

# Solastalgia: The Weight in the Air

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Vibha Galhotra



**NATURE MORTE**  
24th April - 31st May 2025

The works in this exhibition interweave real and imagined narratives, drawing from reappropriated imagery and growing concerns about the rapidly shifting environment, politics, economics, and natural world. These themes are deeply interconnected—none can be considered in isolation.

The exhibition offers a bleak reflection on our times: despite rapid advancements in knowledge and technology over the past fifty years, we have failed to learn from the past. Political divisions persist, democracy appears increasingly ineffective, and we continue to exploit the Earth's resources through damming, mining, space interventions, and satellite expansion, further deepening the crisis. Even the global Covid pandemic, which should have prompted introspection and permanent change, instead only served to accelerate the insidious agents of capitalism further.

A recurring sentiment Galhotra expresses through her works is: "I don't know." This statement reflects the disorientation of living in an age where misinformation prevails and a select few dictate the course of society, maintaining power while leading us into destructive cycles. By the time we realize we are being misled, we are already entangled in structures that offer no possibility of escape.

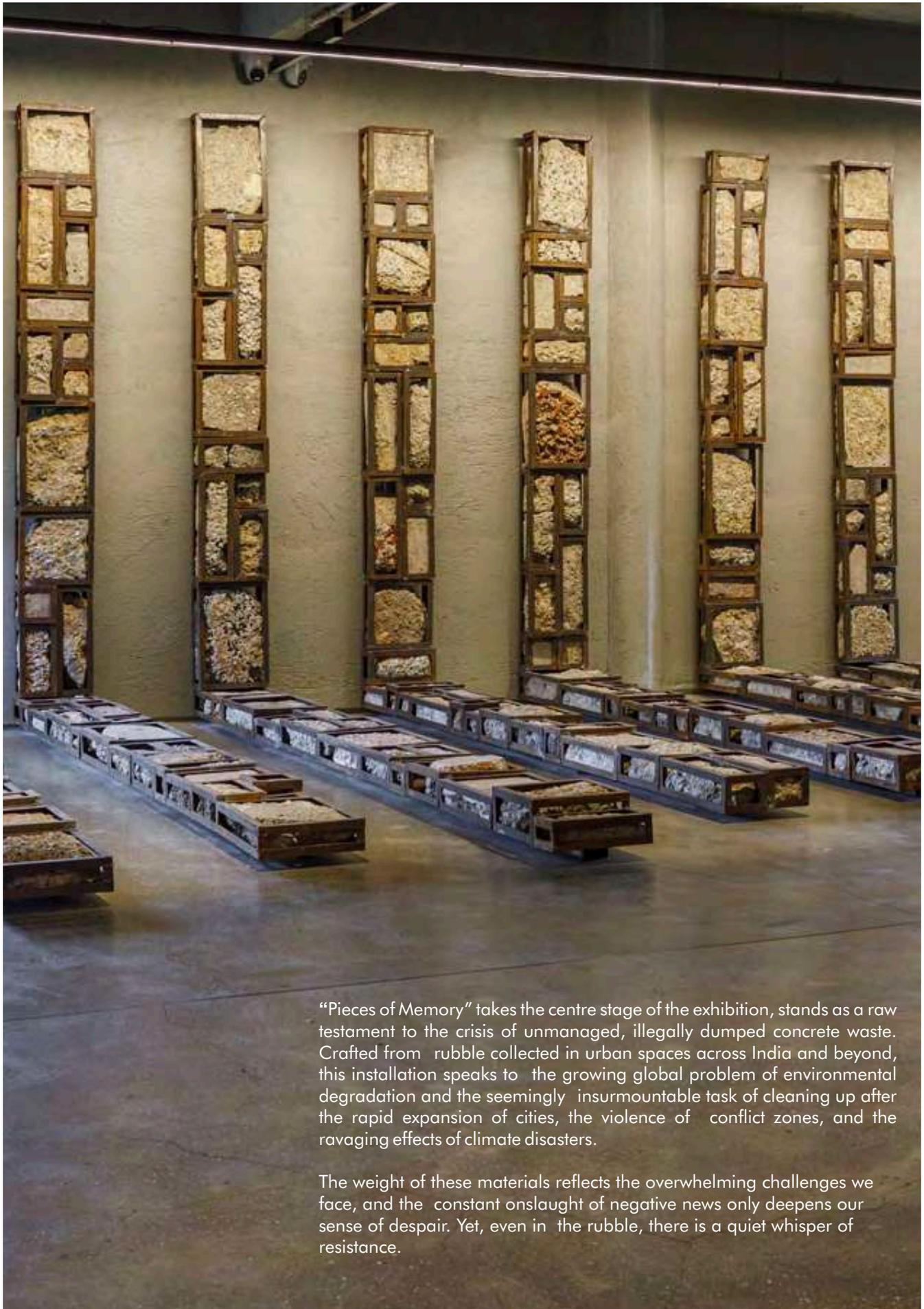
The works on view are in a variety of materials. Four works are in the artist's signature medium of patinated ghungroos, the tiny metal bells woven together to create tapestry-like images. On view will be four new works, each of a very different character: "I Don't Know,"

"Temper," "Fire in the Sky," and "Fractured." Each of these works responds to the general theme of the exhibition in different ways. While some picture destructive forces and a foreboding anxiety, others offer a sense of hope and redemption from what seems inevitable.

"Pieces of Memory" is a large-scale sculptural installation, standing as a raw testament to the crisis of unmanaged, illegally dumped concrete waste. Crafted from rubble collected in urban spaces across India, this installation speaks to the growing global problem of environmental degradation and the seemingly insurmountable task of cleaning up after the rapid expansion of cities, the violence of conflict zones, and the ravaging effects of climate disasters. The weight of these materials reflects the overwhelming challenges we face, and the constant onslaught of negative news only deepens our sense of despair. Yet, even in the rubble, there is a quiet whisper of resistance.

A sound piece featuring "Debris", a poem written by Vibha Galhotra and recited by Rahul Baswani, plays in the gallery throughout the exhibition.

"Untitled (Solastalgia-The Weight in the Air)" (2024–25) includes content from "Moving Stories: The Voices of People Who Move in the Context of Environmental Change" (2014), authored by Alex Randall, Jo Salsbury, and Zach White; edited by Rebecca Sullivan; published by Climate Outreach. Used respectfully for artistic purposes



“Pieces of Memory” takes the centre stage of the exhibition, stands as a raw testament to the crisis of unmanaged, illegally dumped concrete waste. Crafted from rubble collected in urban spaces across India and beyond, this installation speaks to the growing global problem of environmental degradation and the seemingly insurmountable task of cleaning up after the rapid expansion of cities, the violence of conflict zones, and the ravaging effects of climate disasters.

The weight of these materials reflects the overwhelming challenges we face, and the constant onslaught of negative news only deepens our sense of despair. Yet, even in the rubble, there is a quiet whisper of resistance.



# Debris

In the contest of chaos, where nature weeps,  
A tale of debris, in silence it seeps.

Climatic disasters, with fury they roar,  
Leaving a trail of destruction, on every shore.

Wars waged with anger, a relentless fight,  
Cities were reduced to rubble, swallowed by night.

Debris of dreams, shattered and torn,  
In the aftermath, a world forlorn.

Mountains of trash, an unsightly mound,  
Consuming the Earth, like a relentless hound.

Plastic seas and polluted air,  
A legacy of neglect, we're forced to bear.

In the ruins of hope, resilience takes hold,  
Amidst the debris, stories unfold.

Beneath a tumultuous sky, where chaos aligns,  
In the contest of despair, where suffering combines.

Debris tells a story, a narrative untold,  
Of climatic disasters, and wars uncontrolled.

War's relentless grasp leaves landscapes scarred,  
A symphony of destruction, shards scattered far.

Forced migration, a desperate exodus unfolds,  
Families displaced, their tales left untold.

Through desert and oceans, seeking a home  
In the debris of borders, shattered and torn.

In the crucible of chaos, where tempests rage,  
A tale of debris, written on history's page.

Wars, a relentless storm of anger and pain,  
Leaving landscapes scarred, echoes of disdain.

Debris of homes, shattered dreams in the dust,  
In the aftermath, humanity's trust.

Mountains of trash, a testament to excess,  
A planet burdened, under plastic's duress.

Debris of consumption, a relentless tide,  
Choking the Earth, where ecosystems collide.

Forced migration, a heart-wrenching flight,  
Families torn apart in the depth of night.

Beneath the weight of climatic tears,  
Debris whispers of our deepest fears.

In this contest of chaos, where tempests scream,  
A tapestry woven with nature's shattered dream.

From extraction's grasp, the land laid bare,  
Mountains crumble, stripped and bare.

Debris of forests, once proud and tall,  
Now echoes a silent environmental call.

Mountains of trash, a synthetic tide,  
Plastic kingdoms where ecosystems hide.

Debris of conflicts, both near and far,  
An indelible mark, like a cosmic scar.

Wars unfold with a thunderous roar,  
Leaving behind a world torn at its core.

Debris of consumption, a planet's plea,  
To break the chains of reckless apathy.

Forced migration, a poignant quest,  
Families adrift, seeking a place to rest

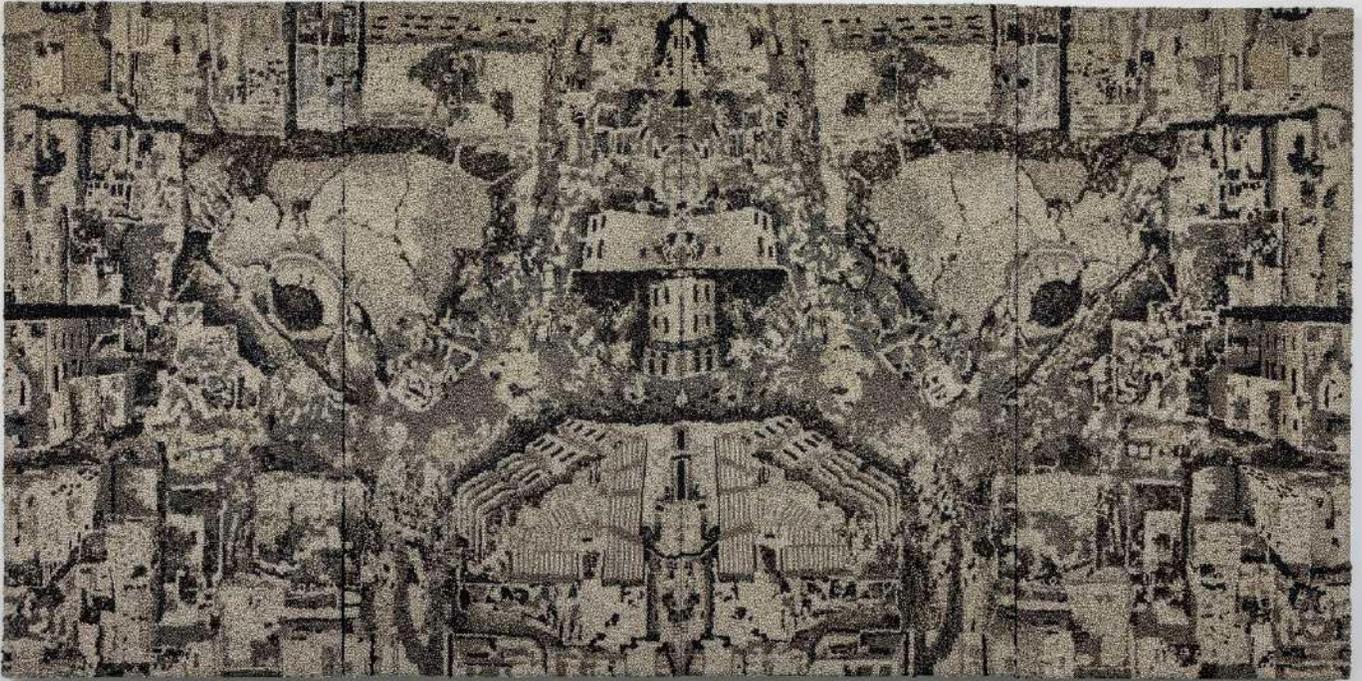


Solastalgia: *The Weight in the Air* is a poignant journey through a world in flux, an exploration of the emotional and psychological turbulence born from the irreversible degradation of landscapes once held dear. In this new body of work, Vibha Galhotra delves into the phenomenon of solastalgia, a term coined to describe the distress felt when one's home environment is transformed beyond recognition. As climate change and human intervention alter the landscapes we once knew, the exhibition reflects on the grief and disorientation that accompany such profound loss.



Interwoven throughout the exhibition are real and imagined narratives drawn from the deepening concerns over the shifting environment, politics, and the fragile natural world. Each piece speaks to an interconnected reality—where environmental destruction, societal fracture, and political discord are inseparable threads in the fabric of our time.

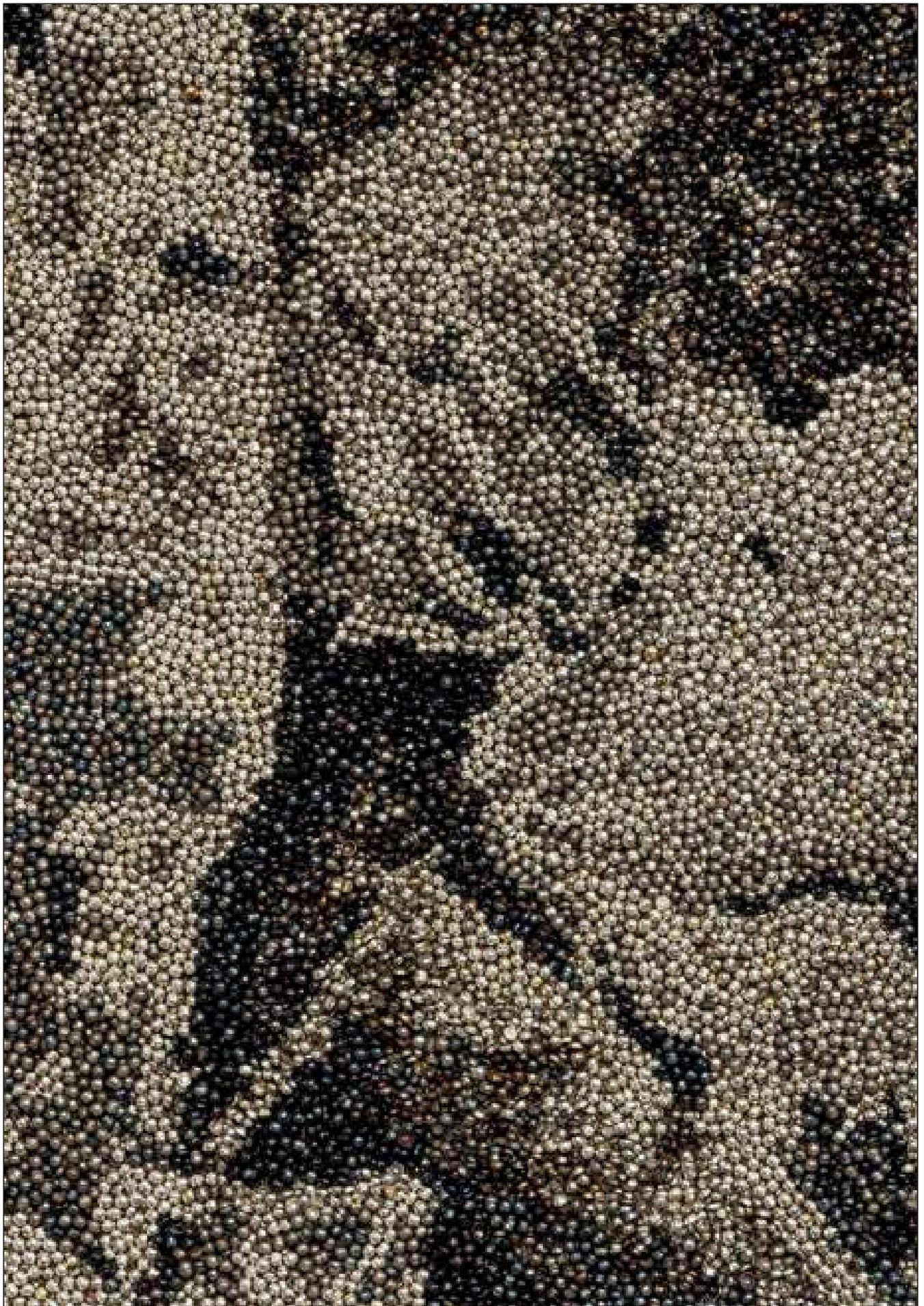
Despite the progress of knowledge and technology, humanity finds itself on the precipice of a new kind of darkness, where the failure to learn from the past persists and the world teeters on the edge of uncharted consequences.



### **Fractured**

Metal ghungroos (trinkets) sewn on fabric, board and metal  
78 x 156 x 4 in, 2024-25

“Fractured” captures the fractured soul of humanity, torn apart by the toxic forces of dominance, ownership, and control. In this work, a mirror of a war-torn world is reflected through a sci-fi lens, distorting reality into an unrecognizable landscape where violence and hatred are intertwined with the hunger for power. It is a chilling examination of how these destructive forces shatter both societies and the natural world, perpetuating cycles of conflicts and divisions.





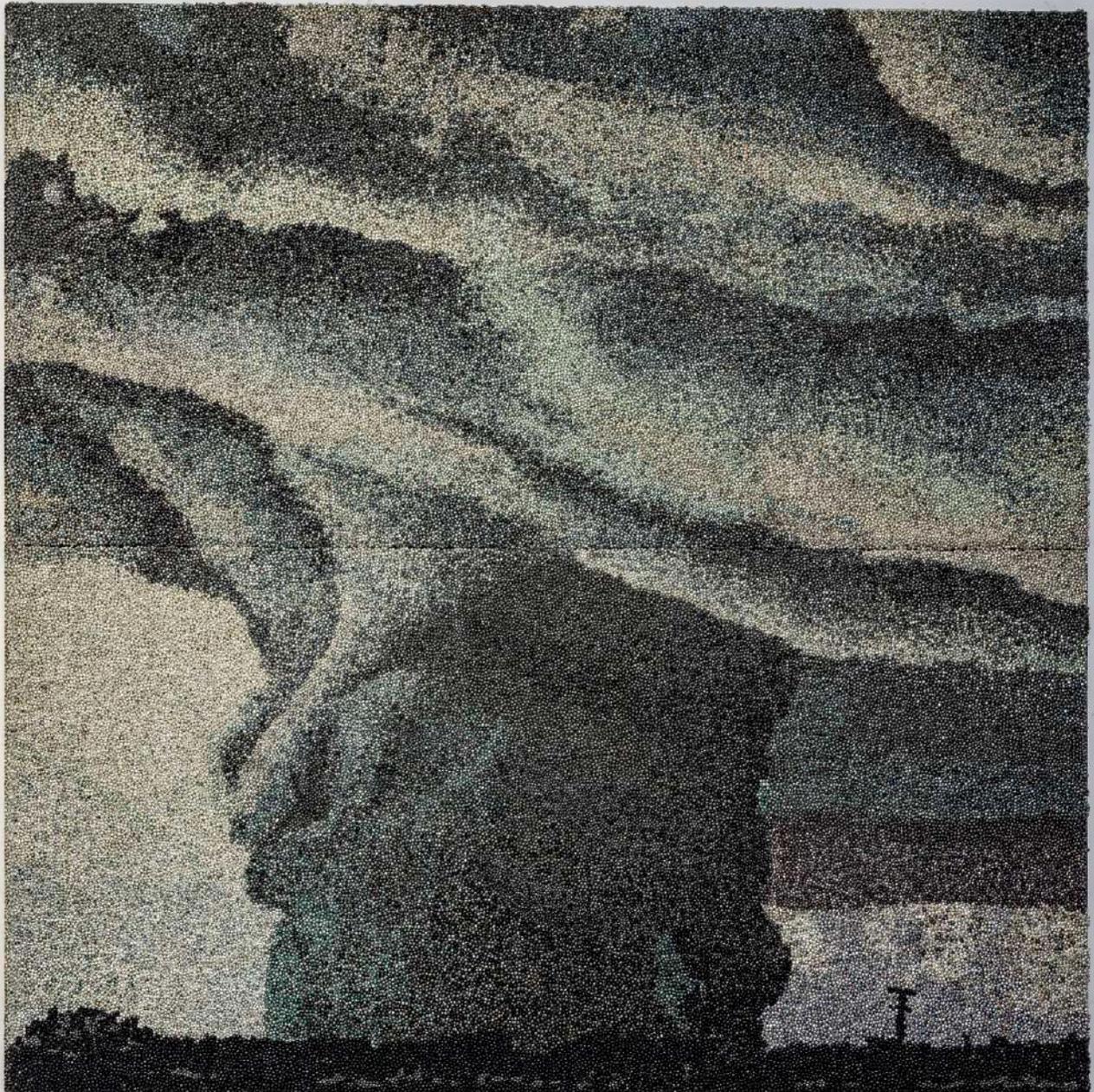
### **Fire in the Sky**

Metal ghungroos (trinkets) sewn on fabric, board and metal  
85 x 122 x 2 1/2 in, 2024-25

In "*Fire in the Sky*," destruction becomes a sacred portal for renewal. Drawing on the mythology of rebirth through fire, this piece imagines a world where the old must burn away to make room for new growth.

It is a visual prayer for transformation—an acknowledgment that in the ashes of destruction, there is always the potential for something new to arise.





**Temper**

Metal ghungroos (trinkets) sewn on fabric, board and metal  
78 x 78 in, 2024-25

“Temper” speaks to the destructive power of nature, reminding us of our fragility and insignificance in the face of its might. The work is a quiet meditation on humility, acknowledging that no matter how advanced we think we are, we remain at the mercy of forces far greater than ourselves.



Untitled (Solastalgia- The Weight in the Air)  
Testimony from various sources printed on archival rice  
paper and found rubbles  
13 x 9 1/2 x 2 in (each), 2024-25, Set of 12



This body of work draws on powerful first-hand testimonies featured in "Moving Stories", a book authored by Alex Randall, Jo Salsbury, and Zach White, and edited by Rebecca Sullivan. Published by the Climate and Migration Coalition, the book centers the voices of those who have been displaced as a result of climate change — a crisis that disproportionately impacts underprivileged and marginalized communities around the world. The Climate and Migration Coalition advocates for the rights and protection of people forced to move due to environmental degradation, extreme weather, and the long-term effects of climate instability. These narratives are not distant or abstract; they are lived experiences of loss, adaptation, resilience, and survival.

When I first encountered these stories, I was struck by the depth of injustice and the recurring silence surrounding those most affected. This work emerged from a desire to bear witness and to create space for these testimonies to be seen and heard in a visual and spatial form. It is both a reflection and a call to action — to recognize displacement not only as a humanitarian issue but as a shared global responsibility.

Proceeds from this work will be donated to the Climate and Migration Coalition, in continued support of their mission to protect and empower climate-displaced communities.

With sincere thanks to the authors Alex Randall, Jo Salsbury, and Zach White; editor Rebecca Sullivan; and the Climate and Migration Coalition for their vital work and efforts.

Source: <https://climatemigration.org.uk/>



**I Don't Know**  
Metal ghungroos (trinkets) sewn on fabric and metal  
96 x 60 x 1 in

Born in 1978, Vibha Galhotra lives and works in New Delhi.

She received a Master's of Fine Art Degree from Kala Bhavan, Santiniketan in 2001 and her Bachelor's Degree from the College of Art in Chandigarh in 1999.

Galhotra's multimedia oeuvre including sculptures, installations, photographs, videos, site-specific work, and public art interventions addresses the shifting topography of a world radically transformed by climate change, consumerism, capitalism, and globalization.

Propelled by the constant negotiation between human beings and their ecosystem, Galhotra's practice utilizes intensive research and intuitive imagination to investigate the social, economic, and political implications of human activity on the environment. She draws from varied disciplines, including the fine arts, ecology, economics, science, spirituality, and political activism to inform a poetic visual response to the environmental changes and restructuring of culture, society, and geography occurring in today's world.

Nature Morte presented Galhotra's solo show entitled "Silent Seasons" at our Dhan Mill gallery space in December/January 2022-23. "Climacteric Whispers" at Goodman gallery, London; She has also had solo exhibitions at the Jack Shainman Gallery, New York (2012, 2015 & 2020); Exhibit 320, New Delhi (2017); Gallery Espace, New Delhi (2013); Project 88, Mumbai (2008); and Anant Art Gallery, New Delhi (2004 & 2005).

The artist has exhibited at museums and institutions internationally, including The Asia Society, New York (USA, 2019 & 2021); Punjab Lalit Kala Akademi, Chandigarh (India, 2019); Land Art Biennial 360° (Mongolia, 2016); Southeastern Center for Contemporary Art, Winston-Salem (USA, 2012); Centro per l'Art Contemporanea (Italy, 2012); Hamburg Kunsthalle (Germany, 2022), Martin Gropius Bau, Berlin (Germany, 2020); Museum of Fine Arts, Leipzig (Germany, 2020); Kiran Nadar Museum of Art, Delhi (India, 2022 & 2018); Kunstmuseum Wolfsburg (Germany, 2018); RMIT Gallery, Melbourne (Australia, 2018); San Jose Museum of Art, San Jose (USA, 2011); Kemper Museum of Contemporary Art, Kansas City (USA, 2015); among others.

Her works are in numerous public and private collections including the Kiran Nadar Museum of Art (India); The Margulies Collection (USA), Pizzuti Collection (USA), (USA), Casa Gates Foundation (USA), Masaccio San Jose Museum Arte Contemporanea (Italy), Singapore Art Museum (Singapore), Devi Art Foundation (India), Casoria Contemporary Art Museum (Italy), Gut Gasteil (Austria), Saga Art College (Japan), Europos Parkas (Lithuania).

[www.vibhagalhotra.com](http://www.vibhagalhotra.com)  
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