

Video Walkthrough | Suneil Sanzgiri: *An Impossible Address*

Introducing his exhibition and commissioned film, *An Impossible Address*, Suneil Sanzgiri discusses the legacy of Sita Valles—the Angolan-born revolutionary at the centre of his new work—and his ongoing research into the mutual struggle for freedom that developed between India and Africa against the Portuguese empire.

Watch the walkthrough on Mercer Union's website:

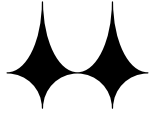
<https://www.mercerunion.org/exhibitions/sanzgiri-an-impossible-address>

Suneil Sanzgiri: Sita is a figure who's tragic death and revolutionary life opened up a number of questions for me. Very few images of her exist, yet you feel that affectivity reverberating throughout generations. It's something that I can intimately feel today, you know, some 50 years after her passing.

I'm Suneil Sanzgiri, I'm an artist and filmmaker and researcher. And we are here at Mercer Union at my exhibition *An Impossible Address*. This exhibition features really three components. The first is the film, *An Impossible Address*. It's a single channel film and follows up on the work of my last exhibition, with a work called *Two Refusals (Would We Recognize Ourselves Unbroken?)*. And in many ways this new film is a continuation of that project and that research that went into the history of the kind of mutual struggle against the Portuguese empire between India and Africa, and specifically Goa where my family's from, and Angola.

So this new film really dives deep into Sita's story and disappearance. How I came across Sita was through a news article about Goans who pop up in these other anti-colonial struggles around the world. She was a woman of Goan origin who fought for the independence and liberation of Angola, she was born in Angola. She was a doctor, she was a revolutionary. She was a very beloved figure. After the independence of Angola in 1975, Sita started seeing that the revolution and the revolutionary leaders were not living up to the promises that they made the people of Angola that there were still unbelievably horrid conditions across the rest of the country. And so she started to challenge those in power. And so over the course of several years, the Angolan government disappeared some 20 to 30,000 people including Sita Valles.

The other component of the exhibition is the conference table which we've reconstructed from the 1955 Bandung Conference, the supposedly first Afro-Asian solidarity conference which sort of proclaimed you know this international solidarity of all colonized people, and we have the audience seated in these seven chairs which were the seven core organizers of that conference. And we place the audience in these chairs as a way to think about these kind of encounters one has with their neighbour, with strangers.



And the final component is these draped fabric pieces, these acoustic felt sound blankets. And so these 29 fabric pieces represent the 29 flags that were present at the Bandung Conference. However, we're thinking about this notion of the emptiness of bearing one's flag. They're both beautiful objects but they are these phantoms, they are these silent figures that are looming over the exhibition in many ways.

We have this kind of animation which is this very surreal image of all the chairs at the Bandung Conference falling from the sky in this kind of freefall. The terrain in which the animation is placed is actually this desert landscape in Angola, where some people think that Sita might have been disappeared. It's a place where many people were disappeared, where they were abducted and taken into planes and thrown out.

I think about this question of burial and unearthing, I bury Sita's image on film and we see mention of that in the beginning of the work. I was thinking about it in relationship to Sita's disappearance and burial. There's no guarantee with working with film that the image that you're seeking to create ends up being the image that results. So I think about that in relationship to political struggle, how one fights for a world that they may never see, how one might never see the fruits of their labour. And so I think this film is really trying to understand that notion of the unsayable and the unspeakable in relationship to disappearance and hauntings, and this kind of affective fugitivity that Sita's life evokes for me.