

HOMELANDS

Kolkata in Review

LAUNCH EVENTS

Press preview
Public preview
Launch reception

MEET THE ARTIST

With Anthony Haughey

PRESS

Coverage from Kolkata

OUTREACH ACTIVITIES

Shantiniketan workshop
Khoj Kolkata workshop
Outset Writing Competition
Children's drawing workshop
Roundtable conversations

GALLERY TOURS

Public curator-led tour
Daily student-led tours
Guided school visits



In Partnership With



CHRISTIE'S

Associate Partner



Outreach Partner

outset.
india

Venue Partners



INSTALLATION

The Harrington Street Art Centre provided a characterful and beautiful venue for the Homelands exhibition.



PREVIEW EVENTS

Journalists from nine publications attended the press event. 120 people attended the exhibition preview.



PREVIEW RECEPTION

190 people attended the preview reception at the British High Commission. Pictured below left is visiting artist Anthony Haughey with curator Latika Gupta, and Director British Council East India, Sujata Sen.



PRESS: Additional press from Kolkata

In addition to over 150 articles and listings from the Delhi launch, the Kolkata lunch generated 9 long format pieces in India, including three pages in Open Magazine. Plus 3 pieces in Ireland (home of visiting artist Anthony Haughey) and numerous listings across Kolkata.

Creating a space called home in a world of boundaries

Pranita Bose focus

What is a homeland after all? Is it a sense of belonging to one's very own or just a piece of land with a boundary line on all sides or a specific language, or is it ethnicity?

Many may recall over this most recent as a case of identity-study within a determined national area and further debate its existence in reality and think of it as a fragment of human imagination only.

In search of satisfactory answers to the three interrogative processes—What, Where and Why—one of the year's most anticipated exhibitions titled "Homelands" recently took off at the Harrington Street Arts Centre in the cultural capital to serve its Kolkata chapter.

Travelling to four major metro-cities—New Delhi, Kolkata, Mumbai and Bangalore—across India's art-scene in 2013, the inaugural edition of the exhibition had earlier opened its doors to the public at the national capital. This

Curated by Latika Gupta, Homelands is the British Council's flagship art-project of the current calendar year. What is even more exciting for art connoisseurs is that this diverse exposition introduces an array of over 30 thought-provoking works by 28 brilliant British artists to India, collected from the archives and studios of best contemporary art that graces in more than 8,500 works.

The international collaboration not only displays some of the most out-of-the-box media-video, footage, installation, specimens, photographs, documented material, groups, prints and a slew of quaint sights and sounds, but also offers a unique stand on the British art assemblage by a well-researching Indian curator.

"Above all, this gallery show poses a couple of fundamental questions about a world that's undergoing a sea-change every moment in front of its inhabitants' eyes, thereby throwing a big blanket of doubt over the vagueness called modern life. It is bewildering as modernity still suffers from an identity-crisis and continues to grapple for

It is in the dark. The society still doesn't know which direction it is heading towards and what does it want from life. At this critical juncture, Homelands emerges to help demonstrate a clear view about the world around us in order to dispel the dilemma," enlightens Rob Lynes, director, British Council India.

Treading on the terrain of three principal questions that surround the pillar of "homeland" as a concept in this creative cauldron, Gupta expounds on the common belief that "modern-day identities prompt men to migrate overseas in quest of a better economic life. At times, even a war-torn, a political conflict, clashes, riots, poverty,

Incidentally, a few good artists have been invited to visit the exhibition in India. Four of the showcased artists who are supposed to make it to the venue include—Mona Haughey, Zanele Muholi and Sukhdev.

Inviting their stay, the artists will engage with audiences, give public talks and conduct workshops in association with Outpost India, a platform to support contemporary art in India. Resident artist Anthony Haughey will grace the Kolkata show.

Cutting to the heart of 21st century's cultural relations, Homelands grapples with the relationship between self and place in a world of transitory identities and contested demarcations or fenced LOCs.

Called from the rare and prestigious art collection of British Council, the avant-garde pieces range from the vintage 1930s era to the abstract compositions with a convergence technology, till date.

The gallery of leading multi-faceted artists features some top-bracket names, from the first art-world on the last. From belonging to alienation, his-

story to memories, Homelands attempts to excavate a treasury of ideas, thus revealing a rich plurality of meanings. Boiling out a multi-layered nature of programmes that highlight artist talks, seminars, curator-led walks, outreach activities and a row of fascinating workshops, this touring exhibition will soon stop at Mumbai on April 28 on the premises of Dr Bhanu Prasad Museum before moving on to Bangalore in the last week of June.

Focusing on private-public partnership, the exhibition also endeavours to fathom the importance of institutional art, which is both conserved for posterity and undertaken by a central government as an enterprise.

This forum could necessarily inspire a productive critique on a state's definitive identity through its comprehensive accommodation of art," endorses Latika. Do indulge in a peek!

For more information, log on to the Homelands website which is a detailed on-line resource to learn more vividly about the artists on view www.homelandsindia.com



Curated by Latika Gupta (above) Homelands, will exhibit 30 thought-provoking works by 28 brilliant British artists; the exhibition will travel to four metros in India this year

Asian Age, March 4th

AROUND THE WORLD

debameeta bhattacharya found much merit in a cross-border exhibition

CUTTING into the heart of 21st century cultural relations, the "Homelands" theme grapples with the relationship between self and place in a world of transitory identities and contested geographies. Extracted from the art collection of the British Council, the exhibition is a unique take on contemporary British art by Latika Gupta, curator of the show. With more than 30 works by 28 leading modern and contemporary artists, Homelands excavates the idea of a "homeland" to reveal a rich plurality of meaning, ideas of belonging, alienation, history and memory. It is the reflection of the changing world order since 1914.

Asked why "Homelands" for a title, Gupta said, "Today, many of us move across national boundaries. We are born in one country, we make another our home. In the cross-crossing of political, social and cultural borders, we live our lives through hybridised identities, belonging here and there, inhabiting multiple places—both physical and metaphorical.

Geographies that can be mapped as international boundaries and as places composed up by remembering and imagining. What constitutes a homeland? Is it ethnicity? Language? Religion? Customs and beliefs? Are homelands those in which our ancestors were born? What of outsiders who live and make other lands their homes? Where do we really belong? Where can we hope to make one day? So I have chosen this title. It is the way you interpret things."

Among the displays, Haroon Mirza's *Lulu Lal* 2008, Susan Hiller's *The Last Silent Movie* 2007/2008, Graham Perry's *Hillside of Pissini* 2001, Mona Haughey's *+ and -* 2004 merit mention. One of the most compelling works on the theme is Hiller's work, an installation that memorialises the date of dying and extinct languages as the world battles towards globalisation and threatens to erase the distinctive features of local dialects, colours, patterns and ways of life. She has brought together sound recordings of 25 extinct or endangered languages from various anthropological sound archives and a phrase from each language is reproduced as an etching of microscope diagram.

For more information, visit <http://www.homelandsindia.com>

The exhibition at the Harrington Street Art Centre is on till 14 March



The Statesman, New Delhi and Kolkata editions

ON DISPLAY

Dying languages from our Homelands

HT Correspondent
■ letters@hindustantimes.com

KOLKATA: A dark room filled with sounds, some mellifluous and some mundane kept visitors at the Harrington Street Arts Centre engaged by the sheer strangeness of the experience. 'Homelands', a contemporary arts exhibition from the British Council Collection, has on display actual languages that have died a slow and tragic death.

The main exhibit, *The Last Silent Movie*, is a documentary by British artist Susan Hiller and includes extinct tongues, like Xoleng and Silbo Gomero—a language based solely on a series of whistle-like sounds—and even some considered endangered.

"In the manner of an ethnographer, Hiller collected and collated 25 endangered and extinct languages from sound archives across the world. You hear these languages spoken by the last person to ever speak it," said Homelands curator, Latika Gupta, speaking on the 20-minute documentary.

The Last Silent Movie (2007) is one of more than 80 artworks by 28 reputable British artists—of whom eight are Turner Prize awardees or nominees—at the exhibition. "When I saw it I started developing the theme of



Examples of traditional Kori architecture displayed at the show. HT PHOTO

the exhibition. I started wondering what it meant to save who we were—our sense of language or the place we live in," Gupta said.

The word 'homeland', in its most common usage, refers to the native land of a person. Ideally, everyone has at least one homeland, unless homeless or of cross-cultural descent. The exhibition showcases how, in any of these three cases, there can be as much conflict—cultural, political, ideological and geographical—as there is harmony, in being attached to one's 'homeland'.

The exhibition, a must see, will be on till March 14.

Hindustan Times, Kolkata edition, 13th March

A Sense of Belonging

Twenty-eight contemporary artists explore the idea of home not only as a physical space, but also in terms of racial identity, sexuality and even languages that are dying out



JUST BEFORE beginning to write this piece, I went to speak to the new people who had moved in on the first floor. They had been leaving the building's grill door ajar, thus enabling the black dog that owns our street to come up and chew its way through a portion of our doormat every night. I explained the situation to the pleasant young man who opened the door, in a mixture of Hindi and English. An elderly man with a long beard came to see who was at the door. He was given a précis of the conversation in what sounded like Pashto. He sympathised with my dog crisis. Then he asked, where are you from? Since the conver-

sation was premised on the fact that I lived upstairs, I said, upstairs. Third floor. Yes, yes, he said, but where are you actually from? Umm, I live here, I said. I've lived in the neighbourhood for six years. No, no, he said, I don't mean that. Oh, you mean city, I said, smiling in relief. I'm from Delhi. Ah, but this is where you've married into, said the old man, where's your parental home? And what about your husband? And his parents, where are they from? When I managed to extricate myself, leaving behind a terribly dissatisfied old gentleman, I realised what I ought to have done—asked him where he was from. But I had assumed I knew

the answer. Even if my guess was right, it seemed to me that I had failed the basic test of neighbourliness. I'm not sure which was worse: having refused to satisfy his curiosity, or having denied him the pleasure of satisfying mine.

Latika Gupta, curator of the British Council's ongoing exhibition, *Homelands*, has described the show as an attempt to answer that constant, encountered, hard-to-answer question: 'Where are you from?' *Homelands*, which just completed its Delhi run and re-opens on 1 March in Kolkata, before going on to Mumbai and Bangalore, contains 80 works by 28 contemporary artists from the British Council collection, united by a shared concern with questions of belonging, with the relationship between selfhood and place.

The biggest name here is probably the British artist David Hockney, represented by his eight-part series, *A Rake's Progress*, a wry and personal homage to William Hogarth's 18th-century series of the same name. Hockney's etchings in black and red and aquatint are a far cry from Hogarth's paintings. Hogarth's view of the Rake's decline was both salacious and righteous—we watched as he skittered away the family fortune on prostitutes and drink, as he married 'an old maid' for her money, went to prison and then gradually descended into insanity. Hockney replicates some of these things, such as the old maid, the prison, and the decline in fortune—there's a memorable image, for instance, of the drooping Rake making his way down a staircase with the legend 'The Waller Begins to Empty'—but he is far less judgmental. Hockney's Rake is autobiographical, inspired by



WORKING FROM HOME An untitled work, 1991-02, by Anthony Haughey

his own time in America as a young gay artist in the 1960s. It is about being at home in a new milieu, and beginning to be at home in one's sexuality.

Another kind of being at home in one's body is achieved by Lisa Cheung's *I Want to Be More Chinese* (1997). Cheung's series of posed photographs superimposed on china plates depicts her friends exaggerating the slantedness of their eyes. She takes a physical characteristic usually picked on as a racial slur, and subverts it with sly humour. Cheung's work is an act of reclaiming, using a playful gesture to make a serious point. It involves a positive ownership of racial identity—and yet to insist on enacting the 'Chinese' body is a way of refusing its supposed naturalness.

In the four untitled images from Suki Dhandia's 2001 photographic series *Shopna*, we move from an identity defined by the body to the external signs that are often read as the language of identity. Shopna, a Bangladeshi-British girl, was 15 when Dhandia photographed her and her family over the course of a year. In one image, she sits primly on a chair in a salwar kameez, her legs folded up; in another, she



OUR HOUSE 28 Macdonald Street, Freetown, Sierra Leone by Tim Hetherington, Adia Johnson and Abiodun Johnson

trays by the bedside 'for my husband', a cot for an imagined future child—the imagination of home fuses objects and persons into a fictitious whole.

Objects and people also come together in Anthony Haughey's photographs from his 1991 series *Home*, which are part of his documentation of

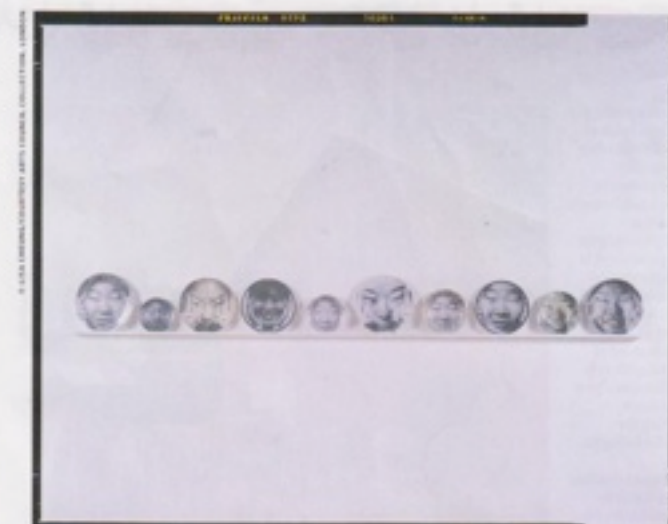
Shopna wears her hijab outside home, using it to distinguish herself from the other girls who may be playing pool or getting a bite with friends at a chip shop

the Ballymun housing estate in Dublin, where he encouraged young residents to photograph the lives of their own families and community.

Family and community also form the subject of the two photographs here by Martin Parr. These stunning black-and-white images are both of the

Steep Lane Baptist Chapel in Hebden Bridge, Yorkshire, taken in 1976 and 1978. Part of Parr's earliest work, they already reveal his interest in everyday life in Britain, though here the prism is not the weather, or consumption, as it would be later, but religion. The image of *Baptist Chapel Buffet Lunch*, in which a reproduction of Michelangelo's *The Last Supper* is juxtaposed with an old lady spooning some sugar into her cup of tea, is a masterpiece, an ordinary moment somehow transformed into a tableau.

A different kind of evocation of religious spaces is contained in Langland and Bell's embossed prints on satiny white paper of the architectural plans of mosques around the world: the Great Mosque in Cordoba, Spain, the Q'ala of the Banu in Algeria, the Friday Mosque of Samarra, Iran. These geometrical white impressions on white paper manage to produce a strangely empty, echoing effect—a sense of both presence and absence that is beautifully evocative of the idea of space itself. Space only



SKIPPING THE SLUR *I Want to Be More Chinese*, 1997, by Lisa Cheung

acquires a shape by something surrounding it—but then it becomes something that can shape us.

Two exhibits evoke childhood, but then appropriate that evocation for rather grim adult purposes. Bob and Roberta Smith's *Concrete Boat* (1996) look like enlarged toy boats, tugging at our nostalgic selves—and yet the fact of their immovability weighs us down. They cannot float, and neither can we. Jimmie Durham's *Our House* (2007) is even clearer: the childlike simplicity of his scrawled separation between 'Our House' and 'Others' is a powerful indictment of the unconstructed 'us versus them' emotion that governs the behaviour of most adults, whether as individuals or in communities.

The Lebanese-British artist Mona Hatoum is represented here by three works. The most hypnotic of these is a kinetic sculpture called *and...and...*, in which a stainless steel brush in a sand box creates furrows in the sand on one side, while smoothening them out simultaneously on the other. It is a work of almost unbearable beauty, gesturing to the infinite and unending process of engraving and erasure, creation and destruction. *Prayer Mat* (1995), made of thousands of upturned pins glued on

If the limits of our language are the limits of our world, then these women inhabit different universes: their homelands barely intersect at all

canvas, with a compass to tell the direction of Mecca, seems to point to the ambiguous sense of belonging that faith offers in the world today. A video work called *Measures of Distance* (1988) overlays images of Hatoum's mother taken on a rare trip back to Lebanon in 1984 with the spiky Arabic text of letters written by her, unravelling the idea of home in a time of war and enforced exile. Even as the work speaks of a hard-won intimacy between mother and daughter, it can seem to lock someone else out: Mona's father feels threatened and excluded by their conversations about the body.

The family and language both recur in Zineb Sedira's well-known work *Mother Tongue* (1992), where three consecutive videos capture the limits of communication between three generations of a family: Sedira, her Algerian-speaking mother, and her English-

speaking daughter. If the limits of our language are the limits of our world, then these women inhabit different universes: their homelands barely intersect at all.

The most haunting work in the exhibition, Susan Hiller's *The Last Silent Movie* (2007-08), is also about languages. Hiller brings together sound recordings of 15 languages that are either already extinct or on the verge of dying out, providing the name and current status of each language as well as English translations of the recordings: Kora, Maa, Ninklang, the cheerfulness of Jiriala, the whistling beauty of Sibogomero. As you sit in that dark curtained room and listen to a voice say, "Now we are going to speak Comanche again. From now we will speak Comanche for ever," the hair on your arms stand on end at that hopeful enunciation of a patent untruth, the act of speech by which the speaker hopes to turn it into truth. "I can speak my language. I am a fluent speaker," says another voice. Then, throwing down the gauntlet, gruffly but firmly turning the tables on us, the listeners, the voice says: "Can you speak my language?"

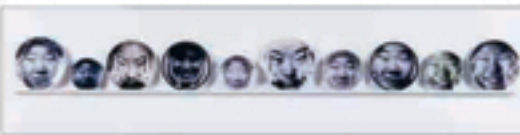
It's a question even harder to answer than "Where are you from?" ■

The lightness of being

Who are we? What defines us? What creates our identity? Homelands, an exhibition of exemplary artworks, aims to provide answers to these questions, writes Supreeta Singh

art

Clockwise from top left: Gillian Wearing's *Meander and Kelly*; Suki Dhandia's *United*; Liza Cheung's *I want to be more Chinese*; Mona Hatoum's *Hand*



Bengal Post, 10th March

When we first meet a person, we inevitably ask, "Where are you from? What do you do?" These questions prompt certain answers that apparently define him or her and set about creating an impression in the mind. But is that all? Is a person's existence limited by such geographical, professional or religious boundaries? *Homelands* — A 21st Century Story of Home, Away, and All the Places in Between, the British Council's flagship arts project of 2003, showcases mesmerising and thought-provoking artworks from the organisers' private collection in a rare exhibition that is touring four cities of India. In Calcutta, the exhibition is on till March 14 at The Harrington Street Arts Centre. The exhibition has already travelled to New Delhi and will be put up in Mumbai and Bangalore as well. It has been organised in association with Jagrup's and Christie's.

Twenty-eight modern and contemporary artists feature in the exhibition and each of them raise,



dissect and explain the relationship between self and its identity in his or her own distinctive tone. This is perhaps, one of the best features of the exhibition that, although there are so many artists commenting on the same theme with their individual installations, paintings, videos and photographs, their expressions do not overlap or fall into repetitions, the credit for which goes to the curator, Lata Gupta and the British Council team. The wide range of works not only shows the creative spark of the artists but also the need to address the issue of identity. Through the relationship of human beings with each other, with the state, with the home,



with the place of birth and growing up, with food, clothes and objects and with himself or herself, *Homelands* lets the viewer take nothing for granted and puts every cliché under the scanner. Another remarkable aspect of *Homelands* is that it is very high on emotional content. An exhibition that is inherently academic and inspires theoretical debate is also easy to understand and feel because it reflects the issues that the global village we live in, is confronting today.

At a special preview held for the media, Gupta walked through the exhibition shedding light on each of the works on display. Suki



Dhandia's *United* (2002) comprises four photographs — out of many in the series — that show the life of Shopna, a 15-year-old Bangladeshi-British girl.

Impressed by Shopna's air of confidence when the artist first saw her with a youth group in White Chapel, she decided to explore the nuances of identity through an individual's clothing. This was actually a part of another project commissioned by the BCL, but matured into a full-blown series on how Asian girls are perceived by foreign eyes. Dhandia herself is from Punjab but has settled in England. The work is interesting because it highlights gender roles and poses at stereotypes.

Three installations by Mona Hatoum delve into the notions of faith, displacement and angst. Her most personal work called

Measures of Distance (1996) acts as a meter to gauge the ravages of war, separation and irreparable loss. In *v and -* (1994), the vein of anxiety and irony continues as a kinetic object circles around a small plate and creating and erasing lines depicting the transient and ephemeral sides of life — how relationships are forged and identities formed, yet they are wiped away by destructions and man-made wars.

The *Last Silent Movie* (2007-2008) is a seminal work put together by Susan Hiller, who is originally from Ohio but is based in London since the early 1960s. The work is a collection of extinct languages, therefore, it is neither 'silent' nor a 'movie'. Voices flow one after another, speaking in their native tongue that belong to communities

spread across the world. A phrase of each language is reproduced as the etching of an oscilloscope diagram.

The boundary between places is always a blur, a vague idea, a line running across a map but invisible to the eye. Where does one place end and another one begin? Raymond Moore's four photographs — *Kilenny* (1971), *Wilshire* (1973), *Hetherington* (1977) and *Flintley* (1971) — are a study in black and white that drawn into a world of darkness and light, architecture and human forms.

Some of the other artists showcased at the exhibition include Gillian Wearing, Zarah Sodra, Martin Pan, Anthony Lam, Tim Hetherington, Anthony Haughey and others. *Homelands* must not be missed.

What is a homeland made of? Explore this exhibition in Kolkata

KOLKATA has had a space of interesting exhibitions over the past month. Among these, the most celebrated event was *Homelands*, an exhibition of artworks at the Harrington Art Centre. The exhibition that had opened in the capital on January 24th, was on its second leg at Kolkata before moving on to Mumbai on April 28th and Bangalore in June 20th. Curated by Lata Gupta, the exhibition consisting of 80 works by 28 "leading modern and contemporary" artists from the British Council's art collection, was unique both in concept and content, seeking to project "the idea of a 'homeland' to reveal a rich plurality of meaning: ideas of belonging, alienation, history and memory". Gupta's effort reaches out to many who have moved across national boundaries when she states, "We are born in one country, we make another our home...inhabiting multiple places. What constitutes a homeland?" What indeed.

The exhibition showcases some leading contemporary artists from Britain, some of whom we are familiar with, such as David Hockney, Nathan Coley, Graham Cusack, Jeremy Deber and many others. It also gives us the opportunity to see the works of 8 Turner Prize winners and nominees and is a unique opportunity of a glimpse of the changing face of the changing face of art in Britain today. The exhibition also offers visitors the opportunity of meeting some of the artists who

BUSINESS OF ART

JHUPU ADHIKARI



have travelled with the show to conduct workshops in association with Outset India, a body set up to support contemporary art in India.

Visiting Kolkata during the exhibition is Anthony Haughey, whose work is part of the collection. An artist and lecturer/researcher in the School of Media at the Dublin Institute of Technology, Haughey lives and works in Ireland and is known for his long-term 'Disputed Territory' project (2006), in which he uses large-scale colour photographs and sound/video installation pieces, to explore 'conflicts over territory and identity in contemporary Europe and the aftermath of conflict in Ireland, Bosnia and Kosovo'. For researching his project, he has worked directly with members of the International Centre for Missing Persons in Bosnia. Visitors to the exhibition in Kolkata have the opportunity of meeting him.

Another artist whose work can be seen in the exhibition is Grayson Perry, whose ceramic vases are now fairly well known to art collectors. In 2002, the Stedelijk Museum in Amsterdam mounted a solo exhibition of his work and gave him a platform, which helped in his winning the Turner Prize in 2003 — the first time it was given to a ceramic artist. He is known to have created a stir, when he attended the award ceremony dressed as a girl (his alter-ego Claire) wearing a little girl party frock. Trained at the Central Institute, Perry's first exhibition of ceramics was in London in 1983. Perry, who was also interested in film as a medium, decided to choose clay as a medium for 'communicating his ideas about gender and society'. He is known to have said that he had no real motivation to work in clay but chose pottery as, "artifice could be deployed to make the innocent or honest pot have a purpose and mean something".

(The writer is a winner of many advertising design awards and a member of creative)

Financial Chronicle, Delhi, Mumbai, Hyderabad March 4th

METRO

SOUMITRA DAS

Homing in on the Collection

The British Council Collection, according to its website, comprises the very best in British practice in all media. It begins from the mid-20th century with works by Lucian Freud, Henry Moore, Barbara Hepworth, and Ben Nicholson, among others. The exhibition, *Homelands*, that opened at the Harrington Street Arts Centre on Thursday, trains the spotlight on specific artworks from this huge repository that deal with the theme of "The idea of being British" in a multi-cultural society where one is constantly confronted with uncomfortable questions about one's mother tongue and identity — ethnic, cultur-

al and otherwise.

Young curators from various countries were invited to cull artworks that represent a constructive and productive critique of the state, and Lata Gupta was selected to curate this particular one. Eighty artworks from the Collection by 28 leading and contemporary artists are on show "to reveal a rich plurality of meaning: ideas of belonging, alienation, history and memory", to quote the *Homelands* website. Gupta's was an unenviable task for this can prove to be a minefield. Political cor-



Mona Hatoum's kinetic object

rectness is the easy way out. And as this exhibition demonstrates, it is well nigh impossible to veer away from this pitfall, for who would want or dare to offend the minorities (quite often self-righteous) in

all spheres of life?

So who are the Big British artists here? To begin with, there is the entire series of marvellous David Hockney prints titled *The Rake's Progress* from the early 1960s, and eight Turner prize winners or nominees besides, the best known of whom in this region is Mona Hatoum, a video and installation artist of Palestinian origin, who lives in London and who was a 1995 Turner nominee. Then there is Gillian Wearing, the 1997 Turner prize winner. Gupta has avoided the provocative.

But she has included Fabien Cappello, whose work is a clutch of ceramics (not really mainstream), the product of a collaborative project with six designers responding to the city of Lisbon. Grayson Perry's large, gleaming vase with its funny priapic imagery has also emerged from the margins.

Hockney's *Rake's Progress* is as spare as Hogarth's was rich in details. Yet both are unsparring. One of the most beautiful artworks is Hatoum's cut-throat razor-like contraption that simultaneously furrows

the earth on which it rotates and smooths out the grooves as well. It is poetic with or without a "message." Her video showing impressions of her mother's naked body with lines from her letters in Arabic superimposed on them (like barbed wire, as Gupta explained) conveys the despair of severance. Nathan Coley's *Camouflage Bayrakli Mosque* with its horizontal stripes and mirror floor is equally arresting.

Ironically, the most memorable work is aural, titled *The Last Silent Movie*, the only visual being the transcriptions of sound recordings of extinct or endangered languages. Concealment led to extinction. One can say that of all cultures in exile.

SATURDAY, MARCH 2, 2013

Maps of lost homelands

Conflict and deception are part of life, says Mona Hatoum's powerful and metaphoric art

NEELAM RAAJ
TIMES NEWS NETWORK

The first thing the research on British-Palestinian artist Mona Hatoum tells me is that she hates interviews. I'm nervous enough but she makes it worse by demanding to see my questions before she says a word. But the ice is broken as soon as the 60-year-old starts talking about her conceptual pieces, some of which have travelled to India as part of a British Council show. From a glowing neon globe that is titled 'This Spot' to a prayer mat that has a compass pointing to Mecca but is actually made of brass pins, her metaphorical objects remind us that conflict and deception are part of life. Exile is something she is familiar with and her art reflects this displacement. Born in Beirut to Palestinian parents, Hatoum will be travelling in the UK when civil war broke out in Lebanon in 1975. The war lasted 20 years and Hatoum's exile became permanent. Her art is rooted in these life experiences, exploring borders and breaking taboos. On her first visit to India, Hatoum spoke to TOI-Crest.

In India, your work is part of a British Council show titled 'Homelands'. What is your idea of home?

It's not something I think of very much or try to define any more. I have no romantic idea of wanting to go back since my original home has changed so much. When my parents were alive, Beirut was home but not anymore. Now you can say it is London where I mostly live with my husband. But I

travel a lot and I create these temporary homes from where I work. I spend a lot of time in Berlin because of its nice, laidback feel.

You've visited the India art fair. What do you think of the idea of culture meeting commerce?

I am not very keen on art fairs though it's a good meeting place. I like to enjoy what I am doing without thinking about where the work is going to end up. I have done a lot of my creative work in residences in faraway places like Mexico, Venezuela and Cairo. Away from the hyped up art market and the bureaucracy of big museums which want to push you in one direction or the other, it's a much freer situation.

In 'Shift' (2012), you mapped the world on a wool carpet overlaid with yellow circles of seismic waves that give the impression of danger. In an early work titled 'Present Tense', you created a map using bars of traditional Palestinian olive oil soap collected from factories in Nablus, north of Jerusalem. Why are maps a recurrent theme in your work?

It happened accidentally the first time. I came across a map of the 1933 Oslo peace agreement between Israel and Palestinians. It was a very ridiculous map which marked the territories to be handed back to the Palestine Authority. All it did was dotted the land into little pockets.

Does it make you angry when people experience the work physically?

It bothers me when people explain my work in relation to my geographical origins. That's limiting to my art. My works are much more complex — this does not equal that. The language of art can be very ambiguous. A work is a story to be completed by the spectator and each one will interpret it depending on his or her life experience.

In one of your video works that is showing at 'Homelands', you read aloud letters that your mother wrote to you from Beirut. Your mother is also heard, speaking openly about her feelings and sexuality, accompanied by images of her in the shower.

Are there overtones of feminism in your work?

In the early '70s and '80s, I was involved with feminist groups. During my readings, I become aware that in my work I was clearly about dividing and ruling rather than unifying borders. So, I decided to do the soap work with red glass beads pressed into the ivory surface denoting borders. This was during my first visit to Jerusalem in 1996. Maps imply measurable, identifiable space but my maps are about an unstable geography, about things not being secure.

One of your most famous pieces is 'Corps Etranger, Foreign Body', when micro cameras explored your body through its orifices. Was this you holding up a mirror to our obsession with the body?

In the '80s, I did mostly performance. My body symbolised society and the things happening to my body were like violations of its borders. But in the '90s, I started making sculptural works such as *The Light at the End* in which six electric heating elements were suspended from an iron frame that looked like prison bars and gave off heat. What changed was that instead of my delivering a message to the audience through my actions as a performer, I decided to set up situations where viewers could experience for themselves. My body was replaced by the body of the audience who could

Primal's narrative there seemed to be no innocent in the mother and daughter relationship. It was always about the father and daughter. Now, I see a lot of complacency has set in about feminism but there is still a huge amount of work to be done. And it's not that I only deal with feminism. I see women's issues in the larger political context since they're closely woven together with issues of race and class. ■

'Homelands' will be on at The Harrington Street Arts Centre, Kolkata till March 14 and at the Dr Bhabha Centre for Art, Mumbai, from April 28 to June 9




Times of India Crest Edition, March 2nd

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REVIEW ARTS

Age of fragile maps

Rita Datta

Between the 19th century, which marked the upsurge of nationalist passions, and the post-colonial world of the 21st, the accepted parameters of the term 'homeland' and other received allegiances have been continuously reassessed and redefined. In presenting the British Council's collection for an exhibition named *Homelands* for Indian viewers in four Indian cities, curator Latika Gupta probably kept in mind a debated concern of our age of fragile maps, shifting loyalties and diasporic communities. A concern that's as crucial for individuals as it is critical in its international implications.

Seen recently at the Harrington Street Arts Centre, the show's draw would have been some known — even celebrated — names, including seniors like David Hockney and Susan Hillier, the younger Patrick Brill (aka Bob and Roberta Smith) and Cornelia Parker and those of Asian origin like Mona Hatoum and Haroon Mirza. But its real strength lay in provoking a rethink on how fluid and fraught identity categories like homeland, language, religion and race are.

In a way, Palestinian-British Mona Hatoum's + and - could have been deemed a theme piece for the show, positing the paradox of the immigrant's experience. The work bore the disarming simplicity of her signature with a pair of blades, one serrated and one smooth, rotating on a bed of sand. While one imprinted grooves on the surface, the other deleted them. The contradictory needs to assert one's identity and, at the same time, seek prudent anonymity to belong in the adopted land could hardly have been suggested more starkly.

Lisa Cheung wasn't as tacit in *I Want to be More Chinese* which alluded to a racist attitude to Mongoloid physiognomy in an environment dominated by Caucasian concepts that Indians aren't immune to either. Much like taking up the white word, black, in the slogan, *Black is beautiful*. However, by reacting to toxic putdowns, the artist's righteous defiance inadvertently gives in to a dialogue with those who don't deserve a response. Besides, it implies that the ones who've left their birth place can't afford the easy nonchalance of native residents towards their roots, while strident nationalism in the latter would immediately be taken for rabid right-wing affiliations.

Religion and language surfaced in the work of several artists as the stubborn, though troubling, adhesive of one's identity. Martin Parr's monochrome photographs, tellingly deadpan, echoes the WASP ethos of small-town Britain, with its church and tea rituals. Nathan Coley's hand-drawn copy of *Bayraklı Mosque*, Belgrade, premised the psychological dominance of places of worship over communities. Thus the strategy of conquerors/rulers to undermine resistance calls for their destruction or conversion to the latter's faith. This mosque, for example, was turned into a church during Austrian rule.

Interestingly, Ben Langlands and Nikki Bell look at the ground plans of four famed mosques to "explore," says the exhibition note, "the role of architectural spaces on human behaviour". Whether or not there's an invariable correlation between the two, it could be that austerity of décor and prayer services as well as the mandatory hall or courtyard for congregations instill a fervour for both faith and ummah, allowing few diversions.

While all religions promise a hereafter, Hillier's depiction of phrases from endangered or extinct languages as nervous oscilloscope waves that bring heartbeat graphs to mind pronounced all human constructs like language and culture transient, ultimately doomed. The dark alcove, where voices spoke in these dying or dead tongues as their English translation appeared on a black screen, wrapped the viewer in a strange pall to suggest the inevitable eclipse of everything in Time.

Yet, the physical place — a town, a country or one's home — with its intimate weave of sights, sounds, smells and symbols acquire the imprint of character. This is seen in the elegant economy of Raymond Moore's photographs; Haroon Mirza's boisterous, playful mixed media installation evoking a bit of Pakistan; Anthony Haughey's glimpse of a Dublin Catholic home; Paul Graham's portrayal of the deceptive calm of Belfast; and Tim Heatherington's conversational lens that dwells on the colourful Crusade architecture of Sierra Leone. But the subversive smirk of Cornelia Parker and the cold appraisal in Anthony Lam's frames do upturn cherished symbols of British life and its status as the enlightened refuge of dissenters. Because, as Jimmie Durham's print shows, "our house" must have high fences to keep "the neighbours" at bay.

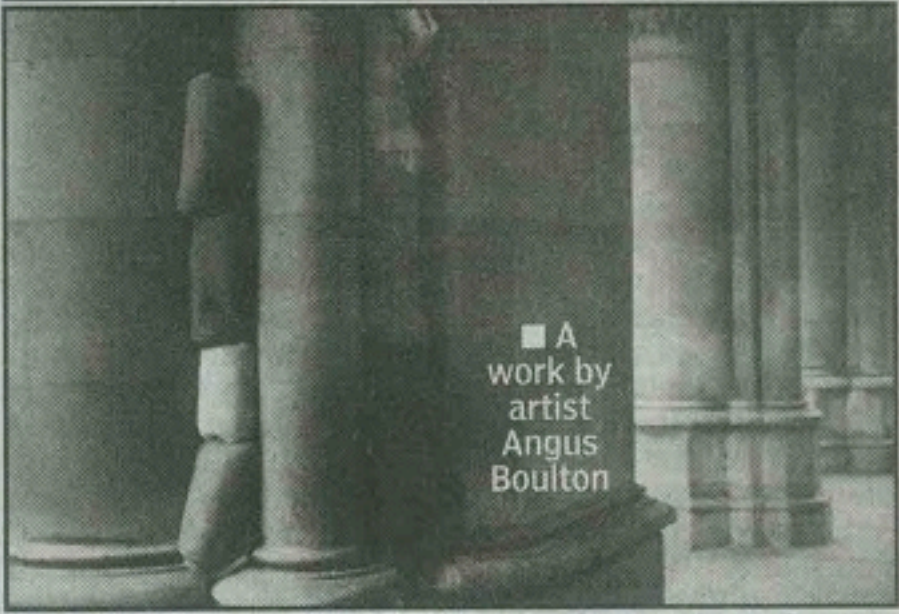
But then, what is the homeland of the homeless, whose belongings are stuffed into the convenient recesses of London's regal Victorian buildings in Angus Roulston's photographs, if not a cold street corner?





The Telegraph, Kolkata edition, March 16th

CITY~GUIDE



■ A work by artist Angus Boulton

Homelands and The Harrington Street Arts Centre, Kolkata at 8, Ho Chi Minh Sarani, 2nd Floor, Kol-71 jointly play host to an art exhibition to be open to public from **Friday March 1** and will continue till **Thursday March 14**. **Gallery Timings:** 12 noon to 7 pm, closed on Sundays and national holidays.

EXHIBITIONS

Homelands
The Harrington Street Arts Centre, Kolkata presents an exhibition at 8, Ho Chi Minh Sarani, Opp The American Consulate, next to ICCR, Suite No. 5 & 25B, 2nd Floor, Kolkata, 700071) till 14 March 2013 12pm- 7pm

KOLKATA

Art *HM*
Homelands
Till 14 March
Curated by Latika Gupta, the exhibition displays the work of 28 contemporary artists and looks at the ideas of belonging, exile and migration. It will later travel to Mumbai and Bangalore.
Noon-7pm (closed on Sundays). The Harrington Street Arts Centre, 8, Ho Chi Minh Sarani, Second floor, Suites No. 5 and 25B, .

ART



Homelands, The
Harrington Street Arts Centre, 8 Ho Chi Minh Sarani,
Noon-7 pm

on till **14 Mar**

Culled from the art collection of the British Council, this exhibition has more than 80 works by 28 leading modern and contemporary artists that reveal a rich plurality of ideas of belonging, alienation, history etc.

Recommended listings across Kolkata press

PUBLIC TALK: ANTHONY HAUGHEY

On Saturday 2nd March, Anthony gave a public talk about his work to a crowded audience of 120 people and standing room only,



OUTSET WRITING COMPETITION

On the same day, Anthony awarded the winners of the Outset Writing Competition, which was launched at the Kolkata Book Fair and received 230 entries.

Writing Competition
What is a homeland?

We live across different cities and countries, belonging here and there; travelling from one life to another; inhabiting multiple places – physical and metaphorical. What is a homeland? Is it ethnicity, language, religion or customs and beliefs?

Write a short poem or passage and draw an illustration to express your thoughts. Those above 15 years are eligible to apply.

Pick up forms and submit entries at the British Council stall at Kolkata Book Fair or at the British Council reception, 16 Camac Street, L&T Chambers, Kolkata 700017.

Last date for entries: 25 February 2013.

Winners will be announced at 3.00 p.m. on Saturday 2 March at Harrington Art Centre, The Harrington Mansion, 8 Ho Chi Minh Sarani, Kolkata 700071. Noted Irish artist Anthony Haughey will award certificates and prizes.

From the art collection of the British Council, the Homelands exhibition is a unique take on contemporary British art showcasing more than 80 works by leading artists at the Harrington Arts Centre. Exhibition open from 1 March onwards; 11.00 a.m. to 7.00 p.m.

BRITISH COUNCIL

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outset India

Venue Partners
The Harrington Arts Centre



WORKSHOP: SHANTINIKETAN

20 MFA students from the art school at Shantiniketan (set up at the beginning of the 20th century by nobel laureate poet Rabindranath Tagore, on the outskirts of Calcutta) attended a workshop with Anthony Haughey and Latika Gupta, within the Homelands exhibition space. They were invited to bring along examples of their work and projects, which were reviewed and discussed amongst the group, led by Anthony and Latika. Anthony also showed his own work to the group as an equal participant.



WORKSHOP: KHOJ

From 5th-7th March, 15-20 invited participants were invited to take part in a three day workshop in association with Khoj Kolkata. Those in attendance included mid-career to senior artists from Calcutta, including two German artists in residence at Khoj Kolkata. The event was intended as a rigorous participatory dialogue, which would result in new ideas at the end of the 3 days, that could be taken forward as art projects, individually and through collaboration.

Day 1 activity:

Anthony Haughey presented his work, explaining the context of some of his projects, in the recent economic history of Ireland that has led to massive social changes.

Abhijit Gupta. presented selected projects including a three-channel video on three perceptions of migrants from Bangladesh and 'Designs on a Delta', a project undertaken by Khoj Kolkata in the Sunderbans, that examined the feasibility of new forms and designs of ecologically sustainable architecture in the cyclone-ravaged villages in Sunderbans.

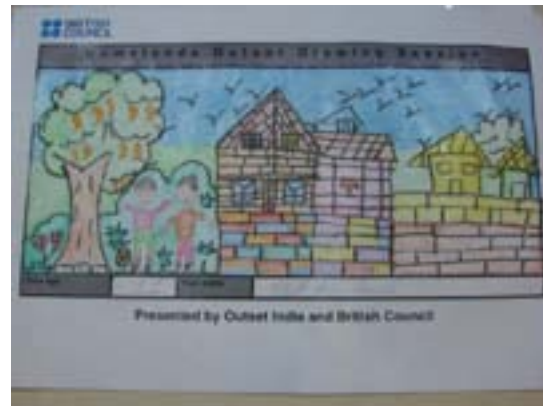
Chattrapati Dutta made a presentation that dealt with 'Designs on a Delta', highlighting also various strategies that may be utilised to present a project such as one in the Sunderbans. The idea of performative presentations was also discussed.

The three artists' talks/ presentations were followed by a discussion, including questions and constructive critiques.



WORKSHOP: ANANDAN

This session welcomed underprivileged children (6-14 years of age) from a city-based NGO to participate in an interactive drawing workshop. Led by Tandra and Pulak Chandra, Charles Wallace India Trust scholars, the children were shown around the Homelands exhibition and given drawing materials to create their own picture of “homeland”. The activity lasted for over 3 hours and the drawings are displayed on the Homelands India website.
<http://www.homelandsindia.com/HSAC>



ROUND TABLE: ROLE OF A CURATOR

On March 14th, a closed round table discussion was led by Latika Gupta with 20 invited discussants, including directors of the leading private galleries in Kolkata, museum curators and personnel, as well as younger artist-curators. The topic of discussion was: 'The role of the Curator as Interpreter - Ideas of Location through different modes of exhibition making'. The session also included a presentation on contemporary art in Sri Lanka by visiting Sri Lankan photographer and curator Menika Van Der Poorten, who co-curated the British Library / British Council project 'Return to Sri Lanka'.



ROUND TABLE: FIVE-YEAR STRATEGY

On the same day, a second round table took place within the backdrop of the Homelands exhibition. A participatory session aimed to collectively brainstorm on the British Council's five-year arts strategy going forward. Led by Sujata Sen and Samarjit Guha, 25 local arts contacts from visual arts, performing arts and theatre and literature took part in the conversation and debate.



GALLERY TOURS: LATIKA GUPTA

On Saturday 2nd March, Latika hosted a 2-hour open session, offering tours and introductions to anyone entering the gallery. This was promoted as a prelude to Anthony Haughey's talk which followed immediately after.



GALLERY TOURS: STUDENT GUIDES

Two students from the city were trained by Latika to assist visitors in the gallery each day. The students led free guided tours twice daily, in English and Bengali. As well as assisting with workshops and events.



GALLERY TOURS: SCHOOLS

Four schools from across the city took advantage of free tours offered by The British Council's Outset Guides. The schools which took part were Adamas International School, MSB School, Shri Shikshayatan School, and Usha Martin School.



HOMELANDS

A 21st century of home, away, and all the places in between.

Contemporary art from the British Council Collection.

Curated by Latika Gupta.

homelandsindia.com



Nathan Coley, Camouflage Bayrakli Mosque, 2007

100 x 78 x 63 cm, Painted hardboard, British Council Collection.

© The Artist, Courtesy the artist and Haunch of Venison (as with other recent print)

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