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Art review

Marta Jakimowicz

Budhaditya Chattopadhyay's sound and video installation 'Eye contact with the city' was very fine in its 'immersive' meditatively palpable qualities.

The magic of Bar1



'A Disappearing Act', the title of the exhibition (Rococo, 11, Rest House Rd., September 24 to 26) by the participants of Bar1 India-India residencies may have alluded to the residencies being discontinued, while playfully yet seriously gathering the works in a theoretical-poetic comparison

between the magician's act and art-making which conjures an illusion of things to recreate them on another plane for heightened experience and insight. On the other hand, the young artists, most of whom came from other parts of the country, learned about and reacted to the city, each in his or her own way but registering the sense of time passing, the past mediating the rapid chaos of the present. The latter element extended onto the graceful colonial-day cottage in which the show was displayed in an architectural and evocative engagement with it.

The whole exhibition was quite wonderful and brimming with different preoccupation areas and expressions while connecting too and mutually responding.

Oscillating from intuitive exuberance to conceptual approaches and the use of text, the exhibition often involved also sound or its absence and the moving image of video, thus adding to a multifaceted entirety that kept changing yet held together while suggesting reference to life's animation. Himali Singh Soin provided much of this connectedness, guidance and framing for the event through her writing about the process behind it and through introducing the show with her poems. The poems which drew precious sensations and reflections from natural, unadorned situations, from daily ways of thinking and writing were available as text and audio, while the artist strove to bridge the periphery of words with that of visuality and location by in an understated manner adding photography and drawing as well as spreading it all over the building's porch. In a dialogue with the building's name, Siddhartha Kararwal's "Rococo" was a dizzy abundance of colours, forms and substances which simultaneously revealed their inherent deceptiveness and witty, irreverent incongruity.

His immense parrot, girl, horse heads and a plethora of objects and creatures made of bright cloth, plastic bubble wrap and such filled the room at dynamic angles and levels entering in a conversation with it and others spaces.

The environment acknowledged history along with the mutant tradition in the popular circumstances of today, whereas his video enacted an aesthetic-conceptual gesture of erasure.

The third part of the titular collaboration came from Bhuvaneshwari L N whose vast carvings integrally fitted into the walls had strong, highly abstracted images of crushed car bodies.

Those ironically yet with sadness contradicted-complemented the video on the floor, its tapering projection of vehicular traffic moving on letters quoting from the Futurist admiration for speed.

Budhaditya Chattopadhyay's sound and video installation "Eye contact with the city" was very fine in its 'immersive' meditatively palpable qualities. Watching two, again contrasting and complementing, videos based on found material with a slowed cars' motion shot from above and with a blurred side view of fast traffic from close on one had an immediate intuition of retaining intimate, quietly raw, perhaps older experiences

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from under the noises of the new rapidity and tension.

Having gone through the works and the house, one ended with a conceptual and minimalist but rather effective piece by Deepak D L Recalling Krishna telling the Chakravyuha story to his sleeping sister heard by her unborn baby, the artist asked one to lock oneself in the bathroom and listen to the soundless audio inside which indicated a possibility to 'enter the womb' of the formless potential of things.

Sound spaces

"Every sound alarms" by Beate Engle, the German resident at 1Shanthi Road Studio/Gallery (October 1 to 5), was another interesting exploration in multi-sensory experiences. The artist quite successfully tries to make evident, or rather felt, the intangible trajectories and dynamic dependence between sounds, words, three-dimensional objects, people, colours and lights in their spaces.

Impressions, meaning and sensations almost tactile for the involved viewer bear a mutual impact in it, while the present and the fleeting interact with the auras left behind by things past.

Although new to India, she reacted to its reality, spirit and history in a sensitive manner, sometimes calmly focussed and sometimes exciting. Whereas her "Showdown" photographs translated a stirring, rhythmic brightness into an evocation of riotous, festive noises, the "Fair Trade" wall of quoted sentences conjured a movement of human aspirations and "Community Disco" dynamically integrated traffic lights with flashing colour lamps and popular music. Especially good was "Liberty Tree" using post-Independence newsreel sound and image projected over and through an old-fashioned, ornamental memento stand.

Effective too was the series of photographs which playfully and warmly captured monuments of historical personalities finding a prosaic yet charming relationship with current life.

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