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SATISH GUJRAL'S
ARCHITECTURAL LEGACY

T H E A R T I S T S S U E

The 'Anish Kapoor: Painting' exhibition is underway at the Modern Art Oxford gallery till 13 February.

TEXT: ADITI MAHESHWARI, PHOTO: BEN WESTOBY.



UNDERNEATH IT ALL

ANISH KAPOOR'S CURRENT EXHIBITION AT MODERN ART OXFORD IS PART OF HIS ONGOING STUDY OF THE REPPRESSED BODY, EMOTION, AND SELF.

They say creativity takes courage, and if that is to be believed, then 'Anish Kapoor: Painting', on view at the Modern Art Oxford gallery till 13 February 2022, is not for the faint of heart. Allow us to paint a picture: a chair drenched in bodily matter and fluids, the earth erupting with flaming bloody innards, a tray brimming with viscous red, a stretched piece of blood-soaked skin mixed with a pile of hair. An air of gratuitous violence fills the space, but it is surprisingly eloquent—almost considered and contemplative. This is the genius of Anish Kapoor, the British-Indian sculptor who has dominated contemporary art for three decades, and whose works truly take you to the edge.

Kapoor, of course, defines himself otherwise—"I'm a painter working as a sculptor"—and this is why the exhibition is of importance, as it explores the rarely exhibited paintings that have been an integral part of his oeuvre over the last 40 years. At the show, his oil-on-canvas artworks are displayed alongside his floor-based works (which demand to be viewed as paintings as well), and for the first time, his deep reds and blacks are met with vivid yellow, ash grey and lascivious purple. The show is a demonstration of his ongoing attention to the abjected body and self. As you look closely, it poses a question: How do you perceive this raucous imagery? The works may manifest as a repressed mind, bursting at the seams, or as a commentary on animal and human cruelty. But what also makes the show relevant is its timing: Conceptualized during the pandemic, it brings out the vulnerable and debilitating emotions that engulf the world today. But if you were to look beyond the imagery of decapitation, gore, organs spilling out and reaching the floor, you might find a deeper message: to introspect and express. Let it all out. Breathe. **▲**