

Pudgavinda II (And Clark Aard)
Part of the 'Pudgavinda' (After Contemporary India Project)
From the Photo Performance Project, 'Tanna House of South India'
Museum and Culture, Bangalore
Type C Print on Mixed Paper
2000-2001

Figure 10 (1980-1981)
1981
1981
1981

Figure 10 (1980-1981)
1981
1981
1981

The Holy Family
1981
1981
1981

Figure 10 (1980-1981)
1981
1981
1981

Sacred

Curated by Nancy Adajania

Bhavna Kakar invites you
to the preview of

Sacred

curated by Nancy Adajania

Angelo da Fonseca | Gargi Raina | Gigi Scaria
Jehangir Jani | Kartik Sood | Pushpamala N
Prajakta Palav | Rohini Devasher | Sahej Rahal
Sudhir Patwardhan | Tushar Joag | Tyebe Mehta | Veer Munshi

February 1, 2014 | 6:30 pm onwards
On view until March 5, 2014
11 am - 7 pm (Sundays by appointment)

LATITUDE 28

A Gallery for Contemporary Arts and Ideas

F 208 GF, Lado Sarai | New Delhi - 110030

T: +11 46791111 / 9310830690

www.latitude28.com | latitude28@gmail.com



Sacred/Scared

A Lexicon of What It's About and What It's Not

- Nancy Adajania

Ambivalence

The title of this exhibition encodes a moment of typographical uncertainty. If you were to type the word 'sacred', the computer often auto-corrects it to 'scared'. Is this merely an accident or is it symptomatic of a deep anxiety and debilitating ambivalence of our times? In liberal circles, and especially in the art field, the sacred is looked upon with a measure of healthy scepticism and bracketed within forbidding connotations. Often, it is relegated to the domain of ancient or traditional art or Indological research, where it can be domesticated within a tradition of pedagogy and interpretation. Or then, it is seen as a source of inspiration for certain kinds of abstractionist tendencies within the regional modernism that developed in this country between the 1950s and the 1980s; here, too, the sacred can be tamed within the discourse of a self-reflexive modernism appropriating impulses from the past into its dynamic present.

Organized Religion

Most typically, the sacred is reductively identified with the dogmas of organized religion. In this vein it can also, and misleadingly, be conflated with an aggressive revanchist ideology based on the politicization of religious identity. The justified antipathy that the liberal and secular intelligentsia, artists among them, harbour towards such an ideology – with its attendant threats of violence, censorship and a monochromatic, authoritarian world-view that suppresses diversity – can all too often translate as a thoroughgoing rejection of the sacred. This has been the experience of intellectuals and artists in many other societies in transition, where the trajectory of modernity has been mapped against all expressions of what appears to be an undead past that presses its unwelcome claims on the present.

Resistance

However, the sacred continues to resist all such categorizations. It cannot be reduced to dogma or conflated with an ideology of politicised religiosity. This exhibition addresses the rhetorical, ludic and performative strategies through which artists have accounted for the sacred as it leaks into the world, and the social, cultural, political and psychic domains that it inhabits. This exhibition embraces the various and sometimes contradictory gestures by which the sacred may be approached. It is phrased as an inquiry, and 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.

Memory

I have gathered together a varied typology of materials here, ranging from paintings, photographs, films and videos, to mixed-media works and sculpture, to children's drawings. Discreet reproductions, incorporated into the flow of the exhibition as pedagogic annotations, are intended to prompt the viewer into an awareness of the unacknowledged histories of Indo-Iberian modernism (Angelo da Fonseca) or the epiphanic re-reading of a contemporary work that appears to have settled into a stable meaning within the interpretation of the artist's work (Sudhir Patwardhan).

Turbulence

I also include, as a key work in this exhibition, Tyeb Mehta's mesmerizing 1970 film, *Koodal*, made for Films Division and rarely shown: *Koodal* brings the turbulent energies of religious belief and civic expression into surging collision, proposing the portrait of a two-decade-old postcolonial nation in the throes of transition. Engaging in dialogue with *Koodal* are Tushar Joag's video meditations on the schismatic communally oriented politics of the 1990s and early 2000s, *Phantoms* (2002) and *Three Bullets for Gandhi* (2007).

Colloquies with the Icon

The icon is perhaps the most readily available and widely accessible interface with the sacred. By definition, it offers itself as a visible and relatable form of the otherwise unapproachable sacred. Embodying superhuman qualities of perfection, power and eternity, it serves as a focus for the aspirations and yearnings of the faithful; it acts as a guarantee, variously, of intercession, healing, redemption or consolation. And yet, given its location within a body of rituals and a system of ceremonial, the icon can paradoxically become remote from the world of affect that the worshipper inhabits. Under the ministrations of organized religion, it can become fetishized, and can intimidate or even alienate the worshipper through exaggerations of scale.

N Pushpamala, Angelo da Fonseca and Veer Munshi approach the icon from distinctive ideological commitments, but all of them hold colloquy with the icon. They reclaim the icon for the world of affect and criticality, for the circulations of human tribulation and exaltation, using humour, wisdom, wit and emotional tenderness.

An atheist who equates religion with folklore, N Pushpamala explores what she terms the sociology of folklore. Her photo-performance, 'Our Lady of Velankanni', appropriates the form of Mary known to the faithful as 'Our Lady of Good Health, the Blessed Virgin Mary of Velankanni', transporting it from the domain of contemporary Catholic votive imagery into the space of fiction and theatre. Collaborating with Clare Arni, Pushpamala produces a tableau in which the two artists appear as angels paying playful obeisance to the Virgin and Child. Credited with healing powers, the Velankanni shrine attracts large numbers of Hindus, as well as Muslims, in addition to Christians; indeed, it represents a Christian practice with strongly syncretistic features, which has evolved from the encounter between European Catholic tradition and Tamil devotionalism.

While Pushpamala is not a believer, she is not an iconoclast either. Even as she subjects the conventional image of the beatific mother and child to ironic scrutiny, she recreates the popular aesthetic of the votive with affection. We need not be trapped in the binary between iconolatry and iconoclasm, there is a field of displacements, translations and transfigurations between these two poles that Pushpamala investigates.

The Goan artist Angelo da Fonseca (1902-1967) is an unknown and unacknowledged pioneer of decolonization, both in Indian art practice, as well as in the iconography of Indian Christianity. He was the first modern Indian Christian artist to translate the narratives of Christ's life pictorially in an indigenous pictorial vocabulary. Unlike, say, some of the late Mughal artists as well as his fellow modernist Jamini Roy, who were Muslims or Hindus, presenting Christian images in Indian accoutrements, Fonseca worked from within Christianity as a believer addressing both his own community or fellow-believers, as well as the Indian audience at large.

Da Fonseca's was a courageous choice; isolation and humiliation, as well as bafflement and indifference came his way. To the end, though, he remained inspired by his conviction that Christianity could not be trammelled by the aesthetic preferences associated with European colonialism and that its spiritual teachings and examples should become available locally in terms consonant with local culture. His sari-clad Madonnas, baby Jesus in the aspect of infant Krishna and his angel-apsaras and gandharvas were mediated by the Bengal school heritage of Santiniketan where he studied under Nandalal Bose. Significantly, his work anticipated by decades the official doctrine of 'inculturation' endorsed during the Second Vatican Council (1962-1965) in recognition of the necessity of decolonization for a global church.

Fonseca's compassion and radical desire to break down religious boundaries converges in Veer Munshi's 'Hamara Hanuman' (2009). The artist M F Husain, the protagonist of 'Hamara Hanuman', is shown here not as a fleeing refugee forced into exile by the persecution unleashed by the fascist forces. Instead he is imagined as a figure of superhuman power, indeed as Hanuman, the beloved figure from the Ramayana, a devotee of Ram who participates in the conquest of Lanka and the rescue of Sita, and also, locates and brings the life-giving herb Sanjivani for Lakshman. The Husain/Hanuman composite carries symbols associated with Husain's art, the long brush and the Petromax lamp. Munshi employs irony to devastating effect. The Hindu Right wing charge against Husain was that he had profaned the images of Hindu deities by creating modern expressionist versions of them and by implication that Muslims had no right to access the reservoir of Indic imagery.

Exorcising Phantoms

The sacred, as a mode of contested continuity with a past that is at once both actual and imagined, can inhabit the individual imagination and shape the construction of collective memory in spectral ways. The sacred can manifest itself as a troubling fragment or figment that refuses to be assimilated into a coherent narrative of selfhood. It can prey on the mind as nightmare, as repressed content emerging to view. It can haunt the sensibility as a series of phantoms, palpable enough to exert psychological pressure yet too diaphanous to be grasped and called to account. The phantoms of the sacred can generate anxiety, vertigo, delirium and terror. They threaten the self's stability and consistency; they prompt a questioning of religious and ethnic foundation myths; they decoy the self into pursuing them in various directions.

Tyeb Mehta, Tushar Joag and Gargi Raina conduct courageous inquiries into the pivotal role that the phantoms of the sacred play in India's charged social and political climate, where communities that have lived together in peace for generations can be manipulated at shockingly short notice into annihilating one another.

Tyeb Mehta's *Koodal* is electric with the phantoms of the Partition, religious schisms, incipient class warfare and gender irresolutions: a dance of polar opposites approaching each other, pulling away, caught in a cycle of confrontation and reconciliation. Edited to a percussive score by Narayana Menon, the film is a study in a restless kinesis: bodies locked in a kabaddi bout, mating bulls whose end is foretold on the hooks of the abattoir, the surging crowds attending Gandhi's funeral cortege, the self-flagellating street acrobat and the transgender performer painting his/her face into a mask. The artist once observed: "Koodal is my autobiography". As a South Asian Muslim, Mehta was seized by the crisis of negotiating a form of belonging in a turbulent post-colonial India. The film ends with a ritual of reconciliation – the re-enactment of the sacred marriage of Shiv and Parvati in the Meenakshi Sundareshwara temple, in Madurai – to exorcise the phantoms of violence and point idealistically to more harmonious forms of communion and collective being. The title of the film – the Tamil 'koodal' variously means a meeting point, a gathering for a general assembly, or sexual union – emphasises Mehta's deep-seated need to overcome the fragmentation in his consciousness.

Tushar Joag's videos, 'Phantoms' (2002) and 'Three Bullets for Gandhi' (2007), made more than three decades later, continue this viscerally charged enquiry into the disquiets of a post-colonial nation-state. Joag's videos are held hostage by revenants. Who are they? Unassuaged ancestral spirits: spectres of unachieved futures, or unnamed, unclaimed victims of riot and pogrom. Joag's crisis as artist and as citizen hinge on his self-questioning on the subject of being a member of the Brahmin elite within India's Hindu majority; how do these circumstances of birth align him to various histories of privilege, oppression and Hindu sectarianism.

In 'Phantoms', made in the aftermath of the Gujarat pogrom in 2002, which resulted in the death and displacement of hundreds of members of the Muslim minority, he mounts a search for his kulavrutant or family history. Joag is critically aware that he belongs to a caste group (the Chitpavan Brahmins) from which the forces of Hindutva have for generations recruited its leading members; among them, the Mahatma's assassin Nathuram Godse and the right-wing ideologue V D Savarkar. 'Three Bullets for Gandhi' stages a grotesque and terrifying performance analogue of Gandhi's assassination in a Bombay underpass. The video begins with the image of the Mauryan lion capital, the official symbol of the Indian republic. From this sacrosanct symbol encoding an ethical mandate of liberty, equality and inclusiveness, Joag himself appears as a man-lion, a figure of violent almost erotic provocation, alluding to the subversion, indeed the perversion of modern India's foundational charter.

Gargi Raina's 'Excavating the Mirror Neuron (Ayeneh-Kari) Day/Night' (2013), an exquisite pair of mixed-media works and an eponymous video, employ the patterns of sacred geometry as a device to centre the self, but also to forge a sense of interconnectedness with others. The paper surface of the works is shot through with diamonds of light reflecting off the mirror beneath it. The 'mirror neuron' in the title alludes to the artist's belief that, despite irrevocable violence, an invisible thread of shared empathy connects Kashmir's Hindus and Muslims across the divide of religious difference. While the mirrored light is a homage to ayeneh-kari, the scintillatingly beautiful mirrorwork found on the walls of mosques, mazars and shrines that the artist visited in Tehran, the layers of light and opacity, reflection and refraction signify Raina's struggle to dialogue with the ghosts of history.

The artist, a Kashmiri Pandit by birth, has to contend with the multiple experiences of exile into which members of her community have historically been forced, the latest displacement caused by the conflict between Islamist militancy and the Indian state, which tore Kashmir's complex social fabric apart during the 1990s. Raina inserts a videographic probe into the certitudes of sacred geometry, to expose the unmarked graves of the militants. Her work recalls to mind the Sufi parable that pictures the truth as a broken mirror, its thousand shards telling a story from every perspective.

Sensing Allegory

Allegory is the narrative that travels in disguise, in camouflage. Its surface lends itself to reading while its depths remain hidden behind encryption; but often, the key to the code is left lying in plain sight. Allegory reminds us that the sacred is often to be found at the heart of the everyday, in the textures of speaking and living; that it suffuses the fragments of half-forgotten scriptures, informs the protocols of encounter between strangers and dialogue between friends, active wherever a distance has to be covered between one imagining, desiring, dreaming self and another. Allegory can also cross the distance separating two epochs or cultures, marking the persistence of a tradition originating in one time and place in a completely distinct location.

Sudhir Patwardhan's paintings often evoke the life of the small town or shanty, coping with the crises of late-industrial society; his protagonists are the marginal denizens of the street, the store, the factory and the Bombay-Thane commuter train system. Looking closely, however, we are sometimes intrigued, then amazed to find that his characters might engage one another in the manner of figures in a Gothic altarpiece or a painting from the Northern Renaissance, and their local gestures and costumes conceal scenes from the life of Christ.

The diptych 'Bylanes Saga' (2007), for instance, plunges us into a dystopian late-industrial townscape. Its three main tableaux are drawn from everyday life; beneath their workaday surfaces, they crackle with tension. A Muslim woman holds on to her child, not yielding it to an old man who seems to ask for it. A man has slumped to his knees; have the men who surround him rushed to his rescue, or did they knock him down in the first place? At the centre of the composition is a clearing, a rare open space in a contemporary Indian town; a forlorn child sits in the distance.

As we take in these details, we realize with a shock that these scenes have travelled a long distance to inhabit this frame: the Madonna and child come from a Presentation in the Temple; the fallen man belongs in a pictorial account of the Deposition of Christ; and the abandoned child in the clearing recalls to mind da Vinci's portrait of St Jerome in the wilderness. The structure of the diptych is precarious, with the scenes just discussed balancing on another stratum of depiction, showing ordinary citizens passing in the street. This precariousness is deliberate; the painting mirrors the structure of Matthias Grünewald's paintings for the Isenheim altarpiece (1512-1516), with its main panel and wings balanced on a predella or threshold panel. These images, transiting between mediaeval Christian iconography and present-day Bombay/ Thane, build into a parable about hope lost, redemption deferred, and people driven into a spiritual no man's land.

A reproduction of the Isenheim altarpiece, its sculpted elements by Niclaus of Hagenau and its paintings by Grünewald, is inserted into the exhibition, as a point of reference and comparison that provokes us into re-reading Patwardhan's painting.

Jehangir Jani acts as a mimar of syllables, an architect working in the ruins of calligraphy, to re-shape the primal coherence of language through approximations, conjectures, calligrams and mosaics. In his 2014 series of nine watercolours, 'Ta'veel (Postcard Series)', he works with episodic, fragmentary elements of Arabic calligraphy, as well as with floating, half-disguised symbols such as the minar or minaret, panja or hand-print and ka'aba or holy cube, which he extracts from the deep archive of Shi'a religious experience. These works suggest the liminality, the threshold condition that he occupies as a secularized artist who, nevertheless, derives psychic and cultural energy from his family and community traditions. His threshold is the location between what he calls the 'architecture of belief' on one side and the grammar of universalizing abstraction on the other. This location is rendered more complex by the private, almost secret meanings that Jani encrypts into these works: the body threatened by varied scourges of the epoch such as the HIV syndrome, sectarian strife and the possibility of nuclear meltdown. Jani's morphed forms propose an alphabet of thingness and uncertainty, wound and healing, belief and doubt, which invites us to decipher it.

Afterlife

The afterlife is a vital element of the sacred: it indicates those persisting extended temporalities by which forms, images and indeed lives might continue to influence contexts and experiences far removed from those in which they originally flourished. A tradition of philosophical inquiry, for instance, might migrate from the circles of debate in which it arose, and find habitation on alien shores. The presence of a saint-poet may continue after her physical extinction, in the form of a circulating corpus of poems carried into the future by the voices of disciples and votaries, so that the presence becomes the voice, relayed, echoing, memorized, found again in translation (for instance, Prajakta Palav's workshop with village children). The hope of the afterlife also, and perhaps paradoxically, animates forms like funerary art, whether the Pharaonic tombs or the Faiyum portraits, the afterlife is that fascinating awareness of the strength, beauty and energy of those who are no longer living, encountered through trace images and memorial gestures (Kartik Sood's paintings, for instance, are born of an enchantment that comprises, in equal proportions, magic and vulnerability).

In framing Prajakta Palav's work, I have invoked the cosmic tropes of visphota and pralaya, the explosion and the deluge, that underlie her awareness of a metropolis exploding with uncontrollable multitudes, teeming with wastes that can no longer simply be returned to the earth. For 'Sacred/ Scared', I have chosen to present the residues of an ongoing project on which Palav is engaged: a workshop that she holds far away from the art world and outside the glare of public attention. She brings together schoolchildren in her native village, Bilwas, in Maharashtra's coastal Sindhudurg district, to read and interpret the ovis or poems of a modern woman saint-poet, Bahinabai Chaudhari (1880-1951). Bahinabai's poems, which she composed and sang in a dialect of Marathi, delighted in the imagery of home and nature, and imparted perennial folk wisdom to her listeners.

This quiet intervention in the lives of people who are marginalized by reason of social location and language may be viewed as an additive social project, all the more admirable because it is not funded by a grant-making body or undertaken with a view to adding to the artist's resume. Instead, it embodies a complete departure from the painterly practice with which Palav is identified. Her interactions with the schoolchildren crystallize around Bahinabai's poems, which she shares with them, eliciting their responses through the drawn and painted image.

In her notebook, Palav's spontaneous translations of Bahinabai's ovis from Marathi come to life. Amidst scribbles and scratches reflecting the activities of the workshop of the mind, word fragments emerge: "the unlearning, killing of the self", "the coming and going (travelling) of spirit doesn't end, when it takes a halt we call it living". In the paintings that the children have

made, a tree grows into the roof of the sky, and a field is lush with crops that look like green rain: looking at these images, you know you have come to a place where the boundaries are marked only by the wind.

The act of reading the ovis to the village schoolchildren has inspired Palav to make a meditative painting for this show. The mixed media work 'Once upon a time' may look like the detritus brought in by the sea. In a way it is mediated waste: Palav has used plastic scrap, broken it down and recycled it into her work.

Another kind of recycling is evident in Kartik Sood's paintings which act like prayers for the dead: even as their bodies return to the elements, the memory of all that inspired them is embodied through lyrical evocation.

Strange and Sublime Addresses

The body is a costume for states of transformation, and sometimes, an artist, acting in shamanic mode, can tempt an unidentified totem creature or spirit animal to break the cover of civility mandated by social life. Or the artist, drawing on the expertise of the astronomer, the genetic biologist or the surveyor, might simulate an out-of-body experience. As elegist for a planet ruined by the species that has been its chief beneficiary, the artist can explore violated landscapes, bear witness to the industrial degradation of the earth and its resources. In such avatars does the Sublime – the ecological Sublime, the post-industrial Sublime – manifest itself. The Sublime transforms the viewing subject in the act of viewing, by exceeding the limits of the viewer's customary optic, by breaking peremptorily with the viewer's assumptions of normality, and by exposing the viewer to heightened conditions of strangeness, disorientation and terror.

The shaman is Sahej Rahal's exemplar; he focuses his attention on the point where form emerges from the ruins of iconography and is animated by a yet-unclassified pneuma. Inspired by astronomy and the aesthetic of satellite photography, Rohini Devasher invokes what Walter Benjamin described as the aura, the simultaneity of intimacy and distance, through her mythic, abstract topographies. Gigi Scaria dedicates himself to the earth's last uninhabited expanses, where the human being can only be a survivor, a recipient of visions into the vastness yet also the fragility of the universe. The pilgrimage towards the Sublime is punctuated by markers of encounter: an electric pole held down by gravity just as it seems poised for ascension; a fallen pylon, like a broken cross; an archetypal circular track engraved into the earth, apparently made by a cosmic event or marking a primeval ritual, but actually the tracks left behind by trucks carrying the earth's resources away to the factories.

This exhibition proposes that the sacred is not a pre-ordained and pre-shaped entity. It is an auratic, liminal condition, a tantalizing horizon: a place in which you find yourself without having looked for it.

Arriving there, we might say with Adrienne Rich, from 'Midnight Salvage', 1996:

'find us in crazed niches sleeping like foxes

we wanters we unwanted we

wanted for the crime of being ourselves'

Director's Note

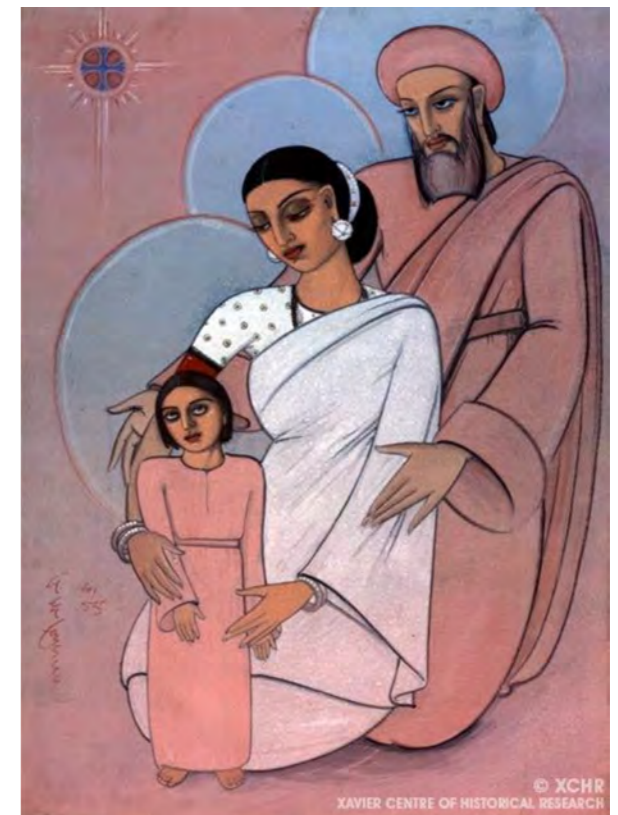
- Bhavna Kakar

Latitude 28 has come a long way since its inception in 2009. Over the years the gallery has strived to act as a space for innovative ideas and experimental art works, while contributing to the existing pedagogy of art practices in India. And every year, the season of the India Art Fair has been a reason to push ourselves to present some of our best shows so far. In line with our tradition of inviting renowned curators from the country to put together quality exhibitions that align with the gallery's agenda, this year we invited Nancy Adajania to curate 'Sacred/Scared', one of the most challenging curatorial themes so far. But unpacking an idea as loaded as 'the sacred', with its multiple connotations – liberal, dogmatic, political, religious and spiritual – was not so difficult in Nancy's capable hands. We managed to inspect how artists have variously explored the sacred in their works over the years, situating side by side several generations of Indian artists – Angelo da Fonseca, Gargi Raina, Gigi Scaria, Jehangir Jani, Kartik Sood, Pushpamala N, Prajakta Palav, Rohini Devasher, Sahej Rahal, Sudhir Patwardhan, Tushar Joag, Tyeb Mehta and Veer Munshi.

Nancy has seamlessly threaded together a diverse narrative in our space, which included exciting works such as prints of Fonseca's works, Tyeb Mehta's film *Koodal*, Jehangir Jani's *Ta'veel* (Postcard Series), Sudhir Patwardhan's *Bylanes – Saga* along with Tushar Joag's *Three Bullets for Gandhi*, Pushpamala's *Our Lady of Velankanni* and the works of younger, emerging artists such as Kartik Sood, Sahej Rahal and Rohini Devasher. This show is especially significant for me, personally, as for the first time Latitude 28 has joined hands with TAKE on art, a quarterly art magazine that I edit and publish in the latest issue, *TAKE Sacred*, which was also guest edited by Nancy. The magazine furthered the conversation on what 'sacred' means to artists, acting in Nancy's words, as an informal reader to accompany the show.

With this show, Latitude 28 has set a new marker for the gallery to outdo, and hopefully this will take place in the coming year, with the several projects that we have lined up.





Clockwise: *Flight to Egypt*, water colour on paper, 12 X 16 Inches, 1959
Blind Oarsman, water colour on paper, 16 X 11 Inches, 1948
The Holy Family, water colour on paper, 16 X 12 Inches, 1955

Courtesy Xavier Centre of Historical Research

ANGELO DA FONSECA



Mother Mary along with Jesus, Impasto on canvas, 12 X 16.3 Inches, 1951
The Angels wind, sketch, 16 X 12 inches, 1956

Courtesy Xavier Centre of Historical Research



The Goan artist Angelo da Fonseca (1902-1967) is an unknown and unacknowledged pioneer of decolonization, both in Indian art practice, as well as in the iconography of Indian Christianity. He was the first modern Indian Christian artist to translate the narratives of Christ's life pictorially in an indigenous pictorial vocabulary. Unlike, say, some of the late Mughal artists as well as his fellow modernist Jamini Roy, who were Muslims or Hindus, presenting Christian images in Indian accoutrements, Fonseca worked from within Christianity as a believer addressing both his own community or fellow-believers, as well as the Indian audience at large.

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Gargi Raina
Excavating the Mirror Neuron (Ayeneh-Kari) Night
Mixed Media on Arches Paper
36 x 59 inches
2013

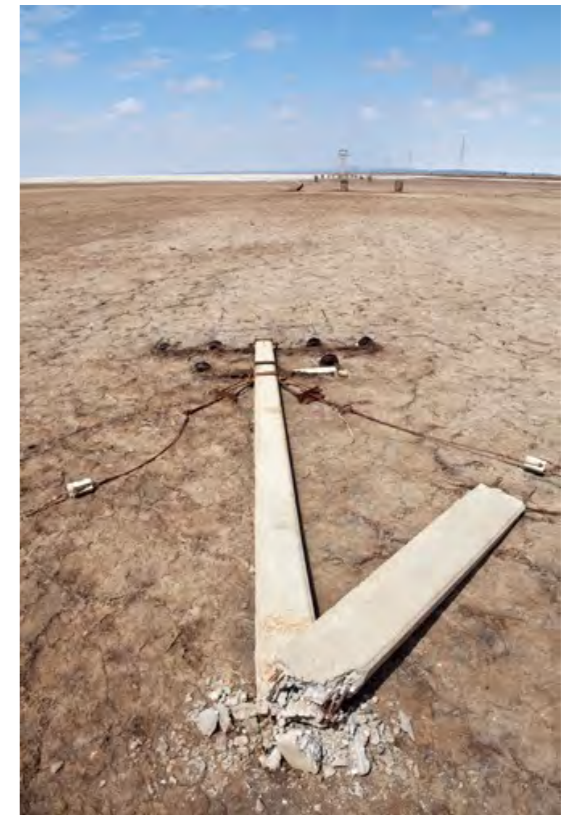


Gargi Raina
Excavating the Mirror Neuron (Ayeneh-Kari) Day
Mixed Media on Arches Paper
36 x 59 inches
2013

GARGI RAINA

L: *Excavating the Mirror Neuron (Ayeneh-Kari) Night*, Mixed Media on Arches Paper, 36 x 59 inches, 2013.

R: *Excavating the Mirror Neuron (Ayeneh-Kari) Day*, Mixed Media on Arches Paper, 36 x 59 inches, 2013



Clockwise: *Camel and the needle*, Ink-jet print on archival paper. Ed. 2/3. Size: 32 x 48 inches, 2013

Time Out 1, Ink-jet print on archival paper. Ed. 1/3, 48 x 32 inches, 2013

Time Out 2, Ink-jet print on archival paper. Ed. 1/3, 48 x 32 inches, 2013

GIGI SCARIA



Jehangir Jani
Ta'veel (Postcard Series)
9 Watercolours on Arches Paper
15 X 11 inches each
2014

JEHANGIR JANI

Ta'veel (Postcard Series), Watercolour on Arches paper, Set of 9, 15 x 11 inches each, 2014



Kartik Sood
Love Never Dies a Natural Death
Portraits - Oil, Acrylic, Paper pulp, Ink on Paper, on Boards;
Landscapes - Archival Pigment and Gouache on Archival Paper
11.3 x 8.5 inches each
2013

Love never dies a natural death, Portraits - Oil, acrylic, paperpulp, ink on paper on boards.
Landscapes - archival pigment and gouache on archival paper, 11.3 x 8.5 inches each, 2013

KARTIK SOOD

PUSHPAMALA N

Pushpamala N and Clare Arni
Our Lady of Velankanni (after contemporary votive images) from the photo-performance project,
'Native Women of South India: Manners and Customs', Bangalore
Type c-print on metallic paper
20 x 24 inches
edition of 20; set of 10
2000-2004





PRAJAKTA PALAV

Once upon a time, Mixed media on canvas, 3 x 4 feet



From the children's workshop conducted by Prajakta Palav (inspired by Bahinabai's ovis)

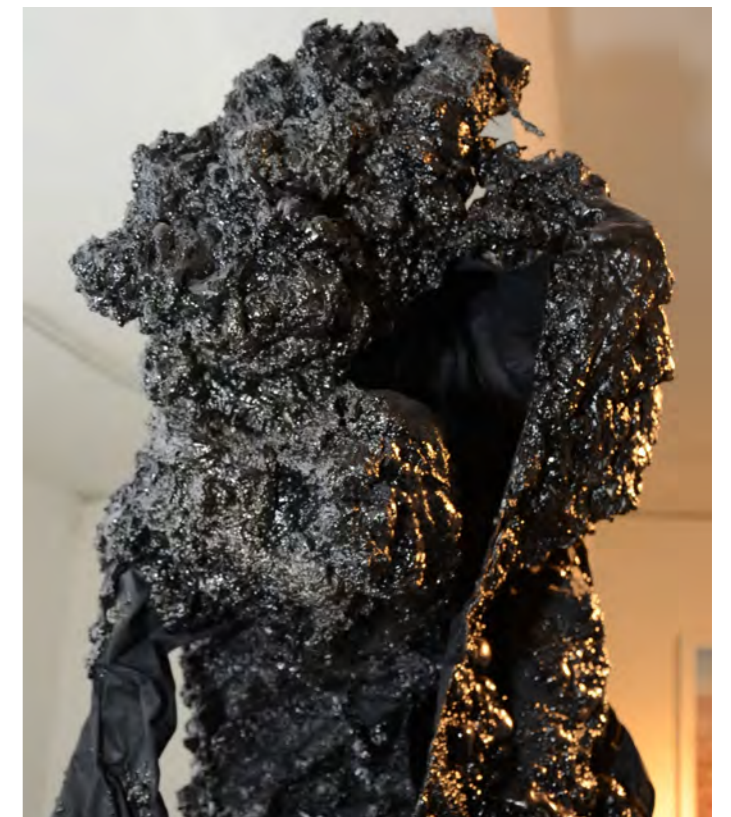


ROHINI DEVASHER

Surveyor (10), Colour pencil on archival pigment print on Hahnemuhle museum etching paper.
Ed. Unique, 23 x 41 inches, 2013



Surveyor (05), Colour pencil on archival pigment print on Hahnemuhle museum etching paper.
Ed. Unique, 23 x 41 inches, 2013



SAHEJ RAHAL

Achkan, Cloth, Polyurethane, Acrylic Paint, 3 x 2.5 x 2.5 ft, 2013, Courtesy Sahej Rahal and Chatterjee & Lal

Saras, Video, looped, Duration:1 min 44 secs , Edition: 5 + 2 AP, 2012
Courtesy Sahej Rahal and Chatterjee & Lal

The body is a costume for states of transformation, and sometimes, an artist, acting in shamanic mode, can tempt an unidentified totem creature or spirit animal to break the cover of civility mandated by social life (Sahej Rahal, 'Achkan'). Or the artist, drawing on the expertise of the astronomer, the genetic biologist or the surveyor, might simulate an out-of-body experience (Rohini Devasher). As elegist for a planet ruined by the species that has been its chief beneficiary, the artist can explore violated landscapes, bear witness to the industrial degradation of the earth and its resources (Gigi Scaria). In such avatars does the Sublime – the ecological Sublime, the post-industrial Sublime – manifest itself. The Sublime transforms the viewing subject in the act of viewing, by exceeding the limits of the viewer's customary optic, by breaking peremptorily with the viewer's assumptions of normality, and by exposing the viewer to heightened conditions of strangeness, disorientation and terror.

The shaman is Sahej Rahal's exemplar; he focuses his attention on the point where form emerges from the ruins of iconography ('Saras', 2012) and is animated by a yet-unclassified pneuma. Inspired by astronomy and the aesthetic of satellite photography, Rohini Devasher invokes what Walter Benjamin described as the aura, the simultaneity of intimacy and distance, through her mythic, abstract topographies. Gigi Scaria dedicates himself to the earth's last uninhabited expanses, where the human being can only be a survivor, a recipient of visions into the vastness yet also the fragility of the universe. The pilgrimage towards the Sublime is punctuated by markers of encounter: an electric pole held down by gravity just as it seems poised for ascension; a fallen pylon, like a broken cross; an archetypal circular track engraved into the earth, apparently made by a cosmic event or marking a primeval ritual, but actually the tracks left behind by trucks carrying the earth's resources away to the factories.





L: *Phantoms*, Single Channel Video, Duration of video : 3 mins 42 secs, 2002

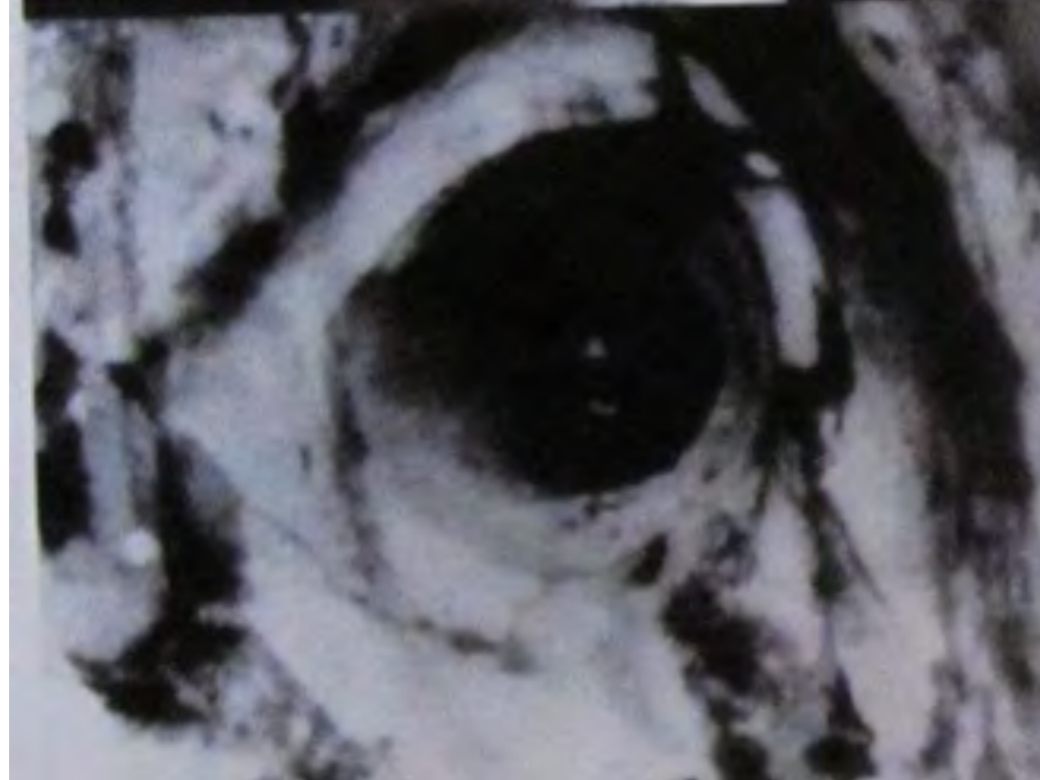
R: *Three Bullets for Gandhi*, Single Channel Video, Duration of video : 5 minutes 2 seconds, 2007

TUSHAR JOAG



Tushar Joag's videos, 'Phantoms' (2002) and 'Three Bullets for Gandhi' (2007), made more than three decades later, continue this viscerally charged enquiry into the disquiets of a post-colonial nation-state. Joag's videos are held hostage by revenants. Who are they? Unassuaged ancestral spirits: spectres of unachieved futures, or unnamed, unclaimed victims of riot and pogrom. Joag's crisis as artist and as citizen hinge on his self-questioning on the subject of being a member of the Brahmin elite within India's Hindu majority; how do these circumstances of birth align him to various histories of privilege, oppression and Hindu sectarianism.

In 'Phantoms', made in the aftermath of the Gujarat pogrom in 2002, which resulted in the death and displacement of hundreds of members of the Muslim minority, he mounts a search for his kulavrutant or family history. Joag is critically aware that he belongs to a caste group (the Chitpavan Brahmins) from which the forces of Hindutva have for generations recruited its leading members; among them, the Mahatma's assassin Nathuram Godse and the right-wing ideologue V D Savarkar. 'Three Bullets for Gandhi' stages a grotesque and terrifying performance analogue of Gandhi's assassination in a Bombay underpass. The video begins with the image of the Mauryan lion capital, the official symbol of the Indian republic. From this sacrosanct symbol encoding an ethical mandate of liberty, equality and inclusiveness, Joag himself appears as a man-lion, a figure of violent almost erotic provocation, alluding to the subversion, indeed the perversion of modern India's foundational charter.



TYEB MEHTA

Koodal, Film, 1970, Produced by Films Division

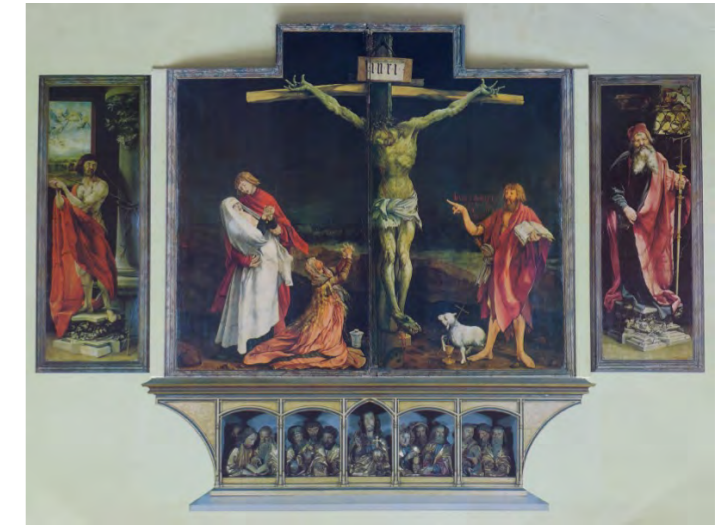
Video: <http://www.latitude28.com/index.php/exhibitions/reviewdetail/88/current>



Sudhir Patwardhan's paintings often evoke the life of the small town or shanty, coping with the crises of late-industrial society. Looking closely, however, we are sometimes intrigued, then amazed to find that his characters might engage one another in the manner of figures in a Gothic altarpiece or a painting from the Northern Renaissance, and their local gestures and costumes conceal scenes from the life of Christ.

The diptych 'Bylanes Saga' (2007), for instance, plunges us into a dystopian late-industrial townscape. Its three main tableaux are drawn from everyday life; beneath their workaday surfaces, they crackle with tension. A Muslim woman holds on to her child, not yielding it to an old man who seems to ask for it. A man has slumped to his knees; have the men who surround him rushed to his rescue, or did they knock him down in the first place? At the centre of the composition is a clearing; a forlorn child sits in the distance.

As we take in these details, we realize with a shock that these scenes have travelled a long distance to inhabit this frame: the Madonna and child come from a Presentation in the Temple; the fallen man belongs in a pictorial account of the Deposition of Christ; and the abandoned child in the clearing recalls to mind da Vinci's portrait of St Jerome in the wilderness. The structure of the diptych is precarious, with the scenes just discussed balancing on another stratum of depiction, showing ordinary citizens passing in the street. This precariousness is deliberate; the painting mirrors the structure of Matthias Grünewald's paintings for the Isenheim altarpiece (1512-1516), with its main panel and wings balanced on a predella or threshold panel. These images, transiting between mediaeval Christian iconography and present-day Bombay/ Thane, build into a parable about hope lost, redemption deferred, and people driven into a spiritual no man's land. A reproduction of the Isenheim altarpiece, its sculpted elements by Niclaus of Haguenau and its paintings by Grünewald, is inserted into the exhibition, as a point of reference and comparison that provokes us into re-reading Patwardhan's painting.



L: *Bylanes Saga (Diptych)*, Acrylic on canvas, 72 x 96 inches, 2007

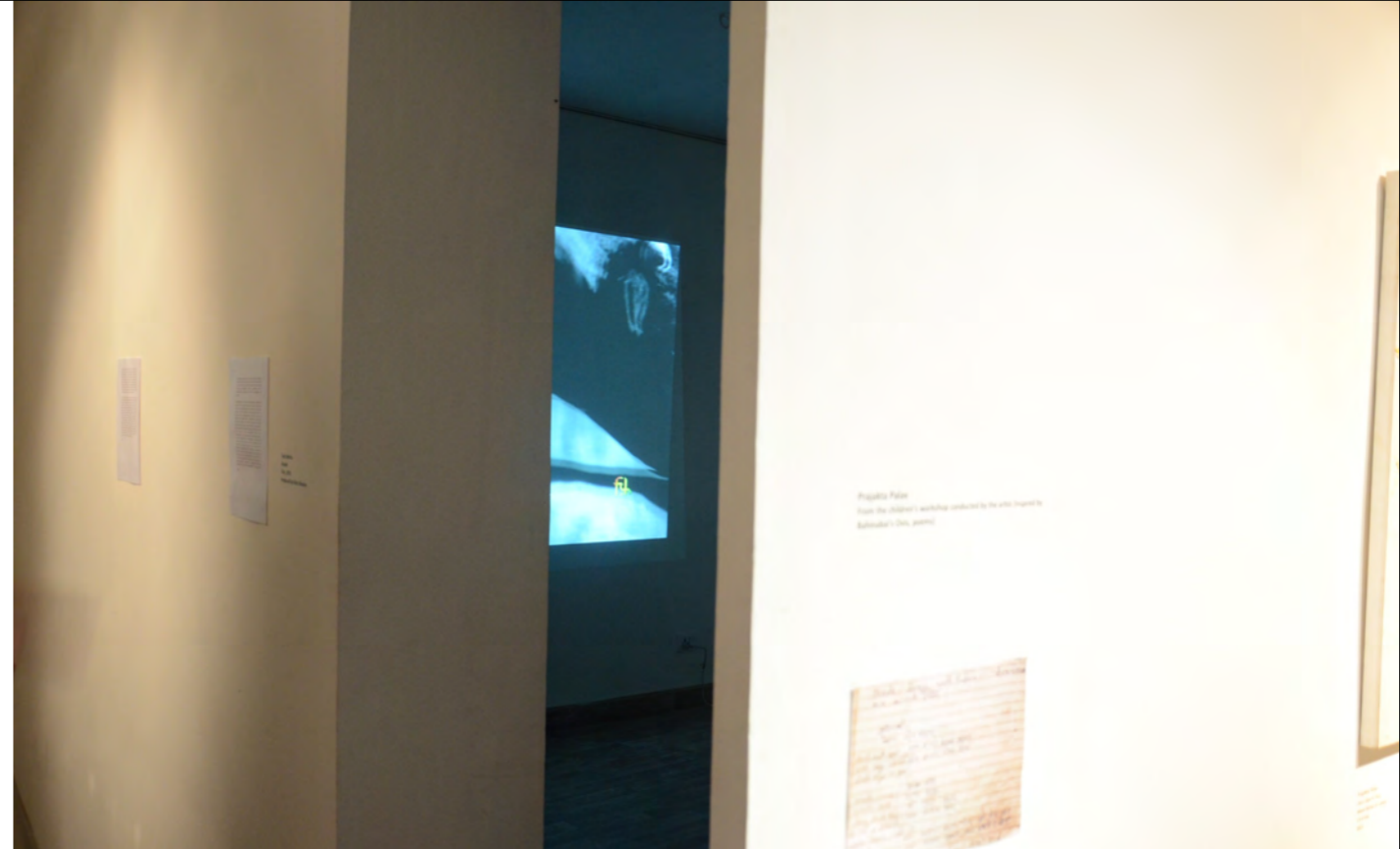
Above: *Detail of Isenheim Altarpiece (1512-1516): sculpted parts by Niclaus of Haguenau and paintings by Matthias Grünewald*

SUDHIR PATWARDHAN



Hamara Hanuman, Digital print on archival paper, 54 x 42 inches, 2009

VEER MUNSHI





Media Coverage

The Mint
February 21, 2014

<http://www.livemint.com/Opinion/h59IDu8MbHx9hsQSyERpbM/EYE-SPY--Sacred-games.html>

EYE SPY | Sacred games

An exhibition of contemporary Indian art playfully interrogates notions of holiness

Somak Ghoshal

14 2 0

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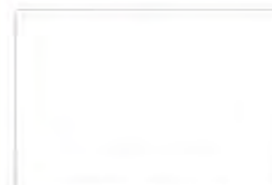
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A still from 'Koodal'. Photo: Courtesy: Latitude 28 gallery

In 1970, artist **Tyeb Mehta**, one of modern India's finest and most expensive painters, directed a short film called *Koodal* (a Tamil word which means "meeting point" or "union"). Produced by the National Films Division Corporation, it won the Filmfare Critics Award that year. The 15-minute masterpiece is part of an ongoing exhibition of contemporary Indian art at Latitude 28 gallery in New Delhi, and a compelling reason to visit it.

Sacred/Scared, as the name of the show suggests, is a playful interrogation of the ways in which religion, and especially notions of holiness, have been reinterpreted in the visual arts. In her note, curator **Nancy Adajania** attributes the provenance of the title to "a moment of typographical uncertainty". "If you were to type the word 'sacred', the computer often auto-corrects it to 'scared'," she writes. "Is this merely an accident or is it symptomatic of a deep anxiety and debilitating ambivalence of our times?"

The question, needless to say, is rhetorical.

AN EXHIBITION BY 13 ARTISTS EXAMINES THE WORLD OF RELIGION, SPIRITUALITY AND SELF CENSORSHIP WHILE DEALING WITH HOLY SUBJECTS

PALLAVI CHATTOPADHYAY

GOAN Angelo da Fonseca was perhaps the first Indian artist to portray Christ's life in an indigenous setting. While Mahatma Gandhi resorted to *satyagraha* to protest against the British rule, Fonseca found his weapon of resistance in painting brown-skinned Madonnas from 1930s. Fonseca was criticised for his portrayal of Christian subjects and was later expelled by the Portuguese colonial government from Goa. His interpretation of the Virgin Mary in *Mother Mary Along With Jesus* (1951) was much talked about as it showed her draped in a sari. A reproduction of that work is now on display in an exhibition titled "Sacred/Scared" at Latitude 28 gallery. Thirteen artists aim to interpret religion, self-censorship and spirituality in a light manner through this exhibition.

The gallery was unable to loan the original work from the Xavier Centre of Historical Research, Goa. Says Bhavna Kakar, director of the



gallery. "Given the times that the artist worked in, his deconstruction of the colonial imports in the visual

sensibility that formed 'sacred' images make it political and powerful."

On Sacred Ground



(Left) Angelo da Fonseca's *The Angels Wind*; Gargi Raina's *Excavating the Mirror Neuron (Ayeneh-Kari) Day/Night*

Ranging from paintings, photographs, video installations to sculptures and drawings, the exhibition has 43 works on display. Curator Nancy Adajania says, "The title 'Sacred/Scared' alludes to the fear that many of us, as liberal and secular artists, feel, while expressing our opinions in relation to questions of religion, spirituality and the public manifestations of the sacred. We live in an age of aggressive politicised religiosity, where threats of violence have forced artists to practice self-censorship." Though there is not much artwork which depicts the self-censorship, she writes: "If you were to type the word 'sacred', the computer often auto-corrects it to 'scared'. Is this merely an accident or is it symptomatic of a deep anxiety of our times?"

Artist Gargi Raina in her mixed media work titled *Excavating the Mirror Neuron (Ayeneh-Kari) Day/Night* has pasted tiny mirrors within geometrical patterns on paper to pay homage to *ayeneh-kari*, a reference to mirror work that decorates walls of mosques in Tehran.

Mumbai-based artist Prajakta Pallav has incorporated children's drawings on paper as part of her work on display and has gone beyond the conventional exhibition format. Her drawings range from depicting a farmer reaping crops in his farm, to a woman cooking food in her hut. These were sourced from one of her workshops in the village of Bilwas, Maharashtra, where she asked her students to interpret poems of a late Marathi poet Bahinabai Chaudhari. "Even though she was illiterate, she compose her poems in Marathi verbally, which her son noted down on a piece of paper," says Pallav.

The works are on display at Latitude 28, F 208, Lado Sarai, till March 5, between 11 AM and 7 PM

Indian Express
March 3, 2014

<http://indianexpress.com/article/cities/delhi/on-sacred-ground/>

About the Gallery

Identifying with its geographical locale in one of the prime art hubs of New Delhi - the village of Lado Sarai, the gallery is called Latitude 28. As the name suggests, the latitude of the New Delhi situates it aptly while giving it a global frame of reference. From the metropolis of New Delhi, Latitude 28 over the years has become synonymous with cutting edge art coming out of the country, seeking out fresh perspectives and innovative thinking in its attempt to stimulate commercial interest in new waves of art-making. The establishment aims to cultivate a space where collectors and art enthusiasts can interact with emerging artists and their practices. Its strategy allows the space to act as a horizontal environment where younger artists are able to contextualise and reference their work with the masters of Indian art, even as the ethos of the gallery encourages them to experiment with medium, material and institutional critique. An emphasis on critical thinking and discursive engagement prompts the gallery to accommodate curatorial projects that weave artworks together to demonstrate the concerns of the curators, and consciously tries to initiate renewed readings of artworks in various contexts. Shows that deconstruct established modes of looking at works, presenting them with renewed relevance and reassess outmoded norms of the white cube are part of the curatorial agenda.

Latitude 28 gallery recognises the shift from survey exhibitions and museumised displays to art fairs and biennales, as sites where dialogues on the contemporary take place. The gallery attempts to support contemporary Indian art not only through exhibitions, but also by supporting residencies and organising outreach programs, seminars and talks. Our recent endeavour is a bi-annual residency in collaboration with 1 Shanthiroad, Bangalore and we will be collaborating with Sunaparanta, Goa Centre for the Arts and Delfina Foundation, London in the coming year. We have supported Kartik Sood, Anindita Dutta, Shweta Bhattad and Siddhartha Kararwal in their out of the box practices. Kartik is currently at Gasworks on a residency grant by The Inlaks Shivdasani Foundation and Charles Wallace India Trust. He was awarded the Emerging Artist of the Year by FICA and Pro Helvetia. Shweta Bhattad, another artist that we represent, has had performances around the world, including KHOJ International Artists Workshop and most recently at Bamboo Curtain Studio, Taiwan. Latitude 28 also supports Shweta's project Gram Art Residency in rural recesses of central India in her village in Madhya Pradesh. 'Glitch Frame Lollipop' at the gallery in 2012, was a landmark show in that it turned the gallery into an experimental space/an incubator for future projects for the artists Siddhartha Kararwal, Amitabh Kumar and Prayas Abhinav, as opposed to merely being a venue for display of artworks.

Latitude 28 has been an active participant at the India Art Fair. This year, its efforts are varied. Besides the show 'Sacred/Scared' curated by Nancy Adajania at the gallery space in Lado Sarai, there are three other projects at the art fair grounds. The fair booth (booth number A2) will display curated works of contemporary art, which tries to cover the range of practices of young contemporary artists based in India. Alongside, there is a video project 'Contested Spaces', specially curated for the fair by our director Bhavna Kakar that will screen through the duration of the fair, political and interventionist video works by artists from around the world whose works have been a part of important biennales, Documenta and other museum exhibitions. There is also a performance at the venue of the art fair Everything Ends and Everything Matters, by Anindita Dutta, one of the most promising performance artists right now who has been recently awarded the Dame Jillian Sackler International Artists Exhibition Program grant by the prestigious Arthur M. Sackler Museum of Art and Archaeology at Peking University, Beijing.

Through these initiatives and many more projects in the horizon, Latitude 28 is still growing as a contemporary art venture, continuing its search for newer methods of interaction with art.

Latitude 28's vision is shaped by its Founder/Director, Bhavna Kakar, who has over a decade's experience as a curator, writer, and art consultant. Latitude 28 supports its sister concern, TAKE on art (www.takeonartmagazine.com) India's leading contemporary art magazine. Bhavna Kakar is also the editor and publisher of TAKE.

LATITUDE 28

A Gallery for Contemporary Arts and Ideas

F 208 G/F Lado Sarai, New Delhi, India - 110030
T: +11 46791111

www.latitude28.com
latitude28@gmail.com

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