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What to see at Contemporary Now 2026 in Chennai: Exhibitions, talks and artist walkthroughs

From August 8 to 25, Contemporary Now transforms Chennai into a city-wide gallery, bringing together 66 artists, seven leading galleries, exhibitions, talks, workshops and artist walkthroughs across museums and cultural spaces

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Artwork by Thukral and Tagra | PhotoCredit: SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

Art is not always something you stand quietly in front of. Sometimes, it spills into a cafe conversation, a studio visit, or even an entire city. This August, Chennai becomes a large gallery as **Contemporary Now** returns for its third edition, transforming museums, galleries, and cultural spaces, inviting visitors to wander, question, linger, and discover not just art, but the city itself.

The third edition brings together 66 artists from seven leading galleries, complemented by a city-wide programme of exhibitions, discussions, artist walkthroughs and workshops.



Artwork by Saju Kiarhan | Photo Credit: SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

Running from August 8 to 25, Contemporary Now will be anchored at the Lalit Kala Akademi, with a series of partner programmes unfolding across Chennai. Work will be presented by seven leading galleries — Ashvita's, Chemould Prescott Road, Chatterjee & Lal, Experimenter, Project 88, TARQ and Vadehra Art Gallery. This year's edition is centred on the curatorial theme *Practices in Continuum: Tracing the Present*, exploring how contemporary artistic practices evolve through research, experimentation and dialogue.

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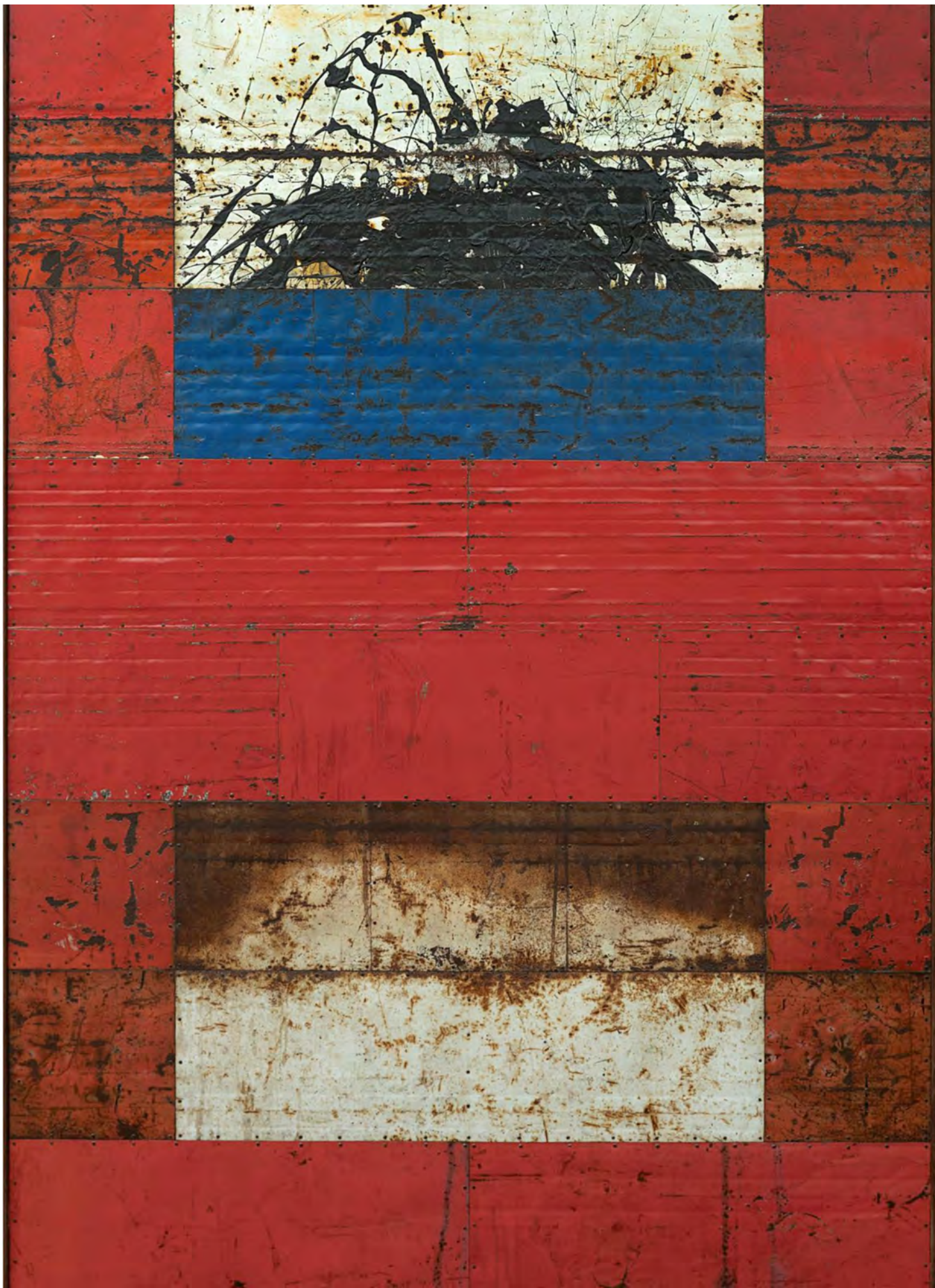
Serving as the main hub of Contemporary Now, Lalit Kala Akademi brings together works ranging from charcoal on fabric to recycled teak wood, hand-spun textiles, digital video, and photography; the exhibition showcases artists working across a range of materials and mediums. Among the highlights are works by Anju Dodiya, Jitish Kallat, Mithu Sen, Nikhil Chopra, Raghava KK, Thukral and Tagra, Maanas Udayakumar and more, each bringing their own visual vocabulary to a show that invites viewers to slowdown, look closely and engage with their stories.

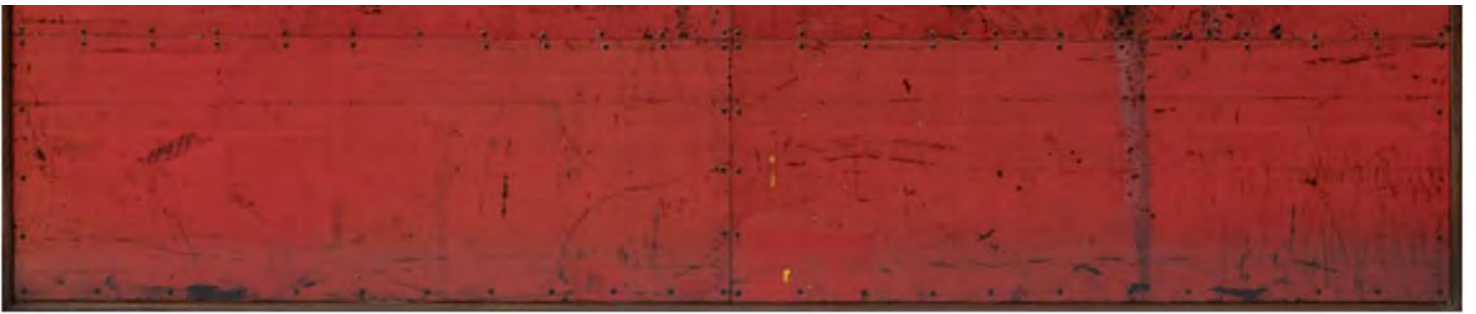
Ashvita's on Radha Krishnan Salai hosts *Continuiverse* by C Krishnaswamy, inviting viewers to reflect on our relationship with land, memory, and community through a series of sculptures. The show draws inspiration from the Ayyanar tradition of southern India where clay was shaped into guardian figures. Meanwhile, at Ashvita's Flagship, the gallery's new Chennai space, Benitha K Peciya presents *How Long Will We Live? Or When Will We Die?* — an exhibition that pairs her artworks with the books, research, and objects that have shaped her artistic practice and way of seeing.

Collectors choice

"Contemporary Now is built around the collector. Buying art isn't an impulse purchase; you're asking someone to invest anywhere between ₹5 lakh and ₹15 lakh in a work. So our job is to give them confidence. We have brought together the best galleries and artists, and every artwork sold through Contemporary Now comes with a year of art insurance, along with digital authentication and registration. We want collecting art to feel as secure and transparent as any other serious investment," says Ashvin E Rajagopalan, director, Ashvita's and Contemporary Now.







Artwork by artist Gurunathan | Photo Credit: SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

Madras Abstraction, presented by Gallery Veda as part of Contemporary Now, traces the evolution of abstraction through the lens of the **Madras Art Movement** that started in the 1960s, pioneered by DP Roy Chowdhury and KCS Paniker. Bringing together works by eight artists across generations: KV Haridasan, Achuthan Kudallur, Akkitham Narayanan, Velu Vishwanadhan, Ganesh Selvaraj, Saravanan Parasuraman, Suresh Kumar P, and Yuvan Bothysathuvur, the exhibition explores how a distinctly South Indian visual language emerged from the intersection of regional history, spirituality and modernist thought. For the event, the artists reinterpret abstraction through themes of geometry, colour, memory, and philosophy, highlighting the legacy of this influential art movement.

Explore the works of some of India's most celebrated modern masters at **Masters in Madras**, a group exhibition presented by Apparao Galleries and curated by Sharan Apparao. Bringing together iconic names such as MF Husain, FN Souza, SH Raza, Arpita Singh, Anjolie Ela Menon, A Ramachandran and others, the exhibition offers a rare opportunity to view landmark works spanning diverse styles and generations. Head to Apparao Galleries, Wallace Garden, on August 9, from 5pm to 7pm, for an evening celebrating the richness and evolution of modern Indian art.

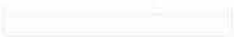




Artwork by artist Maanas Udayakumar | Photo Credit: SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

Partner programmes

Alongside the exhibitions, Contemporary Now will also feature a line-up of talks and partner programmes. On August 8 at 5 pm, Ashvita's Flagship will host **The Many Lives of the Photobook: A Contemporary Lens to Publishing Practices & Shared Futures**, a panel discussion with Brendan Ember, Balaji Maheshwar and Indu Antony, moderated by Shuchi Kapoor, exploring the evolving role of the photobook. Later that evening, at 7pm, Raw Mango, Teynampet, hosts **On Patronage: Public Impact, Private Collections**, with Anu Menda, Meha Patel, Jaiveer Johal and Siddharth Somaiya in conversation with Umah Jacob on the relationship between private collections and public culture.



Then there is **I Have A Dream**, a studio exhibition by George K, at the George K Studio, T Nagar. Presented by Apparao Galleries and curated by Jaiveer Johal, this partner programme offers a peek into the artist's visual language in the space where he created most of his art.

Also Read: I Have A Dream: A photo exhibition that focuses on light, drama created by its shadows



For those interested in photography, **In Dialogue with Nature**, presented by the **Chennai Photo Biennale Foundation** and WWF-India, runs from August 8 to 22, at the Avtar Foundation for the Arts, bringing together limited-edition photographs and portfolios centred on ecology, conservation and the natural world. Also opening on August 8 is **Unruly Bodies: Sighting the Body Politic** from the Avtar Collection, curated by Suchitra Vijayan at Espace 24, Alliance Française of Madras. The exhibition examines how power shapes bodies, memory, identity and belonging through works from the Avtar Collection.

Over the next two weeks, the city becomes a map of conversations and discoveries, reminding us that art lives not just within white walls, but in the people, places and stories that shape a city.

Contemporary Now Edition-III starts from August 8. To know about the full schedule, follow @contemporarynow on Instagram.

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