



The nights will follow the days

ARTISTS

AMBA SAYAL-BENNETT

ALIA SYED

MUNEM WASIF

SHIRAZ BAYJOO

SUMAKSHI SINGH

CUARTED BY

SHALMALI SHETTY

Serendipity Arts Festival
Excise Building, Panjim, Goa
15-23 December 2023

Curatorial Research Fellowship 2023
Art South Asia Project and Serendipity Arts Foundation
& Supported by Faizal & Shabana Foundation

Artists

Alia Syed, Amba Sayal-Bennett, Munem Wasif, Shiraz Bayjoo, Sumakshi Singh

Curated by

Shalmali Shetty

Exhibition Dates

15-23 December 2023

11:00 am - 8:00 p.m.

Venue

Excise Building, Serendipity Arts Festival, Panjim, Goa, India

Linked Events

- *Talk: The nights will follow the days - Shalmali Shetty & Mala Yamey*; 16th December 2023, 2:30 - 3:30 p.m., ESG Auditorium, Panjim, Goa

- *Culmination Talk*; 9th February 2024, 10:00 a.m. - 12:00 p.m., Frieze, No. 9 Cork Street, London

Supported by

Curatorial Research Fellowship 2023 granted by Art South Asia Project (UK) in collaboration with Serendipity Arts Foundation (India) and supported by Faizal & Shabana Foundation.

Courtesy

Jhaveri Contemporary, Mumbai; Project 88, Mumbai; Exhibit 320, New Delhi.

With special thanks to Sofia Karim, Architect and Activist, London.

Press

- *TAKE on Art visits Serendipity Arts Festival* (one of five selected exhibitions), TAKEpick, TAKE Magazine (18 Dec 2023)

- *In Person: The Nights Will Follow the Days*; Arundhati Chauhan, ASAP Connect (22 Dec 2023)

- *Munem Wasif: Walkthrough by Shalmali Shetty*, The Eight Foundation (25 Dec 2023)

- *In Goa, Serendipity and the Self*; Deekshith Pai, The Chakkar (16 Jan 2024)

Links

[Art South Asia Project](#)

[Serendipity Arts Festival](#)

[SAF Talk](#)

Image

Shroud (2023), Shalmali Shetty

The nights will follow the days is premised on the story of the haunting reappearance of a woman who allegedly returns to her home numerous times much after her passing. She finally returns for one last time before the house she used to inhabit—a link, a refuge, an emotion, an association, an identity—was demolished. Taking this as a metaphor, the exhibition navigates across themes of spectral memories and narratives associated with spaces, places, lands and oceans. Through the works of five artists, it further explores personal truths, displaced generational memories and histories affected by colonialism, migration and political landscapes—enabling a return to a place of remembrance and imagination.

A STORY

One evening, was like any other. The skies, a heavy blue-black. As the day slowly faded into the sea on the horizon, and dusk settled in, white tube lights illuminated the house, a yellow lamp and incense were lit, attracting and repelling a host of buzzing insects louder than the ceiling fan and the murmur of the television. As the lizards scurried on the wall, frogs croaked in the courtyard, dogs barked in the distance—a whiff of *kane* fish curry and boiled rice floated in with the warm, humid air. My uncle wistfully recalled his childhood, his life, as he stepped out for his daily walk, a routine. On his way, he noticed an old woman he had never seen before, ambling her way up the staircase of the neighbouring house, to the terrace. The land had been sold; soon, he would leave his ancestral home behind. To be demolished.

This evening was like any other. The neighbouring house, the only other house in the vicinity, having been transformed into a bar and restaurant, accommodated a variety of flavours and emotions—now abuzz with laughter overpowering old Kannada tunes on the radio and a cricket match on the television. The smell of alcohol combined with chicken *sukka*, *marwai gassi* and rice *rotti* floated in the warm, humid air. *The land had been acquired; soon, they would leave this ancestral home behind. To be demolished.*

Or, perhaps this evening, was unlike any other. A few attempts later, if memory did not fail her, she intended yet again to return to her home. After a long journey, as the light faded at the close of day and lights came on at the beginning of night, alone, she arrived limp and frail, knowing it to be her home. She slowly ambled her way up the staircase to the terrace of what was now a bar and restaurant, abuzz with flavours and emotions. *This land had now been inherited, occupied, transformed, sold, acquired; perhaps, this was her last visit. Before her home is demolished.*

The uncle is returning home after his walk. As he draws closer, a cacophony of faint voices overpowers loud laughter, old Kannada tunes and the cricket match. He looks in its direction, up the staircase of the neighbouring house, at a small crowd of people gathered around the old woman. Curious. Enquiring. Bothered. Wondering: Name? Address? Identity?

This is my land... this here, is my home... I live here... I belong here! This belongs to me!

From the crowd of people, the uncle and another man, having lived in the neighbourhood longer than the others, leaned in to take a closer look at the agitated old woman. She looked up, straight at them. In that moment, a nod, a knowing smile. In that moment, the weight of recognition; a recollection; a remembrance; an evocation; a rememory—freezing, as humid air closed in.

It was in 1992, twenty five years before this evening, that she had passed away in her bedroom under the very terrace. Having lived in a hostile society, a life of trials and tribulations, childless: she was angry, defiant, spiteful, resenting, sorrowful, alone; holding onto reality through the little she was left with. Like for countless others, her home was like a shell that respired, held, broke; a space of desire, dreams, comfort, security, consolation, devotion; a place of feelings, emotions, confinement, solitude, belonging—that she perhaps promised to return to. And so she has, over the years, numerous times—through conversations, community stories, family histories, personal recollections, bodies. She is returning through me to you, as I write and you read this account. She will, again and again and again, to her place of remembrance and imagination.

The ancestral homes now stand obliterated—a link, a refuge, an emotion, an association, an origin, an identity, erased. In the day, the land is inhabited by tall, dry wilderness; at night, spectres consume traces of memory.

The nights will follow the days, and the days will follow the nights.

~ Shalmali Shetty, 2023

ALIA SYED

Alia Syed is an experimental filmmaker whose work has been shown extensively in cinemas and galleries around the world. She is interested in storytelling, time and memory and the juncture of personal realities which she explores through different subject positions in relation to culture, diaspora and location.

Syed was born in 1964 in Swansea, and works between London and Glasgow. She has been making experimental films in Britain for over 25 years. Syed's films have been shown at numerous institutions around the world including Los Angeles County Museum of Art in 2012-13; Museum of Modern Art, New York (2010); Hayward Gallery, London (2005); Tate Britain, London (2003); Gallery of Modern Art, Glasgow (2002); Tate Modern, London (2000), Reina Sophia Museum of Contemporary Art, Madrid (2009), and has also held several solo exhibitions at Talwar Gallery, New York and New Delhi. She was nominated for the Jarman Award in 2015 and the Paul Hamlyn Artists Award in 2020.



***Panopticon Letters Missive I* (2013)**

Video Projection

Duration: 24 mins

Panopticon Letters Missive I combines Syed's interest in storytelling with a compelling presentation of history as a visual narrative. Exploring ideas of memory, techniques of the body, and colonialism within the tradition of landscape painting, footage of the river Thames in London is altered to bring about a false relationship between sky and water. This is set against the technical descriptions of the architectural plans for an ideal prison as read from 'The Panopticon Letters' of Jeremy Bentham (1748-1832), who had first identified the Millbank site for the construction of his Panopticon. The darkness of the severed horizon-line allows different modes of address to emerge within a correspondence of letters, reformulating a multitude of narratives of time and place.

Alia Syed (b. 1964) is an experimental filmmaker whose work has been shown extensively in cinemas and galleries around the world. She is interested in storytelling, time and memory and the juncture of personal realities which she explores through different subject positions in relation to culture, diaspora and location. Syed works between London and Glasgow. She has been making experimental films in Britain for over 25 years, which have been shown at numerous institutions around the world. She was nominated for the Jarman Award in 2015 and the Paul Hamlyn Artists Award in 2020.

AMBA SAYAL-BENNETT

Amba Sayal-Bennett is a London-based British-Indian artist working across drawing, projection, and sculptural installation. Her practice explores how methods of abstraction are exclusionary and performative, crafting boundaries between what is present, manifestly absent, and othered. Using translation as method, she explores the movement of bodies, knowledge and form across different sites, and processes inherent to the diasporic experience.

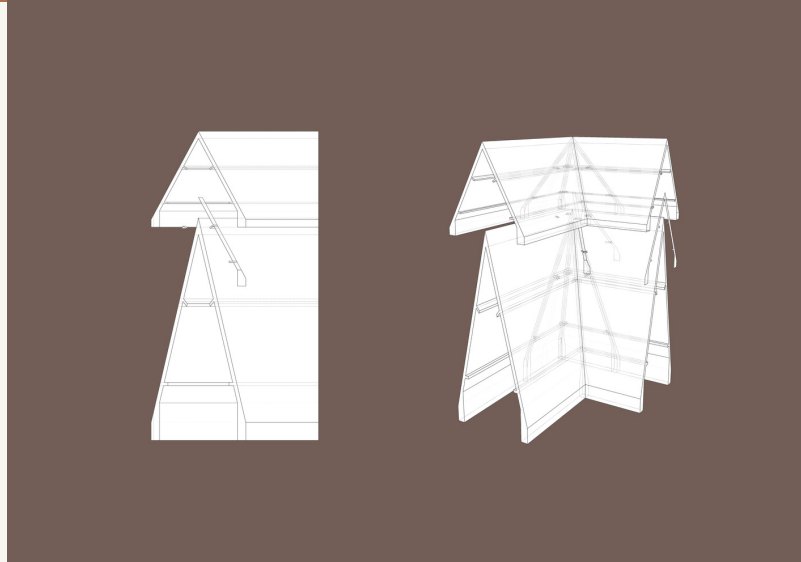
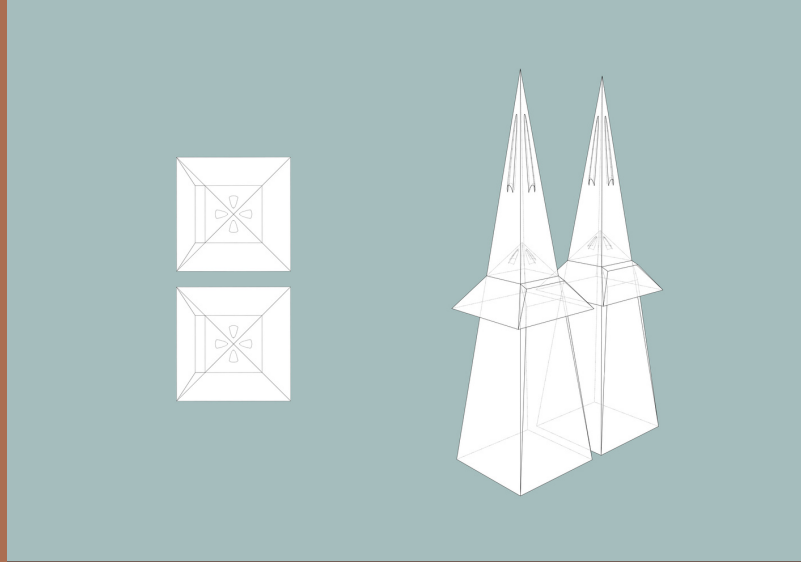
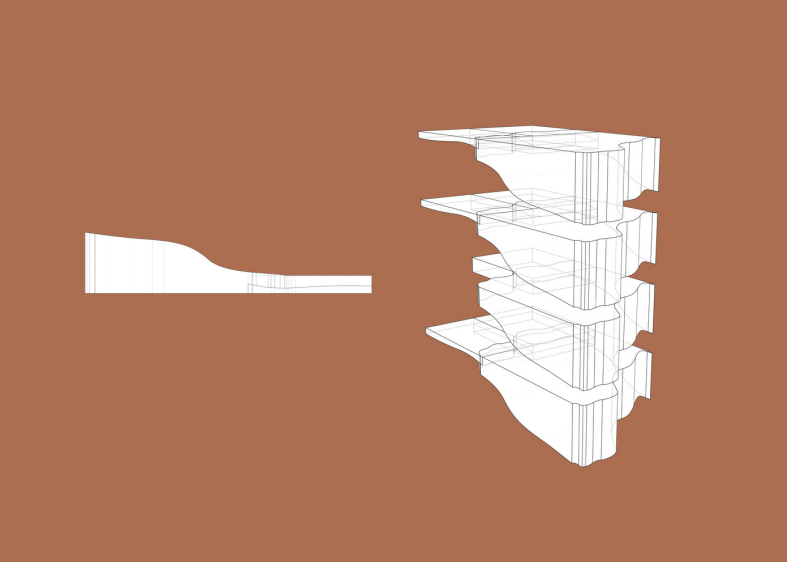
Sayal-Bennett received her BFA from Oxford University and MA in Sculpture from the Royal College of Art. She was awarded her PhD in Art Practice and Learning from Goldsmiths and has published her practice-based research with Tate Papers. Between January and March 2022, she was The Derek Hill Foundation scholar at the British School at Rome in Italy. She is currently an Associate Lecturer at Camberwell College of Arts. Recent exhibitions include Geometries of Difference, Somerset House, London (2022); Horror in the Modernist Block, IKON, Birmingham (2022); My Mother Was a Computer, indigo+madder, London (2022); and Tomorrow, White Cube, London (2021).



Planar GBCB (2023)

Powder Coated Mild Steel, 26 x 44 x 2.5 cm

Manifesting as three interconnected lines of enquiry: drawing, projection, and sculptural installation, Sayal-Bennett's project explores performative dynamics within human and non-human assemblages. *Planar GBCB* stems from an ongoing interest in instruments of measurement, from the astrolabe and compass, to Jantar Mantars. Curious, ancient, other-worldly calculating machines enabled the observation of astronomical positions with the naked eye through an assemblage of measuring devices, and celestial and human bodies. An instrument is a human and non-human assemblage, a system created by the body working in conjunction with a material structure or object. She is interested in how instruments, apparatus and materials have agency.



***Dera, It's Synonymous with Home: Mound, Camp, Settlement* (2023)**

Matt Giclee Prints on Hahnemuhle German Etching Paper, 3 x A3

Dera is a compilation of three prints, evocative of Sayal-Bennett's grandmother's home in Derby, England that was named Dera after Dera Ghazi Khan, her birthplace in the Punjab. Working through inherited memories, oral narratives, and lived experiences of the Partition as passed down by her grandmother, the triptych sequentially subtitled *Mound*, *Camp*, and *Settlement*—words synonymous with the term Dera—follows her journey from the loss of a homeland, to working in makeshift tents put in place for refugees and the displaced, to subsequently arriving in an unfamiliar landscape and resettling in a new home. Sayal-Bennett using architectural drawings, reimagines and maps spectral structures—responding to the transmuting idea of a home, and seeking to revive a dormant relationship between the past and the present.

MUNEM WASIF

Munem Wasif's image-based works explore the notion of trace in its various forms. His complex installations often mix photographs with moving images, archive documents or collected paraphernalia to reveal notions of impermanence and insecurity. Never exhaustive and always open to interpretation, the narratives they develop simultaneously test the limits of documentary representation and the possibilities of fiction. Most recently, Wasif was awarded the Robert Gardner Fellowship in Photography by the Peabody Museum of Archaeology & Ethnology, Harvard University.

Wasif's work has been included in exhibitions at Center Pompidou, the Palais de Tokyo & the Visa pour l'image festival in France; Whitechapel Gallery, Kettle's Yard and Victoria & Albert Museum in England; Museu d'Art Contemporani, Spain; Musée d'Art et d'Histoire & Fotomuseum Winterthur in Switzerland; Kunsthal museum & Noordlicht festival in Netherlands; Museum of Modern Art, Poland; Parasite, Hong Kong; The Factory Contemporary Arts Centre, Vietnam; Gwangju Biennale, Korea; Singapore Biennale, Singapore; Sharjah Biennial, Art Jameel and Ishara Art Foundation in UAE; Asia Pacific Triennial of Contemporary Art, Australia; and Dhaka Art Summit & Chobi Mela in Bangladesh. Munem lives and works in Dhaka.



***Dark Waters* (2019)**

Archival Pigment Print and Ambush Text Print on Archival Paper

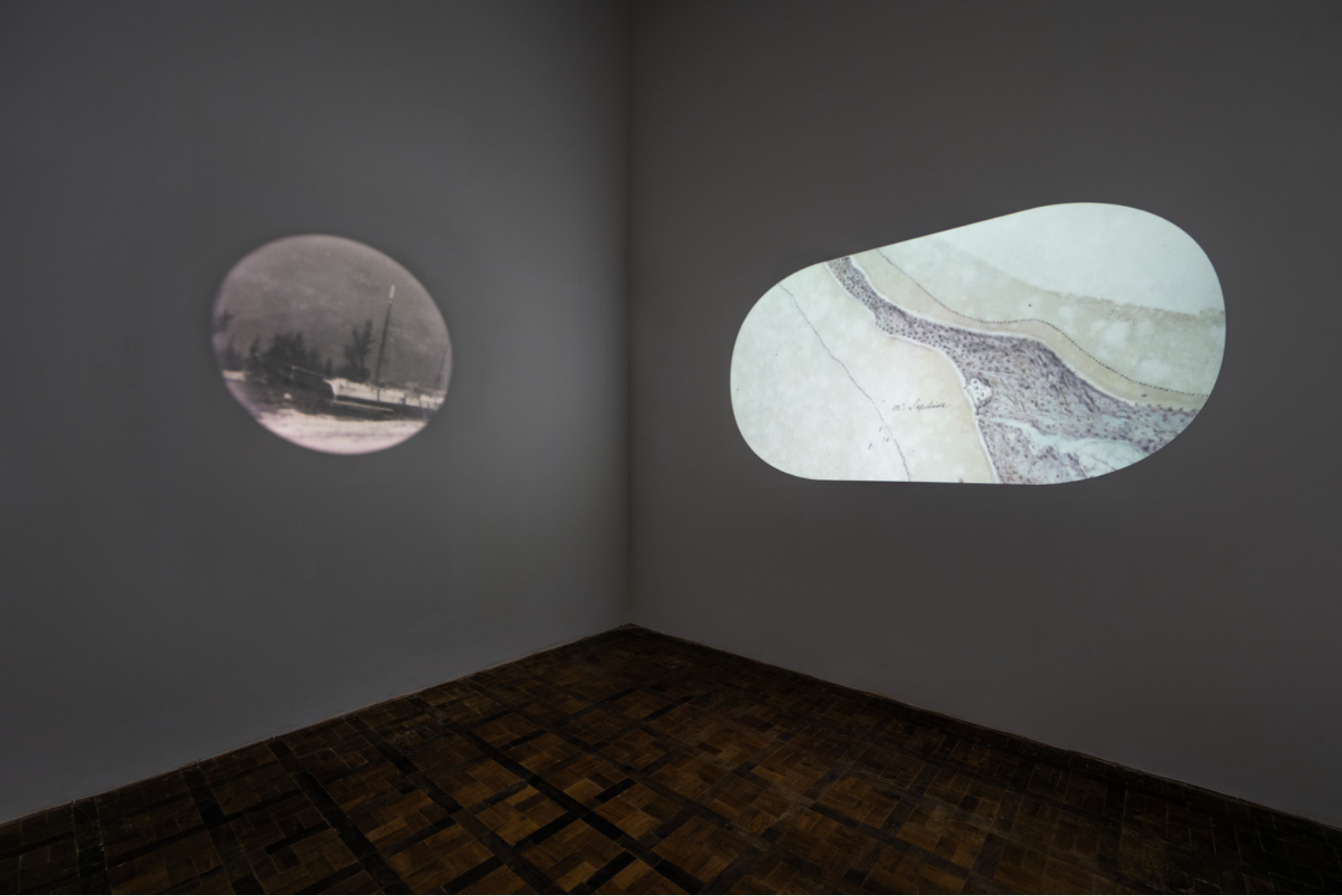
Set of 14, 11.5 x 15 inches each

Spurred by an awareness of current challenges, Wasif investigates topics that often resonate in the global conversation. His working methodology based on long-term immersion, close contact with his subjects and systematic repetition, eschews facile interpretations to convey layered, sensitive, and sometimes contradictory observations on complex issues such as food sovereignty, labour exploitation, or borders and migration.

Part of a larger ongoing project entitled 'Spring Song', *Dark Waters* is a series of black and white photographs which seems innocuous at first: dark, featureless masses of water—the empty ocean at its most ordinary form, a stark reminder of what Rohingyas have gone through to escape a mass execution. Recalling harrowing details, Wasif juxtaposes texts with images to reveal the refugees' escape at sea. The works reflect a constant flow of migration in the Bay of Bengal, where lines of borders are lost in the shades of night.

SHIRAZ BAYJOO

Shiraz Bayjoo is a contemporary multi-disciplinary artist who works with film, painting, photography, performance, and installation. His research-based practice focuses on personal and public archives addressing cultural memory and postcolonial nationhood in a manner that challenges dominant cultural narratives. Bayjoo has exhibited with the Gropius Bau, Berlin; Deichtorhallen, Hamburg; Kunstal Charlottenborg, Copenhagen; Institute of International Visual Arts, London; New Art Exchange, Nottingham; 5th Edition Dhaka Art Summit; 14th Biennale of Sharjah; 13th Biennale of Dakar; and 21st Biennale of Sydney. Bayjoo is a recipient of the Gasworks Fellowship and the Arts Council of England, and was commissioned for Art Night, London 2019. He was an artist in residence at the Delfina Foundation in 2021, and was awarded the Smithsonian Artist Research Fellowship. Bayjoo presented a solo exhibition at the Diaspora Pavilion for the 59th Venice Biennial in 2022, and the 15th edition of Sharjah Biennial.



***Surface to Horizon* (2017)**

2-channel Video

Duration: 7 mins

Surface to Horizon is an exploration of narratives concerning the complex histories and relationships of migration and trade, indentured labour, slavery, and the enduring legacies of colonialism across the Indian Ocean. Bayjoo uses metaphorical references drawn from archival sources, such as the Blue Marlin, a deep-sea fish that never swims to shore—serving as a symbol of resistance in the face of external forces; and the military map of the contested Diego Garcia island in the Chagos Archipelago that continues to be under military control. This is juxtaposed with a survey of a 19th century photograph of sailing ships docked in Port Louis Mauritius—establishing oceanic routes for the transport of both people and goods; and the brief appearance of a coin of the English East India Company, symbolising the coloniser’s ability to amass wealth and exert territorial dominance.

The accompanying soundtrack comprises audio recordings from temple ceremonies in Tamil Nadu, conveying a call to home, a community, and a sense of belonging, against the disruptive experiences of displacement and migration causing many lives to be lost at sea, never to return. The work thereby enquires into the challenges of authoring a collective identity in the post-colony. As part of his ongoing research, this work was presented during a residency undertaken at Clark House Initiative, Mumbai in 2017.

SUMAKSHI SINGH

Sumakshi Singh (b. 1980) is an artist and educator. She completed her BFA from Maharaja Sayajirao University Baroda in 2001 and an MFA from the School of the Art Institute of Chicago (SAIC) in 2003. She has taught, mentored and lectured at SAIC; Oxford University and the Victoria and Albert Museum, UK; The National Gallery of Modern Art (NGMA), Delhi, among other institutions and residencies worldwide.

Her installations, illusion mappings, animations, paintings, threadwork and sculptures have been exhibited in group and solo presentations at Saatchi Gallery, London; Museum of Contemporary Art, Chicago; C24 Gallery, New York; KNMA, Delhi; Kochi Biennale; Museum of Contemporary Art, Lyon; MAXXI Museum, Rome; Mattress Factory Museum of Contemporary Art, Pittsburgh; Van Harrison Gallery, New York; Wilfrid Museum of Art, Israel; Kunsthaus Langenthal, Switzerland; Queensland Gallery of Modern Art, Australia, among others. She is the first Indian artist to be commissioned by Hermès for their artist windows and is the recipient of several grants and awards including YFLO (FICCI), Zegna, Illinois Arts Council, and Richard H. Driehaus. Her work has been on the cover of Arts Illustrated and featured in Art in America, Art Forum, Platform Magazine, Take on Art, Chicago Tribune, Village Voice, and Younger Than Jesus: the New Museum Catalogue among other journals.

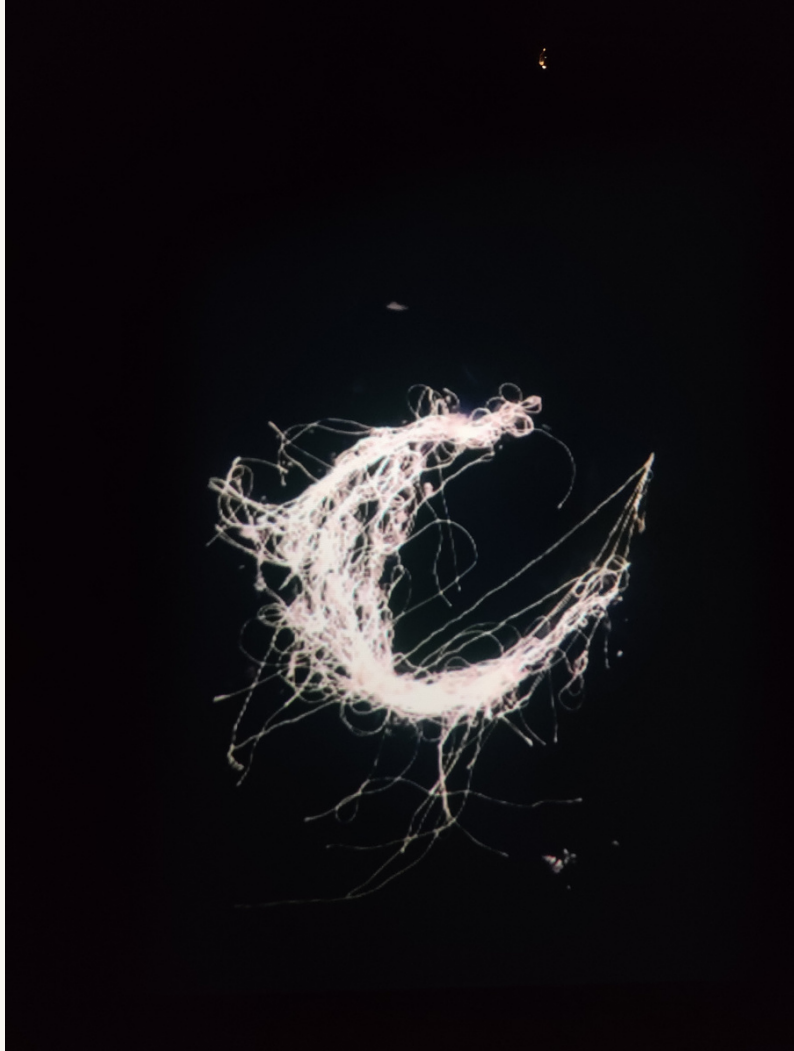


***Pichla Darwaza* (2023)**

Thread; 8 x 8 feet

Pichla Darwaza is a work from the '33 Link Road' series, named after the address of the artist's ancestral home. Built by her refugee grandparents, post the partition of India, this beloved home—the site of innumerable gatherings, shared stories, weddings, births and deaths—now lies empty and in a state of deterioration for the first time in 72 years, having served its function.

In place of brick and mortar, the fragile white thread weaves solid architecture into soft, spectral cob-webs of past memories. Made to exact life-size dimensions, every nut, bolt, hinge and brick transforms into insubstantial, porous skins challenging the solidity of both—the form and the meaning of 'home'. The language of memory finds resonance in these veil-like membranes; flattened as if preserved within the pages of a book.



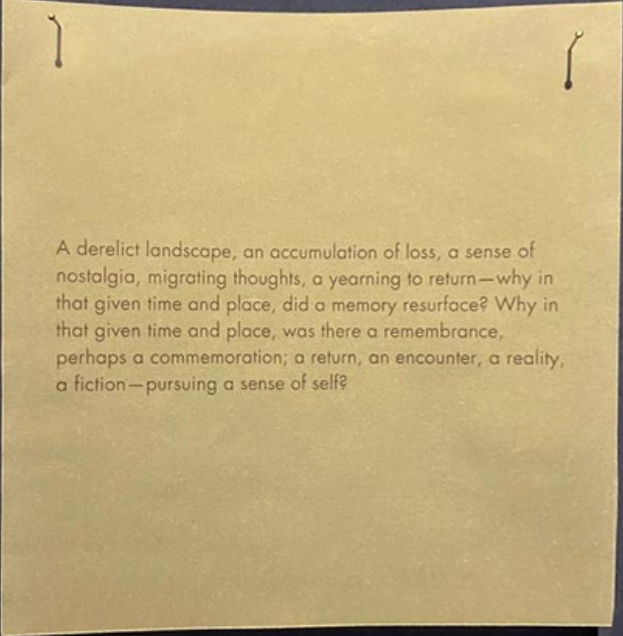
***As Structure Dissolves* (2023)**

Stop Motion Animation, projected on wall

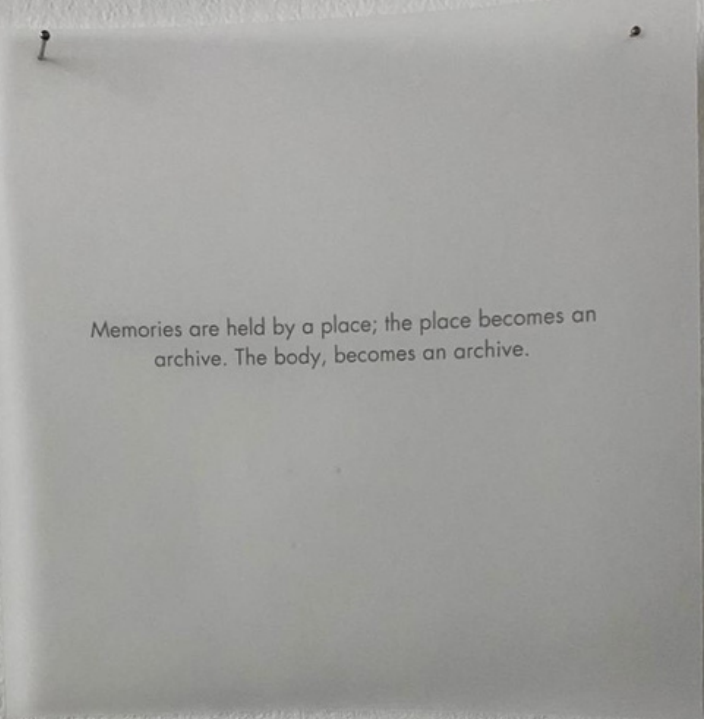
Duration: 9 mins 22 secs

As Structure Dissolves is a stop-motion animation from the '33 Link Road' series, named after the address of the artist's ancestral home. Built by her refugee grandparents, post the partition of India, this beloved home—the site of innumerable gatherings, shared stories, weddings, births and deaths—now lies empty and in a state of deterioration for the first time in 72 years, having served its function.

Here, a door from 33 Link Road is re-constructed stitch by embroidered stitch. After completion, the form hovers and pulsates for a moment as if breathing and then slowly starts to shapeshift. A subtle dance ensues—a push and pull—as the thread resists this mutation of form and tries to hold on to its identity as a door. Ultimately the door gives in, fragmenting into abstraction before finally dissolving back into its original material (thread). In doing so, it swirls like a galactic phenomena, as if offering back its temporal gift of a form back to being assimilated into the material of stars.



A derelict landscape, an accumulation of loss, a sense of nostalgia, migrating thoughts, a yearning to return—why in that given time and place, did a memory resurface? Why in that given time and place, was there a remembrance, perhaps a commemoration; a return, an encounter, a reality, a fiction—pursuing a sense of self?



Memories are held by a place; the place becomes an archive. The body, becomes an archive.

Personal thoughts dispersed across the rooms

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Memories are held by a place; the place becomes an archive. The body, becomes an archive.

“What were you talking about?”

“You won’t understand, baby.”

“Yes, I will.”

“I was talking about time. It’s so hard for me to believe in it. Some things go. Pass on. Some things just stay. I used to think it was my rememory. You know. Some things you forget. Other things you never do. But it's not. Places, places are still there. If a house burns down, it's gone, but the place—the picture of it—stays, and not just in my rememory, but out there, in the world. What I remember is a picture floating around there outside my head. I mean, even if I don't think it, even if I die, the picture of what I did, or knew, or saw is still out there. Right in the place where it happened.”

“Can other people see it?”

“Oh yes. Oh yes, yes, yes. Someday you will be walking down the road and you hear something or see something going on. So clear. And you think it's you thinking it up.

A thought picture. But no. It's when you bump into a rememory that belongs to somebody else. Where I was before I came here, that place is real. It's never going away. Even if the whole farm—every tree and grass blade of it dies. The picture is still there and what’s more, if you go there—you who never was there—if you go there and stand in the place where it was, it will happen again; it will be there for you, waiting for you. So, you can't never go there. Never. Because even though it's so all—over and done with—it's going to always be there waiting for you (...)”

“If it’s still there, waiting, that must mean that nothing ever dies.”

“Nothing ever does.”

An excerpt from a conversation between the mother Sethe and her daughter Denver from Beloved by Toni Morrison (1987), pg. 43-44

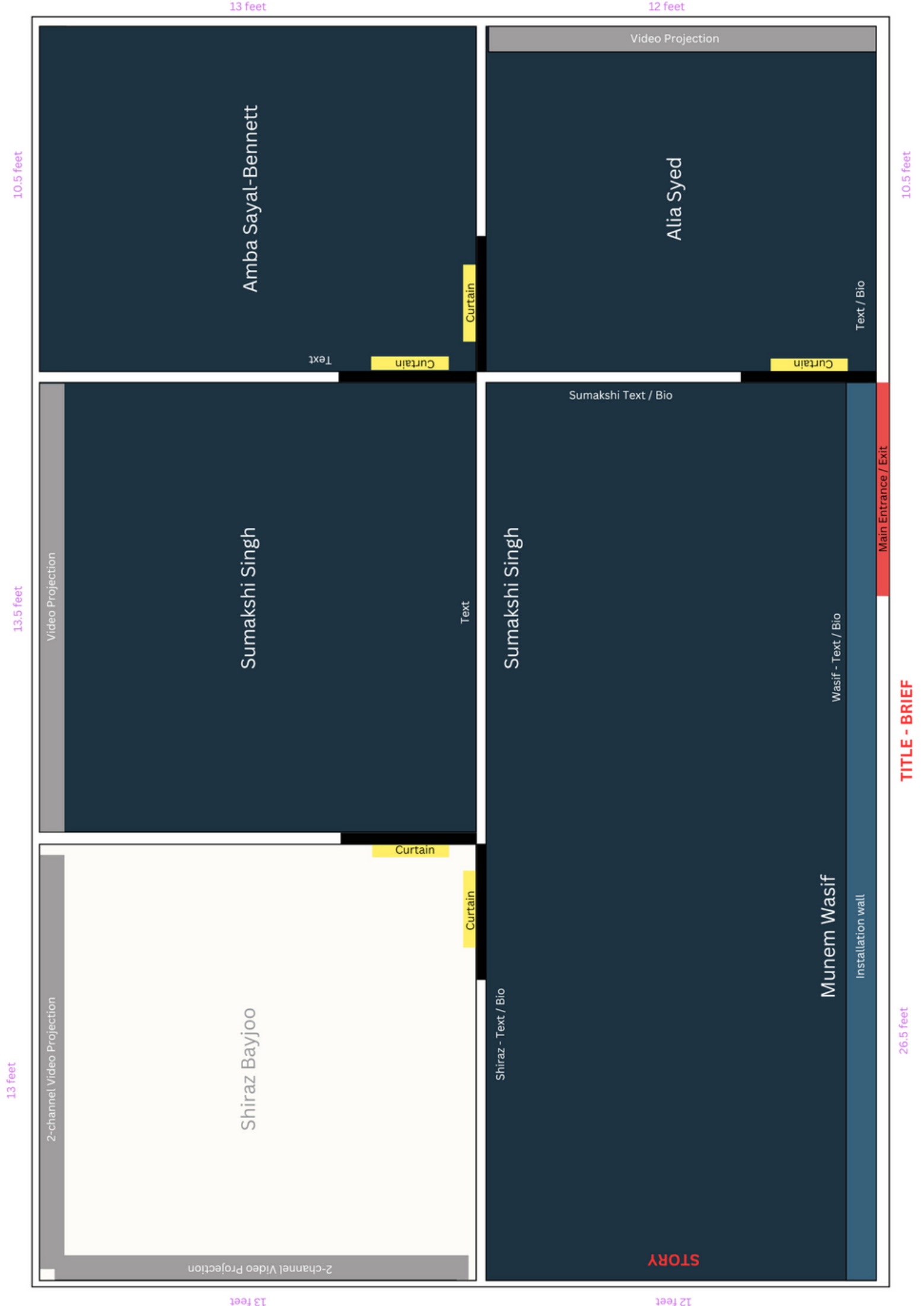
“Have you heard about the thin place?” Sofia asked me.

Some places are identified as thin places. There is a thin place in the Isle of Iona, Scotland where the boundary between the physical world and the spiritual world is thin, porous, dissolving; where you can pass from one world to another.

I have been thinking about memories suspended on the margins of thin places: the transience, the temporality, the strangeness, the fragility, the ruin, the decay, the mythology.

The notion of the Thin Place originates from the Celtic mythology; and is a concept notably present in the political practice of Sofia Karim, Architect and Activist, UK.

Was she a memory, or was she a ghost?



TITLE - BRIEF

Main Entrance / Exit

STORY

SERENDIPITY ARTS FESTIVAL 2023



THE NIGHTS WILL FOLLOW THE DAYS



15-23 DEC

11:00AM–8:00PM
EXCISE BUILDING

Supported by

ASAP
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**Faizal &
Shabana**
FOUNDATION



Exhibition Poster, 2023

SERENDIPITY ARTS FESTIVAL 2023

The nights will follow the days

SHALMALI SHETTY & MALA YAMEY

16 DEC
2:30PM-3:30PM
ESG Auditorium

Supported by



Talk Poster 2023

*Mala Yamey (Head of Programs, ASAP)
in Conversation with Shalmali Shetty*

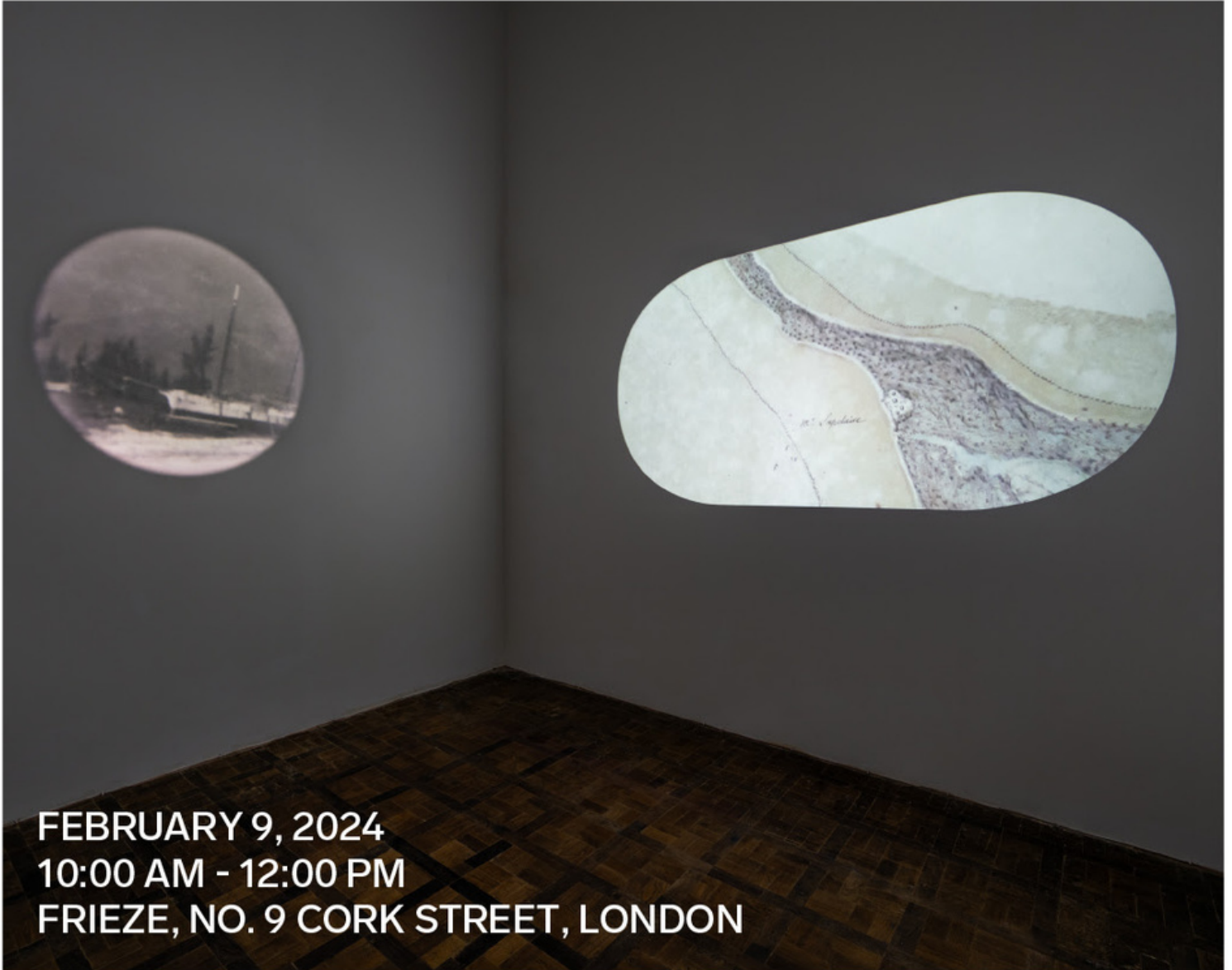
Shalmali Shetty (Curatorial Fellow) & Mala Yamey (Head of Programs, Art South Asia Project) will be in conversation around the ASAP x SAF Curatorial Research Fellowship. Mala will talk through the fellowship's origins and its aims to facilitate cultural exchange across the South Asian ecosystem. In conversation with Mala, Shetty will talk through her experience of the fellowship to date and how she formed her research interests and questions, specifically related to her curatorial project.

Art South Asia Project



Serendipity Arts Curatorial
Research Fellowship

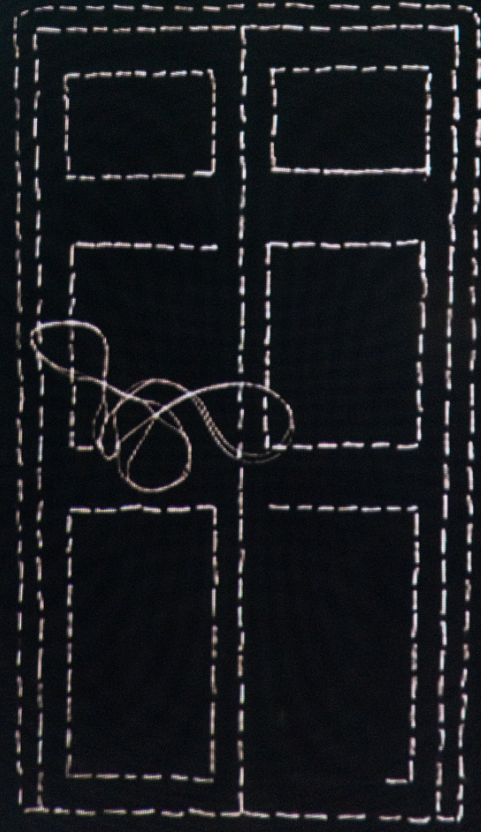
CULMINATION TALK



Talk Poster, 2024

Art South Asia Project and Serendipity Arts Foundation are delighted to extend an invitation to join us for a talk featuring Nour Aslam (ASAP), Smriti Rajgarhia (SAF), and Shalmali Shetty (selected Fellow) moderated by Mala Yamey (ASAP). This special event marks the culmination of the ASAP x SAF Curatorial Research Fellowship 2023.





The nights will follow the days

Curated by
Shalmali Shetty

Artists
**Alla Syed | Amba Sayal-Bennett |
Munem Wasif | Shiraz Bayjoo |
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Courtesy of Project 88, Mumbai, Exhibit 320, New Delhi and Jhaveri Contemporary, Mumbai.

With special thanks to **Sofia Karim** (Architect and Activist, London).

Art South Asia Project (ASAP) and Serendipity Arts Foundation have partnered for the first time to support a curatorial fellowship programme for a diasporic South Asian curator living in the UK. The primary aim of this programme is to establish cross-continental connections between South Asia and the UK, which will facilitate the exchange of knowledge and the growth of research fields in both the regions.

This year, Shalmali Shetty was selected as the inaugural fellow for this programme, which is designed to offer a unique opportunity for the fellow to develop their research interests and curatorial vision. The aims of the programme are to encourage the selected fellow to develop a research project and curate an exhibition that reflects their research findings. This initiative also provides the selected curator with a platform to showcase their work, broaden their professional network, and contribute to the cultural exchange between South Asia and the UK.

The project is supported by the **Faizal & Shabana Foundation**.

Shalmali Shetty is a curator, writer and artist working between India and the UK. She completed her BVA in Painting from the Faculty of Fine Arts, MS University of Baroda, an MA in Arts and Aesthetics from Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi, and an MLitt in Curatorial Practice (Contemporary Art) from the Glasgow School of Art, supported by the Charles Wallace India Trust Scholarship. Her research interests include themes of archives, memories, hauntology, oral histories, and speculative ideas around prophecies, oracles and imagined futures, extending this focus through the familiar framework of India, and the Global South's neo-colonial relationship to the West. She has coalesced her backgrounds in art practice and theory in the production of this curatorial project.



Supported by



"What were you talking about?"
"You won't understand, baby."
"Yes, I will."
"I was talking about time. It's so hard for me to believe in it. Some things go. Pass on. Some things just stay. I used to think it was my memory. You know. Some things you forget. Other things you never do. But it's not. Places, places are still there. If a house burns down, it's gone, but the place—the picture of it—stays, and not just in my memory, but out there, in the world. What I remember is a picture floating around there outside my head. I mean, even if I don't think it, even if I die, the picture of what I did, or knew, or saw is still out there. Right in the place where it happened."
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"Oh yes. Oh yes, yes, yes. Somebody you will be walking down the road and you hear something or see something going on. So clear. And you think it's you thinking it up."

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"If it's still there, waiting, that must mean that nothing ever dies."
"Nothing ever does."

An excerpt from a conversation between the mother Sufie and her daughter. Denver from *Beloved* by Toni Morrison (1987), pp. 42-44



Art South Asia Project x Serendipity Arts Festival Curatorial Research Fellowship 2023

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Art South Asia Project (ASAP) Ltd is an arts education and development UK based non-for-profit. It supports initiatives to widen and deepen the engagement with modern and contemporary visual and applied arts through South Asia and its diaspora.

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ASAP Team: Nour Aslam, Mala Yamey

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SHALMALI SHETTY

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