



Home

News

Business

Energy

Opinion

Lifestyle

Video

In Focus

Home / Lifestyle / Art and culture



## Ishara show by Gauri Gill explores ties between City, Nature, and the Sacred

Installation view of Sheher, Prakriti, Devi at Ishara Art Foundation, 2024. Image courtesy of Ishara Art Foundation and the artists. Photo by Augustine Paredes/Seeing Things

Dubai

+ Follow

**N.P. Krishna Kumar, Al Arabiya English**

Published: 26 March ,2024: 04:18 PM GST

Updated: 27 March ,2024: 02:12 PM GST

🕒 10 min read



AA



Guided by a research-led approach, Ishara Art Foundation in Dubai, has completed five years, dedicated to presenting contemporary art of South Asia.

Advertisement



As it celebrates five years, Ishara has opened its 11th show titled ‘Sheher, Prakriti, Devi,’ (City, Nature, Deity) by renowned photographer Gauri Gill, her first extensive curation in an art context, ruminating on the interwoven relationship between dynamic cities, the natural environment, and the inseparable sacred.



ADVERTISING



**For the latest headlines, follow our Google News channel online or via the app.**

According to Sabih Ahmed, Associate Director and Curator of Ishara Art Foundation, the present show is one of the most ambitious – comprising 138 works – in scale but displayed with a sense of “light-weight levity.”

Ahmed also speaks about the ‘web of relationships,’ even among the very many different contexts, and the

collaborations, conversations, co-existence. and cohabitation among the artists and artist collectives in the show.



Gauri Gill & Vinnie Gill, Buildings and Trees. Archival pigment prints (photographs), pastel and watercolour on rough paper, Dimensions variable. Shown in Sheher, Prakriti, Devi at Ishara Art Foundation, 2024. (Photo by Augustine Paredes/Seeing Things)

The seed for the present show is from Gauri Gill's 2021 exhibition in Mumbai about Indian cities called 'Rememory,' a key term in Toni Morrison's work, which is not just about remembering, but "instead is a physical presence which always 'exists' in the world."

Gill's work emphasizes her belief in working with and through community, in what she calls 'active listening,' and encompasses several lines of pursuit and is marked by "empathy, surprise, and a human concern over issues of survival."

Last September Gill was awarded the 10th



#### ART AND CULTURE

### Jitish Kallat explores interrelationship between the cosmic and the terrestrial

Prix Pictet, the global award for photography and sustainability. For more than two decades, she has been engaged closely with marginalized communities in the desert of western Rajasthan, and for the last decade with indigenous artists in Maharashtra.

Her work is in the collections of prominent institutions worldwide, including the Museum of Modern Art, New York; Tate Museum, London; Smithsonian Institution, Washington; Fotomuseum, Winterthur; and the Ishara Art Foundation and the Prabhakar Collection, Dubai.

ADVERTISING



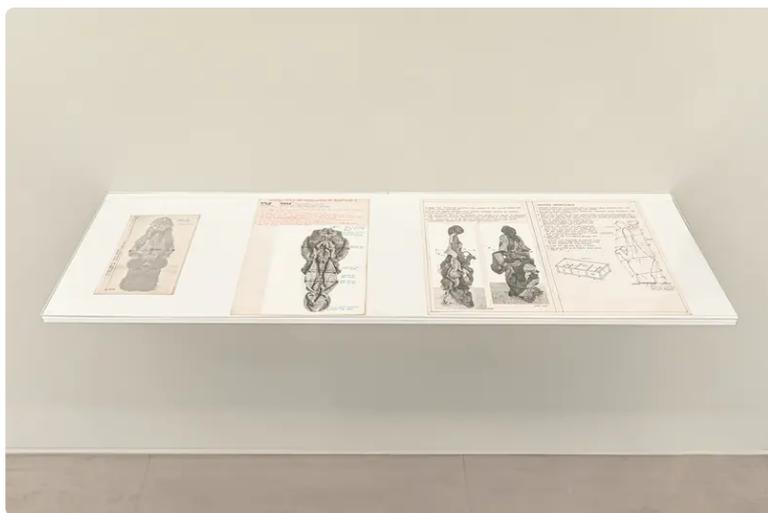


28. Vinnie Gill, (L-R) Kachnar (White Bohemia Variegate) tree (2023); Kachnar (Purple Variegate) tree (2023); Cheel (Bottlebrush) flowers (2023). Pastels and watercolour on rough paper, 55.2 x 37.4 cm each. Shown in Sheher, Prakriti, Devi at Ishara Art Foundation, 2024. (Photo by Augustine Paredes/Seeing Things)

When the invitation for the present show in Dubai came in 2022, Gauri was able to expand the circle of artists and chose those of she had admired from across the world.

“Each of these artists is someone whose work looks at aspects of the city, of nature, and of the sacred—and the many overlaps between these categories—and whom I have been drawn to for one reason or another. In my view, many of

the artists have also received inadequate, if any, attention. Ishara was so kind as to agree, and over the next year we went on to invite nine additional artists and a collective, to eventually present 12 different practices, flowing apart and through one another,” writes Gill.



Mrinalini Mukherjee, (L-R) *Adi Pushp* (1997); *Devi* (c. 1982) – Installation Instruction. Archival document, 30 x 21.5 cm each. From the collection of the Mrinalini Mukherjee Foundation. Shown in *Sheher, Prakriti, Devi* at Ishara Art Foundation, 2024. (Photo by Augustine Paredes/Seeing Things)

Thus ‘*Sheher, Prakriti, Devi*’ includes works by Chamba Rupal (collective), Chiara Camoni, Gauri Gill, Ladhki Devi, Mariam Suhail, Meera Mukherjee, Mrinalini Mukherjee, Rashmi Kaleka, Shefalee Jain, Sukanya Ghosh, Vinnie Gill, and Yoshiko Crow.

Explaining her penchant for collaborations, Gauri Gill says: “I don’t see the distinction between my own practice or others’ practices.”

Across the gallery, the exhibition is mounted with the works juxtaposed against one another.

Gauri Gill's black and white dystopian pictures of urban India are deconstructed by interspersing her mother Vinnie Gill's drawings of parrots, owls in flowering trees, rivers through remote mountains, or Mughal tombs in ruin – an art practice of around 60 years, which have never been exhibited.



Chamba Rupal, Das Mahavidya (Ten Great Wisdoms). Hand embroidery on silk cloth, 29.2 cm x 29.2 cm (each). From the collection of Anant Art. Shown in Sheher, Prakriti, Devi at Ishara Art Foundation, 2024. (Photo by Augustine Paredes/Seeing Things)

As Gauri notes, her mother's works helped her “see India conveyed through another register, deeply felt and somehow enchanted.”

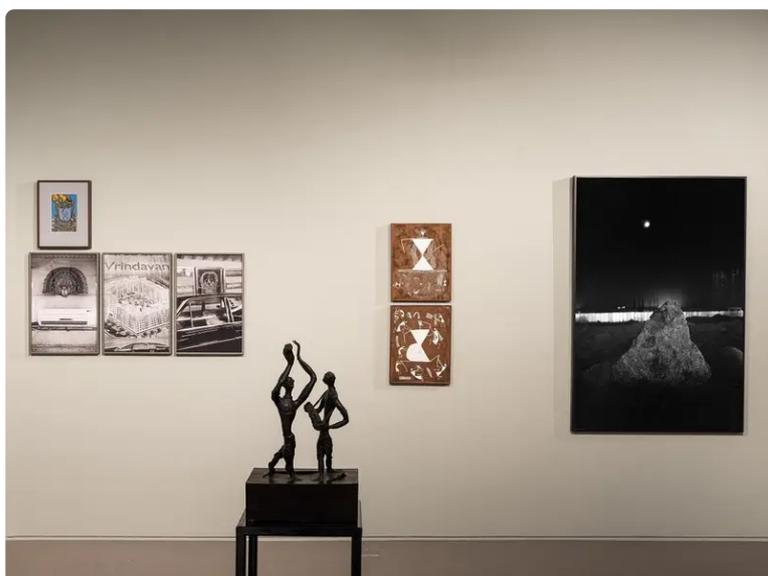
Gauri's own work felt “critical and conceptual,” while mother Vinnie's work

felt “compassionate and ardent.”

The Mumbai show had posed the question: “Why was it that one of us was perceived by the world as a so-called ‘artist,’ while the other not?” This was what prompted her to invite her mother into the exhibition, and also “to light up” her own work.

This same sentiment had led Gauri to invite Ladhki Devi, mother of prominent Warli artist Rajesh Vangad to join the exhibition. Rajesh had learned the matriarchal art form from his mother, and the latter had not professionally exhibited her work outside their village.

“Ladhki Devi entered the space with her creations of the infinite forms of the Devi (the Great Goddess), who appears to engage in, while simultaneously transcending, a wide range of everyday activities usually performed by women, as well as the fundamental duties of Mother Nature,” writes Gill.



Installation view of Sheher, Prakriti, Devi at Ishara Art Foundation, 2024. Image courtesy of Ishara Art Foundation and the artists.  
(Photo by Augustine Paredes/Seeing Things)

In Gill's words, "Apart from the sheer beauty and multiple truths expressed by the different artists -- from the mundane to the transcendental, the gross to the subtle, and, the manmade to the sacred -- through this palimpsestic and idiosyncratic exhibition, I wish to acknowledge those who have found ways to stubbornly persist in their practice, often sharing their work only within their families and local communities, completely outside the circuits and networks of professional artists, contemporary art discourse, galleries and markets... Through this gathering of insistent voices we hope to consider the dualistic worlds of the depleted and regenerative, manmade and natural, colonial and Indigenous, young and old, English and non-English, mundane and magical, absent and present."

Gill offers a unique lens to regard cities as spaces of habitation that are shaped by multiple life-worlds. Together with various practitioners with whom she shares an affinity, the exhibition presents a world where built and natural structures are rendered porous by termites; gates open to unfinished roads; historical ruins become homes to migratory birds while pigeons become occupants of post-colonial houses; locusts bear witness to contemporary

terrors and forests manifest as spirit sisters.

In this show, Gill invites viewers invited to regard ecology as an overlap of cultural, natural, and spiritual domains. “It is the opposite of Nihilism – everything matters. Thinking about the unseen, the interdependency of various dualities. It is all about connecting the dots,” she says at the preview of the exhibition in Dubai.

The Chamba Rumal—or ‘paintings in embroidery’ reflect the close relationship between Pahari embroidery as practiced mainly by the local women, and guided by miniature artists of the Chamba region and style. They portray 10 different wisdom aspects—or Das Mahavidya—of the One Truth, as expressed through the Divine Mother in Hinduism, and using the double satin stitch adapted to the motifs and details.



Rashmi Kaleka, (L-R) Deemak #6, Deemak #7, Deemak #8

(2023). Watercolour and graphite on hot pressed archival 300 gsm paper, set of 9, 31 x 41 cm each. Shown in Sheher, Prakriti, Devi at Ishara Art Foundation, 2024. (Photo by Augustine Paredes/Seeing Things)

Chiara Camoni's extraordinary anthropomorphic figures arise spontaneously through her close communion with nature in the remote rural area in Italy where she lives, and where she walks through the forest each day. The sister in her new video called 'Burning Sister' emerges from the Earth, to which she returns, even as she goes through fire.

Mariam Suhail distils ubiquitous, personally known and contextually specific motifs of urban living, from pigeons trapped in building chutes to the migration of 'chhaths' (rooftops) that are labelled in the North Indian subcontinent a term that throws up a whole series of evocative associations—into abstract and poetic gestures.

Meera Mukherjee is a unique outlying woman artist who grew up in metropolitan and upper-middle class India, but ventured out to live among and learn from the great traditions of Bastar, and Adivasi artists in general. Her subject matter includes women, workers, fishermen, weavers, and Vaishnavi and Baul singers, that easily traverses the terrain from quotidian to spiritual dimensions.

The installation manuals for Mrinalini Mukherjee's mythic hemp sculptures read like codes to enter a secret world—one in which hemp and jute transform magically into goddess, serpent, or bird; form rising from material through the artist's oracular commandments in the guise of meticulous written instructions.



Installation view of Sheher, Prakriti, Devi at Ishara Art Foundation, 2024. Image courtesy of Ishara Art Foundation and the artists. (Photo by Augustine Paredes/Seeing Things)

Rashmi Kaleka has created from scratch a deeply inspiring permaculture farm on the outskirts of Delhi, where she regularly hosts and feeds friends and strangers. This is the home base and rich source of her close engagement with nature and care, in this case reflected through empathetic and imaginative drawings of termites and their colonies.

Shefalee Jain creates works that are grounded in community, and are ever

responsive—and responsible—towards social upheaval. For this exhibition, she has created a new trilogy about the ‘Rekhan’ (locusts) regularly seen in Rajasthan and across North India these days due to the impact of climate change. In this work, the locusts bear witness to the sadness and terrors of the times, and the social upheavals we live in.

Sukanya Ghosh uses experimental forms to explore the cities that we inhabit. In her new video ‘Konkal,’ on view for the first time, she excavates the skeleton or carcass underlying the city, even as she returns to ephemeral sites of construction to highlight unfinished and ever ongoing projects of post-colonial modernity.



Installation view of Sheher, Prakriti, Devi at Ishara Art Foundation<sup>4</sup>. Image courtesy of Ishara Art Foundation and the artists. (Photo by Augustine Paredes/Seeing Things)

Yoshiko Crow’s sublime renditions of the

Goddess Tara in her 21 avatars and the strange hybrid human-animal figures arise from fertile dreams and a many lifetimes-long spiritual practice rooted in Mahayana Buddhism. Her work “Kodama,’ or ‘Tree Spirit’ is as luminous in its delicate materiality as it is other-worldly.

The exhibition also hosts a readers’ space on the mezzanine floor with books and resources that complement the themes that underlie the displayed works,

The exhibition is open till June 1, 2024 (Saturday).

Read more:

**[‘Only Life, Myriad Places’: Sudarshan Shetty and sensing the world in multiple ways](#)**

**[Notations on Time: Where dreams intersect with history](#)**

**[Navjot Altaf at Ishara: Art, activism, and the larger web of life](#)**



Get the latest stories from AlArabiya on Google News

Ishara Art Foundation

Sabih Ahmed

Dubai

Gauri Gill

## Also Read

### **Casablanca Art School: Bridging the gap between postcolonial and global art history**



Following its acclaimed showing at Tate St Ives, organized in partnership with ...

**Art and culture**

---

### **'Only Life, Myriad Places': Sudarshan Shetty and sensing the world in multiple ways**



The Indian artist's exhibition at Dubai's Ishara Art Foundation offers a fusion of ...

**Art and culture**

---

### **Notations on Time: Where dreams intersect with history**



How do you artistically explore, enter, and experience the labyrinthian, ...

**Art and culture**

---

### **Haroon Mirza: Using light and sound as aesthetic form**



Ishara Art Foundation recently hosted a talk in Dubai with the UK based ...

**Art and culture**

---

### Navjot Altaf at Ishara: Art, activism, and the larger web of life



The exhibition titled 'Pattern' by celebrated Indian artist Navjot Altaf at Ishara ...

Art and culture

### Jitish Kallat explores interrelationship between the cosmic and the terrestrial



For art lovers, Dubai-based Ishara Art Foundation has staged a magnificent treat ...

Art and culture

## Editor's Choice



**Yazidi women recount ISIS captivity: They raped children as young as 4**



**Putin's Western Involvement in Moscow Attack Claims 'Narrative Laundering': Maj. Gen.**



**'You trust ISIS sources?': Russian politician Yevgeny Popov on Moscow terror attack**



**US Navy works to keep sailors' morale high amid challenging Red Sea Houthi campaign**

**Top Content**

**Trending**

Top Content

Day  Week



**Russia outgunning**



**IIS authorizes**

1



**Russia outgunning  
Ukraine 6-to-1:  
Kyiv commander-  
in-chief**

World  
News

4



**US authorizes  
bombs, warplanes  
for Israel amid  
rising civilian death  
toll in Gaza**

Middle  
East

2



**Romania says it  
found drone  
fragments near  
border with Ukraine**

World  
News

5



**Moscow slams  
'unacceptable  
Israeli' strikes on  
Syria**

World  
News

3



**Israel hits Syria in  
heaviest raid in  
months on Iran  
proxies**

Middle  
East

6



**Ukraine forces will  
have to retreat 'in  
small steps'  
without US aid:  
Zelenskyy**

World  
News

 Before you go >



# Gaza children sleeping hungry every night

 Share

**ALARABIYA**  
**news**

\ Home \ Lifestyle \ Art and culture [↶ BACK TO TOP](#)

**NEWS BUSINESS ENERGY OPINION**

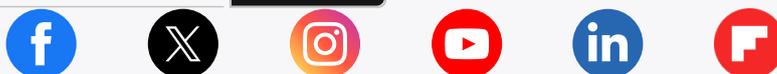
MIDDLE EAST  
NORTH AFRICA  
GULF  
SAUDI ARABIA  
WORLD  
ECONOMY  
TECHNOLOGY  
MARKETS

**LIFE VIDEO**

ART AND CULTURE  
ENTERTAINMENT  
FASHION AND BEAUTY  
HEALTHY LIVING  
TRAVEL AND TOURISM  
VARIETY

**SUBSCRIBE TO OUR NEWSLETTER**

Enter email address **Subscribe**



[ABOUT AL ARABIYA NETWORK](#)

[CONTACT US](#)

[TERMS OF USE](#)

[PRIVACY POLICY](#)

[CAREERS](#)

[SERVICE PROVIDERS](#)

[FAQ](#)

[SITEMAP](#)

[SPEAK UP](#)

© Copyright. Al Arabiya Network. 2024 -  Language 