

TAKE

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Nihaal Faizal's intervention on cover page:

Apart from TAKE's very first issue (Volume 1 Issue 1: Black), the magazine's mastheads have always appeared on the top left corner of the cover page. For TAKE's 28th issue on memory, the artist Nihaal Faizal returns the cover page masthead to the top right—a position it fleetingly and briefly occupied just once before, in its initial launch issue.

Cover Image:

One of the envelopes on which Mahatma Gandhi wrote notes at his meeting with Lord Mountbatten, 2 June 1947. Displayed as a part of the exhibition *Tangled Hierarchy* curated by Jitish Kallat at John Hansard Gallery, part of the University of Southampton, the UK. With the kind permission of the University of Southampton.

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Above: Installation view, 'S. H. Raza | Zamin: Homelands'

material from the Raza Foundation the show is curated by Puja Vaish, Director of the JNAF, and ran from 2 June–31 July 2022. The show incorporates texts that are informative, touching anecdotes using letters—written and received—and notes written in Devanagari, French, and English tell of the artist's assimilation of languages, and varied knowledge of art, literature, poetry and cultures.

Raza was born and raised in a small town in Madhya Pradesh where his father was a forest ranger. His experiences and memories of growing up close to nature and the environment later churned into his incessant brushstroke and dripping in the 70s. The exhibition's title is taken from a 1971 oil on canvas painting titled *Zamina* phenomenal gestural work—beams of yellow, orangish red, and green screams from behind the aggregating black fluid that barely cohere of imagery in our eye. While in France during 1960s and 70s, Raza revisited the forest landscapes in India bringing defining compilations from remembered residues of his mind. Almost notating the mild conversations heard from a distance or fiery flames visible in the middle of the night.

During 1948–55, Raza turned dramatically lyrical watercolours on paper to paradigms in landscapes—works such as *Houses with Medieval Church*, *Church at Meulen*, *Mosque* being good examples. These works trace diversities in rectilinear views and feature structures drawn from an aerial vantage in the delightful diagonal brushwork. With blocks and broken lines on ochre and brownish grey ground or sky—these architectural constructs sometimes are a dense mass of black, unsubstantial structures, cubist contours or tin-like translucent flatness of burnt sienna, grey and ochres that occupy the blazing ground but, with no specifics of time and place. Scenes in graphite where Raza indefinitely

erases and draws (leaving the lines visible than removing them with an eraser), where lines multiply to construct. A few contours define the wall, roof and depth of the structures that hint at the window or door—a pictorial frame looks cohesive as a picture but hardly situates one location in the viewer's mind.

Traced in a scene, *Untitled* (1952) gouache on paper has a burnt sienna sphere that looms large between the disproportionate structures suspended in cosmic space—it appears like twin cities were split, while they share a sun or a moon telling a mythical tale of light and darkness. As we move through the exhibition, a black dot (we imagine we know so much about it, yet we struggle with its presence) is cosmically framed in the middle of a square, moving, forwarding (in its entirety always) across the plane. Raza's late works develop many forms of this dot—from an orb in a landscape to a circle, mass, or sun, embedded amid a tile-like mosaic which at times relocates across the plane. The show culminates with a work titled *Amar Kantak* (1998) with verso text that reads, 'Amarkantak, Mandala, Kakaiya, Dindori, Niwas, Satpuda, Vindhyachal, Narmada, Narsinghpur... my thoughts and life forces are driven by these (places). Eternal memories. In gratitude to my homeland – Raza.' Names of these places variously suggest sites of pilgrimage, where mountains collide, rivers meet, and saints had resided. If not human-like, the dot emanates a humanising effect on us as we constantly follow its path in the exhibition.

The artist moved away from pictorial constructions in the mid-1950s to experiment with the forms of abstractions—rising from substantial, tangible traces of buildings to attain a full circle to culminate in symbol, motif, geometry which is predictable of a matured seeker in a person. In the show, the artist's most prodigious works are of the 70s—where he revisits memories in most discomfiting brush strokes—in fleeting blobs and dashes across the canvas. The artist's experiences of nature and land emanate in colours and emotions that echo his calling in loss and longing for his homeland.

'S.H. Raza | Zamin: Homelands', Curated by Puja Vaish, Jehangir Nicholson Art Foundation, Mumbai, 2 June–31 July 2022.

Review

04 - Mumbai

REVIEW OF 'EVENT, MEMORY, METAPHOR'

Aparna Andhare



Above: Garima Gupta, *Cassiterite (Cornwall)*, Colour pencils, Graphite on Archival paper, Copier paper, Gateway paper and Rice paper, 8 x 16 inches, 2021. Photo Courtesy: Garima Gupta and TARQ.

'Event, Memory, Metaphor' has all the elements needed for an enthralling art show, responding to contemporary struggles and the changing nature of the way archives are created, accessed and interpreted. A multi-artist, multi-medium show at Tarq, in Mumbai, curated by Anish Gawande, the exhibition is an assemblage of artworks that speak to each other, that shout and argue but very respectfully, of course.

Artworks in the show reiterate that the personal is inextricably political; the world is a tangled mess,

and we are all connected in several sticky ways. The making of history, its recollection and retelling links us all, and affects us as individuals and society. A seemingly humble bag suspended from the ceiling encapsulates Areez Katki's family history, with parts forgotten, the textile mill production of large companies like Wadia Group's Bombay Dyeing, and the gendered perceptions of skills and techniques such as embroidery. On the other hand, Garima Gupta's light boxes make a commentary on the natural world being categorised and taxonomies set up by colonisers. She takes an archive from a university in America and reclaims it, attempting to decolonise the material and its analysis, bringing to the fore the violence that enabled the creation of the 'archive' in the first place.

Writing is on the wall, quite literally, but in two very different ways: Saubiya Chasmawala and Muzzumil Ruheel both work with calligraphy. Using Arabic letters, Chasmawala creates patterns, reminiscent of monumental Kufic writing, exploring the form and grace of the line. This repetition of form can be seen as prayer or practice. Her engagement is self-critical, and unavoidably entangled, even as her lines drum up a rhythm. When has the engagement with faith or spirituality been straightforward? Ruheel, on the other hand, turns forms of historical writing on its head, obscuring meaning, turning the page into a checkerboard, and the act of comprehension into a perilous game.

A group show always runs the risk of turning into a hodgepodge, but Gawande uses the gallery space to his advantage, creating small pods, allowing the viewer enough breathing and thinking space—perhaps most poignantly in the location of one of Parag Tandel's sculptures placed at the back, near a window. Tandel tells the story of the Koli community. The Kolis are a fishing community, and the original inhabitants of Bombay. With unbridled urbanisation, the community is now being literally pushed out of their homes and their livelihood is being systematically destroyed. Bridges, buildings, and the complete lack of sensitivity towards the environment is reflected in the tarpaulin blue sculpture, itself very delicate. The precarious nature of home is also central to Saju Kunhan's work, as he works with fragmented tiles from his ancestral house. The impulse to hold on to pieces, and recreating the past is deeply moving. Like Kunhan's tiles, Tandel's *Into the Bones* is a set of sculptures that look like fossils, shards of the past, rescued from rubble and earth and uncovered in



Above: Installation view, 'Event, Memory, Metaphor', Curated by Anish Gawande, Tarq, Mumbai. Photo Courtesy: TARQ.

excavations. Using natural elements and brass, Tandel's sculptures sparkle and catch the eye, shining like beacons, announcing an emergency—this is a cry of help, an urgent call to conserve, and to protect, before it is too late.

The archive, ever present and silently building, is at the heart of this show. Tandel makes a book and records how Koli women are adapting in *Ek Bahal Mein Chand Hoga, Ek Bagal Mein Rotiyan*, while Philippe Calia with *Cloud Atlas* makes cyanotypes which document natural resources and geographies that are source elements in most objects we use, including devices that physically store information. The vivid blue of *Cloud Atlas* questions the materiality of (even digital) information, and actions that eventually destroy the planet.

Destruction, in its most obvious and train-wreck glory, forms the core of Sameer Kulavoor's *Read & Resist*, and *JCB*. These are images we have seen several times on our phones and in newspapers. He depicts protests, atrocities and politics being actively recorded, and encourages a vocal political stance in his large ironically cheerful style. Most pressing

causes are recorded in realistically comical panels, and he sets up a moral compass for walking towards justice in a dystopian, crumbling world.

The show is as much about its curatorial framework and the scholarship it references, as it is about the artworks. Anisha Gawande brings together a range of disciplines, including borrowing the title from noted historian Shahid Amin. This well-researched approach encourages viewers to deliberate over how an incident turns into history. Not all archives are written, not all stories are told, not all significant issues are articulated but the slippery past and its implications can be captured in art, creating an aesthetic experience that moves, delights, and even frustrates. Anish Gawande has created a layered narrative of visual and textual material that makes the unsaid quite apparent.

'Event, Memory, Metaphor', Curated by Anish Gawande, Tarq, Mumbai, 14 July– 24 September 2022.

Review

05 - Kolkata

BEYOND THE DARK EDGE: EXPLORING THE NUANCED WORLD OF ARUNIMA CHOUDHURY

Oindrilla Maity



Above: Arunima Choudhury, *Landscape in Red*, Acrylic on canvas, 24.02 x 24.02 inches, 2018. Photo Courtesy: Emami Art.

In the visual art circuit of Kolkata Arunima Choudhury's presence has always been non-intrusive and yet persistent. Like William Wordsworth's solitary Lucy Gray—character from the eponymous poem—she is perhaps "The sweetest Thing that ever grew/Beside a human door!" We are yet to discover her other side: her ever-curious mind which constantly seeks to transcend social taboo, patriarchy and female stereotypes; her expansive vocabulary of the process of life and death; her experience of transience and permanence and her broad awareness of the environment. Therefore, an exhaustive collection of her work of over four hundred paintings from 1995 to 2022, reaching a retrospective-level exhibition titled 'The Dark Edge of Green' and curated by Nancy Adajania (at Emami Art, Kolkata, June–August, 2022) is a rediscovery of the artist who creates a world in which she reckons "...sadness is not the end of anything. There begins new hope; new light; new sunshine..."

Arunima Choudhury (b. 1950, Siliguri, West Bengal) studied painting at The Indian College of Art and Draftsmanship, and design and mass communication

at Chitrabani, Kolkata, throughout the 1970s. Deeply inspired by the post-Tagore Bengali poets Jibanananda Das, Bishnu Dey, Buddhadeb Basu, Shakti Chattopadhyay, and the Hungryalist movement, she is a true reflection of the cultural psyche of the Nehruvian era in Bengal. Nancy Adajania introduces the exhibition as one in which the artist's work 'expresses nurturing fecund generative female principal' However, instead of looking at Choudhury's work through the rubric of 'woman and nature', which appear as a recurrent motif in the work, Adajania attempts to look beyond the reductive and unitary conception about women—a finding that continues to echo through her latest curatorial venture 'Woman is as Woman Does' (2022). Explored from the deeper and more complex aspects, Adajania discovers the archetypal impulses from the subconscious, which set Arunima free from sexual and social inhibitions; she discovers the artist's complete freedom in her work and it is this joyous element that the curator draws our attention to.

Choudhury's work is not just an illustration of nature but is expressed through the manifestation of the artisanal and ethical choice, journeying through which Adajania is reminded of the American poet Forrest Gander's idea that eco-poetics is 'not just about using nature as one's subject matter.' Eco-poetics is connected to the world in a way that implies responsibility—an aspect that the spectator hardly misses in the artist's work. The paintings raise questions about life at every level. Adajania's take on Choudhury is akin to what the journal *Eco-poetics* did to the term eco-poetics by broadening it from poetry into poiesis.



Above: Arunima Choudhury, *Beastly Games and Other Love Stories X*, Vegetable colour on acid-free handmade paper, 14.76 X 17.72 inches, 2009. Photo Courtesy: Emami Art.