

Airspace Projects acknowledge the Traditional Custodians of the land on which we stand today, the Gadigal and Wangal people of the Eora Nation. We would like to pay our respects to their Elders, past, present and ever emerging. We would also like to acknowledge all other Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people who come to the gallery to participate in its program of exhibitions and events. Sovereignty was never ceded

No Man's Land

Raqiya Ahmed

12.1.24 – 28.1.24

Roti-making isn't necessarily always a coming-of-age for young Indian girls.

It was, and still is, about finding safety, solace, and solitude amongst female companions without the scrutiny and shame of a surveillant man. The kitchen is an underground confessional for women to consult and confide in one another. It's where we whisper secrets.

Parallel cinema exposes them.

Unlike classic noir films seen in Hollywood, Mani Kaul de-sterilised these controlled black-and-white monotonies in a naturalist way in *Uski Roti* (1969) to unapologetically dissect taboo issues while ordinary household chores were completed. At its most tense yet relaxed, the minimalist dialogue about sexual assault over roti-making pacified the Brown domestic struggle.

Kaul had privileged plotless narratives to subversively prioritise silence, agricultural landscapes, and the ambience through unhurried shots. In particular, Kaul's shots linger on hands, and I extend this homage and tribute to working-class Brown women and their unyielding dexterity through the fabric poem, 'Leavening Agent' (2023).

The director cleverly uses the theatrics of, what seems to be, flour to represent a snowy storm the wife, Balo, endures as she sleeplessly waits by the bus stop into the night for her cheating husband, just to give him roti. Her heels bleed, the pain is passive and her perseverance mute. By fleshing her experience through words, and the contents of war acting as the extended metaphor, the labour behind making roti encapsulates our sanctuary as a warzone too.

Refurbishing the old is inspired by, and credited to Karla Dickens' practice expressed in her exhibition *Embracing Shadows*. Dickens purposefully preserves found objects for years so they collate rust and dust for an industrial aesthetic, privileging the working class.

I hope the recycled hotpot, tawa and tea towel obscured by the installed barbed-wire does its part in reflecting a pacified, domestic struggle.

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