



THE TRANSFORMING STATE

Religare arts initiative
presents

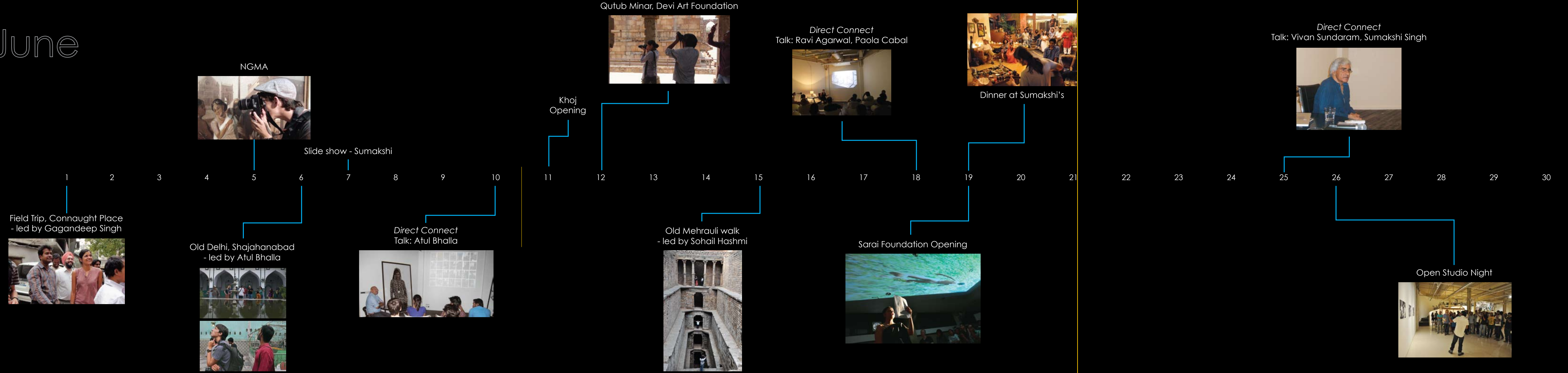
the



Curated by Sumakshi Singh and Paola Cabal
Tuesday 10th August - Tuesday 31st August, 2010

an exhibition showcasing works created by the resident artists of the
2010 Connaught Place: The WhyNot Place residency programme
during the months of June and July, 2010

June



Field Trip, Connaught Place
- led by Gagandeep Singh



Old Delhi, Shajahanabad
- led by Atul Bhalla



NGMA



Slide show - Sumakshi

Direct Connect
Talk: Atul Bhalla



Qutub Minar, Devi Art Foundation



Khoj
Opening

Old Mehrauli walk
- led by Sohail Hashmi



Direct Connect
Talk: Ravi Agarwal, Paola Cabal



Sarai Foundation Opening



Dinner at Sumakshi's



Direct Connect
Talk: Vivan Sundaram, Sumakshi Singh



Open Studio Night





Purnna Behera
 Brad Biancardi
 Becky Brown
 Rebecca Carter
 Raffaella Della Olga
 Garima Jayadevan
 Greg Jones
 Kavita Singh Kale
 Megha Katyal
 Nidhi Khurana
 Jitesh Malik
 Koustav Nag
 Rajesh Kr Prasad
 Vishwa Shroff
 Rajesh Kr Singh
 Onishi Yasuaki

The 2010 WhyNot Place Summer

Residency Programme at **arts.i**

The Transforming State

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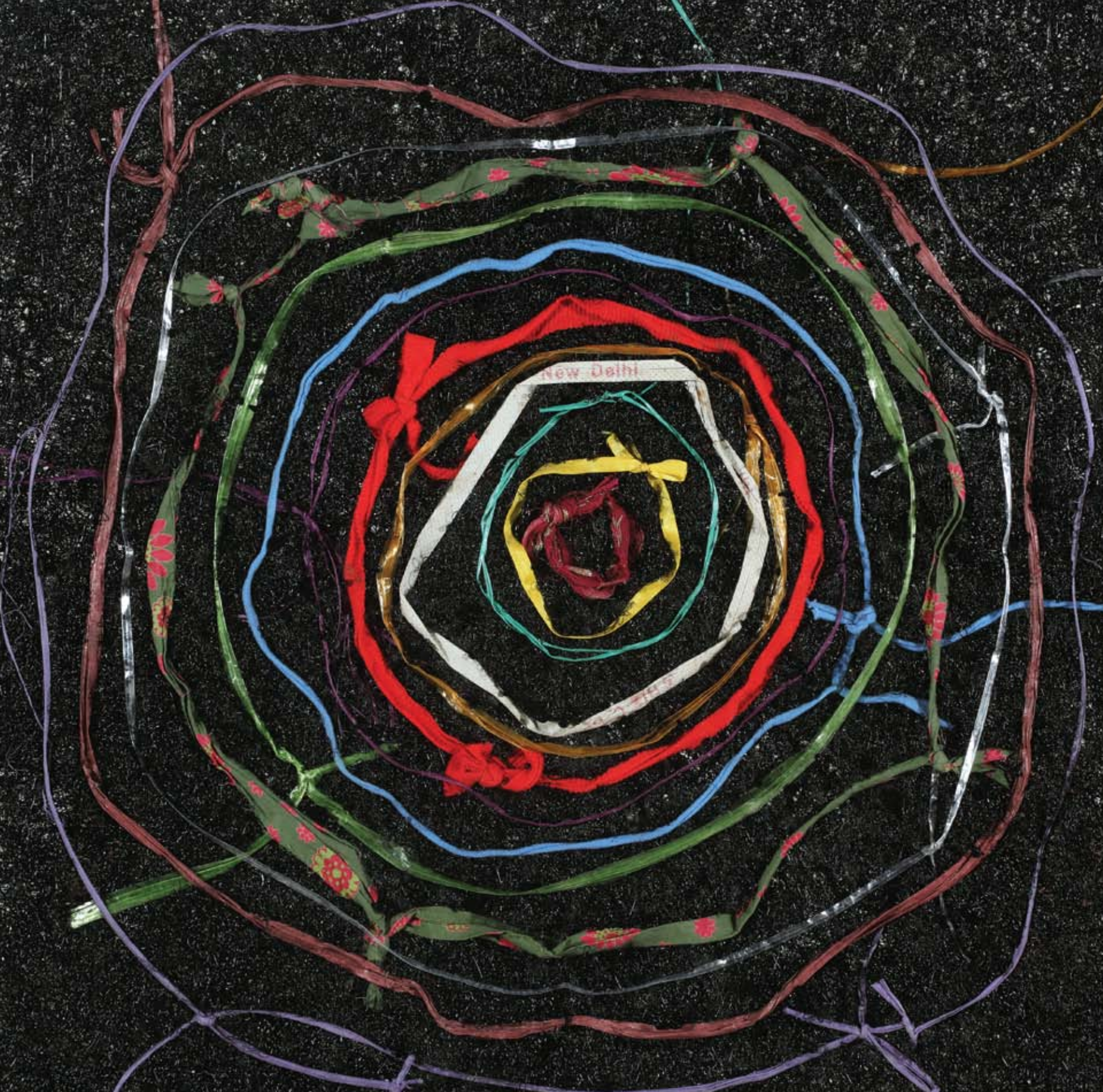
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Religare arts.initiative

India's 360 degree platform for the arts

Artwork by
Onishi Yasuaki

Religare Arts Initiative

Religare Arts Initiative is India's first corporate supported arts organization established on the founding vision of creating a 360 degree platform for the arts in India, to provide Indian contemporary art a larger integrated voice and make it a more transparent, relevant and effective force in society.

Through a consortium of supportive activities – exhibitions, residency programs, art awareness workshops, research and documentation, arts management services, art fund management, auctions and seminars, our mission is to ensure that all the diverse dimensions of art are nurtured and given the right exposure, so that art permeates more completely into the societal fabric and enriches a wider consciousness thereby unlocking its true, life-affirming potential.

Religare Arts Initiative is committed to using all its resources to represent and promote art, artists and shows that hold the power and promise to forge an identity that best represents the depth and expanse of what we today call, Indian Contemporary Art.

Religare Arts Initiative Limited was founded in September 2007 as a subsidiary of Religare Enterprises Limited, a globally trusted brand in the financial services domain. Religare Arts Initiative extends the Religare spirit of corporate entrepreneurship into the realm of art with a commitment to create and expand infrastructure for the arts and to promote contemporary art, artists and sound curatorial practice in India.

Religare Arts Initiative's holistic spectrum of activities integrates the aesthetic, historical and educational dimensions of contemporary Indian art through its infrastructure and services.

Religare Arts Initiative's first art hub in New Delhi, arts.i, is spread over 12,000sq ft in the city's iconic heart, Connaught Place. The facility integrates two galleries, a cafeteria, an art shop, a resource centre and ancillary transitional spaces that double up to accommodate symposia, workshops and other art activities. Going forward, Religare Arts Initiative envisions the expansion of its arts infrastructure across major Indian metros and global financial capitals, to leverage Religare's corporate strengths to animate art.

Religare Arts Initiative offers a range of Arts Management Services that have evolved out of a deep understanding of the client's needs to enhance and consolidate the value of their art assets. A spectrum of services comprising the following has been carefully crafted to ensure the best advantage for clients:

Authentication | Valuation | Collection building | Restoration and conservation | Inventory documentation and management | Corporate collection management, promotion and liquidation | Art loan scheme | Art insurance

www.religarearts.com



Religare Enterprises Limited

A diversified financial services group with a pan-India presence and presence in multiple international locations, Religare Enterprises Limited (“REL”) offers a comprehensive suite of customer-focused financial products and services targeted at retail investors, high net worth individuals and corporate and institutional clients.

REL, along with its joint venture partners, offers a range of products and services in India, including asset management, life insurance, wealth management, equity and commodity broking, investment banking, lending services, private equity and venture capital. Religare has also ventured into the alternative investments sphere through its holistic arts initiative and film fund. With a view to expand and diversify, REL operates in the life insurance space under ‘Aegon Religare Life Insurance Company Limited’ and has launched India’s first wealth management joint venture under the brand name ‘Religare Macquarie Private Wealth’. REL, through its subsidiaries, has launched India’s first holistic arts initiative – with Religare Arts Initiative -- as well as the first SEBI approved film fund, which is an initiative towards innovation and spotting new opportunities for creation and maximization of wealth for investors.

REL operates from seven domestic regional offices, 43 sub-regional offices, and has a presence in 498 cities and towns controlling 1,837 business locations all over India. To make a mark in the global arena, REL acquired UK-based Hichens, Harrison & Co. in 2008 which was subsequently re-named as Religare Hichens Harrison PLC (“RHH”). Hichens, Harrison & Co. was incorporated in London in the year 1803 and is believed to be one of the oldest firms of stockbrokers in the City of London. Pursuant to expansion of REL’s business, the company has grown from largely an equity trading company into a diversified financial services company. With the addition of RHH the REL group now operates out of multiple global locations, other than India, (the UK, the USA, Brazil, South Africa, Dubai and Singapore).

For more information, please visit - www.religare.in

Connaught Place: The Whynot Place 2010

The rains have a way of transforming Delhi that no king or commoner has been able to match in the centuries of human engagement with its terrain. Yet the endeavour continues, more-so now as we become hyper-aware of our own economic potential engulfed by visions of emerging as a “world city” on a rapidly shrinking global landscape.

But Delhi has always been a world city, touched as it were by the royal marauders of the past, each making it their own workshop to practice the combined art of creation and destruction. It is a city in a constant state of transition, progressively littered with memories of its past and always, always carrying within its core, imprints of a future that awaits its own fate in turn, of being relegated to the not so distant past. Delhi is a restless city. Forever haunted by the ghosts of the future, it remains in anticipatory motion, spurred on by the desire to achieve a constant state of utopia.

A little under a 100 years ago, Edwin Lutyens was entrusted the task of taming the city, and by extension its people, with a new bouquet of monuments that would rapidly induce a state of submissive utopia. Connaught Place, the central financial district, rapidly occupied a place of pride within this bouquet and in the process acquired the first imprints of a future enslaved to its past. Modeled after the Royal Crescent in Bath, England and named after the Duke of Connaught, it came encrusted with symbolism. In the years since the departure of British colonial rule, Connaught Place braved the combined forces of an unforgiving Delhi summer and an equally unforgiving populace no longer obliged to appease the ghosts of its past. Eventually life took over. Cracks appeared and became home to the pigeons and sparrows. Colonnades morphed into theatres of sequential habitation...vendors in the morning, lovers in the evening, homeless at night. Connaught Place remained, patient and dormant, as the city moved on.

The twenty first century saw a resurgence of desire to relegate the current to the past and let the ghosts of the future enter and inhabit the parched skin of the nation. Delhi once again found itself at the helm and Connaught

Place began to rumble in anticipatory delight. The ghosts of the future held a striking resemblance to the ghosts of the past.

the WHYNOT idea

The genesis of The WhyNot Place residency program at Religare arts.i lies in the WHYNOT idea. It all began one summer evening as members of the arts.i team debated the pros and cons of holding art shows at the arts.i gallery during the scorching summer months ahead. It is fortuitous that at the same time, Connaught Place, home to Religare arts.i, began to wear braces and its pores began to fill up with cement and migrant labour. It did not take much to realize that the Religare arts.i gallery was inadvertently caught within the rapidly growing vibrations of a transforming state. Surrounded by an impending storm of transformative activity, it had become an island of calm, a meditative zone, a space for reflection, an observatory. If the purpose of art is to be both a mirror and a window, then this was the space where its practitioners could unleash its power to expand our mindscape to observe, understand and reflect upon these transformations at both a physical and a spiritual level. Within and without.

And we said, why not.

The WhyNot Place residency programme

Every up and down is fertile ground for a whole world of possibilities...

‘The WhyNot Place’ residency programme is a unique art residency organized by Religare Arts Initiative, held within the gallery spaces at Religare arts.i gallery, the first art hub of Religare Arts Initiative in New Delhi. This residency brings together a select group of emerging and mid-career artists ranging across different media and sensibilities. The residency is intended

as a process studio that enables each artist to further their own conceptual and aesthetic sensibilities within a broad thematic framework suggested by a mentor.

The programme was launched in the summer of 2009. It started as a day residency with five sessions of two weeks each, spread over the months of May, June and July. Twenty four artists, mostly Delhi based, were invited for the programme. A year since its inception, the programme has already acquired a momentum and inertia inherent to the WHYNOT idea. The five sessions have morphed into two extended month long sessions, the ‘artists by invitation’ format has given way to selection of artists by Jury review and the call for participation has found an amplification that carried it beyond the borders of Delhi, past the shores of India onto the radars of artists worldwide. Sixteen artists from five nations made the arts.i gallery their meditative space for the year 2010 under the guidance of artists Sumakshi Singh and Paola Cabal.

The WhyNot Place 2010: The Transforming State

It is not without reason that Sumakshi Singh and Paola Cabal emerged as an obvious choice for mentors for this year’s residency programme. Both Sumakshi and Paola are members of a rapidly expanding tribe of individuals for whom home is a state of mind and nationhood is a transient reality, a transforming state. Their lives deeply inform their art practice and, one would assume, vice versa.

Sumakshi was born in Delhi and grew up all over India. Her pursuit of an education in art took her to Baroda and then beyond the borders of India to the Art Institute of Chicago. A defining moment in her life and her art practice. Here she walked the manicured paths of a constructed environment that progressively denied her the pleasure of imperfection. She missed the scars and the narratives embedded in them. Her art became her pathway to

rediscover those scars for herself and for others, in the process assuming the role of a bard for negative space. In Sumakshi’s own words, “my work constantly traverses the lines between Metaphor, Reality and Illusion and ranges from plays on space-time theories to cultural, historic and physical critiques of place, done in paintings, interactive installations, sculpture, video and performance.”

Paola was born in Bogotá, Colombia and grew up in the United States of America. An act of displacement that became her shadow as she moved on in life and through her art practice, in pursuit of light. The Art Institute of Chicago became her workshop to find ways “to pin down, to make permanent, what cannot be pinned (light), nor made permanent (shadow)”. Through an active acknowledgement of the presence of light in everyday life, Paola has externalized the constant presence of change in her own life. Through the conscious act of “freezing light” in urban spaces, that by their very nature carry the imprint of impermanence, she has gently inserted the question – “what is permanent?” – into the everyday meditations of our impermanent lives.

At any given point in time, both Sumakshi and Paola’s art practice is deeply rooted in their immediate environment and yet never bound within its limits. Instead, it blurs those limits revealing new points of engagement.

It is our hope and belief that they have extended this sensibility to this year’s residency program, blurring its boundaries and creating new points of engagement for each one of us.

- Religare arts initiative team

The Transforming State

Locating Change

“With the new Delhi the problem is far different [compared here to the building of the new Australian capital]. The site itself is part of an architectural palimpsest older and more moving than any in the world excepting Rome.”
-[Excerpted from an article by Herbert Baker for *the Times*, London, 03 October 1912]

Sumakshi writes: Co-mentor Paola Cabal and I have been driving from Gurgaon to Connaught Place and back every day for the past two months. She usually looks keenly out of the window. Once, I asked what she was looking for. She said “Just the everyday sights- the usual, you know -that’s what my work is based on. The problem is,” she adds laughing “I never seem to see the same thing here twice- it changes overnight!” In the conversation that ensued we agreed that the degree of upheaval we were witnessing in the visual landscape around us was normally seen in post-disaster environments: this could be New Orleans, post Katrina or even earthquake-affected Haiti. We considered the eventual impact that this devastated landscape would have on the psychological landscape of its inhabitants, within the context of the foremost thing on our minds: the rapid transformations it was currently effecting in the works of all our resident artists.

In February of 2010, I had an exciting meeting with the arts.i team. They told me about “TheWhyNotPlace” residency and asked if I would like to propose a theme and mentor the residency this year. I was tremendously excited and promptly initiated a conversation about “The Transforming State” of Delhi and “what did it say about us?” Together we created an application form and decided to open this year’s call for entries to artists worldwide. We felt that Delhi could use the infusion of newer, expanded strategies of art making, enriching the current dialogue. As we finalized the nuances of the theme, it

occurred to me that I knew the perfect person to co-mentor this residency with me: my friend and fellow artist, Paola Cabal. Her own practice springs boards off her insightful observations of subtly transforming environments (using changing sunlight patterns, shadows and transitional structures like scaffolding), that I have seen her throw generous bucket-loads of into her teaching practice at The School of the Art Institute of Chicago, where we were colleagues. The arts.i team looked at her work and résumé and promptly agreed to bring in this resource; she has proven critical to the highly satisfying level of dialogue that the residency engaged in.

In March, a call for entries was put out. A few short weeks later almost 300 artists worldwide chose to respond to these investigations of the “Transforming State” through proposals in video, photography, writing, painting, sculpting, installing & performing! Opening the emails every day with great anticipation, I would find idea after idea, critique after critique, all asking the same questions, each coloured by the individual vantage point of its artist. Artists that have been in Delhi their whole lives: *living the change*, those that had intermittently visited: *witnessing the change*, artists that had never been to India and were *locating these changes* in a theoretical context. A jury comprising of G.R.Iranna, George Martin, Megha Joshi, Gulrukh Parmar and I viewed and listened, argued and agreed until we came up with our final sixteen. A month of online mentoring followed. Layer by layer Paola and I got to know the incoming resident artists. Our first contact was through their portfolios of manifested ideas. This is a deeply quiet introduction to someone. Then we read their words about their ideas. Their natures and interests began to reveal themselves. We looked at where they were from; they were bodies located in a context. Then we emailed the artists. Energy started stirring. Thoughts started exchanging themselves. These bodies were alive! It was a bit of a jarring realization! Then we spoke on the phone. Their personalities started revealing themselves. Responses became immediate and concepts speedily grew. When we finally met them it was strange to put a voice & body to the carriers of these ideas we had been so intensely engaged with for two months.

We would like to thank arts.i for this incredible adventure of deep discovery and absolute madness. This has truly been a deeply enriching, 360 degree experience of jurying and mentoring the artists, curating the show, writing and designing the catalogue, organizing events, talks and field trips, initiating new points of contact with Delhi, doing interviews with journalists and exploring wonderful, untapped potentials.

Paola writes: The last time I’d been to New Delhi was in December and January of 2007-08. There had been a lot of excitement even then about the Commonwealth Games of 2010: various projects were just getting off of the ground, and the sense of expectation was palpable. While I was sure I would come back to India at some point, I wasn’t sure when, and I remember experiencing a sort of anticipatory disappointment: would I be here to see the city in the absolute fury of preparatory transformation that the Games were sure to occasion? New Delhi is far away from Chicago, and it takes planning and effort to marshal the time and resources needed to come here. For more reasons than I can list, but also for the magic of it’s timing, it felt like an absolute gift to have been invited by arts.i to co-mentor this residency with my long-time friend Sumakshi Singh.

In the intervening years since we’ve had parallel, closely related yet decidedly individual artistic practices in Chicago (to my considerable consternation, Sumakshi returned to India in 2007), it would seem we have both learned a great deal about working collaboratively and bringing projects to fruition that an individual would have a difficult time putting together on his or her own. Effective collaborations always bear the distinct imprint of their individual contributors, however, and I saw a great deal of Sumakshi in the sheer scope, ambition, and thoughtfulness of the Transforming State idea. The following is Sumakshi’s amplification of the theme as published in the call for entries, inviting proposals and portfolios from artists:

“India in the last decade has been a keen example of both macro and micro changes. With the approaching Commonwealth Games, the face of Delhi is undergoing rapid trans-formation. Personal and Cultural identity blur and re-forge boundaries. The Natural and the Urban form new compromises with each other. Indian and Western values clash and shake hands. Architecture

chooses historic renovation or completely denies its past in favour of modernization. And Connaught Place is at the heart of this incredible upheaval.

In this exciting and alive transition several questions are being thrown up in the air: What do these changes say about us? Who are we, who were we, who are we becoming - visually, socially, psychologically? What are our values? What is worth keeping and what is worth changing? Who are these changes for? Are they cosmetic or do they plunge deeper?

Using the armature of the shifting nature of our capital, this residency aims to create a dialogue around these questions. Based on their own independent interests and practices, resident artists will be asked to process, critique and digest their impressions of the external and internal landscape in very open ended ways (including optional exercises, dialogues, slideshows, field trips, critiques and studio visits). The work produced in this intense period will be exhibited for a month at arts.i. Conducted right at the tail end of the flux in Delhi being caused by the Commonwealth Games, artists will be given the opportunity to explore these issues from a personal and environmental standpoint in ways best suited to their pre-existing practice.”

Deepening the Engagement

“Whoever undertakes to create soon finds himself engaged in creating himself. Self- transformation and the transformation of others have constituted the radical interest of our century, whether in painting, psychiatry, or political action.”

-Harold Rosenberg

In her vision for this year’s residency, Sumakshi realized from the beginning that while each artist would enrich the residency dialogue through his or her own material and conceptual expertise and his or her own sense of place, there would be vastly differing levels of awareness as to the history, ecology, culture, and contemporary art of New Delhi. These went beyond the surface

appearance of the city and comprised vertices along which the residents’ pre-existent, spatially sensitive practices could gain traction and expand into a deeper field.

Sumakshi writes: With encouragement from arts.i Director Mukesh Panika, the good will of artists and organizations in Delhi, not to mention the invaluable, “we’ll plunge right in” assistance offered by Mala Parthasarthy and Lottie Curry, we organized a host of activities. Two open studio nights (where the resident artists talked about their work with the public), five walks through Old and New Delhi, six official trips to contemporary and historic art institutions, along with group-critique days and one-on-one mentoring, succeeded in instigating a high-energy environment of dialogue, not just for art practitioners but also the public at large. Aided by our hard-working interns Naina Singh, Priyamvada Dalmia, Udayvir Singh Guron and Ayesha Singh we also initiated the “Direct Connect” series: within the eight-week span of *The Transforming State*, no less than eight eminent artists/ activists/ writers/ conservators came to arts.i to share their practices and expertise with our resident artists (and also the public). This was a truly remarkable confluence of the ambitious aspirations of “TheWhyNotPlace” and the incredible generosity of these practitioners.

Through their work and in walks through the city, we experienced first-hand the vital debates taking place concerning policies for the city’s water and green spaces. We sat in on a round-table discussion on urban ecology, and attended the presentation of a critical paper on the work of a prominent artist. Field trips to such events, and to both historic and cultural sites widened our sense of the space of the city and even the country in both physical and intellectual terms. “Transform” pre-supposes a before and an after; through the magnanimous gestures of these professionals, we were better able to locate Delhi in time and space. These experiences opened up multiple doors into the city, and the subtle processing they inspired proliferated into the gallery. Working side-by-side, the artists shared their time, expertise, and emotional support in an ongoing dialogue.

Atul Bhalla was the first visiting artist to jump on board, offering considerable portions of his time in engaging with the artists one-on-one. He shared a slideshow of his insightful photographs, installations and

performances, situating them in the political, environmental and social context of Delhi for the resident artists. He then articulated his reasons for specific material choices. For example, after discussing the ecology and the cultural associations of the Yamuna river (historic and contemporary), he then described using the plastic casings of bottled water to create casts with Yamuna river sand, and juxtaposed these with tap water that actually comes from the river itself. His micro and meta-narratives generated cohesive connections that enabled our artists to question the “what”, “how” and “why” of their own material and conceptual choices. He also led us on a fascinating tour covering churches, mosques, homes, tombs, shut-down galleries and printing presses, shops and eateries of the walled city at 6.00 am!

As a scholar, writer, activist, and documentary film-maker, **Sohail Hashmi’s** engagement of the city is a well-researched, rigorous one that also possesses a fluid narrative grace. As a repository of knowledge, Hashmi seems inexhaustible to us, and we asked him to return again and again. He took us on a total of three walks, and his narrations in history and place became a mnemonic within which to locate our perceptions such that we would never see those places the same way again. The walled city of Old Delhi, the step-wells and Sufi monuments in the Mehrauli institutional area (as well as the folly of one Mr. Metcalf), and the forts and mausoleum at Tuglaqabad came alive with their former inhabitants, their aspirations, and the challenges they faced- often similar to those posed to today’s urban administrators. Besides the walks, Sohail Hashmi also gave a talk at the arts.i gallery. Through his historic contextualization of the water bodies of Delhi, we gained a broader consciousness through which to understand the city’s water debates today.

First photography, then performance, **Ravi Aggarwal’s** art practice represents a second and equally focused “life” for the artist. Perhaps these aforementioned disciplines are the most recent sites for his activism, moving his focus on labour and ecology out of the courtroom and protest site and into the public sphere along different avenues. Exploring his practice in a way that felt very open and authentic, Ravi left us with questions about the politics of “taking” a photograph, and who a photograph actually describes. Importantly, he is himself an example of someone who has not found it necessary to draw a line between art and activism, private practice and public dialogue- someone who, we feel, left us all thinking about the level of

engagement each of our own practices represents within the dialectics of our respective places.

Vivan Sundaram shared a portion of his extraordinarily broad practice that uses the armature of conceptual and post-minimalist languages to encompass solid social, environmental and political critiques. Iterated in video, sculpture of found and created objects, large scale installations and collaborative (curatorial and performance based) ventures, his considerations exploded the possibilities of how our artists could digest their immediate visual environments. The rigour of this practice, moving fluidly between the literal and the poetic, the real and the manipulated, opened up spaces for investigations, so far unrealized by them.

Jitish Kallat’s practice operates in the liminal space between declaratory, overt reality and our subjective experience of those declarations, implementing various strategies to explore the divide. Words formed by bones, words burnt into mirrored Plexiglas, miniature figurines frozen in poses of overt violence, the colors of threat-levels, all gesture toward India’s recent history and toward larger notions of “security”. Speaking to globally salient issues with thoughtfulness and gentle humor, Kallat’s practice links to where the artist is from but is not limited by it, nor is it tied to a particular medium. Through his talk and in subsequent studio visits, the artist encouraged us to explore multiple solutions for voicing our ideas, while offering startling insights into the subjectivities and personal inclinations of each artist he spoke with. The conversations he started continued for the rest of the residency.

In her talk, **Anita Dube** focused on work she’d made in the past five years; she wanted to share these recent projects- many, made outside of India- with us and with her colleagues in Delhi. In project after project and medium after medium, there emerged a rigorous attention to craft and detail that was matched in turn by the idea each project was devised to explore, walking lines of familiarity and distance, intimacy and public projection in evocative, compelling ways. Perhaps the biggest shock was when we learned the artist had been working in Delhi for several years, yet this lecture stood as one of the only instances in which she’d been invited to talk about her work. We’d become aware of a critical absence of dialogue surrounding artistic practice even as we took steps to activate these kinds of conversations.

Beginning with nature- and land-based interventions and moving steadily toward site-specific work, within and outside of built environments, **Vibha Galhotra’s** work points to compelling possibilities for public art, while she continues her (in some ways) more personal painting and drawing practice. Galhotra’s practice was closely aligned with *The Transforming State* inquiry we were taking on in the residency, as she had also been exploring the built environment in transition, and we appreciated the subversive, inquisitive take her practice represented.

In what felt like a decisive contrast relative to the other artists who’d shared their work with us, **Rohini Devasher’s** practice pointed inward, following a thread of a personal and scientific inquiry that only speaks to larger cultural issues as an afterthought. Devasher’s questions in many ways pre-date contemporary dialectics; her elegant wall drawings, startling television feedback loops, and her current project on amateur astronomers instead send us back to the questions of how we were formed in the first place, and the various other iterations of ourselves that might just as easily have taken place.

Mention also needs to be made here of **Gagandeep Singh-** an artist-in-residence from the 2009 residency and a subsequent day-resident at arts.i- who made a profound and positive impact throughout *The Transforming State* residency by generously sharing his time and expertise. When they first arrived, Gagan took the residents for a walk through a space he was intimately familiar with: Connaught Place. July resident artist **Vishwa Shroff**, a practitioner of extraordinary craftsmanship, attention to detail and a generous spirit who led us through a day-long book-making workshop during the residency, further exemplified the spirit of generosity and commitment present among all of the residents. We witnessed several micro-collaborations among artists (too numerous to describe individually) unfold as they documented each other’s works, helped one another with their projects, and problem-solved as a team. For these two groups of artists, remarkable for their interpersonal affinity and openness, Gagan and Vishwa’s contributions remain noteworthy and we stand enriched, and grateful.

The Artists’ Responses

“We now know that human transformation does not happen through didacticism or through excessive certitude, but through the playful entertainment of another scripting of reality that may subvert the old given text and its interpretation and lead to the embrace of an alternative text and its redescription of reality.”

-Walter Brueggemann

For artists with a certain kind of practice, immersion in a chaotic space in the midst of a massive transformation is extremely fecund territory. While there were marked differences in the dynamics of the June and July residencies, we also encountered considerable similarities, cross-pollination of ideas within each month, and approaches that carried across from one month to the next. We are dividing these approaches into two, separate categories- visual and conceptual- for the sake of clarity, although as a matter of course there is an overlap between the two. Considering them now in retrospect brings a profound satisfaction; like singling out the individual threads of an astonishing tapestry, it is a process of introspection and admiration that will probably continue long after this catalogue goes to print.

We invite you to enjoy the catalogue, to play detective in identifying these themes, and to discover additional ones through your own exploration, as we are certain to do in the months and years to come.

Visual Approaches

Gravity

Things that hang, things that lean, things that spill and ones that feel precarious. As an evocation of instability, gravity was implemented as a visual strategy by four artists- all in July. (Perhaps the monsoons inspired a theme?)

Repetition

Faced with cognitive saturation, it seems natural to respond in ways that invoke meditative, rhythmic repetition in order to establish a working

momentum. These repetitions also forged meaningful connections to the urban environment of New Delhi even as they responded to the artists’ individual inquiries. A total of eight artists, three from June and five from July, worked with repetitive processes.

Thread, String, or Yarn

Simultaneously a description of fragility and an intimation of private space, warmth, clothing, and garments, the use of thread, string, or yarn were implemented evenly across the two residencies- three artists in June and three in July.

Language as Form

Three artists worked partially or exclusively with text for their inquiries, exploring subjective saturation and both the possibility and impossibility of communication.

Architecture

As the most visually dominant as well as the most actively transforming element visible in the Connaught Place context, it is surprising that only four artists chose to overtly invoke it in their practices. Of these, three stood outside of the built environment, dissecting it into fragments, while one invoked a domestic interior.

Conceptual Approaches

Site-Specificity

While the jury reviewing the applications to the residency tried to strike a balance between various forms of art-making, things changed once everyone arrived. In what is perhaps a symptom of a residency that revolves around, engages with, digests and processes transforming spaces and environments, a total of eight artists elected to work in ways that respond so specifically to the nuances of a chosen space that their work is functionally non-transferable- it cannot be moved, or it’s transfer to a different space would render it meaningless. Partly through the mentoring process, partly through cross-pollination, and mainly through the artists’ own evolving ideas- painting, sculpture, video and animation practices exploded into space. In what also feels auspicious and wonderful, I find that this corresponds to *exactly* four artists in June, and *exactly* four artists in July.

Assimilation

There is a difference between responding subjectively to the idea of a place or *re*-presenting it, and physically or literally incorporating the place into your practice. Four artists, all from the July residency, took this latter route, choosing to incorporate elements uniquely endemic to New Delhi that they collected, found, or purchased.

Representation

Descriptions of New Delhi- as words derived from the city, photographs of it’s inhabitants, drawings of it’s forms, or maps of it’s expanse- found their way into the work of at least five artists, and debatably more: we are applying a strict rubric wherein artists implemented visual forms unique to this city, but expanding this frame includes almost every artist.

Urban versus Rural Experiences

For three artists, all from the June residency, the sensory overload inherent to the experience of New Delhi proved a stark contrast to the smaller, quieter, more nature-friendly environments they’d come from. Shown as encroachment, confusion, and bedazzlement, their responses to the same theme proved as individual as the makers themselves.

Transformation as an Internal Condition

This category is slippery, but nonetheless matches if, when looking at an axis moving from the referential (on the left) toward the subjective, the artist’s relationship to a place falls well to the right. For three artists, one from the June and two from the July residency, the idea definitely carries meaning: all three drew from New Delhi to effect a kind of internal catharsis within their practices.

Hybridity

Given both the practicality and the contemporary relevance of such a strategy in terms of survival, it is surprising that only four artists chose to invoke “fused” identities- between historic and contemporary, between personal and public, between human and animal, and between human and machine- in their work. Notably, all four are from India.

Humanity versus Automation

The sight of structure after structure clad in scaffolding invites consideration of the diminished space for organic life and the massive, collaborative effort required to rebuild or restore our existing architecture and infrastructure; individual lives suddenly feel very insignificant in comparison. Seven artists in total, four from June and three from July, chose to invoke this lens as part or all of their inquiry during the residency.

Final Note: Why and How?

This catalogue has been written and designed by us artists (Sumakshi Singh and Paola Cabal) for artists. We are trained in “looking”. That is what we mainly do. The writing in this catalogue therefore reflects the intricacies of conversations deriving from visual strategies that we have shared with our resident artists from that vantage point. A journalist from the Washington Post asked us “Why engage in the dialogue of “The Transforming State” through art practice when the newspapers, court rooms and activists are yelling about the same thing?”

Great question. Why? We responded: “In urban environments information seems to be constructed mainly for quick and easy delivery. The assumption is that the busy commuter/ dweller has no time to unravel nuances. Perhaps another loud and clear message will be consumed in the visual and verbal noise of television, newspapers, advertisements, signs and vendors. Perhaps a subtler, more subversive methodology is called for, to raise questions. Art that arrives quietly in unexpected forms, that creates an experiential connection to “your” world outside, that nags and therefore stays with you subconsciously because of its refusal to immediately reveal “what it means”, that makes you re-investigate territories taken for granted, that reminds you that a singular vantage point isn’t enough and neither is your first quick interpretation of an event, that asks you to centralize the peripheral considerations – which are perhaps where the real unconsidered issues lie.” Or, a simpler response is that we hope that this Catalogue will answer that question for you, more eloquently than either of us could.

“All changes, even the most longed for, have their melancholy; for what we leave behind us is a part of ourselves; we must die to one life before we can enter another”.

Anatole France

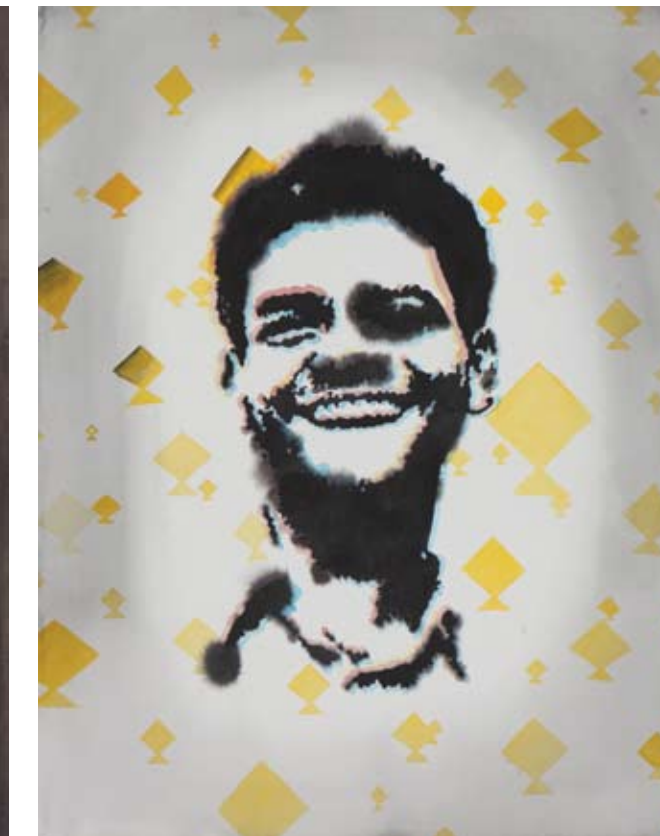
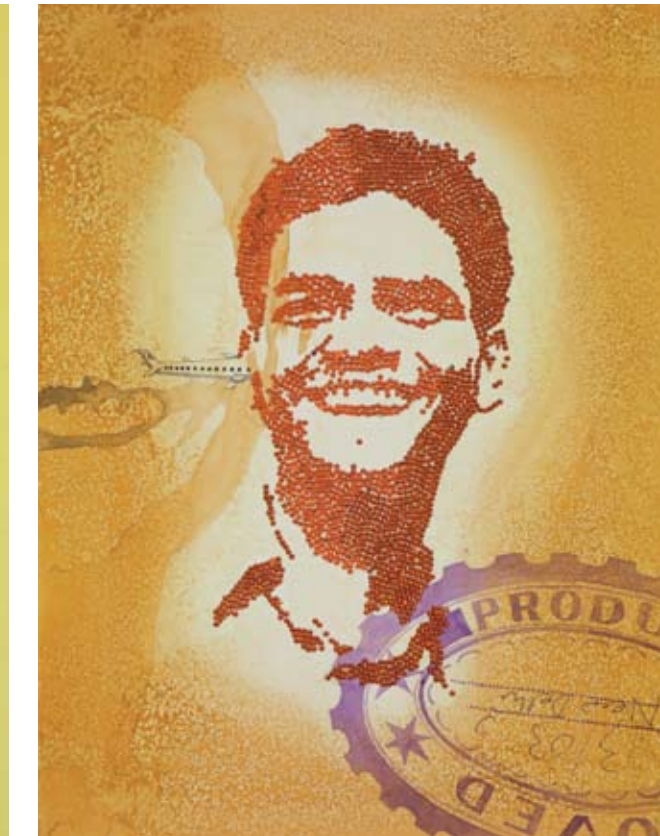
Our environment shapes us and we are, in turn, shaped by it; there are consequently many New Delhis as the city is ‘read’ through its inhabitants. There are also many Purnna Beheras. There is the loved, nurtured Purnna of supportive, small town Bhubaneswar and the starry eyed Purnna who made his way to Delhi three years ago with five thousand rupees in his pocket and promises of artistic success to his family. Then slowly appeared the disillusioned Purnna of brutally shaken dreams (of red-carpet treatment that awaited him in his new city), followed by the exhausted Purnna who walked from gallery to gallery, portfolio in hand with little result.

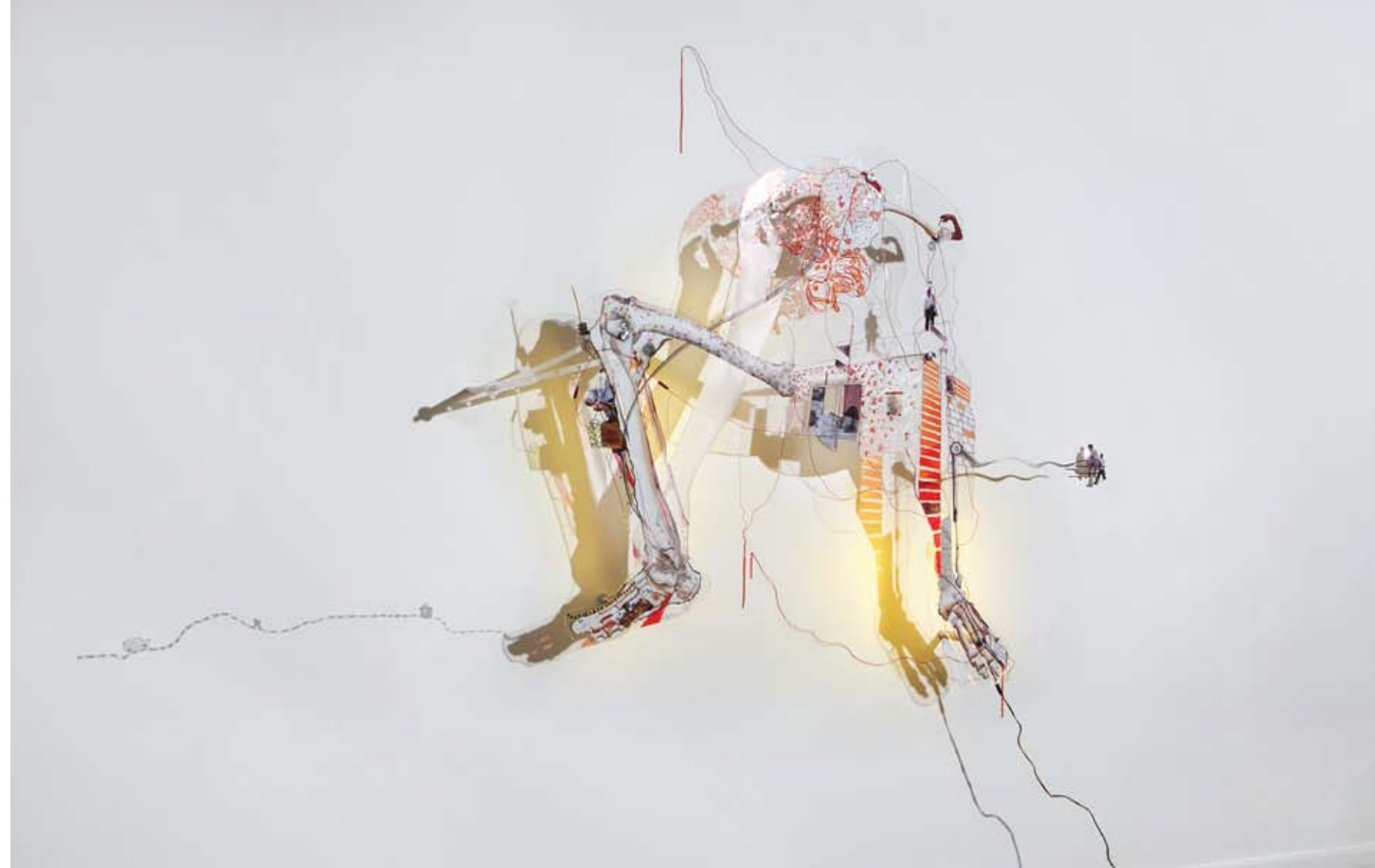
We then meet a defeated Purnna who returned to Bhubaneswar three months later, stunned at the violence done to him by the unrelenting metropolis. It took artist Purnna fifteen days in Bhubaneswar to remember why he left home in the first place: fear of stagnation.

The artist convinced the Purnna of psychological and emotional vulnerabilities to take another stab at his ambitions. A humbled Purnna returned with quieter expectations, highly aware of the difficulties in navigating the economic, cultural and class disparities of the capital. A disciplined Purnna put ambitions of glamour and recognition on the backburner to eke out a living, drawing portraits of children of dotting parents outside wedding mandaps and airports. Then came the hopeful Purnna that was taken under the wing of an established artist as a studio assistant and the determined Purnna, who networked and painted and eventually found his way into galleries. Today, we have a relieved but watchful Purnna, trying to find himself reflected in the voices, hopes and aspirations of other migrants that have or still are struggling with the weight of the mammoth machinery of the city.

Looking for his story in the other, Purnna deploys the language of forms (and now material) symbolically. Let me give you an example. Purnna was discussing “Sandwich Man”, a project that he was experimenting with at “TheWhyNotPlace” residency. He had taken a photograph of a rickshaw-

Purnna Behera

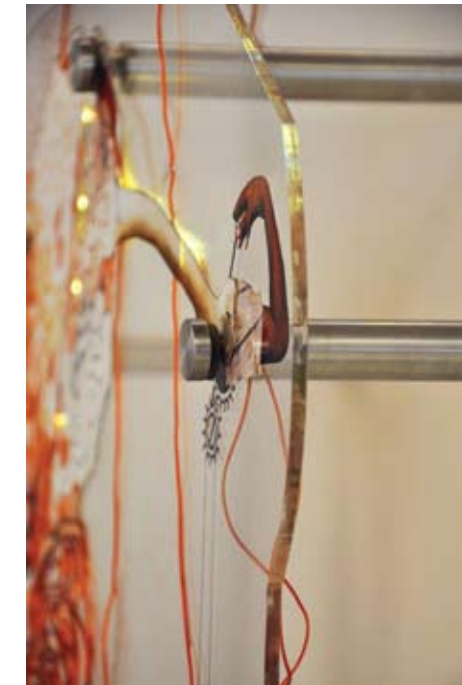




wala that he observed outside a metro stop. He was sitting on the ground, shoulders slumped, with one hand on his head in a posture Purnna decoded as a concession of defeat to the city. He decided that this man sandwiched between his desire to nurture himself emotionally (which is why he migrated to the city) and the need to feed himself physically (by working himself to the bone) would represent “the common man crushed between these two essentials”. I questioned who the “common man” was in this layered city and Purnna specified the poor migrant.

Delicately cut out drawings on paper of gears and other machine parts merged into detailed anatomical drawings done in glass paint or sandwiched between the two transparent acrylic sheets cut out into the life size silhouette of the rickshaw-wala. Purnna talked about how the city treated the human like an inexhaustible machine and to amplify this read, added tangled electrical wires that snaked vein-like through the form occasionally culminating in tiny LED lights. The group of artists and I encouraged him to take advantage of the transparent language to extend these details out of the frame of the acrylic edge, and Purnna started making some strategic visual choices. The plastic, the

Sandwiched
acrylic sheet, wires, collage,
glass colours
45" x 45" (approx)
2010



electrical, the shiny, the mechanical and the human cast their fragile shadows and he started placing elements on the wall to interact with the shadow, offering it substance. Elements sensitively extracted from photographs were adhered to the wall, extending their forms beyond their edges into contour-drawings. The wire started stretching, leaking and looping, creating interesting tensions between contour and material. In the original version of Purnna’s idea, a large red carpet extending from wall to floor was to be the backdrop for this man. There is, of course, an autobiographical reflection in the “Sandwich Man”, appropriately experienced by the viewer in the reflective nature of the acrylic that is juxtaposed against the tiny elements of manipulated, photographic collage of security guards and pedestrians.

Purnna’s drawing - collages tackle the heavy-duty issues of presentation within representation. I mean this in both ways, the re-presenting (or presenting again) of a (usually autobiographical) occurrence and the representing (standing in lieu of, replacing, speaking on behalf of another). Since for Purnna, this “another” is usually the emotional or psychological landscape of a friend, mother and recently (the more problematic) anonymous, lower

Details: *Sandwiched*

middle class to poor city dweller, the muckiness of the direct “is-ness” of life and experience he wants to depict (instead of elicit), is refuted by the left-brained symbol system equivalencies within his chosen modes of representation.

Red wire = Blood, veins
Lights = City
Gears = Mechanical
Red carpet = dreams of glamour
Posture = bearing the burden of city-life
Transparency = Common man is an empty shell, he is invisible to the city

In other words, a sterile distance is created when things stand for things and since Purnna’s stated interest was in the abrasive grit of city life that erodes the will of the dreamer, the co-mentor and I both encouraged him to push his practice into a realm where he could use the tangibility of the artistic process itself to evoke certain responses from the viewer- to lose mediation through a system of symbols and plunge into a place where his process would echo



Sketch- Life in Metro
mixed media & collage on
fabriano paper
52" x 72"
2010



Detail

the concept. Paola looked at the ink portraits of Puranna's friend that appeared in several of his drawings (dissected and jig-sawed back into deliberately misaligned images) and had an idea to offer. What if Puranna chose just one image that he had to repeat over and over? The process could be gritty; like the city, it could deny indulgences even as it replicated the mechanical nature of repetitive labour that the city asked Puranna to engage in to survive here. And in this attempt at machine- like precision, Puranna would poignantly be setting himself up for failure. The human would have to apologetically, tentatively peep out in this process. I offered Puranna the example of the delicate portrait he had already done of his mother, in a moment of homesickness, remembering her evening shringar (decorating oneself) for her husband. In the attempt to echo the results of the process, Puranna had sweetly adorned the lips of the otherwise featureless face with one sequin at a time. This quiet action spoke more of love and reverence than the symbols of pink hearts he decided to paint as a backdrop. He also super-imposed details of his own face upon his mother's in an attempt to find the nurturer in him that would help him navigate this city of tough choices.

I put together a slideshow of images for Puranna to introduce him to the kitsch-based practice of Baba Anand. Decorating Technicolor cinema

The Mother I (right)
mixed media on waterford acid
free paper
13" x 10"
2010



posters from India's past with glitter and sequins, he memorialized these epic productions in decorative frames, pulling the street lingo into the gallery. I referred him to the disjointed collages of Thomas Hirschhorn and the naïve folk-art language of Clare Rojas, playing with gender roles and moving fluidly between painting, installation, sculpture and performance. David Shrigley's solutions though text and line drawings employed a piercingly observant humour as a methodology to expose a wicked psychological universe while Sarnath Banerjee pointed toward the socio-cultural. Giorgio di Chirico's strange desolate, disjointed worlds used the armature of dense symbolism of Greco-Roman ruins while Michael Scoggins appropriated the symbology of children's drawings on lined notebook paper.

Purnna has been digesting these thoughts at home over the month of July, after the end of his residency period in June. When he came in this morning, I expected to see an austere series of portraits done with machine-like rigour. Instead he presented three self-portraits, (three more are in the works) taken from a smiling photograph of himself, right before he left Bhubaneswar three years ago, each one different, each one indulgent of a different impulse. One gave in to the kitschy seduction of shiny decorative crystals, another wanted to try out the cool effect of salt sprinkled on wet watercolour and the third indulgence was in yummy saturations created by using the visually complementary colours of yellow and purple (on exact opposite ends of the colour wheel) ... and all of these had been drawn with a stencil. Purnna had got the mechanized to work for him. Perhaps he was done with being the machine. Perhaps his experience of the city was different now.

Perhaps that is why we make art. It gives us insights into our current state before the mind has even had a chance to process or articulate it into thought, let alone concrete language. The pre-cognitive impulse that goes into art-making becomes more urgent than the digested premises and requirements of the desired concept. Perhaps Purnna's mind is holding on to an experience that no longer needs to be processed by him or his art-work. Maybe Purnna has found the mother within him that will indulge his whims a little and give him some backup room. He had drawn portrait after portrait to make a living and maybe he didn't want to enter the abrasiveness of direct experience. Perhaps it had been too real and art was a way to process it from a safe distance. A distance that plays out in a readily available language of overtly contrived symbols.

Shiny crystals portrait = Purnna in a fantasy of glamour and wealth, having received his social sanction represented by the enlarged stamp, hand painted on the bottom.

Lumpy, black, substitute lead portrait = Purnna in a sticky, mucky, tar-like situation where he finds it hard to extricate himself from.

These choices revealed something to me about Purnna and about myself. I see that he is vulnerable. That he was protected and loved by his mother. I feel scared for him: this naïve newcomer that could be chewed up and spat out for breakfast by the city. He misses the tenderness of home. I believe, he has the resources to survive the unforgiving metropolis, even ride this, but not without a certain amount of violence done to his gentle nature. I feel the need to protect him from the city. I feel the need to protect him from my acidic, unforgiving art-tongue, doling out sharp critiques of his work. I don't want to be another abrasive agent of the city. I look at Purnna as if seeing him again for the first time. His story is remarkable. Against all odds, here he is, sitting in the arts.i space, talking about "The Transforming State" of the self and the city, in his smiling, soft-spoken voice.



Face IV, Face III, Face II
mixed media on waterford
acid free paper
29" x 20" (each)
2010

“...The lot of those songs are simply a response to what struck me as beauty, whatever that curious emanation may be, from a being or an object or a situation or a landscape. This has a very powerful effect on me, as it does on everyone, and I prayed to have some kind of response to these things that are so clearly beautiful to me.”
Leonard Cohen

Brad Biancardi wants to have love affairs with his paintings. What he has instead, are love affairs with the actual objects they depict. The paintings become points in the continuum of a long-term relationship, as a way to celebrate this ongoing admiration and adulation for an object, a person or a place: in other words “a noun”. Once this noun (the what) is in place (and yes, it is usually singular), the verbs (the “hows” of enacting the action of painting them), the conjunctions (the “hows” of connecting them to backgrounds) and the prepositions (playing with elements of colour, scale and perspective to identify what is “on top of” or “comes from” or “enters into” what) come into place. These micro-relationships within the painting are usually arrived at, after considerable trial and error, visible in shifting lines and pecking layers of partial commitments. Brad admits, “I am a clumsy painter. I put one colour on, see it, if it doesn’t work then I go back over it.” I am guessing that the “doesn’t work” is always felt or calculated with reference to the noun.

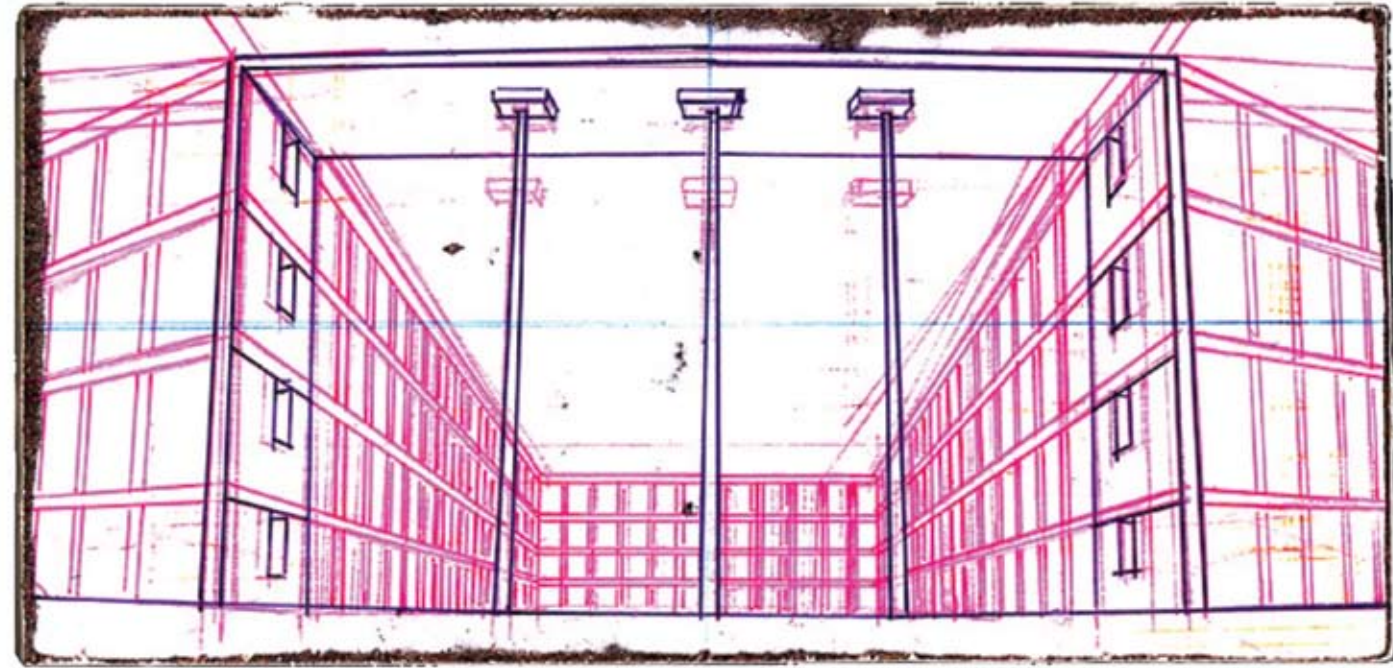
This is what makes it really difficult for him to enter a foreign country, to respond to the theme of “The Transforming State” of Delhi and hope he’ll fall in love...and I believe that, that is indeed Brad’s pre-requisite to making art that is insightful, meaningful and engaging. It is a pretty tough condition to set if you have less than a month!

So “kroW Work” is not about love, but the next best thing: beauty. Brad found this intangible quality, in the equally noun-less, repetitive, patterns in the Islamic Darga of Moinnuddin Chisti and the Jama Masjid, that generated a subtle, experiential “analogy to”, in place of a “representation of”, cosmic infinity. Experiential; phenomenological: which is why, perhaps, this work needed to be located on a wall instead of a canvas. Brad’s previous work had also engaged with notions of depth and space, but infinity was located in vanishing points, in a High Renaissance, linear perspective, picture window manner. Other visual tropes from this period inspire his practice in the form

Brad Biancardi



process: kroW Work
graphite, sharpies and paint on wall
138.5" x 252"
2010



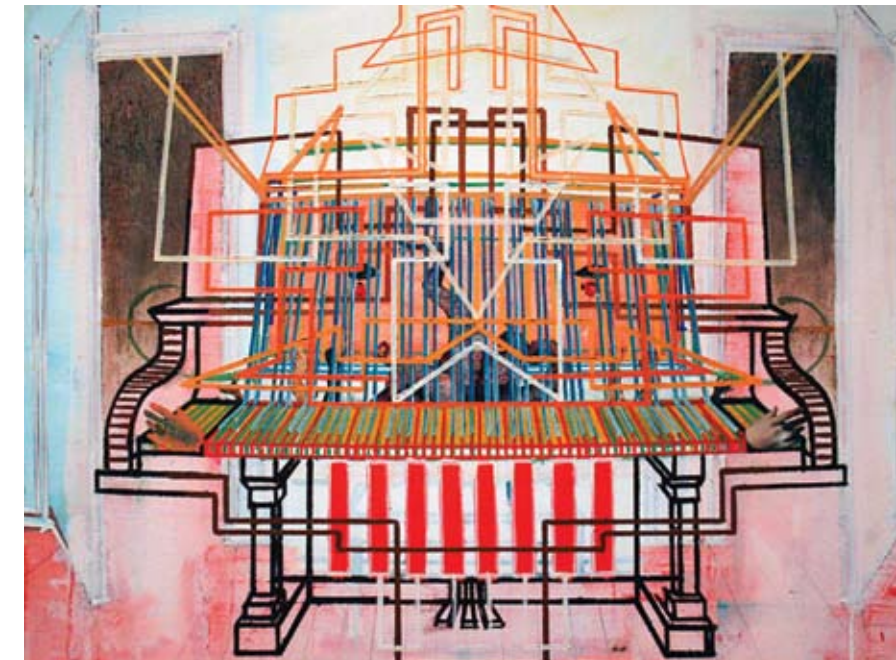
of symmetrical composition, attempt at harmony, clarity in defining the protagonist by placing it/ him/ her in a central spot or located where the perspective lines appear to converge so that your eye naturally follows them from foreground to background. These ploys are also a minor rebellion against one year of photography school, that preached “the rule of thirds” (namely that the frame is divided into three equal sections and the subject should ideally be located anywhere but the central third) in order to create an “interesting” composition.

Painting and drawing have served as Brad’s entry points into fields of mathematics, engineering, philosophy, politics and literature. Objects are taken apart in the drawings and put back together in intersecting planes of perspective, moving back and forth, trying to find their perfect locations and leaving behind these transitional traces. Brad uses this de-constructive/ re-constructive investigation of structure to ultimately generate an intimate understanding of what the object is, how it is made and how it works.

Brad came here, saw the auto-rickshaws as a novel form and immediately began his relationship with them on the wall. The first auto-rickshaw appeared on the right hand side of the wall: literal, life size, green and yellow, drawn with Sharpies (permanent markers), a medium Brad has used in several architectural drawings, done on wooden boards and walls. Interestingly enough these vividly coloured markers intended for permanence and an assurance against fading, are partly sanded and erased from the flat surfaces they render into three-dimensional elastic planes, subverting their language completely. Brad has disintegrated the “here to stay” nature of the material, and often, after his long search for “the solid object that signifies so much”, he dematerializes the form of this beloved object as well. This is another layer of Brad’s work psychology to which I would like to take a detour, to visit briefly.

In this case Brad found the auto-rickshaw, but mostly the subject finds Brad, seeping slowly into his “art consciousness” after a long-term relationship with him in his other avatars as Brad the musician, the political citizen or

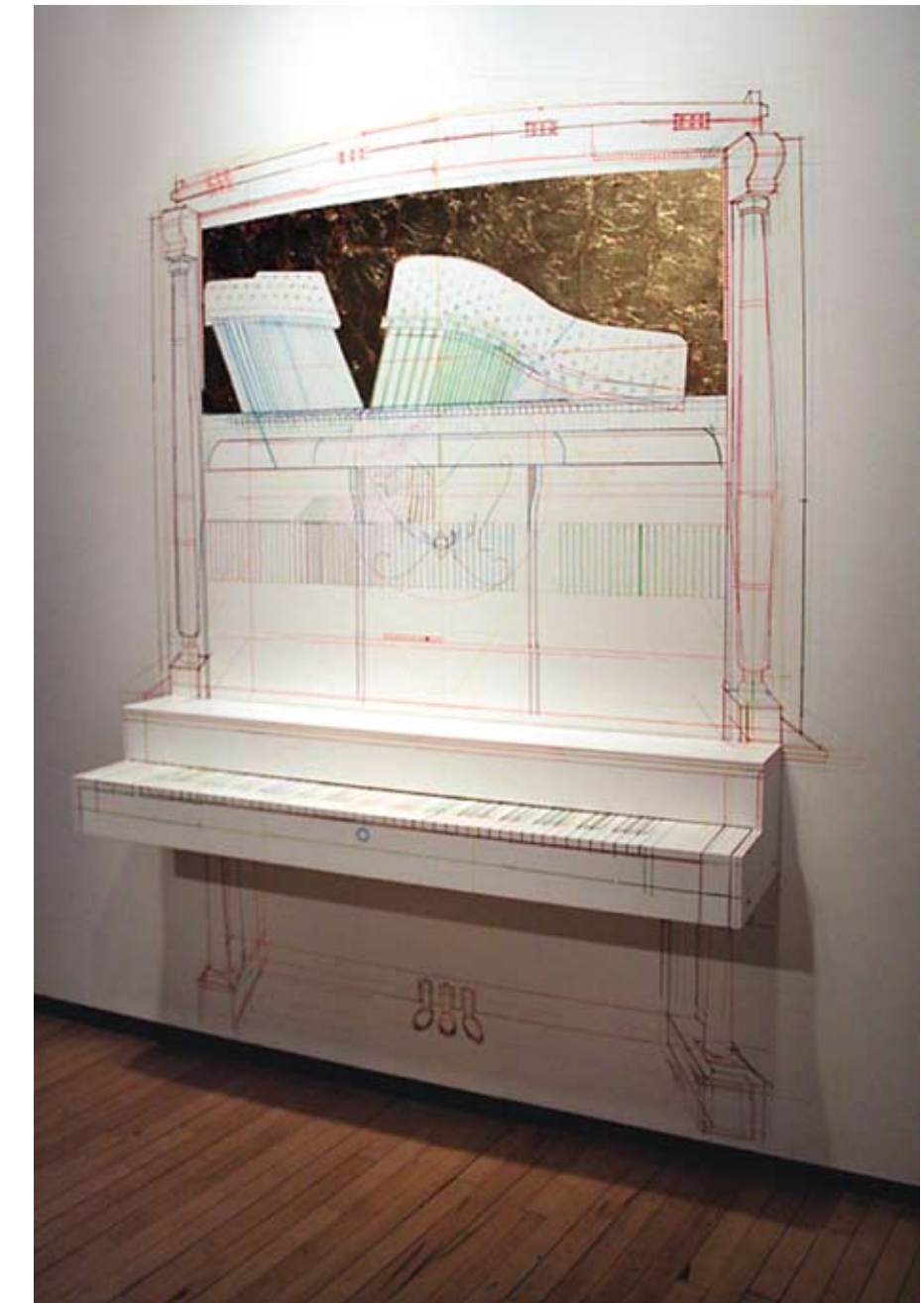
Revised State Department
pen and ink on gesso
2.6" x 5.5"
2006



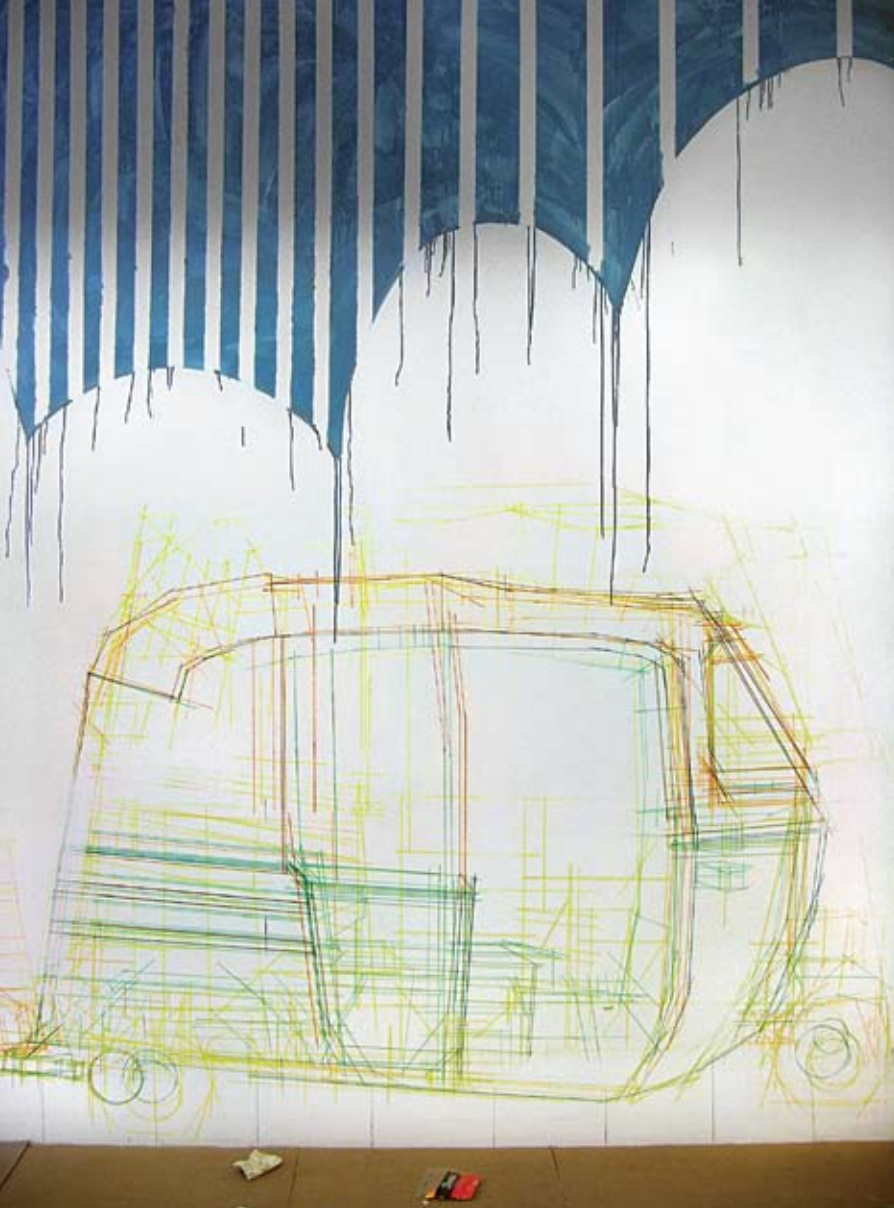
This Piano Has Been Drinking not Me, Oil, acrylic and paper on canvas, 25" x 32", 2009

the bicycle commuter. Let us take the example of a piano that lived in the town hall of Brad’s hometown in Indiana, that then followed him to Chicago and by a miraculous series of events has now ended up in his living room. Brad commemorated his love for it both in painting and in an interactive installation. In the former, the monumental form dissolves into a hollow armature of coloured lines that articulate the structure in space. The painted lines are the only visual elements, which display any real “body” as the form itself is open, airy and reveals a sensitive understanding of its nuances. The installation takes it one step further into disappearing as it turns the piano into a flat, unfolded, hardly visible drawing, with a projecting rectangular tier, barely able to assert itself in space as if shy of being a three-dimensional object. A strange predicament for such a substantial mass! I wonder what is the nature of Brad’s struggle with his “noun”? To find it, just to make it disappear. To shift it around until it is unsure of its location. To assert symmetry by mirroring it. Is it perhaps a methodology of asserting dominance and control upon this object that owns him with its love? Or is it simply too precious a thing to be fully revealed?

This Piano Has Been Drinking, not Me
oil, acrylic and paper on canvas
25" x 32"
2009



Duet for Broken Piano
sharpies, gold leaf effects, pedals, contact
dimensions variable
2009



Process



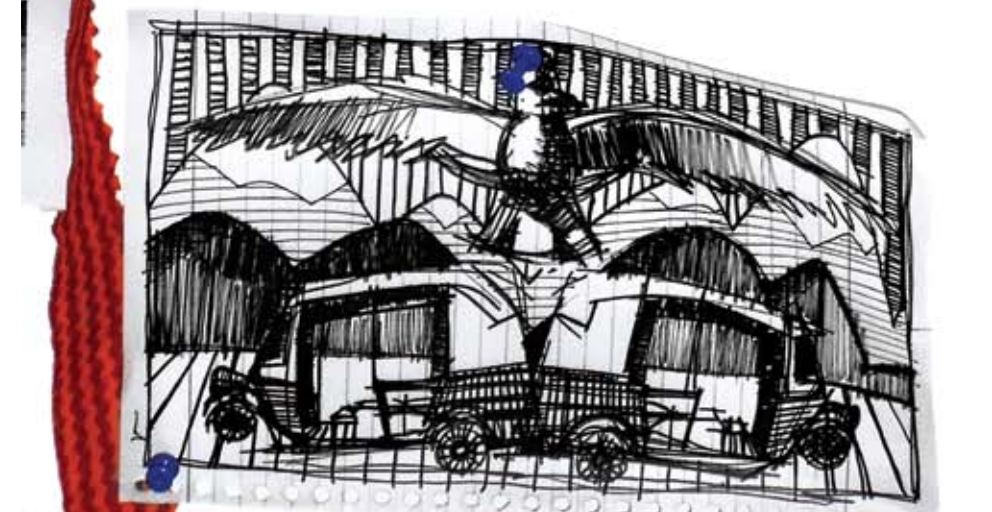
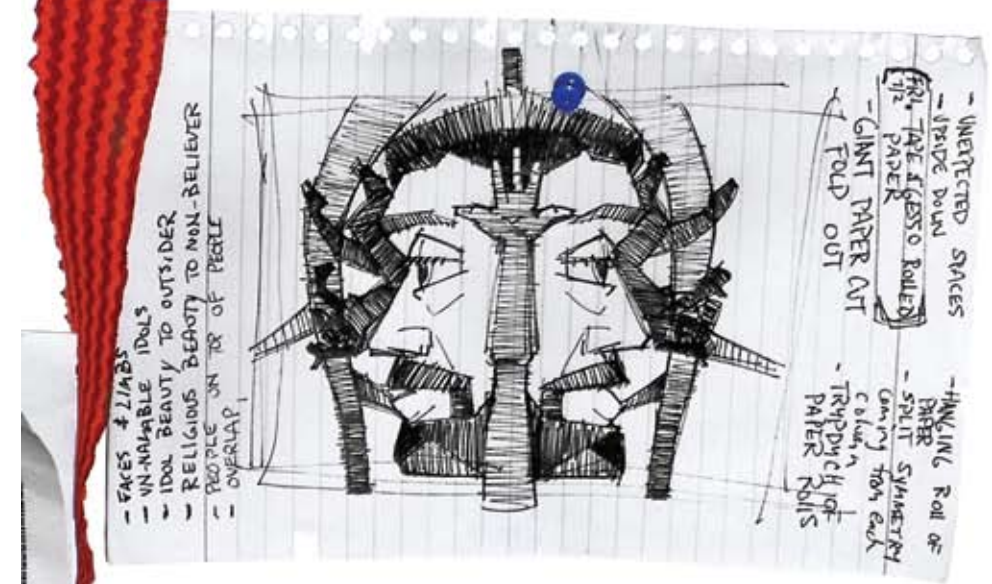
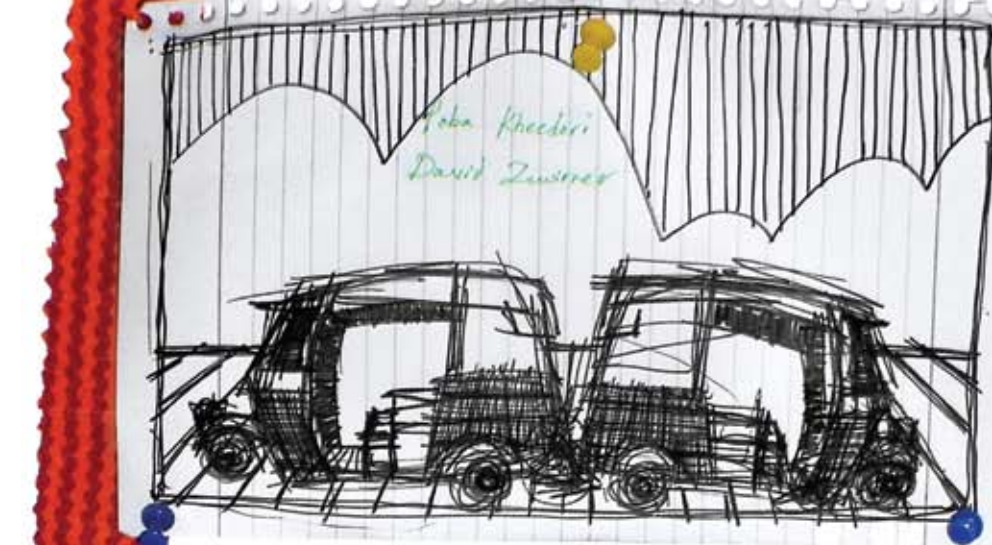
The first auto-rickshaw was about “the human striving for perfection” that gives life to the image, in its attempt to extract the form, from the shifting lines. The second auto-rickshaw is a lie: it fakes the uncertainty of its location, creating an illusion of arrival through the same process as the first. The Islamic patterns on the other hand, created after much complex calculation, with rulers and compass show no reference to the methodology at all. It’s a strange set of decisions to allow, deny and delude viewers into access to process.

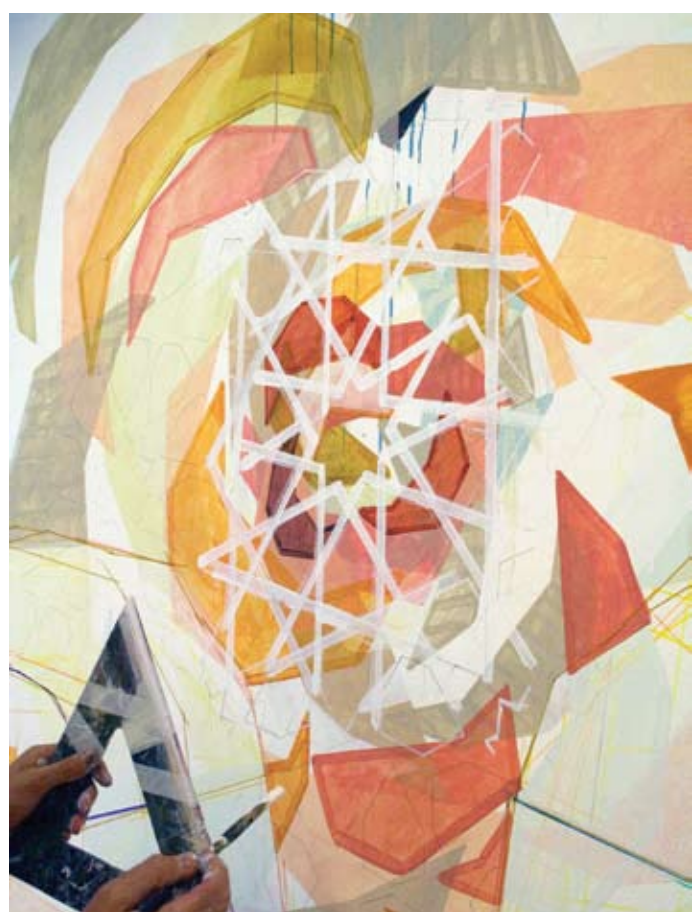
Brad’s language is perverse and contradictory. The all-over geometric pattern aggressively flattens out and blocks the space that the three-dimensional rickshaws had promised to let you enter. The small units of pattern are filled in with graphite, creating an unevenly toned wall-paper. As the co-mentor aptly put it “...he uses paint for drawing and pencil as paint.” An avid admirer of Piero della Francesca’s worlds ordered around a clear center, as well as the abstract expressionist attempt at center everywhere, circumference nowhere, Brad has been considering the benefits of having a painting practice that coexists with another way of making, “one that begins not with paint but with ideas”.

His initial inclination was: “To produce an artwork here in Delhi that somehow spoke of America, being American, or being an American artist trying to produce abroad. This seems now to be an obvious and unavoidable characteristic of any artwork that I would create, anywhere other than my home.” Soon after he arrived, Brad had hesitatingly brought up the issue of whether he had the right to walk in, with his tourist’s eye and start making work about “Delhi” and “auto-rickshaws”, despite his obvious attraction to the form. He wanted to know “if it was silly”. I responded by offering the fact (that I still maintain) that Brad is a tourist in India and his vantage point as a tourist is perhaps as valid as any other. If his memorable points of contact have been Islamic monuments and auto-rickshaw rides, a pretense toward a deeper understanding, or trying to avoid a dialogue with Delhi altogether was perhaps “sillier”.

Brad states: “This experience at the residency has given me a sense of community support that I love and crave always. I decided not to bring my demons from home here to Delhi with me, and instead, to respond as sincerely as I can to those things that I find beautiful here.”

(next page) kroW Work
graphite, sharpies and paint on wall
138.5" x 252"
2010





Becky Brown

Becky Brown does not suffer from the anxiety of choice that plagues makers of many stripes. Whether engaging her painting practice, her sculptural objects, or her writing, the answer to everything is an inclusive “yes, please: as much as possible,” and “thank you”-always “and”, never “or”. As I prepared to think about her practice through this essay, Becky sent me texts she had written, floods of language seamlessly congruent with her visual production. They began with lists as a matter of course:

Interdisciplinarity, interconnectedness, interdependence, integration, interface, interference, interfold, interim, interior, interloper, interlude, intermediary, intermission, interpretation...

and:

Inundation, proliferation, saturation, fragmentation, appropriation, information. Multitude of languages, diversity of symbols, history, memory, archeology, time. Neurosis, anxiety, fear, desire, landscape, cityscape, narrative, event, communication, abstraction, geometry, depth, surface, tension.

In his unforgettably charismatic commencement speech to the graduating class of 2008 at The School of the Art Institute of Chicago, celebrated critic Jerry Saltz repeated an assertion he’d intimated elsewhere in talks and writings: the notion that artists are cats, and their art is the sofa. To illustrate, Jerry contrasted the summoning of a dog with the summoning of a cat, gesticulating hilariously with his body for added emphasis:

“Come here, Fido”, and ‘Fido’ does; no sooner have you called ‘Fido’ than he is jumping on you and licking your face. Try doing that with a cat. “Come here, Snowball”. ‘Snowball’ walks over to the sofa *opposite* you in the room and rubs his body against *it*. Dogs just want to be loved by *you*. Artists, on the other hand, want to be loved by the *whole world*; so they make this thing called “art”, and they put it between themselves and everyone else. Artists are cats, and the sofa is their art.

It is a lens through which to regard an artists production that I’ve chosen to invoke for Becky Brown because I’m interested in reading her ‘sofa’ as an amorous gesture toward the World- it feels, intuitively, like the right thing to do- and in exploring from that vantage point what sort of singular “Becky-ness” emerges.

Hidden Temples
collage, paint on paper





To begin where Becky Brown does when she's writing, her lists are experientially compelling. Only apparently stream-of-consciousness, they possess a hidden logic. The ones quoted above come from two separate instances in which the artist had set out to articulate something about her visual production, yet not a single word is repeated, and the varied, often surprising juxtapositions of word against word force a slowed reading if I am to fully occupy the space each evokes. Applied to her collage-paintings, spatial interventions, and freestanding sculptures, the experiential quality inherent to Becky's lists suggest that the 'sofa-self' she offers the world cloaks a deliberate, curated vocabulary of forms immediately beneath an appearance of transparent inclusiveness. Brown's colours and shapes recall the innocence of childhood, evincing legos, tonka trucks, stacked plastic rings, and those little cars that race on infinitely reconfigurable tracks to invite viewers into her world. Yet, what a strange play-lot it is. Jumping into these spaces confident of

my footing, I step outside to find myself categorically No Longer in Kansas: everyone's invited to the party, *and* there's mud pie for dessert. You can play, too, *and* you have to balance this stack on your head while playing hop-scotch and reciting the alphabet. Backwards. To reassert Saltz' metaphor (with a nod towards "Chairy" from Pee-wee's playhouse), how do Becky's sofas court the World's affections? They are too self-aware for straight 'play' and too meticulously crafted; even as they invite substantial dialogue, they dissolve into peals of laughter; they're pretending to be available and playing hard-to-get. "If we're going to have a relationship, World," I hear them say, "you're going to have to work for it." As I write, there are five days left of the residency. Window frames, bamboo ladders, and pieces of what used to be signage are clustered close to the gallery entrance for what will coalesce over the next couple of days into Becky Brown's intervention. These are sprouting collaged growths, and the



growths themselves are becoming structural: a collage/lamination crowding the "real" view out of the window frame it inhabits. Everything is upright and with the exception of the ladders, which lean on the wall, freestanding. Brown's intervention elements are completely camouflaged in the very much "in-process" studio ambiance the gallery currently evinces; we're replete with construction tools, the sound of saws, and electricians running up and down ladders. As yet unsure of their positions on the floor, the artist's grouping is an awkward family photograph, one that gets even funnier and more engaging as I step closer. One of three evenly spaced holes in the self-consciously vertical brick on the floor has sprouted a white starburst made from multiple pieces of paper, and I remember myself as a kid- laughing so hard, the milk I'd been drinking spurted from my nose.

One of the trickiest aspects of re-locating her practice to New Delhi is the artist's use of found objects. "Where can I go to find trash?" she asked us. "You know, old furniture or whatever, that people are getting rid of?..." Enter Becky Brown's education- the collective education, really, of all of those of us who'd come in from elsewhere- on the life of waste in the city. Former car-parts, garments worn thin from use, wooden forms bending in space that used to be chairs, all have their price at the Kabari market in Delhi's walled city. Critical to the cycle of waste disposal, Kabari-wallas visit homes across the city on bicycles to negotiate the purchase of a family's recyclable, re-sellable, or re-useable discards- highly subjective categories- which are then re-sold at the market. Colourful discards competing for value in a bazaar of multiple





subjectivities recall the experience of Becky Brown's work, an acquisitive viewing experience, if also a curious one: What to buy? What stands out? What remains anonymous and indistinct?

The artist had unwittingly entered very sensitive terrain. In one of the more contentious, short-sighted transformations of Delhi state, we learned, the Municipal Corporation of Delhi had decided to contract solid waste disposal to a consortium of private companies- a decision with overwhelmingly negative consequences both for the waste-pickers and the volume of trash ending up in landfills. Reflecting on the transformation of her process in the city, Becky writes: ...much of my practice comes out of the materials that I collect in my path, and my path [in Delhi] is less defined, less independent, less familiar. Much of this is good because it is forcing me to think more critically about some of my practices—for example, if I can't get a magazine for free (if it doesn't find me itself), is it still worth getting? Why do I need to accumulate so much paper? Why am I unable to work unless I have a surplus or excess of material? And why is it important that I am not (or barely) paying money for this material?



Brown experienced a deep ambivalence about purchasing for her work what she was accustomed to finding on her own, for free, in her native Manhattan; paying for her 'found objects' created an imperative for these to be used- not always the case when she found them herself. Whereas in New York, Becky thought about the inclusion of a discarded object as an "extension of [its] life", here she was "redirecting its' course"—a potentially disruptive (as opposed to productive) intervention. Though elements obtained through the artist's roadside collection strategy did ultimately make their way into her work, Becky wasn't the one to acquire them. She could never be certain whether something was trash or not, and on the two separate occasions she tried, workers on the roadside made it clear to her she could not have what she sought. Her bricks and the small, irregularly shaped pieces of cement and slate onto which she's built layered collage sculptures were surreptitiously collected for her by employees of the gallery at night, and as she told me this, Becky protested: "I [didn't] want to take something people [were] going to use!"

If, as artists, we do not insist on something Grand, Far-Reaching, or Noble for our practice; if, rather than formulating pretensions toward something

Universal, we confess to ourselves that it is a deeply personal, highly subjective activity; if we own that, embedded in the process and the choices we make are elements that have meaning only to ourselves, then: there is a kind of compromise we have to reach- perhaps a smaller something, but nonetheless something of value- that we think about ourselves as contributing to the World, to draw a line for ourselves, to be able to say it is not simply self-indulgence. Maybe there are several small somethings along the lines of whose ethics we walk a sort of personal tightrope act, but I propose there is mostly a central something, even if it's small- a main story that makes it okay to make things, though in fact we couldn't help ourselves if we wanted to, though in fact we would make things, regardless.

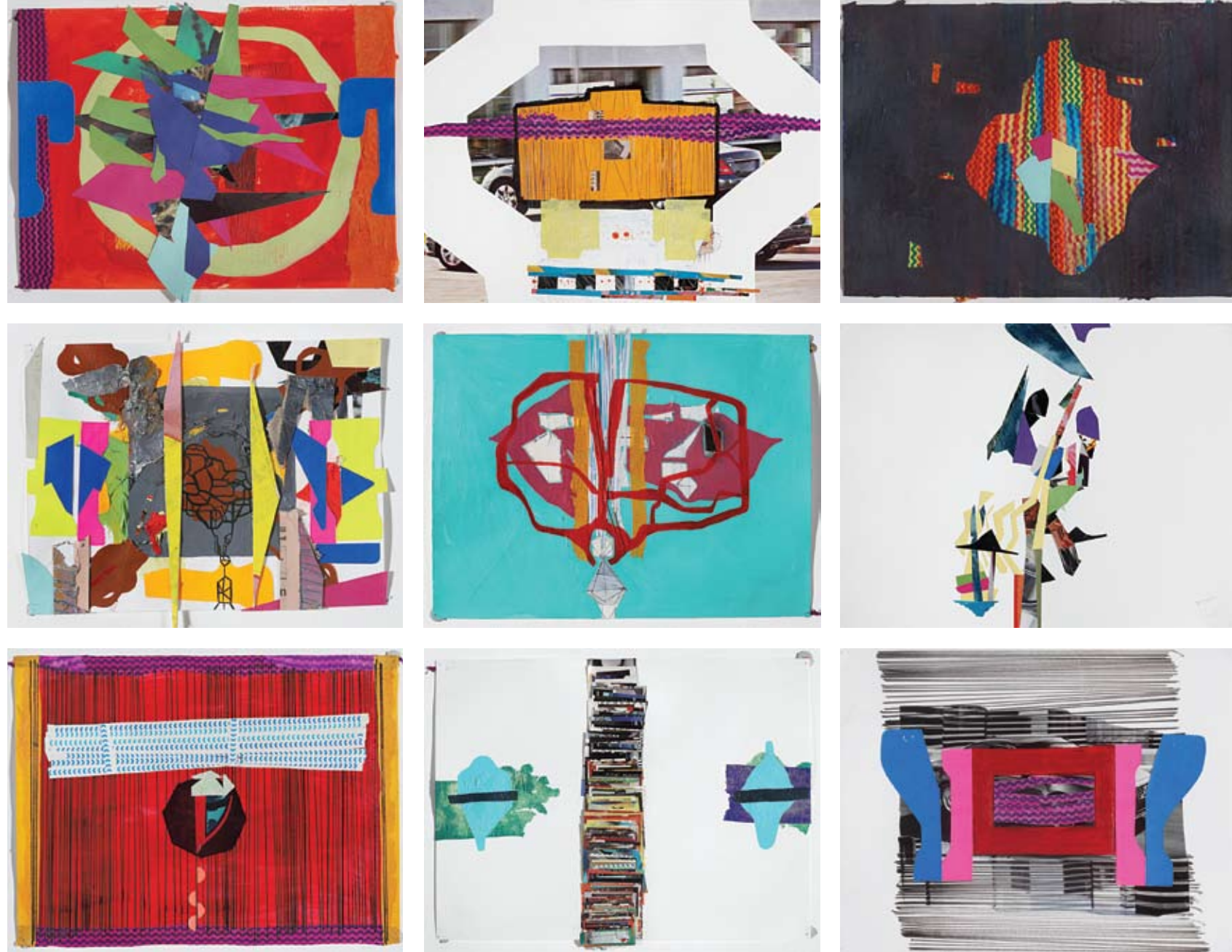
In not wanting to take something people were going to use, I intuit the contours of the story Becky tells herself. It has to do with scavenging and selection, and the privileging of an object destined for the trash. Becky's assignment of value to that object has everything to do with the fact that no-one else wanted it: I propose that hers is an ethos of ecology, as well as an aesthetic impulse. Perhaps the most profound gift and the biggest puzzle Delhi bequeaths to Becky is the re-writing of her story- at least for now, and maybe from now on. Here, someone wanted all of the artist's various materials, and the act of extracting them from this environment, whether through purchase or subterfuge, posits a re-prioritization that cannot feel comfortable to her, moving as it does her visual production from its alternately gracious and clunky, funny and sly periphery to Center Stage. Even, perhaps, positing the art-making activity itself as The Point, rather than the by-product of her lived experience.

What will Becky make with this new stack? In my mind's eye, she's already eyeing elements from the pile; she's choosing one and using it to cover others, she's taking all of the green ones out, and putting all of the yellow ones on top. She's changing her mind, and the ideological shape is responding in turn; if it is a new story, if it weaves together various stories, it remains, categorically and inimitably, Becky Brown's.

"And when all the celebrations are over it remains only to pick up all the ornaments—all the accessories of the celebration—and by burning them, make a celebration."

Chris Marker, in *Sans Soleil*





Rebecca Carter

If Rebecca Carter had not already been assembling fragile constellations of thread-borne words in her pre-existing practice, it would be easy to imagine her month-long production during the 2010 WhyNotPlace residency as the result of a visual language she'd invented just for this experience. Considered together, her pieces vividly evoke feeling foreign and trying to navigate an unfamiliar space, or more specifically, Rebecca Carter's pieces evoke feeling *not at home*. Words are already abstractions, each an elaborate compendium of symbols we have agreed to implement to differentiate some things from other things. As abstractions, even once we assimilate them as language, they inhere the possibility of becoming strange to us once more- how much stranger if the very same words are assigned similar, but not identical meanings in a new context? Describing the evolution of "the uncanny" as an idea informing contemporary discourse in his introduction to *The Architectural Uncanny: Essays in the Modern Unhomely*, Anthony Vidler writes:

Its favorite motif was precisely the contrast between a secure and homely interior and the fearful invasion of an alien presence; on a psychological level, its play was one of doubling, where the other is, strangely enough, experienced as a replica of the self, all the more fearsome because apparently the same.

Rebecca makes the familiar strange to us; she reasserts the graphic, image quality of text. The coalescence and dissolution of her thread language denotes the words' fragility, even as it gestures beyond the specific and toward a network of interconnected meanings.

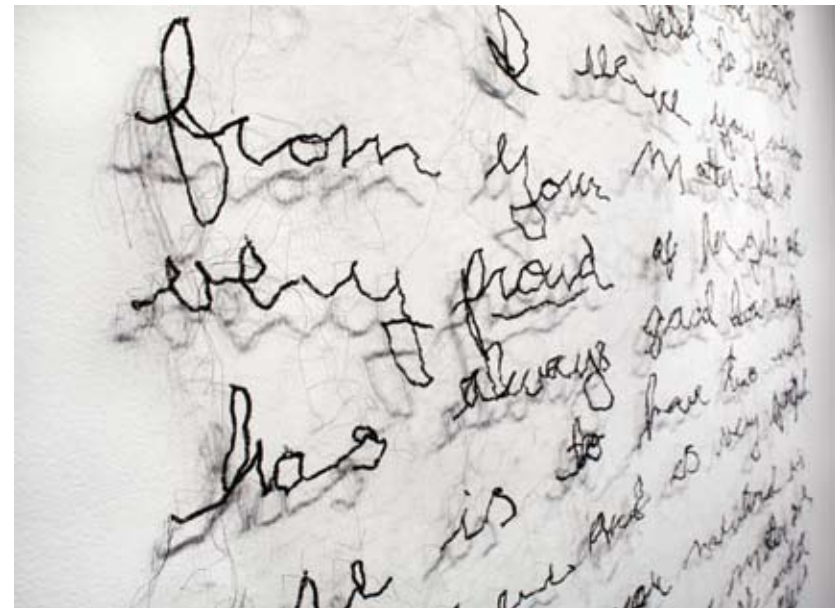
Before they are for us, the viewers, it is my sense that Rebecca's text-pieces are for herself: intensely private extractions from the verbal bombardment that accompanies cosmopolitan existence. Read this way, her pieces become a record of her journey from Dallas to New Delhi, their chronology revealing the artist's shifting intellectual and emotional responses to her context. Sometimes, there is a tidy, linear congruence between experience, impulse, and artwork: the artist is on an airplane from Amsterdam to New Delhi for the second leg of her flight and the ankle she'd sprained a few days before is still in its bandage. Much of the signage is in Dutch. Rebecca has a cold. From the seat-pocket in front of her, the packaging on the headphones offers a kind of gentle respite, declaring in English: "The joy of listening: It's yours!" Displaced in space and uncomfortable in her body, the phrase offers

Saudade (Home-made, home-made! But aren't we all?)
thread, pins, wall
dimensions variable
2010



an experiential pleasure that is available regardless; it became the first thing Rebecca elected to translate into her groundless-thread language. Falling into the same category- one I would group under 'contextual extractions that offer a measure of comfort'- are two other pieces the artist made. Again courtesy of KLM, one reads: "Stress getting to you? Calm down and relax by learning," and from the Delhi Police, a valentine: "WITH YOU FOR YOU ALWAYS"

While still reflective of the artist's experience as a matter of course, much of the work Rebecca made during her time at the residency had more private



points of origin, and varied considerably as to level of articulation. In the tiny fragment "o...o", for instance, language itself is seen to dissolve, pointing to a central experiential choice Rebecca's work offers: is this meant to be "read"? or "seen"? "o", as in "oh?", or two circles? Another small piece, "nooo" is similarly graphic. And still another, "piano piano" seems like an imperative along whose lines the artist is directing herself. Softly softly, toward what? or, along-? Or, against-? It is interesting that of these more peripheral, enigmatic considerations, the artist chose in the end only to exhibit "piano piano." Relegated to the floor among first attempts, drawings, and other discards,

these efforts acquired an even greater vulnerability ahead of what looked like their imminent demise.

Carter writes about Connaught Place:

To cross the street requires a desire and commitment. To step into the steady flow of traffic requires confidence that the space/time to cross will in fact open. Cars, motorbikes, rickshaws, auto-rickshaws, buses, trucks, won't



The Love Letter
thread, pins, wall
84" x 60" x 1.5"
2009



Loosed Words
thread, pins, wall
dimensions variable
2009

necessarily stop but just as likely swerve – multiple fluid bodies in motion fluidly.

"Stop," reads one of her pieces, followed by a second, less resolute, more difficult to decipher version of the same word, culminating finally in one that has become almost entirely form, a tangle of threads, rather than a word. The series I think about as Rebecca's "distress signals" includes three other pieces, all contextually extracted explorations of otherness: "DIVERSION," all in capital letters, "Keep Distance," painted on the back of a truck, and one of

only two pieces the artist made in Hindi, "Savdhan," or Caution.

Getting her bearings for the first time sitting in a public park outside of her guest house accommodation, the artist tells a story of a little girl who approached her with wide-eyed curiosity. Looking at Rebecca and pointing to a stray dog that was also in the park, the girl said, "Dog." After a few minutes, this dog was joined by others and the girl pointed again, "Friends." This was



Saudade (Stop)
thread, pins, wall
dimensions variable
2010

a subdued joy, this improbable, momentary connection- an experience among many that eluded description or evocation through contextually extracted language.

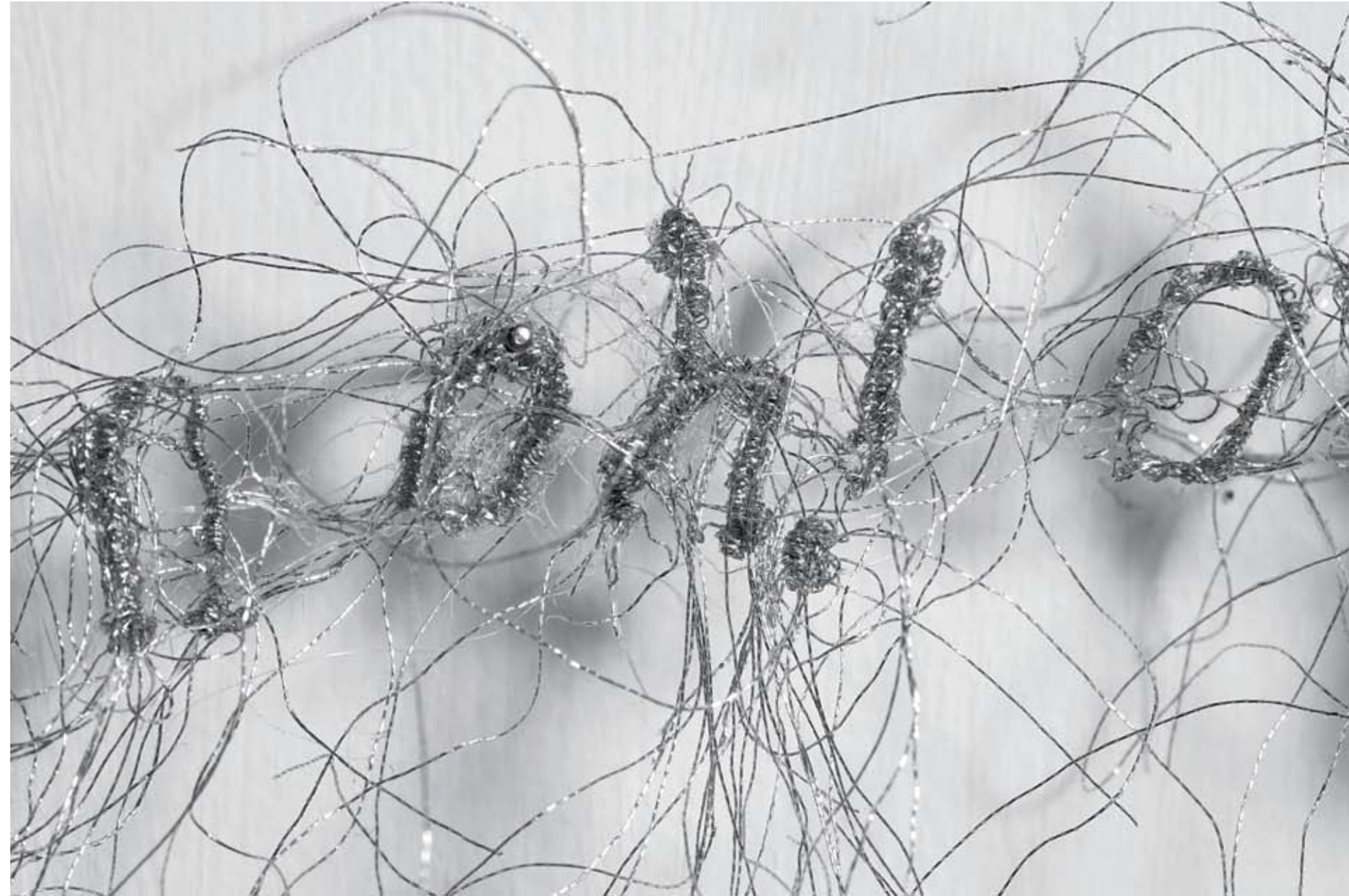
"but I felt: you are an *P*" "why, why do we feel/(we all feel) this sweet/sensation of joy?" Brought from home and making home a place that was not, I regard Rebecca Carter's introduction of poetry or, really, fragments of poetry, into her work as a kind of 'nesting', besides responding to an expressive imperative that "found" words could not satisfy. Seven in all,

this largest group of works populated the space around the artist with the her own, internal cadences; I read them as songs she had stuck in her head and imagine that, as happens with me, the connection to her immediate environment, circumstance, or emotional or psychological state became immediately apparent after she stopped to consider the lyrics.

The day after Rebecca arrived in New Delhi, her cold worsened. Important elements of her art-making practice still had to be acquired: an embroidery sewing machine, for instance, and the dissolvable cellulose material that forms the matrix for what ultimately become her "groundless" embroideries, but the artist was too sick to come to the gallery, and the material acquisition that required her presence stalled. Still sick, and stressed from feeling behind, the artist made it to the gallery on the fourth day and, using thread she'd brought from home, got straight to work on the machine we finally managed to purchase together.

Interacting with Rebecca, one becomes aware of competing inclinations resident in the artist's nature: on the one hand, there is a profound desire for, and conscious effort toward, openness and an inner state of peace, on the other, a tenuousness and a worry that everything is not, in fact, going to be okay. In what I think about as her resilient fragility, Rebecca resembles her work. Reflecting on her experience of New Delhi, the artist writes: Proximity and distance – never being alone, transformation of my sense of personal space – chains of hierarchies – "help" – a sense of the possible... balance. Grace. Certain moments of sincere and direct personal kindnesses... Overwhelm. Complexity. Honk honk, beep beep, roar of ac/fans/traffic/construction. Heat smothering. Desire for shelter/desire to let go and somehow merge with...

We are all pluralities, I suppose, and at any given moment, one of our competing inclinations dominates the others. While both Rebeccas (because they are one-and-the-same Rebecca) co-existed throughout the residency, it was the experience of co-mentor Sumakshi Singh and myself that the artist's inclination toward resilience and fluidity predominated over her tenuousness during her time here. In becoming part of the group of artists sharing an



Saudade (an oh! of pain) (detail)
thread, pins, wall
dimensions variable
2010

open space, the artist added her sound, literally and figuratively, to the ongoing symphony: invested engagement in other artists' inquiries, smiles, and hugs, as well as the ceaseless whirr and hum of the sewing machine.

A poem by Mei-mei Berssenbrugge the artist sent to me as I was preparing this essay concludes:

I have to re-create the scene at a distance, so I can watch.

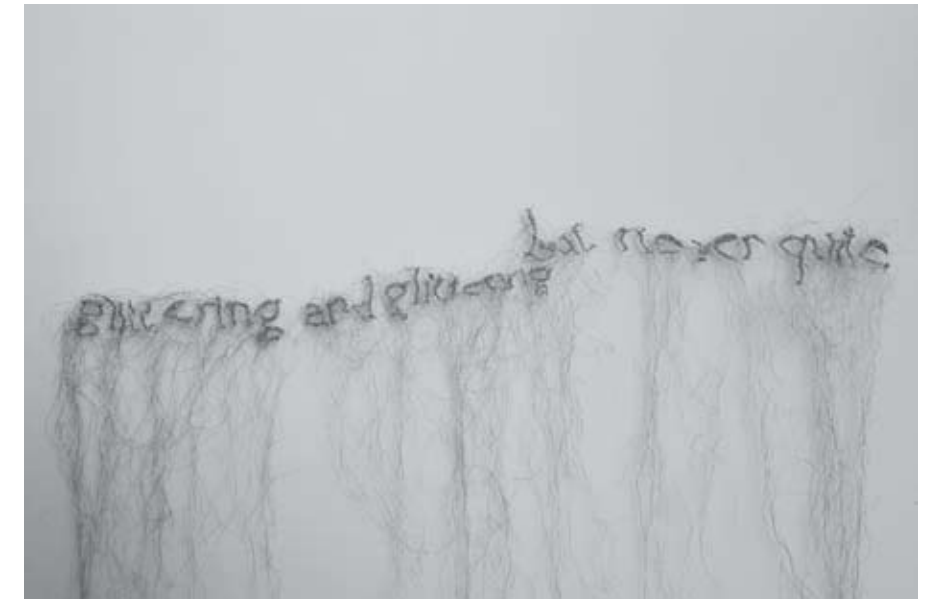
At the podium, I say in my head, "I love you, be my friends, exchange these promises, you to

whom I aspire."

In the open studio on July 28 that was the culminating event of the artist's time here (the exhibition only opens some ten days later), Rebecca Carter grew emotional as she described her experience of the residency. The time had been marked by significant challenges, as well as by a new community of friends, and the unlikely gift of being one among eight individuals who adapted seamlessly to one another's rhythms and quirks in a spirit of total generosity had moved her profoundly.

Saudade (but never quite/ glittering and glittering)
thread, pins, wall
dimensions variable
2010

following pages
Saudade (why, why do we feel (we all feel)
this sweet sensation of joy?)
thread, pins, wall
dimensions variable
2010



Why, why do we feel
(we all feel) this sweet
sensation of joy?

Why, why do we feel
(we all feel) this sweet
sensation of joy?

In our inventory of fragments, there is something about bees: or, not the bees themselves, but the bee-keeper's container. There is also a word exchange (not to be confused with an exchange of words, nor with a conversation- at least, not in the conventional sense). There are six hand-carved bricks and a Holy Mountain; a heavy steel stand, a megaphone, and an inability to speak. With the exception of the mountain, these things are recursive; they fold back in on themselves and signal backward to a source outside of the present. Maybe these things are stars (except the mountain) (perhaps even that): moving in perfect concert, illuminating a reliable map, they imploded centuries ago. Maybe they're not that kind of stars: maybe they're still here.

To engage Raffaella Della Olga's practice, you have to set aside what you know- the parameters along which you usually read things, and the speed, have to change. Is it a contradiction, to say that you have to know who you are? Because: there's trust involved. You have to trust yourself. Specifically: you have to trust yourself enough to let go. Later on when you re-occupy the spaces you relinquished for these experiences, you can decide if they resonated with your own life. You can decide that later. Right now, set yourself aside. Raffaella is giving you permission not to know. She doesn't know either: this is at the heart of what she is articulating in her work. She's building a house of cards, at the base of which 'conviction' and 'chance' are supporting one another's weight, and you: you have to be light, to come in.

Our first conversation set the tone for her time at the residency. Raffaella was talking about something else when I interrupted her to ask how she thought about her proposed projects as connecting to the idea of the transforming state. I was not in the right frame of mind for the conversation, as my interruption evidences. I was feeling impatient: I wanted Raffaella to get to the point, or, more specifically, I wanted Raffaella to get to *my* point, not hers.

Besides not being in the right frame of mind (and it should tell you something about Raffaella- a vital clue- that she would not herself consider the frame one of 'mind', so much as of 'heart' or perhaps, more accurately, of 'spirit'), my impatience had another source in that first conversation. I was puzzling Raffaella out for myself. She seemed to me to have arrived from Paris armed

Raffaella Della Olga





me. “I, myself, am in a constant state of transformation; metamorphosis...” her loquacity was undimmed, but at that point I entered a different space within it, a self-reflexive one, following the thought through its potential iterations. If one is in a moment of internal transformation, I wondered, how does one link that transformation to the actively transforming external space in which one finds oneself? Raffaella’s various ideas began to coalesce for me as efforts to forge precisely these sorts of links.

A Roll of the Dice Will Never Abolish Chance
-[title of a poem by Stéphane Mallarmé]

To return to the house of cards, the artist’s practice balances two unknowables: herself, and her viewer. As detailed above, Raffaella requires, like a chef with a list of ingredients, that her viewers bring some space with them. All of her references are germane to the effort of linking the artist to her space; like a set of constellations, they’ve formed points of orientation for her own thinking, yet: considered only after the fact, if considered at all,



inside a carapace of her previous references, and I had a hard time seeing these as anything but noise over the present moment and place: the bees were because she’d been reading the Rig-Veda, the words were inspired by a Théo Angelopoulos film, and there was not at that time any intimation of a Holy Mountain, nor of Bricks, nor a Megaphone, nor an Inability to Speak. If anything, my experience of Raffaella was that there was a surfeit of language.

Maybe she was relieved that I spoke French. It is a second language for her, and one she speaks with what to my ears sounds like native fluency; my Italian (her first language) is functionally nonexistent, and her English, though competent, is not something she is comfortable speaking. As her listener (interrupter), I felt she was overestimating my French- a third language for me, and not one I consider myself proficient in. And, to return to the outset, I wanted her to get to my point, which was New Delhi on Monday, July 5, 2010. As I only came to appreciate later on, Raffaella had her own points to get to. More importantly, she had her own way, often recursive, somewhat convoluted, shimmering and riverine, of getting to them.

“‘The Transforming State’, for me, is a constant, internal condition,” She told



where do these landmarks leave the viewer? Do they offer purchase into the unknowns of Raffaella's ongoing transformation? Do they help to locate it here? Do they point outward to her practice? Do they enable our own transformation?

I give them to you just in case, an inclusive and undifferentiated list that needs must fail, nonetheless, to abolish what cannot be known: Mantramanjari,



the first volume of the Vedas, the film "Eternity and a Day" by Théo Angelopoulos, the film "The Big Trail" by Raoul Walsh, India's "Economic Times" newsdaily, London's Speaker's Corner, and six bricks. Also, fragments of Raffaella herself: her previous life as a criminal attorney, her identification with both idealism and absurdity and her ideas on the impossibility of justice.

Neither the bees nor their enclosure lasted the month, but, besides these, the remainder of our initial inventory stands. Feeling (rather than thinking) or maybe sensing my way through each element in a responsive act of emotional archeology, I intuit seismic reconfigurations of previously established terrain.

The hand-carved bricks read "tra nsf orm ing sta te", about three letters per brick- significantly, in bauhaus font. The router buzzed for weeks; the tip became unusable and had to be replaced. She could have made her own bricks; she could have made a mould from a clay positive; she could have simply evoked the dimensional "brick" lexicon; she could have used papier-maché. This? This speaks to a literalist fury, a committed insistence, a prolonged and possibly meditative process, if a difficult one. Insofar she envisions returning the bricks from whence they came, that they might at some point integrate seamlessly (carved on the tops rather than the sides of the bricks, her letters would disappear if used for building) into architecture, I read the piece as the artist's wanting somehow to stay here in New Delhi.

What looks like a delicate contour line drawing from a distance turns out to be a collage when seen up close; Holy Mountain comes from various weeks worth of exactly extracted economic indices.

For Impossible Speaker Corner, the artist had a megaphone and a steel stand she'd purchased from a reluctant vendor and reappropriated. It was initially meant to be an inclusive public platform- a response to the fact Connaught Place doesn't have a Speaker's Corner, and a sense the artist had the people here were not free, one she acknowledges as presumptuous, but which she nonetheless intuitively as in some measure real. Over time, the project changed into a one-woman performance; in standing on the platform and, in an attitude of vivid protest, speaking through a megaphone, the artist would implement her body and voice in a parody of protest; she would assert the right to speak in public, and use that platform for absurdist pronouncements. I watched and took photos as, on the appointed day, Della Olga carried the stand about a half of a kilometer into Lodi Gardens. I think she thought she was going to say something; she had brought some notes with her, something from Kafka. (I'd tried to read it in the car on the way there, but between the handwriting and the Italian, failed.) All of us had been nervous about the stand; she made her way up and stood on it in her dark green stilettos before

discarding the stilettos. She took the megaphone out of the bag she had been carrying it in and she put it to her mouth, but she never turned it on. After a few moments, she sat on her stand, megaphone in one hand. "It's impossible," she said first in French, then Italian, "this thing I have set out to do, it's impossible"

As of this writing, only Raffaella's word-exchange has yet to transpire: she plans to return to Tughlaquabad, a site we'd visited as a group, with her Veda text and in the company of someone who can write Sanskrit. Once there, she plans to choose words from the text- the artist's version is in Italian- and have the person write their Sanskrit equivalents in a notebook. Afterward, she wants to stand at the bottom of the water reservoir at the site and record herself speaking the words into the space.

Even as the artist connects her own threads for me, linking her projects as a series of discontinuous fragments requiring an ongoing activity of modification on her part, I am formulating my own connections inside of the space I brought with me: there is something about the failure of language, and about being outside of a situation. Closing my eyes to engage her pieces inwardly, I sense a movement from thought to feeling, from reference to action, and see Raffaella herself transforming, only just now becoming the viewer she demands.

Untitled (work in progress)
collaborative performance at
Tughlaqabad fort
2010





Garima Jayadevan

The city is magical. It's also way too real, isn't it? It's chaotic and disconcerting. It's noisy. It's busy, it's dirty and it's dazzling. Its lights seem to go on to infinity. A thousand lights; a thousand lives; a thousand secrets.

The city compresses you; confuses you; enchants you. It promises, it disappoints. It's constantly in flux – a massive, living, breathing organism that throws out and sucks in people, buildings, roads, markets, rivers and trees. Heat radiates off its asphalt and rigid lines of concrete appear to soften and dance. So, mirages form.

New arrows appear everyday rendering familiar routes strange. The dweller navigates anew the paths between the same two points. Meanwhile, there is a temple in Kerala, lit with a thousand diyas: a thousand lights; a thousand prayers. The temple is calm and reverent and has the silence of bare feet; a space for expansion. "Believably Hot" as Garima puts it, with all the flames of its little lamps.

Garima Jayadevan's installation "Mirage" embraces these seemingly contradictory co-existences of the sacred and the secular. As one walks around the gallery one might notice a small geometric, flower pattern cut out of a wall at eye-level. Through these little kite-shaped openings one catches an occasional mysterious glimmer. Upon approaching, a diagonal wall opens up and welcomes you in, its beautifully ornate mirrored wall taking on your colours and splicing them into geometric shapes. A four by seven feet room expands into a stunning infinity of lights reflected by the room's mirrored surfaces, invoking reads of bedazzlement, chaos and beauty at all once. One finds oneself reflected yet fractured in the small triangular mirrors of the meticulously constructed flower motif covering every inch of surface in the room. Reminiscent of Jain temples and the "Sheesh Mahals" of the Mughal era, yet strangely contemporary, the space elicits the same richly layered responses generated by a complex urban environment where (in Garima's words) "...one finds oneself reflected in everything and everyone around them." Garima's slow, repetitive, methodical arrangement of mirrors becomes a kind of meditation in action: an apt process for a material that is "the" metaphor for self-awareness.

The temperature in the little urban temple is noticeably hotter. "Believably hotter?"

Mirage
Cut and arranged mirrors,
lights, reflective tape
7ft X 3.5ft
2010





We were enchanted when we first came across Garima's portfolio. The work was charming and humorous, simple yet with a considered attention to detail. "Endless Desire" featured a passage of continuous spirals and lines made up of little disposable glassfuls of brightly coloured water arranged rangoli-like on the honeycomb-patterned courtyard floor, making its way up stairs and sneaking around corners of verandahs. Another project delicately adorned wild mushrooms with little petals and leaves: a sweet offering reminiscent of a pooja thali. This "Goldsworthy-esque" intervention created a moment for surprise and contemplation. It seemed to ask viewers to pause in a landscape that had previously been merely "on the way" to something else.

The first project Garima proposed to realize here was a "City in a vessel". She wrote: "A vessel-shaped structure made by either mirror or highly polished steel is placed in different cityscapes of Delhi. The images being reflected on different panels of the vessel will be photographed to tell the story of transforming cityscapes. These photographs will be composed and displayed along with the vessel."

A flurry of emails went back and forth between Garima and I. "What does a vessel signify to you?"

"A city is always like a vessel containing different religions, caste, races, classes, political and ideological visions. By placing this vessel in different parts of the city, I would like to mark and map geographical spaces, which in turn reflects the different identities."

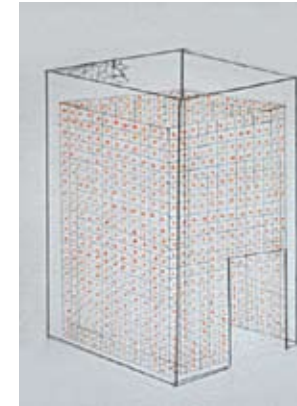
"What kind of vessel? Hand constructed or ready-made? Will the city be reflected inside or outside the vessel? In other words, is the vessel the container of the city or is the city wrapping around the hollow that is the vessel? What contains what?"

Hand constructed - made of 5 panels - one base and 4 walls. The city is reflected inside the vessel and so visually the vessel is the container of the city.

"Why that particular shape of the vessel? The question is - Is there a link between the shape of the vessel and the image/ people it is reflecting? I find an ambivalence in the form; it is neither specific enough to add a layer enriching your concept nor generic enough to be a non-issue. Could the vessel itself springboard from the various complex aspects of the city you wanted to capture? For instance, could it be shaped like the 3D topographical map of Delhi - locating the reflected image in its geography? Should it be a ceremonial vessel or one for mundane functional uses? Perhaps your vessel could be a shape composite of the different "cultures" you are planning to

Endless Desires
Colored water, disposable
glasses
2008

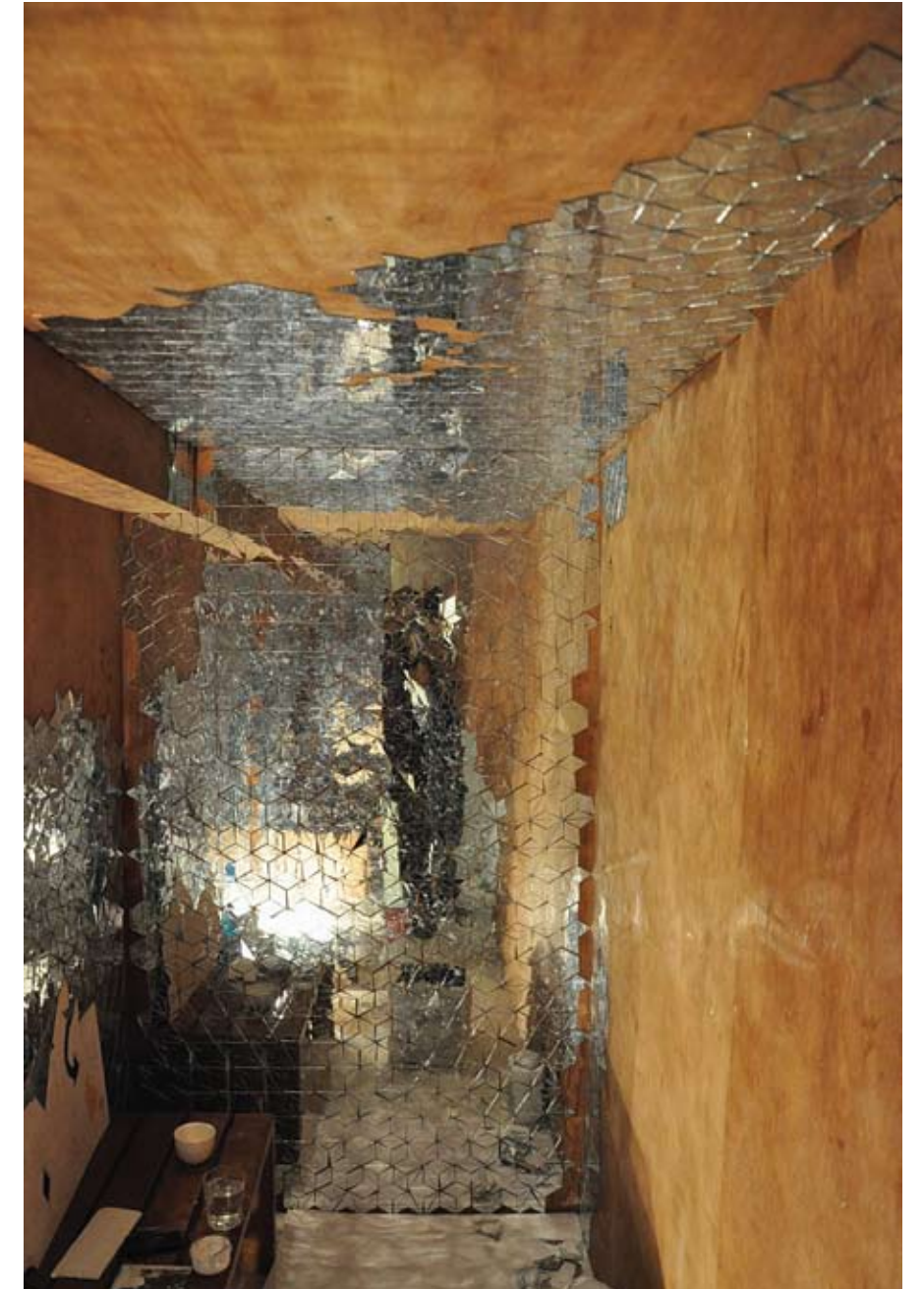
Untitled
Flower petals, mushrooms



reflect within Delhi (even religious vessels like kamandals, copper urns etc.).

I asked her how this idea began. Often the first impulse for an idea clarifies the form it needs to take. We discussed associations of vessels in the Indus Valley, Japanese Raku firings, deliberately imperfect tea-cups, Egyptian organ containers, Greek amphoras, ash urns and more. I recommended the nuances of seven very different mirror-based projects for further conceptual filtering. For instance, Anish Kapoor's "Cloud Gate" in Chicago (a bean-shaped, reflective, public sculpture) caricatures the highly contrived grid of the city, almost poking fun at its mammoth upright skyscrapers and the viewers in and around it as the curved surfaces contort and render a bit ridiculous their reflections. On the other hand, Yayoi Kusama's psychedelically patterned to infinity mirror installations create a more private space for psychological engagement. Specific projects by Gabriel Orozco, Michelangelo Pistoletto, Robert Smithson, Anjali Srinivasan, KK Projects were added to the research and of course Subodh Gupta's reflective kitchen utensils of nurturance that transformed into threats as one encountered the polished guns hidden in them.

Garima proposed a second idea: hollow pillar like structure with metal rod mesh. After fitting small lights in every square inside, she wanted to place this





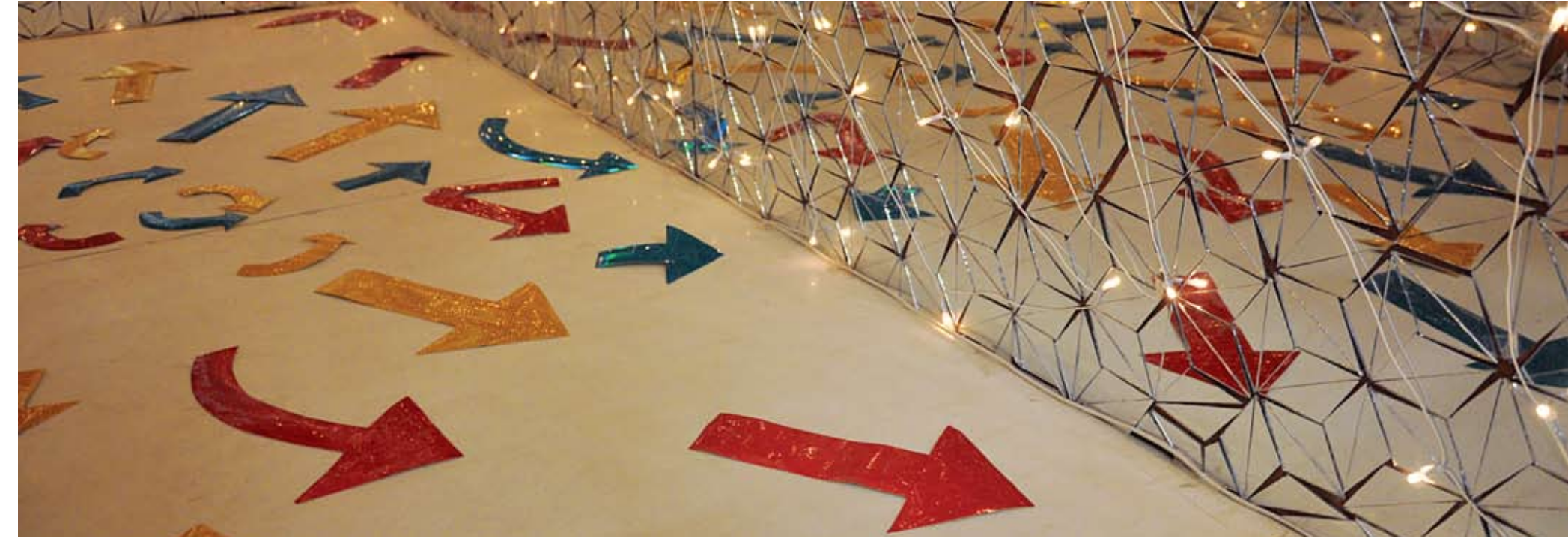
mesh structure in a mirror box, getting the multiple reflections of the light. Paola Cabal, the co-mentor asked how this piece would speak to her investigations into site-specificity, or explore New Delhi/ Connaught Place specifically? "...Let the experience of the site inform, and transform, what you make."

Garima's expanded on the idea's relationship to the "Transforming State" – the residency's theme. "After experiencing the rural places one can feel the lights in the metros like Delhi and Bombay. After entering the space one gets bedazzled. The original idea was to do it with a limited number of diyas (lit up earthen oil lamps used for auspicious occasions) which when assembled with mirrors produce the multiple image of lights we see everywhere. But the idea is to present the bedazzled feeling one gets when entering the metros in contrast to calmness and peace one feels when they experience lit diyas."

Paola and I both loved the idea of the mirrored room/ pillar. I encouraged Garima to collect images of different metropolis skylines at night and short videos with the flickering of city lights for source material. In the following



weeks the group of 8 artists discussed notions of the secular and the sacred. From vertical temples in Indore and Kerela we moved to the tiny cave-like Shinto shrines dotted over the horizontal landscape protecting their flickering lights. Garima's reminiscing about entering mirrored Jain temples and seeing herself reflected in every part of them found analogy to the metropolis "... you get lost in the crowd. You don't know where you are actually located anymore. People start to serve as reflections of you. You see your challenges on their faces." Her interactions with Purnna Behera further connected this line from the personal to the social, while talks with Greg Jones investigated issues of light pollution in Delhi that her intervention would undoubtedly evoke. Garima was simultaneously taking photographs of reflective environments, collaging these images onto windows playing with real/ captured reflections, cutting mirrors, sticking mirrors and creating playfully interactive sketches with arrows made of different materials located at various points in the gallery (derived from innumerable diversion signs, an everyday feature in the Delhi landscape). A few nights before her departure the

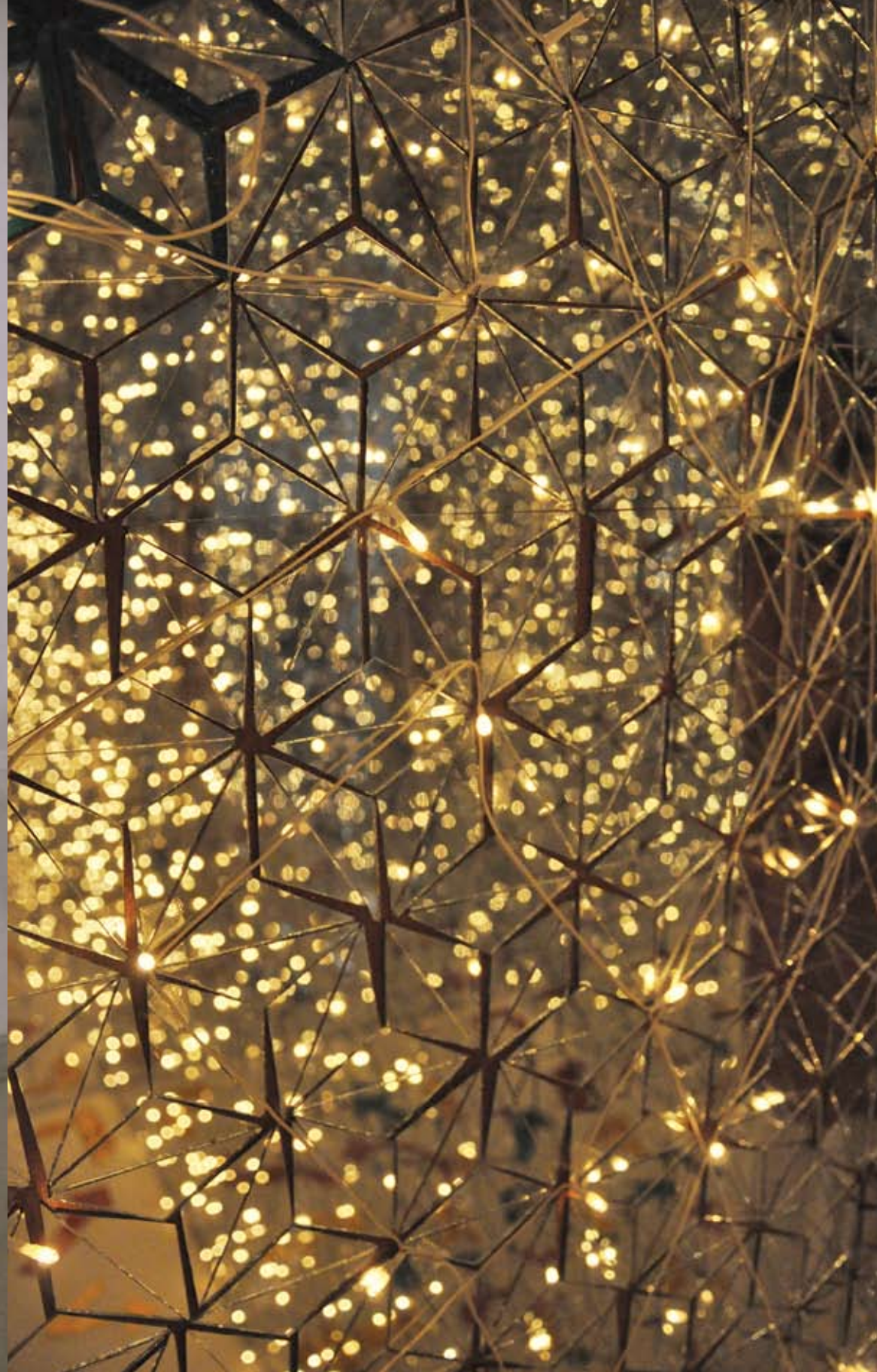


reflective arrows entered her installation, getting picked up by the unrelenting mirrors that used them to point at an infinity of directions as disorienting as the city itself.

We talked about mirrors as ultimate tools of transformation and displacement. We talked of malls, reflective shop windows and the use of mirror everywhere around us in the shiny, new version of an old city. We discussed how Garima's work was seemingly gentle and how these little thoughts and small desires could penetrate with alarming sharpness the social fabric around her. We talked about what shape her room should take: we went from a simple cube, to a more complex shape based on a temple plan, back to the simple cube again. The cube was more open to associations. We talked about the treatment of the entrance determining reads of sacred, domestic, public, contemporary or historic: whether it was a simple door, a passage, an arch or a jaali etc. In most spaces in Delhi it is rare indeed to encounter a sight that is not mediated through a window, a gap between the buildings or hanging wires overhead. We collectively came to the conclusion that, therefore, the outside of the room

needed to provide clues, a little peek into the experience it promised. The familiar flower pattern was cut out of a wall. To amplify the visual cacophony of Delhi, we started discussing variations in the scale and colour of lights, portions of neon signs, perhaps a slow flicker or a specific detail from a specific road.

Maybe a gallery is like a highlighter. One can displace into it an everyday experience like the urban commuter's attempt to locate oneself in his "not-so-familiar any more", dazzling, bewildering, visual environment. And, here we have a moment to stop and consider an occurrence we take for granted. Looking back I realize that nearly all of Garima's considerations of the "vessel" project found a subtler voice in "Mirage". Employing a language that is simultaneously literal and sublime it translates the mundane into the spectacular while dealing with issues of psychology, visual transformation, geography, identity and relationship of self to environment, allowing viewers to carry this vertical penetration of their usual day back out of the gallery into their city that will not look quite the same ever again.



“The materials of the novelist must be real; they must be gathered from the field of humanity by his actual observation.”
Goldwin Smith

What does it mean to respond to our experience of the visible world through painting? Where does the impulse come from? I read Greg Jones’ prolific month-long output of drawings, paintings, sketches and photographs as coming from a personal desire to “make sense” from sensory input. Hence the work ranges in language and scope, from sensitive and minutely observational mark-making to larger and more intuitive formal and material investigations.

Greg Jones’ abstractions are accessible - even gregarious - because they manifest specific relationships to an observed, and observable, field of vision. In spite of their modernist scale, the work is not declaratory: these paintings neither claim a territory, nor do they posit the centrality of the artist’s subjectivity. Rather, the work invites viewers’ engagement inquisitively and openly relying on the grace of this casual exchange for the activation of meaning in the work. It is a tricky negotiation, fraught with the possibility of failure; before they are anything else, after all, Greg Jones’ paintings are his fictions - his own, curiosity - driven syntheses of his experiences. But in a distinct affinity with the novelist posited by Goldwin Smith above, Jones is insistent about the materials for his fictions. Describing himself as “a landscape painter of sorts,” Jones articulates his questions, the vital raw material that informs his visual choices:

...what was left of these landscapes - were there any completely natural parts left?
...and for what reason were they devoid of humans?...the compression of natural environments, the encroachment of built-up, urban areas into these spaces is something I have tried to tackle... the little man-made discrepancies I found in natural environments, things that looked like they shouldn’t have been there, this interested me.

The results describe a dynamic between breath and constriction, play and seriousness, control and chaos that sometimes glides easily and assertively across the viewer’s field of vision; at other times, it is a hesitant, searching amble of movement. Like skilled conversationalists, his paintings beguile;

Greg Jones

Untitled
water colour, gouache, and
pencil on paper
15" x 11.5"
2010





they propose, rather than insist. Materially, they “listen”, as well as respond. And if they knock over the occasional metaphorical wine-glass at the soirée, I cheerfully identify with their pervasive humanity.

“Travel is more than the seeing of sights; it is a change that goes on, deep and permanent, in the ideas of living”

Miriam Beard

Greg Jones did not initially come to India for the WhyNot Place residency; rather, the residency happened after the fact. Together with his companion, Lottie, Greg had been in India for some ten weeks - already well into the first part of what is planned as a multi-year, multi-country trip, when he found himself in New Delhi on June 1, 2010. Greg and Lottie had been working and saving up money in their native England; this time and these experiences were the planned and happily anticipated result of months of frugal living.

The singularity of purpose and the diligence demonstrated by these two leads me to think about the urgency of leaving home. What was Greg looking for? What did he need for himself, or his work, that Newcastle could not offer? And, why India?

As it turns out, India represented a kind of homecoming for Greg. As a child, he'd lived in Bombay for two years, a time during which his family travelled throughout India. Greg speculates, “ever since, [I] have thought of the memories of [these places] and if they were real, whether they were constructed from photos or stories, or whether I actually remembered them.” As though bent on gathering every conceivable scrap of evidence, Greg Jones arrived at the WhyNot Place with hundreds of photographs and dozens of sketches. He had a lot to process, and he didn't waste any time getting straight to work.

This is what I think about as the gentle magic, the vast yet somehow comforting, polished anonymity of the arts.i gallery space- it provided Greg Jones the right thing at the right time: a reprieve from constant travel, a space to contemplate, a safe haven to experiment, and the critical and gracious response that is so important to the revitalization of an artist's

ongoing dialogue. Greg's urgent questions for India are not the sort one ever conclusively answers, yet there is needfully a reckoning, a persistent, driving impulse if not to make sense then at least to make peace. Even as he took in New Delhi in general and Connaught Place in particular, formulating new questions from this experience, Greg Jones was working through where he'd already been: the plains of Punjab, the desert of Rajasthan, the coastal surroundings, rice paddies and plantations.

The work Greg made before his time at the WhyNot Place residency reflected a cool, almost minimalist sensibility. Recognizable, rectilinear landscapes with glossy, varnished surfaces were split into clean segments, land from sky, or landscape from landscape, as in the case of *untitled (norway)*. “The heart of New Delhi is a maximalist kind of place,” I wrote to him in an email before he'd arrived,

I think it will set up an interesting tension for you - does your work transform wholesale into a pluralist, jumbled, inclusive metropolis? Or do you deviously find ways to escape the noise? How to do this whilst still remaining honest to what you are experiencing?

Reflecting on his responsiveness to materials, co-mentor Sumakshi Singh wrote,

I realize that your work is a really subtle processing of these environments which makes the entire task of online mentoring - without the object slightly challenging! It seems that your material behaviour...is as important as the conceptual investigations...

Human encroachment of the natural environment was not a new theme for Greg's work; he'd explored light pollution during a residency in Norway, and some of the work from Newcastle intimates built environments even as it focuses on the lines, colours, and shifting values of the horizon. The implicit value judgment that comes with persistent questioning of humanity's response to, and use and exploitation of, the natural environment presents some contradictions for Greg's paintings, for he relies on these interventions for the formal completion of his compositions. Without the small gestures toward, or outright inclusion of, the built landscape; without the mesmerizing value shift in the night sky created by light pollution; without the false horizon created by the streak of a passing car: where would these works be? Greg confided his discomfort over his position:

...this influx of humanization in such a massive body of land... concerns me not just as an artist but as a person. What is my role in commenting upon it through painting? What right do I have to comment upon someone else's



Untitled I (Encroachment series)
oil on board
36" x 96" (diptych)
2010

country, the way they live and how they use their land. I have found it hard, using social commentary in my painting, being in a country that is not my own.

To return to my initial proposition, I ask in counterpoint: how else does a painter explore his internal contradictions? How else would Greg Jones respond to what he is experiencing? I have thought about the making of artwork often for myself, wondering how people who do not make artwork make sense of the world for themselves, or whether it could be possible they are not plagued by the same questions, doubts, or disquietude that drives my own making of sense. Carol Becker crystallizes the matter in her essay, "Countervailance: Educating Creative Practitioners":

For people in most societies, the motivation to work is imposed from the outside, through necessity and then through the demands of a job. These structures keep them locked into work, as conventions have determined. But

artists most often generate their own jobs and projects, whether employed to do so or not, and therefore must be driven and propelled from the inside. Through the process of work, they are able to dissolve their own resistances.

It was profoundly satisfying to participate in the unfolding of Greg's creative output, which was both externally responsive to New Delhi and internally responsive to itself. There was considerable integrity to the way he would take risks, relinquishing control to the material while remaining rigorous about the colour and form. At other moments, an obsessive methodology would balance the "overdrive" Greg experienced as he tried to process his thoughts. The work became more abstract, abandoning much of its former open space and consistent balance in favour of a messier and more immediate visual language.

He writes:

I am unclear as to the reason of the progression into a more abstract way of painting,... but my work has somehow shifted into this more contemplative

realm, less about the obvious imagery and clear visual identity and maybe more into commentary and using the paint as a stimulus for a thought process...

Greg Jones does not have the "right" to comment upon "someone else's country", as he put it, but as an artist, Greg Jones has a need to do so. And with that need, there is a responsibility to be genuine about the process, to admit to what one does not and in many ways, ultimately cannot know and, importantly, to go ahead and, make work nonetheless. As external reflections of his internal inquiries, the prolific body of work Jones generated in his time here demonstrates his internalization of that responsibility: elegant or clumsy, elegiac or critical, the work is open, it shares a kind of frank honesty even as it describes, and poses questions about, the city. In his thirty days here, Greg's attempts to orient himself in space and time through his work were such that my co-mentor and myself felt we'd come to know him well, and were the richer for it.

Untitled III (Encroachment series)
oil on board
48" x 216" (triptych)
2010



“If we represent knowledge as a tree, we know that things that are divided are yet connected. We know that to observe the divisions and ignore the connections is to destroy the tree.”
Wendell Berry (1934)

Change is inevitable. We know that space transforms as we move forward in time. With this altering space, come changes in things we own, places we live, ways in which we move through the city, the pace of our lives, the relocation of our neighbours and friends, our shifting jobs and finances. Some of us experience drastic cultural, political, architectural, and environmental transformations we never thought we would see. Sometimes economies boom and collapse. The city preserves all these uneven stories (large and small) side-by-side, layer over layer: a growing container, taking on new shapes as more stories get added on, each one affecting the other.

Delhi's frantic frenzy of construction and Connaught Place's "rapid and sporadic face lift" find voice in Kavita Singh Kale's sculpture "FRAGILE, Strings Attached" and accompanying animation "Arrested>>Fast Forward>>". An uneven, three-dimensional grid of raw wood, framing clear acrylic boxes, is suspended from tall vertical poles of different heights, reminiscent of the scaffolding and construction one has left just outside the gallery. About five feet tall, the sculpture seems to burst unexpectedly out of the ground, in the process of building upon itself, cube by cube. Tangles of thread and wire housed in each five by five inch clear acrylic cube, crisscross violently, trapping the forms within and challenging the stability of the grid outside. Strange anthropomorphic forms are seen in this chaos: part human, part machine. The endearing nature of their doll-like scales is subverted almost instantly by their strangely mutated bodies created by cutting, reforming and adhering found and purchased objects. These are altered further by tiny, hand formed sculptural appendages and painted surfaces.

The materials in Kavita's project (varying from cheap plastic toys to gravel and brick from construction sites) have a satisfying cohesiveness with the concept: both come from the streets outside, re-enforcing each other. Individual narratives in each cube elicit reads from the viewer that range between violence, distortion, exhilaration, humour, silliness and claustrophobia

Kavita Singh Kale

FRAGILE "Strings_Attached"
Wood, Plexiglas, altered found
objects, Emseel
63" x 36" x 29"
2010



through the sheer inventiveness of the visual language. Just as we think we are starting to observe a formulaic logic in the fusion of the human with the mechanical, Kavita surprises us, and we keep looking into this mad, topsy-turvy universe. One character is located in a curious space between being a rendition of a contemporary Hindu god with eight arms wielding weapons of construction (in place of destruction) and being a vulnerable handicapped entity with screws, grommets, washers, ball-bearings and bolts growing out in place of limbs. The clever audacity of the language lies in the transformation of these small construction tools without an attempt to disguise their functional identities in any way. The real screws then represent limbs without a masquerade. A bright yellow, truck-shaped shell appears like a fused bag-pack engulfing another being, perched on her tip-toes, looking as if she were about to take off into space, but held down by the wires. Evolved avatars of modern man appear, designed to construct efficiently while other characters seem caught up in goofy, celebratory feats of gymnastics, rolling about on their tyre-shaped heads with their legs up in the air. Each of these personalities interact with tiny hand-made and manipulated found objects, meticulously painted to represent birds, cellular phones, construction cranes, cricket balls, jewellery and wrenches that generate specific micro-environments for them. Seen one through another, the individual narratives piled up and filed in this “building” create an overwhelmingly complex meta-narrative. Kavita’s sense of humour



reveals itself as one sees the miniature version of the wannabe “Nike” bags, printed as “Bike” by our street markets (complete with the Nike logo), proudly sported by members of public, unconcerned with the distinction. Kavita Singh Kale is mostly a painter, who has also worked on animation projects. She submitted a wonderful acrylic on canvas rendition of her “Wedding Album” in her portfolio. The guests stand stacked adjacent and over each other, located in flat rectangular patches of colour that barely have depth enough to contain the minute detailing - the contour drawings of gifts and other biographical objects specific to each.

It is precisely this attention to detail - ranging from postures, understated expressions, objects, outfits and their patterns - that allow the rigid, puppet-like characters to transform from a “symbolic type” to a particular person. The naïve language of a drawing filled in with flat colour seems to be a decoy to invite the viewer in, un-intimidated, then revealing bit by bit a real sophistication and earnestness in the construction and detailing of the imagery. (The employment of an entry point into her work through an accessible, almost street-level language can be seen meandering into her sculptural practice). Imbued with an otherwise unforgiving humour of an acute and relentless observation of people and their characteristics, the painting employs a charming awkwardness of language to take the sting away. Prolific drawing activity fills her sketchbooks with these quirky, insightful observations of the people that we pass by everyday, but fail to stop and consider. In this extraction of the specific character from the general public relegated to peripheral consideration, Kavita feels like “I somehow know these people.” Before arriving at “TheWhyNotPlace” Kavita wrote about the changing urban landscape, “...Inhabitants patiently wait for benefits, and in the meantime are forced to overcome obstacles caused by a constantly changing environment. I want to portray the urban growth that is happening on top of and inside each entity, benefiting some, while adversely affecting the others causing a domino effect.” She talked about “personifying the



urban environment” as body accessories by painting people from Delhi with appendages of concrete structures and heavy machinery, and then finally translating the idea into a video of herself transforming via body extensions referencing urban development.

Paola Cabal, co-mentor noticed “...I see some rich possibilities from even the words you’ve chosen, “Domino effect”, “on top”, “inside of”. These are structural words. You’ve indicated your interest in extending your inquiry into structural terrain by using “body extensions”...your words here speak to me of the possibility of extending your two-dimensional painting practice further into three dimensions...little people that sit under, on top of or around existing structures, and derive much of their meaning from placement. Or, what if you make architectures of your own, by creating “bricks”, wooden “supports” and “tiles”?”

I responded, “I like the concept of exploring the relationship between the inner and the external landscape i.e. how this physical change is affecting the aspirations and psychological natures of these now-mutated entities. What prompted this idea? Was it particular stories you heard from people or perhaps things you observed in yourself?” I encouraged her to jot down narratives that related to the human negotiation of flux in specific situations so that “the work created will have a richer archive of source material to draw from.”

Regarding the body extensions for the video I asked, “Could you build sculptural props to put on yourself for the shoots or do you just plan to do this digitally? This is a great opportunity to make life-size ‘real’ urban accessories!” Paola recommended research on Rebecca Horn, who first came to prominence in the seventies for her performances with body extensions.

Kavita responded enthusiastically, “I would love to explore different media!” elaborating that she had indeed wanted to extend her practice into three dimensions, but was simply intimidated by the short time frame of the residency. She did some further soul searching over the weekend and proposed five projects! These included the afore-mentioned painting and a preliminary idea that manifested itself into the final sculpture “... All the cubes (containing people) assemble together to form one bigger cube. The individual spaces will reflect and refract via the acrylic sheets and create multiple layers of images, creating a metaphor for their lives linked together.”

Over the course of our twenty-five days together “FRAGILE, Strings Attached” went through several formal changes. I suggested that the smaller cubes build themselves into an uneven, undulating structure like an in-process construction site as opposed to the proposed larger cube: “It’s too stable a form to highlight the precariousness of the ‘domino effect, flux, change and ongoing activity’ that you are interested in”.

A field trip to old Delhi stimulated the idea of the crisscrossing wires and people trapped within them.





In a group critique with the co-mentor and other artists we discussed the kinetic potentials in Kavita's sculpture. The wood frame barely seemed able to contain the buzzing activity. Fellow resident artist Greg Jones recommended filling some of the cubes with gravel or other construction material and letting gentle vibration create a sound component. Paola Cabal picked up clues from Kavita's photographs of the created characters with their strangely cast shadows. She suggested placing the piece outdoors, recording the trajectory of shadows created over an entire day and projecting it onto a tiny screen within the sculpture.

I talked to Kavita about creating a simple animation of the cubes building and collapsing upon themselves, lending a time component to the work.

Kavita's walls began to get covered with photographs of the agents, enablers and sufferers of the upheaval she observed during a walk through Connaught Place led by Gagandeep Singh: action shots of digging, filling, breaking floors, re-making floors, smashing walls, workers precariously balanced on scaffolding, 'earth movers' along with static images of blocked roads, fallen trees, collapsed portions of the Metro track, steel girders, rolls of cables and buildings seen through a chaotic network of wires. Bricks, gravel, wires, cubes, wood, plaster, thread, nails, toys, paints, paper and Emseal, collected during her daily sojourns proliferated over her floor, desk and windows. Her studio was the experimental laboratory of a mad scientist, spilling out miniature Frankenstein's.

In a slide presentation I designed for her, Kavita was introduced to the tiny constructed cities and overlapping mountain-like wire interventions of Gisela Insuaste, the whirlwind three-dimensional landscapes of transformed found objects by Sarah Sze and the fantastical mutations in Matthew Barney's "Cremaster 3". I referred her to Gigi Scaria's video "Panic city" of the animated rise and collapse of various buildings in the skyline, and discussed the nuances of the conscious employment of "outsider art" language in the forms and figures of Clare Rojas, Chris Johanson and Eric Lebofsky. Finally, we looked at issues of scale varying from Charles Simonds miniature hand-constructed cities to Richard Serra's massive "earth works".

Meanwhile Kavita was shooting videos in Connaught Place at breakneck speed in time with the construction activity racing toward its deadline: the opening of the Commonwealth Games. She says, "While shooting videos ...I felt that, we as citizens have to put up with serious hurdles in our daily activities, not necessarily for the betterment of our lives but rather to give a face-lift to the city." This is an important observation. Are these changes in Connaught Place simply cosmetic: a shiny new façade to present to the visiting world? The video finally resolved into "Arrested>> Fast Forward>>": a combination of live footage with 3d animation derived from her sculpture where construction workers seem trapped in a frozen moment or sped into a fast forward frenzy of activity.

"FRAGILE, strings Attached" asks who are the beneficiaries of this change? Almost afraid to know, one nervously frames the next question: "Who are these Urban Mutants?" Using a language as playful as it is disturbing Kavita puts forth questions concerning relationships between the psychological and the physical landscape, the discreet and the inter-connected narrative, the human and mechanical nature of activity, the familiar and the bizarre semblance of things and the inviting and the repulsive nature of transformation. The found, the hand made, the painted, the sculpted and the documented, all come together to substantiate this massive inquiry.

Source images
Old Delhi and Connaught Place



Wedding Album
Acrylic on canvas
102 x 127 cm
2009

“Compulsive ideas...may be defined as wishes, temptations, impulses, reflections, doubts, commands and prohibitions.”
Sigmund Freud

As one walks into the darkened gallery space, one seems to behold an apparition. Hundreds of thousands of white strings floating in light congeal to form the glowing silhouette of a house, the simple shape of which recalls the formulaic “home” of sweet childhood drawings. A quiet, almost dream-like state descends upon viewers witnessing this ethereal construction of pure white thread, stretched and woven onto sparse wooden frames. As one circles the walls of vertical strings, they appear to clump together and then separate one by one: glimmering individual strands that hide, reveal and visually vibrate the contents of the home within. This shimmering structure of substantial scale seems to be made of no substance at all.

Details begin to reveal themselves: knots in the thread, the weft intersecting the warp from time to time, a meandering thread that snakes in and out, changes direction and hangs loose. Tiny flaws render the intangible experience physically real, and the weightlessness of the vision starts to succumb to gravity with the realization of the sheer time and effort involved in this obsessive, repetitive, handmade process.

Megha Katyal’s “Home Sweet Home” borrows its title from the 19th century song by John Howard Payne that has found its home in the world of kitsch; ceramic signs in kitchens, silk ribbons on doors, calendars with cottages and kittens and, of course, cross-stitch patterns embroidered by grandmothers everywhere. Was it an aspiration, a blessing or a description? It is the ubiquitous nature of the catchphrase that Megha explores. “More often than not, I felt that these words formed a false façade over the nature of relationships within a house. What was their purpose?” asks Megha, who grew up with a “Home Sweet Home” poster. Its promise seemed laden to her with the irony of the actual, everyday experience of home: the frictions and emotional upheavals of uncomfortable relationships. On our first meeting, I asked Megha about her material choices for this project and she explained: “All my life, my mother has been stitching garments for Radha and Krishna (a demonstration of loving and caring). I have always

Megha Katyal

Detail, Home Sweet Home
Woven Thread, wood
8 ft X 10ft X 9ft
2010



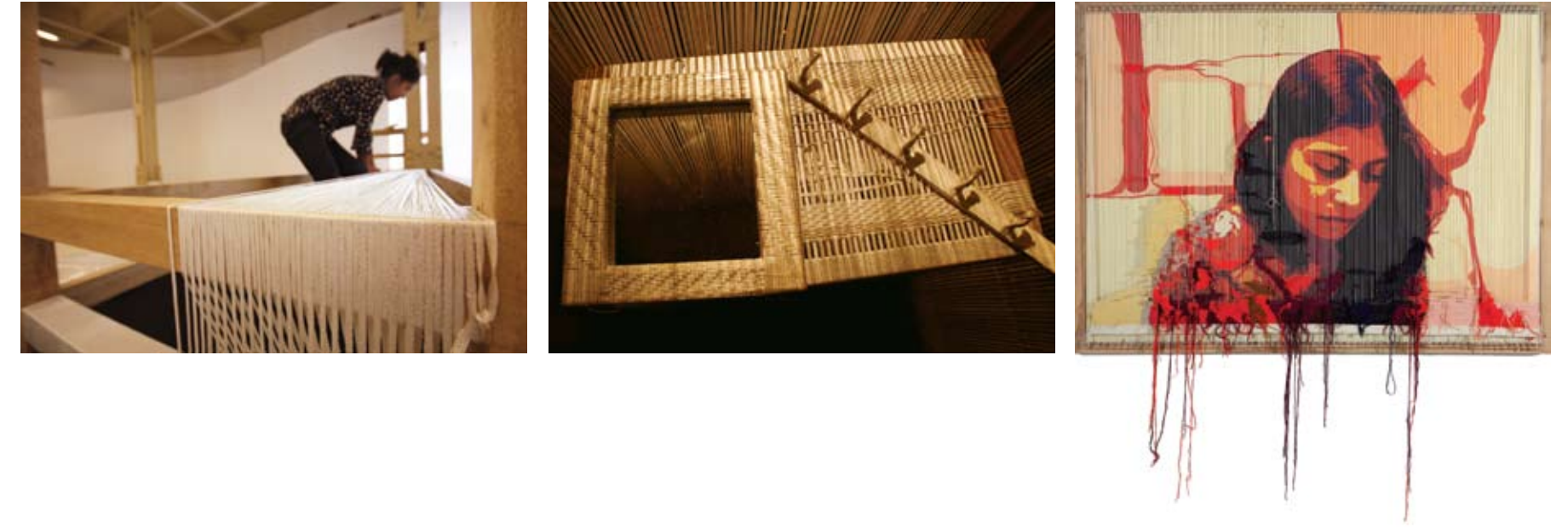


had an intimate relationship to stitching and weaving: for me they serve as metaphors for the intertwining and stitching together of delicate human relationships. 'Home Sweet Home' will be a comment on the perfection we strive to achieve in our personal relationships. So I really need the taana-baana (warp and weft) to be perfect".

Her last two sentences answered a lot of questions for me. I had been wondering whether the repetitive nature of the activity Megha was proposing was actually meditative or obsessive. Whether it was a desire to control and "fix" something specific through this action, or to lose herself in its meticulous demands. In either case, there was an urgent need for her to "see" this manifest home, apart from the nature of engagement with the process itself. There is definitely an insistence inherent in the very act of tedious repetition that does not escape the viewer.

Megha first talked about creating a smaller than life size room and weaving scaled down objects within it – some generic and others specific to her home. I loved the thoroughness of the idea of these woven manifestations extending from architecture to objects. But considering her ideas on scale, I proposed an

alternate vision: "...you are engaging in an almost compulsive activity for over a month. It's a performance of sheer endurance arising from a consuming need to know, and viewers will see that in the final piece. I feel that the full force of those driving questions should explode life-sized. If it's obsessive then go all out with your obsession. People should be able to enter your compulsion. The objects then have chance of presenting their own selves, as opposed to being scaled maquettes that represent things." My other issue with the diminutive size was that it ran the risk of becoming cute and doll-house like – much like the expected experience of the words "Home Sweet Home", illustrating rather than transforming its interpretation. I continued, "I believe that the full potency of this project depends on the specific objects you choose to weave. Objects that are general and hold no personal significance to you could very well make this house a neutral, safe dream – a "type", but lacking a personality, a particular story. But the inclusion of specific details, for example, if you own a chair with a partly broken leg or have a unique bed frame, weave it that way, so that the stories of "that chair", "that bed", "this" specific space, start demanding closer attention and expand narrative potentials...."



Megha confided that she was getting married soon. I considered how part of the urgency of this investigation (and possibly the chosen objects) might be arising from introspection about what she was leaving behind and the future home she would be moving toward.

Discussions continued with our group of resident artists and Paola Cabal. Process, concept and material looked to each other for support and integration. In keeping with this notion of perfection and purity that exist solely in the disembodied realm of ideas came the solution of using only pure white thread. The very languages of weaving and stitching observed by Megha in the domestic setting were being implemented to critique it. Together we researched "KK Projects", New Orleans and "Project Row Houses", Texas where homes had been converted into galleries to explore possible relationships between the domestic and the art viewing space. I screened a slideshow for Megha with works by Mona Hatoum, Ghadha Amer and my own personal connection to the domestic - a project I'd made recreating the three-dimensional illusion of my grandfather's drawing room.

While reviewing Megha's portfolio of previous work, the jury came across

ornate acrylic paintings of sewing machines, renderings of fabric textures and colourful bunches of yarn, magnified in scale to around six by four feet. Thread, fibre, stitching and weaving remained the subject matter, as opposed to becoming the material itself. Though skilfully executed, the paintings frankly seemed a little bored with themselves, as though they'd come about too easily, and had asked too few questions. An image of an installation buzzing with energy suddenly popped up: thousands of bobbins generating a chaotic network of loosely wound, tangled and dangling colourful threads on a low white platform. It was drawing, a painting, and an installation all at once. The thread had gone from being subject to object/ material. We sat up: it was the first piece that felt like Megha was searching hard for something. A self-portrait followed. Painted in a large shallow box with graphically demarcated shapes of flat colour and tone, woven portions of Megha's face floated a few inches above the painted area, following the colour palette below. The hovering threads were allowed to hang off the edges of the piece, cleverly imitating the dripping paint, completely reversing the roles of her early paintings where the paint mimed the thread. Reminiscent of Ghada Amer's work, the hovering, dripping strings playfully engaged with notions of edges of painting by denying the complete containment of all information



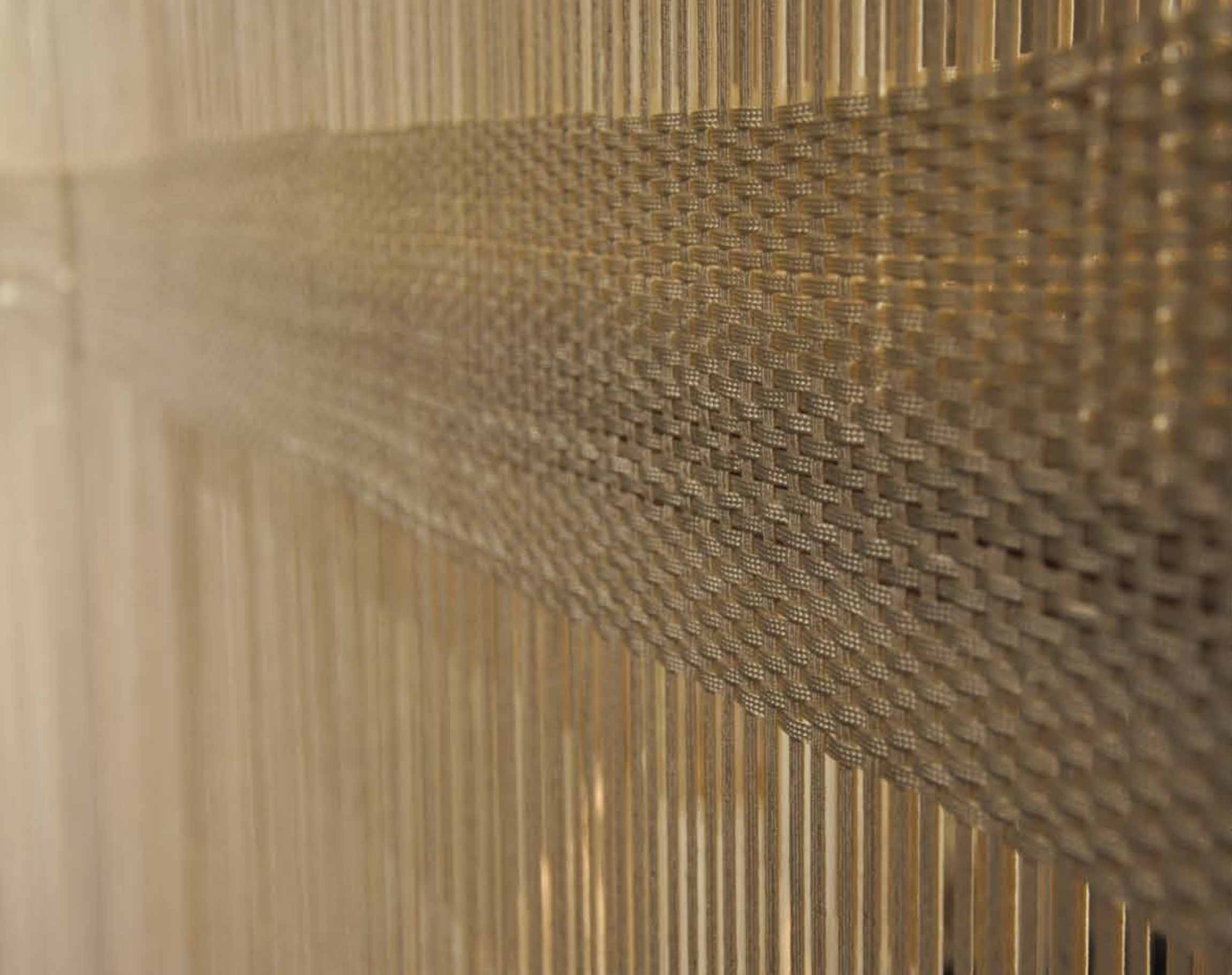
Home Sweet Home
Woven Thread, wood
8 ft x 10ft x 9ft
2010

within the given rectangular frame. Materials masqueraded as one another and reversed places (typically, the paint is applied over the woven surface of a canvas) generating an unimposing entry point into the work through the “in-process” feel of it. It seemed that Megha was definitely pushing questions of material and form in her practice - this made her an excellent candidate for the residency.

All of us at “TheWhynotPlace” witnessed the progress of her project with growing anticipation. Since it was being woven in parts we could only imagine what it would look like once put together. We observed how Megha’s preoccupation with the “perfect” taana baana caused her to unravel and re-weave large segments of this home. Funnily, Megha kept referring to the poster as “Sweet Home Sweet!” I wondered why the adjective took precedence over the noun for her: did that qualitative promise of the home announce its absence during the times of emotional upheaval and sorrow she mentioned when I first met her?

The “home” was put together and we finally got to experience it. It was a quiet moment. As one enters it through the doorway, the generic archetype of the outer house suddenly gives way to a room full of specifically chosen objects – this is a lived in space now. The room is a rich textural experience of varying patterns taken on by its objects: all white, all woven, all life-size and lined up against the linear profusion of vertical string walls. Threads hang loose from these partially woven forms, suggesting but not completing the edges of the bed, the pillow, the blanket, the rug, the tables, the lamp, the shelves, the cup and saucer: all of which seem to be in the process of materializing from the raw thread. And although the armature for the making of “Home Sweet Home” was the friction and discomfort that needs must arise when an idea decides to manifest into the gritty, material world, as one catches a glimpse of the words “Home Sweet Home” discreetly woven into the surface of the bed, one can’t help feeling that a promise has indeed been whispered gently.





Nidhi Khurana

Getting lost, finding a way out, “making” your “way”: in what I think about as the dance of art-making, the forward, backward, forward again waltz that characterizes an artist’s intensive engagement with a work in progress, there is a subtle navigation within the defined space of the work. Each new mark presents an assertion requiring a response, and the “way out” unfolds with a delicate precision that is needfully relative, rather than pre-established. Here, getting lost signifies a change in direction, rather than disorientation, and to remain lost for days, weeks, months falls well within the realm of what an artist anticipates, accepts, and takes profound pleasure in.

Nidhi Khurana gets lost. Driving through New Delhi on her way to an important commitment, Khurana is not mindfully lost but frantically disoriented. This morning as usual, her husband, Hira, had drawn a map for her. In my mind’s eye, Nidhi studies it again, reaching into recent sensory experience to forge a spatial relationship to the symbols drawn for her. Street names are of little use. A monument brings a flash of hope before Nidhi remembers in a flood of disappointment and mounting desperation that she’d been that way yesterday; it had not formed a part of today’s visual recall. She is on her mobile. She is calling Hira. “I’m lost. Again.”

In her increasingly tactile, engaging mixed-media pieces, Nidhi loses and finds her way with a combination of grace, resilience, and insistence that is uniquely her own. In gestures I read as assertions of landmarks or talismans against ambiguity, Nidhi cuts part of the paper away, she sews into it’s surface, she punches grommets into it. These materially hold her place and cannot be shifted. The work may resist these assertions: additional surface area may be added on; fabric may be invoked to cover some portion of a surface already littered with holes. Nonetheless, for Nidhi, to begin is to mark her place in the space of her paper. A skilled dancer, she is in position on familiar ground as the music begins.

Even before she arrived at the WhyNot Place residency, Nidhi was clear that she would devote her time here to a consideration of Delhi state as it had transformed for her, and that the project would involve mapping. The work itself embodied a kind of inevitability of trajectory: like the city, her two-

Untitled 1
Mixed Media (canvas, cloth,
paper, cow dung, silver foil,
thread, stitching and buttons)
68" x 71.5"
2010





dimensional mixed media pieces had for some time been voraciously annexing the spaces around their borders, growing more layered, less object oriented and more spatially immersive.

To make the first mark on the wall, however inevitable, still represents a breathless leap into a void. Once the carefully crafted and unforgivingly immutable terrain of fresco painters, today wall-based artworks- particularly in gallery or museum settings- are understood as ephemeral. Even as the mark is made, it carries the promise of its eventual dissolution in a way a work on paper does not. Nidhi reflects:

By creating a map that is eventually going to be rubbed away, painted over or eventually destroyed, I am exploring... spatial and temporal relationships that are redolent of existence itself.

In the instance of Nidhi's Mind Map, I propose this engagement of site as less a kind of existentialist exercise in futility than as her decisive prioritization of process over product. Her destination, so to speak, had changed: Nidhi no longer puts marks on surfaces to make something, now, she is putting them down to find something out. In the seminal text "*Seeing is Forgetting the Name of the thing One Sees*", Robert Irwin reflects on his own transition from object to space:

It had been a long journey, starting from my own more or less naive approach as a painter to now be arriving at a point where, to some degree, I had dismantled the whole thing: image, line, frame, focus, transportability. I'd dismantled the art endeavor, but in the process I'd dismantled myself. My questions had now become way in excess of any answers that I had...

It would be tempting to formulate a crisp and comprehensible connection between need and process in Nidhi's Mind Map: if she is prone to getting lost, after all, what more sensible project to undertake than a precise, wall-scaled recreation of Delhi state? But as it evolved, Nidhi's piece began to pose a counterpoint question: how can the creation of a map experientially explore "lostness"? The current transformation of Delhi is only its most recent; Nidhi was looking further back in time for her own, personal histories in these spaces, and still further back than that. She writes:

Untitled 2
Acrylic, silver foil, enamel, graphite and stitching on paper
83.5 X 59 inches
2010

Map
enamel, silver foil and stitching on paper
29.7 X 42 cm

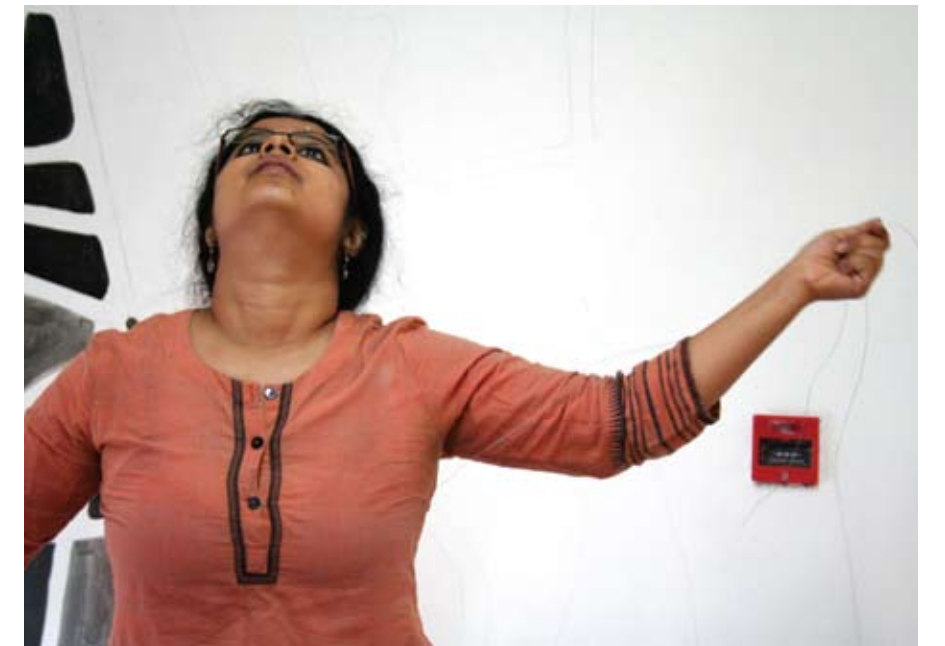


After doing intensive research into the history and ecology of the city I consulted various maps drawn from the year 1857 until now. I also reflected on my experiences in the city, going back to childhood visits, shopping trips and school transits. I realized how the city had grown and expanded through a network of roads, bridges and flyovers into the National Capital Territory of Delhi.

While Nidhi's initial thought was to project and trace multiple phases of the city, one on top of the other, onto the wall, residency co-mentor Sumakshi Singh encouraged her to consider a side-by-side progression- one that would enable a comparison of Lutyen's Delhi against the city's post-colonial iterations and, finally, to the rapidly shifting contemporary city. Already somewhat daunted by the scope of what she'd decided to take on, Khurana decided simply to begin. On the wall precisely opposite the top of the long, curved stairwell, a delicate contour line took shape.

In a definitive group discussion including all of the resident artists, the co-mentor, and myself, we stood, knelt, and sat in the lofted space where Nidhi had been working. Her sewn, cut, or grommated drawings- a simultaneous project she would return to again and again when the wall intervention seemed to shut her out- lay in stacks on the floor around us. We considered her precise outlines, and the small flakes of silver leaf that were emerging on the wall adjacent. We had come to talk about the wall, but were unable to resist engaging the more intimate, colorful and personable investigations the stacks on the floor comprised. There was unanimity to the sentiment: "we miss your drawings". The outlines from the projector felt too mechanical to us, and the un-selfconscious ease of material play in the drawings, too engaging to forfeit for the sake of imagery that reflected only her research, and not her self. We wanted the cut-away layers, colored threads, notational scribbles, and tiny surprises from her drawing vocabulary to find their way into her installation.

It was an essential vote of confidence. While Nidhi did not altogether abandon her use of the projected image, it became secondary to what was now a "Mind Map" in the truest possible sense. Drawing and painting by hand, Nidhi located her landmarks along the wall not according to their relative positions in physical space, but rather according to how familiar they were to her. Things grew disproportionately large, as well as impossibly



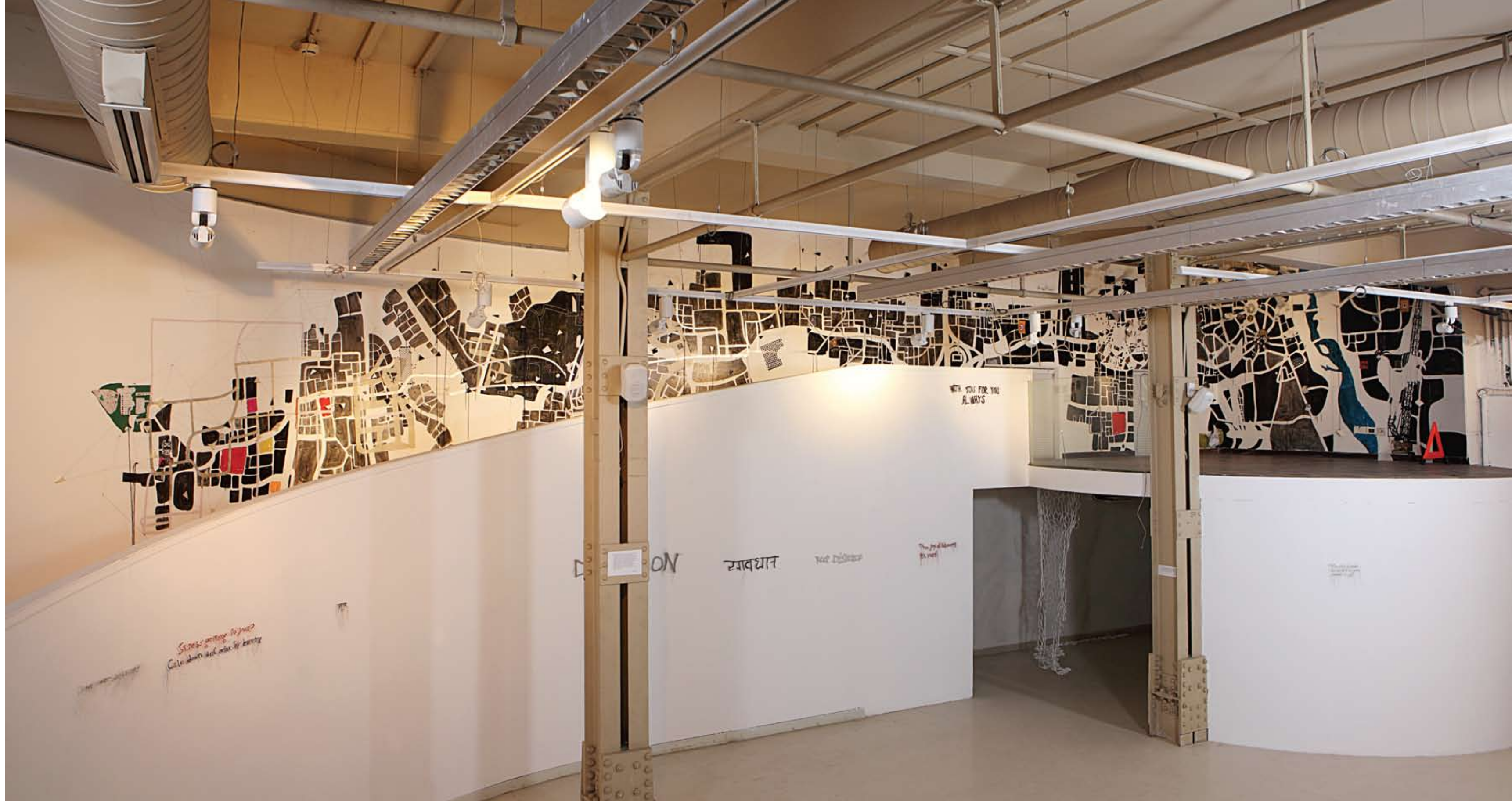
small. No longer an historic guide to the city, the work transformed into an experiential exploration of both discovery and disorientation: the city as remembered, as present, as impossible and tenuous.

It has been three years since Hira and Nidhi moved to New Delhi. Though she has made a sort of peace with the city, Nidhi continues to get lost. She writes:

...the city has begun to grow on me. I have lived in smaller towns and cities all my life and always hated the metropolis. Initially there was a mixture of dread, fear, tension and certain reluctance towards Delhi. My new work is an effort at re-conciliation with a city I have come to terms with and even love; I had to pay homage.

Whoever you are, go out into the evening, leaving your room, of which you know every bit; your house is the last before the infinite, whoever you are.

Rainier Maria Rilke





An expatriate who lived most of her life in Paris, the American artist Mary Cassatt often reiterated her belief that museums, rather than art academies, were the true sites of artistic learning, even going so far as to declare academies irrelevant if they were in proximity to a good museum: one could learn all one needed to know, she believed, by spending time making copies of the work on view. As an educator at The School of the Art Institute of Chicago, I'm not prepared to dismiss the enterprise as categorically futile, but I will admit an undeniable educational advantage to being associated with, and steps away from, the fifth-largest survey museum in the world. With students and for myself both, I have occupied the unique space copying alone enables, and would qualify the experience as a singular inhabitation of another artist's process.

Somewhere between musical interpretation and investigative reporting, copying is a kind of intimacy: in re-tracing the steps of the artist before you, you see the world as he or she regarded it. For the duration of your copyist activity, you adopt those attitudes and expressions for yourself, and the artwork in question becomes uniquely reanimated. Your activity moves the work from passive document to active amalgam of discrete decisions and, in replicating those decisions, you never think about your own work in the same way again.

In the ambitious undertaking comprised by Jitesh Malik's work during the WhyNotPlace residency, the artist opened himself to a similarly immersive experience of Connaught Place. The results are equal parts Lutyens, accident and traffic of all types, hovering with extraordinary balance between contemporaneity and history and signalling each in a distinct, unequal relationship that resonates closely with what it feels like to be in the heart of colonial New Delhi at the height of the city's most recent transformative fury. Not unlike reading a book whilst sitting in solitude at a café, the sheer physicality, speed, and focus demanded by Jitesh's on-site process precluded certain kinds of direct engagement with passersby while permitting an immediate observational vantage point. As he made his layered plaster casts of the spaces around the colonnaded walkways of Lutyen's deliberately planned commercial hub, between installing the wooden structure, mixing, then pouring his variegated plasters and inserting his colourful, delicately subversive interventions inside, the artist must have thought about the architect. Trained

Jitesh Malik

Whitewashed
plaster, yarn and embedded
detritus
2010



as an architect, himself, Malik must have had the copyist's inner conversation as he worked, parsing his subject for its secret decisions, considering what he would have kept, and where he would have chosen a different path. I find myself wondering to what extent Jitesh Malik experienced more or less what he thought he would when he decided to take on his project; whether he was surprised (the way the results feel surprising), or whether he was, himself, transformed.

In all fairness, there's probably no approximating Jitesh Malik's experiential reality while generating this work. I am including images of the artist at work in Connaught Place with his carpenters and I could include dozens more, but the images fall short, as the words must do. It is germane to attempt, however, so I will describe the scene as best I can.

The first thing to understand is that it was hot. Temperatures in New Delhi for the more-or-less three-week-period in July 2010 during which Jitesh was working swung between an asphyxiating 36 degrees Celsius (97 degrees Fahrenheit) and a truly intolerable 42 (108)- admittedly, better than June, and vastly better than this past May. The difference for July, however, was the humidity. Movement equalled water. Perspiration? Or did the impossibly wet air condense on your skin as you walked, like dancing in a fog? Or, both things? Regardless, unless you were sitting perfectly still outside, you got heavier; you grew leaden with the burden of the watery air. And: no one was sitting still. That is also salient.

Walking...no: attempting to walk this summer in Connaught Place (and for how many months or years previous? I wonder) was an acrobatic endeavour requiring focus, balance, concentration, and skill. Holes surreptitiously appeared in the pavements where there had been none the previous day, and the makeshift boards you'd used to navigate these new chasms would disappear with equally alarming frequency. You were wise to pay close attention to the movement of your body and the ground beneath your feet, but there was a lot else you might miss if that was all you paid attention to, for there were other people, too. Given a single, makeshift route from one point to another, these fellow pedestrians were as likely to avail themselves of it as

you yourself were, so you had to take care not to collide with them, nor to step on the dog also reclining extravagantly across the space. And: the sounds. And the smells. And.

The experience of Connaught Place was a cognitive totality and an impossibility, given the dimension of any individual's attention. I had to develop more attentions, or perhaps more accurately, layers of awareness, to navigate the space. In belonging to the country, if not the city, Jitesh enjoyed a distinct cognitive advantage over my own experience of sensory assault. Nonetheless, he wrote:

I am familiar with the city, and even though expected, the heat, the dust, and the aggression of the traffic and construction is daunting... I had to be on the streets for long periods of time and while there, the urine stench became quite unbearable... respite came occasionally from the rosewater-glycerin that I was using as a mould release!



If there is assault, then there is also unexpected sweetness. Your fellow pedestrians may require the same path for passage as you yourself are using, but there is relatively little hostility and, on the other hand, much cooperation amongst the informal fraternity of users of the public space. What this is, how to intimate its larger implications meaningfully, is elusive, but I suspect it is simply cosmopolitan and millennial, a tolerance built from centuries of continuous construction and close co-habitation. In Jitesh Malik's project, I see these grace notes in his colourful strings: a brightness that is integral to the restrictive spaces of Connaught Place, as endemic to the place as the stone tiles that comprise the walkways.

Like Rachel Whiteread's projects in London before him, Malik's work gives concrete volume to the decidedly occupied, amply used, categorically non-vacant spaces of air surrounding the architecture of Connaught Place. Noting that he has chosen to include a diverse selection of such in-between spaces at

a charismatically personable scale (as opposed, for instance, to a monumental, continuous volume of vertical space between two of Lutyen's columns - also an in-between space, but one that, if given substance, would articulate very different ideas), I read the artist's choices as both critical of Connaught Place and celebratory of the human resilience enacted daily within the regimented rhythms it imposes. I find this take confirmed in Malik's initial project proposal, where he writes:

I am interested in the space in-between; metaphorical as well as architectural, the constant dialogue and negotiations [between] the inside and the outside. Occasionally, one finds a liminal space in the layered city such as Delhi, where our physiological/psychological state finds a resonance with the physical architectural space...

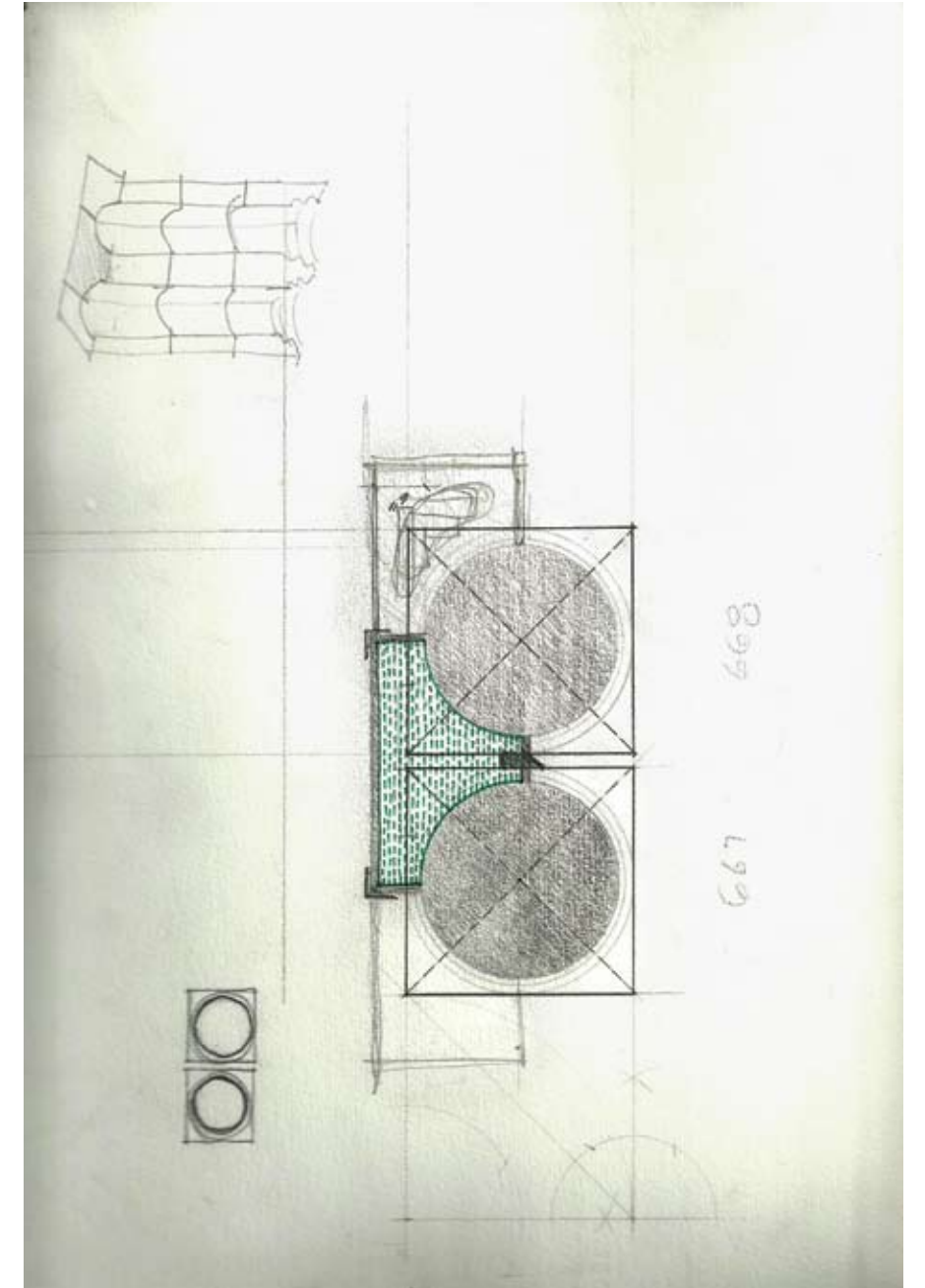
As he built moulds around, and poured casts of, the spaces between





architectural elements, Malik could have extended these further out into the surrounding spaces. Like the continuous vertical volume conjectured above, there are solid logistical reasons not to have done: he might have had to obstruct some of the pedestrian traffic to do so, and in so doing the artist could well have drawn unwanted official attention to his decidedly unofficial activities. Also, the expanded moulds could have generated impossibly heavy objects, sending his effort over the line between ambition and futility in a distinctly unsatisfying way. If I am positing these bigger casts, it is to juxtapose their theoretical volumes against the much slimmer, more fragile slivers the artist did choose. The bigger casts would have accommodated us as viewer-pedestrians; they might have offered a place to sit, and perhaps a measure of shade for the extravagantly-reclined canine mentioned earlier. Instead, even as they intimate our resilient grace, Jitesh Malik's casts remain unforgivingly unaccommodating, voicing Connaught Place as a stern and authoritarian counterpoint to the restless multifariousness of its users. Although they assert a compelling variety of liminal spaces, the inventory Malik's project demonstrates unequivocally, through its scale, that none of these spaces was meant to house actual activity, and that the activity that takes place in them, nonetheless, does so in spite of the architecture, not because of it. The clarity and sinuousness of these forms tell us they do indeed follow a plan, but that plan was never meant to serve *our* needs.

From my vantage point in a lofted space carved from the gallery's expanse, I can count eight separate casts Jitesh Malik has made. They rest atop plywood boards in an ad-hoc configuration against the gallery's entrance wall as the space is readied for the residency's open studio event. Already compelling as objects, how the artist finally decides to install them will speak volumes about how we think of and relate to them as viewers. As of this writing, Malik is still weighing the options.





“On the one hand, hybridity can imply a space between two zones of purity in a manner that follows biological usage... distinguish[ing] two discrete species and the hybrid pseudo-species that results from their combination. ... On the other hand, hybridity can be understood as the ongoing condition of all human cultures, which contain no zones of purity because they undergo continuous processes of transculturation (two-way borrowing and lending between cultures). Instead of hybridity versus purity, it is hybridity all the way down.”

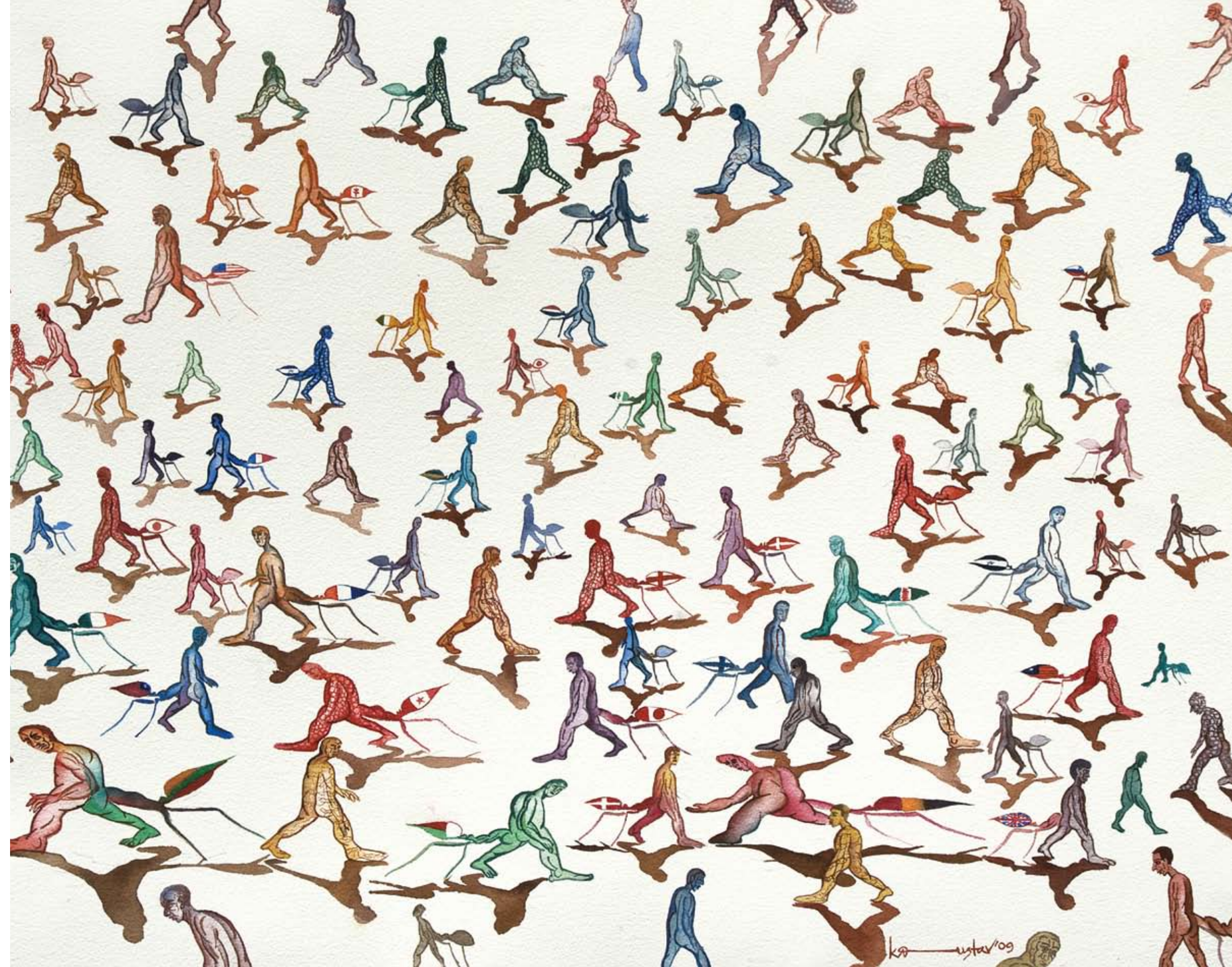
-Renato Resaldo

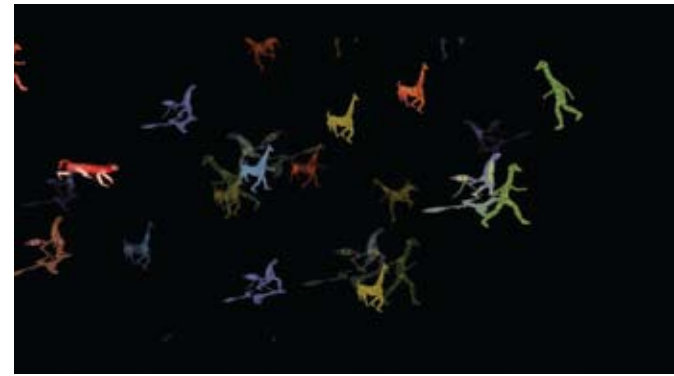
The problem of content is really a problem of framing; once importance is assigned to one thing, what is left out develops a weight and presence of its own through its absence. Through both his obsessive watercolours and his video/installation work, I think about Koustav Nag as constantly contending with this issue; in each of his responses, I find increasingly inclusive solutions. It is as a logical consequence of his pursuit of Very Big Questions that Nag finds himself having to widen his frame, then widen it some more: What is the nature of humanity? At what point can we make a distinction between a population of individuals and a civilization? Where do we draw the line between humankind and the technology it produces? What does it mean to designate something as ‘natural’?

Koustav is at his most playful in his biological imaginary, inventing his own patterns for ‘cell structures’ or ‘muscle tissues’. The pieces are so charismatic and absorbing that it is only upon further consideration that one realizes there is something subversive about the humor- that this is serious play. Titled *Refer to Discipline in Our World*, one of the artist’s watercolors is populated by half-human, half-ants; closer inspection reveals flags of various nations on the ants’ rearmost segments, the “gasters”- interestingly, also the portion that holds the poison for the insects’ sting. Another, *Interaction Life*, features similar human-ant hybrids closely approximating, in this configuration, their four-legged counterparts; everyone’s skin bears vivid, repetitive patterns, and the only figures privileged with bipedal movement are giraffe-like, a decision suggestive of a reconfigured future in which humanity becomes more animal-like, and animals, in turn, more civilized.

Koustav Nag

Refer to Discipline in our World
Water Colour on Arches paper
24”X30”
2009





It is as though Koustav Nag had more possible variations in mind than he had space for on the page. The watercolour figures, each with their individually painted shadows, are already tiny and meticulous in their variety; the paper would have to become larger, or the figures even smaller, to accommodate Nag's imaginary. Where to stop? What, in other words, to leave out? The artist's move to video seems like a natural response to that question, a kind of reversal of the selection process. If Koustav had been extracting from the world's variety those elements he found essential to explore his questions, he was now putting the full spectrum back in place, unedited, in all of its complexity.

There was an important intermediate step- two, really- between the artist's manual process and his subsequent move to digital ones. I wouldn't have been able to tell unless I had read it amongst his listed materials- it's not obvious, from the work- but, at some point, Koustav Nag had begun painting on archival digital inkjet prints, his watercolour blending seamlessly with digitized imagery already on the paper. With assorted hybrid forms already digitized, generating a flash animation (the second intermediate step) must have followed naturally (in the most self-conscious possible sense of the word 'natural'). The computer expedited Koustav Nag's exploration of his forms. Angular and jerky, far from a fluid, technically perfect work, the flash animation the artist showed us of his hybrid forms gifted these with

ambulation. Loping or hopping in a diagonal movement across the screen, we were offered a vision of a future of disparate gaits, a polyphony of solutions to the millennial problem of movement.

Responding to "The Transforming State" theme in his project proposal for the WhyNot Place residency, Nag conflated biological and social definitions of hybridity to posit a startling new post-colonial "species" for Indian society. Inasmuch as it is a conceptual point of departure, this idea also felt like an orientation point Koustav Nag formulated to locate himself. Like his post-colonial hybrid contemporaries, the artist is multilingual: his first language is Bengali, Hindi is second, and English is third. I include an unedited quote from this initial project proposal because, as I hope is already evident, I find the artist's ideas striking regardless of the fluency with which they are expressed:

Presently our social life style and cultural development are mixing with each other. When our colonial period in India started, it was about eclectically development on social life. Such mixed cultural development gave birth to a new form of cultural specificity. As per biology two different species is crossed to raise a hybrid one. After globalization our social and cultural life takes the same route towards such hybrid origins directly or indirectly. Every body depends on electronic medium.

If the point of departure was clear for Koustav, the destination was less so, and residency co-mentor Sumakshi Singh and I alternated between laughter and frustration as the three of us moved together toward greater specificity for the artist's project. Nag resembled his work: an effervescent personality, the artist could always be seen smiling, laughing, or making jokes even as he tried to give shape to his broad avenues of inquiry. Koustav made us nervous- he was frequently the absentee artist-in-residence, as he would leave the gallery for most of the day to work on a flash animation with a friend more proficient in the program than he. We wondered what he was making, as Koustav had only given us an extremely general description. The phrase "and something something" became a motif: emblematic of the artist's conversational elisions, it was Koustav's fallback where his attempt toward a clearer description in Hindi or English fell short.

Twelve days and, already, several "and something something"s into the residency, we made an appointment with the artist in which he was to physically set up his project- even if the projected component was incomplete, the projection surface less than ideal, and the space, not darkened as he would have liked. The residency was already well under way and we were still nervous, but we agreed to trust Koustav. If language was not getting us any closer to a sense of the artist's project, we reasoned, surely images, however incomplete, would. Some four days later on, our trust was rewarded when the artist juxtaposed historic and contemporary images of Connaught Place in a projection onto a book he'd made. The images possessed a striking delicacy,

some of their interactive features had already been activated, and there was an undeniable poetry to the scene- one that had little to do with history, research, or language and everything to do with the image of the artist holding his book aloft, trying to capture the evasive image of the city.

Koustav Nag has yet to decide upon the titles of what are now two separate, but related projects. The new project uses a live feed- that widest-frame, full-spectrum, unedited version of experience intimated earlier- as part of an installation in a closed off, rounded space in the gallery. Three groups of round, white rubber forms- bracelets acquired at a nearby bazaar- form two organic columns in the space as well as a central 'screen' element. Here, Koustav is reasserting his biological imaginary. His bracelet "cells" bend the light in evocative ways, and the live video feed seen through them is interrupted by the rounded structural shadows they create.

As both projection surface and object, the book described earlier has since undergone a fairly comprehensive transformation. The first book featured Nag's writing, some drawing by him, and a few threads here and there, but these felt like fairly illustrative, non-committal efforts- the 'appearance' of his ideas, rather than their manifestation as an actual presence. The new solution adds layers of complexity as well as visual interest, as Koustav has intervened into a ready-made tourist guidebook by incising layers into its

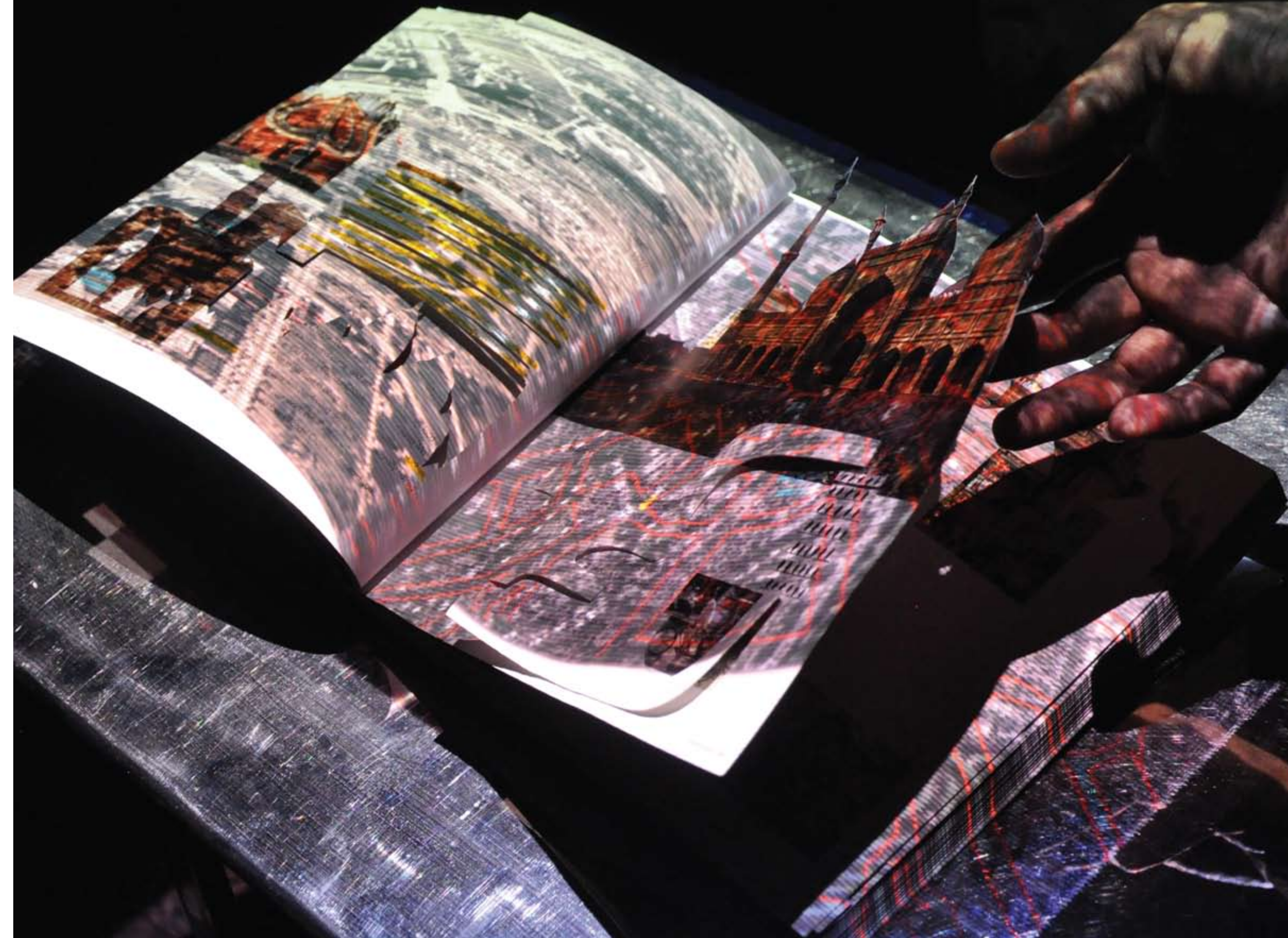
following pages:
Multiplicity of Social Life II
Rubber band, video projection, stapler pins
dimensions variable
2010



pages. Compelling possibilities are formed by this choice: as the projected juxtaposition of historic and present-day Connaught Place is manipulated by the viewer using a mouse placed next to the book, an image of a mughal astronomical observatory, the Jantar Mantar, pops up over the historic image. Turning the pages of the guidebook, a second Jantar Mantar appears in print. Moving over present-day Connaught Place to Barakhamba road, a text pop-up tells us about the 2008 bomb blasts that claimed 30 lives and injured over 100 people. In its turn, the guide-book page that happens to be open at the time reads “When Past is Present”.

In his consideration of hybridity the artist has widened his frame to include all of Connaught Place, evoking important questions about memory, place, history, public presentation, and present-day reality as he does. There are 6 interactive points in total in the projected maps: Palika Bazaar, the Jantar Mantar, and the Regal Cinema posit historic New Delhi as a place of leisure, shopping, and culture. In present-day New Delhi, tension and commerce characterize the city differently, while culture remains: included are the “Life Insurance Company”, “Barakhamba Road”, and, of course, “The Religare

Arts.i Gallery”. In this piece, Koustav Nag has simultaneously asserted and hidden his vision, making his viewers fight the visual noise of the tourist guidebook to access the information he offers, and offering an alternative means of information conveyance through the book itself; viewers must choose which voice to listen to, or alternate their attention between the two. In engaging Koustav’s hybrid city, we become, in a sense, hybrid ourselves.



Multiplicity of Social Life 1
Book on Video Projection
9”X19”
2010



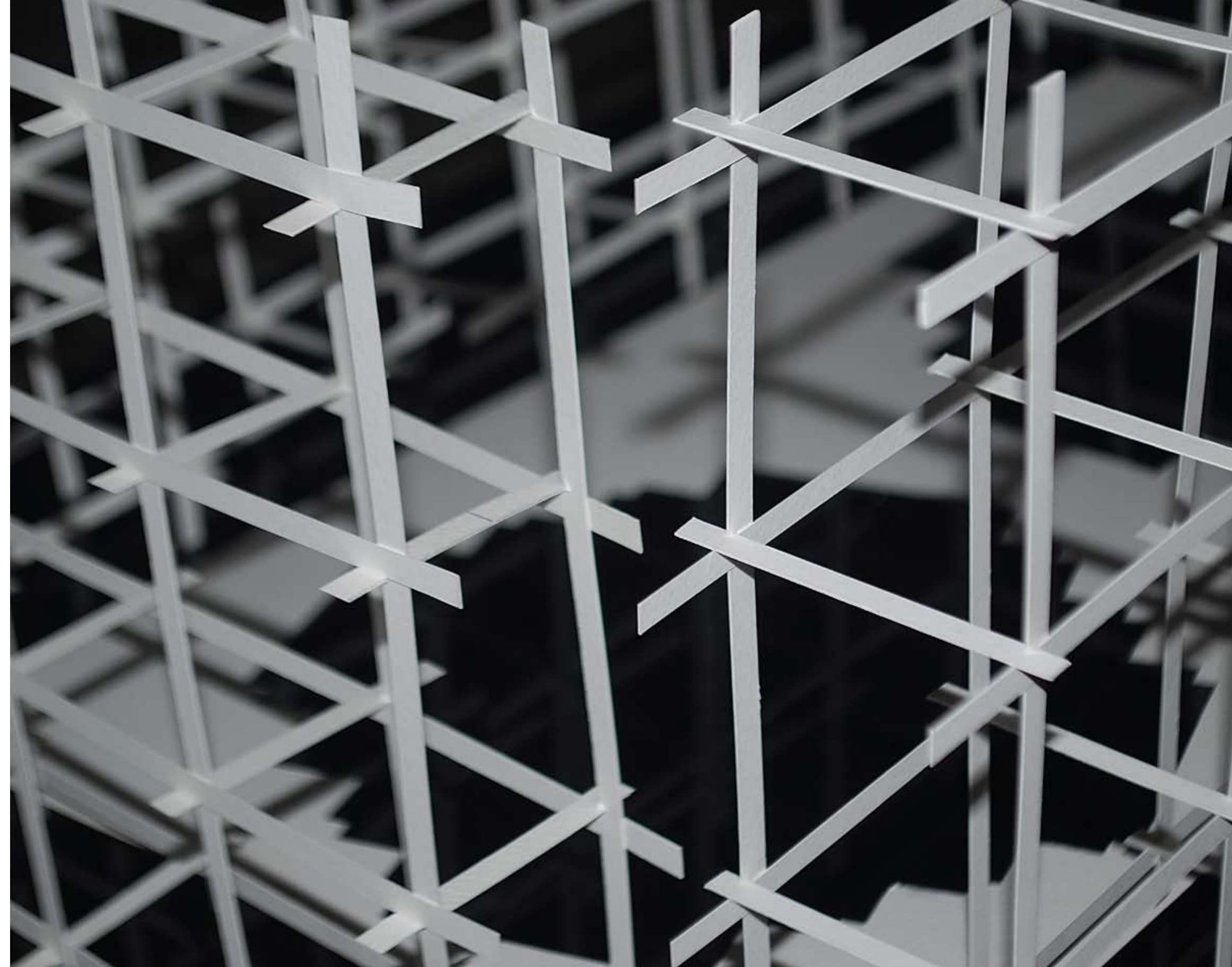
Rajesh Kr Prasad

The rapid transformation of the city has led to a dissonant, anachronistic amalgam of architectural histories and styles that is evoked by Rajesh Kumar Prasad's "A Series of Actions to Achieve an End". In Rajesh's architectural installation, history is present, yet increasingly fragile, in the form of meticulously constructed paper sculptures. These appropriate and conflate elements from Delhi's historic monuments generating structures and architectural details are at once familiar and elusive. The material vulnerability of these carefully crafted forms is amplified by their juxtaposition with modernity in the form of a clear acrylic/ Plexiglas column that replicates exactly the contemporary steel columns of the surrounding arts.i space. Stretching up to meet the centre-point of a concrete beam by the gallery entrance, the column feigns support and then immediately contradicts this semblance, as viewers walk past to discover it split wide open and structurally unsound. Its material transparency seems to poke fun at the grandiose modern columns in the gallery (proudly propping up the ceiling/ institution), while also generating a beautiful opportunity for viewers to experience mundane connectors like nuts and bolts appearing to magically float in air, in a gravity-defying gesture. These modern elements cast their sharp literal and metaphoric shadows on the historic, visually obliterating areas of fragile detail.

The column is clean and angular in its competitive verticality. It is reflective and acknowledges our presence within its structure, throwing our regard back on us. The delicate, white paper structures invite viewers to negotiate the spaces between them, but with care and precision. As one takes in the details, one encounters the familiar visual appendage of the uneven three-dimensional grid, wrapping parasite-like around its host site. It has been years since Gurgaon and New Delhi's buildings could be observed minus the inevitable scaffolding, symptomatic of its rapid growth, demolition and now much overdue attempt at historic renovation. The motives behind the latter have raised eyebrows as Delhi's blatantly obvious ploy of sudden interest in its cultural heritage appeared right before the Commonwealth Games.

The Delhi of today encompasses seven older cities of Delhi. Dynasty after dynasty invaded Delhi and with them their architectural styles merged, morphed, mutated and manifested into unique expressions. Today, vast sums of money are pumped into shiny new malls and skyscrapers of glass and steel that now grow alongside the poorly preserved relics of Delhi's past: step wells,

*A Series of Actions
to Achieve an End (detail)*
300gsm paper, cut and fitted to
resemble scaffolding
2010



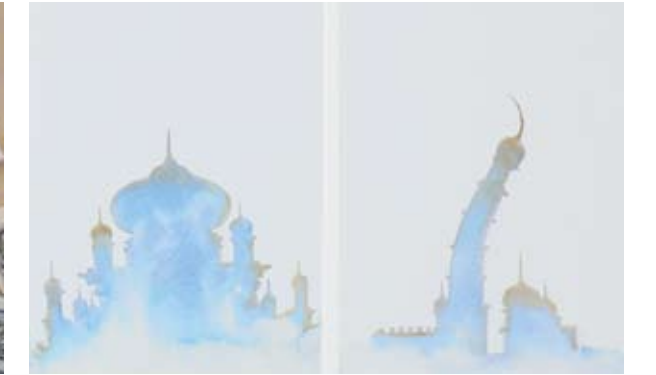


mosques and mausoleums from the eras of the Lodhis, the Tughlaqs, the Mughals and the Slave Dynasty. In this vast container of histories, one can see these aged monuments in their disappointing state of dilapidation, filled with the trash of modernity and witness their carefully cast and carved patterns dissolve into a chaos of etched lovers' names. Symbols of strength and power in their time, today they seem overshadowed, small and fragile, pushed into tiny patches of reserved land being eaten on all sides by multi-storied condominiums and office spaces.

"How do the ancient and modern, past and present coexist?" the artist asks. "And, what can their coexistence tell us about ourselves?" A voice in the present, "A Series of Actions to Achieve an End" depicts an uneven and uneasy future, begging the question: "Are preservation and progress mutually exclusive?"

When Rajesh came in he said that he wanted to paint some watercolours that highlighted the importance of preserving old monuments and buildings. He wanted to portray these buildings as being protected from the ignorance and indifference of the people who did not care about Delhi's heritage. His personally developed symbol for this idea was a squiggly, snake-like tower which then appeared in these small paintings. Occasionally a surrealist image of an elephant with its trunk contorted into a u-shaped minaret would appear. Both on a one-on-one basis, as well as in group critique, we had several discussions to pry out the significance of this form from Rajesh. "Why this wobbly-looking tower? I don't quite get it." I admitted. Finally after much prodding, Rajesh confided, "To me it's about flexibility. In Japan buildings are designed with flexible foundations – it is what helps them survive earthquakes..." After a few conversations I finally understood that to Rajesh flexibility equated survival, and so by imbuing the minarets with this quality he was somehow protecting them. The idea was sweet but its execution felt very contrived. It was a far stretch for me.

So, for the initial stages of the project, we concentrated on Rajesh's concepts and concerns, rather than the imagined formal manifestation he visualized for his ideas (as watercolours). Paola and I encouraged him to start researching specifics to fortify his project with facts on processes and politics of preservation, actual stories/ locations of these monuments and peoples'



responses to them. Group critiques with the other artists began expanding his notions on the forms that the project might take. Rajesh willingly began to conduct various experiments. He started laying out pieces of paper on the ground to mark the trajectories of people's movement in space (which undoubtedly helped him consider viewers' negotiation of spaces in the final iteration of the installed sculptures in "A Series of Actions to Achieve an End".) He went to the Qutub Minar complex and took direct impressions of the textures of the ancient columns there by rubbing graphite on paper.

Rajesh Kumar Prasad is a sculptor by training and has worked on several architectural models. He had brought with him a small maquette made of thick white paper, based on a small Gazebo-like structure from Maharaja Sayajirao's palace right across his home in Baroda. He started placing this tiny form within various contemporary architectural elements in the gallery and photographing them from various angles with the help of Rajesh Black – our photographer in residence. It finally felt like Rajesh Prasad was rigorously researching the possibilities of his project.

The photographs were beautiful! They were elegant images that seemed to collapse layers of time and generate considerable tension using the formal tropes of scale and precariousness as the constructed monument would appear perched on the edge of a cliff-like projection (in reality the extruded edge of a pillar). In some images where the architectural details of the background got more abstract, it became almost impossible to gauge the size of this intervention, further opening up the narrative.





I suggested that Rajesh could start basing these models on specific historic architecture in Delhi, instead of using the generic forms. "...these models can then take on so many roles! They could become a sculptural installation – they are so beautifully crafted and incredibly satisfying to behold. You could take them out into the world and photograph them juxtaposed with contemporary architecture and / or the actual monuments they are based on, creating tangible narratives using the real, the ideal and the represented." I gave him the example of Gabriel Orozco's re-creation of the Manhattan skyline and sea by assembling small discarded pieces of wood and trash near a puddle. He photographed this natural graffiti skyline that he built up in minutes, in front of the actual buildings looming tall in the background, generating a poignant dialogue between the permanent and ephemeral, the real and represented, the desired and the discarded. Ironically, not long after I first saw the photograph, the World Trade Center towers came down, announcing their own ephemerality as clearly as the flimsy, rotting wood planks.

I also showed Rajesh the miniature architectural interventions of Charles Simmonds based on Pueblo architecture constructed brick by tiny brick located in nooks and crannies of gallery spaces in microscopic cities. I put together a slide show of images of Michael Rakowitz's political critique on architecture for the homeless and Mathew Ritchie's installations based on physics, history, mythology, observation and fiction. Also included were images of the "science fiction meets historic" sculptures of Diana-al-Hadid and Andrea Cohen along with Gordon Matta Clark's slices and sections of actual buildings destined for demolition.

On a field trip to the walled city of Delhi, generously led by artist Atul Bhalla, Rajesh's project discovered many architectural secrets hidden from guide books, and hence, from preservation. It was startling to observe how strongly the historic, the religious and the domestic were enmeshed together, with urban dwellers living right over, under and adjoining, five hundred year old mosques, hundred year old churches, maqbaras and Hindu temples.

During another field trip into old Mehrauli, conservator/ writer Sohail Hashmi, explained in detail, how the columns were locked together with dado joints and then kept in place via the sheer weight exerted upon them by some of the oldest rocks in the world – the Delhi quartz from the Aravalli

range. Rajesh began to consider using these architectural locking mechanisms in his paper monuments to contrast with the exposed nuts and bolts of the transparent contemporary column. This field trip also led us into an extensive architectural survey of ornate step wells, the tombs of Chisti saints, (surrounded by contemporary graves of Mohammedans) and the tomb of the treacherous son of Akbar's wet nurse – who was ultimately killed as Akbar threw him off the roof twice, since he didn't die the first time! History came alive as we heard the incredible stories of why they were built, how they were built and how their purpose changed over the years through the various dynasties, and eventually the British Raj. These tombs had transformed into police stations, honeymoon suites and even boat-clubs. These field trips were invaluable to Rajesh's research and informed his projects tremendously.

Rajesh spent day after day meticulously measuring, cutting and piecing together these feats of historic engineering. A few nights before the open studio display, the entire group of artists sat up for hours discussing the possible arrangements of Rajesh's sculptures.

In the final iteration, one feels like one is walking through a quiet place of memories and ruins. These lovingly constructed ghostlike sculptures are as generous up-close in form and pattern as they are structurally from further away. The phenomenology of the piece engages both the body - as it encounters and navigates these sculptures in space - as well as the detailed eye that encourages you to bend and closely inspect the detailing of this master craftsman in his homage to history.





“Mind loves the nonessential” – Osho

Vishwa's project will be ready in five days. She is sitting on the living room floor, bent over a coffee table at a guest-house in Defence Colony with a neat stack of archival white paper ten inches long by three inches wide and a collection of little rubber stamps, each with a tiny raised letter of the alphabet. I am confronted by a giant grid of sentences (four hundred and eighty in total) that are laid out for quick review on the dining table, coffee table and other horizontal surfaces. Carefully hand stamped with red ink, these crisp containers of thoughts, instructions and questions, that have been plaguing Vishwa since her arrival in Delhi three weeks ago, will soon be encapsulated individually in tight, little clear acrylic boxes and put up on a wall together, so as to overwhelm the viewer with the hundred and twenty square feet of area they will occupy.

- THE SNAKES ARE READY
- THE SNAKES ARE READY FIND ANOTHER WAY
- THE SNAKES ARE READY ARE THEY THE SAME
- THE SNAKES ARE READY CAN I DO IT WITH YOU THAT ITSELF IS A QUESTION NOW
- FOLLOW PREVIOUS INSTRUCTIONS ARE THEY THE SAME
- ARE THEY THE SAME THAT ITSELF IS A QUESTION NOW
- FOLLOW PREVIOUS INSTRUCTIONS FIND ANOTHER WAY THE SNAKES ARE READY
- THAT ITSELF IS A QUESTION NOW ARE THEY THE SAME
- THE SNAKES ARE READY

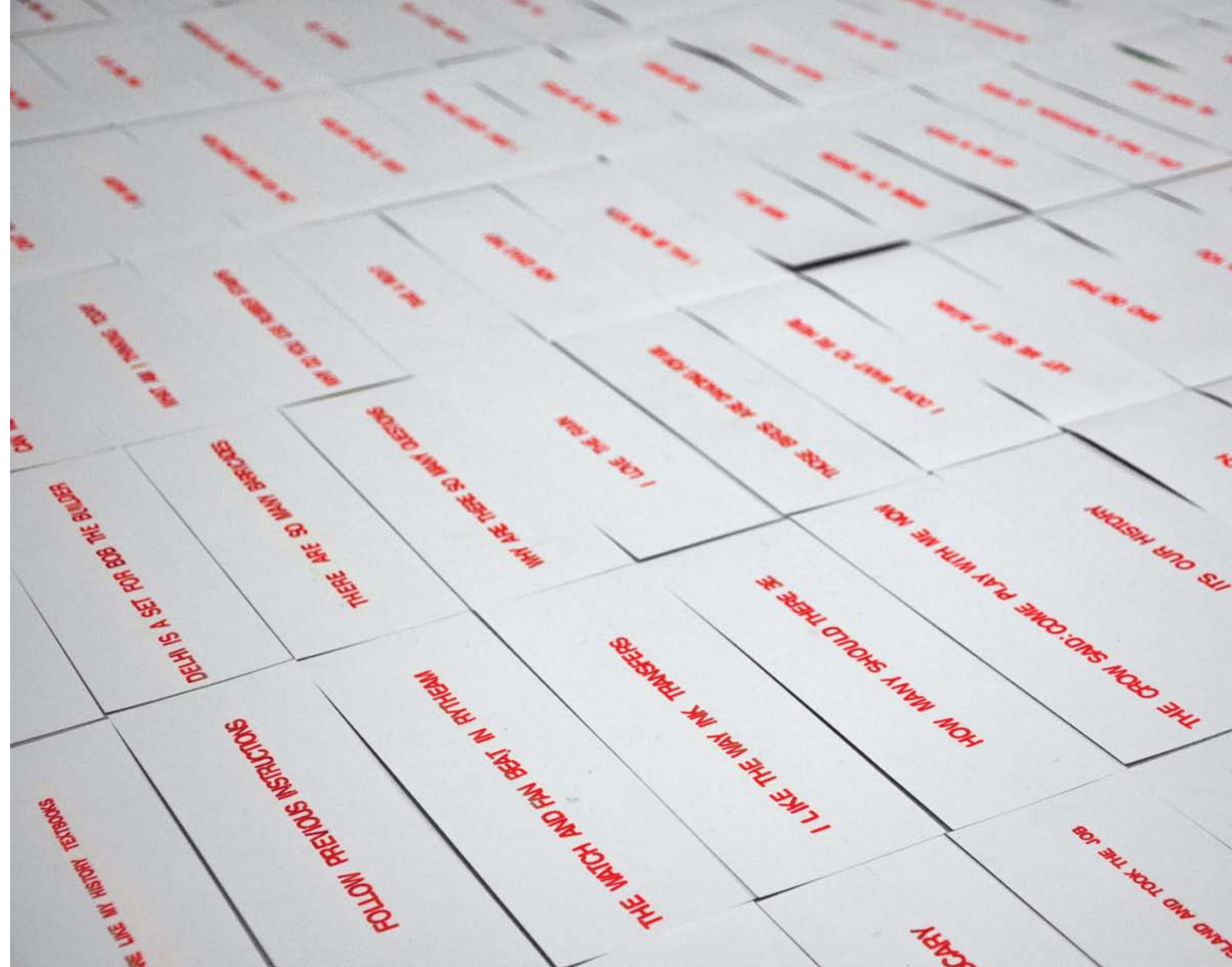
The grid allows the viewer to shift up, down, left and right to play a visual game, constructing/ reconstructing/ de-constructing strange narratives by leaping from one random sentence to another, imitating the mad non-linear process of thoughts that go zig-zagging off to an unknown destination. Occasionally the sequential possibilities created by the busy horizontal skimming and skipping stop themselves and the punch of a singular thought sinks in vertically and slowly into a small pool of silence.

FIND ANOTHER WAY

Perhaps this methodology of equal democratic representation (of all the individual micro and macro assertions, questions, insights, hesitations,

Vishwa Shroff

Titled Untitled - process detail
Rubber-stamps on paper
10" x 3" x 1" x 480
2010





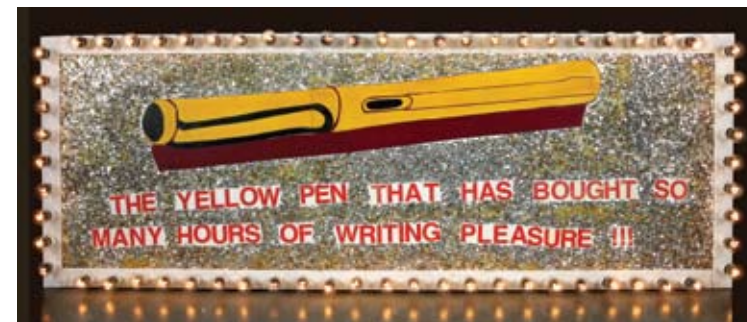
prejudices, tremblings and vacillations from the mundane to the philosophical), will be more telling of the viewer's current frame of mind, than Vishwa's psychological landscape.
COMFORTABLE. REPEETIVE. PLEASE KEEP QUIETE.

Abundant errors in the articulation of her disjointed thoughts are recorded by the red ink.

I turn to see a pile of discarded attempts in the trash, and ask Vishwa about them. She looks up and says in a matter of fact way, "Those ones had spelling mistakes and other errors." Barely able to contain my amusement, I point out, "You do know that so do the ones on the table right?" Vishwa lets out an exasperated, "NO! Where?" I don't want to point them out afraid she'll change them. She assures me that she has rules. "If I catch it while I am stamping it, I run it through a spell-check and do another one, but otherwise I like to leave them there". Her project is a denial of the visual sensory indulgence she usually relishes (of surprises, play with material and embracing the unexpected flaws created by the stamp). It is an overwhelming confrontation with the unrelenting mind, through the simulation of repetitive, machine-like labour both in an attempt to precisely line up the letters and the daunting task of diagnosing the correct spelling. Of course, she sets herself up for failure. Vishwa was diagnosed with dyslexia at age six when she aced the same spelling test that she had completely failed, barely ten minutes ago. Upon being asked "how?" she responded that the first time the words emerged from the teacher's mouth were flying around the room, but the second time she caught them. Her therapist told her that she could have either words or numbers but not both and since then Vishwa has tried to hold down and fix these flying signifiers, through special education, word-based board games and more recently her artistic practice.

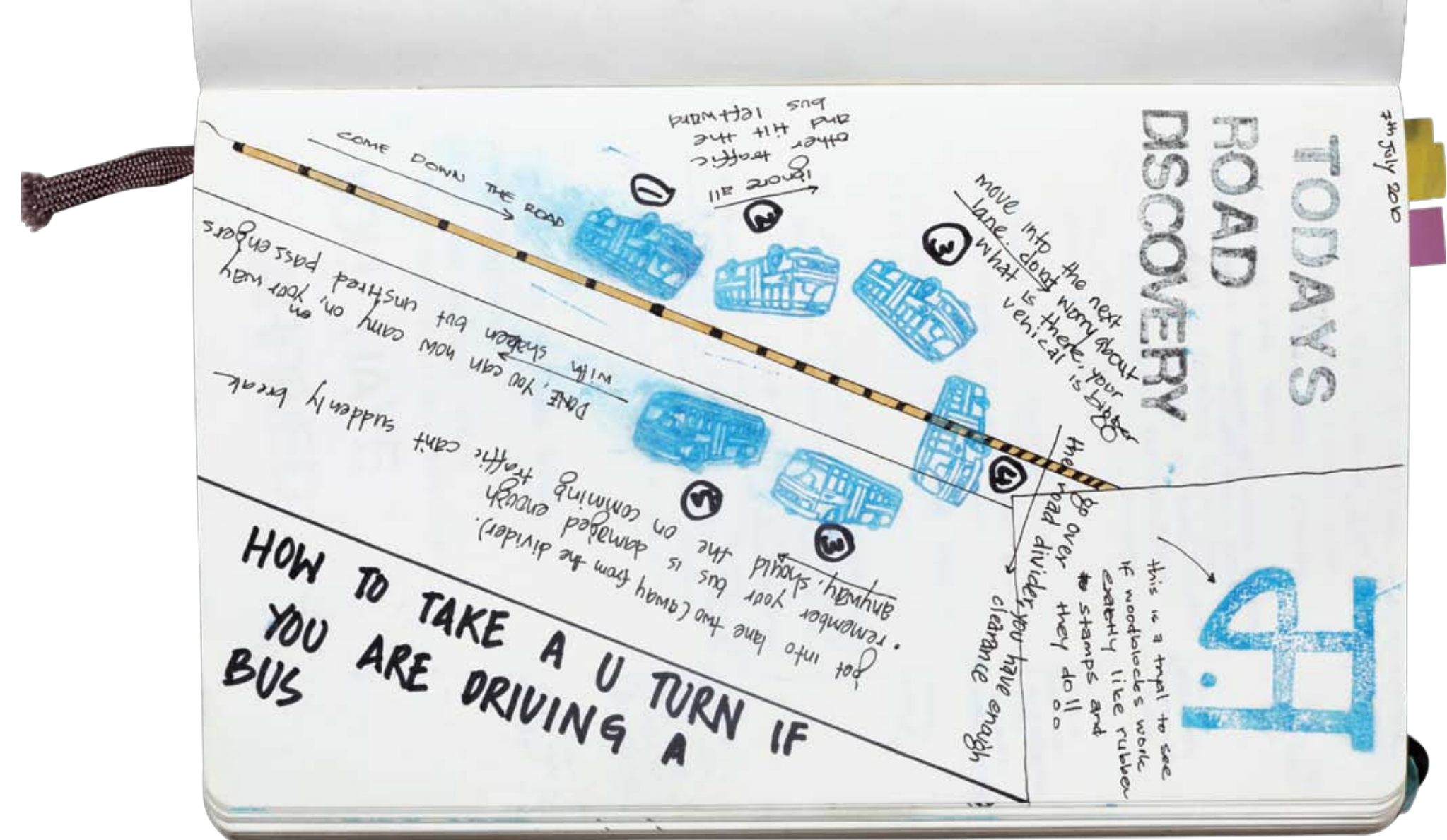
A beautiful example of the latter, "Strange thoughts come and go" in a subtle white on white, box-like triptych, vertically tiered, with punched out paper letters. In the uppermost panel, the tiny letters appear mounted on white pins, arranged alphabetically but repeated with the frequency of their appearance in "Scrabble" multiplied by three. In the second panel these letters float and form pockets of words and sentences that come tumbling down to be

"caught" by the bottom most box in an alphabetic heap. The elusive white words actually disappear as the light hits them, allowing them to be read only through their skewed shadows. Another drawing (later converted to a goofy Broadway billboard with bulbs framing the image) depicts an old fountain pen, innocently accompanied by the text "THE YELLOW PEN THAT HAS BOUGHT SO MANY HOURS OF WRITING PLEASURE!!!" except that the "writing" on this paper, hasn't been written at all but created by rubber



stamps. A book designed by Vishwa is made so as to be read by three people at a time, subverting the isolated nature of the activity. This smart-ass humour, with a playful hide and seek of both form and intention, this finding of optimism, meaning and pleasure in the small things can be seen in most of her work.

"Nothing of consequence on my mind", a neon installation holds an important key to decoding Vishwa's practice and current project. Her family has created a solid legacy left by generations of freedom fighters to industrialists to large charitable organizations in Gujarat, resulting in a household where each action, though impulse is scrutinized and justified largely through the lens of its social relevance. "How relevant or consequential is anything?" asks Vishwa. "Maybe our thoughts are random and inconsequential, but when the thought comes "I want my Sevपुरi", in that tiny moment it is somehow more urgent and consequential to me than



Afghanistan being bombed. Why do I need to justify buying the sevपुरi by saying that the impoverished vendor will make money hence this a socially responsible action? Maybe I just want to sit and watch TV or make a painting without considering its larger meaning. Some actions are ridiculous. Why can't they be justified in themselves?"

Her projects perhaps materialize this notion of "Fried Air". They give permission to the unsubstantiated, the trivial, the peripheral and the mundane in an attempt to convert the mere backdrop to human activity (of traffic, thoughts, tea or trees) into a valid consideration in itself.

Vishwa's sketchbooks overflow with her prolific drawing, writing and stamping activity. Cleverly illustrated instructions based on everyday occurrences in Delhi keep finding their way into her moleskin. Looking at Vishwa's visual depictions of everyday events is a treat. Her acute observations are relentless in their penetrating humour and nothing is spared her acerbic wit: from instructions on "How to Take a U-turn in a Bus" illustrating a bus going over a divider or "How to Cross the Street in Janpath" to digesting the messy intricacies of our group lunch expedition titled "How to Organize a Lunch for 15 in Bengali Market".



THE YELLOW PEN THAT HAS BOUGHT SO MANY HOURS OF WRITING PLEASURE !!!

The Yellow Pen
7ft x 3ft
canvas, sequence, light bulb
screen printing, ink, oil, wood,
chaser circuit
2008

How to Take a U Turn if you
Are Driving a Bus
sketchbook, rubber stamps,
ink on paper
(from sketchbook)
2010

Based on her experiences in Mumbai and Baroda, Vishwa initially proposed making a large, intricate paper garden (like a pop-up book that one could walk around in) as a critique of the low usage of lawns as public spaces in the Metropolis. Upon arriving in Delhi she realized that this was not the case here. Looking for another visual thread to hold on to, her sketchbook started recording marker drawings of many types of advertisement barricades placed around construction sites, revealing information about the work while simultaneously covering it up. The drawings particularly revealed in the small variations in the hand painted signage from board to board of a specific company. Given the massive scale of construction being conducted, these boards are an integral part of our current visual environment. Vishwa responded to them as symbols of inaccessibility that deny the privilege of physical and even visual access into the landscape beyond, like the high walls of Delhi's mansions or the hard to navigate nature of Delhi's bureaucracy. Despite generating an Orwellian discomfort they were ultimately flimsy, could be moved and offered optimistic promises for a better future. For Vishwa "what to accept and what to dispose are perpetually confusing, and it is this sentiment that I hope to share..."

"I NAVIGATE THROUGH HISTORY EVERYDAY". Vishwa's stamps and pens wrote and drew about the pressure of having to navigate the secret unspoken rules of traffic in a new city. She drove on "Kasturba Gandhi Marg" and other streets named after historic personalities; started considering the vague familiarity of these names from school days and decided to re-aquaint herself with these personalities to see what her relationship to them would be. The nature of Vishwa's practice is personal and intimate and she was searching hard for those private links to this new environment. All this was serving as research for a game that she was planning to create in the Religare arts.i gallery, that would involve people having to negotiate the barricades of history, (along with small discreet interventions of drawings, juicy nuggets of information and instructions), in a manner echoing Vishwa's trajectory through traffic, on that historically named road. Apart from the challenges presented by Delhi as a chaotic metropolis, she was also approaching a high degree of discomfort in her personal interactions here; not getting the quiet mental space she was used to; assuaged with questions, thoughts and well meaning advice at the residency, that she had no time to process or resolve.

HOW TO MANAGE LUNCH FOR 15 AT BENGALI MARKET

- ① walk in a single file
- ② 1st person must find atleast two empty seats in a corner
- ③ two of you run to corner and occupy the two seats, let the rest follow
- ④ start squeezing into seats as they become available
- ⑤ Once you have more than 30% occupancy on 4 different table, move the furniture around so that you may have one long table (note: you can start to slot the tables together one at a time as a slower conquest)
- ⑥ Let one person order for all
- ⑦ the person must order everything on the menu in triples
- ⑧ When the food arrives, start a plate dance
- ⑨ To do so take a bite of what is in front of you and pass it along with your other hand receive the plate that someone is passing to you
- ⑩ Repeat step 7 to 9 until all the members of your party become drowsy

others

5th July.

DRIVING AND WALKING IN DELHI IS LIKE LIVING IN THE GAME OF PONGE. I AM NOT JOKING AT ALL WHEN I SAY THIS. AS I DRIVE I CHANGE LANES EVERY FEW SECONDS JUST TO KEEP UP WITH THE TRAFFIC AROUND ME SO THAT MY DRIVING LOOKS SOMETHING LIKE THIS

Titled *Untitled*
 rubber-stamps on paper, acrylic boxes
 10" x 3" x 1" x 480
 2010

One evening a friend voiced the issue of noise pollution in Delhi as research and she exploded: "I don't care. My accommodation is in a quiet spot, I listen to the radio in the car and unless I'm on the balcony, the arts.i space is quiet. My personal level of discomfort is so high, I really don't care about the rest right now." This response was a revelation. A catharsis of her immediate mental landscape, generated by the profusion of half-digested experiences in Delhi, poured out in the form of words. This was her personal point of contact with Delhi, not the forced connection with history books, not the construction barricades and not the gardens. Yet all of this finds a voice in her words.

Ironically, I think Vishwa's final project is ultimately about noise pollution, in her head and her immediate environment. Personal conversations, public events, mispronounced words and even her private thoughts are not safe from exposure.

"But if thought corrupts language, language can also corrupt thought."
 - George Orwell

A sentence suddenly jumps into a self-contained pocket of a real time thought; illustrating itself. "WHATIFITAKEALLTHESPACESAWAY". The action of giving language to a thought, created a new thought. The rest is a wall of thoughts, displaced from context. Considering the multiple possibilities of each sentence, I notice how these 'holders' of meaning can be so incredibly open. They allow my thoughts to reside within Vishwa's, undoubtedly mutating their original significance through manifestation into language, that I then meet half way, to de-code through my experiences. This process exposes the fragility of the personal and contextual givens upon which meaning is constructed. I ask myself: "What are Vishwa's rules for the project? When every insignificant thought is allowed, how does she choose the ones she wants to give significance to?" A search light is turned inward for now and later I will resume my usual day. But this time, I will not be able to resist a smile when the cafeteria waiter comes in at five thirty to announce: "The snacks are ready" pronouncing it as "THE SNAKES ARE READY".



Rajesh Kumar Singh

For something like the eleventh time since sitting down to write about his work, I am scrolling through a selection of about fifty or so of the hundreds of photographs that Rajesh Black has taken during his time at The WhyNot Place residency. Even within this grouping of Very Good photographs, some stand out, resonating with bell-like clarity as they pull my eyes across their technically perfect compositions and challenge me to decipher their spell. To say that these are photographs I wish I had taken is an oversimplification.

I have little patience for writing about photography that expends most of its breath on hopelessly subjective, aching lyrical eulogy. In my research for this essay I found myself lending such texts at best a cursory scan, regarding them as ornaments to the photographs they accompanied: kind of pretty, but not anything that would ultimately augment my experience of the images. Here is one thing to say about the way Rajesh Black's Very Good photographs function- they are complete unto themselves. Never more than a few beats away from my analytical doubt, I parse his images for the politics of their medium, I cross examine them for overt derivation, I litmus test them for indulgence in melodrama. And yet: I have to reach around the photographs to get there. Trying to say something more about them, I find myself tempted by the same strategies I'd so readily dismissed.

It is perhaps unsurprising that the words of a photographer, rather than a writer, would best illuminate the impasse. Raghu Rai, an éminence grise in the world of photography in general and Indian photography in particular, articulated what I suspect was a personal frustration with the increasingly insurmountable body of theoretical inquiry surrounding photographic practice when he remarked:
They say a good photograph is worth a thousand words. But a thousand words can be a lot of noise. How about some silence- a moment in space which is non-negotiable?

It is 2010; Susan Sontag has articulated a polemic and Jeff Wall has circumscribed a space and it has, to summarize, been a very long time since a photograph could simply be a photograph. And yet. As divided against myself now as I felt while engaging Rajesh Black's process during his time at the residency, as insistent as I was and remain that technical virtuosity is simply pretty-picture-making- a pleasant irrelevancy- unless aligned with ideas as

Untitled
digital print on archival paper
20" x 30"
2010



crystalline as the photographs themselves, Black's Very Good images glow on my screen and I find myself pulled, literally, back to my senses.

Rajesh Black is new to photography: he had been at it for eight months when he traveled from Varanasi to New Delhi for the residency with his recently acquired Nikon D60; he'd already earned recognition from the National Geographic Channel as part of their 2009 "Moment" awards. Or Rajesh Black is a self-invention, only some of the above is true, and the artist is a considerably more nuanced intermingling of aspiration and origin than anyone gave him credit for, including himself.

"You can call me Rajesh Black", he told us, though his given name is Rajesh Kumar Singh. Neither this artist nor a relative of his, Rajesh Kumar Singh is as it happens an Associated Press photographer of some stature. Who can blame Rajesh Black, or ascribe nuance to a clearly pragmatic gesture of simple self-distinction? Black is not the narrator; he does not stand behind the curtain wielding the threads of marionettes dancing on the stage.

Perhaps Black is the actor, for things become more tangled and complex when I explore his artistic trajectory. Participation in a group exhibition of manual photography in 2008 would appear to belie the artist's neophyte status, though I was unable to find any images from the event. Did he mean that he was new to *digital* photography, when he said he'd only been taking pictures for 8 months? That would align more or less with when the artist had acquired his camera but, surely, he had submitted something for the contest?

Still photography of the kind that happens out in the world- rather than as a staged event or in a studio- is, to my thinking, the most distancing among artistic disciplines. Only apparently a transparent conveyance of information, it is in reality a minute and irreproducible combination of time, place, photographer, subject, complicity, defiance, or indifference. Even its more recent counterparts, film and video, reveal more about their makers and motives, as over time such elements as sound, pacing, dialogue, and camera movement articulate distinct relationships between artist, subject, medium, and viewer. Where in his photographs is Rajesh Black?

The artist came from Varanasi to New Delhi for a mentored residency in Connaught Place, prints in hand of some of the unequivocally stunning images that had secured him an invitation to participate in the first place in spite of an apologetic line in place of an artist's statement: "My English is not very good..." A self-proclaimed tabula rasa, Rajesh Black would entreat co-mentor Sumakshi Singh and myself, "I am new to this. Please guide me. I want you to tell me what you think. Your honest feelings about my work." I want to reassert the possibility of the artist as his own invention in order to explore this statement as both strategy and evasive tactic: in denying the span of his own learning curve with his medium, was Rajesh Black transforming, chameleon-like, into what he thought we wanted, as mentors? Was he setting the stage for a particular kind of interaction? And if he was, was he evading critique, or opening himself up further for it?

Black would make a distinction between methodologies for his work: sometimes he "found" a picture and other times, he "created" it, engaging people he wanted to photograph in lighthearted banter until they relaxed, their countenances opened up, and they became as they had been, or perhaps more animated versions of their original selves, never entirely free of self-consciousness. Other "creations" required a subtler, more continuous involvement, as in his image of a Tonga-walla who has suffered occupational displacement, no longer permitted by the Municipal Corporation of Delhi to operate his bullock cart on the city's streets. I find myself wondering about the interpersonal agility required, how conscious the artist himself is of his own transformations, and how essential these ultimately are to the success of his photographs. If I propose that, consciously or unconsciously, Rajesh Black is an actor, did the actor seek out, in photography, the most appropriate medium for his already defined self? Or did the medium pre-empt Rajesh Black's becoming Rajesh Black?

It was the fourth group critique of the day on June 14, 2010. The other resident artists, the co-mentor, and I had been at it for about three hours by the time we gathered around the computer screen to review Rajesh Black's work, and the artist was being characteristically elusive about his project. We wanted to know what his inner rules were, the factors that determined



Untitled
digital print on archival paper
20" x 30"
2010

whether he found, or made the effort to create, a situation to photograph. "I am trying to click a moment," he responded, "people's expressions; their lifestyle..." How do you connect your practice to the city, specifically? "I am trying to capture the 'feel' of Delhi," he offered. If these are responses to your subjective experience of the city, how are you including yourself?

If Rajesh seemed confused by the question, his answer revealed he thought it was self-evident, "Because it's my taste," he said, "my frame" Exasperated, I gave the artist a deadline: two days to find a thematic thread along which to link his remarkable, if scattered, body of work in New Delhi. Black was encouraged to review the photographs he'd already taken, to see if, like the Tonga-walla image, he could find any stories that were already unfolding, and to do some research: perhaps there were stories in the city that resonated with his interests, even if he was unable to articulate exactly what those were to us.

As parallel inquiries to the work he'd already been making and would continue to make, Rajesh elected to focus on people sleeping and on cars. He'd already taken photographs of rickshaw-wallas asleep in public atop their rickshaws, and he found himself intrigued by the variety of people he would find sleeping in plain sight in an astonishing array of unexpected places. Noting that most of his subjects thus far had been working class, I suggested the artist consider sleep conditions across the socio-economic spectrum, and wrote a letter in support of his project that I hoped would enable him to get permission to photograph middle and upper-class families' sleep habits as well.

It's interesting to me that when pushed to focus his efforts along a thematic line, Rajesh Black chose passive subjects, before whom he did not have to perform in order to obtain his photographs. While sort of voyeuristically intriguing, as in the instance of the sleepers, or humorous, as in a one-off animation he created by flashing three hundred images of the rears of passenger vehicles in rapid succession, these efforts lacked the profound stillness, breathtaking hold, and unmistakable magic of his self-directed work.

Kneeling on his prayer mat in the kind of intimate space of a Vermeer painting, and with the same kind of contemplative solitude, the anonymous muslim looks out at us from Rajesh Black's photograph. He could be under water.

Cradled between arms and knees, ensconced in laughter and protection both, the little boy draws our eye just left of the center of the image.

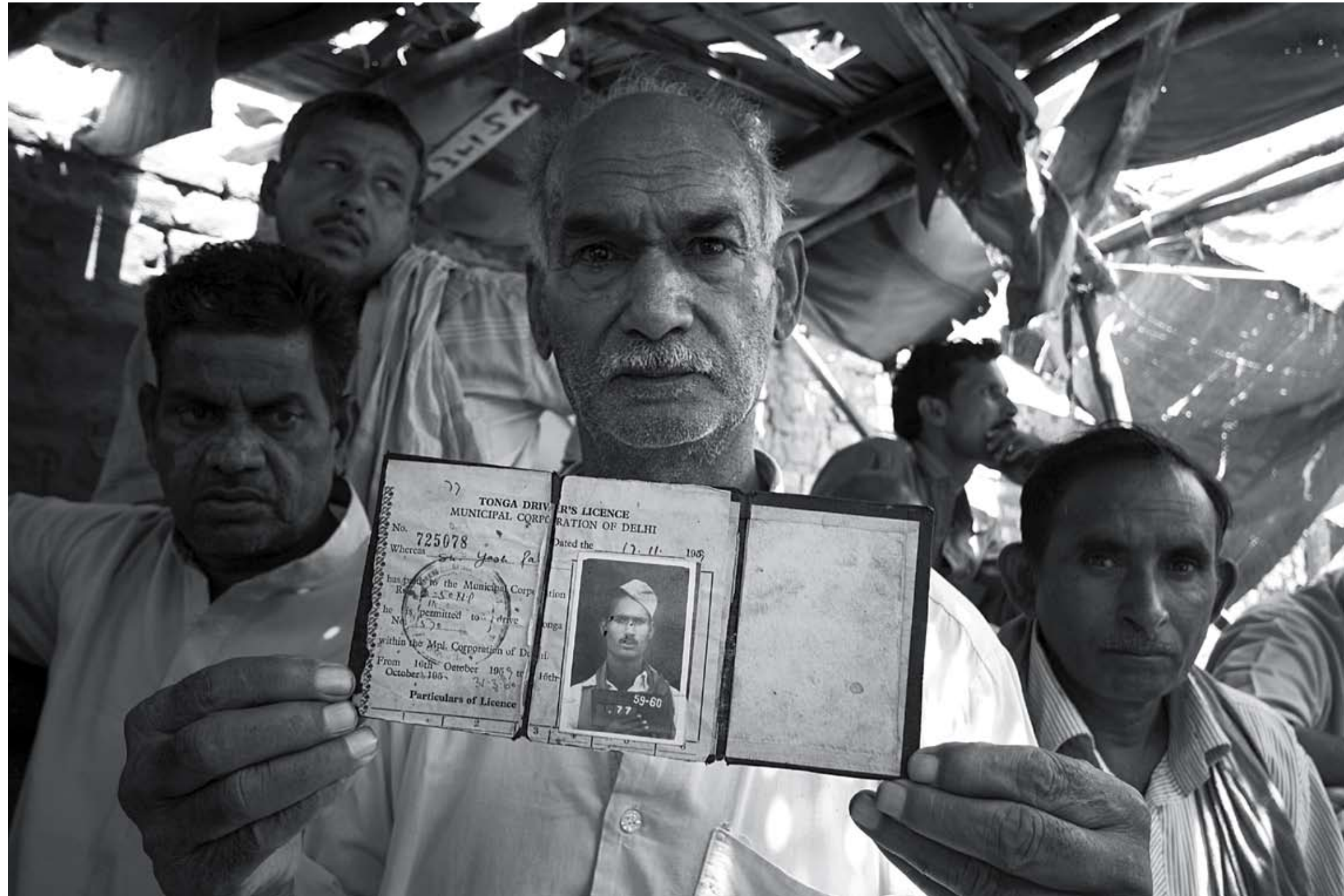
It is hot, and the man of indeterminate age that has paused (to rest?) has a rag draped over one shoulder that forms a kind of gravity-laden, colorless rainbow across the bottom of the composition.

And I could go on, but I have nothing to add that will augment your experience of these images. The photographer remains a mystery, as does the arresting hold his images have.





Daily Drama
archival inkjet print
30" x 20"
2010



Yash Pal, Tongawala
archival inkjet print
30" x 20"
2010

The Earth is suspended in vast, silent space.
Its mountains hang by invisible strings.
We are told that an atom is less than 1% mass and 99% free space.
Earth is space.
Its mountains are actually empty.

The thing about Onishi Yasuaki's (Yasu's) work is that you immediately know what you're looking at but you just can't believe it. The sheer simplicity with which the impossible has been articulated, causes a sharp, involuntary, open-mouthed intake of breath. The installation is stunning and it's monumental... except that it is missing the monument.

"This vast expanse of our world was born out of emptiness, which is without form, and it will return to the same emptiness. Everything appears and disappears, but the source is the same emptiness, the immense void." - Osho

April 2010. I am looking at Yasu's portfolio. In this world form and space have reversed their relationships: nouns have disappeared and conjunctions remain, leaving behind the sentence of space-time punctured with gaping holes for you to enter strange dimensions of scientific lawlessness. A giant, three-dimensional drawing of a floating mountain is created that seems to manifest the intangibles of gravity, light and air.

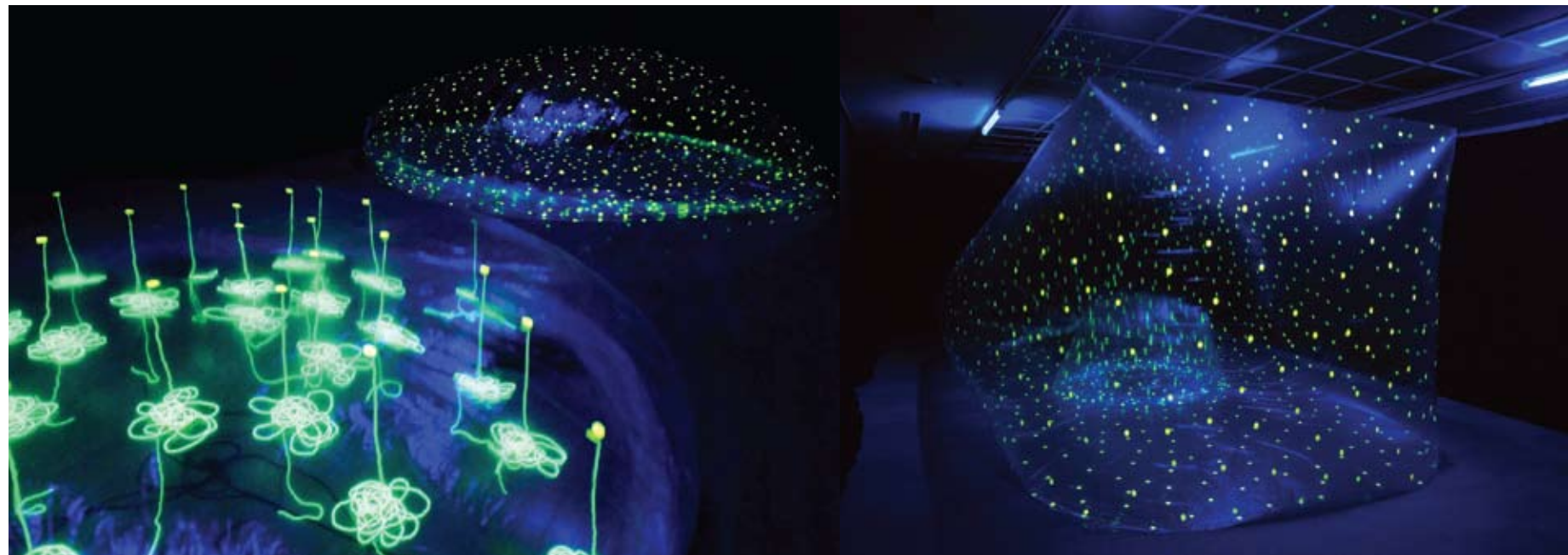
Yasu creates miracles using simple plastic sheets held in place by thousands of strings of hot black glue dripped down from a network of wires in the ceiling. The sky is present and the mountain is missing. In other darkened chambers, room-sized unseen plastic bags breathe. They inflate and deflate slowly; their living, breathing, membranes defined only by star-like points of phosphorous that expand to convey the convex inhale of space and then map the trajectory of its gentle implosion downward. Sometimes glowing strings suspended from the upper surface of the plastic, stretch to expose the full length of extended air and then collapse into a slack puddle of luminous thread: simple yet cosmic, essential, revelatory and immaculate. It's as if breath pauses and expands into an eternity of silence, and one is invited to walk in to see what that looks like.

As I regard the meticulous austerity of the simple installations done in Korea

Onishi Yasuaki

Reverse of Volume
glue, plastic sheet, additional media
2009
Courtesy of Aomori Art Centre
Japan





and Japan, I wonder what will happen to Yasu's visual language in India.

July 2010, New Delhi, India. A chaotic, colourful network of criss-crossing, overlapping strings appear to create the peaky waves of a mountain-like form, still erupting from the upheaval of colliding tectonic plates. A vertical monsoon of black glue raining from the ceiling culminates in this heaving, undulating, vividly coloured web.

Gone is the clean black and white language representing the flash-frozen, blue-print of something. "The Volume of Strings" is "the something" itself: alive, tangible and confrontational. Gone is the considerate back-up room, the safe distance for quiet contemplation and regard. This construction demands a more aggressive phenomenological encounter: at, above and below eye-level, with its shifting configuration of conflicting planes. Gone are the neatly defined boundaries of form. Addition or subtraction could happen at any given moment and the plane is now pierced by air pockets.

Upon closer inspection, the visceral tangle slowly reveals a beautiful, carefully considered methodology to its madness. Drip by carefully calculated drip of shiny, tar-like glue descends to catch and be caught by a precise spot on the coloured string below. Gravity is used to create a piece that defies it.

Restriction Sight TOM
plastic sheet, paper, woolen yarn, fluorescent paint, fan, black light, additional media
550 x 500 x 1000 cm (installation)
2007

Thousands of pieces of found string of varying lengths and colours are knotted together piece by piece and lifted from the seductive pull of the earth by a point of black glue, stretching to the ceiling frame, drawing a hair-like line through liminal space. The usual role of glue, as the invisible agent holding together visible forms is subverted as it announces itself in this profusion of linear repetition. In this universe, physics is redefined as mountains float, the space in-between is given solid substance (filled in like vertically hatched drawing) and the viewer is allowed to enter the forbidden (positive) space relegated to solid matter.

Yasu came to India on the 3rd of July, preparing to hang volume with glue and plastic sheets through another mountain-like intervention. The co-mentor and I quizzed him, "How will this extend your pre-existing practice?" We urged him to consider what the opportunity to be here, in New Delhi at this moment in time, could uniquely offer his work.

I hesitantly put forth some points of departure. Perhaps the mountain could echo the shape of the Delhi ridge? Perhaps the language of scooped out, reversed sculpture could be used to evoke specific cultural artifacts, buildings or trees that have disappeared in the violent transformations of our capital? But these options felt too contrived. These were solutions for a long-term citizen invested in the absences of the familiar, a dweller who had been

Process - Volume of Strings





processing and digesting changes in the city. Yasu's vantage point was different and he would have to find his personal point of contact.

The streets of Connaught Place, Sadar Bazaar and Chandni Chowk can give the term "sensory overload" a whole new dimension with an overwhelming and simultaneous encounter with sights, smells, sounds, textures and temperatures. Meandering through these streets, Yasu wondered how he would dialogue with Delhi. He insightfully points out, "If I had come as a tourist on vacation, I would have been looking at Delhi in a very different way; at eye level; at the people, the shops, the artifacts and the monuments in the guide books. But being here as an artist, looking for something to hold on to for a project, I was looking up and saw the cacophony of colourful tarps strung overhead on ropes and wires dissecting the sky and then looking down and I found the discarded coloured string. Vendors use it to tie bundles of books and other articles. I picked it up and brought it into the studio." I smile and consider what it tells me about Yasu's nature, when in the midst of the sheer devastation of ripped up streets, torn down buildings, people, cows, garbage and bikes, what he saw was a string.

When Yasu began to go out to comb the streets for discarded strings, people stared curiously. "I started to pick them up to use as my material. People began stopping to speak to me, asking what I was doing. Somebody laughed, but then somebody helped me. I was watching the ground, only to look for different colours and kinds of string. I looked up to see a person who was picking up only clear plastic bags. We looked like friends".

Yasu's innocent observation penetrated deep and threw me for a spin considering the unlikelihood of a friendship developing over the economic divide. At the "Ecology in Fragments" seminar at Max Muller Bhavan, our group of artists learnt that 350,000 villagers live off the city by segregating garbage; unpaid labourers, without contracts, scraping up a meager living from recyclables they can sell. I try to put my finger on "What does it mean to have two men engaging in similar action with completely different intent and unequal results? One man to recover the remaining value in its base material state and the other to flood it with value by simple dislocation into a white cube; one to use and one to regard; to salvage functional value versus a wish for the mundane to transcend the functional; an economic necessity versus a chosen visual point of contact with the city." And why would I presume all this? What if he was an artist too?

During one of his daily sojourns, disappointed at finding only red and white strings, Yasu was looking for more options. Enthusiastic shop-keepers jumped in to help their (by now) local celebrity, trying to get his attention from across the road, excitedly yelling, "Japanese! Look...over there!" pointing toward the blue and green strings, hidden from his eyes or that some had saved for him.

Yasu used the found object like a door, to go outside and experience the city. His self-imposed rule of not purchasing material and using instead the urban detritus afforded him an opportunity

Source images: Sadar Bazaar

to penetrate the street and its inhabitants in a manner rare for an outsider. A micro-community was created around this remarkably simple activity that allowed the users of public space to suddenly stop and consider the potential in the mundane. He recalls that against all odds, not one, usually aggressive street vendor tried to sell him anything during this entire process.

Choosing to make his project out of the ignored byproducts of urban culture, Yasu found yet another way to make the invisible visible.

The mountain-like form is flexible in its associations and used by Yasu simply as a volume that elicits "reads" of nature, accumulation, power, impassiveness, social hierarchies, intimidation, beauty or simply the visual chaos of the streets outside. It is a structure complete at almost any stage in its trajectory of creation after the first string of glue has pulled up a point in the pyramid. "It's also, sort of a joke. If the residency deadline appears unexpectedly, I can stop making the mountain anytime and at each point, it's a mountain!" says Yasu with a cheeky smile, which belies the sheer rigour and integrity of his daily ritual of finding, tying and dripping a chandelier of strings.

I think that it might be the coloured string that found Yasu, and changed his entire working methodology. Yasu came in "taking out the information or putting the isolated clue in the void, using simple extracted elements: only shape, only colour or only motion, pared down even further to a dot, line or light." This minimalist practice has been exploded open to resonate with the "maximalist" context of Delhi.

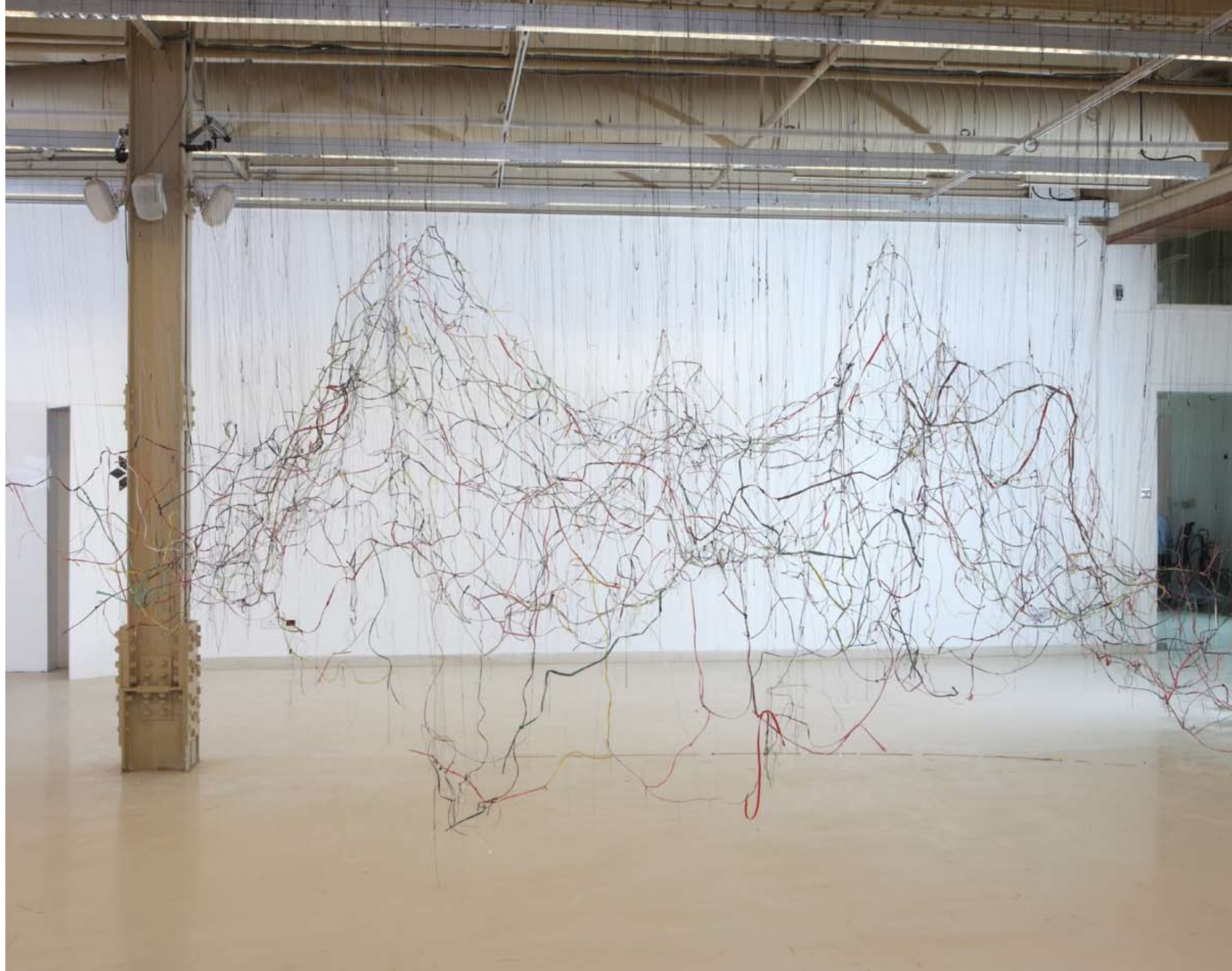
Yasu has gone from simply giving voice to a pre-conceived idea, (by raining glue upon plastic covered objects that are removed to leave behind contours of the chosen, absent form) into a much more additive and organic arena. One move responds to the next. One discovered string could shift the entire outcome. He is now constructing the void of the form, bit by bit like the city outside: from underneath and from above. One sees him inside his material mountain, delicately tying, untying, and gluing; negotiating the relationships between its parts. The found object has its history to be reckoned with. He spends long hours standing, chin in hand, staring intensely at this growing volume as if asking it what it would like him to do next. Then one sees him suddenly spurred into action, hot glue gun in hand, performing an impressive acrobatic feat of balance and focus high up on an aluminum ladder, following the trajectory of each drip thirteen feet down with his eye.

This time, perhaps the found object had become the glue; the invisible connector; the negative space that was pulling together a series of stories, communities, interactions and experiences, some visible and others invisible.





Volume of Strings
found strings, hot glue
dimensions variable
2010



Artists’ Profiles

Purnna Behera has a BFA from B. K. College of Art & Crafts, Bhubaneswar, Orissa, 2004. He has taken part in several shows: ‘I, We & They’, Triveni Kala Sangam, New Delhi, 2010; ‘Acid, Base and Salt - the Litmus Test’, Ragini Art Gallery, New Delhi, 2010; ‘Art Expo India’, Mumbai, 2009 Art Konsult, New Delhi, 2009; ‘Iris’, Rashtriya Lalit Kala Akademi, New Delhi, 2008. He has taken part in a few art camps: state level painting camp organized by Mission Ashra in collaboration with Dept. of Painting; a painter’s camp and exhibition at Puri organized by Dept. of Painting, B.K. College of Art & Crafts, Bhubaneswar, Orissa, 2004; an artist camp and exhibition at Konark, organized by OTDC, Orissa, 2003. He has won the following awards: 19th Annual Art Exhibition, B.K. College of Art & Crafts, Bhubaneswar, Orissa, 2004; first prize in state level competition on Prevention of HIV/AIDS organized by NSS, Bhubaneswar, Orissa, 2003.

Brad Biancardi has an MFA in painting/drawing from University of Washington, Seattle, 2005. He has taken part in the following solo shows: ‘This Bike Deserves a Painting’, Grey Gallery and Lounge, Seattle, 2009; ‘Image Splimage: New Paintings by Brad Biancardi’, Eastern Expansion, Chicago, 2009; ‘Insistent Imagery: Bird, Elevator’, Gallery and Star Wars, Crawl Space, Artist-Run Gallery, Seattle, 2007; ‘Piss President’, Crawl Space: Artist-Run Gallery, Seattle, 2006. His group shows include: ‘(Re)Collect’, Curated by Francesca Wilmott, Hyde Park Art Center, Chicago, 2009; ‘Annual Rivet Auction’, Crawl Space: Artist-Run Gallery, Seattle, 2007; ‘Current Works, Session Two’, Crawl Space Gallery, Seattle, 2006; ‘Painted On’, The Hedreen Gallery, Lee Center for the Arts, Seattle, 2006. He has been the recipient of several honours and awards: Betty Bowen Memorial Award for Artists - 2007 finalist; Visual Codec One Shot Project – Finalist, 2006; Boyer Gonzales Artist Scholarship, 2004; Dedalus Foundation – Grant Nomination University of Washington - Teaching Assistantship, 2004; University of Washington - Research and Recognition Award, 2003; National Society of Arts and Letters – Merit Fraiser Award, 2001.

Becky Brown has an MFA from Hunter College, NYC. She has taken part in several exhibitions: ‘Dance Ghost’, Vaudeville Park, Brooklyn NY, 2010; ‘Warm and Heavy: Becky Brown and Marianna Ellenberg’, X3 Projects, Tegucigalpa, Honduras, 2010; ‘It’s a Wonderful Life’, Sideshow Gallery, Brooklyn NY, 2009 and 2010; ‘New Work: Art From the Workers at the New Museum’, Stanton Chapter,

NYC, 2008; ‘183rd ANNUAL: An Invitational Exhibition of Contemporary American Art’, National Academy Museum, NYC, 2008; ‘Is Your Wife on Mars?’ Solo Mixed Media Installation, Gallery 221, List Art Center at Brown University, 2005; ‘My Love Is Mighty Wide’, Solo Exhibition: painting, collage, ephemera, List Art Center Lobby, 2004. She has taken part in two art residency programs: Yaddo, Saratoga Springs, NY, 2008 and Vermont Studio Center, 2007. She has received several honours: John Koch Award, National Academy Museum, 2008; Yaddo Artist Residency, 2008; Full Fellowship, Vermont Studio Center, 2007; Roberta Joslin Award for Excellence in Art, Brown University Visual Arts Dept., 2005.

Rebecca Carter has a BFA School of the Art Institute of Chicago, 2003. She has had two solo shows: ‘The Love Letter’, 500X, Dallas, 2009; ‘The Supposed Object’, 500X, Dallas, 2008. She has taken part in several group shows: Cheongju International Craft Biennial/Craft Competition, Cheongju, Korea, 2009; ‘Drawn/Draft/Depict’, Irvine Valley College, Irvine, CA, 2009; ‘Far from the Madding Crowd’, Road Agent Gallery, Dallas, 2009; ‘Viewfinder’, Dallas Contemporary, Dallas, 2009; ‘Fremder_Fremder’, Project Space, 500X, Dallas, 2009; ‘Rocket City National’, University of Alabama, Huntsville, AL, 2009; ‘My Own Backyard’, Fotofest, Houston, TX and Daimler Headquarters, Fort Worth, TX, 2008; ‘The Eyeglasses and the Eyeballs’, The Skydive, Houston, TX, 2008; ‘Space is a Time Machine’, UTD Gallery, Dallas, TX, 2008; ‘Inaccessible Landscapes’, 500X, Dallas, TX, 2008; ‘The Functionaries of Time Travel’, Art House, Austin, 2007; Nest, Danny Simmons Gallery, Brooklyn, NY, 2007; Recent, Pollock Gallery, Dallas, TX, 2007; ‘Build Your Dream’, Pollock Gallery, Dallas, 2006; ‘New American Talent’, Art House, Austin, 2006. She has taken part in two residencies: Vermont Studio Center, Johnson, VT, 2008; Catwalk, Catskill, NY, 2008. She has received the following awards, grants and fellowships: Cheongju International Craft Competition Merit Award, 2008; Meadows Summer Fellowship, 2006, 2007, 2010; Southern Methodist University Research Council Grant, 2006.

Raffaella Della Olga graduated from the Accademia di Belle Arti – Brera, Milan, Italy, 2003. She has a Law Degree from the University of Milan, Italy, 1997. She has several solo shows to her credit: ‘*Un Coup de Dés Jamais N’abolira le Hasard – Constellation*’, text de Raimundas Malašauskas, N.O. Gallery, Milan, Italy, 2010; ‘*Le Cylindre Invisible*’, Ars, Bergamo, Italy, 2009; ‘*D102D – Raffaella della Olga*’, N.O. Gallery, Milan, Italy, 2007; ‘*O 06756*’, ‘*La Casa dei Sogni*’, Ars, Bergamo, Italy, 2003; ‘*Solo Sogni Per Favore*’, curated by Gabi Scardi, Galleria Estro, Padova, Italy, 2003. Her group shows include: ‘*Art-O-Rama*’, N.O. Gallery, La Belle de Mai, Marseille, France, 2009; ‘*Fade Out*’, Galerie Philippe Samuel, Paris, France, 2008; ‘*Twentyfive - Banca Akros*’, N.O. Gallery, in collaboration with Gallerica Alessandro de March, Galerie Rubin, Milan, Italy, 2007; ‘*De rendez-vous en rendez-vous*’, Galerie du Haute

Pavè, Paris France, 2006; ‘*No Parachute*’, Artand Gallery, Milan, Italy, 2003; ‘*Lavori in Corso*’, Via Benedetto Marcello 6, Milan, Italy, 2002; ‘*Overture*’, Milan, Italy, 2002; ‘*Salon I*’, Permanente Museum, Milan, Italy, 2000. She has taken part in CAMAC, Art, ScienceTechnology, Marnay sur Seine residency, France, 2009.

Garima Jayadevan has an M.F.A. in painting from Government Institute of Fine Arts, Indore. She has taken part in the following group shows: ‘Aranya-2008’, all India painting and sculpture exhibition organized by Reflection of Another Day, Birla Art and Culture Academy, Kolkata, 2008; Dewas Art Gallery, Dewas, 2008; ‘21st National Exhibition by South Central Zone Cultural Centre’, Nagpur, 2007; ‘Raza Exhibition’, organized by Ustad Alauddin Khan Sangeet Evam Kala Academy, Bhopal, 2007; ‘Desire’, Art Lounge Gallery at Hotel Sayaji, Indore, 2007; ‘Sadrashya’, Government Institute Of fine Arts, Indore, 2006; ‘Ashwin-2064’, Devalalika Kala Vithika, Indore, 2005; Group show at Devalalika Kala Vithika, Indore, 2005; group show at Rajasthan School of Arts, Jaipur, 2004. Garima Jayadevan received the best student award from the Rajasthan School of Arts, Jaipur, 2004. She also won the Lalit Kala Akademi Students Scholarship in 2003 and 2004.

Greg Jones has a BFA from Newcastle University, 2009. He has had one solo exhibition: ‘Lit in Darkness’, the Long Gallery, Newcastle University, 2009. He has taken part in the following group exhibitions: ‘Art Liberating Lives’, Mall Galleries, London, 2009; Newcastle Artist’s Society Group, 2009; Newcastle University Degree Show, 2009. He has received Bartlett Scholarship for Travel - Tromsø, Norway, 2009.

Kavita Singh Kale has a BFA in Fine Arts (Painting) from the College of Art, New Delhi, 2001. In 2009 she took part in the Contemporary Art Fair at Travancore Palace, New Delhi. In the same year she had her solo show ‘Visual Diary’ at the Visual Arts Gallery, New Delhi. In 2008, her film was selected for the Siggraph Asia-India Focus, Singapore. In 2008 her film was selected for the Anney International Animated Film Festival, France. In 2006 her film was selected for the NID Film Festival, Ahmedabad. In the same year her film was selected for the 6th Indo-American Arts Council Film Festival, New York. In 2005 her film was selected for Golden Elephant International Children’s Film Festival, Hyderabad. In the same year her film was selected for Nova Cinema Indian Film Festival, Brussels, Belgium. In 2004 her film was selected for Anifest, Mumbai. She has won several awards: BDA Promax World-Bronze, New York, 2007; BDA Promax World-Gold, New York, 2006; Silver Conch Award (International Sec.) 2005; 1st prize in IDPA Award for excellence, Mumbai; 1st prize in IDPA Award for excellence, Mumbai, 2005.

Megha Katyal has an MFA from the College of Arts, Delhi University, Delhi, 2009. She has taken part in the following exhibitions: 8th Bharat Bhawan International Biennial of Print-Art, 2008; 50th Annual National Lalit Kala Exhibition, 2008; Lalit Kala Akademi, Chandigarh, 2007; 7th Bharat Bhawan International Biennial of Print-Art, 2006. She has taken part in two workshops: International Artist Workshop, ITM Universe, Gwalior, 2008 and Samhita, the Annual Seminar-cum-Workshop, College of Art, New Delhi, 2008/2006. She is the recipient of several awards: Garhi Grant, Lalit Kala Akademi, Delhi 2010; 1st Prize, Annual Art Exhibition, College of Art, New Delhi, 2008; 3rd Prize, Annual Art Exhibition, Government College of Arts, Chandigarh, 2007; All India Arts Exhibition, Lok Manya Tilak Trust, Pune, 2006; Chandigarh Lalit Kala Akademi, Annual Arts Exhibition, 2006; Indian Academy of Fine Arts, 72nd Annual Arts Exhibition, Amritsar, 2006; Swarcha Paul Award for outstanding work of 1st, 2nd & 3rd Year, Government College of Arts, Chandigarh, 2006; Certificate of Merit, Government College of Arts, 2005; Centurion Bank of Punjab, 9th Annual Arts Exhibition, 2005.

Nidhi Khurana: Nidhi Khurana has an MFA (Sculpture) from the Faculty of Fine Arts, M.S. University, Baroda, 2003. She has taken part in several group exhibitions: ‘Drifter’, Gallery Beyond, Kala Ghoda, Mumbai, 2010; The Global Arts Village, New Delhi, 2008; Calcutta, 2007; Nehru Centre Art Gallery, Worli, Mumbai, 2007; Art Felt, New Delhi, 2007; Triveni Kala Sangam, New Delhi, 2007; ‘Dual Entities’, Gallery Art and Soul, New Delhi, 2007; ‘The Drifters’, Artists’ Centre, Mumbai, 2007; Academy of Fine Arts, Kolkata, 2005; ‘Resurrection’, Faculty of Fine Arts, M.S. University, Baroda, 2005; IFACS State Level Exhibition, Lalit Kala Akademi, Ahmedabad, 2002. She has taken part in several artist camps and residencies: The Global Arts Village, New Delhi, 2008; Artist Camp organized by Welham Girls School, Dehradun as part of the 50th Anniversary Celebrations, 2007; Artist Camp, the Doon School, Dehradun, 2005.

Jitesh Malik has an MFA and MLA (Masters of Landscape Architecture) from Penn State University, University Park, Pennsylvania USA, 2006. His solo shows include: ‘Concretescape’, Adam & Art Bellefonte, Pennsylvania, USA, 2002; ‘Spillage’, Sheetz gallery, Altoona, 2001. His group shows ‘Bohemian Paradise: Intersecting Experiences’, International Education Program. 3D exhibit of community design work in Czech Republic, Downtown Theatre Gallery, State College, 2003; ‘Campus Lines’, Park Ridge, Illinois, 2002; ‘Crossroads’, University Park Campus, Penn State 2002; ‘Kabir – the Poet Revisited’, SoFA Gallery, Indiana State University, Bloomington, Indiana, 2002; ‘Remembering September 11’, Pattee Library Mall, Penn State University, 2001; ‘Pieces of Topaz’, with Jeff Morgan in Adam and Art Gallery, PA, 2001. He has taken part in the following

residencies: artist-in-residence, University of Louisville, 2006; Institute of Arts and Humanities residency at Penn State University, 2004. He has also been the recipient of these awards: Creative Achievements Medal from College of Arts and Architecture, Penn State, 2005; ASLA (American Society of Landscape Architects) annual students' Honor Award, 2005; Alma Heinz and August Louis Pohland Grad Award, 2004.

Koustav Nag has an MFA from the Kala Bhavana, Visva Bharati, Santiniketan, 2007. He has taken part in several exhibitions: G.C Laha Art Gallery, Kolkata, 2009; Brownson Art Gallery Manhattanville College, NY, 2009; Naestved International Exhibition of Contemporary Mini Square Prints, Denmark, 2008; Inter Exchange Exhibition with Saga Art and Visva Bharati, Japan, 2007; Somokal Art Gallery, Kolkata, 2007; Butterfly Art Foundation International Contemporary Art Exhibition, Cochin, 2006; Kaleidoscope Art Gallery, Vadodara, 2006; Birla Academy, Kolkata, 2006; Lalit Kala State Level Exhibition, in collaboration with the State Academy, 2004; and by the Annual Regional Art Exhibition, Kolkata, 2004. He was recognized at the Butterfly Art foundation International Exhibition, 2004.

Rajesh Kumar Prasad has a BFA in Sculpture from Rabindra Bharti, Kolkata, 2007. He has taken part in the following exhibitions: *'Platform 15'*, Artspace, New Delhi, 2009; Annual Exhibition, AIFACS, New Delhi, 2009; *'Integration'*, Faculty Of Fine Arts, M.S.U. Baroda, 2008; Student Annual Exhibition 2003-2007, Rabindra Bharti University, Kolkata. He has recently created a sculpture for the Raheja Group of Companies, Gandhinagar, 2009. He has also been the recipient of the following awards: Certificate of Merit for Sculpture, Rabindra Bharti University, 2007; Certificate of Merit for Linocut, Rabindra Bharti University, 2003; Kejriwal Award for Sculpture, Rabindra Bharti University, 2005.

Vishwa Shroff has an MA in Fine Art from the Birmingham Institute of Art and Design (UCE), Birmingham UK, 2003. She has taken part in several shows: Researcher in Residency, Tokyo Wonder Site, Tokyo, Japan, 2010; 'Emami Chisel Art', Kolkata, India, 2010; 'For Love Not Money', A Global Mail Art Collaboration, Tallin, Estonia, 2010; 'The International Postal Art Project', F Block Gallery, Bristol, UK, 2010; 'Pigeons', Maskara Gallery, Mumbai, 2009; 'Dukan', Fine Arts Faculty Exhibition Hall, Baroda, 2009; 'MIMB', Akron University, USA, 2009; Group show, Art Gotham, New York, NY, 2005; ' Stage 1', Vinopolis Gallery, London UK, 2004; 'Forward', St. Paul's Gallery, Birmingham, UK, 2003; 'Carry on Drawing', Savannah Art School, USA, 2002. She has taken part in several camps and workshops: Diya Foundation Camp, Baroda, 2010; conducted 'Alternate Perception and Interpretation, D.C. Patel School of Architecture, V. Vidya Nagar, 2009; Karaghoda Artsit Camp, Kutch, 2008;

Chintan Upadhyay's workshop for site specific installation, Baroda, 2007; Tempera techniques, Faculty of Fine Art, Baroda, 2001; Pottery workshop, Ceramic Centre, Baroda, 2001; 'Pot Tree', NID, 2000; Drawing and watercolour workshop, Baroda, 1996-97.

Rajesh Kumar Singh has an MFA from Banaras Hindu University, Varanasi, 2008. He has taken part in the following shows: 'Pani', Qeretica Art Gallery, Varanasi, 2010; 'The Best of 2010 Photography Anthology', Canada, 2010; 80 & 81st All India Fine Art and Craft Society, New Delhi, 2009; Manual Photography Group Show, Banaras Hindu University, Varanasi, 2008; Shilpostav Art Exhibition, Ram Chhatpar Shilp Nayas, Varanasi, 2007; Regional Art Exhibition, Varanasi, 2006; 77th All India Fine Art and Craft Society, New Delhi, 2006; Four Vision Group show, College of Art and Craft Patna University, Patna, 2005; Four Vision Group show, Faculty of Visual Arts, B.H.U, Varanasi, 2005. He has also participated in several art camps and workshops: East/ North India Artist Workshop, Khajuraho (M.P), 2008; Ram Chhatpar Sand Sculpture Camp, Varanasi, 2006 and 2007; Photography Workshop, Faculty of Visual Arts, Banaras Hindu University, Varanasi, 2007. These are the awards won by the artist:1st Award in Photography, Banaras Press Club, Varanasi, 2010; Year of the Best Exhibit, Shivalaya Arts Foundation, India, 2008; 27th State Lalit Kala Akademi Award, Lucknow, 2008; Selected Prize, 12th International Biennial Print & Drawing Exhibition, Taiwan, 2006.

Onishi Yasuaki has an M.A. Fine Art Sculpture from the Kyoto City University of Art 2004. He has had several solo exhibitions: 'The Reverse of Volume', Kinokino Centre for Art and Film, Sandnes, Norway, 2010; 'Dairy Distance', Solyst Artists in Residence Centre, Jyderup, Denmark, 2008; 'Mountair', Kongsli, Enschede, Netherlands, 2008; 'Space Between Face and Reverse', Pantaloon, Osaka, 2007; 'Inner Skin', Neutron, Kyoto, 2007; 'Visible', Sfera Exhibition, Kyoto, 2006; 'See Darkness', Gallery B, Tokyo, 2004; 'Darkness Thing', Gallery B, Tokyo, 2003. He has taken part in the following group shows: 'Point Ephemere', Bunkamura Gallery, Tokyo, 2008; 'Mind Street', EM Art Gallery, Seoul, Korea, 2009; 'Residency Project Part2', Kala Gallery, Berkeley, USA, 2009; 'Home', Aomori Contemporary Art Centre, Aomori, 2009; 'Against the Sculptural', Seoul Museum of Art, Seoul, Korea, 2009; 'Toyota Art exhibition 2004', Toyota Municipal Museum of Art, Aichi, 2004; 'Exhibition of Young Metal Sculptors –Intersection', Metal Art Museum, Hikarinotani, Chiba, 2002. He has taken part in several art residencies: Air Sandnes, Sandnes, Norway, 2010; Rondo Studio, Graz, Austria, 2010 Solyst Artists in Residence, Jyderup, Denmark, 2008; Kunstenaarsinitiatief B93, Enschede, Netherlands, 2008; Kunstenaarslogies, Amersfoort, Netherlands, 2008.

Our list of Exhibitions 2008-10

• **Outer Circle** Group Show, Mixed Media
8th - 30th Oct 2008

• **Phaneng** Solo Show, Photography
10th Nov - 8th Dec 2008

• **Ragamala** Solo Show, Watercolors
15th Nov - 8th Dec 2008

• **Nature of the City** Group Show, Mixed Media
16th Dec 2008- 15th Jan 2009

• **Everything Under the Sun... Almost** Dual Show, Mixed Media
7th Feb - 8th March 2009

• **The Human Animal** Group Show, Mixed Media
19th March- 8th April 2009

• **Zip Files** Group Show, Mixed Media
21st April-20th May 2009

• **Connaught Place The WhyNot Place** Group Show, Mixed Media
8th Aug -23rd Aug 2009

• **Grave For Nothing** Dual Show
27th Aug - 23rd Sep 2009

• **Home Sweet Home** Group Show, Mixed Media
5th Oct -25th Oct 2009

• **1: Art Against AIDS** Group Show, Mixed Media
1st Dec - 11th Dec 2009

• **Found Objects Lost Planet** Group Show, Digital Print on Paper
15th Dec '09 – 5th Jan 2010

• **Ballard Estate** Group Show, Mixed Media
9th Jan – 29th Jan 2010

• **Arts. i Redux:** Showcasing Emerging Artists Group Show, Mixed Media
11th Feb – 10th Mar 2010

• **The Decorated Cow:** Solo Show, Mixed Media
13th Mar – 13th Apr 2010

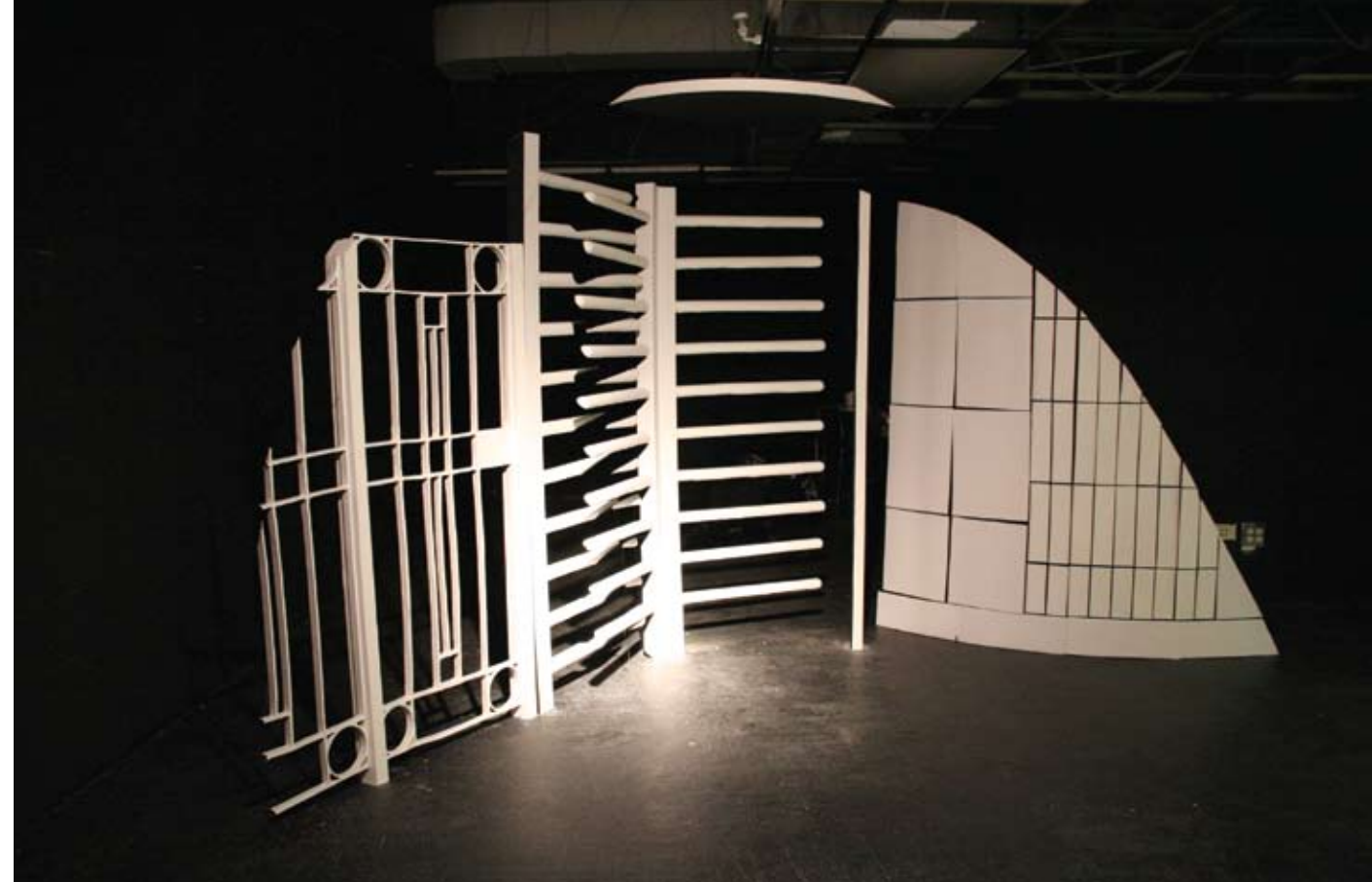
• **Baba Anand:** Solo Show, Mixed Media
17th Apr – 17th May 2010

• **Holy Now:** Group Show, Mixed Media
10th May – 15th May 2010

Paola Cabal
co-mentor, the WhyNot Place Residency 2010

An artist and educator whose visual practice is divided between gallery and self-initiated public projects, Paola Cabal is currently an instructor of Painting and Drawing at the School of the Art Institute of Chicago. She has also taught at DePaul University, the University of Illinois at Chicago and at Northwestern University. A native of Bogotá, Colombia, Cabal has lived in Pittsburgh, Bogotá, and Fort Lauderdale; she feels strongly about having found a home in Chicago, where she has lived and worked since 2001. In summer 2008, Paola was a fellow at a prestigious public art training program in New York, The Abbey Mural Workshop. Cabal's work was recognized with an important grant from the Driehaus foundation in 2006, and in 1998 the Carnegie Museums of Pittsburgh recognized a mural by the artist with a Carnegie Centennial award for outstanding contributions towards community improvement through the arts. Her work has been written about in Mouth to Mouth magazine, Xtra News, and the Charleston City Paper, among others, and is discussed in the book "Buddha Mind in Contemporary Art", in an essay by Carol Becker. Paola has exhibited in Bogotá, Colombia, Ft.Lauderdale, Omaha, Charleston, and New York, in addition to numerous exhibitions in Chicago. Cabal completed her BFA at Carnegie Mellon University in 1998, and her Master of Fine Arts in Painting and Drawing at the School of the Art Institute in 2003. Last summer, an artist's residency run by Chicago's department of Cultural Affairs in downtown Chicago led to the formation of Paola's collaborative group, function utility- "(f)utility projects". (f)utility projects formally debuted in 2010 with a site-specific intervention and completed a second major work in April. The images shown here are from that initial open studio collaboration with Michael Genge, Chris Grieshaber and Amanda Tworek.

The Location of Things II
paper, interior latex paint,
monofilament, and polystyrene
insulation foam
2009



Sumakshi Singh
co-mentor, the WhyNot Place Residency 2010

Singh's sculpture and site-specific projects have been presented in solo and curated group gallery and museum exhibitions in India, China, USA and Europe. Recent venues include Mattress Factory Museum of Contemporary Art, Pittsburgh, PA, Van Harrison Gallery New York, NY, Museum of Contemporary Art, Chicago, IL, Illinois State Museum, IL, Halsey Gallery, Charleston, SC and ArtHouse Texas, TX and upcoming solo shows at Project 88, Mumbai and Kashya Hildebrand Galerie, Zurich. She was awarded an Illinois Arts Council award in 2007 (in recognition of outstanding work and commitment within the arts) and Richard H. Driehaus Foundation Award in 2005 (to support and encourage excellence, artistry, focus, direction, maturity, and originality in the visual arts). Her shows have been reviewed by the Village Voice, ArtLovers, Austin Chronicle, Chicago Tribune, Reader, Chicago Arts Critics Association, Charleston City Paper, New Haven Register among other journals and papers. Artist residencies include Camargo Foundation, France Skowhegan, ME, Catwalk, NY and Sculpture Space, NY. She was a finalist for the Rijksakademie in 2006. Singh received an MFA from the School of the Art Institute of Chicago (SAIC) and a BFA from Maharaja Sayajiro University, Baroda, India. She has been teaching at SAIC since 2004 and is partly based in New Delhi, India.



July

First day: Introduction and presentation



1 2 3 4

Direct Connect talk: Writer, filmmaker and conservationist, Sohail Hashmi gave a talk on the fascinating natural and man-made water bodies of Delhi and their current state.

The artists visited the National Museum as a part of their field trips.



5 6 7

The artists toured the facilities of the renowned Devi Art Foundation.



8 9 10

Sohail Hashmi gave the artists an incredible insight into Tughlaquabad and its history.



After having been in the residency for nearly two weeks, it was time for group discussions and critiques.



11 12 13

Resident artist, Vishwa Shroff, conducted a workshop on book binding.

Max Mueller Bhawan Ecology of Fragments round-table discussion

14 15 16

Old Delhi walk - led by Sohail Hashmi



Direct Connect talk: Artist Jitish Kallat and artist mentor of the residency, Sumakshi Singh.



17 18 19 20

Lalit Kala Akademi talk by Critic Geeta Kapur on artist Navjot Altar

Direct Connect talk: Artist Anita Dube and artist co-mentor of the residency, Paola Cabal.



Direct Connect talk: Vibha Galhotra and Rohini Devasher.

21 22 23 24

The artists visited the Qutub Minar as a part of their cultural field trips.



25 26 27 28 29 30 31

The artists met up at Sumakshi's house for dinner.

The studio space at arts.i was opened to the public to see works in progress and hear the artists talk about the nature of their art work.





Purnna Behera
Brad Biancardi
Becky Brown
Rebecca Carter
Raffaella Della Olga
Garima Jayadevan
Greg Jones
Kavita Singh Kale
Megha Katyal
Nidhi Khurana
Jitesh Malik
Koustav Nag
Rajesh Kr Prasad
Vishwa Shroff
Rajesh Kr Singh
Onishi Yasuaki