

Resonant Histories:

India and the Arab World

‘Resonant Histories: India and the Arab World’ traces the artistic and intellectual journeys of two regions whose modernities evolved through shared aspirations for cultural autonomy and self-definition. Drawn from the collections of the Barjeel Art Foundation, Sharjah, and the Jehangir Nicholson Art Foundation, Mumbai, this exhibition invites viewers to consider how art can reveal enduring connections forged through parallel historical experiences and creative exchange.

Here, a constellation of voices from India, Bahrain, Egypt, Iraq, Kuwait, Lebanon, Palestine, Syria, Tunisia, and the United Arab Emirates come together. Through paintings, sculptures, prints, ceramics, textiles and works on paper spanning the twentieth century and beyond, the exhibition highlights practices that converge around questions of identity, modernity, and belonging.

Multiple threads weave these regions together: a shared colonial past and independence struggles; the Non-Aligned Movement's radical reimagining of global power; and the constant flow of people across these geographies. Rather than framing India and the Arab world as separate spheres, ‘Resonant Histories’ underscores their reciprocal dialogues - moments of collaboration that influenced modern art in both contexts. Here, a diversity of pioneering art practices are staged together, revealing intersections of form, philosophy, and cultural imagination. A majority of these artists exhibited at the India Triennales in Delhi from the 1960s onwards, while others trained at the same institutions and engaged in shared discourse around international practices and distinct visual languages in their newly independent countries. Liberation movements and social changes are chronicled in many of the artworks, often blending local traditions with modernist forms.

At its heart, the exhibition celebrates the fluency of artistic exchange: the ability of ideas, images, and gestures to move across borders and time. It is both a culmination and a beginning- an invitation to revisit shared histories that continue to inspire inquiry and solidarity. This presentation affirms that the story of modern art is not a singular narrative, but a network of voices shaping one another across time and space.

Curated by Suheyly Takesh & Puja Vaish