

Tirza True Latimer, Wifredo Lam, Charles Henri Ford, Ariel Goldberg, Noam Parness, Robert Giard, Alexis Clements, Barbara Smith, Pamela Sneed, Susanna Koetter, Kiyon Williams, Orlee Malka, Joseph Liatela, Aika Akhmetova, Rasel Ahmed, Fontaine Capel, Nona Faustine, Patricia Lannes, Nirvana Santos, Stanley Stellar, Avram Finkelstein, Deborah Kass, Glenn Ligon, Yevgeniy Fiks, Angela Dufresne, Catalina Schliebener, Russell Perkins, Ronak K. Kapadia, Chitra Ganesh, Marianna Bender, Katharina Poblitzki, Hilton Als, Lola Flash, Perry Brass, John Burton Harter

INTERSECTIONALITY

ISSUE 68



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“There is no such thing as a single-issue struggle because we do not live single-issue lives.” — Audre Lorde

Dear Friends,

As we continue to define a vision for the future of the Leslie-Lohman Museum of Art, the concept of Intersectionality is at the center of the many conversations among staff, board of trustees, and collaborators. Is it possible to reflect the LGBTQ+ experience in an authentic way without paying attention to issues of race, ethnicity, class, and ability? The answer to that question brought us back to the 1977 statement from the Combahee River Collective and to the writings from Kimberlé Crenshaw who in the 1980s stated that “Intersectionality” is an analytic sensibility, a way of thinking about identity and its relationship to power. Originally articulated on behalf of black women, the term brought to light the invisibility of many constituents within groups that claim them as members but often fail to represent them.

From Charles Henri Ford and his colleagues defying the equalizing norms of modernism in the 1940s (*Other Points of View*, page 4), to the poignant feature guest curated by Pamela Sneed which primarily focuses on a group of her students navigating complex and layered intersectional issues through their artistic practice and lives (*Intersectionality in the Studio*, page 20), to the desire of a brown feminist Queer utopia expressed so beautifully by Chitra Ganesh on our upcoming iteration of QUEERPOWER (page 54), the pages in this issue of *The Archive* are all built around the idea of intersectionality. We seek to bring light the experiences and issues that are a result of the complex set of identities that makes each and every one of us unique.

This year, we hope members of our community, museum visitors, and program participants have the opportunity to see themselves reflected in our content in a much more nuanced and intersectional way.

Onwards!



Gonzalo Casals  
Executive Director



Join us for our third annual Spring Benefit celebrating leaders at the intersection of Arts and Social Justice

# Utopias 2020

HONORING

CHITRA GANESH  
QUEERPOWER Public Art Commission

WANDA ACOSTA  
Community Advocacy Award

JASON BAUER & JUAN MANGIAROTTI  
Young Queer Philanthropy Award

MUSIC

DJ Rekha

Tuesday, March 31, 2020, 6-9 PM

Tickets Available at [leslielohman.org](http://leslielohman.org)

Honorary Host: \$2,000  
(includes a 10 ticket bundle)

Reception Tickets:  
\$100 (\$90 for members)

For information contact:  
[development@leslielohman.org](mailto:development@leslielohman.org) or  
212-431-2609 x 15.

All funds raised at the Spring Benefit  
directly benefit the Leslie-Lohman  
Museum of Art operations and programs.

Image: Chitra Ganesh, *Sultana's Dream*, 2018, Portfolio of 27 Linocuts on BFK Rives Tan, 280gsm, 20 1/8 x 16 1/8 in. Edition of 35. Courtesy the artist and Durham Press.

Stepping into the sumptuous worlds of aesthetic possibility created by Chitra Ganesh (b. 1975) quickly reveals an artistic vision full of queer feminist postcolonial fantasies and futures. Ganesh's two-decades-long solo art practice moves beautifully across mediums—from charcoal drawings and paintings, to digital collages and films to new media animations and site-specific installations. Drawing on popular culture, comics, religion, and science fiction, Ganesh states that her visual vocabularies are most inspired by the Indian figure of the *junglee* (literally “of the jungle”)—a colonial pejorative term to police female transgression.<sup>1</sup>

# Chitra Ganesh

Text by Ronak K. Kapadia

Powerful femmes are front and center in nearly all her works; *junglees* appear as feminized forms twisted and reassembled with the visual iconographies of the sacred and profane. We see this most clearly in her fantastic 2014 *Eyes of Time* mixed-media mural at the Brooklyn Museum, which was part of her first solo museum show in New York. In this work, the artist reimagines the Goddess Devi's avatar Kali—the warlike feminist icon of creation and destruction—as a three-breasted headless cyborg, adorned with wildly braided cascades of black hair and a girdle made of bloodied human arms and hands, as she powerfully controls the cycles of time. Ganesh's luminous and complex works offer contaminated visions full of Hindu and Buddhist-inspired ideas of metaphysics, mythology, and temporality that are equally punk and queer. Wildness and wilding are everywhere in these works, which remind us that the *junglee* figure is not only a site of queer unruliness but also an altar to divine political knowledge about other ways of being in the world.

While Ganesh's acclaimed solo practice rightly circulates far and wide, less acknowledged is her equally compelling and longstanding interdisciplinary collaboration with fellow Brooklyn-based artist Mariam Ghani (b. 1978). Since 2004, this duo has built the *Index of the Disappeared* (Index), a material archive of post-9/11 disappearances and a platform for public dialogue and digital exploration. As scholar-activists, Ganesh and Ghani have convened diverse cross-sections of cultural producers to explore timely issues about the US global war on terror, with a focus on its domestic reverberations within Arab, Muslim, and South Asian communities. The Index has translated their impressive documentary archives into visual works installed in spaces far beyond gallery and museum walls. Recent commissions from New York University, the Park Avenue Armory, and Yale Law School have included mixed-media works on the US prison camp at Guantánamo Bay, codes of conduct from the Army Field Manual and Geneva Conventions, and the afterlives of torture at secret CIA black sites around the globe.

In their earliest exhibition, *Seeing the Disappeared*, the Index featured a window installation of overlapping watercolors of immigrant detainees to mimic the form of missing-person flyers that proliferated in public spaces in lower Manhattan after 9/11. Drawn from research interviews conducted by Ganesh and Ghani with formerly detained immigrants and their loved ones, these images deftly employed watercolor—a medium often associated with Sunday painting, landscape, and leisure—to make visible the countenances of imprisoned peoples and their loved ones, whose violent experiences with the militarized security state are often disappeared as part of war on terror discourse. In the process, the Index's paintings serve as reparative queer feminist intervention, calling attention to the violent absences and haunted abjections that distinguish and make possible contemporary US civic life while simultaneously restoring dignity and humanity to subjects deemed collateral damage of US global warfare. In these collaborative works we witness artists grappling with the most urgent political questions of our time—torture and its afterlives, radical forms of confinement and killing, spectacular brutalities that define the dystopian here and now. Ganesh is thus part of a unique subset of contemporary queer American artists of color whose interdisciplinary works are playing a pivotal role in amplifying creative revolt. Might these insurgent expressions help turn the tide against endless wars and militarisms that define the criminal disorder of things? After all, what could be queerer than the political artist's recognition in the here and now that the world we inhabit is unrelenting and not enough. Let's follow their lead.

<sup>1</sup> Ganesh's artist statement qtd. in Gayatri Gopinath, "Chitra Ganesh's Queer Re-Visions," *GLQ: A Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies*, Vol. 15, no. 3 (2009): 469.

Ronak K. Kapadia is an associate professor of gender and women's studies and affiliated faculty in art history, global Asian studies, and museum and exhibition studies at the University of Illinois at Chicago. He is author of *Insurgent Aesthetics: Security and the Queer Life of the Forever War* (Duke University Press, 2019) and at work on a new book titled "Breathing in the Brown Queer Commons."

