



Kiran
Nadar
Museum
of Art



La Biennale di Venezia

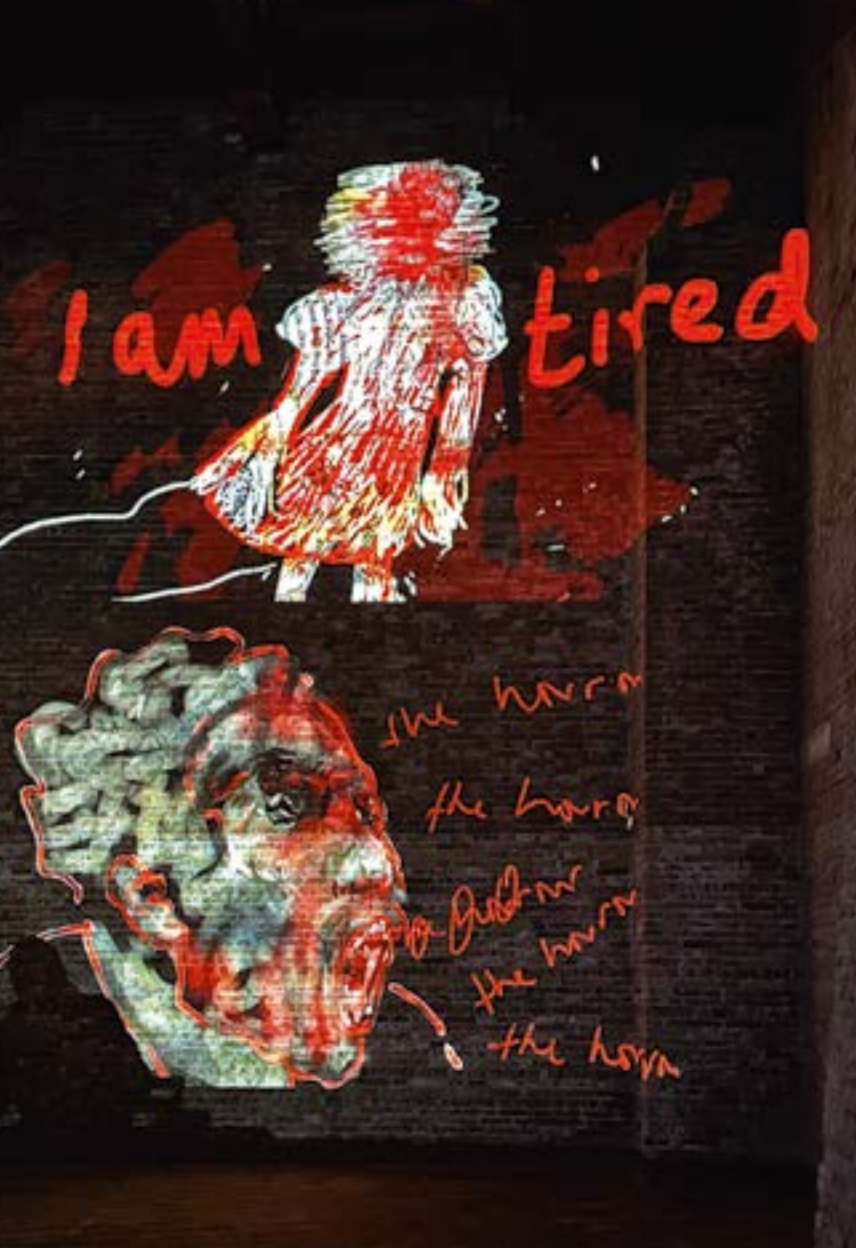
61. Esposizione
Internazionale
d'Arte

Eventi Collaterali

Malini Malani



Of Woman Born



Nalini Malani

Of Woman Born

Kiran Nadar Museum of Art
Collateral Event 61st International Art Exhibition
La Biennale di Venezia, 2026
Curated by Roobina Karode



Nalini Malani

Of Woman Born

Nalini Malani's animation chamber invites us to leave behind fixed ideas of geopolitical imagination. It prompts us to ask: For whom is history written? What would our maps, our myths, our futures look like if they were redrawn from the perspective of the vanquished who survived the horrors of war?

Of Woman Born is a newly commissioned immersive work by Nalini Malani for the Kiran Nadar Museum of Art. Conceptualised as an animation chamber, it draws on the Greek myth of Orestes, who kills his mother to avenge his father and is absolved by Athena, a goddess not born of a woman. Through this divine pardon, the maternal body is severed away from law and justice even as it remains the origin of life. For Malani, this is no archaic story. It still haunts our present, when wars and occupations are justified as self-defence, and devastating violence unfolds with no true reckoning. Malani summons the Furies of our time, not only as goddesses of vengeance, but along with the unseen and unheard, the displaced and mourning. She foregrounds this absent agency of women who bear the deepest wounds of conflict yet remain central to the possibility of another world.

Across nine channels of projection, *Of Woman Born* leads us into a deep, dark cave-like chamber with moving images. Mythic figures, drawings, silhouettes, drifting texts, and apparitions refuse to settle into a single, coherent narrative. A haunting soundscape of twenty minutes courses through the space, superimposing the past and present, myth and memory, justice and impunity. We are invited into this unsettling space not to resolve the story of Orestes, but to live through its afterlives, and to listen to the dispossessed women whose muted histories return here with a demand to be heard.

Nalini Malani's artistic practice, spanning more than five decades, represents a consistent engagement with what can be observed as a paradoxical experience of trauma. Her artistic consciousness is structured around the persistence of a foundational wound, the partition of Undivided India, resulting in the violent aftermath and displacement. A wound that recurs, defying to be buried in history, making its brutal presence felt again in communal violence of 1992, 2002 and 2018. Malani's extended artistic journey, from paintings and drawings to Mylar cylinders and iPad animations, is not a linear development but a discontinuum of artistic forms, where each form interrupts the apparent naturalness of the previous ones, synthesising and insisting that meaning erupts through rupture rather than through seamless evolution. Apart from this representation of the external, drawing also evolved into an intimate way of ordering an inner reality: its fears, anxieties, and uncertainties, which constitute the lived experience of those who do not hold power.



But Nalini Malani does not articulate her practice in the sanitised language of form and composition. She expresses her visual world in the language of bodily horror, not metaphor: body fluids, secretions, mucus, ooze, bubbles and stains. Her entire artistic trajectory rests on this viscosity, the insistence that violence, trauma and memory are not abstract, but they lodge themselves embodied as stains that will not wash away.

The hand that draws, the eyes that witness, and the body that moves through her works are all implicated in the violence, insisting that art making and viewing are both forms of embodied engagement with historical trauma. This was not only a technical skill she imparted, but also a philosophical position that the body is not an abstract figure or a neutral subject. It is a corporeal entity with historical bearings that can be opened, dissected, and analysed. Most importantly, observation and the subsequent act of drawing become a way of thinking about violence, exposure and the precariousness of this exemplified existence. Trauma and suffering mutate the body into an unrecognisable distortion.

In Malani's practice, sound is superimposed upon image, disembodied voices pierce through images, and quotes from various scholars collide with animated figures of the distressed female body. Greek myths superimpose themselves upon Hindu epics; the figure of Medea merges with the figure of Sita, not through harmonious synthesis, but through the processes of simultaneity, where each figure stains the other, changes it, forces it to speak about

the circumstances it was never originally able to address. The visual field becomes a space where such binaries collide, and she makes visible the violence inherent in both traditions along with the predicament of women. Their mistreatment of women does not develop a symbolic language, but instead treats the body itself as a superimpositional surface, which is inscribed by violence.

The layering in Malani's work is also a reminder to us that memory operates in a form of superimposition wherein the past and present, personal and collective memory, individual trauma and historical violence become indistinguishable. The viewer's body gets drawn to the site of political contestation in the acceleration and disorientation played out by the visual and spatial experience of animation chambers. The exhibition space does not simply remain a mediative or contemplative space, but is transformed into a field of perceptual struggle, testing our ethical capacity to witness violence without mastery or resolution. This supersaturation of multiple projections, overlapping voices, and accelerating gestures latches onto the viewer's body, making them co-witness to the acts of violence. In the animation chamber, looking afresh is not a choice, but a necessity of perpetual renewal demanded by the work's refusal of closure.

Roobina Karode



IF MORE ATTENTION
WERE PAID TO THE
FEMALE THOUGHT
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REACH SOMETHING
CALLED PROGRESS

Nalini Malani

Nalini Malani (born in 1946 in Karachi, undivided India) is a pioneering Indian contemporary artist with an artistic practice that spans over six decades, deeply influenced by her own lived experience as a child refugee of India's Partition.

Malani's artistic practice took a radical turn in the late eighties. Confronted by the rising waves of orthodoxy, she extended her art with a multidisciplinary approach, beyond the possibilities of canvas, reaching a wider audience through the potent expression of theatre, ephemeral wall drawings, video plays and the mesmerising allure of video/shadow plays. In these works she gives voice to the marginalized through her evocative visual stories. Her art investigates the questions of gender, race, social inequality, and places inherited iconographies and cherished cultural stereotypes under pressure.

The protagonists in Malani's art emerge from across Asian and European mythologies, history and literature. As a global story teller her practice centres on reframing the female gaze, crafting epic narratives that simultaneously evoke beauty and discomfort. For Malani, it's crucial to reflect on how humanity is absorbing the impending sense of crisis and catastrophe. She does this by unsettling our ingrained ways of seeing both art and



Nalini Malani, Kyoto Prize – Arts and Philosophy, 2023



Transgressions, three-channel video/shadow play, with four reverse painted Mylar cylinders, 2001

Installation view *Nalini Malani: You Can't keep Acid in a Paper Bag*,
KNMA New Delhi, 2014 / Photo Gireesh GV

life. Her point of view is unwaveringly urban and internationalist, and unsparing in its condemnation of a cynical nationalism that exploits the beliefs of the masses. Her socially engaged work continues to illuminate and inspire several generations of creators from the Global South.

Malani's work has been exhibited in 29 solo Museum exhibitions, including four retrospectives, 22 biennales, and over 200 international museum group presentations. A major breakthrough came in 2012 presenting *In Search of Vanished Blood*, at DOCUMENTA(13), when the rotating reverse painted cylinders in a video/shadow play became her international signature. In 2014, the Kiran Nadar Museum of Art organised a year-long retrospective in three chapters, *You Can't Keep Acid in a Paper Bag*, curated by Roobina Karode. In 2017/18 the Centre Pompidou in collaboration with Castello di Rivoli organised the two-part retrospective *The Rebellion of the Dead*. And in 2021 M+ presented in their opening exhibition Malani's solo *Vision in Motion*. Looking ahead, 2027 will witness the Tate Modern's major survey exhibition on Malani's extensive oeuvre, which coincides with the 80th anniversary of the Partition of British India. Malani's work is now held in the esteemed collection of 50 museums worldwide, including M+ in Hong Kong, KNMA in New Delhi, British Museum and Tate Modern in London, MoMA, MET, Guggenheim in New York, Centre Pompidou in Paris, the National Museum of Modern and Contemporary Art in Seoul, and the Art Gallery of South Australia in Adelaide.

Malani's formative artistic journey began with a Diploma in Fine Arts from Sir J.J. School of Arts, Bombay, in 1969. Her pursuit of artistic research continued with the prestigious French Government Scholarship for Fine Arts, allowing her to study in Paris from 1970 to 1972. Malani has earned prestigious awards including the Kyoto Prize (2023) in Arts and Philosophy, the CAA Distinguished Feminist Award (2023), the Joan Miró Prize (2019), the Asian Art Game Changers Award (2016), the St. Moritz Art Masters Lifetime Achievement Award (2014), the Fukuoka Prize in Arts & Culture (2013), and in 2010 she was conferred an Honorary Doctorate in Fine Arts from the San Francisco Art Institute. In 2021, she became the first recipient of the National Gallery of London International Fellowship.



Kiran Nadar, Chairperson, Kiran Nadar Museum of Art

Kiran Nadar Museum of Art

The Kiran Nadar Museum of Art (KNMA) is India's pioneering private museum for modern and contemporary art, located in New Delhi and oriented to South Asia and the world. Established in 2010 by collector and philanthropist Kiran Nadar, KNMA stewards a growing collection of over 16,000 works and is a catalyst for critical engagement with art and its multiple histories. Through research-driven exhibitions, publications, residencies, and a dense ecology of public programmes, the institution seeks to unsettle the idea of the museum as a mere container, imagining it instead as a changing infrastructure of care, interpretation, and collective thinking. The upcoming museum complex in New Delhi will transform KNMA into one of South Asia's most significant cultural institutions.

The museum acknowledges the vision of its Founder and Chairperson Kiran Nadar, and support of Shiv Nadar Foundation and our partners and teams.





Architectural model by Adjaye Associates for Kiran Nadar
Museum of Art at 18th Biennale Architettura, Venice 2023.
Photo Timothy Casten.

Exhibited Artwork

Nalini Malani
Of Woman Born
2026

9-channel animation chamber
67 iPad animations
31 minutes and 57 seconds

Audio poem
20 minutes and 20 seconds

iPad Animations: Nalini Malani
Video edit: Rikhav Desai and Nalini Malani
Sound design: Nalini Malani and Stuart DaCosta
Vocals: Neha Karode and Nalini Malani

Project management: VeniceArtFactory
Video/Audio: Eidotech
Construction: Green Spin

KNMA Team
Curated by: Roobina Karode
Curatorial research: Premjish Achari, Srinivas Aditya Mopidevi
Project support: Deepanjana Klein, Silpi Das, Apurva Kackar,
Aseem Vadehra, Aditi Jaitly Jadeja, Radha Mahendru, Amrita
Kapoor, Jijo Jose



Free Admission

09 May – 22 Nov 26

10.00am – 6.00pm

📍 Magazzini del Sale

(Closed on Tuesday)



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