

COMPLEXITIES OF SOCIAL IDENTITIES & ‘OTHER STORIES’

Art today foregrounds itself on the performative regime of representation. While representation functions on certain categorical appearances, its tenacity in visual practices stems from questioning, sometimes subverting and intervening these categories. The performance of gender and religious norms most often restricts the being of an individual in the majority of the societies that we are part of. Queerness is that tender strength where resistive actions emerge that interrogate the normative. These actions are not grand in their form and function but sublime utterances that subvert structures. This article engages **Fiza Khatri’s ‘Sailoon And Other Stories’** and **Areez Katki’s ‘Bildungsroman (& Other Stories)’** that demonstrates intimate moments and domesticity while establishing dialogues around **queerness, patriarchal hegemonies and identity.**



Fiza Khatri, *Shining*, Oil on canvas, 2020

Sailoon And Other Stories, **Fiza Khatri’s** debut solo show at the **Jhaveri Contemporary** delicately charts her everyday intimate moments and the way she navigates socially constructed spaces. *Shining*, an oil painting depicts a scene at a sailoon. Almost a narrative sequence at pause where the observer’s eyes are allowed to carefully participate in the activities happening within it. What is distinguishable about this painting is a transgressive performance that unfolds within the composition. Three men participate in a woman’s gaze choreographed in a space that is primarily meant for men. The sailoon in this painting and many alike are socially constructed spaces that are among some of the peculiar sites of homosociality in South Asia. **Fiza’s** presence in the painting and in the *Sailoon* dissolves few of the prescribed norms of heteronormativity.



Fiza Khatri, *The Sink*, Oil on canvas, 2020

Haircut is one of the recurring themes in **Fiza's** work. As poetic as it can be, hair is significantly political. It is a powerful code. The ritual of haircut is through which she claims ownership of her body. A deeply self referential painting, *The Sink*, a self portrait takes one on a journey of self introspection. Depicting a personalised space where most of us greet, encounter ourselves multiple times throughout the day. A mirror placed above a sink. The elements in the painting inform the viewer about the possible action that must have taken place. A haircut! The subtle hues and the strategic composition of the work passes by leaving behind a mark in the memory of self introspection.



Fiza Khatri, *Spark and Bite*, Oil on canvas, 2020

Fiza encapsulates tenderness of her life and complexities of queerness through her paintings. Witnessing her works is experiencing personalised spaces, interactions with people, plants and animals. She currently lives and works in Karachi. She was awarded her BA from **Mount Holyoke College, Massachusetts** in **2015** and is expected to receive her MFA from **Yale School of Art** in **2023**.



Areez Katki, *Shrine (Still Life with Partially Squeezed Lime)*, Cotton thread hand embroidery on cotton khatka, 2018

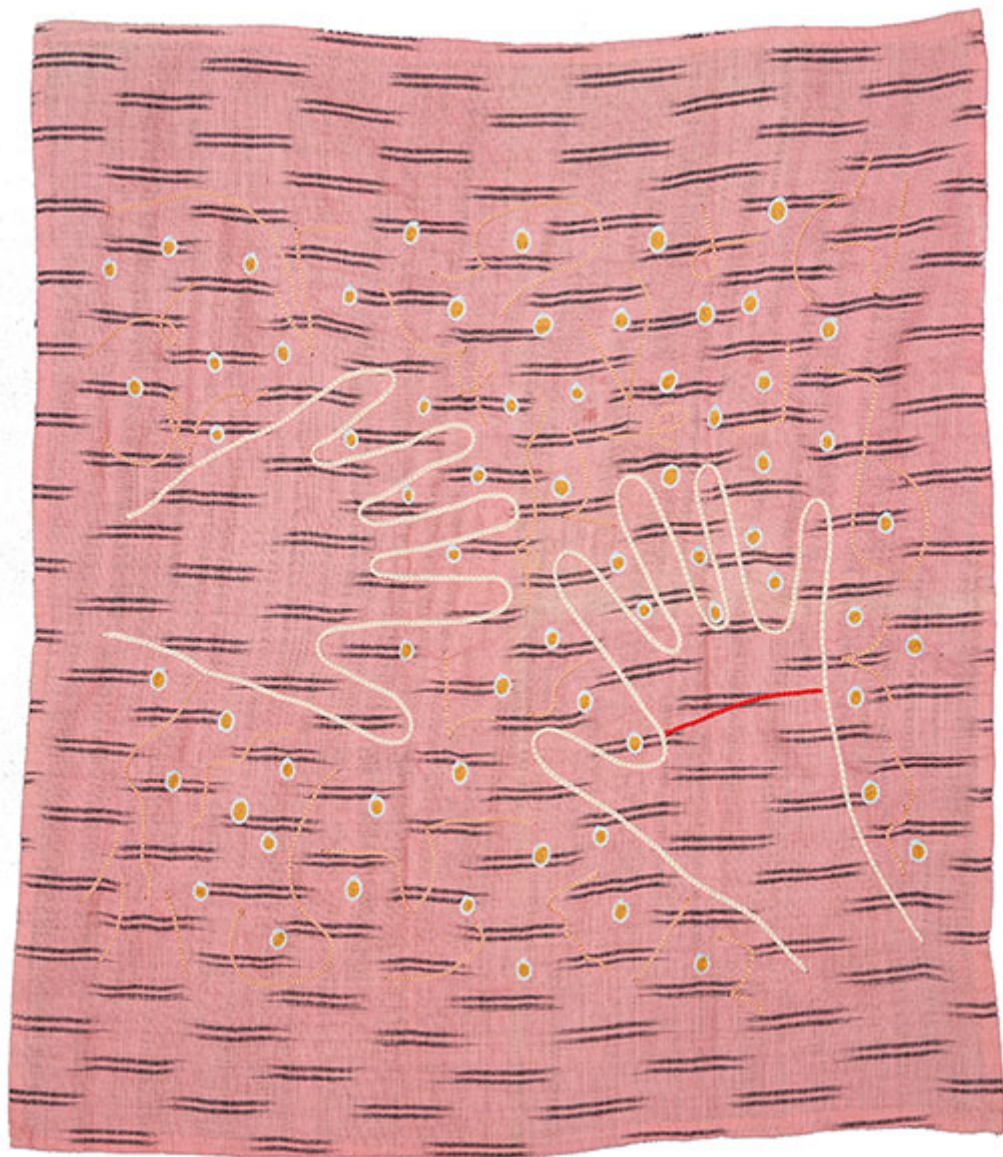
Bildungsroman (& Other Stories) is **Areez Katki's** first solo show in India that is presented by **Tarq**. Using domestic cloth as the grounding framework of his work, Katki interweaves complexities of **migrant identity, spirituality** and **sexuality**. The title borrows an all-encompassing term from German, for a person's spiritual and psychological journey. The narrative of the exhibition is ingrained in the title itself. It provides a novel context to Katki's work foregrounding his formative years spent with his mother and grandmother, learning the techniques of embroidery from them.



Katki deploys materials and techniques that are primarily bound to gendered associations, in particular considered as ‘feminine.’ He presents a dense visual vocabulary that interrogates patriarchal hegemonies. Katki brings forward multiple important nodes of his identity, a member of the traditional Parsi community—a child of Zoroastrian immigrant and a queer New Zealander.

“Katki’s approach to making work for the exhibition honours his inheritance of needlecraft traditions via the female members of his family and his consciousness of the political significance of craft practices. He notes the difficulty of recovering matrilineal heritage within Zoroastrian tradition; searching out stories of female deities and independent Parsi women as well as the presence of textiles. The tale of a piece of simple cloth that now tells a grand story, captures his imagination. Heeschews the more extravagant frontiers of Parsi textile tradition—bypassing sumptuous brocades, riotously embroidered silk ‘Garas’ and quilted bridal mantles—and selecting to embroider over everyday clothes sourced during his travels ...”

-Curator and writer Anna Miles



Areez Katki, *Hands on lap*, Cotton thread hand embroidery over Ikat handkerchief, 2019

Katki is an artist and writer currently based in **Wellington, New Zealand**. His practice addresses the social constructs of spirituality, postcolonial identity and sexuality in reference to being born into a Persian Zoroastrian family. Having a background in Art History, Katki borrows from social and historical research to explore his complex genetic landscapes.

Text by Kuldeep Patil

Image Courtesy: Jhaveri Contemporary, Fiza Khatri, Tarq and Areez Katki

Find more about the Artists and the Art works:

<https://jhavericontemporary.com/viewing-rooms/sailoon-and-other-stories>

<https://www.instagram.com/fklmnop/?hl=en>

<https://privateviews.artlogic.net/2/3752ce5fa09d5ddceabffd/>

<https://www.areezkatki.co>

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