



GALLERIA CONTINUA

SAN GIMIGNANO BEIJING LES MOULINS HABANA

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NIKHIL CHOPRA

Drawing a Line through Landscape

Opening Saturday 26th January 2019, via del Castello 11, 6pm-midnight
Until 7th April 2019, Monday to Sunday, 10am-1pm, 2-7pm

Galleria Continua is pleased to present in San Gimignano one of the leading artists on the international art scene today Nikhil Chopra with “*Drawing a Line through Landscape*”, a work the artist did in 2017 in occasion of his participation at documenta 14 in Kassel.

Nikhil Chopra’s artistic practice ranges between live art, drawing, photography, sculpture and installations. His performances, in large part improvised, dwell on issues such as identity, the role of autobiography, the pose and self-portraiture, reflects on the process of transformation and the part played by the duration of performance. Chopra combines everyday life, memory and collective history; daily acts such as eating, resting, washing and dressing, but also drawing and making clothes, become the process of making an artwork, becoming an essential part of the show.

“In Athens, a tempestuous muddy sea and a cluster of rolling clouds gather on the walls of a former tavern as a panoramic mural. Nikhil Chopra’s performative work has often involved voyages—across the desert of Sharjah, down the River Thames, and entering the waters of the Arabian Sea. For Drawing a Line through Landscape he sets forth to traverse the nearly 3,000 kilometres between Athens and Kassel: crossing the mountainous landscape of Greece, passing the deserted villages, former soviet towns, and orthodox monasteries in Bulgaria, lingering briefly in the verdant wilderness of Romania’s Cozia National Park, at gatherings on public squares, or in the art spaces of Sofia, Budapest, and Bratislava, where he is joined by fellow artists and choreographers. His tent is a temporary studio and domicile—reminiscent of travelling theatres, where improvisational encounters unfold in communal relation. The artist serenades the cities and towns that he enters much as a lover does, transitioning through states of exuberance, intoxication, rejection, and fatigue. This continued journey remains enmeshed in the trails of centuries-old nomadism as well as the migratory passages that are still being carved out—ultimately the zigzagging route is not simply a South-North or East-West binary movement but rather the reflection of a complex microcosm of dispersed selfhood, abandonment, economic austerity, and territorial violence in today’s Europe”.

Natasha Ginwala (written for documenta14)

“Below are the waves, above are the clouds. The line in between, the horizon, takes its name from the root of the Ancient Greek verb ὀρίζω (orizō), which means to divide, and of the noun ὄρος (oros), which stands for boundary, or landmark. Marking the point where landscape disappears falling behind the curvature of the earth, the horizon is the only visible border for someone looking at the open sea, one that can only be contemplated and never be crossed. Tracing the line of the horizon was the gesture that marked the beginning of Drawing a Line through Landscape.

[...]

If there is something unresolved in Drawing a Line through Landscape, is the inherent fragility of the landscape that is discussed there. The heroic gesture of the artist who wants to paint “a 3,000 kilometres landscape” has to come to terms with the political fragmentation of what it wants to join together. Whereas Chopra’s project attempts the unification of different countries into one single landscape, any possible desire for coexistence is constantly challenged by political forces that make use of divisions to gain momentum. In recent years right wing populisms, nationalisms, and xenophobic sentiments have gained force and popularity in Europe to an extent that is unprecedented since the end of WWII. Many of the countries visited by Chopra have been all but exceptions to this tendency. It is in these unresolved points of crisis or of rupture that a certain irony emerges, and one not devoid of poetry. There are moments in which Drawing a Line through Landscape created images or situations evocative of pastoral scenes, particularly intimate idyllic moments that inherently contrast with the intimidating distances that the project wants to bridge. It is possibly in these moments that the personas invented by Chopra look more defeated and burdened by their destiny. Some of these moments are immensely ironic, like it is the image of the artist struggling to carry on his back a sixty-meter canvas roll containing a life-size landscape captured over a 3,000 km journey. Others are rather tragic, like when Chopra listens calm and poised to the words of a policeman explaining that in Budapest’s public squares it is forbidden to draw and dance. In neither case Chopra hesitates, he exposes the crisis as part of the larger picture and gets on with his work. Whereas political and cultural unity seemed to be threatened, he responds by establishing a sort of visual, performative, and conceptual unification. It is possibly for this reason that once the landscape is finished and offered to public view, the distance covered seemed easier to handle. After travelling for weeks, patiently working to transpose every tiny observation and every short encounter on a limited patch of canvas, Chopra had to measure himself not only with the physical distance of a body that travels. On the road from Athens to Kassel he worked to metabolise geographical, cultural and political differences, only to recompose them together into one vision of a landscape that renders a great distance intelligible”.

Excerpt from the essay ‘Below are the waves, above are the clouds’, by Michelangelo Corsaro

The exhibition will also be the occasion to present *Inside Out* to the public for the first time. The work features a series of photographs documenting the site-specific performance made by Nikhil Chopra in 2012 for his first solo show in the gallery. The project lasted ninety-hours during which the artist disguised himself as various people to embody history and memory.

Nikhil Chopra was born in Calcutta in 1974, and lives in Goa. After studying at the Faculty of Fine Arts at Maharaja Sayaji Rao University in Baroda, India, the artist continued his studies in the United States, where, in 2003, he had his first solo exhibition, SIR RAJA II. A few years later he once again showed in the States, in collective exhibitions in 2005 and 2006, the latter at the Brooklyn Museum of New York. Recent shows include the solo exhibition *Yog Raj Chitrakar: Memory Drawing IX*, at the New Museum of New York in 2009, and the group shows *Production Site: The Artist’s Studio Inside-out* at the Museum of Contemporary Art in Chicago (2010); *Generation in Transition: New Art from India* at the Zacheta National Gallery of Art in Warsaw (2011). The artist recently made the film *Man Eats Rock* in collaboration with Munir Kabani for the H Box, presented at the Artsonje Center in Seoul, at the Today Art Museum in Beijing and at the Guangdong Museum of Art in Guangzhou (2011). In 2013 on the occasion of the Manchester International Festival his performance *Coal on Cotton* received critical acclaim. In 2014 and 2015 Chopra performed at the Kochi Muziris Biennale, at Bienal de la Habana and at the 12th Sharjah Biennial. His last project was also his most ambitious project yet: *Drawing a Line through Landscape* for documenta 14

Drawing a Line through Landscape is a project commissioned by documenta 14 and supported by Piramal Art Foundation, Payal, and Anurag Khanna, Galleria Continua and Chatterjee & Lal. Collaborations Performance interventions in: Sofia by Ivo Ivan, Gorna Lipnitsa by Madhavi Gore and Jana Prepeluh, Budapest by Ivan Angelus and the Budapest Contemporary Dance Academy. Costume Design: Loise Braganza. Set Design: Aradhana Seth. Film: Sophie Winqvist. Song Writer: Gautam Sharma. Music: Ranjit Arapurkal. Driver: Stephen Frick. Documentation: Madhavi Gore. Project Assistant: Shaira Sequeira.

For further information about the show and for photos:
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