

ART

# Everything you need to know about the 9th Mumbai Gallery Weekend 2021

Mumbai's cultural scene is warming up again. Over the weekend, stop by these events at the 9th MGW (January 14-17) that blur the line between art and design

By Shaikh Ayaz

14 January 2021



A shout-out to Mumbai's culture vultures. Starting today, the city will come alive thanks to the buzzy Mumbai Gallery Weekend 2021. Now in its ninth edition, the MGW has become a key art event in the Maximum City's cultural calendar since its small beginnings in 2012. Spread over the art hub of South Mumbai and even Bandra, the MGW will see 22 leading galleries take part this year. Expect nothing less than the whole gamut: well-known artists like Anju Dodiya, Nikhil Chopra, Aditi Singh, Abhishek Salve and Rithika Merchant will show their works alongside the masters SH Raza, Jogen Chowdhury and Bhupen Khakhar to mention a few. The past, present and future seamlessly intertwined, so to speak. Besides art treasures, the MGW 2021 has included 'design' in its itinerary for the first time. Architects Ashiesh Shah and Rooshad Shroff are all set to showcase their wares.

## Atelier Ashiesh Shah, at Indigo Bungalow

Located in bustling Colaba, the old Indigo Bungalow is an architectural heritage. Soon to be reborn as The One8 Bungalow, it will serve as a venue for Atelier Ashiesh Shah's design presentation 'OTLO' (Gujarati for threshold). Shah remarks, "Through it, we will ponder over art, design and function, their synchrony and distinction." Inspired by the Japanese 'Wabi-Sabi' philosophy, these design objects follow a 'Brutalist Tribal' characteristic to celebrate beauty in imperfection through handcrafted collectibles. "This time around, with design being a part of the 9th MGW allows us to present what we like to call functional sculpture through the design objects we create, a perfect niche that blurs the boundaries between art and design," says the renowned architect. Shah says the pandemic was a catalyst for this project to take off. "We want to focus on solidarity within the design community as a medium to bring change. The process of initiation brought forth the need to collaborate with the most eminent industry personalities to transform lives and livelihood of those lesser privileged." For now, Shah is excited about 'OTLO's opening at the 9th MGW: "2021 is starting with such a fabulous platform for art and design. Things are finally looking up."

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Naga Chair

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## Rooshad Shroff, at Rooshad Shroff Gallery, Fort

For MGW 2021, architect Rooshad Shroff has teamed up with artist Tanya Goel for 'Obverse', a limited edition embroidered chairs. Speaking to AD India, Shroff explains, "'Obverse' celebrates embroidered furniture and its intricate technique. Tanya's complementary artwork pays tribute to Indian craftsmanship. It was like translating a painting into embroidery form." This is Shroff's second collaboration with Goel after last year's The Gyaan Project, a charity initiative that also included contributions from BV Doshi, Atul Dodiya and Christian Louboutin. Initially launched to reinvigorate what many felt was Mumbai's fading art scene, the MGW has over the years grown vastly bigger in size and scale. Today, its major challenge is how to lure patrons back to

museums after a year spent under Covid's dark shadow. Shroff says the timing is trickier still. "On one hand you want footfalls and on the other, you don't want too much crowd and maintain Covid protocol. How to navigate this, it's a big question for all of us." Visitors walking into RS Studio will get a glimpse of the interior designer's signature C-Chairs series and his patented wood embroideries. "Guess all architects love furniture," he says.



Tanya Goel x Rooshad Shroff



## Lubna Chowdhary at, Jhaveri Contemporary

"My primary concern is the relationship between East and West, an area where questions about my own identity merge with an interest in cultural dualities and dichotomies and their expressions in form," says Lubna Chowdhary, while discussing her solo 'Code Switch' (Jan 14-Feb 27) at Jhaveri Contemporary. Chowdhary was born in Tanzania to Pakistani parents who originated in India. She lives and works in London. The title of the exhibition alludes to this cultural hybridity and plurality, as Chowdhary constantly switches between the contrasting forces of both exclusion and inclusion and belonging and non-belonging. 'Code Switch', in particular, investigates the complex and changing formation of identity in a continually globalising world. In it, Chowdhary's geometric abstractions mark a change in her work, taking the form of ceramic panels, collage works on paper and paintings. The new works intentionally suggest sacred geometries but are just as indebted to the countless corporate logos and brand identities that saturate contemporary visual culture and dominate the media landscape.

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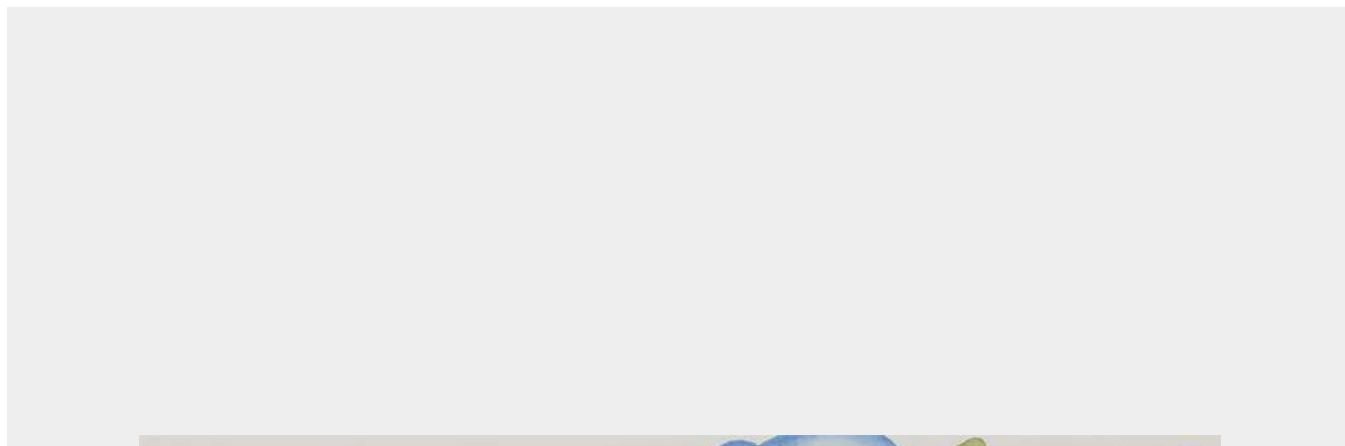


Code 1, 2020 Gouache and acrylic on gessoed board 29 x 23 cm

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## Bhupen and Jogen, at Akara Art

In 'Proximate Paths' (Jan 14-Feb 28), a two-artist show, Akara Art has found a way to marry Bhupen Khakhar's magnetic pop art filled with a homoerotic charge and Bombay's middle-class milieu and aspects of its uneventful life with Jogen Chowdhury's dark but enigmatic vision of humanity. Both artists belong more or less to a similar generation though with radically different approaches and styles. Now 81, Chowdhury was raised in Bengal that became part of East Pakistan. This experience of human suffering is the heart of his art. On the other hand, Khakhar (died: 2003) was a product of Baroda and old Bombay which has now essentially vanished. Over the course of his career, this former chartered accountant cemented his reputation as one of India's most significant and provocative artists. His famous Tate Modern retrospective said it best: 'You can't please all.' And so, Khakhar flouted social conventions. His Bombay scenes are abuzz with social chatter, the streets, shrines, shops and the working class coming together in a Chagall-esque carnival. (Khakhar is long gone, but his friend Sudhir Patwardhan continues to capture that slice of the city). Jogen Chowdhury's great subject has also been the figure, only more twisted and crosshatched. For this exhibition, opening on January 14 to chime in with MGW, Akara has "tried to cover works from different periods of both artists," says Puneet Shah, founder and director, Akara Art. Five Jogen Chowdhury oil paintings are on show while from Khakhar's body of work, there is a mix of oils, watercolours and a ceramic plate — not least his iconic 'Janta Watch Repairing' (1972) which was a part of the Tate retrospective. The show's highlight is an early Chowdhury. A remnant from his Paris days, the riveting 'Representative from Hell' (1965) features Lord Yamraj who has come to collect his due.





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Bhupen Khakhar, The Dance of the Devils, Watercolor on paper, 11.5 x 15.25 inches

## SH Raza, Somnath Hore, Anju Dodiya and more, at Galerie Mirchandani + Steinruecke

Galerie Mirchandani + Steinruecke's new show, 'RED' (Jan 14-March 31), will see the coming together of 11 artists including SH Raza, Somnath Hore and Anju Dodiya among others. To these artists, "the valency of red emerged from their response to their immediate environment, as well as to their reflection on their own state of mind, during the long year of pandemic and lockdown that 2020 was," writes curator Ranjit Hoskote. "In their work, the 11 artists participating in the first part of 'RED' have addressed the colour in various ways, interpreting it viscerally, metaphorically, by allusion and association, through cultural memory and the clarity of a survival experience." The show presents two pivotal works by Mumbai-based Anju Dodiya. Rendered in watercolour and mixed-media formats, 'Pillow Bearer' and 'Red Wind' are typical self-portraits of the artist in a heightened state of fantasy. Hoskote says that Dodiya "stages her paintings around variations on the self-portrait, which are drawn out into a gallery of personae. Anju has long been preoccupied, also, with the psychosomatic states of dream, anxiety, insomnia, and fear, articulated



as phantasmagorical figures that beguile or besiege the embattled self." Red, to Dodiya, symbolises "a state of consciousness and attention to self and world, a colour that signals, in varied contexts, auspiciousness and festivity, yet also hazard."

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Anju Dodiya, Red wind, 2020 Charcoal, watercolour, fabric collage on padded board - Galerie Mirchandani + Steinruecke

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## Anju Dodiya, Nikhil Chopra, Rashid Rana and Nityan Unnikrishnan at Chatterjee & Lal

Anju Dodiya makes her presence felt in yet another group show. At Chatterjee & Lal gallery's 'Heads in the Clouds' (Jan 14-March 27), she will rub shoulders with Nikhil Chopra, Rashid Rana

and Nityan Unnikrishnan. "Diversity is at the heart of the exhibition. At the same time, the central concern is that there are affinities that can be discerned, which are to do with the nature of storytelling in our region," founder Tara Lal tells AD India. She says the exhibition was first conceptualised around "works by Rashid Rana and Minam Apang. In both cases, the artists thought about the earth/sky relationship but approached how to articulate this harmony in diverse and interesting manners. From this starting point, the exhibition grew organically."

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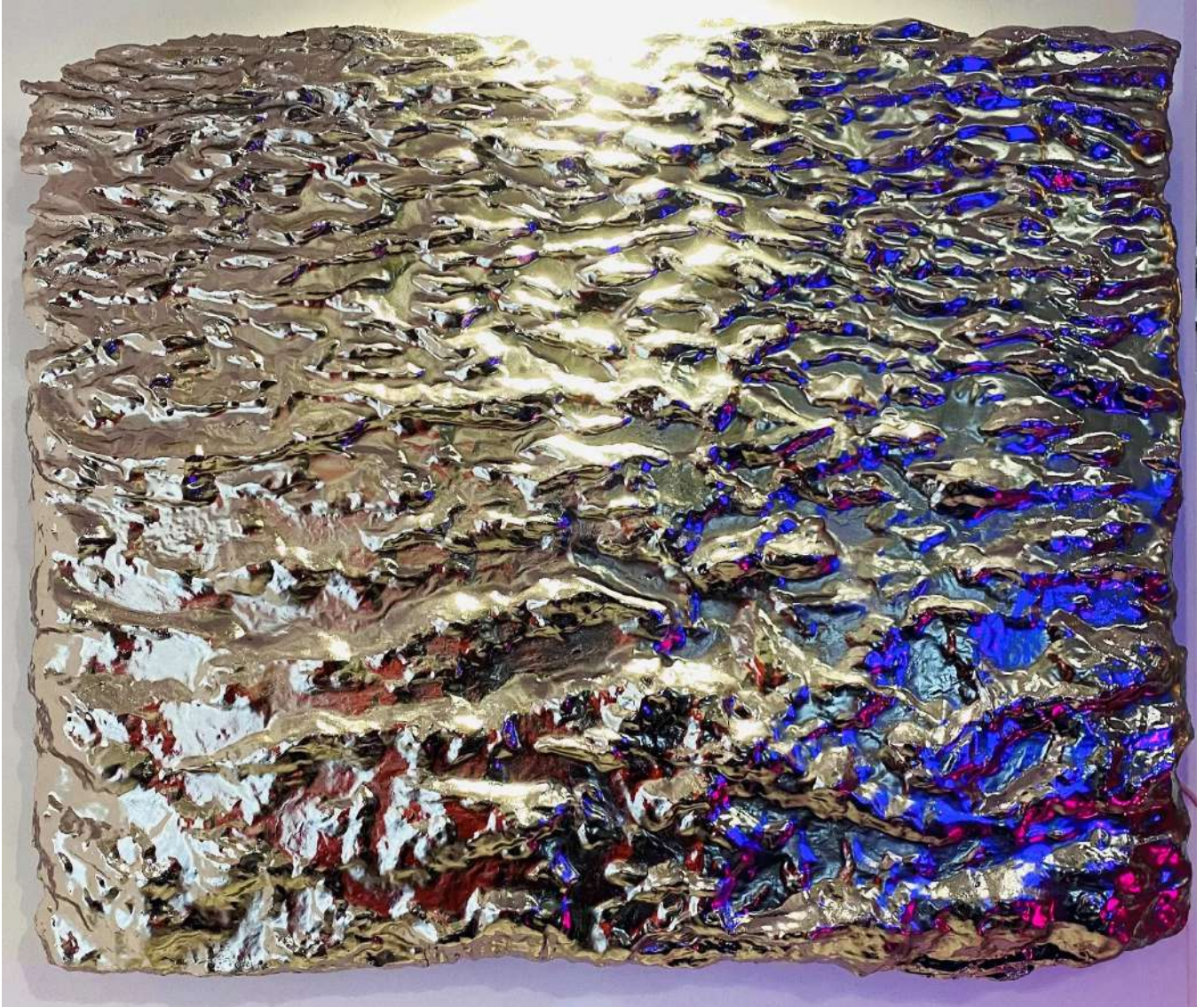
Nikhil Chopra Untitled 2020 Mixed media on paper 12 x 17 in. Image courtesy the artist and Chatterjee & Lal

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**Lekha Washington Studio, at Jamaat**



Jamaat and Lekha Washington Studio have tied up for 'Hinomaru' (14 Jan-5 March) to show a selection of Washington's functional pieces. Curator Pravina Mecklai says, "Lekha's life and work seems to have come full circle with 'Hinomaru.' She has adapted to the new norm, using new materials and ideas. Her work is particularly relevant in this age of sustainability."



Hinomaru by Lekha Washington

## **Rekha Rodwittiya and Riyas Komu, at Sakshi Gallery**

Sakshi Gallery will roll out 'Tinker, Tailor, Soldier, Sailor' (Jan 14-Feb 28), a selection of installations and sculptures from 1993 to 2020 from Rekha Rodwittiya and Riyas Komu among others. Asked about the playful title, curator Geetha Mehra replies, "It works on two levels: In the last year one was able to go through the gallery inventory built up since 1984 and make a selection for the current exhibition. Though carefully thought out, it has a certain randomness to it, much like the delightful counting game played along with the rhyme 'Tinker....' Mehra says that the exhibition "is a celebration of life and all that we have but it is equally a homage to those who left



us last year." 2020 was unprecedented in other ways, too. As the pandemic raged businesses slumped but it felt like the art world, where seeing is often believing, bled more than most. Yet, Mehra finds enough reasons to be optimistic for 2021. "One hopes," as she says, "there will be a cultural churn akin to 'roaring twenties.' Post the Spanish Flu we had jazz, the Bauhaus and abstraction becoming a defining factor as people tried to escape reality. So, there is faith and there is life."



Rekha Rodwittiya. Cream Text. 2011-2012. Wood, Acrylic Paint, Varnish, Fibre Glass, Popular stickers, Acrylic Paint, Varnish (Ed: 3/3). Size: 24 (h) x 18 (w) x 7 (d) Inches

## Aditi Singh, at Chemould Prescott Road

After a 10-month pause, Chemould Prescott Road will resume business with Aditi Singh's 'Somethings are always burning' (Jan 14-March end), a solo of mostly ink works that nod to nature. Through the molten fluidity of a medium like ink, Singh captures the rapidly evolving qualities of light, shadows, mountains and other splendours and fragilities of the natural world.

Each work in 'Somethings are always burning' articulates "the resilience of beauty, observation of its abundance, desire for its precision, and the continuing praise of it," as she puts it. A solitude seeker, Singh draws much of her inspiration from walking and from that rare luxury in the modern world called me-time. "Painting and walking are each practices of awareness, of being open to directions, inner and outer," says the Mumbai-based artist. "Both recognize that each moment can bring in different perceptions, and that our lives are not fixed solidities, they are fluid and in motion. About loving solitude and its spiritual joys, she says, "A phrase from Joseph Conrad's Heart of Darkness has stayed with me since I first read it at 18: 'We live as we dream, alone.' I spend a lot of time reading books and meditating. Both activities require a keen solitude and endurance. As does painting, which is again essentially a solitary act, one never quite knows its total nature, nor oneself in relation to it." If lucky, the elusive creativity will manifest itself once in a while to sweep you into the unknowable. "But knowing," she insists, "is an endless process."



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Aditi Singh | Untitled

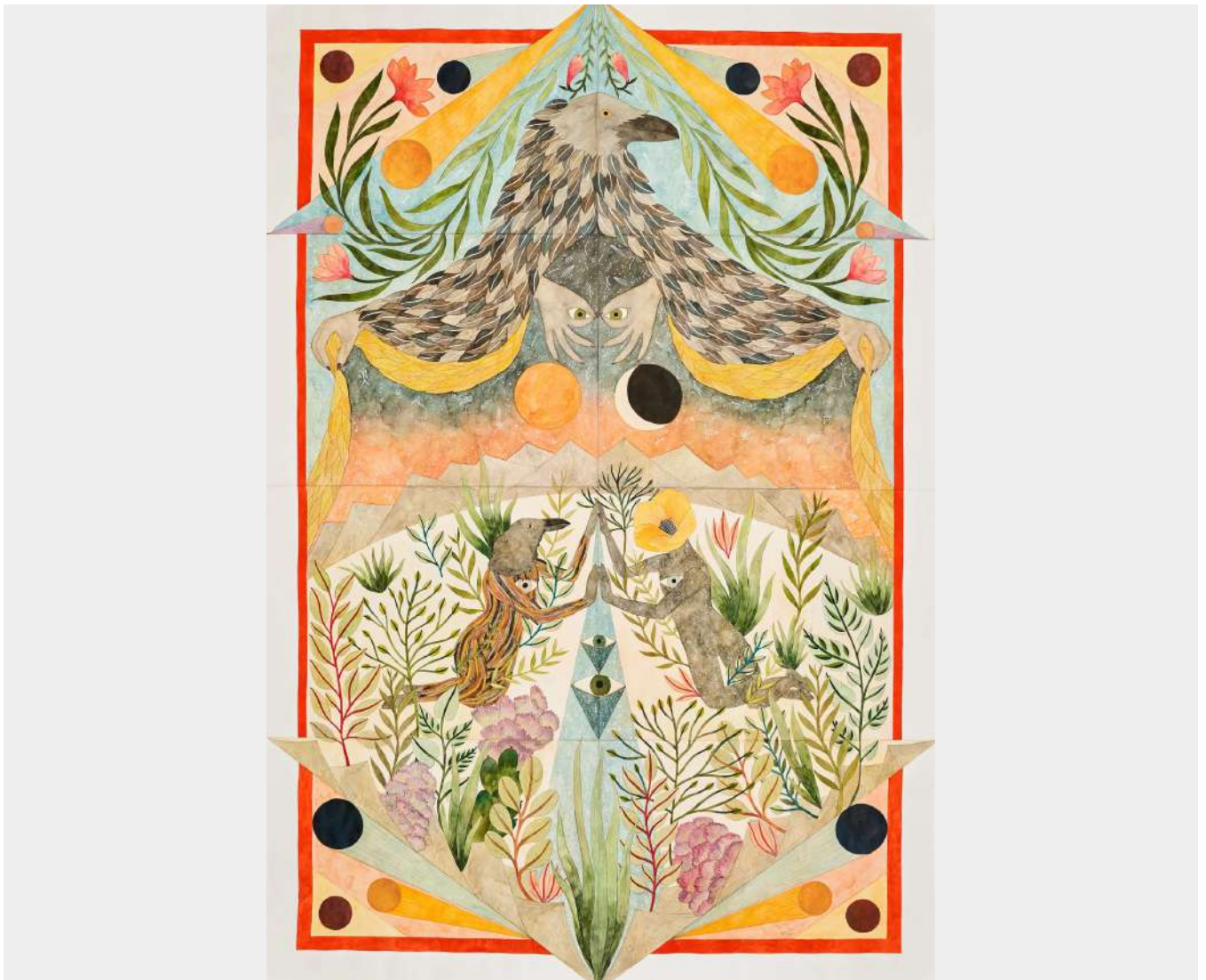
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**Rithika Merchant, at TARQ**



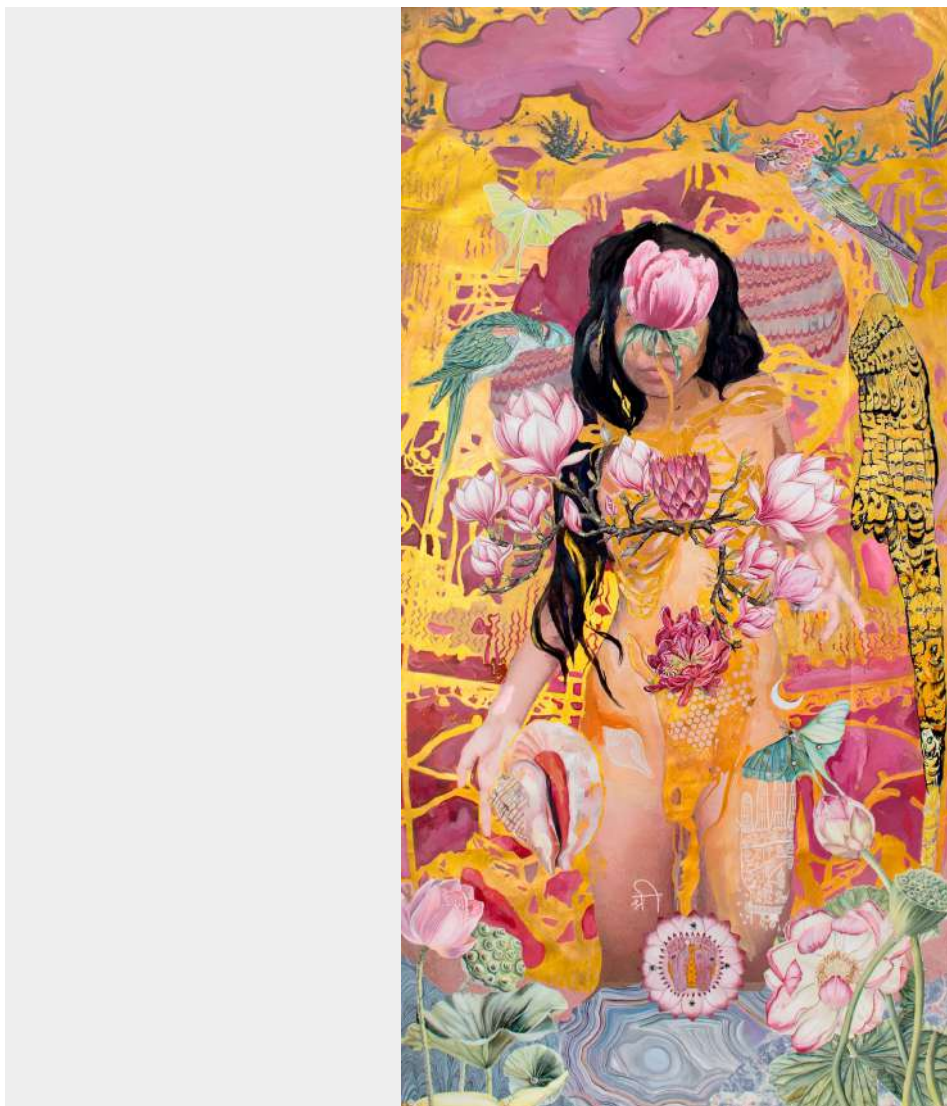
Like with Singh, nature is an important component in Rithika Merchant's work. Spontaneous accidents of creativity and yet, richly fleshed out, Merchant's 'Birth of a New World' (Jan 14-Feb 27) at TARQ entices us into a unique world, more imagined than real. Delving into a primordial terrain, the artist who lives between Mumbai and Barcelona recreates a miniature of mythology, cultures, history and nostalgia. Fluent in watercolour, gouache, ink and collage, her art exudes organic colours and patterns reminiscent of 17th century botanical drawings and Kalighat paintings. She's also influenced by Leonora Carrington and Hilma af Klint. "Rithika's attention to detail is mesmerizing. Whether it's her characters or collages, the impeccable focus on each little thing gives the works a depth and keeps the viewer coming back for more," says Hena Kapadia, director, TARQ who had hosted Merchant's first solo show 'Where the Water Takes Us' in 2017.

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## Shilo Shiv Suleman, at Art Musings

Sculptures, paintings, embroidery work, wearable art—Shilo Shiv Suleman uses different media to share her stories in her latest solo showcase titled *Reincarnate: We meet here in the Afterlife*, at Art Musings, Mumbai. 2020 was a year that encouraged her to revisit her spiritual side. "2020 was a death and resurrection, but our worlds have ended so many times and begun again. Our myths and monuments are testament to the ever living bodies that turn into gardens, civilisations that live beneath the shifting sands of empires, lovers' tombs overgrown with ivy, flood myths and end-of-the-world stories. Every incarnation is meant to serve a cosmic and not individual purpose. The purpose of an incarnation is said to be re-establishment of dharma, righteousness, destruction of evil and protection of the good—and so Krishna says in the Gita, 'Sambhavami Yuge Yuge' ('I will appear again and again to help humanity redeem itself')," she philosophises.



## Shaikh Wajid Shaikh, at Art and Charlie

Incidentally, 'Tasawuur' (Urdu for imagination) is literally the title of Shaikh Wajid Shaikh's show (Jan 14-March 31) at the Art and Charlie, a new gallery focussed on challenging the boundaries of space and the innovative ways in which art can be shown. Through his conceptual works, Shaikh contemplates the ever-widening divide between fact and fiction. Explaining this new gallery format, curator Ayesha Parikh says, "We are used to seeing art in clean spaces but there is so much potential for art to talk to its surroundings. Choosing to display in venues that are more human, more liveable and more fit for the artwork itself is what we are looking to explore."

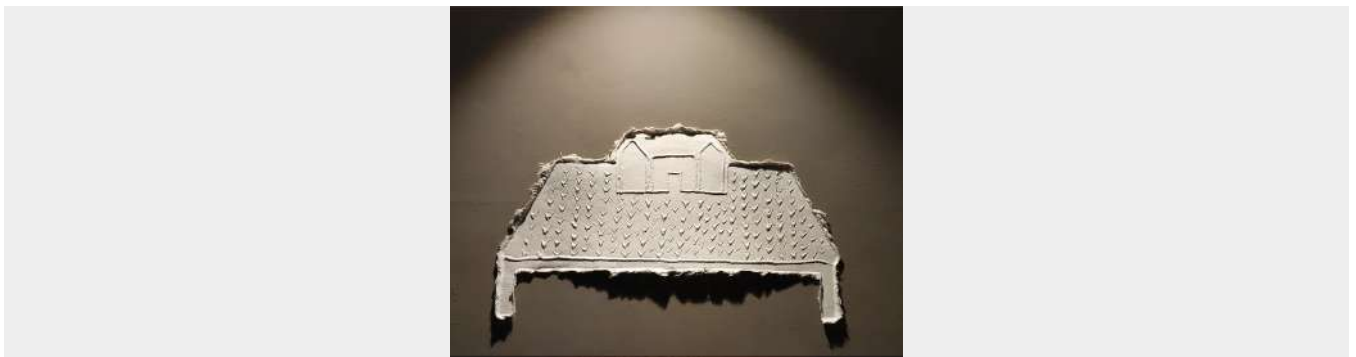
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# Abhishek Salve, Kumar Misal and Roshan Anvekar, at Priyasri Art Gallery

Nestled in Mumbai and Baroda, Priyasri Art Gallery is another institution that works at promoting young and emerging artists. Its latest show, 'In Time, All Will Be Tilted' (Jan 14-Jan 20), demonstrates the works of Abhishek Salve, Kumar Misal and Roshan Anvekar from their 'UNTITLED' series, a virtual exhibition held at the onset of the lockdown. "Though these artists have deep rural connections and respond to the conventional sense of ideas, they still look back into their own identities, their regional belongings and bring out visual idioms pertaining to their own lived experiences throughout this stage of uncertainty," says founder Priyasri Patodia. "And they have banded together, especially for MGW 2021, to reflect and embrace this new normal—uncertainty which has been evolved by the global pandemic."



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Kumar Misal, My Home, Papermaking and Embossing, 6×10 inch, 2020

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## Tyler, at Method

For the very first time, street artist Tyler's works will be part of a formal gallery exhibition. His untitled solo show (14th Jan-7th March 2021) are on view at Method Art Space's two locations, Kala Ghoda & Bandra. What's interesting about this show is that all pieces are found objects off the street, that further Tyler's signature stencil art style with characters and situations that humorously reflect on various political, social, gender and caste based structures. For over 10 years, the artist has unabashedly expressed his opinions across the canvas of the city. With his first solo exhibit, the artist and gallery invite people to see the works within closed doors.

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Women Of The World Unite

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## K G Subramanyan, at Saffronart

The big auctions are back. Saffronart's 'Creative Circuit: The Art of K G Subramanyan' (Jan 19-20) will be on view at their newly refurbished gallery in Mumbai's Prabhadevi followed by an online auction. Going under the hammer are 120 of Subramanyan's artworks from the Collection of the Seagull Foundation for the Arts. It is no secret that the late artist was remarkably versatile and ended up producing a large volume of drawings and paintings. Spanning from the 1950s to 2000s, the sale hopes to give collectors a kaleidoscopic survey of his career. Subramanyan who passed away in 2016 at 92 has come to be regarded as one of Indian modern art's giants, whose originality and personal style owed both to the sources he was seeing (folk art, Kalighat paintings,



mythological epics) as well as to his own scholarly mind and experimentations. "My works have always sought to move between the real and the imaginary," the artist once said. "With over 250 individual artworks from various decades of K G Subramanyan's life, this is perhaps one of the most expansive collections dedicated to a single artist to be offered for sale in the subcontinent," divulges Minal Vazirani, Saffronart co-founder and president. It represents the range and depth of an artist who left an indelible impression on Indian modernism, from his early works in Santiniketan, the rare design studies he made for the Weavers' Service Centre in Bombay, his exploration of semi-abstraction and the 'Marker' series which evolved after his time in New York in the 1960s on a J D Rockefeller III fellowship and later reverse paintings of his last few years."



Below is the list of all participating galleries and ateliers

Akara Art Art & Charlie Art Musings Art & Soul Atelier Ashiesh Shah Chatterjee & Lal Chemould Prescott Road Galerie Isa Jāmaat Jhaveri Contemporary Gallery Maskara Method Art Space MAR at Bajaj Art Gallery Galerie Mirchandani + Steinruecke Natesan's Antiqarts Priyasri Art Gallery Pundole's Rooshad Shroff SaffronArt Sakshi Gallery Tao Art Gallery Tarq

| GALLERY NAME                      | ARTIST NAME  | EXHIBITION TITLE                           | ON TILL           | ADDRESS   |
|-----------------------------------|--|--|-------------------|---|
| Akara Art                         | Bhupen Khakhar & Jogen Chowdhury   | Proximate Paths                            | February 27, 2021 | 4/5 Churchill Chambers, 32 B K Boman Behram Marg, Apollo Bunder, Colaba, Mumbai 400001                        |
| Art And Charlie                   | Sajid Wajid Shaikh   | Tasawwur                                   | March 31, 2021    | Kuckeliku, Arthur Bunder Road, Above Mezban Restaurant, Colaba, Mumbai 400005                                 |
| Art & Soul                        | Naval Jijina   | Aerial Views In Painting & Music           | February 27, 2021 | 1 Madhuli, Shirsagar Estate, Worli, Mumbai 400018   |
| Art Musings                       | Shilo Shiv Suleman   | Reincarnate: We Meet Here In The Afterlife | February 27, 2021 | Admiralty Building, Colaba Cross Lane, Near Dunnes School, Mumbai 400005                                      |
| Atelier Ashiesh Shah              | Ashiesh Shah   | OTLO                                       | January 17, 2021  | One8 Bungalow (Previously: Indigo) Mandlik Road, Behind Taj Mahal Hotel, Apollo Bunder, Colaba, Mumbai 400001 |
| Chatterjee & Lal                  | Arshi Ahmadzai, Minam Apang, Nikhil Chopra, Anju Dodiya, Amit Dutta, Piyali Ghosh, Kausik Mukhopadhyay, Sahej Rahal, Rashid Rana, Gagan Singh, Nityan Unnikrishnan | Head In The Clouds                         | March 27, 2021    | 01/18 Kamal Mansion Floor 1, Arthur Bunder Road, Colaba, Mumbai 400005  |
| Chemould Prescott Road            | Aditi Singh  | Somethings Are Always Burning              | March 31, 2021    | 3 <sup>rd</sup> floor, Queens Mansion, G Talwar Marg, Fort, Mumbai 400001                                     |
| Galerie Mirchandani + Steinruecke | Abir Karmakar, Anita Dube, Anju Dodiya, Arun K S, C K Rajan, Gieve Patel, Nicola Durvasula, S H Raza, Siji Krishnan, Somnath Here, Sosa Joseph                     | RED  | March 31, 2021    | 1 <sup>st</sup> Floor, Sunny House, 16/18 Mereweather Road, Behind Taj Mahal Hotel, Colaba, Mumbai 400001     |

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The 9th Mumbai Gallery Weekend (MGW) 2021 is a four-day event opening on January 14 until 17 in venues across South Mumbai

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