



Gallery Sumukha

Presents

## Memory, Roots & Desires

A Group Show

Pushpamala N  
Ravikumar Kashi  
Ravinder Reddy  
Riyas Komu  
Shanthamani M  
Vivek Vilasini

Preview: 7th December 2022

6:00pm - 9:00pm

on view till 14th January 2023

Mon-Sat, 11:00am - 6:00pm

Celebrating the Opening of Museum of Art & Photography (MAP)

Gallery Sumukha

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# 'Memory, Roots & Desires'

## *Apparitions of Time*

Six artists, six visions - all converging upon our world and times, our past and present. It is a virtual congregation of oneiric, mythic and historical presences - conjured, invoked, provoked and called upon to witness, interrogate, contemplate and converse.

In an age of flux and flows, uncertainties and turbulences, art turns into assertive and introspective acts of capture, assemblage, crossover and juxtapositions: icons, figures, ideas and forms transmigrate, morph and coalesce. These journeys through hi/stories of the nation, people and art, conjure images that mix temporalities, generations and mediums, probing, shifting and mixing positions of contemplation, points of action, junctures of conversation. Deeply rooted in the collective unconscious, they are sometimes explicit, direct and belligerent, other times, subtle, liminal and subterranean. These figurations easily move between the physical and the material, concrete and abstract, memory and fact, contemplation and action. The apparition of political icons merge, the artist transmigrates through iconic images from the history of art, son enters into pensive conversations with his father, bodies flaunt striking poses, the mythic figures in splendid attire congregate at the corridors. Lithographic divinities come to life, materials speak in abstract terms, history smiles and reminds, bodies celebrate the spirit of life and freedom.

Time becomes malleable and soluble, iterations spin strange spirals of being, opening up new tangents of imagination, lives and dreams to be...

Dr. C. S. Venkiteswaran  
*Film Historian & Art Critic*  
2022



## Pushpamala N

*Bharat Bhiksha (2018)*

(after 1878-1880 calendar print by Calcutta Art Studio)

Concept, direction and production : Pushpamala N

Photography: Clay Kelton

Cast: Shreelata Rao Seshadri, Pushpamala N and Ranna Nandesha

Giclee print

Size: 44 × 59 inches

According to scholar Christopher Pinney, the Bharat Bhiksha image is the oldest found printed image of the nation. We find a suffering old crone handing over a young male child to the care of a crowned and sceptered Britannia. In the early years of the freedom struggle there was the idea that the country had become too old and decrepit and there was a need for a new India. Gandhi's newspaper at the beginning of the last century was in fact named 'Young India' with the aim of working towards a resurgent nation.

## Pushpamala N

*Kichaka - Sairandhri (2013)*

(after 1890 oil painting by Raja Ravi Varma)

Concept, direction and production : Pushpamala N

Photography: Clay Kelton

Cast: Cop Shiva and Pushpamala N

Giclee print

Size: 41 × 55 inches

Rape narratives figure prominently as national allegories in the literature of the colonial period. Plays and poems in the late nineteenth century and early twentieth century are full of stories of mythological heroines being abducted or violated by demons and villains, where the heroine becomes the figure of the nation whose honour is being threatened by colonial oppressors. The mythological subjects acted as a code to get by the vigilant British censorship.

Ravi Varma made a series of paintings on the subject of Kichaka Vadha (The Killing of Kichaka) which is an episode from the Mahabharata, in which the Kirata prince Kichaka tries to violate the modesty of Draupadi while she is disguised as an attendant (sairandhri) in the thirteenth year of exile of the Pandavas in the city of Viratnagar. Her husband Bhima decides to kill him secretly and saves her. The Marathi play Kichaka Vadh by Krishnaji Prabhakar Khadilkar, the editor of the nationalist newspaper Kesari after Tilak's conviction on sedition charges, opened in 1907 and ran to 'houses packed with large native audiences' till it was banned in 1910. A contemporary newspaper records that though nothing was stated, everyone in the audience knew that Kichaka was really intended to be the Viceroy Lord Curzon, that Draupadi is India, that Yudhisthira is the Moderate and Bhima the Extremist party.

Reproductions of Ravi Varma's series of paintings on the episode were circulating widely at the same time in the form of chromolithographs and postcards. The postcard version of Ravi Varma's painting " Kichaka- Sairandhri" c 1910 had a caption on the reverse: "Kichaka in order to satisfy his lustful desire is encroaching upon Sairandhri's modesty".



## Pushpamala N

*Bharat Mata ( 2005-2018)*

(After 1905 painting by A.N Tagore)

Concept, direction and production : Pushpamala N

Photography: Navroze Contractor

Cast: Pushpamala N

Giclee print

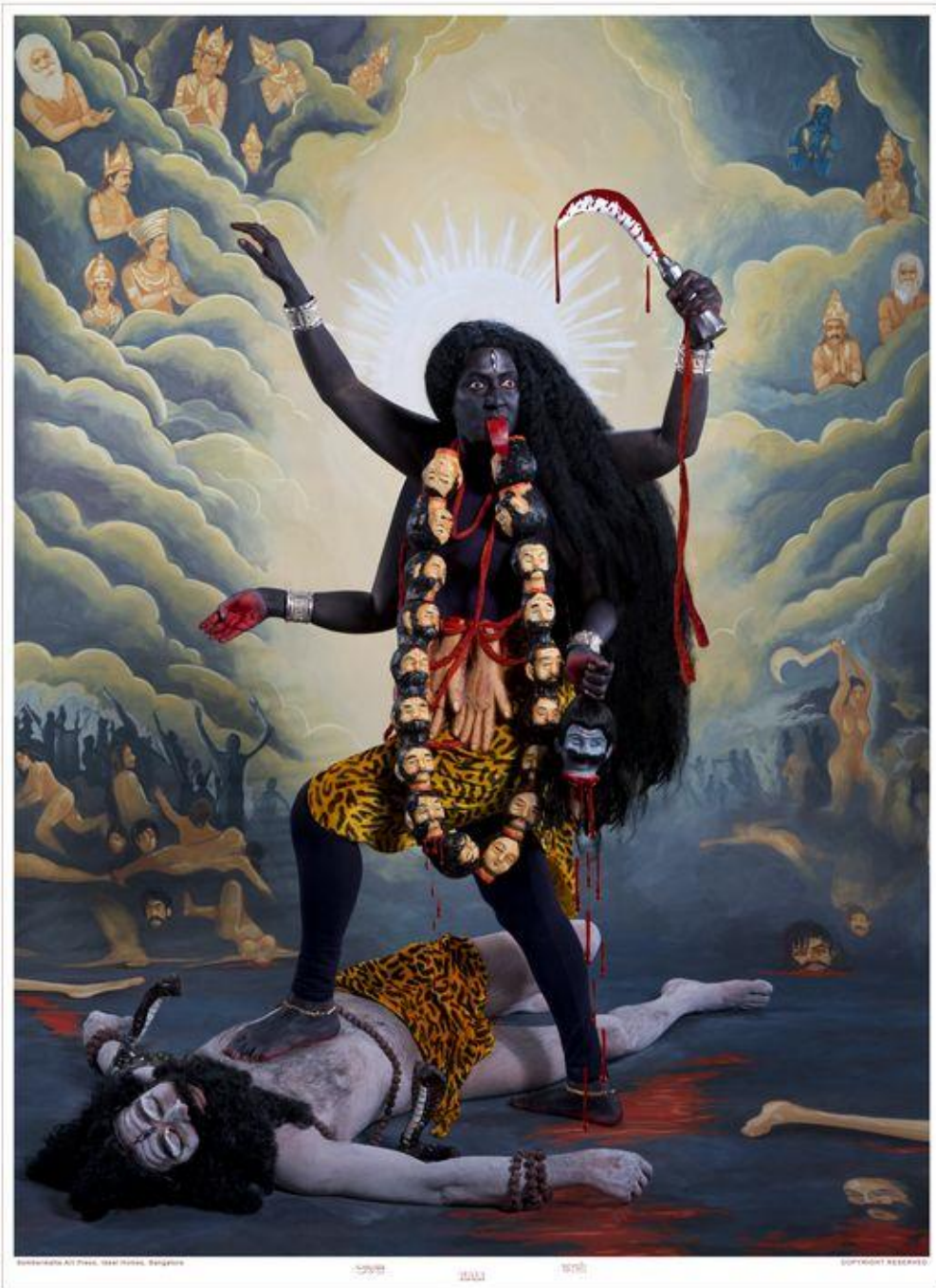
Size: 20 x 30 inches

This is a recreation of the iconic watercolour painting by Abanindranath Tagore painted after the Partition of Bengal along communal lines by the British in 1905, at the height of the Swadeshi Movement. Originally called Banga Mata to represent a united Bengal, it was later changed to Bharat Mata as a representation of India. The image depicts the nation as a Vaishnava ascetic dressed in saffron, floating over a lotus pond holding a sheaf of paddy, a piece of white cloth, a palm leaf manuscript and a rudraksha mala in her four hands, representing food, clothing, education and spirituality.

The idea of Bharat Mata first found mention in Bankim Chandra Chattopadhyay's 'Bande Mataram' composed in 1875 and used in his famous novel Ananda Math in 1882 which strongly influenced AN Tagore. . The novel was set in the backdrop of the Bengal famine of 1770 and was among the earliest works of fiction with an anti- colonial theme. In Anandamath, the author for the first time referred to the nation as Mata or Mother, evoking the powerful force of Shakti and merging it with a deep love for the motherland. Bande Mataram later became the slogan of nationalism.

Through the efforts of Sister Nivedita, this iconic image of Bharat Mata was reprinted in thousands of protesters' posters and banners across Bengal The idea turned out to be so powerful that by 1909, just four years after Abanindranath Tagore painted Bharat Mata, his work had spread across India. Swadeshi protestors in Uttar Pradesh carried out processions of Bharat Mata images to the chants of 'Bharat Mata ki Jai'. In Madras, the noted Tamil Poet, Subramanya Bharati, a disciple of Sister Nivedita, popularised it through his works. Similarly, Lokmanya Tilak and Lala Lajpat Rai popularised the idea in Bombay and Punjab. Images of Abanindranath's Bharat Mata could be seen across the country.





## Pushpamala N

*Kali (2014)*

(after 1908 Calcutta Art Studio print)

Concept, direction and production : Pushpamala N

Photography : Clay Kelton

Cast: Umesh Maddanahalli and Pushpamala N

Giclee print

Size: 41 × 56 inches

Kali is a recreation of a 1908 calendar print from the Calcutta Art Studio, advertising the East India Cigarette Manufacturing Company. Veiled images were used for nationalist propaganda in British colonial times to circumvent censorship and circulated widely in the form of advertisements, calendar pictures and postcards. This apocalyptic image of Kali uses the picturization of the Biblical Last Judgment from Christian art, with the upper half showing the gods and the lower part depicting sinners behind the figure of the rampaging goddess on the body of an ash-smeared Siva. The dark Kali dancing on a white Siva was a sly metaphor for the Indian nation defeating the white masters...

## Pushpamala N

*Motherland ( 2009-2018)*

(after 1992 calendar painting by Jesudoss)

Concept, direction and production : Pushpamala N

Photography: Clay Kelton

Cast: Pushpamala N

Giclee print

Size: 32 × 41 inches

Motherland is a recreation of a 1992 calendar painting by the artist Jesudoss. It pictures the nation as the militant Hindu goddess Durga with her lion mount against a flowing cartographic representation. This has become a very popular contemporary representation used in political rallies.



## Pushpamala N

*Woman with Chakki (2018)*

(after 1999 watercolour painting by Atul Dodiya)

Concept, direction and production : Pushpamala N

Photography: Clay Kelton

Cast: Pushpamala

Giclee print

Size: 37 × 56 inches

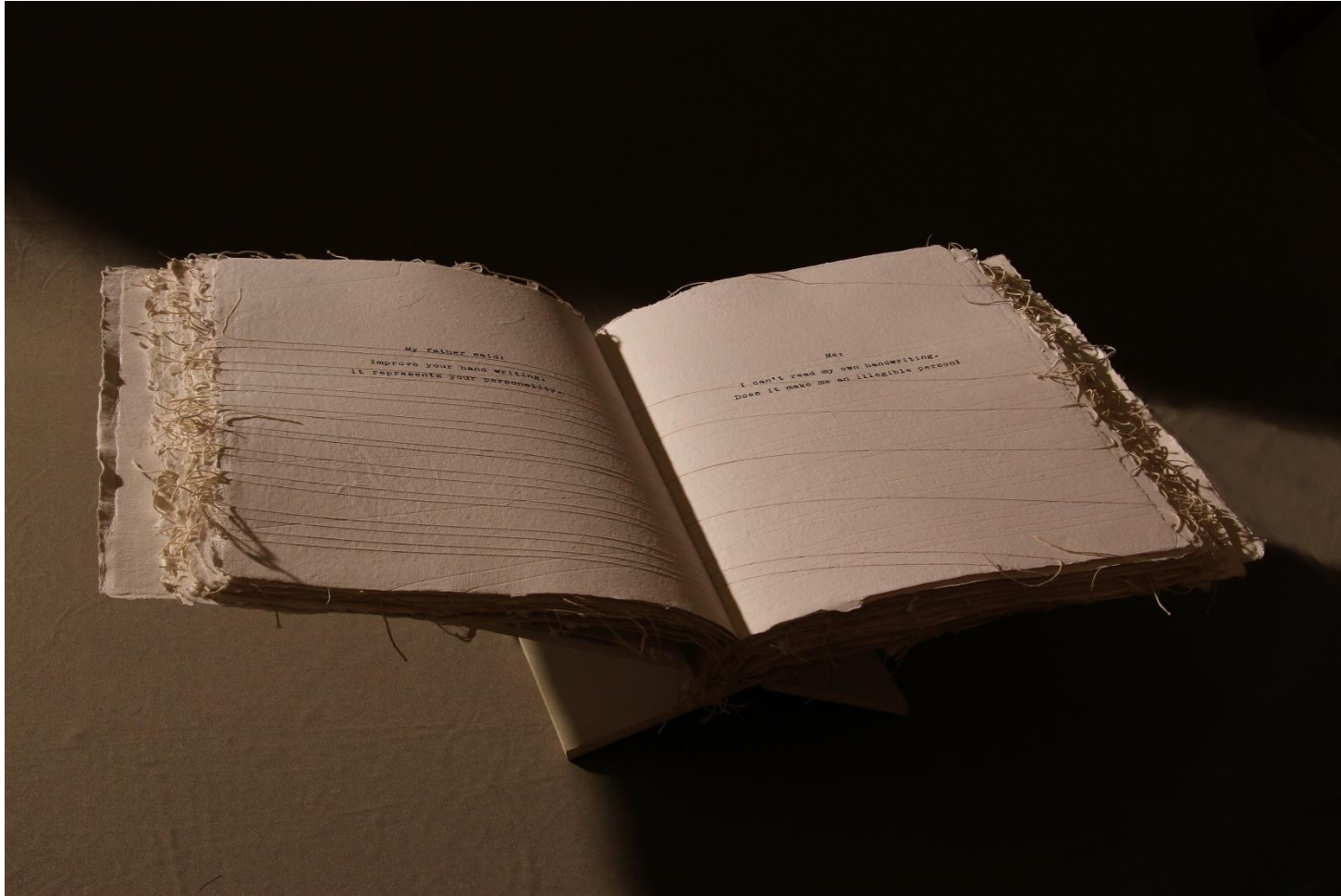
*Woman with Chakki* is an elaborate recreation of an original water colour painting by the contemporary artist Atul Dodiya. A rustic woman laboring over a grinding stone- chakki- is a quintessential image of rural India, famously celebrated in the famous scene in the film *Mother India* which shows Nargis bending over, grinding wheat. Dodiya makes his woman into a skeletal hag, doomed forever like Sisyphus, into this labour,. The artist dons full body paint and mask to play the *Woman with Chakki* against a painted backdrop in a photographic recreation of the work.





## Ravikumar Kashi

I have been engaged in making artists books for more than two decades now. Each book becomes an exploration of an idea.



### *'My Father Said'*

Text Transfer on handmade paper with wooden stand  
19 x16 x 3.5 inches (when closed)  
92 pages  
Unique book

I had a challenging relationship with my father. Though we loved and cared for each other, our political and religious world views were different. This work reflects that conflict, and the struggle to maintain our relationship. My Father Said is an artists' book that brings together our two viewpoints. Through these pages, two parallel narratives that converge and diverge at various points unfold.

One set of texts seen here is my perception of what he said verbally and non-verbally, and how I responded to them. The second set, written in Kannada, is from my father's diary, in which he had recorded his views about me. The sheets themselves were formed using white cloth belonging to my father, with sacred thread (janivara/janeu) sandwiched between them.



## Ravikumar Kashi

*'Everything He Touched'*

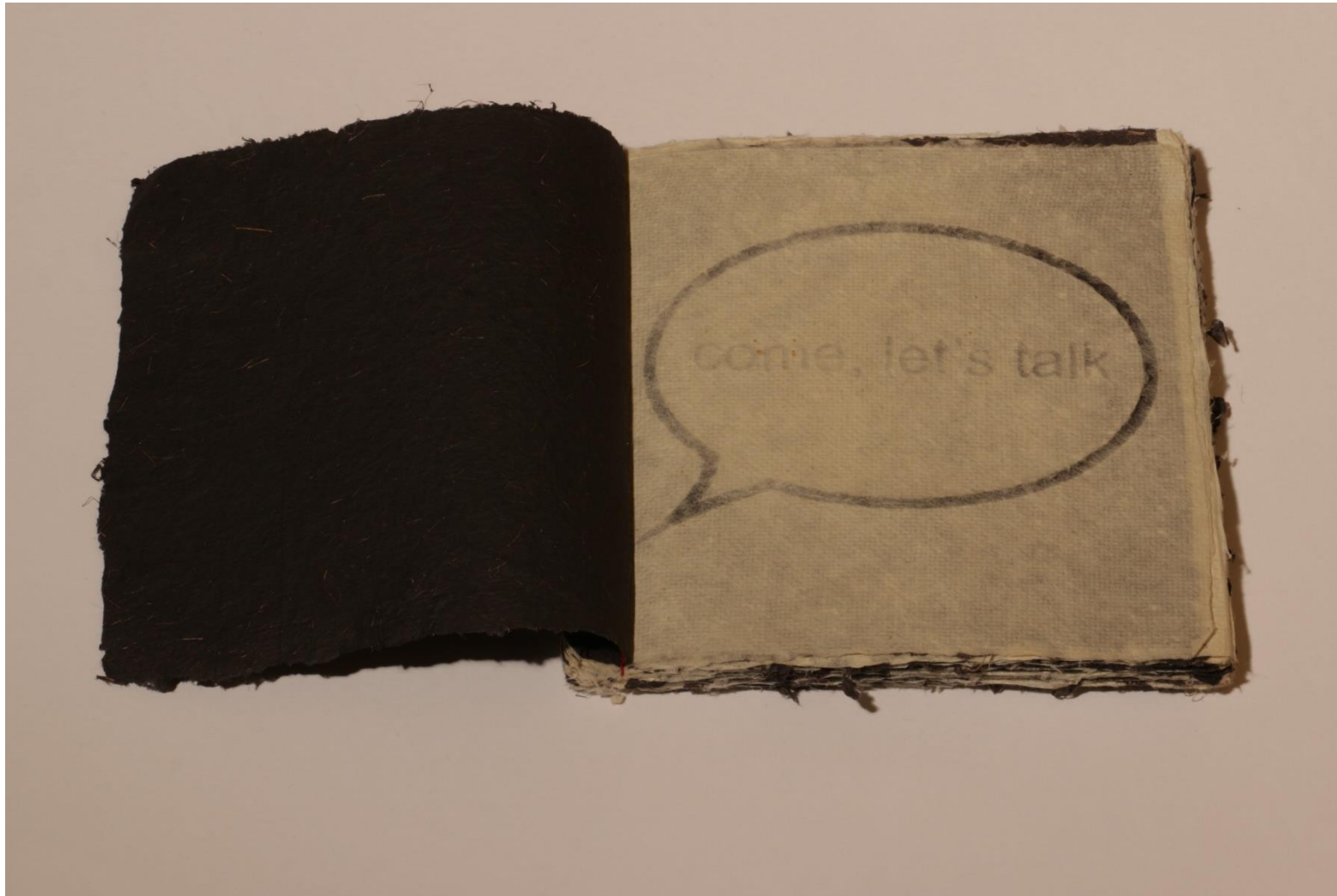
Conte, ink and text transfer on stained Hanji paper

14.4 x 12 inches (when closed)

32 pages

Unique book

Our generation understands Bapu, as he was fondly called, only through other people's narratives, books, photos, the places he visited or resided, and the objects used or touched by him. He has been transformed into a show piece rather than a living spirit who is followed for his ideas. *Everything He Touched* is a part of my ongoing engagement with Mahatma Gandhi as a person and an idea – through painting, photography, and paper works. In this work I have used study material from Gandhi museums to embody the sense of fetish that grips them. Objects he touched live a hallowed life there, and serve as a substitute for his personality in the national imagination. At the same time, I wanted to incorporate an undertone of decay into the narrative, representing both the passage of time as well as the idea of deconstruction. This book has been created with Hanji paper from South Korea, which is one of the most resilient handmade papers produced, often surviving several hundred years. Though the book looks old, it will last; therein lies a tension, and a reflection of Gandhi's legacy.



## ***Ravikumar Kashi***

*'Cross Talk'*

Water mark in paper made from Daphne fiber

10 x 10 inches (when closed)

48 pages

Unique book

Cross Talk is about how we communicate at the individual and societal level – when the actual meaning of what is being said is lost in prejudiced hearing, and misunderstandings arise. It is also about how one image can suggest more than one meaning to the viewer, depending upon their background and approaching mindset. At the heart of this work lies this subjectivity of what words and images can mean.



**Ravinder Reddy**

*'Standing Radha in blue'*  
Painted on polyester resin fibreglass  
70.5 x 37.5 x 21 inches  
2016 - 2017



## Riyas Komu

*Eighteen Steps to Nasreen Mohamedi - II, III, IV (2022)*

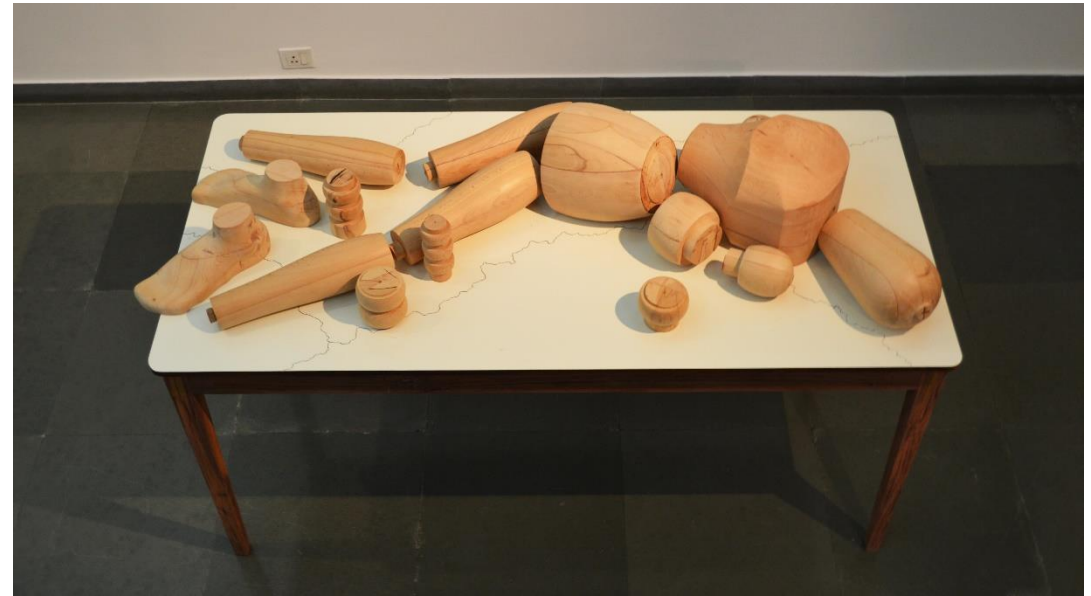
Wood , Metal & Automotive paint

*Eighteen Steps to Nasreen Mohamedi* seeks to prise open the intertwined and submerged pasts now ominously and violently being set for closure. It is an attempt to retrieve from the flux of time, memories and the ebb and tides of the multilayered culture that we are and ought to be.

These works reflect the interest in integrating into sculpture the core spirit of aesthetic forms through a precise minimal approach - a process of working in and through the material to arrive at the essence of a shape created in response to our lived present, one that is driven by the Holy Shiver, by the chaotic impulse to hurt and divide.

Through the ways of engagements with form and material - geometric shapes, kufic script and slow process wood - sought creativity through contemplative modes and means in art making, these works place the artist's body as a historic site - a space for thinking and making, of knowledge and experimentations, of the experience of chaos and creation. They are attempts to salvage the memories of art, lineages of modernism, traditions of craft, to open fresh conversations and exciting possibilities.







## Shanthamani M

*'Venus'*

Wood charcoal with Cotton rag pulp and Carbon fibre

77 x 31 x 33 inches

2010





## Shanthamani M

*'Exotic Entertainment'*  
Wood charcoal with Cotton rag pulp & Silicon rubber  
52 x 31 x 27 inches  
2021



## Vivek Vilasini

*"...and for those who sing their national anthem in somebody else's mother tongue (after 'Death of Socrates' by Jacques Louis David)"*

Archival print on Hahnemuhle canvas

91 x 162 inches (Triptych)

2021



## VIVEK VILASINI

*'What my lover said to her husband's concubine (Komal)'*

Archival print on Hahnemuhle canvas

72 x 54 inches

2022



**VIVEK VILASINI**

*'What my lover said to her husband's concubine (Shuddha)'*

Archival print on Hahnemuhle canvas

72 x 54 inches

2022



## **VIVEK VILASINI**

*'What my lover said to her husband's concubine (Teevra)'*  
Archival print on Hahnemuhle canvas  
72 x 54 inches  
2022

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