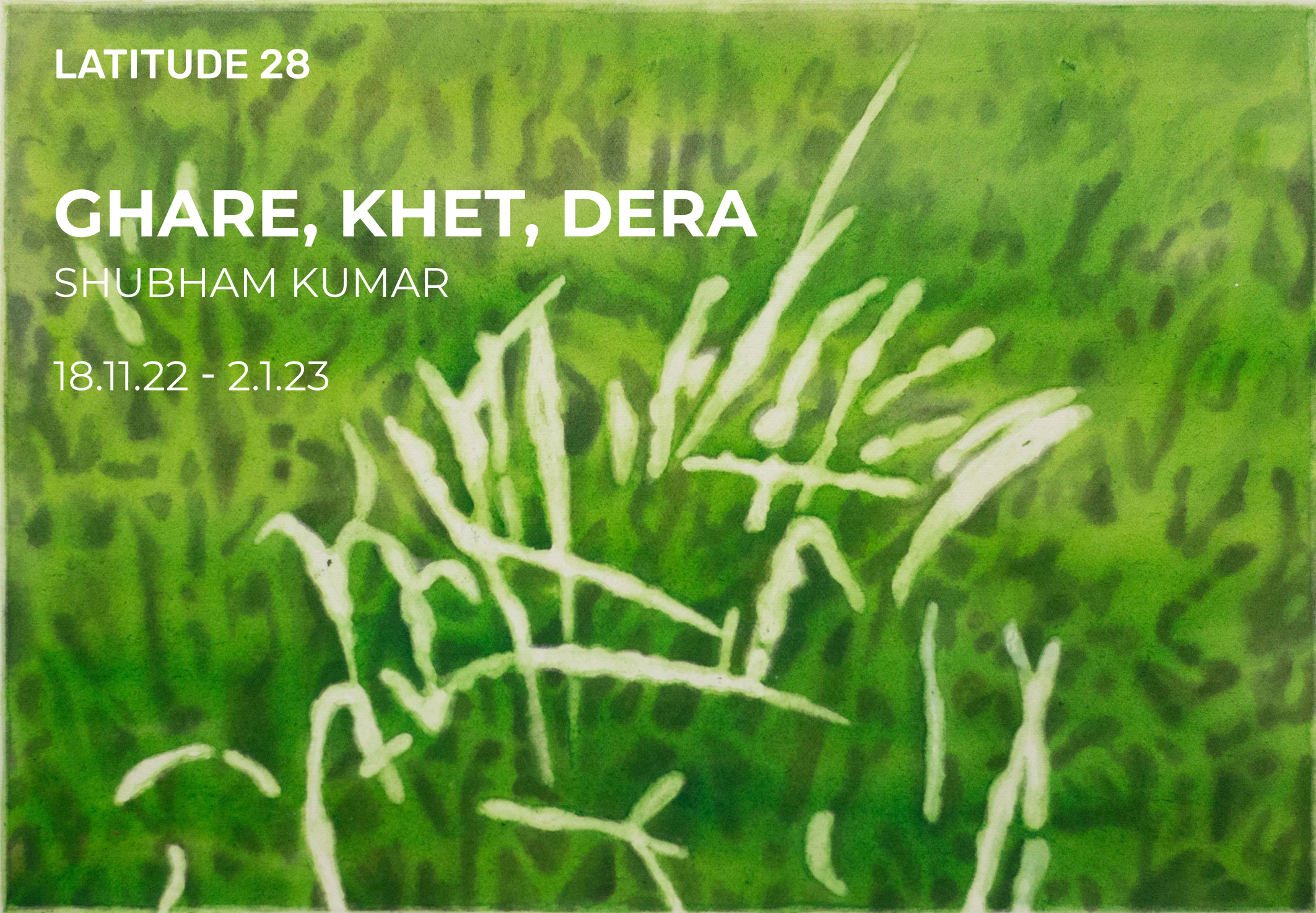**LATITUDE 28**

GHARE, KHET, DERA
SHUBHAM KUMAR

18.11.22 - 2.1.23

GHARE, KHET, DERA
By Anisha Baid

This solo exhibition by Shubham Kumar unfolds the multiple readings of home through the lens of his family and extended community in Gaya, Bihar. A home is commonly defined as the place of safety and security - a shelter from the political forces at play outside its four walls. However, in this ongoing body of work, Kumar has iteratively investigated his ancestral home and farmland in relation to national and regional histories of caste, economic precarity, homelessness and land conflict.

Ghare invokes the ancestral village home – a permanent place of origin for the family, even as it constantly undergoes a process of transformation, adapting to the new norms and laws of the land. This village home is entwined with the *Khet* – the family farmland cultivated with rice and wheat. *Dera* – often translated as an encampment or temporary home, refers to Kumar's family home in the city of Gaya where most of his family has migrated to.

The *Khet* – only divided from other farmland by raised mounds of earth or Aaris, has been the most active witness to land conflict and violence in the past. Kumar grew up listening to anecdotes of armed conflict between Maoist revolutionaries and the landowning families of the village in the farmlands. Using the camera as a tool to fabulate an escape route through the land, he re-stages these positions of capture and escape in the field. Stills from these performed escapes in the safety of the present then become reference materials for Kumar's meticulously photorealistic watercolour paintings.

Kumar mobilises digital manipulations and layers of mediation between the documentary image and the visible surfaces of his work to obscure any direct access. These paintstaking manipulations – done both digitally, and through the physical acts of paintings - work to reveal the inherently fabricated nature of representational images, especially

when making documentary claims to truth. Maintaining an analytical gaze upon the surfaces of art making – the paper, the screen and the projected image become central characters in the show as they try and fail to hold coherent representations of generational violence.

Further exploring iterative processes of truth making, Kumar's installation works in the show scratch beyond the surface of the image to simulate depth. *It Was Me* is a sculptural installation that takes as its basis - an imagined two centimeter thick image, slicing through a single cross section of it iteratively, to produce a new image surface. The complicated and exact internal logics within Kumar's processes become a metaphor for the convoluted processing of images in the media industries used to construct dominant, nationalist as well as counter-cultural rhetorics. A similar exploration of depth happens in Rangaa, a multichannel video installation that uses photogrammetry to reconstruct one of Kumar's paintings in virtual space, layer by layer, thus creating a three dimensional image. This projected image is further manipulated with physical layers and multiple projections such that one is never able to arrive at a final image.

Kumar's work in the show contends with the suspect nature of an image, always bringing into question the process of its creation. A home is searched for and necessarily never found - in the process unraveling the layers of nostalgia, ideology and echoes of violence it is wrapped up in.

Anisha Baid is an artist and writer from Kolkata, India. Her practice and research involve an investigation of pervasive technologies through an examination of their design, diversity of use, and their relationship with ideas from science fiction.

Her work attempts to poke at the flat-scapes of the computer screen to decode computer labour through the interface - a technological tool that has converted most spaces of work into image space. She is currently pursuing an MFA at Carnegie Mellon University, Pittsburgh, USA.

Suddenly and Slowly I Existed Forever-II
(Series)
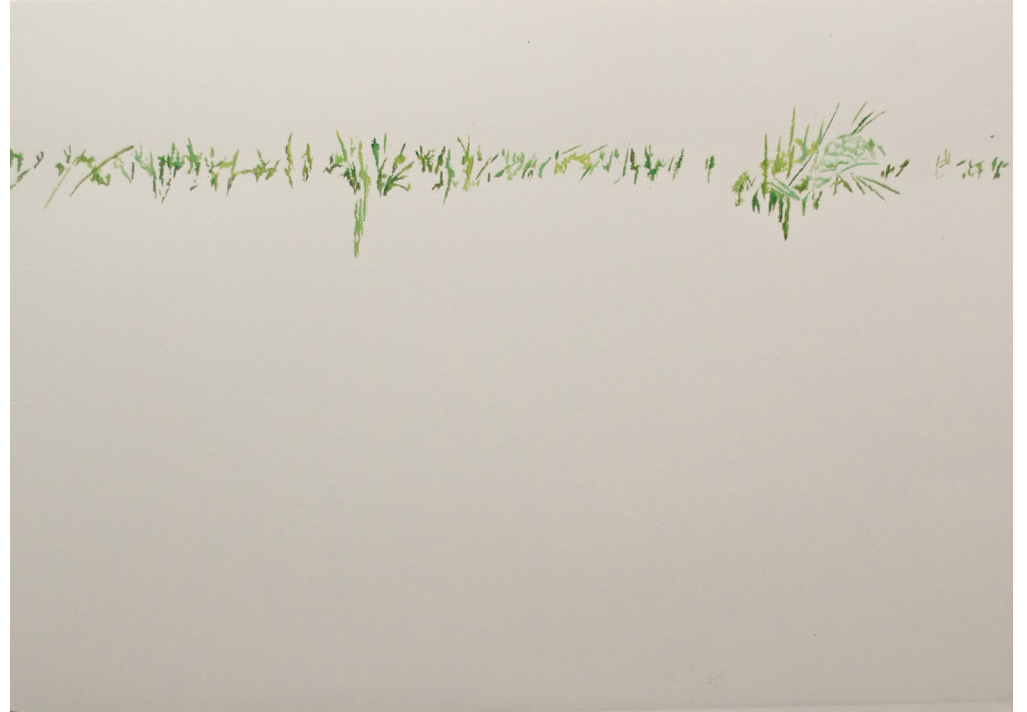
8.3" X 11.7" each | Watercolour on Paper | 2022

Suddenly and Slowly I Existed Forever-II (a)
(Series)

Suddenly and Slowly I Existed Forever-II (b)
(Series)

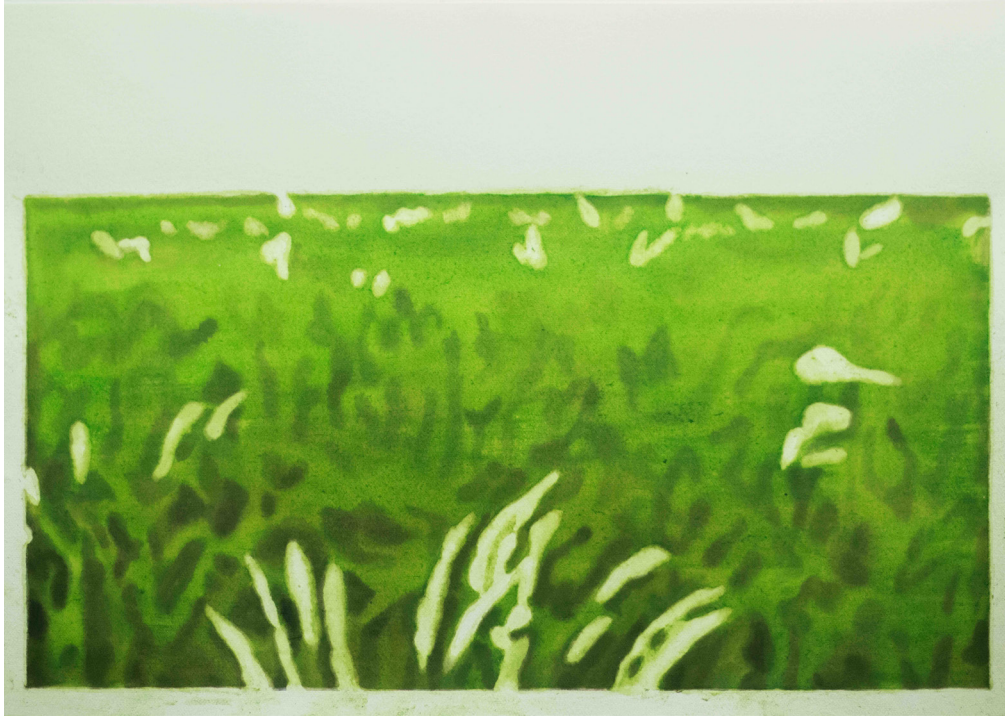*Suddenly and Slowly I Existed Forever-II (c)*
(Series)

Suddenly and Slowly I Existed Forever-II (d)
(Series)

Suddenly and Slowly I Existed Forever-II (e)
(Series)

Suddenly and Slowly I Existed Forever-II (f)
(Series)

Suddenly and Slowly I Existed Forever-II (g)
(Series)

Suddenly and Slowly I Existed Forever-II (h)
(Series)

Dera-IV
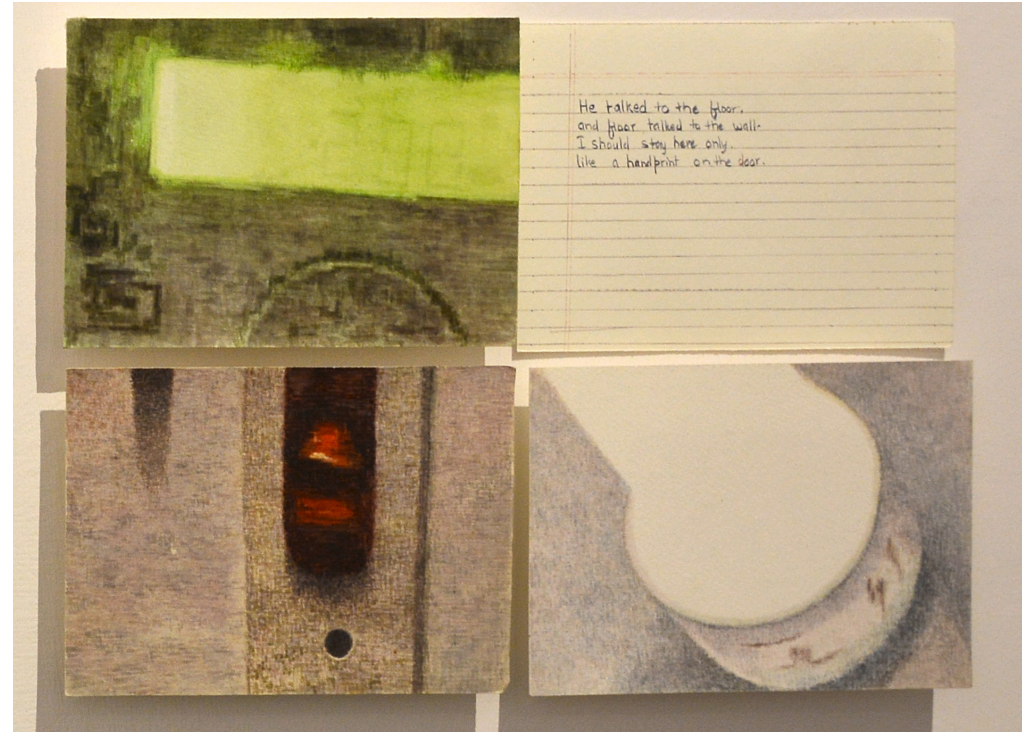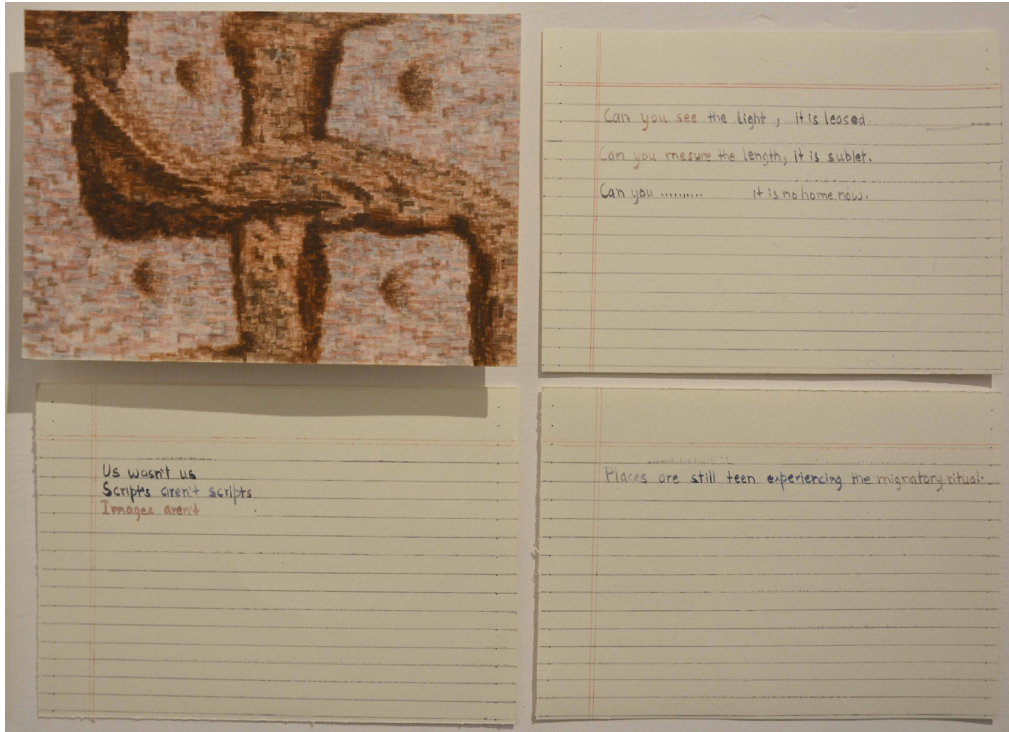(Series)

5" X 7" each | Watercolour on Paper | 2021

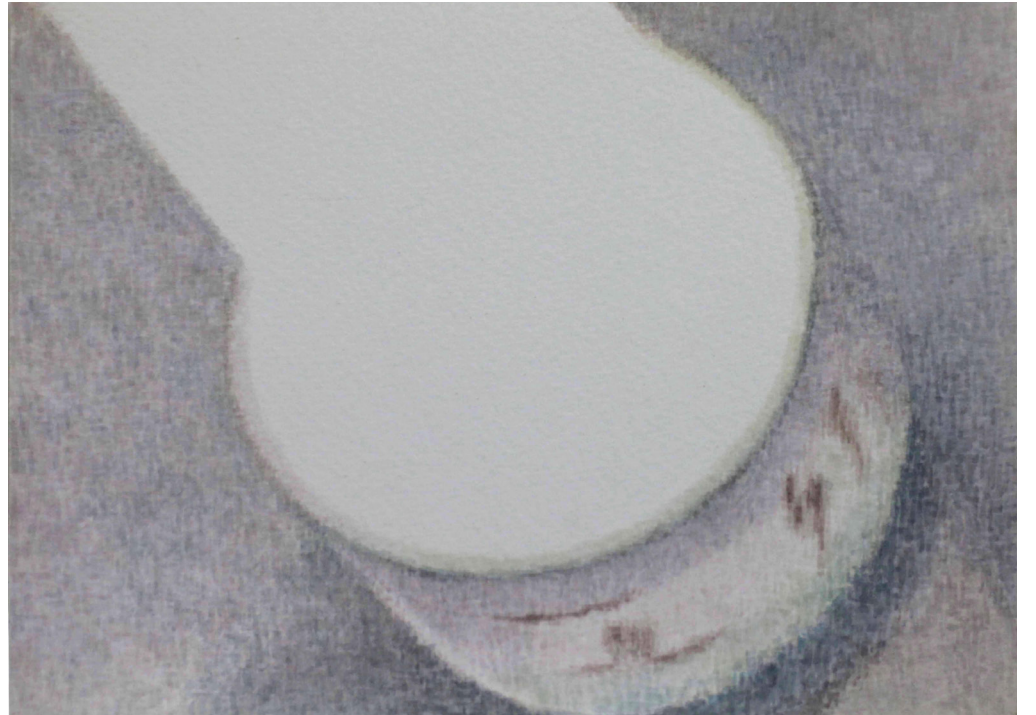Fabrication need to be understood.

Mass also left to new location

Dera-IV
(Series)

details

Can you see the light., It is leased.

Can you measure the length, it is sublet.

Can you .... it is no home now.

Us wasn't us
Scripts aren't scripts
Images aren't

Places are still teen experiencing the migratory ritual.

He talked to the floor.
and floor talked to the wall.
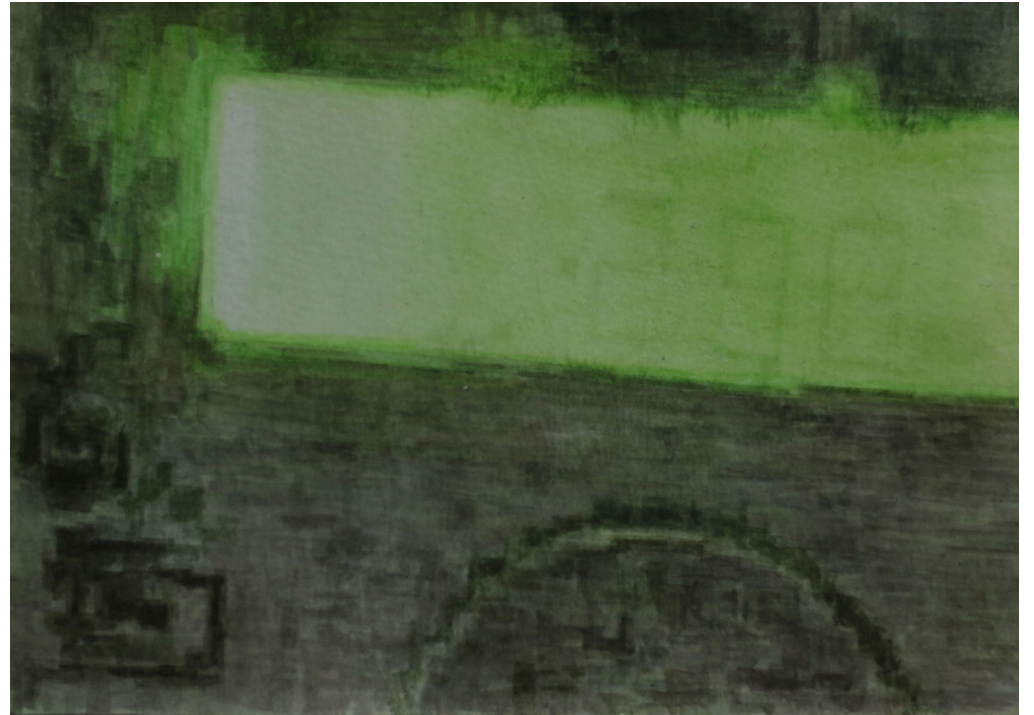I should stay here only.
like a handprint on the door.

Dera-IV
(Series)

details

Dera-IV
(Series)

details

Dera-IV
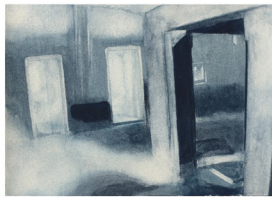(Series)

details

Dera-IV
(Series)

details

"The body of work *Ghare, Khet, Dera* reflects on the histories of serfdom, caste-based violence, and land politics through the site and metaphor of a field/farmland. Works in red and green come from the shifts that I have seen by leaving my present flat. Having grown up in Gaya in a farming family, I was privy to many first-hand anecdotes of violence and witnessed land riots through the late 90s till 2005.

Drawing from this archive of stories sourced from my immediate family and juxtaposing them against the timeline of political conflicts between landed caste groups and landless communists/revolutionaries, I investigate how the personal can navigate the communal and the state. Land for me functions as geography, a site for hierarchies, an understanding of class, economics, and caste, nourishment, and murder. The focus lies on the physicality of each space or fragment, that is a landmark for a specific time, event or incident.
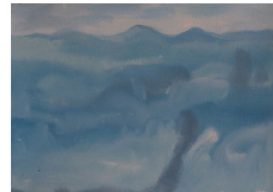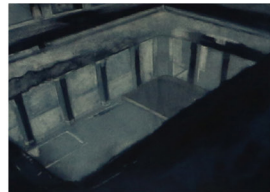
These are some of the questions that sparked and continue to drive this body of work - **How do we experience the land then? How do we navigate this history? Is navigating this land the same as navigating its history? How do we situate sweat, blood, produce, identity?**"

- Shubham Kumar

Ghare, Khet, Dera-V
(Series)

5" X 7" each | Watercolour on Paper | 2018

He was told, sea is for everyone
Then land should also be
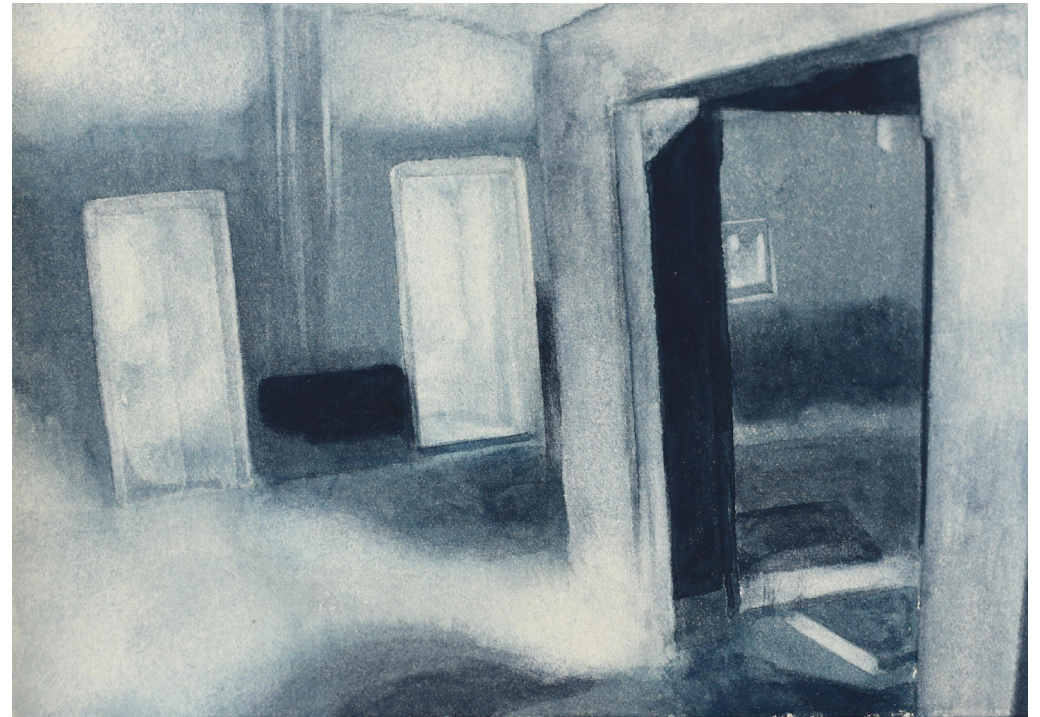
Despotic outsiders, always in fear

How ceiling of edifices maintained?
settlements across the sphere should be looked upon
                              history should be looked upon
                              local   should be looked upon

Survival asking parity
why grasses still cold in strata.

Ghare, Khet, Dera-V
(Series)
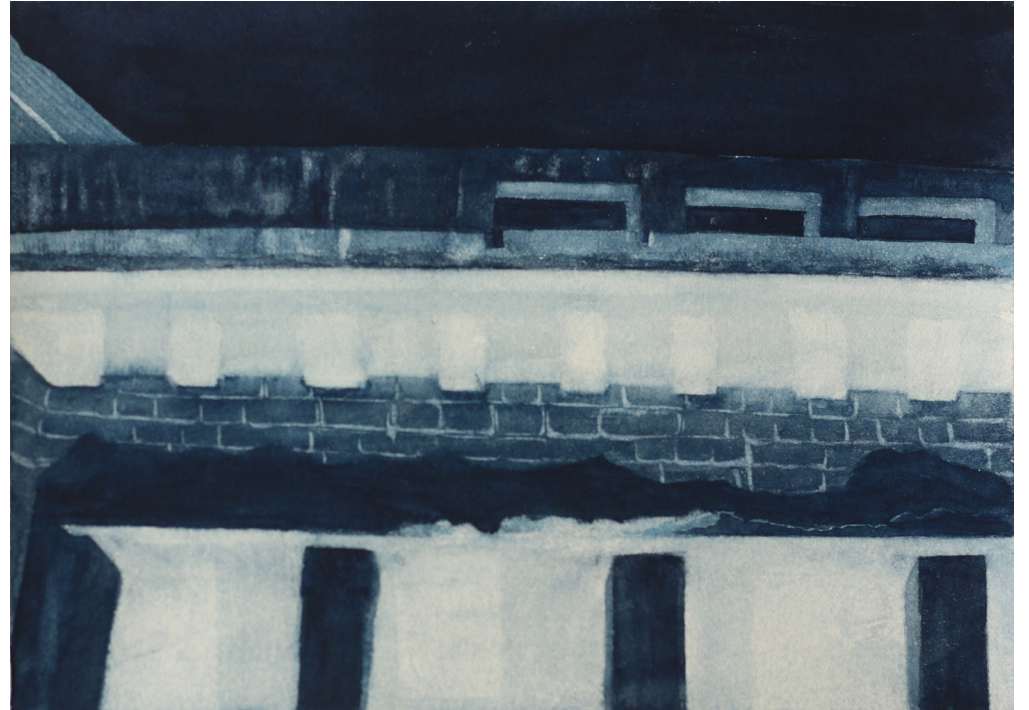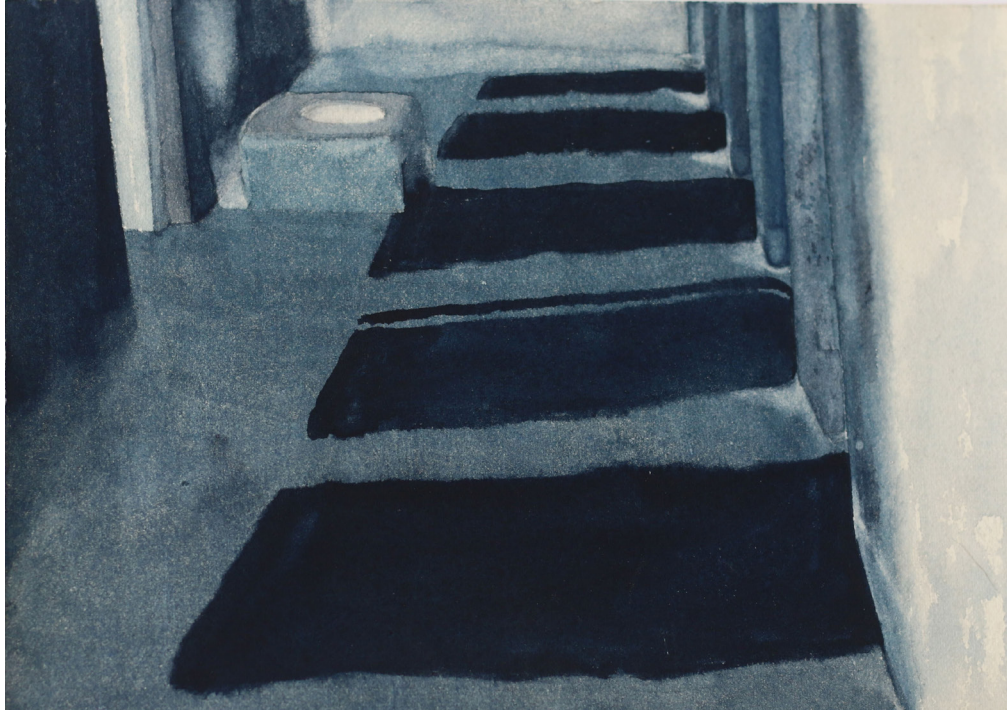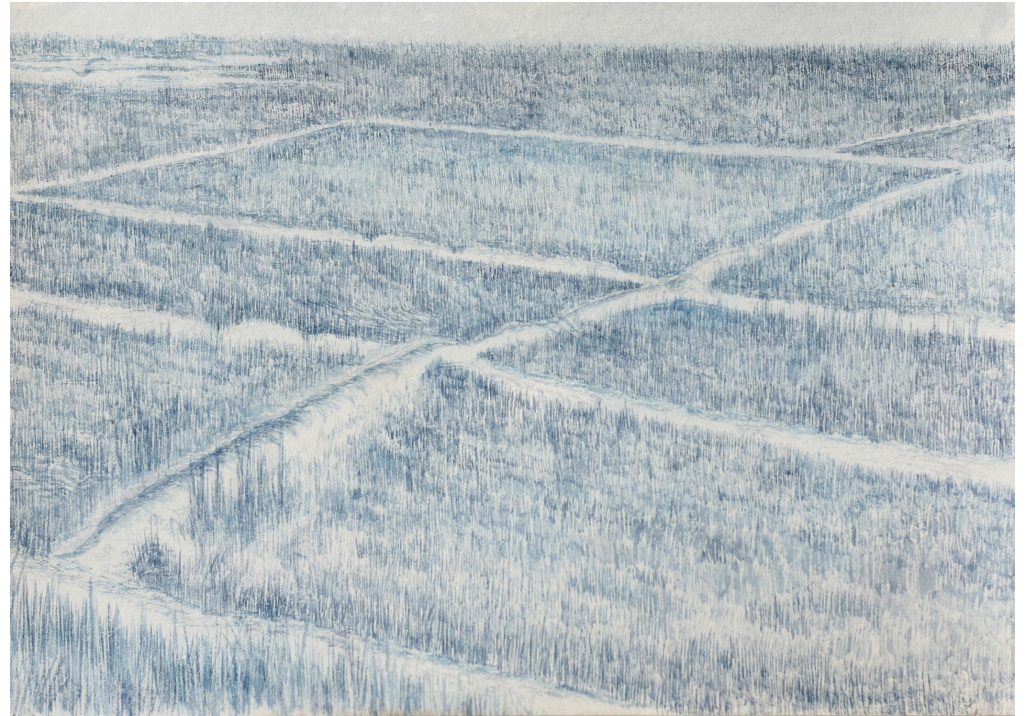
details

Ghare, Khet, Dera-V
(Series)

details

Ghare, Khet, Dera-V
(Series)

details

Ghare, Khet, Dera-V
(Series)
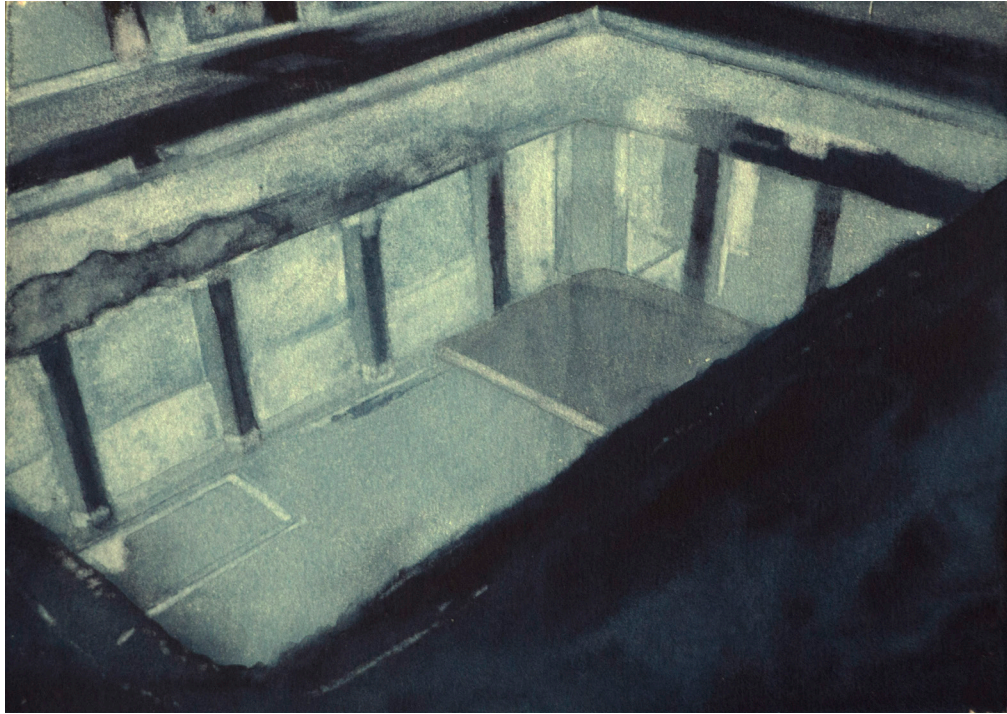
details

Ghare, Khet, Dera-V
(Series)

details

Ghare, Khet, Dera-V
(Series)

details

When He Knew Monuments Mean Hiding and Hiding was Nostalgia-II
(Series)

8.3" X 11.7" each | Watercolour on Paper | 2022

When He Knew Monuments Mean Hiding and Hiding was Nostalgia-II
(Series)

details

When He Knew Monuments Mean Hiding and Hiding was Nostalgia-II
(Series)

details

When He Knew Monuments Mean Hiding and Hiding was Nostalgia-II
(Series)

details

"In the triptych *Escape Mechanism*, there is this addition of a further layer of abstraction to the photographs from my farmland in the form of small, concealed icons of the computer cursor in one corner of the painting. As the paintings were made with the image as a reference on the screen, I situated the cursor as a witness to these acts of fabrication of the documentary. As such this cursor is the only visible on close attention, becoming symbolic of the larger technological apparatuses like the camera, the digital editing software, and media networks involved in the production of documentary narratives, which remain invisible in the telling of violent histories."

- Shubham Kumar

Escape Mechanism
(Series)

11.7" X 16.5" each | Watercolour on Paper | 2020

Escape Mechanism
(Series)

details

Rangaa

11.7" X 16.5" each | Watercolour on Paper, Projection | 2020

"A proverb in this region goes as 'if many people perform a myth, it is almost reality' (loosely translated) and to a larger extent throughout the globe, we can observe the same. Oryza Rufipogon is a weedy (as opposed to economic) variety of rice that is very common in the fields of Bihar and several parts of the country. While this variety germinates independently and is self-sufficient, it is locally regarded as a nuisance and concerted efforts are made to eliminate them from the fields, even though biologists and researchers have deemed these weedy varieties as a valuable species for biodiversity.

Rangaa is a multimedia installation that draws from these complexities, inherent to the agricultural work that forms the backbone of this nation. Weedy rice becomes a metaphor through which to address a larger socio-political eradication of difference and diversity.

The aim was to create an atmosphere of an illusory narrative through these layers of mediation - one where the idea of the original is destabilized. If I trace my process, the painted image is what was 'constructed' first and chronological documentation helped me to construct the video - which consists of photogrammetrically recreated versions of the painted image."

- Shubham Kumar

Run II (a)
8.3" X 11.7" each | Watercolour on Paper | 2022

Run II (a)

details

Run II (a)

details

Run II (a)

details

Run II (b)

8.3" X 11.7" each | Watercolour on Paper | 2022

Run II (b)
(series)

details
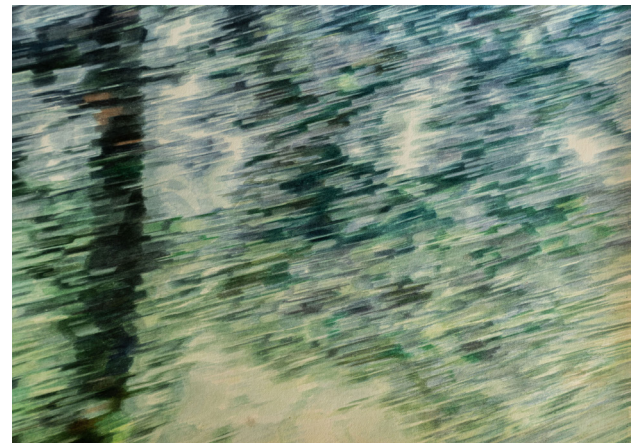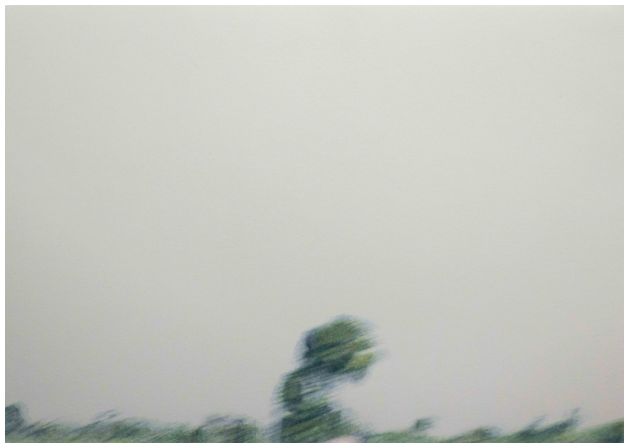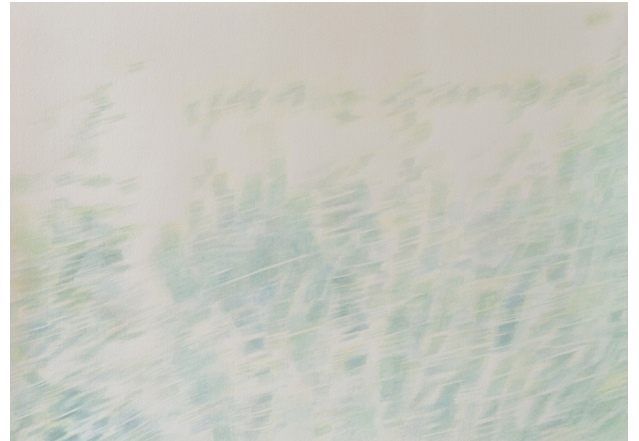
Run II (b)
(series)

details

Run II (b)
(series)

details

"These two sets of work, titled *Run*, and *Escape Mechanism* were painted from stills of videos recorded by me, in and around my family's farmland in Gaya. These still photographs reveal a blurred landscape of green fields and grass and the succession of obscured images stand out perhaps as flashes of memory from someone escaping the site of violence. While these videos were shot long after these incidents, attempting to retrace, re-imagine, and perhaps restage moments of escape and attack. The act of painting, in turn, adds another layer of fabrication to the images, which moves away from presenting a narrative of the violent encounters that might have taken place between 1990-2005 on the farm to become fragments of the transitory moment.

These photorealistic paintings of blurred images are a metaphor for the constant crisis of documentary narratives. Instead of representing the events of violence, they present an image from the land which is abstracted until it begins to break, and the violence is manifested in the attempt to make meaning from these images."

- Shubham Kumar

Run II
(Series)

8.3" X 11.7" each | Watercolour on Paper | 2022

It was Me (a)
(Series)

11.5" x 16.5" x 0.7" | Image transfer on paper | 2020

It was Me (b)
(Series)

13.5" x 12" x 12.5" | Print on paper paper, clear glass, frosted glass | 2020

It was Me (c)
(Series)

11.5" x 16.5" x 0.7" | Image transfer on handmade acrylic sheet | 2020

It was Me (d)
(Series)

11.5" x 16.5" x 0.7" | 6000gsm handmade paper | 2020

"*It Was Me*, is an installation that allows me to stage an ongoing process of fabrication of an image I took during a visit to my farmland. I manipulate the same image using techniques like image transfer, paper making, shredding, translucency to a degree where the final product does not retain any trace of the hand that made it but begins to look manufactured or digitally rendered. The use of these 'skills' to fabricate realities is accompanied by making certain fictional presumptions about the nature of images and materials, which I then build on.

The main focus of this project is to show metaphorically how our social fabric has been weaved using certain tools to make-believe foreordained norms, creating a fictional process - dialogue using technical references in the installation. The idea of dismantling or slicing a sheet becomes a process that gets tampered with its beginning itself. The proposed thickness of the following sheet is not comparative which helps me alter the objectivity of the sheet with an image."

- Shubham Kumar

It was Me
(Series)

2020

SHUBHAM KUMAR

(b. 1995, Gaya, India)

Shubham Kumar is an artist from Gaya, Bihar and currently lives and works in Vadodara. His work is informed by familial introspection that traces the politics of land, construction, regional violence, and counter Maoist-insurgencies in Murera and Gaya (Bihar). Images, ideas and creatures from his native land operate as metaphors, through which he makes sense of the complex ideological narratives imposed onto the region's life. His work proposes scenarios that address these tensions between the perceiver and the represented subjects. He exposes the subtle ways in which dominant, oppressive narratives inhabit majoritarian imagination. His interventions include problematizing the making of the documentary image and fabrications – primarily through parafictions, painting, image transfer, installations, and software interfaces as tools and mediums. The works, as such, are investigations into the digital and photographic nature of these materials, focused on minute, subtle changes (organic and intervened) instead of larger, defined narratives.

Shubham Kumar has participated in various group exhibitions including the Delhi Contemporary Art Week, Bikaner House, Delhi (2022), 'World Within World Without', Art Incept, Delhi (2022); 'Defining Home', Hissa, Surat (2022); 'Immerse', Somaiya Vidyavihar, Mumbai (2022); Art Incept Grant show, Delhi (2022); Cima Award Show, Kolkata (2022); 'Surface Encounters & Strange Beings', Goa (2021); 'Untitled IX', Priyasri Art Gallery, Mumbai (2021); Students Biennale, Kochi (2021); Degree Show at FFA MS University, Vadodara (2018); 'In-making', Fine Art Gallery, Vadodara (2018). He has also been a part of the Immerse residency, Somaiya Vidyavihar, Mumbai (2022); Khoj Peers, Delhi (2021); 'The conditioned Image'; online workshop by Chinar Shah, Bengaluru (2020); SSAF Next Step Residency at 1Shanthiroad, Bangalore (2019) and attended workshops on Video art by Gigi Scaria, MSU Baroda (2018) as well as the Kala Sakshi mentoring workshops (2018). Shubham has been awarded the Tacita Dean Award, Art Incept, Delhi (2022); Kalpana Reddy Memorial Award, M.S.U. Baroda (2021); Khoj Support Grant, Delhi (2020); Nasreen Mohamedi award for Best Display BVA, MSU Baroda (2018); as well as the JJ School of Art Printmaking award (2014).

About LATITUDE 28

Since its inception in 2010, LATITUDE 28 has been promoting creative dialogue and presenting dynamic exhibitions that focus on contemporary art from South Asia. Founded by art historian Bhavna Kakar, LATITUDE 28 has become synonymous with cutting edge art from the region, seeking fresh perspectives and innovative thinking in its attempt to stimulate interest in new waves of art making and provides a horizontal environment where artists are encouraged to contextualize and experiment with medium and material, positioning them within historical and contemporary frameworks that critically respond to the canon. When making programmatic decisions, LATITUDE 28 seeks to promote diversity through building a community and culture that is inclusive of all groups and individuals. Keeping with its wider role as an institution dedicated to the arts, LATITUDE 28 has paved the way for active collaborations between artists from Iran, Pakistan, Nepal, Sri Lanka and India through its curated shows and outreach events. The gallery, thus, continues to work towards making art accessible and inclusive to larger audiences and our patrons, with exhibitions strategically located at the nexus where artists, their work, art institutions, collectors and many different publics intersect.

LATITUDE 28

GHARE, KHET, DERA

SHUBHAM KUMAR

18.11.22 - 2.1.23

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