

Contact: Elaine Merguerian 212.327.9313; elainem@asiasociety.org

ASIA SOCIETY MUSEUM PRESENTS TWO INDIA-RELATED EXHIBITIONS

Nalini Malani: Transgressions
February 19 through August 3, 2014

Tales of Wonder: Indian Art from the Asia Society Museum Collection
February 4 through May 3, 2014



Installation view of *Transgressions*, 2001, at Museum Boijmans Van Beuningen, Rotterdam, 2001. Photograph by Johan Pijnappel.

Asia Society Museum presents *Nalini Malani: Transgressions*, an exhibition of work by one of India's foremost contemporary artists.

Nalini Malani was born in 1946 in Karachi before the Partition of India in 1947. She is based in Mumbai and Amsterdam and her work—which spans mediums of painting, sculpture, installation, performance, and works on paper—utilizes allegory and symbolism to explore issues relating to gender, class, and race in a postcolonial world.

The exhibition features *Transgressions II*, 2009, a multimedia installation from the Asia Society Museum Collection. This three-channel video integrates the folk sensibility of traditional shadow plays with new technology, creating a mesmerizing projection of colors and imagery.

In *Transgressions II*, three videos are projected through four transparent Lexan cylinders, which the artist has painted in a manner that references the Kalighat style—practiced in Bengal in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries—which often commented on topical events. As the cylinders rotate, images of a wrathful female deity, boxers, and animals inspired by Edward Said's *Orientalism* create an ever-shifting tableau on the gallery walls. The imagery is accompanied by a recording of a poem written by the artist.

The exhibition also features a selection of Malani's artist books, which emphasize the importance of drawing and painting to the artist's practice, as well as highlight the techniques and themes she uses in other mediums. For example, *Heiroglyphs of Lohar Chawl* is a

companion work to a series of drawings and paintings that focus on the south central Mumbai neighborhood of Lohar Chawl, where the artist had a studio in the 1980s and 1990s.

Malani was trained as a painter at the Sir Jamsetjee Jeejeebhoy School of Art in Mumbai (1964–1969) and became known as a pioneer in India in the 1980s for her focus on feminist issues, and later in the early 1990s for her innovative theater and installation projects. Her multimedia projects feature recurring themes around the subjects of gender, memory, race, and transnational politics, especially in reference to India’s postcolonial history after independence and partition. The artist often draws upon stories from Hindu and Greek mythology, nineteenth-century so-called literary nonsense writing, and early-twentieth-century experimental theater to create allegories for present day events.

The exhibition is curated by Michelle Yun, Curator of Modern and Contemporary Art, Asia Society.



Krishna Dancing on Kaliya (Kaliyahimarddaka Krishna). India, Tamil Nadu, Chola period, late 10th to early 11th century. Copper alloy. Asia Society, New York: Mr. and Mrs. John D. Rockefeller 3rd Collection, 1979.22. Photo by Lynton Gardiner.

To coincide with *Nalini Malani: Transgressions*, Asia Society Museum presents *Tales of Wonder: Selections from the Asia Society Museum Collection*. The exhibition comprises a selection of dynamic sculptures and paintings that, through imagery, directly or indirectly allude to tales from ancient scriptures and Indian epics, and provide context for some of the imagery and references in Malani’s work.

Fantastic legends surround the plethora of deities that populate the Indian religious traditions commonly referred to as Hinduism. The protagonists of these stories—like the gods of Greek mythology—engage in love and war among themselves, and intervene in human affairs. The sources for these stories range from the ancient religious hymns, ritual texts, and philosophical treatises published in the *Vedas* and *Upanishads*, to great epics like the *Ramayana* (*Deeds of Rama*) and the *Mahabharata* (*Great Story of India*).

Drawn from the Asia Society’s permanent collection, the sculptures and paintings on view come from regions of India as diverse as Tamil Nadu in the south and Kashmir in the north. The objects date between the eighth and seventeenth century. Some of the

sculptures were commissioned for temples and others were primarily used in religious processions.

Included in the exhibition is a large seventeenth-century cloth painting made to hang in a temple behind the sculpture of the god Krishna. Titled *The Rainy Season*, this exquisite watercolor, gold, and silver painting is on view for the first time following its recent conservation. The painting depicts *gopis* (village milk maids) presenting offerings of garlands, fans, and fly whisks to Krishna beneath a sky filled with birds and winged angels

The *Tales of Wonder* exhibition is curated by Adriana Proser, John H. Foster Curator for Traditional Asian Art, Asia Society.

Support

Support for Asia Society Museum is provided by Asia Society Contemporary Art Council, Asia Society Friends of Asian Arts, Arthur Ross Foundation, Sheryl and Charles R. Kaye Endowment for Contemporary Art Exhibitions, Hazen Polsky Foundation, New York State Council on the Arts, and New York City Department of Cultural Affairs.

About Asia Society Museum

Asia Society Museum presents a wide range of traditional and contemporary exhibitions of Asian and Asian American art, taking new approaches to familiar masterpieces and introducing under-recognized arts and artists. The Asia Society Museum Collection comprises a traditional art collection that includes the initial bequests of Mr. and Mrs. John D. Rockefeller 3rd, and a contemporary art collection.

Founded in 1956, Asia Society is a nonprofit, nonpartisan, educational institution headquartered in New York with new state-of-the-art cultural centers and gallery spaces in Hong Kong and Houston, and offices in Los Angeles, Manila, Mumbai, San Francisco, Seoul, Shanghai, Sydney, and Washington, DC.

Asia Society Museum is located at 725 Park Avenue (at 70th Street), New York City. The Museum is open Tuesday through Sunday from 11:00 a.m.–6:00 p.m. and Fridays from 11:00 a.m.–9:00 p.m. Closed on Mondays and major holidays. General admission is \$12, seniors \$10, students \$7, and admission is free for members and persons under 16. Free admission Friday evenings, 6:00 p.m.–9:00 p.m. (free Fridays are suspended during the summer when the Museum closes daily at 6:00 p.m.). Find out more at AsiaSociety.org/museum

###