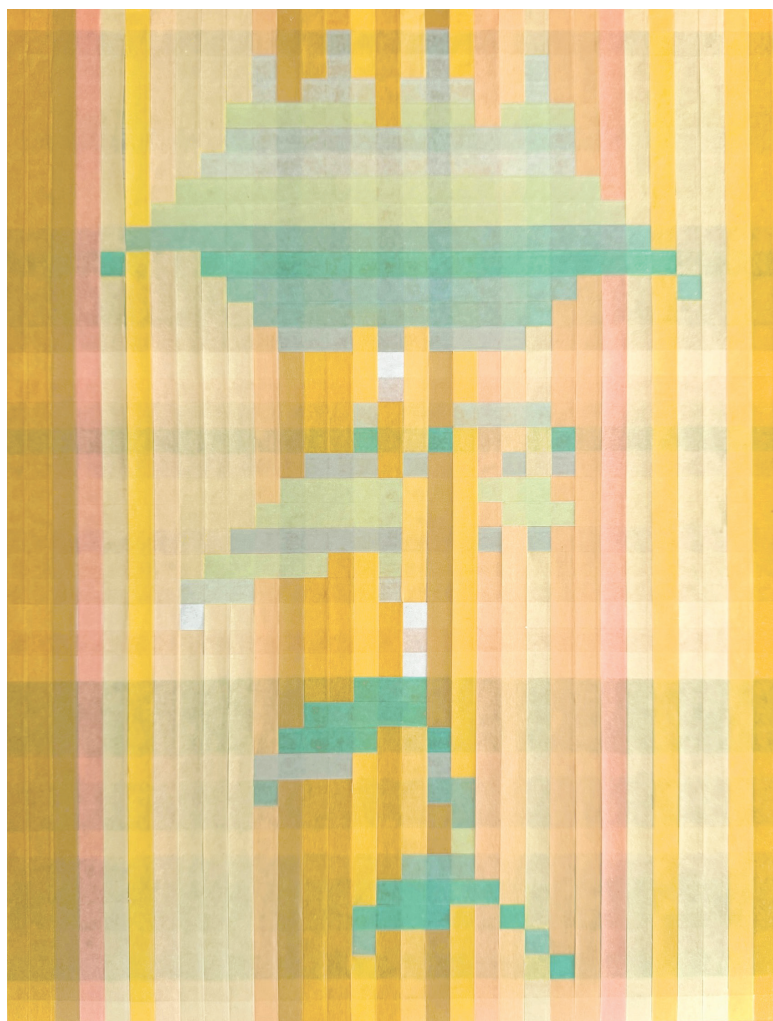


Meera Sethi

Facing Material



September 16 to October 26, 2026



Cover: Meera Sethi, *Outerwhere*, installation view at Cambridge Art Galleries, Queen's Square, 2023. Photo by Toni Hafkenscheid.

Above: Meera Sethi, *Block Print after Sushma*, 2026. Washi tape on plexiglass and paper. Courtesy of artist.

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Suspended in space, a gathering of winter coats encircles the centre of the gallery—each repurposed and collaged with found objects, old cloth, textile fragments, paper collage, plastic flowers, and children's toys. *Outerwhere*, comprised of twelve coats, carries within it gathered narratives from the South Asian diaspora. Taking this essential garment as a starting point, Meera Sethi has meticulously reworked the winter coat to offer a poetic intervention that reminds us of the many ways playfulness and informal archives of material culture can aid in journeys of resistance to racializing and homogenizing settler-colonial cultures. Each hand-sewn coat holds an assemblage of objects that examine stories of colonization, displacement, racism, grief, memory, resilience, and reconciliation brought about through transnational migration.

In *Outerwhere*, two coats in particular actively engage with what it means to be a settler on stolen land. With *Goddess of Smallpox*, for example, Sethi creates a shrine for Shitala Ma, a rural, oppressed caste goddess of skin diseases worshipped in India, Nepal, Bangladesh, and Pakistan who protects an original Hudson's Bay Point Blanket Coat from the ravages of smallpox introduced by British colonists into Indigenous communities on Turtle Island. In this gesture of recognition and offering, Sethi prods us to consider ways in which healing from colonization can take place across peoples variously impacted by it.

Peering in towards *Outerwear* are four portraits from Sethi's series *Who's Your Dadi?* Dadi is a Hindi/Urdu/Punjabi word for a paternal grandmother. Each vividly rendered painting portrays an archetypal dadi surrounded by textile details that provide a sartorially rich sense of identity and place. One is seated in a secluded garden or courtyard, known as an *aangan* in India. Portrayed in profile and dressed in a floral-printed kaftan that echoes her surroundings, this dadi is gazing directly ahead as if contemplating the piece of empty cloth that gently rests upon her lap.

Within each of these portraits, a blank sheet of paper or cloth is visible—a motif that connects these women across the social, ethnic, caste, and class distinctions they embody. Sethi proposes this to viewers as an opening to interpretation. Are these dadis each caught in the act of considering their own unwritten stories? Or, as Laila Malik observes in her essay on Sethi's paintings, perhaps these dadis stand for something else: "Sethi has convened a lost council of elders who are watching and taking note... Across class and land and ocean, they exist

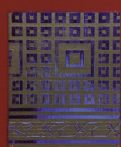


as a collective refusal to be written out of the narrative” (Laila Malik, “The Dadi Principle,” Hamilton Artists Inc., Hamilton, ON, July 4, 2023). Each matriarch is portrayed at the centre of her world, in a position of strength and honour in a moment of remove from the patriarchal social structures that loom just beyond the picture’s frame.

Each of the dadi paintings is accompanied by a *Draweave*, a new body of work and a neologism that Sethi coined to name the coming together



of drawing and weaving. *Draweaves*, a technique that Sethi developed, are meticulously woven using the everyday materials of adhesive tape sometimes combined with string. The process is assiduous and labour intensive, requiring Sethi to slow down, closely observe, and attend to the intricate work of the handmade. Each weaving is a translation of one of the patterns that animates the dadi paintings. *Kullu Weave after Kaushalya*, for example, is a *Draweave* using a tapestry technique that is based on the vibrant handwoven geometric pattern of the dadi's Kullu shawl in Sethi's painting *Kaushalya*. These wool shawls have a long history in the Himalayan regions of India, where they are made



by Indigenous Kullvi weavers from the state of Himachal Pradesh. Similarly, in *Bandhini after Ram Lubhai*, Sethi creates a *Draweave* from paper tape and cotton string in the form of a tied bandhini fabric made on a woven ground and as yet unwound. The precise process she has refined offers a two-stage investigation into this resist-dyed textile craft practiced extensively across India and Pakistan by Muslim and Hindu communities which are separated by modern postcolonial and highly militarized nation-state boundaries.



Meera Sethi, *Subtractive Grid Drawing Black 27* (after Suraiya Hasan Bose (Book 1), 2025, ink pen, acrylic pen and oil pastel on paper. Courtesy of the artist.

On a second wall, an installation of Sethi's *Subtractive Grid Drawings* echoes these themes and expands upon her interest in the development of a language of abstraction informed by the rich history of textiles. Inspired by her recent *Draweaves*, Sethi has begun to look more closely at the structure of cloth: how it is constructed through the intricate intersections of warp and weft. Looking to artists such as Anni Albers, who blurred the lines between art and craft by integrating abstraction with textiles in the mid-20th century, Sethi's recent drawings invite us to look closely at the world of patterns that is familiar and intimate yet often overlooked as a highly-developed skilled craft. Sethi's *Subtractive Grid Drawings*, formed through an ongoing sketchbook practice, offer insight into a reversal of a drawing process whereby the grid is carefully removed as if to expose an underlying pattern already there.

In her methodology of deep investigation into textile histories, Sethi reveals an understory of intercultural exchange across geographic regions that is embedded within every inch of cloth. Across her installations, paintings, weavings, and drawings, Sethi encourages viewers to consider their relationship to these materials and, through them, to the interconnections between cloth, self, and environment. By reframing textiles as a mode and metaphor of communication, Sethi reminds us that language is woven across time, space, culture, and community.



Portrait of the artist by Taveeshi Singh

Meera Sethi

Meera Sethi is a Toronto-based artist with a process-oriented, interdisciplinary, and research-based practice that moves between painting, drawing, sculpture, illustration, performance, and social practice. Her work sits at the intersection of the body and cloth, with a particular focus on South Asia and its diasporas. She references histories of gender, labour, environment, and colonization.

Sethi's work can be found in the permanent collections of the Royal Ontario Museum and the Wedge Collection. In Canada, it has been exhibited regionally at the Varley Art Gallery of Markham, Cambridge Art Galleries, the Art Gallery of Burlington, and the Aga Khan Museum, among other national venues. She is the recipient of multiple awards and residencies from the Toronto, Ontario, and Canada Arts Councils; the Textile Museum of Canada; University of Toronto; InterAccess; The Banff Centre for Arts and Creativity; Mount Allison University; and the University of Winnipeg.

She lives and works in Tkaronto (Toronto, Canada), the traditional territory of the Anishnaabe, Haudenosaunee, Wendat, Chippewa, and Mississaugas of the Credit First Nation.

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