

**Sakshi Gallery in collaboration with Shrine Empire**

presents

**LAPSES II**

**Curated by Anushka Rajendran**

**Artists: Anoli Perera, Gautam Kansara, Kartik Sood, Neerja Kothari, Puja Puri, Raj Jariwala, Ranbir Kaleka, Samanta Batra Mehta, Samit Das, Subrat Kumar Behera, and Tayeba Begum Lipi**

**Preview: Thursday, April 12**

**On view till: May 12, 2018**

**At Sakshi Gallery and Sakshi Salon**

Lapses II is another iteration of Lapses, an exhibition that was presented by Shrine Empire at Harrington Street Art Centre, Kolkata in April 2017.

**Curatorial Note**

“The processes of memory are random. Quite literally tangled. Neuroscience has sifted through pathways in the brain linked to memory to find that they are all over the place; an absurd process of cataloguing unrelated objects in a hoarder’s den. Phenomenologically, a strong sensorial cue emanating from an individual’s environment could unleash a flood of unrelated memories. Empirical data and the archaeologies of cognitive science are yet to unveil a teleological narrative; the twists and turns of fate. The overarching imprints that we are left to work with are fluorescent patches assembled in the shape of a brain, dispersed tangles of calcium pathways in mice brain, low resolution MRI scans and Positron Emission Tomography. Memory is yet to yield anatomical diagrams in biology textbooks, unlike other mystical phenomena such as the heart that pumps blood. Epigenetics tells us that we inherit history in our genetic material, like a newly appointed curator inheriting a museum’s collection, a palimpsest of time. Destiny has it that a ‘tangible’ memory is entirely its external referent — its material correlates and learned linguistic associations — mnemonics that tautologically loop into the sensorium to reinforce neural pathways. Like a totem, we embalm and contain in the physical shape of a perfume bottle, a memory related to its fragrance. Then there is the totem we inherit from our ancestors, perhaps as a relic, a funerary rite, a fetishized object in the guise of a family heirloom or fear of persecution coded into our DNA. The closest visual/tactile/sensory map we have of historical memory is the museum and of personal memory, a cabinet of curiosities. This exhibition consists of a series of artworks that lend memories their object-hood, saving them from the lapses in our collective and personal memory.

Neerja Kothari breaks down learning and learned responses of the body to their essential components. In her drawings presented at this exhibition, she breaks down the act of memorising, and the repetitive

process that informs it by juxtaposing it with the cognitive implications of repetition for her grandfather who suffers from dementia. Her personal experience with physiotherapy, re-learning muscle movements that ought to be involuntary, involved the absurd act of quantifying gestures, numerically deconstructing muscle memory to induce self-conscious mimicry of movement — a poor substitute for what had been. Against the backdrop of x-ray plates that capture her ailing body, that the viewer walks past, she imposes text that recounts the basic act of walking — “heel-toe”, only to rupture it with “stand-fall” — motioning towards the precariousness that will always shroud her own muscle memory. Kartik Sood’s work indicates another dimension to muscle memory through his research on traditional performances in Manipur. The idea of inheriting a tradition that is inscribed in the body, that is remembered from one generation to another, but is now slowly disappearing is highlighted in his anatomical, yet poetic inscriptions of this performance form through video and image. He supplements the digital image with his own interventions to evoke sensations and meaning, that the photographic image would remain empty of. Inherited memory and tradition also informs Subrat Kumar Behera’s work, which is an homage to his grandmother and her endless capacity for story-telling. His childhood in their village was made alive with uncanny tales of harmony between man and wildlife, and the supernatural reinforcements of human nature. The wisdom that had been passed down through these stories from his grandmother haunts him, as he draws from this oral archive to lend them tangibility through his paintings.

Anoli Perera and Raj Jariwala look at trauma of migration. Anoli Perera imagines the whole world of social and personal attachments that immigrants leave behind on their long road away from home, navigating political and social obstacles along the way. Raj Jariwala is interested in the database of satellite maps as a resource to tap into spatial and geographic memory that get erased and rebuilt. Here the satellite map becomes a post-human appendage that battles propaganda and news stories in the cartographic preservation of history. Amid diplomatic debates on the situation in Syria, his work reconstructs a village in Aleppo that could once be accessed via satellite imagery but has since ceased to exist in war torn Syria. He builds layers over digital prints of empty terrains to impose human memories upon them.

*Untitled (Khandwa)*, a later work, takes us along with the artist on a trip to his great-grandmother’s ancestral house in Khandwa, and interactions with distant cousins. Very little of the original house survives except in a few remaining architectural elements and other details. The artist recalls stories about his great-grandmother narrated by his grandmother during her struggle with dementia along with incomplete fragments from her childhood as if it was all unraveling around her in the present. The processes of memory, its recording, retrieval and forgetting became furthermore complex in Khandwa.

Samit Das’ drawings are a testament to how encounters with documented history refuse to leave linear, chronological impressions upon us. They coexist in real time, pouncing upon our understanding in

disparate threads, or simultaneously as if from an absurd collage of pages in a history textbook. The series *The Language of Undivided Line* is a study based on the artist's own journey studying various archival images from the Bengal region in the pre-partition era. Puja Puri looks at the cinematic adaptation of the EM Forrester's fiction, *A Passage to India*. While the film extensively dwells on Adele's alleged rape at the hands of Dr. Aziz, it skips over the actual incident. Puri ventures into the scene of crime, The Malabar Caves to make drawings that reconstructs impressions that the narrative allowed, while denying any visual marker of this traumatic episode. The role of literary narratives in sublimating cultural trauma in Puri's references to racist colonial attitudes in *A Passage to India* finds another iteration through Samanta Batra Mehta's *My India, My America*, the autobiography of Krishanlal Sridharani. Batra Mehta finds her own memories of her diasporic experience come alive in Sridharani's accounts of his experience and re-claims his text as her own. Ranbir Kaleka's work holds a mirror to our lives, and the civilizational logic in the projected body on a coffin-sized box – allowing us to project our own impressions upon it.”

— Anushka Rajendran, 2017