

JACK SHAINMAN GALLERY

VIBHA GALHOTRA

Beyond the Blue

February 21 – March 28, 2020

Opening reception for the exhibition: **Friday, February 21st**, from **6-8 PM** at **524 West 24th Street**.

Jack Shainman Gallery is pleased to present *Beyond the Blue*, an exhibition of new work by Indian conceptual artist **Vibha Galhotra** (b. 1978) at the gallery's 524 West 24th Street location. The third solo presentation of Galhotra's work at the gallery, the show is spatially and conceptually divided into two parts: the first imagines looming catastrophe on earth as the planet's resources are depleted, and the second examines questions of survival and interplanetary escape. Together, they act as a warning, imparting a sense of urgency before environmental displacement forces the population into space.

The artist's practice centers on environmental concerns and the consequences of industrialization and globalization. Offering a counter to the conventional approach to environmental studies, Galhotra seeks to expand the discourse to include history, theory, political intervention, economy, tradition, and culture when considering the current state of environmental degradation. Her process-oriented practice is based in both research and intuition; her work dwells between the personal and public, reality and belief, and science and spirituality to explore the shifting landscape of society.

Featured in the first room of the gallery are molded paper works imagining the earth's landscape after its resources have been exhausted, offering a picture of the consequences of our perpetual denial and refusal to forgo the perceived comforts of development and capitalism. In working with paper, an inherently delicate material, Galhotra meditates on the ephemerality of the planet's resources and the fragility of our existence. In these performative works, the paper terrain is cast from a concrete mold, resulting in a topography that acts as a record of the artist's creative process - a process through which Galhotra enacts the wounding of our planet, impressing upon the viewer the damage caused by human activity.

Comprised of eight large tondos from her current series *Life on Mars*, the second part of the exhibition offers a vision for the future of civilization in response. In reference to this present body of work, Galhotra cites the following text by Radhika Subramaniam, Director and Chief curator at Parsons The New School of Design:

There are signs of flowing water on Mars, says the news, bringing an unexpected thrill to a Monday morning. We see reflected in our neighbor some of the potencies of our own liquid planet. With water comes the promise of life. Without it, all is latent...

Water slips its way into every crevice of our lives. It crashes into our imaginations even as it rocks us to sleep. It appears as a welcome glass of hospitality; it coaxes a seed to sprout; it soothes the parched land. It appears as a leak in the roof; a puddle on the road; a dripping faucet and in the frustration before the mute mouth of many an Indian municipal tap. We are lulled into complacency by its quiet foundational flow until its ravaging excesses—as floods, hurricanes and tsunamis—command our attention.

A pillar of life, water is also central to Galhotra's artistic practice. Her work has been deeply influenced by the Yamuna River, a sacred source of life that flows through the city of New Delhi and is in a critical state of exploitation and pollution. Her new series is specifically concerned with the water crisis, as the earth faces an increasing shortage of viable freshwater sources, and turns to the evidence of water on Mars as an answer. Using intricately woven metal ghungroos characteristic of her practice, Galhotra deconstructs images of the surface of Mars sourced from NASA research to create surreal, celestial landscapes. Through her meticulous, effortful process, Galhotra interrogates a utopian vision of Mars, the shimmering beauty of the resulting works revealing both the hope and delusion of an interplanetary escape.

The speculative image of Mars proposes a new theory of colonization, holding the question of whether a future habitat will be built on the same hierarchical orders that destroyed the earth. Galhotra also seeks to highlight the absurdity of our times, where we use advancing technology to search beyond ourselves rather than to conserve and invest in the planet's resources. As progress takes the form of avoidance and escapism, Galhotra instead urges us to embrace the wounded, fragile planet. Amidst hope and despair, reality and delusion, the essential question remains one of survival.

Galhotra lives and practices in New Delhi, India. She received a BFA degree from Government College of Art, Chandigarh, India (1995) and a MFA from Kala Bhavan, Shantiniketan in 2001. In 2019 she mounted the project *Who Owns the Water* with the Asia Society in New York, culminating in a film premiering at the inaugural Triennial of Asia in 2020. She is included in the upcoming exhibition *Zero Waste* at Museum der bildenden Künste Leipzig, Germany and has exhibited extensively in India and internationally, including shows with the Centro per l'Arte Contemporanea, Italy; Kunstmuseum Wolfsburg, Germany; San Jose Museum of Art, USA; Dhaka Art Summit, Bangladesh; Land Art Biennial LAM 360°, Mongolia; ICASTICA "Arezzo Biennial", Italy; Art Dubai, UAE; Colombo Art Biennale, Sri Lanka; Museum of Contemporary Art Shanghai, China; and Fordsburg Artist Studio (Bag Factory), South Africa.

She was a recipient of the Asia Art Game Changer Award in 2019, the Asian Cultural Council Fellowship in 2017, and the prestigious Rockefeller Grant at the Bellagio Center, Italy in 2016, and has been honored with the YFLO Woman Achiever of the Year Award (2015), Inlaks Foundation Fine Arts Award (2005-06), and the National Scholarship from the Human Resource Department, Government of India (2001-02), among others. Her work is held in international collections such as the Kiran Nadar Museum of Art, India; Casa Masaccio Arte Contemporanea, Italy; Gates Foundation, USA; Singapore Art Museum, Singapore; Essl Museum, Austria; Devi Art Foundation, India; Casoria Contemporary Art Museum, Italy; Saga Art College, Japan; Europas Parkas, Lithuania; 21C Museum, USA; Margulies Collection, USA; Pizzuti Collection, USA; Seattle Art Museum, USA; Haryana Cultural Affairs Department, India; and the Consulate General of the United States, India.

Concurrently on view is ***Where They Are***, an exhibition of new works by **Becky Suss** at 513 West 20th Street, New York, as well as ***Meleko Mokgosi: Democratic Intuition*** at The School.

Gallery hours are Tuesday through Saturday from 10 am to 6 pm. For press inquiries please contact Emily Alli, Sutton, emily@suttoncomms.com, +1 212 202 3402. For other inquiries please contact the gallery at info@jackshainman.com.