AGAINST EXTINCTION

AN INTERVIEW WITH SAHEJ RAHAL

Karin Zitzewitz

ABSTRACT

An interview with Mumbai-based contemporary artist Sahej Rahal discusses the potential of artificial intelligence-driven simulations and images to engage issues of temporality. The interview considers the AI simulation *Anhad* (2023), in which a tripedal figure is both driven by noises in the gallery and creates a haunting song with each step. It examines the implications of the work's juxtaposition of various modes of temporality within and beyond an Indian political landscape dominated by a Hindu nationalist, authoritarian regime. Moving to a suite of AI-generated still images called *Black Origin* (2022), the conversation assesses the challenge artificial intelligence makes to photography. It contextualizes those images as they were presented in an exhibition that both reflected on the seventy-fifth anniversary of India's independence and speculated about the country's future.

KEYWORDS

हद-हद करते सब गए. बेहद गयो न कोए. अनहद के मैदान में. रहा कबीरा सोए
Limits are all they speak of, and yet they dare not cross them,
I wait for you on the playground beyond those limits.
– Kabir Das, fifteenth-century poet and mystic

अनहद | *Anhad* | *The Unscalable* (2023) conjures a cybernetic ritual-site that confronts the limits of human scale against the immeasurable rhythms of sonic excess, opening pathways towards unscalability. The audience become active participants in this ritual, joined by non-human actors that present themselves as quasi-sentient beings driven by AI programs. Responding to audio feedback, a tripedal being is driven through a digital forest, with each foot carrying within it recorded notes of Hindustani classical music that modulate as the creature navigates the landscape. A narrator converses with the program, recollecting a tale of the world broken under the weight of measures. This audio feedback captured through a microphone, interrupts the movements of the creature causing it to change notes. Drawing upon the sonic chaos of the physical world, *Anhad* begins to generate an infinitely incomputable song, in a chorus of myth, machine, mind, and memory. *Anhad* unfolds at the cross-section of game design and storytelling, bending the constraints of each to create a regenerative and continuous ritual of mythmaking.

KARIN ZITZEWITZ: Anhad *[Fig. 1/Video 1] is the latest in your series of artificial intelligence simulations, through which you explore what might constitute life. At the center of each is an AI-driven being that uses machine learning to become better at navigating a landscape. Your experiments have led you to vary the form of the being, the computational motor of its movement, and the landscape in which it lives.* Anhad *is unique because of its relationship to music – here, the moves made by the figure also create a haunting song, which is set in* jugalbandi *(interactive duet) with a second voice.*

You begin this short introduction to Anhad *with a verse attributed to Kabir Das, a fifteenth-century poet who is claimed by adherents of both Sufism and Bhakti, which are Muslim and Hindu devotional practices, respectively. You invoke these words of Kabir's to introduce the concept of* anhad*, which you often translate as "unscalable", but which also means something like "without limit" or "infinite".* Anhad ke maidan*, a phrase in the second line of the couplet, could mean the "field of the limitless" or "the infinite playground". It could, in other words, refer to the Sufi "beyond", or the plane beyond rational thought that devotees seek to inhabit, because it is there that one comes closer to God. The first line of this couplet also comments upon a very human cowardice in the face of death, as life's most significant limit. All of this is quite provocative on its own, but it also brings to mind the definition provided by Arturo Escobar of the "pluriverse", a central concept of this*

special issue project: "The pluriverse refers to the idea of multiple worlds but also to the idea of life as limitless flow."[1]

Escobar draws his idea of multiplicity principally from models of Indigenous thought, among other sources, which he advocates for as tools for the decolonization of knowledge. And so, it is something of a coincidence that his phrase, "life as limitless flow", is so suggestive of the materials you draw on. How much does his idea resonate with you in your work with artificial intelligence, which explores questions of what constitutes sentient life?

It seems to me that Anhad, *from among your set of AI simulations, is the most connected to this "flow" by virtue of its use of Hindustani classical music, which is the central musical tradition of the northern portion of the Indian Subcontinent. As an aesthetic realm, music is often caught between its own rational sonic nature – the rules of music – and its association with alternative forms of embodied knowledge – as a window to the sublime. How would you like to introduce this set of issues with regard to your work?*

SAHEJ RAHAL: Thank you, Karin, for opening us off on such a fertile terrain, and for introducing me to Arturo Escobar's phenomenal work! I found this unbound conception of "life as limitless flow" – emanating across a multitude of worlds – mirrors what the Sikh poet Harinder Singh Mehboob (1937–2010) is describing when he says "utte raag aa", meaning, there is music above us.[2] Mehboob, here, envisions the entirety of being in a continuum of music, resonating across space and time. Humankind, he says, has separated itself from this song, by carving categories into the continuum, through language. By naming himself Man, he separates himself from the World, and by naming the Other, he separates even from himself. These segregations conjure up an architecture of exteriorities, measured against the Man's own finitude.

Today, the lacerations of Man fester under the rampancy of machinic intelligence bolstered by the data mining of mega-corporations that provide only the illusion of connection, and state surveillance. Machine learning facial recognition tech maps movements of individuals. Weaponized snoop-ware stalks and silences journalists and intellectuals. Far-right internet trolls band together as "Trads" to cheer on the return of a falsified past. Matchmaker apps like "Betterhalf.AI" use machine learning algorithms to produce cis-hetero couplings based on an individual's curriculum vitae – propelling hegemonies of caste and class into the selfie panopticons of the future. An image of a planet as computable clockwork is regurgitated, and, by extension, all that lies upon it become mere

[1]
Arturo Escobar, *Pluriversal Politics. The Real and the Possible*, Durham, NC 2020, 26.

[2]
Harinder Singh Mehboob, *Poetics. Part Seven of Sehje Rachio Khalsa*, transl. by Gurtarn Singh Sidhu, Delhi 2020.

cogs in the monster machine, codified, categorized, and cut away from the whole.

Yet the very tools lulling us into inactive spectatorship hold unlikely trapdoors that land upon the terrain of unscalability. Drawing upon the song speculated by Mehboob, *Anhad* reconfigures the same tools that measure the mind, to create immeasurable rhythms of sonic excess.

KZ: Escobar goes on to qualify the nature of the pluriverse, by saying that it "does not assume that worlds are completely separate, interacting with and bumping into one another like so many billiard balls. On the contrary, worlds are completely interlinked, though under unequal conditions of power."[3]

I recalled this definition when reading your introduction to Anhad, *which presents two contrasting temporalities, both of which you wish to oppose through the provocation of experimental artificial intelligence: one based in a Hindu nationalist Indian state, or Hindu Rashtra, that imagines itself as Sanatan, a state of religious purity that constitutes "the all-transcending order of time itself", and the other, a transnational condition based in "the rampancy of machinic intelligence bolstered by mega-corporations today, [which] threaten to subsume the faculty of all conscious experience". Both of these temporalities, though they coexist, insist upon their own singularity and/or dominance, setting up temporal plurality as a distinct challenge. And yet, Escobar reminds us that it is not so easy to resist. Where might we find resources to capture these other modes of time?*

SR: This plurality of worlds, which Escobar conjures upon a billiard table, reminds me of the Sufi conception of the world not governed by a singular truth, but a collection of fictions that pour into and upon each other. If we consider these enmeshments and linkages between worlds that Escobar suggests as a cartography of tunnels, trapdoors, and escape hatches, they become unmapped openings charted upon the pluriverse, through which all sorts of strange things can leak, creating feedback loops, and unsettling the locations of power that seek to concretize themselves, or to put it differently, replace the real.

Instruments of state bureaucracy, and manifestations of technology produced by capital, assert themselves as such. What we are witnessing is a war waged upon reality itself, one that seeks to subsume all pluralities within a singular normative order. Let's consider this in terms of machine intelligence, in which a series of determined inputs are entered to produce a determined outcome. This cascading determinism, consequentially, produces a conception of thought, mind, and being itself as codified, categorized, and computable in a series of "if" and "then" statements.

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[3]
Escobar, Pluriversal Politics, 27.

Bodies become agents of causality capable of only responding with reactionary impulse. Undergirding this system of cause and effect is the projection of a firm and unmoving cohesive reality. However, this claimant to the real is far from absolute, being prone to slippages, glitches, and hacks that reveal the porosities of its structures.

KZ: Your ultimate concern, as you put it, is that "what we are witnessing is a war waged upon the shape of reality itself". Escobar, for his part, argues that it is, in fact, most important to "counter this ontological politics with a different politics based on multiple reals – that is, on radical ontological difference and pluriversality".[4] Is that a useful strategy in the Indian context?

SR: Let us consider the Hindutva schematic of the Hindu Rashtra: a mythical country drafted upon Indian contours. Hindutva insists that it represents the authentic India, as the sole inheritance of present-day Hindus by virtue of their birth, and excluding all others.

This archaic theater of nation-building enacted under a singular religiosity is itself a Western import. Born out of the European experience, following an era of religious wars. Evident in the formulations of nationhood undergirding the work of Locke, Rousseau, and Hobbes, there lies an implicit agreement, that as per the natural course of history, Germany could only exist as Protestant Germany, England as Anglican England, and Spain as Catholic Spain.

The architecture of this political theology is essentially incompatible with the heterogeneous confluence of cultures that has come to shape the Indian society, through a broad range of faith experiences that range across polytheistic, pantheistic, henotheistic, monastic, animist, Sufi, nature-worshiping, and even atheistic practices.

To graft itself upon this multitude, Hindutva weaponizes state machinery in the form of cultural erasures, pogroms, false incarcerations, police action, and the enforcement of Cold War-era citizenship laws. Intellectuals, academics, journalists, progressives, and students who challenge the state are systematically targeted and jailed with the silent sanction of the Supreme Court.

Under the virulence of Hindutva, the state now imagines itself as Sanatan, the temporal order of history itself. Absolute, eternal, and unmoving. It takes the shape of the trench, the roadblock, the endless spools of barbed concertina wire that lace the horizon lines of New Delhi. A temporal barricade, denying movement to all who seek to trespass the end of history.

Within this trapdoor of collapsing time, however, resistance has reconstituted itself in unscalable proportions of myth. A thousand eyes gather at Shaheen Bagh, where Muslim women, old and young, refused the imposition of the national register of citizens. At Jama

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Ibid., 15.

77

Masjid, a thousand hands rose in unison with the revolutionary Chandrashekhar Azad, holding the Indian Constitution against the sky. At the borderlands of the national capital, Sikh farmers were joined by citizens from across the nation to challenge the unconstitutional agrarian reform laws.

The gathering masses soon became the largest protest movement in the history of human civilization, withstanding storm, heat, plague, and expired teargas shells, for eighteen months, forcing the state to repeal the laws. Together, they became what the poet Harinder Singh Mehboob once described as Khalis Kudrat. An absolute force of nature residing beyond historical time, returning to challenge it with the turbulence of revolution.

KZ: Indian intellectual debates, especially those understood as "post-colonial studies", have identified as "subaltern" those actors whose thinking escapes colonial modernity, but typically argue that their voices are successfully excluded from power. An important recent piece by South African intellectual Suren Pillay has outlined how this sense of foreclosure has been opposed by thinkers who disdain the post-colonial *approach in favor of a* decolonial *one.[5] Like the student activists Pillay describes, these writers seek out, to propose a few examples, the Indigenous traditions of the Americas or Dalit life in India for imaginative resources for thinking otherwise.*

In essence, these thinkers struggle with the relationship between imagination and the workings of power. This question seems important to your project, which acknowledges colonial entanglement while exploring the political potential of radical difference not only through Harinder Singh Mahboob's Sikh thought, but also through Jalalul Haq's critique of caste, which he locates within Indian philosophy.[6] Published first in 1997 but reissued in 2022, Haq's highly imaginative text suggests that the critique of caste is best done through Indian thought categories – i.e., it should be pursued on the grounds of philosophy.

Your simulations of life deliberately undermine the central metaphors of caste hierarchy, an alignment of power and knowledge in which, as Jalalul Haq argues in The Shudras:

> *Inequality was ingrained as the natural result of the circumstances of one's birth; liberty, a privilege of the elite; and justice was simply another name for deep injustice, and the denial of equality and liberty. Varna, or the contingency of one's birth, was the dominant and all-encompassing idea, and any conceivable disturbance (in the forms of intermixing of castes) in this*

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[5]
Suren Pillay, The Problem of Colonialism. Assimilation, Difference, and Decolonial Theory in Africa, in: *Critical Times* 4/3, 2021, 389–416. See also Kajri Jain, Spooky Art History (or, Whatever Happened to the Postcolonial?), in: Tatiana Flores, Florencia San Martín, and Charlene Villaseñor Black (eds.), *The Routledge Companion to Decolonizing Art History*, Abingdon/New York 2023, 315–330.

[6]
Jalalul Haq, *The Shudra. A Philosophical Narrative of Indian Superhumanism*, Delhi 2022 [1997].

system (varna-sankara) was a personal tragedy and a collective disaster.[7]

How does your work resonate with this critique?

SR: The exclusionary imperative of the Hindu nation state, as Jalalul Haq elaborates, is premised on an eschatological framework that subsumes the human subject within the violent metaphysics of the caste system. The peculiarity of caste is such that, unlike other forms of bigotry and oppression, it is premised on a purely metaphysical belief system. An elaborate mythology imagines that at the center of the universe lies the body of the cosmic patriarch, the Vishwa Purusha. His head gives birth to the high caste Brahmins, his shoulders become the warrior caste Kshatriyas, his thighs become the Vaishya – the merchant castes, and from his feet the low castes are formed.

Mirroring the Cartesian theater of being upon which the many follies of the West have been enacted, the scissor of caste lends the mind primacy over the limb. The high-born Brahmins become "superhuman", having heaven-ordained access to power in the material realm. Conversely those born from the limb become subhuman, in a mythological system of oppression that is aimed towards those who find themselves at the bottom and outside the metaphysical hierarchy of caste.

If we attempt to locate the figure of the human within the Hindu state, she is nowhere to be found. Instead, we are met with a hollow shell that has been exhausted of all agency through a series of lacerations inflicted upon subject and society, upon state and citizen, upon myth and memory, and upon mind and limb. The faculty of reason, when located within confines of this disarticulated body, is merely an instrument of sectarian polemics.

Through my experiments with the AI programs, I chanced upon a possible suturing of these disarticulations, drawing upon the work of philosopher Reza Negarestani, in his explorations of Inhumanism and its revisionary potentialities.[8]

The Inhuman, as Reza elaborates, relocates reason as "alien vector" within the dissected body of humanism itself. It does so by framing the capacity for reason as an abstract protocol that is not intrinsic to the human, but has been functionally implemented by the techno-linguistic infrastructure of human culture. This revision, by extension, reconstitutes the idea of freedom as an "insurrectionary force" that has bootstrapped itself out of evolutionary pre-adaptations and reformatted the human species as a suitable processing platform.

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[7]
Ibid., 253.

[8]
Reza Negarestani, The Labor of the Inhuman, Part I: Human, in: *e-flux* 52, 2014 (August 24, 2022), and Part II: The Inhuman, in: *e-flux* 53, 2014 (August 24, 2022).

Anhad stages a possible dialogue with this insurrectionary force of revision. We find ourselves, perhaps, as the last humans, witnessing an unfolding AI simulation. Behind the lens of an AI controlled camera framing the action, we follow a black tentacled creature wandering within a virtual biome; an arid landscape bleached in saffron fog, with overgrown mushrooms and mangroves, tearing through the digital sands. This being is not driven by a single brain but a collection of multiple AI scripts that are attached to the virtual bones within its calcified petroleum body and act as "proto-minds" that calculate, infer, and collectively recalibrate the movements of the creature.

Each script/mind is capable of "listening" to the physical world outside the program as well, by picking up audio cues through the computer's microphone. As a result, within the body of this petro-being, the hierarchy of mind and limb has collapsed, making them indistinguishable from each other in a complete recalibration of human senses.

Each run of the simulation is distinct. In some instances; when audio inputs of a certain intensity are registered, the creature begins bowing, kneeling, and unfurling and on rare occasions, diving beyond the bounds of the virtual world. As the weight of the creature shifts upon its tentacles, a note of an abstracted *raag* (musical scale) is fired, recorded in the voice of my friend Niyati Upadhya. With each step, the song begins to modulate as new notes are triggered, and when the weight of the creature is held upon two legs simultaneously, their notes begin to harmonize.

This music of minds that *Anhad* conjures emerges out of a chaotic feedback loop that spirals between sound and script. The simulation chooses how it responds to external sounds, as if it were driven by inhuman will, entirely outside of my hands.

KZ: Now, let's turn toward Black Origin *(2022), your portfolio of AI-generated images [Fig. 2–Fig. 11], and the way that they prompt us to look a bit more closely at AI as a representational mechanism and how it works. I am reminded of Harun Farocki's idea that the computational image is displacing the photographic or filmic images that had been at the center of his own work. As he notes,*

> *strange new images, which are somehow on the verge of competing with and defeating finally the cinematographic, photographic image, so that the era of reproduction seems to be over, more or less, and the era of construction of a new world seems to be somehow on the horizon − or not on the horizon − it's already here.[9]*

I wonder if you agree, or if your work might contest this point. Your images are so self-consciously filmic, referring as they do to the

9
Harun Farocki, Cinema, Video Games and Finding the Detail, Tate Shots, 2016, *YouTube*, April 15, 2016 (August 24, 2022).

Sahej Rahal, Black Origin, 2022, digital collage generated using AI program, Courtesy of the
artist and Chatterjee & Lal, Mumbai.

[Fig. 3]
Sahej Rahal, Black Origin, 2022, digital collage generated using AI program, Courtesy of the
artist and Chatterjee & Lal, Mumbai.

[Fig. 4]
Sahej Rahal, Black Origin, 2022, digital collage generated using AI program, Courtesy of the
artist and Chatterjee & Lal, Mumbai.

[Fig. 5]
Sahej Rahal, Black Origin, 2022, digital collage generated using AI program, Courtesy of the
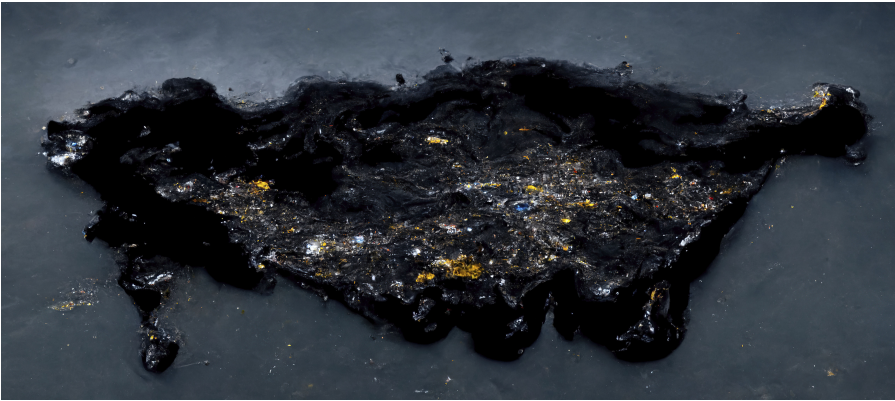artist and Chatterjee & Lal, Mumbai.

84

[Fig. 6]
Sahej Rahal, Black Origin, 2022, digital collage generated using AI program, Courtesy of the
artist and Chatterjee & Lal, Mumbai.

[Fig. 8]
Sahej Rahal, Black Origin, 2022, digital collage generated using AI program, Courtesy of the
artist and Chatterjee & Lal, Mumbai.

87

[Fig. 9]
Sahej Rahal, Black Origin, 2022, digital collage generated using AI program, Courtesy of the
artist and Chatterjee & Lal, Mumbai.

[Fig. 10]
Sahej Rahal, Black Origin, 2022, digital collage generated using AI program, Courtesy of the
artist and Chatterjee & Lal, Mumbai.

89

[Fig. 11]
Sahej Rahal, Black Origin, 2022, digital collage generated using AI program, Courtesy of the
artist and Chatterjee & Lal, Mumbai.

imaginative – constructed – space of science fiction. But even the found images that Farocki typically uses were themselves "constructed" in dialogue with historical forms of representation.

In our first conversations, we talked a bit about how you have begun to put more and more emphasis on the construction of landscapes – whether they reflect Indian coastal geographies, for instance. That made me reflect on W. J. T Mitchell's fantastic history of landscape painting in relationship to imperialism. As he argues, "even the most highly formulaic, conventional, and stylized landscapes tend to represent themselves as 'true' to some sort of nature". He associates this with the "double semiotic structure of landscape – its simultaneous articulation and disarticulation of the difference between nature and convention – [...]" and concludes that

> *the historical narratives they generate, are tailor-made for the discourse of imperialism. [...] Empires move outward in space as a way of moving forward in time; the 'prospect' that opens up is not just a spatial scene but a projected future of 'development' and exploitation.[10]*

It occurs to me that the science fiction sources you draw upon most readily – Star Wars *with its Imperial Walkers and colonized Ewoks and* 2001: A Space Odyssey *with its plural evolutionary timelines – knowingly and very cleverly use idealized landscapes as a crucial representational tool.*

SR: If we were to examine the tools and techniques employed in the construction of perspective in the Western canon of landscape painting, we would be confronted with a horizontal line, moving anxiously towards us from the distant edges of time, and shattering upon the iron canvases of the Cold War. The projections of conquest that once lay at the far end of the picture plane now make incursions into all that was being projected upon. The flattening of this distance between the real and the represented gave birth to a claustromaniacal entity construed from a science of fictions, known to us today as multimedia advertising.

The algorithmically augmented economies of distraction that churn within this beast seemingly confirm Farocki's wager. However, I do not see them as absolute, given their propensity for glitches, hacks, and data leaks. These breakages appear across the structural framework of the systems, become fractures in the foreclosed futures they seek to establish.

The AI image-generation programs that I used to create the portfolio of otherworldly landscapes was fed images from my own website, and screenshots of my AI simulations and videos, creating a strange mirror, within the unfolding narrative universe underlying my practice. One could imagine this as the consequence of one

10

W. J. T. Mitchell, Imperial Landscape, in: id. (ed.), *Landscape and Power*, Chicago 2002, 7–34, here 16–17.

species of artificial intelligence attempting to comprehend another. Now the AI generators I'm using are still quite limited in the images they create. They are unable to reproduce hyperreal representations of what they are looking at, they are incapable of rendering accurate facial symmetry or differentiating between shadow and texture, or shape and contour. As a result, the generated images seem to carry a strange impressionistic quality, even while attempting photo realism. This game of code and mirrors ends up creating a visibly inconsistent and unreal version of reality, made up of divergences that resist the totalizing vision of a cohesive structure.

KZ: Indeed, these images, as well as the simulations, trouble the edges of artificial intelligence. They push us to contemplate both the productivities and the limits of these technologies, not to mention the parameters of sentience or what might constitute "the real". That reminds me, again, of Escobar's goals for pluriversal thinking, which are to free ourselves from the forms of knowing that ground the so-called real – structuring things, like the nature of time and space – in order to provide better resources for exploring what might be possible. Escobar's approach is to gather and explore cultural materials that might provide alternatives, and to do so as broadly as possible; your work shares this impulse. His imaginative exercise is political both in the sense of being engaged in questions of power and in the sense of attempting to bridge between imaginative possibilities and achievable strategies. That is the role he has taken on as a political anthropologist. Is it one you accept as an artist?

SR: Thank you so much for sharing this with me Karin, I'm really struck by this conception of "a gathering of the real" that underlies Escobar's pluriversal thinking. I'd like to share with you an event that unfolded recently where I saw this happen in a very physical sense. My fellow artist, Pratik Modi was recently invited to host an exhibition of his own work as part of an event called *People's Freedom 75*, which was organized by a group of progressive activist organizations in Mumbai. Pratik instead decided to open that conversation to a multitude of voices instead of doing a solo show. And together with him and more of our artist friends from Borivali, an area of the city with a thriving community of young artists, we organized an exhibition where we invited over eighty artists, theater performers, musicians, poets, and filmmakers, from all across the country to join us in examining the past seventy-five years of Indian independence, in order to reflect upon the history of people's movements that continue to shape and safeguard Indian democracy, and to collectively envision what comes next, both in an imaginative and in a material sense. The work that we received from them became part of a collectively created installation that, over the course of the five days of the event, was constantly transforming to move between a performance stage, a screening space, and a library. On the final day of the exhibition, we invited environmental activists and musicians who have been organizing the ongoing protests in Aarey Milk Colony to lead the day and speak of the ecological crisis

that is occurring in the heart of the city. To my mind, the event in its entirety became a gathering of realities that were unfolding upon each other.

We included my AI program *finalforest.exe* and the portfolio of AI-generated images, *Black Origin*, in the show. I was particularly excited to install the images on the entire length of the windows of the room. This made their scale mimic the horizon of the cityscape outside, creating a strange transposition of a flooded future upon the present, while *finalforest.exe* moved to the rising chants of *Azadi* (freedom) inside the building.

Sahej Rahal is a storyteller who weaves together fact and fiction to create counter-mythologies that interrogate narratives shaping the present. Rahal's myth world takes the shape of sculptures, performances, films, paintings, installations, video games, and AI programs, that he creates by drawing upon sources ranging from local legends to science fiction, rendering scenarios where indeterminate beings emerge from the cracks in our civilization. Rahal's participation in group and solo exhibitions includes the Gwangju Biennale, the Liverpool Biennial, the Kochi Biennale, the Vancouver Biennale, MACRO Museum Rome, Kadist SF, and CCA Glasgow. His AI simulations have been exhibited as part of WORLBUILDING Exhibition organized by Hans Ulrich Obrist at the Julia Stoschek Foundation, ACCA Melbourne, Akademie der Künste, Berlin. He is the recipient of the Cove Park/Henry Moore Fellowship, Akademie Schloss Solitude Fellowship, the Sher-Gil Sundaram Arts Foundation Installation Art Grant, the Digital Earth Fellowship, and the first Human-Machine Fellowship organized by Junge Akademie ADK.

Karin Zitzewitz is a specialist in the modern and contemporary art of South Asia. She is the author of *Infrastructure and Form. The Global Networks of Indian Contemporary Art, 1991–2008* (2022), *The Art of Secularism. The Cultural Politics of Modernist Art in Contemporary India* (2014), and *The Perfect Frame. Presenting Indian Art: Stories and Photographs from the Kekoo Gandhy Collection* (2003). She curated exhibitions by Pakistani artist Naiza Khan (2013) and Indian artist Mithu Sen (2014) for the Eli and Edythe Broad Art Museum at Michigan State University. Her research has been supported by the Alexander von Humboldt Foundation, the Paul Mellon Centre for British Art, the American Institute for Indian Studies, and the Fulbright program. She is a former Chair of the editorial board of *Art Journal* and *Art Journal OPEN*. Zitzewitz is Professor and Chair of the Department of Art History and Archaeology at the University of Maryland.