

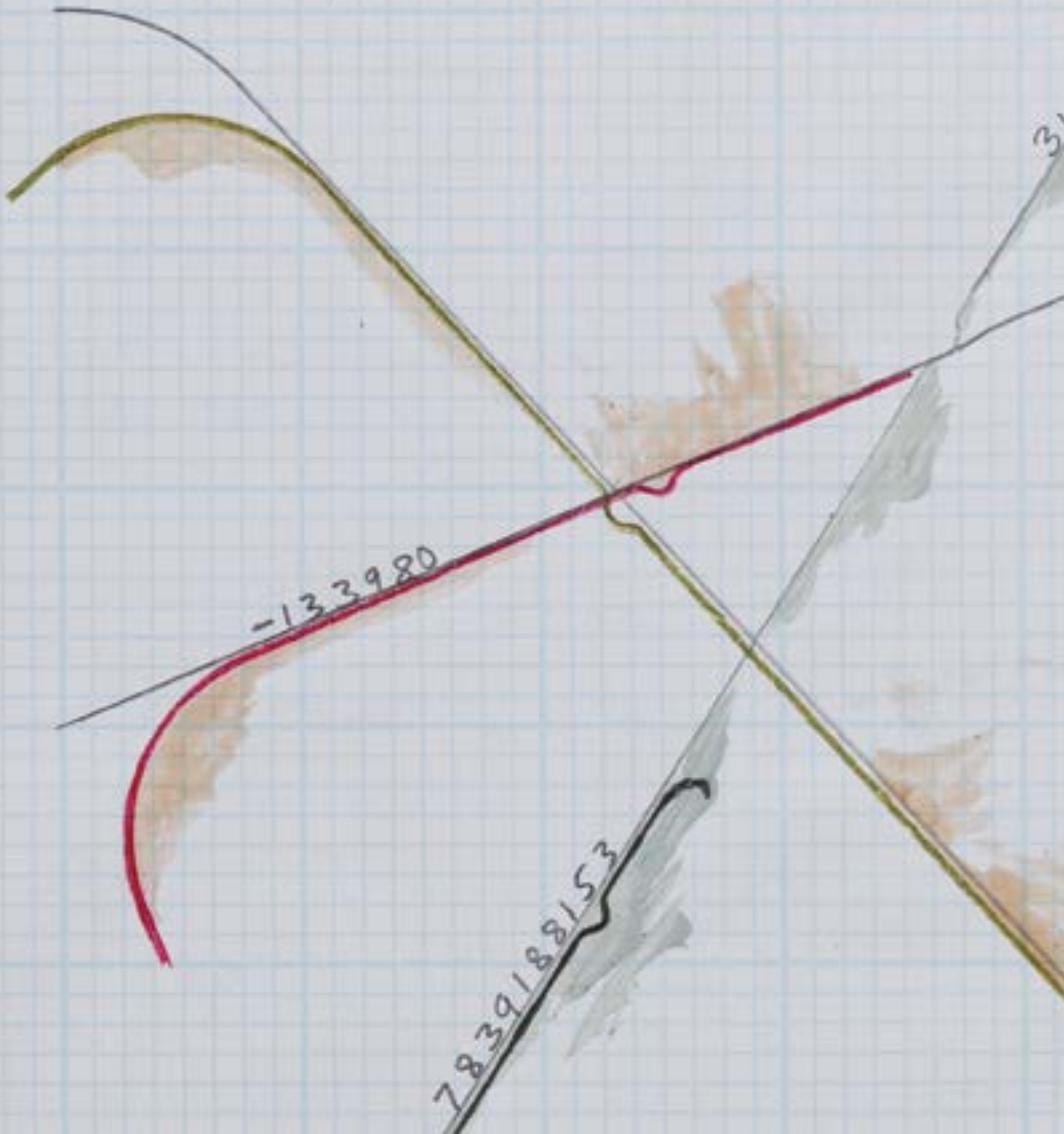
ISHARA
ART FOUNDATION



J I T I S H
K A L L A T :
O R D E R O F
M A G N I T U D E

J I T I S H K A L L A T : O R D E R O F M A G N I T U D E

16 FEBRUARY – 1 JULY 2022





Ishara Art Foundation proudly presents *Order of Magnitude*, the first major solo exhibition of Jitish Kallat in West Asia and the Levant.

Featuring new works that include paintings, multimedia installations, drawings and site-specific interventions, the show reflects the artist'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 exhibition at Ishara brings together artworks comprising a suite of drawings titled *Integer Studies (Drawings from Life)*, a new iteration of the immersive installation *Covering Letter (terranum nuncius)*, the *Epicycles* photo-series, and a wall-sized painting titled *Postulates from a Restless Radius*. The exhibition also features a site-specific intervention titled *N-E-S-W*, a functional magnetic compass embedded within the architecture of Ishara and aligned to the cardinal directions, rendering the exhibition and the Foundation into an instrument measuring planetary movement.

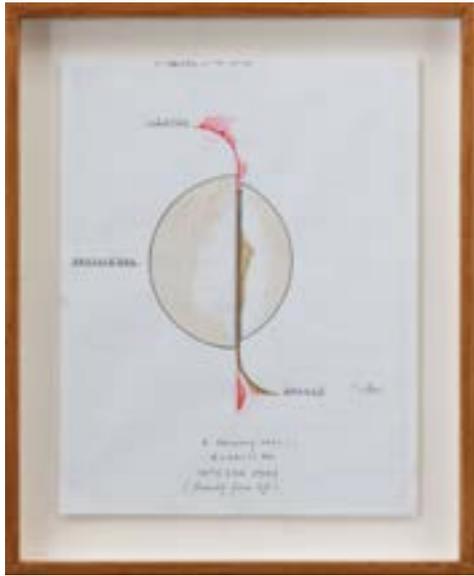
Order of Magnitude is accompanied by physical and virtual tours, educational and public programmes, a newly commissioned text and artist conversations over the duration of the exhibition.



Postulates from a Restless Radius draws its shape from the conic Albers projection of the Earth. With a hand-drawn graph lying beneath the imagery, the work begins as an unstable, cross-sectional grid in aquarelle pencil that opens up the globe on a flat

plane. In place of planetary geography it assembles signs and speculations, at once evoking botanical, suboceanic, celestial, and geological formations. The painting is an exploratory abstraction of forms that suggest signatures of growth and entropy.

Postulates from a Restless Radius (2021)
Acrylic, gesso, lacquer, charcoal and
watercolor pencil on linen
640 x 320 cm radius, 375 cm length



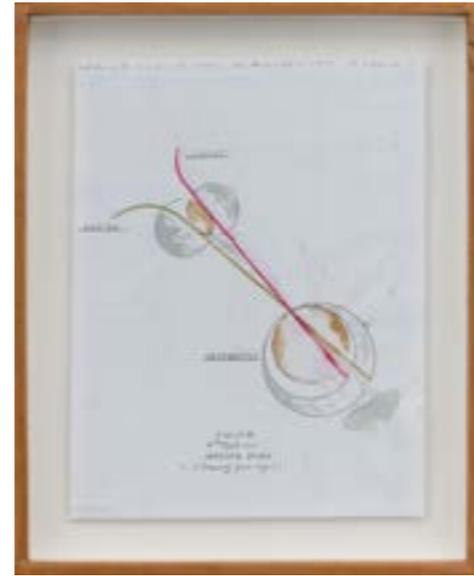
8th January 2021



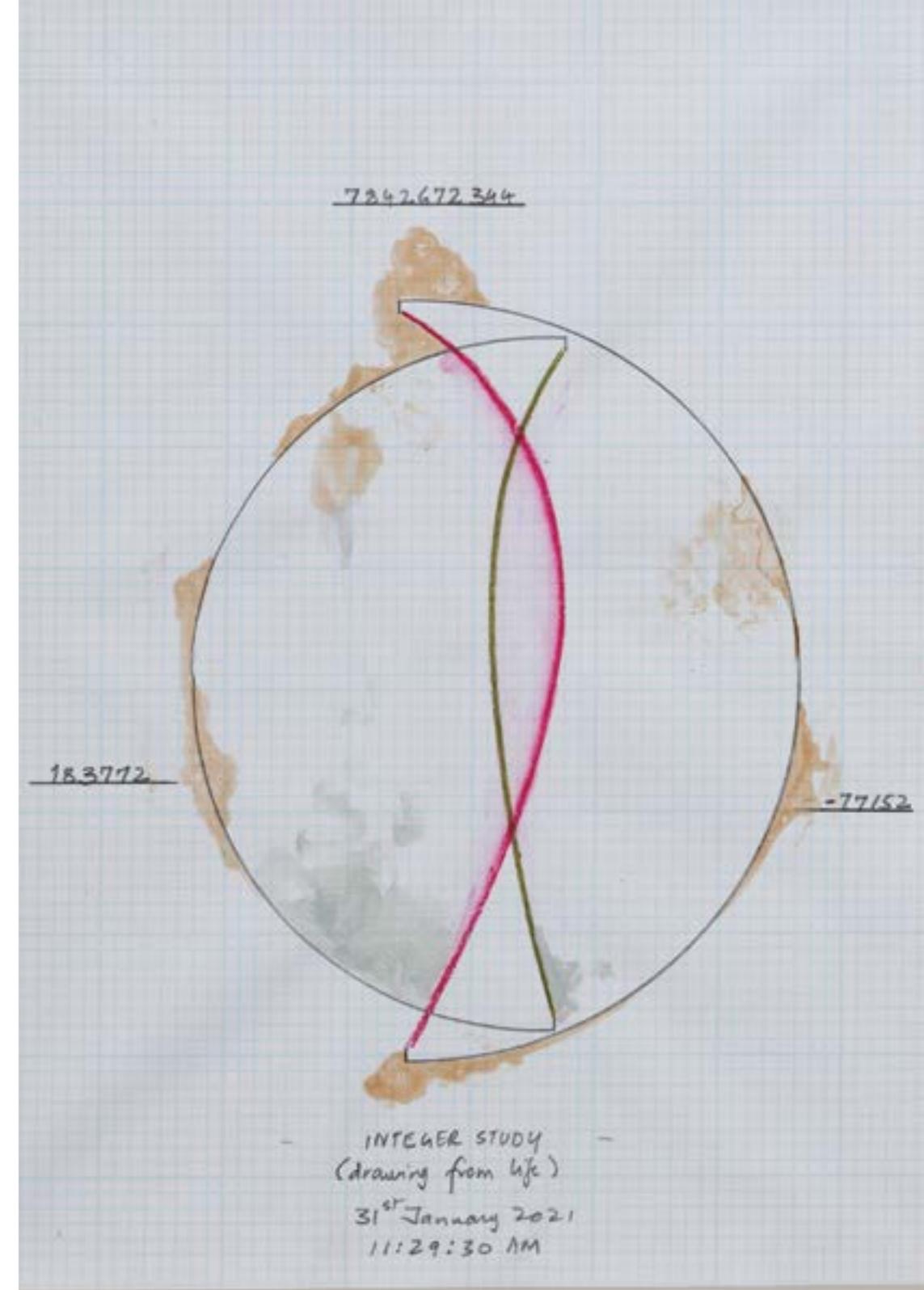
1st February 2021



26th March 2021



9th April 2021



Since the beginning of 2021, Kallat has followed a ritual of making one drawing daily as part of a durational study in graphite, aquarelle pencil and gesso stains. Running through the space in resemblance to both the horizon and the equator, each work functions as a timestamp of a particular moment each day, 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 instance of the work's creation. This precision is juxtaposed with contrasting diverse forms and shapes, as human life and death are abstracted in drawings that are both graphic and painterly, prompting questions of extinction and evolution.

Integer Studies (Drawings from Life) (2021)
Graphite and aquarelle pencil, stained gesso,
organic gum on Bienfang Gridded Paper
29.2 x 35.9 cm each



D R A W I N G B R E A T H

BY AMAL KHALAF

Hurling through space, we on Earth are experiencing time at multiple speeds. Moving at the speed of loss, of grief, of time-ticking urgency and of stillness, moving at the speed of us. Pandemics, climate catastrophes, daily death figures, explosions and unpredictability are disrupting the usual rhythms of capital. Our bodies and how we connect to each other and the planet are changing. Exhausted, our capacities, tendencies and affordances are shifting. We grow atomised, and through our relative isolation we tune into foundational rhythms.

The cycles of the sun and moon
Utterances, the rhythm of syllables
on our tongue and ear
The blink of an eye
Our breath

What time is it on the clock of the world?¹ On this planet that is depleted, extracted from, transforming faster than we can predict, where and how do we locate ourselves? In ecological or interstellar time? Where, on an algorithmic timeline, is now? How do we locate ourselves in ourselves? How can we find ways to metabolise this loss to make meaning and sow seeds in the compost of our grief? What frames of reference, what scaffolds are holding us?

Jitish Kallat's practice moves us through orders of magnitude, in bodies of work that transport us through time and space, from the cellular to the celestial. Epistolary, decrypted images from the Golden Records, photographs from the iconic 1955 *Family of Man* exhibition emerge from roots, grids and structures turn to rivers, frames collapse into

frames, ink marks and a geological movement dissolve into each other. The past, present and future compose timeless-lines; lines and marks, mark-making as ceremony, marking the passage of time, recording nature, observing shadows, raindrops as collaborators and fire marking wind patterns. These works evoke another quality of time, emerging from a reverent stillness that becomes the point from which what appears familiar or graspable quickly unravels and asks our help to make sense of it.

Inhale, exhale
Expand or shrink as you take
and release each breath
Right lung, left lung, earth lung,
aqua lung, space lung
Breathing in chorus, your breath in time
with their breath, in time with mine
When it stops somewhere,
we lose our timing²

Breath is a force that animates the exhibition. The blinking, breath-like cadence of the decrypted images of *Covering Letter (Terranum Nuncius)* is a salutation to the beyond, a breath that becomes the space between personal time and collective history, the finite and infinite and the unknown other.

Imagining the encounter that the images and the 55 recorded salutations were intended to have, would those interstellar others receiving them know of the costs of our humanness, the grief that accompanies our extinction? What would they be able to hear? Would they be able to decipher the gasps of air and the shaping of breath by mouths that form our words, our calls to the ether?

Keeping time
Measuring distance
Drawing breath
Reaching out
Touching what touches us, to
touch our being-touched

In *Epicycles*, we see other representations of humanity, gathered in the 50s, these images are encountered from all sides and connected to the ground, breathing with aerial roots like adventitious plants, breath uniting the terrestrial realm and sky. The geological, subterranean and celestial are also interconnected in *Postulates from a Restless Radius*, floating in fluid, unruly mark-making and melting movements of pigment on a page.

In this unfolding of the planet onto a flat plane, river-like lines stream. They look like ravines that took millennia to form - twenty-four breaths, or six minutes, for the water to dry. Drawing breath and holding breath, *Integer Studies (Drawings from Life)* feel like a daily practice of witnessing time, witnessing life and death, and the frames we have to describe the shape of our grief. In a compelling meditation on extinction, survival and our interconnectedness, statistics discordant with structuralist detachment swim in the bare emotion of abstract residues.

Languid, diaphragmatic, deep,
shallow, sweet or laboured
How do you breathe?
Inhale all the way,
Hold
Empty the breath till you reach stillness
Hold

We become more aware of our breath, the breath of those around us, and those far away.

My life is conditional on yours and we inhale the same present, and exhale into the future and this space between us is also what connects us. Shouting in the dark, we are distanced whilst constantly connected through the ether. We are more aware of the overwhelm of messages we are sending and receiving from radically different contexts, our algorithms broken only by our biorhythm. Inhale, exhale all the way.

This stillness, this new way of listening, with our breath and our bodies, exposes the way in which we co-create one another, continually engaged in the processes of making and re-making one another. As we practice stillness, knowing our breath is part of a chorus, we can try and synchronise our tempos³ to find a collective rhythm to set new worlds in motion, to lay the foundations for our survival.

1. American revolutionary and philosopher Grace Lee Boggs along with her husband and civil rights activist Jimmy Boggs visualised 3,000 years of human history on a 12-hour clock where every minute represents 50 years. In 2014, at almost 100 years of age, Grace Lee Boggs wrote this essay: <https://conversationshatyouwillneverfinish.wordpress.com/2014/09/06/what-time-is-it-on-the-clock-of-the-world-by-grace-lee-boggs/>

2. A haiku by Sonia Sanchez:
without your
residential breath
I lose my timing.
in Jackie Wang's, *Carceral Capitalism*
(Cambridge: Semiotext(e), 2018)

3. Jackie Wang, *Carceral Capitalism*
(Cambridge: Semiotext(e), 2018)



Epicycles is a double-sided, multi-sopic photo-series that 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. This body of work combines 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. The verso of each work carries images culled from the artist's *Integer Study* drawings that are also featured in the exhibition.

Epicycles (2021)
Double-sided multilayer print on
20 LPI lenticular lens, teakwood
226.1 x 132.1 x 61 cm





A new iteration of *Covering Letter (terranum nuncius)* occupies Ishara's mezzanine floor. It consists of four components — a sound piece, illuminative transparencies, a sculptural bench, and a solar location map of pulsars projected on the wall. Audio greetings to the exhibition, playing above a bench shaped like the two hands of the Doomsday Clock. This symbolic clock, maintained since 1947 by The Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists, warns us just how close we are to global catastrophe. Images from the two Golden Records that travelled as part of NASA's 1977 Voyager 1 and 2 space mission flicker in a breath-like cadence. Encapsulating the world as it was then, they range from scientific and cosmological diagrams to photographs of

flora and fauna, architecture, human anatomy and vegetation. Projected on the wall is a diagram appropriated from the Records' cover, erroneously indicating our place amongst the stars as a return address. The 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 our collective meditation as residents of a single planet, where the 'other' is an unfamiliar "intergalactic alien".

Covering Letter (terranum nuncius) (2018-2021)
116 stereoscopic parallax prints on Plexiglas,
programmed LED Panels, frames, wooden shelves
and bench, 4-horn speakers, video projection
dimensions variable

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, on-site and online programmes, education initiatives and collaborations. 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 is grateful for the generosity extended by Zarina and her family to use the ideogram in the Foundation's logo.

Ishara Art Foundation is presented in partnership with Alserkal.

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The team at Jitish Kallat Studio

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N-E-S-W (2022)

Magnetic compass and mirror inset
in gallery floor, 7.5 x 8.6 x 7 cm



Jitish Kallat was born in 1974 in Mumbai, the city where he continues to live and work. 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 HangarBicocca (Milan), Busan Museum of Art (Busan), among others. Kallat's work has been part of the Havana Biennial, Gwangju Biennale, Asia Pacific Triennial, Fukuoka Asian Art Triennale, Asian Art Biennale, Curitiba Biennial, Guangzhou Triennial and the Kyiv Biennial. 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 in 2021.

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 and Art Gallery (Birmingham), the Brooklyn Museum (New York), the Burger Collection (Hong Kong), Centre Georges Pompidou (Paris), Devi Art Foundation (New Delhi), Fukuoka Asian Art Museum (Fukuoka), Guggenheim Abu Dhabi (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 Gallery of Canada (Ottawa), National Museum of Asian Art (Washington DC), Philadelphia Museum of Art, Rubell Family Collection (Miami), Smithsonian Institution (Washington DC), Sigg Collection (Switzerland), Singapore Art Museum (Singapore), Victoria and Albert Museum (London) Whitworth Art Gallery (Manchester) and The Ishara Art Foundation and The Prabhakar Collection (Dubai).