

# THE TIMES OF INDIA

## Celebrating South Asia in London

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**Uma Nair**

Uma Nair has been writing for the past 36 years on art and culture. She has written as critic for Times of India and Economic Times. She believes that art is a progressive sojo ...  
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*Hybridity and Belonging in Contemporary Art* brings together artists from and inspired by Asia whose work explores hybridity, displacement, nostalgia, and the refusal to be confined by a singular identity. Crossing cultural and national boundaries, the artists in this suite at Sundaram Tagore's new space in London, synthesise Eastern and Western visual languages, forms, techniques, and philosophies.



By incorporating authentic elements from their own cultures, each adds richness and complexity to the contemporary canon. *Hybridity and Belonging in Contemporary Art* reflects Sundaram Tagore Gallery's cross-cultural ethos and its longstanding commitment to artists operating across geographies and lived experiences.

## Geometry based abstraction

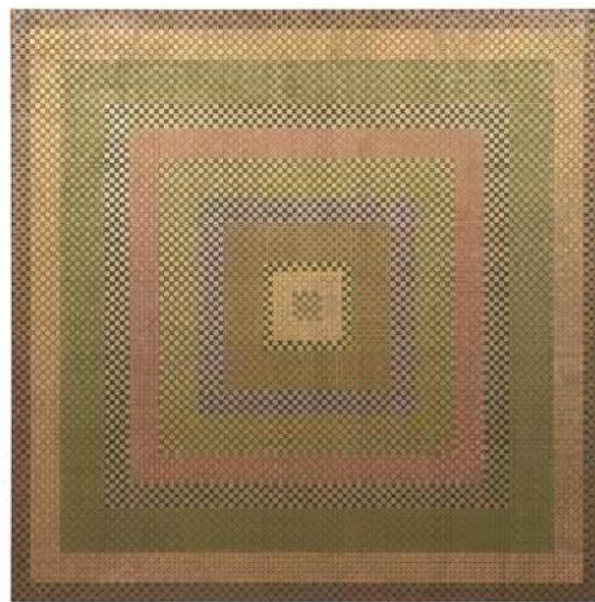
Two artists deal with geometric based abstraction. The abstract and Neo Tantra Guru Sohan Qadri and the young Trishla Jain who is also a poet and author.



Sohan Qadri

Qadri's two works of ink on dye series is also distinguished by the carefully recorded inscriptions of technical details on the dyed paper he used. Aasha and Agni are a pair of scarlet-coded creations that at once reflect his deep meditative practices and his love for seeing infinite depths of grace and gravitas within the strict rumination of geometry. For Qadri his meditation practice brought him into geometry being a pathway to grace, and proportions reflected a divine ordering in which colours belonged to the inner voice.

His meticulous practice of folding and piercing both tell us of his precious preference for perfection in the mechanics of the making of the painting, along with the reductively systematic application of contours within and without, with the dipping of the dye. We are reminded of the truth of his own practice as a yoga Guru and his ability to imbue into his works the beauty and the brilliance of the aura of the rhythm of the truly transcendental.



## Trishla Jain

In an intricately designed geometrically based abstraction Trishla Jain creates a series of superimposed squares and recalls the great Guru Josef Albers historical *Homage to the Square*: series.

She brings it forward to contemporary character with little textural terrain in a disarmingly sombre work, composed of colour applied with different tools.

Her ability to create optical effects with subtle, shimmering colour contrasts as well as play with the illusion of receding and advancing feels, creates its own visual dynamics. Not only does she step into the deeper intensities of vision she also weaves into her square a universal echo of the beauty of symbolism and a philosophy rooted in the power of chants and mantras.



Neha Vedpathak

An abstractionist of depth and ingenuity is Neha vedpathak who explores the synergy of handmade Japanese paper, to focus on her inventive , artistic investigations.

Her use of a rigorous self-developed technique, which she refers to as “plucking,” creates a frame that melds the process of discipline and contemplative vision of spiritual repetition like a mantra or a chant. Vedpathak spends hours separating the paper’s fibers with a tiny pushpin and this act is akin to a spiritual practice.

The resulting works resemble swaths of lace fabric, which she paints and sews into striking abstract compositions. Part painting, part collage, Vedpathak’s tensile and , tactile constructions float before our eyes, as they cast intricate shadows on the wall. Her ability to create depth with nuanced shifts of colour and texture by leaving small areas of the composition unplucked, plays off the subtle transparency of the lace-effect.



Tayeba Lipi

Tayeba Lipi's sculpture *The Mirror*, 2017 is one of her famous razor blade works in which two female figures face each other, Lipi says:

"When I see things through my heart, when I have a conversation with another woman or when I listen to someone's stories, I sometimes find the reflection of my own mind in that mind. We are as different as we live our lives, but we always find some similar issues or stories that are never spoken out ever."

This sentiment succinctly captures the true nature of Lipi's art and philosophy.

Lipi first appeared on the global stage in 2011 as the commissioner for the first Bangladeshi pavilion at the 54th Venice Biennale. Lipi, a charming sculptor and feminist creates politically charged work that addresses social contradictions and asks questions. This sculpture is an expression that reflects the driving force of her practice, and also signals the need for continuous constructive conversations that reveal truths and discover common ground between art lovers all over the world.



### Anila Quayyum

On a slim wall near the door are a trio of works by the high priestess of composition Anila Quayyum.

The brilliant Quayyum just finished a stirring show at Singapore and her work in this exhibition is a symphony in understanding the ripples that form the ecological cycle and the place of animals and birds on the planet. Her materials are born of her intuitive reasoning and balance of harmony.



She has been inspired by the subversive embroidered paintings of Egyptian artist Ghada Amer, hand sewn story quilts by African-American artist Faith Ringgold, and multimedia installations created using textile techniques by American artists Anne Wilson and Ann Hamilton. Agha has henceforth created worlds that are authentic to her life experiences while also conveying universal truths.

*Whales in the Clouds*, a stellar study is made of mixed media (metallic sewing, hand-cut collage on paper, acrylic paint, encased in resin on gesso panel.) The fascinating *I am an Island – Purple*, 2025, is a medley of mixed media (hand-cut collaged paper on paper, acrylic paint, sewing, resin-covered gesso panel). Intriguing however is *Big Birds Conference*, 2025, a magical mixed media work of (hand-cut collaged paper on paper, acrylic paint, sewing, resin-covered gesso panel.) These three stirring works create an immersive experience for all viewers in London.