

Dipna Horra:
Dhunia – Part One
Open Sound 2011:
Nests Built by Birds:
Surrey Art Gallery



/ Curated by
Jordan Strom

/ September 9 – December 16, 2011



Nests Built by Birds: Open Sound 2011

In English grammar, the phrase “nests built by birds” is commonly used as an example of “passive voice” in the relation between the subject and the object expressed. Through its repetition of letters, and inference of birdsong, “nests built by birds” is a phrase that evokes notions of sound and singing or speech. The fourth annual Open Sound program will present three works of sound art related to voice and translation. In all three projects, sound art installation about voice becomes as delicate and powerful as the nests built by birds.

Exhibition runs at intervals through 2011.

/ Ensemble SISYPHE: *Clang Clagan*

The first project *Clang Clagan* (2010) by the Vancouver collective Ensemble SISYPHE (Andrea Young and André Cormier) is a computer-assisted voice and viola installation about marking time.

Presented February 5 to June 5.

/ Ellen Moffat: *vBox*

The summer project is Saskatoon artist Ellen Moffat’s *vBox* (2008) a multi-track vocal instrument of spatialized, granular, linguistic sounds and chance juxtaposition that language.

Presented June 11 to August 28.

/ Dipna Horra: *Dhunia: part 1*

Based on a parable told by the artist’s grandmother, *Dhunia: Part One* (2011) animates a found object with sounds and voices recounting a tale of the Goddess Parvati’s quest for material wealth.

Presented September 9 to December 16.



Dipna Horra: Dhunia: Part One

/ Ventilating the Eye, Blowing in the Ear: Dipna Horra's *Dhunia – Part One*

Originating from the Arabic language, the word *Dhunia* in Punjabi means *the present world or earth*. Ottawa-based artist Dipna Horra's sound and video installation, *Dhunia – Part One*, presents an audible seven-minute parable about the Hindu goddess Parvati's relationship with material wealth and the world.

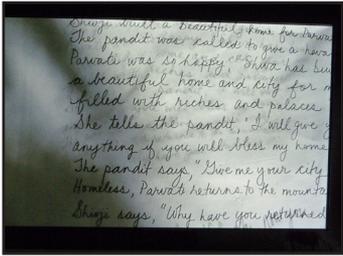
This video installation, presented at the Surrey Art Gallery, comes out of the artist's series of artworks that document the lives of her United Kingdom-based grandparents. This series has included painting and photography, but most recently incorporates audio recordings as their central feature.

The artist's Kent-based grandmother (or *Mathaji* in Punjabi) is a regular reader of Hindu scriptures, such as the Vedas and the Upanishads. Horra's *Mathaji* is such a committed reader of these texts that she can recite them at length in her mother language of Punjabi. The artist has captured one of these recited stories along with separately recorded sound such as train noise. The combined voice and ambient recordings are played back using a found wood and glass window as a speaker to project the sound into the Gallery's main entranceway.

Dhunia, along with other recent artworks, uses everyday domestic objects as broadcasters of sound and recorded speech. In *Dhunia's* case, it is an average mid-twentieth century wood window suspended from the ceiling on wires as though it were floating on air. In the instance of her 2009 work *Avaaz* (meaning "voice" in Punjabi), the artist uses a bone china tea set, radiator, and wooden tea trolley to amplify her father's voice and related field recordings within the spaces of the gallery.



Dipna Horra: Dhunia: Part One



As the voice in the installation *Dhunia* recounts the story of Parvati, a screen immediately behind the suspended window, and framed squarely within the window sill of the Gallery's TechLab exhibition space, depicts a sequence of images of hand-drawn black script against a white modulating background. The words in English (along with related Punjabi phrases) translate Horra's Mathaji's story.

The spatial proximity between the window and the monitor suggests a strong relationship between the function of the screen and the idea of the window. According to Anne Freidberg, television, film, and computer screens are the "virtual analogs" of architectural windows. For Freidberg, the "exchange between architectural and virtual window, is now a critical component of twenty-first century visuality." The window of the home, in the wide-screen computer age, has now become "windows on the world". The text on the screen appears to float as though the page were a window curtain blown by a gentle breeze. This effect recalls the origin of the English word for window. Window derives from the Old Norse *Vindauga*, from *vindr*, "wind" and *auga*, "eye". Or as Friedberg describes it "the window aperture provides ventilation for the eye".

Horra is very interested in what she refers to as the "windows of the world". The windows of the screen and the architecture of the gallery serve as metaphors for thresholds between private space and the exterior world. These



Dipna Horra: Dhunia – Part One

windows, according to the artist, “protect, shelter, provide a view onto an external landscape, and they let the external gaze in... At times,” says Horra, “these windows will become a mirror for the listener’s personal experience”.

For Horra, the recent turn toward the use of voice through resonant everyday domestic objects is intended, she says, to “bring forth a heightened awareness of the hidden aspects of the habitual.” She considers domestic spaces as areas of overlap between the politics of a society at large and the personal stories of the self and family.

Windows are generally considered devices for viewing. Yet, like the Hungarian-American painter Gyorgy Kepes who once defined transparency as the simultaneous perception of different locations, Dipna Horra too considers the transparency of the window as not strictly a visual experience. *Dhunia– Part One* through its activation of both the ear and the eye might cause its observer not only to rethink their own relationship to myth and reality, but also rethink the relationships between pictures and storytelling, window versus screens in their own daily life.

Jordan Strom
Curator of Exhibitions
and Collections
Surrey Art Gallery



Dipna Horra: Dhunia – Part One

/ About the artwork

Dhunia – Part One

2011

wood, glass, video with sound, electronics
courtesy of the artist

/ About the artist

Dipna Horra's practice is based in mixed media explorations and interdisciplinary collaborations. She responds to her environment through drawings, textiles, abstract expressionist paintings, photography, and installations. Horra has studied and worked in architecture in New York and Montreal. She has exhibited her art in Canada and the United States. Through her process she sees hybridity, identity, and a transcultural synthesis of materials and thoughts. Since 2003, she has been exploring with architectural installations that involve sound, film, and performance. Her recent new media experiment: www.dipnahorra.com has received worldwide acclaim. Horra's creation of ephemeral spaces is based in the desire to find a location and place in the time of personal experience. Horra has made several works with voice and particularly the Punjabi language as central to the work.

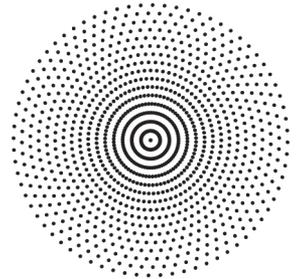


Open Sound

/ About Open Sound

Nests Built by Birds is part of the Surrey Art Gallery's Open Sound program. Open Sound is an exhibition program developed in 2008 to support the production and presentation of audio art forms as part of contemporary art practice.

Open Sound seeks to feature the leading edge of audio art, and has included site specific installation, radio experiments, ecological practices, and other investigations into the limits of sound today.



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