

PRESS RELEASE | 24 August 2023
Exhibition Opening

VHC
VIDA HEYDARI
CONTEMPORARY

Love Pours From My Wounds

Debut Solo by Mery Borah
Curated by Shaunak Mahbubani
24 August - 1 October 2023

Opening: Thursday, 24 August 2023, 6 PM – 9 PM



Mery Borah
Rhythm of My Colour Palette – 1
2018
Oil on Canvas
47.5 x 36 in

We are thrilled to present **Mery Borah's** debut solo, **Love Pours From My Wounds** curated by **Shaunak Mahbubani** at **VHC | Vida Heydari Contemporary**. The exhibition, which takes its title from Aija Mayrock's poem *Dear Girl*, will preview on Thursday, **24 August 2023, 6 PM – 9 PM** and run through **1 October 2023**.

Curator Shaunak Mahbubani will lead a walkthrough at 8 pm on the opening night.

"We speak in tongues like the outcast and the insane...how dare we reveal the human flesh underneath," asks Chicana writer Gloria Anzaldúa¹, articulating the fetters imposed on women's emotions, especially those from historically oppressed backgrounds. In her first solo exhibition at VHC, Borah subverts these constraints, claiming the densely layered impasto canvas as a conduit for powerful expressions of alienation.

Raised in a small village in Eastern Assam, Borah came to Kolkata to pursue her MFA in 2012. The works in the show are primarily made between 2015 - 2018, in the years after moving out of the camaraderie of art school, reflecting the loneliness and insecurity that many young artists without a network of support face when first fending for themselves. A feeling of being subsumed is recurrent in the works, within the fast-moving crowds of the big city and the spectre of material consumption that governs our lived reality, both evocative of Marx's ever-pertinent writings on *alienation* in a capitalist society. Under the duress of everyday violence, the figures break out of their two-dimensional plane, distorting, melding into one another and losing discerning features. The artist recounts her process in creating these works as deeply intuitive, often without a detailed sketch or plan, directly channelling experiences such as repeated micro-aggressions in public spaces or the struggle of finding safe housing.

In a series of paintings reminiscent of Giuseppe Arcimboldo's fruit and floral faces, Borah constructs her painted bodies from the deluge of everyday objects that fill our lives and self-worth. We encounter multiple figures formed via consumer assemblages, from packaged food to beauty products. One can read a presence of hope as the series pivots to a damaged yet uneasy calm within compositions of paint tubes, brushes and colouring sticks.

*Your cruelty is no match for my spirit.
Try to break me
and you will see
love that pours like blood from my wounds.
— Aija Mayrock, *Dear Girl*²*

Resonating with Mayrock's poems on bullying and gendered violence, the paintings underscore the value of creative acts in a deeply fractured world. As writing is for Anzaldúa, painting for Borah becomes a process through which these encounters

¹ Gloria Anzaldúa, "Speaking in Tongues: A Letter to Third World Women Writers," in *This Bridge Called My Back: Writings by Radical Women of Color* (Fourth edition), edited by Cherríe Moraga and Gloria Anzaldúa (2015); pages 163-172.

² Aija Mayrock, "Dear Girl," Andrews McMeel Publishing (2020)

are galvanised. The resulting works must be seen not only as recounting these incidents but also as emblems of creative alchemy, as resilient acts of love.

Pune-born curator Mahbubani returns to the city for this exhibition after a string of international projects. Mahbubani writes, "Mery's autonarrative approach combing an energetic impasto technique with incisive surrealism immediately drew me in. There is something so beautiful and generous in being invited into an artist's raw, vulnerable state, for it is to also be given the freedom to express our own most repressed emotions."

ABOUT ARTIST MERY BORAH

Born in 1986 in Jorhat, Assam, Mery Borah attained a BVA in Painting from the Government College of Art and Craft, Guwahati, in 2012, followed by an MVA in Painting from the Government College of Art and Craft, Kolkata, in 2014.

Through works executed in oils, acrylics, water-based colours and drawings on paper, and inquiries centred on the world of objects that create our immediate environment, Borah draws deeply from feelings of insecurity and restlessness to express the vulnerable state of the body and mind. Her paintings become a conduit for expressing the violence in contemporary society inflicted by the self-centred and animalistic nature of man.

Borah has participated in numerous group shows over the years, with works exhibited at the Lalit Kala Akademi, Kolkata, Lalit Kala Akademi, New Delhi and Rabindra Bhawan, Guwahati, among others. She is a recipient of the Young Talented Artists Award, 2010-11, conferred by the Ministry of Culture, Government of India.

Mery Borah lives and works in Kolkata, India.

ABOUT CURATOR SHAUNAK MAHBUBANI

Nomadic curator and writer Shaunak Mahbubani (they/she) primarily pursue projects under the exhibition series 'Allies for the Uncertain Futures' focussed on exploring possibilities of co-visioning futures grounded in the pursuit of non-duality.

The fourth iteration in this series, AUTOPOIESIS, had manifestations and cross-pollinations across Mexico City, New Delhi and Berlin in 2022-23. They will curate The Albanian Conference at the upcoming Lagos Biennale, in 2024. Other recent curatorial projects include Party Office at documenta fifteen, Kassel, in 2022, co-curated with Vidisha-Fadescha; A—ligning the Un—certain, Maxim Gorki Theatre, Berlin, in 2022; Skin To Skin, Experimenter, Kolkata, in 2023; Entre Sures, Mexico City, in 2021, co-curated with Eli Moon; Seeds are Being Sown, PRAF, New Delhi, in 2020; Reality is Post-Produced, TIER, Berlin, in 2019; Saavdhaan: The Regimes of Truth, New Delhi, in 2018 and Towards Resistance, Pune, in 2017.

Mahbubani's art writing has appeared in Artforum, Critical Collective, Mezosfera, ifa Biennale stories, STIR World, Hakara Journal and other platforms. They have been awarded residencies, grants and engagements from Goethe-Institut, ISCP New York, La Napoule Art Foundation France, The Gujral Foundation, Inlaks Foundation and IFA India.

Since 2019, they have been collaborating with artist-curator Vidisha-Fadescha under the moniker 'After Party Collective,' creating momentum towards the affirmation of trans*, intersex, and gender-dissident bodies through curatorial and performance projects, including DANCE TRANS* REVOLUTION, New York, in 2021 and publication series Consent of The Governed, co-edited with Party Office, 2021-ongoing.

Shaunak Mahbubani is currently based between Berlin and India.

ABOUT VHC | VIDA HEYDARI CONTEMPORARY

Established in 2020, VHC is Pune's newest contemporary art gallery. VHC celebrates art by partnering with artists, promoting their work and connecting them to art lovers. The gallery showcases works by local and international artists and contributes to the cultural fabric of Pune city through its collateral programs. VHC endeavours to create a platform to encounter and engage with relevant contemporary art practices from around the world.

VHC was founded by Vida Heydari, a curator and gallerist with over 14 years of diverse experience in the global art world. She has worked with accomplished Indian, Iranian and Chinese contemporary artists and has also consulted for various private and public collections.

VHC | Vida Heydari Contemporary | Marvel Alaine, Lane 8, Koregaon Park, Pune, India.

Web: <https://www.vhc.art/>

IG: <https://www.instagram.com/vhc.art/>

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Press Kit:

https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1YFAqGKibTVk2I_-NI5rEz6FV36FzDMSk?usp=sharing

Interviews can be arranged with the artist, the curator and the gallery founder Vida Heydari.