



Remembering Sisyphus:

lessons in uncertainty

NOVEMBER 2020 - JANUARY 2021

SUNAPARANTA

ARTISTS

Rana Begum ♦ Decameron-19

Tayeba Begum Lipi ♦ Pallavi Paul ♦ Prajakta Potnis

Raqib Shaw ♦ Sudarshan Shetty ♦ Sumakshi Singh

Ayesha Sultana

#RememberingSisyphus

FOREWORD

A very warm welcome back to Sunaparanta!

This pandemic changed our every day, and challenged the way we all lived. Our lives were stripped of agency, and sucked into a space of uncertainty. Every day we are reminded of how precious life is and how fragile we are.

Since March, we have faced varying degrees of lockdowns across the globe. There was a strange unity in how quiet cities were across continents. Over these months, Sunaparanta initiated several online artistic projects, a talk show “ListenIN” featuring creative minds at the forefront of their fields, a book club “Read Along” featuring award winning authors, art & theatre programmes for children that moves online seamlessly as a way to stay close and connected to our community. It was also a way to use art to understand how to cope with isolation, fear, anxiety, grief and uncertainty; art as a method of comfort, and a lens through which we can attempt to make sense of the world around us.

It has been heartening to see how the creative community has responded and how artists are working even more profoundly to keep engaging us, to coax us to see things differently and to find beauty in the most unusual places.

The precarity that we find ourselves in has become a turning point. It is a time for new thought. How we view and experience art has altered. Questions related to solidarity, ecology, sustainability have become urgent and are being addressed with new compulsion.

What we have learnt in these months of isolation is that art can function as a social glue that keeps us together.

Our new show acts as a reminder of this. Today, more than ever, we celebrate the importance of culture: of exhibitions, of gatherings.

The works and experiments in this exhibition pull and push us in unfamiliar ways. They disrupt visual language, toy with perception, tease the senses and manipulate perception.

As the objects speak and interact with each other, a conversation begins. It leaves us with a sliver of hope even as we live through the modern world's greatest crises, and come out stronger for it.

Isheta Salgaocar, Patron, Sunaparanta Goa Centre for the Arts

CURATOR'S NOTE

This exhibition takes off from the story of Sisyphus, the infamous character from Greek mythology, forced to repeat the same task for eternity. He had to push a rock up a hill, only to watch it roll back down every time it reached the top. For many, Sisyphus is the absurd hero, a metaphor for the perennial human struggle.

In *The Myth of Sisyphus* (1942), the Existentialist writer Albert Camus parallels the legendary tale as an understanding of the human condition. In life, we are always searching for meaning and order but all we find is chaos. For Camus, the way out of this conundrum was not by looking for some kind of escape or utopia. Instead, we had to face it head on and live life as it is – in all its monotony, toil and with no hope for success.

In these past months, an invisible virus set us all in disarray. We sacrificed everything – our lives, our relationships, our livelihoods. As social structures crumbled, our societies were laid bare and naked for all to see. And we, just as fragile and inconsequential.

How do we cope with the loss of meaningfulness? How do we accept a world fraught with uncertainties? Is there a way to move beyond fear of contagion?

Camus advised us to live with the absurd. For him, artists know how to as they have the capacity to move beyond nostalgia and lament. They teach us how to look beyond what we see, to shift our perspective and to find levity even in the severest punishment.

With artists, we can deviate and imagine new ways to endure our present reality. But, Sisyphus' fate is disappointing and not acceptable.

Perhaps we can propose a shift in narrative. Why should he face his burden all alone? Yes, he may be a beacon of strength and relentlessness. But, did he ever find happiness? How could he bear to push that rock time and time again and all by himself?

Humans cannot suffer alone. It is only in the presence of and with others that we learn to cope and withstand pain. As we adapt to an environment where we are always under threat, can collective action and experience provide a space for care and renewal?

In our version of the story, our absurd hero rests, just for a moment. As he pauses, two hands intercede and offer to push the weight he carries up the hill. In that instant, morality, empathy, generosity may be restored. We connect with each other and in nature. Art makes that possible.

Leandré D'Souza, Curator

DECAMERON-19

Expanding network: Anja Dimitrijevic; Laura Santini; Mathieu Tremblin, Cynthia Montier; Peter McCaughey; Sharmila Samant; Igor Ponosov; Zara Joan Miller; @xcswx (Crystabel Riley & Seymour Wright); Robert Luzar; Deana Kolencíková; Thomas Lasbouygues; Ben Parry; Lia Mazzari; Epos 257; Encastrable; Jonathan Naas; Arzhel Prioul; Marianne Villière; Aïda Gomez; Vladimír Turner; Billy Steiger

Concept and curation: Lia Mazzari & Ben Parry

The project draws inspiration from the literature of plague, in particular Giovanni Boccaccio's 'Decameron', in which ten characters, sheltering in an empty villa outside Florence, tell each other stories whilst in isolation from the Black Death of 1348. *DECAMERON-19*, by contrast, plays out in the digital present, physically and virtually, in our streets and public spaces, under open skies and in cyber-space.

A network of artists from cities across the globe, many of whom were initially strangers to each other, have been meeting weekly, virtually, to narrate stories lived, retold and performed through the project's methodology of exchanging scores.

Each contributor, in turn, writes and presents a score which then becomes a tool for exploring the edges of shared, and separate, space. The embodied and situated responses, reflect the common and the unique spatial, psychological, social and political conditions we find ourselves in.

By interpreting the same score in different contexts, Decameronistas have been mapping their localities, and exchanging their experience of making work in differing states of lockdown, restrictive policy measures and economic constraints. The emergent work, and the emergent colleagueship and friendship, is sustaining the group. The weekly conversations connect these different perspectives, and map the present, exploring the role of art in finding resource currently, and in imagined futures.

The result is the co-production of new knowledge about the nature of living through multidimensional crises.



Dispatches from the Isolated City is a transnational collaboration from cities around the world, generating 100 stories in response to life during this global pandemic.



Porous Walls I
2008

PRAJAKTA POTNIS

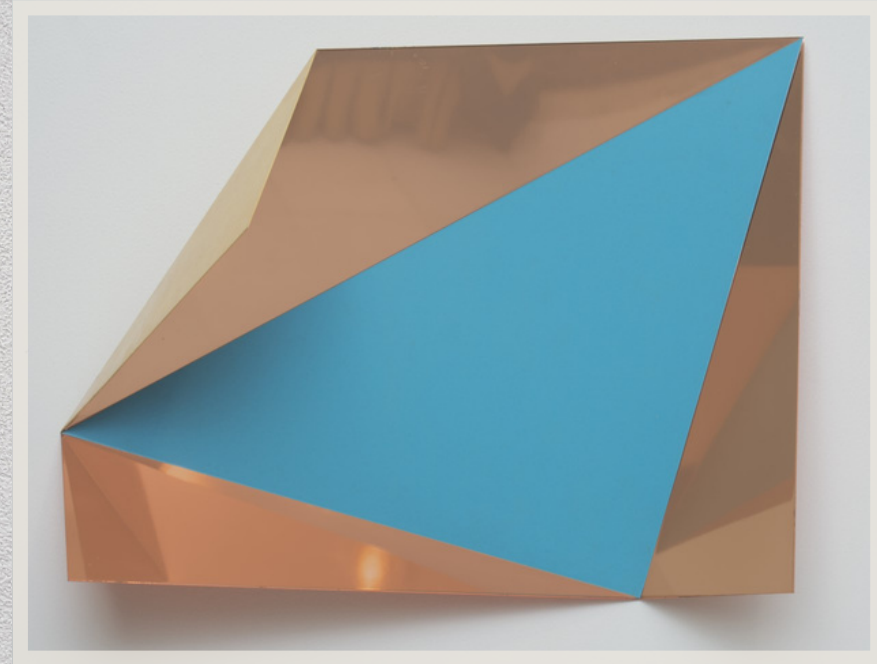
Prajakta Potnis' works are a contemplation of the porous boundaries that segregate the private from the public. For the artist, the domestic space of a home, often dictated by feminine sensibilities is not unrelated to the larger social, economic and political issues that are generally regarded as the domain of the world outside. Just as the fungus that claims the interiors of a house, the politics of the home oozes out to the world, guiding desires and decisions. Without collapsing the boundaries between the two, the fluidity of the segregation makes it a potent space where complexities overlap and coexist, presenting us with the duality of the inside and the outside.

In *Porous Walls I* (2008), the bedroom is presented as a space covered with holes. The walls take on the form of a skin breathing through its pores making references to intimacy, but also breaks the stereotype of the bedroom as a safe space, since the porosity allows the concerns of a life lived outside to flow in.

RANA BEGUM

Rana Begum is inspired by the geometry of traditional Islamic architecture and orders her viewer's experience of space and geometry. The artist often plays with light bringing three-dimensionality to flat surfaces, indicating a world residing inside a plane, and its infinite potential. This also grounds a surface as a minimal, abstract representation distilled down from an environment much larger. Even when they are static sculptures, her experiments with light also imbues the work with temporality.

No. 475, 2013 from the *Fold* series evokes a world on a wall. Just as Wassily Kandinsky and Paul Klee were able to evoke an entire world in their abstraction, this wall sculpture implies that the entire world is a surface folded into contours, as one catches their own reflection on the copper surface. This experience also guides the viewer's movement in relation to the work, in a way that is characteristic of minimalist sculpture and also Rana Begum's practice.

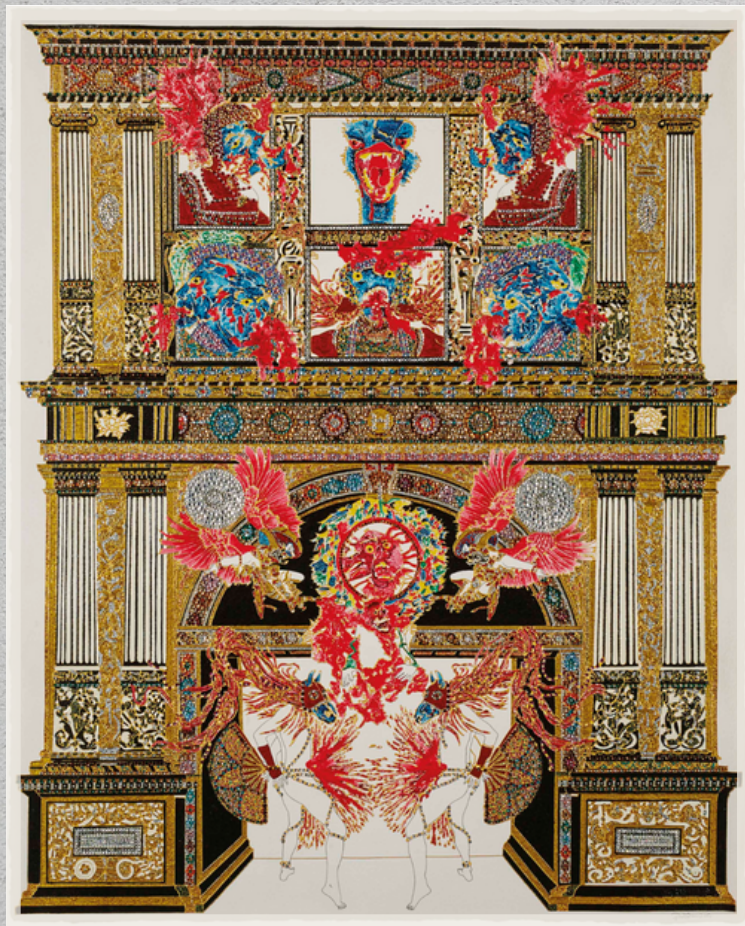


No 475
2013

RAQIB SHAW

Raqib Shaw's works are known for their detail and excess as his bejeweled paintings with acrylic and enamel capture fantastical terrains and tales, not unlike the art of Persian carpets or Kashmiri Shawls. With aesthetic influences as diverse as renaissance painting, weaving and Japanese lacquer-ware, his storytelling draws from literary, mystical and art historical sources. Populated with a wealth of hybrid creatures, Raqib Shaw portrays a dizzying scene of erotic hedonism, both explosive and gruesome in its debauchery.

Absence of God (2007) is inspired by the 16th century painter Hans Holbein the Younger and 18th century draftsman Giovanni Battista Piranesi. In this glorious painting, luxurious gemstones, sequins, glossy enamel set the stage for a fantastical world of intricate iconography trapped between fairytale and nightmare. Beneath its shimmering opulence, the artist unleashes an intensely violent and sexual imagery where Victorian fairies, Hindu deities engage in combat. Here, mythical beasts romp in a florid landscape against architectural ruins while hominids try to catch glittering butterflies with a broken net.



Absence of God
2007

AYESHA SULTANA

Ayesha Sultana has been immersed in exploring notions of sight and perception, linked with the enquiry of making. Her works investigate the relationship between movement and stability, form and structure, rhythm and repetition.

For Sultana, our vision is oversaturated. As a result, we only record what we want to see. But, we often miss things. What we miss is just as important as what we choose to perceive. This forms the essence of her work.

Stripping away the remnants of form, she draws our consciousness to the act of looking, recording, perceiving and the sensations that they stimulate.

She creates optical deceptions as she plays with paper, iron, wood, cloth. Concerned with space and architecture, she turns two-dimensional into three-dimensional sculptural surfaces. In her investigations, she challenges concepts of materiality and form presenting objects that appear weightless and transient.

The flatness of paper is worked upon with simple material and alters into architectonic forms. Fabric, on the other hand, is presented as almost translucent emerging from the wall and generating new shapes.



Strata Study
2019



Skin
2015

GALLERY - II

TAYEBA BEGUM LIPI

Tayeba Begum Lipi's practice is rooted in themes related to the female body and its marginality. She is known for her works that take on an autobiographical perspective and related to her line of memory. She recreates everyday domestic objects such as the sewing machine *Untitled (Sewing Machine)* and handbag (*My Private II*, 2013), made from stainless steel razor blades.

The objects appear as if they are encased in their own suit of metallic armor, carefully welded into rigid yet fragile structures.

Her provocative choice of material recalls her childhood in Bangladesh during which her ever-growing family of eleven older siblings preoccupied her life. Her work is a reminder of her specific task that was to purchase and cleanse sparkling new razor blades and pins, as the crucial, often only, tools available to the midwives assisting with the arrival of each new addition to the family.

The silvery cold cage that she uses reflects the pain and constraints that overshadow motherhood while also exposing gender stereotypes implemented by patriarchal structures within which we have to navigate our lives.

Untitled (Sewing Machine)
2014



My Private II
2013



SUDARSHAN SHETTY

Sudarshan Shetty is one of the earliest artists in India to work with installations, despite being trained as a painter. In his practice, material culture, past and present, from distinct sources accumulate and are juxtaposed in inextricable ways. For Sudarshan Shetty, these often enigmatic, poetic assemblages are entry points into larger ontological questions raised by the world of 'things' that we occupy.

For Shetty, failure is built into the foundation of all ideology, and from this experience, we make our own meanings and move forward. The ruin does not mark the end but is in fact a regenerative space. In *Untitled (2013)*, the uncanny collation of material such as wood, marble dust and a cup and saucer, also indicates that renewal may not occur through restoration or replication, but by the genesis of new form, just as a fragile ceramic cup and saucer can prop up a musical instrument.



Untitled
2013

SUMAKSHI SINGH

In Sumakshi Singh's work, form begins to disintegrate, turning ethereal and illusory. Here, fabric is separated from embroidery, leaving behind a thread skeleton that floats seamlessly without the support that was used to create it. The work presents itself as a mirage removed from our present experience in real time and space.

For the artist, making art has been a way to look within, to process life, and contemplate questions about death and grief, beauty and joy. Her labour intensive process enables an understanding of how meaning is constructed in the multi-layered experiences of existence.

Dianthus (2020) presents a dance between the movement of needle, thread and the mysteries of a pattern that slowly unveils itself. In its grace, the thread creates soft holes through which we can find and lose ourselves.



Dianthus
2020

PALLAVI PAUL

At a time when noise has become an index of public spirit; when authoritarian regimes are engaged in a feverish amplification of propaganda via partisan statistics and faux science; when the pandemic has also unleashed a despotic drive towards homogenizing populations and policing speech – can quietude harness something outside overdetermined and hyper-regulated imaginations of contemporary life? Can the sharing and listening of “quietude” be a space of care and resistance?

On 26 March 2020 Pallavi Paul launched *Share Your Quiet* in collaboration with *Sunaparanta Goa Centre for the Arts*. People facing various degrees of isolation were invited to share 10-sec recordings of their “quiet”. In silence, things churn, relationships change, and ideas are born.

For 10 subsequent weeks, recordings were collected from various parts of the world, turning this experiment into a transnational project. Each week, these hearings were aired live in the form of collective symphonies of “quiets”.

Here, in its physical form, a room is wrapped with the names and locations of our participants. As viewers enter the space, the movement and direction of their bodies trigger sounds unexpectedly, reconfiguring the original scores and allowing for multiple symphonies to be recreated.

Mohamd Salman Lucknow	Shivam Rastogi Faridabad	Alessandro Girola New York	Marta Jaromik Georgia	Meg Bullock England
Riah Forbes San Francisco	Harmeet Rattan Uttar Pradesh	Sree Banerjee Mumbai	Sonia Shirsat Goa	Jeanne Couaillier China
Zain Masud England	Vlado Ozombeta Germany	Waswo X. Waswo Udaipur	Cheryl D'Sa San Francisco	Barbara Gavezotti Italy
Dipesh Pandya England	Hera Istanbul	Rohini Devasher New Delhi	Dipanjali Deka Guwahati	Rohan Das Kolkata
Lilit Gilardi Germany	Sathya Tamizharasan Chennai	Cecilia Rodrigues Mumbai	Sahej Rahal Mumbai	Padmaparna Ghosh United Kingdom
Nitasha Jaini Haryana	Rituparna Sengupta Kolkata	Sanchari Banerjee Germany	Rooshad Shroff Mumbai	Rahul Corriea Australia
Kiran Ambwani Canada	Pallavi Paul New Delhi	Mohamd Salman Lucknow	Mahitha Coimbatore	Johann Desouza Mumbai
Rahul Corriea Australia	Amin Jaffer Portugal	Edith Lázár Romania	Fiona Amundsen Tāmaki Makaurau Auckland	Edith Lázár Romania
Ada Enmo Jørgensen Norway	Delano D'Souza Paris	Katarina Rasic Serbia	Nabila Thailand	Chantelle Oliveira Japan

Share Your Quiet
2020



S u n a p a r a n t a
GOA CENTRE FOR THE ARTS

Sunaparanta Goa Centre for the Arts is a not-for-profit, process-based arts initiative founded by Dipti and Dattaraj V Salgaocar. It encourages creation, learning, understanding, appreciation and enjoyment of the multi-disciplinary art forms through outreach and dialogue in Goa.

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