

Art

At TARQ, Pratap Morey shrinks Mumbai to size and finds leverage in the palm of his hand

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Pratap Morey

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Entering *Brobdingnag Paradox* at TARQ feels like stepping into a city seen after a long stare. The clamour of Mumbai's construction sites has been muted, pressed, rearranged. What remains is a set of photographic collages that behave like after-images. Bridges, columns, antennae and facades appear familiar, then suddenly unmoored. Scale slips. Distance becomes elastic. The eye is asked to work harder, and to linger.

All you need to know about *Brobdingnag Paradox* at TARQ, Mumbai

This is Pratap Morey's third solo at the gallery and his first since 2019. The gap shows. These works carry the confidence of an artist who knows his material intimately and is willing to let it misbehave. Drawn from sustained site visits across the city, the images compress Mumbai's restless building cycle into tight pictorial fields. From afar, the surfaces read as polished abstractions. Up close, they turn fussy, crowded, slightly abrasive. It mirrors the lived experience of the city itself.



An artwork by Pratap Morey at TARQ

The central manoeuvre of the exhibition is miniaturisation. Monumental urban structures are cut down to insect-like proportions, each fragment small enough to fit into the artist's palm. The gesture is playful, but it carries bite. "For my exhibition *Brobdingnag Paradox*, the paradox lies in miniaturising these humongous structures and transforming them into insect-like forms within my pictorial space," Morey has said. What might have been a formal trick quickly reveals itself as a recalibration of power.

Morey speaks openly about the satisfaction this reversal brings. "Returning to my studio and reversing this dynamic gives me a deep sense of satisfaction," he notes. "As an artist, I feel I possess the liberty, perhaps even a self-proclaimed authority, to alter these power structures, at least within my pictorial space." In a city where infrastructure routinely dwarfs the individual, this act reads less as escapism and more as pressure release. The city is not denied. It is handled.

That handling is meticulous. Pencil lines trace and restrain the photographic cut-outs, binding them into unstable architectures. The collages offer multiple vantage points at once, a bird's-eye survey collapsing into intimate detail. Morey resists explaining how this choreography is achieved. "I am very much in control of how the viewer's eye moves through my work," he says. "I may not be able to fully explain how I do it, as the process itself is abstract, but the control is always there." The result is a viewing experience that feels directed without feeling didactic.



An artwork by Pratap Morey at TARQ

The grid emerges as a recurring armature, most overtly in *Canouflage Subterfuge*. Referencing the modular logic of glass-clad buildings, the grid performs a double act. It amplifies scale while pretending to dissolve it, reflecting sky and light until mass appears weightless. Morey is sceptical of this seduction. "For me, the grid functions as a metaphor for being tamed or caged," he explains. "Somehow, we have convinced ourselves that grid patterns signify beauty and order. To me, this is a reflection of a tamed behaviour." The critique lands quietly, embedded in surfaces that gleam just enough to lure the eye.

Repetition is another motif that hums through the show. Columns recur. Antennae echo each other. Forms loop back, producing a low-grade disorientation. The sensation is recognisable to anyone who has crossed the city at length. "As you navigate through the city you see the same columns, same bridges, same dish tv antennas, it's the same topography everywhere," Morey observes. "Are you even moving, if you keep seeing the same thing?" In the collages, this sameness becomes oppressive, then strangely hypnotic.

Yet the works stop short of despair. There is resistance here, even if it operates within tight bounds. Speaking of his reduction of scale, Morey frames it as a form of pushback. "This act of reduction allows me to preserve my sensitivity and keep it intact," he says. "In doing so, I feel I am able to restore a kind of social equilibrium." The phrase might sound lofty, but in the context of the exhibition it feels earned. The equilibrium is provisional, personal, and that is precisely the point.



An artwork by Pramp Morey at TABQ

Titles add another layer of friction. Dense with ambiguity and a wink of art speak, they refuse to pin the works down. Morey welcomes misreading. "If there is confusion, I welcome it," he says. "Confusion slows us down. It prevents instant consumption." In a cultural moment trained on speed and clarity, this insistence on pause feels almost contrarian. The titles hover, suggesting rather than instructing, keeping the viewer slightly off balance.

The exhibition closes with a catalogue launch structured as a conversation between Morey and Alisha Sakhare, extending the dialogic nature of the works themselves. It is a fitting end point. Breathing Paradox does not offer solutions to Mumbai's scale, spectacle or repetition. Instead, it offers a set of tools for looking, thinking and recalibrating. By bringing the city down to size, Morey does not tame it. He meets it on different terms, one cut-out at a time, and invites us to do the same.

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