

## Nalini Malani

### *The Human Stain*

23 November 2023 – 13 January 2024

Opening on Thursday 23rd November



*The Human Stain, Oenone Phèdre, 2023*

Reverse painting, acrylic and email paint of Mylar, 51 x 86 cm

© Nalini Malani. Courtesy Galerie Lelong & Co.

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Widely considered the pioneer of video art in India, Nalini Malani practises drawing, painting, and the extension of those forms into projected animation, video, and film. Her works in new media often take the form of monumental and immersive shadow play pieces that create mesmerizing layers of imagery and sound. Committed to the role of the artist as social activist, Malani focuses on creating dynamic visual stories about those who have been ignored, forgotten, or marginalized. Drawn from history, culture, and her direct experience as a refugee of the Independence and Partition of India and the legacy of colonialism and de-colonization, Malani's work explores violence, the feminine, and the politics of national identity.

Malani's technique of reverse painting is inspired by the tradition of painting on the underside of glass, permitting her to create ghostly effects with apprehensive figures appearing in flowing, liquid forms. The artist borrows the title of the series *The Human Stain* from Philip Roth's 2001 novel.

She writes : "In Roth's novel, the main character tries to hide his race behind the fair colour of his skin, where it is advantageous to be taken as fully 'white'. The human stain is both a mark on the skin and the mark of experience, too messy and convoluted to be sorted out by moral high mindedness.

Myths are our human stain, our oldest stories, which come to us without authors in a snowball effect through the centuries of time, gathering whatever is pertinent to those times.

In this series *The Human Stain*, I want to bring forth the characters from the myths, in this case the Greek myths, to resonate in our contemporary moment. Thus we can see stains of Phèdre, Medea and the characters from the Oresteia in our contemporary lives, which unravel relationships in dreams and associations through the archetypes of these universal truths."



Photograph © Luke Walker

Born in 1946 in Karachi, Nalini Malani lives and works in Mumbai and in Amsterdam. In 2007, she was chosen by Robert Storr for the 52<sup>nd</sup> Venice Biennale. That same summer, the IMMA in Dublin dedicated a retrospective and a catalogue to the artist. Her work has also been exhibited at the Kiran Nadar Foundation in New Delhi and at the Stedelijk Museum in Amsterdam (2017). Two major retrospectives were organized in 2018 at the Centre Pompidou in Paris and the Castello di Rivoli near Turin. MoMA, the Metropolitan Museum, the Tate Gallery and the MNAM-Centre Pompidou have recently acquired key works by Nalini Malani. Winner of the Joan Miró prize in 2019, she had an exhibition at Fundación Miró in Barcelona the following year, then in Hong Kong at the newly opened M+ Museum in 2021-2022. In 2022 Nalini Malani was awarded a fellowship at the National Gallery in London which ultimately led to an exhibition entitled *My Reality is Different*. In 2023 she received the Kyoto prize, an outstanding distinction often referred to as the equivalent of Nobel prize in Asia.

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