



Press Release

Asia House presents

Step Across this Line

Contemporary Art from Bangladesh, India and Pakistan

Curated by Deeksha Nath

Asia House Gallery, 10 – 22 October 2011

London, 22 September 2011 – for immediate release

Asia House, the UK's leading Pan-Asian organisation, is proud to present **Step Across this Line: Contemporary Art from Bangladesh, India and Pakistan.**

Curated by New Delhi based independent art critic and curator **Deeksha Nath**, the exhibition features the work of cutting-edge contemporary artists from three countries of South Asia. Despite political and religious divides and problematic histories this new 'post-national' generation shares ideas and visions, stepping across the lines that divide them. Their work, in various media including video and installation, explores their colonial past, modern history and current regional, national and global identities.

The title of the exhibition, borrowed from Salman Rushdie's collection of essays, draws attention to how lines on maps can connect individuals, they can divide communities and so when they are drawn they are drawn across peoples lives. It thus calls into play the role of lines as boundaries but then also issues an invitation to cross the line, metaphorically, imaginatively and humanistically. This exhibition poses a larger question: Can we consider what we mean to each other? Do we love or hate? Do we love and hate? Can we be friends and enemies and, most importantly, how can we be simultaneously context-specific, proud and post-national?

Considering the regions' intertwined histories, cultures and communities and thus inherent knowledge of one another, what will yet another meeting accomplish? Throw in this mix the colonial history that ties the four nations (including the host country of this exhibition) together and you have created a situation for yet another meeting, another glimpse, another recognition and another conversation in a never-ending exchange which happens in fits and spurts, in continuation, in love and in hate, in exhaustion and hope.

The artists participating in this exhibition are **Naeem Mohaiemen, Wakil Rahman, Saira Ansari, Mehreen Murtaza, Abhishek Hazra, Priya Sen, Hasan Elahi, Unum Babar, Firoz Mahmud, Malik Sajad, Gauri Gill, CAMP (Shaina Anand and Ashok Sukumaran) and Asim Waqif.** The curator Deeksha Nath will function both as an insider and outsider as she has never visited Pakistan or Bangladesh but has lived and studied in London and now resides in New Delhi.

Press Preview and Press Launch

There will be a Press preview on 7 October at 11.00-12.30 and a Press Launch with Curator talk on 10 October at 13.30-17.30. (Curator talk at 14.00). To register for these events email mia.gulati@asiahouse.co.uk

Private View sponsored by India Art Fair

A special private view will be held on **13 October at 17.45-20.30** to coincide with the opening day of Frieze Art Fair which is just 5 minutes from Asia House in Regents Park. Asia House is delighted to be supported by **India Art Fair** for this special private view event. India Art Fair (formerly India Art Summit) is set to take place in New Delhi from 25-29 January 2012. The highly successful 3rd edition in 2011 included 84 exhibiting galleries from 20 countries, displaying a diverse range of renowned and emerging artists. With over 100,000 visitors over 4 days and a record number of new collectors (30-40%),

the 3rd edition in 2011 firmly established **India Art Fair** as the region's leading platform for modern and contemporary art, and demonstrated the vast potential of the Indian art market.

Exhibition Supporters

Asia House would like to thank Grosvenor Gallery for producing and supporting this exhibition. Marketing has been supported by Sothebys.

Drinks for the exhibition opening have been supplied by Cobra Beer.

Food for the exhibition has been supplied by Royal Foods/Bombay Halwa.

Sumi Ghose, Director of Cultural Programmes at Asia House, commented: *'At Asia House we are proud of our programmes celebrating the richness and diversity of the culture and peoples of Asia. This extraordinary exhibition offers us an opportunity to recognise and understand the lines that divide and separate cultures and nations, yet more importantly it allows us to celebrate the work of an artistic generation that breaks through borders, in search of a shared post-national future.'*

The Curator – Deeksha Nath

Deeksha Nath [b. 1976] is a New Delhi-based independent critic and curator. She has curated numerous successful exhibitions in India and abroad. She is also a Desk Editor, Art AsiaPacific (New York) and ArtEast (Kolkata). She has published widely in books, journals, national and international magazines and exhibition catalogues. Deeksha's previous assignments have been with the Tate Modern, London and the National Gallery of Modern Art, New Delhi. She has been visiting faculty to several fine arts, design and visual culture programmes in India. Deeksha is a Charles Wallace scholar and has trained at the Faculty of Fine Arts, M.S. University, Vadodara (B.F.A. Art History), City University, London (M.A. Arts Policy) and Goldsmiths College, London (M.A. Contemporary Art Theory).

Notes for editors

Exhibition Venue and opening hours

Asia House Gallery and Fine Rooms

63 New Cavendish Street

London W1G 7LP

T: +44(0)20 7307 5454

W: www.asiahouse.org

Exhibition opening times: 10 – 22 October Mon – Sat, 10.00 – 18.00

Asia House

Asia House is the leading Pan-Asian body in the UK and is a non-profit, non-political organisation, covering 40 countries of Asia, from the Persian Gulf in the west to the Pacific Ocean. Through our stimulating and vibrant Business, Policy and Cultural Programmes, we aim to shape and contribute to the understanding and knowledge of Asia in the UK. **Step Across this Line** exhibition forms part of Asia House's year-round cultural programme, which has a reputation for high quality talks, discussions, performance and film covering the arts, culture and current affairs of Asia. Asia House also runs the Pan-Asia Film Festival and the UK's leading annual pan-Asian literary festival, the Asia House Festival of Asian Literature.

Artist Biographies

Abhishek Hazra

Abhishek Hazra is a visual artist based in Bangalore. His work explores the intersections between technology and culture through the narrative device of a 'visual fable'. He is interested in the social history of scientific practices, and his current, ongoing project attempts to explore the history of science research in colonial India. Abhishek works with animated shorts and digital slideshows that often integrate textual fragments drawn from fictional scenarios. He is also interested in the way in which the languages of science journalism and information visualisation participate in the complex dynamics of 'knowledge dissemination' and 'translation'.

Asim Waqif

Delhi-based Asim Waqif studied architecture at the School of Planning and Architecture, Delhi, where he currently teaches as Visiting Faculty. After initially working as an art-director for film and television he later started making independent video and documentaries before moving into a dedicated art-practice.

His recent projects have attempted a crossover between architecture, art and design, with a strong contextual reference

to contemporary urban-design and the politics of occupying/intervening/using public spaces. Some of his projects have developed within abandoned and derelict buildings in the city that act like hidden activity-spaces for marginalized people.

CAMP (Shaina Anand AND Ashok Sukumaran)

CAMP is based in Mumbai, India and was founded in November 2007 by Shaina Anand, Sanjay Bhangar and Ashok Sukumaran as a collaboration with Khoj International Artists Association, New Delhi. CAMP attempts to create a new format for collaborative production, beyond the traditional or historic role of artists and their collectives. It began from a will to work collectively in areas around technology, art, archives, the public sphere, and contemporary life. Working with many media forms and platforms: radio, video, films, books, software, hardware and other assemblies or mixes, CAMP seeks to create structures of support and enquiry, and formats of production, distribution and exhibition.

Firoz Mahmud

Firoz Mahmud was born in Khulna, Bangladesh. Based in Dhaka & Tokyo. Did his BFA & MFA from Dhaka University(2001), MFA from Tama Art University(2007) and PhD (2010) Tokyo University of the Arts. Attended Residency at Rijksakademie Van Beeldende Kunsten (2003-04), Amsterdam, Ozu Culture Center (2009), Italy and ISCP/ International Studio and Curatorial Program (2011) in New York. His work also exhibited at the Metropolitan Art Museum in Tokyo, Fuchu Art Museum, Ota Fine Arts, University Art Museum, Mori Art Museum (Center Gallery), The University Art Museum, Tokyo University of the Arts, Hiroshima City Museum of Contemporary Art, Aichi Prefectural Museum of Art (2010) in Japan, kunsthau Tacheles in Berlin, Rochester Contemporary Art Center, New York and Sovereign Art Foundation and many more.

Gauri Gill

Gauri Gill was born in Chandigarh, India in 1970. She received BFAs at the Delhi College of Art, New Delhi (1992) and at the Parsons School of Design, New York (1994); and an MFA in Art at Stanford University, California (2002). She works mainly in Photographs. Her work has been exhibited widely in India and across the world. Solo exhibitions include: 'What Remains', Green Cardamom Gallery, London (2011); 'Notes from the Desert', Nature Morte Gallery, New Delhi; Matthieu Foss Gallery, Mumbai; Focus Gallery, Chennai; Urmul Setu, Lunkaransar (2010-11) and 'The Americans', Nature Morte Gallery, New Delhi; Thomas Welton Art Gallery, Stanford University; the Chicago Cultural Center, Chicago; Bose Pacia Gallery, Kolkata and New York; Mississauga Central Library, Mississauga (2008-2011). Group exhibitions include: 'The Matter Within: New Contemporary Art of India', Yerba Buena Center for the Arts, California (2011); 'Generation in Transition', Zacheta National Gallery of Art and various others.

Hasan Elahi

Hasan Elahi is an interdisciplinary artist whose work examines issues of surveillance, simulated time, transport systems, borders and frontiers. His work has been presented in numerous exhibitions at venues such as SITE Santa Fe, Centre Georges Pompidou, Sundance Film Festival, Kassel Kulturbahnhof, The Hermitage, and at the Venice Biennale. Elahi was recently invited to speak about his work at the Tate Modern, Einstein Forum, the American Association of Artificial Intelligence, and at TED Global. His awards include grants from the Creative Capital Foundation, Art Matters, a Ford Foundation/Phillip Morris National Fellowship, and an artist grant from the Asociacion Artetik Berrikuntzara in Donostia-San Sebastian, Spain. His work is frequently in the media and has been covered by The New York Times, Forbes, Wired, The Guardian, BBC, CNN, ABC, CBS, NPR, Al Jazeera, Fox, and has appeared on The Colbert Report. Hasan Elahi is Associate Professor of Art at the University of Maryland where he is Director of Digital Cultures and Creativity in the Honors College. He was a 2010 Alpert/MacDowell Fellow and in 2009, he was Resident Faculty and Nancy G. MacGrath Endowed Chair at Skowhegan School of Painting and Sculpture. He currently lives outside of Washington, DC roughly equidistant from the CIA, FBI, and NSA headquarters.

Malik Sajad

Malik Sajad was born in Kashmir and now studies in London. He was deeply affected by the brutal war that devastated his homeland. At an early age he discovered cartoons as a way to cope with the daily tragedy and suffering that was around him. Humor, irony and metaphor became tools of his expression. He has also found graphic novels to be a powerful tool in his expression. The sharp rupture in Kashmiri life due to the war has inspired him to capture the lost heritage of Kashmir in colorful paintings and installations

Mehreen Murtaza

Mehreen Murtaza was born in Riyadh, KSA; received a Honors in BFA from Beaconhouse National University, Lahore, 2008. She was accepted for the Gasworks Residency funded by The Charles Wallace Pakistan Trust - Rangoonwalla Foundation Award, UK, 2010 and has exhibited frequently in the UAE, UK, Germany, India and Pakistan. Murtaza's works have also been acquired by collections such as the Museum of Monaco, DMZ Bank, Frankfurt, Cartwright Hall: Bradford City Art Gallery and Museum, UK and Devi Art Foundation, New Delhi. As an allegory of human life, Murtaza's emphatic theatricality suggests an idealized landscape suspect for the misguided illusions of the Absolute - the ultimate promise of technological prowess to find the Truth for us.

In spite of her politically-charged imagery, Murtaza is less interested in political events per se; she is more concerned with exploring the process of mediating the essence of an event through images. Her narratives are based on what she calls “factions” – an idiosyncratic fusion of fact and fiction.

Priya Sen

Priya Sen’s work as a filmmaker has been shown at festivals including the Berlinale; Black Lily Music and Film festival, Philadelphia; ‘VideoMix India’ La Casa Encendida, Madrid; Exis Experimental Film & Video festival, Seoul; and has been traveling with ‘Indian Highway’ since 2009. She has had solo exhibitions this year, at Khoj Studios in New Delhi, and Project 88 in Mumbai, and was part of ‘Something I Have Been Meaning to Tell You’, curated by Sunil Gupta and Vidya Shivadas at the Vadehra Art Gallery, New Delhi. She received the Charles Wallace fellowship in 2010 for a residency at Gasworks in London, followed by a residency at Nottingham Contemporary in Nottingham, UK, in the same year. She worked at Sarai-CSDS, New Delhi from 2005 - 2011, as a researcher and media practitioner with the Sarai Media Lab and Cybermohalla, and collaborated in collective contexts across a range of media forms and vocabularies. Priya works as an editor, sound designer and freelance filmmaker, and has recently moved to Bangalore to teach film at the Srishti School of Art, Design and Technology.

Saira Ansari

Saira Ansari was born in Sao Paulo, Brazil in 1982 but moved to Pakistan in late 1983. She received her BFA Degree in Painting in 2004 from the National College of Arts (NCA), Lahore. She returned to her Alma Mater for a Masters Degree in 2009, where she graduated with an MA (Hons.) Visual Arts degree in January 2011.

Ansari’s practice consists of experimenting with mixed media and she has moved fluidly between 2D and 3D in several of her works. A large body of her work is based around text based pieces and small ‘scribble-like’ drawings. She also maintains a blog under The s.a. Project title as part of her art practice. Her content often contains strong opinions about the structures of power that she observes in her personal life, around her and within the art world.

Ansari has participated in several group exhibitions in Lahore and Karachi since 2003. Her first solo exhibition ‘the work that will probably never end’ was held at the Grey Noise gallery in 2010. In 2011, Ansari has participated in 3 international shows – IAS 2011, Delhi, Art Dubai 2011 and a group show at Jamjar gallery, Dubai – and is working on the fourth one which will be held at the Asia House, London, later this year. Ansari currently resides in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil where she is completing her MA dissertation on public spaces of art in Pakistan.

Wakilur Rahman

Wakilur Rahman was born in Bangladesh in 1961. He did his BFA from 1976-1981 at Dhaka Art College, Bangladesh. From 1984-1986 he did his M.F.A. at Central Academy of Fine Arts Peking, P.R. of China. He has been living and working in Berlin and Dhaka since 1988. Since 1982 he has been the founding member of the artist group SHOMOY which participated in most of the group exhibitions. He has participated in most of the National, Young Artist’s Exhibitions and Asian Art Biennale organised by Bangladesh Shilpakala Academy since 1979.

Naeem Mohaiemen

Naeem Mohaiemen uses essays, photography, and film to explore histories of the international left and failed utopias. Project venues include Bangladesh Shilpakala Academy, Gallery Chittrak (Dhaka), Experimenter (Kolkata), VM Gallery (Karachi), Third Line (Dubai), and Green Cardamon (London). Chapters from his history of the 1970s ultra-left have shown at Frieze Art Fair, Sharjah Biennial, New Museum (New York) and MUAC (Mexico City). Naeem’s publications include *Chittagong Hill Tracts in the Blind Spot of Bangladesh Nationalism* (editor), *System Error* (with Lorenzo Fusi, Silvana), "Islamic Roots of HipHop" (*Sound Unbound*, MIT Press, DJ Spooky ed.), "Flying Blind: Waiting for a real reckoning on 1971" (*Economic & Political Weekly*, India), "Everybody Wants To Be Singapore" (*The Good Life*, Art in General), "Adman Blues" (*Indian Highway*, curated by Hans Ulrich Obrist and Julia Peyton-Jones, Serpentine Gallery), "Mujtaba Ali: Amphibian Man" (*Rest of Now: Manifesta 7*, Rana Dasgupta ed.), "Asterix and the big fight" (*Apex Art Journal*), and "Beirut, Silver Porsche Illusion" (*Men of the Global South*, Zed Books). His work has been featured in *Granta* (Pakistan Issue) and *Rethinking Marxism*. Naeem also explores contradictions between Bengalis in marginal migrant status in Northern countries, and majoritarian (and authoritarian) status inside Bangladesh. As part of this work, he wrote the chapter on religious and ethnic minorities in the Ain o Salish Kendro Annual Report (askbd.org), contributes to the Daily Star newspaper (thedailystar.net) and made the film "Muslims or Heretics: My Camera Can Lie", which was screened for EU Human Rights Commissioners in London.

Unun Babar

Unun graduated in 2007 from Beaconhouse National University, Lahore with a distinction in Fine Art. Her interests lie mainly in photography and video installation art besides also producing drawings. Her work is mainly about the exploration of media, delving into new ways of melding the boundaries between them. Since graduating, she has been involved in a number of group shows as well as a solo, along with being actively engaged in teaching at BNU. She is currently pursuing a graduate degree in New Media Art in the US.

For further information and images, please contact:

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For further information on Asia House, please visit www.asiahouse.org.