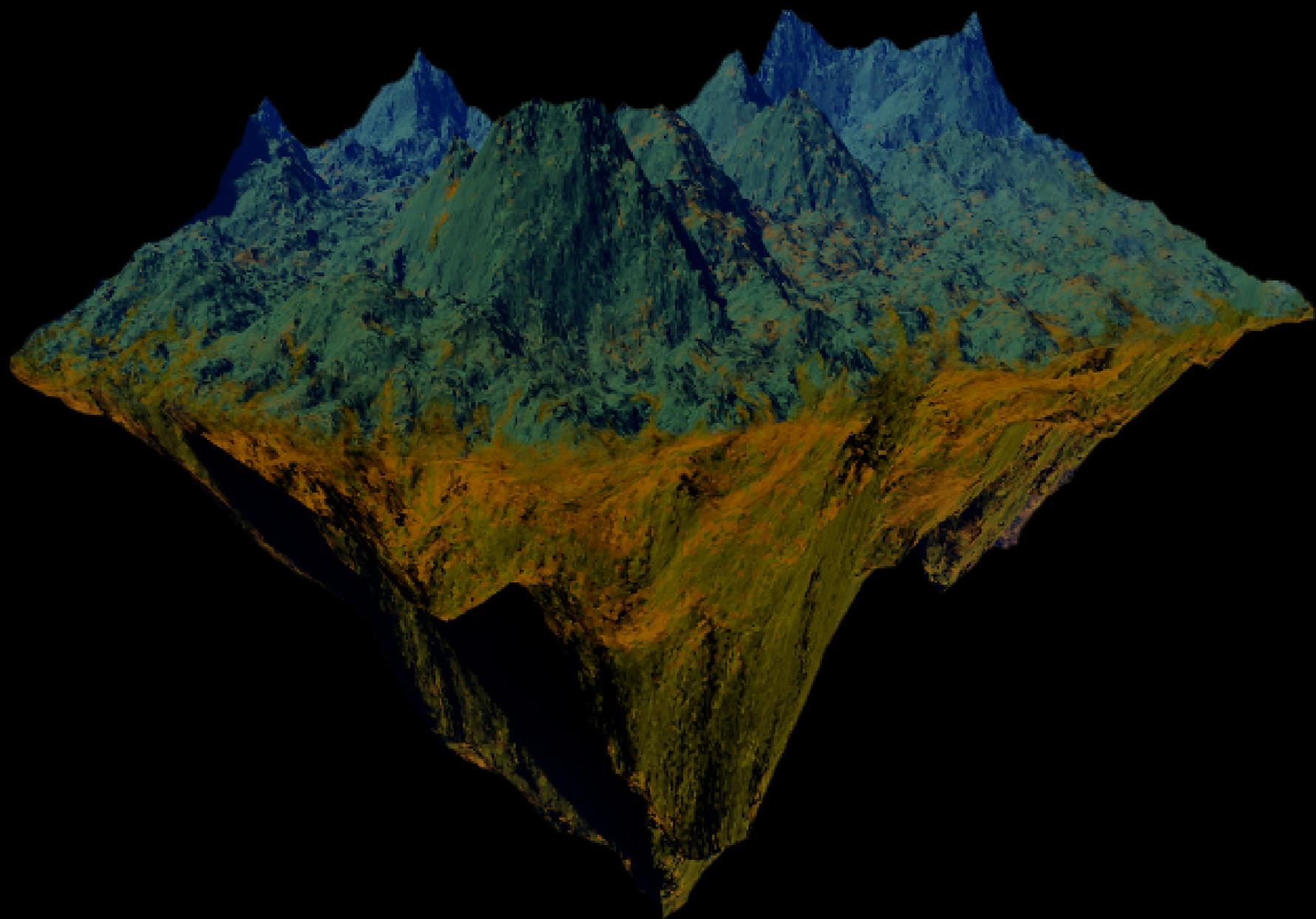


SPACELESS PLACE

JANUARY 2017

WINTER



PRODUCTION

This issue is produced in collaboration with the South Asian Visual Arts Centre (SAVAC). Contributors were selected through an open call for submissions. The selection committee comprises: Nahed Mansour, Artistic Director, SAVAC; Lindsay LeBlanc, Editor, KAPSULA; Ricky Varghese, University of Toronto.



KAPSULA
PRESS

STAFF

LINDSAY LEBLANC • editorial
ZACH PEARL • art direction
SARA ENGLAND • comm. and outreach
LUCAS CABRAL • marketing
YOLI TERZIYSKA • development

In Consultation with:

CAOIMHE MORGAN-FEIR
FRANCISCO-FERNANDO GRANADOS
KATHERINE DENNIS
NICK WHITE
MATTHEW KYBA

CONTRIBUTORS

KOHILA KURUNATHAN
MARINA FATHALLA
NADIA KURD
RAJEE PANA JEJI SHERGILL
SANDY SAAD

On the cover:

TAZEEN QAYUUM

As part of the exhibition *Info Bomb: The Subcontinent Newsroom*. Co-presented by SAVAC and Art Metropole. At Art Metropole, Toronto, Canada. 2013

LICENSING



KAPSULA is published under the **Creative Commons Canada BY-NC-ND 4.0 license**. Subscribers are legally and freely permitted to redistribute this document without penalty. However, subscribers may not attempt to edit or sell access to its contents. For more information on what this entails and/or the various types of Creative Commons licences, visit:

This document is an interactive PDF created using Adobe InDesign CC 2017. Extra content, such as footnotes and image captions can be accessed using your mouse or touchscreen. Security features and interactive graphics in this document are compatible with Adobe Acrobat 9.0 and later. For optimal functionality we recommend you download the latest version of Adobe Acrobat Reader.

The KAPSULA logotype is set in House Gothic Bold Number Four. Body copy for this issue is set in Cosmos. Article

titles and headers are set in House Gothic Bold Number Four and Baskerville. Image captions are set in Calisto MT.

DISCLAIMER

KAPSULA acknowledges the views and opinions expressed by our contributors are not necessarily those of the masthead, and that all text, images and illustrations published herein are done so with the permission of their respective owners, or that to the best of the publication's knowledge reproduction rights have been granted.

CONNECTEZ-VOUS

Are you involved in an arts or community-based organization and looking to complete a publishing project? Perhaps we can help.

KAPSULA provides affordable rates for professional and collaborative editing, design and distribution services.

KAPSULA is an imprint of:

**KAPSULA
PRESS**

44 Hedges Boulevard
Toronto, Ontario
M9B 3C4

TABLE OF CONTENTS

1	Introduction
2	Chapter 1: The History of the Book
3	Chapter 2: The Structure of the Book
4	Chapter 3: The Language of the Book
5	Chapter 4: The Style of the Book
6	Chapter 5: The Content of the Book
7	Chapter 6: The Impact of the Book
8	Chapter 7: The Future of the Book
9	Chapter 8: The Conclusion of the Book
10	Appendix A: The Bibliography of the Book
11	Appendix B: The Index of the Book
12	Appendix C: The Glossary of the Book
13	Appendix D: The List of Figures of the Book
14	Appendix E: The List of Tables of the Book
15	Appendix F: The List of References of the Book
16	Appendix G: The List of Sources of the Book
17	Appendix H: The List of Works Cited of the Book
18	Appendix I: The List of Acknowledgments of the Book
19	Appendix J: The List of Dedications of the Book
20	Appendix K: The List of Forewords of the Book
21	Appendix L: The List of Prefaces of the Book
22	Appendix M: The List of Afterwords of the Book
23	Appendix N: The List of Epilogues of the Book
24	Appendix O: The List of Epigraphs of the Book
25	Appendix P: The List of Epitaphs of the Book
26	Appendix Q: The List of Epitomes of the Book
27	Appendix R: The List of Epitaphs of the Book
28	Appendix S: The List of Epitaphs of the Book
29	Appendix T: The List of Epitaphs of the Book
30	Appendix U: The List of Epitaphs of the Book
31	Appendix V: The List of Epitaphs of the Book
32	Appendix W: The List of Epitaphs of the Book
33	Appendix X: The List of Epitaphs of the Book
34	Appendix Y: The List of Epitaphs of the Book
35	Appendix Z: The List of Epitaphs of the Book

PROLOGUE

Leaky Archives Lead to Slippery Histories

When presented with the opportunity to partner with the South Asian Visual Arts Centre, known by their acronym SAVAC, on a special issue dedicated to mining the organization's archives, all of us at KAPSULA agreed that their mandate and model of exhibition-making complemented our goals as a publication. We identified with the decision to operate in tandem, relying on support and collaborative work to fulfill our aims. We identified with the desire to unpack the archive, sift through its dusty documents, and acknowledge the role of historical testimony in shaping an organization's identity. Most importantly, we identified with the proposition that a place—its qualities, its feeling, its participants—doesn't always own space, and equally, space doesn't always generate meaning according to its borders. Around this time, the magazine was in the process of making some big administrative decisions, which would culminate in a publishing model that focuses our practice exclusively on special projects with partner organizations. This issue marks our first collaboration under the new model, and additionally to the shared priorities of SAVAC and KAPSULA, it has its significance as a landmark in the publication's history.

It wasn't until reviewing the range of proposals submitted to our call that I realized I'd been lost in the overlaps, the commonalities between our two organizations, our shared commitment to working on this project for many of the same,

but probably a few different reasons too. From there forward, I felt the weight of the task ahead: to facilitate this archaeological exercise, finding a way to support a group of five writers whose perspective and fluency in the subject matter greatly exceeded my own. Fittingly, each of the contributors have something to say about borders and the way they're used in generating information about the space they define. The in-between isn't always shaped by overlaps—the comfortable simultaneity of two or more, an area cast in grey. Sometimes, the in-between is determined by its being unwanted, orphaned, without. An editor with a disposition toward vague, snarky wordplay (the preferred tool for casting the world in grey), here I found myself without words. This issue required something different of me and the magazine, where the discomfort of existing in-between was not only acknowledged, but underscored for its revolutionary potential. The SAVAC archive offered a series of artworks, exhibitions, and writing that motivated this discussion—some of the examples used in the issue come up more than once, a reminder that the archive itself is unfixed and multiplied by these types of analyses.

We know that the trouble with transnationalism arises in its initial assumption of identity: that the actors (continents, countries, states, cities) who are implicated in this process of working-across were ever working in isolation. The crude act of breaking land apart during Partition of India (which informs and underlies several of the artworks and exhibitions

discussed in the issue) revealed that while adding borders seems generative at first, the implementation of these borders simultaneously produces great chasms that threaten the safety of current transnational exchanges. This is to say, information can be lost at the border—stepping outside of one’s borders is stepping outside of the flesh, shedding one’s skin, a change in state. Geographies are *felt*, under foot and under skin. Histories are *felt*, in memory and in bones. If you’re not sure, read on, because these writers will convince you. For those of you who have been following SAVAC’s activity as an artist-run centre and know its mandate intimately, it is my sincere hope that these papers reflect, at least in part, what the organization means to you. If you’re unclear about the role and importance of SAVAC as an institution, if you’re not yet attuned to the community-driven and intellectually rigorous art practices it supports, or if you, like me, are coming to this publication with limited knowledge of the histories it speaks to, then the content to follow should be viewed an invaluable resource (for which I can take little credit). However, what’s written here is only a starting point to understanding the slippery histories it represents. All are encouraged to continue down one of its many fluid paths.

Thank you to Nahed Mansour and Ricky Varghese, who not only assisted in selecting our writers but provided some key editorial feedback early in the process. Thank you to the team at SAVAC, for initiating this meaningful collaboration, providing support throughout the various phases of issue production, and for the work your organization continues to do. And most of all, thank you to Sandy Saad, Kohila Kurunathan, Rajee Paña Jeji Shergill, Marina Fathalla, and Nadia Kurd for their ongoing patience, and for the many things I have learned from their contributions.

Lindsay LeBlanc

Making Space:

SAVAC's Creation of an Inclusive Canadian Cultural Arena

Sandy Saad

In 1976 Artforum published a series of articles by Brian O'Doherty entitled "Inside the White Cube," now well-known by artists, art historians, and critics. The essays outline O'Doherty's exploration of the modernist white cube gallery space and its effect on the art object and viewing subject. He describes the white cube as a space in which the outside world is omitted; windows are usually sealed off, walls are painted white, and the ceiling becomes the source of light. O'Doherty argues that space itself becomes the prime focus of the gallery experience, and suggests that the supposed objectivity of the white cube, built to be a place free of context, is a political staging ground reflecting mechanisms of inclusion and exclusion. He parallels the twentieth century modernist structure to that of a medieval church, which refuses entry to the outside world. O'Doherty critiques the institution by implying that participation within the authoritative realm of galleries and museums is reserved for a small selection of voices that have a sophisticated understanding of modern art and society. He presents a dichotomist space of privileged discourse consisting of a specialized form of knowledge, leaving the vast range of people alienated and/or marginalized.

The isolation of the viewer by the white cube cultivated a desire to create opportunities for partic-

ipation, which was the impetus for the establishment of the South Asian Visual Arts Collective in 1997. The group originally came together to program the visual arts portion of Desh Pardesh, a Toronto-based multi-disciplinary arts festival and conference dedicated to providing a venue for underrepresented and marginalized voices from the South Asian diaspora. Throughout its eleven year history Desh Pardesh would evolve into an annual five day conference/festival made possible through a series of strategic partnerships with various organizations, drawing in over 5000 attendants from Canada, the U.S., the U.K. and India (Fernandez 2006). The South Asian Visual Arts Collective aimed to support South Asian artists by curating and exhibiting their work, providing mentorship, and facilitating professional development. Following the final year of Desh Pardesh in 2001, the collective would continue to work in its own capacity. In 2008 the group became federally incorporated and changed its name to South Asian Visual Arts Centre (SAVAC), reflecting its organizational purpose and structure as an artist-run centre. Operating without an exhibition space, SAVAC would work in a similar spirit to Desh Pardesh and implement a collaborative model of institutional partnerships to program various spaces and fulfill its mandate. SAVAC's nomadic approach to programming would allow it to reach a wide variety of audiences, increasing the visibility of culturally diverse artists. It would work to create opportunities for participation within various 'white cubes,' to explore issues and ideas shaping the identities and experiences of people from South Asia and its diasporas, and to host an active program of challenging, experimental and critical new perspectives on the contemporary world. This essay will ex-



explore three programs that have come to fruition as a result of SAVAC's collaboration with some of Canada's most established cultural institutions. These programs demonstrate the ways SAVAC offers alternative approaches to Canadian art, adding to the complexity and nuance of our national history. The centre creates opportunities for the Canadian South Asian community to actively participate in Canada's cultural arena, and fosters a sense of community through accessible programming that encourages the interaction of people from various walks of life.

On September 14, 2010 *Bamiyan (the heart that has no love/pain/generosity is not a heart)* opened at Institute of Contemporary Culture at the Royal Ontario Museum. The exhibition was

made possible through partnerships between SAVAC, Institute of Contemporary Culture, and the 23rd Images Festival. The collaboration signalled significant growth in SAVAC's presence within the Canadian cultural milieu, with the site being in the largest museum in Canada and the exhibition being part of the largest experimental, independent moving image festival in North America. *Bamiyan* brought together Vancouver-based artist Jayce Salloum with Afghan-Hazara artist Khadim Ali. The artists travelled together through Pakistan and Afghanistan to develop a survey of the landscape, explore the ruins and the cave sites of the fifth century Buddhas (destroyed by the Taliban in 2001), and gain insight on the living conditions of the Hazara people (a persecuted Shia Muslim minority living in the region). A composition of photographs, miniature paintings, videotapes, and various ephemera including objects, documents, notes and maps, offered a complex story of a war-torn country. Jayce Salloum's photo-



graphs revealed a picturesque landscape littered with tanks and rotting debris, while his series of videos served as evidence of trauma, showing fragments of monumental Buddhas that had been ruined and stored into piles, catalogued, and housed in sheds. Khadim Ali's miniature paintings illustrated landscapes of abundant life, filled with flowers and fruit trees, juxtaposed to various forms of war weaponry including tanks, guns, and grenades. Each artist developed a series of portraits; Salloum installed a grid of passport-style photos of children, men and women in various stages of their lives, capturing the idiosyncratic qualities of each subject—all of them appearing at once uniform and different. A network of portraits taken by Ali showed high school students who once attended a co-ed school that had been separated according to gender following a government edict. The portraits were accompanied by a video loop portraying the girls

participating in a morning assembly before making their way to their classrooms—suggestive of hope that their education would lead to a means to a better life, social equality, and justice (Sivanesan 2010). The exhibition would end up travelling nationally and internationally, receiving critical attention from various media outlets. *Bamiyan* presented an alternative narrative to the situation in Afghanistan, delivered from the perspective of artists and writers living in the region; it offered accounts from groups not always heard from in mass media, those of women and asylum seekers. A catalogue accompanied the exhibition as a means to further address important issues regarding contemporary life in the region: a paper witness to the loss of monuments, a sense of place, and history.

Complementary to Brian O'Doherty's reflections on institutional space, Mary Alexander and Edward Porter argue that "Museums were housed on palatial or temple-like structures that made the man on the street feel uncomfortable and discouraged his attendance" (Alexander and Porter 2008). The museum as a space of discomfort that was explored by Sameer



Farooq and Mirjam Linschooten in *The Museum of Found Objects: Toronto (Maharaja and—*. The exhibition opened in February 2011 as a response to a concurrent exhibition at the Art Gallery of Ontario, entitled *Maharaja: The Splendour of India's Royal Courts*—a blockbuster exhibition that consisted of 200+ objects produced under the patronage of India's kings. *The Museum of Found Objects* was a pop-up museum consisting of ordinary objects collected by the artists through social interactions with various South Asian communities in the Greater Toronto Area (GTA). The collection included spice tins, snow boots, *Fair and Handsome* whitening cream, and various clothing articles amongst other objects. Each item was displayed with a ruler—critiquing the scientific and anthropologic approach to measuring historical and cultural objects in museums—and accompanied by 'research labels' telling stories of the various relationships between the objects and their previous owners. *The Museum of Found Objects* critiqued the museum's (in this case, the Art Gallery of Ontario's) self-appointed authority to represent non-Western cultures—specifically oriental cultures that had known a history

of colonisation, and therefore hold a problematic relationship to the authoritative framework of the museum. By responding to *Maharaja*, Farooq and Linschooten questioned the authoritative structures by which museums present objects. On the last day of the exhibition, visitors were invited to "Loot the Museum," freeing the objects and releasing them back into the hands of the public. The exhibition became a space of inclusion and participation, calling on various members of the South Asian community in the GTA to acquire its display collection, and inviting the public to physically dismantle the museum's temporary collection. *The Museum of Found Objects* functioned to create a sense of community in a museum space and complicate a contested history, telling a nuanced, dynamic, and at times humorous story of South Asians living in today's world, which reflected a diverse set of experiences.

A diverse set of experiences and complex identities also inspired *Beyond Measure: Domesticating Distance*, which opened in September 2015 at the Robert McLaughlin Gallery (RMG). The exhibition was a partnership between SAVAC and the RMG, and would strive to reflect the experiences of a growing South Asian demographic within the Durham region. The group show brought together the multidisciplinary practices of Tazeen Qayyum, Abdullah M.I. Syed, Asma Sultana,

Surendra Lawoti, and Meera Margaret Singh. The artists considered the migrant experience and the occupation of a between-space shaped by acts of recollection, reflection, and narration (Amber-reen Siddiqui 2015). Tazeen Qayyum used various forms of repetition to produce a jarring play between adornment and destruction: *Infiltration*—an installation of laser-cut acrylic cockroaches, chosen for their ability to survive in multiple environments—was laid out intricately in a circular form and accompanied by *Blur*, a video performance in which Qayyum repeats the ritual of applying kohl (eyeliner), at first perfectly, then smearing under her eyes and down her face, bringing tension to the everyday ritual. Repetition was similarly found in Abdullah M.I. Syed's *The Flying Rug of Drones*, where a series of drone figures made of box-cutter knives were hung high in the gallery space, casting a pattern of their silhouettes. The work compared the magic carpet of Arabian Nights to the drones used as a tool for American surveillance across the same geography. Syed's exploration of cultural stereotypes was carried through in *Soft Target*, a series of performances in which the artist photographed himself standing on a makeshift target taken along his travels, reflecting his experience of post-9/11 racial profiling. Asma Sultana's installation *Whatever The Glimpse of a Free Spirit Exists That Will Be My Home* consisted of a white petticoat embroidered with her hair. Sultana's thick hair (which had been a strong aspect of her sense of identity) thinned after migrating. She would reconcile this loss by collecting her fallen hair and using it to embroider a series of autobiographical artworks that signified the things she felt and had lost through migration. Meera Margaraet Singh and Surendra Lawoti documented a yearlong exchange of photographs to create *Of Light and Longing*; their correspondence was a record of attempts to search for familiarity in a foreign place, to repurpose the past in the present, and to find themselves in displacement. The exhibition echoed a diversity of

these artists' layered experiences and provided a multifaceted discourse revealing the experience of many Canadians living in the diaspora, who are always negotiating their identities and searching for something familiar.

Through its collaborations and partnerships SAVAC has created a multiplicity of spaces across the Canadian art terrain that each reflect the diversity of the artists and people that live and work within the country. Its programming continues to offer critical views on contemporary issues, complex narratives adding to the nuance of our national and local histories, and critical opposing perspectives when needed (as they often are). Due to its collaborations, various white cubes across Canada have hosted and broadcast the voices of marginalized artists, generating a more dynamic conversation on what constitutes Canadian art, who gets to be included and who gets to engage. In 2013, SAVAC was recognized as an important organization within the Canadian art milieu with a multi-year award from the Ontario Trillium Foundation, which funded the creation of an archive that traces the history of SAVAC as an organization, and the people and groups that preceded it. This is indicative of SAVAC having asserted itself within the Canadian cultural milieu, becoming a strong advocate for diversity in Canadian arts and an important contributor in articulating contemporary Canadian experience. SAVAC, though logistically "spaceless," is a place where artists and curators are granted mentorship opportunities, various communities actively participate in accessible programming, and stories are told that reflect the multiple worlds in which we dwell—breaking apart the once tightly sealed white cube.

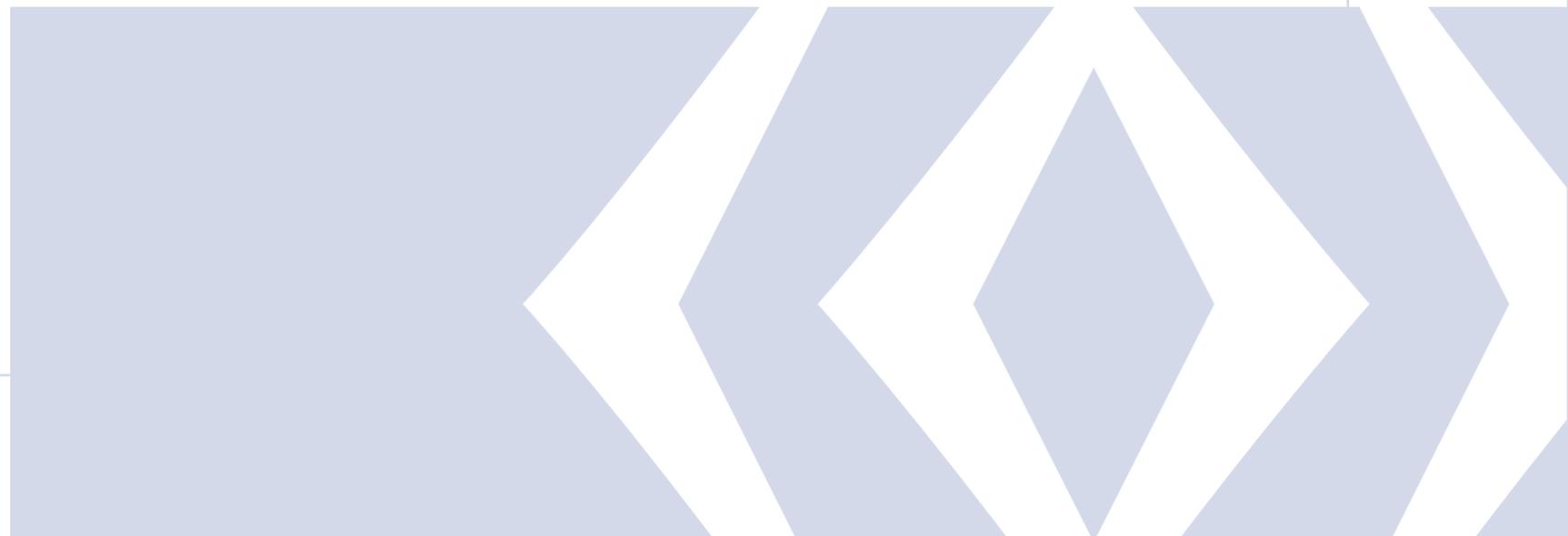
BIBLIOGRAPHY

Alexander, Mary and Edward Porter Alexander. *Museums in Motion: An Introduction to the History and Functions of Museums*. Plymouth, MN: AltaMira Press, 2008.

Fernandex, Sharon. "More than Just an Arts Festival—Communities, Resistance, and the Story of Desh Pardesh." *Canadian Journal of Communication* 31 no. 1 (2006): <http://www.cjc-online.ca/index.php/journal/article/view/1778/1902>.

Siddiqui, Ambereen. "Beyond Measure: Domesticating Distance." In *Beyond Measure: Domesticating Distance*. Toronto and Oshawa, ON: The Robert McLaughlin Gallery and South Asian Visual Arts Centre, 2015.

Sivanesan, Haema. "Absence as Presence." In *Bamiyan (the heart that has no love/pain/generosity is not a heart)*. Toronto, ON: South Asian Visual Arts Centre, 2010.



Border-Fluid

Kohila Kurunathan

“I don’t feel I can go back to either place,” I said of Saudi Arabia, my birthplace, and Sri Lanka, the birthplace of my parents. “You’re stateless,” she said, smiling. I agreed with this identification.

In the 2015 exhibition, *Beyond Measure: Domesticating Distance*, artist Asma Sultana’s installation, *Wherever the glimpse of a free spirit exists that will be my home*, expresses the artist’s sense of loss after leaving Dhaka—a loss physically manifested in the loss of her hair. Using a white petticoat and blouse as surface and ground, she creates embroidery sketches using her hair as the thread. These gestures take the shape of water, a metaphorical rendering of the artist’s stream of consciousness. “Water,” writes curator Ambereen Siddiqui, “[has an] ability to find and make space for itself, morphing to adapt to its surroundings, while maintaining its own attributes” (Siddiqui 2015, 36).

From my earliest days, my litmus test for a world map’s legitimacy has been to check whether Sri Lanka is included, and the accuracy of its shape. A second test verifies the form of the Red Sea and the Arabian Peninsula. Surrounded by water, these borders are easy to confirm, and I check on them them as if they were mine to claim

Info Bomb: The Subcontinent Newsroom (2013) centers on the release of a fictional document by the United Nations. Signed in 1947 by Mohandas K. Gandhi, Muhammad Ali Jinnah, and Cyril Radcliffe, “the document agrees to the redrawing of South Asia’s borders in the year 2014 on the basis of a more equitable division of natural resources and a greater ecological balance” (Soske 2013). Reactions to and analyses of the document’s discovery, the document itself and the circumstances of its creation are collected in a series of video interviews and print articles published across three issues of *The Subcontinent Times* newspaper.

In an interview included in the project’s documentary component—*Section 1: New Maps* by Rajee Jeji Shergill and Jon Soske—Dilip M. Menon, Director of the Centre for Indian Studies in Africa, shares his account of a correspondence between Gandhi and French historian, Fernand Braudel (at the time a prisoner of war in Lübeck, Germany). Braudel

apparently asks Gandhi about the relationship between nature and sovereignty, to which Gandhi responds “water.” Braudel inquires further, “So, do you mean the fluvial as that which stands outside history and asserts its own sovereignty?” Gandhi replies, simply: “Water is God.”

Menon highlights that Gandhi and Jinnah’s agreement was based on sovereignty over bodies of water, an idea he says has been “mischievously and politically buried because we do not want to share waters; we might want to share a history, but we don’t want to share waters.” He describes a meeting between the architects of Partition where the redrawn map is revealed—a map in which the five rivers of the Punjab flow over the subcontinent, creating the likeness of a hand raised in a salutation.

An article in *The Subcontinent Times*, titled “Whose Natural Reserves?,” discusses the ambiguous and questionable nature of the logic informing the South Asia’s redrawn borders. What exactly is included in the term “natural reserves?” How will they be shared, and how will they be accessed?

Can water, in its materiality, ever be divided? It seems no one knows.

Fathima and Zahra Husain, the artist-curators behind *Info Bomb*, have devised a scenario in which those responsible for Partition take immediate action against their decision, by creating a moment of undoing—"The Unhappening"—sixty-seven years into the future. In this alternative version of the present, the sites of natural resources are determined to be unified spaces and shared between the surrounding nations, although the document provides no instructions about how citizens might reach these areas. Menon suggests water as another method of demarcation, so that borders lose their very definition, as the rivers "assert their own sovereignty" (Shergill and Soske 2013).

The key premise in *Info Bomb* allows for the occupation of spaces that exist beyond dominant his-

tories and their resulting borders. Freed from these impositions, our forms as individuals and communities take on the fluidity of the waterways—confluences, estuaries, tributaries—that are always on the move, and in a state of change. Menon's assertion that "we don't want to share waters" can be further clarified as no *state* wants to share waters, where the sharing of water between peoples leads to a dissolution of arbitrary state lines.

Two articles by factAgency (artist Monika Löve's fictitious news agency) in *The Subcontinent Times* report on phenomena that further fragment these delineations. In one case, the overlapping borders of two states that disagree has resulted in enclaves, which are unwanted by both states, so that the residents of these between-territories are rendered stateless. In a second storyline, an area is so heavily guarded by the military that it becomes isolated from all human activity, and involuntarily evolves into an ecological habitat preservation area—a naturally demilitarized zone. Just as people rely on borders for a sense of identity, so too the space between

borders gains an identity from its people.

Following the events of 1983's Black July, thousands of Tamils left Sri Lanka and migrated to Europe, Australia, Canada, and the Middle East—the last being the closest in proximity to the place that was called home, but also the one least likely to grant any sort of citizenship. In some ways, there was a repetition of what had just been left behind/escaped—an un-wanting that happens all over again.

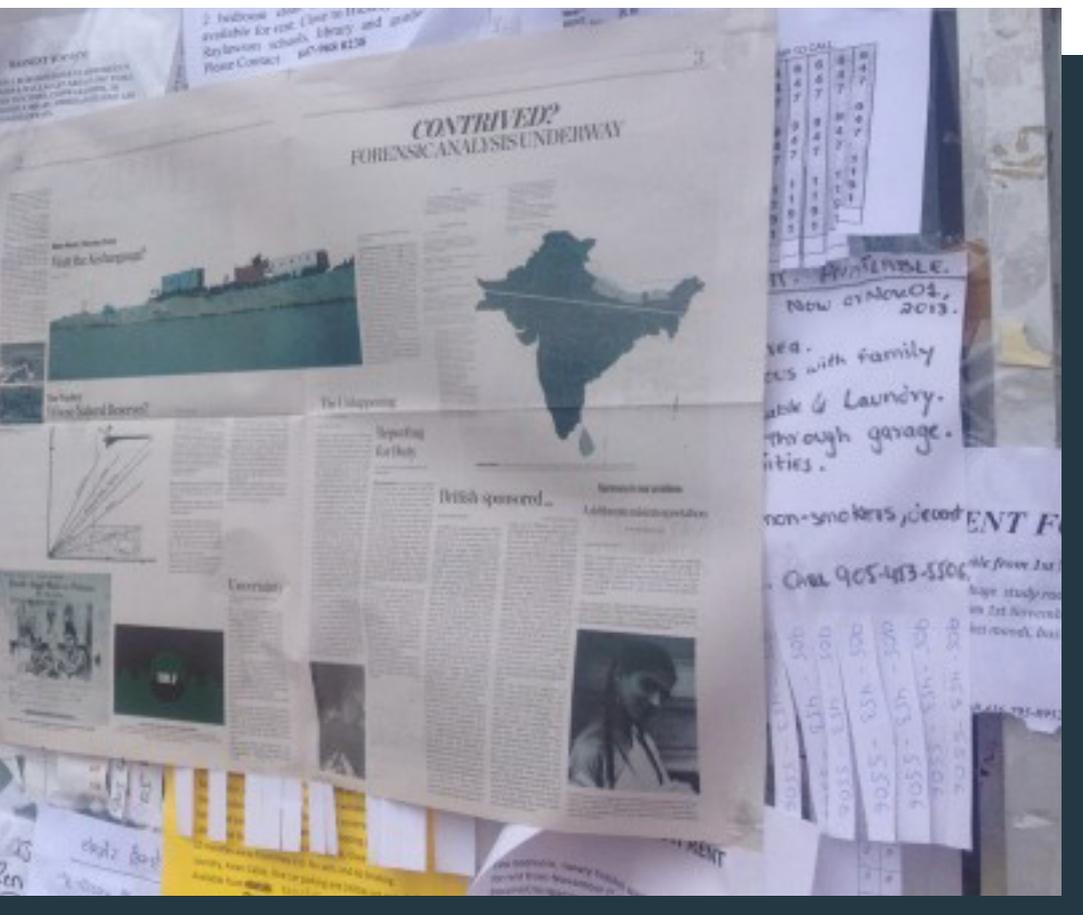
In the 2009 exhibition *South-South: Interruptions & Encounters*, Allan deSouza's installation *Bombay* weaves together two narratives: one of an East African man who is kidnapped into slavery, taken to India, and later returns to Zanzibar; the other of deSouza's own father, who leaves India for Kenya.

deSouza begins with a precise historical moment: a photograph of Bombay, the man whose story he pieces together. Named after the city of his residence, Bombay is released after his master's death and sent back to Africa. In Zanzibar he joins a retinue led by two British officers, serving as a translator with his knowledge of Hindustani.

Bombay, in this photographic starting point from 1860 Zanzibar, is described by the photographer J.A. Grant:

His face is turned to one side, away from the camera, with his eyes seemingly focused at a point out of the camera's frame. Closer inspection reveals his eyes to be angled back; not looking at, but watching the camera as if from behind the shelter of gauze. It's an apprehensive gaze, knowing he is being recorded; turning his face away to avoid the camera's scrutiny, but glancing back just to keep an eye on the watcher. (Aji and Soske 2009, 30)

Bombay's self-consciousness and awareness separate him from the photographer's intentions. Despite almost being lost to history, this photo serves as a beginning and an anchor, and Bombay remains a distinct figure throughout the exhibition.



With the camera standing in for historic inspection, this self-conscious framing can be applied to that imaginary moment in 1947 when Gandhi, Jinnah and Radcliffe, realizing the impending impact of their work, sought to belatedly atone for their actions by sending into the future a gesture that attempted to undo the conflict that would come to characterize the subcontinent over sixty years later.

After drawing a line between Bombay (the place) and Zanzibar, deSouza overlays the story of Bombay (the man) with the path of his father's migrations, from Bombay to Kenya, and incorporates his own journeys from Kenya to India and England.

Standing at India Gate in what is now Mumbai, deSouza, his father, and the man Bombay are transposed onto one other, creating a fixed point multiplied across time. deSouza's text-based wall installation reads, "Now, all I have are the fantasies and inventions of the passage from India to Africa. They fabricate genealogy; not a family tree but a root of familiarity. I swaddle myself within this security blanket of imagined history."

My mother's stories have been the root of my familiarity with Sri Lanka—particularly those stories about my grandfather, ones that demonstrate commonalities between he and I. Growing up, I nurtured these traits, so that when we eventually met and overlaid ourselves onto one other, there would be no boundaries or gaps in continuity. That moment, trapped in the future, remains a fixed point in my own imagined history.

From afar, the lines sewn into in Sultana's fabric are invisible; from a middle ground they just begin to be discernible, still only a slight distinction from the fabric. But up close, they are defined lines, weaving through the petticoat and through each other, strengthened in their repetition.

In shifting the definitions of that which is outlined, defended and neatly demarcated to a fluvial space, the flag of permanence is lowered, and then drowned. This alternative space is labeled "in-between" when viewed from the borders, and deemed uninhabitable.

Unchecked by boundaries, the movements of those who traverse this space reshape its form from within. The fluid passage the space affords makes it more freely inhabitable, as bodies cease to be defined by their borders. In this way those who are labeled as unwanted or in-between reject the border and its ability to define, giving new form to the process of definition itself.

Today, I have erased the number of my house
And removed the stain of identity from my street's forehead
And I have wiped off the directions on each road
But if you really want to meet me
Then knock at the doors of every country
Every city, every street
And wherever the glimpse of a free spirit exists
That will be my home.

Amrita Pritam, "Mera Patta"

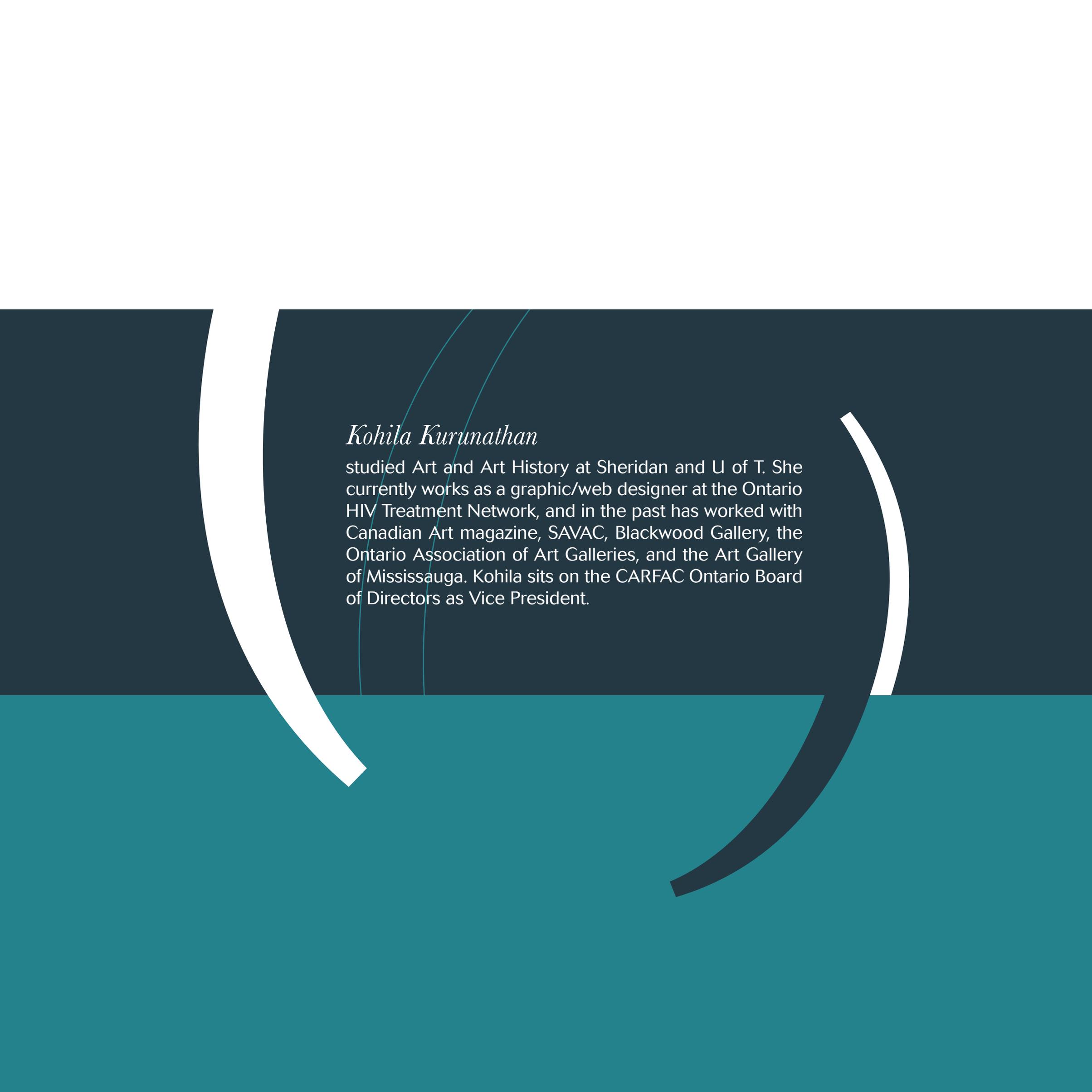
BIBLIOGRAPHY

Ajji, Tejpal S. and Jon Soske, eds. *South-South: Interruptions and Encounters*. Toronto: Justina M. Barnicke Gallery and South Asian Visual Arts Centre, 2009.

Soske, Jon. "British-Sponsored Ex Post Facto Land Grab." In *The Subcontinent Times*, edited by Fathima Husain and Zahra Husain (curators). Toronto: South Asian Visual Arts Centre, 2013.

Shergill, Rajee Jeji and Jon Soske. *Section 1: New Maps*. 2013. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0KLVx3dkAju>.

Siddiqui, Ambereen. "Beyond Measure: Domesticating Distance." In *Beyond Measure: Domesticating Distance*, 15-17. Toronto and Oshawa, ON: The Robert McLaughlin Gallery and South Asian Visual Arts Centre, 2015.



Kohila Kurunathan

studied Art and Art History at Sheridan and U of T. She currently works as a graphic/web designer at the Ontario HIV Treatment Network, and in the past has worked with Canadian Art magazine, SAVAC, Blackwood Gallery, the Ontario Association of Art Galleries, and the Art Gallery of Mississauga. Kohila sits on the CARFAC Ontario Board of Directors as Vice President.

Partition and the Lost Kashmir in Kriti Arora's

THIS or THAT? Or NEITHER?

(2005)

Rajee Paña Jeji Shergill

Indian artist Kriti Arora's five-minute silent film *THIS or THAT? Or NEITHER?* (2005) was screened during the South Asian Visual Arts Centre's (SAVAC) second annual experimental short film and video screening program, *Monitor 2*. The film is a rhythmic study of light and movement that reflects on the history of Arora's great-grandfather, who was a cloth merchant before the partitioning of the Indian Subcontinent (Kim 2006, 5). I read the visual aesthetics in the film as a reimagining of a lost and unreachable place, representative of the Kashmir where Arora's ancestors lived prior to the displacement they experienced when they left the newly formed nation of Pakistan for India. The dawn of independent India and the formation of Pakistan became a reality on August 14 and 15, 1947, when the two regions were separated. These dates also mark the end of the British Raj (1858-1947) and the beginning of decolonization and nation-building in both countries. In order for Indian Muslims to have their own state in Pakistan, India was partitioned following the border scheme known as the Radcliffe Award, which cut into the states of Punjab and Bengal. Muslims migrated toward the west part of Punjab (which became West Pakistan) and East Bengal (which became East Pakistan), while Hindus and Sikhs travelled in the opposite directions. However, Kashmir was a Princely state during the British Raj and ruled by Maharajah Hari Singh. He had to decide after Partition whether to cede Kashmir to India or Pakistan. Muslims predominantly populated



the area, and it would have made sense for Kashmir to be ceded to Pakistan; yet, Singh was Hindu, and he wanted to stay neutral and possibly govern independently. After a pro-Pakistan rebellion took place and the Maharajah asked India for assistance, he ultimately ceded the state to India. In 1947-1948 India and Pakistan battled one another for the state, and Pakistan and India now both have control over Kashmir (Calvocoressi 2009, 432). Arora's family were among the many Hindus and Sikhs who left Pakistan-administered Kashmir for India.

The implications of the divide have affected countless lives in myriad ways, and Indo-Pakistani relations have been fraught with ani-



mosity since. Partition constituted the largest mass migration in human history—approximately twelve million people were displaced. The slaughter of those divided along religious lines was prevalent, and this violence was often the deciding factor that led individuals to leave their homes and become refugees, which was the case for Arora’s family. Arora was profoundly affected by her maternal family’s personal histories of before and after Partition, which she grew up hearing about. According to feminist scholar Urvashi Butalia, “collections of memories, individual and collective, familial and historical, are what make up the reality of Partition. They illuminate what one might call the ‘underside of its history’” (Butalia 2000, 8). In recent decades, South Asian artists have negotiated the effects of Partition by making artworks that explore related historical trauma and cultural memory, as well as the contemporary realities of Indo-Pakistani hostilities. According to Hammad Nasar, who curated the 2012 exhibition *Lines of Control: Partition as a Productive Space*, it has only been since the fiftieth anniversary of Partition that more visual artists have explored the event (Nasar 2012, 9). This is an important act of remembering when public memorialization of Partition is still almost non-existent in India or Pakistan. Artist and art historian Iftikhar Dadi notes that a number of South Asian artists are of a generation that did not witness Partition or Bangladesh’s 1971 accession to independence, but are “now beginning to grapple with the latent complexity of Partition’s effects, which extends from grand nationalist, geopolitical, and identitarian agendas into the most personal and intimate aspects of the self” (Dadi 2012, 19). Dadi points out that Partition remains an open wound, as it resonates with contemporary acts of communal violence and displacement that have occurred in India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, and around the world. Artists continue to examine such issues, and SAVAC’s

programming has shown works that investigate these subjects similarly. For instance, *Monitor*—the experimental short film and video screening program—“has held a steady engagement with an international community of artists, curators and critics, initiating dialogues around the shifting nature of South Asian politics, economies and landscapes through artists’ film and video” (SAVAC 2016). Works that have a focus on Partition and Bangladesh’s independence were shown during *Monitor 2*, *6* and *8*. Arora’s *THIS or THAT? Or NEITHER?* exposes the reality of the Partition and its aftermath through intergenerational transference. The work is imbued with her family memories, a silent exploration of images as pulsating studies of light and movement.

Arora’s five-minute-long 16mm film *THIS or THAT? Or NEITHER?* gives homage to her maternal great-grandfather, the cloth merchant (who gave up the occupation when he migrated to India). Interweaving archival black-and-white footage of a train full of Partition refugees, the video symbolizes the process by which the artist’s grandmother made it to India, speaking from the vantage point of the present. In the narrative text that begins the film, Arora mentions how she grew up hearing stories about the lives of her grandparents and great-grandparents in what is now part of Pakistan. Partition footage follows, showing a passenger train overflowing with people, shot from a distance. The landscape in the background is made up of fields and trees; there is no indication of where the train is headed. The footage of the train reappears regularly throughout the film, emphasizing the transitional nature of the Partition event. The footage also acts as a material connection that traces Arora’s grandmother’s loss of homeland. The footage is grainy, but one female passen-

ger can be seen holding onto the side of the train, with her other hand dangling white fabric in the wind. This figure of the female passenger can be symbolically related to Arora's grandmother who, as stated above, ventured to India by train; and to Arora, who appears repeatedly in the film as the other main point of focus (besides the train footage), emphasizing lineage. Arora stands draped in white cloth, visually paralleling the anonymous train passenger, in front of a wall onto which light is projected. She moves in a rhythmic fashion, taking the shape of a cone with the cloth draped over her as she waves the white fabric up and down in a ritualistic manner. This image is briefly superimposed onto footage of what appears to be Arora piecing something together in an artist's studio space. The rhythmical movements of the fabric gesture to the train's rhythmic motion, while the cloth references Arora's great-grandfather's occupation as a cloth merchant. The footage of the studio space is self-referential as it points to Arora's occupation as an artist. Arora embodies the train's rhythm and her great-grandfather's occupation, drawing them together in the present. Working with the archived memory of her great-grandfather and grandmother, entering into dialogue with it through art-making, Arora explores her ongoing experience of remembering Partition from her standpoint in the present. Her interpretations of memory allow the artist to explore the lost land of her ancestors, the lost occupation of her grandfather, and the desire of retrieval.

The presence of the train as well as the title of the film, *THIS or THAT? Or NEITHER?*, allude to the arbitrariness of the borders between India and Pakistan, and the ways these borders affected the identities of Kashmiris, Pakistanis, and Indians during the time of Partition. However, the title also succinctly describes how



Arora synthesizes the stories she grew up hearing from her grandparents about the senselessness of a divided subcontinent. For instance, she remembers her grandparents talking about how Kashmiris would call Kashmir a “no man’s land”—belonging to neither India nor Pakistan before it was ceded. When her grandmother travelled to India by train, it made frequent stops in the middle of nowhere (Arora 2013). The train in the film thus travels through an indistinguishable landscape that is meant to refer to India or Pakistan or neither, an in-between space. While recollecting memory, it also reflects Arora's desire to connect with the homeland her family left behind. The film points to how Arora's identity has been shaped by her family's migration; her mimicking of the train's rhythmic motion can be read as an effort to share a feeling with her grandmother and the passengers on the train.

Interestingly, the video is silent even though it shows footage of movements that create sound. The film has no soundtrack, so while we view the train on the screen we do not hear it. This sensory deprivation implies the absence of Partition and its memories from the contemporary moment, at the same time it acknowledges the event's continued presence. In *An Accented Cinema: Exilic and Diasporic Filmmaking*, film and media scholar Hamid Naficy points out that diasporic and exilic filmmakers draw on “transitional and

transnational places and spaces, such as borders,” and “vehicles of mobility, such as trains,” as significant sites for their investigations of identity (Naficy 2001, 3-4). Arora’s incorporation of the train into her film brings to the fore identities in flux. For instance, the footage appears more than once, symbolizing more than one place and person; the movement of the train in two directions can be read as representing India and Pakistan as the two final destinations, as well as mobility and migration. What happens to the identities of the passengers? This is left open to the viewer. The title of Arora’s film indirectly calls attention to the iconography of the cone; this shape is part of the artist’s personal iconographical system whereby she represents the Partition through the temple or a mosque, respectively Hindus in India and Muslims in Pakistan. Borders were carved out along religious lines, to make the countries distinct from one another; when represented abstractly as cones, temples and mosques become indistinguishable. Additionally, Arora’s fabric cone alludes to tents in which refugees on both sides of the divide sought shelter when they reached their final destination (Arora 2013). *THIS or THAT?* intermingles Arora’s various inherited memories of Partition, addressing her family’s experiences and collective occurrences as well.

In the history of the decolonization of the subcontinent, the colonial baggage that the British left behind when they divided India lingers in the antagonism between Pakistan and India. This is evident in the policing of their borders and particularly in the dispute over Kashmir. Indian-administered Kashmir has also been fraught with an ongoing internal conflict in relation to sovereignty: the majority of Kashmiris want the right to self-determination and are protesting against the state and the government of India. The Indian government’s approach to resolving the dispute has not been successful, since they want to keep Kashmir. Kashmiris will not give up their struggle and resistance. Fortunately, individuals on both sides of the divide and in diaspora—including artists, activists, and organizations such as SAVAC—are building intercultural bridges and imaging spaces in which connections can be made, superseding borders and shedding light on current issues that affect South Asians. Artists of South Asian descent, including Arora, are developing a dialogue within their art practices, where they explore memories

related to the Partition and its aftereffects. Formerly silenced histories are brought to the fore in an effort to move forward. These are integral steps toward ensuring that family histories pertaining to the birth of independent India and Pakistan do not remain the hidden “underside” of the historiography of the Partition.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Arora, Kriti. Skype interview with author. December 3, 2013.

Butalia, Urvashi. *The Other Side of Silence: Voices from the Partition of India*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2000.

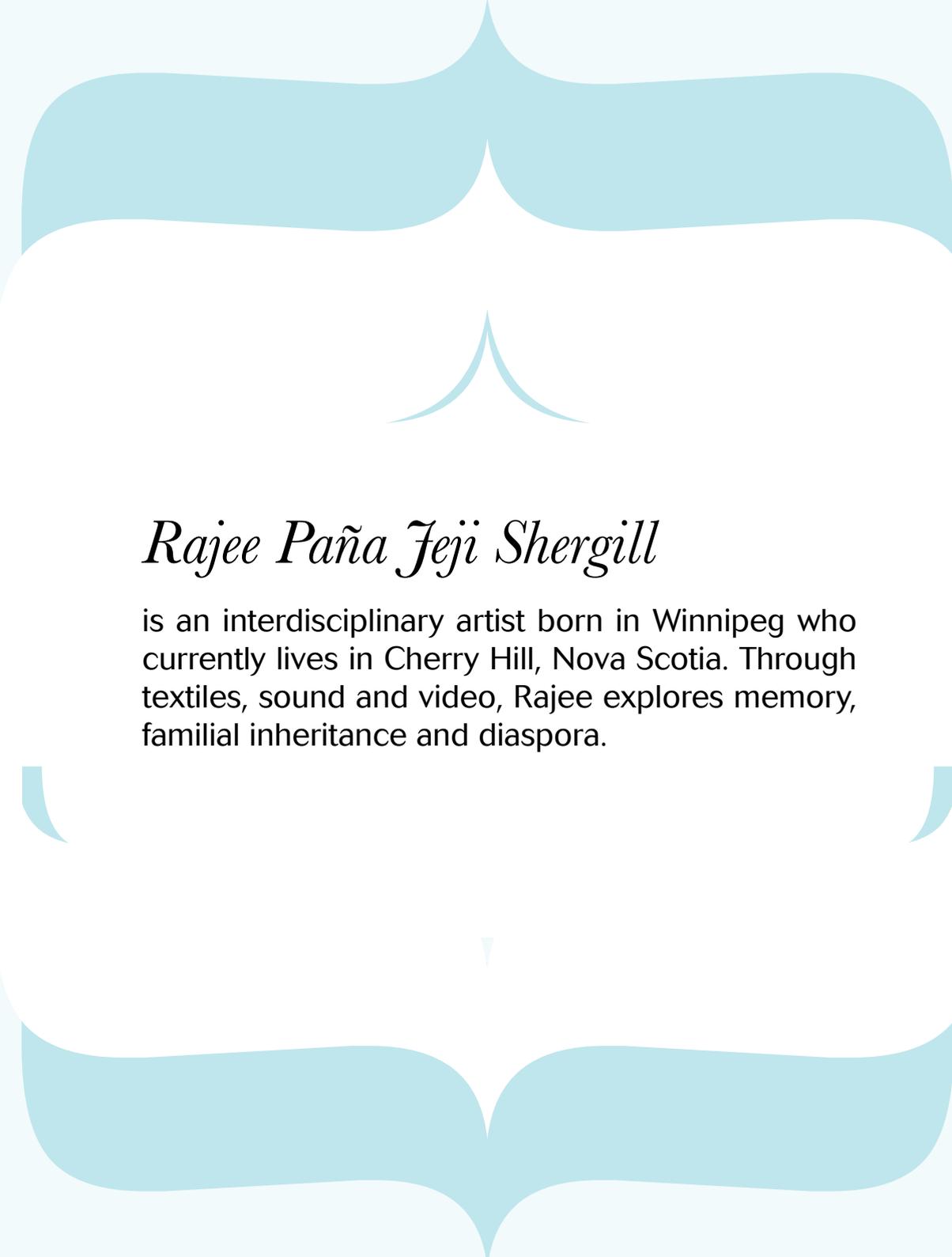
Calvocoressi, Peter. *World Politics Since 1945*. Harlow, UK: Pearson Longman, 2009.

Dadi, Iftikhar. “Partition and Contemporary Art.” In *Lines of Control: Partition as a Productive Space*, edited by Iftikhar Dadi and Hammad Nasar, 19-21. London: Green Cardamom, 2012.

Kim, Jane, ed. *Monitor 2: Contemporary South Asian Short Film and Video*. Toronto: South Asian Visual Arts Collective, 2006.

Naficy, Hamid. *An Accented Cinema: Exilic and Diasporic Filmmaking*. Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2001.

Nasar, Hammad. “Lines of Control: Partition as a Productive Space.” In *Lines of Control: Partition as a Productive Space*, edited by Iftikhar Dadi and Hammad Nasar, 9-16. London: Green Cardamom, 2012.



Rajee Paña Jeji Shergill

is an interdisciplinary artist born in Winnipeg who currently lives in Cherry Hill, Nova Scotia. Through textiles, sound and video, Rajee explores memory, familial inheritance and diaspora.

A (future) archive of a since disappeared land

Marina Fathalla

“Dormant” describes plants (and other life forms) that are temporarily asleep, blooming and flowering at different times of the year. I explore temporality through the notion of dormancy in plants during the long winter months, when their regular physical functions are suspended or slowed down for a period of time. Dormancy points toward the depth of the landscape, histories that are just hidden out of view—in a deep sleep, rather than dead. It also points to the treatment of land that appears derelict before it blooms through architectural practices of site analysis and site reading prior to building.

Looking to define and explore concepts of *tactile history*, *feeling history*, and *feeling the land*, I consider a site in Streetsville, Ontario. Formerly farmland, the lines and ridges of a history of labour are still physically evident on the site, just before its redevelopment. These histories: the death of agriculture, immigrant passage and settlement, and Anishinaabe cultivation around the Credit River (running just behind this site), although physically hidden, can be felt. With redevelopment processes underway, the distant history of the site—a physical, affective and visceral history—will be



kept even further away from the centre of our bodies, undetectable both on the physical site and in the museum as a space to materialize memory and history. I created a piece to explore the tension of archiving, attempting to preserve or document the feeling of moving across the ridges of a disappearing land. I sought to parallel the motions of moving through microfiche documents in the museum; moving through the images in a linear fashion metaphorically parallels walking alongside the agricultural ridges of the land, but at the same time asserts its distance from this haptic, embodied experience by structuring and fixing time.

The concept of dormancy also begs the question: which histories are memorialized and which remain undocumented? How are these histories represented in museological spaces? Abbas Akhavan's piece *Study for a Glasshouse* (2013) addresses these questions by unearthing and reclaiming stories of settlerhood. As a site-specific installation at the Peel Art Gallery Museum and Archives (PAMA) in Brampton Ontario, it directly engages the architecture of the archive and unsettles the very structures that govern it.

Built as a "greenhouse," or vitrine, the display case contains a paper archive from the PAMA collection documenting the social history of the rose in the Dale Estate. The history of Brampton, Canada's "Flower town," becomes part of the Canadian collective imaginary and identity. The paper reproductions include images and texts that document the rose, highlighting the colonial history of the Dale Estate. They bring into play questions about the commodification of the rose, the colonial framing of nature, and land as a topic of study. The reproductions are laid out at one end of the display case, and the plant types at the other, each one labelled with their etymology. The vegetation types are each carefully chosen native species growing under ideal conditions throughout the duration of the exhibit, slowly corrupting the impermanent and fragile paper representations.

In my own practice, native plants represent a felt history, while invasive species speak to a narrative of movement and travel, pollinating and surviving in hostile environments. In anticipation of an imminent erasure I create pseudo-field guides, which take precautionary measures of preservation (as gifts) of reciprocal exchange between people and the land in the past and the future. Through taxonomic studies of plant life, invasive and native species become a vehicle for dialoguing between scientific, measured and meticulous studies, and those that are historical, political, nuanced, ephemeral, and temporal. Using small scale pencil drawings, I intimately engage with the intricacies and details of the plants and their etymologies—revealing and paralleling the poetics of movement, impermanence, and cyclical weathering patterns that demand patience: a slowing down of the process of *building*, *siting*, and *cultivation*.

The movements of settlerhood: (in patterns, ephemeral by nature) leave a subtle impression/trace on the land;

Land is Archive is Dwelling.

Milkweed is represented in drawing as its pollen is transported by the wind: a narrative of movement, crossing between the temporality and rhythms of written gesture, and immigrant and Native narratives of (un)settling.

Histories of colonization are subtly present as traces in a landscape that has been occupied, shifted, and distorted by new inhabitants and social structures, yet not often emphasized in museological or institutional spaces.

By intervening in the aesthetics of the vitrine and its mechanisms of display, not only does Akhavan's installation highlight the impermanence of the archive and the precarity of conservation practices, but also critiques the very notion of a collection—including its underlying power relationships and colonial structures. These gestures intervene in practices of collecting and taxonomy, as part of how we remember and forget histories of settlerhood that are connected to location and place. I ask, then, what is a reified understanding of site specificity and site, in a nomadic context? And further, how does one cultivate a sense of familiarity while challenging the notion of a 'sense of place' as one bounded by location?

Erasure;

I draw connections between the "glasshouse" in the title of Akhavan's piece and the history of the glasshouse in modern architecture. Akhavan's investigation of the interplay between hostility and hospitality in "domesticated landscapes" is mirrored in the opposing forces at play in the modern architectural typology of the glasshouse: on the one hand the glasshouse provides a sense of permanence and protection, and yet, the domestic, intimate and private spaces are

on display, opposing the notion of the home as a place of refuge. The history of modern architecture tends to place its emphasis on how buildings become like art objects in space, planted on site without concern for context, existing apart from the natural landscapes that host them.

The modernist typology of the glasshouse is de-rooted from its context, and stands as a permanent and pristine structure unaffected by its surrounding natural and changing landscape. That disjuncture, where context is understood as secondary to man-made concepts of 'genius loci,' goes hand in hand with the colonial project. A form of erasure has to take place before the architect can conceptualize the site. Place then *becomes* site: a violent obliteration of history and memory, a mathematical understanding of the land that relies on boundary and measurement (Beauregard 2005). Following this, there is a sense of place imposed on the site as a commodity, the way its developers make it seem more attractive, wherein it becomes an abstracted symbol for meaning of place (casting a wide net of marketability). Architect Carol Burns, in her essay "On Site," describes the politics of erasure in site practices:

“The idea of the cleared site is based on an assumption that the site as received is unoccupied, lacking any prior construction and empty of content. It posits space as objective and ‘pure,’ a neutral mathematical object... The disregard for natural constructions betrays the presumption that they are politically and ideologically immaterial...” (Burns 1991, 150)

How does one cultivate a sense of familiarity while challenging notions of a sense of place that propagate the prominence of ‘locus,’ or ‘spirit of place’ in architectural discourse? ‘Spirit of place’ is often unconnected to socio-cultural and political specificity, and takes on an idealized and romanticized view of place, such as how the primitive hut has been taken up in Western architecture and phenomenology. Ideas of spiritual connectedness to the landscape in phenomenology are problematized by varying cultural concepts of ‘location,’ spirituality, and cosmology. In the case of modern architect Philip Johnson’s idea of the glasshouse, the overarching concept of the ‘locus,’ which views nature as wallpaper, conveys a sense of purity by creating continuity between inside and outside.

The glasshouse in architecture history is a poetic gesture that marks the landscape with large and heavy brush strokes, a search for architectural purity that results in violence on the land and erasure of context. Akhavan’s work breaks apart architectures of the archive and acts as a potential space to reinvent memory, proposing another version of the ‘spirit of place.’ Working with processes of archiving in artistic practice I examine histories that fold onto the land and accumulate over time, which allow for gestures of decolonization and re-thinking processes of recollection from within the spatial archive. Dormancy allows for the recovery of those

histories, bringing forth the question of memorialization and the materiality of memory in museological contexts to gather the dimensions of temporality in the land, and its histories of dwelling. I want the projected image (in tension with the material and archival slide) to evoke a (future) archive of a since disappeared land, and thus to make felt the potential for this land’s erasure in the future. This projected future is conveyed as light, immaterial and tangibly felt.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Beauregard, Robert A. “From Place to Site: Negotiating Narrative Complexity.” In *Site Matters: Design Concepts, Histories, and Strategies*, edited by Carol Burns and Andrea Kahn, 39-58. New York: Routledge, 2005.

Burns, Carol. “On Site: Architectural Preoccupations.” In *Drawing—Building—Text: Essays in Architectural Theory*, edited by Andrea Hahn. New York: Princeton Architectural Press, 1991.

Redfield, Wendy. “The Suppressed Site: Revealing the Influence of Site on Two Purist Works.” In *Site Matters: Design Concepts, Histories, and Strategies*, edited by Carol Burns and Andrea Kahn, 185-222. New York: Routledge, 2005.

Marina Fathalla

is a cross-disciplinary artist and writer currently based in Toronto. Her projects are fueled by a particular sensitivity to site, at the intersection of its poetics and its politics. She explores modes of preserving land history, and strategies for preservation in museum contexts. Her upcoming project titled Land Reform is a publication examining the history of agrarian land reform in Egypt, and explores the nuances around the value of land through the lens of tourism and the desert as a spiritual landscape.

Finding a Space for the Mosque

Nadia Kurd

In 2005, I curated the exhibition *Muqarnas: Intersections of Islamic Architecture* with the South Asian Visual Arts Centre (SAVAC) at Niagara Artist Centre in St. Catharines, Ontario. The exhibition sought to situate mosque architecture in Canada by examining the works of Canadian architect Sharif Senebel and Pakistani-American painter Lubna Agha. In conjunction with the exhibition, SAVAC issued an open call for images of mosques to demonstrate the diversity of these communities and places of worship. The exhibition aspired to show the adaptability of Muslim practices and ultimately, to dispel the disturbing and often racist narratives that have pushed Muslim communities to the margins of Western society.

The mosque occupies a critical role in the lives of practicing Muslims. Beyond their purpose as a space for Islamic ritual and supplication, mosques also function as community centres where the faithful can receive social services (e.g. English classes) and observe civic events (e.g. Canada Day festivities). In *Muqarnas*, the images of Canadian mosques designed and built by Sharif Senebel (Fig. 1) were shown next to Lubna Agha's pointillist paintings, which colourfully illustrate forms found in traditional Islamic architecture (Fig. 2). Together, these works mixed Islamic aesthetic traditions with European modernist conventions.

The location of the exhibition also played a crucial role in its intended message. Outside metropolitan Toronto, the city of St. Catharines offered a far more suburban setting—one with a growing Muslim population, and a growing number of mosques. Indeed, Canada's first

purpose-built mosque, the Al-Rashid, was located in Edmonton, Alberta (Fig.3)—far from any urban coastal port such as Vancouver or Halifax. Built in 1938, the Al-Rashid Mosque combined the community's needs with the builder's skill and knowledge. Resembling a cross between a one-room schoolhouse and an Eastern Orthodox Church, the Al-Rashid would come to represent the design and function of contemporary mosques in Canada. An exhibition outside a major metropolis would both affirm the adaptability of Muslim religious practices and recall the past (and almost wholly forgotten) history of the Al-Rashid.

In a short profile of *Muqarnas* in *Canadian Architect*, author Ian Chodikoff describes the final day of the exhibition, when a number of cultural groups participated in a parade in front of the gallery to celebrate the annual Niagara Grape and Wine Festival. According to the author, the festival was "a fitting representation

of some of the many cultural elements defining Canadian cosmopolitanism that is found in many urban communities across our country" (Chodikoff 2006, 82). However, this celebratory, multiculturalist view has been implicated by more polarizing debates on the permissibility of mosques, not just in Canada but across North America.

Outside of countries with Muslim majorities, mosques present challenges because of their locality but also, and paradoxically, because of their spacelessness. In other words, the location of a mosque can often evoke strong protest, yet the architectural nature of the building itself can be quite arbitrary. Any clean, unobstructed space can be made a mosque, and Muslims can pray anywhere so long as they are faced towards Islam's holiest site: the Kaa'ba in the city of Mecca. In her discussion of mosques in New York City, art historian Jerrilynn D. Dodds points out:

The architectural requirements are few, and include

no symbolic forms. Minarets, which we tend to associate with the site where the Muezzin makes the Adhan, or call to prayer, are common in new-built mosques, where they serve more often simply as markers of exterior identity. Indeed, the original minarets of Islam probably served a similar function. (Dodds 2002, 32)

In the years since the exhibition, I have perhaps become more cynical of how mosques (and by extension, Muslims) are perceived by the broader public in non-Muslim majorities. While minarets are considered key exterior markers of identity, they are also symbolically loaded. I would argue that minarets and mosques have become unequivocal symbols of Islam, coded as a racialized threat to Western democracy. Whether it's their location, form, or symbolism, these buildings have evoked both tensions and anger from the residents of their proposed locations. Recently, such oppositions were clearly articulated in the case of the construction of a mosque in Tennessee, where local residents challenged not only

the erection of the building, but incited a debate on the legitimacy of Islam as a valid religion protected under the First Amendment of the US Constitution.

More globally, and more voraciously, a motion was put forth in 2009 by the right-wing Swiss People's Party (SVP) to ban the building of minarets altogether. Though a total of only four minarets exist across Switzerland, the campaign to end the construction of minarets aimed to foster fear of such structures by equating the architectural form with launching missiles in its advertising. Winning over 57% of the vote, the advertising campaign proved successful by making the case that minarets were synonymous with the increasing Islamisation of the nation (BBC 2009). According to Martin Baltisser, the SVP's general secretary, the ban served a necessary political message and was, in his words, "a vote against minarets as symbols of Islamic power." Closer to home, a 2015 "Stop the Mosque" flyer circulated in Meadowdale, Ontario, which vociferously proclaimed that "free speech, liberty, safety and Canadian values must be protected!" (CBC 2015) These cases highlight the precarious

nexus between identity, built-form, and belonging in which mosques and their congregants are found.

Given the hostility and spacelessness that mosques face, the question remains, where and how do mosques fit within the architectural histories of Canada? How can mosque histories been seen—but not evaluated by—churches and other places of worship? More importantly, how can these buildings acknowledge their history of arrival and settlement on Indigenous lands? Identifying and linking these intersecting trajectories in Canadian architectural studies is one way to begin to address the disparities between how particular types

of built spaces are viewed.

The ongoing examination of contemporary mosques is another way to unravel some of the dominant perceptions about the historical and political significance of these buildings. The work of architect Sharif Senebel continues to serve as a critical point for discussions on the role of the mosque in contemporary society. The Islamic Centre Senebel designed in Prince George (Fig.4), for example, responds to both the architectural needs of the community and a global concern with sustainability—where the minaret “assists in passive stack ventilation, contributing to the sustainable features of the building.” Mosques that have been repurposed (frequently by community members themselves, such as the Imadul Islam in Toronto (Fig.5), are also sites for further study, as they disclose the varying economic realities Muslim communities face.

Newer Muslim centres such as the **Noor Cultural Centre** (Fig.6) are outright challenging the conventions of mosque architecture and shifting the religious paradigms of ritual practice. The former Japanese Cultural Centre was built in 1963 by famed architect Raymond Moriyama, and in 2001 philanthropist Hassanali Lakhani purchased the building to transform into a meeting place for Muslims of all denominations. During time for prayers, men and women stand side-by-side: notably, “women can sing the call to prayer or give a pre-prayer sermon, but the line not yet crossed is to have a woman serve as an imam” (Mossman 2016). Since its opening, the groundbreaking approach of the Noor Cultural Centre has spurred the establishment of additional inclusive congregational mosques such as the **el-Tawhid Juma Circle** which is a “gender-equal, LGBTQI2S affirming, mosque, that is welcoming of everyone regardless of sexual orientation, gender, sexual identity, or faith background.”

Outreach within and outside Muslim communities needs to continue in order to bridge disparate and uneven knowledge on Islamic practices in Canada. For rather than being seen as an integral part of Canada’s multicultural society, Muslims are increasingly regarded a homogenous, racialized community, one that is at odds with Canadian values, especially in terms of integration and citizenship

(Moghissi, et al. 2009, 16). Canadian mosques have been at the heart of these debates. This can be seen in the veiled arguments made against the establishment of mosques—among the most common are complaints about the appropriateness of the mosques location, the subsequent inadequate access to parking for local residents, decreased property values, increased local traffic and so on. I would argue that such responses show how deeply issues of belonging are associated with and communicated through built-forms. The establishment of a mosque presents a disruption of Euro-Canadian settler architecture and points to changes of accepted religious practices in Canada.

As Muslim communities continue to grow and build mosques, the buildings' heterogeneous nature and the ways in which they reveal ideological assumptions will need to be further documented. The study of Islamic architectural expressions in Canada has the potential to unravel the Islamophobic formulations of Muslim life that have shaped its spaces and their construction thus far. *Muqarnas: Intersections of Islamic Architecture* attempted to pose questions about the place for mosques in contemporary life. Reflecting on the exhibition today my questions persist, making it clear that more needs to be done to include the mosque in visions of Canadian cities and society. Here I offer the same conclusion as in the original exhibition essay:

The place and character of the diasporic mosque continues to illuminate how identity is inscribed in new settings and how identity itself can change. *Muqarnas: Intersections of Islamic Architecture* shows how this is a dynamic time for Muslims in Canada and throughout North America, as the possibilities for new sacred spaces are contested and negotiated from both within and outside the community. (Kurd 2006)

BIBLIOGRAPHY

BBC. "Swiss Voters back ban on minarets." November 29, 2009. <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/8385069.stm>.

CBC News. "Contentious Mississauga mosque re-zoning approved at council." September 22, 2015. <http://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/toronto/contentious-mississauga-mosque-re-zoning-approved-at-council-1.3238236>.

Dodds, Jerrilynn D. *New York Masjid / Mosques Of New York*. New York: powerHouse books, 2002.

Fox News. "Justice Department Wades Into Tennessee Mosque Controversy on Side of Islam." October 18, 2010. <http://www.foxnews.com/politics/2010/10/18/justice-department-wades-tennessee-mosque-controversy-islam/>.

Kurd, Nadia. *Muqarnas: Intersections of Contemporary Islamic Architecture*. Toronto: SAVAC, 2006.

Moghissi, Haideh, Saeed Rahnema, and Mark J. Goodman. *Diaspora by design: Muslims in Canada and beyond*. Toronto; Buffalo, NY: University of Toronto Press, 2009.

Mossman, Matt. "Mosque Makeovers: Reimagining a Sacred Space." *The Walrus*. September 12, 2012. <https://thewalrus.ca/mosque-makeovers-mossman/>.

Noor Cultural Centre website. http://www.noorculturalcentre.ca/?page_id=24. Accessed May 25, 2016.

Petersen, Andrew. *Dictionary of Islamic architecture*. London; New York: Routledge, 1996.

Sirhandi, Marcella. "In Memoriam: Lubna Agha – Artist in White." *Islamic Arts Magazine*. May, 2012. http://islamicartsmagazine.com/magazine/view/in_memoriam_lubna_gha_artist_in_white/.

Studio Senbel website. <http://www.studiosenbel.com/projects/prince-george-islamic-centre>. Accessed May 23, 2016.

Nadia Kurd

is a curator and art historian with a PhD in art history from McGill University. Her dissertation examined mosque architecture in North America. In addition to working at arts organizations such as the South Asian Visual Arts Centre, Ontario Association of Art Galleries and the Prison Arts Foundation, Nadia is currently the Curator of the Thunder Bay Art Gallery where her focus is on community engagement and emerging artists in Northwestern Ontario.

