

# **The Places We Carry**

by

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## Declaration of Committee

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## **Abstract**

*THE PLACES WE CARRY* combines windows, texts, and images to perform like a memoir of fragmented images of place and time. These images, representations of the immediate urban landscape that has surrounded me since moving to Canada, are fractured, displaced, and repositioned within the gallery space. Together, the three handmade books, a video and the site-specific installation build a dialogue both within and outside of the site. The piece interacts with its architecture, its built environment, and the sun's movement. Alluding to a window's dual quality of inside and outside as a symbol of interconnection that both reveals and dissolves invisible barriers, I map my attempts to understand the complexity of defining, sustaining, encountering, and accepting a place as a social complex rather than a geographical identity. By collecting windows across Vancouver, by stitching, painting, tracing, and binding books, and by experimenting with light, I explore the implications of individuality in relation to how a place becomes home. In these works, I attempt to weave an understanding of place and home in which each element negotiates its presence through the other.

**Keywords:** Home; Place and Space; Mapping; Found Objects; Light; Narrative; Memoir

## **Dedication**

To my parents, *Himanshu Ghosh* and *Group Captain A.K Ghosh* who against all adversities raised and educated me to have the strength to follow my dreams.

## Acknowledgements

I would like to express my deepest gratitude to my dear supervisors Prof. *Sabine Bitter*, Assoc. Prof. *Elsbeth Pratt* and Asst. Prof. *Kathy Slade* for their continued guidance, patience, and motivation throughout my time here at SCA. Your generous support has been invaluable, I have had the privilege to learn from you and my past teachers in India who helped me reach where I am.

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To all my friends, family, and cohort a heartfelt thank you for your contributions and love: *Anindita Ghosh*, *Ashu Gera*, *Mansi Patel*, *Charlie Cooper*, *Faune Ybarra*, *Bronwen McVeigh*, *Krusna Balar*, *Olivia Valenza*, *Giselle Liu*, *Radhika Goyal*, and *Madhurjaya Dey*.

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# Defence Statement

## Introduction

*The Places We Carry* is an ongoing journey that began as a small set of drawings made onto objects, which I picked up from a roadside scrap dealer during my third year as an undergraduate student. Through this work, I reflect on my interest in collecting objects as memoirs and their significance to my personal relation to places in time. In my practice I attempt to extend / establish the role of these objects, to transform them into sites that create / encourage alternate ways of looking while also searching for spaces that lie in-between the definitions of how we identify a place.

This statement will trace my artistic journey at the School for the Contemporary Arts. It will touch upon the methodological and theoretical approach to my practice alongside descriptions of projects, thoughts and feelings that fed into these projects. Following Irit Rogoff, through my work I will engage in conversations, particularly surrounding the “issues of space and the spatialization of social relations and epistemological conventions.”<sup>1</sup>

In my practice, which includes painting, video, artist books, ceramics, and collecting mundane objects--I endeavor to understand what a place is, how that place defines me, and how I define it. The process of seeking answers to these questions started with another simple, yet challenging, question that I was asked every two years of my life: *Where are you from?* My answer always involved a long list of geographically defined places that grew substantially over time. But my story does not lie in the name of the places in where I lived. What my answer lacked was the story of places—the context of the time I associated them with.

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<sup>1</sup> Irit Rogoff, “Subjects/Places/Spaces,” in *Terra Infirma: Geography's Visual Culture* (London: Routledge, 2006), p. 22.

There was never just a single place that I called my own; it was part of all of them together.<sup>2</sup>

My father is in the military, and we were regularly posted to new cities. When I asked him why we must move, he would say, “so that we don't grow roots in one place, but in multiple places.” Our identities were forged by my father’s profession: it provided a fixed point in an otherwise changing landscape. Moving became routine and while I always looked forward to these new chapters in my life, my home seemed to be on wheels. Our possessions were packed into boxes that we carried with us. It wasn’t until I experienced living in the same place for six years (the longest I have ever lived in the same place) that I realized that identifying a place as home<sup>3</sup> is complex. If the length of time that I spent in a place doesn’t define my relation to it as home, then, what does?

I held onto multiple threads to weave an answer to the question of where I am from. As Zarina Hashmi said, “I do not feel at home anywhere, but the idea of home follows me wherever I go.”<sup>4</sup> These threads were of languages I spoke and understood, the cities I had lived and visited, and the cultural beliefs that I adopted along the way. All of this I embodied growing up, yet I never felt that one answer was enough. I am only the second generation to be born in what is today known as India. My maternal and paternal grandparents were Partition children.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> John Krygier and John Fels, “There Aren't Two Sides,” in *Rethinking the Power of Maps* (Guilford Press, 2010), p. 254.

<sup>3</sup> What does it mean to be at home in the world? Home may not be where the heart is, nor even the hearth. Home may be a place of estrangement that becomes the necessary space of engagement; it may represent a desire for accommodation marked by an attitude of deep ambivalence toward one’s location. Home may be a mode of living made into a metaphor of survival...It is as if home is a territory of both disorientation and relocation, with all the fragility and fecundity implied by such a double take.” Homi K. Bhabha, Claudette Lauzon, as quoted in “Unhomely Archives,” in *The Unmaking of Home in Contemporary Art* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2017), p. 104.

<sup>4</sup> Zarina Hashmi, “Cities I Called Home: Zarina Hashmi,” Zarina, accessed October 1, 2021, <https://www.zarina.work/cities-i-called-home>.

<sup>5</sup> “1947 Partition of India & Pakistan,” The 1947 Partition Archive - Spotlight at Stanford, June 12, 2017, <https://exhibits.stanford.edu/1947-partition/about/1947-partition-of-india-pakistan>.

Their original language is alien within the borders of what defines today's India, resulting in a loss of home and identity. Additionally, my parent's inter-lingual marriage added to this heightened sense of fragmentation—the in-betweenness that characterizes my feelings about where I truly belong or where I am from. In 2019, in Canada, far away from what I thought was home, I strove to resolve this dilemma surrounding identity and belonging through my work. My research addressed these issues by deconstructing space and the architectural constructs of a home. Space was my central point of focus. It challenged the in-betweenness of “belonging and unbelonging”<sup>6</sup> to multiple geographical locations, by providing continuity of my perception of where was home. Borrowing words from Irit Rogoff, I see “space as a context for material activity or manifestation of subjectivities where social relations alter the perception of its physical and aesthetic awareness.”<sup>7</sup> Such a space resonated like an answer to the ever-changing experience of identifying with a place as home. But space was just one of the forms of knowing a *place*:<sup>8</sup> not the only one.

While studying at SFU, I was given the opportunity to live on my own while collaborating with colleagues and participating in the multidisciplinary approach foundational to the School for the Contemporary Arts. It helped me understand how artists from various backgrounds approach similar ideas differently. This led me in the direction of considering place not solely through narrating my personal experiences, but by fabricating a new means of knowing and defining them. Answering the question of where one belongs, can be examined outside of the given structure of existing definitions. As Rogoff writes, “my inquiry does not attempt to answer the question of location for belonging; it is by no means prescriptive since I have no idea where anyone belongs, least of all myself. It is, however, an attempt to take issue with the very question belonging, with its naturalizations as a set of political realities, epistemic structures and signifying

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<sup>6</sup> Irit Rogoff, “Subjects/Places/Spaces,” in *Terra Infirma: Geography's Visual Culture* (London: Routledge, 2006), p. 20.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid.,22

<sup>8</sup> Ibid.,16

systems”<sup>9</sup>. My practice draws upon similar attempts to create a fresh approach to understanding a place.

When asked about her practice, Zarina Hashmi beautifully said, “It’s almost like writing your life’s story, and it’s not just my life’s story. It’s the story of all immigrants. And that’s where the home comes in, the idea of home, and maps and floor plans”<sup>10</sup> I share the same concern and care in the way in which I approach my work.

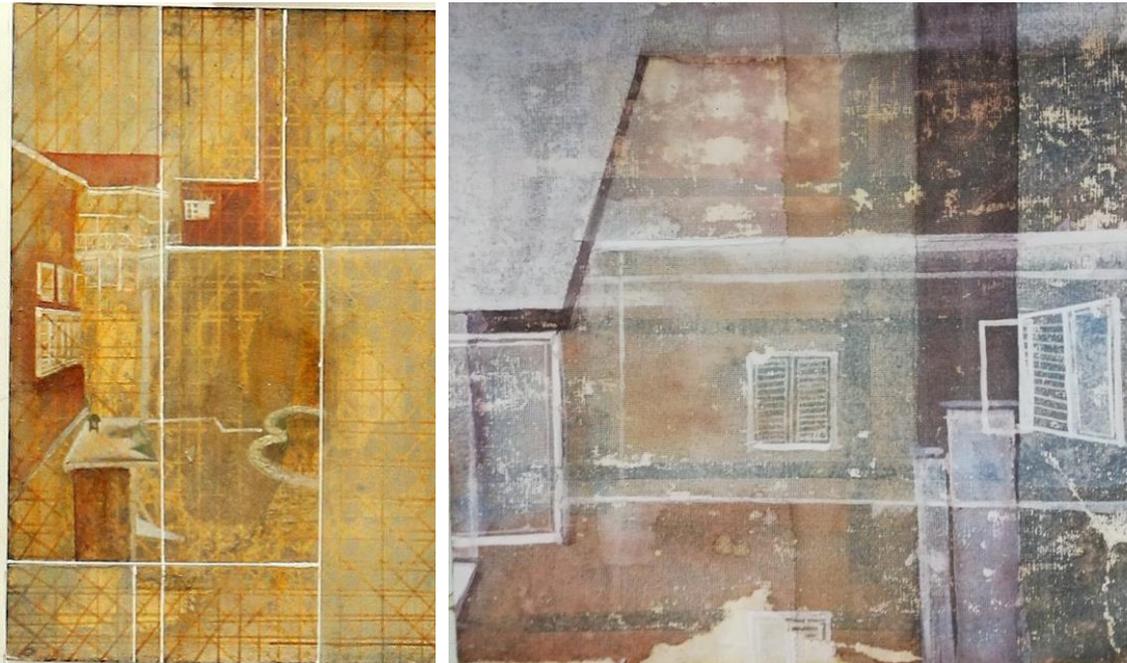
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<sup>9</sup> Ibid.,15

<sup>10</sup> Tate, “Zarina Hashmi Studio Visit – Tateshots,” Tate, accessed October 1, 2021, <https://www.tate.org.uk/art/artists/zarina-hashmi-17194/zarina-hashmi-studio-visit>.

## Objects and Materials as Memoires

Domestic interior spaces, architectural elements such as doors, windows and sometimes even structures in public spaces like a flyover or a staircase, are all recurring subjects in my undergraduate paintings. I repeatedly dissected these elements and presented them in simpler visual forms. Within my art practice, I continued discovering and revisiting my interest in spatial elements of the domestic spaces that I occupied. At the same time, I increasingly drew from my family's practice, and that of many other families like mine, of creating a home in any given house by using objects that we possessed that travelled with us in our thirty aluminium trunks.



**Figure 1. Watercolour and Ink on Paper | 2018 | Aakansha Ghosh**

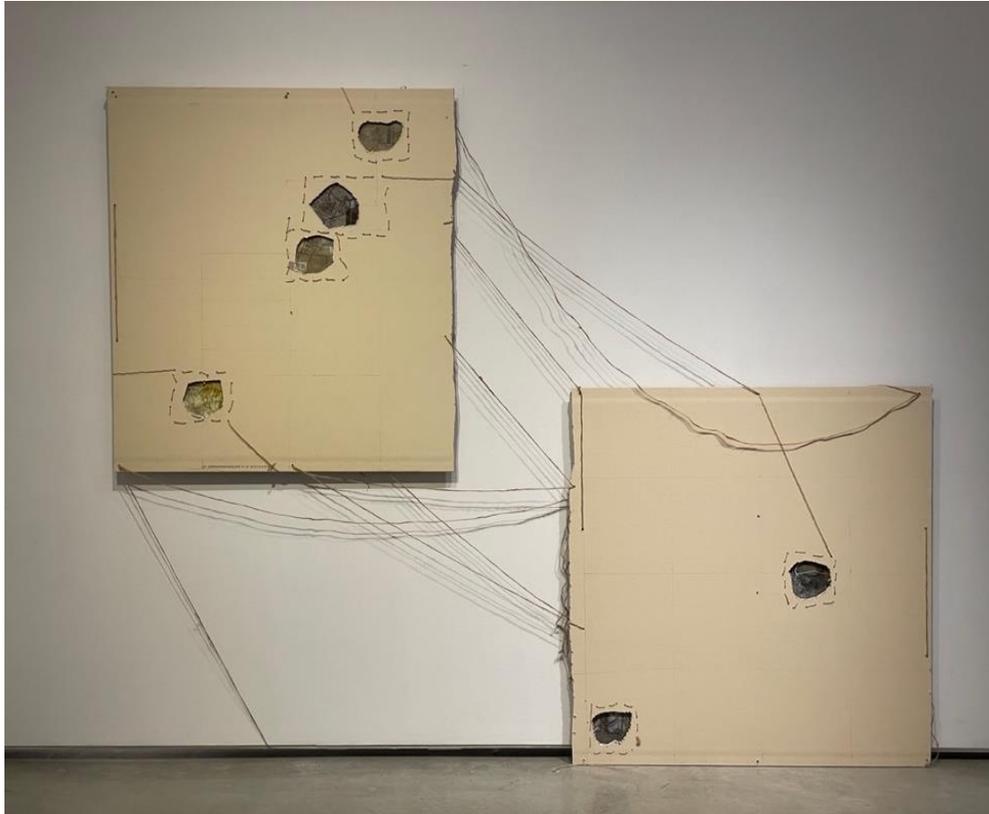
Constantly on the move, I always questioned, imagined, and re-interpreted my identity at every new stage. Materials and objects began to reveal themselves as answers to my questions, like the weaving pattern of the furniture that was given to us along with the houses, aluminium trunks or the blue and white residential spaces.

The materiality of things, found or made, increasingly shaped the conceptualization of my practice. My works harboured the characteristics of not just the object or material, but also became a part of the transient memories that these objects brought with them. They bring to the table the idea of revealing and concealing the invisible yet embodied passage of time.<sup>11</sup>

During my first year as a graduate student, I continued exploring the incorporation of objects into my work. The work titled *Grazed* (2020) focused on ideas of invisibility and played with the notion of highlighting the mundane. I used aluminium foil to trace and preserve the gestures of the past left in domestic spaces that continue to be occupied, but by different bodies and in a different time. The work played on the material's strength and weightlessness, but also incorporated its reflective qualities. Another work titled *Dissonance* (2021) brings together sections of walls of my studio space and found vinyl flooring tiles that I painted and embedded within the wall. The materials visually evoke a sense of fragmentation. This act of fragmenting invites the viewer to look more closely at reintegration of tangible subjects (building materials, dry wall, and flooring) into intangible subjectivities of home and belonging. It brings forth the inhabited realities of invisible journeys of moving.

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<sup>11</sup> Adele Nye, "(PDF) the Objects of Nostalgia: Embedded Historical Narratives," ResearchGate (unknown, August 26, 2015), [https://www.researchgate.net/publication/281444808\\_The\\_Objects\\_of\\_Nostalgia\\_Embedded\\_Historical\\_Narratives](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/281444808_The_Objects_of_Nostalgia_Embedded_Historical_Narratives).



**Figure 2. Dissonance | Installation Shot | 2020 | Aakansha Ghosh**

The objects continue to unfold into memories of the subjects I integrate into my work. These objects along with their materiality come in as confluences of information, experiences, and gestures—of all that is lived and embodied within the constraints of a single image. By using these objects within my work, I attempt to reveal the minor subjectivities that emerge through the act of seeing. This idea of image creation through the use of found objects gives room to generate parallel narratives that have the possibility to open the viewer to perceive the complexities of geographically overshadowed social relations and contexts that are not immediately apparent on a map or that go unnoticed.

## Project Overview

*The Places We Carry* was exhibited at the Audain Gallery, Vancouver in September 2021 in the exhibition titled Trajectories of Unlooking. The project was composed of three interconnected yet independent artworks. Upon approaching my work on the east wall of the gallery was *Vice Versa*, a two minute and twenty-four-second-long video loop presented on a 24 x 40-inch screen mounted onto the wall. Three handmade book works, *The Places We Carry (I, II, and III)* were presented on two large plinths against a wall almost in the center of the gallery. The books measure 11.2 x 11.2 inches each. Two of the books were displayed open, and one was closed. Finally, a large sculpture titled *The Places We Carry* was installed on the other side of the wall directly behind where the books were displayed, in a space that opened up to the gallery's street facing windows. *The Places We Carry* is composed of found windows and frames and was positioned diagonally in the space, spanning from the floor at the wall to the top of the gallery windows. This leaning wall of windows measured 14ft x 13ft. Renderings of visual data were placed onto the gallery's window as colour fields directly in front of and at the centre of the sculpture.



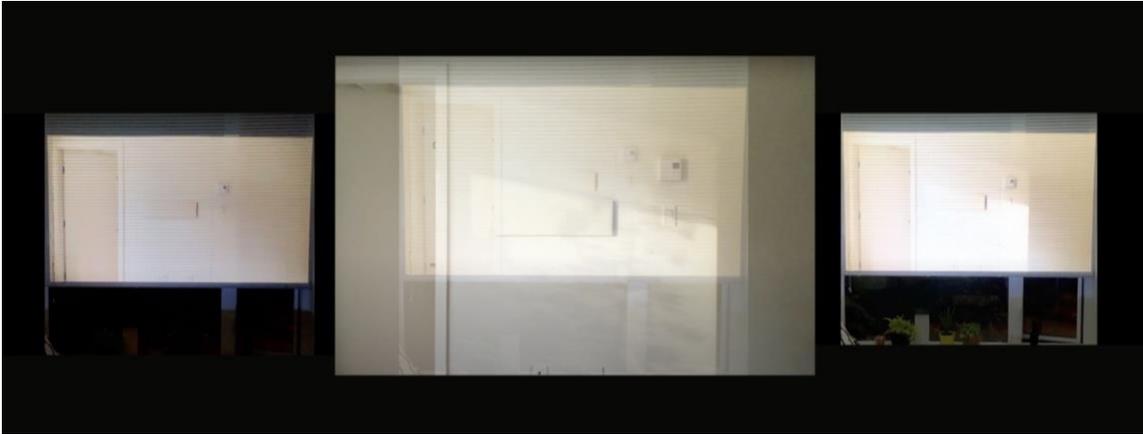
**Figure 3.** The Places We Carry | Installation shot | 2021 | Aakansha Ghosh

## **The Video, Vice-versa**

I created the video during the peak of the pandemic in the summer of 2020. This project was an experiment made up of an accumulation of my encounters with sunlight in my domestic space. I was living in an apartment right on the border Vancouver's Downtown Eastside. I had lived in Vancouver for six months and was attempting to get accustomed to facing the haunting and tragic situation of the drug and homeless crisis everyday bit by bit, sitting at the window of my living room.

I became more attentive and observant of the happenings in the urban spaces that my window looked onto, including the back alley of my residence. Before the pandemic, I was aware of the situation, but I was now living alongside it: it was a part of my routine. The loud sirens, shrill screams, and sometimes the protest sounds of a beautiful gathering of determined people, I would let it in and shut it out at my convenience with the help of a device called a soundproof window.

I began to consider what possible meanings my relationship to these sounds and images could hold, and how an architectural device was a significant factor to this relationship. I started recording sounds at my window ledge. I also started to note the time when, for precisely 7-8 minutes approximately at 4:10 pm, the evening sunlight hit my window and would cast a prominent projection of its frame, along with that of the trees located outside it, onto a wall in my residence. My only interaction with the outside was limited to seeing things through my window and my only way of interacting with it in gesture was by sharing the same space.



**Figure 4. Vice-versa | Video Stills | 2020 | Aakansha Ghosh**

I recorded a video of this sunlit projection over the course of one week, along with the audio of my surroundings. I then projected the video onto the same window exactly twelve hours from when this phenomenon used to occur.

In this video, I attempt to capture and juxtapose the duality that exists on either side of my window. While this work speaks about a particular space and time, some of the ideas it holds can also extend to other windows in that it builds an intersubjective connection between the inside and the outside—between the spaces located in the same place, but distinct in how and what occupies them. Revealing and disorienting, *Vice-Versa* situates real and recorded time and space as mirror planes.<sup>12</sup> “It resituates the viewer in order to question the structures underlying the organization of social space.” (Chrissie Iles, 2000)<sup>13</sup>

This video was recorded 500 meters from the gallery where it was displayed. Therefore, I decided to omit the sound during the exhibition and let the viewer engage with it in silence and attend to the outside sounds that would seep into the gallery. During my few collaborations and many conversations with sound artist Charlie Cooper, I learned how sound occupies space and how sound can challenge one’s perception of a place. While physically and visually the video

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<sup>12</sup> Erika Suderburg and Chrissie Iles, “Video and Film Space,” in *Space, Site, Intervention: Situating Installation Art* (Minneapolis, Minn: University of Minnesota Press, 2000), pp. 252-262.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, 261

was muted and passive, it became suffused with the active sound in the gallery. It maintained a discreet presence in the space while actively engaging in a complex dialogue about the dynamic immateriality and tenacious interactions present on either side of an architectural device (window). It subtly conjures the cloaked anarchy of the hierarchical relationship among people between these constructed city spaces.<sup>14</sup>

### **The Books, The Places We Carry (I, II & III)**

As of spring of 2021, my work had shifted to incorporate my engagement with questions of confrontation and limitation in relation to identifying places as geographical identities instead of accepting place as a social complex. In other words, my efforts have been to bring together the “architectural and physical along with the epistemological and ontological”<sup>15</sup> narratives that a place encompasses. Over the course of my reattempt to manifest parallel ways of understanding and positioning myself within the spaces I occupy, I drew from Doreen Massey’s approach toward space as a dimension of the world, an equally significant variable alongside time which determines its unorganized dynamism.<sup>16</sup> She also argues that “An (idealized) notion of an era when places were (supposedly) inhabited by coherent and homogeneous communities is set against the current fragmentation and disruption.”<sup>17</sup> I situate my practice towards tampering with the inescapable rigid structure of classifications in an attempt to push them a little wider. I was challenged many times by trying to map the multiple routes and flows of my belongingness. Representing it using simple long strokes on a single image or paper created a visual of a smooth journey which overshadowed the lived experience of the movement undertaken. I wanted to

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<sup>14</sup> Sophie Watson and Katherine Gibson, “Part II Postmodern Cities,” in *Postmodern Cities and Spaces* (Oxford, UK: Blackwell, 1995), pp. 125-186.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid, 4

<sup>16</sup> Doreen Massey, “Space, Place, and Gender on JSTOR,” JSTOR, accessed October 5, 2021, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/10.5749/j.ctttw2z>.

<sup>17</sup> Doreen Massey, “Space, Place, and Gender on JSTOR,” JSTOR, accessed October 5, 2021, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/10.5749/j.ctttw2z>.

map my belonging not looking down at an image but creating an image bottom up.

Since I started living alone, I associated home with where my family was. In April 2021, I was in a position I never imagined. Despite the corona viruses' spread, I was determined to travel back to India, where I considered home. It had been two long years; a lot had changed for my family and not for good. I needed to see them and be with them in the flesh.

I landed in Bangalore on April 19, 2021, and as much of a cliché as it maybe I could smell the familiar scent of the soil. I felt at ease at the sight of my Baba at the airport. He looked older. I could see the time that had passed. On my fourth day of isolation, I heard the news that Canada had banned all direct flights from India. My world was at a standstill. I was in a 11 x 10 ft room, and while I knew that my parents were there, behind a locked door, I still felt alone. I kept thinking to myself, "you are home, why are you so upset?".

My sense of home had come from images of maps, and the locations had become an essential to my sense of the world. I was a citizen of the country I was in, and at the same time an international student granted the time to study and live in Canada. But in that moment, I was just a passport that read Republic of India<sup>18</sup>. The line between my notion of nationhood was blurred encountering my new "macro-identity"<sup>19</sup>.

Everything came flashing back to me again, where should I be? Did I do something wrong? My sense of who I am suddenly shifted.

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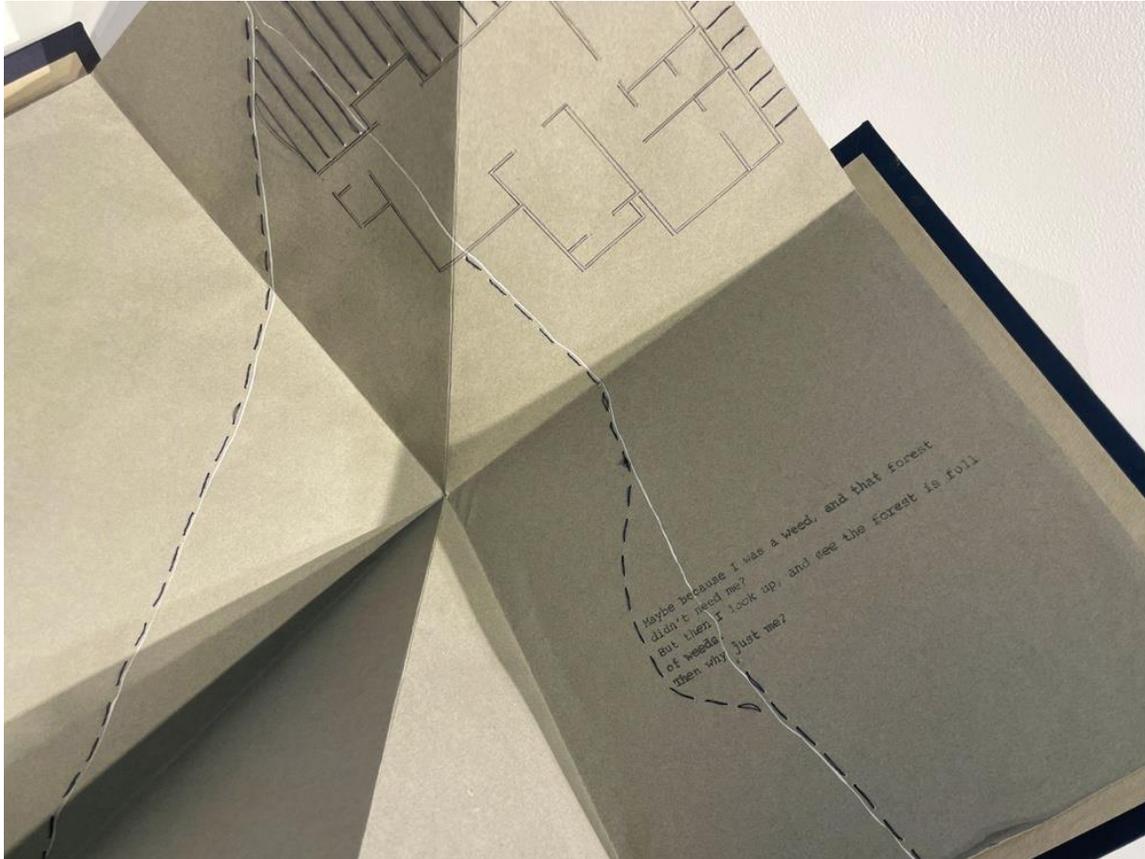
<sup>18</sup> I acknowledge that the lands I refer to as Canada stand on genocide, ethnic cleansing, and forced removal of the indigenous peoples to whom this Turtle Island truly belongs. I don't claim entitlement to be here, I am grateful to be an unwelcomed guest. My intention with the statement is to bring light to the affect that national and international demarcations have on people's lives.

<sup>19</sup> Jisha Menon, "Performance of Nationalism: India, Pakistan, and the Memory of Partition," in *Performance of Nationalism: India, Pakistan, and the Memory of Partition* (CAMBRIDGE UNIV Press, 2018), p. 12.

I documented the research of eight weeks: my attempts to find a safe way out of what I knew as home; six days of travelling across three continents, and another fourteen days of isolation. I was mapping my journey from home to home. I then translated this into three handmade books. They archived my thoughts, in words and visuals that were stitched, cut, and bound into forms that could lay flat or popup almost like paper sculptures.

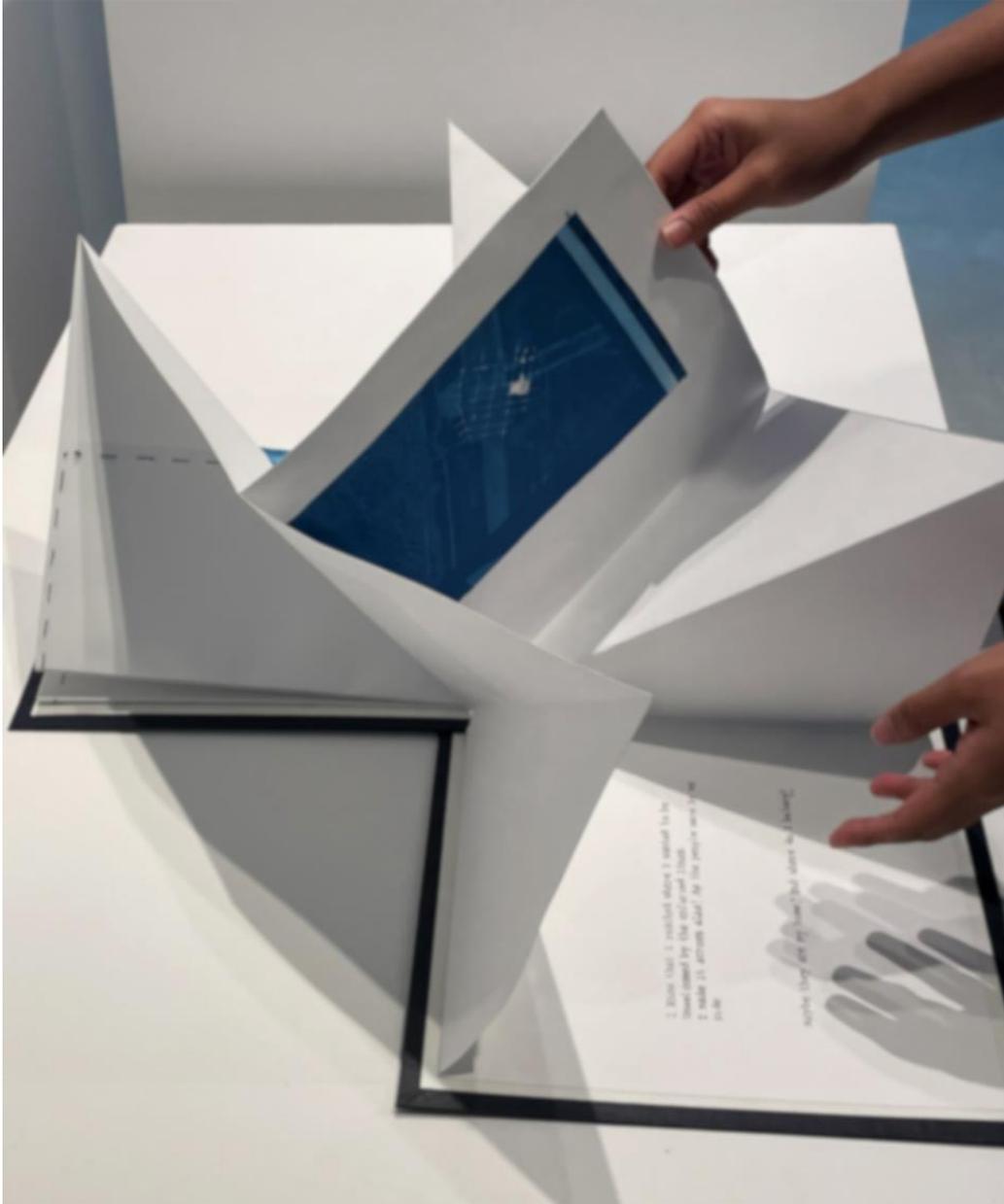
The viewers were prompted to follow my journey via a non-linear approach due to the form of the book. Each book had three sheets of square paper; each paper was folded into two triangles in an origami aesthetic which then formed a smaller square. Each book opened differently; the readers had to move with it or move it to unfold the next page. It was a visual topography of my journey and maybe that of many others.

**Book I** contained floor maps of the spaces I reside in both Canada and India. I stitched the pages in a way that if unravelled into three flat sheets, each page will mark my six-day journey between the three continents.



**Figure 5.** The Places We Carry, Book I | Details | 2021 | Aakansha Ghosh

**Book II** contained multiple cyanotypes of the images I took from my aircraft's windows. It visually spoke of the liminal relation between me and the places I travelled through.



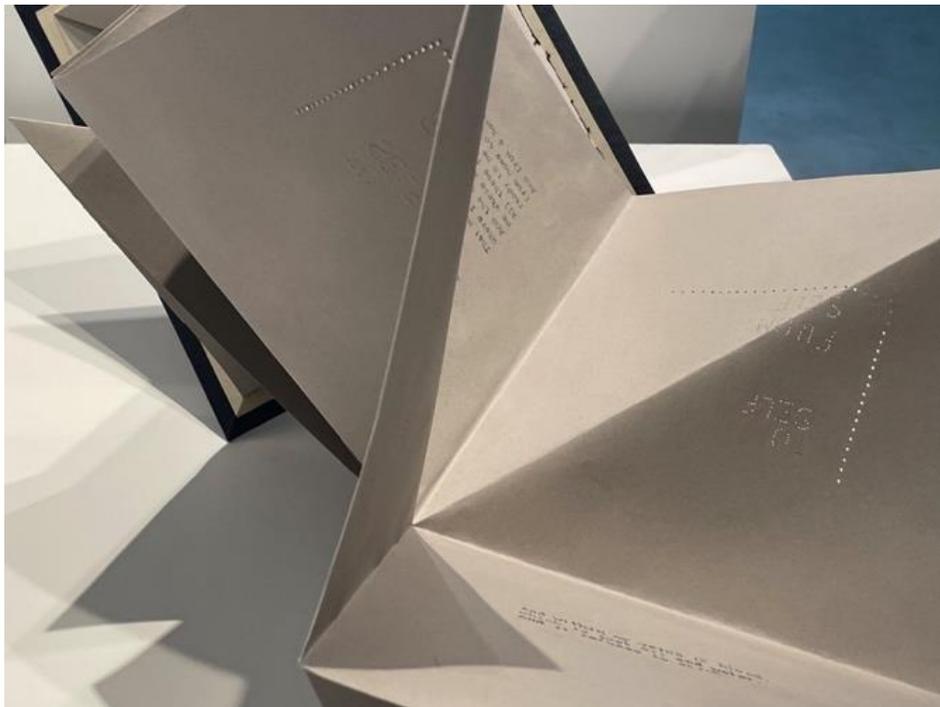
**Figure 6. The Places We Carry, Book II | 2021 | Aakansha Ghosh**

**Book III** was an extended response to convey the experiences of not just the journey, but the deeper-rooted quest to filter belonging as an object of temporality. Images in this book were composed of text. For example, in the middle page, the words

TO  
SELF

FROM  
SELF

were formed using a needle to pierce the paper. I made this image using the same stitching technique employed in rest of the books but, in this instance without using thread. These words “to self” and “from self”, are not just a label on the trunks we used to transport our belongings; they have the ability to carry within them the numerous journeys of the past, present and the future.



**Figure 7. The Places We Carry, Book III | 2021 | Aakansha Ghosh**

These books were a form of “memory sculptures”<sup>20</sup>. With them, I intended to articulate and contextualize the effects of politics on identity, and the map’s role in establishing and maintaining of social relations<sup>21</sup>. Despite this, though, I continue to approach these works from a personal stance, leaving room for the reader to approach the piece from their individual perspective. Through these books I attempt to unravel the hybridized cultural relations and salient social<sup>22</sup> complexities masked as land demarcations through inward reflections. They encourage readers to question their presence within these absolute enclosures of given approaches such as geopolitical demarcations towards one’s relationship to places when it’s an incoherent entity of identity.

**Note: The full text is attached in Project Documentation.**



**Figure 8. The Places We Carry | Installation Shot- Books | 2021 | Aakansha Ghosh**

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<sup>20</sup> Claudette Lauzon, “The Art of Longing and Belonging,” in *The Unmaking of Home in Contemporary Art* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2017), p. 28.

<sup>21</sup> Denis Wood, John Krygier, and John Fels, *Rethinking the Power of Maps* (New York: Guilford Press, 2010).

<sup>22</sup> Irit Rogoff, “Borders,” in *Terra Infirma: Geography's Visual Culture* (Hoboken: Taylor and Francis, 2013), p. 118.

## **The Installation, The Places We Carry**

*The Places We Carry* started as an unfolding journey in Fall 2020. It was driven by the idea to map sunlight in the context of the site's urban landscape, along with a wish to situate the viewers in a dialectical position within the site.

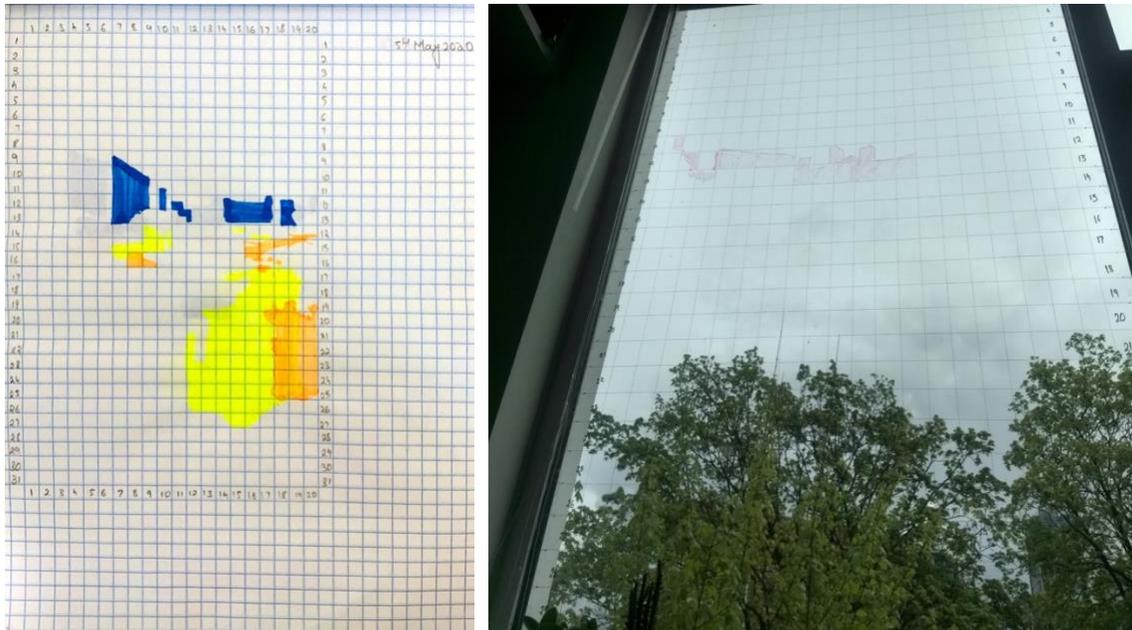
### ***I. Mapping Sunlight***

During the spring of 2020 at the start of the Pandemic, I was working from the confinement of my study room. I focused on capturing the minimal yet significant control that an architectural element like a window exerts during our interactions with the outside.

The light penetrating through the window activated the space and became a significant aspect of sustaining a routine in life. I collected used coffee filters to paint the mapping of the intangible and ephemeral dynamics of sunlight and its interaction with the immediate urban landscape visible through my window. The linearity of the visuals I worked with were gestures that transcribed the imperceptible potency and delicate infiltration of natural light, its immaterial intensity that shifts the perception of space and time.

With this, I continued my attempts to map the light more objectively. I based the production of my work on the way our perceptions, inspired by the objectivity and rationality of the given, reconstructs the world around us according to our individualistic conception and rationale.

To further engage with these ideas, I collected visual data over a period of time every day. The process was designed as an objective method of data collection using the window as a device with a graph on it to record the data. The compositions and the structures that resulted from this process were like a narration of the sunlight's interaction with the urban landscape present outside the window.



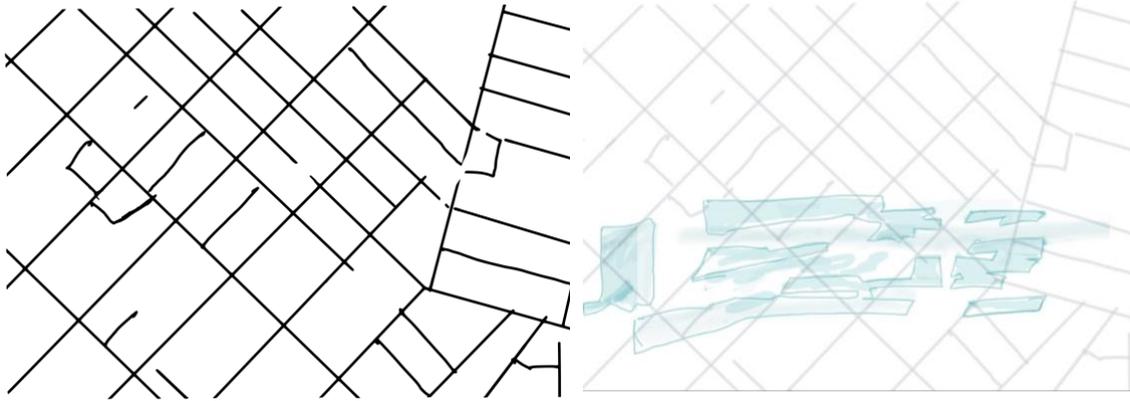
**Figure 9. left: Mapping Process right: Window as a mapping device | 2020 | Aakansha Ghosh**

The colorful forms that are placed onto the gallery’s street facing window resulted from a similar data collection process. The data set that was collected at 12 pm was yellow in color and the one at 5 pm was blue with a hint of violet in it. Even though color can have “symbolic, phenomenological, or esoteric significance”<sup>23</sup>, my idea was to just denote and distinguish the two data sets without overpowering the viewer’s ability to approach the work from either the outside or the inside.

We were given about thirty days to work on site before the installation began and I took the opportunity to use the gallery’s street facing windows to record visual data. I took note of the negative spaces that were created due to the sunlight’s interaction with the urban landscape. I did this everyday once at 12pm and once at 5pm. During this process I used the urban grid of the site to calculate the mean and process the data rather than using a simple graph. The

<sup>23</sup> Marcella Beccaria and Ólafur Elíasson, *Olafur Eliasson* (London: Tate Publishing, 2013).

process of selecting, cleaning, sorting, and layering a data set to create a visual interpretation of the location was influenced by my learning of the basics of how Geographical Information Systems<sup>24</sup> functions.



**Figure 10. left: Urban Grid Used right: Data Set | 2021 | Aakansha Ghosh**

Once at this window (standing on either side), the colored markings frame a viewer's perception of what they are looking at. Moreover, they add a layer of visual information which the viewer is not expected to decipher, but rather to see through or to embody. As Ernest Larsen wrote about Ilya Kabakov's work my installation draws upon a similar notion where, "the installations aim is to valorize the otherwise ephemeral subjectivity of the everyday."<sup>25</sup> These objectively derived visual gestures further this idea of how the act of seeing can be an act of creating value. It situates the viewer within a suspended moment or an indefinitely extended moment of time.<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>24</sup> National Geographic Society, "GIS (Geographic Information System)," National Geographic Society, October 9, 2012, <https://www.nationalgeographic.org/encyclopedia/geographic-information-system-gis/>.

<sup>25</sup> Erika Suderburg and Ernest Larsen, "Ordinary Gestures of Resistance," in *Space, Site, Intervention: Situating Installation Art* (Minneapolis, Minn: University of Minnesota Press, 2008), pp. 171-188.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid*, 175

## II. The Structure

The sculpture was positioned so that it was leaning at an angle between the distance of the moveable wall and gallery's windows. The site was chosen to facilitate the mapping of sunlight and to incorporate chance encounters between outside passersby and inside gallery viewers. The structure was composed of twenty-one reclaimed windows that were collected over the last year from all over Metro Vancouver. Each window came from a home or back alley and, most often, I was able to learn a little bit about the people whose homes these windows once belonged to. Some were just renovating their homes or farmhouses for better insulation; some were looking for a change after a big personal loss and some had a few lying in their backyard and weren't sure what to do with them.

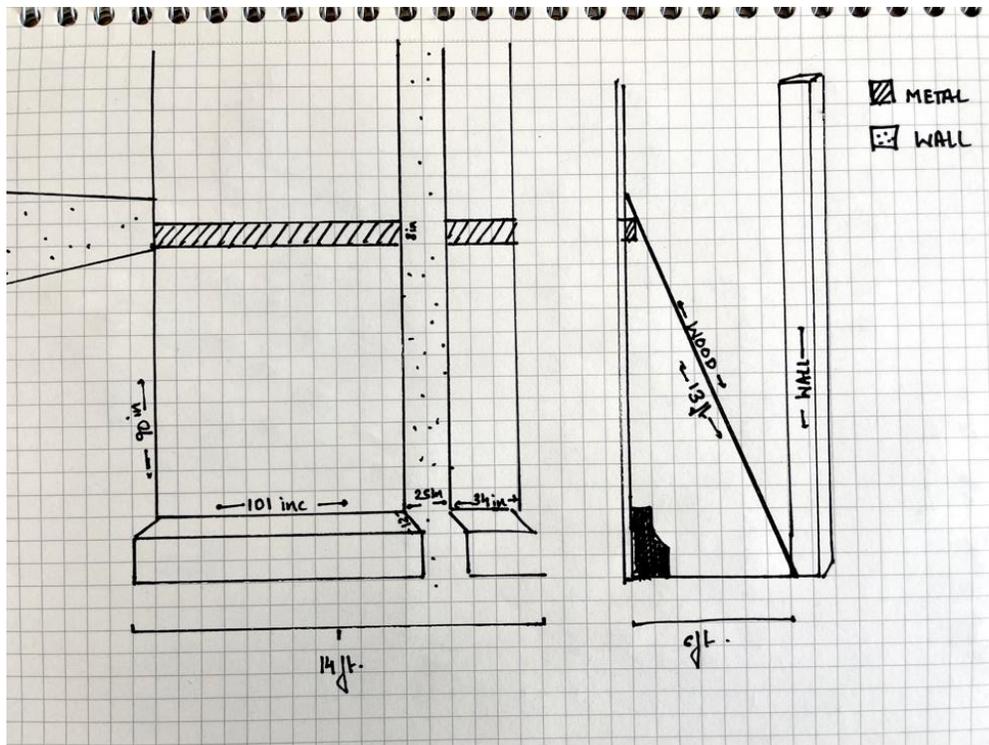
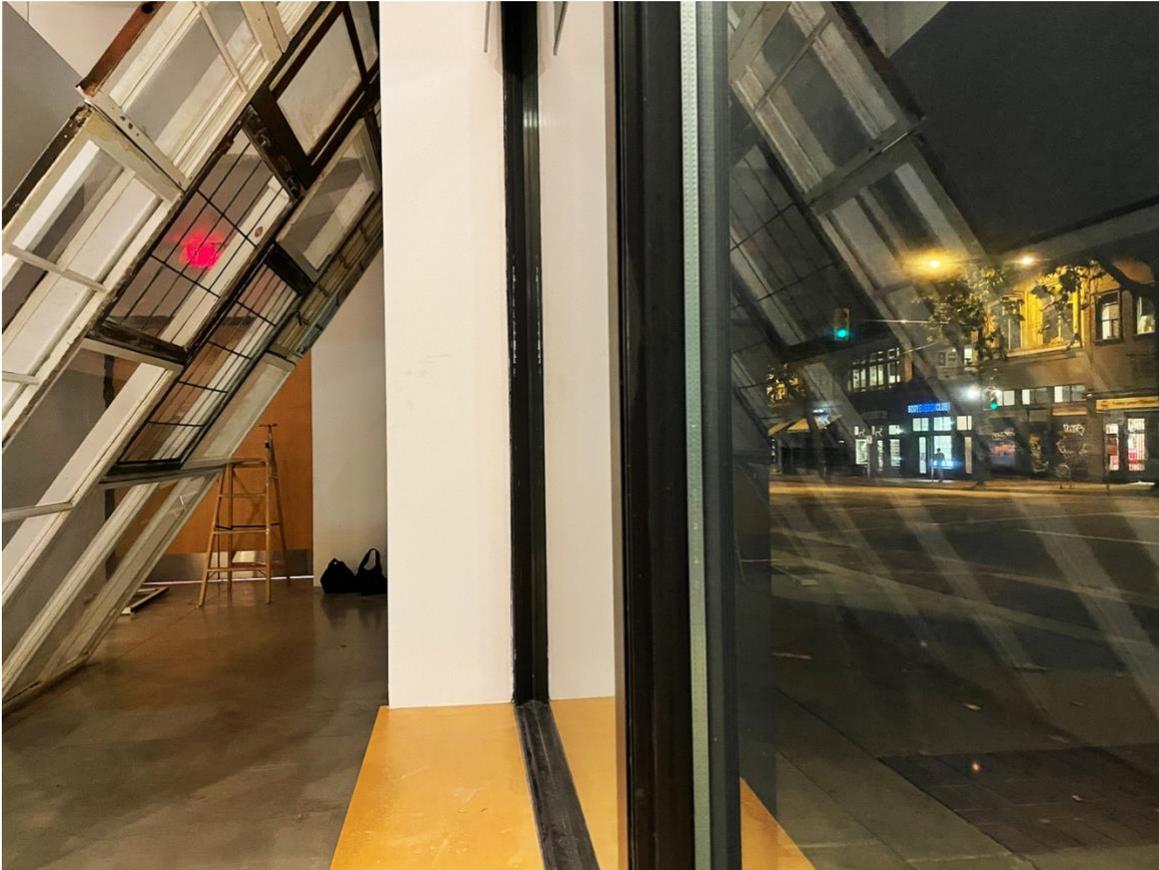


Figure 11 Site Mapping, Structural Calculation | 2021| Aakansha Ghosh

I didn't clean the windows. They were just neatly piled in the studio space and over time they continued to retain the dust and handprints of all the spaces that

they have been in and of the people that handled them. This installation, like Gordon Matta-Clark's work, attempts to reconstitute memory, not through an insular approach but a subversive approach to contextualize and resituate these reclaimed objects that along with the audience collectively produce a dialogue with the site's social and architectural conditions.<sup>27</sup>



**Figure 12 . The Places We Carry | Evening Installation Shot | 2021| Aakansha Ghosh**

The leaning angle of the structure gives room for the visitors to encounter each window one at a time and/or as a whole. They are encouraged to walk through it, sit under the structure on the gallery's window ledge, or encounter it from outside

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<sup>27</sup> Claudette Lauzon, "The Art of Longing and Belonging," in *The Unmaking of Home in Contemporary Art* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2017), p. 49.

as a window display while walking down West Hastings Street. The massive leaning structure creates a small enclosure that lends to a sense of comfort and discomfort at the same time. The angle also plays with the idea of shelter. Starting at sunset, one can witness the glass of the gallery's street facing window almost acting like a mirror, where the reflection of the structure positions the viewer between a canopy of reality and semblance.



**Figure 13**      **The Places We Carry | Installation Shot, Refracted Light, West-side of Audain Gallery | 2021 | Aakansha Ghosh**

The mapped sunlight forms represent the passage of the sun over a fixed period of time. This together with the daylight that illuminates the structure creates a situation that presents multiple facets of time. The viewers can experience these shifts in time simultaneously via the shadows that fall onto the floor or walls, by looking through the colored data forms from the outside or vice-versa, or through the fragmented reflections of the outside onto the glass panes of the windows

inside. Each viewer encounters the installation as a unique phenomenal experience, that is not only based on their position in relation to the installation, but also on the time or day they view it.

The interaction of the various elements that comprise the installation, such as the sunlight data, the glass of the reclaimed windows, and the way the reflections bounce and mirror images of the outside on the inside and vice versa, creates a different experience for each viewer. Like the sun data that represents time that has passed and works to reveal a juxtaposition with the present, the work calls attention to the two spaces on either side of the window situating them in conversation with one another. These temporal aspects of the installation situate the viewer between the unnoticed stories present on either side (the reclaimed windows and the gallery's windows) using light to guide a different reading of the space each time.

*The Places We Carry* uses space both sculpturally and conceptually. It offers physical, spatial, and perceptual possibilities of mapping and approaching a place considering space and time as dimensions adding not to the quantitative but to the qualitative comprehension of the site.



**Figure 14 . The Places We Carry | Installation Shot | 2021 | Details | Aakansha Ghosh**



**Figure 15 . The Places We Carry | Installation Shot | Details | 2021 | Aakansha Ghosh**

*The Places We Carry* proposes ways for the viewer to interact with the site in different capacities: physical, emotional, personal, social and/or political. Thus, viewers navigate various interpretive possibilities within the Audain Gallery's challenging location. The form of the installation appears to slowly alter when one moves through it. The motion of the viewer's body, the sunlight and the movement on the street outside bring together a self-reflexive deconstruction of the place it is situated on. The playful motion of ever-changing light over the found objects intervenes within the architecture of the gallery. It plays on the notion that one is inseparable from the totality of a space, shared by objects and beings over time.<sup>28</sup>

*The Places We Carry* renders invisible social constructs and personal histories visible. It reflects upon the spatial subjectivity and encourages people to visualize their individual geographies<sup>29</sup>. This goes hand in hand with their ability to initiate, to help processes and generate a new way of positioning the self in context with the others in a place. It shares a pragmatic possibility of an illusionary wholeness by operating between the street and an institutional gallery space.

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<sup>28</sup> Erika Suderburg and Chrissie Iles, "Video and Film Space," in *Space, Site, Intervention: Situating Installation Art* (Minneapolis, Minn: University of Minnesota Press, 2008), pp. 252-262.

<sup>29</sup> Irit Rogoff, "Subjects/Places/Spaces," in *Terra Infirma: Geography's Visual Culture* (Hoboken: Taylor and Francis, 2013), p. 14.

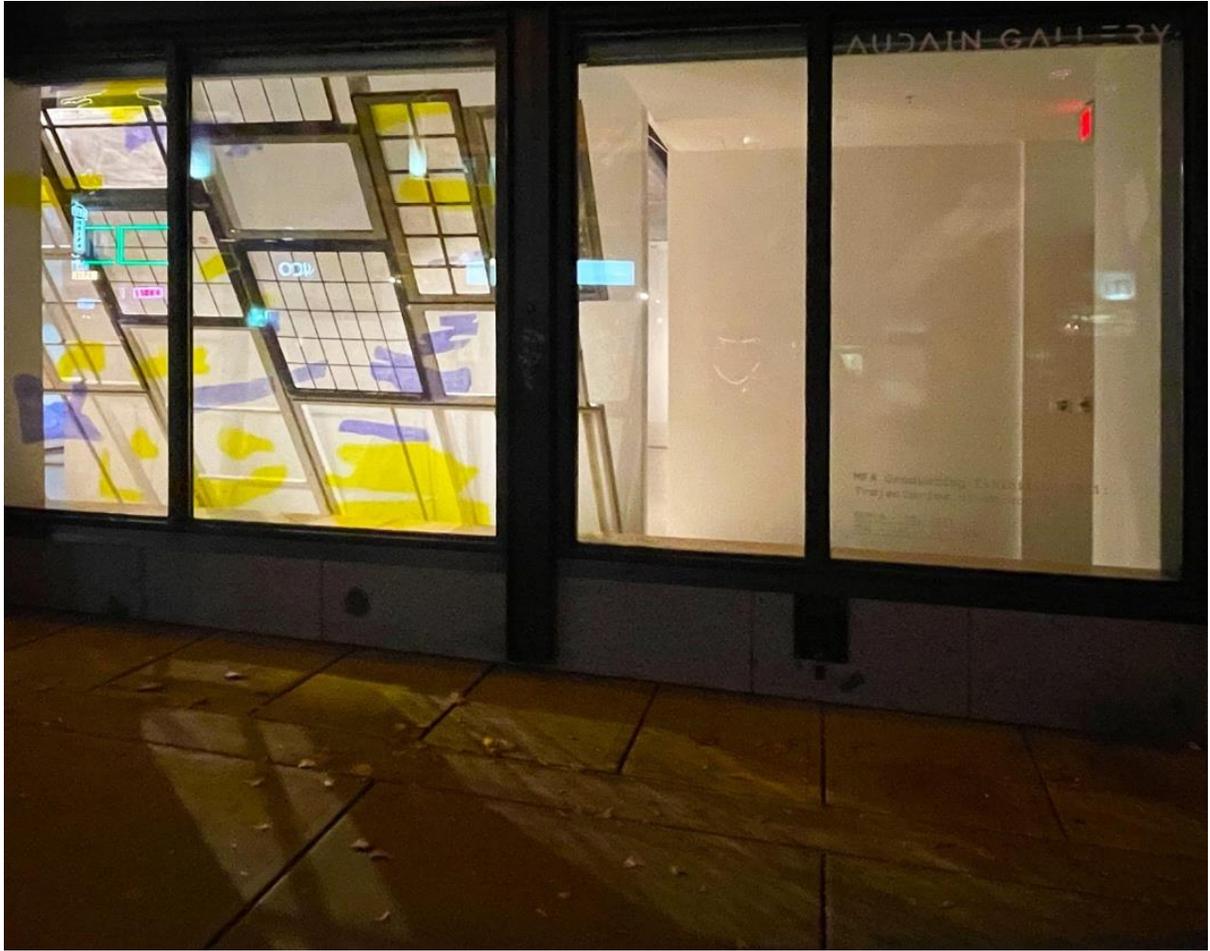


**Figure 16 . The Places We Carry | Installation Shot | 2021 | Aakansha Ghosh**

*The Places We Carry* composes and weaves together the reflection of the fast-paced movements of the site, with the stillness of the viewer's body, making the momentary actions of humans, light, and objects apparent and creating an alternate visual experience of the site itself. It brings together multiple understandings of a place through a repertoire of objects and ephemeral components. In Rogoff's words, it "permits profound affinities and adjacencies to be discovered without differences being lost."<sup>30</sup>The installation operates between the duality of the inside and outside, stasis and motion, synthesizing light and time as mediators of this complex discourse. It opens endless possibilities of locating one's positionality between a kaleidoscope of space, place, and time.

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<sup>30</sup> Ibid., 16



**Figure 17**    **The Places We Carry | Night Installation Shot, West Hastings Street | 2021 | Aakansha Ghosh**

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# Project Documentation: Poems

## The Places We Carry I

The world was a chaos, and that chaos  
seeped into my home.

I was home, but I was nowhere.  
I didn't know what to do and where to be.

Only 24hrs ago I was where I wanted to be,  
After 547 nights I was finally home.  
But now, I felt trapped.

A place 12000 kms away, where I was a nobody,  
I had started growing my roots, on a land that wasn't mine.  
It was just me and no one.  
I built a house which after a prolonged wait  
had just become my home.  
But now, I was told that I couldn't be there anymore.

Maybe because I was a weed, and that forest didn't need me?  
But then I look up, and see the forest is full of weeds.  
Then why just me?

## The Places We Carry II

As I sat in the plane, with fear and grief,  
I didn't know if I'll make it to my destination  
Or even would I make it back to my start.

It was like the world went upside down,  
The sea was above my head and there was nothing  
beneath my feet.

I was above all the roads and borders,  
And I could only see blue,  
Maybe that's where is nowhere and  
Nowhere is blue?

And on my way, I found many who were just like me,  
Nobodies who had somewhere to be.  
In the lands where unknown faces spoke a language  
that I didn't know.  
But they welcomed us like it was home.

Was it a hoax? I'd never know.

I know that I reached where I wanted to be.  
Unwelcomed by the enforced lines,  
I made it across alas! As the people were by my side.

Maybe they are my home? But where do I belong?

## The Places We Carry III

The boxes are empty,  
Glaring and daring me to choose  
the right one.

Well, I thought I'm an expert at boxes.

My whole life can fit inside it,  
And I've got it down to a list.

I can pack my entire life in an hour  
because where there's roots,  
there's power, but I'm just soil.  
Flowing with the wind and water  
And  
I stay where they leave me.

And within my veins is blood.  
Which is just oil and water,  
And it refuses to stick.

My Baba's old books,  
my Maa's saris,  
that photo album that locks  
all my memories in a flash,  
saved for when my recollection  
doesn't last.

That memento that reminds me,  
Where I came from,  
And the one that awaits to tell  
me where again.  
All these fits in a box  
ready to be carried  
from home to a house,  
And from a home to a house again.

But that's not that kind of box  
People ever ask for.  
They have questions, and  
I still don't have that right box.

So, I seek for it outside,  
I see,  
So many lines on a map,  
so many roads that unwrap.  
But none which reveal a home,  
roads and non-roads that  
Maybe are just a trap.

I see both worlds so clearly,

And I jump and leap and reach out  
But I always fall between, never seen.

Maybe I belong in the spaces between.

## Project Documentation: Images



Figure 18. The Places We Carry | Installation Shot- Books | 2021 | Aakansha Ghosh



Figure 19. The Places We Carry | Installation Shot- Books | 2021 | Aakansha Ghosh



**Figure 20.** The Places We Carry | Installation Shot- Books | 2021 | Aakansha Ghosh



**Figure 21.** The Places We Carry | Installation Shot- Books | 2021 | Aakansha Ghosh



**Figure 22. The Places We Carry | Installation Shot-Light Interaction | 2021 | Aakansha Ghosh**



**Figure 23. The Places We Carry | Installation Shot- interaction | 2021 | Aakansha Ghosh**



**Figure 24.** The Places We Carry | Installation Shot | 2021 | Aakansha Ghosh



**Figure 25.** The Places We Carry | Installation Shot | 2021 | Aakansha Ghosh

## Appendix Research Paper: Remapping Maps

My research attempts to understand the complexity associated with the notion of defining, sustaining, encountering, and accepting a place as a marker of a person's geographical identity. However, this definition of a place creates a dynamic disparity between what is a place, and how does one point to it without a map? As Doreen Massey argues, "An (idealized) notion of an era when places were (supposedly) inhabited by coherent and homogeneous communities is set against the current fragmentation and disruption."<sup>31</sup>

One of my research's central questions has been how to create a visual representation of the idea of a place as a "whole" or in totality? One which is an amalgamation of what we think it will be and what it is (place in context to time). A cohesive interpretation of the past, present, and a lived future. But how do I create a representation of this totality? And is there a need for this whole?

The journey of trying to understand what a place is and how that place defines me or how I define it became integral to my practice. I moved to a new city every two years of my life and identifying a place as 'home' for me was complex. It was never one place that I called my own; it was part of all of them together.

My research was an extension of trying to answer the questions of belongingness by deconstructing space and home's architectural construct. Space was my central point of focus as it challenged the in-betweenness of being perceived, conceived, and lived as a combined element of continuity in my life. It resonated like an answer to the ever-changing association of belongingness to a place. But space was just one of the forms of knowing a place, not the only one.

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<sup>31</sup> Massey, Doreen. *Space, Place, and Gender*. University of Minnesota Press, 1994. Accessed June 2, 2020. [www.jstor.org/stable/10.5749/j.ctttw2z.146](http://www.jstor.org/stable/10.5749/j.ctttw2z.146).

The autobiographical elements that act as an entry point to my visuals were narrowing down my work creation rooted in my own narratives, making it restrictive and inaccessible. To crystalize time in context to place led me to create works that talk about my experiences diasporically. This led me to investigate places by not narrating my experience but fabricating a new means of knowing and defining a place, which intensified my interest in maps. The dilemma of where one belongs shouldn't be answered through having to locate oneself from a given structure of existing fragments. Often, these existing structures are given to us and are accepted by us using tools like a map.

How do we understand the place in its totality? What role does a map play in this and how does it situate the viewer in context to the place it tries to represent. This paper moving forward will analyze, speculate, and propose the need of counter mapping, juxtaposing it to the perception of maps.

## **Maps and Mapping**

Maps have been usually defined as navigational tools, a two-dimensional depiction of the world to help mark a location and, in most cases, to reach from one place to another. Mapping hence can be approached as an objective tool used for a subjective purpose, which we might as well name as colonization and/or economic exploitation. This subjectivity of the maps has been since harnessed to propagate what the maker wants to render visible. Maps hence "are propositions which create a received picture of the world that is inadequate, inaccurate, often false and in thrall to dominant interests"<sup>32</sup>

In my writing, when I use the term map, I am referring to maps that are a product of technical-scientific derivations (geographic map projection techniques)

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<sup>32</sup> Wood, Denis, John Fels, and John Krygier. "Unleashing the Power of the Map." Essay. In *Rethinking the Power of Maps*, 39. New York: Guilford Press, 2010. P. 47

but also visuals that engage with cartographic techniques. Maps in context to contemporary art are tools to represent, reinterpret, and resituate ourselves in a place, space, and time. But all maps present themselves as having a sense of knowledge by distilling the complexity of the world and then putting it in front of the viewer. But what is being distilled need not be didactic. This realization and understanding of maps have shifted the focus from maps towards mapping techniques. There can never be a map that is representationally accurate and all encompassing. Hence, in contemporary maps the makers interest lies in the choices that are made to represent a place in this way and not the other way. A choice that an artist makes all the time. Today these techniques are being borrowed, maneuvered, and applied by other fields, especially in the contemporary arts.

Maps are presumed to tell the truth about the world, and assuming there is only one world, then why do we need so many kinds of maps? Maybe it is within this second question that the answer to my research lies. There are multiple maps because none of them present the place in totality, and when we put the place in context to time, "roads and the non-roads,"<sup>33</sup> that these maps illustrate the need to be continually evolving.

But at the same time, they present themselves with certainty, and this certainty is what I disagree with. It gives you a single perspective of the one who is making it or of the one for whom it is being made. As Ruth Watson wrote, "Maps create regrettable limits, looking at who is mapping, and what is being mapped today"<sup>34</sup>. The simplest of the maps are also a manipulation. It already represents a world as the one who is making it seen. Denis Woods argues that maps "are an intellectual construction far from reality that takes over the

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<sup>33</sup> Wood, Denis, John Fels, and John Krygier. "Unleashing the Power of the Map." Essay. In *Rethinking the Power of Maps*. New York: Guilford Press, 2010. p. 45

<sup>34</sup> Ruth E Watson, "Mapping and Contemporary Art," *The Cartographic Journal*, November 2009, [https://www.academia.edu/491148/Mapping\\_and\\_Contemporary\\_Art](https://www.academia.edu/491148/Mapping_and_Contemporary_Art).

reality."<sup>35</sup> I believe it manages to take over reality by neglecting the significance of time and constructing an image of a place where space takes over its whole perception. Maps try to fix time, in other words a map of Vancouver in 1960 is not the same as one today,

"One must imagine the territory in order to create the map" <sup>36</sup>, and sometimes this territorial aspect of mapmaking takes the shape of nationhood. Nationhood is one of the most manipulated aspects that these maps pry on. Nationhood exists as state-contracted borders on the map, so they are built on a map. And these borders then are used as a tool to define one's identity.

An example of this that I am a witness to would be the Indo-Pak Border or Indo-Bangladesh Border. The LOC (Line of Control)<sup>37</sup>, an invisible line in actuality and a stark, bold one on an image, the map. It has the power to define which side one belongs, and which nation-state does one serve and dedicate its patriotism too. The origin of my family was on the other side of the border. Still, the invisible line of definition dictates the psychogeographic<sup>38</sup> effect it has on one's perception of their identity.

Ironically this line of demarcation between India and Pakistan is different on different sides. There are quite a few renditions of it: the one which is the LOC

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<sup>35</sup> Wood, Denis, John Fels, and John Krygier. "Unleashing the Power of the Map." Essay. In *Rethinking the Power of Maps*. New York: Guilford Press, 2010, p. 64

<sup>36</sup> Greta Muscat Azzopardi, "Dal-Baħar Madwarha: Fleeting Territories: Mapping Malta ( The Island of the Day before)," Valletta 2018, accessed December 10, 2020, <https://valletta2018.org/events/dal-bahar-madwarha-fleeting-territories/>

<sup>37</sup> "Line of Control: Latest News, Videos and Line of Control Photos: Times of India," *The Times of India* (Topics, December 13, 2020), <https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/topic/line-of-control>.

<sup>38</sup> I am referring to the term Psychogeography defined as the relation that we have with our built environment, how the built environment affects it and how our psychological state effects the built environments perception for ourselves. This is my understanding of the term from Guy Ernest Debord, "The Situationist International Text Library/Theory of the Drive," trans. Ken Knabb, Library (Published in *Internationale Situationniste #2* 1958), accessed December 15, 2020, <http://library.nothingness.org/articles/SI/en/display/314>

dividing the state of Kashmir operated by Pakistan and India; the official international borders that were established during the Partition; and the current official state maps of both of these countries which claim the state of Kashmir as a part of their territory.

Production of such imageries overlap the dilemma and continue the fragmentation of identity. I don't want to point at who is right or wrong, nor is this case my focal point of reasoning. What I interpret from such a case of recent and ongoing history is the continual production of ever-changing criteria. This line defines one's individuality and identity, based on a map produced by a nation state's politics. These maps tend to look over the social history of people. Some very silent parts of a state, city, or neighborhood (a place) on a map, pieces that are almost invisible, turn out to be the loudest in terms of social memory that it entails. And in most cases, these are rapid, overlapping, and with a timeline that may or may not be linear.

Hence a place, when viewed as a map or through one rendered by cartographic methodologies, eliminates time. It focuses disproportionately on space and dehumanizes life. When mapped as a subjective interpretation, serving as a source of abstraction, what gets lost is the "focus on mapping is the view of the world from the ground: lived experience."<sup>39</sup> The map communicates what the others have seen or discovered but doesn't present to its viewer an opportunity to know the place based in their individualistic understanding.

One can see the emergence of subjectivities in a map as an intervention by artists during post-modernism. They became sites of personal investigation and were used as metaphoric visual contemplations of exploration or a journey, like in the case of artist Zarina Hashmi. Mimi Wong the editor of *Art Asia Pacific* wrote the review of her work:

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<sup>39</sup> Coco Fusco, "Questioning the Frame," In *These Times*, December 16, 2004, <https://inthesetimes.com/article/questioning-the-frame>.

"Dividing Line (2001) depicts the geographical line that demarcates India from Pakistan. Born in 1937 in Aligarh, India, Zarina experienced firsthand the fallout of the Partition in 1947 when her Muslim family became separated between the two newly created states. Yet in the woodcut printed on Indian paper, there are no signifiers to denote which side is which—nothing to reflect the people, their culture or religion. All we see is a thick, jagged rupture, its abstract appearance indicative of the arbitrary nature of political boundary-making. Some twelve years later, Zarina returned to the dividing line, this time inverting its black and white spaces—with the land in *Abyss* (2013) rendered as an opaque, inky field, the focal point is placed entirely on the line, underscoring how its historical impact still reverberates today."<sup>40</sup> (Wong, 18)

Another excellent example of an artwork produced by Lyndi Hall brings forth the invisible lines of power that are deemed objective. Her set of works titled "On Fixing Position, 2012"<sup>41</sup> situate her art as a form of what I believe can be termed counter-mapping to generate a new understanding of cartographic truth.

Her practice has been situated in an exploration of lines that are the basis of geometric standards. They are still perceived to be mathematical derivation and hence an objective lead toward complete unbiased truth. In the work of hers mentioned above, the objectivity can be seen reflected in the creation of maps or cartography and its associated invisible objects that structure the globe through latitude and longitude, or the act of orienteering and reorienting through objects like the compass or sundial.

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<sup>40</sup> Mimi Wong, "Busan Biennale 2020: 'Words at an Exhibition – an Exhibition in Ten Chapters and Five Poems,'" ArtAsiaPacific, 2018.

<sup>41</sup> Lyndi Hall, "On Fixing Position," Lyndi Hall (Burnaby Art Gallery, 2012), accessed December 10, 2020, <http://lyndihall.com/position/index.htm>.

Through Hashmi's work or that of Hall's, I understand maps in art are a form of trying to step away from the specificity of the it or that of a globe to look at the physical presence of the related objects or the symbolic/poetic connections that have developed from this long tradition of interaction with movement and place. An attempt to examine the various systems that we have put in place to steady the body during uncertain times, whether that be the technology of orientation in order to empirically position the self or, in the case of the former, a gesture towards creating a space for the representation of the self.

Bringing together the act of collective mapping and art, creates a dialogue within our visual culture of understating a place. It does so without prioritizing the objective or subjective, neither institutionalized practice nor other ways of reflection or vice versa. Counter mapping is one such process that seamlessly engages in knowledge production while opening up the imaginative aspect as well. Despite that, I'd argue that the resultant mapping processes be always open for discussion and have an individualistic approach. Paving the way for multiway of meaning making and not having to deal with a single answer. Such open-endedness would demand the continual interpretation of what is being perceived each time one encounters it. And each time, the meaning it produces will have the possibility to grow.

This shift of understanding maps brings me to counter-mapping. From the ground up, in other words, to go back to a possibility that can create maps that are generated from a place, of a place and not maps that create a place.

### **Counter-mapping**

D.L Hodgson defines Counter Mapping as efforts to push "against dominant power structures, to further seemingly progressive goals."<sup>42</sup>The term "counter-mapping" was coined by Nancy Lee Peluso, working with the Dayak in

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<sup>42</sup> Dorothy L. Hodgson and Richard A. Schroeder, "Dilemmas of Counter-Mapping Community Resources in Tanzania," *Development and Change* 33, no. 1 (2002): pp. 79-100, <https://doi.org/10.1111/1467-7660.00241>.

Indonesia, using maps for reclaiming their land<sup>43</sup>. Counter maps are a by-product of a long tradition of post-colonial practices claiming back the knowledge of a place by mapping the past. Since the 1970s, there has been factual evidence of First Nations political organizations in Canada and Alaska using this technique. As Nietschmann wrote "More indigenous territory has been claimed by maps than by guns. This assertion has its corollary: more indigenous territory can be reclaimed and defended by maps than by guns"<sup>44</sup>

Referring to counter-mapping living and working here on the traditional unceded territories of the Coast Salish peoples of the x<sup>w</sup>məθkwəy̓əm (Musqueam), Skwxwú7mesh (Squamish), and Səlílwətał (Tseil-Waututh) Nations, I also see the land acknowledgments as a minuscule but a daily effort of counter-mapping. As some counter-maps aim to pave the way for a change, others which in this case, simply attempt to contribute to public knowledge.

In my constant encounter with people during my moves across the multilingual, multicultural states in India and then here in Canada, I realize that we live in a world with many ways of knowing that exist within many different systems of knowledge. Counter-maps have the ability to assert the existence of these other ways of knowing a place and challenging what maps are all about.

They are living documents, in other words, rather than archival representations, they facilitate the creation of a space for the social and

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<sup>43</sup> Peluso, Nancy Lee. "Whose Woods Are These? Counter-Mapping Forest Territories In Kalimantan, Indonesia." *Antipode* 27, no. 4 (1995): 383–406. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-8330.1995.tb00286>.

<sup>44</sup> Greta Muscat Azzopardi, "Dal-Baħar Madwarha: Fleeting Territories: Mapping Malta ( The Island of the Day before)," Valletta 2018, accessed December 10, 2020, <https://valletta2018.org/events/dal-bahar-madwarha-fleeting-territories/>.

individual understanding of a place. They help people to start speaking, thinking, and imbibing within them the knowledge of place by learning from their own and each other's experiences when encountering such maps, generating a unique individualistic frame. I also argue that counter maps provide an equitable space to connect thoughts and bring the whole story together by inviting a response from its readers/users.

We limit ourselves when we think that maps are only two dimensional and/or fixed. Even though currently most used maps (Google maps) serving the purpose of navigation are handy, but they entirely leave off the meaning of the place. It replaces the unique abilities to understand a place by eclipsing the many ways of knowledge production, taking it over with the most basic non-human yet anthropocentric viewpoints generated based on single point enforced commonality. As Wood writes, "Routes do not constitute a map. Composite images on my phone have no connection to what my body has experienced or will experience"<sup>45</sup> The counter maps have the ability to integrate these embodied experiences.

I believe counter maps are an attempt to create forms of knowing a place through a different lens. My research's practice (art creation) attempts to address this broader concern by trying to defamiliarize the given, and the act of counter mapping provide the space to do just that.

The creation and distribution of maps have been made accessible now more than ever. Which has resulted in a loss of exclusivity over map production and knowledge, a systematic interruption of the institutionalization of maps. Making them more and more revolutionary. A lead towards counter-mapping has given us the opportunity to create "otherwise possibilities"<sup>46</sup> of knowing a place.

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<sup>45</sup> Denis Woods, "Cartography Is Dead (Thank God!) - Makingmaps.owu.edu," 2003, <http://makingmaps.owu.edu/mm/cartographydead.pdf>. pp 4-7

<sup>46</sup> Ashon Crawley, "Introduction. In Black Pentecostal Breath: The Aesthetics of Possibility, ," 2016, pp. 1-31.

Woods summarizes this feeling of realizing the possibility of unrestricted opportunities really well; he says "Cartography Is Dead (Thank God!) Let's admit it. Cartography is dead. And then let's thank our lucky stars that after the better part of a century, mapmaking is freeing itself from the dead hand of academia."<sup>47</sup>

Counter-mapping in academia can act as an intervention and also become a part of educational work critically engaged in the critique of the hegemonic cartographic images. It creates ways for everyone to become an occasional mapmaker through self-organized and self-realized map making. It has the power to develop visibility for invisible social constructs and marginalized personal histories or forms of knowledge. They show spatial subjectiveness in favor of people to visualize their individual geographies and perceptions of place, space, and time. This goes hand in hand with their ability to initiate, help processes and generate a new way of positioning the self in context to others when claiming what a place is.

But there are many questions that have no specific or justified answer to truly legitimize counter maps. Unless communicated directly through familial text or use of legend, how shall one understand that the map created is a counter to what & to whom? Who is looking at these maps to say if it's counter or not? If it is the creator, it again gives the autonomous power back to the map maker. To whose eye is it catering? Which gaze is performing this counterness? The counter maps that are created might or might not be multi-vocal. I am not sure if it should or shouldn't be sure of its narrative? It can also be read as an attempt to erode the certainty of the perspective of a map.

At the same time all these uncertainties also create a fear of the unknown, a hitch in homogenizing what a place could be. As "maps serve the

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<sup>47</sup> Denis Wood, "Cartographic Perspectives, Cartography Is Dead (Thank God!)," Making Maps, 2003, <http://makingmaps.owu.edu/mm/cartographydead.pdf>. pp 4-7

purpose of location and that they alleviate the anxiety of being lost,"<sup>48</sup> and maybe they do that only because they are so certain. The map constructs 'some' worlds in a way that might not give the whole picture. But how or what gives the whole picture? Bringing all the maps and counter maps together? An effort to map what is still there, to bring in context what unites and will continue to be there even when the road/urban maps keep changing.

Maps that are grounded in critical theory of understanding and performing the otherwise possibilities. That which acknowledges but does not exploit their ability to reflect and propagate power relations through prevailing societal visual culture. And such practical applications can be seen in the realm of contemporary art.

This can be seen in the artworks by Zarina Hashmi, Joshua Neustein, Lyndl Hall, Huston Conwill, or Reena Saini Kallat <sup>49</sup>. Their work reflects either declaration of subjectivity taking precedence over the objectivity of a map or the other way around but with a challenging core concern of how to talk about and define what a place is.

Underlining all would be the common intention for the information presented to reach the viewer. To make them perceive, receive, acknowledge, and then interpret it. Ultimately maps are forms that chart different relationships

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<sup>48</sup> Irit Rogoff, *Terra Infirma: Geography's Visual Culture* (Hoboken: Taylor and Francis, 2013), p. 74

<sup>49</sup> **Zarina Hashmi**

Hashmi, Zarina. "Zarina Hashmi (1937-2020): Artist: New York." Zarina. Accessed December 15, 2020. <https://www.zarina.work/>.

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Irit Rogoff, *Terra Infirma: Geography's Visual Culture* (Hoboken: Taylor and Francis, 2013), 108.

**Reena Saini Kallat**

"Deep Rivers Run Quiet: Reena Saini Kallat," India Art Fair, accessed December 10, 2020, <https://indiaartfair.in/programme/deep-rivers-run-quiet-reena-saini-kallat>.

of time and space. They also put the relationship of power in context, and these relationships arise differently from other communities. And if all maps disappear, nothing exists anymore; there would be nothing left to point at and say, it is this or it was this. As Paul Tacon in *Mapping Our Countries* wrote: "Maps are artifacts that embody, reaffirm and publicize the personalization of place. Without maps, we would exist in totally different, unimaginable ways"<sup>50</sup>.

And one lives in a duality of what we imagine and what actually is, but it is in the perception of a place in totality where lies the truth of reality. We create this perception based on the objectivity and rationality of the given (maps), then reconstruct the world around us according to our individualistic conception and rationale (forms of counter maps). So, it isn't about the destruction of the existing maps but to generate new ways of making and looking at forms that define a place. The frame that these given maps put around could be multiplied or at least pushed a little wider, as a long-term change can be pursued "bit-by-bit at a micropolitical level"<sup>51</sup>

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<sup>50</sup> Tacon, P. and Watson, J. (1999). *Mapping Our Countries*, Djamu Gallery/Australian Museum, Sydney, unpaginated as quoted in Watson, Ruth. 2009. "Mapping and Contemporary Art." *Cartographic Journal* 46 (4): 293–307

<sup>51</sup> Natalie Loveless, "Conclusion," in *How to Make Art at the End of the World: a Manifesto for Research-Creation*(Durham: Duke University Press, 2019), p. 102.

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