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India Art Fair presents its 13th edition with over 500 participating artists

STIR looks at ten artists who stood out at the recently concluded India Art Fair in New Delhi.

by [Rahul Kumar](#) | Published on : May 04, 2022

The 2022 edition of **India Art Fair**, the leading platform that showcases modern and **contemporary art** from **South Asia**, was presented from April 28 to May 1 at the NSIC Exhibition Grounds in New Delhi. It comprised 77 exhibitors, including 63 galleries and 14 institutional participants from 16 cities in **India** and beyond. The fair featured over 500 modern and **contemporary artists**, a talks programme, Artist in Residence workshops and performances, and a Platform section that showcased underrepresented traditional and folk **Indian art** forms. The fair also introduced an expanded Young Collectors Programme with the aim of educating and empowering new collectors. Jaya Asokan, Fair Director of India Art Fair, commented: "Since the **pandemic** has caused a paradigm shift in the global art market, the purpose of **art fairs** has taken on a new relevance, which prompted us to reconsider our role within the art world. In a bid to sustain this cultural dialogue throughout the last two years, we transitioned from a seasonal four-day event to a year-round presence through a refreshed website with newly commissioned artist films and stories, IAF Parallel exhibitions and events, new pop-ups and **public art** projects, workshops and walkthroughs to grow our footprint within the region.'



Visitors at India Art Fair 2022
Image: Courtesy of India Art Fair

There seemed a distinct focus on developing the next generation of collectors. "While making my enquiries at the various galleries, I have been pleasantly surprised to find out

that they have been already sold, and that too, to a young collector,” says Kiran Nadar, Patron and Founder of **Kiran Nadar Museum of Art**. Mortimer Chatterjee, Gallery Director, **Chatterjee & Lal**, pointed out the price points they kept was to encourage young collectors. “We have seen a lot of younger collectors this year as well as major acquisitions made by institutions,” he said.

While it is not an easy task to make a selection from the over 500 artists showcased, STIR brings to you 10 presentations that stood out to make an impression.



Untitled paintings by Rithika Merchant

Image: Courtesy of India Art Fair

Ritika Merchant at Tarq gallery

Merchant looks to a more primordial time, where she searches for answers in the stars. She focuses on the sky, using a holistic vision of the universe to try and answer what comes after the Holocene and Anthropocene when the earth started changing in a much more rapid and real way. Each hoop is named after a star or star system and is a meditation on how the behaviour of the star can tell us more about ourselves and our future. For example, Sirius' waxing and waning brightness is a metaphor for how civilisations rise and fall. From dust to stardust, the cycle is endless. “Throughout history comets have been viewed as portents of either disaster or some sort of huge change. My collages are visual totems or alters to these powerful forces,” she says.





Riverbank, mix-media on paper by Shailesh BR
Image: Courtesy of India Art Fair

Shailesh BR at Vadehra Art Gallery

Shailesh BR's art spoke powerfully in dialects of a day-to-day existence. Titled *Riverbank*, it takes reference from **Rabindranath Tagore's** poem *The Golden Boat* – along with a constellation of inspirations from Henri Matisse, Benodebehari Mukherjee, and Gabriel Rico – by enlivening philosophical existence through various tangible and intangible objects. By grasping at objects of interest in the material world to navigate the truth of a metaphysical experience, Shailesh expands the functionality and meaning of these objects once their inner character is interpreted. "In effect, this set of 24 works is a visual poem; my assemblages grasp at reminiscences of long walks on the riverbanks in **Kolkata**, where deep insight and observational politics shaped my understanding of insecurities and falseness alongside truth and love in the city," he says.



Untitled, mix-media on paper by Anindita Bhattacharya
Image: Courtesy of India Art Fair

Anindita Bhattacharya at Gallery Threshold

Eating is an ecological act; it is an ethical act; an agricultural act and a political act. The politics of food has never been more relevant than in recent times, never before what we 'consume' as food has been so closely scrutinised. "The choice of what we eat is perhaps the most influential choice we make that has a global effect, most remarkably, for example, during the struggle for the independence of India, **Mahatma Gandhi** made not eating a form of political protest," she says. Her large-scale paper-cut work felt a juxtaposition of traditional **craftsmanship** and contemporary in expression.



You darkness, mix-media on acrylic lightbox by R Magesh
Image: Courtesy of India Art Fair

R Magesh at Palette

Culturally we do not allow enough space or value to darkness. The formless, infinite, indefinable, unknowing realms of unconsciousness and shadow. Yet this is where creativity and energy and aliveness are born, it is through this very darkness we realise the value of light, the value of hope and enlightenment. Magesh's work titled *You Darkness* explores the different aspects of power structures and the inequalities being faced by the voiceless, unrepresented communities all around the world, be it class, creed, race, religion, colour, or gender. "The various forms of exploitation, it is from this great suppression will arise a new voice, a new awakening and thus a new beginning," he mentions. Magesh references a poem by Rainer Maria Rilke: *You darkness from which I come, I love you more than all the fires, that fence out the world, for the fire makes a circle, for everyone, so that no one sees you anymore.*





Untitled, mix-media by Shilpa Gupta
Image: Courtesy of India Art Fair

Shilpa Gupta at Vadehra Art Gallery

Shilpa Gupta's practice explores the interventions, alterations, and transgressions that occur across spatial and conceptual boundaries of urgent contemporary concern. Her multidisciplinary practice comprises a wide array of media and processes, which explore our fragile relationship with identity, right to expression and systems of culture, as well as the indiscriminate mobility and malleability of borders – not only of nation-states but also nomenclature-based definitions. The diasec-mounted photographs feature a set of images taken of empty streets in urban areas during the lockdown, the prints altered to create a gaping absence at the heart of the image where Gupta comments on the underbelly of progress as the receding connectedness of everyday neighbourhood life.



Untitled, ceramics by PR Daroz
Image: Courtesy of India Art Fair

PR Daroz at Gallerie Nvya

Suspended between the past and future, Daroz's architectural gateways provide a unique **sensory experience** set out in space and time. The threshold marks an invasion as well as

an intimate experience of a space that is both personal and public. Daroz's portal invokes resonances of the Buddhist stupas that act as transitions between old and new. "I was inspired by the monuments of Mandu with its haunting aura of free gateways and arches opening out to framed and vast spaces; the grills splintered with glimpses of faces; a lotus pond in full view. Terracotta is the skin of a given civilisation. It contains and defines the very sap that characterises the spirit of the civilisation," he says.



Naqal Makaani/Naqal-o-hamal, Charcoal on paper by Mariam Suhail
Image: Courtesy of India Art Fair

Mariam Suhail at Gallery SKE

Naqal Makaani - a term meaning repeating, copying or transferring (*naqal*) of a dwelling, home or house (*makaan*). The term *naqal* is also used on its own as the word for cheating off of someone. The composite term *Naqal Makaani* is used mainly in the context of migration of people or a population.

Naqal-o-hamal - a term meaning copying (*naqal*) and (*o*) carrying (*hamal*), transfer and lift. The word *hamal* is also used on its own as the word for pregnancy. The composite term *Naqal-o-Hamal* is used mainly in the context of transportation of goods and materials from one place to another.

Loosely translating in this instance to *Migration of Roof*, *Transportation of Roof*, the first part of the title describes intention and the second, it's practical manifestation.

"Certain words in Urdu, which is my first language, have been making an appearance in my

mind a lot more recently, floating as dark, bold text on a white background. The word, its form and its meaning all run around, throwing thought and memory into a spinning motion. The word *Chhath* is just roof, but *chhath* also brings to mind roof over one's head (*sar pe chhath*). To migrate with your *chhath*, transporting a roof, as an action is an impossibility, an absurd gesture as well as a desperate desire. I am away from what I always called home, but have I brought it with me?" she says.



Somewhere in Northeast India, woodcut print on paper by Chandan Bez Barua
Image: Courtesy of India Art Fair

Chandan Bez Barua at Gallery Latitude 28

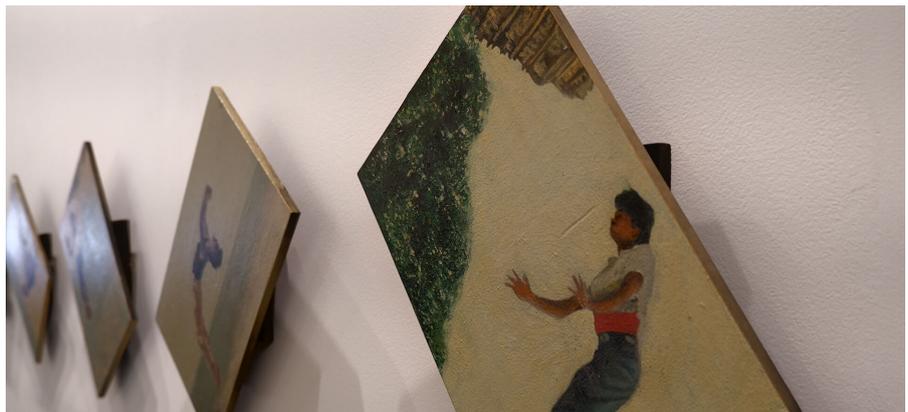
His collage is a synchronisation with specific part of many works. The artist has cut his additional prints and joined them to create an atmosphere coming out of his nostalgic affinities. The collage includes works from his ongoing series *Somewhere in Northeast India*. Barua was born and brought up in the Northeast India, the ecological and nostalgic themes emerged in his works almost naturally being surrounded by landscapes ignored by the cultural urban mainstream. "These landscapes are unfamiliar yet familiar to us," he says. To capture the originality of the real landscapes on his prints, carving on the woodcuts takes substantial amount of time, making it a painstaking process. The process of photographing the landscape itself became contemplative and the tactile experience of carving the wood enabled a reinterpretation of the photographs.



Untitled, print on cloth by Zarrin Fatima Shamsi
Image: Courtesy of India Art Fair

Zarrin Fatima Shamsi at Gallery Art Incept

Born in 1994 in Gujarat, Zarrin studied painting in Baroda, followed by graphic arts. She communicates of natural objects through her prints. She collects found objects and responds to its form and texture. "These objects end up representing emotions that otherwise remain unspoken and unexpressed. Utilising the ordinary to create something precious makes my works intriguing," she says. The subdued and subtle colours draw reference from the unexpressed feeling of a women. The artist currently lives and works in Kuwait.





*A study for a jumping sequence, paint on wood by Amshu Chukki
Image: Courtesy of India Art Fair*

Amshu Chukki at gallery Chatterjee & Lal

Taking from the personal photo archives of the stunt master 'Different Danny', Chukki's work titled *A study for a jumping sequence* presented the body of a stunt man doing a series of summersaults against a landscape. This gesture of jumping against the landscape sets itself as an initial prompt to think of landscapes and cities, it's morphing through the **choreography** of the stunt and various attempts to action. Here landscape and the city become the 'dupe', the 'stunt double'. "The landscape tilts, falls and rotates, destabilising the horizon. A Dutch angle for a perpetual fall that imagines the city and landscape in a state of suspension or a suspension of disbelief," he states.

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Rahul is responsible for curating the Art section. He has been a Consulting Editor with Arts Illustrated and has written for various publications like Mint-Lounge and Vogue. Before retiring from mainstream corporate roles, he led an art venture for NDTV and was also involved in its television...

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