



## NEWS

# 'Significant Form' Brings Seven Decades of South Asian Art to Hong Kong

'Significant Form' brings seven decades of South Asian art to Hong Kong, connecting modernist pioneers and contemporary artists through shared histories of migration, memory, identity and cultural exchange across generations and geographies.



Serenade Team  
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Art Intelligence Global's Hong Kong gallery is presenting *Significant Form*, a major group exhibition bringing together eleven artists whose practices span the post-Independence period to the present day. Running from 17 September to 11 December 2026, the exhibition is co-curated by Adeline Ooi, formerly Art Basel's Director Asia, and presented in collaboration with Mumbai galleries Chemould Prescott Road, Jhaveri Contemporary and TARQ.

The exhibition examines the ways in which artists across South Asia and its global diaspora have responded to histories of migration, displacement, cultural exchange, political change and questions of identity. Rather than presenting a single narrative of South Asian art, *Significant Form* brings together different generations and approaches, revealing how artists have developed distinct visual languages from the complex histories and cultural traditions surrounding them.



Yuki Terase, Founder of Art Intelligence Global, describes the exhibition as a conversation "across generations and geographies", bringing together pioneering modernists with contemporary voices from South Asia and its global diaspora. She also points to the growing international presence of South Asian art, while highlighting the opportunity to present the work of artists including Nasreen Mohamedi, Anwar Jalal Shemza, Zarina and Balraj Khanna alongside a younger generation of artists in Hong Kong.

The historical backdrop is particularly significant. The end of British colonial rule in 1947 brought independence to the region but was accompanied by Partition, which resulted in one of the largest and most violent mass migrations in history. For artists who came of age in the decades that followed, the consequences of Partition became an important part of their personal and artistic histories.





Among the exhibition's highlights is an exceptionally rare complete set of twenty-six photographs by Nasreen Mohamedi (1937–1990). Her exploration of form and structure becomes a means of considering cultural hybridity, shared experience and spirituality against a backdrop of national and ethnic divisions. The exhibition also includes late paper collages by Zarina (1937–2020), whose restrained compositions address displacement while suggesting possibilities of healing and regeneration.

For artists working after Independence, another challenge emerged: how to develop forms of expression that could articulate new national and personal identities while resisting the perception that modernism outside Europe was necessarily derivative of Western models. A number of artists who travelled to Europe after Partition responded to this question by creating practices that moved between different cultural and artistic traditions.



Anwar Jalal Shemza, who moved to London in 1956, developed a distinctive visual vocabulary that brought European modernism into dialogue with the geometries, tiling traditions and linguistic culture of Lahore. His linear forms exist somewhere between abstraction and calligraphic script. Balraj Khanna, who arrived in Britain in 1962, created luminous abstract paintings informed by landscape, natural rhythms and memories of a peripatetic childhood, giving visual form to the instability of diasporic experience.

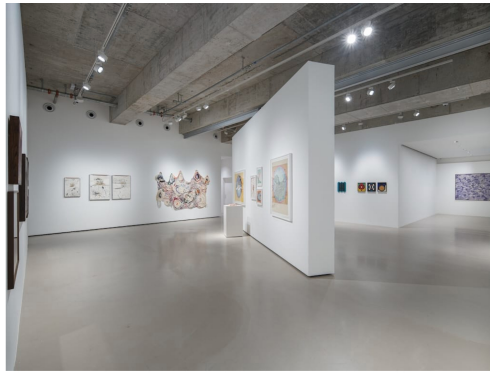
The question of cultural hybridity continues through the work of Lubna Chowdhary, who was born to Pakistani parents and educated and based in England. Her geometric ceramic tiles and gouache paintings occupy an intentionally ambiguous space between different visual and cultural vernaculars, resisting the idea that artistic identity must belong to a single heritage.



For Ooi, these varied practices are connected by the ways artists construct individual visual languages from their particular understandings of history and experience. She describes the exhibition as revealing "the many ways artists engage with histories, places, memories, and identities", while identifying cosmology, religious beliefs, geometry and mathematics as recurring ways of reflecting on ideas of divine order. Repetitive mark-making, she adds, can become a meditative exercise and an inward search for purity of thought.

The exhibition then moves towards artists whose practices emerged from the 1980s onwards. Their concerns extend beyond questions of identity to encompass political developments, material histories, intellectual traditions, power structures and the environment. [Mithu Sen](#), for example, uses undecipherable scripts to disrupt language

and expose the hierarchies associated with linguistic assimilation. Viswa Shroff transforms fragments of colonial-era architecture in Mumbai into vessels for memory and historical change.



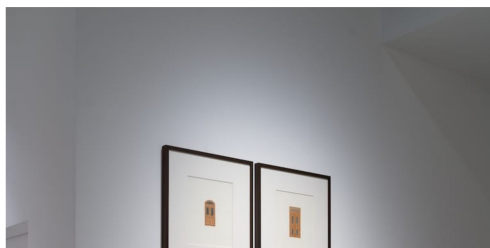
Landscape and the environment are central to the practices of Jitish Kallat and Soghra Khurasani, although their approaches differ considerably. Kallat exposes tarmac and thermochromic pigment to the elements, allowing his works to register atmospheric change. Khurasani's incised woodblocks engage with landscapes shaped by memory, migration and her experience as an Indian Muslim.

Traditional techniques provide another important thread. Desmond Lazaro trained in Rajasthani miniature painting under a master painter and continues to work with pigments and intricate compositions informed by inherited cosmological and spiritual principles. Boshudhara Mukherjee, meanwhile, draws on weaving and crochet techniques encountered through her mother and grandmother, transforming discarded saris and cloth into new forms. In both practices, inherited techniques become vehicles for contemporary artistic inquiry rather than static traditions preserved unchanged.



This movement between inheritance and transformation is central to *Significant Form*. Across seven decades, the artists represented in the exhibition demonstrate how South Asian art has developed through encounters between different places, cultures and histories. Their work does not exist within a simple opposition between tradition and modernity, or between East and West. Instead, it reflects the friction, exchange and overlap produced when different cultural experiences meet.

Ooi describes this diversity as an important reason for bringing the exhibition to Hong Kong, calling it a step towards highlighting "the immense talent and compelling stories emanating from South Asia's diverse and richly layered art history(ies)". Her observation also points to one of the exhibition's central ideas: that South Asian art cannot be reduced to a single history, aesthetic or cultural identity.





Presented in Hong Kong, *Significant Form* places these practices within an international context. Its combination of pioneering modernists and contemporary artists suggests a South Asian art history that has always been connected to wider networks of migration, exchange and artistic dialogue. The exhibition brings together artists whose experiences cross national and cultural boundaries, demonstrating how those encounters can generate new forms of artistic expression.

*Significant Form* is on view at Art Intelligence Global in Hong Kong from 17 September to 11 December 2026.

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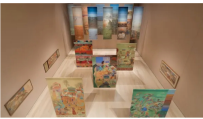
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