

those who walk before me

A solo exhibition by Joya Mukerjee Logue

A memory, unbidden and without feet, announces itself presently, carrying the compulsions of our prolific world – from renewal and regeneration to repair and restoration contended in acts both big and small – with all our pasts and futures trailing at its heels. For artist Joya Mukerjee Logue, memory is inextricably linked to an understanding of culture. With an Indian father and American mother, Mukerjee Logue's own mixed heritage sets a stage of curiosity for questions around identity, belonging and connection. Exploring the varied dimensions of her ancestral and cultural roots within the contours of her present-day life in Cincinnati, Ohio, takes Mukerjee Logue on frequent travels back to India, to her father's hometown of Ambala in Haryana. As they compound, her personal visits become subsumed in collective recall, stretching the practice of memory from preservation to an agile reclamation of shared stories, structures and spaces in and around her ancestral house, home to five generations of family, in a bazaar just off the Grand Trunk Road. These threads of continuity between history and the present yield the site-specific triggers of belonging so essential to the human condition, cogently described by historic preservationist Thompson Mayes as landmarks of identity, in his book titled *Why Old Places Matter*.

Mukerjee Logue has a propitious vantage point guiding her self-reflexive inquiries into collective memory, whether that of family or of cultures at large. Steering the course between two cultures from within their liminal spaces, Mukerjee Logue is alert to the conditions of plurality as she is intimate with the unitary constitution of the clustering self. Her practice is poised towards self-discovery, enriched further by the emotional theatre of routine, encounters through travel, and a growing archive of family photographs, anecdotes and belongings. She turns an anthropological lens upon her moods and experiences, elapsing within a timeline of personal–historical significance, yielding charming portrayals of everyday life that sustain varied truths about the shared human condition resurfacing over time and generations. Such a living museum, offering experiential revisitations of times gone by and lives well-lived, transcends the moment of its own making and representation, promising timelessness and making universal appeals in spite of the consistent and assertive forces of change. In her decade-long painting practice, Mukerjee Logue has summoned an atmosphere of familiarity through earthen palettes, enacted in fluid, impressionistic strokes. As her figures, objects and structures transcend their inspiration to become 'images', so too develops her visual vocabulary, a collage of ideas, experiences, feelings and memories – a dusty road; an umbrella with faded colours; an indistinct figure who could be someone's mother, another's friend.

those who walk before me is Mukerjee Logue's first-ever solo exhibition in India, bringing together a comprehensive curation of up to 30 canvases and multiple series of drawings and works on paper. In spirit, these recent works are a travelogue of an inner itinerary, emerging from a morning walk in the bazaar outside her ancestral family home called Rajovilla. Here, a silent conversation emerges from a bedlam of irregularities and through the chaos of noise and movement, of a changing landscape over time from commercialization, climate change, land grabbing and structural changes to property. Mukerjee Logue slips into the perspective of a child enchanted with the grandeur of motifs, not out of any particular aesthetic ornamentation but the recognition of time's parlay beyond one's own existence and the sheer largesse of it all. Her attention shifts with equal earnestness from the flutter of a sari's *pallu* to objects excavated from the home and city, such as Indo-Scythian King Rajuvula's coins, and amalgamations of different time periods that echo through the architecture of her ancestral home, in its arches and *jaali* patterns that span almost 200 years. She adeptly captures the idiosyncrasies of Ambala Cantonment's Sadar Bazar in both daytime and nocturnal scenes, supported by the memoirist impulses of her ageing father, whose own recounting of childhood coalesces the shared history between them, connecting her family's

past to her children's futures. Mukerjee Logue's works, both through physical adventure or reflective ingenuity, nurture an understanding of identity as a prismatic reveal over a linear accretion of experiences, bringing to fore a diaristic record of day-to-day life lived by one, and perhaps all.