

STYLE & CULTURE

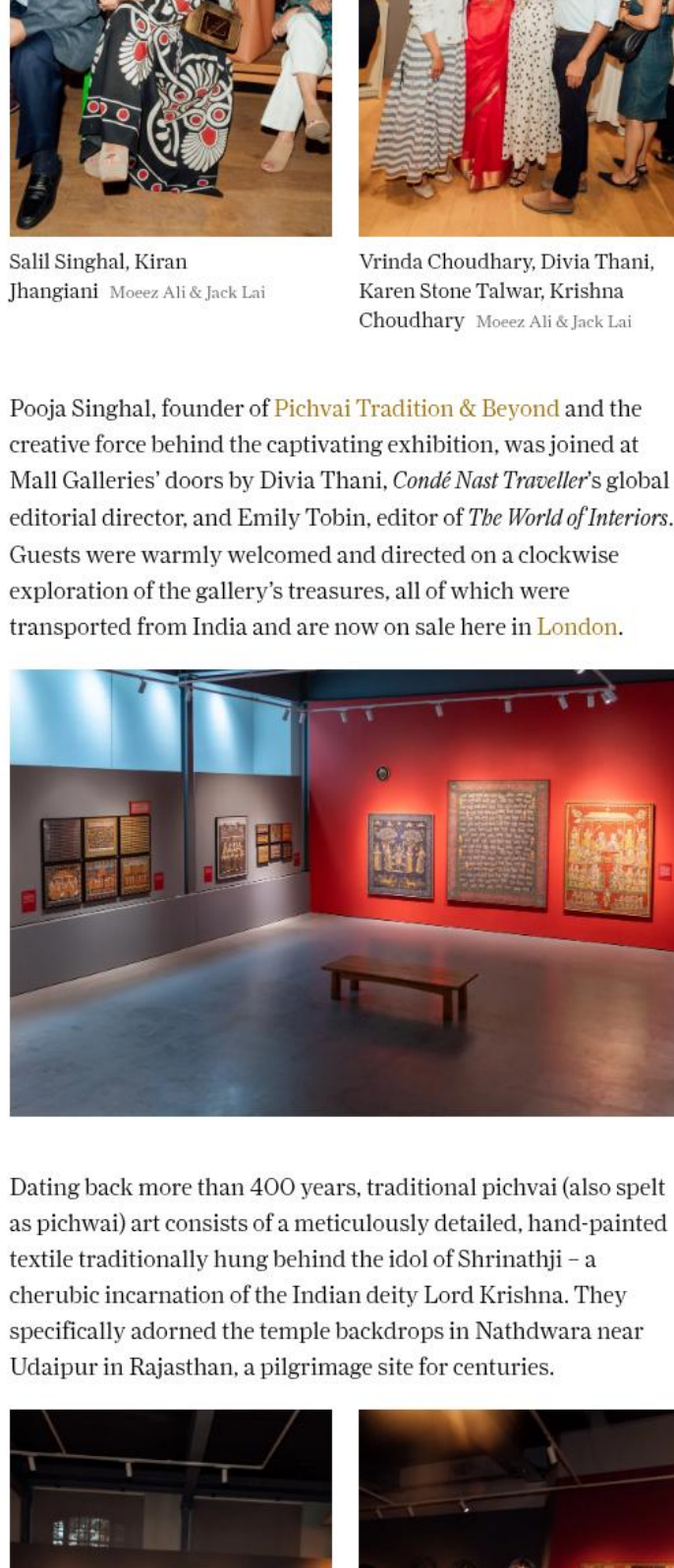
Inside the launch of London's most fascinating new exhibition – Feast, Melody and Adornment: The Art of Pichvai

The new exhibition at Mall Galleries offers a rare opportunity to witness the evolution of a 400-year-old Indian art form

BY CONNOR STURGES
1 July 2025



On the balmy summer's evening of Tuesday 1 July 2025, *Condé Nast Traveller* and *The World of Interiors* joined forces to celebrate the opening of one of London's most exciting new exhibitions at Mall Galleries.



Creatives, entrepreneurs, aesthetes and big names from across the Indian diaspora and the art world congregated just a stone's throw from Buckingham Palace to mark the arrival of *Feast, Melody and Adornment: The Art of Pichvai* – the first major exhibition of its kind in the capital.



Saif Singhani, Kiran Jhangiani *Moore Ali & Jack Lai*

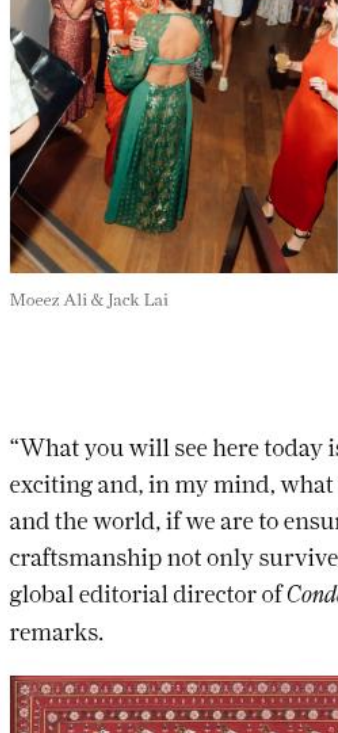


Vrinda Choudhary, Divya Thani, Karen Stone-Talwar, Krishna Choudhary *Moore Ali & Jack Lai*

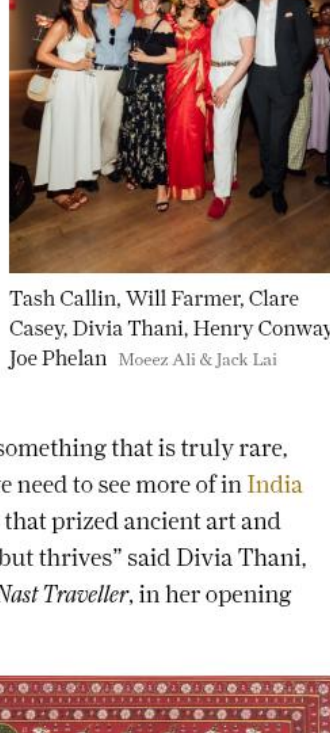
Pooja Singhal, founder of *Pichvai Tradition & Beyond* and the creative force behind the captivating exhibition, was joined at Mall Galleries' doors by Divya Thani, *Condé Nast Traveller's* global editorial director, and Emily Tobin, editor of *The World of Interiors*. Guests were warmly welcomed and directed on a clockwise exploration of the gallery's treasures, all of which were transported from India and are now on sale here in London.



Dating back more than 400 years, traditional pichvai (also spelt as pichwai) art consists of a meticulously detailed, hand-painted textile incarnation hung behind the idol of Shrinathji – a cherubic incarnation of the Indian deity Lord Krishna. They specifically adorned the temple backdrops in Nathdwara near Udaipur in Rajasthan, a pilgrimage site for centuries.



Mayank Singhal, Niya Khemka, Shaina Waney, Jai Waney *Moore Ali & Jack Lai*



Devisha Singh, Emily Tobin, Dia Bhupai *Moore Ali & Jack Lai*

The scale of the show is impressive: While the North Gallery is bedecked with sketches and archival pieces, the other two gallery spaces primarily display contemporary interpretations of the traditional art form.



There are more than 500 works in total, ranging from a few inches in size to large pieces that would dominate entrance foyers. The colours are vibrant – the gallery's walls were painted in bold red and muted grey to enhance the impact of the works and allow guests to appreciate the intricate details.



Moore Ali & Jack Lai

Highlights included *Tamasba – Festive Gathering of Udaipur Palace*, a vivid reimagining of a centuries-old composition that captures joyous celebrations within the palace walls, featuring male figures surrounded by women of the royal zenana (women's quarters) on either side. At the far end of the gallery, one attendee furrowed his brow at *Hacienda of Shrinathji* before likening it to a "Picasso", the cityscape floating on itself, reminiscent of early 20th-century Cubism.



Moore Ali & Jack Lai

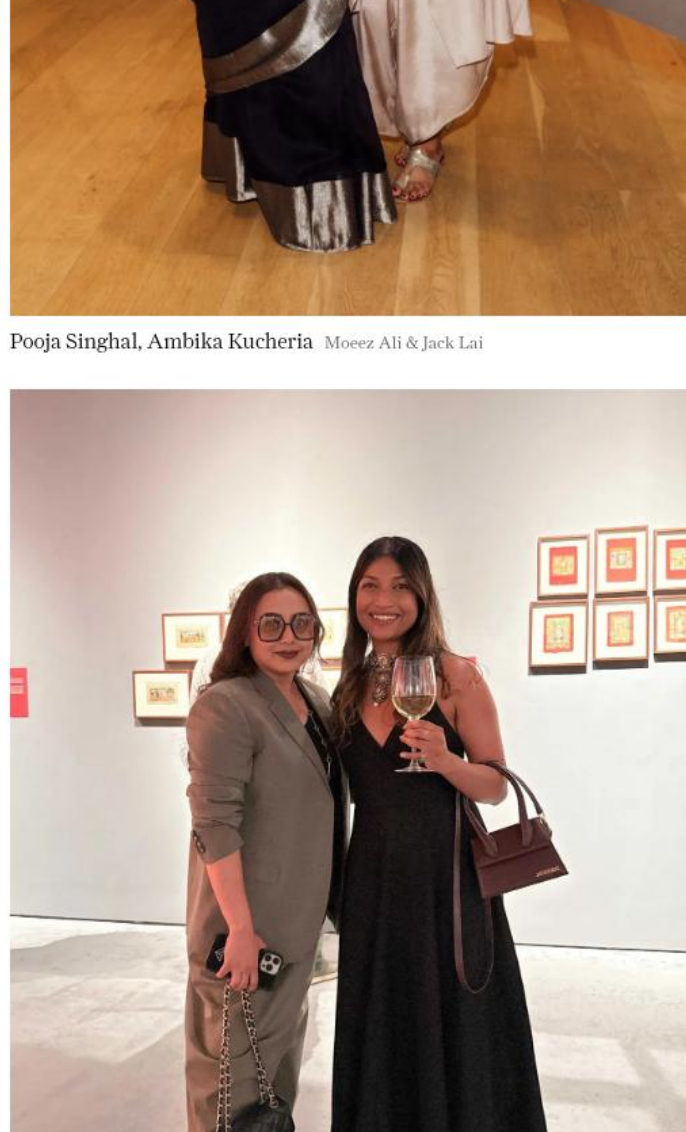


Tash Callin, Will Farmer, Clare Casey, Divya Thani, Henry Conway, Joe Phelan *Moore Ali & Jack Lai*

"What you will see here today is something that is truly rare, exciting and, in my mind, what we need to see more of in India and the world, if we are to ensure that prized ancient art and craftsmanship not only survives but thrives" said Divya Thani, global editorial director of *Condé Nast Traveller*, in her opening remarks.



"This 400-year-old art form comes from Nathwada, in Rajasthan, where Pooja's family is from," she continued. "When Pooja discovered what we were in danger of losing, she set up a charitable initiative with the support of her family's foundation. Her atelier today works with artists who are keeping this incredible tradition alive, but also pushing boundaries, contemporising pieces for today's collectors. The proceeds are rolled back into sustaining the artist community. So what you see here tonight is part revival, part reimagining. It is the future of our ages old heritage."



Pooja Singhal, Moni Mohsin *Moore Ali & Jack Lai*

Singhal, visibly emotional, subsequently took to the microphone explaining, "This is a really big moment for me and my team, and also for traditional Indian art. I started this journey of revival in 2009, and I never imagined I would have a show of this scale in London. I am so grateful to Divya for being such an inspiration and a force behind this show. I grew up seeing pichvai because we lived in Udaipur, and my mother was a collector. But once we moved to Delhi, we entered the world of minimalism and contemporary art, and many of us left our traditional roots behind. When I returned to Udaipur, I realised that the decline in Pichwai had begun and I knew the art form would die out if we didn't find new patronage, and ensured that the artists were compensated well, appreciated, and respected. I also wanted to retain the traditional techniques and materials but push the envelope when it came to design, so that these works can sit alongside contemporary and modern art and hold their own. It took years of hard work. But in 2016, we were the first traditional art form to show at the Kochi-Muziris Biennale. Then we were allowed into the India Art Fair, which was largely a setting just for contemporary art galleries. After successful shows in Delhi, Mumbai and Singapore, we are here in London, with our biggest and boldest endeavour yet."



Bitu and Anita Kaushal *Moore Ali & Jack Lai*

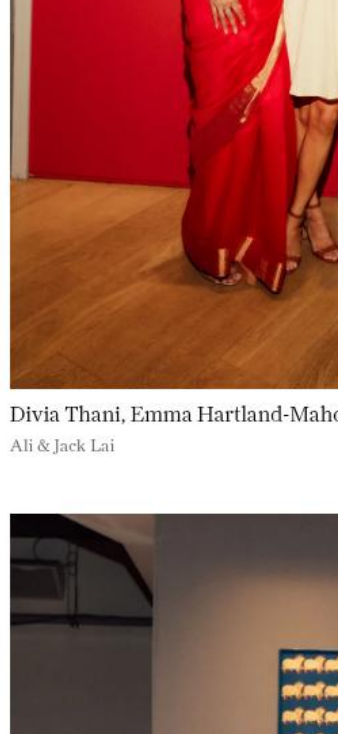


Archana Thani and Eshta Kabra *Moore Ali & Jack Lai*

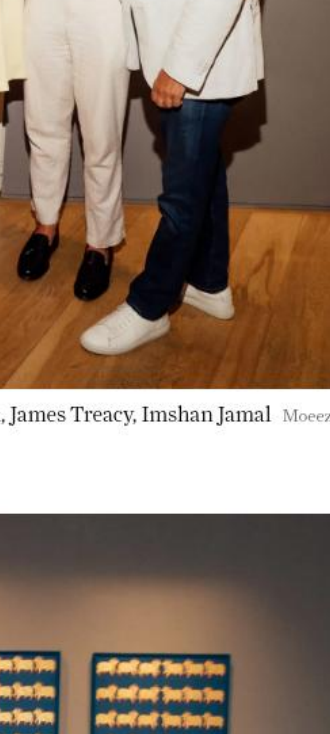
"It has been a Herculean effort, and the more people who get to see and enjoy this art form is what drives us."



The crowd stayed on to mingle and examine the pieces in detail. A pop-up bar in the North Gallery kept attendees' thirst quenched as they explored the gallery, with bartenders shaking and stirring a series of Johnnie Walker Blue Label cocktails. Options included 'walking in the sun' (Johnnie Walker Blue Label, chilli, mint and soda) and a refreshing, iced muddle of whisky and lemonade. Light bites circulated the room, dashing waiters offering light bites including caramelised roseoff onion and black truffle quiche, Mumbai aubergine caviar with masala aioli, swordfish fillets on parmesan biscuit, and mini lamb kafta with minted yoghurt and barissia butter.

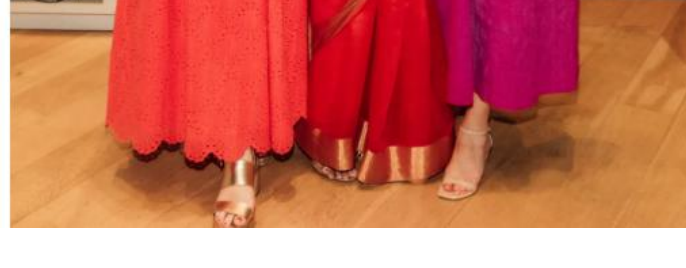


Alka Bagri, Pooja Singhal, Divya Thani *Moore Ali & Jack Lai*



Binoj Sonaila, Sonalee Kumar, Pooja Singhal, Abhishek Modi, Nandini Modi *Moore Ali & Jack Lai*

Feast, Melody and Adornment: The Art of Pichvai is showing across the West, East and North Galleries of Mall Galleries daily from Wednesday 2 July - Saturday 5 July, 10am - 6pm, and Sunday 6 July, 10am - 4pm. Admission is free, with no booking required.



Deepa Sama, Sindhu Vee, Divya Thani, Geetika Jain, Divyata Ashiya *Moore Ali & Jack Lai*

Pooja Singhal, Ambika Kucheria *Moore Ali & Jack Lai*

Rani Mukherjee Chopra and Saniya Shete

Meleni Bharwani, Divya Thani, Anu Hinduja *Moore Ali & Jack Lai*

Rohini Belani Garyali *Moore Ali & Jack Lai*

Divya Thani, Emma Hartland-James, John Treacy, Imshan Jamal *Moore Ali & Jack Lai*

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