



Zainub Verjee is a media/visual artist, independent curator and writer. Currently she is on the board of Digital Earth, Powell Street Festival Society and on the Canada Council Media Arts Advisory Committee. Her cultural activism is in the areas of gender and race. Zainub also freelances as a mendhi artist.

RETRO/DESH was conceived by Gitanjali Saxena and Kevin d*souza for Desh Pardesh, and organized with Desh Pardesh.

Gitanjali Saxena, OCAD, is a Toronto based independent video maker and animator. Over the last 6 years, Gitanjali has both authored and produced six short documentaries and animated films. The work has received television, theatrical and grassroots screenings around the world. Currently in the pipeline is *Chocolate is an Indian Word*, a 35mm animated mini-series about growing up as a small, brown smart-ass on the Canadian Prairies.

Kevin d*souza is a videomaker and community organizer. He grew up in Calgary and has recently moved to Melbourne, Australia from Toronto. Kevin's video work is informed by his experience as a grassroots organizer. His recent work explores the ambiguities of being queer and Asian, and the redefined notions of gay male desirability.

- RETRO/DESH is on tour across Canada, venues TBA. Please contact Sania Ansari for more information.

- Inaugural events also include a historical overview by Zainub Verjee on opening night, a panel discussion with Ali Kazimi, Julian Samuel, Zainub Verjee and Gitanjali Saxena.

- There is an ongoing internet discussion for South Asian artists and interested parties. Please join us: firebox@interlog.com

- RETRO/DESH activities will culminate in a catalogue/historical document. TBA

drop in screenings

July 21 - July 24	11:00 am - 5:00 pm
July 25	12:00 pm - 4:00 pm
July 28 - August 1	11:00 am - 5:00 pm

at V-Tape, located at 401 Richmond (Richmond & Spadina). Suite 452. Toronto, Canada (416) 351-1317. email: video@total.net

RETRO/DESH is co-sponsored by V-tape. and is made possible by generous funding from the Canada Council Media Arts Program.

for more info call:

desh pardesh

Culture. Politics. Activism.

401 Richmond St. W Suite 450

Toronto, ON Canada M5V 3A8

tel:416.340.0485 fax:416.340.1418

Too young to be old hat, yet long and wide enough to lose sight of its beginnings, Desh Pardesh is simultaneously going on fast forward by going on rewind, offering a retrospective tour of its Canadian videos and films. This tour will provide a diverse, historical and challenging overview of the South Asian Canadian video and film scene by examining the surrounding discussions, trends and influences of the time, as well as the cultural development inside and outside each of these works. By charting the overall patterns and environmental influences and effects, we hope to inspire and provoke new directions for South Asian Canadian film and video makers.

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desh pardesh presents:

RETRO/DESH

July 21 - August 1, 1998

RETRO/DESH: ARTIST AND COMMUNITY

Questions of Identity Politics

Curated by Zainub Verjee

What historical, political and social contexts have contributed to the formulation of contemporary notions of "community"? How do these ideas of community manifest as a conceptual and organizational cultural space?

Cultural space is the site of social exchanges, spontaneous alliances, contest and promised democracy. The idea of Community within this cultural landscape as a place of identity, shared experience and collective memory offers the perception of safety, a familiar space that feels like home.

Often cultural spaces are the claim of the institution - protected and controlled. Definitive claims to community reduce its malleability. In the increasing complexity of lived struggles around issues of class, race, gender and sexuality, how have artists confronted the shifting terrain of cultural space?

A narrow set of parameters with relation to content often accompany definitive cultural communities, limiting access to those artists whose work does not focus on identity politics. These parameters have been defined by social political and historical factors. Is there room in the larger cultural realm beyond these conventions to imagine a diverse and spontaneous cultural practice that transcends current expectations of contemporary art practice of South Asians?

Retro/Desh presents a critical examination of the last decade of film and video practice of Asian artists. This Historical tour will highlight the concerns and issues of identity politics as well as uses of technology.



I. TRACING CULTURE (83 minutes total)

Using different approaches to peel away the layers of "culture" the works in this program are personal journeys in the search of a cultural and racial identity. Memory (constructed and otherwise), cultural displacement and the incongruity of heritage and location point to the problematic of identity.

India Hearts Beat.

Leila Sujir. 13:00 min. 1988. V-Tape
In this lyrical electronic tapestry, the lives of three women from different generations and cultural backgrounds are woven together. Focusing on notions of homesickness and cultural displacement, live footage is juxtaposed with the images of a red sari that creates a river of memories, where the women cleanse themselves with repetitive ritualized gestures.

New Views, New Eyes.

Gitanjali Saxena. 50:00 min. 1993. V-Tape
Using conversation, journal entries and historical fact this work is a poetic and reflexive journey on the road to self discovery. Shot in India and Toronto the artist brings a multi-layered view to sense of self in India.

Missing Culture.

Peter Karauna. 20:48 min. 1993. V-Tape
In this eloquent piece, the question of identity is laid out using anthropological definitions, family self perceptions, correspondence and memory. The ambiguity as well as the commodification of "culture" and ones own need to belong become apparent.

IV. RECONSIDER (Total 129 minutes).

This program presents a theoretical and analytical look at the postcolonial era. Exile, colonization, nationalism, fundamentalism, modernism and other related issues are brought to the forefront in two very differing works.

The Raft of Medusa: Five voices on colonies, nations & histories. Julian Samuel. 99:00 min. 1993. V-Tape

This talking head document offers a crash course in postcolonial theory. The place of the Orient in intellectual history is the focus, however, the extended interviews address issues surrounding British India and its partition in 1947: the unique case of Hong Kong as it faces integration with mainland China; Occidental modernism and Islamic fundamentalism and African Diasporic language. Amin Maalouf, Thierry Hentsch, Sara Suleri, Nourbese Philip and Ackbar Abbas star in this work.

Coconut Cane and Cutlass. Michelle Mohabeer. 30:00 min. 1994. CFMDC.

As a counterpoint to the Raft of Medusa, Coconut Cane unfolds as a complex hybrid work. The theoretical and personal underpinnings of this work deal with colonization, exile and sexual oppression.

II. GLIMPSES OF DESIRE: Storytelling and Poetry (26 mins total)

Identification of desire within one self and its unraveling are the theme of this program. The shape of desire breaks through the bounds of society's given constructs. Race, queerness, experiences and imagination are agencies for these works. The often conflicting elements which shape identity are brought together, creating new meanings for ones desire.

Her Sweetness Lingers.

Shani Mootoo. 12:00 min. 1994. V-Tape
Set at a garden party in a swirl of fragrance, flowers and women the artist explores lesbian desire, love and the possibilities that bring with a caress. "Falling - what a strange word for it! An act I associate with bruises and tender pain."

growing to darkness.

Kevin d'souza. 4:30 min. 1995. V-Tape
This work melodiously unfolds the contradictions of being queer and Asian and the redefined notions of gay male desirability. Colonization and its commodification of desire fade into the background as the artist reclaims another sense of desire.

Beyond/Body/Memory.

Neesha Doshanjh. 5:00 min. 1993. V-Tape
A series of rhythmically repeated images of self-caress and cleansing are used to express an Asian woman's sense of emerging self, her growing strength, and her desire for the erotic touch of another.

Two/Doh.

Michelle Mohabeer. 5:00 min. 1996. CFMDC
An experimental and provocative piece which examines the fine line between public and private and the relation to desire.



III. SPEAKING OUT: Community Activism (142 minutes total)

The works in this program speak to the strength and dynamics of collective process in empowering "Community". Ranging from issues of land cultural displacement to sexual politics these works are a document of how "communities" exist and expand in definition when working toward a common struggle.

Voice of Our Own.

P. Ratnam & Ali Kazimi. 25:00 mins. 1989. V-Tape.
The tape looks at the process of formation of a national organization of Immigration and Visible Minority women on Canada. An inspiring work which provides an insight to the struggles of finding a collective identity that recognizes and respects the differences.

Bolo! Bolo!

G. Saxena & I. Rashid. 30:00 mins. 1991. V-Tape
Speaking out is at the core of this tape. Diasporic South Asian artists and activists speak about the barriers and success of organizing around issues of health and sexuality and AIDS. Social political and personal stories are laid on the line.

Narmada: A Valley Rises.

Ali Kazimi. 87:00 minutes. 1994. Mongrel Media
A moving depiction of tribal peoples, laborers, framers and others of the Narmada Valley as they come together to form a community in struggle against the building of Sardar Sarovar Dam. Partially funded by the World Bank, the dam will displace thousands of people who have lived in the valley for generations. Fasting and non-violent methods form part of the process of struggle.