

For Immediate Release
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The Kitchen

THE KITCHEN PRESENTS CHITRA GANESH: *HER GARDEN, A MIRROR*
SEPTEMBER 14 – OCTOBER 20



Image Credit: Chitra Ganesh

Through Printmaking, Sculpture, and Video, Ganesh Visualizes a Sci-fi Feminist Utopia Expanding on Begum Rokeya Sakhawat Hossain's 1905 Story "Sultana's Dream"

The Kitchen presents *Her garden, a mirror*, a solo exhibition by **Chitra Ganesh** of new works in printmaking, sculpture, and, video (September 14-October 20). Taking as her point of departure the feminist, sci-fi utopia imagined by Bengali Muslim author and social reformer Begum Rokeya Sakhawat Hossain in her 1905 story "Sultana's Dream," Ganesh continues her symbolically rich exploration of gender and power, harnessing mythologies of the past to expand a futurist imaginary. Engaging the speculative traditions of varied art historical and literary sources, Ganesh reimagines the roles of the individual and the collective during periods of societal turbulence. Curated by **Matthew Lyons**.

Working with **Durham Press**, Ganesh has created a large suite of linocut prints, a technique championed by Die Brücke artists in Germany around the time of the publication of "Sultana's Dream," to expressively build a world through black ink and negative space. Drawing inspiration from the histories of relief printing from fine art to DIY and protest movements, one important reference was the Flemish painter Frans Masereel's 1925 wordless novel of 100 woodcuts, *The City*. Ganesh's prints present densely symbolic dreamscapes cohabitated by nature, technology, myth, humanity, and architecture; she creates her own visual vocabulary that bridges disparate times and symbols to map the mythological onto the everyday. *Her garden, a mirror* also features new sculptural installations inspired by the way in which technologies used to excavate the past help us to visualize the future.

Across her career, Ganesh's imagistic vocabulary has drawn from surrealism, expressionism, Hindu and Buddhist iconography, and South-Asian pictorial forms such as Kalighat and Madhubani painting, connecting these with contemporary mass-mediated visual languages of comics, science fiction, news photography, and illustration. Her studies

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in literature, semiotics, and social theory are critical to the engagement with narrative and deconstruction that animates her work. In this exhibition, **Chitra Ganesh** has extended Begum Rokeya's futurist vision, coalescing the feminist fantasy she articulated over a century ago with the contents of contemporary imaginaries.

In "Sultana's Dream," Begum Rokeya, a lifelong women's education advocate (who would eventually open a high school for Bengali Muslim girls in Kolkata—which is still running to this day), imagined a utopia in which an educated woman was not a social aberration, but rather a given. The story introduces "Ladyland" to readers via the experience of a dozing woman narrator who dreamingly slips into this alternate realm. Here, women not only have intellectual agency, but also drive society. In this lush collectivist realm, militarism has no place, horticulture is huge, and technologies work symbiotically with the earth. With levity and satiric humor, Begum Rokeya depicted an inversion of the gendered rules of her environs, and the ways they corresponded to social and physical architectures: men are confined to the *zenana*—the secluded interiors the household designated for women—and women openly occupy and thrive in the public sphere. Ganesh says of the exhibit, "The idea was to think about elements of the body and of architecture that are translated out of the language of the story and take visual form. The character can be the dream itself or the city, and the narrator is a conduit or a translator."

In November The Kitchen will partner with the Times Square Arts and the Rubin Museum of Art to screen Ganesh's video *The Scorpion Gesture* (November 1-November 30) as part of the Times Square Arts' Midnight Moment, the world's largest, longest-running digital art exhibition, synchronized on electronic billboards throughout Times Square nightly from 11:57pm to midnight. For more information, visit <http://www.timessquarenyc.org/midnightmoment>.

Curated by Matthew Lyons, *Her garden, a mirror* will be on view September 14 – October 20 at The Kitchen, 512 W 19th St, New York. Exhibitions are always free at The Kitchen thanks to member support. Exhibit hours are Tuesday-Saturday, 11am to 6pm. An opening reception will take place on September 13, from 6 to 8pm.

About Chitra Ganesh

Chitra Ganesh (b. 1975, lives and works in Brooklyn, NY) graduated from Brown University in with a BA in Comparative Literature and Art-Semiotics, and received her MFA from Columbia University. Ganesh's work has been widely exhibited, including at the Rubin Museum, Brooklyn Museum, Queens Museum, Museum of Contemporary Art San Diego La Jolla, Berkeley Art Museum, Bronx Museum, the Andy Warhol Museum, MoMA PS1, and Baltimore Museum. Ganesh's work has been widely exhibited across Europe and South Asia, including at the Fondazione Sandretto Re Rebaudengo, the Saatchi Museum, MoCA Shanghai, Kunsthalle Exnergasse, Kunstverein Göttingen, Gothenburg Kunsthalle, Indira Gandhi National Centre for Arts, Princes of Wales Museum in Mumbai, Devi Art Foundation, Travancore Palace, and the Dhaka Art Summit at Shilpakala Academy. In 2013-14, she was Artist-in-Residence at New York University's Asian/Pacific/American Studies Program, and in 2015-2016, she was a Robina Foundation Fellow for Arts and Human Rights at Yale University Law School. Art. Ganesh was awarded a Hodder Fellowship for the 2017-18 academic year at Princeton University's Lewis Center for the Arts. Ganesh is the recipient of numerous other residencies and grants, including a Guggenheim Fellowship, and her works are held in the public collections of the Philadelphia Museum of Art, San Jose Museum of Art, Baltimore Museum, Whitney Museum, and Museum of Modern Art. chitraganesh.com

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About The Kitchen

The Kitchen is one of New York City's most forward-looking nonprofit spaces, showing innovative work by emerging and established artists across disciplines. Our programs range from dance, music, performance, and theater to video, film, and

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art, in addition to literary events, artists' talks, and lecture series. Since its inception in 1971, The Kitchen has been a powerful force in shaping the cultural landscape of this country, and has helped launch the careers of many artists who have gone on to worldwide prominence.

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