



Varunika Saraf: *An infernal realm of our making, 2021-2022*
Courtesy: Private Collection & Chemould Prescott Road, Mumbai

Poetics of the Real and the Imagined

Curated by Latika Gupta, the exhibition highlights individual resilience and collective solidarity and features:
Anupam Roy, Pallavi Paul, Ranbir Kaleka,
Ranjit Kandalgaonkar and Varunika Saraf

The exhibition is borne out of the long-standing relationship between British Council and Charles Wallace India Trust and is a part of British Council's India/UK Together, Season of Culture, marking India's 75th anniversary of independence.

15 December 2022 - 2 March 2023
The British Council, 17 Kasturba Gandhi Marg, New Delhi 110 001

In partnership with

Charles Wallace
India Trust

Curated by

Latika Gupta

Featuring

Anupam Roy

Pallavi Paul

Ranbir Kaleka

Ranjit Kandalgaonkar

Varunika Saraf

Supported by

British Council's India/UK Together Season of Culture

India/UK Together
Season of Culture



About India/UK Together, a Season of Culture

This fabulous exhibition, *Poetics of Real and the Imagined*, is a culmination of an enduring partnership with the Charles Wallace India Trust and also an indication of a way ahead for India and UK innovation in artistic collaboration and connections in culture.

The India/UK Together Season of Culture is a year-long celebration of the long-standing relationship between India and the UK. Marking India's 75th anniversary of independence, it will see a vast programme of creative collaboration, education and cultural exchange take place online, and in cities across both countries.

Working with a number of partners and institutions in the field of Arts, Education and English, the British Council is developing a programme of cultural activity which will bring together people in both countries, raise awareness around key real-world issues, and strengthen and celebrate the UK and India's educational and cultural ties.

The Season of Culture will enable collaborations between emerging artists and arts organisations from both nations, acting as a platform for greater artistic exchange, global opportunities, and exposure.

The collaborations across art forms will foster creative expression and will be distinguished using digital innovation in the arts. The thought-provoking collaborations will also inclusion and diversity principles deeply embedded.

Over 1,400 artists will showcase their collaborations to millions of audiences across India, Britain, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland, through a wide array of arts such as theatre, dance, visual arts, literature, music, architecture, design, fashion, tech-art, and new media art.

The Charles Wallace India Trust (CWIT) alumni are an important part of the Trust's past 40 plus years of commitment to supporting artists and providing scholarship opportunities for Indian students to study in the UK. Over the years, the CWIT alumni have had access to groundbreaking ideas which address global challenges in arts and cultural heritage. This stunning exhibition at the British Council in New Delhi, *Poetics of the Real and Imagined* curated by leading CWIT alumna Latika Gupta brings together some remarkable pieces of contemporary visual arts in different media highlighting the astonishing skills of Indian artists who have done their research in the UK with CWIT support. The exhibition eloquently explores global challenges of climate change, equality of opportunity and at times, the forbidding march of progress as it 'holds the mirror up to life' (as Shakespeare wrote in Hamlet) for modern audiences today. I'm delighted this second exhibition with the Charles Wallace India Trust with five artists and alumni follows hot on the heels of the beautiful *Journeys of Clay and Fire*.

For more information on India/UK Together, a Season of Culture, please visit www.britishcouncil.in

Jonathan Kennedy
Director Arts
British Council, India

Why Art Matters

Since 1981 when the Charles Wallace India Trust (CWIT) was established, we have worked closely with British Council India. We are particularly pleased to be collaborating with the British Council on the India/UK Together Season of Culture with two new exhibitions, and both are curated by CWIT alumni. In 2022 *Journeys of Clay & Fire* presented the work of seven ceramic artists – all of them had been supported by CWIT at a critical point in their artistic journey. In 2023, CWIT is pleased to present *Poetics of the Real and the Imagined*, bringing together five visual artists who share a commitment to exploring ideas of justice and equity. The exhibition is curated by Latika Gupta. CWIT is extremely grateful to Latika for finding the time to curate this thought-provoking exhibition.

CWIT's visionary founders created some excellent founding principles that continue to inform our approach to grant-making today. Rule One was the idea of supporting only those neglected subject areas that are considered the least 'useful' by other institutions. Over the past four decades CWIT has been supporting visual artists, designers/makers, curators, theatre-makers, writers/poets, film-makers and musicians, as well as encouraging young Indians to develop conservation techniques. In recent years, many of the artists' residencies supported by CWIT have been enhanced through our partnership with the Inlaks Shivdasani Foundation. CWIT also offers a range of academic fellowships in the humanities and social sciences in conjunction with our UK partners.

The five artists presented in this exhibition span at least a generation. Anupam Roy is amongst the newest of CWIT grantees, awarded an MFA by De Montfort University, Leicester in 2020. Dr Pallavi Paul (2015) and Ranjit Kandalgaonkar (2018) were both supported to do their residencies at the Delfina Foundation and at Gasworks respectively. In 2012 Dr. Varunika Saraf went to Cambridge, UK to do a fellowship at the Centre for South Asian Studies; and Ranbir Kaleka was amongst the earliest artists supported by CWIT during the 1980s. Contemporary art that seeks to ask challenging questions about our world and about the human condition, has always been a part of the CWIT portfolio and perhaps it is needed now, more than ever.

Shreela Ghosh

Secretary

Charles Wallace India Trust

London, January 2023

Curator's note

Latika Gupta

Poetics of the Real and the Imagined presents an intergenerational perspective from CWIT alumni Ranbir Kaleka, Pallavi Paul, Varunika Saraf, Ranjit Kandalgaonkar and Anupam Roy, who received grants from the 1980s to 2021. They collaborated with a variety of institutions in practice and research-based programmes in the UK, supported by the Charles Wallace India Trust.

All five artists in this exhibition have a deeply committed practice that is rooted in sociopolitical ideas of justice and equity. Their work draws on poetry and politics, realism and dreamscapes, to underline and communicate, in a variety of media, the relationships of human subjects to each other and to history. These relationships are manifest in everyday contemporary life— be it the experience of urbanity, or ancestral and subsistence bonds with the earth. The migrant body, the laboring body, the trans-body inhabit in-between spaces, grappling with questions of identity based on gender, language and caste as they navigate places and lives that are rapidly being transformed in the global south.

The works selected for the exhibition bring our attention to a world that is increasingly marked by natural and man-made disasters, climate change and ecological precarity. Art has the power to hold a mirror to life while also bearing the promise of liberatory and emancipated futures. In this exhibition, even as we bear witness to fragile bodies alienated by hyper-capitalism and its attendant oppressions, we recognise individual resilience and collective solidarities forged in the intertwining of experiences.

Anupam Roy



Broken Cogs in the Machine

2022

Black ink on paper

104 x 59.25 in

Courtesy: The artist & Vadehra Art Gallery, Delhi



Broken Cogs in the Machine
2019

Black ink and Wiggle eyes on Nepali
handmade paper
22 x 98.5 in

Courtesy: The artist & Vadehra Art Gallery, Delhi

Anupam Roy

Anupam Roy's practice reflects his experiences and observations in the hinterlands of rural Bengal where he currently lives and works, the urban landscapes of metropolitan Delhi, as well as in Central and North Eastern India where he has engaged in different socio-political movements. He studied Visual Art at Ambedkar University, Delhi and did his second MA in Fine Art from De Montfort University, Leicester, UK supported by CWIT. Anupam's works have been exhibited at several exhibitions, including the 2018 Triennial: Songs for Sabotage, New Museum, New York, and his first institutional solo show at Project 88, Mumbai in 2019. He is the recipient of the 2018 FICA Emerging Artist Award and as part of the award, he recently did a solo show at Vadehra Art Gallery Delhi. Anupam has participated in different National and International Group shows, Seminars (SOAS, London); Online Panel discussions (Organised by Bordeaux Montaigne University, France, 2021), Fairs like IAF, Delhi; Frieze London and New York and has published an Art book, Zines, interviews, articles.

Ranbir Kaleka



Bound

2018

Single channel projection on a charred wood casket.

5 min loop

Performance: Naresh

Technical assistance in editing and fabrication: Raj Mohanty

Courtesy: The artist & Vadehra Art Gallery, Delhi

Ranbir Kaleka

Across the five decades of his artistic activity, he has produced both a remarkable body of paintings, vibrant with phantasmagoria and epic disquiet, as well as a body of trans-media works that combine conceptualist sophistication with a calibrated opulence of image. During the last twenty years, Kaleka has orchestrated a number of arrangements of the painted image and the projected image, arranged so as to cohabit in the same space. However, he does not embrace the simple juxtaposition, superimposition or mixed use of media to achieve a pluralising effect. On the contrary, he produces a meticulously calibrated adjacency of media, with which to disrupt the civilities of the layered image. Kaleka's images are only apparently simultaneous and palimpsestual. In experienced actuality, they are asynchronous: they lag behind one another, snag at one another, hold together in a spectral shimmer only to split apart in brief bursts before regaining a deceptive stability. In the subtle gap between the manifestations of these images, Kaleka breaks open a difference of spatiality, temporality, sensation and significance, making us intensely alive to the condition of viewerly reception. [From *The Poetics of the Liminal Moment* - Ranjit Hoskote]

Ranjit Kandalgaonkar



Rush Hour

2009

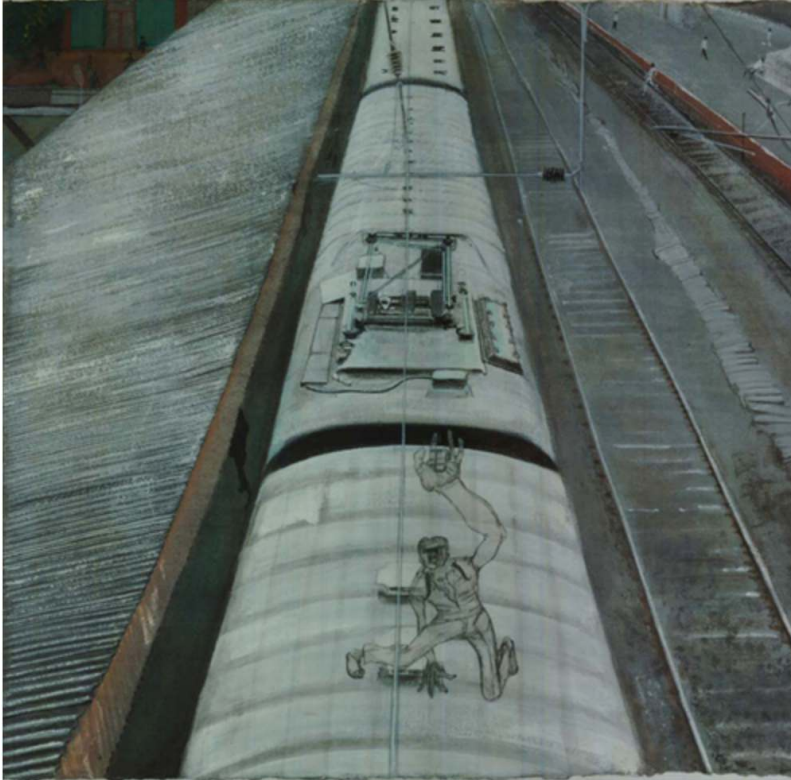
Microtip & Acrylic on Canvas

130 x 30 cm

Courtesy: The artist

At the precise moment when common goals are met or objectives are arrived upon, events unfold at a frenetic pace (they occur so quickly; they slow down) and identities are obscured causing everyday rituals to turn bizarre.

These rituals are performed everyday to reinforce/stamp our authority over the spaces of transit that we occupy.



Borivali v/s Virar

2009

Acrylics on handmade paper

71 x 68 cm

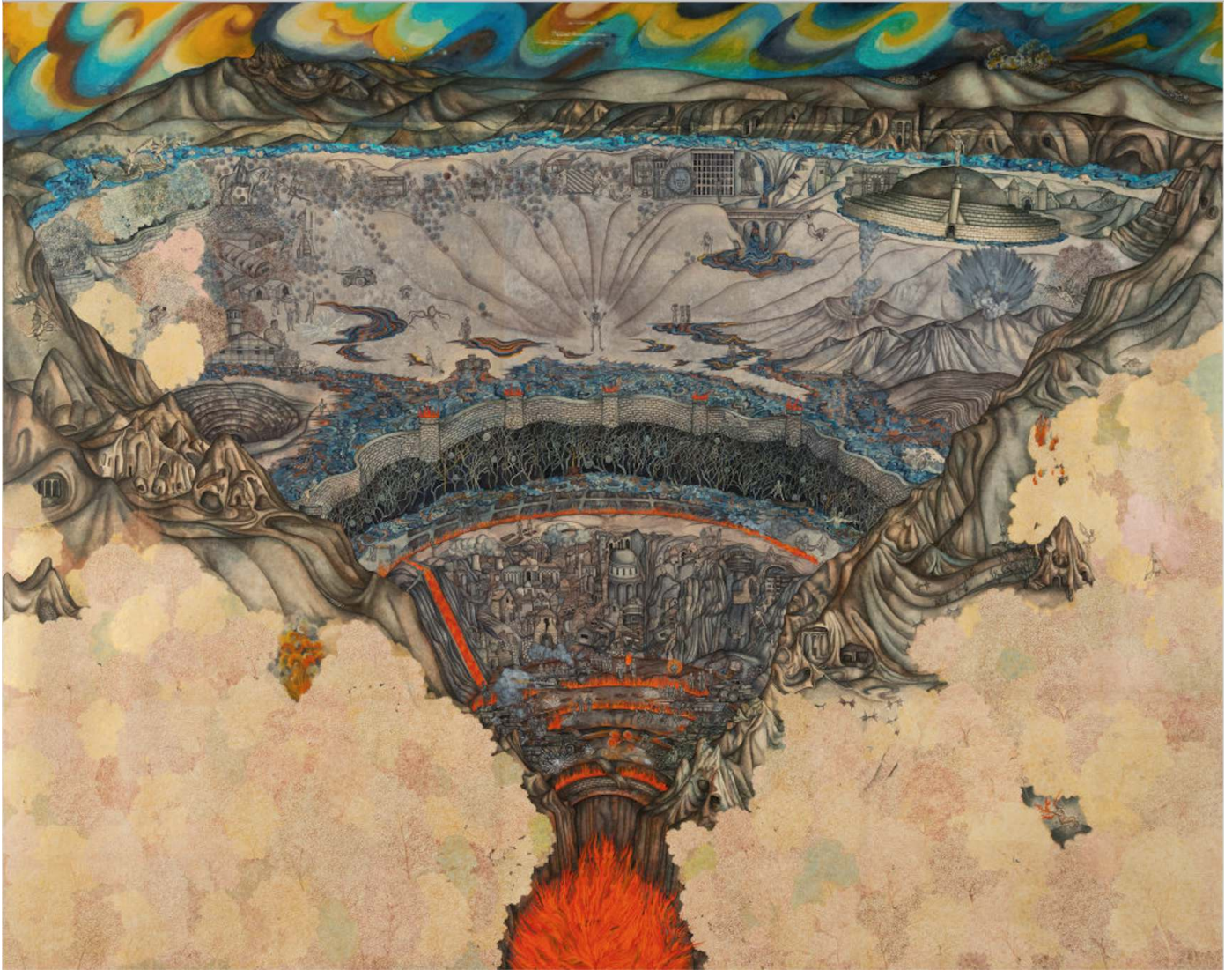
Courtesy: The artist

These "blindspots" atop train bogies get unofficially legitimised due to the sheer volume of travellers. Recording these in-between spaces which people are forced to inhabit is a mainstay. Conflict between commuters of these two stations on various issues is almost legendary.

Ranjit Kandalgaonkar

Ranjit Kandalgaonkar's art practice primarily comprises a lens directed at the urban context of cities. His city-specific projects map vulnerability within redevelopment strategies of urbanisation, combative histories of reclamation/ speculation or record timelines and *blindspots* -alternate markers of a city that's unravelling. His works respond to research conducted on modes of philanthropy practiced within community-based trusts; a subaltern imagination of the Bombay plague of 1896; subsequent loss of flora/fauna in colonial Bombay ; and a long-term project on latter day 20th century ship-breaking and invisible shipping infrastructures. They attempt to unlock trapped data through placing the work in the context of an unseen social history. Awards & fellowships include; Majlis Visual Arts fellowship, UDRI Architectural fellowship, The Leverhulme Trust Artist in Residence, The Wellcome Trust Seed award, SAI Harvard University Artist Residency and the Gasworks Artist residency. His work has been exhibited at UCL-Cities Methodologies, Bergen Assembly Art & Research Triennale, OCA Norway, S.a.L.E Docks, Sakshi Gallery, Gallery Ark, Maharashtra State Archives, BNHS Library, Colomboscope, Warehouse421, the Wellcome Collection, London. He lives and works in Mumbai, India.

Varunika Saraf



An infernal realm of our making

2021-2022

Watercolour on Wasli backed with cotton textile

67.25 x 85 in

Courtesy: Private Collection & Chemould Prescott Road, Mumbai



The Sky Set Ablaze

2020

Medium Watercolour on Wasli backed
with cotton textile

67 x 50 in

Courtesy: The artist & Chemould
Prescott Road, Mumbai

Varunika Saraf

Dr. Varunika Saraf is an artist and art historian based in Hyderabad. Saraf has participated in several group shows such as Sangam/Confluence, Heidelberger Kunstverein (2020), Critical Constellations, Foundation for Indian Contemporary Art, New Delhi (2019), Days Without a Night, Max Mueller Bhavan, New Delhi (2018), and Phantoms of Asia, Asian Art Museum, San Francisco (2012). In 2016 Saraf received the Amol Vadehra Art Grant. She was also the Summer Research Fellow at the Getty Research Institute, Visiting Fellow at the Max-Planck Institute, Florence, NTICVA Visiting Fellow at the V&A Museum and the CWIT fellow at the Centre for South Asian Studies, University of Cambridge. In 2010 she received the Senior Research Fellowship from the UGC. Saraf holds a PhD and an MPhil in Visual Studies from the School of Arts and Aesthetics, JNU, and an MFA in Painting from S. N. School, University of Hyderabad. She is represented by Chemould Prescott Road, where she recently presented her third solo show *Caput Mortuum*. In 2023, her project, *We, The People*, a set of 76 embroideries, will go on display at the Sharjah Biennial.

Pallavi Paul



Cynthia Ke Sapne / The Dreams of Cynthia

2017

Three-channel video installation, 44 mins

Courtesy: The artist and Project 88, Mumbai

Pallavi Paul

Dr. Pallavi Paul is a visual artist and film scholar living between New Delhi and Berlin. Her practice interrogates how the idea of “truth” is produced and argued in public life. Paul is particularly interested in the tension between the document and its aesthetic utterance – the documentary. She has received her PhD in Film Studies from the School of Arts and Aesthetics, Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi. Her work has been exhibited at venues including the Berlinische Galerie (2022), IFFR (2020), Berlinale Forum Expanded (2022), Tate Modern, London (2013); AV Festival, New Castle (2018, 2016); Beirut Art Centre, Lebanon (2018); SAVVY Contemporary, Berlin (2019, 2022); Contour Biennale, Mechelen (2017); New Alphabet School, HKW Berlin (2020, 2022); The Rubin Museum, New York (2019). She was the recipient of the DAAD Artist in Berlin program 2021-2022, and is currently a post-doctoral fellow at the ICAS:MP fellowship programme in New Delhi.

Latika Gupta

Latika Gupta trained in visual studies from JNU, Delhi and was a research fellow at SOAS, London (2017) on a Charles Wallace India Trust Fellowship. Her research on trans-Himalayan ritual and material culture has been supported by the India Foundation for the Arts. She has taught at the Dr. BDL Museum's postgraduate diploma course and was co-mentor for the Curatorial Intensive South Asia programme (Khoj & Goethe Institut) in 2019 & 2021. She has worked as a curator at the NGMA, KHOJ International Artists' Association and curated exhibitions of South Asian and international contemporary art, and the permanent exhibition for a trade routes artifacts museum in Kargil, Ladakh. She curated 'Homelands: A 21st century story of home, away and all the places in-between'; drawn from UK's British Council Collection and Arts Council Collection, that toured Delhi, Mumbai, Bangalore, Kolkata, Colombo, Lahore and Karachi in 2013-2014; 'Folk Archive' by Jeremy Deller and Alan Kane in 2015 (British Council Collection), and 'Jeevanchakra', Kolkata, 2016, as part of the Wellcome Collection's *Medicine Corner* project in India. As Associate Editor at Marg publications, she edited the quarterly journal from 2016-2020. She currently works as Director Projects at the Sher-Gil Sundaram Arts Foundation, teaches art history as visiting faculty at Ashoka University, Sonapat and is part of the editorial collective of '*100 Histories of 100 Worlds in One Object*'.

Acknowledgements

The exhibition would not have been possible without the support of

Anupam Roy

Pallavi Paul

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Ranjit Kandalgaonkar

Varunika Saraf

Shreela Ghosh, Secretary, CWIT

Vadehra Art Gallery, Delhi

Chemould Prescott Road, Mumbai

Project 88, Mumbai

Delphine Pawlik, Aanchal Sodhani, Nisha Kotian, Prahlad

Bisht, Ashish Sharma, Bipin Rawat

and the **British Council teams** in Delhi and Mumbai

About Charles Wallace India Trust

The Charles Wallace India Trust is a UK charity and a grant-making Trust established in 1981. Our alumni numbering almost 3,000 people, come from across India. We work in partnership with several institutions providing much needed opportunities for postgraduate study and research in the arts, heritage and humanities.

www.charleswallaceindiatrust.com

About the British Council

India/UK Together, a Season of Culture is a year-long celebration of the long-standing relationship between India and the UK. Marking India's 75th anniversary, it will see a vast programme of creative collaboration, education and cultural exchange take place online, and in cities across both countries. Working with a number of partners and institutions in the field of Arts, Education and English, the British Council is developing a programme of cultural activity which will bring together people in both countries, raise awareness around key real-world issues, and strengthen and celebrate the UK and India's educational and cultural ties.

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