



The Dr. Bhau Daji Lad Mumbai City Museum presents **The Doubled Frame: Interrogating Identity**, at the Kamalnayan Bajaj Special Exhibitions Gallery, and **POI/ Bharat ke Log**, at the Special Project Space, on view from the 19th of September, 2014.

THE DOUBLED FRAME: INTERROGATING IDENTITY

Exhibition Overview

The Dr. Bhau Daji Lad Museum's extraordinary collection of models and dioramas form a unique art historical mode in the larger genre of Company School Painting. They represent more than just a sculptural equivalent of the paintings. Produced under the tutelage of the Museum's then curators Ernst Fern and C. L. Burns, both of whom were also principals of the Sir J. J. School of Art, the models and dioramas show us how Indians were being taught to view themselves through the new and exciting medium of the Museum and the various State exhibitions which were popular throughout the latter half of the 19th and early 20th century, to which the Museum regularly contributed.

The exhibition, **The Doubled Frame: Interrogating Identity**, attempts to trace the genealogy of our model and diorama collection exploring the various lenses through which Indians were viewed and were insidiously being taught to view themselves in the 18th, 19th and early 20th centuries. The model collection becomes an important and as yet undocumented extension of the ambitious and controversial project to capture in minute detail the people of India. British administrators constructed an archaeology of dominance through visual narratives that ossified and redefined caste and custom and soon Indians learnt to interpret themselves through similar tropes.

In tracing the connections between our models and the various documentary traditions which preceded them in the subcontinent, interesting discoveries have been unearthed which present clearly discernible influences of artists such as Raja Ravi Varma in the dioramas, *The Court of Krishna* and *Sita in Ashokvan* for eg.; or the similarities between our models of Indian communities and the paintings and sketches of Rao Bahadur Durandhar, an eminent Maharashtrian artist who went on to become the first Indian principal of the Sir J. J. School of Art, Mumbai. The new medium of photography also influenced the way community types were represented in the models and one can see, for e.g., the Parsi gentleman in our collection derives directly from the studio photograph of Parsis in William Johnson's *The Oriental Races and Tribes, Residents and Visitors of Bombay: A Series of Photographs with Letterpress Descriptions* (1863-66).

The title of this exhibition owes a debt to Dr. Homi Bhabha's seminal text *The Location of Culture* (1994). In revisiting history to reflect on how identity shifts and mutates through political and social machinations and creates new visual characteristics and forms of representation, the past inscribes itself in the present, and helps us look afresh at who we are and how we might evolve.

Exhibition Credits

The exhibition is organised by the Dr. Bhau Daji Lad Mumbai City Museum.

Curated by Tasneem Zakaria Mehta, Managing Trustee and Honorary Director. Researched by Madhura Wairkar, Assistant Curator Collections and assisted by Ruta Waghmare.

POI/भारत के लोग

Exhibition Overview

POI/Bharat ke Log, (POI standing in for People of India with a delicious vernacular sound to it – *poi* like *oi*) is artist Archana Hande's response to the Museum exhibition **The Doubled Frame: Interrogating Identity**, in the Kamalnayan Bajaj Special Exhibitions Gallery. The latter exhibition draws from the Museum's collection of rare books, photographs, paintings and prints to essay a reading of how an Indian identity was constructed in the 18th, 19th and early 20th centuries by the British. Using the Museum collection as the frame of reference Hande creates a topography of images both contemporary and historic that emerge like ghosts and disappear in a shroud that is actually a mosquito net, ephemera from the past seeking to inhabit a tangible form in the here and now.

The artist speaks of her interest in the idea of how identity has no origin and is a constantly shifting ontological construction that changes with each passing moment. However she explains that the human need for security and certainty prevails and we are co-opted into believing that which others wish us to believe. The issue of what is authentic, what is pure and original as a cultural construction is questionable and difficult to substantiate as the very act of practice in the present mediates and changes the original.

Hande uses the idea of a mosquito net, a British import now used ubiquitously in India, as the protective layer which encloses the ephemeral images of the hundreds of types of people which she has sourced both from her own personal collection and from the Museum. She speaks of a semiotics of identity, signifiers which become codes of connection or disharmony. "This language is performed through a documentary practice which transforms the original idea in its very practice," she says.

Using video, assemblage, popular imagery and sounds to create an immersive experience the artist asks us to reflect on who we are and how we have come to see ourselves.

About the Artist

Archana Hande lives and works in Bombay and Bangalore.

She holds a B.F.A & M.F.A in print making, from Visva-bharati, Santiniketan, (1986-1991) and M.S University, Baroda, India (1991-1993). In 2000 she was granted the Charles Wallace India Trust Arts Awards and took part in a residency at the Glasgow School of Art. In 2010 she participated in a research residency with Pro Helvetia, Switzerland.

She has had several solo shows including *The Golden Feral Trail*, Perth and Laverton, Australia, 2014; *All is Fair in Magic White*, Delhi and Rome, 2010; *www.arrangeurownmarriage.com*: Bombay, China, Finland, Sweden 2008-2012 and *Relics of Grey*, Bombay 2006-2007, among others.

Archana Hande has participated in many international and national group shows such as *Social Fabric*, INIVA, UK, Sweden, Germany, India; *Shadow Lines*, Biennale Jogja XI Jakarta; *So Close Yet So Far Away*, Incheon Women Artists' Biennale; *SAMTIDIGT (Concurrent)*, Sweden, Finland; *Farewell to Post-Colonialism*, The 3rd Guangzhou Triennial; *The Edge of Desire: Recent Art in India*, Australia, New York, Mexico city, Monterrey; *Art Circus*, Yokohama Triennial Japan, 2005. Most recently, Archana co-curated *Project Cinema City*.