

# Sacred

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**Curated by Nancy Adajania**

1<sup>st</sup> February – 15<sup>th</sup> March 2014

The title of this exhibition stems from a deliberate typographical error. If you were to type the word 'sacred', the computer often auto-corrects it to 'scared'. Is this merely an accident or does it point to a symptom of our times? In liberal circles, and especially in the art field, the sacred is looked upon with a measure of healthy skepticism and bracketed within forbidding connotations. It is either relegated to the domain of ancient or traditional art or Indological research, or is seen as a source of inspiration for certain kinds of abstractionist tendencies within the regional modernism that developed between the 1950s and the 1980s. The sacred is also often reductively identified with the dogmas of organized religion. It can also, and misleadingly, be conflated with an aggressive revanchist ideology based on the politicization of religious identity. The justified fear of the liberal and secular intelligentsia, artists among them, for such an ideology – with its attendant threats of violence, censorship and a monochromatic, authoritarian world-view that suppresses diversity – translates as a rejection of the sacred. This has also been the experience of intellectuals and artists in many other societies in transition, where the trajectory of modernity has been set against all expressions of what appears to be an undead, vampire-like past that continues to press its claims on the present.

However, the sacred cannot be reduced to dogma or conflated with an ideology of politicised religiosity. This exhibition will address the rhetorical, ludic and performative strategies through which artists have sought to account for the ways in which the sacred leaks into the world and the social, cultural, political and psychic domains it inhabits. The sacred is not a pre-ordained and pre-shaped entity. It is an auratic, liminal condition, a tantalizing horizon and a place where you find yourself without looking for it.

This show will embrace the various and sometimes contradictory gestures by which the sacred may be approached: through the erasure of the icon as well as its restitution, the conscious act of cultural confluence, a sense of communion but also of divisive violence, the condition of the Sublime evoked even in landscapes of ecological destruction, and the irreverent subaltern retellings of epics that stands the elite narrative of hierarchy and privilege on its head.

This exhibition is phrased as an inquiry. It raises questions that are not asked for fear that one may be misunderstood, or for reasons of self-censorship. It investigates the substrata of a condition that is both elusive and present that is claimed by numerous public manifestations yet remains intimate, unclaimable, pluriform.

**Artists include Angelo da Fonseca, Gargi Raina, Gigi Scaria, Jehangir Jani, Kartik Sood, Prajakta Palav, Pushpamala N, Rohini Devasher, Sahej Rahal, Sudhir Patwardhan, Tushar Joag, Tyeb Mehta and Veer Munshi**