



VIVEK SHRAYA
TRISHA

MAY 4 – JUNE 18, 2017

AGM
ART GALLERY OF MISSISSAUGA



DIRECTOR'S NOTE

The AGM is proud to present Trisha in the gallery's XIT-RM Project Space. A powerful meditation on family history and personal identity, this photo essay offers a wonderful introduction to multidisciplinary artist, musician and writer Vivek Shraya's work. We are pleased to showcase her work alongside two exhibitions also featuring found photographs – *The Family Camera* and Annie MacDonell's *The Levellers*.

Thank you to RBC Foundation for their continuing generous support of this program, to Kendra Ainsworth for curating this exhibition, and for the collaborative support of AGM staff members Sadaf Zuberi, Laura Carusi, Melanie Lowe, Sharada Eswar, Rhéanne Chartrand, and Jessica Palada, and our incredible roster of volunteers.

ARTIST BIO

Vivek Shraya is a Toronto-based artist whose body of work includes several albums, films, and books. Her first book of poetry, *even this page is white*, won a 2017 Publisher Triangle Award and was longlisted for CBC's Canada Reads. Her debut novel, *She of the Mountains*, was named one of *The Globe and Mail's* Best Books, and her first children's picture book, *The Bay & the Bindi*, was featured on the *National Post* Bestseller List. Vivek has read and performed internationally at shows, festivals and post-secondary institutions, including sharing the stage with Tegan & Sara. She is one half of the music duo Too Attached. A four-time Lambda Literary Award finalist, Vivek was a 2016 Pride Toronto Grand Marshal, a 2015 Toronto Arts Foundation Emerging Artist Award finalist, and a 2015 recipient of the Writers' Trust of Canada's Dayne Ogilvie Prize Honour of Distinction.

vivekshraya.com | [@vivekshraya](https://twitter.com/vivekshraya) | [#trishaproject](https://trishaproject.com)

CURATORIAL STATEMENT

In this age when most of our photos are stored on our phones, dusting off a photo album and flipping through its pages is now an infrequent activity. However, when we do decide to interact with these tangible reminders of our and our loved one's pasts, the experience can be a powerful one; sentimental, nostalgic, melancholic, surprising, humorous, or unsettling. Toronto-based multidisciplinary artist, musician and writer Vivek Shraya mines just this experience with her own family's photographs, creating a photo essay that is both personal and universal.

The project came to life when Shraya was promoting her 2014 short film *Holy Mother My Mother*. When giving talks about the film, which documents a family trip to India, Shraya showed a photograph of her mother, noting the resemblance between them. A subsequent search for more photographs brought to light a side of her mother that Shraya never knew – as a newlywed, a new immigrant, and not yet a mother – and what was always a search for deeper connection between mother and daughter became one that celebrated differences as well as similarities.

In *Trisha*, Shraya presents found photographs of her mother alongside her own, painstakingly re-staged ones, with herself standing in for her mother as subject. In the text that accompanies the photo series, Shraya speaks of the experience, while growing up, of aspiring to be like her mother and the shock of encountering, through these photographs, that her mother was then, as now, not only her mother but a woman in her own right, with a history and identity that went beyond what Shraya had known. In the original photographs, Shraya's mother is alone in the frame, often staring directly into the camera – at times seductive, defiant, or contemplative. In replicating these scenes, these looks, Shraya positions the camera – and the viewer – as a conduit for connection across time, across generations; the artist's mother looking into her future, perhaps anticipating a yet conceived of family looking back, and Shraya, placing herself almost literally in her mother's shoes, looking out from her own vantage point back to her mother at the same age.

There is a power and a vulnerability in *Trisha*. As Shraya remakes herself in her mother's image, her text poetically and poignantly speaks to how this action might have been perceived by her. In performing femininity in her mother's likeness, Shraya is both resolute – speaking back to the world that still sees women and the feminine as at best inferior and which caused her mother to pray for sons, and wistful – considering, perhaps, who Trisha might be and what her relationship with Shraya's mother might be like.

Together, these two interconnected series of photographs, in their overt, surface level similarities, and subtle, often playful differences craft a nuanced portrait of a mother-daughter relationship that contains the multitudes of both women, and speak to the forgotten, unrealized or as yet undiscovered aspects of ourselves that haunt us all.

Kendra Ainsworth
Curator of Contemporary Art

IMAGE CREDIT

Cover

Vivek Shraya, *Trisha 1b*, 2015, digital print.

Inside

Vivek Shraya, *Trisha 2a*, digital print of found photograph.

Vivek Shraya, *Trisha 2b*, 2015, digital print.

Creative Direction: Vivek Shraya. Photography: Karen Campos Castillo. Makeup: Alanna Chelmick.

Hair: Fabio Persico. Set and wardrobe assistants: Shemeena Shraya and Adam Holman.

XIT-RM

The XIT-RM is a project space dedicated to showcasing the work of emerging artists in the GTA and Mississauga region. Artists are selected annually by the gallery's curatorial team to exhibit work that honours the mission and mandate of the AGM, with an emphasis on contemporary art and critical engagement.

The XIT-RM is generously sponsored by the RBC Foundation.



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First. New. Next. The AGM provides platforms for exhibitions, collections and experimentation in contemporary culture with a recent focus on artists and cultural producers from Indigenous, newcomer and youth communities. Through a broad range of educational programs, artist projects and other forms of critical dialogue, the AGM seeks to transcend traditional disciplinary boundaries, foster community, and provide spaces where alternative modes of thought are supported and activated in tangible ways.

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