

Press Release

The Brooklyn Museum Presents *Suneil Sanzgiri: Here the Earth Grows Gold*

Part of the Brooklyn Museum’s annual UOVO Prize for an emerging Brooklyn-based artist, the exhibition marks Suneil Sanzgiri’s first solo museum show

On view October 27, 2023–May 5, 2024



How do we live through and narrate moments of revolution and revolt, and how do we understand these experiences across time and distance? These are just a few of the questions asked in *Suneil Sanzgiri: Here the Earth Grows Gold*. During this moment of violent nationalism worldwide, Sanzgiri (born Dallas, Texas, 1989; active in Brooklyn, New York) examines sites of anti-colonial revolt and solidarity to reflect on the complexities of narrating such histories. Seamlessly traversing time, place, and media, the artist explores the material and immaterial traces of resistance, particularly in his family’s home of Goa, India. In advance of the exhibition, Sanzgiri unveiled a fifty-square-foot mural on the facade of UOVO’s Brooklyn facility in Bushwick on August 3, 2023.

Sanzgiri notes, “I’m tremendously excited to open this exhibition with three brand new works that have been in production for over a year. The show offers the perfect opportunity to unravel the various threads of my research and consider the complexity of the questions and histories raised by the works, together with audiences at the Brooklyn Museum.”

“Sanzgiri has been one of the most closely watched filmmakers in recent years, and it’s been rewarding to collaborate on his first solo museum exhibition and large-scale installation. The works in the show tackle the contradictions found in anti-colonial struggles and histories, which have so often been accompanied by violent forms of nationalism and erasures of other histories—something with which we continue to contend in this country and in museums in particular,” says exhibition curator Drew Sawyer, Sondra Gilman Curator of Photography at the Whitney Museum of American Art (formerly Phillip and Edith Leonian Curator of Photography, Brooklyn Museum).

The exhibition centers on *Two Refusals (Would We Recognize Ourselves Unbroken?)*, the artist’s newest two-channel video installation. The film tells the stories of the mutual struggle in India and Africa against Portuguese colonialism, highlighting the solidarity that developed between the two continents during the 1960s and 1970s. Through both documentary interviews and fictional narratives—and blending CGI animation, Super 16 mm film, and hand-processed and destroyed archival footage with cinematic film clips—Sanzgiri sheds light on the entangled relationships among historical figures in Goa, Mozambique, Angola, and Guinea-Bissau.

Brooklyn Museum

Two Refusals (Would We Recognize Ourselves Unbroken?) (2023) takes Portugal's oldest work of epic poetry, *Os Lusíadas (The Lusíads)*, as its entry point. In the film, a woman's dreams become haunted by the mythological titan from the *Lusíads* called the Adamastor, a giant storm cloud that forms on the Cape of Good Hope and seeks to destroy Vasco da Gama's ship, to prevent the explorer from reaching India. The film simultaneously reframes the Adamastor as a figure of anti-colonial revolt and confronts its ultimate failure.

Sanzgiri sets the stage for his film with a mixed-media sculpture titled *Red Clay, Stretched Water (Return to the Source)* (2023). Standing in a basin of water, the large assemblage combines artifacts, images, and ephemera from the artist's research across planes of bamboo scaffolding. The work echoes the imagery of the exhibition's central film, situating the visitor in the historical and geographical moment presented by Sanzgiri.

Alongside the sculpture is a 16 mm film projection of a red banner reading "YOUR HISTORY GETS IN THE WAY OF MY MEMORY," blowing across an ocean landscape. The line is borrowed from Kashmiri American poet Agha Shahid Ali's 1997 poem "Farewell." Sanzgiri's CGI-animated work, a version of which is displayed as the mural on the UOVO Brooklyn building, explores how lived experience and memory are often erased by official national histories upholding fixed identities.

In February, Sanzgiri was announced as the winner of the fourth UOVO Prize, an annual award given to an emerging Brooklyn artist to encourage their practice and increase visibility of their work. Sanzgiri is the first filmmaker to receive the award. Winners receive a solo exhibition at the Brooklyn Museum, a fifty-square-foot mural on the facade of UOVO's facility in Bushwick, and a \$25,000 unrestricted cash grant. Previous UOVO Prize winners are John Edmonds, Baseera Khan, and Oscar yi Hou. *Suneil Sanzgiri: Here the Earth Grows Gold* is on view in the Brooklyn Museum's Ingrassia Gallery of Contemporary Art through May 5, 2024, and Sanzgiri's mural, titled *My Memory Is Again in the Way of Your History (After Agha Shahid Ali)*, is on view at UOVO's Brooklyn facility until July 2024.

Suneil Sanzgiri: Here the Earth Grows Gold is organized by Drew Sawyer, Sondra Gilman Curator of Photography at the Whitney Museum of American Art (formerly Phillip and Edith Leonian Curator of Photography, Brooklyn Museum), with Imani Williford, Curatorial Assistant, Photography, Fashion and Material Culture, Brooklyn Museum.

The UOVO Prize is made possible by



About the Artist

Suneil Sanzgiri's work has been screened extensively at festivals and arts venues around the world, including the International Film Festival Rotterdam, New York Film Festival, Hong Kong International Film Festival, True/False Film Fest, Sheffield Doc/Fest, Doclisboa, Viennale, e-flux, REDCAT, Menil Collection, Block Museum, MASS MoCA, moCa Cleveland, Le Cinéma Club, and Criterion Collection. He has won awards at the BlackStar Film Festival, Open City Documentary Festival, Images Festival, Videoex, and more. In addition to Sentient.Art.Film's inaugural Line of Sight Fellowship, Sanzgiri has completed residencies and fellowships at SOMA, MacDowell, Pioneer Works, and Flaherty NYC. His work has been supported by grants from Creative Capital, the Jerome Foundation, NYSCA, Field of Vision, and the Foundation for Contemporary Arts. He was named one of the "25 New Faces of Independent Film" in *Filmmaker* magazine's fall 2021 issue and was included in *Art in America's* "New Talent" issue in 2022. Sanzgiri graduated from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) with a master of science in art, culture, and technology in 2017. He is currently working on his first feature-length film.

About UOVO

UOVO is the nation's leading storage and logistics provider for art, fashion, archives, and collectibles, with state-of-the-art facilities in New York, Delaware, Florida, California, Colorado, and Texas. Founded by collectors who sought

a new standard of care for artworks, UOVO is operated by an expert team of industry professionals and offers bespoke solutions to meet the specialized needs of any collection. UOVO's services include climate-controlled storage, private viewing galleries, local transportation, international shipping, installation, packing, archival photography, digital inventory management, art finance, optional loss protection, and more. To learn more about all that UOVO has to offer, visit uovo.art.

About the Brooklyn Museum

The Brooklyn Museum contains one of the nation's most comprehensive and wide-ranging collections, enhanced by a distinguished record of exhibitions, scholarship, and service to the public. The Museum's vast holdings span five thousand years of human creativity from cultures in every corner of the globe. Collection highlights include the ancient Egyptian holdings, renowned for objects of the highest quality, and the American collections, which are unrivaled in their diversity, from Native American art and artifacts and Spanish colonial painting, to nineteenth- and early twentieth-century American painting, sculpture, and decorative objects. The Museum is also home to the Elizabeth A. Sackler Center for Feminist Art, which is dedicated to the study and exhibition of feminist art and is the only curatorial center of its kind. The Brooklyn Museum is both a leading cultural institution and a community museum. Located in the heart of Brooklyn, the Museum welcomes and celebrates the diversity of its home borough and city. Few, if any, museums in the country attract an audience as varied with respect to race, ethnicity, socioeconomic status, educational background, and age as that of the Brooklyn Museum.

IMAGE: Suneil Sanzgiri (born Dallas, Texas, 1989; active in Brooklyn, New York). Still from *My Memory Is Again in the Way of Your History (After Agha Shahid Ali)*, 2023. 16 mm film (color, silent): 1 min., looped. Courtesy of the artist