

Serendipity Arts Festival 2024: Craft Highlights

This year's edition will witness an array of craft related events and workshops curated by **Sandeep Sangaru & Kristine Michael**. Sandeep Sangaru is an award-winning designer known for his work in furniture and craft innovation, often collaborating with traditional artisans to merge contemporary design with indigenous techniques. Kristine Michael is a ceramic artist whose work integrates fine art and craft, exploring cultural heritage and modernity through clay.

Details of Craft Events:

- **Abundance in Scarcity: Exploring Ladakh's Sustainable Ingenuity**
"Abundance in Scarcity", curated by Sandeep Sangaru, is an immersive project exploring the interplay of scarcity and ingenuity in Ladakh. Nestled in the Himalayan cold desert, Ladakh's environment has fostered sustainable practices and cultural resilience. The project features stories and installations that capture the essence of this resilient landscape and its people. Key themes include "Ingenuity in Scarcity," highlighting how limited resources drive creativity and sustainability; "Cultural Resilience," showcasing how ancient traditions adapt to contemporary challenges; and "Environmental Stewardship," prompting discussions on the balance between human life and ecological preservation. The project aims to foster collaboration among artisans and creators, sparking dialogue on sustainability and cultural preservation, and inspiring action towards integrating these practices into the future, while initiating conversations on fragility and sustainability.

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SERENDIPITY ARTS FESTIVAL 2024

- **Past Forward: Remix and Collaborations in Ceramics and Glass**

Past Forward: Remix and Collaborations in Ceramics and Glass is an exhibition curated by Kristine Michael for Serendipity Arts Festival 2024, showcasing collaborations between contemporary and vernacular artists in ceramics and glass from Goa and other parts of India. The event brings together artisans and artists to explore new interpretations of history, memories, and stories through the lens of these traditional materials.

Key Collaborations:

Ceramics: Bipasha Gupta with Goa Potteries, Partha Dasgupta with Shankar Turi, and Zillu and Dattaram Harmalkar of Kumbhar Pottery.

Glass: Reshmi Dey with Firozabad glass makers and Hemi Bawa with glass artisans.

Ceramic and Glass: M Sashidharan.

Upcycling: Nehmat Mongia with Azulejo tiles and glass waste.

The exhibition emphasises the use of sustainable and upcycled materials, inviting artists to reinterpret traditional forms in innovative ways. It highlights the expressive potential of ceramics and glass, creating a rich, participatory space where artists and audiences can connect through storytelling and creative expression. This initiative encourages fresh perspectives on cultural narratives while fostering a deeper understanding of both art and life for future possibilities.

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- **Songs of Day and Night project supported by Bridge Bharat**

Songs of Day and Night, supported by Bridge Bharat, is a textile installation project that showcases a unique fusion of Gond art, Chamba Rumal embroidery, and Lucknow's chikankari. The installation highlights the rich living traditions of these art forms, weaving together stories, songs, and folktales rooted in Indian tribal and regional cultures. This materialistic intervention would allow us to experience and read into the living traditions of these art forms, their songs, and folktales with tactility of embroidery traditions of Chamba Rumal and Chikankari.

Key Artists:

Venkat Raman Shyam (Gond Art): A renowned tribal artist known for his contemporary Pradhan Gond murals and mixed media work, he draws inspiration from his cultural heritage and interprets it through modern techniques.

Padma Shri Lalita Vakil (Chamba Rumal): A master of Chamba Rumal embroidery from Himachal Pradesh, recognized for her intricate silk embroidery and for training over a hundred women in this craft.

Imran Ahmed (Chikankari): A chikankari artist from Lucknow, known for blending modern business strategies with the traditional craftsmanship passed down through generations in his family's 50-year-old chikankari practice.

The installation explores the **botanical motifs** central to each of these art forms, symbolising the connection between livelihood, culture, and nature. By placing the works in response to the site of a tree, the project draws attention to the aesthetic and cultural significance of natural elements in Indian art traditions. The collaboration between these master artists offers a tactile experience of heritage crafts, allowing audiences to engage with the nuanced

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techniques and stories embedded in each piece. Through this dialogue between tradition and innovation, the project promotes the preservation and evolution of India's rich textile and craft heritage.

The Infinite Forest: An Exploration of Material Possibilities

The Infinite Forest is a project that explores craft forms and craftsmanship in contemporary forms and materiality through the mastery of artisans working with 4 different design collectives showcasing dhokra art (non-ferrous metal casting using lost wax techniques); jute work; marble, and textile. The idea of showcasing these types of craft is also to juxtapose different types of materials, each vastly different from the other, and push boundaries in the ways in which these forms can be showcased. The Infinite Forest plays on the idea of a forest, inhabited by mythical and magical creatures, folk and tribal tales, an abundance of flowers and trees at a scale that pays tribute to the expert workmanship and techniques which explore both materials as well as their multitude of possibilities.

Key collaborators include:

No Borders: with a focus on the ancient art of Kasuti embroidery, this collaboration highlights the personal journeys of artisans and their connection to heritage, flora, and fauna.

Vaarsa: with artists like Dr. Manjiri Thakoor and Arti Zaveri, this segment explores the rich, mythical history of human imagination through art, from ancient civilizations to modern times.

Devrai Art Village: this installation, Luminous Darkness, reflects on India's cultural identity, blending natural and human worlds to evoke a sense of unity with nature.

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SERENDIPITY ARTS FESTIVAL 2024

The project also features a Jute Craft Workshop facilitated by Vikram Wakle, showcasing jute's versatility through macramé and weaving in ceramic rings.

Through these collaborations, The Infinite Forest encourages reflection on craftsmanship, imagination, and the interconnection of materials, culture, and nature.

- **M(O)therhood**

This event explores the expansive and multifaceted concept of motherhood using Knitting Meshwork as a choreographic principle, weaving together various presentations that delve into the relationship between motherhood and the broader world.

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