CHITRA GANESH
2015-16 Estelle Lebowitz Visiting Artist

Exhibition
September 1 - December 10, 2015
Mary H. Dana Women Artists Series Galleries
Douglass Library
8 Chapel Drive, New Brunswick, NJ 08901 / Gallery Hours: M - F 9am - 4:30pm

Reception and Public Lecture by Chitra Ganesh
Tuesday, November 3, 2015 / 5-6:30pm
Mabel Smith Douglass Room, Douglass Library

The Mary H. Dana Women Artists Series is a program of the Center for Women in the Arts and Humanities (CWAH) in partnership with Rutgers University Libraries. CWAH is a unit of the Office of the Senior Vice President for Academic Affairs, and a consortium member of the Institute for Women’s Leadership at Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey. The exhibition and lecture are sponsored by the Estelle Lebowitz Memorial Fund bringing the work of renowned contemporary women artists through exhibitions, class visits, and public lectures to the Rutgers University community and general public. Rutgers co-sponsors include: African, Middle Eastern, and South Asian Languages and Literatures; Art Library; Asian American Cultural Center; Brodsky Center; Center for Cultural Analysis; Center for Women’s Global Leadership; Centers for Global Advancement and International Affairs (GAIA Centers); Department of Art History; Department of Women’s and Gender Studies; Douglass Residential College; Fine Arts Department-Camden; Institute for Research on Women; Institute for Women’s Leadership; Margery Somers Foster Center; Mason Gross School of the Arts-Visual Arts; Paul Robeson Galleries-Newark; Rutgers University Programming Association (RUPA); South Asian Studies Program; Women and Creativity House-Global Village. Additional co-sponsors: Durham Press (PA) and the New Jersey State Council on the Arts.

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Introduction and Acknowledgements

It was a great pleasure to present a solo exhibition of work by artist Chitra Ganesh in the Dana Women Artists Series Galleries and to bring her to campus as the 2015-16 Estelle Lebowitz Endowed Visiting Artist. During her campus residency, Ganesh delivered a public lecture in Douglass Library, a graduate level lecture to MFA students, and met with several groups of undergraduate students in classroom settings. In addition, she met with graduate students from Mason Gross School of the Arts in one-on-one studio critiques. We heartily thank Chitra for her extraordinary work and contributing significant amounts of her time to engage the public and our students in rare opportunities for intimate exchanges of ideas with an artist of her caliber.

The Center for Women in the Arts and Humanities (CWAH) gratefully acknowledges Dr. Joel Lebowitz who established the Estelle Lebowitz Endowment fund in 1999 in honor of his late wife, ensuring the continuation of CWAH exhibits for exceptional women artists. We have been honored to bring to campus the work of distinguished leaders of the feminist art movement, and rising stars of the art world such as Chitra Ganesh.

I would like to acknowledge Dr. Radhika Balakrishnan, Faculty Director, Center for Women’s Global Leadership and Professor, Women’s and Gender Studies at Rutgers University for her thoughtful catalog essay.

It is with deep appreciation that I thank the staff of the Center for Women in the Arts and Humanities without whom our programs and exhibitions would not be possible – Nicole Ianuzelli, Manager of Programs and Exhibitions, and Leigh-Ayna Passamano, Program Coordinator.

CWAH wishes to thank Dr. Barbara Lee, Senior Vice President for Academic Affairs, and Isabel Nazario, Associate Vice President for Strategic Initiatives for their outstanding support of our programs, as well as the following co-sponsors: African, Middle Eastern, and South Asian
Languages and Literatures (AMESALL); Art Library; Asian American Cultural Center; Brodsky Center; Center for Cultural Analysis; Center for Women’s Global Leadership; Centers for Global Advancement and International Affairs (GAIA Centers); Department of Art History; Department of Women’s and Gender Studies; Douglass Residential College; Fine Arts Department-Camden; Institute for Research on Women; Institute for Women’s Leadership; Margery Somers Foster Center; Mason Gross School of the Arts-Visual Arts; Paul Robeson Galleries-Newark; Rutgers University Programming Association (RUPA); South Asian Studies Program; Women and Creativity House-Global Village. Additional Co-sponsors: Durham Press (PA) and the New Jersey State Council on the Arts

Connie Tell
Curator and Administrative Director
Center for Women in the Arts and Humanities
The Feminist Art Project
Art is not the end but a beginning.
-Aie Wei Wei

The art of Chitra Ganesh is an active conversation held between multiple identities engaging the questions of representation of women, their bodies, and imagined realities through a playful interrogation of received forms in culture, both high and low. Influenced by her parents immigration to urban New York and their attempt at keeping her well versed in South Indian Tamilian culture, Ganesh’s work appropriates images from Indian comics of her childhood, Bollywood heroines, subverting the codes and messages imbedded in them, to more radical possibilities. Equally inspired by traditional South Indian music and dance as by the subway chalk work of Keith Haring, Ganesh’s art asks us to question the cultural assumptions involved in any work of creative expression.

Ganesh came to understand herself as a feminist in high school attending pro-choice rallies, and later in the nineties when she became active in queer rights. The progress of this involvement has led her to more actively engage performance and activism, and fully realize the power that images have to effect change in a world of structural inequalities and various forms of racial and cultural oppression. More recently, her work has been informed by the rise in visibility of protest around the world. The protest movements around Eric Gardner, Michael Gray, Freddie Brown, the color umbrella protests in Hong Kong, the protests in Thailand using the three fingers from the Hunger Games, and farmers movements in India, draw semiotic relationships through the use of performance and performative acts. Ganesh’s images provide an amplified collective awareness of people challenging inequality of wealth, racism, sexism and state repression.

Ganesh is as an editor and translator of our collective perceptions, triggering her audience to reconsider how they think. Her work is about new approaches to communicating ideas that challenge power and how sexuality is represented. It is often the story that remains
is the story that is told by those in power. Ganesh takes authority and inscribes new stories of power in her artwork.

Ganesh’s work on the *Index of the Disappeared* is her foregrounding of the stories of those who those in power do not tell; the histories of immigrants and dissenting communities in the United States since 9-11. She brings out the need to look at censorship, disappearance, deportation, secret renditions, stories of people that are hardly seen or told. It catalogues and creates a body of work around what is missing and carves out a space using images to open up alternative narratives to become a part of the history. Ganesh’s work shows how art and visual culture can challenge and provide new accounts of stories.

Ganesh’s work is read differently in each context that it is experienced such as in the US, India and Europe. She is constantly looking to experiment and try new ideas, attempting to influence the art world and stay engaged in her political projects. As art continues to be an arena for the speculative market to invest money, it is those with money that define what is *art*. Within this structure, trying to make work that is political and trying to challenge the status quo is difficult. But Ganesh continues to focus her work on challenging power, the neoliberalism in the art world, and issues of sexuality and gender. The range of her work is a continual invitation to reconsider the nature of power and in the way culture is constructed in order to discover and celebrate alternative narratives of *power, feminist, queer, post-colonial*; always radical, getting to the root.

**Radhika Balakrishnan, PhD**
Faculty Director, Center for Women’s Global Leadership
Professor, Department of Women’s and Gender Studies
Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey

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*Index of the Disappeared* is a collaboration, ongoing since 2004, between artists Chitra Ganesh and Mariam Ghani. The Index is both a physical archive of post-9/11 disappearances - detentions, deportations, renditions, redactions - and a platform for public dialogue around related issues. The *Index* archive is based in Brooklyn and is open to scholars for research by appointment.
Chitra Ganesh was born and raised in Brooklyn, NY, where she currently lives and works. Her drawing, installation, text-based work, and collaborations are inspired by buried narratives and marginal figures typically excluded from official canons of history, literature, and art. She is widely recognized for her experimental use of comic and large-scale narrative forms to communicate submerged histories and alternate articulations of femininity to a broader public.

Ganesh draws from a broad range of material, including the iconography of Hindu, Greek and Buddhist mythology, 19th century European portraiture and fairytales, archival photography, and song lyrics, as well as contemporary visual culture such as Bollywood posters, anime, and comic books. Using a process of automatic writing, she probes this visual and textual material to connect seemingly disparate narratives, and reveal uncanny moments of absence and buried desire. Fragments of poetic language cohere with her visual iconography to produce nonlinear narratives of “unforseen desire and untimely loss,” offering audiences untold tales from both collectively imagined pasts and distant futures.

By layering disparate materials and visual languages, Ganesh asks her viewers to “seek and consider new narratives of sexuality and power.” In this process the body becomes a site of transgression and transformation, both social and psychic, doubled, dismembered and continually exceeding its limits.
Chitra Ganesh / Archival Lightjet Prints

**Lantern Head**, 2013

*(OCCUPATIONAL HAZARDS OF EMOTIONAL MINEFIELDS)*

EGGSHELLS LODGED UNDER MY FINGERNAILS, LIGHT BULBS GROUND INTO MY HEELS...
A UNICORN CHARGED IN AND TOOK MY PULSE. THERE WAS NOTHING THERE. HE PULLED OUT HIS MAGNIFYING GLASS. --- THE LINES ACROSS MY WRIST SAY:

THROW OFF YOUR RIDER IF YOU EVER HAD ONE.
Suppose the Universe, 2013

Suppose the looking glass smashes? We, for example, know how to share the narrowest of paths, even when destiny closes her roads, and all the forest grows silent.....

"Both a symptom and a cause"

For instinct a blunt instrument, & the past another country
IT WAS THEN AND THERE, WHEN THE CLOCK STRUCK ONE HUNDRED, THAT HER GHOST CREEPT OUT OF THE SHOWER. DOWN HER LIGHTHOLE -- A PATH OF ELEGANCE--, BROWN FINGERS TREMBLED IN CAUTION. WAS IT CONSTELLATIONS WARPING AROUND THIN WRISTS, OR DEATH LURKING BEHIND HER THOUSAND MOONS? A SPINELESS CROW, A STARVING DOG, HER SWAN SONG'S FINAL CALL...

**Swan Song Call, 2008**
The Dazzle, 2006
FROM THE RABBITHOLE’S LABYRINTH, UNEXPECTED RESURRECTIONS: A LOTUS ARMED WITH NIGHT VISION, A LANGUAGE OF WHIRLPOOLS AND METAPHORS STREWN ON THE OCEAN FLOORS, & WRITING ON THE WALL SAYS: “BEWARE OF EVERYDAY LIFE”.

STREAMS OF MISPERCEPTION, PONDS OF ILLUMINATION, OCEANS OF SORROW AND VAST LAKES AS YET UNCLASSIFIED... THE SEAS OF HERSELF, REFLECTED IN ANCESTORS OF A MICROBIAL PAST.

Writing on the Wall, 2013
Chitra Ganesh / Mixed Media on Paper

Annals of Herland, 2011
Catwoman Series, 2013
(1 of 3)
Hers, An Inner Web, 2009
The Wipe, 2011
Chitra Ganesh / Lenticular Prints

The Ghostwriter, 2009

the ghost writer came knocking, 
her teeth tore my windows

The Ocean Itself, 2009

a whisper above me, 
a wreckage beneath my ocean floor
Architects of the Future - Away from the Watcher, 2014, (1 of 4)
Architects of the Future - City Inside Her, 2014 (2 of 4)

Architects of the Future - Intimacy of the Void, 2014, (3 of 4)

Architects of the Future - The Fortuneteller, (4 of 4)
Delicate Line: Corpse She Was Holding, 2010, (1 of 7)
Chitra Ganesh / Videos

*Rabbit Hole*, 2009, 2:55 minutes
Site-Specific Installations, 2004-15, 4:53 minutes
Exhibition Checklist

ARCHIVAL LIGHTJET PRINTS

*Lantern Head*, 2013
17 x 23"
Courtesy of the Artist

*Sati and Shiva*, 2007
17 x 23 ½"
Courtesy of the Artist

*Suppose the Universe*, 2013
16 x 32"
Courtesy of the Artist

*Swan Song Call*, 2008
28 x 40"
Courtesy of the Artist

*The Dazzle*, 2006
21 x 36"
Courtesy of the Artist

*Writing on the Wall*, 2013
20 x 26"
Courtesy of the Artist

MIXED MEDIA ON PAPER

*Annals of Herland*, 2011
13 x 13"
Courtesy of the Artist

*Catwoman Series*, 2013
12 x 12" each, 3 from series
Courtesy of the Artist

*Forest*, 2011
22 x 30"
Courtesy of the Artist

*Hers, An Inner Web*, 2009
60 x 40"
Courtesy of Cindy Elden

*The Wipe*, 2011
22 x 30"
Courtesy of the Artist
Exhibition Checklist Continued

LENTICULAR PRINTS

_The Ghostwriter_, 2009
20 x 26 ½"
Courtesy of the Artist

_The Ocean Itself_, 2009
20 x 26 ½"
Courtesy of the Artist

PRINT EDITIONS

_Architects of the Future_, 2014
- _Away from the Watcher_, 25 ¾ x 31 ¾"
- _City Inside Her_, 25 ¾ x 44 ¼"
- _Intimacy of the Void_, 25 ¾ x 18 ¼"
- _The Fortuneteller_, 25 ¾ x 22 ¼"
Screenprint and woodblock
Portfolio of 4 Prints, Edition: 25
Paper: Saunders Waterford 425gsm
Published by: Durham Press, PA

_Delicate Line: Corpse She Was Holding_, 2010, 22 x 28"
Silkscreen, lithography, monotype, relief, and glitter
Portfolio of 11 prints; Edition: 20; 7 exhibited
Published by: Brodsky Center, Rutgers University

VIDEOS

_Rabbit Hole_, 2009
2:55 minutes
Courtesy of the Artist

Site-Specific Installations
2004-15
4:53 minutes
Courtesy of the Artist
Chitra Ganesh / CV
chitraganesh.com

Education
2002 MFA Visual Arts, Columbia University, New York, NY
2001 Skowhegan School of Painting and Sculpture
1996 BA Art-semiotics and Comparative Literature, Brown University, Providence, RI

Selected Solo Exhibitions/Projects
2015 Solo Exhibition, Gallery Wendi Norris, September 2015
2014 *Chitra Ganesh: Eyes of Time*, Sackler Galleries, Brooklyn Museum of Art, NY
*Phantom Worlds*, John and June Alcott Gallery, UNC Chapel Hill
*Drawing from the present…*, Lakereen Gallery, Mumbai, India
*Secrets Told: Index of the Disappeared*, New York University -- multi-site installation across A/P/A Galleries Kimmel Center, & Kevorkian Building, NY
2013 *A Zebra Among Horses*, Gallery Espace, New Delhi, India
*Chitra Ganesh*, Twelve Gates Gallery, Philadelphia
*Her Nuclear Waters….*, Socrates Sculpture Park Billboard Series, NY
2012 *Flickering Myths*, Gallery Wendi Norris, San Francisco (catalog)
*She, the Question*, curated by Stina Edblom, Gotenburg Kunsthalle, Sweden
*The Ghost Effect in Real Time*, Jack Tilton Gallery, NY
2009 *The Ocean Beneath*, Chatterjee and Lal, Mumbai, India
*On Site 2: Her Silhouette Returns*, PS1/MOMA, organized by Klaus Biesenbach
*Chitra Ganesh*, FIAC solo presentation, with Haas & Fischer, Paris
2007 *Upon Her Precipice*, Thomas Erben, NY
*Chitra Ganesh*, Haas & Fischer, Zurich, Switzerland
Selected Awards and Residencies
2014  Kirloskar Visiting Scholar Program, Rhode Island School of Design
2013  Artist in Residence, New York University A/P/A Institute, with *Index of the Disappeared*
Visiting Faculty, Skowhegan School of Painting and Sculpture
Transparent Studio Residency Bose Pacia/+91 Foundation, Brooklyn
2012  John Simon Guggenheim Memorial Foundation Fellowship in the Creative Arts
Timehri Award for Leadership in the Arts, Presented by Aljira, A Center For the Arts
2010  Art Matters Foundation Grant
Lower East Side Printshop Special Editions Residency
Hermitage Artist Center Residency
2009  New York Foundation for the Arts Artist’s Fellowship
2008  Brodsky Center for Innovative Editions
2007  Smack Mellon Studio Residency
2006  Art Omi International Artists’ Residency
2005  New York Community Trust
Emerge 7, Aljira Center for Arts
Artists’ Alliance Rotating Studio Program
New York Foundation for the Arts Artist’s Fellowship, Gregory Millard Fellow
Headlands Center for the Art Project Space

Selected Collections
Brooklyn Museum
Burger Collection Zurich
Devi Art Foundation
Deutsche Bank Art Contemporary
Gwangju Contemporary Art Centre
Philadelphia Museum of Art
Museum of Modern Art
Queens Museum of Art
Saatchi Collection
San Jose Museum of Art
Whitney Museum of Art
Selected Group Exhibitions

2015

A Curious Blindness, The Wallach Art Gallery, Columbia University, New York
Frames of War, curated by Natasha Marie Llorens, Momenta Art, Brooklyn
Border Cultures Part 3 [security.surveillance], curated by Srimoyee Mitra, Art Gallery of Windsor, Ontario, Canada
Eye Awards Exhibition, Art Science Museum, Singapore
Eat Pray Thug, curated by Heems Suri, Aicon Gallery, NYC
False Alternatives, Gallery Veda, Chennai, India, curated by Meenakshi Thirukode
Index of the Disappeared, Franklin Street Works, Stamford, Connecticut
Chitra Ganesh & Dhruvi Acharya, IAf Curated Projects, curated by Girish Shahane, NCSA Exhibition Grounds, New Delhi

2014

On Paper: Alternate Realities, Baltimore Museum of Art
Shangri La: Imagined Cities, Los Angeles Municipal Art Gallery (catalog)
Durham Press: Polly Apfelbaum, Chitra Ganesh, Beatriz Milhazes, Mickalene Thomas, International Print Center, Philadelphia
25 Years of Drawing: Gallery Espace, Indira Gandhi National Arts Centre, New Delhi
My Sweet Lord, 1 x 1 Gallery, Dubai
After Our Bodies Meet, Leslie Lohman Museum, NY
The Watertank Project, public art exhibition across 80 water tanks throughout NYC
Initial Public Offering: Recent Acquisitions, San Jose Museum of Art
Leather Japan, Thomas Erben, New York
Sensual Wisdom. Hindu ritual and contemporary Indian art, KunstMuseum Bochum (catalog)
Selected Shorts, CAAM Festival, Kabuki Theatre, San Francisco
Dakar Biennial, with Simone Leigh, screening of “After Hell…” (Catalog)
Trinidad and Tabago Film Festival 2014: Experimental Shorts, with Simone Leigh

2013

Reading List: Artists’ Selections from the MoMA Library Collection, Cullman Education and Research Building, Museum of Modern Art
MicroCities: Incube Arts inToAsia, TBA Festival, Queens Museum of Art & Stephan Stoyanov Gallery, NY
International Fine Print Dealers Association Print Fair with Durham Press, Park Avenue Armory, NY
Splintering Signals: Chitra Ganesh & Nitin Mukul, Augusta Savage Gallery, University of Massachusetts Amherst
Selected Panels and Lectures

2015

* Ligatures: a Gulf Coast Program, Printing Museum, Houston
* Off the Wall: Chitra Ganesh in conversation with Saisha Grayson, Elizabeth Sackler Center for Feminist Art, Brooklyn Museum, NY
* Visiting Artist Lecture, CUNY LaGuardia College, NY
* Visiting Artist Lecture, High School Program, Rubin Museum, NY
* Brooklyn Public Library Talks: In Conversation with Alex Zafiris, Grand Army Plaza Library, Brooklyn, NY
* VALS Lecture, Columbia University School of the Visual Arts, NY
* Visiting Critic, Shiv Nadar University, Masters in Fine Arts Program, New Delhi
* Strategies in Collaboration: Speaker Series, India Art Fair NCIS Exhibition Grounds, New Delhi
* Oakley Center Colloquium, Williams College, Williamstown, MA
* Visiting Artist Lecture, University of Delaware MFA Program, DE

2014

* The Architecture of Myth: the Future is the Past, in Conjunction with San Art, Hoa Sen University, Saigon, Vietnam
* Kirloskar Scholar Inaugural Lecture, Rhode Island School of Design
* Ceci N’est Pas Une Comic: Graphic Novel Panel, NY Artist Book Fair, PS1/MOMA
* Modern/Global Contemporary Art Symposium, University of Pennsylvania
* Visiting Artist Lecture, Cooper Union Saturday Program
* Watch This Space: Artist Talk with Chitra Ganesh & Mariam Hasop, Kevorkian Center for Near Eastern Studies, New York University
* Radical Archives Conference, Cantor Film Center, New York University, NY
* Avid Lecture Series, Lakeeren Gallery, Colaba, Mumbai
* Hum Gunagar Auratein Hain, The International Association of Women in Radio and Television, Max Mueller Bhavan, New Delhi
* Hanes Visiting Artist Lecture Series, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, NC
* International/Modern/Global/Contemporary Symposium, ICA Philadelphia, PA
The mission of the Center for Women in the Arts and Humanities (CWAH) is to recognize, advance, and document the intellectual, aesthetic, and cultural contributions of diverse communities of women in the arts and humanities.

To accomplish this goal, CWAH engages in university and community partnerships to present exhibitions, classes, public programs, sponsored research, documentation and interdisciplinary projects encompassing the intersection of gender studies with the arts and humanities, and the creative and intellectual production of women in all arts and humanities fields across geographic, cultural, economic, and generational boundaries. The Center for Women in the Arts and Humanities serves university, local, national, and global audiences.

**STAFF**

Abena Busia, Academic Director; Chair, Department of Women’s and Gender Studies  
Connie Tell, Curator and Administrative Director  
Nicole Ianuzelli, Manager of Programs and Exhibitions  
Leigh-Ayna Passamano, Program Coordinator and Web Administrator  
Deborah Lee, Work-Study Assistant

To learn about our programs, please visit our website: cwah.rutgers.edu

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