



'Transparent Billboard'.

BYRNE: PLANE IN SIGHT
AKARA ART, MUMBAI

There is a sense of solitude in George Byrne's photographs of vibrant landscapes bereft of habitation. The quietude of the streets and the emptiness of the strip malls and second-storey car parks bring back the sense of eerie isolation that pandemic-induced lockdowns created in urban spaces around the world.

The images seem akin to an abstract painting, with clear geometric shapes juxtaposed against one another. A sense of fantasy leaves you wondering if the landscapes are real. "He also references the New Topographics photography movement via a subject matter firmly entrenched in the urban everyday," states the curatorial note.

These works by Byrne, an Australian photographer who lives in Los Angeles, are part of his first solo show in India, at Akara Art, Mumbai. This is the gallery's second physical show after *Horescape*, an exhibition of Somnath Hore's works, in July. "The physical viewing is by appointment only and we are staggering the visits," says Puneet Shah, director, Akara Art.

He first came across Byrne's photographs online; and they evoked a strong response. "There was a very modernist painterly quality in his photographs," he says. The photographer's gaze scans streetscapes like a flâneur, collecting fragments of the urban landscape. "Returning to his studio and to his computer, he then laboriously sifts through these sharp, contrast-heavy images, and choosing elements from these images he starts to meddle, using photographic software to cut, paste, re-colour, and edit the final image," explains the note.

The works for the show have been chosen to appeal to the aesthetic of younger collectors.

The exhibition can be viewed till 24 October at Akara Art, Colaba, Mumbai. Phone: 022-22025550



'71st St, Miami'.

THE ART SEASON IS HERE AND RARING TO GO

Following the lull of the pandemic-induced lockdown, art galleries are back with shows in the virtual and physical space. These range from a new series for young artists to a show reflecting artistic interpretations of the uncertain times we live in. Here are Lounge's picks of the season

Avantika Bhuyan

Avantika.bhuyan@htlive.com

APPROPRIATION DISINFORMATION—NATURE AND THE BODY POLITIC
TARQ, MUMBAI

Geneva-based artist Apnavi Makanji's drawings and installations have always added a layer of meaning to archival material, creating complex constructs informed by botany, memory and displacement. In their new series, Makanji has taken archival material from a French atlas, *Atlas International Larousse Politique Et Economique*, dating back to the 1950s, and layered it with collages of fictitious dead and decaying monsters made with found pages of a magazine. "By taking this atlas, she has looked at tools of capitalism and proof of systematic violence. The atlas also lists the materials that came from the colonies. Hence the work examines the injustice of resource distribution," says gallerist Hena Kapadia, who is showing these works as part of the show *Appropriation Disinformation—Nature And The Body Politic*, at Tarq, Mumbai. These collages were shown earlier this year at the Dhaka Art Summit as part of the exhibition *Seismic Movements*, curated by Diana Campbell.

This is the first time works are being shown in India "These collages are not only a representation of what has been forgotten, buried or annihilated, they also stand in for a subconscious that is mutant and diseased," says the curatorial note. The series



'Appropriation Disinformation—Nature and the Body Politic'.

seems particularly relevant at a time of geopolitical flux. "It looks at how much colonialism has shaped our lives," adds Kapadia.

The exhibition can be viewed by appointment at Tarq, Mumbai, till 30 September. Phone: 022-6615 0424

FUTURE IS NOT FIXED
NATURE MORTE AND VADEHRA ART GALLERY, DELHI

Alongside *Masking-Shell*, a watercolour and charcoal on paper work created earlier this year, one can read artist Anju Dodiya's words about the process of creating it: "The great Venetian painter Tintoretto died in a plague pandemic and Munch survived the Spanish flu. I can only laugh at my audacity in February, when I had told a friend that I was planning to do some joyous paintings. What the hell are joyous paintings? Munch gives me joy, most Italian pietas make me sing and the bleak wartime still-lives of Picasso are sumptuous. So will we sustain our joy? What lies ahead?"

Her work is part of a virtual exhibition, *The Future Is Not Fixed*, organized by two Delhi-based galleries, Nature Morte and Vadehra Art Gallery. The title of the show, featuring 24 artists like Dodiya, Bharti Kher, Dhruvi Acharya, Gigi Scaria and Jitish Kallat, mirrors the nebulous times we live in. "None of us ever had a fix on the future but we liked the illusion that we did. But now even that illusion has come crashing



'Dominus Aeris Coleus XIV' by Thukral & Tagra.

down," says Arjun Sahwney, the curator. "Everyone is mulling over this at different levels." As he wondered how this period would be documented by the visual arts, the galleries approached him separately for a show on these lines. "When they realized both had a similar idea, they volunteered to collaborate on a single show in which the artists illustrate these thoughts and feelings," he adds. Every work on display is accompanied by an artist's note on their interpretation of this period.

In addition, Vadehra Art Gallery has started an initiative called Fresh to support young, emerging artists. The first in the series is an online showcase of Shrimanti Saha's works, *Fire In The Greenhouse And Other Stories*. The artist draws heavily on myths, pop culture, Company paintings and science fiction, creating dreamlike vistas and dystopian landscapes. "It was more important than ever during a time like this to support emerging artists. Shrimanti's work is also extremely evocative and interesting for young collectors," says Roshini Vadehra, gallery director.

'Future Is Not Fixed' can be viewed on *NatureMorte.com* and *VadehraArt.com* till 20 September, and *'Fire In The Greenhouse And Other Stories'* can be viewed on *VadehraArt.com* till 30 September.



'Falani' by an anonymous artist from Kabul; and (below) 'Haya' by Arshi Irshad Ahmadzai.

SEEDS ARE BEING SOWN
SHRINE EMPIRE GALLERY, DELHI

The Shrine Empire Gallery in Delhi has an earthy smell floating around it's newest exhibition. The smell of *tite-pati*, a healing herb, envelops the senses. At the entrance, images from the Gorkhland Picture Archive come into view. Artist Aqiu Thami has presented a collection of striking images from newspaper archives recounting the often invisibilized movement of the people of Gorkhland. There is a deeply personal element to this work as Thami presents images of the curfews and communication blackouts she witnessed while growing up in Darjeeling. "And there is the ceremonial smell of *tite-pati*, which her parents have sent from back home," says Shaunak Mahubani, who has curated the show, *Seeds Are Being Sown*, for the Prameya Art Foundation. This is the second physical exhibition in the Capital, open to visitors by appointment.

The themes of hybridity and resistance to diverse voices and cultures run through works by feminist artists such as Tehmeena Firdos, Baaraan Ijlal, Arshi Ahmadzai and Anna Ehrenstein. This is the third part of the series, *Allies For The Uncertain Futures*, being curated by Mahubani. "One of the core threads that emerges within this assemblage of feminist artists is the practice of conscious commemoration, of a listening and holding space for those who have faced great losses in struggles for identity and self-determination," says the curatorial note.

Mahubani, who witnessed protests against the Citizenship (Amendment) Act in Delhi last year, has used the past couple of months to reflect on conversations with artists in the context of questions of citizenship, who belongs and whose voices will be heard and whose images will get invisibilized. "Artists have come from these experiences or have been involved in moments of resistance," says Mahubani.

Last year's experiences prompted them to give free rein to artists. "Each voice is important in its own space," they say. For instance, Tehmeena Firdos' small-scale sculpture refers to the emotional uncertainties of families living in the area where anti-CAA protests took place. Firdos' new body of work, created in the lockdown period, carries heavy residues of violence but also contains important markers of directions ahead, "such as Dr (B.R.) Ambedkar's emblematic pointing finger coming together in the word *sabr* (patience) painted on one of the sculptures," says the note.

Then there is Baaraan Ijlal's *Change Room* project, which holds space for multiple voices that have experienced conflict and abuse. "It features a testimony of a woman from Ahmedabad who got relocated from her home. It circles around the violence and how life changed after moving from one locality to another—it looks at the residue of the violence," says Mahubani. They are happy to be back in the gallery. "It's about re-engaging with multiple senses after the isolation of the pandemic," they say.

The exhibition can be viewed at Shrine Empire Gallery, Defence Colony, Delhi, till 24 October. Phone: 011-41327630

A Janus-faced genius of modern jazz

FIRST
BEATSANJOY
NARAYAN

Charles Mingus, the late great bassist, bandleader, and one of jazz's most influential figures, is sometimes referred to as Janus, the Roman god shown as having two faces—among other things, he stands for duality of personality. That's because of the diversity of styles that Mingus straddled: On the one hand, he combined all the elements of traditional jazz with blues and gospel to create bebop and hard bop compositions but, on the other, he broke down old conventions and composed and played in free and avant-garde styles. That is the sort of duality you find in the music of Georgia Anne Muldrow.

It may be blasphemous for many jazz purists to see similarities being drawn between Mingus, one of the genre's most towering personalities, who died aged 56 in 1979, and a musician such as Muldrow, born in 1983, but there are many reasons for it. Most prominent is her interpretation of Mingus' compositions. In 2017, Muldrow, a multi-instrumentalist, vocalist and composer, was commissioned to do a concert at Washington, DC's Kennedy Center. It was



Muldrow performing in Oakland, California, in November 2019.

called Muldrow Meets Mingus and it involved several other musicians. To get a taste of what it was like, you can sample two tracks from Muldrow's latest album, *Mama, You Can Bet!*: *Beemoanable Lady Geemix* and *Fables Of Faubus*. These are her interpretations of Mingus' *Beemoanable Lady* and *Fables Of Faubus*.

Muldrow calls her interpretations (or remixes) Geemixes, and those little spelling changes for "Beemoanable" and "Faubus" are also her own. But trivia aside, both compositions are re-imagin-

ings of the two tunes that are bouncy, funky and electronic. And while they may step up the pace of the originals, they don't take away from the sheer genius of the original composer. I made a playlist with Muldrow's versions alternated with the originals. And it works like a do-it-yourself EP: the modern version segueing seamlessly into the traditional, original one.

There is a caveat, though. It would not be accurate to say that the new versions of those two tunes are by Muldrow. They are not. They are by Jyoti.

THE LOUNGE LIST

Five tracks to bookend this week

1. *'Beemoanable Lady Geemix'* by Jyoti (Georgia Anne Muldrow) from *'Mama, You Can Bet!'*
2. *'Zane, The Scribe'* by Jyoti from *'Mama, You Can Bet!'*
3. *'Brokenfolks'* by Muldrow from *'VWETO II'*
4. *'Great Blacks'* by Muldrow from *'A Thoughtiverse Unmarred'*
5. *'Where I'm From'* by Muldrow & Declaime from *'Black Love & War'*

Yes, that's the Janus aspect of Muldrow's musical personality. Like Mingus, Muldrow straddles a range of styles and genres. But she also has aliases. One of them is Jyoti, a name given to her by the jazz musician and composer Alice Coltrane, who was a friend of the family (Muldrow grew up in Los Angeles and her parents were accomplished musicians). And Jyoti is the name she uses for her explorations of avant-garde jazz and electronic music. She also composes and performs under her birth name. But the music she makes then is different:

It's another form of jazz, amalgamated with funk, hip hop and neo-soul. But Jyoti's newest album, *Mama, You Can Bet!*, dedicated to her mother, Rickie Byars Beckwith, continues Muldrow's passionate journey into experiments with free jazz.

Besides the two re-imaginings of Mingus tunes, *Mama, You Can Bet!* has complex compositions: interplays between keyboards, percussion and bass but also, for the first time in her Jyoti avatar, Muldrow adds layers of her singing voice, which has been compared to Ella Fitzgerald, Nina Simone and Roberta Flack. The distinctive thing about her Jyoti incarnation is that Muldrow rarely uses any other musician, preferring to compose and play everything herself. At concerts, she performs—singing and moving with shaman-like grace—to her recorded compositions.

The 15 tunes on *Mama, You Can Bet!* are eclectic, heady and engrossing. But they also fit together remarkably. Occasionally funky, sometimes soulful and always virtuosic, it's an album that showcases the rare talent of someone who first began playing in her teens and has now become a hugely prolific musician talented not only in jazz but in soul, blues, hip hop and funk.

To explore Muldrow's other, non-Jyoti avatar, the first stop has to be the Seattle channel KEXP, which has a freely-accessible video of a full live performance of her and her husband, Declaime (Dudley Perkins), in the

channel's studio. It's from 2019, just after the duo had released *Black Love & War*, a full-length album on which they channel messages about black heritage, resistance and healing. When you watch the couple perform some of those songs from the album on the KEXP video, the love and complementarity is palpable. They also have a record label founded in 2008—SomeOthaShip Connect—that they use for most of their album releases, and which ensures them unconstrained creative freedom.

When it comes to releases, Muldrow has been prodigious. She has a few albums as Jyoti, but many more under her birth name. So many that navigating them can send you down a rabbit hole as you explore and get acquainted with her penchant for experimenting with styles and genres that could otherwise seem immiscible but which she blends together with finesse.

But to begin one's acquaintance with Muldrow's music, there is no better way to start than with the new Jyoti album. Because *Mama, You Can Bet!* is quite easily the best demonstration of how comprehensive and genre-defyingly talented a jazz musician can be. At 37, Muldrow already has a prodigious output of recordings. We can only expect much more.

First Beat is a column on what's new and groovy in the world of music.

@sanjoynarayan