JEHANGIR NICHOLSON ART FOUNDATION

THE MUSEUM
Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj Vastu Sangrahalaya
MUMBAI

PRESS RELEASE

‘Jyoti Bhatt: The Looking Glass’ is the first major Museum exhibition of the artist, bringing together over 190 works across printmaking, photography, painting and archives from seven decades of his artistic practice.

JYOTI BHATT | THE LOOKING GLASS

Curated by Puja Vaish

28 October 2026 - 23 March 2027
Jehangir Nicholson Art Gallery, CSMVS Museum, Fort, Mumbai



Image: Jyoti Bhatt, untitled, 1979, etching, courtesy the artist

Curatorial note

‘The Looking Glass’ traces the themes, images and processes across Bhatt’s printmaking, photography and painting. This exhibition frames the reciprocal relationship between his use of different mediums. In its playfulness, Bhatt’s practice unintentionally challenges categorisations of original and copy, past and present, documentation and intervention. Bhatt views the reproducibility in printmaking with curiosity, testing the possibilities, often revisiting and reworking on earlier plates, altering, painting or combining them with others.

A student of the first batch at the Faculty of Fine Arts, MS University, Baroda - the first art school established after Independence - Bhatt was part of an environment where ideas of Indian modern art developed through a conscious engagement with India’s craft and indigenous visual forms. Since 1966, Bhatt has photographed the living traditions of rural India. He is one of the first artists to extensively use the camera in his practice, starting in the 1950s. He also documented his colleagues and teachers, and his photographs are now regarded as the most extensive archive of art milieus and vernacular practices of the time.

Bhatt references surfaces on which domestic, social, political and cultural life is performed: the *aangan*, the street, the wall, the floor and skin, where rangoli, wall paintings, graffiti, tattoos, games, signs, songs and writing find expression. With a few contemporaries in Baroda, Bhatt began looking at local, pop and everyday urban imagery including painted rickshaws, shop signs, matchbox labels, printed charts and couplets on trucks. A visual linguist, Bhatt juggles a vast vocabulary of images and text, using humour and satire to chronicle happenings around him. His works have a design quality, drawing on the two-dimensionality of ritual diagrams.

Several of his works are reflections on the self. Unlike modernist existentialist depictions, Bhatt presents the self as a social and cultural being with works that are sumptuously kitsch, replete with references to local and personal experiences. Their meanings emerge by decoding images and symbols.

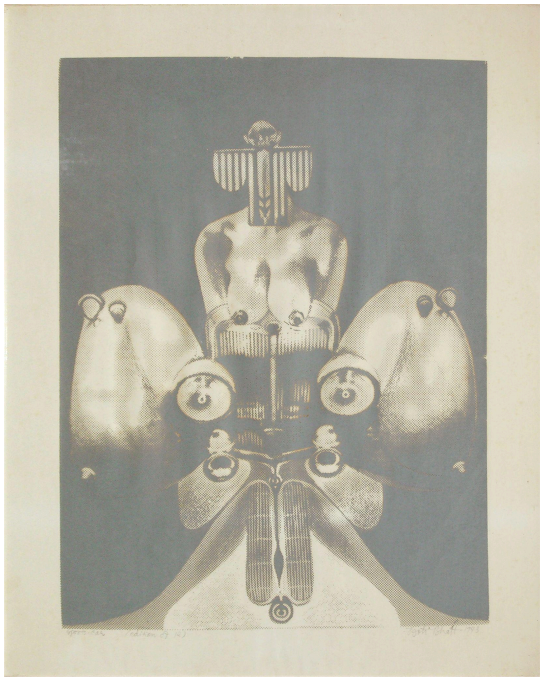
‘The Looking Glass’ invites a closer look at the connections between the personal and the social in Bhatt’s works. Inspired from lived experience, Bhatt’s practice presents the quirks and ironies of life and art.

- Puja Vaish

Featured artworks:



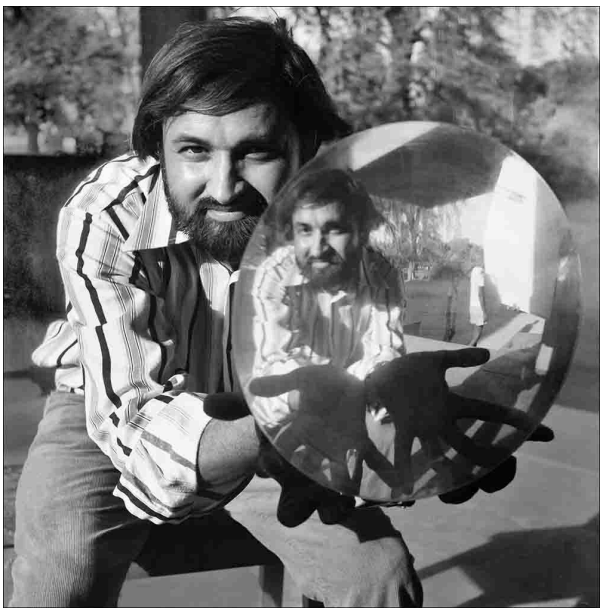
Pushpak, c. 2002, hand painting on etching
Courtesy the artist



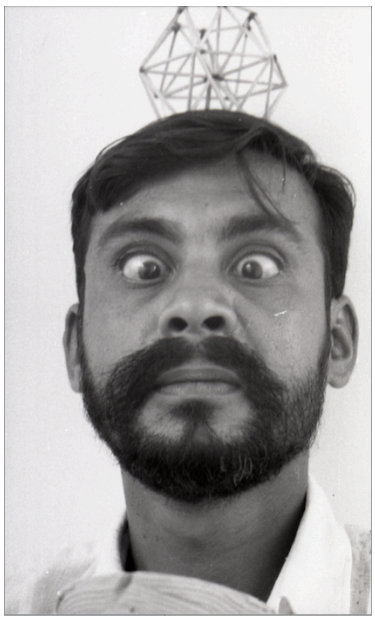
Sports Car, 1973, serigraph
Jehangir Nicholson Art Foundation, Mumbai



Self Portrait, 1972 (2016), etching
Jehangir Nicholson Art Foundation, Mumbai



Raghav Kaneria
Photographed by Jyoti Bhatt
Courtesy Jyoti Bhatt



Himmat Shah, 1968-69
Photographed by Jyoti Bhatt
Courtesy Jyoti Bhatt and Asia Art Archive



Blue Goggles - Variations, Gujarat, 1982, archival print
Jehangir Nicholson Art Foundation, Mumbai



A rural house, Rajasthan, 1980, archival print
Jehangir Nicholson Art Foundation, Mumbai

About the artist

A printmaker, photographer and painter, Jyotindra Manshankar Bhatt (Jyoti Bhatt) was born on 12 March 1934 in Bhavnagar, Gujarat. An alumni of the Faculty of Fine Arts, Maharaja Sayajirao University, Baroda, Jyoti Bhatt subsequently taught there from 1959 until his retirement in 1992. In the 60s, he went to Italy under a government scholarship to study painting and printmaking at the Academia di Belle Arti, Naples, and then to the Pratt Institute, New York, on a Fulbright Scholarship and JDR IIIrd Fund Fellowship to study printmaking. Bhatt started the photo-documentation of the 'Living Traditions of India', producing over 50,000 photographs over three decades from the 60s.

Jyoti Bhatt joined Baroda in the first batch of the college in 1950 and was part of the early artist collectives. He was a part of the 'Baroda Group of Artists' and also a founding member of the 'Group 1890', and 'Camera Pictorialists of Baroda'. His works have been part of exhibitions worldwide, such as the *Sao Paulo Triennale of Arts*, Brazil; *Through Indian Eyes*, Indian Photographer's Show, Holland; *Six Indian Photographers*, Museum of Modern Art, Oxford, *Painters with a Camera,* Jehangir Art Gallery, Mumbai, etc. Bhatt's works have been acquired by major private and public collections, such as the Museum of Modern Art, New York, USA; Smithsonian Museum, Washington D.C., USA; The British Museum, UK; Tate Modern, London; Uffizi Gallery, Florence, Italy; Lalit Kala Akademi, New Delhi; National Gallery of Modern Art, New Delhi; Tata Institute of Fundamental Research, Mumbai; Centre for International Modern Art, Kolkata, Jehangir Nicholson Art Foundation, Mumbai, etc.

For inquiries

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For listings

Jyoti Bhatt | The Looking Glass
Curated by Puja Vaish
Presented by Jehangir Nicholson Art Foundation and Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj Vastu Sangrahalaya

Exhibition Venue	Timings
Jehangir Nicholson Gallery	10:15 am - 6 pm

2nd Floor, East Wing
Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj Vastu Sangrahalaya, 159/161, Mahatma Gandhi Road, Fort, Mumbai 400023

Open on all days
Museum ticket applicable:
200 INR for Indian adults
40 INR for children (5 - 15 yrs)

About the institutions

Jehangir Nicholson Art Foundation (JNAF)

The Jehangir Nicholson Art Foundation is a non-profit organisation committed to preserve, document and update the seminal collection of modern and contemporary Indian art, acquired by Jehangir Nicholson, one of the earliest art collectors in India. The JNAF collection reflects crucial phases of modern Indian art history from the 1940s to 2000s.

With over 800 artworks, procured by Jehangir Nicholson across five decades till 2001 and by the foundation since then, the JNAF presents a diversity of post-independence art practices in the country. In 2008, the JNAF entered into a collaboration with the Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj Vastu Sangrahalaya, Mumbai (formerly, the Prince of Wales Museum), where it functions as the museum's modern and contemporary art wing.

The JNAF seeks to build a connected research-based framework for its exhibitions and programming, bringing Indian art into conversation with relevant local and global art-historical discourses, onsite and online. Through collaborations with national and international institutions and professionals, the JNAF has created a platform for critical dialogue and diverse interdisciplinary cultural exchange.

Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj Vastu Sangrahalaya (CSMVS)

THE MUSEUM



Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj Vastu Sangrahalaya (CSMVS) is one of the premier art and history museums in India. The museum came about as an initiative of prominent citizens of Mumbai, having completed in 2022 a centenary in service of society. Situated on the southern tip of Mumbai on the 'Crescent Site', it is the heart of the Kala Ghoda art district in Mumbai, the building itself done in an interesting architectural style known as Indo-Saracenic, an amalgamation of several artistic styles that is unique to India. The museum opened to the public in January 1922 and has since built a diverse collection of more than 70,000 objects. Today, its building is listed as a Grade I Heritage Building, is a Platinum certified Green Building, and has been awarded the highest Award of Excellence 2022 UNESCO Asia Pacific Heritage Award for "the heroic restoration of the CSMVS Museum Building", and the 2010 UNESCO Asia Pacific Heritage Award for Cultural Heritage Conservation. It has also been awarded first place for Heritage Building Maintenance by the Indian Heritage Society. CSMVS is part of the splendid Victorian Gothic and Art Deco Ensemble of Mumbai inscribed as a UNESCO World Heritage Site in 2018.

The museum is today a dynamic space located within the heritage city of Mumbai, widely visited by a diverse range of audiences, offering curated exhibitions, academic and cultural programmes, publications, and unique in-person and online experiences in multiple Indian languages. The museum also houses an eco-cultural hub for children—the CSMVS Children's Museum—nestled in a grove of trees, enabling a non-competitive environment for children to engage with the museum's collections and the arts. It also houses an advanced Conservation and Research Centre that undertakes the preservation of its iconic art objects.

Its Museum on Wheels buses travel to several states offering museum exhibitions to students and communities in rural India. The CSMVS is run on the principle that it is by the people, for the people, operating entirely autonomously through the support of a legacy of sensitive donors, patrons and institutions.