

## HAUSER & WIRTH

### Press Release

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## Exploring The Quotidian And The Cosmic, New Works By Subodh Gupta Go On View In New York City

**'Subodh Gupta. Seven Billion Light Years'**

**10 February – 25 April 2015**

**Hauser & Wirth New York, 18th Street**

**Opening reception: Tuesday 10 February 2015, 6 – 8 pm**

**New York...** Hauser & Wirth is pleased to present 'Seven Billion Light Years', an exhibition of sculptures, installations, film, and new paintings by Subodh Gupta. Spanning the New Delhi-based artist's career to the present day, the exhibition emphasizes Gupta's distinctive use of found, commonplace objects in his ongoing campaign to map the effects of cultural dislocation in our era of shifting powers. In particular, Gupta captures the everyday realities of life in India – its nearly surreal collisions between the inescapably earthy and the ineffably divine, between the current of masses and the path of private days – through works of art that address dichotomies between traditional values and the impact of globalization.



'Seven Billion Light Years' will go on view 10 February 2015 at the gallery's downtown location at 511 West 18th Street, and remain on view through 25 April. The exhibition coincides with the debut of a major work by Subodh Gupta in the much-anticipated exhibition 'After Midnight: Indian Modernism to Contemporary India 1947/1997', opening 8 March 2015, at the Queens Museum in New York NY.

The exhibition title 'Seven Billion Light Years' makes reference to the earth's current population of seven billion human beings – and its cosmic inverse, the unfathomable distance between our mortal lives and a mysterious cosmos. Gupta's art asks what it would mean to address the world's people not as an anonymous mob but as individuals who each possesses a piece of infinity. A centerpiece of the show is a series of new paintings called Seven Billion Light Years, which returns to Gupta's signature subject of basic kitchen utensils familiar to every Indian. Utilizing three-dimensional objects affixed to canvas with resin, these paintings continue his investigation into the sustaining and even transformational power

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of the everyday. In them viewers can detect what anthropologist and writer Bhargupati Singh describes as 'the patterns we create through our diurnal scrapings, the marks we leave night and day, through rise and fall, joy and sorrow, on the surfaces of our ordinary domestic vessels that journey with us, sometimes for years. What we discover in the process are intricately crafted pieces of the cosmos'.

By bringing us ever closer to the intricate texture of our everyday lives, Singh writes, Subodh Gupta 'reminds us that what is near, is no less cosmic or mysterious'. Exploring this idea further is Gupta's film 'I go home every single day' (2004 / 2014). It documents the artist's journey from New Delhi to his native city Patna, capturing the train tracks, stations, and passengers encountered en route to his parents' home. A lyrical chronicle of daily life, this film captures the short journey from the modern urban center to a form of traditional Indian life, all the while reflecting upon the facets of that life and their inevitable disappearance with progress.



### 'I was in my own world.'

Another highlight of the exhibition at Hauser & Wirth – and a counterpoint to the Seven Billion Light Years paintings – is the installation 'Pure (I)' (1999 / 2014), a variation on a key work exhibited last year at the Museum für Moderne Kunst Frankfurt am Main, Germany. This installation revisits Gupta's early performative-sculptural work 'Pure (I)', first conceived and presented at the Khoj workshop in Modinagar, India in 1999. A seminal piece for the artist, 'Pure (I)' marked the beginning of his ongoing exploration of everyday objects as vessels of larger cosmic power. Gupta collected household utensils from neighbors on the outskirts of New Delhi, including a hookah and a plough, and sunk them into a field that had been covered with a paste of mud and cow dung. He then anointed himself with the same paste and lay in the center of the field in a posture known in yoga as shavasana, or the corpse pose. Gupta recalls that he found himself in a state of 'meditative blankness'. Reflecting on the experience he explained, 'I was in my own world'.



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'Pure (I)' also generated a 1999 film in which Gupta is seen standing under a shower. Unspooling in reverse, the footage begins with the artist naked and becoming increasingly covered in the loamy paste from

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the field. As a child, Gupta had been sent out to gather cowpats for ceremonies, and his 'Pure' works using cow dung specifically evoke a childhood in Bihar and the everyday rituals of Indian life. The Hindu faith recognizes cow dung as a symbol of purity; believed to possess cleansing powers, it is used today in rural areas of India to treat and fertilize agricultural land.



At Hauser & Wirth, 'Pure (I)' is a new work in which Gupta revisits and reconsiders his process of 15 years ago. At the gallery he will present a group of household utensils partially buried in pure earth, and a group of poignant black and white photographs of the neighbors from whom he borrowed the original objects for his earlier piece – portraits of his de facto collaborators in the soul-searching process of his art.

'Seven Billion Light Years' also features the monumental sculpture 'This is not a fountain' (2011 – 2013), which stretches twelve feet across the gallery's main space. Here Gupta assembles the tools of kitchen cookery, including aluminum vessels, buckets, pots, and pans, multiplying their quantity to achieve monumentality and abundance. Distressed and tarnished with blackened soot, the individual domestic objects in this jumble are humble and nostalgic; but together they achieve a sort of dramatic grandeur. From this heap of empty pots, faucets sprout forth and gurgle with flowing water that washes over the various dishes that once held food. This water passes over the old forms, but disappears mysteriously without any evidence of accumulating pools. The spectacle of 'This is not a fountain' references the economic and social transformations of the artist's homeland – the inequalities of class that still prevail, despite India's rapid growth and modernization – while playfully acknowledging the inevitable reach of the art world's imperatives, exemplified in the very title of this Duchampian installation.

Cooking and eating are themes that course throughout Gupta's work and serve as useful vehicles for reflecting upon everyday cultural practices. 'My Family Portrait' (2013) displays kitchen utensils on common racks that one might find in a middle class Indian home. The utensils here, however, include new stainless steel objects alongside old pots and pans – stand-ins for both the new and the old. Similarly, works like 'Basket' (2014) and 'Aam' (2015) such plentiful and humble dietary staples as potatoes and mangos, but cast in bronze. From steel utensils, cow dung, and loam, to such luxurious metals as copper, bronze, and gold, Gupta's materials are cultural signifiers that are ubiquitously rooted in the artist's personal biography. Here, bronze serves as a rich metaphor for the almost unbearable tension between luxury and depletion, accumulation and deprivation.

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## About the Artist

Subodh Gupta was born in 1964 in Khagaul, Bihar, India. He studied at the College of Art, Patna (1983 – 1988) before moving to New Delhi where he currently lives and works. Trained as a painter, he went on to experiment with a variety of media, which culminated in his first installation in 1996 entitled '29 Mornings'. His work has been prominent in major international biennials and has been the subject of numerous solo exhibitions across Asia, Europe and America. Recent solo exhibitions include, 'Everything is Inside', MMK Museum für Moderne Kunst Frankfurt am Main, Germany (2014); 'Everything is Inside', National Gallery of Modern Art, New Delhi, India (2014); 'The Imaginary Order of Things', Centro de Arte Contemporáneo, Malaga, Spain (2013); 'Spirit Eaters', Kunstmuseum Thun, Switzerland (2013); 'Line of Control', Kiran Nadar Museum, New Delhi, India (2012) and 'Subodh Gupta', Sara Hildén Art Museum, Tampere, Finland (2011).

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Seven Billion Light Years III  
2014  
Oil on canvas, found utensil, resin  
225 x 240 cm / 88 5/8 x 94 1/2 in

My Family Portrait  
2013  
Mixed media  
Dimensions variable  
Installation view, 'Subodh Gupta. Everything is inside', MMK Museum für Moderne Kunst Frankfurt am Main, Germany, 2014  
Photo: Axel Schneider

Pure () (detail)  
1999 / 2014  
Mixed media  
Dimensions variable  
Installation view, 'Subodh Gupta. Everything is inside', MMK Museum für Moderne Kunst Frankfurt am Main, Germany, 2014  
Photo: Axel Schneider

This is not a fountain  
2011  
Old aluminium utensils, water, painted brass taps, PVC pipes, motor  
ca. 242 x 370 x 310 cm  
Installation view, 'Subodh Gupta. Everything is inside', MMK Museum für Moderne Kunst Frankfurt am Main, Germany, 2014  
Photo: Axel Schneider

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Courtesy the artist and Hauser & Wirth

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