FATAL LOVE
South Asian American Art Now
February 27 – June 5, 2005
FATAL LOVE:
SOUTH ASIAN AMERICAN ART NOW
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QUEENS MUSEUM OF ART
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I HAD WRITTEN MY POEMS QUICKLY, IN ORDER TO survive. But after writing there came a time of fragmenta- tion, being torn apart in so many directions: the fear on this island, the condition of our lives, not knowing what could arise next, fire, pestilence — that bitly white powder filled with anthrax spores. A floor of the building where I teach, right next to the Empire State Building, was shut down for a while. Meanwhile on the other side of the globe in Afghanistan, the terrible bomb explosion by the United States, site of ground down, children starving, women in black piyong flying. Both are places real. I live in one, I reach out to the other. Displaced in space, they co-exist in time, in a molten present.

As a child I lived at the borders of war. Moving back and forth across the Indian Ocean between Kerala and Khoroum in the Sudan. In Sudan there was a civil war raging. On the way to India we often stopped in Aden, in what is now Yemen. There were British Tommies on the rocks, and Yemeni freedom fighters hidden by the broken walls. More recently in India, in the last few years there has been the rise of a Muslim-Hindu movement and terrible ethnic violence which occurred Gujrat. Then too there has been the escalation on the border with Pakistan and the fear of war. All this has been part of my personal history and has left a mark on my writing.

How can these violent renditions of the real that cut into memory, be translated into art?

Art in a time of trauma, a necessary translation.

"Fragments of a vessel" writes Walter Benjamin, "to be glued together"

But what if the paste shows, the seams, the fractures?

In a city blowing up at its southern tip, the work of art must be both real, a literal translation, and a poetic translation, a coded and traumatic recovery.

It seems to me that in its rhythm the poem, the artwork, can incorporate scarification of the soul, the broken pieces, the pieces, the scars, the woven scars, the drug explosions. So that what is pieced together is a work that exists as an object in the world but also, in its fearful sonority, its shimmering stretch, allows the world entry.

I think of it as a recording that permits our lives to be given back to us, fragile, precarious.

OVER THE LAST DECADE, the Queens Museum of Art has mounted a series of exhibitions that respond to the uniquely diverse county we call home. Because we are situated on an island people speak of 137 languages, it makes sense to say that a show of Greek, Korean or Taiwanese art would have local resonance. However, it has become apparent that we need more than in diverse set of exhibitions. Because of the remarkable diversity, we need to be focused in our commitment to create long-term rather than one-time connections. One such commitment is to engage the South Asian communities of Queens and the metropolitan region — in themselves a diverse set of groups. Through the museum mounted an important and memorable exhibition, Out of India, in 1997, the starting point for our current effort could be traced to Crossing the Line in 2001, a show organized by our chief curator, Valerie Smith. That summer, we presented projects in and out of the museum from New Gondwana, to Hirose, to CitySpace, to Edge of Desire. Now, after eight years out of India and nearly four years after Crossing the Line we feel prepared to mount our next South Asian exhibition. Jaishi Abichandani and Pranita Raddo have teamed up to present the show, Fatal Love: South Asian American Art Now. The exhibition is inspired by a performance of the same title that will occur on our Downtown stage as part of our programming ideas Art in India, which is organized by the Art Gallery of Western Australia and the Asia Society, New York, and museum. Jaishi Abichandani, who lives in New York City, and Pranita Raddo, who lives in New Delhi, have a long history of working together and their collaboration is the result of years of working together and their collaboration is the result of years of working together and their collaboration is the result of years of working together and their collaboration is the result of years of working together and their collaboration is the result of years of working together and their collaboration is the result of years of working together and their collaboration is the result of years of working together and their collaboration is the result of years of working together and their collaboration is the result of years of working together and their collaboration is the result of years of working together. We believe that this exhibition will bring together artists and audiences alike and that it will be a turning point in the history of South Asian art in America.
of appropriate programming around the exhibit. The numerous committee meetings and benefits that made Fated Love possible were organized with assistance from Debra Winklefheimer and David Dean, Louis Arquilla, the Facilities Manager, to be commended for enabling the curators and artists to develop many site-specific installations in non-traditional exhibition spaces throughout the museum. Last, but not least, thanks to David Strauss, Director of Public Relations and Marketing, whose eye for detail and willingness to work late hours brought a sense of polish to the whole project.

As we offer viewers of this exhibition a snapshot of contemporary South Asian American experience and artistic practice, I look forward to the continuing dialogue this will engender and our hope that the Queens Museum of Art will continue to act as a platform for examining unfolding developments in the South Asian community.

NEW YORK DEVOURS PEOPLE: An energetic and productive city, it needs fresh blood to rejuvenate itself. Migrants come from around the world, and from across the United States. Some are young, and they come to make a name for themselves or to find out what they are capable of in a city whose challenges are tremendous. Many are older, torn out of their social networks for various reasons and eager to make more than a living to support those who did not cross the sea.

The character of New York is that its people work hard, and they work hard to support each other’s hard work. The varied construction worker eats at the endless cheap restaurants, kept open by red-eyed restaurant workers, whose pain is soothed by the taxi drivers at the back whose conversation echoes neighborhoods left behind in another life. South Asia is everywhere in New York: in the hospitals, the subway, the taxis, the brokerage houses, the newspaper kiosks, the colleges. Like other New Yorkers, South Asians put their shoulders to the wheel to keep the city on the move.

Each borough of the city has an enclave where South Asians retreat to stock up on necessities from the homeland, or simply to catch wind of languages and emotions that they otherwise live without. These areas, most spectacularly on Jackson Heights’ 74th Street, are home to shops that bristle with South Asian life, and many of them carry the slogan on their awnings, “Indo-Pak-Bangla.” Such an energetic gesture might be cynically employed to increase the size of one’s consumer market. But it says more: it indicates that despite the national differences and hardships that nudge the sub-continent, those who find dissent there but live here recognize that we have far more in common than we are allowed to imagine. Indo-Pak-Bangla, like South Asia or just plain deal, is a way to indicate this sense of fellowship, far away from the homeland.

Devis in large numbers did not always skip our sweat to make the city run. Small groups of us had come to New York off the Yankee Clippets that plied the trade between Boston and Madison in the 18th and 19th centuries. A few of us came as college students and as political exiles, to clutter the salons of the city with our various hopes and grievances. In 1920, the Indian Home Rule League of America wrote to revolutionaries in India, “As a center of revolutionary activities throughout the world, New York
City affords the best opportunity for carrying out proper work," Agnes Smidley, Jyotishak Das, Late Lajpat Rai, B. R. Ambedkar, and other important figures of Indian nationalism lived for a time in the city, and pushed the agenda of Indian freedom. From 1924 to 1965, however, the US government forbad the entry of all Asians into the US. This put a stop to the immigration, but for the few who came under great pain (as did the East Bengalis into Harlem). In the mid-1920s, the US government, enforced by the courts and driven by the Bipartisan Immigration Act of 1924, forced the country to dismantle formal discrimination, the US Congress revised its immigration laws. The security system needed less workers and the newly passed Medicare and Medicaid legislation required medical workers. At the same time, the typical destination for doctors in the UK had tightened its immigration laws, and 1962 did not establish any shops because their energies were elsewhere; to shop for spice and rice, they went to Unjoom, the African Kalabrians, a pioneer in the sale of South Asian and Middle Eastern goods. But in the mid to late 1970s, as families members joined the technical workers and on its others made their way statewide, these shops opened up shops in some areas. Like Jackson Heights, Samaraj Roy's 1973 electronics store set by 5th Avenue, and Alipour, the phone shop. Northern India's culture and its restaurants. An immigrant group enters the fabric of a city, and the consciousness of its members, when it sets up an enclaves, a Spanish Harlem, and other enclaves. The late 1970s, or the organized domestic community. It took an enormous effort for them to organize for justice, either in their professions or alike in the institutions of the community. In 1998 (led by the New York Taxi Workers' Association) come alongside the vibrant domestic service organizations like Worker's Aswan and Asdibat, in the heart of the city. The voice of the desire worker on the map or our community. And few of our "mainstream" representatives listen. These some representatives have remarked, "They give us as their culture and their taxes and their wonderful restaurants."

By the late 1970s most desis who came into the city could not find the kind of jobs enjoyed by the desis in the first decade after 1965. Doctors and engineers continued to enjoy their privileged place in the city, but alongside them came taxi drivers, nurses, newspaper vendors, domestic servants and dishwashers: those who worked hard for low remuneration. Many came from parts of South Asia torn by warfare and state trauma (such as Bangladesh, or else the Indian state of Punjab), and they struggled in their new world to make sufficient money to send back to families who had to rely upon these remittances. The desi working-class did not get fed by the mayor, nor by the organized domestic community. It took an enormous effort for them to organize for justice, either in their professions or alike in the institutions of the community. In 1998 (led by the New York Taxi Workers’ Association) came alongside the vibrant domestic service organizations like Worker’s Aswan and Asdibat, in the heart of the city. The voice of the desire worker on the map or our community. And few of our "mainstream" representatives listen. These some representatives have
and Desis Rising Up and Moving join VJAY PRAKHAD to provide a generous dose of youthful hope for New York's desire.

But YSS, SAVA, and DRUM are not alone. Besides them are a host of organizations that significantly challenge the stereotypes of the South Asian body, and of the South Asian imagination. Artists of all kinds, who are always kind to us non-artists, gather in such places as South Asian Women's Creative Collective, South Asian League of Artists in America and SAVAAM, and teach each other to push their dreams further. They help us say things we might not otherwise think. And, when the night falls, Basement Bhanga, Masala, and other social spaces enable us to corporeally challenge the "model minority" stereotype (but wish we'd rid ourselves of the Punjab-centrism, even as I am a proud Punjabi).

Alternatively grandiose and harsh, New York City now competes with London for the title of the capital of the desi Diaspora. The rich social world of desis enables us to represent ourselves and conjure up our dreams. Music and poetry, fiction and essays, paintings and dance our world is alive, and so are we.

Vijay Prashad is author of Karma of Brown Folk, among other books. His most recent book is Darker Nations: The Rise and Fall of the Third World (New Press).

In August of that same year, on the Sunday before Indian and Pakistani Independence Day, the Eagle Cinemas, the local Bollywood movie theatre, was the venue for the screening of the video documenting the wishing tree as well as the work of a dozen other South Asian artists all reflecting upon the themes of freedom, independence and South Asian solidarity in the diaspora. Their supporters and friends came to a politicized space in the midst of our primarily conservative and capitalist community where there are separate merchant associations for the Indians, Pakistanis and Bangladeshis. Rushd Rana's huge mural dominated the sidewalk for the day, while the video art installed next to the movie posters in the lobby of the cinema stayed there for two months, provoking unsuspecting audiences. That afternoon, Suleka Meeta read her new impassioned essay "A Fatal Love" about the bitter relationship between India and Pakistan. It is from this essay that the exhibition has taken its name.

In the years since the wishing tree and Eagle Cinemas, the museum has hosted day-long performances and film-based events under the moniker "Fatal Love," an ongoing commitment to the notion of South Asian solidarity. It is
This is a movement • JAIISHRI ABICHANDANI

liting that now in its fifth year, Fatal Love has been given the scope of a full-scale exhibition and become an occasion to profile the works of artists from the South Asian diaspora and generate a critical dialogue around this work.

In 1996, the Queens Museum presented Out of India: Contemporary Art of the South Asian Diaspora, featuring the work of 28 artists from India, Malaysia, Great Britain, Toronto and the United States. The exhibition was very successful in linking works made in several international urban locations by artists with incisive diacritical histories, thereby laying open the condition of many immigrant communities across the world today. Fatal Love, on the other hand, is a much more local and intimate show, focusing on topical themes close to the heart of this community. Close to 75 percent of the artists are artists from New York and New Jersey and they trace their roots to India, Pakistan, Bangladesh and Nepal. Like most urban citizens, they negotiate a sophisticated multiple of identities and communities, but the South Asian cultural scene in New York forms the important core of their artistic lives. Teachers, bankers and doctors may harbor not so secret passions for art, theatre, literature and film, traversing long and conflicted paths before committing to their artistic practice. Oftentimes trained in fields of success in navigating occasionally opposing ideological and positions. Most in the South Asian diasporic art community have close personal relationships with each other, and a landscape of New York City is so immediately infected with a plethora of such organizations. The impact of the cultural production of this community is creating ripples. It is a story of hope, growth and survival.

The first non-profit in New York City to actively develop and promote the work of South Asian artists was the South Asian Women's Creative Collective (SAWCC), an organization founded in 1997 and which has been hosting an annual exhibition at galleries in NYC for seven years. Several of the artists included in Fatal Love have been involved in SAWCC in varying capacities, from curating (Bina Bhowmick), exhibiting (Shriyak Acharya Siona Benjamin, Marina Dardel, Maia Kajih, Vandana Jain, Anna Matthew, Premi Murthy, Dina Rahman and Dao Shah), to serving on the volunteer Board of Directors in an ongoing effort to facilitate positive change (Santinay Patnaik, Chitra Ganesh, Swati Khurana, Yomna Nayar and my co-founder Prerana Reddy). Many of our members have honed their artistic and organizational skills in SAWCC, going on to found their own initiatives focusing on social justice, theatre, music, dance or film, and, in the process, have created a network of artists, curators and activists who have worked together to create a platform for their work.

The show is ambitious in scope and includes works from some of the most prominent South Asian artists working today. It is a testament to the richness and diversity of the South Asian diaspora and a reminder of the power of art to bring people together.
This is a movement • JAIshrI ABChANDI

An examination of the photography in Fatal Love will reveal highly conceptual staged works like Yamini Nayyar’s elaborately magnified images of miniature, 
psychedelic-like scenes that appear as Childs. Gowani’s much different, disturbing self-portraits which evoke violent historical narratives. The result of Nayyar’s elaborate process of representing a woman that she has constructed is a body of images haunted with malfeasance and isolation. Of her work Nayyar says, “I am interested in rendering everyday private moments as traces of absence and 
deposition of任性. By constructing frag-
ments of narrative, I invite the viewer to draw upon per-
sonal, public, and private mind’s eye to create some of their own meanings and 
asociations. The images thrive on discrepancies that exist within perception, and hence, how meaning occurs.”

Three photographers with Muslim heritage, Soeed Rahman, Safia Fatimy and Maroona Waheedha Daredia, 
offered years of extraordinary portrayals, allowing the charged politics of 
their subjects’ bodies to create tension within the frames. Rahman’s images of Pakistani drug queens in the te
dark public is presented in his series Haveyouseenher02 as part of the tradi-
sion of Wolfgang Tillmans and Nan Goldin’s usual set of study and shoot to frameless to live in
in.

University of Washington Professor of English, Chandras Reddy, feels that the power of Rahman’s work lies in the idea that he is addressing more than conven-
tional representations of women and Western life, and the differences in reli-
gious practice between the generations. The subject are portrayed embodying certain values, yet holding on to the Islamic and traditional.

Born to a Pakistani father and Nepalese mother, Safia Fatimy’s primary project is one of a still of Fatimy’s images of her mother in a swimsuit, enjoying a cigarette and whisky, and posing herself at the age of twelve in the conventional stereotypical of older women across all races. They speak of a enjoyment of spirit, body and life not usually afforded to women, and are highly unusual representations of South Asian women in particular. A much sought after fashion and commercial photographer, Fatimy has recently switched her attention to working on art and education.

Luminous and haunting, Jareet Vedana and Pratima Nathalio go on to demonstrate different processes of manipulating base representational photographic images to arrive at a very similar aesthetic that removes most cultural signifiers and places memory and abstraction at the forefront of their work. While Vedana’s points of view convey a brand of postmodern imagery, with the aim of “revealing the complex” of the Indian’s “vocabulary and musing”. Nathalio uses imagery from the 1940s and 1950s and intertwined, and the nudity with burning spirituality within the frame and rendering new meanings to aspiring Hollywood film stars, creating a mysterious distance by distorting and altering the images.

The contemporary romanticism of Vedana and Nathalio’s work is linked to Mala Iskandar’s pointedly investigations of the sublime. Amongst the many influences in her work, she cites art history and literature, traditional Western landscape painting and conceptual miniatures. Iskandar repre-
seats the genre of landscape painting done in Fatal Love and her painting is more figurative influenced by her references to Indian miniatures. Like Vedana, Iskandar’s work has more of a resonance aesthetically with contemporary Western art. Iskandar also works in this emotional space.

Outstanding in their treatment of surface, and retaining a critical tension emerging from the employment of various points of view, the images of point and reference, her works invites a contemplative experience by the viewer.
This is a movement • JAHISHI ABICHANDANI

Dhruv Acharya also cites cartoons and Indian miniatures among her various influences and approaches. Western contemporary dialogues about painting from a completely different perspective in terms of content, painfully yet stylishly dimensional and thematic. One of the brightest stars to emerge lately, her work is reminiscent of Chris Ofili in its decorative approach and Fred Tomaselli in its treatment of surface. With high demand for her beautiful, often autobiographical paintings of self-contained women, Dhruv explores the divisions in her identity—between native and modern, and between her space and time between Mumbai and Brooklyn. Artist Jitish Kallat writes of Acharya, "She consciously skirts the misconception that cartooning is autopilot, rebellious, and instead sets for a flat and stylized rendition, her unique, pointier language becomes a dialect of sources spread across historical time and geographical locations." Like Acharya, Siana Benjamin, Ela Shah and Shalini Khandekar have garnered spiritual concerns and autobiographical narratives while pushing traditional representations of the feminine body within the tradition of miniatures paintings. The triumph of the feminine within the confines of spiritualism steeped in South Asia's patriarchal centuries-long tradition of caricaturing women and societies to transcend religious, social and class taboos. Benjamin claims a Jewish Indian heritage, Shah is Hindu and Sikandar is Muslim. They always salved the tradition of the miniature in an attempt to free it of its oppressive historical weight. The figure in Benjamin's self-portrait cannot be confined by the literal boundaries imposed upon her. The red of the dress stains the entire surface with its powerful message. Shalini's portrait of Shah's women have been liberated entirely from the frame and now mundane rout. In their new incarnations as nimbles, they have become part of the hydrogen super heroes, each of whom has developed super heroes.

Easily the most successful South Asian American artist practicing today, Shahla Sikandar has been shifting physical, emotional, geographical, cultural and psychological boundaries throughout her practice. The winner of numerous awards, Sikandar has been represented by prestigious galleries and impeccably educated at the National College of Art in Lahore and Rhodes School of Design. Often departing from the miniature tradition that she was trained in to create murals and installations, she has also gone through periods of wearing a complete burqa, painted over images of Hindu goddesses, lovingly placed her black friends into her playful frameworks and disrupted academic and professional, creating slapsticks in an otherwise conventional genre. In the piece presented in Fatal Love, spinn, she further pushes formal boundaries, revising her traditional heroines and endowing them with a new life in the contemporary world of animation. A review of spinn in the "New Yorker" called Sikandar's, "mephitic phantasmagories of mingled Hindu, Muslim and Christian realities, enchanting and spooky, as when black-haired goddesses (the lovers of Krishna) attack and swarm like bats. Sikandar proves that miniatures are a living tradition, subject to cogent innovations. Her message is a fond plea for multiculturalism on the subcontinent, where competing visions of the sacred attract dangerous passions." An artist of extraordinary talent who has been shaped as much through the community as her time at Brown and Columbia, Chitrav Ghosh has been commissioned to incorporate the life of the city to exhibit into her site-specific installation in the QAM ramp. Ghosh's work sits precariously balanced between installation, wall drawing and sculpture. With strong doses of confrontation, violence and war and a few pencil sketches by Walker and Rana Bajajer, breaking new ground by tak- ing the fashionable genre of wall drawings beyond its usual limbo, blending with color, points, objects and objects that spill off the wall and onto the floor, thrashing to enrage the viewer with its painful visions. twisting and mutating female bodies inscribed with cultural signifiers look in and out of each other in a netherworld space. "My work explores how memories and their relationships to the site are transformed by crisis... the body becomes a site of social conflict, where collisions of anxiety, loss and contradictory historical narratives assume a material form. Its doubling, splitting, fragmentation and drive to self-identification indicate the rupture that takes place when juxtapositions are made visi- ble, as boundaries between history, memory and fantasy continually unravel." The questions raised about history and cultural and psychological boundaries by both Sikandar and Ganeshi are investigated further in Milhkar and Elizabeth Daddi's Magic Carpet, which seems over a miniature city, Panorama of the City of New York. The origin of the
This is a movement • JAISHRI ABICHANDANI

piece lies in an Eastern folklore appropriated by Walt Disney to serve Orientalist fantasies. In the artist’s own words, the illuminated, sublime, magical carpet “on one hand, enacts the longing for ease of travel over geographic and national boundaries that have become increasingly fraught for immigrants to negotiate since 9/11. On the other, the carpet evokes the silent flight from surveillance and the quiet deportations that have characterized the experience of thousands of immigrants during the last three years.” This bewitching installation uses a language created by contemporary art practices to allude to and critique historical and current violence perpetrated by Western nations against their own citizens as well as other countries.

As I write this essay on a grey London afternoon, six Muslim artists with diverse practices are exhibiting together in a show entitled We Have Met the Enemy and He Is Us (Redux Gallery, London). A previous show, We, was put together by the Institute of International Visual Artists to highlight the concerns of the feminine in Islam. Fatal Love: South Asian American Art Now endeavors to place South Asian artists with their peers, reconnecting aesthetic and artistic traditions that were historically entangled until the violent rupture of Partition, instead of isolating and losing them once again.

Every point of entry into Fatal Love has been democratized by site-specific installations in the Panorama, ramp and elevator to distinguish the exhibition from Edge of Desire: Recent Art in India, New York’s first full-scale examination of contemporary visual practice in India occupying both the first floor of the museum and the Asia Society. The work selected for Fatal Love also has ideological departures from Edge of Desire by the inherent condition of being offered by our diasporic experiences. Suketu Mehta’s words have been reimagined to refer to the relationship between artists and their work, as well as their ambiguous relationships to their ancestral lands and America.

The catalogue for the exhibit has been designed as a set of postcards to be tucked up on refrigerators and mailed to loved ones, connecting the artwork into the hands and memories of those who fall under its spell. Fatal Love examines the richness and nuance of the condition of a heroic other, its triumph, subversiveness, insatiable love and insistence on a rich existence.

We the peoples of the Subcontinent love each other. It is an adulterous love, an illicit love. When we want to live together safely, it has to be outside, in some other country, in someone else’s house. It is still a land where love means something, because we are ready to die for love. Any lesser climax would be to mock the vastness, the wholeness, of this love; could it be tested, solicited, by mere existe or meaning? —Suketu Mehta

Endnotes
FATAL LOVE: SOUTH ASIAN AMERICAN ART NOW reflects a multitude of creative and social engagements between artists and their diasporic environments. Today’s South Asian American artists, particularly those based in and around New York, have had the advantage of a critically engaged, supportive community and a two-decade-long history of South Asian diaspora art practice to which they can refer. As a result, their work displays a multifaceted synergy of creative art practices. Given the richness and variety of work from which to choose, Jaisi Shah’s exhibition invites the viewer to enter into a world of South Asian cultural production that is inclusive of generational and experiential differences, yet which frames more precisely the contemporary moment. Some work was chosen to represent an exploration of first- and second-generation immigrant experiences—the passionate, exhilarating, and at times dislocating and alienating experience of cultural transition. Artists reflect on the complicated nature of performing immigrant identity, balancing ethical and religious traditions, experimenting with historical and personal gender roles and identities, and the process of making America their home. Other works in Fatal Love take personal narratives as a starting point from which to confront colonial legacies and national mythologies. While the experience of cultural displacement retains relevance in South Asian American art practice, diaspora art can also be seen as an active reclamation of public spaces, challenging the audience to examine daily life, urban existence and current culture. Her gestures acquire additional resonance as she takes on the personal risk as a Pakistani Muslim woman participating in potentially “suspect” behavior in a paranoid post-9/11 environment.

South Asians in America: Setting the Scene

As an entryway from the companion exhibit Edge of Desire: Recent Art in India, which occupies the first floor of the museum, the elevator became an important space to demarcate the beginning of a journey into the particulars South Asian and American context of Fatal Love. Upon entering the elevator, the viewer is confronted with a darkened space illuminated by lightboxes containing images of a Muslim woman praying in distinctive North American public spaces. In many Muslim societies, prayer can take place anywhere and at any time, including in the public or toilet paper seemed urgenytic. Later she spoke with other Pakistanis and Pakistani-Americans about if, when, and how they quit using latrines. While stories of people hiding out in public restrooms until it was clear for them to use bottled water to cleanse themselves or disguising their latrines as toiletbrush holders in their home seem comical at first, Rehman has created a sound piece that dives into how public spaces and mundane activities can be sites for discomfort and anxiety for the immigrant. By placing numerous Johns in the Qahwa’s restrooms, Rehman invites the general American public to share in that confusion and to examine different cultural concepts of cleanliness.

While cultural assimilation can be a thorny process, it can also be an opportunity for positive new experiences and a window into something different. Asma Ahmed Shikha’s recent work is a recent transplant to New York from Karachi, Pakistan. Her recent work reflects on the vastness and sheer diversity of New York City and the simultaneous disorientation that can occur in figuring out one's own identity within this veritable maze of spaces. This search is captured in Varnavay Boulevard in which Sheikh transforms the ubiquitous MTA subway signs into a map of New York City with the exception of the airport. The viewer can navigate through the city by identifying landmarks such as Times Square and the United Nations Building. The work provides a sense of place and orientation in a city that can be overwhelming and confusing. While admittedly deciphering the subway system is a challenge for even many long-time residents, for the immigrant this is overlaid by a larger sense of “being lost.” On this other hand, the subway enables the newcomer a sense of freedom of movement and exploration.
nation, each ride potentially an adventure into the unknown. Each car is a microcosm of the city itself, a motley yet vibrant agglomeration of people from all back-grounds and socioeconomic divisions. The wondrous expanse of New York City that imbues this piece is further enhanced by locating its installation in the Queens Museum's signature Panorama of the City of New York, a large-scale model of all five boroughs that never ceases to amaze in its scope and grandeur.

While New York remains an important symbol of America's identity as a notion made of and by immi-grants, the events of September 11 have changed the landscape for South Asian, particularly Muslim, commu-nities who have been demonized wholesale as potential ter-rors. Almost instantly, indiscriminate security dragnets rounded up thousands of Muslims, none of whom to-date have been prosecuted on terrorism charges. The Patriot Act and the special registration program have created a sense of alienation from and anger toward the undocu-mented American government that will take decades to repair. Many of these men came from an invisible underclass of recent immigrants who are rendered “doubly invisible” through their lack of access to media, money, lawyers, and power more generally. While New Yorkers interact with tourists and newcomers to the city without a second thought, their close friends and family would notice when they went missing. Naeem Mohaiemen and Ibrahim Qureshi’s Dissolution in America, an ambitious multi-media installation that commemorates the human cost to these individuals, their families, and com-munities which has been largely unrecognized by mainstream media. In an effort to put faces to the “disap-peared,” the duo have directed a team of collaborators and volunteers, using interviews, video collages that display graffiti, signs, and stickers indicative of the social debate over the Patriot Act taken place in New York streets, diary entries written and their families; as well as legal documents. Viewers join in the process of uncovering the wealth of information them-selves through accessing several interactive stations.

Many artists have seen the events of September 11 as an impetus to explore more broadly the finance and insur-ance industries’ power in shaping America and the

Note: The text is a reflection on the events of September 11 and their impact on immigration and identity in the United States. It discusses the perception and treatment of immigrants, particularly Muslims, and the role of art in commemorating their experiences.
South Asians and Americans: A Global Distancing of Stories Written
The artist discussed have been concerned to confront, challenge and undermine the distorted and limited preconceptions of South Asian and immigrant communities that are too often presented by the media and the government. They have used art to make injustices public and to demonstrate how their communities are specifically impacted by contemporary events, policies and culture. Other artists have been more concerned to make public the invisible or hidden aspects of highly visible identities in order to reclaim nuanced individualities. Leaving the specificity of New York and America aside, they are using art as a process to forge new hybrid selves. For many South Asian American artists, America is one of many homes. Complex trajectories have given these nomads both a wealth of iconography, and cultural, and historical referents. They have found novel and unique and personal aesthetic from these elements.

Being born in England, raised in India, and now living in America, Anima Palakunnath Matthew's mixed or mossa background continues to shape her photographic practice. She is well known for her humorous though politically pointed appropriations of Hollywood film posters that question Indian nationalism, colonialism, and sexism. For the first time, in a physical and the spiritual come presenting perhaps her most personal piece Fabrications of the Truth, a long handmaden accordion book construct- ed of Poland's emulsion transfers onto tobacco paper. Contemporary images are digitally combined with child- hood snapshots to chart her personal journey from her British childhood to her American present. This process becomes a commemoration of her father who died 20 years before, just one year after finally returning to India. The effects that the parents' death has often been a trope for South Asian writers from Sa'adat Hassan Manto to Amitav Ghosh. Narratives of both images and words have been sources of inspiration for photographer Anna Bhushan. Her jewelry-like illustrations based on Salman Rushdie's seminal Midnight's Children glow with psychological and chromatic imagery of modern India, the novel is a family saga set against the volatile events of the 30 years following the country's independence—the partition, the rule of Indira Gandhi, the onset of violence and war, and the imposition of martial law. Bhushan's four works tap into the sexual, comic, magical and tragic tones of the novel. The multitude and intersecting stories lived at the time become a meditation on the intersection of individual and public life, of personal history and the historical record. An exploration of her own experience of a traditional Hindu wedding forms the basis of Swati Khurana's recent work. She poses the ceremony as a ritualized per- formance wherein the bride becomes a consumable artifact. In India, women are considered the property of men, and marriage is not only a sexual and social transaction between families, yet these women are also living in a global post-colonial culture that fetishizes the exotic. At the crossroads between Bollywood movies, vanity maga- zines, and fashion trends, the Hindu bride is the most rec- cognizable symbol of Indian womanhood. In the three col- lection on view in Fatal Toilet (by Bhushan), a live called Malabar Beach House Bride, Khurana digitally collages hand drawn tracings of her own wedding photos with found images of all sorts of objects, objects that are ex- tendly interior design, and animal coloring books. These elements are constructed to create disorienting spaces of captivity and domesticity for the figures of the bride, she is contained within "vails" coded by various historical
Creating a South Asian Contemporary: Reflections of the Past. Dissections of the Present. 
Completions of the Future — PRERANA REDDY

and economic tropes. Khurana hints at a darker world of entrapment and isolation under the glossy and the ironic, aesthetic of consumer-age pastiches.

South Asian Americans in the Brave New World

Indeed in today's world where national and cultural identity are being transformed by global capital in the form of international mass media, telecommunication technology, and tourism, many artists are addressing the bastardization of cultures and the necessity to examine our compli- cated political landscape. As many of the artists in the show attest, any true sense of multiculturalism must move beyond simple celebrations of diversity and tolerance in an attempt to reveal the struggle between self-identity and international identity.

Bari Kumar's paintings vividly meld individual experiences with the collective politics of the world using imagery with multiple art historical, cultural, religious and sig- nificance, the works invite visitors into an engagement with the art of political direction. Using imagery from Christian iconography mingle with decapitated multi- armed Hindu goddesses, and fragmented texts in various languages, scripts, and font styles highlight the intractable structure of Indian religious and rational imagery in the age of advertising and digital culture. Kumar's cautionary narratives are the grim remembrance of painful clashes between cultures, and the viewers are prompted to make their own narratives of these elements to carry into the future.

Nitin Mukul's paintings are also charged with a sense of menace, where infection and nuclear detonation threat- en the flow of everyday life. In Here for example, a typi- cal "Indian" scene of water buffaloes bathing seemingly exploits the viewer releasing bacteriological fears, but the ironies of this work is as it peels through various layers of con- sciousness, evoking a sense of danger to our physical and mental environment caused by scientific advancement. Mukul's process begins by juxtaposing media images with his own to create a dense narrative collage. Then, he assembles the panels to transform the studio into a painting, his ability to stay with the colors and textures of the various layers to create highly disorienting compositions. Inverting the process of subliminal advertising which creates unconscious desire for products, Mukul's candy-colored images overwrite the paranoia lurking beneath the surface of the everyday.

Rina Banerjee's work consists of sculptural and instal- lation pieces composed of a diverse range of materials, from the luxurious and colorful to the mundane, strange, and organic, indicating our simultaneous apprehension and attraction to the exotic, and furthermore, the legacy of the empire and its unapologetic thirst for conquest and adventure. These longings have transformed under capit- alism into cultural tourism and are redefined on the quest for the eternal, for a new world, made possible through packaging and commodification. In her installation With (in) time and (to) good book, get back to where you once belonged, Banerjee utilises a grand chandelier and layer table, signifying the entryways of hotels and restaurants, to which she adds harriners with plastic wings, dried fish, and monstrous fish and mushrooms, crickets and butterflies. All elements of human and artistic culture and natural beauty. A tangle of threads and material into focus these stories and insights that are ignored, undervalued, or distorted by mainstream cultural narratives. For her most recent project in her solo show at FOA, Banerjee's recent work reveals more fully the brutal nature of colonisation and its objectification of the colonized subject, particularly as it leaves marks on the body. At the same time, images of bondage, bondage, and alienation hint at a subversive eroticism, the possibility for transforming violent and demeaning action into something both pornographically enticing.

South Asians and the Global Future

While it was important that Fatal Love include works that deal directly and indirectly with the state of South Asian American communities today, many of the works speak more broadly to the process by which we access, sort through, and process the many streams and forms of information with which we are assaulted. Even as personal identity and psychological legacy have a role in this process, many of the artists have used a particular set of lenses and filters to bring into focus those stories and insights that are ignored, undervalued, or distorted by mainstream cultural interpretations. For instance, the political news, views, numbers, and opinions are available in abun- dant, yet our capacity to parse out the meaningful has been diminished; analysis, synthesis, and vision are in short supply.
Born and dispersed out of dying grasps of one grand empire and perched at the precipice of another, the artists in *Fetal Love* use the wide palette of aesthetic strategies available to them to activate a space for both spiritual reflection and public debate at a moment when such spaces in America, and in South Asia, are increasingly circumscribed by the twin myopia of corporate power and national self-righteousness. In an increasingly polarized and spiritually exhausted world, we count on those artists for whom *Fetal Love* has meaning—those with the patience and the passion—to grapple with the complexities of our current condition and transform them into possibilities.

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Dhruvi Acharya applies personal, ancient and pop-
culture symbols and metaphors to create narratives
that draw the viewer into a world where thoughts are
as visible as “reality.” Her technique involves layering
opaque and translucent paint, melt and gloss media,
to create a uniform surface that allows the paint to
visually recede to various levels. Artistically influ-
enced by Indian miniature paintings, contemporary
comic books, as well as Japanese Superflat paintings,
her work explores concepts of speech and communi-
cation, solitude and loneliness, and their effects on
one’s psyche.

Dhruvi Acharya is a native of Mumbai, India and moved
to the US in 1995. She received her MFA in painting
from the Maryland Institute, College of Art in Baltimore,
and studied Applied Arts at the Sophia Polytechnic
College in Mumbai. Her works, held in both private and
public collections, as well as her solo shows, span India
and America. This young painter has also exhibited in
juried shows with panelsists from the Whitney Museum of
American Art and the Hirshhorn Museum of the
Smithsonian Institution. She currently divides her time
between New York and Mumbai.
Siona Benjamin celebrates her womanhood, abilities, strengths and ambitions through her work. As a Bnei Torah Jew from India, her work reflects her own struggle with a hybrid background: though predomi-
nantly brought up in a Hindu and Muslim society, she was educated in Catholic and Zoroastrian schools. Her work is inspired by tanzic art of ancient India, as well as the Byzantine Iconography and Jewish reli-
gious art from her childhood, creating a dialogue between the ancient and the modern, and ultimately forcing a confrontation of unresolved issues. In My Magic Carpet (2004) from a series of paintings enti-
titled Finding Home, Benjamin broaches issues such as identity, immigration, motherhood, and the role of art in social change.

Siona Benjamin trained in Fine Arts at the Sir J.J. School of Art in Mumbai, India, and has received MFA in theater design and painting from The University of Iowa, Urbana-Champaign and Southern Illinois University, Carbondale, respectively. Her most recent solo show includes Forest of Ash at Cheryl Terrelon Fine Arts, New York, and Masada: Diversity and Democracy in Asian Art at The William Benton Museum of Art, Storrs, CT. She now lives and works in Montreal, New Jersey.
Anna Bhushan is primarily a painter, but her recent exploration in illustration has taken her work into the context of film installation and books. Fatal Love presents four small illustrations from a series based on Salman Rushdie’s Midnight’s Children. A candid use of color and line distinguishes the series, which won the Folio Society’s Illustration award in 2003. Bhushan bases much of her work on existing literature and her own writing, as she is most interested in narratives of both images and words, particularly of the Indian tradition. She uses a range of approaches, preferring to work intuitively without any framework.

Anna Bhushan recently relocated to New York from London, where she received her Masters in Communication Art and Design at the Royal College of Art. She has received numerous awards for book illustrations, and has exhibited her paintings, illustrations, and installations in both India and the UK. Her most recent exhibition, Narratives, was displayed at the Royal College of Art in 2003.

Ifitkhar and Elizabeth Dadi’s work comment upon the far-reaching effects of global media and advertising in advancing contemporary cultural imperialism, the construction of identities and Historical narratives, and the preservation of colonial legacies. Drawing on universally recognizable visual languages, they create vivid, iconic images that play upon society’s difficulty in separating fact from fiction, which ultimately clouds contemporary understandings of the past and present conceptions of other cultures.

For Fatal Love, the Dadi’s have created an original installation of a magic carpet illuminated by hundreds of light bulbs hovering over a section of the museum’s Panorama of the City of New York. The work provides a poetic, multivalent commentary on the dilemmas of immigration by “Orientals” to New York City, particularly South Asians, Arabs, and Muslims. The installation, at once evokingplayful fantasy and socio-political backlash, illustrates a nostalgic memory of the aura of travel as well as a desire to flee from the surveillance and deportation that plagues the immigrant community. The stillness and tranquility of the magic carpet, the panoramic view afforded by riding it, and its promise of open journey provides an apt metaphor for the invisibility of immigrant life.
IFTIKHAR AND ELIZABETH DADI

TALIS, LOVE, SOUTH ASIAN AMERICAN ART NOW

Ifitkhar Dadi was born in 1961 in Karachi, Pakistan and graduated with an MFA from the University of Washington, Seattle. He later undertook a doctorate in art history at Cornell University, New York where he is now an Assistant Professor in the History of Art Department. With Salih Hassan, he curated Unpacking Europe: Towards a Critical Reading (Nai Publishers), a collection of scholarly essays and artists’ projects which interrogate the historical and contemporary meanings of Europe.

Elizabeth Dadi was born in 1957 in Seattle, WA and graduated from the San Francisco Art Institute in 1985 with a Bachelor of Fine Arts.

Together, the Dadies have participated in exhibitions in various regions of the world, including Europe, Asia, Australia, and South America. Their most recent exhibitions include displays at the Herbert F. Johnson Museum of Art, Cornell University, and at the Street Level Photoworks Gallery, Glasgow, UK.

MAREENA WAHEEDA DAREDIA

Mareena Waheeda Daredia aims to “re-humanize” the Muslim community that has been demonized in the American media since 9/11. Having experienced various cultural landscapes, Daredia unites the similar and disparate environments of her upbringing through her photographs. She portrays her friends and family in the mundane as well as intimate aspects of Muslim American life, capturing their attachment to many cultural and religious rituals that have become their personal identifiers. On the other hand, they are shown embracing certain Western values and the domestic environments of the photographs reveal the hallmarks of typical middle-class American existence such as Laura Ashley bedspreads and IKEA dressers. In doing so, she uncovers identities that have been misrepresented and misunderstood in the Western world in recent times.

Mareena Waheeda Daredia, born in Pakistan, is a graduate of the Pratt Institute, Brooklyn, NY. She was raised in the United Arab Emirates, where she attended a British school, until she immigrated to Canada with her family. She currently resides in Hoboken, NJ, where her diverse cultural and social experiences continue to impact her artistic perspective and motivations.
Safia Fatimi, feeling a sense of urgency to spend time with her parents, documents her mother’s retired life in her ongoing photography series Khem Kumari (2004). This project allowed her to uncover stories of her mother’s childhood, hardships, and education, while she experienced the activities of her mother’s daily life. Fatal Love presents three photos that depict Khem Kumari Pradhan, a retired doctor of Nepali descent who married a Pakistani man she met during her medical residency in Brooklyn. The photographs of “Kummi” portray a South Asian woman, attached to numerous aspects of her ethnic background, fully assimilated to the American lifestyle.

Safia Fatimi is a New York City-based professional freelance photographer with numerous corporate and magazine clients including Columbia Records, Sony Music, Entertainment Weekly, and Rolling Stone among others. Also a photography instructor, Fatimi holds an MA in Art Education from the Teacher’s College at Columbia University and a BS in Photography from the Rochester Institute of Technology. She has received awards from Photo District News and has exhibited her work in a group show at Bose Pacho Gallery, New York.

Chitra Ganesh, through her work, explores how memory and its repression shape moments of personal and social crisis. Her original wall drawing in the museum’s ramp space, as well as her two performative photographic pieces, integrate personal and post-colonial narratives, challenging dominant representations of post-colonialism. Ganesh’s source materials include Greek and Hindu mythology, 19th-century portraiture, Bollywood posters, comic books, and mainstream media. She uses collage, assemblage, and digital manipulation to layer disparate images and materials.

Chitra Ganesh was born and raised in Brooklyn and Queens, and currently lives in Brooklyn. She received her MFA from Columbia University in 2002, and has received awards including residencies at the Skowhegan School of Painting and Sculpture, Henry Street Settlement, Abacos Arts Center, and a College Art Association Professional Development Fellowship. In 2004, Ganesh was selected for Residencies at the Headlands Center for the Arts, The Center for Book Arts and The Lower Manhattan Cultural Council Workspace Program. In 2003, Ganesh’s work was featured in HyperPark Magazine as an up-and-coming artist and named as one of OUT magazine’s top 100 people of the year.
Farheen HaQ works with digital video and photography. She uses the tools and equipment of mass media to bring viewers into socially and politically relevant work that explores ideas of cultural inscriptions, the body, gender and language. Her art is an investigation into the ephemeral quality of culture and the dynamic flux of identity. She does not aim to solve or resolve issues but rather to question and heighten sensibility. Retreat (2004) is a performative series of photo lightboxes that document her praying in city streets and public spaces. The work is an display in the DMA’s elevator, a private room in a public space, which will be darkened to further evoke a meditative experience.

Farheen HaQ studied modern dance at Ryerson School of Modern Dance and later received her MFA from York University, Toronto. In recent years, she has had exhibitions including Wrapped in Code at Gallery 1313 and Bumble at the Edge of Town at Goldfarb Centre Art Gallery in Canada, and she has participated in several group modern dance shows.

Mala Iqbal evokes a Romanticism that is different from its historical interpretation, depicting a natural world no longer divided from the civilized world. Her work begins with the convergence of imagination and observation, combining the familiar and the strange. She juxtaposes man-made and natural elements—streetlights, ruins, walls, cabins—and uses different modes of composition—naturalistic next to caricature, a mountain that looks collaged—to achieve the uncanny. Stylistically, her work quotes kitsch, pop art, mail art, science fiction, illustration, cartoon, traditional Western landscape painting and Indian miniature. While addressing the rapidly changing world, Iqbal’s paintings aim to uncover the experience of the powerful, authentic emotions that humans have always associated with the natural world.

Mala Iqbal, a resident of Brooklyn, was born in the Bronx in 1972. She received her BA in Visual Art and English from Columbia University and her MFA in Painting from the Rhode Island School of Design. She was a Visual Arts Fellow at the Fine Arts Work Center in Provincetown, MA in 1998-1999 and 1999-2000. Her artwork can be viewed at Bellwether, a gallery in New York City.
Vandana Jain manipulates logos, slogans, and other elements of corporate branding to discuss the "shared culture" that results from globalization. She juxtaposes religious iconography with logos to create mandala designs, and also integrates fragments of logos in her Tangram series. Lately, Jain has explored architectural models and sculptures; John Hancock's America (2005) visually charts the resonance of his bold signature on the Declaration of Independence in shaping America. The work focuses on corporations' covert and mundane ways of taking over public spaces. Located in the GMAs signature Panorama of the City of New York, the piece also makes emotional and timely connections between New York and America at-large, while demonstrating insurance and finance companies' affect on the city.

Vandana Jain was born in Queens, New York, in 1975. She received her Bachelor of Fine Arts from New York University and currently lives and works in Brooklyn. Some of her most recent exhibitions include Primary/Secondary: Contemporary Drawings, Subversion, and The East Williamsburg Art Show. Jain has also received the Artists in the Marketplace awards from the Bronx Museum for the Arts.

Indira Freitas Johnson is an artist and community activist. Her sculpture, Balance of Power (1997), demonstrates the process of spiritual growth, a significant theme in her work, especially as it relates to her life as an Indian immigrant, artist, wife and mother living in contemporary American society. Johnson's sculpture illustrates balance, both physically and symbolically - the symmetrical meditative position, sculpted in ceramic, acting as a foundation for the sculpture while it simultaneously maintains equilibrium with the round and spiral metal structures that fit together to evoke spiritual wholeness.

Indira Freitas Johnson was born in 1943 in Mumbai, India. She received undergraduate degrees from St. J.J. Institute of Applied Art and the University of Bombay, and an MFA from the School of the Art Institute of Chicago. She has had several solo exhibitions including Indira Freitas Johnson: Sculpture and Drawings at the Helmut Gallery, Chicago and Enough: Indira Freitas Johnson and Voices from Around the World at the Chicago Museum of Contemporary Art. In 1993, Johnson started the Shanti Foundation for Peace, whose mission is to foster greater peace between cultures through education, the arts, and grass roots community development. She is a Founding Board Member of MarketPlace: Handwork of India, an organization that promotes economic development and personal empowerment for low income women in India.
Rajkamal Kholon, born in 1974 in Arubam, CA, received her BA in Studio Art from University of California, Davis, and her MFA in Painting from California College of Arts and Crafts. Her numerous solo and group exhibitions most recently include: Exhibitions by Rajkamal Kholon (Arvons Center for Arts and Learning), Imports and Exports (Raja 3 Galleria), and Art on Paper (National Museum of Art) among others exhibited throughout the United States. She participated in the prestigious Whitney Independent Study Program in 2002, as well as in AM 22, at the Bronx Museum of the Arts. She is represented by PPOW gallery in New York.

Swati Khurana explores her own experience of a traditional Hindu wedding, sharing the ritualized performances wherein brides become consumable artifacts. The three digitally collaged prints on view are from an edition of five called Malabar Beach House Bride (2005), in which Khurana manipulates hand-drawn elements with found images from architectural and interior design magazines and animal coloring books. Together, they create dense, yet playful, artificially constructed environments, which also subtly allude to the changing faces of India. Through these highly coded images, the series investigates modes of domesticity and captivity.

Swati Khurana, born in 1975 in New Delhi, India, is a multimedia artist and filmmaker who has exhibited in the US, India, and Canada. Her most recent exhibitions include: ArtSpace, Charlottesville, VA; Singular Identities at Habitat Centre, New Delhi, India; National Poetry Month at Rutgers University, Newark, New Jersey; and Groundswell Auction at White Columns, New York. She received her BFA from Rhode Island School of Design, and will receive her MFA this year from School of Visual Arts NY, NY. A participant in the AIM program at Bronx Museum of the Arts and also an artist-in-residence at Henry Street Settlement, she has been cited in The New York Times, Musuem of New York, and Art News Magazine of India among other publications.
Bari Kumar uses the structural elements of poster design to re-address cultural propaganda in a formal manner. He employs bold, spontaneous imagery of street signage with Tamil, English, and Spanish phrases as well as various “loaded” religious and art historical references. Collectively, they serve as metaphors of cross-cultural cohabitation. Accordingly, in Harvest of Culture (2000), Kumar merges symbols and phrases of Hinduism, Islam, and Buddhism together onto a canvas, creating a sense of unity among the distinct religious faces of India. In Byak (2003), Kumar depicts a decapitated peasant whose handling arms bleed onto a platter, evoking the heavy price paid by India’s farmers at the altar of global capitalism, while at the same time appropriating imagery of the suffering of Christ.

Bari Kumar was born in India and began painting after earning a degree in graphic design from the Otis Parsons School of Design in California. He has had numerous exhibitions including most recently, Neither Here Nor There, Patricia Correa Gallery, Global Address, Fisher Gallery, Unfamiliar Territory, San Jose Museum of Art, and Export Quality at Rose Pacific Gallery in New York. He currently lives and works in California.

Annu Palakunnathu Matthew presents for the first time Fabrications of the Truth (2000). By combining childhood snapshots with recent images, Matthew reconstructs memories in the form of a handmade accordion book. The images are presented as Polaroid emulsion transfers onto tobacco paper, commemorating the 20th anniversary of her father’s death from the effects of smoking. This project, undertaken in London, Matthew’s birthplace and childhood home, evokes nostalgia and emphasizes the fluid feeling of memory.

Annu Palakunnathu Matthew is Assistant Professor of Art (Photography) at the University of Rhode Island and is represented by Sepia International Inc., NYC. Her work has been included in recent exhibitions at the Victoria & Albert Museum, London, Light Work, Syracuse, NY, Sepia International, New York City, the DeCordova Museum, Lincoln, MA and the Center for Photography at Woodstock. Matthew’s work is included in the book BIPP from Phaidon, which, according to the publisher celebrates the quality and vision of today’s 100 most exciting international contemporary photographers.
Naeem Mohaiemen and Ibrahim Quraishi, in their collaborative work *Disappeared in America* (2009), use video, soundscapes, photographs, objects, and the audience’s interactions to commemorate the 3,000 Muslim men in America detained under the Patriot Act since 9/11. The majority of those detained were from the invisible underclass of cities like New York. They are the recent immigrants who drive our taxis, deliver our food, clean our tables, and sell fruit, coffee, and newspapers, only noticed when one glance at the back license of a taxi or at the ramming around the neck of the pushcart vendor. Already invisible in New York, after detention, they are now “ghost prisoners.”

The installation includes still-screened photographic images of detainees mounted against the exterior walls of the museum, viewable in full from outside the building and partially from the second floor. Lightboxes illuminating text from the Patriot Act and covered with decorative stones create an interactive experience for exhibition viewers, allowing them to uncover the legal framework of the act. This dilemma. Furthermore, video and sound stations make palpable the human cost of detention. A computer station allows the viewer to dig deeper into the stories and research compiled by the artists and their collaborators.

Ibrahim Quraishi is an activist and the artistic director for Compagnie Faim de Sable, an international collective of artists whose work transforms space through the use of movement, voice, sonic, visual and physical installations. Some of his most recent pieces have been commissioned by the Japan Foundation, Tokyo, Festival Art.DC, Paris, G. A. S. Gallery, NY, MESS Festival, Sarajevo, le Bal, Paris, Saison France/Quebec, Quebec City, Multimedia, Munich; and Downtown Arts Festival, NY among others.

Naeem Mohaiemen is a Bangladeshi American historian, journalist, activist, and filmmaker with a specific interest in political Islam. He is currently a New York correspondent for Bangladesh’s largest English-language newspaper, Daily Star. Mohaiemen’s work and writing have been featured in The Washington Post, The Village Voice, NY Daily News, The Nation, New Haven Advocate, Bright Lights Film Journal, Alibi, CounterPunch, Subcontinental, and Channel 4 (UK) among others.
Nitin Mukul frequently juxtaposes images from the mass media with his own photographs to incorporate both into personal narratives that explore the cultural space (dis)located between his Indian heritage and his upbringing as a second-generation American. These small collage studies form the basis for his large-scale paintings. In paintings such as Want Some Candy? (2004), Mukul explores a variety of themes, including the perpetuation of stereotypes in popular culture and the contrasting rituals and motifs of different societies. In Herd, he reflects on the ways in which recent advances in science and technology reshape our physical and mental environments.

Nitin Mukul was born in Lawrence, Massachusetts, and he currently lives and works in Washington, D.C. He has a BFA from the University of Massachusetts at Amherst and has also studied at the Amsterdam Hogeschool voor de Kunsten, Netherlands. For two years, he acted as the Creative and Administrative Manager of the IndiaCenter of Art & Culture, New York. Mukul has exhibited his work in the United States, Canada, and India.

Prema Murthy presents a diptych of large digital prints based on demographic and economic data on the borough of Queens. To create the prints, the artist gathers numerical data which she then maps onto various points of digital bodies in a 3D modeling software program. The program in turn serves to form and de-form, integrate and dis-integrate the bodies according to their fluctuating values. Murthy combines drawing, design and digital processes to explore the shifting boundaries of space, culture and modes of embodiment. Her past projects include animation, video, digital prints and Install art.

Prema Murthy received a BA from the University of Texas, Austin and an MFA from Goldsmiths College, London. From 1997 to 2001, she was a core member of the Brooklyn-based art group Fakshun, which exhibited at Ars Electronica Festival, Austria, and the Whitney Biennial. Her individual work has been exhibited at the International Center for Photography, Whitney Museum of American Art, Walker Art Center, Lir Center for Visual Arts at MIT, India Art Center, Mumbai, Lir Center, Seattle Art Museum, and General Foundation, Vienna.
Pratima Naiithani shares three prints in a new series she’s developed based on the film stills of Indian cinema from the 1940s and 1950s. Through distortion and misrepresentation of production and publicity snapshots, the traditional song-and-dance musicals of the period take on a new life. Comedies become dramas, which in turn, reveal a darker, more subversive current at work compared to the escapism of over-the-top, popular Indian entertainment. Naiithani draws inspiration from her unique ethnic background; her mother Cristina and father Mahesh, both naturalized Americans, hail from El Salvador and India, respectively.

Pratima Naiithani was born on June 18th, 1979 in Washington, DC and spent her childhood in Princeton, NJ. Initially developing interests in music and dance, Naiithani began a serious pursuit of photography around the time of her move to New York City in 1997. Since her graduation from the School of Visual Arts in 2003, her prints have been published in the Visionaire World 41 annual collector’s book, and have appeared in the Indo-American Arts Council’s Rising Vendors, and the Visual Arts Gallery’s Yearning for Yours showcase.

Yamin Nayar’s project Of The Charmed and Vital World of A-27 series (2003), an installation of photographs made from staged situations using figures in varied scales and self-constructed miniature environments, is in a large part about the formation of a narrative fantasy fueled by her family’s experiences of leaving India and settling in Detroit in the late 1970s. Nayar explores the language of the modern condition, wrapped around issues of migration, displacement, alienation and belonging. For the artist, disillusion and the process of creating home and community in its context—mentally and physically—are filled with numerous layers of public and private experiences, internal fragmentations, and a heightened understanding of a fluid state of eternal becoming.
Saeed Rahman's HASEENA 420 (2002), a series of photographs of Pakistani drag queens living in New York City, demonstrates the joy and happiness that result from beauty, the askew practices of making oneself up, and the wholeness of spectatorship. Each picture includes objects that highlight the reality of these women's existence and bring them to life—a cell phone, can of beer, or make-up brush, for example. Also included are elements of fantasy, inventions and mimicry, and the fearlessness of wanting it all. The camera and its documentary subject come together in sharing a Baroque aesthetic enterprise.

Saeed Rahman was born in Karachi, Pakistan and currently lives in New York City. A self-taught artist, Rahman was included in a group show, "Melange," at Canvas in Karachi. Some of his photographs will also be published in The Herald, a monthly published in Pakistan.

Saeed Rahman's installation Latah Stories (2004-5), on view in the museum's upstairs bathroom, explores the latah, a container filled with water used for cleansing oneself after use of the bathroom. Being of Pakistani descent, Rahman grew up using a latah before being forced to use toilet paper as an undergraduate in a dormitory. While utilizing tongue-in-cheek humor, she considers issues of shame and acceptance, as well as differing concepts of cleanliness. The latahs also represent, through their most basic function, the separation between practices performed inside the Pakistani American household and public conventions of behavior in America.

Sa'dia Rehman was born in Queens in 1980 and received her BA from The College of New Rochelle and her MA in Art History and Museum Studies at The City College of New York. Her most recent exhibitions include Once Upon A Time: Visions by Alumni/Arts, Castle Gallery, New Rochelle, NY; Territoria, 7th Annual Visual Arts Exhibition, Gallery Antinola, New York, NY; and Make Milk, Lighter Skin, Better Waste, Bridge Gallery, Chalf, New Rochelle, NY.
Ela Shoh's World Within (2005) is an installation of hanging wooden mobiles featuring women cradled within household items such as bottles or clothes hangers. It depicts women's struggles to balance family, career, spirituality and dreams. The figures are sometimes juxtaposed with American superheroes or Indian goddesses, both of whom are symbols of power and hope. While the sculptures might appear comical or humorous at first, they address religious, political and cultural issues, creating a contemporary mythology for the present day multicultural global society.

Ela Shoh was born in Mumbai, India, where she learned Indian miniature painting techniques as well as various Western techniques in art. After receiving her B.A. in Psychology and a Diploma in Fine Arts, she traveled around the world, finally settling in the U.S., where she received her M.A. in sculpture at Montclair State University. Her work is in collection in N.J. State Museum, Jersey City Museum, Air India, and the Indian Embassy. She has received numerous awards and fellowships including the N.J. State Council on the Arts, the Dodge Foundation, and the Innovative Printmaking Fellowship at the Rutgers University.

Asma Ahmed Shikoh grew up in Karachi, Pakistan. There, her work had attempted to define national and cultural identities of a society in flux. Now, in New York, Shikoh's fascination with city life and its impact on personal identity, continue to grow. The magnitude of New York City's structures and its tremendous ability to absorb diversity hold her in awe. Vanvick Boulevard (2005) is from a series of paintings called Home that documents her experiences as she adopts the city as her own. In this piece Shikoh selected the iconic MTA subway map and personalizes it using visual tools from her everyday life and Urdu script. The process of painting is therapeutic, and helps her research, explore and discover New York.

Asma Ahmed Shikoh received her BFA in painting and printmaking at the Indus Valley School of Art and Architecture in Karachi, Pakistan, where she later became an Assistant Lecturer and Studio Art Workshop Facilitator. She has exhibited in group shows in Pakistan and in her new city of residence, Hoboken, NJ.
Shahzia Sikander specializes in Indian and Persian miniature painting. While becoming an expert in this technique-driven art form, she has imbued it with a personal context, blending the Eastern focus on precision and methodology with a Western emphasis on creative, subjective expression. Sikander is also interested in exploring both sides of the Hindu and Muslim “border,” often combining imagery from both, such as the Muslim veil and the Hindu multi-armed goddess, in a single painting. Expanding the miniature to the wall, Sikander creates murals, animations, and installations. Her installation at the GMA, Spinn (2003), is a digital animation in which the hair of Krishna’s gopi’s flies off their heads and swarms like bats against an exquisitely rendered background that playfully combines various forms of religious iconography.

Shahzia Sikander was born in 1969 in Lahore, Pakistan. After her undergraduate degree at the National College of Arts in Lahore, she received an MFA from the Rhode Island School of Design. Sikander has received many awards and honors for her work, including the Honorary Artist Award from the Pakistan Ministry of Culture and National Council of the Arts.

Jaret Vadera’s Light, a series of photographic prints covered in Phaselis, and then covered over in paint and Mylar, subtly clouding and dispersing the image, creates visual experiences that comment on the fleeting nature of memory and perception. The artist’s installations design forms in a transient internal snapshot, exemplifying the inability for one to fully capture the past. In a broader context, the work positions the authority of cultural memory or history, as well as how the mind encounters experience through the process of interpretation.

Jaret Vadera received his training in fine art from the Ontario College of Design and Cooper Union School of Art in New York. He has had numerous solo and group exhibitions in Toronto including Archive, Department of Canadian Heritage, Toronto Eaton, Cultural Foundation of Caracas, France, Re-Construct, Ph Galleria, New York; and Interescapes, Galleria 401, Toronto. His published writings have appeared in Surface & Symbol, and he has received media coverage from radio stations and journals. Vadera has received awards such as Kathryn Maxine Noonan Award and an Emerging Artist Grant from the Toronto Arts Council.
WORKS IN EXHIBITION

Disvoe Chhaya (b. 1971, Mumbai, India)
Paint, 2004
Acrylic on canvas
48 x 48 inches
Courtyard of the artist

Net Art, 2002
Acrylic on canvas
36 x 36 inches
Courtyard of the artist

Ovaco, 2004
Acrylic on panel
7 x 12 inches
Courtsey of Sonia Santini

Bino Banderji (b. 1963, Calcutta, India)
With food and teeth: get back, get back, get back in where you once belonged, 2003
Mixed media installation: dollhouse frame, electric fan, wooden tables, day, plastic wrap and dried organic matter
48 inches in diameter x 144 inches high
Courtsey of the artist

Coconut Oil, 2003
Video
4:32 minutes, color, sound, looped
Courtyard of the artist

Mariana Wahnveda Daredia (b. 1971, Karachi, Pakistan)
Monoprint, 2004
Video
5 minutes, color, sound, looped
Courtyard of the artist

Stana Benjamin (b. 1960, Mumbai, India)
From the Trading House series
"My Magic Carpet," 2004
Gouache and gold leaf on paper
23 x 17 inches
Courtsey of Cheryl Hbeam Fine Arts, New York

Anna Bhushan (b. 1975, England)
Selections from the Midnight's Children series
Fire, 2003
Shootout, 2003
Midnight's Children, 2003
Rains, 2003
Gouache on watercolor paper
6 x 3 inches each
Courtsey of the artist

Bijayini Das / Elizabeth Dafni (b. 1961, Karachi, Pakistan / b. 1957, Seattle, WA)
Magic Carpet, 2005
String-sculpture installation: fabricated metal "carpet" illuminated with lightbulbs
36 x 40 inches
Courtyard of the artist

Musa Jhigaj (b. 1973, Bronx, NY)
Red sky, small candle, 2004
Gouache and acrylic on paper
20 x 31 inches
Courtsey of Bellflower Gallery, New York

Mysterious Light, 2004
Acrylic on panel
24 x 30 inches
Courtsey of Bellflower Gallery, New York

Vandana Jain (b. 1975, Jamnagar, Gujarat, India)
John Hancock's America, 2004
Site-specific installation: plywood, antifreeze, cell, felt and reflective tape
48 x 30 x 16 inches
Courtsey of the artist

Indira Freitas Johnson (b. 1943, Minneapolis, USA)
Believe in the Power, 1993
Ceramic and mixed media sculpture
27 1/2 x 25 x 14 1/2 inches
Courtsey of the artist

Rejikarnal Khobzi (b. 1974, Auburndale, CA)
P All Started with Someone Else's Line, 2004
Gouache on 19th century Japanese lacquer painting
30 x 40 inches
Courtsey of PROW Gallery, New York
Swati Khurowa (b. 1975, New Delhi, India) Selections from the Melodious Beer House Bride series Trace Bride, 2005 Batting Buffoons, 2005 Aarfa Ghori, 2005 R is for 14 x 20 inches each Courtesy of the artist

Bari Kumar (b. 1966, Varanasi, India) Portrait of Culture, 2000 Oil on canvas 27 x 40 inches Courtesy of Bose Pacia Gallery, New York

Ritik, 2003 Oil on linen 61 x 64 inches Courtesy of Bose Pacia Gallery, New York


Nineteen Mahalakshis (b. 1969, London, MA) Works Some Comedy!, 2004 Arahant Art on canvas 3 panels 10 x 10 inches each Courtesy of the artist

Nishad, 2003 Oil on canvas 24 x 36 inches Courtesy of the artist

Premra Murthy (b. 1969, Seattle, WA) QNS0001, 2005 QNS0002·9, 2005 Deputy of prints, pigmented ink on fine art paper 60 x 50 inches each Courtesy of the artist

Pratima Majhi (b. 1979, Washington DC) Selections from the Fifty Women series Zeena & Raveena, 2004 The Day After, 2004

The Red Window, 2004 Photographs 16 x 20 inches each Courtesy of the artist

Yamini Nayar (b. 1975, Delhi, IN) Selections from the GI: The Changed and Visual World of a 27-series Safely parked, so he thought . . ., 2003 Digital C-print 40 x 30 inches Courtesy of the artist

Saadat Rahman (b. 1972, Karachi, Pakistan) Selections from the Hossain 420 series Muhaddir, 2002 Self in Gold, 2002 C print 30 x 30 inches each Courtesy of the artist

Sidhii Rahman (b. 1980, Converse, NY) Site Specific Installation: Purchased plastic boxes and looped sound Courtesy of the artist

Elie Shaff (b. Mumbai, India) World Waves, 2002 Holographic models of gold leaf and mixed media on wood Courtesy of the artist

Anne Ahmed Shikoh (b. 1978, Karachi, Pakistan) From the Home series Yawm-e-Defa, 2005 Pen and acrylic on paper and canvas 48 x 36 inches each Courtesy of the artist


Janet Vadera (b. 1976, Toronto, Canada) Selections from the Light series 1996, 2000 Untitled, 2003 Untitled, 2003 Untitled, 2003 Acrylic paint and Hede on digital C-print 7 1/2 x 10 1/2 x 1/2 inches (11 x 14 inches framed) each Courtesy of the artist
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