

DIS

ALL THAT
IS IN THIS THING

NEHA

KUDCHADKAR

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PLAY

ALL THAT IS IN THIS THING

By
Neha Kudchadkar

Curated by
Marie DuPasquier

At
DISPLAY, BERLIN

ALL THAT IS IN THIS THING

In continuity with the show “Pinch Your Thumb and Three Fingers”, in 2018, in Mumbai, India and directly following the residency and group show at CAN, Centre d’art Neuchâtel, Switzerland, “Cette Question qui vous Brûle les Lèvres”, early 2019, our collaboration with the Mumbai-based artist Neha Kudchadkar continues as we feature the exhibition “All That is in This Thing” at Display.

Periodic shedding of an outer skin surface, the molting processes, commonly associated with arthropods or reptiles, is here seized by Neha Kudchadkar. Casting off skin implies also the cast of one’s corporeality, a portrait in hollow; a lining of which all the rags detach and spread to become, each of them, metonymies of a once animated being, once engaged towards other beings and things. They carry information and evoke movement like the polysemic Latin origin of the term might recall. *Mutare* doesn’t only evoke transformation but also implies motion. The molt remains like a surviving wraith of this relationship - being/outside -, but once distributed in space, it is joining the circuit of things. Yet unformed, it informs. But what information does it carry and what information does it take away?

The exhibition at Display is based on the idea of a molt data storage with the attempt to translate and dislocate the intrinsic information in space. It lies on the ground, at the own measure of the artist, and arises like an ageless discovery brought to the soil. Its parts seem to spread rumors, reminiscences of ancient and personal memory conserved in the epidermis. Personal information, intimacy? Maybe “it looks like a fog. It is all over sensitive, almost tangible, it forms a heady color, it breathes literally; but never lets itself caught. It’s not an object of the past time (a family memory, for example); it is a place, a survivance (a memory of the air, among other things).” (1)

All the while questioning herself on the uselessness characteristic of information contained and the values we attribute along its circulation, Neha Kudchadkar operates a shift towards a reflection

on fragmentation of the self and the large use of our personal data for economic and political purposes in the digital era. This including phishing, distribution, integration, transfer, manipulation of information. Personal data – at first sight useless for common purposes –, and their mis/use, management/protection might well be seen as the emblems of accession of the information society. And what exactly remains? To whom does it really matter?

Text by Marie DuPasquier

(1) Georges Didi-Hubermann, *Génie du Non-Lieu. Air, poussière, empreinte, hantise*, 2001.



CROSSED INTERVIEW

Neha Kudchadkar & Johanna Ackva

In the context of the exhibition *All That is in This Thing* by Neha Kudchadkar at Display, a dialogue is established between the artist and the German dancer and choreographer Johanna Ackva. The collaborative processes and the mix of various practices - dance, installation, research or language - are central for both their artistic research. The exhibition was the occasion to ask them about this creative process at the intersection of different zones and mediums.

Could you describe your respective practice and the relevant topics at the moment?

Johanna : I work as a dancer and performer. I often work in a frame that someone else sets up, which I see as a subframe of their work within which I create by using my body. Besides that, I make my own work, which also mostly deals with the body and its movements. The way I create is oftentimes a translation of perception into movements, using different strategies to make visible what happens when you encounter the world with all your senses. Lately, I've been asking myself and others how we experience the ephemerality of our own bodies and lives. Therefore, I interviewed different people who have been encountering death and dying either in their professional or in their private lives.

Neha : A lot of my current work is about the space that my body occupies in the world, and in relation to it. I am primarily a ceramicist, but I'm also increasingly using other materials, because having these different restrictions actually opens up new possibilities. Scanning your own body, for example, is a very interesting process because you're distorting it to get into the scanner and you end up being controlled by the equipment that you use to make your work. You actually have a physical relation to it the medium because it is changing your body. I find that, actually, one of the most interesting reasons to use different materials: it acts back on you.

"Manipulation" originally comes from the latin manus (hand) and pleo (to fill), literally referring to the action of filling one's hand. The concept is defined

by "the action of manipulating something in a skilful manner." How does this resonates for the both of you?

Neha : For me it's crucial that making is a learning process and in that sense, I need to be open to being manipulated in the process. When I first started drawing, it wasn't comparable to the way I either work with clay or dance. I was moving in a way that wasn't very comfortable but allowing myself to do it. I came to realize that in fact, what you make is so dependent upon the way you move around it and your body language. Sometimes just that, being uncomfortable doing things, opens up ideas and areas that you didn't know about. And that is immensely freeing.

Johanna : There are many pair and group exercises of physical manipulation or touch that are used in dance, but I really like to begin a warm-up by touching myself. It helps me in "getting in touch" with how my body is like at the moment, on a very concrete physical level. So I do that very often. The first time I heard the term manipulation in the frame of dance, it was in connection with the Japanese choreographer Min Tanaka, who developed the Body Weather Training. He opened a so-called Body Weather Farm, where you could come and engage in the communal living with activities such as gardening and field work. Dance was part of this. The Body Weather manipulations are a set of clearly choreographed sequences of manipulation, in which one or two people work on a body by moving it. As a body being moved, it is about experiencing movements and sensations that you are capable of - without you doing them yourself. As your task is to observe yourself in relation to the influences of your surroundings, the weather, it is not actually passive.

Manipulation also implies "the action of manipulating someone in a clever or unscrupulous way." Neha, your work reflects on the relations between the body and technological devices, and maybe the use / misuse of information. Does "data manipulation" speaks to you?

Neha : First of all, I think of ceramics as technology. Another important thing is most relationships are also about negotiation and manipulation. In part of this work, I have taken information from my body and then manipulated it using technology. I'm thinking about data manipulation in that sense

– me manipulating my own data in that way – with the awareness that we are constantly extracting data from ourselves. I consider the abstractness of this extracted data to be extremely bizarre. How can it be useful for someone else? The point of my manipulation was to make it more abstract, more useless but without losing the connection to the body.

Neha, the ceramic pieces displayed in the space could be seen as dislocated information or data of yours. In the space they become traces of you. What information do these pieces bear?

Neha : The work made for this exhibition involved an almost obsessive collection of imprints of myself in different materials, in clay, in plaster, with the scanning, with the filming – each of them is extremely direct technology to collect information. These very direct impressions of my body are then distorted, magnified and reconfigured, by me, thereby creating new information.

Johanna, as a dancer and choreographer, how do you consider the concept of trace ? Can a space be marked by a movement?

Johanna : I was wondering about the word trace. It first comes to me as something that stays but if you think about the traces of an animal in the snow, a trace is something that will fade after some time. I thought about resonance as well, since dance, similar to music, doesn't work without it. There is a kind of dance that goes beyond the dichotomy between material and non-material, movements that don't leave a visible trace but somehow they resonate or radiate.

Neha : I see two bodies of dancers, the ones who radiate energy, as you put it, and the ones that retain the energy. It's not about one being better than the other, it's about the way every body processes movement.

Johanna : If we'd consider energy in a scientific, physical understanding, there's no new invention of energy, so when you speak of radiating energy you also must have been open to receive that energy from somewhere, and process or transform it.

Interview by Marie Jolliet.

NEHA KUDCHADKAR

Neha Kudchadkar is a visual and performing artist currently based in Mumbai. She is a graduate of the Royal College of Art, London, and the Faculty of Fine Art, M.S.U., Baroda, and has been a student at the Golden Bridge Pottery, Pondicherry.

She has shown her work in several groups shows within India and abroad, including at the Benyamini Contemporary Ceramics Center, Tel Aviv, Project 88, Mumbai and the Law Warschaw Gallery, St Paul. In 2018 she had a solo exhibition – Pinch Your Thumb and Three Fingers – at the Mumbai Art Room in Mumbai.

Neha Kudchadkar has chosen to negotiate various roles – dancer, ceramicist, researcher, teacher, choreographer, administrator, collaborator – that inform one another and broaden her approach as an artist and maker. She places herself in her social, political, material, cultural, and physical environment through her work, sometimes playful, sometimes somber, often using her body as the subject and object of the work and as a tool for the making of it.

Neha Kudchadkar is a recipient of the Charles Wallace India Trust Scholarship and the Junior Fellowship, Government of India. She is on the curatorial team of the Indian Ceramics Triennale and the International coordinator for Artaxis, an evolving network of independent artists. Neha is a co-founder and director of beej, a performing arts collective in Mumbai.

Molt I, II, III
2019

Un/glazed Terracotta
Digital Print on Archival Paper
Video (04.48 min)

Streaming

By
Shaunak Mahubani

For as long as I can remember, I've felt confined by my body. Not only in a gender-dysphoric manner, which I'm coming to terms with as largely due to social norms restricting my possibilities of expression, but rather in a this-is-a-spacesuit-and-i-need-to-get-out-of-it-now manner of anxiety. I feel my ability to consciously eject is intrinsically linked to my knowledge of the apparatus that keeps me tethered to this physical reality. Where will I go when I'm free to leave? Maybe I should I take more care of my body.

Curious to understand death and the continuous nature of life, Yarden Kurulkar first experimented with clay, the material she considers as most closely reflecting the human form. She has recently started working with 3D printing technology, which she finds 'can dissect and analyse the components that make us mortal.'⁽¹⁾ In her journey to identify a tune remembered from her childhood, the artist discovered a song sung at Bene Israeli funerals, a hark back to her upbringing. Kurulkar, based in Mumbai, created a 3D replica of her skull, inverted it and converted it into a vessel filled with water. This was charged with the song, recreated on a cello, from which arose a series of black and white photographs *Earworm* (2018, 426" x 45", Inkjet print on

Hahnemuhle Photo rag). The enigmatic images, lying somewhere between a starscape and a graph, create the illusion of transmitting data, of reporting back from the quest to capture the nature of intangible debris that collects over our material continuums.

I always look forward to meeting old trees. Their gross and stabilized energy systems—thanks to their mature grounding mechanisms, I imagine—allow for deep irrational interactions of our intangible bodies. An act of perceiving rather than purely encountering; of dipping into a deep reservoir, unafraid of drowning.

Neha Kudchadkar—trained as a dancer—starts her ceramic inquiries from the corporeality of the body. Prodding and pulling, stretching and moulding, she pokes holes into the notions of entity, enclosure, home, and structure. Her creations often become extensions of limbs and digits, redefining the extents of the physical body. Continuing this investigation, she measured the outer area of her body and used this information to create an equisized sheet of clay. This sheet was fragmented, each separated shard was individually held, felt, contoured, and fired, to produce *Molt* (2019, variable dimensions, ceramic). When seen spread across the floor of a room, the arrangement

takes on an unpredictable collectivity, presenting a labyrinth one may traverse in search for the existence of the immutable self.

What is the relationship between collectivity and agency? Am I defined by my sphere of control? How does control get translated into bits and bytes? Hito Styryl respects the right for technology to go on strike⁽²⁾. Whose side does that put her on? Which side is left?

Lucas Lugarinho, living and practicing in Mexico City, considers himself a top-notch employee. Collaborating with his office staff—his laptop, mobile phone, and budget projector—Lugarinho produces paintings for his employers The Images. Members of the Image family travel far across the internet to reach the office, where they undergo a long process that renders them as pigment on physical surface. Soon after the devastating fire at the National Museum of Rio de Janeiro in 2018, a 3D image of Luzia's skull found its way to Lugarinho. Luzia, the name given to the Upper Paleolithic period skeleton of a Paleo-Indian woman believed to be amongst the first wave of immigrants to South America, was greatly destroyed in the fire; her fossilized remains badly fragmented. For the artist, 'her continued existence is bound to her digital data [... which] now seeks refuge in

virtual platforms, news channels and even memes'⁽³⁾. As a way of re-archiving, Lugarinho fed this image back into Google's neural network hallucination program: the Deep Dream. The painting *Luzia's Dream* (2018, 50 x 60 cm, oil and acrylic on canvas) captures this moment within the endless circulation of data, an unexpected collision of ancestral deep time with uncertain digital futurity.

One of the ways in which pop-culture gets closest to understanding the nature of reality is through the conspiracy theory of living in a coded simulation run by an advanced civilization. I find this utterly fascinating, simultaneously terrifying and completely true. Although two tenets must be added here: One, our physical reality, even though it is only a simulation of 'code', is as real as the code that creates it; and two, the advanced programmers of our simulation are in continuum with ourselves. Second century philosopher Nagarjuna offers great insights in his treatises on Shunyata⁽⁴⁾.

Deploying performance, moving image and architectural intervention, Julie Béna deconstructs the traditions of narrative storytelling. As part of an ongoing reflection on transparency, the artist populates the polymorphic, 3D-animated world of Opportunity with characters inspired by research at the anatomical mu-

seum in Palazzo Poggi, Bologna. Through *Anna & the Jester in Window of Opportunity* (2019, Single Channel Video), Béna ‘demands new definitions for who gets to be human, while questioning the systems and architectures that regulate and govern (in)visible bodies.’⁽⁵⁾ The film’s post-human aesthetics—created in collaboration with Sybil Montet and Simon Kounovsky—juxtaposed with an all-too-human existential voice deeply shake the illusions of stability that we create to navigate our known reality.

(1) Amita Kini-Singh, ““So it Goes”: Indian artist Yarden Kurulkar’s personal explorations of life and death – in conversation”, ArtRadar

(2) Hito Styryl, “Photography and Political Agency”, The New School, 2013.

(3) Lucas Lugarinho, Unpublished manuscript, 2019

(4) Shunyata imperfectly translates to emptiness or nothingness. Read more in Nagarjuna, “Dialectical Method of Nagarjuna--Vigrahavyavartani”, translated by Kamleshwar Bhattacharya.

(5) Laura Herman, “Anna & the Jester in Window of Opportunity” Exhibition text, Jeu De Paume, 2019

IN CONVERSATION

JOHANNA ACKVA

Johanna Ackva (1989, DE) works as dancer/performer and choreographer. Collaborations and collective processes are central to her work, in which the body and its movements appear at the intersection of different lines of influence such as text, music, drawing, video and other materials. Her current interest moves around the roles and perceptions of death and dying within a societal context that is highly influenced by the ideas of security and profit. Besides an ongoing interview research, this topic also feeds into an upcoming piece, "Out of Our Hands" which will premiere in November 2019 at Tanzfabrik Berlin. Johanna Ackva studied anthropology and later on dance and choreography at Hochschulübergreifendes Zentrum Tanz Berlin. Recently, she has been a guest teacher at Universität der Künste Berlin and performing with Nicole Wendel (CORHYTHM, Kunstraum Potsdam), Lea Martini & Dennis Deter (Eine Geschichte der Welt, Kampnagel Hamburg), and within Suddenly collective's newest production ESPRIT (Tanzfabrik).

YASMIN BASSIR

Yasmin Bassir was born 1989 in Tehran, Iran and lives and works in Berlin since 2011. She studied Visual Communication at the Tehran University of Art, Iran and graduated at the University of Fine Arts Berlin (Meisterschülerin) in 2019. Her work is articulated around multiple and long term existential interrogations and a research with and around with Ceramics as a main material. Her work was shown in Berlin and Iran (Galerie Wedding, UdK, South Beach, Iran, etc.). She is a recipient of the DAAD Grant, Berlin for final project from Universität der Künste Berlin.

In conversation with
Johanna Ackva, Oct 23, 7pm
Yasmin Bassir, Oct 26, 11am

CARTE BLANCHE

SHAUNAK MAHBUBANI

Shaunak Mahbubani is a nomadic curator, currently living in India. They primarily pursue projects under the series 'Allies for the Uncertain Futures' initiated in 2016. This exhibition series is focused on exploring the possibilities of socio-political, ecological and techno-evolutionary futures through the lens of non-duality. They are interested in complicating boundaries between artwork and the viewer through participatory gatherings, diffusions, and the use of non-white cube spaces. They have received exhibition grants from apexart (New York) and the Inlaks Foundation, and were also a part of the inaugural 2017 edition of CISA (Curatorial Intensive South Asia) initiated by Khoj International Artist's Association and Goethe Institut Delhi. They have curated exhibitions at Embassy of Switzerland (New Delhi), Goethe Institut (New Delhi), Kalakar Theatre (New Delhi), Mumbai Art Room (Mumbai), 1Shanthi Road (Bangalore), and TIFA Working Studios (Pune). Mahbubani was Curator, Programming at The Gujral Foundation from Oct 2017 - Nov 2018, and is Prameya Art Foundation's Art Scribes Awardee 2018-2019.

The text carte blanche *Streaming* is to be read in the booklet of the exhibition and on the website www.display-berlin.com.

DISPLAY

Display was founded in 2015 as a junction point between artistic and curatorial practices; understood as a transitory space, where creation, presentation, representation and questioning contemporary practices could be done simultaneously.

Connection line between inside & outside, seen & unseen, the vitrine is a display. The exhibition room is a display. Display collaborates with artists, mainly living in Berlin, curators, thinkers to invest the space and create installations with a focus on transformations and processes. We aim here to give attention to experimenting curation, exhibition design and devices. We are engaged in questioning image systems, investigating the positions, movements and relationships of the different actors and bodies in the space. Display is a space for experimental artistic and curatorial practices and focuses its attention on "Contact Zones".

It is run by Marie DuPasquier. Display has been awarded with the Auszeichnung Künstlerische Projekträume – Initiativen 2018 – Prize of the City of Berlin – Senat Kultur & Europa.

www.display-berlin.com