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CONTEMPORARY ART

Out of the soot and dust caused by unchecked mining, an art show emerges

Chetan Kurekar's first solo show at Mumbai's Fulcrum gallery explores the relationship between memory and landscape.

Scroll Staff

Apr 03, 2025 · 11:30 am

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Against a blackened horizon, a man crouches on a ravaged ground, cradling a mound of mud – the remnants of a household shrine or perhaps an entire house itself? In another painting, the same man is seen watering a denuded tree that pokes out of a plastic crate incongruously as well as defiantly.

The past persists in stubborn, sad ways in Chetan Kurekar's first solo show *At the Shore/Smrityancha Kinara*. The collection of paintings, drawings, diorama and a video is being shown at the recently opened Fulcrum gallery in Mumbai's Kala Ghoda neighbourhood.



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At the Shore reflects 28-year-old Kurekar's experience of growing up in the soot and dust of the mining belt in Maharashtra's Chandrapur district. Kurekar's father operated underground mining equipment that burrowed deep into the bowels of the earth. The destructive effect of such machines on structures above the ground is evident in Kurekar's incredibly detailed dioramas.

In one, all that survives of a house is its entrance. A tiny Kalnirnay almanac remains on one of the walls. In another, a family photo lies on the ground, mixed with the rubble.

In a curatorial note, Fulcrum founder Ayesha Aggarwal discusses Kurekar's artistic concerns and the manner in which the stubborn remnants of the past co-exists along the aching realities of the present in his works.

'Memory and landscape'

"In his debut solo exhibition, Chetan Kurekar explores ideas of memory and landscape through a collection of sculpture, oil painting, charcoal drawing and a single channel video that together create a vestibule of the artist's experience of his home, its landscape and a community left behind. The exhibition ponders the effectiveness of protest against unchecked mining practices

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Chronicles of Erasure. Courtesy Chetan Kurekar/Fulcrum.

“The artist’s relationship with the changing landscape of a village overpowered by the coal mining industry is peppered with anxiety. In the work ‘Silences’, a young man overlooks the machine-made hills and lakes, his shoulders tense and his fist clenched around the edge of his clothes.

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“The artist has witnessed communities being alienated from their land, the environment becoming inaccessible and turning hostile. People spend every afternoon outside their homes while the mines are blasted for fear of their roofs caving in above them.

“In the series of three sculptures titled ‘Fragments of Belonging’, as brick and mortar crumble and decay, Kurekar weaves stories of lives lived and lost, the everyday that is imprinted upon the objects and the relationship that these objects have with the people that inhabited the now ruinous homes.

“There is poetry in the artist’s attention to detail here, whether in the faded movie posters on the exterior walls or the meticulous placement of utensils in a kitchen. Each sculpture in the series serves as the paradoxical image of beauty and calamity, time stands still asking the view to pause and consider the fraught relationship between man and land.





A detail of Chronicles of Erasure. Courtesy Chetan Kurekar/Fulcrum.

“It is in this relationship that the artist situates himself. The son of a machine operator, the artist recalls delivering his father, a union leader, his lunch while he staged protest alongwith his colleagues and comrades asking to be relocated away from the mines.

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“In the painting, ‘Which side are you on?’ while a man holds up a blank white banner, symbolic of the ongoing but futile resistance, Kurekar asks the viewer to pick a side, the choice a classical one;

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“As a representative of his community, the artist embarks upon a performance where he sits on open land allowing the coal dust to settle on his face, keeping his eyes open and unblinking until they water and tears roll down his face. The resulting single channel video titled ‘Gaze of Dissent’ is a close crop of Kurekar’s eyes during this performance. It symbolises protest, resistance and resilience.



At the Shore. Courtesy Chetan Kurekar/Fulcrum.

“Another modest but momentous symbol of resilience that features in some works is the sparing presence of life and growth; whether in the windblown tree, the sporadic shrubbery or the presence of aquatic plants in the blackened water pond.

“‘On the road with Monet’ captures the artist’s repeated journeys back home over the twelve years that he was away. He satirically invokes Monets monumental body of paintings of water lilies, with their harmonious colours and quiet luminosity, leaving viewers with feelings of awe and calm.

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“In Kurekar’s pond, the water is blackened by coal dust and the presence of the imaginary water lilies are in stark contrast to their environment. This echoing dissonance is retold in ‘The night that never ends’: a man waters the trunk of a bare tree, only to have the water overflow out of the crate the trunk sits in.”




On the Toad with Monet. Courtesy Chetan Kurekar/Fulcrum.

“A sense of despair dominates the work, only to be enhanced by the arid and vacant landscape. It appears that memories have faded, shifted and morphed into the vision for a dystopic future, one without the rays of hope. Kurekar extracts fleeting moments of his childhood from the recesses of his mind, allowing memory to precariously linger at the mind’s shore before being washed away by waves of melancholia.





Chetan Kurekar.

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Chetan Kurekar

At The Shore Art Show

Fulcrum Gallery Mumbai



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BOOK EXCERPT

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‘Our heart is a hill / Underneath it, a Buddha sleeps’: A writer muses on Buddha and his teachings

An excerpt from ‘The Master of Unfinished Things,’ by Geet Chaturvedi, translated from the Hindi by Anita Gopalan.

Geet Chaturvedi & **Anita Gopalan**

36 minutes ago



The Buddha. | Pexels

Sanchi isn't far from my home, a fortunate proximity that allows for frequent visits. It is the only place associated with Buddha that I have visited so often. Curiously, Buddha himself is said never to have set foot there. Yet Sanchi holds a revered place on the Buddhist map. Even in places where Gautama did not tread, his presence is felt. Though his journey in the outside world has ended, in the inner world, his footprints remain fresh, as if he has just walked by. What is love but this: the inward sensation of something that has already transpired outside and the continuous reliving of that experience.

How natural it is that when Buddha is mentioned, a soft melody of love begins to play in the background.

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Buddha's path was not one of worship (aradhana), but of devotion (upasana). Derived from "upa" (near) and "asana" (sitting), "upasana" conveys the idea of sitting close to oneself – an inward practice, contrasting with the external objects and rituals required of worship.

In the stupas, viharas and museums of Sanchi, numerous statues of Buddha and Bodhisattvas can be found, both intact and fragmented. Yet the one that captivates me the most is the statue of Gautama Buddha seated in the earth-touching mudra. ...

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LITERARY TRIBUTE

Mario Vargas Llosa (1936-2025): The end of an era for Latin America's literary luminaries

Quality, diversity, perfection, originality and technical experimentation defined Mario Vargas Llosa's literary output.

Ángel Esteban del Campo, *The Conversation*

4 hours ago





Mario Vargas Llosa. | Jessica Rinaldi / Reuters.

The death of Peruvian author Mario Vargas Llosa (1936–2025) marks the end of a Golden Age of Latin American literature. Just as there will not be another generation in Spain like that of Cervantes, Lope de Vega, Calderón de la Barca, Tirso de Molina, Góngora and Quevedo, in America there will not be another like that of Vargas Llosa, Gabriel García Márquez, Julio Cortázar, César Vallejo, Pablo Neruda, Jorge Luis Borges, Alejo Carpentier and Carlos Fuentes.

Vargas Llosa's unparalleled awareness of his craft made him perhaps the most accomplished writer among his contemporaries. His discipline to writing, and to doing so impeccably, was absolute.

I interviewed him several times, and visited almost all of his libraries, where he worked, in London, Madrid, New York and Peru. The physical order of his working environments was comparable only to the mental order with which he wrote, which was rooted in an obsessively correct use of time.

He never received visitors in the mornings, and in the afternoons, he rarely attended to guests before 6 or 7 o'clock. He was convinced that genius is not natural, but the fruit of effort and tenacity, as he wrote in his [Letters to a Young Novelist](#)....

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**CENTRE-STATE TIES**

Interview: Do away with governors, says Kerala MP who moved bill to limit Raj Bhawan powers

The CPI(M) leader explains why unelected governors have to be kept out of state universities. He also criticises Modi for his 'somersault' on federalism.

Anant Gupta

9 hours ago



Communist Party of India (Marxist) MP John Brittas. | [John Brittas/Facebook](#)

On April 8, the Supreme Court decided in favour of the Tamil Nadu government in its case against Governor RN Ravi's failure to sign bills into law. The court ruling, which stipulates time limits for governors to act on the bills sent to them, has become the latest flashpoint in the growing rancour between the Bharatiya Janata Party-led Centre and opposition-ruled state governments.

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opponents. In a first, the Tamil Nadu government on Saturday enacted the 10 bills in question without the governor's clearance, following the judgement.

M.K.Stalin 
@mkstalin · [Follow](#)

We thank and welcome today's historic judgment of the Hon'ble Supreme Court, reaffirming the legislative rights of State Legislatures and putting an end to the trend of Union government-nominated Governors stalling progressive legislative reforms in Opposition-ruled states.

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12:53 PM · Apr 8, 2025 

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Notably, seven of these bills pertain to the administration of state universities, including matters such as the appointment of vice chancellors. Earlier, John Brittas of the Communist Party of India (Marxist) had sought to introduce a private member's bill in the Rajya Sabha to deal with the issue of governors doubling up as university chancellors....

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**BOOK EXCERPT**

Politics of hate and politics of heat: The psychology of communal violence following the Partition

An excerpt from 'Gandhi: The End of Non-Violence,' by Manash Firaq Bhattacharjee.

Manash Firaq Bhattacharjee

9 hours ago



Corpses on the streets of Calcutta during the riots of 1946. | [Wikimedia Commons](#)

To add another lens to the event, I will refer briefly to two accounts – one intellectual and long-distant one and the other a direct witness – of the killings in Calcutta, from Nirad C Chaudhuri and Ashis Nandy. Chaudhuri had left Calcutta for good in 1942, but he had friends and relatives in the city that passed on information. Nandy was nine years old and new to the city.

In his memoir, *Thy Hand Great Anarch!* Chaudhuri writes with characteristic bluntness:

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“The unwillingness of the Government of Bengal was certainly intentional, and if they at last asked for military intervention that was only to save themselves from the obvious charge of being behind the massacres. It is also possible that they asked for military help when they saw that the game of killing was going against Muslims.”

The *fact* of a leader or government abetting crime often happens through carefully crafted acts of prevention of duty (which is prevention of law and justice). It is difficult in retrospect to hold them responsible as the motivational aspects behind such facts are clouded by claims that befuddle and confuse interpretation. Objectivity must negotiate with suspicion and good faith. This false challenge is deliberately created to withhold judgment. Chaudhuri blames Suhrawardy’s intentionality from facts. Governmental dilly-dallying in taking decisions when there is an outbreak of mass violence and lives are at stake comes from political reluctance. This nefarious tradition became the norm in postcolonial India where minorities have been targeted. Here’s a clinching detail from an official about Suhrawardy’s delaying tactic to ensure that he had enough deaths for his cause:...

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HIGHER EDUCATION

Why JNU’s abrupt U-turn on hostel for North East students is causing concern

The university claims ‘reservation’ is not allowed though its own reports and official publications say students from the region will be given priority.

Johanna Deeksha

11 hours ago





Students protest during the inauguration of Barak Hostel on April 7. | Special arrangement.

For nearly a decade, students from the North East looked forward to having a dedicated hostel for them at the Jawaharlal Nehru University in Delhi.

In 2016, the university had signed an agreement with the central government's North East Council, which promotes the development of India's northeastern region, to build a new hostel on campus, primarily for students from the North East.

The council funded the construction of Barak hostel, named after a river that flows through Manipur, Mizoram and Assam.

However, when the new hostel was inaugurated earlier this month, the students received an unpleasant shock.

The university's vice-chancellor Santishree Dhulipudi Pandit declared that there would be no reservation in the hostel for students from the North East. "JNU believes in unity," the vice-chancellor is heard saying in a video shared by students. "It doesn't believe in isolating any community on the campus."

She added, "JNU follows the Constitution of India. No separation of any identity on this campus..."

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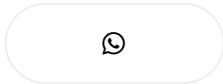
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LITERARY AWARDS

2025 Commonwealth Short Story Prize: Indians Parul Kaushik, Tino de Sa shortlisted for Asia

The regional winners (Africa, Asia, Canada and Europe, Caribbean, and Pacific) receive £2,500 each, and the overall winner, £5,000.

Scroll Staff
13 hours ago



Two writers from India – Parul Kaushik and Tino de Sa – and one each from Bangladesh – Faria Basher – and Pakistan – Tahoor Bari – have been shortlisted for the The Commonwealth Short Story Prize, Asian region.

The prize is awarded annually for the best piece of unpublished short fiction from any of the Commonwealth’s 56 Member States. Regional winners (Africa, Asia, Canada and Europe, Caribbean and Pacific) each receive £2,500 and the overall winner receives £5,000. The regional

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winners will be announced on May 14 and the overall winner on June 25 at an in-person award ceremony.

The shortlist of 18 writers from 25 countries was selected from almost 8,000 entries. The shortlisted stories range from historical fiction to satire and crime and speculative writing, to family dramas and coming-of-age stories. The stories also tackle topics such as human trafficking, war and bereavement to motherhood, unlikely friendships and unexpected love.

In addition to English, the Prize also accepts submissions in Bengali, Chinese, Creole, French, Greek, Malay, Maltese, Portuguese, Samoan, Swahili, Tamil, and Turkish....

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CULTURAL POLITICS

Why the renaming of an iconic Bengali New Year parade in Dhaka sparked a debate

The rebranding appeases Islamist groups, which said that the name 'Mangal Shobhajatra' was 'un-Islamic'.

Zakir Kibria

Yesterday · 09:00 pm





The Mangal Shobhajatra in Dhaka on April 14. | Munir Uz Zamar/ AFP

In the predawn hours of April 12, a fire on the Dhaka University campus reduced a 20-foot bamboo-and-cane sculpture called the “[face of fascism](#)” to ash. A papier-mâché dove, symbolising peace, was also charred.

The arson attack on the artwork was the visceral climax of a [debate](#) over a single word: “mangal” or auspicious.

It had been sparked by the [university administration’s decision](#) to rebrand the iconic Mangal Shobhajatra procession, which is held on Bengali New Year on April 14, as the Borsho Boron Anondo Shobhajatra (“Procession of Joy in the New Year Embrace”).

The renaming of the 36-year-old tradition, which had been born in protest against military dictatorship, has ignited a cultural war in Bangladesh.

Officials claim they are restoring the event’s original name. But the timing and context betrayed a darker agenda: the erasure of a symbol that once unified Bengalis across religious and political divisions.

The Mangal Shobhajatra began not as a festival but as a revolt. In 1989, under General Hussain Muhammad Ershad’s autocratic regime, students at Dhaka University’s Faculty of Fine Arts crafted grotesque owls (to represent corruption), tigers (courage), and doves (peace) to mock the



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DEVELOPMENT

India's bamboo bounty yields little for artisans, cultivators and entrepreneurs

The country is the second largest cultivator of the plant but lags far behind China in the global market due to poor policies and inferior produce.

Aatreyee Dhar, [IndiaSpend.com](https://www.indiaspend.com)
Yesterday · 07:30 pm



AFP

Adiram Reang, an indigenous farmer who belongs to the Autonomous District Council village of Bagmara, in Dhalai district, 125 km from the state capital Agartala, wanted to own Kanak Kaich bamboo plantations. But when he found out about Tripura's State Bamboo Mission, about 15

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years back, he decided it would not be a profitable venture. “From what I heard, the beneficiaries griped about the thorny quality bamboo that is not in demand for sale outside the state,” he said.

The State Bamboo Mission gives Barak/Bambusa Balcooa or Tulda to eligible beneficiaries, which farmers and experts say is of lower quality than Kanak Kaich.

Reang, in 2015, did start a bamboo plantation, but it was under a project by [the State Forest Department](#), along with the Indo-German Development Corporation. Reang planted Kanak Kaich on three hectares of his land, and now supplies it to clients across India. “I send two trucks of raw material in a year. One truck carries 3,000-3,300 bamboo stalks, amounting to a little over Rs 1 lakh,” Reang says....

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BOOK EXCERPT

‘you touch my skin / a riot breaks out inside of me’: These poems bridge the self and nature

An excerpt from ‘Bewilderness,’ by Devashish Makhija.

Devashish Makhija

Yesterday · 05:30 pm





'between the spider'

(a tribute to MF Hussain)

in the neighbourhood
of your breath
i have traveled close and far

our lips have moved
dunes, shifting

a bird across the sun
became my hand fluttering
painting a thin shadow over
your lips

under that shadow
your words were horses
naked, riding your breath
till their legs became a blur

we exhaled a spider



in the neighbourhood of
your breath i have traveled
close and far.

'mud'

she asked if she could plant
herself on me
she had dreamt of mangoes
the night before and asked
me to google what
that meant

the fruit of my labour
came organically

sexual,
said google

her hair hung like a hundred roots
searching my skin for a trace
of an aquifer

wet,
she'd said
in a chat message
when i'd asked her how she'd been

reaching for the sky could take
seventy years
if you are a tree

the rest of us find our clouds
underneath our eyelids
as we shudder
into fistfuls of mud.



'forest fire'

in the centre
of his world he
stood burning.

"in the jungle," she said,
"only the rhinoceros runs towards
a fire to stamp it out."...

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BOOK EXCERPT

Travel writing: A solo traveller recalls a Christmas Eve spent camping on a beach in Karnataka

An excerpt from 'Solo: My Year of Backpacking and Unpacking,' by
Indrajeet More.

Indrajeet More

Yesterday · 01:30 pm



Indrajeet More. | [Instagram](#)

Today's plan was simple and sorted: hike to Paradise Beach, pitch my tent there and spend Christmas Eve camping solo!

Anyone who has been to Gokarna cannot stop going gaga over Paradise Beach. They say it is so secluded that at night glowing phytoplankton make the shore look exactly like the starry sky. Covered with forested hills on all three sides, Paradise Beach is cut off from the nearby villages, Gokarna and Belekan, by dense shrubs. This makes the beach inaccessible by vehicles, and the only way to get there is to either hike all the way through the woods over the hills or take a boat from any of the adjoining beaches.

Hiring a boat was out of question as it would eat up a good chunk of my given budget, so the only option left was to hike. Buckling up my backpack with high enthusiasm, I filled my water bottle and stocked up on four bananas for dinner. I first hitchhiked my way to Om Beach and then started hiking at around 5 pm. My aim was to reach there before it got dark. Acting all cool, I would occasionally track my route on Google Maps as the trail appeared to have faded in some parts. Slowly, the trail started to fade for a few metres and eventually vanished completely. I realised that it was taking a bit longer than I had calculated to reach my destination. Dubiously, I pulled out my phone to check the GPS and realised that I had been hiking in the wrong direction the whole time! The bloody GPS had lost its signal 500 metres back! "NOT AGAIN!" an instant bout of panic rushed through my body. I could see the sun going down, which made me even more anxious. I had no time to process any of this. I was in no mood to die in a forest without ever



having sex or tasting baklava or even seeing a whale, just because I had lost the damned GPS signal! ...

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