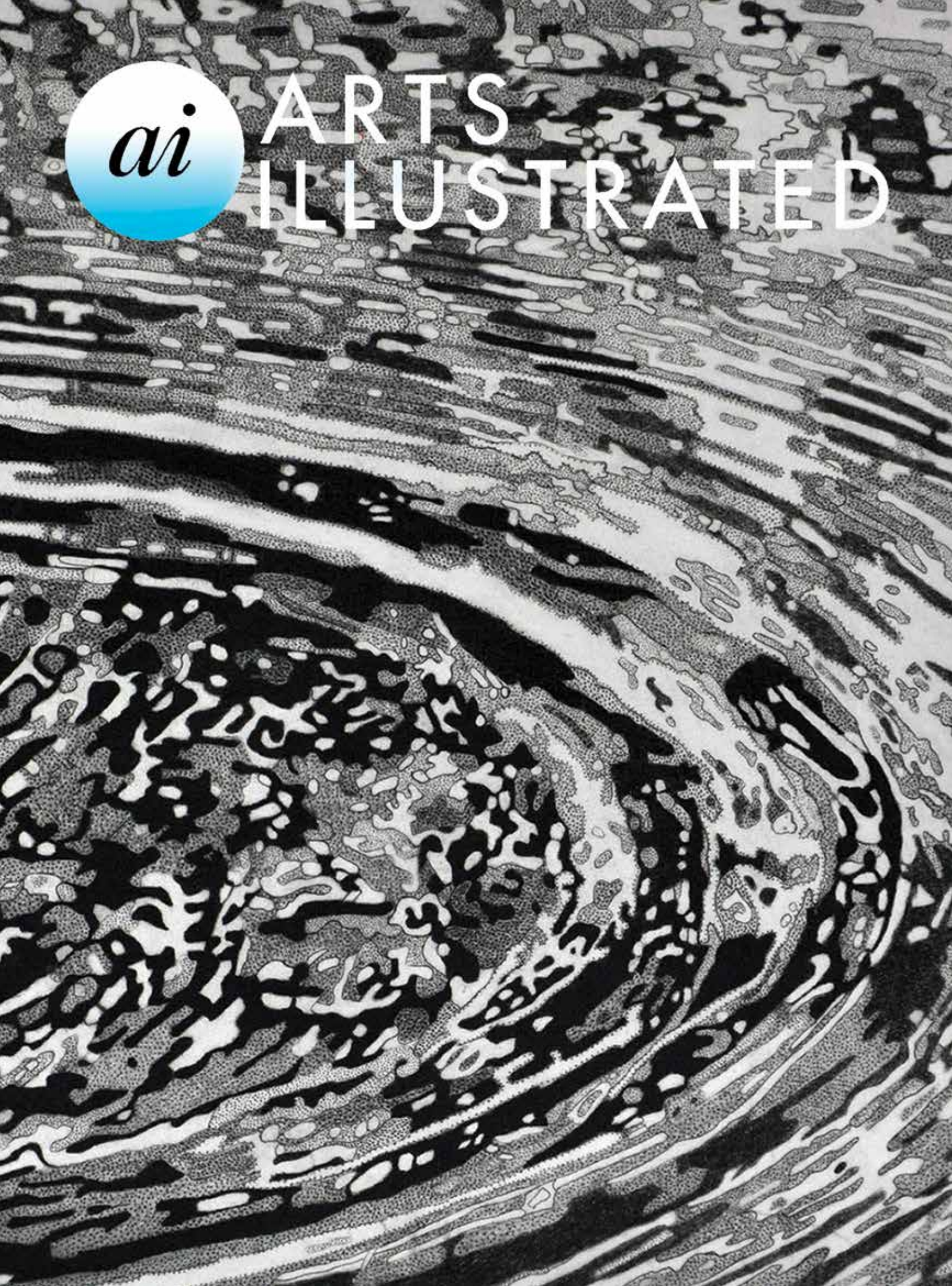




ARTS ILLUSTRATED



Editor's note

At the time of working on this issue and discussing the cover with Parvathi Nayar – on the solo power of water and its environmental implications in a development-hungry country – relentless waters with another kind of hunger devastated the entire state of Kerala. It made Parvathi's cover for this issue frighteningly relevant and our theme that wanted to look at the beauty of solitude, the aesthetic of isolation, and the beginning of things, where one is followed by two, where many drops begin with that first one, always. The Kerala floods reminded us that perhaps destruction too was tied into the idea of solo, a precursor of what is to come, a full stop for the next sentence to begin.

This issue we found that solo resided in each one of us, in its many-hued splendour. It reiterated the fact that just by virtue of something being 'single' or 'alone', it did not do away its complex layers, its narratives and stories and its constant need to dialogue with the world, so something new could then walk its path. Even a literal interpretation – a movie named 'Solo' or a solo road trip – brought with it a surprising charm of its own, unpredictable in where it takes us.

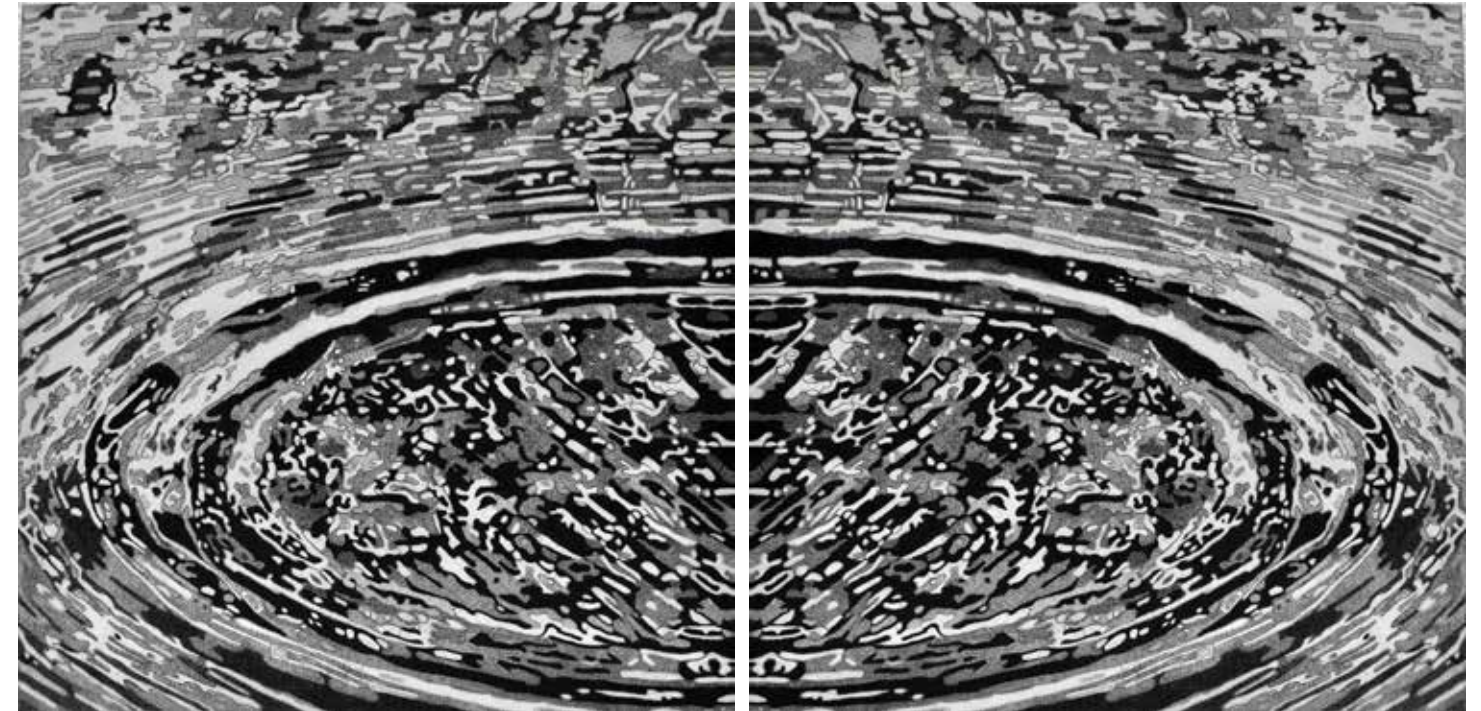
But, perhaps, the one thing that really stood out while we put this issue together and one that truly resonated with the theme for me was the Supreme Court verdict on September 6 that finally scrapped Section 377, an archaic, pre-colonial law that criminalised same-sex relationships, allowing the colours of the rainbow to reclaim its rightful place in the sky.

Our pages, too, this issue, bring a piece of that rainbow – resplendent in its alone-ness, multi-layered in its manifestation, and full of shining light for the future. And a reminder that every journey begins with someone, somewhere, over the rainbow.



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Cover Artist



The solitary event. A singularity from where life itself emerged. But equally, one pebble in the pond. Perhaps, then, another. And another. The butterfly effect. One event collides with a neighbouring one, influences that episode. And moves to nudge the next. A cascading series of causes and outcomes.

It's what I dream each drawing will do – be an idea moving outwards, whose form is both fluid and frozen, meaning one particular thing but also many different things. A ripple that will find new shape in the minds of its viewers.



Parvathi Nayar

Intimate Strangers

AUGUST 21 TO 28, 2018, NEW DELHI

Reviewed by RAHUL KUMAR

The solo show of Bakula Nayak at the India International Centre in New Delhi was aptly titled *Intimate Strangers*. Nayak's works are a very personal response to things that are found and collected by her, but probably held significant value and meaning for those they once belonged to. While searching for vintage papers, Nayak confesses that she often finds pages from personal diaries or random bills. 'At first glance they look like innocuous pieces of paper, but they make my imagination go wild. They offer insights into people's lives and I enjoy giving them a new life,' she says. And so a ledger page from 1947, or a bread bill of a bakery in Paris from 1932, tucked away and preserved, come alive in Nayak's re-imagination of the stories around them.

Her artistic journey began five years ago when she lost her father. As a child, she remembered a mysterious red box that was always hidden away. While clearing things up, Nayak came across the red box and found that it contained a random collection of papers and letters her parents had written to each other, meticulously capturing details of their life. As a way to relieve her grief, Nayak began sketching on these pieces of papers. 'Over time I found notes my parents wrote about their dreams for me. How they were foregoing small pleasures to give me the best. It became impossible for me to read those letters. That's when I decided not to use personal papers to sketch on. I needed to let them be,' shares Nayak. 'Then I became interested in looking for old papers from thrift stores.'

Reclaimed photographs after a studio shut up shop in Pune or of old bill books, all indicate that nothing is permanent. Everything is bound to be discarded and left to perish, eventually, and this is what Nayak builds on, of giving old stories new meaning. A page from a gardening journal that Nayak picked up from a flea market in New York, for instance, gave her fascinating insights of the times. 'While the focus was gardening, it was evident that it was the time of economic depression. People were selling their homes either due to losing their jobs or often just shifting to old-age homes,' she explains. For Nayak, it is the paper that dictates what is drawn on it. A trained architect, Nayak is comfortable with laborious and detailed drawings. 'It is so meditative for me that I have stopped wearing a watch.'

As part of the exhibition, Nayak also gave viewers the opportunity to send vintage postcards of her artwork to the person of their choice, that much like her exhibition of paintings, vintage objects and other paper ephemera allowed us to take a fragment of lives past, of a shared experience with strangers, one that was unexpected in its charm and deeply resonant in its impact.



Bakula Nayak, *Endless Bliss*, Mixed Media on Vintage Paper from 1907, 14.5" x 23.75".

Bakula Nayak, *I Scream...You Scream*, Mixed Media on Vintage Paper from 1962, 18" x 30".

Bakula Nayak, *I've Got This*, Mixed Media on Vintage Paper from 1937, 15.5" x 23.75".

Bakula Nayak, *Garden Party*, Mixed Media on Vintage Paper from 1955, 14.5" x 23.75".

All Images Courtesy of the Bakula Nayak.



