

“The art is here for the public and the public is here for the art.”

Art in India still sorely lacks the awareness, appreciation and support that it receives internationally. Inconsistent governmental support and a lack of pro-art public policy, a dearth of quality galleries, museums and public art spaces, and only a handful of accessible art education institutions create a dynamic where art is largely misunderstood or ignored by the public. While the last decade has seen some positive development on this front, we are still a ways away from meaningfully bringing art to the masses and creating a society that is aware of, and takes pride in, the art and artists of their country.

Art Bengaluru’s aim has always been to aid in the Bangalorean front of that fight by bringing a selection of works from a diverse set of artists to UB City - a large public space in the heart of Bangalore. For 10 days, *anyone* can enter the festival *for free* and view over a hundred works of art across a diverse spectrum of mediums and styles, displayed with museum-class display infrastructure; thus, bringing a much needed injection of art to the city, and the wonderfully disarming onslaught of emotion, insight, perspective and reflection that is unique to an enriching art experience.

The 2018 edition of Art Bengaluru brings together 17 Indian artists across 24 exhibits to UB City. The festival begins at the foyer with two stainless steel sculpture exhibits by pre-eminent artist **Balan Nambiar**. A master with over 60 years of experience, Mr. Nambiar’s forms dance elegantly between symmetry and asymmetry, and are often inspired by childhood memories and symbols associated with the ritual arts. He will also be showcasing a body of jewellery enameled paintings that have never been exhibited previously and a selection of mild steel sculptures on the ground floor and piazza respectively. **Gurudas Shenoy**’s natural and urban semi-abstract canvases appear next - with an extensive collection at Sublime Galleria on the 8th floor as well. **Kavita Jaiswal** subsequently contemplates existentialism and perception through abstraction via mixed media works on canvas across two exhibits at the luxury corridor entrance. Moving inwards, **Vipta Kapadia**’s ephemeral abstractions in oils juxtapose **Chandan Bhowmick**’s vivid terrestrial abstractions in acrylic opposite Louis Vuitton and Burberry. This section transitions into the next with large linear hillsides in pen and ink on paper from 1986 by **D Venkatapathy** - the senior most living founder member of the Cholamandal Artist Village and an important member of the Madras Art Movement.

Coming back around to the grand staircase, symmetry replaces fluidity while paper and wood replace paint and ink with 3 exhibits featuring works by **Yuvan Bothysathavur**, **S Ravi Shankar** and **Ganesh Selvaraj**. Though stylistically unique, these exhibits are tethered by strict geometrical forms employed by the artists; from the perspective-altering curves and lines of Yuvan’s work on plywood, to Ravi Shankar’s architectural laser-cut paper sculpture that transform in different angles of light, and Ganesh’s intense assemblages of magazine paper on board.

The first floor features photography and photo media by **Devangana Kumar** and **Rohaam Sulaiman**. Devangana’s large format digital recreations of mid-nineteenth century

postcards based on Indian servants under British employ strive to reinstate the identities of those commodified subjects and critique the culture of direct and indirect servitude still present in post-colonial Indian society. Rohaan's documentation of Naga tribes and wildlife explore themes of migration, adaptation to rapidly evolving habitats and preservation of tradition.

The centrally located exhibits of the 2nd floor showcase works by **Parvathi Nayar**, **Romicon Revola**, **Ashu Gupta** and **Saju Kunhan**. Parvathi's exhibit explores water in its simultaneous ubiquity and scarcity, portrayed through the entire spectrum of perspective - from bird's eye to microscopic. Romicon showcases two video projects and a central sculpture: the former meditates on a single drop of water and the latter engages with the phenomenon of the urban sprawl, while the sculpture attempts to address them both. Ashu, the festival's youngest artist, attempts to reconcile her despair about Bangalore's lost trees through a series of pen and ink drawings on canvas. The bridge features the largest work of the festival: a 30' by 8' oil on canvas by Saju Kunhan that, despite being created in 2011, has never been previously exhibited due to a lack of a large enough exhibition space. Inspired by Saju's first experience of a "mega city" - Mumbai - the detail and scale of the work is mesmerising and should not be missed.

The festival's final exhibits feature semi-abstract photography by **Ashish Dubey** and **Pallon Daruwala**. Ashish's works disarmingly capture natural abstractions and, on first viewing, more closely resemble a Kandinsky than the documentation of dying wetlands that the works actually represent. One of the city's most acclaimed photographers, Pallon's exhibit features a selection of works from the new edition of his *Vertical Horizon* series, which aptly titled, capture a diverse series of subjects and settings from perspectives that are as thought provoking and disorienting as they are captivating.

We thank all our artists and partners for agreeing to embark on this journey with us and look forward to welcoming you to Art Bengaluru 2018.

- Abhishek Naidu, Curator