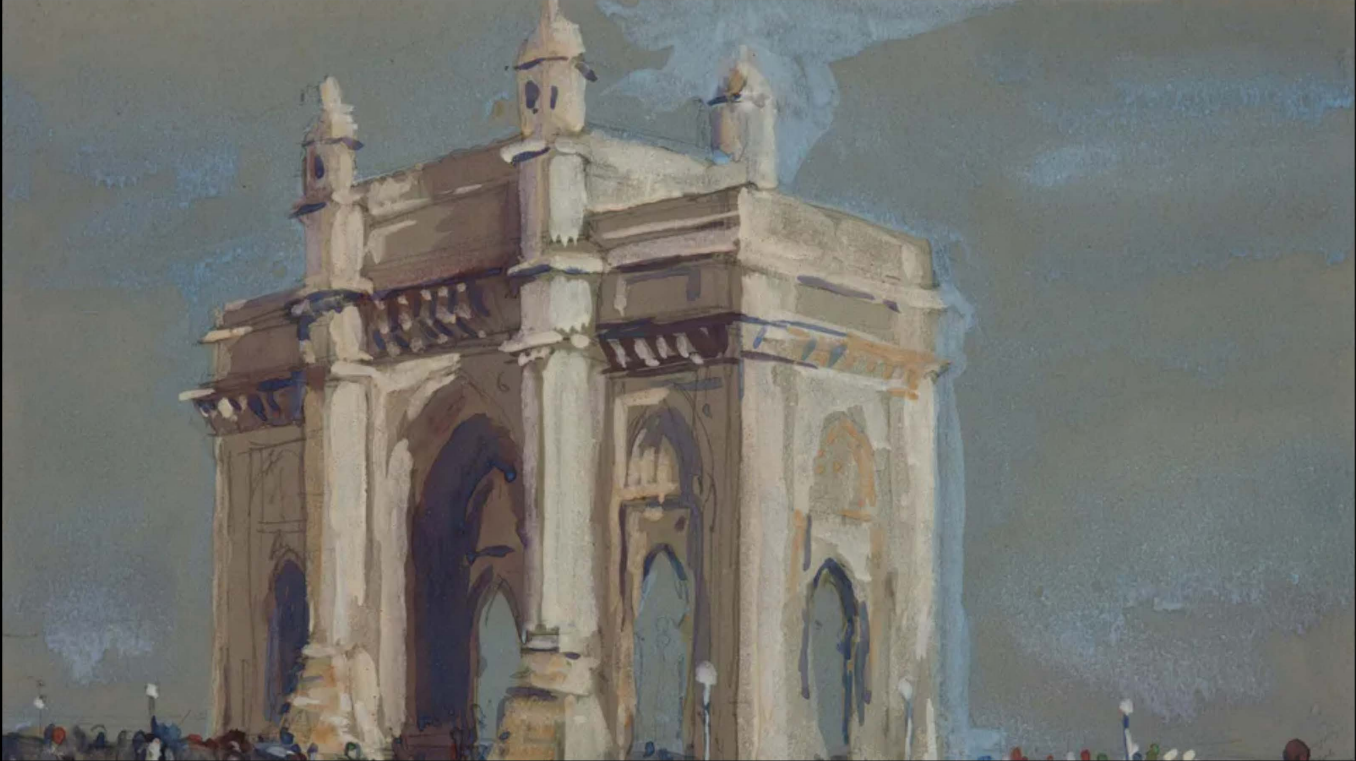


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JD Gondhalekar's Gateway of India, Courtesy: DAG

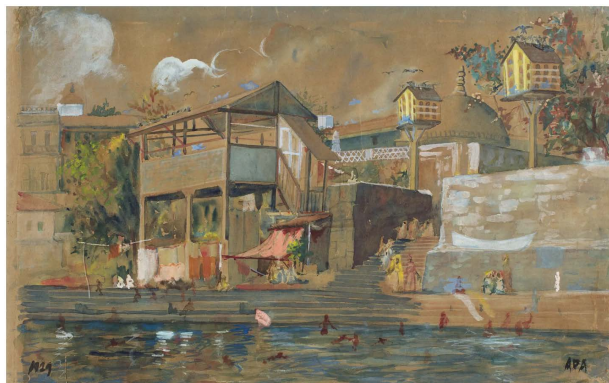
PEOPLE & CULTURE

Bombay of old and other shows to watch at the Mumbai Gallery Weekend

On from 9-12 January across Mumbai's top art galleries

BY ELA DAS
9 January 2025

"*Once Upon a Time in Bombay* is a love letter to the city painted by 19th-century artists for whom **Bombay** was a muse," explains Ashish Anand, CEO and MD at the DAG, of a show dedicated to the coastal city, which the gallery has specially curated for this year's Mumbai Gallery Weekend. Connecting the city's natural landscape—the sea and the beaches—with its grand colonial architecture, centres of pilgrimage, and its people and life on its streets, the selected works depict its enduring spirit with a sense of nostalgia.



UNTITLED (BANGANGA) by K.H. Ara DAG

Serving as a window into Bombay's landscapes and lifestyles, the **exhibition** is a prelude to a larger upcoming show. Divided into three thematic sections, 'By the Sea' investigates the quiet seafront of villages and fishermen's lives; 'Sacred and Storied' includes works that explore the city's striking colonial architecture as well as Indian artists' (such as NR Sardesai and KH Ara) attempts to reclaim the Indian landscape through expressive watercolours of temple and pilgrimage sites; and 'Cityscapes in Time' frames familiar neighbourhoods through the lens of unfamiliarity.

To 'Tadoba with love



While NR Sardesai's rustic portrayal of **Cuffe Parade** in *Where Now Stand the Gagalbhoj Baths* depicts a long-lost version of the city, Baburao Sadwelkar's *Excavation in the Mazgaon Area* catches Bombay on the cusp of modernity, hinting at a metropolis forever in flux. Wandering through the 'By the Sea' section, one finds two unnamed works that chronicle an 1860s *View of Bombay* showcasing the quiet air of a burgeoning port in Fort, and *Malabar Hill by Night*, painted nearly a century later, revealing a vibrant, illuminated skyline. Taken together, these pieces narrate the gradual shift from a laid-back **coastal** enclave to the bustling, cosmopolitan hub that we recognise today.



AS Tendulkar's Institute of Science ■AG

As you move through the show, keep an eye out for KH Ara's masterpiece, painted when he was only 15—a watercolour of Banganga. Nearby, AS Tendulkar's *Institute of Science* playfully references a building that now houses the National Gallery of Modern Art; while Pestonji Bomanji's *untitled* oil painting of cows at Dhobi Talao provides a lens into a bustling part of a city we know of today. A trove of watercolours by Baburao Sadwelkar capture countless vistas of then Bombay; and MS Joshi's *Ganpati Procession* and *Ganesb Visarjan Festival* glow with the same festive energy that enlivens today's **celebrations**. The *pièce de résistance* of the show, however, is a 1923 lithograph titled *Map of the Island of Bombay*, which narrates the coastal city's land reclamation story, telling us more about how localities were shaped or have changed over time.

Anand describes how the upcoming expanded **exhibition** will go on to include more artists and archival material such as maps, literature, lithographs, postcards, photographs, catalogues, books, and "anything and everything that adds weightage to the experience of what life was actually like once upon a time in Bombay across two to three centuries. It will be a literal visualisation of the making and shaping of the city, and will greatly contribute to understanding the people and landscapes of India's centre of finance and entertainment, and the many transformations that continue to define it today."

GALLERY HOP ACROSS MUMBAI

In its largest coordinated art event, galleries across the city will open with new shows for **Mumbai** Gallery Weekend (MGW) this week, along with immersive walkthroughs and talks to engage everyone from art rookies and culture vultures to seasoned collectors. Here's a list of shows we have our eye on this year:

One for the Masters



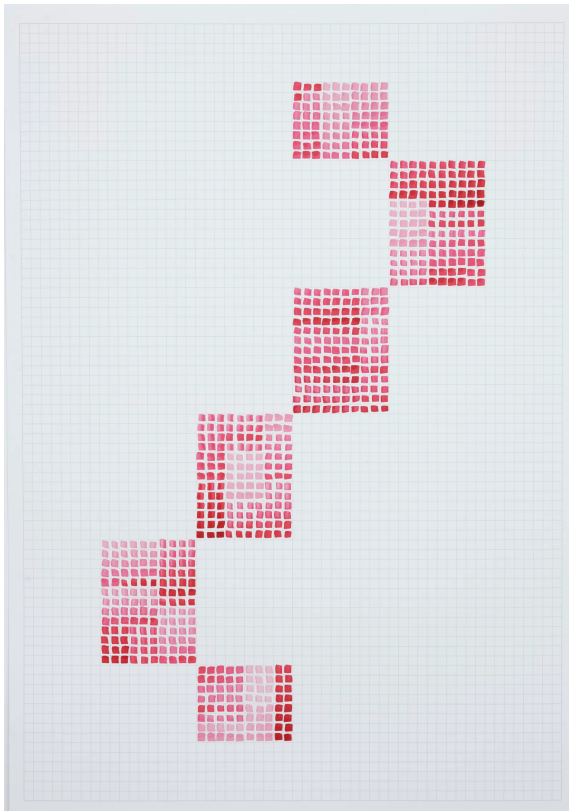
Nilambari by Jayasri Burman Art Musings

Where: Art Musings, Colaba

To mark 25 years in the business, Art Musings is showcasing a group exhibition titled *Resonance* with an ensemble of artists they've represented through their remarkable journey. "My mum and aunt opened the gallery in 1999, and I joined two years later in 2001," recalls the gallery's director, Sangeeta Raghavan. "What's truly remarkable is how we're still representing all the artists and masters we've shared time and space with over these decades."

Not confined to a particular curation or theme, each artist has chosen a work to display in the show, "to define their body of work and career. Artists have vibrant personalities and stories, and I wanted them to create their own narrative here because they're the ones who've encouraged us to continue running as a gallery," shares Raghavan. "We had three godfathers—Husain, Raza and Souza—and a godmother, Anjolie, who always backed us and encouraged us. We were so lucky to stand on their shoulders . and these walls echo the memories we've shared with them."

A window to Istanbul



Where: *Jhaveri Contemporary, Calaba*

Showcasing her work in **Mumbai** after six years, London-based visual artist Rana Begum brings a remarkable solo exhibition with a series of wall-based sculptures and watercolours that epitomize her signature exploration of light, colour and form. "I had been part of a lot of big shows, very intense shows, over the past few years, and felt like I was constantly striving for moments of calm, contemplation and reflection in my work. These three bodies of work echo that."

Created during a residency in **Istanbul** to highlight the city's dying industries, Begum recalls living in a hotel with sweeping views of its architecture and landscape. "When I'd look out the window, I'd see the minarets shimmering under the shifting daylight, which you'll now see depicted in the matte metallic tones of my work." While Begum's work is always static, it's activated by the viewer moving around it and its space. "These are more subtle pieces of work, but still require the viewer to bring it alive with sight."

Begum also collaborated with metal-spinning craftspeople to create moulds that, once mounted, evolve into shape-shifting compositions. As natural light changes through the day, these works come alive, casting elongated shadows and shifting hues that alter their presence within the space. "One of the **workshops** I visited was a quiet and deep space in a basement. It had a window which was lined with shelves of metal mugs holding dyes. The surface of the wall was covered in dyes and I could see the entire city through it, and immediately wanted to recreate Istanbul this way," she shares.

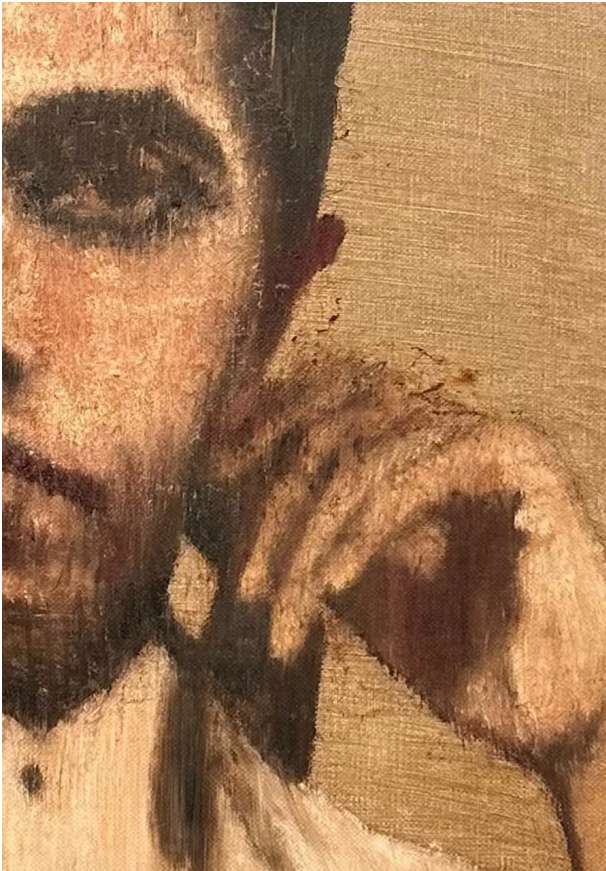
Art tours at the Mumbai Gallery Weekend

Where: *Across the city*

Walking tour group Art & Wonderment⁺ has helped deepen art conversations in Mumbai for over a decade through curated walks, behind-the-scenes tours, and engaging virtual sessions. For this year's MGW, they'll be hosting immersive day-long walks across the event's three days.

Covering a slew of galleries, with lunch and coffee breaks in between, their tours are the perfect way to join a gallery hop with like-minded folk or learn more about art in an approachable, story-telling way. Visit Mumbai Gallery Association's [Instagram](#) for a full schedule.

When music united us all



By **Atul Dodiya** | Chemould Prescott Road

Where: *Chemould Prescott Road, Fort*

Atul Dodiya's 'Radio Ceylon Paintings: Vol. I' pays homage to the golden era of Hindi film music from the 1940s to '60s, recalling the songs he grew up listening to on a transistor radio. Through portraits of icons like Mohammed Rafi, Suraiya, Shamshad Begum, and Talat Mahmood, Dodiya underscores the crucial contribution of Muslim artists during a time when secularism was visibly at work. By revisiting this sense of communal warmth, he seeks to remind viewers of an India in which music transcended differences and united people.

Rooted in reflection

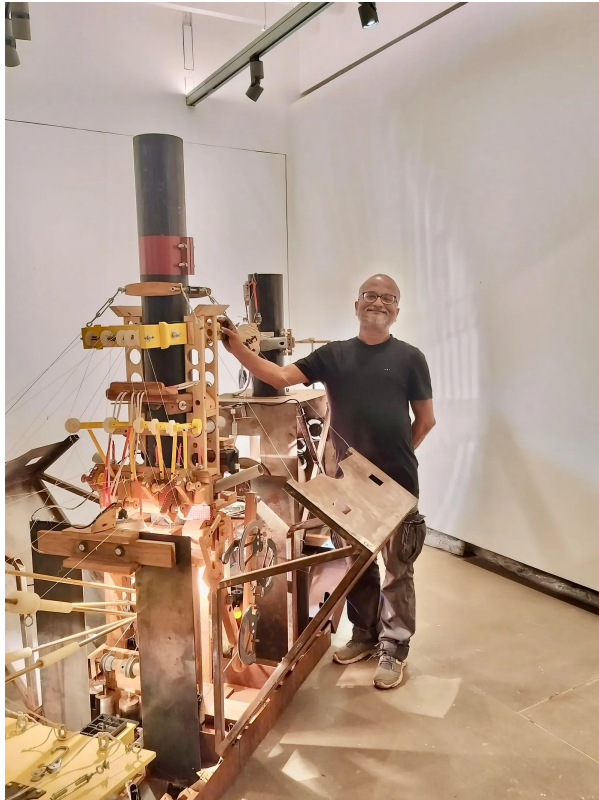


Pristine 3, 2024 by Soghra Khurasani TARQ

Where: TARQ, Fort

Artist and printmaker Soghra Khurasani's solo exhibition titled *Grounded* features a body of prints that explore the relationship between the self and nature. Her signature woodcut prints feature striking lines and strokes applied at varying frequencies—offering subtle details of nature, wild shrubs, uprooted fields, and fresh green grass—to reflect on the time she's spent in her home and studio in the tranquil outskirts of Vadodara.

On travel and solitude



Where: Chatterjee & Lal, Colaba

Contemporary artist Kausik Mukhopadhyay returns after nearly eight years with *I Want to Travel Blind*. Inspired by his experiences during the pandemic, the large-scale installation focuses on themes of travel and solitude. Featuring two ships, the artwork reflects a deep-seated yearning to be elsewhere, and his personal journey during a time of profound loss.

Madras magic



By Paul Beumer Artisans', Kala Ghoda

Where: Artisans', Kala Ghoda

In his first solo exhibition in India, Dutch artist Paul Beumer teams up with lungi weavers from Karūr, Tamil Nadu to reinterpret the centuries-old craft of Madras Checks. Formally trained in painting, he likens **textile-making** to the illusions of form and colour he once pursued on canvas. The show titled *Play Becomes Joy, Joy Becomes Work, Work Becomes Play*—after a quote from Swiss painter and designer, Johannes Itten—merges ancient weaving techniques with modern art's expressive language, pushing the boundaries of tradition to find magic within constraint.

A reflection on digital overload



Hand embroidery on textile by Viraj Khanna The Art Gallery

Where: Tao Art Gallery, Worli

In *Brain Rot*—aply named after the Oxford Word of the Year 2024—artist Viraj Khanna examines our growing dependence on **social media**. Showcasing mobiles with screen-time displays and textiles cleverly embroidered to resemble paintings, the exhibit underscores the disconnect between curated online images and reality. Despite acknowledging how excessive tech use impacts his mental health, Khanna mirrors the collective struggle of continuing to scroll.

Tracing inner echoes



Untitled #3 Akara Contemporary

Where: Akara Contemporary, Colaba

Sathi Guin's latest works in a show titled *Of Silence and White Noise* include paintings and **sculptures** that transform dots and lines into portals for contemplation. Here, fluid strokes juxtapose anchored forms, capturing the push and pull of everyday anxieties and silences. By repurposing materials—from iron grills to delicate porcelain—she unites rugged hardness

with delicate vulnerability, inviting us to peer beyond the surface and discover a quiet resonance in the undefined.

Clay and community



Sandeep Manchekar's Hum Kumhaar installation Nine Fish Art Gallery

Where: [Nine Fish Art Gallery, Byculla](#)

In '[Matki Kabe Kumhaar Se \(The Dialogue\)](#)', ceramicist Sandeep Manchekar bridges tradition and modernity through six distinct sections. His monumental installation, *Hum Kumhaar*, features ten life-size pots representing different potter communities, each placed on a bullock cart to evoke ancient civilizations and highlight the contemporary relevance of caste in India. By experimenting with diverse clay bodies, Manchekar embraces the unpredictable results of firing, turning variability into a source of infinite creative possibilities.

Mumbai Gallery Weekend will take place across art galleries in Mumbai from January 10 to 12, from noon to 8pm.