

Given Time: *The Gift and Its Offerings*

Curated by Dr. Arshiya Lokhandwala

August 27, 2016 - February 14, 2017



Anita Dube
Anju Dodiya
Atul Dodiya
Dayanita Singh
Jitish Kallat
Justin Ponmany
Nikhil Chopra
Prajakta Potnis
Raqs Media Collective
Shaurya Kumar
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Given Time: The Gift and its Offerings

Curator's note:

Given Time: The Gift and its Offerings is an invitation to twelve artists' to unpack ideas of the gift. The gift normally understood as a simple exchange from one individual to the other; one is not aware of its larger contractual obligations, which are already in place once we receive or accept the gift. Every society has different practices in regards the exchanges not exclusively of goods and wealth, real and personal property, and things of economic value, but also the exchange of military favors, ritual and hospitality.

An area of much scholarship by many historians including anthropologist Marcel Mauss who suggests: the gift giving not as a voluntary action where a person gives to another person, but that the person receiving a gift is obligated, as being the recipient to involuntarily reciprocate the same, emphasizes the importance of obligation in this act of returning a gift. The exhibition title pays homage to philosopher Jacques Derrida's book *Given Time 1: Counterfeit Money* in addition highlighting "the interval" between giving and receiving a gift as playing a critical part in the exchange of gift and counter-gift (return-gift), suggesting that the gift not only "gives time," but implies the moment within which it must be returned to the gift giver making the gift according to him impossible. The reciprocity of the gift, its return or exchange, annuls the gift. Is it possible for us to consider the gift devoid of reciprocity, return, exchange, or debt is what the exhibition aspires to contemplate.





Given Time: The Gift and its Offerings
Gallery view



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Gallery view



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Gallery view



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Gallery view



ANITA DUBE

Stone Mountain, 2016
365 Stones, velvet, glass, aluminum
Variable

The hardest, the most beautiful gift one can give or be given: **Aazaadi**. It hurts as it pleasures. A stone is its primary unit. Once held in the hand – luminous – nothing less will do.

It becomes a burning mountain bathed in the embers of the rising and setting sun. Near, like the breath of a loved one I want to grasp in astonishment.

Then it recedes, keeps receding, distant, arrogant like God.
Vishnu – the face of the state? Its many avatars, slippery: seductive as Mohini, cruel as Narasimha, aloof as Shiva.

In my hand it transforms into a fabulous stone; many stones big and small, young and old, each decked out like a bride or groom, in perhaps a desperate gasp of life.

A red resplendent mountain rises.



ANITA DUBE, *Stone Mountain*, 2016
365 Stones, velvet, glass, aluminum
Size: Variable

ANJU DODIYA

Touching Birds – I, 2007

Hand colored screen print on stencil washed and pigment stained STPI cotton paper and digital printed kozo paper inclusion with acrylic, watercolor, gold leaf, gampi paper, epoxy resin and paper cut-outs.
66 x 51.75 inches

Fur/Foam/Fame, 2016

6 framed archival digital prints on Hahnemuehle bamboo paper, with painted fabric mounts.
22 1/8 x 17 1/8 inches each

Anju Dodiya's *Touching Birds -1, 2007* speaks of the transcendence of love and how fleeting a gift, touch is. It fills up our senses, yet, is impossible to grasp and hold forever; and people, like birds and moments quietly fly away.

Continuing the same theme, in this recent set of six works *Fur/ Foam/ Fame* Dodiya draws on Jacques Derrida's quotation referring to private monsters, overlapping it with the constant reference in her work to the inner demons of the creative mind. The compassionate touch between man and animal, and the absent demons get interchanged. The sea appears, as Hokusai's wave; and we catch a glimpse of Amrita Shergil. This is the poetic reality of touch -it is unexpected and momentary. Fur, foam, fame...all come and go. This is the gift of the tides of time.





ANJU DODIYA, *Touching Birds - I*, 2007
Hand colored screen print
on stencil washed and pigment stained STPI
cotton paper and
digital printed kozo paper inclusion
with acrylic, watercolor,
gold leaf, gampi paper, epoxy resin
and paper cut-outs. (Unique work)
66 x 51.75 inches



ANJU DODOYA, *Fur/Foam/Fame*, 2016

6 (unique) framed archival digital prints on Hahnemuehle bamboo paper, with painted fabric mounts.
22 1/8 x 17 1/8 inches each



ATUL DODIYA

Anarkali and Seventy-two Idiots, 2004-2010
72 archival digital prints on Hahnemuehle bamboo paper, and 1 archival digital print on Ilford fibre silk paper
6" x 6" inches each

In 2003 Atul Dodiya was gifted a catalogue by artist friend Krishnamachari Bose of his show 'De Curating' that contained portraits of 94 living Indian artists.

Dodiya, over a period of 6 years responded to these works choosing to revisit the portraits of his friends and colleagues giving them a quirky / ironical twist. Can the humor and wit that Dodiya offers us back considered a return gift?



ATUL DODIYA, *Anarkali and Seventy-two Idiots*, 2004 - 2010
72 archival digital prints on Hahnemuehle bamboo paper,
1 archival digital print on Ilford fibre silk paper
6" x 6" inches each



DAYANITA SINGH

The Book is The Exhibition

48" long vitrines (3), 60" vitrines (2),
72" long vitrines (2), 1 Sent A Letter Box
7 Books from inside the Sent A Letter box, each
shown inside its own vitrine.

From the very beginning, I have been making photographs to make books (Zakir Hussain, 1986). I now make books that are the exhibition as well (Museum of Chance book-object, 2014).

In the decades between, I made conventional exhibitions of framed prints on the wall because curators would insist that a book was a book and an exhibition was an exhibition. But somewhere I knew this was not so, because for me, the book was the exhibition.

In 2000, I began to write letters to friends I had travelled with, by cutting up my medium format contact sheets and pasting them into Moleskine books. I always made two copies: one that would stay with me in my Kitchen Museum and the other, for my friend. In 2006, after our travels in Calcutta, I made the 32nd such book for Gerhard Steidl. Initially he had wanted to publish all 32 books but we finally settled on a set of seven. These were published in 2007 as Sent A Letter; in a box that was made in India and shipped to Goettingen.

Sent a Letter became my first book-exhibition. I carried it with me on my travels making impromptu exhibitions in friends' homes and hotel rooms.

Thereafter, Sent a Letter became part of almost every one of my exhibitions. Its most successful showing has been in the shop window of Satram Das Jewellers on Park Street, where it has been on display since January 2008. In many ways, it is perhaps my first museum, well before Museum Bhavan (2013).

Ever since Sent a Letter went out of print, I have wanted to make a very special edition of it. With Sent a Letter Museum 2016, edition 1/3, the circle completes itself.



DAYANITA SINGH, *The Book is The Exhibition*, 2016

48" long vitrines (3), 60" vitrines long (2), 72" long vitrines (2), 1 Sent A Letter Box
7 Books from inside the Sent A Letter box, each shown inside its own vitrine.



DAYANITA SINGH

The Gift NFS, 2005/2016

Chairs book, 1 vitrine and a text

231 cm x 18 cm x 11.5 cm

Courtesy the Artist, Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum,
Steidl and Frith Street Gallery

In the solitude of the Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum's carriage house, Dayanita Singh made her first artist book for a writer friend (2002). At the time of the *Chairs* exhibition (2005, also at the Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum), she had made thirteen such books, each one created for a specific person: a private exhibition for one individual. In lieu of an exhibition catalogue, Singh decided to print an artist book in this unique intimate format. She then went on to circulate the book through an alternate channel of distribution: of the thousand books that were printed by Steidl for the exhibition, five hundred were sold at the museum and five hundred were privately distributed by Singh's distributor/friends.

Each distributor/friend was sent their own edition of ten books, which they then gifted forward through a gifting or distributing system of their choosing. The only stipulations were that the work was not to be sold and that the names of the recipients were not to be disclosed to Singh. As the book/exhibition made its way across the world along this parallel, nebulous and open-ended chain, it turned into an ongoing gift.

By the time Singh had made 32 such books, Steidl decided to print *Sent A Letter* (2007), which has since had several unique exhibition formats, recently culminating in the *Sent A Letter Museum* (2016).

This fall, Steidl will publish *Museum Bhavan* (2016), a box of ten accordion fold books. Once again a self-produced artist book, but this time each book will be unique.



DAYANITA SINGH, *The Gift NFS*, 2005/2016

Chairs book, 1 vitrine and a text

231 cm x 18 cm x 11.5 cm

Courtesy the Artist, Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum, Steidl and Frith Street Gallery



JITISH KALLAT

Rain Study (the hour of the day of the month of the season), 2016

Graphite, acrylic epoxy on Arches Paper

15 in. x 10 in x 21 pieces, 22 in. x 13 in x 4 pieces

Jitish Kallat's *Rain Study* (the hour of the day of the month of the season), much like his elemental suite of *Wind Studies*, participates in the near currents of the atmospheric to summon images that invoke the astronomical. During rain-showers, with the drawing paper held out to the sky Kallat steps outdoors. The drawing thus becomes a rainwater receptacle with constellations of descending raindrops settling on the paper. This short duration of time, measured through the artist's breath cycles are marked as BC on the drawings. Once overlaid with a spray of dark pigment and wiped dry, the resultant image invokes galaxy clusters or stellar maps of the distant universe. The drawing thus becomes a contemplative instrument that momentarily enters the flows in our localised environment, to exponentially shift orders of magnitude probing ideas of deep space, time, scale and location.

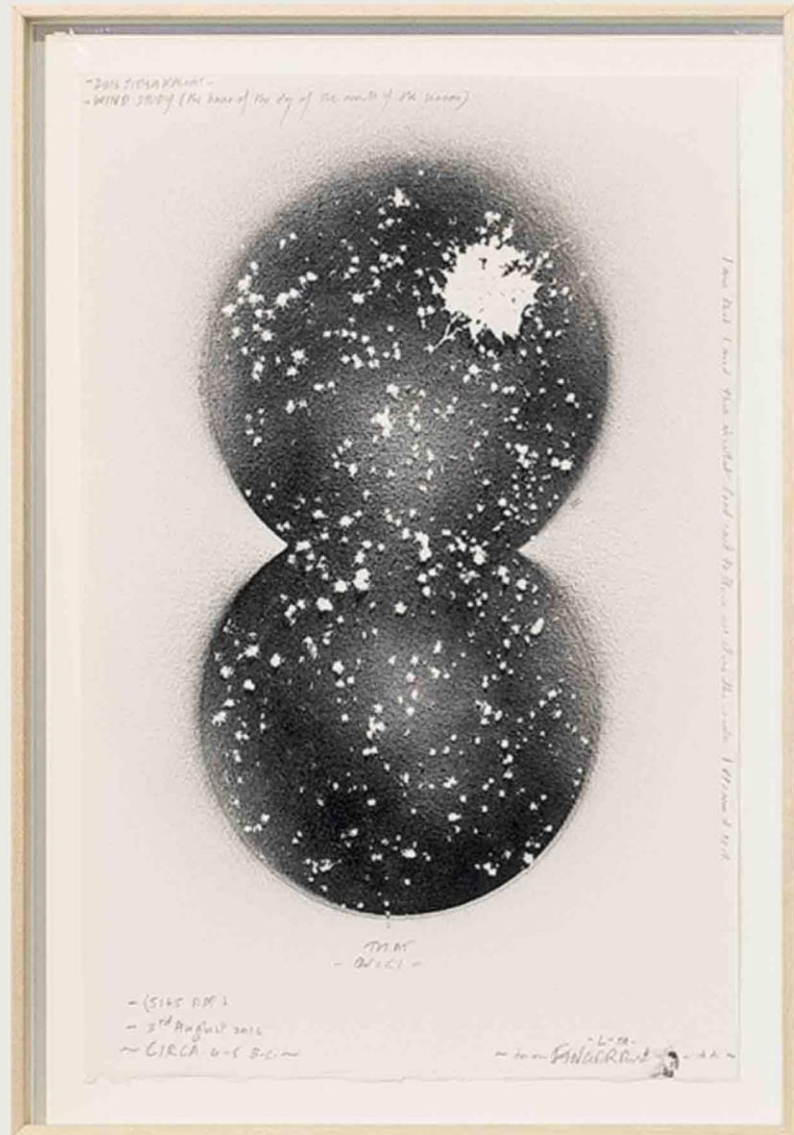
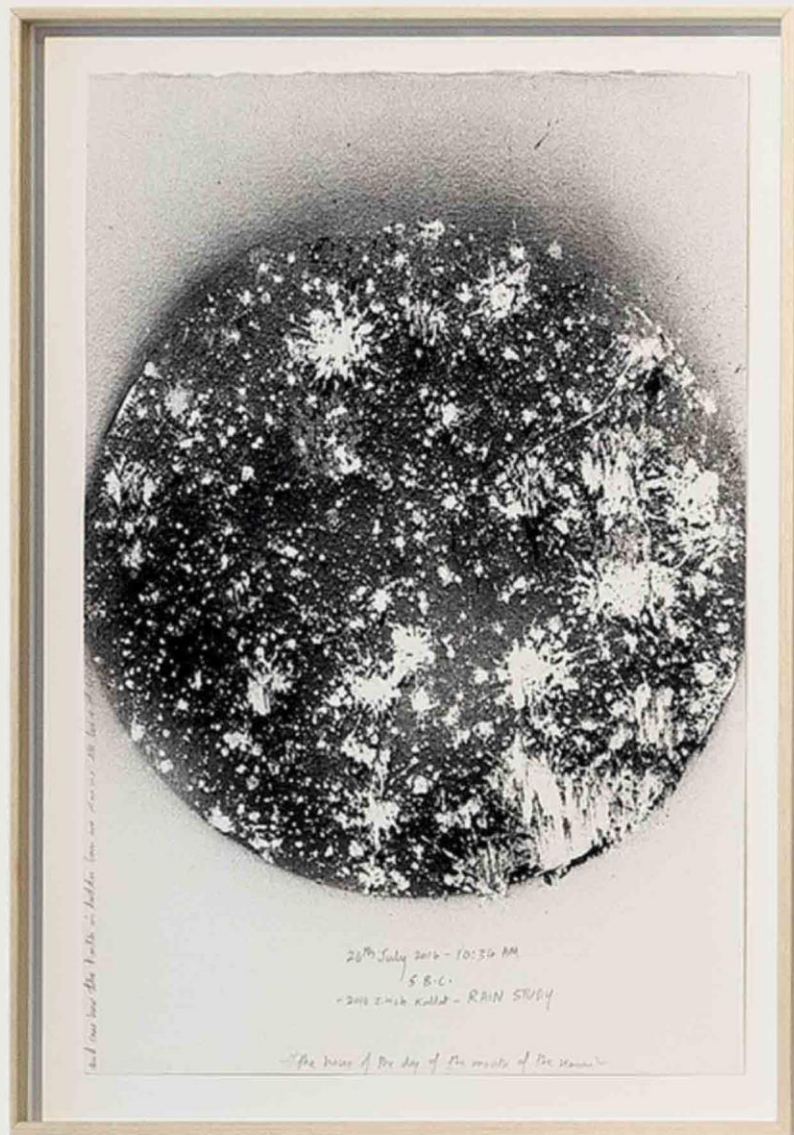
Kallat's vast oeuvre spanning painting, photography, drawing, video and sculptural installations traverse varying focal lengths and time-scales. From close details of the skin of a fruit or the brimming shirt-pocket of a passerby, it might expand to register dense people-scapes, or voyage into intergalactic vistas. Some of his works revisit history, overlaying the past onto the present citing momentous historical utterances, while others such as his *Rain Studies* contemplate the ever-transient present moment.

With '*Rain Study* (the hour of the day of the month of the season)' Jitish Kallat revisits a suite of 'rain studies' he made on thermal fax paper during the Boreal Art/Nature Residency, Laurentian Mountains of Quebec in 2002.



JITISH KALLAT, *Rain Study (the hour of the day of the month of the season)*, 2016
Graphite, acrylic epoxy on Arches Paper
15 in. x 10 in x 21 pieces

22 in. x 13 in x 4 pieces



Rain Study (the hour of the day of the month of the season), 2016
 Graphite, acrylic epoxy on Arches Paper
 15 in. x 10 in x 21 pieces



JUSTIN PONMANY

Europa Loading...

Video edition 1/3

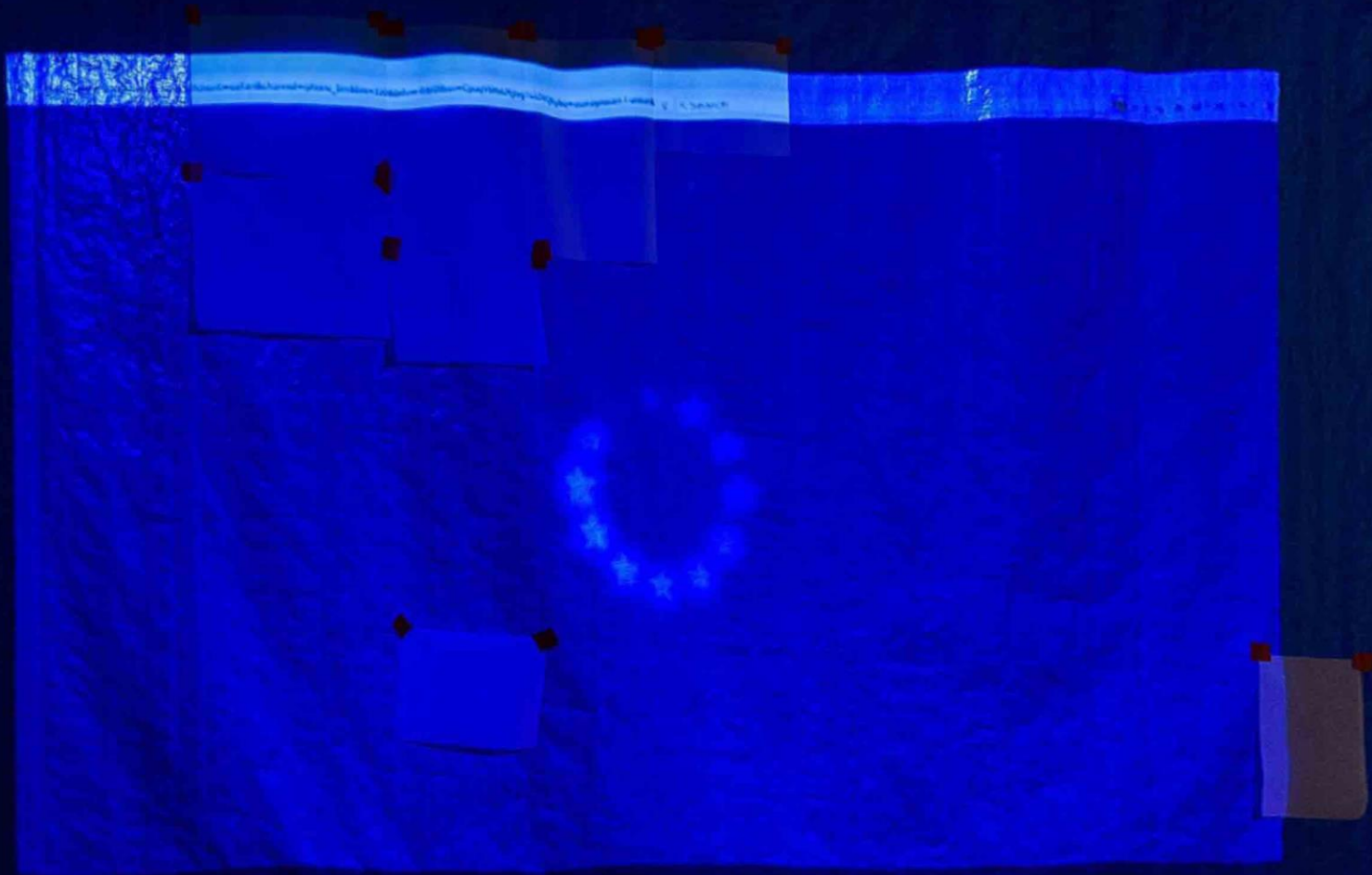
P s: In Greek mythology Europa was a Phoenician princess who was abducted and taken to Crete by Zeus in the guise of a bull. The continent of Europe is named for her.

In *Europa Loading*, the artist draws our attention to a symbol familiar to us of flash content on the Internet loading, which upon looking closely in the video resembles the European Union logo. The blue background from the logo doubles up as the sky populated with the sun, the moon and the stars. The moon wanes and waxes and along with the sun orbit around in conjunction like a ballet duo playing out space and time. Despite the smooth synchronization, like a Pandora box his work unpacks several things at once - all-disturbing.

In the wake of the crisis in Europe on several fronts the dilemma of refugees from Syria, Afghanistan, Iraq, Eritrea and Kosovo looms large, who continue to swell in numbers, and this influx is met with both, welcoming and unwelcoming arms. Europe is fraught with indecision in regards to this issue, as any resolve to aid or shelter them is met with much resistance. It is strongly felt by those opposing that these refugees wreck the intimate European fabric and threaten their free- dom. This was one of the prime reasons cited for people who voted for Br-exit -this very antagonism and fear of the 'other'.

As more governments are re-elected in favor of the right, a conservative worldwide trend particularly in the EU is evident. As it is, it was beset by a string of economic problems leading to dissent in the ranks where some countries were accused of being lax and under-performing, cutting at its very roots, raising fears of the breaking up of the European union. This saga of an undetermined course has always marked its evolution even as the EU kept expanding. At best, what is visible is that at any moment it has been difficult to estimate a near or distant future of Europe as if a true and final picture were still 'loading...'

The gift of shelter - allusion to which can be drawn to biblical times when refugees, Joseph and Mary who had to flee with her unborn child to Egypt continues to be denied to millions in Europe and also over the world, and the protagonist watches on...



JUSTIN PONMANY, *Europa Loading...* , 2016
Video edition 1/3



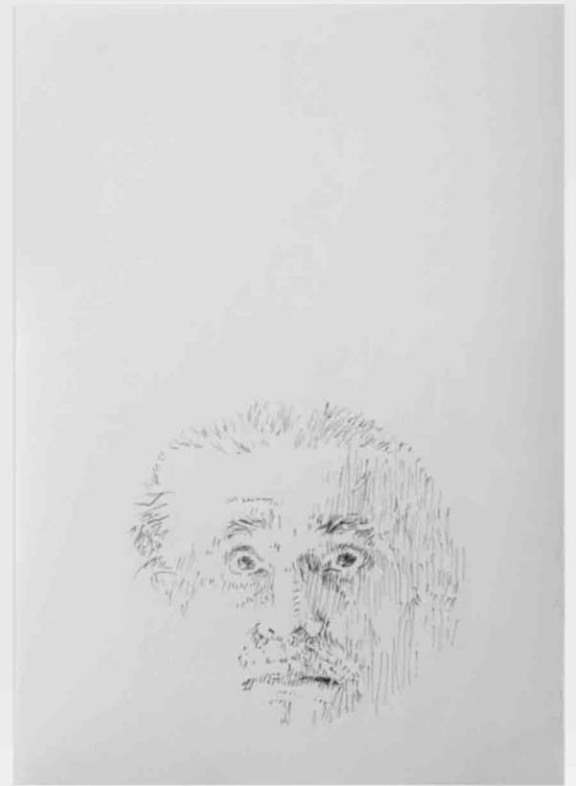
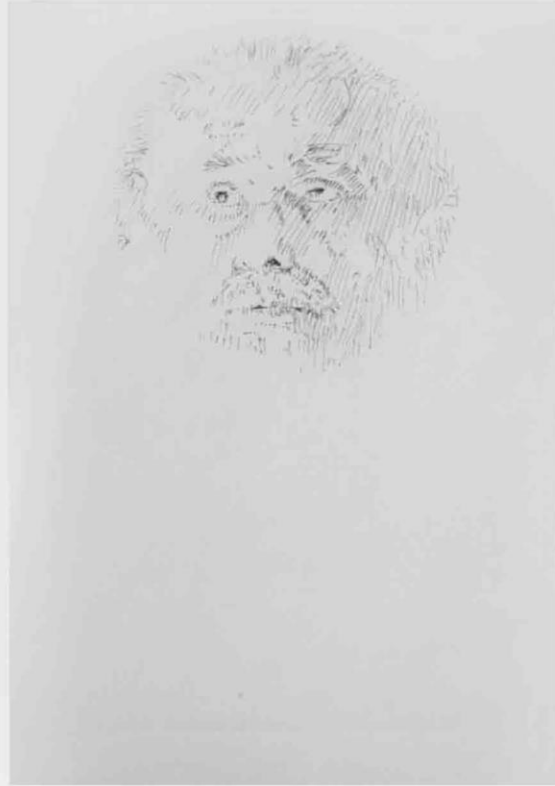
JUSTIN PONMANY, *Witness* 01, 02, 03, 04, 05, 06, 07, 08, 09
Pen on Vellum paper
11.5 x 8.5 inches x 9 works



JUSTIN PONMANY, *Witness*, 01, 02, 03, 2016
Pen on Vellum paper
11.5 x 8.5 inches x 9 works



JUSTIN PONMANY, *Witness*, 04, 05, 06, 2016
Pen on Vellum paper
11.5 x 8.5 inches x 9 works



JUSTIN PONMANY, *Witness 7, 8, 9*, 2016

Pen on Vellum paper

11.5 x 8.5 inches x 9 works



MITHU SEN

Return Gifts: For Sale, 2016
Shadow Drawings on Paper and acrylic,
objects, torch
10 x 7.5 inches x 17 pieces

I am putting your return gift on sale!

A return gift is given to keep the very relationship between givers alive. A constant reminder of shared emotions and relationship.

One or the other partner must always be in debt....

Putting the return gift on sale is a sign of abandonment, a denial of the existing connection between giver and taker. The return gift turns into a capital good hinting at the desperation to end the relationship and the psychological trauma of taking such an extreme path.

Some aspects remain hidden yet available, waiting to be unveiled.

The return gifts reveal the multiple layers of the tangled connections made over the years, only to be exposed under some light.



MITHU SEN, *Return Gifts: For Sale, 1, 2, 3*, 2016
Shadow Drawings on Paper and acrylic, objects, torch
10 x 7.5 inches x 17 pieces



MITHU SEN, *Return Gifts: For Sale, 4, 5, 6*, 2016
Shadow Drawings on Paper and acrylic, objects, torch
10 x 7.5 inches x 17 pieces



MITHU SEN, *Return Gifts: For Sale, 7, 8, 9, 2016*
Shadow Drawings on Paper and acrylic, objects, torch
10 x 7.5 inches x 17 pieces



MITHU SEN, *Return Gifts: For Sale*, 10, 11, 12, 2016
Shadow Drawings on Paper and acrylic, objects, torch
10 x 7.5 inches x 17 pieces



MITHU SEN, *Return Gifts: For Sale*, 13, 14, 15, 16, 2016
Shadow Drawings on Paper and acrylic, objects, torch
10 x 7.5 inches x 17 pieces

NIKHIL CHOPRA

Raghunath Villa, 2016
Charcoal on paper
29 x 43 in.

Julius Caesar, 2016
8mm film to DV with stereo sound
4 mins 6 secs
Edition 1 Of 5 + 2AP
Music: Ali Belkacem

How do we evaluate our inheritance? While most simply value the gift of the material, for the artist Nikhil Chopra it's what he has inherited through his father and grandfather. Raised in Kashmir in his ancestral home in Jammu, he was taught painting by his grandfather and acting by his father, both skills he has imbibed in his practice as a performance artist. In *Raghunath Villa* a drawing made especially for this show, Chopra visits his home that has been in his family for over hundred years, but possibly for the last time. The house will be sold shortly.

His film along side the work *Julius Caesar*, 2016 performed and filmed in *Raghunath Villa* with the artist playing Brutus and his father Cassius, as he convinces Brutus as Chopra to murder Caesar. Replaying the same trope, the artist is being convinced by his father to give up something important to him, his Homeland: Kashmir. Given the political unrest in this region, and also the artist's personal stance that his family and many others of the Brahmanical origin have been the reason of Kashmir's downfall, he accepts the legacy of what Kashmir and his family has offered him, as a return-gift he offers to leave Kashmir. Somewhere hoping against hope that the peace returns to the region.





NIKHIL CHOPRA, *Raghunath Villa*, 2016
Charcoal on paper
29 x 43 in.

Julius Caesar, 2016
8mm film to DV with stereo sound
4 mins 6 secs



NIKHIL CHOPRA, *Raghunath Villa*, 2016
Charcoal on paper
29 x 43 in.



NIKHIL CHOPRA, *Julius Caesar*, 2016
8mm film to DV with stereo sound
4 mins 6 secs
Edition 1 Of 5 + 2AP
Music: Ali Belkacem



PRAJAKTA POTNIS

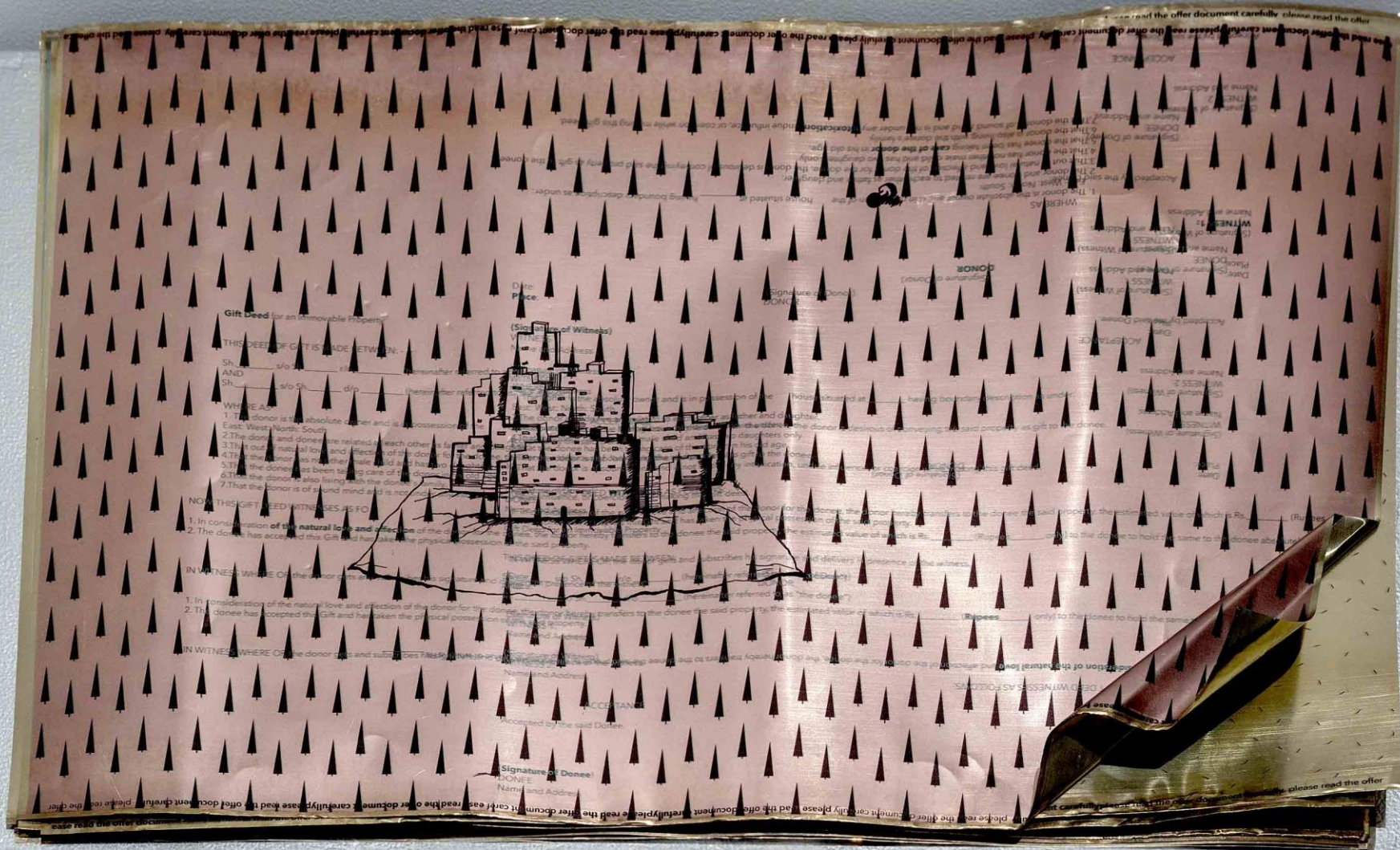
Please read the offer document carefully
German silver
Variable

The gift deed- is an official document used under the court of law as a covenant for transactions to transpire. How a transaction that might emerge from love or a simple feeling of affection takes on an official flavor suggesting that giving/ gifting can never be without a consequence or a purpose. The fine print that adorns official documents has been appropriated here on the gift wrappers as a disclaimer to warn the receiver of an obligation that he might unknowingly walk into.

Hence the artist reflects on the subliminal effect that transpires during a transaction. The gift wrapper takes on the metaphor of being a residue of a capitalist society, it attempts to reverberate today's times where that the facade is more valued than the actual thing. The redundant crumpled gift wrapper once used to wrap a quantified feeling takes on the form of sculptural abstract forms.



PRAJAKTA POTNIS, *Please read the offer document carefully*, 2016
German silver
Variable



PRAJAKTA POTNIS, *Please read the offer document carefully*, 2016
German silver
Variable



RAQS MEDIA COLLECTIVE

A Different Gravity

Furniture, Words, Mirror, Illumination, Carpet

A surprise is a gift, or a shock (and sometimes a shock is a gift), that the future gives to the present. A Different Gravity is a condensation of that sensation. A gift from one time to another unwrapped in a parcel of space.

A Different Gravity is an installation featuring words inscribed on furniture and furnishings. The articles of furniture - a table, a chair, a mirror and a carpet - suggest a room where anticipation reigns, as if something were about to happen.

The elements of the room could be seen as constituting the bare bones of a script and a mise-en-scène, or perhaps an ensemble of uncanny experiences waiting to be savoured. Perhaps this is a setting for a film that is forever or never being made.

With this work, Raqs furnishes thought with its effects. Words find surfaces, surfaces plumb depths, mirrors are illuminated. The word in combination with the object endows an ordinary expression with new set of meanings. The bespoke carpet has the word 'FLYING' carefully stitched into it with gold thread. A handsome upholstered chair is emblazoned with the word 'WRONG'. The mirror spells 'STAGE' with light bulbs and the table has the word 'TIME' incised on its surface. A flying carpet waits by a time table, while the wrong chair faces the mirror stage.

A Different Gravity weighs words and lets them settle and sink into meaning while letting the concepts that bring them together float. The work accomplishes a strange tension between the condensation of meaning and the levitation of thought - leading to a sense of déjà-vu, of having sat at the right table at the wrong time, or at the wrong time at the right table, of facing oneself on stage while looking inwards, of flying while standing still. Each of these experiences is a gift, a present no one expected to receive.



RAQS MEDIA COLLECTIVE, *A Different Gravity*
Furniture, Words, Mirror, Illumination, Carpet



SHAURYA KUMAR

Its mine; No Its Mine; Now its yours; No its Ours;
Now Its missing

Hand-woven tapestry with Wool and Silk,
Pigment Dye, ABS plastic
10 ft x 10 ft, 10 sculptures of varying sizes

The Constitution of India stipulates that it shall be the duty of every citizen of India to value and preserve the rich heritage of composite culture. We thus have a special responsibility for preservation of our heritage as one of our fundamental duties. Yet between 2008-2012, more than 2,208 sculptures and idols were looted from living temples across India. In addition, a recent report by the Comptroller and Auditor General of India notes that within the last ten years, 92 historic monuments have gone missing and are now "not traceable." Unlike what is happening in the Middle - East, all this looting and iconoclasm happened during the time of peace.

In 2011, a joint team of Indian and American investigators arrested a New Delhi born and New York based collector and antiquities art dealer Subhash Kapoor and charged him with looting and smuggling more than 150 ancient sculptures and artifacts from India of an estimated price of \$100 million. Sculptures sold through his gallery are now in collections around the world including the Metropolitan Museum in NY, the Cleveland Museum, the Art Institute of Chicago, National Gallery of Australia Canberra among many others. In addition, Kapoor himself, or through his surrogates, gifted hundreds of sculptures to such institutions that still lie in their permanent collection.

Were these exquisite sculptures ever Kapoor's to gift? Who has the right to gift an object that does not belong to the individual? Shaurya Kumar's work on display *It's mine; No It's Mine; Now It's Yours; No It's Ours; Yes It's Missing* alludes to a gamut of contemporary issues under the paradigm of gift and its offerings. His work playfully proposes that inherent to the idea of gift giving is the notion of a



relationship, a forging of social, emotional, political and psychological bond between the exchangers that must be enforced by a self-perpetuating balanced reciprocity whether voluntary or otherwise. Kumar's work uses repatriation of 200 ancient Indian art objects and artifacts from U.S. President Barack Obama to Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi during his recent visit to the United States as a symbol of gift exchange set on the premise of old Indian game of Chausar, often known for inherent manipulation and deceit. Blending together ideas of gift exchange, two way reciprocity, diplomacy, strategy and power, Kumar probes unsettling thoughts related to these iconic gifts, offered by powerful economies like the US, Australia, Germany and Singapore to India as a gesture of good faith, though the fate of these returned objects is yet to be known.

Responding to this idea of gift and counter-gift, Kumar's work is set on a hand-woven tapestry that is symbolic of a conduit of return of valuable Indian artifacts from different countries represented by their flag colors back to home i.e. India. However, these gifts also play the role of a pawn in the hands of diplomats and people of power that is symbolized by their plastic like material, as their value is undermined by their purpose. Kumar's works have often addressed loss of aura when the original is transformed in its meaning and narrative due to transposition, marginalization and destruction. It addresses the new world of non-objects and questions the role of individuals and institutions that assign them their new meaning, often regressed and stripped of their original stature.

Lastly, Kumar carefully weighs resounding questions such as "Who defines history? To whom does the history belong? Who owns history? Is history Mine? No it's Mine! Now it's Yours." Through this satirical but playful work on display, he suggests the undercurrents of negotiations and counter negotiations of what belongs where and to whom, the fate of "lost and found" art objects and artifacts, and in a way the course of history itself, as decided by men of power and stroke of chance. There are no clear winners or losers but it's only a give and take – of gifts and its offerings in disguise – to be reciprocated in a different time and context.



SHAURYA KUMAR, *Its mine; No Its Mine; Now its yours; No its Ours; Now Its missing*
Hand-woven tapestry with Wool and Silk, Pigment Dye, ABS plastic
10 ft x 10 ft, 10 sculptures of varying sizes

SHILPA GUPTA

*Altered Inheritances -
100 (Last Name) Stories, 2012-14*
Photograph, 100 Frames
sizes variable

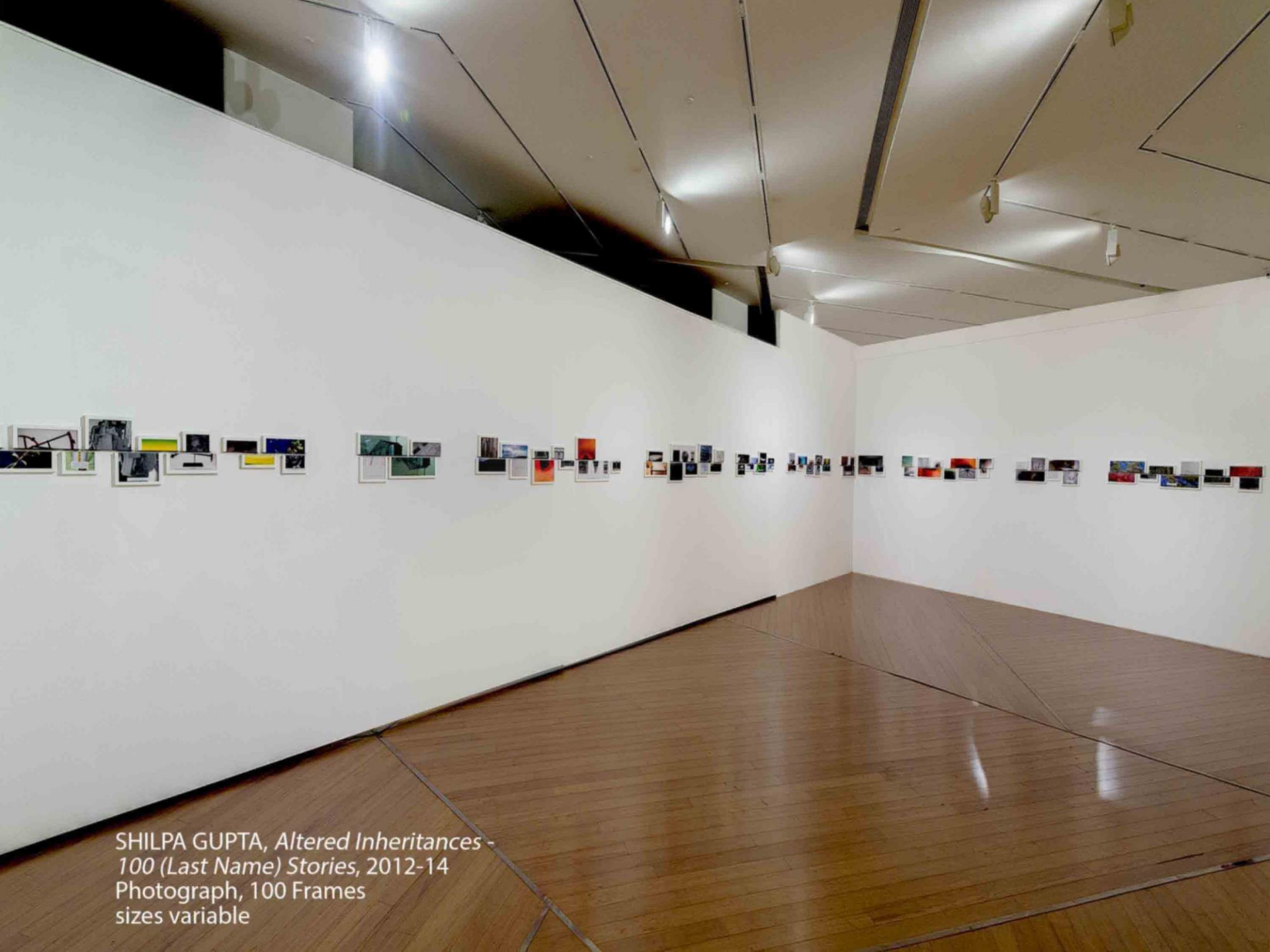
Artist Shilpa Gupta ponders over altered and sometimes misaligned identities through her recent body of works on display. In *Altered Inheritances* Gupta gathers stories of individuals who have changed their last name for different reasons be it fear of political persecution or to avoid social prejudice or to realize a personal aspiration and goal or even to save embarrassment. Through her works, the artist reflects on the philosophical representation and consequences of a change so grave in the lives of individuals that it alters their identity and alternate futures while obliterating their past and scarring their present.

To achieve this sentiment, each photograph is sliced in the center dissection of a one's self or self image, much in the same way as names are stricken off in the texts narrating heart felt tales scribed within the photographs; reflecting upon the process of name change that is complicated along many dimensions as she delves on emotional, social, physical, and legal impact of such a change. Images swivel from the associative to gestural - a stack of doors, tools of measurements, devices to stay afloat, imaginary maps, watches, cages, several of which have recurred through the artists practice as they piece together a common narrative as experienced by these individuals. This body of work acts as an archive of various fragments recounting the reason for the name change whether driven by a positive or negative emotion that compels the audience to think about the significance of an inheritance that we almost take granted, whether as a gift or a curse.





Altered Inheritances - 100 (Last Name) Stories, 2012-14
Photograph, 100 frames
Size variable



SHILPA GUPTA, *Altered Inheritances -
100 (Last Name) Stories*, 2012-14
Photograph, 100 Frames
sizes variable