E R A S I N G T H E M A R G I N S :

Recasting Dalit Identity
through the Alchemy of Contemporary Printmaking

Kirtika Kain

MFA | 2018

E R A S I N G T H E M A R G I N S :

Recasting Dalit Identity
through the Alchemy of Contemporary Printmaking

Kirtika Kain BFA

Submitted in fulfilment of the

Requirements for the Degree of

Master of Fine Art

National Art School

October 2018

Declaration of Originality

I hereby declare that this submission is my own work and to the best of my knowledge it contains no material previously published or written by another person, nor material which to a substantial extent has been accepted for the award of any other degree at the National Art School or any other educational institution, except where due acknowledgement is made in the exegesis.

I also declare that the intellectual content and visual record of studio work of this exegesis is the product of my own work, except to the extent that assistance from others in the project's design and conception or in style, presentation and linguistic expression is acknowledged.

……

……

Authority of Access for Copying

This exegesis may be made available for loan and limited copying in accordance with the Copyright Act 1968.

……

……

A B S T R A C T

Erasing the Margins presents a personal investigation into the Indian caste system, an entrenched socio-religious stratification based on archaic notions of ritual purity and karmic destiny. Addressing the centuries of oppression that have been embodied and internalised by generations, the studio practice attempts to contend the historical representation of the Dalit outcasts. The research is supported by an examination of the present political landscape and recent events that continue to determine the livelihood of the nations's lowest caste groups. The project fits within the field of historical and contemporary postcolonial theory and amongst the diverse practices of contemporary visual artists addressing similar themes of caste, materiality, text, and the possibilities of the printmaking medium. The implicit social rules that anchor the studio experimentation are excerpted from the writings of influential Dalit scholar and activist Dr BR Ambedkar. These words are silkscreened repeatedly with materials that relate to themes of valuation, corporality, ritual and the manual labour of the lower classes including iron filings, gold, vermillion and bitumen. Through diverse alchemical and experimental printmaking processes, the resulting series of mono-prints transforms the language and these materials into aesthetic object of value; thus, erasing, re-defining and re-imagining a personal and collective narrative.

A C K N O W L E D G M E N T S

My sincerest gratitude to those that paved the path before me: Dr BR Ambedkar, Krishna Reddy, VS Naipaul, Arundhati Roy, Debjani Ganguly and all artists and writers mentioned in this paper. My respected teacher and friend Tony Barclay.

The school that has given me everything and each staff member that has given me their best.

The Department. My guardians Peter and Maureen, I could not have asked for more.

Nina, Carolyn, my girls Emily and Sarah and all those beautiful students that make the studios feel like home.

My parents Uttam and Bimla. My dearest Nupur didi.

This is for you.

Other contemporary abominations like apartheid, racism, sexism, economic imperialism and religious fundamentalism have been politically and intellectually challenged at international forum. How is it that the practice of caste in India—one of the most brutal modes of hierarchical social organisation that human society has known —has managed to escape similar scrutiny and censure?

- Arundhati Roy

C O N T E N T S

I N T R O D U C T I O N

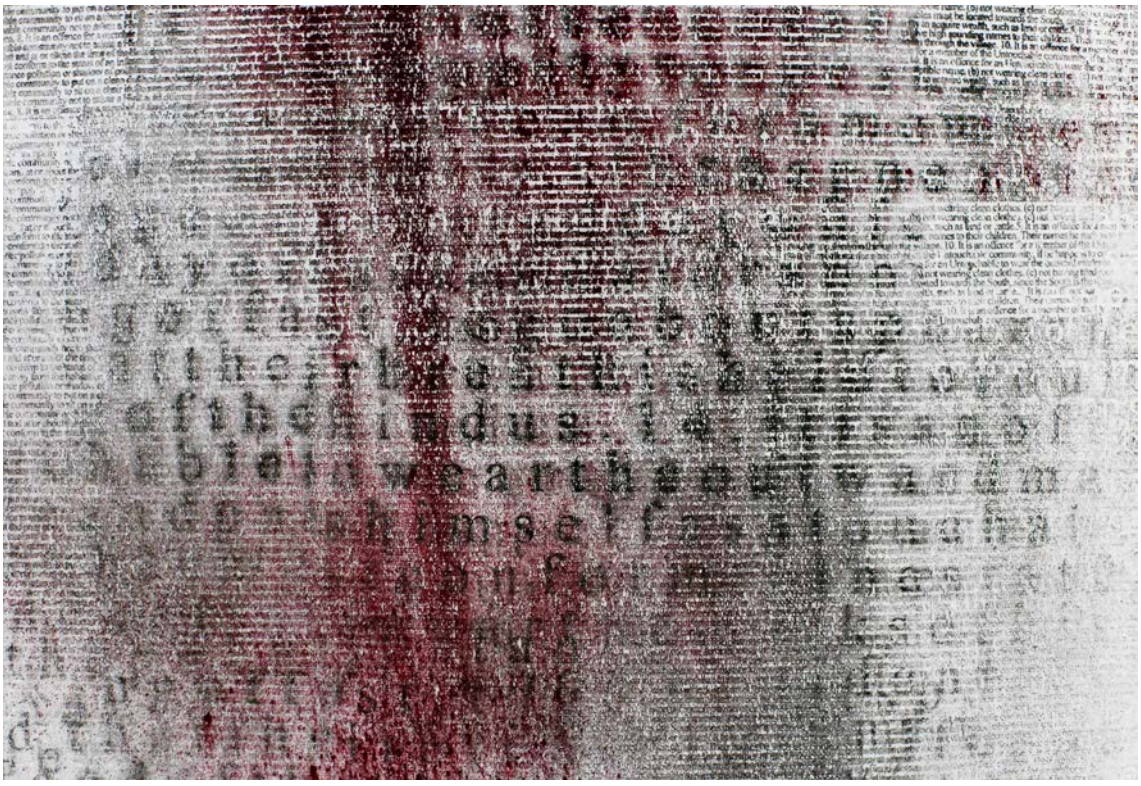

Figure 1 Kirtika Kain, *Annihilation* (detail), 2017, silkscreened pigment and vermillion on zinc embossing, 120 x 78 cm

How do you rewrite a century old narrative? How do you recreate an identity and redefine a people? This research project addresses the Indian caste system, a system of social stratification with origins dating back to 1500 BC.[1] Outside of this hierarchical system exists the Dalits, or Untouchables, a population associated with impurity and pollution, who have endured centuries of subjugation. Utilising the alchemy of printmaking, my investigation seeks to transform the waste materials and rules that define the livelihood of Dalits into aesthetic objects of value. By doing so, I attempt to challenge the historical representation and constructed identity that I, as a Dalit woman, have inherited.

The Indian Caste system is based on entrenched ideas of ritual purity and karma that can be traced to ancient Hindu scriptures. The Sanskrit word 'Dalit' literally translates to 'broken, shattered'[2] and represents those deemed subhuman; anything they touch or cast a shadow upon is tainted and thus in rural areas they exist as manual scavengers, residing near village graves, disposing of animal carcasses and cleaning human excreta.[3] Over time, migration and urbanisation have seen slight upward mobility, however deep-rooted ostracism remains throughout the sub-continent for the 250 million who identify as Dalits.[4]

An understanding of the historical and contemporary discourse surrounding caste has formed the research platform of this project. This includes the writings of influential Dalit leader and reformist, Dr BR Ambedkar. As the architect of the Indian Constitution, Dr BR Ambedkar petitioned strongly for the legal rights and equal opportunities for the historically oppressed sectors of society.[5] His legacy has inspired key resistance movements that have found solidarity with marginalised communities around the globe. Recent political events and landmark legal rulings have informed the research and studio practice and are timely reminders of how topical and divisive caste continues to be.

---

[1] Bina Hanchinamani, "Human Rights Abuses of Dalits in India." *Human Rights Brief* (2001) https://digitalcommons.wcl.american.edu

[2] Barbara Joshi. "India's Untouchables", *Cultural Survival* (2016), https://www.culturalsurvival.org/ourpublications/csq/article/indias- untouchables

[3] "Who are Dalits", *NAVSARJAN* (2009), http://navsarjan.org/navsarjan/dalits/whoaredalits

[4] Joshi, Ibid.

[5] Frances W. Pritchett, "Dr. B. R. Ambedkar: his life and work", *Columbia University* (2018), http://www.columbia.edu/itc/mealac/pritchett/00ambedkar/index.html

Theoretically, I place my research within the framework of post colonial discourse, which has been largely influenced by the seminal writings of Edward Said. The central argument of Said has been applied to the historical position of Dalits by contemporary theorist Debjani Ganguly. Similarly, the key ideas of Gayatri Spivak within Subaltern Studies have been extended by theorist Cosimo Zene to comprehend ‘untouchability’. The Hybridity theory of Homi Bhabha defines my own position on the periphery of divergent Eastern and Western cultural systems. Most significantly, the literary works of diasporic authors have exemplified the complexities of this unique status of both insider and outsider.

Despite the theoretical, social and political weight of this discourse, the research has been subsumed into a material, studio based praxis. Thus contemporary artists that utilise similar materials and engage in a process led practice are explored, in particular Sheela Gowda and Australian artist Yhonnie Scarce. South Asian artist Savi Sawakar similarly unravels his personal history and experience of caste through figurative paintings. The history and future possibilities of the printmaking medium are exemplified in the practices of Krishna Reddy, Zarina Hashmi and Ciara Phillips, whilst Mira Schendel and Glenn Ligon have been researched for their use of typography. Throughout the program, as my own work has shifted towards abstraction, the large-scale collages of Mark Bradford have been another point of visual reference.

This research of the field has fuelled my own studio process. Experimental screenprinting techniques have been combined with an extensive list of materials that relate to themes of biography, ritual, value and the manual labour of the lower classes, resulting in the creation of unique prints. The implicit social rules lived by generations of Dalits and transcribed in the historical writings of Dr BR Ambedkar have formed the basis of this material experimentation. These words have been screen printed repeatedly with religious pigments, bitumen, iron filings, dirt and gold pigment upon surfaces as diverse as copper, rice paper, zinc and wax. The dense layering, the chemical etching, the melting of wax along with myriad other alchemical processes have altered the materials, obscured the text and transformed the implications of these rules.

P R O J E C T T O P I C

Although it is one of the oldest social hierarchies in the world, the caste system is just as prevalent today as it has ever been.[6] Recent data shows that the historical progress and awareness Dalits have gained is being met with greater societal backlash and a dramatic upsurge in targeted violence.[7] Political circumstances and key events that have unfolded during the completion of the Masters program have been timely reminders of how much is yet to be done to attain justice and parity.

‘India exists in several centuries simultaneously’[8]

The precise origin of caste is still contended amongst anthropologists, yet societal divisions can be traced in ancient texts dating back 3,000 years.[9] The hereditary system ascribes precise roles to each of the four major groups: the Brahmins (priests and scholars), Kshatriyas (warriors), Vaishyas (merchants) and Shudras (laborers).[10] The hierarchy offers greater privileges and entitlements to the higher castes and more duties to lower groups.[11] Outside of this entire system exists the Untouchables. Due to their subhuman status, they are ascribed menial and degrading tasks in society including cleaning of human waste, leather tanning and street sweeping.[12] Today, along with India’s Indigenous tribes, they are referred to by the Indian government as Scheduled

---

[6] *BBC News*. “What is India's caste system?” 20 July 2017, https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-india-35650616

[7] Anoop Sadanandan, “What Lies Beneath the Alarming Rise in Violence Against Dalits?” *The Wire*, (India), June 15, 2018, https://thewire.in/caste/rise-in-violence-against-dalits

[8] John Boyne, “Arundhati Roy: 'It’s a hatred that crosses the line,” *The Irish Times*, (Dublin), June 24, 2017, https://www.irishtimes.com/culture/books/arundhati-roy-it-s-a-hatred-that-crosses-the-line-1.3125377

[9] Tia Ghose, “Genetic Study Reveals Origin of India's Caste System,” *Live Science*, August 8, 2013, https://www.livescience.com/38751-genetic-study-reveals-caste-system-origins.html

[10] Sindhuja Sankaran, Maciek Sekerdej and Ulrich von Hecker, “The Role of Indian Caste Identity and Caste Inconsistent Norms on Status Representation.” Frontiers in Psychology (2017) National Center for Biotechnology Information, https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC5374864/

[11] Arundhati Roy, “The Doctor and the Saint,” in *The Annihilation of Caste B.R. Ambedkar*, ed. S.Anand (Brooklyn, NY: Verso), 24.

[12] “Who are the Dalits”, Dalit Solidarity (2016), https://www.dalitsolidarity.org/dalits-and-untoucchability.html

Castes and Scheduled Tribes, collectively constituting more than 20% of the entire national population.[13]

Dalits continue to endure routine discrimination in education, employment, health care, housing and access to temples.[14] Reports reveal a crime is committed against a Dalit every 18 minutes.[15] Every day, on average, three Dalit women are raped, two Dalits murdered, and two Dalit houses burnt.[16] Dalit children are made to sit separately whilst eating in 39% of government schools and 45% of Dalit children remain illiterate.[17] In the past five years, the National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB) has registered a six to eight-fold upsurge in the rate of crimes committed against Dalits.[18] The majority of these crimes are murder, assault and rape, yet only 26% of crimes result in a conviction.[19] Correlations show the rise of crime is greatest in the states where Dalits have made significant social and economic advancements, particularly crimes that seek to deprive the victim of any signs of material progress.[20]

'…out of the struggle of this giant mass will come the tidal wave of revolutions.'[21] The first Dalit to be educated abroad, Dr BR Ambedkar wrote the history of his people in the early twentieth century.[22] Despite severe caste discrimination, segregation and financial disadvantage, Dr BR Ambedkar was amongst the most educated and qualified Indians of the mid-twentieth century Independence era.[23] What had been endured for centuries, how Hindu society had imprisoned Dalits and why nothing had changed; he

---

[13] Kancha Ilaiah Shepherd, "A 'Dalit Spring' is on the horizon," *Al Jazeera*, (India), April 8, 2018, https://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/opinion/dalit-spring-horizon-180407132053298.html

[14] Human Rights Watch. "India: 'Hidden Apartheid' of Discrimination Against Dalits," February 13, 2007. https://www.hrw.org/news/2007/02/13/india-hidden-apartheid-discrimination-against-dalits

[15] Ajit Kumar Jha, "The Dalits | Still untouchable," *India Today*, (Noida), February 3, 2016, https://www.indiatoday.in/magazine/the-big-story/story/20160215-dalits-untouchable-rohith-vemula-caste-discrimination-828418-2016-02-03

[16] Jha, Ibid.

[17] Jha, Ibid.

[18] Sadanandan, Ibid.

[19] Sadanandan, Ibid.

[20] Smriti Sharma, "Caste-based crimes and economic status: Evidence from India." *Journal of Comparative Economics* (2015) Science Direct, https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0147596714001048#s0065

[21] Dalit Panthers Manifesto, Barbara Joshi, ed. Untouchable! Voices of the Dalit Liberation Movement (London: Zed Books, 1986), 145.

[22] Pritchett, Ibid.

[23] "Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar", Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar Open University (Oct 2017), http://baou.edu.in/dr-br-ambedkar

described in detail their livelihoods, the implicit social rules they had to follow on a daily basis, the extreme discrimination that he too had experienced.[24] As an international scholar, he brought a global perspective and understanding to the complex system of caste, comparing it to the slavery of Ancient Rome and modern America.[25] Dr BR Ambedkar described untouchability as a cruel and disabling enslavement, that deceived the lower castes into thinking they were free citizens yet constraining them to degrading lives.[26] He identified that unlike slaves, Untouchables could never be unshackled from this status, such was this enduring and unconscious form of servitude.[27]

Dr BR Ambedkar inspired Dalits to awaken from millennia of subjugation; he devoted his legal and political career to writing, advocating and educating the lower castes to understand their rights and freedoms.[28] Decades later, his ideologies formed the basis of the Dalit Panthers, a resistance group that found solidarity with the Black Panthers and Civil Rights movement.[29] Established in 1972 by Dalit writers and activists, the organisation started as a literary movement that then rallied for economic, gender and class rights.[30] Unlike their American counterparts, the Dalit Panthers struggled with internal divisions and split two years after initiation.[31] However, the legacy of this early resistance can be witnessed today with empowered masses protesting indignities, encouraged by Dalit rights organisations and activists.[32]

---

[24] Dr BR Ambedkar, "Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar Writings and Speeches Vol. 5", *Dr. Ambedkar Foundation Ministry of External Justice (*2014), https://www.mea.gov.in/Images/attach/amb/Volume_05.pdf

[25] Dr BR Ambedkar, Ibid.

[26] Dr BR Ambedkar, Ibid.

[27] Dr BR Ambedkar, Ibid.

[28] "Dr BR Ambedkar", *Cultural India (* https://www.culturalindia.net/reformers/br-ambedkar.html

[29] Nico Slate, "The Dalit Panthers: Race, Caste, and Black Power in India." Black Power beyond Borders (2012) Springer Link https://link.springer.com/chapter/10.1057/9781137295064_7 (accessed October 9, 2018)

[30] Jayashree B. Gokhale-Turner, "The dalit panthers and the radicalisation of the untouchables." The Journal of Commonwealth ad Comparative Politics (1979) Taylor and Francis Online, https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/14662047908447324?journalCode=fccp19

[31] Sanjay Paswan and Pramanshi Jaideva, *Encyclopaedia of Dalits in India Movements* (India: Kalpaz Publications, 2002)

[32] Shepherd, Ibid.

‘A local BJP worker was filmed as he fired his gun on protesters’[33]

In April 2018, there were large-scale protests all across India as millions of Dalits demonstrated against the Supreme Court’s dilution of the 1989 Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes (Prevention of Atrocities) Act.[34] The Court’s decision bans the immediate arrest of those accused of violent crimes against Dalits and other marginalised groups.[35] Government data shows that by the end of 2016, 90% of 145,000 cases involving Dalits were still awaiting trial; this decision thus makes it even harder to bring perpetrators to justice in a time of increased violence.[36] Dalits are also concerned that the few legal rights they have secured will be removed.[37] This includes the system of Reservation whereby quotas in government jobs and educational institutions were implemented to improve generational cycles of poverty.[38] With high unemployment rates in India, these quotas have further angered higher caste groups that feel entitled towards these reserved positions.[39]

Many political activists, researchers, human rights and Dalit organisations have criticised the presently elected Bharatiya Janatha Party (BJP) for promoting Hindu fundamentalism, which has led to increased attacks against Muslims, Dalits and other minority groups.[40] The BJP government has close affiliations with the right wing Hindu fundamentalist organisation, Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS).[41] This sectarian militant group has been banned three times since India’s Independence, yet has revived its intention of transforming India into a conservative Hindu state, in which all ancient traditions, including caste, are preserved.[42] They are thus against Dalit reform and social

---

[33] Shepherd, Ibid.

[34] Kelsey Munro, “India's deadly caste protests: Here's what fuelled the anger,” *SBS*, (Sydney), April 5, 2018, https://www.sbs.com.au/news/india-s-deadly-caste-protests-here-s-what-fuelled-the-anger

[35] Munro, Ibid.

[36] *Al Jazeera*. “Dalits in India hold protests against 'dilution' of SC/ST Act,” April 2, 2018. https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2018/04/dalits-india-hold-protests-dilution-scst-act-180402082213061.html

[37] Shepherd, Ibid.

[38] Shepherd, Ibid.

[39] Shepherd, Ibid.

[40] Zeenat Saberin, “HRW: BJP leaders publicly promoting Hindu supremacy,” *Al Jazeera*, (India), January 18, 2018, https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2018/01/hrw-bjp-leaders-publicly-promoting-hindu-supremacy-180118095202152.html

[41] *Power and People: Al Jazeera*, “India’s Hindu Fundamentalists,” October 8, 2015. https://www.aljazeera.com/programmes/peopleandpower/2015/10/indias-hindu-fundamentalists-151008073418225.html

[42] Rajesh Joshi, “The Hindu hardline RSS who see Modi as their own,” *BBC Hindi*, (Delhi), October 22, 2014, https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-india-29593336

mobility, instead protecting the rights and privileges of higher castes Hindus.[43] Political commentators note the token strategies by the BJP government to garner the Dalit vote particularly by invoking the legacy of Dr BR Ambedkar.[44] These gestures are in contrast to the BJP's outspoken support of Hindi supremacy and ongoing failure to prevent and prosecute mob violence, lynchings and attacks by Hindu vigilantes.[45]

'Don't we all have the same roots?'[46]

Post-colonial researchers note the homogeneity between Dalit and Indigenous Australian histories.[47] Historically, this is exemplified with similar links to the Black Panther movement.[48] More recently, both marginalised groups have found common ground within literary circles, with writers expressing a shared struggle against social, physical and economic exploitation.[49] Often expressed in the form of autobiographies, the narratives of both peoples attempt to reclaim agency, contest representations imposed by dominant historical accounts and inspire the ongoing fight for equal rights.[50]

As a key trading partner with India, the Australian government has recently condemned the caste system in 2018 by passing a motion on Discrimination based on Work and Descent (DWD), a United Nations initiative banning caste discrimination.[51] Brought forth by both Greens and Labor Senators, the resolution calls on Australian businesses to promote inclusive recruitment and to ensure humanitarian aid is delivered to all

---

[43] Shepherd, Ibid.

[44] Harish S. Wankhede, "The Two Faces of Hindutva's Dalit Agenda," *The Wire*, (New Delhi), May 10, 2018, https://thewire.in/caste/the-two-faces-of-hindutvas-dalit-agenda

[45] Saberin, Ibid.

[46] Devanuru Mahadeva, "Dalits and Aboriginals: Rebuilding India and Australia," *Al Jazeera News*, (Australia), October 2, 2016, https://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/features/2016/09/dalits-aboriginals-rebuilding-india-australia-160928153557057.html

[47] Rathna Periasamy, "Tracing the Homogeneity between Dalit and Australian Aboriginal Communities: A Historical and Literary Perspective." *International Journal on Studies in English Language and Literature* (2014) Research Gate, https://www.researchgate.net/publication/

[48] Kathie Lothian, "Seizing the Time: Australian Aborigines and the Influence of the Black Panther Party, 1969-1972." *Journal of Black Studies* (2005) SAGE Journals, http://journals.sagepub.com/doi/abs/10.1177/0021934704266513

[49] Periasamy, Ibid.

[50] Rajesh Kumar, "Dalits Vs Aboriginal Australians: Convergences & Divergences," (PhD thesis, Jawaharlal Nehru University, 2008) 19-20 http://www.academia.edu/34606102/

[51] Vivek Asri, "Australia passes a motion to support so-called 'low caste' Indians," *SBS*, (Sydney), July 5, 2018, https://www.sbs.com.au/yourlanguage/hindi/en/article/2018/07/04/australia-passes-motion-support-so-called-low-caste-indians

marginalised groups within the South Asian countries where caste is prevalent.[52] There is also the increasing acknowledgement that caste based discrimination proliferates within migrant communities in the country.[53] This is highlighted in studies that suggest caste structures are recreated in the Indian diaspora through intra-caste marriage, early socialisation and religious segregation.[54]

Throughout the program, these historical precedents and recent developments have enabled me to comprehend the scope of my own background as well as the research area and have continually influenced the studio process.

[52] Asri, Ibid.

[53] Naomi Selvaratnam, “Australians subject to 'caste discrimination', migrants say,” *SBS*, (Sydney), August 28, 2015, https://www.sbs.com.au/news/australians-subject-to-caste-discrimination-migrants-say

[54] Dhanda, M. Waughray, A., Keane, D. et al.. “Caste in Britain: Socio-legal review.” London: Equality and Human Rights Commission. (2012)

Figure 2 Sheela Gowda, *Collateral* (installation view, Documenta 12, Germany), 2007, incense ash material, steel mesh, wooden frames, dimensions variable

LITERARY REFERENCES

Postcolonial theory formed a necessary historical and theoretical framework for considering my research investigation. It enabled me to place the themes of my practice amongst significant precedents of critical theory. The influential writings of Edward Said established cultural assumptions historically associated with the exoticised Eastern subject.[55] Subaltern studies determined the ethical considerations and discourse surrounding the study and representation of Dalits.[56] As a Western practitioner, cultural hybridity highlighted the complexity of existing in the interstitial space between two cultures.[57] Finally, literary fiction has been profoundly influential in demonstrating this trans-cultural exchange through the contribution of diasporic authorship.

Postcolonial discourse has been largely defined by the seminal writings of theorist Edward Said. In the foundational text *Orientalism* (1978), Said scrutinised Western historical, cultural, and political assumptions towards the East.[58] He critiqued the entrenched representation of colonised subjects as primitive and irrational, to be ruled and dominated.[59] This construct is traced to Imperialist scholars that homogenised unique societies and depicted the Orient as the Other.[60] Rather than an objective enquiry, this politically motivated interpretation helped to define European culture as the binary opposite of the East, establishing Imperial superiority.[61] Most significantly, the stereotypes were reinforced and still proliferate today, forming the foundation of Western perceptions of the Orient.[62]

---

[55] Edward W. Said, *Orientalism* (New York: Vintage Books, 2004), 2.
[56] Cosimo Zene "Self-Consciousness of the Dalits as "Subalterns": Reflections on Gramsci in South Asia." *Rethinking Marxism* 23, 1 (2011): 83-99, doi: 10.1080/08935696.2011.536342. (accessed June, 2017)
[57] Homi K. Bhabha. *Location of Culture.* (London: Routledge, 1993), 1.
[58] Said, Ibid., 31-197.
[59] Said, Ibid., 7.
[60] Said, Ibid., 51.
[61] Palestine Diary. "Edward Said On Orientalism". Filmed [1998]. YouTube video, 40:31. Posted [Oct, 2012]. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fVC8EYd_Z_g
[62] Said, Ibid.,, 201-328.

This argument has been extended by academics researching the historical identity of Dalits. Contemporary postcolonial theorist Debjani Ganguly proposes that following Independence from Colonial rule in 1947, Indian nationalist leaders 'orientalised' lower caste subjects.[63] Ganguly considers how Imperial assumptions of tribalism and backwardness were projected by higher-caste Indian leaders onto minority Dalits, making them the target of ostentatious governmental policy.[64] This purported an idealised national history that downplayed caste brutality and demonstrated to the British Empire that India could self-govern.[65] Consequently, the colonised became the colonisers, inverting Said's Orientalist paradigm.[66] Further, Ganguly suggests colonial modernity ironically provided the necessary conditions for Dalit activist and scholar, Dr BR Ambedkar, to break from the prescribed past and rewrite this hegemonic representation of history within India.[67] Whilst offering a revisionist history, Said and Ganguly emphasise that authoritative histories must continue to be contested.[68],[69]

Postcolonial discourse subsequently impacted cultural and critical theory, leading to the emergence of Subaltern Studies.[70] The term 'subaltern' was introduced early in the twentieth century in the notebooks of Italian Marxist Antonio Gramsci, defining those on the margins of authoritative history.[71] These groups, Gramsci proposed, have not attained the consciousness to deem their own lived experience worthy of documentation but could initiate a transformation by retracing their fragmented histories.[72] In the 1980s, however, Subaltern Studies became synonymous with South Asian scholars challenging historiography from the perspective of the colonised rather than the colonisers.[73] In her crucial essay *Can The Subaltern Speak?* (1988), Gayatri Spivak

---

[63] Debjani Ganguly, "Their History, (Y)our Memories: Provincialising Europe in Dalit Historiography," in *Impossible Selves Cultural Readings of Identity,* ed. Jacqueline Lo et al. (Australian Scholarly Publishing Pty Ltd, 1999). 15.
[64] Ganguly, Ibid., 16.
[65] Ganguly, Ibid., 16.
[66] Ganguly, Ibid., 17.
[67] Ganguly, Ibid., 17.
[68] Ganguly, Ibid., 19.
[69] Said, Ibid., 328.
[70] Gyan Prakash. "Subaltern Studies as Postcolonial Criticism." *The American Historical Review* Vol. 99, No. 5 (1994): 1475, doi: 10.2307/2168385.
[71] Zene, Ibid., 2.
[72] Zene, Ibid., 4.
[73] David E. Ludden, "Introduction: A Brief History of Subalternity." *Reading Subaltern Studies. (*New Delhi: Permanent Black, 2001), 1.

argued that postcolonial studies as a Eurocentric enterprise antithetically emboldened the ethnographic representations it sought to dismantle.[74] This is because post colonialists disregard the heterogeneity of the subaltern populace and through language and collective representation, reinforce Western imperialism.[75] If subalterns are granted agency, what is spoken can be nothing more than complicity as they will be using the very channels that have contributed to their subordinate status.[76]

Author and cultural historian Cosimo Zene revises and critiques key theories within Subaltern Studies and extends Antonio Gramsci's category of the "subaltern" to include the Dalit caste of India.[77] Zene draws upon his fieldwork to propose that Dalits are the prototypical subalterns, observing how such populations have retained Gramscian "traces" of their history in folklore, myth and figurative art alongside a willingness to overcome subalternity through uprisings.[78] He uses his own empirical findings to challenge Spivak's article.[79] Zene concludes that the subaltern can not only speak, but can also teach postcolonial historians to unify a fragmented history and understand a cultural identity.[80]

Contemporary cultural theorist Homi Bhabha also extended the work of Edward Said within *The Location of Culture* (1991), a collection of essays that describe the complexity of cultural exchange between the colonised and coloniser.[81] Bhabha introduced the term 'hybridity' to define the emergence of a new identity from this interaction,[82] mapping a 'third space' at the junction of Imperial and native influence.[83] This dual identity results in an 'ambivalence' characterised by displacement and difference, where the colonised cannot be the complete original of either cultural group.[84] 'Mimicry' underscores how colonial dominance is asserted and subverted,

---

[74] Gayatri C. Spivak, "Can the Subaltern Speak?" *Marxism and the Interpretation of Culture*, 1988, 271-313. doi:10.1007/978-1-349-19059-1_20.
[75] Spivak, Ibid., 79.
[76] Spivak, Ibid., 80.
[77] Zene, Ibid., 11.
[78] Zene, Ibid., 15.
[79] Zene, Ibid., 11.
[80] Zene, Ibid., 12.
[81] Bhabha, Ibid.
[82] Juniper Ellis, "The Location of Culture (review)" *Philosophy and Literature* 19, no.1 (1995): 196-197.
[83] Ellis, ibis., 196-197.
[84] Ellis, Ibid., 196-197.

creating a colonised subject that is close but not completely alike, maintaining hierarchical divisions yet threatening this authority.[85] This discourse undermines purist, essentialist notions of identity[86] and is exemplified in the literature of Indian disaporic authors V.S. Naipaul, Arundhati Roy, Jhumpa Lahiri, Salman Rushdie and Kiran Desai.

In particular the literary works of VS Naipaul have been influential in understanding the complexities and contradictions inherent in the Dalit rights movement. As a second generation Indian born in Trinidad, VS Naipaul returned to his ancestral homeland in the 1960s and 70s, in a time when the nation was transitioning from Colonial Rule to its own Independence.[87] Naipaul is scathing in his assessment of Hinduism and how it perpetuates religious inclinations towards karmic defeat and indifference.[88] Naipaul notes that the Gandhian nonviolence that was once a form of protest has stagnated into a complacent acceptance, a non-interference with the workings of destiny.[89] He particularly attributes the generational trappings of caste to this sentiment, to this false security of knowing one's unshakeable place in the Hindu order. [90]

As Naipaul is travelling through Bombay during the 1970s, he describes encounters with the nation's Dalits. Ironically, he notes the way they have deified Dr BR Ambedkar; they have made him into a God that they worship, although this the antithesis of his life's work.[91] This keen observation continues in his interactions with the founder of the Dalit Panthers, Marathi poet Namdeo Dhasal. This is during the time when the organisation is splintering due to the conflicting agendas and the poor organisational of its key members. In the way that only a novelist can, Naipaul paints the portrait of Dhasal by recalling meticulous details of the exchange. The interior decor, the furniture, conversations with Dhasal's wife reveal the character flaws that could not sustain a revolution. Although these are highly subjective accounts, they nonetheless offer insight into a history that few have witnessed first-hand, and are thus as insightful as the theory.

---

[85] Ellis, Ibid., 196-197.
[86] Ellis, Ibid., 196-197.
[87] VS Naipaul, *India: a wounded civilisation*. (New York: Knopf, 1977), 15-43.
[88] Naipaul, Ibid.
[89] Naipaul, Ibid.
[90] Naipaul, Ibid.
[91] Naipaul, V. S. *India: A Million Mutinies Now.* (Toronto: Vintage Canada, 2011), 482-615.

V I S U A L R E F E R E N C E S

Although theory forms a necessary consideration for the themes of my research, the discourse is ultimately transmuted into the studio practice and resolved through the making. Due to the socio-political and contextual nature of caste, it is through poetics that I am able to forgo didacticism and engage a visceral response within my audience. Therefore visual references that explore materiality have wielded greater influence upon my methodology than theoretical precedents. An array of contemporary and historical practices are working models for my investigation, sharing parallel conceptual, material, aesthetic and historic concerns. These artists privilege a haptic process and exemplify a strategy to address an international audience despite the specificity of their themes. Because the alchemy of printmaking is so integral to my work, it is difficult to discount historical precursors and contemporary innovation within this medium. My work inevitably drew on the historical implications and tropes of text art, yet as the course progressed, engaged increasingly with abstraction.

Contemporary Dalit artist Savi Sawakar (b. 1961) is a rare exemplar of an internationally recognised practitioner to offer a visual and historical representation of ‘untouchability’. Drawing from the political writings of Dr BR Ambedkar, familial accounts and his personal groundwork as an activist, Sawakar explores the religious and sociological complexities of caste.[92] His figurative paintings and drawings depict the embodied identity of a tormented people burdened with centuries of oppression and foregrounds their lived reality.

Untouchable Couple with Om and Swastika (2013) [Figure 3] depicts two blackened figures carrying clay pots painted with religious symbols and a walking stick with bells. These pots were used in the past to prevent saliva escaping the mouth of an Untouchable and polluting the ground whilst the bells signalled their arrival and warned

[92] Saurabh Dube. “Unsettling art: caste, gender and dalit expression.” openDemocracy (2013). https://www.opendemocracy.net/openindia/saurabh-dube/unsettling-art-caste-gender-and-dalit-expression

of an impending shadow.[93] The bodies are stigmatised and stunted, an arresting gaze beaming from demonic red eyes. Their void like presence is underscored against a backdrop of a garish yellow dabbed with thick textured brushwork.

Figure 3 Savi Sawakar, *Untouchable Couple with Om and Swastika*, 2013, oil on canvas.

The paintings of Sawakar depicts the toil of a low caste livelihood with figures carrying animal carcasses, begging for alms and performing ritual prostitution.[94] Sawakar incorporates religious insignia that denotes the false promise of salvation offered to Untouchables if they convert to other faiths, as well as symbols of 'untouchability'

[93] Dube, Ibid.
[94] Dube, Ibid.

including scavenging birds and the solar eclipse to mark the hour of begging.[95] Sawakar accesses a historical and experiential knowledge of caste and extends this political discourse into Western art museums.[96] Through this, he challenges the power structures that subjugate and creates an alternative representation of Dalit identity.

In the practice of contemporary Indian artist Sheela Gowda (b. 1957), the complexities of political, religious and economic discourse are explored through material and process. Gowda selects biographical, sacred and culturally specific materials common in daily ritual, including vermillion, incense ash and cow dung.[97] In *And Tell Him of My Pain* (1998), [Figure 4] hundreds of metres of thin red thread are pulled through silver sewing needles and coated with vermillion powder before being bound together to form endless linear red ropes winding around the gallery space.[98] The arterial red of the vermillion powder, used symbolically to mark the foreheads of married Hindu women connotes bodily references and overlooked female labour.[99] The physical toil of the studio practice is not fetishised, rather the intensity and integrity of traditional labour is retained and palpable.[100] The making becomes a private performance that embeds the themes within the work and addresses the political through the personal.

Metamorphosis of material is also presented in the durational piece *Collateral* (2007) [Figure 2] in which forms resembling a topographical landscape moulded from incense are burned into ash.[101] This is informed by the political rise of extreme Hindu nationalism that has marred and ravaged the social landscape, yet it is just as much about an exploration of line, form and space.[102] Gowda explores the myriad possibilities of a singular material, allowing its inherent sensuality to dictate the outcome by determining the process.

---

[95] Dube, Ibid.
[96] Dube, Ibid.
[97] Sheela Gowda. “NAS Gallery: Behold.” Art forum, (Sydney, National Art School, 2010). vodcast.
[98] Trevor Smith, “The Specific Labour of Sheela Gowda.” *Afterall,* 22 (2009): 37
[99] Smith, Ibid., 37.
[100] Smith, Ibid., 39.
[101] Grant Watson. “Collateral damage: Indian artist Sheela Gowda burns installation in UK gallery”, Art Radar (2011). http://artradarjournal.com/2011/03/09/collateral-damage-indian-artist-sheela-gowda-burns-installation-in-uk-gallery/ (accessed January, 2017)
[102] Gowda, Ibid.

Figure 4 Sheela Gowda, *And Tell Him of My Pain* (installation view), 1998, thread, glue and red pigment, dimensions variable

Contemporary Australian Indigenous artist Yhonnie Scarce (b. 1973) deploys a similar engagement with her chosen material to qualify a broader engagement with political discourse. As a glass artist, Scarce uses the medium of glassblowing to create multitudes of bush fruit forms that represent the food gathering practices of her ancestors and commemorate a familial history of dispossession and assimilation.[103] Glass is symbolically significant as a lens, magnifier and a material that is both transparent and reflective. In her Sydney Biennale work *Weak in Colour but Strong in Blood* (2013) [Figure 5] these sculpted forms are splintered, discarded, disfigured and displayed in multiples to denote the magnitude of mass persecution.[104] Placed upon dissection trays within a laboratory setup and categorised according to colour, the work alludes to ethnographic experimentation and governmental policy.[105]

[103] Engberg, Juliana. "Yhonnie Scarce". *2014 Biennale of Sydney.* Edited by Julian Engberg. Australia: Biennale of Sydney Ltd, 2014. Exhibition catalogue.
[104] Engberg, Ibid.
[105] Engberg. Ibid.

Scarce connects her personal narrative to a collective national memory and grapples with the immensity of the past through the immediacy of process. Like Gowda, Scarce's practice is both ritualistic and alchemical, which is as much about the material qualities as it is about the lived history that is imbued within it. Scarce also exhausts the possibilities of a single medium, yet is not limited by it, incorporating found objects, metal and fabric in diverse sculptures and installations.[106] Through these materials, Scarce challenges primitivist and traditional modes of Indigenous art.[107] Despite a different context, the concerns are comparable with those of Sawakar, with Scarce breathing new life into the representation of these universal themes of subjugation and oppression.

Figure 5 Yhonnie Scarce , *Weak In Colour But Strong In Blood* (installation view), 2013–14, blown glass and found components, dimensions variable

[106] Engberg, Ibid.
[107] Engberg, Ibid.

Within the printmaking medium, the practices of Krishna Reddy (1925 - 2018) and Zarina Hashmi (b. 1937) are notable historical precedents. Both were amongst the first wave of Indian modernists to leave the country in the mid twentieth century and later studied in the legendary Atelier 17 print studio in Paris, founded by Samuel Hayter.[108] Reddy's prints are often of linear structures and biomorphic forms, influenced by the natural world and imagination yet speak of a deeper spiritual interest in life force.[109]

Figure 6 Krishna Reddy, *Demonstrators,* 1968, colour intaglio etching, 29.21 x 44.45 cm

Reddy was particularly experimental and introduced the colour viscosity method, an innovative technique used in *Demonstrators* (1968) [Figure 6].[110] Inks with different viscosities have been applied to the printing plate in vertical lines that represent human

[108] Navina N. Haider, "Workshop and Legacy: Stanley William Hayter, Krishna Reddy, Zarina Hashmi." The MET (The Met Fifth Avenue, October 7, 2016), Vodcast. https://www.metmuseum.org/exhibitions/listings/2016/workshop-and-legacy

[109] Haider, Ibid.

[110] Haider, Ibid.

figures in the turbulent Paris student protests of 1968.[111] The colour palette is similar to that of eighteenth century miniature court paintings.[112]

Reddy's practice is informed by a political awareness of his immediate surroundings, with early drawings responding to the death of millions during the Bengal Famine and Indian Independence that he witnessed at a young age.[113] As a multidisciplinary artist, Reddy is able to translate these prints into bronze figurative sculptures. He similarly approaches the plate as a sculptural surface, gouging into the metal with burins, scrapers and machine tools.

Zarina Hashmi is also significant in challenging the notion of printmaking as a craft in India and a secondary art around the world. Hashmi creates autobiographical woodblock prints and paper works that chart her travels, concept of home and experience of exile.[114] Like Reddy, Hashmi experienced the traumatic Partition of India and Pakistan that resulted in the displacement of millions, including her own family in 1958.[115] Her prints are imbued with memories from life before the division, including Islamic architecuture, geometric shapes from her studies in mathematics and inscriptions in Urdu, the language of her childhood.[116]

Like Sawakar and Scarce, personal and familial history enables access to broader universal themes. Her abstract topographies, frontiers and calligraphic images reference the directional maps from her travels.[117] She would also collect paper from travelled countries and scratch, fold, knot and sew into it, treating the surface like a membrane. [118] Her woodblock print *Dividing Line* (2001) [Figure 7] traces the border separating the two nations that defined her early life.

---

[111] Haider, Ibid.
[112] Haider, Ibid.
[113] Jennifer Farrell and Navina Haider, "Turbulent Times: New Relevance for Krishna Reddy's Demonstrators", The MET (2017). https://www.metmuseum.org/blogs/ruminations/2017/turbulent-times-krishna-reddy-demonstrators (accessed February 2017)
[114] Karen Rosenberg. "Reveling in the Multicultural Possibilities of Paper", *The New York Times,* (New York), January 31, 2013. neyyorktimes.com (accessed February, 2017).
[115] Rosenberg, Ibid.
[116] Rosenberg, Ibid.
[117] Rosenberg, Ibid.
[118] Rosenberg, Ibid.

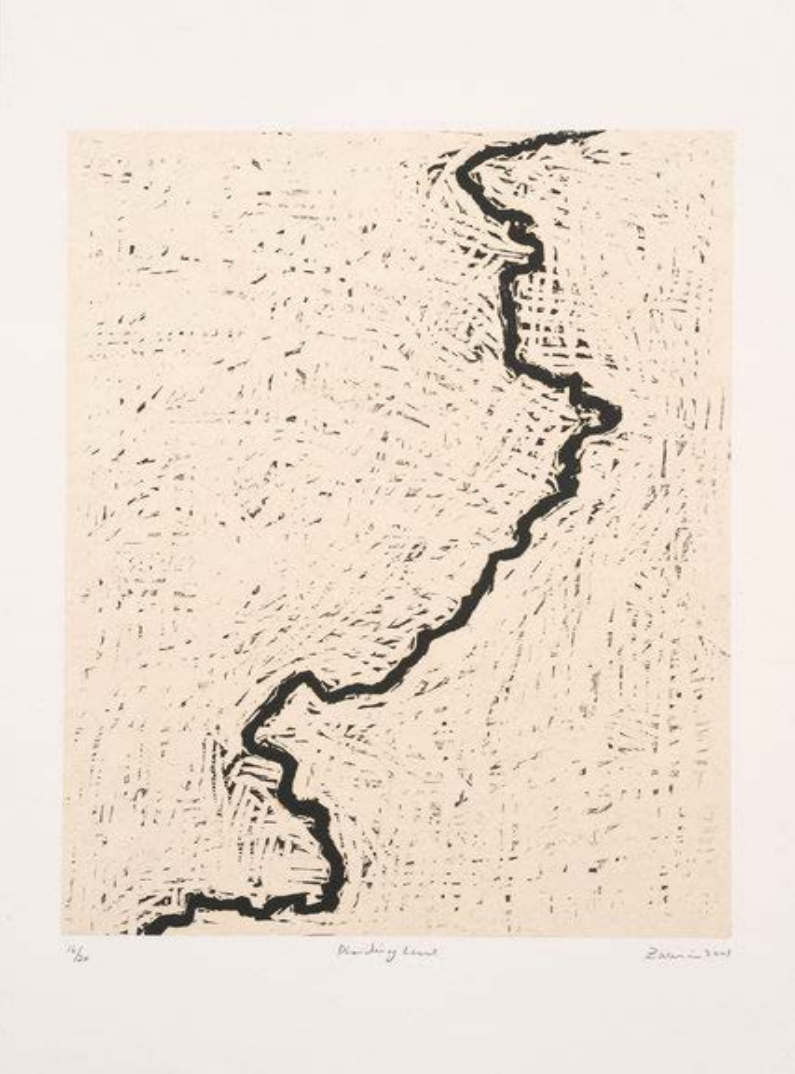

Figure 7 Zarina Hashmi, Dividing Line, 2001, woodcut, 63 x 48 cm

Both historical figures challenged traditional print techniques and championed innovation and experimentation, qualities that are embodied today in the practice of Canadian-Irish artist Ciara Phillips (b. 1976) Phillips' screenprints, installations and textiles attempt to dismantle the inherent power structures within language by playing with written text, the flow of communication and language of making.[119] Her practice is inspired by the work of Corita Kent (1918 - 1986), a Catholic nun who combined print and pedagogy, using it as a tool to educate and organise.[120] Along with her activism, Kent was interested in the formal consideration of printmaking, creating vibrant and

[119] Declan Long. "Ciara Phillips." *ARTFORUM* (2016) ProQuest Research Library, search.proquest.com. (accessed January, 2017).

[120] Long, Ibid.

original posters and typographies that are presented alongside Phillips' own work.[121] Repeated shapes, gestures, patterns and letters form screenprints that cover the entire gallery wall and suspended from the ceiling to fall in the middle of the gallery.

Figure 8 Ciara Phillips, *Workshop* (Collaboration with Justice for Domestic Workers), 2010- ongoing

Phillips' practice is both individual and part of ongoing collaborations. For her Turner-prize nominated exhibition *Workshop* (2010) [Figure 8], Phillips transformed the gallery into a temporary print studio, developing print projects such as posters, publication and textiles.[122] For example, she helped the group "Justice for Domestic Workers" prepare protest material for their cause and subsequent exhibitions have been offered to different age groups and collectives.[123] Each iteration is new and responsive to the exhibition's locale and includes basic print demonstrations.[124] Phillips amplifies

[121] Pablo de Ocampo. *Cold Friends, Warm Cash.* Western Front, Vancouver, 2016. An exhibition catalogue.
[122] Ocampo, Ibid.
[123] Long, Ibid.
[124] Ocampo, Ibid.

the distinctiveness of printmaking as a social medium and a tool for the education, organisation and the dissemination of ideas.

Although not overtly a political artist, Swedish born- Brazilian artist Mira Schendel (1919 - 1988) is a historical example of an artist interested in the aesthetic of typography. Her paintings and drawings are replete with letters removed from their linguistic context, barely discernible words and obliterated phrases. As a Jewish wartime refugee, Schendel was limited to the materials of tempera, rice paper, acqeous inks and gold leaf, yet this selection provides unity to her vast oeuvre.[125]

In the series *Objeto Grafico* (1967), repeated letters, geometric figures and images are presented in circular, spiral forms that reference cyclical renewal and the creation of the Universe.[126] Schendel is interested in the physical representation of metaphysical concepts including time and space, containment and expansion, internalisation and externalisation, order and randomness.[127] The transparent palimpsest allows the viewer to encircle the rice paper drawings, altering the otherwise linear and discursive reading of language. In one iteration [Figure 9] language manifests visually in a two dimensional pictorial plane. They form clusters and constellations in which the writing structures the space.

Another drawing within the series integrates cultural references including concrete poetry by philosopher Max Bense, song lyrics and excerpts from avant grade literature in a sparse arrangement that allows for pause.[128] Schendel uses text as units to construct myriad visual possibilities. The use of letters is not just about linguistic structures or formal concerns but abstract concepts. It is a gateway to explore deeper existential matters and to understand how language creates reality. Transparency is a way of concealing, hiding and layering this language and communicates how seemingly distant spiritual worlds exist in the immediate material world.[129]

---

[125] Taisa Palhares, “Living in Between: Mira Schendel’s Poetics,” in Mira Schendel, ed. Tanya Barson and Taisa Palhares (London: Tate Publishing in association with Pinacoteca do Estado de São Paulo, 2013), 12.
[126] Cummings, Laura. “Mira Schendel - Review”, *The Guardian* (2013), theguardian.com (accessed April, 2017)
[127] Palhares, Ibid., 13.
[128] Palhares, Ibid., 13.
[129] Cummings, Ibid.

Figure 9 Mira Schendel, *Objeto Gráfico / Graphic Object,* 1967, Oil and ink on rice paper with acrylic, 100 x 100 cm

Schendel draws from philosophy, semiology and game theory in a practice that is multidisciplinary and examines how abstracted language, composition and materiality can intersect.[130]

Contemporary text based artist Glenn Ligon (b. 1960) engages with themes of African American identity, sexuality, race and history through language extracted from rap

[130] Tanya Barson, "Living in Between: Mira Schendel's Poetics," in *Mira Schendel*, ed. Tanya Barson and Taisa Palhares (London: Tate Publishing in association with Pinacoteca do Estado de São Paulo, 2013), 21.

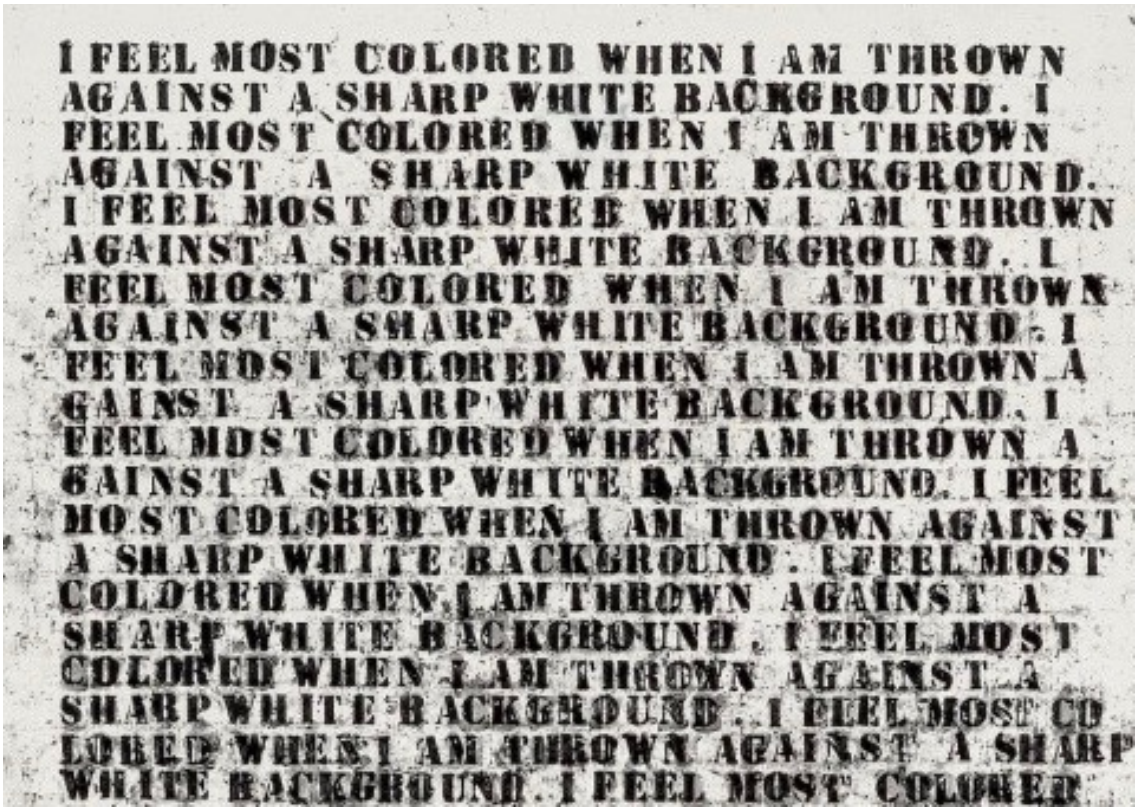

Figure 10 Glenn Ligon, *Untitled (I Feel Most Colored When I Am Thrown Against a Sharp White Background*), 1990-91, oil stick on wood panel, 203.2 x 76.2

lyrics, literature and the writings of influential activists, comedians and artists.[131] Ligon disintegrates the boundary between text and image in his highly textured paintings. The illegibility of the words gives way to the visceral experience of their inherent meaning. In the series *Door Paintings* (1990–91) [Figure 10], Ligon quotes the 1928 essay of African American novelist Zora Neale Hurston.[132] Upon a primed, white door, Ligon deploys the print technique of stencilling; emboldening, smudging and obliterating the text with a thick oil pastel, causing the words to progressively smear and ultimately become indecipherable. The words are not mechanically reproduced, but rather a private performance for Ligon as he personally responds to the ramifications of these words through the action of printing. The work seemingly performs the actions of the text “I feel most colored when I am thrown against a sharp white background”.[133]

---

[131] Liz Blackford. “Glenn Ligon: Prisoner of Love #1”, *Guggenheim Collection Online* (2017). guggenheim.com (accessed August, 2017).
[132] Blackford, Ibid.
[133] Blackford, Ibid.

The otherwise neutral script becomes burdened with the weight of it's meaning. By disrupting the text, Ligon underscores the textuality of the work. Removed from its original context and re-stencilled incessantly, the words confront the viewer and encourages a scrutiny of the language and its implication. The printed surface, a symbolic door, acts as a passage from the past transcription to present translation of Hurston's words. More than the words, it is this materiality that communicates, thus the erasure of form clarifies the subtext.

Within my own project, text has been the bedrock of the research and the studio process. However, as my own practice evolved, the text became implicit within my own body and was no longer illustrated or decipherable as these text based artists. I thus looked increasingly towards abstraction; in particular, the large scale collages and paintings of contemporary American artist Mark Bradford (b.1961) became a significant source of reference. A melange of salvaged advertising posters, graffiti, billboards, commercially used paper, dye and bleach; what amasses in these palimpsests is a layered tapestry encapsulating South Los Angeles. Amidst the noise of cultural pop references, fashion trends, memories and surface matter from the local environment is a keen reflection of society, community and themes of race, sexuality and class.

Compositions such as *Black Venus* (2005) [Figure 11] take on a topographic quality, in which the singular fragment melds into the whole, suggesting an interconnectedness. There is a natural rhythm and balance in the composition that resounded with my own intuitive way of making and engaging with the rhythm of my own body. This work reveals to me how the fragments or, in my case, words and letters can be embedded in the fabric of the work without the social and political reference being lost in abstraction. By using traces, the work not only references the landscape but also moves beyond it; it is as much about a specific neighbourhood as it is about every and any neighbourhood in the world. The work is thus as vast as the topography it presents but also as specific as each scrap of paper. The large scale also engages the body in the viewing as it does in the making.

Also noteworthy is the identity of the artist himself. As a gay African American male from a working class family, Bradford forcefully refuses to remain a peripheral figure in the art world. Thus his collages are not just remnants of his material reality, they are a melange of his own identity, history, body, sense of outsiderness, and they are used to contest the loaded and political history of Western abstraction.

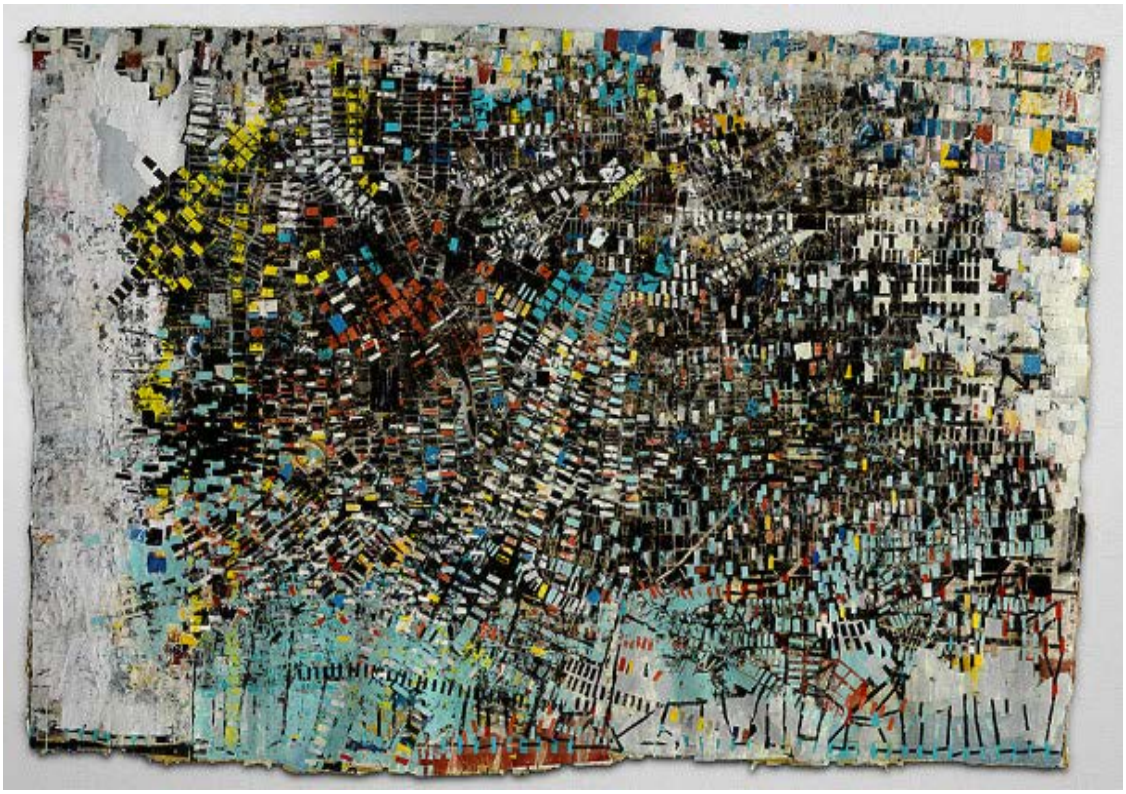

Figure 11 Mark Bradford, *Black Venus,* 2005, billboard paper, photomechanical reproductions, acrylic gel medium, carbon paper, and additional mixed media, 330 x 498 cm

STUDIO METHODS

Figure 12 Kirtika Kain, *Resistance*, 2018, silkscreened bitumen on oxidised copper, 60 x 45 cm

Within the studio all strands of research and intellectual inquiries were transmuted into a haptic and process driven practice. Questions that first arose in the undergraduate course found new material expression. Detailed planning and note-taking was balanced with frenetic and unpredictable experimentation. This push and pull of order and chaos has recently transformed into a more organic flow; allowing my own body to respond to the process rather than dictating outcomes. Thus early deliberate efforts have ultimately given way to effortlessness and joy in making.

As in my recently completed undergraduate year, the writings of Dr BR Ambedkar grounded the material investigation. The text is excerpted from the essay *Untouchables or The Children of India's Ghetto* (written circa 1946 and published posthumously in 1989) [refer to Appendix]. From the outset the fifteen rules have been compelling not only due to their content, but also the authority they have held over millions of bodies for millennia; the countless generations that have performed these words, the stymied human potential, the devastation summarised so succinctly with such an economy of words. As the first Dalit to transcribe these implicit social rules, Dr BR Ambedkar instigated the possibility of re-writing and even erasing them completely. As a beneficiary of his life work, these words carry an unspeakable significance within my own body.

In my final undergraduate project, I had screen printed these words repeatedly with chalk to reference the trans-generational learning and rehearsal of this historical identity. I had come to appreciate the importance of poetics over protest, the power of silence, subtlety and discovery through the doing. The Masters program has enabled me to nurture these questions, to allow the text to inhabit my own body and permeate into the process.

Prior to entering the studio, initial research drew upon artists emphasising materiality within their praxis, leading me to readdress my own preparation. I constructed and continually revised an ongoing list of materials that my body gravitated towards. This material list included oil, pigment, enamel, incense ash, fabric, aluminium, dirt, tannin, canvas, mirror, charcoal, silicon carbide, linoleum, turmeric, bitumen, sandalwood paste, milk, gold leaf, crackling medium, sand and graphite. Initially the result of free

association, in hindsight it is apparent that these materials relate to biography, ritual and themes of valuation, corporality and the manual labour of the lower classes. I have often considered printmaking as a science experiment; I retain the procedure and test all possible variables. I thus divided these materials into substances to print with and substrates to print upon. The revised lists set boundaries to an otherwise boundless investigation and enabled me to focus the perennial reflection and contemplation of making into an ordered course.

Extensive material possibilities were narrowed by the process of screenprinting itself. Only finer pigments that could move through the mesh and adhere to the paper were ultimately utilised. Perhaps more so than etching, lithography and other plate-based print processes, screenprinting allows for materials beyond standard inks to enter the work. The action of printing through the screens also preserves the legibility of the text until the heat, wax or acid is applied, thus it is used most predominantly in the entire body of work. Screenprinting itself is associated with the labour class in India's textile industry. It is therefore a suitable process in the alchemical transformation of language and material into high art.

To challenge and disrupt my prolific pattern of making, I initially assigned myself the task of finding a new space each week and responding directly to it as opposed to determining an outcome or artwork. The first of these spaces was my newly allocated studio section within which I stencilled a quote from Homi Bhabha: "...the margins of the nation displace the centre; the peoples of the periphery return to rewrite the history and fiction of the metropolis."[134] Through this stencil I applied a thick impasto and sprinkled vermillion pigment. As an intensely saturated red pigment, vermillion was historically used in early European painting and is traditionally applied by Indian women, thus complementing the hybridity theory of Bhabha.

During the second week I converted a narrow installation room into a camera obscura, painting the windows black then stencilling the letters IOU on the window to allow the light to ricochet on the walls [Figure 13]. These letters referenced the title of a recent

---

[134] Homi K. Bhabha, "Introduction: narrating the nation," in *Nation and Narration,* ed. Homi K. Bhabha (Routledge, New York, 1990), 6.

sculpture by Indigenous artist Fiona Foley that explored themes of dispossession and impunity. In the third week I transformed a communal project wall into a shared chalkboard and for the final project I pasted Xerox prints upon a blank noticeboard. These four weeks enabled me to comprehend my theoretical research prior to making, to think of printmaking beyond the borders of a page and to engage with space, material and the broader use of text in art.

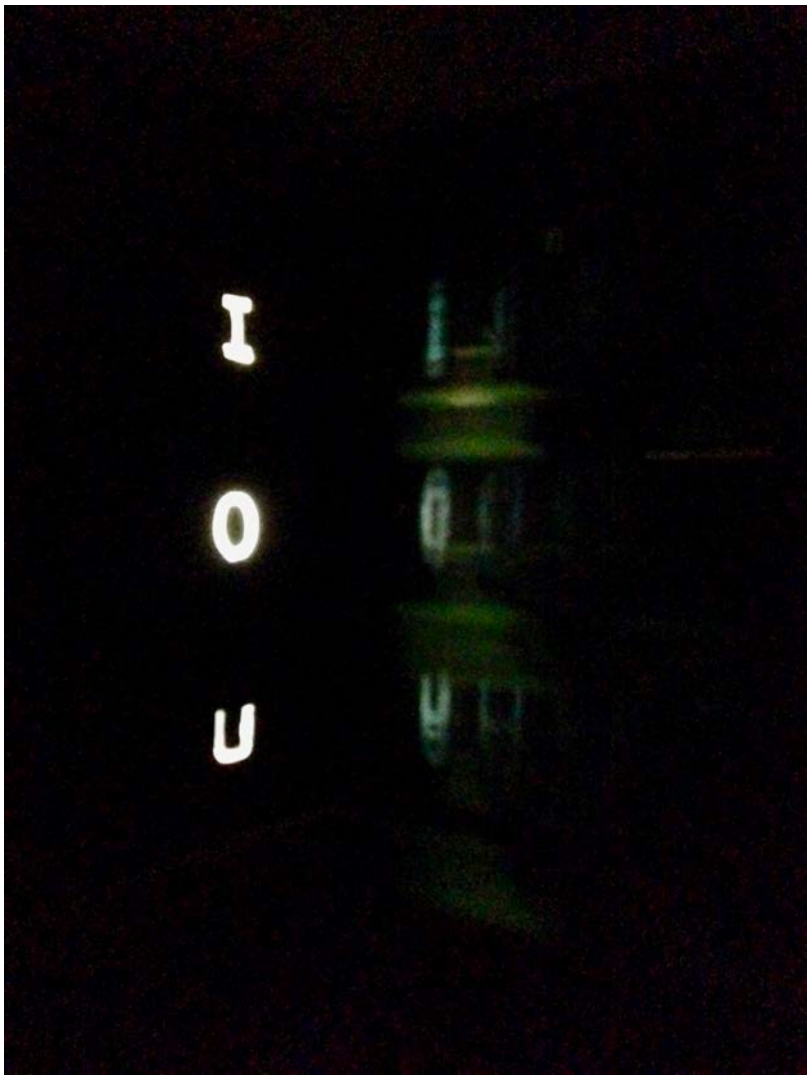

Figure 13 Kirtika Kain, 2017, studio installation, newspaper, black acrylic, dimensions variable

In the studio, I learned the language of each material, enjoying the singularity, possibility and limitation of each one. I was introduced to gel wax, a clear substance that I melted upon acetate film or glassine paper and reheated to shift and obscure the

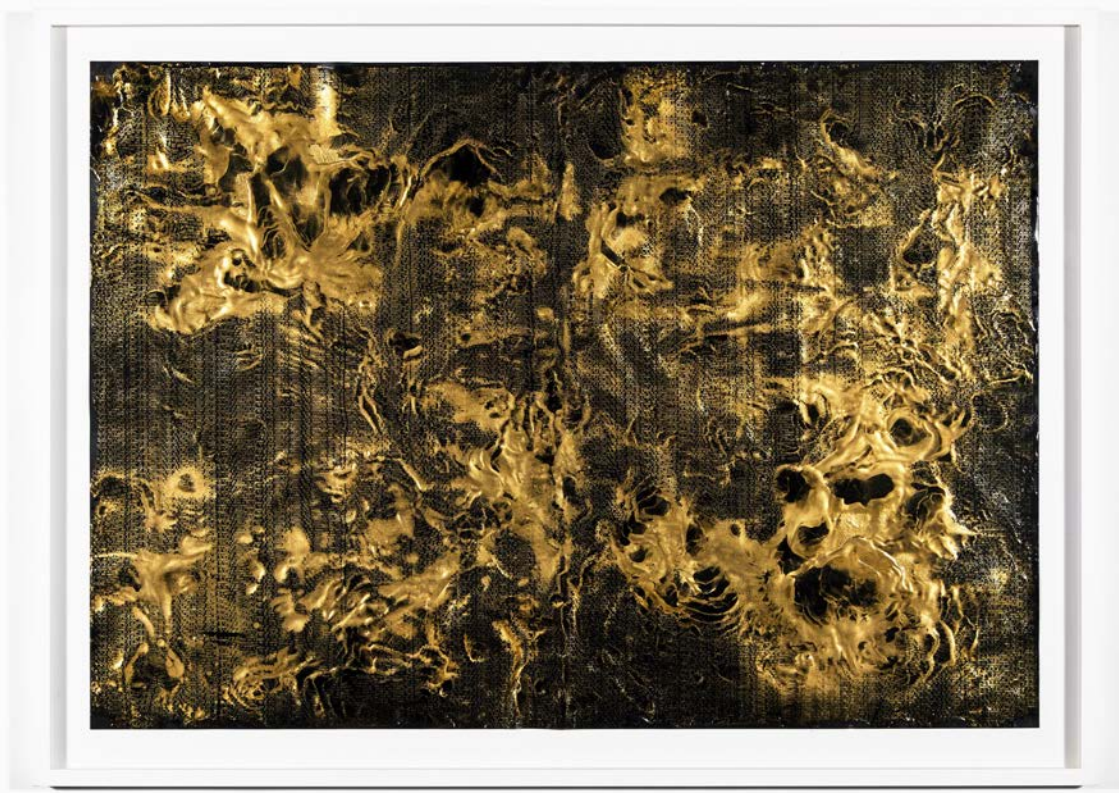

Figure 14 Kirtika Kain, *Balais I*, 2018, silkscreened gold pigment and melted gel wax on Dura Lar film, 99 x 130 cm

text. Over the months I was able to apply vermillion, black pigment, silver and gold upon this wax, trialling each variable upon the list [Figure 14].

I silkscreened with iron filings, metal dust swept up from the floor of the Sculpture department, silicon carbide, crushed charcoal and gold pigment onto rice paper and sealed several sheets together with paraffin wax [Figure 17]. The translucency of the wax and the rice paper appeared skin-like and with the abrasive filings encased within the sheets I was able to acquire a textural, roughened membrane [Figure 15]. I also printed with liquid graphite and detergent upon rice and glassine paper, giving me marbled, soapy textures that I have collaged as support works. All of these processes were discovered through trial and error and by closely observing the materials.

I then proceeded to etch copper and zinc plates. After screenprinting the text repeatedly on the front and back of the plate with bitumen paint, I have etched both metals in ferric and nitric acid respectively for up to a week. The acid then corroded the plate,

preserving the bitumen text. I am interested in both plates as sculptural objects. Whereas the copper is organic and develops bright and unexpected patinas, the zinc is slick, metallic and more stamp-like than the natural erosion of text on copper.

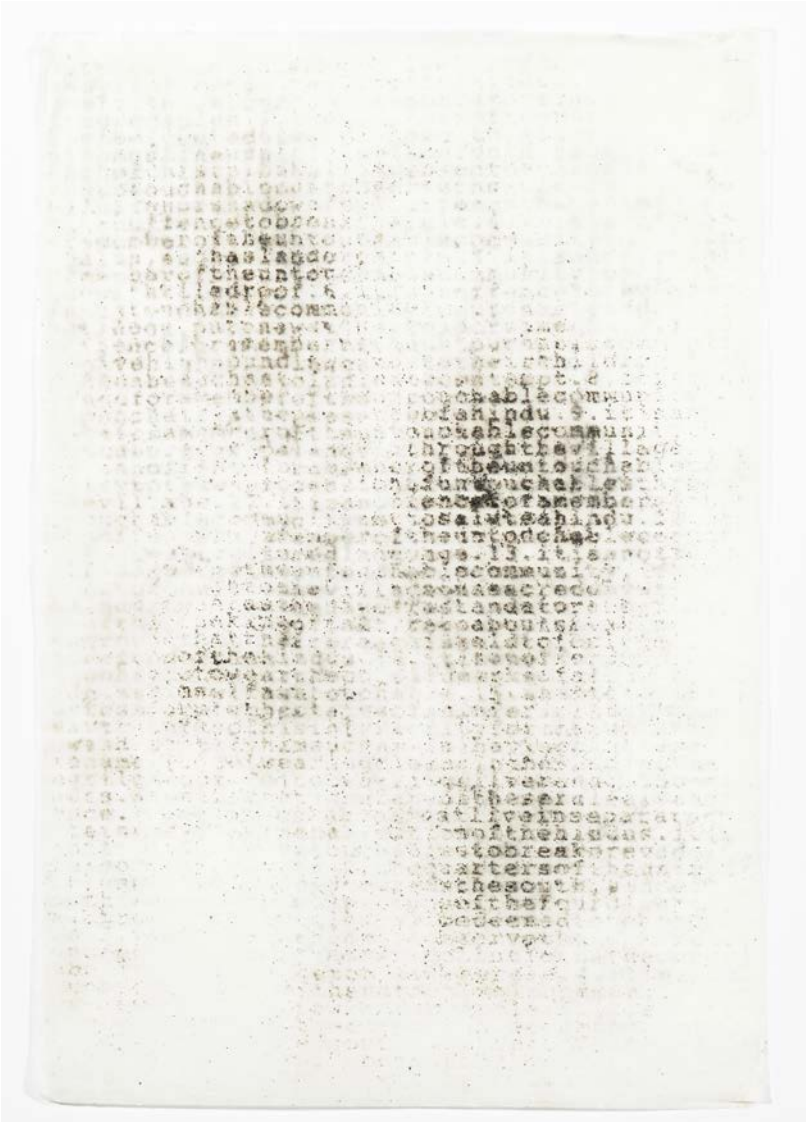

Figure 15 Kirtika Kain, *Stratum I*, 2018, silkscreened iron filings and wax on layered Japanese rice paper 94 x 64 cm

I have also silkscreened with bitumen paint directly upon the veil-like rice and glassine paper. Bitumen paint has a deep tonal range that to my eyes appear as the colours of India. It is hue of every race, of the polluted streets, the soot and toxic haze of the air. The shellac I apply to the bitumen paper seals and blisters like skin, the turpentine bleeds into the rice paper and the wax oozes on the surface; it is both grotesque and beautiful. This is the process I have been pursuing for the final post-graduate exhibition.

Figure 16 Kirtika Kain, *pitch #1*, 2018, silkscreened bitumen, turpentine and shellac on Japanese rice paper, 53 x 53 cm

By giving the text a physical body, a dimensionality, I am able to materialise how the implicit codes and societal rules govern our identity; how the body of the text meets our own body. Although I, in the twenty-first century, am accessing these rules in the English language, they have been transferred aurally and played out by a mostly illiterate populace. The regulations are not intellectualised, they are inscribed and performed for thousands of years. The dimensionality and skin like surfaces references this historical and ancestral body knowledge. Through the material choices of copper, impasto and processes of erosion, disintegration, encasing of text, I am materialising the layers of imposed identities and regulations. The works are not a palimpsest, an eraser and re-writing but rather an overlaying and superposition, as in strata and hierarchies.

Therefore there is an essential link between form and function; the physical form of the text carries the dense accumulated meaning. The membrane like surfaces speak of this accumulation, that which lies beneath the skin.

Collectively, these studio processes have attempted to subvert, re-inscribe and reimagine the language as well as transforming the value of the material. Whilst considering the treatment of the language, early on I engaged with action words to exemplify my physical response to the implications of these loaded rules. I would use the editing program Illustrator to plan and enforce these actions upon the letters. What has transpired over the months is a more instinctual, felt response to the text, allowing the implications of these words to be felt in my own body. Most of the text exposed upon my screens has become smaller, more uniform and gridded; the actions of obliterating, concealing, erasing has been carried out by the spontaneous movement of heat and acid. This has signalled a movement towards abstraction, with the text becoming increasingly illegible and buried and my own body becoming more involved in making. The unnecessary detail has been was removed and the intention towards the rules distilled. Thus in the physical act of creating, through movement and spontaneity in process, I am accessing an ancestral knowledge, a body knowledge that bypasses my own learning and intellect and deliberate efforts.

The act of making has precipitated a marked personal development from deliberate, technical and tedious to an allowing of enjoyment and surprise. This came about through repeated attempts to replicate the rhythm of strong works. What could not be repeated was the joy and discovery in the making. The stronger works have surprised me as they have fallen outside of what I thought I could control and create. Although there is an ongoing drive and pressure towards resolving the body of work, there is a greater appreciation that this joy exists outside of anything I impose.

Something must also be said for the studio space itself; the two storey high ceilings, the dramatic neo-classical plaster friezes that adorn the back wall, the golden sandstone, such a grand space invites grand visions. Within these century old rooms there is timelessness, as if made just for this moment. An idea, a thought that was hatched during the day, would be tested by evening and if unresolved would linger until the

morning. Being completely engrossed in a dialogue with the work and allowing it to tip into all aspects of life has been the pinnacle of my time in the studio.

Figure 17 Kirtika Kain, *golden grit I*, 2018, silkscreened gold pigment and silicon carbide on waxed layers of Japanese kozo, 60 x 50 cm

In many ways I find art making and the art world analogous to the caste system. Upon leaving the studio, the work and the artist enter into a hierarchy, a game of endless stories and projections. In this sense, being in the rawness of making is closest to the source of who I am without the words and labels. As I leave the studio, I understand that I can play this game, I can enter and leave hierarchies and never really belong to any.

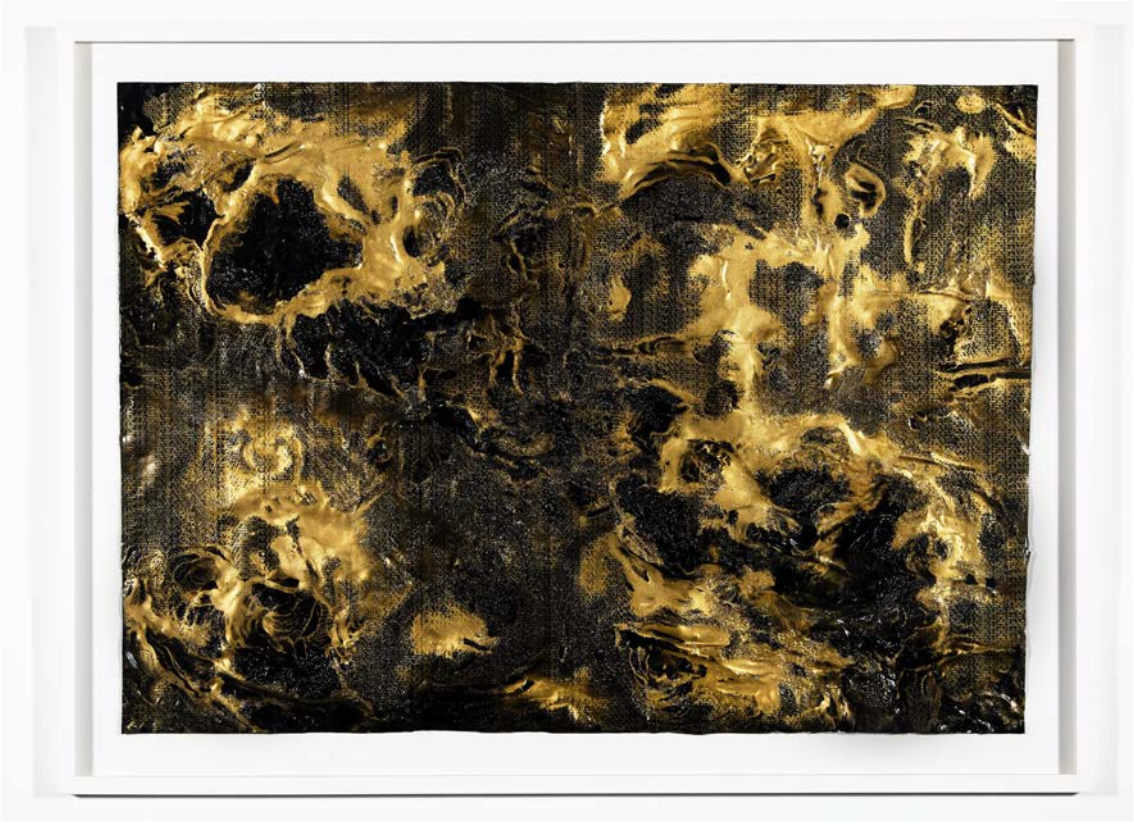

Figure 18 Kirtika Kain, *Balais II*, 2018, silkscreened gold pigment and melted gel wax on Dura Lar film, 93 x 124 cm

After working so rigorously and consistently from the commencement of the Masters program, there was an inexplicable shift in the second year when all the planning, exertion and effort in the studio had become grounded within me. The research and the doing had come to affect me so profoundly that it was no longer an external endeavour that I was working towards or striving for. The thesis had seemingly lifted off the page and was now in every aspect of what I was doing and who I was. Previous definitions of success and failure fell away and remarkably at this point, much of the work for the year seemed close to completion and there was little to do. What precipitated were experiences and events that seemed to consolidate this understanding.

Amongst the first of these experiences was the exhibition *Fearless* at the Art Gallery of NSW. The disparate works of nine female contemporary South Asian artists were united by themes of nationhood, history, violence and politics of the woman's body. The black and white photographs of Dayanita Singh captured a stirring silence, moments of terror, of unease and beauty. As I saw them, personal and collective memory merged as one and they appeared as snapshots of everywhere I had been. I then entered the five channel video work of Nalini Maliani, *Mother India* (2005), that engulfed me with the flashing images of destroyed livelihoods, rooms that had been completely decimated, families, bodies, women, deities and darkness, paired with audio of muffled female voices and screams. This culminated into the feeling of looking unflinchingly into myself, my history, my memories and those of my ancestors. I developed a greater understanding of body memory as my reaction to these images was simply inexplicable, I could feel it coursing in my body as if a wound had been opened.

Powerful political themes of geography and borders were scrutinised in the intelligent works of Shilpa Gupta and the colossal installations of Reena Saini Kallat. Prints of Zarina Hashmi were presented alongside paintings of Shahzia Sikandar and the exhibition concluded with Nalini Malani's single channel video *In Search of Vanished Blood* (2012) beside a quote of Arundhati Roy that read "…there's really no such thing as the 'voiceless'. There are only the deliberately silences, or the preferably unheard." As if my entire thesis were curated into an exhibition, the boundary between art and myself dissipated. I had always looked but had never truly seen art like this and was left weeping. Each artist had delved into something so personal, so specific and unique that

it opened up into that which was shared. As I experienced this rawness, I knew the truth of this experience was all that mattered and through my art practice I would continue to search uncompromisingly and fearlessly for this within myself, as these artists had.

In counterpoint to these experiences, a few months prior to exhibiting in the graduate exhibition, most of my works were selected as part of the National Art School's inaugural participation in the Sydney Contemporary Art Fair. As the leading Australian International fair, Sydney Contemporary is the one of the key commercial art events in the country, bringing together leading galleries and prominent art collectors. Seeing my work enter into this marketplace once again consolidated my experience of the entire Masters program. On the first VIP opening, many of my works were sold within the first few hours and there was an immediate frenzy of interest with many reputable collectors vying for a single work. Many felt sympathetic towards my story and I noted the ease with which all that I was could be packaged for the market.

Although it was exciting as a young artist to witness this passionate excitement for my work, it was as if a timely reminder had been planted amongst the crowd in the form of Desmond Lozaro, an English-born Indian-based artist who had seen me in this whirlwind of activity. He reminded me to take my time in my endeavours, that the entire marketplace that surrounded me could wait. He offered me his own story; his enquiry had led him to learn ancient painting, pigment and paper techniques with an Indian master for a decade after completing Masters. Despite surrendering himself to this life of obscurity, his passion and fearless pursuit had today made him one of the most respected artists within India and globally. I know that what has got me here, the search I have committed to, was the most invaluable thing in the entire multi million dollar fair and what every collector was on the hunt for. There was only one clear path, to continue this pursuit and to dig even deeper.

Paradoxically, these experiences have been spontaneous, yet have carried a note of recognition, as if the questions I had posed were being answered before me. I recall the first few months of the course when each minute in my day was accounted for, when every possible variable would be tested and my wall filled with networks of ideas and possibilities. Having cemented this groundwork, I can now enjoy not knowing what will

come next. Yet once again, in this discovery there is only one possible direction and that is closer to my own truth, the rawness that cannot be articulated so much as experienced quietly in the studio or whilst standing before the work of an artist that has done the same. This search has led me here and is where I will continue.

‘What are the terms of associated life on which the Touchables and Untouchables live in an Indian village? In every village the Touchables have a code which the Untouchables are required to follow. This code lays down the acts of omissions and commissions which the Touchables treat as offences. The following is the list of such offences:

1. The Untouchables must live in separate quarters away from the habitation of the Hindus. It is an offence for the Untouchables to break or evade the rule of segregation.
2. The quarters of the Untouchables must be located towards the South, since the South is the most inauspicious of the four directions. A breach of this rule shall be deemed to be an offence.
3. The Untouchable must observe the rule of distance pollution or shadow of pollution as the case may be. It is an offence to break the rule.
4. It is an offence for a member of the Untouchable community to acquire wealth, such as land or cattle.
5. It is an offence for a member of the Untouchable community to build a house with tiled roof.
6. It is an offence for a member of an Untouchable community to put on a clean dress, wear shoes, put on a watch or gold ornaments.
7. It is an offence for a member of the Untouchable community to give high sounding names to their children. Their names be such as to indicate contempt.
8. It is an offence for a member of the Untouchable community to sit on a chair in the presence of a Hindu.
9. It is an offence for a member of the Untouchable community to ride on a horse or a palanquin through the village.
10. It is an offence for a member of the Untouchable community to take a procession of Untouchables through the village.
11. It is an offence for a member of the Untouchable community not to salute a Hindu.
12. It is an offence for a member of the Untouchable community to speak a cultured language.
13. It is an offence for a member of the Untouchable community, if he happens to come into the village on a sacred day which the Hindus treat as the day of fast and at or about

the time of the breaking of fast; to go about speaking, on the ground that their breath is held to foul the air and the food of the Hindus.
14. It is an offence for an Untouchable to wear the outward marks of a Touchable and pass himself as a Touchable.
15. An Untouchable must conform to the status of an inferior and he must wear the marks of his inferiority for the public to know and identify him such as—
(a) having a contemptible name.
(b) not wearing clean clothes.
(c) not having tiled roof.
(d) not wearing silver and gold ornaments.
A contravention of any of these rules is an offence.

Next come the duties which the Code requires members of the Untouchable community to perform for the Touchables. Under this head the following may be mentioned:
1. A member of an Untouchable community must carry a message of any event in the house of a Hindu such as death or marriage to his relatives living in other villages no matter how distant these villages may be.
2. An Untouchable must work at the house of a Hindu when a marriage is taking place, such as breaking fuel, and going on errands.
3. An Untouchable must accompany a Hindu girl when she is going from her parent's house to her husband's village no matter how distant it is.
4. When the whole village community is engaged in celebrating a general festivity such as Holi or Dasara, the Untouchables must perform all menial acts which are preliminary to the main observance.
5. On certain festivities, the Untouchables must submit their women to members of the village community to be made the subject of indecent fun.
These duties have to be performed without remuneration.'[135]

[135] Dr BR Ambedkar, "Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar Writings and Speeches Vol. 5", *Dr. Ambedkar Foundation Ministry of External Justice (*2014), https://www.mea.gov.in/Images/attach/amb/Volume_05.pdf

B I B L I O G R A P H Y

Al Jazeera. “Dalits in India hold protests against 'dilution' of SC/ST Act.” April 2, 2018. https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2018/04/dalits-india-hold-protests

Ambedkar, Bhimrao. “Untouchables or The Children of India's Ghetto”, http://www.drambedkar.co.in/

Anand, S. ed. *Annihilation of Caste B.R Ambedkar.* London: Verso, 2016.

Art Radar. “Contemporary art trends and news from Asia and beyond.” Accessed January, 2017. http://artradarjournal.com/

Asri, Vivek. “Australia passes a motion to support so-called 'low caste' Indians.” *SBS*, (Sydney), July 5, 2018. https://www.sbs.com.au/yourlanguage/hindi/en/article

Barson, Tanya. “Living in Between: Mira Schendel’s Poetics.” In Mira Schendel, edited by Tanya Barson and Taisa Palhares, 19-31. London: Tate Publishing in association with Pinacoteca do Estado de São Paulo, 2013.

BBC News. “What is India's caste system?” 20 July 2017. https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-india-35650616

Beatty, Paul. *The Sellout.* New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2016.

Bhabha, Homi K. ed. *Nation and Narration.* Routledge, New York, 1990.

Bhabha, Homi. *Location of Culture*. London: Routledge, 1993.

Blackford, Liz. “Glenn Ligon: Prisoner of Love #1”, *Guggenheim Collection Online* (2017). guggenheim.com

Boyne, John. “Arundhati Roy: 'It’s a hatred that crosses the line.” *The Irish Times,* (Dublin), June 24, 2017. https://www.irishtimes.com/culture/books/

Brown, Rebecca M. “Penelope Vlassopoulou, *no water.”* Art Journal Fall (2016): 5.

Cummings, Laura. “Mira Schendel - Review”, *The Guardian* (2013), theguardian.com

Dalit Panthers Manifesto, Barbara Joshi, ed. *Untouchable! Voices of the Dalit Liberation Movement* (London: Zed Books, 1986), 145.

Desai, Kiran. *The Inheritance of Loss.* London: Hamish Hamilton, 2006.

Dhanda, M. Waughray, A., Keane, D. et al.. “Caste in Britain: Socio-legal review.” London: Equality and Human Rights Commission. (2012)

"Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar", *Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar Open University* (Oct 2017), http://baou.edu.in/dr-br-ambedkar

Dr BR Ambedkar, "Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar Writings and Speeches Vol. 5", *Dr. Ambedkar Foundation Ministry of External Justice (*2014), https://www.mea.gov.in/Images/attach/amb/Volume_05.pdf

"Dr BR Ambedkar", *Cultural India.* https://www.culturalindia.net/reformers/

Dube, Saurabh. "Unsettling art: caste, gender and dalit expression." openDemocracy (2013). https://www.opendemocracy.net/

Ellis, Juniper. "The Location of Culture (review)" *Philosophy and Literature* 19, no.1 (1995): 196-197.

Engberg, Juliana. "Yhonnie Scarce". *2014 Biennale of Sydney.* Edited by Julian End berg. Australia: Biennale of Sydney Ltd, 2014. Exhibition catalogue.

Farrell, Jennifer and Haider, Navina N. "Turbulent Times: New Relevance for Krishna Reddy's Demonstrators", The MET (2017). metmuseum.org

Ganguly, Debjani, "Their History, (Y)our Memories: Provincialising Europe in Dalit Historiography" *Impossible Selves Cultural Readings of Identity,* ed. Jacque line Lo et al. Australian Scholarly Publishing Pty Ltd, 1999.

Ghose, Tia. "Genetic Study Reveals Origin of India's Caste System." *Live Science,* August 8, 2013. https://www.livescience.com/38751

Gokhale-Turner, Jayashree B. "The Dalit Panthers and the radicalisation of the untouchables." *The Journal of Commonwealth ad Comparative Politics* (1979) Taylor and Francis Online, https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/

Gowda, Sheela. "NAS Gallery: Behold." Art forum, (Sydney, National Art School, 2010). vodcast.

Hanchinamani, Bina. "Human Rights Abuses of Dalits in India." *Human Rights Brief* (2001) https://digitalcommons.wcl.american.edu

Haider, Navina N."Workshop and Legacy: Stanley William Hayter, Krishna Reddy, Zarina Hashmi." The MET (The Met Fifth Avenue, October 7, 2016), Vodcast. https://www.metmuseum.org/exhibitions/listings/2016/workshop-and-legacy

Human Rights Watch. "India: 'Hidden Apartheid' of Discrimination Against Dalits." February 13, 2007. https://www.hrw.org/news/2007/02/13/india-hidden

Jha, Ajit Kumar. "The Dalits | Still untouchable." *India Today*, (Noida), February 3, 2016. https://www.indiatoday.in/magazine/the-big-story/story/20160215

Joshi, Barbara. "India's Untouchables", *Cultural Survival* (2016), https:// www.culturalsurvival.org/ourpublications/csq/article/indias-untouchables

Joshi, Rajesh. “The Hindu hardline RSS who see Modi as their own.” *BBC Hindi*, (Delhi), October 22, 2014. https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia

Kumar, Rajesh. “Dalits Vs Aboriginal Australians: Convergences & Divergences.” (PhD thesis, Jawaharlal Nehru University, 2008), 19-20. \ http://www.academia.edu/34606102/

Long, Declan. “Ciara Phillips.” *ARTFORUM* (2016) ProQuest Research Library, search.proquest.com.

Lothian, Kathie. “Seizing the Time: Australian Aborigines and the Influence of the Black Panther Party, 1969-1972.” *Journal of Black Studies* (2005) SAGE Journals, http://journals.sagepub.com/doi/abs/10.1177/0021934704266513

Ludden, David E. “Introduction: A Brief History of Subalternity.” *Reading Subaltern Studies.* New Delhi: Permanent Black, 2001.

Mahadeva, Devanuru. “Dalits and Aboriginals: Rebuilding India and Australia.: *Al Jazeera*, October 2, 2016. Accessed January, 2017.

Munro, Kelsey. “India's deadly caste protests: Here's what fuelled the anger.” *SBS*, (Sydney), April 5, 2018. https://www.sbs.com.au/news/india-s-deadly-caste

Naipaul, V. S. *India: a wounded civilisation.* New York: Knopf, 1977.

Naipaul, V. S. *India: A Million Mutinies Now.* Toronto: Vintage Canada, 2011

Ocampo, Pablo de. *Cold Friends, Warm Cash.* Western Front, Vancouver, 2016. An exhibition catalogue.

Palestine Diary. “Edward Said On Orientalism”. Filmed [1998]. YouTube video, 40:31. Posted [Oct, 2012]. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fVC8EYd_Z_g

Palhares, Taisa. “Living in Between: Mira Schendel’s Poetics.” In Mira Schendel, edited by Tanya Barson and Taisa Palhares, 11-17. London: Tate Publishing in association with Pinacoteca do Estado de São Paulo, 2013.

Paswan, Sanjay and Pramanshi Jaideva, *Encyclopaedia of Dalits in India Movements* (India: Kalpaz Publications, 2002)

Periasamy, Rathna. “Tracing the Homogeneity between Dalit and Australian Aboriginal Communities: A Historical and Literary Perspective.” *International Journal on Studies in English Language and Literature* (2014) Research Gate, https://www.researchgate.net/publication/

Power and People: Al Jazeera. “India’s Hindu Fundamentalists.” October 8, 2015. https://www.aljazeera.com/programmes/peopleandpower/2015/10/indias

Prakash, Gyan. “Subaltern Studies as Postcolonial Criticism.” *The American Historical Review* Vol. 99, No. 5 (1994): 1475-1490 doi: 10.2307/2168385.

Pritchett, Frances W. “Dr. B. R. Ambedkar: his life and work.” *Columbia University* (2018), http://www.columbia.edu/itc/mealac/pritchett/00ambedkar/index.html

Rosenberg, Karen. “Reveling in the Multicultural Possibilities of Paper”, *The New York Times,* (New York), January 31, 2013. neyyorktimes.com

Roy, Arundhati. *The Ministry of Utmost Happiness*. London, UK: Hamish Hamilton, 2017.

Roy, Arundhati. “The Doctor and the Saint,” in *Annihilation of Caste B.R Ambedkar,* ed. S. Anand. London: Verso (2016)

Saberin, Zeenat. “HRW: BJP leaders publicly promoting Hindu supremacy.” *Al Jazeera*, (India), January 18, 2018. https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2018/01/hrw-bjp

Sadanandan, Anoop. “What Lies Beneath the Alarming Rise in Violence Against Dalits?” *The Wire*, (India), June 15, 2018. https://thewire.in/caste/rise-in-violence-against-dalits

Said, Edward W. *Orientalism*. New York: Vintage Books, 2004.

Sankaran, Sindhuja, Maciek Sekerdej and Ulrich von Hecker, “The Role of Indian Caste Identity and Caste Inconsistent Norms on Status Representation.” Frontiers in Psychology (2017) National Center for Biotechnology Information, https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC5374864/

Selvaratnam, Naomi. “Australians subject to 'caste discrimination', migrants say.” *SBS*, (Sydney), August 28, 2015. https://www.sbs.com.au/news/australians-subject-to-caste-discrimination-migrants-say

Sharma, Smriti. “Caste-based crimes and economic status: Evidence from India.” *Journal of Comparative Economics* (2015) Science Direct, https:// www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0147596714001048#s0065

Shepherd, Kancha Ilaiah. “A 'Dalit Spring' is on the horizon.” *Al Jazeera*, (India), April 8, 2018. https://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/opinion/dalit-spring

Slate, Nico. “The Dalit Panthers: Race, Caste, and Black Power in India.” *Black Power beyond Borders* (2012) Springer Link https://link.springer.com/chapter

Smith, Trevor. “The Specific Labour of Sheela Gowda.” *Afterall* 22 (2009): 37-43.

Spivak, Gayatri Chakravorty. "Can the Subaltern Speak?" Marxism and the Interpretation of Culture, 1988, 271-313. doi:10.1007/978-1-349-19059-1_20.

Wankhede, Harish S. “The Two Faces of Hindutva’s Dalit Agenda.” *The Wire*, (New Delhi), May 10, 2018. https://thewire.in/caste/the-two-faces-of-hindutvas

Watson, Grant. “Collateral damage: Indian artist Sheela Gowda burns installation in UK gallery”, Art Radar (2011). http://artradarjournal.com/

“Who are Dalits”, *NAVSARJAN* (2009). http://navsarjan.org/navsarjan/dalits/whoaredalits

“Who are the Dalits”, *Dalit Solidarity* (2016), https://www.dalitsolidarity.org

Zene, Cosimo. “Self-Consciousness of the Dalits as “Subalterns”: Reflections on Gramsci in South Asia.” *Rethinking Marxism* 23, 1 (2011): 83-99, doi: 10.1080/08935696.2011.536342

L I S T O F F I G U R E S