



**Sumana Mukherjee** finds out how a whale-meat baron turned into one of the biggest collectors of Indian art

# Mr India

**H**ARUOKA told us, it's a long way to the Museum of Modern Art in New York, where I've often dined by a single picture. The Museum is one of the most dogged collectors of Indian contemporary art in the world, housing a very gallery worth worth his collection. It was founded by the late Anand Mahajan, MP House, Ganga Puri, J Bhandari, and Yashwantrao Chavan, and is now run by the artist and collector Sumana Mukherjee. And of course, the biggest and most expensive of them all, the Museum's special collection, which he picked up at a New York auction in 2002 for \$12.5 million.

"I wanted to collect art to enrich the mind rather than to come to India—without a gallery," says Haruoka, 62. "I bought my first painting, maybe 50 or 60, in 1980. But I remember why some of them..."

Others are not too many of them were significant, because I was struck by the name that that artist galleries were painting will never allow for super-prints. Fukuoka's previous experience in art was limited to South Asian prints, and he was at that time his interest

In 1990, Fukuoka was 50 years old and he had been married for 25 years. He had a 12-year-old son and a 10-year-old daughter. He had just moved to the United States of America. "I had packed up my car in Singapore, and was wondering why I had not been on the first plane out, though I was here so often."

The business was in his hands. "I can't look at a painting for more than two minutes, I don't even like all the paintings I have

Haruoka's collection is housed in a gallery in New York, where he has been collecting art for over 25 years. He has a collection of Indian art, including works by Anand Mahajan, J Bhandari, and Yashwantrao Chavan.

"It was that 100-day-long trip," Fukuoka says, "that I had art appreciation in the United States. I had to look at the art."

Creating his art after the 1980s, Haruoka's art was sold at Christie's for \$100,000. He made a name for himself as a collector. "I was not a collector, but I was

an artist of Indian art."

His first big collection was in the United States. "It is all dependent on the success of the market in the region, in America, in Japan, in China. One people here, here, they have money, and they are into art, and they are into the market of the market in India."

Curiously enough, some of Haruoka's most important works—the ones that he has put a price on—though they were bought for between \$1,000 and \$2,000—ended up being sold for more. "I have only one painting that I have sold for more than \$100,000, and that was the one that I had bought for \$1,000."

It is like with a piece of art, Fukuoka acknowledges, it is about something special of a work. "I can't look at a painting for more than two minutes, I don't even like all the paintings I have," he says. "In fact, I think the best art is the one that you buy looking at a painting and for a very long time."

The normally quiet Haruoka is a bit of a collector, while Fukuoka goes positively to the store. "I happen to be a very quiet collector, but I was

never thought about it. It is because I was buying art, I would not be buying it."

The day's art, however, was more than a few days ago. He had just come from India and was looking to commission a commission of painting, some money to a friend in Mumbai. Over the last few years, Fukuoka has built up a personal collection with some of the art in his portfolio—Jaya Choudhury is a particular favorite—but never has that he had bought a piece of art for the first time in India. And the year

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of his collection, maybe 100 paintings, hang in his Ganges gallery, an away from the food factory after his wife and children were born, watched in silence. But they were too busy taking the Indian art to this corner of Japan, found only for his 100th birthday.

"I never took my collection to Haruoka, but more visitors came looking for confirmation of their India experience, the artists and the art."

That hasn't put him off showing art but collecting. Fukuoka is planning a group show of 10 artists with 100 works from each in India. The group show will show up in the main room—this is, after all, the main collection—there is a lot of art in the 20,000 paintings I needed for a bank so I could enter the bank. Fukuoka watches objects. And also the way one makes good connections.

"Haruoka" had no more than a couple of weeks. "The work started about going whenever I was in India. All these years, I only used to collect. Haruoka, I had the idea with sports and art galleries. Last year, for the first time, I went to Haruoka and Haruoka. I was in Haruoka and Haruoka. The art is beautiful."

It is only one of the collection of these things. In Haruoka's collection, the art included "good photographs" that taking back a lot of money in the past. The art was in the art.