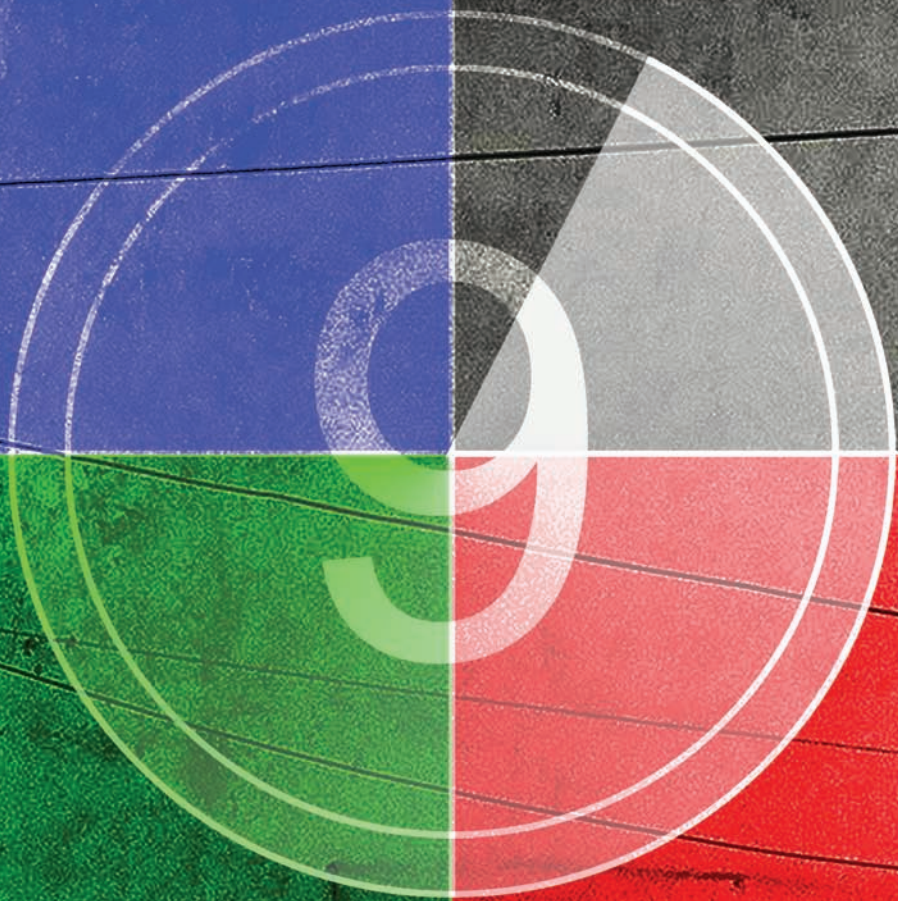


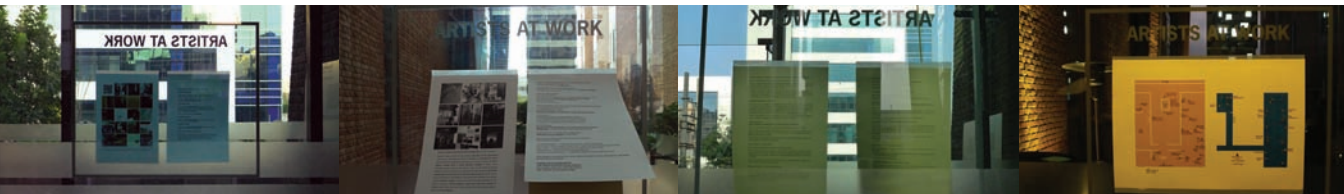
K&G
sara READER
art as a place



Date: 15-11-2012

From: Raqs Media Collective

Dear Artists@'Sarai Reader 09' (and all of you who have been following the process of the exhibition at Devi Art Foundation, Gurgaon), we are working on the proposition: "Art as a Place". This concept has emerged from the experiences around SR09. It would be great if all of you could send your thoughts on this, as a paragraph or two, from your reading of the texture, rhythm, encounters, uncertainty and porosity of the place that you find in Devi.





Zuleikha Chaudhari, Artist and Theatre Director

A series of lines on various planes

They are in between the just after and just before

It is poetry it is speculation, fact, analysis, gesture

Still images in movement. Precisely particularly.

A thing which is also a depiction which is also an experience which is also a place

The planes unfold re-dimension refold

This is a performance. It is in rehearsal.

The place is an event.

Jyoti Dhar, Art Critic

Art as a Place in which things take shape. I'm thinking about H.G. Master's recent article where he proposes that we reassess, in this case caricature-like, absurdist, painting, not as a window onto something, but rather a theatre of sorts.

Vijai Patchineelam, Artist

There is that essay by Perec about a room that is useless: "I have several times tried to think of an apartment in which there would be a useless room, absolutely and intentionally useless. It wouldn't be a junkroom, it wouldn't be an extra bedroom, or a corridor, or a cubby-hole, or a corner. It would be a functionless space. It would serve for nothing, relate to nothing". A space without a function. Not 'without any precise function', not pluri-functional, but a-functional. It wouldn't obviously be a space intended solely to 'release' the others (lumber-room, cupboard, hanging space, storage space, etc.) but a space that would serve no purpose at all.

Inder Salim, Performance Artist

I quote Freud, not to emphasise, but to see it as a leveller: "Wherever I go, I see poets (artists) have been before".

Gagandeep Singh, Artist and Telecommunication Entrepreneur

There was a call for tools, a need to know the corners, the surfaces, reflections, shadows, a sudden shift from forcible

encounters, an ease of pressure of movement, jerk-like shifting to working in the place which opened up like a crack. A process took over – of observing and watching this new place.

Naveen Mahantesh, Architect

We recently concluded a studio workshop at R.V. School of Architecture, Bangalore, and the theme was 'place-making'. A 'place' is for collective consumption, its intent is for the collective, within which an individual might *almost always* find an interpretation. There are other notions of time, residue, overlays and decay that add content to the 'place' and become part of the place-making process. These notions gave rise to the idea of 'context' being able to define a larger framework for a 'place' as opposed to a 'site'/'space'.

This was a very specific exercise, in architecture which tried to address the ideas of place making. There were many filters through which the idea of a place could be explored, and we explored it by "the death of the author". One, the immediate destruction of the notion of what the plan stood for, and two, the design process focussed on multiplicity and the temporal nature of the spaces designed. I haven't been to the Devi for the ongoing exhibition yet, but it will be interesting to look at an art gallery exhibition, minus its authors. Will it then read as a 'place'?



Inder Salim

Within the multiplicity of structures, mostly knotted by corporate time wasters, we emerge like uncultivated mushrooms after a creative cloud burst near the willow trunks of the city's drifting peripherals.

Anurag Sharma, Photographer

Place also entices one with possibilities to create with its abundance. An abundance reflected through the physicality of the place. At the same time, this can be an entrapment, with the whole fixation going towards exploiting this abundance. The abundance of an art place can supersede the creative process, which needs constant guarding/reflection.

Inder Salim

Play and leisure, intent and loitering, intensity and desire to connect are the first few steps to understanding the present. The idea of 'ritual' shifts radically from its conventional meaning and definition to something which touches our inner being, a being which is already loaded with accumulated pasts, both legible and illegible, both personal and political. We are all perhaps struggling to overcome our fears and connect with something trustworthy on the horizon. There is one more step, but we don't know if it's an abyss or a rose garden. We've never been there. These are 'processes', of encounters, of playfulness and randomness, of keys and locks we know not, of fabrics within fabric called us, and of silences forced upon us and silences we maintain. These are departures and arrivals at a place which transforms the space in such a way that we tend to have a fresh look every time we happen to occupy it again. We are then perhaps doing some Art.

Mihaela Brebenel, Research Scholar

The researcher opens a studio. No key need be fetched. It is an action over a place. Of enclosure and disclosure, encroaching and expansion. The part in participation. The natural light in the repository, the unfinished room, is a supplement.

Belinder Dhanoa, Artist and Teacher

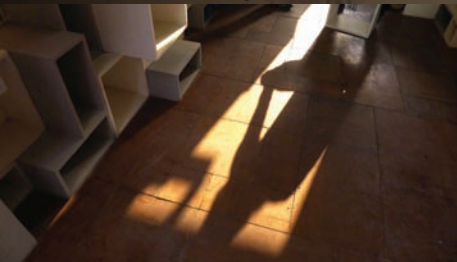
A sensitivity to the body, its capacity for action, and its crucial role in perception, has remained a constant. It is a body that claims space in its stillness, displaces invisibility in its movement. I walk through Devi and find my place. On the mottled, grey cement I rest my feet, my frames, my thoughts, and I know the shared space. I see reflections and shadows of words on the floor, the walls, the mirror, my body. I see traces, reflections and the presence of others on the floor, the walls, the mirror, my body. I read, I interpret, I watch, I am inscribed, and I reach out to erase yet another word, another thought. Devi is a space in which I vanish, but I am Devi.

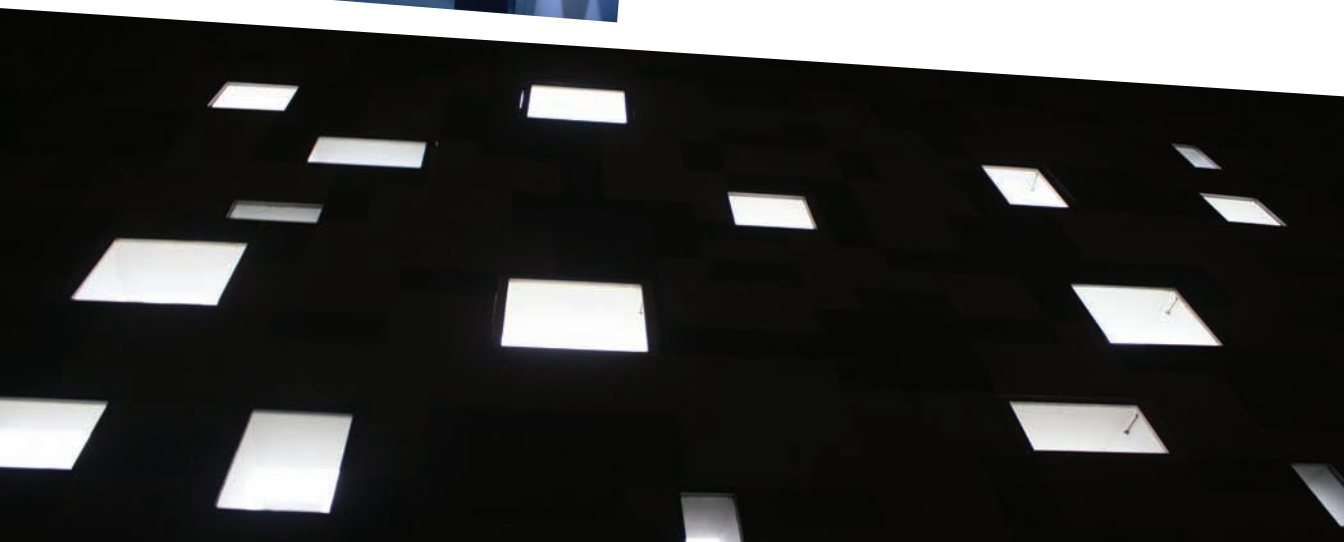
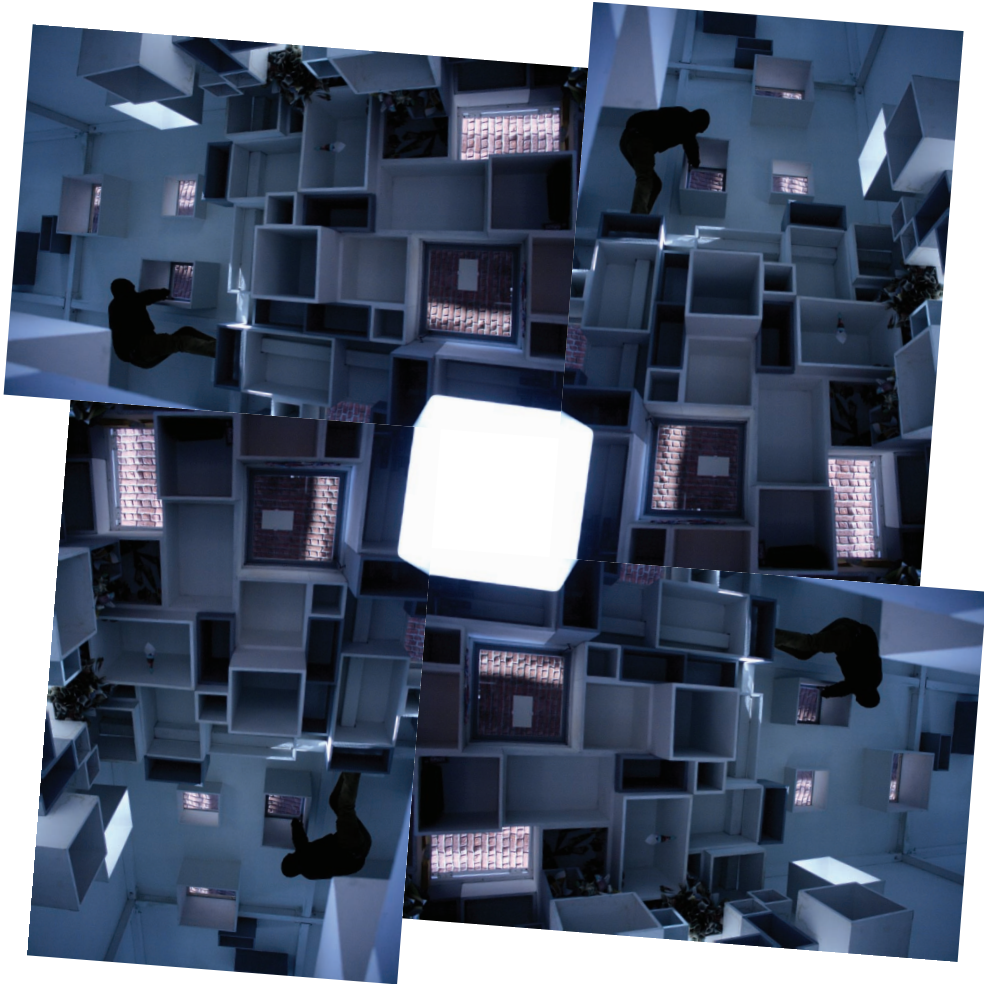
Inder Salim

Any lucid understanding of space is perhaps one which engages the 'naming' of the void in the first place. So, if the nothingness or zero or *shunyata* of the beginning is named as Zero or *Shunyatya* or Nothingness, we obviously get the idea of One, which is loaded with things that are made up of Zeros and Ones. And yet, we don't seem to penetrate the finite outline for any locomotion towards the infinite.

Gagandeep Singh

Inhabiting an animal forest amongst the structured layout cleared the air for a dialogue. I could walk freely, replicating the circles drawn earlier. This was only when the earlier cut-out forms from the past refused to find any grounds in this new place. This time, the struggle was between memory and the present moment. The net structure supported the animal forest, and I began a relation with the sensation of touch.











This place moves into our histories from the wilderness and the desert... or even from aboard ships that ply no more. I am speaking of *viharas* and monasteries and Foucault's heterotopic ship where people do things away from the central logics of imperial history. One speaks about places such as the Sufi *khanqah*. Away from the *polis*, away from the granaries of Mesopotamia, where too people gathered to do things but with objectives of building property and empires of control. One speaks maybe even of a village where much else is produced in distracted reverie of movements to come, what gets sold in the marketplace as tribal art or craft. Where the florid effervescence of life finds irrational yet aesthetically enchanting forms in leisure and ease. Something that has a parallel history even in the history of modern art parallel to the career of the bourgeois *salon*. Ruskin's Workingmen's College or Cooper Union as places where people came to exercise their skills and crafts. A place for those at variance with the logics of the factory and the marketplace as defined by their political economies to come to and practice a vision of the world in the reality of labour and history. The practitioners in such locales need not have been 'artists' as we understand the term today, not people professionally committed to a career in art. They consisted of all kinds of people – artists-to-be, journeymen, amateur dabblers in clay and paint and so on. Modernity promised the sublimation of creation in the wilderness of other times in a sublimely connected humanity.

One speaks of the place of non-art in the history of art just as the French philosopher François Laruelle speaks of the role of non-philosophy in the history of philosophy. One is now wondering of the bohemian contexts of 'sketches' of perceptual life, kitsch, amateur art, etc., at the fringes of modernity that nevertheless were foundational to the advent of modernist art. St John's Wood, Chelsea Village, Bandra-Versova and so on. Art

was for long and could acknowledge itself as a rhizomatic activity coursing through a myriad creative personalities – the artistic host, the muse, the model, the actress, the Sunday painter, the amateur sculptor or potter and so on. The ‘scene’ consisted of a few artists and many, many outliers of the majestic adventure of modern art. Today, unfortunately, we have a ‘scene’ defined only by artists/artists-to-be and a few others who are either monetarily- or media-worthy. There is too much art and very little else in the art scene today. One laments the demise not of communities (for art communities exist today as well) but of a certain connect the artist had with life. The place of art was one where art and the ordinary grew together through the passage of many kinds of life. There was a time when the art ‘scene’ could enrich and ennoble many kinds of lives other than the famously artistic ones. One also frowns at art’s self-willed sundering its relationship with that rather vague domain of experience and life – wisdom. Wisdom as a rule belongs to the terrain of emptiness, a space away from the logic of self-interest, in other lives or experiences. An art scene where everyone wants to be an artist in a professional competitive sense has very little occasion for such situations.

The erosion of leisure time, or rather the conversion of leisure into productive activity, is of course the principal reason why this has happened. It is the productivity of leisure-time activities that professionalises art in a certain way. And it is this same loss of leisure to productivity that impoverishes ordinary life, giving it unitary definitions – the place for many people doing many things in their lives and coming together to show off their wares to one another in easygoing ways is gone. As we know places (in the anthropological sense of the term) are disappearing into space, or are giving way to fantastic places of the imagination that are increasingly difficult to externalise, share materially or tangibly. What is really endangered by such a retreat of creation into the imaginary is the

space occupied by the human body. Frustrated by the lack of time to get out of continuous productivity, the mind demands that the individual destroy the very space of self-presence. Lacking place, the mind threatens to destroy space itself. The contradiction between unprecedented material creativity amongst populations and the regime of productivity that feeds off it are beginning to reach epic proportions.

The irony is that much of what passes for productive creative labour today is branded by the idea of communication. But the sense of communication that marks the production of things today in an era of relentless self-advertisement is that of the *Übermensch* in search of a flock to preach to. In some ways, the difference between the realms of art and the commercialised sectors of creative work that have grown so powerful after a century of feeding off art (much as art has grown through dialogue with all sectors of creative work) is precisely this: the retention at all costs – against the onslaught of the demand to become *Übermensch*, the preacher seeking the sect – of a place to create in duration, repose and communion with the world and life. Art becomes the last bastion of the struggle for meaningful leisure as opposed to the leisure imposed by regimes of productivity. But to do this, the place of art will have to let in the critical category of non-art, life itself, to seep into the spaces of artistic work. The point will not be to deny the frenetic pace of history, but to live amidst it, enjoy its hectic ways and visit the place of art to discuss life and experience in humane and easygoing ways. For that, artists will have to rediscover the place of non-art in their lives against the relentless call to professionalise in strict ways and join the factory-line (itself a conversion of agrarian harvesting lines) of productivity. Flights from empire into wilderness to find the place of art need to be sublimated in life itself... yet one more time.

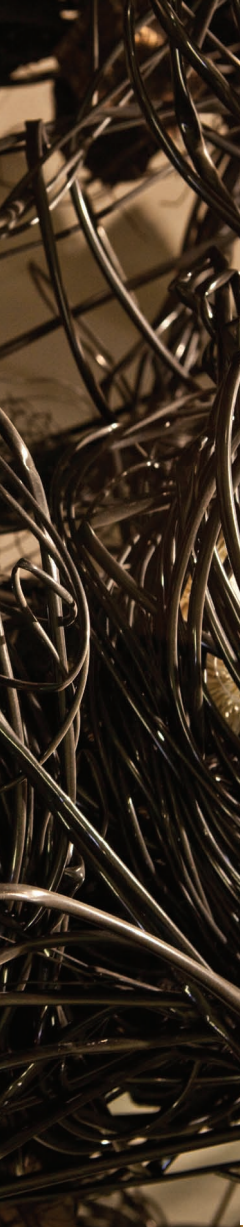
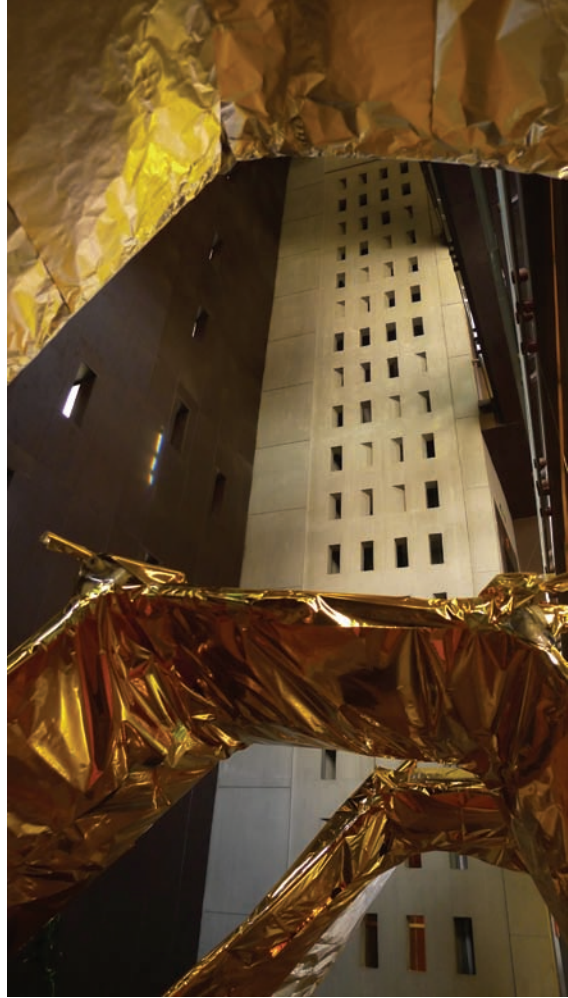
Kaushik Bhaumik, Historian



















Is the act of creating a glossary of micro-narratives an insurgent act? Gurgaon Glossary reiterates that cities get worked out beyond plans, conspiracies, policies, activisms, concepts, discourses and interventions. Many structured and unstructured conversations took place, about methods of engaging with the city, about exchanging notes with various people working on the city, and about sharing experiences of living in cities.

'Sarai Reader 09 Mumbai Extension: *Gurgaon Glossary*' by Rupali Gupte, Prasad Shetty and Prasad Khanolkar at Mumbai Art Room, Mumbai, February-March 2013.

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AND KATHARINA KAKAR • TAPIO MAKELA • ISH S • ZULEIKHA CHAUDHARI • SHVETA SARDA • PARUL GUPTA • RABINDRA PATRA • NAMRATA

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