



Culture 04 Aug 2021 06:12 PM

# #LSAforLocal: Art collector Shalini Passi on emerging artists in India and why you should support them

SHALINI PASSI

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Art collector and mentor Shalini Passi is a force to reckon with in the art world. While her personal collection ranges from Indian artists like Bharti Kher, M.F. Husain, Manjit Bawa, and Ram Kumar to international names like Jeff Koons and Damian Hirst, she always has her eyes open for young, emerging talent.

The pandemic might deem art and artists as non-essential players, but Shalini Passi strongly sees them as trendsetters in the digital space. We ask her to curate a list of emerging artists and young art practitioners



Being exposed to museums and galleries from a very young age, my relationship with art started early. A passion for art and design encouraged me to associate with art platforms like Khoj and Kochi Muziris Biennale, which focus on encouraging and supporting young art practitioners through their programmes. Since 2012, I have been an Advisory Board Member of Khoj, a not-for-profit contemporary arts organisation based in Delhi. As an Advisory Board member, I encountered many young talents and had an opportunity to invest in their practice. Similarly, being a patron of the Kochi-Muziris Biennale and a mentor at The Art Gorgeous House allows me to be closely involved with the art fraternity, enabling me to recognise, encourage, and further support the emerging artists and young art practitioners.

Such coalitions acted as a catalyst in establishing my own foundation, [The Shalini Passi Art Foundation \(SPAF\)](#), and a digital platform [MASH](#) in 2018. MASH and SPAF have so far been actively supporting and orchestrating various artistic endeavours like podcasts, exhibits, webinars, research articles, and more.

In need of the dire COVID-19 situation, we recently had an online fundraising exhibition of my photographic series called *‘Forever Delhi’*. Since 2010, I have been actively involved in educating underprivileged children in Delhi, through a series of workshops that provide opportunities for them to learn about the arts and crafts with skilled individuals. I have also been supporting and donating to The Delhi Society for the Welfare of Special Children.

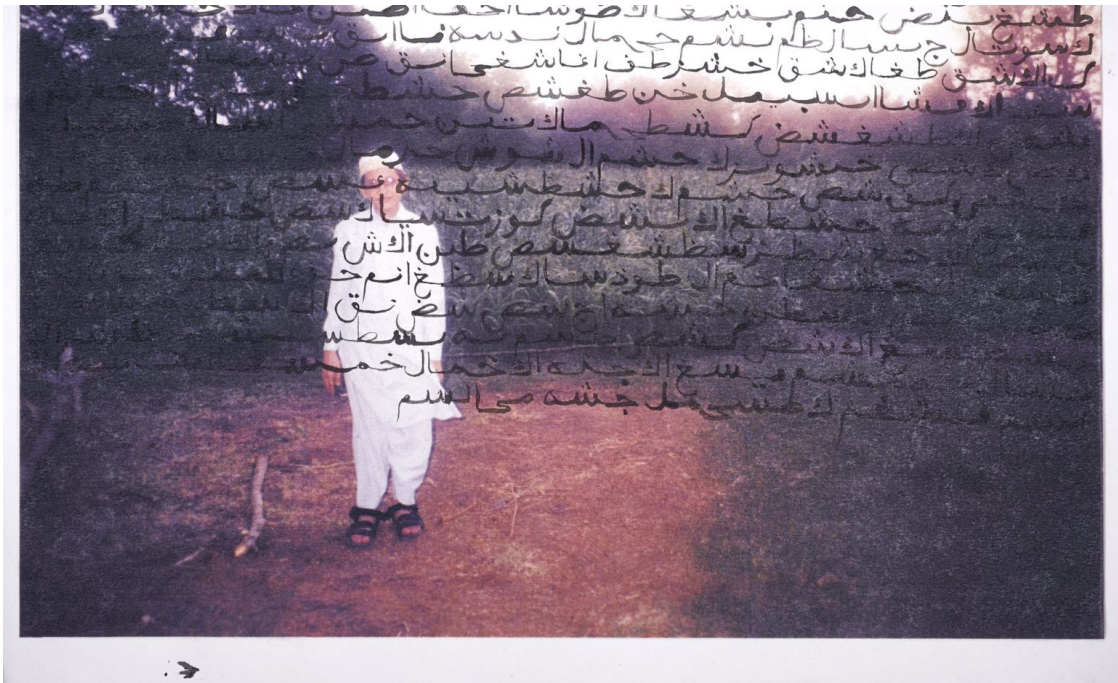


Image: Courtesy MASH Instagram

The art industry has grown rapidly in the last few years with a widened horizon for artists, art collectors, and admirers alike. Talking about new trends, we have been seeing the intersection of art and design pronto which is a big step in the right direction. With globalisation and digitalisation, NFTs are another buzzing art trend, joined in by prestigious institutions like Christie's. Uncertainly, the current COVID-19 situation has a backlash on the art industry and emerging artists as well as established artists have found it difficult to make ends meet. On the other hand, we have seen the art industry come together and rise through digital platforms engaging in virtual exhibits, talks, and artists support.

The growing Indian art industry is hugely supported by an increasing number of emerging artists. There are a few that have caught my eye through their exemplary work, at such an early stage. We now see an exploration of diverse mediums as means of artistic expression. These range from architectural interventions, textile art, interactive art to digital art.





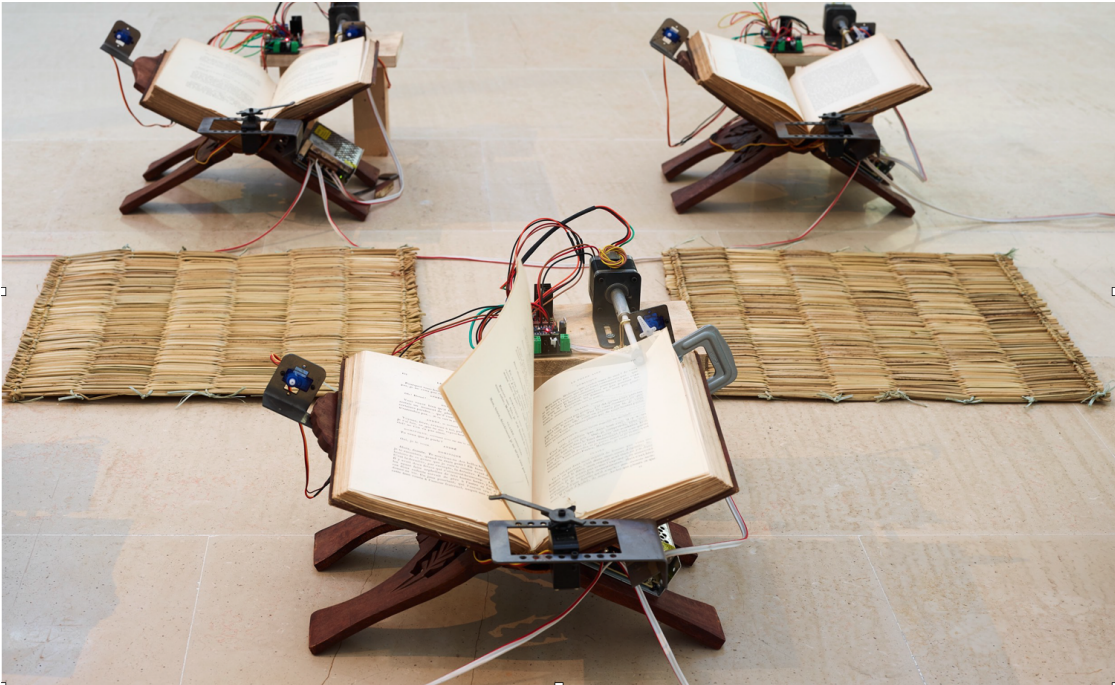
Untitled#50 by Saubiya Chasmawala, Ink on printed Photograph. Photograph © artist and Tarq

I would like to begin with contemporary artist **Saubiya Chasmawala**, whose work explores the subject of scriptures, texts, and paper-making. She has a delicate sensitivity in her works that are heavily influenced by her memories. Her repetitive mark-making process is introspective and nearly meditative which sets a tone apart.



Flag (Warped) by Ayesha Singh, Metal and Cloth. Photograph © artist and Nature Morte

Another emerging artist I have been following is **Ayesha Singh**. Her practice rooted in architecture highlights the socio-political hierarchies and questions the lost and translated histories of buildings. She is



Page Turner by Shailesh BR, Kinetic Sculpture. Photograph © artist and François Fernandez / Villa Arson

**Shailesh BR** is another intriguing artist who philosophically questions the functionality of routine objects through machines and drawings. His study in Sanskrit has a power play in his derivative connotations rooted in ‘*Tarka Shastra’s*’ way of thought.



VIEW 1  
VIEW 2  
SPHERE 5 | BRICK, CEMENT AND OTHER CONSTRUCTION MATERIAL | SEP 2020 | 9 (H) X 21 (L) X 15.5 (W) INCHES

Sphere(5) by Teja Gavankar, Brick, Cement and Metal. Photograph © artist

**Teja Gavankar** is another emerging artist with a sculptural quality in her works. Her geometric sculptures and drawings explore the idea of physical space and materiality. Thought-provoking and powerful, her works are essentially minimalistic in nature.





Observatory/Watch Center by Sahil Naik, Wood, Metal, Glass and Concrete Paint. Photograph © artist and Experimenter

**Sahil Naik** is a sculptor based out of Goa who bisects themes of architecture and modernism from religious, political and economic standpoints. His second solo show *‘Monuments, Mausoleums, Memorials, Modernism’* explores the underpinned political structure and violence of nation-building centred in South-Asia.



Inhalation (2019) by Anupam Saikia, Live Performance. Photograph © artist and Harshvardhan

In the list of emerging artists, **Anupam Saikia** sets apart with his focus on interactive experiential art and performance art. The works are a narrative of socio-political scenarios and their psychological impact. He co-founded the Anga Art Collective in 2010, which is the first from the Northeast region of India.



Shrine (Still Life with Partially Squeezed Lime), Embroidery on cotton Khatka textile. Photograph © artist and Tarq

Artist and creative writer **Areez Katki**’s work is individualistic with his use of thread work and embroidery as a means to explore genetic landscapes. His work questions the idea of textile based craft traditions and traverses queer intimacy, colonial gaze, and social constructs of spirituality.

These artists are bright, young achievers and the present-day art scene in India is certainly receiving global recognition. The dialogue between art collectors, curators, and admirers seem to be more open and direct compared to pre-digitised times. Though the pandemic might have slowed the process by a notch, the future of Indian contemporary art is nothing short of promising.

*All Images: Courtesy Shalini Passi*

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Shalini is a Delhi based architect, artist, and philanthropist who sits on the Advisory Board of Khoj Studios, serves as a longstanding Patron of FICA (Foundation for Indian Contemporary Art) and the Kochi-Muziris Biennale. She is also the founder of MASH (My Art Shalini), a digital platform that explores the intersection of architecture, art, craft, design, and fashion in an accessible and engaging formats.