

C O L A - 2021
Individual Artist
Fellowships

City of Los Angeles Department of Cultural Affairs



Neha
Choksi

***Strata bouquet (uncertain allies)* makes reference to Neha Choksi's embodied personhood, in only the oblique way that all art objects refer back to their artists. Choksi's ongoing engagement with rock, stone, and the processes of extraction allow us to witness her interactions, holding, throwing, and kicking the material.**

Evidence of these acts can be read like handprints. Here, the invisible forces of tension and gravity, weight and balance, are at first more evident than the artist's labor. The artist's mark is the existence of the art object itself.

Choksi's installation emerges from a correspondence of material, physics, and rhythm. Seven tall canvases of slightly differing widths hang on the wall in stately formation. However, they escape categorization as "only" paintings or wall works: each canvas has a corresponding boulder placed several feet in front of it. These are connected by two elements: canvas straps, stretched taught at an angle, and steel strips, which lay flat on the ground. From each of the seven boulders, seven cylinders have been hollowed out with the extracted material used to make corresponding sets of pigments that color the straps and canvases. Each strap has been moved one panel to the right and passes through the cored holes, creating a visual and physical cohesiveness that plays with color and form, separation and connection. The widths of the straps have also determined the spacing of the canvases while the pigments made from crushing the extracted stone have been enhanced with other natural materials from the earth to mimic the color of the boulders. These illusionary interventions by Choksi disrupt simplistic divisions between nature and culture, the given and the made. The contrast of the straight lines of the canvas with the rough forms of the boulders similarly call attention to these binaries only to dispel them. The artist's body relies on time to make marks on these stones, just as the earth does.

This installation is a conceptual variant from Choksi's other work with stone, given that specifics of geographical origin are less important than their diversity of material, age, and location. Sourced across the United States, the different types of rocks are the result of disparate raw elements, earthly processes, and geological lifetimes. Human systems then make it possible for such boulders to exist for purchase, thus beginning their recognized entry into the realm of culture. The title—*Strata bouquet*—denotes this collapsing of time, space, and scale made possible by multiple interventions. The word *stratum* first emerged in the 16th century—in the age of Dutch painted still lives implied by Choksi's use of bouquet in the title—meaning to layer or cover, that is, a gesture performed. The etymology of the word constitutes a collapsing in itself, with *strata* containing simultaneous meanings established at various historical moments, pertaining to geology, surfaces and structures, social categorizations, and statistics.

The world increasingly bears the burden of our demands and our gaze. With this in mind, Choksi disturbs our assumptions regarding the organic and the manufactured by penetrating the solidity of a rock. Her pulverization of stone results in a slippage from nature to culture. Materially speaking, a painting is just pigment and art production demands the extraction of matter. In the dynamics of probing and

**Lives and works
in Inglewood, CA
and Bombay, India**

Education

MA, Columbia University, New York, NY, 2000

BA, University of California, Los Angeles, Los Angeles, CA, 1997

Selected Exhibitions

2021
Uncertain Allies, Kleefeld Contemporary Art Museum, Long Beach, CA (solo)

2018
Elementary, 18th Street Arts Center, Santa Monica, CA (solo)

Made in L.A. 2018, Hammer Museum, Los Angeles, CA (group)

2017

Faith in friction, Manchester Art Gallery, Manchester, UK (solo)

Liberty Matter, Commonwealth and Council, Los Angeles, CA (solo)

2016

The Future is Already Here—It's Just Not Evenly Distributed, 20th Biennale of Sydney, Sydney, Australia (group)

2015

Minds to Lose, Hayward Gallery Project Space, London (solo)

Selected Bibliography

Biswas, Allie. "Neha Choksi: Transformations necessitate lost pasts and renewals of future hopes," *Studio International*, 2017.

Dworkin, Craig. "We are all meat, striving to be human," *ART India*, 2015.

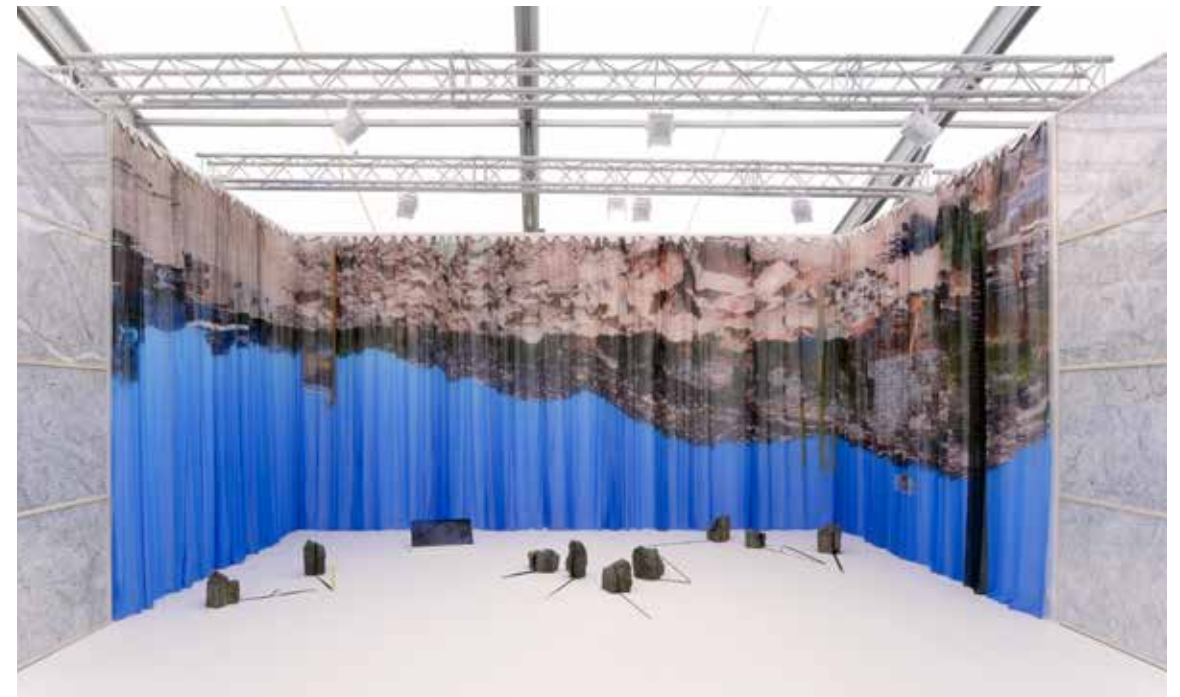
Chong, Sei. "Indian Artist Explores Absence Through Presence," *The New York Times*, 2013.

www.nehachoksi.com

making, reflection and representation, there exist the possibilities of both parasitism and reciprocity. Given this, what kind of allies can we, as artists, makers, and humans, be to the earth?

Ana Iwataki

Dust to Mountain (video still), 2016.
4K video installed on wedge at the angle of the artist's kick, sound, sheer fabric curtains. Dimensions variable, installed each time with unique curtain configuration.



Stone Breath Mountain Dust (installation), 2016.
Multimedia installation, Frieze, London.
Dimensions variable. Photo: Andy Keate.

The Weight of the Cave, (detail), 2016–2019.
Pulverized rock paint on hickory creek granite boulders. Dimensions variable.
Photo credit: Brica Wilcox.





Strata bouquet (uncertain allies), 2021.
Boulders, canvas, pulverized rock pigment,
earth pigment paint, stainless steel.
96 x 123 x 35 inches. Photo: Ruben Diaz.

Strata bouquet (uncertain allies) (detail), 2021.
Boulders, canvas, pulverized rock pigment,
earth pigment paint, stainless steel.
96 x 123 x 35 inches. Photo: Jake Courtois.



Strata bouquet (uncertain allies) (detail), 2021.
Boulders, canvas, pulverized rock pigment,
earth pigment paint, stainless steel.
96 x 123 x 35 inches. Photo: Ruben Diaz.