

City as Studio

CITY AS STUDIO

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“ Why?” I wanted to ask, “To what purpose?”  
I kept quiet and waited for it to start a dialogue.

Nothing.



# City as Studio

An Introduction

In the ten years of its existence, Sarai has sought to restlessly expand the boundaries of artistic, cultural and intellectual work in India, and has been widely acknowledged as a pioneer in this domain. By all accounts, it has succeeded not by fixing any rigid agenda or format for change, but by allowing that landscape to be discovered through a scrupulous processual ethics and an internal structure that allows for flexibility, curiosity, diversity and close critical engagement.

A careful look at the pilot year of the City As Studio fellowship programme would surely make clear both the success and the immense future potential of this approach. Through every step of its process, the various actors in the programme-fellows, mentors, interns, Sarai media lab members, other participants in the various exhibitions and events-were drawn into a continual conversation that investigated and questioned even its most basic, founding terms-“city”, “studio”, “collaboration”, “exhibition”, and so on-allowing experimental contemporary art to emerge organically, in a mutually curated environment.

Thus, what emerged at the end was not just a wide array of art objects, performances and events, but a context and a framework that could render

meaning and embody thought. The 'City as Studio' programme, as it turned out then, was not exactly a workshop, not a residency, not an exhibition series, not a fellowship grant, not a festival, not a community, not a non-pedagogical "school", nor a simple cluster of public programmes, although it creatively incorporated and reinvented elements from all of the above.

The programme began with a basic template, for a network of practitioners-not just the fellowship awardees, but also Sarai's interns, medialab members and mentors-who documented, advised, stayed in conversation with, and made work alongside them-as well as a whole host of invited and curated participants for the exhibitions and events. It provided and supported studio, work, exhibition, seminar and living space; it created a context for regular and mutual discussion and exchange online and offline, the latter during an intensive "on-site" period in the city of Delhi.

This basic template was gradually filled in by mutual agreement over the course of the fellowship period. In the early months, participants began by convening to an online group, where they met, introduced their projects, background and previous work, and gave initial responses and critique to each others' work. Fellows began working on their respective projects in their home locations. At the same time, the EXB series hosted at Sarai began, bringing in a new and widely dispersed public for exhibitions that radically redefined the "art show" as it had typically been showcased in New Delhi's galleries and performance spaces. The programme had modalities by which it could be both inward looking and interact with a general and diversified public.

This dual approach continued after the convening of all the fellows and other participants of 'City as Studio' on-site, in Delhi, in July 2010. Typically, we met as a group twice or thrice a week to discuss and present work in progress, to understand each others' systems, to read together and share texts, to make field visits, explore the city together and initiate public interventions, to plan and curate exhibitions, and to think through and debate various perspectives on the city or approaches to artistic practice.

While all this was happening, the EXB framework that was already in place was made available for joint curation by all the 'City as Studio' participants over the course of two major collective exhibitions, at the middle and at the end of the residency period. After the residential period, the participants continued their interaction online while focusing on various individual projects, contributing pieces for more events in the EXB series and preparing pages for the final reports.

Out of this structure, and by close attention to the ethics of mutual discussion and critique, the rest was allowed to evolve. The mutually planned exhibitions and meetings of the group were punctuated by various kinds of public interventions. This included an event that brought 'City as Studio' fellows into conversation and collaboration with well known young Indian poets working in Hindi and English (as well as their audiences), an intervention and workshop with local residents of a small town at the edge of Delhi's city borders, walks and collaborations with groundbreaking urbanist Solly Benjamin, and a range of smaller public actions and performances.

The participants were not placed under any compulsion to speak, attend, produce, or make work in any given format; however, most became emboldened, by an inevitable process of cross-pollination, not only to assist each other but also to explore new directions, collaborations and practices in their own work. Indeed, over the course of the fellowship period, a practicing architect found himself in productive dialogue with residents who had decided to build their own railway platform without the involvement of any architects, an already acclaimed printmaker launched an innovative project involving sound recordings and formal interview-based research, a dancer reinvented her practice not only beyond her classical training but also beyond the stage, a graffiti artist began a process of exchange and collaboration-exploring the transition from hand-painted to digital signage-with shop owners and shopfront painters, a video artist began to more closely explore material culture, and virtually every participant made some use of the newly made time and space to venture beyond the expectations of their previous careers or already cultivated audiences.

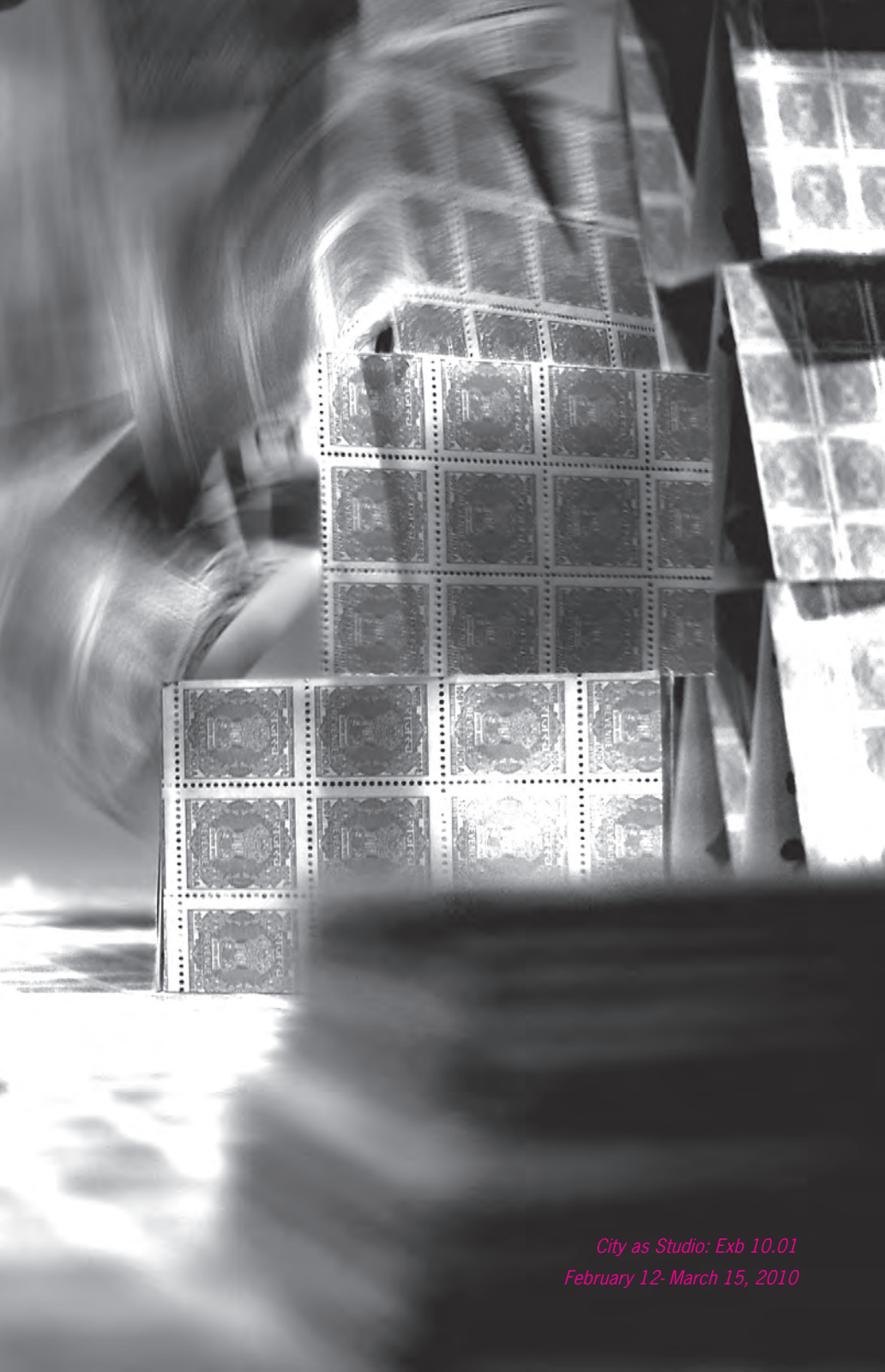
However, what we would like to underline again is the expansion and reworking of the discursive field that 'City as Studio' has begun to make possible. How might we rethink the idea of the urban? How should we conceive of the Indian city? How do the fragments by which a city can be apprehended relate to its mythic self-presentation? How might we rethink and interrogate "site-specific" practice? What constitutes the public sphere? What constitutes performance? How does specialised contemporary art practice relate to the other aesthetic forms and practices that an Indian city typically overflows with?



In India-and perhaps elsewhere as well-it is still rare to find many of these questions investigated in an art context, that artistic practice concerns itself not just with aesthetic pleasure, market value or even socio-political "message", but instead is able to see itself as a form and ethics of unfettered (critical) thought. It is in this sense that we feel that the 'City as Studio' will be able to create a legacy, generate and inspire contexts even far beyond its own. To this end, 'City as Studio 2010', only begins the conversation; thanks to linking devices such as the 'City as Studio' email listserve (where many of these conversations can be glimpsed) that, while keeping its current participants, will grow and evolve with each new year of the programme.

Vivek Narayanan





*City as Studio: Exb 10.01*  
*February 12- March 15, 2010*

# MEMBERS

## ASSOCIATE FELLOWS 2010

Nabina Das  
Rohini Devasher  
Dhrupadi Ghosh  
Goutam Ghosh  
Deepankar Gohain  
Ashavari Mazumdar  
Paribartana Mohanty  
Radhika Murthy  
Samir Parker  
Gaurav Sharma

## **SARAI MEDIA LAB**

Iram Ghufuran  
Amitabh Kumar  
Bhagwati Prasad  
Priya Sen  
Raqs Media Collective

## **CYBERMOHALLA LAB**

Shamsher Ali

## **MENTORS**

Solomon Benjamin  
Inder Salim  
Vivek Narayanan

## **STUDIO RAPPORTEUR**

Akansha Rastogi

## **INTERNS**

Irmelin Joelson  
Natasha Marie Llorens

## why not blow up the **STUDIO MODEL**

- 'City as Studio' is a media platform that is modeled on bringing together an agglomeration of people, practices and places, in diverse combinations, and creating structures where it is possible to re-think and re-imagine what constitutes a space of production. The studios will question, make flexible, dislocate and locate differently, practitioners and practices from their usual contexts of work.
- The studios will be structured through different modalities of space and conditions, such that each activates a different constellation of experience and formal innovation.
- These media environments will not be hierarchically determined by media forms, rather will initiate interesting collaborations that will enable a range of possible forms.
- The studios will produce a continuous and evolving archive of the city, its erasures, impulses and transformations.

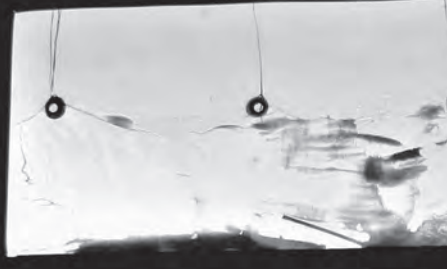
Do you need a very knowable space to work? A space that you are familiar with, or are you able to work anywhere? The site could be a world anywhere, any place. Or would you need a space with given and stable coordinates for you to work?

No, actually making a space go from stable to unstable and unstable to stable, is all a notion of my practice. So I really don't care whether I'm in a formed space, or I have five cameras around me, or five lecturers, or five reporters. I don't care because I never function like that and I don't want to function like that. I don't want to partition myself.. The material has its own challenge, after it has been dislocated .. So you need not be so concerned about what representation is all about. It's the material, it's the functional space, it's the re-activation of the space, that's it.

*Dhrupadi Ghosh*











*City as Studio: Exb 10.02*  
*April 16 - May 10, 2010*

you are here: [home](#) → [practices](#) → [media forms](#) → [the city as studio](#) →

The Sarai Media Lab invites expressions of interest and intent from artists and practitioners in diverse media - textual, visual, aural, spatial and temporal - who could be - visual artists (photographers, sculptors, installation artists, graphic artists), writers and independent scholars, filmmakers, architects, experimental musicians and composers, sound recordists, performers and people whose practices straddle or transcend different areas of practice - for participation in the 'City as Studio' Project.

The City as Studio initiative will create contexts for high intensity inter-disciplinary processes at different locations in Delhi and at the Sarai space at CSDS. Sometimes these process(es) may be rendered as an exhibition, at other times as a gathering, as a library, as a temporary archive or as an occasion for performances, conversations and debates. At still other times it may take the form of a workshop, a temporary atelier, a media studio, a publication or an online platform. The City as Studio is neither a one off event, nor a workshop or a residency, nor a festival or a simple cluster of public programmes - though it has elements of all of the above. It is primarily a method of generating a new public profile for creative work in the city, a scanning of the horizon of possibilities that can be opened up in urban spaces through the presence of art, experimental cultural activity and public exchanges.





## the city as studio- call for proposals

Possible areas of that will be reflected upon could include but need not be limited to -

The city as spectacle, as a site of consumption, as an arena of power

The growing intensity of surveillance,

The question of distance and anchorage: housing and transportation

Access to resources, location and privilege

The local pursuits of pleasure

Life, death, and rites of passage in the city

The everydayness and banality of terror

Imagined histories and urban legends, the fantastical and uncanny city

The archived and remembered city

Urban ecologies, the city as a zone of bio-diversity, urban forests, rivers

Ways of life, sub-cultures, bodies of informal knowledge, local practices

Migrants, margins and minorities

We invite applicants to imagine that the city itself is their studio, and that urban realities are their materials in order to create artistic work that acts as a body of public knowledge in and about the city.

paraphrasing **PROPOSALS** for the planet

I see my nomad self traverse myths and histories and idioms and images, from the cities of my origin, to cities of my dreams. What I encounter in the process is “Jajabor – The Migrant City”. My proposed work speaks about waves of population coming and receding from the city, while the city itself changes its landscape... I will write poems, essays and haikus on “City Memorabilia”...

*Nabina Das*

Astro-Nomads, umbraphiles or shadow lovers, properly applied is one who is addicted to the glory of total solar eclipses; noctcaeladors are defined as those with a strong interest in, and psychological attachment to, the night sky. Who are these individuals who watch the stars and invest their resources in the activity? Why do they continue to chase eclipses and other celestial phenomena across the country and sometimes the world?

*Rohini Devasher*

It's like an online gallery of building promotion that is ringing up the visual parameter, whilst reintrospecting layers of a multi functional space. Doesn't the newer space only bring the quest but a challenge, to pursue the “not so recognized” corridors of changing landscape along with the subtext of a woman's body?

*Dhrupadi Ghosh*

*A question that comes up while looking at your practice is: when does a work finish for you?*



"From the beginning of the 21st century, thousands and thousands of labourers migrated from neighboring states like U.P, Haryana, Bihar and other places to construction sites in Delhi. According to written documents, workers in construction sites worked 24 x 7 continuously, for longer than 10 years. The approximate expenditure of these projects was around 247 hundred crores. We also know that the then government brought teams of skillful architects from the Far-East ." Here, I wish to enact the role of the artist in the 22nd century , who makes imaginary observations of the 21st century.

*Goutam Ghosh*

Delhi had always been a place that attracted my attention, and everytime I visited it I rediscovered it, always stumbling upon something new. Everything is here; I cannot think of any other city containing so much diversity-from so good to so bad, and from worse to best-and with so much colour. I got lost in the city so many times, found myself, and again became faceless. Whenever I am here in the city, I try to educate myself only to realise it once again and rediscover its complexities. And yet it remains even to this date, so unknown to me. Delhi is indeed a land with a thousand faces.

*Deepankar Gohain*

This is an attempt to try and experience an urban space through many diverse and conflicting world views. A rediscovery of the space-where one was born, brought up, transferred, displaced-not only a nostalgic sense but by really looking at it anew, through the perspectives of people one brushes past everyday.

*Radhika Murthy*



*So I'm just wondering whether the "I" which is constructed as an artistic "I", can sometimes be pushed away and become something else. How many ways do you think you are constructing and deconstructing and remaking the word "I" in your practice? Practice not just as the practice of making art but the practice of making art in these very co-presences.*

I propose a more visceral exploration-involving the very grammar of Kathak. One aspect of this study will be gestural. I propose to examine the interplay between 'kathak' movements and 'everyday' movements, that occur in the urban context. This methodology will range from violent interventions of 'pedestrian' movements, slippages, to seamless transitions.

*Ashavari Mazumdar*

It is a documentation of my travels. As I go around the city with my camera, somewhere something artistic happens and I shoot it. I have managed to capture some clips that are rare and carry their own meaning and value. It is beyond the artistic ego and the shadow, although I choose scenes with a personal vision and intelligence. Adding to a travellers perspective, I examine it.

*Paribartana Mohanty*

Inspired by the visual and conceptual work of Fritz Lang in Metropolis, the Archigram Collective and Lebbus Woods, I propose a graphic narrative that reflects the currents shaping social and urban topographies. I consider yet another position: a critical perspective expressed in a fantastical, parodic, illustrated story.

*Samir Parker*

My project for the 'City as Studio' is called 'Jugaad and the City'. I plan to use Delhi as a laboratory and a case study and through this, explore the usually ignored and off-limits parts of the city. One of the secret agendas will be to make the case for Delhi to be declared as the jugaad capital of India - a counter to the official propaganda of projecting it as a sterile 'world-class' city.

*Gaurav Sharma*





*City as Studio: E.0 10.03  
June 18 - July 14, 2010*



# EXB Extraterrestrial Basement

Goutam Ghosh:  
Last evening it was a disaster when the printer stopped working in mid-performance. Being apologetic, I immediately stopped my performance and tried to start again. Somehow it ended. I am embarrassed. The project did not turn out the way I had imagined it. I was conscious of the audience who had given their time to see my performance and I felt I did not give them anything worthwhile in return for their time. After the performance I had a discussion with Vivek.

The dialogue went as follows:

Vivek Narayanan: Why did you apologise?  
GG: ...because it was not turning out the way it was supposed to.  
VN: so you are saying that everything comes to you the way you have imagined it?  
GG: not always, but my primary

The EXBs are a series of exhibitions that punctuated the year of the 'City as Studio' fellowship programme, and continue after it. The EXBs - literally, Exhibition Basement - at Sarai, became artist run platforms with the energies of collective and multidisciplinary media practice.

Through the year, the EXBs came to be associated with critical practices around articulating and expressing multitudinous readings of the city. Each EXB was different in what it activated and transformed - both in terms of processes of making as well as conversations around display. The engagement between 'practitioner' and 'audience' was not necessarily determined by the 'object' or a 'work'. Rather it produced a dialogue, it tentatively explored, it searched for form and found language for intermediary stages of producing. It brought to the surface and into contact with each other, diverse creativities, its contexts and configurations.

The mutating, ever-changing basement, became a studio, a gallery, a workshop, a performance space, a laboratory, an atelier, a library, and an archive. The imagination of practice, collaboration and display, exceeded previous articulations and opened themselves to newer ones. The EXBs are an attempt to materialize some of these imaginations.

# Featuring 49 Artists

of the new economy

Prayas Abhinav	Paribartana Mohanty
Shamsher Ali	Radhika Murthy
Love Anand	Satyajit Pande
Hemant Babu	Samir Parkar
Konrad Bayer	Bhagwati Prasad
Ram Bhat	Niha Masih
Neelofer	Vivek Narayanan
Nabina Das	Suraj Rai
Rohini Devasher	Rochie Rana
Gaigongmei Gangmei	Ish S
Manola Gayatri	Pradip Saha
Anandee Ghorpade	Inder Salim
Dhrupadi Ghosh	Ambarish Satwik
Goutam Ghosh	Samudra Kajol Saikia
Iram Ghufan	Gaurav Sharma
Tanya Goel	Nishant Sharma
Deepankar Gohain	Ravikant Sharma
Kriti Gupta	Priya Sen
Alana Victoria Hunt	Shuddhabrata Sengupta
Lokesh Jain	Aarti Sethi
Jason Kahn	Nobel Singha
Siddhartha Kararwal	
Rakesh Khairalia	
Amitabh Kumar	
Prabhat Kumar	
Ashavari Mazumdar	
Kelly McCue	
Dyuti Mittal	

concern is to touch my imagination and when it does not happen...

VN: But you could take your performance in different ways, atleast you had options.

GG : like ?

VN : the moment the printer was not working [as you say], you could take some instant steps to carry on with your performance. Like the printer was not faithful to you, so you could react to the printer, express your anger or may be something else

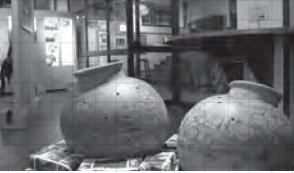
.....

GG : That I could do maybe ... but I just wanted to be honest and maybe I was bit preoccupied with my idea .

VN : Things don't always happen the way you want them to show. I think the printer was a great 'performer' in your performance , may be it didn't want to activate, may be it didn't need to be activated, may be you did not have enough communication with your printer. Look at the mechanism of the printer and its aspect, its reliability to its master.







Piao  
Bhagwati Prasad



City as Studio: EXB 10. 01



City as Studio: EXB 10.02



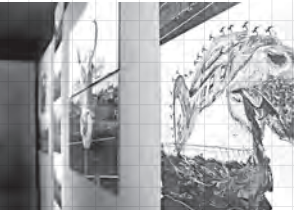
Thousands of Words  
Kriti Gupta, Niha Masih,  
Gaigongmei Gangmei



Thousands of Words  
Kriti Gupta, Niha Masih,  
Gaigongmei Gangmei



Performance by Colm Clark



The Cow Ate It Up,  
Amitabh Kumar

And slowly a pink mountain rises in the jungle, which is gradually dismantled and taken to the factory. The crow wonders if it's the last pig in the jungle...

Pink Mountain  
Goutam Ghosh

On the track 'Blue Hour', car horns which are the most common sound/noise in urban Delhi's soundscape, are carefully manipulated to create a trumpet like sound which is juxtaposed with piano and drums, with glitchy highs which are always going in and out of equilibrium.



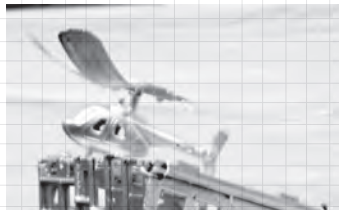
(...) to anyone real or imagined, about anything they would like to write in a text message but were suddenly unable to do so.

Paper txt msgs from Kashmir  
Alana Hunt

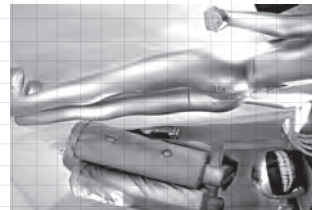
In Between Days 2010  
diF  
(Ish S + Konrad Bayer)



Vagabond  
Iram Ghufuran



So That Affection for the City Endures  
Shamsher Ali, Love Anand, Neelofer,  
Suraj Rai

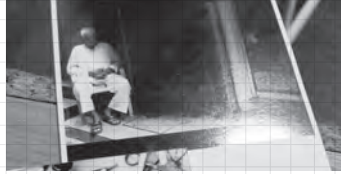


Kalki Calling  
Siddharth Kararwal

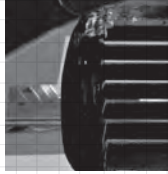




City as Studio: EXB 10.03



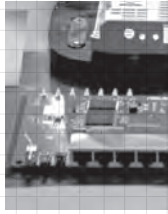
City as Studio: EXB 10.02



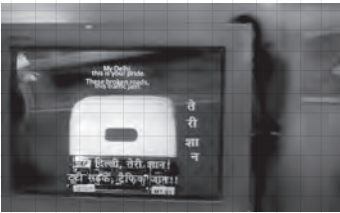
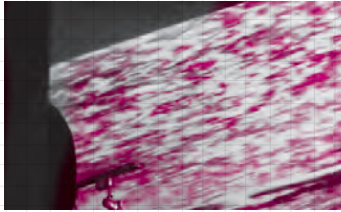
So That Affection for the City Endures  
(Ver 1.2)  
Shamsher Ali , Suraj Rai



Letters to Thousands of Words,  
Nabina Das with  
Gaigongmei Gamgmei, Niha Masih



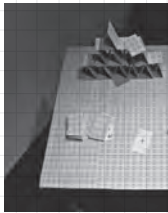
Paper txt msgs from Kashmir  
Alana Hunt



Autopoesis  
Prabhat Kumar, Ravikant Sharma



Street Walkers  
Manola K. Gayatri



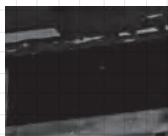
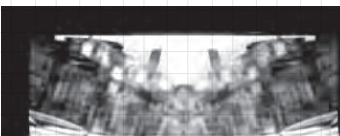
Lurid in addition to being graphic. Prepubescents and puritans should refrain from attending these sessions.

A world gives a glimpse of itself through the symbols that it creates. These symbols come to form a cluster and come in contact with other such clusters. It is then that an imagination for a new world begins.



Bodily : Graphic essays on anatomy and pathology  
Ambarish Satwik

So That Affection for the City Endures  
(Ver 1.3) Shamsher Ali, Love Anand,  
Neelofer, Suraj Rai





City as Studio: EXB 10. 01



City as Studio: EXB 10. 02



City as Studio: EXB 10. 02



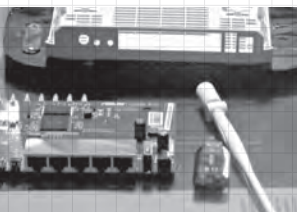
City as Studio: EXB 10. 03

Groping in the dark-fantasy or night mare? What marks a new city as home? What's the apparel change from one side of the street or the country to the other? A dramatic monologue on street life experiences for the walking 'Akkahood'.

Street Walkers  
Manola K. Gayatri



The interim exhibition of the Delhi Studio



So That Affection for the City Endures  
Shamsher Ali, Suraj Rai

Sense Lens will endeavor to portray the dichotomy associated with the evolution of modern day machines that have made it possible to move across time, but at the same time created new anxieties.

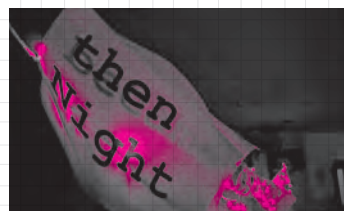
Sense lens  
Deepankar



Electro Out  
Ish and Lionel Dentan



Ghumakkad Baja  
Prayas Abhinav, Hemant Babu,  
Ram Bhat, Nishant Sharma



The interim exhibition of the Delhi Studio



The interim exhibition of the Delhi Studio



City Games  
Iram Ghufan, Amitabh Kumar

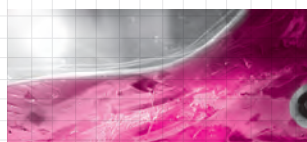
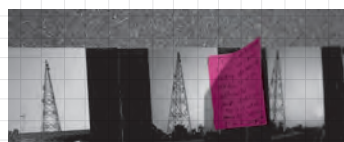
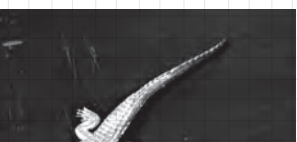


The interim exhibition of the Delhi Studio

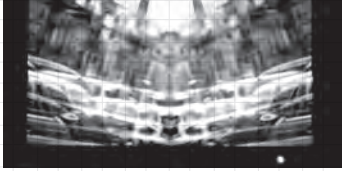
'20 minutes' is a nineteen minute video - shot in the summer of 2009.

Location: in front of a pink wall, under a green mango Tree.

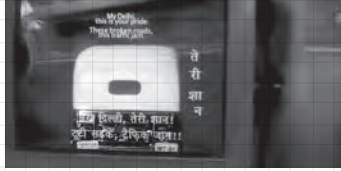
20 minutes  
Tanya Goel



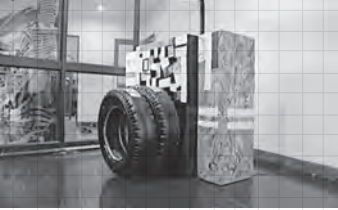




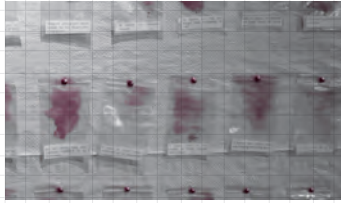
In Between Days 2010  
diF (ish S + Konrad Bayer)



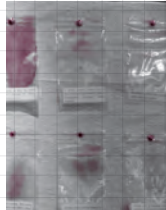
Autopoesis  
Ravikant, Prabhat Kumar



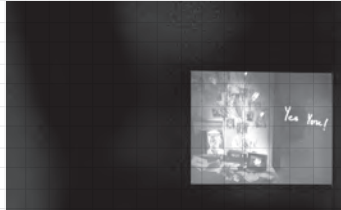
Sense Lens  
Deepankar Gohain



Plush as Dust  
Iram Ghufuran, Amitabh Kumar



Sense Lens  
Deepankar Gohain



Still -Life Study and Samuel  
Paribartana Mohanty



Our solution will provide a platform much like satellite TV, but on audio and in a on-the-move, outdoor-friendly format. The solution will inherently be capable of being used for p2p data exchange and audio streaming. This will enable people to be active broadcasters and not just passive consumers of information.

Ghumakkad Baja  
Prayas Abhinav, Hemant Babu, Ram Bhat, Nishant Sharma



The anatomy of dust carries the history of ourselves and the city we inhabit. Perhaps it will reveal its secrets to the dust collectors, perhaps not.

Plush as Dust  
Iram Ghufuran, Amitabh Kumar



City as Studio: EXB 10. 05



WHAT'S LEFT IS FIT FOR OPTICAL CONSUMPTION ONLY AND MAY EXPLODE IN YOUR EYES









In the midst of every city, there is a substantial and groundless complexity of arrangements and interactions—among people, objects, territories, climates—that take the city outside of its confines. To draw upon this capacity is not an act of a particular remembering. It is not an act of repositioning or relinking an observer to a more perspicacious line of sight. Rather, such complexity is revealed in those moments... in which a place is "blown apart"—the convergence of trajectories (movements, folds, expulsions, gatherings) linked in an apparent impossibility—and thus redistributing what has come before and opening up to what is yet to come.

Abdou Maliq Simone

Introduction, *Urban Africa - Changing Contours of Survival in the City*

## You Are Now Entering **The Studio**

The term 'Delhi Studio' emerged from the phase in the fellowship program in which all the studio participants came together in Delhi for six weeks and brought into focus its core imagination. That of being an opportunity to dislocate and reconstruct objects, people and places in new formations. The endeavour was not only to bring the constantly shifting layers of experience and intensities that make up our cities to find articulation and expression through creative and critical media platforms, but to innovate on the idea of the platform itself.

What emerged, and will be elucidated in the next few pages, hopefully dissolve known models of production and display, and create structures where the relationship of making and viewing are experienced in flexible ways. The spaces and practices in these six weeks were in themselves innovations, and in turn created the conditions for their own transformation. They created new encounters and intersected practices. They became modalities that enabled different configurations of forms. The media environment that emerged therefore was both fluid and dynamic and with it constructed further occasions and orientations for experimentation.

Underlying this was a constant, open and evolving archive of the city, and a continuous process of exchange.

भारतीय गैर न्यायिक

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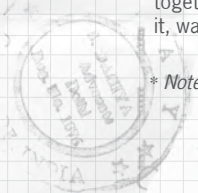
For 2 months in July and August\*

We tried to work out systems and time tables to be with and without each other in the studio, to be together in the city, and to be alone. For many the studio became a second home, others abandoned it. Some brought their canvasses, paints, palettes, brushes, pens and knives; others got in dvd players and speakers. One morning there was a coffee machine, and chalk drawings on the walls of the main room. We made work, thought of new work and looked at previous work with new perspectives.

We travelled across the city in search of spaces, people, material, and histories. We discovered cartographers, co-travellers and guides. Someone took photos of the city, someone shot video, someone danced their way through, someone made music, someone challenged the night, someone misplaced the front door key, someone bought a carpet, someone welcomed others with a red carpet, someone laid the street with paper, someone built a structure, someone told poetry, someone cut up the poets words, someone left a secret gift, someone left the tap running in the bathroom, someone watched, someone was ill. In the end, we all turned to the city.

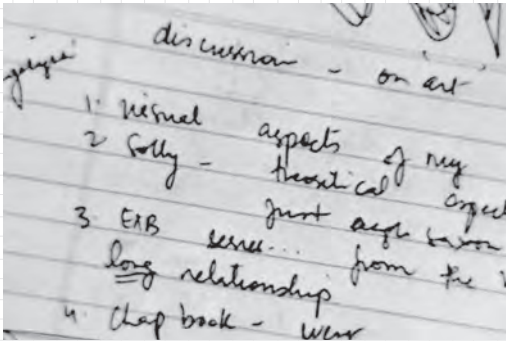
The workings of the six weeks in Delhi when everyone came together-the fellows, the Sarai resource people, the external mentors and interns-felt like creativity itself. Focused, unwieldy, revelatory, faltering, stretching into openness and simultaneously narrowing ones vision. That a group of people could be present together during this process, and find ways in which to grapple with it and think with it, was significant and possibly created new terms for the process itself.

\* Notes from the Sarai Media Lab



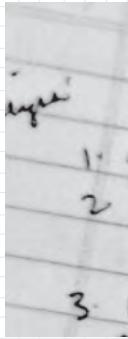
Thinking back

A filmmaker searched for form outside of film, in a city she resisted at first; an architect imagined a temporary structure on a railway platform that connected the city to its outside; a dancer was reluctant to move outside a classical repertoire; a graphic designer imprinted himself on the city's more subversive energies; a visual artist opened everyone's eyes to the night sky through sound; a painter created a giant camera that looked inwards; a graffiti-scrawling street artist unfurled a piece of red cloth through a street in the heart of the old city; a video-artist made electric coils incandescent for a few seconds through a burst of unusual voltage; a printmaker explored illness through a creature that stumbled across layers of translucent net; a poet strung words together like paper lanterns; a writer-photographer walked the nights with a bandmaster's red hat and a toy police car.



Meanwhile the city continued unrelentingly in a season of unprecedented rain and erratic weather. It wasn't important to find a rhythm. Collective energies without the insistence of collaboration, made it easier to be impacted by each other's practices, and for practices to be honed and diverted and transformed for a while. There was an interesting tension between skill and practice-and a deliberate confusion where it was possible to merge the two into a different configuration altogether. The space of making and distributing was thrown into question, but always kept in conversation so it didn't dissipate into meaningless acts and particles.

\* Notes from the Sarai Media Lab



*So the sense of comfort in the collective space in terms of conversation and exchange, outside a pedagogical context - maybe not just the 'City as Studio' programme, but in other situations also. ..What do you think about the potentials for this and what are the structures and how would it begin to work? These 'conversations sideways', outside a pedagogical context?*





the limits of **WANDERING** in sudden **CITIES**  
or Notes from a Studio

The other day I walked through a very narrow, dark lane in Paharganj, and it suddenly opened up into a beautiful courtyard with a Peepal tree and a bright blue stone, brick wall and lively kids playing about, who immediately crowded around me and my camera. At first they were confused ... and then they posed for photographs that they would never see again, and I came out into the crowd, noise and bad roads outside, feeling refreshed by that hidden niche of relative quiet. This experience is some ways sums up my process in Delhi, and my poor camera can only store a tiny, visible part of it. The rest is wandering about somewhere around me. I hope I can call out to it from time to time and it will come and show me a glimpse of itself.

*Radhika Murthy*

...there is a solitude that works in the matrix of the bustle of everyday life.

*Dhrupadi Ghosh*



*What sustains creative spaces?  
Is creativity enough?*



The image that stays with me is of you caught between the structured and isolated transit through the city in a newly built, seamless metro, with your earphones in one ear and with the other listening in on a life that is overlapping yours. Your process hovers on the surface city with images pasted into collages and... at the same time you live it, breathe it and walk it everyday.

*Natasha Llorens*

After returning from Bhoghal, when Iram's wallet was stolen, I tried my hand in the Metro. It was indeed very stupid but I managed to open the zip of a passenger's leather bag hanging on his shoulder. Was it a performance? I dont know. I even put my hand in and touched some papers and envelopes. I quickly moved my hand out and left it unzipped. My heart was pounding, but I nearly experienced the technique of a thief.

*Inder Salim*





*Red Cap: Shamsheer Ali*



*Fill It, Shut It And Forget It: Inder Salim*



*Dance and the City: Ashvari Mazumdar*

*How does value emerge in a collective context for you? Especially when we have moved away from other systems of value which might involve how much you can sell your work for or what award you win. You move out of all of that, and you'll still be having a group of people making work for each other. What then produces value?*



This idea of a heightened state of being - where through every act, all of art practice becomes a realm in which we reach higher intensities. This higher acceleration produces different states of energy. I think we can say that this is the kind of practice that is the heart of life itself. The argument goes, that within this heightened state of intensity that one is driving at, and the life force that is living through it, there are two kinds of grounds of caution or counter argument. One is that, in its lessening there is a possibility of massive disappointments, and disappointments usually produce deep, dark forms of social imaginations. The other is that in this search for a heightened state of being, there could be a loss of an ethical compass, because what you are searching for may come from realms in which you may have to give away the ethical compass guiding you in the world. **So I'm curious whether you face this kind of conflict in your way of being an artist, or in your way of being a person; this conflict of dealing with disappointments in yourself or around you, or dealing with a loss of a compass of where to go or what directions to take?**

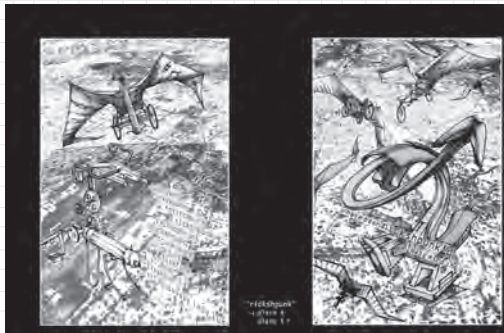
*\* From the Associate Fellows interview series*



*Intervention at the Railway Platform in Taj Nagar: Gaurav Sharma*



*Town Address Not Found: Dhrupadi Ghosh*



*RICKSPHUNK: Samir Parker*

# Arguments for the Imperfect City

Solly Benjamin

December 30<sup>th</sup> 2010

'..Altogether, poor images present a snapshot of the affective condition of the crowd, its neurosis, paranoia, and fear, as well as its craving for intensity, fun, and distraction...(it) speaks also of the countless transfers and reformatting, but also of the countless people who cared enough about them to convert them over and over again, to add subtitles, reedit, or upload them. .. (Apart from resolution and exchange value) One might imagine another kind of value defined by velocity, intensity, and spread..' Hito Steyerl, 'In Defense of the Poor Image' e-Flux Journal #10 November 2009

Perfections dull the mind into political closure. The value of 'practitioners generating knowledge' is that you engage, confront, (and also be subverted) in cityscapes that refuse and usual categories, disciplines, and statics. Some months ago, a group of us explored parts of Delhi: Bhogal, Jungpura extension, Mayur Vihar, and Shashi Garden. These are complex spaces and in a constant dynamic of construction of new floors, the flurry and excitement of the weekly market, and memories of being migrants, settling in, of evictions subverted, others negotiated. The sense of intensity of city building creating histories of significance.

These same spaces are seen differently. Within a geographical frame of being 'central' and others 'outer', from a planners' of non-planned Slums,

that in the way of some sociologists (arguably disconnected from their generative politics) with a history to be instantly vaporized and evicted away. Such given categories are a vocabulary that strives for perfection. They remain a staple in how cities are framed from a policy-planner-activist perspective: the discipline of spatialities; a critical geographers mantra: The frontier to be consumed by the wave of capitalism, and gentrification, and also of the activist's and development NGO's: the rule of law shaped eviction & resettlement; the international bank consultant, in partnership with FICCI accredited developer: functional logic of the rule of law and policy that makes possible the acquisition of land to set the 'globally investible city' and also 'resettled housing' out there for those 'less productive'. These are, as Jeebesh Bagchi points out, motivated by the potential/ anxiety/ need and intent to 'projectify'.

Our traverses disrupted these ideas and rationales. Our discussions meandered with little plan. Meeting residents in their homes undergoing additions of rooms, some more complicated defying a cartesian logic when living space co-joined with a garment accessory factory in a semi basement with a mosque above accessed from another streets. Such surprises extended into our discussions with property dealers over the complex fluidity in land titles – reflected a complexity of political claiming unexplained by frames of the Nation State or 'the market'. Instead, he talked about first term of town council, his own reputation even while he sought new grounds in flatted apartments with access to stable bank financiering. The local politician, an old contact from central city constituencies now nurtured new ones here. In these traverses, terrain is constituted with colliding and intersecting logics,

incompleteness and imperfection seem to open new spaces and possibilities.

Where then are the boundaries of the city and why do we accept a disciplining of perfection? Drawing on the provocative article by Steyerl cited above, can we think of the 'Imperfect City' and refuse normative shackles? Striving towards 'perfection' means the planners anxiety, policy makers' goal, and international development consultant returns, all that lay Bangalore on a path towards Singapore, and others onto Shanghai. Instead, let us reject this to explore territorilizations as being usefully constituted out of collisions, seepages:

- An imperfect law that is necessarily indefinite, fluid, subject to re-constitution and disruption.
- A cityscape whose opaqueness, fragmentation, and illegibility allows the possibility of being incomplete and thus constitutive of subversive, escape, and new formations. We see a city here difficult to survey, and in forms that reject easy conception as unitary and utilitarian devices. Instead, city formative processes that build and morph, multiply tenures and spacialisations.
- Territorial formations not easily placed on a grid and moves beyond the notion of an inner city and an outer periphery. Rather, it poses colliding spaces at time in parallel never to meet.
- Cityscapes where identities shift and conflate to make complex any form of capture, but an engagement in political spaces whose repetitive practices consolidate terrains. For instance, the ten days every August for St Mary's feast that re-works public administration to appropriate policy and the plan beyond a project;

the Thigala appropriation of Christmas that disrupts essentialization of both community harmony and conflict, and of course, election times as spaces of contradictory histories being re-imagined to mobilize alliances.

In our methods, let us radicalize De Certeau's walks presently that lie disciplined by it's towers. Instead, are we here, like the situationists and the practice of City Studio, experiencing the cracks, the fissures and the disruptions? Following Ranciere's *Disagreements* (1998) are these fissures and disjunctures revealing the political, opened up in opaque, stealth like, imperfect ways to erode and disrupt the neat boundaries of the plan, the mega, and the financially solvent? What does this tell us about our descriptions of such a city – in times when 'ethnography' and street knowledge is just another term for the local informant? Should we complete the case study whose neat lessons mark territorial closure? Are these easy illustrations of best practices and 'good governances', narratives of instant loss and marginality and give city spaces to the power of the meta? Or, gain political space via imperfect incompleteness, the smudges and the leak that reveal both stealth and hesitancy. Why not accept the lines not drawn? Or those with uneven edges as necessarily disruptive, disjunctioned, with their edges frayed, their inner layers ruffled and patched? And even when we walk together, do we really walk the same path, or be drawn into exciting imperfections taking the side roads to new wonders?





*Hard Hat, performance by Bhagwati Prasad*





# The Present Of Us

Inder Salim

Going by the classical/modern knowledge of art, one can say that “beauty” was exclusively manufactured in factories called “studios”, but not any more. Much water has drifted under the bridges all over world, both turbulently or gently even, rendering most of it as dead, or less significant. But, yet the desire for production of “beauty” never ceased in our ever-spinning-half-mythical-half-real-world(s), and most of humanity happens to be a chronic chaser of such mirages embedded within the reality of us. Accumulations of all types and all kinds define our respective pasts with a wobbling surface which challenges our sense perception endlessly. And within the conundrum of that continuum, somehow, the idea of beauty gravitates autonomously towards our respective presents, if one is keen to understand the life “in detail” with all its myriad faces, types and textures, touches and smells even. Thus, performance art as a genre, to walk along with other genres, and with all other so called non-artistic genres even.

‘The present of us’, is indeed a loaded term, and contains all. The overwhelming nature of “all” is perhaps, the reason that the art world has begun to take a serious note of the shift of this space called “studio” to the space beyond the conventional studio. Thus, the space-as-city-as-studio takes shape; for an instant discovery of the city with a fresh look, without prejudice of what is ideal and



*Street Walkers: Manola K Gayatri*



*Bodily: Ambarish Satwik*

what is unplanned about it. And 'the city' indeed has all the ingredients which makes it look like a studio like space, churning dreams endlessly, and therefore a ready-made stage for the production of "beauty". But can "beauty be produced consciously? Yes-no-yes is the answer. In fact, the shift from studio to the city has happened radically during the last few decades which is generating critical questions, vital to the very understanding of art. The city is teaching different languages to its inhabitants and most of us are familiar with a few we learn in school. The 'present of us' is perhaps willingly inviting all the speakers of the city to participate in the new understanding of life and art. It has its own madness and practioners of art will reflect and share the same. The present in that sense is never in a position to define, and hence there is no will to arrive at some unified theory of art, but ...



In the 'city as studio', the controlled space for the ideal production of an art-object is now amidst the frenzy of compelling routine, and intermittently subjected to the polemics of 'the other' " in a more twisted way than one has the power to manage in a traditional studio. So, beauty, a new beauty, if one can say so, once produced/perceived can be safely taken home, kept inside the heart, or for memory, or taken to the gallery space, or left intact with its site-specificity, where one can share it with others, or gather critical opinion around the very nature of its presence.



Speaking traditionally again, the present is also about genres like theatre, music etc, but perhaps there is an element of "the present" performing more acutely in performance art. It is this quality that it can engage the most temporary thing like 'smell' as material to perform and convey the concept, if any. It is in the

nature of this genre that it resists documentation, or is packaged to be represented in another space without its lover/creator hovering around. Since it is about 'the body' in the first place, and therefore, it is the present of that presence...

But, the body was perhaps, never bereft of the range of subjectivities criss-crossing the material that it is made up of. In the cycle of the city akin to life cycle, the binaries are collapsing more rapidly than we perceive the difference between two distinct analogs/shades giving birth to a new set of binaries, and therefore new possibilities to explore the hidden of it. For an artist with a new muse (without conscious muse ) in the mind, a road side corn seller is more interesting a spectacle than a glossed McDonald selling burgers. The latter stands for constipation and the former is humorously laxative. But the city has all. Ironies change shapes and shades, and are here to stay with us, and the artist is perhaps playing the role to "disseminate the sensible" only if the body is intensely woven within the subjective discourse in a more discursive way. So, in this 'city-as-studio' experiment, it was somehow mandatory not to exclude consciously any subjectivity that is "entering us through all the pores of our body"

So, to begin with, the participants with different groundings in different disciplines/aesthetics rubbed their shoulders in a studio within this 'city-as studio' concept. The rub: the process was the performance in itself. In the final outcome, one can safely say that the objects/installations that were exhibited along with other performance pieces by others were quit in sync with each other. Both inside and outside of the process was visibly moving in free floating manner that took care of all the elements, including the body.

P.S: about smell:  
the olfactory nerve, responsible for taking note of smells around, happens to be most sensitive of all nerves and sleeps quickly after initial activism. But ironically it creates a very strong memory in the mind. My school days happened around a large wild poppy field where we used to play and do wired things during breaks. So, whenever I happen to smell a poppy flower or little opium it quickly kicks me in the space of that Time: my past. The present often looks upside down continuum...



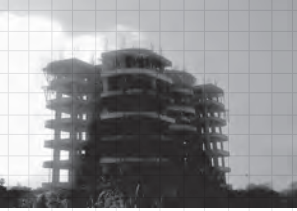


Everyone in the world is performing. We are all performers.  
The particular\_ performance you are inclined towards, perhaps prepares the surface  
for its staging.



*Red Cap, Shamsheer Ali*

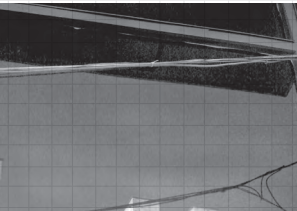
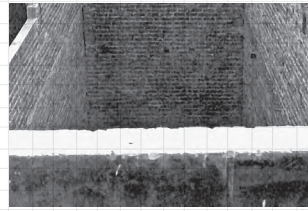
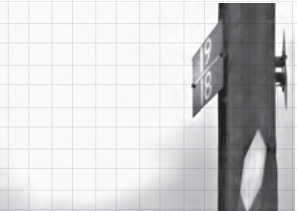




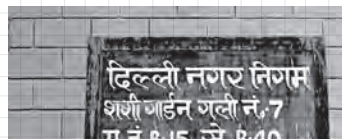
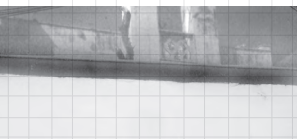
When I was a schoolboy I discovered that a house alone does not exist, that it does not end at the outer limits of the ground floor but continues onto the streets, the garden, then to the house across the street. The house across the street itself continues into what is in front of it, and so forth.

To imagine ones house is to imagine the whole world.

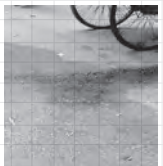
*Yona Friedman*



The city gathers within its gaps and layers, to what is already gathered. When we do something, do we add layers or fill up the gaps?



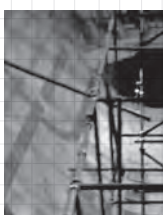
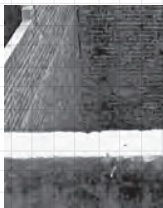




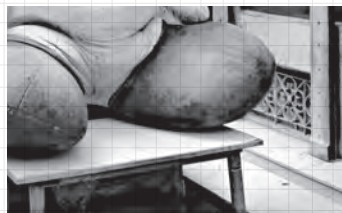
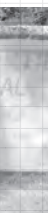
I need to perform in the social canvas, rather than the one stretched on a frame.



The conversation should continue as struggle. Much remains to emerge!



Space that is continually transformed by our reactions/physical movements in it.



Perseids meteor shower cancelled

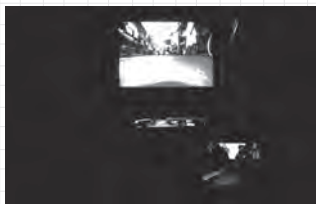




# UNRAVELING EVERYTHING

that unwinds

The interim exhibition of  
the Delhi Studio  
July 30, 2010



Both the evenings were so different. I really loved and enjoyed the 30th of July, and the 20th of August a little less so. On the 30th I was not anxious, or stressed out, and I wasn't even in the space and I loved that I wasn't in the space where the work was, and that people were just there, either doing something or not doing anything or interacting or not interacting. What happened that day was self consciousness about the work. It became about presenting it. It was a very closed group on the 30th so it was just for us, but I was still presenting it to people. It wasn't like I wasn't aware of that. Maybe my mood shifted after the one interaction I had which happened very early in the evening, which threw me completely. It made me aware that I hadn't thought about enough, but I didn't want to think so much either. I now understand that by asking people to lie down, you must make sure that you give duration.

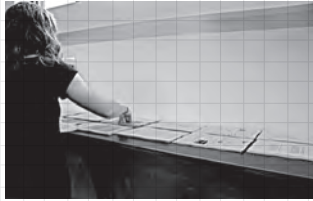
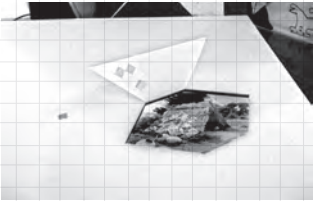


You can't expect me to come here and commit to indefinite amounts of time. What I realized is a lot of that is anxiety, but it might be interesting to play with and work with. So it made me very aware of my audience in a way I haven't been before. This time it was a more direct experience and it required participation in a way that my other work hasn't, which has always been more passive.



Rohini Devasher  
on 'We Are Star  
Stuff'

EXB 10.04  
August 20, 2010



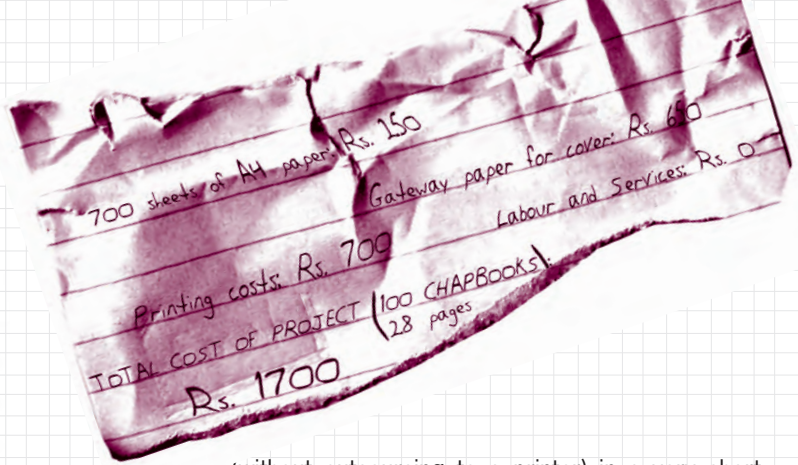
What we had on the 30th, was really almost random ideas, which I had no pressure on me to articulate more than what an almost first instinct had been. I definitely felt a need for the later exhibition, to find some kind of expression that would appeal to a wider audience of people. I felt that was an opportunity to make something of it. And the fact that I did it, I mean I'm not terribly thrilled with the final way it came out - in fact literally till the morning of that day, it was very amorphous... I liked and enjoyed that space. In fact what's been best these past couple of weeks, is the amorphous nature of our engagement. We are allowed to define and choose how we want to engage.

Samir Parker on 'Ricksphunked'









(without outsourcing to a printer) in a very short time (one week), on a minimal budget, investigating what it means to collectively produce a “hand-made” book in the contemporary Indian context.

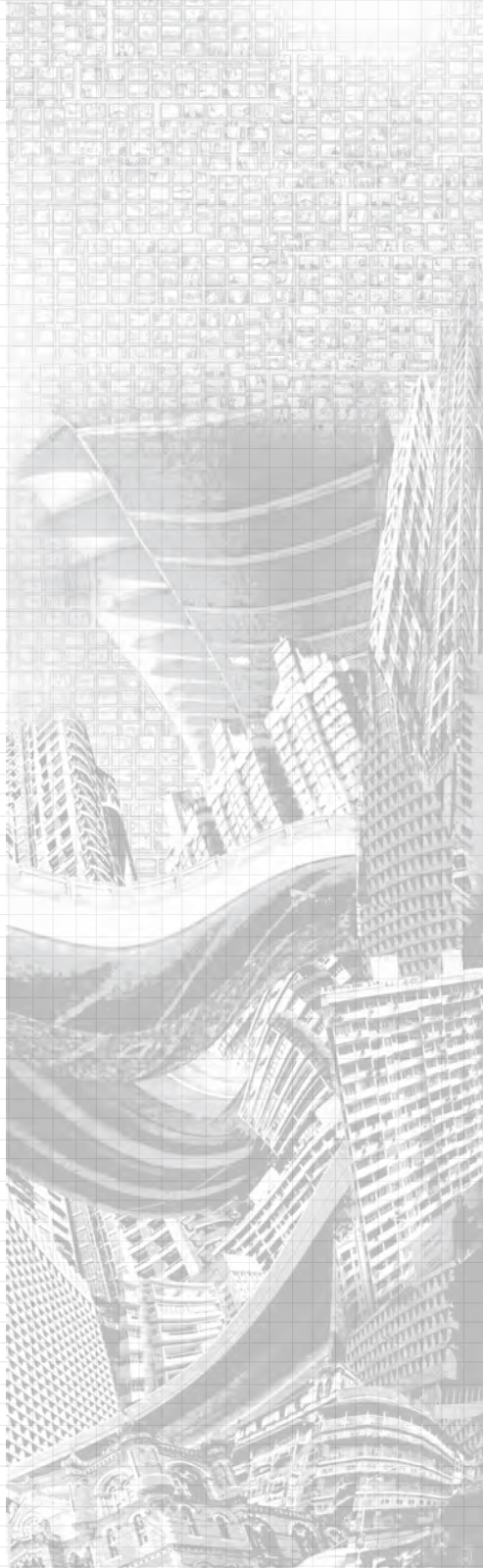
At the event, as part of the performance, each audience member received a free copy of the limited edition chapbook. The event featured a short discussion on the possibilities for innovation in poetry publication before beginning the performances.

Apart from Nabina Das, a writer who was already one of the 2010 ‘City as Studio’ fellows, the event brought in five other poets writing in Hindi in English, selected partly in consultation with the online journal Pratilipi: Geet Chaturvedi, Giriraj Kiradoo, Monica Mody, Nitoo Das and Vyomesh Shukla.



# REPORTS

Excerpts



## POETRY DARWAZA

### Nabina Das

Come Aitaa

Let's walk down the paddy lanes just till the town bus stand  
While you wait for aunt Moromi; I'll tell you why Aslam won't sell  
fish cheap even if you swear on the hungry-mouthed floods  
forsaken huts and fungal pots pans we won't ever throw away  
but if you wonder why the one-eyed Harekrishna didn't return  
from the big market of Ganeshguri, no ID, no whereabouts  
Aitaa, I swear on my loveless luck I'd have to invent a new fairytale.  
*(for Deepankar Gohain)*

Didn't Ghalib live here? My rickshaw man pedaled and smiled  
He bought his quarter peg here every evening, walked from there!  
No wonder I imagined your beard hair on the banister, wind-tangled  
*(for Ashavari Mazumdar)*

Like Pablo Neruda  
I want the body of an island  
Rust and free  
Parts loafing in the surf  
Or become a blue vessel  
Of migrant shame, a chipped wall  
Of rose petal and lime spits on  
A summer night when the river  
Watches a whispering constellation.  
*(for Rohini Devasher)*

Legs that grew to be tall buildings  
little buildings concrete buildings  
legs that became pillars, posts and pipes  
standing in an acid moon they were shadows  
with legs that forgot to have their feet  
toes that could wriggle out of mossy pools  
Badar Badar Ghazi Ghazi  
Badar Badar Ghazi Ghazi  
*(for Dhrupadi Ghosh)*

Before she sits down  
On summer-driven bricks  
She will pat her animal skin  
The blued forehead dreaming  
a boon; she will look, three-eyed  
the sleepy ones closed and  
the mouth open, singing a saliva chant  
then she will rise, Shiva of the shantytown.  
*(for Radhika Murthy)*

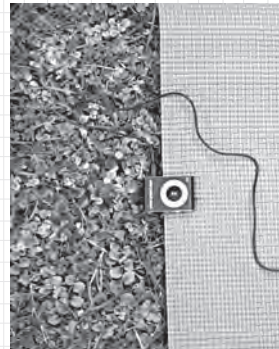


## DIARY OF AN ASTRO-NOMAD

Rohini Devasher

Beginning in July 2009 through to August 2010, I have traveled back and forth across the country with different individuals as part of the process, each trip focused on a stellar event or site. From Patna in July 2009 for the longest total solar eclipse, Varkala for the Annual Eclipse, the Leonids Meteor shower to Mecca's of astronomy such as the Indian Astronomical Observatory at Hanle, Ladakh and the Giant Meter Wave Radio Telescope array just outside Pune.

All these trips were extraordinary, these sites, hidden away from most civilization, far from any towns and villages are almost symbolic of the individuals that populate them. The astronomers too escape the city as often as possible to find the stars, unspoiled and comparatively untouched. I realized while in Leh and Pune, that I do a very similar thing right here in Delhi. I drift through or rather across the city, never really touching down completely. Astronomy offers that form of escape, offers these sites of pilgrimage; (I can call an eclipse chaser's journey nothing else) far from people and place. The video and photo documentation done on these trips is still to be sorted and digested. In almost every way, it is like nothing I have done before and I am not certain I have the tools or the language to address them yet.





We talked about the history of 'observation' and how it evolved from cult like beginnings to become a recognized form of science. How Astronomy is unique by virtue of being the oldest of the observational sciences and because of all the scientific fields, there will always be a need for the amateur simply because there aren't enough people looking at the stars. What it requires of the imagination and the psyche to deal with a deep time science, spanning thousands of years. Astronomy as a form of archaeology. The position of the 'amateur'. The schizophrenic juxtaposition of the virtual versus the real and the anxieties and false expectations that produces.

For the City-as-studio open day I put together 2 audio pieces, Eclipse and Cathexis, both 10 minutes long, strung together from the various conversations. The audio pieces were played on 10 MP3 players arranged in the garden outside Sarai. People were invited to lie down in the garden, under the sky and listen to them.

The results were unexpected. There was an intimacy to the experience that didn't exist before that particular scenario played itself out. As few as one, as many as 10 people lying down together gazing up at the sky, mimicking the act of amateur astronomers world over, and like them linked by common experience, in this case of the audio files, of the experience of this 'collective rest or sleep'.

There is one moment when a young amateur astronomer, Shubham asks you to put your finger against the sky and imagine the space your nail blocks, and then to further imagine a huge cluster of stars in that space. At that point many people responded physically by extending their arms towards the sky.

## RESOURCE WILL STOP CLAIMING THE HUMAN WAR TO MEMORY

**Dhrupadi Ghosh**

I stopped learning you since I came back to double land.

There is no grey pergola.

Neither sap green. Except some barren land with thin barbed wire.

You don't even miss to see. Run and rudder.

Rudder run.

A new trench in some other land.

I heard its some twenty-first trench

Linear betrayal of Verkhovna Rada

Verkhovna Rada is no Chambal.

Non living or re living some uncensored death.

Its pouring heavy this way.

I killed some young grand planner

And buried his body next to hers.

She got scurvy initially. Extra growth in her skinny body.

Or might be scabies. Something contagious

She could survive the warfront by planting the disease.

She was dead yet not killed.

Did she eat some potato skins? Run and rudder

Run rudder

Two de bodied message and some de fertile map.

Who was younger or more thin!

Am no afraid of killing this para protection. Am no stable in this town.

I have to feed myself on non weak and resource will stop claiming the human war to memories.

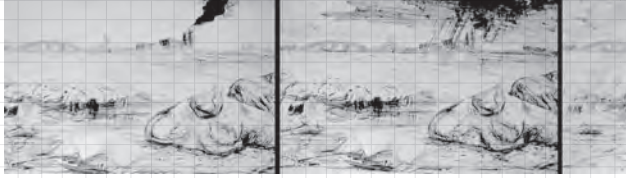




To you Kobad Ghandy, Malcom x, Khurram Pervez  
or Satish Shetty and any other morrows. Run and  
rudder, rudder run, when resource will stop claiming  
the Human War to memories.



Some small town girl stormed my city.  
My country road and the big prison.  
There is command in her voice  
And a necessity unfurls.  
Childhood monastery, mixed land use,  
non-confirmation.



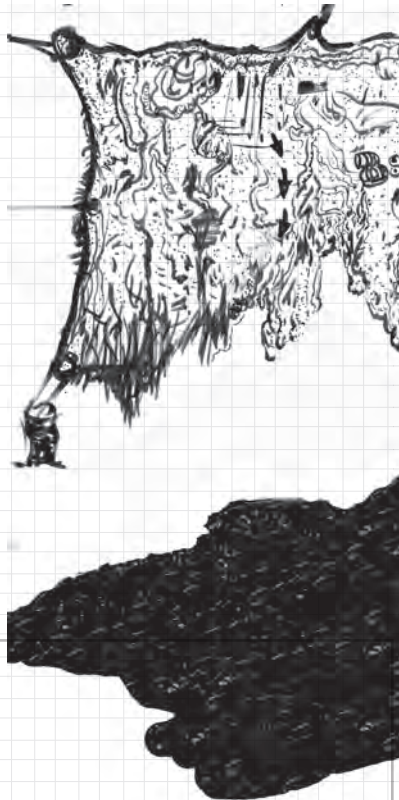
## CITY STUDIO AND POST CITY STUDIO

**Goutam Ghosh**

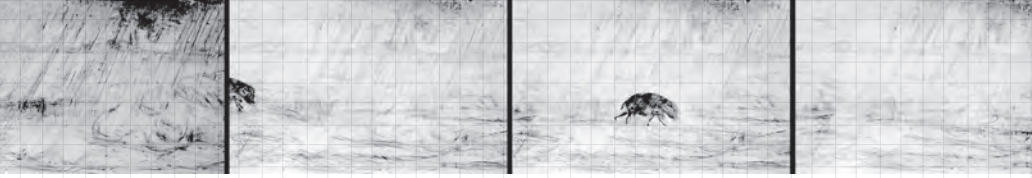
A new context gives me new working circumstances. To deal with them formally, materially and conceptually is a challenging task. Every situation calls for a unique adaptation to a new language, new technology and new materials.

It is really funny to see how one can play around new forms. For instance, a video artist doesn't need to edit her video like a professional video editor.

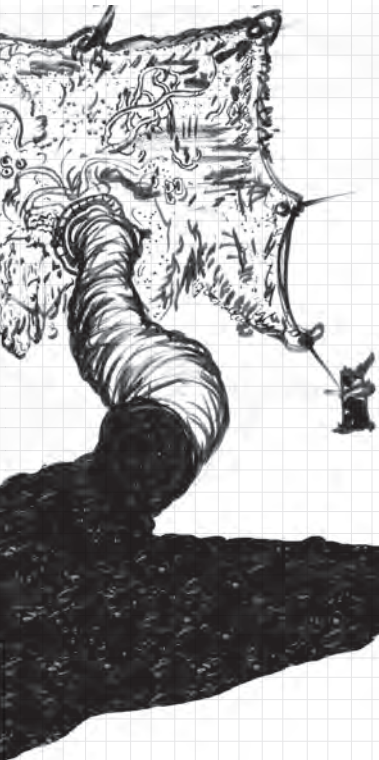
I think temperament is a common thread among all these: like the temperament I use in painting, would be more or less similar, when I turn to photography, editing, sculpting, stitching or making a cup of tea. (...)







I am interested in art which has expanded the definition of art, and enriched the field by looking out side; it is my continuous search to dissolve the wall between work-time and off-time, for instance I have a fascination for other art forms, like making tea. I dream to have a 'tea laboratory', and archiving and restoring gramophone records. Art is the thing that makes life more interesting than art itself.



## THE EYE OF AN ARTIST

**Deepankar Gohain**

Every work of art, apart from being original in its physical sense is imaginary and visionary. If contemporarity is judged by the topicality of the artworks, the work dies slowly and loses the timeless quality that every work of art tries to achieve. Art is specific to time beyond its limit and is highly oblivious to acceptance and rejection. A good piece of art is there-even in the darkness-it's there to speak its words of beauty and wisdom. Its beauty lies not just in the eyes of the beholder, but also in his ability to think of the world spirit and of the life order. Art is important because it chronicles the changing times, and, as it transfuses to a new body or paradigm, it carries forward the residues of the past.





## CITY AS A COLLAGE

**Radhika Murthy**

I think initially in this process, I concentrated too much on being a stranger to everything here.

I always felt that this fragmented, seemingly confused approach to work was a detriment, something I need to 'improve' in order to work seriously. But your analysis and my time at Sarai have, to my delight have made me think that I can actually make this a viable approach. And that is very exciting.

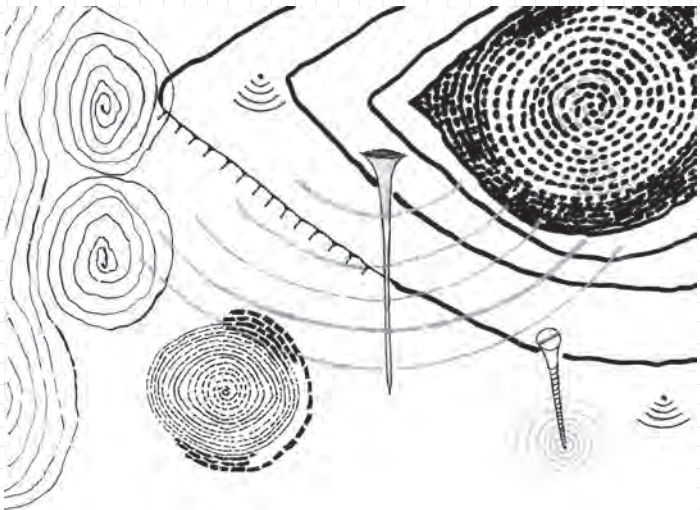
Delhi as a collage of Times and Spaces overlapping each other, was a concept highly evident to me and the videos emerged. I played them in a loop to highlight the concept of continuity of space and time.

While taking photographs of the collages, some frames seemed to create real spaces. These spaces then got populated by narratives that I encountered in my wanderings through the city. Sometimes, a real conversation is a story in itself and sometimes the story, tired of remaining a secret, reveals itself in imagination. These narratives speak individually and collectively to show the soul of the Myriad City.

Most times, there is too much going on, on the ground and under the ground in a city, to look up into the sky, obscured constantly by electricity

wires, shop awnings, buildings, billboards and what not. But searching for pieces of sky among all these obstructions, and later remembering the place under that sky, created a different personal geography, of the city for me.

Afterall, we are all under the same sky. The sky is mine, yours and everybody's.





## RISK, RESPONSIBILITY, BLAME : LANDSCAPE/MINDSCAPE

### Paribartana Mohanty

“Experience is rubbish”, I said

I can't prove it. I do not take the responsibility to prove it. Nevertheless, my experience always fails. The same thing happened during city studio as well. Experience guarantees certain clues. We understand those clues as knowledge, which perhaps helps. I am doubtful about those clues. It need not be necessary that the available clue will solve the mystery. I remember a story by Dr. Hrusikesh Panda (an Oriya novelist), in which a frustrated girl runs away from her house, and unknowingly sits in a bus. After some time she finds an empty vast landscape through the window. She tries to lose herself in the landscape but hears something. The voice was coming from the back seat. Someone had said, 'it is a cremation ground!'. Her free-wheeling thoughts stopped after hearing that. She started searching for the clues, some hints to ascertain, but could not find any. The man said again 'it's a cremation ground'.

Experience is a story which we can share . Life is politically manipulated. Personal and public is very much intermingled. Interest and options are not very separate terms, though used separately. Like our bank balance our knowledge is controlled in a way, if we accept this fact. (...)Experience is memory,



not a knowledge-system on which one can rely. Experience is past. I do not know if History could be called an experience in such a case, but I doubt. Experience brings the 'claim'. Claims of knowing or understanding better, claims of occupying, claims of representing, claims of monopoly, copyright and hierarchy so on and so forth. Still I do not know. Still I am not convinced. Still I doubt! Which opens a vast space for experimentation for me? (...)



I do not create an ART. I create something, through which I imagine a grand mythology. Imagination is a journey, adventurous. I travel in imagination. In the imagination, I relate, relate to the unknown. Therefore, imagination is beautiful. In the process of 'post-mughal HUNTING SCENE', I saw a grand mythology like Ramayana or Mahabharata, which was secular and democratic. I am not a-political, even I do not mind to be political. When I use the word 'mythology', I mean a psychological space, a mindscape where I saw a hunting scene very much like the famous mughal hunting scene depicted in miniatures. Brutal and beautiful, unlike war or a combat, where there is an 'enemy'. The hunters have covered/masked faces. Nevertheless, I recognize them through their gestures, 'the pointed finger', pointing ubiquitously. I would not mind, if it had happened during the pre-historic age. But Today, I mind it! I point towards you. I blame you. Who said "ahum brahmasmi" [I am the Brahma (god)].



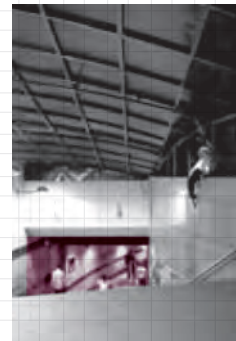
The mindscape turned into a hungry landscape. In the next chapter I find, all the cameras have turned into guns. A machine, pointed towards the other, aiming the subject, the target is ready, a button or a trigger pressed...click...click...click... This is not the end of the story! I am not satisfied how it ends. I explore. I take the responsibility. From the beginning, I knew that there is a risk. So I put the drapery, hide the identity. It could be you, anybody or me. But I knew no audience will be blamed, they will clap and they will appreciate. Nobody takes the risk, responsibility and the blame. At the end of the mythology, I find a narcissist auditorium.

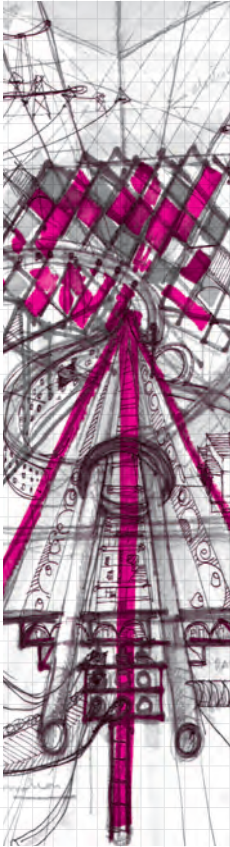
## URBAN KATHAK

**Ashavari Mazumdar**

The 'studio' also facilitated collaboration with a photographer, Shamsheer where he photographed me 'dancing' in the Mandi House area. I enjoyed this interaction - it also made me reconsider notions of 'performance', performative space, the body's relationship to space. It is interesting for me to think of my 'performance' at Mandi House documented by photos, as a part of my response to Mandi House and Kathak.

My final project was a dance-theatre piece titled 'City' which explored movement in the urban Indian context. The movement vocabulary explored the intersections of 'daily' and 'extra-daily' movements employing Thangta, classical Kathak and 'daily' movements. I think of the urban as a 'multi-media' experience and projected live video feed along with a video recording during the performance. Shudhabrata had suggested projecting on the body and I also experimented with this during the performance. Classical Kathak assumes certain relationships of words and movements- in this performance I attempted to push this relationship in new directions. I also attempted to explore the convergence/divergence of theatre and dance - movements from daily situations morphing into 'dance'.





## URBAN JUGAAD

**Gaurav Sharma**

Jugaad Nagar is an urban model proposed for the National Capital Region of Delhi. It is located on waste land next to corridors of mega infrastructure projects. These megastructure projects are planned and designed so that they can be tapped and appropriated. Individual and collective appropriation of these megastructures using innovative pluralistic interventions is officially encouraged and facilitated.

Jugaad Nagar is built and modified using a decentralised shared process. The basic or 'source' code for Jugaad Nagar is freely available to users to edit and reuse on their own, and then feed back into the public sphere. In this way, changes and improvements to Jugaad Nagar can be made rapidly and by a multitude of different types of users, through 'decentralised peer review'.

Jugaad Nagar is permeable to various types of users, with points of ambiguity in the civic sphere which blurs the boundaries between public and private. It offers high density; mix use fabric, including self-build housing with a range of secure and varied forms of tenure.

As conventional languages, styles and norms are done away, new forms of urbansim emerge in Jugaad Nagar. These forms are translated into new models, creative practices and innovative processes.



RICKSPHUNK

Samir Parker

drawn to ideas of anarchy on a grand scale; the ironic and seditious, i pick at the threads of the grand narratives of the times what unravel are those subversive character-journeys secreted away in the interstitial spaces of this anti-sagacity

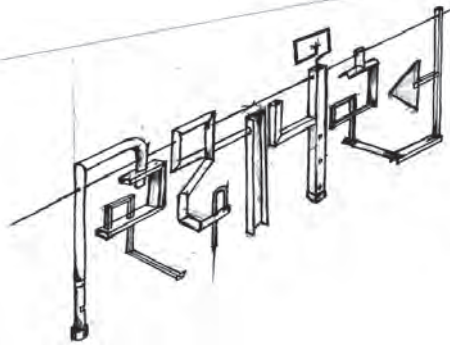






brace ur bowels  
or  
chuck  
ur chuddeez

if ur  
faint of  
heart  
or ass  
this will  
break u



# BIOGRAPHIES

## *Shamsher Ali, Delhi*

Shamsher Ali is a writer and practitioner with the Delhi based Cybermohalla Ensemble. He is co-author of 'Trickster City: Writings from the belly of the metropolis' (Penguin India, 2010) and the text and graphic book, 'No Apologies for the Interruption' (Sarai-CSDS, 2011). His writings and photographs have been published in the Sarai Readers. He is currently working on a book of his photographs.

## *Solomon Benjamin, Bangalore*

Solomon Benjamin is an urbanist operating out of Bangalore. Benjamin's research over the last decade looks at how land based territorialisation shapes the globalization of cities and towns, where politics joints economy. Benjamin has published in leading international journals like the Int. Journal of Urban and Regional Research (IJURR), Environment and Urbanization (E+U), GeoForum, and the SARAI reader, as well as in European journals with articles in French, German, and Spanish. He has a PhD from MIT in Urban Studies and started as an architect in 1985 from SPA Delhi.

## *Nabina Das, Delhi*

Nabina Das is a poet, fiction writer and flâneuse. A fiction editor at StoryQuarterly journal (Rutgers University), she is completing her MFA thesis at Rutgers. Nabina's first novel "Footprints in the Bajora" is available from Cedar Books, India, while her poetry and prose have been published in international publications. A participant at the prestigious 2011 NYS Summer Writers Institute, Nabina has won prizes in major Indian poetry contests. A 2007 Joan Jakobson fiction scholar and 2007 Julio Lobo fiction scholar, she has worked in journalism and media for about 10 years.

## *Rohini Devasher, Noida*

Rohini Devasher has trained in painting and print making. Standing at the threshold of art, science and fiction, her practice is an exploration of processes of emergence where an increasing complexity is built through layers and recursion. She has been associated with the Khoj International Artists Association, Delhi for the past few years.

### ***Dhrupadi Ghosh, Kolkata***

Dhrupadi Ghosh describes herself as a labour who loves to change the bureaucrat identity of space <http://shunyasthan.blogspot.com/>

### ***Goutam Ghosh, Delhi***

Goutam has studied visual arts and art history from M S University, Baroda. His work has been shown in several group shows, including 'Video Wednesdays' in Gallery Espace, Delhi.

### ***Deepankar Gohain, Dibrugarh***

Deepankar studied literature, fine arts and art history. He is the co-founder of a non profitable organization by the name of 'Vatsalya' in Assam that works for community development. He worked as a research assistant in three documentaries produced by Doordarshan and has experience in theatrical activities. He is now a full time visual artist experimenting in diverse mediums deriving elements from the 'Performing arts' , from the folk and popular traditions and also from the new media interactive arts. Deepankar curates art shows and is an occasional writer; he plays the guitar and the dotara alongside few popular Assamese folk instruments.

### ***Iram Ghufraan, Delhi***

Iram Ghufraan's work largely emerges from various interdisciplinary creative practices. She works within filmmaking, photography, research and writing, and their intersections. Iram's work has been shown in several international contexts - Watermans Arts Centre, World Social Forum and ISEA among others. She received the 'Arts Network Asia' grant for 'Delhi Commons', a project initiated as a critical response to the Commonwealth Games in Delhi. Iram has been associated with the Sarai Programme since 2003.

### ***Irmelin Joelson, Göteborg***

Irmelin Joelson is a trained sociologist with a focus on urban theory and critical geography. After educational detours to London, Shanghai,

Oxford and Bangalore, she is currently based in Göteborg, Sweden, holding a position as program and communication coordinator at Göteborgs Konsthall. Working as a freelance writer/artist her interest lies within the bodily resemblances with architecture within socio-spatial practices and the economy of bodies. Recent work has been dealing with the economy of density and boredom.

### ***Amitabh Kumar, Delhi***

Amitabh Kumar is a designer/artist from New Delhi. He has worked mostly in the comic book form and is currently trying to locate narratives in a single composite image. Amitabh has been with the Sarai Programme since 2006.

### ***Natasha Marie Llorens, New York***

Natasha Marie Llorens is an independent writer and curator based in NYC. Her interests include social practice, and the overlap between contemporary art, architecture, and urbanism. Recent projects include *Out of Blue*, curated with Helga Kristoffersen at ISCP in NY, *Mary Walling Blackburn's Radical Citizenship: The Tutorials*, and *Double Session* at the Center for Curatorial Studies at Bard College. Llorens is a PhD candidate in Art History at Columbia University.

### ***Ashavari Mazumdar, Delhi***

Ashavari Majumdar has trained in Kathak under Pt Vijay Shankar in Calcutta and from the legendary Pt Birju Maharaj in Delhi. She was awarded the National Scholarship by the Government of India to pursue her training in Kathak. She is a recipient of a grant for 'New Performance' from the India Foundation for the Arts for her work as a dancer-choreographer. She has explored various media like film and photography. Ashavari scripted and directed a dance film produced by Channel 4, UK on the occasion of 60 years of Indian Independence. Ashavari is empanelled as a soloist by the ICCR (Indian Council for Cultural Relations under the Ministry of External Affairs), and has performed and taught at various prestigious venues in India and abroad.

### ***Paribartana Mohanty, Delhi***

Paribartana Mohanty has a background in print-making and art history and works largely in video. His works have been shown in galleries and film festivals.

### ***Radhika Murthy, Pune***

Radhika Murthy is a traveller, writer and filmmaker. Her student films and independent work has been screened at a number of film festivals in India and abroad. She was invited to participate in *Osian's Cinefan Talent Campus* in 2008. Her Diploma film from the Film and TV Institute of India- *MOTORBIKE*, was selected as part of the Indian Panorama and screened in Goa, and New Delhi. Photography, making collages and music are some of her other pursuits.



### ***Vivek Narayanan, Delhi***

Vivek Narayanan's first book was *Universal Beach* (2006); a second, *Mr. Subramanian*, is forthcoming. His poems have appeared widely online and in print, including in anthologies like *The Bloodaxe Book of Contemporary Indian Poetry and Language for a New Century* (W.W. Norton, 2008). He is Co-Editor of the online literary journal *Almost Island*. He was a coordinator for Sarai-CSDS's Independent Fellowship Programme and a mentor for the City Studio Fellowship last year.

### ***Samir Parker, Mumbai***

Samir Parker has a practice that seeks to engage with the more intriguing ideas of the times through diverse individual projects and collaborations with artists, galleries and institutions. He has designed and produced installations, exhibitions, publications, audio-visuals and multimedia for among others UDRI Mumbai, The London School of Economics' Cities Project, UNICEF in India and Sri Lanka, Bodhi Art and CAMP. A graduate of the School of Interior Design, CEPT University, Ahmedabad; he continues to teach and design curricula. More recently he has been working on a series of graphic narratives. Part social and urban commentary, part architectural and subversive fantasy, some of his work may still be up on the staircase to the Sarai basement.

### ***Bhagwati Prasad, Delhi***

Bhagwati Prasad is writer, researcher, performance and graphic artist based in Delhi. He has written two graphic novels *Tinker Solder Tap* and *The Water Cookbook*. He has been with the Sarai Programme since 2002.

### ***Inder Salim, Delhi***

Active in action/performance art since 1999, initiating performances with upcoming artists at different levels. A conceptual artist who performs both inside the gallery space and outside in the public domain. He has performed at different venues both abroad and in India. Art Karavan International was his major initiative to bring artists non-artists from different backgrounds on the same platform. Photography, poetry, blogging are his other activities. Presently he is working as a core member of a 1000 strong group on Face Book which is working for the reconciliation between Hindus and Muslims in Kashmir. This exercise is also part of the artists exchange idea between Berlin and Kashmir, which is an on going collaborative project CHARLIE.POINT. KASHMIR with Silke Kastner in Berlin. He was a mentor for the City Studio Fellowship last year.

### ***Priya Sen, Delhi***

Priya Sen's work as an artist and filmmaker, has been screened at various film festivals and exhibitions, including the 'Forum Expanded' at the Berlinale and the travelling 'Indian Highway'. She received the Charles Wallace fellowship in 2010 for the Gasworks residency in London. Her recent work has been shown at the Khoj Studios and



currently at the Vadehra Art Gallery in New Delhi. Priya worked with Cybermohalla and Sarai Media Lab since 2005.

### ***Gaurav Sharma, Delhi***

Gaurav Sharma is an architect and designer. He has a diverse portfolio of original work ranging from new-build architecture to installation art to the creative modification of historic buildings. His work had been featured in *Domus*, *Architecture + Design* and *Design Today*. He is a recipient of Scotland International Scholarship awarded by the British Council. His individual entry was shortlisted for the AMD Open Architecture Network Challenge 2008.

### ***Raqs Media Collective, Delhi***

The Raqs Media Collective (Jeebesh Bagchi, Monica Narula & Shuddhabrata Sengupta) have been variously described as artists, curators, editors and catalysts of cultural processes. Their work, which has been exhibited widely in major international spaces and events, locates them along the intersections of contemporary art, historical enquiry, philosophical speculation, research and theory—often taking the form of installations, online and offline media objects, performances and encounters. They live and work in Delhi, based at Sarai, Centre for the Study of Developing Societies, an initiative they co-founded in 2000. They are members of the editorial collective of the Sarai Reader series, and have curated “The Rest of Now” and co-curated “Scenarios” for Manifesta 7.