

# KAYA

## Artists in Conversation

30<sup>th</sup> September – October 2015



**Six women artists from different places, using distinct methods of aesthetic investigation, create a conversation about contemporary perspectives on womanhood.**



**Conceptualised and presented by Smita Bajoria - Ganges Art Gallery**

Nandini Chirimar | Moutushi | Rashmee Pal Chouteau |  
Manjari Chakravarty |  
Mahjabin Majumdar | Megha Joshi  
with Lina Vincent Sunish, co-curator



**“Like a silkworm weaving  
her house with love  
from her marrow,  
and dying  
in her body's threads  
winding tight, round  
and round,  
I burn  
desiring what the heart desires...”**

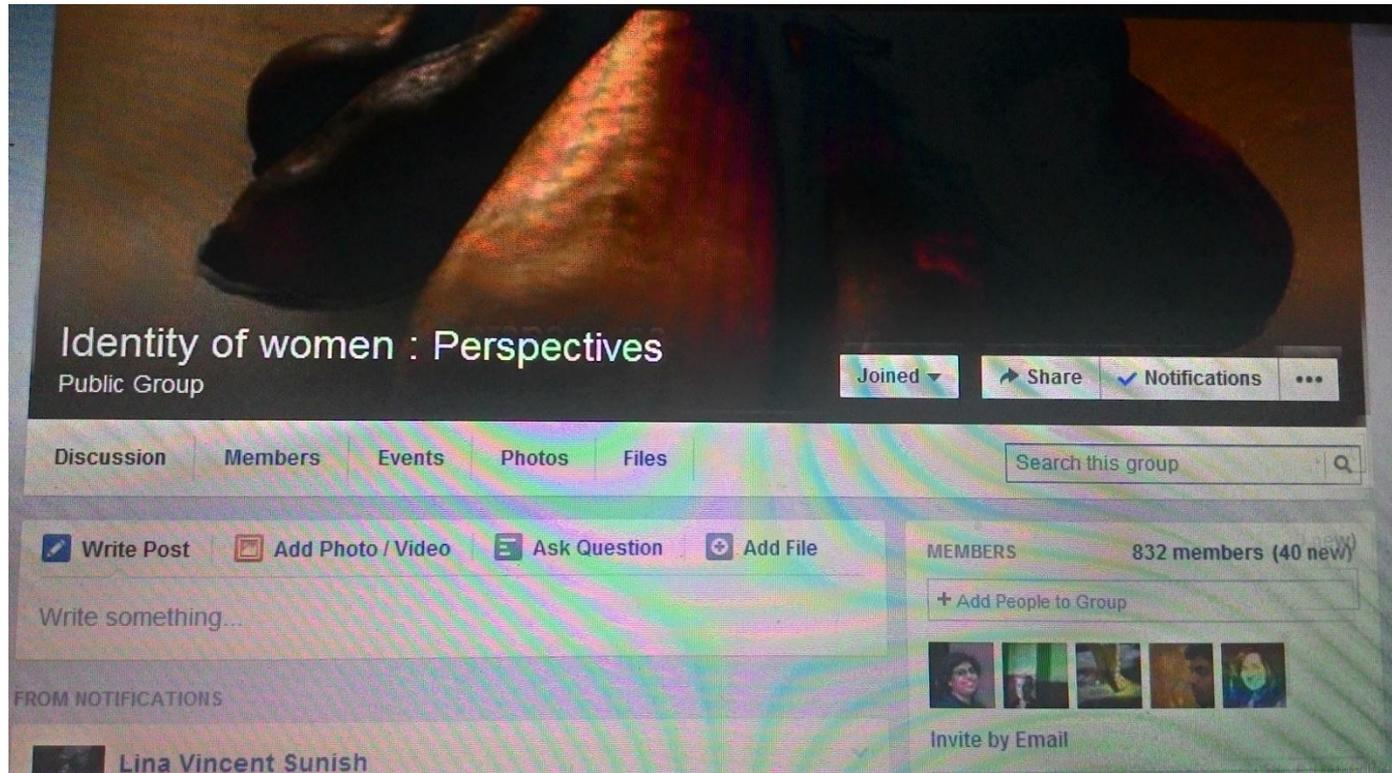
**~ Akka Mahadevi**

**Femininity is an eternal identity – an identity that biologically transmuted into our being and moulded our souls with the wisdom of our previous generations. Blood and bones of mothers and grandmothers mingled with exhilaration and agonies of their life’s journeys – a journey that continues through the privations of our own existence. The personal body therefore becomes the door that opens the broader periphery of the Universal reality to us. As we live, breathe, love, fight, persevere and procreate we also weave ahead a vivid tapestry of identities that are varied in nature but analogous to the principles of the eternal feminine.**

**Involving these thoughts/ideas we the artists, introspect further within our individual practices and create a set of works that recounts our personal experiences as a woman – how it has shaped into its present form, influences or anecdotes that have strengthened this individuality and nurtured the core of our beings. Let us celebrate the essence of our femininity by showings a series of paintings, drawings, prints or installations involving fabrics or any other material.**

**Moutushi**

The gallerist and artists came together and decided that they would like to reach out widely; they began a Face Book group that allowed them to share their thoughts and also allow members to share stories, anecdotes, personal experiences and much more.



They invited a curator (Lina Vincent Sunish) to collaborate on the project, and to channel the different perspectives into a comprehensive body of material. The page has more than 800 members who engage in discussions of a wide and relevant variety.

**Mahjabin Majumdar**

LOST CONNECTION, Size-24X20 inch, Acrylic on Canvas



“Identity and obscurity overlap each other within my work space, I try to depict an attempt at reconciling elements of memory & the relationship between self and place in a world of transitory identities; to explore into the autobiographical realm where one’s own history & interests get more of a hearing within the complex of confounding pictorial space, thereby looking for relations between my existence and total existence, connecting between here and elsewhere. The presence of the body in my work suggests that bodily positions in space are signifiers of relation in the physical as well as spiritual sphere.”

**Manjari Chakravarty**

The Hope Chest 24" by 18" by 10"



“When I look back on my work I see that I have always been collecting my thoughts, memories, opinions, observations. sometimes I store them in boxes, sometimes in words. I am the silent observer. I make them so that I may preserve. for myself, and for others.”

**Megha Joshi**

'Droop' 26 x 24" (variable), 2014, dry gourds and paper pulp

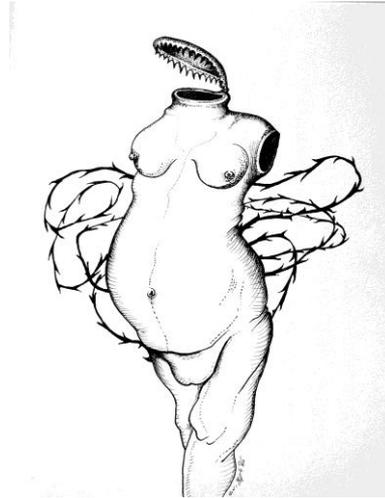


“I am not just my body but moving beyond the body from the outside in, has been a difficult task. In the course of my practice, certain experiences made me say, “The damn breasts come in the way”. I have breastfed my children, they have given life and nourishment and yet I found myself cursing and wanting to distance myself from them. So when a sculptor encounters problems caused by breasts as they create works, what does she do? She makes the object the subject.”

## Moutushi

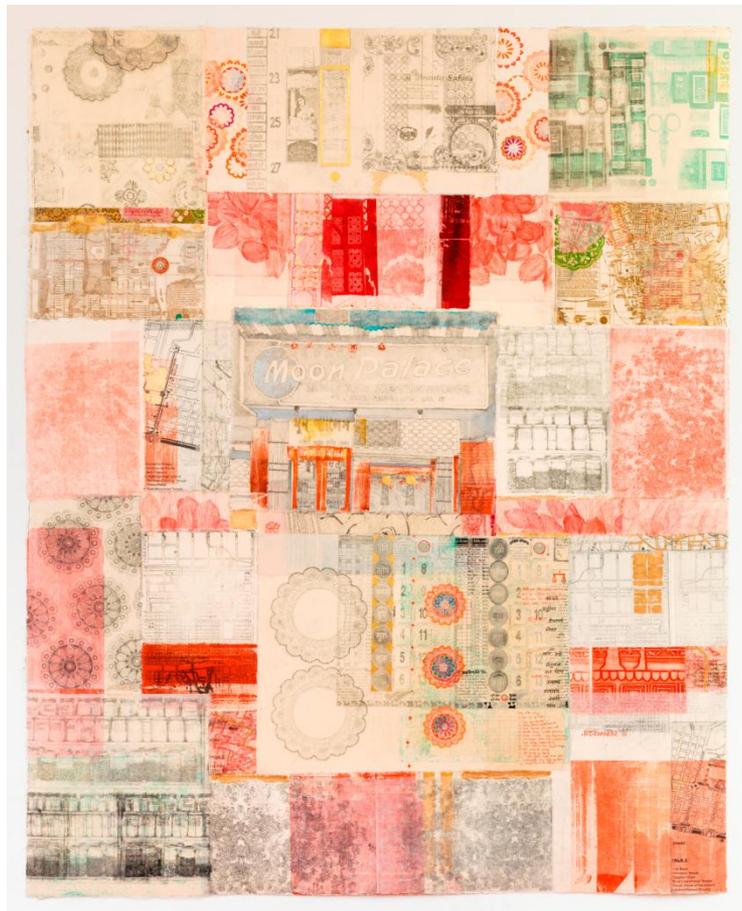
Form I, IV, X, XIII, 9 x 11inch. Medium- pen & ink on paper.

“The feminine body for me is a discursive entity that generates questions of gender politics within the parameters of a strong patriarchal society like ours. My objective is to trace historically, the origin of this disposition by examining iconographic imageries and early photographic evidence. A continued referencing of these sources allows me to address the changing notions of feminine identity, empowerment, sexuality and tolerance of the same. As a ‘scavenger of memories’ I endeavour to evoke nuances of human relations and memories left behind as extinct appendages of history.”



**Nandini Chirimar**

The Moon Palace and other observations, Mixed media on Japanese Kozo and Arches paper 44" x 35", 2015



“Everyday life is the foundation of my work. I constantly observe and think about myself, my surroundings and the traditions that shape my actions. I draw from personal history, relationships, places I have lived in, maps and my different roles as an Indian woman/mother living in America. Through my work I also seek to document current culture and societal norms that we exist within. ”

**Rashmee Pal Chouteau**

untitled 12in x 16 in, ink and watercolour on Arches watercolour paper



Rashmee Pal Chouteau works mainly with ink and watercolour exploring a myriad of subjects including the rendition of human body parts and the emotions connected with them, or drawing parallels between aliments & desire. Her works deal with emotions, play and sensuality.

## SHARED VOICES

Women have been muses for others – they have been depicted, idolised, objectified and reconstructed in art; their faces, bodies, attributes and fashions discussed and evaluated thoroughly – with and without their assent and/or participation. Women are as much producers of culture as men; the many great female artists, performers, musicians and writers are proof of this. Data however explicitly shows that their numbers are far fewer than males in any field. Women have been battling from time immemorial, trying to make balances with the other half of the human race, the other (conventionally understood) gender. Different names have been given to it; Western movements have fed particular terminologies and documented histories, while women in lesser developed regions like Asia and South America have led their own revolutions of empowerment, recording voices in vernacular languages.

Today we want to take a renewed view, because though much remains the same, much has changed too, which has to be acknowledged. Rather than complain and blame, one of the ways is to attempt to divest the discussions of baggage, use new vocabularies, fresh terms and contemporary experiences to translate *this* moment in women's history.

Eric Wahl said “The purpose of art is not to produce a product. The purpose of art is to produce thinking.” In the exhibition, the artists present varied perspectives of womanhood, attempting to question their personal beliefs and encourage thought and response within the viewer.

**This project is an example of the way women are turning the gaze upon themselves and their gender; it may be grammatically wrong but *they are their own muses*. As the community builds, so also does courage, respect and strength. The artistic voices are representative of numerous human beings who seek equality in more ways than one.**

Lina Vincent Sunish – curator

## Artists Short Profiles

**Rashmee Pal Chouteau** passed out from Kala Bhavan, Santiniketan, and then moved to France where she continues her art practice through illustrations, painting, installations along with teaching various age groups in different structures including Ecole des Beaux-Arts du Mans. Rashmee has also worked in restoration of historical monuments. She has exhibited in numerous shows in France, Belgium, Holland, India including exhibitions at the Centre international d'études en littérature de jeunesse, Charleville-Mézières, France and Le Museum 'Het Stadmus' Hasselt, Belgium. Her works are in permanent and private collections in France, India, England, Australia and the USA.

**Manjari Chakravarti** trained in printmaking at Kala Bhavan Santiniketan. She has worked extensively in diverse media and has had solo shows at Galerie Beatrice Binoche at Saint Denis, Reunion, France (2011), Akar Prakar Kolkata (2010), Art Alive, New Delhi (2008), Gandhara Art Gallery (2007), Galerie88 Kolkata (1999), and Art Heritage New Delhi (1994). Her installation The Vanishing Wives of Shantiniketan was shown at Enduring Legacy, at the Gallery Neumeister in Munich and at the Indian Embassy in Berlin in association with Akar Prakar Kolkata and ICCR New Delhi and also at the India Art Summit 2011, New Delhi, in association with Akar Prakar Kolkata. She has participated extensively in group shows both in India and abroad, including at the Royal College of Art, London and Tamarind Art in New York. She lives and works in Shantiniketan.

**Mahjabin I. Majumdar** was born in Dhaka, Bangladesh. She did a Bachelor of Fine Arts from Kala Bhavana, Santiniketan where she currently lives. Among the many shows she has participated in are: 'Existential Explorations' Sixteen Contemporary Indian Artists, Galleria M, Kolkata, 2014. A Group show of Modern & Contemporary Indian art curated by Dr. Rebecca M. Brown from the collection of Shelley & Donald Rubin, the College of New Jersey Galleries & at Oglethorpe University Museum of Art, Atlanta, USA, Titled "Goddess, Lion, Peasant, Priest" 2012. 'Bridge 2 Worlds', organized by IMA Foundation, London, UK, 2010; "Confluence", Maya Art Space, Kolkata 2013; "Artist From Bengal" presented by Akar Prakar, Delhi 2012; "Objects" at Ganges Art Gallery 2012; Asian Contemporary Art Summit New York, USA 2010. Mahjabin's solo exhibition "Sound Of Silence" was organized by Sarjan Art Gallery, Baroda 2007. Her works can be found in the collections of Rubin Museum New York; Universal Graphic Museum Egypt; Kanagawa Prefectural Gallery, Japan; Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Netherlands and private collections in India and abroad.

**Nandini Chirimar** began studying art at College of Art, New Delhi. She was awarded a full scholarship by Cornell University to pursue her undergraduate education, so came to the USA in 1987 to complete her BFA in Drawing and Painting. She went on to do MFA in Painting at the Hoffberger School of Painting, Maryland Institute College of Art. She was awarded a residency at the Skowhegan School of Painting and Sculpture, summer 1991. In addition, Nandini learned viscosity printing from Arun Bose and spent four years in Japan studying woodblock printing with Taika Kinoshita. She is currently exploring other printmaking techniques with Vijay Kumar at the Manhattan Graphics Center, New York. Nandini has shown her work many international venues, including Allen Gallery, New York; Queens Museum of Art, New York; Ganges Art Gallery, Kolkata; Centre for International Modern Art (CIMA), Kolkata; Exhibit 320 Gallery, New Delhi; Ono Gallery, Tokyo; CWAJ Print Shows, Tokyo; Twelve Gates Gallery, Philadelphia; Taubman Art Museum, Virginia; AHAF Fair, Korea; SLICK II Fair, Paris; India Art Fair, New Delhi and in Erasing Borders Travelling Exhibitions.

**Moutushi** is a visual-arts practitioner based in Kolkata. She trained in Fine-Art Graphics from Kalabhavan in Viswabharati Santiniketan (1998) and later the Faculty of Fine Arts M.S. University Baroda (2000). In 2001 she received the Charles Wallace India Trust Award and the Commonwealth Foundation fellowship that jointly sponsored an MA program in Advanced Printmaking from the Wimbledon School of Art, University of Surrey. Her first solo show was held at the India High Commission in London (2002) and the following one at Gallery Time & Space in Bangalore (2012). Some of her significant participations are The 7th International Engraving Biennial at Versailles, GEORGIE Project - Griffin Gallery London (auction by Sotheby), MEMORABILIA - Sumukha Art Gallery Bangalore, DRAWING 2014 - Espace Gallery Delhi and BEYOND PRINTS - Ganges Art Gallery Kolkata. The artist has taught in institutions all over India.

**Megha Joshi** trained as a sculptor from the Faculty of Fine Arts, MS University Baroda, India. She worked as a set designer and art director for film and television for 10 years when she quit at the peak of her career to return to her fine art practice in 2007. Joshi has worked with conventional materials such steel, fabric, bronze, rubber and most interestingly, everyday objects and materials used in Hindu ritualism. She has been actively participating in shows in India and abroad and has been invited to art residencies in Budapest, Scotland and Iceland. Her work has been shown at the India Art Fair over four years. Her most recent show was her solo 'I: Object' in New Delhi. Her works are in the collection of galleries, institutions and collectors in India and abroad.

THANK YOU