

About Purvai Rai

Purvai Rai (b. 1994) is a mixed media artist based in New Haven, Connecticut, and New Delhi.

Rai's work centres on the interplay between memory, identity, and materiality and utilises ritualistic, repetitive practices such as weaving, mark-making, and printmaking. Thematically, she traces the evolution of Punjab across generations, examining the influence of changing regimes and sociopolitical structures. With this research, she reassesses ideas of tangible and intangible inheritance, the influence of place on memory transmission, and how these factors coalesce to manifest identity.

Materiality is at the heart of her practice, and she often works with natural materials like jute, cotton, and yarn. She is particularly interested in the tactility of natural fabrics, and how in the recesses of its weaves reside familial and generational memory, waiting to be inherited much as clothes are passed on from parent to child.

Rai's delicate graphite and ink drawings on rice paper are conceived in response to social and political events, specifically those caused by religious and cultural discord. Distilled into an abstract visual language consisting of circles and elliptical patterns, Rai alludes and (re-)presents the precariousness of existing on the margins.

Rai is a 2025 MFA candidate in Painting and Printmaking at Yale School of Art, and completed her Bachelor's degree through Srishti Institute for Art, Design and Technology, Bangalore in 2017. She was the artist in residence at the Henry Moore Foundation in 2024 and has participated in several exhibitions. She is represented by Gallery Espace in Delhi, India.

"The materials, visual elements, and gestures employed in the works function as multivalent signifiers that embody personal and collective narratives that accumulate over time. Making art assists me in finding interconnections between community, craft, agroecology (economy), architecture, and ancestry prompting a reassessment of the influence of place on memory transmission and the formation of generational patterns." Purvai Rai



Purvai Rai, Mannat 10, 2023

CV

Education

2023 - 2025

Masters in Fine Art; Painting and Printmaking, Yale University, United States of America

2013 - 2017

Bachelors in Design; Information Arts, Information Design Practices, Srishti Institute for Art Design and Technology, India

Solo exhibitions

2023

'Sutr Santiti', at National Gallery of Modern Art, Mumbai

2022

'Women is as women does', curated by Nancy Adajania, Jehangir Nicholson Art Foundation, CSMVS, Mumbai

2021

'Highlighting the Role of women in India's History' curated by Uma Nair, National Gallery of Modern Art, New Delhi

2020

'Partition, Migration, Identity and Memory', Fundraiser for the realization and expansion of the Partition Museum, organized by Art Alive Gallery, Amritsar, Punjab

Group exhibitions

2024

'Memory Fields', curated by Gayatri Sinha, Centre for Contemporary Art, Bikaner House

'Entwined 2.0', Apparao Galleries, Bikaner House, New Delhi
Delhi Contemporary Art Week 2024, Bikaner House, New Delhi
Art Mumbai, Mumbai
India Art Fair, New Delhi
StART KX, London

2023

Group Show, TAF London, 079 Stories, Ahmedabad
'One X One: Beyond the Small Scale', Gallery Espace, New Delhi
Delhi Contemporary Art Week at Bikaner House, New Delhi

2022

Delhi Contemporary Art Week at Bikaner House, New Delhi
'Riyas', curated by Ina Puri, Inam Gallery (Bikaner House), New Delhi
'Fleeting Expressions', Gallery Espace, New Delhi
'Lines (by) Lines', curated by Manmeet K Walia, Dhoomimal Gallery, New Delhi
India Art Fair, New Delhi

2021

'Residues', curated by Reha Sodhi, Delhi Contemporary Art Week at Bikaner House, New Delhi
'Patterns of Intensity' curated by Ranjit Hoskote, Art Alive Gallery, New Delhi

2020

'Abstract Notations' curated by Jesal Thacker, Gallery Espace, New Delhi

'All is not lost' curated by Saloni Doshi, Sakshi Gallery, Mumbai

India Art Fair, New Delhi

2019

'Art Now' curated by Sunaina Anand, Lalit Kala Academy, New Delhi

'What is contemporary' curated by Anushka Rajendran, Art Alive Gallery, New Delhi

Museums and Public Collections

Justine De Penning, The Architecture Story
Minal Vazirani, Saffronart
Jindal Stainless Steel
Kiran Nadar Museum of Art

Residencies

2024
Henry Moore Institution Residency in collaboration with Yale Center for British Arts
Paul Mellon Centre, The Graduate Summer Program

Awards

2022
3rd Place winner, Emerging Artists Award South Asia 2023, The Arts Family London