

## Thought Bubble

Exhibition May 17<sup>th</sup> – June 27<sup>th</sup>, 2018

Press Preview & Opening Reception: Thursday, May 17<sup>th</sup>, 6:00pm – 8:00pm

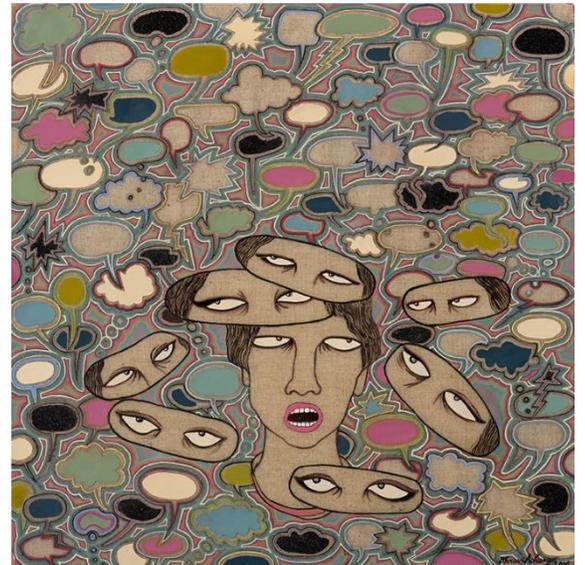
35 Great Jones St., New York NY 10012

Aicon Gallery is pleased to present **Thought Bubble**, a group exhibition featuring the work of **Dhruvi Acharya, Chitra Ganesh, Amitabh Kumar, Sa'dia Rehman, Nisha Sethi, Anuj Shrestha, Himanshu Suri** and **Salman Toor**. The exhibition explores the use of comics, graphic novels, and art which unites text and image into a single work. As the new millennium continues upon its often surreal, socially fragmented, and politically tumultuous course, artists from South Asia, and its diaspora are deploying new ways of seeing, representing and communicating their experience in the visual realm.

New media, increasingly globalized communication patterns, and the frenetic nature of developing technology have all pushed artists and storytellers towards visual modes that can be understood and interpreted by audiences that need not have a thorough grounding in the particular political and cultural issues being addressed. As artists respond to a new, and often chaotic, global reality, they have begun challenging, repurposing and reinventing previous methods of mass communication of visual cultures and ideas. There is little doubt that pared down visual/text-based communication channels such as Instagram, memes, the replacing of words and ideas with emojis, and the rapidly declining consumption of the printed word, has begun to seep through from their origins in the technical and digital realms into both global popular culture and the fine arts.

This exhibition will seek to explore the historical and contemporary influences of these various visual realms upon one another, the increasingly blurred lines between them, and the impact and possibilities of the rise of universal visual modes in political commentary and social critique across and within cultures.

Mumbai-based **Dhruvi Acharya's** work focuses on the psychological and emotional aspects of an urban woman's life in a world teeming with discord, violence and pollution. Employing a subtle, dark and wry humor, the work draws viewers into a world where thoughts are as visible as "reality", and where the protagonists live and metamorphose by the logic of that world. Brooklyn-based artist **Chitra Ganesh's** wide-ranging works are focused on the marginalized and excluded figures and narratives in art, history, and literature. Accordingly, and unsurprisingly, women - pin-ups, mothers, priestesses, witches, heroines, warriors, and goddesses - are the protagonists of her works, which include mixed-media drawings, digital collages, photographs, paintings, and installations. In her works, she presents alternative narratives, in which women possess a dangerous sexuality and are invested with strength and power.



Dhruvi Acharya, *Words, Words, Words*, 2016, Synthetic polymer paint on unprimed linen, 18 x 18 in.



Chitra Ganesh, *Still Awaiting Her Time*, 2018, Archival inkjet print, 18 x 13.5 in.

**Amitabh Kumar** is a graphic artist based out of Bangalore, India. In the past, he has worked with the Sarai Media Lab, Delhi, where he researched and made comics, programmed events, designed print media and co-curated an experimental art space. He is a founding member of the Pao Collective, an Indian comics ensemble, and is currently occupied with creating ecosystems for emerging comic book artists in India. He has been painting murals across the country for a few years now. Since 2014 he has been Faculty at the Srishti Institute of Art, Design and Technology and in 2015, initiated the Art in Transit project with Arzu Mistry, which works extensively across public spaces in Bengaluru, focussing on the emerging Bangalore Metro Rail Network.

Born in Queens, NY, **Sa'dia Rehman** is a transdisciplinary artist whose work is fueled by a critical exploration of Muslim American identity and how it intersects with race, power and gender. Through performance, video, installation and large-scale wall drawing, Rehman obsessively pulls apart and puts together “images of consumption”— family photographs, mass media and art historical images. Along

with this heavily researched and collected archive, her core materials include: hand-cut stencils, Xeroxes, charcoal, graphite, spray paint and ink. At the heart of my practice is obsessive study, collection, copy, cut and reassembly of images—from newspapers, the internet, photographs and artworks. The repeated actions of examining images, printing images, cutting lines and aspects out of the images, Xeroxing and re-sizing images, creating hand-cut stencils and collaging create my performance, video, installation and large-scale wall drawings.

Born and raised in Berkeley, CA, **Nisha K. Sethi** is a self-taught artist whose passion lies in using art and design as tools for social change. She started her creative journey as a street artist and eventually evolved into a seasoned Graphic Designer and Sign Painter. Her skills in typography and design have been strengthened through education, experience, and experimentation. Nisha currently works with TRUST YOUR STRUGGLE mural collective and works in Los Angeles as a freelance Visual Designer and professional Sign Painter specializing in hand-lettering. **Anuj Shrestha** is an illustrator and cartoonist residing in Philadelphia, PA. His work in this exhibition is drawn from several of the artist’s comic and graphic novel series, including *Resident Aliens*, which deals with themes of isolation, displacement, and identity erasure face by immigrants and refugees the world over, and *National Bird*, which serves a visual metaphor for the growing presence of surveillance in people’s lives, particularly those who are disenfranchised or living on the margins of society.

**Himanshu Suri**, better known by his stage name **Heems**, is an American rapper from Queens, New York. Formerly of the rap groups *Das Racist* and *Swet Shop Boys*, Suri has exhibited his work at the Guggenheim, New York, and the Museum of Contemporary Art, Chicago and curated projects for institutions including the Whitney Museum of American Art, New York. In addition, he has maintained a constantly evolving output of collaborative musical and recording projects. His work on display in this exhibition is a pair of collaborative collage-based prints, done in conjunction with San Francisco-based artist **Chiraag Bhakta**, also none by his street artist name **\*Pardon My Hindi**. **Salman Toor**’s works present a unique vision of the complexities and exchanges between South Asian popular culture and the historical traditions of Western idealization. In his work, he merges techniques from Persian and Indian miniature paintings, vis a vis the use of aerial or multiple perspectives as well as text. In addition to his well-known works on canvas, in this exhibition Toor presents a series of his own illustrated panels from the forthcoming graphic novel *The Electrician*, co-written with **Alexandra Atiya**. The novel is steeped in the strangeness of the supernatural and highlights the various social conflicts of contemporary Pakistani life.

Please contact Aicon Gallery ([Andrew@Aicongallery.com](mailto:Andrew@Aicongallery.com)) for more information.