

01.10.21 - 01.11.21

# Rented Shadow and Neighbours

Hema Shironi

*'Come what may the house helps us to say: I will be an inhabitant of the world, inspite of the world'*

**The Poetics of Space by Gaston Bachelard**

Hema Shironi's gentle delineations of the house as a site of safety and of loss have been a significant journey in her work and for those who have witnessed her progress. The house as embodiment of shelter and a repository of the human values which reside in it has consumed her. The house and the home that it once was, moved with her, recalling and documenting times of conflict. But the artist transcends pain and invents ways of healing. These are contained in the signs which mark the new pathways of recovery and rejuvenation. Shironi begins to revel in her triumphs as she goes into uncharted territories searching for everyday emblems which she can reuse and transform. Each stage of her travels are marked by a surprising twist: sometimes a bundle of belongings, sometimes a fragment of apparel.

Thus her narrative moves from material to material, from medium to medium mirroring her account of remembered experience. Memory evokes a body of images which she gathers and quite literally threads together to make them universal in meaning. The darkness of trauma is set aside as Hema Shironi's work speaks of the persistence of life: delicate poetic trails of marks and new forms of the lightness of being.

**Salima Hashmi**



Buried Alive Stories, 2020  
Embroidery on Cloth  
95cm x 104cm  
USD 1250.00



Buried Alive Stories, 2020  
Detail Images

## Rented Shadow and Neighbours

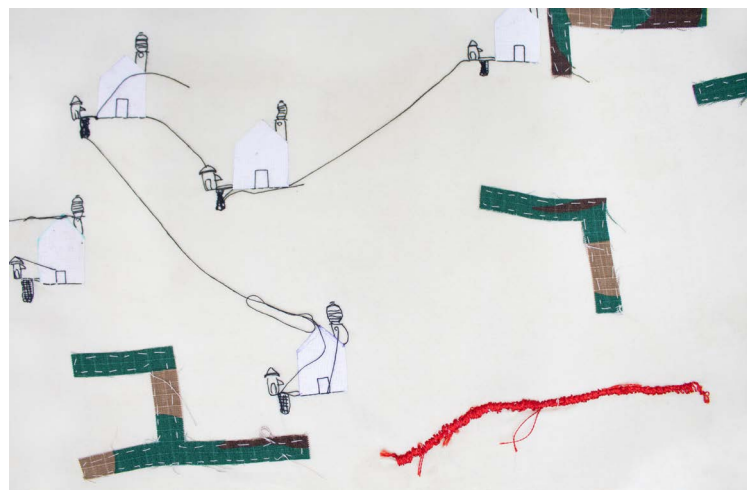
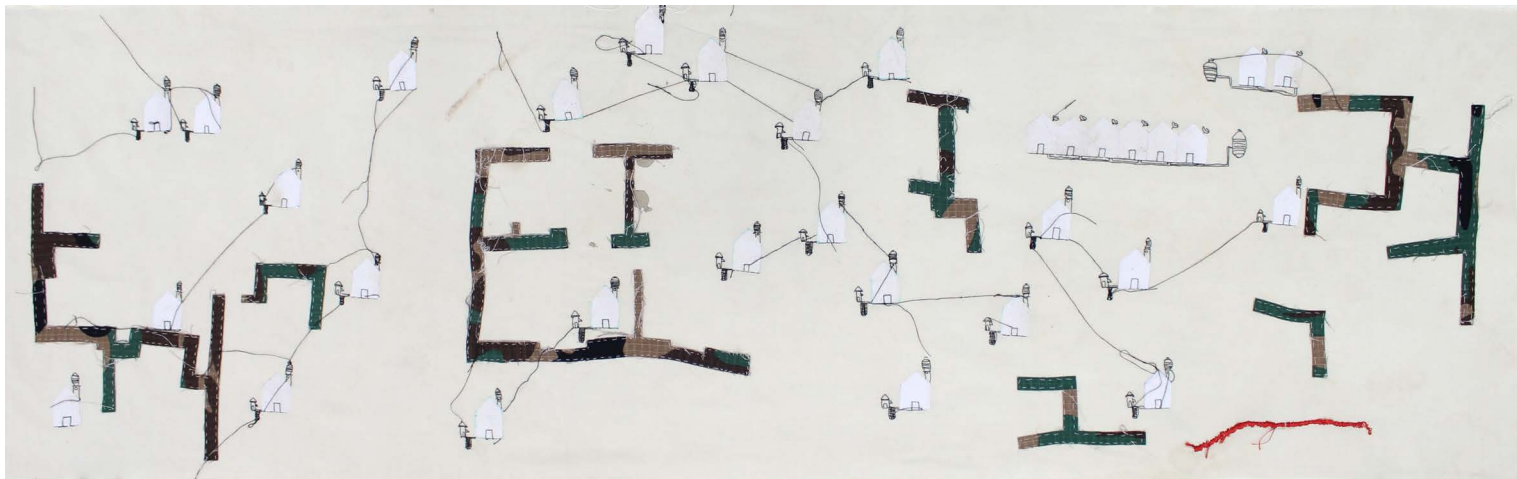
Hema Shironi's debut showcase at the Saskia Fernando Gallery presents a body of work that delves into the artist's complex understanding of migration, displacement and identity. In *Rented Shadows and Neighbours*, Hema explores her community's historical and lived experience of colonization and civil war. As a child, her family often moved from one place to another and she eventually found herself questioning the bonds that communities and individuals make. This questioning was driven by the difficulty of answering what it truly meant to belong somewhere. Hema's wide-ranging artistic practice combines embroidery, mythological imagery, bricolage and installation, to name but a few instances of a keen enquiry into cultural identity. A notable element underpinning much of Hema's work is a gridded structure that permeates her compositions. Appearing as threads and partitions, they often contain the sculptures and installations of her interdisciplinary work.

In *Erasing Flag and Mended Fences*, this method of working touches on the grand narratives of history, mythology and religion. National flags and religious imagery are dissected to reveal not just similar structural principles but the uncertainties that bring them together in the first place. In addition to this, her use of cartography reveals the trauma that remains embedded in the landscapes of the North. The use of red coloured thread has the distinct effect of suggesting collective trauma and violent memories. Hema's maps are the veins and capillaries that carry blood throughout the body of her work, along the many roads that hold the memories of its maker. This anatomical connection between body and landscape is positioned deep within *Rented Shadows and Knowing and Unknowing Memories*; the latter being a photographic installation of everyday meals and snacks replaced with an embroidered selection of maps, one of which reads: *Kilinochchi, the heart and peace of hope*. Here, in the presence of the sneaking blood red string that occupies portions of the other maps, the artist reveals a convoluted desire for reunification of mind and soul, land and body.

The symbolism of blood is a recurring point of reference in Hema's work as it features so consistently in the history of the land. In *Window Scape*, a red landscape appears behind the everyday sight of clothes hanging out to dry. The nature of domestic life is presented as a vault of memories in *Buried Alive Stories*, where household objects are transformed in the aftermath of a destructive event. These bloodied threads draw together the omnipresence of wartime trauma which reaches out and transforms everything it comes into contact with. The sacred nature of religion also does not go untouched as all communities suffered from the aftermath of the Easter Sunday attacks. Hema explores the destruction of innocence and generational displacement in *Religious Family*, a triptych which also signifies rootedness and connection. The artwork is a photographic series of childhood portraits in a church setting, covered by a partitioned grid. The silhouettes of each saint are featured as embroideries of falling statues.

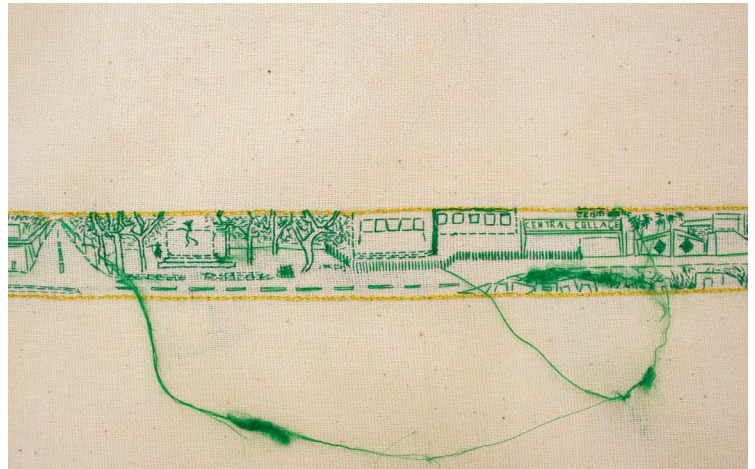
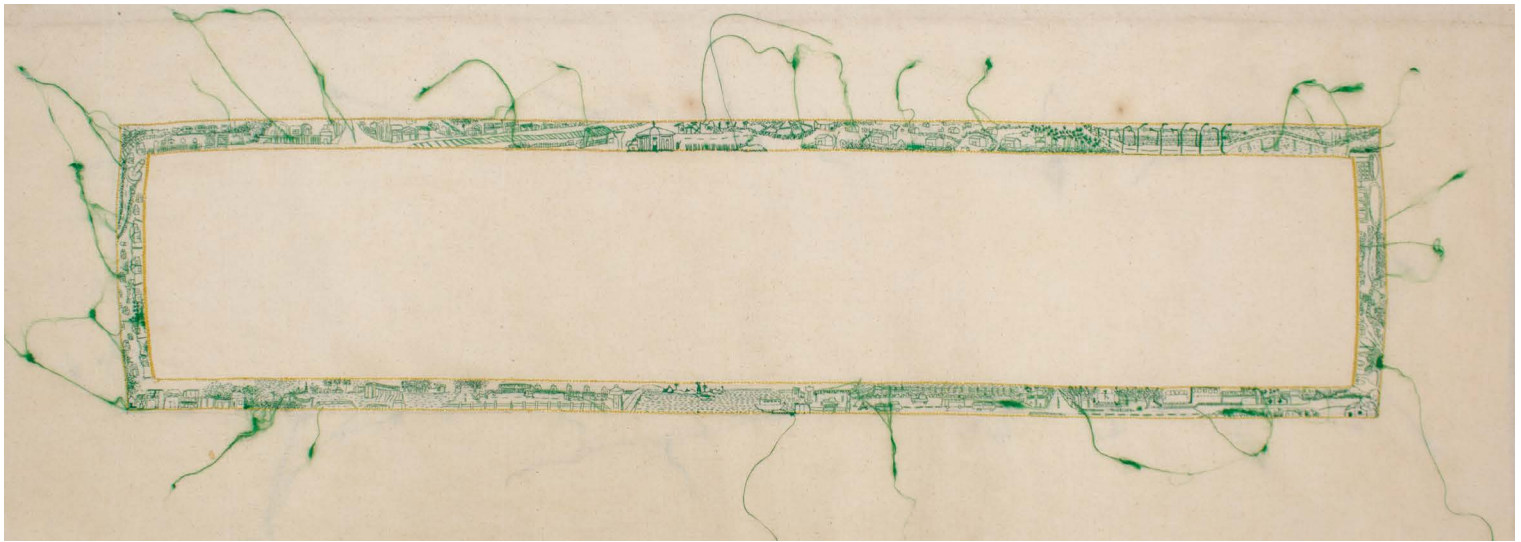
Here she underlines the hard fact of spiritual practice being at the core of all religions, regardless of scripture and deity. Hema states that her practice focuses on the human and universal aspects of conflict. Her work is driven by the nostalgia of the numerous places she has called home and how each community belonging to those places grapple with concerns of language, culture, memory, myth, gender and equality. Sri Lanka is a vibrant country with a multitude of overlapping and cultural trajectories, where many languages, religions and historical communities coexist. *Rented Shadows and Neighbours* sheds light on the obscure issues of identity that stem from historically marginalized communities in a visually layered narrative. The wide range of materials used in the collection reflect the cultural diversity experienced on Hema's migratory routes. Sri Lanka is a place where hopes, dreams, desires and delusions

She proceeds to counter this disturbing narrative with *Blasting Gift*, a composition in the form of a regular consumer package, a form to be unpacked, that juxtaposes the original state of a bombed church site with images of Muslims deep in worship, facing each image of the church.

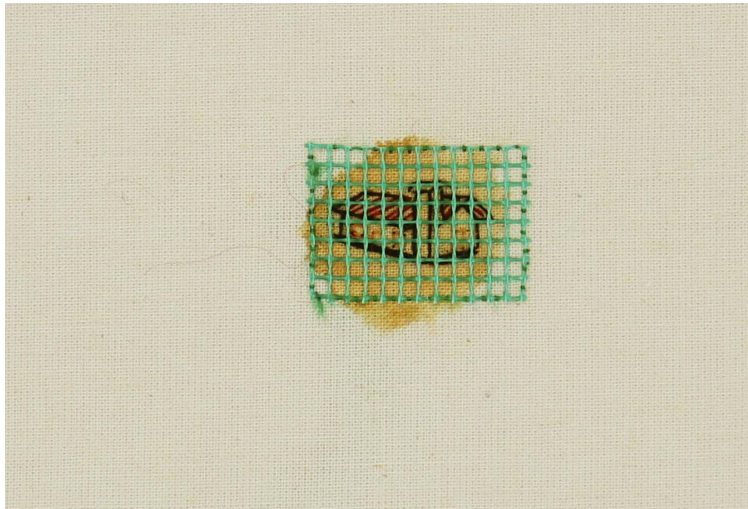


Blend With Surroundings, 2020  
Collar Stiff, Camouflage Fabric,  
Stitched on Cloth  
43cm x 140cm  
Top - Full Image, Right - Detail  
USD 980.00

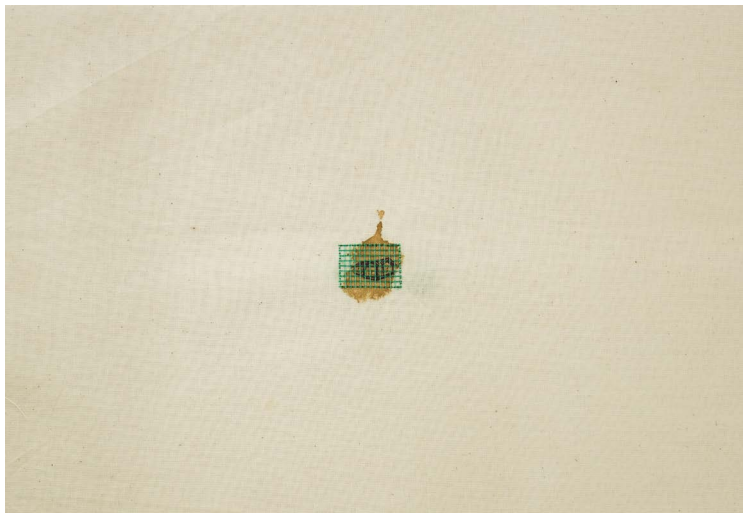




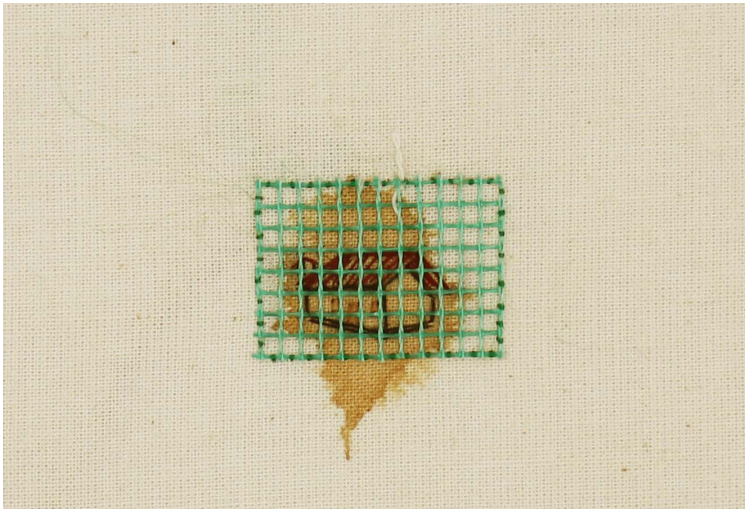
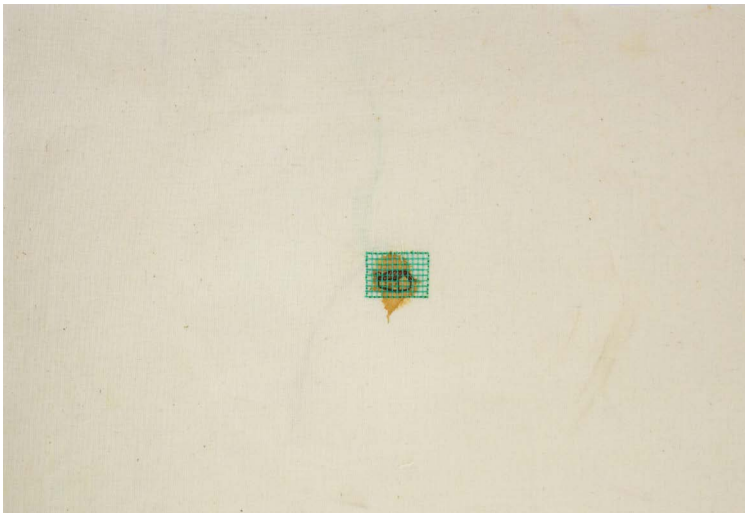
Land Framed Picture, 2021,  
Embroidery on Cloth  
37cm x 103cm  
Top - Full Image, Right - Detail  
USD 1000.00



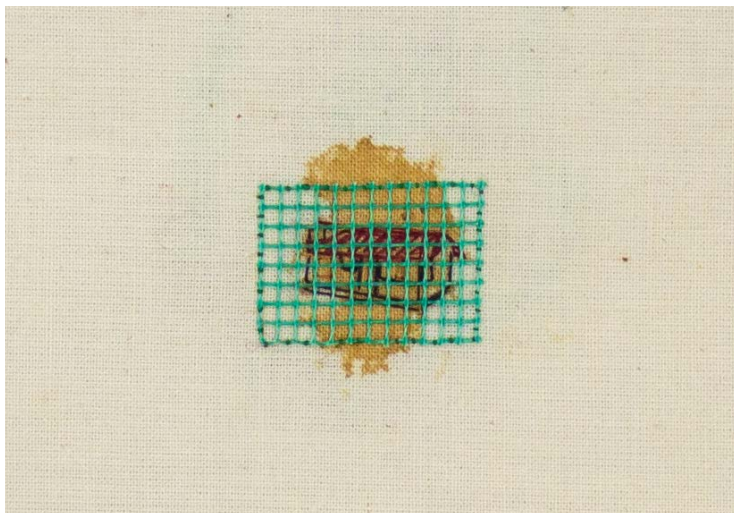
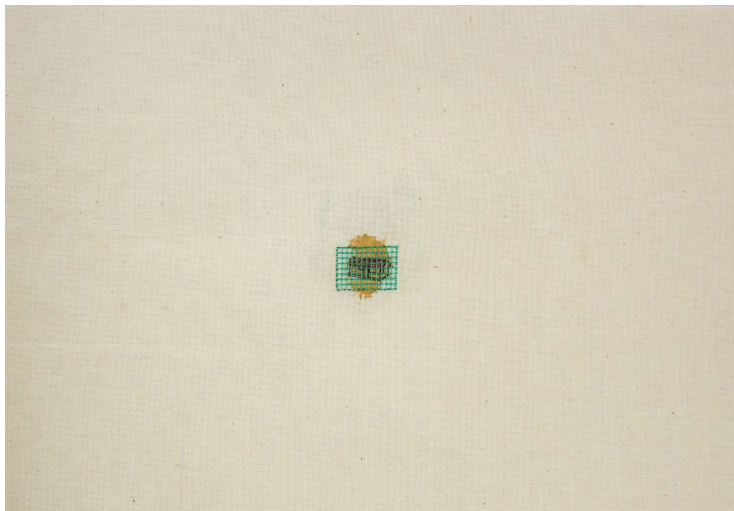
Listed Loan House 1, 2020  
Net and Embroidery on Cloth  
21 cm x 30 cm  
Top- Full Image, Bottom - Detail  
USD 100.00



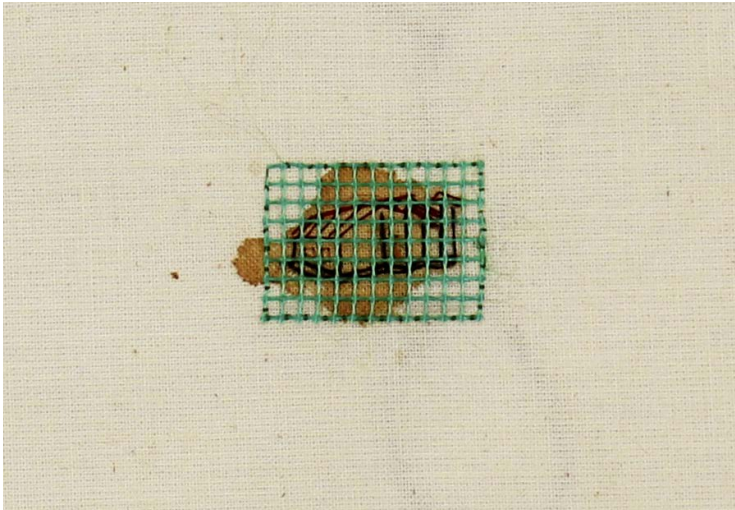
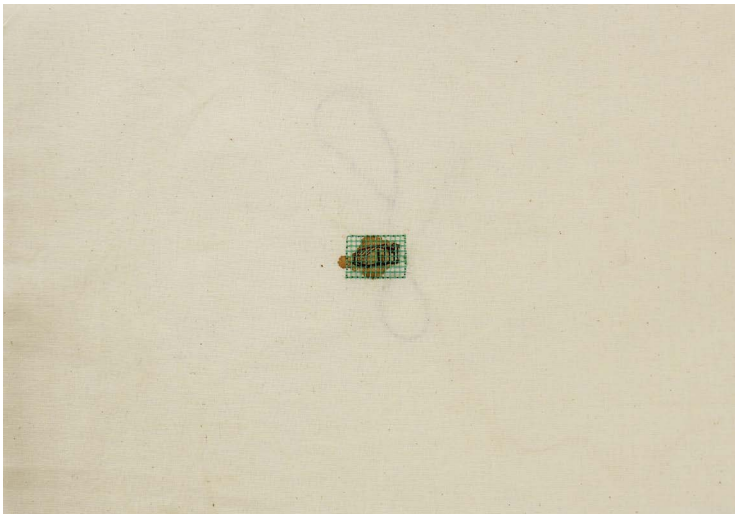
Listed Loan House 2, 2020  
Net and Embroidery on Cloth  
21 cm x 30 cm  
Top - Full Image, Bottom - Detail  
USD 100.00



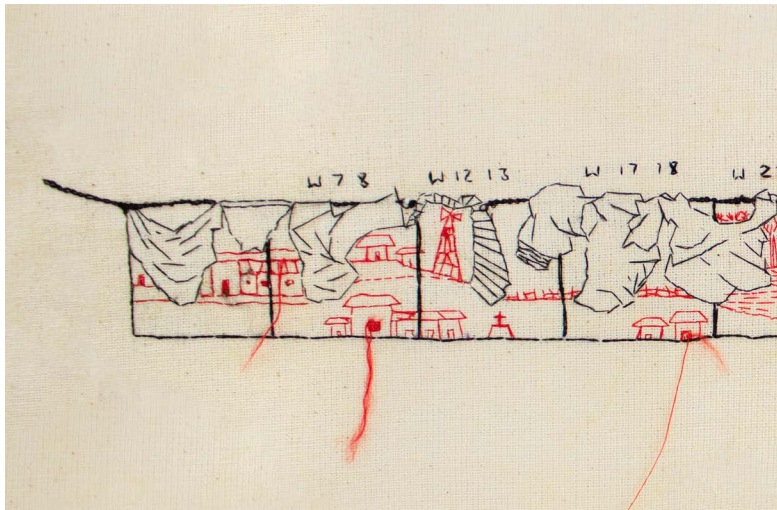
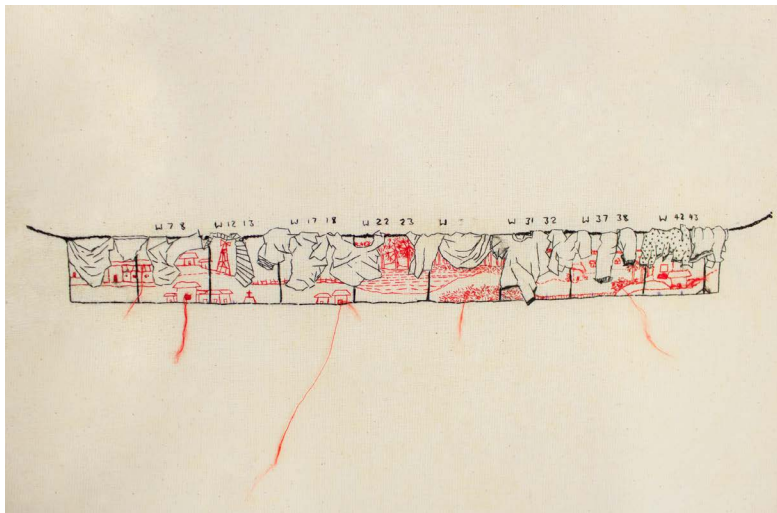
Listed Loan House 4, 2020  
Net and Embroidery on Cloth  
21cm x 30cm  
Top- Full Image, Bottom - Detail  
USD 100.00



Listed Loan House 3, 2020  
Net and Embroidery on Cloth  
21 cm x 30 cm  
Top - Full Image, Bottom - Detail  
USD 100.00



Listed Loan House 5, 2020  
Net and Embroidery on Cloth  
21cm x 30cm  
Top- Full Image, Bottom - Detail  
USD 100.00



Windows Cape, 2018  
Embroidery on Cloth  
29cm x 39cm  
Top- Full Image, Bottom - Detail  
\$200.00

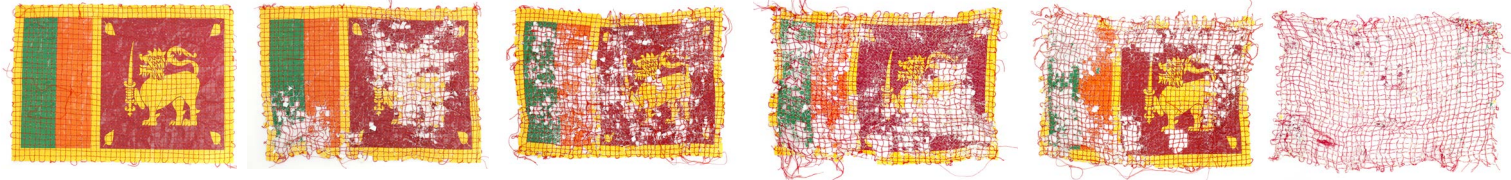


Alay Fears, 2020  
Paper, Fabric and Net Stitched on Cloth  
126cm x 114cm  
USD 1500.00

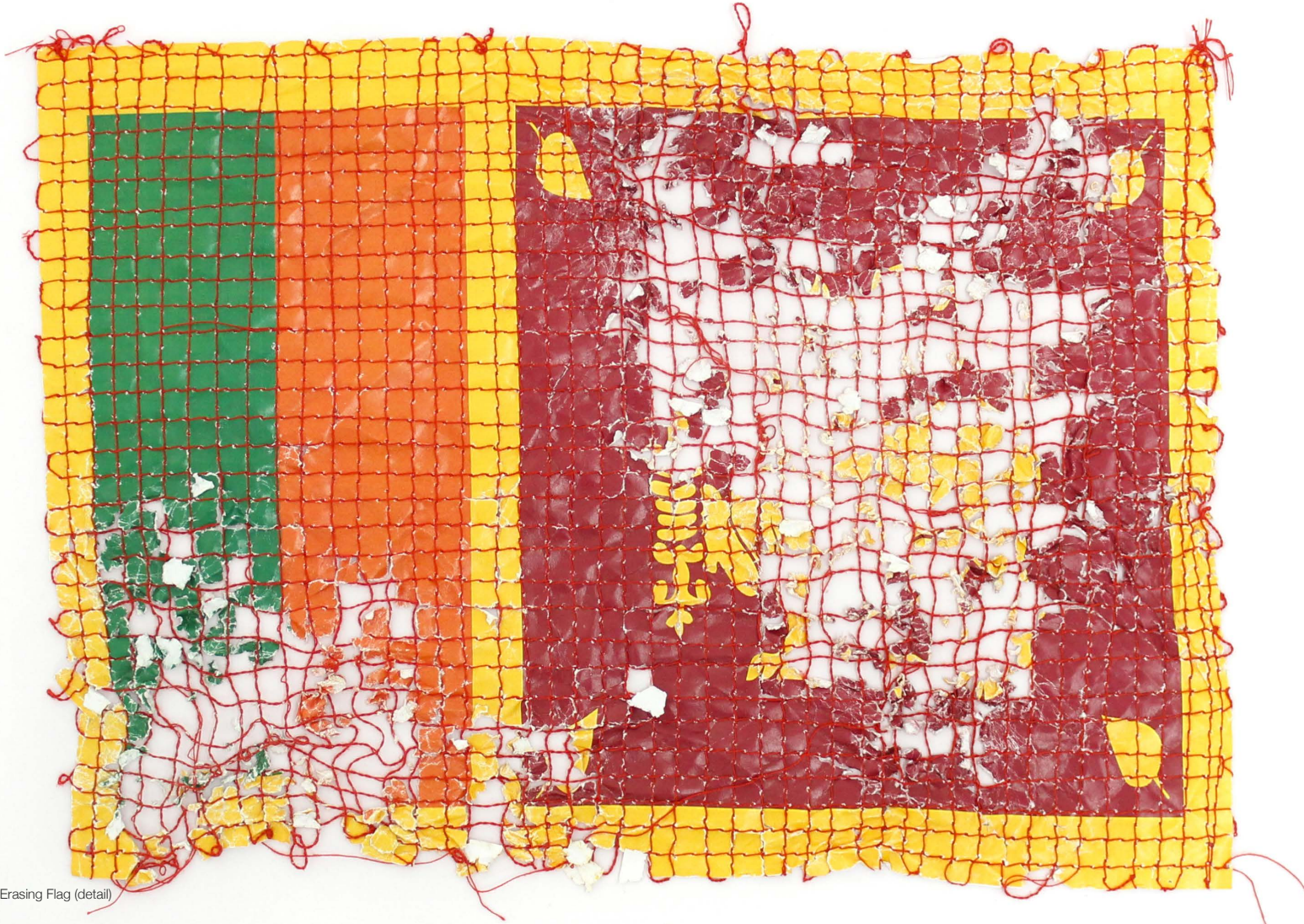




Allay Fears (detail)



Erasing Flag, 2019  
Stitched Paper  
21cm x 30cm (x 6)  
USD 750.00



Erasing Flag (detail)

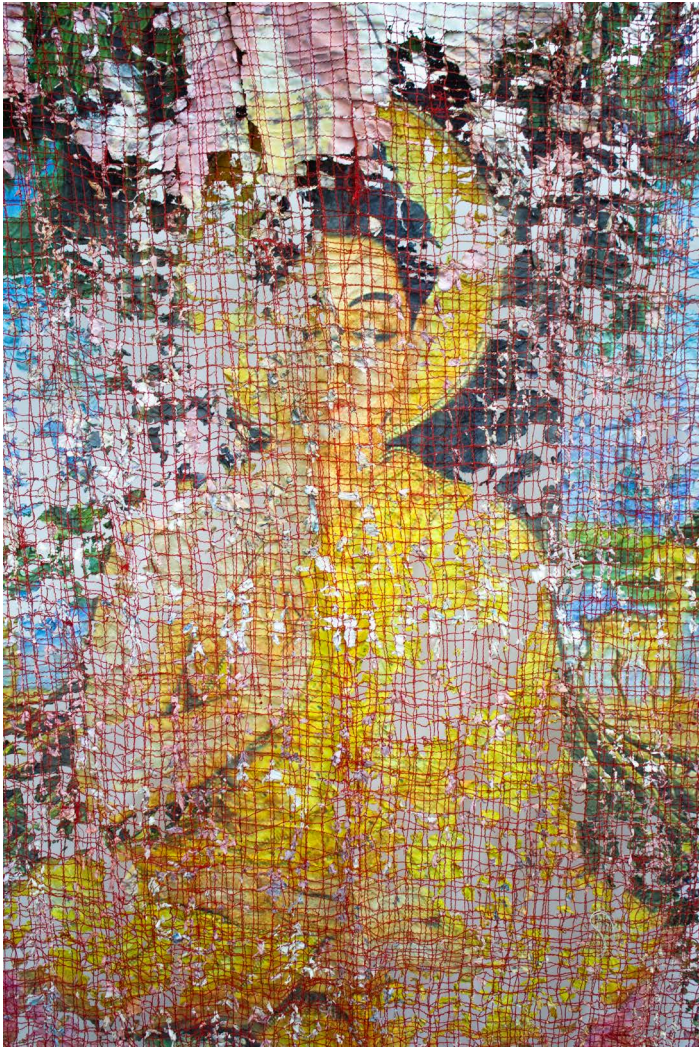
Squeeze Order of Being, 2020  
Cloth and Polyfill  
Varied  
USD 900.00







Mended Fences, 2019  
Stitched on Printed Paper  
107cm x 244cm  
USD 2250.00

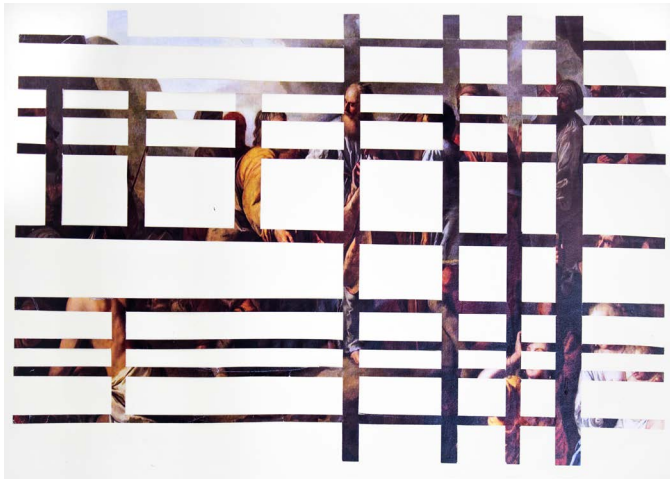




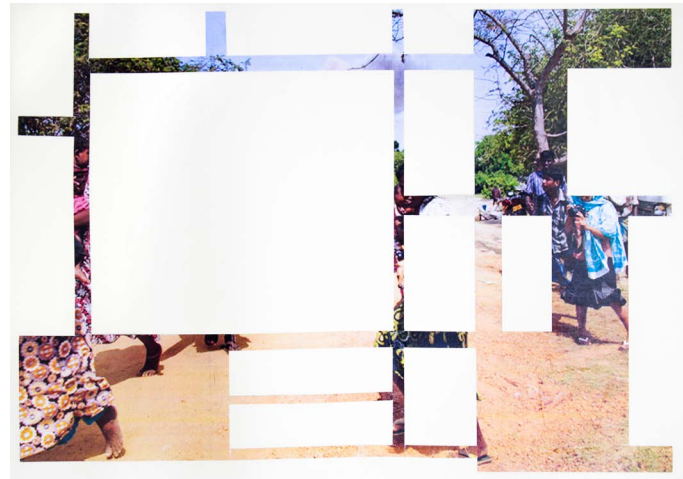
Junction 55, 2020  
Thread and Printed Fabric Net  
121cm x 143cm  
USD 2250.00



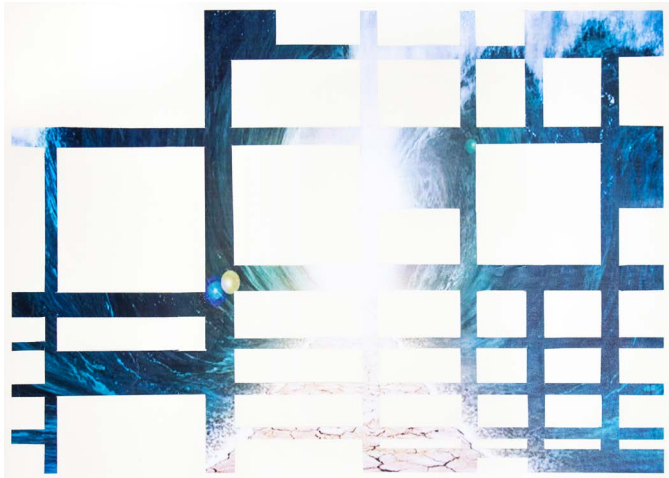




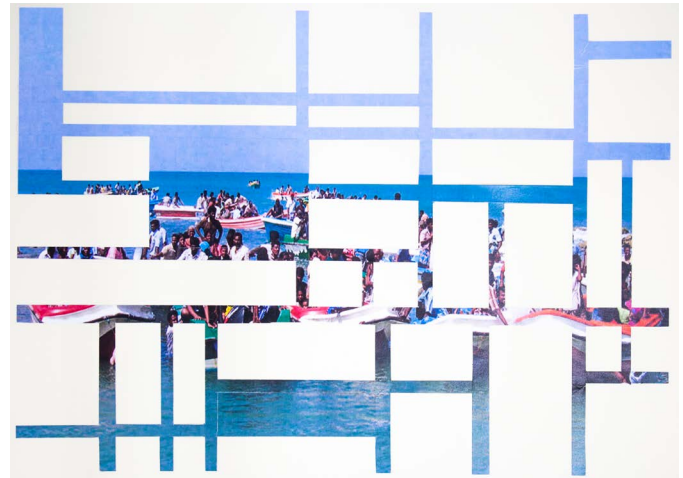
The Route To The Promised Land 1, 2019  
Mixed Media on Board  
30cm x 42cm  
USD 200.00



The Route To The Promised Land 2, 2019  
Mixed Media on Board  
30cm x 42cm  
USD 200.00



The Route To The Promised Land 3, 2019  
Mixed Media on Board  
30cm x 42cm  
USD 200.00



The Route To The Promised Land 4, 2019  
Mixed Media on Board  
30cm x 42cm  
USD 200.00



The Route To The Promised Land 5, 2019  
Mixed Media on Board  
30cm x 42cm  
USD 200.00



The Route To The Promised Land 6, 2019  
Mixed Media on Board  
30cm x 42cm  
USD 200.00



Collage Letters, 2020  
Paper and Embroidery on Cloth  
76cm x 107cm  
USD 1000.00

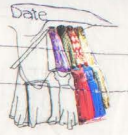
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No. \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_



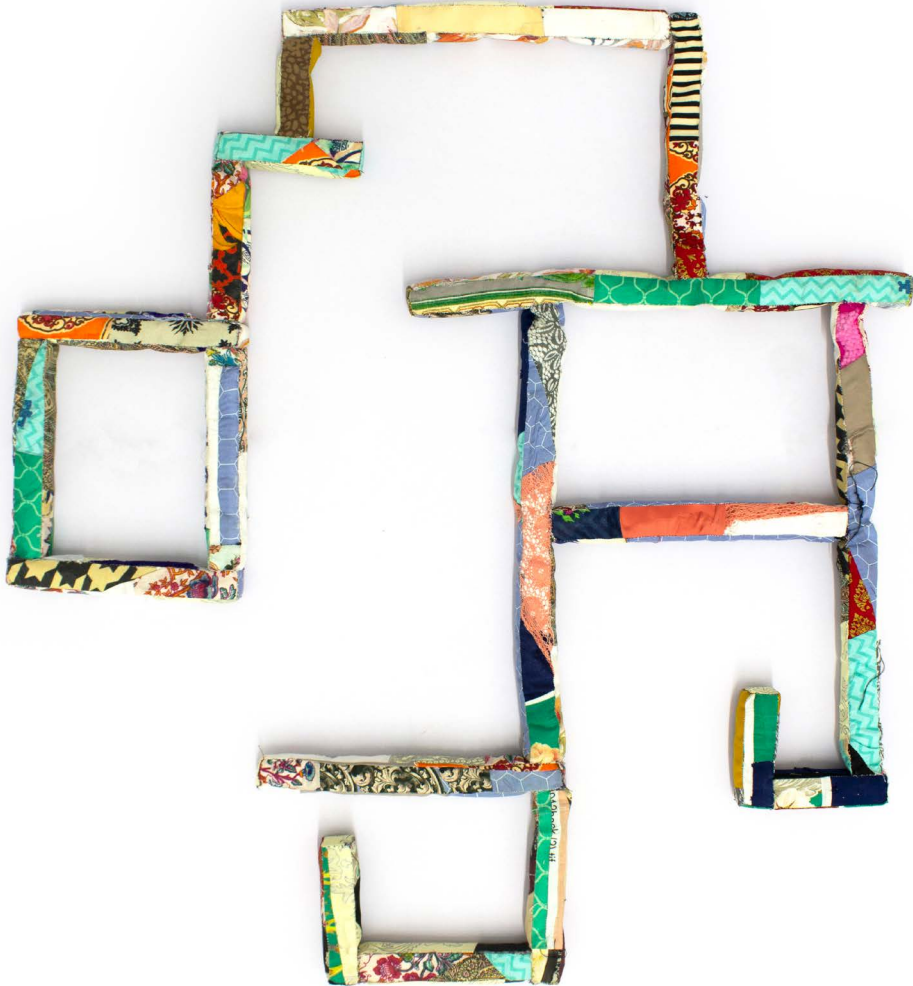


Rented Shadows, 2020  
Paper and Fabric stitched onto Silk Organza  
92cm x 152cm  
USD 1500.00



Rented Shadows (detail)





Applied Foundation, 2020  
Printed Fabric and Collar Stiff  
76cm x 92cm  
USD 1100.00





Small Pillow Sale, 2020  
Printed Fabric, Polyfill, Threads Stitched on Cloth  
64cm x 36cm  
USD 375.00



The Heart of  
Peace and Hope

VOICE

**Ms. Thangaruby (36)**  
I am 36 years old, living in Mullaitivu. I lost my husband, as well as three of my siblings, during the war. I resettled from a camp to Kokkilar 200, and am currently living with my parents and 12-year-old son. I depended on my parents before joining this project, but now am able to get income through the Sari project. I planned to spend this income for my son's study when I joined, and with the earnings I started to send my son to private classes. I want to learn more sewing techniques and become a tailor, so that I can earn more for my son. I am very happy to be a member of this project.



Hidden Blur Families 1, 2020  
Mixed Media on Canvas  
15cm x 15cm  
USD 100.00



Hidden Blur Families 2, 2020  
Mixed Media on Canvas  
15cm x 15cm  
USD 100.00



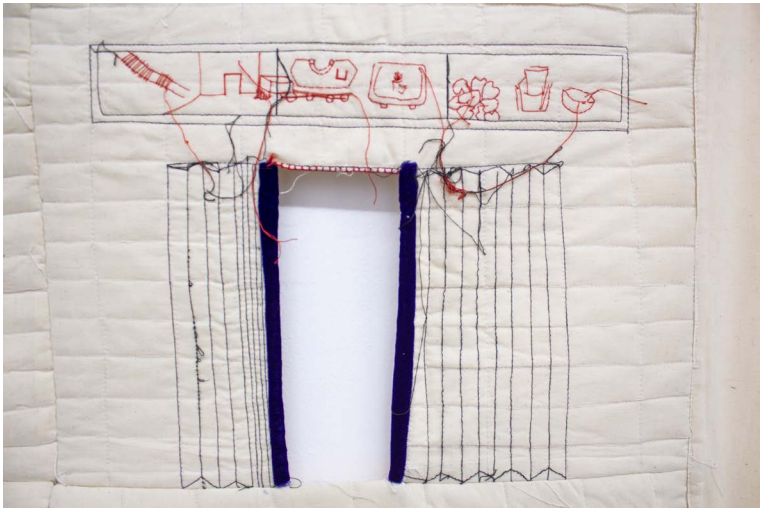
Hidden Blur Families 3, 2020  
Mixed Media on Canvas  
15cm x 15cm  
USD 100.00



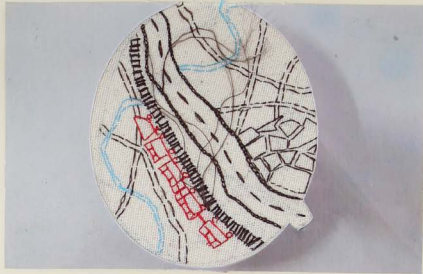
Hidden Blur Families 4, 2020  
Mixed Media on Canvas  
15cm x 15cm  
USD 100.00



Lasting Memories, 2020  
Embroidery and Printed Fabric Stitched on Cloth  
175cm x 98cm  
USD 1500.00







Knowing and Un-knowing Memories, 2020  
Mixed Media on Board  
28cm x 22cm (x4)  
USD 125.00 (each)

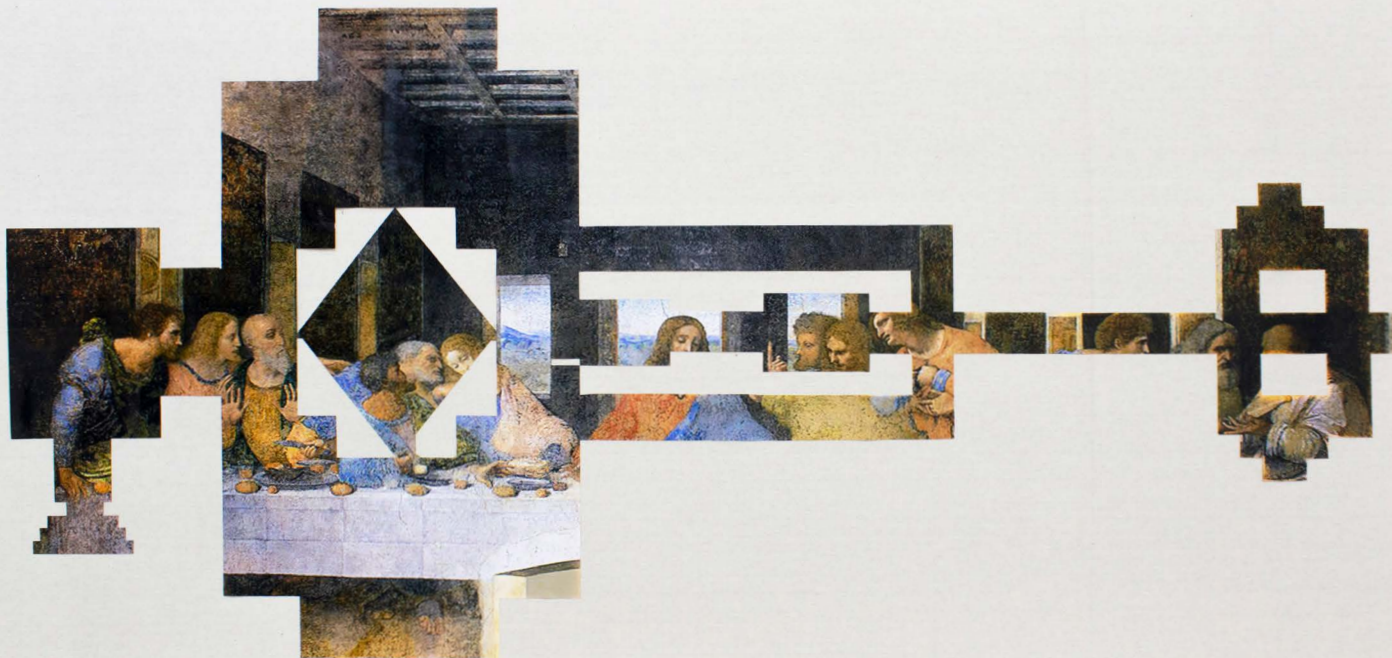




Blasting Gift, 2019  
Stitched Printed Fabric  
60cm x 94cm  
USD 750.00

Blasting Gift (detail)

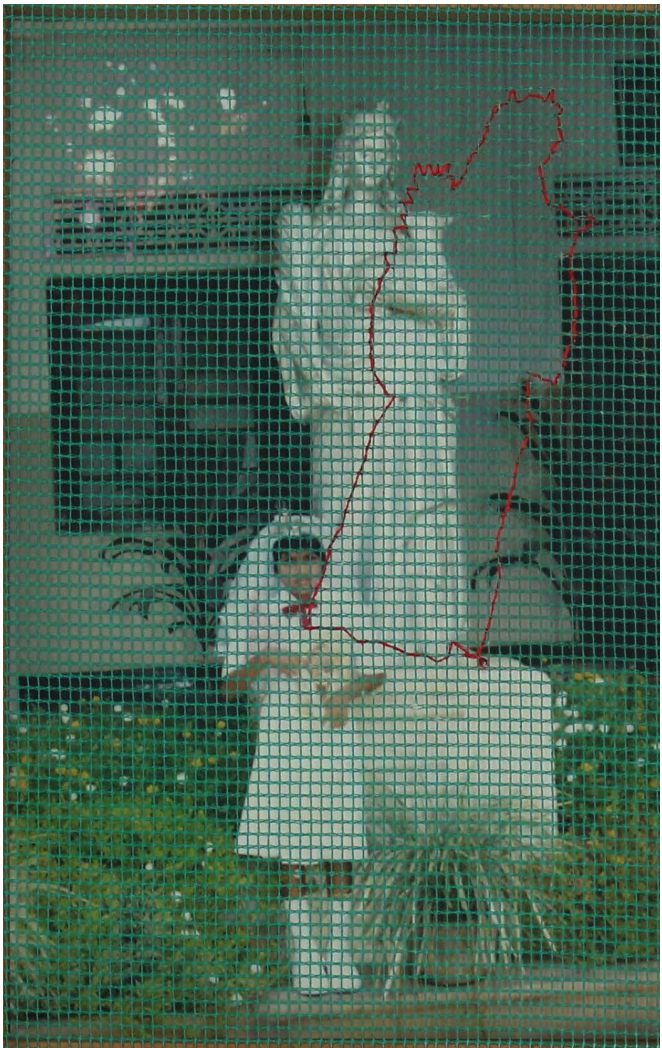




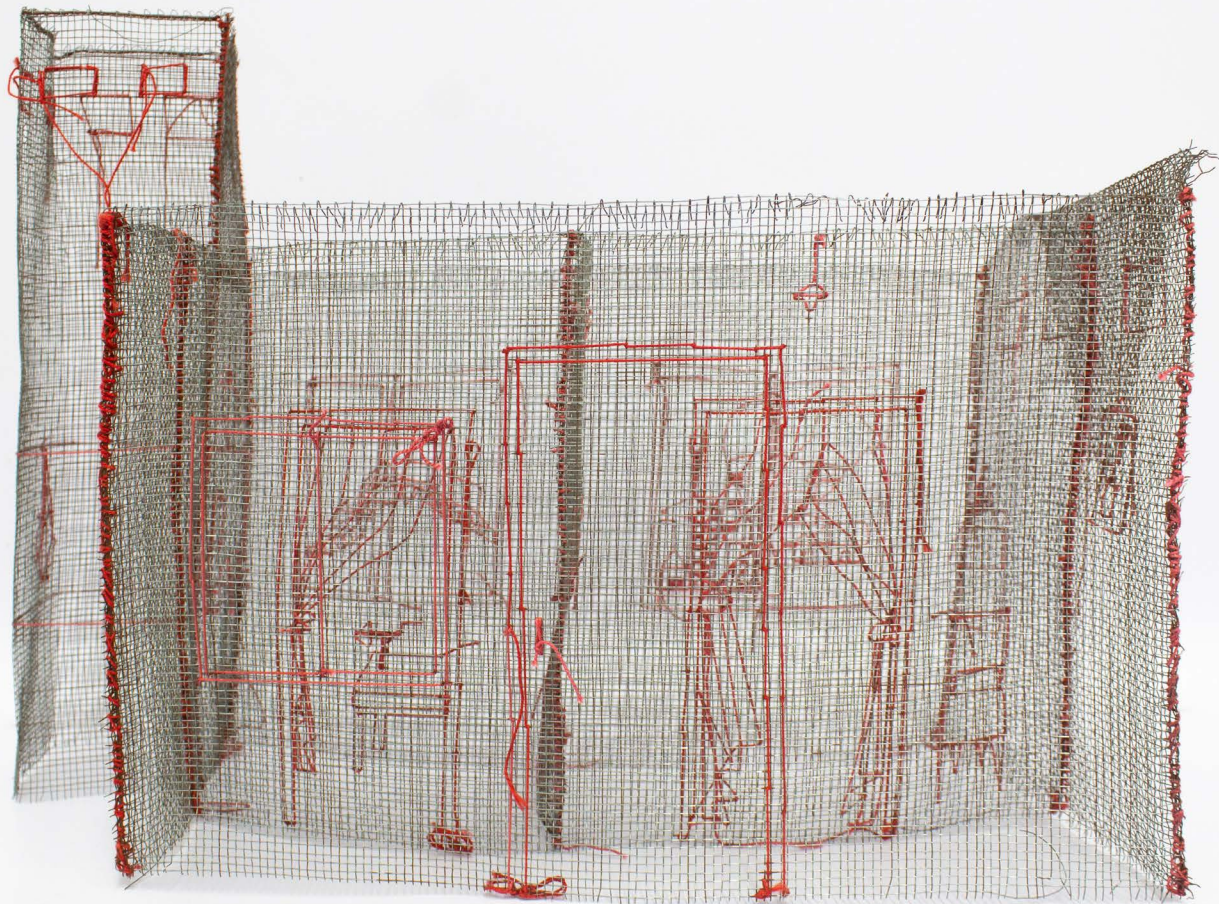
In the name of..., 2020  
Photo Paper on Cloth, Mounted on Board  
92cm x 183cm  
USD 900.00



Religious Family, 2018  
Mixed Media in Wooden Frame  
19cm x 38cm  
USD 250.00

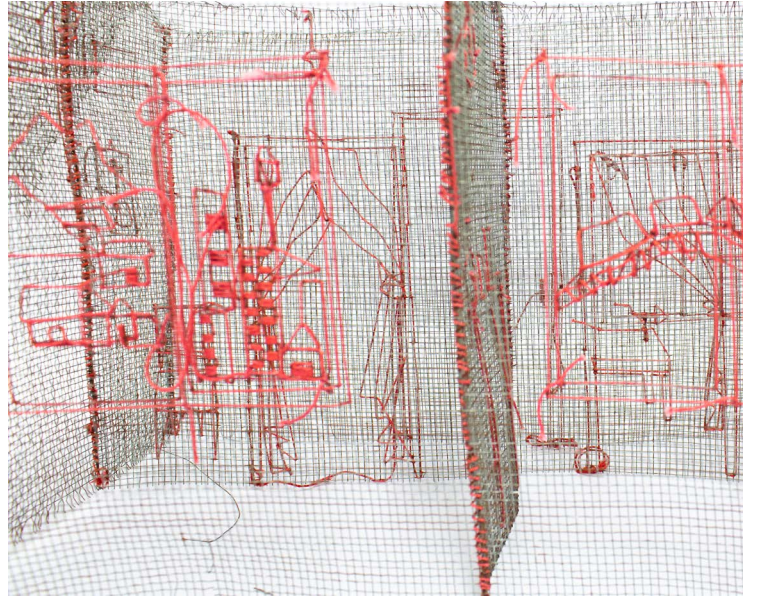
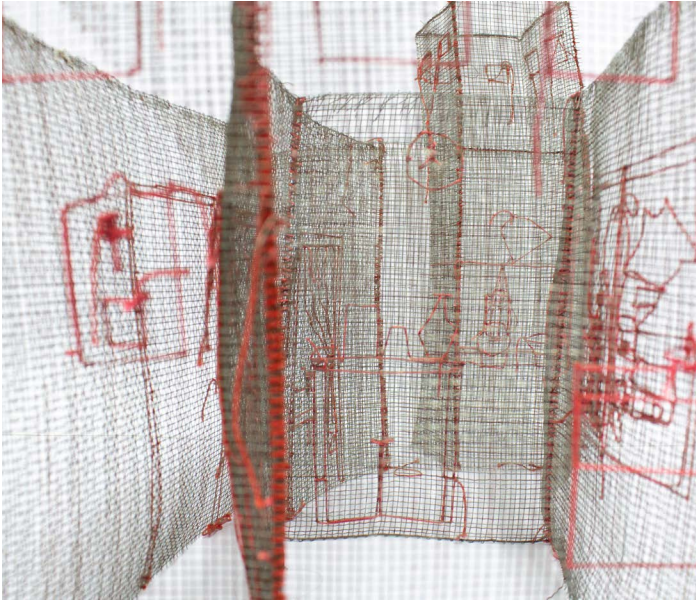


Religious Family (detail)



Filtered Wall, 2020  
Stitched on Iron Mesh,  
31cm x 43cm  
USD 900.00





**Hema Shironi Joseph b.1991**

**Education**

2016 BFA (visual art), Ramanadhan Fine Arts Academy University of Jaffna, Sri Lanka

2019 to 2020 MFA (visual art), Beaconhouse National University, Lahore, Pakistan

**Group Exhibitions**

2019 Sea Change, Colomboscope Curated by Natasha Ginwala at Rio Complex, Colombo, Sri Lanka.

2018 Being and Becoming, Curated by T Shanaathanan at Saskia Fernando Gallery, Colombo, Sri Lanka.

2017 Theertha Performance Workshop, Theertha Artist Collective, Colombo, Sri Lanka

2013 Open Edit: Mobile Library - from AAA to Raking Leaves, Curated by Sharmini Pereira, Colombo, Sri Lanka.

**Residencies**

2021 House of Kal Colombo - May 2021

**Work Experience**

2017 to 2019 Assistant Designer at “Kolam” research-based design and craft project, Jaffna, Sri Lanka

**Catalogue Design & Writing**

Saskia Fernando Gallery

**Artwork Photography**

Saskia Fernando Gallery

**Introduction**

Salima Hashmi

**Director**

Saskia Fernando

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