

Angela Dufresne + Mala Iqbal
Where I End, We Begin
Curated by Wells Chandler
Opening Reception 4-7pm Thursday Oct 21

Oct 19 - Nov 17, 2021

Richard and Dolly Maas Gallery
SUNY Purchase

Press Release

Mala Iqbal and Angela Dufresne explore collaboration with this suite of drawings and paintings. Using methodologies from both of their respective practices and histories they co-create paintings affecting intimacy, loss and sexuality in imagined, every day and invented spaces. The series reflects on how their individual practices inform and challenge each other's development. Each work results from stylistic and conceptual fusion yet still offers localities for their distinct artistic agency. The project was sparked by drastic changes in their lives. Dufresne's long-term partner succumbed to Frontotemporal dementia. Iqbal and her wife parted ways amicably after a period of turmoil. Somehow in the process of all this trauma and change, Iqbal and Dufresne who had been friends and colleagues for over 20 years began to see each other differently. That new vision brought them together as lovers and life partners. The works in the show express both artists' desire to query the pleasure and turmoil in the wake of lives in transformation, exposure and at times alienation. Iqbal and Dufresne utilize the painterly spaces as experiential repositories, teetering between the private and public spheres. They opt to exploit and expound on their access to each other's bodies and the ferocity of their desire to broaden what paintings can say and show.

The paintings made specifically for *Where I End, We Begin* were made at MacDowell Colony in the summer of 2021. Iqbal and Dufresne worked simultaneously and sequentially. Built through a cumulative process of additive working methods, the paintings grew over time through revisions resulting from a call and response dialogue. These dialogue-based methods originated in a series of collaborative drawings also included in the exhibition that were created over the past 5 years. Drawings made after dinners at kitchen tables mostly, where an artist begins a work and hands it off to another to respond, alter, destroy, add to, or all the above. Intervention was central to making the ongoing series of collaborative drawings, some of which had as many as 8 contributors, which include their partners Elizabeth Bonaventura and Grace Sullivan as well as (in no particular order) Geoff Chadsey, Martin Wilner, David Humphrey, Vera Iliatova, Craig Taylor, Dawn Clements, Amy Yoes, Gillian Chadsey, Peter Blomquist, Medrie MacPhee, Cal Siegel, Meena Hasan, Kate Shepherd, Wells Chandler, Manal Abu-Shaheen, Jennifer Packer, Audrey Irving, Jane South, Barbara Takenaga, Glenn Goldberg, Jen DeNike, Elizabeth Tubergen, Sofie Grant, David Graham, Maritza Ranero, Lorraine Bonaventura, Heather Cameron, Faye Kahn, Jorge Colombo and James Huang to name some but not all. Each of the works vary based on dialogue in

unpredictable and unprecedented ways with consequent metamorphosis of style, form and content.

Ideas of transformation as embodied through painterly revisions are central to how Iqbal and Dufresne conceived of the works in *Where I End, We Begin*. Change, loss, addition, traces, hauntings and retention reflect the radical shifts happening in their lives. Personally and politically, transformation reflects pleasure, fatigue, joy, absurdity and the residuals of their communal lives and political activism. Also presented in *Where I End, We Begin* are works of, by and about members of their community, co-conspirators and queer family. Included are two portraits of William E. Jones, one by Dufresne and one by Iqbal, and several portraits by Dufresne and Iqbal of Darien Brahm, Dufresne's friend of over 30 years. Expanding the scope of kinship, there is a portrait of Tony Bluestone by Dufresne and a portrait of Dufresne by Bluestone which depicts fundraising T-shirts Dufresne and Iqbal designed to support Walk the Walk 2020, a grassroots organization that funded GOTV efforts in marginalized communities in PA, MI, GA, TX and OH during the 2020 election.

The works in the show articulate how ad hoc communities and close-knit queer familial structures contribute as much, if not more, to the creative process than the hermetic individuated studio practice championed by modernism with its emphasis on individual mastery and stylistic cohesion. Beyond transgressing these ideas, the work here turns the other way toward collectivity and re-aligning self-expression as something derived from relationality.

Mala Iqbal was born in the Bronx in 1973 and grew up in a household where three cultures and four languages intersected.

Her most recent solo show *Fellow Traveler* was at Taylor University in Upland, Indiana in 2018. Additional solo shows include Ulterior Gallery, Bellwether Gallery and PPOW in New York, Twelve Gates Arts in Philadelphia, and Richard Heller Gallery in Los Angeles. Her work has been exhibited in group shows throughout the United States as well as in Australia, China, Europe and India. Her work has been reviewed in various publications including The New York Times, The Village Voice and The New Yorker.

Iqbal has participated in residencies at MacDowell, Yaddo, The Fine Arts Work Center and the Hermitage Artist Retreat. She received a New York Foundation for the Arts fellowship in Painting in 2008.

Iqbal lives and works in New York City.

Angela Dufresne is a painter originally from Connecticut, raised however in the town in Kansas (Olathe-Suburbs) that Dick and Perry stopped in before they killed the Clutters (In Cold Blood) and now based in Brooklyn. She received the first college degree in her lineage. Her work articulates non-paranoid, porous ways of being in a world fraught by fear, power and possession. Through painting, drawing and performative works, she wields heterotopic narratives that are both nonhierarchical and perverse.

Recent solo shows include *Long and Short Shots* at Yossi Milo and Angela Dufresne as *William E. Jones' Painting Bottom* at M+B in Los Angeles in 2021. Additional solo exhibitions include *Making a Scene* at the Kemper Museum in Kansas City in 2018 and *Just My Type* at the Dorsky Museum at SUNY New Paltz in 2019. She has exhibited at the Hammer Museum in Los Angeles, P.S.1 Contemporary Art Center in New York, The National Academy of Arts and Letters in New York, Brooklyn Academy of Music in New York, The Cleveland Institute of Art, The Aldridge Museum in Connecticut, Sarah Lawrence College in Yonkers, New York, the Rose Museum in Waltham, Massachusetts, Mills College in Oakland, California, and the Minneapolis School of Art and Design. She is currently Associate Professor of painting at RISD. Awards and honors include the National Academy of Arts and Design induction 2018, a 2016 Guggenheim Fellowship, a residency at Yaddo, a Purchase Award at The National Academy of Arts and Letters, two fellowships at The Fine Arts Work Center at Provincetown, The Center for the Arts in Sausalito, California, and a Jerome Foundation Fellowship.