

## Shilpa Gupta

*Some suns fell off*

Tanya Bonakdar Gallery, Los Angeles

February 15 – March 29, 2025

Tanya Bonakdar Gallery is pleased to present Shilpa Gupta's first solo exhibition in Los Angeles, *Some suns fell off*, on view February 15 through March 29, 2025, and her second show with the gallery.

Over the last two and a half decades, Shilpa Gupta has developed a compelling interdisciplinary approach that challenges prevailing notions of individual and collective identity. Through sculpture, installation, sound, and drawing, Gupta explores notions of nationalism, borderlands, control, and censorship. As regimes with authoritarian tendencies take hold around the world, concurrent with a tightly concentrated media landscape vulnerable to the influence of such power, the concepts of otherness, individual rights and the freedom of expression are especially resonant. *Some suns fell off* holds a mirror to the world, reflecting the invisible structures that restrict our freedoms.

Shilpa Gupta's work often deals with the invisible lines that separate one from being legal to illegal in a few steps. Living in India, she frequently addresses the contested borders of her own country. Despite the fencing built along the demarcation line between India and Bangladesh, an informal and subversive economy persists across the border. *1:7690* is composed of a hand-wound ball of shredded strips of clothing carried from Bangladesh into India. The garment is no longer recognizable, a tactic often used in contraband. This conscious abstraction is further manifested in the artwork's title, which serves to underscore the arbitrary nature of state-sanctioned cartography. When multiplied by the ratio in the title, the length of the fabric strips corresponds to the measurement of the fenced border between the two nations. The act of winding and unwinding the ball again and again embodies the range of emotions – hysteria, anxiety, and hope – which vanish and reappear as lines are drawn through neighborhoods, and sometimes literally through homes.

For *100 Hand-drawn Maps of USA*, the artist asked 100 people living in the United States, of all ages and backgrounds, to draw an outline of the country purely based on memory. The fan flips through the pages sporadically, showing there is no single drawing that is "accurate," nor are there two that are the same. States are forgotten, misshaped, or incorporated into others – highlighting the disparity between the private and the public, between the singular state-sanctioned cartography and the informal image of one's country that one carries in the mind.

In a related work, Gupta's *Map Tracings* is an outline map made up of copper pipe, twisted to form three-dimensional linear sculptures. The work renders the familiar outlines of the USA into peculiar forms, the well-known shape becomes a strange line that literally twists our vision and reminds us that the nation is an artificial construct, and what it maps first and foremost is the way it imagines itself.

Suspended from the ceiling, a monumental, embroidered canvas portrays the stars on the flags of several officially recognized and unrecognized nations. The flag, a symbol of power and identity, strength and stability, is transformed into fine, delicate thread, suggesting the instability of the nation-state, usually seen as predetermined and unshakable.

Often engaging with language, Shilpa Gupta's *Sound on my skin* is an object typically found in transit zones. But instead of displaying timetables, arrivals and departures, it flips through a poetic stream of consciousness deliberating ideas of power, truth, fear, and hate. Phrases dissolve and morph into one another, while intentional misspellings make the viewer question the expected and understand the unexpected, which is often how the 'other' appears to us, in conversation with ourselves. As with many of her other works Gupta is concerned with the act of seeing and cognition, and how constructed perceptions about the world are taken for granted as knowledge.

Systems of power and authority can intentionally produce fear and myths, in order to control and retain power. Gupta's *Nothing Will Go On Record* series make restricted voices visible through their absence. By removing the outline of the figures, the artist brings to light their censored voices – and the violence used to suppress them, so often hidden by layers of bureaucracy. Gupta's line drawings are a subversive archive of the struggle to be heard.

In a darkened room, a reverse-wired moving microphone plays a recording of one lone voice, reciting the names of 100 poets from different times and countries, as well as the year they were detained and incarcerated by their respective state. In some cases, the individual was detained repeatedly year after year, some are still incarcerated, and some disappeared or have been executed. The microphone and a single light bulb slowly revolve around the room, a reminder of the importance of the individual voice. Gupta's practice is a poetic archive of the violence and aesthetics of oppressive systems, pushing us to see the possibilities of resistance.

Born in 1976 in Mumbai, Shilpa Gupta currently lives and works in Mumbai, India. The artist graduated with a BFA in sculpture from Sir J. J. School of Fine Art at the University of Mumbai in 1997.

Shilpa Gupta has been the subject of solo presentations at international institutions including Ishara Art Foundation, Dubai (2025); Centro Botín, Santander, Spain (2024); National Gallery Singapore (2023); Amant, Brooklyn (2023), which travelled to Madison Museum of Art (2024); a two-person exhibition with Marisa Merz at MAXXI L'Aquila, Italy (2023); Barbican, London (2021); Dallas Contemporary (2021); M HKA, Museum of Contemporary Art, Antwerp (2021); Contemporary Arts Center, Cincinnati (2010); OK Center for Contemporary Art, Linz, Austria (2010); Lalit Kala Akademi, New Delhi (2009), among others.

Gupta's work is represented in the permanent collections of Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York; Philadelphia Museum of Art; Museum of Contemporary Art, Chicago; Centre Pompidou, Paris; Mori Art Museum, Tokyo; M+ Museum, Hong Kong; Louisiana Museum, Denmark; Louis Vuitton Foundation, Paris; Asia Society, New York; Astrup Fearnley Museet, Oslo; National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne; Queensland Art Gallery, South Brisbane; Cincinnati Art Museum, Cincinnati; Kiran Nadar Museum of Art, New Delhi, among others.

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