ANRAD GALLERY

NATURE'S MIRROR

Asian Art in London
29 October – 3 November 2026

The Lavery Pavilion, The Lavery
4 Cromwell Place
London SW7 2JE

NATURE'S MIRROR:
Curatorial Note

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India's textile traditions constitute one of the world's oldest and most diverse material cultures. From the dyed textiles of the Indus Valley Civilisation to the intricate fabrics that travelled across courts and global trade routes, cloth has long been integral to the cultural and social life of the subcontinent. Regional techniques, materials and motifs have evolved in response to local landscapes, rituals and ways of life, creating an extraordinary diversity of textile traditions and visual languages.

Among these varied visual languages, nature emerges as a recurring and unifying theme. Flora and fauna are transformed through diverse textile practices into richly varied expressions of the natural world. Nature becomes both a source of inspiration and a means of connecting these works to the landscapes, communities and traditions from which they emerge. Through this interplay of material, technique and imagery, Nature's Mirror celebrates textile practice as both a repository of inherited knowledge and a continually evolving form of artistic expression.

Three traditions are brought together here: embroidery, weaving and painting on cloth. Distinct in process, each is rooted in knowledge and practices transmitted across generations, while allowing space for individual expression and reinterpretation.

Tribal and folk embroideries from Bihar and Jharkhand are represented through quilted wall hangings embellished with bold depictions of indigenous flora and fauna, worked in the characteristic straight running stitch. Alongside these are intricately embroidered wall hangings inspired by historic palampores and chintzes, bringing together a range of techniques, from the minute darning stitches of kantha to the continuous chain stitch of aari, as well as French knots and feather stitch. The exhibition also presents finely woven Venkatagiri textiles, renowned for their exceptionally fine cotton, alongside hand-painted kalamkari works created using organic colours, including indigo and madder.

Together, these works reveal the versatility of cloth as both material and medium. Bringing diverse textile practices into dialogue, Nature's Mirror draws connections across regions, traditions and generations. Despite their differences, the works share a common visual vocabulary: the natural world.

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EMBROIDERY

India's embroidery traditions are distinguished by their intricate craftsmanship, vibrant colour and extraordinary diversity of stitches and techniques. Developed across courtly, commercial, religious, folk and tribal contexts, embroidery has long adorned garments and household textiles while expressing regional identity, cultural traditions and social life.

The embroideries presented in this exhibition represent two distinct strands: tribal and folk traditions from Bihar and Jharkhand, traditionally practised as household textiles, and commercial embroideries inspired by the historic palampores and chintzes produced for the European market.

From the sixteenth to eighteenth centuries, Indian embroideries, particularly chain-stitched textiles, entered European markets through the expanding networks of the Dutch and English East India Companies. Bedspreads, hangings and covers were prized for their vivid colours, intricate designs and distinctive imagery. This exchange brought Indian makers into contact with Persian and Chinese decorative traditions, introducing motifs such as flowering plants, birds, scrolling vines, stylised trees and the tree of life. Absorbed and transformed within Indian workshops, these influences became part of a distinctive language of textile ornament.

Chain stitch, worked with a conventional needle or the hooked aari, was particularly suited to these elaborate natural motifs. Its continuous looping line allows the embroiderer to create both fine linear detail and richly textured surfaces. The trade embroideries in the exhibition build upon this tradition, combining a range of techniques including kantha darning stitch, aari, French knots and feather stitch. Historical imagery associated with palampores and chintzes is reinterpreted through contemporary embroidery, with colour, stitch and texture bringing these designs into the present.

The tribal and folk embroideries originate in Bihar and Jharkhand, where quilting traditions have long formed part of domestic and ceremonial life. In Bihar, embroidered quilts known as sujanis were traditionally made from layers of old saris and discarded cloth, joined and embellished with the characteristic straight running stitch. Their imagery draws on rural life, personal and mythical narratives, indigenous flora and fauna, and protective symbols.

In Jharkhand, the quilting tradition known as ledra encompasses blankets, dhurries and other quilted textiles. Its bold visual language reflects the region's Khovar and Sohrai mural traditions, with densely worked running and cross stitches depicting creepers, plants, birds, animals and flowers. Together, these embroideries demonstrate how textile traditions preserve inherited techniques while providing a living medium for storytelling, cultural identity and creative expression.



TREE OF LIFE, 2026

Artist: Embroidery craftsmaen working with ATELIER
Screen printed and embroidered linen
32 x 22 in | 81 x 56 cm

ENQUIRE HERE



TREE OF LIFE WITH FLOWERS AND FRUITS ON RED, 2026

Artist: Embroidery craftsman working with ATELIER
Screen printed and hand embroidered on linen
38 x 28 in | 91 x 71 cm

ENQUIRE HERE



TREE OF LIFE WITH FLOWERS AND FRUITS ON CREAM, 2026

Artist: Embroidery craftsman working with ATELIER
Screen printed and hand embroidered on linen
38x28 in | 691x71 cm

ENQUIRE HERE



RED JUNGLE 3, 2026

Artist: Embroidery craftsman working with ATELIER
Screen printed and hand embroidered on linen
23 x 24 in | 58 x 60cm

ENQUIRE HERE



RED JUNGLE 4, 2026

Artist: Embroidery craftsman working with ATELIER
Screen printed and hand embroidered on linen
23x24 in | 58x60cm

ENQUIRE HERE



PEAHEN FOREST 1, 2026

Artist: Embroidery craftsman working with ATELIER
Screen printed and hand embroidered on linen
31 x 26 in | 79 x 66 cm

ENQUIRE HERE



PEAHEN FOREST 2, 2026

Artist: Embroidery craftsman working with ATELIER
Screen printed and hand embroidered on linen
31 x 26 in | 79 x 66 cm

ENQUIRE HERE





BUSHY TAIL MONGOOSE, COCKEREL AND FAUNA IN INDIGO, 2026

Artist: Embroidery craftsman working with ATELIER
Screen printed and hand embroidered on linen
65 x 24 in | 165 x 61 cm

ENQUIRE HERE



EXOTIC TREE OF LIFE, 2026

Artist: Embroidery craftsman working with ATELIER
Screen printed and hand embroidered on line
68 x 44 in | 173 x 112 cm

ENQUIRE HERE



PALMIER, 2026

Artist: Embroidery craftsman working with ATELIER
Screen print and hand embroidery on linen
70 x 59 in | 178 x 150 cm

ENQUIRE HERE

**Catalogue only: not exhibited*



PALM TREE OF LIFE, 2026

Artist: Embroidery craftsman working with ATELIER
Screen print and hand embroidery on linen
59 x 45 in | 150 x 114 cm

ENQUIRE HERE

**Catalogue only: not exhibited*



MIRROR TREE OF LIFE, 2026

Artist: Embroidery craftsman working with ATELIER
Screen print and hand embroidery on linen
70 x 50 in | 178 x 127 cm

ENQUIRE HERE

**Catalogue only: not exhibited*



MOUNTAIN GOAT AND PEACOCK 1, 2026

Artist: Embroidery craftsman working with ATELIER
Screen printed and hand embroidered on linen
26 x 20 in | 66 x 51 cm

ENQUIRE HERE

**Catalogue only: not exhibited*



MOUNTAIN GOAT AND PEACOCK 2, 2026

Artist: Embroidery craftsman working with ATELIER
Screen printed and hand embroidered on linen
26 x 20 in | 66 x 51 cm

ENQUIRE HERE

**Catalogue only: not exhibited*



FLORAL VASE, 2026

Artist: Embroidery craftsman working with ATELIER
Screen print and hand embroidery on linen
23 x 23 in | 58 x 58 cm

ENQUIRE HERE

**Catalogue only: not exhibited*



RED JUNGLE 1, 2026

Artist: Embroidery craftsman working with ATELIER
Screen printed and hand embroidered on linen
21 x 21 in | 53 x 53 cm

ENQUIRE HERE

**Catalogue only: not exhibited*



RED JUNGLE 2, 2026

Artist: Embroidery craftsman working with ATELIER
Screen printed and hand embroidered on linen
21 x 21 in | 53 x 53 cm

ENQUIRE HERE

**Catalogue only: not exhibited*





BUSHY TAIL MONGOOSE, COCKEREL AND FAUNA IN RED, 2026

Artist: Embroidery craftsman working with ATELIER
Screen printed and hand embroidered on linen
62 x 21 in | 157 x 53 cm

ENQUIRE HERE

**Catalogue only: not exhibited*



SEA CREATURES, 2011

Artist: Karpuri Devi
Hand embroidery, running stitch on layered cotton fabric
36 x 54 in | 91 x 137 cm

ENQUIRE HERE



FREE TIME, WILD LIFE, 2025

Artist: Moti Karn
Hand embroidery, running stitch on layered cotton fabric
18 x 27 in | 46 x 69 cm

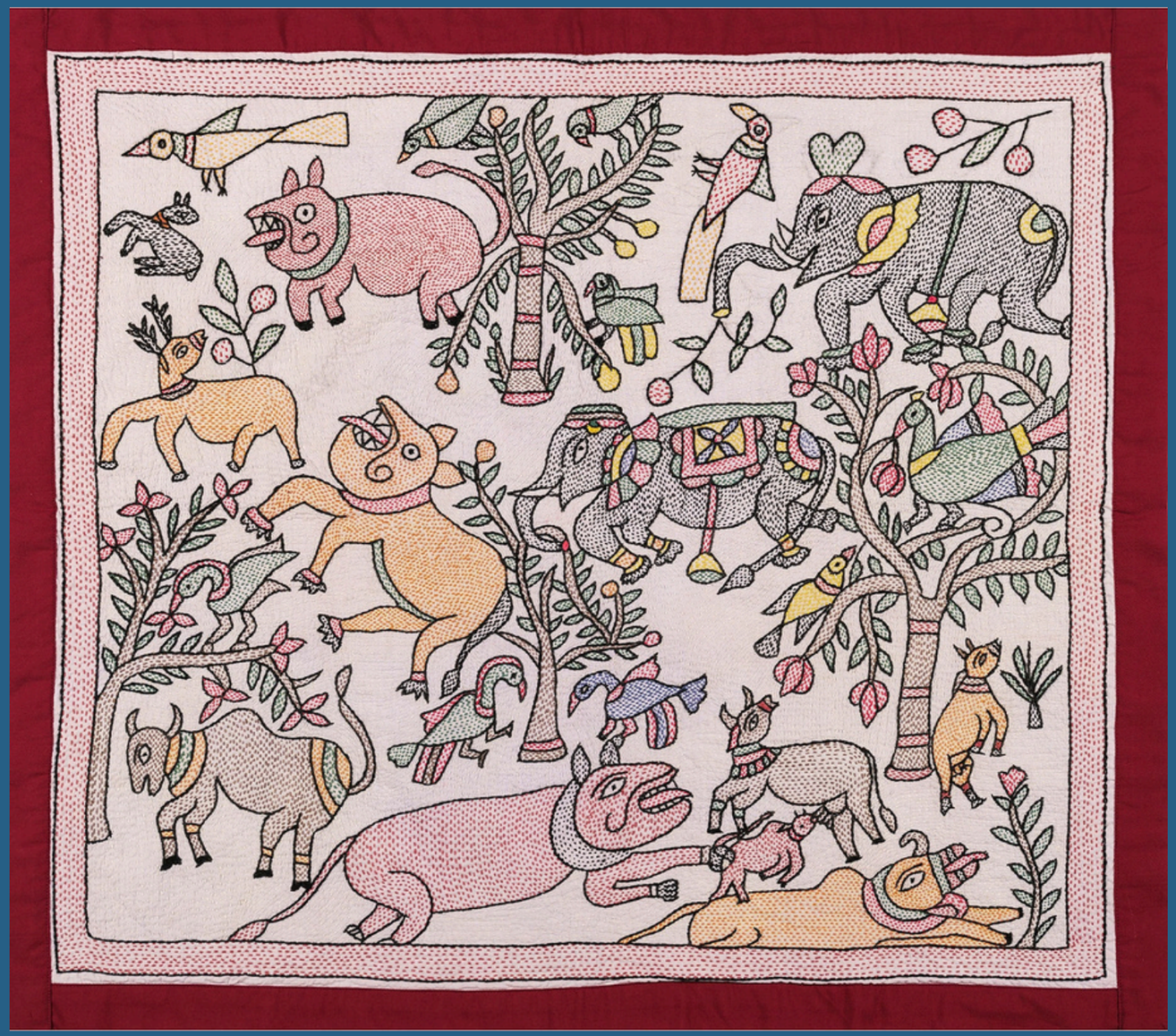
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INSIDE THE FOREST, TRIPTYCH

Hand embroidery, running stitch on
layered cotton fabric
64 x 20 in | 163 x 51 cm (each)

ENQUIRE HERE



WILD LIFE, 2025

Artist: Moti Karn
Hand embroidery, running stitch on layered cotton fabric
30 x 34 in | 76 x 86 cm

ENQUIRE HERE

VENKATGIRI WEAVES

Feather-light, translucent and finely woven, Venkatgiri textiles are among the most refined expressions of South Indian cotton weaving. Produced in Venkatgiri, Andhra Pradesh, they are distinguished by exceptionally fine cotton, restrained colours and delicate supplementary-weft ornamentation. Their origins can be traced to the early eighteenth century, when the Velugoti dynasty patronised hereditary weavers to produce fine cotton dhotis and turbans for the nobility. The tradition later expanded to include sarees and ceremonial textiles for courtly and temple use.

Historically woven in counts as high as 200's, the sheer cotton ground may be complemented by mulberry silk while zari adds subtle metallic accents. Characteristic motifs include mangoes, peacocks, flowers and leaves, reflecting regional aesthetics and associations with nature, fertility and religious symbolism.

The textiles are traditionally woven on a fly-shuttle pit loom, with the loom set into the ground to provide stability and precise control over the fine warp. A distinctive feature of the process is street sizing, in which the yarn is stretched between poles in an open space, coated with rice starch and dried in the sun. This strengthens the delicate threads, enabling them to withstand the demands of weaving.

Some Venkatgiri textiles incorporate Jamdani-style supplementary-weft ornamentation, a technique in which additional weft threads are inserted by hand to create individual motifs within the ground weave. Although Jamdani is most closely associated with the weaving traditions of Bengal, the technique has been adapted in other regional contexts, including Venkatgiri. Its use here demonstrates the ways in which weaving knowledge has travelled, been exchanged and reinterpreted across the Indian subcontinent.

The technique requires exceptional precision and concentration, with each motif carefully formed thread by thread. More elaborate designs can take many hours to complete, while a single textile may require months of work. The resulting motifs appear integrated into the fabric rather than applied to its surface, creating a subtle pattern that can be appreciated from both sides.

Venkatgiri weaving remains a hereditary tradition, with knowledge and labour historically shared across generations and within families. Its continuity preserves a highly specialised body of knowledge—from yarn preparation and sizing to loom construction and the intricate manipulation of the weft—ensuring that this exceptional weaving tradition remains a living art form.

GOLDEN HERD, 2026

Venkatgiri cotton weave
46 x 64 in | 117 x 163 cm

ENQUIRE HERE





TREE OF LIFE, 2026

Venkatgiri cotton weave
74 x 46 in | 188 x 117 cm

ENQUIRE HERE

KALAMKARI

Kalamkari refers to the distinctive hand-painted and block-printed cotton textiles of the Coromandel Coast in southern India. The name derives from the Persian kalam, meaning pen, referring to the bamboo tool used to draw directly onto cloth. More than a decorative style, Kalamkari encompasses a sophisticated combination of drawing, block printing, mordant and resist techniques, and dyeing with natural vegetable and mineral substances.

The tradition evolved through both religious and courtly patronage. Historically, large textiles served as temple hangings, backdrops, scrolls and banners. From the seventeenth century, under Mughal patronage, Kalamkari expanded into decorative hangings, furnishings, canopies, screens and qanats—textile enclosures for royal and military tents. Persianate influence brought a growing emphasis on stylised floral, botanical and animal motifs, reflecting an enduring fascination with gardens and the natural world.

Two principal centres emerged. Machilipatnam became known for designs created with carved wooden blocks, while Srikalahasti developed a predominantly freehand tradition, with artists drawing and applying mordants directly with the kalam. Both centres produced textiles for international trade, linking the Coromandel textile tradition with markets across Persia, the Middle East and Europe.

The making of Kalamkari is an intensive, multi-stage process. Cotton is prepared before mordants, resists and natural dyes are applied successively. Mordants enable dyes to bond with the fibres and influence their colour, while resists protect selected areas from subsequent dyeing. Repeated washing and sun-drying allow the colours to develop through the interaction of organic materials, minerals, water and light.

Today, Kalamkari occupies a space between inherited knowledge and contemporary artistic expression. Generations-old techniques of line, colour and pattern continue to be preserved and reinterpreted, while evolving imagery reflects the distinctive creativity and aesthetic sensibilities of individual artists

TREE OF LIFE WITH BORDER, 2026

Artist: J Tejaswini
Natural dyes on cotton fabric
48 x 28 in | 122 x 71 cm

ENQUIRE HERE





TREE OF LIFE (CHINTZ), 2026

Artist: J Niranjan
Natural dyes on cotton fabric
67 x 39 in | 170 x 99 cm

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VIEW FULL FAIR DETAILS

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