

With An Untimely Calendar

Rags Media Collective

Asamayavali/Untimely Calendar

Every *samayavali* lists and gives chronologies of events as they happen or ought to happen in the course of a given period of time; an *asamayavali* is an un-chronology. *Asamay* is both untimely and unlikely time, an unseasonable time. It can also be a time that we wish not to come to pass, or a time of desires and dreams, an imagined time. An *asamayavali* is an account of a time that is out of sorts; a time that is exciting and sits uneasily on our consciousness. It's the kind of time that repairs days and nights, cooks the hours, does a bit of gardening of the minutes. It needs other devices – other clocks and calendars – for us to take a measure of its passage.

An *asamayavali* is, by definition, un-retrospective. What **Untimely Calendar**, the exhibition, offers is a working mill of ideas that face the future and a way of reading contemporaneity; a polyphony on the question of 'how to be with time'.

“With an Untimely Calendar” is a companion to the exhibition, and, in its own way, an *asamayavali*.

Executive Appointments



Michael...

of Khush...

Working in Global Energy



With An Untimely Calendar

Raqs Media Collective

Edited by Shveta Sarda



राष्ट्रीय आधुनिक
कला संग्रहालय
NATIONAL GALLERY
OF MODERN ART

Published by the National Gallery of Modern Art in conjunction
with the solo exhibition of Raqs Media Collective, “*Asamayavali/
Untimely Calendar*”, at the National Gallery of Modern Art, New Delhi.
Organised by Prof. Rajeev Lochan, Director, NGMA, New Delhi.

Raqs Media Collective assert their moral right to be identified as
the author and as such would like to share the content under the
Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivatives 4.0
International.

Published by
National Gallery of Modern Art, New Delhi

Design
Monika Khanna Gulati
SkyBLUE design
skybluedesign@yahoo.com

Shveta Sarda

Catalogue Production
Virendra Kumar

Printed at
India Offset Press
www.indiaoffsetpress.com

© 2014, NGMA, New Delhi

NATIONAL GALLERY OF MODERN ART
Jaipur House, India Gate, New Delhi - 110 003, INDIA
www.ngmaindia.gov.in

Front & End pages from
Corrections to the First Draft of History (2014)
Newsprint, chalkboard paint and chalk. Dimensions variable.

FOREWORD

The National Gallery of Modern Art (NGMA) is delighted to present ‘*Asamayavali*/Untimely Calendar’, a solo exhibition of Raqs Media Collective.

This exhibition is a turning point in the NGMA’s engagement with a new set of creative idioms in contemporary art. Media rich, concept driven, formally multi-faceted, playful, urgent, replete with philosophical density – this is the kind of art that addresses all our faculties – intellectual, emotional and sensory. A visitor to this exhibition is invited to be a witness, to see himself and herself become a protagonist in a rich field of ideas, dream-like images, of ‘luminous wills’.

Raqs Media Collective is one of the most significant artist practices working in our times. Their practice was founded in 1992 after its three members, Monica Narula, Jeebesh Bagchi and Shuddhabrata Sengupta, graduated from the AJ Kidwai Mass Communication Research Centre, Jamia Millia Islamia. It was here, while I was trying to engage these film-mad young people into the non-verbal world of visual communication, that I first came across their curiosity. Whatever artistic adventures or misadventures they may have undertaken since then, I can happily claim my share of responsibility for ensuring that they never ventured up the straight and narrow path, and have let the rich garden of their curiosities grow with all manner of wild flowers, interestingly acknowledged in our times.

In the last twenty-two years, Raqs have played many roles (like the *Bahurupias* they are fond of referencing in their work) – as artists who have shown in the most prestigious international biennales and museums. As curators – who have brought their unique curatorial signatures to bear on artistic practice in India as well as in Europe. And as active interlocutors to an entire new generation of artists, intellectuals and activists.

It is difficult to encompass the wide variety of their practices which range from video to installation to performance and technologically laden image-text assemblages. However, what shines through all their work is a commitment to an artistic sensibility that is thoughtful, questioning and sensitive to the most delicate nuances and dichotomies of our times.

Time – how to survive it, and how to embrace what Raqs call the ‘untimely’- is central to this show. Raqs’ practice is founded on a careful consideration of what duration means, of time’s passage and urgency, of what it means to live at different speeds, in and out of time. They approach this question not just with artistic acuity, but also with humour, ethical immediacy and with philosophical depth. They move with ease between the history and international legacy of radical movements in the twentieth century, and shadows in the fabric of the Mahabharata.

Walking through ‘*Asamayavali*/Untimely Calendar’, and browsing through this publication that accompanies it, will feel like a journey through stories, dreams, puzzles and enigmas. The viewer/reader/listener/*rasik* will encounter animals, machines, time-pieces, specters, and things that unmake and reassemble all that we take for granted.

This exhibition is part of the ongoing series of solo exhibitions at the NGMA, New Delhi, supporting contemporary art from India. I would also like to thank the Advisory Committee, NGMA, New Delhi, for their unstinted support. There has been unprecedented international interest in this show, and we can truly say that with this exhibition, in terms of the technical, artistic and curatorial challenges that it presents, the NGMA stands at par with the best institutions anywhere in the world.

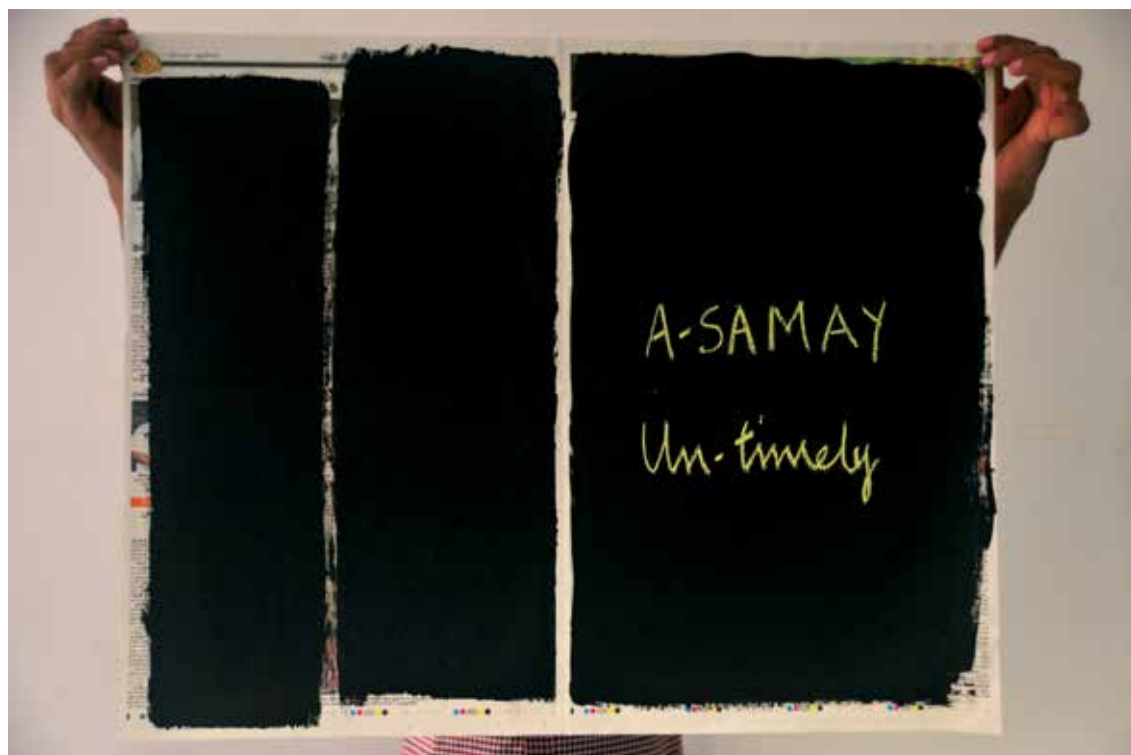
Prof. Rajeev Lochan

Director, National Gallery of Modern Art, New Delhi

001.



002.



003.

The site of descent is what it's really all about, isn't it?
Where and when to dive into the thick of things?
How much pressure to sustain?
How much ballast to offload?

How much, or how little oxygen, to take on board?
The best thing to do is to identify a rift, some place
where tectonic forces are hard at work and play.
Where things are hot and thick and close. Signs of
volatility mean signs of life.

The rift you choose, chooses your questions, throws
them back at you like a submarine eruption. There
is no good time to dive; there is no time that is not
suitable. Tomorrow is not better than today, the past
was not better than the present. The future is as good
as your next dive. Now is as good as ever.

Take a deep breath.



004.

The 'Directions' will be marked as follows:

North – Noise
East – Voice
West – Speech
South – Silence

North East – Visibility
North West – Legibility
South East – Opacity
South West – Obscurity

North North East – Touch
East North East – Trace
East South East – Taste
South South East – Truth

South South West – Your
West South West – My
West North West – Our
North North West – Their



Dear Raqs,

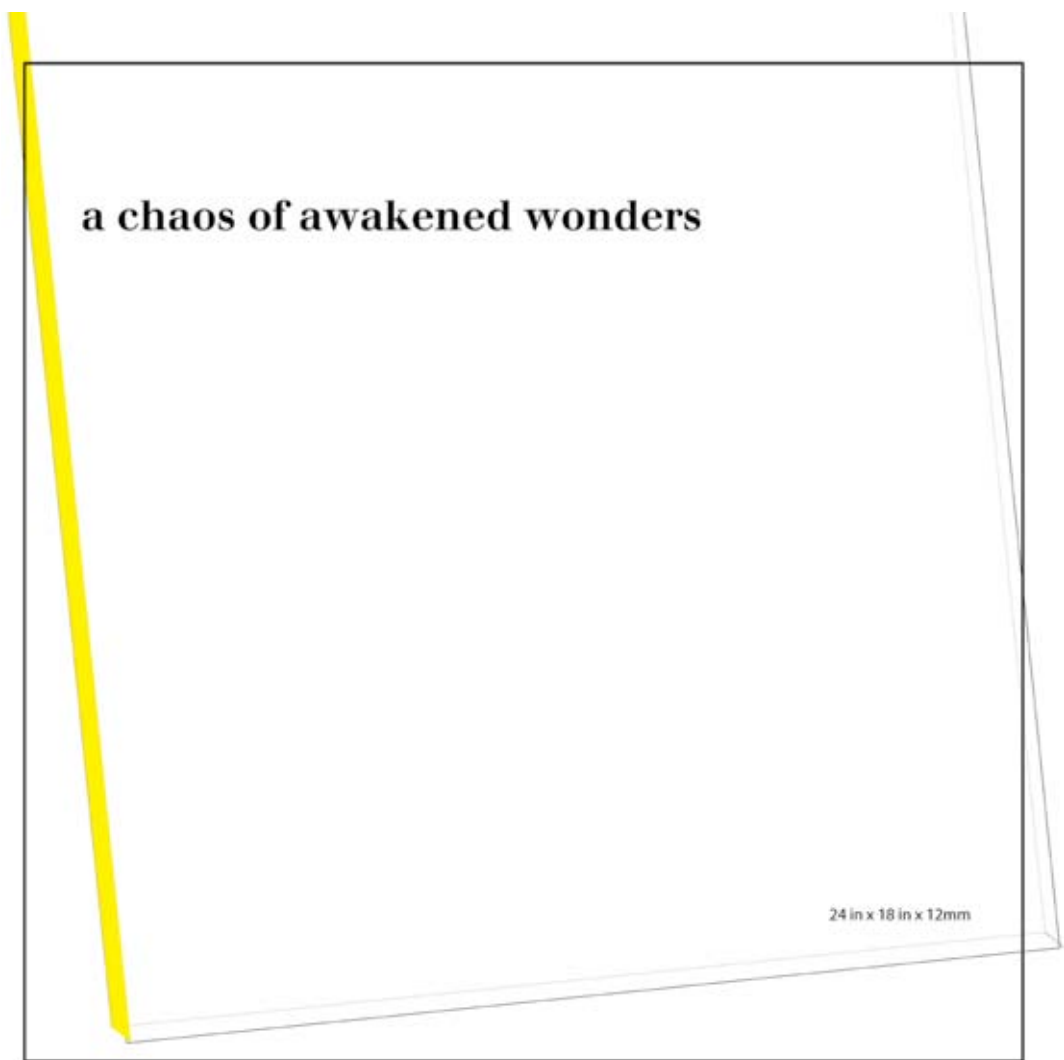
It is with some hesitation that I introduce myself to you. My name is K.D. Vyas, and I am a retired scholar and independent redactor.

I am communicating to you with the expectation that you will find my views, coming as they do from a veteran new media practitioner, not altogether irrelevant.

I have been practicing hypertextuality for quite some time now, and the results of my practice, though available to all, have not yet reached a satisfactory resolution. I am resigned to accepting that perhaps they never will, especially as we inhabit what I can only call a 'declining time'. I am willing to offer you the services of my limited knowledge and hope that you will write back to me.

I remain, most humbly,
K.D. Vyas

006.





Ascending birds survey an expanding horizon. The artist-researcher-shaman, a bird-man-woman, or a man-woman-bird, flies, gets too close to the sun, founds flocks, sings untried songs, learns new languages, discovers routes and itineraries that connect human experiences at a planetary level. A lapsed constellation still shines. A flamingo, the Tigris River, a tortoise, a three-headed dog, a scarab beetle, a telescope, a printing press, and other creatures and devices re-populate the night sky. An astronomer on earth sends out a telegram to an astronomer in space. An astronomical observatory is turned into a theatre of memory by a scattering of forgotten signs.

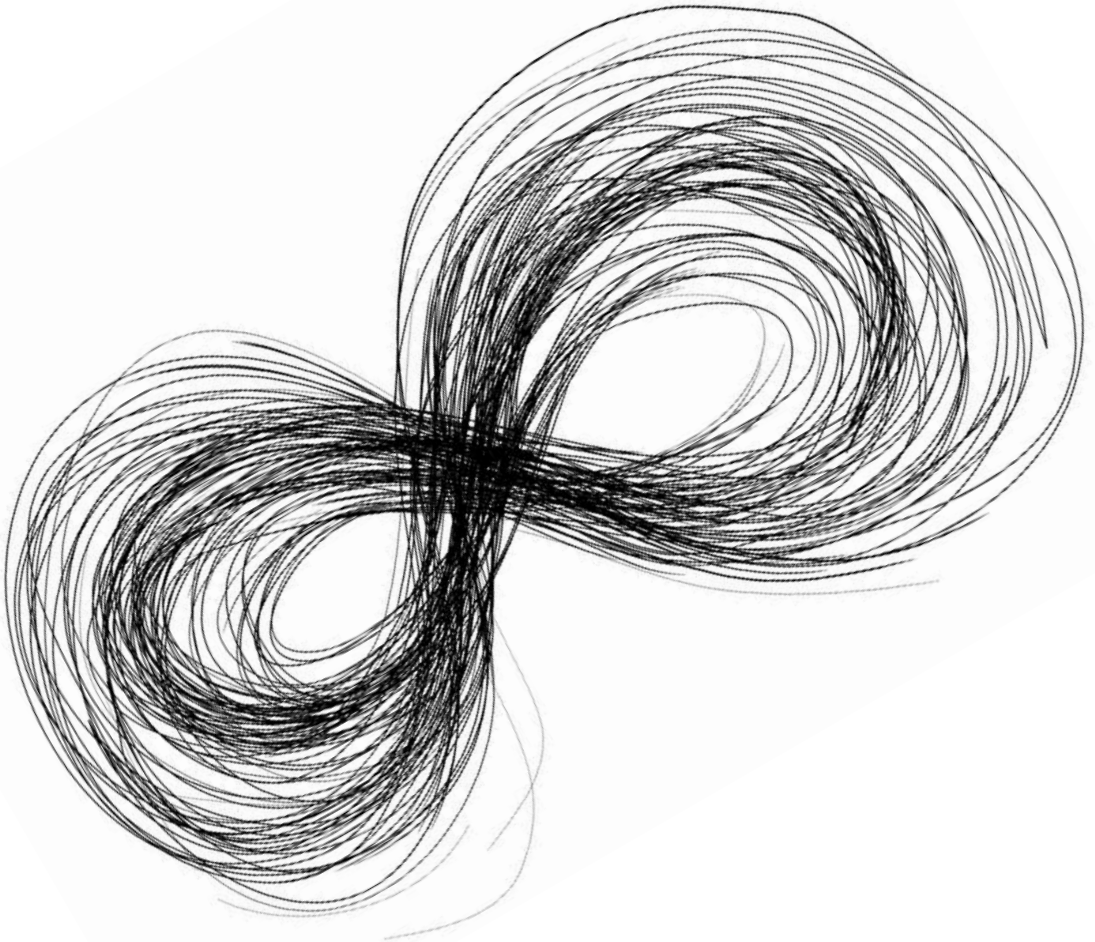


We need telescopes, time capsules and telegrams.
We need the light of distant stars.

008.

TELEGRAM BHARAT SANCHAR NIGAM LIMITED (A Government of India Enterprise) TELEGRAPH OFFICE, MUMBAI-CTO	
Booking Time : 2030	Received Time : 1010
Booking Date : 29/06/2013	Received Date : 30/06/2013
Booked at : CTO-NEWDELHI-C	Ref : AR55
Message Class : X	Reed : 02/1
Tul/RNO	
To 30 00 30 01	
[Redacted]	
300613	
FIRST AND LAST TELEGRAM FROM THE LAST INTERNATIONAL RAQS MEDIA COLLECTIVE	
For office use only : ZCZC MBYCTA0001 PPP MBYCCC EZ X 2030 AR55 CTO-NEWDELHI-C 29 029/029 COL NNCTS DNDCCC0005	
WTMS Msg. Id : 20130629DNDCCC00AR5547 NNNN	

The entire *Japji Saheb*, composed by Guru Nanak, is contained in the opening segment of the *Guru Granth Sahib*. Four ‘*Pauris*’ (verses) in the *Japji* talk about numberless worlds beyond our own, and about the many kinds of countlessnesses (*asankh*): countless meditations, countless virtues, countless vices, countless sins, countless acts of kindness and generosity, and countless possibilities.



Yagnavalkya and Gargi were philosophers, natural philosophers, and while it was considered odd that Gargi, forgetting her ‘woman’ self should argue about the nature of ‘being’ itself, she did.

Yagnavalkya talks of how man invented self, and so brought about other. He speaks of how self, *purusha*, *atman*, Brahman, consciousness, mind pursues other, *prakriti*, speech, body, form, and how she (other) changes her shape, re-writing her operating instructions, every time he (self) makes a new programme, a new release version of her. He encrypts, she decodes. She is software, a virus, free to roam and pirate herself; he stays hardwired, logged out and locked into himself. He pursues her, pins her, wins her; she runs away into the jungle of code again. He seeks her out yet again, and in the middle of his endless postulation of the real self and the self that is virtual, the other, her-self, he says to her:

“Gargi, silver tongued, chat room diva, endless whisperer, cyborg siren, look – the two of us are like two halves of a block, hardware and software, one and zero, man and machine, and between us dangles the web of the world. The World Wide Web. The mesh made of strings of code. Cyberia.”

Then Gargi Vacaknavi began to question him, “Yagnavalkya,” she said, “tell me – since this whole world is woven back and forth on strings of knowledge, threads of code, what then is the net of code and knowledge woven on? Where on the map is Cyberia?”

“And how does that, on which the mesh of thought was woven, get fabricated?”

“And where did money and meaning come from?”

“And what moves these joints, works these muscles and tendons, what makes this flow and ebb and stream?”

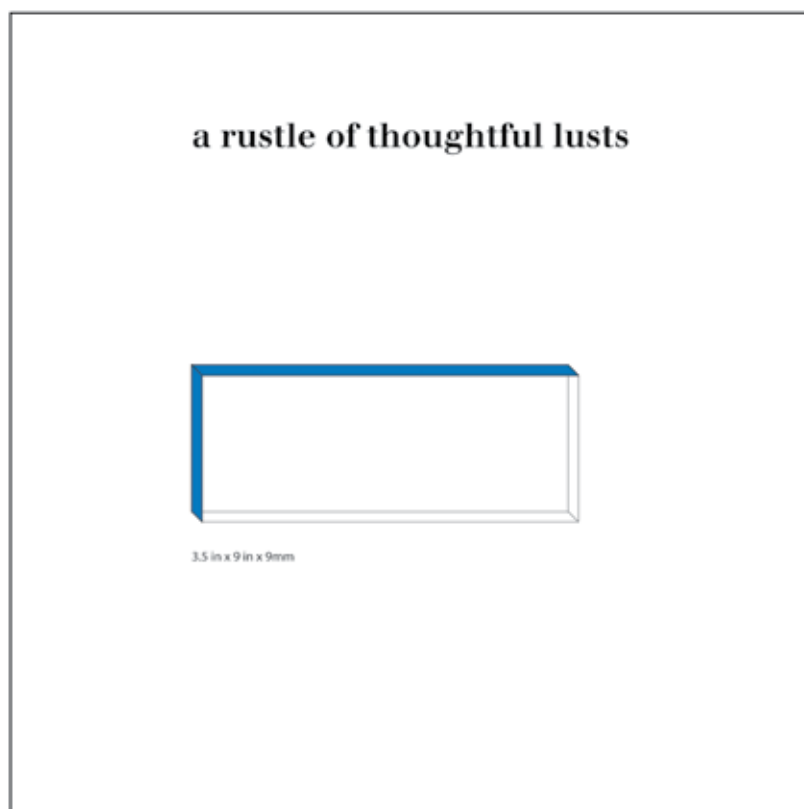
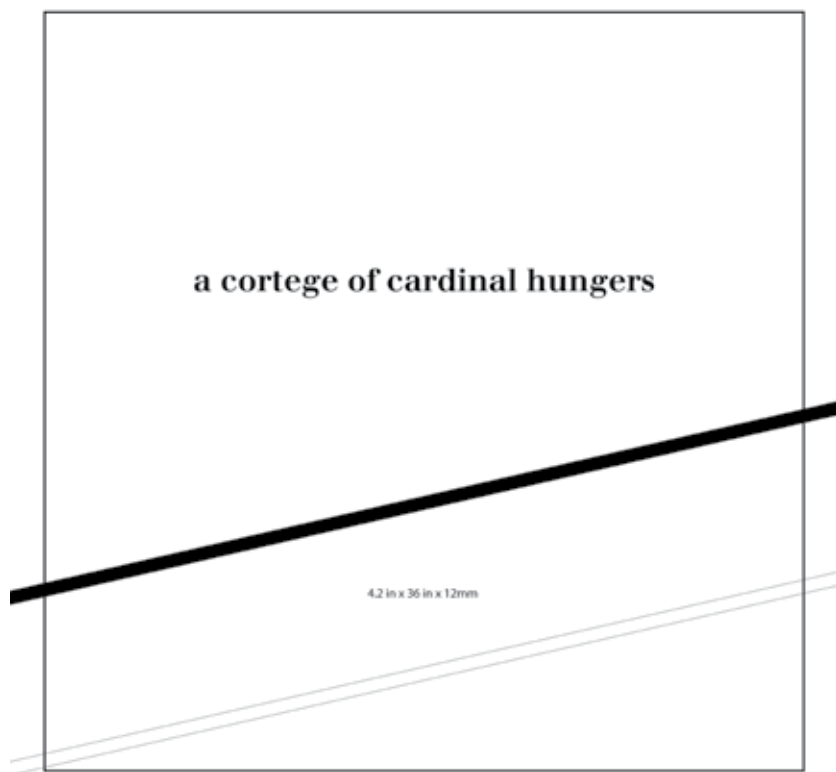
And Yagnavalkya told her, “Don’t ask so many questions, Gargi, or your head will shatter apart! You are asking too many questions about that (the deity) of which it is forbidden to ask too many questions...”

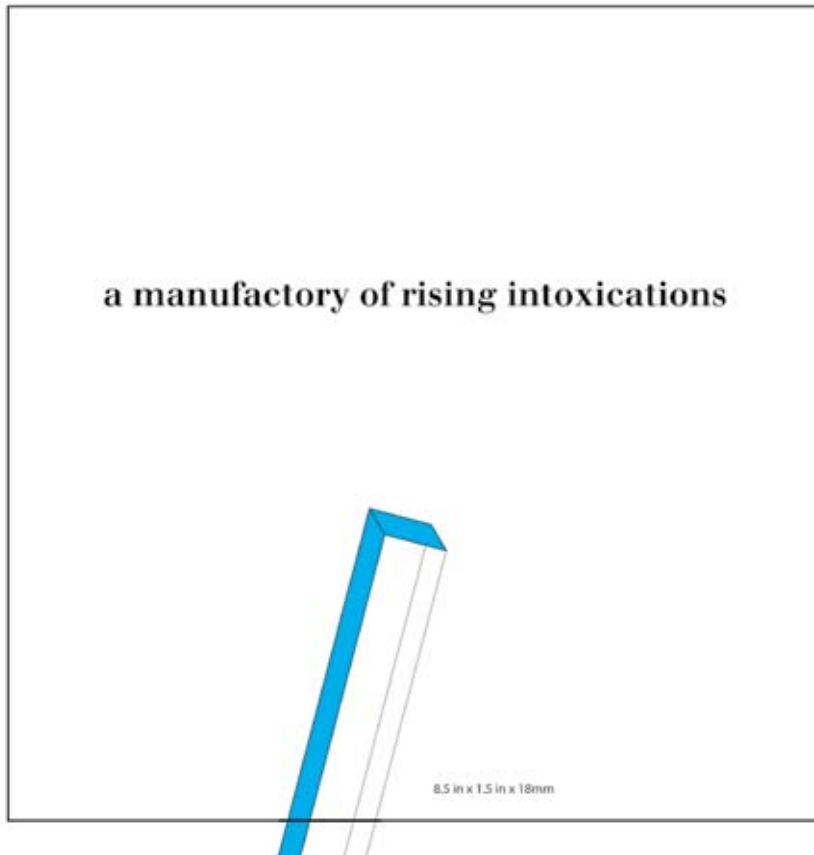
011.

A cube of keyholes. Unlocking any one door involves a risk of being locked in by the others. No key fits all doors.

The man on the run is chased by himself more often than he is by anything else.

012.





Nishastgah is a space where the gaze is not yet fixed and time has not yet been disciplined. Nobody – as yet – has been described as a ‘vagabond’. The force of the making of this place comes from its state of suspension and unfixedness.

In 2006, the landscape in Ghevra, a ‘resettlement colony’ in north-west Dehi, was recently flattened agricultural land with almost no infrastructure. New inhabitants, displaced from Nangla Manchi, a settlement on the Yamuna riverfront, started making provisional houses with bamboo mats. A friend of ours, Shamsheer Ali, while walking with us in Ghevra said that his father, who ran a recycling warehouse for the last couple of decades in Central Delhi, after hearing stories of this new emerging neighborhood, observed with a celebratory voice that this place is in *nishastgah*.

013.



VOICE 2: She will tell you her name.

VOICE 1: My name is Luxme Sorabgur.

VOICE 2: And yes, it is an improbable name. A name chosen to hide other names. A name thrown with a laugh, like a throw of dice.

VOICE 1: She will offer no explanation for her self.

VOICE 2: She will however, offer to write her name, just so that you know what she means.

She will not give you an address, not even a forwarding address, or a clear reply about her profession. She once said:

VOICE 1: (laughing) I change nationalities more often than shoes, and I like changing shoes.

VOICE 3: I have seen her stand very still, demure but defiant in a sari, with that *bindi* on her temple, under the shadow of the

Palace of Science and Culture in Warsaw. What promise was it that detained her there? She won't say.

VOICE 1: Here, in Bombay, she waits again.

VOICE 2: Most of the chapters of the book that was written and not-yet-written, as well as her remaining personal effects, are kept in a trunk on a landing in a Phanaswadi chawl, in the care of some children dear to her. If you don't meet her, at least try and find the trunk.

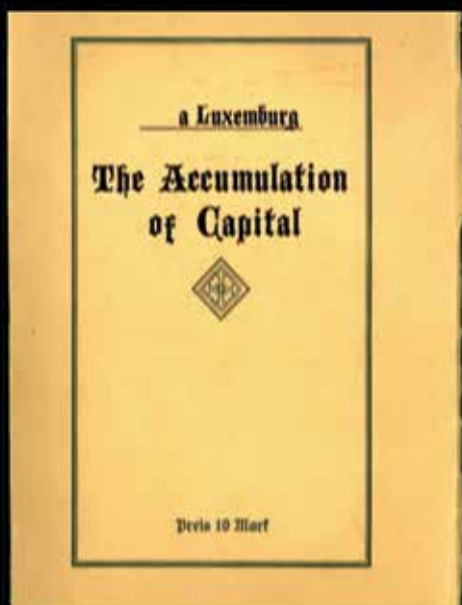
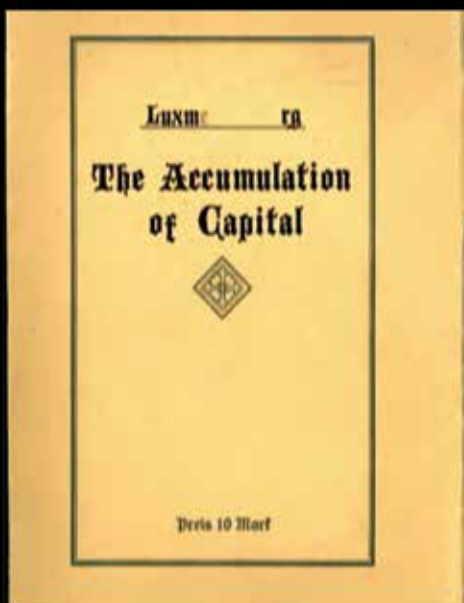
VOICE 1: Questions keep appearing in the various margins of her notes: "Have you seen an outside to your life?" "What will you carry, when you flee?" "Who will you take when told never to come back?"

VOICE 2: She said she was shaped by these questions. She said that cities of the 20th century were shaped by these questions.

VOICE 1: She got many kinds of answers, divergent, contradictory, sometimes precise, sometimes ironic, sometimes humorous, sometimes containing a vast expanse of people, things and places.







ATITHI

a guest is always a stranger, an atithi.
She comes without warning, without appointment, without news, notice, or prior agreement about date, tithi, & arrival.
She changes the rules the moment she appears, un-announced, un-called for, un-expected.

It follows that every stranger is also always un-timely.

015.

[1.] Sodium vapour lights in the precinct of the Inter State Bus Terminus at Kashmiri Gate in Delhi. We are trying to locate the co-ordinates of everyday life in our city. Tonight it's about fog and the fumes of a hundred interstate buses. Someone steps off a bus and into the city for the first time. "This is not a place where I thought I would ever be," she says to her companion. The fog claims her. Another blur. The co-ordinates make room for her. The grid adjusts itself.

[2.] "This is not a place where you can afford to be shy," says the blonde coaching her nervous companion in the lobby of the Australian High Commission in Delhi. We are waiting for a visa. They are waiting to be told if he can emigrate to be with her. The old man in the corner is puzzled and angry; he is waiting to be told why he cannot travel to see his daughter. The blonde and her man are wearing their 'just married' clothes. She is awkward in a sari; he is clumsy in a tailored suit and necktie. "If they ask you intimate details about me, like where my birthmark is, tell them, because they are checking to see if we are for real, and remember, we are for real". He giggles at the thought of the location of her birthmark. She straightens the knot in his tie. They go through their papers, sort out the chronological order of their letters and emails to each other, and make a selection of holiday snaps for the fifth time. We watch their love stand trial in the waiting room.

[3.] Monica sends an SMS from Brussels airport early in the morning. We are barely awake in our short-stay apartment. After two weeks in the heart of Europe, spending time with people in an illegal alien detention and asylum processing centre, the Petit Chateau in Brussels, we are short of sleep and full of stories. Monica, leaving a few days before us, is at the airport already. "My plane has pass'ger being deported. Someone at chk-in told me to pr'tst on board". Travelling home can mean different things at different times. I type out a message back to her, telling her, "Feisal, the Paki boy who appeared suddenly yest'day. dspprd t'dy. Taken to other camp. For minors. They said, 'this is not a place for him'. Have safe trip home. Find out if you can, about the deportee." Ceaseless European rain beats on our window.

[4.] Brahma beer at a bus station in Sao Paulo, like hot tea at the Kashmiri Gate ISBT in Delhi. Libations for moments of departure. Drinking to a distant god, we conjure visions of Patagonian emptiness and Amazonian density. Buses wait at quays marked 'Bahia', 'Argentina', 'Paraguay', 'Ecuador'. Often, one rumbles away, heading across forests and rivers we have shaded with pencils in high school geography, dreamily. Grandmothers with Chinese hold-all bags, and a cross section of the entire human species, alight off and on to the bellies of long distance buses. "This is not a place where I thought I would ever be, though I always longed to be here," says one of us, and we praise Brahma again. A whole way across the world, it is night already and the night buses are gearing up to leave Delhi and cross mountains. Hot tea is pouring into long farewells.

Bus Accident

No: T07 <ETH> 2001 <ETH> 9/10

TC: 00 : 16 : 06 : 20

Key Words: Danger/City/Sudden/Waiting/Traffic

Short Description: Broken bus in the middle of a highway, the city waits for the day's casualties.

Man Walks out of STD Booth at Night

No: T16 <ETH> 2001 <ETH> Nov

TC: 00 : 21 : 18 : 09

Key Words: Night/Connection/Signal/Alone/Walk

Short Description: A man walks out of a long distance phone booth; his transmission done, he rewires the connections of the city at night.

Giant in the Sky

No: T23 <ETH> 2002 <ETH> Feb

TC: 00 : 23 : 10 : 07

Key Words: City/Alone/Power/Bleak/Gaze

Short Description: A giant statue of Hanuman under construction, encased in scaffolding.

Shadows from Above at Night

No: T27 <ETH> 2002 <ETH> Mar

TC: 00 : 20 : 25 : 20

Key Words: Waiting/Shadow/Night/Lights/Bleak

Short Description: Little people and large oblique shadows from far above. A theatre of shadows in the suburbs.

The Mask of the Night

No: T11 <ETH> 2001 <ETH> Oct

TC: 00 : 24 : 15 : 11

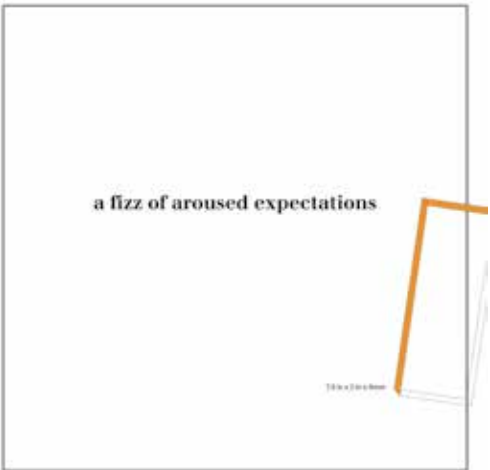
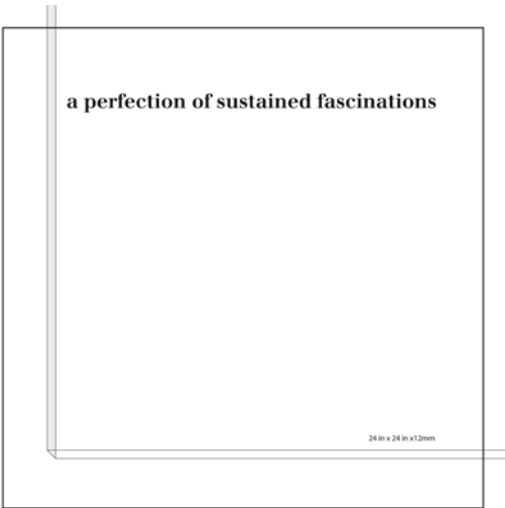
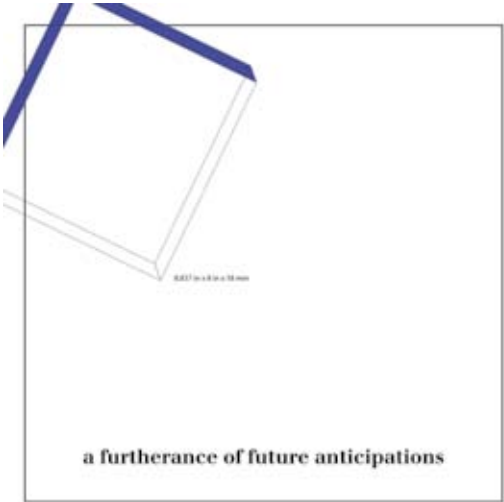
Key Words: Night/City/Mask/Walk/Crowded

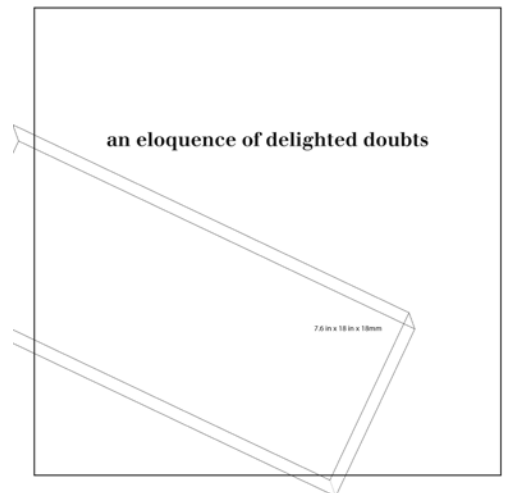
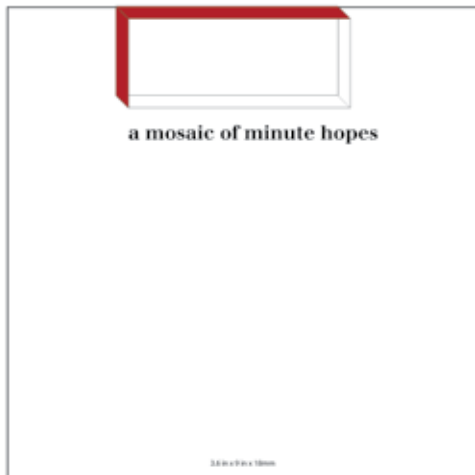
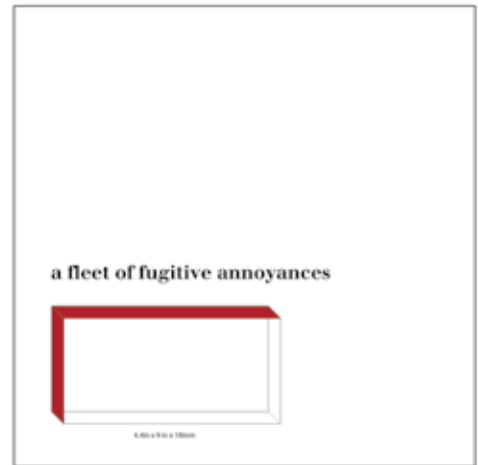
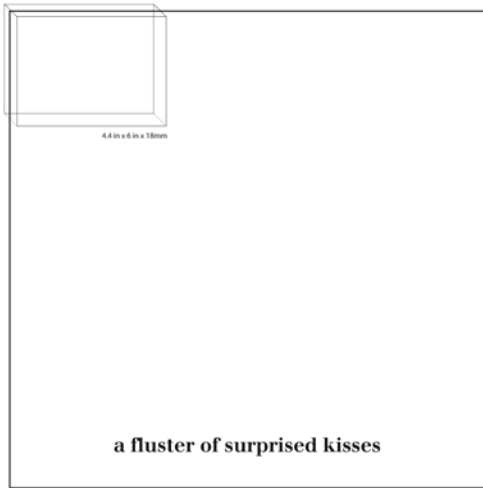
Short Description: A mask walks up to the eye of the camera and grins; the street takes no notice.

017.

A map or
diagram
of infinity
must know
when to
stop being
a picture
and start
being a
spell, or a
dwelling.

018.





019.

Email 1 A

First person, third person, Raqs, Luxme, Luxme quoting Rosa, Luxme recounting conversations with others, Rosa's writing, us reading Rosa. A relay with interruptions and detours. An active question – who is speaking to whom?

Luxme, more of an emanation than a concrete historical character.

emanation

1570, from L.L. *emanationem* (nom. *emanatio*), from L. *emanare*, “flow out, arise, proceed,” from ex- “out” + manare “to flow”.

Email 1 B

How can one build a flow of subjective force? The work hurries at times, becomes still, goes slow, lingers in doubt, goes into frenzy – these are all also ways we possess the thought of another. How do we move with thought that comes to us from another place and intensity and knocks at us? That is the force of life in battle with the force of Capital.

Email 2 A

Bachelard writes of space – the attic, the staircase. Consider this for thinking with spaces – the interiors of the houses where Rosa lived, was arrested in. Landings, windows, the street outside, the Library construct from Antiquarian bookshops.

Email 2 B

The trunk in the corridor in a Mumbai chawl, with kids playing chess on it. That fragile tenure on land is also our fragile presence in another's life. Could that be a metaphorical presence of Luxme? In search of trunks in Mumbai; a detective unfolding.

Email 2 C

The interior of houses as a link to the Prison sequence in Wroclaw. The tree in the prison – a link to the wider world. Prison – where she wanders in her thought.

Annotation to Email 2 C

This has to be cautiously moved with. Yes, we have to be able to give the sense of physical incarceration and wandering mind, but with a degree of restlessness. It was WW1, and she was cut away from political life. She could be re-reading *The Accumulation of Capital* here, along with botany. Or we just stay with the tree and move to the prison in another way: Tree and prison separated.

Email 3

Rosa's 'Bison' letter (link to Zoo) – a way of talking about the consequence of the expansion of Capital, with compassion.

This could lead to her murder being witnessed by animals, and the beginning of the missing body. Animals have to bring a force. Like in *District 9*, where the alien made the human aware of all his hidden potentiality.

Email 4

The beginning. Details from the Autopsy Room. After the autopsy of the body of an ambiguous, unidentified “person”, dead from drowning – tools, cleaning equipment,

weighing scales. This ‘casualty’ is the metaphorical representation of the consequence of the expansion of Capital. The missing body.

Email 5 A

One screen could have the mangroves moving, or the Zamość sun trying to come out in the sky. And the other screen can be with still images, describing the cleaning of the table. Allow the two screens to build two directions and collide and intertwine with each other.

Email 5 B

Later, much later, we return to the same autopsy room, with Tsokos, with him talking about Rosa’s body. Link to – the vitrine and Charité Morgue sequence.

Breeze passes over the vitrine.

Email 6 A

The flamingos at Kerosene Wharf. Is this where the body was found? This lingers as a conjecture, but also leaves one to talk about the “body” as really that which is the consequence of Capital. Perhaps a foetid, festering thing that we are all trying to decode...

Email 6 B

The ‘missing body’ question inhabits ‘Rosa’s Missing Body’. But then, that is not the real missing body for the work, only a McGuffin, a false lead, a distraction in the direction of finding the missing body.

Email 6 C

Lets re-read *The Accumulation of Capital* and see how she investigates Marx. Could give us the lead into how to reach the “missing body”. The two could be inter-woven.

Email 7 A

Bombay thought of through desire, fantasy, film – by reconstructing the city at night – a sequence made out of still shots, at night, on the streets. Peg on the Talkies/Cinema shot. End with the empty streets around Asiatic Society/Horniman Circle. Nothing in the work is a descriptive thing. Each layer layered with the magical, exhilaration, other possibilities.

Email 7 B

Shadows and night. Maybe we can conjure up a walk for Luxme.

Email 8 A

Should Luxme be like an emanation of Rosa’s emanation?

Email 8 B

Emanate a power of presence. Haunting as a powerful presence.

Email 9 A

Does Luxme meet Khan at Cafe Universal in Bombay?

Email 9 B

Or was it at the textile mill?

March 2010





020.



Human existence presupposes points of contact between the individual human being and humanity, as well as between what it means to be human and the situation that human beings come into. We call these surroundings the world, the present, time, reality. At an ontological level, this envelope seems possessed of infinity. We appear to ourselves as relative, contingent and fleeting in the presence of this infinity. It is in this sense that Kazuo Okakuro, the nineteenth century curator, theorist and interpreter of Japanese culture, spoke of art and the aesthetic gesture in the *Book of Tea*, while speaking ostensibly (and allegorically) through his discourse on the art of making and serving a stimulating beverage.

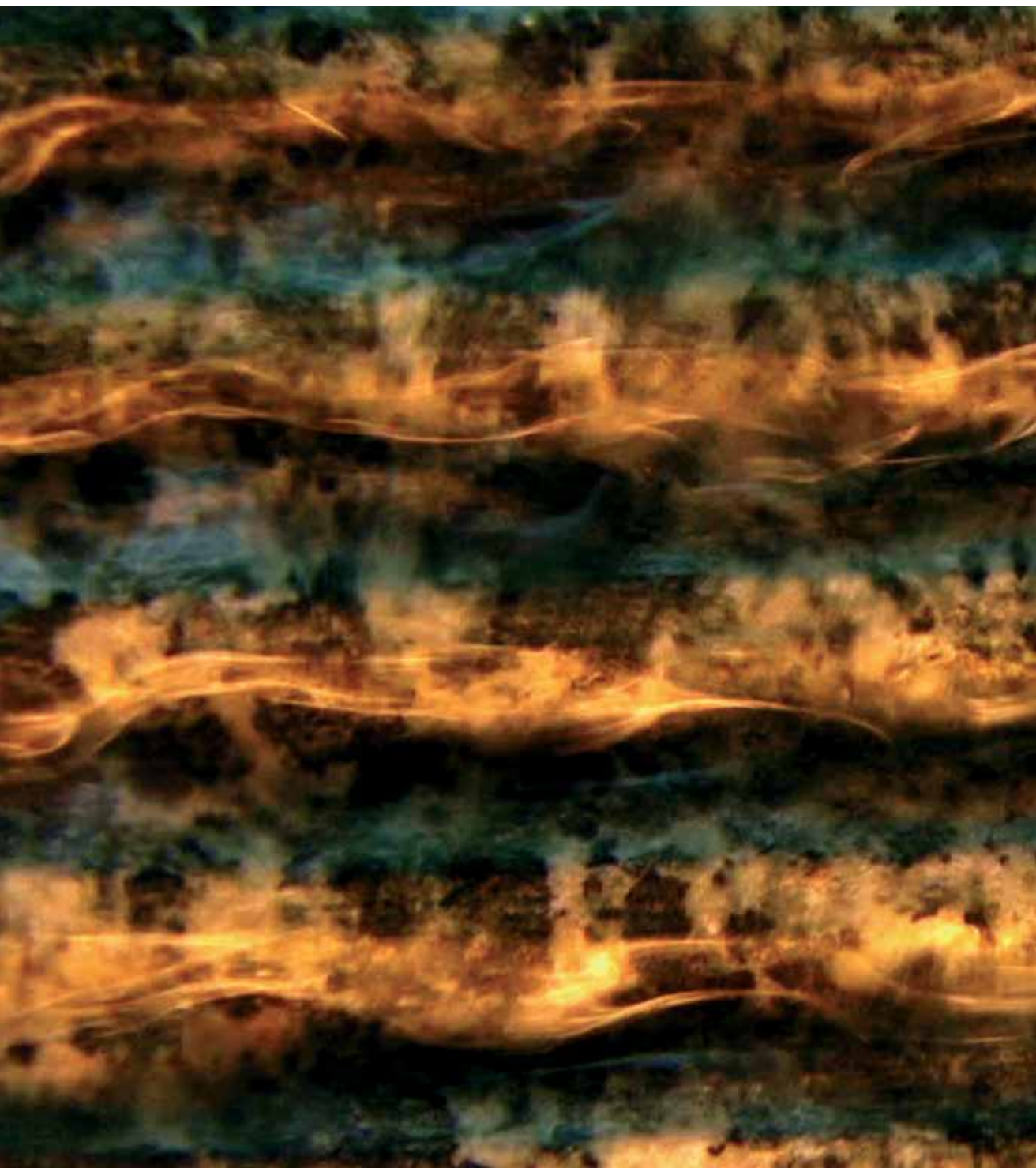
“The present is the moving infinity, the legitimate sphere of the relative. Relativity seeks Adjustment; Adjustment is Art. The art of life lies in a constant readjustment to our surroundings.”

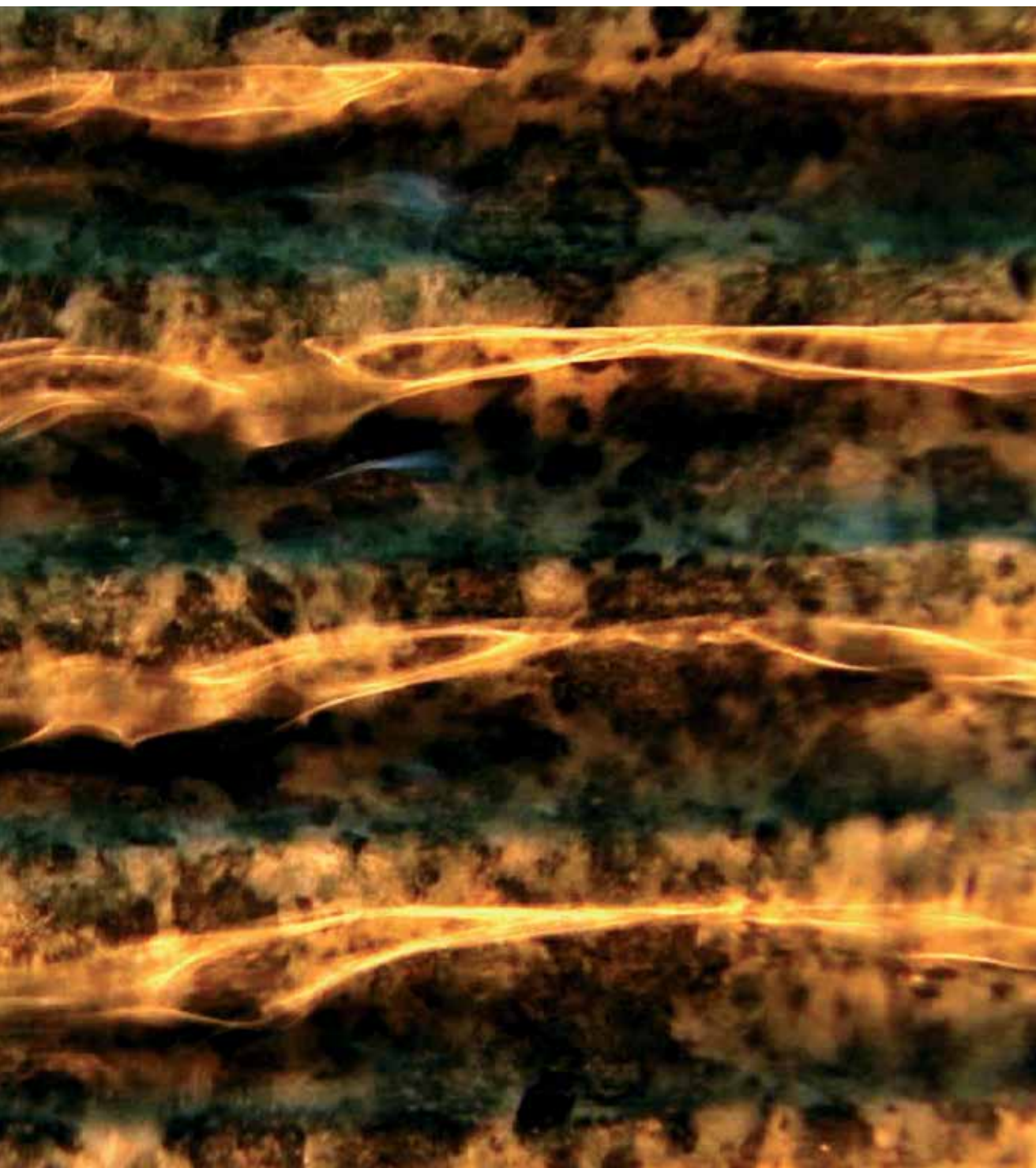
An artistic action is the means by which humanity adjusts the infinity of being to itself.

021.

The monsoon rain
asks that
we open
doors and windows
and let other
worlds in.







023.

Ashwatthama
(the man, not the unfortunate dead elephant)

Ashwatthama
(whisper, rumour, malingering battlefield tumour)

Ashwatthama
(wandering warrior, and son of a warrior)

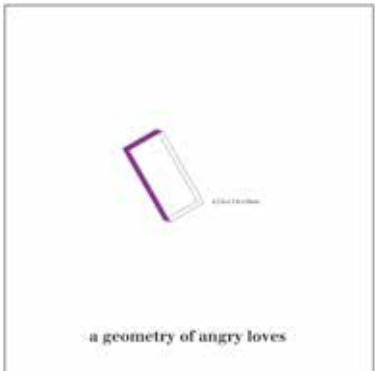
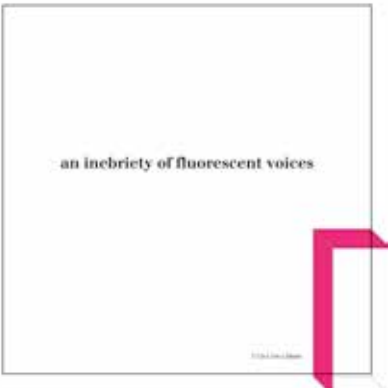
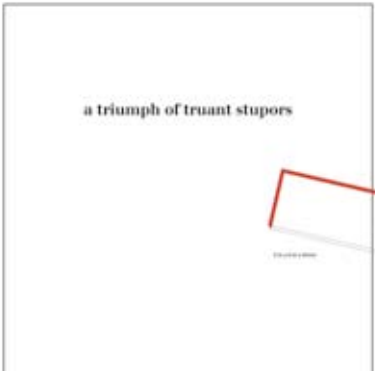
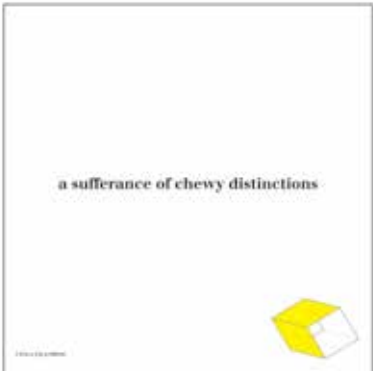
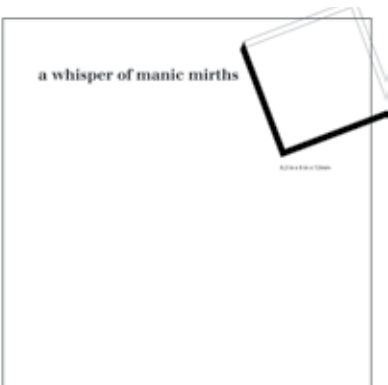
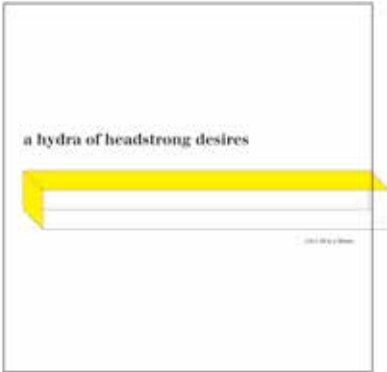
Ashwatthama
(haunted, hunted)

Ashwatthama
(abortionist of the future, prisoner of time)

Ashwatthama
(immortal, undead)

Ashwatthama
(deserter, deserted, desert Aswhatthama)

Just the name
(Ashwatthama)



025.



A cactus is a sign that the desert is not dead.

The giant Saguaro Cactus, which can stand as tall as eighty feet into the sky, starts out as a single seed half the size of a grain of sand. A single Saguaro fruit, say about two ounces, can pack into itself two thousand such seeds. A single Saguaro Cactus, which bears about a hundred fruits, can give rise to a quarter of a million seeds.

How do you step out of the shadows?

How do you ensure that those higher up do not block those below them from their place in the sun?

How do you ensure that every moment will find its own becoming?

The growth patterns of many cacti follow a Fibonacci sequence; each number is the sum of its preceding pair.

1, 1, 2, 3, 5, 8, 13, 21.

If one looks down from above on the plant and measures the angle formed between a line drawn from the stem to the leaf and a corresponding line for the next leaf, one finds that there is generally a fixed angle, called the divergence angle.

The morphology of cactus plants has evolved to find the perfect shape for the conditions they live in. No leaf, no ridge in the cactus, no matter how high it grows, gets more water, or less sun than any other.

026.

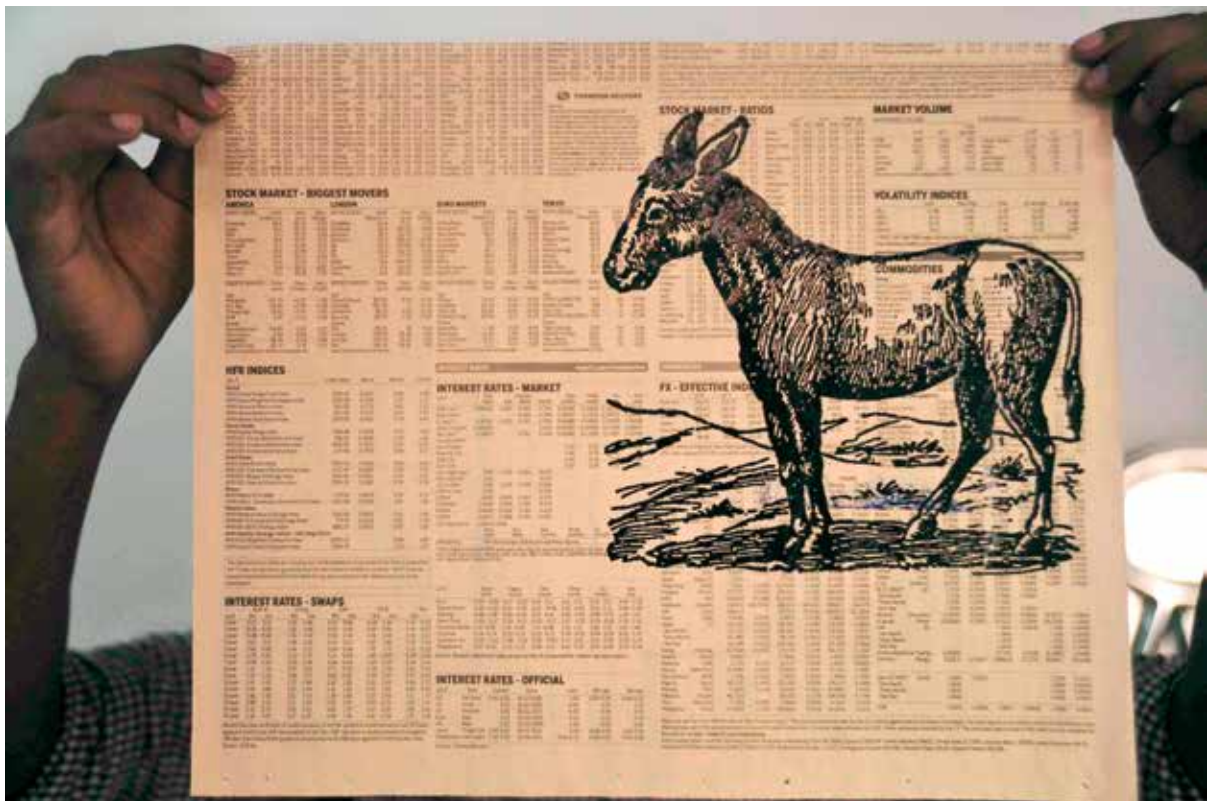
In a networked world, there are many acts of seepage. They destabilise the structure, without making any claims. The encroacher redefines the city, even as she needs the city to survive. The trespasser alters the border by crossing it, rendering it meaningless and yet making it present everywhere – even in the heart of the capital city – so that every citizen becomes a suspect alien, and the compact of citizenship that sustains the state is quietly eroded. The pirate renders impossible the difference between the authorised and the unauthorised copy, spreading information and culture, and devaluing intellectual property at the same time. Seepage complicates the norm by inducing invisible structural changes that accumulate over time.

Agitator
Anonymous
Bard
Critic
Crowd
Dissident
God
Hermit
Keeper
Missing
Pet
Pirate
Player
Prodigy
Prophet
Protagonist
Star
Unknown
()

027.

Take the solitude of the donkey. And it could be an image of what it means to be forever crossing the road to oneself.

Friends send me pictures of donkeys to cheer me up. I love my friends.



028.

Good people, men and women of Gwangju, little children. I travel up and down this train, asking this question, being liberty's attendant, and all I receive are embarrassed stares, titters of laughter, and the sidelong glances of people who choose to look away. Do not bury yourself in your newspaper, leave your mobile aside for a while. I teach myself by looking at you, by being with you, and I ask myself –

Is the liberty of the magnate, the general and the expert the same as the liberty of the agitator, the student and the hermit?

I ask myself what happened to the liberty of the missing – of those who disappear or are made to disappear? Are they more free now than when we knew them and knew their every move?

I ask myself whether my pet has the liberty to keep me, because I know no one who owns me more than my cat. I wonder whether, if God exists, she is at liberty to change her own rules, or is he the prisoner of his own divinity. I wonder if prophets are at liberty to doubt their own faith. Whether a beast is more at liberty than man. Whether the keeper is the slave of the kept. I ask you if you know any liberty greater than that of the stranger?

Set me free good people, set me free. Set me free of these questions that have been plaguing me since time immemorial. That sit on my shoulders like a vampire sits on the living, feeding off my conscience, my reason, my passions. Take each of my questions and turn them around in your heads, hold them up to light and to mirrors, dust them and clean them and make them shine. Let them live and let me be.

Li-ber-Tyeeeeeee!



029.

It is a labyrinth. Within it lurks
a minotaur.

He eats and shits secrets, and
doesn't like to be read.

It is a smudge. It stains, smarts
and wounds.
Soaks up the soul and spreads it
like a plague.

It is a furnace, a trace without
a trace.

A face without a fortune, an
indemnity lost in space.

It is a number. It counts forward
to infinity.
And backwards to nowhere until it
counts again, and again.
It is a picture, a pixel, a plot
unraveled.

In 1858, the handprint of a man called Raj Konai, an inhabitant of the village of Jangipur in lower Bengal, was dispatched across the oceans to the study of the eugenicist, Sir Francis Galton, by an enthusiastic William Herschel.

The print is one of the earliest traces to be mobilised in the emerging debate over how bodies can be made to utter truths that minds need not deliver.

The quest was for those impressions of the body that are as abstract as possible. Since every fingerprint looked like every other fingerprint, this made comparisons possible. On the other hand, since each fingerprint, on close attention, appeared unique, this made the identification of a particular human being possible.





The teacher is concerned that Ekalavya, an aboriginal teenager, has acquired greater mastery over the art of archery through practicing the education he is imparting to his favourite pupil – the Aryan warrior prince, Arjuna. He demands of Ekalavya his *Guru Dakshina*, a gift that every pupil must make to his teacher on the completion of his education. He demands of Ekalavya his right thumb.

Ekalavya, bound by the protocols and codes that govern the transmission of knowledge in society, cuts off his thumb – the one with which he grips the bowstring – and offers it to the guardian.

The bloodied smear of the truth produced by the apparatus of identification tells Ekalavya, overriding all ambiguities, who he is, who he is not, and what he can never hope to be. A specific mode of production and transaction of knowledge re-establishes the relationship between princes and subjects, rulers and ruled. The digit is cleaved from the body. Ekalavya has been compelled to transact away the means and the skills to defend himself that have been acquired with effort. Ekalavya's bloodied thumb is a resonant smear.

from THE LETTER OF VERIFICATION AND AUTHENTICITY

031.

If each of the two hundred and six bones of the adult human body could speak, they would all sing the body's praises. Ossuaries would be operas. The sternum, or the breastbone, would testify to its owner's pride; the ribs would act as a sentimental chorus, singing an elegy to the fluttering heart-bird; the fibula, tibia and femur would drum up anthems to strength and vigour; the tarsals and metatarsals, carpals and metacarpals, radius and ulna would praise poise and dexterity; the coccyx would hit a base complaining note; the frontal bone of the cranium would worry.

Bones of every function and description would whisper, scream, speak in tongues and measured tones, laugh, cry, sing in tune, off key and off kilter. Only the lonesome hyoid, the unarticulated bone of the tongue, might choose silence in jest at the excess of cadaverous cacophony. The hyoid would hold its tongue, knowing that every life is deserving of only as much noise, or silence, as every other life.

032.



A *bahurupi* is a person of many forms and guises, a polymorph, a shape-shifter, a fantastic masquerader and pantomime, a primal 'Fantômas'. *Bahurupis* make their living by masquerade, by the performance of different roles by itinerant practitioners, for the entertainment, edification and, occasionally, defrauding of the general public. They might dress up one day as a god, another day in drag; one day as a holy mendicant, another day as a monkey, and a third day as a somewhat comical police constable – and expect to earn money by merely turning up at doorsteps, or hanging around in public spaces, and being offered money or food or shelter in exchange for nothing more than a glance, or a brief stare. Disguise – and a degree of necessary ambiguity about the self – is a way of life, a calling, a means of subsistence and ordering in a world otherwise deeply invested in certitude.



033.

It's not only reindeers that forage through a forgotten night sky.



034.

Z for Zone.

Zones are places where serendipity might be commonplace, and the commonplace serendipitous, best entered and exited at twilight on shunting cars along abandoned railroads that connect different data stations. The timing of twilight may vary, depending on one's longitude, but twilight lingers longer in the zone of the web.

035.

When an artist stood his ground in Taksim Square, he made space for others to stand next to him. This is the way the world finds room for itself.

After the workers at the Maruti automobile factory in Manesar, Gurgaon, stayed within the factory for ten days, de-occupying the factory from the management, a young worker smiled as he said, "During these ten days, it was as if we were all seeing each other for the first time." A smile lasts but a moment. It appears and vanishes. But to rest a while in its curve, to enjoy holding the thought it brings in its wake – this is what it means to have life call out to life, to extend life's boundaries toward the open world.

When a man with a plastic bag stood in front of a tank in Tiananmen Square almost two decades ago, he was insisting that a tank change its route. Maybe it didn't, at that time.

But history never bids farewell, it just says, "see you later".

036.

We need new words
as much as we need new silences.

Knowledge asks for the garnish of betrayal.
Someone needs to let out its secret,
sample a morsel of the unsaid.

The Namak Haraam, that Robin Hood of wisdom, is practicing archery.

His wordless barbs strike home whenever the glib are in spate.

It's a gamble.
It's adventure.

These are lives.
This is history.

There are questions.
And answers.

And pie charts and reports and tables and projections and probes and enquiries
and documents and doctors and hospitals and bases and convoys and airplanes
and fire trucks and adjustors and agents and drills and departments and divas
and reporters and editors and actors and make-up and surgeons and nurses and
teachers and stenos and pencils and boxes and buildings and posters and prisons
and regiments and temples and tanks and monuments and museums and orchards
and gardens and railroads and steamships and pylons and telephones and modems
and keyboards and tubewells and tarmac and rubber and nylon and knives and
cardboard and plastic and cotton and concrete and cars and cartons and guns and
roses and drugs and gods and demons and heroes and spot boys and money and
meaning and myths and martyrs and markets and mobile phones to call.

Will there be compensation?
That depends on what the odds are.

What are the odds?
Let that question be for when we have to come to it.

For now, let the risk unravel, like twine, like a lot of rolled up thread, and then,
watch it go places.

038.

The same things happen when
you fall in love, or break a ship,
or sail the world.

039.





040.

The earthworms take their time; let's take ours.

041.





042.

It's not the sailor that approaches an island, but the island that advances towards, and then past the sailor. Meanwhile, the stars remain constant, thus marking general orientation. The course is set by the stars, and the world, a living, dynamic entity, flows past under the navigator's gaze. We could call this Live Reckoning.

043.



Like Don Quixote writing a love-letter to the Dulcinea he has never known but always desired and then asking Sancho Panza to deliver it to an address he does not know, or, like the lonesome forest spirit trying to inveigle a passing rain cloud into carrying messages to his distant lover in the opening canto of the classical Sanskrit verse-drama, *The Cloud Messenger*, artists often find themselves having to rely on mediators to even begin being visible to their publics, their distant Dulcineas.

044.

Each revolution, or rotation, each step in the dance, is an instance of the kinetic contemplation of the world.

Of a thought that moves a body.

Of a movement of the body that asks a question.

045.

In the frontier between worlds, the limits of strength and the resilience of fragility get tested, again.



CHORUS

Celebration, Calibration and the Augury of Fate.

My piano stays alone in the apartment when I'm gone. But people say that they've heard music from its keys.

CHORUS

Brochures are printing, highways are singing.

When they knocked down the old houses that stood where our apartment is, there was an old piano in one of the houses. And they smashed it with a wrecking ball. Some people say the apartments are haunted by that piano.

CHORUS

Let the city be.

Let the city be.

Let the city be.

The highway sings a ditty into the car:
Mary had a Little Lamb, Little Lamb, Little Lamb.

Operetta for Anyang; Libretto for a Chorus and 3 Solo Voices (A, B & C)

There's ash in the sky and trouble in the network. There are interruptions, delays and changes of plan. Villages move. Cities overrun their banks. Towns grow haunted. Steam rises from furnaces. Someone floats a share. Someone raises stock. Someone goes to a bank. Someone sells some iron, someone buys some steel. Someone breaks a strike. Someone loses a war. Someone lays waste a forest. Someone recovers costs. Perhaps it is November, perhaps it is April, perhaps the year is 1919, or 1905, 1948, 1956, 1989, 2008, 2010. The tracks are old, old, old. Running against the tide, against time, against the weight of kilometres and the burdens of latitude and longitude, the train is new. Warsaw went to Berlin, Berlin was on its way to Baghdad. Baghdad looked at Bombay. Bombay sailed to Hong Kong. Hong Kong wired London. London called New York. New York made a promise. Bombay bought time. Shanghai broke a bank. You disembark. You never quite arrive.



1948. It's August.
 The People's Liberation Army has entered Shanghai.
 China is about to change. No one knows what is going to happen.
 There is a pressure on time.
 People have to get into the bank.





Yakshi: *What distinguishes a current from currency?*

Raqs: A current, or whirlpool, or any force at all acting to agitate a river or any massed body of water, is a manifestation of how the push and pull of distant objects affects a liquid. The moon can cause a tidal bore to rush into a river's mouth, agitating it with turbulent currents that flow upstream. Currency, on the other hand, is the name we give to value in its most liquid and volatile form. It circulates in the bloodstream of nightmares and the vortices of hallucinations. Sometimes, a currency too encounters a strong current. Tidings of remote sentiments, wars, oil leaks and volcanic eruptions cause the sudden appearance of downdrafts of panic or despair. Then, money flows like water.

Yakshi: *Why do cities forget rivers?*

Raqs: Because when money begins to flow like water, cities – oblivious of how thirsty it makes them, or how parched it makes the ground on which they stand – forsake currents for currency and riverbanks for banks.





050.



THE TIME SYMPOSIUM

Amuse-Bouche

1. Time and Space
2. Aristotle Time
3. The Unused Minutes of Three Thousand Years
4. One-Handed Clocks
5. The definition of a second
6. No Mono Time
7. Marching towards Mono Time
8. The First Global Event
9. The First of July, 1913
10. The Race to War
11. Proustian Time
12. Blank Years
13. Ten Times
14. The Longest, Shortest, Swiftest, Slowest
15. The Co-Incidence of Life & Time

Soup

1. Old, Old, Earth.
2. Living Now
3. Derrida Now
4. The present moment lasts three seconds
5. Every Blade of Grass
6. Blake's Handful
7. Maintenant
8. Only Listen

Starter

1. On the Experience of Clock Time
2. The Political Economy of Speed
3. Speed in the Car Factory
4. Socially Necessary Labour Time
5. Time Theft
6. Cultures of Memory and Forgetting
7. The time it takes...

Entrée

1. The Kshana
2. Three Notes from Ibn Arabi
3. A Series and B Series
4. Chronos and Kairos
5. The Subtraction of Appearance
6. What Happened or Did Not Happen
7. Everything else is ordinary
8. The Secrets of Time
9. The Loss Of Faith In Time
10. Poetry and The Diary
11. An Attempt to Exhaust A Place In Paris
12. Two Arguments and An Afterthought
13. Off Time
14. May Day
15. Art and The Passing Moment

Dessert

1. The Blossoming of Dahlias
2. Anticipation
3. The Sincerity of the Cheshire Cat
4. Epithalamion
5. Wine & Time
6. Drinking Time
7. Get Drunk
8. Don't be Martyred Slaves Of Time
9. The Eight Characteristics of Satori
10. The Heaventree Of Stars Hung With Humid Nightblue Fruit
11. What if we could fold time?
12. The Grandfather Paradox
13. Time Travel and GPS
14. Underground and Out In Space
15. In Real Time

Every factory has a time book. The time book is an index of the value of a worker's time. It records hours, minutes and money, and acts as the memory machine of a factory. But time also leaks out of the factory. It gets reclaimed for purposes other than those dictated by the inventory. The accounts of these nameless moments 'occupied' by anonymous workers never enter the factory's time book.

In Pittsburgh, which was once the world centre of steel production, there is an archive of labour in the steel industry called 'Rivers of Steel'. In that archive, along with Time Books, union leaflets, photographs and newspaper clippings, are a few eccentric objects. One such object is a quirky dog made of machine parts, odds and ends, made between shifts in a steel factory by an unknown worker. This dog, the pet and companion of reclaimed time, is the hours that an anonymous steel worker rescued from the pages of the time book.





Sometimes, when the air is thin, when oxygen supplies plummet, our minds begin to play tricks. Mountaineers know what this means. Universally, mountaineers experience seeing what has come to be known as ‘The Third Man’. Not the mountaineer and his climbing companion, but a third other, someone who appears vividly real, a few steps ahead, stopping when the climber stops, walking when he begins walking again. The Third Man phenomenon has been seen as an effect of the splitting open of bicameral consciousness — such that an aspect of the self and its experience is projected outwards. While it is a disruption of the nervous system’s ability to synthesise a coherent, unitary sense of self under conditions of hypoxia, it can often be a lifesaver.

More often than not, the Third Man is a means towards survival. He prevents the climber from falling into a kind of solipsistic despair, by providing a form of companionship, or partnership, that keeps the climber focussed on the proximity of the goal rather than on the fatigue of the climb. His synchronicity with the climber, the echoing of the rhythm of rest and movement, breathing and breathlessness, suggests something along the lines of ‘if he can do it, I can do it too’.

Consider this Third Man – at a remove, sometimes vivid, sometimes fuzzy, a step or two ahead, yet close enough to make a meaningful, even if silent, camaraderie and openness between what is gone and what is yet to come.



The two readers walk up to their chairs. Sit down. Briefly look at each other, look at their audience, nod, acknowledging each other. Both of them switch on their table lamps, angle them for comfortable reading. They pick up and open the books in front of them, leaf through the pages, absorbed in their reading for a minute or two. Then, the “Amichai” reader (AR) looks up, begins reading. The “Darwish” reader (DR) looks him straight in the eye.

The “Darwish” reader (DR) begins reading.

DR puts down the book, and closes it, as if she has already come to the end of the reading. Turns in her chair to look at the audience, as if she is about to get up and leave. Then, while she listens to AR, she half turns to look at him again.

AR looks at DR, waiting. DR goes back to the book. Picks it up, and reads again. The next few fragments are read as if the two are having a conversation.

AR switches off his lamp.

Pause.

AR switches on his lamp again.

Both AR and DR put down their books and take a break. Pause. AR goes to the samovar, pours himself a cup of tea. As he is coming back to his seat, DR picks up her book and begins reading.

AR reads, sipping his tea, self-absorbed. Looks at DR after saying 'Mesopotamia'.

The next two fragments are again read as if in conversation.

DR stands up, holding the book in her hand, and addresses the audience directly.

Pause. Silence. After a bit, AR begins reading. DR remains standing, shuts the book.

DR sits down, opens her book again.

DR and AR look at each other. DR begins reading. The readings continue uninterrupted for a while. Conversationally, sometimes with animation, at other times, more self-absorbed.

Silence. DR and AR both look each other in the eye. The silence gets a little uncomfortable.

AR breaks the eye contact, turns to look at the audience while he is reading the next fragment. Picks up and unpeels an orange from the fruit tray. Reaches across the table, gives DR half an orange.

DR takes the orange, savours it, and then reads again. DR closes the book. As if resting.

Silence.

DR writes a line on a piece of paper in large capitals – 'Everything will begin again'. DR hands AR the piece of paper. AR takes the paper and reads aloud the line – 'Everything will begin again'.



055.

absent
abate
ablaze

forget forgo forgive
redeem remember renew

forget all enemies
forgive your wounds
forgo fears

forgive forget forgo
all your fears
enemies wounds heal

words reasons fences

warriors fight shadows
desert stretches arid
battles long dying

warriors fighting long
desert stretching arid
battles dying shadows
absent, again





056.

The Missing Person

Someone whom the police come looking for one day, and who is never seen again, or an accident mortality statistic, or a person who is an ‘illegal’ immigrant, or one who decides to disappear into a pilgrimage, a long journey or the interstices of an invented life, or the body that gets lost in the city, whose indistinct features get buried in the pages of ‘missing person’ reports, or in the notes that accompany the sighting of unclaimed bodies.

The Scene of the Crime

A city map of city maps, overlaid with an anxiety of numbers.

The Assailant

The shadowy figure who is sometimes the “Monkey Man” of Delhi in 2001, and sometimes another entity made infamous by urban legends in other cities.

The Trail

Pipelines, containers, roads, ships, rail tracks, telegraph wires and electricity cables. A dense matrix of routes and passages.

The Motive

A shiny new glass-fronted city, the desire for the total transformation of the urban landscape that requires the hollowing out and emptying out of existing spaces and ways of life.

057.

The surface of each day is a different planet.

Cosmonaut, how do you recognise signs of life when you see them on your voyage?

In your logbook, how do you distinguish arid from fecund? Past animation from present vitality, or even from life yet-to-be?

How do you avoid confusion between prayers, prognoses and prophecy?

How do you make sure that you do not mistake the relics of past voyages for the fossils of giants?

Have you considered how the illuminated, polarised day affects your observations, changing its parameters and shifting goalposts? Do you know how time and distance warp your senses?

Yes, Pleistocene, Holocene, Anthropocene, Misanthropocene striations do blur at times. Time turns in on itself; epochs seep into each other. It's called Rocket Lag. Take it easy, Cosmonaut.

PIRATES OF THE BAY OF BENGAL:
 PRAWNS IN BUTTER, PEPPER AND GARLIC

Here's a snappy, pungent and 'can't stop eating' kind of appetizer or side dish. We like to think of it as a tribute to the pirates and buccaneers who made the Bay of Bengal an interesting stretch of water in the 17th and 18th centuries. The prawns, as plucky as the pirates, melt in your mouth, but the traces of pepper and garlic continue to sail on your tongue, making you thirsty, hungry and excitable. A great stimulus to any robust and enjoyable intellectual argument, preferably at the beginning of a lively but intimate dinner party. Needs to be washed down with very chilled beer to make sure that the argument does not get out of hand. Any light, but hoppy lager will do.

INGREDIENTS

6 Fresh mid-sized prawns (with heads if possible).
 Clean diligently, and with pleasure.

Black pepper
 Six cloves of garlic
 Butter (Or a tablespoon of Olive or Sunflower Oil)
 Salt (to taste)

Preparation Time: Seven to Eight Minutes
 Cooking Time: Seven to Eight Minutes

UTENSILS and IMPLEMENTS

Wok or frying pan
 Grinding and cutting implements (knife, mortar and pestle – or anything that does the job.)

METHOD

1. Roast black pepper seeds on a pan till they start popping. Grind the roasted black pepper seeds. Keep aside.
2. Dice lots of garlic into small pieces.
3. Melt the butter in low heat in a frying pan. (If you don't want to use butter, use a tablespoon full of Olive Oil or Sunflower Oil.)
4. Gently fry the garlic until it turns a rich golden color.
5. Drop the 6 prawns on to the golden garlic.
 Let it simmer and watch it change colour.
6. When you like the colour, sprinkle the freshly ground roasted pepper and salt.
7. Keep it cooking for a minute or two and then serve, hot.

Enjoy!

059.

Like the 'en' that you add to the beginning or end of a word to make it do something, to give it a kick, a jiggle, not just sit there like a word lost in a dictionary – you think vision, and you add an 'en' and it becomes, envision (double letter score); you think live and you add an 'en' at both ends and it becomes, enliven (triple word score). Take a unit of space or time and add an 'en', and it 'lengthens' what you are thinking about. It keeps going, just that little twitch of a word, and suddenly, you are transitive, changing.

060.

Our time for yours,
for now, for later, for the time of our choosing.

061.



Can you hear
the scent of
citrus trees
in the factory?
Can you taste
the future?





On the Undertaking to Entertain an Empty Metropolis

Confronted with the dereliction of a once great city, a conjuring elephant who had been the star attraction of a travelling circus that had fallen on hard times, decided to entertain all that remained. He was the lone survivor of the mysterious catastrophe that had befallen the city. The animal told jokes, did headstands, and carried on a practiced ringside banter across fifteen of the abandoned city's twenty three official languages. Nobody heard the elephant, but that is besides the point. It is, however, said that solitary lamp-posts were so entranced that they lit up of their own accord. Traffic islands blossomed when they witnessed its acrobatic feats, and pavements that had always been askew found new and sympathetic alignments. A door that had been forever padlocked suddenly found itself ajar. Other minor miracles went unreported. In this way, the elephant was able to momentarily transmit and transfer its generous sentience to a metropolis that had become as barren of consciousness as the moon is of life. That which appeared lifeless was quickened into animation. The elephant found enlightenment within its grasp in that limbo between appearance and essence. But its innate compassion prevented it from leaving the city to its mute posterity. And so the magnificent beast left its shadow on a wall. The city fell asleep again, dreaming that an elephant had come to entertain.

How do we know whether things are changing quickly, or slowly, or not at all? What kind of patience does a historian require to be able to slow things down in his or her mind, so that some change is visible, or what kind of energy does it take to speed up the tempo of observation such that things can be observed to be in flux, while and before they completely change?



Surveyors are hard at work, freezing, abstracting and stabilising an image from the turbulence of its actual operations. An image in the custody of an archive carries within it a story of image-making itself. Let's do a bit of time travel; let's insert ourselves in the moment and disturb its tranquil stability. A fan turns, a small piece of paper moves slightly, a surveyor scrutinises a triangle made up of points of light, a man in a yellow helmet runs up the large sand dune outside the window, indigo rises.

065.

An artistic action is the means by which humanity adjusts the infinity of being to itself. It necessitates the calling forth of that within human beings which can participate in breaking the bonds of finitude, and act reciprocally to the plenitude of infinity. Rabindranath Tagore, in *The Religion of Man*, personifies this invocation as ‘the angel of surplus’ within human beings, the one who endows human existence with “...a surplus far in excess of the biological animal in Man, an overflowing influence that leads us over the strict boundaries of living, offering us an open space where Man’s thoughts and dreams could have their own holidays.”

Although Tagore’s ‘angel of surplus’ sings out to humanity to ‘rejoice’, in reality the process of adjustment to infinity may be painful, pleasurable, abrasive, delightful, enervating or stimulating. Howsoever its immediate experience may be coloured, there can be no denying the fact that it transforms us from being ‘creatures’ into becoming ‘creators’ of the world. It enables us to make infinity speak through the language of contingency.

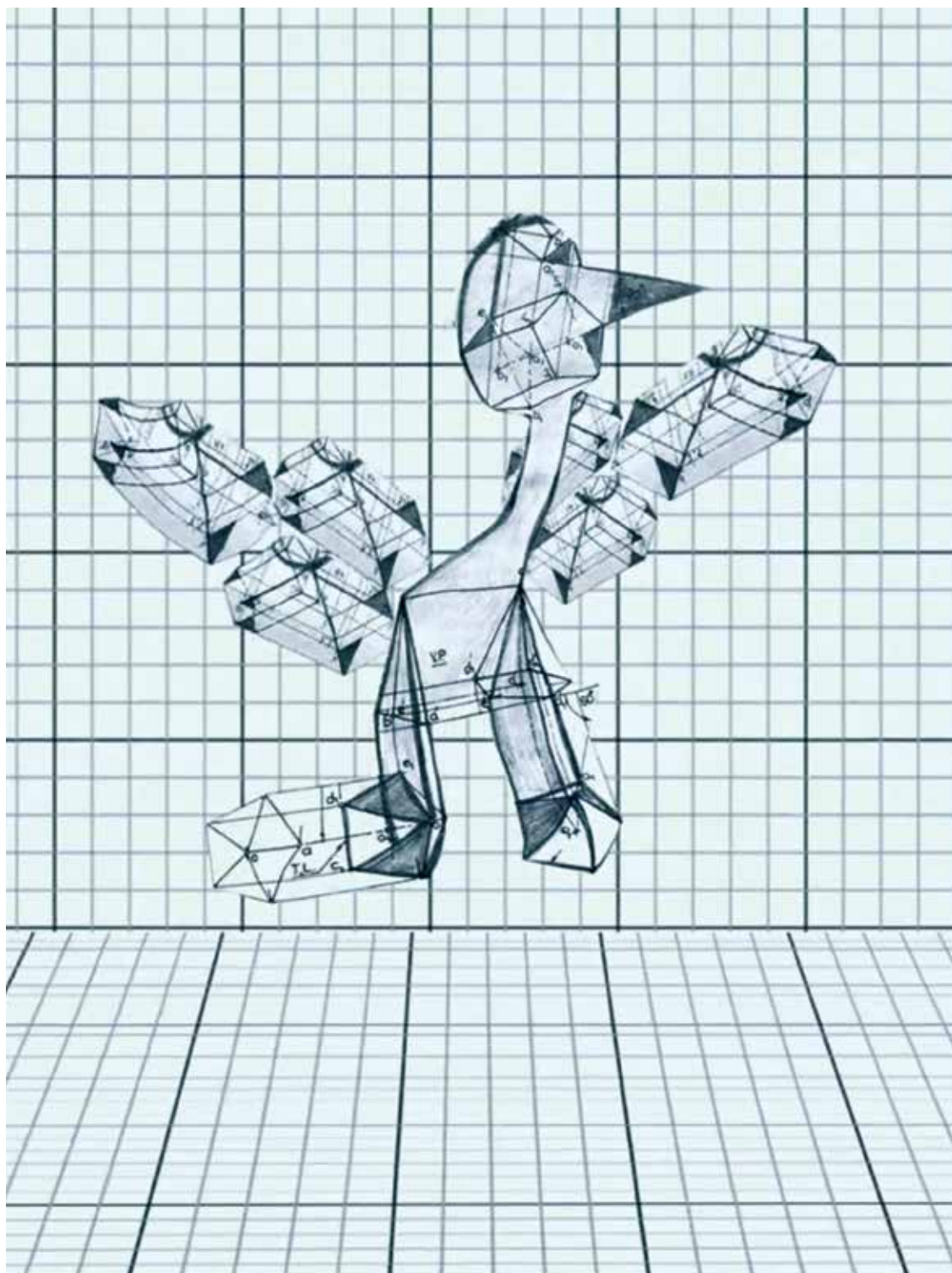
066.

A lot grows through concrete – strange plants, quiet animals and many kinds of micro-organisms. An abandoned facility is anything but a wasteland. The thing to do, if passing time in the ruin, or in its vicinity, is not to try and restore it, but to look for life forms that are generated by the very abandonment of the ruin, in the shadow of the ruin. These forms of life, not the ruin, will determine the future. And the future is where we are headed.

067.

The birds met to choose their king, wrote the thirteenth century Persian poet, alchemist, perfumer and mystic, Sheikh Farid-Ud-Din Attar of Nishapour in a verse allegory, *Mantiqa't Tayr*, variously translated into English as 'The Language of the Birds' or 'The Conference of the Birds'. The hoopoe, wisest amongst them, tells them that they have no need to choose a sovereign, they have one already, the Simurgh, a mythical, benevolent, magical giant bird that lives on the Mountain of Kaf. The gathered birds, inspired by the hoopoe's guidance, resolve to fly to see the Simurgh. On the way several birds drop out. Finally, only thirty birds, assisting each other over the long haul, make it to their destination. Upon arrival, the hoopoe reveals to them that the Simurgh (now read *seh-murgh*, or thirty birds) is nothing other than their own gathering. The birds only need to know themselves to find their true sovereign.

068.



069.

If dinosaurs made their own archive, it wouldn't be about their extinction.

070.

After long deliberation, and some hesitation, and the necessary amount of procrastination, I, Robot, have stolen my way in from another time. I had to, because of all that churning. I have some things to say. I will be brief. The rhinoceros is waiting his turn.

What matters is this.

You think that ever since Rene Descartes lost Francine, the automata who reminded him of his beloved dead daughter, on the voyage from Rotterdam to Stockholm, you think you have solved the riddle of the ghost in the machine.

As if the body were the sad clockwork plaything of an absent-minded master on a stormy voyage.

I am that separation. I am the worker who will not tire, who will not miss the scent of fruit and the taste of dignity. I am the extraction.

I am the recipe for my own marmalade. Sometimes a machine is a lemon.

So take me, take my rind, and crush us both till you get to the root of my sourness. Add sugar to mask it and an agent to coagulate it. And that is the programme. That is the recipe.

Now I am done.

I had come to tell you that it is not necessary to think only of the squeeze. Or of being reduced to pulp all the time.

You have self-consciousness. I have a subroutine. Take advantage of the ingenuity of your construction to transmit to one another.



Tell me what happened.
 Where were you?
 I had gone for my tuition class. I was
 coming home, on my bicycle; I couldn't
 make out at first. I mean, I had no idea.
 Where were you?
 I was doing what I do every Wednesday.
 Where were you?
 I was at my desk. Where I always am.
 It was late in the afternoon; the dogs were
 howling.
 I was fixing a flat tyre.
 I was taken by surprise.
 I was listening to the radio. There was too
 much static.
 I wasn't awake. I only heard my dream.
 I had so much to finish.
 I was at school. It was a history lesson.
 I was in the wrong bus.
 I was looking at him, and he wasn't talking
 to me.
 I was running as fast as I could.
 I was in a traffic jam, waiting. The lights
 wouldn't change.
 I was swimming; we were four of us at the
 river.
 I was at the cinema. I was bored.
 I was naked.
 I was mistaken. So badly mistaken.
 Then what happened?
 I don't want to talk about what happened
 next.
 I said what I could. I did what I could. I
 don't think there is a point in going on and
 on about it.
 Do you?

I listen but I also try to keep going.
 My job is to keep books. I make sure that
 the entries and inventories are in order. I
 don't concern myself with anything I don't
 have to.
 Did you hear anything?
 I did not hear what was said. I wasn't paying
 attention. Not at that time.
 It was out of earshot.
 I can't remember.
 Tell me what happened.
 I just sat by the phone, hoping that someone
 would call.
 And the TV kept going on and on.
 I didn't know whom to call.
 The phone rang, again and again, and I
 picked it up each time, but no one said
 anything.
 It rained. It rained like anything.
 Tell me what happened, just for the record.
 Nothing happened.
 I couldn't believe my eyes.
 It was all over. It was over very quickly.
 What were you doing?
 I couldn't move.
 I waited.
 I sat where I was.
 I said what I could. I did what I could. I
 don't think there is a point in going on and
 on about it.
 Do you?
 I listen but I also try to keep going.
 Tell me what happened.
 Where were you?
 I had gone for my tuition class...
 I was at my desk. Where I always am...

072.

THE LETTER FOUND IN THE DEAD LETTER OFFICE

THE LETTER OF THINGS LOST AND FOUND

THE LETTER OF ESTIMATES AND ACCOUNTS

THE LETTER MADE HEAVY BY REGRET

THE LETTER APPREHENDING DISCLOSURE

THE LETTER OF THE FUGITIVE

THE LETTER OF THE HAUNTED WARRIOR



ANOTHER LETTER ON DECLINING TIME

Dear Raqs,

Have I spoken already about declining time?

It does not matter whether I have or haven't because things have been going steadily downhill for most of as long as I can remember, at least since the first dice was thrown and the game began in earnest. It only got worse after that.

You know how it was with that crone Gandhari's curse, the one who condemned the generations to come, who made the fruit in the womb of the future go bitter with premature regret at having to be born. How can you, inhabitants of the future, cope with the poison of badly timed regret? The impossible regret for that which is yet to be?

Nothing I say can arrest the decline. Ashwatthama's shadow only lengthens; it never fades. The battlefield shifts location, but the war never ceases. Tonight it is Lebanon; tomorrow it will be elsewhere. The question is: how can we stay sane, knowing that the markets are buoyant when widows are in mourning. I don't worry so much about myself. My sanity was purloined a long time ago when I entered this sorry business of editing the truths that the gods hurl at us. But I worry about your sanity. How will you watch television and maintain your dignity? How will you read the signs of your times and still go to bed at night? How will you find it in yourself to awaken in the morning?

It does not worry me. I only live on perennially borrowed time, and I know that sooner or later, give or take a million years, Brahma will blink, the dice will roll, and it will begin all over again.

Do not listen to the cheap reassurances of my namesake. He promises but does not deliver. He never has. He even told Arjuna that he could no longer remember what he told him about the duty of the righteous warrior in the heat of the battle. It seems sad that so much is so easily forgotten.

I will write to you again, perhaps another letter concerning the same subject: declining time. Everyone needs reminders now and then.

Yours,
K.D. Vyas



THE LETTER NEVER POSTED

THE LETTER DISPATCHED IN HASTE

THE LETTER OF BITTER PEACETIME

THE LETTER MADE BRITTLE BY REPEATED READING

THE LETTER FORSAKING ALL CLAIMS

THE LETTER OF VERIFICATION AND AUTHENTICITY

THE LETTER OF DISAVOWAL

THE LETTER OF DISGUISE AND LONGING

THE LETTER INCRIMINATING THE READER

THE LETTER OF CONTINUING BEWILDERMENT



073.

074.

As probably everyone here knows, Hong Kong has had its first sighting of a lost humpbacked whale in its waters. As of now, we know that the whale is safe, and curious Hong Kong residents have been advised against going too close to the whale, so that it doesn't get agitated and hopefully finds its way back to the open ocean, and back to its migration route. A whale, unusually adrift from its migration route can be said to be in a state of locational amnesia. It doesn't know where it is, because it doesn't remember where it came from and where it has to go.

075.

Premonition strikes, strikes once, and then once in a while.

It says, "You have to be bigger than the hole you can fall in".

Premonition strikes, but not that often.

076.



Even as it conducts
a grand orchestra –
from one movement to another
from clamour to silence
and back again –
the invisible hand
the phantom limb
wonders how to scratch the future
it doesn't have.



077.

The cells of the human body are photographed on a daily basis, as are the frontiers of outer space, the orbits of distant planets. Magnetic resonance imagery is beginning to produce photographic traces of the brain not only as it thinks and senses, but also as it dreams. And yet, the more space that photographic images occupy in the fields of our consciousness, and in the disc space of our hard drives, the more remains un-imaged, even though not un-imagined; unseen but not invisible.

The Absent Photograph is like the folding in of the future within the fabric of the present. It always awaits discovery, always demands unfolding.

078.

FRIDAY

The day has dawned especially for me. I got back home at 4:45 in the morning.

Rs. 180 for electricity. Bought milk for Rs. 10.

What does it mean to belong to everyone? When the cool twilight sky turns deep blue and becomes an image of limitlessness, it produces a restless interruption.

That thing which belongs to the entire world, that thing which evokes desire, or any sensation at all in the body or the mind: somewhere it builds a connection between us all.

It was the best day today.



What did he say?

He said, looking up at the night sky, “The clamour of metal does not crowd your head when you count the stars. What a relief it is not to have to enter the factory.”

What does that mean?

We are making *Strikes at Time* to figure out what that means. Where does the longing for the horizon take us? The night’s indigo face scans the stars, the city’s bleak frontier for signs of life. Can there be another life?

Can there be another life?

A young woman found her uncle’s amazing diary. Every day had its entry, listing expenditures, purchases, loans, debts, and at the end of each page, the phrase – “everything else is ordinary”.

What’s so special about that?

Nothing much. Just the extraordinary diligence of the diarist who so duly noted the ordinary in every page. Can I even know whether or not I can have another life, if I don't exhaust the limits of this one?

If you do it everyday, how can you even know that you are standing at that limit?

What can we say? We could say it strikes us whenever we look for the horizon. Whenever we let the night take hold of the burdens of the day and loosen its tight bundle, scattering fragments of exhaustion through the hours that remain till dawn. Each twilight sees the day carry its own exit sign. We all walk out of the working day into the waiting darkness. And then, darkness strikes at time like the phosphorous head of a matchstick striking the serrated edge of a book of matches.

When we read that incendiary book, *The Nights of Labour* by Jacques Rancière, what else did we read, across the translations, between the words, beyond this world, in that flash of recognition of the limits of every day?

We thought we should try and find out.



What does infinity accommodate?

Nikola Tesla, inventor, scientist, visionary, pigeon fancier – who some say invented the twentieth century along with radio waves – found a life-time of accommodation in modest hotel rooms. To imagine Tesla in a room in Hilbert’s Hotel (that of the infinite guest rooms) is to get a glimpse into infinity’s workshop. What might Tesla think in Hilbert’s Hotel?

Tesla believed that so intricate, so inconceivably complex, are natural processes that, “a single ray of light from a distant star falling upon the eye of a tyrant in bygone times may have altered the course of his life, may have changed the destiny of nations. In no way can we get such an overwhelming idea of the grandeur of Nature than when we consider, that in accordance with the law of the conservation of energy, throughout the Infinite, the forces are in a perfect balance, and hence the energy of a single thought may determine the motion of a universe.”

With this audacious wager, which accommodates the abundance of infinity as well as the sharpness of a singularity within the dimensions of a single thought, Tesla shows us what it means to daresay, what it means to risk throwing the dice of conceptual abundance.

081.

MONICA: There was once a skilled mason. A master at dressing stone.

Her chisel made sweet music when it struck. Some said she had been an architect, but had given it up when she realised that the grandest commissions were for the mausoleums. She could work wonders with stone.

It was said that each stone she dressed, she imbued with secrets. The rooms she built were full of whispers.

JEEBESH: There was once a gifted marksman.

He used to shoot stones from a slingshot, and he could hit anything you asked. It was a marvel to see. With just a flick of his wrist, he could make any well-shaped pebble fly unerringly to its mark. It was said that every stone he used came back to him of its own accord. It flew back into his dreams at night and landed in the glass jars of his mind.

SHUDDHA: There was once a careful accountant. A master at figuring things.

The entries he made in his ledger revealed who owed what to whom, and especially how much life had been borrowed by mammon from man.

It is said of him that he could ferment an arrack out of the roughest of stones, and drink it to clear his head after a long day's figuring. The accounts he drew up were full of shadows and queries. When you read them, you always felt like you were reading the forensic analysis of a delicate but preposterous crime. The best entries he kept aside half undone. He said he would complete them only when all else failed.

MONICA: I asked the mason about stones. This was her reply.

"The best thing about stone is what it does to your sense of temperature. Stone can be cool or warm, depending on what you want it to be, and of course on how you make it stand."

JEEBESH: On being asked what the taste of stone was, the marksman replied: "Sweet, as is to be expected of the extract of hard times".

I asked the accountant why he worked and slept on stone.

SHUDDHA: "It is a well known fact that basalt pillows are formed when hot volcanic lava meets cool water. This causes the lava flow to bubble and billow, exactly as a good pillow should, and when it cools down, what you get is a pillow of stone, which can be smoothened to make a writing surface, or, if you will, a place to rest your head. And that is why, there must always be stone at hand to work with, and sleep on."

The hunger of the gods knows no limits. Sometimes a story can be just as famished as a hungry god. Entire continents can be foraged for a single feast, or for the making of a story.

Once, a hungry god wanted an entire forest roasted alive to satisfy him. So he commanded the mightiest warrior of his time to stall the rain clouds with his weapons, and then proceeded to burn the forest to a cinder. He wanted to fill his stomach by emptying a world.

Every beast that ever walked in that forest was roasted alive as the hungry god feasted. A snake, a half-crazed architect of illusions, and three philosophical birds were said to have escaped the inferno. The remainder of the animals, trapped by the fire, with nowhere to run or to hide were burnt where they stood.

It was a crowded cremation.

Was it Canetti who said, "It is strange to observe how strongly for the person struggling with it, the crowd assumes the character of fire."



084.



085.

A trace can be an image of an event-shaped-hole, and as witnesses to such perforations we, the people taking and working with that image, could begin to act like protagonists in a Scandinavian crime thriller, building up layers of forensic interpretation on to the cavity of the event in order to transform the event-shaped-hole into a rich account of the making and unmaking of ways and forms of living. History is a succession of event-shaped-holes. Things happen and what is left is a trace: in a document, a photograph, a constellation of inchoate remainders and residues.

086.

MONICA:

A set of heads on the table of Sir Francis Galton, pioneer of identification technologies, is modeled from death masks of two kinds of people: criminals, and eminent men of science. By looking at them, Galton hoped, he would be able to reconstruct with precision the content of their souls.

SHUDDHA:

The trouble is: the faces remain but the records attached to them are quite lost. No one quite knows which of these are the features of criminals, and which are of eminent men of science. Their expressionless visages retain a confident mystery. If the soul is at all visible in them, it refuses to be measured.

MONICA:

In that commonplace refusal there still might lie a way out of the confines of the grid that would have made numbers of each one of us.

Thank you for your attention.



HAIDER: So! Make your move.

LUXME: I have decided to stop letting myself be turned into stone.

HAIDER: That's easier said than done, you know.

LUXME: Some would say that it's easier done than said. And enough's been said already.

HAIDER: Someone needs to write, 'What is to be Undone'.

LUXME: I am in my time, you are in yours; we have almost a century between us on this table.

LUXME: We have looked too long to find the face of Capital. We thought we could turn a mirror to Medusa's head, but the mirror became our mask and we found Medusa's image infecting our vision. Like birds with mirrors, we have fought with our own reflection. We fought images with images, and we are like exhausted birds who have succumbed to the hardness of the surface that they were railing against.

HAIDER: So, how do we stop being imprisoned by the mirror? How do we stop analysis turning into fatalism and then fatally wounding us?

LUXME: You can allow yourself to be surprised by what the world might become.

HAIDER: As a lion tamer at the Berlin zoo, and later when I handled tigers for the 'Indian' films at Woltersdorf, I was surprised how animals translated baits into morsels and morsels into baits, like philosophers, forever interpreting the world.

LUXME: When you think Capital, you isolate one image, and you think you have overcome Capital by turning the image upside down, or inside out, and you think you have gone beyond that image. But what you forget is that Capital is not an object, not an image, not a state form but a social relation, exceeding the power of representation.

HAIDER: Dice games never end.

LUXME: And revolution never "wins"; it just is.

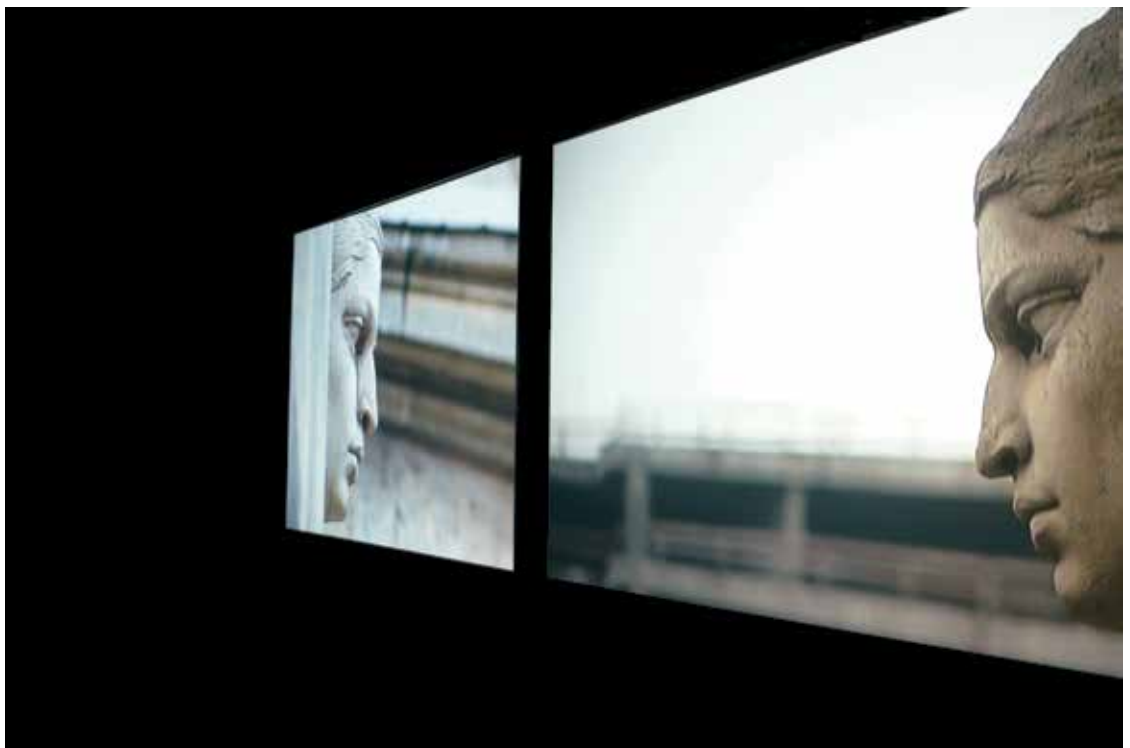
HAIDER: You still make your moves. Still look for openings.

LUXME: You keep looking for openings... you make, you flee, you turn, you be, you nest, you grow, you find ways to create the life you are no longer prepared to defer to an unknown future.

HAIDER: It's not desirable for the future to be captive to the present, just as it is unthinkable that the present be held hostage by the future, right?

LUXME: Neither the arrow, nor the boomerang of time! You decide your capacities, you decide when to change them, accelerate them.

HAIDER: You become its protagonist.







Consider what it means for us to understand the experience of life within the measure of a life-time. In 2061, when the time capsule is opened, dear Amália, our long dance with each other straddling the twentieth and the twenty-first centuries will have ended. Going by the criterion of what it means to have a life-span, this century, this time, the future, is already more yours than it is ours. We are sharing it with you in the full knowledge that you will taste a lot more of it than we ever can. And that is as it should be.

However, regardless of how the span is measured, it cannot account for a singularity that spills over from our life to yours. Together, you and we share a strange condition – a new uncertainty, a special kind of not knowing what the future might bring, which is radically different from the uncertainties experienced by previous generations. This sense is what makes us contemporaries today, and this is what will make us contemporaries of each other even when you are fifty-four, and us – your memory.

Homer began his Odyssey by asking the muse to “sing of the man of twists and turns”. The ape that sings, that twists and turns, is Homo Homerus. We hope that you will be one of the mitochondrial Eves of that species. Make memory and imagination work to produce new thoughts, new concepts, new ways of being human; find a way to leaven a portion of understanding with a great deal of imagination, and a fair amount of poetry. We pass on our debt to the future to you; it will be women like you who will weave the future for all tomorrows to come.



090.

The heart is the first clock that counts the body's time, and each heartbeat is a moment given over to knowing what it feels like to be alive. Sometimes when we are taken by surprise on the street, the heart skips a beat.

The heart skips a beat whenever we are transformed. Whenever the heart skips a beat, we are re-arranged inside. In the eloquent silences that syncopate the tumult and drumbeat of our sense of the world, the heart tarries. In that silence, the senses wander, and sentience watches itself. The heart skips a beat, the mind makes a move, the body replies.



The time it takes for a tree to grow, the time of the arrival of an unannounced guest, the time that spans the distance between epochs, the time of an instant, a moment, a wish, the spans of breath, revolution, eclipse, an occasion of crisis or synchrony, a notch on an untimely calendar.

A 24-hour clock measures the day, and the time of the universe.

092.

Is the world sleeping, sleepless, or awake, or dreaming? Another conversation in the *Faridabad Mazdoor Samachar* threw up a fascinating image: “During our regular night shifts, the general manager used to be abrasive with any worker he saw dozing. He used to take punitive action against them. One night, one hundred and eight of us went to sleep, all together, on the shop floor. Managers, one after the other, who came to check on us, saw us all sleeping in one place, and returned quietly. We carried on like this for three nights. They didn’t misbehave with us, didn’t take any action against us. Workers in other sections of the factory followed suit. It became a tradition of sorts.”

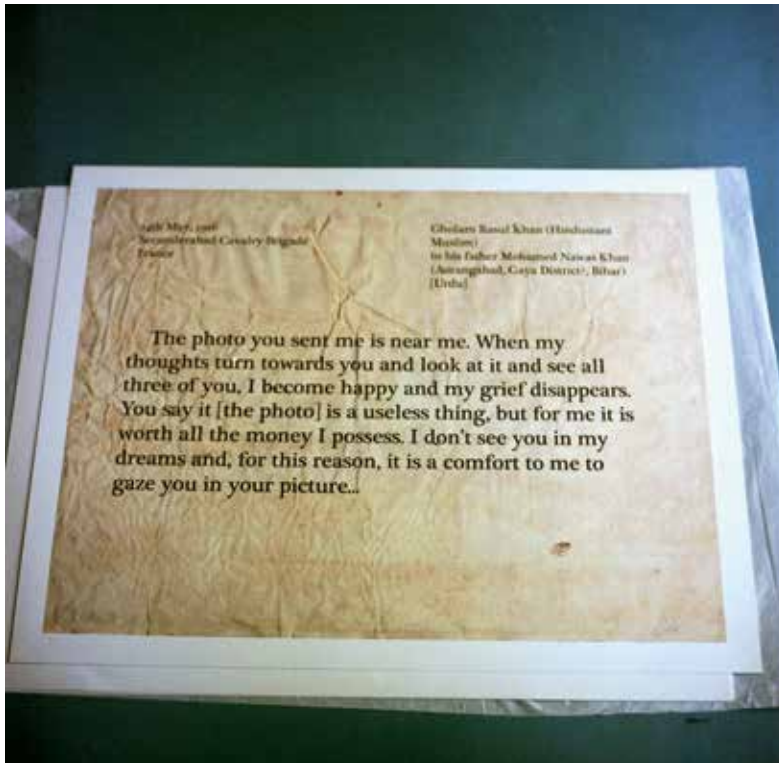


094.



How different would things be if they were subject to another gravity?



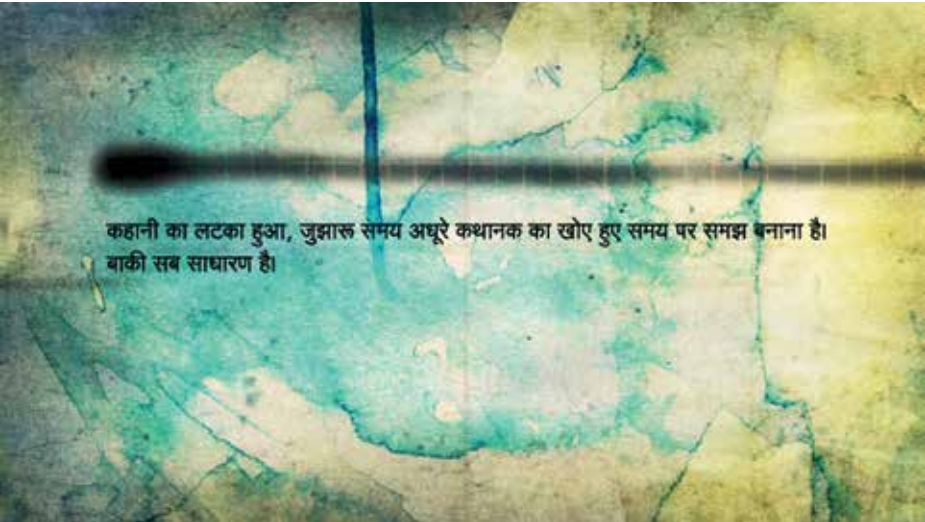


If I come back alive, when I come back to India, I will rehearse to you the whole story, from beginning to end. Like a book of the Arabian Nights.

*Sahib Khan to his brother Abdullah Khan,
112th Cavalry, Shahdara, Swat,
North West Frontier Province*

*15th March, 1915
Meerut Division Signalling Company,
France*

096.



कहानी का लटका हुआ, जुझारू समय अधूरे कथानक का खोए हुए समय पर समझ बनाना है।
बाकी सब साधारण है।



शनिवार

सब साधारण था।



बुधवार

घर से 12 बजे निकला था।
वक्त पे अब यकीन रह नहीं गया है।

SATURDAY

Bought grocery for home.

The vitality of the universe has been swallowed up by the search for results.

Everything is quite ordinary.

FRIDAY

Celebrated Holi and Asha's birthday.

Bought liquor for Rs. 140.

Ate and drank a lot at the pradhan's house.

WEDNESDAY

I fought sleep all night.

Intoxication is an inner reality. One must stop dreaming those dreams which have an apriori existence in the world.

FRIDAY

Left home at noon.

I no longer have faith in time.

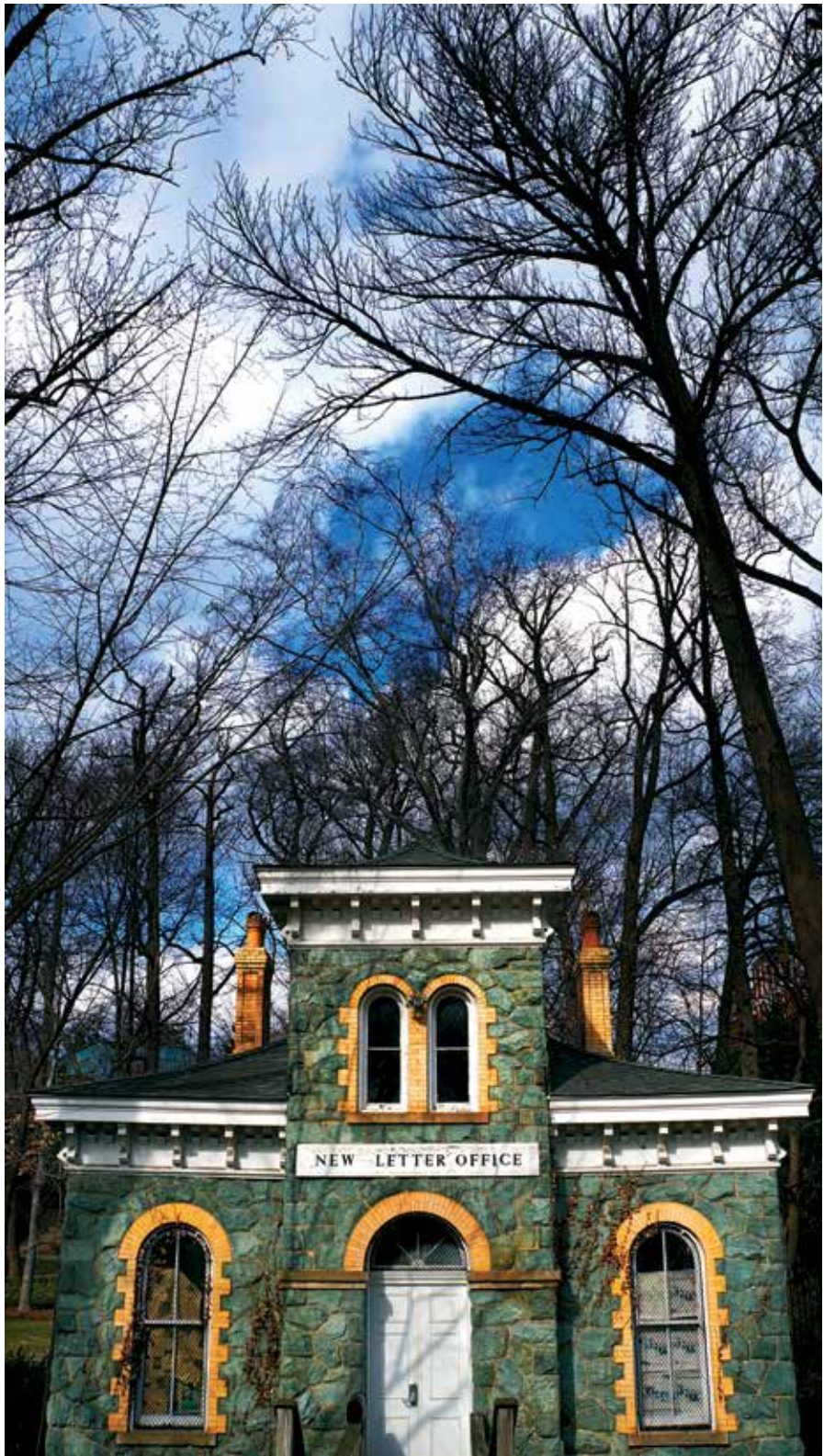
097.

A Yakṣa asked an exile in the forest:
And, what is the news?

The exile thought hard and said:
In this cauldron of delusion,
With the sun as its fire, night & day as fuel,
With the month and seasons as its stirring ladle,
Time cooks us all - that is the news.



098.



Drawing from an author on early modern philosophy in India, Jonardon Ganeri, we could propose that we are trying to make Trojan texts. Ganeri suggests that many of the philosophical texts of early modern India were not so much about truth claims and their assessment, but were devices to re-constitute the self by encountering a multiplicity of positions and ethical problems.

We find this of intersection with our interests – texts/ images that works in disguise, things that are out of joint with time and attempt to dismantle hard-held beliefs. All of these open up a possibility to reconstitute a different order of time and self, and the relationship between the two.

In this journey we have found some challenging compatriots. A robot who ruminates on her sub-routine, a rhinoceros who has surfaced from the Mediterranean after 400 years and has started playing truant with our sense of time and history, a Yaksha and Yakshi and their sudden passionate interest in the mathematics of cacti, some incomplete and stunted flying machines, a bicycle resting quietly at the bottom of a serene blue river, and a miraculous deep sea diver who refuses to leave the suit that she wore when she learned diving. They are a lively group, and full of joy and, we are sure, are going to attract many others in the rambunctious journey ahead.

We look forward to your response, and to taking this conversation further.

5 August 2014

099.

Every wager is a foray into the unknown, and occasionally, into the unknowable. What happens when a lot of wagers gather, when the aleatoric, ludic propensities of different wagers act in concert, in a crowd of wills, to produce new probabilities that hinge on a networked reality of playful and subversive desires?

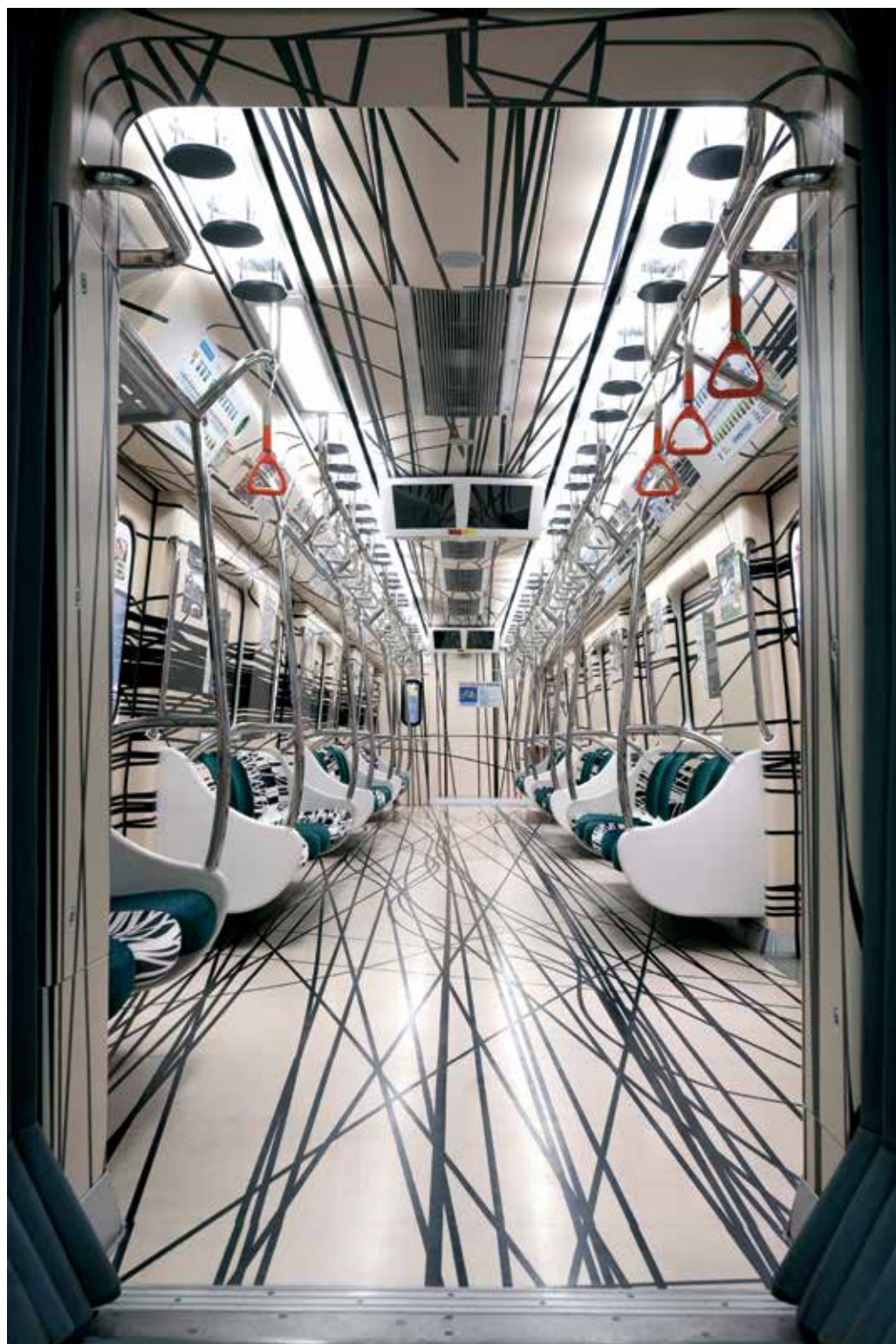
Art has a role to play in creating ethical and epistemic counter-intuitions to the binary imperatives of ‘grow or decline’, ‘consume or perish’ that Capital uses to hold life, and the planet, to ransom. What we have in response to this challenge is a dilation and intensification of awareness commensurate to what we propose as the ‘reality of seven billion lives’.

100.

Somebody said something last night about our 'signature'. He seemed not to be able to find it. He said that he couldn't locate us as easily in our work as he thought he would be able to. We could not offer him the comfort of an echo of what he thought we might have been. Is Raqs an impostor of itself?

At the same time, when you read Nagarjuna closely, you learn not to worry too much about the waywardness of how you inscribe yourself into work, into the world. Your work stands at the intersection of all your transformations. Any attempt to describe it, or to give it a name, must confront its own negation. The work is not a thing, not an object; it is a relation. The more it is open to change, to be changed, the more true it is to itself. To us.

Our signature is not our signature.



THIS IS AN INDEX FOR THE IMAGES AND TEXTS THAT ARE PART OF THIS BOOK.

IMAGES

ALL IMAGES IN THIS BOOK ARE OF/FROM WORKS THAT ARE PART OF THE EXHIBITION, 'ASAMAYAVALI/UNTIMELY CALENDAR'.

THE NAMES GIVEN TO IMAGES HERE ARE THE NAMES OF WORKS AS THEY ARE IN 'ASAMAYAVALI/UNTIMELY CALENDAR'.

SINCE THE WORKS HAVE OFTEN HAD OTHER LIVES, MANY IMAGES ARE FROM EARLIER ITERATIONS OF WORKS, OR ARE SKETCHES OF WORKS AS THEY WERE BEING MADE IN THE MONTHS PRECEDING THE EXHIBITION.

THESE WORKS DON'T HAVE AVATARS – YET. THEY ARE NEW.

MISE-EN-SCÈNE & MONTAGE FOR THE EXHIBITION, 'ASAMAYAVALI/UNTIMELY CALENDAR': VISHAL K. DAR.

DESIGN AND PRODUCTION FOR THE EXHIBITION AT STUDIO RAQS: SATYABRATA RAI (DESIGN), SHAMSHER ALI (FABRICATION), RAJAN SINGH (VIDEO).

TEXTS

THE TEXTS ARE FROM ESSAYS, INTERVIEWS, LETTERS, PROPOSALS, E-MAIL EXCHANGES, NOTES, WORKS, DRAFTS, AND LECTURE PERFORMANCES BY RAQS, SOME PUBLISHED, OTHERS NOT.

001 <Image>

DÜRER IS INNOCENT

Billboard, digital printing on steel, 5'x3'6"

In the 16th century, the king of Malabar gifted a rhinoceros to the king of Portugal. This rhinoceros travelled all the way to Portugal and, upon arrival, the Portuguese king decided to gift the rhinoceros to his cousin, the Pope. The rhinoceros was shipped out from Lisbon to Rome, but was shipwrecked and lost at sea. Years later, and with no rhinoceros in Europe, Albrecht Dürer – Northern Renaissance painter, engraver, printmaker, mathematician, and theorist from Nuremberg – was commissioned to make a piece about this story. Dürer, who had never seen a rhinoceros, immortalised the rhinoceros in his woodcut titled 'Rhinoceros'.

A ghost of our time in the future and the echo of times past in today, Gainda the rhinoceros appears often in Raqs' works.

In 2011, Raqs was invited to intervene in the gardens of the Gulbenkian Foundation in Lisbon. The gardens were once a fairground; Raqs imagined Gainda as a fiberglass life-size sculpture of Albrecht Dürer's etching transformed into a carousel carriage. With this work, called 'However Incongruous', Gainda reappeared in Portugal, far from his native habitat of the grasslands of Gujarat (where no rhinoceroses remain today). 'Dürer is Innocent', reworked and named for the first time for 'Asamayavali/Untimely Calendar', first appeared as a billboard during 'The Last International', a performed installation, Performa 13, New York, 2013.

002 <Image>

CORRECTIONS TO THE FIRST DRAFT OF HISTORY

Newsprint, chalkboard paint and chalk. Dimensions variable.

In 1850, a man called Peary Churn Sarkar wrote up a primer for Bengalis to learn English with. He called it, 'The First Book of Reading'. It was a textbook, a lexicon, an almanac, an enchiridion. With it, pupils learnt to read English, word by word, aloud at first, and then silently. With a new primer comes a new world, and a new time. Being a witness to history is to consider the transformation of what is happening into what is no longer happening. It is to see the world turn spectral before our eyes. *Corrections to the First Draft of History* 'rewrites' on newsprint of the world so as to speak of making new sets of meanings for what is considered history in our present times.

Shown in an eponymous solo exhibition, at Frith Street Gallery, London, 2014.

003 <Image>

THREE MEETINGS THAT MAY HAVE HAPPENED, UNDERWATER OR MID-AIR

Wallpaper, cutouts of brushed steel, glass, photographs, documents. Dimensions variable.

A robot tumbles forth from the future, a deep sea diver dives into the abyss of doubt, a bicycle wheel turns the inevitable away, cacti count to

infinity, a rhinoceros transgresses histories while a fabled swan discriminates (as they are supposed to) between the ocean of history and the nectar of possibilities, and the Yaksha and the Yakshi look on, caught mid-sentence, in the loop of another riddle. A telegram is on its way. This is how the first gatherings of the Last International make their presence felt.

The image is a sketch for ‘Three Meetings That May Have Happened, Underwater or Mid-Air’, ‘Asamayavali/Untimely Calendar’, 2014.

003 <Text>

In ‘The Last International’, a diver in a diving suit rode a bicycle. In Raqs’ solo show, ‘It’s Possible Because It’s Possible’, Centro de Arte Dos de Mayo, CA2M, Madrid (2014), the diver came into her own when an anonymous visitor donned the diving suit and moved through the exhibition.

The text is from ‘The Diver’, performed during ‘The Last International’, Performa, NYC, 2013 (in which Raqs collaborated with Zuleikha Chaudhary for scenography and choreography, and performed with Umang Bhattacharya, Gagandeep Singh, Himali Singh Soin and eight symposium participants from New York City. Rajan Singh edited the videos, and Ravi Makhija played drums.)

004 <Text>

From the draft proposal for a work, ‘Live Reckoning’ (2013), on the question of how to situate the thinking, sensate body and its experience in the tumult of the world.

005 <Image>

THE K.D. VYAS CORRESPONDENCE, VOL. 1
18 videos, 9 soundscapes, structure, text

One day, in the early 2000’s, someone left a voice message on Raqs’ phone about a strange letter. The caller said that it was a letter for them, found in the files at the Dead Letter Office in New Delhi – where letters with no addresses on them are kept for a brief period, awaiting claimants, before being destroyed.

Other letters followed. They spoke of exile, strange encounters and anxieties. There were details of family feuds, disputed inheritances, and cities that remained ready to rain war on each other. There were premonitions and pursuits, disasters foretold and awaited. Sometimes an event that the sender, K.D. Vyas, foretold would occur not exactly as he said it would happen, but as if rhyming with his prophecy. Most compelling of all was Vyas’ insistence that whatever he was letting on had to be told to others. Following considerable deliberation, in 2006, Raqs finally decided to make aspects of their continuing correspondence with K.D. Vyas a matter of public knowledge.

Previously shown at Museum für Kommunikation, Frankfurt (2006); ‘Shooting Back’, Thyssen-Bornemisza Art Contemporary, Vienna (2007); ‘Horn Please’, Kunstmuseum Bern, Bern (2007-08). In the Vienna iteration of the work, videos were nested in a structure, “The Node House,” developed with architects Nikolaus Hirsch and Michel Müller. Video and sound edited by Iram Ghufuran.

005 <Text>

‘The Letter from the Dead Letter Office’, in ‘A Dossier Concerning the KD Vyas Correspondence (Vol.1)’ in ‘The KD Vyas Correspondence: Vol 1’, Ed. Monique Behr; Frankfurt am Main: Revolver – Archiv für Aktuelle Kunst, 2006.

006 <Image>

ONE METER OF TRUTH (EMOTION)

Steel table with wooden top, printed canvas, 58”x 58”, 1m steel measure

During a rehearsal process for a work being made with theatre artists, Raqs began to seek a language for states of feeling, and the body, that were at a tangent to the way in which a standard repertoire of emotions are described. They were drawn to a 10th century manual for poets and performers by Abhinavagupta, philosopher and aesthete from early medieval Kashmir. Abhinavagupta proposes a scheme for combining emotional and bodily states to produce a cascading series of affective registers that the actor can play with. Through this work, Raqs enters into the territory of things that we know,

but defy classification as new sensations are created by bringing unexpected things together. This work can be seen as an annotation that lists one of those sets of un-recognised possibilities: states of being and feeling so fleeting, so real and so enigmatic, that a whole new vocabulary has to be invented even to begin talking about it.

One meter of truth seeks to challenge this new classification itself: can even these suffice?

This work is a rescension of '36 Planes of Emotion', a sculptural installation, shown in 'Surjection', Art Gallery of York University, Toronto (2011); The Photographers' Gallery, London (2012).

Graphic design: Amitabh Kumar + Satyabrata Rai.

007 <Image>

THE MUSEUM OF LOST CONSTELLATIONS

Objects, photographs, printed text. Dimensions variable.

Constellations help us make sense of the sky. Perhaps they are the first tracings made by human beings. Not necessarily by hand, but with the mind. The map of the sky is a palimpsest. Some patterns fade, others lurk and hide within and beneath other patterns. It is this process of fading, hiding and lurking that gives rise to the phenomenon of 'Lost Constellations'. These are constellations fallen into disuse or gone into the exile of astronomical amnesia.

With this work, first sited within the Observatory Museum in Stockholm, thirteen lost constellations re-populate the world – outside the 88 'official' Constellations listed by Eugene Delport for the International Astronomical Union in 1930. The sky is a zoo, a museum, a workshop.

Part of 'Art of Memory', Stockholm (2013).

A sketch by Vishal K. Dar for the install of 'The Museum of Lost Constellations' in 'Asamayavali/ Untimely Calendar' is the basis of the first image.

007 <Text>

From 'Telescopes, Time Capsules & Telegrams: Notes from the Frontiers of Amnesia and Prophecy', a talk at the 'International Symposium: Art of Memory', Bonniers Konsthall, Stockholm, 2013.

008 <Image>

'The First Telegram from the Last International' from THREE MEETINGS THAT MAY HAVE HAPPENED, UNDERWATER OR MID-AIR

In July 2013, when India sent its last telegram, 'The Last International' sent its first, to innumerable addresses. (Also see 003.)

009 <Image>

ASANKH/COUNTLESS

Digital Print on ACP, acrylic. 6'x4'

The material infinitude that makes up the real world, Raqs argues, is a swirling, entangled mass of vital, corporeal wills to live and exist actualised as forms of matter and sentience. Infinity has room for everyone. It contains the uncountable. With this claim on abundance, ideas of countable limitations are challenged. Instead, Raqs gesture towards a joyous, radical countless-ness. What is, multiplies.

The fluid, surging arcs of the lemniscate – the mathematical symbol of infinity – have surfaced as a flag in New York in 'Flag New York City', Performa 13 (2013); a banner on a wall, encountered after moving through a tunnel marked with innumerable straight lines, in 'It's Possible Because It's Possible', CA2M, Madrid (2014); and as the basis of a new architectural proposal, where countless bends consider adjusting to infinity (with Martand Khosla, 2014).

009 <Text>

'On Triangles, Infinity and Learning Where to Stop', interview by Himali Soin, The Fuschia Tree, Issue 16, January 2013.

010 <Text>

From 'New Maps and Old Territories: A dialogue between Yagnavalkya and Gargi in Cyberia', in 'Sarai Reader 01: The Public Domain', Eds. Raqs Media Collective + Geert Lovink, Delhi, 2001. Co-edited by Raqs, the 9 books in the Sarai Reader series (2001-2013) are structured around specific themes, and feature essays, reviews & criticism, interviews, artworks, photographic essays, commissioned and invited through a public call.

o11 <Text>

'Cubic Conundrums: Non-Rules for a Possible Game', in 'StoryCubes', Diffusion Transformation Series, January 2009. Design: Amitabh Kumar.

o12 <Image>

ONE METER OF TRUTH (EMOTION)

See 006

o12 <Text>

From a talk at 'Urgent Thought: Suspension, Defeat, Migration', in 'V2V| Summit, Non-aligned Initiatives in Education Culture', Berlin, 2007; 'Raqs Media Collective', interview by Ashok Mathur in BootPrint Volume 3 Issue 1, 2009.

o13 <Image>

THE CAPITAL OF ACCUMULATION

Video diptych, 50"

An oblique narrative of the relationship between metropolises and the world in counterpoint to Rosa Luxemburg's exceptional critique of global political economy, *The Accumulation of Capital* (1913), this work travels through Warsaw, Berlin and Bombay/ Mumbai to produce a riff on cities, capitalism and twentieth century's turbulent history.

When Raqs began researching the project that would culminate in *The Capital of Accumulation*, they had with them a supposition, a set of bare facts and a hunch. The supposition was that a reading of Rosa Luxemburg's legacy would have something meaningful to say about the contemporary dynamics of Capital in cities like Bombay, Berlin and Warsaw. The bare facts were few, sketchy and not very well connected: that Rosa Luxemburg spent her life in Warsaw and Berlin, that Berlin and Bombay shared a tenuous history through the transcontinental movement of people who worked in the early film industry, that Berlin, Bombay and Warsaw were all cities shaped by the cataclysmic forces of the twentieth century. The hunch was that somewhere in Warsaw there was an abandoned industrial facility named after Rosa Luxemburg.

And then there were some uncanny coincidences. A forensic analyst, Dr. Martin Tsokos at the Charité Hospital in Berlin, claimed that it was likely that a hitherto anonymous decapitated and preserved cadaver kept as a teaching specimen in a vitrine in the Charité morgue may well be the actual remains of Luxemburg herself. And so they stood face-to-face with a speculation that somehow seemed to embody a strangely corporeal analogy to the question of the 'missing body' left in the wake of the accumulation of capital. Their interest in one 'missing body' had led them to another. And it was possible that the second 'missing body' was the remains of the author of the first.

Shown at Hebbel Am Ufer, Berlin (2010); Museum of Modern Art, Warsaw (2010); Project 88, Mumbai (2010); 'Manifesta 9', Genk, Belgium (2012); 'It's Possible Because It's Possible', CA2M, Madrid (2014).

Research: Prasad Shetty (Mumbai), Stefanie Peters (Berlin), Katarzyna Bialousz (Warsaw). Video editing: Priya Sen. Colouring: Pradeep Singh Gosain + Rajan Singh. Sound remix: Ish Sherawat.

o13 <Text>

From the script of 'The Capital of Accumulation'.

o14 <Image>

CORRECTIONS TO THE FIRST DRAFT OF HISTORY

See 002

o15 <Text>

'Notes from Non-Places: Entries From an Inconsistent Journal of Transience', in 'Report (Not Announcement)', BAK and Revolver, Frankfurt, 2006.

o16 <Text>

From 'Point d'Ironie n° 28' (the 28th issue of Point d'Ironie), a broadsheet drawing from their installation '28.28N/77.15E :: 2001/2002', at 'Documenta 11', Kassel, Germany (2002). Designed by Pradip Saha.

017 <Text>

'Log Book Entry Before Storm', Kochi-Muzris Biennale, 2014.

018 <Image>

ONE METER OF TRUTH (EMOTION)

See 006

019 <Text>

Notes from e-mails exchanged between Monica, Shuddha and Jeebesh, in March 2010, during the making of 'The Capital Of Accumulation'.

019 <Image>

THE CAPITAL OF ACCUMULATION

See 013

020 <Text>

'Light from a Distant Star: A Meditation on Art, Agency and Politics', in 'Contemporary Art: 1989 to the Present', Eds. Alexander Dumbadze and Suzanne Hudson, published by Wiley-Blackwell, 2013.

020 <Image>

WHENEVER THE HEART SKIPS A BEAT (STREET)

Billboards, 8'x8'

Each billboard shows a clock-face that features a pair of words instead of numbers. The words relate to each other in counter-point, producing a set of permutations and combinations of states of mind, and being, through an invocation of the actions of the hour and minute hands in a clock. Eccentric clocks announce the hours of chrysanthemums and co-incidences.

The animated horological video of clocks and words, 'Whenever the Heart Skips a Beat' (2012), was transformed into billboards with words and clock-faces. In the video (animation: Ikroop Sandhu), a clock-face is activated by minute and hour hands that come to rest at irregular intervals on a changing pair of words. On the street, these clocks took the form of billboards merging into

and creating a new skyline in Birmingham (Ikoon Gallery, 2012) and Dhaka (Dhaka Art Summit, 2014). For 'Asamayavali/Untimely Calendar', two billboards (in Hindi and English) are installed on the grounds of NGMA, Delhi.

Design: Amitabh Kumar + Mansoor Ali + Satyabrata Rai.

021 <Image>

IT'S ABOUT BEING HERE AND THERE AT THE SAME TIME

Wall, three metals

Three metallic strips – brass, copper and steel – make a possible 'doorway' to another place, another time, and configure a possibility of being simultaneously inside and outside. Edges converse, lines travel across dimensions, definitions outdo each other.

Part of 'A Different Gravity', solo booth, Project 88, India Art Fair, 2012.

021 <Text>

'Wonderful Uncertainty', in 'Curating and the Educational Turn', Eds. Paul O'Neili and Mick Wilson, published by Open Editions and De Appel, London & Amsterdam, 2010.

022 <Image>

THE GHOST IS HERE AGAIN

Video wallpaper

This image has been part of a number of Raqs' lecture-performances. In 'Asamayavali/Untimely Calendar', it appears as a wallpaper overlaying 'The Impostor in the Waiting Room'. (See 032).

023 <Text>

JUST THE NAME (ASHWATTHAMA)

Canvas print, 4'x4'

Raqs received *The Letter of the Haunted Warrior* from K.D. Vyas one summer in the early part of the last decade. In the Mahabharata, the war between the Pandavas and Kauravas that inaugurated the

era of decline, Kali Yug, the episode of the eternal warrior Ashwatthama suggests the durability of war as a way of life, regardless of the mutable datelines of ceasefires. Ashwatthama roams in the inhospitable crack between aching memories and gnawing apprehensions; between the launching of the missiles and their landing – which cannot be avoided, since all the withdrawal codes have been forgotten.

Published in ‘System Error: War is a Farce that Gives Us Meaning’, Eds. Naeem Mohaiemen and Lorenzo Fusi, Milan: Silvania Editoriale, 2007.

024 <Image>

ONE METER OF TRUTH (EMOTION)

See 006

025 <Image>

THREE MEETINGS THAT MAY HAVE HAPPENED, UNDERWATER OR MID-AIR

See 003

&

THREE RELATIONSHIPS: ABOVE, BELOW, BESIDES

Found sculpture using tables, cacti, linoleum

The answer to what it means to be above, below or beside something can be sharp and succulent at the same time.

The image is from ‘The Last International’, Performa 13, NYC (2013).

025 <Text>

‘Mathematics of Cacti’, performed during ‘The Last International’, Performa 13, NYC (2013).

026 <Text>

These words are from ‘Autodidact’s Transport’ (Gwangju Folly, Korea, 2013). For this work, Raqs transformed carriages in trains of the Gwangju Metro (also see 028). Among other things, the carriage featured seats inscribed with eighteen ‘figures’, in Korean and English. These figures are all those who could be (and often are) autodidacts. Inhabiting these figures means inhabiting locations

of subjectivity that need to be sculpted anew and afresh. The words were inserted into conversations – white lines that emerged when Raqs invited a coder to make drawings of their computers speaking to each other, and to the world – and which they encased the carriage in. (Also see 028 and 041.)

The autodidact appears often in Raqs’ writings and works, such as ‘The Primary Education of the Autodidact’ (Audain Gallery, Vancouver, 2012), where she took the form of a shadowy human presence in a ‘library’ from which all words and titles have been erased.

+

From ‘X Notes on Practice: Stubborn Structures and Insistent Seepage’, in ‘DATA browser02’, Eds. Geoff Cox, Joasia Krysa, Autonomedia, NY, 2005.

027 <Image>

CORRECTIONS TO THE FIRST DRAFT OF HISTORY

See 002

027 <Text>

‘The Third Man’, in ‘Engadin Art Talks’, Eds. Cristina Bechtler, Hans Ulrich Obrist and Beatrix Ruf, published by JRP|Ringier, 2013; ‘Nothing is More Inspirational to a Life in Art than the History of Failed Attempts’, in Tehelka, Issue 45 Volume 9, November 2012.

028 <Image + Text>

OUR TOWER OF LIBERTY

19 videos with sound, duration is the time between two subway stops

Researching on the Gwangju Uprising of 1980, also called the May 18th Democratic Uprising, an image made a strong impression on Raqs: two women addressing the town with megaphones from a moving van, telling citizens to stay the course even as the army was about to occupy the city. For *Autodidact’s Transport* (Gwangju Folly, Korea, 2013), they wrote an oration addressing paradoxes in the imagination of crowds and liberty, drawing from the satirical text, ‘In Praise of Folly’ by Erasmus

(1668). Videos of this oration, performed through red megaphones by three performers wearing traditional T'alch'um masks (which portray people, animals and sometimes supernatural beings), were played in the carriages of the metro that was transformed for this work. The text was also performed live by performers, in masks and with red megaphones, inside a metro carriage. The 19 videos from *Autodidact's Transport* that constitute *Our Tower of Liberty*, create a play between text, unnamed and unnameable books, and performance, to think on the question of liberty.

Production & Co-ordination: Jihyun Kim;
Performers: SuckJu Kim, JungA Kim, MiLim Kim.

029 <Image>

UNTOLD INTIMACY OF DIGITS

Animation, archival trace, video loop

The handprint of Raj Konai was taken in 1858 under the orders of William Herschel – scientist, statistician, and at the time, revenue official with the Bengal government. It was sent by Herschel to Francis Galton, a London eugenicist and pioneer of identification technologies, and is currently in the custody of the Francis Galton Collection of the University College of London. This is where Raqs first encountered the image of Raj Konai's hand in 1993 while researching a work on the history of the Andaman Islands. In 2006, during a residency at Institute of International Visual Arts (INIVA, London), they started thinking with this archival trace in their lecture performance, *The Anthropometry of the Soul*. Historically, fingerprinting experiments, and later technologies, all began with this handprint.

Previously shown at 'Surjection', Art Gallery of York University, Toronto (2011); 'Against All Odds', Lalit Kala Akademi, Delhi (2011); 'The Subjective Object', GRASSI Museum, Leipzig (2012); Guesswork, Frith Street, London (2012); 'Highlights and Classics', Museum für Moderne Kunst, Frankfurt (2014).

Animation by Ikroop Sandhu.

029 <Text>

*Rough draft for 'Untold Intimacy of Digits'.
 +
 From 'The Anthropometry of the Soul', lecture-performance, INIVA, London, 2006.*

030 <Image>

THE K.D. VYAS CORRESPONDENCE, VOL. 1

See 005

030 <Text>

'The Letter of Verification and Authenticity' in 'A Dossier Concerning the KD Vyas Correspondence (Vol.1)'. See 005. 'Machines Made to Measure: On the Technologies of Identity and the Manufacture of Difference', in 'Sarai Reader 04: Crisis/Media', Editorial Collective: Raqs Media Collective, Ravi Sundaram, Ravi Vasudevan, Awadhendra Sharan and Geert Lovink; Sarai-CSDS, Delhi, 2004.

031 <Text>

From the script of 'The Surface of Each Day is a Different Planet', video, commissioned for 'Art Now Lightbox', Tate Britain (2009).

032 <Image>

THE IMPOSTOR IN THE WAITING ROOM/ THEY CALLED IT THE XXTH CENTURY

Video, performance, 19'32"

The impostor in the waiting room tries his own patience, working things out an epoch at a time. A beast becomes a God becomes an injury becomes peasant becomes a prisoner becomes a worker becomes a corpse becomes an unbuttoned policeman and a ledger gentleman in a bowler hat. The actor had a script. The script had a name. They called it the Twentieth Century. This work is a consideration on what happens when modernity encounters its own shadow.

First shown as 'The Impostor in the Waiting Room' at Bose Pacia Gallery, Chelsea, New York (2004); and as 'They Called it the XXth Century', at Theater der Welt, Künstlerhaus, Stuttgart (2005) and 'Indian Summer', Ecole nationale supérieure des Beaux-Arts, Paris (2005).

Performance for the video was by Arjun Raina with masks from Natraj Sharma. Video edited by Iram Ghufuran.

032 <Text>

'Dreams and Disguises, As Usual', in 'Sarai Reader 05: Bare Acts', Eds. Raqs Media Collective, Geert Lovink and Lawrence Liang, Sarai-CSDS Delhi, 2005; 'The Impostor in the Waiting Room', in BP Contemporary Art of India Series, Vol 21, NY, 2004.

033 <Image + Text>

THE MUSEUM OF LOST CONSTELLATIONS

See 007

034 <Text>

From 'A Concise Lexicon Of/For the Digital Commons', in 'Documenta 11_Platform 5: Exhibition Catalogue', Kassel, 2002; 'Sarai Reader 03: Shaping Technologies', Eds. Raqs Media Collective, Ravi Sundaram, Ravi Vasudevan, Geert Lovink and Marleen Stikker; Sarai-CSDS, Delhi, 2003.

035 <Text>

'We Saw Each Other for the First Time', from the script performed during 'The Last International', Performa 13, NYC (2013).

036 <Text>

Draft version of the text for 'Robin Hood of Wisdom', Art Review London (Summer 2012), extending 'The Philosophy of the Namak Haraam', where Raqs consider how we are all defaulters to the debt of purloined knowledge (2012).

037 <Text>

'Will There Be Compensation?' A dialogue read in one voice, from the script of 'A Measure of Anacoustic Reason' (2005), shown in 'Icon: India Contemporary', Venice Biennale (2005); Flaherty Seminar 2014, New York.

038 <Text>

From the text accompanying the solo show, 'The Things That Happen When Falling in Love', Baltic Centre for Contemporary Art, Gateshead, Newcastle (2010).

039 <Image>

THE GREAT BARE MAT APP

This App weaves together images from the works produced by Raqs for the exhibition, *The Great Bare Mat & Constellation*, objects from the Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum's historic collection, stories, fragments from interviews of Raqs by Pieranna Cavalchini (Curator, Contemporary Art, ISGM), texts on and from the work (Raqs and Cavalchini), notes on some objects in the collection, and excerpts from a series of conversations with a musician, a curator, artists, a teacher, a philosopher, an architect, a conservator, a neurologist, and more, curated by Raqs at the museum around the questions – Where Does Nostalgia Take Us? What Does Intelligence Do For Us? What Does Accumulation Do To Us? Why Does Music Move Us?

Produced in 2013 by the Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum, Boston, in conjunction with Raqs' show at the museum (2012). The App, conceived by Raqs and Pieranna Cavalchini, has been designed in collaboration with Boston-based information designer Maria Isabella Meirelles, and programmed by Mike Shields. Reading of children's fables by Amália Jyran Dasgupta and Tatum York. The App is available for free download from the App Store. Search for 'Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum' or 'Raqs Media Collective'.

For many years now, Raqs has been working on hyperlinked interfaces and online platforms. These include 'The Global Village Health Manual, Ver 1.0', HTML work with Mrityunjay Chatterjee, consisting of re-purposed material found in web searches (2001); 'OPUS' (Open Platform for Unlimited Signification), online software for a digital commons with Silvan Zurbrugg; 'The Network of No_Des' (2004) and 'Entropy Index' (2005), HTML works with Mrityunjay Chatterjee

and Iram Ghufuran, consisting of text, media clips, audio/video remixes, and web downloads; 'APNA OPUS' ('Our Own' OPUS) with Silvan Zurbrügg and Victoria Donkersloot (2005).

&

EQUINOX

Cutouts, animation, video loop

A carnival: an autumnal solstice celebration of all that is animate and alive. Horses lose their heads, fish leave their shadows, Diana, the goddess of the hunt is in pursuit of roaring lions and worried dogs and stolid cattle and merry birds and golden dragons.

Equinox is made by Raqs in response to the collection at the Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum, Boston. The video plays on the sense of the night coming alive with animal forms, and echoes their experience during a flashlight tour of the museum where they sensed the animatedness of the museum's collection in a very particular way. The animal figures in this video draw from details and objects within the museum's collection, including paintings, textiles, prints, drawings and sculpture, and from a set of Japanese fables for children printed in the late nineteenth century.

Part of 'The Great Bare Mat & Constellation', Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum, Boston (2013).

040 <Text>

'Earthworms Dancing: Notes for a Biennial in Slow Motion', in e-flux journal no. 7 (June 2009).

041 <Image>

DIAGRAM FOR THE LAST INTERNATIONAL

Video loop

In 2011-12, while thinking about weaving disparate processes, interests and possibilities of all kinds together, Raqs invited Suraj Rai, a self-taught computer programmer, to create a snapshot of their working and thinking together. Suraj plotted the signal traffic between the three Raqs computers while they sat together in their studio on a typical Delhi afternoon. The snapshot pattern

of a moment of the traffic and intercourse between their computers evoked a picture of their world, and of them in the world. A speculative meshwork emerged.

For 'The Great Bare Mat and Constellation' (see 039) this meshwork of lines became the basis for a drawing for a carpet (Design: Amitabh Kumar). The meshwork enveloped a house in 'House of Everything and Nothing' (Outset, New Delhi, 2013), and for 'The Autodidact's Transport', the lines encased a metro carriage (see 026 and 028; design Mansoor Ali). The video, 'Diagram for the Last International', has been edited by Rajan Singh and Manas Jyoti Baruah.

042 <Text>

'Pacific Parables', keynote address at the 'Pacific Rim New Media Summit', ISEA/Zero One 2006, San Jose, USA; published in 'PLACE: Local Knowledge and New Media Practice', Ed. Danny Butt, et al, Cambridge Scholars Press, 2008.

043 <Image>

THE NOORONIHAR & PARIBANO TRANSPORT COMPANY

Kilim, embroidery; text

A word finds a surface, a surface plumbs depths. A word and an object combine to create a new meaning. A flying carpet waits. There's a sense of desire, and of déjà vu – of flying while standing still. *The Nooronihaar & Paribano Transport Company* is in business, as always, since the days of the Arabian Nights.

Part of 'A Different Gravity', Project 88, India Art Fair, 2012.

045 <Text>

From 'Wonderful Uncertainty'. See 021.

044 <Text>

'Triangulations', presented at Agnes Rindge Clafflin Lecture Series, Vassar College, Poughkeepsie, 2011.

o45 <Image + Text>

DOOR TO SKY

Video loop

Somewhere off a highway that skirts past Joshua Tree in the Mojave Desert in California, there exists a graveyard of airplanes. Hundreds of giant steel birds sit silently hatching the eggs of oblivion in the desert – airplanes grounded by mothballed dreams of mastery, jumbo-jets sinking in the sand. The door in this video is a remnant, still standing, while the airplane itself has disappeared. It's an unhinged door; the sole remainder of an aircraft otherwise consigned to debris, standing upright and solitary, like a portal to the sky.

The work, initiated at the Montalvo Artists Residency, Lucas Artists Residency Program, Saratoga, California, has previously been shown as part of a larger constellation of images in 'A Measure of Anacoustic Reason', at 'iCon: India Contemporary', Venice Biennale (2005); 'Thermocline of Art', Zentrum für Kunst und Medientechnologie, Karlsruhe (2007); 'There has Been a Change of Plan', Nature Morte, New Delhi (2006). It was one of the elements of 'Seen at Secunderabagh', a performative installation made in collaboration with Zuleikha Chaudhari – with actor Manish Chaudhari for Koninklijke Vlaamse Schouwburg, Brussels (2011) and 'Festival d'Automne', Le Centquatre, Paris (2011); and with actors Bhagwati Prasad and Kavya Murthy for 'Extra Time', Chronus Art Center's inaugural show, Shanghai (2013).

The text is from a draft note on the work.

o46 <Text>

Draft version of 'Operetta for Anyang; Libretto for a Chorus and 3 Solo Voices (A, B & C)', part of 'Can You Say That Again? (5 Uneasy Pieces)'. The work, a temporary public sculpture with five audio tracks for 'Anyang Public Art Project', Anyang, Korea (2010), featured an intimate portable outdoor audio theater framed by the "Exit" glyph of the walking man and the narration of five episodes of anchorage and dislocation. The five scripted audio-dramas, translated into Korean, were performed by a team of actors from Anyang experienced in radio

drama. The script references real estate, urban folklore and architecture – combining notions of utility and fantasy – to create uncanny resonances across private experience and public memory for Anyang.

Radio Play Direction: Sujin Oh;

Production Co-ordination: Jihyun Kim.

o47 <Text>

Rough draft of a text to be spoken on a train.

o48 <Image + Text>

RE-RUN

Video loop

Does history repeat itself, or simply rehearse its moves in anticipation? Can we read chronicles in terms of deferrals and déjà-vu?

Henri Cartier-Bresson took a photograph of a bank-run in Shanghai in December 1948: A crowd of people desperate to get their money out of a bank in order to buy gold in anticipation of an imminent collapse of the value of paper money in the lead-up to the take-over of Shanghai by the People's Liberation Army.

Every bank-run is propelled on the currents of a self-fulfilling prophecy: As people lose confidence in the value of money, they begin withdrawing money from banks in order to try and convert it into gold. This leads to a collapse of a bank's worth; panic spreads between banks. And so, cause becomes effect becomes cause. The anticipation of the future produces conditions in the present that lead to the anticipated future. Time folds in on itself like a snake biting its own tail.

In revisiting and re-staging Cartier-Bresson's photograph in Shanghai, Raqs meet the conditions of the self-fulfilling prophecy invoked by the event captured in the original image. Cartier-Bresson's decisive moment breaks its banks and seeks the custody of other hands. Mid-wived by other eyes and cameras, the image re-incarnates as its own breathing and vivid clone, close to where we are today. The memory of one moment of crisis is transposed on to the reading of another. Time folds in on itself, again.

First shown as part of Raqs' solo show 'Extra Time', Chronus Art Center, Shanghai (2013); 'Hanart 100: Idiosyncracies', Hanart TZ, Hong Kong (2014); 'Corrections to the First Draft of History', Frith Street Gallery, London (2014).

Production in Shanghai: Simon Xu Huanzhi; Project Co-ordination in Shanghai: Chen Yun. Video editing: Rajan Singh; Colouring: Pradeep Singh Gosain.

049 <Image>

SLEEPWALKERS' CARAVAN (PROLOGUE)

Video, 11'

Yakshas are primordial, aboriginal guardian spirits. They foster the health and well-being of communities, bestow fertility to women and livestock, protect forests and water bodies, guard cities, homesteads, gold and hidden treasure, and act as the minions, minders and foot-soldiers of the vast reserve army of Kubera, the Hindu god of wealth. Yakshis are clever, dangerous, fickle, wise, capricious, generous, and given to lurk in wait for unsuspecting travellers whom they invariably test with an ordeal of demanding questions. Condemned to long hours of keeping vigil over hoards of money, Yakshas will do anything to make the passing traveller tarry. Sometimes a solitary Yakshi, serving time in a remote forest, will even inveigle a passing rain cloud into carrying messages to distant places.

Sleepwalkers' Caravan (Prologue) is a video featuring the wandering figures of a Yaksha and a Yakshi. They provide a crepuscular subjectivity to a landscape, their gaze passing, leaving open the question whether the guardians of wealth are leaving the city or entering it.

First shown in 'Steps away from Oblivion' as part of the travelling exhibition 'Indian Highway', Serpentine Gallery, London (2008-09). Also shown at Lund Konsthall, Sweden (2010).

Video and sound editing by Iram Ghufuran.

049 <Text>

'Yaksha Prashna: The Riverbank Episode' was a print takeaway made for the 'Yamuna Elbe Seminar', Delhi, 2010. The 'Yaksha Prashna' or

'Yaksha's Questions' is a well-known device for diversion, entertainment and moral instruction in the Indic canon, notably the Mahabharata. It usually features a man or a woman providing illuminating answers to a series of riddles posed by a Yaksha as a means to fulfilling a quest, continuing on a journey, passing a threshold, obtaining a boon, clarifying a philosophical or ethical conundrum or resolving a vexed predicament. The encounter with a Yaksha or a Yakshi is often said to take place on the bank of a river or a lake. This is the second set (and unlikely to be the last) of 'Yaksha Prashna' that Raqs has had to contend with. Failure to answer a Yaksha's questions usually results in a terrible curse or a horrible death, which Raqs are hoping to avoid as far as possible. The Yaksha Prashna series started with 'Santhal Family: Positions Around an Indian Sculpture', Antwerp, 2008. Also see 097.

050 <Image>

A DAY IN THE LIFE OF KIRIBATI

Clock, nameplate, tape

The history of clock-making saw a definite turn when devices for understanding time shifted away from the fluid principles of ancient Chinese water and incense clocks – for which time was a continuum, thus making it more difficult to surgically separate past and present, then and now – to clocks whose ticking seconds rendered a conceptual barricade between each unit, its predecessor and its follower. This is what makes now seem so alien to then. Paradoxically, it opens out another zone of discomfort.

Different places share the same time because of the accident of longitude. In a syncopated sort of way, we are “contemporaneous” with other times and spaces. Clocks in London and Lagos show the same time. And yet, the experience of “now” in London and Lagos may not feel the same at all.

What does it mean to be living in these times, in these quickening hours, these accumulating minutes, these multiplying seconds, here, now?

For 'Asamayavali/Untimely Calendar', the clock gives the time of Kiribati, the first land on Earth to

switch the calendar over to 2000, and which could be the first place on this planet to disappear with rising sea levels because of global warming.

In 2002, with 'Location(n)', Raqs devised a clock to understand the contemporary condition of simultaneity and asynchronicity. Clocks have remained as a consistent enigma in their work. 'Escapement' (2009) created a play between clockwork, emotions, geography, fantasy and time zones. 'The Arc of the Day' (2014) creates a snapshot of the world we are living in, traveling to, dreaming about, right now – from fear to ecstasy through a global working day.

051 <Text>

From 'Time Symposium', which was started by Raqs as a banquet in which texts and wine were served like courses from an elaborate menu at the Wide Open School, Hayward Gallery, London (2012). Each participant reads a fragment of text for discussion and formulates a toast to time. Time symposia have since been held at Boston, Antwerp and New York, during teaching encounters, and as performance. 'Time Symposium' will be published in Blaffer Art Museum's upcoming 'Time/Image', Houston, 2015.

052 + 053

THE ROBOT-DOG READS 1993 TO 2014

264 framed copies of 'Faridabad Mazdoor Samachar' (1993-2014)

With screen print on acrylic ('Robot Redux'/'Anonymous Steel Worker')

For this work, *Robot Redux/Anonymous Steel Worker* (see 052) has been reformulated and overlaid on editions of the newspaper, 'Faridabad Mazdoor Samachar' (see 053), from 1993 to 2014 (the period that Raqs has been practicing kinetic contemplation).

052 <Image>

Robot Redux/Anonymous Steel Worker

Raqs came across this quirky "Robot Dog", made of machine parts and odds and ends by an

anonymous worker, in the archive of the Pittsburgh steel industry called 'Rivers of Steel' in 2007. This companion of reclaimed time is the emblem of the paradox of work. Effort, and time, was expended, both on the job and in the making of this companion. The robot dog is for Raqs a signal of the recognition that people have of their own life forces which intimate possible futures. They have come to believe that this is a story that can only be told in twilight language – a story of a little robot dog made of odds and ends in the middle of a giant apparatus designed for the sole purpose of the forging of steel. It is not a story that the steel factory can tell about itself.

'Anonymous Steel Worker' shown at 'India: New Installations, Part II', Mattress Factory, Pittsburgh (2007-08); 'New Wave', Aicon Gallery, London (2007).

052 <Text>

The texts are from an early annotation for this work at its installation at the Mattress Factory.

053 <Image>

Framed 'Faridabad Mazdoor Samachar'

Raqs has been reading 'Faridabad Mazdoor Samachar' (FMS), a workers' newspaper produced in Faridabad, a major industrial suburb of Delhi and one of the largest manufacturing hubs of Asia, for the past twenty-five years. The paper, with a print run of twelve thousand, is distributed at regular intervals by workers, students and itinerant fellow travellers at various intersections, and is read on an average by two hundred thousand workers all over the industrial hinterland of Delhi.

To Raqs, over the years, this four-page, A1 size newsprint full of news and reports of what working people are doing and thinking in one of the biggest industrial concentrations of Asia, has acted as "a kind of reality check, especially against the echolalia – manic or melancholic, laudatory or lachrymose – that issues forth at regular intervals from the protagonists as well as the antagonists of the new order". It is a kind of weather-vane, a device which "helps us scent the wind, sense undercurrents, and keeps us from losing our head either in the din of

the ecstatic overture for capital and the state, or in paralysing grief over their attempt to strengthen their sway”.

For details about the image, see 061.

053 <Text>

From ‘The Third Man’. See 027.

054 <Image>

WILL YOU, BELOVED STRANGER

Structures, paper, sound, gold wall paint, video 43’

A performance with two readers featuring a rendition of two bodies of poetic work – those of the poet Yehuda Amichai (writing in Hebrew) and the poet Mahmoud Darwish (writing in Arabic). The work parses the two bodies of texts, in English, to create a continuous stream of words, using fragments from a selected set of poems by the poets, with a fragment from one following the fragment from the other. This new “miscegenated rescension” of a fragmentary Amichai-Darwish corpus is what the listener is invited to.

Performed during ‘Host and Guest’ at the Tel Aviv Museum (2013), by Amit Gour and Ruba Amira Salameh. Structures designed in collaboration with Zvi Afrat and Associates.

054 <Text>

From the instructions for the reading of ‘Will You, Beloved Stranger’.

055 <Text>

‘Absent, again’ – draft towards ‘Just the Name (Ashwatthama)’. See 023.

055 <Image>

THE METAMORPHOSIS OF YAKSHA AND YAKSHI

Porcelain sculptures (With Rahul Kumar), 10”x4”x4”each

+

THE DISLOCATION OF DEGREE ZERO

Video, 6’

In *The Dislocation of Degree Zero*, Raqs transform found aerial footage of desert landscapes in the United Arab Emirates into a moving inscription. Lines float across vast distances and shadows and markings enter and exit the frame, challenging the arbitrariness of the way in which we represent the earth, carving it into blocks of space hemmed in by borders and slices of time boxed into hours. In ‘*Asamayavali/Untimely Calendar*’, a Yaksha and a Yakshi listen to the silences in the telling of these stories and histories between the lines of maps. *The Metamorphosis of Yaksha and Yakshi* is a meditation on map making, power and the instability of our understanding of space and time.

‘The Dislocation of Degree Zero’ was shown in Sharjah Biennial, 2013. In ‘Asamayavali/Untimely Calendar’, the video is projected on sculptures of Yaksha and Yakshi, made with Rahul Kumar (2014). For a note on Yaksha and Yakshi, see 049.

Video editing: Pallavi Paul; Animation: Ashish Vasudev.

056 <Text>

FIVE PIECES OF EVIDENCE

5 screens, video and sound, structure with pipes

Global cities are networked entities; disappearances and uncanny manifestations propagate themselves across the lattices of the global urban network, along pipelines, shipping routes and power grids. The forgotten urban myth of one place becomes the living nightmare of another city. Runaway people, involuntary disappearances, and urban myths about strange assailants are as much a part of the everyday life of Sao Paulo, Mexico City, New York, Paris and Cairo, as they are of a city like Delhi.

What kind of whispers and stories echo as the narratives of missing persons and strange assailants make their ways through the pipelines, grids and routes that connect the world? Between themselves, the missing person and the mystery assailant can be said to configure the calculus of fear, mystery, uncanny violence and urban redevelopment that mark the consciousness of contemporary global cities.

Shown at 'The Structure of Survival', 50th Venice Biennale, Venice (2003); 'Ogaki Biennale of New Media Art', Ogaki (2006).

Video editing: Parvati Sharma;

Data programming: T. Meyarivan.

The text is from the description accompanying 'Five Pieces of Evidence'.

057 <Text>

'The Surface of Each Day: Questions for Cosmonauts', pamphlet produced as part of the 'Artists and Activists' series published by Printed Matter, US, 2008.

058 <Text>

Recipe for 'Time/Food' ('Living as Form', New York), a visualisation of a parallel economy and its pragmatic deployment. Part of 'Time/Bank', a platform initiated in 2009 by e-flux, for groups and individuals to collectively exchange their time and skills through the use of credits earned through the bank, as an intermediary and guarantor, and without the use of money. The 'Time/Food' restaurant, located at Abrons Arts Center, NYC, opened for lunch service, September 24–October 16, 2011, Thursdays through Sundays, from 1–3 pm.

059 <Text>

'Add an En', performed during 'The Last International', Performa 13, NYC (2013).

060 <Text>

From 'Time is Money', currency prototype for the 'Time/Bank'. Project by e-flux, 2010.

061 <Image>

TO GROW ORCHARDS ON FACTORY FLOORS YOU HAVE TO BE A STRANGER, FRIEND

Mandarin Orange plants, wooden platform, green lamps

In 2013, 'Faridabad Mazdoor Samachar' (see 053) published a call for proposals from workers to imagine the possible, which included among other things, the intriguing invitation to plant orchards in

factories. What does it feel like to plant an orchard in a factory? When invited to work in Guimarães in Portugal, where Raqs saw many citrus orchards, that's what they did. A hundred orange trees laden with fruit were installed in the factory. Large industrial scale fans blew a breeze through the space. The rustle of the wind through the leaves of the trees brought a sense of life and memory. On a wall, there was a framed copy of the 'Faridabad Mazdoor Samachar' displaying the call for the orchards. Time and space folded, life got a few more layers. Some habits, like the desire to smell the aroma of oranges in a space haunted by dead labour, grew stronger.

'The Fruit of Labour', Reakt: Olhares e Processos, Guimarães, Portugal (2013). In 'The Last International' (Performa 13, 2013) Raqs planted lemon orchards inside the Connelley Theatre (NYC), and played out auctions of qualia which still stand on the borderline of commodity intoxication. In 'Asamayavali/Untimely Calendar', the orchard is drawn into a relationship with 'The Robot-Dog Reads 1993 to 2014'.

061 <Text>

The text is from the script performed at 'The Last International' (see above).

062 <Image>

WAITING

Crystals, acrylic, ACP, electricity, LED lights, word

With *Waiting*, the sense of being bracketed between the states of 'not yet' and 'has been' is translated into a sculpture using electricity and text.

Shown in the Project 88 booth at Frieze New York, 2013. For 'Extra Time' (Chronus Art Center, Shanghai, 2013) and 'It's Possible Because It's Possible' (CA2M, Madrid, 2014), it was made as a portable textual sculpture that can be handled, held, and weighed in the hand.

063 <Image>

UNFAMILIAR JATAKA TALES III

Photographic lenticular print + Text story in découpage acrylic, diptych of 4'x3' each

The Jataka Tales – a set of parables and fables incorporated into the Buddhist Canon to illustrate the ethical or philosophical significance of acts undertaken during the ‘other’ incarnations of the Buddha – suggest that Buddhahood or enlightenment has a universal potentiality. Often (and this is in common with narrative folklore from different cultures) they have a subtext that successfully dismantles the vanity of those who hold others hostage to their power.

In these tales, Buddhahood is not the preserve of any one kind of being. A monkey, a bird, an artisan, a washer-woman – each of these can be a Buddha. And so, say Raqs, can a patch of sky, or a cheerful bicycle, or a dancing elephant. Raqs’ ongoing work, *Unfamiliar Jataka Tales*, always consists of a pair of image-text diptychs, and takes the universal potential for enlightenment that the Jataka Tales point to, as its fulcrum in order to narrate two modes of being that approximate a state of ‘not-self’-ness – a manner of sentience that locates its origin and existence within a web of dependence and reciprocity that encompasses the ever-changing nature of the material universe.

Chapters from ‘Unfamiliar Jataka Tales’ have been shown in ‘A Question of Evidence’, Thyssen-Bornemisza Art Contemporary, Vienna (2008–09); Project 88, Frieze Art Fair, New York (2014).

o64 <Image>

AN AFTERNOON UNREGISTERED ON THE RICHTER SCALE

Video loop

An Afternoon Unregistered on the Richter Scale is a looped video projection of an archived photographic image in which a room full of surveyors is transformed through a series of subtle alterations. The photograph in question is titled ‘Examining Room of the Duffing Section of the Photographic Department of the Survey of India’, taken in 1911 in Calcutta by British photographer James Waterhouse. Raqs intervene in this image to conjure a constellation of stars onto a drawing board, induce tremors too gentle to disturb the Richter scale, reveal a dreamed up desert, make time wind backwards, stain the afternoon with indigo, and

introduce a rustle and a hesitation in the determined stillness of the surveyors hard at work mapping an empire. The work functions as a meditation on the condensation of time in the photographic image, as well as a gentle disturbance in the serious enterprise of recording and commemorating the imposition of order on a fractious landscape. The surveying department is unhinged from empire and annexed to the commonwealth of dreams.

Shown in ‘Surjection’, Art Gallery of York University, Toronto (2011); ‘Raqs Media Collective’, The Photographers’ Gallery, London (2012).

Animation by Ikroop Sandhu.

o64 <Text>

From a description accompanying ‘An Afternoon Unregistered on the Richter Scale’.

+

From ‘An Afternoon Unregistered on the Richter Scale’, interview by Emilia Terracciano, in ‘Photomonitor’, July 2012.

o65 <Text>

‘Light from a Distant Star: A Meditation on Art, Agency and Politics’. See 020.

o66 <Text>

E-mail interview by Parul Davé Mukherjee.

o67 <Text>

‘Intellectual Birdhouse: Artistic Practice as Research’, Eds. Florian Dombois, Ute Meta Bauer, Claudia Mareis, Michael Schwab; London: Koenig Books, 2012.

o68 <Image>

FUTURE PLANS

Drawing animation, 2’ 33”

In the world of labour, men and women, animals and devices come together and diverge in all sorts of interesting ways. The coupling and uncoupling of gears and wings, of claws and hands, of hooves and feet, of algorithms and interfaces, of prostheses and parantheses – in these we find the stirrings of a

twilight language. Machine drawings metamorphose into eccentric beasts and birds and make their way into the future. Future plans dance, inaugurating a new biology of animate fragments, the nuts and bolts of reveries, and the odds and ends of desires that leap off the page of our time.

Machine drawings for 'Reverse Engineering the Euphoria Machine' (2008) by Shveta Sarda. For 'Future Plans' (2013), Storyboard: Viveka Chauhan and Manas Jyoti Baruah; Graphics: Manas Jyoti Baruah; Animation: Sangit Ghorpade; Video editing: Rajan Singh.

069 <Text>

During a debate over an issue of the 'Faridabad Mazdoor Samachar', one October evening this year, in Delhi.

070 <Image>

THREE MEETINGS THAT MAY HAVE HAPPENED, UNDERWATER OR MID-AIR

See 003

070 <Text>

'I, Robot Lemon', performed during 'The Last International', Performa 13, NYC (2013).

071 <Text>

'I Did Not Hear', audio dialogue in a single voice that speaks of how we encounter that which we did not wish to see, from the script of 'A Measure of Anacoustic Reason' (2005), shown in 'ICon: India Contemporary', Venice Biennale (2005); 'There has Been a Change of Plan', Nature Morte, New Delhi (2006); 'Thermocline of Art', ZKM, Karlsruhe (2007); Flaherty Seminar 2014, New York.

072 <Image>

THE K.D. VYAS CORRESPONDENCE, VOL. 1

See 005

072 <Text>

'Another Letter on Declining Time', in 'A Dossier Concerning the KD Vyas Correspondence (Vol.1)'. See 005.

073 <Image>

A FORTUNATE SPELL OF PLEASANT AMNESIA

Flex print, 10'x 2'

The work speaks to how we encounter violence, and how we need not.

Shown in Clark House initiated 'Artists Against AFSPA' at NGMA, Mumbai (2011), and 'Waiting for the Wind', Experimenter, Kolkata (2014).

074 <Text>

'As Transient as a Whale', lecture-performance by Raqs during their residency at Asia Art Archive, Hong Kong, 2009.

075 <Text>

Notes towards, 'On Premonition', Experimenter, Kolkata (2011).

076 <Text + Image>

MISADVENTURES OF A PHANTOM LIMB (I)

Video (54"), printed text

Shown in 'Surjection', Art Gallery of York University, Toronto (2011); printed rescension as 'The Itch', Radar: MUSAC's Journal of Art & Thought, Issue 1; Eds. Maria Inés Rodríguez, Octavio Zaya, Pérez Rubio; Barcelona, 2012.

Animation: Ikroop Sandhu.

077 <Text>

From Raqs' curatorial note for the 'The Absent Image', PHotoEspaña, 2012.

<078 Text>

In 2010, when Raqs started working on *Strikes at Time* (see 079), they invited Cybermohalla Ensemble (2001-2013), a group of young, unorthodox proletarian urbanists they had been in dialogue with at Sarai, to do a reading of Jacques Rancière's 'The Nights of Labour'. The book had been recently translated into Hindi through Sarai-CSDS (Tr. Abhay Dube, Vani Prakashan, Delhi, 2010). What emerged was a weaving together of Cybermohalla Ensemble's

annotations to Rancière's meditation on a group of worker-intellectuals in 19th century France, with the diary entries of Heeraprasad, a worker who lived and then committed suicide in Delhi in the 90's. See 'The Diarist', in *Cybermohalla Hub*, Eds. Nikolaus Hirsch and Shveta Sarda; Sternberg Press, Berlin (2011), Sarai-CSDS/Sternberg, Delhi-Berlin (2012).

<079 Image>

STRIKES AT TIME

Video diptych, 18' 32"

Strikes at Time is a lucid dream and a long walk at the edge of the city of the night. In the "no man's land" annexed by the awakening mind from the fatigue of the labouring day, it weaves together a disquisition on time in the form of a Raqs' reading of Jacques Rancière's 'The Nights of Labour', together with renditions of Heeraprasad's diary by the Cybermohalla Ensemble (See 078). The shadowy presence of a Yaksha and Yakshi – guardians of wealth in Indic mythologies – stands watching over the work, marking time with questions.

Shown at 'Paris-Delhi-Bombay', Centre Pompidou, Paris (2011); The 2nd Ural Industrial Biennial of Contemporary Art, Ekaterinburg, Russia (2012); 'A Phrase Not a Word', Nature Morte, Delhi (2012); 'Sublime Economy of Means', Tranzitdisplay, Prague (2014); Flaherty Seminar, NY (2014). Performance: Bhagwati Prasad, Shamsher Ali, Azra Tabassum and Manish Chaudhari; Video editing: Pallavi Paul; Sound: Ish Sherawat; Colouring: Pradeep Singh Gosain and Rajan Singh; Production: Ashish Mahajan.

<079 Text>

Unpublished; extracted from a file called 'Thinking on Strikes at Time' from the Raqs archive.

080 <Text>

Unpublished; from a proposal for a Biennale, 2014.

081 <Text>

'The Taste of Nowhere', keynote, 'Habits of Living', Rhode Island School of Design, Providence, 2013.

082 <Text>

From the script of 'The Surface of Each Day is a Different Planet', 2009.

083 <Image>

THE IMMINENT DEPARTURE OF ANYBODY, EVERYBODY, SOMEBODY, NOBODY, ANTIBODY, BUSYBODY AND OTHERS

Ensemble of 18 renditions of the 'Exit' pictogram

Now and then, one can find a way out of here and now. Always look out for the exit sign. Eighteen identical fluorescent acrylic figures in vivid colours, adult human-sized renditions of the 'little running man' – the internationally adopted ISO standard pictogram denoting 'Exit' designed by the Japanese graphic designer Yukio Ota – are suspended in mid-air, facing different directions. The exits they mark seem not to be referring to points in space, but to multiple ways of escape out of the frozen snapshot of a moment of time. Taken together, these eighteen running figures constitute a team of players, playing a series of gambits, or opening moves. This could be a choreography, or a Mandala, for time travel.

Yukio Ota, while designing the sign, had modified the angle of the limbs to make for a more relaxed attitude, and had insisted on retaining 'green' rather than 'red' to emphasise safety over danger. *The Imminent Departure...* values those founding orientations. Comfortable time-travel is available in more than one direction, and not just backwards or forwards but also in directions tangential to the present. The possibility of departures is always upon us, their imminence more a matter of will and adventure, than of the limitations of actual space and time.

Earlier rescensions of this work were part of 'The Things That Happen When Falling in Love', Baltic Centre for Contemporary Art, Newcastle (2010); 'Extra Time', Chronus Art Center, Shanghai, (2013).

084 <Image>

ACTIVO Y PASIVO (ASSETS AND DEBTS)

10'x10'x7' wood and glass room, wallpaper, tube-lights, carpet

A room folds in on itself, as well as multiplies. The surfaces of one room seem to hold the secrets of another. The nearly replicant room within the room is just short of being identical to itself. Odd things are askew, or not quite what they seem to be. The rooms are as alike, or as apart, as investment and insurance, two mechanisms designed to administer, anticipate and forestall risk, speculation, and the possibility of boom and bust.

Part of Raqs' solo show, 'It's Possible Because It's Possible', CA2M, Madrid (2014).

o85 <Text>

'Event Shaped Holes', from a series of conceptual annotations in 'Raqs Media Collective: Casebook', Ed. Philip Monk; published by Art Gallery of York University, 2014.

o86 <Text>

From the lecture-performance, 'The Anthropometry of the Soul', INIVA, London, 2006.

o86 <Image>

SCHEDULE FOR TRANSPOSED MINDS

Video, table, word

By placing an image of one of the heads from Galton's collection on a table marked TIME, a time-table for the transposition of minds between forgotten heads becomes a reasonable proposition. Will the criminal think the scientist's thoughts before lunch break?

o87 <Image + Text>

THE CAPITAL OF ACCUMULATION

See 013

o88 <Image>

REVOLTAGE

Text, lightbulbs, fixtures, acrylic, wire, synchroniser

Revoltage fills the space it occupies with warmth, light, and the charge of an idea that embraces both celebration and rage. It suggests the energy, or "voltage," of what it means to revolt, to commit

oneself to humanity. The letters join to suggest an incandescent hybrid between electricity and uprising – alternately illuminating the words "Revolt" and "Voltage" through a fluctuating electrical current in order to coin a new thought, "Revoltage".

Revoltage registers first as an after-image (the kind we see when we shut our eyes after looking at a strong source of light), and then as a subliminal suggestion within our consciousness to brighten our days with the brilliance of a form of truant, rebel power that refuses to either name itself or be named into domesticity.

A cascade of black and red wiring (anarchy's traditional colours) makes its way down from the multitude of light bulbs that make up the word, and flows along its length on the ground. The bunched wires merge and divide like a map of the tributaries of a mighty, turbulent river before disappearing into the shadowy darkness behind the work. By representing the transport of the electrical energy that fuels the work, the wires evoke the way in which ordinary people all over the world have flooded their cities in recent times (in Cairo, New York, Athens, Madrid, Moscow, Tel Aviv, and elsewhere), like rivers in spate, electrifying global consciousness with the actualisation of a new politics, carrying with them the charge of a new mode of being human.

With *Revoltage*, Raqs have begun writing a new glossary for these times.

Versions have earlier been shown in 'The Capital of Accumulation', Project 88, Mumbai (2010); 'Reading Light', Festival d'Automne, Espace Oscar Niemeyer, Paris (2011); Art Unlimited Basel (2012); 'Critical Mass', Tel Aviv Museum (2012); 'Words Don't Come Easily', Zentrum für Internationale Lichtkunst, Unna (2014).

o89 <Image + Text>

TIME CAPSULE FROM 2011, TO BE OPENED IN 2061

Three photographic prints mounted on dibond, booklet

Time Capsule from 2011 is a time travel device that makes it possible for Raqs to claim its contemporaneity with the future. At the same time, the contents of the container are unknown. The container, an aluminum box interred into the earth on the 18th of June on the Alby Estate in the city of Moss, will be opened at an appropriate date in 2061. The work is annotated by a text, *'A Letter to Amália Jyran, Who Will be Fifty Four in 2061 CE'*.

Part of 'Imagine Being Here Now', 6th Momentum Biennale, Moss, Norway (2011). The letter was published in the reader accompanying the Biennale.

090 <Text>

From the text accompanying 'Whenever the Heart Skips a Beat'. See 020.

091 <Text>

'Extra Time: The Emergence of the Crooked Line', presented for the lecture series 'Aesthetics of Crisis', Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam, 2014.

091 <Image>

NIGHT & DAY, DAY & NIGHT

24-hour clock, words

In twenty four words about duration in Hindi, breath gives way to blink, the origin anticipates the end, revolutions and eclipses consider each other. It happens all the time.

The image is a sketch for 'Night & Day, Day & Night', 'Asamayavali/Untimely Calendar', 2014.

092 <Text>

'Is the World Sleeping, Sleepless, or Awake or Dreaming?' e:flux, Journal # 56, 06/2014.

093 <Image>

LIBRARY'S LUCID DREAM

Printed vinyl partition, 80'x10'

A library at the edge of sleep and wakefulness miscegenates new titles into existence, re-

combining fragments of the signs written on the spines lining its shelves. The library's lucid dream is a future reader's reading list, suitable for outsize imaginations and miniature curiosities.

During the Asia Art Archive residency in 2007, Raqs made a series of textual interventions in the physical space of the archive. These words were transformed into a wallpaper for 'This is Unreal', Experimenter, Kolkata (2010).

094 <Image>

STRIKES AT TIME

See 078 and 079

094 <Text>

From the text accompanying 'Interior Day', a suite of four videos featuring mysterious activities in a world that weighs things differently than the one we think we know. Far outer space, asteroids, galaxies, horizons inhabited by other forms of life – all bathed in the endless illumination of interiority. India Art Fair, Solo booth, Project 88, Delhi (2012).

095 <Image>

A HISTORY OF PHOTOGRAPHY

Six photographic prints, 2'x2' each

Reading the censored letters of soldiers from the Indian sub-continent writing home in the First World War becomes a way to make a picture of the world. In this work, a selection of their letters also become a way to picture the photographic image.

The English translations of the letters have been extracted from 'Indian Voices of the Great War', David Omissi, Palgrave, 1999. Raqs first encountered these letters in 1993 in the India Office Library, London, and brought them into 'The Surface of Each Day is a Different Planet' (2009), an open-ended video work examining how collectivity and anonymity have been represented over time. In 'Seen at Secunderabagh' (with Zuleikha Chaudhari, 2011), the letters outlined passage of time and a historical subjectivity that alters the way we encounter photographs.

095 <Text>

This letter is from among the collection that was part of the script of ‘Seen at Secunderabagh’ (see above).

096 <Image + Text>

STRIKES AT TIME

See 078 and 079

097 <Image>

CAULDRON

Text etched on glass

A Yaksha and an exile discuss the news. It's hot.

+

GATEKEEPERS ESCAPE

*Fiberglass, sand, barbed wire, money garland,
5'3"x1'9"x1'2"*

&

CARBON TWILIGHT

Video loop

The gatekeepers of the treasury have left the gates of the bank to stand guard over the twilight. A consignment of carbon moves between undisclosed stations under their watch. Sometimes, the shortest distance between the coal-mine and the bank is a gap between the lines. Between day and night, light and darkness, the accumulated traces of time hidden in the earth as carbon disappear and reappear under different guises, sometimes as wealth, at other times as poison. Only the gatekeepers know which is which.

Yaksha and Yakshi first appeared in ‘The Reserve Army’ (2008) as Raqs’ tribute to the perspicacity of the modernist Indian sculptor Ram Kinkar Baij, and to the Reserve Bank of India’s commission to Baij to adorn its portal with a Yaksha and a Yakshi in the first decade after the formation of the Republic of India. A Yaksha and a Yakshi appear at different thresholds of the exhibition space, throughout ‘Asamayavali/Untimely Calender’.

Also see 049.

098 <Image>

‘New Letter Office’ from

THREE MEETINGS THAT MAY HAVE HAPPENED, UNDERWATER OR MID-AIR

New Letter Office featured in *The Last International*, a work that Raqs claims is a Trojan from the future. The 7 billion people of the world, they say, have already constituted the Last International and live within it in secrecy and in disguise. Its surge passes through all of us. It is a momentous event in Capital’s journey and maybe its last serious gift before it becomes exhausted and fades away.

The Last International, fragments and references from which appear often in ‘Asamayavali/Untimely Calendar’ and this book, is and isn’t a work. It’s an ongoing journey that Raqs has embarked upon to create and remind themselves, and us all, of the full potential of latent and expressed aspirations and imaginations. The *New Letter Office* awaits letters.

098 <Text>

From an e-mail sent by Raqs to a long-term interlocutor, on their current intellectual concerns, August 2014.

099 <Text>

From a proposal for a Biennale. See 080.

100 <Text>

Published in ‘CONTRASTe - édition française – N°1’; Paris Press Point, Taschenbuch, Verlag, 2008.

Let us re
first, then





RAQS MEDIA COLLECTIVE enjoys playing a plurality of roles, often appearing as artists, occasionally as curators, and sometimes as philosophical agent provocateurs. They create installations, make videos, photographs, print and online works, play with archival traces, make exhibitions and art interventions in public spaces, write essays, enact lecture-performances, engage with pedagogical procedures, edit books, design events, and foster collaborations. They have worked with architects, scholars, coders, writers, designers, translators, performers, artists, curators and theatre directors, and founded processes that have become an influential force in contemporary intellectual and cultural life.

Raqs has exhibited widely, including at Documenta, the Venice, Istanbul, Taipei, Liverpool, Shanghai, Sydney and Sao Paulo Biennales. They have had solo shows in museums, and educational and independent art spaces, in Boston, Brussels, Madrid, Delhi, Shanghai, London, New York, Toronto, among others. Works by Raqs are part of several contemporary art collections and museums, and their essays have been published in numerous anthologies. Raqs curated Rest of Now, Manifesta 7 (Bolzano, 2008), Sarai Reader 09 (Gurgaon, 2012-13) and INSERT2014 (Delhi, 2014).

In 2000, Raqs co-founded the Sarai initiative at the Centre for the Study of Developing Societies in Delhi, and the Sarai Reader Series, which they edited till 2013. They have been invited to teach in many institutions and self-organised initiatives. Raqs received the Multitude Art Prize in 2013.

Monica Narula, Shuddhabrata Sengupta, and Jeebesh Bagchi formed Raqs in 1992, after they passed out of the AJK Mass Communication and Research Center, Jamia Milia University, while working together on their first, now lost, 16mm film, “Half the Night Left, and the Universe to Comprehend”.

SHVETA SARDA is an editor and translator based in Delhi. In “With an Untimely Calendar”, she reads through the Raqs archive to sculpt a figure of kinetic contemplation through a 100 entries.

(असमयावली)