



THE UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO
NEUBAUER COLLEGIUM
FOR CULTURE & SOCIETY

Raqs Media Collective: Cavalcade

May 8 – July 11, 2025

A new film by the Delhi-based artists stages a rapturous procession where humans and non-humans jostle for space.



CHICAGO— The Neubauer Collegium for Culture and Society at the University of Chicago is pleased to present *Cavalcade*, an exhibition of new works by the renowned Delhi-based artist group **Raqs Media Collective**, on view May 8 through July 11, 2025.

Based in part on footage of an annual religious festival that takes place in the holy Hindu city of Deoghar, in the Indian state of Jharkhand, *Cavalcade* recasts the event as a gathering where humans and non-humans jostle for space. The recurring presence of skeletal imagery, set in the sonic gloom of a spectral, beatless soundtrack, suggests that this moment also conjures the communion of the living and the dead, past, present, and future – a moment outside time.

A cavalcade is a procession or parade, originally of horsemen. In Raqs' delirious visual imagination, this caravan morphs into a psychedelic congregation of figures that emanate from dreams, myths, and speculations. The film's soothing voiceover instructs us to "march not in a straight line, but in spirals, in circles, in loops that twist and tangle, now, alive." The viewer ventures alongside a colorful cast of ghosts, goblins, and guardian spirits who are shown weaving their way through forests, standing at the edges of crater-like coal mines, climbing the upthrust of petrified lava, flying over

brick kilns and dry riverbeds, observing ships at sea, and walking with a procession of devotees celebrating the nuptials of the Indic deities Shiva and Parvati.



The film is accompanied by three enigmatic prints that incorporate AI responses to the artists' prompts, a welcome intrusion of machine intelligence into the cosmos of the show. Diagrams depicting the thought processes that informed the making of *Cavalcade* are overlaid with fragments from the artists' ongoing dialogue with AI (texts from the exchange appear in the film as well). A scroll-like banner adorning the exterior wall of the Neubauer Collegium features a phantasmagoric, hydra-like figure that beckons visitors indoors.

Taken together, the film and its print complements pose the question of what it might mean to extend human solidarity to animals, mythical figures, natural elements, ghosts, and machines. As such, *Cavalcade* can be viewed as an invitation to expand our notion of what it means to be a citizen of the world – to inhabit the cosmos, to be cosmopolitan.



Indeed, the presentation of this new work was conceived in close partnership with the Neubauer Collegium research project [Reimagining Cosmopolitanism](#) (2022–2025), which is reconceptualizing global citizenship for a new era. Collaborators come from a variety of backgrounds and disciplines including anthropology, political science, history, English, geography, cultural studies, sociology, and media studies. Papers developed over the course of a three-year series of workshops will be published in the forthcoming *Oxford Handbook of Cosmopolitanism*. The opening of the exhibition coincides with the project's capstone conference, at which the international group of scholars will synthesize their findings in dialogue with one another and in the context of the exhibition. The conference has been jointly organized by the Neubauer Collegium and the Chicago Center for Contemporary Theory, both at the University of Chicago.

Cavalcade is curated by Dieter Roelstraete and made possible by the Neubauer Family Foundation and the Brenda Mulmed Shapiro Fund. Additional support and partnership provided by the Chicago Center for Contemporary Theory.

ABOUT THE ARTISTS

Raqs Media Collective was founded in Delhi in 1992 by Jeebesh Bagchi, Monica Narula, and Shuddhabrata Sengupta. Their films, installations, performances, and curatorial projects have been presented in major art venues around the globe. Their work has been included in Documenta 11 and in the Venice, São Paulo, Istanbul, and Sydney biennials. Monographic presentations of their practice have been hosted by the National Gallery of Modern Art, Delhi; K21, Düsseldorf; Whitworth Gallery, Manchester; MUAC, Mexico City; the Mathaf Museum of Modern Art, Doha; and PROA, Buenos Aires. They have curated editions of Manifesta, the Shanghai Biennial, and the Yokohama Triennial. Working at the intersection of contemporary art, historical inquiry, philosophical speculation, and theory, the artist group honors the etymology of their moniker (“raqs” means “dance” in both Arabic and Urdu) in the notion of “kinetic contemplation” as one of the founding principles of their free-ranging, quintessentially cosmopolitan art practice.

IMAGES

Raqs Media Collective, *Cavalcade* (still), 2025. Digital video projection. Courtesy of the artists.

Raqs Media Collective, *Cavalcade* (still), 2025. Digital video projection. Courtesy of the artists.

Raqs Media Collective, *Cavalcade*, 2025. Vinyl. 76 x 120 in (193.04 x 304.8 cm). Courtesy of the artists.

MEDIA INQUIRIES

Mark Sorkin | 773-834-8936 | msorkin@uchicago.edu

GENERAL INFORMATION

Neubauer Collegium for Culture and Society
The University of Chicago
5701 S. Woodlawn Ave.
Chicago, IL 60637
773-795-2329
neubauercollegium.uchicago.edu

Gallery hours: M–F, 9am – 4pm