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Page	12
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# Progressive Artists' works are a steal

I WOULD like to begin this column with my personal tribute to Tyeb Mehta, one of India's greatest painters. It was a matter of great satisfaction when I heard about the sale of his painting *Celebration*, at Christie's for \$317,500 (Rs 1.5 crore) in 2002 — the highest price ever paid for an Indian painting till then. As I write this column, I continue to be filled with great sadness at his death at the age of 84. A founder member of the famous 'Progressive Artist Group' of Bombay, Tyeb Mehta had been ailing for quite sometime but his death was nevertheless untimely, as he still had so much more to offer to the art lovers of the world. In 2005, his painting titled *Gesture* was sold for more than double the price — Rs 3.1 crore by Osian's. Among his unforgettable works is *Mahisasura*, which remains one of my favourites.

## BUSINESSOFART

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The second art summit is steadily moving closer, but the art community in Kolkata appear to have as little knowledge about the upcoming event as it had last year. The first art summit and its follow-up this year in the third week of August, are undoubtedly among the most important events in the calendar of art events in India. I confess that I am pained to see that there has been as little sensitivity towards this matter as in the previous year. However, it is still not too late to spread the word and I sincerely hope that the art summit organisers will rectify

this at the earliest. We artists are a sensitive lot and there are a great many artists in Kolkata! They will no doubt take note of the fact that there appears to be only one Kolkata gallery taking part — Akar Prakar.

Among the 54 art galleries listed by the summit organisers, there are other cities also, that have few participants. Chennai has two, Prakrit Arts and Apparao Galleries, Guwahati has Easel, while Bangalore has Gallery Sumukha and Galleryske. Mumbai has some of the most respected names such as Pundole, Bodhi Art, Chemould, Sakshi and others. The Delhi galleries are most prominent, which is just as it should be, since the art summit is being held in the city. We will be able to see Delhi Art Gallery, Vadehra, Religare Arts Initiative, Dhoomimal Gallery, The Stainless, Marigold Fine Art, Nature Morte, Palette, Gallery Espace, Gallerie Ganesha, Gallery Nyva and more. With the passing of Tyeb Mehta, it seems particularly apt that two artists of the Progressive Artists Group are being featured by India's oldest commercial gallery, Dhoomimals. Dhoomimals is known for its superb collection of works by F N Souza and part of the exhibition space that the Gallery has been allotted, will be used for showing this artist's works ranging from the 40s to the 90s — in all the various mediums and subjects that he is known for — nudes, landscapes and heads. It may be noted that recently his *Orange Head* was sold for Rs 3.16 crore by the Sotheby's. At the art summit, genuine art collectors will be able to buy from a range of works including heads for around Rs 65 lakh.

The second artist from the Progressive Group, H A Gade, is no less an artist by the quality of his work, but certainly less famous internationally, than Souza. Gade, a founder member of the Group, is credited with revolutionising the style of abstract landscapes. Dhoomimal Gallery will be exhibiting many of Gade's watercolours, dating back to the 40s. These will be offered in the range of Rs 7 lakh to Rs 8 lakh and art collectors should take note of these prices...perhaps these may be the lowest prices ever, for works by any of the Progressive Artist Group members.

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