

When India became home

ART
EXHIBITION

18-23 June
2026

Main Gallery
Bikaner House
Pandara Road
New Delhi





Artist's Statement

Julia Usmanova

India proved to be far more diverse and layered than I could ever have imagined. Over the years, I have come to regard it as my second home, and everything that once seemed extraordinary and otherworldly has now acquired the gentle patina of something familiar, something dear.



Jasmine

Size: 80 x 100 cm

Media: oil on canvas

My lily-cup is filled with rosy wine,
And from the violet clouds the
jasmine falls.

These rubaiyat of Omar Khayyam
describe this painting better than
any words of my own.

I was inspired by walks beneath the
moon during the rainy season, and,
of course, by the blossoming
jasmine trees that I encountered
time and again along my path.



Solitude

Size: 80 x 100 cm

Media: oil on canvas

The painting is built upon the tension between the stability of the figure and the instability of the surrounding space. The background dissolves into drips and fragmented fields of color, while the female figure retains a sense of inner coherence and integrity. The forward-directed profile becomes the compositional axis of the work, focussing the viewer's attention.



*Midday
and
Midnight*

Size: 92 x 92 cm

Media: oil on canvas



Tiger

Size: 80 x 100 cm

Media: oil on canvas

The painting Tiger was created in Russia, as a symbol of my deep attachment to - and nostalgia for - the time I spent in West Bengal. It's a dream of the endless summer.



Silk

What could possibly be more tender than silk, or a woman's gentle gaze?



Earring 1

Size: 20 cm

Media: oil on canvas

The human ear is, in itself, a work of art. And no one knows how to accentuate this quite like the people of India.



Earring 2

Size: 60 x 60 cm

Media: oil on canvas

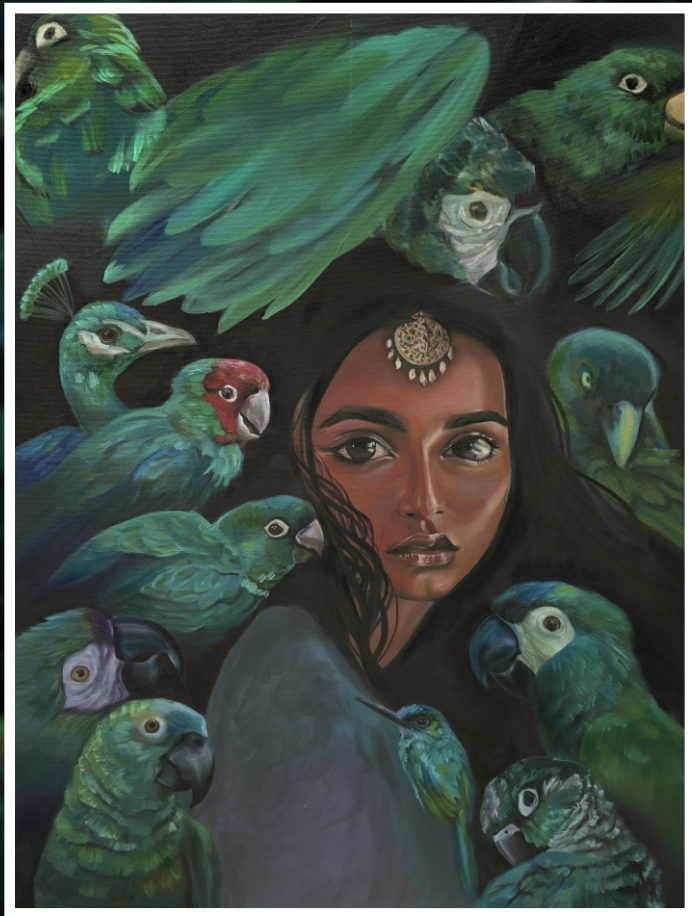
The human ear is, in itself, a work of art. And no one knows how to accentuate this quite like the people of India.



Birdy

Size: 122 x 91 cm

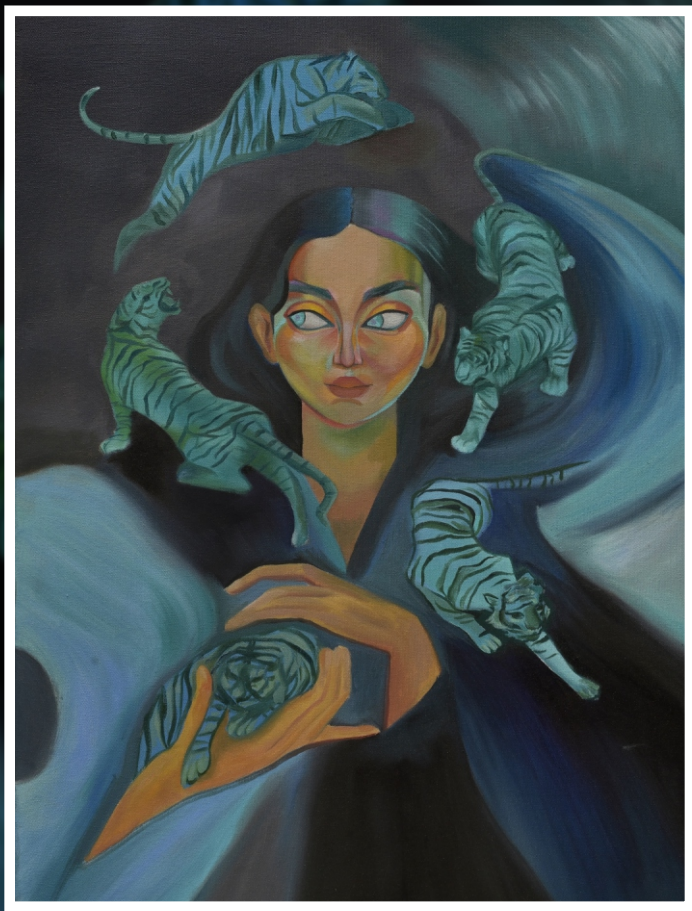
Media: oil on canvas



Doe eyes

Size: 122 x 91 cm

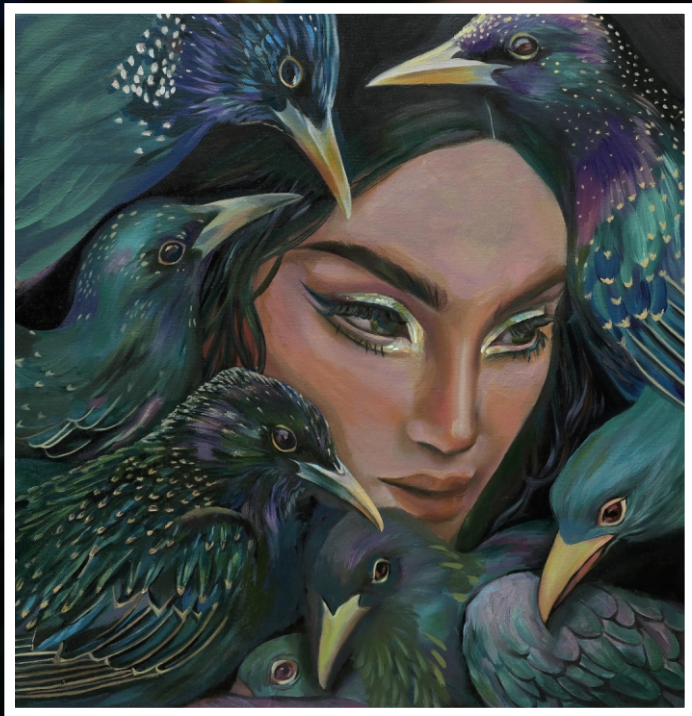
Media: oil on canvas



Bengal bay

Size: 61 x 91 cm

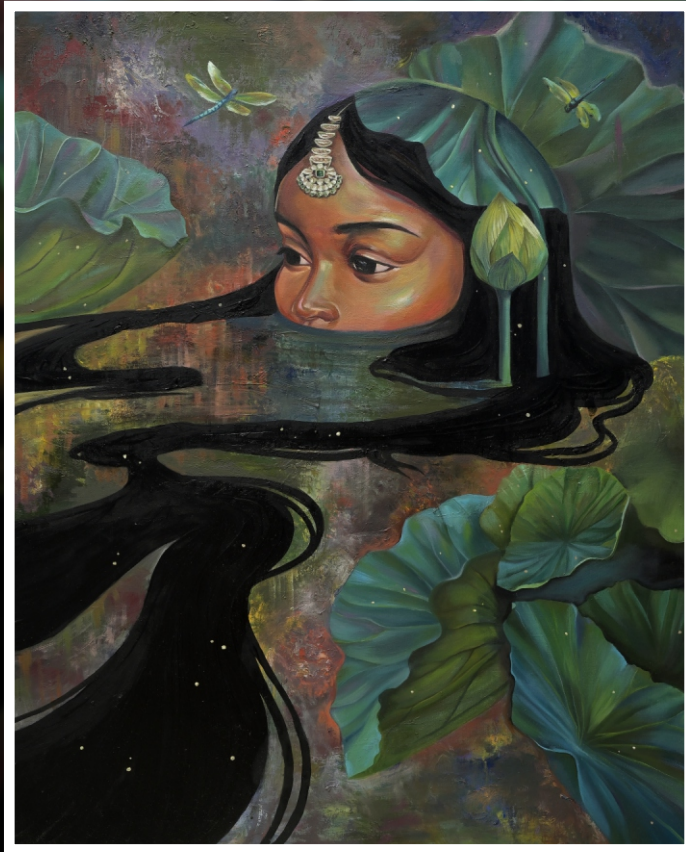
Media: oil on canvas



Starlings

Size: 60 x 90 cm

Media: oil on canvas



Dragonflies

Size: 80 x 100 cm

Media: oil on canvas

This painting, along with Pink Pond, was inspired by the waterlily ponds of the Acharya Jagadish Chandra Bose Indian Botanic Garden.



Woman

Size: 80 x 100 cm

Media: oil on canvas

In Every woman there resides a spark of the devine, a thread that connects her inextricably to the natural world.



Pink pond

Size: 80 x 100 cm

Media: oil on canvas



Bird trill

Size: 83 x 83 cm

Media: oil on canvas

A scorching afternoon when the very air seems to flow and melt, and only the birds retain their tireless, irrepressible zest for life.

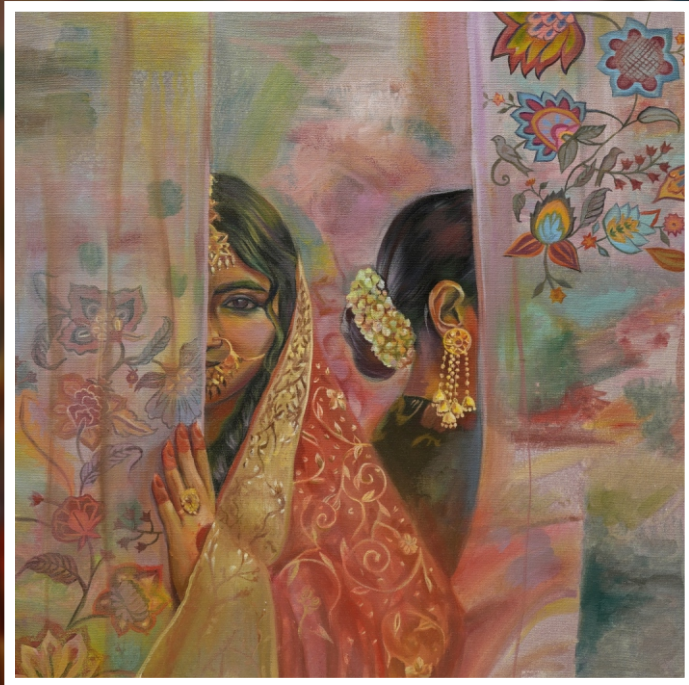


Fog

Size: 61 x 91 cm

Media: oil on canvas

I began conceiving this exhibition back at the end of 2021. The first painting "Fog" is a reflection on solitude. It is also, in mood, the most Russian piece in the collection. The young woman is wearing white dress; the high collar and minimalist design serve as a reminder of the necessity of discipline. The horse wears a bridle but has no reins; horse and the woman gaze in opposite directions - all symbols of uncertainty and a loss of direction. It is a moment to pause and consider where to go next.



Drying clothes

Size: 60 x 60 cm

Media: oil on canvas

This is the hour after lunch, when
all the world falls briefly, blissfully
silent.

About the Artist

Bilateral Layerings

Russian artist Julia Usmanova has demonstrated that diasporic artistic practice can achieve compelling outcomes when expressed within an adopted cultural environment. Having lived in both Kolkata and Delhi, the latter being her adopted home for the past six years, Usmanova evokes the spirit, culture, and landscapes of these cities through the recurring motif of the feminine form. Furthermore, the feminine motif remains distinctly Indian in its facial contours, drapery, posture, and other visual attributes.

Alongside the eloquence of this carefully crafted form, the importance of lived experience is made evident through the fragrance of jasmine blossoms surrounding the figure. Beneath the figure appears a cup of wine, conveying the importance of cherishing the present through life's simple pleasures. This peaceful interlude finds further resonance in the works titled Solitude and Middy and Midnight.

As an artist who has made the feminine form central to her practice, it is not surprising that ornamentation plays a significant role in her creations. A carefully rendered pair of earrings, delicately adorning the outer contour of the ear, serves as yet another interpretation of the Indian theme through the artist's personal lens.

To further define the layers of the subconscious that run through her creations, the artist moves beyond the routines of

everyday life and delves inward to explore deeper emotional and psychological realities. The motif of a tiger comfortably enveloping the female figure within a dreamscape is far more than a decorative image. Once again, the choice of a stylised tiger, familiar through its associations with both the Siberian and Royal Bengal tiger, connects the artist's Russian origins with her life in West Bengal.

A further exploration of the dialogue between her Indian experience and her native Russian background can be found in the recurring presence of birds and dragonflies, gently sheltered within the embrace of the feminine figure. Their positive presence evokes a range of enduring values and symbolic associations grounded in human emotion, while simultaneously bridging material and spiritual realms.

The centrality of women in Usmanova's art emphasises that human emotions and interpersonal connections constitute the most powerful means of expression within her work. Her ties to both countries, expressed through a rich constellation of associations, make this body of work both a personal testament and a bridge between cultures, as well as the flora and fauna that populate her visual universe, offering a glimpse into the artist's continuing creative journey.

Curatorial Note
Neena Gulati