

Nalini Malani



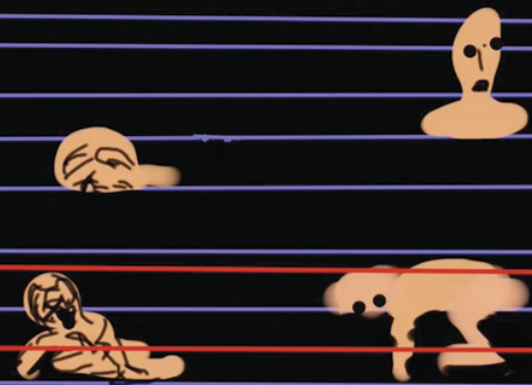
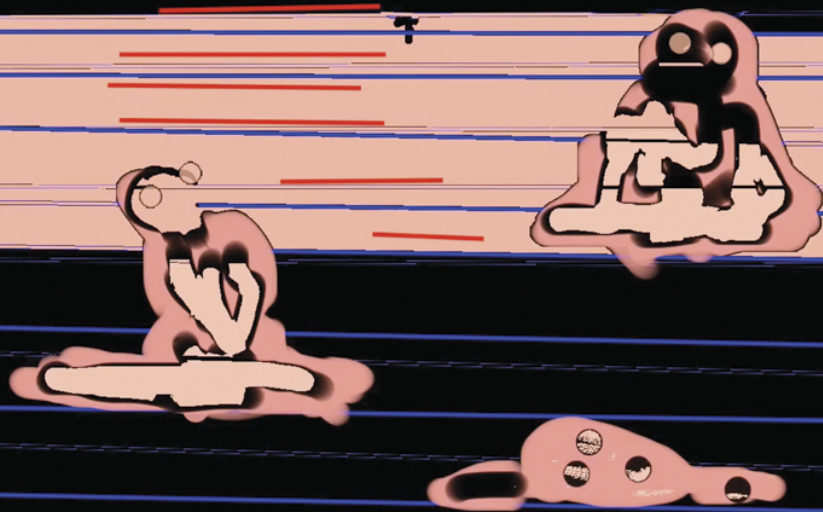
Can You Hear Me ?

Nalini Malani

Can You Hear Me ?





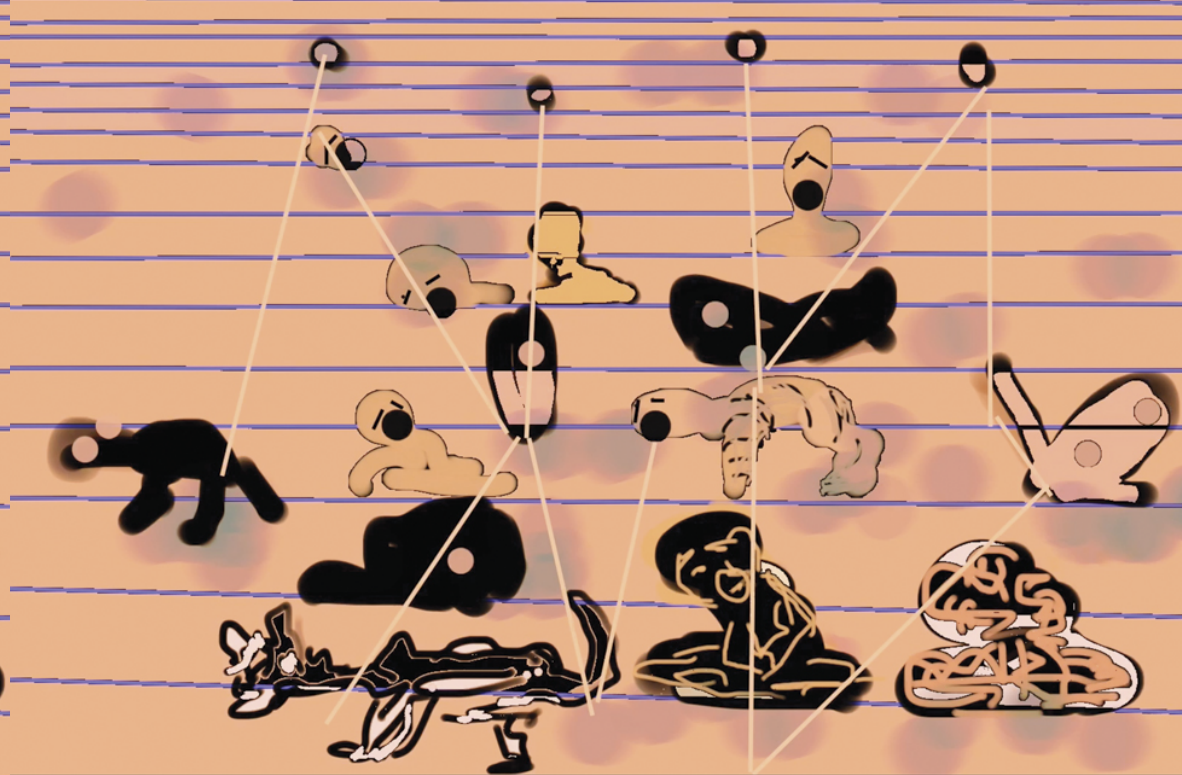
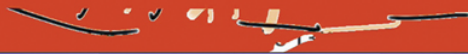




Nothing can ever  
happen twice



In consequence,  
the sorry fact is  
that we arrive here  
improvised  
and leave without  
the chance to practise





Wislawa  
Szymborska

In consequence  
the going that is  
that we arrive here  
improvised  
and leave without  
the chance to practise



Dystopia

## Director's Note

Goethe-Institut / Max Mueller Bhavan Mumbai celebrates its Golden Jubilee. Our celebrations commence on 18 October with a three-day festival that expands into an elaborate program up to 2020. This program acknowledges the important roles played by different individuals, institutions and partners over the decades in shaping the work of the Institute in Mumbai.

One of the special individuals is the artist Nalini Malani, whose association with us has been since the very beginning - that is, from 1969 when she attended Western and Indian music concerts organized by our very first director Dr. Heimo Rau. In the 90s Malani initiated a number of ground breaking experimental projects with us, under the directorship of Dr. Anna Winterberg. This started in 1993, with a collaborative project with actor Alaknanda Samarth for the theatre play *Medeamaterial*, by German playwright Heiner Müller, held in the Stuttgart Hall of the Institute itself. This was followed by the theatre play *The Job* in 1997, in collaboration with theatre director Dr. Anuradha Kapur. The piece was based on a story of another German playwright of world fame, Bertolt Brecht. To be able to address a larger public this was presented at the Experimental Theatre, NCPA, Mumbai after which it traveled to the National School of Drama, New Delhi. These theatre productions fundamentally changed the scale of Nalini Malani's art. Wanting to travel these works internationally Malani transformed her works into what she calls *video plays*. This resulted in the production of the video play *Hamletmachine* adapted from the work of the same title by Heiner Müller, in collaboration with the Fukuoka Asian Art Museum and the Max Mueller Bhavan Mumbai in 2000. After being shown in Japan it was presented in the ground breaking inaugural exhibition *Century City* at the Tate Modern, London, 2001, after which it traveled to more than twenty venues around the world.

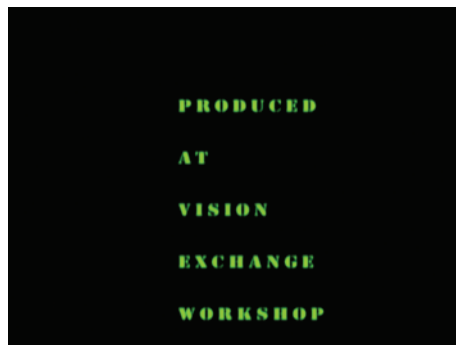
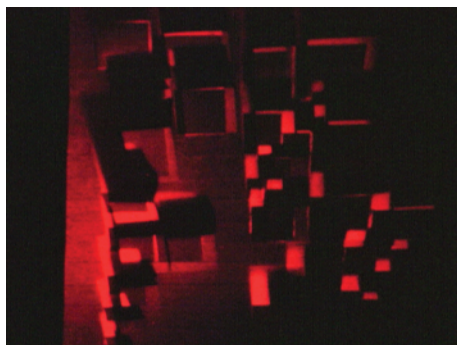
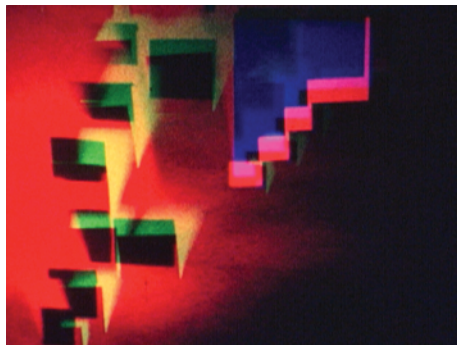
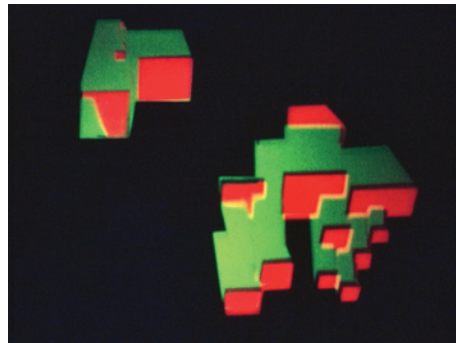
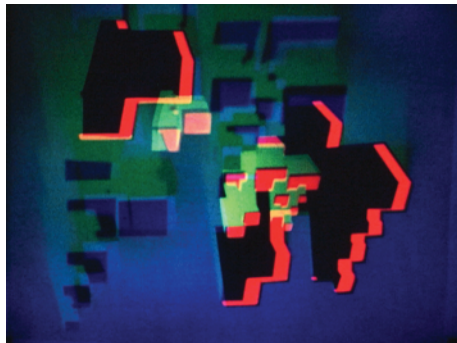
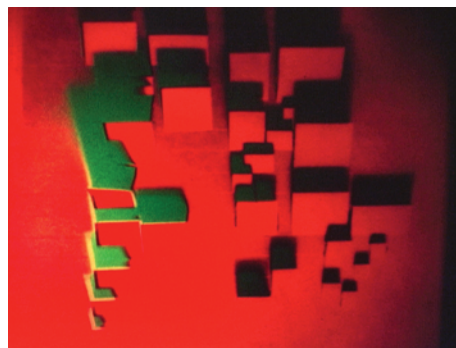
Now in 2019, I am pleased that we are able to present *Can You Hear Me?* in our Gallery. An exhibition that juxtaposes Malani's first film animation *Dream Houses* from 1969 with a entirely new, room filling video installation *Can You Hear Me?*, consisting of 11 projections with more than 50 video animations from 2018/2019. Spanning the same fifty years as when Goethe-Institut / Max Mueller Bhavan was established in Mumbai.

I would like to thank Nalini Malani for conceptualising this special exhibition.

**Björn Ketels**

**Director**

**Goethe-Institut / Max Mueller Bhavan Mumbai**



## Can You Hear Me?

Nalini Malani

Thought Bubbles

The exhibition title, *Can You Hear Me?*, is about not being heard. In the list of titles of the recently made animations, called *Notebooks*, this title has two variations. The words may be similar but, in fact, they address two different types of concerns. *Can You Hear Me?*, with a question mark, is the scream of a minor girl who is being violently raped but nobody hears her cry. *Can You Hear Me*, without the question mark, is a strident command, and has to do with exerting 'power'.

In this exhibition, I have juxtaposed a series of more than fifty iPad animations, made between 2018 and 2019, with the very first animation, *Dream Houses I*, made in 1969 on 8mm film. A juxtaposition that is similar to the double-projection film installation *Utopia*, 1976, in which I placed *Dream Houses II* next to my 16mm black and white film of a disillusioned young woman as protagonist.

In both juxtapositions, in *Utopia* and in this exhibition, *Can You Hear Me?*, the leitmotif is a question: What has the idea of Utopia given us? This in turn raises others: How did we start out and what are we heading towards now? With the death of Modernism and the progressive socialist state, what is our excuse for the present state of affairs and the future? It reminds me of the poem *Nothing Twice* by Wislawa Szymborska:

*Nothing can ever happen twice.  
In consequence, the sorry fact is  
that we arrive here improvised  
and leave without the chance to practice.*

We come improvised. There is no time to rehearse life,  
and nothing can be redone.

In a span of 50 years, I have made three types of animations. In the first one, *Dream Houses*, 1969, began with a physical object in different light configurations shot on 8 mm reverse stock. In the period between 1996 and 2017, the animations were of my paintings /erasures sessions, shot with a photo camera, the stills were then edited on to video. The most recent ones, called *Notebooks*, are made digitally on an iPad.

The animations that I have made since 1996 are like 'Thought Bubbles' in their character and function. When I see or read something that captures my imagination, I have a need to react with a drawing or drawings in motion. Not exactly in its mimetic form but more as a 'Memory Emotion'. I feel like a woman with thoughts and fantasies shooting from the head. Each of them can have different ideas, and may not feel like it is from the same person. Each of these voices in my head needs therefore a different penmanship.

These iPad animations as a set of works have a sense of the abject. For this I have developed a language that is funny, sad, modest, energetic, hysterical and acute. But within it also appears the satirical, comic and the absurd. How else to make sense of life?

## **Stop Motion Animations, 1969**

In the entrance passage of the newly opened VIEW (Vision Exchange Workshop) in April 1969, Nuruddin, Akbar Padamsee's brother, had made and placed a series of boards showing a grid of squares with about twenty scales of grey. It triggered my mind to use such a grey scale as the basis of my first animation. I wanted to try to transform the black-and-white scale into colour, as I had read about in Johannes Itten's publication *The Art of Colour*, and also wanted to experiment with additive colour through light and movement.

My ideas in those days were first of all inspired by my architect friends, from whom I learned about and discussed the ideological possibilities of

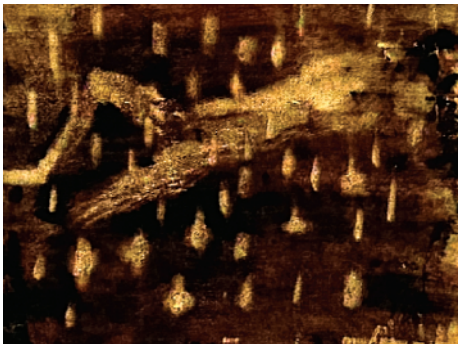
modern architecture, of the Bauhaus for example, in the work of Walter Gropius and Mies van der Rohe, and that of Frank Lloyd Wright and Buckminster Fuller. As I had studied Graphic Design and Typography, I frequently did the lettering for their maquettes. These represented a visionary world, which I wanted to visualize in the form of an animation film. Around this time, architect Charles Correa, a close friend of Padamsee's, came almost weekly to VIEW to talk about his ideas on social architecture. That's when I met the legendary Buckminster Fuller.

For *Dream Houses*, I built a maquette from black carton, which was available at the stationery shops outside the JJ School of Art. This maquette, I shot with a Mamiyaflex camera on 6 x 6 cm slides, which came in rolls of 12. For each slide, I changed the angle of the light source. These slides were projected on the wall, and recorded with an 8mm film camera, on reverse stock. In front of the camera, per section, I placed different additive primary colour filters. After I shot with green, for instance, the film was rolled back, and for the second time it was shot with red. This superimposition gave the colour yellow in certain parts of the grey scale on the film. It was a painstaking process that although I had calculated and proofed in advance, much was also happening by chance. The registration was essential and that is the reason why there came about two variations of *Dream Houses*, with the first one a few frames off.

The film was developed at the Kodak Laboratory in Worli, which took about ten days. After this, I started the process of editing on the Moviola at VIEW. *Dream Houses* was made all by myself, without assistance. On the part of the senior artists at VIEW, there was no interest in my work or in the final result. If there was anybody I discussed it with, it was Nandan Kudhyadi, who was then a student at the art school in Baroda, and who after VIEW went to the Film and Television Institute of India (FTII) in Pune. As I had no money to make a negative for screening copies, *Dream Houses* remained in its tin box in my different studios until 2011, when it was discovered by my partner Johan Pijnappel. As an art historian, he



## MEMORY RECORD ERASE



Animated Film Conceived  
and Drawn by  
**Nalini Malani**

understood the importance of this early work, and organized to have it professionally cleaned and digitally scanned in Amsterdam.

In the brief period since its rediscovery, *Dream Houses* has been recognized as an important icon in the canon of Indian Modernism when it was shown in my retrospective, *You Can't Keep Acid in a Paper Bag* at the Kiran Nadar Museum of Art in New Delhi in 2014. Soon after that, the work found place in international museum collections, and was included in major exhibitions such as *From the Collection: 1960 – 1969*, Museum of Modern Art, New York (2016), *The Collection – Stedelijk Base*, Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam (2017), *Nalini Malani: The Rebellion of the Dead*, Centre Pompidou, Paris (2017), *Awakenings: Art in Society in Asia 1960s – 1990s*, National Museum of Modern Art, Tokyo (2018), and *Mud Muses – a rant about technology*, Moderna Museet, Stockholm (2019).

### Erasure Animations 1996-2017

Although not featured in this exhibition, I would like to say a few words on the second form of animations made in the period between 1996 and 2017, as this gives a better overview on how I work with animations, and for what purpose. The first one from this period was *Memory: Record / Erase* made in 1996. This work was part of the theatre play *The Job* for which I collaborated with theatre director Anuradha Kapur. It was my second theatre production with the Max Mueller Bhavan in Bombay – the first one was *Medeamaterial* in 1993 for which I collaborated with performer Alaknanda Samarth. In the 60s, when I had a studio at the Bhulabhai Desai Memorial Institute, I had helped theatre director Satyadev Dubey with backstage work, but it was only in 1992 that I actively came into theatre through Alak. When she entered my wall drawing/ erasure installation *City of Desires* at Gallery Chemould in 1992, she immediately said, “This calls for a performance”. It was a time when due to the rise of orthodoxy and right-wing politics that had begun in the late eighties, I felt that if I wanted to be heard as an artist, I had to break out of the painting frame, or, in the case of theatre, had to go beyond the stage.

Therefore, *Medeamaterial* was performed without a stage, where the public followed the protagonist from room to room in the Stuttgart Hall of the Max Mueller Bhavan. This in contrast to *The Job* which was developed for the Experimental Theatre (part of the National Centre for Performing Arts) on a kind of proscenium arch, to be able to address a larger public. However, I did not want to let go of the idea of direct confrontation with the public, and added a series of installations around the stage, which were separated by a wall of carton boxes. We wanted the atmosphere of a warehouse. Half an hour before the start of the play, the visitors were invited to walk around and interact with these installations following the performer, Ritu Talwar. In two of the six installations animated elements appeared, being a zoetrope, and the animation *Memory: Record/Erase*. I wanted to extend certain aspects on the thought processes of the protagonist. These animated thoughts were like 'Thought Bubbles,' which work for me as a 'Memory Membrane'. The idea of animating thoughts came to me while making the wall drawing, *City of Desires*, at Gallery Chemould. When I wiped parts of the charcoal drawings, it occurred to me that I could make this into animations.

*Memory: Record/Erase* was made in one night at Chemould with a full setup, including a camera person and light assistants. It was to be painted on paper. To give the recorded image more brightness, Alok Upadhyay, the cameraman came up with the idea of pasting the paper on the glass entrance door, and to use a backlight. It was one long session from 8pm until 8am. I worked without a story board, where one drawing followed by traces of erasure led to the next idea. For this, I had to be totally concentrated, especially when there were so many people around me. And, with the wet paint dripping, there was no time for pause. The level of concentration and focus was like that of a singer rehearsing a raag – a total immersion in a stream of thought. This same kind of painting/erasure process, as a 'one-time performance', has been used for all my animations in the period of 1996 to 2017.

The title of this first type of erasure animation, *Memory: Record /Erase*, refers not only to how it was made but to the type of video technology used as well, and on a political level how our memory is manipulated by politicians. It was shown for the first time at the Second Asia-Pacific Triennale of Contemporary Art, at the Queensland Art Gallery in Brisbane in 1996. For my solo exhibition, *The Job* at the MMB in 1997, I used the animation as part of a new video sculpture, also called *The Job*, in which a monitor stands for the head of the female protagonist lying on a hospital bed. On that occasion, my first monograph *Nalini Malani: Medeaprojekt*, was published by MMB, in which the film expert Ashish Rajadhyaksha wrote the first article on my moving-image art. After that exhibition, *Memory: Record Erase*, was shown at the Mumbai Film Festival in 1998. Initially the work was rejected by a jury member, the well-known animation specialist Ram Mohan, the same professional animator with whom Akbar Padamsee had worked to make his film *Syzygy* in 1969 at VIEW. In Mohan's opinion, my work was not an animation as the movement jerked too much. It was eventually accepted because another jury member, the film scholar and historian Amrit Gangar made a case for the originality of the work.

The possibility of creating these erasure animations, and using them in various formats, opened up a whole new field. Soon after, the World Wide Video Festival in collaboration with the Prince Claus Fund gave me the opportunity to make the immersive video installation *Remembering Toba Tek Singh* as a response to the nuclear experiments by India in 1998. I did not call this a video installation but a *videoplay* as it was actually my intention to continue making theatre plays. However, it was clear to me that the costs of traveling and availability of actors would limit me too much, so I turned the whole theatre play, actors and backdrops included, into video. The work consisted of four projections and 12 monitors placed on the floor in tin trunks. The main images on the walls were of two female protagonists, one Indian and one Pakistani, trying to fold a sari across the room. In the main projections, appears the documentary



Remembering Mad Meg, Centre Pompidou, Paris, 2017

footage with the explosion of the nuclear bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. On this footage is super imposed an animation of monsters.

This collaging of my erasure animations within video, and later in video/-shadow plays, became a way of working wherein I could insert personal expressions within the images, such as in *Gamepieces* (2003), *Unity in Diversity* (2004), *Mother India: Transactions in the Construction of Pain* (2005), *Remembering Mad Meg* (2007) and *In Search of Vanished Blood* (2012). I wanted certain motifs to come back in these works, and with animation I had full control. With animated drawings and paintings, my fantasy world could take over. In *Mother India* for instance, I collaged part of the animation *Stains* in the belly of the cow.

In *Remembering Mad Meg*, the videos are only animations. This work grew from a two-channel projection, when it was first presented at my solo show at the Irish Museum of Modern Art in 2007, to a four-channel projection in the retrospective at the Centre Pompidou in 2017. The world of Pieter Breughel the Elder, from which this is inspired, together with that of Jeroen Bosch, gave me a tremendous range from which to create nightmarish fantasies in the form of animated metamorphoses. What interests me is the metamorphosing as I work along, as if my mind is out there on the paper or the wall. My concentration is on that stain or mark and what can come out of it. It is a bit like automatic writing as in Henri Michaux's work.

As a four-channel video/shadow play, *Remembering Mad Meg*, brings the visitor inside a chamber, a curious all-encompassing overwhelming array of sight and sound. After a while, one notices the different constantly changing layers, where the image in a shadow is of a different timbre as the one of the painted image. Superimposed, these animations and shadows evoke many thoughts that fall in different places, depending on what you are looking at. As such these video/shadow plays recreate the complexity of thought the way time works at any given moment. It is the simultaneous nature of what a human mind can do in the unconscious.

It is like when you sleep and have no control on what you dream, on the nightmare or other absurdities.

## **iPad Animations 2017-2019**

In 2017, I was constantly in the middle of work for retrospective exhibitions at Centre Pompidou and Castello di Rivoli. It was difficult to plan long sessions of painting so I decided to focus on iPad animations, a medium that I taught myself in 2015, including the sound. As there is this deep inner urge to draw every day, and I am obsessed with the moving image, I decided to make 'moving drawings'. For this, I found an animation app which provided me with several tools. I threw out the Apple Pencil, and started to draw with my index finger. There is a sensitivity of fingertip on plate that is so direct and has its own inner workings. This is totally different from using a pencil. There is something more erotic, something very raw and direct about the process of drawing, rubbing, scratching and erasing, to do with messing around in one's mind, which then comes out at the tip of one's finger.

The many issues that I think of and want to talk about in these *Notebooks* animations come from a wide range of stimuli. This could be daily politics, other people's writings, or something mundane I might have just experienced. There is the daily inner urge to examine them through my drawings, to question them, to show a different angle, to laugh about or to protest. Why does Modernism form such a threat in these days of growing orthodoxy? Why limit the freedom of the other? How can the alpha male tap into his female side of thought? Is there a way to understand the contradictory language that politicians use?

In my reaction to what has triggered or irritated my mind I often start out with a quote from a wide range of writers, whose texts I have been reading for decades such as, Hannah Arendt, James Baldwin, Samuel Beckett, Bertolt Brecht, René Crevel, Veena Das, Faiz Ahmad Faiz, Milan Kundera, Saadat Hasan Manto, Heiner Müller, George Orwell, Toni Morrison

and Wislawa Szymborska. It is a kind of graffiti that I get from these writers. A similar kind of graffiti comes from images of artists like Goya or Grosz, Japanese prints of the floating world, or Kalighat paintings, and even from my own earlier works. From there on, the making of the animation flows as if by itself and goes in any direction with different levels of transparency and opacity. I have no control over the style, nor do I work towards 'a' style, as style is a market-driven idea. It is the subject that decides or governs the form.

In a period of two years, more than seventy animations were made from which a selection of around fifty are included in this exhibition at the Max Mueller Bhavan. Some are longer than the 1-minute Instagram limit, and some have never been shown online. If I would categorize this weekly growing collection of iPad animations, there would be the socio-political, the more 'abstract' ones, the feminine/masculine, the satirical and the personal ones.

The socio-political ones are an expression of frustration and anger with the decisions that are made by the powers that are operating in this world. I feel we now live in very confusing times compared to my youth. The absurd decisions made by the powers around us may lead to the most dangerous and horrific ends. The democratic model has changed from a vehicle of hope into one of helplessness. For example, the animation *Blind Man's Bluff*, has to do with powerful heads of state and the regressive results of their actions. Similarly, in *Megalomania I and II*, the head of a state breaks the world into smithereens. In *Dystopia*, we are in the land of the absurd. With *Ubu Roi*, where I satirize power, greed and the insensitive practices of the complacent, haute bourgeoisie abuse their success.

The more 'abstract' animations have to do with my own quirky thoughts and fantasies. In *Hysterical Bird*, I quote an image from Goya's *Los Caprichos* – something that happened over hundred years ago and whose absurdity resonates even today. The hysterical bird also evokes Walter Benjamin's book *Thesis on the Philosophy of History*, in which he speaks of

Klee's *Angelus Novus*. In my animation, I chose to have a bird that is rendered helpless – she flaps her wings unable to fly. The bird would like to sing “to awaken the dead and make whole what has been smashed.” Reading Hannah Arendt's statement, “The earth is the very quintessence of the human condition,” struck me. When you have the earth as a vast territory and the heart is the microcosm, what the earth yields and what the heart makes of it, might equal art? Hence the animation title *Heart - Earth - Art*. Nothing Twice is inspired by the poem of the same title by the Polish writer Wislawa Szymborska in which she tells us: “In consequence, the sorry fact is that we arrive here improvised and leave without the chance to practice”.

In the animations dealing with feminine/masculine ideologies, there is one where these very words became the title itself. I believe femininity and masculinity reside in both men and women. It depends what part of the person is activated in a given moment. The problem is that the feminine part is mostly denigrated. Veena Das's quote reflected exactly what I have been talking about for years. She writes, “There are feminine regions of the self that reside in both men and women....”. The portraits in this animation are built up in a barcode line configuration. But can this advanced reading program identify the regions of the feminine or the masculine? *My Secret Flower* is about a young girl's awakening sexuality and her freedom to feel within the flower. In *Portrait of a Girl I and II*, the childhood of a girl collapses into the life of a young woman, such that the past is not erased but constantly present. Recalling girlhood feels pleasurable and joyous.

In the face of extreme domination by the state there is no way out of the darkness but to find a language in satire even as one squirms around trying to find ways to look for the light. In *Double Speak I*, a little puppet figure is trying to run away from an aggressive lecturing male head. It is seen with a quote from a poem by René Crevel, a communist and a surrealist, that dwells on the freedom to dream and fantasize. In *Double Speak II*, a large figure is the prosecutor. His body consists of two legs with a huge head that is completely filled with violence. The head is an image quote from

*Disasters of War* by Goya. From Samuel Beckett's play *Endgame* I have two players Hamm and Clove, who want to end their lives but they cannot. They are trapped in the physical room while simultaneously being trapped in their self-conscious cages.

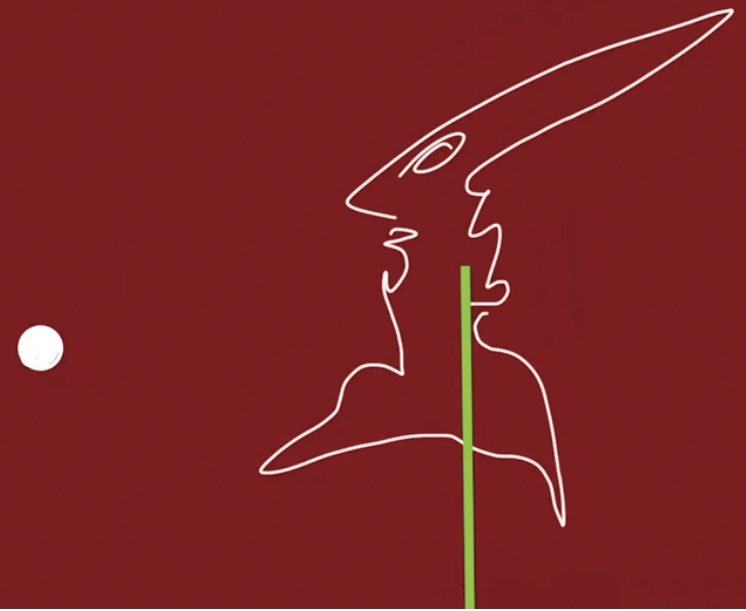
Relatively few animations from the *Notebooks* are personal as I feel it is difficult to put this out there in the public. Thoughts starts with the text "People's voices in my head" after which a cluster of image quotes appear turning into each other. Are these bad thoughts, good thoughts, complicated thoughts? *She is gone* is about missing my mother – who passed away this year at the age of 97 – the beautiful bird under whose wing I lived for 72 years.

## Can you hear me?

Fifty years have gone by. *Dream Houses* came alive after remaining in the dark for forty-five years. This animation reminds us of glowing expectations, coming from a shared ideology for all, into a better - nay – into a humane social future. How intense is the contrast with the installation *Notebooks* fifty years later, where a multitude of 'Thought Bubbles' have a sense of the abject. Within these phantasmagoric illusions, there is place for the satirical, the comic and the absurd. With these animations, I am still exploring what the Dada art movement started – the idea of the absurd. The most mundane circumstances can lead to thoughts which go everywhere, in a million directions. A whole range of feeling can spring up at any moment. The absurdity of life, how little value it has, during which people can be taken away from you anytime. It feels as if life has no validity or precious meaning. Similarly, nature and ecology are treated with disdain and one feels helpless with the catastrophes around. Has the world gone crazy? If Nature dies, we die.

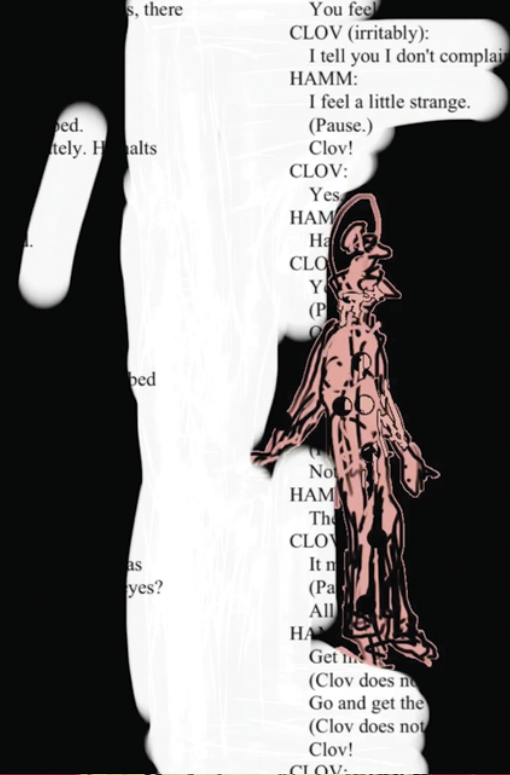
Who will listen?

Hello. Can you hear me?





HAMM:  
Of the  
CLOV:  
I always ha  
(Pause.)  
Not you?  
HAMM (gloom  
Then there's  
CLOV:  
It may end  
(Pause)  
All



s, there  
You feel  
CLOV (irritably):  
I tell you I don't complain  
HAMM:  
I feel a little strange.  
(Pause.)  
Clov!  
CLOV:  
Yes  
HAMM:  
He  
CLOV:  
Y  
(P  
O  
bed  
as  
eyes?  
No  
HAMM:  
The  
CLOV:  
It n  
(Pa  
All  
HAMM:  
Get me  
(Clov does not  
Go and get the  
(Clov does not  
Clov!  
CLOV:



11/11/2011

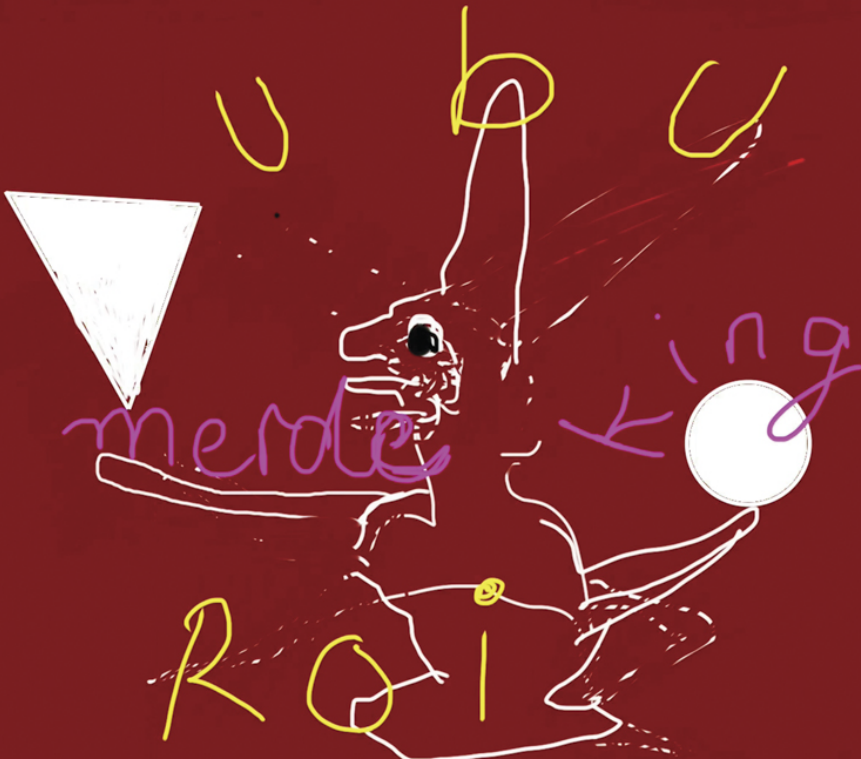


endgame



no reason for it to change

the questions, the same answers







# # Malani Notebooks



HAMM:  
Did you ever see my eyes?  
CLOV:  
No.  
HAMM:  
Did you never have the curiosity, when  
sleeping, to take off my glasses and look at  
CLOV:  
Pulling back the lids?  
(Pause.)  
No.  
HAMM:  
One of these days I'll show them to you.  
(Pause.)



## Biography

**1946** Born in Karachi (Sindh), the only child of Satni Advani (Sindhi Sikh) and Jairam Malani (Theosophist).

**1947** During the Partition of British India, the family is displaced from Karachi and has to leave behind all their belongings. Nearly 12.5 million people on both sides were forced to flee their homes and the estimated loss of life was over several hundred thousand.

**1948** Nalini Malani's father obtains a job at Tata Airlines (later Air India) in Calcutta.

**1954** Moves to Bombay due to her father's job transfer, where the family begins to live in an apartment block in one of the colonies built for displaced Sindhis.

**1958** Makes a series of international journeys to Tokyo, Paris and other parts of the world thanks to her father's airline job. Japanese culture and the Egyptian section at the Louvre make a lasting impression.

**1960** Inspired to become an artist while still at high school through biology lessons in anatomy and nature.

**1964-69** Diploma in Fine Arts, Sir JJ School of Art, Bombay. This was one of the first art schools established in India by the British where students were trained in the European oil painting tradition.

**1965** Deeply affected by the Indo-Pakistani war.

**1966** First solo exhibition of oil on canvas paintings while still at art school. The works explore different aspects of the most base but complex human emotions. Literature becomes an important basis for this exhibition and future works.

**1964-67** Acquires first studio space at Bhulabhai Desai Memorial Institute, Bombay, where artists, musicians, dancers and theatre artists worked individually and as a community. Gets the opportunity to interact with artists such as Tyeb Mehta, Nasreen Mohamedi, V.S. Gaitonde, and M.F. Husain.

**1969** First overseas exhibition, the *5th International Young Artists Exhibition*, takes place in Tokyo.

Participates in the legendary Vision Exchange Workshop (VIEW) in Bombay. It was here that Nalini Malani, as the youngest contributor, made a series of camera-less photographs and 8mm and 16mm films.

**1970-72** Awarded the French Government Scholarship for Fine Arts to study in Paris.

Attends lectures at the Sorbonne by Noam Chomsky and Claude Lévi-Strauss, and gets involved in Jean-Paul Sartre and Simone de Beauvoir's public initiatives.

**1973** Decides to return to India motivated to contribute to the making of the young Indian nation. Moves into studio at Lohar Chawl located in the heart of a bustling wholesale market in Bombay.

Continues to work on film and makes the short production *Taboo*.

**1976** Disappointed with the direction in which India is developing, makes a double film installation *Utopia*, in which the early work *Dream Houses*, is juxtaposed with a new black and white film.

**1976, 80, 83, 88** Participates in workshops and collective projects involving national and international artists at the Kasauli Art Centre in Himachal Pradesh.

**1978** Starts *His Life* series of oil paintings that continues till 1984, reflecting on the hierarchies within middle-class Indian families through the format of the Greek tragedy.

**1979** Meets Nancy Spero and May Stevens at the A.I.R. Gallery in New York, the first artist-run non-profit space for women artists in the United States. Invited by the collective to exhibit her work there.

Meets R. B. Kitaj at his solo exhibition at the Marlborough Gallery on the same trip.

**1979** Invited for a solo exhibition at the Lalit Kala Akademi in Bhopal, Nalini Malani invites Vivan Sundaram and Sudhir Patwardhan to join. During this project, the idea of *Place for People* is born.

**1981** Initiates and organises, along with Vivan Sundaram, the landmark exhibition *Place for People*. The project involved a collective of artists who wished to focus on the ideas of the local and the indigenous in their work as distinctive from the then dominant abstractionist Bombay Progressive Artists' Group.

**1984-89** Awarded the Art Research Fellowship from the Government of India. Studies different types of drawing techniques from Ajanta murals, Nathdwara and Kalighat paintings.

**1986** Plans to organise an exhibition with 20 female artists in an attempt to give them a voice in a male-dominated milieu. However, there are no sponsors for an exhibition such as this and eventually a small group is formed with Nalini Malani,

Madhavi Parekh, Nilima Sheikh and Arpita Singh. They travel across India over three years with a show titled *Through the Looking Glass*.

Participates in an international biennial in Havana, Cuba.

**1987** Curates *The Sculpted Image*, an exhibition with seventeen sculptors, during the Bombay Arts Festival at the Nehru Centre as a tribute to the female sculptor Pilloo Pochkhanawala.

**1988/89** At Vivan Sundaram's invitation to collaborate, Nalini Malani and Bhupen Khakhar create a glass panel mural at the Shah house in Bombay. Begins using the reverse glass painting technique and extends its use to Mylar, acrylic and Lexan in paintings, shadow plays as well as in theatre.

**1989** Travels extensively in the USA on a USIA Grant and receives a fellowship at the Fine Arts Work Center, Provincetown, Cape Cod. Meets Nancy Spero, Leon Golub and Thomas McEvilley in New York, and Eric Orr in Venice, CA.

Participates in *Artists Alert* organised by SAHMAT. This initiative was set up in response to the fatal attack on the theatre artist Safdar Hashmi on 1 January 1989. This would become a continued engagement with Nalini Malani participating in subsequent SAHMAT programs to promote democracy and pluralism in India through cultural interactions.

Begins work on a series of limited-edition artist's books titled *Degas Suite* and *Hieroglyphs, Lohar Chawl*. Besides the hardcover bindings, she makes accordion books titled *Dreamings and Defilings, Caste Off* and *Musings*.

**1991** Creates her first shadow-play installation *Alleyway, Lohar Chawl* that allows the public to walk through and participate.

**1992** Makes the ephemeral art installation *City of Desires* as a tribute to the damage on the traditional wall-paintings in the temples of western India. At the end of the show, the work was obliterated with white wash, becoming her first *Erasure Performance*. Makes her first video artwork based on *City of Desires*.

**1993** Collaborates with actor Alaknanda Samarth on the play *Medeamaterial* by Heiner Müller as a project for the Goethe-Institut / Max Mueller Bhavan Mumbai. The production was deferred for a year due to the attacks on the Babri mosque at Ayodhya and the riots that followed in 1992.

**1994** Begins *Mutant* painting series about the de-gendered female on milk-carton paper.

**1996** Makes her first video erasure animation *Memory: Record/Erase* for the theatre production *The Job*.

Meets Winin Pereira and Jeremy Seabrook, authors of *Global Parasites*, and designs the book cover and even gives it the title. This has a lasting impression and leads to a series of works concerning ecology and globalisation.

**1997** Collaborates with theatre director Anuradha Kapur on the play *The Job or By The Sweat of Thy Brow Shalt Thou Fail to Earn Thy Bread* based on a story by Bertolt Brecht for a project with the Max Mueller Bhavan presented at the Experimental Theatre of the NCPA in Bombay.

Collaborates with Pakistani artist and art historian Iftikhar Dadi on the occasion of 50 years of Indian and Pakistani independence to create the installation *Bloodlines* using sequins.

Max Mueller Bhavan publishes her first monograph titled *Nalini Malani: Medeaprojekt*.

**1998** Participates with Australian artist Judith Wright and Japanese artist Kaoru Hirabayashi in the travelling exhibition *Another Landscape: History/Life/Language*.

Makes her first multi-channel videoplay *Remembering Toba Tek Singh* in protest against the Indian government's nuclear tests on the birthday of the Buddha.

**1999** First Indian solo museum exhibition, *Remembering Toba Tek Singh*, at the Prince of Wales Museum, Bombay, takes place and attracts more than 25,000 visitors in a period of ten days.

**1999/2000** Six months residency at the Fukuoka Asian Art Museum. Produces the video play *Hamletmachine*, in collaboration with the Butoh dancer Harada Nobuo, in protest against sectarian elements that were eroding the idea of a secular India.

**2001** Shows her first video/shadow play *Transgressions* at the exhibition *Unpacking Europe* curated by Salah Hassan and Iftikhar Dadi at the Museum Boijmans van Beuningen in Rotterdam. The work is acquired by the Stedelijk Museum in Amsterdam.

Starts the ongoing series *Stories Retold*, reverse painting on acrylic and Mylar bringing tales from *Bhagwad Purana* and *Alice in Wonderland* into a contemporary context.

**collaboration: Nalini Malani & Anuradha Kapur**



**performance: Ritu Talwar**

design team: Sumant Jayakrishnan & Sandeep Bhattacharya

An adaptation of

# Bertolt Brecht's **The Job**

Hindi translation: Atul Tiwari

presented by

National Centre for the Performing Arts(NCPA), Max Mueller Bhavan Bombay, Gallery Chemould & Sakshi Gallery

**Jan 22-25 1997, 6.30 pm Experimental Theatre, NCPA**

NCPA Box Office: Jan 13 for members, Jan 16 for the public (9.00 -1.30 & 4.30 - 6.30)

**2002** First USA solo museum exhibition at New Museum of Contemporary Art in New York curated by Dan Cameron.

Solo video exhibition inaugurates the Apeejay Media Gallery in New Delhi.

**2003** Creates the videoplay *Unity in Diversity* as reaction to the massacre of two thousand Muslims in Gujarat.

**2005** Presents the five-channel videoplay *Mother India: Transactions in the Construction of Pain* at the 51st Venice Biennale.

First retrospective curated by Susan Bean at the Peabody Essex Museum in Salem in two parts runs for a full year.

**2007** Moves to new studio close to the Gateway of India in Bombay.

Creates the 14-panel painting installation *Splitting the Other* for an octagonal room at the Italian pavilion of the 52nd Venice Biennale curated by Robert Storr.

First European museum solo exhibition at the Irish Museum of Modern Art in Dublin curated by Enrique Juncosa.

**2008** The Museum of Modern Art in New York acquires the video/shadow play *Gamepieces*, which is followed in 2011 by the acquisition of her artist book *Hieroglyphs of Lohar Chawl*.

Creates together with Robert Storr the artist's book *Listening to the Shades* based on a series of 42 paintings inspired by the mythic figure of Cassandra.

**2009** Shows with Wang Jianwei in Beijing in the two-person exhibition *Himalaya project: Studies in the Visualisation of Cultural History*.

**2010** First European museum retrospective exhibition called *Nalini Malani: Splitting the Other* curated by Bernard Fibicher at Musée cantonal des Beaux-Arts in Lausanne.

Conferred an Honorary Doctorate in Fine Arts from the San Francisco Art Institute.

**2012** The Art Gallery of New South Wales in Sydney acquires the videoplay *Mother India: Transactions in the Construction of Pain*, around which Jackie Menzies curates a solo museum exhibition.

**2012** Participates in dOCUMENTA (13) curated by Carolyn Christov Bakargiev with a new site-specific six-channel video/shadow play *In Search of Vanished Blood* that becomes one of the key works of the exhibition.

**2013** The comparative study *William Kentridge, Nalini Malani: The Shadow Play as Medium of Memory* by Andreas Huyssen is published.

# Nalini Malani

## *In Search of Vanished Blood*



dOCUMENTA (13)

HATJE  
CANTZ

Carolyn Christov-Bakargiev

Arjun Appadurai

Andreas Huyssen

Wins the Fukuoka Award in the category of Arts and Culture that started in 1990. Earlier winners are Nam June Paik, Xu Bing and Cai Guo-Qiang.

**2014** Retrospective at the Kiran Nadar Museum of Art in New Delhi called *Nalini Malani: You Can't Keep Acid in a Paper Bag* curated by Roobina Karode in three chapters over a period of nine months. It starts with the double film projection *Utopia* (1969-76) that was recovered in 2012 from Malani's stored belongings of the Lohar Chawl studio.

Wins the St. Moritz Art Masters Lifetime Achievement Award. Earlier winners are Ilya & Emilia Kabakov, Ai Wei Wei and Robert Indiana.

**2015** The video shadow/play *Gamepieces* presented at the MoMA in New York in its year-long exhibition *Scenes from a New Heritage*.

**2016** Wins the Asia Arts Game Changer Award in Hong Kong for her transformative work in the field with Cai Guo-Qiang and Yoshitomo Nara.

Premiere of her rediscovered 1969 film *Dream Houses* at MoMA in the exhibition *From the Collection 1960-1969*.

The indepth study *In Medias Res: Inside Nalini Malani's Shadow Plays* by the cultural theorist/artist Mieke Bal is published in conjunction with Malani's solo exhibition at the ICA in Boston.

**2017** The Stedelijk Museum in Amsterdam presents a solo exhibition which includes the video/shadow play *Transgressions* acquired in 2001.

Centre Pompidou collaborates with the Castello di Rivoli on a pan-European two-part retrospective called *Nalini Malani: The Rebellion of the Dead*. In Part I, in Paris, the selection is structured around the video/shadow play *Remembering Mad Meg* from their collection.

**2018** Castello Di Rivoli exhibits Part II of the retrospective with a different selection of works and a second catalogue. This publication contains detailed exhibition overviews from 1966 to 2018, including all exhibited art works and their respective techniques.

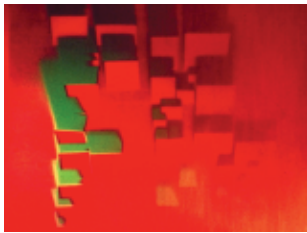
Exhibited *In Search of Vanished Blood* as a six-channel video play at the Power Station of Art as part of the 12th Shanghai Biennale after it had been rejected several times by the Chinese censor board.

**2019** Wins the seventh edition of the prestigious Joan Miró Prize, a bi-annual award given since 2007. Previous winners are Olafur Eliasson, Pipilotti Rist, Mona Hatoum.

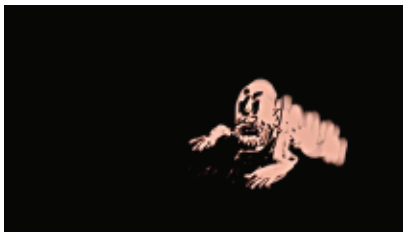


Nalini Malani, Joan Miró Prize, Barcelona, 2019  
Photo David Campos - Courtesy "La Caixa"

# List of Exhibited Works



Dream Houses I, 1969



Run, Run, Run, 15 June, 2018



Man full of himself - WHY, 22 June, 2018



Demons of the Night, 7 July, 2018



Can You Divide the Clouds, 11 July, 2018



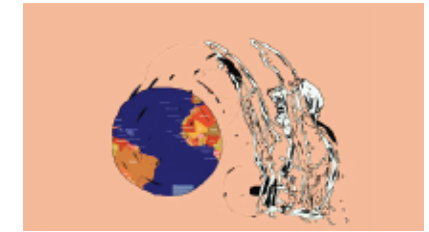
Can you hear me? 22 July, 2018



Can you hear me, 26 July, 2018



Quote from Bertolt Brecht, 29 July, 2018



Megalomaniac I, 3 August, 2018



How did we survive this long, 15 August, 2018



Blind Man's Bluff, 16 August, 2018



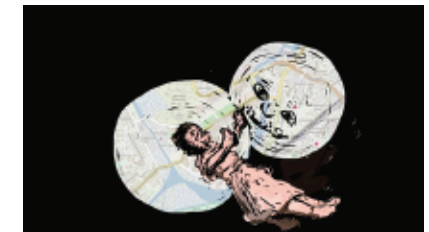
Blinding, 16 August, 2018



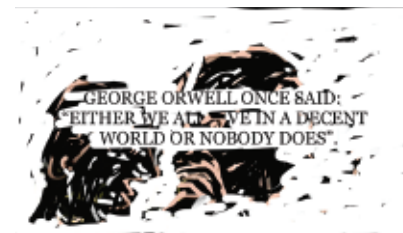
Megalomaniac II, 18 August, 2018



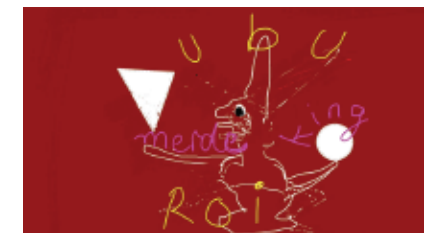
Phantoms in the Head, 20 August, 2018



The Tale of Two Cities, 23 August, 2018



George Orwell Once Said, 27 August, 2018



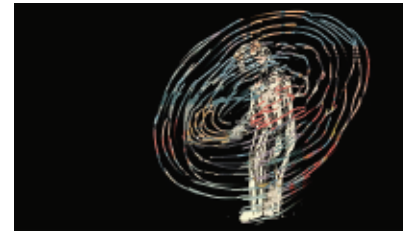
Ubu Roi, 2 September, 2018



Who is Afraid of Orange, 12 September, 2018



Where have all the flowers gone, 13 September, 2018



About Life, 31 October, 2018



The Trees, 15 November, 2018



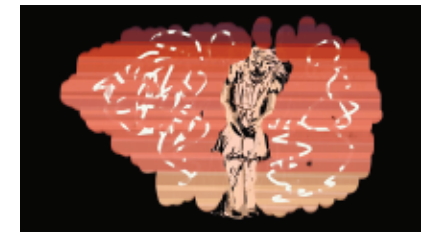
All Earth is Grass, 17 September, 2018



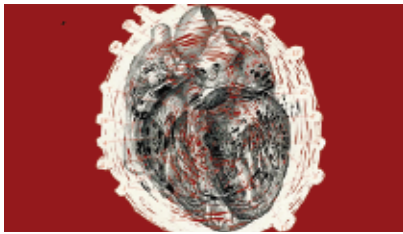
Mephisto, 19 September, 2018



Perhaps I Died a Little, 26 November, 2018



It's been a long time, 17 December, 2018



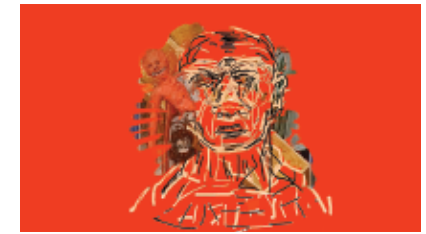
Heart Earth Art, 1 October, 2018



Feminine Masculine, 6 October, 2018



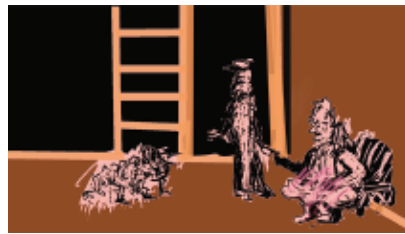
What is the Past, 27 December, 2018



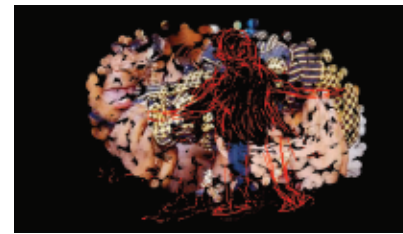
Nothing Twice, 5 January, 2019



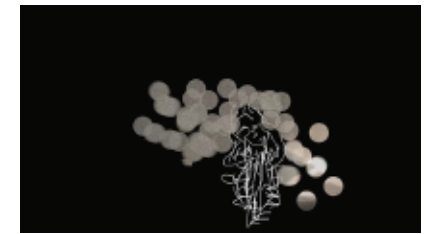
No Guilt No Blame, 13 October, 2018



Endgame, 19 October, 2018



Perhaps this is Happiness, 19 January, 2019



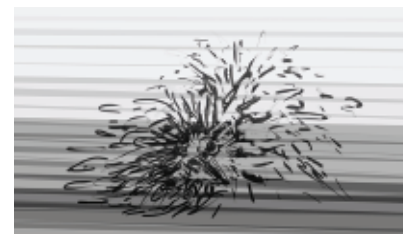
I Miss You, 11 March, 2019



Thoughts, 22 October, 2018



Rage, 26 October, 2018

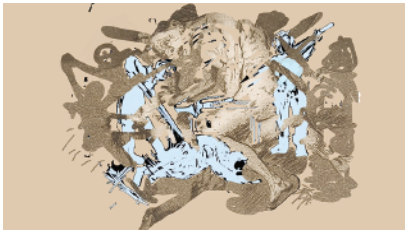


She is gone, 24 March, 2019



My Secret Flower, 10 May, 2019





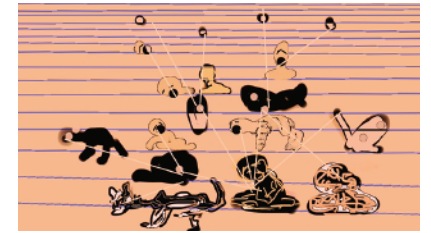
The Pain of Others, 13 May, 2019



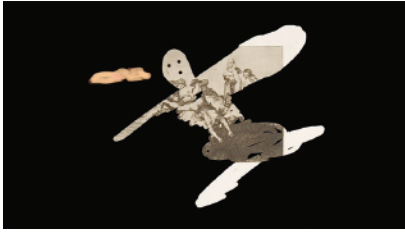
Venting, 5 June, 2019



Double Speak II, 26 July, 2019



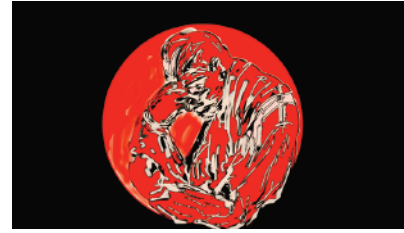
Dystopia, 31 July, 2019



Hysterical Bird, 23 June, 2019



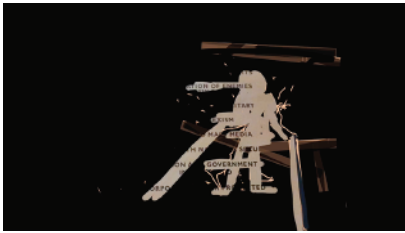
Current Affairs, 26 June, 2019



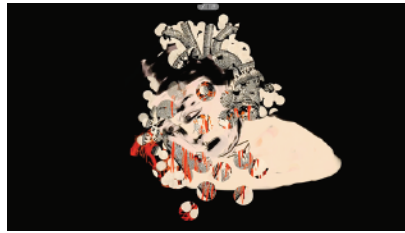
The Circle I, 6 August, 2019



Watch Out, 15 August, 2019



Inspired by Paul Klee, 26 June, 2019



Death of Modernism, 30 June, 2019



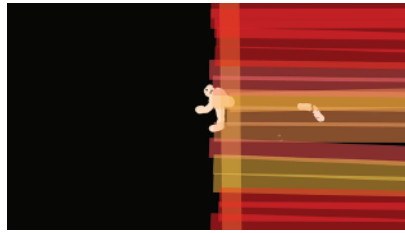
Portrait of a Girl I, 23 August, 2019



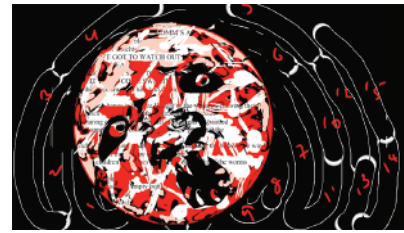
Portrait of a Girl II, 24 August, 2019



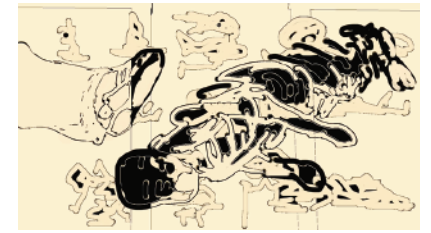
Fail Better, 30 June, 2019



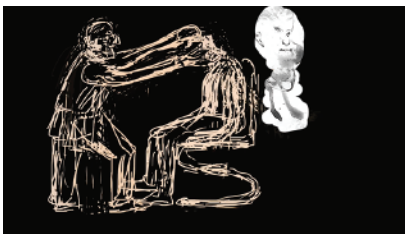
Double Speak I, 18 July, 2019



The Circle II, 26 August, 2019



Hieroglyphs of Lohar Chawl, 11 September, 2019



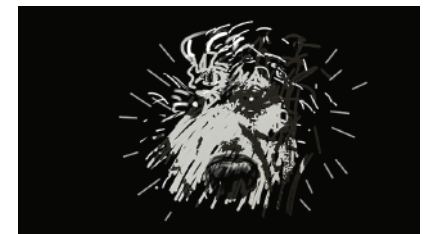
Slap Slap, 18 July, 2019



The Red Man, 20 July, 2019



Metronome, 11 September, 2019



The Scream, 12 September, 2019



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*Can You Hear Me?* is a collaboration between Goethe-Institut / Max Mueller Bhavan Mumbai and Nalini Malani

### Text

*Can You Hear Me?* - Nalini Malani  
Biography - Johan Pijnappel

### Gallery MMB

Björn Ketels, Director  
Amruta Nemivant, Senior Programme Manager  
Phalguni Desai, Communications

**This brochure is produced on the occasion of the exhibition *Can You Hear Me?*, a solo by Nalini Malani at Gallery MMB, Goethe-Institut / Max Mueller Bhavan Mumbai from October 19, 2019 – January 2, 2020**

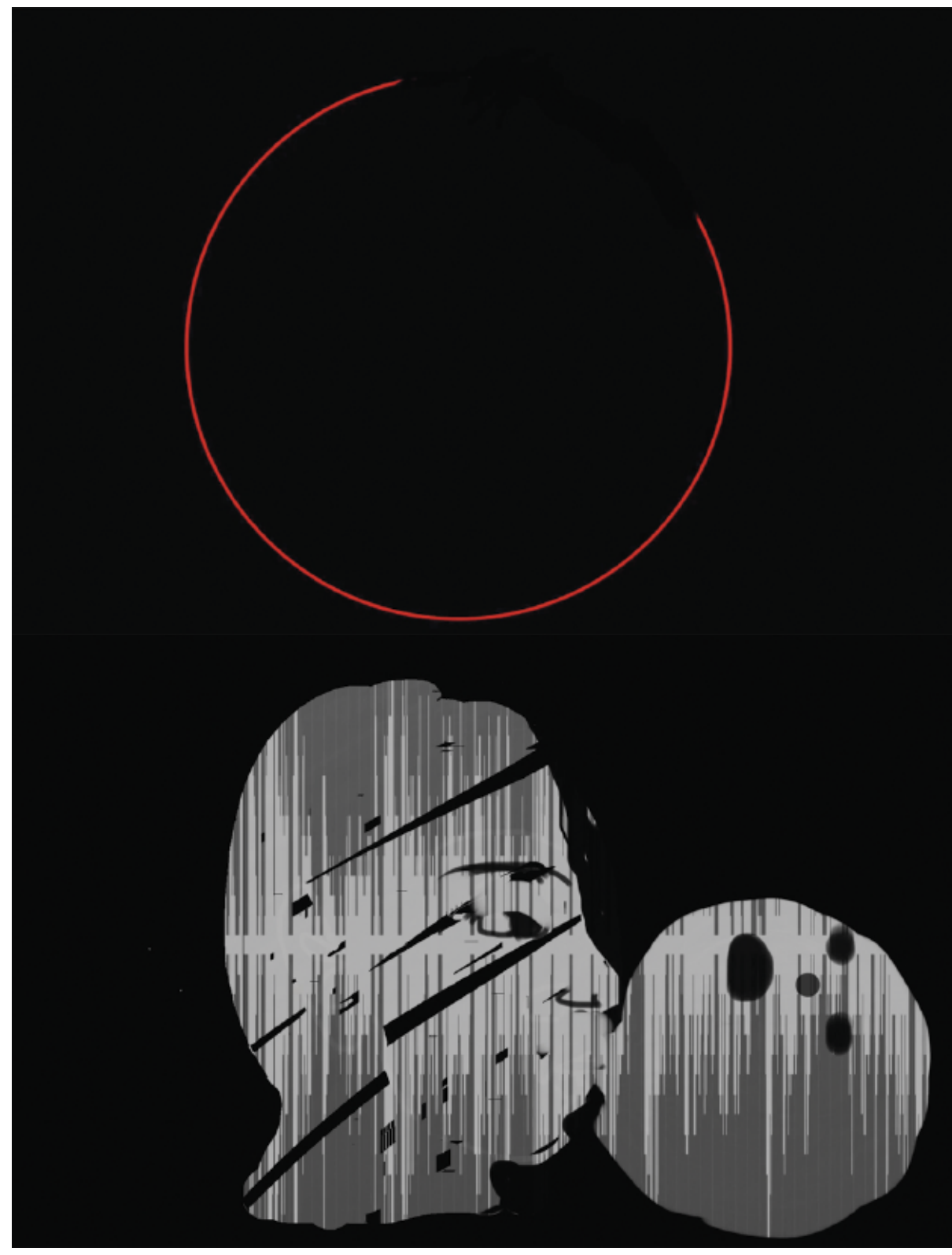
All images in this brochure are courtesy Nalini Malani  
Second edition, November 2019

Gallery MMB  
Goethe-Institut/Max Mueller Bhavan Mumbai,  
K. Dubash Marg, Kala Ghoda, Mumbai 400001

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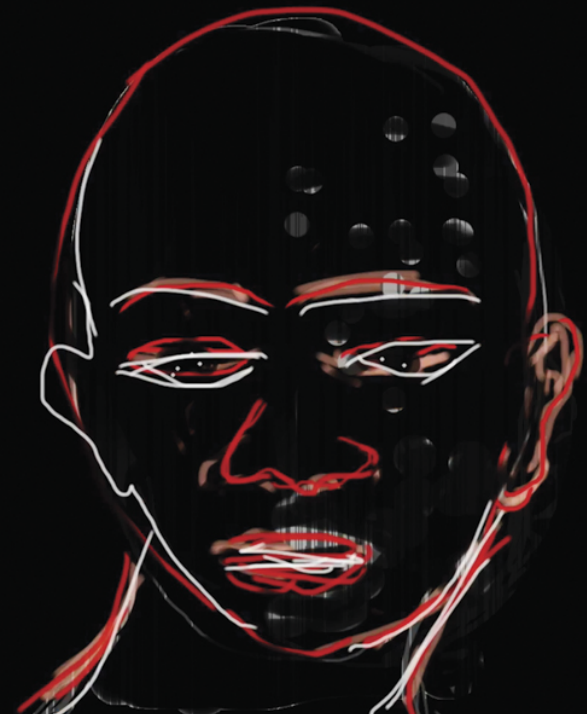
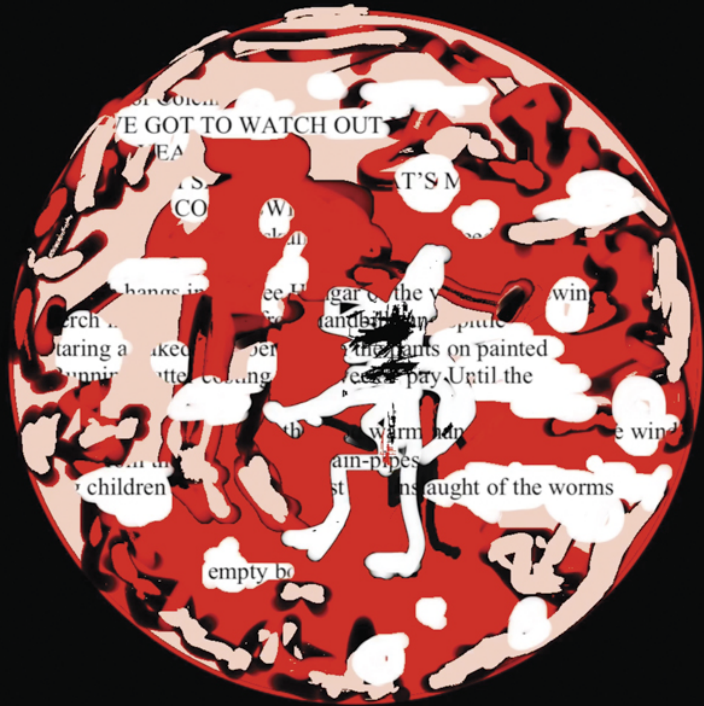
 **@GI\_MMB\_Mumbai**

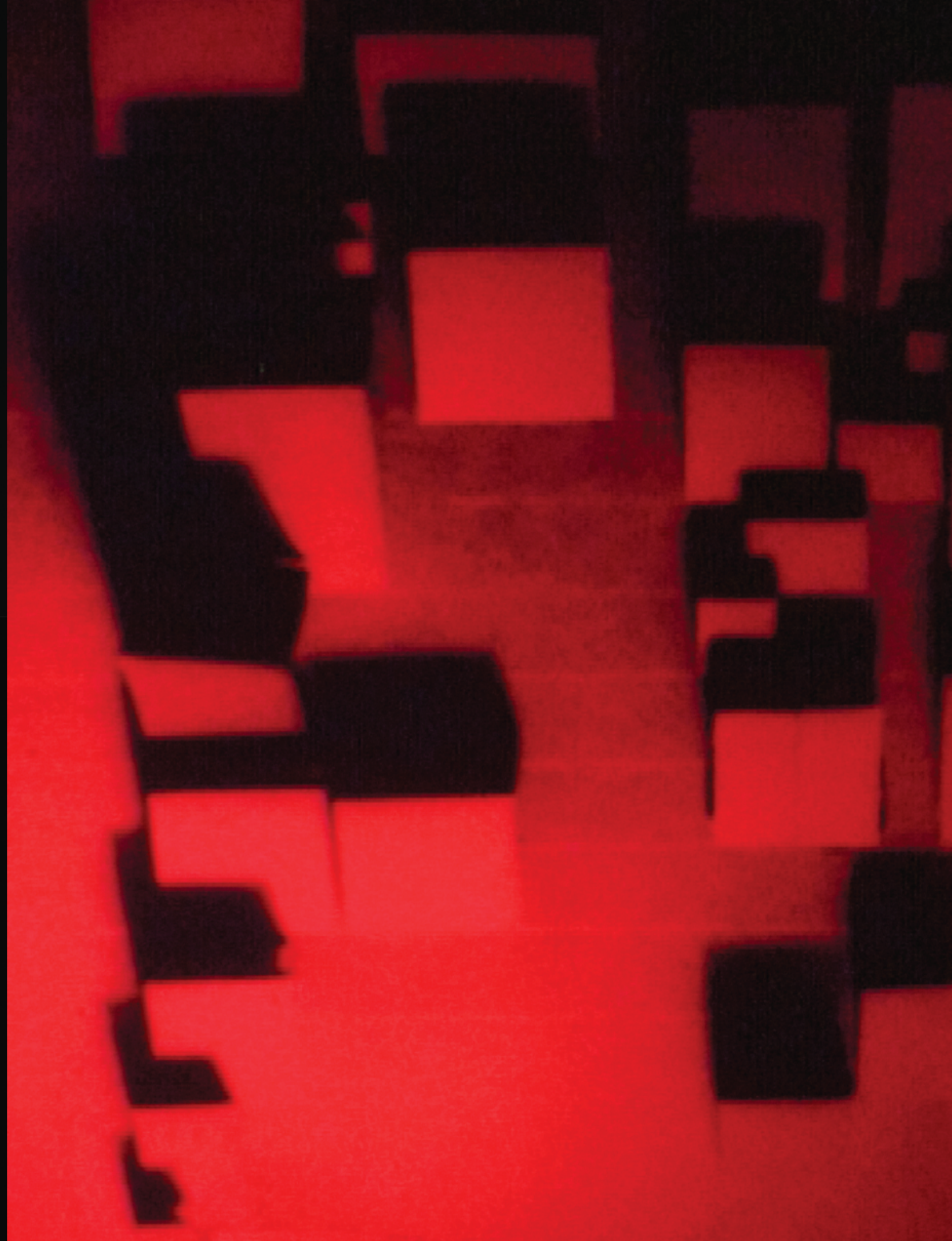




"There are  
feminine  
regions  
of the  
self that  
reside in  
both men  
& women...  
Veena Das









Nalini Malani

Can You Hear Me ?

