

## Mumbai's constantly changing cityscape

The exhibition is on view at the Dr Bhau Daji Lad Museum till December 28, 2025



By Sanjana Ray

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Cities aren't built overnight. They emerge, shapeshift and sediment over generations — through *invisible labour*, feverish construction spurts, political whims and the restless ambitions of those who inhabit them. In *Limits of the Town...*, artist Sameer Kulavoor turns his gaze to Mumbai's architecture of expansion — the ways

to expect from it.

## Inside *Limits of the Town...*, Sameer Kulavoor's solo exhibition on Mumbai's constantly changing cityscape



Photo courtesy: Dr. Bhau Daji Lad Museum. Image: Sameer Kulavoor, *Name place animal thing*, soft body and fluid acrylic paints, Saunders Waterford acid-free paper, 2025.

### An exhibition rooted in the city's constantly shifting ground

The starting point to this uniquely designed exhibit is the Bombay Fort — demolished in the 1860s — and the shifting boundaries (of the Maximum City) that followed. The Dr Bhau Daji Lad museum's archives form the backbone of the exhibition: early maps of the city, urban plans, dioramas, and rare objects that chart the city's journey from a fortified settlement to an ever-expanding megapolis.

understand the impact that time, culture, politics, and socio-economic conditions have wrought on the city's visible and invisible surroundings.



Sameer Kulavoor and Tasneem Zakaria Mehta.



*reflected in the museum's historical collection," she says.*

Kulavoor's practice, which spans two decades and the multiple mediums of drawing, painting, animation films, murals, zines and public art, emerges from an instinctive reading of the urban landscape. His works are rooted in the everyday — a chajja, a scaffolding, a mandap, a column — but reconfigured into abstracted forms that reveal the city's preoccupations and anxieties.

## Artworks on Display

*Limits of the Town...* brings together nearly 25 works created by Kulavoor between 2011 and 2025, spread across the ground and first floors of the Dr Bhau Daji Lad Museum. Here are the key pieces you shouldn't miss.

### 'State of Celebration'



Photo courtesy: Dr. Bhau Daji Lad Museum. Image: Installation View, Sameer Kulavoor, *State of Celebration*, Front: machine embroidery, jari-work, sequins and screenprint intervention on digitally printed Satin Fabric stretched on wooden frames, 2025.

The centrepiece of the exhibition, *State of Celebration*, marks the latest chapter in Kulavoor's decade-long study of the mandap. What began as drawings has evolved into a monumental textile installation that captures the mandap's role as both civic structure and cultural mirror.

From a distance, its shimmering panels evoke the mass-produced fabrics of Mumbai's festival markets. Up close, they dissolve into a tapestry of contemporary urban life — traffic symbols, political motifs, everyday signage. Kulavoor produced these textiles using the same automated processes that drive the city's celebration economy, embedding his patterns within existing ones.



The reverse side shifts the narrative: painted in tempera, gesso and acrylic, it honours the often-invisible labour that constructs and dismantles these temporary architectures. The work becomes a layered reflection on spectacle, materiality and the people who quietly uphold the city's rituals.

### 'Limits of the Town'



Photo courtesy: Dr Bhau Daji Lad Museum. Image: Installation View, Sameer Kulavoor, *Limits of the Town*, soft body and fluid acrylic paints on Fabriano acid-free paper, 2025.

Drawing on early Bombay maps from the museum archive and Dinshaw Edulji Wacha's accounts of life inside the old fort, this multi-panel work places the historic nucleus of the city at its centre — with forms spiralling outward like Mumbai itself.

Kulavoor revisits the original 1784 stone boundary markers, now installed on the museum lawns, using them as a metaphor for a city whose limits have been repeatedly redrawn through reclamation, infrastructure and sheer urban momentum. The work suggests an expansion without end — a city in permanent negotiation with its own borders.

### 'Metromorphosis 1'



Photo courtesy: Dr Bhau Daji Lad Museum. Image: Installation View, Sameer Kulavoor, *Metromorphosis*, marine grade waterproof MDF, Polystyrene PVC sheets, fibre, plaster, exterior paint, distemper, aluminium sheets, epoxy adhesives, nut bolts, fishing crates, 2025.

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Installed at two locations within the museum, *Metromorphosis I* is Kulavoor's meditation on Mumbai's vertical ambitions. Building on research from his engagements at Sassoon Dock, SqwLabs and The Shifting City, the work examines how policies around FSI, TDR and CRZ physically shape the metropolis.

Created with production designer Sandeep Meher and a team of miniature set makers, the installation reconstructs a compact cityscape — dense, improvised, precarious and instantly recognisable. It nods to threatened Koli communities, post-liberalisation architecture, and the uneasy balance between growth and identity.



The exhibition invites viewers to ask a deceptively simple question: What does it mean to live in a city that's

constantly redrawing itself?

## Details

The *Limits of the Town...* exhibition is on view at:

*Dr Bhau Daji Lad Museum, Veermata Jijabai Bhosale Botanical Udyan and Zoo (Rani Bagh),  
91-A, Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar Road, Byculla (E), Mumbai – 400027.*

*Timings: 10 am to 5:30 pm (closed on Wednesdays and certain public holidays)*

*Museum entry tickets applicable*