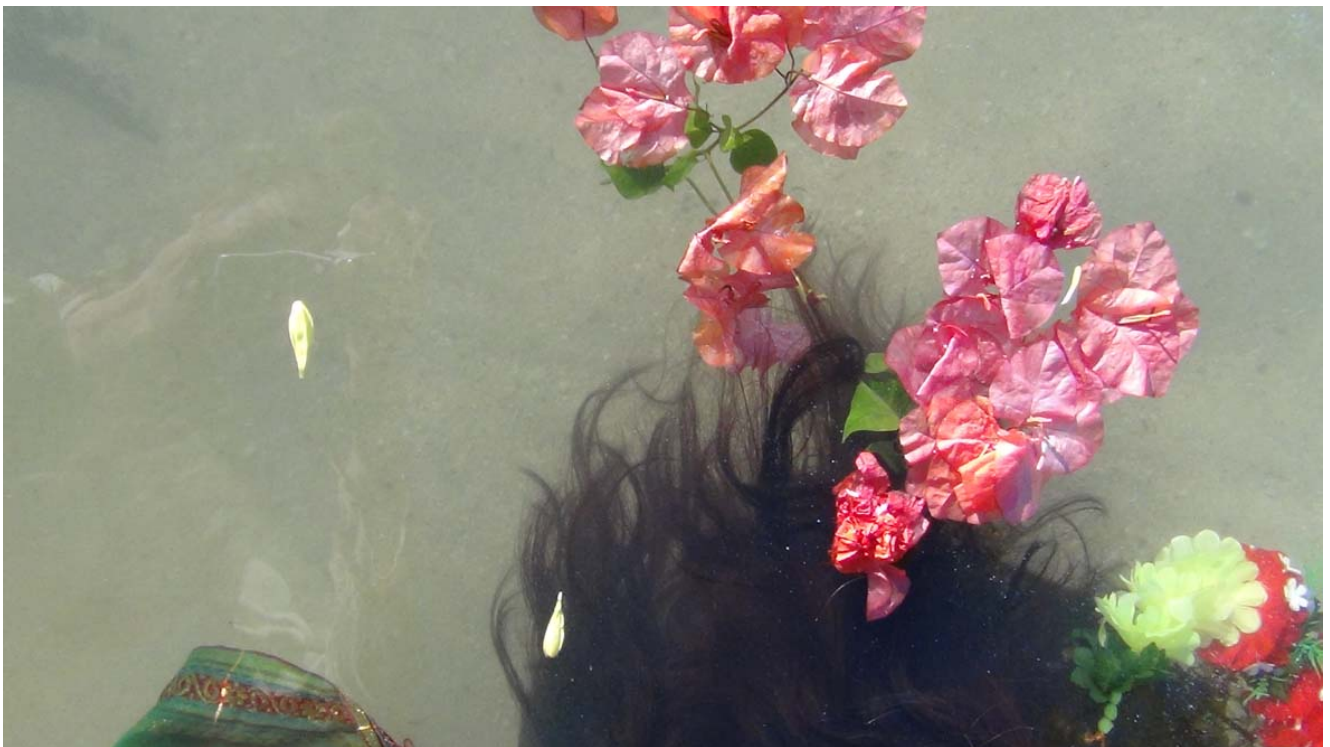




Drowning Durga VIII

R 30,000.00



"In the series ""When the moon waxes"", I interrogate my personal family history of poverty, alcoholism, emotional and physical abuse as they intersect with Indian Ocean migration, colonialism, apartheid and post-apartheid. My great-grandparents came to South Africa in 1860 as part of the British Indentured Labour system which, in the demise of Trans-Atlantic slavery, became the economic model of choice by the Empire. Escaping lives of poverty and arranged marriages in India, they found themselves plunged into a racially hierarchical society divorced from familial support systems. Since 2007 I have been recording my mothers' stories of the hardships endured by the various women in our family – from her mother who once tried to drown her seven children because of hunger, to my mother's own story of abuse in marriage which she was given into at the age of 13 to an aunt who set herself alight in front of her children or the seven sisters who hung themselves on a tree in our neighbourhood protesting their father. During this collection of oral history, I was intrigued to learn that my grandmother's skills included making handmade needle-lace and since 2009 I've created visual scenes of my grandmother's and mother's lives in lace. As I have almost no images of

my grandmother, I plunged into the archives at the Durban Documentation Centre finding visualisations of Indian women which “stood in” for my grandmother, but which then tied in her personal stories to a larger collectivity of displaced migrant women. In the photographic works “Drowning Durgas” (part of the “When the moon waxes” exhibition), I enact the role of a drowned Durga, in reference to the number of stories I grew up with of women who had killed themselves - drowning, burning and hanging - viewing suicide not as an act of cowardice, but as the only avenue seemingly available to women sometimes to escape the social restraints of their lives. During the Durga pooja (prayer), a devotee fasts to the goddess Durga so that she may take away their sins. Sometimes a clay effigy is made and submerged into water and Durga is said to do this, returning to her husband. In “When the moon waxes”, Durga is not submerged, she doesn’t take on other’s sins and she does not return to her husband. She embodies both and all and is set adrift. The photography and video footage for this exhibition series has been shot in Mauritius, Zanzibar and Durban where Africans of Indian descent have rooted themselves post-indentureship. “When the moon waxes” also demonstrates the creativity and skills that migrant women have used to uplift their families and contribute to both intimate and wider economies, linking the struggles of a particular group and historical episode(s) to larger struggles of women nationally and transnationally.”

Edition Size	5
Medium	Individual hand-painted digital colour photograph with hand-pasted henna designs on Sihl persomural
Height	61.00 cm
Width	91.00 cm
Artist	Sharlene Khan
Year	2015

