

Social Memory: Sites of Remembrance

2023 Visual Arts Exhibition Catalog
South Asian Womxn's Creative Collective



Social Memory: Sites of Remembrance

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Visual Arts Exhibition
March 16–April 15, 2023

ArtSparks Collective
Rhea Aggarwal
Siona Benjamin
Marcy Chevali
Shabnam Jannesari
Parvathi Kumar
Farah Mohammad
Namita Paul
Nazrina Rodjan
Tara Sabharwal
Ariana Sarwari
Ela Shah
Mona Sharma
Pallavi Sharma
Fatima Zaidi

Curated by **Shilpi Chandra**

Elizabeth Foundation for the Arts
Blackburn 20|20 Gallery
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Curatorial Statement

Memory belongs equally to the present and to the past, to the individual and to a group. How then do individual-level processes interact with collective ones, and vice versa? How does a group share, convey, and sustain memories? In the same way that individual memory shapes a person's awareness of themselves in the present—their role within the family, workplaces, or institutions—social memory is the connective structure of groups, creating a collective consciousness of ideas and a sense of belonging. Social memory transmits the consciousness of the past to help individuals localize their memories, influence their ideas, and shape their identities. While acknowledging that sites of remembrance can often be places of contestation, artists are uniquely positioned to reformulate meaning, to open up new manners of collectivity, and to create opportunities for sharing and passing on knowledge.

This exhibition reflects the concerns on artists' minds today—from a reclamation of forgotten female South Asian histories and a continued interest in overturning the patriarchy, to a blurring of the distinction between "craft" and "fine art" and new modes of femme South Asian representation. The artists in this exhibition consciously explore the connection between social identity, collective knowledge, and historical memory; the past and present intertwine to point to a future that is open to a wider range of interpretations and expressions.

—Shilpi Chandra, New York 2023

***Shilpi Chandra** is an art historian and curator with a focus on contemporary art of South Asia and its diaspora. Her curatorial practice is rooted in making art freely accessible to lay audiences by creating exhibitions that bring people into public and community spaces. After receiving her MA in contemporary art from SUNY–Purchase College, she worked in the curatorial department at the Katonah Museum of Art on thematic exhibitions ranging from self-taught artists to mid-century modern architecture. At the Pelham Art Center, a community based arts organization, Shilpi was responsible for managing the exhibitions program. Shilpi also has an MBA from Columbia Business School and worked in healthcare marketing for several years. She regularly teaches adult education classes on Chinese and Indian art history and contemporary Asian art.*



Installation view
Blackburn 20120 Gallery, 2023

ArtSparks Collective

What happens when social memory is evoked amidst newly emerging social consciousness? How might it further the reimagining of individual and collective identities? These are some of the questions that the four artists of this collective—Dilkash Kauser, Sarvath Saba, Lathamani, and Nagarathna Duggana—have grappled with in response to the curatorial call. Their work serves as a site for recollection as they come together to contemplate their



ArtSparks Collective (Dilkash, Lathamani, Nagarathna, Saba)
Emergence, 2022
Mixed media (cloth, wool, ribbon, sequins)
52 x 52 inches

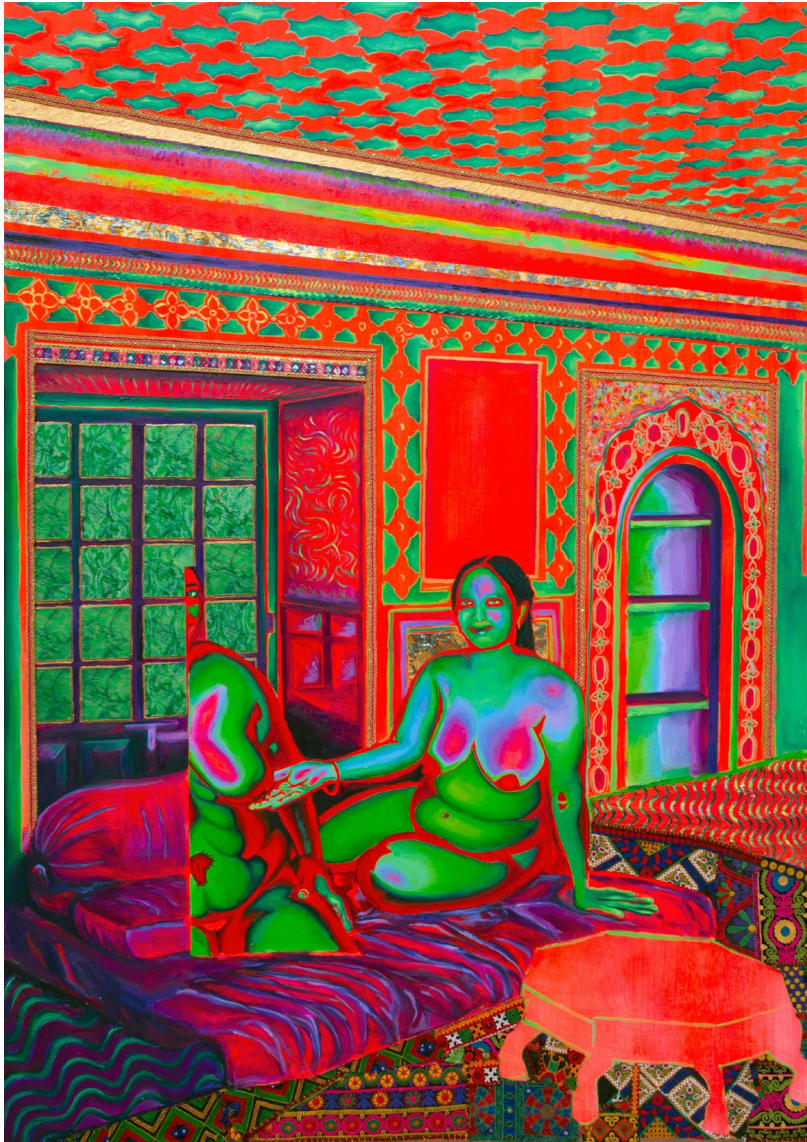


ArtSparks Collective, *Emergence* (detail)
Installation view

inherited positionality as women, mediated through sociocultural norms and often unequal power structures that maintain systems of patriarchy that in turn impact them either directly or indirectly. Through their images, rich in their narrative qualities, they seek to challenge these norms and power structures by reimagining and reclaiming their presence as women. While the art-making process serves as a means to extend their thinking into new horizons, the work they produce is intended to shine a light on their experiences and provoke consciousness-raising conversations among other women with similar shared histories.

Rhea Aggarwal

My most recent body of work is concerned with articulating South Asian lesbian identities using intricate textile patterns and neon digital colors. In this work, I explore the coexistence of traditional and perverse depictions of the feminine in India. I incorporate Indian textiles and traditional architecture with sourced images of “sexually perverse” women in a singular composition. I source images of women from popular cultures, like Bollywood, and taboo cultures, like pornography. I place these digital women in traditional *zenanas*, which are spaces in a house that are reserved only for women and that prohibit men from entering. I am inspired by South Asian miniature paintings and their depictions of female homoeroticism. By using traditional Indian aesthetics to depict queer sexualities, I challenge the nationalist condemnation of queerness as western and collapse the constructed binary between an “authentic Indian tradition” and a corrupting “western modernity.”



Rhea Aggarwal
Secrets of the Zenana III, 2022
Oil, acrylic, fabric, etching, gold leaf on canvas
65.5 x 47.5 x 3.5 inches



Rhea Aggarwal, *Secrets of the Zenana II* (left) and *Secrets of the Zenana III* (right)
Installation view

Siona Benjamin

The terrorist attack that occurred in Mumbai in 2008 was a massacre of both resident Indians and visiting foreigners. The Chabad house in Mumbai, a Jewish outreach center, a synagogue, and a hostel, was attacked and six of its occupants, including the rabbi and his wife, were killed. These attacks brought notice to the world of the existence of a small but ancient group of Indian Jewish people that inhabited the Indian subcontinent for approximately 2,000 years.

I was brought up as a Bene Israel Jew in a predominately Hindu and Muslim India. To some of my American friends, there were many questions asked. "Did Jews first inhabit India upon the establishment of the Chabad house?" "What did the local Jewish population look like? Sound like?" My Fulbright grant helped me to initiate a project to explore and reveal the various Indian Jewish faces of India in a photo collage/painting visual art exhibition.



Siona Benjamin
*Fulbright Series #10, Esther Sukkur (Belkar),
Sukkur Enock and Queenie Sukkur, 2012-2013*
Photo collages with gouache and acrylic paint
on Hahnemuhle paper
35 x 35 inches



Siona Benjamin
Fulbright Series #11, Maayan Abraham (Shahpurkar), 2012-2013
Photo collages with gouache and acrylic paint on
Hahnemuhle paper
35 x 35 inches

I videotaped and photographed about 70 Indian Jews and made 40 photo collage portraits, which are printed on 3 x 3 ft Hahnemuhle paper. I used gouache and 22-karat gold leaf to paint their stories. Visualizing the Bene Israel Jewish faces, they could be ghost images from my past, my childhood in Jewish India, weaving new and old stories. Are these faces from dreams and memories or are they just other faces on passports or immigration cards or perhaps from my family's photo albums?

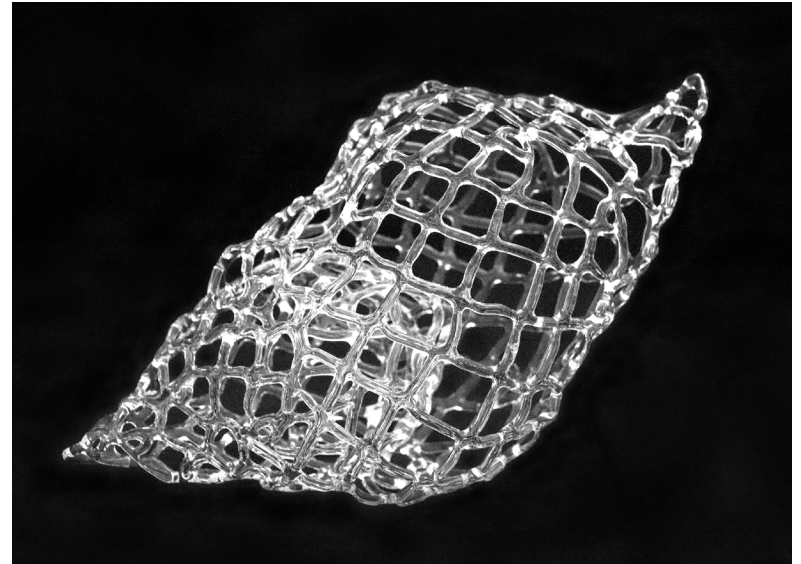
My goal is to promote the understanding about the true diversity of people in India. My project will help my audience understand the meaning of racial diversity and the need therefore to stop compartmentalizing "the other." I believe in the power of art to be able to make socio-political change in this world.

Marcy Chevali

My work is often repetitious, process based, and time consuming. It depends on the accretion of a simple shape through process. The forms that I make are translucent and vulnerable. This work is hesitant and delicate with a handmade, drawn quality. I often turn to a net or grid structure with glass, thread, or ink. A net is semipermeable, allowing some things to pass through but not others. It separates fish from water, butterflies from the wind, trapeze artists from the ground. They hold groups together. When formed into a net, glass rods, thread, or ink become stronger, occupying more dimensions and having the ability to expand. Although they divide space, both sides are easily visible. The work oscillates between disappearance and infinity. These netlike pieces show connections between many points, but also



Marcy Chevali, *Untitled* (detail)
Installation view



Marcy Chevali
Untitled, 2019
Flame worked borosilicate glass
5 x 8 x 4 inches

as a grid they provide a framework for directions of growth for the future. The semi-predictable grid structure can also show memories of the past. Although the glass rods are narrow and the reflections are small, they echo the shape of the entire piece and show a distorted reality.

My work is made up of personal metaphors through shape, materials, or relationship to context. Although it is often deeply personal, my hope is that a viewer can relate through their own experience but also often on a political, universal, or collective emotion.

Shabnam Jannesari



Shabnam Jannesari
Azin is Getting Married, 2020
Oil on canvas
55 x 82 inches

My bright, highly saturated palette is inspired by childhood memories such as the colorful carpet in my grandparents' home. The carpet is a symbol of an ideal world or paradise. It represents an invented world, outside of convention. Color and pattern conjure up a world of memory, a dream space in which the past and the pres-

ent exist together within my art practice. In my work, I try to maintain the immediacy of drawing and avoid rendering my forms too tightly. Working in this way allows me to experiment with form, color, and abstraction in my imagery and create an environment that departs from reality. I often choose patterns from Persian carpets and tiles as part of my subject matter.

I was born in Isfahan, a traditional and historical city with spectacular mosques that are decorated with traditional tiles and Islamic patterns. The mosque's colorful tiles have long inspired me, as have the patterns of Persian carpets. Their flat shapes free me to use pattern as a formal element in my work. The patterns in my paintings come from different elements that have been with me since childhood. These paintings tell the stories of the life I left behind. In my work, I explore the bittersweet nostalgia of distant memories in my life. My closest friends and family are

transformed into figures in surreal and hopeful visions of an alternate reality. My paintings express my personal story, but they are relatable to any woman who has been censored, sexualized, or otherwise oppressed by a patriarchal society. I carefully compose my figures in heterotopic spaces to reveal and empower the Iranian female identity. I flip the artistic tradition of objectified or idealized female forms, which are originally intended to attract men, into strong feminine forms living in their natural state.

Parvathi Kumar



Parvathi Kumar
Sense of Sameness, 2022
Photograph
18 x 24 inches

The human need to belong is universal. Candid photos of people bear witness and document social behaviors and interactions. Such photos are reflections and impressions of how people shape their identities and create a sense of togetherness within a common cultural setting. The human act of reminiscing on various life moments and events is natural. Historical photos of moments from a specific time and place preserve narratives and stories of how people were. Such photographic memories lend themselves to discussions of days past, in turn bringing people together, and to reaffirm a sense of identity.

While photographs portray how the photographer saw and recorded a moment, others from the same time may remember it differently or have gathered varied information. Therefore, there is an implicit bias or “skewed” view from the photographer’s work, which can influence how groups or viewers remember their

past. Candid photos are “extracts” of reality, containing details of a scene that fit only within the confines of a frame. Hence, people as the subjects in a photograph may be astonished by how they were perceived, and may remember the same moment quite differently.

The medium of photography is unique, in that the scope and recording capacity of the camera’s eye is much wider than the human eye! Hence, one may be surprised at what was forgotten at the moment of capture, reminded only later when reviewing details of an image! This further adds to the social contexts and how groups remember themselves and their experiences.

Ultimately, our collective time on Earth is fleeting. We create and preserve memories with and without documentation. The yearning to belong is in all areas and walks of life. Hopefully we remember what is important and worthwhile, and identify with what is inherently true.



Parvathi Kumar
Las Vegas, 2022
Photograph
18 x 24 inches

Farah Mohammad



Farah Mohammad is a printmaker and installation artist based in NYC. Some of her most recent works have been sculptural woodcut prints and monotypes of architectural structures that symbolize resilience. Her process of creating prints, where she breaks images down into shapes around which she builds the main subject, enables her to take an emotional inventory of their personal symbolism.

Through printmaking she combines anthropological research with her fascination with urban architecture. She draws inspiration from images she captures of spaces undergoing change. Through her work she creates a visual reality for herself, where her past and present, her Pakistani and her American identities, can all coexist.

Farah Mohammad
Dictator Lover, 2021
Woodcut prints on kitakata paper, hand-stitched with French linen thread,
pierced by and held to the wall with metal sculpture
64 x 38 x 15 inches

Namita Paul
Indigo Interior, 2022
Canvas, indigo dye, sequins, embroidery thread, fabric
48 x 60 inches



Fragments of childhood memories of annual visits to my grandparents' home in the Punjab are etched in my mind. A white brick single story structure with an open-to-sky courtyard ... stairs leading up to a flat roof connecting adjoining houses. A wooden door with an iron latch ... a dark, covered passage. A small kitchen with a concrete floor and shelves on two walls ... windowless living rooms.

The house is no longer in the family but remains in my subconscious. The sound of rain drumming down on the courtyard floor ... the touch of wet stone on the soles of my feet. The whirring of overhead fans in the summer heat, the rumble of my grandmother's sewing machine ... frocks and salwar kameezes in tiny floral prints. The aroma of her mooli parathas ... freshly grated radish spiced with salt, black and red pepper, the sound of her voice calling us to eat.

This is the house where I was born. This is also the house where my grandparents found refuge after being displaced from their home during the partition of India and Pakistan in 1947 and started a new life from scratch. The work on display is an attempt to conjure those fleeting images and hold on to them. Combining my memories with physical attributes of the house, I look for an anchor. A form that connects me across time, geographies, and place; that serves as a point of departure and arrival.

Nazrina Rodjan



Nazrina Rodjan
Tu hamár ke báte? / Who are you to me?, 2022
Oil on wood
50 x 30 inches

2023 will commemorate 150 years of indentured Indian labor from India to Suriname. An estimated 500,000 Indian indentured laborers were traded by the Dutch, British, and French empires to work on plantations throughout South America and the Caribbean. South Asians were kidnapped en masse into this new system of contract labor. The Indian Ocean crossing of the voyage from India to Caribbean colonies was called “Kala Pani,” meaning “black waters.” Crossing the Kala Pani was a taboo for South Asians—and particularly for women, who often made the oceanic voyage alone.

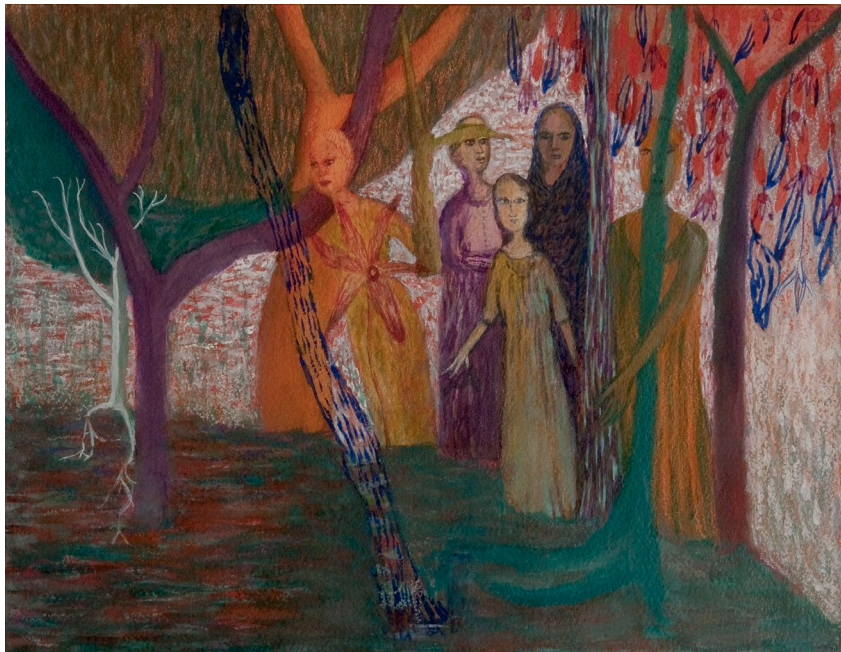
My current project (*Kala Pani: 1873-2023*) is a series of oil paintings portraying indentured Indian women who were photographed as colonial objects in the 19th and early 20th centuries on plantations in the Caribbean. Painting a series of portraits of these women is my way to reclaim their status as exoticized objects under the colonial gaze. By using the medium of oil, I am reclaiming a traditional technique used to create portraits of European nobility by remembering the lives of these women from the South Asian diaspora whom history has merely footnoted. Everything about these women seems to be a question we can never answer, but I decided to give them titles in Hindustani that are questions they might have for me: not only as the painter, but as their ancestor.

One of the pieces is a fictional portrait based on the faces of the women in my family. It is a combination of my own face, my mom’s, my nani’s, and my parnani’s. To me, creating this piece symbolized the acceptance of questions remaining unanswered, stories being lost forever, and realizing that after a history full of trauma, there’s a treasure in the women that are still here to tell their stories.

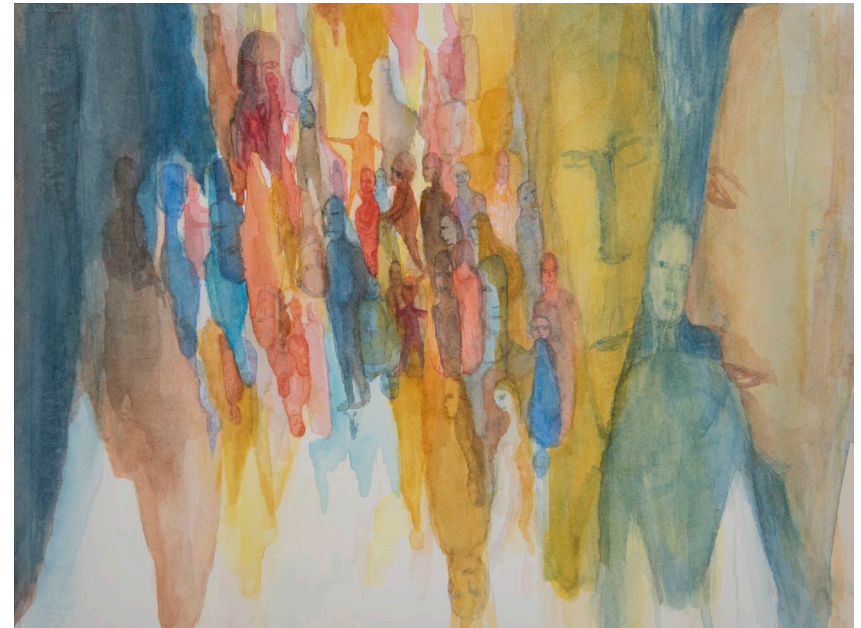
Tara Sabharwal

Over 40 plus years, I have been making watercolors, oil paintings, drawings, and prints in various sizes and formats, both figurative and abstract. Through a process of free-association mark-making, I tap into something deeper within myself, a part of myself that observes my awareness of reality, both experientially and through my understanding of Indian philosophy.

"The world is an illusion (*maya*), it is you, the experiencer (*atman*), that is Real." This, in essence, is my heritage from India: collective knowledge, social identity, and personal memory, all rolled into one. It is the underlying fabric of my childhood, from everyday conversations to myth and cosmology.



Tara Sabharwal
Watching a Procession, 2010
Watercolor and gouache
9 x 12 inches



Tara Sabharwal
Together Alone, 2019
Watercolor
11 x 14.5 inches

From early on, I grappled to understand what it all meant, especially as this true "self" had to be found. I was told it lived in a corner of the secret cave in one's heart, but the only way in was through living in the world outside. One needed to live a life with people, while understanding that it was unreal and impermanent. The quality of your mind was paramount. If you changed your mind, you changed the world, but the world of people was essential. You could not find yourself, or be yourself, alone.

My paintings in this exhibition exemplify this duality. People alone together. Life, with its inevitable struggles, has shown me how to accept this duality as a hallmark of the human condition, my emotional response to the dilemma between the self and the world, with its push-pull currents, in relation to nature and environment, relationships and community.

Ariana Sarwari



Ariana Sarwari
Sahr-e-Seer (Untitled 003), 2022
Inkjet print
10 x 15 inches

My ongoing project, *Sahr-e-Seer*, was born out of necessity. Following a childhood of alienation from both Afghan tradition and American comfort, I existed in the unformed space between these two cultures. I began to bring my camera to family gatherings, turning the camera on these uncomfortable situations, reclaiming my agency where I felt most out of place. I have begun digging into the contradictory and compelling social lives of Afghan-Americans within the diaspora, attempting to seize moments that express the deeply entrenched American Dream narrative prevalent within the community. At the core of the work is a profound need to identify my place within social, cultural, and political structures through my understanding of the generation that came before me.



Ariana Sarwari
Sahr-e-Seer (Untitled 004), 2022
Inkjet print
10 x 15 inches



Ela Shah
Curious Cow, 2000
 Wood, clay, rope
 20 x 18 x 8 inches

My artworks have layers of personal as well as societal meanings. They deal with various political, religious, social, or cultural issues. I search myself through art and it helps me survive, have faith and hope in this world, which is often confusing, contradictory, violent, and unfair, especially during COVID. It fascinates me how millions of people around the world have deep faith in the unknown and celebrate their faith by building big monuments in public places or little shrines in their homes or on the streets.

The works in this exhibition are my monuments to a multicultural, postmodern world. They demonstrate how skyscrapers and corporate offices have replaced temples and churches. They exhibit the tension between the spiritual and material worlds. The painted arches and patterns echo both Islamic architecture and Indian temples. They are tall like churches. These structures are also my structures of faith: faith in oneself, humankind, and divine power. Memories of these sacred, different religious architectural monuments help me to find my new identity in the US.



Ela Shah
Power of Faith, 1998
 Wood, clay, rope
 20 x 18 x 8 inches

Mona Sharma



Mona Sharma, *True Tales of Intrigue*
Installation view

I am very much fascinated by the restrictions we put on ourselves in terms of what and how we communicate, what we feel we are allowed to talk about, what we feel others are allowed to say, the prerequisites required to say them, and the forums deemed acceptable to say them in.

I typically work in soft sculpture, graphic drawing, and 'zines because I love the near-universal accessibility of these mediums. Plush toys and comic strips: these are things that are in-

viting, that can be approached, handled, and revisited. They're hugged and pinned up on cubicle walls. They're trusted, a quality that I find irresistible in that I can choose to work with that trust and walk side by side with the viewer, or betray it, leading the viewer to an unexpected space. I make no apologies for wrapping "difficult knowledge" in a bright, plush package, especially since it's meant to be shared.

There's so much limiting who gets to be heard. And that's understandable. That connection is probably one of the most precious things anyone could ever hope for. In its best form, art is the pursuit of a language that allows us to truly be heard.



Mona Sharma
True Tales of Intrigue, 2015
'Zine series
Various dimensions

Pallavi Sharma



Pallavi Sharma
In Memory of..., 2017 (below) and *Meghdoot*, 2018 (above)
Installation view

The present interdisciplinary artworks speak through the baggage of my experiences and memories in hopes of forging a collective and cultural identity via decolonial everyday practices. Through contrapuntal readings of selected Indian mythological texts, lullabies, and ritual practices, I offer imaginary ways to alter the prescriptive texts and create liberatory spaces and new ways of knowing, connecting, and understanding each other.

The present works emerged from my investigation and understanding of the current global ecological crisis concerning patriarchal structures, corporate greed, the destruction of biological and cultural diversity, and the process of restoration and renewal. I derive my strength from Mahashveta Devi, Savitribai Phule, bell hooks, and many other philosophers, thinkers, and activists from my homeland and worldwide who worked for human rights and gender equality. Their voices have generated the power to speak against all kinds of oppression and have enabled us to see the broader and deeper divide which separates us.



Pallavi Sharma, *In Memory of...*
Installation view

The works *Meghdoot* and *In Memory of...* center around the intersectionality of gender, caste, class, and environmental justice and speak about our bodies, environment, cultural history, and reclaiming spaces to redo systems that destroy communities.



Fatima Zaidi
Safe, 2022
Watercolor paint
12 x 9 inches

Fatima A. Zaidi is a portrait and figurative painter based in Brooklyn, NY. As a Pakistani artist, Fatima is constantly thinking about South Asian and Muslim women, the spaces they occupy, and the spaces they are welcome in. Her work gives a glimpse of certain memories from Fatima's youth in Karachi, and explores different emotions and experiences that women like her go through, and the traits that make them stand out as a collective group. Fatima has always been mesmerized by the human face and likes to make portraits because they are a strong way to confront audiences. Through a diverse range of oil painting techniques and mixed media, Fatima's work dramatizes expressions, facial features, and adornment, adding layers of garish colors and recreating Bollywood-esque scenarios. In representation, the paintings highlight what is South Asian femininity and tend to have a strong psychological narratives related South Asian culture, social obligations experienced by women, beauty and makeup, and politics. Fatima takes inspiration from artists with various backgrounds and from different time periods, such as Marilyn Minter, Kehinde Wiley, Cindy Sherman, Shirin Neshat, Salman Toor, Abdur Rahman Chughtai, Jamil Naqsh, Jackson Pollock, and Vincent Van Gogh.



Installation view
Blackburn 20120 Gallery, 2023

Artist Biographies

ArtSparks Collective—Dilkash Kauser, Sarvath Saba, Lathamani, and Nagarathna Duggana are four artists associated with ArtSparks Foundation. A nonprofit organization based in Bangalore, India, ArtSparks brings diverse visual art experiences to over 2,500 children living in underserved communities and attending under-resourced government schools. All four women, positioned within the communities where the schools are situated, serve as art facilitators. Through much of their lives, each of them have faced some form of marginalization by virtue of their positionality as women within their families and communities. In some instances this has manifested in their education being curtailed at an early age. In other instances this has been embodied in popular views of them as the property of their husbands. While none of these women artists have had an artistic practice prior to their association with ArtSparks, a substantial part of their engagement with the organization—with its emphasis on their development as artists, educators, and agents of change within their local communities—has led them to self-identify as artists. And, over the years, they've begun to view their own engagements with art as deeply transformative as they negotiate issues of gender, identity, positionality, and much more.

Rhea Aggarwal (b. 2000) is an Indian artist originally from New Delhi and newly based in Brooklyn, New York. Her work is a pursuit of radical agency within a constraining mainstream nationalist culture. She works across painting, printmaking, and time-based media to explore themes of sexuality, cultural identity, and diasporic longing. Rhea graduated from Wesleyan University with a BA in studio art and anthropology; she was the recipient of the Jessup Prize, which is "awarded to undergraduates deemed to show the greatest talent in studio art." She has exhibited her work internationally across India, Europe, and North America, and is excited to continue honing her practice in community with other South Asian queer artists.

Siona Benjamin is a painter from Mumbai, now living in the US. Her work reflects her background of being brought up Jewish in a Hindu and Muslim India. She has an MFA in painting and a second MFA in theater set design. She has exhibited her work in the US, Europe, and Asia. Siona does private and public art commissions, while also selling and exhibiting in galleries and museums. She was awarded a Fulbright Fellowship in 2011 to India and a second Fulbright in 2017 to Israel. Her work has been featured in: the *New York Times*, *Chicago Tribune*, *Phila-*

delphia Inquirer, *Financial Times*, *Jewish Week*, *Boston Globe*, *Art New England*, *Art and Antiques*, *ArtNews*, *Times of India*, *Jerusalem Post*, *Times of Israel*, and several others. A documentary on her work is now available on Amazon.com: *Blue Like Me: The Art of Siona Benjamin*. Two recently published books feature her work: *I Am Hava* is a children's book she illustrated; and *Growing Up Jewish in India*, where her work is featured and edited by Professor Ori Soltes.

Marcy Chevali is a visual artist with an MFA from the Maine College of Art. She has shown work in galleries and artists' spaces including Villa Terrace Decorative Arts Museum, Queens Museum of Art, AIR Gallery, Gallery Aferro, and Jamaica Center for Arts and Learning, and with organizations such as South Asian Women's Creative Collective, Hudson Valley Center for Contemporary Art, ABC No Rio, Project for an Empty Space, 4heads, and Peculiar Works Projects. She was awarded an artist grant from the Queens Art Fund in 2015. In 2017, she was a fellow at the Edward Albee Foundation. She had a solo exhibition of her work at Aicon Gallery in 2021. She was recently awarded a Ron Desmett Memorial Award for Imagination With Glass from Pittsburgh Glass Center and was an Open Studios Artist in Residence at Haystack Mountain School of Craft in 2022.

Shabnam Jannesari is an Iranian artist who received her MFA with distinction in studio art at the University of Massachusetts–Dartmouth. She has exhibited her work in the United States and abroad. She has had recent solo exhibitions: *The Ribbons of Space* at Hastings College and *The Carpet Grew Like a Garden* in Cambridge, MA; she also participated in group exhibitions at University of Connecticut–Avery Point (Groton, CT), Wheaton College (Norton, MA), Fort Point Art Gallery (Boston, MA), and Bristol Art Museum (Bristol, RI). Her paintings and drawings have recently been acquired by Fidelity's corporate collection as well as the University of Massachusetts School of Law. She is a recipient of the Distinguished Art Fellowship at the University of Massachusetts–Dartmouth and a two-time recipient (2020 and 2022) of Elizabeth Green-shields Foundation grant (Montreal, Quebec).

Parvathi Kumar is a fine art photographer, initially trained by her mother in manual film photography; she gained valuable darkroom experience in high school. This gave her a good foundation and understanding of

working with light well into the digital era. She is largely self-taught, with degrees in electrical engineering and computer science, though she studied the work of past and present masters and mentors. She has exhibited her work in group and solo shows over the last 12 years throughout the US and abroad. Her work has received awards and has been published in *Life Framer*, the *British Journal of Photography*, and other online platforms. In 2021, she released a self-published photo book entitled *Everyday Blackness*, a series of 25 portraits celebrating Black women from the NJ/NY area, which has been featured and is forthcoming in exhibitions in 2022 and 2023. She currently lives in Bridgewater, NJ with her husband and two sons.

Farah Mohammad (b. 1993, Karachi, Pakistan) received her BA from Bennington College and her MFA from Columbia University. Her exhibition highlights include Half Gallery, International Print Center New York (IPCNY), the Jewish Museum, Wallach Art Gallery, Field Projects, LeRoy Neiman Gallery, Chashama Gallery, Local Project Art Space (NYC); and the Moss Art Center (Blacksburg, VA). She was the recipient of the LES Keyholder Residency (2021), the Blackburn Print Excellence Award (2021), and the Lucas T. Carlson grant at Columbia University (2020). Her recent solo exhibition was at Nyama Fine Art in NYC (2022), and her work has been acquired for the permanent collection by the Baltimore Museum of Art. She is currently the artist in residence at Cornerstone Studios.

Namita Paul is a San Francisco-based artist. Drawing from personal and political histories, Namita's work engages with themes of home, belonging, rupture, migration, architectural space, memory, and time. Her current work is an exploration of the ways in which physical spaces we have inhabited stay with us long after we have left them. Through material and form, Namita makes visible markers of personal and collective memories. Her idea-based work guides her studio practice, which includes large scale installation, drawing, painting, printmaking, textiles, and photography. Namita holds a BA in interdisciplinary visual arts and an MA in cultural studies from the University of Washington and is currently pursuing her MFA at California College of the Arts. Select group shows in 2022 include Root Division, California College of the Arts, Hubbell St. Galleries, (San Francisco, CA); and Lindsay Dirx Brown Art Gallery (San Ramon, CA). A solo exhibition of her series, *The Blue Sari*, was organized at Abrams Claghorn Gallery in Albany, CA (2021).

Nazrina Rodjan is a queer Indo-Caribbean/Dutch-Surinamese visual artist of indentured Indian descent. Rodjan was born and raised in Rotterdam. As a formally trained artist from St. Joost School of Art and Design, Rodjan primarily works in graphite, acrylic, and oil. Her work represents themes of migration, queerness, and diaspora, and a significant body of her work has focused on portraiture: portraits of people of color, ancestral photographs, and colonial postcards. She is committed to visually representing marginalized and invisible stories using traditional painting techniques. She spends her time painting between the Netherlands and the US.

Delhi-born **Tara Sabharwal** completed her BA in painting from M.S. University, Baroda and Masters from Royal College of Art, London. In 1990, Tara visited New York and settled here, while continuing to live, work, and show internationally. In a career spanning 42 years she has had 45 solo shows in the US, India, UK, Japan, Germany, and Italy, among others. She received several awards, including the British Council, Durham Cathedral, and Meehan fellowships in the UK; and Henry Street Settlement, Joan Mitchell Foundation CALL, and Gottlieb awards in the US. She has done several residencies, including Guanlan (China), Women's Studio Workshop (Rosendale, NY), Cooper Union (NYC), MASSMoCA (North Adams, MA), and Vermont Studio Center (Johnson, VT). She has taught at the Women's Studio Workshop, Cooper Union, CUNY, Blackburn Printshop, and the Guggenheim and Rubin museums. Her work is in the permanent collections of the Victoria and Albert Museum, DLI Museum, and the British Museum (UK); Peabody Essex Museum (Boston); Museum of Nebraskan Art (NE); New York Public Library (NYC); and Library of Congress (Washington, DC). In 2017, she formed the group "inBEtween" with American, German, and Indian artists; she has curated eleven exhibitions on the theme of migration and displacement in the US, Germany, and India.

Ariana Sarwari is an artist and educator born and raised in New York. She uses photography and video to explore the restrained spaces of a multi-generational household, documenting the relationships and interactions that occur within her immigrant family. Central to Sarwari's practice is the excavation of her place within the Afghan and American cultures she was raised in. In addition to her artistic practice, Sarwari teaches photography at the International Center of Photography and works as a freelance photographer and videographer. She received her

MFA in photography and related media from The New School Parsons School of Design in 2018 and most recently exhibited at Gallery Petite in New York, the Auckland Festival of Photography in New Zealand, and the India Photo Festival in Hyderabad.

Ela Shah was born in Bombay, India, where she earned her BA in psychology and diploma in fine arts. She received an MA in sculpture from Montclair State University. Although an American citizen, she has been able to hold on to her Indian heritage and incorporate elements of it into her paintings, sculptures, and installations along with Western influences. Shah has been featured in prestigious galleries and museums around the world including the National Gallery of Modern Art (New Delhi), Jehangir Art Gallery (Mumbai), Queens Museum (New York), William Benton Museum (Storrs, CT); and the Hunterdon Museum, Noyes Museum, and Newark Museum (New Jersey). Her work is in the collections of the New Jersey State Museum, Montclair Museum, Newark Library, Air India, Indian Embassy, and other public places and private collections. She has received numerous awards and fellowships including those from the National Association of Women Artists, Dodge Foundation, Rutgers Center for Innovative Print and Paper, and the NJ State Council on the Arts. Her work was featured in the Smithsonian Asian Pacific American Center's 2015 exhibition marking the 25th anniversary of the H1-B visa. A 2021 award-winning documentary, *Ela: Breaking Boundaries*, has been featured in several international film festivals; in a coffee table book with the same title as the film, her life story is accompanied by nearly 100 photographs of her work.

Mona Sharma is a first-generation Canadian artist of South Asian descent. She obtained her MFA from Concordia University, Montreal in 2012. She has received numerous grants and has exhibited her art in galleries across Canada and the United States. She works primarily in soft sculpture and digital drawing, two mediums whose accessible exteriors lend well to subversive acts. Directly inspired by tensions induced by the diverse nature of her background, her goal through art has been to foster a more critical understanding of how we form as individuals and function as a society.

Pallavi Sharma is a multidisciplinary artist, educator, and independent curator. She is a board member of the Asian American Women Artists

Association (AAWAA) and founder and director of the nonprofit organization Inner Eye Arts. Pallavi has been part of the City of San Ramon Art Advisory Committee for several terms and held leadership positions. She has exhibited her works in many solo and group shows in national and international exhibitions since 2000. Her socially-engaged art practice addresses migration and the notions of memory, marginalization, patriarchy, and misogyny. Her practice and research interests concern Asian American women's cultural production and activism. Pallavi received her BFA and MFA from the Faculty of Fine Arts Baroda and a PhD in art history from the National Museum Institute of History of Art, Museology, and Conservation, New Delhi, India. She presently teaches at California College of the Arts (San Francisco).

Born in Karachi, Pakistan in 1992, **Fatima Zaidi** received her BA in museum studies, painting, and psychology from Bennington College. Though she is starting out her career as a formal painter, Fatima has significant experience in fundraising within the art world. While living and working in New York City, she has always explored her genuine passion for the arts and for advancing the culture and diverse experiences of the South Asian community. Presently, she is a board member of the South Asian Womxn's Creative Collective, and works as the Director of Development at the Kitchen, a nonprofit center for avant-garde performance and experimental art. Prior to her role at the Kitchen, Fatima was Development Manager at Triple Canopy and Campaign Coordinator at the Studio Museum in Harlem; she has also worked at the Public Art Fund, Whitney Museum of American Art, and Bronx Museum of the Arts.

The South Asian Womxn's Creative Collective (SAWCC) is a nonprofit arts organization dedicated to the advancement, visibility, and development of emerging and established South Asian womxn artists and creative professionals by providing a physical and virtual space to profile their creative and intellectual work across disciplines.

SAWCC has served South Asian womxn since 1997 and has earned a reputation for showcasing cutting-edge work that deals intelligently with issues of gender and cultural representation. SAWCC connects womxn of South Asian descent with links to various communities and encourages their growth as artists by providing a platform to exchange ideas and feedback on their creative work and network with other South Asian womxn artists, educators, community workers, and professionals. Members include those who identify as South Asian women, trans, nonbinary, gender nonconforming, and femme.

Blackburn 20|20 is a nonprofit exhibition space affiliated with the Robert Blackburn Printmaking Workshop, a program for the Elizabeth Foundation for the Arts.

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SAWCC

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