

Events

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Vivan Sundaram's last work, "Six Stations of a Life Pursued," comes to Kochi

Vivan Sundaram died on March 29, 2023, before his final work could be shown. Now it has come to My Beloved Fort Kochi. Here is what I saw.

This has finished · 12 December 2025 – 31 March 2026

In this page

On view 12 December 2025 – 31 March 2026
Times 10AM to 6PM (Mon to Sunday) Till March 31st, 2026
Cost Free
Part of Kochi-Muziris Biennale 2025–26

Where

Cube artSpace
Art gallery · Not recorded yet

Drawn from OpenStreetMap, by its contributors.

You've just missed it — take it home anyway

The 2025–26 Biennale ended on 31 March 2026. The next is expected around December 2027. We made a book of all 72 exhibits, venue by venue, with the photographs — 76 pages, 9 MB.

He never saw it installed. The iron cages were built. The actor stepped inside. The photographer shot for hours. But Vivan Sundaram, one of India's most important artists, died on March 29, 2023, before anyone could show his final work to the world. Now, that work has come to My Beloved Fort Kochi.

"Six Stations of a Life Pursued" (2022), Sundaram's last major work, is on view at **Cube Art Space, Mattancherry**, as a Special Project of the Kochi-Muziris Biennale 2025. It is a photography-based installation that moves through six stops. Each one asks you to face pain, memory, beauty, horror and loss.



What I Saw

This is not a show you walk past. It is a show you walk through slowly.

Sundaram built the installation around different kinds of bodies. It shows a wounded body marked by torture. It shows mourning bodies as shadows. It shows a family caught in a quiet charade.

A body floats like debris on a lake. A prisoner tries to reclaim what it means to exist. At the end are the leftover props. These concrete objects hold the weight of everything that came before.

> **Geeta Kapur, art critic and Sundaram's wife, describes the work as a place where history becomes personal. We don't just look at the past — we feel it pressing against us.**

The sections

The installation unfolds in distinct sections. Each has its own mood and scale.

Shelter

Actor Harish Khanna was chosen to play an incarcerated figure inside a set of eight iron cages, each about 6 by 4 feet. Sundaram made the cages with his longtime collaborator Shamlal, a junk-yard ironsmith. The process was like a performance in itself. It involved hammering, bending, twisting and locking.

Inside these cage-shelters, everyday objects became tools of violence and survival. One cage holds a tub filled with water. Another has a bunk bed fixed to stretch a body. An iron hoop works as both a noose and a halo. Bandages drape across walls. A copy of the Indian Constitution is placed with pointed care.

Eight final photographs were chosen from many enactments. They show a man with his face in a bucket of water and a man looking at the sky through a porthole. Others show a man in a prison cell and a man with a store of destroyed apples. Another shows a man at the doorstep of a Kashmiri jaleedar cabin. One more shows a man in a wooden cabin with the Indian Constitution, making an exit to a Chinar grove.

Anay Mann lit these scenes and photographer Imran Kokiloo shot them.

Penumbra

This section is quieter and more ghostly. Photographer Imran Kokiloo and his wife Anita Khemka stage a family portrait with their two young daughters, Azah and Zaara. The figures are shot in silhouette against a dark studio. They crouch, fold and cling, looking like dancers, acrobats or body-bags.

The shadow here is not just a visual effect. It is the subject. The photographs show a ‘disappeared’ family recalled through phantom movements. They show a huddle for protection and a getaway stance. In between come moments of childlike play.

Performers in the Vale

Imran, Anita, Azah and Zaara, the same family, now move out of the studio. They go into the streets and cemeteries of Srinagar. In a series of photomontages, they play wayfarers and an exiled family. They also play local actors.

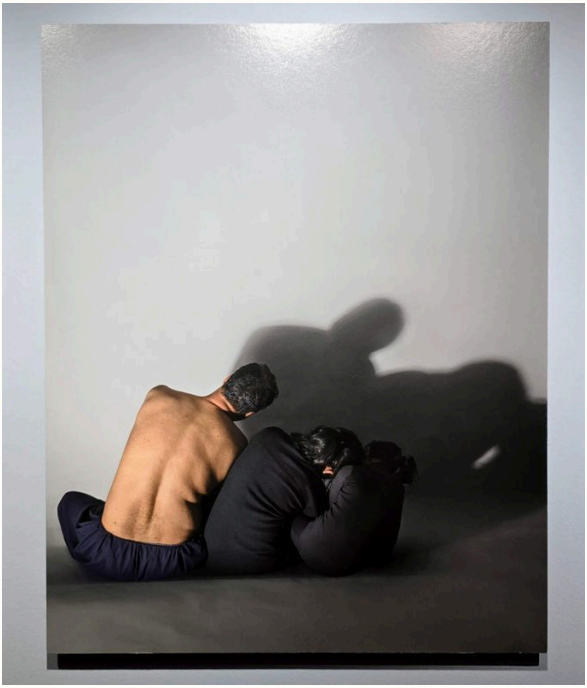
Real locations are photographed in colour. These are then combined with studio-shot scenes. This creates a layered mix of make-believe and documentary.

Lake Sublime

A large photograph of Dal Lake, Srinagar, measures 58 by 58 inches. It is made to look like a miniature painting seen from above. The water surface seems peaceful at first. But look closely.

Sundaram cut tiny fragments of his own body and scattered them across the lake, mixed with debris. What looks like lilies and lace turns out to be bombs, flags, trucks, guns and slogans.

Sundaram worked with collaborator Hilal Ahmed. Together they photographed his own torso, shrank it, sliced it digitally and embedded it in the lake's surface. The result is unsettling. The beautiful and the violent dissolve into one image.



Vivan Sundaram's final work, shown at Cube artSpace on Bazaar Road during the 2025–26 Kochi-Muziris Biennale.

About the artist and why to visit

Vivan Sundaram was born in 1943 and died in 2023. He was one of the most important figures in Indian contemporary art. He studied at the Slade School of Art in London during the student movements of 1968.

He returned to India and spent five decades making work that responded to political violence, communal conflict, urban waste and buried histories.

He was also India's first installation artist. His works ranged from a memorial for victims of the Babri Masjid violence to digital photomontages of his own family's colonial-era photographs. His practice was deeply collaborative. He worked with ironworkers, photographers, actors and sound artists.

"Six Stations of a Life Pursued" was first shown at Sharjah Biennial 15 in 2023. The late curator Okwui Enwezor conceived that edition, titled

“Thinking Historically in the Present.” Enwezor had died in 2019. Hoor Al Qasimi, director of Sharjah Art Foundation, continued with his title and vision. Sundaram’s work was one of 30 specially commissioned projects for SB15’s 30th anniversary.

Now, for the first time, it comes to My Beloved Fort Kochi.

Visiting Details

Exhibition: Vivan Sundaram, “Six Stations of a Life Pursued” (2022)

Where: Cube Art Space, Mattancherry

If you are visiting the Biennale, plan your route with our Ultimate Guide to Kochi-Muziris Biennale 2025. For more on what is happening across Fort Kochi and Mattancherry, see our 32 Things To Do in Fort Kochi.

Places in this story 2

MattancherryFort Kochi