

MASS MoCA

At MASS MoCA, four artists engage with the archives and afterlives of revolution

to see oneself at a distance is on view March 25, 2023 – April 1, 2024

North Adams, MA, March 1, 2023 – MASS MoCA presents *to see oneself at a distance*, on view beginning March 25, 2023. This exhibition highlights the works of four contemporary artist-researchers who employ rigorous, long-term archival investigations to create their work. Together, they explore decolonization and national liberation not as event horizons, but as a series of gestures, ruptures, and fragments that might ripple across time and space. On view from Saturday March 25, 2023, through March 2024 in the Michael & Agnese Meehan Gallery, the show features **Maryam Jafri**, **Kapwani Kiwanga**, and new works from **Hương Ngô** and **Suneil Sanzgiri**. *to see oneself at a distance* focuses on 20th-century revolutionary, anti-colonial movements and figures while challenging their romanticization, vilification, or absence in popular media and memory. To see liberatory histories at a distance is to reckon with their complexities, afterlives, and the varying scales of their implications: from the individual or familial to the global.

Multidisciplinary artists **Hương Ngô** and **Suneil Sanzgiri** have each developed new work for the exhibition. Ngô presents a series of text-based prints on traditional Vietnamese dó paper— a fibrous and durable paper that for centuries has been used for important diplomatic purposes and record-keeping. The prints reproduce and reaffirm the Marxist writings attributed to the anti-colonial organizer, Nguyễn Thị Minh Khai (1910-1941), that emphasize struggles for women's liberation as necessarily intertwined with struggles for national liberation. Sanzgiri's trilogy of short films invokes varied and multi-temporal filmic languages from lush 16 millimeter to desktop cinema to drone videography. Together, the series probes the intersection between Sanzgiri's own family's history in Goa, India, and stories of global solidarity, freedom fighters, and neocolonial extractive forces. Exhibited in a new sculptural installation featuring relevant archival imagery, Sanzgiri proposes that the projects and promises of liberation are as yet unfinished, improvisatory, and as fragile as they are galvanizing.

In an investigation of what she calls “digital colonialism,” **Maryam Jafri's** two installations examine how archival photographs from key moments in the histories of certain African and Middle Eastern nations have been acquired and edited by multinational stock photo agencies, suggesting that some archives obscure as much as they reveal. **Kapwani Kiwanga** locates botanical elements in the photographic and video records of independence ceremonies, treaty signings, and the official events in newly independent African nations. She has invited local farmer, floral designer, and chef **Tu Le** of 328North (Williamstown, MA) to study and reinterpret arrangements from South Africa, Cameroon, Libya, Tunisia, and Namibia, which will dry and wither over the course of the year-long exhibition.

Together, the artists in *to see oneself at a distance* demonstrate how once-triumphant histories are (mis)remembered, instrumentalized, negotiated, and endure into the present.

Accompanying programming includes a screening of *Saat Hindustani (Seven Indians)* (dir. By Khwaja Ahmad Abbas, 1969) introduced by **Suneil Sanzgiri** on **Thursday April 27, 2023**, at the Clark Art Institute's Manton Research Center (225 South Street, Williamstown, MA). One of the only films made about the liberation of Goa from Portuguese colonialism, this forgotten

classic is a touchstone for Sanzgiri's practice. A work of radical idealism, the film lays out the contradictions latent in possibilities of solidarity. For more information, see <https://www.clarkart.edu/events/>.

to see oneself at a distance is organized by Meghan Clare Considine, 2021-23 MASS MoCA graduate curatorial fellow and master's student in the Williams College / Clark Art Institute Graduate Program in the History of Art.

Artist bios

Maryam Jafri works across media and genres—video, sculpture, photography, and performance. Notable solo shows have been held at the Blaffer Art Museum, Houston (2021), Institute of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles (2019), Contemporary Art Gallery, Vancouver (2019), Van Abbemuseum, Eindhoven (2016), and Kunsthalle Basel (2015). She has participated in group shows at Munch, Oslo (2021), Museum of Contemporary Art, Palermo (2020), Museum of Contemporary Art Barcelona (2019), Athens Biennale (2018), Riga Biennial (2018), Front International: Cleveland Triennial for Contemporary Art (2018), São Paulo Biennial (2016) and the Belgian Pavilion at the 2015 Venice Biennale.

Kapwani Kiwanga is a French and Canadian artist who traces historical narratives, excavating and considering the global impact of international relationships—including colonialism—in its manifold aspects, and how it permeates contemporary culture. She studied Anthropology and Comparative Religion at McGill University in Montreal and studied Art at l'École des Beaux-Arts de Paris, and later at Le Fresnoy. She has presented solo exhibitions at the New Museum, New York, and the MIT List Visual Arts Center, Cambridge, Massachusetts, among others. In 2020, she was awarded the Marcel Duchamp Prize. She will represent Canada at the 60th Venice Biennale in 2024.

Hương Ngô is an interdisciplinary artist who works with gestures of translation, traces of erasure, and ephemeral forms to question archival silences and the politics of fugitivity. Born in Hong Kong as a refugee, and having grown up in the American South, Ngô was a Fulbright U.S. Scholar in Vietnam, a Camargo Core Program Fellow, and a graduate of the Whitney Museum Independent Study Program. Her work on Nguyễn Thị Minh Khai is on view at the Hessel Museum of Art (Center for Curatorial Studies, Bard College) in the exhibition *Open Secret*, curated by Rachel Horvath-Eboh (until May 2023).

Suneil Sanzgiri is an artist, researcher, and filmmaker. His work spans experimental video and film, animations, essays, and installations, and contends with questions of identity, heritage, culture, and diaspora in relation to structural violence. His work has been supported by Creative Capital, the Jerome Foundation, Field of Vision, and more. He was named in *Filmmaker Magazine's* "25 New Faces of Independent Film" in 2021 and in *Art in America's* New Talent issue in 2022. He is the 4th recipient of the UOVO Emerging Artist Award from the Brooklyn Museum, which will present his first institutional solo show in Fall 2023.

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About MASS MoCA

MASS MoCA is one of the world's liveliest centers for making and enjoying today's most evocative art. With vast galleries and a stunning collection of indoor and outdoor performing arts venues, MASS MoCA is able to embrace all forms of art: music, sculpture, dance, film, painting, photography, theater, and new, boundary-crossing works of art that defy easy classification. Much of the work we show in our light-filled spaces, on our technically sophisticated stages, and within our lovely network of late 19th-century courtyards is made here during extended fabrication and rehearsal residencies that bring hundreds of the world's most brilliant and innovative artists to North Adams all year round. For more information about MASS MoCA, visit www.massmoca.org

About the Clark Art Institute / Williams College Graduate Program in the History of Art

The Williams Graduate Program in the History of Art at the Clark Art Institute sponsors annual exhibitions by graduate students. Through this program, candidates for a Master's in Art History undertake all aspects of exhibition development, including scholarly research and writing, installation design, art handling and preparation, and exhibition promotion. MASS MoCA provides space, technical support, and curatorial oversight along the way. With a deep, hands-on understanding of all aspects of exhibition production, participants have gone on to become leading curators and arts administrators

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