

Intricacies: Fragment and Meaning

Exhibition: August 8 – September 14, 2019

Press Preview & V.I.P. Reception: Thursday, August 8, 6:00pm – 8:00pm

35 Great Jones St., New York NY 10012

Mequitta Ahuja (b. 1976, USA)

Peju Alatise (b. 1975, Nigeria)

Rina Banerjee (b. 1963, India)

Faiza Butt (b. 1973, Pakistan)

Saba Qizilbash (b. 1977, Pakistan)

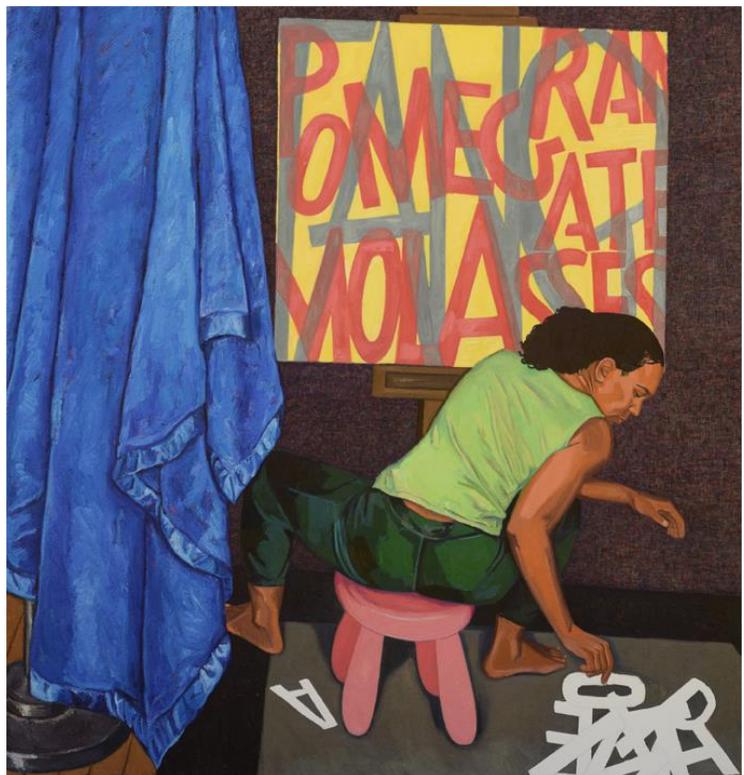
Aicon Gallery is pleased to present *Intricacies: Fragment and Meaning*, an ambitious group exhibition that brings together artists who scrutinize the milieu and distill from it modes of production that are both ordered and complex. **Saba Qizilbash** and **Faiza Butt** from Pakistan, **Rina Banerjee** and **Mequitta Ahuja** from the US and **Peju Alatise** from Nigeria offer works that transcend the sum of their myriad parts. Presented together, the various works in the exhibition offer the viewer a liminal space to absorb and contemplate the relationship between part and whole, fragment and meaning. Through their use of meticulous detail and balance, the artists featured here unveil and elaborate the intricacies that lie at the core of the human condition. These artists adopt the gestalt format in construing images thus offering unique perspectives on issues of scale and focus in visual art.

Mequitta Ahuja

Working across modalities of painting—abstraction, text, naturalism, schematic description, graphic flatness and illusion— Mequitta Ahuja replaces the common self-portrait motif, the artist standing before the easel, with a broader portrait of the artist at work. By positioning a woman-of-color as primary picture-maker in whose hands the figurative tradition is refashioned, Ahuja knits her contemporary concerns, personal and painterly, into the centuries old conversation of representation. As fellow artist Rina Banerjee has said ‘In her work, notions of feminism feud and cohabit with restless ease. Ahuja’s work is the fabric of a global consciousness that speaks to identity in the plural and the complicated flows particular to cross-cultural exchange and global migration, as well as racial and social awareness.

Peju Alatise

Drawing inspiration from the Yoruba textile – a resist-dyed textile traditionally made by Yoruba women in Nigeria, Peju Alatise’s interdisciplinary approach results in thoughtful pieces that have reached global audiences outside her homeland. The realities of living in contemporary Nigeria juxtaposed within the



Mequitta Ahuja, *Seated Scribe (Pomegranate Molasses)*, 2018
Oil on canvas, 84 x 80 in.

realms of Yoruba mythos are the connecting threads within her oeuvre. Unequivocally political in her visual language and deeply rooted in the present, Alatisé's work draws on some of Nigeria's troubled socio-politics, particularly the exploitation of girls and young women, functioning as both monument and monition. In the artist's own words, 'I want to take my grandmother's cultural values and evolve with them. But, is nostalgia stronger than migration? Than imperialism? Than change?'

Rina Banerjee

Amid a turn toward nativist politics in the United States, the work of Indian-born, New York-based artist Rina Banerjee seems particularly relevant, reflecting as it does the splintered experience of identity, tradition and culture prevalent in diasporic communities. Banerjee's fanciful sculptures are made from materials sourced throughout the world, paying homage to items caught between cultures. What results is a polemical taxonomy that mines the material effects of imperialism and capitalism. In Banerjee's paintings and delicate drawings on paper, female figures float in chimerical landscapes, often in states of transformation or with hybrid features of birds and beasts. Her titles are long, free-form refrains that immerse the viewer in the physical and emotional space of the work, heightening its quasi-mystical magnetism.

Faiza Butt

Faiza Butt's works are elaborately rendered drawings in dots, large scale paintings, and painted ceramics. She draws upon inspiration from informal sources or crafts for her work which reflects on the human conditions in all its fragilities and failings. Butt's messages are conveyed in palatable narratives that at first glance appear to offer beauty, rigor, skill and engaging materials, but a closer look invites questions as to why and what. Butt does not use the human body or 'portrait' in the classical tradition of the 'figure'. Her images are scavenged from journalistic sources to depict her politics. The contrast between poverty and affluence is the backdrop for Butt's rationale of global unrest - images of her children sleeping as manmade objects of surveillance and security orbit alongside the exotic and mythological creatures of their dreams.

Saba Qizilbash

Drawn to the eerie silence of international borders, lines of control and hostile fencing in general, Saba Qizilbash imagines these locations as witnesses to night vision activities, forced deportations and bureaucratic holdups. Qizilbash is no stranger to lines drawn across maps, erupting in violence, creating distance beyond the geographical. Her journeys between India and Pakistan have been frequent with her children in tow, trying to adapt to shifting scenarios, and contested world views. Abandoned railway systems, floating water barriers, scant structures with no seating, overgrown grass weaving through razor-wire fences - these structures appear post-human in her work- devoid of any designated places to rest and sleep. The works take on and transcend the functions of a relic - rendered in a scale that is at once commemorative and personal yet pensive and somber.

It is an honor to present the work of this distinguished group of artists. Several of whom have been seen recently in major forums like Venice Biennale (Peju Alatisé and Rina Banerjee); Studio Museum in Harlem, New York (Mequitta Ahuja); Asia Society, New York (Faiza Butt, Mequitta Ahuja and Rina Banerjee). Among the artists are finalists and recipients of notable awards like the V&A's Jameel Prize (Faiza Butt), the Joan Mitchell Award (Mequitta Ahuja) and the Sovereign Asian Art Prize, Hong Kong (Saba Qizilbash, Faiza Butt).

Please contact Aicon Art (dheeya@aicongallery.com) for more information.



Faiza Butt, From the series *Dinner Dialogue*, 2017
Ceramic, 13 x 18 in.