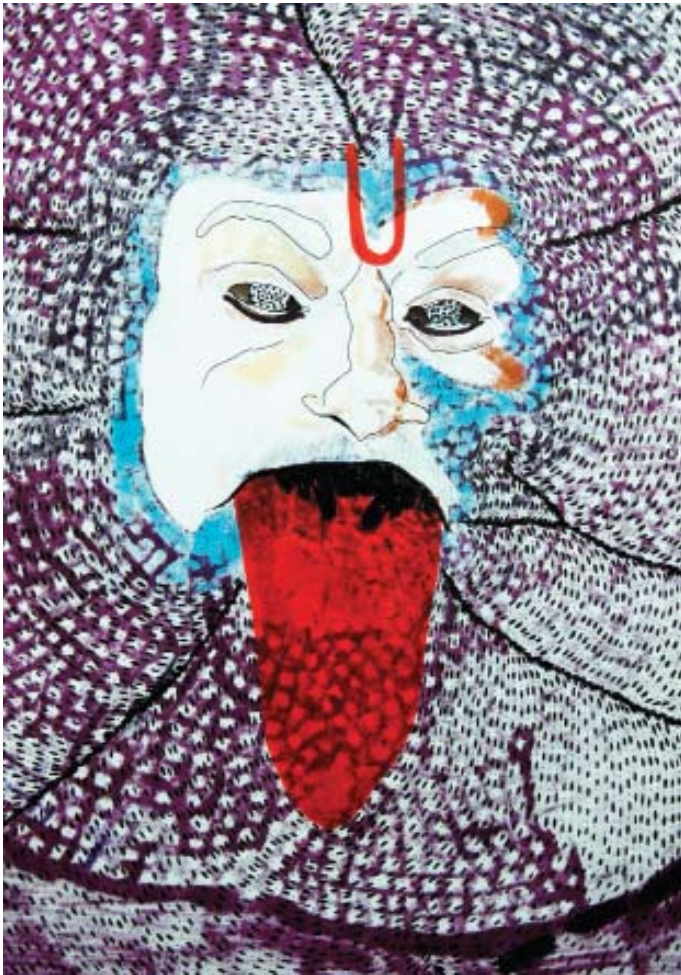


FROM MUSCAT TO LONDON

RADHIKA KHIMJI



The space between departure and arrival is curious. It is never fixed, even when you're sitting in the same seat on the same plane for hours. My relationship with my cities, Muscat and London (and my country, India), is always located there, in the getting to and leaving of a place.

What is fascinating and inspirational about any city is the daily relationship one has to it, apart from its history and cultural heritage. Daily life is always slightly different and slightly the same. In my experience it has a lot to do

with travel. In Muscat I drive from place to place and in London I use the public transportation available. In London my studio is an hour away from my home. In Muscat my studio is in my home. These subtle shifts and different durations have an effect on my practice. I have always thought of the marks I make on the surface of my work as a kind of journey across a space, a plotting of an interior chart which maps out two activities; the activity of physically moving and that of drawing and remembering. Employing several pluralities such as stillness and movement, the subject of my work is always related to a process. The roads in Muscat have been built up over the last 30 years, a network made available for the city's inhabitants. At times this infrastructure has had to blast through mountains to pave its way through the city and as you drive on highways these breaks through rock punctuate the journey. These are points which make visible the interior of a dense surface, exposing layer upon layer of rock. This element of my city has always triggered thoughts about surface and depth, and the physical relationship one has to what is beneath. These relationships with surfaces have influenced my process of making a work, as what I do has a lot to do with layering and finding pathways inside a shape. The dots I use are exactly that, a step-by-step trip through the rough terrain of the surface I work on.

Travelling around London also opens up different surfaces in a different way. One is always going deeper into the earth, via the underground, or slowly moving on its surface through traffic. These daily wanderings have enabled my current body of work, expanding on the intrinsic qualities of a notebook, utilising its portability, intimacy, narrative unfolding, and sequential rhythm amongst other aspects. The significance of a notebook for travel and documentation of a passage, journey and exploration is fundamental to my practice and allusive to my understanding of how an art object materialises. I have been led by this project to make a series of floating hitchhikers that are in a constant state of transit. They are cut-out shapes, and reference the body. Their role is to destabilise the relationship between figure and ground and thereby prevent a simplistic and patronising cultural analysis of the work. When dealing with my two cities, there is a self-governed censorship I employ in most of my work to actively refuse any association to an exoticism. Dumb humour is the present tool I use to discourage a dated Orientalism today.

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