

# Rah Naqvi | *when a name is laid to rest: archives of future present past*

13 October - 18 November, 2023



*Rah Naqvi, dua, 2023, inscribed soldered drawing on vegetable dyed leather, ink*

We are proud to present Rah Naqvi's (they/them) first solo exhibition at AKINCI. Originally from Mumbai, India, Naqvi now lives and works in Amsterdam after finishing their residency at De Ateliers in 2021. As a multidisciplinary artist their work engages in narratives themed around religious and societal polarisation through mediums like paper, textile, sound & video - centring art as their tool for activism.

In, *when a name is laid to rest: archives of future present past*, Naqvi presents primarily new works exploring the notion of belonging, urging the question: "What becomes of tired bodies in a constant state of flux in voluntary and involuntary refuge?" The visual narratives inform themselves from the reference point of a trans marginal identity, tied to the sociopolitics of modern-day India, where the intersections of belonging are blurry and undefined.

One navigates through two distinct states within the gallery: exhaustion and rest.

The first space echoes an endless symphonic and visual rage, through means of a looping video work, titled *trespasser will be prosecuted*. Visuals of an anonymous figure in flux, running across different terrains exposes a body under continuous threat, compromised into space and time with no sense of belonging. Images of the anonymous figure wearing a mask flash in between, revealing a loss of self within a powerful exterior. The soundscape, using distorted fragments of right-wing rallies, exertion of weary feet and heavy breaths plays alongside the backdrop of rhythmic drums – a commentary on the inviting nature of apathy. The soundscape mirrors the current political climate in contemporary India, and its challenges with authoritarianism and growing mobocracy.

On display within the space are leather soldered fragments, archiving excerpts of the remnants of communal riots – in their violence and deafening stillness. Placed in isolation, a *tazbeeh* (prayer beads) hangs on the wall, marked with the names of lives taken. A wind chime titled *chimes of apathy*, juxtaposes figures of an imminent threat to the symbolism of comfort and ease. Stamped slippers display a recognizable symbol of the working-class and act as a presence of the vulnerable within the space.

Stepping into the second space one experiences a shift; of rest and resilience. Two textile works by Naqvi envelop the room. Both an ode to resistance, one speaking to familial care, and one to an honoured resilience. A family heirloom is re-worked: where once were gold and silver embroidered embellishments, now lie delicate embroidered poems and images dedicated to Naqvi's grandmother, speaking a narrative honouring the sacrifices made by the women in their family for generations to come. A quilted image of a woman named Bilkis, a figure of resilience, hangs alongside the heirloom. Stitched onto her dress is a poem dedicated to a life deserved, imagining futures unlived.

Echoes of songs can be heard luring one to step into the next space, revealing an archive of lullabies collected through an open call. Resting songs in different tongues, different homes, and different ancestral exchanges of care holds the space. The lullabies are accompanied by the video work *mother tongues*, projected onto a clothesline of hanging kurtas and pyjamas. A desire for stillness, a final reference to the unafforded rest for vulnerable bodies.

The collective works, made with the aid of friends and family, holds close to Naqvi's beliefs of a collective consciousness. The film in the first space was shot and produced in India by Ali Monis Naqvi and Srishti Roshan and edited in Amsterdam by Amir Malake Baroud. The soundscape was directed and produced by musician and artist Nene Moné. The artist emphasizes that creation for them is not a solitary act, but one of interdependence and trust.

The artist extends their gratitude to Srishti Roshan, Ali Monis Naqvi, Amir Malake Baroud, Nene Moné, and all the contributors of the resting songs archive, without whom this show would not be impossible.

This exhibition has been made possible with the generous support of Stichting Stokroos.

*The work of Rah Naqvi (they/them, 1996, Mumbai, India) engages in narratives themed around religious and societal stigmas. They had their first solo exhibition 'Bashaoor' at Clark House, Mumbai in 2018, followed by their second solo exhibition, 'Sharam o Haya' at Ame Nue, Hamburg in 2019. In the same year, they were part of 'Heroines Now', a group exhibition at AKINCI, alongside melanie bonajo (NL), Anne Wenzel (DE), Gluklya (RU/NL) and Lungiswa Gqunta (SA). Their shows include 'Hunger' at AKINCI (2020); 'Inherited Memory' at Tarq, Mumbai (2020); 'Viral self-portraits' at Moderna galerija, Ljubljana (2020) and the performance 'Soft Touch Men' at 'In the inner bark of trees', curated by Archive Sites at Savvy contemporary in Berlin (2023). Naqvi has been part of other group exhibitions at MAIIAM Contemporary Art Museum, Chiang Mai, TH (2020/21); Kunsthall Trondheim, NO (2019); Museum of Modern Art, Warsaw, PL (2018) and Para Site, Hong Kong (2018). Their work was also shown at TS1 Yangon, MM (2018); The Regimes of Truth, curated by Shaunak Mahubani, New Delhi, Apexart NY (2018); 'Micro subversions Playbook, Conflictorium', Ahmedabad, curated by Avni Sethi and Venkataraman Divakar (2018) and The 'Exhaustion project', Haus der Kulturen der Welt, Berlin, curated by Abhijan Toto (2018). In 2021, they were a resident artist at De Ateliers in Amsterdam. Rah Naqvi was also one of the two representing artists for India at the Bangkok Biennale, 'Escape Routes' (2020).*