

Suchitra Mattai

Osmosis



Suchitra Mattai, *one*, 2022. Vintage saris, my Mother's sari, fabric and rope net, 126 x 180 in.

Opening Reception November 12, 4-7 PM

Kavi Gupta presents *Osmosis*, a solo exhibition of new multi-media works by Indo-Caribbean American artist Suchitra Mattai.

Thinking about the saltwater ocean migrations that have shaped her family's cultural and geographic heritage, Mattai has both a scientific and a poetic interest in the process of osmosis, which involves the migration of water molecules from one region to another. Salt is a trigger for the osmotic process, which, in a manner of speaking, is about the emergence of something and the loss of something.

To create the works in *Osmosis* Mattai employed salt as both a sculptural medium and a chemical instigator of aesthetic transformation. The material empowers Mattai's aesthetic expressions of emergence and loss as they relate to the layering of new stories and cultural traditions atop those that already exist.

Anchoring the exhibition is a large-scale salt sculpture depicting a tilted *temple ruin*, seemingly emerging from underground. The glistening, encrusted form recalls the story of seafarers off the coast of Mahabalipuram who witnessed the appearance of such ruins when

the waters temporarily receded from shore prior to a tsunami. When the sea rushed back in, the ruins disappeared. They exist now only in the seafarers' memories, and in folklore. The exhibition is designed to move the viewer through the architecture of a Hindu temple, culminating in the garbha griha, or most sacred space, where the large sculpture resides. The temple's architecture reflects the space of memory.

Mattai's personal, familial, and cultural history has similarly been revealed, erased, altered, and in some ways constructed by the sea. Her artworks critically, and often joyfully, reflect upon this complex past by incorporating significant family heirlooms such as her mother's vintage saris and her grandmother's prayer Dupatta. Simultaneously, the works push her family's story forward by incorporating materials of personal

significance to Mattai's American experience, such as feather boas, shattered glass from her broken studio window, and found objects recovered from second hand stores.

"Osmosis relates in a way to the flexibility of storytelling," says Mattai. "It's about agency, pushing and pulling, ebbing and flowing, and the curiosity of probing what's revealed, and unearthing what's concealed."

Mattai's work is in the collections of Crystal Bridges Museum of Art, Bentonville, AR, USA; Jorge Pérez; Olivia Walton; Denver Art Museum, Denver, CO, USA; and Kiran Nader Museum of Art, Delhi, India, among many others. Recent exhibitions include *Suchitra Mattai: Breathing Room*, Boise Art Museum, Boise, ID, USA; and *State of the Art 2020*, Crystal Bridges Museum/the Momentary, Bentonville, AR, USA.



Suchitra Mattai, *love, labor, and the pursuit of happiness*, 2022. Vintage saris, my Mother's sari, ghungroo bells, clothes pins, and fabric, 70 x 72 in.