

I HAD A DREAM OF CHASING A DREAM



D E B A N G O N A P A U L

I Had a Dream of Chasing A Dream

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Abstract

In this dissertation, I am talking about memory and experience to think about gender inequality. Inequality shapes its way into society through the institution in our space of interaction with others. Institutions such as families, schools, and bureaucratic areas are not mere neutral spaces of interaction; instead, they carry a specific form of inequality inscribed in them. There is a need to unpack this affective nature of the institution, for which I have taken the primary form of Institutional object, which is an archive to look for specific answers which are not visible. Archives are responsible for the collective memory of our society where this form of violence against particular gender takes birth. The collective memory assigns a subjective role in society, creating a sensory to check the already assigned role in reality. To get over this mode of life of assigned role and subjectivity as such, we shall look more closely at how we can take back this decentered subjectivity to its original subjectivity. I am also going further not only to create memories which were already there rather recreate an archive of refined memory through this mingling of visual elements. Space plays an important role in the setup of experiences and archives, so what can be the ways to direct me to relook at the process happening in space at any time. We often tend to think of archives as something from the past, but they are actually taking their elements from the present to create to undertake a future project.

My artistic investigation looks at this process of archiving in relation to affect produced by space and object. I am also trying to closely think about the forms associated with my practice and my work space to analyze critically by reflecting on my memories from the past.

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Introduction

Human beings' experiences are not merely a representation of a mixture produced by space and time in its entirety. Rather these are varied responses to a lived reality in profound ways of making connections with things, places and people. The memory we create in our mental world gets faded away if not given importance in terms of their association with certain constraints. The way people respond to the lived reality has now arrived at a different paradigm resonating to a different version of experiences, nuances and concepts. The landscape of people's lives has changed to a greater extent. Therefore, the sensorial experience is also being transformed due to discourses around landscape.

In my dissertation, I will investigate about the nature of reality around me through landscape transformation, affective dimension with it. I will also be looking at networks of experience and the emotions it can incorporate through this mode of the life cycle. I have broadly categorized the experiences and their area of study. In the first chapter I will be discussing the logicalities from a gendered perspective of reality. I have tried to locate the position of women in society and the cultural inferences associated with it. Furthermore, my experience of journey and my interaction with new places have been articulated in the following paragraphs. I have tried to map the effect produced by space to the memory. For this, I have looked at space as a visual element which changes its nature through every subjectivity.

In the second chapter I have argued about the role of archives as a specific area of study in knowledge production. For me, the question of archive is very delusional in nature, archive always contained in very robust and repressive mechanisms. The archival system is public in nature but private in terms of access. They are governed through a specific set of instructions. Two things that come to my mind are one who has access to tell the story or knowledge production as such and at the same time who has the power to tell that it is authentic and contains truth. Impacts of political and economic forces can erupt and also change these discourses of truth viz a viz reality. Archives always hide something from reality and show only what could be useful in the future from the memorized. I am concerned with how and who will decide what is useful in the present to memorize it for the future. The reality of any event is integrated into the context of that event, the space, and the time of the event. As Benjamin has said when we borrow something from the collective memory and make it seem as if it's complete in its

subjectivity within the present, it leaves its aura. Somehow what has been memorized is the truth and kind of remembrance of that event. History is being written and memorized in this way. Archive in some sense has anarchy of rules and certain paradigms. In this sense, how archives are often rethought in order for us to hide the static and dynamic factors which are clearly showing impact in my experiences.

In the third chapter I have tried to locate my practice with the Indian context by citing some of the major works in Indian Culture which relates to my way of looking at

experiences. and memory as well. I have discussed the work of Rabindranath Tagore's views on the position of women in society. The positions of society in which women were objectified with an association of passivity. How an object is not acting itself is not alive; similarly, the women were not allowed to act. I am also pointing to the idea of emancipation through the novel. To think more about the role which society of men and men in the body of women should play in the context of women emancipation. Afterwards, I am mentioning how woodcut as a medium became my language. In the end, the role of the beginning of the large scale work and artists that I admire.

Chapter 1 - Experience of reality through a woman's lens and Culture of biasedness.(having dreams as a girl)

We all have dreams. Dreams that drive us to act and they give us the courage to create something. But sadly, the culture where I grew up does not allow a young girl to dream. Since childhood, I have been hearing in my society that girls should always follow what their parents decide for them, what patriarchal men and women of society, and what their husbands decide for them. They are made weak systematically through certain ideological apparatus¹, and are not allowed to make decisions.

Science has been categorized as natural science, social science and formal science. The term 'Sex' is a term of natural science and 'Gender' is a term of social science. Sex in biology defines as only male and female while gender is a social construct. For species to continue their generations, sex is defined as the participants in the process of sexual reproduction. Only the opposite sexes can reproduce a new organism where roles have been defined of male and female as active and the passive respectively. This clear distinction between the roles and their symbolic representations creates a stereotype in society that results in the creation of women's identity as inferior to men in society. The binaries that are assigned with the roles of sex such as masculinity and femininity, active/passive determine the position of the gender in the society.

The rise of science as a field of study started with descrimination against women, also a consequence of male dominated society. Although the marker of this segregation is the binaries formed around our educational discourse. And these binaries are stated in such a way that it has been confirming the supremacy of male mind and inducing a dimension of inferiority among other genders. Before I start to identify the stereotypes in society that have been inculcated by the epistemology created around natural science, I would like to talk about the terms that are considered to be the same but produce different effects and have differing impacts.

The era of advancement in the area of natural science was being done by most scientists and they were male, creating an educational discourse around natural science that was discriminating against the women. It reserves the checks and balance of active and passive roles of sex as men actively researching and knowledge about the natural world from the perspective of man only and passively women simply accepting those norms. The active role of females in the knowledge making around natural science would have had a greater impact in society to understand the natural world with no gender bias. That only women and men are natural and other than this are not natural and not acceptable and it creates a society discriminating against all other gender. And then inside the naturalisation of gender,

¹. Ideological state apparatus, a term developed by Marxist theorist Louis Althusser to denote institutions such as education, churches, family, media, labor unions and law that were formally outside of state control but served to instill the values of the state in order to protect, to interpellate those affected by it.

only male is active, guiding the roles making it again discriminate even in the natural sex, against the female role since only male organ contribute actively in reproduction process. The way in which it is being taught to children, the language used, be it using visual aid or the storytelling creates a diverse effect on social norms. Terms like, decay and debris are assigned for females and the uses of these in science textbooks to illustrate their role while terms like remarkable process, producing and magnificent shows the negative connotation relating to females and positive connotation assigned to male.

The use of term of decay, dying in natural science also checks the position of women in society -the unholiness at the time of menstrual cycle, if a girl is on menstrual cycle she is not allowed to cook food or worship god as she is not holy cause of the decay process. These terms and their effect on society is very much visual in the clear dispossession of the agency of females can be seen. Another example I wanted to talk about, the dream that I pursue, is to express myself, having a deep connection to my family's past. My grandmother once shared her story about how she used to like climbing trees and used to pluck fruits from trees. These tall mango trees, and climbing was her favorite sport. As usual, one day her mother married her to my grandfather, she was 16 years old. In 1971. This was the time of war between West Pakistan and East Pakistan (i.e. Bangladesh). She had to leave her country and come to India. Afterwards, she has never been able to see her village again and her favorite mango tree as well. I asked her, what was the most painful experience for her?" She said "I still miss climbing up to my mango tree".,

"Looking through the moon" is the piece that I did back in India where it represents the heredity that I carry within myself. This woodcut piece is inspired from the story of my grandmother's mango tree where I took my own visual elements of a banana tree while doing my bachelors from Santiniketan. And there I did my journey to look through the past and keep the spirit of dreaming.



figure: 1

Looking through the moon,
medium- Woodcut; size- 4' x6'; 2017

I don't remember the day I was born. But when I try to remember, a story that my mother told me strikes my mind. In Hindu religion we have thousands of God and Goddesses. And there is a goddess named Laxmi² Ma. A large part of India is mainly dependable on harvesting. So when there is pre winter season (called Sarat kal) we worship Goddess Laxmi² who represents wealth and prosperity. And as a gratitude for good harvesting and decorate our houses with Alpona³ with motifs of paddy leaves, dhaner bhar, the pot where we store dhan or rice; chalta fruit i.e elephant apple surrounded by her footprints.

Alpona³ is a liquid paste made of powdered rice and water. The footprint of goddess laxmi² is drawn to invite her inside the house to bless the family with wealth. The ritual of alpona³ making is usually practiced by women and passed on to their daughters. It has also become an important way of expression by the women in our patriarchal society. Growing up I have seen my mother make beautiful Alpona³ all over the floor of the house. Somewhere I felt that alpona became her place to reside in. The process of making those motifs and swirls and lines became a place where she could be herself and express herself where she is in the role of neither a daughter, wife or mother but who wants to become someone more than these roles and that is herself surrounded by something that she really enjoys doing passionately. Here I have shown myself as a young Debangona, who dreams of breaking away from those barriers of gender inequality in a household space and stepping out in a world that doesn't bound her in any way. During a brief conversation with my mother I found out that after I was born I brought wealth and good news of my father's promotion in his job. To recreate that event I used footprints of Laxmi Goddess where it resembles my arrival to the world, bringing wealth at home. dreams of breaking away from those barriers of gender inequality in a household space and stepping out in a world that doesn't bound her in any way.



figure: 3



figure: 4

figure: 2

². Laxmi, also called Shri, Hindu goddess of wealth and good fortune.

³. Alpona or alpona (Bengali: আলপনা) is a South Asian folk art style, traditionally practiced by women, and consisting

New Place (Space as Visual element : Connection to the Journey)

I learnt how buses work differently here on my first day of school. In India the buses have a conductor in addition to the driver, to collect the ticket or to stop the buses at your destination. But here in Oslo there is no conductor. One has to push a Stop button and then the driver stops the bus. At my stop no one had pushed the button so the bus didn't stop, and I had to walk a long way to get to the school.

I find Oslo is about short periods of sudden sunshine, lots of gray weather and quite a lot of rain. When I was exploring the city in the month of September it suddenly started raining in the city. I was not prepared for the rain. I was following the map on my cellphone to reach the UDI office for my paperwork, when suddenly my cell phone switched off automatically. It was my 5th day in this new city, and I did not know the way or the right subway to reach the school or my place. I didn't know how to pronounce Jernbanetorget then. I was stuck in the middle of the city.

As my Indian bank card was not working and I had no cash with me, all the money was deposited to the school's account, which I can withdraw if I have a bank account here. Opening a bank account takes time and time. It took me one month to finally open an account. Till then I learnt to roam around the city without a cellphone. And to draw maps with notes in my pocket diary.

These experiences of changes in simple surroundings helps me to understand its value. Everything that is happening now will become a memory to me. These memories change their shape through time. Memories and the ways space is particularly associated with memory speaks about the experience of newness. This newness is a feeling of a new place and its surrounding public sphere. Infrastructural spaces of the city such as bus transport, and educational institutions appear in front of us as neutral physical spaces, but in reality, they are also producing an affect. The infrastructure space is inducing in us a sense of becoming. In different ways, we can relate to certain demographic changes and the spatial transformation of any place. The question arises here: what would be the attributes linked to being looked at by the changes, what type of demography was there in the past? and what is it now? In other words, how I experienced the process of this pervasive transformation. The transformation is visible but could only this be called urban practice? Or there could be some other practices that are also urban.

As Hillary Angelo in her paper looks very closely at the perspective from which one defines the process of transformation. She argued as John Berger talks about the way in which perspective was being defined through the artifact only. The presence of the artifact in a particular space & time tells a story and the eyes of the person looking at the work of art define the perspective in which the story is being told as where the eyes are present.

From the early nineteenth century, industrial cities were described with their human density, diversity, isolation, poverty and anomie to what is not a city. In Europe, binaries such as Agrarian/Industrial and Traditional/Modern were the main forms that explained the

new social norms and spatial transformation. They were defined with the latter characteristics. Thus, the perspective was being drawn for the urban practices and their particular social form, even food culture movement and urban greening gave a way to fix urban social problems. In urban spaces, the small scale, culturally homogenous, and private green spaces were being installed for setting up examples. It produced different experiences and selectivities based on them. These experiences resulted in certain consequences such as firstly, a hegemonic urban environment outside of the natural environment. Secondly, nature as an indirect immanent resource for social, moral and psychological benefits extracted out of it. Ways of seeing nature were also changing with this urbanized practice. A new set of practices are emerging through it that serve to a benefit.

One day I was crossing the street by Akerselva when suddenly something in the sky caught my attention. It was the sky. Not the northern lights but the normal winter sky. I observed an interesting fact that I encountered for the first time. It was the upside down vignette gradient. I don't want to go for the scientific explanation but to do visual realization. The evening sky has a different impression with upside-down.



figure: 5

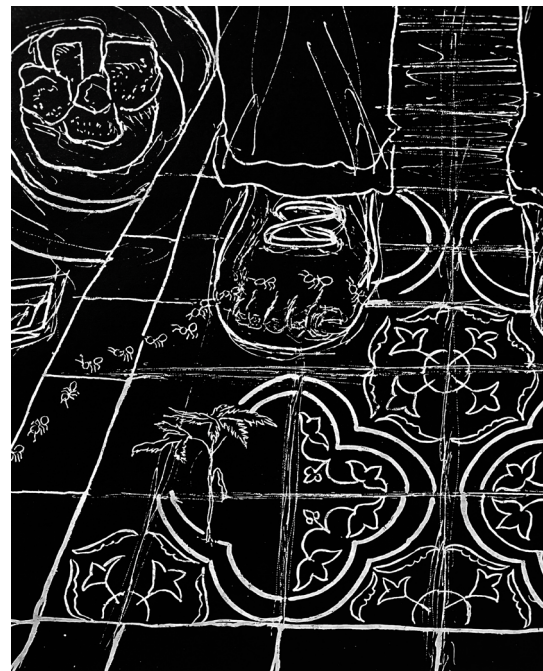


figure: 6

For me, landscape is a space of gathered knowledge. A collection of memories to me. The pieces I made are in a transitional state, as if caught between growing & dying. They are capable of aspiration, decay & renewal of memory. The visual aspect I use is a very fragmented way. I wanted to portray the seen/related objects to my ways of making. It helped me to observe my surroundings. Like the saucepan on the table, the ants that are moving on the floor. I began to remember events, and wanted to focus on both them and the objects that triggered the memories.

Chapter 2 - The Fragile Memory and Ephemeral Experience of Memory Object : Archival Logic

Modernity stands on the monolithic pillar of the “archive” where one can consult a comprehensive history of human affairs. A famous line from Chinua Achebe “Until the lions have their own historians, the history of the hunt will always glorify the hunter”. Just like after the outbreak of the coronavirus, people are now remembering the joy of speed. A much appreciated account by the famous journalist Ravish Kumar, who pointed out that a tree fall does not mean an individual loss, but a collective loss of associative properties such as damaging a car or bus parked underneath. But he also fails to mention the loss of other beings associated with a tree. We, the human species, the world’s most selfish creature, have a vanity of archiving, unable to transcend our anthropocentric mindset, even from our sociocultural biases.

It is precisely at this juncture of these critical questions that an artist should reconsider the ideas of “archive”, “history” and “memories”. Michel Foucault defines the term “archive” in relation to the conditions of the possibility of its construction, thus changing it from a static collection of texts to a set of relations and institutions that allow statements to persist, means of which they become part of an archive. The archive, then, from Foucault’s point of view, is not just a set of things, not even a set of statements, but a set of relations: it is “the general system of formation and transformation of statements”. For Foucault, the “statement” is the basic unit of “discourse” and hence this basic unit is analyzed in the archaeological method that helps to unearth history. The “discourse” is thus the object that Foucault includes to study history. It is extremely widespread and variable, tending to cross almost every traditional way of making historical units. The analysis of discourse thoroughly neglects any fundamental dependence on anything outside of the discourse itself⁴ Foucault, M., 1970. The archaeology of knowledge. Information (International Social Science Council), 9(1), pp.175 Furthermore, discourse does not mean the recording of historical events, but the utterance of associative meanings, utterances and individual or collective psychological experiences. Hence, for Foucault, “episteme” is a set of relationships between discursive positivity that changes through periods, even in a single span of time. Everyday activities or minor changes in a socio-spatial dimension can lead to different understandings of the linear formulation of traditional history. As an answer to the question of archives through my artistic research, I am trying to link various insights that I have acquired from different experiences and memories with their respective disciplinary study.

Then, here also I start associative study, looking at the space from a critical urban perspective and try to reevaluate the architectural elements, gentrification and many more aspects, how a Static and Kinetic city runs parallel in same spatial arrangements. Taking memory objects as a base such as trees, scissors, food, everyday objects and so on, I have tried to unfold the relation of people with the tree in an urban setup mapping the places from gender lenses.

⁴Walter Benjamin, On The Concept Of History

My relationship to memory and the archive is not monolithic, but has grown in many ways. For me, making art was mostly about preconceptions and how different materials and their materiality work. I have always liked to collect memories of objects, found material, and events, without the aim of producing or making anything out of them, but because they fascinate me. I never would have thought that the objects could also be archived. As I learned more and more about what archives can be, I realized that it is not only about collecting history, records and documents, but also about things and matters that do not “belong to archives”. My contemplation here is, who has the power to decide what belongs in an archive and what doesn’t? But the choice is necessary and inevitable because, as Ilya Kabakov suggests, we cannot keep everything institutional that is commonly associated with formal, political, and institutional archives. As Benjamin speaks about historicism⁴ and learns stories that were not written down, perhaps because they were the stories of the oppressed or the powerless, I think it becomes important to revisit the past through multiple stories and bring out the hidden truth, the mysteries. As Durant says: “History is not about the past ... but about the present”⁵, so is our memory, “it looks back”⁶ “Durant states his archive as a spatial unconscious in which repressed content returns disturbingly.”⁷ It’s really interesting for me to think about how our memory and subconscious work to disrupt our understanding of time as past, present and future but as something infinite, obscure and untraceable. After reading various artists, particularly the work of Susan Hiller, it helped me develop a vision to underpin the mundane and ordinary, the storytelling that is less structured but a type of practice or a point of reference, like Foster says the nature of all archival material found yet constructed, factual yet fictional, public yet private.⁷ has certainly enabled me to see the impulse we all have to connect things that appear separate. The questions about the generalized archive, or what Alan Sekula calls a shadow archive⁸, gave an insight into how an archive can act as a force on the body, in other words how some norms are generalized to an extent that we don’t even notice essentially acts as a cultural hegemony in our body and society. The involuntary responses, whether physical or sensory, to specific vocabularies, issues, memories, and stories that evoke potential stories in the viewer tend not always to be entirely unconscious, but physical and ingrained in the body.

The idea that I extract from Susan Hiller about the ‘cultural artifacts’, that are, to collect images, information, stories, and object of everyday life :

“ All societies put a tremendous amount of energy into encoding meanings in their artifacts and they put an almost equal amount of energy into denying meaning, claiming that the objects are naturally the way they are or neutral; they don’t mean anything. Now, of course, my interest in artifacts is precisely this, to make visible, as it were, the unconscious language of our society through revealing something”

⁵. Sam Durant’s interview By Carolina A Miranda
<https://www.latimes.com/entertainment/arts/la-et-cam-sam-durant-scaffold-interview-20170617-htmllstory.html> (accessed on 17-05-2020)

⁶. Wendy Chun, *The Enduring Ephemeral, or the Future Is a Memory*

⁷. Hal Foster, *An Archival Impulse*

⁸. Alan Sakula, *Body And The Archive*

Her remarks on theory and the art practice about the locate art-practice relying on the ideas previously formulated somewhere else and it lags behind as compared to what it relies on the current. The theory is not that of directing art-practice but yet it should not be ignored as a large amount of art is made in a non-critical and non-analytical fashion. Art does not have a transparent relation to the theory nor it is ignorant of theory. By locating meaning on everyday materials and artifacts it brings the mythological proportion of cultural productions to a scale directing at the individuality of perceiving. The collective memory that it inherently carries and it has made truth-telling so elusive, so difficult and so mysterious. Artists have to look out of that collective memory and take the meaning of that cultural artifact from an individual truth-telling. Hiller's notion of artistic practice takes me to look at the role of the artist to address the criticality of reality by the (re-)writing of history rather than inferring to the positivist empiricism.

The juxtaposition of materials with stories and experiences is here in a constant process of making sense and unfolding, the moment in the present is felt and constantly being reworked in flux so that it is always an itinerary through something else. Hal Foster suggests that archives turn "dig sites" into "construction sites." I think the whole journey gave me a sense of what research looks like, how to critically understand, retrace, question and navigate the ongoing narratives of history and memory that have helped contextualize my work.

I want to argue my practice through the relation that it has to the unconscious brain. Freud's Notion of psychoanalysis relates it to the archive of memory. In our mind, our actions related to the present is not solely on the present mind or the conscious mind, rather our activities are related to the unconscious mind or culture embedded in the archive of unconscious memory as Freud said it. So our action in the present is a mixing of present and our way of seeing through the culture that is taken by the subconscious mind. I want to focus on the archive of our brain to work in the present. My photographs, drawings relate to my personal life that has been a cultivation of repressive ideology, strange experience so when I take a moment and then I work on it I want to deconstruct the subject of the background, I have been trying to analyze the context of the object which the cultural artifacts are as Hiller proposed it.

I close my eyes, and I remember the telephone notebook that we used to have at home when I was a child. I don't remember the color of the memory objects although I remember the size and it was smaller than the usual ones. I was probably four years old and I had just learned the Bengali alphabets. It was forbidden for me and my elder brother to write or draw anything on that. One day, my mother was busy on the phone with her sister, my aunt Doli. With a little encouragement from my brother I was able to commit the serious crime that day. It was a crime to write in the phone book because we were so little. I wrote my aunt's name in that phone book. In Bengali it is written ডলি but it also pronounce the same if we only use the alphabet ড and ঙ. I remember, I drew the common flower we used to have in our garden called sefali i.e coral jasmine, commonly found in every house in my neighborhood. I drew one with a leaf and another one without the leaf to balance the composition that I wanted to give to her as a birthday gift. Because of this incident my mother and brother found me as a genius child.

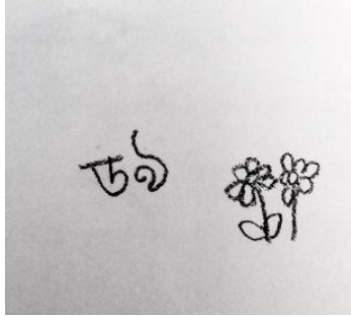


figure: 7



figure: 8



figure: 9

This fickling of memory, one can notice after articulation of experience above is not mere relation to the object rather it is also the way these memories of experiences shape themselves. Even in this particular memory, the effect of family institutions can be seen when we were forbidden and the disciplinary practice inside our home. In this sense infrastructure also defines moral behavior and produces citizens as such. Another aspect of this articulation comes when we think about memory and the narrative of archived experience which contains Bengali alphabet instances, the structure of feeling that is shaped in it, like, their pronunciation. Also, when I think about this memory the flowers are coming and it was also my aunt.

The temporality of an event occurred which has its efficacy. Suppose that event is a part of reality in its particularity of space and time. Reality is said to have all aspects of living with which we associate ourselves. Maybe my brother has memories of this experience but with focus on some other part of the object in reality, consequently, a specific structure of feeling associated with this. Things are present in itself but everybody focuses on it with their respective subjectivity.

I argue that with changing subjectivity of beings located in this nature-culture mixture changes the experience of time and space. And it also changes memory. So the volatile nature of memory is continuously altering its appearance with the being it is associated with.

When I try to include this memory in my work, I show my memory objects and feelings but each audience comes and looks at my work, they relate themselves with my visual narratives and elements as such, creates a whole different story in their mind and checks the memory reserved in the unconscious brain. In this sense it is always expanding its value with the visual elements that appear to be for an individual. The interpretation is also a way to recreate the experience. This immateriality of experience is immanent and transcend the human control of their world. The world which is not in the regular zone of humans. It is out of bound which these zones created through and shaped through. As far as I can understand the discourse around this memory, I think the journey of my drawing with text based practice has started from here. The venture point of the evolution of practice is visible here which is a result of the rigorous mixtures of experiences, memory and subjectivity. In this sense, an archive recreation is also something which has given me the sense of this new life. And my continuous involvement in chasing my dream.

Chapter 3 - Reflection on practices : Reflection on the Process of my Artistic Research

Gender disparity in the unequal social structure of India has already been seen in the literary works of Rabindranath Tagore novel by Ghare baire, this story is set in the early decades of twentieth century, with the arrival of swadeshi movement in Indian history. This story is about Bimala who never sets foot outside of her house and gets married to her husband Nikhil who is a zamindaar (land owner) and liberal in his ideology. He encourages his wife to come out of the inner courtyard of the house and persuade her to take part in the discussion. He persuades her to be a part of the decision making of the social system in the political agendas of the world which is outside of her world, of her home. Bimala is initially hesitant to take steps further but eventually gains confidence and crosses the path that alters the defined norms of society. Through the process of storytelling, Rabindranath Tagore brought out the intimate stories of the domestic domain of the women and men. At the same time, he persuaded them(women) to come out of their covens and to the open world. Here, women are represented as confined in a singularity of time and space yet believe in going to have a dream of a world which still is unknown to them. It is being shown through their dreams of becoming. When I read such stories of women they remind me of my mother who had excelled in academics and the creative arenas alike. She also had dreams to cross that boundary off the wall within the social boundary, where thinking about her own self had been compromised to certain limits. Thus, her role as a mother, daughter and a wife has ended. While her desire and dream to become more than these normalized roles and to think about her identity in the outside world remains as just her dream of her own inner world.

In this story the way reality has been shown there. Where one can think about herself, where one is getting all the support she needed by the society. Something important going on here is the way these sublime imagination could take the shape of reality is, by the intimacies which are automatic precursors to the new order of world. I wish to look at these reality through my memories. I wish to define a new paradigm through my practice of entangling with the attributes of time and space to manipulate the imagination behind the reality. My response to these forces comes in my artworks which is also volatile in nature. Volatile nature of memory around these experiences is an intuition of subjective self which is determined to re-assign the role. To realign the subjectivity which has gotten decentered by the subjugation position in the real nature of history and society as such.

Same way, my works are like a way of preserving experiences of objects around me which are selective and which are increasingly loud and impossible to escape. I choose objects in my immediate surroundings which are sentimental and bear an imprint of my mental space and other's physical spaces . These objects can be everyday objects that I am attached to and they get registered as Haptic memory. During my travels I also encounter objects and sounds around me. I can't experience them with tactile sensations but visual and sonic experience only. When I began to work on my artistic practice, I have always tried to bring all of these experiences into my composition. Memories are important for any living being as a conjunction between our existence and time in terms of mapping one's existence with relation to social need. Memories of the past become the present when remembered and altered.

Woodcut as Medium of Expression

I am interested in the physical result of my actions and my presence, and therefore create works that are a record of my emotions, movements and traces. For this, woodcutting is an important method where the tracks are made visible. The very act of “cutting out” is like making scars in the wooden board; for the motif to emerge, I have to remove something. What is not present becomes the motive. Everything in the process makes an impression: How hard I cut that day, how deep the grooves I made were, the way I moved my body over the wooden boards. Because life has left its mark on me both physically and mentally, I am concerned with imprints, both physical and emotional / mental / sensory. I mainly use personal material, such as my own texts, diaries and photography as a starting point for the woodcuts. In this way I work with memory, with what triggers your and my memory.

Experiences around scars as the memory object of my historical past. Human beings are made of five elements that are fire, earth, water, air and space or spirit. These are the five representations of portraying myself and they indicate the combination of these elements. I remember when I was 5-6 years old, we used to have Hawaiirosa flower tree at our garden. One day my elder brother plucked the most beautiful flower from that tree, though he knows I hate when somebody plucked flower. Then he started to rip off all the flower petals one by one in front of my me. There I got angry and started to run after him to make him stop. In the middle of running I stepped on one ripped flower petals and slipped by hitting my head on a wooden slab of our entrance door. I don't remember anything after that. I woke up next at the hospital with 7 stitches on my forehead which is still there until today.



figure: 10
I Had a Dream of Chasing a Dream(series of work),
woodcut, 244 cm x 110 cm, 2022

I like the fact that through my physical growth and inner growth I am learning new expressions so in this composition I try to show both internal and external understanding of self. In the sense, scars are intention although very volatile in a similar way I got these scars is very volatile in nature. Mere experience of not wanting my brother to pluck flowers got converted to a real experience of scar. These scars live with me in my artwork. Although when people come to look at my work, the experience of my scare is exchanging themselves with something else from the specific narrative of the audience.

In the woodcarving while I am totally unconscious as well as working. I start to carve motifs at full speed into the mdf board surface. Sometimes I start to curve unconsciously and at the same time, I have worked with text and flow of thoughts, where I carve my thoughts directly into the wooden boards, without censoring, for more than a month. I wanted to challenge myself: The flow of thoughts that is constant, and I had to be in every motif for a long time, as cutting the shapes into the wooden boards is a physically slow process. Visuals are physical to me as compared to the sensory body: Cut into a wooden board, objects become far more real than the original experience. Thus, does this mean the original is just a small part of long experience with volatility? I am interested in the way these motives look visually and appear in their optic sense and what the visual expression does to the reader instead of the sensor. The experiences of these objects are the images of my actions to the profound sense of time in which stereotypes of society seem to be stationary. I'm also interested in the several different ways I can approach this to look for something which is unsaid and unheard by the authority- takers of real so-called men and invisible men inside a woman similar in the way as Berger points to them.

The last exhibition that I had in Gallery Seilduken, I worked with a large gallery room placement, where the images took over a wall and became narration joining themselves to the next of each piece. I am thinking about how the bodily experience looks alike when the images are bigger than myself, enveloping me inside them. They get a physical presence in addition to what the words and motives themselves create, inside of me. The atmosphere of the works I create is important to me so as to what it does to the room, and the relationship that arises between work and the viewer because it evokes that sense of volatility in the ephemeral nature of this real temporality.

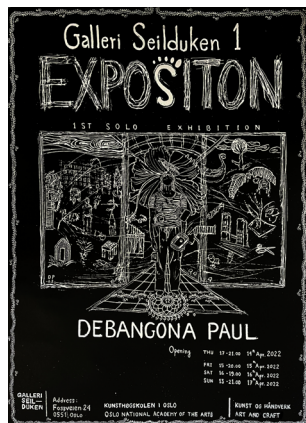


figure: 11



figure: 12 -13



figure: 14

There is a belief that if you see an eyelash fallen on your face, place it on the back side of your hand and blow the fallen lash, the wish that you make will become true. The way that I started to chase my dream of a new life in a foreign country has this connection of wish fulfilling. In this composition I portray this act of blowing eyelashes as a wish fulfillment.



figure: 15



figure: 16



figure: 17

The transition from India to Oslo had much impact while I was using an auto-rickshaw. Now I am using an electric scooter for public transport. Like how my global card was not working while doing payment to the airport cafe in Denmark. That time I can relate my situation as a mirror warning in motorbikes which says, “objects in the mirror are closer than they appear” to my interpretation “problems in the life are way more closer than they appear”



figure: 16

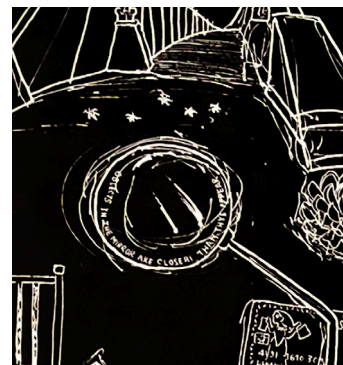


figure: 16

The large format

I always wanted to do something big. To take the challenge of creating a big impression. It starts from breaking the stereotype norms of society, cultural to the traditional aspects of printmaking laws. I think this is the reason that I am encouraged to take this large scale woodcut format in my work. Through the journey, I have realized that it is hard to think about a large scale piece, but it's much harder to do in practicality. I have experience hand rubbing woodcut printing size 183 cm x 122 cm with editioning which takes 6 hours of constant rubbing for one complete print. As we learn from history, this time, I started to think about how to give more focus to producing images rather than technical difficulties.



figure: 18

Personally, I developed that I mentally work faster under pressure. Last year in December, when I knew that I got the privilege to participate in the print exhibition of a group show, “New Territories of Action,” at QSPA Gallery 20th Jan - 12th Mar 2022, I realized that I needed to cope up with this large scale technical issue. There I started to think about how to decrease the printing time frame. In the experimentation stage, I take print of my first woodcut piece with the enormous hydraulic press (used for gluing wood at wood workshop). It was a successful experiment after one distorted proof print.



figure: 19

With that successful experimentation and seeing my long term project, my professor and best technician helped to build the largest press ever made in Norway. Or I can say in the world. I am incredibly privileged that my works are the reason behind this amazing start of a large scale printmaking journey at Khio.

Known inspirations: exploring the unexplored

I am fortunate to grow up with emerging artist friends around me. They are the reason behind my inspiration. My best friend and amazing artist Janhavi Khemka, currently studying at the School of the Art Institute of Chicago, is practicing large-scale multi color woodcut pieces. As a hearing-impaired person, she finds it difficult to express herself for most of her life. Her practice is focused on finding ways to translate her perceptions. So most works deal with her personal space, both mental and physical. Recently, she has been working with the extension of woodcut to make animation with that.



figure: 20



figure: 21



Another notable person that I am glad to know is Beatrice Guttormsen. She graduated from Kunsthøgskolen I Oslo in 2020. Her project-based on investigating memories of her own upbringing and past. In the piece, she mapped all the places she lived, visited the places and then drew down as she remembered them. In her process, she cut all the objects, dreams and events that came to her down into the wooden boards.



figure: 22

Leilighet 420 - fragmenter av et minne (Apartment 420 - fragments of a memory)

Conclusion

I wanted to pull out the everyday objects, give them life again. All the things with physical contact with another time, related to emotions and rituals. Like the coffee cup I use every day to drink coffee from. Everyday objects are memory carriers. The home itself is something I change often, so furniture, books and things I take with me from place to place become fixed points. They give me anchorage and belonging. The bodily relation to the objects became the starting point for the works. A personal experience and interpretation of certain things, not as they were, but more as a completely subjective tactile memory. In my work the more I observe the more details are visible to me, I can explore the unexplored areas every time.

Sometimes, Objects are not relevant or important in the end . It is what they are alluding to, it is what they are pointing to or what emotion they evoke within us that gives them meaning.

I think the whole journey has given me a sense of what research looks like, to critically understand the enduring narratives, tracing back, inquiring and navigating through diverse possibilities of history and memory that has helped contextualize my work.

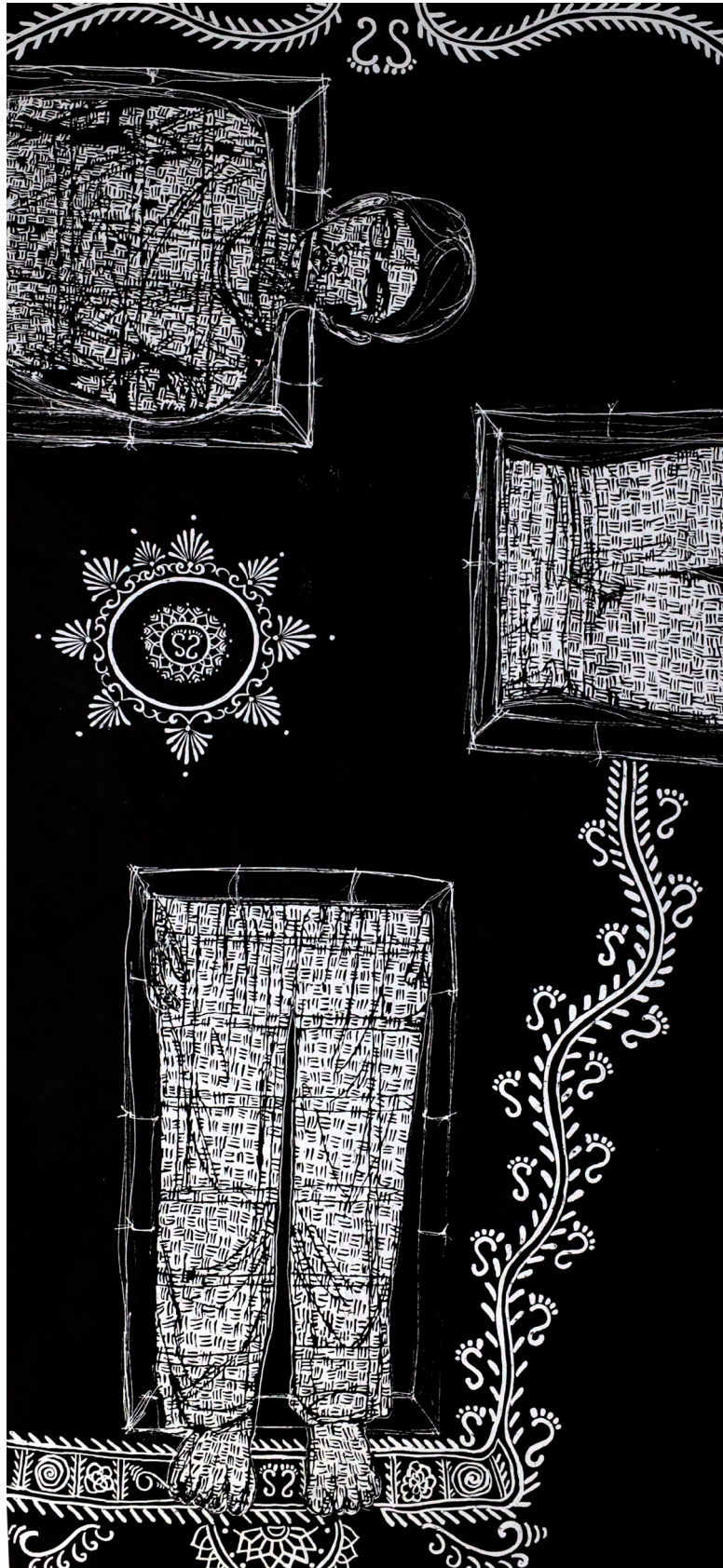
As philosopher Immanuel Kant put it, the concept of space serves as the organizing principle by which we perceive and interpret the world, even in abstract ways. I have stated this to conclude that there is a strong need to understand space and its relation to experience resulting in nature-culture mixture. As, I have not been able to fully get a grasp on this area of research where I could have gotten a relational understanding with reality as such.

Another aspect which would like to focus on the process of formation of this modern reality, we only interact with the end part of any modern technology resulting in not being able to unearth the process of becoming. This process of transitioning of object, experience in memory and reality has to look closely through the neurological way to look into reality.

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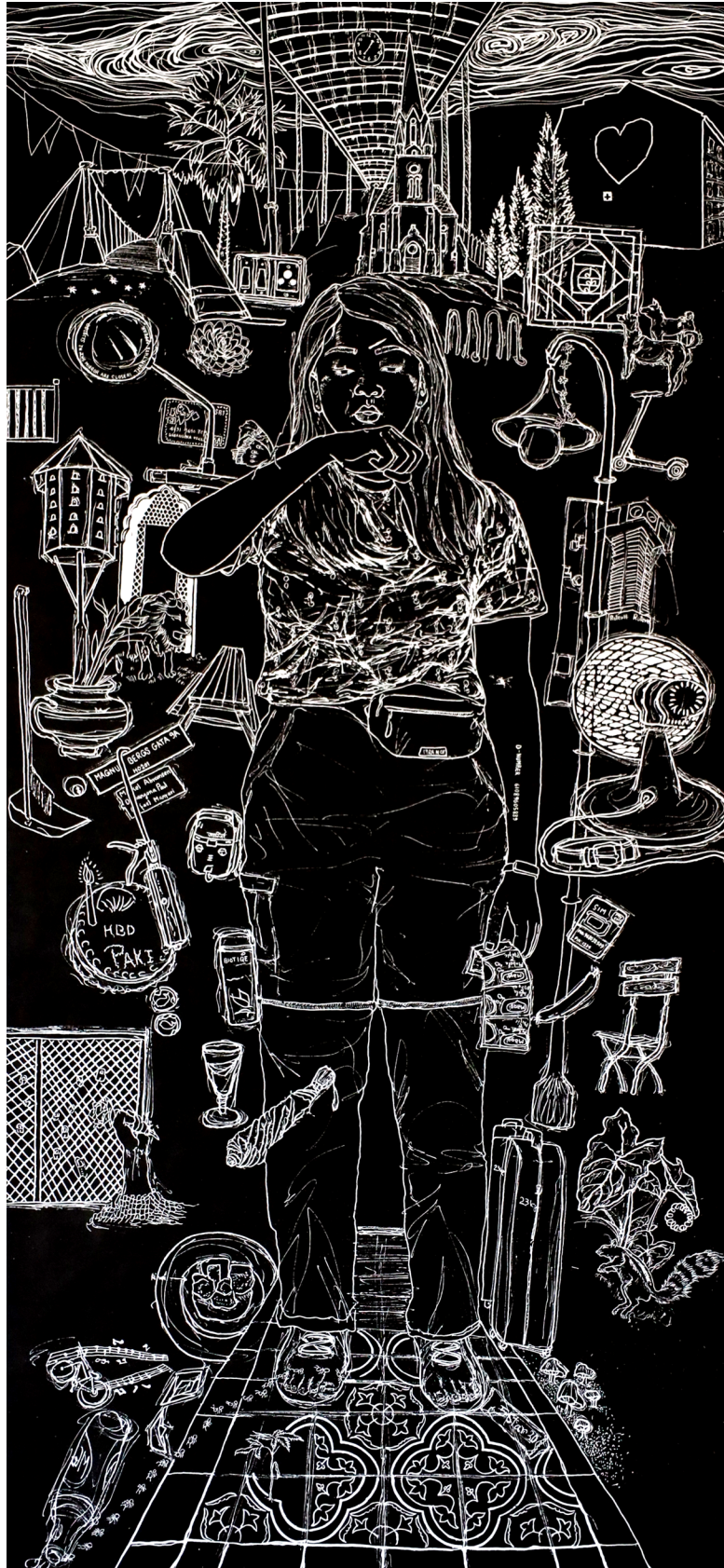
Art Works



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