Contemporary Renaissance

Artists Remen Chopra Vibha Galhotra Sonia Jose Monali Meher

Curator Veeranganakumari Solanki

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In the last few years the city administration of San Giovanni Valdarno has created an approach to culture and to contemporary art that is open to the world, going beyond the national borders in order to find opportunities of cultural development in Europe and in the other continents. Within this context the current administration has taken a step further, seeking the promotion of artistic and cultural production on site, a production involving young artists already working internationally.

Our collaboration with MK Search Art must be understood within this frame. Its goal is to invite artists to live in San Giovanni, finding inspiration from the life of our town, having an experience that will lead to the creation of new works of art. Ultimately we hope to stimulate the contamination between our culture and their culture, between our lifestyle and the way we look at our city and that of those who come from abroad.

The first experience of this kind, which was realized in 2011 with artists from the Czech Republic, has met great enthusiasm, reinforcing our idea of promoting San Giovanni internationally. There is no doubt that this new experience with artists from India have brought even more prestige, thanks to a higher level of production and the presence of an even more international participation. Our intention is to proceed in that direction so that this occasional event could become more structured, a leitmotiv within the program of Museo Casa Masaccio. We are in fact aware that this represents a great chance for our city both in terms of growth as well as cultural offer.

Last but not least we see this as an extraordinary tool for integration and tolerance, promoting San Giovanni in the forefront of the larger context of Valdarno.

Maurizio Viligiardi Mayor, San Giovanni Valdarno





Il Sindaco

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Da qualche anno l'Amministrazione Comunale di San Giovanni Valdarno ha intrapreso il percorso di un approccio alla cultura ed all'arte contemporanea che si apre al mondo, nella direzione di uscire dai confini nazionali allo scopo di individuare anche in Europa e nei continenti extraeuropei opportunità di crescita del proprio livello di offerta culturale. Proprio in questo contesto l'attuale Amministrazione ha previsto di compiere un ulteriore passo in avanti, ricercando e promuovendo la produzione artistica e culturale in loco da parte di artisti giovani ma già affermati. In tal senso va intesa questa iniziativa progettata e realizzata in collaborazione con SMKSearch, che ha come obiettivo quello di individuare artisti che risiedano per un periodo a San Giovanni Valdarno e trovino ispirazione per l'ideazione e la realizzazione delle loro opere proprio da questa breve esperienza di vita nella nostra città. Ciò nella speranza ed al fine di stimolare una contaminazione tra la nostra e altre culture, tra il nostro modo di vivere e vedere la nostra città e quello di coloro che provengono da fuori.

La prima esperienza di questo tipo, realizzata nel 2011 con artisti provenienti dalla Repubblica Ceca, è stata entusiasmante ed ha avvalorato la nostra idea di una promozione internazionalizzante di San Giovanni. Non vi è dubbio che questa nuova esperienza con artiste di nazionalità indiana abbia rappresentato un ulteriore salto di qualità, grazie ad un livello di produzione notevolmente più elevato e alla presenza di artiste già affermate, a livello internazionale, nel mondo dell'arte contemporanea.

La nostra intenzione è quella di proseguire nella direzione intrapresa con la volontà di far sì che queste occasioni possano trasformarsi in eventi strutturati e appuntamenti fissi all'interno della programmazione del Museo Casa Masaccio. Siamo, infatti, consapevoli che ciò può rappresentare una grande occasione di crescita della nostra città dal punto di vista dell'offerta culturale, ma anche uno straordinario strumento di integrazione e di promozione per San Giovanni e per l'intero Valdarno.

IL SINDÁCO Dott. Maurizio Viligiardi

New Aesthetic of the Contemporary Renaissance

San Giovanni Valdarno, the Tuscan town in the Arno valley, near Arezzo, traces a personal and significant association with art, culture and architecture. Being the birthplace of the famous Renaissance artist Masaccio (b. 1401), there is a significant and protracted relationship with changing art movements and practices that integrate themselves within the inherent art and culture of this town. Though San Giovanni Valdarno was founded in late XIII century by the Republic of Florence, it has integrated itself with cultures and influences from the surrounding regions, thereby imbibing multicultural elements from the very beginning. According to Giorgio Vasari¹, the architectural layout of the historic centre of the town was created by Arnolfo di Cambio. It is structured around the symmetry of an architectural layout that centers itself with historic references of ancient monuments and façades. The main axis, on which San Giovanni Valdarno is articulated, corresponds to Corso Italia. The town grows out with contemporary additions that adopt renewed developments. Though San Giovanni Valdarno is an industrial town, it preserves its cultural and artistic heritage.

Artists and art movements over the centuries has been influenced by historical events, political turmoil and contemporary happenings. Artists integrate personal views and ideas into a universal language through their art practices, similar to the history of the town of San Giovanni Valdarno. Masaccio, along with Brunelleschi, has often been referred to as the first artist to introduce aspects of perspective in art through painting and architecture. Masaccio has also been credited for bringing the "new birth of painting." He is considered a pioneer of the Renaissance school.

During the residency at Casa Masaccio, the artists explored and excavated, through ideas and research, the historical nature, architecture and art of the town in order to integrate it into their personal art practices. Maintaining an identity of their own, the artists created a dialogue that engaged with San Giovanni Valdarno, with its culture and people; at the same time they realized the development of new contemporary ideas and forms through their art. The works created during this period employed a

¹ Giorgio Vasari, *Le vite de' piú eccellenti pittori, scultori ed architettori*, ed. Gaetano Milanesi, 9 vols. (Florence: G. C. Sansoni, 1906) 2: 107.

language that merged into the history of the town, but at the same time maintained universal identities of their own within the "new aesthetic."

The "new aesthetic" refers to a renewed function of a conceptual idea or form. This could originate from a more complex theory of art that is being rethought in a contemporary context; it could refer to new perspectives that the artist adds to a known medium or technique; and it could also imply the immediacy of contemporary impressions that translate themselves into another form (the form of art), which in turn stimulate the viewer, audience or reader developing subjective reflections within this "new aesthetic."

The four artists – Remen Chopra, Vibha Galhotra, Sonia Jose and Monali Meher – of the "Contemporary Renaissance" explored these ideas of the "new aesthetic" through their art practices. They developed this strain of reflections during the residency.

Remen Chopra draws deeply from the Renaissance period and from its school of thought, which was very central to San Giovanni Valdarno, the hometown of Masaccio. Her works resemble a detailed report of the artist's impressions and connections with the intensity of universal laws. This complexity – these layers –, become points of departure, central to the course of her practice. The treatment of her materials creates sensations and textures, allowing a lever of innovation that goes beyond the surface. Rendering this through the theatrical realm, Chopra enacted the act of cleansing in her work in order to step into the second birth of spiritual awakening. This work becomes the beginning of a yearning for the ideal, conveying the impressions of the new Renaissance within the "new aesthetic."

Within the vein of the "new aesthetic," Vibha Galhotra's art practice focuses on the context of displacement, nostalgia, identity, existence construction and deconstruction, the banal cultural condition in and around which environmental negotiations constantly change the new world. The works Galhotra created during the residency were from her series "Orbis Unum (one world)." Galhotra drew from the chastity of white to redesign the flags for one world, where the cultural and social symbols of geopolitics were denoted but not differentiated. Her *Re-birth Day* project, inspired by Michelangelo Pistoletto's *Third Paradise* involved for the first time a public art interaction for the people of San Giovanni Valdarno, who participated in the creation of this work on November 16-17, 2012. The work was exhibited in San Giovanni Valdarno on the *Re-birth Day* – December 21, 2012. The interaction of the people with this work extended into the artist's concept of her "Orbis Unum" series; and also brought the re-birth day audience into the realm of the "new aesthetic." Drawing inspiration from everyday life and experiences, Sonia Jose's art practice relates to personal and social history. Her work stems from a need to preserve and acknowledge lived experience and reflect on intimate and overlooked circumstances that surround routine life practices. This is an aspect that explores ideas of the "new aesthetic," whereby the known is questioned with fresh perspectives of *the unseen seen*. Jose's work during the residency at Casa Masaccio came from her impressions of her immediate surroundings. Through her sensitive ability to absorb different environments and situations, Jose translated her observations of the architecture – as well as different associations between San Giovanni Valdarno and other towns and cities in Italy – into her works and installation. The vitality of a centre, and the knowledge and a trusted structure within the unknown is something that Jose formulates through her works, signifying her connection to the contemporary rebirth (Renaissance).

Monali Meher portrayed site-specific aspects of San Giovanni Valdarno in the series of works she created during the Contemporary Renaissance residency. The elements of site-specificity, time, and changing identity, as well as process and hybridization are vital factors of her practice, which results are situated within the parameters of the "new aesthetic." This means the understanding of the Renaissance school of thought within a contemporary context, and in relation to the performative nature of her works, and her temporary environment in Italy, including the people and their customs; all these elements were reflected in Meher's photographs, installation and video works, which she created during the residency. Meher implemented certain techniques from the Renaissance – from chiaroscuro to the vanishing point – thereby creating renewed perspectives.

During the residency, the canons of the Renaissance and the role of history were a vital influence for the creation of new perspectives and thoughts. They were furthered by personal reflections and highly individual aesthetic developments that functioned within a more universal concept of the "new aesthetic." This is an organic form that has begun to spread its base on the development of thoughts created during the Contemporary Renaissance – where the content and development of renewed forms and ideas can be recognized as the "new aesthetic."

Veeranganakumari Solanki

The Contemporary Renaissance *a conversation in residence*

Veeranganakumari Solanki: It is the end of the one-month residency at Casa Masaccio where each one of you has created works that are so diverse from your studio practices and yet so connected. In which way do you feel this residency influenced and furthered your practice in relation to your experience here?

Monali Meher: For some reason, after a long time I felt that in San Giovanni Valdarno I was totally there in one place with my mind, body and soul. I could leave everything behind. It was very refreshing to meet you all, live and work together, share this beautiful place. Although I had a sort of plan for the residency, I kept a lot of space to communicate and experiment.

Sonia Jose: It took me a while to understand the new place, making comparisons and connections, recognizing landmarks to orient myself. It also took a little bit of living in the space to familiarize with the everyday routine and culture. Our studio and living spaces were very centrally located, bang in the middle of the town square, so it was a great location to get the rhythm of this place. It was amazing to meet and make friends with many new people in and around San Giovanni Valdarno as well. Being in such a small town made me try to understand not only the physicality of the space but also the ephemeral architectural structures that made the space.

VS: The idea of center was already present in your practice and this notion already influenced your previous works, but with a different perspective. I would say that most of your works have this sort of spatial specificity, but in a much wider space!

Vibha Galhotra: When I reached this residency after traveling for so long my mind was like that of a gypsy. I had this feeling, I wanted to flow or drift with the waters, landing in this residency where all settings were beyond my expectation... the museum space, the studio space, the support of the people involved with the residency as well as that of the habitants of San Giovanni Valdarno. Here, not even for a moment, did I miss my own surroundings but I felt as if I had found another home in the city of San Giovanni Valdarno, where there was both labor and leisure. I wanted to go to the residency with an empty mind so that the place, people and culture would create a new dimension in my practice.

VS: I think we all gained new discoveries, going beyond our artistic and curatorial practices.

We found a system that generated something pre-conceived and new at the same time.

Remen Chopra: That is so true! When I came to this residency, I had this indefinable feeling that the vision I had about the concept of the "new renaissance" – where heaven and earth become one with no religious constructs and boundaries – was going to begin during this residency. When I met all you all, I felt destiny had brought the five of us together to somehow create this in our own ways. The residency gave birth to an artwork, which I called *The Beginning*, which became for me a very important and symbolic work, envisioning a new harmonious world. The residency was a kind of personal rebirth as well a research towards a new beginning in art.

VG: The work I did during the residency was just an idea and then became reality thanks to the help of the staff at Casa Masaccio, MK Search Art, the people of San Giovanni Valdarno, all of you at the residency and especially Veerangana, who planned it so well and in such a short time. The idea of paradise in the times of climactic changes in the human history and a fateful connotation of "end of the world" made me feel like responding to the call of Michelanglo Pistoletto – who is one of my favorite artists – in connection to his project entitled Rebirth-day, which celebrate the notion of the "Third Paradise."

The other works I made were earlier ideas I had in mind, but somehow this residency felt like the right place to realize them, and it was indeed! From the first day onwards, I met people related to all kinds of creative fields, including Lucia who is a fashion designer and now a friend. She offered her skills and knowledge with the use of fabric, especially cutting and stitching, as she already saw that I often use these skills in my practice. Thanks to all these elements "Orbis Unum" turned out to be a great experience, which brought into reality my utopian idea of "One World." These projects are the manifestation of my concept of togetherness in the times of global sustainability and the cultural crisis, where what I call "the power of constructing and deconstructing" is in full bloom. Now is the time to reconstruct the right "Change" in order to create a balance at every level of society.

VS: That's quite true, this residency did lead each of you to a new and quite different path, and yet was so related with each of your practices. You all had this feeling of immediacy, there was something different, something more that grew out of it – be it a new body of work, a new stream of thoughts, a revision of your practices... so much...

MM: Somehow we were not strangers, maybe it was the place but there was something magical about it. It triggered our curiosity. For me it was also just being there and observing, as if I wanted to experiment with my daily life in the new surroundings, to see what could happen. I think the main factor was my desire to be flexible, my decision to deconstruct certain habits, to allow a new pace, which was in tune with the rhythm of that place.

SJ: I can't point out exactly what it is in this residency that has influenced my practice, but it was a fantastic opportunity which provided a great platform for meeting new people, making good friends, having meaningful exchanges and new experiences which in turn has inspired new thoughts and possibilities that I will probably be able to articulate better over time.

RC: At the end of this month, after spending time with each of you, I felt and still feel so enriched, there was this special bond that brought us together and we became a sort of family... and Luciano was our father! In such a short time I felt we all could share and trust each other. The fantastic five!

SJ: I feel we all have an inherent tendency to work in a particular way, which is related to particular concerns based on our personalities, experience, geography and politics. Being in a new environment, even only for a month, provided new stimulus and inspirations. It was also a great experience to be able to live, work, discuss and share with you – Veerangana, Monali, Vibha and Remen – we all got along and connected very well in a very short time.

RC: I was reading Leon Battista Alberti's writings about harmony being a constructed concord of parts to form a symmetrical whole and – although we had created such diverse artworks – I felt that the five of us all came together the way Alberti described it. Everything was so harmonious and I feel that this residency was more than just a residency because it brought love, friendship and togetherness.

MM: I agree it was more than a residency. Afterwards we all left, but it kept us in contact... in fact it keeps growing and we need to see each other and share.

VS: And it is all coming together with futures we are planning already!

Remen Chopra

I had a dream... it seemed like a sequel to Michelangelo's Adam and Eve; this time heaven and earth become one. The magical vision started with the fantastical notion of heaven coming down and enveloping the earth, uniting mankind once again in spiritual harmony. There were no boundaries, no religious constructs, just the brotherhood of man: A collective awakening to welcome the new stage of evolution based on absolute truth. I had the feeling that, in some indefinable sense, this vision had to be

started in Italy: the birthplace of Renaissance. But this time, eastern and western ideologies had to combine in order to arrive at a holistic synthesis. I woke up. I meditated on it. I asked the universe if it really was a vision and if I had to go to Italy. To my amazement two weeks later I got an email from MK Search Art asking me to apply for this residency in Italy. I got goose bumps thinking of the sequence of events. It seemed there was a universal intelligence at play. It became apparent that all this was guiding me to write down thoughts which would help me bringing a change in the arts - to bring aesthetics back. Now I feel it becomes important to write down thoughts for a new manifesto.

to bring...

The residency work gave birth to what I call the re-evolution of art, which has been strongly present in my work and in my consciousness during moments of deep meditation. My work has been constantly reaching for and retreating into the history of the Renaissance to derive a new aesthetic principle. Based on the mathematical principles of the divine proportion together with the spiritual, my work envisions a new aesthetic order which I call the "new renaissance."

a new aesthetic principle

"Beauty is a kind of harmony and concord of all the parts to form a whole which is constructed according to a fixed number, and a certain relation and order, as symmetry, the highest and most perfect law of nature, demands." Leon Battista Alberti

Is there a method to understand the timeless, eternal and transmutable qualities of beauty?

Do the works of Leonardo da Vinci, Michelangelo, Vermeer, Mondrian, Rabindranath Tagore or Shakespeare have something in common? It has been argued that works such as these have a depth and subtlety of expression which enables them to transmit the 'artists' experience of the sublime, or the divine. Despite the elusive and somewhat ethereal nature of this phenomena, it has been recognized and described not only by artists of genius throughout the ages and across cultures, but also by skeptics and rationalists. So, perhaps there might be some objective way to understand the very subjective concept of beauty. Is there then a way to harmonically analyze beauty? Is beauty somewhere then correlated to mathematics? So, hypothetically if beauty is mathematical does it have a universal property?

Is there a connection between what we see and what we perceive as part of a universal formula? For instance, the Renaissance artists did use the golden

mean extensively in their paintings, sculpture, architecture and even music to achieve balance and beauty. Ancient Greeks had a concept that beauty arises from *kosmos*, which means "ordered structure" a "divine ratio" found throughout nature. The geometric principle of the golden ratio was applied in the art of sacred traditions.



They say that the very program of life itself – the DNA molecule – contains the golden ratio¹. From microbes to the largest creatures upon the planet, phi is the prevalent ratio that is present in all species. These questions, their need for answers², lead me towards a need for re-evaluating notions of beauty in order to understand where we are heading. Did postmodernism bring us closer to the truth or has it distanced us from it? And had postmodernism instead replaced the notions of creativity and aesthetics? Walter Benjamin demanded that we look at art in its plurality of copies, replacing the notions of creativity and genius, eternal value and mystery, substituting the aura generated by a work of art and thus the absence of the authority of the actual art object and the "traditional value of cultural heritage"³. Art critic Clement Greenberg famously said "all profoundly original art looks ugly at first"⁴. Did art then not take into account the aesthetic experience for reasons of a selfish pursuit? Has it been divorced from eternal values and a cultural heritage? Is that the reason for art becoming soulless? Are we at the point of destroying another culture by failing to take into account the spiritual side of the historical process? Has contemporary art taken a wrong turn?

"Art is born and takes hold wherever there is a timeless and insatiable longing for the spiritual, for the ideal: that longing which draws people to art. Modern art has taken a wrong turn in abandoning the search for the meaning of existence in order to affirm the value of the individual for its own sake. What purports to be art begins to look like an eccentric occupation for suspect characters who maintain that any personalized action is of intrinsic value simply as a display of self will. In artistic creation the personality does not assert itself, it serves another, higher and communal idea. The artist is always a servant, and is perpetually trying to pay for the gift that has been given to him as if by a miracle. Modern man, however, does not want to make any sacrifice, even though true affirmation of self can only be expressed in sacrifice. We are gradually forgetting about this, and at the same time inevitably losing all sense of our human calling" Andrey Tarkovsky (Sculpting in Time)⁵.

1939-1944 (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1988).

Priya Hemenway, Divine Proportion – Phi In Art, Nature, and Science (New York: Sterling Publishing Co., Inc., 2005).
Mario Livio, The Golden Ratio: the story of Phi, the World's Most Astonishing Number (New York: Random House LLC, 2008).

³ See Das Kunstwerk im Zeitalter seiner technischen Reproduzierbarkeit [The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical

Reproduction] written by Walter Benjamin and originally published in the Zeitschrift für Sozialforschung in 1936. 4 John O'Brian (Ed.), Clement Greenberg – The Collected Essays and Criticism, Volume 1: Perceptions and Judgments,

⁵ Kitty Hunter-Blair (Trans.), Sculpting in Time: Andrey Tarkovsky The Great Russian Filmmaker Discusses His Art (Austin: University of Texas Press; reprint edition, 1989), p. 38.

Rendering it through the theatrical realm, in these images I enact the act of cleansing, stepping into the second birth of spiritual awakening. The works showcase this inner journey towards ascension and salvation. The work then becomes the beginning... conveying the impressions of the new renaissance... a yearning for the ideal...

Time present and time past

Are both perhaps present in time future And time future contained in time past If all time is eternally present All time is unredeemable What might have been is an abstraction Remaining a perpetual possibility Only in a world of speculation What might have been and what has been Point to one end, which is always present Footfalls echo in the memory Down the passage which we did not take Towards the door we never opened Into the rose-garden. My words echo Thus, in your mind. Four Quartets by T.S. Eliot This fragmentation has become so evident in the choices we make and in the dictates of our everyday life that the artist has become a victim to the fads of the world and art has become a spectacle where it is constant narcissism. Is it time for this fragmentation to end and the enlightenment of beauty to replace the postmodernist views? Is art the culmination of moral and material principles of the absolute truth? Art according to Rabindranath Tagore is the response of man's creative soul to the call of the real. He said "I believe in a spiritual world - not as anything separate from this world – but as its innermost truth. With the breath we draw we must always feel this truth that we are "living in God". When we say we are 'living in God', what does that mean? Recently, there was a discovery within the field of human genetics, that the matrilineal is the most common ancestor of human beings. In other words, the primordial mother or the "single eve" was the most recent woman from whom humans today descend, on their mother's side, and through the mothers of those mothers and so on back until all lines converge into one person. That suggests that the mtDNA is generally passed from mother to offspring without recombination. All mtDNA in every living person is directly descended from her by definition. The DNA has the seed of life, believed to be the primordial mother.⁷ This seed of life, the sacred energy, resides within us in the "sacrum" bone as the sacred mother energy which in ancient India was called the "Kundalini" and what the Greeks called "sacrum". Since life is a script of the DNA, and we are a reflection of the beauty of the primordial mother and, all that we see is a reflection of the same... does this then imply that we are all part and parcel of the same reality? That we are all universally linked to each other, and that we are collectively conscious beings? Carl Jung had spoken of a collective unconscious common to all mankind. He also taught that this collective realm is to be attained by a maturing process of self-realization. So now, I come back to my question – is beauty mathematical and if so, is it linked to our DNA? To my surprise, there seems to be a co-relation between the golden ratio, (the mathematical principle believed to be used in art works to make it aesthetically pleasing) and DNA. I was fascinated to discover that the golden ratio or the divine proportion perfectly fits over a cross section of a DNA molecule. Hypothetically, this suggests that since the genes present within DNA molecules are the script for life, that the world is a play of DNA. Since the DNA pattern and the golden ratio pattern work on the same principles of geometry, the principle of beauty is related to the structure of DNA. Therefore we are nothing but spiral structures, internally built, aiming for a pattern based on the golden ratio. Since the DNA contains within it the seed of life, the

⁶ Rebecca L. Cann, Mark Stoneking and Allan C. Wilson, "Mitochondrial DNA and Human Evolution," *Nature*, 325 (1987), pp. 31-36.

⁷ Roger Lewin, "Science: DNA evidence strengthens Eve hypothesis," New Scientist, issue 1791.

primordial mother energy, then science, spirituality and art are all interrelated. Therefore, Art is the experience of the universal. It cannot be separated from the truth as we are part of the same cosmic rhythm. Art is an inward movement towards the center of silence leading to the absolute truth: it is a state of concentration, an approximation of all that is understood by the word "yoga". The movement is from the gross to the subtle, from the physical to the metaphysical, from the senses to the spirit all in continuum and not in polarity. According to the Indian treatise on art, the artist's entire focus is inwards, where all the duality of subject and object is lost and the distance of physical time and space are eschewed. Here the finite and the infinite merge...



Thoughte for a manifesto towards a new aesthetic 'an 'new renaissance': New metric - towards the sublime. Spiritual vision to bear on reality. New breakthrough - rebirth of propertion acethetics acc. to the divine propertion Marmony and equilibrium - new geale. Manifestation of the eternity of equinit in art. Seeking touth - ant a detector of Science is empirical, conception of images is a dynamice revelation in accordence to mathe vois cal infinity princip les Ercedren is insyrable from conscionenes A collective conscions vers phenomenon -Ihrening fake identity. The end of the individual "I" new A new time of rebittin - sande of time shift. The cocond birth of, not in feish but in spirit.



Vibha Galhotra

It was a wonderful experience. I arrived to this small town, where the people and the place charmed me with ite simplicity and beauty. I was the first one to reach San Giovanni Valdarno on my way back from North Carolina after the opening of my solo exhibition at the Southeastern Center for Contemporary Art in Winston-Salem. It was such a beautiful place that I just felt I was in holiday. Slowly everyone started arriving and we all gelled together as one family so it was lot of fun, food, wine, goodp, getting together, visiting and of course a lot of work! I really enjoyed everyone's company at the residency so I thank you all for making it a great experience.

The residency was themed around the Contemporary Renaissance, so it was obvious that we all would be working around our relationship to the place and its history. For me it was a change to continue my practice and to benefit from the wonderful people living there. On the very first day Luciano – one of the organizers – introduced me to his wife Lucia and daughter Bianca, with whom I immediately connected. While dining all together I discovered that Lucia is the chief designer of Roberto Cavalli.

Because of my connection with Lucia I decided to work with what makes Italian craftsmanship so unique – its artisans working fabric, leather... I took this opportunity to marry this tradition with my idea of utopia, which I have been working on since the last 2-3 years. My project started taking shape while doing a rekey of the site in relationship to my extensive traveling. I also decided to create a project I would share with the city and its citizens, whose engagement was really beautifully. The museum staff at Casa Masaccio, where the residency final show took place and the organizers of the residency were so helpful, they helped me producing a piece which happened to be the first public art work ever made in the city.

We quickly got permission from the municipality and from the school. The project, entitled *Rebirth Day* was inspired by of the great artist Michelangelo Pistoletto, especially his notion of "Third Paradise." I became interested in his philosophy and utopian vision, his theories for a new compatible world between the natural and the artificial, which is related to my utopian vision of hope and experience.

Both works – *Rebirth Day* and *Orbis Unum* – were created simultaneously. Everything was perfectly done and no *jugaad* [a Hindi-Urdu term widely used in India and Pakistan to define a creative or innovative idea providing a quick, alternative way of solving or fixing a problem] compromised the work. Lucia organized all the aspects of my work that involved fabric, cutting, stitching, embroidery and leather laser cutting – all outsourced from units of her factory.

I have been to many residencies, but this ones was one of the best, because I met many friends and the warmth of people was so strong that when we left we all felt we were leaving home...















Masaccio

Cheese cheese



Garibaldi

Home made



San Giovanni Valdarno by night





Two beauties Bianca and Lucia









Me in Turin



















Rebirth Day

This project was inspired by the work of Michelangelo Pistoletto, and particularly by his notion of "Third Paradise," where he talks about how the world has been consumed by the humans and the artificial world and how now it is time for the new paradise. He created a new sign, which transforms the infinite sign $[\infty]$ by adding a womb-like form in the middle of the infinite. This decision signifies the birth of a new world.

Being the residency in Italy and working on the utopia, I became connected with the utopian idea of Michelangelo Pistoletto, and I therefore decided to involve the people of San Giovanni. I wanted join me celebrating the birth of a new paradise.

This was a public art project reflecting the desire of people looking for changes in these times. This project comes as a thread to tie these ends together.

"An evolutionary step in which the human intelligence finds ways to live in armony with the intelligence of nature"

Michelangelo Pistoletto

Orbis Unum (one world)

During this residency I merged my existing experiences with this new experience, which involved time, space and people. When I arrived there I was already traveling between different continents and I had left the US just the day before the hurricane Sandy hit the country. I was going from one airport to the other and also through security checkpoints.

At some point I felt that the notions of border, security, and power are relative. If nature decides to deconstruct the construction of humankind in order to deconstruct itself, if nature decides to return to its Pangaea state then how one will decide the borders? What will be the order and who will rule?

With these thoughts in mind, I began to collect all the predictions made by the different prophets and religions all around the world especially when they talk about big changes happening in the year 2012. I would compare this thoughts with a statement by Albert Einstein that say "The acceleration of free fall with respect to the material is therefore a mighty argument that the postulate of relativity is to be extended to coordinate systems that move nonuniformly relative to one another."

In the meantime I started to further develop my series "Utopia of Difference" and I created my new ongoing series entitled "Orbis Unum (one world)." In this series I envision one world without borders and orders. I decided to work on sings of identity for countries, their flags that are commonly used by the army to show their power. I conceived a pure world where all the harsh divisions between different countries are disappearing, where all the flags are white on white. Using the color white was very important for me in this work, since it embodies not only neutrality and purity, but also behaves as an ethereal and infinite form where everything becomes one. One element of this installation is soil from Italy and India, which similar color and texture becomes another metaphor of unity among all nations. The other element of the installation is a video documenting the act of washing away the colors from the flags.

















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Sonia Jose















The Second Coming – William Butler Yeats

newhere in sands of the desert And what rough beast, its hour come round at last, body and the head of a man, That twenty centuries of stony sleep Were vexed to nightmare by a rocking cradle, the indignant desert birds. drops again; but now I know Slouches towards Bethlehem to be born? w thighs, while all about nd pitiless as the su The darkness **Reel shadow:** A gaze b ls moving it

best lack all conviction, while the worst Things fall apart; the centre cannot hold; rld, The falcon cannot hear the falconer; Are full of passionate intensity. osed upon is loosed, ceremony of innocence Mere anarchy is <u>he blood-dimmed</u>

The Sc

e Second Coming is at hand. some revelation is at hand;

ing! Hardly are those words out age out of Spiritus Mundi





Monali Meher



Reference images - Along the side of the Arno river, San Giovanni Valdarno, Italy, 2012.



Paesaggio III, 2012. Lambda print, 67 x 100 cm.

During the month spent at the Casa Masaccio residency, I portray the site-specific aspects of the town of San Giovanni Valdarno. During the time period spent here, my experience with the new surroundings, its nature and architecture, interiors of spaces as well as people and customs, have been conveyed in my photos and videos. In spite of my fleeting physical appearance, the emphasis is on the surrounding and its symbolic nature. This series of works also reflects the performative nature of my art practice.

Daily life aspects, such as strolls through the city, morning walks along the river, nature, Saturday and Sunday markets, churches, sound of the church bells every now and then, children playing in the square, people gathering at the square in the evening, cafes, residential buildings, drying cloths, interiors/exteriors, the history of the places, walls, structures, architecture, fountains, rituals, memorial assemblages, niches, myths, narratives, miracles, marks, traces, landscapes, atmosphere, weather, light, Renaissance characteristics: vanishing point, perspective, light and shade, foreground

and background, all these factors have been incorporated in my photographic works, installations and videos through contemporary methods, thinking process and displays. Instead of relating to a specific historical factor, I let myself free and my own experience and imagination guided my work created during the residency. Every brief introduction and repetition of words, vocabulary and language became a part of my daily expressions and eventually manifested themselves into the titles of my works created here. The titles are very significant and give a vital element to the work, another layer, skin or costume.



Reference image – Bridge on the Arno river, San Giovanni Valdarno, Italy, 2012.



Paesaggio I, II, III: Every place has its own character; the walks alongside the river, the circle around some part of the river by crossing the bridge to go on the other side of the city. All of them could be part of any other place/landscape/ geography.

I [Vanishing point]: I apply this attitude in my own way by placing the subject matter out of the landscape frame or by positioning myself in a manner through which the surrounded nature or foreground becomes important and the figure slips into the background unrecognizable or hidden, and merges into the foggy atmosphere.

In Renaissance paintings – where different scenes, episodes, narratives, or portraits are rendered – the figures are either gazing at a particular object, event, or looking towards an unknown space – outside the painting – or at someone, for instance looking towards the artist who painted them. I feel curious about this notion that is a complete mystery to me. We can only fantasize about this element, this history of this *in between space*, of the actual reality and the painting.



Above: Paesaggio II, 2012. Lambda print, 67 x 100 cm.

Left: *Reference image* – Bridge on the Arno river, San Giovanni Valdarno, Italy, 2012.

Le scale and I passi: I was fascinated by the interiors of the studio building, which elements became my inspiration – the stairs made of stone, the light penetrating through the gaps of these steps, the painted, faded and restored Renaissance walls of the studio, the old fireplace with the traces of black smoke and the contemporary addition of the radiator.

Le scale: Climbing up the stairs, I saw them as piano keys playing with the rhythm of my body, the tune of musical notes following time and movement, the back of the human figure getting merged into the light at the top of the stairs, almost disappearing into the bright light and appearing through the shade again; repeating the same movement over and over again, the metaphor for ongoing life, playfulness, hope and determination.



Le scale, 2012. Video, sound, 2:48 min.

I Passi: The horizontal nature of I passi indicates a similar movement, which continues in the studio space against three walls as different backdrops. In each frame the figure vanishes into another imaginary space. I used these formations into a specific order, I arranged each frame one after the other in order to create the sense of movement, I wanted to communicate the feeling of passing through and entering into another space while highlighting peculiar interior details of the spaces such as the radiator, the fireplace, the floor and the walls; though my experience I deconstructed the history of the space and its features.



I passi, 2012 (detail). Digital print, 230 x 210 cm







I passi, 2012. Digital print, 230 x 210 cm.



ne museum at ban Giovanni valdan

La porta trasparente was inspired by the miracle of Monna Tancia. The story is depicted in a cycle of frescos in the sanctuary church of Nostra Signora delle Grazie in San Giovanni Valdarno. The miracle tells the story of Monna Tancia, an elderly woman who had to take care of his 3-month old grandson Lorenzo whose parents where killed by leprosy. With no food for Lorenzo and taken by despair she prayed the Virgin Mary and then suddenly her breast were filled with milk that she used to feed Lorenzo. The church was built on the path where she prayed the Virgin Mary and it has four doors pointing four different cities. Inspired by this place I created my own landscape of islands, which are geometrical forms with wood, glass, cables and light bulbs. This work suggests the metropolitan jungle, made of electrical cords but also an altar for remembrance.



La porta trasparente, 2012. Wood, glass, light bulbs, cables, installation view at Casa Masaccio, San Giovanni Valdarno, Italy, 2012. Photos: Gianluca Maver and Emanuela Barilozzi Caruso.



Scena Tragica sull'Arno is similar to my performative work Fake performance scene of tragic end in the old church and it took place in the historical context of the residency program of the MK Search Art residency program. The theatrical, mysterious, site-specific, misty, film-like nature of Fake performance scene of tragic end in the old church were the motivations that made me thinking to stage this romantic tragedy by the scene with objects – such as fruits, cloths, mask, and shoes – scattered on the floor. The result was fake, gloomy, theatrical and it indicated no beginning or end to this mysterious film.



Previous page: *Scena Tragica sull'Arno*, 2012. Video, 9:38 min. Right: *Fake performance scene of tragic end in the old church*, 2010. View of the performance at Museum-Night, Oude Kerk, Amsterdam, 2010. Photo Gert: Jan Van Rooij.

Veeranganakumari Solanki



San Giovanni Valdarno

We arrived in the small Tuscan town of San Giovanni Valdarno, nestled by the River Arno, during the first week of November 2012, for a one-month residency at Casa Masaccio. Some of us had met earlier, some not - we were all absorbing things around us, grasping and settling-in. San Giovanni Valdarno is historically considered an important crossroad for not only travellers, but also culture and the development of the Renaissance. This is evident with it being the hometown of the pioneering artist Masaccio (1401-28), and also through the architectural genius of Arnolfo di Cambio (c. 1240-1300/1310) who designed the Palazzo d'Arnolfo, located in the town main piazza. The façade of the Palazzo is peppered with stones and Della Robbia coats of arms that helped establishing the historic relevance of the building. The little town of San Giovanni was so deeply inherent with culture and small discoveries that, while we instantly embraced it as our home, there were always things one would stumble upon – be it a Pinocchio mosaic, the Saturday market, or shortcut alleys through old courtyards. Italy – especially Tuscany – is celebrated for its passion for food and culture. This did not escape us! From monuments to moments, it was a plethora of experiences and interactions with the entire residency team (including MK Search Art, the Casa Masaccio team, and the 5 of us) that made it more than just a residency, connecting us with with strong bonds.













Studios (Psithurisma of Renaissance)

Masaccio's house – Casa Masaccio – is today a center for contemporary art. The museum has preserved the historical and heritage nature of the building, thereby bringing the Renaissance period into contemporary connections. Our exhibition at the museum opened on December 1, 2012, as a result of what we created and worked on in our studios in the adjoining building. This building was the native house of the Renaissance painter Giovanni Mannozzi, better known as Giovanni da San Giovanni (1592-1636) and had conserved walls from the 14th century along with restored paintings done by the artist during the Renaissance. Each artist had a studio, in which there were interactions, reflections and exchanges. Sonia's studio on the first floor was a source of inspiration for everyone, with its restored walls and paintings that connected us to the Renaissance through a contemporary context. My studio (the curator's space) was located in the top floor of this house. It overlooked the Tuscan hills beyond the Arno and was a perfect setting for volleyed discussions with the artists, the creation of texts as well as reflections, thoughts and ideas, such as the formulation of the concept of the "Contemporary Renaissance."



Interactions

The experience of being in a small town like that of San Giovanni Valdarno is the wonderful feeling of acceptance, intimacy and personal relationships developed with various individuals – everyone (eventually) knows everyone! They'll know how you like your coffee within a week, your favorite gelato flavor, and you'll recognize the Irish Setter with his owner in the square every Sunday when the men gather to discuss soccer. It was inevitable that we all had various engagement with the people of the town in the form of projects and personal encounters. While Monali and Remen reflected what they absorbed in their Contemporary Renaissance art works, Sonia and Vibha had personal interactions with various groups of people in the town. As a curator, I was involved with the 4 artists at different stages of these interactions – as a spectator to Sonia's interactions with the people while she traced frottages of manhole covers around the town, to a late night meeting at the Ceramics centre for Vibha's Rebirth Day project, which was the first public interactive project for the town of San Giovanni Valdarno. This project created a new level of interaction not only for us, but also for the people of the town who were curious about everything related to the project – be it the history behind it, the works by the artists in the show; and a curious old man who insisted I was of Russian origin, and helped tremendously to gather people to come and participate in the project, hoping that at the end of it all I'd marry his younger brother and Vibha would marry him!







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November 3: interacting with the locals during our first visit to the Saturday market



Residency Visits







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Centers

SACI Studio

International, Florence





November 26, Academia di Belle Arti, Florence



Residency Visits

Though one month seemed so short, there was an impossible amount of things we did, places we saw and people we met. Our first visit was to Turin for Artissima, followed by numerous trips to Florence. Around mid-November, a drive through the vineyards of Chianti to San Gimignano, led to a wonderful day at Galleria Continua, hosted by Mario Critiani. It included a visit to Ai Weiwei's exhibition and a lavish meal over which we spilt ideas, discussions and reflected on the residency. Each of these visits involved discussing each other's works, which resulted in a better understanding of the ideas we were developing. This was furthered by visits from two curators – Alessandra Sandrolini from Bologna, Italy and Ann Cesteleyn from Belgium, who interacted with each artist to gain a better understanding of their works. In between these visits and the opening, we had a lecture organized by Professor Paolo Parisi at the Academia di Belle Arti in Florence, where besides speaking about my curatorial practice, I also had a chance to discuss the concept of the residency further and each of the artists had the opportunity to introduce their works to the students and to the audience. The lecture was followed by a visit to SACI, where, with Mary Beckinsale, we met the Dean, the students and the main organizing committee. Finally, during the two days that led up to the opening of the exhibition, there were visits from several curators and critics, most of whom were also present at the panel discussion on the opening night of The Contemporary Renaissance, on December 1, 2012.





Stufato

While reading about the beginning of the Renaissance, perspective and the artists of Florence, lo Scheggia, Giovanni da San Giovanni, Mariotto di Cristofano and the famous Annunciation by Beato Angelico, in the book Museo della Basilica di Santa Maria delle Grazie a San Giovanni Valdarno, I stumbled upon this native rhyme along with a recipe. It just goes to show how culture integrated itself into the daily lifestyle of people, in a manner very similar to what we experienced during the residency.

"Racconta una leggenda che una donna, per onorare meglio la Madonna fece un piatto forte e assai drogato che batezzó col nome di Stufato. Questo piatto che viene da lontano Saprà ridarti quell rapport umano E far capire anche al piú somaro Che il tempo é vita e che non é denaro" "The legend says about a woman, who to better honor the Madonna prepared a hearty and spicy dish which she called stew. This dish that comes from far away will bring you back to human contact and even the most thick-headed will understand that time is life, not money"







The Contemporary Renaissance - in the making

Ram 1. 2" high 20Cm apidan u Smt Ely d all but without any Break zo cm Between each wood stripter from the centre of wood (vertically) 8 strips of wood Distance ft.b + discutation of direction + doringe te on she wall? 7 prav & stick rape on the wall? - Lyw gray flack pin -> dearle Tast > bourd - 2" with 2 Postsdores that of hear by 2 solopo mw ou an & measuring tape 84 6hi 9 sneps of later \$ 10 screen 12 V " Drowing truy on thread " uch-"andie -A blue tac /adhesive Une - chabarn > water colours -* pedeoral +1x1 A -> Colour primer & shelf on the u drary love Difference - Michelengelo con 0-7



Panel discussion: "Residencies as an Exchange Platform (Asia and Europe)" | Palazzo Arnolfo | December 1, 2012



From Left to Right: Saretto Cincinelli, me, Isin Onol, Roney Simon, Maurizio Bortolotti, Mario Cristiani, Brada Barassi and Nicola Trezzi. Photo: Emanuela Barilozzi Caruso.




1st December 2012

Palazzo Arnolfo 6.00 pm Institutional welcoming addresses Panel discussion Residencies as an Exchange Platform (in context - Asia and Earope) Panelluly: Maurizio Bortolotti | Saretto Cincinelli | Mario Cristiani | Brada Barassi | Isio Onol/Veeranganakamuri Solanki | Nicola Trezzi Moderator: Roney Simon

Casa Masaccio 7:00 pm Opening reception

Contemporary Renaissance: Mun-Sat 15:00-19:00 | Son 10:00-12:00 15:00-19:00

Casa Masacelo Cento per l'arte renompensos Gasa Juda. 85-53027 Sin Genami Rahama | 78: +394559020303 Aur +394559023367 | cas

Promoted by Ziscanaincontemporanea2012

casa masaccio

MKSearchArt







MK Search Art, Roney Masaccia Forte Galhotra, Remen Chopra, Sol Giani, Tony, Leopold, Blanca, MK Search Art, Roney Simo Donatini, Tommaso Amico 11.0 di Meane, Casa Masaccio, Fausto Forte, Serena, Trinchero, Lucia, Laura, Monali Sonio Tose, Nicola Trezz Meher, Vibha Galhotra, Remen Chorra. , Barbara, Mercedes, ani, Tony, Leopold, Bianca, Zoney Simon, Luciano Donatini, 3/1 Art

Snapshots

















Views of the exhibition

















Biographies and statements

Remen Chopra

Born in 1980 in New Delhi, where she lives and works.

Through the understanding of the nature of time as cosmological and psychological, and as fantasy and metaphysics, my works are a structured fluid of sketches, photographic and digital constructing complex monochromatic, performance-based montages. Their aim is to constantly reach for and retreat from an endless realm of surfaces and layers in order to create the contrasts between real and endorsed time. Furthermore their use of the reference of time as a moral concept, where the past, present and future merge as a way to understand the transformation of the self; my work addresses a new aesthetic of beauty, while drawing strongly from elements of history. The works convey the deep complexity of time as a state, wherein lies the redemption of mankind.

The montages I explore are those of imagery and concepts, which are drawn significantly from the aesthetics of theatre. The works are transparently layered with elements of performance and figuration, which are placed in the medium of time and in relation to light, sound and transient occurrences. I explore narrative structures, weaving together sheaths of incidents and thoughts that are paused for a fleeting moment, therefore making the ephemeral eternal. The references that one experiences through my work are interlaced with private memories and perspectives, causing a collision between personal and social histories.

My practice delves into the psychological realm of human consciousness. Creating this through the theatrical realm, my work conceptualizes detailed and staged sets, during which I collaborate with performers who become the represented subjects of my works. The feminine form has a particularly strong presence in my work, and represents eternal and immutable qualities of regeneration, nurturance and balance. My works envision a new order that is defined by empathy and harmony, and engendered by the re-establishment of the cosmic balance between masculine and feminine energies. Driven by a search for a new sense of harmony in a fractured postmodern world, the feminine character retreats into my imagination. Walking into the shadows of history, on the steps of an old Roman historical building, there is a woman confronted by my own neurosis. Who is she? What does she stand for? Where is she headed? The modern woman is surrounded by ghostly figures of the Renaissance. Within these narratives, there is a constant tension between the past and the present, the woman's constant negotiation with her own individuality through time. She then, through my interventions, reach a new dimension where she sees the formation of a new universe, an explosion through which new structures are being formed, where an enlightened truth is coming about and an evolution is taking place.

The rendering, the layers of images with its detailed transparency signify a strong spiritual connection with the search for inner truth, ascension and salvation. I work towards the revelation that is striated within the limitless layers of history, time and truth. The cultural aspects of going back to the Renaissance and the issue of returning are factors that I have been addressing through the integration of perception, sensation and emotion. There is an innate gesture of signification, a change in the act of sorting and cleaning, an attempt to embrace the visible but inaccessible harmony and truth. Understanding the figurative as an exponent of balance and harmony, I delve into genre of figuration in order to inquire about notions of aesthetics and beauty, creating what I call "The New Renaissance." My works become a new beginning; they convey impressions of the new Renaissance and a yearning for the ideal.

Education

BFA, Fine Art, College of Art, New Delhi MFA, Fine Art, College of Art, New Delhi Additional studies, The School of Visual Art, New York

Selected solo shows

2012: "Il siero della verità," MK Search Art, San Giovanni Valdarno, Italy (with Monali Meher). 2011: "Memoirs of Tanaz and Vimala," Sakshi, Mumbai

Selected group shows

2012: "Contemporary Renaissance," Casa Masaccio, San Giovanni Valdarno, Italy; "Indian Parallax or

the Doubling of Happiness," Birla Art Foundation, Calcutta; "The Contemporary Sultanate," at Kutub Haveli Serai, Exhibit 320, New Delhi. 2011: "Miniscule Marvel," BMB and Contemplate Art Gallery, Mumbai. 2010: "Indian Awakens: Under the Banyan Tree," Essl Museum, Vienna; "Her Work is never Done – II," BMB, Mumbai; "New Order Beauty," Palette, New Delhi. 2009: "A New Vanguard - New Trends in Indian Art," The Guild, New York; "Re Visioning Materiality II," Gallery Espace, New Delhi; "Art against Terrorism," Aakriti Art Gallery, Calcutta. 2008: "Everything," at Westerhuis, Amsterdam. 2007: "Insider," Bodhi, Mumbai; "Cross Poly Nations," Teatro dal Verme, Milan. 2006 : "Multiplicity and Self," India Habitat Centre, New Delhi

Vibha Galhotra

Born in 1978 in Kaithal, India. She lives and works in New Delhi.

Art reflects the social environment, political behaviors and beliefs of the time, thereby becoming the narrative of the contemporary. I try to place myself through my works by reflecting my mental and physical identity. For me art, science and spirituality create a line and all the histories fall around them. I also seek my identity and my utopian vision through my art practice.

My art practice narrates the life of a disordered (or hyper ordered) society, with all the clashes and tensions that contemporary life carries with it. People build walls around themselves to create order and borders. Through my visual vocabulary, I am interested in showing what happens when we negotiate with the so-called "realities" created by us. Furthermore, my work focuses on the notions of displacement, nostalgia, identity, and existence, whether it is constructed or deconstructed. It also deals with the banal cultural condition in and around the environment of negotiations, as they happen within the new constant changing urban atmosphere.

I wish to offer new parameters to relocate our subjective position in the global and local specificity. The changing individual is dynamic in response to the rapid pace of

the world. I choose to express my thoughts and concerns through various mediums, textures and materials to re-address our mutating cosmopolitan life. The urban and global existence is to create, invent, and deconstruct a new imagery in order to understand and decode the complexities of our daily life. In my time, I see lot of complexities and negativities around. My utopian vision instinctively motivates me to find some positivity through my work. Therefore, I deliberately try to change the aesthetic of the negative into something that is positive, light and more interactive. My utopian vision agrees with the saying of great philosopher and visionary Swami Vivekananda where he believes that - in order to let the world evolve peacefully – there has to be a confluence of science and spirituality. "Science can become an irrational cult, prompts one to dismiss as nonsense anything that modern science has not discovered yet, or cannot comprehend even it be truth based direct experience."

I feel that science is an outcome of logical and visible belief. The spiritual is an invisible logical belief but when understood, it is similar to Einstein's theory of relativity. I understand this as utopian visions of a logical sympathy through science, something that has already been explained through spirituality.

While expressing these concerns and thoughts, my practice appears as an outcome of the search for meanings in my time, these 'episodes' happening around me; particularly when I am trying to understand the organic and the human psyche, the difference between construction and deconstruction, growth and re-growth.

Education

BFA, Printmaking Department, Government College of Arts Chandigarh, India MFA, Printmaking Department, Kala Bhavana, Visva-Bharati, Santiniketan, India

Selected solo shows:

2013: "Alter" MK Search Art, San Giovanni Valdarno, Italy; "Metropia," Southeastern Center for Contemporary Art, Winston-Salem NC, United States; "Utopia of Difference," Jack Shainman, New York. 2008: "Metropia," Project 88, Mumbai. 2006: "Where Do We Come From? What Are We? Where Are We Going?," Anant, New Delhi. 2005: "Between Me and Delhi," Anant, New Delhi. 2004: "White, Fine Arts Faculty," MS University, Baroda, India. 2002: "Space within the Space," Siddhartha Hall, Max Mueller Bhavan, New Delhi

Selected group shows

2013: "Souvenirs," Perrotin, Paris. 2012: "Contemporary Renaissance," Casa Masaccio, San Giovanni Valdarno, Italy; Kathmandu International Art Festival; Colombo Art Biennale, Sri Lanka. 2011: "Modern and Contemporary Art from India," San Jose Museum of Art, San Jose TX, United States. 2010: "India Awakening: Under the Banyan Tree," Essl Museum, Vienna. 2009: The International Sculpture workshop, ITM Universe, Gwalior, India; Baku Biennale, Azerbaijan; "India Xianzai," Museum of Contemporary Art, Shanghai; "Space Invader," Aicon, London. 2008: "Mutant Beauty," Anant, New Delhi; "Zeitgeist," Palette, New Delhi; "Everywhere Is War (and rumours of war)," Bodhi Art, Mumbai; "Destination Asia: Flying over Stereotypes' Conversation- 1," Elementa, Dubai; "Walk the Line," Avanthy Contemporary, Zurich; "Rethinking Materiality," Espace, New Delhi. 2007: "City Cite Site," Anant, New Delhi; "Urban Similes: Transforming Cities," Project 88, Mumbai; "Destination Asia: Non-strict correspondence," Soros Center for Contemporary Art, Almaty, Kazakhstan. 2006: "Bronze," Espace, New Delhi; "Shadow Lines, Vadehra Art Gallery, New Delhi. 2005: "Unclaimed Luggage," Artrageous Group, Nicosia, Cyprus; "The Chair Project," Sarjan Art Gallery, Vadodara, India. 2004: "The Twilight Zone of Digital Divide, West End, New Delhi. 2002: "Kunst in der Landschaft," Gut Gasteil, Gasteil, Austria. 2001: "Sculptures Symposium," Europos Parkas, Vilnius. 1998: "Punjab LKA," Annual Art Exhibition, Chandigarh, India

Sonia Jose

Born in 1982 in Bangalore, India, where she lives and works.

My work takes inspiration from everyday life and experiences and relates to the immediate environment and my personal and social history. I am particularly drawn to intimate and often overlooked circumstances that surround routine life. My work stems from a need to preserve and acknowledge lived experiences and investigates the relationships, exchanges and politics between places, architecture, objects and individuals.

In my formative years, I trained intensively for competitive swimming, spending seven hours on average, in a pool. Many strong influences emerged from this period, and looking back, I realize how I was shaped by the repetitive practice of everyday life. A large part of my training was fundamentally meditative and involved keeping to the rhythm of time and mind – body synchronism and coordination. I now strive for that same balance in my art practice, exploring meditative processes of art making through physical and mental strength and endurance.

I work with varied media that includes drawing, painting, sculpture, photography, video and installation. My work is a reaction to the experiences of situations and spaces that are physical as well as psychological. My concerns therefore come from an attempt to understand myself in relation to my surroundings and are perhaps a way of coping and adapting to change.

For me the personal is political -I see value in the consideration of a life spent in a particular place and time, in recording an individual testimony.

Education

Graduate diploma, Fine Art, Srishti School of Arts Design and Technology, Bangalore

Selected solo shows

2010: "A place called home," Gallery at Sua House, Bangalore. 2007: "On the wall," Galleryske, Bangalore. 2005: "Back to square 1 (this is all we have...)," Galleryske, Bangalore

Selected group shows

2012: "Contemporary Renaissance," Casa Masaccio, San Giovanni Valdarno, Italy. 2011: Prague Biennale; "To be continued... The FICA Group Show," presented by Foundation for Indian Contemporary Art, New Delhi and Volte Gallery, Mumbai. 2010: Art Gwangju (under the auspice of BMB); "BMB Picks," BMB, Mumbai; "Her work is never done," Gallery BMB, Mumbai; "Side by Side," Red Dot, Colombo, Sri Lanka. 2009: "Lost in an Urban Maze," Palette, New Delhi. 2007: "Foto- und Medienkunst aus Indien: eine Entdeckungsreise," Fluss, Wolkersdorf, Austria. 2006: "Open Eyed Dreams," Durbar Hall, Cochin, India; "Satyagraha Centenary Exhibition," Travancore Art Gallery, New Delhi and Kizo Art Gallery, Durban, South Africa; "Recent works", Project 88, Mumbai. 2003: "Graduate Show", Srishti School of Arts Design and Technology, Bangalore

Monali Meher

Born in 1969 in Pune, India. She lives and works in Amsterdam.

I transform the manner in which materials react, what shape or smell they produce, what impact they make on my viewers and how the space around my art and audience gets transformed. This aspect of 'conversion in character' reflects a strong metamorphosis of my personal identity as a Diaspora artist. I elaborate a philosophical exploration of the human, in order to point out its process of construction, through the antithetical notions of private versus collective memory, feeling of longing versus belonging, intimacy versus conflict and familiarity versus unfamiliarity. I try to merge these processes into my work, so that the viewer gets a notion of time through a process of dilation and re-connection. No matter which artistic medium I employ, I want to embody the same breath of life, while introducing the viewer to a deep, paradoxical and even intellectual reading of the world. I play with senses and time, creating luminal connections between outer tangible worlds and inner invisible ones. Most of my works are site specific and durational, they reflect the journey of my life and performances as therapeutic actions during those particular moments of my existence. Through these manifestations, I deconstruct the narratives related to them and set a new challenge for experience, understanding and research.

My art is usually time based and often reveals the process of creation. According to sites and related situations, my choices of materials differ to reveal the hybridization of various elements from both my cultures, being presently European and originally Indian. "Time", as a factor, is central to my practice, whether it's a wrapped object or a performance. I use time as medium, which is extended, assembled and captured. Elements of the past, understood as a quantity of time are of extreme significance. To be able to record and replay time frames and juxtapose real time with mediated time is a vital aspect of my works. My art witnesses my quest for defining the trace of time, its territory and extensions into the real world. Beyond this, I draw an ontological thought of time influencing human essence and evolution. Two different spaces interact in a self-reflecting process of transit, change and affected repetition.

My use of natural and ephemeral ingredients results in a process of perishing and transitory moment of the time. This is utter, thus unavoidable and deliberate. Such assemblages and installations are temporary structures in the time and space created within the durational act: the performance.

My performances are atmospheric, sometimes ritualistic and frequently involve props of various natures. They show the cyclical circles of destruction and renewal, as well as formal and conceptual ideas within the framework of personal references that inform the fragile division between my life and my art.

Decay, hybridization and transformation; creating new identities; reshaping belongings; intimacy; a dialogue of matter and memory – all these constitute the language of my work. Furthermore, the aspects of continuity, repetition, vulnerability, duration, temporality, awareness, situation and public involvement are also inherent qualities that inform my art practice. The process before and after the performance is equally important and challenging.

Education

BFA, Painting Department, Sir J.J. School of Arts, Mumbai, India

Selected solo shows

2012: "Il siero della verità," MK Search Art, San Giovanni Valdarno, Italy (with Remen Chopra).2009: "Departed, Assembled, Wrapped, Captured: Time," Project 88, Mumbai; "Measures & Weights, Live Funds," Fonds BKVB, Amsterdam. 2008: "Departed, Assembled, Wrapped, Captured: Time," Lumen Travo, Amsterdam. 2005: "Reverse, Rewind, Replay," Goliath Visual Space, New York. 2004: "Ceremony," Artkitchen, Amsterdam. 1999: "Theatre Of Memory," Lakeeren, Mumbai. 1998: "Reflect (A Personal Window Display)," Jüttner, Vienna. 1996: "Bio-Morphosis," Lakeeren, Mumbai. 1993: "Untitled," Contemporary Art Gallery, Ahmedabad, India

Selected performances

2012: A Dialogue with water, Live Action 7, Gothenburg, Sweden. 2011: Mass, Guangzhou Live 11, China; Golden Quadrilateral, MAXXI Museum, Rome; Morose, Infr'Action Sète, France. 2010: Fake performance scene of tragic end in the old church, Museum-Night, Oude Kerk, Amsterdam; In Determination. The National Review on Live Art, Glasgow. 2009: In Determination, Art Dubai; Two headed with Fish Posture, "rebelle: Art and Feminism 1969-2009," MMKA. Museum voor Moderne Kunst Arnhem, the Netherlands. 2008: Mapping the City, Weaving the Spine, SKOR: Stichting Kunst en Openbare Ruimte, Rijksmuseum Twenthe, Enschede, the Netherlands. 2007: Reverse, *Rewind, Replay: 7 acts from the past, The National* Review on Live Art, Glasgow. 2006: Between the Familiar/ Unfamiliar, the Home & Heart, Beats a Golden Kiss, Saturday Live Mumbai, Tate Modern, London. 2005: With or without emotional hang ups, Live Web, Duke University NC, USA. 2004: Under Pressure, MARTa, Herford, Germany; u o a e m, NMAC Foundation, Montemedio, Spain. 2003: Practising Nostalgia and Old Fashioned, Centro de Experimentação e Informação de Arte, Belo Horizonte, Brazil. 2002: New Territories, International Festival of Live Art, Glasgow. 2001: *Camouflage*, Nehru Centre, London. 2000: Bruststuke Looser, Salzburg International Summer Academy of Fine Arts, Austria. 1999: Protected Reflection, Lakeeren, Mumbai. 1998: Nothing is Permanent, Jehangir, Mumbai

Selected group shows:

2013: "Souvenirs," Perrotin, Paris. 2012: "Re-Picturing The Feminine: New and Hybrid Realities

in the Artworld, A survey of Indian and Australian Contemporary Female Artists," Gallery OED, Cochin, India; "Contemporary Renaissance," Casa Masaccio, San Giovanni Valdarno, Italy; "Skin and Spirit," Siemens Sanat, Istanbul. 2011: "ComPeung- Revisited," Chiang Mai City Arts and Cultural Centre, Thailand; Prague Biennale; "Frictive Familiarities," Art Kino, Stockholm. 2009: "rebelle: Art and Feminism 1969-2009," Museum voor Moderne Kunst Arnhem, Netherlands; "De Stomme Van Portici," hoet bekaert, Ghent, Belgium. 2008: Sinop Biennale, Turkey. 2007: "Who is your friends/the soap operas," Soap Gallery, Kitakyushu, Japan. 2006: "Rites, Rights, Rewrites," Mason Gross Galleries at Rutgers University, New Jersey. 2005: "Love & Death," Van Gogh Museum, Amsterdam. 2004: "Another Passage to India," Théâtre Saint-Gervais, Musée d'Ethnographie, Geneva. 2003: "De Inrichting," Willibrord, Heiloo, Holland. 2002: "No I.D., Sakshi," Mumbai. 2001: "Camouflage," Nehru Centre, London. 2000: May for India & You Festival, Tulln, Austria. 1999: "Smell the Art," National Gallery of Modern Art, Mumbai. 1998: Next Wave Festival, Melbourne. 1997: "50 years of Art in Mumbai, 1947-1997," National Gallery of Modern Art, Mumbai. 1996: "100 years of Cinema," Lakeeren, Mumbai

Veeranganakumari Solanki

Born in 1985 in New Delhi. She lives and works in Mumbai, India.

I envision the term "curating" as the 'Third Eye' of an exhibition or project, which provides fresh and unfamiliar insights and interpretations to the audience. The artist, the audience and the curator are ideally the three most important levels of interaction that determine the accomplishment of an exhibition. As a curator, when working towards an exhibition, my primary concern that often determines a concept is the space and its allied contexts – be it historic or contemporary. Spaces could be of two types – the first would be the white cube, at a gallery, institution or museum, which allows me freedom to work around and execute a pre-conceived concept within a planned

composition. The second type of space – which for me is more exciting – is the one that has a history attached to it and where things happen more organically. This second kind could refer to public spaces, alternative spaces, or historical buildings that reflect and connect with the past, in terms of architecture and location. While the latter could pose challenges to curators and artists, it often stimulates new concepts and ideas that are carried forward into broader perspectives. For instance, "The Contemporary Sultanate" took place in a heritage structure, which harked back to the Mughal period in India, and the artists responded to a contemporary concept that drew from this history. This atmosphere was also present in "The Contemporary Renaissance," at Casa Masaccio, where the history of the space and the legacy of the Renaissance played a crucial role in the development of the artists' contributions.

Having established the artists and the space, the next crucial point to take into account is the nature of display and installation, which would largely depend on curatorial interventions that are connected to the artists' concepts. From a curatorial perspective, I consider it essential to let an artist's voice be heard, by ensuring that a work stands independently within the larger context. However, to prevent any disconnection, there must be a common vein that links the works by different artists in order to create a successful exhibition in its entirety.

It is essential for the audience to be consciously involved in an exhibition, and ideally the viewer should be able to walk away from it and remember not only each artwork, but also its placement within the curatorial concept and display. This could be further catalysed through maps, memory sheets, or interactive displays. A vital aspect of a curated exhibition is the creation of documentation.

With curating being an intangible form, it is the created archives that will convey future researches and studies in this field. This is the task of the curator, the challenge of being the 'Third Eye', without disturbing, but at the same time mediating and informing.

Education

BA, English Literature, St. Xavier's College, Mumbai Post-graduate diploma, Indian Aesthetics, Mumbai University Post-graduate diploma, Art Criticism and Theory, Jnanapravaha, Mumbai Master, History, SNDT, Mumbai Gwangju Biennale International Curator Course, South Korea

Selected curated shows:

2013: "Spell of Spill: Utopia of Ecology," Palette, New Delhi. 2012: "Circumferences Reforming: Peel Till They Bloom," Buena Vista, Miami Design District; "Contemporary Renaissance," Casa Masaccio, San Giovanni Valdarno, Italy; "Il siero della verità," MK Search Art, San Giovanni Valdarno, Italy; "The Contemporary Sultanate," Kutub Haveli Serai, Exhibit 320, New Delhi. 2011: "Myth<->Reality: Constructing Cult-u're," The Guild, Mumbai, India. 2010: "Emerging Asian Artists," at Art Gwangju, South Korea

MK Search Art

Based in San Giovanni Valdarno (Italy) and New Delhi (India), MK Search Art was founded by Roney Simon and Luciano Donatini in 2010.

Its goal is to promote debates and a deeper understanding of contemporary Indian art not only within India and in relationship to Italy but also in close dialogue with the international community.

With two identities – one commercial and one nonfor-profit – MK Search Art has been organizing exhibitions, performances, conferences, books and presentations at art fairs.

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