

Ahmedabad University's Contemporary Arts Festival Sets the Stage for the School of Performing and Visual Arts

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[Ahmedabad University](#) deepened its engagement with the arts and the city's cultural fabric with the inaugural Sabarmati International Contemporary Arts Festival of Ahmedabad ([SICAFA](#)). More than a festival, SICAFA is a precursor to establishing the School of Performing and Visual Arts, reinforcing the University's commitment to integrating artistic inquiry into its academic and civic mission.



SICAFA comprised performances across genres, including theatre, music, folk dance, talks, culinary festival, installations, featuring renowned artists, educators, and scholars

Rooted in the belief that a thriving cultural ecosystem is essential for intellectual and social progress, SICAFA connects tradition with contemporary expression, fostering dialogue between artists, scholars, and the wider community. By bringing together performers, creators, and audiences in an immersive cultural experience, Ahmedabad University aims to celebrate artistic excellence and lay the groundwork for a dedicated academic space that will shape the future of performing and visual arts education.

Held from March 11-18, 2025, in partnership with Neekoe Foundation and the Polish Institute New Delhi, the festival transformed Ahmedabad into a vibrant hub of artistic expression, featuring a dynamic mix of theatre, folk dance, music, puppetry, storytelling, and thought-provoking conversations with renowned artists.

The festival, curated by [Deepan Sivaraman](#), Professor, School

of Arts and Sciences, Ahmedabad University, and Neena Naishadh, Founder, Neekoe Foundation, opened with the spectacular Manganiyar Seduction, directed by Roysten Abel, where a grand ensemble of 40 Rajasthani musicians performed within a four-story illuminated structure, mesmerising an audience of over 2,000 attendees. The performance set the tone for a week of artistic excellence and cultural immersion.

SICAFA showcased a diverse array of performing arts traditions. Amitosh Nagpal's Middle Class Dream of a Summer's Night, a contemporary theatrical piece, brought a fresh and imaginative perspective to modern Indian storytelling. Jeevit ya Mrit, an adaptation of Rabindranath Tagore's celebrated short story, was presented as an extended monologue powerfully performed by the National Film Award winning actress Seema Biswas and directed by Anuradha Kapur, former Director of National School of Drama.

Folk traditions were equally celebrated, with Purulia Chhau, a spectacular masked dance-drama from West Bengal's indigenous communities, captivating audiences with its vibrant energy and intricate choreography. Theyyam, Kerala's centuries-old ritualistic performance, added a spiritual and visually arresting dimension to the festival.

The festival also featured Patrick Sims' Puppetry Show, transporting audiences, especially children, into a world of imaginative storytelling. Saumya Joshi's Oh Womaniya, a high-energy performance by Jigna Vyas, delved into the deepest facets of a woman's identity and experiences, while Girish Karnad's Hayavadana, adapted by Padma Shri awardee Neelam Mansingh Chowdhry, challenged audiences to rethink human identity and transformation.

The Anirudh Varma Collective (AVC) delivered a powerful closing act, seamlessly blending Indian classical music with contemporary influences, demonstrating the evolving landscape of artistic expression.

SICAFA also curated a special culinary arts segment, featuring India's rich food heritage and its deep cultural connections. Engaging discussions on contemporary arts and their role in shaping cultural consciousness added further depth, bringing together distinguished artists and scholars for thought-provoking conversations.

A Cultural Movement for Ahmedabad

Beyond a contemporary arts festival, SICAFA was a cultural movement reaffirming the role of the arts in fostering critical thinking, creativity, and interdisciplinary learning. As Ahmedabad University progresses toward launching the School of Performing and Visual Arts, SICAFA will continue as an annual event, deepening the University's engagement with the arts and further cementing Ahmedabad as a global cultural destination.

About Ahmedabad University

Ahmedabad University is a leading private, non-profit research university offering students a liberal education focused on interdisciplinary learning, practice orientation, and research thinking.

The University has been

- Recognised by the Government of Gujarat as a Centre of Excellence.
- Accredited with A grade by the National Assessment and Accreditation Council (NAAC).
- Awarded a 5-star rating, the highest awarded in the Gujarat State Institutional Rating Framework (GSIRF) for 2021-22 and 2023-24, by the Knowledge Consortium of Gujarat (KCG), Department of Education, Government of Gujarat.
- Awarded the Royal Institute of British Architects (RIBA)

International Award for Excellence 2024 for our University Centre.

- Awarded a Platinum Rating by the Indian Green Building Council for sustainability and green practices.
- Recognised by the UGC under Section 12(B) of the UGC Act, becoming one of the very few private research universities to have been awarded this recognition for select research universities.
- Recognised as a Highly Commended University for Teaching and Learning Strategy of the Year in the Times Higher Education (THE) Awards Asia 2023.
- Awarded the AACSB's Innovations That Inspire Award 2023 for its Foundation Programme.
- Awarded Gold Rating by the Indian Green Building Council for achieving the Green Building Standards at our University Centre.

The University, established in 2009, is rooted in the vision of one of India's finest educational foundations, the Ahmedabad Education Society, which was founded in 1935 by nationalist leaders. Programmes at the University range from bachelors to doctoral levels in humanities and social sciences, natural sciences, engineering, and management through its 13 Schools and Centres:

Amrut Mody School of Management | Bagchi School of Public Health | School of Arts and Sciences | School of Engineering and Applied Science | Ahmedabad Design Lab | Centre for Heritage Management | Centre for Inter-Asian Research | Centre for Learning Futures | Global Centre for Environment and Energy | International Centre for Space and Cosmology | Sahyog: Centre for Promoting Health | The Climate Institute | VentureStudio

An urban university, Ahmedabad promotes independent-mindedness and diversity across all dimensions of its activity and helps students mature into critical thinkers who are analytically equipped, practically oriented, and contextually aware global citizens. The University provides a contemporary educational framework that brings liberal arts, sciences, and the professions to engage together in creating new knowledge for addressing complex challenges of the society and in offering majors that merge the boundaries of disciplines to prepare students for the new economy.

