

From Berlin to Bombay: Rudolf von Leyden and India's Artistic Awakening

Book presentation and talk by

Reema Desai Gehi

June 24, 6–8pm, room 217 at IAAW

Welcome speech: Flora Veit-Wild, Emerita Professor of African literatures

Moderation: Nadja-Christina Schneider

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Based on the book *The Catalyst: Rudolf von Leyden and India's Artistic Awakening*, the presentation will shed light on a German art critic who played a pivotal yet overlooked role in shaping modern Indian art. Arriving as a refugee from Nazi Germany, Rudolf von Leyden soon became a tireless champion of India's emerging avant-garde painters in the vibrant world of post-independence Bombay. The lecture will capture the critic's monumental influence on artists like K.H. Ara, M.F. Husain, S.H. Raza, F.N. Souza and Krishen Khanna – the audacious pioneers who rebelled against academic styles to forge a bold, new artistic vision for a nation reborn.

Reema Desai Gehi is the Editor at *ART India* magazine, the country's longest-running art publication. An alumna of Cardiff University, UK, where she completed her Master's with a special focus on arts journalism, her debut book *The Catalyst: Rudolf von Leyden and India's Artistic Awakening* was published in 2024 by Speaking Tiger; its German translation has been published this year by Draupadi Verlag, Heidelberg.

