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Art And Culture ❯

This art festival reveals why the creative economy is as much about audiences as creators

In this photo essay, we showcase more highlights from the Contemporary Now arts festival in Chennai, along with director insights.

Madanmohan Rao • 3212 Stories



Saturday October 31, 2026 , 4 min Read

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Launched in 2014, PhotoSparks is a weekly feature from YourStory, with photographs that celebrate the spirit of creativity and innovation. In the earlier 1,025 posts, we featured an art festival, cartoon gallery, world music festival, telecom expo, millets fair, climate change expo, wildlife conference, startup festival, Diwali rangoli, and jazz festival.

Chennai recently hosted the third edition of the art festival 'Contemporary Now', with collaboration from art galleries of Kolkata, Ahmedabad, New Delhi, and Mumbai as well. A diverse range of artworks was exhibited in 10 venues across the city, as shown in this photo essay.

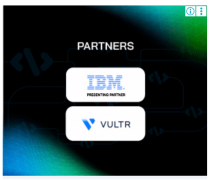
The artist lineup included Ashwini Bhat, Prajakta Potnis, Khageswar Rout, Amitesh Shrivastava, Sandeep Mukherjee, Saju Kunhan, Pratap Morey, Benitha Perciyal, Natasha Preenja, and many others.



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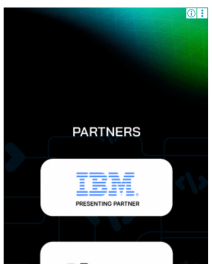
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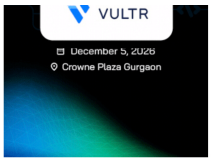


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"Now is a good time to be in art. Aspiring artists as well as audiences today are much more connected to art, thanks to social media," mixed-media artist Benitha Perciyal tells *YourStory*.

Earlier, art catalogues and visits to a few galleries were the only available options. "You had to simply wait to get access and exposure, or travel to other cities, which was quite expensive," she recalls.

"Today, online access is immediate and global. But at the same time, too much online exposure can be confusing or intimidating," she cautions.



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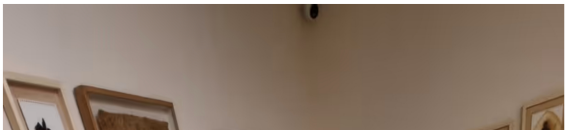


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Digital platforms and AI make things much easier and faster now for art. "But it also takes away from the satisfaction of finding or creating something after a lot of effort," Perciyal says.

The art festival's directors are Ashvin Rajagopalan and Priyanjoli Basu. Both express satisfaction with the event's achievements for the art community of Chennai and beyond.

"We had collectors who usually have not come out much, but engaged with us at the festival. We had many art fans and students who could see what was happening in the rest of the country thanks to our institutional partners in other cities," Rajagopalan says.





There are plans to have more editions of the festival. “We may end up having two or three editions of Contemporary Now. One, of course, in Chennai, but others could be in Ahmedabad, Baroda or Shantiniketan,” he adds.

“The festival’s level of contemporary artwork has probably not been shown in Chennai earlier. A lot of feedback I got was that there are major art events in Delhi and Mumbai but not as much in Chennai,” Basu observes.

The art community felt this event should happen more often in Chennai. “It should not be a once-a-year thing. The displayed artworks should be shown elsewhere also, to continue the conversation,” she adds.



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As trends in the art market in India today, she points to more appreciation of art about politics, gender and climate change. “People are trying to engage with a new narrative, a

new trend. The works of a lot of young women artists are also being collected," Basu says.

"Many contemporary artists have been responding to what is happening around the world. Art collectors are also responding to such art because it makes them feel something and moves them. Knowledgeable collectors are able to find more artists making such work," Rajagopalan adds.

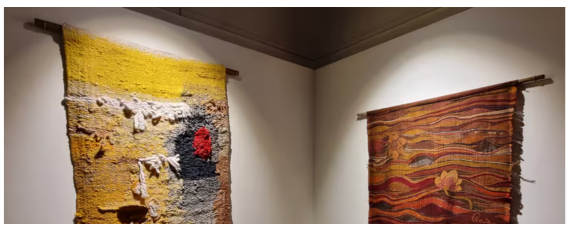
Both directors see a growing importance for the role of art today, as well as a need for more art appreciation in society. "Artists voice the world's uncertainty and conflict for us. Engaging with such art reflects your concern about such issues," Rajagopalan says.



Basu calls on audiences to discuss art with people they meet, attend art events, and visit art galleries. "When you go on holiday, make sure you see a city's art galleries also," she suggests.

"And of course, if you are traveling abroad, it is very important to go and see their museums. That is how we can improve art appreciation and knowledge of art right here in India," Basu signs off.

Now what have you *done today to pause in your busy schedule and harness your creative side for a better world?*



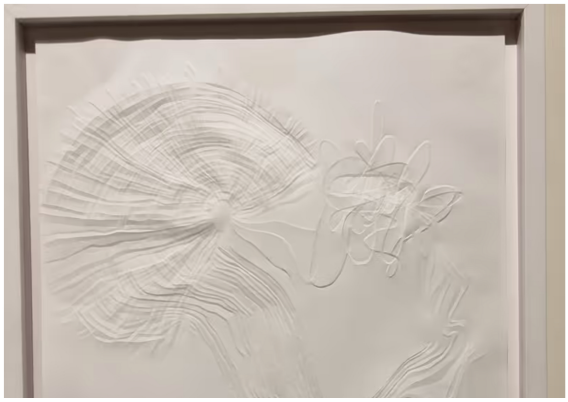
















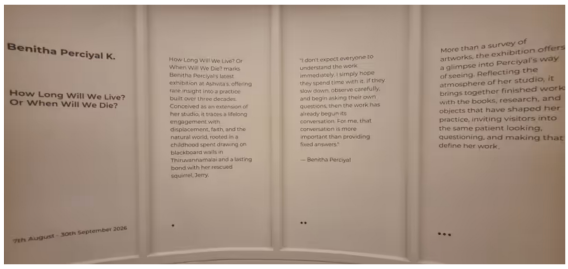


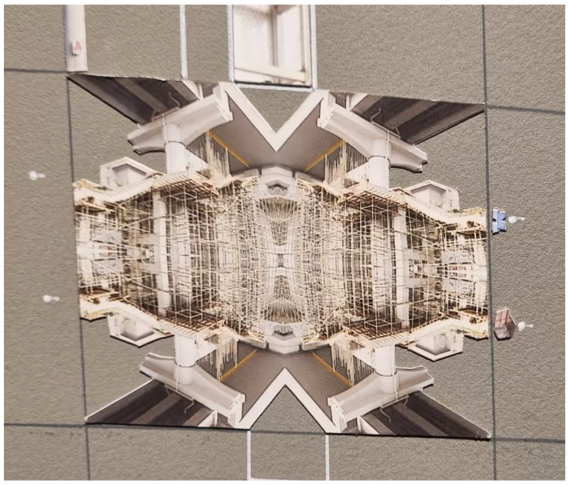






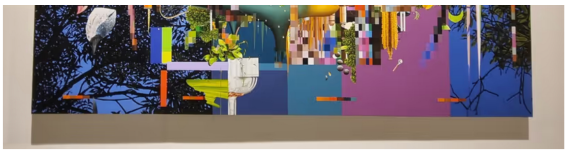



Benitha Perciyal K.
How Long Will We Live? Or When Will We Die?
How Long Will We Live? Or When Will We Die? marks Benitha Perciyal's latest exhibition at Apiwza's, offering here insight into a practice built over three decades. Conceived as an extension of her studio, it trades a lifelong engagement with displacement, faith, and the natural world, rooted in a childhood spent drawing on blackboard walls in Thiruvanmiyaar and a lasting bond with her rescued squirrel, Jerry.
"I don't expect everyone to understand the work immediately. I simply hope they spend time with it. If they slow down, observe carefully, and begin asking their own questions, then the work has already begun its conversation. For me, that conversation is more important than providing fixed answers."
— Benitha Perciyal
More than a survey of artworks, the exhibition offers a glimpse into Perciyal's way of seeing. Reflecting the atmosphere of her studio, it brings together finished work with the books, research, and objects that have shaped her practice, inviting visitors into the same patient looking, questioning, and making that define her work.
15th August – 30th September 2026









(All photographs taken by Madanmohan Rao on location at 'Contemporary Now' venues in Chennai.)



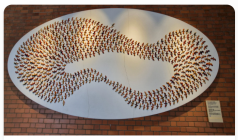
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