

Sakshi Gupta

Born in Delhi in 1979, Sakshi Gupta recently had her second solo in Bangalore, GALLERYSKE, Bangalore, 2007. Her recent group participations include, *India Oggi. L'Arte Contemporanea Indiana fra Continuità e Trasformazione*, Curated by Daniela Palazzoli, Milan, Italy. *Digressing Domains*, Curated by Sushma Bahl, Delhi, 2006, *Team Unteamed*, presented by gallery Art Konsult, Delhi, 2005, and *Mercury Rising*, Navsar, Delhi. Earlier this year she won an Inlaks Scholarship to attend a residency at the Cittadellarte-Fondazione Pistoletto, Italy.



Hands-On
GITANJALI DANG

Delhi-anchored artist Sakshi Gupta phrases her new work, *Landscape of Waking Memories*, as a floor installation. This installation strategy creates room for intriguing perspectives. Often, viewers take for granted the distance maintained while viewing a work of art, but more often than not, it is the key to a scrupulous reading.

The mere act of going down on one's haunches or standing at ease at a distance from Gupta's installation changes its purport. In *Landscape of Waking Memories*, the artist conflates the unlikely voluminosity of deeply curled metal lashes with the insouciant lightness of feathers.

When the viewer zooms out, the work echoes the melancholy of a tumescent and electric beached cloud. When this distance dissipates, it resembles the severed wing of a mythological creature.

The feathers used in the installation had not too long ago dressed hens. Although the fading black of the feathers is camouflaged by the grey sheen of recycled aluminium, every so often a feather, tinted by an interface between the colours russet and rust, spurts out dramatically.

This openness to adopt taken-for-granted objects into her process is redolent of a sentiment articulated by Wolfgang Tillmans in the title of his 2003 exhibition, *If one thing matters, everything matters*.

Historically, quilts have always been a fraught project, with the subcategory of art quilts being particularly contentious. In addition to subverting traditional formal values allied with quilts, Gupta also negates them as a conduit of immediate expression.



Landscape of Waking Memories, 2007
Galvanised wire, mesh and chicken feathers
65" x 37" x 10"
Edition of 3

Gupta's métier involves the reconstitution of materials she employs, by helping them escape the materiality they are branded with. She borrows the quilt out of its original comfort-giving context and manipulates it to fashion an almost-surreal cladding, whose temperament could swing from benevolent to minatory.

Although, post-Emin, the bed and its support cast of quilt and pillowcase will forever be seen in the light of confessional art, Gupta's articulations are gratifyingly divorced from any such purges. The artist's practice draws nourishment from manipulating and teasing the inherent materiality of her chosen medium.

By using galvanised metal as the support for her quilt, she successfully divests it of its specific masculine histories. In the same instance, she effectively and astutely off-loads the freight of the metal onto the act of quilt-making, commonly perceived as a feminine pursuit.

This hardened position of negotiating and intermixing polar opposites has been arrived at over a period of time. Most recently, in October this year, for an *Untitled* installation, comprising a bed and a quilt, Gupta used disembodied leather eyelashes that called to mind S & M rituals and offset them with the downy vulnerability of a fabric with which she swathed the pyre-like bed.

The title could be read as symbolic of mercurial mental preoccupations. As the amoebic disposition of everyday existence spread itself soft across the terrain of time, Gupta with her hands-on approach kneaded the longwinded process to a dénouement.

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untitled, 2007
Fabric, leather, and wood
79" x 54" x 46"