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### The Poetics of Perception

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A review of *Shadow Lines: Experiments with Light, Line and Liminality* curated by Meera Menezes at Shrine Empire Gallery

Shreya Chaudhuri

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Curator Meera Menezes brings together 11 artists from different generations (Adip Dutta, Ayesha Sultana, Hemali Bhuta, Manisha Parekh, Nasreen Mohamedi, Parul Gupta, Prashant Pandey, Shambhavi, Shobha Broota, Tanya Goel, Zarina) and their individual engagement with abstraction.

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The show seeks to locate liminal space in the art works through the interlinkages between line, light, colour, medium, tactility and their essential visuality. The term liminality was first used by anthropologist Arnold van Gennep [1] in 1909 to mark the second phase in a rite of passage. Liminality marks a transcendental phase or a state of "in-betweenness", an element that calls for attention in the selection of the art works.

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Although the assembly of art varies in essence, each work exudes a distinct sensorial pull. The exhibition unfolds with Manisha Parekh's welded sculptural work in distorted three dimensional shapes titled *Is It Me or Is It You?* The play of shadows of the lines through its contorted forms on the wall reverses the order of perception. This spectre of light and line is also manifest in Adip Dutta's *Untitled* (2019) which is a fragile work - ink and brush drawings on paper that simulate an endless intertwined surface. The frailty of the work bears delicate movement evoking a plethora of visual possibilities within its expanse.

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The engagement with line is an understated experiment in Ayesha Sultana's work titled *Form Studies Photographs* (2018). The abstract lines in the set of 20 digital prints appear like a crumpled and creased landscape. Sultana's works disengage the premise of the exhibition of line play with medium, material and light with its minimalist underpinnings. The work bears a surreal quality, situating the artist's predicament in a language of exploring new concepts in her practice.

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Prashant Pandey reflects on the perpetual working of lines, light and shadows as he makes the viewer absorb their presence gradually through his *Untitled* work made with *bhasma* or holy ash on glass slides. The work resembles a symbolic scroll suspended from the ceiling bearing pictorial motifs and inscriptions with an undecipherable script, and evokes an ethereal quality with its cryptic codes and symbols. On another register is Hemali Bhuta's *Only the golden spice will cure me* (2017) a yellow ink globule that approximates the therapeutic quality of turmeric. Made during Bhuta's residency at the Centre International d'Art et du Paysage, France the work resonates with the artist's personal travails in a space far away from home. The intermeshing of colour through the prism of light in this work elevates the overall disposition of the viewer. Her other suite of works on display include *Roll* (2015), *Blank for a Blank* (2017) and *Making Homes*. Shambhavi's *Maati Meyrd I-V* in tones of brown and yellow pays homage to the earth, and may be read as a sublimation of a pre-urban, pre-industrial past.

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A panel of untitled works by Shobha Broota takes the luminous quality of her lines onto another plane. Using wool on thread and canvas in varied patterns and hues Broota's works invoke a tactile and tangible quality. Her "shadow lines" draw a rhythmic element in their recurrence. On another register are Tanya Goel's *Aluminium/silver leaf studies* (2018) that are remnants from demolished buildings of the 1960s. A patchwork of oxidized leaf foil on the blocks of stones evokes the idea of temporality. The hyperbolic use of lines creates a quivering sensation in Parul Gupta's superimposition of two abstract squares. The movement of the lines inhabits the visual field of the work creating a state of flux.

The iconic line in Zarina's works used distinctly to mark borders and boundaries find meaning in the larger theme of the exhibition. Jagged and abstracted lines map political borders and notions of memory, trauma and belonging symbolizing the indelibility of past histories. Situated on another plane are Nasreen Mohamedi's monochromatic yet radiant lines, which stand out in her abstract works. Her subtle lines known to have been inspired by Islamic architecture, made way for her keenness to explore light and patterns in her work. Mohamedi's mixed media works are filled with complex latticed lines where light permeates to create a 'perspectival illusion'. [2] On the whole, the overall appreciation of the art works is more inclusive when perceived singularly rather than as a cluster.

*The exhibition Shadow Lines: Experiments with Light, Line and Liminality is on until May 18, 2019 at Shrine Empire Gallery, Delhi*

## Notes:

[1] Arnold van Gennep, *Les Rites de Passage* (The Rites of Passage), 1909

[2] Eleanor Clayton, *Nasreen: Mohamedi: Lines Among Lines*, The Double Negative, 2014