



Ministry of Culture
Government of India

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Confederation of Indian Industry

Press Release
20 March 2019

Artist line-up announced for India Pavilion at 58th International Art Exhibition at La Biennale di Venezia



Jitish Kallat, *Covering Letter*, 2012, *Fogscreen projection installation*,
Image courtesy: Philadelphia Museum of Art and the Artist

Our Time for a Future Caring

Exhibition: 11 May to 24 November 2019

Preview: 8-10 May 2019

Organisers: Ministry of Culture, Govt. of India and Confederation of Indian Industry

Commissioner: Director General National Gallery of Modern Art, Delhi

Principal Partner & Curator: Kiran Nadar Museum of Art

The India Pavilion is delighted to announce the artist line-up for its forthcoming presentation at the 58th International Art Exhibition at La Biennale di Venezia, opening to the public on 11 May 2019.

Seven eminent modern and contemporary artists have been selected to represent India who are:

Nandalal Bose, Atul Dodiya, GR Iranna, Rummana Hussain, Jitish Kallat, Shakuntala Kulkarni and Ashim Purkayastha.

The India Pavilion will form part of India's ongoing programme celebrating '150 years of Gandhi'. The group presentation entitled *Our Time for a Future Caring* will critically engage with the many facets of Mahatma Gandhi, considering his philosophical ideas and their place in today's complex world, in which violence and intolerance are still prevalent.

A significant new partnership between the public and private sectors in India has enabled the India Pavilion in 2019. It has been spearheaded by the **India Ministry of Culture** and co-organised with the

Confederation of Indian Industry (CII). It is curated by the **Kiran Nadar Museum of Art**, the Pavilion's Principal Partner; the Director General of the **National Gallery of Modern Art** is the Commissioner of the project.

Our Time for a Future Caring will feature works by an intergenerational group of artists spanning from twentieth century to present day. Assembling gestures, metaphors, memorials, exchanges and object symbols that together coalesce, coincide and morph together, the exhibition will feature artworks that either reflect directly on Gandhi and his place in history, focusing on specific moments and their resonances for contemporary audiences, or offer conceptual investigations into his philosophical ideas and broader notions of agency, action and freedom.

The exhibition will begin with the 'Haripura Panels' by **Nandalal Bose**, an Indian 'National Treasure artist' whose works will be shown in Europe for the first time, on loan from the National Gallery of Art. **Jitish Kallat's** poignant video installation, 'Covering Letter' will also be on display in Europe for the first time, featuring a letter from Gandhi to Hitler, projected onto fog. Further featured artists whose work engages with specific moments in Gandhi's history will include **Ashim Purkayastha** and **Atul Dodiya**, the latter of whom refers to Gandhi as 'an artist of non-violence' and whose legacy he continues to reinvent and probe in his work. Artists whose works relate to themes focused on by Gandhi such as nonviolence, truth and tolerance include **GR Iranna**, **Rummana Hussain** and **Shakuntala Kulkarni** and further details about all of the artworks in the show will be unveiled soon. The Pavilion will feature work in a range of artistic mediums including painting, sculpture, mixed media video installations and photography.

Ms. Nirupama Kotru, Joint Secretary, Ministry of Culture, Govt. of India, said '*Mahatma Gandhi's life was his message. He was the embodiment of compassion. He stood for non-violence and truth all his life. He asked us to have faith in humanity, no matter what the provocation. Gandhian values have always been an intrinsic part of the Indian ethos. Art is nothing but an expression of a nation's culture. It is therefore befitting that in the year we celebrate 150 years of Mahatma Gandhi, we express his moral principles through art. The installations and art works at the India Pavilion in the Venice Biennale are an expression of the universal Gandhian values of truth, non-violence, compassion towards fellow beings and nature, self-reliance, simplicity and sustainability.*'

Shri Adwaita Chavan Gadanayak, Director General, National Gallery of Modern Art, said '*It is an honour to present these important contemporary artists, alongside the work of National Treasure artist Nandalal Bose, on loan from the National Gallery of Modern Art, to celebrate 150 years of Mahatma Gandhi at the India Pavilion. Bose and Gandhi had a close relationship and it is pertinent that Bose's seminal 'Haripura Panels' will form the starting point for this exhibition, a work that acutely demonstrated the artist's belief that art informs all creative activity and is related to social need. The show will bring together a rich variety of works to explore the 'Father of the Nation' from different cultural perspectives.*'

Mrs. Kiran Nadar, Founder and Chairperson, Kiran Nadar Museum of Art, said '*These seven significant Indian modern and contemporary artists come from across India and their work reflects strikingly different responses to the figure and philosophies of Gandhi. The India Pavilion will present a discursive, timely exhibition, which explores Gandhi's enduring presence and considers history, memory and identity. KNMA is dedicated to promoting South Asian contemporary art and is honoured as Principal Partner and Curator to present Atul Dodiya, Ashim Purkayastha, GR Iranna, Jitish Kallat, Nandalal Bose, Rummana Hussain and Shakuntala Kulkarni at the Venice Biennale.*'

Ms. Tarana Sawhney, Chairperson, CII Taskforce on Art and Culture, said '*CII is delighted to be working with the Ministry of Culture, KNMA and NGMA to present these seven artists at what is undoubtedly the world's largest and most prestigious contemporary art event, the Venice Biennale. Through this new collaboration, the first public-private partnership of its kind, our mission is to challenge and inspire international audiences, showcasing the strength of art from India on a global platform.*'

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Notes to Editors

About the India Pavilion

2019 will be the second India Pavilion at La Biennale di Venezia. The first India Pavilion took place at the 54th edition in 2011.

A Steering committee and a Curatorial Committee were formulated for the organisation of the India Pavilion 2019, bringing together the public and private sectors. The India Pavilion is co-organised by the Ministry of Culture, Govt. of India and the Confederation of Indian Industry. India Pavilion is curated by Kiran Nadar Museum of Art, the Principal Partner and the Director General, National Gallery of Art, Delhi is the commissioner to the project.

About the Partners

Ministry of Culture, Govt. of India

The Ministry of Culture is the Indian government ministry charged with the preservation and conservation of the country's rich cultural heritage and promotion of art and culture.

National Gallery of Modern Art

The National Gallery of Modern Art is the premier art gallery, under the Ministry of Culture, Govt. of India. The main museum is located in New Delhi at Jaipur House, a former residential palace of the Maharaja of Jaipur, designed by British architects Sir Arthur Blomfield and Sir Edwin Lutyens. It has an extensive collection, with over seventeen thousand works of Indian modern and contemporary art.

Kiran Nadar Museum of Art

Kiran Nadar Museum of Art was founded by art collector and philanthropist Kiran Nadar and is located in New Delhi, India. The Museum opened in 2010 and exhibits modern and contemporary art from India and the subcontinent. It is a non-commercial, not-for-profit organisation and offers an extensive public programme of exhibitions, publications and education.

Confederation of Indian Industry (CII)

The Confederation of Indian Industry is a non-government, not-for-profit, industry-led organisation, playing a proactive role in India's development process. CII works to create and sustain an environment conducive to the growth of industry in India, partnering with industry and government alike through advisory and consultative processes.

About the Artists

Nandalal Bose (1882-1966)

Nandalal Bose is esteemed as one of the pioneers of the 'nationalist-modern' in Indian art. Bose was responsible for the historic task of adorning the original manuscript of the Constitution of India. Like many of his contemporaries – thinkers and artists, he held strong opinions and actions for India's struggle for independence. One of his most remarkable contributions to the freedom struggle was through the linocuts commemorating Mahatma Gandhi's Dandi March of 12 March 1930, and designing Haripura Congress posters upon Mahatma Gandhi's invitation. In 1972 he was designated one of India's nine 'National Treasure' artists, which prohibits his work from being exported outside of the country.

Nandalal Bose's work has been widely displayed in India and across the world. His posthumous retrospective exhibition, *Rhythms of India: The Art of Nandalal Bose (1882-1966)* was held at San Diego Museum of Art, California in collaboration with NGMA, New Delhi, and Government of India in 2008. Visva-Bharati University honored him by conferring the title of '*Desikottama*'. The Tagore Birth Centenary Medal was awarded to Nandalal Bose in 1965 by the Asiatic Society of Bengal.

Atul Dodiya (b. 1959, Mumbai, Maharashtra)

Atul Dodiya was born in 1959 in Mumbai. He studied at the J.J. School of Arts, Mumbai and later the École des Beaux-Arts, Paris in 1980. Atul developed a unique artistic language as a result of his longstanding engagement with the works of artists like Bhupen Khakar and David Hockney. The figure of Mahatma Gandhi as a subject has featured several times in his oeuvre as he explores the aesthetics that ran through the public image of Gandhi as a popular leader.

Dodiya has participated in seminal exhibitions like *Century City* at Tate Modern curated by Geeta Kapur, and the first edition of Kochi Muziris Biennale in 2012. Of his many solo shows the most recent are *7000 Museums: A Project for the Republic of India*, curated by Tasneem Zakaria Mehta at Bhau Daji Lad Museum, Mumbai (2014 -15) and a mid-career retrospective exhibition *Experiments with Truth: Atul Dodiya, works 1981 – 2013*, which was curated by Ranjit Hoskote at the National Gallery of Modern Art, New Delhi (2013).

Atul Dodiya lives and works in Mumbai.

Rummana Hussain (1952–1999)

Rummana Hussain was born in Bangalore in 1952. Completing her education at the Ravensbourne College of Art and Design, Kent, United Kingdom (1972-74), Rummana moved towards an artistic expression which involved installations, performances, videography and activism. A spontaneous response to the politics of her time led her to interrogate personal identity as a woman and a Muslim and echoing vulnerabilities.

Coming from a family with roots grounded in politics, activism and social welfare, Hussain was an active participant in SAHMAT, a platform of intellectuals promoting liberal secular ideas in India through art and activism. The shattered dome-like shape of a mosque became a recurring spectral motif in her sculptures and drawings in the exhibition. *'Living on the Margins'*, performed by Rummana in 1995 at the National Centre for the Performing Arts (NCPA) is considered among the first contemporary performative works in India. She was artist in residence at Art in General in New York in 1998, where her installation focused on intersections within cultures, ruptured memories and contextualising the present within history. Her last work *'Space for Healing'*, 1999 was exhibited at the third Asia Pacific Triennale of Contemporary Art at Queensland Art Gallery in Brisbane. Rummana's works were ephemeral in nature, and many has not been archived or preserved, making them even more precious today.

Rummana Hussain passed away in 1999.

G.R. Iranna (b. 1970, Sindgi, Karnataka)

G. R Iranna was born in Bijapur district of Karnataka. He completed his bachelors in painting from College of Visual Art, Gulbarga in 1992 and later on, Masters from College of Art, New Delhi in 1994 and Wimbledon School of Art, London in 1999. His artistic explorations are crossovers of paintings and sculptural installations.

Iranna's first one-man show was held in 1992 at the College of Visual Art, Gulbarga. His more recent exhibitions include *The Primordial Ash*; Aicon Gallery, New York, 2017; *And the last shall be the first: G.R. Iranna, Works 1995-2015*; National Gallery of Modern Art Bengaluru, 2016; and *Tempered Branches*; AICON Gallery, New York, 2014 to name a few. His works have been reviewed and appraised by critics, curators and art historians. Publications on his works include *Ether is all that is*, essay by Roobina Karode, *Scaffolding the Absent*, essay by Maya Kóvskaya, *Birth of Blindness*, essay by Donald Kuspit, *The Dancer on the Horse*, essay by Ranjit Hoskote and *Disorder and Early Sufferings*; essay by Ernst W. Koelnsperge. Iranna's works are part of important national and international collections such as National Gallery of Modern Art, New Delhi, David Robert Collection, London, Kiran Nadar Museum of Art, New Delhi, Chester & David Hurwitz, USA and Bharat Bhavan, Bhopal. Iranna was awarded the National Award from the Lalit Kala Academy and the AIFACS Award, at the show '50 years of Art in Independent India' in New Delhi in 1997.

He lives and works in New Delhi

Jitish Kallat (b. 1974, Mumbai, Maharashtra)

Born in 1974, Jitish Kallat's oeuvre spans painting, photography, drawing, video and sculptural installations. His recent mid-career retrospective *Here After Here* was curated by Catherine David and organised at the National Gallery of Modern Art, New Delhi in 2017. It displayed works spanning twenty years of his artistic practice. Kallat's other solo exhibitions at museums include institutions such as the Art Institute of Chicago, Bhau Daji Lad Museum (Mumbai), the Ian Potter Museum of Art

(Melbourne), CSMVS Museum (Mumbai), the San Jose Museum of Art and Art Gallery of New South Wales (Sydney).

Kallat also served as the curator and artistic director of the second edition of the Kochi-Muziris Biennale 2014. His work has been part of the Havana Biennale, Gwangju Biennale, Asia Pacific Triennale, Fukuoka Asian Art Triennale, Asian Art Biennale, Curitiba Biennale, Guangzhou Triennale and the Kiev Biennale amongst others. His works are part of important collections such as the National Gallery of Modern Art in New Delhi, the Museum of Contemporary Art in Los Angeles, and the Singapore Art Museum, among others.

Kallat lives and works in Mumbai, India.

Shakuntala Kulkarni (b. 1950, Dharwad, Karnataka)

Shakuntala Kulkarni was born in Karnataka in 1950. Shakuntala's current artistic practice lies at the intersection of many disciplines though her initial training in visual arts stems from mural painting.

Shakuntala has exhibited extensively with solo and group exhibitions, including "of bodies armour and cages" in 2012 at Kiran Nadar Museum of Art, and CSMVS Museum in Mumbai, "and when she roared the universe quaked", 2007 at Chemould Prescott Road, Mumbai, and Dhaka Art Summit in 2016. She is a recipient of many awards and scholarships including Prince Claus Fund for setting up multi-disciplinary project *Reduced Spaces* in 2002, Artist Residency at the Brewery Arts Centre, Kendal, U.K. in 1998, and the Government of India Cultural Scholarship for painting and Printmaking under tutelage of Akbar Padamsee, Prof. Palsikar, Prof. Somnath Hore in 1975-76.

Shakuntala Kulkarni lives and works in Mumbai.

Ashim Purkayastha (b. 1967, Digboi, Assam)

Ashim Purkayastha was born in Digboi, a town well known for oil refinery in Assam. Drawing from eclectic sources, he voices his concerns around societal reactions triggered by the economy and politics. His exhibitions include solo exhibitions at Anant Art Gallery at the Visual Arts Gallery, India Habitat Centre, New Delhi (2006) *Self x Social* at The School of Arts and Aesthetics, Jawarhalal Nehru University, New Delhi (2005); *Hindu Moon in Mughal Garden, Nature Morte*, New Delhi (2004); *Young Contemporaries* from Santiniketan, Gallery Espace, New Delhi (2002 amongst several others. Ashim has received several awards and fellowships, including the prestigious Pollock-Krasner Foundation Award in 2004.

Ashim Purkayastha lives and works in New Delhi.