



Connections Across Centuries

Mumbai-based DARA K. MEHTA offers a glimpse into his personal collection, where the boundaries between time, culture and art converge.

Growing up, occasional trips abroad always featured visits to museums. We were genuinely engaged by these experiences, rather than feeling as though we were being dragged along by our parents. My father owned a striking [*untitled*] painting of a trio of horses by [M.F.] Husain (as pictured on the left) and one of the most exquisite [K.H.] Ara still-life works. We were privileged to grow up surrounded by these captivating works of art.

At the age of 19, I began to explore the world of art, initially as a hobby. However, it was from 2004 that my passion for collecting truly took flight. Over the years, this enthusiasm transformed into a commitment—not only to showcase and care for South Asian art, but also to share it with fellow enthusiasts and ensure that artists receive their due recognition, even internationally.

My collection has developed along two distinct paths. One approach involves acquiring multiple works from certain artists spanning different periods, while the other focuses on owning one or two significant pieces by an artist. Having started with a focus on paintings, largely by the [Progressive Artists' Group], the collection has now significantly broadened.

Initially, I did not feel a strong connection with Bengal art. However, as a collector, one grows and evolves. My collection now reflects a broader spectrum, including works from the Bengal School, the Baroda School and other schools of art. Coincidentally, the three artists I have recently been particularly drawn to and collected—Somnath Hore, Sarbari Roy Chowdhury and Ganesh Haloi—are all from Bengal.

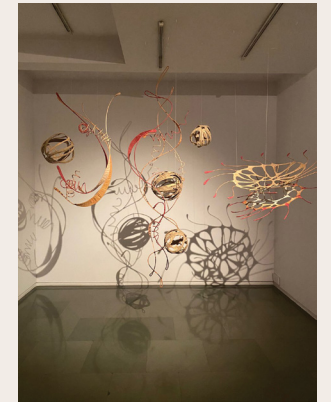
I have always loved both sculpture and antiquities from across the region—particularly from the Himalayas—and over the last decade form an integral part of the collection.

My collecting is instinctive in nature, with the work having to resonate deeply with me. This has allowed me to collect various artists and works about whom I had no prior knowledge or association with. Above all, it is the courage of conviction to trust my eye that has shaped my collection.

Reflecting on the collection today, without any premeditation, one perceives a connection between various works across periods, mediums and styles.



Ranjani Shettar



The first time I encountered Ranjani Shettar's hanging installations, I had no knowledge of who she was or what her practice entailed. Their uniqueness and wow-factor completely blew me away—these are works of contemporary art that I have the greatest affinity with.

Fortunately, a few years later, I had the chance to encounter and acquire these magnificent installations, which I had instantly fallen in love with.

However, I didn't want to simply pack it away in boxes. And, of course, there was no way an installation of this scale would fit in my apartment in Mumbai. This led to long discussions with Deepak [Talwar, gallerist] and Ranjani about reimagining and installing it differently.

The two images seen here—one at my home and the other displayed at the gallery—show how the work

has taken on a life of its own, each beautiful in its own way, yet both conveying a sense of colour, form and shadows, which are integral to the work.

These pieces could have been made anywhere in the world, by an artist of any nationality, but they retained an Indian base in both their colouring and thematic elements. It marked a new phase in Ranjani's artistic journey, incorporating spherical and helical elements, which shifted the iconography, and that for me created an even more interesting composition.

One of the joys of installing this work in my house was spending two days with Ranjani on how it should be hung and being part of a collaborative process along with Deepak and her. The way she was able to adroitly adapt the work to a significantly different space, both in shape and size, has led to people asking if the work was commissioned for this area. [•]