

TELL IT *SLANT*

Curated by **Sonali Bhagchandani**

Aarti Sunder

Pahul Singh

Prasiit Sthapit

Rahee Punyashloka

Riya Chandwani

Vikrant Kano

Yashna Kaul

Curatorial Introduction:

A *SLANT* IN TIME | archiving forgetfulness

A linearity holds our archival imaginary hostage: time (and memory) is often presupposed to be sequential, (pre)determined, calendrical – and thus contained inside records that appear stable. Such documents *claim* a material authenticity: dissolved of doubt, hesitation, emotion, or any recursive movement. Fraught landscapes are flattened into abstracted statistics, as historical time accrues in the form of a ‘memorial’. Here, data collates and multiplies to no definite end; an ‘archive fever’ now subsumes our contemporary discourse. But if we take a step back, can such a linear apparatus truly harbour the weight of memory, or capture the movement of time? Put differently, can temporality be restricted to a linear chronology? Is our relation to the past – with our flawed, incomplete subjectivities – itself an objective phenomenon? For even if we remember (or document) with precision, historical narratives tend to slip, mutate, or turn delinquent – at times, morphing to strengthen the agenda of hegemonic regimes.

At this tenuous impasse, could a perspectival shift – a squint, a twist, or a *slant* of sorts – open up a newer way of seeing and capturing time, to revive its radical historicity? What might this look like? Marking a departure from linearity, Walter Benjamin once likened a historian to a storyteller: where grasping the past does not mean reconstructing it “the way it really was” back then, but rather, reckoning with its disjointed temporal remnants in our contemporary – to capture a “memory as it *flashes* up in a moment of danger.” Time is split, transient, and urgent – untethered from the calendar. How might memory collect (and archive) such a fleeting temporality, and more importantly, what are the political stakes of these conceptual movements? Resisting a positivist approach, this exhibition proposes a subtractive twist into our archival imaginary: each artwork takes a slant, piercing into our hitherto stagnant temporality; and at this unsettling edge, one encounters the gaps, slippages, absences, and contingencies immanent in the making (and re- making) of history. Each narrative necessitates an unlearning of the present in order to grasp the past.

Fiction and phantoms no longer dilute an 'objective' truth, but rather, become portals to grasp our unspoken desires, unrealised dreams, and the inscrutable (yet inexhaustible) core of language. As memory sheds any façade of objectivity – the canonical 'unstained' knowledge – you encounter the ruins of time, a structural exoskeleton that bears the imprint of potential, the conditions of possibility to create anew. Out here, viewers confront family archives that index an ode to forgetfulness; phantoms of abandoned archives that *return* in spectral formations, interrupting the present; tense slippages between aural, visual, and textual registers of *silent* testimonies that tremble cartographic lines; a long Partition's fearful relation to belonging, resisting temporal frameworks; the symbolic (and sonic) remnants of a forgotten revolution in Nepal; and the outtakes of a film from the 1980s, resurrected into a haunting ghost-like spectre of sectarian violence. These juxtapositions render our ordinary ground estranged, unstable, and on the move. In short-circuiting our archival imaginary, this exhibition is an experiment: to create speculative nodes where the tropes of memory can be reconfigured. From more than a century ago, Emily Dickinson's words become our manifesto: "Tell all the truth *but tell it slant.*"

TELL IT SLANT

31 October – 18 November 2025

Shrine Empire, New Delhi

Preview: 31 October 2025 | 5:30 – 8:30PM IST

D395, Defence Colony, New Delhi

www.praf.in

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TELL IT SLANT



Curated by Sonali Bhagchandani

AARTISUNDER
PAKUL SINGH
PRAGATI ESTHARIT
RAHEE PUNYASHLOKA
RITIK CHANDANRAM
VISHANT KANO
YASHIKA KAUL

Scan the QR code to read the curatorial text



SHRINE EMPIRE



TELL IT SLANT



Curated by Sonali Bhagchandani

- AARTI SUNDER
- PAHUL SINGH
- PRAJIT STHAPIT
- RAHEE PUNYASHLOKA
- RIYA CHANDWANI
- VIKRANT KANO
- YASHNA KAUL

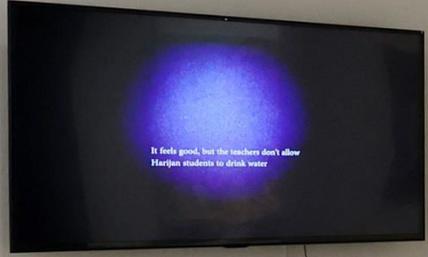
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SHRINE EMPIRE









YASHNA KAUL

The Image World

pigment prints collaged on archival board

2018 – 2022

A photograph claims to materialize memory as something that can be possessed, suggesting a moment may be lost without one. Could photography be as much about forgetting as it is about remembering? I think through this dialectic of the absence and presence of memory as I work with my family photographs, reflecting on my father's neurological forgetfulness caused by early-onset Alzheimer's; and my mediated remembrance of our family and his polygamy. In reinterpreting the family album, I try to engage in an active remembering – where the image is confronted with its own inclusions and exclusions. Is memory really inscribed within a photograph, or is it the absence of memory and the presence of fantasy?

















PRASIIT STHAPIT

Red is the Colour of Spring

Photography installation

2019 – ongoing

“You fought valiantly, comrade,
Sacrificing yourself for the country.
Your blood, now, paints the spring red.”

- Junmaya Nepali, *Hot Blooded Vengeance*

For most of my childhood, an old photograph hung on the walls of my grandparents’ living room in Kathmandu. The photograph was of our great grandfather – or at least, that’s what we kids were told. Only after it was taken down, I found out that the man in it had actually been Joseph Stalin. My grandfather, a staunch communist in those days, had idolized Stalin because he believed that communism was the path to a just society.

This discovery that it had been Stalin staring down at us, all these years, coincided neatly with my own political awakening. For most of the early days of the war in Nepal, and living in Kathmandu, I had been shielded from it all. There were only whispers back then: two police officers killed in an ambush; seven villagers shot dead under the suspicion of being Maoists. But after 2001 and the declaration of emergency, this conflict exploded into everyone’s consciousness – including mine – with unavoidable news of attacks, higher death tolls, and the curtailing of civil rights.

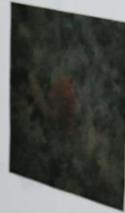
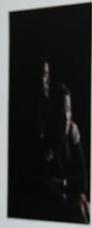
The war began on 13 February 1996, when a police post in the small town of Holleri, Rolpa, in Western Nepal, was attacked; weapons and explosives were seized, and the attackers left shouting slogans. This was the start of a decade-long conflict that pitted the Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist) against the State. A stronghold of the communists, Rolpa and its neighbouring district Rukum, became the epicenter of this civil war. After ten years, around 17,000 deaths, more than 1,350 disappearances, thousands disabled and millions displaced – the war ended in 2006. The Maoists entered mainstream politics and two years later, with the ousting of the centuries-old monarchy, Nepal became a Federal Republic. The Communist Party has been in power four times since then, and the country has gone through some historic political changes.

Travelling through Rolpa and Rukum, I met people who fought on both sides, and noted stories of atrocities committed on either end. But what does all this mean today when those sides have come together? The people who bore the brunt of war are forced to look on as the historic treaty – the promise of justice and reconciliation – has been reduced to just another paper dream.



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खेडपावली चवथ्यावरी दिने की
की चवथ्यावरी चवथ्यावरी चवथ्यावरी
चवथ्यावरी चवथ्यावरी चवथ्यावरी
चवथ्यावरी चवथ्यावरी चवथ्यावरी

















संसारका समानाधिकार तथाकपीडितहउ - एंक हेसुाँ । नेक, पा थबाड, ऐलपा ।





PRASIIT STHAPIT

Moonsongs for Earth

Video (colour), sound

2022 – ongoing

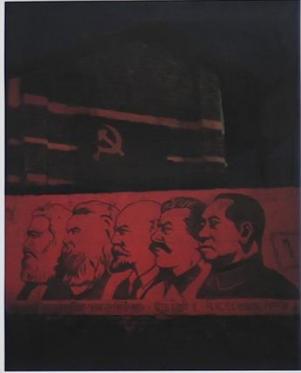
[Viewing Link](#)

During the civil war, for the Maoists, music emerged as a powerful tool: not only as propaganda, but also, for battle cries and catharsis. Musicians poured their hearts into words and melodies, singing of fury, bullets and bombs, and blood painting the land red; the struggles of war but also of flowers blooming, smiles of warm embraces, love and life itself.

With the end of the war, monarchy was abolished. The Maoist party transitioned into mainstream politics and disillusionment grew. Feeling betrayed by the war's resolution, many musicians came to realize that their songs only *dreamt* of the revolution – they couldn't bring about the changes they had so desperately hoped for. *Moonsongs for Earth* is a sonic exploration of the decade-long war in Nepal: the dream for a just, egalitarian society, and its subsequent betrayal. With songs by Pradip Dewan, Laxmi Gurung, Mohit Shrestha, Karna Pariyar 'Bidrohi' and Jhankar Buda Magar, amongst others.



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AARTI SUNDER

From Infra Earth to Extra Sky

Video, 14:25 minutes

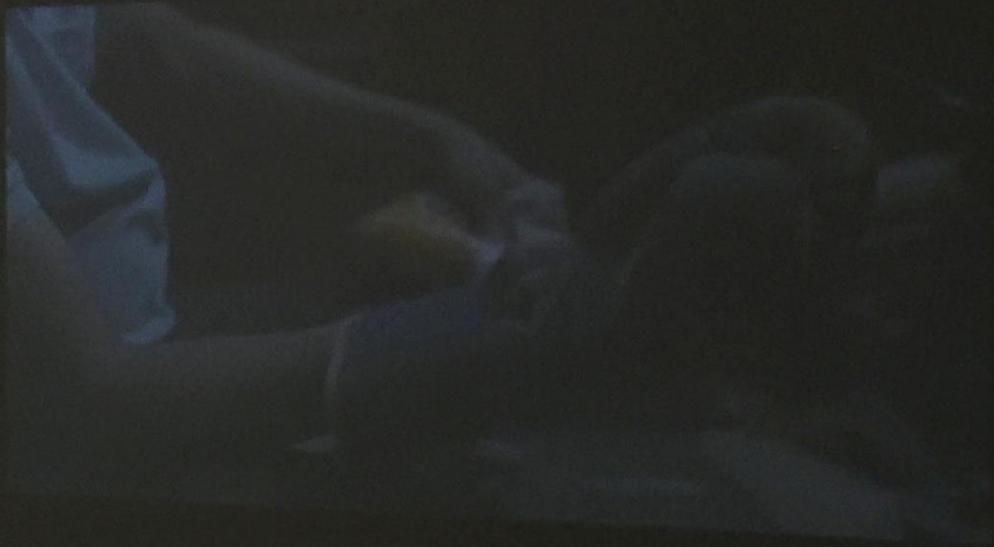
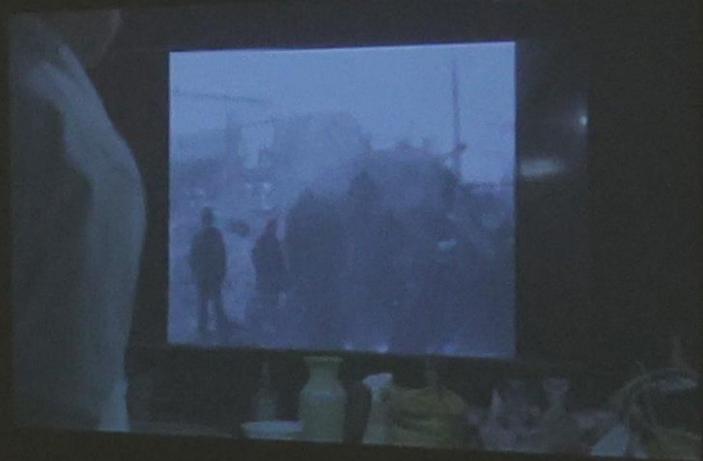
2025

This work involves an investigation of the organism, the machine and their environments that lie at the centre of infrastructures of technology. It is led by three stories – one of an elephant, the other of a snail and the third of a coconut. At its core, the work asks the following: Why do ideas and objects leave the planet? Why do they return to us, and upon their return, how do they alter the way we relate to each other and to non-humans? And how do they sound?

Every exit carries with it the possibility of return. Some ideas and objects return with the full gust of reason, affect and intent. The return is hardly straightforward, or easy to decipher. However, it is insistent and full of promise. It is this messy location of shape-shifting potentials that collide to tell stories of how to confront scale, and minimise implosions. And it is within these stories that organisms find it possible to resist being overwhelmed, and wading through its inundation. This work focusses on three situations where the exit into the cosmos has been coupled with the return to affect sociability and centre themselves around the organism within capital – the fully governed organism, the partially governed organism, and the organism refusing to be governed.

A public electrocution of a circus elephant in the US reminds us that the elephant is not always in the room, but in the cloud of smoke that fills and short circuits easy techno-social histories. A snail currently in India eats away at the city of Chennai during the monsoon despite large-scale efforts to cull it. And the coconut inscribed with suspect incantations returns from the sea onto the beach to create havoc and thrill.

The coconut, the snail and elephant aid the construct trespassing between layers from undersea into the extra sky. They communicate, plot, form clandestine alliances and have a strong role to play in the history of technology, history of movement, and of desire. All three have been ungrounded, and in that forcible dislocation have found ingenious ways to alter the way in which we relate to each other.



AARTI SUNDER

From Infra Earth to Extra Sky

Acrylic on paper

2025

This work considers the living organism and its environment through an infrastructural lens. Three situations are brought forth where an idea/object/organism unfolds how the techno-sphere plays out historically and within present day sociability. The project's premise rests on an understanding that communication that takes place between the layers that exist within the earth (underwater, underground, terrestrial, the sky) and outside of it (into the cosmos), creating a loop of information flow back and forth. This movement is also an announcement of sound and time in motion, a proto-animation of what is to come through re-contextualising words like invisibility and infinity through the lens of technology and its apparatus.

The three situations – one involving a coconut, another involving an elephant and a third that talks of snail – coincide with infrastructure, belief, and the city. In this confrontation a delicate and often imbalanced see-saw with human and non-human sociability is broken open. Each of these stories try to understand how it has been a part of our society historically, and why it is important to remember and retell it in our present time. They return to us in the form of politics, in the form of infrastructure, ideas for progressive governance, and in the form of the dead refusing to give up on the living.



RIYA CHANDWANI

What are we?

oil on canvas

66 x 144 inches

2025

What are we? is a dream-like composition of prominently Sindhi people, thinking through their culture and rituals, going about everyday ordinary routines. The work recalls their lives before the Partition, when cultures mingled freely and communities coexisted as part of a shared fabric of humanity, whilst also bearing witness to the rupture of Partition, which scattered identities and reshaped collective memory in irreversible ways. Through its layered imagery and fragments, the painting becomes a living archive to our contemporary: one that remembers both continuity and loss, while asking whether belonging is defined by traditions we inherit, histories that divide us, or the ways we continue to live together across time.



PAHUL SINGH

A Quavering Line / Ikk Kambdi Lakeer

oil on canvas

66 x 144 inches

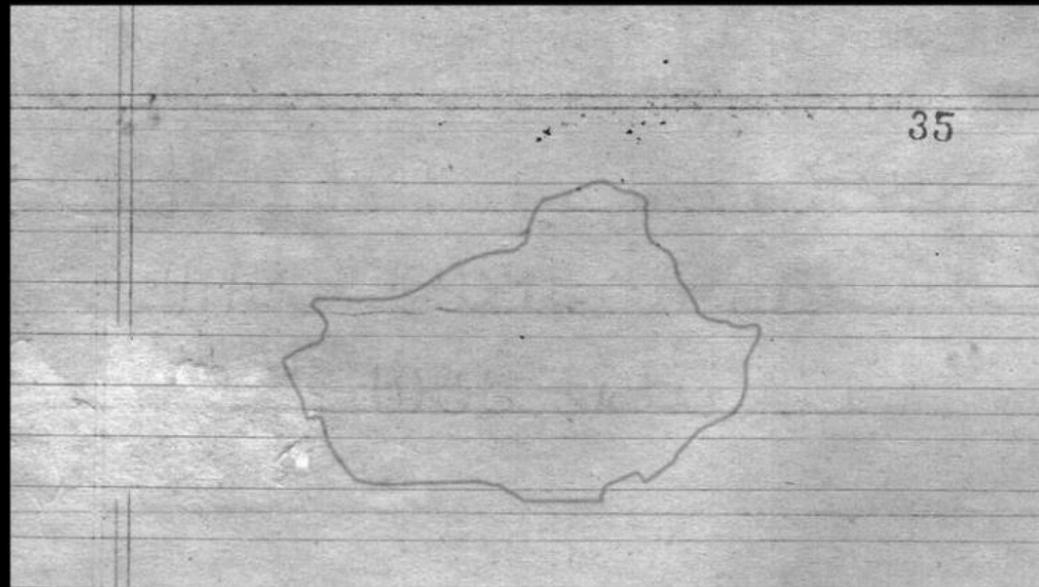
2025

Presented as fragments of a narrative, each close-up shot captures individuals speaking. The voice is visually re-enacted, as every auditory impediment, every hesitation, is reflected in a trembling line – a map, a fracture, a filament, a thread. The line quivers and shakes in response to the individual's voice, steadfast in its refusal to straighten, and allowing the voice to (re)emerge even during its absence.

The work juxtaposes soundlessness, or the conspicuous absence of sound, with the palpable anticipation of it. This contradiction stems from the expectation of auditory cues in the silence, which remains unresolved – much like threading a needle that never reaches completion. While the voice permeates this work, listening becomes its focus. Viewers are compelled to hear through another lens – directly through the line – experiencing the narrative as much through their eyes as their ears. The piece addresses tensions between aural, visual, and textual registers.

With respect for those involved in the documentation, the work also examines the fragile nature of oral histories – in this work, choosing illegibility serves as an act of respect, care, and resistance. I have seen that oral histories often face scepticism. Their nature – transmitted through memory and subject to personal interpretation – leads to questioning their credibility. There is also intentional and unintentional editing of oral histories to align with prevailing cultural, political, or social narratives, the fragility is heightened by the potential for testimonies to be dismissed or altered. In *A Quavering Line*, the line refuses this and bears witness to the testimony.

The work functions as much through its visual elements as its acoustic ones. The spoken word is dismembered; sound, image, and meaning converge as the topography of the voice creates shapes, and the gestures of hands creates images. The double framing and split screen of the videos resemble an open book.





VIKRANT KANO

We are on the same edge

Rice paper, acrylic, oil pastel, dry pastel, oil and graphite pencil on canvas

84 x 144 inches

2021 - 25

We are on the same edge is drawn from oral narratives of Indian soldiers who fought for the British in World War II, in Burma, between 1939 – 45, and specifically from personal accounts of Dhani Ram, my grandfather, who was an infantry army soldier; thinking through his stories of death, the psychological trauma of being in a warzone, the scale of geopolitical conflicts, and the inevitable mass migrations that followed. In these juxtapositions, the work foregrounds questions about belonging – to a space / place, and the making of identity. The composition emerges from a single photograph: of my grandfather with a friend, taken at a photo studio, in their uniforms, after returning from the Burma war in 1945. Who is standing together with him in the photograph? As the backdrop of the photo studio transforms into a war zone in the jungles of Burma, this work is rendered with surreal elements, becoming a testimony of forgotten histories with the lasting impact it had on those who lived through it.



RAHEE PUNYASHLOKA

Anatomy of a Smooth Surface #1

Mixed media, archival photograph, digital and physical manipulation

21 x 30 inches

2024

This 'portrait' is based on a staged photograph of an unknown person, who may or may not be *Dhobi* themselves, and which is the first ever photograph of my community. The person smoothens a white cloth laid out on a table with an iron, an occupational task of my people for generations before and after this photo. There is plenty of metaphorical smoothing that occurs within this image too, be it in the matter of the enduring casteist legacy of the image, of the smooth surface to which my people have historically been mere means, or, of the passivity and the unifying limits of the caste structure. What you see in this portrait is my response to this idea of the Dalit body as a smooth, malleable artefact.



RAHEE PUNYASHLOKA

Tannerfilm

HD Video, 13 minutes

2023

Tannerfilm is a multidisciplinary inquiry into how the archive structurally refuses to include the Dalit as a protagonist, and in turn, makes the Dalit into an "impossible subject." A mediation on archival violence, the impossibility of memorialization for the marginalized body. The first iteration of the *tannerfilm* project begins as a response in the form of a video work.

The caste system mandates that those at the lowest rung of its hierarchy do not matter. Their narratives hold little value. This is demonstrated remarkably by the film that is at the heart of this video work: *They Call me Chamar*. Produced by the Films Division of India, Lokesh Lalvani's documentary shapes itself as a narrative about the dehumanizing effects of caste on the 'Chamar' community. However, the protagonist of this narrative is not a Dalit person, nor the community itself, but a Brahmin man, Ram Dayal Dixit, who was ousted by his community and forced to reside in the Chamar ghetto.

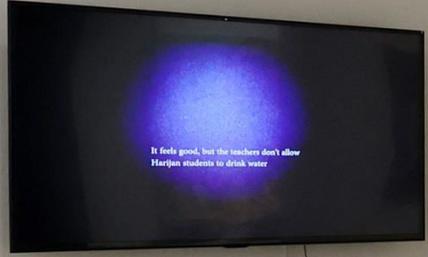
The protagonist's Brahmin identity is the documentary's categorical imperative. The film focuses on the fact that despite being a Brahmin, Ram Dayal needs to endure the everyday indignities that surround Dalit lifeworlds since eternity. A single Brahmin man's proximity to Dalit suffering takes precedence in the film over the systemic oppression of the Dalit community itself.

Tannerfilm uses "outtakes" from this film, the very few interstices that exist which do not involve the Brahmin protagonist, to weave a phantom film that could have, or rather, should have been. The produced work, in turn, becomes a meditation on absences and violence, both real and metaphorical.



They told me to take him and get away from the village

१५



Sonali Bhagchandani is a writer and curator based between Singapore and Mumbai. Her research explores both visual and narrative strategies in story-telling, focusing on intersections between text, image, and the 'archive' in contemporary exhibitions and material histories. She holds an MA in History from Goldsmiths, University of London (2022), and a BA in English Literature from St. Xavier's College (2016). Previously, she attained a Post Graduate Diploma in Modern & Contemporary Indian Art and Curatorial Studies from the Dr. Bhau Daji Lad Museum, Mumbai (2017). Her writings have been published by STIR World, Project 88, ART India, The Hindu, JPM Quarterly, and Usawa Literary Review.

Art Scribes Award is an annual art writer's award, an eminent, rotating jury consisting of art critics and curators is assigned the task of choosing an applicant who has demonstrated a sustained commitment to research, conceptual frameworks and art history in their writing practice, as the recipient of the award. Applications are received via open call as opposed to nominations to ensure equal opportunity. The chosen writer is awarded an international curatorial residency in partnership with our various collaborators around the world in order to help them demonstrate their critical acumen in curatorial research. This is part of PRAF's emphasis on encouraging research, criticality and innovation within curatorial narratives, especially among young/emerging curators. Art scribes award is now in its 12th edition, and since last year it has been under the framework of the Villa Swagatam residencies of Institut Français in India. Sonali Bhagchandani was awarded a one-month residency at **Chateau La Napoule**, the residency space of the La Napoule Art Foundation, where she conceptualised this project. The Art Scribes award is realised with the support of our partners **La Napoule Art Foundation**, **Institut Français** and **Ambassade De France en Inde**, and knowledge partner **Devi Art Foundation**.

Prameya Art Foundation [PRAF] is a nomadic institutional framework for the arts working out of New Delhi which maintains as its primary focus the city and the extended South Asia region. Our projects and programmes are conceptualized with curatorial agility to be responsive to creative conversations and infrastructures locally, and by building strategic partnerships and collaborations with global contexts as one way to situate practices from South Asia within extended constellations of shared concerns that may be forged across geographies.