

India's Contemporary Artists Speak With Refreshing Accent

By JEAN CHARLOT

Our thanks to the Watumull Foundation for helping bring to Honolulu "Ten Contemporary Painters from India." This important show opens Thursday in Jefferson Hall, East-West Center.

The 10 elect are undoubtedly men of worth, trained in the international style. In viewing this show, there is a temptation to go from the known to the unknown, and to pair each of our Indian friends with its counterpart in Paris or New York. It seems that our 10 artists are well-travelled—or else avid readers of art magazines.

Yet in every case, within the limitations of the expected international grammar, an accent intrudes, distinct from that of the European or American masters.

It is natural that one looks with pleasure for the departure from the norm.

In that sense, the show is rewarding as it leads us through unexpected byways. One would be tempted to label these as provincial, were it not for the fact that to label immense and complex India a province is in itself a most provincial attitude.

Jyotish Bhattacharjee appears as the most strictly international of the group. And yet "Flux of Life," a white-robed crowd, sidetracks him into his local own.

Jeram Patel, in two paintings on wood, emphasizes the natural grain of the panel by painting, gouging and burning. Human meaning is not lacking in these weathered suggestions of ancient doors and window screens, burnished by generations of dwellers who lived, loved and suffered on the premises.

In "Snows of Kashmir," G. R. Santosh paints a lu-

narscape, white on white. His "Galaxy," in a chord of orange and purple favored by the Parisian Mathieu, is one of these astronomically scaled vistas where man indeed would forever be out of place.

Satish Gujral, in our game of equivalents, approximates the Chirico of anthropomorphic constructions. His semi-mechanical elements stand

for people. My favorite is "Seer," which, if I read it aright, is man in communion with a lonely star that pricks the night skies.

K. G. Subramanyan is an exception to the rule. His roots feed unashamedly on his own soil. His still-lives tie with details seen in Hindu miniatures, and do so by a miracle of atavism that need not copy the strong

chromas of the ancient originals nor their linear precision.

In his case, the game of equivalents would be unfair, even though Braque comes faintly to mind because of equally delicately keyed greys.

For a non-Indian his subject-matter holds lovely surprises. Pots and pans and fruit dishes such as the ear-

ly cubists favored exhibit intensely different forms and textures. Loveliest of the three is "Summer still-life," with its folding stand, earthen water-cooler and slices of watermelon.

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Sept - 8.64

In her foreword, Dr. Grace Morley writes of the organiser of the show, "Mr. Craven's decisions prevailed for he knows his audience. "Himself an American, Mr. Craven naturally beams his choice of artists to an American audience. Perhaps some day another show of Indian art will come to our shores chosen along less partisan lines. Other painters than Subramanyan must know the value of folk art as a source. Even after admiring this show, untapped art from other Indian artists doubtless hold fresh surprises in store.

Jean Charlot.