1. Tyab Mehta, Untitled, 1952.

‘When Tyab Mehta was a child and he lived in Bombay, he was looking out the window because there was a lot of noise under his house and he saw a scuffle between the Hindu–Muslim groups that had broken out at that point of time. This was pre-Partition, pre-Independence but violence had already begun, the communal tensions were growing. He saw one man break open the skull of another. And witnessing this impacted him so badly that for a while he couldn’t make sense of things around him. And whenever he took to art, he had these broken, disfigured figures appearing in his canvas.’

-Medhavi Gandhi

‘Tyeb Mehta straddled abstract and representational art by depicting stylized human figures suspended in geometric planes. During a visit to New York in 1968, he was exposed to American paintings, in particular the work of Abstract Expressionist Barnett Newman1. Mehta was fascinated by Newman’s monochromatic “Zip” paintings divided by a vertical line. In this painting from the “Diagonal” series, Mehta adapted the idea of the divider to bisect a female figure. Her disjointed body symbolizes the violence that Mehta and others of his generation witnessed after the Partition of India in 1947. In the Muslim ghetto where Mehta grew up, street violence was frequent. In 1965, he visited the battlefields of the Indo-Pakistani conflict. He commented: “That violence gave me the clue about the emotion I want to paint.” 2 Mehta’s tormented figures mark his awareness of the horrors of war.’

-<https://sjmusart.org/roots-air-branches-below-modern-and-contemporary-art-india/works/tyeb-mehta-untitled-from-diagonal-series.php>

Who were the Progressives?

‘The desire for freedom—political, as well as,  artistic—soon spread widely among young artists, who witnessed Independence from the British Raj. In Bombay, another set of artists formed a group, called The Progressives in 1946. Francis Newton Souza was the outspoken leader of the group, which included M. F. Husain, K. H. Ara, S. A. Bakre, H. A. Gade and S. H. Raza. Souza wanted to question the conventions that had prevailed in art schools. For him, modern art stood for a new freedom that could challenge the traditional sense of beauty and morality. However, his experimental works were focused mainly on women, whom he painted as nudes, exaggerating their proportions and breaking the standard notions of beauty. M. F. Husain, on the other hand, wanted to make the modern style of painting understandable in Indian context. For example, he would paint using the western expressionist brush strokes with bright Indian colours. He not only drew from Indian mythology and religious sources but also from the style of miniature paintings, village crafts and even folk toys. As a result of successfully combining a modern style of painting with Indian themes, Husain’s art came to eventually represent Indian modern art in the international art world. Mother Teresa is an example to understand how he adapted modern art to paint themes important to Indian, as well as, international audience.’

-https://ncert.nic.in/textbook/pdf/lefa107.pdf

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1. Satish Gujral, *Mourning en masse*

‘The word ‘graphic’ holds a special place in legendary artist Satish Gujral’s vocabulary. He often uses it whenever he refers to his past. A past that is as extraordinary as his life. A past that narrates many tales of a remarkable life. It is while retrieving compelling anecdotes from his life, the 91-year-old relies heavily on his ‘graphic memory’ to recollect the feel, touch and sight of that particular moment . . . . This graphic memory is something he is blessed with. A quality he has employed quite generously while painting his dark and poignant ‘Partition series’. After all, he witnessed the ravages of riots first-hand while travelling to his hometown, Jhelum, a small river settlement along the river, in Pakistan immediately after Partition. He was accompanied by his father, a freedom fighter and member of the Constituent Assembly from Rawalpindi. “We were in Lahore when the country was divided. Lahore had become a living hell as everything was burning,” recalls the Padma Vibhushan recipient. “My father decided to head home (Jhelum) and he was given a car. As we drove towards our home which was just 100 miles from Lahore, we saw that people were being killed on the road and women were raped. The route took much longer than usual because everything was burning and there was chaos,” he recollects.

When they finally managed to reach home in the evening, they were informed that everything was destroyed in their village. Their house had become a refugee camp. The macabre of life was being played out openly, everywhere around them.

Read more here: <https://www.thehindu.com/entertainment/art/i-didnt-paint-partition-i-painted-my-own-suffering/article22138883.ece>

<https://scroll.in/article/957484/satish-gujral-1925-2020-a-life-and-artistic-practice-marked-by-an-impermeable-silence>

<https://www.platform-mag.com/art/satish-gujral.html>

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1. S.L. Parasher. *Undivided Punjab*,   1967.

‘Artist, writer and philosopher Sardari Lal Parasher was 43 years old when Partition cleaved the subcontinent and uprooted thousands. He had to leave behind his all in Lahore as he, like hundreds of other refugees, boarded a train out of newly-created Pakistan. He was the vice-principal of Mayo School of Arts (now the National College of Art, Lahore). He fled with his life, a set of clothes and a newspaper clipping of a sketch he had done of Rabindranath Tagore.

Soon after arriving in India, Parasher took up the job of the supervisor of a refugee camp in Baldev Nagar, Ambala. On his daily pre-sundown peregrinations around the camp, he saw people with grief and a sense of loss writ large on their faces. He sketched, with pen and pencil, whatever he saw on any piece of paper that he could lay his hands on.’

* (read the rest here) [Partition pangs, etched forever - TSI](http://www.thesundayindian.com/en/story/partition-pangs-etched-forever/23/47924/)

‘While traditional forms and literary resources spurred his imagination, it is in Parasher’s response to materials that sheer spontaneity and unfettered involvement finds fullest liberation. During the sixties when Chandigarh was being developed as part of the Nehruvian vision of nation-building in the post- Independence period, and as a founder Principal of the College of Arts interaction with architects, writers and historians fuelled his intellectual world. His own creativity was triggered to find suitable responses to the changed aesthetics of a post-Independent, modern city.

Le Corbusier selected Parasher’s design for a steel sculpture mural in Chandigarh from an all-India contest. The Vidyavalanj (States of Knowledge) selected for the entrance of Government College for Men building sets into motion the overwhelming large expanse of the facade of Corbusier’s building; the dynamism of triangular forms and the shadows cast simultaneously compliment and intensify the architectural facade of the college. Similarly, Parasher’s ‘Landscape sculpture-undivided Punjab’ of 1967 in Leisure Valley, extols the language of pure form and texture imprinted with square shapes, the text of a poem by Puran Singh and Punjabi folk songs.

The forms emerge from amidst the circular pool as if kneaded out and raised to a circular sway out of the soil. Similarly, restlessness generating energy and movement . . .’ .

* (read the rest here)[The Sunday Tribune - Books](https://www.tribuneindia.com/2005/20050731/spectrum/book1.htm)

Explore the artist, his life and works here: [SL Parasher](http://prajnaparasher.com/SLP/index.html)

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1. B.C. Sanyal

‘This is a depiction of a fair. It is immediately post-Partition so there is the refugee camp in the backdrop but this is also showing that there is a certain interaction between people in the background. In the foreground, the immediate front of the painting, our character who tries to draw our attention is disconnected from the rest. The next people we see, by the basket, may be a family, a group of potters, people selling their wares but the rest of the people are distant. The artist offers no explanation whatsoever. What we took away from this artwork was how BC Sanyal, who was new to the city of Delhi, was capturing it. He was looking at these new sets of people who have gathered together --- maybe there’s a bit of loneliness, some alienation but there’s also unity, like you see at the back. Even in this time there are people who find connections. You may not know someone but you are familiar with the situation that they find themselves in and that binds you together. So the artist sort of draws you in to show you what he sees at a point of time.’

-Medhavi Gandhi.

Read more here: <https://www.theheritagelab.in/bc-sanyal-artist-lahore-delhi/>

Watch an episode of *Zinda Itihaas*  on B.C. Sanyal here: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AYBt1o\_68HI

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1. Ram Kumar, *Unemployed Graduates*, 1956

‘Born in 1924 in Simla, Ram Kumar was among India’s leading modernists. He studied Economics at St. Stephen’s College, New Delhi, in 1946. Following this, he went to Paris to study painting under Andre Lhote and Fernard Leger in 1949-1952.

Ram Kumar, like many of his confreres among the first generation of post-colonial Indian artists - including such figures as F N Souza, M. F. Husain, Paritosh Sen, Jehangir Sabavala, Krishen Khanna, S H Raza and Akbar Padamsee - combined an internationalist desire with the need to belong emphatically to their homeland. In its internationalist mood, this generation looked to the early 20th-century modernisms of Paris, London and Vienna for inspiration; its need to belong prompted an interest in the construction of a viable ‘Indian’ aesthetic that bore a dynamic relationship to an Indian identity. With Ram Kumar, this quest for an indigenist tenor has not meant a superficial inventory of ‘native’ motifs offered as evidence of a static and essentialist Indian identity. Instead, as I have already suggested, he demonstrates that a painter can enact the innermost dramas of his culture while maintaining the individuality, even idiosyncrasy of his performance.’

-https://www.saffronart.com/artists/ram-kumar

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1. D.P. Roychowdhury

‘Born in Rangpur on 14 October 1899, he had his early education at home. He started learning painting at the feet of Italian painter Boiess. Later he abandoned European technique and style and became a disciple of the master artist Abanindranath Tagore.

After completing the study of art Deviprasad worked as a teacher in the Oriental Art Society of Calcutta. He worked there for long twenty-eight years as its Principal. After his retirement, he became a member of Lalit Kala Academy, Government of India. Later he rendered his service to the Academy as its President for seven years.

Besides paintings, Devi Prasad regularly practised the art of sculpture. He learnt sculpture from artist Hironmoy Chowdhury. He later visited Italy and learnt and absorbed the style and technique of western sculpture. During this period he freed himself from the influence of the Bengal School and infused realism in his works.’

Read the rest here: https://en.banglapedia.org/index.php/Roychowdhury,\_Deviprasad

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