

PIPPY HOULDSWORTH GALLERY

Press Release

ZARINA BHIMJI

Smudged (Jangbar)

THE BOX

5 September – 4 October 2014



Zarina Bhimji, *Smudged (Jangbar)*, 2013-2014
Digital print on fibre based paper, 24.5 x 41.3 cm, 9.6 x 16.3 in

Pippy Houldsworth Gallery is delighted to present a new commission for The Box by photographer, film-maker and former Turner Prize nominee Zarina Bhimji. Capturing the poetic decay of abandoned spaces, Bhimji's haunting photographs question the legitimacy of historical documentation. Relinquishing facts in favour of tone and texture, her photographs manifest an instinctive, *formal* response to a place and its history. Bhimji explains: 'My work is not about the actual facts but about the echo they create, the marks, the gestures and the sound. This is what excites me.'

For The Box, Bhimji has responded to Zanzibar's political history as part of an ongoing exploration of colonialism in India, Africa and Britain. Focusing acutely on the scene's subtle material and formal qualities, the image evokes a 'sense' of being in the country. Whilst uninhabited, the scene's architecture hints at the leftovers of human presence. Characteristic of her work, the space is documented in a state of abandonment; a dilapidated, rusty truck balances its weight on a flat tyre, whilst a vintage car is parked in the background with its bumper trailing on the floor behind it. Contrasting in colour, both vehicles embody a sense of euphoria or progress, perhaps alluding to the country's struggle for independence during the 1960s and the Zanzibar revolution of 1964.

However, TJ Demos explains that the 'artist relinquishes precise information and factual presentation in favour of highlighting the aesthetic qualities and poetic potential of each image. As much as for the traces of history it carries, each location is chosen for its distinct quality of light, the details of its architecture and the particular character of the landscape.' Devoid of context or historical specificity, Bhimji's photos resonate on an *emotional* level.

Bhimji's photographs frequently act as visual sketches for her films. Typically, the artist will begin a project by completing extensive research before undertaking a reconnaissance trip to a specific country. Whilst on the recce, the artist will have a series of questions in mind which will drive the production of her work, sieving out potential locations by taking photographs in order to 'stitch' the final film together. Working meditatively, Bhimji explains that there is a 'sudden' moment in which her thoughts will manifest themselves in an image, embodying the sensation of *being* in that particular place.

Born in Mbarara, Uganda, Zarina Bhimji (b. 1963) is a British photographer and film maker. Nominated for the Turner Prize in 2007, Bhimji's work has been shown extensively both in the UK and abroad. Her solo shows include Whitechapel Gallery, London (2012); The New Art Gallery Walsall (2012); Kunstmuseum Bern (2012); de Appel, Amsterdam (2012); Art Institute of Chicago, Chicago (2009); Haunch of Venison, London (2006); Wadsworth Athenium, Museum of Art, Hartford, Connecticut (2003); Tate Britain (2003) and Ikon Gallery, Birmingham (1992).

Bhimji's work features in numerous international collections, including Museum of Contemporary Art, Chicago; Kunstmuseum Bern; Tate Modern, London; Government Art Collection, London; Moderna Museet, Stockholm; Victoria & Albert Museum, London; South London Art Gallery; New Hall, Cambridge and Kadist Art Foundation, Paris.

Supported by the Arts Council England and Artsadmin.

Upcoming: 10 October – 15 November 2014

Carrie Mae Weems, *Color Real and Imagined*, Main Gallery

Tania Kovats, The Box