



Raghav Babbar

Sangam

September 12–October 24, 2026

Rajiv Menon Contemporary is proud to present the debut US solo exhibition of the India-born artist Raghav Babbar, presented across two cities: in our Los Angeles space and a dedicated booth at The Armory Show in New York. One of the most globally recognized young Indian artists, Babbar transitions from his institutionally celebrated portraiture practice to a sweeping, epic treatment of pilgrimage and faith. In this journey, Babbar locates a rooted vision of humanism.

In 2025, Raghav Babbar attended the Maha Kumbh, a Hindu pilgrimage in North India and the largest religious gathering ever recorded. Among over 600 million other pilgrims, Babbar found himself in the midst of history in the making. Embracing the Maha Kumbh's sheer force of the crowd, Babbar found a deep meditation on faith as a democratizing, humanizing force in an era of chaos and conflict.

The pilgrimage was transformative, providing new depth and scope to Babbar's sensitive, humanistic engagement with the soul. Babbar, who built his practice around intimate portraits of individual sitters, was suddenly confronted with the largest collective of individuals in human history. While his work has long centered on the psychological interiority of the individual, this experience led him to reconcile singular acts of faith with the emotional force of the collective.

The specificity of Raghav's subjects is undeniable. While the pilgrims he depicts are from a specific time and place, the Maha Kumbh is a vehicle for transcendence. Nighttime at the Maha Kumbh allows Babbar's compositions to depict individuals flowing together into a shared space of devotion and consciousness. Darkness is the beautiful unknown, a primal space of our shared humanity and spirit. The Maha Kumbh allows Babbar to give new pictorial language not just to Vedic concepts of the spirit, but also universal human experiences of spiritual and philosophical awakening.

His paintings are hybrid, rooted, and deeply humanistic. Babbar's reverence for the European masters meets his profound awe at the Maha Kumbh, resulting in compositions that are both specifically-placed and transcendent of geography.

Babbar's paintings also engage the long tradition of European history painting. Like Goya's depictions of war, pilgrimage, and collective struggle, Babbar's densely orchestrated compositions pull protagonists from the anonymity of the crowd. His muted, earthen palette and dramatic handling of light further reinforce this historical resonance.

These works revive the ambition of history painting: to distill the essence of an era through the careful rendering of a singular, charged moment. Yet rather than centering a traditional heroic figure, Babbar elevates the everyday individual. His protagonists are pilgrims, bystanders, and devotees whose gestures of exhaustion, ecstasy, and contemplation become vessels for larger



questions of faith, mortality, and collective identity. In his hands, the crowd is not a backdrop but the subject itself and ordinary people become reflections of humanity as a whole.

Through this approach, Babbar transforms a specific historical and spiritual gathering into something universal, using narrative not simply to recount an event but to illuminate the emotional and existential conditions of the human experience.

Bridging the heroic treatment of the Western canon with realist documentation of a history-defining event, Babbar balances a sensitive treatment of each individual figure with a wider celebration of confluence. Through the Maha Kumbh, one of the world's most celebrated young portraitists finds new possibility in the collective.

Raghav Babbar (b. 1997, Rohtak, India) lives and works in London, England, UK. He received his B.F.A. from Lasalle College of Art, Singapore (2020) and completed his M.A. in painting at the Royal College of Art, London, England, UK (2023).

Solo exhibitions include *My Mother Tongue is Paint*, CICA Vancouver, Canada (2026); *Mela*मैला, Nature Morte Gallery, Mumbai, India (2025); *Orchestrated Characters*, Larsen Warner Gallery, Stockholm, Sweden (2024); Solo Presentation of Newest Works at ART SG 2024, Nahmad Projects, Singapore (2024); *Layers of Life*, Zuecca Projects, Fondazione Bevilacqua La Masa, Venice, Italy (2023); *Raghav Babbar: New Paintings*, Nahmad Projects, London, UK (2023); *A Visual Journey: Paintings by Raghav Babbar*, Waterhouse & Dodd, London, UK (2021).

Group exhibitions include a presentation of works at *Frieze London*, Nature Morte Gallery, London, UK (2025); *Exhibitionism*, Rajiv Menon Contemporary, Los Angeles, USA (2025); Presentation of works at *Art Mumbai 2025*, Nature Morte Gallery, Mumbai, India (2025); Presentation of works at *India Art Fair*, Nature Morte Gallery, New Delhi, India (2025); Presentation of works at *Art Mumbai 2024*, Nature Morte Gallery, Mumbai, India (2024); *The Body Electric*, Larsen Warner Gallery, Stockholm, Sweden (2024); Presentation of works at *Art Basel Hong Kong*, Helly Nahmad Gallery, Hong Kong (2024); Presentation of New Works, *ICA Miami*, Miami, FL, USA (2023); Lasalle College of Art Degree Show, Institute of Contemporary Art, Singapore (2021); *Converging Biographies*, Art Outreach, Singapore (2021); *Fluid Spaces*, The Starving Artists, Singapore (2021); *who R u now?*, online group exhibition, London, UK (2020); *Lost and found: imagining new worlds*, Institute of Contemporary Art, Singapore (2019).

Raghav Babbar was awarded the prestigious Global Talent Visa by Arts Council England in 2025 and featured in Forbes' "30 Under 30 - Asia - The Arts" list in 2024. Babbar's work is in the permanent collection of the Institute of Contemporary Art Miami, FL, USA, Kiran Nadar Museum of Art, India, K11, Hong Kong SAR, Fondazione Bevilacqua la Masa, Venice, Italy, and Kasturbhai Lalbhai Museum/Indigo Art Museum, India.