

Two Exhibitions Expose the Historical Use of Rape as a Weapon of War Amidst Russia's Attack on Ukraine

Pritika Chowdhry's Partition Anti-Memorial Project Showcases Rape as a Weapon of War as disturbing reports of sexual violence emerge from Ukraine

CHICAGO, ILLINOIS, UNITED STATES, May 10, 2022 /EINPresswire.com/ -- This Spring, socio-political artist Pritika Chowdhry, founder of the [Partition Anti-Memorial Project](#), will show her work at the Ukrainian Institute of Modern Art in "UIMA Chicago's Protest Art Show," until June 4, 2022 and at the Woman Made Gallery's group show, "[The Deeply Rooted](#)," until May 21, 2022.

The 75th Anniversary of the Partition in India will be commemorated in August 2022. India was partitioned in 1947 into India and Pakistan along religious lines. Twenty million people were dislocated as Muslims migrated to the new nation of Pakistan and Hindus migrated to India. Violent communal riots erupted all over the country, and over 2 million people died.

Chowdhry founded The Partition Anti-Memorial Project in 2007, and it will be part of the festivities with a controversial solo exhibit at the South Asia Institute in Chicago. The Partition



Pritika Chowdhry. "Silent Waters," 2009. One hundred and one ceramics feet, wax, water, salt. 25' x 25', Weisman Art Museum, Minneapolis, MN.



Pritika Chowdhry. "Scorched Earth," 2022. Wood-burning on wood. 36"x24".

Anti-Memorial Project intends to raise consciousness about a less publicized element of the Partition in India—the brutal rape of over 300,000 women on both sides of the border.

“The use of rape as a weapon against women is rarely ever mentioned, and the widespread use of rape against women is the counter-memory of the Partition of 1947 that is omitted from the popular memory culture,” Chowdhry explains. Recently, reports of wartime rape are emerging from various cities in Ukraine, alongside the possibility of a partition of Ukraine. “It is quite stunning to see how history repeats itself,” Chowdhry continues.



Pritika Chowdhry. "What the Body Remembers," 2008. Paper pulp, mason stains. 6 ft. x 3 ft. x 10 ft. installed dimensions.

Chowdhry will also include new works that engage with the conflict in Ukraine from the perspective of women. "When a memory is unbearable, how do you memorialize it?" asks Chowdhry. "Traditional monuments and memorials seem inadequate to memorialize such an inexpressible issue. I felt that what is needed is an anti-memorial that will not let people forget the occurrence of mass rapes in 1947 or 2022." Chowdhry is exhibiting one of her new works at the Ukraine Institute of Modern Art in Chicago in a group exhibition featuring protest art against the Russian invasion of Ukraine.

“The invisible cost of war is usually the women and children,” Chowdhry says. Chowdhry has burnt a delicate mesh of gauze on a silhouette map of Ukraine. The burnt gauze is denser in the areas that are more affected by the Russian invasion. The cities of Bucha, Irpin, Kharkiv, and Mariupol are indicated by denser burnt lines that look like patches of burnt gauze. The work is titled “Scorched Earth” to critique the scorched-earth policy that retreating Russian troops have been implementing in Ukraine.

In the Partition Anti-Memorial Project, Chowdhry’s anti-memorials are quietly provocative, temporary, and incorporate visceral materials and soundscapes. Chowdhry emphasizes that her goal is not necessarily to "speak for the women" or "give a voice to the voiceless," which would act as another kind of silencing. Her experiential art installations invite viewers to hold space in the acts of bearing witness, mourning, remembrance, and repair.

Her anti-memorials are sculptural art installations that flip the idea of traditional memorialization on its head. Chowdhry says, "it is important not to forget such atrocities because if we forget, we are bound to create conditions that will enable history to repeat itself.

And that has certainly borne out in Bosnia, Rwanda, and now Ukraine.”

The Partition Anti-Memorial Project comprises anti-memorials that examine the Partition of India, and the partitions of other countries, and raises awareness about rape as a weapon of war in partitions, civil and military wars. Pritika Chowdhry has an MFA in Studio Art and an MA in Visual Culture and Gender Studies from the University of Wisconsin, Madison. She has exhibited her artworks internationally and in public and private collections.

Chowdhry's work is currently on view in the following exhibitions:

“UIMA Chicago's Protest Art Show,” March 13, 2022 - June 4, 2022, Ukrainian Institute of Modern Art, 2320 West Chicago Avenue, Chicago, IL, 60622.

“The Deeply Rooted.” Woman Made Gallery. 2150 S Canalport Ave, 4A-3, Chicago, IL 60608, April 8 – May 21, 2022.

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