

LATITUDE 28

Bhavna Kakar

Presents

The Personal is Mythical

Bhajju Shyam | Neha Sahai | Viraj Khanna

Preview: 25th July 2025

Timing: 6 pm

Venue: LATITUDE 28, F-208, First Floor, Lado Sarai, New Delhi, 110030

Exhibition Open till: 18th August 2025

Timings: Monday to Saturday, 11 AM – 7 PM



Title: Divine Feminine - Devi Goes Rococo (Maa Saraswati)

Medium: Gouache and ink on paper

Size: 11 x 8 inches (unframed), 40 x 8 inches (framed)

New Delhi, July 2025: LATITUDE 28 is proud to present *The Personal is Mythical*, curated by Bhavna Kakar, a group exhibition featuring new bodies of work by Bhajju Shyam, Neha Sahai, and Viraj Khanna. This exhibition explores how private narratives, memories, and artistic vocabularies can evoke timeless, universal themes, transforming the deeply personal into the resonantly mythical. It begins with the premise that myth is not simply an ancient inheritance but a living mode of meaning-making, shaped by contemporary experience. Myths help us tell stories about ourselves, our cultures, our fears, and our desires, giving form to memory, imagination, and identity.

Contemporary Indian visual language is built from fragments of memory, inherited stories, cultural codes, subversive aesthetics, and above all, lived experience. *The Personal is Mythical* brings together three distinctive artistic voices who are rewriting mythologies through image-making from radically different yet intersecting vantage points. This exhibition does not seek to harmonize or hybridize the

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binaries of “folk” and “contemporary,” or “craft” and “concept.” Instead, it offers a provocation, asking what if the origin story was always here, not elsewhere, and what if influence flowed upstream.

At its core, *The Personal is Mythical* is a critical response to histories of erasure, exoticization, and aesthetic appropriation that have elevated certain practices as “art” while relegating others to “craft” or “folk.” It challenges these hierarchies by placing Bhajju, Neha, and Viraj in conversation, not to merge their traditions, but to let their distinct mythologies speak across materials, mediums, and histories. The exhibition design embraces both individual visions and the connections that thread between them, highlighting the simultaneity and contradiction of tradition and modernity, memory and invention, sincerity and irony, the specific and the universal. By foregrounding these complexities, the exhibition argues that myth is not escapist fantasy but a vital means of negotiating who we are, both collectively and individually.

Bhajju Shyam, a key figure in the Pardhan Gond tradition, creates paintings that carry ancestral knowledge and oral cosmologies. His meticulous, storied works are acts of preservation and resistance, using vivid colors and intricate forms to render animals, spirits, and layered cosmologies that speak to the continuity of storytelling across generations. His visual grammar treats cultural inheritance as something dynamic, evolving, and deeply intimate.

Neha Sahai, a self-taught artist who began painting in her thirties, creates introspective, surreal images that occupy a dreamlike in-between where fish women read under moonlight and stillness carries memory. Using watercolour, gouache, ink, and oil, she celebrates feminine energy as a gentle yet unyielding force. Her work rejects idealised depictions of divinity, reimagining goddesses with authentic strength in a tender but radical counter-narrative rooted in love, poetry, and a profound reverence for the act of painting itself.

Viraj Khanna, working at the intersection of textile, fashion, and post-pop fragmentation, treats identity as a layered costume, stitched, collaged, and unmade. His assemblages are playful yet unsettling, inviting viewers to question the myths of modernity, consumerism, and the “authentic self.” Through masks and layered forms, he explores performance and persona, invoking both contemporary anxieties and ancient traditions of shape-shifting and transformation.

This is not a fusion but a reckoning. *The Personal is Mythical* rejects the simplification of complex histories into marketable categories, restoring nuance and agency to practices too often dismissed or co-opted. It treats myth as a living, insurgent form of storytelling that insists on memory, belonging, and invention on its own terms. It arrives at a moment when India’s cultural equity is rising not in service of the global market, but in assertion of its own sovereignty. Giving credit is not a courtesy but a correction, and it is precisely at the boundary between the personal and the political, the lived and the imagined, that art becomes most urgent.

From the Director’s Desk:



“With *The Personal is Mythical*, we’re not just presenting three distinctive artistic voices — we’re interrogating the very lens through which art from India has been historically viewed, categorized, and consumed. Bhajju Shyam, Neha Sahai, and Viraj Khanna are rewriting visual narratives by pulling from memory, myth, and identity — not as spectacle, but as selfhood. This exhibition challenges the binary between folk and contemporary, traditional and

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conceptual. It reminds us that what is personal can also be political, and what is rooted can still be radical.

As a gallerist, editor, and art historian, my engagement with contemporary art extends beyond exhibitions to fostering critical discourse and research. Through **Latitude 28** and **TAKE on Art**, I have worked towards creating platforms that support emerging voices in art and writing. Initiatives like the **Art Writing Award** reflect this commitment, enabling new perspectives to shape the evolving art landscape. I am particularly excited to see how this exhibition will contribute to a renewed appreciation of their work and open the world of intellectual curiosity about the inevitability of art in society. Along with the technical dexterity of their works, the exhibition is a profound recognition of the incisive social and cultural commentary that underlies the surface of each painting.”

– **Bhavna Kakar, Founder-Director, LATITUDE 28**

About the Artists:

Bhajju Shyam



Bhajju Shyam (b. 1971) is a celebrated Gond artist whose practice inhabits a richly layered space between tradition, personal memory, and living myth. Hailing from the forested village of Patangarh in central India, he developed his distinctive visual language under the mentorship of Jangarh Singh Shyam, transforming inherited forms of Gond painting into cosmopolitan narratives alive with movement and meaning.

Shyam’s work extends the storytelling roots of his community into contemporary contexts, conjuring intricate cosmologies where animals, spirits, and humans coexist in symbolic harmony. His acclaimed *The London Jungle Book* reimagines urban landscapes through Gond iconography, rendering travel itself as a form of myth-making. Through meticulously patterned surfaces and vivid organic forms, Shyam collapses the boundary between the remembered and the dreamed, the local and the universal. His practice resonates with a lineage of artists who have redefined indigenous visual traditions as dynamic, evolving vocabularies, crafting personal yet collective histories that speak to transformation, resilience, and the enduring power of narrative.

Neha Sahai



Neha Sahai (b. 1985) is a self-taught Indian artist whose practice occupies a luminous intersection between autobiography, myth, and memory. Drawing from design and narrative traditions, her work conjures a visual folklore of quiet surrealism, where moonlit fish women, star-gazing moths, and cross-species romances unfold in still, dreamlike spaces.

Emerging at 33 into painting as her primary language, Sahai’s practice resonates with feminist explorations of self and interiority. Her recurring Fish Woman figure, often draped in sarees and immersed in solitary rituals—reading, resting, or gazing into distant worlds—functions as a mythic double or alter ego. In these soft, sensorial landscapes, Sahai collapses distinctions between the remembered and the imagined, the personal and the archetypal. Her work aligns with a lineage of artists who have used figuration and myth to explore identity and interiority — from the narrative intimacy of Bhupen Khakhar, to the feminist poetics of

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Paula Rego and the introspective sensuality of Amrita Sher-Gil. Like them, Sahai weaves the deeply personal into visual vocabularies that transcend the self, creating spaces where memory becomes myth.

Viraj Khanna



Viraj Khanna (b. 1995) is an Indian artist whose practice explores the theatrical construction of identity through layered, narrative-rich forms. Working across sculpture, textile, and mixed media, Khanna mines popular culture, fashion, and inherited iconographies to create visual tableaux that question the nature of selfhood and social performance.

His works conjure a stylised world of fragmented bodies, ornate costumes, and playful symbolism, staging scenes that oscillate between sincerity and irony. Figures appear at once mythical and contemporary, evoking ritual, masquerade, and spectacle as sites of both concealment and revelation. Khanna's practice resonates with artists who interrogate cultural myth-making and personal history through figuration. In these intricate, often ambiguous compositions, he blurs the boundaries between the handmade and the mass-produced, the traditional and the hyper-modern, offering viewers a reflective space to consider how identities are imagined, performed, and transformed.

About LATITUDE 28:

Established in 2010, LATITUDE 28 has redefined contemporary gallery practice with its lateral, avant-garde approach. The gallery stands as a vanguard in nurturing and showcasing emerging South Asian artists by championing experimental material-based practices while fostering meaningful connections among stakeholders -artists, collectors, patrons, arts professionals, and enthusiasts. By prioritising mentoring and capacity building, it shapes creative practices, through programs that drive cultural discourse across the region and beyond.

The gallery's commitment to inclusivity and accessibility makes it a critical nexus for cultural exchange, connecting artists with leading institutions worldwide. Through curated exhibitions that weave together art, history, and socio-political narratives, LATITUDE 28 facilitates an understanding of the forces shaping contemporary society. This approach ensures that each exhibition is a dynamic, immersive experience that engages and challenges audiences.

As an incubator of innovative artistic expressions, the gallery facilitates dynamic exchanges through site-specific artworks, artist talks, and immersive curatorial experiences, setting new standards for what galleries can achieve. Its influence in shaping artistic discourse and inspiring collections is felt across continents, making LATITUDE 28 an essential player in global cultural conversations.

Under the strategic leadership of Founder and Director Bhavna Kakar—also the Founder and Editor-in-Chief of TAKE on Art, South Asia's premier contemporary art publication—LATITUDE 28 has cultivated a robust network of collectors and patrons. This network extends deeply into the Global artistic ecosystems, bridging continental divides and enhancing cross-cultural dialogues.

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