

ISOLATION INTERVIEWS

JAGDEEP RAINA





ISSUE 13

Continuing the Isolation Interviews: a new series of weekly artist and curator profiles highlighting current concerns, accompanied by a selection of available works.

We know that these are precarious and uncertain times for everyone and with so many people staying at home, self-isolating or social distancing, we want to be able to continue sharing some of our favourite art and artists with you. The Isolation Interviews are a weekly series of conversations with artists and curators that will explore how these new circumstances are affecting their practices, projects and productivity. We'll hear how they are finding solutions - and even opportunities - and what their plans and hopes are for the future.

Brooke Benington is committed to supporting and creating opportunities for artists. We believe that this is needed now more than ever. Most artists are self-employed, often supplementing their income by working as technicians, fabricators, assistants, teachers and a whole host of other jobs. Now, many have very suddenly lost a vital source of income. With this in mind, we are accompanying each Isolation Interview with a curated selection of work by that artist, available for purchase.

Thank you for your continued support. Stay safe and look after one another.

Lily & George
Directors, Brooke Benington



You are based in Ontario, Canada. What is your usual studio routine and how, if at all, has it been affected or restricted by isolation and social distancing measures over the past couple of months? Have you found a new rhythm and a new way of working or are you fairly self sufficient?

My usual routine hasn't been too affected since i've been working from home and shifted to teaching from home too, I usually try to start my day reading and writing and then gradually move into making work for the rest of the day- I'm working out of a basement right now studio my studio shut down and I've been quarantined with my family

You have a broad ranging practice that spans textiles, writing, and, more recently, video animation, photography and ceramics but always seem rooted in your drawing practice. Is this usually your starting point and then you are pulled into one media or another as the idea or work develops? Or do you set out front the start to make a video or tapestry?

I usually start with whatever chosen medium I've been working with. I've recently been finishing up the rough draft of my poetry manuscript and I've been writing the poems based on revisiting some of my old tapestries and drawings I've done. Currently I'm finishing up my first video animation and I've been drawing from footage I shot as well as sketchbook drawings to create this piece

It is often said that history is written by the victors. I think that more and more we are realising that there can be a disconnect between reality and how it is recorded and archived for posterity depending on the perspective or position of who is recording it. Is this disconnect, or perhaps more accurately, this idea of parallel narratives something that drives your work?

This is absolutely a parallel narrative that drives in my work. I'm always interested in peeling back the layers of history and trying to subvert the archive or look for the dirt behind the shine. It's important

for me to always realize History is not linear or homogeneous.

I always go back to these two quotes by Kara Walker and John Akomfrah as well: *"the archive acquires a special poignancy... because it is the space of the memorial. There are very few tangible memorials that say, 'You have been here.' And so, the archive is important because it is one of the spaces in which the memorial attests to your existence."*

"I think it's very important to look back. I don't think we do it often enough. I think sometimes looking back leads to, a kind of depression and stasis, which isn't good, but looking forward without any kind of deep historical feeling of connectedness, it's no good either." - Kara Walker



For many - particularly in minority communities - the echos of colonialism are felt in everyday life, but in recent weeks those reverberations have become louder and felt more widely. As an artist who's work has often told the stories of diaspora communities - highlighting their creativity as often as their struggles - do you see a role or even a responsibility for the arts and artists to present alternative narratives and be a force for change?

Absolutely- I feel that for me personally, it's more important than ever to highlight the ways in which the community i come from-Kashmir and the sikh community, members of a minority group who have been ethnically cleansed by the police and members of a geographical region going through imperial violence-stand up and show solidarity to black and indigenous communities and all racialized communities, it's our work to be stronger allies, listen more, read more, donate

more, try and work and fight alongside. it's our responsibility to understand that we can never claim authority on experiences that aren't our own, we can follow the leadership from black and indigenous communities and listen more, while embracing and embracing our own heritage, ancestry, and learn about the intersections of our identity with colonialism, imperialism, white supremacy, xenophobia, and racism. Most importantly, I feel like we can listen to one another as a way to really create forces for change. I always think of this quote too by Pakistani Playwright Ayad Akhtar: "My job is to hold a mirror not only to those who would be islamophobic but to ... my own Muslim community. I've got problems with my own community, which usually, when you're an artist of any value, that's



actually where you live and breathe, is in the critique of your own community, not in the I am a victim don't hurt me. That's not really interesting narrative. ...It creates a binary where I'm right and you're wrong. and I don't think that's art. I think that's advocacy."

Over the past months we have seen communities - both artistic and otherwise - coming together (while apart) and finding new ways to collaborate, cooperate and rise above the difficulties of the situation. Are you hopeful for a post-COVID-19 world where we might see this spirit continue? Are there things about how the art world in particular has operated historically that you would like to see change?

I have the utmost faith that COVID and protests against racism/caste violence, and economic exploitation has been a mirror that has exposed society flaws and showcased disparities that exist within the art world already. It's important we take our experiences of these multiple

pandemics and move forward, I don't think it's the responsibility of BIPOC artists to have all the answers either, it's on the art institutions to decide how to move forward while we work together and listen

to one another. I also hope that museums and galleries start changing their position of leadership and bring in more BIPOC curators, conversators, gallery directors, and leaders.





JAGDEEP RAINA

Jagdeep Raina (b. 1991, Guelph, Ontario, Canada) has an interdisciplinary practice that spans drawing, textiles, writing, and, more recently, video animation, photography and ceramics. In his work, Raina engages with personal and public archives and mines for fissures in representation. Raina was one of the recipients of the 2020 Sobey Art Award. He earned his BFA from Western University in 2013, his MFA from the Rhode Island School of Design in 2016, and attended the Skowhegan School of Painting and Sculpture in 2017. He has exhibited internationally at Midway Contemporary, Minneapolis (2019); Art Gallery of Guelph, Guelph (2019); Cooper Cole, Toronto (2019); Art Gallery of Alberta, Edmonton (2018); Rubin Museum of Art, New York (2018); RISD Museum of Art, Providence (2017); Humber Galleries, Toronto (2017); Provincetown Art Association and Museum, Provincetown (2017); Camden Arts Centre, London (2016); and Modern Fuel Artist-Run Centre, Kingston (2016). Raina lives and works in Guelph, Canada.

website: www.jagdeepraina.com



The terraced streets of Glasgow: driving past, 2016
Mixed media on paper
66 x 101.6 cm
26 x 40 in.



A tangible expression (Part 1), 2017
Mixed media on paper
48.3 x 63.5 cm
19 x 25 in.



Factory grind, 2016
Mixed media on paper
66 x 101.6 cm
26 x 40 in.



A tangible expression (Part 2), 2017
Mixed media on paper
48.3 x 63.5 cm
19 x 25 in.



You migrate, we migrate, you displace, we displace, 2019
Mixed media on paper
101.6 x 196.9 cm
40 x 77.5 in.

BROOKE BENINGTON

LONDON

lily@brookebenington.com

+44 (0)7557 036181

FULMER

george@brookebenington.com

+44 (0)7988 941056

brookebenington.com

[@brookebenington](#)

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