

In Two Exhibitions Chicago-based Artist Pritika Chowdhry Sheds Light on Hidden Female Historiography of Indian Partition

On its 75th anniversary, socio-political artist Pritika Chowdhry creates large-scale installations bearing witness to the turbulent event.

CHICAGO, ILLINOIS, USA, February 7, 2022 /EINPresswire.com/ -- "Word of Mouth"

January 15 – February 12, 2022

Woman Made Gallery

2150 S Canalport Ave, 4A-3, Chicago, IL 60608

"Broken Column: The Monuments of Forgetting"

[Online Exhibition](#)

Art Show International

Los Angeles



Pritika Chowdhry, "Broken Column," multiple latex panels on view at "R.U.R.," 2013. Soap Factory, Minneapolis. Photograph courtesy of the artist.

August will mark the 75th year of Indian Independence from British Imperialist rule. However, it will also mark the anniversary of a darker event riddled with tragedy, loss, and displacement that lies dormant in public memory: India's Partition.

A grandchild of the partition, socio-political artist Pritika Chowdhry has, based on research on feminist historiographies, monuments, and recounts from her own family, created large-scale installations and sculptures on the theme since 2007 within the framework of her Partition Memorial Project. Some of these works are now on view in "Word of Mouth" at Woman Made Gallery, Chicago, and in the solo show "Broken Column: The Monuments of Forgetting" at Art Show International.

In "Broken Column: The Monuments of Forgetting," the artist has created latex casts of the Jallianwallan Bagh memorial in Punjab, India; the Minar-e-Pakistan memorial in Lahore, Pakistan; and the Martyred Intellectuals monument in Rayer Bazar, Dhaka, Bangladesh. During Partition in

1947, India was split along religious lines, and twenty million people were displaced: Hindus traversed the border to India and Muslims to Pakistan. Two million people died in violent partition riots and, less-known, over 300,000 Muslim, Sikh, Bengali, and Hindu women were raped. Likewise, women were the erased victims in the partition of Pakistan when Bangladesh was formed in 1971. "When a memory is unbearable, how do you memorialize it?" asks Chowdhry. Broken Column is an intertextual reference to Attia Hossain's coming-of-age novel of a young Muslim girl in the turbulent times of India's partition, "Sunlight on a Broken Column." Chowdhry's latex fragments become anti-memorials, refusing to be appropriated for nationalist propaganda functioning as an entry point to healing processes and bearing witness to these traumatic events.

Fluency in English was used by the British to exercise power. Chowdhry's choice of material, iron, for her 79 piece installation, The Masters' Tongues at Woman Made Gallery speaks to Iron as a tool of colonization in its role as a building block for Industrial-era Britain used in railroad tracks, ammunitions, architecture, and objects. Rusting cast iron tongues lay in rows in the gallery space. Together they represent the 54 Commonwealth countries, all of which were former colonies of Britain, and the 25 territories that are still under British governance—79 states—where English is the official language. "Rust can be seen as deterioration, in the case of iron, it makes the metal stronger by creating a hard outer shell that protects the metal," Chowdhry says. Through a contemporary lens, Chowdhry investigates the English language as a "master's tool," used by the British to subjugate local peoples, and how the English language has become hybridized, empowering contemporary citizens.

Deeply engaged with disseminating her research, Chowdhry's Partition Memorial Project, and more recently, Counter-Memory Project includes an educational component: a blog. She highlights partitions of countries, civil and military wars, riots, border violence, genocides, and terrorist attacks, to raise consciousness about rape as a weapon in wars and conflicts in the 20th and 21st centuries. As an adult, upon hearing the traumatic stories of her family members during Partition, she found that knowledge is healing.

Blog: <https://www.pritikachowdhry.com/blog>

Partition Memorial Project: <https://www.pritikachowdhry.com/partition-art>

About the Artist

Pritika Chowdhry is a Chicago-based multi-media artist. In the Partition Memorial Project, her anti-memorials are quietly provocative, temporary, and incorporate visceral materials and soundscapes. Chowdhry emphasizes that her goal is not to "speak for the women," and her experiential art installations invite viewers to bear witness, holding space for mourning, remembrance, and repair. Chowdhry has exhibited her works nationally and internationally in group and solo exhibitions in the Weisman Art Museum in Minneapolis, Queens Museum in New York, the Hunterdon Museum in New Jersey, the Islip Art Museum in Long Island, Visual Arts Center of New Jersey, the DoVA Temporary in the University of Chicago, the Brodsky Center in

Rutgers University, and the Cambridge Art Gallery in Massachusetts. She is the recipient of a Vilas International Travel Fellowship, an Edith and Sinaiko Frank Fellowship for a Woman in the Arts, a Wisconsin Arts Board grant, and a Minnesota State Arts Board grant.

Chowdhry has an MFA in Studio Art and an MA in Visual Culture and Gender Studies from UW-Madison. Pritika has taught at Macalester College and College of Visual Arts in St. Paul, Minnesota.

Anna Mikaela Ekstrand
Cultbytes
+1 720-254-2997
info@cultbytes.com

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