

S m a c k M e l l o n

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Shayok Mukhopadhyay
Waiting for Water

June 26 - August 8, 2021

Opening Reception: Sat. June 26, 4-7PM

* RSVP required

Artist-led Tours: Sat. July 17, 2:30–4 PM

Virtual Artist Talk: Thurs. July 29, 7 PM



Shayok Mukhopadhyay, *Waiting for Water*, 2021. Installation, dimensions variable.

Waiting for Water is a solo presentation by artist Shayok Mukhopadhyay spanning the entrance, stairway, and interior of Smack Mellon's main gallery space. Employing two different styles of water-carrying vessels, this bifurcated installation examines the disparate material conditions of those prepared and unprepared to handle water shortages anticipated by the impending climate crisis. Here, Mukhopadhyay asks: how would waiting for water feel in Brooklyn?

The mighty Himalayas, which once served as a water-bank for the north Indian plains, are losing glaciers at an alarming rate due to global warming. Alternating floods and droughts indicate the climate emergency that is upon us, which continues to ravage drinking water supplies in India, the artist's home country. Climate change is expected to disproportionately impact those least responsible for it, but its effects have surprisingly started showing up at the doors of affluent, high-consuming societies. Since 2019, both the Indian city of Chennai and the Australian outback suffered crippling water shortages, multiple hurricanes have flooded Texas, and wildfires have become a year-round phenomenon in California.

Waiting for Water is an effort to publicly reevaluate the vulnerability of technologically complex societies to the volatility of climate change. Set against the backdrop of Dumbo, Brooklyn, an area that sustained major flooding less than a decade ago during Hurricane Sandy, this exhibition imagines a not-so-distant scenario wherein the water crisis has hit New York City. On one side, improvised, disposable water containers start from the sidewalk outside the gallery and line the windows. Standing in for their hypothetical owners, each one holds their spots while they run other errands. The second line of brightly colored plastic containers, mimicking classical terracotta jug shapes, are broken into fragments and exhibited on pedestals. These containers reference news imagery of the 2019 Chennai water crisis, which depicted dense crowds of people speckled with colorful plastic. Through this archaeological display system, these vessels are surrogates for a civilization who, more accustomed to crisis, handled their hardships gracefully but nevertheless perished. Through this installation, Mukhopadhyay foregrounds how climate change will aggravate our societal disparities, where the elite, protected by their privilege, will enjoy museums but ignore where art actually comes from.

S m a c k M e l l o n

Bio:

Shayok Mukhopadhyay grew up in Kolkata, India and graduated from the Documentary Photography and Photojournalism program at the International Center of Photography in New York in 2012. His first solo show of photographs, *Québec*, took place at Katharine Mulherin Projects in Toronto in 2013. His installation, *Back Home*, was part of the 2017 Bronx Museum's AIM Biennial exhibition. In 2019, he completed a six-month residency at Atelier Mondial, Basel; premiered his feature-length doc, *Gautam & Buddha* at the Transilvania International Film Festival; and had a solo show at DOCK, Basel titled *Calcutta Corner*. Shayok is a NYSCA/NYFA Artist Fellow.

Media contact, Audrey Irving: airving@smackmellon.org

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