

# Startup States

Abhishek Hazra

Alana Hunt

Ayesha Hameed

Birender Yadav

Ele Carpenter with

Raqs Media Collective

Jason Wing

Karthik KG

Moonis Ahmad Shah

Somnath Bhatt

Curated by Laura McLean

Startup States investigates post-colonial legacies inherent in contemporary forms of power exercised through data-driven governance. Through art, artefacts, and archival material, the exhibition explores the colonial origins of systems of biometric identification, registration, and control developed in India and Australia, and their relationship to the technics of state governance today.

Startup States forms part of an ongoing research project examining the intersection of the informational bio-politics and power of the state and its strategies for shaping and representing 'a people', with market-driven bio-powers whose digital platforms and social media focus and form new labour practices, new publics, new constituencies, and new political movements.

Within this framework, Startup States looks at ways in which the economy of cognitive capitalism generates a form of data-driven governance as it codifies, financialises, and regulates daily life, and how the efficiency of such networked governance is being mimicked by nation states through citizen profiling schemes.

## ARTWORKS

Anti-clockwise from gallery entrance:

### **Karthik KG**

*datamugshot*

software (processing script for visuals, Pure Data for sound), two desktop monitors, Kinect motion sensor, PC, sound (2017/19)

### **Alana Hunt**

*An Activity Timesheet*

find-a-word addressing work for the dole in indigenous communities, photocopy, A4 paper (2019)

### **Moonis Ahmad Shah**

*The Incoherent Lives of This and That*

lab print photo manipulated found images, HD video, 23 mins (2016)

### **Jason Wing**

>> *Brute Force* >> *Merge Sort*

HD video loop, 10 mins (2017)

### **Abhishek Hazra**

*Is My ID Me OR Is It My Dog?*

HD video, 10 mins (2010)

### **Birender Yadav**

*Donkey Worker (Angootha Chap series)*

36 x 60 inches, thumb prints on paper (2015)

Vitrine left to right:

### **Somnath Bhatt**

*Colonialism Was a Start-up*

tote bag (2015)

### **Mozilla**

*Aadhaar is Dystopian and Dangerous*

badge (2018)

Copies of Australian customs and immigration documents drawn from the National Archives of Australia (1904-1919)

### **Raqs Media Collective**

*A Concise Lexicon of / for the Digital Commons*

Published in 'Sarai Reader #03 Shaping Technologies' (2003)

## **Ele Carpenter**

### *Embroidered Digital Commons*

cotton, thread (2008–), a collective close-reading and close-stitching of the text  
*A Concise Lexicon of / for the Digital Commons.*

Sarai cafe:

## **Ayesha Hameed**

### *A Rough History (of the destruction of fingerprints)*

16mm/HD video, 9:50 mins (2015)

## **ARTISTS**

**Abhishek Hazra's** (based in Bangalore) works traverse a diverse, yet closely interconnected mesh of interests. He uses video and performance that often integrate textual fragments drawn from real and fictional scenarios. Histories of science and an ironic fascination with theoretical approaches are just some of the interests that inform his practice. Increasingly interested in performance while still being quite ambivalent about privileging 'liveness', his recent series of lecture performances explore questions around affect, precarity, and provincial cosmopolitanism. Abhishek has exhibited and performed in institutions and contexts that include Kochi-Muziris Biennale (2016), Experiment Marathon, Reykjavik Art Museum, Kunstmuseum Bern, MAXXI Museum, GallerySKE, KHOJ, and Kiran Nadar Museum. Past residences include Gasworks, London; Art Omi, New York; and SymbioticA, Perth.

**Alana Hunt's** (b.1984 Sydney, lives on Miriwoong country) activities as an artist and writer are defined by her commitment to sensitively challenge ideas and histories in the public sphere and the social space between people. South Asia and the north-west of Australia have shaped her engagement with the violence that results from the fragility of nations and the aspirations and failures of colonial dreams. Since 2009 Alana has orchestrated art and publishing projects with, in, and about Kashmir, including *Paper txt msgs from Kashmir* (2009-2011) and *Cups of Nun Chai* (2010-ongoing). In 2018 Alana presented her work at Makassar International Writers' Festival, via artist lectures at Tufts, Brown, Parsons and Indiana Universities in the US; and in the exhibition *Temporary Certainty* at 4A Centre for Contemporary Asian Art, Sydney.

**Ayesha Hameed's** (b. Canada, based in London) moving image, performance, and written work explore contemporary borders and migration, and visual cultures of the Black Atlantic. Her projects *Black Atlantis* and *A Rough History (of the destruction of fingerprints)* have been performed and exhibited internationally. She is the co-editor of *Futures and Fictions* (Repeater, 2017), which was nominated for a 2018 International Centre of Photography's Infinity Award in the Critical Writing and Research category. She is currently the Program Leader for the MA in Contemporary Art Theory in the Department of Visual Cultures at Goldsmiths University of London.

**Birender Yadav** (b.1992, Ballia, based in Delhi) was born in a predominantly rural province of Uttar Pradesh, India. He came from a family of coal miners, with a father working as a blacksmith at the coal-mines of our province. He was the first to step out from his family and pursue formal higher education. Birender completed a Bachelor of Fine Arts at Banaras Hindu University, Varanasi, graduating in 2013, and qualified for a Masters in Fine Arts from the College of Arts, New Delhi in 2015. His body of works are a reflection of his personal experiences and memories of growing up in a world of coal miners, labourers, and different kinds of workers. They question identity, representation, politics of class difference, forms of work and making, and issues of oppression and domination of the working classes.

**Ele Carpenter** (b.1971, UK, based in London) is a curator, writer and artist working internationally in politicised art and interdisciplinary social networks of making. Since 2005 Ele has facilitated the *Open Source Embroidery* project using embroidery and code as a tool to investigate the language and ethics of participatory production and distribution. The *Open Source Embroidery* exhibition (Furtherfield, 2008; BildMuseet, Umeå, Sweden, 2009; Museum of Craft and Folk Art, San Francisco, 2010) presented work by over 30 artists. Ele is currently facilitating the *Embroidered Digital Commons*, a distributed embroidery exploring collective work and ownership (2008 – 2020). She is a Reader in Curating at Goldsmiths University of London, and Director of the Nuclear Culture Research Group.

**Raqs Media Collective** (founded 1992 in Delhi, by Monica Narula, Jeebesh Bagchi & Shuddhabrata Sengupta) follows its self-declared imperative of 'kinetic contemplation' to produce a trajectory that is restless in its forms and methods, yet concise with the infra-procedures that it invents. The collective makes contemporary art, edits books, curates exhibitions, and stages situations. It co-founded Sarai in 2001, where it initiated processes that have left deep impact on contemporary culture in India. Exhibitions curated by Raqs include 'The Rest of Now' (Manifesta 7, Bolzano, 2008), Sarai Reader 09 (Gurugram, 2012-13), INSERT2014 (New Delhi, 2014) and 'Why Not Ask Again' (Shanghai Biennale 2016-2017). Their work has been exhibited at Documenta, the Venice, Sao Paulo, Manifesta, Istanbul, Shanghai, Sydney and Taipei Biennales. Solo shows at museums include 'With an Untimely Calendar' at the National Gallery of Modern Art (New Delhi 2014-2015), Tate Exchange (London 2016), Fundacion Proa (Buenos Aires 2015), Laumeier Sculpture Park (St Louis 2016), and the Whitworth Art Gallery (Manchester 2017).

**Jason Wing** (b. 1977, based in Sydney) questions our understanding of history and of our current socio-political reality. He holds a Bachelor of Fine Arts from Sydney College of the Arts, University of Sydney. Significant solo exhibitions include that at the Kluge-Ruhe Aboriginal Art Collection, Virginia, USA, 2012; and *The Presence of Absence*, Port Macquarie, 2018. Selected group exhibitions include *Making Change*, National Art Museum of China, Beijing, 2012; and *Survey*, Carriageworks Clothing Store, Sydney, 2010. Jason's work is held in both private and public collections including the National Gallery of Australia, Canberra. Wing's first monograph was published by Artspace, Sydney in 2014. He exhibited in the 3rd National Indigenous Art Triennial, *Defying Empire*, at the National Gallery of Australia, Canberra in 2017.

**Karthik KG's** (b.1983, based in Delhi) research project *Unique Identification and dividual* explores the techniques of identification through the multi-layered historical developments and sci-fi imaginations, and locates the Aadhaar ID project within this as a shift from decentralised to distributed network structure and its relation to shaping of new subjectivities. He completed an M.Res in Curatorial/Knowledge at Goldsmiths, University of London (2016), and holds an M.A. in Visual Arts from Ambedkar University, Delhi (2014). He currently teaches Digital Media at Ambedkar University, Delhi. Recent exhibitions include: *Somewhere Along the Line*, in collaboration with Asia Art Archive, part of the exhibition *It Begins with a Story: Three Exhibitions*, Hong Kong, 2018; and *Mold to Modulation: Dusting the Fingerprints* at Vadehra Art Gallery, New Delhi, 2017.

**Moonis Ahmad Shah** (b. Srinagar, based in Melbourne) is an interdisciplinary artist who works with hybrid practices involving mediums like video, photography, painting, programming and installation. He has shown his work at various exhibitions nationally and internationally such as his solo shows at Sattlekamer, Bern, 2018; Founders Gallery, University of Melbourne, 2018; and Rohtas Gallery, Lahore, 2016-17. Group shows include *Boxed Light* at Mars Gallery, Melbourne, 2018; *Sleepless Constellations*, 1.1 Gallery, Dubai, 2017; *Bureaucracies of Imagination*, Canvas Gallery, Karachi; and *A Million Mutinies Later: India at 70*, Turner House, Cardiff. Currently, he is a doctoral candidate and a sessional lecturer at the University of Melbourne.

**Somnath Bhatt** (b. 1994, Ahmedabad, based in New York) graduated from Rhode Island School of Design in 2017. His interests are broad; they range from multimedia and technology, to multilingual typography and traditional crafts. He likes exploring metaphors and tapping into the dynamism of liminal, peripheral, and intersectional spaces in art and design. His work has been shown at ICA, London; Institute of New Connotative Action, Seattle; Lewisham Art House, London; Wrong Biennale, Oslo; Junior High, Los Angeles; RISD Museum, Providence; Resort Gallery, Baltimore; ICA, Philadelphia; Art Week Dubai; and New York Art Book Fair, MoMA PS1, New York.

## CURATOR

**Laura McLean** (b. 1984, Sydney) is a curator and art writer. Past exhibitions include the *Contingent Movements Archive*, Maldives Pavilion, 55th Venice Biennale and UNESCO, Paris (2013); *Zoe v Bios: Behavioural Modernity & Orgs*, Artistic Bokeh, MuseumsQuartier, Vienna (2015); *Strangeness, Betweenness, and the Cosmopolitan Imagination*, Royal Holloway, University of London (2017); *Planetary Gardening*, Photo Access, Canberra (2017); and *The Conversational Cosmos*, West Space, Melbourne (2017). Her writing has been presented by journals and publishers including ArtAsiaPacific, The MIT Press, Maretti Editore, Frame, and Arena. From 2015-17 she was an editor and chair of Runway Australian Experimental Art journal. Past residencies include Helsinki International Curatorial Program, Helsinki; AIR MuseumsQuartier, Vienna; and a Sarai Fellowship at the Centre for the Study of Developing Societies, Delhi. Laura holds a BVA (Hons 1) and MVA from Sydney College of the Arts, University of Sydney, and MFA (Distinction) in Curating from Goldsmiths, University of London. She will commence a PhD at Monash Art Design & Architecture in 2019.

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