For Immediate Release

Kiran Nadar Museum of Art

KNMA marks its Bengal Biennale debut with a major exhibition paying tribute to Arpita Singh(1937-2026) and *Joler Abakash,* a contemporary presentation around the recess and agency of water

An extensive survey of Arpita Singh at Lalit Kala Akademi, a presentation exploring the recess of water at Alipore Museum, and a Biennale-wide learning programme mark KNMA's first participation in the Bengal Biennale.

PRESS KIT

Kolkata/New Delhi, 20 November 2026 - The Kiran Nadar Museum of Art (KNMA) is pleased to announce its participation in the second edition of the Bengal Biennale, taking place from 25 November 2026 to 2 January 2027 across multiple venues in Bengal, bringing together diverse artistic and cultural spaces. Marking the museum's first participation in the Biennale, KNMA will present two distinctive engagements with modern and contemporary art, bringing together significant artistic practices and explorations.

In addition to its exhibition presentations, KNMA will join the Biennale as its Official Learning Partner, conceptualizing and delivering an extensive education and public programme, with a particular focus on the artistic, cultural and intellectual contexts of Bengal.

"Heaven is where you keep your memories"
ARPITA SINGH (1937-2026)

Arpita Singh, a seminal figure in post-Independent India, is widely known for her tongue-and cheek humour and subversive artistic practice that continues to be an inspiration for subsequent generations. *Heaven is where you keep your Memories* is a quote inscribed in one of her paintings referencing her figures who look skyward. It offers an evocative and poetic entry point into a practice that has remained deeply invested in the entanglements of everyday life, extending meanings and associations by referencing mythology, history and children story books. Personal memories and collective experience enter the picture plane alongside quotidian objects and vistas, while the act of painting becomes a form of poesies - a way of giving shape to inner thoughts, everyday observations, potent details, layering her paintings with many beginnings and no ends.

Born in 1937 in Baranagar, and spending her formative years in West Bengal, Arpita Singh's family moved to Delhi in 1946 ahead of the 1947 Partition, the early political unrest and historical shifts shaping her worldview. After graduating from Delhi Polytechnic, Singh entered the predominantly male-dominated mainstream Indian modernism in the 1960s, gradually forging a distinctive visual language. The artist often occupies the position of a

bystander, a witness to the world's happenings. Her dense pictorial spaces effortlessly collate the familiar and the fantastical, beauty and disquiet, all come together.

Heaven is where you keep your memories
Curated by Aditi Ghildiyal, Curator, KNMA
with Roobina Karode, Curatorial Advisor to the exhibition and Artistic Director and Chief Curator, KNMA.



The Shore, 1984, Oil on Canvas, 48 x 48 in.
Collection : Kiran Nadar Museum Of Art

The exhibition builds on KNMA's longstanding engagement with the artistic practice of Arpita Singh. In 2019, KNMA presented *Submergence: In the Midst of Here and there*, a retrospective curated by Roobina Karode in Delhi, which brought together a significant corpus of her work across six decades.

Continuing this curatorial engagement, *Heaven is where you keep your memories* offers a renewed encounter with Singh's expansive visual language and artistic concerns. The exhibition also marks the first presentation of a survey of this scale of her work in Bengal, bringing into focus the depth, complexity and enduring significance of her contribution to Indian art.

Drawing its title from a quote by Singh, which references her figures looking skyward, *Heaven is Where You Keep Your Memories* offers a poetic entry point into an artistic practice that has consistently resisted singular interpretations. Through painting, she creates worlds that are at once intimate, fantastical and deeply evocative.

Rather than following a chronological narrative, the exhibition traces the recurring motifs, visual vocabularies and formal explorations drawing from Indian visual traditions, textile patterns and everyday visual culture. Women, flowers, ducks, aeroplanes, guns, maps and fragments of text appear across works with continually shifting associations and meanings. The exhibition invites viewers to navigate her richly layered visual world, where memory, imagination and observations remain in constant dialogue.

Bringing together 92 works of the artist largely from the KNMA collection with few private loans, the exhibition offers a rare opportunity to step into Arpita Singh's world. It also marks the void her recent passing has left on Contemporary Indian art.

Joler Abakash
Access - Excess - Recess
Curated by Avik Debdas

জলের অবকাশ (Joler Abakash) - Recess of Water curated by Avik Debdas, Curator, KNMA asks the question that what if the right to recess exceeds human purview? What if we began to understand water not through what it provides us, but through what it chooses to do?



Soma Surovi Jannat, জলের কাছে নদীর চিঠি A Letter to Water from River Medium: Archival pen on paper and wall, acrylic colour, gold and silver leaf, Dimensions: Variable, Commissioned by KNMA, Year: 2026

The presentation begins with this tension between water's agency and the human desire to govern it. It approaches water as a thinking, remembering, and relational presence through the cultural footprints of water as they surface in stories, oral traditions, forgotten rituals, and everyday practices, rather than merely a resource whose access is unequally distributed and controlled by human interests.

The exhibition is based on a long-term research project, *Plurality of Water* by Avik Debdas, that brought the East Kolkata Wetlands into dialogue with Berlin's Pink Pipeline infrastructures. It now expands across the Ganga–Brahmaputra-Meghna delta in conversation with Central European wetlands and river systems.

The exhibition traces how communities, artists and other beings live with and remember water across the Sundarbans, Bangladesh, Assam, Kolkata and Central Europe. It moves through textiles, fishing nets, film, zines, woodcut prints, photography, sculpture, patachitra, sound, etc. *Shwasmul Arts* artists from Khulna and Barguna, Biswajit Das's film on Guwahati's diminished Bharulu River, and Alina's photographs of Central European waterworks show how knowledge persists through labour, gesture and memory, even as rivers are altered or controlled by urban and industrial engineering. The Abakashkhana, a reading, viewing and listening room, with Jaladarsha Collective's work on indigenous rice seed preservation, offers a pause, while Disappearing Dialogues and Jeanne Astrup Chauvaux's *Wild Infrastructures* ask us to see wetlands as worlds of many lives rather than systems to be managed.

The central room holds the Sundarbans' myths and more-than-human presence: *Jungle Nama*, Soma Surovi Jannat's animals, holding glass jars in search of clean water, Shibayan Halder's remembrance of vanished foxes and kites, Soumen Mondal's material book and map of Gosaba, and Swarna Chitrakar's patachitra reimagining Behula's voyage. Sukrit Sen's

soundscape evokes the ghost of the Bidyadhari River, and at the end it opens a horizon with Shawon Akand's Jamdani weaving with the images of turtles, which holds slowness against speed. Throughout, the exhibition treats water as an active presence, shaping survival, memory and coexistence across species and shifting territories.

KNMA AS THE OFFICIAL LEARNING PARTNER

As the Biennale's Official Learning Partner, KNMA will present an extensive programme of artist-led workshops, family and school engagements, and inclusive learning experiences at Lalit Kala Akademi. Designed for audiences across age groups and abilities, the programme will create opportunities to engage with diverse artistic practices and mediums through hands-on, participatory and experiential learning.

Drawing inspiration from the legacy of the Bengal School and the practices of artists such as Nandalal Bose, Jamini Roy, Benode Behari Mukherjee, Somnath Hore, Jogen Chowdhury, Ganesh Haloi and Arpita Singh, the programme will invite audiences to explore painting, printmaking, textiles, craft and mixed media. Through these varied engagements, it will open up conversations around identity, memory, nature and storytelling, fostering deeper connections with art and the cultural histories of Bengal.

Kiran Nadar, Chairperson, Kiran Nadar Museum of Art (KNMA), said, "*We are delighted to take part in the Bengal Biennale for the first time. At KNMA, we believe art is richer when more voices are part of the conversation. With Arpita Singh's exploration of memory and everyday life in Heaven is where you keep your memories, and Joler Abakash's reimagining of water across regions, we hope to bring forward diverse conversations around art. Through our role as the Biennale's Official Learning Partner, we are creating space for everyone, of all ages and abilities, to look, make and take part.*"

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Press Information
For further information, images, or to arrange interviews, please contact
Amrita Kapoor, DGM – Media, PR and Strategic Communications, Kiran Nadar Museum of Art
Email: amrita.kapoor@knma.org;
Mobile: +91 -9818058964

Listing Details:

Heaven is where you keep your memories
Dates: 29 November 2026 to 2 January 2027
Venue: Lalit Kala Akademi, Kolkata, 85, AJC Bose Rd, Maula Ali, Taltala, Kolkata

Joler Abakash: Access - Excess - Recess
Dates: 28 November 2026 to 2 January 2027
Venue: Ward Number 7, Alipore Museum, 17, Judges Court Rd, Alipore, Kolkata

Notes to Editor

About Kiran Nadar Museum of Art (KNMA)
Founded in 2010, the Kiran Nadar Museum of Art (KNMA) is India's leading private museum of modern and contemporary art from South Asia. A non-commercial, not-for-profit institution supported by the Shiv Nadar Foundation, KNMA presents exhibitions, commissions, performances, and public programmes that connect visual and performing arts with broad audiences. Through its wide-ranging learning and community initiatives, KNMA works to expand access to the arts and foster deeper engagement with modern and contemporary practices. KNMA is currently under construction on a new purpose-built campus in New Delhi that will significantly expand its exhibition, performance, and learning capacities. Conceived as an interdisciplinary cultural center, the new building will enable more ambitious artistic production, cross-disciplinary collaboration, and public programming, strengthening the museum's role as a leading cultural platform in India and internationally.
www.knma.org

About Bengal Biennale
The Bengal Biennale is organised by Gameplan Foundation, which was started by Jeet and Malavika Banerjee, and will unfold across multiple venues in Kolkata and Santiniketan, connecting established cultural institutions, historic sites, artist-led spaces and alternative locations. The second edition of the Bengal Biennale will run from 25 November 2026 to 2 January 2027, bringing art into dialogue with the layered histories, landscapes and cultural geographies of Bengal and beyond.
The second edition is co-curated by Chander Haat, an artist collective and community space in Sarsuna, Kolkata; and Ritika Biswas, an independent curator and international researcher. Their collaboration brings together experimental approaches to artistic practice, transdisciplinary research, and community-building, while foregrounding the specific cultural and ecological contexts of Bengal.
This year's curatorial concept interweaves Jibanananda Das' 1942 Bangla poem 'Banalata Sen' and the ecology of wild forest-vines (ban-lata), using subterranean worlds, buried histories, entanglement, resistance and collective survival as starting points. Banalata will move through a variety of sites including a former prison, old houses, a wild park among others, across Kolkata and Santiniketan. Rather than treating these locations as mere venues, the Bengal Biennale considers them as living and layered ecosystems in conversation with art.
https://bengalbiennale.com/