



x TARQ

SHIFTING SELVES

Between meaning, mythology & mirage

11TH - 28TH AUGUST, 2021

Saju Kunhan

Engraving of Delhi before the Seige
Zarina Hashmi
Amit Mahadev Dombhare
Felice Beato
People of India, 19th century photographic album

*I live under the sky,
My memories ground me,
My sense of self shifts everyday.*

Saubiya Chasmawala

Underwood & Underwood studio
Coins of the Mughal Empire

Rithika Merchant

Dhruvi Acharya
Mayank Shyam
Anju Acharya
Laltu Chitrakar
Shakuntala Kulkarni

Gaurav Ogale x Farah Mulla



Delhi II
Zarina Hashmi

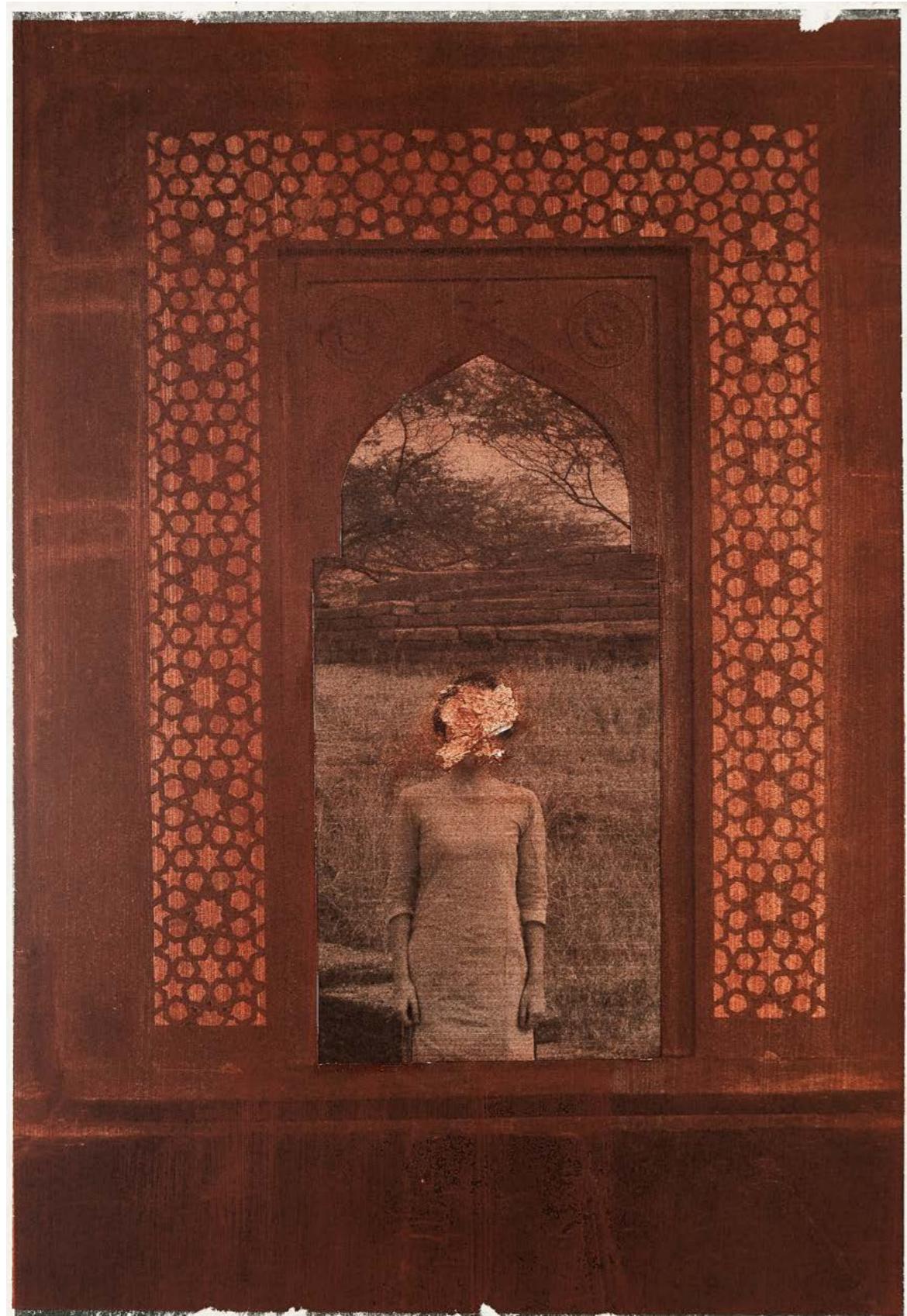
A NOTE FROM THE COLLECTOR PAUL ABRAHAM

The term migration has many connotations, some linked to human aspiration, some to human despair. Throughout our lives, we face moments of displacement. Leaving home, shifting cities or even moving house—each brings with it a new context that urges us to reconcile with different languages, cultures, cuisines, political philosophies and so on. Eventually, we learn to adapt and become a hybrid of what we left behind and what we now call home. Given the unique ways in which we are all shaped, is there any logic to our claim on the places, people and practices that define us? The only thing we can really claim as our own is that sense of always being in transition between who we were and who we are becoming.

One way in which we reconcile with this continual uprooting is to tighten our grip on the rituals handed down to us. Religious, cultural and artistic practices become muscle memory and a way for us to stay connected with our past. But these vestigial connections too merit closer inspection so they can reflect our evolving selves more fully.

A connection that sustains and nurtures us no matter where we are is our rootedness in nature. As we chase the markers of what society defines as success, we seem to leave behind a gentler world of abundance and harmony. The false optics of progress can blind us to our own role in the disastrous displacement and destruction of communities and species. A village was once a place that soothed us with its familiar rhythms, held us firm in a web of togetherness and nourished us with its natural bounty. The further we move from this idyll, the deeper our sense of restlessness.

In my journey as a collector, I am fascinated by artists like Rithika Merchant, Saubiya Chasmawala and Saju Kunhan who are sensitive to these existential issues and work them into their practice and expression. The gallerist plays a key role in identifying singular voices and providing them space to take wing, both physically and metaphorically. As an archive, we at Sarmaya are excited to see a diversity of objects from our collection enter into a dialogue with these contemporary artworks and offer a historical and cross-cultural perspective on these enduring themes.



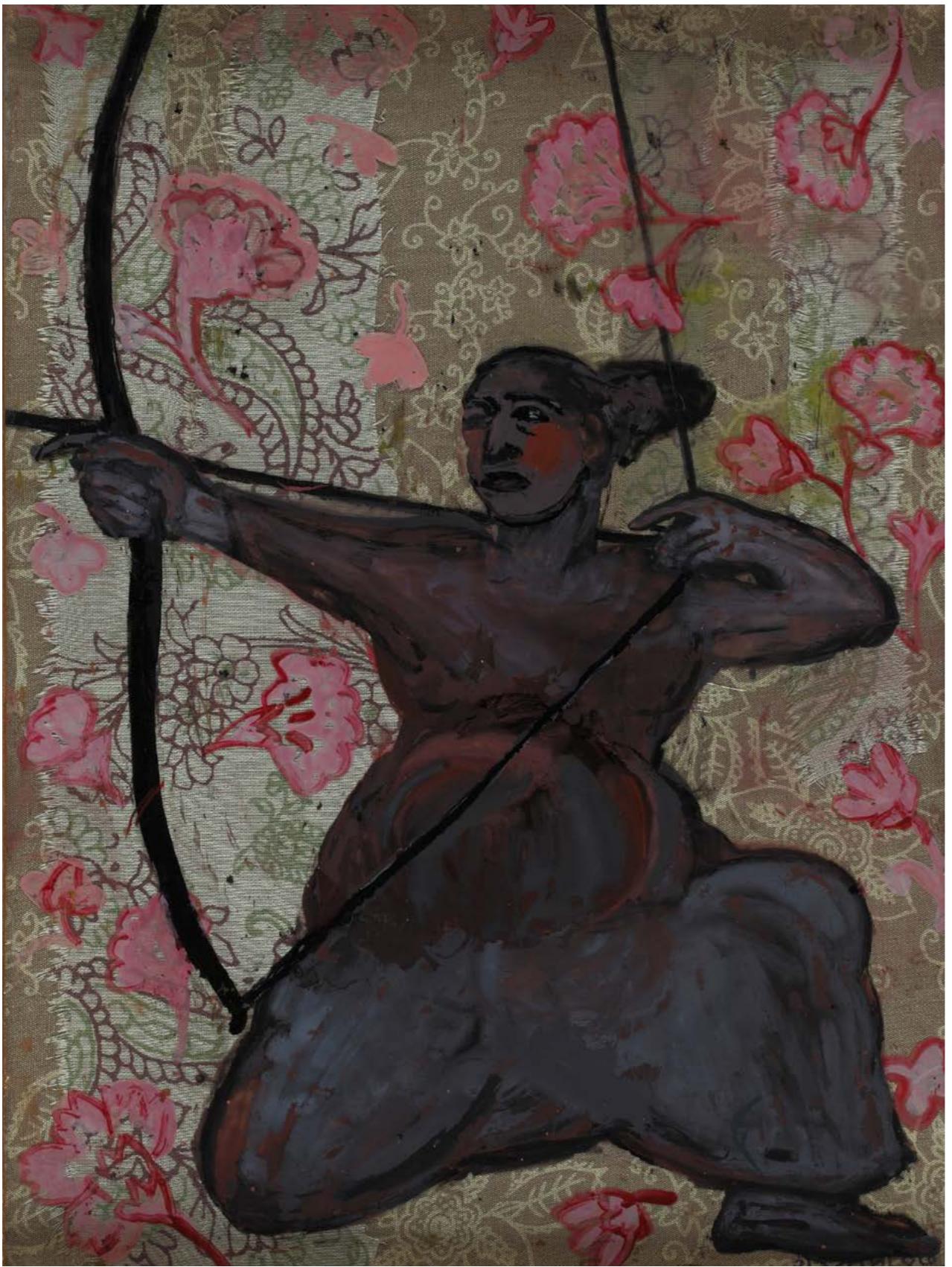
Untitled
Saubiya Chasmawala

A NOTE FROM THE GALLERIST HENA KAPADIA

While writing this essay, I'm trying to articulate my relationship with Pavitra and Paul, and where it all began. I'm sure we had met several times before, together, and separately, and certainly before the first physical Sarmaya show at Pundole's. I can definitely pinpoint the conversation, which was a turning point, and followed shortly after Pavitra had dropped into the gallery to source work for one of her clients. A shipment of Rithika Merchant's works had just arrived, and she was insistent that Paul would be coming by for a preview and asked that Saju Kunhan drop by on the same day, with his work Cloud over the landscape, as it would certainly tie into the narrative of the Collection at Sarmaya. The conversations that followed that week were long, intense, and delightful, and eventually led to them acquiring several of the works you see in the exhibition Shifting Selves: Between meaning, mythology and mirage.

When Pavitra, Paul and I first began talking about the impact that gallerists have on collectors, and in turn on collections I was intrigued by the idea, and a little overwhelmed by the power that was being bestowed upon me as a gallerist. The more thought I put into it, the more I realized that it was a long, complex, and wonderful relationship that develops between collector and gallerist, and in turn, between that same collector and the artist. Eventually, if all goes well, relationships between collectors and artists are very often immensely intellectually and creatively fulfilling to everyone involved, and ultimately lead to the artworld flourishing in the most meaningful way possible. With this in mind, I am thrilled that TARQ is able to host the first in four exhibitions that Sarmaya will be curating with the galleries that Pavitra and Paul have worked closely with over the years.

The show features the works of three artists we work with at TARQ, Saubiya Chasmawala, Saju Kunhan and Rithika Merchant, exhibited alongside other works from Sarmaya's archival collections. It is thrilling for me, and gratifying in a sense, that the artists we work with are being exhibited with artwork that has stood the test of time. It is even more meaningful that the practices of artists at TARQ can hold their own thematically across time and space, whether the works are in conversation with the numismatic collection, traditional Indian art, or even senior contemporary artists. The thoughtful and meticulous curation of the show also put together three artists that we work with, that I would have never thought to put into the same exhibition. It is marvellous to see Saubiya Chasmawala's deeply self-reflective, introspective works alongside Saju Kunhan's large scale maps and Rithika Merchant's intricate, vibrant works, and brings a new sense of discovery for me, to the echoes and potential connections between all the nuanced practices we continue to work with at TARQ.



And when she roared, the universe quaked
Shakuntala Kulkarni

A NOTE FROM THE EXHIBITION DIRECTOR PAVITRA RAJARAM

The making of memory, like the making of art, is a fascinating thing. What stories shape us? What histories bind us? What geographies do we alter as we make and break boundaries through our very personal viewpoints? Do stories change the storytellers? And are we at our most powerful when we are most vulnerable? *Shifting Selves - Between meaning, mythology and mirage* explores these ideas.

I have known Rithika Merchant's work for a while. Many years ago, while still in school, Rithika interned with me at my design practice for a summer. I saw even then her amazing potential as a storyteller, and her early fascination with myth and indigenous art has evolved into a potent vocabulary that is all her own. I was introduced to both Saju Kunhan and Saubiya Chasmawala's works at TARQ. Saubiya's striking, hypnotic works are among those I respond most viscerally to and her reauthoring of memory through calligraphic forms reflects my own fascination with the form and its significance within traditional practices. It was when I was in the gallery to look at Rithika's works that I chanced upon Saju Kunhan's art. I thought immediately of Paul, his own journey, and his fascination with the intersection of history and geography, and insisted he see the work. So to some extent, I have had a personal hand in bringing these artists together at Sarmaya and adding another dimension to the collection started by Paul.

I often turn to TARQ when I'm looking for works to acquire for our collection. Hena Kapadia's easy-going manner belies her talent as a gallerist and her unerring instinct for spotting emerging artists and presenting them in a new idiom. In a landscape of established galleries showcasing artists whose work has already achieved acclaim, TARQ serves as a window to lesser-known artists with startlingly original points of view. And this is very much in keeping with the spirit of what Paul and I strive to create at Sarmaya. This show—and TARQ—seemed to me the perfect place from which to begin our exploration of the symbiotic relationship between artists, gallerists, collectors and audiences.

While setting the direction for *Shifting Selves*, I was keen to juxtapose the work of these three artists with other, seemingly unconnected objects from the Sarmaya collection. Yet when placed together and viewed within the context of meaning-making, these artworks and artefacts become bound by threads that transcend time. We have brought together objects as varied as coins, 19th-century photographs and indigenous art to tell a universal story of the human yearning for identity and a desire to find our own voice.

Directing this show has been a special joy and a wonderful learning experience and has challenged my own boundaries of storytelling in the most delicious of ways. Watching the young Sarmaya curatorial and design team set the pace and lead the narrative has been particularly rewarding and I am inordinately proud of what they have achieved in this small but ambitious show. In a time when much of the world as we knew it seems like a mirage, I hope that our show embraces the brave new beginnings we as humans make over and over again.

SHIFTING SELVES

Between meaning, mythology & mirage

The ordinary routines that held our days, the simple certainties that comforted us, the invisible cogs that moved us further along a road we called progress—they all tilted out of reach this past year. Navigating a storm of doubts, we sought an anchoring in terra firma, the solid ground of identity and home. In charting these inner terrains, we were free to investigate like artists do, roaming the countries of memory and inheritance, history and mythology, belonging and yearning, to create new maps for a new world.

Released from the grip of what-should-be, we could ask questions about what-could-be. Like, what is home? Like artists again, we could break down the walls that constrained us to imagine a different kind of shelter. One that could lean into changing winds and offer an unflinching view of fault-lines, borders and chasms. Making art is the practice of getting comfortable with uncertainty. Of steadyng the hand by turning the gaze inwards. Towards the multifaceted, reflective and ever-changing consciousness, we call the self.

Perpetually in negotiation with itself, this consciousness thrives in the liminal spaces between binaries and it flourishes in the work of the three primary artists of Shifting Selves: Saju Kunhan, Saubiya Chasmawala and Rithika Merchant. Their creations come to life through alterations, manipulations and, often, rejections of the status-quo. By expressing their dissonance with a world straining to return to business as usual, they show us how we may stay a bit longer in the clarifying light of this in-between time.

A negotiation is clearly visible in Saju Kunhan's Clouds over a landscape, a map of Delhi made on recycled panels of wood. He sheds light on his own—and the city's—migrant identity by engaging with the subjectivity of maps and their function as history-making devices. The lines of belongingness are blurred as Kunhan quite literally reconstructs boundaries, walking in the shoes of the archivist himself. The technique of image-transfer from paper to wood follows the same intentions of reauthoring as he creates room for accidents, mistranslations and incompleteness.

Saubiya Chasmawala articulates her identity by capturing a conflict with its markers, particularly photography and calligraphy. She morphs familiar visuals and alters their contexts to challenge authority as well as ideas of ownership. Whether by splicing personal photographs with

her own interventions, or through repetitive, hypnotic drawings that render Arabic syllables into an abstraction, she is constantly negotiating with her presence (and absence) in a man-made society. Through these reinterpretations Chasmawala opens the door to understanding the universal, instinctive need for meaning-making.

Rithika Merchant leaves universality behind as she leaps into the familiar constellations of mythology and subverts them with her retelling. The ubiquitous patriarchal lens of these myths is stripped away through the use of ungendered figurations. She rejects the concrete truths of capitalism for the freeing fluidity of a story still taking shape. Merchant's practice investigates the modern human condition by playing witness to the monumental changes in our cultural, political and natural landscapes, exemplified best in Birth of a New World. In doing so, her images extend outwards into communalty, to a place where home is no longer an individual state of mind. Moving towards a collective consciousness, her work brings the narrative of this show to a full circle.

Though we anchor our inquisitions in the work of these three artists, we also employ their practices as compass points to examine Sarmaya's collection and spark dialogues that transcend epochs, cultures and mediums. In doing so, Shifting Selves invites you to stand at the ever-evolving crossroads of the self and let go of the familiar in exchange for a moment of the remarkable.

WHOSE LAND IS IT ANYWAY?

Saju Kunhan's socio-political inquiries bring to mind Zarina's 2011 Delhi series that offers an aerial view of the city and the Yamuna. The themes of migration, displacement, destruction and reconstruction underlying Delhi II and Delhi III mirror the concerns of Clouds over a landscape. Just like Kunhan, Zarina focuses on the boundaries of the city of Shahjahanabad, critically highlighting their impermanence. She achieves this through her choice of inspiration: an 1858 engraving from the Illustrated London News titled, The city of Delhi before the siege. The fortified city is shown here in the peaceful days before its destruction in the Uprising of 1857.

The Panorama of Delhi, also photographed in 1858, showcases the changing contours of the city of Delhi after the siege. Extending the series of portraits of Indian citizens and military figures arranged across the top and bottom of Kunhan's work is a selection made from the People of India series. These photographs were part of an ethnographic survey of India ordered by Governor General Lord Canning between 1868 and 1875. Captured through the gaze of the coloniser, the portraits speak to the violence of displacement palpable in Kunhan's work.

We find similar questions on land and ownership in the untitled Warli artwork by Amit Mahadev Dombhare. The very identity of the formerly forest-dwelling Warli tribe is linked to the land they inhabit—'warli' means 'piece of land'—and this is expressed in their art. Considered the original inhabitants of the north Konkan region in western India, the Warlis practiced shifting cultivation, migrating periodically from one area of the forest to another. Over centuries, their land has been encroached upon by traders and both foreign and Indian empires and authorities leading to a silent and near-total displacement of a people. Like Kunhan and Zarina, Dhombhare here offers an aerial view of a piece of land, creating patterns in light and in shadow and enhancing the impact of the negative space around each figure.



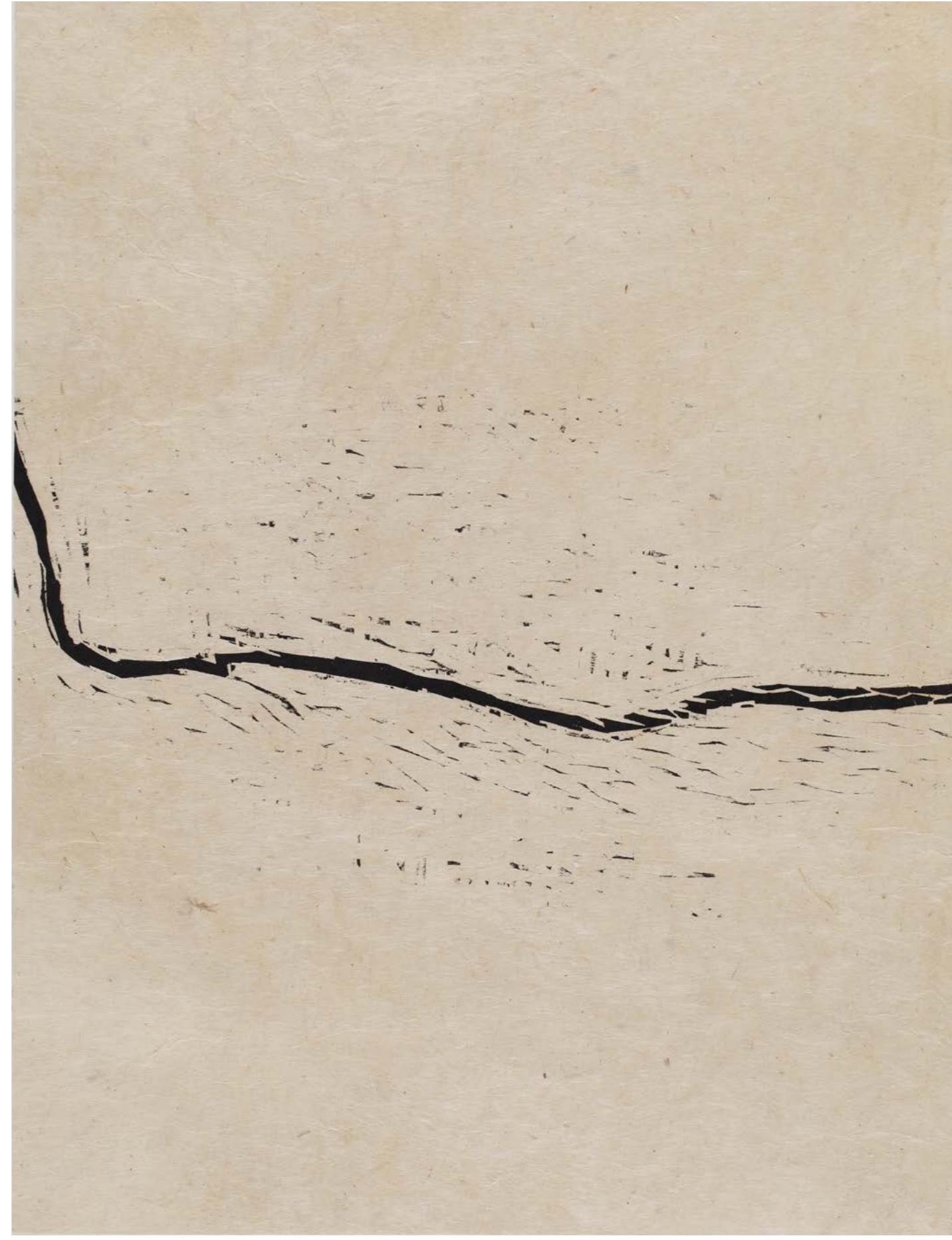


Saju Kunhan
Cloud over the landscape, 2019

Image transfer, soft pastel, acrylic and varnish on wood
6 Panel-work, 152.4 cm x 274.3 cm/each
2020.21.1

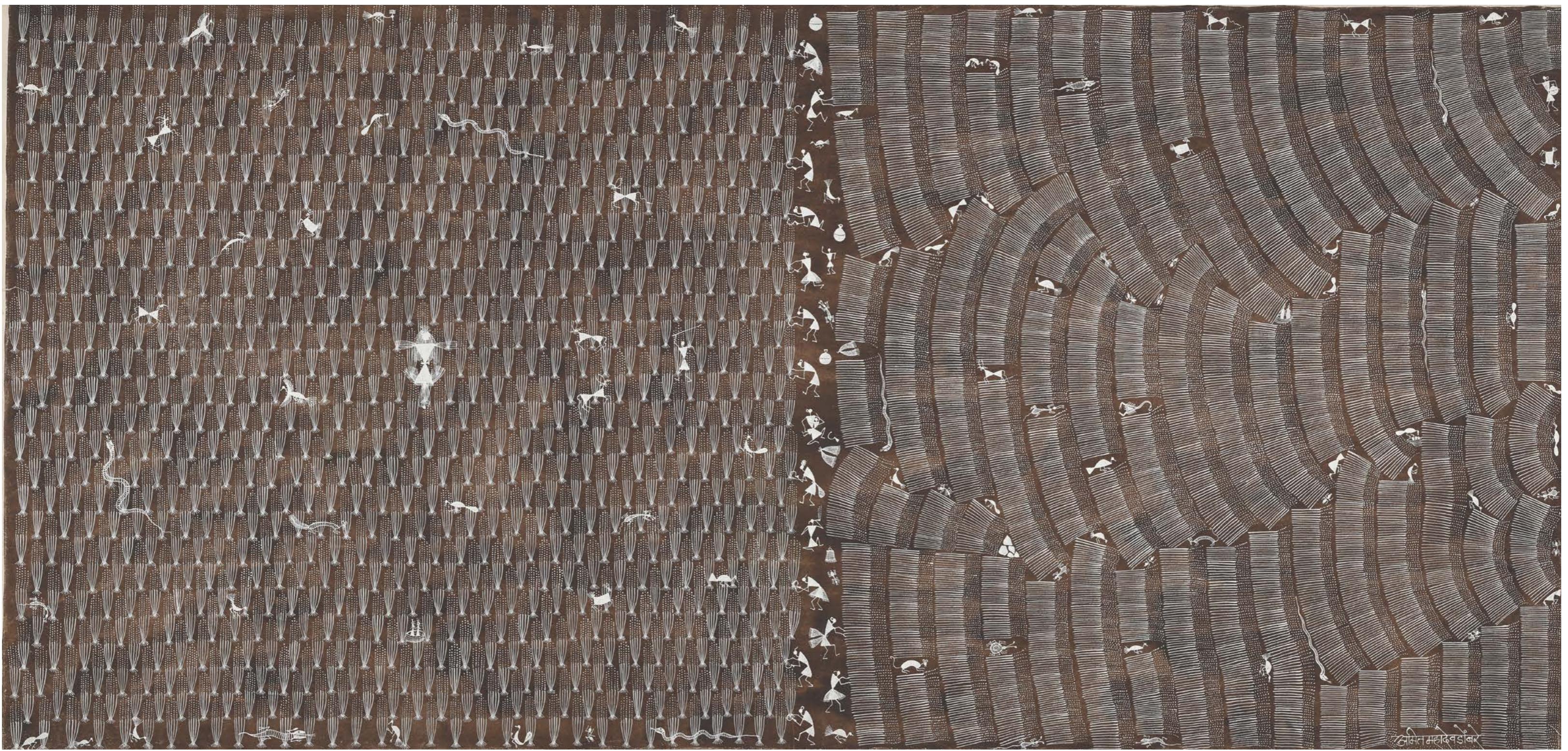
The City of Delhi Before the Siege,
From Illustrated London News, Jan 16,
1858

Woodblock print
H: 25.5 cm x W: 35.5 cm
2015.3.46



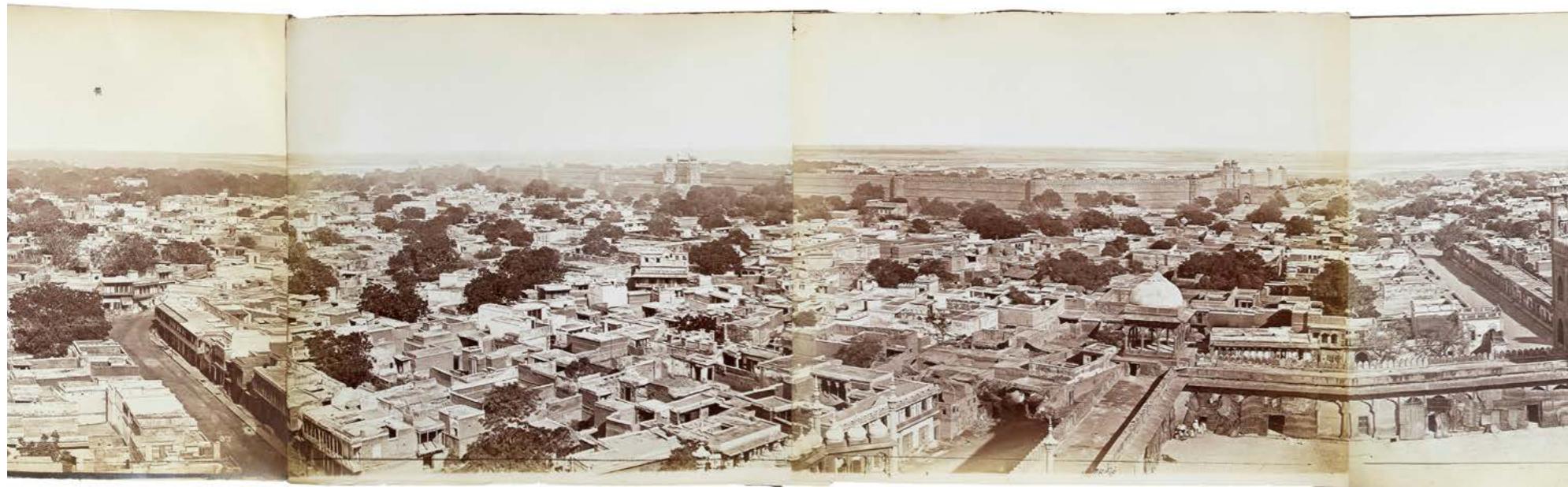
Zarina Hashmi
Delhi II & III, 2000

Woodcut print with black ink
on handmade paper pasted on
cartridge paper
H: 42.5 cm x W: 32 cm
2017.33.1 and 2017.33.2



Amit Mahadev Dombhare
Untitled (Warli), 2019

Cow dung on cloth
H: 81 cm x W: 168 cm
2020.8.1



Detailed view



Felice Beato

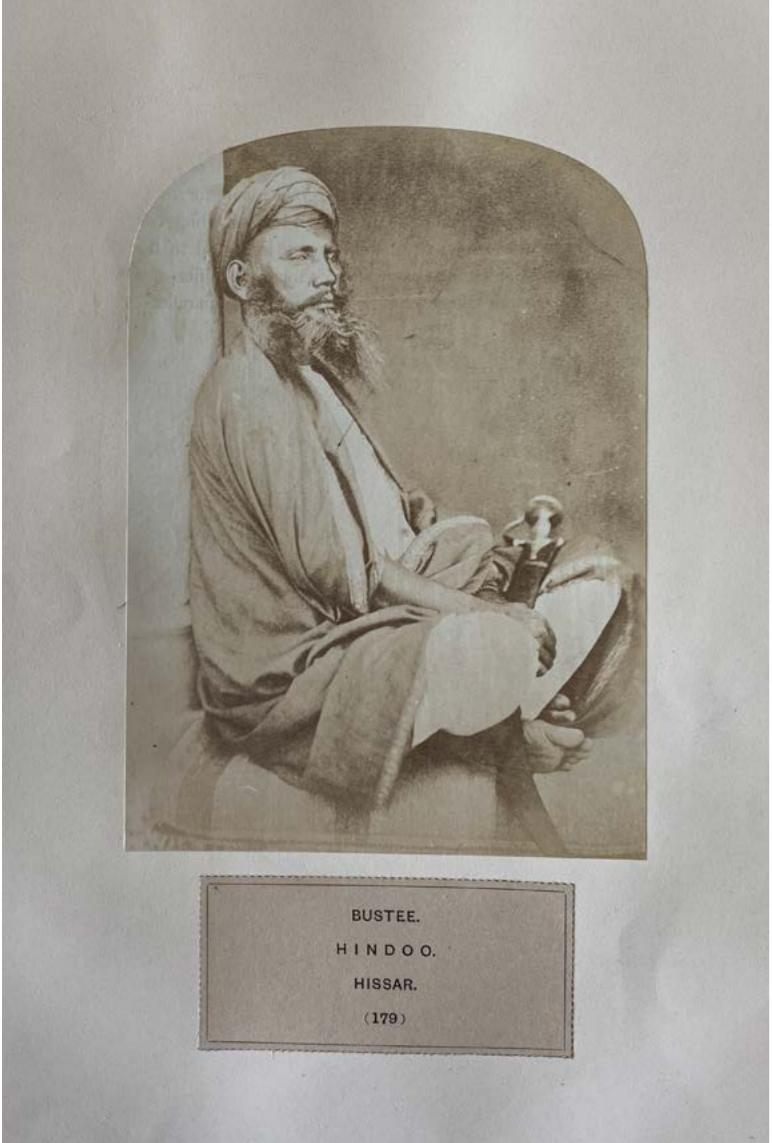
Panorama of Delhi taken from the Jamma Masjid, 1858



Detailed view

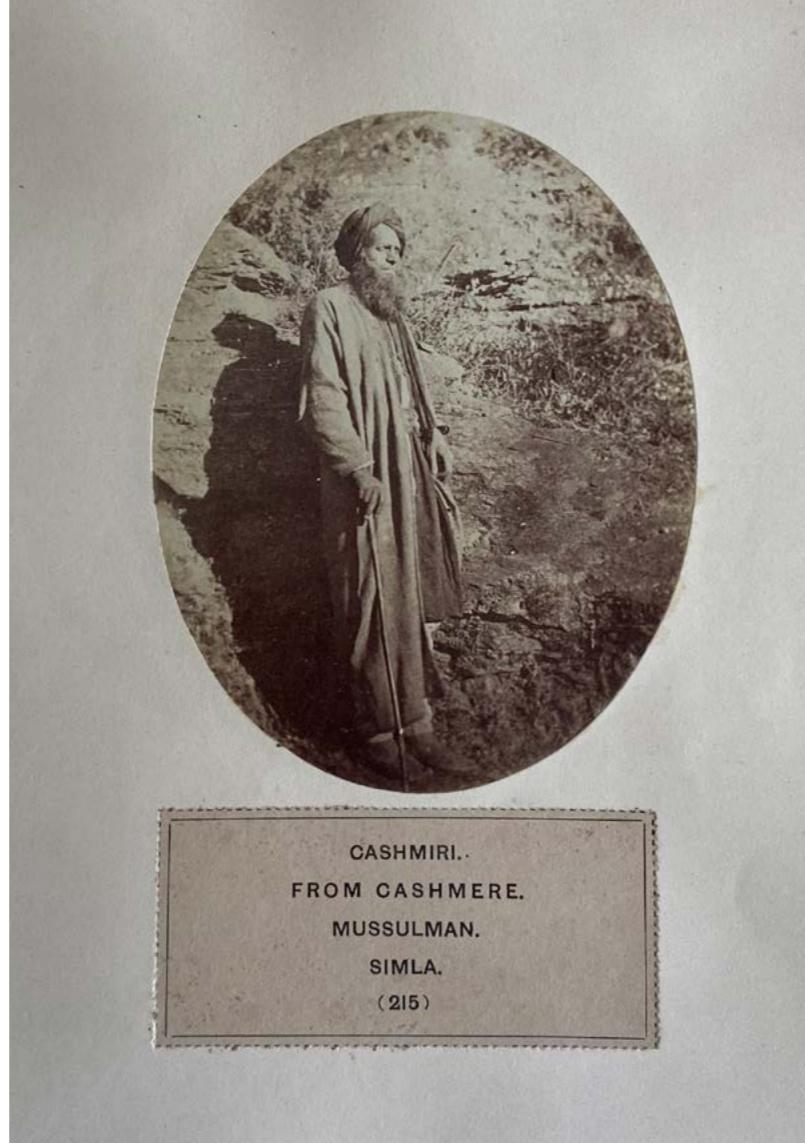
Albumen print

H: 25.4 cm x W:243.8 cm
2021.17.1



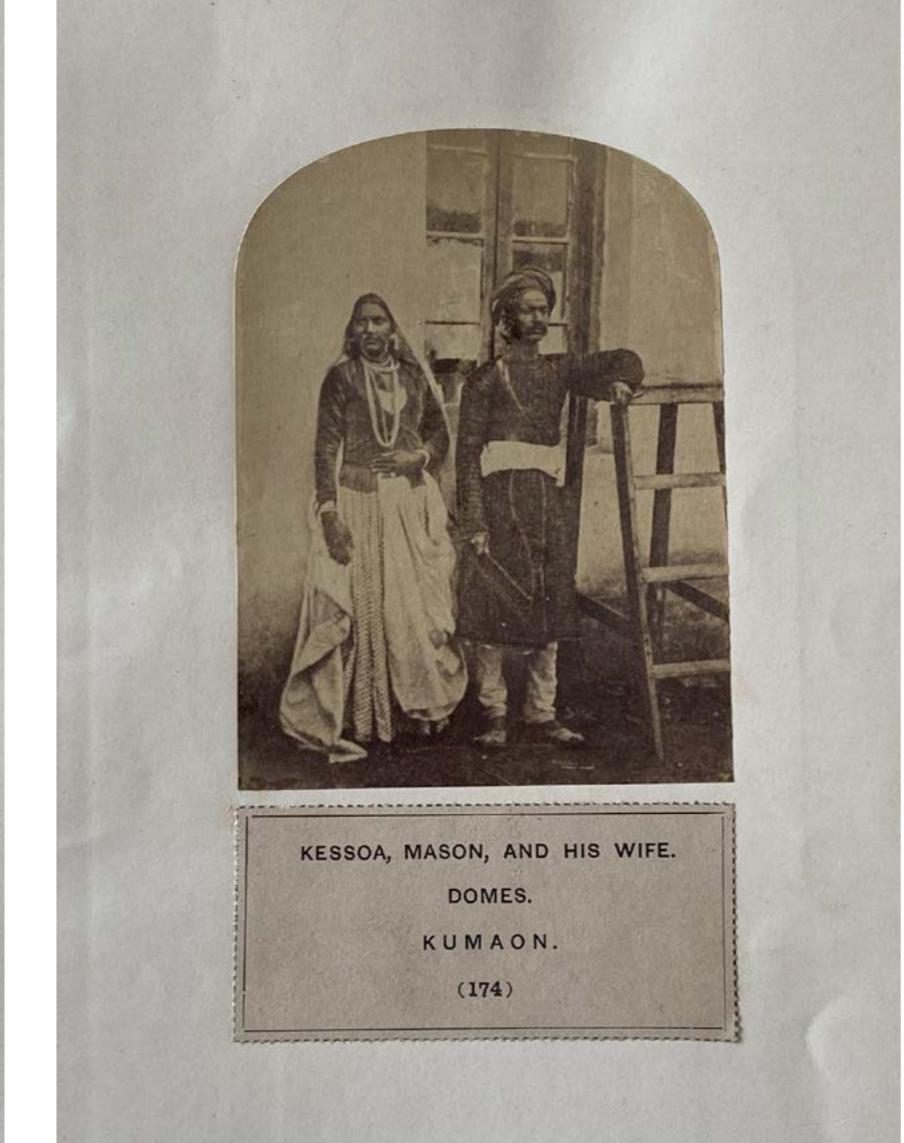
Bustee, Hindoo, Hissar
From People of India, 1868

Albumen print
H: 32.5 cm x W: 23 cm



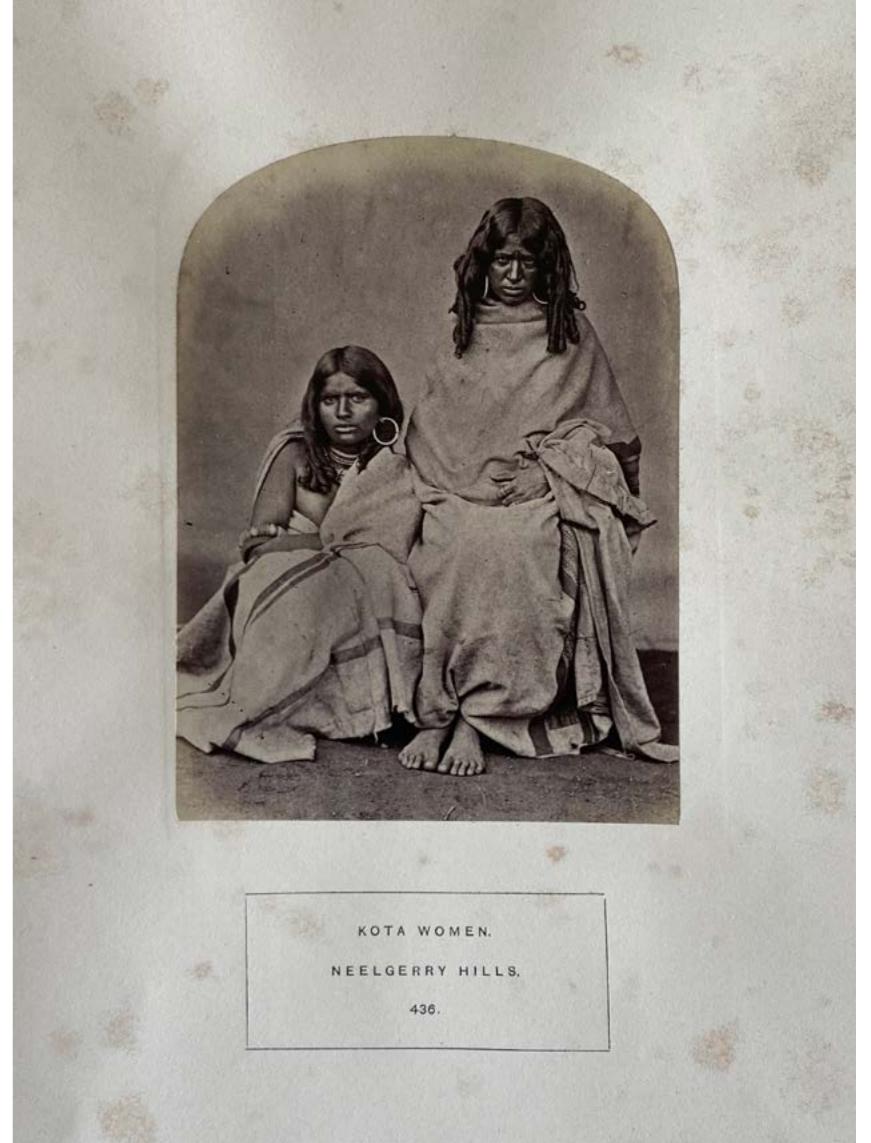
Cashmiri, From Cashmere, Mussulman, Simla
From People of India, 1868

Albumen print
H: 32.5 cm x W: 23 cm



Kesso, Mason, and his Wife, Domes, Kumaon
From People of India, 1868

Albumen print
H: 32.5 cm x W: 23 cm



Kota Women, Neelgerry hills
From People of India, 1868

Albumen print
H: 33 cm x W: 24 cm



LAMBANI WOMAN.
HINDOO.
MYSORE.
420.

Lambani Woman, Hindoo, Mysore
From People of India, 1868

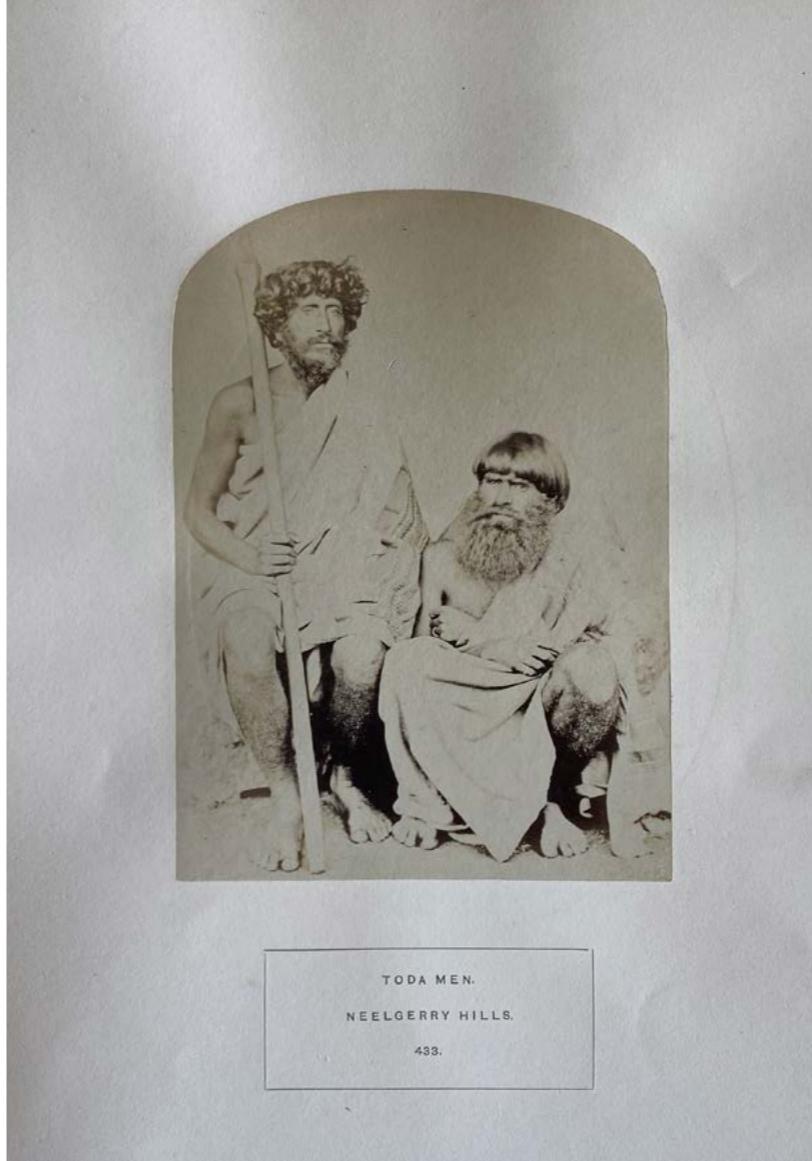
Albumen print
H: 33 cm x W: 24 cm



SCARF MAKER.
MUSSULMAN.
DELHI.
(186)

Scarf Maker, Mussulman, Delhi
From People of India, 1868

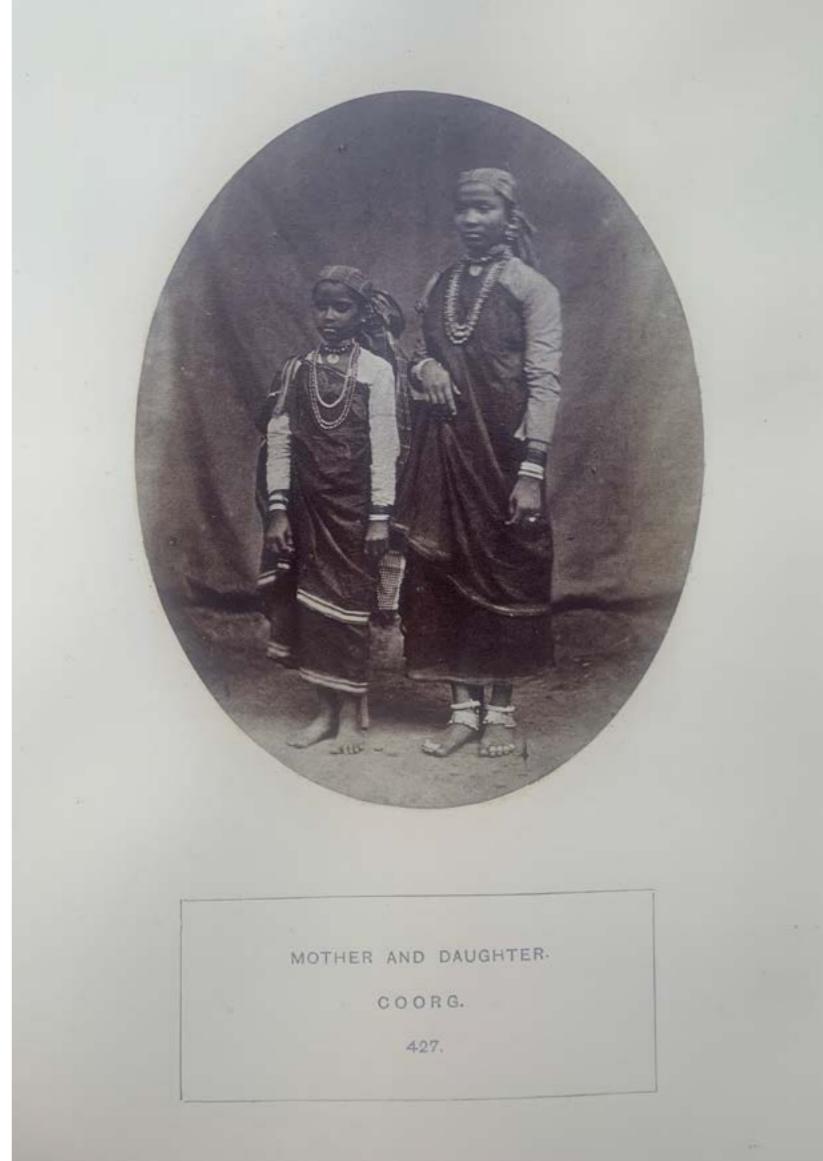
Albumen print
H: 32.7 cm x W: 23 cm



TODA MEN.
NEELGERRY HILLS.
433.

Toda Men, Neelgerry Hills
From People of India, 1868

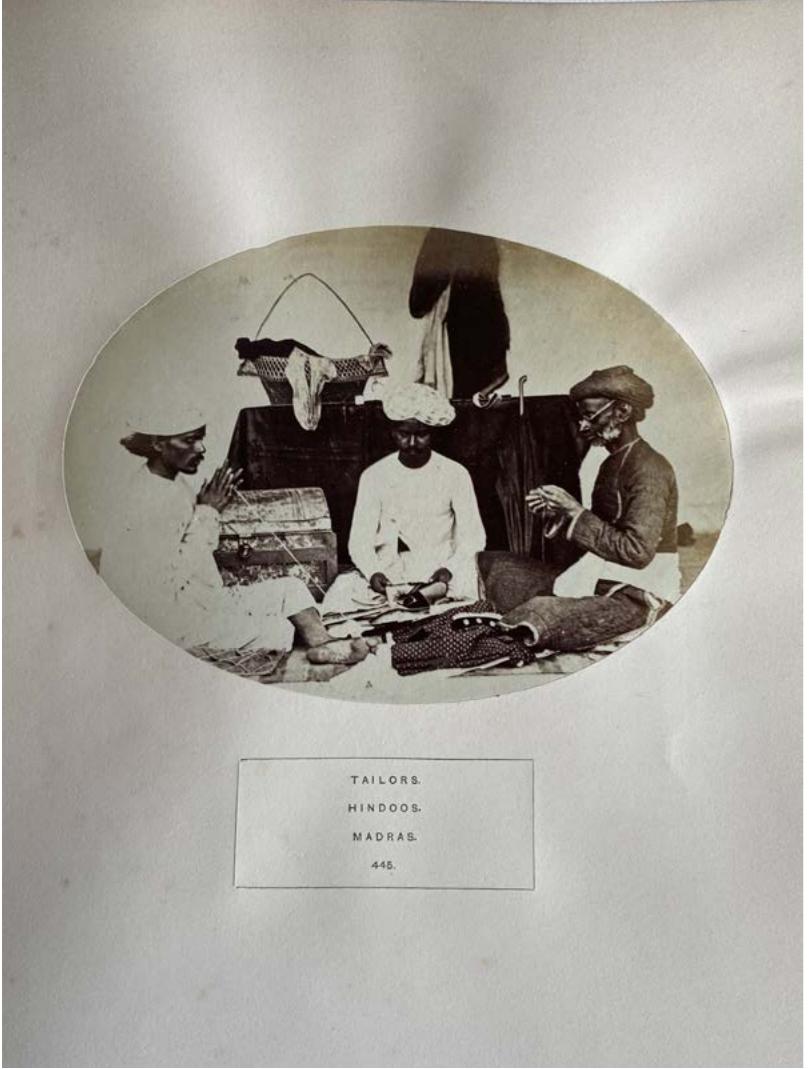
Albumen print
H: 33 cm x W: 24 cm



MOTHER AND DAUGHTER.
COORG.
427.

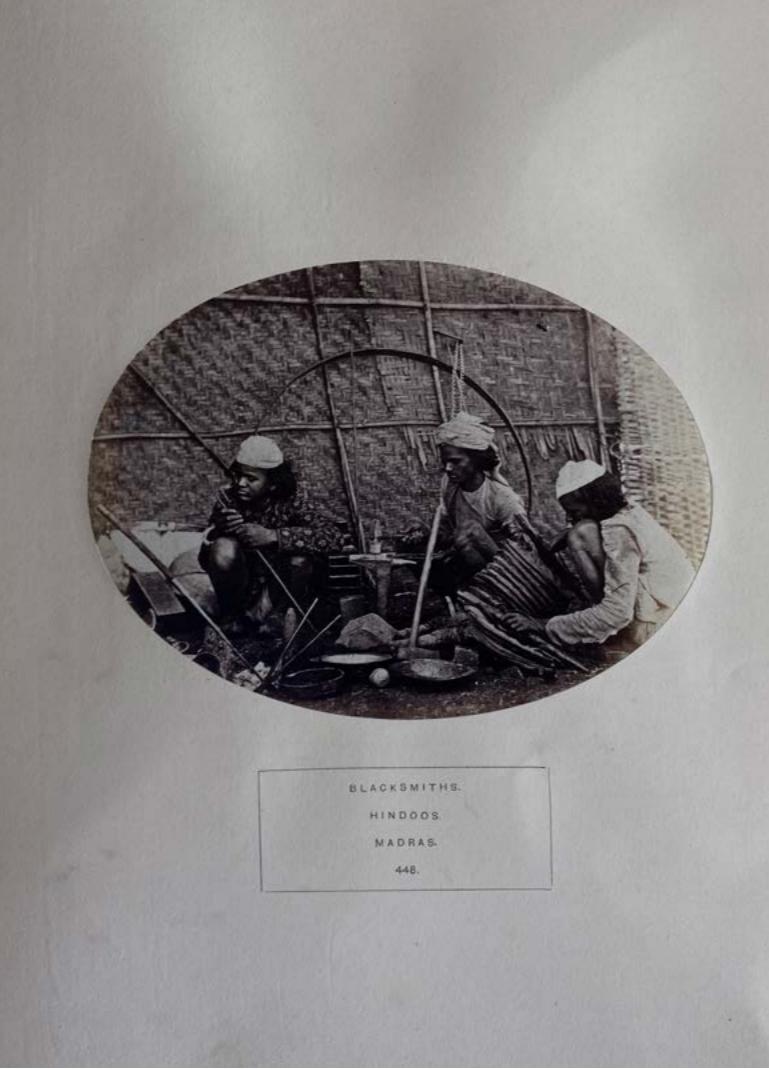
Mother and Daughter, Coorg
From People of India, 1868

Albumen print
H: 33 cm x W: 24.3 cm



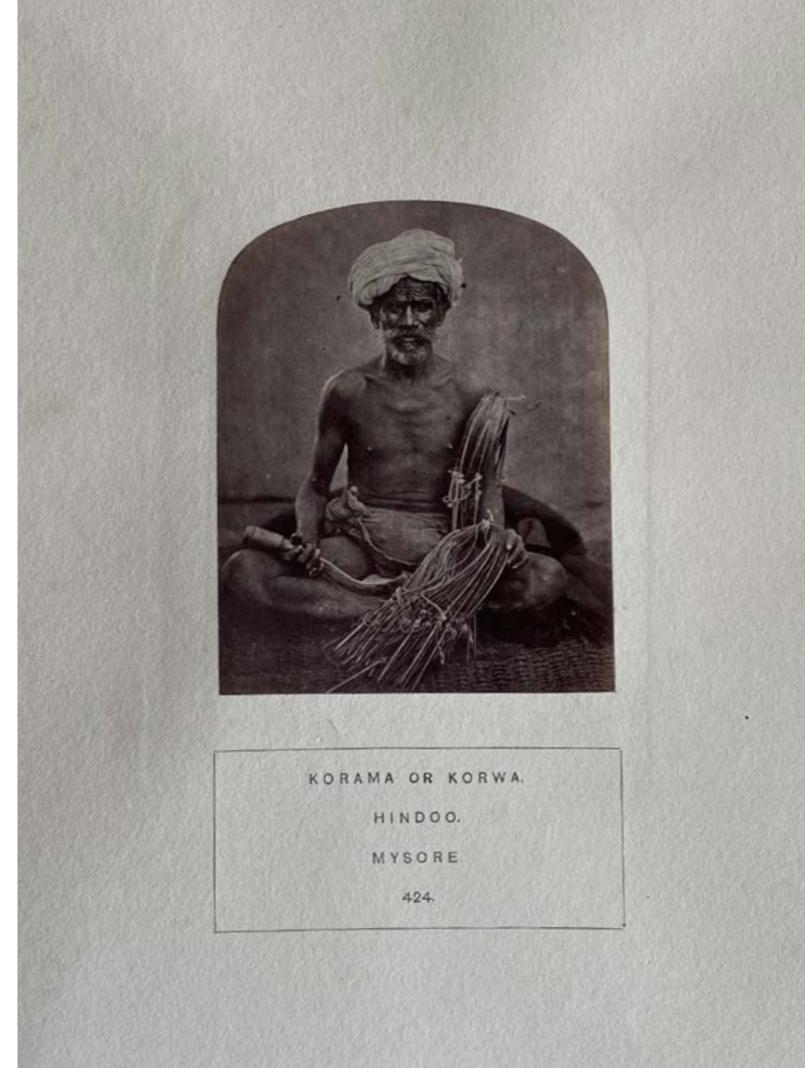
Tailors, Hindoos, Madras
From People of India, 1868

Albumen print
H: 33 cm x W: 24 cm



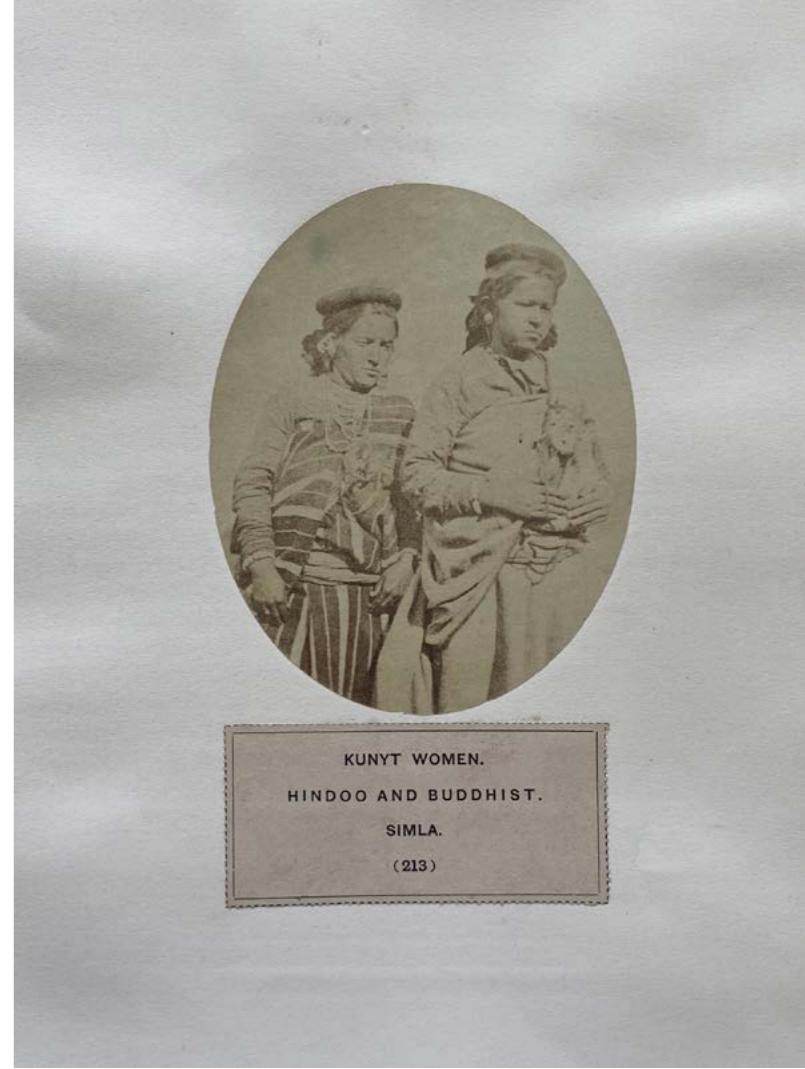
Blacksmiths, Hindoos, Madras
From People of India, 1868

Albumen print
H: 33 cm x W: 24 cm



Korama or Korwa, Hindoo, Mysore
From People of India, 1868

Albumen print
H: 33 cm x W: 24 cm



Kunyt Women, Hindoo and Buddhist, Simla
From People of India, 1868

Albumen print
H: 32.5 cm W: 23 cm

READING BETWEEN THE LINES

Juxtaposed with Saubiya Chasmawala's 'meaningless syllables' are medieval Indian coins inscribed with carefully crafted statements. The coins of Akbar carry evidence of his experiments with religion and numismatics in an attempt to achieve a prophetic status. For instance, he replaces the Kalima on the coin with 'Allahu Akbar Jalla Jalala' the meaning of which can be interpreted as 'Akbar is god, let his brightness shine forth', placing himself in the centre of this sacred utterance. While the gold mohur of Aurangzeb was stripped of the Kalima for fear that the sacred would be defiled by the touch of a non-believer. Later, Alamgir II reintroduced the Kalima on coins to showcase his devotion. Each emperor attempted to stamp as much meaning and idealism onto these tiny metal surfaces as possible.

Speaking to Chasmawala's themes of erasure and re-authorship, more directly explored in her early photographic print, is the coinage of Nur Jahan and Shah Jahan. Nur Jahan's coins give us a notion of how even the most powerful Mughal women operated within realms circumscribed by men. Before we read the empress's name on the reverse of the coin, the inscription on the coin's obverse makes clear who the real authority is: "(coin struck) by the order of Shah Jahangir". Even this hard-won legacy was endangered by the next emperor. When he became king, Shah Jahan recalled Nur Jahan's coins from circulation and ordered them to be melted. Placed next to her relic, Shah Jahan's coin is a reminder of countless histories forced into oblivion.

Ahmad Shah Bahadur's Nazrana coin and the Gigantic Embroidery at the base of Kutb Minar alongside Chasmawala explore the reductions of objects/language to their pure aesthetic forms. Nazrana coins were minted solely for the purpose of gifting or as a souvenir to the ruler; their purpose was to look impressive and confer prestige. This idea of language serving a decorative function is further exemplified by the title of this stereoscopic image of the Qutub Minar: 'Gigantic Embroidery'. Seen through foreign eyes, the script loses its intended meaning and exists simply as aesthetic detail.



Saubiya Chasmawala
Untitled #54 (Batin), 2019

Ink on paper
H: 30.4 cm x W: 45.7 cm
2020.22.2



Saubiya Chasmawala
Untitled #55 (Batin), 2019

Ink on paper
H: 30.2 cm x W: 41.9 cm
2020.22.3



Saubiya Chasmawala
Untitled #10 (Batin), 2019

Ink on paper
H: 91.4 cm x W: 200.6 cm
Loaned from the private collection of Ahsan Ansari, Mumbai



Saubiya Chasmawala
Untitled, 2019

Collaged photo washed with geru
H: 26.5 cm x W: 19 cm
2021.10.1



(83)-3471-Gigantic embroidery in stone at base of Kutb Minar, Moslem
Pillar of Victory, Delhi, Copyright by Underwood & Underwood.

Underwood & Underwood

Gigantic Embroidery In Stone At Base Of Kutb Minar,
Moslem Pillar Of Victory, Delhi, 1904

Silver gelatin print on stereoscopic card

H: 9.0 cm x W: 17.8 cm

2017.15.1 (83)



Akbar

Silver Rupee of Agra Mint
AH 971, Month Khurdad, c. 1559-1600 AD
2015.N.45.1



Akbar

Silver Rupee of Lahore Mint
Ilahi 44, Month Khurdad, c. 1559-1600 AD
2015.N.41.12



Aurangzeb

Gold Mohur of Itawa Mint
AH 1113/ RY 45, 1701 AD
2015.N.140.10



Alamgir II

Gold Mohur of Shahjahanabad Mint
AH 1168/ RY 2, 1755 AD
2015.N.99.7



Nur Jahan

*Silver Rupee of Agra Mint
AH 1034, 1624 AD
2015.N.46.6*



Shah Jahan

*Silver Coin of Burhanpur Mint
AH 1040/ RY 4, 1631 AD
2015.N.48.11*





Ahmad Shah Bahadur

*Silver Nazarana Rupee of Sawai Jaipur Mint
AH 1166/ RY 6, 1753 AD
2015.N.109.12*



Aurangzeb

*Coin Die of Surat Mint
AH 1112/ RY 40, 1700 AD
2015.N.104.14*

TO THE EARTH WE RETURN

Rithika Merchant's narrative paintings clearly take inspiration from the indigenous art traditions of Pattachitra and Gond. Placed side by side, the similarities of the earthy palettes, the animism and the single panel storytelling format are undeniable. Tantalus, Land of Plenty, Gates of Horn and Ivory, Santhal Janam Pata and Milan, all explore the abiding, comforting, reciprocal relationship humans share with nature. While Rithika Merchant's gaze is critical of the callous abuse of the environment especially in 'developed' or urban spaces, there's more of a note of devotion in the indigenous works. They illustrate origin myths that define the artists' Adivasi identity and are lit by the warm, worshipful affection that the Santhal and Gond-Pardhan tribes feel towards their habitat and all the creatures who share it.

Santhals use mythology to elevate the natural to the status of the divine. Their origin story states that the tribe descended from geese. Not unlike the Santhals in the east, the Gond-Pardhan tribe of central India believes that their formless god, Bada Dev, exists in the elements that are crucial to all of nature, all ped and paani.

Alongside Merchant's Tantalus, a tragic myth reinterpreted as a foretelling of a resource-scarce future, is Dhruvi Acharya's own futuristic fantasy. She foresees a dystopian world in which a severe scarcity has led to mutations that allow some humans to become their own water sources. In her signature style, Acharya creates a discomfiting image, an unrecognisable self. Anju Acharya's work sits alongside as a gentle, loving documentation of nature. By drawing us to look closer at the cycles of birth and decay in other species, she evokes an empathy for all living creatures.

Viewed together, the works of Rithika Merchant, Dhruvi Acharya and Anju Acharya make one aware of the presence of a 'female gaze'. One that feeds Shakuntala Kulkarni's mythical reinterpretations of the female body. Just as Merchant questions the futility of dreaming up a utopia in Gates of Horn and Ivory, Kulkarni explores the unattainable ideal imposed on women in And when she roared the universe quaked. She recreates female bodies devoid of softness and alight with rage, power and humour. Kulkarni's series thus offers a cathartic release, the permission to hold uncomfortable truths in our palms for a moment—and then to exhale.



Rithika Merchant
Gates of Horn and Ivory, 2020

Gouache, watercolour and ink on paper
H: 69.8 cm x W: 99.8 cm
2020.21.2



Rithika Merchant

Harvest, A Land of Plenty, 2020

Mixed media collage with gouache, ink and magazine cut outs on paper
2 Panel-work, H: 35.8 cm x W: 98.8 cm/each
2020.21.3 and 2020.21.4



Rithika Merchant
Tantalus, 2020

Gouache, watercolour and ink on paper
H: 64.7 cm x W: 49.7 cm
2020.21.4



Dhruvi Acharya
Untitled, 2007

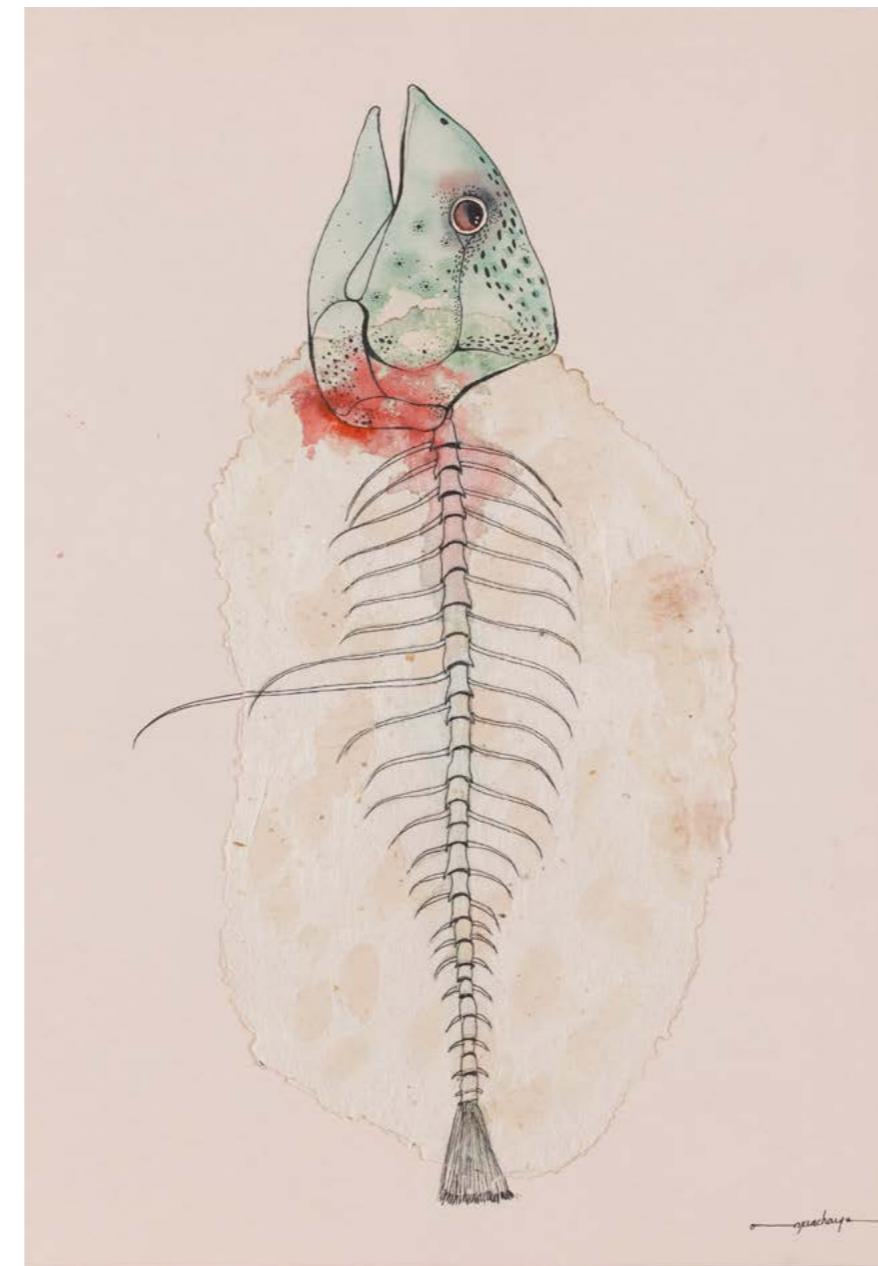
Watercolour on paper
H: 15 cm x W: 10 cm
2019.2.2



Mayank Shyam

Milan (Assimilation, Gond Painting), 2019

Acrylic and ink on paper
H: 54 cm x W: 73.5 cm
2019.33.2



Anju Acharya
Untitled (Unborn)

Watercolour, ink and collaged rice paper
on cartridge paper
H: 31 cm x W: 23.5 cm /each
2019.40.3 (1-3)



Detailed view

Laltu Chitrakar

*Santhal Janam Katha (Birth Story
of the Santhals)*, 2017-18

Water-based paint on paper with
cloth backing
H: 218 cm x W: 73 cm
2018.38.1



Shakuntala Kulkarni

*And when she roared, the universe
quaked, 2007*

Acrylic on fabric glass

H: 21.9 cm x W: 16 cm /each
2018.64.1 (1-9)

Gaurav Ogale x Farah Mulla

majha, 2021
/माझा mine मेरा/

audio-visual mix media

Is land an emotional space? How do we mark boundaries to an idea that exists only in our mind? If emotions, memories and affection define our land, then how much of it is solely ours and how much of ownership is shared? As I move homes and cities, many windows have always been my recluse.



gulaab,
Ogalewadi circa late 1990s

I would often have to raise my toes to see the world of roses my abba (grandfather) had created. The window of Amma's (grandmother) room overlooked this poetic garden. Since I could never see the whole garden from the room, I often tricked myself to believe in a dream beyond the window. Amidst

the scent of the blooming roses, I dreamt of growing older, of freedom.

The last time I visited our house, over fifteen years ago, crippled cacti had taken over this window from inside. I did not inherit that home, rather no one did. But through the crippled cacti, I could still see the world I never really saw but believed was mine. I thought of myself as the king of this fragrant undiscovered world.



sridhar,
Ogalewadi circa late 1990s

My grandfather's room was an oasis of dreams. Where the window became a bystander, standing adjacent to the world's most beautiful mirrored cupboard in the corner. This eight mirrored cupboard had travelled with my great grandparents all the way from Bangalore in the early 1900s. The reflections on its mirrors became my window to the world that my grandfather created for me. A world adorned with Monet's garden and patterns created by my hands. Where I could see all sorts of strange insects and dragonflies hovering inside a macchardani, perenially placed on the raised bed.

When my amma and abba left that home, they carried the cupboard with them to Poona. I don't know if I will ever get a chance to live in that house, all I want is to cherish the mirror cupboard. It might be empty now but it has treasured and witnessed so much over the years - especially my conversations with my abba – who always addressed me as Sridhar and never as Gaurav.



MHADA,
Bombay, circa 2014

Before I moved to a house with bigger and broader windows - windows that could breathe, I lived in a few cramped up buildings around Bombay, locally called MHADA. The only view one had was of someone else's home, a peek into their world, their struggles, their intimate moments and secrets.

Every morning my window created a cinematic frame for me. I woke up to the sound of her pressure cooker, yet I never saw her face. She would pull together strands of her oiled hair, then part them and make place for a little rose - the only bright thing in her otherwise pale, slow-paced world. This was probably the only time of the day she got for herself. For me, it was like watching the same film every day. One day she disappeared. The window had someone else's clothes, someone else's secrets.



c/o Bombay,
Bombay, circa 2015

Bombay is home, but I have never owned a home here. My existence here has been anonymous, between leases that keep renewing. From some homes, one sees faint lines of the robust waves while some have a closer, almost a cake in a colour palette kind of a sea view. When I think of my own place in Bombay, I rarely think of the cramped up drawing-room, the kitchen where I spend a lot of my time, or the balcony that witnesses all kinds of eerie sounds. For me, my Bombay is my part of the Arabian sea - as if the city inhabited underwater, inside conches, echoing familiar soundscapes. The expanse of the city in my visual memory is finite, it is big enough to engulf my dreams and at the same time, it fits into the glass jar that sits calmly on my window sill.



parda,
Poona, circa 2020

There are days when the window becomes a wall, a cocoon. On days like this, I feel like I want to be away from the world, away from the noise and find solace in myself, my body and my gestures. The four walls seem thicker, cobwebs emerge and time stands still. All the curtains are drawn, leaving just a little bit of an opening for the light to dance around. With my little niece, I play around with shadows, create a world for ourselves- a world I want her to keep constructing and inherit someday



with love,

These journals are a testimony of my existence. Since the time I started travelling by myself, they have been my sole companions. There are conversations, recipes, fleeting thoughts and a lot of hope hidden inside the preserved petals and old restaurant bills. I often wonder who will inherit these journals that have captured a story lived. Would the person manage to read my illegible handwriting? Would they be able to relive every visual anecdote just by running their fingers across the dusty pages?

I don't know, I never will.



Founder:
Paul Abraham

Exhibition Director:
Pavitra Rajaram

Archive Director:
Avehi Menon

Head of Collections:
Komal Chitnis

Head of Visual Content & Design:
Gaurav Ogale

Curatorial Team:
Kuhu Kopariha
Diksha Ahire
Shailee Mehta

Design & Installation:
Tanish Malji
Rukaiya Lokhandwala
Jahanjeet Banerjee
Aparna Kale

Editorial Support:
Deepa Menon

Gallery Partner:
TARQ Art Gallery
Hena Kapadia
Aashna Jhaveri
Simran Sanghi
Malhar Barve
Manoj Remje
Santosh Ambre

