



DIASPORIC RHIZOME

21 South Asian
artists creating
<new experiences>
<new ways of being>
<new understandings>

Diasporic Rhizome is a virtual exhibition that explores how the future of our present - one that derives from our past - manifests itself through a South Asian lens.

The concept of 'diaspora' itself is constantly evolving and mutating and in an effort to be as inclusive as possible, the exhibition leaves the agency of belonging to the South Asian diaspora to the artist's own understanding of the concept.

The rhizome serves as the catalyst for artists to create their own narratives and imagine new worlds. Similar to nature, where rhizomes that live just under the surface can heal our bodies, this network of artists are creating work

in non-traditional spaces that have the potential to collectively reshape our futures.

The artists in Diasporic Rhizome reexamine our histories, comment on current social issues, and dream of new realities. This collective work uses innovation and the imagination as change agents where the digital space becomes the apparatus for community building, challenging the world around us to transform and address our growing needs.

The 21 participating artists in Diasporic Rhizome were selected from an open call by the following jury: Faisal Anwar, Ambika Trasi, Brendan Fernandes.

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Curator Statements

Urooj Shakeel

In its ephemeral presence as a virtual exhibition, Diasporic Rhizome represents a moment of connectivity for South Asian artists working in the digital realm. When we consider the stem of a rhizome as an origin point of a systematic network, in the context of this exhibition, we must also consider the source of all artistic inspiration, which I believe to be imagination. Like the stem, imagination serves as the sustainer of all its roots, giving life to new ideas and meanings. The power of imagination makes it possible for art to question cultural notions and challenge the current physical world we live in, existing independently of political control and leading us into action in order to transform our current realities.

The artists in Diasporic Rhizome exist in digital spaces and manifest their networks through new worlds conceived by their art praxis. These worlds transcend our understanding of the physical world around us, a world

that so often confines us in a system that is meant to keep us oppressed. In true avant-garde manner, these artists attempt to change people and their way of thinking by putting them in these new environments.

The sequence of works in Diasporic Rhizome do this by moving us from our past to the future of our present. From a South Asian lens, our experiences originate from similar stories of displacement as a result of colonization and war. In the aftermath of this geographical movement, we regrow our networks in unfamiliar spaces like amputated stems of a rhizome and rise again. As a collective body of work, the 21 artists are in dialogue with one another, each preserving the roots of our pasts, confronting the injustices of our presents, and reimagining our utopian futures. While the virtual exhibition may no longer exist, it serves as a catalyst for new stems to be planted that continue to regenerate their roots in different spaces.

Asad Ali Jafri

Diasporic Rhizome was a dream and an experiment. In a time when artists are connecting to broader audiences through virtual means and physical space is replaced by immediate connectivity, we ask ourselves, how can we utilize the virtual space to bring diasporic South Asian artists together? The dream was to create an experience that cultivates genuine connection amongst artists, their work and the people that engage with that work. The experiment was the process, limited resources and a short timeline in which to do so. The results were greater than what we initially imagined. Artists responded generously to our call with work that is innovative, experimental and inspirational. All of which responds to the world we have inherited/created/lived.

Diasporic Rhizome allows us to experience time in a different way. Works in the exhibition present our

past, memories and legacies through personal and communal perspectives. They offer a critique and reinventing of our current conditions, innovating on the frameworks through which we perceive our realities and information we are given and imagine futures in which we have ultimate agency of our own narratives. All of this, of course, happens concurrently, allowing audiences to experience them in their own time.

Perhaps most importantly, Diasporic Rhizome helps us build genuine relationships, create a community of creatives and explore our current reality collectively. Just like the concept of the rhizome as a connected set of nodes, we know that these relationships, connections and community will continue to expand through the vast global networks, having impact in their own localities and of course, in our virtual worlds.

Anamika Singh

Landscapes Without Bodies, 2019

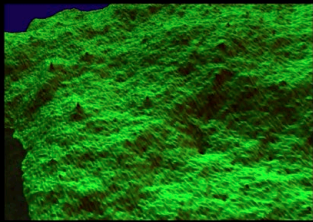


LANDSCAPES WITHOUT BODIES

When Osama Bin Laden's compound was demolished in 2012, A BBC article stated: "No official reason for the demolition has been given. Residents around the compound have speculated that authorities do not want it turned into a shrine."

A simple search for the compound will yield scale replicas in the United States, China and Afghanistan and numerous models both virtual and physical. The demolition of the original compound did not prevent its proliferation as a site, and the possibility of its memorialization and shrine hood. As sites are increasingly sanctified and weaponized through military violence, where do their replicas and speculative traces stand?

As our landscapes are populated by military monuments, militarized urban infrastructure and networks of surveillance, how are our personal and shared histories enfolding themselves within dense entanglements of violent legacies. What grows in the voids left by methodical demolitions, site-less



Chinese special forces were shown storming a bin Laden-like compound, in a rare military video on the special forces broadcast on State media last week.



shrines and continually mutating and mediated memories?

Landscapes Without Bodies, 2019 moves between historical, spatial and speculative edifices that animate the spectres of the "American imagination". Meditating on the replicas of bin Laden's compound, it considers how nationalist and military episodes are synthesized into larger cultural infrastructures wherein they are rendered intimate and obscure simultaneously. Examining transnational flows of violence, the film transverses temporal necropolises, grave-less oceans and hallucinating satellites.

Landscapes Without Bodies, 2019 is part of a developing body of work that examines how witnessing functions as a truth-making and boundary-drawing practice through which events of violence are materialized. Furthermore it inquires into how witnessing transcends the language of visibility. As part of the Diasporic Rhizome, the film continues to ask, 'whose memory is this that I am remembering?'



Top: Still from *Landscapes Without Bodies*, 2019
Middle: Still from *Landscapes Without Bodies*, 2019
Bottom: Still from *Landscapes Without Bodies*, 2019



Jaret Vadera

ASCENDING TO OUTER SPACE
TO FIND ANOTHER RACE, 2015



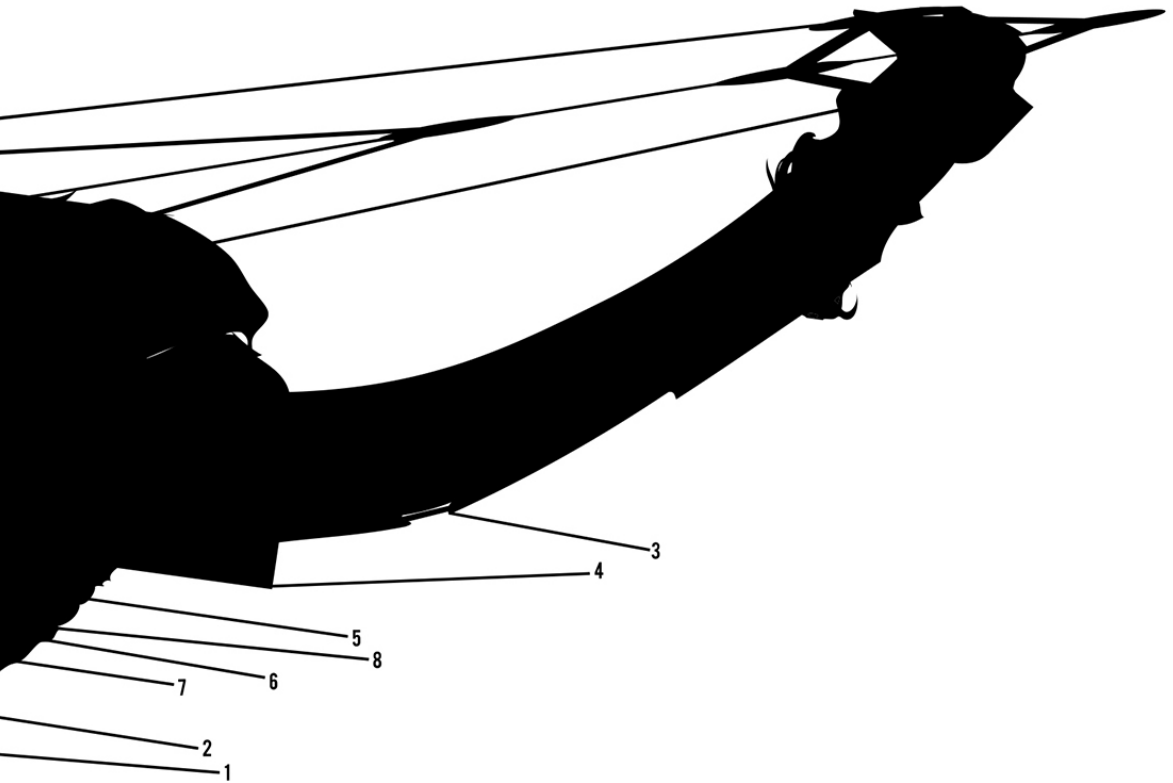


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UNITED STATES

2. SEARCH: TO
LOGO_FACE-TO-FACEBOOK_NET.PNG
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UNITED STATES

3. SEARCH: OUTER
ABDUCT-ALIEN-OUTER-SPACE.JPG
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4. SEARCH: SPACE
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6. SEARCH: FIND
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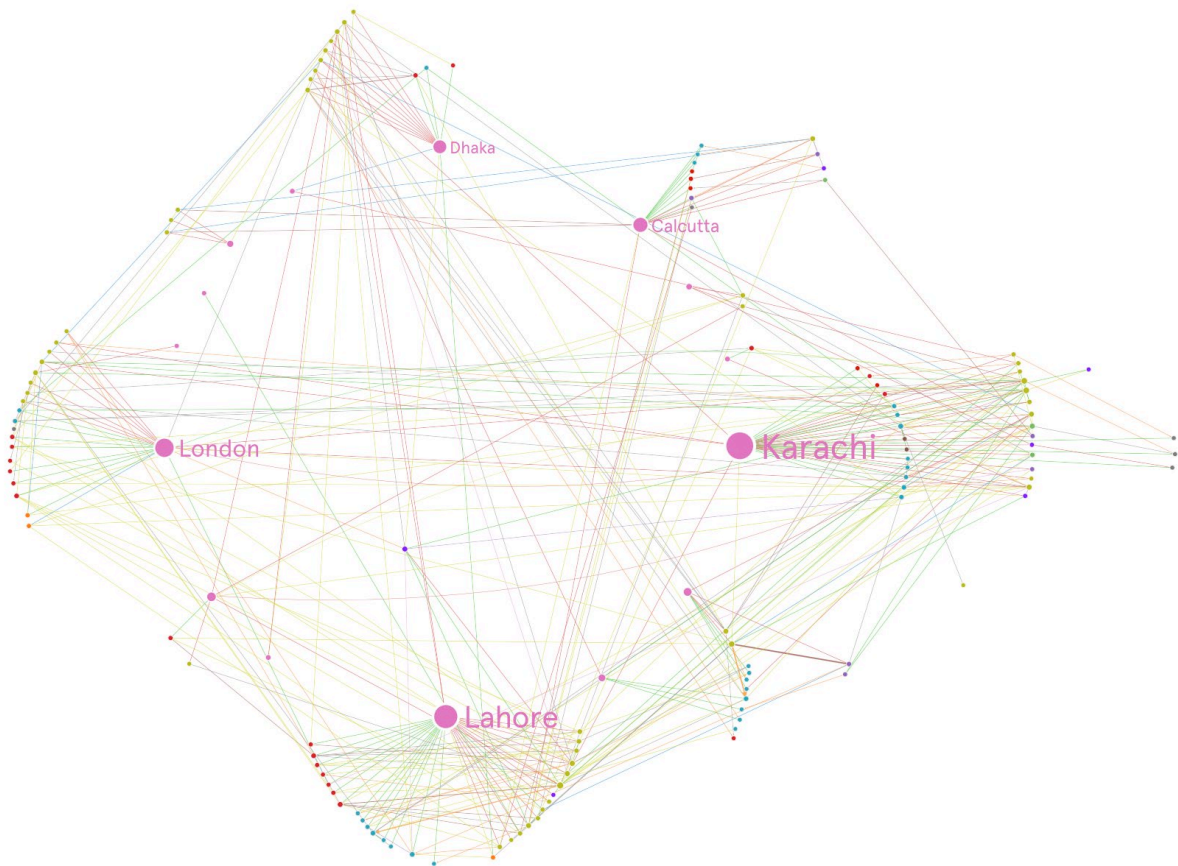
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8. SEARCH: RACE
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UNITED STATES

Moving across borders, both real and imagined, can open up new multivalent ways of seeing.

ASCENDING TO OUTER SPACE TO FIND ANOTHER RACE was influenced by Rorschach tests, FMRI's, and infographics. It explores the parallels between the Internet and neuronal networks—search engines and memory. First, I completed an image search for each word: ascending, to, outer, space, to, find, another, race.

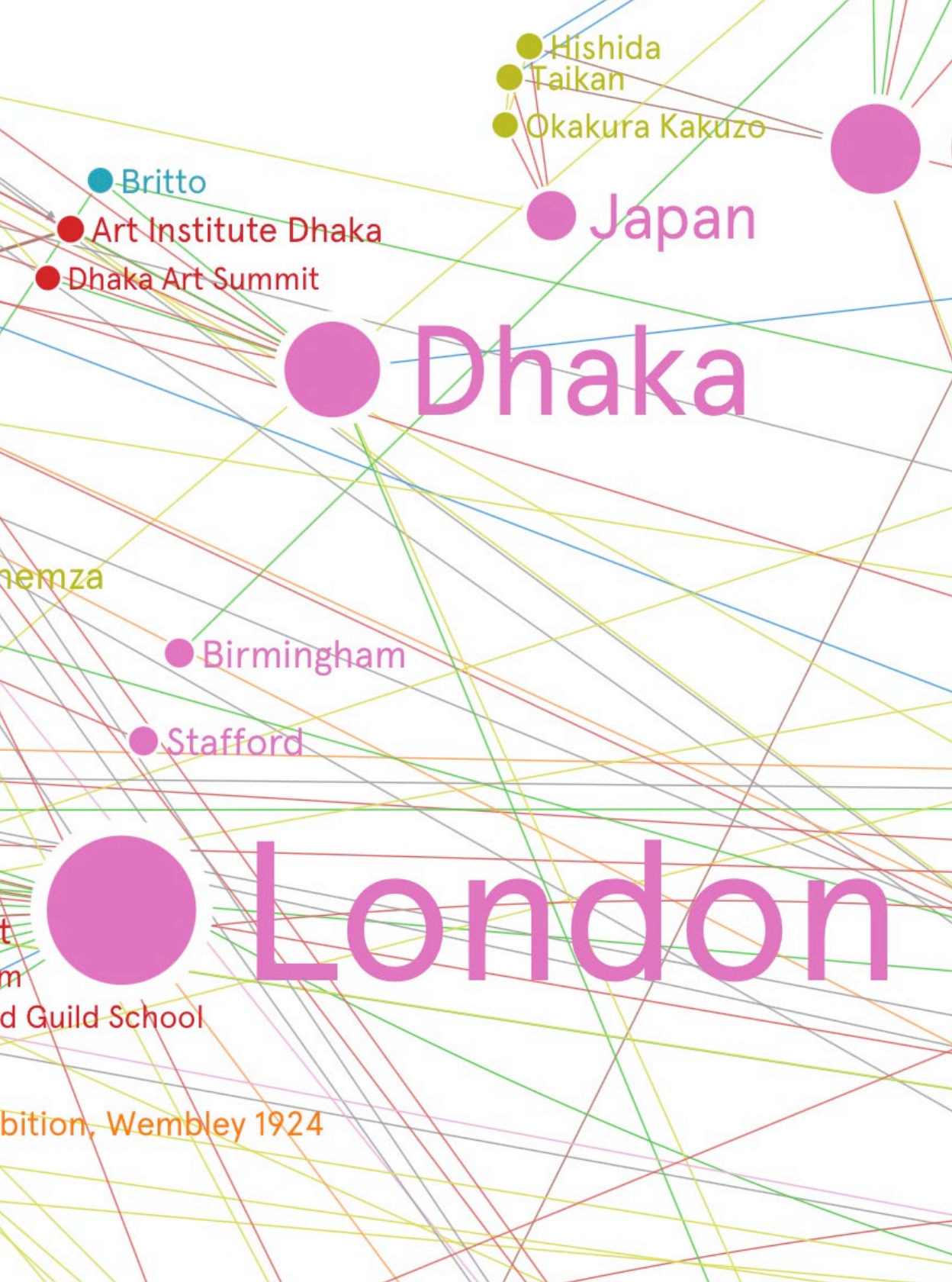
One of the first images from each search was then downloaded, simplified, and combined with the others. The search term, file name, ip address, and country name for each image was then superimposed onto a world map locating the places where the files were originally downloaded.



Saba Khan and Shaheen Ahmed

Mapping Memory





Hishida
Taikan
Okakura Kakuzo

Japan

Britto

Art Institute Dhaka

Dhaka Art Summit

Dhaka

nemza

Birmingham

Stafford

London

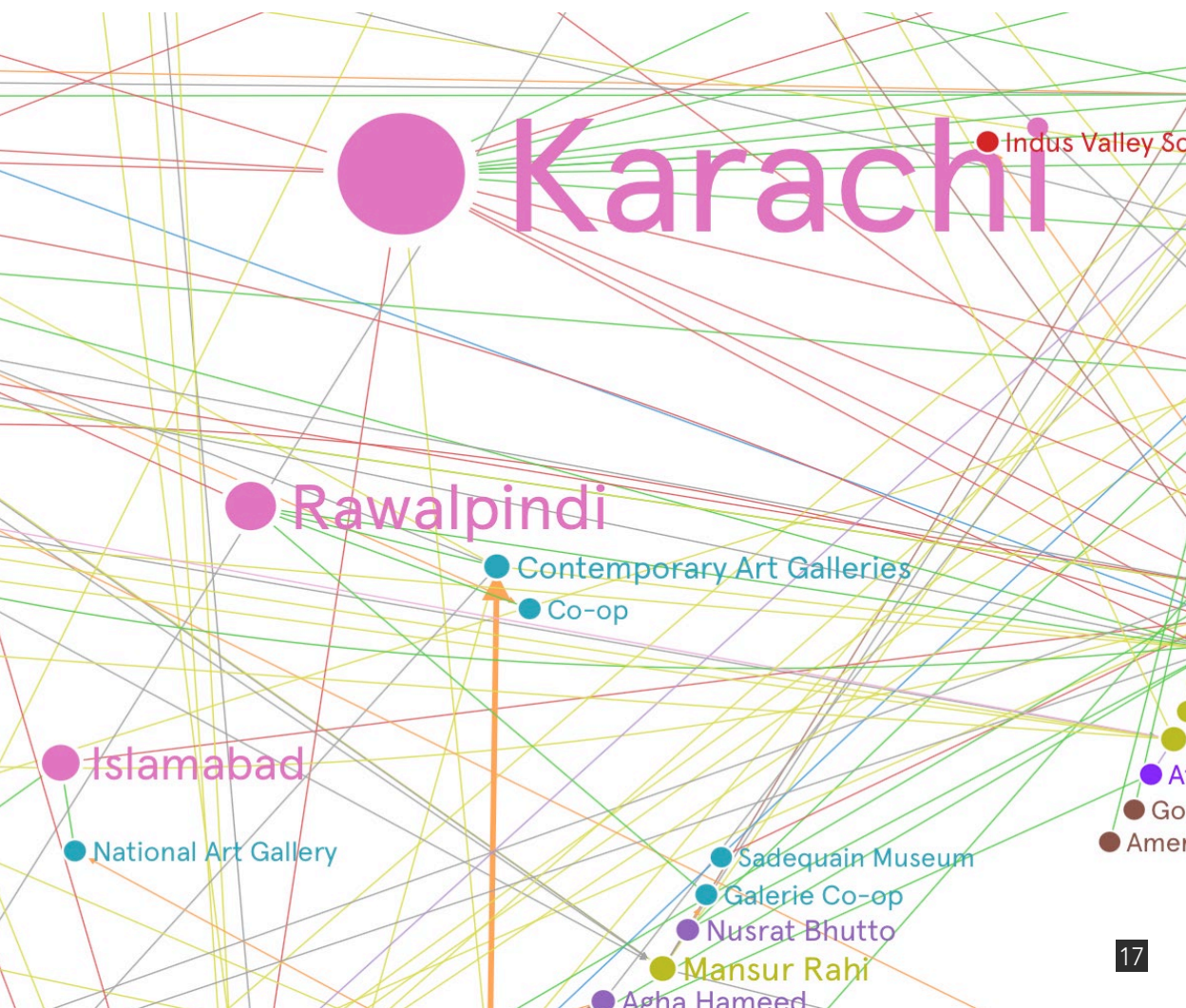
d Guild School

Wembley 1924

Mapping Memory is a project that traces movement of ideas, friendships and conversations. Through this collaboration, we gained insight into a larger narrative between the regions of Bangladesh, Pakistan and UK through selected artists.

The project focuses on artists who were instrumental in their institution building capacities, those who played roles in pedagogy as mentors and were pioneers of art movements.

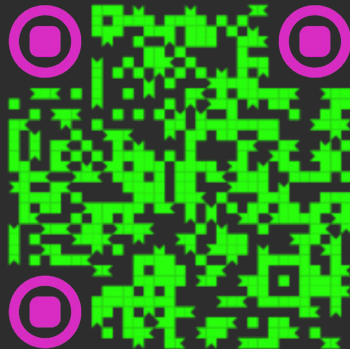
Our predecessors had the privilege to cross borders to study abroad which allowed free flow of ideas and aesthetics. However in more recent years artists have faced more pertinent challenges with regards to travel and visa restrictions and higher education escalating fees. Perhaps through this 2020 pandemic artists will work towards more sustainable online collaborations.



Accepted my fate is like
I have endured all excite
aving my heart caught in
ear God even bird shava
across this homeland for
to prison after prison, af
jailor embrace the other

Amin Rehman

Other Histories



black sites

Why do I tell you this?
Because how you decide to live
our victory will determine how long
will survive. If one of you decides
the lord of the land and the
that then you will not last

wayward wisdom

it is not war, it is murder

I have accepted my fate is like that of a bird,
And I have endured all except humiliation.
Or having my heart caged in the Sultan's place.
But dear God even birds have homes to return to,
to fly across this homeland from sea to sea,
And to prison after prison, after prison,
Each jailor embracing the other.



Top: Still from *Other Histories*
Middle: Still from *Other Histories*
Bottom: Still from *Other Histories*
Poem by Mudhafar al-Nawab

the conquest of the earth

Why do I tell you this?
Because how you decide to live after
you have accepted my fate will determine how long
you will survive. If one of you decides
the lord of the land and the
that then you will not last

it is not war, it is murder

Through my art practice, I have continually investigated and questioned themes such as: violence, conflict, war and peace to highlight the complexities of cultural globalization as an ideology of security. In using a range of artistic interventions, I attempt to highlight the issues of post-colonialism ideology alongside aggressive capitalism, which manifests itself as a floating signifier of world order and peace. Expanding on this body of work, I utilize the graphic and informational qualities of print media, aesthetic design elements taken from Pop Art, and speak to the current 'branding' of global issues across internet and traditional media platforms.

The text installation "Other Histories", a collaborative project with Tariq Ali, is based on the current

and historical print media and relies on my past interest in the power of language and textual expression to alter personal ideologies through language translation. It also provides me with an opportunity to rethink my own cultural past and present. The installation is deep-rooted in rhizomatic thoughts and diaspora identity that serves as the pictorial content and interests in the phraseology of aggressive globalization, colonization and decolonization. The installation challenges us to decipher the text layers through a shared integrational technique, like the palimpsest technique and plays with the cultural meaning embedded in superimposed or layered meaning typography. The work is suggestive of graphic and informational strategies reused in American Pop Art in the 1960's.

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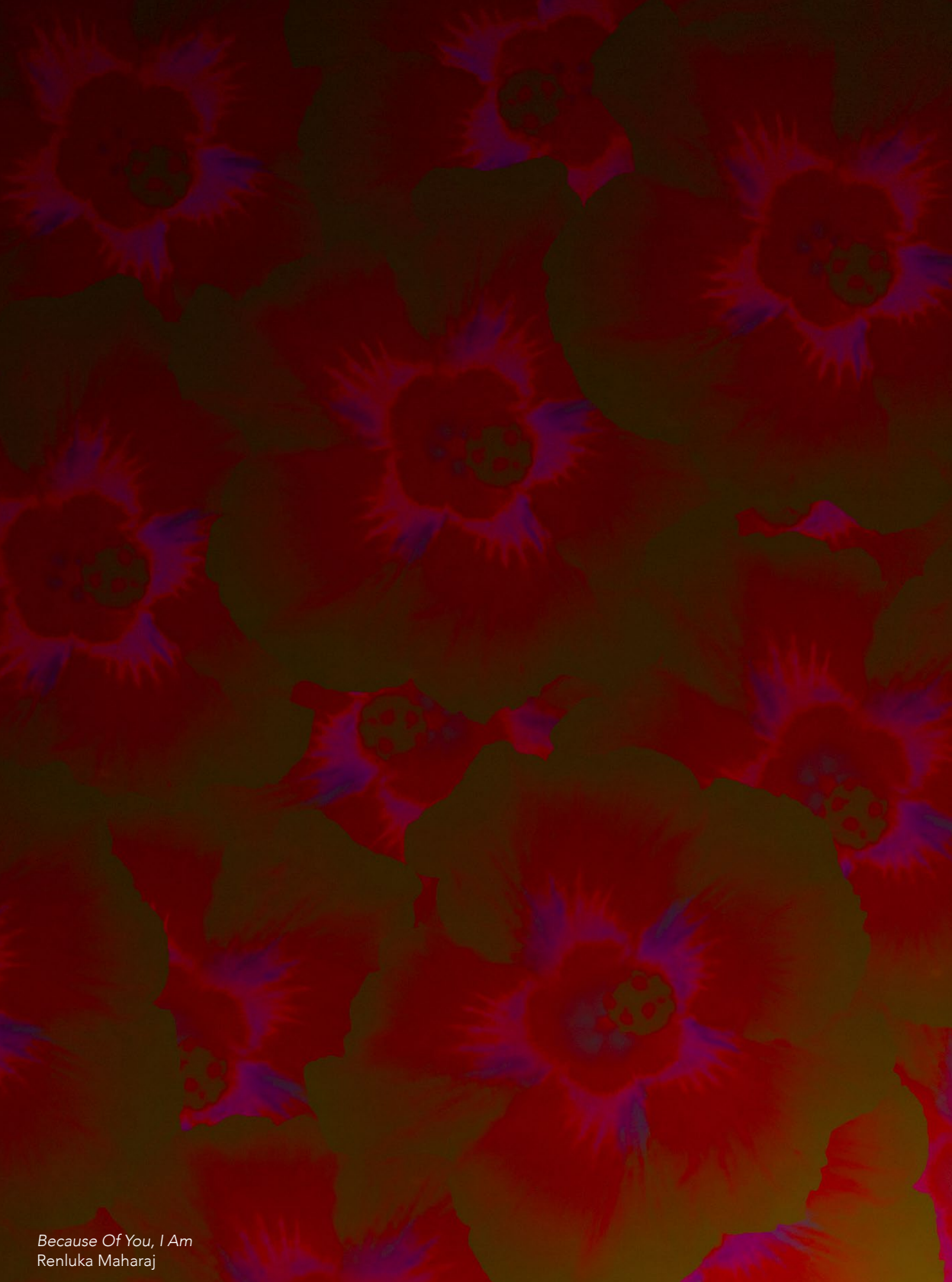
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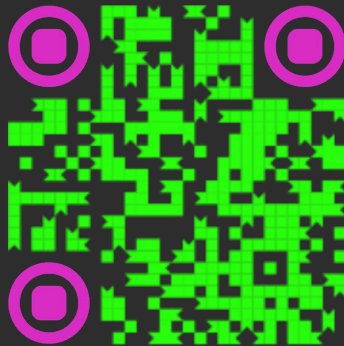
serve me



Because Of You, I Am
Renluka Maharaj

Renluka Maharaj

Because Of You, I Am



Though ties may be severed, connections are never truly lost. Being a descendant of indentured laborers has been the impetus to learn more of my past and also drives the work I do. My ancestors arrived in Trinidad and Tobago in the 19th century to continue working on the same sugar plantations African slaves were newly freed from. Because of abolition, sugar production which yielded immense

profits for the British were in jeopardy, so they looked to India to create a new, cheap workforce. This most current work "Because Of You, I Am" speaks to the re-connecting and re-emerging out of a history of violence, surviving and thriving in spite of it and how important it is to investigate and understand the past, tell our own stories and respect our ancestors because they have taught us how to be strong.





Because Of You, I Am
Renluka Maharaj



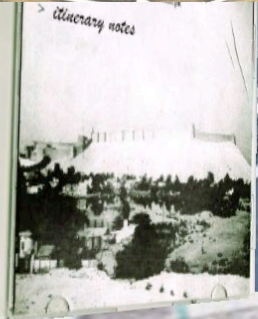
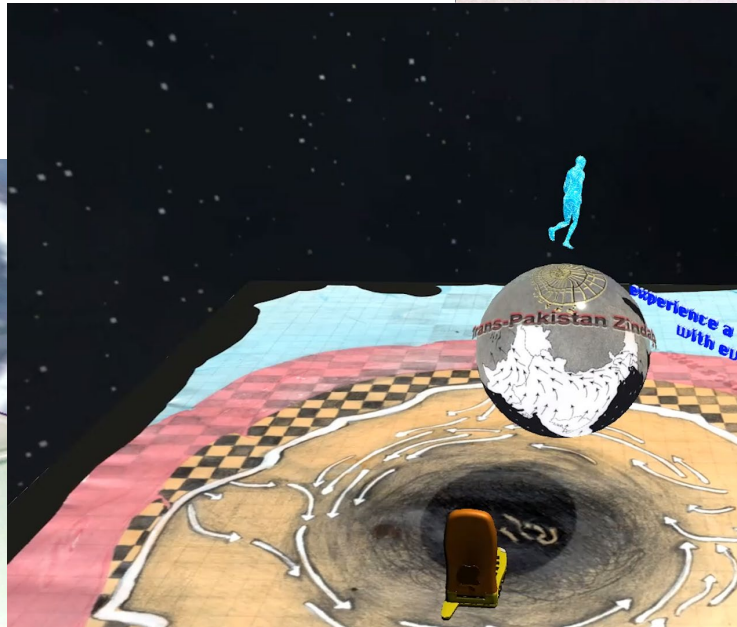
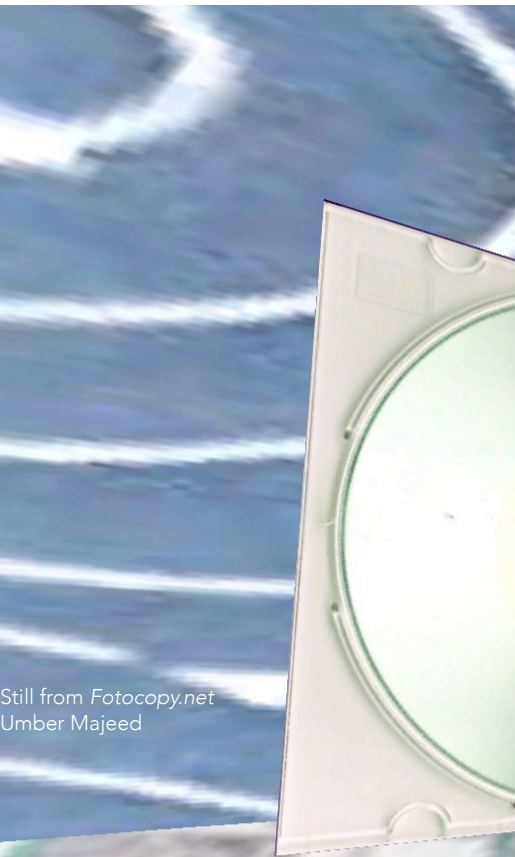
Umber Majeed

Fotocopy.net



Fotocopy.net is offered as a virtual tourism experience exploring the ideas and implications of simulacra, "the copy" as a desktop virtual environment. It explores a concept called "Pirate Modernity" by Indian Media Theorist, Ravi Sundaram; the dissemination of the media culture through the copy as a representation of subaltern population in the city. Combining familial archives, the apparatus of the screen, tools of leisure, context of gentrification in South Asia; the project seeks for viewers to loiter in the kitsch imaginary of corporate culture and critical analysis within a former a failed tourism company of the artist's uncle; a digitally revitalized "Trans-Pakistan Adventure Services".

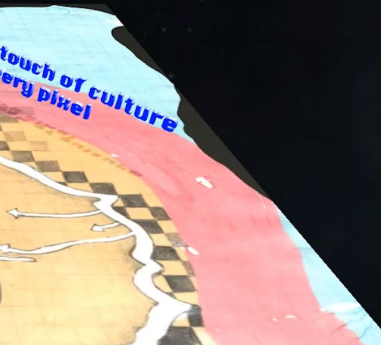
My interest is analyzing capitulation to Western interests, a corollary in Bahria Town (Lahore – Bahria Town), the name of several private, planned housing developments throughout the country. Its Lahore variant recreates Western monuments like the Eiffel Tower and Trafalgar Square—only they're cloaked in a pervasive, Islamic security apparatus. At the crux of this project is the question of how this built environment can be reimagined as a speculative, almost poetic space for othering prevailing logics around race, gender, sexuality, and capital.



Still from Fotocopy.net
Umber Majeed



Click and Drag to Draw on Pe



خوش آمدید

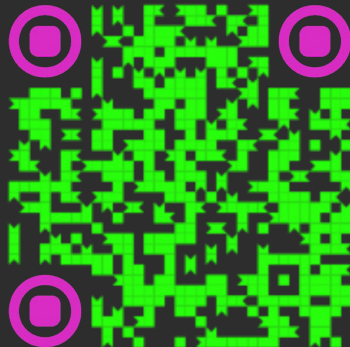




Still from *Pocket Brass*
Melissa Joseph

Melissa Joseph

Pocket Brass

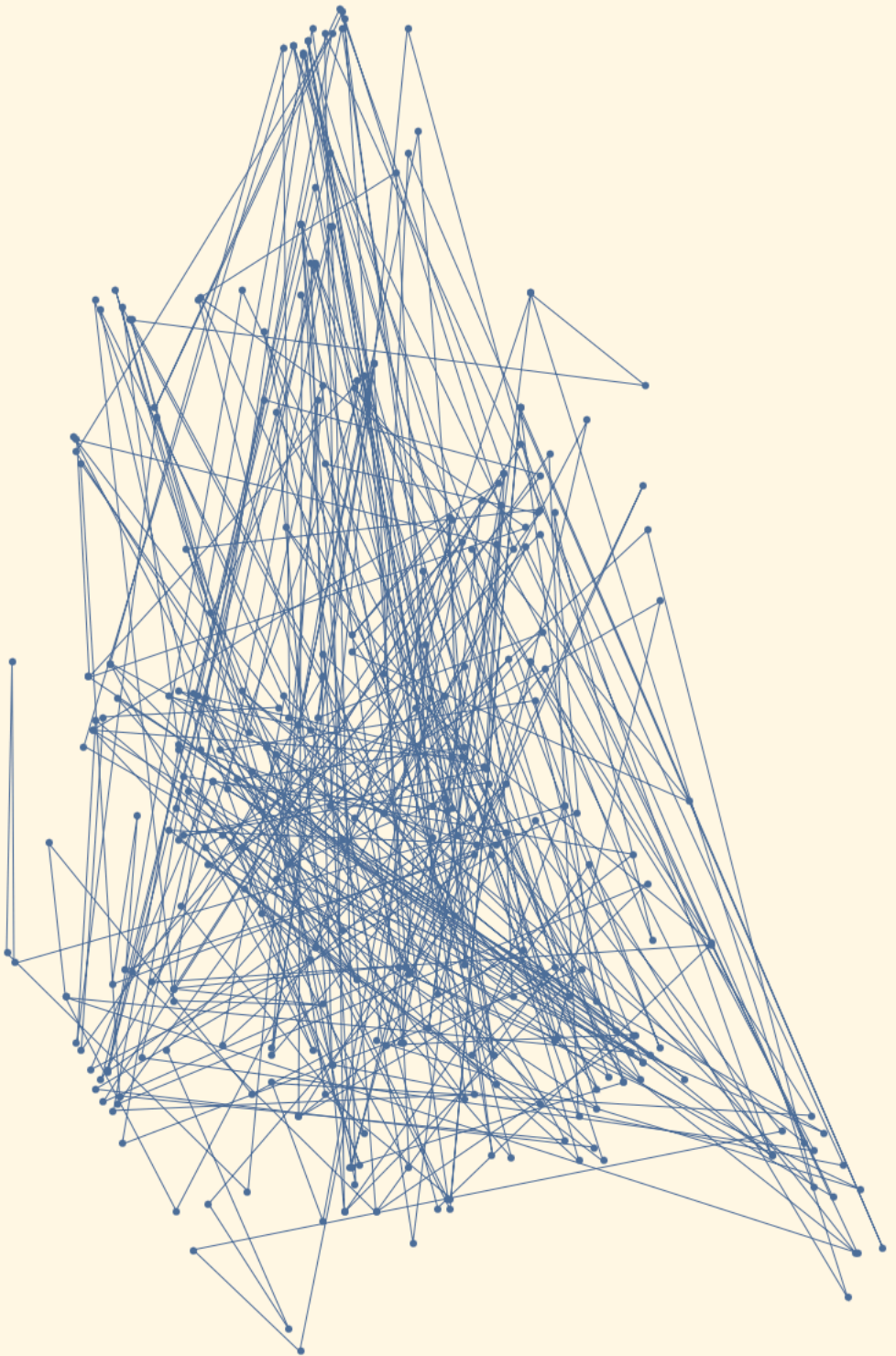




Pocket Brass is a rhizomatic collection of animations and videos that is the culmination of my research on the history of pockets and how they function as political spaces. By providing the capacity for things like ownership, property, and privacy, even these tiny spaces were regulated, policed and sometimes forbidden. While they housed a range of objects from the utilitarian to the sentimental, it was often the least “valuable” things that were missed the most when pockets were picked or stolen. The larger

ideas that I grapple with in the film are mediated through my own experiences as a first/second generation Indian American. There is no linear path through the works; rather we enter each clip from the middle, where we are invited to spend some time, before jumping --without resolution--into the next. My South Asian heritage is embedded deeply into all of the fabrics, images, sounds, and objects involved. I carry these stories with me always, take them out when I need them, and then safely tuck them away again.

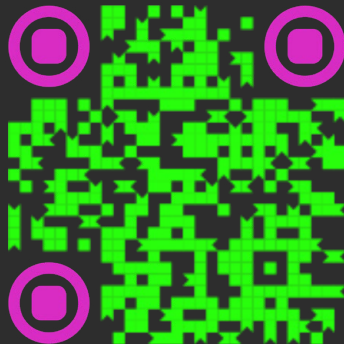


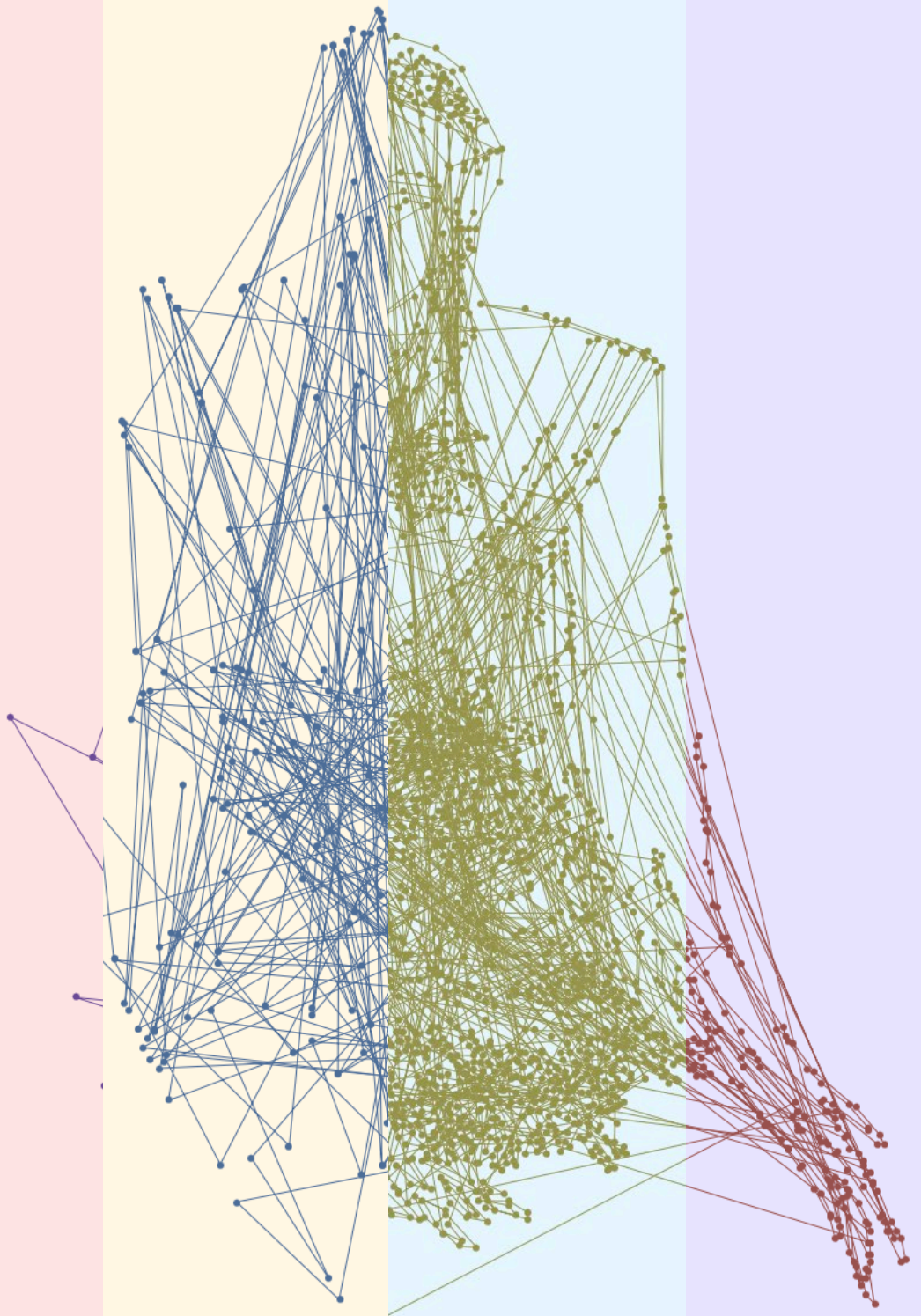


Still from *Reformations*
Vidya Giri

Vidya Giri

Reformations





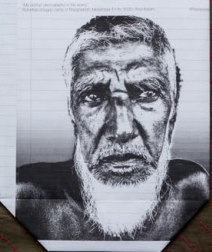
Stills combined from *Reformations*,
Vidya Giri



Reformations is an interactive piece exploring cultural identity, corresponding networks, and migrations over time. It utilizes face detection and reduction algorithms to depict the interconnectedness of points in a system that balances culture and identity. The reflection of the viewer's face into the network connects the viewer with my own background that links from India to the United States to Thailand and Indonesia and the extensive networks beyond the individual points. The knotted figure that reforms over the course of

the piece depicts Onam, the traditional harvest festival of Kerala, that I celebrate annually with my family and community. In creating this piece, I wanted the animation of the points to be adaptive and reflect the potential migratory patterns of diaspora and my own life while also referencing traditional roots. Although the visualization of the moving lines and points can be viewed as decimation and reduction of original traditions, it can also be viewed as that of flexibility and the creation of new pathways in a vast world.

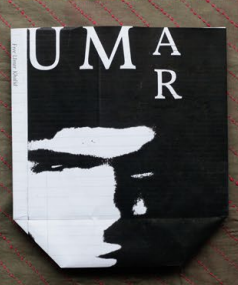
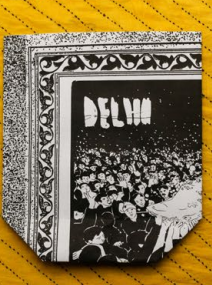




"I STAND WITH YOU. FASCIST RULE IN INDIA IS PROGRESSIVELY TAKING DOWN ALL THAT WAS ONCE TO BE ADMIRER - IN THE COUNTRY OF MY BIRTH."
Anish Kapoor
#TURBINEBAGH



WHERE IS KAJOL?
"Bangladesh authorities should urgently locate the journalist Shaheed Islam Kajol, who has been missing since March 18, 2020" (Human Rights Watch, 13.05.20)



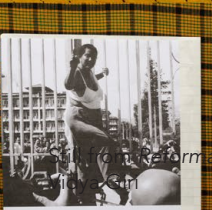
"YOU CAN BURN HOUSES, AND YOU CAN BURN SKIN; BUT YOU CANNOT BURN HUMANITY."
Bijay Prashad
#TURBINEBAGH



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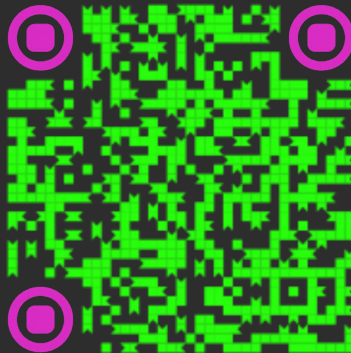


"YOU CAN BURN HOUSES, AND YOU CAN BURN SKIN; BUT YOU CANNOT BURN HUMANITY."
Bijay Prashad



Sofia Karim

Turbine Bagh



In January 2020 India was in the grip of mass protests sparked by anti-Muslim citizenship laws. As a gesture of diaspora solidarity, Karim planned 'Turbine Bagh', a protest at the Turbine Hall of Tate Modern museum, London. 'Turbine Bagh' is a reference to Shaheen Bagh, the women-led protest in Delhi which was the epicentre of the resistance prior to COVID-19 lockdown. Karim worked with artists, writers, poets, musicians and thinkers across the world to create Turbine Bagh samosa packets which would be displayed at the event then sent

to protest sites after. The event was postponed due to COVID-19 but Turbine Bagh carried on as a UK based platform for political art focused on India and Bangladesh. Turbine Bagh has been involved in campaigns for political prisoners and seeks to offer support to artists working in a climate of fear and repression. It began as a joint artists' movement against fascism and authoritarianism, through the humble and familiar object of the samosa packet, and it continues. These are some of the samosa packets that were created.

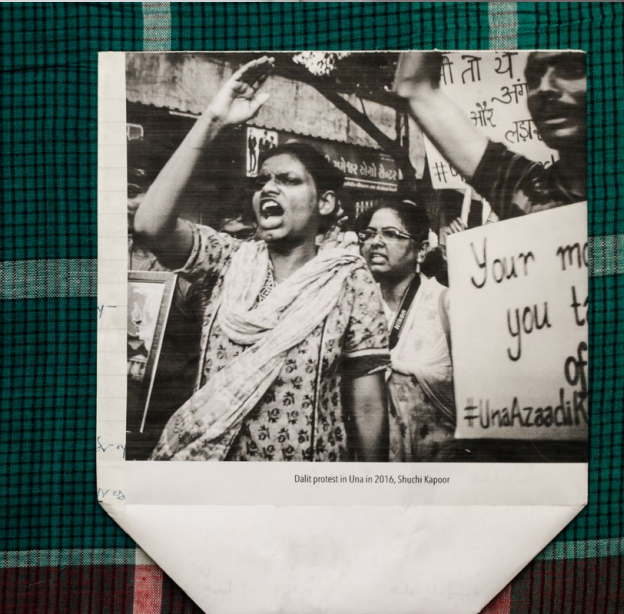
Previous Spread

First row (left to right) : *Release Abdul Kalam, Solidarity* / Anish Kapoor, *Srinivas Kuruganti, Where is Kajo!?* / Lylah, *"This is what lockdown means for the ricksha-wallas of Bangladesh"* / Shahidul Alam (March 2020)

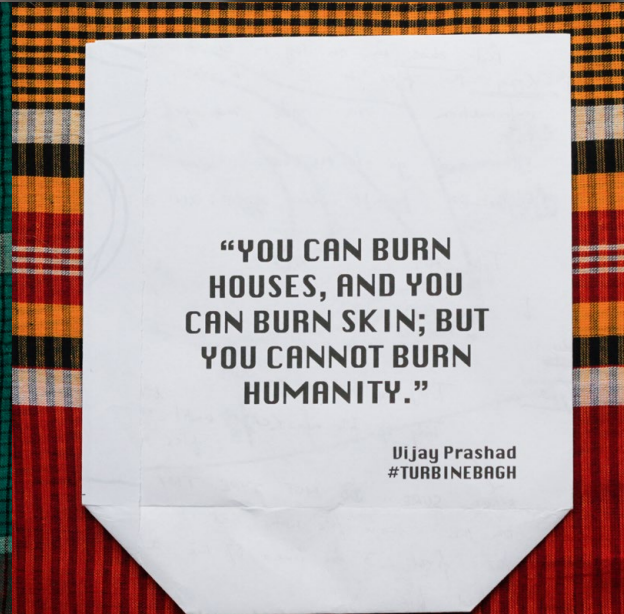
Second row: *Delhi Pogrom* / Younus Nomani, *All of Us Women* / Saba Hasan, *"Dalit protest in Una, 2016"* / Shuchi Kapoor, *"Feminism lite is the opiate of the masses"* / Sofia Karim, *"Free Umar Khaid - 90 days jailed"* / Ronny Sen and Rohit Saha

Third row: *Nepal Resistance* / Nepal Picture Library, *London Protest* / Nilhik Khimani, *Solidarity* / Vijay Prashad, *"Chalo Dilli"* / Harsha Vadlamani, *Nepal Resistance* / Nepal Picture Library



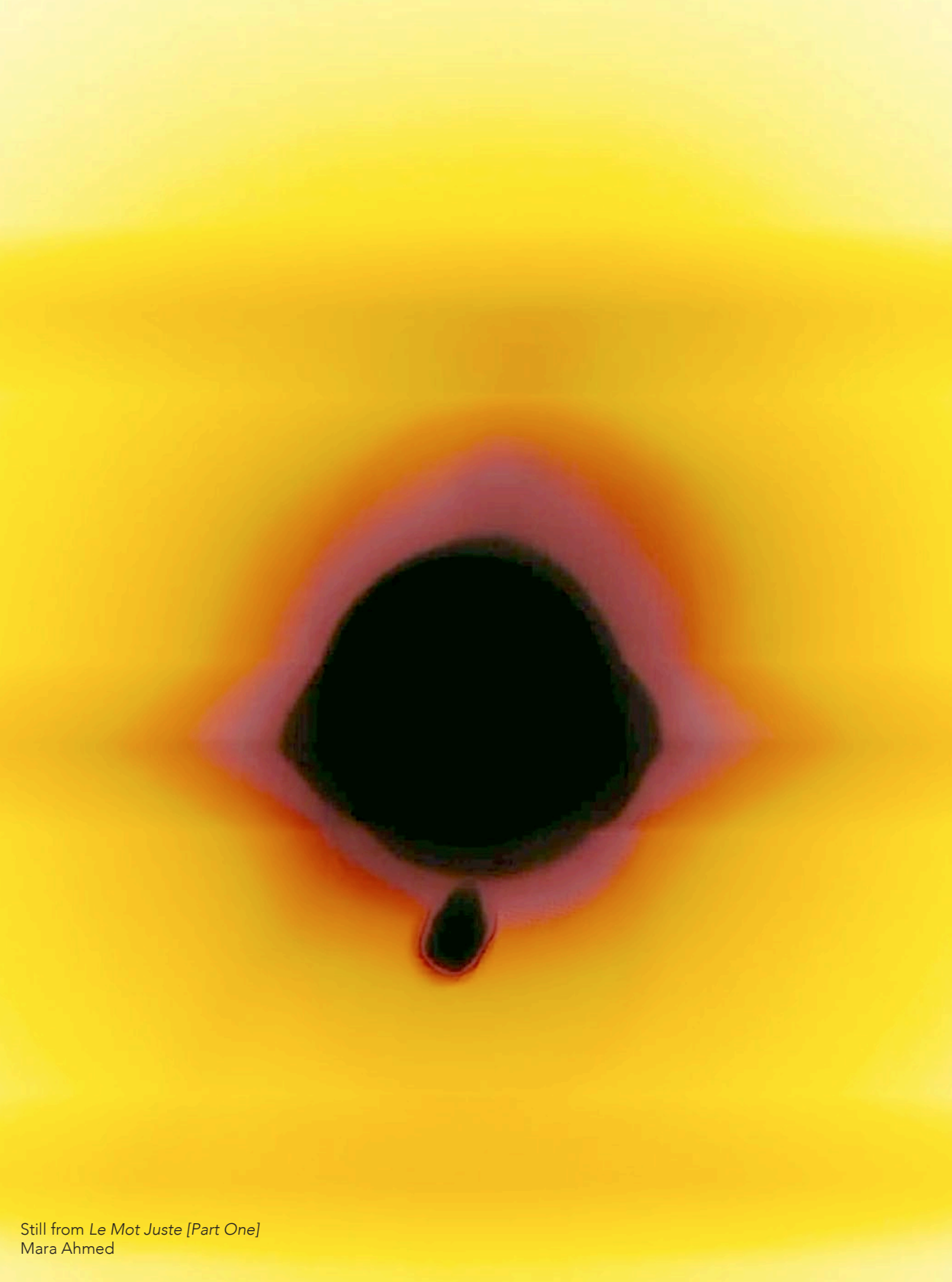


Dalit protest in Una in 2016, Shuchi Kapoor



**“YOU CAN BURN
HOUSES, AND YOU
CAN BURN SKIN; BUT
YOU CANNOT BURN
HUMANITY.”**

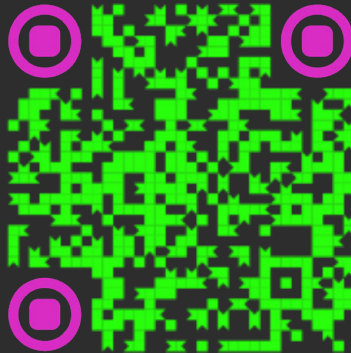
**Dijay Prashad
#TURBINEBAGH**



Still from *Le Mot Juste [Part One]*
Mara Ahmed

Mara Ahmed

Le Mot Juste [Part One]

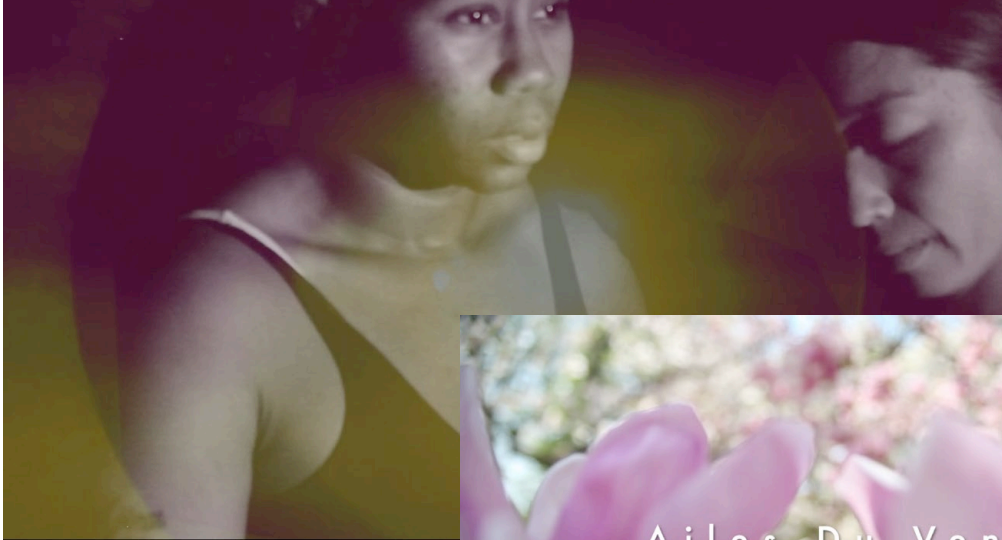


The idea of the rhizome echoes numerous strands of thinking in my work as an interdisciplinary artist, filmmaker and writer. The act and process of wading in multiple disciplines and creating art that blends together diverse concepts, tools, and philosophies, is a form of resistance to borders and silos, limits and labels, hierarchies and dominant forms of knowledge. Most of my artwork and community engagement tend to explore collage techniques that mix or juxtapose difference in order to create new ideas and energy, and inhabit the liminal.

At present, I am working on a documentary about racism in America, called *The Injured Body*, which collates fragments of conversations with 17 women of color with dance performances by artists of color. Franz Fanon's thesis, that violence can be used to control

the breathable atmosphere of the colonized body, became a powerful framework for underlining stories of racist microaggressions through dance.

In September last year, I started building a multilingual archive of stories that seeks to capture the 2020 zeitgeist. The *Warp & Weft* relies on oral storytelling drawn from diverse voices, languages and geographies. It goes beyond politics and explores the human family's preoccupations and imaginaries. The archive is multilingual because it hopes to disrupt the linguistic imperialism of the English language. It upholds Édouard Glissant's *Right to Opacity* by denying immediate legibility to English speakers. I chose not to include contributor bios in the project, as people's education and professional titles are ways of hierarchizing based on power and privilege.



Top, middle and bottom: Stills from *Le Mot Juste [Part One]*. Copyright 2021 Neelum Films LLC. All Rights Reserved.

Le Mot Juste [Part One] is a fusion of personal narrative, film, dance and music. It attempts to chart my own diasporic journey through three continents by homing in on language. Part One proceeds from Lahore to Brussels, from Urdu to French. Part Two will continue to map my life's travels, from Pakistan to the United States, from Urdu, Arabic and Farsi, to a monochromatic American English.

There is something constant and primordial about language. Its woven grid holds us together: the concreteness of its syntax, the braiding of its ancestral yarn, but also the interstices that allow for breath and expansion. The three languages I live in, Urdu, French and English, exemplify the open-ended connections this exhibition

aims to spotlight. Perhaps I am drawn to multilingual, cross-disciplinary, activist work because it offers examples of borderless political space, where we can come into contact with the other and become radically altered by that encounter. Édouard Glissant's *Tout-Monde*, with its rhizomatic creolization and global imperative to accelerate cultural contact and transformation, is never too far from my mind or heart.

Cinematography by Rajesh Barnabas
Dance by Mariko Yamada and Cloria Sutton
Music: The Goldberg Variations and Notebook for Wilhelm Friedemann Bach by Johann Sebastian Bach

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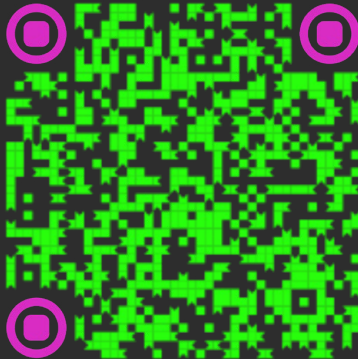
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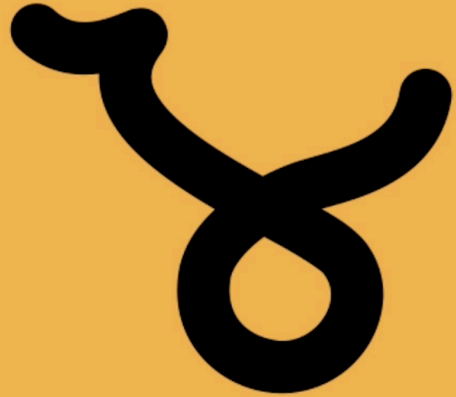
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Shubhra Prakash and Rajeev Prakash Khare

FONTWALA





Still from FONTWALA

What entails preserving one's language and script in a world where English dominates in speech and written form. Where poor translation techniques don't allow for an easy transition of ethnic languages and scripts to digital platforms whereby labeled "complex scripts". Fontwala is a multi-faceted project that includes a digital exhibition and theatrical performance. I immigrated to American from India in the late 90s as a teenager, with my family. Now an American citizen, I have lived in the United States for the past 21 years. I am a theatre artist as well as a web developer. During my six years in New York City 2012 - 2018, I co-founded a theatre company that provided South Asians and people of color an opportunity to tell their stories. In December 2018, I decided to relocate to India to continue my research on the story of my uncle who is a font designer and

typographer of Indian languages. He was the first artist I knew in my life. His name is Rajeev Prakash Khare and he created one of the first softwares, APS through his startup VSOFTE, that allowed for Devanagari typing on a keyboard in the mid 90s. He never imagined turning entrepreneur but did so, as he saw the need for Devanagari and other Indian languages on the digital platforms. As an international software giant entered the Indian market, APS along with other softwares that were making strides in digitization of Indian scripts became obsolete overnight. Fontwala saw the very Anglo Nagari Keyboard he had created for APS being used for free.

Fontwala understands the mystery of this script and his fascination goes beyond the grooves in the script. His knowledge arrives from the cultural, mythological, and



political standpoints. And from histories and stories that have shaped the Indian letterform. The video shows the changing of chosen letterforms from pre-historic script Brahmi to modern-day letterforms. Anglo Nagari Keyboard shows how a complex script like Devanagari sits on a Latin based keyboard, the very first keyboards when Indian languages began digitization. As the letterform transforms in the animation, several aesthetics are compromised and newer forms appear. Is there evolution with digitizing of what the western world considers "complex" scripts? What is the future of such "complex" scripts in the digital media, is Unicode in fact the answer? I specifically explore Devanagari, the written form of Hindi spoken by 425 million people as a first language. As it was by me before I immigrated to the United States from India as a

teenager. As an immigrant I have carried stories from the world I left behind, do they matter in the world I have arrived in? I am aware my exploration is rather specific with respect to the Devanagari script. However, I want to draw a connection and find out if all of our struggles are connected, all to be acknowledged for their own specificity as well as to be learned from. There is so much in the world today that can divide us, how many things can bring us together? There exists similarity in our struggles and our need to preserve our heritage.

Acknowledgments

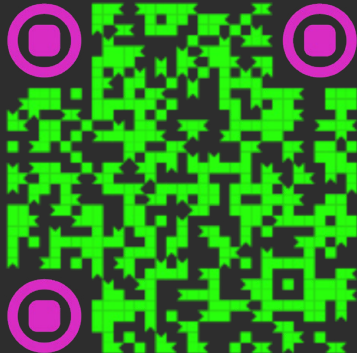
1. Rajeev Prakash Khare, creator of Anglo Nagri Keyboard.
2. Akshar Katha (book) by Gunakar Muley 1972.



Still from *Shifting Normal*

Mushtari Afroz

Shifting Normal





Top: Still from
Shifting Normal

Background: Still
from *Shifting
Normal*

Shifting Normal is a collage of our joyful past, our fearful present and our uncertain future that have been woven into a narrative with the multidisciplinary threads of dance, music, theatre and film. The choreographer injects the doses of her experimentation with South Asian body-based practices such as Yoga and Martial Arts into her Kathak trained tissues and muscles to narrate a corporeal story of her existential crises. The crises have changed how she connects with her audience. In the past, her existence was analog, purely 3D physical, immediate, near and in the same space-time with her audience. But now her existence is 'Phygital = Physical + Digital' and she manifests that duality in 'Shifting Normal'. She performs in her own time within her own physical space and her 2D moving body images reach your digital devices through the world wide web - social media, YouTube etc. at your own convenient time. For a performing artist, particularly dance artist, whose body breathes in the theatre

space, who communicates with the audience through the analog means of movement, gestures, vibration, emotions and exchange of energy, heat and sweat, this new form of Phygital existence is a threat to our survival. However, escaping reality does not provide any solution. The answer is adaptation and with that spirit of adaptation to our reality of constant, perpetual and immortal change, 'Shifting Normal' was created in its dual existence when human connections were suddenly disrupted in order to re-establish dialogue in a re-imaginative space. And since its birth in September 2020 it has touched the heart of the audience from Quebec, Toronto, US and perhaps from many other places around the globe, thanks to the web of internet, that in the past would have been impossible within the live theatre framework.

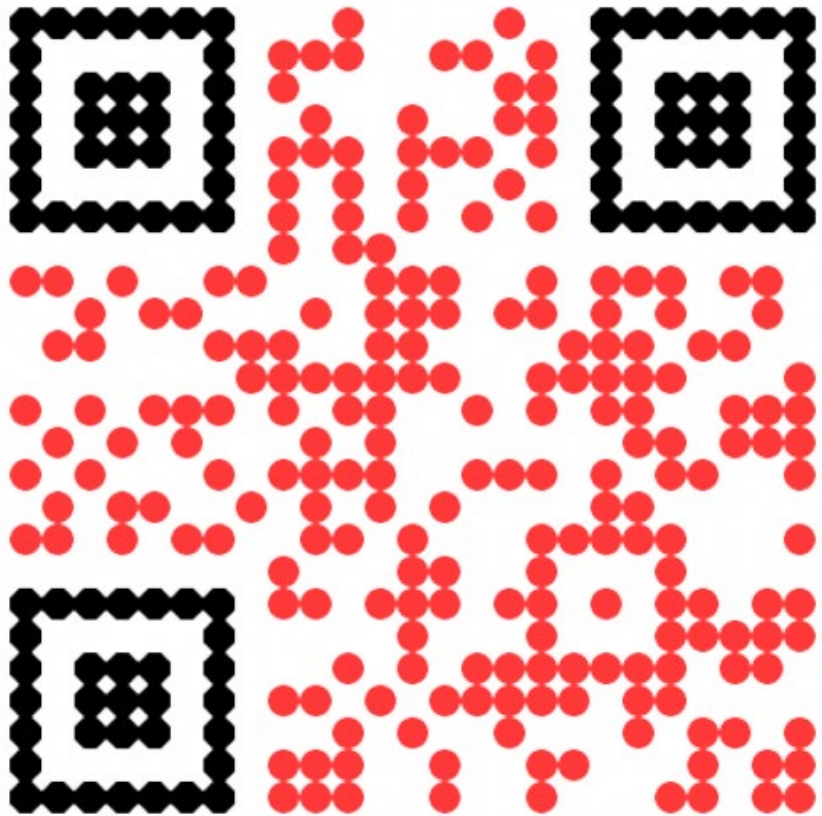
Mushtari Afroz (Concept, Choreography & Dance), Imran Noor Mohammed (Theatre & Script), Tanveer Alam Shawjeeb (Music)



Top: Still from *Shifting Normal*

Middle: Still from *Shifting Normal*

Bottom: Still from *Shifting Normal*



Mithu Sen

Un-ephemeral traces





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ps: *ephemeral traces*



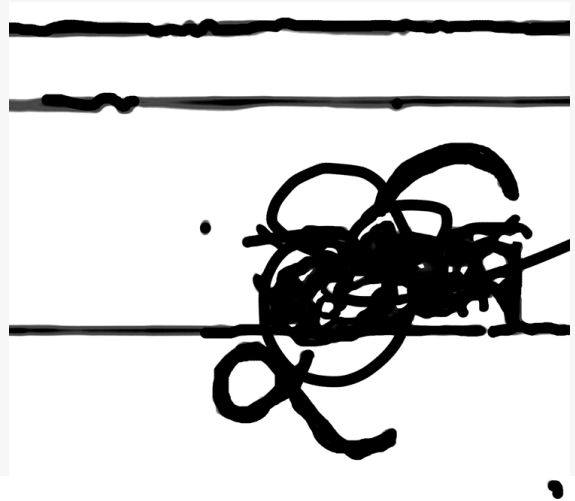
Top: Digital Mixed Media from
Un-ephemeral traces

Middle: Digital Mixed Media
from *Un-ephemeral traces*

Bottom: Digital Mixed Media
from *Un-ephemeral traces*



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The QR code is the sign that forms the surface of my digital mixed-media work. I arrived at the form during the course of the pandemic, thinking through issues of the art world's active migration to virtual platforms and social distancing; along with the problems of visuality and representation. As a ubiquitous element, the QR code is part of a technologically


informed visual vocabulary and opens up a pathway for me to exercise control over its conditions of display. It subverts exhibition, collection, and acquisition; unlike most art objects, it cannot be tamed and domesticated, nor can it be plucked away from the artist's subjectivity. This, to me, opens up a promise that is critical in its aesthetics and politics.



Maryam Hina Hasnain

Economy of Movement (part 2)





Economy of Movement (2) is part of an ongoing mixed media experiment. My practice traditionally uses tangible materials; most often textile interventions. The idea of creating work that was fleeting and no longer rooted material based was born out of circumstances of working within the confines of lock down and not having studio access. Images from paintings that were using turmeric and saffron become palimpsestic where The pigment created maps like scrawls that chart movement in the forms of migration and trade. The paintings translate into the virtual through projections. They are projected to create portals, constantly in flux. The shapeshifting forms illuminate the facade of a Georgian building in London - the ultimate orientalist trope of a flying carpet imposes itself on the facade. This work acts as a provocation to notions of traditional and contemporary - exists through the digital whilst relying on the material. The forms

in the film take on anthropomorphic qualities - they pulsate, multiple and expand - building bridges and networks.

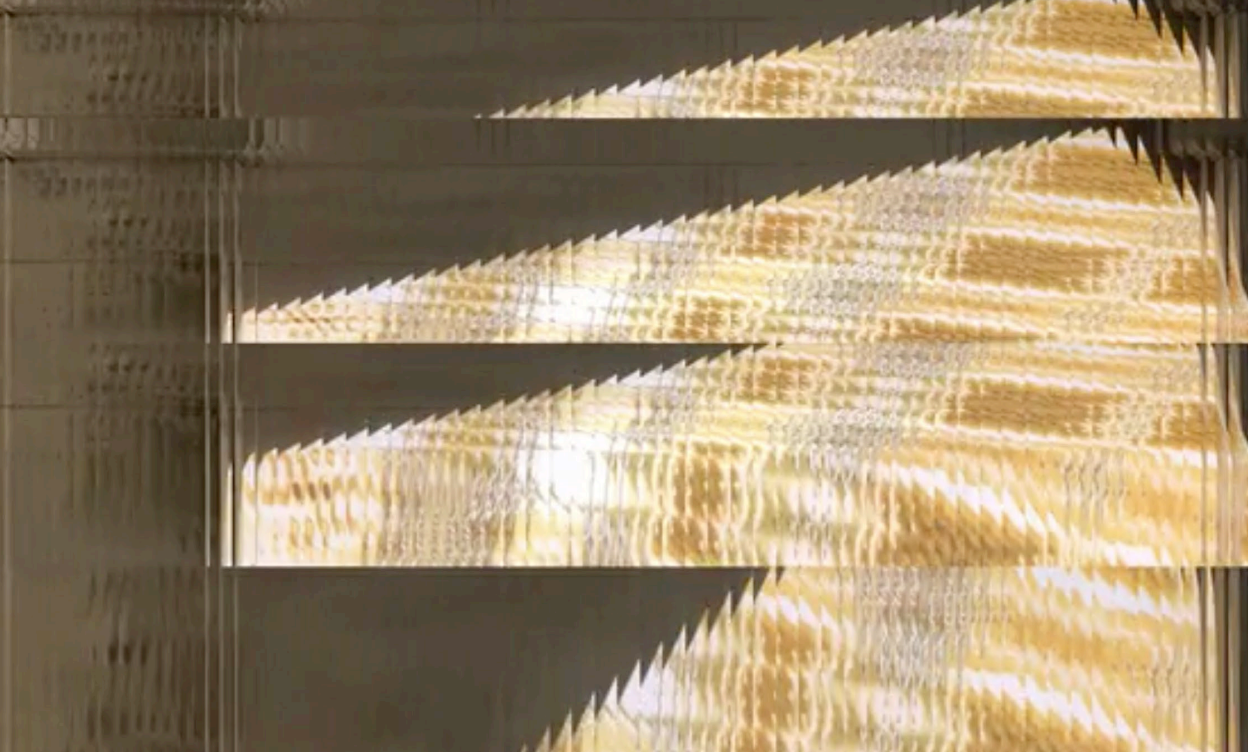
“Through installations and assemblages of textiles, as well as digital video pieces, Maryam Hasnain conducts material investigations of transnational and cross-cultural exchange and the paradoxes of provenance and origin sources. In considering how particular craft forms, such as textiles, can be reconceived and understood in a media-saturated landscape, Hasnain reroutes the circuits of disposability and invisibility that craft traditions are so often relegated to. Drawing on the histories of the textile trade and her own experiences working and living across South and Southeast Asia and London, Hasnain considers the politics and presentation of artistic labor, often applying reflexive self-critique to her own position as an artist.” - Tausif Noor, FoundWork Guest Curator, Historian & Critic

Top Left: Still from *Economy of Movement (part 2)*

Top Right: Still from *Economy of Movement (part 2)*

Bottom Left: Still from *Economy of Movement (part 2)*

Bottom Right: Still from *Economy of Movement (part 2)*





Still from *Building the City of Exiles*

Asma Kazmi

Building the City of Exiles



Building the City of Exiles reflects on the status of the sanctuary city of San Francisco, examining the material culture of its shelter and encampment structures, as well as construction sites. The stark excesses in infrastructure planning and building practices in San Francisco frame a drifting marginalized community of immigrants, refugees, and exiles struggling to keep up with the radically changing global city. The project draws on intersecting ideas to consider San Francisco's sanctuary city ordinance alongside haram, a concept in Islamic urban

planning. In a haram, contending parties are meant to peacefully settle conflict, there is a ban on bloodshed, animal slaughter, the uprooting of trees, and causing bodily harm to others is prohibited. Mecca, the holiest place in Islam, is a haram. Yet, with growing populations in Mecca and San Francisco, urban space seems beholden to the aspirations of builders and planners who erect skyscrapers at alarming rates and heights. Who and what is marginalized in this process? What is the toll on the environment?



The story began four thousand years ago,





Still from *Building the City of Exiles*

After Party Collective

(Vidisha Fadescha &
Shaunak Mahbubani)

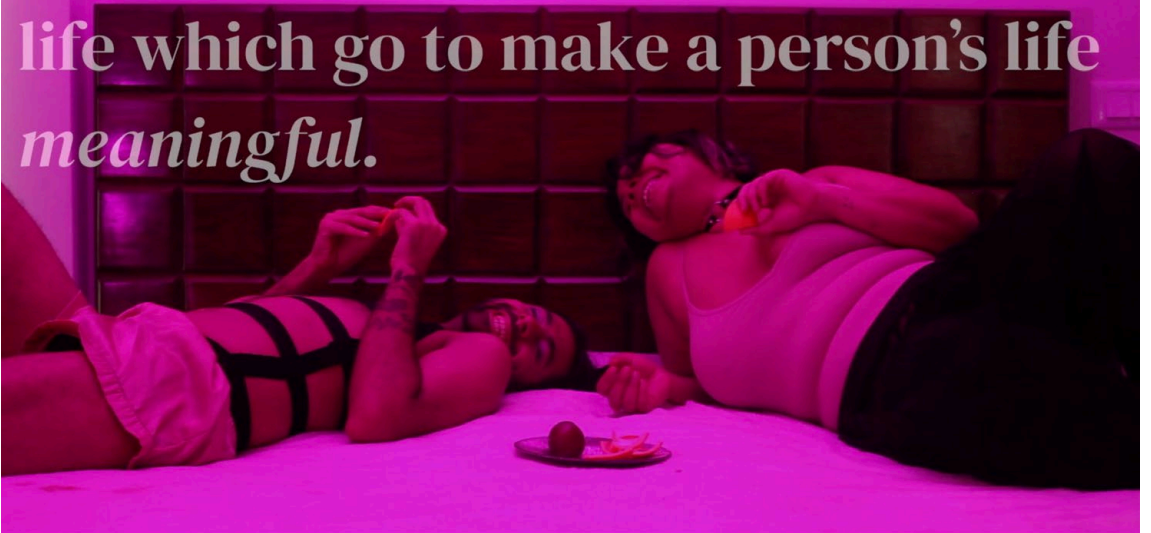
some dance to remember,
some dance to forget



there is a growing recognition that the true measure of development of a nation is not economic growth; it is human dignity.



Article 21 takes all those aspects of life which go to make a person's life *meaningful*.



The queer movement in South Asia has taken strides forward in recent years. However, the political, civic, and cultural spaces opened up by this struggle have primarily affirmed culturally-dominant cis-bodied queers. Trans* and intersex folk, especially those marginalised by caste, class, religion, ethnicity, and ability, continue to be left on the periphery. The recent Transgender Persons (Protection of Rights) Act 2019 introduced in India displays this lip service towards the rights of gender variant peoples, widely celebrated by the Nationalist government and its supporters even though it falls short of setting up policies towards a life of dignity for the trans community.

Continuing our critique of this Act through multiple modes of performance, After Party Collective anchors collective memory in the landmark NALSA vs Union of India judgement passed by the Supreme Court of India in 2014 via this video-performance. This judicial text remains a pivotal one in South Asian queer history, reminding us of the power of an affirmative state body and the profoundly different language produced when those in power create directives that speak to the experiences of the most disadvantaged amongst us. The judgement unconditionally allows

for the self determination of gender including a non-binary identity, as well as takes into consideration the differential socio-caste status of trans people in the subcontinent, directing Indian central and state governments to make provisions for reservations in educational and employment opportunities for the trans community. However, the new Act passed in 2019 disregards the directives of this judgement, and its provisions are currently being challenged in court.

The visual landscape of the video opposes excerpts of the legal document with complimentary questions that After Party Collective seek to unwrap, starting from the gender-deviant body, spreading out into explorations of intimacies, pleasure, nurturance, safety, and agency. While upholding the liberatory potential of the law and constitutionality, we simultaneously look through and beyond the power of the written word. In these acts of biting, twisting, laughing, jolting, we look to understand an intimacy that is constituted outside of definition, for no labels are vast enough to hold the multiplicitous worlds we co-vision to inhabit.

Music: Mother, Female Wizard, 2020



Still from *Blue Lake*, with live performance

Nitin Mukul

Blue Lake, with live
performance



My formal training and experiences led me to bridge video and painting to arrive at a new format for painting as a durational event. I named the process 'durational painting'. I begin by layering paint in sheets of ice, freezing each layer of acrylic and oil so that they accumulate layers of color and texture. Placing the frozen mass outside, I allow it to melt according to natural weather conditions, filming the process with a tight zoom. These works call forth the animistic qualities of material, allowing them to use their own voice and act at their will. To me it's a way of sharing authorship and empathizing with the surroundings by revealing their active role in the outcome of the work. The entropic process gives way to a microcosmic glimpse of elapsing aeonic time

In our present era, sometimes referred to as the Anthropocene, we seem to be increasingly reaping the fruits of our collective actions. The consequences of human activity are wreaking havoc as evidenced by climate change, pandemics, and the endangerment and extinction of flora and fauna that keep our planet in balance.

Blue Lake refers to a body of water in the Cascade Mountains of Central Oregon formed 3,500 years ago in a deep crater left by a volcanic explosion. It was adjacent to the Caldera Arts Center where I made the piece during my Artist Residency in February, 2020. I came to Caldera with an intention to immerse myself in the landscape and to somehow acknowledge



the First Peoples of America that were displaced and wiped out in the process of colonization. During walks around the rim of the Blue Lake crater and the vicinity I gathered objects such as the lichens seen in the piece, and also recorded sounds that I mixed into a soundtrack.

Maura Garcia (non-enrolled Cherokee/Mattamuskeet), fellow Artist in Residence collaborated to create a live performance responding to a section of the painting and the sound piece, and by extension the landscape surrounding Caldera. Her dance company Maura Garcia Dance was founded to uplift Indigenous cultural values, to form connections and to explore the rhythms of the natural world. The full length piece is

65 minutes, the performance shown here uses a 15 minute excerpt.

This piece has a connective thread to the theme of Diasporic Rhizome: the use of lichens I collected in Oregon, where I made this work. Lichens are mycorrhizae, and mycorrhizal networks are "underground hyphal networks created by mycorrhizal fungi that connect individual plants together and transfer water, carbon, nitrogen, and other nutrients and minerals. By analogy to the many roles intermediated by the World Wide Web in human communities, the many roles that mycorrhizal networks appear to play in woodland have earned them a colloquial nickname: the Wood Wide Web"





Still from *Cruising: Other Ways of Love*

Abdullah Qureshi

Cruising: Other Ways of Love





Stills from *Cruising: Other Ways of Love*



Cruising: Other Ways of Love employs a fictional and experimental narrative, thinking about cruising from a mythological and queer perspective. Visually, the film draws on personal memories, encounters, and select characters from the paintings of the Pakistani artist, Anwar Saeed (b. 1955). Music is composed by Zan and includes interviews conducted by Abdullah Qureshi in Marseille, France with queer Muslim friends.

Written and Directed by Abdullah Qureshi

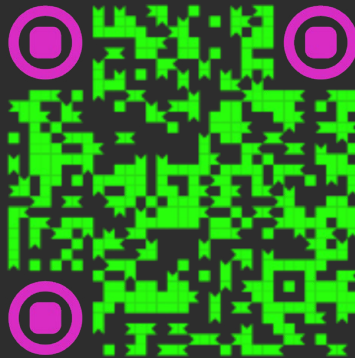
Produced in collaboration with Khadeeja Arham, Zainab Zulfiqar, Umair Sajid, Hadi Rehman

Post-Production Producer: Danai Anagnostou



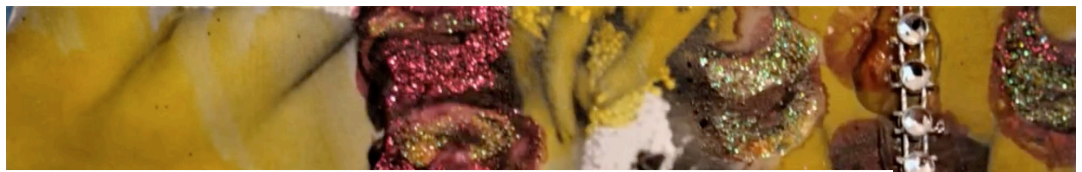
Indrani Ashe

My Goddess Gave Birth
to a Goddess



Who is
Sadette Delacroix?



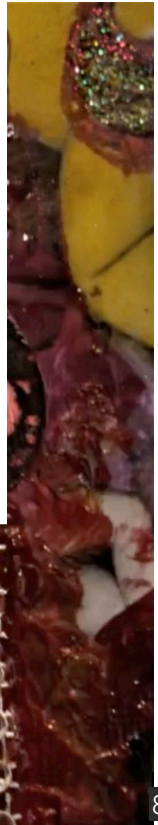
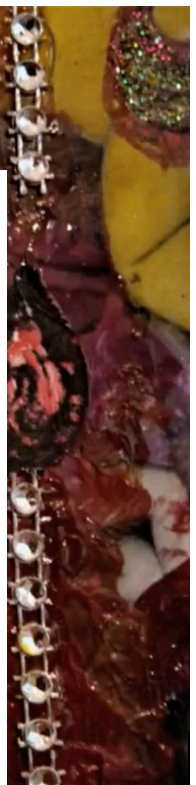
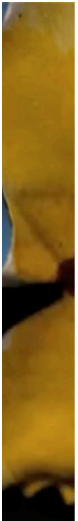


Women of color are fighting a war of representation that reaches into the past and projects itself into the future. A war over who is visible and who authors what is seen. Women like Matahari took our clothing, our jewelry, and our cultural products, selling them as their own until we became alienated by our own image. Now the world is populated by our absence, and the twisted versions created by these wannabes. Our bodies are being bought and sold all the time, but we still don't make any money. Like vampires we suffer from being unable to see ourselves in the mirror.

is mine, to make, recreate, and multiply.

In creating this work, I was thinking of how women use a commodified body as their best chance of achieving the cultural power, influence, and freedom (to create) of celebrity. Earlier in the 20th century celebrity was manufactured in terms of film and photography, while now it comes from sources like Instagram, Tik Tok, and Youtube. Though it seems like the sources are different the images are related to and influenced by the images created earlier in time (that make up our university canons), often they are just reshooting and reframing the same content and bodies. This is why racism, exclusion, and a lack of diversity is unconsciously repeated. In this work I generate my own celebrity drawing on 20th century sources yet made for Instagram. I made a series of gifs that could be distributed over an extended period of time and fit the moment to moment pace of Instagram, yet in the end could be assembled into a longer and more complex piece that satisfied me as an artist.

I created Sadette Delacroix to fight the war for me. My inner goddess gave birth to a psychedelic time traveling goddess who seeks to infiltrate the system; to create, distribute, and profit. A brown girl imitating a white girl, imitating a brown girl. I can't culturally appropriate myself, I'm TAKING IT BACK. Because I listened to my auntie when she told me we didn't wear blouses under our saris before the British infected us with repression and made the temple dancers into prostitutes. That body

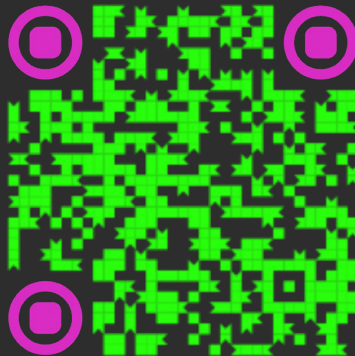


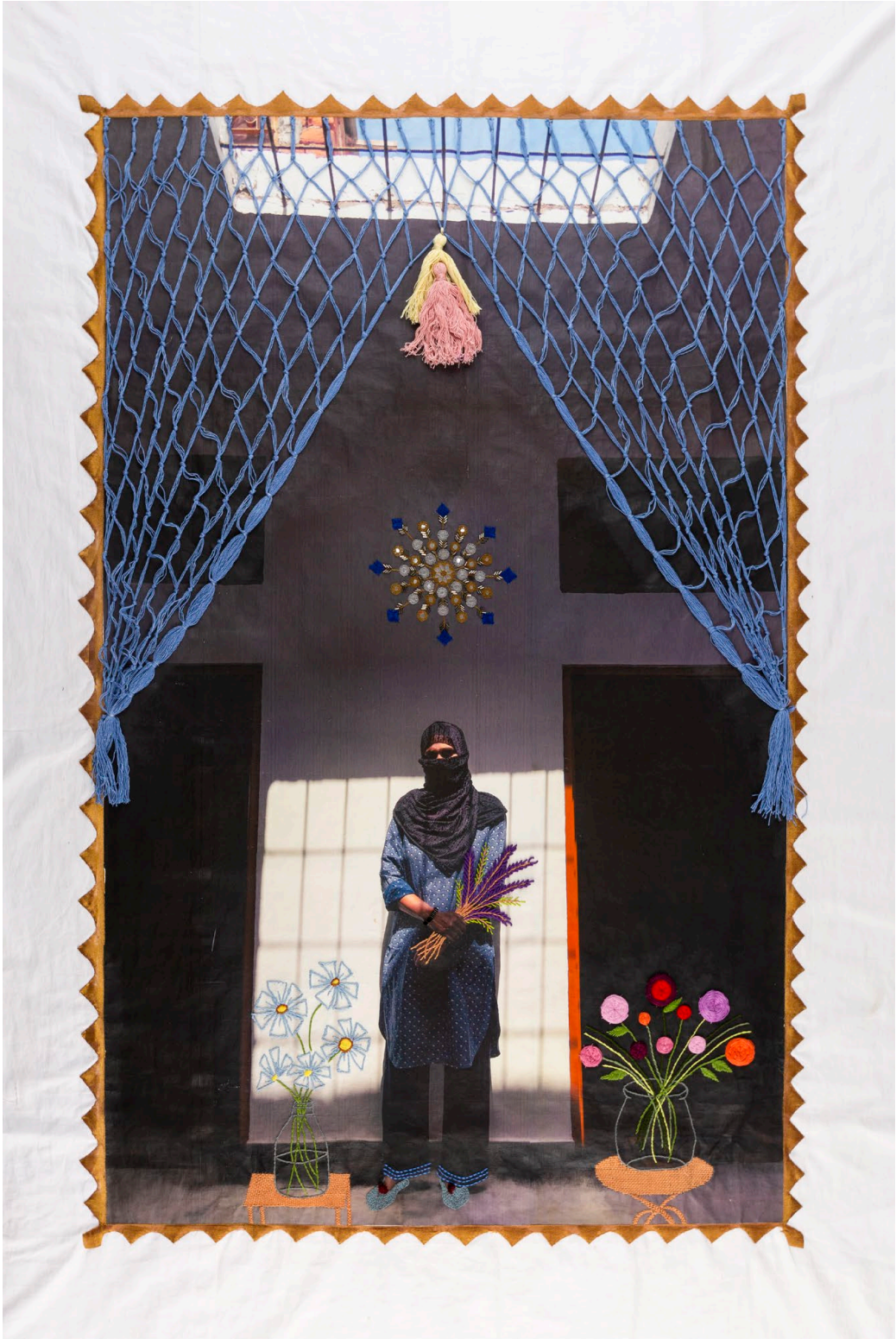


Still from *My Goddess Gave Birth to a Goddess*

Spandita Malik

Nārī





Sarfraz Series: Nārī (2019 - Ongoing) There has always been a sense of legacy being passed among women through this language of embroidery and handcraft, inherited by generations of women and passed along, to break the oppressor by simple but significant hand movements captured on fabric, written in thread. In Sanskrit, nārī means woman, wife, female, or an object regarded as feminine but can also mean sacrifice. While misogyny is hardly exclusive to one country or culture, India bears particularly ghastly symptoms of it. Women are in real danger there: the frequency of domestic violence in the country is impossible to ignore. While searching for women in India in self-help groups who are learning to embroider, I heard about women who weren't allowed to come to the centres. They are either not allowed to leave the house, due to their husbands or fathers, or they felt unsafe leaving the house. I traveled to Lucknow, Jaipur, and Chamkaur Sahib where I photographed and interviewed these women about their harsh economic and social realities. Some women talk about their domestic violence. I had the privilege to be the bearer of the stories these women shared with me, to hear them, to question them, to understand the silences, the pauses, and to have the responsibility to retell, share, and pass on these stories.

I have grown up perceiving the photography of my country through a colonized eye. There was a conscious effort in stepping away from the aesthetic surrounding documentary photography of India, and photographing these women in the rooms they live or feel most comfortable in. I printed the portrait I took, onto the fabric of the region and asked them to embroider the portrait in a way that seemed fit to them, without any guidelines, giving them the agency to have authority over their own portrayal.

These artistic collaborations subvert the idea of the artist as the main producer by giving each woman her own creative entity within her own craft. It also engages the problem of representation in portrait photography as addressed by giving women control over their own image. It is a peculiar sense of belonging and safety found in the private spaces of the unfamiliar. There is an ease in unloading the pain in the agony of another; there is a strange trust and care in these private places, shared by women, known to women. These collaborations created a connection between me and the women in our shared language of art; by listening through our inherited language of embroidery, I learnt the true meaning of nārī.



Still from *Blood Movie*

Tenzin Doma Lama

Blood Movie



Inspired by a seminar with Dr. Michael Taussig on the topic of "Taboo and Transgression" in 2011, I spearheaded this project with a cohort of women after rigorous contemplations on discriminatory practices present in Tibetan and South Asian culture, as an indigenous Himalayan woman trying to make the outcry heard to the global audience. I analyzed the linguistic manifestation of tabooed terms such as sGrib (pronounced as "Dhip"), which literally means obscurations caused by pollutants, such as menstruation, and researched the practice of chhaupadi in South Asian cultures where menstruating women are secluded in a hut facing isolation and sometimes deadly environmental conditions. We agreed to sublimate these ideas into a conceptual frame of a video art piece influenced by these two quotes from the essay "Formless" & the book "Theory of Religion" written by Georges

Bataille in 1929, 1989 respectively: "...,affirming that the universe resembles nothing and is only formless amounts to saying that the universe is something like a spider or spit." / "The animal is in the world like water in water." Being able to gaze into traditional practices from the diasporic lens with that physical distance from the field of primary knowledge and finding a gateway of liberation in the radical texts may create a complex of appropriation but it is this conceptualized ambiguous framework and approach we took that unleashes the universal truth of women in general.

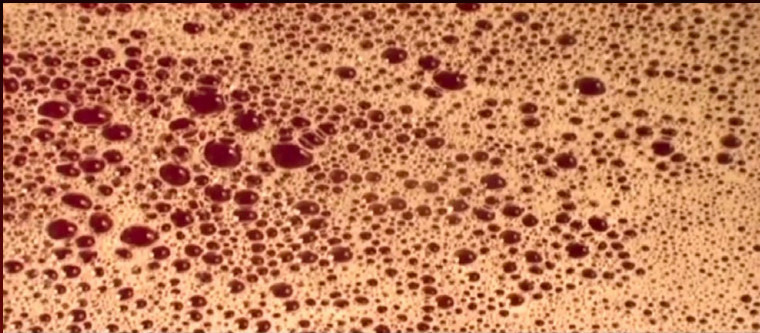
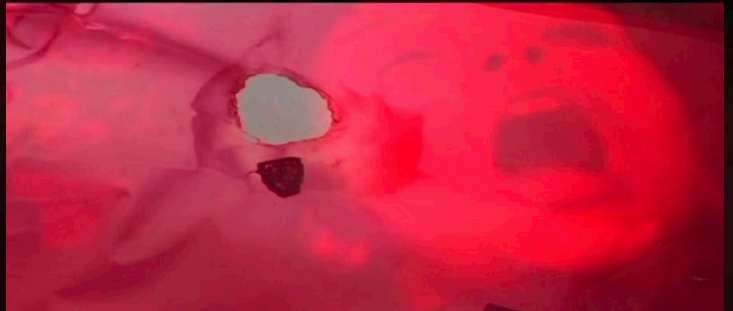
Director/Producer: Tenzin Doma Lama

Assistant Director: Alexandra Afifi

Actress: Jessica X. Daboin

Sound Director: Claudia Gallego

Soundtrack: David Jackman's unknown track layered with Tenzin D Lama on jaw harp



Juror Statements

Ambika Trasi

South Asia Institute's virtual exhibition, *Diasporic Rhizome*, offers answers to some essential questions: How does one unmap a region?; How does one uncoil rigid and hegemonic understandings of "the diaspora" and "South Asia" in order to reveal a multivalent and kaleidoscopic examination of these terms, spaces, and communities?

Using the rhizome as a model for considering the diaspora, the 21 works in *Diasporic Rhizome* unfurl a complex diagram of the South Asian diaspora by excavating buried histories, critiquing current-day neoliberal projects within South Asia, the United States, and elsewhere, and by imagining utopian futures. In nature, the rhizome acts as a multinodal extender, promoting growth ever-

outward for a subterranean plant. The rhizome privileges horizontality over verticality and creates lateral networks for new roots to take hold and new shoots to grow outward; building new futures and ensuring the plant's survival, while resisting a hierarchical structure. It is my hope that this virtual exhibition acts as a rhizome towards new collaborations, nodes of exchange, and mutual care among the organizers, artists, and jurors who took part in this project. My sincere thanks to the team at South Asia Institute for organizing *Diasporic Rhizome*: Dr. Afzal Ahmad, Dr. Shireen Ahmad, Asad Jafri, and Urooj Shakeel, to my fellow jurors, Faisal Anwar and Brendan Fernandes, and to the 21 artists for their moving and vital works.

Brendan Fernandes

As jurors, we were tasked with bringing together a group of artists to represent the complex group of identities and stories labelled, "South Asian Diaspora." For me, there is a queerness to this title. Queerness, not in the sense of gender or sexuality, but in a wider sense of being non-defined, or in flux. Queerness for me has always represented an openness that allows many people to come together, to think through and propose new concepts, to form new senses of community. It struck me that our task as jurors was queer in this sense, and that our selection process should represent that queerness in bringing together South Asian artists whose practices reflected the diversity, solidarity and community evoked by our collective label. In the selection

process, I was looking both for individual practices that represent this solidarity and combinations of different artists, whose works together might dialogue and expand on each other in interesting, perhaps even "queer" ways.

I was excited to see so many artists using their voices and their work to speak to the complexities of South Asian identities. Despite the enormous strain and challenges of this past year, South Asian artists are still finding ways to foster value, agency and solidarity. This is such an exciting and very hopeful gesture. I believe the artists we've put forward represent this hope: to be resilient; to find new ways to be; and to make change in a difficult world at a difficult time.

Faisal Anawar

I am very impressed and encouraged to see so many great works pushing the boundaries of experimenting with mediums, forms, and narratives. Contemporary hybrid art movement presents a unique opportunity for artists to collaborate with other disciplines and experiment with new forms, experiences, and storytelling.

In 1956 Simone Weil in her book *Notebooks* talks about how "Appearance possesses the fullness of reality, but as appearance only. As anything other than appearance,

it constitutes error." A state of mind, or an alternative state of illusion. In history of art, architecture, and design have long been finding creative and original ways of expression through technology since its beginning. Today artists are increasingly keen to use technology, to explore hybrid ways to tell a story, and form a multi-platform experiences, creating an alternative perception within community, and the role of technology to promote positive change in society.

Artist Bios

Anamika Singh

Anamika Singh (b. 1995) is an artist and designer based in New York. Situated at the intersection of post-coloniality, abolitionism, military studies and poetry, Singh's work analyzes the spatial and operational conditions of carceral sites, contested martial histories and their nationalist spatial ramifications to draw deeper links between these infrastructures and unravel our relationships with these shared histories. The questions at the heart of Singh's practice are 'How and why are particular histories of violence rendered familiar or abstract to us? How does the language of love also become the language of subjugation and death? Her work draws parallels, distinctions and entanglements between the aesthetics that shape our desires and pleasures and those deployed in the interest of the necropolitical (Mbembe).

Jaret Vadera

Jaret Vadera is a transdisciplinary artist whose work examines how images colonize the ways that we see the worlds around and within us. Vadera hacks different visual systems, and rewires them to rupture, and open up parallel ways of seeing. His work is influenced by decolonial theory, science fiction, and the study of impossible objects. Vadera's prints, collages, sculptures, videos, and installations have been exhibited and screened internationally at venues such as the: Queens Museum, MoMA, Smithsonian Asian Pacific American Center, Asia Society Museum in New York; Aga Khan Museum in Toronto; Maraya Art Centre in Sharjah; and Bhau Daji Lad Museum in Mumbai. Vadera received his MFA in Painting and Printmaking from Yale University. He is currently an Assistant Professor of the Practice in New Media at Cornell University,

and an Affiliate Assistant Professor at Concordia University. Jaret Vadera lives and works between New York, Toronto, and New Delhi; and is currently based in Brooklyn, NY.

Saba Khan

Saba Khan is a visual artist who lives and works in Lahore. Her work varies from painting, sculpture, photography to installation. She also curates exhibitions and artists' residencies. Saba's recent works are expeditions performed by an all-female artists' group that studies ecology, impact of development and the role of the female gender in spaces of power. The collective visits monumental and ambitious sites, such as dams and barrages, that have transnational effects on the environment. Saba founded Murree Museum Artist Residency, an artist-led initiative in 2014 which has published several artists' books. She has won grants from Sharjah Art Foundation and Graham Foundation to study the effect of barrages that block the continuous flow of River Indus. Khan teaches at the National College of Arts, Lahore.

Shaheen Ahmed

Shaheen Ahmed is a Birmingham based UK artist whose practice is driven by empathy, reworking maps to share narratives of statelessness, crippling infrastructure. Shaheen connects with the earth on a spiritual level, stressing primordial earth belongs to the destitute whether they are humans or animals. With the earth's ruptures, shifting tectonic plates and the movement of vast communities across the globe, she contemplates a more meditative

approach within her own life. Greed and the consumption of and the glorifying of excess wealth and notoriety, is a sickness that seems to be destroying human harmony. Ahmed is part of a collective of craftivists responding to the UK government's HS2 railway bulldozing through ancient woodlands and habitats. Her latest commission (November 2021) is an installation for the Crafts Council UK.

Amin Rehman

Amin Rehman is a multidisciplinary visual artist who has been working since the 1980s and currently resides in Toronto. Originally from Pakistan, he studied at the historic National College of Arts Lahore and received a Masters from the University of Windsor, Ontario in 2011. Rehman's work engages and comments on the current effects of aggressive globalization, colonization and decolonization and also encompasses a number of artist practices such as digital installation, painting, video and neon. Rehman has exhibited extensively in a number of exhibitions across Canada, notably *Other Histories* at the Saint Mary's University Art Gallery (2008); *A is for...* at the McIntosh Gallery at the University of Western Ontario (2012) and *White Wash* at the Art Gallery of Mississauga (2011). Rehman received the Canada Council for the Arts Project Grants to Visual Artists in 2014, 2017 and 2021. He was the recipient of the Chalmers Fellowship Award from the Ontario Arts Council in 2008 and 2017. His upcoming exhibition *the Bleeding Borders* will be exhibited at Art Gallery of Grande Prairie, Alberta in the fall of 2021.

Renluka Maharaj

Renluka Maharaj was born in Trinidad and Tobago. She lives and works between Colorado, New York City and Trinidad. Working with photography, installations, research and travel, Ms. Maharaj's work which is often autobiographical, investigates themes of history, memory, religion, gender and how they inform identity. Ms. Maharaj completed her BFA at the University of Colorado Boulder and her MFA at the School of the Art Institute of Chicago where she received the Barbara De Genevieve Scholarship. Her works are in institutional collections including The Art Institute of Chicago, Museum of Contemporary Photography in Chicago, Joan Flasch artist book collection, Los Angeles Center for Digital Art and special collections at the University of Colorado Boulder as well as numerous private collections.

Umber Majeed

Umber Majeed (b. New York, 1989) is a multidisciplinary visual artist. Her writing, animation, and new media work engage with familial archives to explore Pakistani state, urban, and digital infrastructure through a feminist lens. Majeed has shown in venues across Pakistan, North America, and Europe. In October 2018, Majeed had her debut solo exhibition, *'In the Name of Hypersurface of the Present'*, Rubber Factory, New York. Recent group exhibitions include; *'Volumes- Queens International 2018'*, Queens Museum, New York (2018), and *'Our Loves Are Not Only Human'*, Akademie Schloss Solitude, Germany (2020). She is a recipient of numerous fellowships including the HWP

Fellowship, Ashkal Alwan, Beirut, Lebanon (2017), Refiguring Feminist Futures Web Residency, Akademie Schloss Solitude & ZKM, Germany (2018), the Digital Earth Fellowship, Hivos, the Netherlands (2018-19), Technology Residency, Pioneer Works, Brooklyn, NY(2020), and the NYFA-Deutsche Bank Artist Award for Digital/Electronic Arts, New York (2020). She lives and works between Brooklyn, NY and Lahore, Pakistan.

Melissa Joseph

Melissa Joseph is interested in connecting people through collective memory and shared experiences. Her work addresses themes of diaspora, family histories and the politics of how we occupy spaces. Her work has been shown at the Delaware Contemporary, Woodmere Art Museum, Bemis Center for Contemporary Art, Rider University, Collar Works, and featured in New American Paintings, ArtMaze, and Maake Magazine. She participated in residencies at the Center // Substructured Loss (Berlin), the Growley (SF) Chautauqua Visual Arts (NY) the Textile Arts Center (NY) BRIC (NY), and, currently, the DieuDonne Workspace Residency (NY). She is represented by the Regular Normal Gallery in New York.

Vidya Giri

Vidya Giri's art and life is balanced between cultures, environments, and disciplines. Her experience as an Indian-American and upbringing in Southeast Asia shapes her works. Her current explorations revolve around the parallels between natural and human-made identities and the environments they encompass.

Sofia Karim

Sofia Karim's practice combines architecture, visual art and activism. She has practiced architecture for over 20 years at studios including Norman Foster's in London and Peter Eisenman's in New York. Her activism focuses on human rights across Bangladesh and India, campaigning for the release of imprisoned artists, including Shahidul Alam (her uncle) and Tania Bruguera. Karim is the founder of Turbine Bagh, a joint artists' movement against fascism and authoritarianism and has staged protest exhibitions at Tate Modern (Turbine Hall). Her work has been presented at Harvard University and exhibited in museums and galleries in New York, Delhi and London. Her campaigns and art have been featured in publications including The Observer, The New York Times, The Art Newspaper and British Journal of Photography. Karim has appeared on BBC World News, Channel 4 News, Al Jazeera and Sky News. She is a visiting critic at Westminster school of Architecture.

Mara Ahmed

Mara Ahmed is an interdisciplinary artist and activist filmmaker based in Long Island. She was born in Lahore and educated in Belgium, Pakistan, and the United States. She has master's degrees in Business Administration and Economics. Her documentaries have been broadcast on PBS and screened at international film festivals, and her artwork has been exhibited at galleries in New York and California. Mara is interested in dialogue across both physical and psychological borders. In 2017, she gave a Tedx talk about the meaning of borders

and nationalism entitled “The edges that blur.” She is now working on her fourth film, *The Injured Body*, a film about racism in America that focuses exclusively on the voices of women of color. Her production company is Neelum Films. Mara is honored to be one of the featured changemakers in Rochester Museum & Science Center’s exhibit, *The Changemakers: Rochester Women Who Changed the World*.

Shubhra Parkash

Shubra Parkash is a theatre artist, writer and producer. During the pandemic, her work as writer on *Priya’s Mask* was covered by NPR and the BBC. As a playwright she co-wrote, produced and acted in an original play “*The Music In My Blood*” about Indian classical music that was seen by over a thousand audience members in New York City and the east coast in 2018. While in India, she filmed, edited and animated a digital art exhibition titled “*Fontwala: Stone to Mobile, what remains?*” in collaboration with Rajeev Prakash Khare. The work was presented at Kaleidoscope Digital Art gallery in New Delhi and showcases the evolution of Indian Devanagari script, while questioning how digital media impacts the journey of a complex script.

Rajeev Parkash Khare

Rajeev Parkash Khare is a calligrapher and font design expert who founded VSOFT, one of the first software companies in the 90s to produce Indian language fonts. The fonts created by Rajeev have been in use by several publications, book covers, institutions including the Indian govt. Rajeev has been interviewed by

PrintWeek, Hindustan Times and Times of India on topics such as challenges faced by Indian languages and scripts in the age of digitization. He presently serves as an Art Director at the Delhi Press where he oversees design for over 10 publications in several Indian languages. A graduate of Banaras Hindu University with a BFA in Applied Art and a masters from IDC IIT Mumbai in communication design along with his own extensive study of Indian typefaces, Rajeev remains an advocate for adaptation of technical solutions that make Indian letterforms vastly available in new and diverse media.

Mushtari Afroz

Originally from Bangladesh, Mushtari Afroz is an exponent of North Indian Classical dance form ‘Kathak’ and has been practising within the South Asian dance diaspora in Toronto after immigrating to Canada in early 2000. Her work is driven by her interest in stories - stories that are embodied, that are immediate and personal and yet universal. In an effort to share our collective stories through movement, her artistic practice takes inspiration from movement idioms that collapse South Asian body principles such as grounded, breathing body with the vertical, rhythmic and almost formless undulating body of Kathak. In this way, Mushtari explores new possibilities that are more suited to her contemporary reality and are equipped to express her current concerns and socio-political realities to a global audience.

In 2016, Mushtari founded Kathak Bandi Dance Collective in Toronto that has created and presented original work in Canada and the US in collaboration with Canadian artists.

Mithu Sen

Mithu Sen is an Indian artist with a conceptual practice who works across a range of media including drawing, performance, video, and sculpture. Her practice produces languages that subvert social norms, including those around art production, exhibition, and reception. Sen uproots how we display and value art by constructing interactive scenarios, objects for exchange, and propositions to 'create and consume value', reconceiving how art is shared and circulated. She has exhibited and performed widely at museums, institutions, galleries, and Biennials/Triennials including Asia Pacific Triennial of Contemporary Art, Brisbane, 2018, Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum 2016, Peabody Essex Museum 2016, Art Unlimited: Basel 2016, Queens Museum 2015, Palais De Tokyo 2015, Eli and Edythe Broad Art Museum 2014, Tate Modern 2013; among others. Sen was the first Indian artist to receive the Skoda Award for Best Indian Contemporary Art in 2010, succeeded by the Prudential Eye Award for Contemporary Asian Art in Drawing in 2015, and Performance Artist of the Year by India Today in 2020. She lives and works in New Delhi, India.

Maryam Hina Hasnain

Maryam Hina Hasnain was born and raised in Karachi, Pakistan. She moved to Kuala Lumpur and later to London to study Fine Art. She holds a BA in Fine Art from Goldsmiths, University of London and an MA in Distinction in Fine Art from Chelsea College, University of Arts London. Her practice is underpinned by an interest in trade, empire, migration, borders and citizenship. These themes are explored through a variety of mediums; paintings,

soundscapes, installations and textile interventions. Her studio practice extends into the realm of research, curation and collaborative practice. She is an active, founding member of 2 artist collectives; Neulinge (est. 2019) & Forum Collective (est. 2020). She has previously shown with Artlicks Weekend, London Grads Now at the Saatchi Gallery, and most recently participated as an artist and co curated a project for Late at Tate Britain x Chelsea College titled "Constructing Landscapes/ Building Worlds". She lives & works between London and Karachi.

Asma Kazmi

Asma Kazmi is a research-based artist who combines virtual and material objects to explore simultaneity—a tug of more than one time and place. Her work involves long term engagement with cities, architecture, plants, animals, stones, and other matter to locate vestiges of relations forged by the legacies of colonialism and post-colonial contexts. Combining visual and textual detritus from western and non-western historical manuscripts, photographs, archival material, fragments of locations, and mixing them with her own fabulations, Kazmi tells intertwining stories about Islam, Muslim culture, complex trade routes, global flows of people and commodities, labor, colonial and indigenous knowledge systems, and interspecies entanglements. Kazmi was born in Quetta, a city in Pakistan, near the border with Afghanistan. She works between the US, India, Pakistan, China, Europe, and the Middle East to create installations that are legible in various cultural contexts.

After Party Collective

After Party Collective, formed by artist-curator duo Vidisha-Fadescha and Shaunak Mahbubani, acts in the intersections between curatorial and performance practices. Expanding the Party as a site for critical praxis they produce spaces of embodied thinking to create momentum towards affirmation of trans*, intersex, non-binary, gender non-conforming, and poly-gendered bodies. Through recent projects — Queer Futures Potluck Party held at Goethe-Institute/ Max Mueller Bhavan New Delhi, Queer Futures Archive exhibited in Parramatta NSW, video work “some dance to remember, some dance to forget” first screened at Nottingham Arts Mela, upcoming publication co-curated with Party Office, Consent of the Governed: Race, Constitution and Kink, and upcoming exhibition at apexart NYC — they are energizing choreographies of collectivity, agency, legality, and pleasure.

Nitin Mukul

Nitin Mukul was born in Lawrence, Massachusetts and is based in Queens, NYC. His work blurs boundaries, searching for new intersections across mediums and generations, and mining the malleable narratives of history and identity. In 2020, he was awarded an Artist Residency at the Caldera Arts Center in Sisters, Oregon, and is the recipient of a 2020 New Works Grant from the Queens Council on the Arts. In 2019 he completed video installations at The Institute of Contemporary Art, Philadelphia, Pioneer Works, Brooklyn and Lincoln Center, NYC. He exhibits with Aicon Gallery, NYC and has shown at Poetic

Research Bureau, Los Angeles; Nature Morte, New Delhi, and The Guild, Mumbai. His work was included in the 2013 Queens Biennial at the Queens Museum. Mukul was a studio assistant to the late artist Sol Lewitt, and a former creative director of the Indocenter of Art & Culture in Chelsea. His work was recently acquired by the Kiran Nadar Museum of Art in New Delhi.

Abdullah Qureshi

Abdullah Qureshi is a Pakistani-born artist, educator, and cultural producer. Within his practice, he is interested in using painting, filmmaking, and methodologies of collaboration and organization to address personal histories, traumatic pasts, and sexuality. Through his on-going doctoral project, Mythological Migrations: Imagining Queer Muslim Utopias, he examines formations of queer identity and resistance in Muslim migratory contexts. Qureshi’s work has been exhibited internationally and he has held numerous positions at cultural and educational institutions. In 2017, Qureshi received the Art and International Cooperation fellowship at Zurich University of the Arts, and in 2018, a research fellowship at the Center for Arts, Design, and Social Research, Boston. In 2019, he joined the Center for Feminist Research, York University, Toronto as a visiting researcher, and is currently a Doctoral Candidate, supported by Kone Foundation, at Aalto University in Finland.

Indrani Ashe

Interdisciplinary artist Indrani Ashe responds to a world in which transnational histories and hybrid identities have been

strategically marginalized and erased, where profit-based algorithms continue the work of colonialism and imperialism, and perception becomes reality. Wrestling the narrative from these hegemonical structures, she creates necessary mythologies at the interplay between image, text, and performance: an intersectional feminist shadow archive which regenerates a damaged past and creates potential realities for the future. Ashe was born in North Carolina in the United States, to an Indian mother whose parents fled the state of Bengal after the violent political upheaval of partition, and a father descended from Welsh-English settlers of the Appalachian Mountains. At the age of two Indrani was separated from her mother due to the staunchly held religious beliefs of her father's family, the racist American court system, and a total lack of support from the toxic patriarchal order of her mother's family. Ashe's mythologies operate to recover an identity that has been erased and displaced by racism, misogyny, and the intergenerational traumas of colonialism and migration. While speaking to the experience of the body as a political vessel her practice employs collective storytelling as the ultimate strategy for survival, rebellion, and futurity.

Spandita Malik

Spandita Malik is a New York-based artist from India. Her work is concerned with the current global socio-political state of affairs with an emphasis on women's rights and gendered violence. Malik received her MFA in Photography from Parsons School of Design in 2019. She has been awarded the Firecracker Photographic Grant and En Foco Photography Fellowship. She was chosen for Baxter St Workspace Residency

(2020); Feminist Incubator Residency by Project for Empty Spaces (2020); The Center for Photography at Woodstock Artist in Residency Program (2021) and Bemis Center of Contemporary Arts (2021). Malik's work has been featured in Musée, Harper's and Elephant Magazine. She was named 'Ones to Watch 2020' by British Journal of Photography. 'Spandita Malik: Threads of Identity,' Malik's solo show is currently open at the Visual Art Centre of New Jersey. Her work has been featured internationally in China, France, India, Italy, New York and New Zealand.

Tenzin Doma Lama

Tenzin Doma Lama is a New York and Kathmandu based curator, artist and art consultant. Lama studied Cultural & Visual Anthropology/ East Asian Language and Culture at Columbia University and received her MA in Art Business with a focus on Curation & Art Valuation from Sotheby's Institute of Arts.

Faisal Anwar

Faisal Anwar (b.1970) is a new media artist and an interactive producer working between Canada and Pakistan. Anwar explores the history and diversity of urban spaces and cultural identities. He is inspired by hybrid art, algorithms, data visualization, ecology and cognitive sciences to create thought-provoking works while pivoting community participation and cultural experiences. His artistic practice branches through multiple media including interactive installations, immersive environments, data-driven interventions, and public art. He has shown at several galleries, museums, and festivals worldwide, including the Winter

Jurors

Olympics Vancouver 2010, Nuit-Blanche Festival Toronto 2008 to 2016, and at the First Karachi Biennale 2017. Anwar's project CharBagh was presented at 'Sensory Garden', Aga Khan Museum Toronto in 2016 and at the exhibition 'Garden in the Machine', at Surrey Art Gallery, Vancouver in 2019. In 2019, he was awarded the Labverde Residency at the Amazon rainforest to research and work with scientific climate data. Anwar is a graduate of the Canadian Film Centre's Habitat-LAB, Interactive Arts Program 2004, with a bachelor's in graphic design from the National College of Arts Lahore, Pakistan 1996. Anwar is the founder and artistic director of DigitalDip, an innovation-lab working with hybrid art, design-led thinking and emerging technologies. He is also the co-founder of Art Address, an artist-led collective in Oakville, Canada. <http://faisalanwar.ca>

Ambika Trasi

Ambika Trasi is an artist, arts organizer, and writer based in Brooklyn, NY. Her multidisciplinary research-based practice reveals the coloniality of power within images and sites. She is interested in the role that memory, language, and technology play in identity-making, community-building, and decolonizing in the diaspora. Recent curatorial projects include Salman Toor: How Will I Know, co-curated with Christopher Y. Lew, at the Whitney Museum of American Art, New York (November 13 2020–April 4, 2021) and A Space for Monsters at Twelve Gates Arts, Philadelphia (February 5–April 11, 2021). Previously, Trasi was managing director and curatorial assistant at Asia Contemporary Art Week (ACAW), 2013–2017. As a board member of the South Asian Women's

Creative Collective (SAWCC), 2015–2019, Trasi was an exhibition manager for shows held at Queens Museum (2016) and Abrons Art Center (2017). <https://www.ambikatrasi.com>

Brendan Fernandes

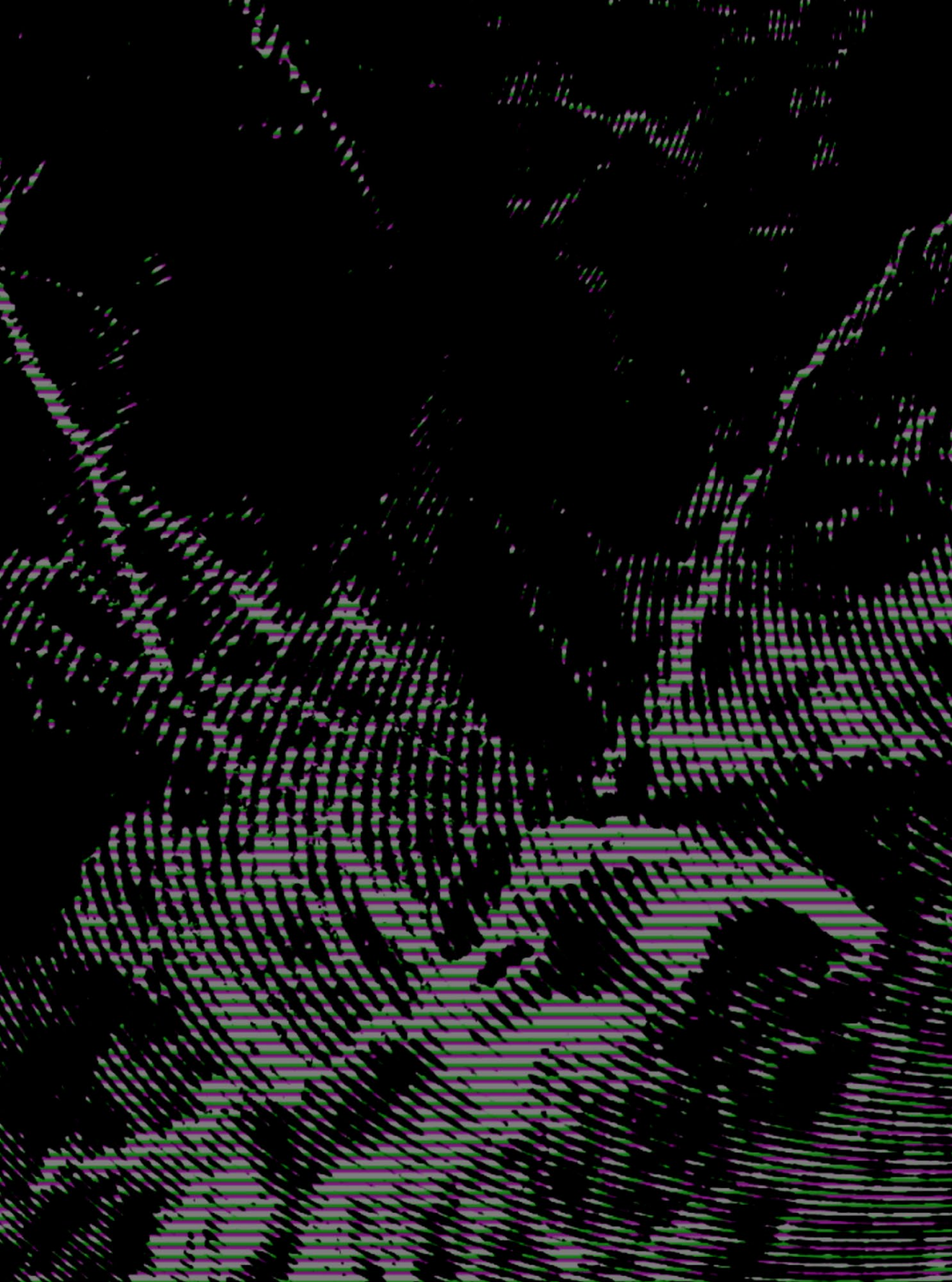
Brendan Fernandes (b. 1979, Nairobi, Kenya) is an internationally recognized Canadian artist working at the intersection of dance and visual arts. Currently based out of Chicago, Brendan's projects address issues of race, queer culture, migration, protest and other forms of collective movement. Always looking to create new spaces and new forms of agency, Brendan's projects take on hybrid forms: part Ballet, part queer dance hall, part political protest... always rooted in collaboration and fostering solidarity. Brendan is a graduate of the Whitney Independent Study Program (2007) and a recipient of a Robert Rauschenberg Fellowship (2014). In 2010, he was shortlisted for the Sobey Art Award, and is the recipient of a prestigious 2017 Canada Council New Chapters grant. Brendan is also the recipient of the Artadia Award (2019), a Smithsonian Artist Research Fellowship (2020) and a Louis Comfort Tiffany Foundation grant (2019). His projects have shown at the 2019 Whitney Biennial (New York); the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum (New York); the Museum of Modern Art (New York); The Getty Museum (Los Angeles); the National Gallery of Canada (Ottawa); MAC (Montreal); among a great many others. He is currently artist-in-residency and Assistant Professor at Northwestern University and represented by Monique Meloche Gallery in Chicago. <http://www.brendanfernandes.ca>

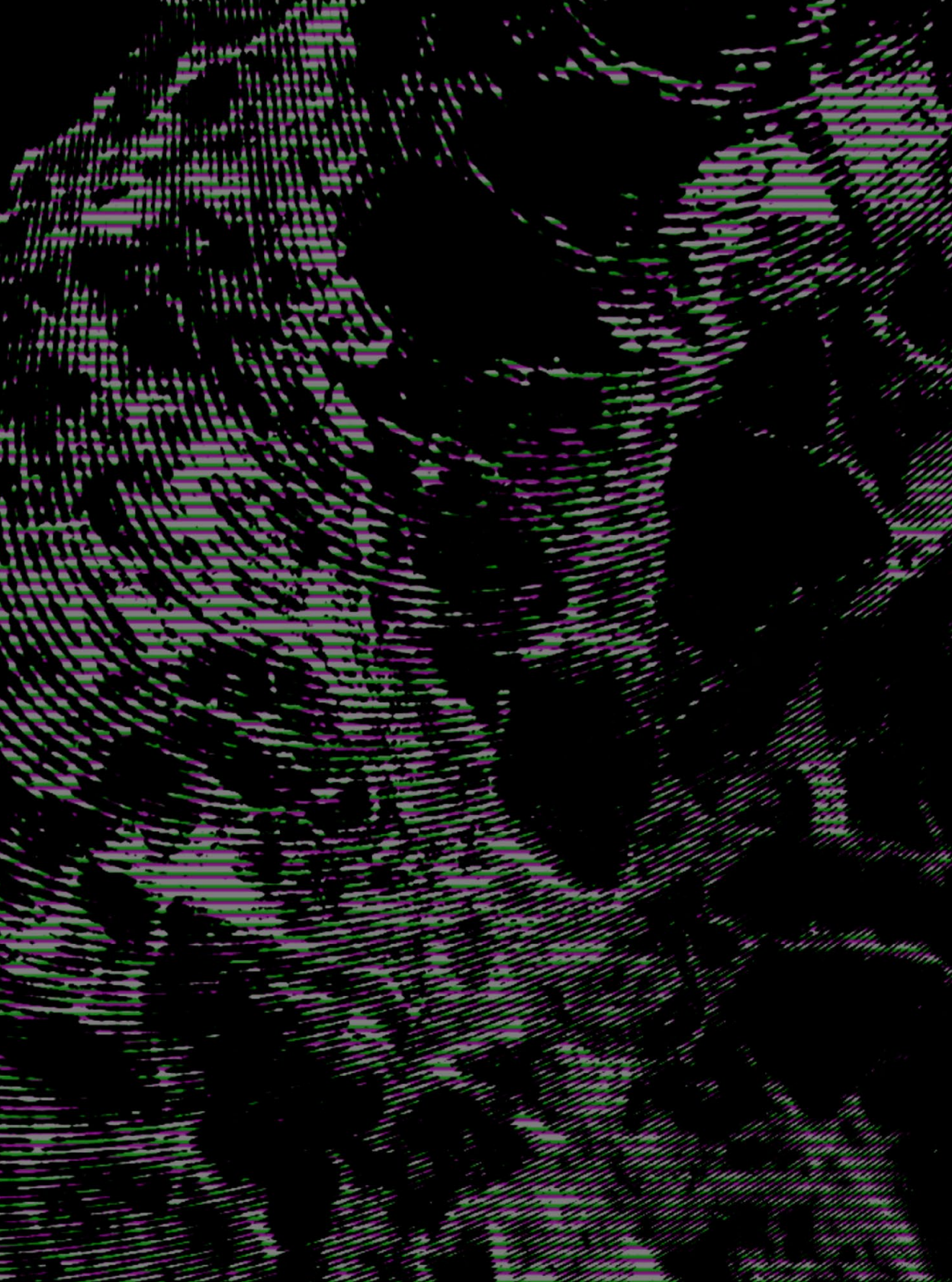
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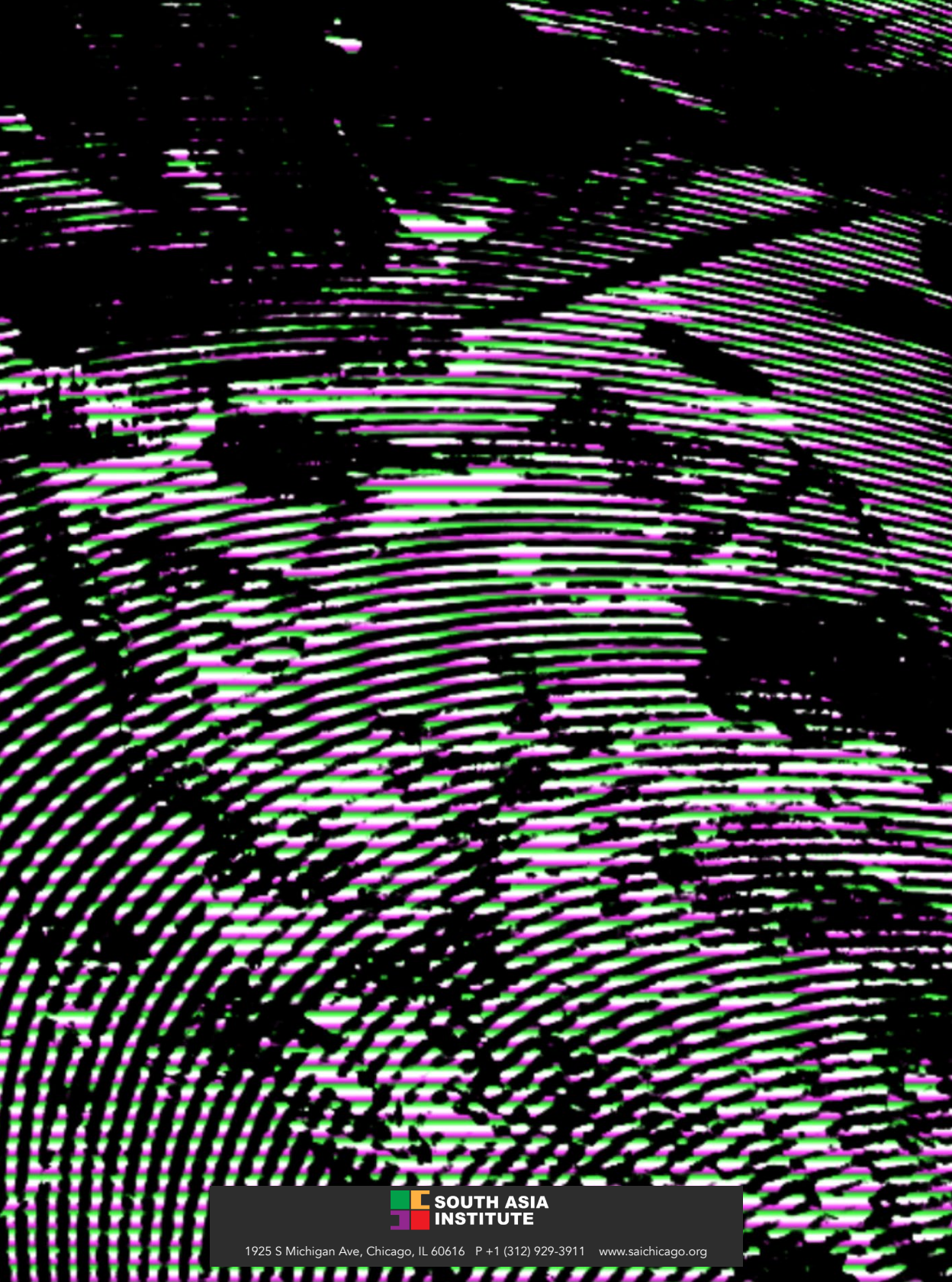
South Asia Institute would like to extend its gratitude to the 21 exhibiting artists in Diasporic Rhizome whose powerful work made this virtual exhibition so impactful. We would like to thank the jury members, Faisal Anwar, Ambika Trasi, and Brendan Fernandes for their time, generosity, and thoughtful consideration of all of the submitted work. SAI also acknowledges its staff: Executive Director, Asad Ali Jafri and Communications Manager, Urooj Shakeel for developing and producing Diasporic Rhizome and Publications Manager Ludvig Perés for designing the catalog.

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1925 S Michigan Ave, Chicago, IL 60616 P +1 (312) 929-3911 www.saichicago.org