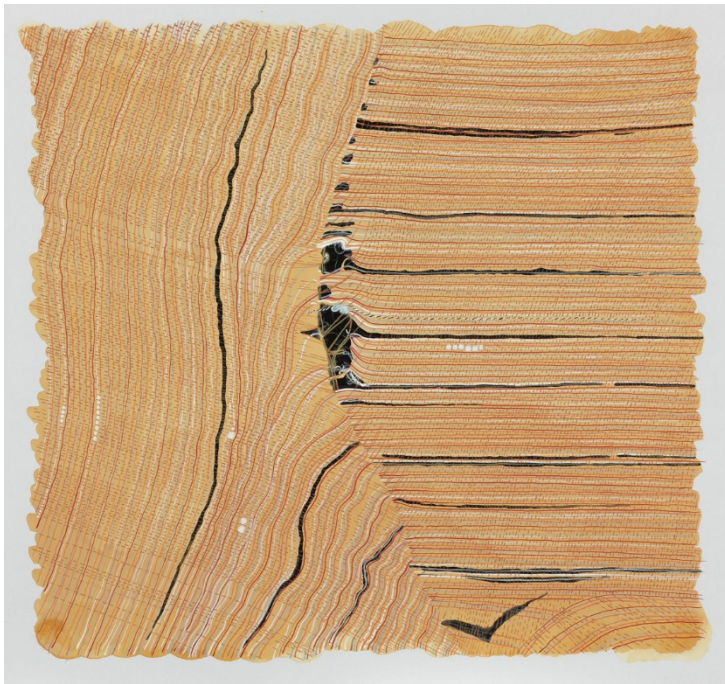


# BIG ART

The art, artists and everything in between.

AUGUST 7, 2017 · BY SHALMALI SHETTY

## SHIFTING REALITIES



Rubaba Haider

*The stitch is lost, unless the thread be knotted IV*

Anant Art presents nine artists from India and Pakistan who take us through a journey of shifting realities as they express them from their point of view. Each speaks from an experience of having lived in a parallel reality of the macro and microcosmic, encountering fantasies, dreams, and apparitions. While the body is forced to battle through a multitude of conditions, the mind tends to blur the thin line between reality and the surreal. The tenses collide to redefine the prolonged negotiations one has been making to come to terms with the swinging pendulum that bridges many realities.



Abhishek Narayan Verma  
*Dysfunctional Family Reunion*

Artist Abhishek Narayan Verma (New Delhi) draws from his experiences of growing up in a society that injects conditionality into the everyday development of an individual. His story of knowing one reality but having discovered so many more, manifests in his visual narratives that are accentuated pictorially with sharp contrasts. His characters embody in their diverse roles, a reality and a mythology, the political and the social, the existential and the individual – each being exposed to their insecurities. Sometimes he is the nucleus of these satirized themes, the figurehead of these dysfunctionalities, or a representative of his own dilemmas. “These settings reflect our mental state. It becomes an investigative process through a selection of ‘what if’s’, building the arrangements in reaction to my own image-making,” he says.

Aisha Abid Hussain (Lahore, Pakistan) shuttles between traditional and contemporary mediums to re-examine histories and archives, and retrace stories yet to be told. The research-based work excavates untold “personal and worldly” histories. Her diary entries are works of art in themselves, where image and text of the little experiences of her everyday are packed into claustrophobic spaces, employing her training in the miniature tradition. These virus-like strings of textual inscriptions remind her of the minute particles of frass.



Aisha Abid Hussain  
*A Fine Balance between Love and Despair Series III*

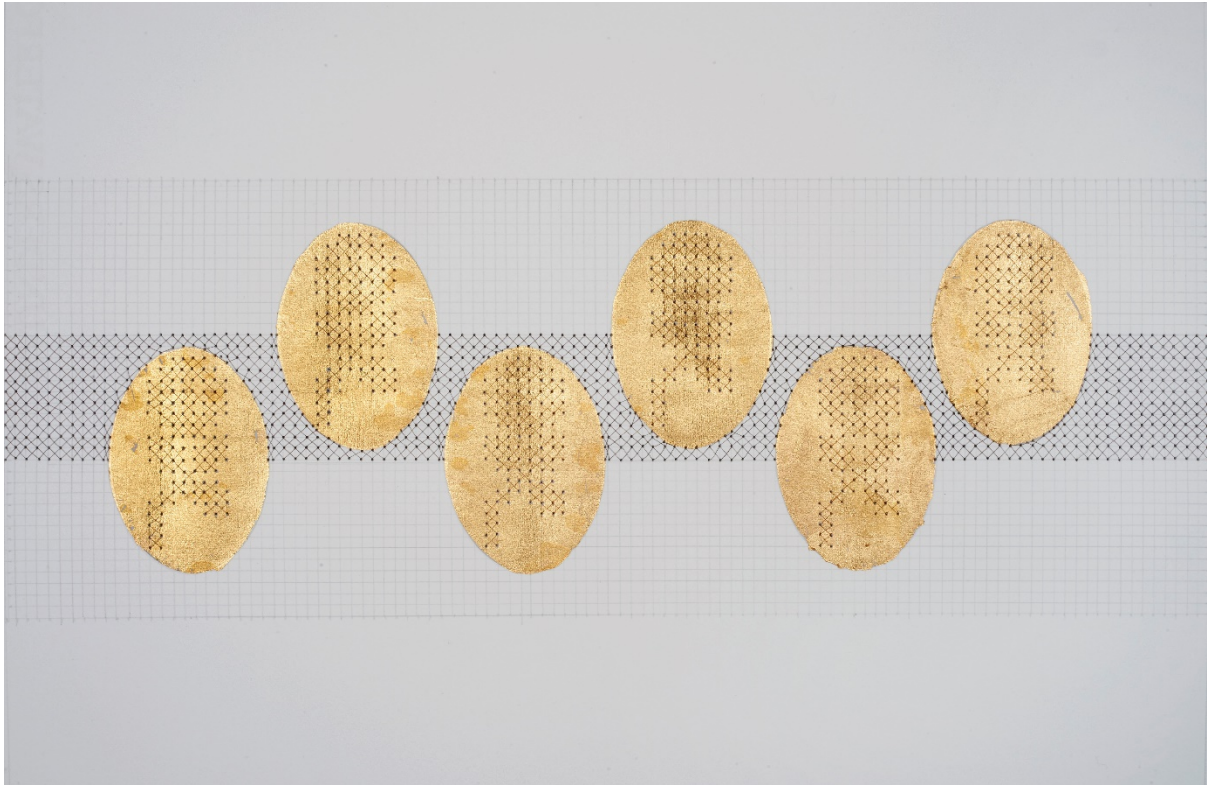
Digbijayee Khatua (Orissa), working with a miniature style using watercolours on sun-board, weaves into play traditional modes of painting with the contemporary. Likewise, he talks about a history that culminates in the present and which moves into a future: his frame is designed to accommodate this unending progress in time. The rural and the urban collide, civilizations encounter new structures and change is inevitable. His paintings are a collage of these transitions and instances, separated between registers, frames, recesses and raised formats, to speak of a layering of simultaneities, overlaps and processes.

Loknath Pradhan (Orissa) superimposes dreams and imaginations onto reality, spontaneously prompting a ‘surreality’. With a printmaking background, the end-product of his process now is not a print but the engraved wood itself. He imagines an urban space using flat wood panels in fixed registers to create perspective. Crowded with bands of skyscrapers, he talks of the calamities of the natural and the synthetic, by juxtaposing incongruous bodies of the natural ornamental world eclipsed by the monotonous urban. The chronic dispute is only destabilizing the existence of one another.

Malleshi HV (Karnataka) hails from a town close to Bellary that has been undergoing environmental crisis due to the excessive and unjust use of mines. The unpreventable reaction and the movement of polluted air are only spreading diseases and making livelihood more difficult in these regions. Futuristic in style, but occurring in present times, geometric planes delineate machines and structures that have taken over the organic. His primary use of lead/ graphite and the minimal use of colours speaks of the unbalanced binaries of a progressing civilization and a depleting nature/ agriculture. His works foreground the crass situation in which the nightmarish experiences of the victimized are restrained beneath the deep rumbling of factories.

Rehana Mangi (Larkana, Pakistan) extends her unusual habit of collecting fallen hair into art. She inherited the superstition from her grandmother, that dead and useless hair should be collected and disposed of discreetly, to avoid black magic.

However, she re-contextualizes it in her unique miniature format, lending it a new meaning and purpose. Her style of painting and use of her delicate collection of hair on *wasli* paper demands a meticulous plane with grids and punched holes, which is then patterned across with cross-stitched and handcrafted designs that are usually found as decorative motifs on household linen. Through these 'paintings' the memories of her childhood find new articulation.



Rehana Mangi  
*Heart Beat*

Belonging to the Hazara tribe of Quetta, Pakistan, Rubaba Haider has been raised in a family firmly rooted in customary social norms. In her works she explores microcosmic gender issues, social conventions, personal and community conflicts, feelings, wounds and relationships. Fabrics, tears, knots and mends, through the very process of weaving and sewing with threads and needles speak of these diverse affairs affecting the body in its relationships. Her hyper-realistic paintings elucidate and symbolize the sentiments attached to weaving, the primary source of income of the Hazara women.

Sumana Som (West Bengal) sees the human body as a metaphor for a natural/ organic landscape. In turn she views cloth, thread and the act of stitching as representing the female body encompassing a multitude of private emotions. She bases her works on her personal experiences, observations and reactions that are in constant communication with her unconscious, her surroundings, mankind and science. Her works focus on the prominence and significance of this autonomous figure and its dependents, dwelling in varying topographies.

Tanmay Santra (Hyderabad) stills time in his paintings, which embody a calm that disguises the inevitable and aggressive realities lying beneath the desolate plains. His thought-provoking observations comment on a fast-growing cityscape with its many facets, contradicting the sensibilities of a home. His watercolours hint at a post-apocalyptic landscape where all that remains of this world is scattered and tarnished. The otherwise placid vastness acknowledged only by the veracity of the shadows injects a sense of a desperate anguish in the onlooker.

Images: ©Anant Art

**Where:** Anant Art at Shridharani Gallery, New Delhi

**When:** On view from 2<sup>nd</sup> August to 10<sup>th</sup> August 2017