

Nilima Sheikh

Artist Statement and Biography

Artist Statement

I am interested in the use of cultural histories embedded within one language, and transcribing them into another; much as in the translation of poetry and literature, word based art forms. By developing strategies of translation I look to invest available contemporary parlance with the weight and memories of other art histories.

In the *Rozgar* series I translate from a 19th century manuscript/manual which depicts the 'professions' in Kashmir, commissioned by an unspecified British officer following their practice in other parts of the subcontinent. Here, however, not only do we have graphic representations of the action of work, this manual visually enumerates implements used by the *karigar* in some detail. There is a remarkable attention to the observation of detail and rhythms of labour, which would have one believe - not just that the cursive hand is of a local artisan, but that the rhythms of labour and brush share a remarkable kinship. By drawing on this manuscript I look to pay homage to the labouring of the Kashmiri craft-workers bringing pleasure and dignity to their struggle against the circumstances of their survival in present (and past) times.

Yet, as I translate, the practice of my hand intervenes, and something is lost. The energetic gait of the local Kashmiri kalam is perhaps out of the reach of my ambivalent hand. But believing, not just in my vanity, that this ambivalence may have its merits, I would borrow the words of Agha Shah Ali: "It is generally believed.... that something can also be gained"*

*From *The Rebel's Silhouette*, Introduction by Agha Shahid Ali. Page xxiii

Artist Biography

Nilima Sheikh
India

b. 1945, New Delhi

Nilima Sheikh studied History at the Delhi University (1962-65) and Painting at the Faculty of Fine Arts, Baroda. (1965-71).

Nilima started exhibiting her work in 1969 and has had 12 solo shows and has participated in several group exhibitions in India and abroad. Her significant solo exhibitions include Each Night put Kashmir in your Dreams, The Art Institute of Chicago. Chicago (2014) Chemould Prescott Road, Mumbai (2010), Drawing Trails- Works on paper 2008-09, Gallery Espace, New Delhi (2009); The Country Without A Post Office: Reading Agha Shahid Ali, Gallery Chemould, Mumbai (2003); Conversations with Tradition, Asia Society, New York (2001); Painted Drawings, Gallery Espace, New Delhi (1999); Song-Space, Gallery Chemould, at Max Muller Bhawan, Mumbai (1995); Song, Water, Air, Gallery Espace, New Delhi (1993).

Select Group Participations include Landscape of Thinking Slow: Contemporary Art from China & India, National Museum of Modern and Contemporary Art, Seoul, Korea, To the Let the World in. Art Chennai, Chennai (2012). Place-Time-Play, Contemporary Art from West Heavens to Middle Kingdom, Shanghai (2011) India moderna, Institut Valencia d'Art Modern, Valencia (2008); Mapping Memories: Painted Travelogues, Threshold Art Gallery, New Delhi (2008); Horn Please- Narratives in Contemporary Indian Art, Kunstmuseum Berne (2007); Tiger by the Tail, Brandeis University, Waltham/Boston (2007); Bhupen Among Friends, Gallery Chemould at Museum Gallery, Mumbai (2005); Angkor the silent centuries, Bodhi Art and Threshold Art Gallery at Bodhi Art, New Delhi (2005); !n Transit 2, presented by Sakshi Gallery, Mumbai at the Alexander Ochs Galleries, Berlin Germany (2004); Edge of Desire, co sponsored by the Asia Society, New York at the Art Gallery of Western Australia, Perth Australia; and tour – Asia Society Museum New York, Tamayo Museum, Mexico City et al (2004); Subtlety-Minimally, Sakshi Gallery at Rabindra Bhavan, New Delhi (2004); Contemporary Miniatures: India/Pakistan, The Fine Art Resource, Berlin, Germany (2003); New Indian Art: Home-Street-Shrine-Bazaar-Museum, Art South India, Manchester Art Gallery, Manchester, UK (2002); 3 Contemporary Artists, Bose Pacia Modern, New York (2001); The Second Asia Pacific Triennial of Contemporary Art, Queensland Art Gallery, Brisbane, Australia (1996); Inside Out: Women Artists of India, Middlesborough Art gallery, Middlesborough, UK and tour (1995,96); Dispossession, Africus, First Johannesburg Biennale, South Africa (1995); 3rd Asian Biennale, Bangladesh, Dhaka (1986); Play, exhibition of six Indian painters sponsored by ICCR in Belgrade, Titograd, Istanbul, Ankara (1985); Contemporary Indian Painting, assisted by ICCR in Worpswede, Hamburg, Hannover, Braunschweig and Bremen, West Germany (1982); New Contemporaries, organised by Marg and Indian Society of Art Appreciation, Mumbai (1978); Pictorial Space, Lalit Kala Akademi, New Delhi (1977); Art Today, II and IV, Kunika Chemould Art Centre, New Delhi (1969,71).

Nilima has traveled to South and South East Asia, China, USA and Europe since 1974 to participate in artists' camps, workshops and seminars and on occasion lecture on aspects of Indian art. She visited the University of Michigan as Roman J Witt Resident Artist and Penny W Stamp Lecturer on invitation by the Museum of Art and School of Art and Design in 2004 and the Montalvo Artists Studios, California, USA as Artist in Residence for a month in 2005. Her research on the Pichwais of Nathdwara (1986-87) was supported by the National Handloom and Handicraft Museum. Her interest in theatre design resulted in visual design and painted sets for Vivadi's 1993 production of Umrao, 1998 production of Sundari, an Actor Prepares and 2000 production of Lao Jiu, the Ninth Born. She has also illustrated books for children. She was awarded Gagan Aban Puraskaar by the Vishwabharati University, Santiniketan (2011).

She has written on art in books, journals and catalogue essays. Selected published essays include Flowers, Benodebehari Mukherjee, National Gallery of Modern Art, New Delhi and Guild Art Gallery, Mumbai (2007); Memory Jars: New Paintings and Water Colors, Arpita Singh, Bose Pacia, New York (2003); Amrita Sher-Gil, Women Artists of India, edited by Gayatri Sinha, Marg Publications, Mumbai (1998); A Post-Independence Initiative in Art, Contemporary Art in Baroda, edited by Gulammohammed Sheikh, Tulika, New Delhi (1997); Materialising Dream: Body and Fabric, exhibition catalogue: Arpita Singh, Vadehra Art Gallery, New Delhi (1994); Between Drawing and Painting, exhibition catalogue: Drawing 94, Gallery Espace, New Delhi (1994); On Visiting Nathdwara, India magazine, New Delhi (1990).