



Pavilion Commissions Programme 2007

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In late 2004, I travelled to India in search of something; I had only previously been once, but as I was too young to remember, this was effectively my first visit.

Although I tried to have no preconceptions of what I might find, I found myself fantasising about people waiting for me at the airport, with open arms, welcoming me back to the homeland - my true home. This was not to be the case. Everything about me screamed 'foreigner'; I couldn't walk the walk and could barely talk the talk. Being treated as a tourist by Indian Nationals (speaking to me in English) upset me. For the first time I had to consider the idea that I was perceived as British. But if I'm a foreigner in India, and a minority in the UK, then what do the words 'British' and 'Indian' mean in this context?

This was the starting point for a recent body of work entitled *Squatting*. I explored the idea of walking the walk - the squatting pose is something I saw widely adopted by lower class citizens in the streets of India, as it is the only way to sit down without soiling the few clothes that people may possess. This is one of the few cultural traits I could relate back to my family back in the UK, recalling my elder relatives preparing food whilst squatting on their carpeted floor.

The reason for a great inaccuracy in the knowledge I possess of Indian life, is a reflection on the nature of immigration. When my relatives first emigrated to the UK in the late 1960' the idea of the country they had left behind remained with them, in a protective shell, so as to avoid dilution by Western influence. However, decades have passed and these values remain, handed down to each British-born generation. They no longer reflect the evolving nature of 'the homeland'. I certainly wasn't told that I would be spoken to by one, and all in English, and that all of the rickshaw drivers now have mobile phones.

The work proposed for the Pavilion commission will engage directly with family members', travelling to their homes within the UK to investigate through interaction, how much their 'immigrant identities' have been influenced by Western sensibilities, and perhaps more specifically, as with *Squatting*, explore how this has manifest through the mannerisms and postures imbedded in the cultural memory of their limbs.

Whilst remaining open to the project evolving throughout, I envisage the setting for the development of these photographic works to be set in an urban living or working environment, initiating a discussion around the protagonist's cultural identity through posture also. Initially I will ask each of the subjects to pose for me squatting, aiming for this to develop organically, exploring other physical traits. The subject's favourite sitting position in or out of the original context for example.

My practice has always involved putting myself in the frame, in front of the lens. Here I will take a different stand point, this time placing myself behind the lens. Just as *Squatting* portrays a foreign pose in a Western setting, I hope to create and present the viewer with an aesthetic that perhaps does not allude to the exotic. It is very much about being British - and to investigate the spectrum that exists between British born and immigrant Indian.