

Vivan Sundaram – a tribute – Archana Hebbar Colquhoun

A tribute to Vivan Sundaram: An artist unparalleled in diversity and creative output

A letter from me to Vivan post March 29, 2023

Dear Vivan,

I know I can never meet you again. I can't hear your eloquent speech in the flesh but I have a recording of our long interview from three years ago – taken during the height of Covid. I have been listening to the recording since the moment I heard you were no longer with us. I feel your presence surrounding me and I can hear your soft voice even when I've got the recorder turned off.

[The interview is titled “Investigating the Mind of an Artist” in which Vivan spoke at length about many aspects of his work in response to my questions about his working practice.]

I feel so fortunate that I had the opportunity to have known you right from when I was a teenager – soon after I joined the Faculty of Fine Arts, Baroda and through my years in Delhi.

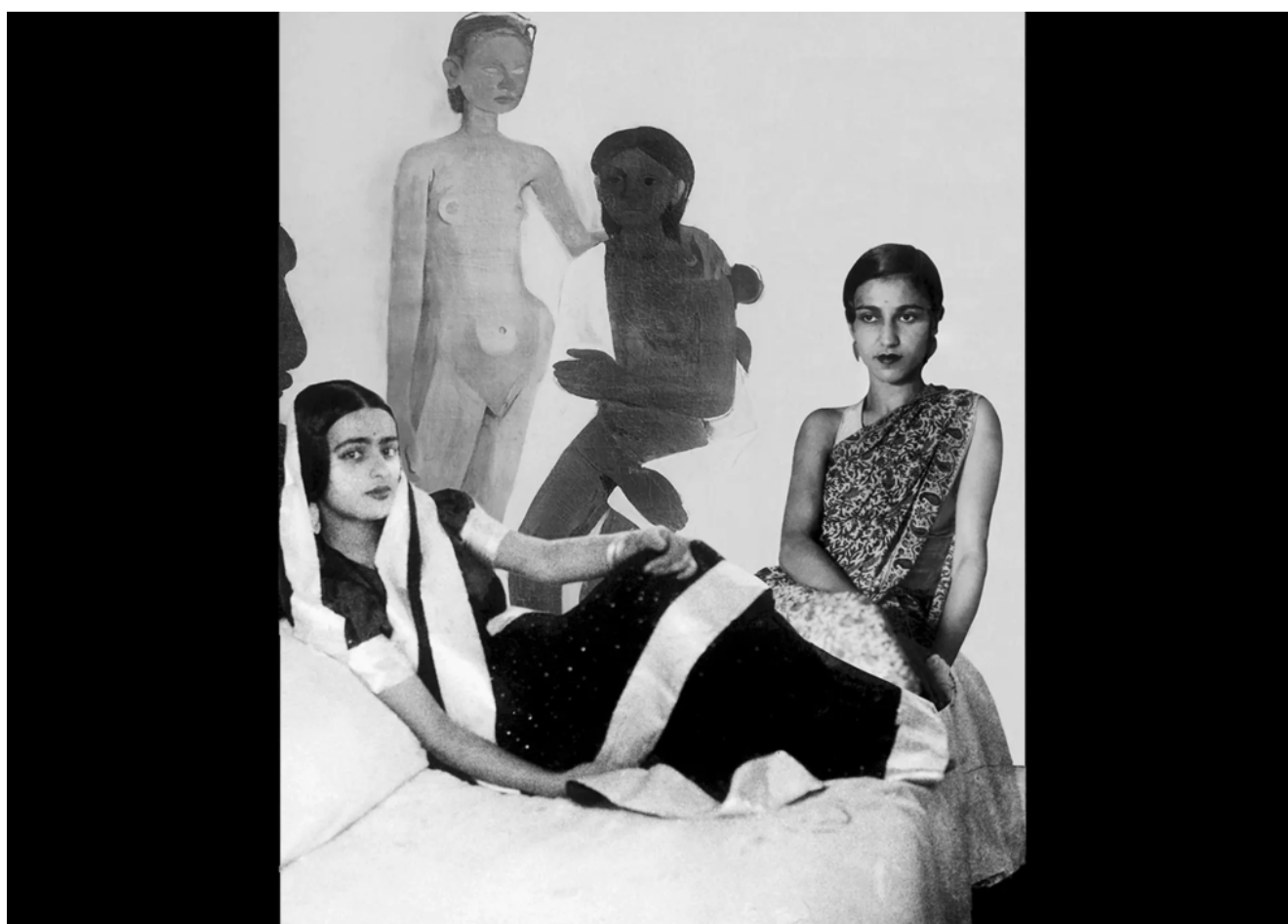
When I first met you at the faculty in Baroda, as I saw you walking towards me, I was struck by the magnetism of your presence. It seemed to me as if you owned the ground on which you walked as well as the air that surrounded you. I later, and only in stages, got to know of your extraordinary artistic heritage.

My interview with Vivan – a recording, and a pending project

Despite having had the recording of the interview with me since late 2020, I couldn't work on the interview in any significant manner. There were many reasons for that. However,

I have now returned to the interview and I feel that the more I listen to our exchange, hearing Vivan's voice, the greater is the challenge to formulate my ideas about Vivan's work and present them in writing.

Although regrets are entirely futile and counterproductive but if I were to consider any regrets that I have with regard to my association with Vivan, they are that I missed seeing his stupendously varied body of work as it was developing and the startling constructions he made and exhibited over the decades, since I moved to Tokyo in the late 1980s.



Vivan Sundaram's *Sisters with Two Girls* (2001)

There are innumerable images to choose from for Vivan Sundaram and his artworks. Any choice made to use an image is necessarily accidental and arbitrary.