Kandasamy

A Wise One, a Warrior

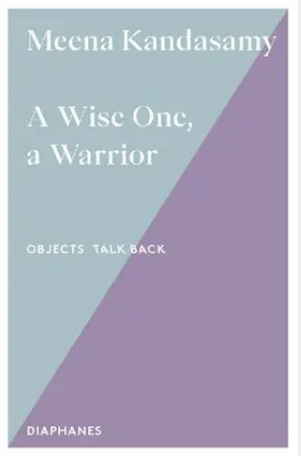
Volume 3

Meena Kandasamy writes about the Mithuna couple, a seventeenth-century ivory sculpture from Tamil Nadu, India, depicting lovers. Kandasamy unfurls a multi-layered, multi-directional narrative built from images, questions and contradictions evoked by the sculpture. “How can we look at this work and not talk about who produced it?” Kandasamy asks and then examines how caste and class are carved into the object as indelibly as its physical details. Such knowledge complicates easy associations of love that may be evoked by the couple.

Refusing any impulse to idealize or exoticize, Kandasamy connects the carving to personal and political stories that expose painful realities of who gets to love whom, and how. She sets the intimate alongside the institutional to interrogate terms such as , and . Through an astonishing stylistic mix, including Twitter, academic discourse, poetry and memoir, she talks back, forward and sideways with the object.

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12,00 €
11,21 € (zzgl. MwSt.)

sofort versandfertig, Lieferfrist: 1-3 Werktage

Artikelnummer: 9783035807547
Medium: Buch
ISBN: 978-3-0358-0754-7
Verlag: Diaphanes Verlag
Erscheinungstermin: 16.06.2025
Sprache(n): Englisch
Auflage: Erscheinungsjahr 2025
Serie: Objekte widersprechen - Objects Talk Back
Produktform: Kartoniert
Gewicht: 100 g
Seiten: 88
Format (B x H): 113 x 172 mm

Kundenservice Verlag Dr. Otto Schmidt KG
Neumannstraße 10, 40235 Düsseldorf | kundenservice@otto-schmidt.de | 0221-93738-997 (Inland)