

Jitish Kallat: Order of Magnitude

16th February – 1st July 2022

Ishara Art Foundation opens 2022 with *Order of Magnitude* by Jitish Kallat, the artist's first major solo exhibition in West Asia and the Levant.

Presenting new works that include paintings, multimedia installations, drawings and site-specific interventions, the exhibition reflects Jitish Kallat's profound deliberations on the interrelationship between the cosmic and the terrestrial.

Jitish Kallat's oeuvre sits between fluid speculation, precise measurement and conceptual conjectures producing dynamic forms of image-making. Using abstract, schematic, notational and representational languages, he engages with different modes of address, seamlessly interlacing the immediate and the cosmic, the telescopic and the microscopic, the past and present. In *Order of Magnitude*, one finds a contemplation of overarching interconnectivity on the individual, universal, planetary and extra-terrestrial dimensions.

The viewer is first confronted with *Integer Studies (Drawings from Life)*, which run through the space resembling both the horizon and the equator. Since the beginning of 2021, Kallat followed a ritual of making one daily drawing as part of a durational study in graphite, aquarelle pencil and gesso stains. Each work comprises diverse forms anchored by the same three sets of numbers: the algorithmically estimated world population, the number of new births, and the death count noted at the particular moment of the work's creation. Human life and death are abstracted in drawings that are both graphic and painterly, prompting questions of extinction and evolution.

Seen alongside these studies is a wall-sized painting titled *Postulates from a Restless Radius*, whose perimeter takes the form of the conic Albers projection of the Earth. The work begins as an unstable, cross-sectional grid (in aquarelle pencil) that opens up the globe on a flat plane. There is no cartographic intent here; in place of planetary geography it assembles signs and speculations, at once evoking botanical, suboceanic, celestial, and geological formations. *Postulates from a Restless Radius* is an exploratory abstraction of forms that suggest signatures of growth and entropy.

Placed centrally are four double-sided and multi-scopic photo works titled *Epicycles*. This series began during the early days of the pandemic in 2020 with a hand-drawn journal capturing minute changes in Kallat's studio - such as cracks surfacing on walls. Kallat embeds these chance encounters with iconic pictures from the *Family of Man* exhibition organized by photographer Edward Steichen at the MoMA, New York, in 1955. The resulting prints combine the artist's everyday observations with archival images of human solidarity taken by photographers from around the world. Meticulously composed on a lenticular surface, the depicted figures appear and disappear as one moves around the work, yielding a complex portrait of time in its transience and ephemerality.

A new iteration of Kallat's immersive installation *Covering Letter (terranum nuncius)* occupies Ishara's mezzanine floor. Images from the Golden Records that travelled as part of NASA's 1977 Voyager 1 and 2 space mission rest on shelves along two opposite walls. Placed inside programmed LED frames, 116 parallax prints flicker in a breath-like cadence. They include scientific, anatomical and cosmological diagrams as well as flora, fauna and architecture, in an attempt to encapsulate a summary of life on Earth. Permeating the exhibition space are the sounds of salutation to the universe that were on the Golden Records in 55 languages. As the two Voyagers continue their journey in space, now over 14 billion miles away from Earth, this work is a reminder of an epic presentation of "our" world to an unknown other. At a time when we find ourselves in a deeply divided globe, Kallat foregrounds these images and reverberations for a collective meditation on ourselves as residents of a single planet, where the 'other' is an unfamiliar 'intergalactic alien'.

An obsolete map of our cosmic neighbourhood, the return address marked on the Records is projected within the installation facing a bench in the shape of the *Doomsday Clock*. The symbolic clock proposed by the Bulletin of Atomic Scientists is reset every year, representing our growing proximity to a hypothetical man-made global catastrophe that is expected to strike at midnight.

Finally, a site-specific intervention by the artist titled *N-E-S-W* serves as an allusive clue to reading this exhibition. Embedded within the foundation's architecture, a functional magnetic compass is inset within the flooring. *N-E-S-W* summons the cardinal directions of the Earth, aligned to invisible force fields, rendering both the exhibition and Ishara into planetary surveying devices.

Jitish Kallat: Order of Magnitude will be accompanied by physical and virtual tours, educational and public programmes, a newly commissioned text by Amal Khalaf and artist conversations over the duration of the exhibit.

For press and interview requests for Ishara Art Foundation, please contact press@ishara.org | +971 4 2233001.

Exhibition Details:

- *Order of Magnitude* is Jitish Kallat's first major solo exhibition in West Asia and the Levant
- The exhibition features new bodies of works being presented for the first time
- In *Order of Magnitude*, one finds the artist's profound deliberations on the overarching interconnectivity between individual, universal, planetary and extra-terrestrial dimensions
- As Ishara's seventh exhibition, this show furthers Ishara's commitment to showcasing museum-grade exhibitions of pioneering voices in contemporary art
- The Ishara Art Foundation, located in Alserkal Avenue, Dubai, is the first permanent space in the Gulf dedicated to South Asian contemporary art
- The non-profit foundation is established by Dubai resident, collector and patron, Smita Prabhakar

NOTES TO EDITORS

About the Artist

Jitish Kallat was born in 1974 in Mumbai, the city where he continues to live and work. Kallat's works over the last two decades reveal his continued engagement with the ideas of time, sustenance, recursion and historical recall, often interlacing the dense cosmopolis and the distant cosmos.

His solo exhibitions at museums include institutions such as the Art Institute of Chicago (Chicago), Dr. Bhau Daji Lad Mumbai City Museum (Mumbai), the Ian Potter Museum of Art (Melbourne), Frist Art Museum (Nashville), Art Gallery of New South Wales (Sydney) and the Philadelphia Museum of Art (Philadelphia). In 2017, the National Gallery of Modern Art (New Delhi) presented a mid-career survey of his work titled *Here After Here 1992-2017*, curated by Catherine David. He has exhibited widely at museums and institutions including Tate Modern (London), Martin Gropius-Bau (Berlin), Gallery of Modern Art (Brisbane), Kunstmuseum (Bern), Serpentine Galleries (London), Mori Art Museum (Tokyo), BOZAR: Centre For Fine Arts (Brussels), Pirelli Hangar Bicocca (Milan), Busan Museum of Art, among others. Kallat's work has been part of the Havana Biennale, Gwangju Biennale, Asia Pacific Triennale, Fukuoka Asian Art Triennale, Asian Art Biennale, Curitiba Biennale, Guangzhou Triennale and the Kiev Biennale. Kallat was the curator and artistic director of Kochi-Muziris Biennale 2014. He has curated the recently concluded exhibition *I draw, therefore I think* for the South South Platform.

Kallat's work can be found in a number of public and private collections including Art Institute of Chicago (Chicago), Arario Museum (Seoul), Birmingham Museum (Birmingham), the Brooklyn Museum (New York), the Burger Collection (Hong Kong), Centre Georges Pompidou (Paris), Devi Art Foundation (New Delhi), Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum (Abu Dhabi), Kiran Nadar Museum of Art (New Delhi), M+ (Hong Kong), Museum of Contemporary Art (Los Angeles), National Gallery of Modern Art (New Delhi), National Museum of Asian Art, Smithsonian Institution (Washington DC), Sigg Collection (Switzerland), Singapore Art Museum (Singapore), Victoria and Albert Museum (London) and The Ishara Art Foundation and The Prabhakar Collection (Dubai).

Website: www.jitishkallat.com

Ishara Art Foundation

Ishara Art Foundation was founded in 2019 as a non-profit organisation dedicated to presenting contemporary art of South Asia. Located in Dubai, the Foundation supports emerging and established practices that advance critical dialogue and explore global interconnections.

Guided by a research-led approach, Ishara realises its mission through exhibitions, onsite and online programmes, education initiatives and collaborations in the UAE and internationally. The Foundation facilitates exchange between South Asian and international artistic networks that include museums, foundations, institutions, galleries and individuals.

The Ishara logo, a synthesis of a square and circle, is based on an ideogram by Zarina to convey the word آسمان ('Aasman'), sky. It forms one of 36 images from 'Home is a Foreign Place' (1999), a work in the collection of Ishara's Founder and Chairperson, Smita Prabhakar. Ishara signifies a gesture, a

signal or a hint, and is a word common to several languages including Arabic, Persian, Hindi, Swahili and Urdu.

Ishara Art Foundation is presented in partnership with Alserkal.

Website: www.ishara.org

Smita Prabhakar, Founder and Chairperson

Smita Prabhakar is an entrepreneur, collector and art patron who has been based in the UAE for over four decades. She is the Founder and Chairperson of the Ishara Art Foundation and is on the Advisory Board of Art Dubai, a member of the South Asian Acquisitions Committee at Tate Modern (London), the Middle Eastern Circle of the Guggenheim Museum (New York) and the Peggy Guggenheim Collection (Venice).

Her collection, The Ishara Art Foundation and The Prabhakar Collection focuses on South Asian contemporary art guided by the shared histories and plural voices from across region. She has supported the V.S. Gaitonde exhibition, 'Painting as Process, Painting as Life' in New York and Venice in 2015-6, a workshop around Shilpa Gupta's artwork, 'For, In Your Tongue, I Cannot Fit,' organised at the Kochi-Muziris Biennale 2018, and the 'Reading in Tongues' project for the seventh edition of the Colomboscope Festival in Colombo that runs from 2021-2022.

Sabih Ahmed, Associate Director and Curator

Sabih Ahmed is the Associate Director and Curator at the Ishara Art Foundation in Dubai. Prior to Ishara, Ahmed was a Senior Researcher and Projects Manager at Asia Art Archive from 2009 to 2019. Over the years, he has led seminal research and digitisation projects around artist archives, organised international conferences on art history and educational resources, and has co-curated exhibitions in Barcelona, Dhaka, Delhi, Hong Kong and Shanghai.

Alserkal Avenue

Established in 2008 by Alserkal, Alserkal Avenue is a renowned cultural district of contemporary art galleries, non-profit organisations and homegrown businesses in the Al Quoz industrial area of Dubai. Alserkal Avenue is a vibrant community of visual and performing arts organisations, designers, and artisanal spaces that have become an essential platform for the development of the creative industries in the United Arab Emirates. As one of the region's foremost platforms for contemporary art, Alserkal Avenue provides cultural experiences for local, regional and international audiences. Alserkal Avenue features Concrete, a multi-disciplinary space conceptualised and programmed by Alserkal.