



1

*Between the Waves*, 2012

Five-channel video installation, colour & b/w, multi-channel sound, TRT 86 min

2

*Between the Waves (Outer and Inner)*, 2012

Mixed media collage, digital prints on archival rag paper

3

*unbecoming*, 2017

Hand coloured digital prints on archival rag paper

4

*unbecoming*, 2017

Photograph on archival paper

a

Interview between Hans Ulrich Obrist and Tejal Shah, Barbara Gross Gallery, 2011

60 min, © Jacqueline Kaess-Farquet

b

Interview between curator Anna Fricke and Tejal Shah, 2014

17:55 min, © André Sauer

c

A selection of books curated by Tejal Shah

d

Documentation of the lecture performance *unbecoming* by Tejal Shah, HFBK Hamburg, 25 Oct 2017

Courtesy: In Germany, Tejal Shah is represented by Barbara Gross Galerie, Munich, and in India by Project 88, Mumbai.

The aesthetic practice of the Indian artist **Tejal Shah** (\*1979, Bhilai) encompasses video, photography, performance, drawing, sound, and spatial installations. Her works compellingly engage us in layered propositions on the co-dependent relationships between gender, ecology, science, sexuality, and consciousness. Informed by queer, feminist, and Buddhist thought, Shah questions systematic dualistic differentiations and seamlessly integrates important reflections on violence and power on the one hand, and love and regeneration on the other. Particularly in the context of her native country India, her unique artistic position is a testimony of courage, outstanding in quality, and independence.

In her installation ***Between the Waves*** that premiered at dOCUMENTA (13), Shah develops her own vision of a cosmology that breaks with multiple standard conceptions of corporeality and consciousness, dissolving the boundaries between human, nature, culture, and other species. Her humanimal protagonists unselfconsciously embody ritualistic and intuitive explorations, unapologetically seeking closeness. The artist presents a radical imagination that is both a utopia and a dystopia. It can be asked if this deeply impressive as well as disturbing vision of a humankind haunted by waves of love over and over, will change anything in this world, as it is. Thematically linked to the video installation, large collage works on paper, *Between the Waves – Inner and Outer* (2012-13) are also presented alongside.

In her new body of work, *unbecoming* (2017), premiering at Kunsthaus Hamburg, Shah continues her explorations: How can one come to embody the movement from the ontological term of 'being' to 'becoming'? How can one come to realize the inter-dependent, co-arising phenomena that one already is? How can we move from deeply entrenched and very subtle forms of violence towards transcendental, unconditional love and fearlessness? Tejal Shah is suggesting thinking of unbecoming.

On the one hand, we have a suite of delicately hand painted and digitally touched (and retouched) recuperation of found images of various anonymous humans – dead, washed up, twisted, stoned and distorted. The artist sifted through hundreds of images available in the public domain of civilian deaths resulting from the many on-going wars post 2<sup>nd</sup> World War. She gathered these low-resolution remnants and intimately reworked them; first digitally and then by painstakingly painting over each individual person in an intimate ritual akin to the subtle touch of the lover who prepares the body of the beloved who has departed. A mysterious, highly pixelated, dark, and moody picture of a person on fire, burning, standing in the midst of the market place as passers-by watch. Contemporary self-immolations as a form of protest against the brutal occupation of Tibet pose another kind of unbecoming. Understood as a political act of ultimate consequence, this death that we watch in progress can be called involuntarily like the death of the humiliated bodies opposite.

Further unbecoming is explored through her public performance-lecture and day-long workshop presented in collaboration with the Hamburg University of Fine Arts, HFBK (Prof. Michaela Melián). A documentation of the performance is on display at Kunsthaus. Shah describes her recent occupation with manifold forms of oral expressions and traditions as "verbal art". In her lecture, she elucidates a proposal on the nature of reality and consciousness based on her current research focusing on key aspects of Tibetan Mahayana Buddhism (following the Middle Way Philosophy School, a legacy of the erstwhile Nalanda University). Tejal Shah is formally studying this philosophy and its practices with several teachers in India and is thus drawing upon a living spiritual tradition that offers some of the most profound and scientifically compatible perspectives on non-duality and awakening to reality as it is. Her interest is in the practical application of the core insights proposed by this body of knowledge and its relevance to the total process of living in consonance. The public account of this intensive form of aesthetic research is presented in Hamburg for the first time and is accompanied by a presentation of her fellow artist **Shabnam Virmani**; thus, providing a broader context to her work and giving insight into her praxis, which are respectively both critical and urgent in the present cultural landscape of India.

Tejal Shah (\*1979, Bhilai, India) studied at the Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology, Australia, and at the Art Institute of Chicago in the United States. She has participated in numerous international exhibitions, and her films have been presented at various film festivals; among other venues, she has shown her works at the Museum of Modern Art, Oslo (2016/17), the Whitechapel Gallery, London (2014), the Gujral Foundation, New Delhi (2014), dOCUMENTA (13) (2012), the Centre Pompidou (2011), and the Tate Modern (2006).