

Bhavna Kakar

Presents

Komal Mistri

Come With Your Own Light

Preview: 12th April, 2024 | Friday

Timing: 7 PM Onwards

Exhibition Open till : 15th June, 2024 | Saturday

Timings: Monday to Saturday, 11 AM – 7 PM

Venue: Gallery LATITUDE 28, F - 208, F/F, Lado Sarai, New Delhi



Komal Mistri, 2022-2023, *Crowning*, Photograph Print on WP Plywood, Glass Bottle with Photo, Ed. ¼, 9 x 7 in

“It is our being looked at by the photograph-as-flesh that makes us fully corporeal subjects in vision; this being looked at also substantiates the subjectivity of the person in the picture, but always already in relation to us, those it “views.”” (Amelia Jones, “The “Eternal Return”: Self-Portrait Photography as a Technology of Embodiment”, *Signs*, 2002, p. 970)

In the realm of the labour room consisting of spotlighted beds and surgery tools, lies the tale of embroidered bodies bewildered if to feel pleasure in pain or pain in pleasure. Lying on the bed, contemplating her identity, the pregnant woman wonders on her dual and frustrated state of being. To chronicle these unheard voices reverberating behind the closed doors of the unhinged mechanised labour room far away from the public imagination, Komal Mistri, a Baroda based artist spent three months in the enclosed spaces of Hospitals across Gujarat. Documenting the process of childbirth that has been ritualised and considered throughout civilisations as sacred and a celebratory phenomenon the artist captures and interprets the unspoken narratives that mark the transformation of the woman’s body and psyche, a space marked by unpredictability, vulnerability, and trust. It’s a space where the eternal process of life and death occurs every other minute.

There’s a rhythm to how the dynamic of relationships gets played out in the hospital space. Like family members, Mistri assumes the role of a confidante, a listener to the woes, injustices and happiness of her women subjects. Mistri’s practice includes churning out the memories from the objects that inform her subjects’ living processes. Bottles of blood, placentas, scissors, stretchers and machines serve as symbols of the mechanised nature of the medical arena. To capture such images is itself an act of revelation to the artist whose personal experience with childbirth and healthcare systems marks her intervention with the photographs in terms of painting and found

For queries contact:

www.latitude28.com | latitude28@gmail.com | +91 11 46791111

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LATITUDE 28

objects being juxtaposed with each other housed in cabinet-like structures. The hiding and revealing acted out through the cabinet doors work towards an interactivity and performativity that generates curiosity in the viewer to find the hidden memory that could be a photograph or an object resounding the unpredictability that plays out within the process of child-birth.

Produced during the pandemic, the current body of work is a result of an extremely challenging process of documentation, pertaining to the anxiety that existed around 'coming into contact', especially in the setting of hospitals and the restrictions that were imposed preventing access to these areas. Mistri's close encounters with the women in maternity wards that also exposed the unpleasant conditions of healthcare systems are turned by the artist into an archive of personal yet collective experiences. The 'shock' effect of some of the very horror-inducing images, especially ones containing the body is contrasted with images of healing and care that come in the form of intimate moments of the women with their close ones accelerated by touch. The artist navigates through ethics of representation, the violence of the camera peeping into private worlds and the documentary image by a deep process of familiarisation with the image choosing what to hide and what to reveal, figuration and abstraction, fact and emotion, loud whispers and silent screams.

Appearance of the naked body, stitched, stained in blood, filled with stretch-marks in fragments juxtaposed with other objects takes us to the haptic visuality of the photograph, that is enhanced here by its relationship with those objects. Invoking a multi-sensorial experience, every assemblage – the photograph and the three-dimensional physical object enclosed in the cabinet – become sources of memory generation of space and identities for the viewer whose own memories gets intermixed affecting their perspective of the photographic work. Susan Sontag observes in *Regarding the Pain of Others* (2003), "The photograph is like a quotation, or a maxim or proverb. Each of us mentally stocks hundreds of photographs, subject to instant recall." Mistri's interventionist approach creates a rupture in the public memory encoded with millions of journalistic, cinematic and family photography images of the phenomenon of childbirth through her personally mediated equations and often constructed surrealistic imagery, sometimes resulting into dark humour.

In the processing of images, a negotiation of identities and voices emerges among the artist, the subject and the viewer, that is influenced by uncertainties reflected within the walled space of the hospital rooms. The subjects in these assemblages return the gaze back through a negotiation of identities and offer new possibilities of thinking about natural processes such as childbirth that is problematized through the suffering body (of woman), gender dynamics, class and caste hierarchies that are played out within the healthcare system and apathetic nature of medical procedures. However, there are moments of solidarity built through collective experience within this larger backdrop which the resisting bodies with their unflinching perseverance reclaim through the process of care and healing. The exhibition thus urges the spectator to come with their own light to discover what we call Barthes' punctum in these photo images which are a provocation in themselves asking, "Can you see this?"

-Text by Saloni Jaiwal

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“Komal Mistri's lens and personal experiences intertwine to unveil the unseen narratives of transformation of the (woman's) body through a very delicate subject matter 'childbirth' that itself is a realm filled with contestations. The photographic works become a source into a world hidden from plain sight. Mistri guides us through the hallowed halls of the labour room where mechanical and the human dissolve into each other. Each image is a whispered confession, a poignant invitation to confront complex societal norms dictating the natural process of childbirth and the woman's agency. The exhibition beckons the seeker to delve beyond the surface, to discover layers of their own selves.”

- Bhavna Kakar, Founder-Director, LATITUDE 28

About the Artist:

Komal Mistri's (b.1990) Komal Mistri's body of work uses altered and/or constructed imagery assisted with found objects resonating the grey areas of memory, identity and space. She primarily relates with the identities of a woman in a domestic space where she constantly struggles to alter her personalities according to her responsibilities, excluding her right to a personal space. She creates enclosed spaces of deconstructed photographs and objects from my memory where one can interact through the doors provided. The camera provides her with a perspective that best renders her personal crisis with existence and identity. The photograph gives an illusion of that challenging existence in the exterior and the interior creating a punctum. The current series delves into the possibility of forming an archive of emotions, primarily through sound, surrounding the phase of childbirth. A vast majority of women are deprived of proper medical attention and are forced to push the limits of their physical capacity in order to complete the process. The socio-economic conditions of rural India constantly thrusts the woman into a gender discriminatory struggle of enduring pain beyond her limits. The artist captures her complex emotions and difficult stances in women's life documenting the labour room processes through interventionist photographic works and found objects using it as the primary element of her work in order to manifest collective pain and deprivation.

Komal Mistri received a Post-Diploma in Painting from the Faculty of Fine Arts, Maharaja Sayajirao University, Vadodara and a Diploma in Painting from the Sheth C.N. College of Fine Arts, Ahmedabad. She is the recipient of the Nasreen Mohamedi Scholarship in 2018. Komal has participated in residencies at the Kanoria Centre, Ahmedabad; Feudo Maccari, Italy and the Robyn Beeche residency at Kriti Gallery, Benaras. She has participated in group exhibitions in India and abroad. This series of works was made possible by the Umrao Singh Sher-Gil Grant for Photography (2020), Sher-Gil Sundaram Arts Foundation. The artist lives and works in Vadodara, Gujarat.

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About LATITUDE 28

Since 2010, LATITUDE 28 has probed into a gallery practice that is lateral, disruptive and avant-garde. Mentoring and nurturing emerging artists from South Asia, the gallery focuses on experimentation with medium and material fostering critical dialogue, perspective and practices by writers, critics and researchers alike. These maker-market relationships amongst collectors, art enthusiasts and art practitioners have grown through the gallery's interactive incubation space, where ideas have been generated through innovative curatorial projects located on the cusp of art history and socio-political context through site-specific artworks and artist talks. The gallery makes art accessible and inclusive with exhibitions located at the intersection of artists, institutions and art education. LATITUDE 28's vision is shaped by its Founder/Director, Bhavna Kakar, who is also the Founder and Editor-in-Chief of TAKE on Art - South Asia's leading contemporary art publication.

SOCIAL MEDIA HANDLES

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/GalleryLatitude28>

Instagram: @latitude_28 @bhavz15 @takeonart

RELEVANT TAGS

#ComeWithYourOwnLight #newexhibition #exhibition #contemporaryart
#contemporaryartists #KomalMistri #artindelhi #latitude28 #takeonart #artdelhi #delhiart
#analog #photography #humanbody #physiognomy #distortion #reality #fiction



Komal Mistri, 2022-2023, *Fungi*, Photograph
Print on WP Plywood, Glass, Textile,
Watercolour on Paper, Ed. 1/4, 11 x 11 in

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Komal Mistri, 2022-2023, *Feeding Room*,
Photograph Print on WP Plywood, Ed. 1/4, 10 x
14.5 in

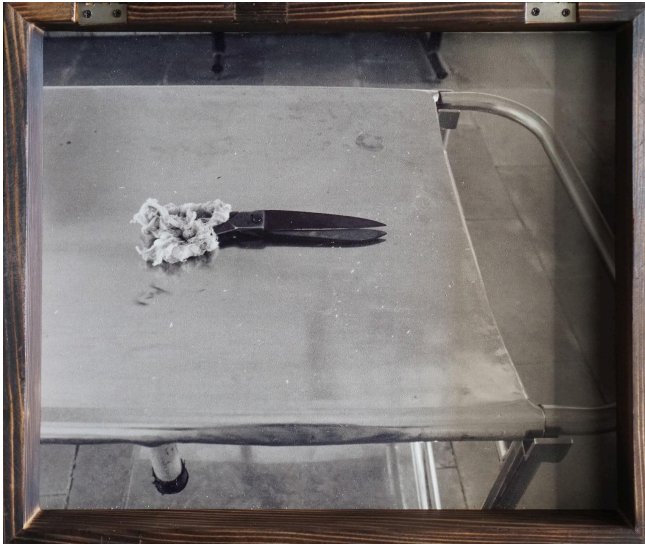


Komal Mistri, 2022-2023, *Stretch*, Photograph
Print on WP Plywood, Watercolour on Bondage
Stitches, Ed. 1/4, 11 x 11 in

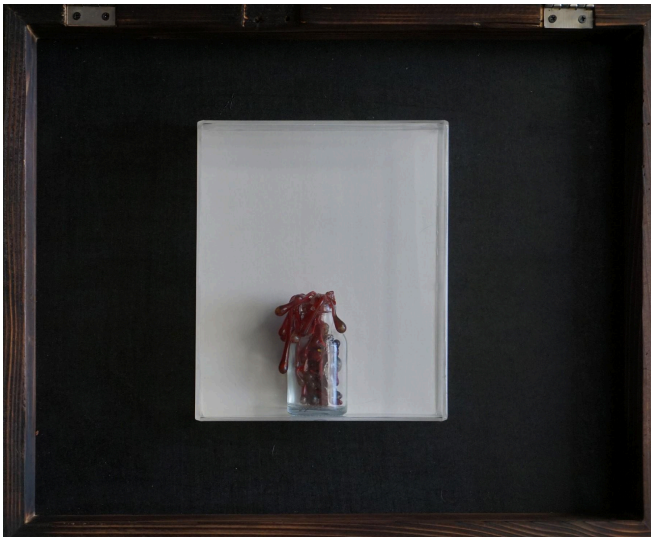
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Komal Mistri, 2022-2023, *Injured Hesitation*,
Photograph Print on WP Plywood, Ed. 1/4, 13 x 11 in



Komal Mistri, 2022-2023, *Objects*,
Photograph Print on WP Plywood,
Glass Bottle Glass Drops, Ed. 1/4, 13.5 x 11 in

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