

PRESS RELEASE

*I wish to let you fall out of my hands* (Chapter I)

Bani Abidi

Naeem Mohaiemen

30 Jan – 3 Mar 2018

Experimenter – Hindusthan Road, Kolkata

Experimenter presents, *I wish to let you fall out of my hands* (Chapter I), with works by Bani Abidi and Naeem Mohaiemen. This exhibition is the first of a two-part exhibition, the latter of which inaugurates Experimenter's second space in Kolkata.

*I wish to let you fall out of my hands* (Chapter I) will open on 30 Jan 2018, and will be on view until 3 Mar 2018 at Experimenter, 2/1 Hindusthan Road, Kolkata 700029.

The exhibition proposes an examination of longing, memory, identity, dislocation and loss through architecture, form, space and structures of their understood meaning. The works on view use film and photography to explore the complexity of human relationships and the spaces they occupy – whether transitory, aspirational, imaginary or reclaimed. It explores a certain relinquishment of emotions and relationships only to consider them over time with renewed understanding.

Glacial time envelops Mohaiemen's fiction film *Tripoli Cancelled* (2017), as a man follows a daily routine of walking, smoking, writing letters, staging scenes, and reading from a weathered copy of the dark British children's classic *Watership Down*. Gradually, we learn that his home for the last decade is an abandoned airport. But is he a prisoner, or emperor of a vast domain? There are no guards and no visible fences, only a rusty jumbo jet and an endless supply of cigarettes. The film is staged in Athens' Ellinikon terminal, designed by Eero Saarinen in 1969, and permanently closed in 2001. The airport was recently leased to an Arab-Chinese consortium for luxury real estate development, as part of EU bailout negotiations. The script is loosely inspired by the experience of Mohaiemen's father, who was stuck at this same airport for nine days in 1977, after losing his passport in Delhi. Showing for the first time in Asia, after premiering at documenta 14 and in the MoMA PS1 solo show *There is no Last Man*, the film was described by *The New York Times* (17/01/2018) as "Franz Kafka and Samuel Beckett mixed with Julio Cortázar, threaded through the needle of colonialism and 21st-century security states."

Bani Abidi's works made almost a decade ago finds deep resonance with Mohaiemen's film, commenting on architecture and identity viewed through the lens of dislocation. *The Distance From Here*, a single channel video, like several of Abidi's works constructs a situation grounded on an absurd proposition. The film is set within two undefined spaces, one mirroring the sanitised interior of a generic waiting room of possibly a visa office and another, a vast outdoor ground circumscribed by security scanners, guards and surface markings. Abidi develops a play on coercion and control where an anonymous group of people, mechanically follow orders to identify themselves. The protagonists with stoic, if not vacant expressions on their faces, seem to be going nowhere but operating under a superseding structure of power and surveillance. Abidi carefully renders the tedious passage of time that is central to the experience of waiting — an interminable, conflicted simmer of emotions. They wait keenly for their turn, yet dread rejection. Another work in the exhibition by Abidi, *Untitled (Files)* 2010, is a series of photographs of unnamed files, seeming to refer to applicants who are preparing to go elsewhere. An anatomy of anxiety, anticipation, dislocation and ambiguity is established.

Although both works embody a form of stillness, they are leavened by gestural complexity and opacity that offer alternate possibilities. *I wish to let you fall out of my hands* (Chapter I) examines the interdependent relationships of people, with spaces they occupy, claim as their own and the identities they take from inhabiting these spaces. It looks at the amorphous physical and mental space of a transient moment between location and dislocation.

For further information and press enquiries related to *I wish to let you fall out of my hands* (Chapter I) at Hindusthan Road Kolkata, please write to [admin@experimenter.in](mailto:admin@experimenter.in) or call on +91.33.2463.0465 or +91.33.4001.2289.

\**I wish to let you fall out of my hands* (Chapter II) at 45 Ballygunge Place, Kolkata is scheduled to open on 27th February 2018. Experimenter's proposed new space at 45 Ballygunge Place, Kolkata occupies two floors of a carefully restored building, typical of early 20th century architecture in Bengal with a private garden and terrace. The home of erudite scholars and academics over generations, the space adds a certain introspective energy adding to Experimenter's own internal focus on its programming. The two-part exhibition also marks the gallery's intentions in broadening its scope of programming; reinforcing its commitment to learning through a series of lecture performances, workshops and discussions.