

INDIA
INTERNATIONAL
CENTRE

IIC

PRESENTS

खुर्जा Khurja
THE CLAY SPACE

A GROUP EXHIBITION
OF CONTEMPORARY
CERAMICS



ANUJA
PANJWANI
MINHAS

JAYA
RAWAL

MILAN
KARMAKAR

RITIKA
ANAND

SANJAY
SAMANTA

SIRAJ
SAXENA

SURAJ
GORAI

ZAHIR
AHEMAD

The Art Gallery Annexe

India International Centre Annexe,
Lodhi Estate, New Delhi 110003.

11th March 2026 to 17th March 2026

Time : 11 am to 7 pm

Curated by **Siraj Saxena**

Khurja – The Clay Space

An artist chooses their medium, but after being associated with it for decades, one begins to realize that it is the medium that has chosen the artist. It is through devotion and reverence for clay that this realization emerges. Clay has long been an integral part of our traditions, culture, and religious rituals. Many saints, fakirs, craftsmen, and poets have offered profound, unique, and meaningful lessons about life through the metaphor of clay. Whether it is a village potter in India or an educated artist working with clay, in simple everyday conversation they often say things so insightful that the listener is left astonished. The Indian artist's special aesthetic sensibility and philosophy of life arise from the soil (clay) itself. Clay has been the true teacher of those who work with it. Across the country, the craft of clay and the understanding of those who shape it are distinctive, captivating, and a matter of pride.

Not only in India but abroad as well, Khurja's stoneware craftsmanship is renowned for its beautiful vessels, planters, crockery, electrical fittings, insulators and laboratory ware. Our artistic medium is also stoneware, and that is why we all made Khurja our workplace. For the past twenty five years, I have continuously pursued my creative practice in clay here as an artist. The sculptures and ceramic installations I have created here have earned me appreciation, recognition, and honour and awards not only in India but internationally, leading to invitations to participate in exhibitions, art events, and international ceramic art residencies and symposiums. Here, I work alongside local artisans, using their resources and living among them, to create my contemporary ceramic arts.

It brings me great joy that young artists such as Sanjay, Anuja, Suraj, Milan, Ritika, and Jaya are now doing their own art practice in this medium in this city. In 2004, Israeli artist Frida Steinberger also came here, and we held a joint exhibition in Delhi dedicated to the Israeli ceramic potter late Ms. Jean Mayor and world renowned poet Yehuda Amichai. We displayed lines from his poetry alongside our ceramic sculptures and installations. Two years ago, in my solo exhibition dedicated to poet Kunwar Narain, I also presented ceramic works made in Khurja using his poems on the surface of my pots and ceramic forms.

Every artist strives to explore new possibilities within their medium. In Khurja, the city of clay, artists are able to see these possibilities more closely and express them more vividly. This exhibition is an attempt by all of us to articulate, through our individual artistic practices, the creative experiments we have undertaken to uncover the hidden potential within clay.

About ten years ago, Sanjay came to Khurja with Bhopal-based senior potter Ms. Nirmala Sharma; that was my first meeting with him. Here, Sanjay continues to experiment with crystal glazes and has also created

several large ceramic installations in Khurja. Suraj, a young artist who arrived with Sanjay, is known for his realistic drawings, which attract great attention. In his works, he has expressively portrayed images of the town of Khurja. Thoughtful and serious by nature, Suraj is always immersed in creating contemplative sculptures.

Anuja has been working here for the past few years and has now, like me, become a resident of this city. She brought with her younger artist friend, Milan Karmakar. Milan's realistic large and small sculptures reveal the promising journey of a sculptor taking shape within him. He is the youngest artist in our group.

A community of artists is now forming in Khurja. Recently, Ritika, Sanjay, and Suraj held solo exhibitions in Delhi featuring works created in Khurja. Anuja has also presented her artistic experiments in glazes (the colors of clay) in group exhibitions. Among us, she is the most enthusiastic and active artist. She began her ceramic journey at Minhas Ceramic Factory in Khurja, where she continues to explore different types of clay bodies, glazes, and surface drawings in her creative practice.

Zahir Ahmad is a traditional potter. I have been working alongside him for twenty-five years. Our friendship has brought positive changes to both our creative approaches. Drawing upon the knowledge of clay inherited from his forefathers, he constantly experiments with glazes and also creates artistic vessels. This is the first time his work is being presented in a contemporary art exhibition.

Ritika seeks to incorporate glass alongside clay in her sculptures and vessels. Working here has been an exciting experience for her. Jaya studied ceramics at Bharat Bhavan, Bhopal. She has successfully experimented with ceramics and metal wire, and she is also a paper collage artist, having created several large installations in that medium as well.

Through social media, international artists view and appreciate images and videos of our Khurja studios and express curiosity about coming here to create works in Khurja's clay. I am confident that in the near future, artists from abroad will come here to create as well.

I extend my gratitude to Minhas Pottery and Zahir Ceramics for not only providing us artists the opportunity to create in their factories but also for offering their full support. I also thank to Shri Mahesh Saxena and Vivek Saxena who made my ceramic practise possible in Khurja. I also thank to Muneer and Tanvir Ahemad for there unconditional assistance.

- Siraj Saxena

W : www.sirajsaxena.in

E : sirajsaxena@gmail.com

M : 9868514534



MILAN KARMAKAR

KHURJA" the city known for its rich ceramic heritage. When I first arrived in Khurja, it was a turning point in my life. That moment transformed my perspective on materials, processes, and creativity. That first encounter with clay, fire and form changed the way I saw things. What once seemed unconventional, slowly became my own. What started as just curiosity, slowly transformed into dedication for me. I was deeply inspired by how clay transforms into form, surface and meaning. What started as a mere curiosity gradually transformed into a dedication. Over time, my perspective has evolved through learning, practicing and closely observing traditional and contemporary ceramic techniques. Today, I work as a ceramic designer and ceramic artist, where I combine technical knowledge with artistic expression.

My work reflects my journey - from my early experiences in Khurja to my current identity as a ceramic artist. I explore form, structure and function, honoring Khurja's ceramic heritage and interpreting them through my own contemporary perspective. I come from West Bengal, a land of stories, rhythms, and profound cultural memories. Living in Khurja, I learned to listen to the clay. Through touch, patience, and practice, it taught me discipline, humility, and expression. My technical training gave me a framework, but my emotional connection with the material gives my work a soul. Each artwork carries the imprint of my journey a journey between region, tradition, and identity.

Today, I work as a ceramic designer and ceramic artist, creating not just objects, but experiences.



RITIKA ANAND

My work explores the interconnections within nature through the language of natural fractals. Inspired by patterns found in landscapes and living forms, I create abstract sculptures and installations that move between the familiar and the ambiguous. Clay is my primary medium, reflecting processes of growth and transformation, and I often combine it with materials like glass, wire, and brass to create contrasts in texture and light.

My first visit to Khurja was a turning point in my practice. Witnessing the rhythm and scale of factory production was both humbling and inspiring. This experience deepened my understanding of labor, repetition, and intention, and continues to influence my work, inviting viewers to see forms that resemble roots, seeds, or living structures and reconnect with nature.



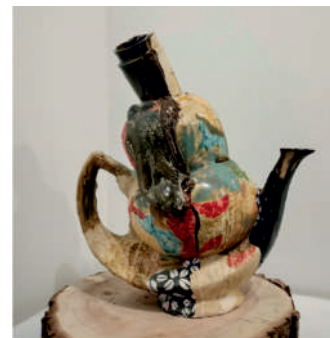
SURAJ GORAI

I am practising artist whose work emerges from sustained engagement with place, people, and material. My practice is rooted in lived experience and shaped by movement between contrasting landscapes and social rhythms. Growing up in the bustling market area of Bankura, West Bengal, I became familiar with density, exchange, and the everyday negotiations of life, while journeys to nearby villages, riverbanks, and terracotta temple landscapes offered spaces of quiet observation. These contrasting environments shaped my sensitivity to memory, material, and site.

My education at Kala Bhavana, Santiniketan introduced me to a living continuum of art, culture, and ritual, where learning unfolded through participation, dialogue, and embodied practice. This experience nurtured an attentiveness to process and context that continues to guide my work.

Over the past three years, my practice has been deeply rooted in Khurja, a rural-industrial ceramic town shaped by generations of artisans and factory workers and industrial mechanism. Through prolonged presence in factory spaces and everyday interactions with workers, and the people of Khurja, I observe the relationship with clay becomes a metaphor, which represented that structure of daily life.

Clay functions in my practice not merely as a medium but as a collaborator and witness. Working with ceramic fragments, waste, and remnants, I explore stories of use, breakage, and renewal. The city of ceramic, Khurja giving me a space, to question the identity of coexistence and relationships, as well as the ephemerality of time and space - reflecting on where we began, what we may lose, and what might quietly remain.





SANJAY

SAMANTA



Perspective on Khurja: A Living Landscape of Clay

My engagement with Khurja began in 2010 when I first visited the town for my Master's dissertation and research. Khurja, widely known as a ceramic crockery hub in India, immediately revealed itself as a place where clay, labour, and industry exist in a continuous dialogue. At that time, my interest was to understand how ceramic practice could fundamentally support mass production and how this production shaped the local economic structure.

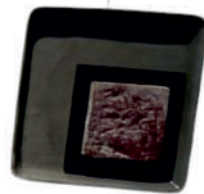
My first impression was striking and almost overwhelming. I remember, seeing sky-high chimneys rising above the factories, constantly releasing thick smoke from coal-fueled kilns. The sky appeared intensely dark, as if the atmosphere itself had absorbed the residue of countless firings. For someone encountering this landscape for the first time, it felt almost like entering another dimension—an industrial ecosystem where clay was continuously transformed into objects of everyday use. My visit then was brief, yet the visual and sensory impact of that environment remained deeply embedded in my memory.

JAYA RAWAL

I believe 60% of the Khurja population to be directly or indirectly associated to clay. These skilled workers understand the workings of clay far better than any institution given how practice comes to them naturally, entangled with their daily lives. This knowledge of experience that comes with handling and caring for clay day in and day out is worth far more than information. I was mesmerized by the sheer abundance of the material as well as the possibilities around it when I first came to Khurja, this city works with clay round the clock all year long.

Stepping into this city is a continuum of forms and shapes. Clay reciprocates, it absorbs the markings left on it when it is moulded. Firing the fragile clay and watching these markings gain permanence from their touch, memory, emotions and experience gives it a form of it's own that isn't reproduced.





ANUJA

PANJAWANI

Khurja is not just a place where I work; it is a place deeply intertwined with my journey of self-discovery. It is here that clay and creation have become an inseparable part of my daily life and artistic practice.

My studio holds an exceptionally meaningful place in my life. It represents an accumulation of my learnings, experiences, and explorations with clay and ceramics — from my time in college to the various professional journeys that have shaped me as an artist.

This space allows me to experiment freely, offering a vast palette of glazes and endless possibilities to play, learn, and evolve every single day. Through each piece I create, I continue to discover new dimensions of material, colour, and form.

Khurja, known as the pottery capital of India, carries a rich legacy of ceramic craftsmanship. Being part of this vibrant tradition is deeply inspiring, and I hope that more people visit this remarkable place and allow it to become a meaningful part of their own creative journeys.

ZAHIR AHEMAD

I have been working in Khurja since childhood and learned pottery from my late father Shri Habeeb Ahemad and uncle Rashid Ahemad. My Father was a skilled artisan he was expert in glaze making and clay moulding and my uncle Rashid Ahmed was a well known master potter. He received many national award for his craft.

I went to Japan in 1984 my trip was organised by U.P. Government. I saw ceramic pottery and production there it was a great learning experience of my life. They were well equipped. I saw such upgraded tools and kin for the first time. Those days we fire our pots in coal furnaces. Less equipped not much technically sound with limited resources but still I make big structural pots with my imagination fine carving give me work satisfaction. I love to experiment with glazes making our own glazes with trial and error achieved enough knowledge for my work still need to work everyday with new ideas and challenges. That's what is Khurja for me.



SIRAJ SAXENA

Over the past twenty-five years, working alongside traditional artisans like Zahir Bhai in Khurja has dissolved the boundaries between us, creating a deep bond united by our shared passion for clay. This relationship is defined by a natural, mutual exchange: they draw from my formal education in art and design, while I am constantly inspired by their generational skill and inherited wisdom. Even as modern society sometimes overlooks it, clay remains a timeless testament to human civilization and aesthetic development, acting as the perfect bridge for our creative dialogue.

This exchange beautifully blends local tradition with global contemporary art. By sharing international porcelain catalogues through a small library I established, I've watched the artisans enthusiastically integrate modern aesthetics into their new creations, just as foreign audiences are left in awe when I present Khurja's craftsmanship during my lectures abroad. As these artisans naturally expand upon their inherited skills, I am dedicated to documenting this evolution, recognizing that today's renewed national focus on indigenous crafts makes it the ideal time to preserve and elevate this vital art form.



SIRAJ SAXENA

30 Jan 1974 Born Siraj Saxena complete his art education from Indore. Afterwards he decided to be a freelance artist, moved to New Delhi in 2000. Started his carrier from a very small room and did his first solo exhibition in Delhi in year 2002. Till now he has done 27 solo exhibitions in india, Poland, Serbia, London, Lithuania, Nepal Spain and Taiwan. He has participated in more than 250 group exhibitions worldwide. He has been invited to participate in international art symposiums, art residencies in many countries like Poland, Latvia, Lithuania, Sri Lanka, Nepal, Thailand, Indonesia, China, Taiwan, Japan, Serbia, Bhutan, Ukraine, South Africa, Germany, Kuwait, Egypt etc.

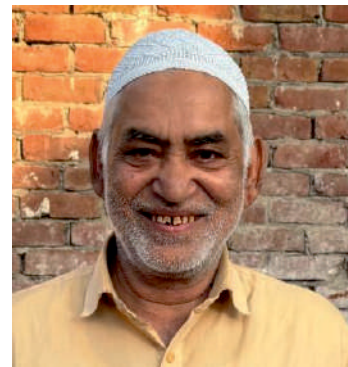


He works in different mediums such as painting, ceramics, print making, wood, metal, paper and textile. His mode of expression is abstract he believes in simplicity and express simplicity, beauty through his aesthetic vision also believes art is symbol of wellness in life hence he has been associated with six senses Vana as visual artist since 2009. He has created more then 500 art works in six senses Vana Wellness Center Dehradun India. His works are in private and museum collections world wide. He has written five books. As he loves to write travelogue. For him art is one of the beautiful way to live life. He also love cycling and done few long distance cycle expeditions in India and abroad. He has been appointed as bicycle mayor of Ghaziabad India to promote cycling in society. He lives and work in Delhi NCR. He paints nature in a different ways if you look his paintings you will see the details of land from Birds Eye view. The way he installed his ceramics you will feel that it's like "Japa". Its an illusion to say that his ceramic pieces are similar but when you look carefully you will see that each form is treated individually to give a rhythm. And viewer experiences through his or her own visual vocabulary. Many of his poet friend call him a poet of line, form and colours. Through his art he emphasises on non violence, truth and love.

Email : siirajsaxena@gmail.com

ZAHIR AHEMAD

Born on 12 March 1957 in khurja learned ceramic skills from his father and uncle who were traditional potters and received national award.he was a long time member of the Khurja pottery manufacturers association khurja.he has participated in various pottery demonstration events organised by Uttar Pradesh government.he loves glaze making and keeps himself busy in experimental glazes.he is always keen to make new designs for his utility objects.he is also a Resorce to provide tablewares to some big brands of hotel industries.his works had been awarded in the exhibitions held at khurja organised by UPSIC.



RITIKA ANAND

Ritika Anand is an accomplished contemporary artist whose practice is grounded in a rigorous academic foundation, holding an M.F.A. from Visva-Bharati University, Shantiniketan, and a B.F.A. from the Rukmini Devi College of Fine Arts, Chennai. Recognized early in her career with the Ministry of Culture's Young Artist Scholarship, her exceptional talent has continued to garner significant accolades, including the prestigious Hyundai's Art for Hope Grant for 2025-26 and the All India Ceramic Category Bronze Award from the Prafulla Dhanukar Art Foundation. With a demonstrated expertise in ceramic sculpture and painting, her technical skills have been further honed through specialized programs like the National Raku Workshop and the International Ceramic Dome Tagore Project.



Beyond her studio practice, Anand has built an impressive global footprint, showcasing her work in numerous high-profile exhibitions and art camps across India, Indonesia, Romania, and China. Notable highlights include her 2025 solo exhibition, "The Poetry of Bloom," at Triveni Kala Sangam in New Delhi, and participation in prominent group shows hosted by the Raza Foundation, Tao Art Gallery, and Lalit Kala Akademi. Actively engaging with the international art community through residencies and camps—such as the Inter Art International Art Camp in Romania and the Arrrrrt Festival in China—she continues to transcend cultural boundaries and contribute significantly to the global contemporary art dialogue.

M. +91 98403 83439

ANUJA PANJAWANI

Anuja Panjwani is an award-winning artist and product designer specializing in ceramic art, pottery, and sculpture. Driven by a deep fascination with diverse materials, she expertly works across mediums ranging from clay, wood, and metal to unconventional canvases like leather and denim. Her strong artistic foundation is backed by exceptional academic achievements, holding Gold Medals in both her Master of Fine Arts (MFA) in Sculpture and Bachelor of Fine Arts (BFA) in Ceramic Art and Pottery. Recognized for her creative excellence, Anuja received the prestigious 2019 Governor Award for Best Art Work in West Bengal and has successfully showcased and sold her pieces in over ten exhibitions across India.



Currently serving as the Head Product Designer at Minhas Pottery, Anuja brings a wealth of practical expertise from both independent studio work and commercial industry roles. She has extensive experience developing functional pottery and specialized glazes across various firing temperatures, including a notable tenure as a glaze designer for Ariane Porcelain. Beyond her independent practice, she has collaborated with prominent Indian brands such as Fabindia, Reliance Swadesh, and The Wishing Chair, while also utilizing her background in marketing to help emerging brands establish their market presence. Combining strong project management skills with her creative vision, Anuja is known for delivering high-quality, innovative designs from conception to final production.

M. +91 6386 400 238

SANJAY SAMANTA

Sanjay Samanta is a distinguished ceramic artist and educator with a profound commitment to both artistic innovation and institutional development. He holds a Master of Fine Arts from Kala-Bhavana, Santiniketan, where he earned a Merit Scholarship, and a Bachelor of Visual Arts from the Government College of Art & Craft in Kolkata. A pivotal figure in the ceramic arts community, Samanta notably spearheaded the establishment of the Ceramic Department at the Himalayan Trust for Natural History Art in Kalimpong and honed his craft as a resident artist at Bharat-Bhavan, Bhopal, for five years. His deep technical expertise—which includes specialized techniques like crystalline glazing and Raku—has made him a highly sought-after educator. He has conducted numerous workshops at prestigious institutions such as Mayo College Boys School, Pathways School, and the Assam Valley School, and notably collaborated with master ceramist Kennet Williamsson in Sweden.



An active and celebrated contributor to the contemporary art scene, Samanta's work has been showcased on both national and international platforms. In 2025, he presented highly acclaimed solo exhibitions, including "Experiment in between art and Industry" at the Arpana Caur Art Gallery and "Reflection" at the Kalasrot Art Gallery. His extensive exhibition history spans over a decade, featuring prominent group shows at the Jehangir Art Gallery in Mumbai, the Lalit Kala Akademi in New Delhi, and the Khajuraho Dance Festival. Further expanding his global footprint, he was recently invited as a guest artist at the prestigious Jingdezhen Taoxichuan Spring & Autumn Art Fair in China, cementing his reputation as a dynamic practitioner dedicated to advancing the dialogue surrounding ceramic art.

M. +91 96475 91180

MILAN KARMAKAR

Myself Milan Karmakar a visual art practitioner from Dakshin Dinajpur, West Bengal. After completing my Bachelor's degree from Shilpa Sadana, Sriniketan, Visva-Bharati University, Santiniketan. I am currently honing my practice in both artistic and commercial ceramics in Khurja, Uttar Pradesh.



My artistic journey is rooted in a deep reverence for nature and its infinite details. I see every creature no matter how small as a divine sculpture, uniquely shaped and painted with textures and colors by a higher force.

Through ceramics, I attempt to reflect this vision: to capture the essence of the natural world in its most honest form. My work aims to bring forward the quiet beauty, individuality, and sacredness of all living beings, highlighting the intricate balance and design present in every corner of the earth.

In a world increasingly disconnected from nature, my practice is both a tribute and a reminder of the wonder, fragility, and spiritual connection we share with all life forms.

M. +91 6294 764 954

JAYA RAWAL

Born in Bhopal 8th January 1973.

1993 - Graduated in commerce

1994 - Started practicing ceramic in Manav Sangrahatang (Bhopal) and then join Bharat Bhavan (Bhopal)

1995 - Participated in Group Show Vadodara (Art Core Gallery)

1996 - Group show in gallery IM in Delhi

1998 - Group show in Bharat Bhavan Bhopal

1999 - Done collaborative work in Metal Scrap Coimbatore

2003 - Group show in Hermitage Art Gallery, Mumbai

2006 - Participated in Ceramic Camp Uttarayan (Vadodara)

2012 - Lalit Kala Camp Bhopal Bharat Bhavan

2013-14 - Collaborative Paper collage in Mumbai International Airport.

2021 - Started practicing ceramic in Khurja.

Lives in Khurja and Mumbai.

Email : jayaraawal@gmail.com



SURAJ GORAI

Suraj Gorai is a visual art practitioner whose work is deeply rooted in lived experience, memory, and the intricate relationship between people, material, and their environments. Raised in the vibrant market town of Bankura, West Bengal, and educated at Kala Bhavana, Santiniketan, Gorai developed an early sensitivity to the intersections of dense social exchange and quiet rural landscapes. His academic background instilled a profound appreciation for process-oriented, embodied learning over predetermined outcomes. Treating clay not merely as a medium but as a collaborator and witness, he frequently works with ceramic waste and fragments. Drawing inspiration from philosophies like Kintsugi, Gorai's practice explores themes of rupture, continuity, and renewal by allowing discarded materials to speak to the histories of loss, labor, and the imprints of time.



For the past three years, Gorai's practice has been deeply situated in Khurja, a rural-industrial ceramic hub where traditional artisan knowledge intersects with mass production. Immersing himself in the daily rhythms of the factory floor, he has transformed these industrial spaces into collaborative studios, notably partnering with Minhas Studio Pottery on projects like The Broken Flow. By listening to conversations, observing the repetition of labor, and mapping the movements of workers, Gorai documents the complex realities of economic urgency and inherited craft. His resulting installations and objects inhabit a space of "hybrid realism," seamlessly blending personal memory with collective labor to invite viewers to reflect on what is produced, discarded, and quietly endures within shifting ecosystems.

M. +91 90646 77135



