
PRESS RELEASE

Witness and Evidence : deliberations on ruins by Sajid Wajid Shaikh and Jofre Oliveras

- *Witness and Evidence* opens at Gallery XXL on May 19, 2024
- Presenting the works of Indian artist Sajid Wajid Shaikh and Spanish artist Jofre Oliveras
- On display will be an array of mixed media artworks exhibited as fragmented ruins

Gallery XXL is pleased to announce the opening of *Witness and Evidence : deliberations on ruins by Sajid Wajid Shaikh and Jofre Oliveras* on May 18, 2024 at 21, Arsiwala Building, Wodehouse Road, Colaba, Mumbai.

Presenting the works of Indian artist Sajid Wajid Shaikh and Spanish artist Jofre Oliveras, the two will use the gallery as a site to extend on an investigation of the ruins that are around us, and the ruins that are far away but continue to surround us.

What is the responsibility of artists, culture workers, and curators to create a space-time for presenting the madness that comes from constant upheaval? Do aesthetics play any role in articulating the here and now?

Witness and Evidence offers a space for a gathering to deliberate upon confusions that emerge from witnessing ruins, to explore historical losses that seek a preservation, and futures that are getting built for generations to come. Through diverse mediums and materials, the artworks transform accumulated ruins in spaces outside as well as within ourselves into varied tangibilities and forms, highlighting the fragmentation of multiple realities that take shape in times of conflicts.

The exhibition will premier Sajid Wajid Shaikh's sculptures made of marble and concrete, and the *Pie Pie* series that evoke resilience in materialities. Along with this, Shaikh's recent observational drawings and objects he has collected over time will invite contemplation on the idea of home, and how objects embody one's existence and memories in the realities of conflict.

In relation to this will be Jofre Oliveras' works whose imagination of digital objects takes physical forms with traditional materials, transporting the viewer to the ruins we might encounter in future. The *Digital Ruins* series is a reinterpretation of classical landscape paintings reflecting on the accumulation of information which has led to the creation of immense outdated archives that can be seen as digital ruins of the digital era. Oliveras' canvases will feature classical Greek and Roman busts which serve as a metaphor for the complexities of the present world, where the remnants of the past are interwoven with the realities of the present.

The exhibition will be on view until June 29, 2024 and the weekly programming calendar will be posted on Gallery XXL's instagram page.

Address

21, Arsiwala Mansion,
First Floor, Wodehouse Road,
Colaba, Mumbai – 400005

Website

www.galleryxxl.com

Contact

info@galleryxxl.com
+91 9324857354

Artist Bios

Sajid Wajid Shaikh

Sajid Wajid Shaikh (b.1989) a multidisciplinary artist currently living and working in Mumbai, India.

Guided by a set of principles rooted in organic intuition, his practice takes on diverse forms, exploring a wide range of themes and mediums. Central to his practice is drawing, which he considers a source of cathartic and sensory responses to his surroundings. These unfiltered explorations draw inspiration from the concept of psychic automatism, tapping into the inner reflections of the subconscious. The resulting artworks often embrace abstract, distorted, and occasionally grotesque forms.

Recently, his practice has probed into political violence and the systems of power that wage war on bodies. With a keen interest in the interconnectedness of violence and defacement, I examine the notions of deconstruction and mutation of identity through the body, considering it not just as a physical form but as a dynamic locus of thought and conflict.

The defacement portrayed in his work takes on a grotesque representation, intentionally disconcerting and jarring to behold. This deliberate discomfort serves a dual purpose, eliciting both a poignant response and disgust. By challenging the ideas of humanity and empathy, the works expose the swiftly changing political landscape of India and its profound impact on the status quo.

With a practice in artmaking that spans a decade, his works have been shown at numerous exhibitions and public art projects where he has exhibited sculptures, conceptualized site specific installations as well as screened films he directed under his independent film production entity, Banal Films.

Most recently his works were exhibited at India Art Fair, 2024; Godrej Conscious Collective Program, 2023; *Ephemeroptera: Time After Time* at Tarq x Gallery XXL, 2023; *OUTSIDERS* at Gallery XXL, 2023; Mumbai Urban Art Festival, 2022; *Future Proche* at APRE Art House x The Upside Space, 2022; Masala Movement on Indernet, 2021; *Tasawwur* at Art + Charlie, 2020; *LUX* at Method Art Space, 2019; and at the Kona Art Project in 2019. Between 2019 and 2020, Shaikh was the recipient of two residencies, the Facebook Artist in Residency Program and at the Harkat Lab, supported by the Gujral Foundation.

Jofre Oliveras

Jofre Oliveras (b.1989) is an artist from Girona, Spain currently based between Spain and India.

With an academic background in philosophy, communication, and journalism, Oliveras took up a study in language which influenced his career to use art and writing as tools for communication focusing on the

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social environment.

The artist's work is guided by classical expressions rooted in Mediterranean culture, apparent in his use of diverse materials and creative processes maintaining a connection to the landscape he grew up around. His process embodies a commitment to the present, viewing the study and exploration of the planet as a creative opportunity. Curious about human experiences, Oliveras' works are a rediscovery of the self steered through social interactions.

Working primarily in the public, Oliveras uses his work as a tool to engage with communities and address issues in their cultural contexts. As a researcher, explorer, and landscaper, his practice extends beyond geographies and categories.

Excelling as a muralist, his community-based and self-sufficient lifestyle led him to participate in Konvent, a multidisciplinary arts center that offers cultural mediation via artistic creation and dissemination. Active since 2013, Oliveras has worked across countries on projects such as Nuart Aberdeen (UK), Underline Project (Lebanon and Jordan), WOOL (Portugal), Art Basel Miami (USA), Memorie Urbane (Italy), Nuart (Norway), Morocco, France, and India.

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About the Gallery

Established in 2023, Gallery XXL is an urban contemporary art gallery based in Mumbai, India. The gallery represents and showcases a roster of Indian and international artists whose practices are rooted in a variety of disciplines that broaden the understanding of established categories and catalyze diverse exchanges through processual exhibitions, treating the gallery as a fluid institution which presents dynamic negotiations to the idea of a 'white cube.'

With its name echoing Jean-Michel Basquiat's city walk from Downtown 81 (Dir. Edo Bertoglio,) when he described his medium as "extra large," Gallery XXL extends a desire for imaginations to be XXL, an abbreviation for 'extra, extra, large' and brings it to the city of Mumbai in order to examine the ambitious scale of visuals and conversations prevalent in urban art.

Arjun Bahl, Giulia Ambrogi, Thanish Thomas and Hanif Kureshi, the founders of St+Art India Foundation joined hands with Joe Cyril (Director, Gallery XXL) to start the space-time for Gallery XXL. Founded in 2014, St+Art India has been supporting street art in the country through public art projects. With the experience of creating artistic interventions in public as well as private spaces coalescing in order to widen engagement with urban art, aesthetics and culture work in the Indian context, St+art extends its vision to facilitate institutional representation for urban contemporary artists through exhibitions at the newly founded Gallery XXL.

Team

Giulia Ambrogi, Hanif Kureshi, Arjun Bahl, Thanish Thomas, Joe Cyril, Vidur Sethi, Sarah Malik, Faraz Khan, Akhil Kattamanchil, Guru Pednekar, Gaurav Kaushik, Ashu Khanna, and Babu Gundanoor.

Annexures

The attached drive link consists of the artist's profile images, artwork captions, high resolution images of the artworks and the invite. For any more information, please contact sarah@galleryxxl.com.

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