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India: in the country overwhelmed by the pandemic, art plays its part. How it can

In the Subcontinent tormented by the pandemic, galleries, foundations and biennials are creating a fundraising network to help the country, through art.

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Until a few months ago it seemed that the Elephant enjoyed excellent health and that Covid-19 bothered him no more and no less like a fly buzzing around the trunk.

On the reasons that, until last February, were at the basis of the almost total immunity of the Subcontinent from the pandemic, everything has been said, even that the Indian population - since it is constantly subjected to a great variety of viruses and bacteria due to climatic conditions and of the hygienic ones, not always and not for everyone excellent - keeps the immune system more active (Gagandeep Kang, Indian microbiologist on *Financial Times*).

Probably therefore convinced of its invulnerability, India has regularly held rallies - in the five states in which there will be new elections involving 186 million citizens - and the celebration of religious holidays such as, just to give a striking example, the Kumbh Mela that has gathered huge crowd: between January and April 2021 more than 9 million pilgrims passed through Haridwar to immerse themselves in the Holy River. Needless to say, hardly anyone wore a mask. And now dozens and dozens of corpses have arrived in Buxar, hundreds of kilometers downstream, dragged by the current of the Ganges.

Now, those who know this extraordinary country - but also those who don't know it - can easily imagine that, if distancing is considered a privilege for the wealthiest already in "normal" times, during a pandemic it is truly a mirage. And if, therefore, extraordinary measures are not taken, the disaster is announced.

For these reasons and for many others that scientists are still trying to understand, unfortunately, today we are witnessing a wave that is overwhelming

India with a daily average of about 400,000 infections and over 4,000 registered victims. But the data, as you can well imagine, are largely underestimated: as Vikram Patel, professor at Harvard Medical School claims, "the reported cases do not even remotely reflect reality: they refer only to people who have been tested".



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The dizzying increase in Covid cases is leading to an unmanageable chaos at the base of which there is a lack of oxygen.

Outside hospitals, patients who cannot find a bed struggle to get hold of at least one cylinder, often waiting in vain for hours and hours.

The whole world is mobilizing to get India the aid it needs.

Support is coming from the United States, Russia and many European countries, including

Italy. Surely out of solidarity, but also because a pandemic, by definition, cannot be defeated if the second most populous country in the world is overwhelmed.

Of course, aid does not come only from the outside. Initiatives are springing up in India from all over: private companies, civil society, also Bollywood stars, everyone is mobilizing.

In this context, the world of art could not stand by. Also because it was, in turn, heavily penalized by the pandemic: the opening of the Kochi Biennale, scheduled for December 2020, was postponed to November 2021 and the 13th India Art Fair scheduled for February 2021 was canceled. Activity in the art world in India had begun to recover momentum, after the daily cases had stood at less than 10,000 in February. Last month alone, 37 galleries participated in the inaugural edition of Delhi Art Week from 3 to 10 April. While the initiative "Mumbai Gallery Weekend" which sees the contemporary opening of all the art galleries of the city one weekend a month, stopped in March.

But then it all fell apart. So even the art world has engaged in many fundraising initiatives and we at Exibart have decided to highlight some of them for those of our readers who want to give help, through art, to a country that is going through a dramatic phase of its life. We report only three of the most significant, but many others are emerging:

Nature Morte: The historic Indiana gallery based in New Delhi will donate 10% of the sales proceeds from our current exhibition, *Examples of Exhilaration*, to support [Mission Oxygen](#). The exhibition is visible until May 14 on the [Frieze Viewing Room](#). Anyone interested can contribute by purchasing a work directly from the viewing room, or by contacting the gallery [via e-mail](#).

Chennai Photo Biennale: the CPB Foundation sells works donated free of charge by 25 artists from around the world, donating the proceeds of the sales to [Khalsa Aid India](#) and the [Protsahan India Foundation](#). The sale starts on May 15th on [shop.chennaiphotobiennale.com](#).

Saffron Art: the international auction house Saffron Art with strong Indian roots, organized an online auction entitled *Art Rises for India*. The auction - which sees the collaboration of some of the most important Indian galleries such as Chemould Prescott Road, Chatterjee & Lal, Nature Morte and Jhaveri Contemporary - will start on May 20 and will last 24 hours. The proceeds will be completely donated to NGOs operating for the health emergency linked to Covid-19.

