

barbican

[Ranjani Shettar: Cloud songs on the horizon](#)

Barbican Conservatory, Silk Street, London

Opening 10 September 2023

#RanjaniShettar @barbicancentre

The commission is realised in partnership with the Kiran Nadar Museum of Art (KNMA)

Media View: 09.30am –12pm, 8 September 2023



L: Ranjani Shettar, work in process of *Cloud songs on the horizon* © Ranjani Shettar. Courtesy Talwar Gallery, New York | New Delhi.
R: Conservatory, Barbican Centre, image: Max Colson.

From 10 September 2023, the Barbican's iconic conservatory will host a spectacular new site-specific commission by Indian sculptor **Ranjani Shettar**.

Cloud songs on the horizon is Ranjani Shettar's first major institutional show in Europe and was commissioned specifically for the Barbican's Conservatory in partnership with the [Kiran Nadar Museum of Art \(KNMA\)](#). The installation comprises five sculptures, handcrafted by Shettar in her studio in rural Karnataka, India, which will be suspended throughout the entirety of the Conservatory's 23,000 square foot space. A tropical oasis in the heart of London, the Barbican Conservatory is home to a vibrant mix of 1,500 species of plants and trees from across the world.

Ranjani Shettar's artistic practice, developed over two decades, is informed by the close observation and study of the natural world. Continually meditating on the subjective unfolding of time in nature, her abstract forms seek to evoke what she calls 'adaptations': those imperceptible and innumerable processes of change and metamorphosis taking place amid the various species of any given environment. Traversing the space, visitors will encounter sculptures nestled among the verdant foliage or gliding above the tranquil koi pond. Carved from a reclaimed teak wood pillar or moulded from a stainless-steel base and bound with handwoven muslin cloth, Shettar employs techniques adapted from traditional Indian crafts. Working intuitively, her approach is embedded in and responsive to its own context and surroundings.

All of the sculptures are intended to be viewed from multiple perspectives, encouraging wandering and exploration as Shettar draws us in to the Conservatory, gently persuading us to look at each tree, flower, leaf, plant and to appreciate their own rhythms. To slow down and to recognise the cycles of transformation embedded within each of them; and, just like the clouds above us, to know that they are always quietly shapeshifting.

Cloud songs on the horizon (2023) will be the first project commissioned by the Barbican's recently appointed Head of Visual Arts **Shanay Jhaveri**, initiating an ambitious programme

of public art across the Centre's iconic site which is visited by around 1.5 million people each year. Launching this exciting new programme, Shettar's commission will be free to visit, enhancing public access to the Conservatory with expanded visiting hours from September. New regular opening times include Sundays (12-8pm) and Friday evenings (5-11pm), offering visitors a chance to explore the much-loved tropical oasis after hours. Tickets will be released one month in advance online via the [Barbican website](#). Additionally, a limited number of tickets for other days of the week will be released each Friday at 10am for the week ahead. The space will also open exclusively for community and school groups to enjoy across a series of forthcoming dates, turning the Conservatory into a living classroom.

Shettar's commission reflects Jhaveri's commitment to ensuring the Barbican's visual arts offer continues to showcase the best artists from around the world, delivering a diverse and international programme across the Barbican Art Gallery, The Curve and beyond. Cementing the Barbican's long-standing track record of supporting emerging artists, Jhaveri's vision is for the Barbican to be one of the UK's leading commissioners of new artistic work.

Since taking up his position in October 2022, Jhaveri has focused on bringing his unique insight to the Barbican's visual arts programme, exploring the interconnections between disciplines, periods, and cultures. Central to this will be inviting contemporary artists from around the world to create new work in response to the Barbican's unparalleled setting, which is recognised as one of the most significant architectural achievements of the 20th century. Jhaveri's ambition is to showcase artistic interventions across the Barbican's unique public spaces and introduce the most dynamic, invigorating and stimulating art practices to our diverse audiences.

Speaking about the new commission, Barbican Head of Visual Arts Shanay Jhaveri says: *"Ranjani's installation inaugurates a new Barbican series of site-specific commissions which will allow artists to directly engage with the architecture and public spaces of this modernist icon. With these collaborations, the Barbican is offering itself to the most inspiring artists working today, platforming important, challenging new work for an ever-expanding audience. Their perspective and interventions will not only allow us to continue to grow our own appreciation of our building and legacy but will also crucially guide us in meeting and knowing our present moment – and there could not be a more perfect artist than Ranjani Shettar to start us on our way".*

Speaking about the choice of artist, he says: *"Over the past twenty years Shettar has evolved a distinctive, process-driven visual language that is entirely her own. Her suspended abstract forms transform enduring modernist preoccupations, through a profound sensitivity for materials and a deep embodiment of an ecological consciousness, all emanating from a local context. In their elegant quietude they achieve something astounding, gently raising our awareness, to query how it is that we are connected spatially, materially, emotionally to this world."*

Kiran Nadar, Founder and Chairperson, Kiran Nadar Museum of Art says: *"Ranjani Shettar's practice has been of particular interest to the Kiran Nadar Museum of Art (KNMA) since we first acquired and installed her work at the museum in 2011. We have been closely observing her artistic evolution that combines her rare sensitivity with patient working. The site-initiated project at the Barbican Conservatory is well aligned with our collaborative efforts at bringing visibility and critical attention to the huge talent of Indian and South Asian artists across the globe."*

ENDS

Notes to Editors

Press contact

Isabel Davies, isabel@sam-talbot.com / +44 7511 700 240

Barbican press room

All Barbican Centre press releases, news announcements and the Communications team's contact details are listed on our website at www.barbican.org.uk/our-story/press-room

Public opening hours

Friday evenings, 5 – 11pm
Sundays 12 – 8pm

A limited number of tickets for other days of the week (Mon – Thurs, 12 – 8pm) will be released one week in advance.

Tickets

Tickets to *Cloud songs on the horizon* and the Barbican Conservatory are free. Tickets for Friday evenings and Sundays in the Conservatory are released one month in advance online via the [Barbican website](#). Tickets for other days (Monday-Thursday) are released each Friday at 10am for the week ahead.

Press Tickets

All press tickets will need to be booked 48 hours in advance by contacting a member of the Barbican's Visual Arts Press team at visualartspress@barbican.org.uk. Our inbox is monitored Monday to Friday 10am-6pm. Please let us know if you have any access requirements. We look forward to welcoming you to the Barbican.

About the Barbican Conservatory

The [Barbican Conservatory](#) is open to the public on select days of the week, with free entry to explore this hidden botanical oasis. It is home to 1,500 species of plants and trees under a 23,000 square foot glass and steel roof that surrounds the Barbican Theatre's fly tower. Designed by the Barbican's architects Chamberlin, Powell and Bon, the Conservatory opened in 1984 and comprises a vibrant mix of temperate and arid plants ranging from areas as diverse as the rocky deserts and bushland of South Africa to the coastline of Brazil.

About Shanay Jhaveri, Barbican Head of Visual Arts

Shanay Jhaveri is the Barbican's Head of Visual Arts. Prior to taking up his position in October 2022, he was Associate Curator of International Art from 2016 – 2022 at The Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York, and completed his PhD at the Royal College of Art in London. Among the many exhibitions Jhaveri has curated are the ground-breaking retrospective *Phenomenal Nature: Mrinalini Mukherjee* at the Met Breuer in 2019, and Huma Bhabha's Met Roof Commission *We Come in Peace* in 2018. He has published widely in various art journals, and has written books including *Western Artists and India: Creative Inspirations in Art and Design*, *Outsider Films on India: 1950 – 1990*, and *America: Films from Elsewhere*.

About Ranjani Shettar

Ranjani Shettar (b. 1977 Bangalore, India) is an Indian sculptor who combines natural and industrial materials to create large-scale installations. She works with materials including beeswax, wood, organic dyes, vegetable pastes, lacquer, steel and cloth, creating immersive environments that are comprised of numerous non-representational forms and are inspired by her observations of the now-threatened natural environs of rural India. Living and working

in Karnataka, India, she is known for her focus on nature and ecology. Shettar's works are in many prestigious museum collections and have been the subject of several solo presentations including at The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York (The MET) (2018), The Phillips Collection, Washington, DC (2019), National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne, Australia (2011), The San Francisco Museum of Modern Art (SFMOMA) (2009), The Modern Art Museum, Fort Worth, TX (2008-9) and The Institute of Contemporary Art (ICA), Boston, MA (2008). Shettar's works have also been featured in exhibitions at The Museum of Modern Art (MoMA), NY; Kiran Nadar Museum, New Delhi; 5th Moscow Biennale; 10th Liverpool Biennial, UK; 55th Carnegie International, Carnegie Museum of Art, PA; 9th Lyon Biennial, France; 8th Sharjah Biennial, UAE; 15th Sydney Biennale, Australia; Art Tower Mito, Japan, Artpace, Texas; Cartier Foundation, Paris; Sainsbury Center, UK; Hermes Foundation, Singapore; Arthouse, NMACC, Mumbai; Wexner Center, OH; The Walker Art Center, MN; Fondazione Sandretto Re Rebaudengo, Torino, Italy and Marian Goodman Gallery, New York. For two decades Ranjani Shettar has been represented by Talwar Gallery, which has exhibited her works in ten solo presentations. In collaboration with The Museum of Modern Art (MoMA), New York. Shettar created a limited-edition project, Varsha and more recently was invited to create a special print for the MET 150, to commemorate The Metropolitan Museum of Art's 150th anniversary.

About Kiran Nadar Museum of Art

[Kiran Nadar Museum of Art \(KNMA\)](#) opened its doors to the public in January 2010. It is a pioneering private museum of Modern and Contemporary art in South Asia, with two branches in New Delhi and Noida. It is a not-for-profit institution that produces rigorous exhibitions, educational and public-focused programs, and publications. Through its work, KNMA emphasises institutional collaborations, and support networks for artists and creative communities, while extending its reach to diverse audiences. The museum houses a growing collection of more than 10,000 artworks, with a focus on the historical trajectories of 20th-century Indian art, alongside the experimental practices of young contemporaries. KNMA was established through the initiative of art collector and philanthropist Kiran Nadar and is supported by the Shiv Nadar Foundation. KNMA is geared to open its new stand-alone museum building in the National Capital Region of Delhi in 2026.

About Visual Arts at the Barbican Centre

The Barbican's world class programme of visual arts exhibitions includes three major exhibitions in its Art Gallery each year, including critically-acclaimed *Alice Neel: Hot Off The Griddle* and [Carrie Mae Weems: Reflections for Now \(22 June – 3 September 2023\)](#); as well as its free commissioning space The Curve, where recent exhibitions have included Iranian artist **Soheila Sokhanvari**.

Forthcoming 2023 exhibitions include [Julianknxx: Chorus in Rememory of Flight](#) in The Curve from **14 September 2023 – 11 February 2024**, and [RE/SISTERS: A Lens on Gender and Ecology](#) in the Art Gallery from **5 October 2023 – 14 January 2024**.

The Barbican has also recently announced its Spring and Summer programme for 2024, which will include [Unravel: The Power and Politics of Textiles in Art \(14 February – 26 May 2024\)](#), a major group exhibition exploring the transformative and subversive potential of textiles, and [Francis Alÿs \(26 June – 1 September 2024\)](#) in the Art Gallery, as well as new work from [Soufiane Ababri \(13 March – 23 June 2024\)](#) in The Curve.

About the Barbican

The Barbican is a catalyst for creativity, sparking possibilities for artists, audiences, and communities. We showcase the most exciting art from around the world, pushing traditional

artistic boundaries to entertain and inspire millions of people, create connections, provoke debate, and reflect the world we live in.

We are an international arts and events centre rooted firmly in our own neighbourhood, collaborating with local communities and putting the City of London on the map as a destination for everybody. Central to our purpose is supporting emerging talent and shaping opportunities that will accelerate the next generation of creatives.

As a not-for-profit, we rely on the generosity of individuals and organisations, including our principal funder the City of London Corporation. Every ticket purchased, donation made, and pound earned supports our arts and learning programme and enables the widest possible range of people to experience the joy of the arts.

Opened in 1982, the Barbican is a unique and audacious building, recognised globally as an architectural icon. As well as our theatres, galleries, concert halls and cinemas, we have a large conservatory with over 1,500 species of plants and trees, a library, conference facilities, public and community spaces, restaurants, bars, and a picturesque lakeside oasis.

We are the home of the London Symphony Orchestra, and a London base of the Royal Shakespeare Company. We regularly co-commission, produce and showcase the work of our other partners and associates: the Academy of Ancient Music, the BBC Symphony Orchestra, Boy Blue, Britten Sinfonia, Cheek by Jowl, Drum Works, the Los Angeles Philharmonic, Serious, and We Are Parable.

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