

FULCRUM

of  
pillow poems  
and delayed dawns

August 13 to  
September 26, 2026

DIPALI GUPTA

Dipali Gupta | Laundry Day | 28x22 in (71x56 cm) | Mixed Media Collage on Paper | 2025

116 Great Western Buildings, 23 Chamber of Commerce Lane, Kala Ghoda, Mumbai 400001







# Dipali Gupta

Dipali Gupta's practice explores societal structures from a feminist perspective. Her practice is influenced by the writings of Foucault and Deleuze focusing on theories of pleasure and desire. Working across mediums, Gupta's practice explores abstraction, eroticism and feminist theory, challenging societal norms around sexuality and identity.



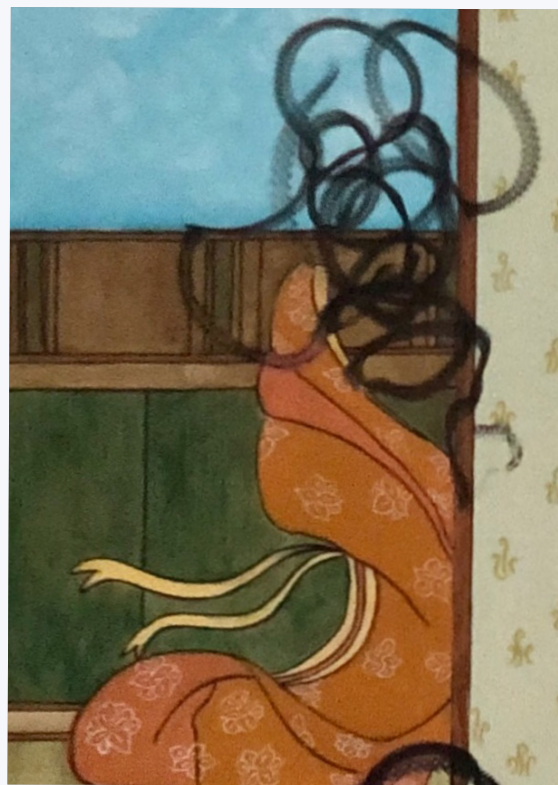
A graduate from LASALLE College of the Arts, Singapore and Goldsmith's University, London, Dipali Gupta has been awarded the Marian Treger Fellowship for Enduring Creativity, 2025 at Virginia Centre for Creative Arts, USA, was a finalist for The Sovereign Asian Art Prize, 2022 and is the winner of the Chan Davies Art Prize, 2018.

Exhibitions include: Desire Lines, The Backroom, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia (2022); The ILHAM Art Show, Ilham Gallery, Malaysia (2022); Uncertain Relaxation, Mutual Aids Project, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia (2020); Apotheca, Suma Orientalis, Kuala Lumpur (2019) and O Her!, Chan + Hori Contemporary, Singapore (2018). Gupta's work Did They Live Happily Ever After? is on permanent view at China House in Penang, Malaysia.



What did you see? | Acrylic on canvas | 47.2 x 35.8 in | 120 x 91 cm | 2020 | Rs. 2,05,200

*"Shunga has a complicated history as these images were often produced by men and consumed in contexts including private pleasure, marriage and popular entertainment. Something that was once hidden, or understood primarily through its erotic function, has acquired the status of cultural heritage. This shift exposes how historically unstable the boundaries between erotic imagery, pornography and art can be. The work does not necessarily change; what changes is the position from which we examine it."*



What did you see? (detail)| Acrylic on canvas | 47.2 x 35.8 in | 120 x 91 cm | 2020 | Rs. 2,05,200



Lovers and A Lantern | Acrylic on canvas | 47.2 x 35.8 in | 120 x 91 cm | 2021 | Rs. 2,05,200

*"Dipali's intention is therefore not simply to reproduce these historical images, but to deterritorialise them—to enter their visual language and intervene from within it. Her abstract vibrator marks fragment recognisable identities and generate new meanings, almost as a form of "time travel". These interventions bring a contemporary female perspective into conversation with visual histories often constructed through predominantly male perspectives."*



Lovers and A Lantern (detail) | Acrylic on canvas | 47.2 x 35.8 in | 120 x 91 cm | 2021 | Rs. 2,05,200



Devoured in the city of dreams | Mixed Media collage, acrylic ink vibrator marks, acrylic paint on used canvas  
 31.2 x 39.3 in | 79.5 x 100 cm | 2024 | Rs. 2,05,200



*"The result is neither a rejection nor a straightforward reclamation. Dipali instead asks what might happen if we were to step inside inherited images and redraw them with a different intention—one that allows desire and pleasure to exist without the necessity of pleasing someone else."*



Devoured in the city of dreams (detail) | Mixed Media collage, acrylic ink vibrator marks, acrylic paint on used canvas | 31.2 x 39.3 in | 79.5 x 100 cm | 2024 | Rs. 2,05,200



Your basic touch is not enough | Mixed media collage, acrylic ink vibrator marks, acrylic paint on ceiling board | 24 x 24 in  
61 x 61 cm | 2025 | Rs. 92,000



Your basic touch is not enough (detail) | Mixed media collage, acrylic ink vibrator marks, acrylic paint on ceiling board  
24 x 24 in | 61 x 61 cm | 2025 | Rs. 92,000



Amazon Domestic 1 | Collage, fabric, thread, Chinese ink vibrator marks on paper | 11.6 x 8.2 in | 29.7 x 21 cm  
2025 | Rs. 50,050

*“Dipali further extends this investigation beyond shunga, drawing from the Kama Sutra and the tradition of Indian miniature painting. The Hookah and the Muse (2025) explores erotic desire from a non-binary perspective, bringing abstract drawings made with a vibrator into dialogue with historical miniature paintings from the Rasamanjiri, or A Bouquet of Delight. Produced within the courtly culture of seventeenth and eighteenth-century Rajput and Pahari states, these erotic miniatures functioned as intimate objects of pleasure, power, and spectacle for elite patrons<sup>14</sup>.*

*By proposing an assemblage of body and machine, Dipali reframes this visual history by using the vibrator to disrupt the conventions of erotic representation and destabilise the authority of gendered ways of looking. Through abstraction and fragmentation, sensuality becomes fluid rather than fixed—resisting the heterosexual and gendered assumptions embedded within traditional depictions of desire. The work does not simply revisit the miniature tradition, but reworks its visual language to open up possibilities for non-binary and homoerotic forms of pleasure.”*



The Hookah and the Muse | Mixed media collage, acrylic ink vibrator marks, acrylic paint, thread work, lace and beads | 17.7 x 23.6 in | 45 x 60 cm | 2025 | Rs. 1,38,000



Little Death (La Petite Mort) | Digital video, colour, 16:9 aspect ratio, 1920 x 1080 full HDR | Duration: 4.24 min | 2018 | Edition of 3 + 1 AP | Rs. 84,000

*“The Little Death (La Petite Mort) (2018) extended Dipali’s interrogation of female pleasure through the visual language of ‘vanitas’. A sixteenth and seventeenth-century tradition of Dutch still-life painting, the genre was concerned with mortality, impermanence and the fleeting nature of worldly pleasures. The title itself evoked la petite mort, the French expression commonly associated with the death-like sensation of sexual climax, bringing together the seemingly contradictory states of death and pleasure.”<sup>5</sup>*



Laundry Day | Mixed media collage on poster paper | 28 x 22 in | 71 x 56 cm | 2025 | Rs. 1,38,000

*"Laundry Day (2026) shifts this question from the image to the systems that produce it. The work sits at the intersection of the longstanding tension between art and pornography. It draws on the visual codes of vintage pornography while denying straightforward consumption through abstraction, fragmentation, and conceptual layering. At its centre, a washing machine marked with the words "Sex", "Desire", "Pleasure", "Love", and "Power" becomes more than a domestic appliance: it suggests a system that processes intimacy itself."*



*"The work also returns to Donna Haraway's cyborg, but in a distinctly domestic form. Here, woman and machine become entangled. The cyborg is neither futuristic nor metallic, but domestic and sexualised, caught within systems of labour and consumption. Laundry Day thus connects the mechanisation of femininity within the domestic sphere to the mechanisation of desire in pornography".*



Laundry Day (detail) | Mixed media collage on poster paper | 28 x 22 in | 71 x 56 cm | 2025 | Rs. 1,38,000

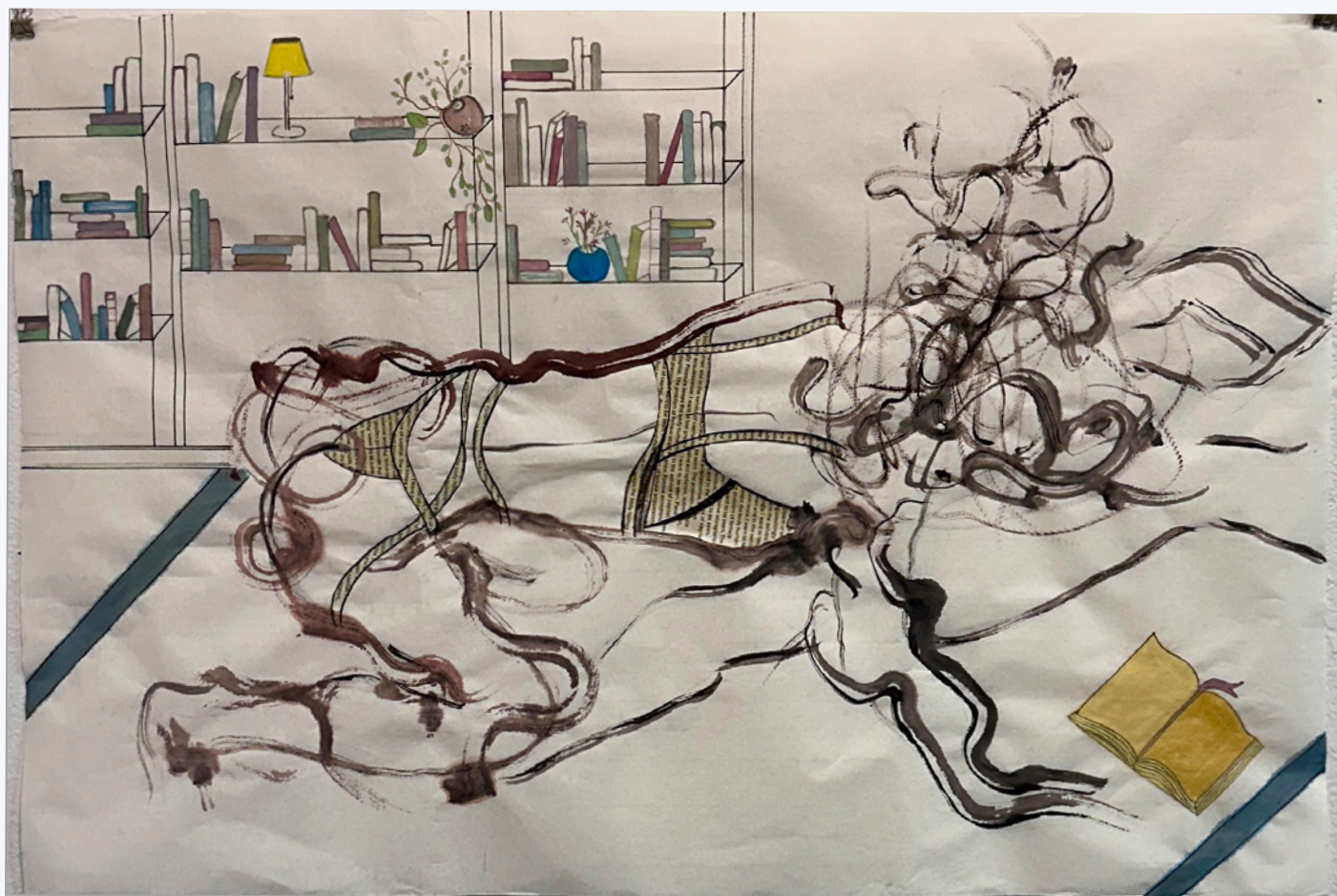


Object of the Gaze | Chinese ink vibrator marks, Chinese water colour on Chinese rice paper  
27 x 18 in | 69 x 46 cm | 2025 | Rs. 82,000

*"The question, then, is not simply whether pornography distorts our desires, but how desire itself is constructed through what we repeatedly see, consume, and learn to recognise as desirable. This resembles what Spanish writer and philosopher Paul B. Preciado described through the term "pharmacopornography"—a system in which sexuality, technology, media and capitalism converge to produce and regulate bodies and their desires.<sup>20</sup>"*



This City, My Belly - A Garbage Dump | Mixed media collage on canvas | 16.5 x 23.4 in | 42 x 59.5 cm | 2026  
Rs. 1,60,000



Pleasure keeps the body human and in service of the capital | Chinese ink vibrator marks, Chinese water colour on Chinese rice paper | 27.1 x 18.1 in | 69 x 46 cm | 2025 | Rs. 82,000

*"This is what I have come to appreciate most about Dipali's work: its refusal of easy liberation and neat answers. Instead, it asks us to sit with what makes us uncomfortable long enough to ask why. Her visual language is layered, playful and inviting, allowing complex ideas to unfold gradually and making room for dialogue rather than a predetermined response. The messiness and contradiction are not problems to be resolved, but part of what makes the feminist dimension of her practice compelling."*



Oestrogen for Art | Installation, grain dispenser,  
soybean in gelatin capsules | Variable size | 2023  
Rs. 50,000

*"Oestrogen for Art is an intimate portrayal of my life in the present. It is a protest of an aging body and also a surrender to science, to becoming more cyborg – bio hacking symptoms of peri menopause and menopause. Drawing on Marina Abramovic's 'Method' and Yoko Ono's 'Grapefruit', I spend hours preparing measured doses of oestrogen capsules as a meditative, process-based ritual. This interactive installation shifts focus from bodily ailments to a meditative practice of care, affirmation, healing and self-preservation.*

*The work emerges from a reckoning that began in 2023, as I confronted what I named as my own depletion, fading, and perceived madness – the very terms culture reaches for when describing women whose bodies stop producing oestrogen. Bone loss, palpitations, hot flashes, insomnia, brain fog, anxiety: this lived reality underlies the installation's meditative surface, against which hormone replacement therapy (HRT) becomes, for many, the only means of continuing as before.*

*Alongside pharmaceutical intervention, I also turned to the botanical – soybeans whose oestrogen-like effects offer a gentler, dietary form of hormonal negotiation. This dual gesture, clinical and organic, expands the installation's central metaphor. Oestrogen for Art becomes, finally, an allegory for the art world's own long-standing habit of erasure: the way female artists, have so often been diminished, withheld, or rendered invisible."*

-DIPALI GUPTA

# A response to *of pillow poems and delayed dawns*

Text by DEBORAH LIM

As a woman, I have often found myself more inclined to give than to take. Giving can carry with it a quality of sacrifice and humility, often accompanied by a lack of recognition or appreciation that feels disproportionate to the labour involved. There is also a frustrating bashfulness in asking for what one might rightly deserve.

This is less an inherent quality than one we learn through social and historical conditioning. To take is to claim something for oneself: to take up space, to take pleasure, to take what one wants without automatically considering what can be given in return. Women are often expected to temper desire with consideration—to think of others, propriety, and consequence. Even pleasure can become something to be negotiated, justified or qualified.

What, then, does it mean for a woman to take pleasure simply because it is hers?

This was a key question that surfaced when I first encountered Dipali Gupta's works in 2018, when she presented a series of four videos at Chan + Hori Contemporary in Singapore titled *O HER!*<sup>1</sup>. The title was bold and uncompromising. Although none of the videos revealed the presence of women, female pleasure was placed at the forefront through a symphony of vibrators in action.

The bedroom and kitchen has long been coded as sites of domestic labour and feminine virtue. In *The Rabbit in Her Kitchen* (2018)<sup>2</sup>, a rabbit appears amidst kitchen knives and ingredients arranged on a countertop. The rabbit's cuteness collides with the functional domestic objects surrounding it, carrying associations of reproduction, the Playboy bunny and, more specifically, the Rabbit vibrator, a dual-stimulation sex toy introduced in the 1980s<sup>3</sup>.

There was something mischievous about the rabbit being placed in the



Dipali Gupta | The Rabbit in Her Kitchen (VIDEO) | 3.52 mins | Digital video, colour, 16:9 aspect ratio, 1920 x 1080 Full HDR | 2018 | Edition of 3 + 1 AP

kitchen against a backdrop of vibrator sounds, bringing an object associated with personal pleasure into a space historically associated with female service to others. At the exhibition opening, the rabbit itself made an appearance, making its symbolism more absurd and tangible.

*The Little Death (La Petite Mort)* (2018) extended Dipali's interrogation of female pleasure through the visual language of 'vanitas'. A sixteenth and seventeenth-century tradition of Dutch still-life painting, the genre was concerned with mortality, impermanence and the fleeting nature of worldly pleasures.<sup>4</sup> The title itself evoked *la petite mort*, the French expression commonly

associated with the death-like sensation of sexual climax, bringing together the seemingly contradictory states of death and pleasure.<sup>5</sup>

However, it is important to note that the art-historical canon had long been shaped by institutional structures that disadvantaged women. Women were largely excluded from formal art academies and the study of the nude, while still life was among the genres more accessible to women artists.<sup>6</sup> Addressing this imbalance, Dipali reworked this history through an eclectic assemblage of vibrators and domestic objects—replacing traditional symbols of transience with contemporary objects of female desire instead. The fe-

male body remained absent, with pleasure implied through staging, sound and movement.

These works did not demand that I become comfortable with addressing female sexuality. Instead, they made me aware of how much my discomfort is produced by inherited codes around what can be said, shown or desired. I could understand the works, even find them funny, and yet still feel the instinct to look away. This hesitation is part of the work's power. It creates a space in which discomfort need not be immediately resolved, but can instead form the beginning of a conversation.

*We teach girls that they cannot be sexual beings in the way that boys are...We make them feel as though by being born female they're already guilty of something. And so, girls grow up to be women who cannot see they have desire.*<sup>7</sup>

— Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie, *We Should All Be Feminists*

Encountering Dipali's work also made me recognise how deeply this conditioning extends into the representation of desire. The absence of the female body in *O HER!* was significant: there was no figure onto which the conven-

tions of the male gaze could readily be imposed.

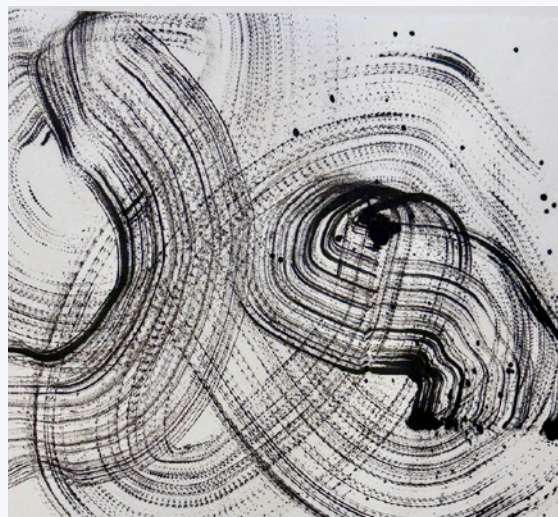
In 2020, Dipali and I had several conversations about her next body of work, *Desire Lines* and *Pages from the Book of Spring*. 'Desire lines' are paths formed through repeated use that deviate from planned routes. Dipali applied the term to female sexuality as alternative pathways through the norms prescribing how desire is experienced and understood.<sup>8</sup>

This metaphor became particularly apt when Dipali began using the vibrator as a drawing instrument rather than for its prescribed function. The machine became an extension of the body, with the marks emerging somewhere between intention and chance. In *Captured Traces I and II* (both 2020), drawings enact their own desire lines through calligraphic strokes of ink on kitchen paper—generated through an assemblage of artist, body, and machine.

There is a quiet subversion in this transformation. The vibrator, an object so specifically designed for the body, is removed from its expected context and asked to produce something else. The



Dipali Gupta | Captured Trace I | Calligraphy ink on kitchen paper | 2020



Dipali Gupta | Captured Trace I | Calligraphy ink on kitchen paper | 2020

works recall Donna Haraway's cyborg, which unsettles boundaries between human and machine, body and object.<sup>9</sup> Dipali's drawings similarly refuse a clean separation between artist and instrument; the marks emerge through their collaboration.

Dipali's interest in Gilles Deleuze is also relevant: desire need not arise from lack, but can generate new possibilities through experimentation.<sup>10</sup> The drawings do not illustrate desire so much as produce new pathways for thinking about it.

*Pages from the Book of Spring* is a version of the *Desire Lines* series which extends this enquiry into histories of erotic representation. Dipali began with the *shunga* or "spring pictures", explicitly erotic images produced in

Japan, particularly during the Edo period (1603–1868).<sup>11</sup> What intrigued Dipali was not simply their eroticism, but the systems of looking, desire, and power embedded within them.

*Shunga* has a complicated history as these images were often produced by men and consumed in contexts including private pleasure, marriage and popular entertainment.<sup>12</sup> Something that was once hidden, or understood primarily through its erotic function, has acquired the status of cultural heritage. This shift exposes how historically unstable the boundaries between erotic imagery, pornography and art can be. The work does not necessarily change; what changes is the position from which we examine it.

Dipali's intention is therefore not sim-



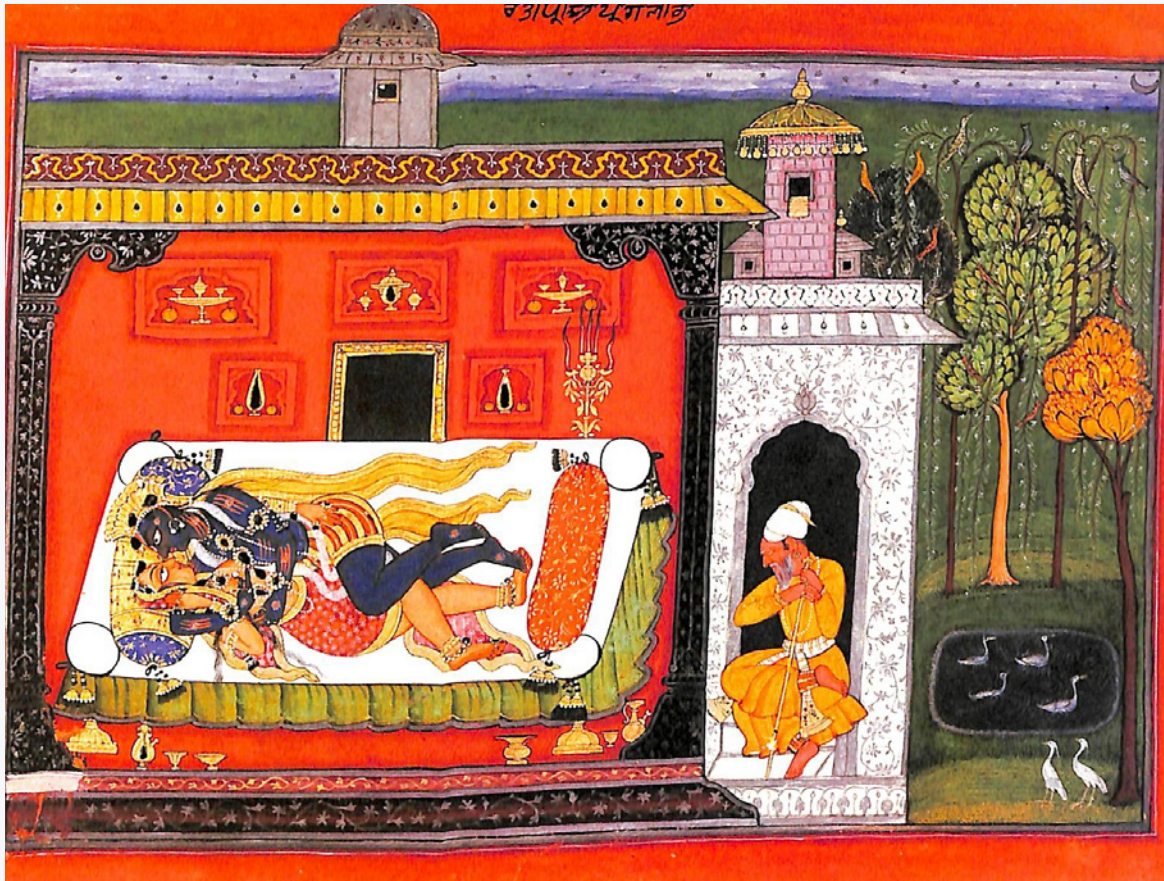
Tsukioka Settei | Untitled | 1710 – 1787

ply to reproduce these historical images, but to deterritorialise them—to enter their visual language and intervene from within it. Her abstract vibrator marks fragment recognisable identities and generate new meanings, almost as a form of “time travel”.<sup>13</sup> These interventions bring a contemporary female perspective into conversation with visual histories often constructed through predominantly male perspectives. Works including *What did you see?* (2020), *Lovers and a Lantern* (2021), *Devoured in the City of Dreams* (2024) and *Your Basic Touch is Not Enough* (2025) illustrate this.

The result is neither a rejection nor a straightforward reclamation. Dipali instead asks what might happen if we

were to step inside inherited images and redraw them with a different intention—one that allows desire and pleasure to exist without the necessity of pleasing someone else.

Dipali further extends this investigation beyond shunga, drawing from the *Kama Sutra* and the tradition of Indian miniature painting. *The Hookah and the Muse* (2025) explores erotic desire from a non-binary perspective, bringing abstract drawings made with a vibrator into dialogue with historical miniature paintings from the *Rasamanjiri*, or *A Bouquet of Delight*. Produced within the courtly culture of seventeenth and eighteenth-century Rajput and Pahari states, these erotic miniatures functioned as intimate objects of pleasure,



Rati-Priya-Pragalbha (Mature Nayika who delights in love), Dogra Art Gallery, Jammu. Image via Wikimedia Commons.

power, and spectacle for elite patrons.<sup>14</sup>

By proposing an assemblage of body and machine, Dipali reframes this visual history by using the vibrator to disrupt the conventions of erotic representation and destabilise the authority of gendered ways of looking. Through abstraction and fragmentation, sensuality becomes fluid rather than fixed—resisting the heterosexual and gendered assumptions embedded within traditional depictions of desire. The work does not simply revisit the miniature tradition, but reworks its vi-

sual language to open up possibilities for non-binary and homoerotic forms of pleasure.

The *Kama Sutra* is often reduced to a catalogue of sexual positions, but its concerns are broader, encompassing erotic love, relationships, and what Wendy Doniger describes as an “art of living”.<sup>15</sup> It understands sexuality through systems of knowledge, culture and convention, giving desire language, choreography, and instruction. In *Decorated Restrictions I and II* (both 2025), vibrator marks fill the backgrounds,

creating visual fields in which desire becomes formless—a presence rather than an identifiable object. The marks do not illustrate pleasure so much as create an atmosphere for it.

Dipali describes her absorption and interpretation of these references as “half-learnings”,<sup>16</sup> fuelled by research and analysis. These histories are filtered through her visual language and the experience of an artist born in Mumbai and shaped by years of living in Southeast Asia.

The exhibition title of *pillow poems and delayed dawns* draws these threads together in a poetic way. “Pillow poems” gestures towards shunga, while “delayed dawns” evokes the Indian tradition of miniature painting and its Nayika archetypes—heroines depicted in different states of love and desire.<sup>17</sup> One such figure is Rati-Priya-Pragalbha, the mature *nayika* who delights in love. In the image that informs the exhibition title, dawn threatens to bring the lovers’ night to an end, and the heroine attempts to delay its arrival by covering the lotuses in her ears so that their opening will not announce the morning.<sup>18</sup> Her gesture is both playful and purposeful. She is

not passively awaiting desire, but actively resisting its conclusion. The delayed dawn becomes, in this sense, an image of desire that refuses to submit to the rhythms prescribed for it.

If historical images teach us how desire has been represented, Dipali’s more recent works ask a different question: what happens when desire itself becomes something that can be manufactured, circulated, and sold? If the *Pages from the Book of Spring* series looked to the past, works such as *A Bazaarful of Desires* (2023), *A Lovely Ride* (2024) and *Laundry Day* (2026), turn to an image-saturated present in which desire is continuously produced and capitalised.

In *A Lovely Ride!* (2024), Dipali extends this economy of desire from the commodity to the image, engaging with American artist Jeff Koons’ *Made in Heaven* series<sup>19</sup>—a body of work that famously collapsed the boundaries between art, pornography, celebrity, and spectacle. Domestic materials such as pipe cleaners sit alongside the suggestion of two bodies, bringing the intimate and the constructed into the same frame. The work asks us to consider not only what we see, but how images teach us to see and desire.

*Laundry Day* (2026) shifts this question from the image to the systems that produce it. The work sits at the intersection of the longstanding tension between art and pornography. It draws on the visual codes of vintage pornography while denying straightforward consumption through abstraction, fragmentation, and conceptual layering. At its centre, a washing machine marked with the words “Sex”, “Desire”, “Pleasure”, “Love”, and “Power” becomes more than a domestic appliance: it suggests a system that processes intimacy itself.

The work also returns to Donna Haraway’s cyborg, but in a distinctly domestic form. Here, woman and machine become entangled. The cyborg is neither futuristic nor metallic, but domestic and sexualised, caught within systems of labour and consumption. *Laundry Day* thus connects the mechanisation of femininity within the domestic sphere to the mechanisation of desire in pornography.

The accumulation of images in Dipali’s collages reflects this larger economy of desire. Images, objects and fragments compete for attention, reflecting a world in which desire is promot-

ed through advertising, pornography, social media, beauty culture and consumer products.

The question, then, is not simply whether pornography distorts our desires, but how desire itself is constructed through what we repeatedly see, consume, and learn to recognise as desirable. This resembles what Spanish writer and philosopher Paul B. Preciado described through the term “pharmacopornography”—a system in which sexuality, technology, media and capitalism converge to produce and regulate bodies and their desires.<sup>20</sup>

Pleasure becomes an economy.

The vibrator is both a tool of sexual autonomy and a commodity whose technological advancements open up new markets and, consequently, new desires. Liberation and consumption have become difficult to separate.

If *A Lovely Ride!* (2024) asks how desire is manufactured through images, *This City, My Belly—A Garbage Dump* (2026) brings the question back to the artist’s body itself. Made after Dipali’s return to Mumbai, the work emerged from both the city’s overwhelming noise, density

and visual excess and a confrontation with her own changing body. Perimenopause brought an unexpected disconnect between what her mind wanted to do and what her body was capable of doing. The body, previously understood as the site through which desire could be pursued, became something to be renegotiated, supplemented and understood anew.

Here, desire becomes more complicated. What happens when the body itself changes the conditions on which pleasure can be experienced? Desire becomes entangled with the physical realities of the body—its capacities, limitations and transformations.

Much of Dipali's practice has been concerned with what has been coded, controlled or made uncomfortable: female pleasure, the sexual object, the domestic sphere, the ageing body. But this is not straightforward reclamation. Dipali is interested in what happens when these categories are opened up, disrupted, and allowed to become something else—when contradiction, discomfort and incompleteness remain visible.

This is what I have come to appreciate most about Dipali's work: its refusal of

easy liberation and neat answers. Instead, it asks us to sit with what makes us uncomfortable long enough to ask why. Her visual language is layered, playful and inviting, allowing complex ideas to unfold gradually and making room for dialogue rather than a predetermined response. The messiness and contradiction are not problems to be resolved, but part of what makes the feminist dimension of her practice compelling.

*I embrace the label of bad feminist because I am human. I am messy. I'm not trying to be an example. I am not trying to be perfect. I am not trying to say I have all the answers.*<sup>21</sup>

—Roxane Gay, *Bad Feminist*

*of pillow poems and delayed dawns* ultimately feels less like an answer to the question of desire than an invitation to remain with it. Dipali's works move across histories, bodies, technologies and cultures, asking who gets to desire, who defines it and who benefits from how it is shaped. Taking pleasure, then, is not simply about claiming something for oneself. It is about recognising the forces that have taught us what to want—and finding, along those inherited pathways, the courage to chart our own lines of desire.

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# Deborah Lim

Deborah Lim is an independent curator working at the crossroads of art and technology, where intersections and hybridities shape new ways of viewing and experiencing culture. Her practice brings together diverse disciplines such as art, film, design, fashion and digital innovation, creating exhibitions that illuminate the possibilities and tensions that arise when boundaries are blurred. She was formerly Curator of Exhibitions at ArtScience Museum in Singapore where she curated exhibitions including Iris van Herpen: Sculpt-



ing the Senses (2025); Goddess: Brave. Bold. Beautiful. (2024); Notes from the Ether: From NFTs to AI and Sneakertopia: Step into Street Culture (both 2023). She is an Adjunct Lecturer at the LASALLE College of the Arts, Singapore, and part of the Advisory Committee for the Nanyang Academy of Fine Arts, Centre for Lifelong Education, Singapore.

Other available works  
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Ayesha Aggarwal, Director, Fulcrum



A Lovely Ride! | 2024 | collage on concrete ceiling board, Gundam stickers, RFID Tag sticker, lace, silver leaf, acrylic ink vibrator marks, acrylic paint | 61 x 61 cm | 24 x 24 in | Rs. 1,38,000



Green Rimpa | 2020 | Acrylic on canvas | 75 x 60 cm | 29.5 x 23.6 in | Rs. 1,20,000



The Rabbit in Her Kitchen (VIDEO) | 3.52 mins | Digital video, colour, 16:9 aspect ratio, 1920 x 1080 Full HDR | 2018 | Edition of 3 + 1 AP | Rs. 84,000

Decorated Restrictions | 2025 | gold pen, charcoal, acrylic on found handmade paper | 7.4 x 7.4 in | 19 x 19 cm | Rs. 36,000



Decorated Restrictions II | 2025 | gold pen, acrylic on found handmade paper | 7.4 x 7.4 in | 19 x 19 cm | Rs. 36,000