

Curator Note

EXHIBITION WITHOUT OBJECTS (EWO) unfolds from an initial conversation that begins with a letter of invitation from the curator to the artist. Instead of showcasing art objects, the artists are asked to create digital narratives that play with the ubiquitous format of the PowerPoint, a standard(izing) presentation medium that is used by individuals from the military, academic, financial, corporate and art worlds alike to share their work. In addition, each artist has paired their PowerPoint with an “event” that further interrogates or explicates the themes introduced by their respective slideshow.

Slideshows have long been essential to international art communication. As a result of the increased pressure on museums in Europe and the United States to diversify their collections and have a more global scope in their exhibitions, curators are embarking on brief visits to the non-western world to research contemporary artists' works and practices. In cities like Lahore, for example, curators from reputable western institutions conduct hurried studio visits with artists patiently waiting in queue with their computers. Faced with these constraints of time and knowledge artists must present their work in the most accessible, efficient and succinct format possible. This is a curious dynamic, to say the least.

These curatorial methods and the exhibitions they give rise to warrant critique. They also force a reconsideration of issues of temporality, materiality, marketability, and the power disparity between the curator and artist, exaggerated in this case by the weight that international exhibitions hold over local ones. In this context the slideshow presentation takes precedence over the art itself, a phenomenon that is shared with many contemporary artists working today due to shifts in digital technology and modes of communication related to the production, dissemination, and distribution of their work. *EWO* operates within this complex postcolonial condition and digital matrix.

EWO is a dynamic exhibition platform that will transform as it moves through cities along its designated route. The show's format shifts attention away from the singular art object to focus instead on artistic practice and discourse. *EWO* aims to engage local audiences, to move bodies from one city to the next, and to build upon pre-existing networks to further strengthen, reinforce and engage knowledge that exists at each locale. The show is designed so that it travels the world solely on a hard drive. It is only a compilation of data and then, at each site, a materialization of bodies, events, and hardware that manifests the data.

The first iteration of *EWO* took place at The Drawing Room Gallery in Lahore and was titled *136 MB / EXHIBITION WITHOUT OBJECTS* (136 MB refers to the file size of the entire show). This subsequent iteration of the exhibition at Khoj International Artists' Association in Delhi includes two additional artists from Lahore. With these additions the file size of the show and its title are updated accordingly and become *230 MB / EXHIBITION WITHOUT OBJECTS* [File Last updated 1 February 2013]. The exhibition's “Calendar of Events” will also continually recalibrate along *EWO*'s route and includes artist-led events and a public program shaped by participants and context.

There are a series of constants and fixed operations in *EWO*. These include the letter of invitation sent to each artist, the PowerPoint slideshow and event requirements, and the hardware housing the exhibition. These constants shift the logic of objecthood normally assigned to individual artworks within an exhibition to the very format of the exhibition itself.

Sadia Shirazi, Curator

