

ART CULTURE

Breaking barriers through art: An exhibition highlights artists from the sub-continent

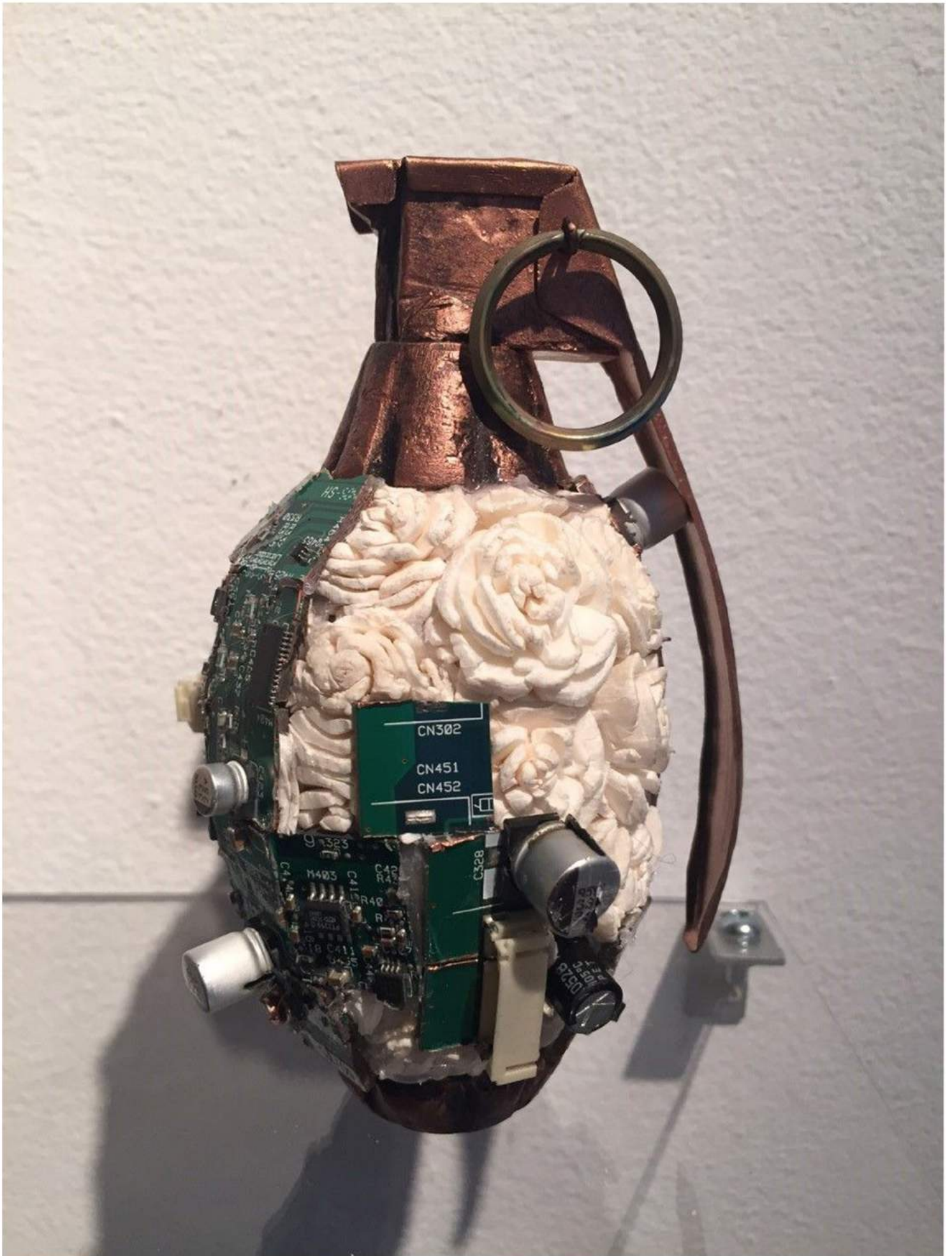
In times of turmoil between India and Pakistan, an artistic exchange seeks to promote harmony and highlight a common culture through art

By [Soma Das](#) | Hindustan Times, Mumbai

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The year 1947 marked the independence from British rule for India, Pakistan and East Pakistan (later Bangladesh). However, independence came at the cost of the partition of nations that shared a common history and culture. While the aim was to ensure peace and better governance, it remains a struggle even after six decades, as the countries battle sectarian violence and conflict.



Bangladeshi artist Promotesh Das Pulak's work, *Mortar Shells and Grenade*, underlines the violence in his country. The exhibits resemble the objects of warfare, but are instead made from shola flower, resin and circuit boards. Similarly, at a time when more people from the sub-continent travel globally and live away from home, New York-based artist of Pakistani origin, Salman Toor's art portrays his experiences of adapting to a new country.

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The exhibition, *Delicate Bond of Steel*, explores the possibility of peace and co-existence between nations through the common language of art. On the surface, the works have no common link. But probe deeper, and you find that they reflect common concerns and experiences of people, going beyond the boundaries of nationality.



Crossing Boundaries by Anila Quayyum Agha, 2015, laser-cut stainless steel and blub (Photo: Aicon Gallery)

The exhibition is the result of an art exchange between New York-based art space, Aicon Gallery (dedicated to art from the sub-continent) with Colaba-based gallery Chatterjee and Lal (C&L).

“When you are walking on the sidewalks of London or New York, the person looking at you sees the south Asian as a unified whole. The art that these artists make is like that unified identity. This show is speaking to that broadness of definition rather than a narrowness,” says Projjal Dutta, partner, Aicon Gallery.



Angle VI by Abir Karmakar, 2015, oil on canvas (Photo: Aicon Gallery)

The idea of trading spaces, a first for both galleries, happened by chance when Dutta met with Mortimer Chatterjee and Tara Lal, founders of C&L, at Art Dubai, in 2015. The exhibition, which took almost a year of planning and logistical coordination, features exhibits in a variety of mediums. artists still living in or used to live in the subcontinent, once upon a time. Even though they may have moved away from where they were born, they are still connected to that place through the delicate bond of steel,” says Projjal Dutta, partner, Aicon Gallery.