Saloni Mathur

A FRAGILE INHERITANCE

RADICAL STAKES IN CONTEMPORARY INDIAN ART

A FRAGILE INHERITANCE

SALONI MATHUR

A FRAGILE INHERITANCE

Radical Stakes in Contemporary Indian Art

DUKE UNIVERSITY PRESS · DURHAM AND LONDON · 2019

Printed in the United States of America on
acid-free paper ♾
Designed by Matthew Tauch
Typeset in Quadraat Pro by Tseng Information Systems, Inc.

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data
Names: Mathur, Saloni, author.
Title: A fragile inheritance : radical stakes in contemporary Indian art / Saloni Mathur.
Description: Durham : Duke University Press, 2019. | Includes bibliographical references and index.
Identifiers: LCCN 2019006362 (print) | LCCN 2019009378 (ebook)
ISBN 9781478003380 (ebook)
ISBN 9781478001867 (hardcover : alk. paper)
ISBN 9781478003014 (pbk. : alk. paper)
Subjects: LCSH: Art, Indic—20th century. | Art, Indic—21st century. | Art—Political aspects—India. | Sundaram, Vivan—Criticism and interpretation. | Kapur, Geeta, 1943—Criticism and interpretation.
Classification: LCC N7304 (ebook) | LCC N7304 .M384 2019 (print) |
DDC 709.54/0904—dc23
LC record available at https://lccn.loc.gov/2019006362

Cover art: Vivan Sundaram, *Soldier of Babylon I*, 1991, diptych made with engine oil and charcoal on paper. Courtesy of the artist.

Duke University Press gratefully acknowledges the UCLA Academic Senate, the UCLA Center for the Study of Women, and the UCLA Dean of Humanities for providing funds toward the publication of this book.

This title is freely available in an open access edition thanks to the TOME initiative and the generous support of Arcadia, a charitable fund of Lisbet Rausing and Peter Baldwin, and of the UCLA Library.

CONTENTS

PREFACE

I still recall my first encounter with the works of art and critical writing by Vivan Sundaram and Geeta Kapur that situate the central concerns of this study. I was a graduate student pursuing my MA in anthropology at the University of Western Ontario, Canada. It was around 1990, before the internet and other communication technologies had revolutionized the way that images and information are available to people around the world. My thesis supervisor had returned from a research trip to India with a sampling of contemporary art catalogues—pamphlets, really—that she had collected from galleries, museums, and bookshops in Delhi. They were a gift; I knew nothing, except that I found them riveting and befuddling. Included were some images of paintings by Vivan Sundaram, featuring fantastical tropes in soft pastels of boats, journeys, and elusive female subjects, with titles like *Arabesque* and *The Orientalist*, which seemed to prompt a visual dialogue, however obliquely, with the writings of Edward Said. Within a year or two, I moved to New York to continue my studies as a PhD student, where for the first time I read Geeta Kapur, whose intense and discriminating prose seemed somehow to *get under the skin* of a painting or a sculpture and break open its vertiginous realities in a way that recrystallized its exquisite complexity just beyond the reach of what could be grasped. I struggled with the destabilizing formulations of her texts and made photocopies from journals like *South Atlantic Quarterly* and *Third Text*, along with coveted

issues of the *Journal of Arts and Ideas*, brought to me by friends from India. I also photographed Sundaram's images to add to my collection of 35 mm cardboard-frame slides, which I projected on the wall for class presentations or viewed on a light box, a major purchase at the time. What strikes me today is the *preciousness* that came with these modes of engagement at a distance; the novelty of an image or text that had traveled physically from New Delhi to the remote corners of Ontario or New York; the endless chain of questions that emerged from a thing that appeared out of its context in this way; and the slow gestation of ideas and responses that came from a sustained process of wondering over time. Somehow these conditions of reception and prolonged puzzlement and contemplation seem a far cry from the voracious appetites for consumption and modes of instantaneous access that characterize the new technologies and globalized circuits of contemporary art today.

The point is not to invoke nostalgia for an earlier, preglobalized set of networks for art but to clarify some of my own locations and investments in this study at the outset. This book does not represent an "insider" account of contemporary Indian art or the Delhi art world. Although it is my birthplace, I do not live in India or operate within the everyday conditions of art and activism that proliferate and thrive on the subcontinent today. I have nonetheless engaged with the creativity of these milieus intimately through travel, research, professional collaboration, friendships, and family ties over the course of a two-decade-long career in the North American academy. Thus, at the crucial core of this book is a heightened sensitivity toward the processes by which cultural knowledge is mediated and transmitted and the possibilities for connection in the realm of aesthetics across the dialectics of distance and proximity. My interest is in the critical procedures that *open out* a discourse about modernism or aesthetics emerging from a particular era and locale and *make it available* to outsiders across distance and time—that is, make its problems and questions available for others to inhabit in a way that transcends the parochial claims to "insider" or "outsider" status. These are the kinds of radical operations and effects that I see present in the work of Sundaram and Kapur and that lead not to a stable or settled point of arrival for the modern and contemporary art of the subcontinent but to a proliferation of difficulty, uncertainty, and untethered possibilities. Theirs is a model of cultural practice that has consistently sustained such effects over time and that has forged a project of critical reinvention in and through scrupulous attention to

preexisting ideas and ways of seeing. To my mind, this is the opposite of the insatiable quest for that which is "new" in contemporary art, or the reductive search for the next big thing, which can sometimes dictate art's institutional agendas. Instead, their intense mode of working entirely in the present while simultaneously calling up a relation to the past in order to give creative shape to the future serves to challenge such progressivist approaches to the history of art with a more profound and dissonant temporal sensibility. At the same time, this book actively resists fixing a stable or unchanging intellectual contribution or constructing a hagiography that idealizes its subjects. It is rather an attempt to articulate some of the difficulty and fragility of such a critical inheritance, to follow its lines of flexibility and diversity and to amplify its points of intellectual vitality, in ways that continue Sundaram's and Kapur's ongoing projects of radicality and diversification. To this end, it seeks not to offer the final word on their different contributions but to expand and alter the terms through which their practices have been understood thus far.

It would be a number of years before I would meet Vivan Sundaram and Geeta Kapur or even realize that the artwork and texts to which I was repeatedly drawn represented the output of a married couple. While their careers are distinguished by many major individual projects, at times intersecting, they could not be defined as "collaborating" in any conventional sense in the manner of, say, Christo and Jeanne-Claude, or, to cite a more fraught model, Marina Abramović and Ulay. Nonetheless, there exists a powerful affinity in their different forms and modes of production, one that I have experienced in mostly uncanny ways. For instance, an idea in Kapur's writing has often led me back to an artwork by Sundaram, and vice versa, but not because of explicit cues or direct references, though such connections do at other times exist. One of this book's central propositions is that this elusive sense of affinity signals much more than the casual cross-communication of a couple who have lived and worked together in Delhi for almost five decades. It represents, rather, an integrated configuration whose disparate, yet focused, threads take the form of a shared commitment to critical consciousness at work. The result is less a coherent unity or a specific intellectual paradigm than a series of relays between dynamic, flexible points whose very shapelessness is the result of the rigorous, ongoing process that we might refer to as critical thought.

Coming to know Vivan and Geeta personally began a new phase of

engagement for me in the present century. In the past fifteen years or so, I have benefited from extended conversations with each of them, engaging with one or the other informally as well as professionally—as co-panelist, discussant, reviewer, even curator—and we have met on many occasions to view art and participate in conferences and workshops in Delhi, Mumbai, Kochi, Kassel, London, New York, and Los Angeles. Over time, this interaction has also become the basis for a valued intellectual friendship. But the primary challenge of this book is not merely the issue of bias or perspective, a concern that my training in anthropology, with its embrace of "situated knowledges" over false histories of presumed objectivity, has helped assuage. It is related to the fact that my subjects, now in their mid-seventies, are both more active than ever before, producing new artwork and writing with seemingly unstoppable levels of energy and intensity, which seem to complicate, revisit, and challenge previous projects, forcefully resisting the kind of circumscription or summation one might be tempted to connect to an undertaking of this sort.

Sundaram's art is, for instance, almost unretrospective-izable. Its multifarious, at times ephemeral, performative, and site-specific forms, which the artist has repeatedly dismantled and reinvented to new ends, resists being physically collected and displayed as a single totality in the format of a conventional retrospective survey.[1] Kapur's writing, represented by an almost uncountable number of essays, is similarly difficult to harness as a whole in any non-reductive way. Its incisive essay format and interventionist spirit represent a way of knowing based in angled perspectives and contingent truth-claims, and its self-conscious dismantling of earlier ideas and analogous reinvention of old concepts to new ends also refuses arrival or summation. In both cases, every new project brings less an accumulation and more a *distillation* of core principles and long-standing concerns. I have come to understand this as a productive tension, but the reader who seeks a more conventional narrative—a start-to-finish artistic biography or a comprehensive account of five decades of work—will no doubt be disappointed.

To approach a cultural practice not as the mere collection or accumulation of knowledge but as an active and ongoing process of creative, intellectual activity that paradoxically deconstructs such a premise—this requires a method of understanding that is necessarily selective and alert to paradigmatic instances of this process. The critic Craig Owens once described the act of engagement with a critical art practice

as an effort to "write alongside" rather than write about.[2] Said characterized it as a question of "adjacency," how an author "stands to the side of, next to, or between" other works, rather than in a direct relation of primordial descent.[3] Kapur has similarly described her own reflexive stance as being "side-by-side" with contemporary artists in India. Studying the way in which Kapur has turned a lifetime of proximity to the visual arts into focused and uncompromising intellectual work, without forsaking the passion, beauty, and pleasure of the aesthetic sphere and its human relations, has been—in a word—inspirational. As a scholar, it has helped me learn, for instance, how to better comprehend the shape of my investments, how to find and formulate meaningful questions, and how to strive for the integrity of truthful pursuits.

Some may object that in highlighting the output of two individuals I have hitched my horse to a single cart, so to speak; that my sustained attention to these careers is not representative of the diversity of aesthetic practice in the Indian subcontinent, or worse, that it serves to eclipse the wide heterogeneity of forms in dispersed and regional, especially non-Delhi, locations. They may be partially right. Today, there are countless artists, writers, scholars, and curators addressing the broader tapestry of creative energy in modern and contemporary South Asian art, allowing a more synthetic picture of artists and activities across the span of multiple decades beyond the known historical art centers of Delhi, Bombay, Calcutta, and Baroda, to include such places as Bangalore, Kerala, Karachi, Lahore, Dhaka, Jaffna, and Colombo, to name but a few. These accounts provide invaluable overviews and strengthen the narratives for art history through research that makes the density and discrepant complexity of the aesthetic sphere visible in new ways. My study, by contrast, constructs an account of an exemplary practice and opts for sustained contemplation of selective works as a point of entry into broader concerns. It responds, in part, to the increasing preoccupation with the rise of a globalized art world and the suspect category of "global contemporary art," a broad, generally ahistorical banner under which the great difficulties of entire societies, their particularities and paradoxical trajectories, are too often superficially treated or wholly subsumed. It does so by favoring the methodology of a deep inquiry, by presenting large ideas in conjunction with microanalyses, and by reckoning with the relationships between knowledge and power and one's personal investments in an intellectual field.

Kapur and Sundaram have been aware of my project for some time,

variously bemused, flattered, irritated, or confused by the peculiar directions my interests have taken. They are somehow constantly immersed in a major undertaking and perpetually in motion between one ambitious endeavor and the next; suffice it to say, my own study did not generally make their daily priority list. Nonetheless, our open-ended discussions about aspects of this book have been extremely valuable, leading more often than not to substantive intellectual questions and concerns. Roland Barthes famously stated that the meaning of a cultural text lay as much in its destination as in its origin, a proposition that, to my mind, opens up the fraught circuits of risk and responsibility attached to any act of earnest interpretation. That Vivan and Geeta have long embraced this Barthesian principle of multiplicity within the discursive field, seeking interpretive complexity and fragmentation over authorial coherence imposed from above, has been a major motivating factor in this journey. I wish to thank them here for supporting this effort to construct a destination of sorts, for permitting its earlier, more stumbling variations, and for indulging me in this long-term project with its possible excesses of scrutiny and the gaze. Ultimately, this book is about working through an ongoing intellectual debt. It is thus part of an unfinished process that will undoubtedly continue beyond the form taken here.

In addition, I wish to acknowledge the support of several scholarly institutions that fueled the research and writing of this manuscript. I benefited from three different residential fellowships—at the Clark Art Institute, the Getty Research Institute, and the University of California Humanities Research Institute—which provided resources, friendships, and time to think and write within a dynamic community of scholars. I am similarly indebted to the accomplished team at the Asia Art Archive, the nonprofit arts organization based in Hong Kong, who digitized the personal archive of Sundaram and Kapur as part of their vast archiving and educational activities concerned with modern and contemporary art from Asia. Their resources, which are publicly available online, have been a great asset to this researcher, offering not merely information but also self-reflexive engagements that alter ways of seeing. As well, thanks are due to the Warhol/Creative Capital Foundation for a generous arts writer's grant in the book category and to the Academic Senate, the Dean of Humanities, and the Center for the Study of Women at my home institution, UCLA, for providing funds related to this publication. I am also grateful to the Fowler Museum at UCLA

for hosting a solo exhibition by Sundaram, co-curated by myself and Miwon Kwon, titled *Making Strange: Gagawaka + Postmortem*, in the spring of 2015. Geeta and Vivan came to Los Angeles for ten days to oversee the installation and to participate in various programs, including a seminar, a public lecture, and an artist talk. The success of these events and the reception by the university community were immensely gratifying, the result of almost three years of work.

This project has had such a long period of gestation that there are dozens and dozens of people—friends, colleagues, and interlocutors, alas, too many to name—based in India, Pakistan, the United States, Canada, Hong Kong, Europe, South Korea, and Great Britain, who have contributed in one way or another over the years. Thank you to all of you and to the revolution of email, FaceTime, and Skype that has enabled our extended contact and exchange. I am especially grateful to Ken Wissoker at Duke University Press for his incomparable sensitivity toward this project. I also wish to thank my hosts and audiences at the following institutions (in alphabetical order), where I have presented aspects of this study over a period of many years: the Asia Art Archive (Hong Kong), Columbia University, Cornell University, the Courtauld Art Institute, the Getty Research Institute, Johns Hopkins University, Karachi University, the Museum of Modern Art (NY), the Institute of Fine Arts at New York University, the New Europe College, Bucharest, Northwestern University, the University of the Arts London's TrAIN Center, the University of Chicago, the University of Copenhagen, the University of Illinois at Chicago, the University of Southern California, and the University of Sydney, Australia.

Lastly, and most immeasurably, I wish to thank my mother, Veena, and my sisters, Punam and Bindu, who offer sustenance in every aspect of my life. This book is dedicated with all my love to Aamir and our son, Jalal, who surround me with daily nourishment and affection, and who have generously endured, embraced, and shared in every step of this meaningful journey.

INTRODUCTION

RADICAL STAKES

My study constructs an account of radical art practice in India through two seminal figures: Vivan Sundaram, the contemporary Delhi-based artist, and Geeta Kapur, the theorist, critic, and curator and the most significant interlocutor of the post-1968 avant-garde generation to which Sundaram belongs. The couple (both born in 1943) have aligned themselves with the discourses of the international Left for more than four decades and are widely regarded as veterans of socially engaged art in the subcontinent. And yet the meaning of their highly individual, parallel, and at times intersecting contributions to the visual arts has yet to receive any sustained consideration by scholars. This book treats their diverse aesthetic practices as an integrated critical configuration and examines how the artist's and the critic's wide-ranging contributions to avant-garde culture in India may be seen to respond, more urgently than ever, to the specific overdeterminations of the present era.

My argument, put briefly, is that Sundaram and Kapur have enacted through their visual arts practices a rejection of a narrative of filial or civilizational descent in favor of a more radical historiographic relationship to the past that we might understand as "genealogy" in the Foucauldian sense. The goal in constructing this inquiry is thus not to offer an evolutionary story about a previous generation's advances in art; nor is it to celebrate a portrait of a family practice or to mythologize

the legacy of a "great" artistic couple. It is rather to engage the radical implications of my protagonists' self-conscious rejection of precisely such narratives for modern and contemporary Indian art and to investigate the forms that their persistent probing of twentieth-century antecedents has nonetheless taken, through specific readings of selected works. When considered together, the artist and critic present a powerful constellation of critical lessons and possibilities for contemporary art on the Indian subcontinent—and beyond—and highlight many of the major themes that have functioned to redefine the field of scholarship in this area: for instance, the formation of a non-Western modernism in constant tension and dialogue with the Euro-American canon, the negotiation with colonial history, the postcolonial national frame, and the new forms of internationalism from the vantage point of the developing world, and the fundamental relation between art practice and art theory as it has been shaped by the rigors of leftist praxis. My project is thus an interpretive exercise to prod the paradigms in contemporary Indian art, a field buoyed by a thriving art market and a proliferation of art writing as a result but still lacking in substantive scholarship that prioritizes both intellectual distance and rigorous engagement with this shifting ground.

Maverick Journeys, Autonomous Tracks

The striking black-and-white photograph in figure Intro.1 was taken in London in 1969 by a lifelong friend, the renowned artist Gulammohammed Sheikh. The picture captures something of the bohemian spirit and independent stance of two maverick trajectories at a single moment in their emergence. The sixties, as Frederic Jameson argued, were more of a "historical situation" than a periodized decade, unleashing turbulent social and political forces, spontaneous engagement, and a passionate rejection of the status quo the world over.[1] Enmeshed in the zeitgeist, our young initiates began separate journeys whose itineraries would lead them through different cities, educational institutions, social circles, and ideological milieus. Reflecting on the formative experience of the sixties, Kapur has described these uneven engagements as "vagabonding," that is, embracing the bohemian spirit of studios, exhibitions, travel, and protests in places like Delhi, London, and New York.[2] At times, their autonomous trajectories will crisscross and inter-

FIGURE INTRO.1 Vivan Sundaram and Geeta Kapur, London, 1969. Photograph by Gulammohammed Sheikh. Courtesy of Vivan Sundaram and Geeta Kapur.

sect, leading to alternating shades of romance, intimacy, friction, and alienation. As it happens, the photograph in London records an episode of the last of these experiences: its youthful subjects, although very stylish, are also distant, noncommitted, aloof.

For his part, Sundaram, who trained as a painter in the fine arts department of the M.S. University of Baroda from 1961 to 1965 before attending the Slade School of Art in London from 1966 to 1968, had begun his political awakening. "Before I left for London," he stated, "I wasn't political at all."[3] But it was during this time that he stopped painting, took a course in the history of cinema, and developed an intense appetite for the moving image, watching hundreds of films at the Slade and at underground venues throughout the city. As well, he joined demonstrations, rallies, sit-ins, and rock concerts, becoming "so immersed in that context, [and] flowing completely in that moment."[4] Fortified by the energy of youth, the artist famously lived in a commune, protested the Vietnam War, befriended anarchists and comrades in liberation movements like the Black Panthers and women's rights, and took part in the legendary events of "May 68." After hitchhiking across North America and landing in leftist hubs along the way, he eventually found his way back to India via land four years after his departure, by hitchhiking and taking trains through Europe, Turkey, Iran, and Afghanistan. Upon his arrival in 1970, the spirit of radicalism led to new friendships in India and close personal alliances with the organized

Left (the CPI-M or Communist Party of India-Marxist)—and ultimately a stance outside the party proper as a self-identified "artist-activist."

Kapur's rites of passage took place, by contrast, more squarely within the halls of academic study, where she gained exposure at an early age to an international pantheon of mostly male artists and critics, who presented her with vital models of intellectual activity. After completing her BA in economics from the University of Delhi, Kapur set out for New York's Greenwich Village in 1963 at a mere nineteen years old to pursue a master of fine arts at NYU. Her teachers there included Irving Sandler, the critic and art historian aligned with the American abstract expressionists, and the Paris-trained African American painter Hale Woodruff, employed by the WPA (Works Projects Administration) during the Great Depression. Influenced by the polemical debates raging in American art circles at the time among critics like Harold Rosenberg and Clement Greenberg, Kapur wrote her first student reviews of key exhibitions by Andy Warhol and Claes Oldenburg, and was befriended by several Indian modernists—Akbar Padamsee, Krishen Khanna, and V.S. Gaitonde—who were also in New York as Rockefeller fellows. Returning to Delhi in 1965, she continued to "vagabond" in the bohemian world of artist studios in Delhi, Baroda, and Bombay, and she found in the senior novelist and art reformer of the Nehruvian era Mulk Raj Anand an influential friend and mentor.

In 1968, Kapur traveled to London to pursue a second MA in art criticism (awarded in 1970) at the Royal College of Art, where she was similarly inspired by the impassioned stance of the British art critic John Berger. In a recent tribute to the latter occasioned by his death at the age of ninety in 2017, Kapur shared the story of her star-crossed rendezvous with the "peerless critic" in Kensington Park in 1969.[5] It was in London, as she has stated, that she entered "more confidently into the discursive field" guided by the leftist painter-teacher Peter de Francia, "who steered her into Marxism, third-world ideology and postcolonialism."[6] On her return to Delhi in 1970, Kapur entered new kinds of liaisons, influenced by Gandhian and socialist literary circles and the world of Hindi writers in particular; one of them became a serious companion. Receiving a two-year fellowship at the Indian Institute for Advanced Study (IIAS) in 1975, she relocated to the northern hill town of Simla and immersed herself among philosophers, historians, and anthropologists, thriving amid the weekly lectures and seminars and the monastic conditions of the think tank. Later, the same would be

true of a residency at Delhi's Teen Murti, the site of the Nehru Memorial Library and Museum and a center for scholars in the city. Significantly, these Indian educational institutions helped shape Kapur's identity as an *intellectual* and made her uniquely conversant with theory, scholarship, and academia from outside the conventional location of a university position.

The crises of the Emergency in the mid-1970s, which brought two years of authoritarian rule under the administration of Indira Gandhi (Nehru's daughter), led to increased disenchantment for their generation, as Kapur has reflected, and brought the embattled contest over national culture into stark and disturbing relief.[7] By the end of the 1970s, the on-again, off-again relationship between our protagonists would shift into a new kind of restlessness and synergy, driven by the ever-present crises related to secularism, civil society, and democratic politics in India and an increasingly fluid participation in shared projects (and living arrangements) in Delhi, Baroda, and Kausali. The latter was the hill station in North India where Sundaram founded the Kausali Art Center in 1976, which grew into a vital hub for artists across the disciplines through residencies, workshops, seminars, and theater experiments. In 1982, they helped launch the *Journal of Arts and Ideas*, a publication concerned broadly with leftist cultural practice and aesthetics that would assist in shaping the discourse in India for the next two decades. In 1985, they married, officially becoming comrades-in-arms. And in 1989, they joined other artists, writers, scholars, and cultural activists to form the collective known as SAHMAT (Safdar Hashmi Memorial Trust) in response to the murder of the actor, poet, and playwright Safdar Hashmi. This organization, now in its thirtieth year, continues to stand boldly for artistic freedom and secular, egalitarian values, and remains a vital platform for artistic collaboration and political solidarity across the public sphere in India.[8]

While these educational and political journeys were made possible by the privilege of a certain class background, enabling access to experiences and resources that are not available to a large swath of the population in India, it is what one *does* with this societal advantage and *how* one actively participates in the cause of social justice that drives a number of questions at the heart of this study. Significantly, the journal and the Kausali workshops, which led to numerous special issues, have attracted the attention of younger artists and scholars today seeking dynamic models for their own initiatives and an understanding of

the discursive synergy that drove an earlier moment of cultural inquiry and dissent.[9] Shaped equally by the constellations of artistic discourse and leftist discussion at home and the tradition of the historical avant-garde and post-Marxist thought abroad, and still drawn to the emblematic figures of hope-filled revolutionary change, like Che Guevara, Fidel Castro, and Frantz Fanon, Sundaram's art and Kapur's criticism are ultimately a highly syncretic practice that is not reducible to a single origin or institutional location, or an individual format or space of activity, or a particular art form or art world trend, or a specific social question or political orientation.

In fact, to present my subjects' formation in this way—as a relatively straightforward articulation of intertwined historical contexts—is to neglect to confront the strange chronotopes, disruptive anachronisms, and inchoate temporalities that permeate and saturate their relation to the past. Crucially, both artist and critic approach the past not as a mere foundation for the present but as a reservoir of intellectual imagination and cultural responsibility that requires relentless demystification and rigorous reinvention and that can feed utopian confidence. More than a critical relationship to history, this is a distinctive form of time-consciousness, I suggest, in which the dependable linearity of past-present-future is disrupted to produce more discordant but no less utopic effects. These utopian aspirations, as anthropologist David Scott has argued in another context, do not belong to the progressivist teleology of historical materialism.[10] They derive instead from the dissonant temporality of aftermath, in Scott's terms, from the "disjunctures involved in living *on* in the wake of past political time, amid the ruins, specifically of postsocialist and postcolonial futures past."[11] Together, Kapur's theorizing and Sundaram's multimedia installation practice do not resolve the intractable issues of linear time or its implications for the history of art—its disjunctural relationship to history and memory, its lack of synchronicity in the world, its impossible finitude and irreversibility. Their work does, however, make temporality itself highly conspicuous in response to the conditions of our deeply unsettled present. I now turn to investigate this radical time-consciousness in more detail, for it speaks to some of the specificity and integrity of their various aesthetic projects, which ultimately "teach us how to be critical," following the criteria offered by Edward Said, rather than how to follow some predetermined path or become faithful members of a school.[12]

The Dialectics of the "Re-job"

Scholars of contemporary art have recently recognized a variety of gestures in the sphere of aesthetics that appear to dangle under the prefix "re-."[13] These heterogeneous maneuvers, represented by verbs like reperform, reenact, reinstall, or reconstruct, have become increasingly visible in the cultural landscape and point to a certain intensification of activities involving ideas of repetition and return. Following the lessons of poststructuralism, and the Derridean concept of the "re-mark," in particular—a marking that not only marks but also redefines by marking itself as different from the first—a number of scholars and critics have linked the logic of the "re" to critical possibilities and radical aesthetic acts.[14] Nicolas Bourriaud has proposed, for instance, that the artist today functions as a "re-mixer of realities," engaged in modes of recycling and reuse that inaugurate a paradigm of "postproduction" linked to the globalized culture of the digital age.[15]

Hal Foster, in his critique of Peter Bürger's influential text, *Theory of the Avant-Garde*, has similarly prioritized the concept of return. Foster's argument is that the return by artists from Europe and America in the 1960s (the neo-avant-garde) to the artistic movements of the prewar period such as Dada, surrealism, futurism, and constructivism (the historical avant-garde) represents a more productive and elastic engagement with the past than Bürger had initially conceived.[16] In the neo-avant-garde's insistent backward glance to earlier moments of the century, Foster perceives a "strange temporality," as if "lost in stories of twentieth-century art."[17] Foster's argument is part of a broader scholarly rethinking of the avant-garde/neo-avant-garde relationship, which has served to unsettle any simplistic rendering of the relations between past and present, people and place, and origin and repetition in constructing the art history of the twentieth century in favor of a more paradoxical temporality between multiply situated avant-gardes and neo-avant-gardes and, perhaps more significantly, between the "neo" and the "now." These debates thus enable a certain freedom to stretch such concepts and historical models more firmly—as Fanon argued that Marxist analysis should be "stretched" to the situation of the colony[18]—to serve the story of artistic radicalism in much wider geopolitical contexts of the twentieth century and to challenge the enduring hegemony of the idea of the avant-garde's exclusively European provenance.

FIGURE INTRO.2 Vivan Sundaram, *Bourgeois Family: Mirror Frieze*, 2001. Digital photomontage from *Re-take of Amrita* series. Courtesy of the artist.

I bring these theoretical insights to bear on the particular convergence of politics and aesthetics in India represented by the careers of Sundaram and Kapur, who seem to consistently embody the "strange temporality" identified by Foster in their approaches to the cultural field. If both artist and critic appear at times to be "lost in stories of twentieth-century art," then I suggest the means to apprehending their acts of immersion rests in the theoretically informed notion of the "retake." The retake is a gesture of hermeneutic return, one that is first announced as such in the title of Sundaram's series of digital photomontages related to his maternal aunt, India's pioneering modernist painter, Amrita Sher-Gil (see figure Intro.2).

In the series, the myths and legends enveloping the biracial and bisexual Sher-Gil as a foundational figure of modernism are subjected to unique forms of subterfuge made available to the artist through computer technologies.[19] For Sundaram, the digital era enables a great deal: "You can shift to the playful, the provocative; you can lie to tell a truth. . . . There is a constant double-take or, in cinema terms, 'a retake' of the shot," he explains.[20] Thus the technique of revisitation and conversion is used to "multiply points of entry and exit" and to enter the intricate entanglements of the Sher-Gil family, the "drama of their self-appointed egos,"[21] their individual journeys and cosmopolitan life stories, through the privileged social milieus of Budapest, Simla,

Paris, and Lahore.[22] "What kind of 'genetic' maneuver," Sundaram asks, "what kinds of narcissistic relay, does this unwind?"[23]

The project is the most visible of Sundaram's multifaceted engagements interrogating the mythic structures surrounding the figure of Sher-Gil, even as they expose the artist's unique burdens and responsibilities related to the privilege gained through birthright ancestry and the personal archive of an exceptional family past. For Sundaram, the making and unmaking of kinship has taken multiple creative and intellectual forms, beginning as early as 1972, soon after his art school training, in a collection of essays he edited on Sher-Gil for a special issue of the Indian art journal *Marg*. The issue, which held contributions by Kapur, Gulammohammed Sheikh, K.G. Subramanyam, and others from the Baroda art scene, rejected the hagiography that had dominated previous accounts of Sher-Gil and demanded instead a critical investigation of what the authors perceived to be the "very uneven path of her achievements."[24] The contributors took Sher-Gil to task, at times harshly, for many things: her idealized vision of feudal life, her romanticization of the working poor, her lack of interest in India's anticolonial struggle, her unsuccessful turn toward miniature painting, and her failure to respond to the exploitation of workers at her family's sugar factory in Uttar Pradesh. In hindsight, it was the first serious treatment of Sher-Gil by working artists, and the spirit of iconoclasm that pervaded the special issue was part of the evolution of their own practices as painters, leading, in particular, to the polemical assertion of figuration seen in the 1981 *Place for People* exhibition, a landmark show that featured six artists and the critic, Kapur, seeking to retheorize the basis for historical narrative itself.[25]

In the years to come, Sundaram would continue to probe his individual relationship to his iconic aunt, turning his attention toward the family itself in a manner that drifted from these collective concerns. The absence of an actual relationship with Amrita, who died before he was born, enabled a multitude of fictive scenarios and highly creative imaginative acts. Sundaram's searching, melancholic canvas *The Sher-Gil Family* (1983–84), for example, presented a portrait of kinship within the isolation and privacy of domestic space, enhanced by the play of shadows and light. *The Sher-Gil Archive* (1995), by contrast, an installation that gathered together boxes, suitcases, closets, fabric, photographs, and videos, as depicted in figure Intro.3, invoked the spirit of

FIGURE INTRO.3 Vivan Sundaram, *Box Five: Family Album*, 2005. From *The Sher-Gil Archive* series. Teak box with plastic case, mirror, gabardine cloth, and framed photographs in water. Courtesy of the artist.

Marcel Duchamp to hint at the preciousness of a familial past.[26] Two major book projects furthered these activities: first, an edited compilation of his grandfather Umrao Singh Sher-Gil's corpus of amateur photographs, and second, a two-volume collection of Amrita's letters, which consolidated the archive of private correspondence for future research.[27] The combined output leads inevitably to the question, What is at stake in this persistent looking back, this overwhelming preoccupation with the familial scene? Does it "unwind the genetic maneuver," as Sundaram proposed, or does it assign the artist to a single, isolated, identifiable lineage? Or does it suggest a more paradoxical foray into the realm of the ancestral that somehow fixes and unfixes descent at the same time? In the pages that follow I develop an argument that supports and embraces the ambiguity of the latter. For now, I also draw attention to the title of his project, which appears to offer something of a clue. By insisting on the singular "retake," rather than the plural, more intuitive "retakes," Sundaram privileges the *process* over the product and asserts his art practice as a verb, not a noun.

The idea of the retake as a maneuver of unwinding also works, albeit more loosely, to characterize Geeta Kapur's efforts to theorize modernism in numerous essays on twentieth-century Indian art, written during the late 1980s and 1990s and collected in her influential book *When Was Modernism: Essays on Contemporary Cultural Practice in India* (2000). In Kapur's collection of essays the retake appears as a single utterance in a vast theoretical vocabulary driven toward articulating and differentiating the "unlogged initiatives" that flourish in the art-making that surrounds her in India. Thus, Kapur argued in the book that the finely choreographed photo and video performances of Bangalore-based Pushpamala N, which systematically upturn the history of gender stereotypes, offered a "retake on the arts of representation";[28] the rough materiality and existentialist viewpoints of senior sculptor N.N. Rimzon provided a "retake on the phenomenological encounter";[29] the part-human/part-animal/part-goddess forms produced by the inventiveness of sculptors Dhruva Mistry and Ravinder Reddy presented "retakes on the (classical) sculptural tradition";[30] and the emergence of radical art practice in India during the 1990s itself necessitated a "retake" of the American avant-garde.[31]

Kapur adopted, in other words, the retake into her critical lexicon to enunciate a range of strategies of revisitation and return evident in the heterogeneous field of contemporary Indian art. More importantly, the

methodology of the retake was also the basis for a self-reflexive textual practice that disrupted linear chronology in favor of disjuncture, difference, and more dissonant effects. Even the rhetorical title of her book, *When Was Modernism*, evokes something of a temporal riddle and reflects the paradoxical sense of temporality that Foster connected to the critical consciousness of the neo-avante-garde. As I will argue, Kapur's preference for recursive loops, retroactive devices, and anachronistic ruptures in her narrative strategies for Indian art is more than a mere stylistic choice. Her work does not simply construct a historical account of modernism in India, it "re-marks" it in the Derridean sense.

While these activities may appear unrelated—at best reflecting a mutual concern with tradition and the past, or at worse, shoring up a privileged art historical lineage or fixing the boundaries of a hegemonic formation—I argue that the retake is precisely about unfixing such claims to filiation and descent and opening up the possibilities of the past in a tight calculation with the needs of the present. In Sundaram's art and Kapur's writing, we witness a similar rejection of certain modes of belonging—filial, evolutionary, authentic, civilizational—and a refusal of the authority of heritage schemes, in favor of a critical historical practice that upends the idea of organic development. Tropes of archaeology and excavation, repetition and relay, are thus crucial to their conceptual operations and help shape distinctive imaginative acts. These are techniques by which the substratum of stories and journeys are mined in order to bring to the surface layers of history and memory that disallow "roots" or nativist attachments. Accordingly, the past becomes less a foundation for the present than a dynamic and continually reconfigurable ground that takes shape through multiplicity and renewal. This kind of historical practice, or "genealogy," in the terms put forth by Michel Foucault, is not, as the philosopher explained, "an acquisition, a possession that grows and solidifies; rather, it is an unstable assemblage of faults, fissures, and heterogeneous layers that threaten the fragile inheritor from within."[32]

Accepting Fragility

The title of this book, *A Fragile Inheritance*, is partly derived from this formulation by Foucault, which points to the hazardous and precarious nature of any radical historical project. And yet, Foucault's reference

to the "fragile inheritor" emphasizes the vulnerability of the *recipient*, rather than the fragility of the inheritance per se, and places the onus of genealogical understanding in large part on its receivers. It is no longer a question, he wrote, of merely receiving a stable set of truths for the present but "of risking the destruction of the subject who seeks knowledge in the endless deployment of the will to knowledge."[33] The destruction of subjectivity may seem a dramatic description of what it means to seek a base in an antifoundational field of knowledge; nonetheless, it is a process that by definition entails uncertainty, instability, puzzlement, and perplexity. What Foucault described elsewhere as "effective history" was composed of "entangled and confused parchments"; it required patience and a knowledge of details, and it reversed the assumptions of distance and objectivity so long held in value by professional historians.[34] For Foucault, the latter amounted to "the famous perspective of frogs," the view of those groveling at the foot of mountain peaks that focus on the highest forms, the noblest periods, the most elevated and grandiose ideas. An effective history, by contrast, "shortens its vision" to that which is near; it embraces its own proximity; it calls for more detailed contemplations and "slanted perceptions."[35] It does not follow smooth, continuous schemas of development, nor does it permit the sense of affirmation or connectedness that we associate with the idea of heritage.[36] It involves instead a "limit attitude," a critical ethos that consists of "analyzing and reflecting on the limits," an approach that is often experimental, undertaken at the limits of ourselves, and that can also imply a degree of coming undone.[37]

These are the kinds of qualities that define the radical knowledge practices of the subjects of this study and help to locate their often intense and uncompromising relationships toward the most intimate territory of the past. They are also the principles that guide my own investigation, resulting in several methodological dilemmas that further complicate the idea of a fragile quest, or bequest. For instance, how does one begin to articulate that which often resists circumscription, or to outline the contours of a critical imagination without foreclosing or collapsing on its protean lines of sight? And how does one *not* lapse into the "famous perspective of frogs" that looks upward with reverence to perceived higher forms, while negotiating the dialectics of proximity and distance that come with intimate, sustained contemplation over time? As I have suggested, Sundaram's familial, cross-generational discourse renders the notion of inheritance unstable. Similarly, Kapur's

radical historiography of art rejects any complacent or naturalized reception of culture, insisting on a role for criticism to this end. In other words, there is no unambiguous transmission of ideas for any researcher who takes them seriously; thus I turn here to further probe the fragility of the framework of inheritance itself.

Uprooting Inheritance

The idea of inheritance, as a mechanism that connects human beings across generations, belongs to a spectrum of slippery concepts like ancestry, descent, lineage, and legacy. The concern with how a thing is passed on in a relay across time gives way to tensions around tradition and succession, as with, for instance, the contest over heritage. Moreover, inheritance is embedded in social hierarchies and relations of power and is often the means for inequitable distribution. One need only think of the privileged recipients of inheritance schemes—the heirs and beneficiaries of the ruling classes—to grasp how inheritance sustains systems of social stratification. In relation to the nation-form, as Étienne Balibar has argued, inheritance is invariably bound up in biologistic models of human reproduction, which open onto questions of genetics—and the reactionary domain of eugenics, inherited defects, degeneracy, and purification schemes—all under the name of a "naturalistic" paradigm.[38] Here, the histories of colonialism and slavery, with their complex regimes of racial and sexual domination, can have a role in disrupting these naturalistic frameworks by throwing the problems of reproduction and the mechanisms of transference into a new light.

As part of Salman Rushdie's "midnight's children," the generation of Indians born on the cusp of India's independence in 1947, my protagonists were historically positioned for the epic confrontation with such naturalized models of cultural inheritance. The break from colonial rule and the investment in the secular democracy of the new nation-state made the question of cultural transfer and transmission an immensely urgent project, one that was felt at the level of state- and nation-building and at the level of aesthetic experience. Significantly, both artist's and critic's earliest projects in the 1960s strained in earnestness *against* the dominant national narratives of unbroken ancient origins in an attempt to thwart such a sentimentalized inheritance. Sundaram's photo-collages from 1965, which played with found materials from an-

cient Hindu sites like Khajuraho and Elephanta (well before the concept of found object was part of his vocabulary), stand as iconoclastic jabs at these civilizational tropes and the official government books that serve as documents of heritage.[39] In figure Intro.4, for example, two female figures derived from classical Indian sculpture, one more slender than the other, are juxtaposed with an advertising slogan for a diet product ("stay slim with Limical") in an irreverent Warhol-esque subversion of consumerist regimes and the romanticized authority of the ancient past.[40] In a similar vein, Kapur's MA thesis of 1969, her first serious piece of writing undertaken at London's Royal College of Art, argued for the necessity of an active "*quest* for identity" for artists negotiating a postcolonial culture, as opposed to a passive bequest involving the static reception of preexisting forms.[41] Later, Kapur would challenge the organic basis of the civilizational tropes deployed in the lyrical cinema of Satyajit Ray as part of a searching stock-taking of the Nehruvian inheritance and the seductive liberal-humanist legacies of that era more broadly. In chapter 3, "The World, the Art, and the Critic," I take these early efforts in the 1960s to seek out spaces for contemporary culture beyond the predeterminations of the ancestral as a series of "beginnings" in the sense meant by Edward Said: not as a divine point of origin but rather as a "first step in the intentional production of meaning" that facilitates relationships to preexisting ideas and necessitates a practice of "beginning and beginning again" in the lifelong pursuit for an alternative collective imaginary.[42]

Such a questioning of roots does not mean less of a commitment to country or nation—and has nothing to do with being "antinational," a hostile term that has become part of the vocabulary of the Right within the reactionary context of Indian politics today. On the contrary, to critique the problematic of roots is to be entirely committed to a particular soil, but not necessarily to a logic of inheritance that derives *by default* from the family tree. The French philosophers Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari famously refuted the root-tree paradigm, denouncing its organic basis for systems of origin and reproduction as "arborescent knowledge," the most classical, "oldest, and weariest kind of thought."[43] For them, the model of the family tree with its roots, trunk, and metaphoric branches implied a certain fixity and solidity and embodied many of the foundationalist limitations of psychoanalytic and structuralist thought. They proposed instead the theory of the rhizome, a different kind of subterranean stem that defies the monolithic, clas-

FIGURE INTRO.4 Vivan Sundaram, *Keep Slim*, 1965. Collage of ink and photograph. Grey Art Gallery, New York University Art Collection. Gift of Abby Weed Grey, G1975.219. Photo courtesy of Grey Art Gallery, New York University.

FIGURE INTRO.5
Vivan Sundaram, *Boat*, 1994. Handmade paper, steel, wood, and video (installation view). Courtesy of the artist.

sificatory structure of the tree and is based in principles of multiplicity, heterogeneity, connection, and rupture that can "explode into lines of flight."[44] The model of the rhizome, with its amorphous set of linkages and interconnections, corresponded with the emergence of the internet in the 1990s and was quickly seized by theorists of cyberspace as *the* framework for the digital age. However, the philosophical distinction between arboreal and rhizomatic frameworks has relevance here beyond the issues raised by technological culture.

The subjects of my study consistently reject the kinds of thought procedures that involve planting roots as bedrock, in Deleuze and Guattari's terms; what they offer instead are a proliferation of "routes" through principles of expansion, variation, repetition, and reuse.[45] The navigational tool of the "critic's compass" and the metaphors of flotation that prevail in Kapur's writing, which I elaborate in chapter 3, are both expressions of this antifoundationalist sensibility. And these narrative devices have their counterpart in the motif of the boat that has been a recurrent feature of Sundaram's art, as seen in the example of figure Intro.5. The boat has taken a multitude of forms in the artist's painting, installation, and video/new media work over the past four decades: from full-scale architectural models to stripped-down elemen-

tal parts; from fragmented forms of water-borne debris to sculptural assemblages made from repurposed parts; from boatlike abstractions and mythical vessels to actual shipping containers turned repositories of history.

As Tania Roy has argued, Sundaram's boat-works during the 1990s responded directly to the rise of sectarian violence on the subcontinent and addressed the depletion of meaning "in an unmoored present," providing allegories of violence, disruption, and dislocation but also refuge, rescue, and self-preservation.[46] Simultaneously a conceptual idiom and a visual technique, the boat in Sundaram's art galvanizes alternative perspectives and unfamiliar horizons based in liminal offshore lines of sight. At once a symbol of journeying and crossing and a space of suspension and concentration, the boat is a means of accessing *routes* (not roots) and of coping with the ongoing crises between subject and society. Little wonder then, as Roy observed, that the vessel was mobilized by Sundaram with greater urgency than ever to counter the escalating campaign for an authentic Hindu heritage based in Vedic origins and civilizational roots that found violent expression in Ayodhya in 1992, and which continues to persist, both as cultural struggle and state-sanctioned ideology, throughout the Indian subcontinent today.

The word "radical" in my subtitle, *Radical Stakes in Contemporary Indian Art*, conspicuously refers to this problematic of roots at the same time it signals a politicized orientation and a broad commitment to social change in general. Etymologically, "radical" derives from the Latin *radicalis*, "of or having roots," or simply *radice*, the root, and the term was used in this manner from the medieval era on. However, by the seventeenth century, the root under discussion became both literal and metaphorical. Eventually, the "radical" object could be the root of a plant, a language, a scientific process, a disease. One result of this expansion of meaning was that a radical by the early nineteenth century came to describe a person *who performed the overturning of roots*, as in "radical reformers." It may seem contradictory, as contemporary artist Mariam Ghani has noted, "that a *radical* can be both a root part and founding principle, and an extreme agent of change and reactions, simultaneously basic and new; but all this contradiction resolves at the root, which is both the foundation of the status quo and the natural starting point for its reform."[47]

Seizing upon these shifts in vocabulary, I use the phrase "radical

stakes" to signal the fluid investments in the politics of culture that are ultimately driven by a commitment to change and to alternative moorings and social attachments. Accordingly, the subject of this book is as much a reading of *their* (the artist's and critic's) radical stakes as it is a process of articulating my own. These latter investments take the form of three broad intellectual preoccupations and self-directing goals. The first is to inhabit and continue a tradition of leftist practice and thought fashioned by an earlier generation by engaging with its intellectual presuppositions, critical procedures, and secular-humanist-democratic vision. The second is to revitalize a discursive arena lagging from overdetermined concepts and ideas, in part, as I will shortly explain, due to the professionalization of postcolonial theory in the academy. And the third is to seek in the practices of art and art writing an exemplary intellectual response to these dilemmas, one that has relevance across the humanities and social sciences, well beyond the domain of the visual arts.

The Current Conjuncture

Accordingly, the aim of the present inquiry is not merely to examine the contributions made by Kapur and Sundaram to the discourses of contemporary art in South Asia. It is also to enter and continue some of the problems and difficulties raised by such radical approaches to the aesthetic field and to begin to self-fashion a personal inheritance that could help respond to the urgencies of our "current conjuncture." This phrase was Stuart Hall's term for the new relationships and dispositions of power emerging at a given historical moment: "The condensation of forces during a period of crisis, and the new social configurations which result, mark a new 'conjuncture,'" he stated.[48] For Hall, naming the new conjuncture was a matter of political necessity, even if a given term—for him, neoliberalism—was less than satisfactory and always provisional.

Notably, Hall's vocabulary and investigative style were productively appropriated by Geeta Kapur to identify the ground of political antagonism and cultural resistance in India in the new millennium. In a widely cited essay, "A Cultural Conjuncture in India," Kapur argued that with globalization, "new factors have emerged to alter the role of artists as

citizens."[49] Writing in the wake of the 2004 elections in India, which saw the centrist Congress Party return to power in an unexpected challenge to the right-wing orientation thriving among the middle classes, Kapur connected this "churning of Indian democracy" to the new modes of experimentation with video and new media precipitated by the shift from the analog to the digital and reflected on the agonistic role for "critical art" within the flourishing marketplace.[50]

If Kapur's call in that essay for "a situational analysis of cultural production within vastly heterogeneous geopolitical realities"[51] harbored a degree of skeptical optimism, the acceleration of inequality and sociopolitical crises the world over surely point to a more difficult, volatile, and regressive conjuncture today. There is no question that we live in truly perilous times in which the future seems profoundly uncertain. The resurgence of authoritarian politics—embodied by Prime Minister Narendra Modi in India and President Donald Trump in the United States but equally visible in the autocratic rulers of Brazil, Turkey, Japan, Russia, and the Philippines—points to a disturbing pattern in which principles of truth and democratic freedom, even the right to criticism and dissent, can no longer be taken for granted.

Instead, these social justice ideals appear to be increasingly threatened by the rise of xenophobic nationalism, religious radicalism, and the unpredictable pairing of disillusionment and populism unleashed by the phenomena of Brexit/Trump. The global refugee crisis, and the chilling reaction to the influx of migrants and the dispossessed in the United States and Europe, has fueled a wave of neo-fascism, anti-Semitism, and Islamophobia; the hostility toward Muslims around the world is perhaps the most pronounced of these xenophobic expressions. Battles are being waged over threatened civil liberties, women's reproductive rights, and the devastating effects of global warming on the planet; travel bans and border walls are being constructed, further destabilizing poor, marginalized, and unprotected populations everywhere. Meanwhile, Trump's notorious Twitter feed conveys a belligerent disregard of issues of the highest importance, while promising (and delivering) a kind of suspension of thinking, a rejection of historical understanding, and a refusal to face the complexity of the world. It also raises a troubling question: How should we speak truth to power when power seems no longer concerned with the truth?

And yet, as Stuart Hall stated with his unparalleled strength of intelligence and insistence on keeping open the door to the future,

> What happens next is not pregiven. Hegemony is a tricky concept and provokes muddled thinking. No project achieves "hegemony" as a completed project. It is a process, not a state of being. No victories are permanent or final. Hegemony has constantly to be "worked on," maintained, renewed, revised. Excluded social forces, whose consent has not been won, whose interests have not been taken into account, form the basis of counter-movements, resistance, alternative strategies and visions . . . and the struggle over a hegemonic system starts anew. They constitute what Raymond Williams called "the emergent"—and are the reason why history is never closed but maintains an open horizon towards the future.[52]

Following in the critical tradition of Williams and Hall, the creative activities of the artist and critic provide a model of intellectual practice that prioritizes the process of *becoming* as a mode of engagement and radical thought. This kind of cultural imaginary, with its rejection of closure and finality of all sorts, and its active investment in the agency and struggle of intellectual work, is of vital importance within the current contexts of global crises and sense of intellectual impasse within the humanities. There is a broad consensus that the radical intellectual toolkit known as postcolonial theory became increasingly exhausted as a critical vocabulary by the late 1990s, either "dulled" as investigative tackle by academic institutionalization and "multicultural managerialism," or firmly displaced (Trumped?) by the shift to "the global."[53] The same has been said of the other "posts" that galvanized aesthetic debates at the end of the millennium, namely, poststructuralism and postmodernism: their depletion amounts to what Hal Foster has called our current "paradigm-of-no-paradigm"[54] and the general experience of a condition of aftermath, of living on within the fault lines of implosion and duress.[55]

Foucault warned about the inevitability of bankrupt concepts, stating they provided no more than "ready-made synthesis." The task is "to free the problems they pose," he argued presciently, looking beyond the cul-de-sac of assimilated "isms."[56] Accordingly, I seek a reinvestment in the strategies of resilience and renewal that drove an earlier tradition of leftist thought, and an engagement with a legacy of ideas *put into practice*, as the basis for a repositioned response to the challenges of our times. As we shall see, the enormous faith that our practitioners have placed in art is not because it provides solace, escape, distraction,

or diversion; nor does it promise coherence, resolution, or a predetermined direction. It is because art's intelligence and intrepid investigation of the world from which it emerges presents a place for us *to go right now*; it provides ballast against the terrible unknown, resources for a continual becoming, and a means for survival, resilience, and renewal.

Filiation vs. the Affiliative Scheme

The fraught nature of the idea of inheritance and the difficulty of transmission across the generational divide were also problems at the center of Edward Said's distinction between "filiation" and "affiliation." These concepts, which first appeared in *The World, the Text, and the Critic* and were developed further in *Culture and Imperialism*, were closely linked to Said's notion of "worldliness" and his approach to the practice of "secular criticism" more broadly.[57] Few things, Said argued, were as problematic and universally fraught in the modern era as the assumption of a natural continuity between one generation and the next. If patterns of *filiation*, resulting from natal links, had served to cohere relationships in traditional society, then these were increasingly eroded and replaced by modes of *affiliation* in the modern era. Said saw this as a persistent tension in the world of high modernism and its intelligentsia and pointed to the prevalence of such tropes as childless couples, orphaned children, and still childbirths within English literature, "all of them suggesting the difficulties of filiation."[58] What Said saw in such modernist writers as T.S. Eliot, James Joyce, Joseph Conrad, and Ezra Pound was "the pressure to produce new and different ways of conceiving human relationships"[59] and a creative reimagining of social bonds that could substitute for the stability of biological connections across generations. Thus, if filiation was a form of belonging that came with birth or family, then affiliative relationships were acquired through "social and political conviction, economic and historical circumstances, voluntary effort and willful deliberation."[60] If the filiative scheme belonged to the realm of nature and biological life, then "affiliation belongs exclusively to culture and society."[61] And if filiation was based on descent and "organic complicity," then affiliation was something actively forged through "critical consciousness and scholarly work."[62]

The intellectual output of Sundaram and Kapur, as I have suggested, is characterized by a refusal of those forms of belonging based on

familial or biological descent and a highly procreative and regenerative drive toward that which we might see as "an affiliative order." The couple, who have no children of their own, are also known in Delhi for their tireless attendance over the decades at the city's rapidly shape-shifting art world events, and their stamina and energy for exhibitions, openings, gallery talks, conferences across the academic fields, performances, open studios, and all manner of other, more eccentric happenings has been much commented upon. The scope and range of their activities must also be understood as reflecting the broader community of artists, activists, and intellectuals in India to which they belong, whose members stand by a principled commitment to civil society and cultural work often debated through rigorous dissensus. Such everyday activities share with their major works of art and writing a seemingly insatiable appetite for past, present, and future simultaneously. In the constant return toward twentieth-century antecedents and the active embrace of younger artists and new initiates—a pointed enthusiasm for both predecessors and successors—we see both artist and critic rejecting timeless or quasi-transcendental mechanisms of belonging, and instead activating affiliative relationships in a somewhat systematic way. And yet, such a process, as Said stated, which can involve the transformation of something personal or narrow into "a cultural act of great importance,"[63] is not systematic or easily grasped through a predetermined methodology. To begin to take such work seriously is thus to try to apprehend the many forms, positions, events, and contexts in which this contribution, defined ultimately by Said as "critical thought,"[64] takes its shape and gains its force.

Generational Frames

The idea of "generation," like the notion of inheritance, is a thoroughly temporal construct, one that is linked equally to the structure of an individual lifetime and to the experience of collective identities. Generation implies identification, belonging, and a social, even quasi-biological bond. It is at times consistent with the idea of cohort, which assumes a shared consciousness of sorts; at other times it marks the fact of social difference and the parent-offspring relation in particular. It was the Hungarian-born sociologist Karl Mannheim who first objected to the positivist's linear rendering of generation as "the curve of the progress

of the human species" over time in his 1923 essay, "The Problem of Generations."[65] For Mannheim, mere chronology did not in itself produce commonality or collective identity. "Were it not for the existence of social interaction between human beings," he stated flatly, "generation would not exist as a social phenomenon: there would be merely birth, aging, and death."[66] If the quote reveals the stark dichotomy between the social and the biological in Mannheim's classic sociology of knowledge, it also displays his own investment in a more organic account of human existence and its relevance to social and historical change.[67]

Recently, anthropologist David Scott has turned to the category of generation "as a mode of thinking the continuities and discontinuities of the past in the present," and has connected this inquiry to intellectual history and to the work of criticism in particular.[68] Scott's far-reaching project of interviews with Caribbean intellectuals, writers, and political actors—most notable among them, Stuart Hall—is highly sensitive to the nuanced fabric of intellectual inheritance and to the structure of generation as a social form. For Scott, the idea of generation contains within it an essentially paradoxical temporality because generations do not merely succeed one another, they overlap and coexist. "Different generations live at the same time," he reminds us, and this fact of *co-existence* implies active participation in a continuous social process and differently located subjects who can nonetheless work toward a shared location.[69] Building on what Mannheim referred to as "frameworks of anticipation," Scott thus expands and redefines the idea of generation as "a frame in which to think of the plenitude as well as the finitude of human existence."[70]

This more synchronic, less sequential approach to the phenomena of generations—to their "successive-yet-overlapping" co-presence in history[71]—situates a more dialogical, multilocational terrain through which to conceive of creative practitioners and aesthetic forms, past and present. In relation to art history, it should also create suspicion about "modernist myths" that derive from seamless stories of generational succession rather than from the "ground of repetition and recurrence" upon which all aesthetic practice is based.[72] Over two decades ago, Griselda Pollock reflected on how generational coordinates within feminist art history (in the form of first, second, and third waves, for example) had served to flatten certain narratives about art and artists, noting that feminist discourse had—at times—been "unconsciously

depoliticized" by being framed through generational and geographic differences.[73]

A quibble along these lines could be made about the recent volume *Midnight to the Boom: Painting in India after Independence* (2013), which provides a portrait of Indian art in the second half of the twentieth century, primarily from the Herwitz Collection at the Peabody Essex Museum, the most significant painting collection of its kind in the United States. Featuring contributions from top scholars in the field, the book identifies three successive generations of artists in South Asia in the twentieth century. Accordingly, the first generation, largely born between 1910 and 1930, are the "Pathbreakers"; the second, who "began to make waves in the 1970's," are "Midnight's Children"; and the third, who turned to new forms, materials, and languages from the early 1990s, are the "New Mediators."[74] Inevitably, artists who fall into more than one cohort, like Sundaram and Nalani Malani, are said to be "on the cusp between generations"; and confusingly, a younger "fourth generation," represented by Sudarshan Shetty and Subodh Gupta, is identified as having emerged through the expanding conditions of the global art market, also in the early 1990s.[75] In other words, the schema appears to strain against Mannheim's key lessons about generations—that human experience is temporally overlapping, that chronology does not in itself produce commonality, and that humanity is always coexistent but not necessarily coeval. Significantly, it also prohibits a more dialogical account of creative practice through which artists assume a multiplicity of agonistic *and* shared orientations toward the spaces of culture in their own time.

Remembering Bhupen: Intimacy and Subversion

The painter Bhupen Khakhar, an emblematic figure of the so-called Baroda generation, is an artist who demands understanding through the kind of expanded generational optic suggested by Scott. This is because until his death from cancer in 2003, this openly gay painter was often at the center of sociality and a source of creative vitality for his famed group of peers in Baroda—among them, Nasreen Mohamedi, Gulammohammed Sheikh, Nalani Malani, Nilima Sheikh, Vivan Sundaram, and Geeta Kapur—with whom he forged many different kinds

FIGURE INTRO.6 Bhupen Khakhar, *Death in the Family*, 1978. Oil on canvas. © Trustees of the Bhupen Khakhar Estate/Victoria and Albert Museum, London.

of bonds through love, humor, empathy, friendship, and artistic solidarity. At the same time, the relevance and significance of Khakhar's painting have expanded and multiplied dramatically as his work has been posthumously received in meaningful ways by countless younger practitioners. This atmosphere of reception is now certainly part of the interpretive complexity and multidimensionality of his oeuvre, as evidenced by a major retrospective exhibition of his work at the Tate Modern in London in 2016.[76] This international show dramatized the remarkable ability of Khakhar's paintings, with their elemental themes of love, sexuality, illness, and the body, as portrayed in figure Intro.6, to "speak" to differentially located subjects across a vast spectrum of social, historical, and generational experience.

Khakhar's status as an artist through which other artists converge and connect was at the heart of an earlier 2013 exhibition in Mumbai,

Touched by Bhupen, commemorating the tenth anniversary of the painter's death. The show featured twenty-five contributors, some friends and colleagues from his circle, others younger practitioners indebted to his work, reflecting on the ways the painter affected their lives: as reference, inspiration, exemplar, and role model.[77] In a memorable homage titled "Buddy," translated from Gujarati for the English-language catalogue, Gulammohammed Sheikh offered an especially intimate set of reflections about the journey of their five-decade-long friendship, speaking of mischief, mayhem, travel, and their "playful duet" in pursuit of a pictorial language through the "alternating currents of being close and being distant."[78] His first-person account about their remarkable bond narrates a certain generational experience unavailable to those outside the cohort except *by way of narrative itself*. To this extent, it builds upon the now canonical volume edited by Sheikh in 1997, *Contemporary Art in Baroda*, which included contributions by Nilima Sheikh, Ajay Sinha, and Ashish Rajadhyaksha, all practitioners in some way connected to the art school, and which remains to this day the most significant account of Baroda's distinctive intellectual and institutional milieu.[79]

If one instance of the critical consciousness I have been explicating rests in the micro-corpus of creative activity that Sundaram produced around Amrita Sher-Gil, then another exceptional instance can be seen in the artist's and the critic's very different posthumous engagements with the life and art of their peer, Bhupen Khakhar. A key feature of affiliation, for Said, was that it *converted* the anguish of familial loss into a more productive language, by means of invention, adoption, and ultimately transformation into something that others can share. As with Sheikh, this is at the potent center of several projects dedicated to the "uncommon universe" of Khakhar, which galvanize methods of mediation and interpretation to serve alternative narratives and critical self-reflection. These projects include a 2007 essay by Kapur whose title I have just referenced;[80] a second essay in conjunction with Khakar's retrospective at the Tate Modern in 2016; a double-page collage made by Sundaram, comprising photos, images, and fragments from Khakhar's letters, also for the Tate Modern exhibition; a series of works by Sundaram made with paper, pencil, and string, *Bad Drawings for Dost* (2004–5); and an exhibition titled *Subject of Death* (2012) curated by Kapur on the occasion of the tenth anniversary of the painter's passing.[81] By turning now to examine a selection of these projects, I seek to show how this creative investment in the legacy of Khakhar represents both an affec-

FIGURE INTRO.7 Vivan Sundaram, *Angel and Devil* from *Bad Drawings for Dost* series, 2004–5. Pencil, paper, and thread. Courtesy of the artist.

tionate homage to the painter's unique social vision and a confrontation of sorts with the inherent limits of successionist narratives and generational frames.[82]

In *Bad Drawings for Dost*, for example, Sundaram revisited pictorial elements from Khakhar's paintings, by tracing over them by hand and then piercing them with a needle and thread, in a tactile operation involving returning, touching, retracing, and stitching. The resulting series of works, Nancy Adajania has stated, present themselves "like a stain of water on the tissue of memory."[83] In these rough stitches and drawings, as depicted in figure Intro.7, Sundaram turned, after a decade of installation and photo/video-based projects, to "caress" the images of his *dost* ("friend" in Hindi), "as though, by touching his paintings, he could make contact with the departed."[84] The allegory of touch is especially resonant since, as Kapur has stated, "Khakhar's figuration testified to many forms of touch," from wounding to healing to sexual incursion, to the extent that he came close to establishing a genre in this vein.[85] Indeed, several of Sundaram's titles in the series—for instance, *Petals/Five Penises* and *Two Men Please All*—seem to inhabit or "touch" the titles of Khakhar's more iconic paintings. But why is such an intimate experience of exchange through touch conceived as a set of "bad drawings" by Sundaram? If the term "bad" is a measure of quality, then what does it mean, it seems reasonable to ask, to make *bad* drawings for a *good* friend?

One answer could be that the gesture stands as a form of recognition of Khakhar's own self-conception as an artist. "I draw badly," the painter once confessed to his friend, the British artist Timothy Hyman, in his characteristically irreverent manner toward aesthetic codes and conventions.[86] And yet, in an interview published in the *Indian Express*, Sundaram offered another response. They were called "bad drawings," he said, "because the images were traced, but I worked on them by dislocating parts of the original painting. It added a certain complexity to the image."[87] Adajania has suggested another explanation, similarly connecting the notion of "bad" to the rough, unfinished aspect of the work. In Sundaram's pictures "there is no urgency," she observes, "to reach for the closure of the perfect composition."[88] Their accounts would seem to confirm, then, that a "bad" drawing is something defined by its rudimentary form. It is minimally composed or technically improvisational, like a rough sketch or a traced line. A "bad drawing"

is partial and ongoing, a quick offering, perhaps, among many, in the process of remembering a friend.

Kapur's writing and curatorial projects point to further layers of meaning in relation to the aesthetic hierarchies and social norms that might attach themselves to a word like "bad." In her account of Khakhar, included in the volume *Pop Art and Vernacular Cultures* (2007), edited by Kobena Mercer, Kapur emphasized the painter's rejection from the outset of dichotomous designations, for instance, between avant-garde and kitsch or between high art codes and the realm of the popular. "Khakhar was a vanguard figure who thumbed his nose at high art," she explained. Moreover, "his love acts remained on the *edge* of respectability." For Kapur, this becomes an important basis from which Khakhar staked "a counter-claim for an avant-garde based on marginal and eccentric sources."[89] "Through a trickster's intransigence," she stated, Khakhar ultimately subverted all manner of conventions relating to male bodies and homosexual desire, and this connects, at least implicitly, to the artist's own interest in "bad drawing." Thus Khakhar's investment in bad drawing supported "a vulnerable form of representation."[90] Another viewer, Emilia Terracciano, appears to confirm this sense of vulnerability: "Khakhar's sketches are open about their faults," she observed in a 2013 review of an exhibition of his drawings in London, but his deft, swift pencil sketches remain refreshingly spontaneous and ultimately lend support to his highly individual representational project.[91]

What should we make of this puzzling vocabulary of "badness" surrounding Bhupen Khakhar? Does it have any relation to the 1978 exhibition *Bad Painting*, curated by Marcia Tucker at the New Museum of Contemporary Art in New York? There, the term came to stand for a predominantly figurative and purposely raw style of painting being developed in America in reaction to the dominant minimalist and conceptualist schools of the era.[92] As it turns out, there is probably no connection; Khakhar himself had little interest in the fickle immediacy of art world trends. The point, for our purposes, is to observe how such questions sustain and activate ambiguity and illegibility, effecting an *interpolative* intellectual practice that disallows shortcuts and instantaneous access and demands instead high levels of engagement from its audience. Such a practice often splinters and multiplies frames of reference, leading to additional questions and further research. In the case of Khakhar, we are left with no bottom line or final word, and no

definitive way to characterize his art. We apprehend, instead, different points of entry into the multidimensional hierarchies operative in the painter's life and work—sexual, aesthetic, societal, behavioral—some of them resonating with the notion "bad." One effect is that the word "bad" no longer functions as a Kantian sign of judgment and objective value. Instead, these modes of engagement push the term into the service of Khakhar's own conditions of marginality. If anything, such interventions come to stand for the societal *costs* (not worth) that were evident in his life and art.

If the phrase "for dost" in Sundaram's title suggests a friendship that was forged at least partly outside the boundaries of the English language, and hints at Khakhar's own relationship to the vernacular realm, then Kapur's reference to "Saint Bhupen" is even more dense with nuance and intertextual citation. Here, the critic performs the same "trickster's intransigence" that she identified in her subject, the artist. This is because Kapur's declaration of sainthood appears, upon first glance, as the ultimate act of veneration and canonization, and it seems therefore a sign of reverence distinctly at odds with the kind of critical retake I have suggested. However, her title "Saint Bhupen" is a reference to "Saint Genet," the name of the book by Jean-Paul Sartre about the French writer and political activist Jean Genet, who was also openly homosexual. Significantly, Sartre's title, *Saint Genet*, has proven resonant for scholars and thinkers in queer studies, who have appropriated the philosopher's paradigmatic attempt to link Genet's marginality and homosexuality to the "greatness" of his art as a model for queer historiography. David Halperin's book *Saint Foucault*, which argues for a reading of Michel Foucault, who died of AIDS in 1984, as a gay intellectual, is an excellent example. But Kapur's nomenclature, "Saint Bhupen," does more than invoke the complex psychology and morality that is at stake in the gender positioning of gay men, which Sartre and Halperin set out to grasp in their major studies of Genet and Foucault. It also invokes the precarious position of the critic in this operation, recalling, in particular, Susan Sontag's objections in *Against Interpretation* to the "thick encrustations" of interpretation that surrounded important artists in her now classic set of reflections about criticism and her harsh indictment of Sartre's book on Genet.[93]

"*Saint Genet* is a cancer of a book," "exasperating" and "grotesquely verbose," wrote Sontag in her memorable 1966 review of Sartre's six-hundred-plus-page tome. For her, it broke "every rule of deco-

rum established for the critic" and epitomized the problem of overinterpretation.[94] Sontag viewed Sartre's book as an "indefatigable act of literary and philosophical disembowelment practiced on Genet"; at best, it was an indulgent exercise intended to prove Sartre's own investments in existentialism and psychoanalysis.[95] Félix Guattari would later agree with Sontag's general assessment of the situation: "It was wrong for Sartre to project onto Genet" his own psychogenetic schema, he stated.[96] And yet, Guattari's attempt to "regain" Genet from Sartre's oppressive analysis in the book, which he viewed as both a "colossal and sumptuous monument" and a "mausoleum," similarly reflected his own interest in developing an antipsychiatric theoretical argument. Thus, in addition to foregrounding gay subjectivity, *Saint Genet* may be seen to stand for some of the most essential challenges to interpretation itself as they have been articulated within the Franco-American philosophical tradition since the 1960s.

Kapur's retake on this inheritance for India in her fertile moniker, Saint Bhupen, thus compels us to recall some of the major lessons of this tradition—for example, to challenge the stultifying separation between form and content; to struggle with the dilemma that knowledge is power; and to seek, as Sontag argued, "a descriptive, rather than prescriptive, vocabulary" for art.[97] As well, this loaded reference invites us to consider in philosophical terms the significance of the space between the critic and her subject. Kapur has acknowledged cutting her teeth on this intellectual tradition, explaining in a recent interview how the debates surrounding interpretation launched by Sontag's text helped her to develop a more critical approach in her writing. "I was already aware that interpretation was a problematized area," she stated. "But the interesting thing was to work out how one actively problematizes it."[98]

Kapur's ingenious act of commemoration in the exhibition *Subject of Death* portrayed in figure Intro.8—to hang Saint Bhupen "resplendent" in the gallery among friends—sustains this process of active problematization and represents another instance of the "working out how" that is crucial to her critical praxis. Her retake on Sartre's epithet points to a contested history of theoretical frames—existentialism, psychoanalysis, and poststructural critique—and cautiously navigates the crowded intersection of theory's lapse into dogmatic excess. Kapur's return to Sontag (this time the text is *Illness as Metaphor*) in her later essay on Khakhar concerned with the tensions surrounding mortality in his final

FIGURE INTRO.8
Subject of Death (installation view), exhibition curated by Geeta Kapur, 2013. Photograph by Anil Rane. Courtesy of Chemould Prescott Road.

paintings, when the artist was suffering acutely from cancer, appears to have been compelled by the same consideration: "I needed to remember how language—its descriptive powers and its follies in the way of metaphors—can cause offence to the person actually suffering from a disease," she stated.[99]

Accordingly, the luminous language of this essay, which Kapur describes as both a continuation of her 2007 text and an "epilogue to his heretical oeuvre," confronts the morbidity of Khakhar's illness and affirms painting's agential role within the devastating conditions of disease and death. Khakhar's late works, she writes, do not so much "out-maneuver death"; they turn "*the objective indifference of death's gaze into aura*."[100] For her, the act of writing must attempt to retrieve the body of the lost friend "from the curse of eternity" and secure for him instead "a place in active memory."[101] What is striking is not only Kapur's dedication to protecting Khakhar from the excesses of language, an artist who—it should be recalled—"thumbed his nose" at theory's high ground; there is also something of a devotional quality, reminiscent of Khakhar's own performative (and mischievous) relation to the sacred. And yet, Kapur's is a firmly *secular* consecration in the end, drawn entirely from the philosophical or "affiliative" field. And this returns us

to some essential questions about the relations among language, philosophy, and the arts: namely, what *should be* the role of interpretation and explication—what forms and registers should it take, and when? Where are the lines between knowledge, possession, and the needs of the self? How can a loved friend's creative life be recalled with corresponding levels of love and creativity? And how should language and the space of display be effectively put to this valiant task?

Problem-Spaces: The Shape of the Inquiry

This trail of activity in the wake of Bhupen Khakar's death conveys something of the *work* that Sundaram's art and Kapur's writing and curating demands from its viewers and readers. Taken together, the former's drawings "for *dost*" and the latter's essay investigations and *Subject of Death* exhibition do not qualify as a "collaboration" in any conventional sense; nor do these projects exist on an equal footing, given the varying registers and depths of engagement that distinguish the critic from the artist here. Nonetheless, through their textual and visual allusions and techniques of tracing, translation, interpretation, and display, we apprehend a sophisticated play of language and signs, as well as meanings that reverberate across heterogeneous forms. This is not to say that the outcome is always successful; on the contrary, the struggle toward that which is often beyond grasp involves persistence, difficulty, and, at times, mixed results. As Said cautioned, affiliation was itself a fragile thing, always fraught with doubleness and at risk of collapsing from the critical to the uncritical: "Affiliation sometimes reproduces filiation, sometimes makes its own forms."[102] The key was to recognize the subtle difference between the two and the continual negotiation on the part of artists and writers to seek that "potential space inside civil society . . . [of] alternative acts and alternative intentions" conceived as a fundamental intellectual obligation.[103]

Said also pointed to the possibility that the drive toward difficulty might "take the joy out of one's heart," as if pleasure was somehow antithetical to the insistent skepticism of critical thought.[104] This final point serves to highlight several intangible qualities—beauty, love, pleasure, and hope—that seem to float freely, indeed reliably, across my subjects' creative output over time. Sundaram's aesthetic forms are frequently beautiful, often breathtaking, even sublime; similarly, Kapur's writing

is full of compassion, moments of bliss, and modulations of love and hope. And yet, these various affective registers are never at odds with the sharpness of their societal critiques, nor do they reflect a momentary lapse of judgment or a dilution of one's critical concerns.

"To be truly radical," Raymond Williams stated with unwavering conviction, "is to make hope possible, rather than despair convincing."[105] For him, hope was a pragmatic asset, the antidote to disaffection and despair; the loss of hope could lead to fatalism and complacency and become a self-fulfilling route to the misery it foresaw. In a similar vein, the beauty and joy that come uniquely from the aesthetic sphere offer a calibrated politics of hope for our subjects. More than sentimentality or a facile sense of optimism, this is a constitutive feature of their affiliative practice, rooted in the analysis of societal forces, fueled by the processes of participation and engagement, and linked to the expansion of the political imagination. This aspirational, yet firmly secular, quality exists in many of their major projects, and it speaks to that which Walter Benjamin attributed to the otherwise metaphysical space of the aura: an aesthetic quality that is fundamentally unassimilable and that resists being wholly recuperated in the end.

The points of intersection that occur between Kapur's writing and Sundaram's art-making in the examples of Khakar and Sher-Gil also stand as an exemplary case of criticism's possibilities in relation to art. Suffice it to say that Kapur's own writing about the Sher-Gil family, which began with a skeptical essay in 1972, assumes a relationship of critical distance and studied *adjacency* to the activities of this unusually creative clan. Subsequent engagements have included an essay on women artists in India that considers (among others) Amrita Sher-Gil and a text addressing Umrao Singh Sher-Gil's corpus of amateur photography alongside Sundaram's digital journey through the "labyrinthine tunnels of the family saga."[106] Her writings on Khakhar, by contrast, extend much further backward and forward, spanning a period of fifty years as already noted, accompanied by several curated exhibitions that featured Khakhar's work.[107] Meanwhile, Sundaram's iconic 1981 painting seen in figure Intro.9 of Khakhar's lively studio, *People Come and Go*, which captures, as Homi Bhabha has recognized, the atmosphere of "citationality"[108]—the hospitality and ease of intercultural experimentation that characterized India's art world at this juncture—reveals a similar kind of sustained energy and intellectual concentration over time.

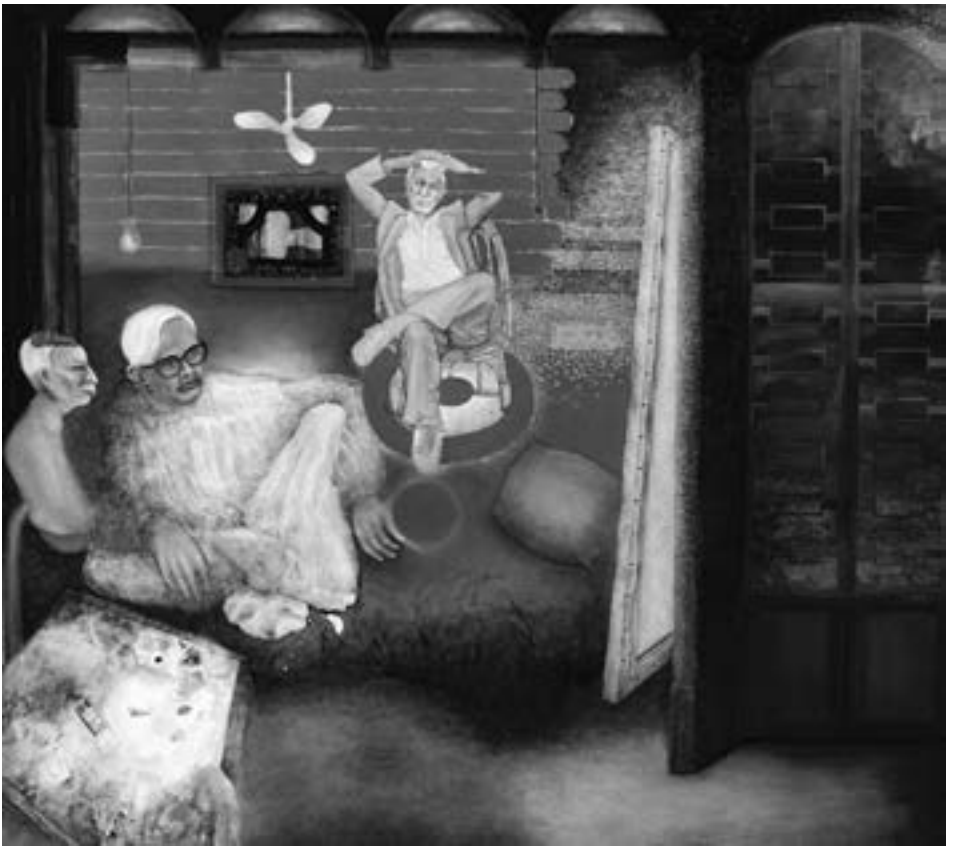

FIGURE INTRO.9 Vivan Sundaram, *People Come and Go*, 1981. Oil on canvas. Courtesy of the artist.

Taken together, we apprehend a lifelong interface of creativity activity, defined by overlapping interests and permeable connections. This corpus, I have suggested, *converts* filiation into affiliation; that is, it *opens out* the sphere of immediate kinship dictated by birth and marriage to a much wider arena of cultural engagement and forms of belonging. These activities further point to the possibilities inherent in the production-reception-display matrix, or put differently, they affirm and activate the dialectical space of *discourse* in contemporary art. One result is that Sher-Gil's and Khakhar's twentieth-century projects become "problem-spaces" that can serve to animate our own. A problem-space, according to David Scott, is "an ensemble of questions and answers around which a horizon of identifiable stakes (conceptual as well as ideological-political stakes) hangs."[109] It is as much a context of rival views, a space of tension and dispute, as it is a creative context where

"the conventions of the language-game" are put into play.[110] For Scott, a problem-space offers the means to rethink the postcolonial critical imagination after the exhaustion of the dream of anticolonial utopias and to "refashion futures" through the politics of the present.[111]

Accordingly, in this book, I discern and enter into a variety of problem-spaces that take shape through the work of the artist and the critic. Each of the chapters that follow take the form of detailed examinations of individual projects, articulated and analyzed on their own terms. In chapters 1, 2, and 4, I investigate the dynamic status of Sundaram's art-making, its intrepid uses of different mediums and formats, and its self-conscious strategies of engagement with diverse audiences and interpretive contexts, both in India and on the international stage. In many ways, Sundaram is a quintessential "semionaut," in Nicolas Bourriaud's terms: an artist who "produces original pathways through signs."[112] By selecting three projects that span a fifteen-year period—*Works in Engine Oil and Charcoal* (1991), *History Project* (1998), and *Trash* (2005–8)—my concern is not only to comprehend how the method of hermeneutic return embodied in the digital retake becomes articulated in other forms, in his installation, video, site-specific, and multimedia work. I also explicate the meaning of this for Sundaram's socially and politically engaged art practice by attending closely to the artist's investments in democracy, social justice, and ecological concerns. Three aspects of his art, in particular—the relentless recycling of forms and materials and images, the insistence on dialectical exchange and discussion, and the constant compulsion for historical revision—provide a powerful basis for this social engagement.

Chapter 3 is devoted to the separate projects of art history and criticism undertaken by Geeta Kapur during roughly the same period. It is positioned, both literally and symbolically, at the center of the book. This is in part because the chapter represents the first essay-length analysis of Kapur's seminal contribution to art criticism in India since the emergence of her voice in the late 1960s, and traces her relationships to the politics of decolonization and the nation and to intellectual antecedents in India and Britain through such figures as K.G. Subramanyan and Raymond Williams, in particular. But it is also, crucially, where my own argument gets tested, across the divergences and points of contact between art-making, on one hand, and the writing and thought practices of the critic, on the other. Forging a passionate alliance with the working artist in India, while pushing at the limits and

possibilities of language itself, Kapur's distinctive knowledge practice is, I suggest, a highly synthetic intellectual constellation that sustains multiple lines of sight.

As Kapur has argued, the "uneven/anomalous nature of third world modernisms," the subject of her book *When Was Modernism*, is linked to "differently periodized, differently theorized, variously located avant-garde moments" and to different strategies of style and exposition.[113] I thus examine Kapur's own strategies of style and exposition, attending to the texture and density of her prose—its changing modalities, its ethical commitments, its distinctly strategic, partisanal voice—in selected essays from a five-decade-long period. Beginning with the early formations of Kapur's intellectual project in the pages of the now historical journals *Vrischik* and the *Journal of Arts and Ideas* and proceeding, by the end of the chapter, to an examination of her most current writing, I seek to follow not only the shape of Kapur's theoretical models but also how she has fashioned a practice of *critique*, understood as the self-conscious activity of thought upon itself. Extending Theodor Adorno's insights about the essay as a form to Kapur's forensic, investigative deployments of the essay, this chapter thus attends to how art history and art criticism in India have been modeled by Kapur and points to some of the larger implications at stake in this progressive tradition of intellectual critique.

My final chapter turns to numerous recent projects by the artist and the critic and uses the concept of "late style" to approach the digitization of the couple's personal archive in 2010, as well as the energy and intensity of creative activity that ensued and that continues without pause even as I write. For Said, following Adorno, late style characterizes the mature phase of a creative career but not as harmony, serenity, and resolution, or as a process of aging and wisening as in the ripening of a fruit. It signals, instead, an outpouring of almost youthful energy in the advanced stages of life that strains against the forces of normalization and assimilation into history, pointing toward difficulty, contradiction, and a lack of reconciliation. These kinds of qualities can be discerned in Kapur's recent activities, in particular the series of five exhibitions she curated in 2013–14, titled *Aesthetic Bind*, at the Chemould Prescott Road in Mumbai, one of the oldest commercial galleries on the subcontinent. This complex, five-part narrative conveys Kapur's profound attempt to reckon with the conditions of her own interpretation within a curatorial platform, without any clear resolution (or

any singular definition) of "the bind." Moreover, the gestures of return to familiar artists and ideas in this project are echoed in several new texts, in which the critic returns recursively to figures she has studied for decades, for instance, M. F. Husain, Bhupen Khakhar, and Nasreen Mohamedi, or revives earlier categories and ideas, like the notion of the "citizen-artist" or the concept of the avant-garde, that have long been prominent in her writing.

Following Derrida's notion of ellipsis, I argue that this *elliptical* modality is equally discernible in several recent projects by Sundaram, namely, *Gagawaka* (2011–12), *Postmortem* (2013), *Memorial* (1993–2014), and *409 Ramkinkars* (2015), in which the artist revisits and repurposes his own earlier work and/or reanimates specific modernist predecessors in Indian art. What distinguishes the late style of both Kapur and Sundaram, I propose, is not merely this creative and intellectual agility, this capacity to condense and calibrate a half century of activity in response to every new change and reverberation around them. It is also their unwillingness to resolve the difficulties or to arrive at the satisfaction of synthesis at the end. What they offer, instead, and what this book seeks to historically understand, is an increasingly powerful lack of synchronicity; a sense of being meaningfully at odds with the times; an untimeliness, in Said's terms, "fully conscious, full of memory," and in possession of a vision that is absolutely vital to how we participate in the here and now.

NOTES

Preface

1 Two major exhibitions recently embraced this challenge by presenting a broad retrospective of Sundaram's career over fifty years. They were *Step Inside and You Are No Longer a Stranger*, curated by Roobina Karode, Kiran Nadar Museum of Art, New Delhi, February 9 to June 30, 2018; and *Vivan Sundaram: Disjunctures*, curated by Deepak Ananth, Haus der Kunst, Munich, June 29 to January 1, 2019.

2 Anders Stephanson, "Interview with Craig Owens," in *Beyond Recognition: Representation, Power, and Culture*, ed. Scott Bryson, Barbara Kruger, Lynne Tillman, and Jane Weinstock (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992), 307.

3 Edward Said, *Beginnings: Intention and Method* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1985), 10.

Introduction

1 Fredric Jameson, "Periodizing the 60s," in *The 60s Without Apology*, ed. Sohnya Sayres, Anders Stephanson, Stanley Aronowitz, and Fredric Jameson (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1988), 178–209.

2 See Sabih Ahmed, "Landing Imaginaries: An Interview with Geeta Kapur," in *Sarai Reader 09: Projections* (Delhi: Sarai Programme, CSDS, 2013), 248–56.

3 Vivan Sundaram, interview with Nandita Raman, International Center of Photography, March 17, 2016, http://www.icp.org/interviews/vivan-sundaram.

4 Sundaram, interview with Nandita Raman.

5 Geeta Kapur, "Learning from John Berger," *Thewire.in*, October 1, 2017, https://thewire.in/98557/learning-john-berger/.

6 Geeta Kapur, "Vagabondage: artandlife in the sixties" (paper presented at Revisiting the Global 1960's: An Interdisciplinary International Conference, School of Arts & Aesthetics, JNU, New Delhi, March 4–5, 2011), 12–13.

7 Geeta Kapur, "Art in These Dark Times," *Economic and Political Weekly* 12, no. 11 (March 12, 1977): 450–51. On the Emergency, see also Emma Tarlo, *Unsettling Memories: Narratives of the Emergency in Delhi* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003); Emilia Terracciano, *Art and Emergency: Modernism in Twentieth-Century India* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2017).

8 Arindam Dutta, "SAHMAT, 1989–2004: Liberal Art Practice against the Liberalised Public Sphere," *Cultural Dynamics* 17, no. 2 (July 2005): 193–226; Jessica Moss and Ram Rahman, eds., *The Sahmat Collective: Art and Activism in India since 1989* (Chicago: Smart Museum of Art, University of Chicago, 2013).

9 Belinder Dhanoa, *The Kasauli Art Centre* (New Delhi: SSAF-Tulika Books, forthcoming).

10 David Scott, *Omens of Adversity: Tragedy, Time, Memory, Justice* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2014).

11 Scott, *Omens of Adversity*, 2. Emphasis in original.

12 Edward Said, *The World, the Text, and the Critic* (London: Vintage, 1991), 29.

13 See Martha Buskirk, Amelia Jones, and Caroline Jones, "The Year in 'Re-,'" *ArtForum International* 52, no. 4 (December 2013): 127–30.

14 Jacques Derrida, "The Double Session," in *Dissemination*, trans. Barbara Johnson (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1983).

15 Nicolas Bourriaud, *Postproduction* (New York: Lukas and Sternberg, 2002), 44.

16 Hal Foster, *The Return of the Real: The Avant-Garde at the End of the Century* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1996); see also Peter Bürger, *Theory of the Avant-Garde* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1984).

17 Foster, *The Return of the Real*, x.

18 Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth* (New York: Grove, 1963), 40.

19 Vivan Sundaram, "Recycling Photographs," in *Photography Theory*, ed. James Elkins (London: Routledge, 2007), 338. See also Deepak Ananth, "An Unfinished Project," in *Amrita Sher-Gil: An Indian Artist Family of the Twentieth Century* (Munich: Schirmer/Mosel, 2007), exhibition catalogue, 13–31.

20 Sundaram, "Recycling Photographs," 338.

21 Vivan Sundaram, *Re-take of Amrita: Digital Photomontages* (New Delhi: Tulika, 2001), 5.

22 Sher-Gil's unusual biography is worth noting: Amrita was born in Budapest to a Hungarian mother and Sikh father and spent the first eight years of her life in Hungary with her sister, Indira. The family moved to India in 1921 and spent much of the next eight years in Simla before relocating to Paris for her art education. She returned to India in 1934 (at age 21) and lived eventually with her Hungarian husband, Victor Egan, on the family's sugar plantation in the Gorakhpur district of Uttar Pradesh. She moved to Lahore in 1941, where she died suddenly later that year. For further biography of Sher-Gil and the Sher-Gil family, see the Tate Modern exhibition catalogue *Amrita Sher-Gil*; Yasodhara Dalmia, *Amrita Sher-Gil: A Life* (New Delhi: Penguin Viking, 2006); Vivan Sundaram, ed., *Amrita Sher-Gil: A Self-Portrait in Letters and Writings*, 2 vols. (New Delhi: Tulika, 2009); and Vivan Sundaram, *Umrao Singh Sher-Gil: His Misery and His Manuscript* (New Delhi: Photoink, 2008).

23 Sundaram, *Re-take of Amrita*, 5.

24 Geeta Kapur, "The Evolution of Content in Amrita Sher-Gil's Paintings," *Marg* 25, no. 2 (March 1972): 41.

25 See Geeta Kapur, "Re-imagining *Place for People*," in *Horn Please: Narratives in Contemporary Indian Art*, Kuntsmuseum Bern (Berlin: Hatje Cantz, 2007), 27–52.

26 Marsha Meskimmon, *Contemporary Art and the Cosmopolitan Imagination* (New York: Routledge, 2011).

27 Sundaram, *Umrao Singh Sher-Gil* and *Amrita Sher-Gil*.

28 Geeta Kapur, *When Was Modernism: Essays on Contemporary Cultural Practice in India* (New Delhi: Tulika, 2000), 399.

29 Kapur, *When Was Modernism*, 395.

30 Kapur, *When Was Modernism*, 392.

31 Kapur, *When Was Modernism*, 375.

32 Paul Rabinow, ed., *The Foucault Reader* (New York: Pantheon, 1984), 82.

33 Rabinow, *Foucault Reader*, 97.

34 Rabinow, *Foucault Reader*, 76.

35 Rabinow, *Foucault Reader*, 89–90.

36 Rabinow, *Foucault Reader*, 54.

37 Rabinow, *Foucault Reader*, 45.

38 Étienne Balibar, "The Genealogical Scheme: Race or Culture?" *Trans-Scripts* 1 (2011): 2–9.

39 Sundaram, interview with Nandita Raman.

40 See *Abby Grey and Indian Modernism: Selections from the* NYU *Art Collection* (New York: Grey Art Gallery, NYU, 2015), exhibition catalogue, 29–30.

41 The thesis was later published as Geeta Kapur, *In Quest of Identity: Art and*

Indigenism in Post-colonial Culture with Special Reference to Contemporary Indian Painting (Baroda: Vrishchik, 1973).

42 Said, *Beginnings*, 5.

43 Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, "Introduction: Rhizome," in *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1987), 5.

44 Deleuze and Guattari, "Introduction: Rhizome," 9.

45 Deleuze and Guattari, "Introduction: Rhizome."

46 Tania Roy, "Wreck, Restoration, and the Work of Carrying On: History on Vivan Sundaram's Boat-Works," *Cultural Politics* 5, no. 3 (2009): 378.

47 Mariam Ghani, "'What We Left Unfinished': The Artist and the Archive," in *Dissonant Archives: Contemporary Visual Culture and Contested Narratives in the Middle East*, ed. Anthony Downey (London: I.B. Taurus, 2015), 57. See also Nicolas Bourriaud, *The Radicant* (New York: Lukas and Sternberg, 2009).

48 Stuart Hall, "The Neoliberal Revolution," *Soundings* 48 (summer 2011): 9.

49 Geeta Kapur, "A Cultural Conjuncture in India: Art into Documentary," in *Antinomies of Art and Culture: Modernity, Postmodernity, Contemporaneity*, ed. Terry Smith, Okwui Enwezor, and Nancy Condee (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2008), 38.

50 Kapur, "Cultural Conjuncture," 30.

51 Kapur, "Cultural Conjuncture," 55.

52 Hall, "Neoliberal Revolution," 26.

53 Sarat Maharaj, ed., *Farewell to Post-Colonialism: Querying the Guangzhou Triennial, 2008* (Dublin: Visual Arts Ireland, 2009), 5. See also Anthony Gardner, "Whither the Postcolonial?," in *Global Studies: Mapping Contemporary Art and Culture*, ed. Hans Belting, Jacob Birken, and Andrea Buddensieg (Berlin: Hatje Cantz, 2011), 142–57; Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, *A Critique of Postcolonial Reason* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1999).

54 Hal Foster, *Design and Crime (and Other Diatribes)* (New York: Verso, 2002), 129.

55 Ann Laura Stoler, *Duress: Imperial Durabilities in Our Times* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2016).

56 Cited in Stoler, *Duress*, 19.

57 In her book, *Worldly Affiliations: Artistic Practice, National Identity, and Modernism in India, 1930–1990* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2015), Sonal Khullar also draws on this Said-ian framework to conceptualize the trajectory of modernism in India. Khullar argues that affiliation "denotes a historical process by which a national art world came together and became conjoined with an international art world" (14), but she is less concerned with the question of transmission at the heart of Said's account of the affiliative scheme.

58 Said, *The World*, 17.

59 Said, *The World*, 17.
60 Said, *The World*, 25.
61 Said, *The World*, 20.
62 Said, *The World*, 16.
63 Said, *The World*, 7.
64 Said, *The World*, 20.
65 Karl Mannheim, "The Problem of Generations," in *Essays on the Sociology of Knowledge*, ed. Paul Kecskemeti (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1952; first published 1923), 278.
66 Mannheim, "The Problem of Generations," 291.
67 See Jane Pilcher, "Mannheim's Sociology of Generations: An Undervalued Legacy," *British Journal of Sociology* 45, no. 3 (1994): 481–95.
68 David Scott, "Stuart Hall at Eighty," *Small Axe* 16, no. 2 (July 2012): viii.
69 David Scott, "The Temporality of Generations: Dialogue, Tradition, Criticism," *New Literary History* 45, no. 2 (spring 2014): 157–81.
70 Scott, "Temporality of Generations," 165.
71 Scott, "Temporality of Generations," 166.
72 Rosalind Krauss, *The Originality of the Avant-Garde and Other Modernist Myths* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1985), 157.
73 Griselda Pollock, "The Politics of Theory: Generations and Geographies in Feminist Theory and the Histories of Art," in *Generations and Geographies in the Visual Arts: Feminist Readings*, ed. G. Pollock (London: Routledge, 1996), 13.
74 Susan Bean, ed., *Midnight to the Boom: Painting in India after Independence* (Salem, MA: Peabody Essex Museum, 2013), 123.
75 Bean, *Midnight to the Boom*, 192 and 195.
76 Chris Dercon and Nada Raza, eds., *Bhupen Khakhar: You Can't Please All* (London: Tate, 2016).
77 See Ranjit Hoskote, "A Crazy Pair of Eyes: Remembering Bhupen Khakhar," in *Touched by Bhupen* (Mumbai: Galerie Mirchandani + Steinruecke, 2013), exhibition catalogue, 34.
78 Gulammohammed Sheikh, "Buddy," in *Touched by Bhupen*, 162.
79 Gulammohammed Sheikh, ed., *Contemporary Art in Baroda* (New Delhi: Tulika, 1997).
80 Geeta Kapur, "The Uncommon Universe of Bhupen Khakhar," in *Pop Art and Vernacular Cultures*, ed. Kobena Mercer (London: Iniva, 2007), 110–35.
81 The show was the first in a series of five exhibitions curated by Kapur under the larger rubric *Aesthetic Bind* at the Gallery Chemould Prescott Road in Mumbai in 2012–13. I discuss the project in more detail in my epilogue.
82 See also the different chapters on Khakhar in two recent monographs: Khullar, *Worldly Affiliations*, and Karin Zitzewitz, *The Art of Secularism: The Cultural Politics of Modernist Art in Contemporary India* (London: Hurst, 2014).

83 Nancy Adajania, "Vivan Sundaram," in *Horn Please*, 108.
84 Adajania, "Vivan Sundaram," 108.
85 Geeta Kapur, "Mortality Morbidity Masquerade," in Dercon and Raza, *Bhupen Khakhar*, 160. The insight recalls the ingenious character of the 2013 exhibition's title, *Touched by Bhupen*.
86 Emilia Terracciano, "A Day in the Life of Khakharpur," *Art India* 17, no. 4 (July 2013): 78.
87 Vandana Kalra, "A Drawing by Dost," *Indian Express*, June 7, 2008.
88 Adajania, "Vivan Sundaram," 108.
89 Kapur, "Uncommon Universe," 112.
90 Kapur, "Uncommon Universe," 114.
91 Terracciano, "Day in the Life of Khakharpur," 79.
92 Marcia Tucker, *Bad Painting* (New York: New Museum, 1978).
93 Susan Sontag, *Against Interpretation and Other Essays* (1966; New York: Picador, 1996), 8.
94 Sontag, *Against Interpretation*, 93.
95 Sontag, *Against Interpretation*, 93–94.
96 Félix Guattari, "Genet Regained," in *The Guattari Reader*, ed. Gary Genosko (London: Wiley-Blackwell, 1996), 218–30.
97 Sontag, *Against Interpretation*, 12.
98 "Independent Critic: Charting a Course—Conversation between Geeta Kapur & Sabih Ahmed," *Take on Art* 2, no. 2 (July–December 2016): 16.
99 Kapur, "Mortality Morbidity Masquerade," 158.
100 Kapur, "Mortality Morbidity Masquerade," 163; emphasis added.
101 Kapur, "Mortality Morbidity Masquerade," 163.
102 Said, *The World*, 24.
103 Said, *The World*, 29.
104 Said, *The World*, 30.
105 Raymond Williams and Terry Eagleton, "The Politics of Hope: An Interview," in *Raymond Williams: A Critical Reader*, ed. Terry Eagleton (Cambridge: Polity, 1991), 176–83.
106 Kapur, "Evolution of Content"; Geeta Kapur, "Body as Gesture: Women Artists at Work," in *When Was Modernism*, 3–60; Geeta Kapur, "Familial Narratives and their Accidental Denouement," in *Where Three Dreams Cross: 150 Years of Photography from India, Pakistan, and Bangladesh* (London: Whitechapel Gallery, 2010), 48.
107 Kapur cites six different essays on Khakhar that she authored between 1969 and 2007 in a footnote. See Dercon and Raza, *Bhupen Khakhar*, 165n1.
108 Homi Bhabha (in conversation with Susan Bean), "India's Dialogical Modernism," in Bean, *Midnight to the Boom*, 24.
109 David Scott, *Conscripts of Modernity: The Tragedy of Colonial Enlightenment* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2004), 4.

110 Scott, *Conscripts of Modernity*, 4.
111 David Scott, *Refashioning Futures: Criticism after Postcoloniality* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1999).
112 Bourriaud, *Postproduction*, 18.
113 Geeta Kapur, "Curating across Agonistic Worlds," in *InFLUX: Contemporary Art in Asia*, ed. Parul Dave Mukherji, Naman P. Ahuja, and Kavita Singh (New Delhi: Sage, 2013), n25.

Chapter 1. Earthly Ecologies

1 On communalism (or sectarian strife) and the visual arts in India, see Jessica Moss and Ram Rahman, eds., *The Sahmat Collective: Art and Activism in India since 1989* (Chicago: Smart Museum/University of Chicago Press, 2013); and Zitzewitz, *Art of Secularism*.
2 *The Times of India*, November 15, 1988.
3 Neville Tuli, *Indian Contemporary Painting* (New York: Harry N. Abrams, 1998), 396.
4 T. J. Clark, *Image of the People: Gustave Courbet and the Second French Republic 1848–1851* (Greenwich, CT: New York Graphic Society, 1973), 17.
5 Clark, *Image of the People*, 17.
6 Rob Nixon, *Slow Violence and the Environmentalism of the Poor* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2011), 35.
7 Nixon, *Slow Violence*, 2.
8 Gastón Gordillo, "Ships Stranded in the Forest: Debris of Progress on a Phantom River," *Cultural Anthropology* 52, no. 2 (April 2011), 141–67; Wu Hung, *A Story of Ruins: Presence and Absence in Chinese Art and Visual Culture* (London: Reaktion, 2011); Ann Laura Stoler, "Imperial Debris: Reflections on Ruins and Ruination," *Cultural Anthropology* 23, no. 2 (2008): 191–219; Julia Hell and Andreas Schönle, eds., *Ruins of Modernity* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2010).
9 Walter Benjamin, "Theses on the Philosophy of History," in *Illuminations*, ed. Hannah Arendt (New York: Schocken, 1968), 257–58.
10 Gordillo, "Ships Stranded in the Forest," 142.
11 Cited in Svetlana Boym, "Ruins of the Avant-Garde: From Tatlin's Tower to Paper Architecture," in Hell and Schönle, *Ruins of Modernity*, 58.
12 Stoler, "Imperial Debris," 198.
13 See Rasna Bhushan, "Tracking," in *Engine Oil and Charcoal: Works on Paper, 1991* (LTG Art Gallery, New Delhi, October 7–26, 1991), exhibition catalogue.
14 On the historical relationships between oil and war, see Iain Boal, T. J. Clark, Joseph Matthews, and Michael Watts, *Afflicted Powers: Capital and Spectacle in a New Age of War* (London: Verso, 2005); and William Engdahl, *A Cen-*