National Gallery of Modern Art pays tribute to pioneering artist Jamini Roy through virtual tour

Context

National Gallery of Modern Art pays tribute to the pioneering artist Jamini Roy on his 133rd Birth Anniversary year through virtual tour.

About Jamini Roy

He was honoured with the State award of Padma Bhushan in 1955. He was one of the most famous pupils of Abanindranath Tagore.

Jamini Roy was one of the earliest and most significant modernists of twentieth century Indian art.

From 1920 onwards his search for the essence of form led him to experiment with dramatically different visual style. His career spanning over nearly six decades had many significant turning points and his works collectively speak of the nature of his modernism and the prominent role he played in breaking away from the art practices of his time. Trained in the British academic style of painting in the early decades of the twentieth century, Jamini Roy became well-known as a skilful portraitist.

He received regular commissions after he graduated from the Government Art School in what is now Kolkata, in 1916. The first three decades of the twentieth century saw a sea-change in cultural expressions in Bengal.

The growing surge of the nationalist movement was prompting all kinds of experiments in literature and the visual arts. The Bengal School, founded by Abanindranath Tagore and Kala Bhavana in Santiniketan under Nandalal Bose rejected European naturalism and the use of oil as a medium and were exploring new ways of representation.

Jamini Roy, too, consciously rejected the style he had mastered during his academic training and from the early 1920s searched for forms that stirred the innermost recesses of his being. He sought inspiration from sources as diverse as East Asian calligraphy, terracotta temple friezes, objects from folk arts and crafts traditions and the like.

From the end 1920s, Jamini Roy rejected the European oil medium and began to use the traditional pigments from vegetable and mineral sources. The imagery was often drawn from village life.

Jamini Roy invested in the portrayal of peasants, artisans, followers of religious cults, village women and adivasis with immense dignity. He represented in his paintings what they held sacred with references from folk tales and narratives that permeated the rural consciousness. In this particular painting titled 'Woman' the artist has painted the figure of a woman against a red background with thick, black contouring lines. The simplification of form suggests a sculptural quality, especially the structured drapery with an ornate border.

From 1924 onwards, Jamini Roy experimented with a new idiom as he was looking for ways to...
simplify form. During this time his images for the most part became either monochromatic bearing an austere play of white, soft grey and black or the palette was limited to the use of one or two colours.

With a masterly control of the brush, he created contours of the form with fluid, calligraphic lines. Roy, during this phase painted seated female forms, mother and child figures, bauls, leaping deer, crawling infant