

PRESS RELEASE



Nalini Malani *The Tables Have Turned*, 2008
Castello di Rivoli Museo d'Arte Contemporanea, Rivoli-Torino

Nalini Malani: The Rebellion of the Dead / La rivolta dei morti
Retrospective 1969-2018. Part II
Curated by Marcella Beccaria
In collaboration with Centre Pompidou, Paris
18 September 2018 – 6 January 2019

Lecture: Mieke Bal and Nalini Malani, Monday 17 September 2018, 5 pm
Opening: Monday 17 September 2018, 7 pm

As part of an international museum collaboration program, Castello di Rivoli Museo d'Arte Contemporanea and Centre Pompidou, Paris, present the first retrospective by Nalini Malani in Italy and in France. Covering almost fifty years of her career, the exhibition unfolds across two parts, each presenting a different selection of works. The first one was held at Centre Pompidou in the fall of 2017, while the second part will be presented at Castello di Rivoli between 18 September 2018 and 6 January 2019.

A celebrated pioneer of contemporary art in India, Nalini Malani (Karachi, 1946) lives and works in Mumbai, a city the artist still prefers to call Bombay. Through drawing, painting, installations, and numerous other experimental forms of art she explores the return of violence in history in a context of relentless globalization, especially against women. Profoundly political, Malani's art

draws inspiration from the archetypes present in Oriental cultures and in Greek mythology, seeking to establish a wide-ranging dialog with disciplines including contemporary theater and literature. By involving viewers in immersive and multisensory environments, the artist reflects on the devastating effects of war, on the phantoms of religion and on the exploitation of nature.

As **Carolyn Christov-Bakargiev**, Director of Castello di Rivoli, explains: “Malani’s work concerns making visible the invisible, foregrounding the shadows, blending the documentary and the urgent with the mythical and universal. To be born in Karachi in 1946 of a Sikh mother and a Theosophist father, means to have entered a world in crisis, tormented by the consequences of colonialism, world wars and their aftermath with huge populations in forced movement, yet with the cosmopolitan and worldly transnational emancipatory knowledges of theosophists such as Annie Besant, whose visions of an interrelated universe of thought forms prefigured later Quantum physics. Malani’s family, like many others, was forced to flee during Partition, and her early life was marked by those times to the degree that her imagery surfaces as the return of repressed psychic material, or appears to be vomited up from the depths of a subconscious filled with horrors and trauma.”

Developed in collaboration with the artist, both parts of the retrospective *Nalini Malani: The Rebellion of the Dead* present works in non-chronological order to highlight the grand narratives that recur in her practice since 1969. To contrast the traditional meaning of the word “retrospective,” Malani has created two new *wall drawing/erasure performance* works, one for the Castello and one for Centre Pompidou. The work at Castello di Rivoli presents characters and iconographic allusions to Indian art, to Greek mythology and to stories of contemporary violence and discrimination. References to contemporary writers such as Italo Calvino (1923-1985) and the poet Attipat Krishnaswami Ramanujan (1929-1993) are also present.

The exhibition at Castello di Rivoli unfolds across the five rooms on the third floor of the Museum, following a rhythm that in each room features a specific body of work. **Room 34** will house the *wall drawing/erasure performance* titled *City of Desires - Global Parasites*, 1992-2018. This new work holds the moving images of *Dream Houses*, 1969, one of the first experimental films ever made by the artist with the stop-motion technique. The room also presents *The Tables Have Turned*, 2008, a shadow play recently acquired for the permanent collection of the Castello. An immersive work about death and devastation, the installation is inspired by the novel *Cassandra* (1983) by the German author Christa Wolf (1929-2011), which recounts the dramatic story of the seer, endowed with the gift of prophecy, yet destined to remain unheard.

Room 35 presents *Twice Upon a Time*, 2014, a painting composed of eleven panels. The work takes inspiration from the story of Sita, a woman who chooses to *return* to Mother Earth instead of enduring the hardships imposed by her husband, King Rama, as told in the ancient epic novel *Ramayana*. In Malani’s version, the *return* is interpreted as a symbol of resistance and the entire account becomes a message about contemporaneity, in which, according to the feminist artist, “patriarchy and capitalism suffocate the freedom of women.”

Together with the three tondi from 2009 *Listen I*, *Listen II*, and *Angel III* the room includes the thirty-panel work *Cassandra*, 2009. These pieces amplify the contemporary significance of Cassandra’s myth, which frequently recurs in Malani’s work. Like in a stop-motion animation, the polyptych includes images of earthworms, small creatures of great importance for the Earth’s ecosystem, while the protagonist is portrayed sickly, almost dismembered while surrounded by a decaying world.

In **room 36**, *Mother India: Transactions in the Construction of Pain*, 2005, envelops visitors in a five-channel installation that incorporates the room’s walls and floor. The work is based on two traumatic historical events that took place in India in 1946 and in 2002, in which violence reached unprecedented peaks, affecting above all the lives of women, condemned to bear the marks of their oppressors on their own bodies. The screening begins with archival footage from 1947 showing ceremonial flags and fireworks during the celebrations for the birth of India as an independent nation, which also led to the Partition, the painful division between India and Pakistan.

Room 37 presents *Listening to the Shades*, 2008. Articulated through forty-two panels made with the reverse painting technique often used by Malani, the work re-activates the myth of Cassandra, whose insights were ignored and considered heretical. Malani explains: “Cassandra for me represents today the insights people have, but are hard put to collate and act upon. Profound insights that individuals have that can be good for the future of humankind are not paid heed to and we continue in the direction of death and destruction, with no thought towards a humane and progressive future.”

The exhibition itinerary culminates in **room 38** with *In Search of Vanished Blood*, 2012. The video/shadow play begins with a frightening, post-apocalyptic, toxic yellow sky, while Cassandra’s voice echoes in the space: “It’s Cassandra who’s speaking. In the heart of darkness. Under the sun of torture. To the capitals of the world. In the name of all victims.” In this work her prophecies become animations in which we recognize references to *The Disasters of War* by Goya (1810–1820), and to today’s conflicts, including Taliban fighters and Maoist rebels from northeast India.

“By narrating the pervasiveness of violence, from the relentless attacks towards women, to the ones against the Earth we all live on—states **Marcella Beccaria**, Chief Curator of Castello di Rivoli—Malani’s art bears a powerful, often uncomfortable message. Like Cassandra, to whom she often refers, Malani outlines visions that allude to a world to come. By interpreting her visions, those who encounter her art are free to act, and possibly build a better future.”

For the exhibition, Castello di Rivoli is publishing a scholarly catalog in English and Italian in collaboration with Hatje Cantz Verlag, culminating the major editorial project started in conjunction with the exhibition at Centre Pompidou, which was accompanied by an English and French volume. The Castello’s publication will include a text by the artist, a new essay by Carolyn Christov-Bakargiev, Director of Castello di Rivoli Museo d’Arte Contemporanea, a conversation between the artist and the curator Marcella Beccaria, and previously unpublished essays by Mieke Bal and Livia Monnet. The catalog also features entries on the exhibited works, a chronology on the artist researched in collaboration with Johan Pijnappel, a wide selection of images and an anthology of writings by the artist, S. V. Vasudev, Adil Jussawalla, Geeta Kapur, Uma Mahadevan, Arundhathi Subramaniam, Shanta Gokhale, Pat Hoffie, Dan Cameron, Yashodhara Dalmia, Thomas McEvelley, Carolyn Christov-Bakargiev, Andreas Huyssen, and Avni Doshi.

In parallel to the exhibition, Castello di Rivoli is organizing a series of lectures and conversations with art historians, scholars and artists, centred around gender-based violence and other prominent themes in Malani’s practice.

Curated by Nalini Malani and Carolyn Christov-Bakargiev, the program features events with **Mieke Bal** (17 September 2018), **Coco Fusco** (27 October 2018), **Cauleen Smith** (17 November 2018), **Carolyn Christov-Bakargiev**, **Milovan Farronato** on **Chiara Fumai** (8 December 2018). This public events series is supported by Nicoletta Fiorucci.

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Biographical notes

Nalini Malani (Karachi, 1946) lives and works in Bombay and in Amsterdam.

Following the Partition of India, in 1947 she moved with her family to Bombay, in a cultural and linguistic context quite different from what she was originally accustomed to. Her father's work with an Indian airline company allowed Malani and her mother to travel and discover Japanese and French culture. Her visit to the Egyptian and Coptic section at the Musée du Louvre in Paris influenced her profoundly.

After her diploma in Fine Arts, in 1970, she was awarded a scholarship by the French government in Fine Arts that allowed her to study in Paris for two years. In 1973, she returned to India and decided to actively collaborate with the nation's reconstruction. In 1984, she was given a grant by the Indian government. When her father died in 1984, the Air India airline company offered her one final free ticket, which she used to fly to New York where, thanks to encounters with other artists at the A.I.R. Gallery, she found inspiration to organize a major exhibition on female Indian artists.

Among her key solo exhibitions: *The Rebellion of the Dead / La rébellion des morts. Rétrospective 1969-2018. Part I*, Centre Pompidou, Paris (2017); *Transgressions*, Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam (2017); *Nalini Malani: In Search of Vanished Blood*, Institute of Contemporary Art, Boston (2016); *Nalini Malani: Stories Retold*, Institute of Contemporary Art Indian Ocean, Port-Louis, Mauritius (2015); *Nalini Malani: You Can't Keep Acid in a Paper Bag*, Kiran Nadar Museum of Art, New Delhi (2014); *Fukuoka Asian Art Museum*, Fukuoka (2013); *Mother India: Videoplays by Nalini Malani*, Art Gallery of New South Wales, Sydney (2012); *Splitting the Other*, Musée cantonal des Beaux-Arts, Lausanne (2010); *Nalini Malani*, Govett-Brewster Art Gallery, New Plymouth, New Zealand (2009); *Nalini Malani*, Irish Museum of Modern Art, Dublin (2007); *Hamletmachine*, New Museum of Contemporary Art, New York (2002); *Remembering Toba Tek Singh*, Prince of Wales Museum, Mumbai (1999).

Among the group events she has taken part in: *Imaginary Asia*, Nam June Paik Art Center, Yongin, South Korea (2017); *Contemporary Stories: Re-visiting Indian Narratives*, Princeton University Art Museum, Princeton, New Jersey (2016); *All Men Become Sisters*, Museum Sztuki, Lodz (2015); *Scenes for a New Heritage: Contemporary Art from the Collection*, Museum of Modern Art, New York (2015); *Infinite Challenge*, National Museum of Modern and Contemporary Art, Seoul (2014); *Artist File 2013*, The National Art Center, Tokyo (2013); *DOCUMENTA (13)*, Kassel (2012); *Asia X Women X Art*, Fukuoka Asian Art Museum, Fukuoka (2012); *Paris-Delhi-Bombay...*, Centre Pompidou, Paris (2011); *Alice in Wonderland*, Tate Liverpool, Liverpool (2011); *In the Seeds of Time*, National Gallery of Modern Art, New Delhi, Bangalore, and Mumbai (2009); *Emotional Drawing*, The National Museum of Modern Art, Tokyo and Kyoto (2009); *Taswir, Pictorial Mapping of Islam and Modernity*, Martin-Gropius-Bau, Berlin (2009); *Indian Highway*, Serpentine Gallery, London; Astrup Fearnley Museum, Oslo; Herning Museum of Contemporary Art, Herning; MAC, Lyon and MAXXI, Rome (2008); 16th Biennale of Sydney: *Revolutions – Forms That Turn*, Cockatoo Island, Sydney (2008); 52. Biennale di Venezia. *Pensa con i sensi – Senti con la mente*, Venice (2007); *Horn Please: Narratives in Contemporary Indian Art*, Kunstmuseum Bern (2007); 5th Taipei Biennale: *Dirty Yoga*, Taipei Fine Arts Museum, Taipei (2006); *Cinema of Prayoga*, Tate Modern, London (2006); *T1. La sindrome di Pantagruel*, Castello di Rivoli Museo d'Arte

Contemporanea, Rivoli; Fondazione Sandretto Re Rebaudengo, Turin; GAM Galleria Civica d'Arte Moderna e Contemporanea di Torino, Turin; Fondazione Merz, Turin; Casa del Conte Verde and Chiesa di Santa Croce, Rivoli (2005); 51. Biennale di Venezia, Venice (2005); 7th Sharjah Biennale: *Belonging*, Sharjah, UAE (2005); *Edge of Desire: Recent Art in India*, Art Gallery of Western Australia, Perth; Asia Society Museum, New York; Queens Museum of Art, New York; Tamayo Museum, Mexico City; Museum of Contemporary Art, Monterrey; National Gallery of Modern Art, New Delhi (2005); 3rd Seoul International Media Art Biennale, Seoul Museum of Art, Seoul (2004); 8th Istanbul Biennial: *Poetic Justice*, Yereban Cistern, Istanbul (2003); 4th Asia-Pacific Triennial, Queensland Art Gallery, Brisbane (2002); *Secular Practice: Recent Art from India*, Contemporary Art Gallery, Vancouver (2002); *Century City: Art and Culture in the Modern Metropolis*, Tate Modern, London (2001); *Unpacking Europe*, Museum Boijmans Van Beuningen, Rotterdam (2001); 7th Havana Biennial, Havana (2000); 3rd Gwangju Biennial: *Man + Space*, Gwangju (2000); *Voiceovers*, Art Gallery of New South Wales, Sydney (1999); *Traditions/Tensions*, Art Gallery of Western Australia, Perth (1998); *Diaspora*, Queens Art Museum, New York (1998); *Fifty Years of Contemporary Indian Art*, National Gallery of Modern Art, New Delhi (1997); 2nd Asia-Pacific Triennial, Queensland Art Gallery, Brisbane (1996); 1st Johannesburg Biennale: *Africus*, Johannesburg (1995); *India Songs*, Art Gallery of New South Wales, Sydney (1993); *Through the Looking Glass*, Centre of Contemporary Art, New Delhi (1989); 2nd Havana Biennial, Havana (1987); Contemporary Indian Art, Royal Academy of Art, London (1982); *Myth and Reality*, Museum of Modern Art, Oxford (1982); *Place for People*, Jehangir Art Gallery, Mumbai (1980).

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