

ANNU PALAKUNNATHU MATTHEW

Indelible Memories

sepiaEYE is pleased to present ***Indelible Memories***, a retrospective of **Annu Palakunnathu Matthew**'s work. Composed of eight bodies of work spanning Matthew's nearly 20 year career, *Indelible Memories* highlights the artist's unique approach to bridging the gaps between the political, social, and transformative issues stemming from her three cultural backgrounds and the facts and fictions of her memories colliding through her explorations of the past. These cultural "overlays" and shifts use a framework of visual juxtaposition and the construction of parallel realities, identities and histories.

Born in England in 1964 to Indian parents, Matthew moved with them to India at age 11. Her father, the photo documentarian of the family, passed away shortly thereafter. Lost with his passing was the so-called photographic "proof" of her childhood memories. Dr. Deepali Dewan, (Senior Curator, Royal Ontario Museum) writes, "The family photograph is the most familiar, ubiquitous and numerous of any genre of photography and yet, despite its popularity, remains notably absent from photo histories. In much of her work, Matthew brings focus on the family photograph, exploring its psychological and emotional dimensions to subvert cultural expectations."

Immigrating to America at the age of 28 and beginning her photographic career, Matthew's unique take on family, memory, and the construction of parallel realities, identities, and histories weave together seamlessly in her imagery. In her essay *Memory's Kingdom* for Matthew's monograph *Memories of India*, Vicki Goldberg gracefully states that "[Matthew's] sense of self is ambiguously located between England, India, and America, and these images hover ambiguously between dream and reality, document and fantasy, clarity and obscurity, today and long ago. Memory and time, those elusive qualities, are malleable in Matthew's hands. Here they merge in an evocative personal account of a country partially erased by camera light, time, and what it called progress."

Still photography, photo animation, and video are deftly used in Matthew's cultural investigations. In *An Indian from India*, a series of diptychs, Matthew tackles the misguided question: "But where are you *really* from?" Stemming from the need to explain herself as "an Indian from India," the artist presents 19th and early 20th century portraits of Native Americans, photographed as exotic "others." Matthew mimics this approach in the second image of the diptych, recreating the scene with herself as the sitter as an "Indian from India," touching on the colonial gaze so common in 19th century photography of Indians by the British.

In *Fabricated Memories*, the artist composites her childhood family snapshots with images made during a visit to England 20 years after her father's death. These seemingly realistic events never occurred, but accurately depict Matthew's memories of her father and her childhood in England. The work is presented as an accordion book of Polaroid transfers of her digitally composited homemade family album. As her father died from smoking, the book is bound in paper made from tobacco leaves and housed in a cigarette box stained with tobacco juice to further lead the viewer into her fabricated memories using the senses of sight, touch, and smell.

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

EXHIBITION LOCATION

547 West 27th Street, #608
New York, NY 10001

EXHIBITION DATES

November 6 – January 16, 2015

RECEPTION

Thursday, November 5, 2015
6-8pm

PRESS CONTACT

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Annu Palakunnathu Matthew, *Lavina*,
still from *ReGeneration*, 2009-2013,
digital animation.



In *Open Wound*, Matthew explores the memories of the children of the 1947 Partition of India. Here she uses family photographs and reenactments to create poignant photo animations with excerpts of their stories.

Matthew's work has been exhibited internationally; most notably in a recent solo exhibition at the Royal Ontario Museum, Toronto, in addition to The RISD Museum, Providence, Newark Art Museum, 2009 Guangzhou Biennial of Photography in China, 2006 Noorderlicht Photofestival in The Netherlands, and the 2005 Le Mois de la Photo à Montréal Photo Biennale in Canada.

Matthew is a recipient of the MacColl Johnson Fellowship in Visual Arts, the John Gutmann Fellowship, the Rhode Island State Council of the Arts Fellowship, and the American Institute of Indian Studies Creative Arts Fellowship. She was an artist-in-residence at the Yaddo and MacDowell Colonies.

Her work can be found in the collections of the George Eastman House, Royal Ontario Museum, Fogg Museum, Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, Center for Creative Photography, Daimler Art Collection, and the RISD Museum among others.

Annu Palakunnathu Matthew is Professor of Art (Photography) at the University of Rhode Island.

In celebration of the exhibition and NYC's Asian Contemporary Art Week, please join us at the gallery on Saturday, November 7th at 4:00 PM for an exhibition walk-through and talk with artist Annu Palakunnathu Matthew and legendary photography writer and curator Vicki Goldberg. We will have Matthew's publication *Memories of India*, with an essay by Vicki Goldberg, available for purchase and signing.

Annu Palakunnathu Matthew
Memories of India

Essay by Vicki Goldberg
Softcover

140 pages, 8.25 × 10.75 inches

Published by Chris Rauschenberg for Blue Sky Books, 2014
\$38.00



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