red and gold, that startle the viewer. Contributing to this stagnation was the reckless buying of this suite of works by the social elite, which often leads to the artist being held in place by the demand for this kind of work. Nilofer Suleman’s Sitar Marriage Bureau brought her wonderfully sarcastic humour on Indian mannerisms to life alongside the serious monotones of it and created a vibrant display.

Artists like Desmond Lazaro, Olivia Fraser and Sheba Chhachhi created a new engagement with the traditional aspect of the spiritual. In the same place, exceptional works by traditional artists like Janghar Shyam, Puttaraju R who works on wood inlay, Vithaldas Sharma on the Nathdwara style of painting, Jaidew Baghel working on the traditional lost wax casting and Qamar Dagar and Poosapati Parameshwar Raju on Urdu calligraphy; created an impact which lingered on well after the exhibit was over.

There were some art works that stood out in this mind bogglingly large exhibit. One worth a mention is the video installation by Seema Kohli. Though many of her canvases were on display, what was true art was Parikrama. A work which I guiltily admit, kept me spellbound as I escaped into her world, this video was a pleasure to watch. Its beautiful execution and conceptualization, her exceptional performance within and engagement with her subjects in this video, now place her as a mature video artist. Param P Tomaneč’s Sage of Gauri Lake Himalayas is a photographic print which makes you wonder and is an exceptional photographic work. Narayan Chandra Sinha’s metal work titled Debi in metal, wood and bronze casting was another interesting work of art as was the rendition of the Durga Puja Pandal by Nandan Purkayastha. Last but not least is the particular calligraphic work titled Jā Rahām by Qamar Dagar, which is a true blend of the abstract, form and text in perfect synchronicity.

What one takes back from this exhibit is an open ended questioning of what is art and its various negotiations with changing environments and times where contradictions can coexist in medium, line, form and style.

What is brought out, is the latent need of the human spirit to express the spiritual in everyday life in the most dynamic ways irrespective of the times, religion, caste, economic status and lifestyle.

For its ability to bring diverse styles of art under one roof and for its unique platform where diverse visual art forms could breathe and express the spiritual aspect in abandon, this exhibition is an eye opener.

Seema Kohli, Parikrama, Storyboard of performance video (still), 2014

The Sacred and Spiritual

The travelling exhibition from Belgium’s Museum of Sacred Art introduces the world to its treasure trove of Indian spiritual art – folk and contemporary.

BY DEEPALE NANDWANI

Last April, the Forms of Devotion exhibition, which featured over 200 works of spiritual art or art inspired by spiritual traditions, debuted at the Lalit Kala Academy in Delhi. Since then, works from the exhibition have travelled to different countries across Americas, Europe and the Far East. The exhibition has already been to Thailand and Uruguay and is now making its way to the US. The spectacular show consists of vibrant Krishna paintings by renowned traditional artist B.G. Sharma, besides works by big names of contemporary Indian art such as S.H. Raza, Subhaprasanna Bhattacharjee, Satish Gupta, and Anjolie Ela Menon. A stunning work by Manjunath Kamath towers over 20 feet tall and comprises 1,008 miniature water color and tea stain paintings that depict the Vishwarupa, or the universal form Lord Krishna displayed to his devotee Arjuna.

“We are taking bits and parts of the exhibition to different countries. The host museum and their curators...
Divinity over the ages
are part of the process of choosing the exhibits,” says Martin Gurvich, the curator and owner of Belgium-based Museum of Sacred Art (MOSA). (Gurvich is often known by his other name, Mahaprabhu Das.) The works will travel for the next four years, after which they will be housed in MOSA’s new building in Belgium. The people behind the exhibition have also released a book by the same name: a richly illustrated two-volume tome designed as a boxed set of 500 pages each. Contributors to the book include stalwarts like Dr Karan Singh, author Devdutt Patanaik, artist Desmond Lazaro, culture impresario Jaya Jaitley and Prof Mushirul Hasan, Vice Chancellor, Jamia Milia Islamia. The book features recently created works, some of them commissioned art, and many of them as yet unpublished.

Established in 2010, the museum is situated within a beautiful 19-century chateau near the historic town in the Belgian Ardennes. Son of famous Uruguayan artist José Gurvich, Gurvich says his involvement with spirituality began when he was quite young and had a chance encounter with Indian philosophy. “I was studying in the US and I began reading books on Buddhism and Hinduism. There was a very strong calling from within me to go to India, and I began to make arrangements to come to this country. Of course, my first time in India came as a culture shock: nothing prepares you for the country. The art had to happen. My father was an artist, so art has always been a large part of my growing up years. Along the way, I discovered Indian spiritual art. MOSA started as a small gallery with 200 words and now we

Established by Martin Gurvich, who often goes by his Indian name Mahaprabhu Das, in 2010, the museum is situated within a beautiful 19-century chateau
have two museums, one in Italy and one in Belgium. We hope to open more branches.”

MOSA’s collection straddles a smorgasbord of mediums — paintings, drawings, collage, digital work, sculptures, installations, videos, films, sound, and interactive, site-specific, and mixed media works, besides research and concept-based installations. The collection is truly diverse — there are small icons as used in roadside shrines as well as monumental edifices; bazaar art, and even Sufi art. The museum holds works by artists like S.H. Raza, Satish Gujral, Shuvaprassanna and senior artists like Paresh Maity, Yusuf Arakkal and Arpana Caur. “There are Warli artists, Madhubani art, miniatures by artists from Udaipur, Pichwais, Gond art, Tanjore works. There is a project on the Ganga that three women artists had exhibited at IGNCA, with digital art, photography and sculptures. The project on Kabir by Shabnam Virmani has videos and photos,” says the curator-owner of MOSA.

Over the years, Gurvich travelled with the art project, meeting artists across isolated villages and big cities of

“The art had to happen. My father was an artist, so art has always been a large part of my growing up years,” says Gurvich
Over the years, Gurvich travelled with the art project, meeting artists across isolated villages and big cities of India.

India. “I began travelling in 2007, and my focus was on traditional art. You see a lot of art from Rajasthan and Mysore, and a collection of art in the Tanjore and Mysore styles, patachitra, Rajasthan miniatures and pichwai. The more I travelled, the more I discovered how wide the spectrum of Indian spiritual art was. Slowly, however, we also began collecting contemporary art, though I must say I was prejudiced against it. My colleague Sushma Bahl introduced me to contemporary art in India.”

The discovery that a lot of modern artists borrow liberally from folk and traditional art has something to do with his change of heart. “That is the beauty of India: You have modernity and tradition co-existing; sometimes with a little tension, but many times with no tension. There is a dialogue between traditionalists and modernists,” says Gurvich. 
Forms of Devotion: The spiritual in INDIAN ART

by ICM Network

Spirituality is the search for transcendent meaning, which can be expressed through religious practices and experienced exclusively in our relationship with nature, music or art. Devotion is something that goes beyond religious affiliation; that strives for inspiration, reverence, awe, meaning and purpose, even in those who do not believe in God. This is what we experience at the multidimensional art event curated by Sushma K Bahl and produced by Martin Gurvich, founder and director of Museum of Sacred Art (MOSA) in association with Lalit Kala Akademi.

This mega art project was conceptualized around the notion of the spiritual and devotional Indian art, titled ‘Forms of Devotion: The spiritual in Indian Art’. Exhibition included over three hundred art works by nearly 150 artists selected by the curators out of a collection of thousand plus works sourced and commissioned by Martin Gurvich for MOSA's permanent collection.

Mahaprabhudasa Martin Gurvich, has travelled across several cities, countries and continents and is an active member of the Hare Krishna movement (ISKCON). Martin Gurvich also represents the Hindu Forum of Belgium and Europe including European Network on Religion and Belief and is a Member of the United Religions Initiative.
Forms of Devotion: The spiritual in Indian art

(a global interfaith organization). His passion for art comes from his lineage, as the son of renowned artist José Gurvich (1927-1974), who died young leaving behind an impressive art repertoire, some of which is housed in the museum at Montevideo named after him. Besides a major publication 'Living Traditions in Indian Art' co-published with Mapin India in three different European languages, he has brought out artists' catalogues to document work in the devotional genre. “Forms of Devotion aims at promoting social cohesion and interfaith dialogue through the visual arts” says Martin Gurvich. He further says “Art is a non-threatening way for people of different cultures and religions to get to know each other and appreciate the variety of culture and spiritual expressions.”

Art is a result of inspiration, and inspiration has a spiritual nature. That makes art a spiritual activity. It can be defined as the communication of human with the sense of existence, discovering of deep secrets, penetrating to the source of things. The artist is, in this case, a mediator between that source and the receiver. Theme, technique, style of the art work is just the means for communication with the audience. They have been changing throughout history from epoch to epoch, from artist to artist.

A twenty feet large wall installation 'vishvaroopas' by Manjunath Kamath encompasses the entire cosmos. Shows Lord Vishnu in his grand avatar in 1008 miniature images. Images float across from one frame to another done in water colour against a subtle background of tea stains on paper. Lord Vishnu occupies the center while rest of the elements are in the periphery which come
Puja Bahl, Vajra Hanuman in Kumbh, Multimedia installation hanging from a wooden base, 120x90 cm and 60 second video in a loop, 2014

together to form one. Vishvaroopa, an iconographical form and theophany of Lord Krishna displayed to his devotee Arjuna, is considered the supreme form of Vishnu, where the whole universe is described as contained in him and originating from him.

Paintings by Anant Kumar Mishra are magnificent works with otherworldly surrealist imagery. Anant’s mythological characters and narratives are based on his readings of scriptures that evoke impressions of the extraterrestrial and science fiction. One of the works titled Hanuman done in water colour on paper is a large painting that depicts Hanuman an ardent devotee of lord Ram carrying the mountain sanjeevani.

Oil on canvas by Yusuf Arakkal titled ‘Last Supper 5’ is a very unique representation of the last supper as we know. Christ is one of the many abiding thematic influences for his canvases. The painting depicts only Christ and no other figure. Christ is seen with bread and wine and others to join him on table are represented by glasses and plates. “It was my grandmother, who despite of being a staunch Muslim introduced me to Jesus and Sri Krishna. I don’t consider myself as a religious person, but I do hold both figures in great admiration. I find meaning in Krishna’s teachings in Bhagwad Gita and Christ’s call for love and compassion is very compelling”, says Arakkal.

Another interesting depiction of Hindu deity

Yusuf Arakkal, Oil on Canvas, 122x122 cm, 2013
Hansuman is a multimedia, fiber glass installation hanging through a mirror base titled ‘Vajra Hansuman in Kumbh’ by a Delhi based artist Puja Bahri with 60 second inbuilt video in a loop. Puja’s work involves lot of mix and match of media and forms and her art comes across as both visually and intellectually stimulating.

‘Chausath Yogini’, etchings on paper by Seema Kohli is a depiction of goddesses in Hindu mythology. The yoginis symbolize the energies from the three main female deities or shaktis known by the names Durga, Laxmi and Saraswati. These three shaktis further disintegrated into 64. “I feel these energies are still further disintegrating and developing into many forms, of which we are not yet aware,” says the artist. As a celebration of female form and energy, the source of the twin forces of creation and destructions, Seema’s work chronicles ancient legends and mythology in a contemporary context. Her intricately detailed work revolves around themes of beauty, procreation, sensuality and spirituality.

Jayasri Burman’s “Prithibi” is an intensely dense painting in water colour, pen and ink on board. Deriving her inspiration from legends, miniature, folk forms and nature, Jayasri places her characters in mythological settings and stylized surroundings. In this particular painting one sees trinity that is Brahma, Vishnu and Shiv flanked either by their consorts or by birds, animals, flowers fruits and other icons.

Curator Sushma K Behl has tried to explore devotion and spirituality in art in different forms and styles, across ideologies, philosophies and faiths. Apart from the paintings, sculptures, photographs and installations there were also digital and video art creations, representing major spiritual traditions not only in India but across the world through classical, folk, traditional or contemporary Indian art. There were pieces of tanjore, madhubani, kalamkari, pichhvai, phad, work, patachttra, thangka or bastar metals apart from art works from renowned masters and senior artists or from young and emerging artists in the exhibition.

‘Metamorphic mantra’ by Paresh Maity, 8 feet tall sculpture of a female head probably a yogini or a deity, made of bronze with 4005 brass temple bells stands majestically as soon as you enter the gallery.

‘Yantra’ by G. R. Santosh is a painting done in oil on canvas is typical of his neo tantric style. Santosh’s art is profoundly influenced by the aniconic and notational drawings of the Tantric Yantra, originally ritual designs used for Tantric meditation. Yantra is a figurative painting with probably a stylized self-portraiture sitting in meditative modra.

During the course of the exhibition that continued for almost a month from 21st March till 26th April, various educational events like lectures, performances, seminars, film screening and workshops were scheduled. After showing in Delhi, the exhibition traveled to Thailand where it was on view at The Exhibition Hall, Art and Culture Building, Chulalongkorn University, Bangkok, from April 28 to May 10.
ONLINE
“Presenting partner Yes Bank will be hosting a series of talks and events in the Yes Bank Lounge, including… book launch for Forms of Devotion with Sushma Bahl and Museum of Sacred Arts”
One significant new element introduced to India Art Fair is the appointment of Girish Shahane as Artistic Director. Directing both the Artistic Projects and the Speakers’ Forum, Shahane will integrate a closely curated artistic programme with the fair itself, bringing a focus to the talks and projects to make them directly relevant to the galleries and artists exhibiting onsite and more accessible for visitors within the context of the fair.

The 2015 Speakers’ Forum will engage the entire range of stakeholders in the visual arts - artists, curators, critics, administrators, academics, gallery owners and collectors, as well as covering a wide spectrum of artistic practices. Speakers will include Adam Szymczyk, Artistic Director of documenta, the world’s largest and most prestigious contemporary art exhibition; Dr. Venu Vasudevan, Director General of the National Museum, Delhi; Jeremy Deller, leading artist and creator of the British pavilion at the 2013 Venice Biennale; Sheikha Hoor Al Qasimi, Director of the Sharjah Biennale and curator of the UAE pavilion at the next Venice Biennale; and Julian Stallabrass, Professor at the Courtauld Institute London, lecturer and writer on modern and contemporary art.

For the 2015 Artistic Projects an extensive programme spanning the outdoor and indoor fair space will present a range of work from high profile Indian and international artists. Highlights of the programme include renowned French artist Daniel Buren’s massive installation work, supported by the French Embassy in India and specially designed for the art fair facade. This is the first of an annual artist-led facade installation project at the fair. Atul Bhalla is creating a walkthrough maze of turnstiles, an interactive work that is both fun and thought-provoking and Chitra Ganesh and Dhruti Acharya will create a collaborative painting on site, giving visitors an insight into the processes contemporary artists employ in their work. The painting will unfold over four days from a blank canvas to the finished composition. A further dramatic project comes in the form of Francesco Clemente’s tent installation. For 40 years Clemente, one of the world’s most renowned painters, has collaborated with a range of Indian artisans in Chennai, Orissa, Varanasi and Jodhpur creating his series of tents using a range of techniques such as embroidery, block printing and his own spectacular paintings.

In addition, Presenting Partner YES Bank will be hosting a series of talks and events in the YES Bank Lounge, including conversations with Jeremy Deller, workshops with the Asia Art Archive and book launches for Arpita Singh with Vadhera Art Gallery, and Forms of Devotion with Sushma Bahl and the Museum of Sacred Art.

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In a re-calibration of the India Art Fair layout, additional exhibition space has been added to the two main tents, and the permanent structure has been re-commissioned to host the largest ever exhibition in a public space on the history of India’s modern and contemporary art. Presented by Delhi Art Gallery, this comprehensive review will showcase the full range of India’s most important artists.

Along with the new design elements to the fair, this year sees expanded restaurant offerings from Delhi’s most popular venues as well as live music at the fair, all of which will enhance the overall experience for our growing audiences from both India and abroad.

Neha Kirpal, Founding Director, India Art Fair says “India Art Fair has taken stock of the way the world is looking at India and the way in which India presents itself to the world. As more international fairs representing emerging markets are established, the desire for collectors is not necessarily to follow the same artists and galleries around the globe, but to engage at a deeper level with each region. This is the approach that India Art Fair is embracing. It is the approach that brings out the unique offering of India, thereby establishing India’s place on the global art map. In line with the positive trends in the market, the fair presents a balanced range of contemporary, modern and classical art, engaging an increasingly broad audience. There is something for everyone and that is what is needed. India Art Fair acts as a catalyst for progress, driving deeper understanding of the country’s artistic history as well as the latest contemporary work from across India, stimulating dialogue, debate, understanding and interaction not only with art specialists, but with the wider public and collectors of tomorrow.”

Sandy Angus, Co-Owner, India Art Fair commented “In my experience of running art fairs in several emerging markets around the world, I can see that collectors today travel the globe to be able to see art from different regions and have a distinguished experience wherever they may go. The desire is to see fresh new works and art forms from exciting emerging markets. India has a lot to offer in terms of its rich art history and its dynamic contemporary art scene, and India Art Fair is focused on bringing together the broadest representation of quality works in a well curated and presented environment that will appeal to a cross section of collectors and the general visiting public alike.”
“Presenting partner Yes Bank will be hosting a series of talks and events in the Yes Bank Lounge, including… book launch for Forms of Devotion with Sushma Bahl and Museum of Sacred Arts”
India Art Fair remains unchallenged as the most important stage for facilitating dialogue and art trade in the region. 85 exhibiting galleries in a total of 90 booths will showcase a breadth of modern and contemporary art practices including painting, sculpture, new media, installation and performance art.

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In a re-calibration of the India Art Fair layout, additional exhibition space has been added to the two main tents, and the permanent structure has been re-commissioned to host the largest ever exhibition in a public space on the history of India’s modern and contemporary art. Presented by Delhi Art Gallery, this comprehensive review will showcase the full range of India’s most important artists.

Along with the new design elements to the fair, this year sees expanded restaurant offerings from Delhi’s most popular venues as well as live music at the fair, all of which will enhance the overall experience for our growing audiences from both India and abroad.

About India Art Fair

India Art Fair is a trademarked event property owned by Seventh Plane Networks. Its Founding Director Neha Kirpal launched the fair in 2008, and has been instrumental in steering the fair’s unprecedented growth over 6 years into becoming the premier destination for art in the region. In 2011, Neha Kirpal was joined by new strategic partners; Sandy Angus (Chairman of global exhibitions group Montgomery Worldwide which has launched several art fairs around the world) and Will Ramsay (Founder of PULSE Art Fairs, and Affordable Art Fairs). Mr. Angus and Mr. Ramsay are also co-founders of the Hong Kong International Art Fair and bring in their global expertise in exhibitions and events, and the support of a truly global network to India Art. For the 7th edition, YES Bank will be Presenting Partner. YES Bank’s association with India Art Fair is part of the Bank’s Retail and Wealth Management initiative. India Art Fair is also supported by BMW as mobility partner, ABSOLUT as Associate Partner, and other partners are Panerai, Le Meridien and Conde Nast India.
ARTEHELKA
3rd November 2014, Online
A definitive India Art Fair at seven

“Presenting partner Yes Bank will be hosting a series of talks and events in the Yes Bank Lounge, including… book launch for Forms of Devotion with Sushma Bahl and Museum of Sacred Arts”
India Art Fair has always acted as a catalytic platform for bringing forth the unseen and deeper nuances of Indian art on a global level. The art fair has also been successful in opening up a dialogue with the world and other art centres, bringing in fresh perspectives and exchange of views to a wider audience. Apart from this India Art Fair has been able to redefine the intricacies of art collection, by having something for everyone, at the fair. This ensures the return of the serious collectors and manages to create interest in art collection among the younger buyers in the country and also the world. As Sandy Angus, Co-owner of India Art Fair puts it, “In my experience of running art fairs in several emerging markets around the world, I can see that collectors today travel the globe to be able to see art from different regions and have a distinguished experience wherever they may go. The desire is to see fresh new works and art forms from exciting emerging markets…”

True to the mission and vision of the founders, this year the IAF will see the participation of 85 galleries in a total of 90 booths, obviously with new artists and new works. The variety of works on could expect would range from modern and contemporary art including paintings, sculptures, new media installation works and performance art. This year IAF introduces a new Artistic Director, Girish Shahane. He would be directing both the Artistic Projects and the Speakers’ Forum.

The Speakers’ Forum will engage the entire range of stakeholders in the visual arts – artists, curators, critics, administrators, academics, gallerists and collectors, as well as covering a wide spectrum of artistic practices. Speakers will include Adam Szymczyk, Artistic Director of documenta, Dr. Venu Vasudevan, Jeremy Deile, Sheikha Hoor al Qasimi and Julian Stallabrass.

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The layout of this year’s India Art Fair exhibits has been arranged in three pavilions. The two main spaces/ tents will have an additional permanent display space exclusively presented by Delhi Art Gallery, which would be hosting the largest ever exhibition of Indian modern and contemporary art by India’s most important artists.

With new design elements, live music and an offering of Delhi’s most popular restaurants to look forward to, the India Art Fair 2015 returns with its patented wholesome experience for artists, art lovers, art collectors and viewers from all over the world.
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India Art Fair remains unchallenged as the most important stage for facilitating dialogue and art trade in the region. With **85 exhibiting galleries in a total of 90 booths**, it will showcase a breadth of modern and contemporary art practices including painting, sculpture, new media, installation and performance art.

One significant new element introduced to India Art Fair is the appointment of Girish Shahane as Artistic Director. Directing both the Artistic Projects and the Speakers’ Forum, Shahane will integrate a closely curated artistic programme with the fair itself, bringing a focus to the talks and projects to make them directly relevant to the galleries and artists exhibiting on site and more accessible for visitors within the context of the fair.

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EVERYTHING EXPERIENTIAL
21st November 2014, Online
Standard Chartered sponsors ‘Forms of Devotion: The Spiritual in Indian Art’

“Forms of Devotion will feature a major exhibition utilising the entire Lalit Kala Akademi, alongside the launch of an accompanying illustrated book and film.”

The Museum of Sacred Art (MOSA), Belgium is pleased to announce the launch of Forms of Devotion: The Spiritual in Indian Art, a multidimensional arts project conceptualised around the notion of the spiritual and devotional in Indian art. It explores the theme through artistic creations in different forms and styles, across ideologies and philosophies as well as faiths and regions of India. Forms of Devotion will feature a major exhibition utilising the entire Lalit Kala Akademi (LKA), alongside the launch of an accompanying illustrated book and film. This coincides with a festival of spiritual music and performance as well as an extensive education programme. Across all platforms, the project aims to engage with representations of icons and ideas of myths, folklore, popular culture and sufi spirit in diverse forms and genres.

The exhibition will include about 300 works by over 150 artists chosen from over 1600 works in the MOSA collection and will be exhibited at the LKA, New Delhi from 21 March - 26 April 2015. Held in partnership with the LKA, the exhibition will extend to all their galleries as well as open spaces at Rabindra Bhawan, in central Delhi’s lively cultural hub. Initiated by Martin Gurvich (Founder and Director of MOSA), the exhibition will be curated by Sushma K Bahl (former Head of Arts & Culture at the British Council, author of 5000 years of Indian Art and esteemed curator) and co-curated by Archana B Sapra (Co-Founder of Arts4All Trust).

A two volume illustrated book accompanies the exhibition and includes contributions from Indian and international authorities on different aspects of devotional art including Devdutt Pattanaik, George Michell and Dr Madhu Khanna amongst others. It is being co-published by MOSA and Niyogi Books.

Forms of Devotion has also commissioned a film, Studios of Devotion directed by Goutam Ghose with Jagannath Guha as Associate Director and script and presentation by Desmond Lazaro. The film captures artists at work across India to help audiences understand their aesthetics and working methods.

A Festival of Spiritual Arts curated by Sanjoy Roy of Teamwork Arts, the Sangeet Natak Akademi (SNA) and the LKA will run in conjunction with the exhibition and will include music and dance performances inspired by specific works and staged in and around the gallery and the Meghdoot theatre. The program will also include lectures, live demonstrations, art film screenings, discussions, gallery walks, digital outreach, performance and extensive educational outreach.

Forms of Devotion will be presented in India by not-for-profit organization Arts4All on behalf of MOSA, jointly with the LKA. Besides the LKA and SNA, the Indian Ministry of Culture and the Indian Council for Cultural Relations are also supporting the project. Standard Chartered Bank has come on board as sponsor of the project.
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ACTFAQs
22nd November 2014, Online (Unique Visitors: 50000)

Forms of Devotion: The Spiritual in Indian Art

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Art Attack!

“Art Attack!”

By Jemima Raman Dec 11 2014
Tags: Leisure Writing

“A multidimensional arts project conceptualised around the notion of the spiritual and devotional in Indian art by Belgium’s MOSA.”

From great masters to contemporary wizards and everything inbetween, art fairs in India are willing to take that extra step to get viewers’ attention

You may or may not be the Jimmy Choo-heeled patron who click-clacked around the India Art Fair last year during its select audience vernissage, picking masterpieces by the dozen — checking with companions if they think this would clash with the colour and decor of the house. But admit it, art fairs give you an opportunity to view — even if you don’t have the means to invest — say, the riot of colours that are Picassos or the delicately rendered Gaitondes, up close. Or discover why so much pith is being placed on art.

This correspondent experienced an epiphany, quite by chance, when she came across one of Japanese artist Hiroshi Senju’s famous waterfalls — cascading in shimmery white on a grey background. Sometimes, it takes just a piece of canvas to go some place peaceful despite the milling crowd. Or see the politically ticking bombs of contemporary artists, which keep floating in Facebook, for real. Think Syrian artist Tammam Azzam’s Klimt ‘Kiss’ on bullet ridden wall.

Most of all, we bet our month’s salary that if there was no Kochi biennale, there would have been no Guesswho, our very own Banksy, whose street art is being hash-tagged million times over in the social media. Much like Banksy, he has chosen a mainstream event to unleash his satirical street art that woozes dark humour, informed by pop culture (the unmistakable face of Mona Lisa pops out of a mundu-set clad village belle, fetching water on head, for instance).

Here is the list of art fairs in India that you must make it a point to visit…
Suspended at D Art Factory
Art Attack!

This one turns the idiom of “viewing” art on its head. A factory space amidst the glassy façade of Gurgaon is made into an art haven, thanks to D Art Factory and Art Collide. Imagine starry sky, artworks dangling from trees, bonfire, chai, music and a space that is invented to showcase the ingenuity of the artists. You have Suspended.

When: Began on the first weekend of November and runs till mid-December

Where: Gurgaon

Watch out for: Since Suspended is hanging on to its ‘underground’ tag quite zealously, one never knows what one is in for on any particular day. But good times and oodles of creativity are guaranteed.

Sensorium 2014

It identifies itself as a festival of arts, literature and ideas. In its inaugural edition, Sensorium reflects on photography at its intersection with literature, cinema and music. The festival got its venue right — Portuguese styled villa in sun dappled Goa.

When: It began on December 5 and will continue till February 5, 2015

Where: Sunaparanta (Goa Centre for the Arts), Goa

Watch out for: Photo-poetry, a project by Instituto Cervantes, which has photographers “translate” a poem into images. And then there’s Farrokh Chothia’s photography show on the Jazz greats.

Unbox Festival 2014

As the name suggests, this too is an out-of-the-box experience that pits creative minds from different fields and let them take shape in any which way.

When: December 12 to December 14

Where: Indira Gandhi National Centre for the Arts, New Delhi

Watch out for: Block printing studio Rangotri from Jaipur and prof Justin Marshall, University of Falmouth, UK, are putting their heads together to revive intricate archival blocks using newer materials and laser cutters.

Kochi-Muziris Biennale 2014

A brainchild of artists Bose Krishnamachari and Riyas Komu, Kochi Biennale got the attention of art lovers when it first came about in 2012. Jitish Kallat is curating this year’s biennale around the theme Whorled Explorations.

When: December 12 till March 29, 2015
Art Attack!

Where: Various venues in Kochi, Kerala

Watch out for: Last time, street art became the buzzword of the biennale. This time round, it has zeroed in on bamboo, which, according to Komu, “has been one of Kerala’s finest indigenous traditions.” The biennale team has commissioned Centre for Environmental Planning and Technology University in Ahmedabad and University of Camilo Jose Cela in Madrid to build a bamboo roof at the Aspinwall House, the event’s main venue, based on the findings of recent excavations in Pattanam. The universities were already collaborating to build a 1,000 sq m bamboo roof to protect the trench where the remains of a wharf were found.

India Art Fair 2015

Possibly the most successful of art fairs to date, India Art Fair has seen six editions already. Instead of a theme, the fair brings together established galleries and their bestselling artists. Perhaps it is because of this, confusion seem to be at the core of the event. With the galleries vying for attention, sometimes it is quite possible that you miss that subtle-but-mind-bending work. Besides, being popular comes with its own headache as well: iPad toting viewers who jostle you so that they get that ‘I was here’ shot in front of masterpieces. When: January 29 to February 1, 2015

Where: NSIC Exhibition Grounds, New Delhi

Watch out for: You are likely to find a few unusual prospects that either make you laugh with their incongruity or shake your head in wonder. En route you are bound to meet the great masters of the art world. Just make sure you have plenty of time. And avoid Sunday if you don’t fancy elbowing your way around.

Forms of Devotion (Sacred art festival)

A multidimensional arts project conceptualised around the notion of the spiritual and devotional in Indian art by Belgium’s Museum of Sacred Art. The project aims to engage with representations of icons and ideas of myths, folklore, popular culture and sufI spirit in diverse forms and genres.

When: March 21 to April 26, 2015

Where: Lalit Kala Akademi, Delhi

Watch out for: Usual fare — lectures, live demonstrations, film screenings, discussions and gallery walks. Also the Festival of Spiritual Arts curated by Sanjoy Roy that will include music and dance performances inspired by specific works.
The catalyst that changed India’s art universe

“Books that will be launched are... titled Art of Secularism and Forms of Devotion: The Spiritual in Indian Art”
There were detractors – as there always are – but surprisingly, not many to leave a negative imprint on the minds of those who wanted this ‘summit’ to succeed. I remember the alacrity with which New Delhi’s art fraternity embraced the summit, at least by attending it in big numbers. The vibe outside Pragati Maidan was interesting, succeeding in creating the look of a ‘mela’ (a traditional fair) as visitors, both from the city and outside, went through customary minor hassles that are part of the deal if you are visiting the sprawling venue in the heart of New Delhi.

It was obvious, even in the first outing, that the ‘art summit’ would have to do something about its venue sooner than later, as minor hassles were bound to become genuinely troublesome with the growth of the fair in the years to come; Pragati Maidan stands facing one of the busiest intersections in the national capital that one would want to avoid on any given day. The organizers of the fair were quick on the uptake and soon transported themselves to the NSIC exhibition grounds from the 4th edition of the fair in 2012.

The biggest issue, however, was its placement in August, which was to become a serious concern right in the second edition. I remember the heavy rains that lashed the city on the second day of the 2nd ‘art summit’, making a mess of the venue, filling up the halls with some water, bad enough to make it untidy where upscale art buyers had to stand squished in their Paris-Milan-London shoes. And to say nothing of the art works that needed urgent protection.

The ‘summit’ organizers, no wonder, skipped it the next monsoon in 2010 giving some months of anxiety to its well-wishers and reappeared in 2011 with the third edition in the month of January. Coupled with a change in the venue and rebranding as ‘India Art Fair’ from the next edition, the premier art showcase in the region seemed to have got a handle on its basics and could then focus on its core strength of showcasing art.

And this gradual progress has come through in the fair’s production quality which has only become better with each passing year. Even though there have been adverse comments on the number of galleries coming down, the fair’s founder and director, Neha Kirpal says the accent is on quality and not numbers. “Our focus has always been on quality. We are very stringent about selecting galleries for participation. Out of 200 applications that we received, we have taken four or five galleries less than the previous year because the focus is quality alone.” In the 7th edition, 85 galleries from around the world will showcase modern and contemporary art across 90 booths.

The India Art Fair has constantly built up its package with A-list talks and lectures. Some prominent speakers at this edition include Adam Szymczyk, artistic director of Documenta, the world’s largest and most prestigious contemporary art exhibition, Dr Venu Vasudevan, director general of the National Museum, New Delhi, Jeremy Deller, the artist who created the British pavilion at the 2013 Venice Biennale, Sheikh Hoor al Qasimi, director of the Sharjah Biennale and curator of the UAE pavilion at the next Venice Biennale, and Julian Stallabrass, professor at Courtauld Institute, London.

Besides, the fair’s presenting partner, Yes Bank that has been in that role since the fifth edition in 2013, will present a series of talks and events such as workshops and book launches. Books that will be launched are those on artists Arpita Singh and Sakti Burman, and two more, titled “Art of Secularism” and “Forms of Devotion: The Spiritual In Indian Art.”
Books to watch out for in 2015

“Among forthcoming publications by Niyogi Books are two volumes each of Forms of Devotion: The Spiritual in Indian Art and Master of Indian Painting”
Books to watch out for in 2015

Bestselling author Jeffrey Archer will release Mightier than the Sword, the fifth novel in the epic Clifton Chronicles series, ahead of the global launch. Swedish author Håkan Nesser will also travel to India ahead of the release of his new book The Living and the Dead in Winsford. Both the books will be brought out by Pan Macmillan.

Two books by popular novelist John Grisham – Theodore Boone: The Fugitive and New Legal Thriller and J K Rowling’s new offering Very Good Lives will be published by Hachette.

Oxford University Press will come out with two books by former Union minister Jairam Ramesh - Legislating for Equity: The Making of the 2013 Land Acquisition Law, co-authored by Muhammad Ali Khan, and Green Signals: Ecology, Growth, and Democracy in India.

Some books related to politics are Narendra Modi And The Election That Shocked The World by former BBC correspondent and Downing Street communications expert Lance Price and The Great Indian Rope Trick: Does the future of Democracy Lie With India by Roderick Matthews (both Hachette); War Room: The People, Tactics and Technology Behind Narendra Modi’s 2014 Win by Ullekh NP (Roli).

There are some cookbooks as well on the cards - Spice Tales by Marryam Reshi; Anothei Vishal’s Kayasth Culture and Cuisine (both Hachette), Lazzatnana (Rupa) by Pushpesh Pant, Zarine Khan Cookbook, by yesteryear actor Sanjay Khan’s wife Zarine (Roli).

A couple of actors will come out with their books. Me, My Fiance and I Fu*led Up by Aarya Babbar is a comedy of errors set against the backdrop of the great Indian wedding while Murder in Bollywood is a Bollywood crime caper by Amjad Khan’s son Shadaab Khan.

There will be other books related to films too. Reel India: Bollywood And Small Town India (Hachette India) by film critic Namrata Joshi deals with tales from the hinterland about India’s obsession with cinema. Show Me Your Words: The Power of Language in Bollywood (Rupa) by Connie Haham is about terms used in the Hindi film industry.

The Front Row: Conversations on Cinema (HarperCollins) by Anupama Chopra is based on the popular interview-based shows on television The Front Row.

Penguin will publish Another 100 Lyrics of Gulzar, translated by Sunjoy Shekhar which has anecdotes about some lyrics and illustrations by poet-lyricist himself while HarperCollins will come out with Javed Akhtar’s In Other Words: Poems, a translations of his works from his Urdu collections Tarkash and Lava.

A number of books by the celebrated Ruskin Bond will be published this year. While his My Most Memorable Characters will be published by Aleph and Beetles, Bugs and School Stories by Rupa, Penguin imprint Puffin will come out with titles like Rusty and the Magic Mountain; Ranji’s Wonderful Bat and Other Stories; The Parrot Who Wouldn’t Talk and Other Stories and Escape from Java and Other Tales of Danger.

Penguin will also publish The Emergency: A Personal History by Coomi Kapoor; Neither a Hawk nor a Dove: An Insider’s Account of Pakistan’s Foreign Relations by Khurshid Mahmud Kasuri; Dilip Hiro’s The Longest August; Aarushi: Anatomy of a Murder by Avirook Sen and God Help the Child by Toni Morrison.

Its fiction list includes Amitav Ghosh’s final part of the Ibis Trilogy Flood of Fire; The Seeker by Karan Bajaj of Keep Off the Grass and Johnny Gone Down fame; Karan Ghelo: Gujarat’s Last Rajput King by Nandshankar Mehta; and a translation of Anant Samant’ss cult Marathi novel Aiwa Maru.

The publishing house has a couple of books on Partition - Urvashi Butalia’s Partition: The Long Shadow and Midnight’s Furies: The Deadly Legacy of India’s Partition by Nisid Hajari.

Another interesting Penguin title is Bill Browder’s Red Notice, a searing expose of the wholesale whitewash by Russian authorities of Sergei Magnitsky’s imprisonment and murder.
In November 2009, emaciated young lawyer Magnitsky was led to a freezing isolation cell in a Moscow prison, handcuffed to a bed rail, and beaten to death by eight police officers. He had testified against the Russian Interior Ministry officials who were involved in a conspiracy to steal USD 230 million of taxes paid to the state by one of the world's most successful hedge funds.

Peggy Mohan's *Walk in C-minor*; Jaishree Misra’s *A Love Story for My Sister; The Persecution of Madhav Tripathi* by Aditya Sudarshhan; Partha Basu's *Mid-career Crisis* and Lynda Gratton's *The Key* are some books to be brought out by HarperCollins in 2015.

During the year, Pan Macmillan India will come out with two books that will be the first of their kinds dealing with diabetes and Alzheimer’s — *Understanding Type 2 Diabetes* by Merlin Thomas and *Where Time Stops: A Caregiver’s Journey through Alzheimer’s* by Bina Berry.

Among other Pan Macmillan titles are *Lunch with a Bigot and other Essays* by Amitava Kumar; Omar Shahid Hamid's *The Spinner's Tale*; filmmaker-writer Peter James’ *Atom Bomb Angel* and *The House on Cold Hill* and David Baldacci's *Memory Man*.

Hachette India’s list also includes *Drowning Fish* by Swati Chanda; *The Amazing Racist* by Chimi Tendul-Ka; *The Land Where I Flee* by Prajwal Parajuly; *Night Heron* by BBC journalist Adam Brookes; *Holy Cow* by David Duchovny; *An Unnecessary Woman* by Rabih Alameddine; Michelle Moran's *The Last Queen of India*; *The Island of Lost Girls* by Manjula Padmanabhan; and Pradeep Sebastian’s *The Book Hunters of Katakdi*, billed as India's first-ever biblio-mystery.

Besides, it will bring out a number of business books like Marissa Mayer and the Fight to Save Yahoo! by Nicholas Carlson; *The Big 100: The 100 Business Tools You Need to Succeed* by Jeremy Kourdi; *The Reputation Economy* by Michael Fertik and David Thompson; and *Becoming Steve Jobs*, a look at Jobs’ career by Brent Schlender and Rick Tetzeli following his dismissal from Apple.

Titles related to sports include *After Tendulkar: The New Stars of Indian Cricket* (Aleph) by Soumya Bhattacharya; and *Criconsomics: Everything You Wanted to Know About Cricket & More* (Rupa) by Surjit Bhalla.

Aleph will also publish two books by conservationist Valmik Thapar - *Real Solutions for Wild India and Winged Fire: A Book of Indian Birds*.

Some of Rupa’s major titles of 2015 are *The Success Mantras of India’s Top 21 CEOs* by Suhel Seth; *Landmark Judgements that Changed India* by former Supreme Court judge Ashok Kumar Ganguly; and *The State in Denial* by the late B.G. Verghese.

Rupa’s publishing partner Aleph will offer books like Shashi Tharoor’s *India Shastra: Reflections on the Nation in our Time*; Mehr Tarar's *Many Malalas: People Fighting for Change in Pakistan*; *The Human face of History* by Raghu Rai; *Exiled at Home: How India’s Muslims Were Betrayed by Saeed Naqvi*; and Barkha Dutt’s *This Unquiet Land: Dispatches from India’s Fault Lines*.

Westland’s titles include *Mandate: Will of the People* by Vir Sanghvi, *Yoga for Sports People* by BKS Iyengar, Shashi Warrier’s *The Girl Who Didn’t Give Up, Arise, Awake* by Rashmi Bansal and *Where We Come From, Where We Go: Tales of the Seven Sisters* by Uddipana Goswami.

Palimpest's first title in 2015 will be the debut novel of young Pakistani writer Teha Kehar. *Of Rift and Rivalry* is an account of three generations of a family in Karachi which runs parallel to the journey of Pakistan since the days of Partition in 1947.

Among forthcoming publications by Niyogi Books are two volumes each of *Forms of Devotion: The spiritual in Indian Art and Masters of Indian Paintings; Arms and Armour: The Royal Collection at Jaipur City Palace* by Robert Elgood; *Sariska: The Tiger Reserve Roars Again* by Sunayaran Sharma and *Great Houses Of Calcutta: Their Precedents, Antecedents, Splendour & Portents* by Joanne Taylor and Jon Lang.
See spiritual Indian art, brought all the way from Belgium

“Amidst the confusion between traditional and modern art, a visitor’s mind seeks solace in the spiritual form. The artwork at the booth of MOSA from Belgium, at the ongoing Indian Art Fair… is therefore of significance”
“Though at present the museum is exhibiting only one of its shows Forms of Devotion: The Spiritual in Indian Art, it has a collection of 1,800 works on Indian spirituality that are ready to be exhibited once the museum is in place.”
“On behalf of Forms of Devotion and MOSA, Belgium presented the Forms of Devotion preview exhibition at Booth number E5 at India Art Fair 2015, New Delhi”

On behalf of Forms of Devotion and MOSA, Belgium presented the Forms of Devotion preview exhibition at Booth number E5 at India Art Fair 2015, New Delhi which runs from 29th Jan to 1st Feb 2015. Given the size and the constraints for space, they are only able to incorporate very few works from their collection, to represent the essence of the project, although they hope to show the larger collection through a DVD at the booth. This marks a fore-runner to the Devotion exhibition which is scheduled to open at the Lalit Kala Akademi on the 21st of March 2015 where it will be on display until 26th April 2015.
"An exhibition Forms of Devotion will be held from April 27th to May 10th."

The second edition of 'Festival of India in Thailand' has started here with a focus on contemporary Modern India as a myriad of colours, culture, music and rhythm of the country were on display.

The festival began on Monday with a performance by diva Sonam Kalra and her musicians of the Sufi Gospel Project. Her mesmerizing tenor melding traditional Indian classical, Sufi and Western music, drew loud applause from the audiences here. It will continue till May 25 across Bangkok with its piece de resistance "Words on Water" featuring well known Indian and Thai authors.

The first part of the festival featured spiritual India with emphasis on Buddhism and was held last year. The Embassy of India is hosting the festival here in collaboration with Sanjoy Roy's Teamworks and Chulaongkorn University here. Thai Princess Sirindorn will attend the closing event of the festival and participate in an interaction between Indian and Thai writers.

"She has been to India many times and is a high level bridge between the two countries," India's Ambassador to Thailand Harsh Vardhan Shringla said at the festival opening adding that she knew about Indian culture, languages and had visited several places in India. Shringla told reporters that "the emphasis on last year's festival here was on spirituality, like Ramayana depicting strong bond of two countries. This year we are focusing on contemporary aspect, it is modern India".

"Mix of painting, dance, fashion and music. Sanjoy Roy, known for organizing the widely popular Jaipur literary festival, has run 26 annual festivals across the world," he said. "We will have representation from Thailand in every programme," he said adding that “art creates window of opportunity to understand and transcend differences. Art is an important vehicle for foreign diplomacy route, Roy noted. The festival will feature "Assam Evening" on March 6 with a show of beautiful ethnic costumes and dance. Assam will demonstrate its cultural diversity as a mosaic of various cultures.

Five talented Assamese fashion designers will showcase their creations interspersed with performances of classical dance and traditional music with violinist Sunita Bhuyan performing. Raghu Dixit Project, a well known independent band will share the stage with a popular Thai group on March 10. Contemporary dancer Daksha Sheth will perform on March 13. Sheth and her husband are pioneers of the aerial technique in Indian dance.

Thammasat University will host the Indian Fun Fair on March 22, highlighted by Rajasthan Josh with folk musicians. An exhibition "Forms of Devotion" will be held from April 27 to May 10.
‘Festival of India in Thailand’ kicks off in Bangkok

By: PTI

Updated on: Tuesday, February 17, 2015 08:37 IST

Bangkok:- The second edition of ‘Festival of India in Thailand’ has started here with a focus on contemporary Modern India as a myriad of colours, culture, music and rhythm of the country were on display. 

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An exhibition “Forms of Devotion” will be held from April 27 to May 10.
“Another important event at the Festival of India, is a mega art exhibition entitled Forms of Devotion. The exhibition features more than 200 works by 100 artists and deals with continuity and change, as reflected in various faiths and cultures, through a collection of traditional and recent works of art.”

Rajasthan Josh and 1 Giant leap perform together. Photo Courtesy: Chetan Sharma

The Festival of India in Thailand, running for the second year in a row, seeks to introduce contemporary India to Thailand

After the success of the inaugural Festival of India in Thailand, in 2014, a second Festival of India was launched in Bangkok on Monday night, with a sell-out concert by the acclaimed Sufi singer Sonam Kalra and her group, the “Sufi Gospel Project.” The singer, who was trained in Western and Indian classical music, is unique, for her “new” spiritual rhythms, where she intones “Halleluylahs” and “Oms” with equal spirit.

To quote her “The Sufi Gospel Project is living proof that many different ‘Halleluylahs’ can exist in harmony. And because of the many languages and musical influences we’ve combined, everyone is able to relate to it.”

The Sikh singer, who sings Sufi songs with gospel-rhythms, has Hindu, Christian, and Muslim members in her band, and they have won over audiences in countries as varied as Europe, Africa, the US, West Asia.

Sonam was excited at performing in Bangkok.

“I believe there is a special relevance of being able to share the music and message of the Sufi Gospel Project in Thailand, because the ideologies of Sufism find a resonance in Buddhism’s teachings, which are beliefs of tolerance and acceptance of all people to be equal.”
The concert had a packed house of academics, students, music-buffs and general public. It was held at the Sasin hall of the well-known Chulalongkorn University, who are partnering the Embassy of India in Thailand, for this Festival. In fact, the University has a full-fledged India Studies Centre. So does the other top varsity of the country, the Thammasat University, which recently also introduced a three-year “India Studies” degree course.

While 2014’s Festival of India focused on the ancient art and cultural forms that have connected India and Thailand, 2015’s Festival has dynamic, contemporary productions, and exciting, path-breaking artistes.

To quote Indian ambassador to Thailand, H.R.H. Harsh Shringla, “The Festival of India in Thailand, running for the second year in a row, seeks to introduce contemporary India to Thailand, while emphasising at the same time the close ties of history and culture our two countries enjoy.”

He was proud that the Festival was organised on “a public-private partnership” making it possible for all the shows to be “free,” for the public.

It was impressive to hear that most of the top Indian companies, in Thailand Indorama, the Tatas and Birla groups as well the well-known Thai “CP” food-group, who have big business interests in India, were all sponsors of the Festival.

After all, the bilateral trade between the two countries reached $8.66 billion in 2014.

Other Indian artistes who will perform at the Festival of India in Thailand, are Daksha Seth and her troupe, including her Australian composer husband Devissaro, and Bollywood actress and daughter Isha Sharvani. They will enact their exotic production “Sari”, which traces the unique history of the Indian garment, and illustrates its various regional styles and textures.

Then, there’s the vibrant musician Raghu Dixit and his multi-lingual music-band “Raghu Dixit Project,” who have wowed audiences at music festivals around the world. They performed at Queen Elizabeth’s Diamond Jubilee Pageant in 2012. Dixit, who has a Master’s degree in Microbiology, is a self-taught musician and guitarist. He was awarded the “Best Newcomer” title in the “Songlines” of 2011. Dixit and his band play an amalgam of Indian and Western rhythms. This, together with their ethnic clothes and charismatic style, where they sport lungis, and Dixit wears ghungroos on his feet, make them a uniquely exciting contemporary musical ensemble.

A special feature of 2015’s Festival, is a literary event called Words on Water, featuring five top contemporary Indian writers. These include Vikas Swarup, the diplomat-writer whose book Q & A was translated into the Oscar-winning film Slumdog Millionaire, Amish Tripathi, the IIM-Graduate who became famous with his hugely successful Shiva Trilogy Arshia Sattar, who translated the Valmiki Ramayana, and recently founded “Sangam House,” an international writers’ residency programme near Bangalore.
There is also Charu Singh, former journalist (she worked for Asian Age) who has lived in Northeast India, and explores topics on Hinduism and Buddhism. And finally, there’s Shailendra Gulhati, a Jammu-based spiritual author, who has written two books including Naam Roop a Tribute to the Divine with artist Arpana Caur, as a jugalbandhi between art and poetry.

It is not a coincidence that the Festival of India has a unique literary section. After all, the organisers of the festival are Sanjoy Roy and Teamwork Arts, who are best-known for the world-famous Jaipur Literature Festival. In fact, in 2015, an award-winning Thai writer, Wipas Sritong, was selected to attend the Festival for the first time. He has not stopped raving over his interactions with the famous authors of the world. Another important event at the Festival of India, is a mega Art Exhibition, entitled “Forms of Devotion.” The exhibition features more than 200 works by 100 artists and deals with continuity and change, as reflected in various faiths and cultures, through a collection of traditional and recent works of art.

The mediums are totally mixed paintings, drawings, collage, video, installations, sculptures. Curated by Dr Sushma Bahl, the exhibition is being launched in Bangkok first, before it tours abroad (Europe, America, West Asia) and finally finds a permanent space in the specially-built MOSA (Museum of Sacred Art, Belgium).

A fun part of the Festival will be an Indian Fun Fair, with the highlight being “Rajasthan Josh” a colourful mix of Rajasthani music and folk dances, together with Sufi rhythms and lively Punjabi numbers.

The official Opening of the Festival of India in Thailand will be held on 6 March. It will uniquely celebrate the culture of a north-eastern Indian state Assam. Entitled “Celebrating Assam,” the programme will have a grand fashion-show of five top Assamese designers (who are now known around the country, and are beginning to create international waves too), featuring the exotic textiles and jewellery of the region. The fashion-show will be interspersed with local music forms as well as exotic folk dances like the Bihu and Jhumur dances, not to forget their famous classical dance Sattriya. The Assam-focus was inspired by the visit of popular Thai Princess Mahachakri Sirindhorn to the north-eastern state of Nagaland in 2014. In fact, the Festival is commemorating the Thai Princess’ 60th birthday celebrations.

All in all, it’s a new and unique “Festival of India in Thailand,” which will, without a shadow of doubt, uplift the “Made in India” brand that Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi has been trying hard to promote.
Art attack: What’s new in the art world?

“The multi-dimensional arts project curated around the notion of the spiritual search in Indian art will include about 300 works by over 150 artists from MOSA’s permanent collection”

The new gallery: Delhi Art Gallery opens a branch in New York
After wowing us with their exhaustive collection of Indian Modern art in Delhi and Mumbai, the Delhi Art Gallery is set to open its first international gallery in New York this month. Spread over 7000 sq ft in the heritage Fuller Building on the corner of 57th St on Madison Avenue, it will debut during Asia Week (March 13-20) with an exhibition titled 'India Modern'.

The new exhibition: A first-of-its-kind exhibition of sacred art comes to Delhi
The Museum of Sacred Art (MOSA) in Belgium travels to India for the first time this month with its exhibition, Forms of Devotion (21 March to 26 April) at the Lalit Kala Akademi in Delhi. The multi-dimensional arts project curated around the notion of the spiritual search in Indian art will include about 300 works by over 150 artists from MOSA’s permanent collection.
The new artist: Experimental filmmaker Shambhavi Kaul has her first solo exhibition

As her films played on a loop through December at Mumbai’s Jhaveri Contemporary Gallery, experimental filmmaker Shambhavi Kaul caught our attention with her varied techniques such as photograms—made without a camera, by placing objects directly on photosensitive film. Kaul (she was born on a film set!) grew up under the influence of her father Mani Kaul, a pioneer of avant-garde Indian cinema, and her work tries to address questions that revolve around identity, culture and politics.

An early memory is watching Miklós Jancsó’s Hungarian Rhapsody while visiting her father at FTII, Pune. "I remember being frozen in my seat, I remember that the film was somehow very large on the screen and that it was extremely brutal but also strangely poetic. It was in Hungarian and I don’t remember reading any subtitles. I have never seen this film again. I’m sure I have secretly avoided it even as it remains, by far, my most powerful experience of watching a film."

Although she has exhibited her work worldwide at venues such as Berlinale, the Toronto International Film Festival, The New York Film Festival, and the London Film Festival, this was her first solo exhibition in a commercial gallery. Expect a lot more of her in the gallery scene: "I am increasingly drawn to media that are not conventionally thought to be in the realm of cinema," she says.

This article was previously published in the March 2015 issue of Vogue India. Subscribe to the print edition or get the single digital copy now.
“The inclusive nature of the project runs through its ethos at various levels. It brings art from across cultures, faiths, genre and regions of the sub-continent and beyond, on a shared platform.”
Forms of Devotion: The Spiritual in Indian Art

A two volume illustrated book accompanies the exhibition and includes contributions from Indian and international authorities on different aspects of devotional art including Devdutt Pattanaik, George Michell and Dr Madhu Khanna amongst others. It is being co-published by MOSA and Niyogi Books.

A Festival of Spiritual Arts curated by Sanjay Roy of Teamwork Arts, the Sangeet Natak Akademi (SNA) and the LKA will run in conjunction with the exhibition and will include music and dance performances inspired by specific works and staged in and around the gallery and the Meghdoot theatre. The program will also include lectures, live demonstrations, art film screenings, discussions, gallery walks, digital outreach, performance and extensive educational outreach.

Forms of Devotion will be presented in India by not-for-profit organization Arts4All on behalf of MOSA, jointly with the LKA. Besides the LKA and SNA, the Indian Ministry of Culture and the Indian Council for Cultural Relations are also supporting the project. Standard Chartered Bank has come on board as sponsor of the project.

Martin Gurich comments:

“Forms of Devotion has been an amazing spiritual journey, full of discovery, joy, new relationships and friendships. I hope that such a project will bring great awareness of India’s vast and diverse culture and friendships. May it bring people of different faiths closer together in the spirit of unity in diversity.”

Sushma K Bahl comments:

“The inclusive nature of the project runs through its ethos at various levels. It brings art from across cultures, faiths, genres and regions of the sub-continent and beyond, on a shared platform. Put together in partnership with so many different institutions, it highlights both the rootedness and the innovation in Indian spiritual art.”

The exhibition will be available to tour internationally from mid 2015.
“Forms of Devotion: The Spiritual in Indian Art, A multidimensional project across artistic genres, media & sacred practices at Lalit Kala Akademi.”
“Forms of Devotion: The Spiritual in Indian Art is a multidimensional arts project conceptualised around the notion of the spiritual and devotional in Indian art”
Forms of Devotion: The Spiritual in Indian Art opens in New Delhi

Forms of Devotion: The Spiritual in Indian Art, is a multidimensional arts project conceptualized around the notion of the spiritual and devotional in Indian art. It explores the theme through artistic creations in different forms and styles, across ideologies and philosophies as well as faiths and regions of India. Forms of Devotion will feature a major exhibition utilising the entire LKA. Across all platforms, the project aims to engage with representations of icons and ideas of myths, folklore, popular culture and sufî spirit in diverse forms and genres.

The exhibition will include about 350 artworks by over 150 artists chosen from nearly 3000 works in the Museum of Sacred Arts (MOSA), Belgium. Initiated by Martin Gurvich (Director of MOSA), the exhibition will be curated by Sushma K. Bahl (former Head of Arts & Culture at the British Council, author of 5000 years of Indian Art and esteemed curator) and co-curated by Archana B Sapra (Co-Founder of Arts4All Trust).

A two volume illustrated book accompanies the exhibition and includes contributions from Indian and international authorities on different aspects of devotional art including Devdutt Pattanaik, George Michell, Jaya Jaitley and Dr Madhu Khanna amongst others. It is being co-published by MOSA and Niyogi Books.

Forms of Devotion has also commissioned a film, Studios of Devotion directed by Goutam Ghose with Jagannath Guha as Associate Director and script and presentation by Desmond Lazaro. The film captures artists at work across India to help audiences understand their aesthetics and working methods.

Forms of Devotion will be presented in India by not-for-profit organization Arts4All on behalf of MOSA, jointly with the LKA. Besides the LKA and SNA, the Indian Ministry of Culture and the ICCR are also supporting the project. Standard Chartered Bank is the main sponsor of the project.

The exhibition will be available to tour internationally from mid-2015. The tour will begin at Exhibition Hall, Art and Culture Building, Chulalongkorn University, Bangkok, Thailand from April 28 to May 10, 2015.
“It will be a comprehensive festival. There is a resurgence in forms of devotion the world over, and the festival will reflect that.”

The collector has kept a close watch on projects related to religion and spirituality in India. It encompasses the entire cosmos — Vishnu in his grand avatar, representing the spiritual concept of all creation, diverse manifestations of a single essence. He occupies the centre, while rest of the elements are in the periphery. Thousands of painted images come together to form one. This is Manjunath Kamath’s depiction of the Vishwaroop (pictured). Director of Belgium-based Museum of Sacred Arts, Martin Gurvich, refers to the artwork as one of the highlights of an exhibition that will comprise the festival titled “Forms of Devotion: The Spiritual in Indian Art”. A multidimensional arts project conceptualised around the notion of the spiritual and devotional in Indian art, the subject has been a preoccupation with Gurvich. “It’s something that interests me. The collection built over a decade has art from across India, covering different religions and beliefs,” says Gurvich, 52.

The collector has kept a close watch on projects related to religion and spirituality in India — from reading about them to visiting exhibitions, interspersed with regular visits to the country. His first purchase was a Rajasthani miniature, and the others followed — Arpana Caur’s serene Buddha to Sheba Chhachi’s Ulla Nag on an illuminated light box and Olivia Fraser’s mixed-media work on Sanganer paper. There are lesser-known works by Warli artists, Madhubani art, miniatures by artists from Udaipur, besides Pichwais, Gond art and Tanjore works as well. “We have exhausted all our resources,” says Gurvich, revealing that most artists were generous to part with works at discounted prices; SH Raza donated his work to the collection.

While the exhibition, curated by Sushma K Bahl and Archana B Sapra, will form an important part of the festival, other forms of art will also be celebrated. “It will be a comprehensive festival. There is a resurgence in forms of devotion the world over, and the festival will reflect that,” says Gurvich. As this exhibition travels to other cities across the world, he hopes to find a larger space for the Museum of Sacred Arts in Europe.
Points of view

“A multidimensional arts project conceptualised around the notion of the spiritual and devotional in Indian art, the subject has been a preoccupation with Gurvich.”

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Written by Vandana Kalra | New Delhi | Published on March 16, 2015 11:56 pm

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ALL EVENTS
21st March 2015, Online (Unique visitors: 127628)
Forms of Devotion

“This is a multidimensional arts project conceptualised around the notion of the spiritual and devotional in Indian art.”
Forms of Devotion: The Spiritual in Indian Art

“Forms of Devotion will feature a significant exhibition utilising the entire Lalit Kala Akademi resources, alongside the launch of an accompanying illustrated book and film.”

The Museum of Sacred Art (MOSA), Belgium is pleased to announce the launch of Forms of Devotion: The Spiritual in Indian Art, a multidimensional arts project conceptualised around the notion of the spiritual and devotional in Indian art. It explores the theme through artistic creations in different forms and styles, across ideologies and philosophies as well as faiths and regions of India. Forms of Devotion will feature a significant exhibition utilising the entire Lalit Kala Akademi (LKA) resources, alongside the launch of an accompanying illustrated book and film. This coincides with a festival of spiritual music and performance as well as an extensive education programme. Across all platforms, the project aims to engage with representations of icons and ideas of myths, folklore, popular culture and Sufi spirit in diverse forms and genres. The program will also include lectures, live demonstrations, art film screenings, discussions, gallery walks, digital outreach, performance and extensive educational outreach.

Seema's body of work for MOSA is based on the intrinsic feeling of love flowing from faith, the feeling of serving mankind or this world created by one Supreme Consciousness, which is the bloodline of everything and everyone who is a part of this Universe. She says, 'I have tried to touch different faiths and bring about the same essence of harmony whether it is through Jesus, Son of God, who is protecting us all as infinite skies; Krishna as Navgunjara who transforms himself into nine different beings as deer, elephant, cow, buffalo, tiger, snake, peacock, camel and a human being; or Dreams of Trishala where Trishala already knows in her dreams that a Thirthankar is on his way to come through her, who will guide and uplift her fellow beings. As she got indications from the symbols in her dreams or Rumi who defied every norm of religion to give the message of love, brotherhood and peace taught him to his master.'

Jesus (2013) as are the others namely Navgunjara, Dreams of Trishala (2014) and Rumi (2014) are done in mixed media on canvas with 24ct gold and silver leaf. Based on the same concepts, Seema will be showing Vishvarupa as a solo endeavor in different mediums of sculptures, paintings, paper works and videos at MOSA, Brussels this May 2015.

The MOSA exhibition at Lalit Kala Akademi, New Delhi will include about 300 works by over 150 artists chosen from over 1600 works from 21 March 21st to April 26th, 2015. Held in partnership with the LKA, the exhibition will extend to all their galleries as well as open spaces at Rabindra Bhawan, in central Delhi's lively cultural hub. Initiated by Martin Gurvich (Founder and Director of MOSA), the exhibition will be curated by Sushma K Bahl (former Head of Arts & Culture at the British Council, author of '5000 years of Indian Art' and esteemed curator) and co-curated by Archana B Sapra (Co-Founder of Arts4All Trust).
“Seema Kohli’s multi-dimensional arts project from the MOSA, Belgium, in a showcase Forms of Devotion: The Spiritual in Indian Art”
“The MOSA, Belgium in association with Lalit Kala Akademi present a multi-dimensional arts project conceptualised around the notion of the spiritual and devotional in Indian art, titled Forms of Devotion: The Spiritual in Indian Art.”
"The exhibition, an initiative by director and founder of Belgium-based MOSA, Martin Gurvich, engages with continuity and change as reflected in various faiths, ideologies and cultures across the country.”
The gallery is currently housing an exhibition titled “Forms of Devotion”, which features over 400 artworks by nearly 200 artists from across India with a focus on the spiritual and the devotional.

One of the standout works is by Manjunath Kamath, that comprises over a 1,000 miniature water colour and tea stain paintings that come together as an installation tribute to Lord Vishnu.

The exhibition, an initiative by director and founder of Belgium-based Museum of Sacred Art (MOSA) Martin Gurvich, engages with continuity and change as reflected in various faiths, ideologies and cultures across the country.

It features original and recent works of Indian art in the devotional genre — the traditional, folk, popular, and contemporary, and its collection boasts of works by some of the most celebrated contemporary artists.

The central focus of the exhibition is on the principle of Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam or ‘the world is one family’. The works include paintings, drawings, collages, digital works, sculptures, installations, videos, films and mixed media works that are featured alongside research and concept-based expressions.

The project has been curated by Sushma K. Bahl and Archana B. Sapra and features an especially-made film Studios of Devotion, that will go on throughout the exhibition.

The exhibits are part of a collection of over 1,000 works sourced and commissioned by Mr. Gurvich for MOSA’s permanent collection and contain works of art that have been sourced from the roadside to those done by renowned Indian masters and emerging stars.

The exhibition will travel to Bangkok and Shanghai, as well as other unconfirmed venues across the world after which it will finally become a part of the permanent collection to be housed in MOSA’s new building in Belgium.

The exhibition is on till April 26 at Lalit Kala Akademi, Rabindra Bhawan, between 11 a.m. and 7 p.m.
Showcasing the spiritual in Indian art

“Titled Forms of Devotion, the showcase seems to aim at a ‘spiritual’ union through the 400-odd works of art created by artists from across the country, both celebrated contemporary artists and those who work on the streets.”

An uncanny wood charcoal rendition of the Goddess Kali, S H Raza’s iconic Bindu and an eclectic Jesus in oil are among artworks on display at an ongoing exhibition at the Lalit Kala Akademi here.

Titled, "Forms of Devotion", the showcase seems to aim at a "spiritual" union through the 400-odd works of art created by artists from across the country, both celebrated contemporary artists and those who work on the streets.

Spaced across three storeys of the Akademi, the multidimensional exhibition contains a plethora of art mediums - paintings in oil and water colours, sculptures in ceramic, brass, iron and glass, photographs, fabric scrolls, all concurring in a spiritual fervor.

Initiated by Martin Gurvich, director and founder of the Belgium-based Museum of Sacred Art (MOSA), the artworks on display have been collected from "not merely all of India but also across the world" over a span of three years.

“It has been conceptualised around the notion of spiritual and devotional in Indian art. It explores the theme through artistic creations in different forms and styles, across ideologies and philosophies as well as faiths and regions of India,” says curator Sushma K Bahl who is author of the book titled “5000 Years of Indian Art.”

The exhibition is a manifestation of a journey that began with a handful of artworks, acquired by Gurvich and is centered around the theme of ‘Yasudhaiva Kutumbakam’ (The world is one family).

“Martin initiated the project... The inclusive nature of the project runs through its ethos at various levels. It brings art from across cultures, faiths, genres and regions of the sub-continent and beyond, on a shared platform,” says Bahl.

A two volume illustrated book, co-published by MOSA and Niyogi Books, that includes contributions from Indian and international authorities on different aspects of devotional art and a film, “Studios of Devotion” directed by Goutam Ghose will also be launched during this five-week long celebration of divine art.

During the course of the exhibition that continues till April 26, various performances are scheduled.

"Rage and beyond: Irawati’s Gandhari“ a retelling of the entire Mahabharata from the point of view of Gandhari, performances by Panchavadyam performers from Kerala, musical renditions by Chugge Khan and Mahesh Ram from Rajasthan, the Qutabi brothers who are significant qawwali artists are among the different performances to be staged within the exhibition complex.

Meanwhile, the exhibition is slated to travel to Bangkok and Shanghai among other venues before becoming a part of the permanent collection to be housed in MOSA’s new building in Belgium.
Showcasing the spiritual in Indian art

New Delhi | An uncanny wood charcoal rendition of the Goddess Kali, S H Raza’s iconic Bindu and an eclectic Jesus in oil are among artworks on display at an ongoing exhibition at the Lalit Kala Akademi here.
Showcasing the spiritual in Indian art

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“Titled Forms of Devotion, the showcase seems to aim at a ‘spiritual’ union through the 400-odd works of art created by artists from across the country, both celebrated contemporary artists and those who work on the streets.”

Jesus in oil are among artworks on display at an ongoing exhibition at the Lalit Kala Akademi here. Titled, Forms of Devotion, the showcase seems to aim at a spiritual union through the 400-odd works of art created by artists from across the country, both celebrated contemporary artists and those who work on the streets. Spaced across three storeys of the Akademi, the multidimensional exhibition contains a plethora of art mediums - paintings in oil and water colours, sculptures in ceramic, brass, iron and glass, photographs, fabric scrolls, all concurring in a spiritual fervor. Initiated by Martin Gurvich, director and founder of the Belgium-based Museum of Sacred Art (MOSA), the artworks on display have been collected from not merely all of India but also across the world over a span of three years. It has been conceptualised around the notion of spiritual and devotional in ... An uncanny wood charcoal rendition of the Goddess Kali, S H Raza s iconic Bindu and an eclectic Jesus in oil are among artworks on display at an ongoing exhibition at the Lalit Kala Akademi here.

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It has been conceptualised around the notion of spiritual and devotional in Indian art. It explores the theme through artistic creations in different forms and styles, across ideologies and philosophies as well as faiths and regions of India, says curator Sushma K Bahl who is author of the book titled 5000 Years of Indian Art.

The exhibition is a manifestation of a journey that began with a handful of artworks, acquired by Gurvich and is centered around the theme of Vasudehaiva Kutumbakam (The world is one family).

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Meanwhile, the exhibition is slated to travel to Bangkok and Shanghai among other venues before becoming a part of the permanent collection to be housed in MOSA s new building in Belgium.
DANDAVATS
25th March 2015, Online
Museum of Sacred Art

“A selection of works that make the Forms of Devotion exhibition and project will be touring select museums around the world.”

Museum of Sacred Art
The Museum of Sacred Art- MOSA at...

Museum of Sacred Art
The Museum of Sacred Art- MOSA at Radhadesh, Durbuy about 100 Km from Brussels opened in 2009 with a dedicated focus on the traditional and living arts of India revolving around the theme of devotion. Set within the campus of a beautiful nineteenth-century chateau near the historic town in the Belgian Ardennes, it has now expanded its brief to include contemporary Indian art from across different spiritual traditions and faiths. The museum has also opened a branch in Italy at Villa Vrindavan near Florence where a magnificent heritage building is getting restored to house MOSA.
Funded primarily by Martin Gurvich, its founding director, the MOSA collection has been diligently built during his various visits to India over the years. The museum makes a unique platform for exposure of Indian art in the West. It features work that artists of the sub-continent have continued to create over the centuries with renewed vigour and in new presentations. With work by masters and young artists, MOSA has over one thousand artworks in its collection. There are paintings, sculptures, photography, installations, digital, and video art creations, representing major spiritual traditions of the world. This it is hoped will encourage interfaith dialogue through the arts. In the two galleries at Radhadesh, exhibitions of works from the collection are held from time to time. And when the new purpose-built museum, currently on plans, is ready, it will house the main collection. Meanwhile a selection of the works that makes the Forms of Devotion exhibition and project will be touring select museums around the world.
Read the entire article here: http://goo.gl/NCiKzt
Forms of Devotion art exhibit launches in New Delhi

“The works…explore themes of spirituality and devotion through not only Hindu but also many other ideologies, philosophies and faiths present throughout India, such as Christianity, Islam, Jain, Sikh, Buddhist, and more.”
Mahaprabhu shows the book *Forms of Devotion* to a customer

The inclusive project aims to promote interfaith dialogue, respect of others’ worldviews, and positive interaction between modernity and tradition.

"In his work with the Hindu Forum Mahaprabhu tries to bridge gaps between faiths," says MOSA general manager Dridha Vrata Das, a second gen ISKCON devotee who has studied traditional South Indian art. "So he’s trying to do that through art too."

In addition the artwork is executed not only in traditional styles from North and South India, but also a variety of different styles such as tribal and contemporary.

The exhibit includes Krishna paintings by renowned traditional artist B.G. Sharma, as well as pieces by big names in contemporary Indian art such as S.H. Raza, Subhaprasanna Bhattacharjee, Satish Gupta, and Anjolie Ela Menon.

There are also Vaishnava paintings by ISKCON artists from the USA such as Puskara Das, Ram Das Abhirama Das, Bhaktisiddhanta Das, Dhruva Maharaja Das, and Drishti Vrata. Many of these worked directly under ISKCON Founder Śrīla Prabhupāda, who described their paintings as “windows to the spiritual world.”

Some pieces are hugely impressive in scope: one standout work by Manjunath Kamath is twenty feet tall and comprises 1,008 miniature water color and tea stain paintings that depict the Vishvarupa, or Universal Form Lord Krishna displayed to his devotee Arjuna.
Forms of Devotion art exhibit launches in New Delhi

Mediums used include oil paint, acrylic, natural pigments, metal castings, woodwork, stone sculpture, photographs, installations, and digital and video art creations.

“The idea is to show people that you can demonstrate devotion through cultural expression like art,” says Dridha Vrata.

The exhibit itself will be accompanied by the “Sacred Arts Festival,” which will run on many permanence and activities inspired by the galleries throughout Forms of Devotion’s run. Some will take place in and around the galleries, others at the nearby Meghdoot theatre.

These will include a Behrupiya dramatic performance on Hanuman; Kathakali dance; Sufi and bhajan music; workshops on woodcarving, miniatures, and Pichwai/Nathdwara painting; art workshops for children; storytelling sessions; and guided tours.

On March 22nd, there was a screening of well-known director Gautam Gosh’s documentary film Studios of Devotion, in which around twenty artists featured in Forms of Devotion are seen at work in their own environments. There will be a repeat screening on April 18th.

A day-long seminar entitled “The Sacred and The Arts” followed on March 23rd, with panel discussions on What is Sacred?, The World Within, and The Sacred and the Secular in the Arts.

The exhibit is also accompanied by a two-volume illustrated book edited by Sushma K Bahl and co-published by MOSA and Niyogi Books. Designed as a box set with over 500 pages in each book, it features nearly a thousand recently created works of art from MOSA’s collection. It also includes essays on Indian art in the sacred genre by scholars such as Devdutt Pattanaik, Dr Madhu Khanna, Kenneth R. Valpey, and Steven Rosen.

“We hope that in a modern India, this exhibit will show that people can still appreciate devotional themes, and that devotion is not just some outdated thing,” says Dridha.

After its run in New Delhi, Forms of Devotion will embark on a five-year international tour, beginning in Bangkok and Shanghai.

“This has been an amazing spiritual journey, full of discovery, joy, new relationships and friendships,” says Mahaprabhu Das. “I hope that such a project will bring great awareness of India’s vast and diverse culture.”
Showcasing the spiritual in Indian contemporary art

“It has been conceptualised around the notion of spiritual and devotional in Indian art. It explores the theme through artistic creations in different forms and style, across ideologies and philosophies as well as faiths and regions of India.”

An uncanny wood charcoal rendition of the Goddess Kali, S H Raza’s iconic Bindu and an eclectic Jesus in oil are among artworks on display at an ongoing exhibition at the Lalit Kala Akademi here.

Titled, “Forms of Devotion”, the showcase seems to aim at a “spiritual” union through the 400-odd works of art created by artists from across the country, both celebrated contemporary artists and those who work on the streets. Spaced across three storeys of the Akademi, the multidimensional exhibition contains a plethora of art mediums paintings in oil and water colours, sculptures in ceramic, brass, iron and glass, photographs, fabric scrolls, all concurring in a spiritual fervour.
Initiated by Martin Gurvich, director and founder of the Belgium-based Museum of Sacred Art (MOSA), the artworks on display have been collected from “not merely all of India but also across the world” over a span of three years.

“It has been conceptualised around the notion of spiritual and devotional in Indian art. It explores the theme through artistic creations in different forms and styles, across ideologies and philosophies as well as faiths and regions of India,” says curator Sushma K Bahl who is author of the book titled 5000 Years of Indian Art.

The exhibition is a manifestation of a journey that began with a handful of artworks, acquired by Gurvich and is centered around the theme of ‘Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam’ (The world is one family).

“Martin initiated the project... the inclusive nature of the project runs through its ethos at various levels. It brings art from across cultures, faiths, genres and regions of the sub-continent and beyond, on a shared platform,” says Bahl.

A two volume illustrated book, co-published by MOSA and Niyogi Books, that includes contributions from Indian and international authorities on different aspects of devotional art and a film, "Studios of Devotion" directed by Goutam Ghose will also be launched during this five-week long celebration of divine art.

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During the course of the exhibition that continues till April 26, various performances are scheduled. Rage and beyond: Irawati’s Gandhari a retelling of the entire Mahabharata from the point of view of Gandhari, performances by Panchavadyam performers from Kerala, musical renditions by Chugge Khan and Mahesh Ram from Rajasthan, the Qutabi brothers who are significant qawwali artists are among the different performances to be staged within the exhibition complex.

Meanwhile, the exhibition is slated to travel to Bangkok and Shanghai among other venues before becoming a part of the permanent collection to be housed in MOSA’s new building in Belgium.
Forms of Devotion

“The show mirrors the layered mix of sacred culture through the prism of select metaphors in Indian art”

A museum in Belgium is to introduce the world to rich Indic spiritual art traditions through a travelling exhibition called Forms Of Devotion. MONA MEHTA reports

The overarching theme of the exhibition to be showcased in Belgium is devotion as expressed by artists in India. Christ, oil on canvas by Suhas Roy, Telangana Gopis And Krishna, acrylic on canvas by Thota Vaikuntam, Tughra In Calligraphy, ink and water colour on paper by Mohammed Zubair, Saraswati, pigments on board by G L N Simha, and Devi, metal, wood and bronze by Narayan Chandra Sinha — different works, different media, all portraying different forms of devotion. They’re part of a collection of more than 1,000 works belonging to the Museum of Sacred Art (MOSA) in Belgium.

MOSA plans to showcase part of this collection in an art festival called Forms Of Devotion in Delhi in the early part of 2015. Initiated by Martin Gurvich, director of MOSA, the exhibition is due to travel the world, offering visitors a taste of the rich spiritual art traditions of the Indian subcontinent.

“Devotion for me is something very personal. It is my personal relationship with God in my particular faith. I fully understand it means different things to different people and that it is not restricted to one particular practice or faith,” says Gurvich, who has been an Iskcon member for the last 30 years.

Then why put something so private in the public domain? “We live in a world where there is a lot of tension between secular and religious people. I think the solution lies in neutrality. Also, there are two sides to devotion,” says Gurvich. “You can surely shut yourself up at home and read your scriptures. However, there is another side to devotion. It requires you to meet likeminded people, interact with people of the same faith as well as with the people of other faiths. If we restrict ourselves to our own community, we become insular; either we try to criticise others or stay aloof. I think devotion is about personal faith and also about interacting with others of the same faith, and other faiths. Over the years, such interactions have made my own practice deeper. The interaction though has to be in the right way and dealt with sensitivity.”
Forms Of Devotion focuses on Indian art, celebrating the creative diversity and rich similarities encompassing tribal, folk, contemporary and traditional art, says curator Sushma Bahl, clarifying that none of the works are antiques. “The idea is to promote Indian art globally. The show will cut across faiths and cultures. We have raised various issues and have also gone local. Take for example Vivek Vilasani’s work Count Me Out which shows a temple gopuram decorated with people instead of deities, highlighting the issue of closing temple doors to people from other faiths, and a painting by Yusuf Arakkal, Last Supper, showing Christ with chapattis instead of the traditional bread. Adding a touch of humour is a work called Sita-Ram Marriage Bureau. On display at the exhibition will be mixed media works Kali by Shantamani Muddaiah and a meditative work made of blunt iron scissors called Meditation by fashion designer Rajesh Pratap Singh.

“It may seem that a large number of works are on Hindu themes or that the artists are mostly Hindus. But that’s only because the majority in India is Hindu. We have included works that depict other faiths too,” says Gurvich. “The idea is to include works of modern contemporary artists who have something nice to say in a beautiful way on the theme of devotion.”

Faith is a sensitive subject, hence the selection of works has been done with great care. “Art is a tool — a nonthreatening tool to talk about sensitive issues; spiritual issues at the philosophical level. I have been practising devotion and have been part of several interfaith interactions. Thanks to my father Jose Gurvich who was a famous painter, I have been exposed to art right from childhood. And over the years, I have realised that art helps you tell your stories about your spiritual quest. Care has been taken not to purchase art ‘which goes beyond being art’. Some artists provoke for the sake of provocation to shock people. I’ve tried not to go beyond a point where art becomes too commercial or agitates others,” says Gurvich.

Sacred images have played a central role in western art too, since long, as has been the case in most cultures. Gurvich attributes the recent revival of interest in spiritual art to globalisation which has made possible greater exposure to other cultures and traditions and the natural human desire to experience that which uplifts the heart and inspires an awareness of a higher reality. Spirituality-inspired art takes one forward to intimately experience divinity, rather than ‘only seduce the eyes’, says Gurvich. “Forms Of Devotion will showcase such living traditions of Indian art to people across the world,” says Sushma Bahl.
Forms of Devotion in contemporary Indian art

“It’s a multi-level celebration of the man’s visualisation of what he thinks is God, titled The Sacred Arts Festival.”

A few weeks back, I was leaning by the wall of a popular coffee shop on the second floor of one of the trendiest malls in South Delhi, waiting to meet Martin Gurvich. That was not a likely rendezvous place for an interview on a topic such as ‘spiritual in Indian art’ but again, a crowded place is just the venue to test if your newly-acquired Zen approach to life is working or not, isn’t it? I, therefore, was waiting in happy anticipation to meet the man who, presumably, knew more about my country than I did, and who had already dedicated an entire museum to the spiritual art of India.
Gurvich, the director of Museum of Sacred Art (MOSA) in Septon, Belgium, didn’t exactly turn out to be what my mind had visualised. Clad in a fine silk kurta and a jacket, he lit up the walkway when he arrived, because he was wearing such amazing calm on his face that I instantly forgot I was in the middle of the flashiest place in New Delhi surrounded largely by people who were practising the art of hedonism.

An active member of the Hare Krishna movement (ISKCON), Gurvich has pumped all that he has into what is currently on view at the spacious galleries of the Lalit Kala Akademi. That’s the contemporary world’s expression of spirituality through art. It’s a multi-level celebration of the man’s visualisation of what he thinks is God, titled “The Sacred Arts Festival”. It comprises an exhibition of art, music and dance performances, workshops, lectures, live demonstrations, art film screenings, discussions, gallery walks and educational events spread over five weeks. A film has also been commissioned, directed by Goutam Ghose, to capture artists across India at work, in order to help understand their aesthetics and working methods.

The mainstay of this project is an exhibition called “Forms of Devotion: The Spiritual in Indian Art,” comprising 300 works by over 150 artists chosen from over 3,000 works at MOSA. The exhibition is curated by Sushma K Bahl, former head of arts and culture at the British Council and co-curated by Archana B. Sapra, an architect and co-founder of the NGO, Arts4All.

We are soon joined by Bahl and Sapra for a chat on the project. Pointing towards Gurvich, Bahl says, “He doesn’t like to talk about all the good work that he is doing so let me tell you how great a soul he is. He has put in so much effort for this project, to see that the Indians get to see this great collection of art.” Gurvich, who owes his passion for art to his father Jose Gurvich who died young (after whom a museum is named in Montevideo, Uruguay), responds only with a smile and instantly digs in his bag to pull out one volume of the two-volume book that has been published as part of the project. The book, published by MOSA and Niyogi Books, carries essays and pictures on the subject, and flipping its pages, Gurvich points out the amazing works being done by artists across the country on giving expression to spirituality through art.

“It’s such a false notion that spiritual art is only practised by those following certain religions in their extreme forms. Very good work is being done across India by contemporary artists who are not necessarily religious but are using art to express Indian religious ethos which are all around us,” says Bahl.

The book is replete with images that are not just aesthetically sound but also give a spin to the mythological tales that this country has known for thousands of years. Gurvich, who also represents the Hindu forum of Belgium and Europe, says, “I hope that such a project will bring great awareness of India’s vast and diverse culture and friendships. May it bring people of different faiths closer together in the spirit of unity in diversity.”

After showing in Delhi, the exhibition travels to Thailand where it will be on view at The Exhibition Hall, Art and Culture Building, Chulalongkorn University, Bangkok, from April 28 to May 10.

*Forms of Devotion: The Spiritual In Indian Art* is on view at the Rabindra Bhavan, Lalit Kala Akademi, Copernicus Marg, New Delhi, through April 26, 11 a.m. to 7 p.m. For details on the museum, visit [www.mosabelgium.com](http://www.mosabelgium.com). For details on the exhibition, visit [www.formsofdevotion.org](http://www.formsofdevotion.org).
The mainstay of this project is an exhibition called Forms of Devotion: The Spiritual in Indian Art, comprising of 300 works by over 150 artists chosen from over 3000 works at MOSA.
“The art exhibition Forms of Devotion will have more than 50 works by 20 Indian artists, selected from 2000 Indian artworks that have been commissioned for a new wing of the MOSA in Belgium.”

In his three-room flat in the idyllic Raghurajpur village in Odisha, Bhaskar Mahapatra has painted more than a hundred versions of the Tree of Life. But the one painted by the artist last summer will perhaps remain the most memorable. It occupies a place of pride in the collection of French President Francois Hollande.
Gifted by Prime Minister Narendra Modi during his recent visit to France, the silk work ostensibly focuses on sustenance of life and clean environment, befitting the global meet on climate change, which the European nation will host in December this year. “It represents common descent and the need to be one with nature,” says Mahapatra.

The universal Tree of Life motif was combined with the depiction of the annual Nabakalebara festival, where deities are made in neem wood. The artist has painted the associated rituals, from the search of the sacred Daru (wood logs) to the creation of new deities. “Now the tale will become popular around the world,” says Mahapatra. He recalls selling this 18×30 inch work approximately between Rs 10,000 to Rs 12,000.

The 44-year-old took more than 20 days to design it. “I was asked to make a work that everyone will like; I had no idea that Modiji will be taking it with him and it will garner so much attention,” says Mahapatra. Having trained for over a decade under renowned Pattachitra master Jagannath Mohapatra, this is not the first international outing of his work. Honoured by the Lalit Kala Akademi, in 1985, Mahapatra was part of the India Festival in Washington, where he travelled with an image of Buddha. In Odisha his work adorns several temples and his collectors are spread across the globe. “I don’t even know where my work goes,” he says.

Like most other artists practising the Pattachitra tradition, he too began with compositions on palm leaf and cloth, gradually to paper and canvas. Natural pigments were gradually combined with acrylics to add longevity.

Mahapatra experimented with varied mediums, putting his work on saris, cushion covers and paper masks, among others, but his theme continue to centre around Lord Jagannath. Currently, his wife and teenage daughter also practise the art.

Curator Sushma Bahl, who has known Bhaskar for over five years feels it’s his rootedness that distinguishes him from other Pattachitra artists. “His experience of painting on the palm leaf enables him to paint extremely intricate patterns,” says Bahl.

She is currently showing his work in the exhibition “Forms of Devotion” at the Lalit Kala Akademi. This too has the Tree of Life, the central pattern though differs slightly, with another festivity associated with Lord Jagannath.
Forms of Devotion: The Spiritual in Indian Art

“The Museum of Sacred Art (MOSA), Belgium is pleased to announce the launch of Forms of Devotion: The Spiritual in Indian Art, a multi-dimensional arts project conceptualised around the notion of the spiritual and devotional in Indian art”
Seema's body of work for MOSA is based on the intrinsic feeling of love flowing from faith, the feeling of serving mankind or this world created by one Supreme Consciousness, which is the bloodline of everything and everyone who is a part of this Universe. She says, ‘I have tried to touch different faiths and bring about the same essence of harmony whether it is through Jesus, Son of God, who is protecting us all as infinite skies; Krishna as Navgunjara who transforms himself into nine different beings as deer, elephant, cow, buffalo, tiger, snake, peacock, camel and a human being; or Dreams of Trishala where Trishala already knows in her dreams that a Thirthankar is on his way to come through her, who will guide and uplift his fellow beings. As she got indications from the symbols in her dreams or Rumi who defied every norm of religion to give the message of love, brotherhood and peace taught to him by his master.

Jesus (2013) as are the others namely Navgunjara, Dreams of Trishala (2014) and Rumi (2014) are done in mixed media on canvas with 24ct gold and silver leaf. Based on the same concepts, Seema will be showing Vishvarupa as a solo endeavor in different mediums of sculptures, paintings, paper works and videos at MOSA, Brussels this May 2015.

The MOSA exhibition at Lalit Kala Akademi, New Delhi will include about 300 works by over 150 artists chosen from over 1600 works from 21 March 21st to April 26th, 2015. Held in partnership with the LKA, the exhibition will extend to all their galleries as well as open spaces at Rabindra Bhawan, in central Delhi’s lively cultural hub. Initiated by Martin Gurvich (Founder and Director of MOSA), the exhibition will be curated by Sushma K Bahl (former Head of Arts & Culture at the British Council, author of ‘5000 years of Indian Art’ and esteemed curator) and co-curated by Archana B Sapra (Co-Founder of Arts4All Trust).

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"Needless to say, I'd been waiting for this exhibition to open for over a month. I even got lucky and found myself on a curated walk with five guides including the co-curator. They were wonderfully enthusiastic about the exhibit and I can understand the effort that went into organizing something on this scale. It's immense. I've seen museums with less artwork."

*Telling Tales about Forms of Devotion*

*Forms of Devotion: the Spiritual in Indian Art* is a multidimensional arts project conceptualized across artistic genres, media and sacred practices (This is important. We’ll get back to this in a minute). It focuses on the spiritual and devotional in Indian art. It's a very ambitious project with 300 works by over 150 artists and is being exhibited at the Lalit Kala Academy (LKA) in New Delhi from 21 March - 26 April 2015, after which it will travel internationally, beginning with Thailand.

The scale and monumentality of the project is fantastic. It's accompanied by a *Festival of Spiritual Arts* that's curated by Sanjoy Roy of Teamwork Arts in conjunction with the Sangeet Natak Akademi (SNA) and the LKA. It includes music and dance performances inspired by specific works, staged in and around the gallery and the Meghdoot Theatre nearby. There are also lectures, live demonstrations, workshops, art classes, art film screenings, discussions, gallery walks, digital outreach, performance and extensive educational outreach.

The Indian Ministry of Culture and the Indian Council for Cultural Relations are also supporting the project. *Standard Chartered Bank* has come on board as sponsor of the project.

A two volume illustrated book accompanies the exhibition and includes contributions from Indian and international authorities on different aspects of devotional art including Devdutt Pattanaik, George Michell and Dr. Madhu Khanna amongst others.

*Forms of Devotion* has also commissioned a film, *Studios of Devotion* that captures artists at work across India to help audiences understand their aesthetics and working methods.

It's both a lesson in museum thought and outreach. The art inside the huge space covers every style of art from performance art to three dimensional pieces and even video murals. The outreach looks at all forms of art through which devotion is expressed in India – from seminars to books to performances.

Needless to say, I’d been waiting for this exhibition to open for over a month. I even got lucky and found myself on a curated walk with five guides including the co-curator. They were wonderfully enthusiastic about the exhibit and I can understand the effort that went into organizing something on this scale. It’s immense. I’ve seen museums with less artwork.
One artist friend of mine loved it. Another thought it was uneven. I tend to agree with the latter. The books are outstanding. The essays in them are worth reading. The scope of performing artists shows the deliberation and foresight that went into organizing the exhibition. The artists being exhibited include well-known names like Shipra Bhattacharya, Arpana Caur, Anjolie Ela Menon, Jayasri Burman, Yusuf Arrakal to lesser known ones like Cop Shiva, BG Sharma and Bannu Studio. All of these appealed immensely to me. Other works appealed to my friends. There's enough choice to go around so that there's something for everyone.

The known artists of our time like Paresh Maity, Souza, Menon, Vaikuntham and Raghu Rai were all represented.

Out of the work I was unfamiliar with, I was especially wowed by the works of modern miniaturists like BG Sharma and Bannu Studio from Jaipur. There were some beautiful pieces by Vineet Kacker in ceramic, Satish Gupta sculptures, paper installation by Sudipta Das and calligraphy by Mohammed Zubair and Qamar Dagar. There's a painting of Jesus by Venkateswarulu where he's translated the miracles of Christ into an Indian context.

The exhibition was a study in how much the language of art in India hasn't really changed as far as paintings and sculpture are concerned. The iconisation is still the same as the 15 century miniature paintings. The colors and the forms are the same. Some things are, however, slyly funny like Satish Gupta's Gods on cricket bats (I'm going to keep an eye out for his works). The photography and multimedia side are..well, its a big exhibition. Frankly, they didn't hold my interest.
Telling Tales about Forms of Devotion

Since the founder of the Museum of Sacred Art (MOSA), Martin Gurvich, has links to ISCKON, it wasn’t surprising that the initial theme of the exhibition was ‘Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam’.

\( \text{ayah bandhurayath n̄eti gaṇana laghucetasām | udāra caritanāmtu vasudhaiva kutumbakam ||} \)

Discrimination saying “this one is a relative; this other one is a stranger” is for the mean-minded. For those who’re known as magnanimous, the entire world constitutes but a family.

While the phrase has been used recently by Mr. Modi, Mr. Mukherji, Mrs. Gandhi etc, it originated in the Panchatantra (3rd century BCE) and in the writings of Hitopadesha (12th century CE). Unfortunately, the phrase is used ironically in the Panchatantra (people taken in by villain spouting line get killed for their naivety) and there is no proof that this sentence was ever found in our Vedas or Puranas.

Secondly, the themes around which the exhibition is organized are unintelligible to me. They include terms like ‘Imaging the Divine’, ‘Cosmic Constellations’, ‘Worlds Within’ etc. The paintings under each section aren’t that different from each other that they’d warrant sectioning. For example, a version of Raja Ravi Varma’s Radha and Krishna by Puttaraju R falls under “Telling Tales” rather than ‘Leela’ and an image of Guru Gobind Singh riding a horse by Virendra Bannu falls under ‘World’s Within’.

I was also amazed not to find a Sir Sobha Singh along with Arpana Caur’s Guru Nanak (although the luminosity of her painting is wonderful as well). I’ve seem far better Anjolie Ela Menon (to name an artist whose works I know) works than the Christ that was displayed.

The Brochure is another source of perplexity. Some of the paintings aren’t shown and the order of display in the exhibition hasn’t been followed. The list of artists at the end doesn’t give page numbers for their art works.
When art becomes a dialogue between faiths

“This multi-dimensional theme has been conceptualised around the notion of the spiritual and devotional in Indian art.”

Martin Gurvich is the founder of the Museum of Sacred Art in Radhadesh, Belgium. The son of famous Uruguayan artist José Gurvich, Martin’s deep involvement with spirituality and the Iskcon movement has found manifestation in the ongoing Sacred Arts Festival at New Delhi’s Lalit Kala Akademi, which has been curated by Sushma K Bahl. Excerpts from an interview:

Q. What made you start the Museum of Spiritual Arts?

Martin Gurvich: It is a spiritual journey that started after my university studies in the US and after many years of practicing Gaudiya Vaishnava and serving Iskcon. The art part came out because of my previous life: My father was a very well-known artist and from there arose the interest. And there was a connect with Indian art, and Indian spiritual art. That connection started about five years ago with the humble attempt to have a gallery or a museum in Radhadesh, where I live. It just focussed on traditional art, mainly Vaishnava art from Rajasthan and Gujarat. Then it became a journey... one spiritual journey within another spiritual journey. I made a big collection of spiritual Indian art, including contemporary, tribal art. It was a small project with maybe 100, 200 works of art.

There is now one museum in Belgium, one in Italy. We are hoping to open more branches where there are different Iskcon projects. And now we have this big art project called ‘Forms of Devotion’ in India this year.
Q. How did you get introduced to Indian art?
MG: It was quite abrupt. I was studying political science at the University of Syracuse in the US, and although it was not overnight, but quite suddenly, I began to feel the need for spiritual practice and philosophy. So I started to read books on Buddhism and Hinduism, different interpretations of Hinduism. And then my interest became quite strong, and my interest for my regular studies and in other things dwindled. There was a very strong calling from within me to go to India, and I began to make arrangements to come to this country.

I had seen the Hare Krishna movement in New York, when I lived in Manhattan for many years, but I was a child at that time. I met the devotees in a serious way in Paris in 1982. In 1989, I came to Mumbai, and although I had been a devotee for seven years by then, it was still a cultural shock when I came here. Since then, I have been coming to India very often, for pilgrimages of course, and we have a large Indian boutique in Radhadesh and I had been shopping for that for the past 15 years.

Q. When did the process of gathering Indian art for Mosa (museum) begin?
MG: For the last five years, we have travelled with the art project, and have met a lot of artists in small villages, in big cities, famous artists, young artists. I began in 2007 when the focus was on traditional art. So I would travel a lot to Rajasthan and Mysore, and started with a collection of art in the Tanjore and Mysore styles, patachitra, Rajasthani miniatures, pichwai.

We officially started the museum (Mosa) in 2010—Hari prasad Chaurasia came for the inaugural concert—and it was the beginning of a small project. But it didn't stop there. I wanted to do more about spirituality; not only traditional, but in a bigger context. But I had a lot of apprehensions about contemporary art, not just in the Indian context, even internationally.
Q. What was the reason for this apprehension?
I had a lot of prejudices against it; I thought it was straying from the real aesthetics of art... basically, it was generalisation that is never good in any field, not even in art.

I am involved in a museum of my father’s work since 2001 in Montevideo, Uruguay, and its focus was mainly on modern art and the masters. I didn’t want to do much with contemporary art. The openness to contemporary art came from the Indian side... I was introduced to it by Sushma [Bahl], and then, it was a whole lot of opening up to such art in the Indian context and also in the South American context; we now do shows of contemporary artists in Uruguay. It had an impact on my Western art sensibilities.

And it has been a journey of discovery, of India, of painting styles, of media, like sculpture and installations and video. The more we travelled, the more we saw how wide the spectrum of Indian art and Indian spiritual art was. That is why the book [a two-volume book called Forms of Devotion: The Spiritual in Indian Art accompanies the show] became so big; because we kept travelling, and kept discovering Indian artists.

Sushma Bahl: Once we had this discovery, it led us to the spiritual tradition. It was another strand that was quite revealing.

MG: We started with traditional art, mainly Hindu and Vaishnav. But then we went through contemporary art, and after meeting artists, we discovered so many different spiritual traditions within the Indian context which represent all the faiths in the world.

Q. What kind of overlaps have you seen between the different faiths and painting traditions in India? Between symbolism and characters and narratives?
SB: We have seen a lot of overlaps. Especially in the way contemporary artists are borrowing from traditions, and traditional artists are taking from contemporary art. For example, the works of Mahavir Swamy show Ganesha sitting with his family and flying kites. His style is that of Bikaner, and he uses very traditional colours.

MG: There are many Hindu artists who work on non-Hindu themes and non-Hindu artists who work on Hindu themes. We have wonderful Muslim artists who work on Krishna themes, like that of the Kamdhenu. There is a lot of overlapping in faith and symbolism.

(Bahl shows an image of a sculpture made by fashion designer Rajesh Pratap Singh. It depicts Gautam Buddha seated in a meditative posture, but it is made entirely of brass scissors, something that Singh uses extensively in his own profession. Not only is it an entirely contemporary take on the traditional form of the meditating Buddha, it also represents the clash of Buddhism’s non-violent philosophy and the inherent violence embodied in an instrument like the scissor.)
Q. Where else are you planning to take the exhibition?
MG: Funding is always a major obstacle. I invested my own money to a certain degree to invest in the research project, to buy the initial art of the main project, and also commission a film by Gautam Ghose. [The film, titled Studios of Devotion, captures artists at work across India.] But we would like to travel with the exhibits [about 300 of them]. The show is according to the venue, and the interests of the venue. We are flexible about how the show can manifest; we would like to retain the main theme, but the works that are on display can vary, depending on the venue, whether it is more traditional or contemporary.

SB: It is definitely going to Thailand and Montevideo (Uruguay). We are talking about Kolkata and Mumbai, but it depends on the space we get.

At Lalit Kala Akademi, for instance, we could have a gurbani on one day, and sufi music on another. There will be performances along with the exhibition of paintings. And we don't plan to show the exhibition in separate chunks; like this is Hindu art, this is Islamic art, or this is digital art and this is traditional art. It will be all inclusive and thematically connected; for example, a theme of telling tales, or of pilgrims and pilgrimages. And we won't worry about what medium, what styles, what faiths. It is all about the philosophy of 'live and let live'.

(The Sacred Arts Festival is on at the Lalit Kala Akademi, New Delhi, till April 26)
"Art collector Martin Gurvich wants to showcase Indian artworks that celebrate the spiritual, devotional and religious manifestations, around the world."

Walls divide devotion. Walls separate worship and spiritual manifestations. In art, a wall cements them all. Give Delhi-based artist Manjunath Kamath a wall. He gives you Vishvaroopa, a mammoth work in water and tea stain depicting the grand avatar of Vishnu in return. Kamath meticulously put up the 1008 frames of different sizes together for Vishvaroopa over three days with the help of assistants.

The work is part of Forms of devotion: The Spiritual in Indian Art, a diverse and multidimensional art project covering different genres, expressions, faiths, devotional practices and media in India and Indian art. The show, scooped from a huge collection belonging to the Museum of Sacred Art (MOSA), Belgium, was put together by noted curator Sushma K Bahl and Archana B Sapra and displayed in collaboration with the Lalit Kala Akademi.

Martin Gurvich, 52, director, Museum of Scared Art, Belgium and Italy, says, “During the initial years, the collection was mainly traditional Indian art. I thought something was wrong with contemporary Indian art. My whole consciousness changed. I opened up to western contemporary art. We saw the traditional influence. My father (Uruguayan painter, potter and musician Jose Gurvich) died very young. He had a huge collection of works.”
When art becomes a dialogue between faiths

Gurvich’s collection is a gentle pilgrimage of sorts for viewers exposed to the concept of high and low art, styles, textures, and approaches. He says, “This collection was my donation to MOSA. I acquired the works from various artists through the sales of my father’s works. That’s art for art. A lot of pieces were kept in Uruguay (in a museum in Montevideo which is named after his father). I would like to bring up a permanent museum in Belgium.” The display of 350 works is an ice breaker for the uninitiated. On this particular day, Kamath’s Vishvaroopam became the first point of reference to contemporary and tribal art for a group of students from a Delhi school. It’s a great start.

Glimpses of faith

- Badri Narayan’s Untitled
- Francis Newton Souza’s Jesus
- Yusuf Arakkal’s Sun Wheel
- Raja Ravi Varma’s Shesh Shayi
- Shobha Broota’s Mirror Image
- Kalam Patua’s Parvati and baby Ganesh
- Nandan Purkayastha’s Durga Puja Pandal
- Cop Shiva’s The Street As Studio
- Parama Libralesso’s Iconic portrait of Zarathustra
- Jayasri Burman’s Shiva
- Drdha Vrata Gorrick’s Hanuman

The calligraphic works from Dhrupad exponent Ustad Wasifuddin Dagar and his sister Qamar Dagar gave a glimpse of their well-rounded perception of expression and an immense search for musicality on paper. At Forms of Devotion, your faith, my faith, his faith, and her faith dissolve in the colours, a language of motifs, moving stories in sculptures, that fine stretch of the nib dipped in ink, and devotion.

Gurvich adds, “There are four different attitudes to religion in general. One is old fashioned and sectarian, not attractive to many. Then, you have those who want to reject religion altogether, the extreme secularism; there are those who want to merge the spiritual and traditional. You can be spiritual and religious, at the same time, and you also appreciate the other.” Forms of Devotion points at India, the vigorous devotee of faiths, philosophies, beliefs and devotional practices that co-exist beautifully against an uproarious backdrop of the tumultuous West and its craggy perception of her spiritual texture.

S H Raza’s sprightly Prem Bindu whirls and culminates into the centre, the bindu of the cosmos. Olivia Fraser’s tranquil deconstruction of motifs in Cosmic Body places Srinathji, an avatar of Krishna, in the eyes, perhaps, of a devotee. Param Tomanec’s striking image of funeral pyres blazing at Varanasi’s Manikarnika Ghat, a picture shot from a boat in the Ganges kindles a humbling realisation of death. Artist Sidharth’s work Baba Nanak depicts Guru Nanak sitting under a tree surrounded with birds and animals. A plough and the flourishing fields around Guru Nanak show the harmonious co-existence of life, labour and devotion. Gurvich is a Krishna devotee. He plays the flute. At MOSA, Belgium, he invites well-known Indian artists and musicians for talks and performances. Currently, he is focussing on making the collection travel East. “We can make it much smaller. There are only 60 works in our upcoming show in Thailand. We can go up to 500 works in one exhibit.”

Forms of Devotion ends on April 28
"Running successfully for almost a month, this art project exhibited various dimensions of spirituality and devotion in Indian Arts. This theme was explored through artistic creations across different genres and styles, ideologies and philosophies as well as faiths and regions of India."
When art becomes a dialogue between faiths

‘Forms of Devotion’ not only exhibited various artistic creations but also marked as launching event for an acclaimed illustrated book and feature film. Extensive educational programmes were coincided with the event about the mysticism of Indian art.

Engagement with icon representation, mystical ideas, folklore and legends, popular culture of sufi spirit was exquisitely done in diverse forms and genres.

Over 300 works by 150 chosen artists out of 1600 works were exhibited in partnership of LKA. Martin Gurvich, the director of MOSA initiated the project and Sushma K Bahl and Archana B Sapra were respectively the curators and co-curators of the event.
Also accompanied the exhibition, was a two-volumed illustrated book containing the contributions of Indian and international artists depicting the devotional aspect of Indian arts such as Devdutt Patnaik, George Michell and Madhu Khanna. The highly acclaimed film, ‘Studio of Devotion’ directed by Gautam Ghose and on script of Desmond Lazaro was launched there. The film is a capture of Indian artists’ work depicting their aesthetics and working method.

Running in conjunction was ‘A festival of spiritual arts’; a dance and music performance of spiritual topics created by Sanjay Roy and Sangeet Natak Academy.

Martin Gurvich praised the event as an amazing spiritual journey with discovery of joy, new relationships and friendship. He hoped it to bring closer the people of various faiths and thus form true unity and diversity.

Sushma Bahl described it as project which ran through the ethos at various levels. She highlighted here hope that it brings people of different faiths together in a spirit of Indian spiritual art.

Images Credit: Forms of Devotion, MOSA
“But the genius of the book lies in assembling not just these examples of contemporary spiritual art but also making space on that platform for traditional artists who create works of art used in spiritual pursuits, and who often go nameless. Both the volumes carry a detailed glossary of artists featured in the book…..The essays, on the other hand, offer such insights into the depths of spiritual Indian art that most of us didn’t even know existed.”
An art book has always remained a precious treasure. And often, a weighty one, not just literally but also metaphorically because it opens a window to a body of art in a manner that an exhibition can never quite match up to.

Sushma K. Bahl's two volume 'Forms of Devotion, The Spiritual in Indian Art' (Niyogi Books), is one of those rare windows to the world of contemporary Indian art that has, for some strange reason, not generally been considered in the same league as the other, gallery-promoted, more financially rewarding, more celebrated contemporary Indian art. I'm talking about spiritual art that gives skilful visual representation to the very essence of Indian civilization – its spiritual quotient.

The spiritual in Indian art didn't end with the calendar prints of Raja Ravi Varma. The practise of spiritual art is as alive and contemporary as Subodh Gupta’s stainless-steel-utensils' work. This genre of art thrives in various nooks and corners of the country that the author visited in search of a compilation that is unbelievably rich and detailed.

The book — comprising approximately 1,200 pages across two volumes — is an offshoot of a project of the Museum of Sacred Art (MOSA), in Durbuy, Belgium. It is well explained in the book by Martin Gurvich, director of MOSA, art collector and member of ISKCON and Hindu Forum (Europe). 'MOSA started in 2010 with the purpose of presenting art forms that connect us with the divine and help us transcend the material plane in a multitude of ways. Even though it is based in Radhadesh, an ISKCON Temple and Community in Belgium, it strives to bring quality exhibits to other MOSA branches such as the one at Villa Vrindavan, Florence, Italy and to well-known museums throughout the world. The collection consists of almost 2,000 works representing nearly 300 contemporary, traditional, folk and tribal artists.' Gurvich, who was born in Uruguay and is the son of renowned painter Jose Gurvich (1927-1974), had 'joined' the Hare Krishna movement in Paris in 1982. The project of devotional art started in 2008 when Gurvich decided to offer the visitors to Radhadesh an opportunity to see Vaishnava Art made by ISKCON artists as well as traditional artists from India. He started collecting art for MOSA but remained exclusively focussed on traditional artists who painted Hindu and Vaishnava themes. 'It was not until I met Sushma K. Bahl that I had the opportunity to discover devotion in contemporary art from India,' writes Gurvich, who gave up his studies in political science at Syracuse University in the US to pursue a 'strong desire to go to India where I would find my spiritual path and spiritual teacher, a sort of calling back home.'
The huge collection of devotion visualised by contemporary Indian artists is the biggest strength of the book, where it comes juxtaposed with traditional images. It gives a glimpse of how the expression of devotion has not really changed over centuries, even though the techniques, methods and even imagery have undergone tremendous change.

If there is a Raja Ravi Varma (1848-1906) on one hand — the artist responsible for giving a physical shape to our gods — then there are soothing interpretations of mythology in Viren Tanwar’s oils on canvas. The renowned mythological concept of Bindu in S.H. Raza’s canvases is but an example of spiritual art and so is ‘Parikrama’, a performance video by Seema Kohli.

But the genius of the book lies in assembling not just these examples of contemporary spiritual art but also making space on that platform for traditional artists who create works of art used in spiritual pursuits, and who often go nameless. Both the volumes carry a detailed glossary of artists featured in the book. The research was carried out by the team of Archana B. Sapra and Puja Bahri of Arts4All Trust.

Needless to add, the aspect of spirituality explored in the book is not just limited to Hinduism or Hindu artists; other religions, and artists following non-Hindu religions find equal space.

The essays, on the other hand, offer such insights into the depths of spiritual Indian art that most of us didn’t even know existed. Essays have been contributed by mythologist Devdutt Pattanaik, founder of Dastkari Haat Samiti, Jaya Jaitly, Dean of Studies at Bhaktivedanta College, Belgium, Kenneth R. Valpey, author on Indian art and archaeology, Dr George Michell, painter and writer Desmond Lazaro, art curator Annapurna Garimella of Bangalore-based Jackfruit Research & Design, former director of National Archives of India, Prof Mushirul Hasan, professor of Indic religions Madhu Khanna and scholar-author Steven J. Rosen besides Gurvich and Bahl.

It’s a monumental effort that underlines the perseverance of Gurvich and Bahl and is a compendium on contemporary Indian art that will remain unparalleled for a long time to come. Hopefully, it will add to the knowledge and respect that the spiritual in Indian art deserves.
Painted worship

“...not often that a compendium of artwork offers one the chance to learn about a section of India’s modern art that has not been quite as feted or visible as other, more lucrative contemporary art. Sushma K. Bahl’s FORMS OF DEVOTION: THE SPIRITUAL IN INDIAN ART gives one that chance.”
Painted worship
Painted worship

The collection reveals another significant thing: artistic styles and practices have vastly evolved over time, but the articulation of worship has largely remained the same. Beyond Varma, there are other varied, visually calming depictions of devotion, such as Kanchar Chander’s image of a yogini in acrylic, sequins and Swarovski on canvas (above) or Anuradha Upadhyay’s imagining of Mahamaya in acrylic on canvas (below). All the images are juxtaposed with essays – contributed by Devudutt Pattanaik, Desmond Lazaro and Mushirul Hassan, among others – that show that spiritual art in India has a hitherto unexplored richness, intensity and vigour.
It is heartening that Bahl, in her investigations, gives importance to artists across faiths. In his essay, the Dean of Studies at Bhaktivedanta College in Belgium, Kenneth R. Valpey, points out that Islam might be believed to discourage "any graphic representation of divinity", but "the rendered visible form is by no means rejected; rather, the divine messages... take form in the written word, in marks that appear as an elegant, swirling dance of devotional affirmation." Such calligraphy can be seen in the works of Mohammed Zubair.
RADIO AND VIDEO FEATURE
RADIO ONE, Weekend Brunch
21st March 2015, New Delhi (Listeners: 3.9 million)
Forms of Devotion: The Spiritual in Indian Art.

"A multidimensional arts project, conceptualised around the notion of spiritual and devotional in India art."

Priyanka Tewari held a 12 minute interview with Martin Gurvich.
Neeta Aggarwal held a 11 minute interview with Sushma K Bahl.
Neeta Aggarwal held 13 minute interviews with some of the artists, workshop participants and visitors.
THE WALL ART TV
8th April 2015, New Delhi
Forms of Devotion, at the Lalit Kala Akademi

“This is a very diverse collection, which represents the diversity and plurality of India, Indian art, Indian culture and especially sacred art.”
TREE OF LIFE
NEWS
ONLINE
ANl NEWS
12th April 2015, Online
PM Modi gifts French President Hollande ‘Tree of Life’ painting

“Prime Minister Narendra Modi has gifted President Francois Hollande a painting titled ‘Tree of Life’ after a successful trip to the European nation”

New Delhi, April 12 (ANI): Prime Minister Narendra Modi, who is currently on the first leg of his three-nation, nine-day tour in Paris, has gifted French President Francois Hollande a painting titled ‘Tree of Life’. The official twitter account of the Prime Minister’s Office shared details about the painting via a series of tweets. “During the France visit, PM @narendramodi presented President @fhollande a painting titled ‘Tree of Life’. @Elysee. The painting, ‘Tree of Life’, reflects traditional societal respect for nature in India.” "With multiple roots and branches like a banyan tree, it symbolises tree’s benevolence, fruit, seeds, shelter, healing, procreation and regeneration faculties that sustain life and clean the environment." Prime Minister Modi is scheduled to travel to Germany later today after a successful visit of France. He will later fly to Canada for the final leg of his tour.
Prime Minister Narendra Modi gifted French President Francois Hollande a painting titled 'Tree of Life', reflecting traditional societal respect for nature in India.
“Prime Minister Narendra Modi gifted French President Francois Hollande a painting titled ‘Tree of Life’, reflecting traditional societal respect for nature in India.”

Mahapatra, who has been honoured by Lalit Kala Akademi has been practicing the art form for the last 30 years along with the rest of his family, and works from his home in the heritage crafts village of Raghurajpur.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi, who wound up his first visit to France, gifted President Francois Hollande a painting titled ‘Tree of Life’ which reflects the traditional societal respect for nature in India.

The painting, pigments on silk, has been done by an Odisha artist, Bhaskar Mahapatra, who has been practicing the art form for the last 30 years along with the rest of his family, and works from his home in the heritage crafts village of Raghurajpur, a PMO statement said.

Mahapatra, who has been honoured by Lalit Kala Akademi, is inspired by his training and expertise in palm leaf painting and pattachitra.

The message behind gifting it seemed to be the emphasis on sustenance of life and clean environment ahead of the global meet on climate change that France will be hosting in December this year.

“The tree, as a divine gift central to human life, is a recurring element in Indian artistic practice. The Tree of Life, with multiple roots and branches like a banyan tree, is a motif for a tree’s benevolence, fruit, seeds, shelter, healing, procreation and regeneration faculties that sustain life and clean the environment,” the statement said.

France will be hosting the meeting of Conference of Parties on UN Framework Convention on Climate Change in December 2015.
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Narendra Modi gifts ‘Tree of Life’ painting to French President

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PM Narendra Modi Gifts ‘Tree of Life’ painting to French President Francois Hollande

“Prime Minister Narendra Modi gifted French President Francois Hollande a painting titled ‘Tree of Life’, reflecting traditional societal respect for nature in India.”

NEW DELHI: Prime Minister Narendra Modi gifted French President Francois Hollande a painting titled ‘Tree of Life’, reflecting traditional societal respect for nature in India, a statement said today.

The tree, as a divine gift central to human life, is a recurring element in Indian artistic practice, it said.

“The Tree of Life, with multiple roots and branches like a banyan tree, is a motif for a tree’s benevolence, fruit, seeds, shelter, healing, procreation and regeneration faculties that sustain life and clean environment,” the statement said.

France will host a meeting of Conference of Parties on UN Framework Convention on climate change in December 2015.

The painting (pigments on silk) has been done by an Odisha artist, Bhaskar Mahapatra, who has been practicing the art form for the last 30 years along with his family, and works from home in Raghurajpur village.

Bhaskar Mahapatra, who has been honoured by Lalit Kala Akademi, is inspired by his training and expertise in palm leaf painting and pattachitra.

France was the first stop in PM Modi’s three-nation-tour. He will fly to Germany today, and later to Canada.
Prime Minister Narendra Modi gifted French President Francois Hollande a painting titled ‘Tree of Life’, reflecting traditional societal respect for nature in India.

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PM Modi gifts ‘Tree of Life’ painting to French President

“Prime Minister Narendra Modi gifted French President Francois Hollande a painting titled ‘Tree of Life’, reflecting traditional societal respect for nature in India”
“Prime Minister Narendra Modi has gifted President Francois Hollande a painting titled ‘Tree of Life’ after a successful trip to the European nation.”

Paris, Apr. 12 (ANI): Prime Minister Narendra Modi has gifted President Francois Hollande a painting titled ‘Tree of Life’ after a successful trip to the European nation.

The Prime Minister took to twitter to share the information about the gift.

"Presented the painting, 'Tree of Life' to President @fhollande," he wrote, also posting a picture of the painting.

The Tree of Life reflects traditional societal respect for nature in India. The tree as a divine gift which is central to human life is a recurring element in Indian artistic practice. The Tree of Life, with multiple roots and branches like a banyan tree, is a motif for a tree's benevolence, fruit, seeds, shelter, healing, procreation and regeneration faculties that sustain life and clean the environment.

The painting, which consists of pigments on silk, was made by Odisha artist Bhaskar Mahapatra, who has been practicing the art form for the last thirty years and has been honoured by the Lalit Kala Akademi for the same.

Prime Minister Modi is scheduled to travel to Germany later today after a successful visit of France. He will later fly to Canada for the final leg of his three-nation, nine-day tour. (ANI)
Prime Minister Narendra Modi gifted French President Francois Hollande a painting titled ‘Tree of Life’, reflecting traditional societal respect for nature in India. The painting reflects the traditional societal respect for nature in India. The tree as a divine gift central to human life is a recurring element in Indian artistic practice. The Tree of Life, with multiple roots and branches like a banyan tree, is a motif for a tree’s benevolence, fruit, seeds, shelter, healing, procreation and regeneration faculties that sustain life and clean the environment. The painting (pigments on silk) has been done by an Odisha artist, Bhaskar Mahapatra, who has been practicing the art form for the last thirty years along with the rest of his family. France will be hosting the meeting of Conference of Parties on UN Framework Convention on Climate Change in Dec 2015.
China supports India’s desire to play bigger role in UN

“Prime Minister Narendra Modi gifted French President Francois Hollande a painting titled ‘Tree of Life’, reflecting traditional societal respect for nature in India”

Beijing, April 13
China on Monday reiterated its support to India's playing a bigger role in the UN but stopped short of an outright backing for the bid to secure a permanent seat in the UN Security Council.
China supports India’s desire to play bigger role in UN

"We attach great importance to the role and status of India as a major developing country in regional and international affairs," Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesman Hong Lei told the media here, endorsing PM Narendra Modi’s statement that India had a right to be in the UNSC.

"We understand and support India’s desire to play a big role in multi-lateral institutions including the UN. The Chinese side will continue to make efforts with all parties to strive for a package plan that accommodates concerns and interests of all parties through extensive democratic consultation," Hong said.

Asked whether the "package plan" referred to a seat in the UNSC, Hong clarified that it is mainly about the reforming of the powerful body.

"Reforms of the UNSC concern a wide range of elements as well as the interest of all members of the Security Council. We maintain that we should strive for consensus through democratic consultation," he said.

"The package plan is mainly about the security council reforms. The UN is a very big organisation. Reform should not be taken place only in the Security Council but also in the field of social and economic areas," he said.

Hong said that China supports the reform of the UNSC to increase its representation to “give more voice to developing countries”.

"The reform of the Security Council bears on the long term development of UN and immediate interests of all members, he said."
China is the only member of the permanent five of the UNSC that is yet to fully endorse its support. The other four — United States, Russia, Britain and France — have, in principle, backed New Delhi’s push for UNSC permanent membership.

This is, however, the first time Beijing has spoke of a package plan.

However, Chinese officials say that Beijing’s main problem is with Japan’s, and not India’s, permanent membership, to the Security Council due to the long-standing feud between the two Asian giants. They, however, add that India should not join hands with Tokyo to stake its claim.

With Pakistan, China’s close ally and India’s neighbour, opposing India’s claim for a seat, China has been caught in a dilemma about backing the demand.

India along with Brazil, Germany and Japan is part of G-4 countries campaigning for the Permanent Membership in the UNSC.

In the joint statement issued after the Foreign Ministers meeting of Russia, India and China (RIC) in February here, China and Russia reiterated the importance they attached to the status of India in international affairs and supported its aspiration to play a greater role in the United Nations.

**Modi calls for permanent seat in UNSC**

India has the “right” to be in the UN Security Council and the days of “begging” for it are gone, Prime Minister Narendra Modi has said, as he pitched for a permanent seat in the powerful world body.

Addressing a congregation of NRIs here before winding up his four-day tour of France, Modi last night said India had made lot of sacrifices for world peace since the World War I and even after the UN was founded.
It has been the largest contributor to the peacekeeping forces across the world, he said.

“Still, India continues to yearn for a (permanent) seat in the UN Security Council. I urge the world... it is time to respect the peacekeeping efforts. It is the right of the sentiments of Mahatma Gandhi and Gautam Buddha. Those days are gone when India had to beg. Now, our nation wants its right,” he told the gathering of about 3,000 Indians.

“There is hardly any other country which has such moral authority as the land of Mahatma Gandhi and Buddha. I hope that when the United Nations celebrates its 70th anniversary (this year), it will especially think about this,” the PM said.

Modi referred to his visit earlier in the day to a war memorial in the Lille region of France set up as a tribute to about 10,000 Indians who got martyred while fighting alongside France in the World War I.

Modi said he wanted to send out a message to the world to realise that Indians have been ready to sacrifice their lives for peace since as long as one century.

“I want the world to know that 14 lakh Indians put their lives at risk by participating in the World War I...Who were they fighting for? Not for India or expansion of India...Thousands of years of India’s history is testimony to the fact that it has never indulged in aggression,” Modi said.

“Indian soldiers fought shoulder-to-shoulder with France...They fought for somebody else,” he added. “Sometimes, history is forgotten. Those who forget history will lose their right to write one,” the Prime Minister said, adding that, ”India is known for its sacrifices...One can fight for oneself, but to die for others is different.” — PTI

‘Tree of Life’ painting for French Prez
Paris: PM Narendra Modi gifted President Francois Hollande a painting titled "Tree of Life" which reflects the traditional societal respect for nature in India. The painting, pigments on silk, has been done by an Odisha artist, Bhaskar Mahapatra, a PMO statement said.

Post studies, Indians can extend stay in France
Paris: Indian students can now extend their stay in France beyond completion of their studies as French students can in India. This is possible after the two sides agreed to the new scheme to allow Indian students in France and French students in India to stay for 24 months. The scheme offers Indian Visa for 12 months renewable once for 12 months for 250 French students and a "second residence permit" of 12 months for the Indian students in France following the 12 months already granted. — PTI
GURU NANAK DEV NEWS
ONLINE
“Prime Minister Narendra Modi gifted Canadian Prime Minister Stephen Harper a miniature painting of Guru Nanak Dev”

Prime Minister Narendra Modi has gifted Canadian Prime Minister Stephen Harper a miniature painting of Guru Nanak Dev.

Painted in traditional Indian miniature style, the painting shows Guru Nanak Dev with his two disciples Bhai Mardana and Bhai Bala.

The pristine landscape in the background adds to the tranquillity of the painting, which is encased in intricately painted borders.

Painted on handmade paper with mineral colours, the work has been done by a Jaipur-based artist Virendra Bannu, who is a seventh generation artist and has been taking the specialized miniature art form legacy of his family forward.

While presenting the painting to Harper, Prime Minister Modi said, “So many of our Punjabi brothers and sisters have made Canada their home and enriched it with their renowned vigour and entrepreneurial drive.” (ANI)
“Prime Minister Narendra Modi gifted Canadian Prime Minister Stephen Harper a miniature painting of Guru Nanak Dev”
**JAGRAN JOSH - ANI**
17th April 2015, Online
*Narendra Modi gifted miniature painting titled Guru Nanak Dev to Stephen Harper*

“The Prime Minister Narendra Modi on 15 April 2015 gifted a miniature painting titled Guru Nanak Dev to Canadian Prime Minister Stephen Harper”

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*Narendra Modi gifted Miniature Painting titled Guru Nanak Dev to Stephen Harper*

17-APR-2015

**Miniature Painting titled Guru Nanak Dev: painted by Virendra Bannu, a Jaipur-based artist**

The Prime Minister Narendra Modi on 15 April 2015 gifted a miniature painting titled Guru Nanak Dev to Canadian Prime Minister, Stephen Harper. Modi was on an official visit to Canada from 14 April to 16 April 2015.

The miniature paintings composition that shows Guru Nanak Dev with his two disciples Bhai Mardana and Bhai Bala, sitting beside him is painted in the traditional Indian miniature style. It is painted on handmade paper with mineral colours and carries background of pristine landscape which adds to the tranquility around the painting encased in intricately painted borders.

The painting is the work of Virendra Bannu, a Jaipur-based artist, who is the seventh generation artist in his family. Bannu has been taking forward the legacy of his family in specialized miniature art form.
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“Prime Minister Narendra Modi yesterday gifted a miniature painting depicting Sikh Guru Nanak Dev with his two disciples to his Canadian counterpart Stephen Harper.”

OTTAWA: Prime Minister Narendra Modi yesterday gifted a miniature painting depicting Sikh Guru Nanak Dev with his two disciples to his Canadian counterpart Stephen Harper.

PM Modi who is on a three-day visit to Canada, presented the painting done in traditional Indian miniature style to Mr Harper.

The composition shows Guru Nanak Dev with his two disciples Bhai Mardana and Bhai Bala, sitting beside him.

The painting is encased in intricately painted borders and made with handmade paper with mineral colours.

The work has been done by a Jaipur-based artist, Virendra Bannu.

“So many of our Punjabi brothers and sisters have made Canada their home and enriched it with their renowned vigour and entrepreneurial drive,” PM Modi said.
“Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Wednesday gifted a miniature painting depicting Sikh Guru Nanak Dev with his two disciples to his Canadian counterpart Stephen Harper.”

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The work has been done by a Jaipur-based artist, Virendra Bannu. “So many of our Punjabi brothers and sisters have made Canada their home and enriched it with their renowned vigour and entrepreneurial drive,” Modi said.
Modi gifts Guru Nanak Dev's painting to Canadian PM

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Modi gifts Canada PM painting showing Guru Nanak Dev with disciples

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