

# experimenter

**Praneet Soi**

*Hold Still*

01 December, 2018 – 02 February, 2019

Experimenter, Ballygunge Place

Experimenter presents *Hold Still*, Kolkata-born and Amsterdam-based artist Praneet Soi's second solo at the gallery.

*Hold Still* titled after Sally Mann's seminal book, lays bare a layered lens through which Soi looks at his surroundings, creating a unique interplay between the narrative and the image. A deep association with the circulated image, its archiving and re-appropriation, remains an essential part of his process, at times leading him to unravel the several transitions – of transfiguring, fragmenting and deconstructing the original form.

Soi's personal experiences, during his time as a student in a changing political climate in the late 90's in the United States, marked a shift in his work, rooting it further into the politics of representation. The devastation in Manhattan in 2001, during the fall of the Twin Towers were caught by western media in ways very different from those of the consequent attacks by US forces of Taliban controlled Afghanistan, where the same media propelled a primitive narrative of the land and its people. This moment marked for Soi, the beginning of an engagement with circulated media and he has since collected and compiled an archive that throws light upon this dichotomy.

Over the years Soi has repeatedly referenced and often subverted, conflict-zone images. He frequently merges such abstracted images with spatial aspects of architecture in an attempt to shift the imbalanced perception of conflict zones, such as he has done with Srinagar, Kashmir. Since his first visit to strife-ridden Srinagar in 2010 and meeting master craftsman Fayaz Jan, Soi delved into ideas linked to the depiction of the city's cultural fabric and slippages in the public understanding of its rich historical legacy, not limited to those of violence, loss and the longstanding misrepresentation of Kashmir in mainstream media.

*Hold Still*, continues Soi's oblique allusion to the circulated image and its public memory. Several works in this exhibition such as *Falling Figure*, *Twin Towers*, *Memento Mori*, transform this archive of images. The fragmented form of the falling figure juxtaposed by the abstracted façade of the twin-towers or the image of the screaming man from Gaza for instance, find themselves represented in paintings as well as craft processes such as coir weavings that lie on the mosaic patterned floor of the gallery. Soi's use of the archive manifests itself through drawings that are meticulously rendered to reveal correlations of the body and architectural elements. The links between the human body and architecture is a subject than Soi has often attempted to articulate within his work through a process of creating a repository of mapped images, and in this exhibition, through paintings such as *Two Architectures*, *October* and *Mumbai Diptych*.

*Hold Still* offers a point of entry into the the densely populated world of images that co-inhabit Soi's mind and explores the construction of meaning through the manipulated and layered visual. It includes traditional practices, such as miniature-painting and coir-weaving and enmeshes them with contemporary techniques such as digital printing and moving image. Soi places the archive of motifs he has built over two decades at its centre, and unravels how he constructs, expands and then rebuilds recurring narratives in his work.

Praneet Soi (b. 1971, India) received his BA (1994) and MA (1996) in painting at Maharaja Sayajirao Univerisity, Baroda; an MVA at University of California at San Diego (2001) and thereafter studied at the Rijksakademie, Amsterdam (2002 to 2003). Recent institutional solo exhibitions include *Third Factory - from Kashmir to Lisbon via Caldas*, Calouste Gulbenkian Museum, Lisbon (2018); *Notes on Labour*, Dr. Bhau Daji Lad Museum, Mumbai (2017); and *Pattern - The Falling Figure and Other Stories*, CCA Derry/Londonderry (2017). Other notable exhibitions have been at Kochi-Muziris Biennale (2016),

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Venice Biennale (India Pavilion), 2011; Ural Industrial Bienale of Contemporary Art, Ekatarinburg, Russia, (2010); 7th Gwangju Biennale, South Korea, (2008). Soi's work maybe found in the permanent collections of the Van Abbe Museum, Eindhoven, Kiran Nadar Museum of Art, New Delhi, Irish Museum of Modern Art, Dublin and Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam among other public and private collections. Soi currently lives and works between Amsterdam and Kolkata.

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