



PRESS RELEASE

Scratches on City Maps

Presenting the works of AIKO, Al-Qawi Nanavati, Bhuwal Prasad, DO, Kapil Jangid, liactuallee, Marina Zumi, Sabiha Dohadwala, Sowat and ZERO

Graffiti - mid 19th century: from Italian (plural), from graffio 'a scratch'

Urban - early 17th century: from Latin urbanus, from urbs, urb- 'city'

Gallery XXL presents ***Scratches on City Maps***, at **Art Mumbai** scheduled from **November 14 - 17, 2024** where XXL will display the works of **ten Indian and International artists at Booth 36**.

Scratches on City Maps uncovers the explorations envisaged by select artists to embrace liberation within the expanse of public spaces, extending it further in enclosed setups such as studios, galleries and fairs to break open, negotiate and even puncture norms that entail the institution of art.

From visualization of language and calligraffiti to the image of a small furry mammal carrying a spray can with a heart; from abstract forms in reflective mediums to canvases that present skylines interrupted by pillars and columns that are fragmenting, disintegrating, often turning into ephemeral structures as well as sculptures that reimagine the personal yearning for a desired home – the curation attempts to invoke reflections on imprinted patterns and stories that are not oppressed by gravity.

As works presented by artists based in Paris, New York City, Berlin, Mumbai, New Delhi and Baroda invoke the viewers to walk with artists, who over here are flaneurs across borders with practices spanning over 10 years, the display open portals to and through the streets in order to look deeper into the exercise of mark making – critically reinvented by using urban art techniques. Acute observers of streets and cities, these marks left behind by the artists pave the way for futures that account for diverse intersectional narratives and represent the desire to reimagine the city's landscape with gestures of intrepid expressions that are at times spontaneous, at other times calculated, guerilla in their fervor and act, and in that radical.

Artist Bios

AIKO

AIKO was born and raised in Tokyo before she moved to New York City in the mid-90s. Creating art since a young age, her art career in NYC began when she started working for Takashi Murakami. AIKO continued to practice her own art and after leaving Murakami's studio, she pursued an MFA in Media Studies from the New School University. Before 2006, she was one of the members of the artist collective FAILE, after which she established herself as an independent artist.

Through her work, AIKO interprets the dynamics of sex work, eroticism, and female empowerment, which is equally inspired by Western red-light districts and Japanese shunga, a 16th-century erotic art form. Upon moving to the US, her visual language transformed into a mixed media style, inspired by graffiti, advertisements, Pop Art as well as traditional Japanese aesthetics. She is an acclaimed artist in the international graffiti, street art and contemporary art scene. In 2008, AIKO participated in a two-artist show called "Brick Ladies" with Lady Pink. Few years later in 2010, she worked with Banksy on 'Exit Through the Gift Shop.' Her large-scale works are installed across many cities including Miami's Wynwood Walls, 2009; New York City's Bowery Wall, 2013; and Coney Art Walls curated by Jeffrey Deitch in 2015, 2016, 2017. AIKO has exhibited in a collection of group shows such as 'Animamix Biennale' held at Shanghai's MoCA in 2009; 'Edo Pop' at Japan Society NYC in 2013; BEYOND THE STREETS in LA, NY, and London between 2018, 2019, 2023. She has shown her work through solo shows, "Sweet Heart" at The Outsiders Gallery in the UK in 2014 and Lady Go at Shizuoka City Tokaido Hiroshige Museum in 2018. On the commercial front, AIKO has been commissioned to create works in collaboration with Louis Vuitton, FENDI, Coach, Apple, Microsoft, Estée Lauder, Kiehl's, The Standard, W Hotel, Sanrio Hello Kitty, Isetan, Warner Bros., RED, Pepsi, Reebok, WTC as well as for the former First Lady Michelle Obama. The artist is currently based in New York City where she is focusing on her studio practice and commissioned works.

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Al-Qawi Nanavati

Al-Qawi Nanavati is an artist from Mumbai, India, currently residing in Iowa City. Her work is influenced by meditation, repetition, and the aftermath of loss. She writes letters to her late mother, Mumtaz, to interact with her and continue conversations that were left abruptly. Crafting these letters resulted in Al-Qawi inventing a secret script that she has been embedding with watercolours onto archival and self-made paper. Her practice is a witness to her inquisitive mind of understanding materials like silver gelatin photographs and repurposed pieces of her late mother's clothing while weaving and crocheting them together. Her diverse processes aim to prolong the intimacy she shared with her mother while healing from the grief of her absence, addressing the universality of loss, longing, loneliness, and the permanence of that void.

Her works have been exhibited at PS1 Gallery, Iowa City, USA (2023); Voices Gallery, Dubuque, Iowa, USA (2023); CSMVS Museum, Mumbai, India (2022); Latitude 28, New Delhi, India (2020); Zhou B Art Center, Chicago, USA (2018); Union Arts Club, Chicago, USA (2017); Peggy Notebaert Nature Museum, Chicago, USA (2016), among others.

The artist earned her BFA from the School of the Art Institute of Chicago in 2017, focusing on printmaking and painting. Having received the Iowa Arts Fellowship and a full scholarship for 2022-25, Al-Qawi is pursuing an MFA in Printmaking at the University of Iowa, with a minor in Papermaking at the University of Iowa Center for the Book Certificate.

She has also co-founded Young Art Support, an online platform in India that promotes, exhibits, and sells the work of young artists free of commission. The platform provides an opportunity for emerging curators and artists to participate in residency programs in collaboration with Somaiya Vidyavihar University, Carpe Arte, and Shaleen Wadhvana, and is currently in its third year of operations.

Bhuwal Prasad

Bhuwal Prasad is an artist from Azamgarh from the district of Uttar Pradesh who is currently based in the National Capital Region of India. Trained in Visual Arts from the College of Art in Delhi, Bhuwal's practice holds broken lines and bold colours at the center of the pictorial surface. Devising a unique form of abstraction that takes cues from his study of indigenous art forms and readings of the Indus Valley civilization, Indian prehistoric rock art, Mesopotamian scrolls and Egyptian art, the scattered figures that appear in his otherwise abstract works reference the evolution of culture. His approach to painting is guided by instincts, which are not mediated by intellect but driven by the pleasure emanating from his thoughts. While employing a multitude of materials like acrylic and oil paints, charcoal, ink, and automotive paint along with fibreglass and MDF, Bhuwal reflects on mediums to create an assimilation of stories of shared histories.

Over the past 15 years, Bhuwal's works have been showcased at a variety of group and solo exhibitions around India some which of include Solitude in my Cacophony a solo solo exhibition curated by Rahul Kumar and supported by Sangita Rajani and Kalyani Chawla at TAQ, New Delhi, 2024; Between the Line a solo exhibition at Eikowa Art Gallery and LDH in Hyderabad, 2023; Melting Metamorphosis at Dhoomimal Art Centre, New Delhi, 2019; group exhibitions Spectrum of Spring at AWG Gallerie New Delhi in 2024; Soliloquy and The wonder of it at Gallery Nvyva, New Delhi, 2023; and Gajanana at Gallery Nvyva, New Delhi held in 2022. And in 2018, Bhuwal was awarded the Junior Fellowship by the Ministry of Culture Government of India.

DO

DO (an alias of Nikunj Prajapati) is an artist, muralist, sculptor and graffiti writer currently based in India. His practice explores and experiments with form and medium to make site-specific work traversing abstraction and figuration, many times with innovative materials such as retro-reflective, vinyl, and PU foam. Interested in typography and lettering, he works with repetition and drip in his graffiti practice, most notably visible in the popular "TryTryTry" and "treetreeree" series.

DO has been part of multiple projects around the country and abroad, most notably street art festivals organised by St+art India Foundation and Kochi Biennale. The artist has participated in projects that span across Stockholm, Dubai and Abu Dhabi and has been commissioned by commercial entities such as Meta, Miral, Blossa, Blossa, Noon.com, Gucci, PayPal, Levi's, Instagram and Google. Many of the projects have been produced in collaboration as an artist duo, DO & Khatra.

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Kapil Jangid

Kapil Jangid is an artist based between Baroda and New Delhi who has a deep interest in the social, architectural and environmental landscapes of urban and rural India. Kapil's work is conceptualized based on his responses to architectural imagery and urbanisation of cities. Coming from a family that migrated from Rajasthan to Gujarat in search of better opportunities, his family settled in Bajwa, a small village on the outskirts of Vadodara where Kapil was born and raised. Growing up in an area which was surrounded by three enormous industrial units of oil corporations, the stark contrast between the precise construction and sterile planning of industrial townships and the informal and unplanned mushrooming of structures in Bajwa led Kapil to study the human conditions and socio-political realities of those who inhabit these architectures. Working primarily with found materials, objects, concrete, collages, photographs, and drawings, the artist builds works that reference his father's occupational background as a carpenter. The composition of the objects that he creates act as a collection of small structures that pose a puzzle for him to navigate and understand social stratification.

Kapil completed a BVA and MVA from the Faculty of Fine Arts at the Maharaja Sayajirao University of Baroda and has been showcasing his works across galleries and foundations since 2015. His works were recently exhibited at Immerse for the Young Collectors Programme, a group show curated by Satyam Yadav and supported by India Art Fair 2024; Permanent Conference curated by Shristi Sainani at Gallery Nvya in New Delhi, 2023; Embark at Ark Foundation for the Arts in Baroda, 2023; Surface 07 at Artbuzz studio in New Delhi, 2022; The Elephant in the Room: neutral infrastructure/s of 'signaling' in the arts, a joint publication by Conflictorium - Museum of Conflict, India and Stroom Den Haag, Netherlands in 2022 and IMMERSE, a group show curated by Shaleen Wadhwa and supported by Somaiya Vidyavihar University in partnership with Carpe Arte and Young Art Support held in Mumbai in 2022.

liactuallee

liactuallee graduated with a Bachelor of Fine Arts from the University of Minnesota – Twin Cities in 2016 and later earned a postgraduate diploma in Aesthetics, Criticism, and Theory from Jnanpravaha, Mumbai.

li makes art as an act of survival. The fragility of identity labels has led actuallee to embrace their transient nature. Having grown up between three continents, their search for belonging often came short which motivated them to create future worlds where they do not struggle to be their amorphous self. Focusing on the possibilities of envisioning collective destinies, they use their imagination and obsessiveness to escape the confines of the current conditions.

By weaving and stitching ecological fiction into their work, li encourages viewers to explore alternative realities informed by overlooked ecosystems which lead to new ways of thinking. This is expressed through the fluidity present in the art they make, speculative characters and landscapes that are equally filled with spontaneities and intricacies.

Through repetitive gestures—whether a loop, stitch, or mark—li constructs environments that evolve through re-articulation. Grounded in hope and utopian visions, their work honors the value of natural resources, including human labor. Repetition becomes a way to expand visual storytelling, connecting craft, queerness, and ecology.

li's interdisciplinary practice has further compelled them to inquire into materials like fiber, ceramics, upcycled textiles, recycled and cotton yarn to cultivate a practice in soft sculptures. The artist has participated in artist residencies, such as Space 118 Mumbai, and Space Studio Baroda and exhibited at Emami Art Kolkata and Art Incept in New Delhi. li has left their mark in their community by painting public murals in Bandra, Mumbai. Their inaugural solo exhibition, "Soft Invasions, Stitchpunk Visions," took place at Method Bandra in June 2023. They were honored with the Artdemic "Textile & Fiber Art" Grant 2024 and participated in edition two of SA Ladakh, Asia's highest land art festival. Most recently in 2024, they completed a residency at Hampi Art Labs. actuallee has also been selected as an artist-in-residence for India Art Fair 2025, and continues to work and live in Mumbai.

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Marina Zumi

Born in 1983 in Buenos Aires, Argentina, Marina Zumi is a multi-interdisciplinary artist based in Berlin since 2018.

Marina's colour spectacles are painted as murals around the world and have now become a tangible reality as the artist continues to explore analog and digital media with new technologies. She continues to work on independent and collaborative projects on the streets and in galleries generating immersive light installations and other mixed media artworks.

Marina has painted walls in more than 35 countries and 4 continents, taking her from Argentina to Russia, the United States of America, China, Kazakhstan to many other countries. Her notable solo exhibitions are "Techno Poetry" held at Urban Spree, Berlin, Germany, in 2019 and "That Place," Juxtapoz, held at the Mana Contemporary, Miami, USA in 2018. Some of her recent projects and group exhibitions where her works have been showcased include "Sun Rise – Sun Set," Tahiti, French Polynesia, 2023; 0010 Exhibitions, "Vapor Wave," Berlin, Germany, 2022; Swab Art Fair, MM Gallery, Barcelona, Spain, 2020; and "Imago," MUCA Museum, Munic, Germany in 2018. After five years, the artist has returned to producing solo exhibitions starting with "Lil Pocket - Tiny Waist" hosted at the AS-EM Space in Leipzig, Germany and "SEW DENTS ON EVERY SKYLINE" at Gallery XXL, Mumbai, India.

Her works have been acquired by the Urban Nation Museum, The Pirelli Collection, The Montana State University, and The Argentina Metro Public Collection, and are spread across many private collections around Argentina, the United States of America, Germany, Brazil, Italy, Turkey, England, Kazakhstan, Belgium, China and Uruguay. Furthermore, her work has been published in various publications such as Juxtapoz Mag, USA, Arte IT, Cosmopolitan Spain and Rolling Stone Magazine BR.

Sabiha Dohadwala

Based in Mumbai, Sabiha Dohadwala approaches textile as a site of integrating and disintegrating memories, images, and histories. Her works address the human tendency to forget over time and advocate a renewed way of understanding memory. Sabiha captures cultural histories and lived experiences through the act of weaving. The tactile materiality of textile is ingrained with acts of remembering in the face of erasure.

Sabiha has a BFA with an emphasis on Fiber and Material Studies from the School of the Art Institute of Chicago. She has previously worked as a Collections and Exhibitions Assistant at the Swedish American Museum in Chicago, US, and at Intuit: The Center for Intuitive and Outsider Art; and as a Textile Designer for BiYuu, Mexico City.

Sowat

Sowat is a Franco-American artist who grew up between the south of France and Los Angeles and fell in love with graffiti culture as a teenager. His work draws inspiration from the long lost cuneiform scripts of Sumerian tablets and the contemporary Cholo Writing, a style of calligraphy invented by Californian Latino gangs to mark their territory. Sowat's canvases which he refers to as 'typographic mazes' blend the rawness of the streets with a refined exploration of form, shape and letters becoming a dynamic fusion of vibrant colours, fluid mechanics, abstract calligraphies and automatic writing.

A member of the Da Mental Vaporz crew, since 2010 Sowat has been collaborating with cult Parisian graffiti artist Lek with whom he has multiplied larger than life in situ projects across countries such as France, Hong Kong, India, and the UK.

Sowat has developed a skill for creating experimental videos which culminated in the films "Mausolée," "Underground doesn't Exist Anymore" and "Tracés Directs," which joined the permanent collections of the Pompidou Center in 2014. In 2016, Lek & Sowat were the first artists to emerge from graffiti and realize a project at the prestigious Villa Medici in Rome. Since then, they have collaborated with numerous prestigious French institutions such as the Pompidou Center, the Palais de Tokyo or Lyon's Opera House.

Sowat lives and works in Paris and is represented by Galerie Le Feuvre & Roze.

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ZERO

ZERO is a self-taught graffiti writer who has been practicing in the streets since 2008. With training in fine arts from MSU Baroda, ZERO has an interdisciplinary practice across murals, graffiti, typography and traditional letterforms digital and print media. As a founding member of the UFO crew, his graffiti practice evidenced his dedication to exploring new definitions of old-school styles, which in his experimental and site-specific work in India and abroad, gives way to a new vocabulary of South Asian styles of graffiti writing. In his murals, he takes inspiration from the scale of environmental elements and converges them in dynamic unexpected forms with diverse cultural narratives.

His media installation practice includes works such as "TITLE" in KONA, and "Surfing" at the Mumbai Urban Art Festival, deftly playing with light, memory, pervasiveness of social media and contemporary desire.

He has come to be known for his 'throw-ups,' illustrating funky typography and traditional letterform hand-painted using a wide selection of bright and chromatic shades. Honing his skill as a graffiti artist, he has been painting and abstracting the alphabet Z-E-R-O and tagging them across the country.

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 catalyse 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 the late 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 Gallery XXL.

Team

Giulia Ambrogi, Arjun Bahl, Thanish Thomas, Vidur Sethi, Sarah Malik, Faraz Khan, Akhil Kattamanchil, Guru Pednekar, Aarti Jain, and Babu Gundanoor.

Annexures

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

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