

NIKHIL CHOPRA WITH URIEL BARTHÉLÉMI

EN

EMBERS / BRACI

09.05.2026 – 13.09.2026

Opening Saturday 09 May 2026 | 4pm – 7pm

Following the two-part performances at La POP and Monnaie de Paris in autumn 2024, Nikhil Chopra, together with drummer and composer Uriel Barthélémi, presents **EMBERS / BRACI** at the Arco dei Becci venue of Galleria Continua in San Gimignano – a new exhibition to add to their dialogue and raise burning questions about the ecological and political precarity of the world we live in.

EMBERS / BRACI reactivates the large-scale drawings created by Nikhil Chopra during the performances *Fire x Fire - Ignition* and *Fire x Fire - Combustion*. These works, born from long-duration actions in which sound and image intertwine, now return to the exhibition space at Galleria Continua to form a new narrative. On the opening day, the two artists will present a three-hour performance: as the rhythm of the drums fills the space, the landscape will once again be drawn in real time. Sound and drawing merge, extending the questions at the heart of their collaboration: how does fire wound us? How does it comfort us? Are we made of mud, water, air, and fire?

The core of Nikhil Chopra's artistic philosophy is rooted in process, transformation, and memory. His immersive, performative practice draws on and at the same time breaks down the boundaries between drawing, theatre, live art, and installation. While each of these forms has a long history, what makes Chopra's work unique is the way they intersect and interact, creating an entirely new artistic grammar. As an artist working outside the traditional conventions of the

studio, Chopra creates in real time, often in front of a live audience, allowing the act of making itself to become an integral part of the work. His body thus becomes site, medium, and narrative, through which the work takes shape. His performances, often largely improvised, critically and creatively explore themes such as identity, the role of autobiography, persona-crafting, and self-portraiture. Most of his characters are not anchored to a specific time or place, yet they feel strikingly intimate and familiar, subtly challenging viewers' perceptions of identity, memory, and history. With an undercurrent of playfulness, there is a palpable play of tension and balance between the artist and the viewer, who may follow and observe closely, but is never fully aware of the act in its entirety. This gives rise to unexpected reactions, imagined narratives, and an ever-branching field of possibilities, activating the audience's participation in a work that wrestles with the art of storytelling itself, while challenging established histories and conventions of class, and gender. Each performance unfolds as a dynamic process, embracing a vibrant state of flow, metamorphosis, movement, tremor, pulse, vibration, and breath. Chopra achieves this almost mystical effect by surrendering to the temporal nature of the process. He uses time as a watercolorist uses water. In doing so, he creates a neutral emotional space, a space free of judgment. "When you begin to look at a painting or a performance and you give it time (or duration, which for me is very important), you begin to remove the layers,

and you begin to understand and reveal the process. There are formal layers, but also contextual ones. Perhaps this is where the value of the work lies: in the process not only in the painting, the drawing, or the performance," the artist states.

This open and collaborative spirit extends to Chopra's long-standing creative partnership with French musician, drummer and composer Uriel Barthélémi, a relationship that first took shape in 2016 with *Floating Cities and Loaded Dice*, a three-hour durational performance staged at the Gare du Nord in Paris, in which the two artists jointly inhabited the vast resonating chamber of the train station to build a symbolic narrative around the conditions of refugees in France and Europe. This founding encounter established the terms of a dialogue that has continued to evolve: two practices, both resistant to fixed categories, both deeply invested in the physical, performative, and emotional dimensions of their respective mediums, finding in each other a space of friction, freedom, and shared invention.

The exhibition in San Gimignano places renewed emphasis on the traces of earlier performances, rekindling their flame while generating a new one. *EMBERS / BRACI* marks a moment in an important chapter. With this exhibition, Nikhil Chopra resumes his artistic practice from where he left off, before taking on the role of curator of the Kochi-Muziris Biennale, titled *For the Time Being*, which concluded at the end of March 2026. The exhibition stands as both echo and transformation: a final combustion before a new beginning.

Costume Designer Marion Moinet.

About the artists:

Born in present-day Kolkata in 1974, **Nikhil Chopra** completed his artistic training in the United States. He presented his first performances in Berlin and continued his career abroad before returning to Goa, where in 2014 he founded HH Art Spaces, an artist-run space. His works are held in major international collections and have been presented at leading museums such as Tate Modern in London, Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York, and Centre Pompidou in Paris. Nikhil Chopra's performances on the international art and theatre scene began in 2008, when he was invited to contribute to *Time Crevasse* (Yokohama Triennale, Yokohama), *Kunstenfestivaldesarts* (Brussels), *Making Worlds* (53rd Venice Biennale), *Performa* (New Museum), and

Marina Abramović Presents (Manchester International Festival, Whitworth Art Gallery). Following a one-year research fellowship at *Interweaving Performance Cultures* at Free University of Berlin in 2011, his work brought him back to the Whitworth Art Gallery to realize a solo project for the Manchester International Festival in 2013, where he received critical acclaim for his performance *Coal on Cotton*. Between 2014 and 2017 he participated in the Kochi-Muziris Biennale, the Havana Biennial, the 12th Sharjah Biennial, and documenta 14. In 2019 he presented a nine-day solo performance titled *Lands, Waters and Skies* at the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York. In 2024, the artist was featured at *Asia Now*, hosted at the Monnaie de Paris, with his performance *Dancing with Myself*. In 2026, Chopra assumed the role of curator of the 6th Kochi-Muziris Biennale in collaboration with HH Art Spaces.

Uriel Barthélémi is a polymorph artist, drummer and electronic musician. His language combines drums, modular synthesizers, installations, sound & video programming and composition. He infuses each of his projects with this multifaceted identity, dense and unclassifiable. Working on the drums and computer connection, this has led him to collaborate in numerous areas of the performing arts from 2002 onwards: dance, theater, as well as the visual arts. These multiple themes have made him reflect upon the concepts of performance and improvisation, to take into account the concepts of plasticity and physicality of sound through immersive spatial layout, as well as questioning the place of the performer (intention, corporality) and frictional psychological contexts (decolonization, sound used as weapon). He also started to think about the relation between sound and plants via two immersive installations, including a 6 month solo exhibition at Frac Champagne-Ardenne in 2024, with the participation of Haegue Yang.

He has been commissioned by French ministry of Culture (2021 & 2024), Sharjah Art Foundation, FIAC, Maerzmusik, Al Mamal Art Foundation, Intonal festival, Beijing National Theater, C74, Steirischer Herbst, Césaré-cncm, among others. Collaborating and appearing with many artists, such as Hélène Breschand, Tarek Atoui, Natascha Rogers, Angelica Mesiti, Taro Shinoda, Hassan Khan, he performed in venues and festivals as Palazzo Grassi (Venice, 2019), Jerusalem show (Jerusalem Est, 2010), Sharjah Biennial (Emirats Arabes, 2015), Jerusalem show (Jerusalem Est, 2010),

Sharjah Biennial (2015, Emirats Arabes Unis), FIAC (Paris, 2016- 2018), festival Voilahn (Singapor, 2018), Nyege Nyege festival (Uganda, 2018), Emerge (Montreal, 2019), Cour d'honneur du Palais des papes (Avignon, 2025), Kochi Biennale (2025-26) Artist in residency at Rauschenberg foundation (US) in 2025, he is a recipient of 2026 Baroness Nina von Maltzahn fellowship at the Watermill Center (US). Since 2022 he is supported by Drac Ile de France.

About the gallery:

Founded in 1990 in San Gimignano, Italy, GALLERIA CONTINUA has expanded its locationsto Beijing, Les Moulins, Havana, São Paulo, Rome, and Paris. GALLERIA CONTINUA represents the desire for continuity between eras and the ambition to write a contemporary story. In thirty-six years of activity, thanks to its commitment to revitalizing and breathing new life into forgotten and unconventional spaces, the gallery has developed a strong and unique identity. Located within a former 1950s cinema-theater, GALLERIA CONTINUA San Gimignano has hosted numerous exhibitions over the years, offering artists the opportunity to create memorable site-specific installations and tailor-made exhibition projects for these distinctive and character rich spaces.

GALLERIA CONTINUA / San Gimignano

Via del Castello 11, 53037 San Gimignano (SI)
+39 0577 943134 | info@galleriacontinua.com
sangimignano@galleriacontinua.com
www.galleriacontinua.com
From Monday to Sunday, 10 AM-1 PM | 2 PM-7 PM

For further information about the exhibition and photographic material:
Silvia Pichini, Communications Manager
press@galleriacontinua.com
cell. +39 347 45 36 136