

Shubigi Rao: Artist Statement

As a cultural nomad with no singular affiliation or identity, since 2003 I have worked with the idea of excavation as a means to catalogue cultural hegemonies, extinction and the interpretation of human history. I collect the detritus of our civilisations, whether objects/garbage, or discredited and unfashionable knowledge and ideas, preferring the subtle and the suggestion, relying on wordplay and humour to explore the tenuous line between existence and extinction, be it human, cultural, species specific or ideological.

My interests range from archaeology, neuroscience, 13th - 15th century science, 17th - 19th century scholarship and exploration, language, libraries, historical acts of cultural genocide, contemporary art theory and natural history. I tend towards installations that are immersive and often tongue-in-cheek, that employ puns (text and visual) and wordplay, whether it is creating archaeological archives of garbage, writing How To manuals for building a nation and a culture from scratch, discovering and diagnosing peculiar forms of urban malaise where digital dandruff and pixel dust accumulate like lint and cloud the contemporary brain, building immortal jellyfish, or a pseudo-museum environment in which issues ranging from the nature of collecting, the mechanisms of knowledge accumulation and storage to destruction and cultural genocide are referenced.

Since 2013 I have been working on '*Pulp: A Short Biography of the Banished Book*', a decade-long film, book and visual art project about the history of book destruction, censorship and other forms of repression, as well as the book as symbol and resistance. This involves visiting public and private collections, libraries and archives globally that have served as flashpoints in history, collecting fragments, ephemera, anecdotes, buried secrets, and piecing together (through the film, book and artworks) a composite chronology of the conjoined literary and violent trajectories of our species.