

## THE FUTURE IS FLUID

As part of our yearlong exploration of the future, Chitra Ganesh joins the Rubin as a Future Fellow, with new works on view and a residency in May and June.

### CHITRA GANESH: FACE OF THE FUTURE

On view now in the Art Lounge through November 4, 2018

Ganesh reimagines how visual languages of science fiction and fantasy take shape and proliferate around the world in print culture, literature, and cinema. In addition to showcasing her own new works on paper and collage-based pieces, Ganesh has invited seven emerging artists—Maia Cruz Palileo, Nontsikelelo Mutiti, Tammy Nguyen, Jagdeep Raina, Sahana Ramakrishnan, Anuj Shrestha, and Tuesday Smillie—to expand and redefine the aesthetics of science fiction by creating posters that refer to a group of important, influential films largely outside the Western canon.

### CELEBRATE CHITRA GANESH

Friday, May 4, 6:00–10:00 PM  
Free admission

Join us in a museum-wide celebration of artist Chitra Ganesh and commemorate her engagement as a Future Fellow at the Rubin. Enjoy free museum admission, a live DJ, and drink specials.

### FACE OF THE FUTURE FELLOWSHIP

May–June 2018

Ganesh curates a series of on-stage conversations that address the future state of select subjects with special guests.

### CABARET CINEMA: FACE OF THE FUTURE

May–June 2018

Ganesh and fellow artists featured in *Face of the Future* select and introduce six films for Cabaret Cinema that reflect the pop fiction futuristic themes featured in their exhibition, ranging from Roger Vadim's 1960s space fantasy *Barbarella* to the original Japanese *Godzilla*.

### SCIENCE FICTION SILENTS

Ganesh's fellowship concludes with silent screenings of seminal silent fiction films like *Aelita on Mars* with live performance scores.

Challenge your expectations about the future with our full year of programs and experiences. Current listings are posted at [RubinMuseum.org/future](http://RubinMuseum.org/future).

@RubinMuseum #TheFutureIsFluid #ChitraGanesh

*Chitra Ganesh: The Scorpion Gesture* is made possible by Rasika and Girish Reddy, Manoj and Rita Singh, the Akhoury Foundation, and contributors to the 2018 Exhibitions Fund.

## the STUDIO

Developed and Animated  
by the STUDIO

Chief Creative Officer:  
Mary Nittolo

Producer:  
Eric Schutzbank

Lead Animators:  
Nick Herms  
Eric Kilanski  
Victor DeRespinis

Additional animation by:  
Jacqueline Garbuio  
Sean Vecchione

FOLLOW US ON



ON VIEW NOW  
THROUGH JANUARY 7, 2019



# THE RUBIN CHITRA GANESH: THE SCORPION GESTURE

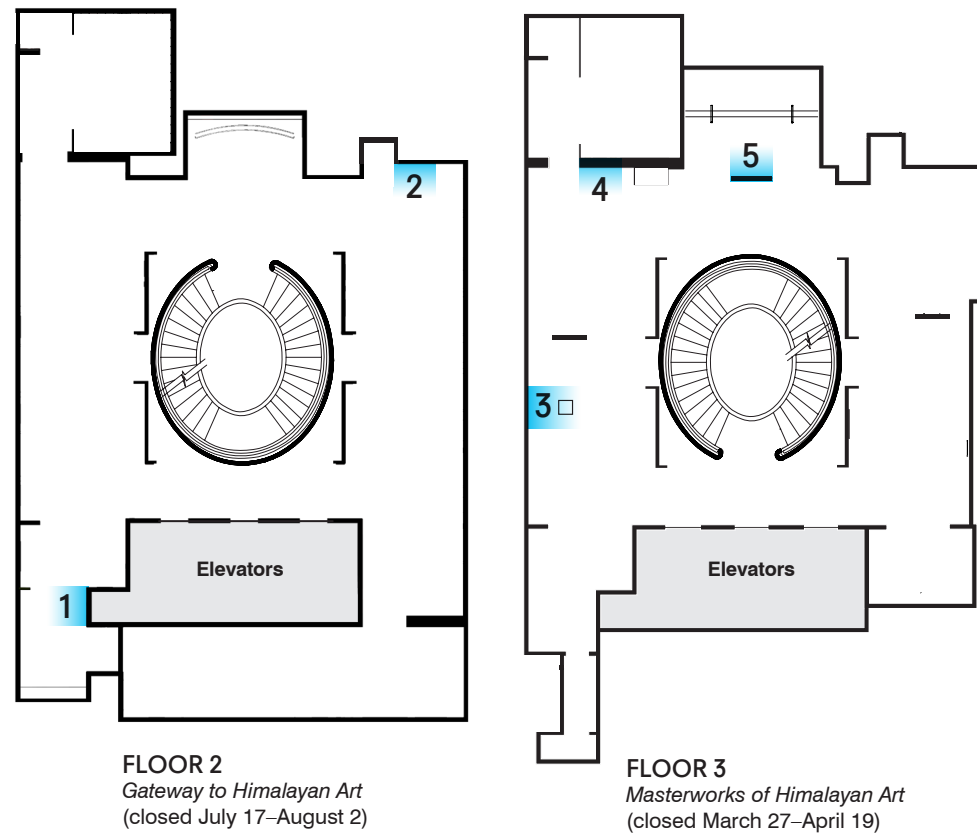
## THE SCORPION GESTURE

For *The Scorpion Gesture*, Chitra Ganesh created a series of animated artistic interventions in the Rubin's collection galleries. All five are inspired by nearby artworks that relate to Padmasabhava, known to Tibetans as the Second Buddha, and Maitreya, the Future Buddha, though each departs from the aesthetics and iconography associated with the traditional works. Ganesh's animations reveal her inimitable and brilliant skill of translating complex narratives—often of mythological or epic proportion—into poetic, contemporary, and lucid visual stories. While this approach is also evident in her paintings and drawings, it is further amplified in her animations.

Adopting and adapting elements from historical objects for this time-based medium, Ganesh takes disparate elements that might all meet the eye at the same time on the surface of a thangka painting and gives them additional narrative and spatial depth. She offers viewers a new lens through which to consider objects in the Rubin's collection, while her own works invite repeated cycles of watching to catch the rigorous extent of their depth, detail, and care. Collaging her line drawings, watercolors, and paintings with elements from historical reference works, these animations live and linger between two and three dimensions, challenging conventional limitations of drawing and sculpture. They are markers of transformation that speak simultaneously to the historical past, the sociopolitical realities of our present, and the speculative potential of apocalyptic and far futures.

—Beth Citron, Curator

## MAP



## CHITRA GANESH

(b. 1975, Brooklyn, NY)

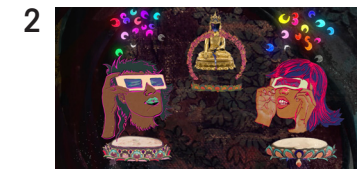
In her drawing-based practice, Chitra Ganesh brings to light narrative representations of femininity, sexuality, and power that are typically absent from canons of literature and art. Her wall installations, comics, charcoal drawings, and mixed-media works often take historical and mythic texts as inspiration and points of departure to complicate received ideas of iconic female forms. Her vocabulary pulls from surrealism, expressionism, Hindu and Buddhist iconography, and traditional South Asian pictorial forms, connecting these sources with contemporary mass-mediated visual languages.

## FLOOR 2



*The Messenger*, 2018  
Digital animation  
Courtesy of the artist

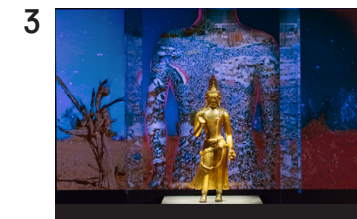
This work was the initial animation I developed for *The Scorpion Gesture*, and it became a gateway to how I approached the project. I wanted to create a sense of dimensionality and depth within the graphic visual languages. The paintings in the Rubin's collection tend to feature varied representations of scale and depth, with multiple narrative vignettes on the same pictorial plane, interlocked in a tight composition. Here the movement between two- and three-dimensional space is achieved through loosening fragments of the dense visual imagery from the paintings, integrated with my own drawings through new camera angles and environments. This integration is visible in the long life ritual elements on the upper left and the worshippers below. The mandala form functions as a point of entry from the Museum space into the diegetic animation space, which the viewer passes through like a space time vortex, such as a black hole or the rings of a tree. I was also inspired by visually resonant moments from the literature and texts, including biographies and historical interpretations, that I read during my research process, such as the story of Namkhai Nyingpo gliding up on a sunbeam with peaceful and wrathful deities in tow. —Chitra Ganesh



*Rainbow Body*, 2018  
Digital animation  
Courtesy of the artist

The title of this work refers to an elevated state of, or metaphor for, the consciousness transformation known as a rainbow body. The Buddhist master Padmasambhava achieved this state from his union with Mandarava, a female spirit (*dakini*) and princess in Tantric Buddhism. Through study and physical connection, each played a key role in the other's enlightenment. *Rainbow Body* takes inspiration from the cave on the right in the painting of the bodhisattva Maitreya, located adjacent to the animation. The cave structure is elaborated upon and extensively built out, introducing an interior depth where the ultimate transformation happens. I wanted to work with a narrative structure of dreamlike density, moving the viewer through a succession of physical and psychic spaces. The animation opens with Mandarava waking up to a dream in her bedroom and follows her journey through the bardo, the sometimes terrifying passageway between death and rebirth. The aerial and gliding camera movements reconfigure imagery of the bardo from paintings with a greater sense of space and depth. The work also combines my line drawings, watercolors, and paintings with pictorial elements from a variety of original sources. —C. G.

## FLOOR 3



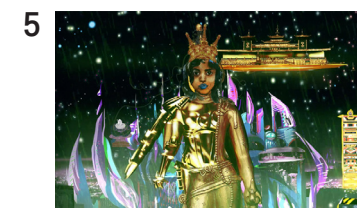
*Silhouette in the Graveyard*, 2018  
Digital animation  
Courtesy of the artist

This animation involved a challenging set of constraints: developing and presenting a moving-image work with a collection object in the frame. The sculpture of the bodhisattva Maitreya is positioned at the front and center of the animation, and it therefore informed artistic decisions regarding imagery, composition, and narrative progression. Maitreya is the Future Buddha, whose prophetic arrival is said to usher in a new age at a time when the terrestrial world has lost its way. The endless stream of images of political, social, and ecological upheaval that we are bombarded with daily seemed in uncanny alignment with the apocalyptic moment associated with Maitreya. Negotiating the spatial relations between the object and my own work inspired a more experimental narrative approach, with references to theater and the performative nature of protest shaping my treatment of photographic and video material. The river of blood gestures to the liminal space between life and death that is a recurring trope in this series of animations. —C. G.



*Adventures of the White Beryl*, 2018  
Digital animation  
Courtesy of the artist

*Adventures of the White Beryl* is inspired by the multi-leaf manuscript in the adjacent room, and it follows the encounters of a shape-shifting protagonist who appears as woman, shadow, universe, animal, and machine at different points in the story. The piece has a nonlinear, cyclical narrative form and draws on the endless permutations of conflict, rebirth, and transformation alluded to in the *White Beryl*'s elemental divination texts. I was particularly struck by how the manuscript characterizes one's life trajectory as a highly contingent series of bodily changes, physical challenges, and natural calamities, which seem both inevitable and avoidable. I sought to play with the signifiers such as zodiac animals and natural and bodily elements, as well as the visual language of the *White Beryl* itself. Early stop-motion animation, such as the work of Harry Smith, was an equally important point of reference. The resulting animation overlaps significantly with the aesthetics of vintage comics and early video games, using sequential action and game board-like sequences as a visual framework for navigating life's dangers and dream-like paths. —C. G.



*Metropolis*, 2018  
Digital animation  
Courtesy of the artist

*Metropolis* alludes to the painting *Life Scenes of Master Shantarakshita*, located directly opposite the animation, and Fritz Lang's 1927 expressionist science fiction film of the same name. I was interested in Shantarakshita's critical role as a translator of scriptures and an overseer of the construction of Samye, the first Tibetan monastery, after the Buddhist master Padmasambhava cleared the Tibetan plateau of troubling spirits. Formally, the narrative is structured as a progression through a series of interlocking environments, starting and ending in deep space and culminating in the apocalyptic resurrection of Maitreya. Here the future Maitreya appears as a multi-limbed cyborg entity, constructed of hybrid elements invoking Aelita, Queen of Mars; the Futura of Lang's *Metropolis*; and bronze sculptures of Maitreya in the Rubin's collection. I was interested in how the first monastery and the surrounding development of a city from the deep past could offer a gateway of connection to the science fictive urban dystopias associated with apocalyptic futures. These dystopias include worlds characterized by stark class divisions, imperialist ambitions, and inequitable access to resources, much like our own world, and are featured in Lang's film and the contemporary science fiction writings of Octavia E. Butler, Philip K. Dick, and Manjula Padmanabhan. —C. G.