

VAF

VISITING ARTIST FELLOWSHIP Magazine



FEATURING THE MITTAL INSTITUTE'S 2020-21 VISITING ARTIST FELLOWS

The Lakshmi Mittal and Family
SOUTH ASIA INSTITUTE
HARVARD UNIVERSITY



2020-21 FELLOWS

- 1 **JAVARIA AHMAD**
Pakistan
- 2 **RICHI BHATIA**
India



- 5 **PROMOTESH DAS PULAK**
Bangladesh
- 6 **BUNU DHUNGANA**
Nepal
- 7 **AMMARA JABBAR**
Pakistan



- 10 **INSHA MANZOOR**
India
- 11 **NAJMUN NAHAR KEYA**
Bangladesh



- 3 **ISHITA CHAKRABORTY**
India
- 4 **SUDIPTA DAS**
India

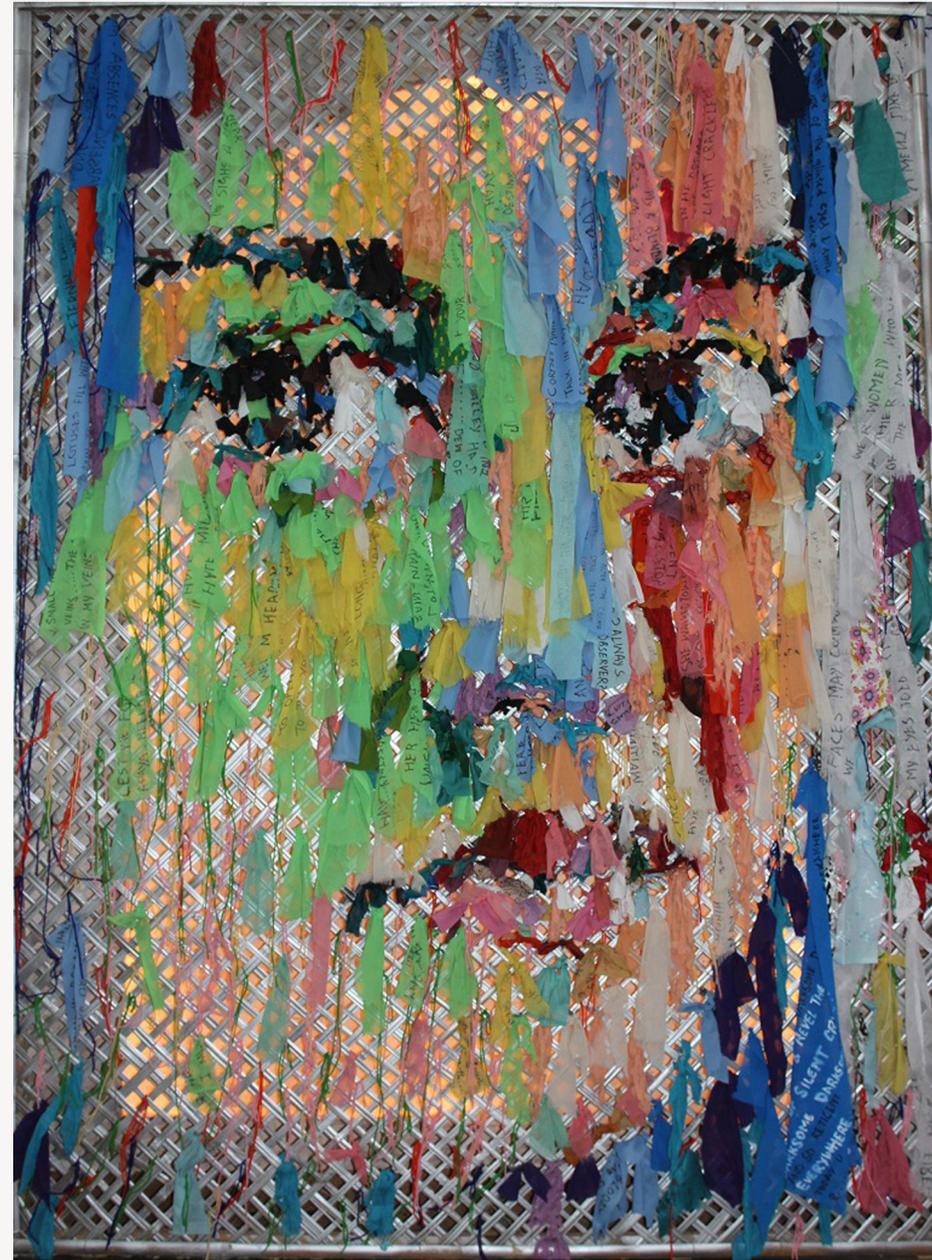


- 8 **PRAGATI DALVI JAIN**
India
- 9 **SUNANDA KHAJURIA**
India



- 12 **MAHEEN NIAZI**
Pakistan
- 13 **PATTABI RAMAN**
India





HIDDEN CONNECTION-II

A self-portrait carrying the voice of women and bearing text of the undocumented, the unaddressed victim, the fragmented identities, who screams, who suffers and longs for justice but, here lay our hearts, hanging hopes, dreams, and mysteries.

INSHA MANZOOR

INDIA

Installation

Through performance, video, painting, and textiles, Insha Manzoor informs self-identification as a collective memory and resistance in a country under totalitarianism that experiences gender discrimination, strife, and conflict. Manzoor is interested in exploring how artistic and cultural traditions can be crafted to bridge differences, mediate conflicts, and contribute to peace.

“

I was born in a place where patriarchy is the dominant attitude in society. Like every other daughter, sister, mother, and wife, my concerns, will, goals, opinions, and choices were sabotaged before I could even nurture them. But unlike many other women, I was fortunate to have the exception of my hero — my father — who made me stronger and confident. He nurtured me in such a way that I vowed to myself that I would fight this battle for myself and every woman like me.

I come from the state of Kashmir in India, which was once described as heaven on earth. I was born in 1991, when armed conflict was at its peak. I spent my childhood embracing the snow-white lambs

and playing with pebbles on the riversides — experiences that gave birth to the art of questioning the existence of self and its purpose, while searching for love for oneself and a way of life without conflicts. I concern myself with the issues of life and death; pleasure and pain; revealing and concealing; freedom, desire, and fear. At the age of 13, I left my hometown and became a junior scholar of the Centre of Cultural Resources and Training at the Ministry of Culture in Delhi. There, I started my battle with fragmented identity and decided to take up art as a profession.

My work refers to the ritual of knotting cloths and threads, which is a sacred ritual of my native land when one has a



THE KNOTTING PROJECT

Medium: fabric, thread, net, dimensions variable

The installation consists of thousands of knots representing the conditions of the psyche: outrage, sadness, love, desire, and remembrance. As each visitor enters the space, they cut a colorful thread and offer it to the performer, who continuously knots the pieces together.



wish. In my childhood, we used to visit Ziyarats (sacred places) with our parents, and the colorful knots on the doors and windows stuck in my mind. I think a knot is a legacy for exploration; a metaphor for the individual and their role within the larger cultural identity. My intricate hand-driven knots are meant to help discover the voice of humanity inflicted from the current times and the feeling of being trapped in the relentless cycle of violence.

Through this fellowship, I hope to utilize Harvard's resources to attend classes, view archives, access online libraries, and explore museum collections to learn how art could be used as an effective tool for communication in situations dominated by a lack of security and the experiences of displacement, trauma, violence, gen-

der discrimination, and sheer fatigue.

As I meet with mentors and peers, I hope to establish the language that makes artistic interventions understandable, deploying them as effective means of communication and mobilization. In the sphere of memory work, this leads to a focus on evoking and presenting memories of contention and of conflict through affect and its techniques.

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I think there will be more frequent calls for artists to act as communicators and spectators to bring people from different belief systems together. By engaging people on the ground about their artistic endeavors, a new understanding can be gleaned — one that illuminates the societies and the aspirations of the people. I am excited for the new connections to be made, the new insights, and the different approaches of my fellow artists in the cohort of this fellowship.



TRAPPED NOT DEFEATED

An installation inspired by fishermen with a fishing trap on the sea shore of Fort Kochi in South India. The two-sided, open trap is a metaphor for a mental trap, with the boat inside it signifying the journey of life. This work is a sign that whenever we get trapped in our lives, there must be a hope of getting out of it.



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