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Searching for Stars Amongst the Crescents

23 Aug – 25 Oct, 2019

Adip Dutta | Ayesha Sultana | Bani Abidi | Julien Segard | Moyra Davey | Prabhakar Pachpute | Praneet Soi | Radhika Khimji | Rathin Barman | Sahil Naik | Sanchayan Ghosh | Sohrab Hura

Experimenter presents a group exhibition, *Searching for Stars Amongst the Crescents*. Looking beyond the confines of our mental and physical capacities and prejudices, the exhibition seeks propositions for a future living. Probing failures and slippages of modernity, the artists reimagine the inheritances of shared legacies, build unexpected alliances of solidarity, and precipitate collective action. They reevaluate terms of insanity, the intersections of personal experiences of the body and its ways of living and what it means to coexist within multi-layered alignments.

The title of the exhibition refers to Bani Abidi's work – *Searching for Stars Amongst the Crescents* which is composed of 12 silent videos across 3 screens. Through the suite of moving images, Abidi poetically touches upon the fragile equilibrium between the undertones of identity, religion and politics. Beyond the superficial, the works in the exhibition seem to imagine new alliances that explore complex intertwined relationships. Like Abidi's video, still and bereft of human presence, Rathin Barman's wall sculpture, *The Courtyard Is No Longer There*, uses an anthropological lens to refer to loss and memory, imagining propositions of homes constantly in flux. Altered architecture and built spaces represented in Naik's works act as memorials and markers of time, a plot, a site of mourning, or an instrument of questionable truth-value in *Proposition for a Monument*.

Several works on view in the exhibition find personal manifestations exploring relationships between the self and the body in landscape, space and society. Psychological & physical barriers and prejudices are challenged expressing collective and individual experiences in works by Radhika Khimji, Ayesha Sultana and Sohrab Hura in the exhibition. Investigating a space between architecture and gesture, Khimji's works employ references to ritualistic practices of applying dots and paint where the body is made present in a layered and barely decipherable landscape. Using painting, embroidery and collage, the works open up connections between the living and constructed bodies that surround us and a space between conflicting polarities emerge. Ayesha Sultana's study of her own breath, through a suite of scratch drawings on clay-coated paper, *Breath Count* are deeply personal explorations of movement, mark making and corporeality. A sense of interconnectedness of the body to a larger system seems to unravel itself through the work. Repeatedly scratching the surface of the paper, Sultana reveals staccato patterns that represent a delicate inward probe of her

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own body using count, distance, motion and removal in breath.

Photographs in Sohrab Hura's *The Levee*, are similarly personal experiences of a journey he makes through the heart of the American South as he travels along the Mississippi river, while his father sails on open water on the cargo ship he works on just across the levee, never quite seeing the same landscape or its people through the same lens, yet navigating the identical course, only separated by the embankment. Through a poetic and poignant body of images and a sound installation, Hura reflects on several complex emotions simultaneously. The photographs present a heart wrenching series of images of the failures and celebrations of life in interior America – guns, violence, racism, right-wing politics and a certain loss of tenderness alongside his own layered relationship with his father.

While Hura's work is as much about viewing a transforming landscape from different yet connected points of view, Moyra Davey's photograph proposes a new connected possibility – a sharing of sight and feel, but through a photograph that traditionally is a repository of memory. Davey's photographs are marked with traces of postage – folds, labels, tapes, and stamps; that travel between continents, addressed to individuals that Davey has had personal connections with. In the process of its travel, a hybrid network of touch, abrasion and trace are built over boundaries of geography.

Land, its geography, related conflicts and their formal representation are central to Praneet Soi's papier mache tiles, *Circular Anamorphosis - Schemas 1 & 2*. These tiles fragment ancient patterns developed in craft ateliers in Srinagar in order to obliquely refer to slippages between a utopian panorama and its violent everyday as a place of domicile in the fragmented and contended landscape of Kashmir. On an adjacent wall, Adip Dutta's presents a series of bronze sculptures that resemble lifeless branches of withered trees. Reflecting the fragility of the times, their shadows and form resemble crucifixion, death and decay as material tactility and formal investigation become an extension of a deeply personal practice. Branches of dead trees appear as a recurring leitmotif in the exhibition, with the work of Julien Segard, who looks at the detritus around the cities he lives in and imagines a renewed value in the residue of what has been discarded. The branches of trees grow into forms and balance delicately in the gallery and while scavenged and altered branches lie on the floor elsewhere, that seem to indicate to a possible undervalued potential of the rejected and side-lined.

Alternate possibilities of collective living and negotiating ethical dilemmas associated with exploitation of land and labour resources are central to Prabhakar Pachpute's practice. Combining field research around the world with personal experience, poetry and local proverb Pachpute's immersive mural and sculptures. For instance, Pachpute's deep association with the farmer movement and the *Farmer's Long March* is reflected in the work *Thousands of Vibrations* which recalls the collective energy and deafening

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vibrations of thousands of farmers pouring in together in silent protest from their villages to the cities all over India, much like the hum of the coal miners' underground world that trembles with the vibrations of explosions. His work portends a future of hope amidst the destruction that surrounds the lives of farmers and miners and imagines the precipitation of collective action.

Sanchayan Ghosh has been interested for long in ideas of labour and brings in temporality, situational dynamics, the intersection of personal and public space in his work *Who Gains from it Honestly?* In a series of shadow cast impressions of the gallery staff, and occupying the office space where the gallery team works together, Ghosh's alter ego, "Dr Ghosh" makes an enquiry into the interconnected yet individual selves of his subjects. By collaboratively working with the team at Experimenter and casting their shadows in moments of stillness, he negotiates the fine crevices of time between presence, absence, and transience – in moments of introspection where each member of the team occupies time alone in dark room that "Dr Ghosh" sets up for his project.

The artists in *Searching for Stars Amongst the Crescents* all seem to pose questions of unease, and locate these questions in a moment of urgency that imagine an alternate possibility than where we seem to be headed in current times. They seek a space and a new reality where lines of insanity and reason blur and frontiers are tested, and where 'stars' and 'crescents' are no longer two separate identities but enmeshed into one cohesive future vision of hope and solidarity.

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