

Voices

## India all around at Venice Biennale

*While India does not officially possess a pavilion to showcase its art and culture, the presence of India at Venice Biennale is multifarious.*



A mural by artist Maurizio Cattelan is seen outside Giudecca Women's Prison hosting the Holy See pavilion during the pre-opening of the 60th Venice Biennale art show, on April 18, 2024 in Venice. AFP

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The warm embrace of spring this year brings forth one of the biggest and most prestigious events in the global art scenario, the 60th edition of Venice Biennale. This year's theme 'Foreigners Everywhere' curated by Adriano Pedrosa, a South American curator, explores the concept of 'foreign-ness' through multiple approaches fostering dialogue and exchange.

While India does not officially possess a pavilion to showcase its art and culture, the presence of India at Venice Biennale is multifarious. From the entry-point of the Biennale venue to the promotional material, Indian art is incorporated in every form as a strong representation of the Global South.

The curator's presentation, 'Historical Nucleus' in Giardini della Biennale showcases some works by masters of Indian art such as SH Raza, FN Souza, Ramkumar, Bhupen Khakhar, and Jamini Roy, Amrita Sher-Gil and B Prabha exhibiting the substantial history of Indian modernism alongside international modernists. The contemporary section features a mural by Aravani Art Project, an art collective composed of cis and transgender women echoing the idea of inclusivity and identity.

As the city of Venice bustled with enthusiasm and art, many parallel exhibitions beyond the Biennale privately funded by renowned patrons of Indian art and other institutions captivated art enthusiasts. Two significant ones are The Rooted Nomad and Cosmic Garden. The Rooted Nomad, presented by Kiran Nadar Museum of Art (KNMA) provides a fresh perspective on the artistic oeuvre of renowned modern master, MF. Husain through an immersive experience-cum-exhibition. Thoughtfully curated by Roobina Karode under the patronage of Kiran Nadar, the exhibition preview was accompanied by the unveiling of the new KNMA logo.

Cosmic Garden curated by Maria Alicata and Paola Ugolini, presented by Karishma Swali celebrates the legacy of senior artists, Manu Parekh and Madhvi Parekh through their exploration of the pluralistic beauty of Indian heritage in a carefully curated series of works in collaboration with senior textile artists of the Chanakya School of Craft.

International exhibitions of Indian art often depend on private patronage; however, other avenues for artists to showcase exist. Personal Structures, presented by the European Cultural Centre, Italy is a biennial art exhibition featuring international artists across multiple venues.

Among several artists invited to exhibit, Indian artists like Paresh Maity, Sonal Ambani, Areez Katki made a mark. Other artists showcasing in international pavilions include Shilpa Gupta and Parul Thacker.

Even though India lacks a pavilion at the La Biennale di Venezia, the representation of Indian art at the Biennale, its collateral and parallel exhibitions positions the country as a powerhouse of creativity on the global map. The rich cultural and artistic diversity of India supported by powerful patronage on a platform for cultural exchange has definitely elevated India's position in the international arena.

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