

# V. S. Gaitonde Chronology



Installation view: Venice Biennale, June 19–October 17, 1954. Photo: Courtesy ASAC (Archivio Storico delle Arti Contemporanee) of the Fondazione La Biennale di Venezia



Exhibition catalogue cover (left) and installation view (right): São Paulo Biennial, Museu de Arte Moderna de São Paulo, September 21–December 31, 1959. Photo: Courtesy Arquivo Histórico Wanda Svevo/Fundação Bienal de São Paulo



Installation view: Ten Contemporary Painters from India, University of South Florida, Tampa, 1963–64. Gaitonde's work appears third from the left. Photo: Courtesy Tampa Bay Times/ZUMA Press

Installation view: Recent Acquisitions: South Asian Painting from the Art in a Changing World: 1884–1964 series at the Museum of Modern Art, New York, May 27–July 29 and September 18–November 2, 1964. Gaitonde's work appears second from the left. Photographic Archive. Photo: Soichi Sunami. Digital Image © The Museum of Modern Art/Licensed by SCALA/Art Resource, New York

**1924** Vasudeo Santu Gaitonde is born in Nagpur, Maharashtra, India, on November 2. After less than a year, his family relocates to Mapusa, in Goa, where Gaitonde's parents were born.

**1928** Gaitonde's family moves to Bombay (now Mumbai). There, he attends school while living in a working-class tenement (*chawl*) in Khotachiwadi, Girgaon.

**1945–48** Gaitonde enters the Sir Jamsetjee Jeejeebhoy (J. J.) School of Art in Bombay in 1945, alongside fellow students Tyeb Mehta (1925–2009), Akbar Padamsee (b. 1928), Syed Haider Raza (b. 1922), and Francis Newton Souza (1924–2002), who subsequently become four leading modern painters.

**1947** India gains independence from the British Raj on August 15 and names Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru as the country's first prime minister. This happens in the wake of the devastating partition of India and Pakistan, which displaces millions of people from their homes.

**1948–59** Gaitonde receives his degree in art and mural decoration from the Sir J. J. School of Art and serves as a teaching fellow at the school from 1948 to 1950.

His oeuvre in the decade following art school is characterized by constant experimentation with various forms of figuration, mixed-medium works on paper, and Paul Klee–inspired watercolors. The artist's initial understanding of figuration, space, and abstraction is also informed by Indian miniatures and mural painting.

**1949** The Progressive Artists' Group's first exhibition opens on July 7 at the Bombay Art Society Salon. Though short-lived, this avant-garde collective is historically tied to incipient modernism in India, marking a break from academia.

**Early 1950s** Gaitonde is briefly affiliated with the Progressive Artists' Group, alongside now-legendary artists Krishnaji Howlaji Ara (1913–1985), Sadanand K. Bakre (1920–2007), Maqbool Fida Husain (1915–2011), Krishen Khanna (b. 1925), and Mehta, and with the Bombay Group, including artists Kattingeri Krishna Hebbar (1911–1996), Shankar B. Palsikar (1917–1984), and Mohan B. Samant (1924–2004).

**1954** Three works by Gaitonde are featured in the Indian room of the Venice Biennale (June 19–October 17).

The Lalit Kala Akademi (Fine Arts Academy) and the National Gallery of Modern Art are founded in New Delhi as the country's first public art institutions dedicated to twentieth-century South Asian art. Both institutions acquire works by Gaitonde for their permanent collections starting in the 1960s.

**1957–58** In November 1957, Gaitonde is awarded the Fleischmann Prize at the *First Young Asian Artists Exhibition* in Tokyo, organized by the Japan Cultural Forum. Two works are exhibited.

Gaitonde begins to maintain a studio at the Bhulabhai Memorial Institute, an influential multidisciplinary cultural center in South Bombay, working alongside such luminaries as theater director Ebrahim H. Alkazi (b. 1925), musician Ravi Shankar (1920–2012), and artists Husain, Mehta, and Nasreen Mohamedi (1937–1990), until the institute closes its doors in 1967. Gaitonde influences Mohamedi's early nonobjective works at this time.

**1959** Gaitonde transitions to working in a nonrepresentational mode—or, as he prefers to call it, a nonobjective style—and subsequently embarks on his roller works.

Artist Bal Chhabda (1923–2013) opens Gallery 59, the first commercial gallery of contemporary art in Bombay, on January 26, on the premises of the Bhulabhai Memorial Institute. Chhabda organizes a solo exhibition for Gaitonde the following year.

Two of Gaitonde's oil-on-canvas works from 1958 are included in *Trends in Contemporary Paintings from India* (February 10–26) at Graham Gallery in New York. These appear alongside paintings by Husain, Khanna, Ram Kumar (b. 1924), Padamsee, Raza, Samant, and Souza.

Gaitonde participates in the Indian Pavilion at the fifth São Paulo Biennial (September 21–December 31).

**1961** Gaitonde's practice temporarily shifts to a monochromatic palette—with ink, or ink and wash, on paper. This change accompanies his interest in Zen Buddhism and the principles of calligraphy, both of which guide him throughout his entire life.

**1963–65** Pundole Art Gallery opens in Bombay on May 11, 1963, with an inaugural exhibition that includes Gaitonde's work. This commences the gallery's long-standing relationship with the artist.

Gaitonde participates in *Ten Contemporary Painters from India*, a group exhibition consisting of thirty works that travels extensively within the United States in 1963–65.

Throughout the 1950s and into the '60s, Indian artists slowly establish their credentials in America, due in part to the Rockefeller-funded Council on Economic and Cultural Affairs and the JDR 3rd Fund. Gaitonde travels to New York with support from the fund in 1964.



**1968** Gaitonde's work is featured in the Indian Pavilion at the first India Triennial (February 11–March 31), which is held at the Lalit Kala Akademi in New Delhi.

**1971** The Bangladesh Liberation War leads to the establishment of the People's Republic of Bangladesh.

Gaitonde receives a prestigious Padma Shri Award from the Indian government.

**1972** Gaitonde relocates to Nizamuddin in New Delhi. Fellow artists, including Khanna, Kumar, Mehta, and Zarina (b. 1937), are among his neighbors.

The same year, Gaitonde utilizes torn pieces of newspapers and magazines in his paintings to create abstract forms through a "lift-off" technique.

**1982** Two of Gaitonde's canvases are shown in the second part of *Contemporary Indian Art: An Exhibition of the Festival of India* (September 18–October 5) at the Royal Academy of Arts in London.

**1983** The Lalit Kala Akademi publishes a small, now-rare monograph on Gaitonde.

**1984** Gaitonde is temporarily unable to work on large canvases after a severe automobile accident that occurred while leaving the India Habitat Centre in New Delhi in September. Consequently, he begins making smaller works on paper.

**1985–87** Gaitonde's ink drawings form an important part of his overall oeuvre and consist of nonmimetic calligraphic and hieroglyphic markings made with spontaneous gestures and rhythmic movements.



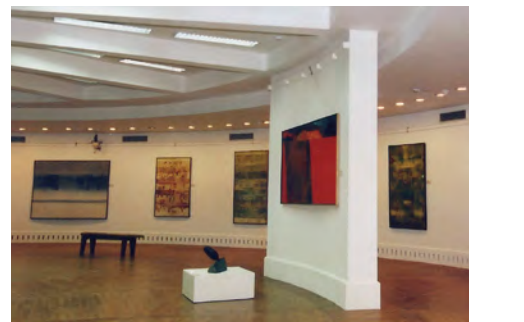
**1988–89** Gaitonde is given the annual Kalidas Samman arts award by the state government of Madhya Pradesh. With these funds and resumed health, he begins to create large oil-on-canvas works once again.

**1994** Gaitonde's work is included in the second part of *Hundred Years: From the NGMA Collection* in July at the National Gallery of Modern Art in New Delhi.

**1996** Gaitonde relocates to Gurgaon, a suburb of New Delhi in the state of Haryana.

**1998** Nine canvases by Gaitonde are included in *A Collector's Eye: The Jehangir Nicholson Collection* (September 11–October 25) at the National Gallery of Modern Art in Mumbai.

**2001** Gaitonde passes away in his Gurgaon residence on August 10 at the age of seventy-six.



Installation view: *Hundred Years: From the NGMA Collection*, National Gallery of Modern Art, New Delhi, July 1994. Gaitonde's work appears third from the left. Photo: Ram Rahman, courtesy Geeta Kapur and Asia Art Archive, Hong Kong

Installation view: *A Collector's Eye: The Jehangir Nicholson Collection*, National Gallery of Modern Art, Mumbai, September 11–October 25, 1998. Four Gaitonde canvases appear along the curved back wall. Photo: Courtesy the Jehangir Nicholson Art Foundation, Mumbai