



Division of Arts and Humanities

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THE RICHARD STOCKTON COLLEGE OF NEW JERSEY

Atlantic County/Visual Arts
Free event/open to the public

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For LISTINGS:

EXHIBITION: (in the art gallery/H113)

September 14– October 16

The Virtual Immigrant:

Photography by Annu Matthew Palakunnathu Matthew

essay booklet available

Related events:

Gallery Talks at 12:30pm (in the art gallery/H113) [apx. 30-45 minutes each]

Thursday, September 24: Robert Nichols, Ph.D., “*Indian Call Centers*”

Friday, September 25: Allyn Miner, Ph.D., “*Northern Indian Sitar performance*”

Wednesday, September 30: Yogi Shanti Desai: “*Spirituality*”

Main Lectures

Thursday, October 1, 2:30-4:00pm in Alton Hall (A-wing)

Lectures followed by discussion with audience:

Annu Palakunnathu Matthew, “The Virtual Immigrant” &

Winifred Poster, Ph.D., “Global Labor Paradox”

moderated by Kate Nearpass Ogden, Ph.D. followed by a

Reception: 4:30-5:30 (in the art gallery/H113)

Gallery hours for this exhibition:

Monday, Wednesday, Thursday, Friday: 11:30am-4pm

Tuesday: 11:30am-8pm

Saturday 12pm-4pm

Sponsored by the Visual Arts Faculty, School of Arts and Humanities, Richard Stockton College of NJ. Additional support provided by the Office of the College Center and the Office of Student Development, and the General and Historical Studies. Stockton Art Gallery is a member of the South Jersey Cultural Alliance (SJCA). The media is invited to visit the SJCA pressroom at <http://www.sjca.net/cgi-bin/pressroom.cgi>

The Virtual Immigrant: Photography by Annu Palakunnathu Matthew

POMONA

Richard Stockton College's Visual Arts Program invites you to their first art exhibition of the season featuring *The Virtual Immigrant: Photography by Annu Palakunnathu Matthew* from **September 14th through October 16th in the art gallery in H113**. The series are lenticular photographic portraits of call center or Business Process Outsourcing (BPO) workers from the artist's home town of Bangalore, India. The artist calls these workers "virtual immigrants" because they are made to "Westernize" themselves (through dress, voice, idioms, local current events, etc.) during their work hours giving the client the impression that they are calling from within the client's country.

There will be a main lecture/panel in conjunction with the exhibition with the artist and sociologist Dr. Winifred Poster each giving a visual presentation lecture on **October 1 from 2:30 to 4pm in Alton Hall (A-wing)**. The event will be moderated by Stockton's Associate Professor of Art History, Kate Nearpass Ogden, Ph.D. The audience is encouraged to ask questions and have a dialogue with the speakers following both talks. From 4:30-5:30 the public is invited to a reception in the gallery/H113 to continue the discussion amongst the Ms. Matthew's artwork

Also relating to the exhibition will be informal gallery talks lasting about 30-45 minutes: On **Thursday, September 24th at 12:30 in H113** Stockton Associate Professor of History, Robert Nichols, Ph.D., will give a talk titled "**Indian call centers**" including topics such as statistics, maps of centers, observations on the "virtual" cultural experience, empowering women, the new Indian/international consumer society, and the "global outsourcing economy".

"**The Northern Indian Sitar**" will be presented by University of Pennsylvania Professor, Allyn Miner, Ph.D., on **Friday, September 25 at 12:30 in H113**. This presentation is an overview of the sitar and its music. Ms. Miner will perform and talk listeners through a sitar performance consisting of the stages of instrumental alap, gat, and rhythmic improvisations. The appealing sounds of sitar draws listeners of all musical interests to India's marvelous world of raga melody and tala rhythmic cycles.

On **Wednesday, September 30th at 12:30 in H113 "Spirituality"** will be presented by Yogi Shanti Desai who was born in Gujarat State, India. A religious home environment made basic spiritual disciplines a natural way of life for him. From an early age he studied Yoga and Yoga scriptures, and practiced meditation and spiritual discipline. Shanti has met many yogis and was initiated in his youth by his Guru, Swami Kripalu. He moved to the U.S. in 1962. His talk will touch on how he has kept, integrated, and taught his cultural spirituality over the decades within the changing American culture.

All of the events are free and open to the public.

About the exhibition:

Citing her essay, "The Virtual Immigrant" this photographic idea evolved when Ms. Matthews became an American citizen in Providence, RI, reading the brochure given "A Welcome to USA Citizenship." "It stated that "Today you have become a citizen of the

United States of America. You are no longer an Englishman, a Frenchman, an Italian, a Pole. Neither are you a hyphenated American.’ These words contradicted my experience and seemed to negate my own transnationality having lived in England, India and now America.”

Ms. Matthew describes *The Virtual Immigrant* photographic series as “an exploration of the constant fluidity and complex dimensions of the immigrant identity, relevant as we consider the effects of technology and globalization. The work will draw a parallel between the experiences of workers at call centers in India as well as those of immigrants and recent citizens in the U.S. The work will consider a potentially more universal space, the ether where the virtual immigrant resides, and its relation to the visceral experience of a recent immigrant”. This is relevant to our southern New Jersey immigrant population which according to the U.S. census there has been a 77% increase of residents from India relocated to Atlantic County alone.

Matthew’s exhibition is a multimedia piece (using photographs and audio woven together). The exhibition includes nine 4 x 6 foot framed lenticular photographs with a ten minute audio loop of excerpts from interviews Ms. Matthew had with Indian call center workers from her home town of Bangalore, India playing in the background. Individual audio players with headphones will be available for visitors who wish to listen to the entire interview.

Ms. Matthews describes “the lenticular prints consist of two photographs that have been spliced and reassembled against a lenticular lens so that from one angle the viewer sees a portrait of the call center worker in his/her “work” clothes, usually perceived as more Western. From the other angle the Virtual Immigrant appears dressed in clothes that he/she may wear for a more formal occasion, which is invariably more Indian.”

A booklet including the artist’s essay, *The Virtual Immigrant* and sociologist Dr. Winifred Poster’s *Global Labor Paradox* (excerpt from her article “Who’s On the Line?” in the journal *Industrial Relations*, 2007, (46) 2: 271-304, Blackwell Publishing) will be available while supplies last. This textual support is necessary for understanding the exhibit more extensively and it can be used as a reference for future research and for educating a larger audience on the social and psychological impact on identity and the sociological ramifications caused by technology’s effect on collapsing borders.

Brief biographies of the guest lecturers:

Annu Palakunnathu Matthew is Associate Professor of Art (Photography) at the University of Rhode Island in Kingston, RI and is represented by Sepia International Inc., New York City and Tasveer Gallery, India. Recent exhibits: Sepia International, NY, RISD Museum, Newark Art Museum, NJ; 2009 Guangzhou Biennial of Photography, China, 2006 Noorderlicht Photo Festival in Netherlands and 2005 Le Mois de la Photo à Montréal Photo Biennale in Canada. In 2007, Matthew was the first of three artists to be awarded the MacColl Johnson Fellowship in Visual Arts
www.annumatthew.com

Dr. Poster received her PhD from Stanford University, and currently is a Lecturer in the Women, Gender, and Sexuality Studies at Washington University, MO and has taught at Northwestern University and the University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign. Her interests are in global inequalities of race, class, gender, and sexuality, and how they play out in

work-family dynamics, political economies, and activism. South Asia is her regional focus of study, with additional studies of North Africa and Eastern Europe.

Her current research explores the rise of the global information technology workforce, and how it will impact women, ethnic groups, and low income communities around the world. Sponsored by grants from the National Science Foundation, she has conducted some of the first in-depth ethnographies of outsourcing by U.S. firms to India. Will these new jobs be the solution to global unemployment, suggested by many World Bank and United Nations development programs, or else the new electronic sweatshop?

Her book manuscript in preparation for the University of Chicago Press “Global Circuits of Gender” illustrates how similar high-tech firms in the U.S. and India respond differently to women’s entrance into engineering and computer factory jobs – through a normative system circumscribing women’s technical skills in the former, and a confinement system focused on women’s movements in technical spaces in the latter. The study also reveals a transnational fluidity of actors between these sites. A high-tech third firm hybridizes the two labor patterns as a U.S. multinational moves to India. Individual IT professionals (“body-shopped” engineers from India, global IT managers from the U.S.) carry labor practices with them as they circulate. Ultimately these various global circuits decompose, fuse, and pluralize the gender regimes, bringing new opportunities and new disciplines to women in each workplace.

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