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# YOG RAJ CHITRAKAR: MEMORY DRAWING IX NIKHIL CHOPRA

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OCTOBER 28, 2009–FEBRUARY 14, 2010 LOBBY GALLERY

In his ninth chapter of works revolving around the wandering draughtsman Yog Raj Chitrakar, Nikhil Chopra combines strategies associated with theater, portraiture, landscape drawing, photography, art actions, and installation to chronicle the world in which we live through live performance. A turn of the century dandy and surveyor based loosely on the artist's grandfather, Yog Raj Chitrakar executes large-scale drawings in the urban landscape while exploring self-portraiture, autobiography, history, fantasy, and sexuality.

*Yog Raj Chitrakar: Memory Drawing IX* is inspired by the 1920s and the role of the United States and New York City in this defining moment in the history of the world—a time of deep physical, imagined, and sociological changes impacted by immigration, architecture, and labor, caught between two world wars. As the character Yog Raj Chitrakar, the artist activates the gallery, now part theatrical set, part turn-of-the-century tableau vivant, for five days (November 4–8). Traveling between the New Museum and Ellis Island to chronicle the New York skyline from this particular position of anticipation, Chitrakar wanders through Chinatown, Lower Manhattan, the New York City subway system, past ferry landings, and the Statue of Liberty, searching for a memory or a ghost, and imagining America.

During the performance at the New Museum, the gallery is in perpetual transformation. For the exhibition, remnants of Chopra's occupation of the space, including a vast wall drawing, record both his travels and his presence in the gallery and remain on display as part of the installation. Documentation from three previous performances also on view in this exhibition—*Memory Drawing II* (Mumbai, 2007), *Yog Raj Chitrakar visits Lal Chowk* (Srinagar, 2007), and *Memory Drawing VI* (London, 2008)—suggests the many ways in which the history and reality of a location impact the artist's execution of characters through costuming, gesture, and action.



*Yog Raj Chitrakar: Memory Drawing II, 2007*  
Time-lapse video, color, 5:15 min  
Director: Munir Kabani  
Courtesy the artist and Chatterjee & Lal, Mumbai



*Yog Raj Chitrakar visits Lal Chowk, 2007*  
Video, color, sound, 12:49 min  
Videographers: Surpal Singh Slathia and Showkat Katjoo  
Editor: Nikhil Chopra  
Courtesy the artist  
Commissioned by Khoj International Artists' Association, New Delhi

For one of the earliest invocations of Yog Raj Chitrakar, *Memory Drawing II*, Chopra occupied the Chatterjee and Lal Gallery in his hometown of Mumbai. The gallery is located in Colaba, a district at the southernmost extreme of the city. From this vantage point, Chitrakar locates Colaba as the center of the universe, and creates a 360-degree view of Mumbai, covering all four walls of the gallery. Captured from a still camera in one corner of the gallery, time-lapse photography documents Chopra's progress as spectators pass in and out of the performance. At the drawing's completion, Yog Raj Chitrakar abandons his work clothes for a white gown, and, seated at the center of the panorama, crowns himself the empress of the moment.

The documentation of *Yog Raj Chitrakar visits Lal Chowk, Srinagar* begins with Nikhil Chopra's transformation into Yog Raj Chitrakar, replacing jeans and boots with breeches and a necktie. The camera follows Chitrakar to the Lal Chowk clock tower that marks the center of the city Srinagar. Srinagar is the capital of Jammu and Kashmir, a region home to boundary disputes between China, Pakistan, and India. Drawing directly on the surface of the street, the artist executes a portrait of the clock tower in charcoal. Interwoven through the crowd of onlookers, a military squadron observes the performance, at one point ordering the spectators to line up for physical searches: a not so subtle reminder that it is illegal for more than five people to congregate, in India, at one time. Perhaps because they do not quite understand what is happening, the military allows the performance to continue, and the onlookers return to watch Yog Raj Chitrakar, who, upon completion of his drawing, departs the heavily trafficked commercial zone.

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*Yog Raj Chitrakar: Memory Drawing VI*, 2008  
 Video, color, sound, 9:28 min  
 Videographer and editor: Lisa Cazzato-Vieyra  
 Courtesy the artist and Serpentine Gallery, London

*Memory Drawing VI* documents a fifty-seven-hour performance at the Serpentine Gallery, London, in 2008, as a part of the exhibition “Indian Highway.” This performance presents Yog Raj Chitrakar as adventurer, departing the gallery with his canvas and supplies. Working from a tent pitched in the cold of an English December, the artist makes a large-scale drawing of his surroundings, both architectural and natural. At the end of three days, Yog Raj Chitrakar returns to the gallery with his completed drawing, which is exhibited alongside his collapsed tent and gear. Having returned to the civilization of the gallery, the artist bathes, shaves, and transforms into Chitrakar the gentleman.

“Yog Raj Chitrakar: Memory Drawing IX” is curated by Eungie Joo, Keith Haring Director and Curator of Education and Public Programs.

Costume design by Loise Braganza.

“Yog Raj Chitrakar: Memory Drawing IX” is made possible by Chatterjee & Lal. Additional support provided by the Toby Devan Lewis Emerging Artists Exhibitions Fund.

This exhibition is presented in conjunction with PERFORMA 09.

## Public Programs

### Yog Raj Chitrakar: Memory Drawing IX

Wednesday, November 4, 12–6 p.m.

Thursday and Friday, November 5 and 6, 12–9 p.m.

Saturday and Sunday, November 7 and 8, 12–6 p.m.

Nikhil Chopra activates the lobby gallery, now a turn-of-the-century tableau vivant, for five days as Yog Raj Chitrakar.

New Museum Lobby Gallery and Ellis Island

FREE



*Yog Raj Chitrakar: Memory Drawing VIII*  
 Marina Abramovic Presents, 2009 Manchester International Festival  
 Photo: Tina Lange

### A Proposition by Nikhil Chopra: Yog Raj Chitrakar and the Traveling Troupe

Friday, November 13, 7 p.m. artist’s lecture

Saturday, November 14, 12 p.m. performance by Smoggo and White Lady; 3 p.m. discussion

Propositions is a public forum that explores ideas in development. Inspired by the scientific method of hypothesis, research, and synthesis, each two-day seminar explores a topic of current investigation in an invited speaker’s own artistic or intellectual practice. Over the course of a seminar session, these developing ideas are presented to the public, responded to, “researched,” and discussed to propel the ideas forward in unique ways.

Seventh-Floor Sky Room and Fifth-Floor Museum as Hub Space

FREE FOR MEMBERS, \$8 GENERAL PUBLIC, \$6 SENIORS AND STUDENTS

Propositions is made possible by Eve Steele and Peter Gelles, with endowment support generously provided by the Charlotte and Bill Ford Artists Talks Fund.

For information on all exhibition-related programs at the New Museum, please visit [newmuseum.org/events](http://newmuseum.org/events)

Visitors can participate in free, docent-led public tours of the Museum’s current exhibitions Wednesday–Friday at 12:30 p.m., and Saturday and Sunday at 12:30 and 3 p.m. For information on group tours, please visit [newmuseum.org/learn](http://newmuseum.org/learn) or call 212.219.1222 x235.

New Museum First Saturdays For Families take place on the first Saturday of every month from 10–12 p.m. and are free to the public. Tickets are given on a first-come, first-served basis. For more information, please visit [newmuseum.org/learn/school\\_and\\_youth](http://newmuseum.org/learn/school_and_youth) or call 212.219.1222 x235. Please note that during the exhibition “Urs Fischer: Marguerite de Ponty” strollers will not be allowed in the galleries. Please leave strollers at the coat check.