

## **TYEB MEHTA**

### **Bearing Weight**

(with the lightness of being)

Presented by Kiran Nadar Museum of Art with  
Tyeb Mehta Foundation, and Saffronart Foundation.

Curated by Roobina Karode

Preview : 4 Feb 2026, 6 PM Onwards

Exhibition Dates : 5 Feb 2026 - 30 June, 2026 Tuesday  
to Sunday 10:30 - 6:30pm

Kiran Nadar Museum of Art, Saket

[Press Kit](#)



Tyeb Mehta, Blue Painting, Oil on Canvas  
Collection: Kiran Nadar Museum of Art  
Copyright: Tyeb Mehta Foundation

**Wednesday, 28 January 2026:** The Kiran Nadar Museum of Art (KNMA) presents *Tyeb Mehta: Bearing Weight (With the Lightness of Being)*, a landmark exhibition marking the birth centenary of one of India's most influential modernists. Presented in collaboration with the Tyeb Mehta Foundation and Saffronart Foundation, and curated by KNMA's Artistic Director and Chief Curator, Roobina Karode, the exhibition unfolds as the first-ever comprehensive retrospective of Tyeb Mehta.

From a prelude presented at ART MUMBAI 2025, this exhibition expands at KNMA, New Delhi, into a full-scale introspection, offering a deeper and more extensive engagement with the artists' life and practice.

With more than 120 works spanning Mehta's prolific career, the exhibition encompasses paintings, drawings, sculptures, film, and archival material that were rarely shown before. It offers a multifaceted view of Mehta's artistic language and intellectual rigor, tracing the evolution of his visual vocabulary and the recurring concerns that shaped his art.

Born in 1925 in Kapadvanj, Gujarat, Tyeb Mehta's early exposure to image-making came through his family's involvement in the film business, which sparked his lifelong fascination with visual language. Initially drawn to art direction, he went on to study at the Sir JJ School of Art, Bombay (now Mumbai) in 1947, where he discovered the transformative potential of painting, a pursuit that defined his art practice. He spoke about his practice as a complex unfolding - “*The process of painting is not easy for me. I struggle at every step. I destroy many paintings before one finally emerges.*” Mehta’s association and friendship with the members of Progressive Artists' Group expanded his understanding of art and its possibilities in a newly independent India.



Study After Santiniketan Triptych, 1989  
Acrylic on canvas, 66.5 x 54 ins  
Collection: Amal Allana  
Copyright: Tyeb Mehta Foundation

The core of the exhibition will be some of the iconic series from across Mehta’s career including *Falling Figure*, *Falling Bird*, *Mabishasura*, *Kali*, *Bull*, and the *Diagonal*. They speak of Mehta as a critical witness of life and conflict in post-independent India. Bull, for instance, was a ‘compulsive image’ for the artist beginning from his early days of drawing at Bandra Abattoir in the 1950s to the very last painting he made in 2007. This retrospective also presents Mehta’s fascination with mythical narratives and folklore traditions, particularly the series of work titled *Kali*, and *Mabishasura*. A larger body of work also emerged as a response to the events of unrest during and after the Partition in 1947. This along with the onslaught of daily life has unfolded in various ways through the artist’s career.

The exhibition also brings to fore Mehta’s short sixteen minute sixteen seconds film *Koodal*, which is a deeper artistic reflection on the cycle of life and death, referring to different symbolic and everyday roles of humans, animals and the deities. Translated in Tamil as ‘Meeting Point’ the title of this film speaks about various contradictions of our continuous coexistence. Written and directed by Mehta, and produced by the Film Division of India it was awarded the Filmfare Critics Award in 1970.

Complementing this expanded view of Mehta’s practice, the exhibition is further enriched by a selection of rarely exhibited archival material that anchors the narrative in lived experience. This includes early works and studies; artist notebooks containing personal notes and writings; photographs documenting key moments with fellow artists and family; exhibition catalogues and invitations spanning his career. Together, they offer new insights into Tyeb Mehta, an artist whose legacy is being unpacked in this granular way for the very first time.

**Kiran Nadar, the Founder and Chairperson of KNMA says:** We feel honoured and delighted to put together a comprehensive exhibition on Tyeb Mehta, one of our most significant modernists. His unique and inimitable language in painting has elegantly addressed the contradictory forces of life and arrived at a vocabulary distinctly his own, yet to be seen in its depth and breadth.”

**Roobina Karode, Artistic Director and Chief Curator, KNMA adds:** “The larger perception and dialogue on Mehta’s art has been mainly focused on his iconic paintings. This exhibition foregrounds the multidimensionality of Mehta’s creative process and the context of its emergence. It is also a novel extension to KNMA’s longstanding commitment to reimagine the narratives of modernism in Indian and South Asian Art.”

**For media inquiries, interviews, or further information, please contact:**

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## Notes To The Editor

### About the artist

Tyeb Mehta was born in 1925 in Kapadvanj, Gujarat. He spent his formative years in the Crawford Market neighbourhood of Bombay. In 1944 he joined the Fazalbhoj Institute at St. Xavier's College to study cinematography, later joining the Famous Cine Laboratory at Tardeo, Mumbai as Assistant Film Editor. He graduated in Fine Arts from Sir J.J. School of Art, Mumbai in 1952. During the same time, Mehta became associated with the Progressive Artists' Group. He held his first solo exhibition in 1959 at Jehangir Art Gallery, Bombay after which he left for London, where he worked and lived till 1964. Thereafter, he visited New York on a Rockefeller Fellowship in 1968; the same year, he won a Gold Medal in painting at the first Triennial held in New Delhi. It was during this period that the diagonal emerged as a key pictorial element in his work and he started using large areas of colours to represent images. In 1970, he wrote and directed *Koodal* for the Films Division, which won him the Filmfare Critics' Award in 1970.

The Vishwa Bharati University, Santiniketan, invites Tyeb Mehta for a two-year Artist-in-Residence programme (1984 - 86). In 1985, while at Santiniketan he painted the iconic *Santiniketan Triptych*, which is a response to the Santhal Charak festival. In 1988, Tyeb received the Kalidas Samman award. In 2004, the Government of Maharashtra bestowed upon him the Manpatra award. The same year, Lalit Kala Akademi, celebrating its golden jubilee, conferred upon him the gold medal, presented by then-President APJ Abdul Kalam. In 2007, the Government of India honoured him with the Padma Bhushan.

Some of his recent posthumous exhibitions are, *Time Unfolded*, Kiran Nadar Museum of Art (KNMA), New Delhi in 2011, *Tyeb Mehta: Triumph of Vision*, Vadehra Art Gallery, New Delhi in 2011, *Crossings: Time Unfolded, Part 2*, Kiran Nadar Museum of Art (KNMA), New Delhi in 2012, *Modernist Art from India: Approaching Abstraction*, Rubin Museum of Art, New York in 2012, *Pioneers of Modernism, Sovereign FZE*, Dubai in 2013; *The Drawing Wall*, presented by Vadehra Art Gallery at Lalit Kala Akademi, New Delhi in 2013; and *Mnemonic: Partition-Partage*, a Curator's Special Project at Venice Architecture Biennale, Venice in 2023. His works are in major collections across the world, including Kiran Nadar Museum of Art, India, Peabody Essex Museum (PEM) in Salem, Massachusetts, Glenbarra Art Museum, Japan, National Gallery of Modern Art, New Delhi, Lalit Kala Akademi, New Delhi, and Bharat Bhavan, Bhopal. Tyeb Mehta passed away in 2009 in Mumbai.

### About Kiran Nadar Museum of Art (KNMA)

Established through the initiative of avid art collector Kiran Nadar, the Kiran Nadar Museum of Art (KNMA) opened to the public in January 2010 as India's first private museum dedicated to modern and contemporary art from the subcontinent. KNMA is a non-commercial, not-for-profit institution supported by the Shiv Nadar Foundation. It seeks to foster a dynamic relationship between art and culture through its exhibitions, publications, educational initiatives, and public programs. Committed to institutional collaborations and artist support networks, KNMA actively engages with diverse audiences through its wide-ranging programming.

The museum's ever-expanding collection of over 16,000 artworks from South Asia features some of the most significant modernist and contemporary works. Now broadening its scope to include classical, folk, and tribal art, the collection spans from the 3rd century CE to the 20th century, tracing historical trajectories in Indian art alongside the experimental practices of young contemporaries.

KNMA is set to evolve into a landmark cultural destination with a new location, an expansive 100,000-square-meter (over 1 million square feet) architectural marvel, near the Indira Gandhi International Airport, New Delhi. It will feature multiple exhibition spaces, a performance arts centre, an education block, an archive centre, a library, restaurants, and a members' room. Strengthening its role as a cultural epicenter, this expansion will further KNMA's mission to be a vibrant hub for visual and performing arts, fostering artistic innovation and cultural dialogue.

[www.knma.in](http://www.knma.in)

### **About Saffronart Foundation**

The Saffronart Foundation is a nonprofit arts organisation that aims to provoke and facilitate critical thinking with initiatives at the intersection of art, culture and social change. Co-founded by Minal and Dinesh Vazirani, it has supported public initiatives across education, disaster relief, and aid for marginalised communities. It has also backed arts initiatives such as Women to Watch 2024 at the National Museum for Women in the Arts; The Fantasy Collection, an exhibition of works by M F Husain at the inaugural edition of ART MUMBAI; Souza//Gaitonde Parallel Lives: One Hundred Years of Fortitude at ART MUMBAI 2024; the Kochi Biennale; and the Venice Biennale pavilion.

### **About The Tyeb Mehta Foundation**

Presenting the legacy of Tyeb Mehta, the Foundation serves as a platform where vision, form, and culture coalesce. Established in 2013, it seeks to deepen the understanding of his practice and widen the discourse around South Asian modern and contemporary art. The vision extends toward nurturing ideas and imagery through a thoughtfully conceived support system for artists and cultural workers. Its diverse projects highlight interdisciplinary exchanges, enhance critical discourse, and forge enduring partnerships and collaborations. The Foundation is committed to encouraging the dialogue between art and culture. Over the past 15 years, the Tyeb Mehta Foundation has hosted an annual program titled Conversation with Chai - a series of lectures, discussions and performances on diverse subjects such as fine art, literature, music and poetry.

[www.tyebmehtafoundation.org](http://www.tyebmehtafoundation.org)