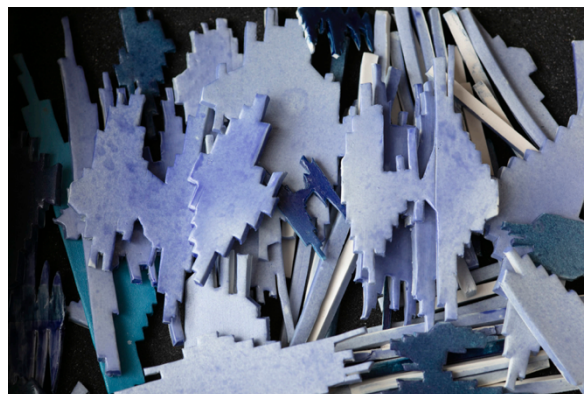
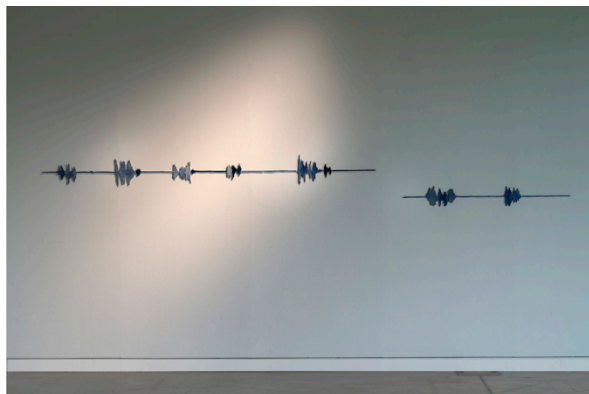


VAF-Magazine, The Lakshmi Mittal and Family  
South Asia Institute, Harvard University, 2020–21





MUTE TONGUE Porcelain, semitransparent, transparent, and matt glazed, special edition color, variable and length approximately 108 inches, 2019-20 Picture courtesy: Thomas Kern and artist How are the stories of refugees narrated in the news? Who speaks about their plight? Often, the marginalized voices of refugees are unheard or ignored. In this work, I wrote a poem based on two stories I listened to of refugees from Somalia and Sri Lanka, and converted the audio file into an audio graph and cast it in porcelain.

ISHITA CHAKRABORTY  
INDIA  
Mixed Media

Ishita Chakraborty's practice reveals itself through inkless drawings, installations, poetry, video, and sounds that echo the traces of migration, the traumas of colonialism, and language and identity in India.

My grandfather was an actor and lived his life on stage. Listening to him recite and practice his lines and seeing my grandmother's meticulous embroideries were my early childhood inspirations. I grew up in a patriarchal society, and art became a tool and a language for me to break and question the boundaries. My father worked as a land and land-reforms officer, so I grew up seeing countless maps and land records. Because of the nature of my father's job, my family moved from place to place, and the uncertainty of home, the question of identity, and changing languages accompanied me throughout my adolescence. Since 2017, I have been working on a series of white-on-white drawings, titled "Zwischen / Between." It elucidates a transitory situation deriving from deeply listening to the oral histories of displaced people. It visually articulates those who are often unacknowledged and are made invisible: the refugees and immigrants. My own history of migration and my present living situation in between India and Europe brings me closer to the subject.

Sometimes, in my childhood, I traveled to historical sites with my parents. I remember the names and words engraved by former visitors on walls and pillars. I find this technique of preserving memory interesting and provocative. This concept helped me to develop my own method of registering other people's voices and memories by scratching on paper. The rigorously hand-scratched drawings depict collected memories of home and exile, communicating floor plans, folktales, poetries, musical scores, maps, landscapes, and transient geographies crossing Asia and Europe.

I grew up next to a Bangladeshi refugee neighborhood in West Bengal, and often listened to their stories of territorial conflicts, illegal immigration, forced migration, and the wounds of Partition. My family was not directly affected by the Partition, but I was surrounded by people who were. I felt their loss of cultural identity. The Visiting Artist Fellowship program and its resources are the perfect opportunity for me to further develop my artistic research. To this day, the effects of the Partition resonate in life in West Bengal. This opportunity gives me a chance to explore my own history and background in the context of global migration and human movement.

My artistic research has a specific interest in the Mittal Institute's ongoing research in the "Looking Back, Informing the Future: The 1947 Partition of British India" project. Specifically, I am interested in learning more about the collection and analysis of oral narratives from those who witnessed and experienced the Partition in 1947. I hope to learn and gain from the Institute's resources, archives, and virtual masterclasses, which will act as a bridge and agent to convey the complexities of scientific research into my art and ultimately raise awareness and make these subjects more accessible.



ZWISCHEN I BETWEEN Scratched paper, 8.5" X 11", 2017–ongoing Picture courtesy: Thomas Kern and artist The scratched, white-on-white drawings are the silent representations and tangible recordings of voices through written words and comment on the value of each individual within a larger geography. The words I use in my drawings come from the conversations I have had with migrants.



ZWISCHEN I BETWEEN Scratched paper, 8.5" X 11", 2017–ongoing Picture courtesy: Thomas Kern and artist In recent times, I met a group of Pakistani and Afghani refugees in Switzer - land, and every time we meet we talk about home, common recipes, rivers, and landscapes. I inscribed our exilic longings into the beloved river Jhelum flowing into the paper without any geographic territories and conflicts.