

Shaping a Contemporary Art Scene: The Development of Artistic Circulation, Networks, and Cultural Policies between India and the U.S. since the 1950's

By Christine Ithurbide

Ph.D. Candidate, CESSMA Laboratory, Paris Diderot University, France,
In co-supervision with the
Center for the Study of Regional Development, Jawaharlal University, Delhi, India

c.ithurbide@orange.fr

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The purpose of my research project at the Rockefeller Archive Center (RAC) was to provide an original analysis of the Indo-American artistic relationships during the second half of the 20th century, their nature, evolution and impact on the shaping of the contemporary Indian art scene. This research is part of my Ph.D. entitled “Geography of Contemporary Indian Art: Cities, Actors and Circulations,” where I study the construction and organization of contemporary Indian art territories at different scales (art district, city, region, and country) and their insertion into the global art system. Particularly interested in the post-Independence context (after 1947), the social networks which contributed to the renewal of art spaces and practices in India and in the rise of a powerful art market, the dissertation aims to question more precisely the role of foreign funds and scholarships on the emergence of a contemporary Indian art scene. In other terms, to what extent did American patronage and cultural policies contribute to a new geography of contemporary art in India?

The Creation of New Indo-American Artistic Relationships

In the early 1950s, American funds to India were mainly oriented toward agriculture and educational development. The Council on Economic and Cultural Affairs (CECA) represented one of the most active organizations, and stemmed from the long-time interest of John D. Rockefeller 3rd (JRD 3rd) in Asia.¹ Created in November 1953, the corporation with

its charitable, educational and scientific purposes was designed to stimulate and support economic and cultural activities from Japan to Pakistan.² However, the concept of culture remained quite undefined and consisted essentially of exchange programs with scientists and academicians.³ This lack of cultural exchanges had problematic consequences as Douglas Ensminger explained to JDR 3rd in 1954: “No mechanism or medium exists for ... putting Indians and Americans into mutual cultural contact. This void, serious in itself, is rapidly being filled by [the] USSR and China, as well as the satellite nation.⁴”

The next year, the possible creation of an Asian-American Organization was under discussion.⁵ One of its main objectives would consist in stimulating or carrying on various cultural activities including visits of music, drama, and dance groups from Asia, and the exchange of art material and exhibits. Increasingly in the second half of the 1950s, the CECA looked to the eventual development of a significant cultural program to supplement its work in the field of social sciences related to rural development. Such an initiative happened parallel to new industrial collaborations with Asia, including the field of design with the launching of Products of Asia in October 1955. Under the sponsorship of Rockefeller interests, the company was formed to stimulate trade between the U.S. and Asian countries in consumer products of fine design.⁶ Products of India, Inc. opened on 630 5th Avenue in New York a few years later on April 23, 1959. Managed by Austin T Graves, it dealt with the development of specific items made in India for the American market and imported fine handbags, scarves, shoes, jewelry and other handicrafts products.

An important report on American Cultural activities in India⁷ was released in 1957 and provided a complete picture of the artistic and cultural spaces active in India, their managers and activities ten years after its independence. The report also demonstrated the presence of American culture (radio, drama programs, music events, and exhibitions). Thirty-one Indian cities had some cultural contact with America between 1955 and 1957. The

number of cultural events totaled three hundred twenty-one, of which seventy-one percent occurred in the five largest cities of the country: sixty-six Bombay; fifty-eight in Madras; fifty-seven in Delhi; thirty-eight in Calcutta and ten in Hyderabad.⁸ Interestingly, this report was not the first attempt to better understand the Indian art scene. Five years earlier, in 1952, a Grant-in-aid was awarded to Stella Kramrisch, a professor at the University of Pennsylvania to report on leading artists and cultural leaders in India. She completed a more or less confidential report on different topics including the identification of artists and art centers where work of high quality was occurring and for which modest support might have important ramifications.⁹ She was also asked to survey architecture, sculpture, painting, crafts, art criticism, and the role and evolution of art patronage considered of paramount importance to the future of art in India.¹⁰

If collaborations existed in a diversity of cultural fields, they did not follow a particular strategy but aimed to grow bigger and provide more facilities for contemporary Indian artists. Few students could afford to study art in the U.S. or live and paint abroad. Outside of the Museum of Modern Art, ties between American art galleries and India were almost non-existent. A program that would start a flow of art books and an exchange of reproductions would be of immeasurable benefit to artists in India.¹¹ Indeed, besides a few exhibitions of American artists in India supported by the United States Information Service (USIS),¹² only two major contemporary art shows traveled to India, as a part of the Second and Third International Contemporary Art Exhibition in Delhi in 1952 and 1957. Both were organized by MoMA and supported by the Ford Foundation.¹³ The artworks, including paintings from Pollock, De Kooning, and Rothko, were selected by Sam Hunter, curator at MoMA. The traveling process was supervised by Porter McCray, director of circulating exhibitions at MoMA.¹⁴ Between 1954 and 1959, the museum was involved in two other exhibitions, also funded by the Ford Foundation: Textiles and Ornamental Arts of India at

MoMA in 1954, was a great success, as was “Design Today in American and Europe,” a travelling exhibition in India from 1958 to 1959 under direct auspices of the Ministry of Commerce and Industry.¹⁵

JDR 3rd strongly believed that there was merit in supplementing the agricultural activities of the CECA with work in cultural exchanges during the CECA meeting of December 4, 1957, he returned to the possibility that “an over-all Asian society might be formed and that perhaps that group might be helpful in the development of some of these cultural ideas.” This expansion of the Council’s work in cultural affairs found its realization in New York with the creation of the Asia Society in 1960.¹⁶ Its two main purposes were to take a leading part in educating Americans about the cultures of Asia and to encourage a two-way circulation between Asia and the U.S. in ideas, in the arts, in people. As a part of this project, the Asia House gallery was created to host exhibitions on arts from Asia.

Although an important cultural turn was taken in the Indo-American exchanges, JDR 3rd aspired to go further as he explained in a letter to Douglas Ensminger in 1961: “I had in mind the arts and particularly the international exchange of the arts.”¹⁷ For such an organization, he was thinking not of a group, but of one individual to serve as the focal point of the international effort. Indeed, no program was providing direct help for contemporary Indian artists, but two of them started to benefit from grants in 1962: Krishen Khanna (through funds given to the Institute of International Education), who studied and travelled for nine months in the U.S. and S.H. Raza who was invited for lectures at the University of California during summer and visited artists and museums in eastern U.S.¹⁸

JDR 3rd’s personal diary of 1963 reveals how he eventually achieved his project of creating a particular art program with Asia. On August 8th, he had lunch with Porter McCray, the previous director of circulating exhibitions at the MoMA during the first contemporary art exchanges with India. He told McCray that he had long felt that culture and the arts could

play an important part in fostering better understanding and mutual respect and appreciation between the U.S. and Asia. Despite a number of grants made through the Asia and Japan Societies and through CECA toward this end, he had never approached the subject on a really “thoughtful and organized basis.”¹⁹ JDR 3rd told McCray that he was planning to set up a new fund and that he had in mind, under its aegis, to make a survey as to the possibilities in this direction and hopefully develop a program. JDR 3rd, who liked McCray, was impressed with him, eventually asked him whether he might be interested in heading up such an effort, at least in the survey stage.²⁰ The next week they met again to further discuss a cultural interchange program primarily with Asia and primarily in the arts. “We seemed to be together in our thinking and I am very much inclined to go ahead and take him on to head a program under the new so-called JDR 3rd Fund which I am about to establish,” JDR 3rd wrote in his diary on August 13, 1963.²¹ Hence, a powerful program for the future of the contemporary Indian art scene was created.

An Ambitious Grant for Contemporary Indian Artists: The JDR 3rd Fund (1963-1975)

From 1964 to 1974, fourteen Indian painters and sculptors received grants from the JDR 3rd Fund, directed by Porter McCray, to come to the United States usually for one year, to study, observe cultural activities in the visual and performing arts, meet American artists, and to pursue their own works without concern for basic living expenses.²² Today most of these artists are recognized as Indian Masters, i.e., Gaitonde, Jyoti Bhatt, Akbar Padamsee, K.G. Subramanyan, Adi Davierwalla and Tyeb Mehta.

Porter McCray would travel extensively in Asia to meet with new artists and find new potential grantees. Letters in Box 108 of the JDR 3rd Fund Archives enables one to reconstitute the emergence of new cultural networks between America and India. In 1962, while visiting India as a representative of MoMA, McCray visited Gaitonde’s studio in Bombay and since then followed his work through exhibitions and collections in India and

the U.S. Gaitonde, from November 1964 to November 1965, was the first Indian painter to receive a grant from the JDR 3rd Fund. During the same trip, McCray saw a great deal of Padamsee's works and was quite taken by their character and quality.²³ On December 9, 1964, he sent a letter to Padamsee, who was based in Paris, regarding the possibility of his coming to America on a grant from the Rockefeller Foundation. When Padamsee came to the U.S. from June 1965 to June 1966, Avinash Chandra and Gaitonde were also in New York under a JDR 3rd grant and the Board of Trustees was hoping to produce a positive interaction among the three painters.²⁴ The fact that each artist would require recommendation letters to receive a grant highlighted the role of networks among artistic society. It was difficult for anyone to suggest names of the artists not belonging to his fraternity mentioned, Jyoti Bhatt retrospectively.²⁵ Padamsee recommended Davierwalla and Tyeb Mehta, the latter was also recommended by Krishen Khanna and M.F. Hussain.

A JDR 3rd Grant was extremely convenient for the artists. A full grant would be between \$8,000 and \$13,000 per artist and would include international travel fees (a world tour was financed to visit different countries in Europe, Asia, America), U.S. travel (usually one month to visit important American cities), per diem, maintenance and material supplies. They would be lent an apartment owned by the Fund in a central location of Manhattan.²⁶ The Fund would pay for the insurance certificate to cover the artist and his family (wife and children if any were coming along). The Institute of International Education (IIE) assisted with passports and visas. The organizers had convinced the Reserve Bank of India to release some of the foreign exchange necessary for the artists to live abroad during the grant program.²⁷

Artists' letters testified to the importance of this experience in their careers. First, it enabled them to discover ancient, modern and contemporary Western art, visiting museums and galleries not only in New York, but in numerous other cities (Philadelphia, Washington,

Chicago, and San Francisco, among others). “We saw many collections that included Whistler, Ryder, and many other American masters. We had seen very few original works by the American artists before coming to the U.S.,” explained Jyoti Bhatt.²⁸ Most importantly, the artists would be recommended and introduced to collectors or museum directors, leading quite often to the acquisition of their work or to their participation in shows. Adi Davierwalla was introduced to the Casarellas, Seymour Lipton, Naum Gabo and Noguchi. He traveled with his wife to see museums and to meet museum personnel in Boston and Washington and had a chance to meet other artists and sculptors in Boston. In 1969, he was invited to exhibit at the International Exhibition at the Union Carbide Building with artists from more than fifty countries and was also chosen for the IIE’s travelling exhibit (with art works chosen by Dorothy Miller of MoMA and John Gordon of the Whitney Museum), an exhibition that traveled throughout the U.S. during the next two years.²⁹

While visiting San Francisco, Los Angeles and Detroit, Arun Bose and his wife were under the guidance of Phoebe Galgiani or Mrs. Walter, Director of Community Programs for International visitors, who would organize visits and appointments for him, with, for instance Ellen Sharp, curator of graphic art at Detroit Institute of Arts or with Sylvia Medintz, from the World Affairs Council in California. “The Bosses were enchanting and everyone loved them,” Galgiani wrote, and she believed the Graphic's gallery was going to handle his prints, “which are really fine.”³⁰ K.G. Subramanyan did a one-man show at the Navina Gallery, Jyoti Bhatt exhibited his prints at the Pratt Institute in 1965, and Davierwalla presented eight sculptures at the Bertha S. Gallery in New York. A letter from Jyoti Bhatt to McCray, thanks him for suggesting showing his work to Lieberman of MoMA, which placed two of his prints in the museum’s collection.³¹ The meeting of Abkar Padamsse with artists arranged by the IIE was most useful, as subsequent to the meeting he wrote an article on Lee Bontecou's sculpture for the *Times* of India.³² The experiences in the United States opened new

opportunities for some artists such as Avinash who was invited to design a glass mural for a factory in Monterrey, Mexico.³³

The archival material also highlights the difficulties and daily struggles encountered at the time by Indian artists in the global art world. Although the JDR 3rd Fund approved a grant to Krishna Reddy in 1971 to assist him in establishing a printmaking workshop in New Delhi, his project was not achieved because of the lack of support from the Indian administration. Due to transport and customs issues Davierwalla had trouble getting his sculptures back to India because of Indian customs regulations.³⁴ Nevertheless, most of the artists remembered the longer term benefits their experiences in the U.S. represented in their career. “It gave me (being a grantee) a reputation in India. I met number of artists, saw their painting and more, so of a great American artist Mark Rothko. Now I can work on my own without doing any job for sustenance,” wrote Gaitonde.³⁵ Others had wished that two or three years after their grant an exhibition of their new works would be organized by the Fund and held in New York.³⁶ For artists such as Padamsee, who were not in their first long sojourn abroad, the benefit was less a matter of acquiring new techniques than in the confrontation with new concepts.³⁷ Others such as Krishna Reddy, came back to settle in New York. In 1977, he started to teach in the Print Department of New York University. The JDR 3rd Fund did not only support contemporary artists, but also musicians, dancers, filmmakers, architects, designers, art historians, and curators. More generally, the new mobility and encounters led to the expansion of the geography of the contemporary Indian art scene, and to the creation of long-term networking on a global scale.

Defining the Role of American Funds in Shaping the Contemporary Art Scene in India

Bringing back knowledge and experience acquired in the U.S. to India represented another step in the development of the Indian art scene and its insertion into a global art system. Parallel to artists’ grants, grants to museum specialists and art historians were also

essential in the rethinking of art institutions' activities in India. What particularly was the American contribution to museum administration, curating and exhibition design? What was the possible influence of American philanthropy on Indian patronage?

Back in India former grantees kept more or less tight links with the American art world. Interesting letters show how some of them requested the sending of material to improve their university. In a letter dated June 1966 to McCray, Jyoti Bhatt expressed his satisfaction with the possibility of receiving an etching press (from Charles Brand Manufacturer, New York) through the JDR 3rd Fund for the further development of his print department at Maharaja Sayajirao University, Baroda.³⁸ Ratan Parimoo, head of the department of History and Aesthetics at the same university, sent a request to the JDR 3rd Fund to support the acquisition of a set of new art books and color slides to augment the facilities of Baroda library to make its educational program more effective and maintain a better pedagogical standard.³⁹ Indeed American funds facilitated the circulation of academic material and enabled an entire new generation of Indian students and scholars to have access to broader art history, though inevitably western-centered.

Museology was another discipline to be undertaken in India. Letters from different directors of museums and art institutions, collected mainly in AAC records, provide much information on the situation since the mid-1950s. Ajit Mokerjee, director of the Indian Institute of Art in Industry in Calcutta wrote to McCray in 1955 that he felt that India was terribly far behind in display techniques and wanted to apply for a grant in which, besides a list of museums to visit, he would be looking for techniques and ideas of exhibits applicable to India for the purpose of encouraging contemporary artists.⁴⁰ He felt the acquirement of those skills urgent as Russian and Chinese ideology was entering the minds of painters, musicians, writers, and other artists and intellectuals in the Calcutta area, so he was willing to oppose communist influences by showing the achievements of artistic works in the Western

world.⁴¹ The highly political commitment of art exhibits in the context of the cold war is evident here.

The long and detailed letters from Grace Morley, director of the National Museum, to McCray enable one to follow the progress in India in the 1960s, the importance of American grants, both from the Rockefeller and from the Ford Foundation, and the evolution of Indian government involvement. Her first major concern was the acquisition of air-conditioning machinery, costing approximately \$100,000 in foreign exchange.⁴² The JDR 3rd Fund helped purchase a limited number of individual units where the survival of certain precious objects was threatened. As she tried to make her museum the first in India to have an art museum library along western lines, she commented with enthusiasm on the visit of Bernard Karpel, MoMa librarian, during winter 1965, to evaluate several libraries in India and make recommendations on the material he felt would be most useful.⁴³ Morley became president of the Museums Association of India, founded in 1943 to advise the Ministry of Education on the requirements of museums in the country.⁴⁵ Following her participation in the Ministry's Museum Camps in 1965, she commented on the improving situation: "there is certainly every indication that the Museum movement is progressing steadily here and some of the benefits that we have been able to represent, in larger museums and such centers as Delhi, are spreading to a certain degree to the rest of the country. It is of course a slow progress." When she retired in 1966, she proudly wrote to McCray that after five and half years the exhibition galleries were in good order, the storage was as safe and convenient as possible and that modern museum activities had been started according to international practice.

However, the lack of materials and training in exhibition design, restoration, and museum administration remained important issues. Dr. Moti Chandra, from the Prince of Wales Museum in Bombay, who was renovating the galleries for the rehangings of the Tata Collection, was persuaded that his experience and equipment were too limited to sensibly

undertake restoration without guidance from an expert.⁴⁶ The same year, the JDR 3rd Fund enabled seven Indian museum specialists⁴⁷ to attend the Seventh International Council of Museum Conferences in the U.S. and to survey American museums. Numerous individual grants were then given to Indian museum specialists and art historians between 1966 and 1975. “It enables [one] to see museology in the practice and in the international perspective,”⁴⁸ commented Dr Hari Bedekar. “The JDR 3rd Fund grant has been of inestimable value ... to gather valuable experience in the field of Museum administration,” wrote B.N. Goswamy, Professor of Art history at Punjab University, Chandigarh. “The cataloguing and documentation of Museum objects has been undertaken along scientific lines and has now been completed.”⁴⁹

American and European expertise was very much valued and trusted.⁵⁰ The planning of the National Institute of Design (NID) in Ahmedabad was among the most emblematic cases with the involvement of foreign consultants such as Charles Eames, E. Scheidegger, and V. Wohlert in its program and organization.⁵¹ Fifteen years later, the Rajmata Gayatri Devi of Jaipur, director of the Maharaja Sawai man Singh II Museum, wrote to McCray for advice concerning an exhibition specialist from the U.S. for the installation of the new wing of her museum, since finding such a person in India seemed rather difficult.⁵² James Shelton from Smithsonian Institution was eventually recommended.

The CECA and the Ford Foundation also supported the creation of major cultural institutions today such as the International Cultural Center in Delhi⁵³ and the National Center for Performing Art (NCPA).⁵⁴ Interestingly, as early as 1966, J.J. Bhabha, director of Tata Industry Ltd. Bombay, met McCray in New York to discuss possible support for a new art center in Bombay, the future NCPA.⁵⁵ Was it a coincidence that JDR 3rd was working for years precisely on the construction of the Lincoln Center for Performing Arts in New York and just inaugurated it two months earlier?⁵⁶ In 1969, J.R.D. Tata, J.J. Bhabha, and N.R.

Mody visited JDR 3rd to talk again about the new NCPA in Bombay, which the Tata interests were supporting heavily. Several quotations found in later articles and reports tend to bring both performing art centers close to each other.⁵⁷ To what extent then, was the American model influential in India? JDR 3rd knew J.R.D. Tata for some years and met him in India and the U.S. as is mentioned in his diaries.⁵⁸ JDR 3rd indeed received numerous ambassadors, diplomats, industrialists and ministers (including Nehru and Indira Gandhi) who were most likely aware of his cultural philanthropy. Among the important philanthropic families in India, he knew of course the Sarabhais from Ahmedabad, one of the great families of India, who occupy a position somewhat analogous to the Rockefeller family in the U.S., influential particularly in civic, artistic, business, and philanthropic enterprises.⁵⁹ More research should be conducted on the relationship maintained between powerful Indian and American business families as they probably did not remain exclusively business-related.

Eventually, it seems that a critical study needs to be made of exhibitions circulating between the U.S. and India. While most American exhibitions in India, privileged contemporary artists',⁶⁰ exhibitions of Indian art in the U.S. tended to over-emphasize antiques and crafts. The program from the Asia House Gallery⁶¹ and the Festival of India of 1981 illustrate this tendency. For instance, in exchange for loaning the exhibition, "Modern Masterpieces" from the Philadelphia Museum of Art to the NGMA in Delhi (including works from Manet, Cezanne, Picasso, Miro, Duchamp, and Mondrian), the Philadelphia museum received Indian works of art for the exhibition the "Manifestation of Siva." The project Contemporary Art in India—recent works on paper, proposed by Milo Beach, with works from M.F. Husain, Krishna Reddy, Laxma Goud, Bhupen Khakhar, Jogen Choudhury, and Anupam Sud from the Herwitz collection,⁶² had been turned down by the International Exhibition Foundation, Sites, and the Art Museum Association.⁶³ Of a total of fifty-four exhibitions, thirty-two were dedicated to art, including seventeen on works of art from

archeology to miniatures of the 19th century⁶⁴ versus six exhibitions on contemporary India art.⁶⁵ Lectures and conferences, but also more general collections of Asian art in America, both public and private, further this tendency with the noticeable exception of the Herwitz Collection. Such positioning tends to maintain India in its glorified past rather than looking at its contemporary art scene.

Conclusion

The rich material available in the JDR 3rd Papers, the archives of the JDR 3rd Fund, Asian Cultural Council (ACC), Social Science Research Council (SSRC), and Ford Foundation enable a particularly interesting and original analysis of the Indo-American artistic relationships during the second half of the 20th century. The study of the historical and geopolitical context in which those relations and networks developed highlights the particular “soft power” attributed to art during the cold war period. This research underlines the central role of Porter A. McCray in fostering contemporary Indian art dynamics and exchanges with the U.S. and also the significant contributions of American philanthropic foundations. While the JDR 3rd Fund seemed to emphasize individual grants and focus particularly on contemporary Indian artists between 1963 and 1975, the Ford Foundation grants started earlier by supporting major MoMA exhibitions of American contemporary art to India and through financing a series of small grants to Indian cultural groups specifically for cultural preservation. However, because of marginal results after 1970 the Ford Foundation’s privileged projects were of national importance, such as Triveni Kala Sangam in Delhi and NCPA in Bombay.⁶⁶ Those two complementary strategies were essential to provide international experiences to Indian artists to allow them to meet new collectors and visit collections not available in India, but also transformed art institutions in India and helped the country reach international standards and quality. American support from the 1950s to 1980s was particularly important as the Indian government had not yet found adequate means for

giving systematic and substantial support to the arts⁶⁷ and private philanthropy had not yet focused on contemporary art.⁶⁸ Support for contemporary art was very much expected from abroad. However, “it may be dangerous for India to look only for foreign markets for contemporary art[s] and crafts,” commented Alexander Girard in 1955. “There should be an internal demand as well, but how this can be encouraged no one present could say.”⁶⁹ Finally, the visual arts of India and South Asia remained a relatively undeveloped field in the U.S. until the 1960s,⁷⁰ and the situation started to change after this period. However, the contemporary art scene of this time seemed less attractive than crafts and antiques. The rediscovery and revaluation—both by the art market and American institutions—of the generation of artists granted by the JDR 3rd Fund will only start in the late 1990s or early 2000s.

Annex I – Major American Exhibitions to India

1952 Participation to the 2nd International Contemporary Art Exhibition at Delhi Works selected by Sam Hunter, MoMA, emphasized major American artists working in representational styles.

1955 March 26 to April 3—This is Modern Art at the Jehangir Gallery. Included reproductions from MoMA. Screening of an Alexander Calder film.

1956 Rudolph Ray (American contemporary artist) at Jehangir Gallery, Bombay.

1955-1957 Highlights of American Painting, (Bombay Jaipur, Jodhpur, Kanpur, Lucknow, Amristar), USIS support and catalogue printing.

1956 Family of Man at Jehangir Gallery, Bombay. Art in photography, enormously successful.

1956 Dong Kingman in Delhi and Baroda, USIS exhibition.

1957 American Advertising Art Exhibition at the Commercial Artists Club, Bombay (152 prints)

1957 3rd International Contemporary Art Exhibition in Delhi. Works selected by Sam Hunter of MoMA. Included works from Stuart Davis, Arshile Gorky, Adolph Gottlieb, Grace Hartigan, William D. Kooning, Jackson Pollock, Mark Rothko, and Niles Spencer. Ford Foundation grant support.

1958 Design Today in Am and Europe in Delhi, Bombay, Amristar, Madras, Bangalore, Hyderabad, and Ahmedabad. From MoMA collection, presented under direct auspices of the Ministry of Commerce and Industry. Ford Foundation grant support.

1966-1967 Two Decades of American Painting, in Delhi, Tokyo and Kyoto. Organized by the MoMA. Supported by the JDR 3rd Fund.

1980 Modern Masterpieces from the Philadelphia Museum of Art at the NGMA Delhi – October 9, 1980 to November 30, 1980. Original Masterpieces by Manet, Cezanne, Renoir, Sisley, Pissaro, Monet, Rousseau, Maillol, Matisse, Braque, Picasso, Duchamp, Picabia, Gleizes, Lipchitz, Leger, Brancusi, Modigliani, Chagall, Klee, Miro, Tanguy, Rouault, and Mondrian.

1987-1988 American Mysticism, Visions of Inner Spaces (in exchange with the exhibition “New Tantra Art,” at the Wight Art Gallery, UCLA), NGMA, Delhi.

Annex II - Contemporary Indian Art Exhibitions during the Festival of India in the U.S., 1981-1982

New Tantra Art at Wight Art Gallery, UCLA, eighty contemporary Indian paintings: Biren D., K.V. Haridasan, Mahirwan Mamtani, Prafulla Mohanti, K.C.S. Paniker, Om Prakash, PT Reddy, and G.R. Santosh.

Contemporary Indian Art at Grey Art Gallery and Study Center, New York University. Seventy-five works by eight artists: M.F. Hussain, Tyeb Mehta, Bikash Battacherjee, Raza, Vinod Dave, Gieve Patel, and Rambhadracharya Kaleka, from the Chester Herwitz Family Collection. December 10, 1985-January 1986.

Indian Art Today: Four Artists from the Chester and Davida Herwitz Family Collection at the Philips Collection, Washington: Raza, Laxma Goud, Raanujan, Hussain, February 22-April 6, 1986.

Contemporary Print: India at San Diego State University.

Ned Chand, Sculptor at Capital Children’s Museum, Washington.

Raghubir Singh at Pace MacGill Gallery, New York and UCLA, May 8-July 28, 1985.

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The ideas and opinions expressed in this report are those of the author and are not intended to represent the Rockefeller Archive Center.

ENDNOTES:

¹ For more details on the Rockefeller's long-time interest in Asia, see: *A Passion for Asia: The Rockefeller Legacy, a Publication in Celebration of the 50th Anniversary of the Asia Society*, New York, 2006.

² In the case of India, the program aimed more specifically at assisting the country to reach the key development goals of its Five-Year Plans (food self-sufficiency; raise the national output/income; eradicate malaria; self-sustaining economic development and further industrialization). See JDR 3rd Papers, Series 1, Subseries 3, Asian Interests, Box 45, Folder 411, Council on Economic & Cultural Affairs Inc., Survey of American Activities relating to Asia 1954.

³ The Council made its first grant in the field of cultural affairs in 1954 when it provided support for an international student's seminar in Japan and for the creation of the Japan Society. It also fostered the teaching of English language abroad. See memorandum, September 18, 1961 in Record Group (RG) 5, Series 1, Subseries 3, Box 44, Folder 401, Asian Interests, Asia Society, Report, Council on Economic and Cultural Affairs 1956-1961.

⁴ Complete quotation: "As we here have observed America's and India's efforts to develop mutual understanding and reduce tensions, it seems to us that the one important area that has not been touched is the cultural ... The opportunities and potentialities of such a cultural approach are great with a country like India ... no mechanism or medium exists for making such a cultural approach, or for putting Indians and Americans into mutual cultural contact. The result has been a real void in all efforts toward mutual understanding. This void, serious in itself, is rapidly being filled by USSR and China, as well as the satellite nations. These countries are sharply intensifying their cultural activities and support of "cultural societies" in India and our information is that these are making [a] deep impression." Letter from Douglas Ensminger to JDR 3rd on December 10, 1954, in RG 5, Series 1, Subseries 3, Asian interests, Box 45, Folder 413, Asian Interests, India, 1954-1955.

⁵ "A possible Asian-American Organization," 1955, Folder 389, Letter From Charles P. Noyes and Edgar B. Young to JDR 3rd, August 23, 1955, A new American-Asia Organization (p.10).

⁶ In RG 5, Series 1, Subseries 3, Asian Interests, Box 56, Folder 505.

⁷ Review of American Cultural Activities in India, January 1955-July 1957, Inter-National Cultural Center, c/o Indian Cooperative Union (Folder 391).

⁸ Review of American Cultural activities in India, p.143.

⁹ See Interview Miss Stella Kramrisch, by Chadbourne Gilpatric, June 8, 1952, RF, RG 1.2, Series 200 R, Box 457, Folder 3907.

¹⁰ See letter June 17, 1952, RF, RG 1.2, Series 200 R, Box 457, Folder 3907.

¹¹ *JDR 3rd Fund and Asia, 1963-1975*, 1977, p.145.

¹² Such as Dong Kingman in Delhi and Baroda, "Family of Man," photography show.

¹³ Both exhibitions failed to have the U.S. government support American collections as they felt that "it has not the proper mechanism or authority to assemble such a collection." The society has therefore appealed the Ford Foundation to support an American collection. See Ford Grant Reel 901 (PA 57-12).

¹⁴ The Rockefeller Brothers Fund in 1952 made possible the establishment of MoMa's International program of circulating exhibitions.

¹⁵ This exhibition was one of the steps taken by the government to improve the quality of production by introducing people to the best techniques of production and management and to see some very well designed articles from different countries. They hoped to create interest in industrial design, which may in due course lead to the improvement of the design of goods. See Ford Grant, Reel 902 (PA 57-239) Industrial Design Exhibit.

¹⁶ In the "Report of Committee on Policy and Organization of the Asia Society," February 8, 1960, Donald McLean explained that "*JDR 3rd* inspired the Asia Society and went ahead in the development of the House and in encouraging programs expansion without having with him a united and enthusiastic board of trustees." See RG 5, Series 1, Subseries 3, Asian Interests, Box 43, Folder 394.

¹⁷ From JDR 3rd to Douglas, December 6, 1961, RG 5, Series 1, Subseries 3, Asian Interests, Box 44, Folder 401, Asia Society, Report, Council on Economic and Cultural Affairs 1956-1961.

¹⁸ See Report of the Council on Economic and Cultural Affairs 1962 in RG 5, Series 1, Subseries 3, Asian Interests, Box 45, Folder 409, Council on Economic & Cultural Interests, Inc. Printed material, 1953-1962.

¹⁹ This affirmation follows the lines of a report entitled *Asian Art: Who is doing what?* Issued by the CECA in 1962. The conclusion pointed out that “despite a spectrum of activities concerned with the arts in Asia the dimension of depth was lacking and many programs were peripheral to the main functions of the organization involved.”

²⁰ In RG 5, Series 3, Subseries 1, Box 11, Folder 76.

²¹ In RG 5, Series 3, Subseries 1, Box 11, Folder 76.

²² *JRD 3rd Fund and Asia, 1963-1975*, 1977, U.S., p.49.

²³ Letter from McCray to Akbar, April 7, 1964, in JRD 3rd Fund, Asian Arts Council, Box 108, Painting and Sculpture, Akbar Padamsee B-6530.

²⁴ Meeting May 18, 1965, Board of Trustees, JRD 3rd Fund, AAC, Box 108, Akbar Padamsee.

²⁵ Jyoti Bhatt complete quotation: “*I also have a feeling that we have a sort of fraternities of artists and critics centered in large cities such as Delhi, Bombay, etc. Thus it is in a way difficult for anyone to suggest names of the artists not belonging to his fraternity, partly also because of his lack of information regarding other artists, who do not happen to be his friends.*” In Series 7, “The JDR 3rd Fund and Asia 1963-1975.” Box 60, Folder 496, Questionnaire Response: India.

²⁶ The address was 205 West End Avenue. Lincoln Center comes back quite often in the correspondence.

²⁷ “*Both the Fund and the Institute of International Education are well acquainted with the foreign currency limitations placed on departing Indians by their government and you will be provided with adequate funds for the trip to the U.S. before your departure from Bombay.*” Letter from Porter McCray to Adi, November 8, 1967, in JRD 3rd Fund, ACC, Box 108.

²⁸ In JRD 3rd Fund, ACC, Box 108, Jyoti Bhatt, see “Resume of Summer Tour,” Received September 23, 1965.

²⁹ In JDR 3rd Fund, ACC, Box 108, A.M. Davierwalla (IIE) B-6812.

³⁰ In JDR 3rd Fund, ACC, Box 108, Arun Bose B-6929.

³¹ “As a result, now I have two of my prints in the Museum Collection.” In JDR 3rd Fund, ACC, Box 108, Jyoti Bhatt Folder DF-6544, B-6608, letter from June 1966.

³² Akbar paper, IIE report, September 19, 1967, Series 7, Box 60, Folder 496, see “Art of Lee Bontecou,” by A. Padamsee, *Sunday Times*, India, August 28, 1966.

³³ In JRD 3rd Fund, ACC, Box 108, Avinash Chandra, November 7, 1968.

³⁴ Letter from Davierwalla to Miki Klein, November 16, 1973, “*I cannot have [my sculptures] shipped now as the Indian customs regulations state that an Indian cannot get over his work from abroad if a period of three months lapse. After that period, the purchase and contents would be categorized as an unauthorized import and I would be in deep trouble besides having to pay a heavy duty and fine.*” JDR 3rd Fund, AAC Grant files, Box 108, Folder Davierwalla.

³⁵ Quotation from the artist’s answers to the questionnaire, Series 7, Box 60, Folder 496. See also the quotation from Akbar Padamsee: “*Whilst it was a pleasure to see the rich collection of European art in the U.S. ... it was much more the work of the young American artists that constituted a new experience ... What struck me most was the 'vitality' of the New York School in contrast to the 'refinement' of the Paris School. This vitality, the absence of artifice, exploration into every possible vista of experience, to the point of arriving at non-art gives the American School of painting the significance, and it was this that I consider to be a new experience for me. Those directions, it seems to me, will open a way for a new 'imaginary' ... I didn't think it was a matter of acquiring new techniques, but a confrontation with new concepts.*” Quotation from the artists answers to the questionnaire, Series 7, Box 60, Folder 496.

³⁶ Bal Chhabda’s suggestion for how to answer the questionnaire, Series 7, Box 60, Folder 496.

³⁷ Akbar papers, IIE report, September 19, 1967, Series 7, Box 60, Folder 496.

³⁸ JDR 3rd Fund, AAC Grant files, Box 108, Folder DF-6544, Jyoti Bhatt.

³⁹ The list of slides included eighty-seven from the Metropolitan Museum, sixty-eight from the Morgan Libraries, thirty-four from the Frick Collection, and thirty from the Guggenheim Museum. The list of books included thirty-six books from Abrams Publications, ranging from the Pre-Columbian art of Mexico and Central America, to the history of the Italian Renaissance to Chagall's *The Sculpture of Henri Matisse*, the art of VanGogh and Picasso, and fifty-five years of New Graphic work; ten books from Hacker Art Books, New York; twenty-six New York Graphic Society Publications; eight publications from the Morgan Libraries and twenty-six other books from various publishers. See JDR 3rd Fund, AAC Grant files, Box 120, Folder Ratan Parimoo, see letter received April 16, 1974.

⁴⁰ See the interview of Ajit Mokerjee by Chadbourne Gilpatric, June 6, 1955, in RF, RG 1.2, Series 464, Box 79, Folder 771, Indian Institute of Art in Industry, Mookerjee Ajit, 1954-1955.

⁴¹ Ajit Mookerjee quotation: "*Communist groups were way ahead in utilizing exhibits for ulterior purposes ... For the last five months there have been a series of influential exhibitions in Calcutta, three from USSR, two from China, one from Hungary, all stressing the cult of socialism realism [and he] would like to oppose communist influences, by showing what are the advantages and achievements of artistic work in the Western world.*" Interview of Ajit Mokerjee by Gilpatric, June 6, 1955, RF, RG 1.2, Series 464, Box 79, Folder 771. A grant-in-aid was given to the Indian Institute of Art in Industry Calcutta, to enable Ajit Mookerjee to visit centers of design and visual arts in Europe, the U.S., Japan, Indonesia and India, starting January 3, 1955, as a part of the Rockefeller Foundation's Humanities program in visual arts.

⁴² Letter from Grace Morley to Porter McCray, June 2, 1964, ACC, Box 174, Folder Asian Museums-India, National Museum, New Delhi. Similarly, the Ford Foundation equipped two Triveni Kala Sangam galleries with air conditioning. See Ford Grants Reel 4067 (PA 73-631).

⁴³ Letter from McCray to N.S. Bendre, September 9, 1965, JDR 3rd Fund, AAC Grant files, Box 108, Folder Jyoti Bhatt.

⁴⁴ Letter from Grace Morley to McCray, December 18, 1965, ACC, Box 174, Folder Asian Museums-India.

⁴⁵ Letter from Grace Morley to McCray, December 18, 1965, ACC, Box 174, Folder Asian Museums-India.

⁴⁶ Letter from McCray to Grace Morley, May 20, 1966, ACC, Box 174, Folder Asian Museums- India.

⁴⁷ The seven participants were Vasant Hari Bedekar, Department of Museology, MS University Baroda; Moti Chandra, Prince of Wales Museum, Bombay; T.R Gairola, National Museum, New Delhi; Mohammed Abdul Waheed Khan, Director of Archeology and Museum, Andra Pradesh, Hyderabad; Anand Krishna, Bharat Kala Bhavan, Benares; Ajit Mookerjee, Craft Museum, New Delhi; and C. Sivaramamurti, National Museum, New Delhi.

⁴⁸ De Vasant Hari Nedekar, Head of the Department of Museology, at MS University of Baroda, granted in 1965 and 1972, quotation from the artist's answers to the questionnaire for the preparation of the book *JRD 3rd Fund and Asia, 1963 – 1975*, in Series 7, Box 60 Folder 496

⁴⁹ Quotation from the curator answers to the questionnaire for the preparation of the book *JRD 3rd Fund and Asia, 1963-1975*, Series 7, Box 60, Folder 496.

⁵⁰ Not only in the art field, the Ford Foundation provided numerous grants in the 1950s and 1960s for advisory services to India in the development of a regional plan for the city of Delhi experts (Ford Grant, Reel 902), labor education, the training of Indian engineers in management and production methods of the U.S. steel industry (Ford Grant Reel 901).

⁵¹ Charles Eames, presented a preliminary report in 1958, while E. Scheidegger and V. Wohlert prepared a proposal for the institute's training, service and research elements, all supported by Ford grants. See Ford Grant, Reel 0916 Charles Eames (PA 58-54) and consultant to assist in the planning of a national institute of design (PA 59-464).

⁵² Letter from The Rajmata Gayatri Devi of Jaipur to McCray, June 19, 1974, ACC, Box 174, Folder Asian Museums-India, India General.

⁵³ JDR 3rd attended the inaugural ceremony of the ICC in 1962. On the ICC, see "Report of the Council on Economic and Cultural Affairs 1962," RG 5, Series 1, Subseries 3, Box 45, Folder 409, RG 5, Series 3, Subseries 1, Box 11, Folder 75.

⁵⁴ NCPA received one grant of \$17,000 in 1967 from the JDR 3rd Fund and \$200,000 in 1972 from the Ford Foundation (PA720-0224).

⁵⁵ RG 5, Series 3, Subseries 1, box 11, Folder 79.

⁵⁶ Lincoln Center for the Performing Arts was opened on September 16, 1966, J.J. Bhabha visited McCray on November 30, 1966.

⁵⁷ *"It is a small beginning but it could well lead to a center that could rival the Lincoln Center in New York and a fitting place to house India's art and heritage,"* wrote a reporter for the *Times of India* in "NCPA auditorium reveals shape of things to come," *Times of India*, May 7, 1975, in Ford Grant Reel 4897. *"The site, in Bombay's equivalence of Rockefeller Center, was contributed by the government of Maharashtra and landfill already has been completed at the expense of the Tata's,"* 1972 (PA720-0224), in Ford Grant, Reel 2821.

⁵⁸ They met in India in 1953, for lunches in 1954, in India in 1958 and 1960, letter from 1960.

⁵⁹ Memorandum, from Paul C. Sherbert to JDR 3rd, December 22, 1958 in RG 5, Series 1, Subseries 3, Box 46, Folder 418.

⁶⁰ See Annex 1.

⁶¹ Among the Indian art exhibitions: Master Bronze of India; Gods, Thrones and Peacocks; Indian Miniatures; Gandhara Sculpture; Rajput Painting; Art of India/Stone Sculpture; The Art of Mughal India; Rajasthani.

⁶² Milo Beach in the Department of Art, Williams College, Massachusetts, proposed exploring the traditional aspects of contemporary Indian painting, *"something which has not been dealt with, but which is far more significant than the European influence upon which discussion has been concentrated."* He planned to have a highly selective show gathering between seventy and eighty works, by eight to ten artists. This small exhibition aimed to be an important presentation and reassessment of contemporary art in India. See letter April 3, 1984, from Beach to Terri Cohn, Asian Cultural Council (Indo-U.S. Subcommission), Box 62.

⁶³ A letter from the Indo-U.S. Subcommission informed Milo on June 26, 1984, Asian Cultural Council (Indo-U.S. Subcommission), Box 62.

⁶⁴ Among the most publicized exhibitions were Aditi Celebration of Life "at the Asia Society;" "5000 Years of Indian Art," at the Asian Art Museum of San Francisco; "Manifestation of Siva," at the Philadelphia Museum of Art; "Indian Court Costume," at the Costume Institute of MoMA; and "Forms from Mother Earth: Contemporary Indian Terra Cotta," at the American Craft Museum, New York.

⁶⁵ Annex II – Contemporary Indian art exhibitions during the Festival of India in the U.S., 1981-1982.

⁶⁶ For more details, see "Note on Culture and the Ford Foundation in India," by Sommer, May 1, 1973 in Ford Grant, Reel 4897.

⁶⁷ See "Background a Justification Document," 1972 in PA 720-0224, Ford Grant Reel 2821.

⁶⁸ *"Private philanthropy on an important scale is an underdeveloped art in India; the tendency still is to build temples or to maintain family dominated charities. The Tata's are at least a partial exception to this latter rule."* Comment in a Ford Foundation report from 1972. See "Background a Justification Document 1972," in PA720-0224, NCPA Bombay, Ford Grant, Reel 2821.

⁶⁹ See RF, RG 1.2, Series 464, Box 79, Folder 771 (Alexander Girard, June 13, 1955).

⁷⁰ Quotation from S. Kramrisch, May 4, 1959, See RF, RG 1.2, Series 200, Box 402 Folder 3474.