



Nur Jahan Silver Rupee of Agra Mint AH 1034 1624 AD Copyright Sarmaya Arts Foundation

## *Shifting Selves: Between meaning, mythology and mirage*

The team at *TARQ* presents their upcoming exhibition, *Shifting Selves*, a luminous show that stands at the ever-evolving crossroads of the self. The past year has disrupted the simple certainties of our existence. Faced with a storm of doubt, we sought an anchoring in terra firma, the solid ground of identity and home. *Shifting Selves* investigates themes of identity and belonging, primarily through the works of three gifted artists, Saju Kunhan, Saubiya Chasmawala and Rithika Merchant. With their art serving as compass points, the show brings to display, a selection of objects, drawing connections from across the many genres of the *Sarmaya* collection, including photography, numismatics and indigenous and contemporary art.





The City of Delhi Before the Siege, From Illustrated London News, Jan 16, 1858 Woodblock print H: 25.5 cm x W: 35.5 cm Copyright Sarmaya Arts Foundation

This exhibition is the first in the series of collaborations between *Sarmaya* and India's leading art galleries in an attempt to explore the relationships between collectors, gallerists and artists through the work being created. *In Clouds over a landscape*, a map of Delhi made on recycled panels of wood, Saju Kunhan sheds light on his own—and the city's—migrant identity by engaging with the subjectivity of maps and their function as history-making devices. Saubiya Chasmawala constantly negotiates her presence (and absence) in a man-made society in her works. At times she does so by splicing personal photographs with her own interventions, and at others, through repetitive, hypnotic drawings that render Arabic syllables into an abstraction. Rithika Merchant leaps into the familiar constellations of mythology and subverts them with her retelling – using ungendered figurations that challenge the patriarchal lens and rejecting the concrete truths of capitalism. Her practice investigates the modern human condition by playing witness to the monumental changes in our cultural, political and natural landscapes, exemplified best in *Birth of a New World*.







Mayank Shyam Milan (Assimilation, Gond Painting) , 2019 Acrylic and ink on paper H: 54 cm x W: 73.5 cm Copyright Sarmaya Arts Foundation

The exhibition, curated and designed by the Sarmaya team, is anchored in the works of these three artists, but also employs their practices as catalysts to examine Sarmaya's collection across genres. Expanding upon Saju Kunhan's socio-political inquiries are artist Zarina Hashmi's 2011 Delhi series that explores themes of migration, displacement, destruction and reconstruction, as well as Warli artwork by Amit Mahadev Dombhare that poses questions of land and ownership, among other works. Juxtaposed with Saubiya Chasmawala's 'meaningless syllables' are medieval Indian coins inscribed with carefully crafted statements. This includes coins of Akbar that carry evidence of his experiments with religion and numismatics in an attempt to achieve a prophetic status, and that of Nur Jehan that give us a notion of how even the most powerful Mughal women operated within realms circumscribed by men. *Majha*, by artist and visual thinker Gaurav Ogale and sound artist Farah Mulla, is an evocative piece that responds to the exhibition curation.

With these connections, *Shifting Selves* sparks dialogues that transcend epochs, cultures and mediums. In doing so, it invites you to stand at the ever-evolving crossroads of the self and let go of the familiar in exchange for a moment of the remarkable.

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