

Sundaram Tagore's highlights

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By Catherine Milner, journalist, curator, Creative Director of Messums and editor of The Treasure House Fair Magazine.

"There is a visceral connection if you are in front of a work of art," says art dealer Sundaram Tagore. "If you view art online, you can have the visual and auditory appreciation of the work, but the other senses are missing. The smell, the touch." As Tagore prepares his stand for the Treasure House Fair next week, he reflects on the evolution of the art world, particularly since the pandemic. "I thought art fairs might become a thing of the past," he admits. "But how wrong I was about that." "I was flying around the world 24/7 before the pandemic. There were so many exhibitions; way too many things happening. It was globalisation in excess. Now, at the gallery we are slower, more thoughtful in the way we work, and have deeper interactions with people. A more compassionate world is emerging. The 'Go Big or Go Home' mentality cannot be sustained."

Tagore emphasises that technology, despite its utility, cannot replace the experience of seeing art in person, especially the delicate kinds of works he likes. "The material factor is very important," he says. "The tactility is what draws me in." One striking example is the work of Hiroshi Senju, who uses natural materials like seashells, corals, animal glue, and pigments on Japanese mulberry paper—a centuries-old medium—to create contemporary masterpieces. "You have to be in front of his pictures," Tagore insists. "Otherwise they could just look like poured paint. What makes them so beautiful is how the paint coagulates into tiny bubbles; the fragile textural quality is what makes them so captivating."

Below: Hiroshi Senju, *Waterfall*, 2024, Pigments on Japanese mulberry paper mounted on board 162 x 130 cm



Tagore also highlights Chun Kwang Young, a Korean artist known for his crystalline sculptures made from mulberry paper, and Miya Ando, a New York artist whose luminous works on aluminium centre on the ephemeral imagery of twilight clouds. Both artists exemplify the fusion of traditional techniques with contemporary aesthetics. Tagore speaks passionately about the gallery's commitment to fostering global artistic dialogue. He mentions the artist Sohan Qadri, whose artistic journey spanned continents and cultures. "Sohan Qadri spent a big chunk of his life in Copenhagen where he liked the Northern sky and that he wasn't jostled by the ideas buzzing elsewhere else. He grew up in a very ecumenical way in Punjab under the influence of a Sufi saint and a Tantric guru. Both were teaching the same things: how to discipline your mind and find commonality. All of us are different rivers getting to the same ocean," he concludes.

The gallery's global reach and collaborations with museums highlight its dedication to showcasing diverse voices. Tagore points to Karen Knorr, a German-born photographer who grew up in Puerto Rico. Her surreal, dream-like works critique how animals are treated as extreme forms of otherness, blending the political with the poetic. As the gallery gears up for the Treasure House Fair, Tagore reflects on the excitement of showcasing art in London and also having recently opened a new gallery there in South Kensington.

"As a gallery, we do well in global cosmopolitan cities like New York, Miami and Singapore. I am very excited to be in London, which – even after Brexit – is the most truly global metropolitan city in the world."

Tagore's lineage also underpins his commitment to internationalism. His great grand-uncle was Rabindranath Tagore, the poet. "He was in the service of people when he built the world university and travelled to every corner of the globe."

He was ecumenical and unusual."

Below: Chun Kwang Young, Aggregation 23 - NV123 (BLUE), 2023, Mixed media with Korean mulberry paper 163 x 131 cm

