



## VISITOR'S GUIDE

# SHILPA GUPTA *DRAWING IN THE DARK*

**EXHIBITION**  
**FROM 21 OCTOBER 2017 TO 18 FEBRUARY 2018**

A major artist on the Indian art scene, Shilpa Gupta (born in Mumbai in 1976) has spent six years conducting background and field research on flows of goods and people in the borderlands.

For the CAC – synagogue de Delme, the artist summons these themes, drawing viewers into a physical relationship with the space right at the entrance to the exhibition: a heavy metal bar disrupts both the architecture and the visitor's entry. To counterbalance the brutality of this gesture of separation between the outside and inside, Shilpa Gupta gives every visitor the freedom to cut a path and reenact the situation of a prohibited crossing.

Her exhibition *Drawing in the Dark* tackles notions relating to borders, by showing that cultural transfers and exchanges of an economic or human nature subjectively redraw official demarcation lines and suggest a redefinition of nation-states.

For this exhibition, Shilpa Gupta is presenting a set of new works more particularly linked to the border between India and Bangladesh, which spans several thousand kilometres. This is where India is constructing, what upon completion will be the world's longest separation barrier between two nation states. In 2016, Shilpa Gupta went back to that border zone where she collected images, objects, and stories about everyday life. A massive apparatus organizes the policing of the populations on both sides of a unilaterally imposed wall, giving rise to a complex network of clandestine and informal exchanges.

The works produced for the exhibition evoke all of the strategies used to circumvent, avoid and disrupt the control systems. Despite the massiveness of the "security" structure implemented by the Indian government, the flow of people and merchandise persists, due to the historical and social affinities on both sides of the border, as well as geographic continuity and economic necessities.

The drawings that Shilpa Gupta makes from marijuana pigments, the photographs in which she superimposes detached components over images of the sky, the form she sculpts from sari scraps—all of these refer to objects that cross the border illegally. The artist gives resolutely poetic expression to this invisible, minor world constructed through transactions, everyday displacements and constrained desires.

The people, animals and merchandise do not obey any rule, like those photographed clouds, like those stones swept along by the region's rivers, stones whose struck sound we hear in the exhibition. Shilpa Gupta reminds us that life under a collective sky never stops jeopardizing the contours imposed by the world map.

## BIOGRAPHY SHILPA GUPTA

Shilpa Gupta, born in 1976 in Mumbai, India, lives and works there as well. In the recent years solo exhibitions were shown, among others, in the context of the 56th Venice Biennial (2015, with Rashid Rana), at the Kunsternes Hus in Oslo (NO) (both 2014), at Galerie im Taxipalais in Innsbruck (AT, 2013) as well as at the Arnolfini in Bristol (UK, 2012) Furthermore she was represented by works in group exhibitions, among others, at the Kathmandu Triennial (2017), 12th Havana Biennial (CU), at the Göteborg International Biennial for Contemporary Art (SE), at SALT in Istanbul (TR), at Queens Museum in New York (USA) (all 2015).

Shilpa Gupta is represented by Galleria Continua (San Gimignano / Beijing / Les Moulins / Habana), Dvir Gallery (Brussels / Tel Aviv) and Vadehra Art Gallery (New Delhi).

shilpagupta.com - galleriacontinua.com - dvirgallery.com - vadehraart.com

## WORKS IN THE EXHIBITION

### **1:384943, 2017**

Metal Bar



The entrance to the synagogue is barred by a heavy piece of metal bars that disrupts contemplation of the architecture by placing a massive slash over it. The bar also forces visitors to bend down or deviate from their usual route. The size of the bar corresponds to the size of the wall along the border, at a scale of 1:384943. The title of the work changes according to the context, since the bar's dimensions are adapted to every exhibition site. This work gives us a first glimpse of the work of Shilpa Gupta, who brings a geopolitical element to the vocabulary of minimalism and gets the viewer physically interacting with the works.

In the exhibition *Drawing in the Dark*, it is more particularly a question of the border between India and Bangladesh.

India hems in Bangladesh geographically, and this has a decisive influence on certain strategic aspects, such as access to the mouths of all of the rivers crossing Bangladesh. In 1989, India started building a fence over 4000 kilometres long, a titanic project that continues to this day. This fence is currently the longest boundary erected between two states, and it is a constant source of conflict. The wetlands of the Ganges Delta are rife with surveillance, smuggling and endless flooding. For many of the area's inhabitants, this fence primarily represents a danger, and has nothing to do with India's purported objective of containing external threats. Migration, trade and customs issues remains broadly unresolved.

Every border is preceded by its own design. Then it materialises in the steel of the border posts, which in turn proliferate over the landscape. It would actually take more than 384,943 units of metal identical to the girder that Shilpa Gupta placed in front of the synagogue to represent the full-scale size of the grating, which is 2710 kilometres long in its current state. *1:384943* is much more than a sculpture that obstructs space. It gives us an idea of the scale of that construction project, which has cost the Indian government billions of dollars over several decades.

**24:00:01, 2010-2012**

Flap board



A flap board similar to those found in airports, train stations and transit points welcomes visitors to the synagogue. The characters stream past, stringing together short phrases evoking mobility, nations, distances or dreams. Each line of text appears for a few seconds before melting into the next one.

It quickly becomes apparent to the reader that the machine has been programmed with mistakes, typos, inversions or omissions, and it is up to us to mentally fill and correct them. The machine's babbling gradually turns fears and pains into unique, poetic language.

**Map Tracing #5 - FR, 2017**

Copper wire



A nation is an artificial construct, and what it maps first and foremost is the way it imagines itself. The reality along a border ultimately has little to do with the outlines of the maps imposed by states.

*Map Tracing* is a work adapted to each exhibition site, according to the country in which it is shown and the dimensions of the room. The work has been presented in Belgium, Germany and France, each time taking on the outline of each country. *Map Tracing* disrupts our contemplation of an image that is nevertheless familiar. Depending on the viewers' movements and their position in the space, the well-known shape becomes a strange line that literally twists our vision.

**Song of the Ground, 2017**

Mechanical system, stones from the border river



Upstairs in the synagogue, the visitor is welcomed by the repeated sound of stone knocking together. These rocks found by the artist along the border were silent witnesses to the visible and invisible movements on either side of the fence. Like two arms clapping their hands in protest, the mineral rhythm echoes through the synagogue, recalling the life forces of nature in motion; like the rivers that carry these stones, this song of the ground is also a song of freedom.

**Untitled, 2017**

Drawings made from marijuana growing near checkpoints



Drug trafficking, prohibited by the laws of both countries, persists along the border. This series of drawings presents a few components of a surveillance system that operates opaquely: binoculars, a radio, the collar of a uniform... To create these drawings, the artist used pigments derived from marijuana growing near checkpoints. These drawings leave transparent lines on the white paper; like smuggling activities, they are partly invisible.

## 1:2138, 2017

Showcase, brass plate, strips of clothing



A ball of fabric was made out of thin, rolled-up strips of saris. Presented like an object in a museum, it is accompanied by a label bearing the title of the work: *1:2138*. It is yet another border downscaling operation. The total length of the strips of fabric used to make this ball is equivalent to 1/2138 the length of the barbed border between India and Bangladesh. The transposition from one scale to another enables a small object (the sari) to symbolically contain a much bigger one (the border). But this rolled-up sari has its own history and memory: it crossed the border unnoticed. In Bangladesh, the precious Sari Jamdani, made of cotton, takes a lot of time to make and is highly prized in India, so it gets smuggled. By destroying the much-coveted sari and radically transforming its shape, the artist paradoxically gives it another value, that of invisibility, which enables it to cross the border and elude the trade system.

## Unnoticed, 2017

Photographs of the sky above the border, detached motor components



Whereas saris are secretly sold in India, detached motor components get sold in Bangladesh, where demand is very high. The four photographic pictures presented at the tail end of the exhibition are a reference to the culture of repair, camouflage and adaptation that prevails in this border region. The artist has placed detached motor components on a series of cloudy skies. Clouds do not obey any border, and we all live under a shared sky. It is under this same sky that every day, whole motors cross the border unnoticed, dismembered into small components, to be reassembled later on the other side.

## PARTNERS

CAC - la synagogue de Delme is grateful for support from:



CAC - la synagogue de Delme is a member of d.c.a / French association for the development of centres d'art, LORA - Contemporary Art Network, and the Arts en résidence - French national network.



*Drawing in the Dark* is a collaboration between three European art centres: the exhibition is co-produced with KIOSK in Ghent, Belgium and the Bielefelder Kunstverein in Germany.

*Drawing in the Dark* was presented from 11 February to 16 April 2017 at KIOSK and from 29 April to 16 July 2017 at the Bielefelder Kunstve



Every artwork except *24:00:01* : courtesy Shilpa Gupta and Galerie CONTINUA  
*24:00:01* : courtesy Shilpa Gupta and Dvir Gallery

## RELATED EVENTS

### ART BUS EVENT / IN PARTNERSHIP WITH LORA - LORRAINE ART CONTEMPORAIN

**Saturday 28 October 2017 – GUIDED TOUR AT 11:30am**

LoRA-Lorraine Réseau Art is inviting artist Morgane Britscher to make stops along the roads of Lorraine and introduce us to a selection of contemporary art exhibitions in Metz, Delme, Meisenthal, Saint-Louis-lès-Bitche and Bitche

Reservation required: [contact@lora.fr](mailto:contact@lora.fr) / 06 43 83 65 50 / 5 euros

### TEACHER MEETING

**Thursday 9 November 2017 at 4:30pm**

Teachers will be welcomed by Camille Grasser, head of visitor services, for an introduction to the exhibition *Drawing in the Dark* and the *Gue(ho)st House*, a public commission by Christophe Berdaguer and Marie Péjus.

### ANIMAL K CONCERT IN PARTNERSHIP WITH EUROPEAN DAYS OF JEWISH CULTURE

**Sunday 12 November at 3pm - Gue(ho)st House**

Animal K is the meeting of Marie-Suzanne de Loye's baroque viola de gamba and Violaine Lochu's protean voice. These eclectic musicians join forces for a decompartmentalised exploration of the Jewish musical repertoire of Central Europe and the Mediterranean Basin. Free admission.

### DUO-VISIT IN PARTNERSHIP WITH THE CONSERVATOIRE D'ESPACES NATURELS DE LORRAINE

**Date to be confirmed**

Discover the exhibition in the company of Camille Grasser, head of visitor services at the art centre, then discover the Côte de Delme, regional natural reserve, with Thierry Gydé, head of nature activities at the CEN Lorraine. An extensive stroll through local history. Meet at 4pm at the CAC – Synagogue de Delme. Free. Reservation required.

### "BIG IDEAS SMALL HANDS" WORKSHOPS > FOR CHILDREN AGED 6-11 > 2pm to 5pm

**Wednesday 8 November 2017**

**Wednesday 13 December 2017**

**Wednesday 7 February 2018**

Led by Camille Grasser, head of visitor services, and artist Katia Mourer, these workshops allow children to discover the current exhibition through a playful, concrete approach to the exhibited works. Free. Reservation required.

### PLAY-WORKSHOP > CHILDREN AGED 7 and up > 3pm to 4:30pm

**IN PARTNERSHIP WITH THE MÉDIATHÈQUE DE DELME**

**Wednesday 17 January 2018**

Free. Reservation required with the Médiathèque: 03 87 01 39 91.

### HAND-IN-HAND WORKSHOP > PARENTS AND CHILDREN > 3pm to 4pm

**Saturday 27 January 2018**

For children aged 5 to 12 accompanied by their parents. The art centre is offering a workshop for children and their parents! Little ones and bigger ones can come and share a convivial moment playfully discovering works of art. Free. Reservation required.

## PRACTICAL INFORMATION

From Wednesday to Saturday, 2pm - 6pm  
and Sunday 11am - 6pm.

Admission free.

Guided tour every Sunday at 4pm.

Closed from 23 december 2017 to 2 january 2018 included.

## ACCESS

FROM PARIS (by train 90mins):

TGV Est, get off at Metz or Nancy

FROM METZ (by car, 30mins):

D955, formerly route de Strasbourg

FROM NANCY (by car, 30mins):

N74 towards Château-Salins

then D955 towards Metz

## CONTACT

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## CONTACT EDUCATIONAL SERVICE

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