

# INTERVIEW WITH ACCLAIMED ARTIST JITISH KALLAT

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Nichelle Cole



This is one of the most abstract interviews of my career. The artist is introspective in theory and in practice. And his responses to my questions left open-ended spaces with room to build upon conversations that would last beyond the time he had for us. As a result I find I wanted more from this artist. More time and to be more in depth.

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Jitish Kallat has been defined as a contemporary artist but I think he is more of a philosopher, a closet humanitarian who expresses his views of the world through his art. This year he is featured in the St. Moritz Art Masters and he is the appointed curator for the Kochi Biennale.

ROUGH Italia snatched a few moments with the busy artist, a man whose works are seen as being both a reflection of self and of the collective.

**Hello Jitish and thank you for taking time to speak with me. So let's dive right in. Where do you draw inspiration for your works?**

At one level, what is the actual source of one's work and why one returns to certain themes and images is really hard to tell. One's studio is always festooned with a few illusive questions; at a fundamental level I think it is all about trying to make sense of the world we live in. To reconcile the world we see with eyes open and the world we see when we shut our eyes to look inwards. To match the sounds we hear on a street with the sounds we create every moment through the biological rhythms of our body.

**There is a strong social and societal component to the pieces, how much do world affairs impact your work?**

Everything we see or hear is a pathway to understanding the world. To that extent I see that I'm drawn to just about anything that can open for me a small glimpse into a deeper reality. It could be a minor event on the street; it could be the alignment of celestial forms into a 'syzygy' or a convergence of differing historical events on a same date. Any of these might lead me to a dimension of reality that is unknown to me.

**How many pieces do you create each year?**

It's hard to tell how many pieces; more and more one feels that these aren't even different works, they are all differentiated components of one single life work. Each piece is a small nibble, an episode.

**Why art rather than Philosophy or politics?**

Because art draws from both but aligns to neither. Art commits to nothing but itself.

**Your work is steeped in symbolism, and interestingly enough, colors when used in your pieces have a consistent pattern. The colors themselves seem symbolic. They are similar in tone to the colors of the rainbow. Would you say that you use colour to symbolize hope in your paintings?**

I don't think of colour in symbolic terms while working with them. That said one has an experience of colour juxtapositions creating potent evocative dimensions. One works intuitively and is watchful of the collateral emergence of symbols and meanings.

**There is a strong mixture of cultures within your work. Is this based upon your personal upbringing or your research about what is happening in the world?**

At the level of body and mind one is nothing but a sum total of everything that one has consumed, seen, heard and thought. At the level of one's work I think the same may apply. I grew up in the bustling megalopolis of Mumbai which is a confluence of numerous cultures and perhaps that manifests in the work.



**When people come to view your work what is it that you as the artist are hoping they will walk away with?  
What are you hoping they will derive from your work?**

I carry no expectations, as I'm not prescribing any single message or idea.

The works are an attempt to deliver a glimpse from an internal conversation, which might hopefully have a space for another person to engage with.