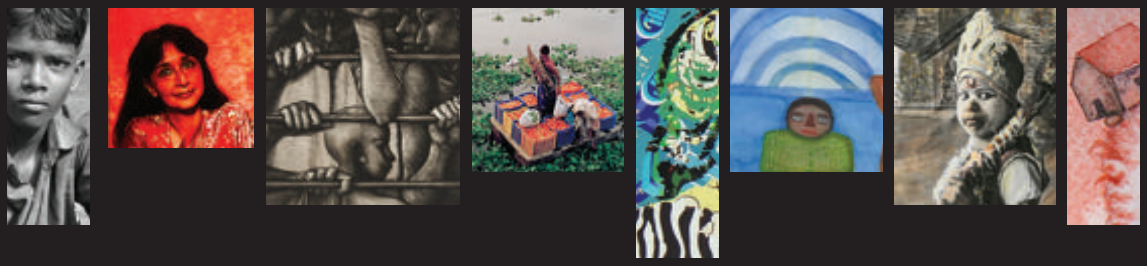


CONVERGENCE

CONTEMPORARY ART FROM INDIA AND THE DIASPORA



This catalogue is published on the occasion of the exhibition *Convergence: Contemporary Art from India and the Diaspora,* organized by Kathryn Myers, on view at The William Benton Museum of Art, University of Connecticut, Storrs, October 22–December 15, 2013.

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University of Connecticut
245 Glenbrook Road, U-3140
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October 22–December 15, 2013
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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Two enlightened museum directors frame my collaborations with The William Benton Museum of Art. In 2002, with my knowledge of Indian art still nascent, Salvatore Scalora, The Benton's director at that time, provided me with unfailing support and encouragement to organize *Masala: Diversity and Democracy in South Asian Art*. In 2013, on the eve of his retirement as Acting Director, Thomas Bruhn made the Center Gallery available to me to curate this exhibition. *Convergence* also serves to introduce and welcome our new museum director, Nancy Stula. Lauren A. Johnson, Assistant Curator, and Carla Galfano, Registrar, worked with unsurpassed dedication and enthusiasm to bring this exhibition from idea to installation. As it has been since 2004, it is a joy and privilege to work with the entire Benton Museum staff.

I would also like to acknowledge the support I have received over the years from UConn's India Studies Program and the Asian American Studies Institute both of which have contributed to this exhibition. Among the many examples of serendipitous occurrences of "convergence" to characterize the present exhibition was the opportunity in 2004 to create a course on Indian art for UConn's new India Studies Program. Providing a structure for my broad interest in Indian art and culture, this course allowed me to share my love of India and my own learning process over the past decade with my students. Betty Hanson, Elizabeth Mahan, and Cathy Schlund-Vials in particular have provided crucial support and a joyous symposium of collaboration and friendship.

Fulbright-Nehru Fellowships in 2002 and 2011 and grants from the University of Connecticut Research Foundation provided support and time for recurrent visits to India, resulting in many gratifying friendships with artists and scholars, some of whom are represented in the UConn collections and others who have contributed essays to this catalogue. Interview videos for RegardingIndia.com that form part of the educational materials for this exhibition were produced with grants from the Connecticut Office of the Arts in the Department of Economic and Community Development and a UConn School of Fine Art's Dean's Research and Creative Activities grant, which has also provided funds for this catalogue.

Finally, I extend a special thanks to the artists who loaned work for this exhibition and to the scholars who contributed essays for this catalogue.

KATHRYN MYERS

LOCALES AND INTERSECTIONS: THOUGHTS ON *CONVERGENCE*

Susan S. Bean

Not so long ago, the common western conception saw cultures as deeply rooted in home locales. There was an insistent expectation that art from India, China, Africa, and the rest of the non-West be authentically, recognizably Indian, Chinese, African, etc. Little room was left in the art historical narrative of the modern era for the emergence of anything really new in places like India. On top of that, modernist art was conceived of as a creation of the West that arrived only belatedly in other places, disconnected from authentic traditional genres. As a consequence, for decades in the western art world, new art from beyond the West was unseen, hidden in plain sight. Recently, with such misleading expectations progressively undermined, the riches of 20th- and 21st-century art are coming into focus across the globe. This new scenario disentangles artists from the artistic heritage of their homelands and opens fresh takes on their responses to locales, whether native, adopted, encountered, or simply imagined.

In the exhibition *Convergence: Contemporary Art from India and the Diaspora*, curator Kathryn Myers, an American painter and professor at the University of Connecticut, has gathered together work by India-based artists and by artists of Indian origin now living elsewhere. The exhibition's core comprises works that Myers acquired for The William Benton Museum of Art's collection, many of which were arranged to be purchased on regular visits to India over the past fourteen years. During her stays there, Myers' own art-making developed in dialogue with her experiences of India's genres of painting and the visual character of its built environment. The exhibition reflects Myers' keen sensitivity to the complexities of place, to the ways artists respond to the multiple locales that inform their lives and work, and to the varied yet intersecting impressions that a shared locale, in this case India, can leave on an artist's work.

The William Benton Museum of Art at the University of Connecticut has been part of a nexus of collectors, galleries, and museums centered in the northeast that has persisted in creating space for South Asia-inflected modern and contemporary art in the U.S. art scene following India's independence in 1947. The Museum's first contribution to this endeavor was the exhibition *Masala: Diversity and Democracy in South Asian Art*, mounted in 2004 as part of a new wave of attention to South Asian art in America. With *Convergence* in 2013, The Benton is again joining the recent upsurge in exhibitions across the country, which are at last succeeding in bringing art with strong links to South Asia into a dynamic dialogue within the American art world. *Convergence*, selected and organized with a painter's sensibility and strong links to India, offers a fresh take on the work of fifteen artists with roots in the subcontinent. In this new, more open environment, *Convergence* considers how the work of artists living in far-flung places converges and intersects through diverse responses to a shared cultural and geographical locale of importance to each in her or his own way. *Convergence* reflects the power of place in a globally interconnected art world.

CREATING CONVERGENCE

Kathryn Myers

In January 2004, The William Benton Museum of Art at the University of Connecticut opened one of the most groundbreaking exhibitions in its history. *Masala: Diversity and Democracy in South Asian Art* filled the Museum's three galleries with over 250 works of traditional, folk, popular, and contemporary art. Acquisitions from *Masala* formed the seeds of what is today a growing collection of contemporary art from India and the diaspora housed in the University's Benton Museum, the Thomas J. Dodd Research Center, and the Homer Babbidge Library. Seeds were also sown at that time by the creation of a new India Studies Program. Increased awareness, interest, and knowledge of India—a country of inestimable historic and cultural value with a crucial role in shaping our present world—has been the result of a convergence of efforts by many individuals at UConn who share intellectual, creative, and deeply gratifying personal relationships with India's social geography.

Nearly a decade later, the present exhibition *Convergence: Contemporary Art from India and the Diaspora* is a testament to the locus of interest in India at UConn. The exhibition revisits select artwork featured in *Masala* and introduces new artists in the university collections. Most notably, it provides an occasion for the academic and public communities to continue to recognize and honor the significance of contemporary art being created in India and by artists of Indian origin living throughout the world. *Convergence*, in taking place within a university setting—a locus of intellectual and creative engagement—emphasizes how works of art continue to act as key avenues through which we increase our knowledge of and more fully invest in the world we inhabit.

What has perhaps most defined the art scene in India in the decade framed by *Masala* and *Convergence* is the unparalleled activity and increased visibility Indian curators and artists have achieved—both at home and abroad—in a seemingly short span of time. Economic liberalization in the early 1990s resulted in greater opportunities for Indian artists to participate in international exhibitions and art fairs.[1] Resilient in the face of recent global economic downturns, the Indian art scene pulses with vitality, exuberance, and optimism. Within India, new galleries, art centers, art fairs, and artist's residencies have provided an arena for the most current international art theory and practice to intermingle with a vast legacy of art, history, and culture. In early 2013, the 5th Annual India Art Fair (IAF) in New Delhi, described as "a melting pot of dynamic world art,"[2] included participation of 105 galleries from 24 countries and hosted a forum featuring international scholars, artists, and curators. Later that year the Kochi-Muziris Biennial in Kerala placed the work of India's emerging talent side by side with established international artists in atmospheric old warehouses, "invoking the latent cosmopolitan spirit of Kochi and its mythical past."[3] The Kochi-Muziris Biennial provides an exceptional

example of how often the seasoned and the new converge in India in innovative and compelling ways. Along with enduring government museums and art institutions, new art spaces have staged pioneering exhibitions and symposia, providing opportunities for young curators, critics, artists, and students to participate in "one of the most startlingly transformed nations in the world"[4] with the ambition to redefine and transform global art in the 21st century.

Outside India, blockbuster exhibitions have showcased contemporary Indian art, redefining historic relationships and engaging new audiences.[5] Initially bringing together artists with diverse experiences, histories, and outlooks under the banner of ethnic or geographic coherence, these extensive exhibitions have come to recognize an increasingly complex and nuanced understanding of India, and have in turn provided nuanced insights regarding individual perceptions of regional/national/global identity. As gallerist Peter Nagy has noted, "to believe that all South Asian artists would be singing in unison or even creating works culled from the same cultural sources is patently false."[6] In the United States, and particularly in the New York metropolitan area, emerging galleries for contemporary South Asian art in the 1990s contributed to a growing sense of internationalism in the art scene. Providing long overdue recognition in the West for a host of premiere Indian artists, they also created a forum for those engaged with and excited by the growing visibility of contemporary Indian art.[7] Artists of South Asian origin living all over the globe have been an integral part of an enlarged and enriched artistic dialogue. With families, relationships, and histories spanning continents and cultures with complex webs of connections, transnational artists enjoy an expanded artistic vocabulary of insights, influences, and references. Exhibitions focusing on art of the South Asian diaspora have uprooted and relocated concepts of home and homeland, in the process seeking "to transcend borders that confine and control preconceived definitions of Indian and Western art."[8]

The late Thomas McEvilley, among the first Western critics to write widely about modern and contemporary Indian art, memorably noted, "in a shrinking yet terrifying world, we have to learn—and use—each other's languages, for the future is an unknown language that we will compose together."[9] With highly developed aesthetic theories and traditions, India has long served as a cultural crossroads with an agile ability to weave together artistic "languages" from different parts of the globe with a rich array of local dialects. The fifteen artists featured in *Convergence*—Ravi Agarwal, Sarnath Banerjee, Siona Benjamin, Neil Chowdhury, Sunil Gupta, Hanuman R. Kambli, Bari Kumar, Vijay Kumar, Sachin Naik, Annu Palakunnathu Matthew, Madhvi Parekh, Sujith SN, Anupam Sud, Avinash Veeraraghavan, and Waswo X. Waswo—offer a wealth of insights reflecting their particular historical and personal circumstances, often staged locally, but relevant globally. While far from providing a comprehensive survey of contemporary art being made in and about India, the exhibition acknowledges the important role these artists play in opening a space for understanding our present world more broadly. As the artwork on view in the gallery and reproduced here reveal, convergence occurs when traditional art and mythology take on a renewed relevance through contemporary content and materials.

Art and social consciousness converge when the enduring resonance of colonialism, communal, or global conflicts, as well as the injustices of daily life inspires compassion and critique. Art and activism converge when an environment in transition is skillfully navigated through diverse political, personal, and poetic insights. Finally, numerous artists, scholars, and friends have converged for the creation of this exhibition and publication, celebrating art from India and the diaspora as a global language that we speak together.

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1. Gayatri Sinha notes several factors contributing to the growth of the contemporary art scene: "... a dovetailing of this generation's practice with economic reforms in India and the opening up of 'markets' for art. The influence of Western collectors, curators and the biennial circuit, the making of a global discourse." For more see, "Introduction: New Persuasions of Contemporary Indian Art" in *Voices of Change: 20 Indian Artists*, ed. Gayatri Sinha (Mumbai: Marg Foundation, 2010).

2. *India Today*. "Indian Art Fair 2013." Accessed February 20, 2013. www.indiatoday.in.

3. Biennial Foundation. "Kochi-Muziris Biennial." Accessed June 14, 2013. www.biennialfoundation.org.

4 "The nineties were a prime time for contemporary art in India, when in spite of government abstinence, its artists could do no wrong. Their works were on view in London, Shanghai, and San Francisco. [...] Their art was meant to represent one of the most startlingly transformed nations in the world..." *Business Standard*, "Missing a *biennial*." Accessed June 14, 2013. www.business–standard.com.

5. To name just a few major exhibitions in the past decade: *Edge of Desire: Recent Art in India*, Asia Society, New York (2005); *The Empire Strikes Back: Indian Art Today*, Saatchi Gallery, London (2010); *Critical Mass: Contemporary Indian Art*, Tel Aviv Museum of Art (2012); *Midnight to the Boom: Painting in India after Independence*, Peabody Essex Museum of Art, Salem, Massachusetts (2013).

6. Peter Nagy, *The Audience and the Eavesdropper: New Art from India and Pakistan* (London: Phillips de Pury & Company, 2008). The terms "India" and "South Asia" are often used flexibly. While the term "South Asia" is inclusive of art or individuals from any of the five South Asian countries, many international exhibitions with the heading "India" often include artists from several South Asian countries and from the diaspora. *Convergence* is focused on artists living in India or as members of the Indian diaspora and on issues and traditions common to the geographical area, history, and culture of India.

7. "In the early part of this decade, few commercial or alternative spaces existed in New York that focused on Indian art—let alone South Asian diaspora art. [...] the commercial galleries tended to focus on Modern and Contemporary artists from the Indian mainland." Sharmistha Ray, "Way in the World," *Art India* 1, vol. 1 (2009): 30-34. Galleries for contemporary South Asian art of particular note in New York City today include Bose Pacia, Aicon, Sundaram Tagore, sepia EYE, and Talwar Gallery.

8. Vijay Kumar, "Curator's Statement," *Erasing Borders Exhibition of Contemporary Indian Art of the Diaspora*. Accessed June 14, 2013. www.iaac.us.

9. Thomas McEvilley, "The Common Air: Contemporary Art in India" in *Art and Otherness: Crisis in Cultural Identity* (Kingston, NY: Documentext/McPherson & Co, 1995): 109-127.

RAVI AGARWAL

Maya Kóvskaya

Delhi-based artist and environmental activist Ravi Agarwal (1958) works along the intersection of several mutually entangled yet distinct lines of concern. His works employ photography, video, public art, and curatorial interventions to examine the workings of power through global capital and its effects on ecologies of natural and lived environments, including the life of "the street," marginalization, and labor. These enduring preoccupations are rooted in a commitment to social justice, yet Agarwal's art practice is equally self-reflexive and introspectively critical.

Photographic series such as *Down and Out: Labouring Under Global Capitalism* (1997–2000), which debuted at Documenta XI in 2002, and *Bhatti Mines* (2002–2003) exemplify Agarwal's interrogation of the lived experience of marginalization and everyday realities of extracted surplus value from the labor of people at the bottom of the socio-economic hierarchy. In the latter project, Agarwal spent a decade working with the Oud community living on the periphery of Delhi, struggling against the city's attempts to expel them from their orderly dwellings of 30 years by representing them as *jhuggi jhopri* (slum) "squatters." These works also show his ongoing questioning of the relationship between artist and subject, the photographic gaze and the gaze of power. He attempts to decenter the authoritative, creative role of the artist as maker of representations and destabilize notions of documentarian "truth" and "objectivity" even as the pathos of his work simultaneously derives from the raw realities it explores. As such, the work avoids the easy path of ideological clarity even as it offers social criticism.

A committed environmental activist, Agarwal is also sensitive to the tensions between the exigencies of brutal poverty, urban planning, and the deployment of capital, often at the expense of the environment. His work is rife with inquiries into the silences of loss and the casual violence of contemporary consumer societies.

Many of Agarwal's works find their impetus in the catastrophe we have inflicted upon what is essentially the lifeblood of the planet—water. At the Sharjah Biennial 11 (2013), he presented *The Sewage Pond's Memoir* (2011), a color video projection with sound and photography exploring the way that the excesses of capitalism are instantiated in the overflow of city sewage into the Delhi Ridge forest, reconfiguring the spatial relationship between land and water, resource and refuse.



Ravi Agarwal. *Untitled [October 5, 2004]*. From the series *Alien Waters*, 2004–2006. Color photograph. 24 x 30 in. The William Benton Museum of Art, Gift of the artist.

Agarwal's series *Alien Waters* (2004–2006), the featured work in *Convergence*, asks what the future can look like given our alienated relationship to our life-giving bodies of water. The marginalized communities along the sacred Yamuna River, struggling to wring life and livelihoods out of the dying waters that have been desecrated by industrial production and urban life, resemble the marginalized river itself. Agarwal asks us to consider the life and death of the river. Who do we become once we have exiled and alienated ourselves from nature? The "predominant Hindu relationship to life in the cycle of rebirth has a timeless resonance as ashes are immersed in the waters," Agarwal writes, "but what will the rebirth be?"[1] While Agarwal's activism belies the cynicism that so often accompanies realizations of the scope of devastation we have wrought as a species upon our habitat and fellow co-inhabitants, his prognostication of the human condition is nevertheless grim: "Ecology has become an ornament," he writes. "Nature which shaped the city once is now being shaped by contemporary relationships of capital and power, instead of as a democratic idea of a common future."[2]

1. Ravi Agarwal. "Alien Waters, 2004–2006, Project Statement." Accessed September 25, 2013. www.raviagarwal.com.

2. Ravi Agarwal. "Flux: Dystopia, Utopia, Heterotopia." Accessed September 25, 2013. www.raviagarwal.com.



Ravi Agarwal. *Untitled [November 23, 2005]*. From the series *Alien Waters*, 2004–2006. Color photograph. 24 x 30 in. The William Benton Museum of Art, Contemporary World Art Fund & India Studies Program, Office of Global Affairs.

SANARTH BANERJEE

Amjad Majid

Born in Calcutta in 1972, Sarnath Banerjee is considered the first graphic novelist of India. He is also an artist, a filmmaker, and is co-founder of the publishing house Phantomville. His work merges image, literature, and art, spanning themes of urban culture, mythology, history, architecture, globalization and modernization, the metropolis, everyday Indian life, philosophy, sexuality, and social criticism, among others. Banerjee's works are also meta-literary in the sense that they are often self-referential with autobiographical insertions of the author/artist into the storyline of the work itself, creating a dialogue between the work and the artist.

In *Corridor* (2004, Penguin), Banerjee's first graphic novel and also the first graphic novel of India, the character of a comic book artist is cast as a *flâneur* or loafer—the figure of the city dweller and urban explorer found commonly in literature and brought to our attention by Walter Benjamin in his study of Charles Baudelaire's poetry—who obsessively scours Delhi's Connaught Place for a book. A similar storyline in the novel follows the *flâneur*, Shintu, a newly wed man who explores the alleys of old Delhi in search of the perfect aphrodisiac. *Corridor* illustrates the distinctive stories of various characters from Delhi and Calcutta, eventually bringing them together in a profound meta-fictional moment when they are revealed to be the comic book subjects drawn by another character in the story. At this point, the book draws attention to itself as a fiction and raises questions about the relationship between fiction and reality. In *The Barn Owl's Wondrous Capers* (2007, Penguin), Banerjee's second graphic novel, the narrator is a collector who is on a quest to find a precious item. He is tied to the role of traveler and *flâneur* who courses from city to city and from story to story as the book navigates history from one century to another. As in *Corridor*, the meta-fictional and self-referential concept of a story within a story becomes important in constructing multiple narratives that are tied together by invisible bonds. *The Harappa Files* (2011, Harper Collins) also contains a multitude of characters, thus adding to Banerjee's collection of loosely bound graphic commentaries that portray life in contemporary post-liberalized India.

Banerjee effectively utilizes techniques of "discursive polyphony" in the varied voices within the work, "heteroglossia" as different forms of speech, and a "dialogism" created by interweaving diverse viewpoints, such that image and text conjoin to offer narratives that converse with history, philosophy, urban life, and a wide set of other topics. This allows for the narration and illustration in these works to function like a camera with zoom-in, zoom-out, and panning functions, to travel from concrete to abstract, subjective to objective, fragment to totality, and back. The work of Banerjee incorporates multiple worlds and imaginariums, offering an enriched, lively, and dialogical experience of reading and viewing texts and images that complement and clash with each other in the construction of relevance and meaning.



Sanarth Banerjee. *Soul* (triptych), 2012. Ink and pencil on paper.
11 3/4 x 8 1/4 in panels. On loan from private collection.



Siona Benjamin. *Finding Home, Hagar (Fereshteh) #64*, 2003. Gouache and gold leaf on wood. 13 7/16 x 10 in.
The William Benton Museum of Art, Contemporary World Art Fund.

SIONA BENJAMIN

Kathryn Myers

As a descendent of Bene Israel Jews—an historic community of Jews in India—who grew up in Mumbai and presently resides in the United States, Siona Benjamin (1960) creates work that traverses the "cultural boundary zones" she inhabits with compassion, sensitivity, generosity, and consummate artistic skill. Her research of the Torah and Midrash (rabbinic interpretations) inspires and informs her paintings, which are based on personal interpretations and revisions of ancient Biblical stories. Finding continued relevance in traditional Indian and Islamic manuscript painting, her own sumptuous images combine text, image, and decorative details painstakingly crafted using some of the original materials and methods employed by miniaturist artisans, such as opaque watercolor and gold leaf.

In her extensive *Finding Home* series, Benjamin weaves together Indian and Jewish narratives to create powerful statements on contemporary conditions. The notion of "finding home" is significant given the artist's complex religious, cultural, and geographic identity, and it calls to mind the plight of Jews, Benjamin's family among them, who have migrated to various parts of the world. With a particular focus on the lives of women in symbolic portraits such as *Hagar, Esther, Ruth,* and *Lilith,* Benjamin revisits—and makes newly relevant—ancient mythology and symbolism.

Each painting is embellished with details layering aspects of Hindu, Islamic, and Christian art, history, and culture. In *Finding Home, Hagar (Fereshteh) #64* (*fereshteh* is an Urdu/Arabic word meaning "angel"), Benjamin takes as her heroine a figure found both in the Book of Genesis and in the Koran. In the artist's contemporary version, Hagar is pictured wearing a burqa over an emerald green sari and hovering above a deep blue body of water. In the background, clouds painted in the typical style of Indian miniatures support small, house-shaped forms, perhaps drawing parallels between Benjamin's experiences of migration with those of Hagar. The Moses-like staff that Hagar submerges into the water creates a ripple that reveals a form reminiscent of a mushroom cloud, which extends out into a sea populated by the fragmented bodies of victims of a suicide bomb.

Benjamin's paintings unearth the past as a means of connecting with the present. Imbuing each of her paintings with specific references to tradition and with content from contemporary life, she elicits diverse emotional responses. Similarly, her appropriation of and invention of forms, symbols, and imagery invites multiple interpretations. Ultimately, Benjamin aims to encourage a greater sense of understanding and tolerance between those of diverse faiths and cultures.

NEIL CHOWDHURY

Neeta Omprakash

Neil Chowdhury (1966) was born in London and grew up in the Detroit metropolitan area. As an American photographer of British and Indian heritage whose immersion in Indian culture has been largely filtered through western sources, Chowdhury's creative work has served as a means of reconnecting with his father's native country. Having been denied the opportunity to live in or visit India while growing up, Chowdhury is conscious of the fact that he is viewing Indian culture as an outsider. His *ouevre* encompasses digital photography and photomontages. In much of his work, the photographer queries the intricacy of the country's social fabric and the fraught relationship of religious faith with poverty in rural and urban India.

The multiple meanings of Chowdhury's work unfold as one studies the details and considers the potent symbolism of the artist's visual forms. In his large photomontage *Laundry Puja*, from the ongoing series *Waking from Dreams of India* begun in 2002 with the artist's first visit to his ancestral country, a poor woman is seen deeply engrossed in her prayers to the "omnipresent almighty." Juxtaposed with her are images of powerful Indian deities including a battle scene painted on the metal shutter of one shop and the multi-armed image of the powerful goddess Durga on another. Chowdhury's fascination for popular imagery of deities and how they interplay with everyday life in India is evident in this piece. The immense breadth and variety of Indian religious and philosophical traditions offers many understandings of the divine, from iconic to abstract, and Chowdhury provides viewers with an image open to interpretation.

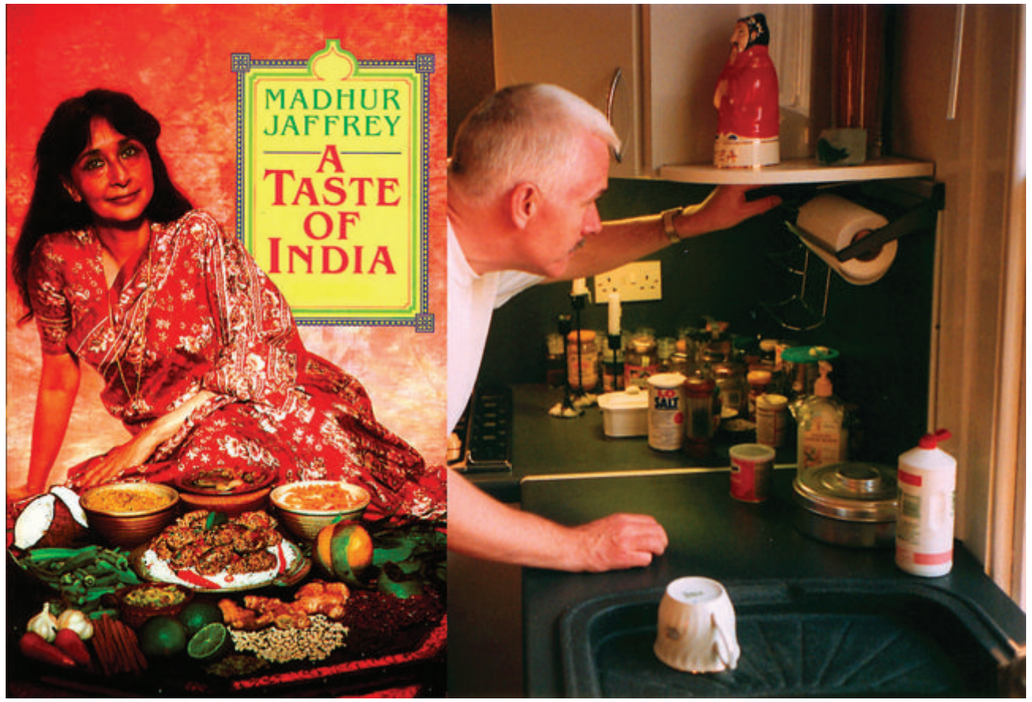
He introduces humor and sarcasm by depicting the woman intensely offering her prayers while turned away from Durga's image. Is she unaware that the Goddess is so close, looming behind her? Or, irrespective of the anthropomorphic image of the Goddess, does she prefer to worship an abstract entity? Two men in white shirts appear as unconcerned passers-by. They seem dwarfed by the intensity of the woman's powerful focus and the images of the deities. The artist has painted the floor on which the woman stands a blood red color. The beheaded demon Mahishasur, defeated by Durga in a mythic battle, is shown lying in the foreground near the woman's feet. Are viewers meant to read the woman as Durga herself? However one might interpret it, *Laundry Puja* ultimately offers an example of Chowdhury's discerning ability to mine and to synthesize various elements from Indian culture and tradition to create works of art that engage the past and the present, as well as the mythic, the factual, and the perceived.





TOP: Neil Chowdhury. *Laundry Puja*, 2008. From the series *Waking from Dreams of India*, 2002–ongoing. Digital pigment print. 30 x 46 in. The William Benton Art Museum, Gift of the Indian Studies Endowment Fund.

LEFT: Neil Chowdhury. *Child Mechanic*, 2008. Digital pigment print. 37 1/2 x 29 in. The William Benton Art Museum, Gift of Kathryn Myers.



Sunil Gupta. *Untitled No. 10,* 1993. From the series *Trespass 2—The Kitchen*, 1993. Lambda print, edition 3/5. 31 x 41 in.
The William Benton Art Museum, Contemporary World Art Fund.

SUNIL GUPTA

Maya Kóvskaya

Born in 1953 in India, photographer Sunil Gupta spent his teens in Montreal, studied photography in New York in the 1970s, and in 1983 received a Master's in London where he lived for the next two decades. He returned to India in 2005 despite the channels of risk he faced due to the public health crisis and the criminalization of homosexuality (struck down by the High Court only in 2009). He relocated to London in 2013.

From his early series *Exiles* (1986), which reclaims Indian history and the public sphere as sites of queer sexuality and identity by locating gay men in iconic architectural and historic spaces, to *Mr. Malhotra's Party* (2007), which references the local "code" for a gay party at clubs in Delhi, he stages portraits of gay people in everyday public spaces, no more obviously gay than the people on the streets around them, and yet quietly, defiantly, sometimes jubilantly themselves.

Diagnosed HIV positive in 1995, Gupta incorporates the politics of love, everyday life, identity, and the body, into his work. Showing the human ordinariness as well as the particular vicissitudes of the "queer experience," he unmasks the myth of the "white male heterosexual experience" as the default template for the putatively "universal." By creating zones of visibility in public space in his photographs, he celebrates queerness in ways that confound the binaries between gay and straight that dehumanize gender minorities by making their ordinary human experiences seem "other" and alien.

Gupta's *Trespass* works (1992–1995) explore the experience of this "alien-ness" on multiple levels—be it that of a gay man, a person of color, or an immigrant. While *Trespass 1* was located in public space in Berlin, *Trespass 2* (1993) offers an "inside" counterpoint. Here, what he describes as "the cultural politics of food (second only to sex) get played out," inside Gupta's London home—the setting of a love triangle between Sunil, a new lover (taken with his partner's consent during his lengthy absences), and his long-term partner, away in New York completing his PhD. The kitchen functions as a symbolic site where the intricacies of the three-way, cross-cultural relationship knotted together and eventually unraveled after Gupta and his new lover remodeled the kitchen, precipitating a "crisis" upon the return of his primary partner.

Continuing to interweave the personal and the political, Gupta's *Love, Undetectable* series (2009) draws its title from his own struggles learning to live with HIV—the first nine years of which he stayed single, in the shadow of an imagined life without sexual intimacy or love—and attempts to hold his condition at livable distance by keeping the viral load "undetectable." Depicting the ordinariness of the love shared by gay and lesbian couples, including Gupta and his own partner, he shows us that far from being love that cannot be discerned from the intimacy he captures, what is truly undetectable is any meaningful difference between the way gay people love, and the love shared by people of all sexual orientations and genders.

HANUMAN R. KAMBLI

Omprakash Naik

Born in 1956 in the beautiful village of Pirna in Goa, the artist Hanuman R. Kambli creates artwork through the continuous transformation of myths, folk tales, legends, and rituals, revealing a distinct connectivity with them in pictorial form. He perceives the immediate reality contextually having an allusion to myth, which prompts a new interpretation of it relevant to contemporary times. His visual narrative in a painting is built up with individual units of imagery. These units are connected to the whole by way of geometric grids. In his pictorial language, Kambli creates a syntax using forms abstracted from the objective reality to construe symbolic meaning in his art.

Dialogue III is from a series of paintings that the artist created in 2001. Its imagery is based on a Shaivite myth—Shaivism is a sect of Hinduism—that establishes the supremacy of Shiva over the Hindu deities Vishnu and Brahma. As the myth goes, upon discovering a glorious shining lingam—a fiery pillar that is the symbol of Shiva—Brahma and Vishnu attempt to seek the fire's source. Vishnu becomes a boar and plunges below the earth while Brahma becomes a white swan journeying upward for a thousand years to seek the pillar's end. One cannot find the base of the lingam and the other finds no end, each thus realizing the eternally pervasive power of Shiva.

The myth eludes literal representation, yet lends itself to Kambli's aesthetic vision. The imagery in *Dialogue III* is rich in meaning and also in visual appeal. Remote architectural structures superimposed by linear geometric forms and floral motif populate the pictorial space. They draw us into a search of the mysterious past only to deliver us back into the present. The dialogue emerges from within (me, myself, and I) and pictorially permeates through the soft, pulsating color planes and the transparent architectural constructs, transcending the concrete walls of material space to enter a lucid and fluid psychological realm where it achieves its formal synthesis in symbolic imagery. The central, five-headed pillar symbolizing the five essential elements (Earth, Water, Fire, Air, and Ether) is balanced upon a precarious grid as a metaphor for the myth.

The human faces at the extreme edges of the picture and alongside the centrally placed lingam are very intriguing with their multiple eyes and off shoots of flora. They are expressive of mysterious and silent communion emerging from multiple viewpoints and evoke a gamut of fleeting emotions in the process of a dialogue taking form. The playful flora extending from the mouths of the larger faces into the pictorial space generates movement, seemingly breathing life into the smaller human forms.

For Kambli, reality seems to always contain paradox. This is expressed through the juxtaposition of diametrically opposing elements in the painting. The geometric forms as against natural forms; the transparent and the opaque color; the translucent and the dull shade; the random and the methodical; the light and the dark—each opposition building up the dialogue. This duality is essential and integral to his compositions, creating a pictorial language profound in meaning and lending the possibility of multiple interpretations to his work.



Hanuman R. Kambli. *Dialogue III*, 2001. Acrylic on paper. 14 3/4 x 15 in. The William Benton Art Museum, Gift of the artist.



Bari Kumar. *Good Luck*, 1996. Oil on canvas. 46 x 36 in. The William Benton Art Museum, Contemporary World Art Fund.

BARI KUMAR

Kathryn Myers

For Bari Kumar (1966), the personal and the socio-political converge in provocative paintings that are often inspired by his own experiences layered with references to historic and current issues such as slavery in the United States or farmers' suicides in India. In the 1980s, Kumar relocated from Andhra Pradesh in the south of India, where he was born and raised, to live in the multi-ethnic barrios of Los Angeles. His art practice draws from a confluence and clash of diverse parts, which at times produce a sense of alienation and evoke the challenges of assimilation. Kumar skillfully juggles a rich lexicon of images and symbols drawn from a range of sources including Renaissance painting, American folk art, Mexican *retablos*, eastern and western religious imagery, popular art, advertising, and street graphics. Through startling juxtapositions of forms, symbols, and texts, Kumar questions his imagery's embedded cultural meanings while opening up new and often hybrid associations.

In the artist's painting *Good Luck* (1996), themes of struggle and division are literally and metaphorically evoked. A headless woman with arms raised in a gesture of supplication, self-defense, or futility, hovers in an eerily tinted landscape, perhaps suggesting the ominous atmosphere of an oncoming storm or simulating the yellowed varnish of an aged painting. To the right, intertwined, menacing snakes overlay a pelvic bone on a red cross. As common symbols in both eastern and western tradition, the snakes dually allude to both fertility and mortality. An upraised eye reminiscent of ecstatic saints and suffering martyrs in the upper left corner recalls the hermetic symbolism of Mexican *lotería* or Catholic "holy cards." Hindi text speaking of a fair beautiful woman and the attainment of knowledge offers an ironic comment on wisdom gained through suffering. The brown skinned woman may point to the suffering of women in many cultures, as well as the privileging of fair skin. Along with the rich range of associations with life outside of India that are typically drawn from Kumar's paintings, *Good Luck* seems particularly relevant to life in India considering the conditions of Indian women who in a rapidly changing society and culture encounter new opportunities at odds with entrenched cultural roles and expectations.

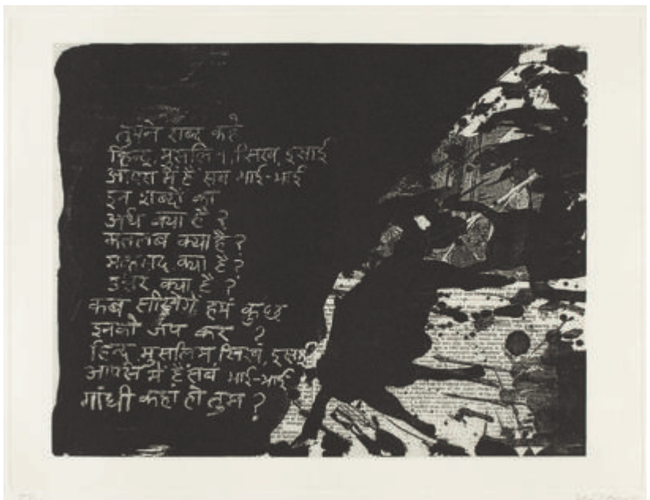
VIJAY KUMAR

Kathryn Myers

Throughout his established career, Brooklyn-based printmaker Vijay Kumar (1942) has used his art to express conflicted feelings of anguish and hope for his native country of India. As a child, Kumar relocated during the violent upheaval of partition from his birthplace of Lahore (in what is now Pakistan) to India. While living in the cities of Lucknow and later New Delhi, he gained renewed faith in how people from different religions and cultures could live with tolerance and respect for one another. After moving to the United States in the 1980s, Kumar remained intimately connected to India and had great hope and trust in the success and ideals of the largest democracy on the globe. His prints are imbued with the despair of distance and reflect the struggles of a democratic nation to uphold ideals of religious freedom, tolerance, and safety of all of its citizens.

The destruction of the fifteenth-century Babri Mosque in Ayodhya in 1992 by Hindu extremists and the subsequent violence between Hindus and Muslims shattered the lives of many and crushed Kumar's hope for an India that respected and protected its diverse religious traditions and practices. This tragic event propelled Kumar to create several powerful bodies of work. In a suite of prints from his *India Portfolio* series, created in 1993, Kumar evokes a sense of horror and outrage with the circumstances of the event by drawing on, marking over, and defacing a reproduction of an American newspaper article describing the carnage. Over the course of multiple prints a mob of figures and text becomes increasingly distorted and eventually morphs into a dark cloud that makes the news story illegible. The transition from figurative to abstract imagery speaks to the destruction of the mosque and the artist's loss of hope. Furthermore, it suggests the futility of words and images in communicating such incomprehensible carnage. Kumar's sense of helplessness, his frustration with living at such a distance from India, and his fear for the safety of loved ones as violence spilled over to neighboring regions are evoked through the erasure of information and the encroaching darkness in his prints, the latter also signaling the dark cloud that troubled times have left in Indian history.





TOP: Vijay Kumar. *Untitled No. 14,* 2003. From the *Indian Portfolio*, 1993. Etching. 16 x 20 in. The William Benton Art Museum, Contemporary World Art Fund.

LEFT: Vijay Kumar. *Untitled No. 16,* 2003. From the *Indian Portfolio*, 1993. Etching. 16 x 20 in. The William Benton Art Museum, Contemporary World Art Fund.



Sachin Naik. *Take It Easy*, 2011. Woodcut. 48 x 31 in. The William Benton Art Museum, Gift of Kathryn Myers.

SACHIN NAIK

Omprakash Naik

If art is to be experienced and realized beyond the superficiality of intellectual vagaries then it is the art of Sachin Naik that makes a way for such an understanding of art. He was born in a village in Goa in 1978, with its typical rustic and religious atmosphere. People there engaged themselves in mundane activities of sustenance and worship of the gods and goddesses housed in many temples within the village vicinity for personal salvation.

Untouched by urban complexities, Naik attempts to tell his tales of life through his works. In the two woodcut prints, *Take it Easy* (2011) and *Untitled* (2006), he cuts away the matter of his imagery to relate a personal narrative. As a printmaker, he prefers the woodcut medium to exploit unconventional tools and surfaces, exhibiting his consummate skills and mastery over the material. In *Take it Easy*, he establishes a mood of anxiety pertaining to impeding health concerns and an obscure future. His beliefs in the practice of yoga and age-old fortune telling as against the uncertainties of modern medical science are expressed in a figurative mode wherein the artist appears taking part in various activities from sitting at his computer to kneeling in a bed of flowers. The seemingly realistic scenes nonetheless inhere within a surreal space. The picture-making language of Indian miniature painting inspires the narrative approach of *Take if Easy*.

In the *Untitled* print from 2006, the strangeness and mystery of the "other" and the "self" is expressed through dichotomic pictorial space, each inhabited by particular entities. The floral motifs of the curtains in each space contrast with one another, perhaps suggestive of ethical and moral conflicts symbolized by the book with a picture of Gandhi on the table. Through works such as this, the artist, with a sense of quietism, brings about the unresolved and perplexing questions of existence.



Sachin Naik. *Untitled*, 2006. Woodcut. 22 x 30 in. On loan from private collection.

ANNU PALAKUNNATHU MATTHEW

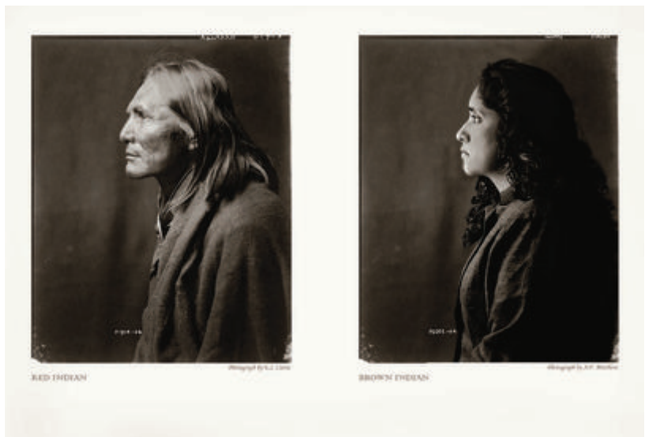
Kathryn Myers

Annu Palakunnathu Matthew (1964) creates photo-based portfolios that display both a deep affection for India, where the artist grew up, and a sharp critique of social and racial problems prevalent in her native country and in the United States, where the artist currently resides. In the ongoing series *Bollywood Satirized*, begun in the late 1990s, she appropriates the form and imagery of large-scale hoardings advertising popular Indian films in order to create satirical billboards that are often digitally manipulated to appear as if they exist in situ. Each work queries significant cultural and political issues in Indian society such as arranged marriage, dowry deaths, acid attacks and, more recently, widely publicized incidents of gang rape. In a spoof billboard titled *Bomb* (2001), two well-known Bollywood actors are seen in profile, facing each other as if forlorn lovers. Yet, rather than a typical scene full of fraught longing and desire, the couple is engaged in a tense questioning of India's attempts to become a nuclear superpower. The text surrounding the main actors considers whether the money spent on weaponry could have been better invested in education. With skillful merging of text and image, the artist utilizes a form of popular entertainment associated with fantasy and escapism to publically critique issues of political and social concern.

Questions of identity, origin, and ethnicity that arose upon moving to the United States prompted Palakunnathu Matthew to research ethnographic photography, which eventually led to the series *An Indian from India* (2001–2007). The series title was informed by the frequency with which the artist encountered questions about where she was from or whether she was a "red or brown Indian." Combining photographs both old and new, the artist creates diptychs that question stereotypes of "otherness," specifically as they relate to American Indians and Indians, groups confused by the navigational miscalculations of Christopher Columbus. In *Red Indian / Brown Indian*, she pairs an early 20th-century image taken by Edward Curtis of an American Indian seen in profile with her own. Both portraits are rich in descriptive texture and detail, but are disturbingly devoid of persona. From the same series, the piece *Traditional American Indian Mother and Child / Contemporary Indian American Mother and Stepchild* positions an historic image of family in opposition to the artist's own contemporary experience. For the image *Contemporary Indian American Mother and Stepchild*, the artist and her American stepdaughter pose together, reflecting an evolving and expanding definition of family and tradition.

In *An Indian from India*, Palakunnathu Matthew masquerades as the tropes she examines and includes relatives from her bi-cultural family as models to create images that express a range of sentiments. The artist transforms the quietly charged and emotionally distant character of physical records into statements of biting satire, familial affection, and humor. Her distinctive bodies of work evoke both what is seen and unseen, and are responsive records of changing times, traditions, lifestyles, and choices.





TOP: Annu Palakunnathu Matthew. *Bomb 36*, 1999. From the series Bollywood Satirized (1998–ongoing). Luminage digital print. 37 1/4 x 62 in. The William Benton Art Museum, Contemporary World Art Fund.

LEFT: Annu Palakunnathu Matthew. *Red Indian / Brown Indian*, 2001. From the series *An Indian from India* (2001–2007). Luminage digital print. 20 x 24 in. The William Benton Art Museum, Contemporary World Art Fund.



Madhvi Parekh. *Morning Light*, 2001. Watercolor. 22 x 30 in. The William Benton Art Museum, Contemporary World Art Fund.

MADHVI PAREKH

Pradosh K. Mishra

For painter Madhvi Parekh (1942), the simplicity of expression through visual rendering is a complex negotiation of the rural and the contemporary. She reframes her subject from childhood memory to combine an instinctive Indian taste with universal representational value. Parekh's narrative is inspired by elements either heard or experienced during her early years in Gujarat, where she grew up surrounded by the rich tradition of the land. Her exposure to folk art practices as a child could therefore be related to the imagery that spontaneously appears on her canvas. Parekh, who was not formally trained as an artist, remains free from the complex arrangement of thought and definitive idea.

Morning Light (2001) is a composition of stories that she listened to in her childhood years, personal experiences and fantasies that are not wholly contemplated. Depth and linear shading have been eliminated in the composition and are replaced by forms that are intuitive. This process of simplification, as Parekh explains, "comes naturally" to her. The central figure with a *tika*, a small marking on the forehead, creates a balance with the imaginative figures of a lion and a snakehead on the left border and a bull-like face on the right. Some faces and characters along the margins resemble anthropomorphic animals and birds, motifs that appear elsewhere in her body of work. The border reflects her feel for design as she grew up surrounded by decorative floor designs and wall decorations in Gujarat. The rendering of mountains at the top with the transparent light of a sunrise along the living space suggests the co-existence of natural life. Parekh intends to let the viewer understand the story as it appears, without requiring much effort in decoding the elements.

Parekh has deftly handled the medium of watercolor with all its translucent luminosity. The arch-shaped bands in the center create a space within a space and reveal a degree of perspective in the generally flat composition. In her paintings, as Indian art and cultural critic Jyotindra Jain has stated, "Madhvi keeps transgressing between two worlds; one of her rural inheritance and of the universal modern, renegotiating both."[1]

1. Jyotindra Jain, *Madhvi Parekh: The Center and the Periphery* (New Delhi: Vadhera Art Gallery, 1999).

SUJITH SN

Maya Kóvskaya

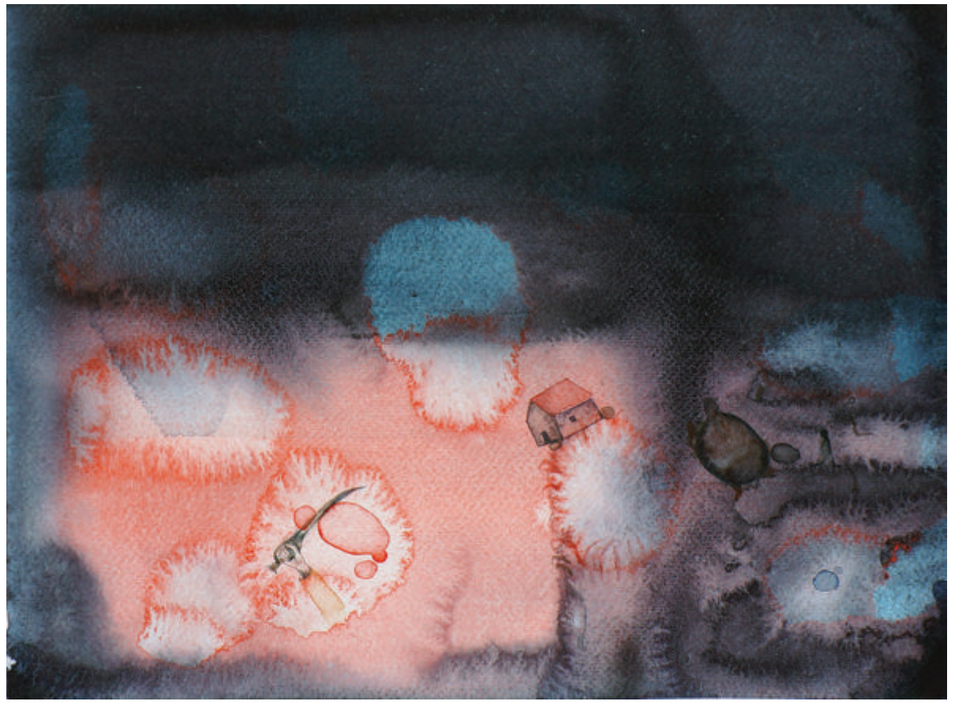
Kerala and Mumbai-based artist Sujith SN (1980) is fascinated by the specter of the individual caught within the vast, bewildering, and shifting landscape of the city and the vagaries of nature in a state of flux. Conundrums of scale and proportion accompany his renderings of transformation in contemporary Indian society as communities undergo processes of incomplete urbanization.

Sujith SN's main bodies of work for the past decade involve the creation of exquisite, intricate scenes against vast backgrounds that nearly overpower the tiny details. He uses watercolor, dry pastels, tea wash, charcoal, and other mixed media on paper to animate a distinctive visual language. He references Northern Renaissance masters such as Hieronymus Bosch and Pieter Bruegel the Elder, who used similar visual devices of scale and complexity to make moral plays portraying profane worldly affairs in relation to sacred, heavenly order. While these Northern European painters used the metaphorical structuring device of "spheres"—celestial, mortal, demonic—to map onto the corresponding moral spheres of sacred, profane, and heretical, Sujith SN maps the ambiguity of collective arrangements onto human frailty in the face of the overwhelming and yet seemingly incompetent powers of the modern state. Thus, instead of producing a visual demonological cosmology connecting heaven to hell through the intermediary mortal world, as these European masters did, Sujith SN navigates the purgatorial territory of the human world in the throes of massive yet unfinished socio-economic change. Rather than offering a biblical, apocalyptic feeling with a strong moral message,



Sujith SN. *Psalms of the Black Water No. 1*, 2013. Watercolor. 15 x 18 in. On loan from private collection.

Sujith SN. *Psalms of the Black Water No. 2*, 2013. Watercolor. 15 x 18 in. On loan from private collection.



Sujith SN's work evokes a Kafka-esque sense of the amoral absurd, or a Foucauldian sense of the "polymorphous perverse" nature of power.

Atmospheric and architectural features, such as oppressive, cavernous skies against roiling lava-like grounds and solitary buildings often precariously teetering on the edge of some unknown netherworld of urban disorder, all serve to render the human figure as weak and vulnerable. Often depicted as isolated beings or even dismembered body parts, the individuals in Sujith SN's works appear diminished by their surroundings—destabilized, fragmented, and sometimes even literally coming apart in the midst of upheaval, much like the actual states of millions of ordinary people in India left behind in the ruthlessly ineffectual wake of so-called "modernization."

Psalms of the Black Water (2013), like *Psalms of the (In)Visible River* (2013), combines images of dismembered limbs and weapons, miniature people, houses, and human artifacts in shades of black and red that conjure up images of fire and brimstone. This work draws on the optics of earlier bodies of works, such as *The City and the Tower* (2008) and *Map is Not the Territory* (2010), deepening Sujith SN's inquiries into how the process of constituting cities engulfs individuals, tearing communities asunder, and laying waste to the natural world that lies in its path, indiscriminate in its violence. Rivers disappear, people vanish, and ways of life are lost. These works both visually narrate and also interrogate the workings of this complex process of social change and the psyches and anxieties that accompany it.



Anupam Sud. *Rear Window*, 2001. Etching. 19 x 30 in. The William Benton Museum of Art, Contemporary World Art Fund.

ANUPAM SUD

Pradosh K. Mishra

Rear Window (2001), an etching by Anupam Sud (1944), is a meditation on urban space in a process of decay caused by increased migration and shrinking infrastructure. As a resident of New Delhi, the capital of India, Sud offers an insider's view of the socio-political challenges large cities face. Critical in her depiction, she explains the situation metaphorically through the placement of figures in *Rear Window* who futilely struggle for physical space inside the suffocating interior of the bus. "Keep Distance," as the lettering on the bus's exterior reads, offers an element of visual wit that belies the complex situation of overpopulation that has hindered India's development. Many of the commuters in *Rear Window*, despite being packed together so tightly, retain their individual identity and remain separate from one another. They grasp for stability, not from their neighbor, but rather by catching the grills and edges of the window. Travelling on the bus, they seek a means of temporary escape, gazing out of the window into an open space that promises to dissolve the discomfort of their current situation. Sud deals with the prosaic subject matter of public transportation in such a way as to suggest the larger struggles for survival the common person faces in urban spaces where the difficulties of limited resources extend into human relationships, often disengaging individuals from one another against the fragmented infrastructure of the city of Delhi.

As *Rear Window* attests, Sud is fascinated by human forms as exemplifiers of truth. Shown taut and devoid of an overly decorative approach, the figures in Sud's print represent the interior mind as much as they do exterior realities. Although all the figures in *Rear Window* are hindered by the bus's limited space, they resist being read as powerless. Some gaze directly out at the viewer. Others appear semi-nude, but their strong bodies and sharp features negate any vulnerability such an undressed state might suggest. Sud's layering of figures and meanings within multiple pictorial frames suggests the complex range of human emotions and experiences that exist in a sublime urban setting.

The route of the bus from Okhla, an industrial neighborhood in South Delhi, to the Supreme Court situated in the centre of New Delhi, is also symbolic of human movement from the periphery to the center, which occurs for different reasons ranging from personal to legal. *Rear Window* unveils a concealed dynamic: positioning the extraordinary expressive power of her human figures against the body of the bus, Sud poignantly comments on the challenges of human existence within an ever-expanding city that has its own share of struggles and issues to address. Sud's print is a profound statement on just how much is discernible when looking in onto figures who are looking out onto you from a rear window.

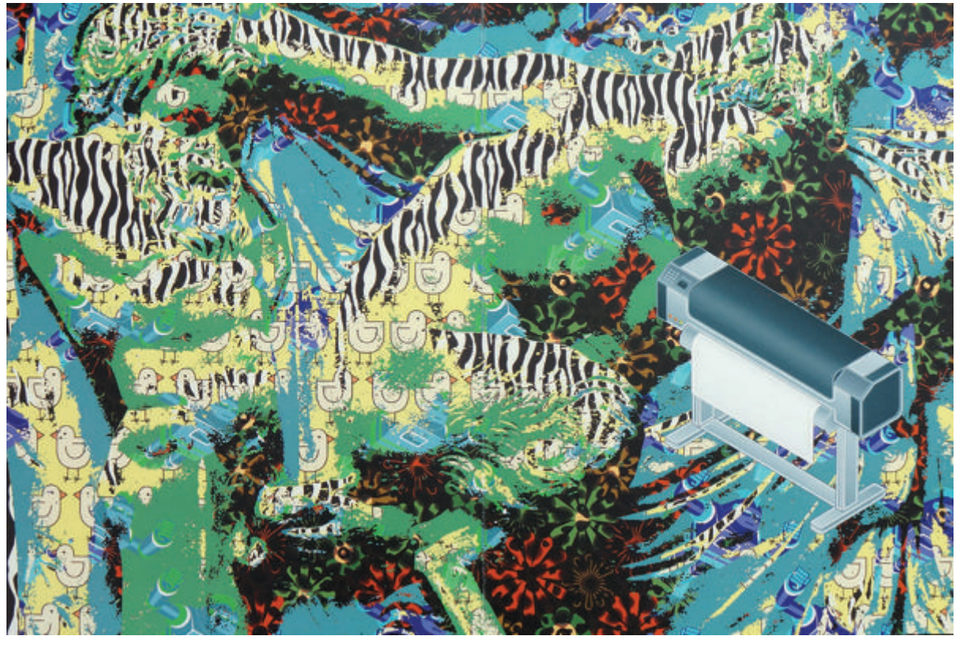
AVINASH VEERARAGHAVAN

Amjad Majid

Born in Chennai in 1975, Avinash Veeraraghavan has developed a recursive practice of constructing images from other images by merging, intersecting, transposing, juxtaposing, layering, and embedding, among other processes. The artist's body of work includes prints, installations, multi-channel video works, graphic books, and photographs. A graphic designer with a studio in Bangalore, the artist is adept at digital imaging and uses image manipulation in many of his works. In a press release for an exhibition of Veeraraghavan's work held at Jack Tilton Gallery in the spring of 2013, the artist is quoted as describing his work as "'psychic shimmers' devoid of narrative, but derived from images of the flotsam and jetsam of everyday lives."

In certain works, such as those in the 2011 series *The Hunt (A Drawing from the Museum of Natural History)*, Veeraraghavan manipulates textures by integrating them into simple forms like the profiles of lions and antelope. The seeming simplicity of the form, however, gives way to a visual complexity that arises from his concomitant use of textures to construct images and other images to compose those textures.

In the *Untitled* series from the artist's 2008 solo exhibition *Gate Crash*, the visual language is articulated through digital layering and merging of images to create rich patterns and textures. The visual interplay central to work in this exhibition, which ranged in scale from small and intimate, as with Veeraraghavan's digital book *Amfastasleep* (2009), to monumental, evoked in viewers a dream-like state. In *I Love My India: Stories for a City*, Veeraraghavan merges images of sites from various cities to depict divergent iterations of "India." In doing so, the artist reconfigures the idea of India through a rearticulation of popular and urban culture, joining the real with the imagined to revisit the question of identity in its constant dialogue with the city. The resulting work rescues the image of India from common tropes by creating a defamiliarized view of the nation out of multiple urban Indian settings.



Avinash Veeraraghavan. *Amfastasleep*, 2009. Digital book, page spread. 11 x 16 1/2 in.
On loan from the Thomas J. Dodd Research Center.



Avinash Veeraraghavan. *Amfastasleep*, 2009. Digital book, page spread. 11 x 16 1/2 in.
On loan from the Thomas J. Dodd Research Center.

WASWO X. WASWO WITH RAJESH SONI

Amjad Majid

Waswo X. Waswo (1953) is an American-born artist, photographer, and writer who has lived and worked in Udaipur, Rajasthan for more than a decade. He is internationally recognized for his photo-based series and miniature paintings that explore concepts of identity, particularly as they relate to national and cultural boundaries.

Waswo's first project upon moving to India in the late 1990s culminated in the book *India Poems: The Photographs* (2006). His subsequent project consisted of portraits, hand-painted by the artist Rajesh Soni (1981), which resulted in a series of exhibitions titled *A Studio in Rajasthan* and a book entitled *Men of Rajasthan*. The artist has described this body of work as a playful examination of the tradition of vintage studio portraiture in India. Waswo's haunting images, *Sapna Playing Sita* and *Suresh Playing Hanuman*, both from the Rajasthan series, feature children incarnating the mythological figures of Sita and Hanuman from the Hindu epic *Ramayana*. In these two works, hand-painted backdrops produced by local artists serve to relocate the Hindu epic into a contemporary, rural setting. The works appropriate the deities, rescuing them from history and tradition by reinserting them into the present modernity. In a statement on his website, Waswo describes the camera as "a tool that reconnected [him] to the people and places of [his] existence." Among such people are Sapna and Suresh who belong to the artist's neighborhood in Udaipur.

In a parallel body of work, Waswo collaborated with miniaturist Rakesh Vijay to tell the quasi-autobiographical, parodic story of a western tourist traveling in India and interacting with the local population. Through the format of miniature paintings, Waswo and Vijay explore the dissonance that exists between varying subjects (the foreigner and the locals) as they occupy a common space.



Waswo X. Waswo. *Sapna Playing Sita*, from the series *A Studio in Rajasthan* (2007–present). Black-and-white digital print. Hand-colored by Rajesh Soni. 24 x 16 in. On loan from private collection.

When exhibited together, as in the 2011 exhibition *Confessions of an Evil Orientalist*, Waswo's miniatures and his photographic works act as a response to critics who take issue with the American artist's appropriation of India's artistic and aesthetic heritage. The aforementioned exhibition encompassed staged photographs, miniatures, installations, a comic book and text-based art that led visitors through several "confessions" by the symbolic figure of the "evil Orientalist."

Waswo's desire with *Confessions*, and with his work more broadly, is to meditate on the role of the subject—whether that is the artist himself, his critics, or his neighbors—in such a way as to challenge notions of membership based on cultural identity and nationality. Waswo's role as an artist reflects the intersection of globalization and transnationalism in a post-postcolonial world where subjectivities and identities are projected with the potential to transcend geographical barriers, national boundaries, and cultural limitations. One of these subjectivities and identities is that of the artist himself who seeks to define his work beyond the prism of essentialized notions of self, whether limited by nationality, ethnicity, origin, or any other exclusionary attributes that some critics use to decide who in their view is allowed to produce Indian art and who is not.

Quotes by the artist were taken from personal correspondence with the author and from statements available on his website, www.waswoxwaswo.net.



Waswo X. Waswo. *Suresh Playing Hanuman*, from the series *A Studio in Rajasthan* (2007–present). Black-and-white digital print. Hand-colored by Rajesh Soni. 24 x 16 in. The William Benton Art Museum, Gift of Kathryn Myers.

ARTIST BIOGRAPHIES

RAVI AGARWAL is an internationally recognized photographer, writer, and curator who began his career as an engineer. A highly regarded environmental activist, Agarwal is the founder and director of the NGO Toxics Link. His work has been included in significant exhibitions worldwide including the Sharjah Biennial, Documenta II, Tel Aviv Museum of Contemporary Art, Serpentine Gallery and the Newark Museum of Art. His work is represented by The Guild Gallery in Mumbai and by Gallery Espace in New Delhi. He lives and works in New Delhi.

SARNATH BANERJEE is an artist, filmmaker, and commonly considered the first graphic novelist in India. Born in Calcutta and previously residing in New Delhi, Banerjee currently lives and works in Berlin. His work has been included in numerous solo and group exhibitions including *Chalo India*, Mori Art Museum, Tokyo; *Indian Highway*, Museum of Contemporary Art, Lyon, France; and *Paris–Delhi–Bombay*, Centre Pompidou, Paris. A billboard project, *A Gallery of Losers*, sponsored by Frieze Art Projects was featured at the 2013 London Olympics. His work is represented by Project 88 Gallery, Mumbai and Kolkata.

SIONA BENJAMIN was born in Bombay, educated in Mumbai and the United States, and presently lives and works in Montclair, New Jersey. She has exhibited her work widely including at The Prince of Wales Museum, Mumbai; The Museum of Biblical Art, New York; Stockton College, New Jersey; and Flomenhaft Gallery in New York, which represents her work. Benjamin is the recipient of grants from the Fulbright-Nehru Foundation and The New Jersey State Council on the Arts. Her work will be the subject of an upcoming documentary film titled *Blue Like Me: The Art of Siona Benjamin*.

NEIL CHOWDHURY was born in London, raised outside of Detroit, and currently lives and works in Syracuse, New York. His work has been featured in many national and international exhibitions including *Radiate*, Gallery 400, The University of Illinois, Chicago; *FofoFreo Festival*, Fremantle, Australia; *This is Not that*, Galerie Duboys, Paris; *Sampling of Blind Men and Elephants*, Dubai; *Erasing Borders*, The Elizabeth Foundation for the Arts, New York; and *Everywhere/Nowhere*, The American Center, New Delhi. His work is in the collections of The Museum of Contemporary Photography, Chicago and The Tasveer Print Collection, Bangalore.

SUNIL GUPTA is a photographer, artist, and curator born in New Delhi, educated at the Royal College of Art, London, and currently based in both London and New Delhi. His work has been included in many significant group exhibitions including *Sun City and Other Stories* at the Alliance Française de Delhi and *Paris–Delhi–Bombay* at Centre Pompidou, Paris. His work is the collections of many institutions including the George Eastman House, the Tokyo Metropolitan Museum of Photography, Tate Britain, and Harvard University. A monograph titled *Queer* was published by Prestel and Vadehra Art Gallery in 2011.

HANUMAN KAMBLI was born in Goa and educated at the Goa College of Art and Visva Bharati University, Santiniketan. He is currently professor of printmaking at the Goa College of Art in Panjim. He has held residencies at the Wimbledon School of Art in London and Montclair State University in New Jersey, and has taken part as juror and exhibiting artist in printmaking workshops, exhibitions, and biennials throughout South Asia and internationally. He was the recipient of a Fulbright Fellowship at Western Michigan University from 1998 to 1999.

BARI KUMAR was born and raised in India and attended the Rishi Valley School in Andhra Pradesh and the Loyola Institute of Visual Communications in Chennai. He received his BFA from the Otis/Parsons School of Design in Los Angeles, where he currently lives and works. Kumar has held numerous solo and group exhibitions at Bose Pacia Gallery in Kolkata and New York, Nature Morte Gallery in New Delhi and Berlin, Grosvenor/ Vadehra Gallery in London, Billy Shire Fine Arts in Los Angeles, and Patricia Correia Gallery in Santa Monica.

VIJAY KUMAR was born in Lahore, India before partition, and for the past several decades has made his home in New York City. He is a printmaker, curator, and educator. His work has been included in international print fairs and biennials and is represented in public and private collections including the New York Public Library, the Museum of Modern Art, the US Library of Congress, and the National Gallery of Modern Art in New Delhi. He is curator of the annual *Erasing Borders* exhibition showcasing art of the South Asian diaspora and teaches printmaking at the Manhattan Graphics Workshop.

ANNU PALAKUNNATHU MATTHEW is Professor of Photography and Director of the Center for the Humanities at the University of Rhode Island. Born in London and raised in India, she currently lives in Providence, Rhode Island. Her works has been featuring in exhibitions at Sepia International in New York City, RISD Museum, Newark Art Museum, Guangzhou Biennial of Photography in China (2009), The Tang Museum at Skidmore College, and the Smithsonian Institute Museum of National History. She is represented by SepiaEYE, New York City and Tasveer Gallery, India.

SACHIN NAIK was born in Goa and educated at the Goa College of Art and the University of Hyderabad. Recent exhibitions include *Identity Place and Power: Selections from the Waswo X. Waswo Collection of Indian Printmaking* at The India Habitat Center in New Delhi. Naik has also exhibited at The National Gallery of Modern Art in Bangalore and Mumbai; The United Art Fair, New Delhi; Lalit Kala Akademi, Chennai and New Delhi; Jahangir Gallery, Mumbai; Ruchika Gallery; and Sunaparant Center for the Arts in Panjim, Goa. He currently lives in Ponda, Goa.

MADHVI PAREKH was born in Sanyaya village in Gujarat and currently lives and works in New Delhi. Her work has been included in numerous solo and group exhibitions throughout India as well as internationally including exhibitions at The National Museum of Modern Art, New Delhi; Gallery Espace, Nature Morte and Vadehra Art Gallery, New Delhi; Sakshi Gallery and Tao Art Gallery, Mumbai; and Bose Pacia Gallery in New York.

SUJITH SN was born in Baroda and currently lives and works in Mumbai. His work has been exhibited at Vadhera Art Gallery, New Delhi; Latitude 28 Gallery, New Delhi; Sakshi Gallery, Mumbai; Site Art Space, Baroda; and Grosvenor Vadehra, London. In 2011, he received the Foundation of Contemporary Indian Art Emerging Artist award. His work is represented by Sakshi Gallery in Mumbai.

ANUPUM SUD was born in Hoshiarpur in the state of Punjab and currently lives and works in New Delhi. She attended the Slade School of Art in London and studied printmaking at the College of Art, New Delhi, where she later taught for many years. Her works have been exhibited in important printmaking exhibitions throughout the world and are in many private and public collections including the National Gallery of Modern Art, New Delhi and the Victoria and Albert Museum, London. Latitude 28 Gallery in New Delhi represented her work at the Indian Art Fair in 2012 and 2013.

AVINASH VEERARAGHAVAN was born in Chennai, India and currently lives and works in Bangalore. His work has been included in numerous solo and group exhibitions at the Devi Art Center, New Delhi; Project 88 Gallery, Mumbai; GALLERYSKE, Bangalore; Ullens Center for Contemporary Art, Beijing; Herning Museum of Contemporary Art, Denmark; Krinzinger Projekte Gallery, Vienna; and Jack Tilton Gallery, New York. His digital collage book *I Love My India: Stories for a City* was produced by Tara Publishing and Dewi Lewis Publishing, London. His work is represented by GALLERYSKE in Bangalore.

WASWO X. WASWO was born in Milwaukee, Wisconsin and has lived in Udaipur, India for the past eight years. His work is represented in India by Gallery Espace, New Delhi and Sakshi Gallery, Mumbai, and internationally by Serindia Gallery, Bangkok; Indigo Blue Art, Singapore; and JanKossen Contemporary Art Gallery, Basel. Publications on his work include *India Poems: The Photographs* by Gallerie Publishers and *Men of Rajasthan* by Serindia Contemporary. Waswo's recent studio practice has involved collaborations with the artist **RAJESH SONI**, who also lives in Udaipur and who hand-paints Waswo's digital photographs in the tradition of hand-colored photography.

CONTRIBUTOR BIOGRAPHIES

SUSAN S. BEAN specializes in the visual arts and culture of modern South Asia. She is the Curator Emeritus for South Asian and Korean art at the Peabody Essex Museum, where she retired in 2012. Dr. Bean's exhibitions and publications on 20th-century Indian art include *Midnight to the Boom: Painting in India after Independence* (2013); *ReVisions: Indian Artists Engaging Traditions* (2009); *Gateway Bombay* (2007); *Epic India: M. F. Husain's Mahabharata Project* (2006); *Exposing the Source: Paintings by Nalini Malani* (2005). Currently she consults for museums, curates exhibitions, edits, lectures, and writes on the arts of modern South Asia.

MAYA KÓVSKAYA received her PhD in 2009 from the University of California–Berkeley. For the past 15 years, she has been an active participant in the Asian contemporary art world as an independent scholar, art critic, writer, curator, and consultant. Her honors and awards include the Yishu Award for Critical Writing on Contemporary Chinese Art (2010), and she was a finalist for the Warhol Foundation Short-Form Art Writing award (2012). Maya has taught courses at the university-level in the United States (UC Berkeley, 1992–1995, 2002–2004) and in China (Beijing Capital Normal University, Beijing Polytechnic University-CIBT, 1998–2001), and has lectured extensively on contemporary art across Asia and in the U.S., as well as conducting comparative scholarly research on art and the public sphere in China and India.

AMJAD MAJID is a critic, writer, and IT consultant currently based in Beijing. He was born in Kashmir and received his M.A. from Washington University in St. Louis in 2007. Amjad is a frequent contributor to art catalogues and regularly writes for international publications including Art Slant, Yishu Journal of Contemporary Chinese Art, and Pulse Media.

PRADOSH K. MISHRA is an Associate Professor in Art History at Banaras Hindu University, Varanasi. He was born in Odisha and received his PhD from Banaras Hindu University in 2008. He has participated in international and national conferences and symposia and has contributed essays to exhibition catalogues and art publications throughout India. In 2012, he was a Fulbright-Nehru scholar in the Department of Art and Art History at the University of Connecticut.

OMPRAKASH NAIK is a Professor of Art History and Aesthetics at Goa College of Art in Panjim. He received his Masters in Art Criticism from Maharaja Sayajirao University of Baroda, India. He has written numerous critical essays on Indian contemporary art for exhibition catalogues and national and international art journals.

NEETA OMPRAKASH is an independent art critic and curator. She received her Masters in Art Criticism from Maharaja Sayajirao University of Baroda, India. Her interdisciplinary projects have included lectures and exhibitions on Indian art and mythology. From 2012–13, she was a Fulbright-Nehru scholar at Eastern Connecticut State University where she curated an exhibition of Indian and African transnational artists and a related symposium. Her articles have been published in numerous newspapers and art journals in India.

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245 Glenbrook Road, U-3140
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