

ARTSOME REVIEW FEATURED

INSERT 2014 – The Sharp Edge of the Global Contemporary

Reviewed by Payel Majumdar

The month long installation INSERT 2014, curated by the [Raqs Media Collective](#) at Maati Ghar, Indira Gandhi National Centre of Arts, is a multiple assault to the senses, a universe of arguments, analysis and solutions specific to the problems being addressed. Titled *The Sharp Edge of the Global Contemporary*, INSERT 2014 takes art back into a realm where it stands for a reservoir of radical ideas for societal change. Inlaks Shivdasani Foundation has produced the exhibition, and the concern which Azad Shivdasani, the chief sponsor had was that it should be socially relevant. This vision seems to have been fulfilled in the final outcome.



Maatighar, venue for INSERT 2014

Over 30 artists from all over the world have come together for this project, from Taiwan to Imphal, working on media varying from sound, image, installation to performance, all coming together in a single rhetoric. Artists posit themselves as game changers, the voice of dissonance situating themselves as visionaries of an indefinite future full of ideas, and hence teeming with possibilities.

INSERT 2014 starts at the root of this and leaves behind your regular art exhibit to move into greyer areas of form, a fluid state which can best be described as a conglomeration of similar thinking artists working with varied media collected at one place, with similar thought that binds them together. It is a multi-pronged attack on one's sensibilities, and more than a modicum of trajectories explored by the different artists can be expected to come through with tangible results. For instance, sample the seventeen bodies like the Delhi Public Library and Doll's Museum identified by RAQS Media Collective in and around Delhi which, while disused or abused right now, can be revamped as a cultural space suited to contemporary needs. Elaborate floor plans of the Delhi Public Library drawn to scale at the site of the exhibit point to both current floor plan, and how it can be remolded to evolving needs of the city.

The Politics of Abandonment



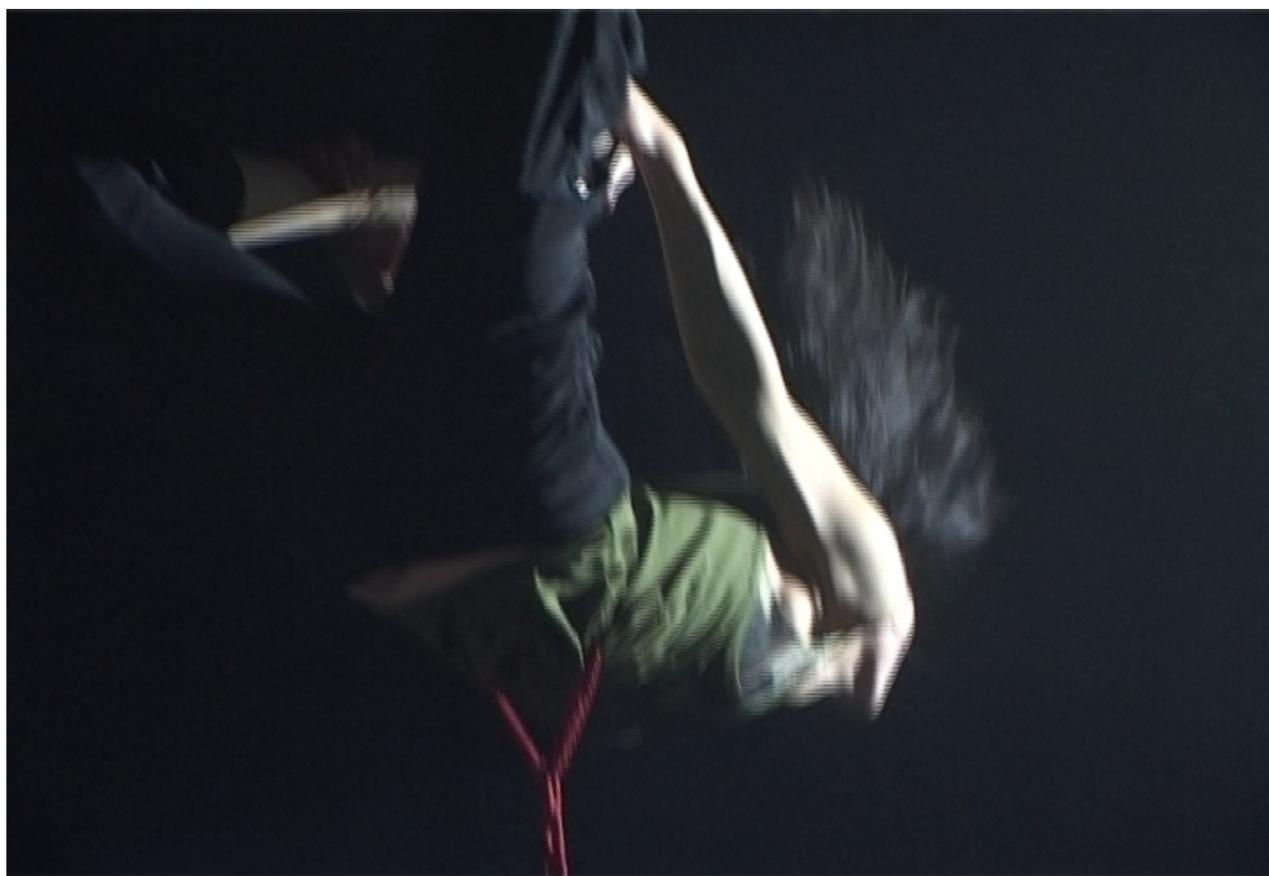
Fittingly placed close to each other is the former installation and Yao Jui Chung's work, a Taiwanese artist who has captured government built spaces in different parts of Taiwan which lie abandoned. The lonely silences of an empty fish market and a county ecological park, a 3-D parking lot laid bare without a single car across floors, the ghostly graffiti staring at the stark silences of a Taiwan tobacco and old bottle factory, all point to a dystopic outcome of the disparity between a government polity's action and the needs of the city. This perhaps provides a reference point to what may happen if action is not taken about these dilapidated buildings of Delhi which have come into disuse. Raqs Media Collective was founded in Delhi, and it is perhaps apt that this gaze of reconstruction-ist expression has begun with the Capital, a city they are by default the most familiar with.

The Geology of Genocide

Equally relevant are the works of Eyal Weizman, an architect from Israel, who uses forensic research to analyze damages wreaked on structures by conflict-related violence. His audio-visual installation which focuses on the Guatemalan genocide in the 1980s, the photographs of Damadola, Bajaur in Pakistan which was hit by drone attacks by the Pakistani military in 2006, missile attacks which have wrecked homes in Bet Lahiya in Gaza, a detailed 3D topography of military attacks constructing displacement of refugees and the deforestation in Guatemala due to military attacks provide a compelling argument about the mass losses suffered due to conflict-related violence. Rupali Patil's installation called 'Abandoned' dwells in the icon of displacement more than the tangibility of it, with human figures carrying their homes on their backs, the backs of their scooters, ships, bullock carts, across the face of a cracked land, fissures marring any future existence of life.

Displacement in Time

Questions of time and displacement come out in Hito Steyerl's film *Lovely Andrea* as well, a film in her words about "travelling images in this age of media globalization and the changing meanings of them." Displaying the politics of bondage, and the normalization of such in the digital age, the film uses multiple narrative techniques to bring home this point. Perhaps Hito Steyerl's commentary about this film provides a universal commentary on the INSERT project as a whole: "I think form is very important, and to think about form is one of the most important preoccupations, because the content is very heavily determined by the form of choices."



Hito Steyerl, 'Lovely Andrea', INSERT 2014

Finally, after the universe of stucco walls drenched in these artworks, Ivana Franke's installation *In the Faraway Past and Future*, in the isolated dome on the first floor of Maati Ghar, is a revelation, designed to stimulate the same sense of wonder that comes with staring at the starlit universe, created with a web of wires attached to a huge sieve, and a single suspended source of light.

The exhibit takes you step by step from the terribly tangible realities of the world to the fluid state of possibility in the future and the opportunity of change that it proffers. Art is then not referential, but creationist in nature, of thought and perspective.

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