

Natvar Bhavsar *Beginnings*

Aicon Gallery Exhibition: March 1 – April 6, 2019
Press Preview & V.I.P Reception: Friday, March 1, 2019
35 Great Jones St, New York NY 10012



Natvar Bhavsar, *BEGIN*, 1968
Pigments and acrylic medium on linen, 97.5 x 144 in.

We are delighted to present *Beginnings*, Aicon Art's debut solo exhibition of the early work of seasoned New York artist **Natvar Bhavsar**.

Claiming 'color' as his medium, Bhavsar has been exploring the sensual, emotional, and intellectual resonance of color since the early 1960s. His paintings evince influences from his childhood in India, surrounded by vivid textiles, practicing rangoli, and witnessing the Holi Festival, and adulthood in New York in the 1960s and '70s. The current exhibition explores the latter influence - works created during

Bhavsar's early foray into New York, in a milieu that included Andy Warhol, Merce Cunningham, and fellow Abstract Expressionists like Mark Rothko. In his essay on the artist, art critic **Irving Sandler** notes, "Indeed, what Bhavsar has drawn from Indian life and culture, what he prizes in it, makes his art distinctive and valuable. In sum, Bhavsar has a personal vision that both continues American color-field painting and embodies his Indian heritage."

The immediacy in Bhavsar's works is a result of the 'controlled spontaneity' of his artistic process. The works are constructed using dry pigment that is often sifted, poured or otherwise dispersed onto eagerly prepared surfaces. Each gesture marks a specific distance from the work's surface, a particular density of color and a measured movement of the body. The resultant surface is grainy and made up of a density of color in varying tones. Referencing this process, art critic **Robert C. Morgan** writes, "It is a reverse form of archeology, and is perhaps closer to the process of nature or the entropy of cities that have been eroded, deserted, destroyed, or simply lost in time. Bhavsar restores this sense of lost time through his intimate application of pigments. They are embedded in the surface of his work, reaching both microscopic and

galactic proportions, depending upon one's state of awareness and emotional receptivity to the amorphous shapes that the colors suggest."

Featured in the exhibition will be one of Bhavsar's earliest works produced in New York – *BEGIN*. In placing Bhavsar's work under the auspices of color-field painting, Sandler was thinking of this work when he wrote, "In New York, Bhavsar continued to paint floating organic and oblong color shapes, but they grew larger and larger. Then he divided the picture plane into huge rectangular compartments, two to four per picture, each one a different, dominant flat color inflected with dry pigment. Each component became a kind of color-field, the picture a construction of color-fields." He later theorizes that Bhavsar went on to "break through" to the elimination of the linear divisions to explore what he calls Bhavsar's mature color-field style.



Natvar Bhavsar, *REE-THA*, 1972
Dry pigments with oil and acrylic mediums on canvas, 96 x 96 in.

Born 1934 in Gothaya in Gujarat, India, Natvar Bhavsar studied at the Seth CN College of Fine Arts in Ahmedabad. At the same time he obtained a degree in English Literature from Gujarat University. Then in the early 1960s he decided to move to America and earned a Master of Fine Arts degree from the University of Pennsylvania after receiving a **Rockefeller Grant**. Bhavsar has shown widely in New York where he has been a central figure in the art world and a longtime resident – one of the few remaining original artists from the **SoHo school** – along with a variety of gallery and museum exhibitions internationally. He has been exhibiting his works in solo exhibitions since 1970. The artist is included in numerous public collections and institutions including the **Philadelphia Museum of Art, Boston Museum of Fine Arts, Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, Metropolitan Museum of Art, the Museum of Contemporary Art in Sydney** and the **Australian National Gallery**. He also features in notable private collections in the US, Germany, France, India, Australia and the Middle East. Throughout his career, Bhavsar has been associated with a number of acclaimed artists, most prominently, Mark Rothko, Robert Motherwell and Barnett Newman.

Please contact Aicon Art (dheeya@aicongallery.com) for more information.