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SOUTH CHINA MORNING POST THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 18, 2010

Going Out 3

Rang

Sundaram Tagore Gallery
Feb 24 to Mar 28

Natvar Bhavsar, best known for his pure-pigment paintings, says colours are like sounds that reverberate with rhythm. The New York-based Indian artist says that over the past 50 years he has created art that investigates the "power and the possibilities" of colour.

"I believe that colours emanate silence and poetic reverberations," he says. "They contain an unfathomably rich visual poetry. Through the patient exploration of colour, I have been rewarded with countless rhythms."

In his latest exhibition, Rang, opening at the Sundaram Tagore Gallery next Wednesday, he further explores the subtle energy of colours. According to the artist, the Sanskrit word rang (being in ecstasy, being devoted to ecstasy, and being free) is an expression that resonates strongly with his work. He celebrates freedom with his paintings, just as dervishes, Bharatanatyam dancers and Sufis do in their own ways.

"In my own process of creating art, I have always been drawn to spatial reverberations," Bhavsar (above) says.

"My process is similar to taking a walk in the wilderness, where one's being comes into union with nature. I often use the languages of poetry and music to express my understanding of the energy that colours possess.

"Colours engage you fully, lead to freedom and create a sublime world that is deeply fulfilling."

His interest in art began in India at a very young age. As a child, he was exposed to the vibrant colours of his grandparents' fabric-printing business, the medium of rangoli and the Indian Holi

festival. At the age of 20, he came under the tutelage of artist and teacher Shri Rasikbhai Parikh.

"These initial experiences were catalysts and significantly inspirational events. They prepared me to forge a new path in painting just as Pollock did with his exploration of the medium," says Bhavsar, whose works feature in more than 800 collections including those at the Guggenheim Museum, the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York and the Museum of Contemporary Art in Sydney.

He went to the US in 1962 to pursue art studies and spent the mid-60s in New York at a time when artists such as Mark Rothko, Barnett Newman, Ray Parker, Jules Diltski, Ken Noland and Morris Louis were prominent in American art culture.

The artist recalls that abstract expressionism, colour field painting and formalist art were the reigning movements. Process art and minimalism were about to emerge.

"Throughout my career, I have worked with the purest pigments, employing them over horizontal surfaces like falling snow or drizzling rain," says Bhavsar.

"I have created artworks with a unique expressive power. They engulf you and, I hope, the experience is like becoming immersed in nature, observing the movement of running water, moving clouds and drifting winds."

On show in his upcoming exhibition are paintings including *Kundan*, *Aalap II*, *Poorna III* and *Vrataa III*.

"These are manifestations of the joyous journey, expressing the rhythms, reverberations and inherent energy of the medium," Bhavsar says.

Kevin Kwong

**57-59 Hollywood Road, Central. Mon to Sat,
10am to 7pm. Inquiries: 2581 9678**



PREVIEW