



On the Occasion of its 20th Anniversary,
The South Asian Women's Creative Collective Presents

Archival Alchemy

Curated by Saisha Grayson • At Abrons Arts Center • April 6 - May 10, 2017 ...



Priyanka Dasgupta, *Where Straight Lines Fail*, 2016. Installation (video, sculpture, archival documents). Courtesy of the artist.

Exhibiting Artists: Golnar Adili; Marium Agha; Blank Noise (Jasmeen Patheja and fellow Action Heroes: Sapna, Anon, Freshly Divorced, Unrelentless Furiosa); Priyanka Dasgupta; Sabba Elahi; Index of the Disappeared (Chitra Ganesh & Mariam Ghani); Amy Khoshbin; Maya Mackrandilal; Zinnia Naqvi; Yamini Nayar; Nirmal Raja; Patience Rustomji; Himali Singh Soin

NEW YORK, NY - The South Asian Women's Creative Collective (SAWCC) is pleased to present its 20th anniversary visual arts exhibition, ***Archival Alchemy***, guest curated by Saisha Grayson. Opening April 6, the exhibition takes over all three gallery spaces at Abrons Arts Center, and features thirteen artists and collectives from throughout the diaspora, working across artistic media to investigate the resonances found in an archival past on the contingencies of the present. Archives are often cast as places of nostalgia— institutions for anchoring flights of fancy with the hard reassurance of facts; repositories for reinforcing “History”: capital “H” singular “y.” But those who take issue with the historical narratives that these archives traditionally uphold also find them productive resources for contesting the very stability and authority that they seem to ensure. Artists— especially those from diasporic and postcolonial perspectives— are critically positioned to work their magic on this archival fodder, rich with mutable, malleable material that can be remixed to new ends. Through this process, conventional understandings of a given reality are put through the grinder of repressed narratives, alternate experiences and gaps filled in by desire, imagination, and intuition. Along the way, artists confront the voids where evidence of individual lives, subversive strategies, and subaltern histories has been erased.

At a moment when South Asian communities, women, and immigrant neighborhoods like the Lower East Side are being targeted by an evidence-averse administration, this exhibition will also offer an opportunity for nuanced reflection on the complex global and personal histories that shape conflicting views of our contemporary moment. Several works explore the role that archives play in creating official histories, papering over dissent and managing the disappearance of non-citizens, while others present or produce counter archives that resist such erasure and offer strategies for empowerment. These include a new site-specific work for Abrons Arts Center's street-facing windows from *Index of the Disappeared* (2004 - present), a collaborative project by artists Chitra Ganesh and Mariam Ghani that charts the documentary trail of U.S. immigration and international policies post 9/11, and now in the era of Trump.

As part of *Archival Alchemy*, a **curator-led tour will be held on April 27, 6:30-8PM**, followed by a **concluding event on Sunday, May 7, 3-7PM** that will bring together panel discussions with artists, activist

and community representatives, and skill-sharing workshops for those seeking increased visibility or strategic invisibility within the bureaucratic and digital archives of our day. An exhibition catalogue with artist biographies, a full curatorial narrative, and essays will be released on May 7.

About the Curator: Saisha Grayson is a curator, writer, art historian and teacher focused on the intersections of contemporary art, feminist politics, and cultural activism. From 2011 to 2016, she was Assistant Curator at the Elizabeth A. Sackler Center for Feminist Art at the Brooklyn Museum, where she organized the Museum's presentation of *Wangechi Mutu: A Fantastic Journey*, curated *Chitra Ganesh: Eyes of Time*, and co-curated *Agitprop!*. Most recently, she co-organized *I want a president...(a collective reading – DC)*, a socially-engaged public art project that culminated in an action at The White House during the 2016 Creative Time Summit in DC. Grayson is also a Ph.D candidate at the Graduate Center, CUNY where she is finishing her dissertation, *Cellist, Catalyst, Collaborator: The Work of Charlotte Moorman*. Her writing has appeared in print and online journals, including *n.paradoxa*, *Moving Image Review and Art Journal (MIRAJ)*, *e-flux* and in museum and gallery publications.

About SAWCC: Founded in 1997, the South Asian Women's Creative Collective (SAWCC) is a nonprofit arts organization dedicated to the advancement, visibility, and development of emerging and established South Asian women artists and creative professionals. SAWCC has served South Asian women by providing a physical and virtual space to exchange ideas and feedback, and profile their creative and intellectual work across disciplines. Through its various programs, the group has earned a reputation for showcasing cutting-edge work that deals intelligently with issues of gender and cultural representation.

2017 SAWCC Visual Arts Committee: Sarah Burney, Ambika Trasi

Hashtags: #20YearsofSAWCC #ArchivalAlchemy

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Abrons Arts Center is the performing and visual arts center of Henry Street Settlement, supporting the presentation of innovative, multi-disciplinary work. The Center cultivates artists in all stages of their creative development through educational programs and residencies; and serves as an intersection of cultural engagement for local, national, and international audiences and art-workers.

466 Grand Street (at Pitt Street) New York, NY 10002

Gallery Hours: Tuesday-Saturday: 11AM-6PM; Sunday: 12-6PM;

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