

Radhika Khimji

Adorning Shadows

23 October – 24 December, 2021

Experimenter – Ballygunge Place

Experimenter presents *Adorning Shadows*, Radhika Khimji's first solo at the gallery. Entwined in the relationship between figure and ground, form and context, mark and page, subject and object, flatness and depth, Khimji explores the body, its transitory nature and the act of looking and experiencing the body in space.

Employing painting, life size sculpture and works on paper, Khimji questions how spaces are embodied, how figures are activated in space, and explores the relationship between a place and being placed. Human forms, especially the female body in transcendence, are clearly discernible in the works on view and seem to suggest directions in how the body may think, feel, navigate the world and negotiate its existence within different dynamics of power. The conceptual underpinning of *Adorning Shadows* may be viewed through several concurrent strands of thought that run through Khimji's work such as Merleau-Ponty's *Eye and Mind* on the felt and lived experience of the body in the fabric of the world, or rooted in yoga sutras in Eastern philosophy of weightlessness and embodiment of the human form. As in thought, Khimji's work constantly shifts between a part and whole of the body in landscape, as a way of seeing and experiencing.

Also viewed through Plato's Theory of Forms, the exhibition views an object or body as essentially a manifestation of form and the phenomena it projects as mere shadows that mimic the form. While the theory concludes that objects in reality are momentary portrayals of the form under varying circumstances, Khimji questions it further by exploring relationships between the body and its place and what embodiment feels like. The gaze, the act of seeing and being seen, have elements of control, dominance and passive acceptance that Khimji playfully attempts to unpack in her work. The wall, room or page is used as a playing field to chart out the different trajectories and gestures in the work, to level out and conflate hierarchies, opening and closing dialogue between the pieces as the viewer reads and navigates the space.

Khimji's work is at once painting, drawing and collage; it is also embroidery and sculpture. Using painting, stitching and assemblage on cloth, wood and paper, Khimji develops a way of working informed by the physicality and materiality of the making process that deconstructs, evades and erases constructions of formulated identities. The body is made visible in spaces that resemble landscapes but eludes discrete identifications. In the exhibition, the female body acts out different roles in the process of empowering herself. Fluctuating between states of being passive and active, defiant and free, the sculptures particularly suggest an embodied hover – a sense of floating and being in between a state that is fully engaged and grounded in the self – dormant forces waiting to be used. Khimji poses several questions through the exhibition. Does the body, a physical structure depend on other factors to sense its hierarchy in a world outside itself? Is the body caught in

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suspended movement in space? Is the body transcendent to our own world, the world of substances, and is the body or its form the essential basis of reality?

Radhika Khimji (b. Oman 1979) lives and works between London and Oman. Khimji holds an MA in Art History, UC London, an MFA from Royal Academy of Art, London, a BFA from Slade School of Art, London and a foundation degree from Kingston University of Art and Design. Khimji has shown in several exhibitions around the world including the 6th Marrakech Biennale, Jogja Biennale XII and the Drawing Biennale, Drawing Room London amongst others. Khimji's works are in the collection of Guggenheim Abu Dhabi, Devi Art Foundation and other private and public institutions.

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