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News

A Look At The Indian Galleries Bringing Some Of The Most Compelling Presentations To Art Basel 2026

Indian galleries spotlight myth, memory and migration with sharply curated showcases at the world's premier contemporary art fair.



A shot from Art Basel (representational image). Unsplash



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What started in [Basel](#), Switzerland, during the 1970s, speedily spread across the world, including [Hong Kong](#), Paris, and Miami Beach. Since its inception, Art Basel is best known for being the zenith of contemporary and modern art that foregrounds fresh voices. Happening currently in Switzerland and going on until June 21, the art event, following its past form, brings several impressive talents to the foreground again, with some of them being from India.

This year, India's presence at Art Basel is being viewed less by scale and more by sharply curated presentations. From a solo project by Rithika Merchant to a focused look at the formative years of Gulammohammed Sheikh, Indian galleries are using Basel to foreground artists whose practices engage with mythology, migration, history, politics and collective memory. Here are four galleries worth watching at this year's fair.

1. TARQ Presents Rithika Merchant's Expanding Cosmology



Art by Rithika Merchant at Art Basel 2026 [rithikamerchant/instagram](#)

Mumbai-based art gallery, TARQ, makes its Art Basel debut with a solo focus on Rithika Merchant in the *Statements* sector. Titled *As the Universe, So the Soul*, the project is a narrative universe that Merchant conceived and has been building since her 2020 series *Birth of a New World*. The artist imagines a community of hybrid beings that leave the earth and establish a civilisation from scratch, developing systems of belief, knowledge, and collective consciousness.

The centrepiece is a seven-panel installation, also titled *As the Universe, So the Soul*, accompanied by watercolour and gouache works. The project draws on the Hermetic principle "as within, so without," exploring the relation between inner life and the worlds people construct around themselves.

Merchant has emerged as one of India's most internationally recognised contemporary artists through works that combine comparative mythology, speculative fiction, and ecological thinking. Her Basel presentation demonstrates how these themes continue to evolve through increasingly ambitious installations.

2. Vadehra Art Gallery Revisits The Early Years Of Gulammohammed Sheikh



'City 2' by Gulammohammed Sheikh. Official website: Vadehra Art Gallery

This year, [Vadehra Art Gallery](#) makes its return to Basel with a simple focus on the inimitable painter-poet, Gulammohammed Sheikh. Titled "Of Cities and Tongas", the exhibition focuses on his works from the 1960s, a rather pivotal period in Sheikh's luminous six-decade career.

The kernel of the presentation lies in the collages, paintings, and drawings that predate the layered narrative style for which Sheikh came to be known later. These early works are urban, equestrian, and abstract in nature, revealing the artist's engagement with modernist ideas and international artistic movements from the 20th century. Chiefly, they also bring out the beginnings of cityscape imagery that would later come out as a recurring motif in the artist's oeuvre.

Sheikh was born in Gujarat in 1937 and as long occupied a most singular position in Indian art. This position has been defined by his simultaneous role as a painter, poet, historian and educator. The artist's works draws heavily from mythology, literature, memory and cultural histories, positioning him as seminal, almost foundational, in post-Independence Indian art.

3. Chemould Prescott Road Brings Together Some Of India's Most Established Contemporary Voices



Art by Atul Dodiya. [tinta.gallery/Instagram](#)

Mumbai's Chemould Prescott Road arrives at Art Basel with a group presentation featuring artists including [Shilpa Gupta](#), [Atul Dodiya](#) and Jitish Kallat, among others.

In the long list, the gallery's selection reflects artists who have helped shape contemporary Indian art over the last three decades. For instance, Gupta's work is globally renowned for examining borders, surveillance, state power and questions of identity. Dodiya, on the other hand, frequently draws upon art history, politics and personal memory, bringing multi-disciplinary results involving painting, installation and found imagery. Kallat's practice ranges from paintings to sculptures and installations, often exploring themes of time, migration, ecology and interconnectedness.

Rather than centralising focus on a single narrative, Chemould's booth positions these artists within broader global conversations around immigration crises, citizenship, history and contemporary society. Their inclusion highlights the gallery's dedication towards bringing Indian contemporary art to international circuits.

4. Experimenter Showcases A New Generation Alongside Internationally Acclaimed Names



Works by Vikrant Bhise and Soumya Sankar Bose. [vikrantbhise_artist/Instagram](#) [experimenterko/Instagram](#)

Experimenter's presentation brings to the world an eclectic mix of Vikrant Bhise, Ayesha Sultana, Christopher Kulendran Thomas, and Soumya Sankar Bose, reflecting the gallery's commitment to artists working across geographies and disciplines.

Among the most closely watched presentations is Vikrant Bhise's latest body of work. The Mumbai-based artist dedicatedly examines migrant and marginalised communities that continue to persevere on the edges of society. His paintings feature temporary tents and makeshift shelters that function as symbols of displacement, survival, and resistance. Drawing on Buddhist imagery, the writings of Omprakash Valmiki, and the legacy of Dr. B.R. Ambedkar, Bhise explores caste, identity, and belonging through deeply personal visual narratives.

Soumya Sankar Bose extends his long-term engagement with archival research and oral histories. His recent project, *We Need To Talk in Whispers*, investigates stories that often remain undocumented, including gender-based violence, domestic abuse, and social stigma. Working across photography, film, and alternative archives, Bose reconstructs overlooked histories through extensive community engagement.

Ayesha Sultana, meanwhile, is known for a restrained practice that explores materiality, landscape, and spatial perception, while Christopher Kulendran Thomas continues his investigations into technology, conflict, globalisation, and systems of value. Together, the artists embody the increasingly international outlook of contemporary South Asian art.

At Art Basel 2026, these four galleries present distinctly varied and informed approaches to contemporary art. Yet collectively they offer a useful window of insight into where Indian art stands today: as much engaged with history and memory as it is with pressing concerns of immigration, caste, ecology, and trauma; not bound by anything, it's attentive to local realities while participating in global conversations.

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