

## Indian artist Nalini Malani is set to make her mark in 2023

by Ma Padioleau



Nalini Malani is a multidisciplinary artist, one of the most influential on the contemporary art scene. In June 2023, the artist won the Kyoto Prize from the Inamori Foundation in Japan. The prize is awarded in recognition of a lifetime's work and is Japan's highest private honour, the equivalent of the Nobel Prize. Nalini Malani previously won the prestigious Joan Miro Prize in 2019 in Barcelona, making her the first Asian artist to win the award. In 2017, she was the first Indian artist to have a retrospective at the Centre Pompidou in Paris.

Nalini Malani came to be known in the 1980s for her feminist struggle and later in the early 1990s for her innovative theatre and video installations. She was part of the first generation of video artists in India. For her paintings, Nalini Malani uses the technique of "fixé sous verre", painting on the reverse side of transparent sheets.

In early March 2023, the National Gallery in London presented "Nalini Malani: My Reality is Different". Drawing inspiration from paintings in the National Gallery and the Holburne Museum in Bath, UK, the artist presented 25 striking video animations. Hand-drawn using an iPad, these animations revealed and concealed different aspects of the paintings in the two collections, including works by Caravaggio and Bronzino in the National

Gallery collection and by Jan van der Venne and Johann Zoffany in Bath. Concurrently, in March 2023, the Montreal Museum of Fine Arts in Canada organised a major exhibition entitled "Nalini Malani: Beyond Borders". Mary-Dailey Desmarais, chief curator of the Montreal Museum of Fine Arts, had this to say about Nalini Malani: "She is a courageous and committed artist who, through art, ensures a collective commitment. She invites us to think, to reflect on inequalities, on our societies, and all this through powerful art, both in concept and in form". The exhibition included one of the artist's masterpieces, her video installation "Can you hear me?", created in 2018 and sadly inspired by the story of a little girl raped in India by eight men and who was left unheard as she cried out for help. The work was presented in a large room of the museum that was plunged into darkness to allow the projection of these nine videos comprising 88 cartoons.

Nalini Malani is exhibiting "Human Stain" at Galerie Lelong & Co in Paris from 23 November 2023 to 13 January 2024. The artist has borrowed the title of this series, "The Human Stain", from Philip Roth's novel. Nalini Malani explains: "In Roth's novel, the main character tries to hide his 'race' behind the light colour of his skin because it is advantageous for him to be considered totally 'white'. The stain is both a mark on the skin and a social mark, so complex and confused that moral force alone cannot overcome it. Myths are our 'stain', these ancient stories that come down to us through the centuries, unauthored, with a snowball effect, accumulating over time information about each period they pass through". In this series, "The Human Stain", Nalini Malani wanted to bring out mythical characters, in this case Greek myths, so that they would resonate in our own time. To paint these characters, she used her technique of fixing them under glass.

Nalini Malani continues to create works that aim to make us aware of today's social and political challenges, in India and elsewhere. Her work speaks of violence, particularly against women, and reminds us of the extent of social inequality in the world. She continues her feminist struggle, using art as a powerful means of communication.

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