KIRAN
NADAR
MUSEUM
OF ART

Enactments and Each Passing Day

An exhibition of moving images - Fifteen contemporary artists

Enactments and each passing day
An exhibition of moving images

Curated by Roobina Karode and Akansha Rastogi

PREVIEW
Thursday, 8 September 2016 6.30- 10.30 pm
KNMA-Noida Plot 3-A, Sector 126, Noida

Exhibition Dates
10 September – 8 December 2016

Sheba Chhachhi, Water Diviner

Participating Artists:

Archana Hande | Bani Abidi | Gigi Scaria | Hitain Patel | Paribartana Mohanty | Pratul Dash | Rashid Rana | Rohini Devasher | Shakuntala Kulkarni | Sheba Chhachhi | Shilpa Gupta | Sonia Khurana | Ranbir Kaleka | Vishal Dar | Vivan Sundaram.

New Delhi: The Kiran Nadar Museum of Art is pleased to present for the first time an exhibition dedicated only to video works. The exhibition *'Enactments and each passing day'* is presented conceptually as a choreography of scenes, actions, stagings, sites and journeys by fifteen contemporary artists from different generations. It unfolds in loops of various enactments in the form of single-channel and multiple-channel videos, video sculptures and large video installations.

The exhibition showcases many important works from the collection including Ranbir Kaleka's *'Man Threading a Needle'* (1998-99), Bani Abidi's trilogy of videos *'Mangoes', 'Anthem'* and *'News'* made between 1999 and 2001, Vivan Sundaram's *'Black Gold'* (2014), Shakuntala Kulkarni's *'Julus'* (2015) and Sonia Khurana's *'Head Hand'* and the *'Surreal Pond'*.

From Vivan Sundaram's bed of detritus from the fabled city of Muziris, the viewer is taken to a strange forgotten abandoned outpost of the second World War off the UK coast, marked by huge metallic structures in Rohini Devasher's video. Creating a performative space and evoking sites and places, the exhibition contests and negotiates between established binaries: rigidity of statehood/borders and the everyday, iconic and the frivolous, Mao and Gandhi, physicist and a miniaturist, artist and his double. It offers journeys to unknown and imagined terrains, that are speckled and marked with discreet and abstract presences, such as that of Shakuntala Kulkarni's army and procession of multiple selves/bodies in her immersive 4 channel video work *'Julus'* and Sheba Chhachhi's mammoth elephant submerging or dissolving in water. If with her '*Water Diviner'* Sheba Chhachhi is evoking the loss and possible recovery of our cultural memory and eco-philosophy, Archana Hande's video installation *'The Golden Feral Trail'* transforms the West Australian horizon into a screen displaying stories of nomadism, economic relations and loss of cultural identity.

These enactments performed by actors/non-actors or artist-performers amidst a crowd or in solitude, in a ruin or remote landscapes, inside a workshop or a public space, are mappings of returns to the everyday. Each scene is a detour or an aberration from the familiar and creates a phantom zone that navigates through the stated binaries. The exhibition speaks through ascents and accents, dissolutions, dislocations, territorial claims, apocalyptic signs, body and the double, and public icons, inducing one to read simultaneously the readily visible and the suggested gestures.

KNMA's collection of video art initiated the shape and content for this exhibition, supplemented by loans from a few more artists. The exhibition allows video-based artworks to be understood and appreciated on their own terms, highlighting the medium's specificity but diverse use.

According to Mrs. Nadar, *"As a collector and institution-builder, I've been following the forays of contemporary artists into a variety of mediums including video and digital arts. The KNMA collection has a substantial representation of cutting-edge artists and video artworks that are historically important and mark the trajectory. This exhibition is our effort to bring attention and popularity to this medium of video art in the larger public domain."*

Details of Works

ARCHANA HANDE: *THE GOLDEN FERAL TRAIL*

Resulting from Archana Hande's six-month residency in the remote community of Laverton, **'The Golden Feral Trail'** reflects local oral histories and charts the historical relationship between South Asia and Western Australia. Using photography, archive documents, animation and installation, Hande explores issues of religion, trade and migration through the early Afghan pioneers of the region and the identity politics associated with their transnational movement. The work references 19th-century trade and migration routes linking Laverton and Coolgardie to Asia, traces of which Hande sees remaining in the landscape — in cemeteries, ghost towns, mining pits and archives. '*The Golden Feral Trail'* transforms the West Australian horizon into a screen displaying stories of nomadism, economic relations and loss of cultural identity.

SHAKUNTALA KULKARNI: *JULUS*

Shakuntala Kulkarni's army of figures sculpted using traditional cane weaving techniques, comes alive in the video **'Julus'**, an immersive 4 channel video work where a procession of multiple selves of the artist storm the space and demand attention, freedom and respect. Shakuntala Kulkarni is a Bombay based multidisciplinary artist and activist whose work is primarily concerned with the plights of urban women who are often held back due to patriarchal expectations. By placing her sculptures over her body, the artist dictates where the viewer's gaze will lie, reclaiming power away from the viewer and allowing herself to be looked at on her own terms.

BANI ABIDI: *MANGOES, NEWS, ANTHEM*

In Bani Abidi's **'Mangoes'** (1999), two expatriate Pakistani and Indian women sit and eat mangoes together and reminisce about their childhood. An otherwise touching encounter turns sour when they start comparing the range of mangoes grown in either country, a comment on the heightened sense of nostalgia and nationalism that exists in the Indian and Pakistani Diaspora. The artist, stressing the idea of a shared history, plays both the women.

Bani Abidi's **'News'** (2001) is a 2-channel video installation, a mock news programme being broadcast on either side of the Indo/Pak border. Presented on 2 monitor screens, a Pakistani and an Indian news presenter relate separate versions of the same news event. The script is an adaptation from a common joke about an Indian and a Pakistani. Adapted to sound like a news event, the joke is a banal slapstick display of superiority. The language used in the video is the Sanskritised Hindi of official Indian jargon and the Persianised Urdu of the Pakistani state, a comment on the state's exclusivist policies of altering language in its effort to construct a separate identity.

Bani Abidi's **'Anthem'** addresses the role of music in the creation of patriotic sentiment. The video *'Anthems'* shows a split screen image of two young women (played by the artist) dancing to popular Indian and Pakistani songs. Their activity is private, and seemingly they are unaware of each other. But in fact they are not, insofar as they are sharing space on the TV monitor. Each of them keeps on turning up the volume on their stereos in an effort to outdo the other. The video ends in a cacophony of sound, where neither of the music tracks can be heard clearly.

Bani Abidi, Mangoes (1999)

GIGI SCARIA: *NO PARALLEL, AGAINST GRAVITY* (2013)

Gigi Scaria's **'No Parallel'** brings up eerily similar photos of two men who have become the respective Father-of-their-Nation. While Mao and Gandhi exist as opposing forces in the collective memory, the archival images of them, giving speeches, meeting people, leading marches has a discomfiting ring to it. They don't seem to have lead particularly different lives. In contradiction to the title the viewer is forced to question their own assumptions of the two men and the public attitude towards them, as well the phenomenon of the 'cult of the Leader'.

'Against Gravity' (2013) is on a 3-minute loop, circling across six panels, and follows the routine of a truck carrying a freight of salt across the adobe and umber tones of a flat, relatively featureless landscape. The truck breaches the continuity and eternity of the horizon, replacing it with a metronomy of its own.

## HETAIN PATEL: *TO DANCE LIKE YOUR DAD* (2009)

The video spotlights Hetain's rehearsed imitation of his father, who since emigration from India to the UK in 1967, has never returned to India. Here he restages existing footage of his father in his coach-building factory, in Bolton, UK. Focussing on his father's physicality, Hetain performs his words, his accent, mannerisms and movements, whilst the cameraman too performs all the original camera movements. Both films are shot in a single take and play in synchrony with one another. Hetain's interest here is in the subtleties between what is inherited and what is imitated. The attempted imitation provides a construct for these discussions to take place. Occasionally he moves out of sync with his father, sometimes missing a movement. At the other extreme certain physical traits confirm a genetic link between father and son. At times the source of a perfectly matched posture or expression is difficult to pin point - is this performance skill or inheritance?

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SHEBA CHHACHHI: *THE WATER DIVINER*

According to the artist Sheba Chhachhi, **'*The Water Diviner*'**, is about the loss and possible recovery of our cultural memory, rich in eco-philosophy. The current environmental crisis has led us into an instrumentalist relationship with water where we are beleaguered consumers trying to meet our needs in the midst of contamination and scarcity. She wishes to remind us of the psychic and cultural associations of water, of water as part of our symbolic life, not just a commodity. Evoking both pleasure, loss and rejuvenation, the video transforms the traditional symbol of wisdom, power and fertility into a figure emblematic of a memory which has been submerged, displaced - put "underwater", and of our need to recover that part of ourselves. The video is part of a large multimedia installation with the same title.

RASHID RANA: *TEN DIFFERENCES*

If Rana's mosaics are usually about opposites revealed on deeper examination to be co-existing realities, a reverse movement occurs in his pictures of twins in irreconcilable conflict ... the context heightening its allusion to the rivalry over the Kashmir Valley which has bedeviled relations between the neighbouring nations since they split apart. "No war is a war until a brother kills his brother", says the arms dealer Marko in the Serbian director Emir Kusturica's epic film, *Underground*. Rana's twins take that bitter logic a step further. '*Ten Differences*' (2004) was a short, looped video, its single frame split laterally. The artist's persona entered at both ends, pointed a gun, fired, was himself shot and fell back dead. One side of the mirror image lagged the other by a few frames, giving the duel the feel of a proper narrative.
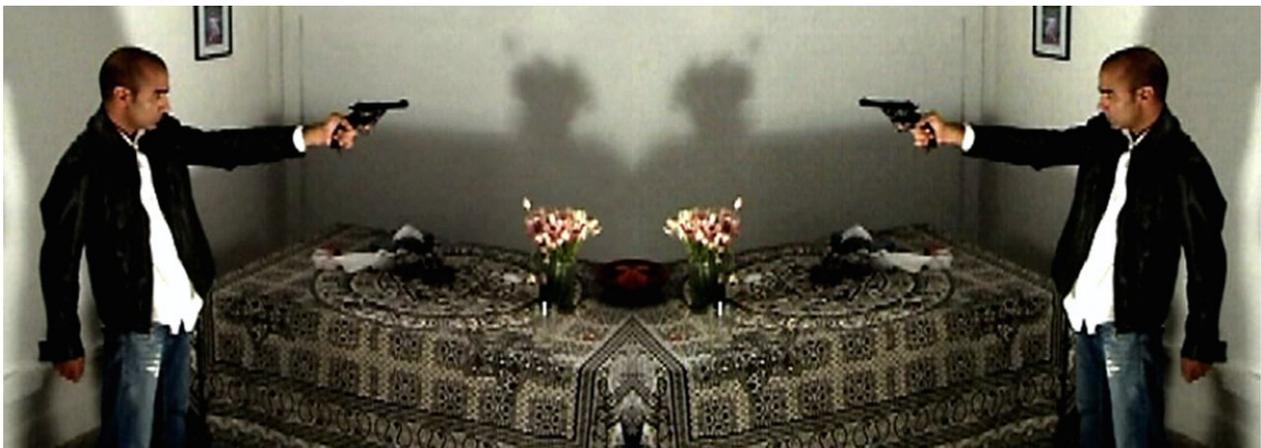
Rashid Rana, Ten Differences (2004)

ROHINI DEVASHER: *SHIVERING SANDS*

Rohini Devasher's **'Shivering Sands'** is a journey of discovery, across the ocean to the wonderful and bizarre site that is the Shivering Islands, a strange forgotten abandoned outpost. What are these strange dystopic tripod like structures? What were they meant to be? What could we imagine them to be? Is this the past? Or the uncertain future of a tenuous present?

The film has two simultaneous narratives; the first, the vastness of the ocean and horizon, the approach, sighting, circling and last view of Shivering Sands. These huge metallic structures, relics of the Second World War off the coast of the UK, transformed into creatures straight out of H. G. Well's novels, or perhaps the All Terrain Attack Transports from Star Wars.

The second, a conceptual narrative of an annotated and edited text (written by Laura Raicovich), that guides us through physics, symmetry, pattern, cosmology and poetry, resonating strangely and perfectly with the geography and phenomenology of the site.

PRATUL DASH: *LIFE OF A DOUBLE*

Rebelling against the neo-liberal shining India, the process of dislocating, and moving, resulted in many years of unexpressed cultural shock. There was need for emancipation from being contained within the cosmopolitan neo-liberal cultural conditioning. This intervention came about, through a series of performances captured on video. The artist goes back to his native village and performs at a site at the very edge of Hirakud Dam, (a site of fond childhood memories).

From Pratul Dash: In moments of extreme detachment, one could be doodling on the sands without any intention of thought till the time seawaters take over. The process could continue with tenacity although there is no defined objective in place. One could become a part in the process of that chosen interval of isolated time that is driven by an inner need. The lines could be predetermined in the consciousness or expressed on the spurt of the moment. It could also be distorted to the extent of being violent and aggressive. The residue of the process could be contemplative and meditative as it plays with the temperamental state of the individual. The quality of that residue could endear the individual to be drawn to the process yet again.

Emancipation from being contained within the conditioning of a greater baggage carried from my belongings till the time of being relocated from place to place continue to occupy major areas of concern. My intervention in this aspect came to realization effectively through a series of performances captured on video. I went back to my native village and performed at a site at the very edge of Hirakud Dam, which is much known to me from my childhood. Using extremely simple means, I use a strong white string from my sacred thread (janayu - a sacred thread worn by hindu brahmins) to literally string up my face. It seems playful to use the string all across the face but one begins to comprehend the almost torturous performance as my face gets contorted and disfigured in the process. The act of being reined in the conditioning of the self comes back along with understanding of the scaffoldings of the construction sites. Here the string becomes the scaffolding, constructively guiding me into emancipation and hope.

One might get a strange sense of relief as the performance unwinds and the distorted image of the face gains balance. What remain are the marks of the string's path of punishment and an extremity of detachment and peace in the end. It is a kind of come back for me in my native land.

PARIBARTANA MOHANTY: *MINIATURIST*

Physicists work like miniaturists, seeing what is invisible to bare eyes. The film is a meditation on blindness, the blinding light 'of thousand suns', the first visual descriptions of the atomic bomb test in Los Alamos and thereafter in Hiroshima. Scientists, politicians, bureaucrats, soldiers and the victims of the disaster describe how the atom bomb blast light blinded them for a few seconds and gradually they saw the mesmerizing colours. Revolving around the court trial of the physicist J Robert Oppenheimer, the film traces his dilemma of pursuing the first ever atomic test and witnessing the greatest human catastrophe as a spiritual experience. The work compares the archaeological time with the material remains of the disaster.

VISHAL DAR: *GIRL ON A SWING*

Vishal Dar's video loop depicting a girl swinging through India Gate as crowds mill around oblivious to her. It projects the apparent shock of feminine frivolity against the sombre values customarily attributed to the site, yet plays also on the age-old Hindi cinema trope of the soldier as the ideal martyr-bridegroom for the girls of BROWNation.

RANBIR KALEKA: *MAN THREADING A NEEDLE, KETTLE*

Ranbir Kaleka's work, an oil painting on board, 59 x 91 cm, (23.3 x 35.8 inch), of a man threading a needle sits on an easel. The painting is spot-lit. As one looks on you see the man suddenly blink or gulp. He occasionally makes a desperate attempt to thread the needle. At various moments he hears the sound of a peacock, a passing train and a police siren, this makes him nervous, his body heaves with heavy breathing. The painting most of the time stays still. This effect is achieved by projecting a video of a man threading the needle on a painting of the man threading a needle.

VIVAN SUNDARAM: *BLACK GOLD*

The video **'Black Gold'** is based on Vivan Sundaram's large installation (done in 2012-13 Biennale) comprising thousands of 'discarded' local potsherds from the Pattanam archaeological site in forms an imaginary (two thousand year-old) port city – Muziris. "The lay-out of the installation suggests an archipelago; circumnambulating it in person, you experience its clustered miniaturization. The geographical allusion turns into a metaphor; the archipelago folds into a playground of infancy." (Vivan Sundaram). Fragrant black beads are nestled amongst these simulated architectural ruins – i.e. pepper, the 'black gold' of the title.

About the video installation Vivan says, "When the camera traverses the site, the dense formation takes on yet another visage: 'dead' matter unravels fresh terrain that is in its very fragility combustive. Animation created by a range of perceptual positions — camera movements from high above swoop onto details creating arabesques; top-angle views the plan, the map brings forth islands surrounded by water; the flattened image becomes a stained glass sky. Low angle shots, drag the viewer through the remains of human habitation. The video image oscillates between showing a bed of detritus and an emerging gestalt that may be deciphered as history. A scene of devastation, a cityscape submerged in a cataclysmic spill - millions of floating peppercorns. Or is this meteoric patina covering another planet? Often in mythic and historical tales there is a tragic end: the flood. There is the sound of the deluge. There is the silence of the aftermath. Beauty is located at the shifting centre of slow time that enables us to stand on solid ground to plunge into waters that carry us to other shores."

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Notes to Editors

About Kiran Nadar Museum of Art (KNMA)

Established at the initiative of the avid collector Kiran Nadar, KNMA (the Kiran Nadar Museum of Art) opened in January 2010, as the first private museum of Art exhibiting Modern and Contemporary works from India and the subcontinent. Located in the heart of Delhi, KNMA, as a not-for-profit organization intends to exemplify the dynamic relationship between art and culture through its exhibitions, publications, educational and public programs. An initiative of the Shiv Nadar Foundation, KNMA aims to instill a deep sense of appreciation for contemporary art by making it accessible to everyone.

www.knma.in

About Shiv Nadar Foundation

The Shiv Nadar Foundation (www.ShivNadarFoundation.org) has been established by Shiv Nadar, Founder, HCL - a $6.3 billion leading global technology and IT enterprise, with over 90,000 employees across 31 countries. Founded in 1976, HCL is one of India's original IT garage start-ups and offers diverse business aligned technology solutions spanning the entire hardware and software spectrum, to a focused range of industry verticals.

The Foundation is committed to the creation of a more equitable, merit-based society by empowering individuals to bridge the socio-economic divide. To that purpose the Foundation is focused on the underdeveloped disciplinary areas in India related to transformational education, creativity and art. The Foundation set up the SSN Institutions (www.SSN.edu.in) in 1996, comprising the SSN College of Engineering (already a highly ranked private engineering college in India), in Chennai, Tamil Nadu. The Foundation has also set up VidyaGyan, a residential leadership academy for meritorious rural children, at Bulandshar and Sitapur in Uttar Pradesh. In addition, the Foundation runs the Shiv Nadar University (www.snu.edu.in), an international multi-disciplinary university with strong research orientation located in Greater Noida in India's National Capital Region and the Shiv Nadar Schools (www.shivnadarschool.edu.in), a network of progressive urban schools across India aimed to provide children with education that creates lifelong learners.