

NEW RELEASE OCTOBER 2022

Gauri Gill *Acts of Resistance and Repair*

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Softcover with dust jacket, 22 x 30 cm

268 pages

110 color and 159 b/w. ills.

English, German

ISBN 978-3-96900-099-1

Euro 45,00 / US\$ 50.00

Gauri Gill's multilayered photographic work presented for the first time in an extensive survey exhibition

The Chandigarh-born artist and photographer Gauri Gill (b. 1970) has been examining the everyday life of the rural population outside India's urban centers for over two decades now. Her quiet, concentrated photographs focus the viewer's gaze on barely perceived peripheral areas in Indian society. In an open, collaborative process that eschews documentary conventions, she has dedicated herself to concerns related to survival and self-assertion, identity and belonging, and also to conceptual questions of memory and authorship. The temporal dimension and the serial continuity, as well as perseverance and empathy, are decisive factors in her artistic practice.

Serving as the bedrock for a large part of her work since 1999, as well as the genesis of several photo series, is the long-term archival project *Notes from the Desert*, in which Gill has used photography to engage with marginalized communities from Western Rajasthan. Particularly underscored here, as across the artist's entire oeuvre, are her long friendships with women, whom she highlights in intimate portraits.

As a counterpoint to her projects in the desert, the photo series *The Americans* (2000–2007) is dedicated to the diverse lifeworlds of the Indian diaspora with respect to migration, home, and cultural affinity. The exhibition also places a particular focus on the artist's collaborative approach, as seen most recently in her ongoing conversations with often overlooked rural artists.

In her series *Acts of Appearance* (2014), for instance, Gill incorporates masks produced by papier-mâché artists of the Kokna community in Jawhar, Maharashtra, in everyday scenes, thus creating a fascinating dialogue between reality and fiction.

From the text *Under the Protection of Images: Gauri Gill and Photography as a Mask* by **Esther Schlicht**:

The mask—itsself a surface and an image at the same time—throws our biased view right back at us observers, making us aware of our own position, including its ethical dimension. Masks can be invitations to communication, but they can also create a sense of distance. They provide both visibility and protection simultaneously. In this sense, the mask as a motif can also serve as a metaphor for Gauri Gill's approach to art and her use of photography per se. Not just in Fields of Sight and Acts of Appearance (where those depicted are under the protection of their own artistic production), but also in other series, Gill employs the ambivalence of revealing and concealing as a pictorial strategy. Regardless of whether it is through the choice of framing that draws the gaze away from the center of the event, or by showing people from behind, with their faces hidden or only dimly visible, or through the deliberate selection of individual photographs from an almost inexhaustible archive, whose entirety remains hidden, Gill's pictures always reveal what they do not reveal, constantly reminding us of how limited our field of vision is. Photography serves the artist's objective of shedding light on invisible micro-stories and creating spaces where the diverse and hybrid realities of life can be expressed without being defenselessly exposed to our gaze—as a mask.

Exhibitions

Schirn Kunsthalle Frankfurt, Frankfurt a.M., Germany

13.10.2022 – 08.01.2023

Louisiana Museum of Modern Art, Humlebæk, Denmark

26.01. – 10.04.2023

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Phone +49 (0)6221/649 20-18 | Fax +49 (0)6221/649 20-20

www.kehrerverlag.com

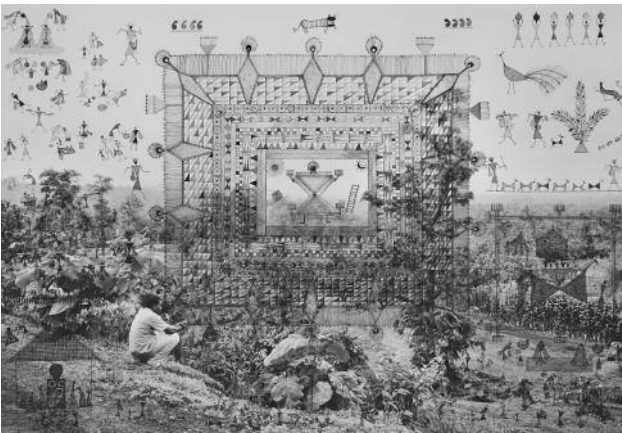
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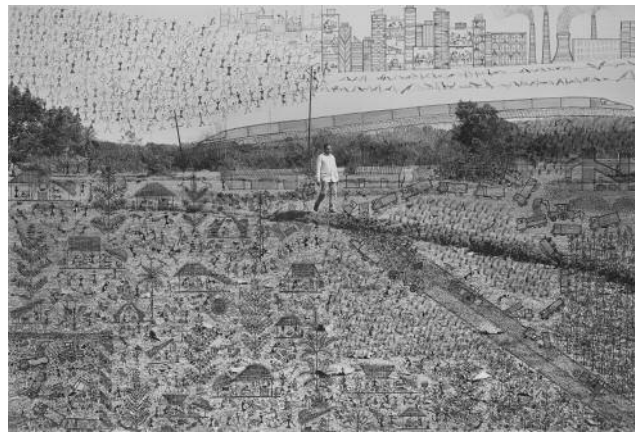
01_ Gauri Gill, *Untitled (5)*, from the series *Acts of Appearance*, 2015-ongoing © Gauri Gill



02_ Gauri Gill, *Manju & Parvati*, from the series *Balika Mela*, 2010, © Gauri Gill



03_ Gauri Gill and Rajesh Vangad, *Gods of the Home*, from the series *Fields of Sight*, 2021 © Gauri Gill und Rajesh Vangad



04_ Gauri Gill and Rajesh Vangad, *Jameen*, part of the triptych *Jal, Jungal, Jameen*, from the series *Fields of Sight*, 2021 © Gauri Gill und Rajesh Vangad



05_ Gauri Gill, *Gurgaon 2004 (a)*, from the series *Rememory*, 2003-ongoing © Gauri Gill



06_ Gauri Gill, *Jannat, Barmer*, from the series *Notes from the Desert*, 1999-ongoing © Gauri Gill



07_ Gauri Gill, *Indian grocery store in Queens, New York 2004*, from the series *The Americans*, 2000-2007 © Gauri Gill



08_ Gauri Gill, *New homes after the flood, Lunkaransar*, from the series *Notes from the Desert*, 1999-ongoing © Gauri Gill



09_ Gauri Gill, *Revanti*, from the series *Balika Mela*, 2003 © Gauri Gill



10_ Gauri Gill, *Software engineer Alok Pareek; business owner, Sumati Patel-Pareek. Silicon Valley, California 2001*, from the series *The Americans*, 2000-2007 © Gauri Gill



11_ Gauri Gill, *Untitled (2)*, from the series *Ruined Rainbow*, 1999-2010 © Gauri Gill



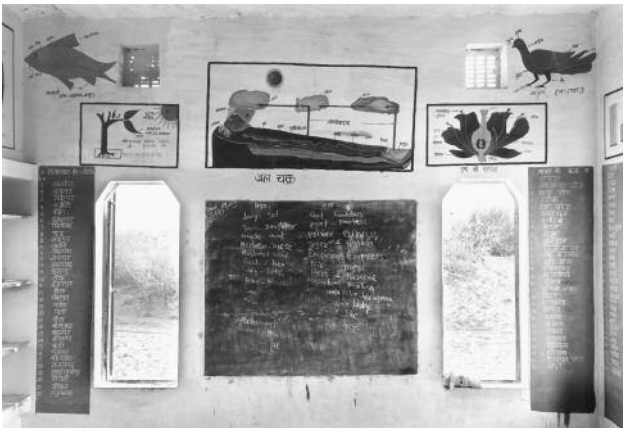
12_ Gauri Gill, *Untitled (2)*, from the series *Birth Series*, 2005 © Gauri Gill



13_ Gauri Gill, *Untitled (9)*, from the series *Acts of Appearance*, 2015–ongoing © Gauri Gill



14_ Gauri Gill, *Untitled (12)*, from the series *Traces*, 1999–ongoing, © Gauri Gill



15_ Gauri Gill, *Untitled (26)*, from the series *The Mark on the Wall*, 1999–ongoing © Gauri Gill



16_ Gauri Gill, *Untitled (50)*, from the series *Jannat*, 1999–2007 © Gauri Gill



17_ Gauri Gill, *Untitled (74)*, from the series *Acts of Appearance*, 2015–ongoing © Gauri Gill



18_ Gauri Gill, *Untitled (77)*, from the series *Acts of Appearance*, 2015–ongoing © Gauri Gill