

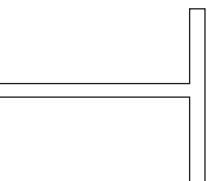
SWAPNAA TAMHANE

DROP CLOTH

This catalogue is published on the occasion of
the exhibition, DROPP CLOTH, on view
from March 25 - May 13, 2023
in Hamilton Artists Inc.'s Cannon Gallery.

Swapnaa Tamhane's practice is dedicated to drawing, making handmade paper, and working with the material histories of cotton and jute. She has an MFA in Fibres & Material Practices, Concordia University, where she is currently an Artist-in-Residence. She has been a Research Fellow with the Shastri Indo-Canadian Institute (2009), and an International Museum Fellow with the Kulturstiftung des Bundes (2013-2014). In 2019, she was the Ontario juror for the Sobey Art Award, and is currently on the board of SAVAC. She has exhibited her work at articule, Montreal; A Space Gallery, Toronto; Museum der Moderne, Salzburg; Serendipity Arts Festival, Panjim; and Royal Ontario Museum, Toronto; with work currently on view at the Victoria & Albert Museum, Dundee, Scotland, and The Sculpture Park at Madhavendra Palace, Jaipur. Her artwork and research has been supported by SSHRC, Canada Council for the Arts, and Ontario Arts Council.

Arièle Dionne-Krosnick is a Ph.D. student in Architecture at McGill University in Montreal, Canada. Her dissertation *Swimming Pools, Civil Rights, and the American City in the 1960s*, theorizes the urban protests of the civil rights movement that took place at, and around, swimming pools as highly contested sites of socio-political activity. She was a Curatorial Assistant in Architecture and Design at The Museum of Modern Art, New York (MoMA) from 2016-2020, and previously worked at the Chicago Architecture Biennial and at the Graham Foundation for Advanced Studies in the Fine Arts, Chicago.



Swapnaa Tamhane,
DROPP CLOTH, 2023.
Exhibition installation view.







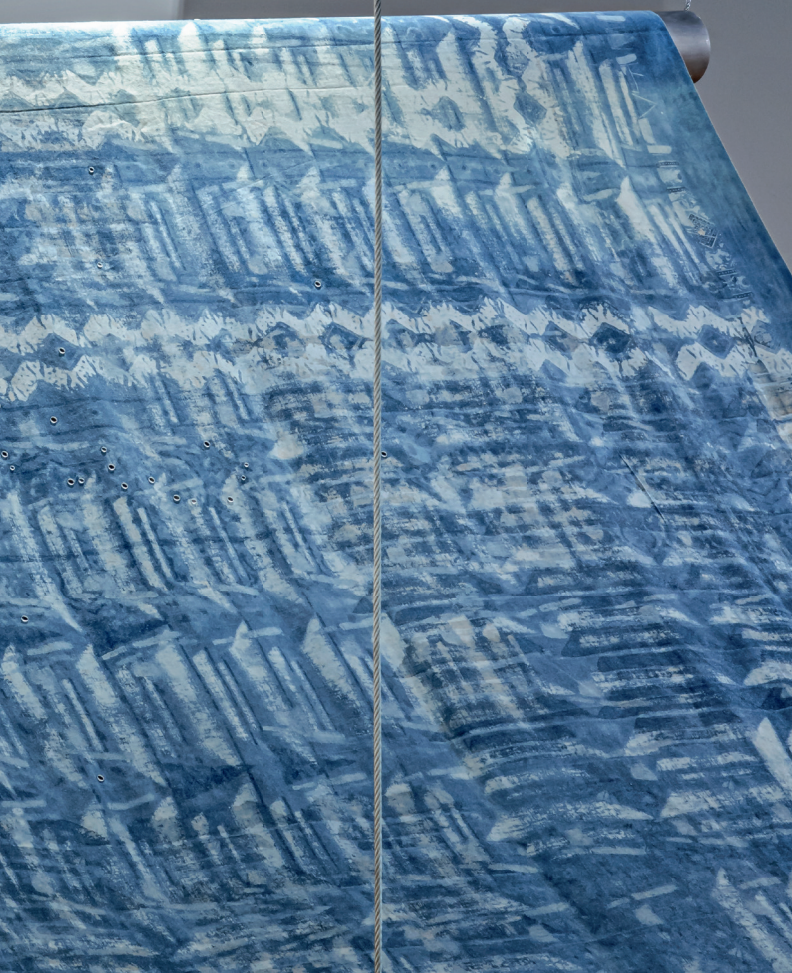
Arièle Dionne-Krosnick

Threads

Near the center of the city of Ahmedabad, a stone's throw from the banks of the Sabarmati River, sits a modern building of exposed concrete surrounded by lush gardens. A rectilinear grid dominates the exterior façade, forming brise-soleil purposefully designed to create a shaded interior while preserving air circulation in the extreme Indian climate. A major compositional element of the building, the brise-soleil punctuate the façade, impelling rhythm onto the otherwise stolid construction. A long ramp provides interior circulation, weaving a gentle slope up the building's three floors and onto the roof. The walls of smooth grey Delhi kota stone serve, in the architect's own words, as a "stone tapestry." Known as the Mill Owners' Association Building, the edifice was designed by famed Swiss-French modernist architect, Charles-Édouard Jeanneret, also called Le Corbusier.

The brise-soleil and other motifs inspired by the Mill Owners' Association Building reverberate throughout Swapnaa Tamhane's *achadiyas* (drop cloths). Alternatively revealed or obscured by the various layers and series of Ajrakh block prints made over time, hints of Le Corbusier's design language emerge across the drop cloths. Unlike Le Corbusier, whose individual presence looms formidably over his buildings and over the discourse on modern architecture, the *achadiyas* privilege the work of many hands, rather than the one. The markings made visible by the intervention with indigo dye celebrate the collaborative nature of craftwork and artisan work, revealing both architectural motifs and those of Ajrakh. The power of textiles as vectors of resistance, rather than as objects of consumption, is here prized and elevated. Further, the *achadiyas*, which are uplifted on aluminium rods of varying heights—recalling indigo cloth hung to dry and industrial looms—gain not only aesthetic prominence but architectural form.





Enveloped by a layered soundscape of the block printers' workshops, the installation transforms the act of viewing into an embodied experience of sharing space, over time and geography. The drop cloths' humble utilitarian purpose is transfigured, their horizontal orientation forgotten. Vibrant indigo patterns and hundreds of mirrored disks reflect and refract the light, adding new layers and new depth. Ornamentation and embellishment, which in conventional western art historical discourse have intermittently been equated dismissively to frivolity and unseriousness because of their association to women's work, here are honored and deployed as new means of mark-making.

The Mill Owners' Association Building was constructed between 1951 and 1954, only a few years after India had gained independence from British rule in 1947. Le Corbusier's modern design represented a vision for the future of modern architecture in India that was supported with the philanthropy of Indian industrialists. For the mill owners, this was a strong statement in favor of a new visual and spatial identity tied to progress and modernity, as well as a symbol of emerging nationhood. The growth of the Indian textile industry had been severely limited by British colonization, which prioritized exports of lower-cost fabrics while imposing tariffs on imports of Indian cloth, amongst other violent and repressive tactics. In the wake of independence, as the textile makers adapted to increasingly urban environments, the Mill Owners' Association Building gave architectural form to India's new cultural and economic realities and hopes for the future.

Kabir sang his poems by composing them orally.

He recited them to other weavers.

He sang about the universe as a textile.

His poems began to move... to travel on the tongues of sadhus, merchants.

They travelled East, West, and North.

His poems began accumulating bhashas and bolis.

They were sung in folk traditions.

They still are.

Eventually, they gathered scripts and were written on paper.

Kabir is not a singular persona.

He is an unarchivable myth.

He belongs to everyone.

He is a chorus of authors.

He is a chorus of centuries. A chorus that continues to move, no

An accumulation of layers.

And sound.

An endless piece of unstitched cloth, unfurled, draped over a body
the ground, gathers earth and dust, and is then folded, run through
unfolded yet again.

Kabir was a weaver.

Kabir was a cotton weaver.

He was subaltern: he was julaha or kori or both or neither.

merchants, traders, and pilgrims.



ve, never secured to a spot.

Swapnaa Tamhane,
Kabir Was Both Kori and Julaha, 2020.
 Woven recycled biscuit wrappers
 and black plastic bags.
 Woven by Premji Bhai.

body, taken off... it falls on
 through hands, and

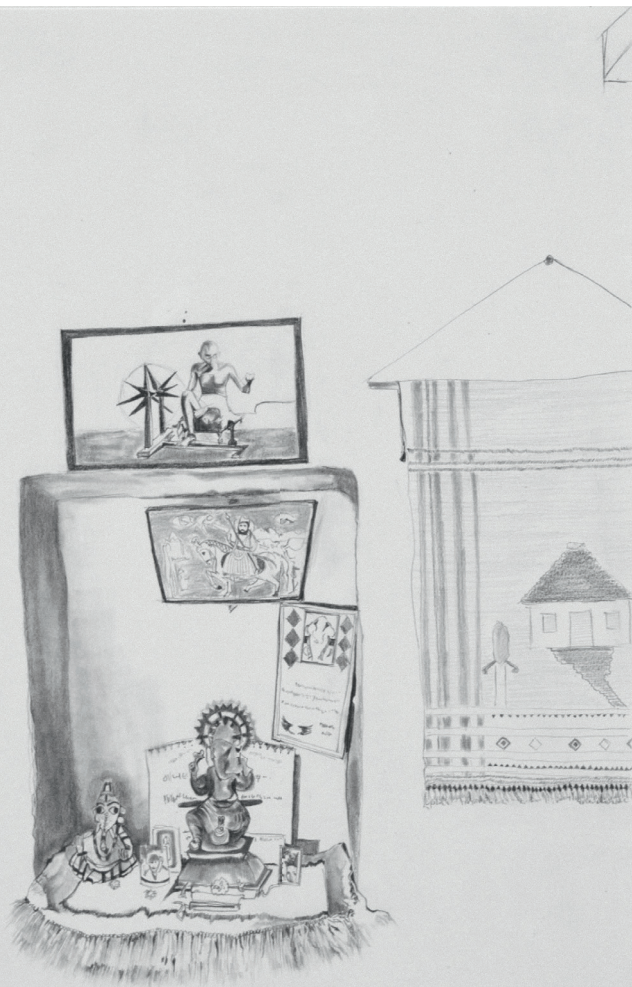
Swapnaa Tamhane,
Kabir Was Both Kori and Julaha, 2020.



Architecture is not an individual pursuit: for the design and execution of the Mill Owners' Association Building, Le Corbusier relied on an atelier full of staff, drafts people, engineers, and fellow architects. Famed Indian architect Balkrishna Doshi, who was working in Le Corbusier's Paris office at the time, was quickly designated as the principal interlocutor between France and India. Doshi not only oversaw construction on site in Ahmedabad, but he also created purposefully designed furnishings for the building. Only a few years later, Doshi would go on to establish his own architectural office, Sangath Studio, Vāstu Shilpā Foundation, and continued to develop his unique and sensitive design language.

Swapnaa Tamhane,
Altar next to a pit loom, 2021.
Pencil on paper.
Photograph by Brandon Brookbank.

Swapnaa Tamhane,
Scene from a weaver's home, 2021.
Pencil on paper.
Photograph by Toni Hafkenscheid.



The weaver, the block printer, the artist, architect, and artisan, all through their vision, attention, and labour, hold transformative power over the material world. In his *Oeuvre complète*, Le Corbusier admires the situation of the building in a garden overlooking the river, where he could see the cloth dyers washing and drying the cotton materials. He writes: "Such a panorama was an invitation to attempt, through architecture, to frame views from each floor of the building." Likewise, through drawing, Tamhane frames interior domestic views in subtle graphite sketches representing scenes from weavers' homes and their altars. The drawings convey icons and images of saints (particularly Kabir) which adorn the walls of the weavers' homes, an intimate view into quotidian interiors and domestic architectures of faith. The altars are portrayed alongside everyday designed objects, a plastic chair, a mirror hung on the wall. All are given equal measure in these quiet set pieces. In "Drop Cloth," the threads of history, architecture, poetry, faith, and daily life are deftly woven by Tamhane.





Swapnaa Tamhane,
DROP CLOTH, 2023.



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For more information, exhibition documentation, and extended biographical notes on the artists, please visit theinc.ca/exhibitions/

