

**Raqs Media Collective: *Come Undone***

22 March – 4 May 2024

**Press Release**

Raqs Media Collective have been variously described as artists, curators, philosophical agents provocateurs, and catalysts of cultural processes. For their fifth exhibition at Frith Street Gallery, they present works centred around the form and idea of the knot – a leitmotif that moves backwards and forwards through their own history and practice.

Most recently, a series of glass knots, displayed throughout the gallery, emerge from Raqs's film commission for the Jencks Foundation at The Cosmic House. This work, *The Bicyclist Who Fell into a Time Cone* (2023), is a poetic reflection on perceptions of a particular moment in history while moving through time, past and present, interrogating varied geographies of perceived centres and peripheries.

*A knot is indicative of how closely something is bound, tied up, with itself, or with something else. As a marine measure of speed, it is also suggestive of how quickly, how speedily, something moves away. Knots link worlds of passages, transitions and departures. Knots that bind, knots that fray. Tears follow knots.*

*We are the knot, and sometimes, we come undone. And then, it's back to living again, to know how to thread the rope, to tie the knot, to read the wind, and to attend to care and the cosmos.*

*Raqs Media Collective*

Accompanying these fragile forms that heed both entanglement and its challenges, are a series of carpets titled *Archipelago* (2024). In blue and gold, their shape and colour echoes tears and the sea. Speaking, in their placement, of land and water bodies, they also connect to the fact that the human body is a water body.

The video *Tears (are not only from weeping)* (2021), consists of animated images of human tears taken using an electron microscope. The human teardrop is a unique and rare thing to look at up-close and the artist's tears and laughter contain enough power to threaten constituted authority. When the body is moved, it can speak without words, it cannot be controlled. Its tidal surges, emerging sometimes as tears, connect us too to the world, and to the natural world, around us.

Eyes continue their intensity in the video *Unruly Iris of Dissent (U.I.D 2)* (2023), created 12 years after *The Unlikely Intimacy of Digits (U.I.D)* (2011), which animated a nineteenth century Bengali peasant's handprint found in a London archive into a spectral count towards infinity. This new work magnifies a restless iris to continue its debate with the U.I.D (Unique Identification Database) that lies at the heart of the 'Aadhar' system which aims to turn every person resident in India into a number. The *Unruly Iris of Dissent* magnifies

an iris scan into an immersive and restless digital projection that looks eye-to-eye with the power that wants to look a little too closely at human bodies.

A vinyl record of songs, along with the sound of now-extinct birds, as well as the knot-bird, provides a soundtrack for the whole exhibition.

**Raqs Media Collective** are: Jeebesh Bagchi, b. 1965, New Delhi, India; Monica Narula, b. 1969, New Delhi, India; Shuddhabrata Sengupta, b. 1968, New Delhi, India. Solo exhibitions and projects have included *1980 in Parallax*, The Cosmic House and *Sea Change*, The Royal Docks, both London (2023); *The Laughter of Tears*, Kunstverein Braunschweig (2021), Pamphilos, Fast Forward Festival 6, Athens (2019); *Still More World*, Mathaf Museum of Modern Art, Doha (2019); *Twilight Language*, Manchester City Art Gallery (2017-18); *Everything Else is Ordinary*, K21 Museum for 21st Century Art, Dusseldorf (2018); *If It's Possible, It's Possible*, MUAC, Mexico City (2015) and *Untimely Calendar* at The National Gallery of Modern Art, Delhi (2014-15). Exhibitions curated by Raqs include *In The Open or in Stealth*, MACBA, Barcelona (2018-19), *Why Not Ask Again*, Shanghai Biennale (2016-17); *INSERT2014*, New Delhi (2014) and *The Rest of Now and Scenarios*, Manifesta 7, Bolzano (2008). They were the Artistic Directors of the Yokohama Triennale in 2020. Most recently they curated *Hungry for Time*, an invitation to epistemic disobedience with the collections of the Academy of Fine Arts in Vienna (2021). In 2023 they were the inaugural World Weather Station artists in residence with Yinka Shonibare Foundation / G.A.S. in Partnership with World Weather Network, Ijebu, Nigeria.