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Contemporary art and the cosmopolitan imagination (Chapter one)

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Chapter 1 Foundation – dynamic ground

Foundation – the lowest and supporting part of a building; the natural or prepared ground on which some structure rests

Foundation – the basis on which anything stands, and by which it is supported; the fundamental assumptions from which something is begun or developed or calculated or explained

Foundation – the act of founding, establishing, settling; the act of starting something for the first time, of introducing something new

Beijing via Wellington (via Shanghai, Berlin, Vancouver...)

In 2004, Yin Xiuzhen showed her *Portable Cities* project in the exhibition *Concrete Horizons: Contemporary Art from China*, held at the Adam Art Gallery in Wellington, New Zealand. *Portable Cities* is a mutable artwork consisting of variable numbers of 'suitcase cityscapes', each fabricated from used clothing, found objects and maps taken from a particular urban centre. Between 2000 and 2004, these cityscapes were installed in differing configurations, usually in combination with local sound recordings, in galleries and exhibition spaces throughout the world. The suitcase cityscapes installed in each show varied, but the roll call of cities mapped by the project as a whole reads like a list of the metropolitan centres that rose to international artworld prominence during the 1990s - Beijing, Shanghai, Guangzhou, Shenzhen, Hong Kong, Lhasa, Singapore, Lisbon, Berlin, Sydney, Vancouver, San Francisco, Minneapolis – and to these were added, in Yin's work, well-established centres such as New York and Paris.

This obvious 'name check' demonstrates more than Yin's extraordinary success as an individual artist,¹ it signals the accelerated international profile of contemporary art from China in the years following the 1989 protests in Tiananmen Square and the country's subsequent 'open' cultural policy and engagement with global trade networks. Chinese

¹ Yin's work has been included in such well-known exhibitions as the third *Asia Pacific Triennial* (Brisbane, 1999), *Inside/Out* (New York, 1998-9), *Cities on the Move: Urban Chaos and Global Change* (London, et.al., 1999), *Text/Subtext* (Singapore, 2002), *How Latitudes Become Forms: Art in a Global Age* (Minneapolis, 2003), *Home and Away* (Vancouver, 2003) and the 2004 Sao Paulo Biennale.

art is, arguably, the art market success story of the past 15 years – indeed, Charles Saatchi's recent decision to focus his new gallery around a collection of contemporary art from China is clear confirmation of the market dominance of the work.² Similarly, China itself, in terms of the global marketplace, is a tiger rising from its rest; the massive infrastructural work being undertaken in Beijing, Shanghai and other metropolitan centres, is but a small measure of the changes being wrought to the country as a whole as it becomes a truly global economic force.

Portable Cities can lend itself almost too readily to these dual frameworks, attesting to the art market's ability to make international superstars of young artists from China, who spend their time traveling from one biennale to another, their works and lives packed into suitcases and carried on long-haul flights. The world-traveler contemporary Chinese artist tirelessly reproduces the cities she sees, each becoming more like the other, more an interchangeable image packed in a case than a lived space, as the pace of globalization irons out the last individual wrinkles left to suggest that cultural difference might be anything more than the consumable pleasure of the exotic.

I would contest this rather obvious, clichéd reading of *Portable Cities*, however, and, indeed, criticism of Yin's work that simply locates her as an 'authentic' Chinese woman artist longing for the return of her home, Beijing, to an imaginary past beyond the reach of change or the introduction of 'foreign' influences. By contrast, I would argue that *Portable Cities* demonstrates, materially, how a contemporary woman artist from Beijing makes herself 'at home everywhere'.

The urban skylines of *Portable Cities* are, literally, supported by suitcases. In this sense, the works convey immediately an important paradox: the cities' iconic profiles can be identified by seemingly fixed symbols (the Golden Gate Bridge, the Eiffel Tower, etc.), yet their foundation, the ground on which they rest, is quintessentially mobile and dynamic, produced as it is from well-traveled luggage. There is a fascinating parallel between this paradox, one that I would argue is central to *Portable Cities*, and the insights of geographers such as Saskia Sassen, who have sought to understand the significance of metropolitan centres to the phenomenon of globalization. As Sassen has argued, the inter-state system that dominated world-wide exchange over the past three centuries has now given way to a transnational economy that operates through key

² see *Sunday Times* supplement, 05.10.08

metropolitan sites. These metropolises simultaneously centralize resources (producing ostensibly stable urban points) and increase dispersal, fluidity and movement by facilitating and extending transnational interchange.³

Yin's cities operate likewise, allowing us to capture the 'essence' of these urban sites, fix them in our imaginations, yet be aware of their movement, their likelihood to be folded away at any minute and transported to the next space. There is a tension produced in every installation of *Portable Cities*, between the specific materiality of the places enfolded in the suitcases, their skylines fashioned from the used clothes of their inhabitants, and their interaction in the space of the gallery as nodal points, linked by a creative cartography drawn differently in each show. The cities in which viewers stand participate in an aesthetic map, making connections between and across art, culture, economic exchange and the contemporary geopolitical terrain of globalization. 'Beijing' is understood simultaneously as an entity in itself *and* within a fluid pattern of movement and exchange: *via* Vancouver, New York, and so on.

In this sense, Yin's project again parallels Sassen's insights and extends the implications suggested by other geographers who have focused on global cities networks. For instance, understanding contemporary metropolitan centres as 'portable cities' has profound implications for unpicking what Peter Taylor, David Walker and John Beaverstock called 'embedded statism', the epistemological legacy of the primacy that European nation-states have enjoyed from the middle of the 18th Century until quite recently. Through a detailed materialist analysis of the emergence and development of world cities in globalization, they have provided compelling evidence for their claim that it is not only possible, but necessary to 'juxtapose [an] alternative metageography of a network of world cities – a space of flows – against the dominant, conventional metageography of nation-states – a space of territories.'⁴ Like Sassen, Taylor, Walker and Beaverstock have argued for a change in the foundation of our geographical imagination. Rather than understand the world as a set of bounded nation-states, we need to engage productively with the geographies of transnational exchange, located in very material ways, through multiply interconnected urban centres, or, as I am suggesting in keeping with this reconfigured founding frame, through a creative map of

³ Saskia Sassen, 'Introduction: Locating Cities on Global Circuits', in Sassen, ed. *Global Networks, Linked Cities*, London and New York: Routledge, 2002, pp. 1036, p. 2, 9.

⁴ Peter J Taylor, D.R.F. Walker, J.V. Beaverstock, 'Firms and their Global Service Networks', in Sassen, ed. *Global Networks*, op.cit., pp. 93-115, p. 96, 95.

portable cities.⁵

The ramifications of reorienting our geographical imagination are extensive and this chapter will certainly not exhaust them. Crucial to the present argument are two main points: first, that the 'alternative metageography' that is being developed here does not simply reverse the existing binary logic that pits territory/stability against flows/rootlessness; and second, that the founding relationship between home and identity can be rethought through concepts of movement to productive ends. The first point impacts upon the development of a cosmopolitan imaginary that is relevant to the present geopolitical climate as well as materially connected to contemporary art practices, while the latter enables an argument to be made that connects the agency of art-making with the articulation of identities-in-process. I see the two as intrinsically linked.

Critically analysing the concept of home is imperative to making this connection and my argument is indebted to the numerous scholars from widely differing disciplines whose work has sought to rethink 'home' as both a conceptual and material formation. Crucial to this is the question of movement or, as the editors of *Uprootings/Regroundings: Questions of Home and Migration* put it: '(b)eing grounded is not necessarily about being fixed; being mobile is not necessarily about being detached.'⁶ The necessity for stating this remains with us, despite decades of postcolonial research on exile, migrancy, transnational and global exchange. The necessity is predicated upon the strength of the hold exercised by a geographical imaginary that equates home with stasis, stability and security (both in terms of safety and secured identities) and exile/migrancy with detachment and rootlessness – the loss of an authentic and sustained origin point. It will suffice to remind ourselves that this logic underpinned some of the most brutal activities in living memory, from the attempted genocide of the 'rootless cosmopolitan' Jews in Europe at the mid-point of the twentieth century, to the present refusal of sanctuary to tens of thousands of refugees throughout the world.

There have been many astute analyses of the reactionary tendency to equate domesticity, as both home and nation ('domestic' as opposed to 'foreign'), with security

⁵ Not coincidentally, Sassen has noted the rise of the global, metropolitan art market, with bi- and triennials, as part of the evidence of the primacy of a global cities model. See *Global Networks*, op.cit., p.3

⁶ Sara Ahmed, Claudia Castaneda, Anne-Marie Fortier, Mimi Schiller (eds) *Uprootings/Regroundings: Questions of Home and Migration*, Oxford, NY: Berg, 2003 – from intro, pp. 1-22, p. 1 – the sentence was originally in italics.

and to jealously guard its boundaries against vilified others, not least among feminist scholars aware that the domestic sphere is not always the safe haven for women that such myths maintain. Indeed, feminists have long critiqued the simplistic equation of home with identity and community as too fixed, too brutally defended and too undifferentiated⁷ As a foundational myth, however, it is not easy to supplant.

Portable Cities provides a space in which we might begin to unravel the potent oppositions between home and away, stability and exile, authenticity and rootlessness, that make it so difficult to develop new ways of thinking through the mobility of subjects, identities and community as they are now experienced so commonly throughout the world. Crucially, *Portable Cities* suggests a modulation between objects and processes - between the metropolitan centres it materializes and the flows and networks they engender. Using this modulation, the installation of the suitcase cityscapes maintains a productive tension between the local and the global, the concrete and the conceptual. In engaging with the work, we are able to see that the soft urban silhouettes are fashioned from clothes – clothes taken from the cities' own residents. As we remember or imagine these iconic skylines, we are invited to step back, to read the suitcase cities installed here as a map, and to make connections between the intimate, portable places at a macropolitical level. The work never collapses one into the other, but rather, like stars in a constellation, the cityscapes retain their particularity while at the same time becoming more than themselves through their vital, global, interconnection.

As a way of imagining urban domesticity as both a local, materially specific phenomenon, and as one that is wholly embedded within dynamic world networks, the work counters a significant and fundamental assumption – namely, that the strength of our homes, our nations and our identities rests on our ability to provide unyielding foundations. But the development of a contemporary cosmopolitan imaginary, of truly connected, world citizenship in a era marked by global cities networks, suggests the establishment of a new founding logic, one capable of acknowledging the intimate interaction between the local and the global, the domestic and its 'others'. In *Portable Cities*, Yin's home is still Beijing, but this is Beijing *via* Shanghai, Singapore, Berlin – a truly global home.⁸

⁷ Biddy Martin and Chandra Talpade Mohanty, 'Feminist Politics: What's Home Got to Do with It?' in Teresa de Lauretis, *Feminist Studies/Critical Studies*, Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1986, pp. 191-212, p191, 204. And Doreen Massey, 'A Global Sense of Place' *Marxism Today*, June 1991, pp.24-29.

⁸ *Global Homes* was the working title of this book for some time.

In configuring a multi-centred, global home, Yin is in good company. For example, arguing against the anthropological conventions that take home to be the fixed locus of identity and community, social theorists Nigel Rapport and Andrew Dawson wrote: 'a far more mobile conception of home should come to the fore, as something "plurilocal", something to be taken along whenever one decamps.'⁹ The resonance of their argument with *Portable Cities* is as striking as it is intriguing. If, as I would argue, *Portable Cities* enables Yin to make herself at home everywhere, or at least in every metropolitan centre she negotiates as a successful contemporary artist, then the work can indeed be seen as a 'plurilocal' home taken along whenever she decamps. I am not suggesting, however, that *Portable Cities* is merely an illustration of social theory, the depiction of a more mobile conception of home. Rather, I am arguing that contemporary art can provide a distinctive perspective on the core cultural, intellectual and political debates of our time, in this instance, offering a means by which we might participate in the imaginative spaces that emerge as movement and process become fundamental to notions of home, identity and community. The paradigm shift Rapport and Dawson called for as a matter of priority within the social sciences is materialized here in art; each tells us something about the need, and the potential, to create new 'founding' figures appropriate to the dynamic geopolitical circumstances of globalization.

Returning to the material qualities of *Portable Cities* is useful here. The cityscapes might be described as works of reclamation in which discarded domestic materials are transformed into iconic urban images for a global art audience. These works of art reclaim the quotidian as a powerful signifier within the processes of globalization, processes commonly assumed to destroy local, everyday differences in their quest to produce a uniform world market. Commenting on the qualities of the everyday in *Portable Cities*, the critic Melanie Swalwell argued convincingly that the project does not so much represent *displacement*, all too commonly cited as the principal experience of globalization, but registers the activity of *emplacement*, of making place within a rapidly moving and fluid network of exchange.¹⁰ This thinking parallels my own and demonstrates a powerful riposte to many of the most intransigent assumptions

⁹ Nigel Rapport and Andrew Dawson, *Migrants of Identity: Perceptions of Home in a World of Movement*, Oxford and NY: Berg, 1998, p.7. They cite Rouse, 1991 on 'plurilocal'.

¹⁰ Melanie Swalwell, 'Contact Zones: Edge in *Portable Cities* and *FragMental Storm*' *New Zealand Journal of Media Studies*, vol. 9, no.1: 'Asian' Media Arts Practice in/and Aotearoa New Zealand, Wellington: New Zealand Electronic Text Centre, 2005, pp. 1-18. p.4.

concerning the impact of globalization on the concept of home, not least the assumption that the local and the global, the domestic and the foreign, are antagonistic opponents rather than, as I would argue, intimate interlocutors.

Critical to my argument here is the link between the fabric of the works and their fabrication; it is my contention that the materiality of the suitcase cityscapes, the processes of their production and the locus of their consumption (as art works specifically designed to be seen in multiple, metropolitan sites), are integrally connected. This integral link establishes them firmly within the dynamics of globalised world cities networks, yet, at the same time, capable of effecting a critical dialogue with and through the local. Yin's material focus on the fragile remnants of everyday lives, *lived*, makes *Portable Cities* more than a monument to the memories of the cities' inhabitants. The clothes and cases provide the ground from which Yin makes herself at home everywhere; through manifold acts of domestic reclamation, we are invited to imagine and make our homes in the world anew.

Understanding Yin's *Portable Cities* as a multiple act of making – making art, making home, making subjects – reiterates the figure of foundation as a practice, an act of establishing, settling or introducing something new. As an act of foundation, *Portable Cities* connects the affective qualities of home with the material qualities of contemporary art; this in turn enables individual subjects to connect with collective forms of cultural signification. The quotidian elements of Yin's work are profound precisely because they link the most ordinary individual activities of living in a city – wearing, tearing, mending, walking, carrying - with the collective bodily engagement that produces the image of the global city itself, its 'visage' or skyline. The everyday movement of people within these localized, particular spaces, becomes the global movement of images, ideas, languages, cultures and capital. The suitcase cityscapes bear witness to how 'home-making' connects banal acts of domestic labour with the collective endeavour of founding and maintaining a transnational, urban economy.

The reference to home-making above is intentional and carries with it a number of important implications, not least Yin's own history as a central practitioner within what has come to be called 'Apartment Art'. Apartment Art is the collective term for a range of critical art practices that flourished in opposition to state-sponsored art in metropolitan centres in China from the 1970s to the 1990s. Using their own homes as alternative art spaces, artists associated with Apartment Art made work that was embedded within an

intimate, private sphere yet was also, as Gao Minglu has argued, a pivotal response to contemporary cultural politics.¹¹

Yin's association with the phenomenon of Apartment Art came in the early 1990s, when the Chinese government's draconian attempts to contain the unrest that had led to the incidents in Tiananmen Square made it extremely difficult for artists to place critical work in public spaces. Yin's work in this period was typified by acts of domestic reclamation similar to those of *Portable Cities*; making work with discarded clothing, furniture and other common household objects, Yin explored the impact of globalization on her 'home' (China, and more specifically, Beijing). In *Cemented Shoes* (1995), for example, Yin filled pairs of used shoes with cement, hanging the solidified objects from the ceiling of her apartment. The work thus brought the most common building material of the globalizing city into direct contact with the bodily trace of its population – the concrete, poured into the shoes, laid a foundation, but a foundation that was mutable (each pair bore the specific trace of its owner) and that spoke of embodiment, difference and change rather than uniformity and fixity. The soft and hard, the animate and inanimate, the human and the built environment, were in intimate dialogue, each impacting upon and forming the other.

While the work produced by the many artists associated with Apartment Art was varied, there were some shared, central concerns that are pertinent here, not least the process-oriented encounter with domestic labour and materials and the prominence of women artists amongst its key proponents.¹² These facts lend themselves to a critical reconsideration of yet another element of 'home-making', namely, the question of the gendered division of domestic space and labour. Exploring the concept of home in relation to feminist politics, Iris Marion Young suggested that home and nation building have been valued as masculine, transcendent, 'history-making' activities, whilst the immanent work of home-making has more commonly been reviled as feminised drudgery. In a counter to this thinking, Young argued for the critical significance of home-making to the construction of history, identity, and, importantly, a fluid subject-in-process. In this sense, her concept of home can be an enabling figure in the contemporary global arena, one that moves beyond binary thinking and engenders politics through the everyday:

¹¹ Gao Minglu interviewed by Christina Yu, 'Curating Chinese Art in the 21st Century: An Interview with Gao Minglu', *Yishu-Taipei*, vol. 5, pt. 1, 2006, pp. 17-35, p. 32.

¹² Eleanor Heartney, 'Children of Mao and Coca-Cola', *Art in America*, vol. 87, no. 3, March 1999, pp. 42-7.

... home carries a core positive meaning as the material anchor for a sense of agency and a shifting, fluid identity. This concept of home does not oppose the personal and the political, but instead describes conditions that make the political possible.¹³

Portable Cities is an apt heir to the domestic legacy of Apartment Art, where the intimate confines of the artist's home became the site of an engagement with a rapidly changing city, nation-state and global world, and to feminist reconceptions of home-making. In *Portable Cities* we see these concerns folded back upon themselves, such that the suitcase cities become the founding figure of a plurilocal, global home. This home, as we have seen earlier, participates in the 'paradox' of cities within global circuits, being at once a consolidated nodal point and a site of fluid exchange – an iconic image built on a traveling case. Moreover, by making herself 'at home everywhere', Yin articulated global citizenship - *cosmopolitanism* – as a form of plurilocal subjectivity, one that intertwines the local and the global in and through the everyday. In this, the work suggests a renegotiated figure of the foundation, one that links spaces with subjects materially, yet dynamically. Yin's suitcase-foundations are not demonstrations of the loss of an authentic home or identity, but of an understanding that homes, and the subjects who inhabit them, are made in the movement between objects and processes, materials and making. As Yin put it:

People in our contemporary setting have moved from residing in a static environment to becoming souls in a constantly shifting transience... (the) suitcase becomes the life support container of modern living... *(t)he holder of the continuous construction of a human entity*.¹⁴

That a mobile foundation can preserve and maintain the 'continuous construction' of the subject suggests a paradigm shift; in a world where foundations move, we can make ourselves at home everywhere, imagine identity, subjectivity and, indeed, community to be mutable, in process, but also material, able to be shaped otherwise. It is here that we encounter responsibility for our position in the world and for those positions that we take

¹³ Iris Marion Young, 'House and Home: Feminist Variations on a Theme', in *Gender Struggles: Practical Approaches to Contemporary Feminism*, edited by Constance L. Mui and Julien S. Murphy, Lanham, Boulder, New York, Oxford: Rowman and Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 2002, pp. 314-46, p. 339

¹⁴ Yin cited in *On Reason and Emotion* (Exhibition Catalogue), The Biennale of Sydney, 2004, p.222

up.

It is useful at this point to turn to Rosalind Diprose's work on embodiment and feminist ethics, specifically in light of her thought-provoking exploration of the modulation between object and process. This work is critical to my own development of the figure of foundation as a 'dynamic ground', not only because of the object/process link, but because Diprose argued that ethics is, at core, concerned with subjects and spaces interconnected through dwelling, as both place and practice:

[Ethics] is about being positioned by, and taking a position in relation to, others. It should not be surprising then that 'ethics' is derived from the Greek word *ethos*, meaning character and dwelling, or habitat. Dwelling is both a noun (the place to which one returns) and a verb (the practice of dwelling); my dwelling is both my habitat and my habitual way of life. My habitual way of life, *ethos* or set of habits determines my character (my specificity or what is properly my own). These habits are not given: they are constituted through the repetition of bodily acts the character of which are governed by the habitat I occupy. From this understanding of *ethos*, *ethics can be defined as the study and practice of that which constitutes one's habitat*, or as the problematic of the constitution of one's embodied place in the world.¹⁵

Diprose, in this passage, forges a critical link between home (dwelling, *n.*, habitat) and home-making (dwelling, *v.*, habitual way of life), or between the material constraints of our position in the world and our agency in making, maintaining and changing them. The subject formed at the interstices of this critical modulation is an embodied, embedded and responsible subject – the subject who can inhabit a plurilocal, cosmopolitan home.

If *Portable Cities* found a means by which to participate in a transformed geographical imaginary, Yin's self-portrait installation of 1998, *Yin Xiuzhen*, looks more closely at the plurilocal subject whose home is built on dynamic ground. In this work, ten pairs of canvas shoes contain photographic images of Yin's face taken at various points in her life – as a child, a schoolgirl, an adolescent, an adult woman; each pair is, in turn, placed on a photographic 'ground': a carpet, a wooden floor, cobblestones, a pavement and so on. In one sense, the photographic likenesses ensure that each is

¹⁵ Rosalyn Diprose, *The Bodies of Women: ethics, embodiment and sexual difference*, London: Routledge, 1994, pp.18-19.

recognisable as the 'same' person, yet their imaged repetition calls into question the very notion of the 'same'. We are brought to the realization that our concept of similitude is premised upon visual protocols, an understanding of the legibility of the face when presented to us in particular formats. Just as the concrete Yin had poured into shoes three years before revealed itself to be a shifting, rather than fixed, ground, the photographs of Yin's face demonstrate that likeness is the product of an economy of the same, of the foundational logic that constructs the subject as continuous and transcendent, a subject whose 'interior' self unfolds sequentially through their legible 'exterior' over time.

The framing devices of Yin's self-portrait provide a space for a more productive and nuanced reading to emerge, because the photographs are doubly mediated – as images made through the conventions of formal photographic portraiture during Yin's life growing up in Communist China and again, here, as she reconfigured them, changing their scale, halving the prints and then placing the sections within pairs of shoes. These shoes are the dynamic ground of a plurilocal subject, a foundation that is materially specific and yet mutable – the shoes of a million schoolgirls raised in Maoist China, every pair the 'same', but clearly never so. The shoes locate their subject in a definite time and place, but are simultaneously a cipher for movement, both in their reference to walking and their allusion to the unbound feet of Chinese women after the cultural revolution. Each pair in the self-portrait signals a temporal shift, an indication of a stopping point on a longer journey whose endpoint is not pre-determined but in process. Unhindered by the teleology that has dominated European models of subjectivity for centuries, the subject envisaged through this work is located, but not fixed, mobile, but not rootless. This is a subject whose identity is not settled through a foundation impervious to change, but one open to transformation.

While I am not arguing that the self portrait, *Yin Xiuzhen*, and the *Portable Cities* project are reducible to one another, I would suggest that they are resonant, that they configure a contemporary foundation, one able to connect subjects and spaces critically through material forms of emergence. The works enable us to think through homes and home-making, local cities and global networks, the personal, the political and the portable as we strive to develop an adequate language for the plurilocal cosmopolitan subjects who inhabit the complex networked geographies of the present day.

New Delhi *via* Shimla (*via* Lahore, Budapest, Paris...)

During 1995-6, Vivan Sundaram created a touring installation entitled *The Sher-Gil Archive*.¹⁶ In the installation were five teak boxes, containing photographs, documents, letters and objects from Sundaram's family archive, organized under the following titles: *Box 1: Father, Box 2: Mother, Box 3: Home, Box 4: Sisters and Box 5: Family Album*. The lineage Sundaram traced in the boxes is critical to the project; the photographic record left by his maternal grandfather, Umrao Singh Sher-Gil, is the foundation of *The Sher-Gil Archive*, both temporally and materially. Umrao Singh was the eldest son of a Punjab chieftain and a Sanskrit scholar, with well-established interests in yoga, astronomy and politics. Significantly, he was also a pioneering photographer, many of whose works were centred on his family – his wife, the Hungarian opera singer, Marie Antoinette (nee Gottesmann), his elder daughter, the well-known modernist painter Amrita, and his younger daughter Indira, Sundaram's mother. Appropriating Umrao Singh's¹⁷ photographs, Sundaram's installation traces the history of a remarkable family of scholars and artists from the start of the 20th century to its mid-point.

Box Three: Home from *The Sher-Gil Archive* consists of four cubes covered with photographs taken by Umrao Singh of the various homes inhabited by the Sher-Gil family between 1912 and 1941. Married in Lahore in 1912, Umrao Singh and Marie Antoinette moved to Budapest in 1913 for the birth of their daughters (Amrita in 1913 and Indira in 1914) and were then unable to return to India due to the outbreak of the First World War. Returning in 1920, they lived in Shimla until, in 1929, they moved to Paris to enable Amrita to attend the École des Beaux Arts. In 1934, at Amrita's behest, the family moved back to India and Amrita set up her studio in Shimla.¹⁸ The photographs appropriated by Sundaram in the installation both present the interiors of the houses and apartments in Lahore, Budapest, Shimla and Paris as historical documents, and re-present them as a work of art, as an aesthetic negotiation between cultural traditions and national borders.

Box 3 enacts a form of domestic topography that, taken together with the other four boxes of *The Sher-Gil Archive*, provides an evocative portrait of a family whose intellectual and artistic endeavours crossed continents, languages, philosophies and

¹⁶ See, *Vivan Sundaram: The Sher-Gil Archive*, exhibition catalogue, Budapest: Mücsarnok's Dorottya Gallery (1995), New Delhi: Hungarian Information and Cultural Centre (1996), Bombay [Mumbai]: Gallery Chemould (1996)

¹⁷ In the passages concerning the Sher-Gil family, I am using the forenames for clarity as Sundaram does.

¹⁸ Both Lahore and Shimla are now in Pakistan, following partition; the family relocated and remained in India.

cultures. In some senses, the Sher-Gil family epitomize the notion of cosmopolitanism as a form of elite cultural movement undertaken in the main by artists, writers and intellectuals with sufficient financial resource and/or social and political connections to move freely across geographical and social boundaries. However, locating the cosmopolitan project described here simply within the privileged realm of the bourgeoisie, dismisses too easily the significance of the transnational experience articulated by *The Sher-Gil Archive* and its development of a cross-cultural visual and material language.

Turning again to *Box 3: Home*, it is possible to describe a more complex configuration of the cosmopolitan imagination within the work, one that speaks of the potential of contemporary art to raise important questions of home, identity and community in a global world. The four cities in which the Sher-Gil family lived in the period— Lahore, Budapest, Shimla and Paris — are metropolitan centres with long histories of intercontinental trade and cultural exchange, further marked by European imperialism and decolonization, and by the legacy of providing sanctuary to numerous exiles and migrant communities over many years. They are complex and, arguably, cosmopolitan sites, where cultural difference has been a cause of conflict as well as a source of remarkable innovation for generations. However, these cities, as entities in themselves, are neither the subject of the photographs taken by Umrao Singh, nor of the installation produced by Sundaram. Rather, as the title of the work reminds us, *Box 3* explores the Sher-Gil family home, a plurilocal home whose foundations were mobile and multiple.

In a fascinating parallel to Yin's *Portable Cities*, Sundaram's archival interrogation of the domestic demonstrates the intimate connection between the personal realm of the family home and the geopolitical networks through which it is inscribed. The Sher-Gil family moved between urban centres in Europe and the Indian sub-continent, making themselves at home in both. The cities in which they settled fostered their multi-faceted intellectual and artistic pursuits, such that Indian philosophy, literature and nationalist politics could be brought into connection with European modernism and the burgeoning photographic technologies of the period. The interiors imaged by Umrao Singh clearly combined materials and motifs from India and Europe, from furnishings and decorations to instruments, objects and images; Amrita's studio in Shimla, for example, was decorated in the 'international style', while the family's Paris apartment was the backdrop for numerous images of Umrao Singh practising yoga.

But *The Sher-Gil Archive* does not simply collate and present family photographs, as if the past is or could be available to us through unmediated 'evidence'. In Sundaram's installation, the photographs are subject to a radical reconfiguration. Sundaram engaged actively with the images as objects themselves, with what might be called their consequential materiality; these photographs are not just transparent windows through which we see the past, they are its physical residue, its trace in the present, with which we construct an emergent future. In *Box 3: Home*, for example, the photographs of interiors by Umrao Singh are mounted on small cubes to become three-dimensional forms, portable homes, able to be packed away in their teak case and relocated at will. And they were; like Yin's *Portable Cities* project, *The Sher-Gil Archive* was a traveling work, a touring installation produced for multiple locations (Budapest, Mumbai and New Delhi) and eventually shown in even more (e.g. Havana and Tokyo).

The fact that the works in the show were packed up, transported and reinvented in these different venues is significant to their articulation of home as a key cosmopolitan site. The venues themselves demonstrate the interconnections between the international modernism of the Sher-Gil family's history and Sundaram's contemporary situation as an established artist, based in India, whose work also travels widely, making him well-known to an international art audience. And if Paris, Budapest, Lahore and Shimla can be called cosmopolitan in their histories of cultural exchange, then Mumbai, New Delhi, Havana and Tokyo should not be underestimated in this regard, with their extensive transnational links. *The Sher-Gil Archive* thus incorporates both a history marked by developed international networks and a contemporary dialogue with and through transnational exchange. The plurilocal home configured by Sundaram's archival installation goes beyond a documentary family history to engage with the contemporary politics of international art practice and the articulation of the artist's own embodied location within this frame. Sundaram lives and works in New Delhi – here understood *via* Shimla, Lahore, Budapest, Paris and Mumbai.

The title of the installation suggests yet another compelling angle on this argument. In an essay accompanying *The Sher-Gil Archive*, Katalin Keserü raised the problematic of classification in regard to the work, stating that '(i)ntead of works of art, the viewer is surrounded in this exhibition by documents whose particular sequence, however, turns the entire 'archive' into a work of art.'¹⁹ I would argue that whether the work is 'art' or

¹⁹ Vivian Sundaram: *The Sher-Gil Archive* ex cat, op.cit., pp. 2-3, p.2

'archive' is immaterial; its title is provocative, its content precarious and its signification performative. It is neither art nor archive and yet it is both, resolutely positioned to destabilize just such simplistic, foundational, binary norms. The work's mode of address requires an engagement with these categories, precisely to undermine their certitude. But this still begs the question – to what end?

It is here that I would argue that the real power of Sundaram's reconfiguration of his maternal grandfather's photographic archive resides; *The Sher-Gil Archive* is positioned at the nexus between archive and installation, juxtaposing the indexical trace of the historical past with the aesthetic agency of the present. The work materialises the dynamic ground of presentation and 're-presentation', reminding us that the archive can never be the foundation of a definitive history. That is, as many have argued before me, there can be no 'pure' or 'originary' representation of the past guaranteed by the archive, no documents that can ever do justice to the events that produced them and no complete reconstruction of the past from the residual fragments left in its wake. Critics of the archive's ostensible status the foundation of historical truth are numerous and most point both to the iniquitous power politics of the formation of archives (the documents recorded and kept are usually those that support dominant regimes) and to the question of its fragmentary physical nature.²⁰

Significantly, in his writing on archives, Paul Ricoeur argued that the indexical residue, or trace, that is the hallmark of the archive's contents, is fragmentary, but also capable of surpassing the event that it in part recalls.²¹ Ricoeur's argument is particularly suggestive in the case of *The Sher-Gil Archive*, since Sundaram's family record is available to us only in and through its reconfiguration as art; it is given to the viewer as always already within the processes of mediation and representation. Ricoeur's suggestion that the sheer presence of the archival record, its material evidence in and as an indexical trace, exceeds the 'originary' event, enables us to encounter Sundaram's archive as both less and more than the presentation of his family history, of the ostensibly fixed foundation of home, identity and community. Indeed, it posits a new

²⁰ See, for example: Jacques Derrida, *Archive Fever: A Freudian Impression*, trans. Eric Prenowitz, Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1996; Michel Foucault, *The Archaeology of Knowledge*, trans. A.M. Sheridan Smith, London: Tavistock Press, 1972; Griselda Pollock, *Encounters in the Virtual Feminist Museum: Time, Space and the Archive*, London and NY: Routledge, 2007.

²¹ Paul Ricoeur, 'Archives, Documents, Traces' [1978] excerpt in *The Archive*, edited by Charles Merewether, London: Whitechapel and Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2006, pp. 66-69. Trace is the indexical residue, the more than, of the event.

sense of foundation on the dynamic ground opened by questioning 're-presentation'.

For example, the photographed interiors of *Box 3* become the exteriors of small objects in the installation. Some of the 'home-boxes' reveal empty interior spaces, absences within the seeming wholeness of their geometry and referred geography. The past is not complete, not unified, but literally, open to revision, interrogation and alternative formation. Moreover, it is multiple and decentred; 'home' is constructed through the accumulation of evidence of a range of places and activities that constitute the domestic sphere. In this sense, the installation materializes the paradoxical implications of the archive as conceived by Ricoeur in that it is both fragmentary and excessive in its force. It will neither resolve through holistic presentation nor through subdued representation - the generation of a singular locus or origin point. In its refusal to resolve simply, the work maintains a compelling tension between history and the present, and between modernism and its legacy in contemporary global art practices and circuits.

Exploding the conventional, founding logic of representation by demonstrating that every act of 're-presentation' is already an act of material mediation, *The Sher-Gil Archive* bridges art and archive, acknowledging the constraints of the past (the inescapable presence of residual objects) but also affirming the possibility of their imaginative recombination in the present. Significantly, the interconnection between art and the archive demonstrated here also has important ramifications for a critical exploration of the relationship between cosmopolitanism and national identity in a globalised era. While these positions are frequently polarized, they need not be if we take seriously the modulation between object and process – material history and aesthetic agency – mobilized by *The Sher-Gil Archive*. Cosmopolitanism colludes with the most destructive features of globalization if it occludes the specificity of nation, history and location in an attempt to transcend difference. *The Sher-Gil Archive* may articulate a plurilocal, transnational home, but it does not ignore the significance of where and how its articulation is performed – and the locus of *The Sher-Gil Archive* is in India and Europe.

While India and Europe have a long history of productive interaction, it is not without tension, dispute and violence. A cross-cultural artwork premised upon an archival exploration encounters these complex interactions at every turn. Without developing this in great detail, it is significant to the present argument to note that both archives and installation practices have their own, specific histories of contestation linked to these particular geographical parameters. For example, Gayatri Spivak, argued compellingly

that the very concept of the archive is problematic in India, where the question of the construction of a national identity is intimately intertwined with the legacy of colonial rule; even the impulse to archive was subject to the vicissitudes of British imperialism.²² Installation has a similarly ambivalent history in India as an art form derived from the dominance of European practice, yet of significance to many politicized artists throughout South Asia. Writing about Sundaram in 1994 for example, John Roberts noted his role as a key proponent of Indian installation and its radical encounters with post-colonialism, identity, politicized intertextuality and the refusal of a simplistic, essential 'Indian-ness'.²³ Geeta Kapur, in a substantial text on modern and contemporary art in Asia, located in installation another paradox that had emerged in its transplantation to India, namely, a revised understanding of the power of the fragment. Rather than lamenting a loss of wholeness, Kapur argued that Indian cultural traditions accepted the fragment (and what she called the 'displacement' of objects) within installation practices as a positive form of signification, thus reminding us again that meanings shift as practices move.²⁴

Clearly, it is not my intention to bring these scholars together here to argue that *The Sher-Gil Archive* demonstrates an 'Indian identity' or 'essence', but rather to think critically about the formal processes of mediation that were deployed in this work and how they impact upon the specific contexts they engage. That is, the work took as its subject a family of mixed cultural descent and affinity, was produced for both an Indian and European audience and drew together the legacies of archives and installation, forms of culturally-specific collection and aesthetic practice. In each of these ways, *The Sher-Gil Archive* performed cultural hybridity beyond the hackneyed conventions that describe it so awkwardly as falling 'between' cultures, toward a model that moves 'across' or 'with/in', so to hold difference and diversity together in productive tension. Spivak, Roberts and Kapur serve to remind us that the archive and the installation are not transcendent modes of practice, but located activities with histories and meanings that are as mutable as they are mobile. *The Sher-Gil Archive*, therefore is more than the representation of a plurilocal home, it is the performance of plurilocality, a means by

²² Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, 'The Rani of Simur: An Essay in Reading the Archives', in Merewether, op.cit., pp. 163-9.

²³ John Roberts, 'Indian Art, Identity and the Avant-Garde: The Sculpture of Vivan Sundaram', *Third Text*, no. 27, Summer 1994, pp. 31-36.

²⁴ Geeta Kapur, 'Dismantled Norms: Apropos Other Avant Gardes', in Caroline Turner, ed. *Art and Social Change: Contemporary Art in Asia and the Pacific*, Canberra: Pandanus Books, Research School of Pacific and Asian Studies, 2005, pp. 46-100, p.65

which home can be articulated in and through multiple locations without reducing them to sameness. The archive/artwork speaks as well of the mobile ground of a cosmopolitan subject in India as it does in Europe, but it does not say quite the same thing.

Significantly, *The Sher-Gil Archive* was not the only work that Sundaram produced with appropriated photographic material from his family's holdings. In 2001, the artist published *Re-Take of Amrita*, a volume of 38 digital photomontages based mainly on Umrao Singh's photographs with additional images from the family collection.²⁵ The book is but one selection of a wider body of digital montages that comprise the *Re-Take* project; the volume refers to over 70 photomontages from which its 38 were chosen and this larger collection of images has also provided material for a number of international exhibitions in places ranging from Paris, London, Amsterdam, New Delhi and Mumbai to Vancouver, Toronto and New York.

The works themselves are black and white composite images in which the Sher-Gil family (Umrao Singh, Marie Antoinette, Amrita and Indira) play starring roles within their own domestic drama. In most of the images, the parents and daughters sit, stand, read, paint, play and pose for the camera, occasionally joined by a few others, such as Jacques Despierre or Denise Prouteaux and, significantly in one image, Sundaram himself as a child. Images of Amrita's paintings often feature in the montages, as do mirrors; the family are seen in both European and Indian dress and are nearly always 'at home'.

The photomontages in *Re-Take of Amrita* explore a number of interrelated themes: the domestic archive as an historical record, its appropriation as material for art-making, the digital photograph as a form of remediation and, of course, the significance of home and family as the foundation of identity and community. In addition, I would argue that the *Re-Take* project extends Sundaram's earlier explorations of the Sher-Gils' plurilocal domesticity by interrogating dwelling in its stronger sense - as both the place and the activity of making oneself at home in the world. In *Re-Take of Amrita*, the interiors are inhabited, the subjects and spaces are mutually constituted, and, as I am arguing here, this takes place in and through the visual, within and over time. That is, the works are premised upon specific structures of vision, modes of proximate, corporeal looking, and

²⁵ Vivan Sundaram, *Re-Take of Amrita*, New Delhi: Tulika Books, 2001.

these engender an affective visuality that has important consequences for the development of a critical cosmopolitan imaginary. In addition, the works enact particular temporalities, forms of material emergence that have significant ramifications for understanding identity as fundamentally intersubjective. These two points are intrinsically interlinked and, more critically, are not abstractions, but grounded within the work itself.

One particular image, *Bourgeois Family: Mirror Frieze*²⁶ (2001), makes these points well. The digital montage brings together five photographs of the family, grouped around three central mirrors. Sundaram's own description is evocative, calling the work a 'triptych that evolves in the manner of folding screens reveal(ing) the figures from right to left.'²⁷ The two images of Amrita on the right were taken in Shimla and Budapest, the central image of Marie Antoinette in Lahore, Indira was photographed in Paris and Umrao Singh, with Sundaram as a small child, was photographed in Shimla. Like *Box 3* from *The Sher-Gil Archive*, we are invited into the home of the Sher-Gil family, a plurilocal home reconceived by Sundaram through a powerful hybrid aesthetic that connects the (western) art historical trope of the triptych with the documentary impulse of the family album and the multiple imaging possibilities afforded by digital media.

The imaged family too, bear this multiple, hybrid signification, their plurilocal identities defined by dress, gesture and activity in the space. Amrita's image is doubled in the mirror at the right, with two 'reflections', one in European dress and one in a sari. Marie Antoinette is likewise doubled, but in this mirror-play, by her own reflection in an 'oriental' robe and by a painting of the back of a woman as she gazes into a mirror. Indira's gaze is returned directly – a young woman looking at herself in the latest fashion from Paris – but her image is joined in the mirror, and thus redoubled, by her father and son, the former demonstrating the use of a camera to the beautiful young child. This is a bourgeois family, as the title of the work indicates, but it is also a culturally-mixed family, demonstrating in this multi-layered image what Mica Nava has elsewhere called a 'visceral cosmopolitanism', an everyday, lived identification with difference.²⁸ Nava's

²⁶ 15 x 26 inches, 2001, digital photograph. All photographs are by Umrao Singh Sher-Gil unless otherwise mentioned: from left: Indira, Paris, 1930; Umrao Singh and Vivan, Shimla, 1946; Marie Antoinette, Lahore, 1912; *Small Earring* (painting, 1893, Georg Hendrik Breitner); Amrita, Shimla, 1937; Amrita, Budapest, 1938, photo, Victor Egan.

²⁷ Sundaram, *Re-Take Amrita*, op.cit., pp. 55 uses the term triptych, and notes that the work reads from right to left.

²⁸ Mica Nava, *Visceral Cosmopolitanism: Gender, Culture and the Normalisation of Difference*, Oxford, New York: Berg, 2007, pp. 8-14.

notion of a visceral cosmopolitanism is extraordinarily resonant with the *Re-Take* project, describing as it does, a cosmopolitanism that takes place 'at home', within our families and neighbourhoods, where the 'libidinal economies of identification and desire' can give rise to 'more inclusive experiences of belonging'.²⁹ Arguably, the articulation of such a visceral cosmopolitanism can have profound implications for the constitution of the subject and for the construction of the cultural imaginary. It is at this level that *Re-Take of Amrita* makes its presence felt.

Re-Take of Amrita produces a notion of home and family developed within and through difference, rather than a closed domesticity whose sense of security is premised upon warding off 'others'. Difference is at the heart of the *Re-Take* project, most prominently, cultural difference, sexual difference and generational difference. This is critical to the work's potential to contribute to the contemporary configuration of cosmopolitanism, where cosmopolitanism is conceived beyond the limits of privileged bourgeois consumption. Conventional, 'neo-liberal', cosmopolitanism is focused upon the individual,³⁰ where the individual is understood to be a transcendent subject or self-contained unit, keen to experience the frisson of 'the other' through a veil of pleasurable, commodified distance. By contrast, the multi-layered cosmopolitanism that Sundaram's photomontages materialise is founded in the proximate exchanges between members of this family and their circle, the collective, cross-cultural, intergenerational and intersubjective dynamic that extends between people and places through affective engagement.

This is manifest more strongly by exploring the visual strategies deployed throughout *Re-Take of Amrita*, than by reference to any single image within the volume. For example, many of the works focus upon combining images of the family members where their individual poses mirror one another or where they can be juxtaposed to suggest a dialogue or conversation. There are also many images in which a relay of looks connect the figures with one another and, significantly, with us, as we view the montages. We are invited into a conversation with the works just as we are invited into this family's home. But perhaps the most striking feature of the visual exchange demonstrated within the work is the complex imbrication of subject and object positions across gender norms.

²⁹ Nava, *ibid*, p.14

³⁰ Editors' introduction, 'Cosmopolitanisms', in *Cosmopolitanism* edited by Carol A Breckenridge, Sheldon Pollock, Homi K Bhabha and Dipesh Chakrabarty, Durham, NC and London: Duke University Press, 2002, pp. 1-14, pp. 1, 5, 11

The two individuals most frequently imaged in the project are Umrao Singh and his elder daughter, Amrita. Both father and daughter were makers of images; each, in these works, is the active subject and imaged object of the look, a look that is both attentive and proximate.

Throughout the volume, pictures of Amrita's own paintings, many of young Indian and European women, appear montaged with Umrao Singh's photographs of the artist. Significantly, she is shown variously in the act of painting, seated in her studio and with her works, and engaging with her fellow artists from the École des Beaux Arts. She is both the active and passive bearer of the look. Umrao Singh too appears in the volume, with his camera and telescope technically enhancing his sight, but also as the object of our attention, in elegant clothing and, more powerfully, dressed only in a wrapped loincloth as he practices yoga, revealing a strong and supple body to the camera. Like Amrita, he is both the subject and object of the look. Whilst this interplay between sexed subjects and gendered objects might appear simple, I would suggest that, when produced across such a range of images and activities, it engenders a powerful affective visuality premised upon an intersubjective identification with difference.

The power of the visual in this context resides in its particular, quotidian, quality; this is not a generalized overview or a distanced, disembodied and 'mastering' gaze, but a form of specific, attentive looking, capable of identifying and engaging with others. The differences of sex, age, ethnic and cultural origin articulated by *Re-Take of Amrita* produce the very conditions for an embodied, intersubjective exchange, such that the 'individual' can no longer be understood as alienated from, or existing in opposition to, other subjects in the world. The father and daughter exchange the look, and in so doing, emerge as subjects embedded within a sociality marked by difference. And, if we are to take the logic of a visceral cosmopolitanism seriously, then the embodied, empathic visuality capable of producing subjects with/in their encounters with others begins at home.

The conversations with/in difference that characterise *Re-Take* further emerge through another set of significant exchanges in the visual – namely, the exchanges between analogue and digital, painting and photomontage. These exchanges are precisely configured to set up a conversation between modernism, its legacy in contemporary practice and the question of the 'original'. Again, for Sundaram, this conversation begins at home.

Amrita Sher-Gil was a pivotal figure in the development of Indian modernism and her work is now well-known to an international audience in this context. Her nephew, Sundaram, belongs to the next generation; trained in India and in England, he began his career as a sculptor and has moved, increasingly, toward installation and site-specific work that places him firmly within the transnational arena of contemporary art practice. There is a cross-generational conversation taking place within *Re-Take* that connects Sundaram with Amrita across times, places and the vicissitudes of intellectual categories such as 'modern' and 'contemporary' art. In addition, *Re-Take of Amrita* articulates a critical conversation between the analogue 'original' – the archival images taken by Umrao Singh – and their digital mediation in the hands of his grandson, Sundaram. Analogue and digital are ciphers for intergenerational exchange and the processes through which emergent configurations of home, family, identity and community might appear. Umrao Singh and his photographs become at once the indexical origin of the family/home and a demonstration of the futility of seeking a singular, fixed locus for identity; the small boy taught by his grandfather to use the camera shifts the focal point, confounding a linear temporality that assumes too simply that the past is the firm foundation of the present.

The digital photograph, *Remembering the Past, Looking to the Future*,³¹ refers explicitly to time, to the imaginative exercise of recollecting the past and envisaging the future. This is a temporal exchange that is both topographical and open-ended. The sources of the image were four photographs: Indira in Paris, Marie Antoinette in Lahore and Amrita in Bombay (photographed by Karl Khandalavala), brought together with a central self-portrait of Umrao Singh in his study in Paris. The figures and the objects in the space construct a particular topography of home as both plurilocal and, significantly, multi-temporal. The analogue images derive from 1912 and the 1930s, but the gestures, dress and poses of the figures, in addition to the objects so prominently displayed in the interior, set up a much more complex spatio-temporal exchange at the point of the digital image. For example, Indira and Marie Antoinette, separated by a period of nearly two decades, each adopt a stereotypically 'feminine' pose referencing historical conventions in European painting – Indira holds a cat and her mother reads a letter. By contrast, Amrita wears traditional Indian dress, as does Umrao Singh, whose posture is

³¹ 15 x 21 inches, 2001, digital photograph. All photographs are by Umrao Singh Sher-Gil unless otherwise mentioned: from left: Umrao Singh, Paris early 1930s; Amrita, Bombay, 1936, photo, Karl Khandalavala; Marie Antoinette, Lahore, 1912; Indira, Paris, 1931.

reminiscent of the thinker or melancholy.³² Books and papers litter the desk, placed alongside a typewriter with a partially typed page held in its carriage.

The scene suggests that we have caught the individuals in deep thought, Indira and Marie Antoinette engaging our look, Amrita and her father maintaining their inward gaze. This space, then, becomes a powerful nexus between the past and the present, the European and the Indian, tradition and change and, importantly, outward-looking social engagement and the power of individual imagination. The work constructs a plurilocal home that is fully embedded within the wider world and offers subjects the space in which to imagine a future as yet not determined. Remembering the past is not an exercise in futility when it enables us to look to the future.

Returning to the work of Iris Marion Young at this point is a useful way to pursue the ramifications of this line of thought. Young's counter to home-making as a feminised form of immanent drudgery pivoted upon a notion of home-making as future-oriented. Critically, she differentiated between 'meaningful preservation' and preservation as 'nostalgia'. Nostalgia, she argued, simply clings to the past, but 'meaningful preservation' is open to the future, to the new, since it combines tending to the material traces of the past while continually interrogating and reworking their meanings in the present.³³ Meaningful preservation is a form of home-making allied to foundation as the act of introducing something new.

These future-oriented, home-making activities link us beyond ourselves to others, they enable us to establish, to found, a vital and dynamic sense of 'community'.

Remembering the Past, Looking to the Future, establishes the home/family through open-ness, through exchanges across and between differences of time, place, history and culture. This is home as something that one works at, rather than is given – it is the opposite of those xenophobic, genocidal definitions of home, family and community as a fortress against difference and change. We make homes, we make families, and we make our identities in and through affective, intersubjective processes, processes that are constitutive also of any sense we might have of community.

Not surprisingly, reconfiguring the connections between home, identity and community has been central to the work of transnational feminist scholars who see this as a

³² Sundaram was well aware of these poses and the iconographies associated with them – see *Re-Take of Amrita* op.cit., p.54

³³ I.M.Young, op.cit., pp. 332-4.

significant political step toward the recognition of difference in a global world. In these terms, homes and subjects are plurilocal and in process, and the material conditions that enable identities and communities to emerge are dynamic. As Irene Gedalof argued:

“Home” is produced through a constant process of adjustment, transformation, negotiation, redefinition – a never-ending, ongoing work to reproduce the appearance of stability and fixity that is part of the imagined community, whether that community is being thought about in terms of nation, ethnicity, race, religion, etc.³⁴

If our foundations are figured as dynamic ground, then our homes are constantly negotiated, redefined and, moreover, open to difference. A visceral cosmopolitanism such as the one that is proposed through *Re-Take of Amrita* enables us to imagine our homes, identities and communities as spaces of intersubjective engagements with others. Biddy Martin and Chandra Talpade Mohanty have argued compellingly for this notion of community as a political necessity; as they wrote:

Community, then, is the product of work, of struggle; it is inherently unstable, contextual; it has to be constantly reevaluated in relation to critical political priorities; and it is the product of interpretation, interpretation based on an attention to history, to the concrete, to ... subjugated knowledges.³⁵

The ramifications of this are profound. The cosmopolitan imagination opened by art's engagement with the processes of making oneself 'at home everywhere' goes beyond the argument that contemporary art just moves from one place to another, each time invented as a new elite commodity. Rather, the work explored here provides the foundation for thinking through the movement of embodied, located subjects beyond the cipher of 'rootlessness'. It is a commitment to the daily labour of making art, making home, making community; it inspires us to participate, rather than allow ourselves to be 'participated'.

³⁴ Irene Gedalof, 'Taking (a) Place: Feminist Embodiment and the Regrounding of Community', in Ahmed, Castaneda, Fortier, Schiller, eds., *Uprootings/Regroundings*, op.cit. pp. 91-113, p. 101.

³⁵ Biddy Martin and Chandra Talpade Mohanty, 'Feminist Politics: What's Home Got to Do with It?' in *Feminist Studies/Critical Studies*, edited by Teresa de Lauretis, Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1986, pp. 191-212.