

## OF PALIMPSESTS AND STAINS

Kathryn Myers and Gopika Nath's show at Art and Aesthetic, New Delhi, from the 7<sup>th</sup> of August to the 6<sup>th</sup> of September, could well be described as a serendipitous juxtaposition of two artists whose practices share many commonalities yet retain obvious differences. Titled *Fragments and Fragmentation*, this refreshing exhibition brings together a kaleidoscope of experiences, emotions and aspects of the artists' life and work.

Both Myers and Nath invite the viewer to be intimate with their work. Myers, a painter and Professor of Art at the University of Connecticut, creates palimpsests of texture and colour. She grapples with the reductionist label of a 'realist painter' through a body of small-scale gouache paintings on paper that are really "fragments and montages of cities" she has visited. It's difficult to locate the cities that house the edifices and streets in her paintings. Are they situated in New Delhi, Benaras or New England? She subverts the realist label without renouncing the desire to 'document' her surroundings. Her gaze has been trained over years of visiting India and eschews the touristic, exotic vista, for a grittier vision. One is led through labyrinthine stairways of the 'common man's home' that never fully opens its doors and remains mysterious. The few figures that appear remain obscure; they are seen from a distance or through a barrier.

On the other hand, Nath, a textile artist and writer, is rather candid in her evocations, though her abstract, fabric-based works may be harder to 'read' than her video and interactive installation. This cloth-based series is marked by the recurring motif of a circular form inspired by the 'lowly' tea-cup; the burnt material, the stitched beadwork and the singed paperwork lend themselves to be read as wounds unravelling the various layers of the self. Interestingly, the video captures the artist singing and stitching. Both these activities are usually relegated to the realm of the non-heroic narrative that folk artists, designers and women who 'sew as a hobby' are burdened with. However, by documenting her process and sharing its complexity, Nath manages to question the stereotype. She also makes the works interactive by setting up a corner called the *Chai Project*, where viewers are invited to share stories of 'stains' that they have encountered – life's different difficult moments that they have grappled with and overcome.



Gopika Nath. *Fragments of the Whole*.  
Cotton voile, nylon net, silk organza, tea, dyes.  
14" x 15" unframed. 2013.

GEORGINA MADDOX