

## BONNIE LAMMAR

*River and Vessel*, 2015  
Archival pigment print, 12 x 12 in



COURTESY: THE ARTIST

## SYED AFZAL HAIDER

### Life of Ganesh

It was the first time Ganesh had returned to India since Joyce died. The trip from Chicago to Jhansi took over twenty hours, with stops in London and New Delhi, finally coming to an end as he settled in one of the guest rooms in Uncle Monmohan's house. It was a large room with an attached bath, away from the rest of the house, with blue, gray, and brown paisley curtains on the windows and a matching bedspread with brown carpeting on the floor. Two large windows on one side of the room looked out onto the front yard and a manicured garden. On the other side, one smaller window with an air conditioner on the lower portion looked out onto an indoor courtyard with a large neem tree. Other than the chirping of the air conditioner, the room was cool and quiet, far removed from the noisy celebration out in the streets—the annual *Caturthi* festival that celebrated Lord Ganesh's birthday.

Ganesh's mother sat at the dining table rubbing thick frosty white bitterness out of a ripening green cucumber, while Ganesh sat with blind Uncle Monmohan in the living room where everything was neatly organized. The living room had whitewashed walls and built-in teak bookcases filled with various law journals, medical books, industrial manuals, biographies, novels, and encyclopedias spanning from floor to ceiling. Pots of blooming flowers sat on low brass stools under the windows. In one corner of the foyer by the entrance stood a tall brass coat tree. A floor lamp lit the space from the other corner. In the living room, on the inner wall above a large dark-brown cut-velvet sofa, a large framed color photograph of Uncle Monmohan hung next to a portrait of his mother, which Bappo had painted a long time ago when she was a young woman. Two matching chairs sat across from the sofa. A jumbo color TV sat on the table by an adjacent wall. All day long, blind Uncle Monmohan sat on his La-Z-Boy in front of the TV, listening to one-day cricket matches, reruns of *I Love Lucy* and *The Honeymooners*, and baldheaded men with thick necks wrestle. A silver enamel spittoon stood next to his chair.

At last, Uncle Monmohan turned off the TV. "There is an important matter we need to discuss," he said.

Ganesh knew it had to be the issue of his arranged marriage to Sitala. But what was there to discuss? The woman he loved, the woman he had met in America, was gone. "I'm here," Ganesh said impatiently.