

PRESS RELEASE:

Uncertain Allies by Neha Choksi
Exhibition Announcement

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Carolyn Campagna Kleefeld Contemporary Art Museum presents Neha Choksi exhibition
Uncertain Allies is on view online from February 24–April 30, 2021

[February 18, 2021] *Uncertain Allies*, a monographic exhibition by Neha Choksi, features sculptures, new painted wall works and a newly produced video. Choksi explores stone that is touched by human activity and human activity that is touched by stone. With multifaceted mixed-media work, she brings geologic and cultural timescales and agencies into conversation. The virtual solo exhibition curated by Kristina Newhouse will be accessible from the Museum's website and displayed in full on the artist's website at nehachoksi.com from February 24–April 30, 2021.



Choksi is enchanted by stone as a raw material. According to her, "The wall works and the sculptures in *Uncertain Allies* unite the presence and natural energy of rocks with the magic of painting as *Ur-art*," which refers to an originary state.* In ways that are both earnest and absurd, she honors it resulting in work that enables us to think beyond conceivable durations, movements, and scales. This contemplation also challenges the artist's own comfort with paint and love of color. Choksi views mined and hand-crushed pigment "as a piece of a larger conversation about the material processes in nature and in art-making." The raw pigments applied to the surface of her works recall the earthly disturbances involved in creating and transporting the pigment itself.

The artist's commitment to physicality is evident in the treatment of her chosen materials. The artist repetitively pounded fabric surfaces with rock tools in many works, leaving them distressed and torn. Choksi also bored into boulders and ground the chipped fragments into pigments for her 2017 sculptures, collectively entitled *The Weight of the Cave*. Through her arduous labor, she was made aware of her body, her capacity, and her limits; she traced an outline of her outstretched hand with freshly made rock pigment. This act of inscription harkens back to ancient cave paintings made by earlier humans.

**Ur-* defined as "earliest, original," used when denoting the primal stage of a historical or cultural entity or phenomenon; I.E. *Ur-text*
Top: *Behind the door (uncertain allies)*, 2020. Linen, paint made from earth pigment, towel, rock on panel. 63 x 38 x 5 inches. **Bottom:** *The Weight of the Cave (Circle)*, 2016-2019. Pulverized rock paint on 11 hickory creek granite boulders. Variable dimensions, this configuration 10 feet diameter. **Both:** © Neha Choksi. Courtesy of the artist and Project 88, Mumbai. Photography courtesy of the artist and Carolyn Campagna Kleefeld Contemporary Art Museum of California State University, Long Beach. Photography © Fredrik Nilsen Studio.



Charge, 2017–2021 [still image]. Single channel video, color, sound, Looped without credits: 1 minute 19 seconds. Single View with credits: 1 minute 37 seconds. © Neha Choksi. Courtesy of the artist and Project 88, Mumbai.

Charge, 2017–2021, is a new short video made especially for this exhibition which brings together the intimate, the natural, and those things touched by human civilization. Framed to capture the movement of her friends' arms and hands as they hurl stones toward the camera, imagery explodes with each hit. The first set of images culled from the internet and the artist's own archives of her work, begin with the first photographic documentation of a black hole. The sequence eventually reverses itself to reveal a series of flowers and sunsets, the former photographed at the Huntington Library Botanical Gardens, the latter sourced from a work made by the artist from 2011–2012. Choksi elaborates, "I thought of *Charge* as a confounding burst of energy which conjures an idiosyncratic legacy of our species on this planet with each successive throw of the stone. Rock is the stuff of planets and the matter at hand at the same time, allowing a remixing of temporal scales and reminding us of the fragility and instability of human legacies." The short film will be hosted on the artist's website for the duration of the exhibition and will premiered at a screening featuring a collection of related video works on Wednesday, March 17, 2021.

Throughout this body of work, pigments encounter their origins. Choksi draws attention to geologic time and embeds these chronologies into fabric, boulders and paint. Her visceral forms of mark making, deconstructing, reconstructing and wielding stone reveal the artist's interest in material processes and the historical role of paint in art. Her physical methods also allow psychic and material energy to comingle. Choksi's self-referentiality interwoven throughout the exhibition underscores the conceptual interconnection of the artist's durational acts. *Uncertain Allies* offers a poetic, philosophical and ethical rumination of our phenomenological and temporal relationship with the Earth.

PRESS PORTAL

Press images, pull quotes and other related media materials here: bit.ly/UncertainAllies_PressPortal

RELATED EVENTS

Wednesday, March 17, 2021, 6:00 p.m.

Four Videos with Rocks: Premiere Screening of Charge (friends in Los Angeles and Bombay)

Exclusive one-time Zoom event: bit.ly/CHARGEfilmscreening

Join us in viewing a collection of short films by Neha Choksi, including her newest video work and three related short films. The artist will introduce the films and participate in a question-and-answer session to follow. Films included in the screening include: *Charge*, 2021; *Insurrection*, 2017; *A Stone's Throw... (Los Angeles)*, 2017; *Dust to Mountain*, 2016.

Choksi's most recent video work, *Charge (friends in Los Angeles and Bombay), 2017–2021*, builds upon footage from a 2017 work, *A Stone's Throw*. The artist's continual growth around exploration of a stones being put in motion by humans extends themes established with her 2016 solo exhibition, *Stone Breath Mountain Dust*, presented by Project 88 at Frieze London, and *Liberty Matter*, her 2017 solo exhibition at Commonwealth and Council, Los Angeles. *Uncertain Allies* also sustains efforts undertaken for the 20th Biennale of Sydney in 2016 and her 2017 multi-channel film installation, *Faith in friction*, presented at the Manchester Art Gallery in Britain.

Wednesday, March 24, 2021, 6:00 p.m.

Earthly Matters: Artist Neha Choksi and Curator Kristina Newhouse in Conversation

Live Zoom event: bit.ly/EarthlyMatters_artisttalk

Don't miss an intriguing artist presentation from Neha Choksi on her current exhibition, *Uncertain Allies*, followed by a conversation about her larger practice with Curator of Exhibitions Kristina Newhouse. Choksi and Newhouse will partake in a probing conversation on the complexity of materiality and materialism from subject to medium, as explored by the artist in her multifaceted body of work.

ARTIST BIOGRAPHY

Neha Choksi (b. 1973, USA; lives and works in Los Angeles and Bombay) works across performances, video, installation, and sculpture to understand the quick of life through poetic interventions—from stone to plant, animal to self, friends to institutions. Choksi's process involves collaborative, lived experiences that negotiate relationships in unconventional settings. As a person of Jain heritage living in the United States today, Choksi is drawn to revisit the entanglements of intellectual history, consciousness, and enculturation.

About Carolyn Campagna Kleefeld Contemporary Art Museum

Carolyn Campagna Kleefeld Contemporary Art Museum is a community of people who examine, critique and create contemporary art and culture. Our exhibitions and projects serve students, campus communities and the public. We build opportunities for participation and collaboration around art and art making and consider the museum to be a community, not simply a building that houses art. As the museum undergoes a significant site expansion and renovation from 2020–2022, we create multiple series of digital initiatives and off-site projects while we work to improve and expand our home location.