

MITHU SEN
A PRAYER UNANSWERED

Opening: 07.11.2024, 7 pm
Exhibition Duration: 08.11.24 - 11.01.25

A PRAYER UNANSWERED is Mithu Sen's third show at Galerie Krinzinger. Exploring the intricate relationship between violence, vulnerability, the void, and verses, she draws her inspiration from Albrecht Dürer's iconic "Praying Hands" (Betende Hände), housed in the Albertina Museum, Vienna. Dürer's drawing, depicting his brother's hands, carries themes of sacrifice, faith, and familial devotion—themes that deeply resonate with this exhibition.

Rethinking Violence and Vulnerability: This exhibition investigates how vulnerability can act as a form of resistance, reversing traditional narratives of violence to expose fragility as a powerful tool in confronting systemic harm. The work highlights the interconnectedness of global crises—wars, genocides, environmental destruction—and how these seemingly isolated events mirror systemic oppression. Ecological collapse, disappearing rivers, and absent landscapes of children reflect an ongoing cycle of human violence, all deeply rooted in patriarchal structures.

The exhibition blurs personal and social boundaries, revealing intricate connections between emotions, ecosystems, societies, and power. By using cartographic interventions, drawings, and multimedia, it maps the emotional and political impacts of global crises, critiquing authoritarianism and its erosion of human rights going hand in hand with a fueling of violence. The visuals evoke faith in humanity while simultaneously grappling with the despair of global crises. Childlike drawings, unreadable scripts, and somber videos represent this tension, making the exhibition both poetic and political.

Central to the show is a reinterpretation of Dürer's Praying Hands, which becomes a symbol of loss, historical continuity, and witness to contemporary crises. This exploration also engages in a "decolonizing" process, expanding the image's meaning beyond religious symbolism, by expanding the hand's gesture to other religious traditions such as Buddhism, Hinduism, Islam to name just a few.

The exhibition's strategic layout enhances its complexity, employing a mix of text, images, and video in a fluid, performative dialogue. Annotated texts accompany the artworks, subtly connecting the emotional undertones of phrases like "counter-violence" and "hopeless" to the images. The slow, deliberate assembly of these annotated images resists immediate consumption, inviting viewers to reflect deeply on the pluralities of violence and conflict. This contrasts sharply with the sensationalized portrayal of crises in media, positioning the "slow image" as an act of resistance.

The medium/process also plays a significant role, with techniques like prick drawing symbolizing disruption, representing physical and emotional wounds. The use of gold—traditionally associated with reverence—acts as resistance, emphasizing the contrast between harm and healing, aligning with the show's focus on vulnerability and violence. The method of reverse violence critiques the desensitization to everyday brutality, using unreadable scripts and chaotic imagery to challenge detachment.

Finally, the contractual declaration acts as both a legal framework and artistic provocation, contrasting bureaucratic language with the emotional weight of the exhibition. The contract, cut through by a golden line, represents the fragile boundary between art and real-life crises. This delicate thread underscores the violence, vulnerability, and unspoken tensions running throughout the exhibition, prompting audiences to reflect on their role in global crises while

examining the artist's responsibility in image-making. Ultimately, the exhibition offers a speculative space for envisioning post-crisis futures, embracing slow, deliberate methods as a response to a fast-paced, violent world.

Artistic contract / declaration text :

I, Mithu Sen, hereby declare that I do not intend to exploit or exaggerate any global crisis, as my raw material such as unprecedented war or violence, as an 'outsider' in these times of inclusivity, nor do I seek to call for ceasefire during sensitive circumstances involving unimaginable tragedies, such as fetuses in formaldehyde.

I tried to distance myself from engaging in conflict zones, both now and in the future, whether through art, aesthetics, principles, or any other form.

I reclaim my position solely as a slow-drawing artist, tracing the line of tolerance in the Post-human Unworld.

Any resemblance to real events, known or unknown, is entirely coincidental, and the artist holds no responsibility for any offense that may arise.

I sincerely apologize if this causes discomfort. However, if you remain unsettled, you are under no obligation to continue reading this file/life or engage with it further.

You are kindly instructed to understand it.