



Press Release: 5<sup>th</sup> December 2013

## **Nalini Malani** **Fukuoka Prize 2013**

Curated by Tasneem Zakaria Mehta

6th December 2013 to 12th January 2014

At the Special Project Space, Dr. Bhau Daji Lad Mumbai City Museum

### **Curatorial Note:**

Nalini Malani is one of India's most celebrated artists and the Dr Bhau Daji Lad Museum is proud to present her work *Listening to the Shades*, and to honour her for receiving the prestigious Fukuoka prize for Art and Culture. Malani brings an intense scrutiny of social and political pathologies to her work, which includes a remarkable diversity of mediums from painting to installation, new media, performance and sound animation. However in a world where painting as an art form has sadly diminished in significance, Malani continues to be an artist whose painting defines her art form. She has in a sense bridged the lacuna between the new media art of today and the painterly qualities of an earlier generation, and that is one of the reasons she remains one of the most significant artists working today. Her work at the most recent Documenta was an extraordinary culmination of this creative exploration.

The Fukuoka prize commends her for "consistent focus on such daring contemporary and universal themes as religious conflict, war, oppression of women and environmental destruction..." Malani sees the artist as a Cassandra of our times. She draws on archetypal images from the Greek myths to represent universal truths. Cassandra, the prophetess who agonisingly sees the disaster ahead but is condemned to never being believed, is a metaphor for our common myopia and for the subjugation of the feminine.

Malani collaborated with Professor Robert Storr of Yale University, to produce the book *Listening to the Shades*, based on the modern interpretation by Christa Wolf. The book offers a revisualisation of the ancient Greek myth and consists of 42 reverse paintings that are facsimile printed. The works evoke the traumas of our times, like ghostly characters seeking to redeem the past and rescue the future. In the essay for the book Professor Storr says, "Malani's work indicates that she has tapped into fathomless reserves of imagery, reference and metaphor, and from those depths arise painterly effects that invite us to luxuriate in colours strokes and textures of disorienting but arresting strangeness. Her iconography is equally captivating. Not only does she conjure with difference...she reaches back to myth, but not in order to re-enchant the world...but to show us that we can no longer escape a collective awareness that the seeds of our own destruction were not divinely sown but were sown by ourselves."

Tasneem Zakaria Mehta

**Works in the exhibition:**

The works in the exhibition comprise of 42 facsimile prints of the artist's book 'Listening to the Shades' and three stop-motion video animations, *Memory: Record/Erase* (1996), *Stains* (1999), and *Penelope* (2012).

The Book, *Listening to the Shades*, by Nalini Malani and Robert Storr is available at the Museum Shop at a specially discounted price.

**About Nalini Malani:**

Nalini Malani's work is influenced by her experiences as a refugee of the Partition of India. She places inherited iconographies and cherished cultural stereotypes under pressure. Her point of view is unwaveringly urban and internationalist, and unsparing in its condemnation of a cynical nationalism that exploits the beliefs of the masses. Hers is an art of excess, going beyond the boundaries of legitimized narrative, exceeding the conventional and initiating dialogue. Characteristics of her work have been the gradual movement towards new media, international collaboration and expanding the dimensions of the pictorial surface into the surrounding space such as ephemeral wall drawing, installation, shadow play, multi projection works and theatre.

**About the Museum:**

The Dr. Bhau Daji Lad Mumbai City Museum was the first museum established in the city in 1872, as the erstwhile Victoria & Albert Museum, Bombay. It showcases the city's history, art and culture. It has a small but rare collection of the fine and decorative arts of the 19th century, which highlights early modern art practice as well as the craftsmanship of various communities of the then Bombay Presidency. The collection also includes miniature models, dioramas, maps, lithographs, photographs and rare books that document the life of the people of the city in the 18th, 19th and early 20th centuries.

The Museum won UNESCO's highest international Award of Excellence in the field of cultural conservation and restoration, in 2005. It re-opened in 2008 with an extensive exhibitions programme which includes a strong focus on contemporary art. A series of curated exhibitions called 'Engaging Traditions', invites artists to respond to the Museum's collection, history and archives, addressing issues that speak directly to the traditions and issues that underlie the founding of the Museum, yet evoke the present by challenging orthodoxies and questioning assumptions. Several distinguished contemporary artists including Jitish Kallat and Sudarshan Shetty have participated in this programme.

The Museum has successfully collaborated with international museums and institutions to showcase contemporary artists and exhibitions which relate to the Museum's permanent collection. It has hosted exhibitions on contemporary photography and the Olympic posters from the V&A Museum, London. German artist Eberhard Havekost's works were presented in collaboration with the Dresden State Art Collections, and the exhibition "Social Fabric" was showcased with INIVA (Institute of International Visual Arts) London, and the Goethe-Institut, Max Mueller Bhavan, Mumbai. Most recently, the Museum collaborated with the Guggenheim Museum, New York, to

present the BMW Guggenheim Lab in Mumbai and the Ermenegildo Zegna group on the project ZegnArt Public.

In December 2012, the Museum opened a unique new cultural hub called the Museum Plaza which offers people a much needed green and programme rich public recreation space. The Museum has restored and adapted old spaces to accommodate new exhibition galleries called SPS 1 and 2, a large open area for the performing arts as well as public sculpture, a Museum Café, a Museum Shop, an artist workshop, and an Audio Visual cum Education Centre.

**Contact Details:**

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Website : [www.bdlmuseum.org](http://www.bdlmuseum.org)

Open: Thursdays to Tuesdays- 10 am to 6pm (5.30pm last ticket) closed on Wednesday and certain public holidays.

Travel: Nearest local railway stations on the Central Line: Byculla; on the Harbour Line: Reay Road; on the Western Line: Mahalaxmi.

By Bus: reachable via most buses passing Rani Baug/ Jijamata Udyan

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