

## LEGACIES OF CROSSINGS

Affan Baghpati | Sophia Balagamwala | Kavan Balasuriya | Samanta Batra Mehta  
Amba Sayal Bennett | Palash Bhattacharjee | Noor Ali Chagani | Akanksha Kamath  
Saba Khan | Gunjan Kumar | Natasha Malik | Firi Rahman | Anushka Rustomji

*Legacies of Crossings* explores the profound impact of migration upon immigrants and their subsequent generations. This group exhibition, displaying the art of 13 artists from South Asia and its diaspora, delves into the experiences of leaving one's homeland, the challenges and triumphs of arrival, and the enduring connections that transcend borders. In this show, artists explore their own journeys - the joys and traumas of navigating new cultures, the lingering memories of home, and the ways these experiences shape their lives and their art.

South Asia experienced deeply impactful and scarring displacements which are explored in the work of the artists in this exhibition. The reverberations of these migrations have shaped our contemporary landscape and have continued to be felt generations after the initial displacements. **Palash Bhattacharjee**, through his focus upon the Kalurghat bridge in Chittagong, explores his family's movements and relationships through these upheavals. South Asia is continuing to grapple with its colonial legacy and contemporary national narratives, **Sophia Balagamwala** films explore these entanglements. **Akanksha Kamath's** poetry and sound piece delves into her grandmother's experience of India and Pakistan's partition in 1947 and Kamath's own experience of home. Using the imagery of caged birds, **Firi Rahman** also explores the meaning of belonging, for those forced to seek asylum.

The exhibition explores the complexities of displacement and the influences these individuals have on their adopted communities. They carry knowledge from home, and absorb knowledge on their journeys. **Kavan Balasuriya's** work incorporates shared architectural motifs from South Asia into his etchings, highlighting the region's shared experiences. In her art, **Amba Sayal-Bennet's** highlights adoptions and migrations within architecture, as she explores modernist forms and motifs within brutalist architectural practices.

Contemporary conflicts and policies continue to make crossing borders difficult, cruel, and a means of control as highlighted in the work of **Saba Khan**. While **Natasha Malik's** autobiographical work explores the female experience of agency, identity and sexuality in a gendered realm defined by patriarchal structures.

In *Legacies of Crossings*, contemporary artworks are placed alongside objects and artworks that themselves have undergone migration. These antique objects have traveled across continents and through time carrying with them silent narratives. They provide insights to the individuals and cultures to which they belonged, and to those that eventually adopted them. Via historic trade routes and contemporary conflicts, these objects have traversed fascinating routes and absorbed legends and histories. **Affan Baghpati's** use of discarded objects in his art similarly re-contextualizes objects, giving them a new purpose. **Noor Ali Chagani's** sculptures explore the materiality and messaging upon contemporary urban landscapes, where societal dissent, creative expression or observations are represented upon contemporary urban walls and pillars.

This exhibition celebrates the stories encased in visual imagery, oral traditions and materiality from the region, and the cultural dialogues they invoke. **Samanta Batra Mehta's** work often constructs imagined histories from antiquated objects, writings and found materials. Gunjan Kumar, explores the messaging available to us through archaeological excavations, local pigments, and indigenous textiles. **Anushka Rustomji's** work is a similar exploration of the mythological and mystical traditions of the global south and their visual representations. Regional legacies and global histories are continuing to be formed. *Legacies of Crossings* invites you to witness the power of movement and its lasting influence on identity, creativity, and the world we share.



### **Project Art Divvy:**

Project Art Divvy is a venture of Foundation Art Divvy. It provides a platform in the UK to the arts and film from South Asia in order to expand South Asian art, culture and narrative's global and local reach. Project Art Divvy partners with UK based galleries and institutions to present exhibitions of South Asian contemporary art and film festivals of independent South Asian films. Project Art Divvy held a series of exhibitions at Rossi & Rossi, London (2017-2019) and is proud to hold an exhibition at Shahnaz Gallery (May 2024). Project Art Divvy will present Divvy Film Festival London, a film festival of independent films from South Asia, at the Institute of Contemporary Art (ICA), London ( 5-7 July).

Foundation Art Divvy provides a platform at an institutional level, locally and internationally to the arts from South Asia. It works in Pakistan and internationally through four active divisions, Art Divvy Exhibitions, Divvy Film Festival, Art Divvy Conversations and Project Art Divvy, and we now are launching Divvy Knowledge Center. Each Art Divvy initiative supports culture, art, film, learning and philosophy.

The most prominent of our Art Divvy Exhibitions has been Naiza Khan: Manora Field Notes, the inaugural Pavilion of Pakistan at the 58th International Art Exhibition of La Biennale di Venezia, 2019 which Foundation Art Divvy presented with the Pakistan National Council of the Arts. In 2020, Art Divvy expanded into film by launching Divvy Film Festival, an annual festival hosting independent films by South Asian filmmakers. Foundation Art Divvy has established Art Divvy Conversations in order to encourage more scholarship on and easy access to contemporary South Asian art practices.

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### **Shahnaz Gallery:**

Shahnaz Gallery is the successor to Bashir Mohamed Limited with over 60 years of experience in Islamic and Asiatic art. The gallery has garnered a well-deserved reputation for its expertise and rare artworks, standing as a leading authority in its field.

Offering expert guidance to collectors, with a keen eye for exceptional artworks, we facilitate the acquisition of coveted pieces and provide support in building comprehensive and noteworthy collections. This has resulted in contributing to some of the most well known and remarkable collections of Islamic and Asian art worldwide.

The gallery counts museums and institutions globally as clients, contributing to their collections as well as loaning to exhibitions. Artworks previously in our collection can be seen in: The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, The Victoria & Albert Museum, London, The British Museum, London, The Museum of Islamic Art, Doha, The Louvre, Paris & Abu-Dhabi, The David Collection, Denmark, amongst others.

email: [info@shahnazgallery.com](mailto:info@shahnazgallery.com) | website: <https://shahnazgallery.com/> | instagram: [@shahnazgallery](https://www.instagram.com/shahnazgallery)

## ARTISTS

**Affan Baghpati** lives and works in Karachi. Baghpati graduated with a BFA from Indus Valley School of Art and Architecture, Karachi (2015) and an MA in Art and Design at SVAD, Beaconhouse National University, Lahore (2017). Baghpati collects discarded domestic objects from different cities of Pakistan and re-contextualizes them for reconsideration. The artist is interested in locating the purpose and notion of his collected objects through their design, form and functionality.

**Sophia Balagamwala** is a multidisciplinary artist and curator based in Karachi. Grounded in archives and museum collections, her practice merges real and fabricated events to explore entanglements between colonial histories, national narratives and personal histories in South Asia. Balagamwala has a BA from the University of Toronto (2010) and an MFA from Cornell University (2014). She has previously worked as the Lead Curator of the National History Museum in Lahore, and is currently an advisor for the Citizens Archive of Pakistan (CAP).

**Kavan Balasuriya** (b. 1992, Colombo, Sri Lanka) is an artist working with drawing and engraving. His practice explores light and shadow, surface and depth, and abstraction and realism. The artist uses aluminum foil to examine movement and stillness. He makes connections and contentions that enhance the experience of perception. He etches and engraves the foil, resulting in visual effects and optical illusions. Balasuriya earned a B.A. in Fine Art (2014) and a Foundation Diploma in Art & Design (2010) at Central Saint Martins College of Art & Design, UAL, London, UK.

**Samanta Batra Mehta's** work has been exhibited at art galleries and museums in the US and abroad including at the Queens Museum of the Arts, the Hudson River Museum, and others. Her works are included in various art collections including at Fondazione Fotografia Cassa di Risparmio di Modena in Italy, the RPG Group, India, The Jindal Collection, India, the Birla Art Foundation, India. She has been the recipient of the Joan Mitchell Foundation's Painters & Sculptors Grant Award, the SqW:Lab Fellowship, the Gradiva Award and others. She holds a Master of Science degree from The London School of Economics, UK. She lives and works in New York.

**Amba Sayal Bennett** lives and works in London. She received her BFA from Oxford University and her MA in Sculpture from the Royal College of Art. She was awarded her PhD in Art Practice and Learning from Goldsmiths and has published her practice-based research with Tate Papers. She is currently an Associate Lecturer at Camberwell College of Arts. Between January and March 2022, she was The Derek Hill Foundation scholar at the British School at Rome in Italy.

**Palash Bhattacharjee** (b. 1983), based in Chattogram (Chittagong), Bangladesh, has transitioned from academically focused printmaking towards multi-media, experimental art practice, video and performance. He received his masters (2006) and Bachelor's (2005) degrees from the Department of Fine Arts, Chittagong University. His works have been widely exhibited in Bangladesh and internationally, including NOmade Biennale Poland 2023, Warehouse421, Abu Dhabi 2022, Colomboscope 2021, Colombo, and many more.

**Noor Ali Chagani** (b.1982 Karachi, Pakistan), is a UK-based artist who graduated from the National College of Arts (NCA), Lahore, Pakistan, in 2008. His recent solo exhibitions include 'The Story of an Outsider' at Wardown Museum, Luton, UK (2023), 'How Little I Understand About Me' at Canvas Gallery, Karachi, Pakistan (2021). In addition, he has received several awards, including the Jameel Prize Residency at the Victoria & Albert Museum, London (2016). In 2018, Modern Painters Magazine New York featured him in 'Top Emerging Artists to Watch in 2018'. Most recently, Chagani was awarded The Arts Family (TAF) London Emerging Artist Award - South Asia 2024.

**Akanksha Kamath** was born in Botswana, growing up in India and now living in London, Akanksha has charted a life in change that comes with a flexible meaning of 'home'. She is an independent writer and journalist contributing to esteemed publications such as The Business of Fashion, Vogue Business, Architectural Digest, Vogue and Harper's Bazaar. After a Masters in Fashion Journalism from Central Saint Martins, she went on to work with Vogue India, leaving in 2022 as the publication's Fashion Features Director. Her poetry work comes from a personal place and in her private moments - meandering travel writing, community and creating connections.

**Saba Khan's** multimedia works traffic in the language of memorial, monument and public projects. From miniature dioramas of a bureaucrat's boring office, flashing LED of retro sci-fi machines seen at power stations to indigo textile banners honouring peasant revolts, she balances grandeur, artifice and satire in order to explore the cracks in the structures. She founded Murree Museum Artist Residency (2014 – 2020) and a satirical artist collective Pak Khawateen Painting Club (2019) Recent shows/residencies include: Delfina Foundation (2023), 421 Abu Dhabi (2023), Sharjah Biennial 15 (2023), Onassis AiR (2022), Jameel Art Centre (2022), Paul Mellon Centre (2021), Lahore Biennial (2020). Her work is in the collections of Jameel Art Centre, Sharjah Art Foundation, Ford Foundation, South Asia Art Institute, Servais Collection. She lives and works in London, UK.

**Gunjan Kumar** (b. 1980, Ludhiana, India) moved to the United States in 2011. She currently lives and works in Chicago, Illinois. Kumar is a materialist and works widely with various pigments and textiles from the around the world. Her interest and research in archeology, particularly prehistoric cave paintings and related schools of art,, play an important role in carving her process and ideology. Her works have been exhibited at the Ukrainian Institute of Modern Art, Donnelley Foundation, TEDx Chicago, Chicago Artist Coalition, among others. She is currently a resident at the Chicago Art Department. Kumar's works are in the collections of the Kiran Nadar Museum, New Delhi, Currell Collection, London, Edward Albee Foundation, New York, and other collections.

**Natasha Malik** received her BFA from the National College of Arts (NCA), Lahore (2012), and her MFA from the Slade School of Fine Art, London, (2015). Malik's practice encompasses painting, drawing, installation, film, printmaking, and photography. Her work has been exhibited nationally and internationally. Recent solo shows include: the soul breathes differently, Satrang Art Gallery, Islamabad (2018), the life of an image, Khaas Art Gallery (2022). She has exhibited at Coningsby Gallery (London), Asia House (London), and COMO Museum of Art (Lahore). She was a participating artist in the Lahore Biennale 2020 as a member of the Pak-Khawateen Painting Club.

**Firi Rahman's** (b. 1990, Sri Lanka) work is often concerned with the contentious relationship between humankind and the animal kingdom. Rahman earned a Foundation in Art and Design (2012) from City and Guilds at Manchester College in the UK. He is a cofounder of We Are From Here, a collective project which highlights a deeply interconnected community in Slave Island whose home-base is increasingly threatened by gentrification.. His work has been exhibited at the Colombo Art Biennale (2016), Colomboscope and Dhaka Art summit. His works belong to private collections in Sri Lanka, Switzerland, India, United Kingdom, and the USA.

**Anushka Rustomji** is an alumna of the National College of Arts, Lahore (2011) and was a participant in the 2015 Pilotenkueche artist residency (Leipzig, Germany). Rustomji has exhibited her work internationally, including at the recent Colomboscope festival (Colombo, Sri Lanka, 2024). Her work has been published in 'Lines in the Sand; Contemporary Art from Pakistan', (Imago Mundi, Luciano Benetton Collection, 2017) and 'Between Quarantine and Quest', (Vasl Artists Association, 2022). She is an MA candidate at the National College of Arts, Lahore and is a faculty member at the Indus Valley School of Art and Architecture, Karachi.