

Critic Note

Critic :- Hemant Sreekumar

Monali Meher

'BUT I WAS NEVER A BRIDE'

Ex-Mumbai artist now settled in Amsterdam - Visual arts trained from Mumbai. JJ college ... residency at the Reich Akademie .. Student of Marina Abramovic in some regards . . . Monali's route of performance was more of a body enactment towards an atmospheric domination of the space in contestation.

Hers was an absolutely a-political and fairly uncritical yet forceful tryst between the body and it's confining architectonics forcing the audiences re-navigation within a new zone free from inherent notional characteristics. Her use of video tools followed in the same vein. Any special material curation done (mostly of the basic organic sorts) was used as props in the performance. A ritualistic aura was predominant and carefully preserved in all of her Performative works.

Monali's session had the largest studio space. All of the peripheral elements of the performance (3 television monitors with looped videos of Monali using the banana as a make up item on the face.... < a throwback to her " body to beautiful " session > + Photo Posters of embroidery like mehendi work done earlier at the studios and photographed to be extracted in the negative) were created previously. The Central primal performance enacted the title "**But I was never a Bride**" with her seated by the central width of the room, Mehendi applied on her breasts and a mike in front of her at face level resting on a opposing dual curved horizontal Microphone stand fastened on the wall behind her. Text scripted in mehendi on the glass window was thrown into the rooms creating a myriad linear network of shadows by the exterior passage lights enacting a subliminal grotto-like vibe within.

Reza Afsina

Very NEW [in] DELHI

Moonlighting occasionally as a DJ in Jakarta, Reza's practice involved exhibiting his body as a valid and viable mainframe to pull connections into notions and thought patterns. He was able to use the human body's ingrained ability to adapt and explore different forms that could telecast different connections and symbological energies.

His ultimate aim was to realize the transmission of memory to the audience even if it involved playing mind games with the self. The artist himself came from a filmmaking + sound recording background and displayed a very dramatic imagination especially in his prior works like "Victoria the Victorian" and predominantly had a visually arresting comment on the human condition. Reza's sensibility was both sensitive and intimate.

Most of Reza's hours were absorbed in heavy "popular media" consumption and the final performance itself was constructed as a cathartic purging of the same using minimal props comprised of computer speakers, a bathtub, sticky cellophane strip and strips of birthday wrapping paper. The Performance consisted of baritone classical affected outpourings from the speakers that created a European celebratory mood, while he was cocooned in the bathtub wrapped with cellophane and wrapping paper. The audience did not see the moment when he squiggled his way in and an assistant taped the miniscule slit through which this was achieved. The performance - marked from the time the audience navigation started into the studio consisted of Reza escaping the cocoon-like confines of the bathtub ... displacing it in the process and extracting the body out by slicing through the cellophane sheet.

Saumyabratta Chaudhary

'HAMLET IN FARIDABAD'

New Delhi based theatre director and professor at the Jawaharlal Nehru University. Saumya brought in a near academic discourse of the Performative and references of body actions from within the realm of Drama. His prior works shown were full-fledged theatre productions, often being renegotiation of prior texts or scripts. It also raised interesting queries about the dividing line between a solo act play and a live performance apart from its location and audience factors.

"Hamlet in Faridabad" lived remarkably up to the bold entitlement, which Saumyabratta created. Almost pendulum like in the enactment of its narrative ... the outcome had the sense of a very theatrical one-act play, as Saumya would toggle between multiple identities. The performance had a taped vocal narrative running interspersed with blank spaces so one ID would do acts connected to the "voice over" silently and suddenly would jump into the other ID which had a more ranting quality to the Performative delivery, carrying over elements of the previous ID ...in a very literal manner.... so often the elements of ID1 would act in a delayed fashion with newer elements superimposed over the previous ones. Both IDs had their locational sets as well with the ID2 placing itself on a rail track while the ID1 was more of a labour home accessory.

Tejal Shah

'SLEEP'

The second artist in the residency to come from a filmmaking background or a camera background in this case was Tejal Shah. While in Reza's case the Camera itself played a peripheral documentative role, Tejal's behind the camera position, was initially used as a method to distance herself from the situation.

Her initial work done during her academic stint in USA involved a very calm but confusing steady shot of the Michigan Lake. Until she said it that the scene was the flat early morning shot of the Horizon as visible from the Michigan lake shore, the scene looked very undecipherable interspersed with the ambient sounds of a telephonic conversation with her mother in Mumbai merged with the existing early morning songs which resulted in a very meditative video composition.

Most other works before were more tongue in cheek video performances twisting around the held notions of Gender Stereotypes using popular syntaxes from Bollywood role play structures or commenting on the citizen nation by casually getting inputs on immediate histories.

Tejal's Performance entitled '**Sleep**' had her strung out on a hammock outside the window of her first floor studio holding a cord connected to a hammock placed in the middle of the room where the audience was expected to lie down one at a time. Right above the interior hammock was a projection bounced off from a 45-degree mirror with the projector on the floor. The footage was beamed directly, constructing associations with multiple female identities within the context of a common task as it had shot footage of women sleeping, mumbling, and singing with their head on the pillow. This footage was edited into a loop and projected on Tejal's body.... and the entire procedure was then shot from a stationary camera on a tripod. Beautifully constructed and composed in the unlit studio space ... the only light was ambient, filtering in off the street casting a larger than life shadow of Tejal across the projection.