



# KEKEE MANZIL

## HOUSE OF ART

Picturing Modern India: The Untold Story Behind an Artistic Revolution



A Film By  
Behroze Gandhy  
Dilesh Korya  
Michael Poole  
Talvin Singh



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# SYNOPSIS

In *Kekee Manzil: House of Art* a daughter journeys to find how her father catalysed the contemporary art movement in India as it achieved independence in 1947. But how did he get to this point? Back in 1941, Kekoo Gandhi came to the aid of a man whose car got stuck in the sand on Juhu beach in Bombay. A friendship started and a business partnership soon followed. The pair established Chemould Frames, which became the largest picture frame enterprise in Asia. A chance encounter, the first of many moments of serendipity helping launch the most significant Indian art movement from the city.

But picture frames need filling. As Kekoo established his business, the Progressive Artists' Group had been growing in Bombay, fired by the tragedy of Partition and the hopes of independence. These included the artists MF Husain, Raza, Souza, and Ara, whose works now sell for considerable amounts. These artists believed in creating a new form of Modernist Art, unique to India: a new voice for a new nation, incorporating its colonial past but looking towards the future. How did they do it? Especially when there was no money in Art. There was no market for it and certainly no tradition which could inspire them.

This is where Kekoo and his wife Khorshed stepped in. They were the power couple of Bombay who supported these artists, developed the first Modern Art Gallery to show their works and fought for the original dream of what India could be.





For 70 years they were at the very heart of the creative and historical movements that buffeted the city. From living through the hopes of the new nation in 50s and 60s. Then to see the first cracks appear in the world's largest democracy during the Emergency in the 70s. And finally today, where the very existence of the secular nation is under threat. Kekoo and Khorshed fought hard for their beliefs, witnessing the tragic consequences of intolerance.

*Kekee Manzil*, for the first time on the screen, will show over 100 original artworks, interwoven with glorious colour Super 8 of the family, and a wealth of stills from the Chemould archive, along with unique historical footage of Bombay.

Melding all this together is a stunning and award winning soundtrack by Talvin Singh. His rhythms and moods capture the sweep of history through a mix of traditional and modern techniques.

*Kekee Manzil* is a hugely ambitious film that interweaves history, art and politics through the prism of this family-the Gandhi's. It is an untold story. A story that will surprise, charm, beguile, shock and devastate the viewer. But beyond the world of art, this film is also a heartfelt love letter to the people of Bombay/Mumbai.



# DIRECTOR STATEMENT

Behroze and I started working together on this film in 2016. We were ambitious, telling the story of not only Kekoo, but also of an art movement. More importantly, India was going through major changes that shocked and saddened us. I felt compelled to speak about this darkness that lurks under surface of the nation, right from its inception.

Behroze recorded her father Kekoo from 2002, aware that she was witness to a unique period of Indian art history – and its main protagonists were fast disappearing. It was apparent that there wasn't enough in the archive to tell the complete story, so new material was shot. Living artists including Nalini Malani, Atul Dodiya, and Anish Kapoor were interviewed. Also contributing is Salman Rushdie, who re-imagined Kekoo and these artists in *The Moor's Last Sigh*.

What struck me the most whilst making the film, was the huge respect Kekoo had in the city. No matter what we wanted, wherever we went, if we mentioned Kekoo, then doors would open, access granted where normally it would be impossible. We were given so much, for example Christie's gave us full access to their entire Indian catalogue just because of Kekoo. He is an immense figure in the artistic and political landscape of Bombay and India.

I am immensely proud of the film, not only because it takes big stories, big ideas, and also the deeply personal, successfully interweaving them, but for any budding filmmaker, it reminds that there's another way to make films. It is self funded, using at times an iPhone to film, never obsessed about the perfect shot. We were budget poor but ideas rich. As Anish Kapoor says in the film 'it is about what it says'. And our film says so much.



# ABOUT THE FILMMAKERS

## BEHROZE GANDHY, PRODUCER

Behroze Gandhi is an independent producer who jointly founded the company Hindi Picture in 1982, initially distributing Hindi films for Channel Four Television. After 1989 Hindi Picture produced programmes for British television. Behroze has produced numerous multicultural programmes and series for Channel Four Television. In 1996, she produced a documentary on the Indian actor Sanjay Dutt.

Behroze's drama credits as producer include *Flight*, a feature for Screen Two at the BBC; and *Surviving Sabu*, a short film for the Arts Council of England.

Behroze says: 'From 2002, I began recording my father and mother, Kekoo and Khorshed Gandhi, as they were witness to key moments of the Indian contemporary art movement from the early 1940s, and established the first contemporary art gallery in Bombay. This period coincided with the emergence of India as an independent nation, which made a record of this period crucial. Simultaneously, I also carried out interviews with contemporaries on that journey, including Raza, Tyeb Mehta, and Krishen Khanna. After my parents passed away in 2012 and 2013, I realised that this was material for a unique documentary, which would reflect the story of Indian art from a personal point of view.'



## DILESH KORYA, DIRECTOR/EDITOR

Dilesh Korya is a British Asian filmmaker and editor based in Bristol, with a career that spans 30 years. For over 20 years he has been editing documentaries for BBC and Channel 4. Many have won awards and garnered big audiences and critical praise.

Prior to this, Dilesh had made numerous short films, both drama and documentaries. His film 'Sari' has been shown at festivals and awarded a number of commendations.

Dilesh is a filmmaker that works across all areas of film production. Not only did he direct and edit 'Kekee Manzil', but also shot many scenes, produced the graphics and co-wrote the film.

'Kekee Manzil' is his first feature documentary, taking nearly five years to make. He is currently finishing off a film script, researching a number of new feature documentaries, as well as editing a major new series for the BBC.



## TALVIN SINGH, MUSIC

Talvin Singh OBE is a musician, producer, and composer. A tabla player, he is known for creating an innovative fusion of Indian classical music and drum-and-bass. Talvin is involved with an electronica subgenre called Asian Underground, and more recently as Indian and/or Asian electronica.

After collaborating with Siouxsie and the Banshees and Björk in the early 1990s, Talvin released his debut album *Ok*, which received the Mercury Music Prize in 1999.

Talvin has since collaborated with a variety of acts including Madonna and Massive Attack.

Talvin came on board this project because he knew of the Gandhi family and Kekoo for many years. He felt compelled to be part of the project.



## MICHAEL POOLE, EXECUTIVE PRODUCER

In a multi award-winning career at the BBC Michael produced a wide range of acclaimed documentary films and series about art and history, culture and society. He has always had a strong interest in the sub-continent, as seen in projects such as *Raj to Rhondda*, a film about Indian physicians who came to work in the NHS in the 1960s, which was later adapted into the hit BBC1 drama series, *The Indian Doctor*. He was also the executive producer of the BBC2 documentary series *Sanjeev Bhaskar's India*. What particularly drew him to the story of the emergence of the modern art movement in Bombay was the opportunity to work with a rich archive of super-8 footage, newsreel material and a glorious portfolio of original canvasses to bring the work of such extraordinary and world-class artists to the wider audience they deserve.



# LINKS

**Chemould Gallery:**

<https://www.gallerychemould.com>

**Talvin Singh**

<https://talvinsingh.com>

# FILM INFO

**Length**

93 minutes

**Format**

HD

**Viewing Options**

Vimeo link on request

**Screening**

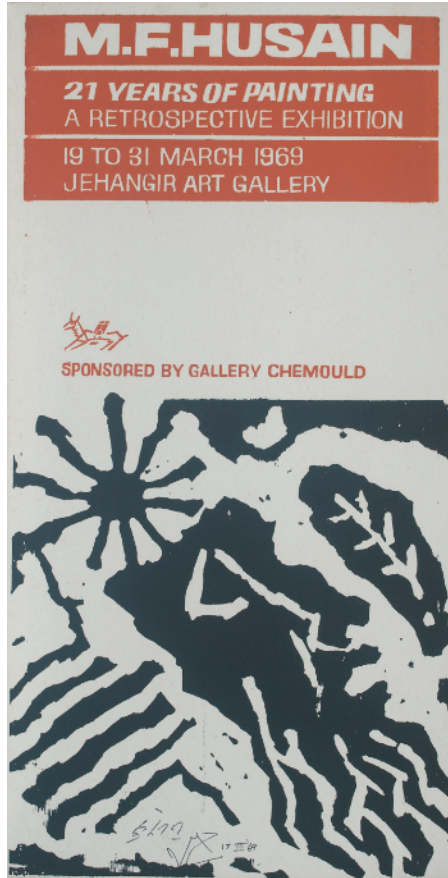
ProRes and DCP available

**Contact**

dileshkorya@gmail.com



## FAQ



**Q: Where did you get the funding?**

A: Behroze provided all the financial support. The film was made on a minimal budget. So much was given to us because of the reputation of the Gandhi family. Kekoo Gandhi is held in such respect that people were only too pleased to help.

**Q: Where did you get the archive?**

A: To a large extent from The Films Division of India a remarkable, untapped resource in Mumbai. In addition, Chemould Prescott has an extensive photographic and image library stretching back 80 years recording the family's life in Bombay. And last but not least, Super 8 footage by late family member Dara Gandhi.

So much of the archive has never been seen in this country.

**Q: What did you shoot it on?**

A: The film used every format and resolution you can imagine, from Super 8, Hi-8 to 4K. A considerable proportion of new material was shot on an iPhone! We wanted a style that wasn't about the perfect image, that revelled in its rough edges. This is the charm of the film- it isn't over-produced. It is authentic.

**Q: How did you choose the Artists that featured?**

A: This is by no means a complete inventory of all the great Indian artists. The artists were chosen because they had a close association with Kekoo.

Many Artists were left out. We were really torn by who we had to leave out.

**Q: Have the artist's work been exhibited in the UK?**

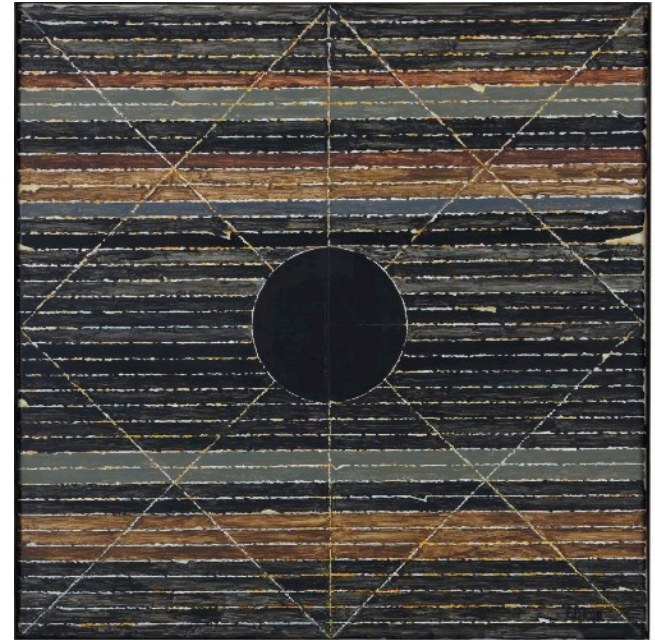
A: Many of the artists have been in group exhibitions over the years. Artists like Bhupen Khakhar have had a major retrospective at the Tate Modern in 2016.

As they are not part of the Western Canon, they are often overlooked.

**Q: Where did you get all the Art?**

A: The pictures of the Art were donated by Christies Auctioneers and Gallery Chemould. We had work that dates back to 1941, all the way to 2020. It is for the first time ever, the most comprehensive collection of Modern Indian Art.

We show nearly 100 pieces, most have never been seen by the general public. This is the first time, and perhaps the only time these pieces will be exhibited together.





## CREDITS

### **Producer**

Behroze Gandhi

### **Director and Editor**

Dilesh Korya

### **Executive Producer**

Michael Poole

### **Music**

Talvin Singh

### **Camera**

Avijit Mukul Kishore

Abhijeet Rao

Peter Chappell

Neeraj Jain

Karan Thapliyal

### **Camera Assistant**

Harvinder Arora

Sabari Pandian

Anil

### **Sound**

Anita Kushwaha

Braulio Lin

Nikhil Kumar

### **Sound Assistant**

Satyaprakash Maurya

Dharamveer Sharma

### **Archive Research**

Sabari Pandian

### **Titles**

Emily Poole

### **Picture Research**

Rupal Shah

### **Post Production**

#### **Producer**

Lisa Williams

#### **Colourist**

Tim Bolt

### **Online Editor**

Arun Hall

### **Dubbing Mixer**

Colin Chipcase

### **Super 8 Film Transfer**

David Wilkinson

Geneva Stop

### **Production Assistants**

Svenja Helmold

Eden Vauttier

### **Stills Courtesy of**

Christies Images Limited

Chemould Prescott

## PRESS/REVIEWS

### THE HINDU

'Kekee Manzil - The House of Art' chronicles a micro-history of Mumbai anchored in a century-old family home

<https://www.thehindu.com/entertainment/movies/kekee-manzil-the-house-of-art-chronicles-a-micro-history-of-mumbai-anchored-in-a-century-old-family-home/article31917896.ece>

### THE TELEGRAPH OF INDIA

'The House of Art'

<https://www.telegraphindia.com/opinion/kekee-manzil-the-house-of-art/cid/1786254>

### THE WIRE (INDIA)

The Accidental Gallerist and the Making of Indian Modern Art

<https://thewire.in/the-arts/kekoo-gandhy-art-gallery-bombay>

### INDIAN EXPRESS

The Chemould Couple

### ARCHITECTURAL DIGEST INDIA

'Mumbai: This heartfelt film offers a brief history of modern art in India'

<https://www.architecturaldigest.in/magazine-story/mumbai-heartfelt-film-shows-brief-history-of-modern-art-in-india-bandra-mansion/#s-cust0>

### THE VERVE INDIA

Meeting the Gandhys Through 'Kekee Manzil-The House of Art'

<https://www.vervemagazine.in/people/meeting-the-gandhys-in-kekee-manzil-the-house-of-art>

### THE MASH INDIA

The House That Built Art

<https://www.mashindia.com/the-house-that-built-art.php>

### THE CULTURE VULTURE