

the exhibition. Mukherjee travelled for three years on a bicycle from Calcutta to Dakar in Senegal, a journey that took five years from 1982 to 1987. There he met the Senegalese singer Amadou Badiane, who had lived in India, had begun an Indo-Senegalese Music club. Mukherjee arrived in Senegal on a Lesse-Passe document and has lived there since, not holding any nationality, but making a living by teaching young Senegalese people lessons in Indian dance and music. He survives not on fees but on their gifts of food and shelter. Froment lets you inhabit Mukherjee's gaze and what he sees with his art, thus defining modernism and conceptual practice outside the maze of the market and the museum and specifically in the spirit of non-nationality.

Sumesh Sharma co-founded the Clark House Initiative, Bombay in 2010 where he presently is the curator along with being the invited curator to the biennale of African contemporary art - Dak'Art 2016, Senegal. His practice deals with alternate histories that are informed by the Black Arts movement, Socio-Economics, Immigration in the Francophone and Vernacular Equalities of Modernism.



Exhibition supported by:



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There will be an active program of talks and lectures accompanying this exhibition.

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Booking is essential for all talks. For free tickets and a full programme of talks and events visit www.imma.ie

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Historica - Republican Aesthetics is curated by Sumesh Sharma.

IMMA - IRISH MUSEUM OF MODERN ART
 EAST WING GALLERIES
 15 SEPTEMBER - JANUARY 2017

Historica - Republican Aesthetics

INVITED CURATOR SUMESH SHARMA
 CLARK HOUSE INITIATIVE, MUMBAI



Front cover:

Saviya Lopes
 Title: Quilt Me A Story
 Leftover scraps of cloth
 Dimensions variable
 2015

Two Invited Curators is a new IMMA initiative that aims to bring diverse curatorial voices to our program. Coming from Dublin, Ireland and Bombay, India respectively; Kate Strain and Sumesh Sharma have very different but complementary curatorial practices.

Historica - Republican Aesthetics is an exhibition that deals with the apparatus of The State and nation building as a context for art making. It explores the relationships that people have with identity and the nation as defined by other factors such as race, religion, tradition, cuisine, geography and history that all together define culture. How do India and Ireland who are both post-colonial societies that won independence from Britain, today celebrate many years of independence while grappling with nationalism and misplaced pride?

Considering colonisation, independence, and nationhood, *Historica* imagines 'the nation' as a conceptual project and 'modernism' as an aspirational value. Colonisation was based on the superiority of a nation – be that language, religion or race but does adherence to religions, languages and race define the modern democratic state? This exhibition asks whether nationalism in post-colonial societies, though democratic and secular, curbs its citizens' fundamental rights of freedom such as one's right over one's sexuality, gender and body. *Historica* asks how do artists define republicanism and nationalism? What are the aesthetics of a modern secular state?

About the artists:

Judith Blum grew up in New York to Jewish parents who fled Vienna and the Nazis. She answers some of these questions with an autobiographical frieze called *Misterioso* - a mystery of identity and history, informed by the many paths she has taken. She studied art in Paris, where she fell in love with the Indian printmaker and conceptual artist **Krishna Reddy**. Reddy trained under numerous masters including Ramkinker Baij, Benode Behari Mukherjee, and Nandalal Bose. In this exhibition we see photographs of Reddy's earliest sculptures which he made in terracotta or plaster when he

reached London to study at the Slade and later in Paris to assist artists such as Joan Miró and Ossip Zadkine. These varied works speak the vocabulary of modernism.

Other historic works are those of **Nandalal Bose** and **Benode Behari Mukherjee** who combined the use of everyday contexts, with techniques that were not typically Indian, to present works that did not conform to what was taught by the Western Classical Fine Art academies that the British had established in India. These artists were abhorred by Rabindranath Tagore, who founded the Liberal Arts University of Santiniketan, where Judith Blum became a disciple of Bose and Mukherjee. Bose designed the murals that adorned the 1938 Haripura Congress where Indian nationalists asked the British to set India free. Later Reddy was to join them to assist on the murals that depicted India's rich history for the newly independent India's presidential palace.

In Lampedusa, (Italy) **Caecilia Tripp** records the voices and waves of those refugees and migrants that come from distant lands or where people have lost their nation through war. They are often unwelcome in Europe, so **Kemi Bassene** creates a shield, a device of shamanistic protection - one that was much needed by Thomas Sankara and Patrice Lumumba, two prominent anti-imperialist post-independence West-African leaders who were killed for resisting their erstwhile colonial masters. **Nadine El Khoury** colours the Mediterranean red on an antique map, thus destroying the map's value but narrating an unending separation of death and hate defined by the sea - one that it is unspoken and feared as a story and unable to be told on the walls of European galleries.

Aurélien Mole photographs Amma Kesava Naidu in the nude in the same poses she was asked to sit by portrait students in the Sir JJ School of Art, India's oldest Western Classical Fine Art Academy. It was established a year after India's first armed revolution against British colonisation. Mole imagines an objectifying gaze and the Greco-Roman traditions of aesthetics that

propped up modernism. Naidu sat for many modern painters the most celebrated being Akbar Padamsee.

Amol K Patil, has made his work on nineteen plates of glass. He draws his family and extended group of cousins who wake up every morning to form teams to clean the streets of the city. They come from a community of folk performers and bards, who are 'untouchables' the *Dalits* who sit at the bottom of India's caste system. Social Justice for the *Dalits* is currently in fashion across all political scenes in India. Amol K Patil questions the sudden fetishisation of the Dalits, instead he etches into monumentality the daily performance of his cousin cleaning streets, a vocation that is etched into their lives.

Sawangwongse Yawnghwe erects door signs in brass and plastic that narrate seemingly nonsensical (but actual) accounts of Myanmar's continuing denial of freedoms to its people.

Yogesh Barve turns the museum catalogue of the former Prince of Wales Museum in Bombay into a public art project. Objects from across the empire were brought there from present day Pakistan, Myanmar, Nepal, Egypt, Tibet and China. The museum was a colonial delight that defined the extent of the empire. As the objects have lost their significance as representations of visual culture so have colonial systems of nationhood that define identity fade away in a world connected by the internet – a world much larger than the tangibility of geography.

Sachin Bonde brings to the museum an object rendered obsolete by digital technology; weighing scales made in brass which depended upon the honesty of the handler and the trust shown on him or her by the client. The Sikh religion described its principles of equality using the metaphor of an honestly balanced pair of scales.

Naresh Kumar has created a Taziya, or a Shia celebration float using tracing paper and sawdust he collects from construction sites. He uses images of the domes of

mosques and temples combined with the words of Babasaheb Ambedkar, the author of the Republican Indian constitution, about a secular state that promises equality; yet one that is often disrupted by religious riots. Using cheap LED lights and other paraphernalia drawn from motifs of popular religious culture, Kumar acknowledges the importance simple ritual holds in the lives of the poor - particularly in his native state of Bihar but that these can quickly be made into vehicles for sectarian hatred.

Saviya Lopes makes a tribute to the idealisation of virginity in the church by representing a fish, an image with resonance over several religions. Institutional discrimination against women has a prominent space amongst all religions, here women narrate and weave their angst into stories like the quilt her grandmother makes.

Poonam Jain makes a garland of stuffed tissue, of the type that adorns the statues of leaders, these are large to fit a statue of monumental size. Many are unveiled each year in India to celebrate dead politicians, sculpted in the tradition of those who colonised that country.

Seamus Nolan draws a comparison between the women's movement Cumman na mBan and the Kurdish women's militia the YPJ by thinking about the celebration of Ireland's military/cultural revolution this year and how women have been re-appropriated within national history and their military contribution finally valued.

Ruth Clinton & Niamh Moriarty consider the female body in relation to modern Irish history and folklore. Using a mirror as an abstracted Morse signal, the reflected light communicates between performer and camera in order to momentarily transform two buildings in Cobh from symbols of colonialism and religion into beacons or temporary lighthouses. This gesture attempts to conjure the melancholic image of the guarded daughter, trapped in a tower, who frequently appears in folk tales.

Aurélien Froment and his film with Somnath Mukherjee present the crescendo of