



INSIDE THE GALLERY PODCAST – SERIES 5 EPISODE 9 (AUGUST 2023)

Sangeeta Sandrasegar– ARTIST

IN CONVERSATION WITH

PROF PEDRAM KHOSRONEJAD

Pedram Khosronejad:

So today, Sangeeta, we want to talk about you and your artistic world and a little bit if you can kindly introduce yourself for our audiences about the background culturally where you were growing up, and what did you do as your journey in the world of art.

Sangeeta Sandrasegar:

Hi Pedram. I am primarily a visual artist and I work across various mediums, and often call myself under the umbrella of "installation art" because that allows the flexibility for me to create dynamic projects that then could be compartmentalized or broken into part. I work in my studio predominantly with paper and do a lot of cutting out with paper and creating smaller works that deal with shadow play. And then, I also try to expand my practice by working through ideas through different materials to do two things, that the materials actually speak to the ideas within the project, but also the search to work with new materials is also a search to find people that are experts in those kind of sections of the creative arts or visual arts, that then I can actually learn. So in this way I expand my practice, both in the research I'm doing which drives the work, and then get to keep learning new such of visual techniques to expand upon those ideas.

So, I don't just work in one medium. And so when people ask me, "What do you make? Are you a painter or are you a sculptor?" I can't really answer that. I've never adequately answered that because I sort of like to work with people that fabricate in different materials and through them and that process of learning and sharing, there becomes another kind of formulation in the project as well. That's the sort of production side of how I house my projects.

The sort of concepts that run through my work are concepts that I've integrally dealt with for the past 20 years or since you know studying my arts degrees and then continuing on. And they are just largely informed from my personal upbringing and life, my hereditary, I was born in Australia to an Australian mother and my father was a Malaysian Indian. And as children we lived between the two countries, predominantly in Malaysia as younger children until we settled more permanently in Australia. We had a constant upbringing of travel and shift and of six months here, six months there. It was migratory but it was also about movement and change. And as a child growing up, there were times you found that disruptive but then that was educational, and then there were times that you really embraced it.

And there was always a sense in a way... Well we in a sense had two homelands to call home, there was also a sense of also always remaining a migrant in either place. And I think this sense of "ambivalence" is what actually structured my decisions to you know not become an academic as the kind of schooling that you know being... Again, if we look at stereotypes, that Asian sense of schooling. My father was a doctor, he came over here and studied, he met my mother who was a medical illustrator. So, both invested in education and training. And to decide to become a visual artist followed in my mother's steps for wanting to be an artist herself but not realizing that. But it also became for me the answer where I could just constantly research and propel and learn. And I'm sure if I'd become a doctor or I'd become a lawyer, if I could have managed those degrees, I would've found ways to keep learning there. But I chose art and that's the lot I'm dealt now.

And it's through that I have the room to explore these things that, again, are so formative, pedagogical formative structures and I've taken them through. So, I still deal with that sense of migration and cultures and trade and it is very present context and topic for Australia. And living in Australia through the '80s and the shifts in cultural waves and seeing this through to the '90s and the next generations of children with mixed heritages and just the constant development of multicultural Australia is rich and it's growing and it sits within still a very generic Anglo structured umbrella. This is where I find the younger artists coming up, the different languages they use and the different sort of forms that they

battle with really interesting. But I still feel like I speak from you know perhaps more older semantic takes, I'm not quite sure, but that's where I see the relevance still stays placed through.

And as we kind of keep developing and keep studying and uncovering more in our archives so to speak, we keep refreshing the stories and refreshing the perspectives, as a lot as the research you do. And so, that's kind of where, I suppose that's the gamut of my work, that I'm interested in, invested in hybridity, multicultural migration stories and particularly placing that from the Australian perspective, the Australian sideline. And I think that is a very particular position within the world and it's something that we are put within the southern hemisphere or the Pacific visuals, but we are quite distinct to our Pacific neighbors and the relative, I'm interested in the relativities between that and our Southeast Asian connections.

Pedram Khosronejad:

Wow, thank you so much. Thank you. That's such a rich and multifaceted cultural and ethnical backpack you have. Because it's fascinating, your mom was medical illustrator. Can you a little bit develop it for us? What was your mom's profession?

Sangeeta Sandrasegar:

Yeah. She worked in a... At the time when she worked at the hospital in a medical illustrator. So before, obviously there was photography, there's always been the advent of photography for documenting since it's development and obviously as a scientific construct. But in the end, for a long time and still in a way, the time to take to illustrate and to capture different variants and to make diagrams is where a medical illustrator sits. So, her job was actually in a hospital, she was at the Royal Women's and she would either be doing diagrams and sort of more technical drawings that would be included in the textbooks for medical studies, or she was doing quite more detailed observational drawings of specimens. If you think of those kind of medical libraries that have specimens and have all these records, then there are also the visual recording and archival of that and she would sit somewhere in there.

Pedram Khosronejad:

Fascinating. Do you think this type of scientific art and hand work that you did see through your mom since childhood influenced a little bit you to work with paper?

Sangeeta Sandrasegar:

Yes, I do. Yeah, I think that her work and the idea of medical illustration or documentation and the beauty that sits within that, but also the science and the horror, that visual horror that we have when we view specimens, that sort of back and forth, I think that certainly played a lot into realizing what visuals can do or how they can conduct education or our way of knowledge. And yeah, I've often thought about that, because then my father, he wasn't a surgeon but he was an anaesthetist. So I think, because I cut my paper with a scalpel, I always feel that it

Pedram Khosronejad:

Exactly, it's very medical tools that you use for cutting the paper. And even if, please correct me, I'm wrong, working with dyeing and colouring the textiles, somehow you are working with chemical materials, action and reaction in water, liquids, is a little bit when you... Am I correct? All of these things are related to parents?

Sangeeta Sandrasegar:

Yeah, I think that's what, taken into these last five years that I've been invested with the idea of colour and then particularly actually where natural colour, so how did the older civilizations actually come across colour and produce it and find various ways of communicating it in a colour fast manner, and learning about these processes and realizing how technical and scientific they are has been really the unexpected real generosity of this research and what I'm really enjoying. And then when you realize that civilization thousands of years old, somehow managed to perfect digging out a certain kind of iron and ore and working out how to treat it in certain ways for it to colour fabric and different plants that they extracted colour from eventually. It's something I can't speak in a very scientific manner because still learning about it, but that's how I see it.

Pedram Khosronejad:

Beautiful. So first before going to textile and dyeing technique and science, you told us you were into cut papers. Can you tell us about that world of your art where you were inspired, because I see there are very sophisticated motives and cuttings that you have with dimensional, from shadow works? Can you explain those series of your artwork for us?

Sangeeta Sandrasegar:

Yeah, so the cutout paperwork really developed when I was at university and near the end of my undergraduate, I started working more with paper and I had a painting undergraduate but wasn't very confident with the thickness and the paints and canvas and started to move to the lightness of paper and realizing as well how durable that material is, that you can really put it under a lot of stresses and it's still so strong and yet in the fine art canon, paperworks and drawings have always been secondary and this is what we've been also trying to break down in the sense of structural hierarchies of the visual arts about paper.

So, I suppose that's why it was interesting and that was the pivot of my work, was I realized that I just loved shadows and that I loved the optics of light and objects and that they could create shadows and that ephemerality of what the shadow represented. And I realized, to be able to create a shadow or third space in my work spoke to the sense of movements and hybridity concepts and third spaces and grey areas, all these coin words of the '80s, '90s, it visually spoke to that and I liked that and I liked that I could, I wanted to then realize I wanted to create works that had another space in them, inherent in them.

And so, working in galleries and hanging the work, but using specific lighting meant people sometimes lost the actual work on the wall, because if it was cut with white or light colours, it might fade into the wall but then it would actually be outlined through its shadow. So the difference between the dark and light and the works were always installed away from the wall to create this extra space. So there was always a tension of space and how they sat.

And that is how I got into the work very early on. And it became then a metaphor and a symbol that has kind of progressed now and I still care about that and that's still sort of fundamental to any work I make, that somehow there's a transience and a movement in the work through some kind of light into play, whether in somehow the materiality. And these paperworks are like that and I still continue to produce them to this day. That's always a mainstay of my practice. And it's something, as you say, there's the delicacy and the intricacy in the paper cut. So, to maintain that side of my practice always, it gives me that quiet time to also reassess and think about other projects as I make these, I might be working on a project that I've worked out the themes and content and I can sit there and produce it. And in that production time, there's that, there's the room to move and think about where a new project might come from.

So this is I think still really important generative time. And these cutouts too then have progressed and moved, they used to be simple colours, then I started to decorate them with glitter and sequences, because I was dealing with a lot of Indian and Bollywood references and Japanese references, so the colours kind of came from Japanese mango and Indian Bollywood. And this was all the colour and excitement that was there in my early twenties. And then I suppose I got to my thirties and things subdued a bit and I started to work with just black and white palettes and materials. And then lately I started to bring colour back into the work by actually painting. I cut the works out and then I watercolor and paint them. And so, the history of watercolor and painting has come back into the work. And now most recently, realizing that paper is such a strong, durable material, I've actually started to try dyeing these cutouts, and that brings us now to the sense of something that's been in my practice for 20 years, it can also go with the developments that I'm interested in.

Pedram Khosronejad:

During this trajectory after your graduation until now for cut paper art, did you travel to these countries? Did you go back home in Asia and study a traditional folkloric handmade paper cuts in this country, the techniques of colouring, painting or dyeing paper, and back home here, use those journeys fruits or not?

Sangeeta Sandrasegar:

It took me a couple, but going back again to those early years of starting to work with paper, and I think this again goes back to then what you said about those, what we were talking about the formative years and the influence of my parents. But I started cutting out the paper and was so kind of interested in the shadows they were making. And then as my skill with the scalpel developed, the images could become more intricate. And when they developed within a year or two to greater line work, is when people, I started to realize that, "Oh, all the Chinese paper cutouts that I grew up with in Malaysia that were stuck on windows around Chinese New Year or for people's weddings and birthday celebrations when we would go to, they were resonating there." And then I was realizing, so oh I was buying, I started buying those kind of books that talked to those craft cultures. And I still use those reference books, which are about Chinese paper cutting and so forth. And I use that, I often reference and take that imagery directly into an image I'm making.

And then most, secondly, and it took me a long time before people sort of I realized, "Oh, the way I am call it, with the Indonesian and Malaysian shadow puppets were again around me.", and certainly my mom who was an artist, that was a big part of our life too, how much she collected whilst we were in Malaysia, of ceramics and of textiles. And then there was always one my uncle that's sitting somewhere in the house, a pair of them framed. There was always the paper cutouts given to us around our birthdays. So it actually, that sort of cutout imagery was actually around me on my childhood and it took-

Pedram Khosronejad:

So you had the family collection actually of all of these material cultures, could help you to develop your visual work observing the techniques that you had around yourself and develop your own self style of working?

Sangeeta Sandrasegar:

Yes. Yeah, I think so. That's it. And sometimes when you're young, it takes you a while to actually appreciate how you've actually just subconsciously taken it all in. But now I see that and now moving

amongst my parents collections, now that they're older and I'm cleaning them up and finding books on salad and ceramics and on silverware and stuff, I see all this imagery that I [inaudible 00:15:16].

Pedram Khosronejad:

Oh, very interesting. Yeah. Yes. Sometimes we need visual reminders to say, "Oh yes, by the way, I did see this book when I was 15." And, "Oh, this is the ceramic that was in my mind, how interesting." Maybe unconsciously you continue to use them in your artworks and today after 20 to 30 years you're back to the source.

Sangeeta Sandrasegar:

Yeah, yes.

Pedram Khosronejad:

So, when and why you shift from cutting paper to dyeing and working with textiles?

Sangeeta Sandrasegar:

That happened just in the recent years. I'd say in the last five years it's been the shift. And I was invited to do a show with Victoria Lynn at the TarraWarra Art Museum and it was called, the title of the show when she was thinking about it was going to be, The Tangible Trace. And it was the idea she wanted, it was... They do an international biennial, which is every two years. And she wanted to work with a couple of Indian artists and Southeast Asian artists, but she also wanted an Australian, some couple of Australian artists that had that same background, heritage. And so, she started developing the project around me saying, "I want to work with you because the idea that shadows has always been in your work, it is really the inspiration for this show."

And so, we started to talk about my themes and what I would be interested in. And while we were talking, then she started to think about artists that she would want to put around in this group show. So it was a conversations with her, and she did specifically want works that dealt with that, the shadow, this idea about the trace. But I didn't want to because the spaces at the TarraWarra Museum are quite vast and big. They're beautiful, I wanted something, I wanted to deal with some different materiality rather than my paperworks. And so then I started to propose to her, "Well, can I use this too as a platform or mount as a springboard to consider new work?"

And so then that's when I was starting to look at colours. I'd been living in Germany and I was starting to investigate, I suppose within the science of Germany and stuff, I started to think about colour for some reason. I think it was traveling between Germany and Australia and just appreciating the beautiful differences of light between the two countries. They both have such great differences of light, colour and structure. And I think that was really what played in my mind, I just have these beautiful images of the forest in Germany and spring and in autumn and how the light filters through them. But then when I'm here in Australia and I see these vast open planes and these blue skies in such a different way and how props can just glow in the sun, it was these kind of resonating colors of golds and blues and greens, I really thought, "Oh, this comes from the natural world." And so that's when I started to think more about natural colour.

There were these very structural architectural window placements in one gallery in TarraWarra. And I decided I wanted to use those windows, the light that came through them and obscure them and actually make work that sat around the window rather than sat on the gallery wall. So then that's when I started to think about colour and other materials, and obviously it couldn't be paper. And then I began that journey. And the pinpoint colour at the time for that investigation, knowing it was about travels and

journeys, it was going to be based around indigo. I wanted to base it around colours around the TarraWarra like the Yarra Valley region. But because I didn't know enough and there's that overlay of working within cultural lands and practices and how you can understand that. So we kind of thought, "Well actually, why don't I look at my own, a cultural colour that sits within my own research practice?" And indigo wonderfully represented that, so then I started working in Indigo,

Pedram Khosronejad:

What was the name of that installation for that exhibition?

Sangeeta Sandrasegar:

The name of the installation was called "What Falls From View." In the end, I did find a plant that creates a beautiful colour in Australia. I was in Germany and I was trying to research someone, a dye specialist that I could work with who could help me. And I came across this girl, I got contact with this girl that's in Melbourne, Heather Thomas. And she'd actually spent a lot of time in India too refining her knowledge of Indian indigo dyeing. But she worked predominantly for, the greater half of her knowledge was sat within Australian plants. And so she showed me, then introduced me to this plant, the "Native Cherry", which is a tree that grows diversely through the eastern regions of Australia. But when you boil up their leaves, it creates a beautiful gold. And it's that gold that really represents that, when we talk about the Australian green and gold, it's that yellow that it ma can make.

So I decided to work with these two colours and that spoke to my ideas of my life and project and how I try to find place. There's this beautiful yellow Australian colour and this beautiful blue that comes from an Indian plant. And the histories between the development and structures between them is what drove the content and theory of the work. And then it became about creating these two colours, but then also joining them. And in that I got the diversity of greens that we see in our natural worlds and it became an overlay of these two colours and they hung within the windows of the space. So the light that fell through the day across winter, obliquely and so forth shone through the work and made it move in new ways each time. Not literally move, but visually change and shift.

Pedram Khosronejad:

But again, the role of light was important, like your paper cut, that the role of shadow and light were important. That metaphor of movement through light and shadow in this new work. I think it was during this process that, again, you developed your future activities, what you want to do. But here I have a curatorial question. This is I think when you and I, we became a familiar with our work and it was when Powerhouse invited you for being part of Exhibition Charkha and Kargha, because as a curator of that exhibition, it was in my mind that how we can connect the past to the present and think about future.

And your work was very interesting for me as a curator. You just create this installation for that exhibition. Those specific spaces work with light and the light was very important. And you and I, we had several talks and thinking. Can you tell our audiences about your experience of previously worked installation that you have and your experiences to work together as a curatorial? And when you did see those objects of the past in the powerhouse collection and talk about the new installation, how was that experience for you?

Sangeeta Sandrasegar:

That was a very satisfying, a really satisfying experience. Because I think, this goes back to when I was saying at the beginning, I say I would make installation work and that I see the works created, I say installation because it is a way to explain the parts or the components that sit within the work. And in

that, I suppose I mean that when I make work, there can be parts and it's about, for me, I want to create works that are giving enough that they can be perhaps reassembled or moved into different conditions. And whether that's all together or whether that's in separate parts and they can hold themselves individually or as units reconfigured.

So the work, "What Falls From View", that I developed for TarraWarra was specifically at the time speaking to those concerns of that architecture and that gallery presence, the overlay of the settler culture in Australia over the first traditional owners of the land and then the immigrant eye that comes into that perspective. And this is where Australia sits now in our current debates, constantly we battle between the three, the original custodians, the settler colonial overlay that we can't seem to get beyond, the royal family, and then the constant rich diversification that comes through our migratory patterns and immigration. That's what that work set about. And so, "What Falls From View" was also about obstructing the view out of the gallery so that eye was turned into the gallery and had to really look at what was there and what wasn't there, and that's "What Falls From View", our perceptions of what we see and what we understand. But the idea is that those works would potentially be movable or reconfigured in another way that they can travel just as the migratory patterns that represent Australia [inaudible 00:23:52]

Pedram Khosronejad:

Yeah, we adapt ourselves to new space as migrants. Yeah, exactly. And I think the beauty of your work is your installations are hybrid installations.

Sangeeta Sandrasegar:

Yeah. That's why it was such a privilege to have you invite the work into conversation with the Powerhouse. And I find that when these invitations happen or to see the work in you, it makes me feel, it means there's a strength in the work, there are other contexts there. And I may talk about just one particular strain that sits in the work for one show and I'm not talking about all the other bits that sit within it. And for you, when you invited me to consider the work at the Powerhouse within also the umbrella concerns of the show, a tie in for you was the actual choice of fabrics that sat within the work, so the khadi. And that was deliberately chosen because it sits within the history of Indian independence and this history of Indian craftsmanship and sustainability today with the village weaver. So again, it's that thinking historically in the present, producing historically in the present, all these terms that the Powerhouse constantly explores or it has to reinvigorate when you have a collection that has dealt with technical and scientific tools and how they can be explored or employed or understood in the present.

And to see the work be able to transition into that kind of context and to understand the indigo as well, not just to its colors but through the technical innovations of cultures that developed indigo. The show at the Powerhouse was about all that, the weaving, the development of the material, the weavers that you had bring across. It talked to all that production that sits within the visual. And then you had these beautiful examples of pieces.

Pedram Khosronejad:

It's very interesting now we think about that because we never, you and I talk about this exhibition and your installation in it. I think we had really objects that back to 1880s from India that were ended in for different reasons in Powerhouse. And as you said, one of the reasons our exhibition was the anniversary of independency of India. We did see in different occasions in this exhibition the transference of knowledge and tradition and development, especially indigo and khadi. And I think it was very good collaboration between artist, which is you and curator, myself, and the entire exhibition design, where

first we installed your installation with the wall which was white. So visitors could come and see in the continuation of exhibition the development and migration of objects and technology from India to Australia, and then finish with yours, just look at it.

And then in very end we installed the second part of project of Annu Kumar on the wall behind your installation, which is about Indian migrant communities in Australia, Sydney and Victoria, but based on textile. And I think visually it worked very well when people look at exhibition and through your installation, new photographs of Annu Kumar. I think it was quite very successful message that we could see when we know we hear you and Annu's strategies for this project. What do you think this combination of your work with Annu Kumar's photographs?

Sangeeta Sandrasegar:

That is also another beautiful offset to the development of the work and to then obviously the whole structure of the show. But to have these two contemporary responses to see the production in today. One, through the physicality of the artwork and the other, second, through the beautiful photography that documents the current actual realities of that process today as well. And then, I think that sense of the objecthood of my hanging panels and the translucency of them, but then that interplay to come to the end and see that but then to still see works through it and see movement and that adds to the interplay of the, I think of the resonances between both those contemporary artwork-

Pedram Khosronejad:

Yes.

Sangeeta Sandrasegar:

... and photos and mine. And it plays into that exotic difference that we look through and what we see. And again, that sense of "What Falls From View".

Pedram Khosronejad:

Also, if you remember your installation, they could like dancing in the air, in the = space, we make it very poetic. So Sangeeta, where you are going, I think after Powerhouse you had several other installation and exhibitions, can you tell us about them?

Sangeeta Sandrasegar:

I suppose coming out of the indigo works that were at the Powerhouse, I was then starting to look at, in the last couple of years, last two years, another colour, so I've been looking at red, I've been looking at Indian Mada. The last project I just did was for the sharjah Biennial and that show is actually called "Thinking Historically In The Present". And it obviously concentrates around the Middle East, Southeast Asian artists, and then also the diasporic artists within that migrated to America, Canada, Australia, so there's artists [inaudible 00:29:01]

Pedram Khosronejad:

Wow, congratulations.

Sangeeta Sandrasegar:

It's this big show, but again it's the same, it's mining the territories and discussions that we are having now and just all this other similar ways these are being realized. And that work was a series then, so

where my work was presented within the Biennial, which again had many beautiful and flexible spaces. The pieces that were chosen for that were actually a series of paper cutouts. It was a series of 105 works. There was a hundred cutouts that I had which were probably around A4/A3 scale that referenced the [inaudible 00:29:39] style. And these were all dyed, the paperworks were actually all hand dyed in indigo in the way we were dyeing the materials at What Falls From View. And then there were five very large works which were made dyeing them in the Indian Mada. So five huge red works which had to be created in quite a different way for the papers because the actual dye in practice for that is a lot heavier and it's hot water and you're putting paper into boiling hot water.

So this was the scientific part of the project, me trying to work out how I can make paper go through that process of the Mada process. Whereas with the indigo it's a slightly different form and it was easier to make the blue. Quite a complex work too, a 100 pieces referencing the [inaudible 00:30:20], and then five pieces that reference another visual art form from India called Kathakali and that's a religious theatrical form, a dance form which is performed, it's a performance that will go overnight. Both of these forms, art forms are actually representations of a very classic Hindu text. So this work again spoke to the idea of these classic texts that get disseminated. And so, these texts, it's still being performed through the Kathakali, it's performed by the Kathakali, this text. They perform all night and in a way they start to embody the God. It's the sense of spiritual performances where the activity and the audience, it becomes, it's a religious ceremony.

But going back to the sense of inside the gallery, it's a very rich sultanate and they have some beautiful spaces. But my works were shown in their museum which has a very classical overlay and structure. And I had two rooms that faced each other off a corridor. The blue works were in one and the red works in the other wall. But again, interesting to see the works that I've installed more flexibly in other spaces be presented in such a very historic building and context. And again, it's spits to what you're saying about the movement that I want of my works and also how they can sit in different spaces and how you work with the gallery in that way, I suppose inside the gallery that way. So that was an experience from afar because I was conducting those installations via Zoom and went only over once the show opened.

Pedram Khosronejad:

Wow. You are doing a hybrid artist installation I see, after experience with me in Powerhouse, now with the Sharjah. It is very interesting how after COVID or this type of Zoom artist/curator museum things is developing. So may I ask, in this, because Sharjah is culturally entirely different, is another culture, mostly majority Muslim community, Muslim visitors, how was the reception to your installation and artworks?

Sangeeta Sandrasegar:

I suppose because it's so far away and it's quite a big show, when we went across for the opening, and since then I've heard people that have been, and I think they get, obviously it's a large international audience, so I think there has been lots of different positive readings and it'll be interesting to see what happens or if there will be any uptake on the work after this exposure. But yeah, it'll be interesting to see. But I mean obviously-

Pedram Khosronejad:

Is it still too early? I think we need time to see other museums and galleries and artists contact. Sangeeta, one of the main aims of our podcast, as the title of podcast, Inside The Gallery, is the experiences between artists and gallerists and galleries and cultural spaces. Knowing the fact that you confirm you are a different artist, because the nature of your artwork, art production is different, is

concerned, light installation, bigger space. Can you tell us, share a little bit your experiences working with galleries and gallerists and private curators when you want to work, what's your experiences in this regard?

Sangeeta Sandrasegar:

... I think on the whole mostly one's experiences are mostly positive. Because if you are invited to a show or if you are working with a commercial dealer, it's because those people have interest in your work and they already have a positive reception. So in that sense, for that experience, it mostly remains pretty positive. And so again, the commercial things, they can be negative in the sense that obviously you might want to work with commercial galleries or have different commercial representation with a space that you might appreciate, but if they don't appreciate you then that those conversations don't really get to happen. But when a commercial gallery is interested in you, then obviously the conversations are receptive and then how you develop the work is mostly receptive or up to the time that maybe that relationship may break down if there's more pressures from the commercial gallerist onto the artist.

So I'd say in that sense, there's certainly galleries that I look around at and would like to show at but they wouldn't be interested in the work. And so then that's, I suppose the frustration sometimes for an artist, how to expand those or how to make those conversations happen and get yourself seen in those ways if you want to be seen in that way.

And then with commercial galleries that you do work with and you have an understanding. I've only had a couple, they've been longstanding relationships, so that's why. And my first gallery was when I started showing, that's how by being taken on this gallery in Sydney, which is now no longer around. The gallery ended with a lot of debt, so a lot of artists weren't paid. So financially it was a very dismal end to the relationship. But the primary years that I worked with him and I was being such a young artist, he was to me like one of my greatest mentors, he really taught me about how to make work, how to feel confident speaking with curators and how to feel confident about the presentation of my work and where to stand up for my work and also where to stand back and accept a conversation or where to receive advice around the work.

And I think it's that fine line of being strong around your work, but for me being able to engage with curators so that when I get to meet someone like you, I don't have... And I know maybe that's my [inaudible 00:35:30], I don't have a static thing, but that you can always find a new combination and you can learn so much from a curator or you can from a gallerist. That's what he taught me. So I think this has been my fundamental arch through there and it hasn't shifted. And the financial travails that happen as an artist, that just seems to always happen. So that's one thing you have to just accept perhaps, that there's always going to be more financial loss than accountability.

Now I show, just facing the last couple of years, Niagara Galleries. So that's a very longstanding Australian gallery I should say, not just Victorian Melbourne Gallery. And I've actually known Bill for the same time I started exhibiting in Sydney and my gallerist in Sydney and him were contemporaries and that's how I first met Bill that many years ago. And I've always respected him and he is very respected in the art world for sustaining such a long commercial gallery and also sustaining the relationships that he has with artists. So in that way, he obviously exhibits great sensitivity and care towards his artists, but also is a good businessman and he pays his artist, which is basically what I'm getting at.

He has quite a range, but that longstanding commitment to the art world I think is something that he upholds. And then the people that work around the gallery are beautiful and it's just a very nice caring space. And I think that's what in the end makes someone feel happy about having a commercial gallerist. And then yeah, funnily enough, Annu, that we were talking about, she works and is associated

with the gallery as well. So that's been another really fun linking within your show and getting to know you both.

Pedram Khosronejad:

I think it's very important for me too, thanks to you, Bill and Sarah came to exhibition Charkha and Kargha. And we had very, I learned a lot, I should say. And this is I think the beauty of working the curators, artists and gallerists together and open their comments and views on the installation about you curatorial in the exhibition. And again, thanks to you. Thank you. You introduced me to Bill and Sarah and still I continue, I talk to them and get advice from them for the things that I do. Thank you for sharing with us.

Sangeeta, as one of the last questions I had since we worked together, I had this chance to, because you kindly provided your personal visual investigations with me to understand better your work and the concept of your work. It was amazing for me that how you are a researcher artist. I would like to ask you how the climate change as an artist and using the natural material and the sustainability of your artwork is important for you and thinking about the question of climate change and Anthropocene as an artist, contemporary artist, and also the preservation of your artworks for future.

Sangeeta Sandrasegar:

I'll start with the preservation question. I think again, it all parks back to my thinking from when I was an art student. The integral sense of the works being about transparencies and etherealness and movement, I never thought about the preservation of them and that they would be pieces that would eventually just pass out. I think I never wanted to make pieces that become long lasting, so that whether how these works may or may not survive is not of concern for me, my concern is that they've been made and they've been in the world. And I suppose in that sense, of the holistic sense of me feeling we come into this world and we go out, then I also want my works to have that sense of life. And then obviously, but I do realize that now it does create complexity for works that then are acquired by museums because then it falls against ...

Pedram Khosronejad:

For conservation reason-

Sangeeta Sandrasegar:

... conservator and the collector and people that need to keep, we need to keep history. I want to make a part of history, but then I give them the challenge, well it may not be a part of, it may not be around for that part of history. And so, I understand that's not a very fair play. And I suppose I'm starting to try and think about that a bit more. I suppose I learned that with some earlier textile works I did in around 2012 that were acquired by the Museum of Contemporary Art. And that's where I got this condition report and I realized, "Well, oh my God, the sequence I've bought them from Brick Lane in London from some cheap plastic shops. They could be plastic, they could be from this source." The cotton, because some of it was cotton, some was nylon. It was such a mixed match of materials of just what I could afford as an artist in London at the time. And then having to do this inventory for the conservator, I realized that's hard. And also, the works were so fragile, they were just roughly torn so that they were fraying and that's part of it.

And so, I learned this idea that they may remain in their collection, but they would become rested. They would be shown occasionally and under, again, the lighting, that was such an important part, as the works [inaudible 00:40:38] become, it's an important part, but it becomes a very subdued part that the

works won't be lit as strongly as they ever were the first presentation now as people start to try and preserve as much as they can of these materials, but for this early iteration it will probably a mix of synthetic and natural material. And so obviously, even how they sit together is problematic.

So I learned this idea of resting in that, okay, perhaps works can be preserved and kept in the archive in that sense. And that's also some kind of beautiful continuity of my work that it's not always out there, but perhaps it lives that way. And so, I'm happy for that to happen and that transition and to work with collections in that way to preserve them as much as they can. And if that means not showing, then that's part of that objects life.

And then, in the sense of global warming and sustainability of the planet, then I think that's a really hard one. It's something I need to start to work out how I analyse that through the practice and through the creation of works. That's already the push and pull of working with natural dyes. And then the production of cotton is in itself ravenous to the landscape and the amount of water it needs, and mostly these created in India, which can have a high range, but then also huge areas of barren, drought land masses. It's a problematic crop that is needed for the sustainability of some farmers and that's a problem to the environments of other sections.

So, inherent in even in working with the natural colours and with the khadi, there are these inherent overlays of, "How do I produce these works?" And again, there's more demand for people to work with natural, who use natural cotton, natural fibres. It's like a this or that. Do we go for the natural fibres and work and use a lot of water, or do we accept that maybe synthetics work in a certain way because we're preserving water? Where do we sit in the environmental seesaw that we as humans are creating because we just have a lot of need and want, is that we just need to pair it back? And then as an artist it's like, "Well, how much do I pair back and not work with paper or cotton?" Paper production too uses a lot of water and the milling of the trees, the growth of the trees.

Pedram Khosronejad:

... Exactly, there's not always black or white. And it's important that we know that artists today, curators or galleries, we are thinking about the climate change. We need to continue to talk about it. Also, we are developing to thinking how we can be sustainable in art production, reduce the carbon using in galleries, electricity, lighting, temperature, all of these things are altogether and is we are just in the beginning of the debate and we need to talk more. But as you said, yes, khadi cotton is very consuming. A lot of things is not maybe sustainable, but it's a tradition. The other way we said we need to keep the traditions going is important preservation of the tradition, continue the tangible cultural heritage. If you stop it, what happened to cultural heritage? But thank you so much, Sangeeta, for your time, talking to us, our audiences for Inside The Gallery podcast, and all our best for the future.

Sangeeta Sandrasegar:

Thank you so much, Pedram.