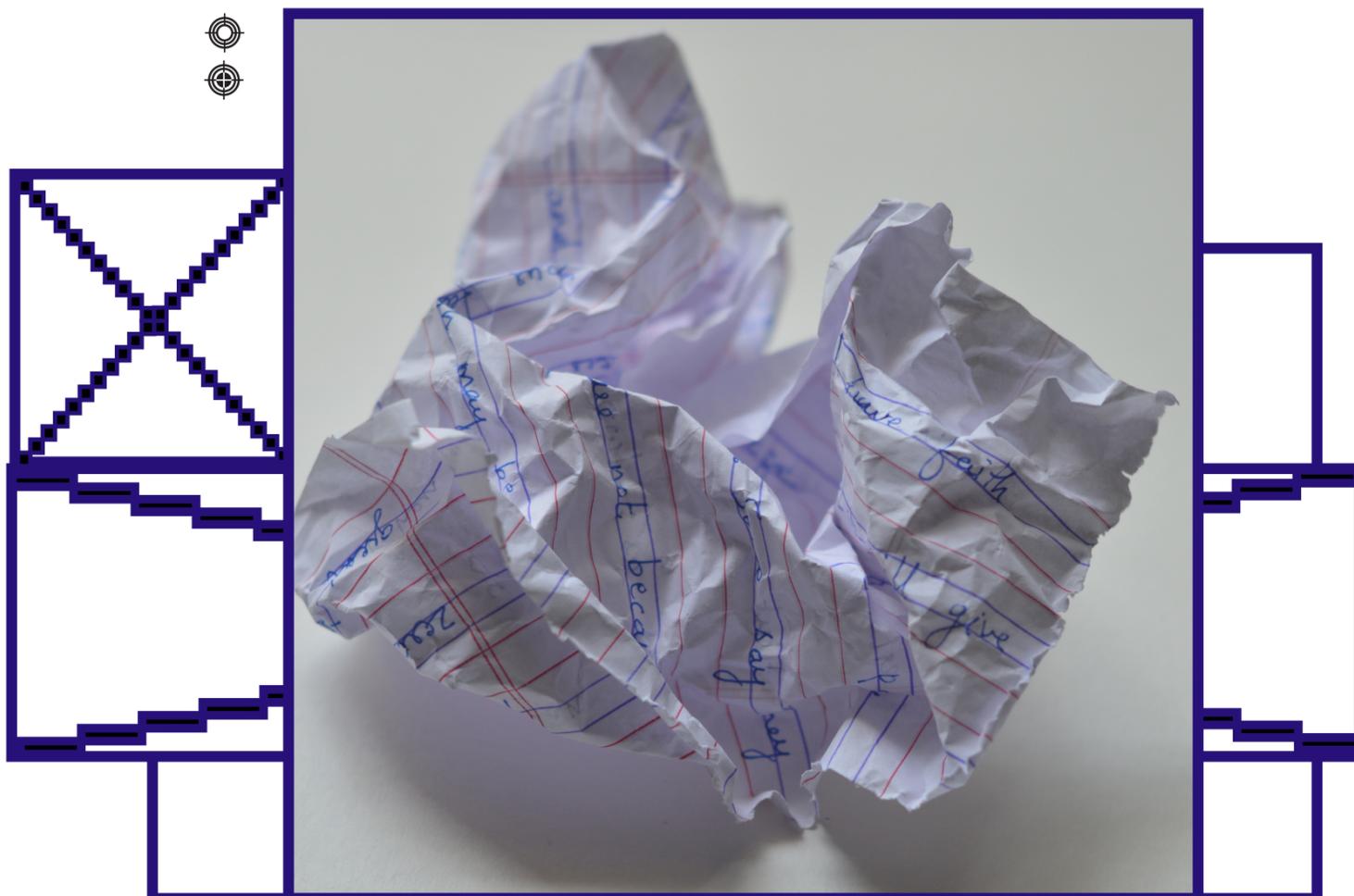
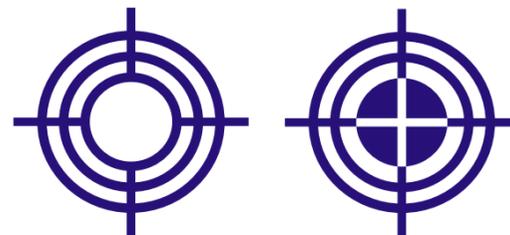
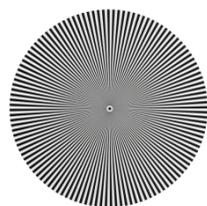


POONAM JAIN

INTERVIEW Q&A



Pulp Society

Poonam Jain (b. 1989) works with drawing, installation, text, gestural works to foreground the intersection of seemingly divergent fields of pedagogy, economy and architecture. She investigates these spaces that one occupies and dwells in at different stages in their lives, looking primarily at language and numbers as some of the common denominators between these spaces. Alphabetical and numerical systems are amongst the first lessons one learns in school - two systems through which our worlds are qualified or ordered for the rest of time. The process of questioning and un/re-learning the 'taught' becomes the essence of her practice. She often shifts personal experiences to social concerns and vice-a-versa.

Jain is preoccupied with the ritualistic acts of measuring and counting as not just indicators of power, but also of home. She examines forms of counting in religion, politics, economics, and domestic settings, blurring the lines between these notional spaces to understand the micro-narrative formed by the language of numbers.



What was the thought process behind creating your work for The Print Out? How did you approach this medium?

There are two sets of works in the packet. One is *Homework*, and two is *Translate*.

One: *Homework* is a continuation of a series called *Practice Book*, where I reimagine the horizontal red and blue lines of cursive writing books. In this set of drawings, they become spaces. It was a response to the changing idea of what is home during the lockdown. Everyday routines were confined to a limited square-foot area. Travel time, meeting people, peeking/seeing/responding happened from within these walls. WFH became a norm. In another earlier series, I compared homework (H.W) and housework (H.W) defined largely for children and women. Women and children both are patriarchally placed at the same level. Both are dictated to and expected to behave and act within certain parameters assigned to them. This work returns as a response to see all genders and ages being confined to one limited space, and then what does the idea of home mean? And then what would the idea of work mean? And then what would the idea of homework mean?

Two: *Translate* is a set of seven coded graphs that become one text. One would need to spend time with it to understand what is in it. I find the ease of information and ease with which assumptions play to form our understandings interesting. The choice that one makes is interesting, and what makes a person make that choice is intriguing too.

What's inside your packet and how do you want people to engage with its contents?

There are many choices in this packet. First, obviously, do you buy it or not? And if you do choose to buy, then within its layers, how would you approach each sheet or sheets? They can turn into artworks, booklets, notepads, experiments, create dialogues, or simply become cones for peanuts. One can make as many copies as needed. It will be a choice. Instructions are given within the packets as starters. If you come up with better possibilities, please do share them with me.

What is the significance of measuring and repetition in your work?

I believe nothing is unique, and nothing is absolute. Having said that, I also think the persistence of measuring and repetition is a hangover of the community I was raised in. It has been ever since amplified. The paradox is I enjoy the making of it in my work, but it is also often a burden to live with. Existentially, to measure and to be measured is endless. And with endlessness, repetition goes hand in hand. It could be a state or an individual; no one can be devoid of it. Within my practice, I explore various aspects of these. How they intertwine in the makings of enforced culture, religion, economy, state policies or just our everyday rhythms of being. Just going on and on.

Your practice shows a keen interest in pedagogy. How have you explored this through your packet for The Print Out?

The system of hierarchy is amplified right from the schools, right from when a child is of age to enter a school (and the bracket she is born in). I think that is what pricks me. And the question of 'What if' has been my way of dealing with it. Strategies to counter how it is taught. To make it playful rather than having it dictated. I try to bring that out in this packet. Meanings can be formed differently depending on the person/child using them. One can write something, and perhaps later, they would struggle to understand the meaning of what was written by them. Others might definitely struggle, and that is the game. That is the dialogue that I hope to achieve.

What is the significance of the imagery drawn from old stationery placed in unexpected ways? What was the inspiration behind the use of such visual imagery?

I grew up spending a lot of time in a local stationery shop that my father still runs. Objects like bill books, chart papers, textbooks, stamps, student notebooks, registers, erasers, rulers, maps have always intrigued me. Although they are seemingly boring objects, they are tools to regulate under the skin functions in society. I then like to create hybrids of these stationery objects that can allow more possibilities than what institutions dictate to individuals.

I feel the new stationery today are the apps and software. The face of the person who gives these blueprints to acquire information is now replaced by the faceless screen. The absolute facelessness of transactions. So, I guess in some ways, the old stationery is not nostalgia but an archive of a certain period's education and transactional systems.

How have you managed to maneuver the physical sensibilities of your work to a digital format?

When I started with the practice book series, I wanted to print the books in thousands and place them in stationery shops across the city. That was never possible to do for many obvious reasons. So, I think The Print Out is a perfect opportunity to distribute this work, Homework in digital format. The other work is Translate which is a decodable graph-like set of drawings. It requires a closer approach than just being viewers of drawings on a wall. In both cases, intervention is needed to complete the work. Repetition plays a role here, and I quite like that.

The scale of objects seems to play an important role in your practice. Can you tell us more about this?

Micro and macro. Micro making macro. This is a recurring approach within my practice. Larger things, structures, monuments intimidate me. The amount of labour and work that goes into making one decent house, the amount of labour and work that goes in assimilating one single meal on one fine afternoon. I feel tiny. It is the hands of thousands of people and resources that make anything possible. I think I try to relate to that when it is either larger-scaled works made by sticking thousands of earbuds, making data of the rubble from a demolished house of conflict or simply writing numbers to reach infinity.

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The meaning of intimacy seems to be too vast for me to narrow it down within my practice. I do, however, like the engagement of viewers with my works. I like the way the making of a work is not over once I have put it out. The performance continues. If that can be called intimacy?

What does collaboration mean to you?

There is nothing without collaboration, like how nothing is unique or can be by itself.