

## **Artists Statements**

### **Prasanta Mukherjee**

The residency at the newly acquired studio of KHOJ at Khirki in Delhi was an enriching experience. This was the first International Artists' Residency at that studio which offered inspiring spaces to the participating artists to work. I was lucky to be part of it both as a participating artist and host for the artists from other countries. It was a good six weeks residency to gather experiences in different ways and to interact with the other participating artists while working at the same place.

The time span also provided an opportunity to experience the space available and to explore the possibilities of creating something interesting and meaningful in that space. I worked on a large wall inside a room, which was newly made.

So there were fresh cement plastered walls. I left the three sides as they were and painted one wall like blue sky, which is facing the door. I made a huge flower in fiberglass and painted it red with golden pollen coming out of it and hanged that on the wall.

At the same time I made many pollens in different sizes, painted them gold. I hanged all of them on the wall along with the flower with floating expression to give the feeling that they are emerging from the same flower and getting dispersed in the atmosphere with an intention of spreading life here, there and everywhere.

### **Hadel Nazmy**

#### **Sky Satisfaction**

The relationship between one community and another was what I was originally planning to work on during the KHOJ residency. I intended to visit an Indian family who only spoke Hindi and stay with them for 24 hours, to get a view of an ordinary day within the home. I wished to investigate the meaning of home, the interactions between people without a common language, basically raising the question: can you teach me your language? Even if this implied no scripts or symbols, I wanted to explore how life was experienced; the habits and mentality, even the body language of people.

By measuring the home and tracing the patterns of movement both indoors and outdoors, I would have an analysis of this communication resulting in a series of diagrams, sketches and analytical models. I was hoping to gain a better understanding of Indian home life, thinking it might allow me an insight into how language defines identity and culture. Because of my unfamiliarity with India this proved to be unworkable.

By the time I felt comfortable in this society, the whole place reminded me of Egypt, yet it was all so strange that felt I was home and not at the home at the same time. Everything seemed the same until people started speaking. So I decided to focus on the inhabitants of Khirkee village because they seemed to me to be a microcosm of the larger political and economical space of the city of Delhi. I watched my neighbours from my studio window. I was interested in how I, as an outsider, could be involved in the daily play of life as it manifested itself.

As an artist I am constantly looking for Utopian societies and there are aspects of India that have mystified me. People seem unable to express themselves freely; they say yes when they mean no. I ask myself if this is because of the way caste in this country circumscribes people's behaviour. The expression of this social marking has raised a number of subsequent questions that I have attempted to contemplate through this installation.

I have used English as a kind of inspiration or channel to engage with the socio-political realities that have emerged from my experiences in India. Sky Satisfaction with its coordinates of created space throw sculpture, images, sounds, text and materials together is an attempt to reflect my experience of India's diversity from multiple viewpoints and positions.

## **Sarindar Dhaliwal**

I arrived in Delhi in early November to participate in the inaugural residency at the Kirki Studios. My interest in the residency was threefold:

1. I needed to produce elements (marble/fabric/paper) for my research into the culture of the library.
2. I wanted to use this opportunity of being based in Delhi to visit the village where I was born after almost half a century away.
3. I wanted to meet with artists/art educators from Delhi and elsewhere in India.

(a) I have been researching the possible contents of a metaphysical library known as the Akashic Records. The name comes from the Sanskrit word Akasha which means ether or boundless space. The library is record of all the events, thoughts and actions that have taken place in the world since the beginning of time. My current concerns centre around the visual exploration of some of these (imagined) records through the framework of my own practice: in installations and paintings. My next solo exhibition (August 28th – September 21st) in Toronto, entitled the Akashic Records :a Visual Sampler, represents the first selection of works from this compendium. My interpretation of this selection is best described as a kind of cabinet of curiosities; a collection conceived through a laboratory of sorts, in which rein is given to internal desires, motivations and artistic impulses.

During the months of November and December in New Delhi, I was able to assemble a number of components for three separate installations that will be included in the exhibition:

- - seedings
- - rajastani cricket pads
- - curtains

The fabrication of silk cricket pads/ marble tennis balls (life size) and 56 miniature curtains (9" x 12") in 28 different colours of cotton fabric, traditionally used for tying turbans was facilitated by members of KHOJ. The buying of materials and searching for the artisans involved flavouring the markets and neighbourhoods of Delhi, which resulted in a rich urban experience. The artist's practice is always propelled forward by the quotidian, and these excursions were the "work".

(b)The India of the imagination as shaped by the storytelling of my mother and her relatives has provided material for both my visual and written work. The country and the culture remain a geographical lode; a repository of images and memories to be mined:

My earliest memories of India are rooted in the village of my birth. Being pulled along by two older cousins, impatient with my slowness, over furrowed fields of crumbly Punjabi earth. The tinkle of a bicycle bell –the pannier filled with little packets of shredded ice, white and glistening, wrapped in green leaves. Running onto a flat roof into the hailstorm and collecting the fat, round balls.

What was so important about this visit to the Punjab was that it was the first time I felt ready to go there. Previously, the contradictory emotions I felt towards the Sikh culture had kept me away. Also, for the first time, I had a place in India (the KHOJ family) from which to undertake this venture. I loved that train ride north in the early morning...seeing a city waking up is one of the pleasures of travel. As the journey progressed through fields of fogginess, the neatness of the farming came as a surprise: rows of marigolds, mazes of matchstick alders. The colours that the buildings and structures were painted (bright yellows next to graphic reds against the deepest greens) echoed the saturated palette of my own work.

My mother's village was one of the tidiest places I've ever seen in India. The cobbled streets swept clean and the drains running with clear water. Though the people were amazed to see me they were very warm and hospitable. I spoke of my formative memories and they too remembered the kulfi man on his bicycle. Sitting around with the gossiping women at night, by the kitchen fire, sipping hot fresh sweetened buffalo milk I felt I was reliving the evenings that my mother and her sisters would have shared while growing up there. I was shown my mother's old trunk that she packed up and left in 1956. I took out two beautiful quilts in a material not available anymore and some handmade cotton fans. This rooting around in the trunk can be seen as a metaphor for my practice – reaching back into childhood and personal history for autobiographical details and incidents on which to base the content of my paintings and installations.

I also went to my father's village and saw the tiny broken down house where he had lived with his family. It was full of dust and cobwebs and hornets' nests. Sleeping on a rafter in the house was a huge white owl. I was going to take a picture but it must of heard me and flew out in an enormous gust of flapping wings. At that very moment a flock of bright green parrots were circling and swooping overhead. We went in search of the oldest woman in the village and she remembered my father and his brothers and was able tell us where my only surviving aunt from that side of the family was living. I was quite touched because this 90 year old women reached into her pocket and tried to give me money - as gesture of fondness. So this trip was a real reconnection with the past.

(c) Meeting artists/curators and the art community in Delhi has provided me with a platform from which to imagine future projects in India, and I am very grateful for this opportunity. I was impressed by the quality of the work that I saw and the intensity of contemporary art production that is taking place in the country.

Kavita Singh asked me to provide images for the back cover of a soon to be published anthology of essays on Sikh art. And the conversations I had with artists Bharti Kher, Subodh Gupta and Prasanta Mukerjee gave me further insights into the artistic milieu of the country. My experience at the KHOJ residency was less frustrating than my fellow foreign artists because I probably had a more realistic expectation of what could be produced (technically) in such a short amount of time. Though the construction work on the building did impact slightly on my studio experience – it didn't interfere with the production of the elements that I needed to produce while there. I was comfortable at the residence and found that Chandan and Manoj were extremely helpful and pleasant.

## **Bharti Kher**

HYBRID 1: The grass is always greener and searching for roots.C- Print, 2002There will be 10 works in the hybrid series.