

Description:

In recent months, the unearthing of mass-graves in Chemmani as well as a burial site in Colombo has once again forced Sri Lanka's buried past into the light. In Chemmani alone, forensic teams have identified well over two hundred skeletal remains, including children, along with toys, school-bags and feeding bottles. These findings return us to the raw fact of the missing: those who vanished, those whose presence was withheld and whose bodies were hidden beneath the soil.

In *an archive too can be [used]*, Imaad Majeed explore how archives—state reports, photographs, testimonies, documents — do more than record absence: they reveal the machinery of disappearance, the gestures of memory, and the possibilities of re-use. They engage with the ways that language and bureaucracy collude in erasure, as well as the ways that mothers with photographs of children become living repositories of unanswered questions.

Drawing from my documentary poetics zine *Testimony of the Disappeared*, and rooted especially in the Eastern Province and the artist's Tamil-Muslim heritage, the performance asks: What does the state mean when it issues a "Certificate of Absence"? What does the archive show when the bones of a child surface above ground? When language is used by the state to silence, how might it be queered, repurposed, made to speak otherwise? And who can tell these stories.

The mass-grave revelations intensify the stakes. An archive too can be used to stall justice, to bury evidence, to certify nothing happened; or it can be used to press, to hold open wounds, to gather ghosts into presence. In this moment of excavation, of exposure, of re-opening, the performance becomes a space for reckoning.

Bio:

Imaad Majeed is a poet and multidisciplinary artist whose exploration of language resonates with the words of Adrienne Rich: “The impulse to create begins – often terribly and fearfully – in a tunnel of silence. Every real poem is the breaking of an existing silence, and the first question we might ask any poem is, What kind of voice is breaking silence, and what kind of silence is being broken?”

Their work, individual and collective has been featured at Their artwork, in various mediums, has been featured at NeMLA, Tamil Studies Symposium, Queer Tamil Collective, Eternal Internet Brotherhood/Sisterhood, Theertha Performance Platform, Colomboscope, Chobi Mela, Art Dubai, Queer Arts Festival, Serendipity Arts Festival, Museum of Modern and Contemporary Art Sri Lanka, BuchBasel, Spielart Theatre Festival, and Singapore Biennale, among others.