

## Delicate Bond of Steel

Cincinnati Exhibition, July 12<sup>th</sup> – July 15<sup>th</sup>, 2018

Opening Reception: Thursday, July 12<sup>th</sup>, 6:00pm – 9:00pm

Martha Hewett Gallery, 1310 Pendleton Street, Pendleton Art Center, Cincinnati, Ohio

**Aicon Gallery** is proud to announce its first pop-up exhibition in Cincinnati, *Delicate Bond of Steel*. The exhibition, organized in partnership with **Marta Hewett Gallery**, opens on July 12<sup>th</sup>, 2018, and features work from the gallery's roster of prominent South Asian artists **Anila Quayyum Agha**, **G. R. Iranna**, **Arunkumar H. G.**, **Gigi Scaria**, **M. Pravat**, **Adeela Suleman**, **Abdullah M. I. Syed** and **Salman Toor**. The exhibition explores the historic cultural and artistic ties that continue to bind South Asian nations such as India, Pakistan, Bangladesh and Sri Lanka, despite the traumatic partitions and redrawing of borders of the past.



**Anila Quayyum Agha**, *Shimmering Mirage*, 2016  
Laser-cut black lacquered steel and bulb, 36 x 36 x 36 in.

The departing British colonial administration positioned the independence and division of the Indian subcontinent in 1947, ultimately, as a means of ensuring lasting peace. However, seventy years later, regional, political and religious divides continue, contributing, in part, to the creation of a global South Asian diaspora, which has taken up firm, yet culturally and historically, interconnected roots wherever it finds itself. Yet, the peace that was to come from independence on the subcontinent, has been elusive. Sectarian strife and regional conflict have found a way to reach across borders the world over, but particularly so in Asia and the Middle East. If, in fact, peace has been imagined anywhere in these regions, it has been in the arts. Whether in the movies, music, television or in print, there has been a constant exchange, even under the darkest clouds of war, that has unpeeled and laid bare the lives of one to the other. Through this unpeeling and revealing, commonalities have ultimately trumped differences.

*Delicate Bond of Steel* is an homage to this imagination, this possibility of peace and co-existence. It brings together the work of sub-continental artists of the post-independence and post-partition generation. This generation was spared the complex and violent struggles of this era and often brought up instead on rosy nostalgia. It is also the generation that, through the digital flattening of the earth, has had access to instant and unfiltered information. For the diaspora artists in this exhibition, all of this comes together in wonderfully varied visual forms, which nevertheless spring from a common historical and cultural bond deeply rooted in the subcontinent.

Pakistan-born, Indianapolis-based artist **Anila Quayyum Agha**, the recipient of Cincinnati Art Museum's 2017 Marjorie Schiele Prize, works in a variety of media, ranging from large sculptural installations to embroidered drawings through which she explores the deeply entwined relationships between gender, culture, religion, labor and social codes. In a world where

increasingly chaotic external events often seem beyond any individuals control, Agha's work turns inward towards the intricacies of the human condition, reflecting on the complexities of love, loss and gains, personally experienced by the artist over the past two years.

Born in Karnataka, but now based in Delhi, **Arunkumar H. G.** explores the tacit relationship between burgeoning consumerist culture and the systematic degradation of natural resources. His collection of cast forms deliberately recalls the processes of mass production, yet his choice of materials (wood pulp, cement, aluminum, wood glue and paint) speaks to the environmental cost implicit in their creation. Raised in an agricultural family in India's Southwestern state of Karnataka and currently based in New Delhi, **G. R. Irranna** explores the constant struggle between the organic forces inherent in nature and mankind's attempts to temper and direct these vital forces in both the physical world and within ourselves through social constructs and systems of indoctrination.

Kerala-born, New Delhi-based artist **Gigi Scaria's** work draws the viewer's attention towards the painful truths of migrancy and displacement through his intense investigation of urban topographies, modern city structures, and the intended and unintended consequences of such for the people who live amongst them. Echoes of alienation and displacement reverberate within the labyrinthine buildings of his canvases and the uncanny structures of his sculptures. Brooklyn-based artist **Salman Toor** uses his paintings of chaotic, surreal, and sometimes grotesque social gatherings, brimming with figures who blur the lines between cultural identity and stereotype, to reflect upon how our individual cultural baggage can all too easily spill over into attitudes of intolerance and violence at the collective level if not successfully mediated.

Pakistan-born, Sydney-based artist and the winner of Australia's 2017 Carstairs Prize, **Abdullah M. I. Syed's** practice is founded in personal observations and experiences as a Muslim male artist straddling multiple and frequently conflicting cultures. Over the past several years, Syed has led his investigation of the integral interwoven systems which shape our society through the medium of uncirculated printed currency. Through the gestural act of meticulously and painstakingly drawing and cutting patterns into printed banknotes by hand, Syed directly intervenes with a cornerstone of contemporary societies' value systems. Currency, the very bastion on which our transactional society is built, becomes the site of denouement.

Aicon Gallery's curatorial vision begins in the Indian sub-continent but reaches outwards internationally from there. The New York gallery provides a vital platform for Modern and Contemporary artists from South Asia, as well as the Middle East and, finally, diaspora artists, to realize their vision in a global and ever-shifting world. Alongside in-depth, focused solo shows, the gallery presents a program of curated group exhibitions that are international in their scope and ambition. The program deliberately links together art produced recently with art made in the latter half of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century. Through this, we hope to produce unexpected congruencies, shed light on multiple modernisms and nuanced designations of "contemporary".

Please contact Aicon Gallery ([Andrew@Aicongallery.com](mailto:Andrew@Aicongallery.com)) for more information.