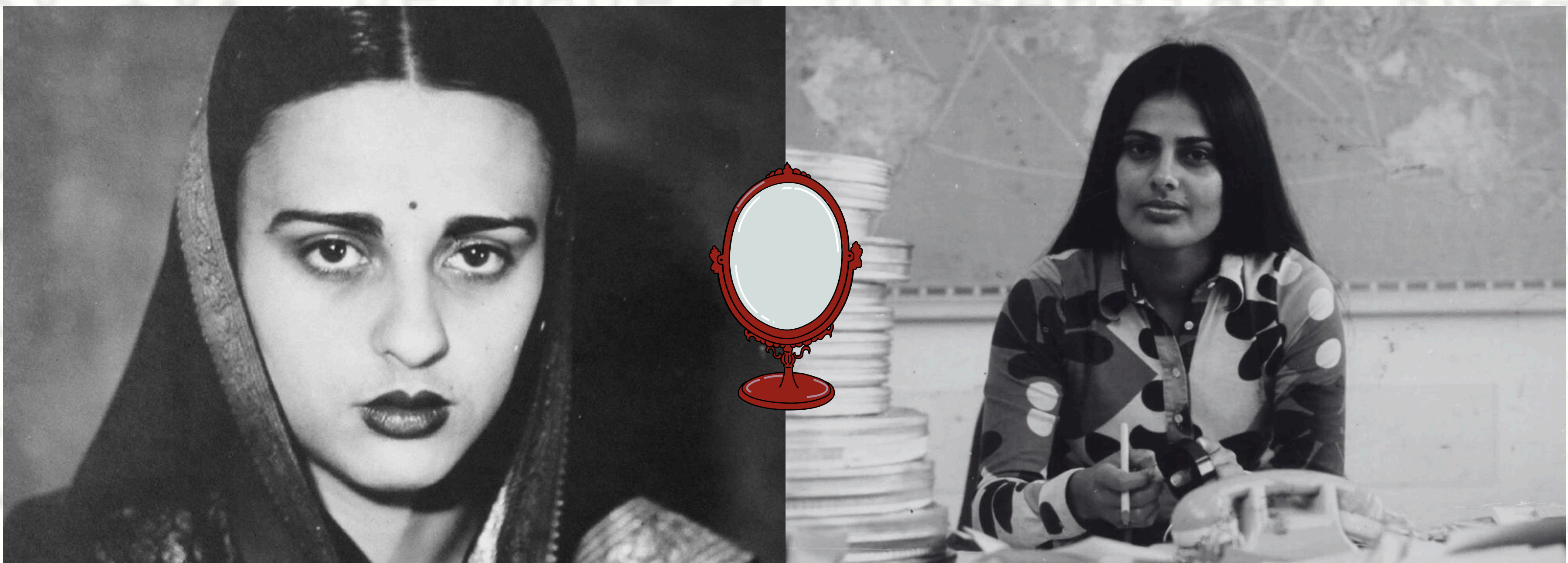


AMRITA through NAVINA NAVINA through AMRITA

Exploring the life and work of Amrita Sher-Gil and Navina Sundaram
through their family album and personal archives

The two women's stories are interlaced not only through consanguinity and co(i)mplications, as Renov puts it; they also share a common gesture of transgressing stereotypical gender roles and nationalities.



Amrita Sher-Gil - Public Domain

Navina Sundaram - Die Fünfte Wand

According to Michael Renov, domestic ethnography plays "at the boundaries of inside and outside in a unique way". Similarly, Navina's archive invites us to dive into "an insider's outside view or an outsider's inside view". The dichotomy public/private is contested in the archive and in the movie, because both works propose a gesture of "the rendering public of private-sphere material, but not as spectacle" (Renov, 2004).



Navina Sundaram's crew in India, 1993 - Die Fünfte Wand

Amrita's and Navina's work functions as **artifacts of memory**, an interrogation of the past and the present which blends private/public, individual/collective, and other/self into voices and archives. In this sense, the **dichotomy of subject/object emerges as a fluid concept**, negotiated within domestic spaces and beyond, embedding autobiographical and domestic ethnography in intimate spaces such as personal archives, letters, artwork, and family albums.

By examining Amrita's and Navina's lives, even though their temporalities differ, their biographies and work reveal multiple layers where familiar histories extend and interconnect in shared spaces of belonging. These spaces reflect a sense of longing or absence, serving as a way to construct or deconstruct themselves while **transgressing traditional roles and orientalist imaginaries**, all intersected by the structures of caste, class and gender.



Amrita Sher-Gil's Bride's Toilet



Access to the film and archive

Javiera Bilbao, Sara Pyakurel, Miranda Hochman

Sources: Die Fünfte Wand - Navina Sundaram Archive
Amrita Sher-Gil — A Family Album - film by Navina Sundaram
The subject of Documentary - Michael Renov (2004)