

PRESS NOTE

Photography Exhibition

**UNSEALED
CHAMBER**
THE TRANSIENT IMAGE



Image Credit: Arpan Mukherjee, From the series *Gola Vora Dhan*, 2013-2021

Artists:
**Aparna Nori, Arpan Mukherjee,
Indu Antony and Philippe Calia**

Curated by
Rahaab Allana

Opening: Thursday, 14th October, 2021, Time: 6.00 pm. On view until 3rd November

Venue: Galerie Romain Rolland, Alliance Française de Delhi, 72 Lodi Estate, New Delhi

Introduction:

This year marks the 195th anniversary of the first successful experimentation with photography as a novel form, and patented as a new invention by the French practitioner Joseph Nicéphore Niépce in 1827. In honour of this occasion, *Unsealed Chamber: The Transient Image* is presenting four contemporary artists working with both analogue and digital methods, reacting to vital transformations following a year of introspection in the course of the pandemic.

According to the Ambassador, H.E. Mr Emmanuel Lenain, Ambassador of France to India: *“The birthplace of photography, France has always supported the practice and development of photography across the world, including India. For many years, this medium has contributed to the cultural relationship between our two countries, and ‘Unsealed Chamber: Transient Image’ is one of many examples of these special ties. On the 195th anniversary of French practitioner Joseph Nicéphore Niépce’s invention of photography, it’s even more empowering to see the artworks of four renowned artists honouring the earlier techniques of printmaking by using these as well as contemporary digital methods that have revolutionised the world we are living in. Photography is an evolving art, which flows with time and continues to hold surprises for us.”*

Through newly made productions, Aparna Nori, Arpan Mukherjee, Indu Antony and Philippe Calia explore a sense of creative hybridity by melding both manual techniques and new media to reflect on questions of self, society, ecology and representation. With a focus on ongoing social concerns, sometimes as subjects within their own images, they make crucial contributions to the ever-growing cultural history of the craft of image-making and identity construction.

The exhibition seeks to exhume what we mean by an ‘original’ form in art, and its appropriation, manipulation and evolution in the present as a transient object. Each artist engages with an intensive reworking of found or new material as a means to unpack his or her inner lives, using speculative means – montage and fiction. Working with multiple surfaces, including glass, paper and cloth, they undertake an introspective journey to different paradigms of reality, prompted by a planetary consciousness of our common predicaments since the pandemic, and hence make us think about shifting interpersonal exchanges.

Unsealed Chamber further considers our place in the world – our collective role as researchers, surveyors, archivists, and pedagogues, with each individual contributing to an ever-enlarging knowledge system. Artist Philippe Calia approaches the planet via Google Earth satellite images, scrutinising sites which are mined for developing camera hardware on mobile devices. Through still and moving images, he explores the destruction of the Earth’s surface, but also ponders the idea of reconstruction through core memories from his childhood seen in a video installation. The very texture of his images draws us to the works of Aparna Nori, who performs acts of inscription – both as subject and spectator, creating salt paper prints of her own body and a recorded projection on draped muslin.

The very act of staging a life, creating connections between personal history, migration, dislocation as well as anchoring oneself to a sense of impermanence, emerges in the work of Arpan Mukherjee. His longer practice of printmaking in Shantiniketan compels him to use different vintage photographic processes to communicate a sense of change as well as leave behind an archival trace. The archive as an ever-growing entity includes what we know but also what we have not seen. Hence, the works of Indu Antony, part of the Bangalore-based artist collective, Kanike, then investigate and trace images of anonymous women found in heaps of discarded material. She reclaims their place in world as active, engaged participants with agency, but uses a photographic technique that will cause the images to fade in time.

About the Artists

Aparna Nori / Nalla Pilla



Aparna Nori (b. 1975) is a photo-based artist based in Bangalore, India. She has a Master's degree in Documentary filmmaking and works on commissioned assignments with magazines and creative teams. Aparna uses photography as a medium to explore ideas of memory, nostalgia, interpersonal connections and the connections with an environment around her. She includes diverse forms of expression in her practice with alternative photographic processes, moving images and bookmaking. In 2019, along with three other artists, Indu Anthony, Krishanu Chatterjee, Vivek Muthuramalingam, she conceptualised "Kānike", a collective and space intended for the practice of contemporary art with an intention to foster creativity

and shape new directions in learning.

Arpan Mukherjee / Gola Vora Dhan



Arpan Mukherjee (b. 1977) has studied BFA and MFA in printmaking from Visva-Bharati University, Santiniketan. Immediate surroundings and personal interpretation of daily life are the basis of his work. He questions and critiques the discrimination, political and economic state of society through research and documentation. For his works which are mostly process-based, he uses various 19th-century photographic mediums. Arpan is among the very few artists who work with 'alternative photography' in the country and has developed a practice-based research studio of historical photographic process in Santiniketan, named 'Studio Goppo'. He has

participated in a number of exhibitions and workshops, and has given lectures on photographic history as well as his own works, both nationally and internationally. In 2010, he was awarded 'Photographer of the year' from *Better Photography*. Presently he is teaching as Associate Professor in the department of printmaking at Visva-Bharati University.

Indu Antony / Ivar



Indu Antony (b. 1982) is a transdisciplinary artist based out of Bangalore and Kerala, India. She is known to explore tonalities of inward discussions that later bursts out into communal spaces. Her work primarily revolves around the notion of spaces and their intangible character in relation to the gendered body as a site of representation by understanding feministic stands which gives way to performances and installations. Indu has participated in numerous group and solo exhibitions in India and abroad including Feminist Art Collective, Canada (2020); House17, Luxembourg (2019); Jimei x Arles Festival, China (2019); Chennai Photo Biennale (2019); Serendipity Arts Festival, Goa (2018); Kochi-Muziris Biennale

Collateral, (2018-19); FotoFest Biennale, Houston (2018); Queer Asia Photo Exhibition, London (2017) and Photo Kathmandu, Nepal (2015). She has been the recipient of the Public Art grant from the Foundation for Indian Contemporary Art (FICA) and the Toto Funds the Arts (TFA) award for photography.

Philippe Calia / The Shape of Clouds



Philippe Calia (b.1985) is an artist, photographer and filmmaker, currently based in Bangalore. For the past ten years, he has been commissioned by various agencies, cultural and media institutions. His photo and video works have been featured in publications such as *The New Yorker*, *Le Monde* or *The Indian Quarterly*. Philippe's engagement with the visual arts also takes shape through writing, education and curation. Since 2013, he has been collaborating with PIX as a photo editor. Between 2015 and 2020, he co-managed BIND, a platform for photography with a public photobook

library in Mumbai. His personal work has been awarded, exhibited internationally, and is held in private collections. Some of his recent Honors and Awards include: Honorable Mention, Dorothea Lange–Paul Taylor Prize (2020); Finalist, Prix de la Fondation Jean-Luc Lagardère (photographie) (2020); Laureate, “Writing and Emerging Forms” Grant - Civil Society of Multimedia's Authors, Paris (2020) and Laureate, Visual Arts Commission - Cité Internationale des Arts, Paris (2019).

Curator



Rahaab Allana is Curator, Alkazi Foundation for the Arts; Fellow of the Royal Asiatic Society (London) and was previously, Honorary Research Associate at University College, London. He is on the board of the Trans-Asia Photography (TAP) Review; Founding Editor of PIX; Founder of the ASAP/art app; and has recently guest-edited Aperture Magazine's 2021 summer issue on Delhi.

Scenographer



Sukanya Baskar is a curator, writer and researcher. Her work has developed closely alongside archives, with a focus on photography and moving image. Previously, she was working with PIX magazine as a Researcher and Design Consultant. As a part of her graduation project she worked on the photobook, 'Witness: Kashmir 1986–2016 / Nine Photographers' (Yaarbal Books, 2017) edited by Sanjay Kak, featured on the *New York Times*' list of Best of photobooks of 2017. She is a graduate from the National Institute of Design, Ahmedabad and the

Center for Curatorial Studies, (CCS) at Bard College, New York.

Participating institutions

The French Institute in India:

The French Institute in India (IFI) is the cultural, scientific and educational department of the Embassy of France in India, which facilitates academic and scientific exchanges and promotes the French language and artistic and cultural partnerships.

Alliance Française

Alliance Française aims to promote the French language, showcase French culture and develop cultural ties between France and India through its robust network in 16 cities. Alliance Française in India works closely with Indian partner organizations as well as the French Embassy and the French Institute in India.

The Alkazi Foundation for the Arts:

The Alkazi Foundation for the Arts (AFA) is a registered charitable trust, dedicated to the preservation of the cultural history of India through extensive research on photography. Housed in the foundation is the private collection of Ebrahim Alkazi, known as the Alkazi Collection of Photography, which comprises works in the form of photographic albums, single prints, paper negatives and glass-plate negatives, painted photographs, and photo-postcards. The collection is particularly strong in areas such as archaeology, architectural history, the urban development of colonial cities, military studies, anthropological studies and topography.

Photographs available at -

https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1ymAPvRNMk5D8CmIULzm7m_FEjh0R_kzV?usp=s_haring

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