

March 10, 2015

## 'Art Dubai: Aicon Gallery to Host a Short Exhibition in Al Quoz Preceding the Fair'

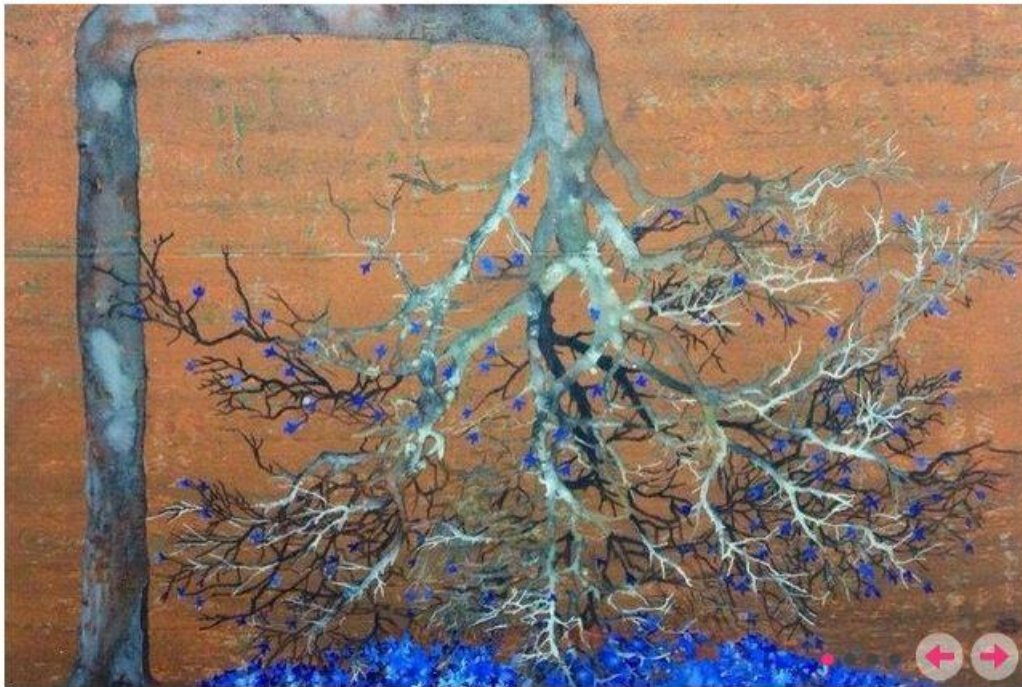
BY ANNA SEAMEN



### THEARTBLOG

An insider's view of the UAE's art scene

Edited by  
Anna Seaman



G.R. Iranna's BLUE CHERRY BLOSSOM, 2013, Acrylic on canvas, 52 x 66 in. This painting is one of many to appear in Empty 10 and Aicon Gallery's exhibition Subcontinental Masters. (Courtesy: Aicon Gallery)

Aicon Gallery, a New York and London-based gallery that specialises in art from the Indian subcontinent is one of the 97 galleries bringing their art to Art Dubai next week. Interestingly, Harry Hutchison, the gallery director decided that as well as the four day fair, he would collaborate with a local gallery Empty 10 to put on a short exhibition preceding the fair. I find this a fascinating way to penetrate the local audience and so, ahead of the VIP opening tomorrow night, I caught up with him for a chat.

Anna Seaman: Your gallery focuses on contemporary art from India and Pakistan but for the Empty 10 exhibition you have art from the Modern period and also pieces from the Iranian master Zenderoudi. Why did you decide to present this mix?

Harry Hutchison: We have presented a mix of modern and contemporary art because it reflects our exhibition program. As we have a temporary large gallery space in Dubai we thought it would be a smart idea to give our

visitors a cross section of what we normally show in the gallery. Another reason is because we know there is an audience for both genres in Dubai, over the years we have met many collectors of Indian modern works, in addition to the South Asian contemporary scene.

At Aicon Gallery we are trying to extend our boundaries, recently in New York we held the first ever Bangladeshi contemporary show and are currently planning a Sri Lankan exhibition for later this year. We have also expanded our horizons to include works of Charles-Hossein Zenderoudi, the father figure of the Sagha Khanne movement and pioneer of Iranian Modernism. We showed his works in Abu Dhabi last year and will continue to work with his pieces because we simply love his canvases and he will be an important figure in the art history books.

AS: You also include some wonderful pieces from masters such as Sadequain - was this a decision based on audiences in the UAE knowing there is such a high population of residents who would perhaps appreciate these great masters?

HH: You are quite correct, we do try and put the right artworks in front of our audience and there are a number of Sadequain collectors in the UAE who will be interested in these works. We have also included them because we just had an important Sadequain retrospective in New York and it gives our collectors the chance to pick up historically important pieces with Grade A provenance, it would be a huge shame not to show these works in the UAE.

AS: I find it fascinating that your gallery decided to collaborate with a local gallery to host an exhibition in addition to your booth at Art Dubai - can you explain the thinking behind this?

HH: One of the reasons that we decided to collaborate with a local gallery is because Art Dubai has split in two, into the modern and contemporary halls. We have traditionally exhibited in the contemporary hall but last year decided to participate in the modern section where we showed the works of M.F. Husain alongside Sadequain: the 'Picasso of India' and the 'Picasso of Pakistan'. This year, instead of taking a booth in both sections we thought it would be nice to break free from the physical constraints of an art fair booth and put on a full scale exhibition. This way we could exhibit so many more works and visitors to the exhibition would get a much greater understanding of what Aicon Gallery is about. We love visiting Dubai and were happy to take on the challenge. Malini Gulrajani, from 1x1 gallery, has been instrumental in helping us put on this exhibition and without her input it would not have been possible.

AS: How many times have you exhibited at Art Dubai? What's your general opinion of the fair in comparison to others?

HH: We do many art fairs every year and Art Dubai continues to be one of our favorites to take part in. We have exhibited at the fair from the beginning, it is very well organised and ideally placed to bring in collectors from around the globe. The fair team do a great job and we do well in the region because of all the hard work they have put in over the years.

AS: You said in other interviews that you focused on Subcontinental art because you travelled there - have you found it to be challenging to tackle such a vast area of talent and promote it globally?

HH: It is a challenge but one that we enjoy taking on, there are not that many galleries in New York and London who focus on Subcontinental art and this is probably an advantage as if you are a collector of South Asian art in New York, sooner or later you will find yourself in our gallery! From the artists point of view, Aicon Gallery provides a unique platform to showcase Indian and Pakistani works in the US, so most are keen to exhibit and work with us.

AS: Finally, how important is the UAE to you as a market?

HH: The UAE is a very important market for us, and we see this trend as continuing long into the future. This year we are putting on a small exhibition but we have much greater ambitions down the road.