

# Rubric



gallery g

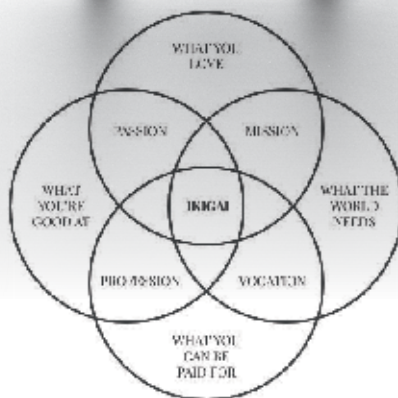
galleryg.com  
galleryGarts  
gallery\_g\_arts

Issue 17 • Feb 2020

## HAPPY NEW **BIG INNINGS!**



It's been a wonderful start to the New Year and new decade, and with the dawn of 2020, **gallery g** has positioned itself to project and embrace a theme that's been subtle in its workings until now. Like they say, change is the biggest constant and realising fully well the changing needs of the art world, **gallery g**, in its 18th year, has set a running theme – *Ikigai* – for the next two years.



What is Ikigai, and why is it important to us? There are many who know about it but to those who are unaware, Ikigai is a Japanese concept that essentially means “*reason for being*.” Pronounced (Ick-ee-guy), it is composed of two words: Iki, which means life and Gai which comes from the word Kai, meaning shell in Japanese, which is deemed highly valuable. Derived from there, ikigai means “value in living.”

The Japanese believe everyone has an Ikigai. There is no direct English translation, but it's a term that embodies the idea of happiness in living. Essentially, ikigai is the reason why you get up in the morning. At **gallery g**, the reason why we have embraced Ikigai as the theme from 2020 is the “reason for our being” as we approach our 20th year of inception in 2023.

In the art world, things don't always move at a frenetic pace especially given that creative process is little slower, but that said, it doesn't allow us to sit back and ponder. On the contrary, with the creative output being at an all-time high, we are setting the dual goals of not just following the Ikigai theme but also step up our underlying practice of what we love doing best – make art available for all.

At **gallery g**, we understand and relate to the art world's needs and combine our excellent resources as is evident in its support of The Raja Ravi Varma Heritage Foundation, the Sandeep & Gitanjali

Maini Foundation as well as its association with the country's one and only biennale – the Kochi Muziris Biennale.

To put things in perspective, **gallery g** is a commercial establishment, and that is what buyers come to us for, seeking suggestions, recommendations and guidance to incorporate the changes – some small, some large – to make their world an ‘artful’ space.

I truly feel somewhere along the way we have found our Ikigai, being constantly associated with all these entities/foundations and it is only befitting to mention that our team, which is as varied as they come, is firmly entrenched in our ideals of embracing our passion and making it a mission.

The team at gg is diverse and dynamic: ranging from the media, engineering background as well as from government and heritage services, provides **gallery g's** core team with the necessary and varied set of skills to drive it forward. The ‘four elements’ that we value are: making a profession, passion for profession, passion for our mission and making our mission as a vocation.

The Ikigai theme will reflect and resonate in everything that we do over the next 24 months, in our interactive sessions, artist notes, foundation programs and will filter down to even the colours that we have primarily chosen as part of the recurring theme.

I look forward to your continued patronage in the coming years as we work towards our 20th year. It's been a great journey so far and it's all coming together in the manner I had envisioned when I started **gallery g** in 2003. ■

- Gitanjali Maini



# Mallaah

In more ways than one, **gallery g's** association with **Shibu Arakkal**, commissioned by the Sandeep & Gitanjali Maini Foundation for an exclusive photo-documentary of the Kumbh mela in February this year, was unique.

Firstly, it was a rare exhibition of photography, a medium that is seldom understood or given its due, and secondly, the concept of capturing the Ardh Kumbh in a manner that's not been seen or talked about before, was significantly different.

Shibu is an award-winning photographer who stretches the boundaries with his unfettered creativity; SGMF, which is intrinsically connected with arts and is involved in promoting India's intangible heritage, commissioned Shibu for the project and the talented artist came up with a series of stunning works that were different, yet arresting.

The exhibition titled **Mallaah** was showcased in **gallery g** from August 11 - September 15 and it showed why Shibu is rated highly in his chosen field. Shibu's idea of documenting a photo art series on the boatmen of the Ganga and the Yamuna is exclusive to **gallery g** and the set of 12 works that he produced came in for rave reviews from the media, art community and the general viewers. Each of the photographs on display were unconventional, not just in subject, but also in the manner in which they had been treated and printed, as Shibu made a compelling narrative, taking the viewer through the journey.

The initiative didn't just end with exhibition, and in line with the commitment that **gallery g** and SGMF strongly believe in, a second

outreach program was initiated with renowned photographer **Sudhir Ramchandran**. The expert talk by Sudhir, a highly regarded professional in his field and someone who has seen Shibu's work evolve over the years, was well received by a select audience. Sudhir's ability to discuss the finer details of photography, stemming from more than four decades of expertise, opened the audience's mind to the perennially misjudged field of photography.

In Gitanjali Maini's words, "*as an end result, the (Kumbh) project as we visualized it and hoped for, has done the expected. Introducing a small part of India's intangible cultural heritage to an audience like myself, who perhaps, never knew this community existed even (was the icing).*"

What she left unsaid was that it was a project that was fulfilling — from the concept, to the production, to the execution, it was all in sync. ■



## In sync with Timeless Traditions

The diverse genre of artists that **gallery g** supports came through crystal clear as it embraced the festivity of Dussehra and Diwali with an exhibition relating to the gods and goddesses of Hindu tradition.

Launched just after the conclusion of the Dussehra festivities, the show titled **Timeless Traditions — Enthralling Indian Art Forms**, by reputed artist **Lakshmi Krishnamurthy** was a study in contrast to the Mallaah show a month earlier. Yet, it showed how **gallery g** is constantly upping the game to stay connected and be relevant to the current scenario.

Traditions galore in Hinduism and given that the current generation may not be fully clued into the importance and intricacies surrounding our festivals and traditions, **gallery g** in association with the Sandeep & Gitanjali Maini Foundation, launched a predominantly traditional show of paintings featuring some of our deities.

Lakshmi, at 75, a Chennai-based artist, can surely give the younger ones a run for their money with her enthusiasm and energy. Her expertise, is without doubt, flawless. After several decades of practising the craft, Lakshmi, who has held several shows in the past, exhibited a range of paintings in different mediums and styles at **gallery g**.

The show was formally inaugurated on October 12, which also coincided with the artist's 75th birthday, and the opening was extremely well attended. Lakshmi, formerly the chief of Visual Arts Department, Rukmini Devi College of Fine Arts, Kalakshetra Foundation, Chennai is well known in the artistic circles.

Unlike many artists, Lakshmi believes in exploring as many mediums and avenues as possible and the works on display which included Kerala Murals, Tempera, Lepakshi, Patta Chitra, Pithora, Warli, Glass Painting and Madhubani styles, clearly revealed her line of thinking. ■



## Prajapati reveals her **Earth Story**



The elements (**Pancha Tattva**) as in Indian philosophy, refers to the five great Elements, which according to Hinduism is the basis of all cosmic creation. It is profound, yet a simple revelation of the existence of the entire life source on earth.

The five elements are present in every living, and breathing life form on this planet. These elements are: *Prithvi* (Earth), *Apas/Jal* (Water), *Agni* (Fire), *Vayu* (Air), *Aakash* (Space/Aether). These elements have different characteristics and also account for different faculties of human experience.

Bharti Prajapati's **Earth Story – The Elements** is a collection of paintings and is an attempt to narrate the intrinsic bond between the five elements. The five elements are present in our body, the earth below and the cosmos above. We have numerous tales, patterns, forms and traditions representing these five elements.

A cherished inclusion in **gallery g's** Artists' Initiative Program (AIP) early on, Bharti Prajapati has showcased her works through us over the years. It is only befitting that as we turn 18 this February, we exhibit a solo show by one of our valued artists, who has been associated with **gallery g** for a long while.

Women and rural themes have been a constant in Prajapati's paintings. The people, the lifestyle, the contrasts of the arid landscape with the vivid colours of her palette, are spectacular.

Our planet has nurtured and sustained life abundantly with its immense wealth of Elements. Earth is forever giving and nourishing its beings, our rivers flow through the length and breadth of the country providing the essential water, the Fire element plays an important role in the creation of new life, the Air we breathe is an invisible but most essential element we are surrounded with, and lastly, Space, the vast universe above us. All five are intrinsically connected and necessary for survival.

Earth Story is about the wonderful co-existence and interaction between the living beings and surroundings. Their inclusive co-existence and inter-dependency has created a beautiful story around us.

As Bharti Prajapati says: *"Our celebrations, art, design, culture and traditions are inspired by nature comprising these elements. My paintings are about the elements and their connect with us. The patterns, colours, forms from our traditional folk and art inspired by the elements are recreated in these works. Earth Story is about creating a piece of art depicting this essence of totality."*

Prajapati further adds: *"Nature along with moods and patterns are imbibed in our physical and physiological evolution. We are part of this complex, which I attempt to portray through my collection of oil paintings. This collection is a collage of colours and forms constantly visible around us, and how we recreate them into our lifestyle and space."* ■

*(The works will be on display at gallery g from 8th to 29th Feb 2020)*



## Curating History, Creating Art

**A**t gallery g we have always worked at keeping a client's design and aesthetic in mind while curating art for a particular space. One such project - extremely challenging, yet fulfilling, was the curation of art for the restaurant of a star-rated hotel in the city.

Asian art is diverse and rich, spanning thousands of years and dozens of countries. It is known for its ritual bronzes, beautiful ceramics, jades, textiles, poetic painted landscapes, garden design, elaborate gold work, extraordinary temples, shrines, pagodas and stupas, woodblock prints, shadow puppets and the like.

This project was a reinterpretation of all these elements with a more modern and contemporary vision, keeping in mind the client's penchant for all things nouveau and cutting edge.

Asian modern and contemporary art differs hugely from its European and American counterparts. It is not just the art of a discrete geographical zone, nor simply one which developed through a series of chronological successions. In the past Asia was assimilated under the term 'Eastern' as the antithesis of 'Western', which meant that 'Asian' never escaped being a projection of the 'Western'.

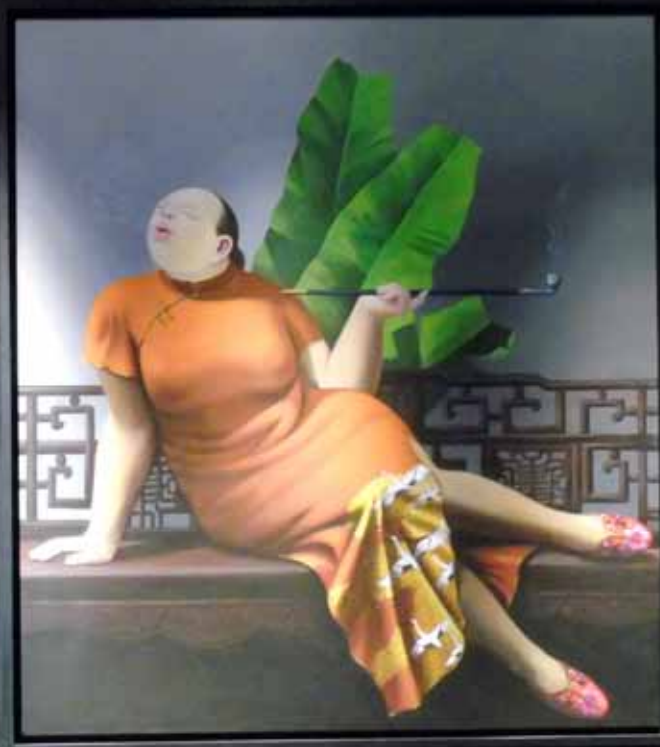
Those 'Western' elements can therefore be clearly seen in the 'Asian' inspired design palette of this restaurant. If poetry gets a literary lilt through hyperbole, then the pop culture in Chinese art lays it thick with similar exaggeration through colour and proportion on canvas. Dramatised women - voluptuous and sexy - form the centre pieces of the space. There's five of them, each coquettish and suggestive, yet cute and cuddly and so perfect despite their over exaggerated curves.

Orientalist motifs in green and tangerine add glamour and make tasteful fillers to blank grey walls. Swirls of similar shades take the form of markers to indicate washrooms, while abstract compositions in grey, yellow and white makes for thinking pieces as you nurse a drink and gaze into their complex orientation.

These decorative elements - more than mere art pieces - have carefully been incorporated as embellishments to a larger and more intricately curated interior design narrative. They emphasise and disguise certain structural elements in the space, while fulfilling an iconographic role. Furthermore, the choice and treatment of each embellishment, pattern and ornament not only provides information about the aesthetics of a certain society, but also provides significant clues about social, cultural and sometimes political values of the region. ■







*Inspired by Chinese pop art, this 'Fat Ladies' as we like to fondly refer to them, are considered symbols of good luck and prosperity.*



# Peace Warrior makes waves at Florence

Artist **Sangeeta Abhay**, who is part of our Artists' Initiative Program (AIP), showcased her work "Peace Warrior" at the Florence Biennale in October 2019. Supported by the Sandeep & Gitanjali Maini Foundation, Sangeeta's first-ever solo exhibit overseas proved to be a runaway success as her work was adjudged in the top-5 in the Installation Art category.

Being conferred with the *Lorenzo il Magnifico* Award in Installation Art segment, Sangeeta was overjoyed as the international jury comprising distinguished scholars, art historians and critics from different countries chose her work amongst the top-5 in that category.

With more than 490 artists and 250-plus designers from 76 countries participating in the prestigious Florence Biennale, Sangeeta, who channelizes her art and inner energy based on the teachings of Buddha, was excited, yet understandably nervous.

*"It was an eye-opener for me, getting to participate in the Biennale was itself a big occasion and getting to see lot of new works, meeting Renaissance artists, it was all very exciting,"* says Sangeeta.

Sangeeta's Peace Warrior garnered attention not just for its supreme skill and beauty but also for the fact that she was championing the cause of education through her work. Besides Sangeeta, there were 10 other Indian entries for the Biennale.

*"Everyone knows about Buddha but my theme for the Biennale was to spread the message of education. Education leads to peace and I believe it is the best answer to curb all the violence and other problems in the world scenario. I am grateful to Gitanjali (and the SGMF) for her support in taking my work to a Biennale as popular as Florence."*

The concept of peace resonated loudly with the visitors and other artists. Reputed photographer and special invitee to the Biennale, Rossano B. Maniscalchi, was so impressed with Sangeeta's work that he made it a point to personally usher in his friends and other visitors to view her work. "Every day, for 10 days, he would come in the morning and spend 10 minutes in front of the installation, and he would tell me not to disturb him," recalls Sangeeta with a hearty laugh.

Maniscalchi was at peace!

Florence Biennale is a major contemporary art exhibition and is regarded as an outstanding showcase of international contemporary art production. Every two years the Biennale enlivens the Medicean city with a programme of collateral events such as conferences, displays, performances, workshops and lectures. ■

Sangeeta Abhay at



## ASI and the importance of registration of antiquities

The Archaeological Survey of India invited **gallery g** to participate in a seminar on the importance of registration of antiquities. The event was the culmination of a 16-day campaign for registration of antiquities.

The discussion was presided over by Shivakant Bajpai, Deputy Superintendent of Bangalore Circle. The resource for the discussion was supported by Dr. Keshava, Superintendent Archaeology, Dr. CB Patil, Deputy Superintendent Archaeology, and Dr. Venkateshaiha, Regional Director.

The discussions revolved around the importance of antiques and heritage culture in our country. The advantages of registration were clearly explained: firstly, it would give the owner bona fide status, secondly, it would help in restriction of illegal movement of antiquities overseas. Thirdly, the discussion sought to allay the fears that the government would confiscate the art if people were to bring it in for registration. What came shining through was the fact that if the registration is done in a proper manner, it would only help establish ownership and authenticate the art. Further, it was made clear that there would be no restriction on movement of the art for exhibition or commercial transaction following the registration of the piece.

To make matters simple, ASI has listed out instructions to help private collectors and art dealers in the registration process.

1. Inform the registering officer by providing photos to establish the veracity of antique.
2. Fill in the prescribed form with three photographs of the antique.
3. Register the artefact.

Following this three-step process, the registration of the artifact would be complete in 15 days. The ASI plans to initiate a campaign at the district levels to spread awareness on the importance of registration of antiquities. ■



# Mercantile history fuels artistic preservation



Exterior of the Al Bait Sharjah

The humble and unassuming exteriors of the Al Bait Sharjah, hide within its sprawling 10,000 square metre interiors stories of the culturally rich past of the Al Midfa and Al Naboodah families. Part of an Emirati Conservation Project spearheaded by Sharjah Investment and Development Authority (Shurooq), the five-star resort is also home to a museum and a library that archives Sharjah's history and chronicles the family's deep-rooted mercantile connections to India.

The intriguing aspect in Al Bait is the hotel's very own museum which houses the decades-old belongings of the former residents. Hailing from the Omani Arab tribe known as Al Harth, the family settled in Sharjah in the early 20th century and played a very important role in pearl trading and greatly influenced the building of schools and libraries in the region.

Furthermore, Ibrahim Al Midfa, a prominent figure of the family, was widely recognized for pioneering journalism in the Emirates. The five Al Midfa brothers lived in the very space that has been restored into the luxury hotel and each section of the hotel is named after the siblings, whose descendants still live in the city today.

Inside the Al Midfa Heritage House, one of the seven sections of this hotel, is a museum that preserves and showcases artefacts, curios and collectibles that belonged to the Al Midfa family. What is interesting to see are the Indian carved doors and windows, artefacts typical to India and carpets that clearly chronicle the Al Midfa family's strong and deep connections with the country. Being a trading family they had long standing business relations with India and hence travelled back and forth (by sea), taking back with them each time a small memory of their Indian travels.

Much of the Emirates' mercantile history, as well as its modern commerce, was born in and around the area. Guests at Al Bait Sharjah can experience the traditional souks, including Souk Al Shanasiyah, one of the most ancient markets in the Gulf region. The library is a unique bibliophile's dream, with hundreds of antiquarian and contemporary books spanning a variety of subjects and interests (below). The thriving modern art scene is centred on the nearby Sharjah Art Museum and the many galleries of the Sharjah Art Foundation, home of the renowned Sharjah Biennial. ■



A solid teak wood door that was brought back from India by the Al Midfa family. Notice the elephant carving, the heavy brass knockers and brass embellishments similar to what is seen on Indian temple doors. The heavy wooden deadbolts are also of indigenous design borrowed from the same region.

## Biennale – Top 20

The New Year brings a packed calendar of biennials, triennials, and other art events taking place the world over. Here are our picks for the splashiest art biennials and triennials to include in your 2020 diary. From Taipei to New Orleans' fifth edition to mark the 15th anniversary of Hurricane Katrina, to Helsinki's inaugural and to our very own Kochi. (Source: artnet.com)

1. Dhaka Art Summit (Feb 7 - 15)
2. Glasgow International (April 24 - May 10)
3. Biennale of Sydney (March 14 - June 8)
4. Riga Biennial (May 16 - Oct 11)
5. Venice Biennale of Architecture (May 23 - Nov 11)
6. Sosnbeek, The Netherlands (June 5 - Sept 19)
7. Manifesta 13, Marseille (June 7 - Nov 11)
8. Helsinki Biennial (June 12 - Sept 27) Inaugural edition
9. 11th Berlin Biennale (June 13 - Sept 13)
10. Yokohama Triennale (July 3 - Oct 11)
11. Eva International, Ireland (July 3 - Oct 11)
12. Liverpool Biennial (July 11 - Oct 25)
13. Gwangju Biennale (Sept 4 - Nov 29)
14. Sao Paulo Biennial (Sept 5 - Dec 6)
15. Folkestone Triennial, UK (Sept 5 - Nov 8)
16. Casablanca International Biennale (Sept 24 - Nov 1)
17. Prospect.5, New Orleans (Oct 24, 2020 - Jan 24, 2021)
18. Taipei Biennial (Oct 24, 2020 - Feb 28, 2021)
19. Kochi Muziris Biennale (Dec 12, 2020 - April 10, 2021)
20. Bangkok Art Biennale (Oct 10, 2020 - Feb 21, 2021) ■



# ART TRENDS

## Sotheby's sold to French tycoon

The rapidly changing dynamics of the art world hit a peak in June 2019 when Sotheby's was acquired by French-Israeli collector Patrick Drahi. Sotheby's, the 275-year-old auction house, had until then sought to remain public, unlike its biggest competitor, Christie's. The \$3.7 billion deal saw Sotheby's being acquired by BidFair USA, a company wholly owned by Drahi. The 55-year-old Drahi, an art collector, is the founder and controlling shareholder of the multinational telecom and mass media company Altice, and his net worth is valued at \$9.1 billion, according to Forbes.



Sotheby's, the only major auction house to be publicly traded and the oldest company listed on the New York Stock Exchange, returns to private ownership after 31 years as a public company. Sotheby's rival Christie's is owned by luxury goods magnate Francois Pinault.

## Rabat shows the way

As museums and galleries recognize that there is a lot more work to be done to address the historic bias against female artists, the gender equality of biennials and other big group shows has also come under increasing scrutiny. The 2019 Whitney Biennial included 50 percent female-identifying artists. The main exhibition at the Venice Biennale? 44 percent. But one exhibition opted to take a more dramatic tack. Enter the all-female Rabat Biennale.



The inaugural edition of the biennial in the Moroccan capital launched on September 24, and its main show featured 63 artists and collectives, all of whom are women. The biennial curator, the French-Algerian philosopher, art historian, and museum director Abdelkader Damani, told artnet News that he decided to include only female artists in the central exhibition, titled "An Instant Before the World," in order to elevate voices that have been silenced in the conventional narrative of art history.

## Banksy's Chimp Parliament rocks the show

There is absolutely no doubt about what stole the thunder at Sotheby's Frieze week contemporary art auction in October — it was a bunch of monkeys.



Devolved Parliament, the massive painting by Banksy of chimpanzees sitting, chewing, scratching, and just generally being chimpanzees in Britain's House of Commons sold for a record £9.9 million (\$12.1 million). That total was nearly five times the high estimate of £2 million. It was also by far a record for a work by the street artist at auction.

Among the early bidders were Andy Warhol/Jean-Michel Basquiat/Hirst trader-collector Jose Mugrabi and Turkish banker Halit Cingillioglu, who first took the price beyond the low £1.5 million estimate. But they were soon submerged beneath a torrent of telephone bids — and one persistent bidder at the back of the room — until the Banksy fell to the phone manned by Emma Baker, Sotheby's head of sale.

## Rare work in a French kitchen!



Stories of a long-lost painting coming to light aren't new. Yet, as a new one surfaces every now and then it takes the breath away given the condition and situation it was found and the sheer luck that brings it into the art world.

A long-lost painting by a celebrated Italian artist that was found hanging in the kitchen of an elderly French woman has sold for €24m (\$26.6m) at auction, setting a new record. Titled, *The Mocking of Christ* by the pre-Renaissance artist Cimabue. It was discovered in September in northern France.

The painting was expected to fetch up to €6m at auction. For years, the painting hung above a hotplate in a kitchen in the city of Compiègne. The owner believed it to be an old religious icon with little value.

Source: [www.artnet.com](http://www.artnet.com) / [news.artnet.com](http://news.artnet.com). ■