

Woman Is As Woman Does

Curated by Nancy Adajania

Celebrating the CSMVS Museum's centenary year and 75 years of India's independence

Premchand Roychand Gallery & Jehangir Nicholson Art Foundation

13th August - 16th October



Sosa Joseph, Pietà, 2019-2020, Oil on canvas, Courtesy of the artist and Galerie Mirchandani + Steinruecke

Contributors

1. Nilima Sheikh
 2. Sheba Chhachhi
 3. Arshi Irshad Ahmadzai
 4. Baaraan Ijlal
 5. Durgabai Vyam
 6. Ita Mehrotra
 7. Paromita Vohra
 8. Anupama Chandra
 9. Uma Tanuku
 10. Ranjeeta Kumari
 11. Gram Art Collective
 12. Aqiu Thami
 13. Pushpamala N.
 14. Vidya Kamat
 15. Zarina Hashmi
 16. Gargi Raina
 17. Purvai Rai
 18. Shilpa Gupta
 19. Mithu Sen
 20. Anju Dodiya
 21. Anita Dube
 22. Sharmistha Ray
 23. Gauri Gill
 24. Sosa Joseph
 25. Navjot Altaf
 26. Shantibai
 27. Al Qawi Nanavati
- + Kamla Bhasin
- + Archival material by women's groups

“The exhibition 'Woman is as Woman Does' by Nancy Adajania is our tribute to women power that highlights transformative changes in varied socio-cultural, political and economic spheres. The CSMVS Museum celebrates its 100 years' long journey and 75 years of India's Independence, by the mounting of this extraordinary exhibition of 27 women artists who have expressed their post-colonial experience through exceptional visual creative process — artworks and installations.”

- Sabyasachi Mukherjee

Director General, CSMVS Museum

"We are delighted to materialize this exhibition with the CSMVS Museum on the occasion of the Museum's centenary. The exhibition features a selection of contemporary women practitioners of India working in varied media. A year that also celebrates 75 years of India's Independence, 'Woman is As Woman Does' highlights the ways in which women have actively engaged with the nation's political, social, ecological and cultural discourse to make a difference."

- Puja Vaish

Director, JNAF

Curator's Note:

This exhibition proposes an inter-generational mapping of **27** women artists who have engaged with postcolonial India's raging social, political and cultural problems. It presents five generations of practitioners, the late Zarina (1937- 2020) being the oldest and Al-Qawi (b. 1995) the youngest, with an emphasis on female artistic labour—'doing' as achieving the impossible, whether incrementally or through radical gestures. Here we witness the multiple forms of consciousness and agency by which women artists have addressed questions of location, materiality and context. Its title refers to Radha Kumar's seminal 1993 book, *The History of Doing*, which historicised the Indian women's movement across the 19th and 20th centuries.

'Woman Is As Woman Does' does not treat gender as a static identity. These artists belong to different classes, ethnicities and caste groups. Those born to privilege are shown alongside those of Dalit or Adivasi origin. You will meet artists who have concentrated on studio practice, and artists who have produced zines and graphic novels, collaborated with subaltern artists, local communities, farmers, activists and grandmothers.

Focusing on a selected ensemble of practices, this exhibition embraces iconic works, contextual ephemera, as well as new works. Whether they explore conventional media or alternative practices, these artists have challenged patriarchal norms to express solidarity with the marginalized.

Both Part I and II of 'Woman Is As Woman Does' could be perceived as a kaleidoscope. Its iridescent bits of red, green and blue glass come together and fall apart, form patterns that disrupt and reinvent themselves again and again. Apart from the forging of solidarities across difference and the politics of adjacency, Part II also demonstrates a seismographic portraiture of self and society, where the schism, calling to be bridged, becomes a leitmotif.

This exhibition pays homage to the late Kamla Bhasin, a pioneer of intersectional politics who encouraged women to denounce the patriarchy, not only in earnest tenor, but also while 'dancing madly'.

—*Nancy Adajania*

About the curator

Nancy Adajania

Nancy Adajania is a Mumbai-based cultural theorist and curator. She has curated a number of major research-based exhibitions including the Nelly Sethna retrospective, 'The Unpaved, Crusty, Earthy Road' (Chatterjee & Lal with Cymroza Art Gallery, Bombay, 2021); 'Zigzag Afterlives: Film Experiments from the 1960s and 1970s in India' (Camden Art Centre, London, 2020); the Mehlii Gobhai retrospective, 'Don't Ask Me About Colour' (National Gallery of Modern Art/ NGMA Mumbai, Govt. of India with Chemould Prescott Road, 2020); the Sudhir Patwardhan retrospective, 'Walking Through Soul City' (NGMA, Mumbai with The Guild Art Gallery, 2019) and 'Counter-Canon, Counter-Culture: Alternative Histories of Indian Art' (Serendipity Arts Festival, Goa, 2019).

Adajania has proposed several new theoretical models through her extensive writings on subaltern art, media art, public art, collaborative art, transcultural art and the biennale culture in the Global South. Her recently published essays include 'Affordances: Degrees of Freedom Wrested from Phantom Narratives' in *Between the Material and the Possible* (Sternberg Press, London/Edith-Russ-Haus, Oldenburg, 2022) and 'The Crafts have the Power to Redeem Art' in *Indian Ocean Craft Triennial 2021: Curiosity and Rituals of the Everyday* (Western Australia, 2021).

She conceptualised and led an online curatorial workshop, 'Once Upon a Cultural Famine: A Curatorial Thought Experiment', for the Kochi Biennale Foundation (2021). Adajania was the juror for the Video/Film/New Media fellowship cycle of the Akademie Schloss Solitude (2015-2017). During 2013/2014, she taught the curatorial practice course at the Salzburg International Summer Academy of Fine Arts. She was joint artistic director of the 9th Gwangju Biennale, 2012.

About the collaborators

Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj Vastu Sangrahalaya

Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj Vastu Sangrahalaya, formerly known as the Prince of Wales Museum of Western India, is one of the premier art and history museums in India. CSMVS celebrated its 100 years' glorious journey as one of the premier, public enlightenment centres of the country on 10th January 2022. This was a landmark moment, not only in the history of the Museum but for the cultural movement of the country. In the last decade the Museum has undergone a profound modernization process with the idea to transform the Museum from a national level repository of antiquities to an institute of international standards. In its Centenary year, CSMVS has put together a list of significant projects and initiatives which will be undertaken in and beyond 2022 to mark this landmark year and moment.

Jehangir Nicholson Art Foundation

The Jehangir Nicholson Art Foundation functions as the Modern and Contemporary Art wing of the Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj Vastu Sangrahalaya, Mumbai.

One of the earliest private collectors of modern Indian art, Jehangir Nicholson, acquired almost 800 artworks over 5 decades. The artworks in the collection date from the 1940s - early 2000s reflecting the significant trajectories of post-independence Indian art as well as the cultural milieu of the city. The core of the collection is of the Bombay Progressive Artists Group, and further features art oeuvres from around India including Baroda, Delhi, Calcutta, Madras. Having built a significant collection, it was Nicholson's ardent wish to make his collection accessible to the public. As early as 1976, he made an alliance with the National Centre for Performing Arts (NCPA) to open an art centre there called the Jehangir Nicholson Museum of Modern Art where a part of the collection was displayed. It was the first space in the city dedicated to Modern and Contemporary Art. When the National Gallery of Modern Art (NGMA) opened in the 90s, Nicholson was on its advisory board and also exhibited works from his

collection there. He spent his final years negotiating with the authorities for a space in the city to build a museum of contemporary art. In his will, he expressed a desire that a home be found for his collection where it would be accessible to the public. After Nicholson passed away, the Executors of the Nicholson Estate formed the JNAF and entered into a collaboration with Mumbai's premier museum, the CSMVS where the Jehangir Nicholson gallery opened to the public on 11th April 2011.

Exhibition Venue:

Premchand Roychand Gallery

First Floor, East Wing

&

Jehangir Nicholson Gallery

Second Floor, East Wing

Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj Vastu Sangrahalaya,

159/161, Mahatma Gandhi Road,

Fort, Mumbai 400023

Timings:

10:15 am - 6 pm

Open on all days

No charge for tour and activity

Museum ticket applicable:

100 INR for adults

30 INR for children (5 - 15 yrs)



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