

BHAJAN HUNJAN  
CONNECTING WITH  
MARIA LUCIA CATTANI

P R O J E T O  
M A R I A L U C I A C A T T A N I

*Maria Lucia Cattani*



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M A R I A L U C I A C A T T A N I

*Maria Lucia Cattani*



Sara Roberts



Red - Algora  
18.5 x 16.5cm (20 x 20)

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Projeto Maria Lucia Cattani is an initiative aimed at continuing the artistic legacy of Maria Lucia Cattani (1958-2015) in several ways:

- The preservation and conservation of works in the artist's estate.
- Exhibitions and curatorship projects with the artist's works.
- Residency programmes for artists invited to work in the artist's studio and create a joint exhibition including works selected from the estate.
- The publication of print works with connections to the work of Maria Lucia Cattani, and also the continuation and development of the artist's unfinished works.



Projeto Maria Lucia Cattani has been developed by the artist's widower with advisors from the fields of history and preservation of documents, art history, curatorship, printmaking and publishing, and the special collaboration of Galeria Gestual and Museu do Trabalho in Porto Alegre, Brazil.

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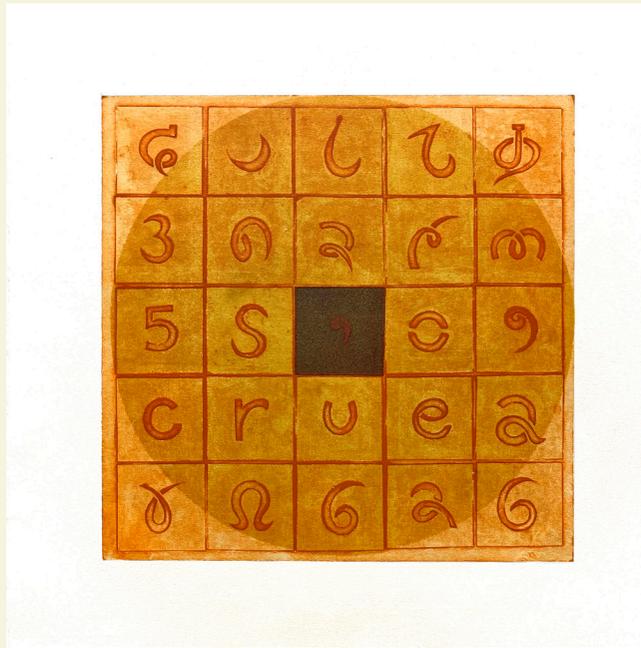
BHAJAN HUNJAN  
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Winchester School of Art Library  
February 1 - March 3, 2023

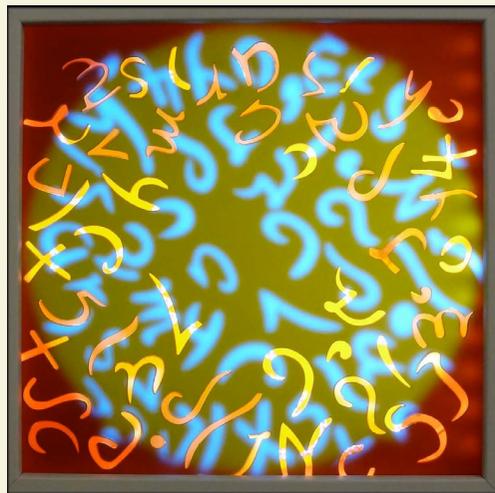
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PROJETO MARIA LUCIA CATTANI ARTIST RESIDENCY PROGRAMME

2020-2022



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- 2) Bhajan Hunjan  
**Orange Comma in Green Square.** collagraph and monoprint in oil on paper,  
34.5 x 35.5 cm, 1998 Collection Maria Lucia Cattani, Brazil
- 3) Bhajan Hunjan  
**Arranging rearranging / Floating text.** LED lit acrylic panel, 25 x 25 cm, 2015

**B**hajan Hunjan (b. 1956) was the 2020 Artist in Residence at Projecto Maria Lucia Cattani, Brazil. <https://www.marialuciacattani.com/projeto.html>

This initiative celebrates the life and work of the highly respected Brazilian artist, Maria Lucia Cattani, (1958-2015). Artist Nick Rands has invited a succession of artists and curators to respond to his late wife's work, to use her Porto Alegre studio and to mount joint exhibitions of their own work and hers, selected from the archive of her work.

Bhajan was invited in part because she knew Maria Lucia as a friend and fellow artist when they were both based in Reading in the 1990s, while Maria Lucia was researching her PhD at the University of Reading. There were parallels in their practice – both produced works on paper using a variety of print techniques (fig.2). Both were dedicated teachers – Maria Lucia as Head of Printmaking at University of Rio Grande do Sul in Porto Alegre, Brazil, Bhajan as an artist educator with young people of all ages creating temporary and permanent installations in schools and community environments<sup>i</sup>. Both had an enduring interest in architecture: Maria Lucia frequently used the wall as matrix and support alike, printing upon and carving into its surface, producing an immersive, sensory wraparound (4); Bhajan has made site-specific permanent features for external and internal spaces, frequently informed by the location and the local community (5). Each artist derived inspiration from their immigrant cultural backgrounds: Maria Lucia's family migrated from Italy to Brazil in the 19th Century; Bhajan's to England in the 1960s via Kenya from Punjab (now divided between India and Pakistan). They each acknowledge the influence of textile works and 'repetitive and patient' tasks undertaken by their women ancestors<sup>ii</sup> (6).

For the residency, due to Covid restrictions on travel, Bhajan was obliged to familiarise herself with Maria Lucia's work only through catalogue and web images. What is it like to investigate another's practice so closely, to examine their motivations and their influences, and yet have to do so at great distance and through the filter of reproduction? Bhajan studied reproductions closely and allowed their principles to inform a new



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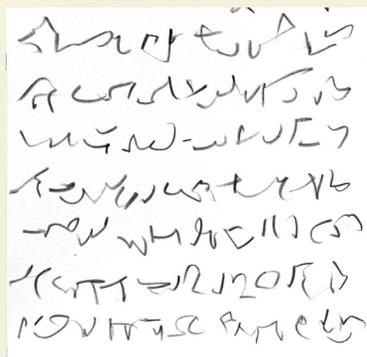


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- (4) Maria Lucia Cattani  
carving A5 P8, 5º Bienal do Mercosul 2005  
(5) Bhajan Hunjan *The Town Square*, Slough, 2008  
(6) Bhajan Hunjan *Dialogue II*  
Acrylic and embroidery on canvas, 156 x 214 cm, 1993



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area of practice. She found a language of soft mark-making which was derived from a spiritual connection with the work and from memories of the artist herself: a person of remarkable energy, warmth and generosity.

Bhajan focused on the 'script works' produced by Maria Lucia from the early 2000s, in prints, in laser-cut artworks, in books, and much later applied directly in ink upon the wall (10). Maria Lucia's script is highly distinctive, confident and delivered without hesitation, but intentionally illegible (7). Influenced by an early study of Sumerian cuneiform and entranced by the notion of a block as the bearer of a cursive form, she printed and overprinted in massed multiples, using colour and rotation in strict and not-so-strict 'systems' (17). These could cover an entire wall or be presented in small, folded book-forms or print on paper. She had been impressed by the beauty and 'neutral visual appeal' of Japanese script on her 2001 trip to Awaji, Japan, and in practices akin to the 'allusive field of writing' of Cy Twombly, the 'Patterned Utterance' of Susan Hillier<sup>iii</sup>, began to extend her mark-making into more script-like forms, presenting in horizontal lines, experimenting with marks made with both her right and left hand.

Bhajan chose to interact with this area of Maria Lucia's work, whilst making it very much her own. Deriving inspiration from Sikh Gurbani scriptures from the Punjab, and while listening to the sacred music often sung to specific ragas, Bhajan used a Gurmukhi script<sup>iv</sup> in a repetitious, meditative way, enjoying free, cursive mark-making. She says,

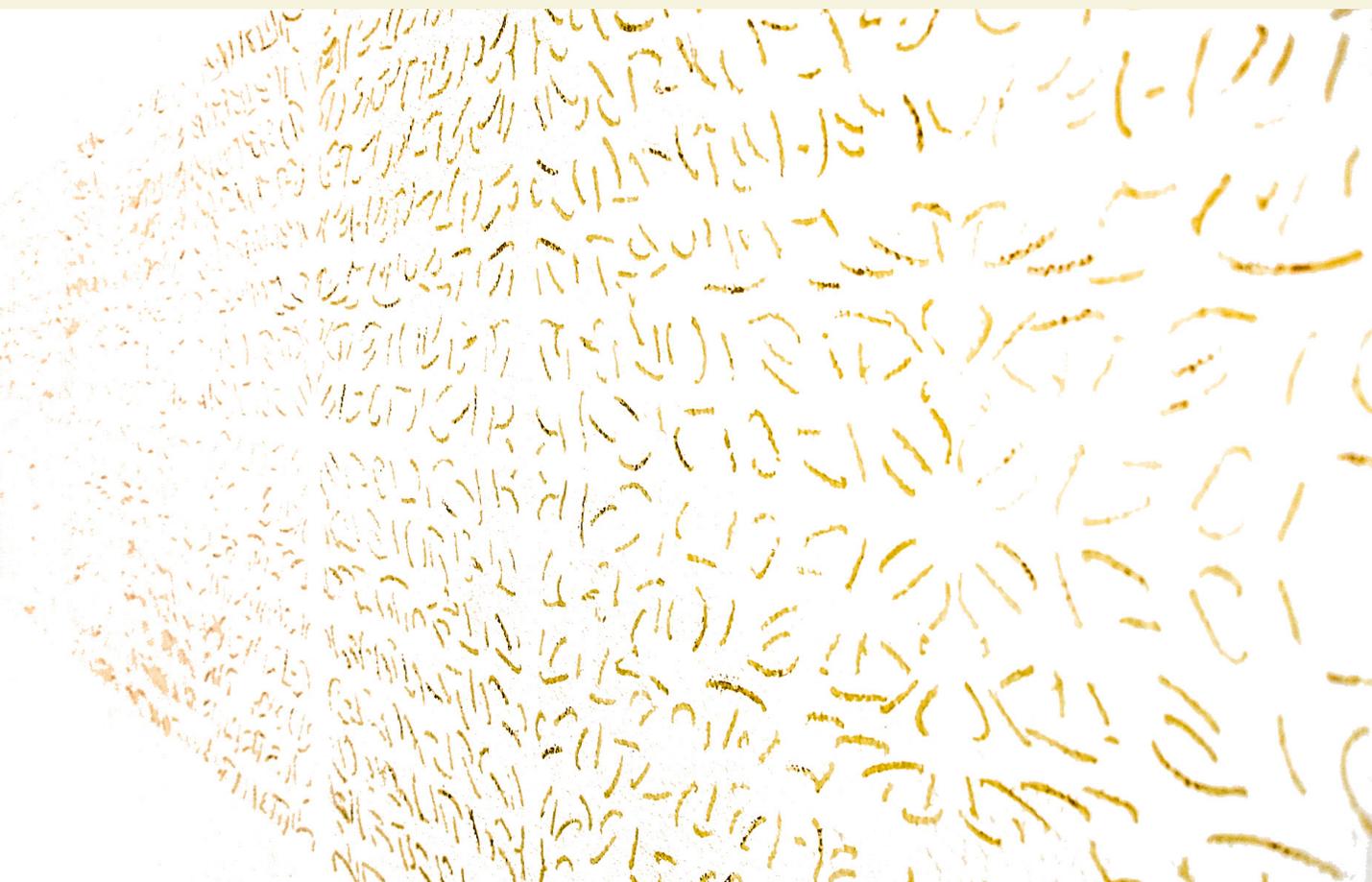
As I was writing them, I was trying to put across the essence of the sound (because for me they have a sound and meaning) and the inspiration and elation I feel when I listen to that sound.

Initially this was on a square support which was cut into smaller units (8). Before being used for relief printing (3 x 3 Linocuts, 2021) (9), this surface was disrupted and abstracted, through an intuitive but rationalised and numbered rearrangement inspired by Maria Lucia's systematic approach. What seems like simple repetition is disrupted by changes in colour and print pressure, systems of rotation, reduction printing and new pairings of cursive forms. Bhajan embraces accident as well as

7) Maria Lucia Cattani. study for writing on the waves. crayon on paper, 21 x 15 cm, 2013

8) Bhajan Hunjan. cutting drawing

9) Bhajan Hunjan. lino printing



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the structured approach of Maria Lucia: “You can be playful,” she says,

but at the same time there is strict process to it and that creates a different piece of work at the end of the day... I guess that’s the way our lives work – we think we have a plan, and we work through that plan in a very rational way, but where we end up is quite a surprise.’

In a less systematic and rotational way Bhajan printed longer and more fluid blocks of script, which in turn were repeated across multiple sheets of fine paper, and sometimes bound into book form. These are repeated prints and presented as multiples, but they are not

editioned; each one has a unique combination of density of inking; of harmonious and complementary pigment, in rich blues, reds and gold, in monoprinted ground colour and figured overprinting. Conjoined, they provide a rhythmic undulation, a punctuated repetition, where comparison is invited and sustained viewing is rewarded with a sensuous satisfaction. (11) (**Connecting Script**, linocut on monoprint on paper, and **Continuous Script**, linocut on Nepalese paper, both 2021).

Bhajan has said that her intensive study of Maria Lucia's work led her not only to further investigation into repetition and the creative use of script, but also to a revived interest in colour (19). As a result, the works from this residency resonate with rich pigment, deployed in complementary transparency and opacity, each applied layer of printing activating its neighbours and its bedfellows.

This correspondence, both material and intellectual, over time and over continents, is apt and richly satisfying. It is enacted between two women artists with a shared interest in print and paper, in repetition, in the power of script, whether legible or not, as a carrier of deeper and spiritual meaning. Bhajan Hunjan has risen to the challenge of a creative response with an intimacy of interpretation, and yet without imitation. She has devised a unique and meaningful visual language which remains creatively and culturally distinct whilst acknowledging and celebrating the work of another.

Sara Roberts

2019 Curator in Residence, Projeto Maria Lucia Cattani



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<sup>i</sup> <https://bhajanhunjan.com/about/> (accessed 2 December 2022)

<sup>ii</sup> Film 2, <https://marialuciacattani.wordpress.com/artist-diary-bhajan-hunjan/> (accessed 2 December 2022)

<sup>iii</sup> See Roberts, S., *Regras e Suas Exeções/Rules and their Exceptions*, Maria Lucia Cattani, in the monograph *Maria Lucia Cattani*, UFRGS, Departamento de Difusão Cultural, 2019.

<sup>iv</sup> The phonetic writing of Punjabi Sikhs derived from Guru Anghad in the early 16th C, written from left to right and phonetically; as opposed to Shahmukhi, a Perso-Arabic script first used by the Muslim Sufi Poets from the 12th C, written from right to left, currently used by Punjabi Muslims.

<sup>v</sup> Film 8, <https://marialuciacattani.wordpress.com/artist-diary-bhajan-hunjan/> (accessed 2 December 2022)



Bhajan's Hunjan's response to the work of Maria Lucia Cattani became what might be called a 'distance residency', with the artist working in her London studio and referring to written and visual information from the website and publications. On the page or screen, the image is transformed. Its scale changes, volume and texture are flattened. The relationship with the work can be both more distant and at the same time more intimate than with a first-hand encounter. You can sometimes look closer, and a succession of pages can offer glimpses of many works at more or less the same time. The reproduction may even seem 'better' than the real work – cleaner, not protected by glass, not surrounded by other people. The real work may even disappoint after hours spent looking intimately at its reproduction.



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If a painting is really wonderful in reproduced form, even a cheap reproduced form, it can still give off a lot of its magic (...) you can look at it at night, you can wake up and have a look at it in the morning. And it's giving off pleasure in strange ways that go on and on.<sup>1</sup>

David Hockney

At times Bhajan was unable to visit her studio as much as she would have liked. Other opportunities for teaching, workshops and residencies – the artist's main source of income – also intervened and expanded the project from three months to two years. A three-month residency period is often only the start to the production of a body of work that needs a longer and slower period of gestation. Bhajan's engagement with the project was both longer and more interrupted. Being able to return to reproductions, however, allowed for continued involvement.



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She made a series of short videos and photographs as she worked, demonstrating and discussing the development of her working process, her ideas, inspiration and creative practice. These videos can be viewed on the Maria Lucia Cattani website. Most of the quotations here have been transcribed and edited from those 'video diaries'.

Artists have always looked at other artists. It helps to situate oneself within a practice. It is part of studying what it is to be an artist, looking at how others before, or currently, address similar issues. Learning about art used to involve 'working from the masters', apprenticeship in an artist's workshop, copying in the National Gallery, drawing in the Victoria and Albert Museum's cast courts.

Bhajan Hunjan work in progress

13) lino blocks

14) linocuts in progress with illustration of Maria Lucia Cattani book, sete dias - one week

Bhajan mentions how student calligraphers would work with one master throughout their life and that "... over many many years it was really testing for the student because you had to shed your ego and you really had to concentrate." She made her own calligraphic drawings much as the student with the master (15 and 16).

The process began intuitively, starting with drawing.

I'm just going to feel my way through it and see what happens, because there's no point in having a big plan. It's going to be very intuitive. I will look at her work and see what I can create. So I'll be bouncing off ideas with her. I think that is the key here, to see what will happen, which will be an element of surprise.

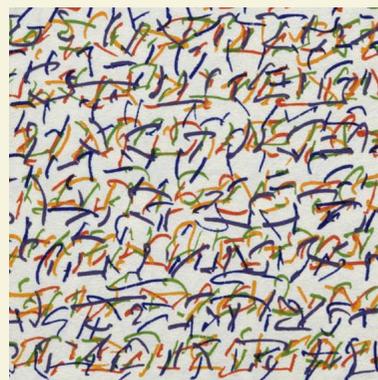
That initial drawing, with elements of script, was cut into square fragments and rearranged according to numerical systems (12). Deanna Petherbridge has written that earlier works were "mathematically ordered using significant clusters of numbers..."<sup>ii</sup>

We can juxtapose them in different ways to get a different work, and I guess that process was really important for Maria Lucia, because she almost had a mathematical kind of way in which she worked out things.

The marks that I made derived from the drawings I had done using specific letters from the normal Roman script and certain sounds. For me they are almost like meditative sounds that connect me with my inner self...

### From drawing to cutout to linocut, calligraphy, monoprint, books and libraries

Bhajan's interest in Maria Lucia's bookworks led to a brief bookbinding course and presentation of some of the prints in book form. Maria Lucia had made artist books since the early 1980s at least, sometimes stencilling pages directly onto walls as integral parts of in-situ works, such as *2 lados / 2 sides* (2008) (10). Her *Quadrantes / Quadrants* project (2008) used letterpress, inkjet print, drawing and bookbinding, and part of its subject matter included libraries in London and Porto Alegre where the work was subsequently displayed in vitrines (18). *Um ponto ao sul* (2011) involved the production of a series of laser-cut woodblocks printed over inkjet print, based on decorations in the Salão Mourisco of the Bibliobiblioteca Pública do Estado do Rio Grande do Sul in Porto Alegre (20).



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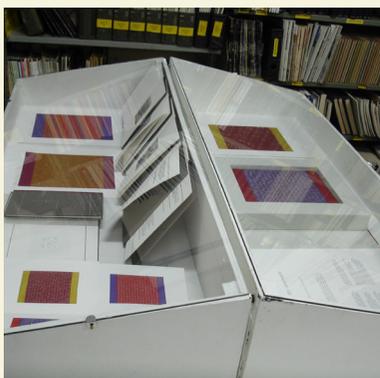
15) Maria Lucia Cattani untitled relief print (detail) 2011

16) Bhajan Hunjan calligraphic study after Maria Lucia Cattani, crayon on paper, 2021

17) Maria Lucia Cattani *8 pages*. bookwork injet and embossing on paper, 12.5 x 13 cm, edition 40, 1998



The work was displayed on music stands in the same room, and featured performance of an especially composed piano work by Celso Loureiro Chaves, *Um point ao Sul / Scattered Loves*, based on page 5 of the book. A smaller offset version of the book was produced in an edition of 1080, each containing a fragment from the original woodcuts used for the larger book. A copy of this edition was placed in every public library in the state of Rio Grande do Sul, Brazil.



Maria Lucia learnt about art history largely “from a great distance, through the filter of reproduction”<sup>iii</sup> often with poor quality reproductions in black and white, studying on the ‘periphery’ in the south of Brazil in the 1970s and 1980s. For Bhajan, looking at printed reproductions in books became the making of prints and books, the latter being a new process for her. The idea of making books led to thoughts of organising a display in a library setting, echoing Maria Lucia’s earlier library projects.

So it seems fitting that Bhajan’s residency, working from reproductions in books, should lead towards her own exploration of script and symbols – which have been common in her practice throughout her career – the production of printed pages and books, and display in a library.

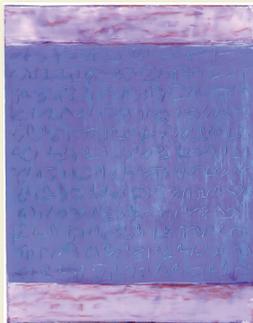
We are most grateful to Sara Roberts and Catherine Polley from Winchester School of Art at University of Southampton for their efforts and support in bringing this project to exhibition.

Nick Rands 2022

<sup>i</sup> Looking at pictures in a book, National Gallery, 1981

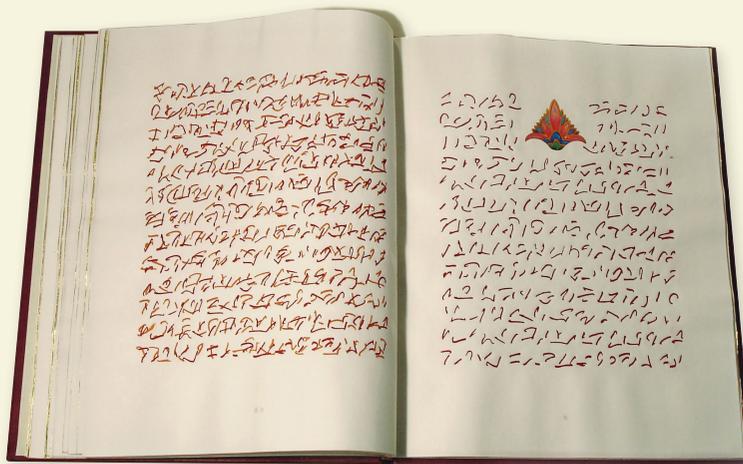
<sup>ii</sup> Colour Dialogues, Bhajan Hunjan. City of Bradford Metropolitan Council, 1994

<sup>iii</sup> Sara Roberts, in Bhajan Hunjan connecting with Maria Lucia Cattani, 2022



“...the colours, are just so, so beautiful...”

Bhajan Hunjan



19) Maria Lucia Cattani Seis sentidos sem sentido  
 Lasercut and oil on panel. Each panel 25 x 20 cm, 2009  
 20) Maria Lucia Cattani Um ponto ao Sul  
 Bookwork – lasercut woodblock print and inkjet on paper  
 24 pages, 29 x 20 cm, 2011



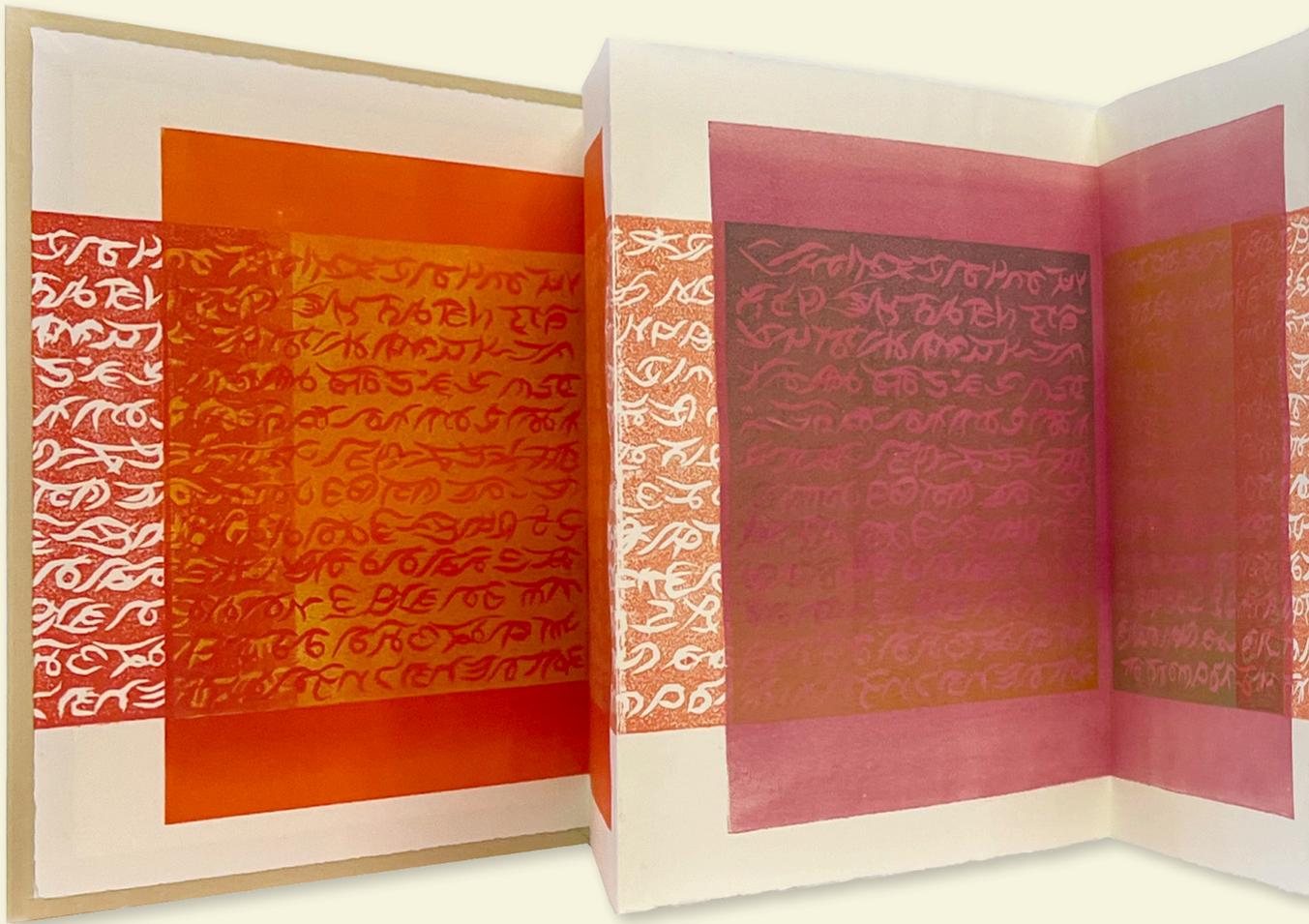














Handwritten text in white ink on a dark red background, likely a marginal note or a separate column of text. The script is highly stylized and appears to be a form of Indic script, possibly Devanagari or a related variant. The characters are dense and difficult to decipher due to the cursive style and the high contrast.

Main body of handwritten text in red ink on a gold background. The text is arranged in approximately 12 horizontal lines. The script is a highly stylized form of Indic script, possibly Devanagari or a related variant. The characters are dense and difficult to decipher due to the cursive style and the high contrast. The text appears to be a continuous passage, possibly a verse or a section of a larger work.

Handwritten text in Devanagari script, likely a religious or philosophical passage. The text is written in a cursive style on a yellowish background. The characters are somewhat faded and difficult to read precisely, but appear to be a continuous flow of text. The script is dense and fills most of the page area.

Handwritten text in Devanagari script, continuing from the main body of text. This section is written on a white background and is also in a cursive style. The characters are more distinct than in the main body, though still somewhat stylized. It appears to be a continuation of the same text.

Handwritten text in white ink on a textured orange background, arranged in vertical columns.

Handwritten text in red ink on a dark red background, arranged in vertical columns.

Handwritten text in Devanagari script, appearing to be a list or index of names and numbers. The text is arranged in approximately 12 horizontal rows. The first row contains a long string of characters, possibly a title or a specific name. Subsequent rows contain shorter strings, some of which appear to be numbers or identifiers. The text is written in a consistent, cursive style. The background of the page is a solid, light pink color. The text is written in a dark, reddish-brown ink. The overall appearance is that of a handwritten document or a page from a book.

Handwritten text in white on an orange background, likely a continuation of the text from the adjacent page. The script is a form of Indic script, possibly Grantha or Tamil, and is arranged in approximately 12 horizontal lines.

Handwritten text in dark blue or black ink on a dark red background. The text is arranged in approximately 12 horizontal lines and appears to be a continuation of the text from the adjacent page. The script is a form of Indic script, possibly Grantha or Tamil.

Handwritten text in a dark blue or purple ink on a brownish-gold background. The script is a highly stylized form of Devanagari, likely a shorthand or a specific dialect. The text is arranged in approximately 12 horizontal lines, filling most of the central rectangular area.

Handwritten text in white ink on an orange background. This text is also in a stylized Devanagari script, appearing as a vertical column on the right side of the page. It consists of approximately 12 lines of characters, mirroring the structure of the text on the left.

Handwritten text in white ink on a red background, consisting of approximately 12 lines of stylized script.

Handwritten text in red ink on a textured, light brown background, consisting of approximately 12 lines of stylized script.

Handwritten text in Devanagari script, appearing to be a list or index of names and titles. The text is arranged in approximately 12 horizontal lines across the page. The script is dark and appears to be written on a light-colored background. The text is partially obscured by a dark red vertical band on the right side of the page.

1. श्रीमद्गणेशाय नमः  
2. श्रीगणेशाय नमः  
3. श्रीगणेशाय नमः  
4. श्रीगणेशाय नमः  
5. श्रीगणेशाय नमः  
6. श्रीगणेशाय नमः  
7. श्रीगणेशाय नमः  
8. श्रीगणेशाय नमः  
9. श्रीगणेशाय नमः  
10. श्रीगणेशाय नमः  
11. श्रीगणेशाय नमः  
12. श्रीगणेशाय नमः









**Bhajan Hunjan** (Nanyuki, Kenya 1956) is a painter and printmaker who graduated from Reading University and the Slade School of Art.

Bhajan became associated with the politics and figurative work of the emerging Black British Art Movement in 80s-90s. Since then she has developed a very individual visual language of free-floating lines, symbolic colours and shapes, repetition and script motifs that draw upon both her Sikh heritage and fine art abstraction to encourage viewers to reflect on social, spiritual and emotional environments.

She works extensively on public art commissions often in concrete, metal and stone. These are always created through community consultation for site specific spaces, and often in collaboration with other artists and local women's groups.

Significant external projects include Peepul Centre Floorscape, Leicester, 2005; Town Square, Slough, 2008; and St Paul's Way, Tower Hamlets, London, 2012.

Recent projects include installation inside Stephen Turner's Exbury Egg (2021) made during her stay in Thamesmead as part of Bow Arts Artists' community in Thamesmead. She is also a committed artist educator working with young people and families to create site specific temporary and permanent installations.

Current projects include Residency on the Maria Lucia Cattani Project and Runnymede Explore/Stories Project with the National Trust. Bhajan was nominated for the Max Mara Prize for Women 2022-24, with the Whitechapel Gallery and Collezione Maramotti.

Public collections include: Cartwright Hall Art Gallery – Bradford Museums and Art Galleries; Print Rooms, British Museum; Peter Palumbo Art Collection; Reading Museum and Art Gallery, Reading University Art, Collection; University College London – Art Collection; Royal Brompton Hospital, London.



**Maria Lucia Cattani** (Garibaldi, RS, Brazil 1958-Porto Alegre, RS, Brazil 2015), studied Fine Art at Instituto de Artes, UFRGS, Brazil; Pratt Institute, New York, USA; University of Reading and University of the Arts London. Initially known as a painter and experimental printmaker in the 90s, she later produced work in film and video, installation and artist's books, which has been exhibited widely in Brazil and abroad.

Selected group shows include: **Proposições**, MARGS, Porto Alegre (2017); **Gravura em Campo Expandido**, Estação Pinacoteca, São Paulo, Brazil (2012); **Convergence/Divergence**, City Hall, Hong Kong, China (2012); **Electronic Literature Exhibition**, Brown University, RI, USA (2010); **7º Bienal do Mercosul**, Porto Alegre, Brazil; **pontos de contato – points of contact**, UFRGS, Brazil and Triangle Space, Chelsea School of Art, London, UK; **Dentro do Traco Mesmo**, Fundação Iberê Camargo, Porto Alegre, Brazil (2009); **Video Links Brazil – An Anthology of Brazilian Video Art**, Tate Modern, London, UK (2009); **Copa da Cultura**, St Elizabeth Kirche, Berlin, Germany (2006); **5º Bienal do Mercosul**, Brazil (2005); **Nagasarwa Artists**, Aoyama, Tokyo, Japan (2002); **Repetition**, Winchester Gallery, UK and Nuova Icona, Venice, Italy (1997).

Solo exhibitions include: **Regras e suas Exceções**, Galeria Gestual, Porto Alegre (2019); **writing on the waves**, Galeria Gestual Porto Alegre (2018); **Gestos e Repetições**, Pinacoteca Barão de Santo Angêlo, Porto Alegre (2016); **Algumas Pinturas**, Galeria Gestual, Porto Alegre, Brazil (2013); **Um ponto ao Sul**, Biblioteca Pública do Estado do, Rio Grande do Sul, Porto Alegre, Brazil (2011); **Pinturas e Múltiplos**, Galeria Gestual, Porto Alegre, Brazil (2009); **Quadrantes-Quadrants**, Camberwell College of Arts Library, Chelsea College of Art and Design Library, London College of Communication Library, London, UK and Biblioteca do Instituto de Artes da UFRGS, Porto Alegre, Brazil.

Public collections include: MAM-RJ, Brazil; MARGS, Porto Alegre, Brazil; Museu de Belas Artes, RJ, Brazil; Pinacoteca do Estado de São Paulo, Brazil; Tate Library Artists' Books Collection, London, UK; British Library, London, UK.

Images on pages 12 - 31

12-13 3 x 3 linocut 1 19 x 38 cm, 2020

14-15 3 x 3 linocut 2 19 x 38 cm, 2020

16-17 3 x 3 linocut 3 19 x 38 cm, 2020

18-19 **Connecting script book**

linocut on monoprint on paper 27.5 x 153 cm, 2022

20 -21 **Connecting script A1**

linocut on monoprint on paper 26.5 x 38 cm, 2021-22

22-23 **Connecting script A2**

linocut on monoprint on paper 26.5 x 38 cm, 2021-22

24-25 **Connecting script A3**

linocut on monoprint on paper 26.5 x 38 cm, 2021-22

26-27 **Connecting script A4**

linocut on monoprint on paper 26.5 x 38 cm, 2021-22

28-29 **Continuous script 1 and 2**

linocut on Nepalese paper 16 x 60 cm, 2022

30-31 3 x 3 linocut on archival paper 19 x 38 cm, 2020

Photo credits:

Bhajan Hunjan figs 1, 3, 5, 6, 8, 9, 11, 12, 13, 14, 16 and pp 30-31.

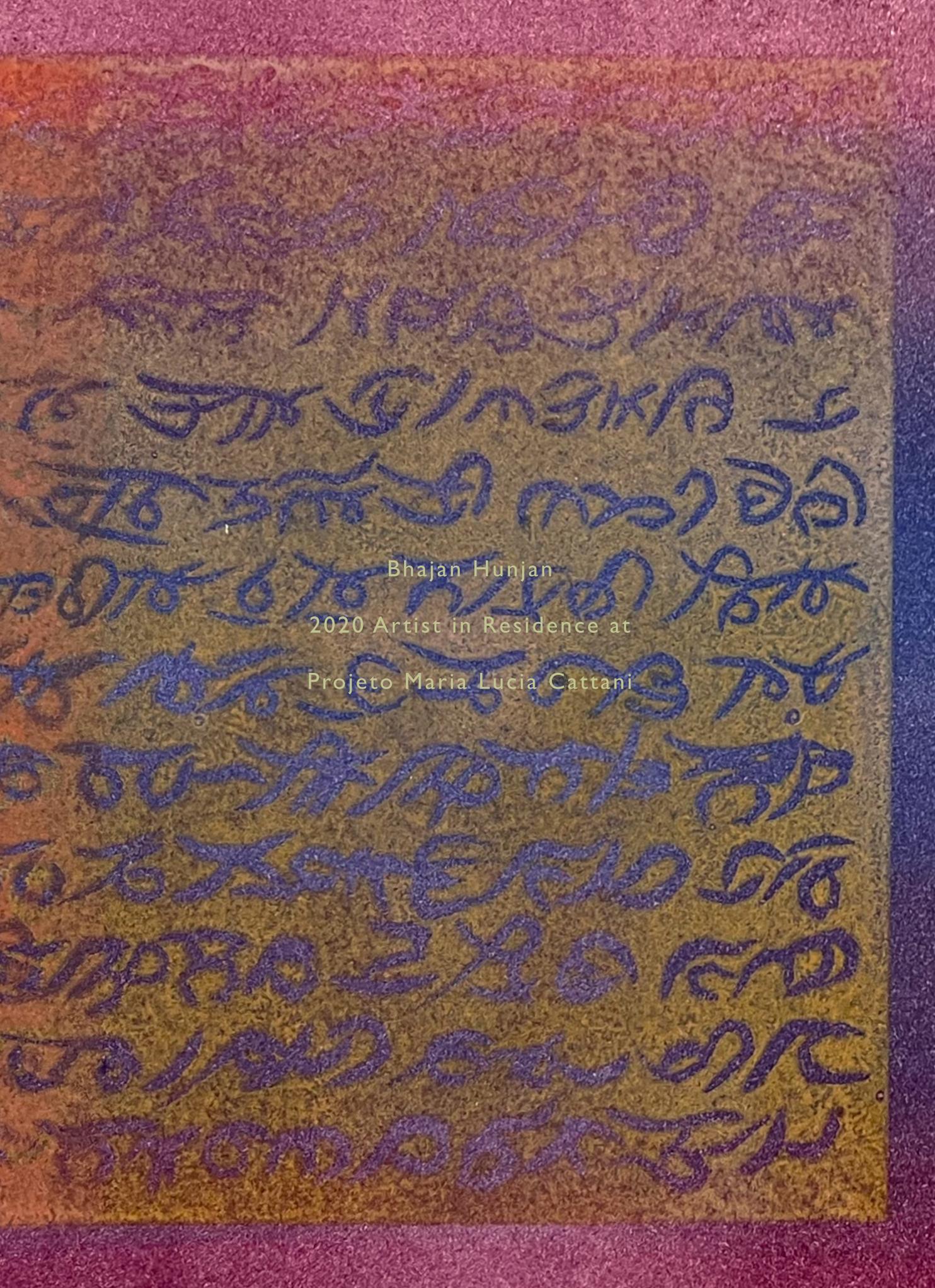
Nick Rands figs 2, 7, 10, 15, 18, 19, 20 and pp 12-29.

Maria Lucia Cattani fig 17.

Ali Khodr fig 4.







Bhajan Hunjan  
2020 Artist in Residence at  
Projeto Maria Lucia Cattani