

Nalini Malani: Can You Hear Me?

Gallery 2, Free Entry

23 September 2020 – 6 June 2021

#NaliniMalani

Nalini Malani presents an immersive Animation Chamber for a major new commission at Whitechapel Gallery

For her first major UK commission, **Nalini Malani** (b. 1946 Karachi, Undivided India; lives and works in Bombay*, India) presents *Can You Hear Me?*, a monumental installation - or Animation Chamber in her own words - consisting of 88 iPad animations projected on the walls of Whitechapel Gallery's historic interior. Made between 2017 and 2020, the animations feature overlapping hand-drawn images, sounds and quotes. The report of the abduction, rape and brutal murder of an 8-year-old girl in India in 2018 is one of the triggers behind this new iteration of *Can You Hear Me?*, a prompt to consider what is being listened to and what is being heard. Visitors are surrounded by a flow of images and ideas that address global issues of feminism and social injustice.

Nalini Malani said: *"The Animation Chamber contains the voices in my head and my heart, simulating how the mind works, as ordered chaos. The making of these individual works often starts with a quote as a reaction to what has sparked or irritated my mind, from writers or images which give me a kind of graffiti, such as Brecht, Orwell, or artists such as Goya or Grosz, that would form a collage/montage."*

Nalini Malani's animations are made by drawing, rubbing, scratching and writing directly with her fingertips on an iPad, which gives a tactile and immediate quality to the work, reflecting the unfixed and spontaneous nature of thought. This 21st century version of the artist's notebook is projected directly onto the brick walls of the Gallery, with text and image taking the form of moving graffiti. In the former central reading room of the Whitechapel Public Library, Malani fills the space with quotes from influential writers who address issues that concern her, including Hannah Arendt, James Baldwin, Bertolt Brecht, Veena Das, Faiz Ahmad Faiz, Milan Kundera, George Orwell and Wislawa Szymborska.

Within the babble of images, text and sound, five different types of animations emerge: the socio-political, abstract, feminine/masculine, satirical and the personal ones. For example, Veena Das' comments on

Press Release

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gender relations ('there are feminine regions of the self that reside in both men and women') or her own personal reactions to the Covid-19 pandemic confinement in 2020 ('I am not bored') unfold across the gallery walls.

A pioneer of video art in India, Nalini Malani has a 50-year multimedia practice. Alongside her acclaimed Video/Shadow Plays, Wall Drawing/ Erasure Performances and Animation Chambers, she creates drawings, paintings, films and photographs. Embodying the role of the artist as a social activist, Malani gives voice to the marginalised through her visual stories. She draws inspiration from history, culture and her direct experience of the Partition of India to look at themes of violence, feminism, politics, racial tension, post-colonial legacies and social inequality, exploring in particular the repressive powers of the state.

Starting out as a filmmaker and photographer after graduating from the Sir J. J. School of Art, Bombay, Malani broke out of the classical painting frame in the late 1980s to reach a wider audience, as a protest against the rise of orthodoxy in politics. In her art she places inherited iconographies and cherished cultural stereotypes under pressure. Her point of view is unwaveringly urban and internationalist, and unsparing in its condemnation of a cynical nationalism that exploits the beliefs of the masses. Many of her animations are available to view on her Instagram account, as part of her wish for her work to remain accessible to all.

An earlier version of *Can you Hear Me?* was first shown at Max Mueller Bhavan / Goethe Institute Mumbai in 2019. Different iterations of the work are also included in a current exhibition at the Miró Foundation, Barcelona and will be shown at Serralves Museum, Porto, later this year; M +, Hong Kong in 2021; and the Fine Arts Museum, Montreal, and Art Gallery of South Australia, Adelaide in 2022 as part of larger solo shows.

Notes to Editors:

- The exhibition is curated by Emily Butler, Mahera and Mohammad Abu Ghazaleh Curator, Whitechapel Gallery with Inês Costa, Curatorial Assistant, Whitechapel Gallery.
- It is accompanied by a fully-illustrated catalogue to be published in October 2020
- *Can You Hear Me?* is supported by Whitechapel Gallery Commissioning Council: Dorota Audemars, Erin Bell, Heloisa Genish, Lili Huth, Irene Panagopoulos, Catherine Petitgas, Mariela Pissioti, Alex Sainsbury; with additional support from Volte Projects and Amrita Jhaveri.
- *The artist uses the term Bombay for cultural reasons

About Nalini Malani

Nalini Malani (b.1946, Karachi, Undivided India) lives and works in Bombay. Nalini Malani completed a Diploma in Fine Arts from the Sir J. J. School of Art, Bombay in 1969 and received a French Government Scholarship for Fine Arts to study in Paris from 1970 to 1972. In 2010 she was conferred an Honorary Doctorate from the San Francisco Art

Institute. Prizes include: Fukuoka Prize for Arts and Culture, 2013; St. Moritz Art Masters Lifetime Achievement Award, 2014; Asian Art Game Changers Award Hong Kong, 2016; Joan Miró Prize, Barcelona, 2019 and in 2020 she received the first Contemporary Fellowship from the National Gallery, London.

Malani's work has been celebrated in museum surveys and biennales around the world, and has been acquired by more than thirty international institutions including: the Museum of Modern Art, New York; The Metropolitan Museum, New York; Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam; Tate, London; Musée national d'art moderne - Centre Pompidou, Paris; M+, Hong Kong; Kiran Nadar Museum of Art, New Delhi and the Art Gallery of New South Wales, Sydney.

About Whitechapel Gallery

For over a century the Whitechapel Gallery has premiered world-class artists from modern masters such as Pablo Picasso, Jackson Pollock, Mark Rothko, Frida Kahlo and Hannah Höch to contemporaries such as Zarina Bhimji, Sophie Calle, William Kentridge, Eduardo Paolozzi and Michael Rakowitz. Its historic campus houses exhibitions, artist commissions, collection displays, historic archives, education resources, inspiring art courses, talks and film screenings, the Townsend dining room and the Koenig Bookshop. It is a touchstone for contemporary art internationally, plays a central role in London's cultural landscape and is pivotal to the continued growth of the world's most vibrant contemporary art quarter.

Visitor Information

Admission: Free

Opening times: Tuesday – Sunday, 11am – 6pm; Thursdays, 11am – 9pm

Whitechapel Gallery, 77 – 82 Whitechapel High Street, London E1 7QX

Nearest London Underground Stations: Aldgate East, Liverpool Street, Tower Gateway DLR

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