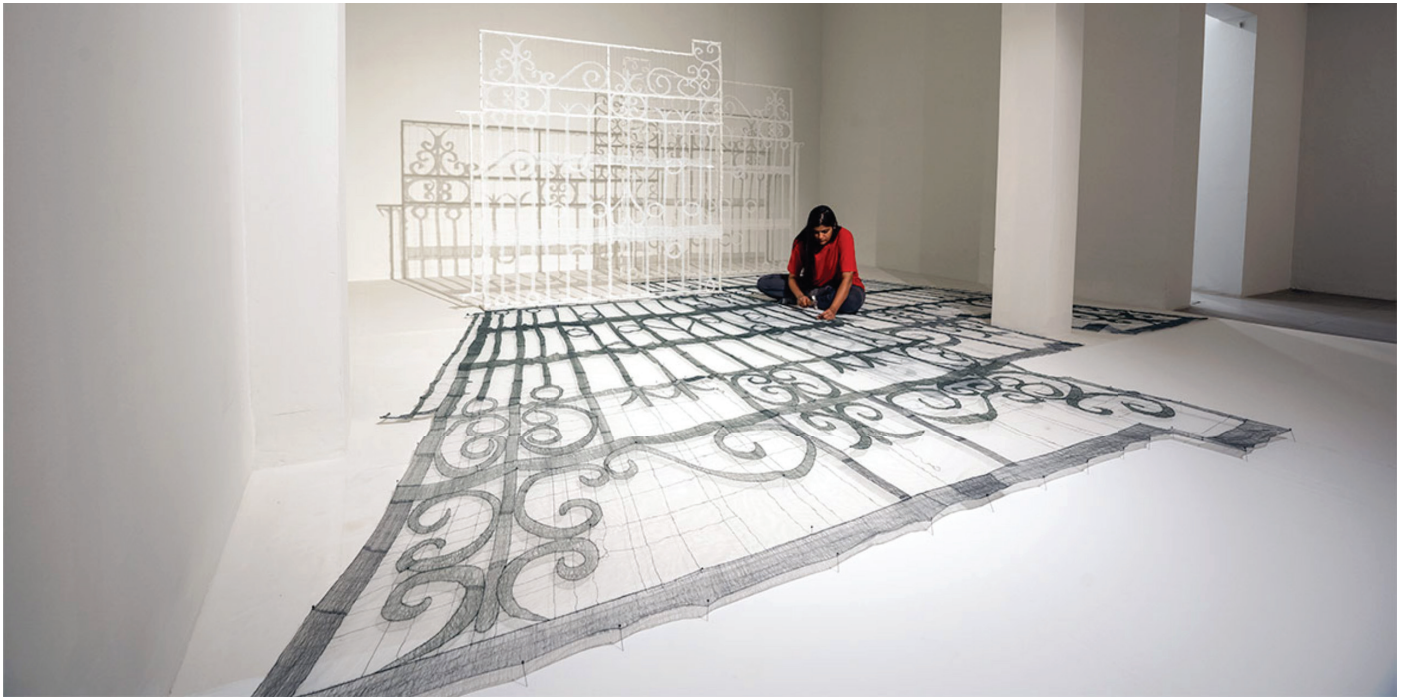


THE VOICE OF FASHION



INTERSECTIONS / FEATURES

Monu-Moments with Sumakshi Singh: Domestic Craft to Contemporary Art

By Anannya Sarkar



October 30, 2025

9 Min Read

The artist, who was awarded a special mention at the Loewe Foundation Craft Prize 2025, uses embroidery and architectural forms to hold and honour her memories

A staircase, almost weightless, suspended mid-air greets visitors walking into the sanctum sanctorum of artist Sumakshi Singh's home-studio in Gurugram. Made of fine thread, its gossamer-like structure seems to hover between material and memory. The piece, painstakingly built yet deceptively ephemeral, will be part of one of her many upcoming exhibitions. Singh moves around it lightly, pointing out knots and seams only she can see.

Her work, though global in reach, remains deeply introspective as each piece makes an attempt to materialise impermanence, whether it's memory or physical dislocation. "You can't preserve memory, but you can give it a body, however fragile," she signs off.

Inside her studio, three artisans work on intricate components under her direction. "I like that it's collaborative. Each hand carries its own energy. I might spend months with my team making something so light it could disappear with a breath," she explains. The process is both physically demanding and meditative. Layers of thread are embroidered on water-soluble fabric using a spectrum of materials (like nylon and *zari*), sometimes stiffened with resin, and finally suspended in air or put in a frame, as the artwork might demand. Her works often reconstruct architectural fragments of childhood spaces: doors, windows, staircases, entire rooms remembered from photographs or dreams.

These "memory architectures" are neither reproductions nor strains of empty nostalgia. They are propositions of how the mind rebuilds what is lost. Singh's 2016 exhibition titled *In the Garden* was perhaps one of her earlier and most intimate exploration of this theme. She endowed levity to the words from letters by her late mother by embroidering them. Singh's exhibition titled *33 Link Road* (2020), an ethereal reimagination of her grandparents' brick-and-mortar house—central to her growing-up years—into a threaded, dream-like series of artworks is another rife example. "A lot of my work began when I started losing people I loved. I realised that grief has its own materiality. The more you resist it, the heavier it becomes. So I started stitching it into something that could breathe," she says. What makes Singh's art distinctive is her ability to translate intangible emotions into tangible structures without sentimentality. "I wanted to give form to what exists only between presence and absence."

The recent acclaim for her exhibition titled *Monuments* (2025) at Bikaner House—where she retraced with embroidery, the forms and patterns of Delhi's old minarets—feels well-earned. While an earlier iteration of the project (*Monument*, 2024) also earned her a special mention at this year's Loewe Foundation Craft Prize, her installation for the window of the Hermès store in Delhi in 2019 earned her popularity beyond the traditional art-viewing-cube experience. Yet, this success is just one chapter in a 25-year practice devoted to what Singh describes as "the architecture of remembering".

As she rattles off her upcoming exhibitions—Paris, Kochi, New York—it becomes clear why she’s been impossible to pin down for this chat. Like her work, Singh is simultaneously grounded in form, but fluid in spirit. “My practice is about holding what can’t be held. I make memory visible. Not to fix it, but to keep it alive,” she says.



A glimpse of her work.

Building the Intangible

Singh’s art defies the traditional boundaries of painting or sculpture. “I was never drawn to working flat alone,” she says. A graduate of the prestigious Faculty of Fine Arts at the Maharaja Sayajirao University of Baroda and the School of the Art Institute of Chicago, she began her career experimenting with sculpture, painting and then with architectural space, thread and drawings into immersive, walk-through environments. Over time, her medium evolved into a delicate balance of embroidery, thread and fabric—elements that simultaneously “reveal and conceal”.



Installation of artworks by artist Sumakshi Singh, from her series 'Monuments'.

The Feminine Lineage

While her installations are globally recognised for their technical finesse, they are also deeply personal in their relationship to matriarchal lineage and gendered labour. Singh traces her first lessons in making with her hands back to her grandmother, who taught her to embroider. "The first stitch I learned was to fix something torn. That gesture of mending has stayed with me," she recalls, while mimicking the act of sewing with her hands. Her use of embroidery, hand-stitching and repetitive motion brings domestic craft into the realm of contemporary art-making, aligning her with artists who reclaim "women's work" as a site of reflection and power. "Embroidery is slow, quiet, often invisible. But it holds everything together. I wanted to see if that could hold memory too."

In her exhibitions, this sensibility manifests as immersive environments that invite viewers to slow down and look closely. "You realise that absence is not empty as it has its own density. The thread is a metaphor, but also literal as it binds generations of hands." Her works, often made in collaboration with women artisans, exist at the intersection of therapy and craft. "We talk as we sew. The work becomes a kind of collective remembering. There's healing in that repetition," she explains. By engaging domestic techniques within fine-art contexts, Singh tries to collapse hierarchies between the private and the public.



Window display installation titled 'Pages from a Dream Journal' by Sumakshi Singh, for Hermès in The Chanakya, New Delhi (2019).

The Artist in Transit

Between her studio in Gurugram and projects abroad, Singh's year is mapped out in travel and creation. Exhibitions in Paris and the United States are in the works, while new commissions await. Yet she insists that her process remains inward. "Every journey begins and ends at the same place, which is the studio," she says.

Her work, though global in reach, remains deeply introspective as each piece makes an attempt to materialise impermanence, whether it's memory or physical dislocation. "You can't preserve memory, but you can give it a body, however fragile," she signs off.

Banner: All photos, courtesy of artist & galleries.