

April 13th –  
August 26th  
2018

# SUBODH GUPTA

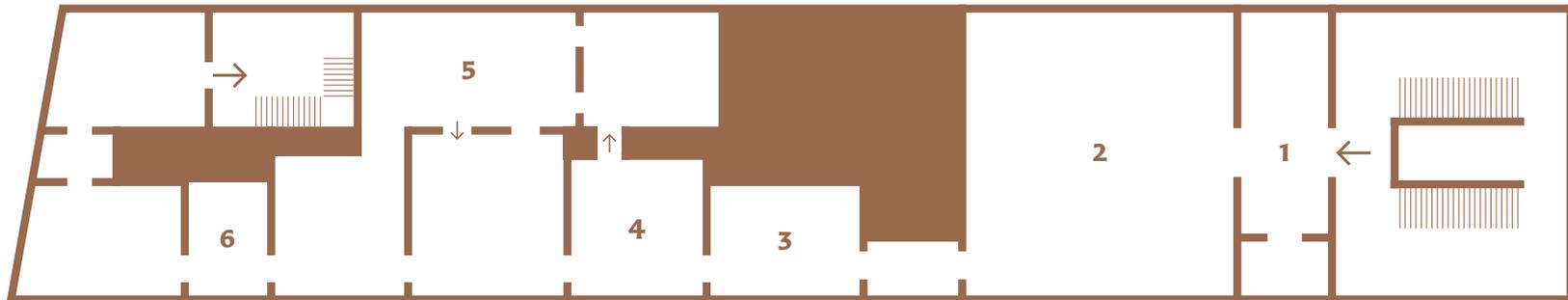
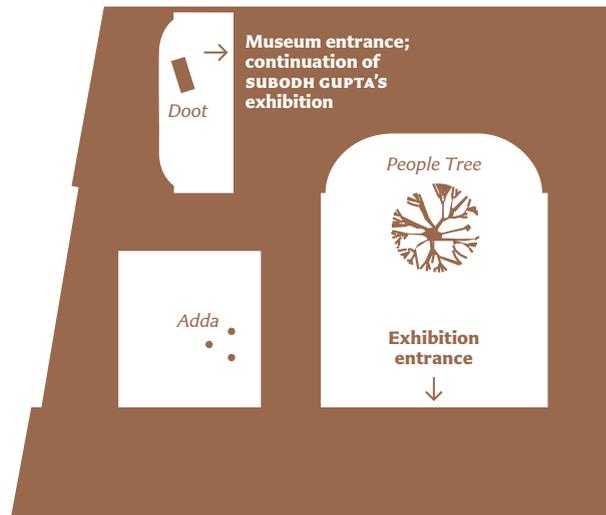
Adda / Rendez-vous



## EXHIBITION

1. The Language of the Ordinary
2. Insatiable God
3. There Is Always Cinema
4. The Gods Are in the Kitchen
5. Travel and Exile
6. Celestial Bodies

## IN THE COURTYARDS



The visual strength of Subodh Gupta's sculptures has granted him a leading position on the international art scene. The artist considers each and every of his works as an accumulation: his personal story adds to the history of India, where he lives; as well as that of the many countries he travels to. It extends to his surrounding environment on which he casts a critical, often political eye. His recent work goes so far as to evoke the history of spirituality and cosmos.

From the smallest ones – objects on the scale of the hand – to the largest: a monumental metal tree planted on the cobblestones of la Monnaie's courtyard; or from the art of cooking to the universe, the artist offers a journey made of sound and vision, for which all five senses are finally summoned. Gupta's first French monographic exhibition showcases the diversity of his oeuvre – as much cooked as it is sculpted – in which both his erudition and antique

hunter curiosity take form, alongside his talents as a painter or as a performer.

Since the 1990s, stainless steel has been the artist's medium of choice. It alludes to the kitchenware found in every Indian home, where sparkling dishes appeared in the 1970s, quickly becoming a prosperity symbol for the middle class. These are utensils his family didn't have the means to acquire and that remained the symbol of a paradox for him: if a majority of Indian families own them, the resources to fill up them every day are sometimes lacking. For Gupta, this tension between container and content serves as the metaphor of a concern for consumer society's outcasts; for economic exiles in particular, that must content with the crumbs of a feast from which they are excluded. Dishes also refer to the meal as one of humanity's fundamental opportunity for encounters; a moment of civilization at its finest: the "rendezvous" which gave the exhibition its title.

## 1. The Language of the Ordinary

Subodh Gupta exhibits everyday objects, both iconic and banal, as art works of his own. *Unknown Treasure* (2017), hanging above the Grand staircase, gives the signal for this. Found objects are pouring out from a bronze pot as if it were a horn of plenty. The pot itself is an enlargement of a *handi*, a traditional Indian kitchen utensil.

The artist confounds our eye by reproducing bronze trompe-l'oeil elements that have marked his daily life, such as mangoes that are plentiful in the summers in India, or the dough used to prepare traditional bread. *Oil on Canvas* (2010) draws on the same illusionist logic, but not without irony, as it alludes to the archetypes of Minimalism. With *Jutha* (2005), the artist used and stained dishes lying in sinks with a faint sound of dishes being washed playing in the background, evoking the complexities surrounding cleanliness and purity in eating and cooking. Lastly, *I Go Home Every Single Day* (2004-2014) traces the artist's journey from his current studio in Delhi to Khagaul, the town where he was born, in Bihar, during which he captures scenes from the everyday while the images accelerate or slow down to the tempo of the train.

## 2. Insatiable God

With *Very Hungry God* (2006) – the evocation of an increasingly universal vanitas, voracious and insatiable – Gupta seizes the spiritual dimension of food. The work takes the form of a skull that has been created with hundreds of gleaming stainless steel utensils, the kind used in the majority of lower and middle class families' kitchens in India. The piece embodies the disturbing duality of alluring excess, on the one hand, opposed to crippling starvation on the other, which result directly from the capitalist modes of production.

The artist showed this work for the first time during the 2006 edition of *Nuit Blanche*, in Saint-Bernard Church, famous for the struggles that had taken place ten years earlier when it was occupied by illegal immigrants. The church had then become a site of resistance and regular demonstrations against the expulsions ordered by the government.

## 3. There Is Always Cinema

Objects can also be released from their functions and put into a standstill by their transposition in bronze or brass. They hold stories, as the title of the piece, *There Is Always Cinema* (2008), reminds us. Galleria Continua in San Gimignano is located in an old cinema that was built after the Second World War. There, the artist discovered a room filled with defunct equipment; vestiges of the building's initial function (projectors, film reels, trolleys, projectionist's toilet, etc.). Gupta then manufactured complete metal replicas of these various objects and displayed them side by side with their original counterparts. Devising what he refers to as “emotionally charged pairs”, they form a commemorative space, which no doubt refers as much to the old Italian cinema as to the movie theatres of his childhood in India. As it is often the case in Gupta's work, several layers of narration coexist and unfold, stemming from the designation of objects as vehicles for identity and memory.

## 4. The Gods Are In The Kitchen

Food is at the heart of Subodh Gupta's work: he assembles and juxtaposes cooking utensils; films food preparation; curates performances about eating and ingestion; paints dishes with the remnants of a meal. The artist began using stainless steel dishes in 1996 and has continued to experiment with it since. Despite the diversity in Indian society, stainless steel cooking utensils can be found in every home. The artist is particularly interested in the glittery appearance of this inexpensive tableware symbolising prosperity, while there's an equally widespread struggle for parts of the population to fill these containers everyday. Gupta has since continued to weave links between container and content, like in the installation *Sister* (2005) in which empty containers are placed under the table, while, on it, instead of a meal, the video of a wedding banquet is projected, during which the guests dine standing up or sitting on the ground. The lunch boxes – *tiffin dabbas* – take up economic and political significance in *Faith Matters* (2007-2008) when they run empty and loop on a mechanical circuit. They evoke the Silk Road and symbolize global food transportation. In recent paintings from the series *In this Vessel Lie the Seven Seas; In It, Too, the Nine Hundred Thousand Stars* (2016), the utensils, deformed by cooking, are for Subodh Gupta comparable to stars.

## 5. Travel and Exile

Whereas *Two Cows* (2003-2008) is inspired by the regular distribution of milk, transportation is not simply a daily activity for Gupta. For him, representations of travel and transport are above all tied to notions of migration and exodus. In the video *All Things Are Inside* (2007), he captures the meagre personal belongings owned by Indian migrant labourers working in the Middle East as they prepare to return home to their families. On another screen, scenes from famous Bollywood movies feature a wide variety of bags. As these videos play side by side, the bags acquire a metonymic value, symbolising the entire life of their owners. In *Jal Mein Kumbh, Kumbh Mein Jal Hai* (2012), Gupta associates a boat – which, in the collective unconscious, represents migration as well as the passage to the netherworld – to pots, which represent the human body in the Sufi tradition. The precarious balance of the piece is rooted in the thought of the Sufi Kabir, a 15th century Indian poet: “Water is in the pot and the pot is in the ocean, Break the pot and the waters merge, Rarely do we ponder on this unification”

## 6. Celestial Bodies

*Pure* (1999), displayed in a kind of antechamber, is the oldest piece shown in the exhibition. It marks a turning point in Gupta's work. The body — his body, is there from the onset of his oeuvre, as evidenced by this performance where the artist covers himself with cow dung, a symbol of purification in India.

Subodh Gupta's recent works have turned to kitchen utensils as an allegory for the universe and cosmos, whereby the infinitely large is captured by the infinitely small. *Anahad* (2016) transforms an inaudible sound signal into an intense vibration that suddenly causes metal panels to quake. Onlookers see their reflection become distorted by the rhythm until the boundaries between self and surroundings dissolve and become one. The artist thus gives form to the Indian concept of the *anahad naad*: the cosmic vibration, a sound that has neither beginning nor end and transcends space and time. With *In This Vessel Lies The Philosopher's Stone* (2017), Gupta reactivates the myth of the philosopher's stone that can change all material into gold. In *Seven Billion Light Years* (2015-2016), a round of dough acts as a celestial body, moving in a space that's difficult to grasp until one understands it is in fact a trivial scene, that of bread making.

### WORKS LOCATED IN THE COURTYARDS AND IN THE MUSEUM

*The exhibition continues in the courtyards  
and in the TI Conti Museum.*

*PeopleTree* — the Indian national tree, the banyan tree — taken over by steel and whose leaves have become kitchen utensils, makes a transformation clear. The living becomes mineral, the organic is invaded by manufactured objects. *Adda*, which gave its title to the exhibition, is a kind of microarchitecture where one would meet to chat, debate or make decisions. With *Doot*, Subodh Gupta transfigures India's emblematic car, the Ambassador, by putting it to a standstill, exhibiting it as a work of art.

In the museum, several of the artist's works are shown and resonate with a thematic exhibition entitled "A dream of elsewhere" displaying the medal collections of la Monnaie de Paris around India. Finally, the medal produced by Subodh Gupta during his residency in la Monnaie de Paris' workshops, in February 2018 is shown. It revives a long tradition of our institution: that of collaborating with contemporary artists about our know-how.

## AROUND THE EXHIBITION

FRIDAY APRIL 13TH, 12AM  
“Departure to Ali Baba”  
Trip to Galleria Continua –  
Les Moulins to discover  
Subodh Gupta’s installation  
*Ali Baba*.

WEDNESDAY MAY 2ND, 7PM  
Duo visit: “Subodh Gupta”  
by Mathilde de Croix  
and “A Dream of Elsewhere”  
by Béatrice Coullaré

WEDNESDAY JUNE 19TH, 7PM  
Artist Talk: Subodh  
Gupta’s – in english

WEDNESDAY JULY 4TH, 7PM  
Tour of the exhibition  
by its curators

Entire program available  
at [monnaieparis.fr](http://monnaieparis.fr)

### FOR INDIVIDUAL VISITORS

EXHIBITION TOUR  
All public (from 12 years  
old), 90 minutes,  
Saturday and Sunday,  
11am; Wednesday, 7pm

### FAMILY TOUR

From 5 years old,  
60 minutes, Saturday  
and Sunday, 3pm

### FAMILY ACTIVITIES

Tuesday April 17th;  
Saturday May 5th;  
Saturday May 19th;  
Wednesday June 6th;  
Saturday June 16th,  
from 2pm to 4pm

Admission ticket for  
the exhibition gives  
access to the Museum  
on the same day.

### FOR GROUPS

Guided tours or  
independent groups,  
on reservation

### PRACTICAL INFORMATIONS AND BOOKING

[billetterie@monnaieparis.fr](mailto:billetterie@monnaieparis.fr)

11, quai de Conti  
75006 Paris

Opening hours: Tuesday  
to Sunday, 11am – 7pm.  
Wednesday until 9pm.  
Ticket desk closes  
30 minutes before  
the exhibitions closes

## EXHIBITION

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**Mathilde de Croix**  
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Translation



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