

## **Online group exhibition: “Contemporary Excavations”**

Looking at contemporary art through a much longer arc of time

“Contemporary Excavations” is a group exhibition about time curated by Sandhini Poddar, featuring the artists Gauri Gill, James Nelson, Daniel Silver and Rajesh Vangad, which was on display at Frith Street Gallery (03/10/20 - 08/05/21). For now, it is presented as an online exhibition on the gallery website. The four artists exhibiting have a concept that spans time, drawing inspiration from different traditions of art history, classical, medieval, modernist and indigenous intellectual histories. They tap into relevant historical information and combine it with contemporary tenses to create their practice works. This leads to the fact that it is common to see some traces and marks of origin in their work, but without sufficient knowledge of their experiences and the historical information they have appropriated and reconstructed, it can be difficult to understand the meaning of the work. This is the reason why the online exhibition begins its layout with a lengthy description of the artists' lives and creative histories, so that the viewer can more fully understand the meaning of the works and the themes of the exhibition. However, it seems to me that perhaps these descriptions would be easier to read juxtaposed with their works. At the end of the page, there is an introductory video about the exhibition, and perhaps Sandhini Poddar's explanation would have captured the viewer's attention more than the long text.

There are few exhibits in the exhibition, but they all tap into ways of thinking, psychology, biography, landscape, environment, history, art history and the history of civilisation. A human shape sculpture ‘friend’ (see below), made up of varying shades of blue bodies and green heads, distinguishes itself from other sculptures that are rich in colour and form, and it is a new experiment and discovery for the artist in 2020. The overall shape of the sculpture resembles that of a classical sculpture but is in a constant state of disorder, and

the expression on its face reveals a hint of confusion and a dull spirituality since the artist created it during a period of confinement. Daniel hand-moulds it in clay and paints it freely with oil paint, interpreting his form of combining figurative and abstract expression.



Daniel Silver, "Friend" 2020. Oil painted ceramic. In Frith Street Gallery.

This also features the work of James Nelson (see below), an artist who specializes in the use of traditional painting instruments, using hand-made Chinese and Japanese paper as a textured substrate to create natural landscapes that combine with the spirit of abstraction. His contemporary practice draws inspiration from the traditions of the 11th 12th 13th century Song Dynasty and it is not surprising to observe that this is a rich and

layered experience. He excavates and recreates things as they were before they were given a name, allowing the viewer to look at contemporary art through a longer arc of time.



James Nelson, “Untitled #14.7603” & “Untitled #14.7502”, 2014. In Frith Street Gallery.