

PUNCTUM II

A CRITICAL LOOK AT LANDSCAPE IN SOUTH ASIAN PHOTOGRAPHY

Gauri Gill, Sonia Khurana, Yamini Nayar, Prajakta Potnis, Sreshta
Premnath & Sharmila Samant

CURATORIAL NOTE:

Arshiya Lokhandwala

The exhibition *Punctum 2: A Critical Look at Landscape in South Asian Photography* examines essential moments that capture the South Asian environment. These fragments of frozen time caught on the camera, present “puncturing” acts of momentary pleasure (jouissance) or disturbances that might have not been previously viewed that suddenly become visible. Roland Barthes defines this moment in his book *Camera Lucida* as the “punctum:” a kind of piercing that shoots out like an arrow grapping the viewers attention. *Punctum 2* highlights these moments by engaging the South Asian landscape through the work of Gauri Gill (Delhi), Yamini Nayar (New York, USA), Prajakta Potnis (Mumbai), Sreshta Premnath (New York, USA), Sharmila Samant (Mumbai) and Sonia Khurana (Delhi).

Sreshta Rit Premnath

Notes by the artist :

“A cage went in search of a bird.”

-The Zürau Aphorisms of Franz Kafka

In this series of photographic interventions images culled from the US Navy’s website, linked to the operations being carried out against pirates in Somalia, are cropped, cut, reassembled and reframed under the headings “Surrender” and “Surround.” The lexicon of the sublime landscape is collided with that of military operations. While the sublime landscape is said to surround the viewer thus enticing his soul to surrender, strategic operations are carried out by the navy in order to surround the pirates and force them to surrender.

The ocean is explored as territory that lies outside the realm of governmentality – a site of awe and threat. Day and night enormous quantities of cargo – the embodied process of the distribution of commodities – ply these waters silently, transparently. It is only at the moment of their disappearance that they suddenly become present to us all. Suddenly, when an oil tanker goes missing, its enormous body comes into focus. It is then that the cage goes in search of the bird. Law must be forced upon the lawless in order to make the absent present. In order to, once again, make the present disappear.



A Cage Went In Search Of A Bird

Digital Composite Print

Edition 4/ 5, 2009

27 x 44 inches



No Title
Digital Composite Print
Edition 4/ 5, 2009
20 x 41 inches



Surrender
Digital Composite Print
Edition 4/ 5, 2009
27 x 44 inches each (Triptych)



Surround

Digital Composite Print

Edition 4/ 5, 2009

27 x 44 inches each (Triptych)

Gauri Gill

Notes by the artist :

Shaksi (2007/08)

My work is from Kabul and New Delhi and includes fragments and memories that speak of Afghanistan, and of the Afghani Indian refugee community in New Delhi, many of whom live in India without citizenship or even refugee status. "In India they say you are Afghani, in Afghanistan they say you are Indian". It is about place or home, and leaving. What do we take, what do we leave behind, who we were there and who we become here, and through it all what remains. What continues to live in and around us, or in the lives of our children. I am interested in the act of making such physical journeys, both by individuals and communities. (It includes photographs from Kabul and Delhi, photographs by the community, as well as texts by children).



Kabul

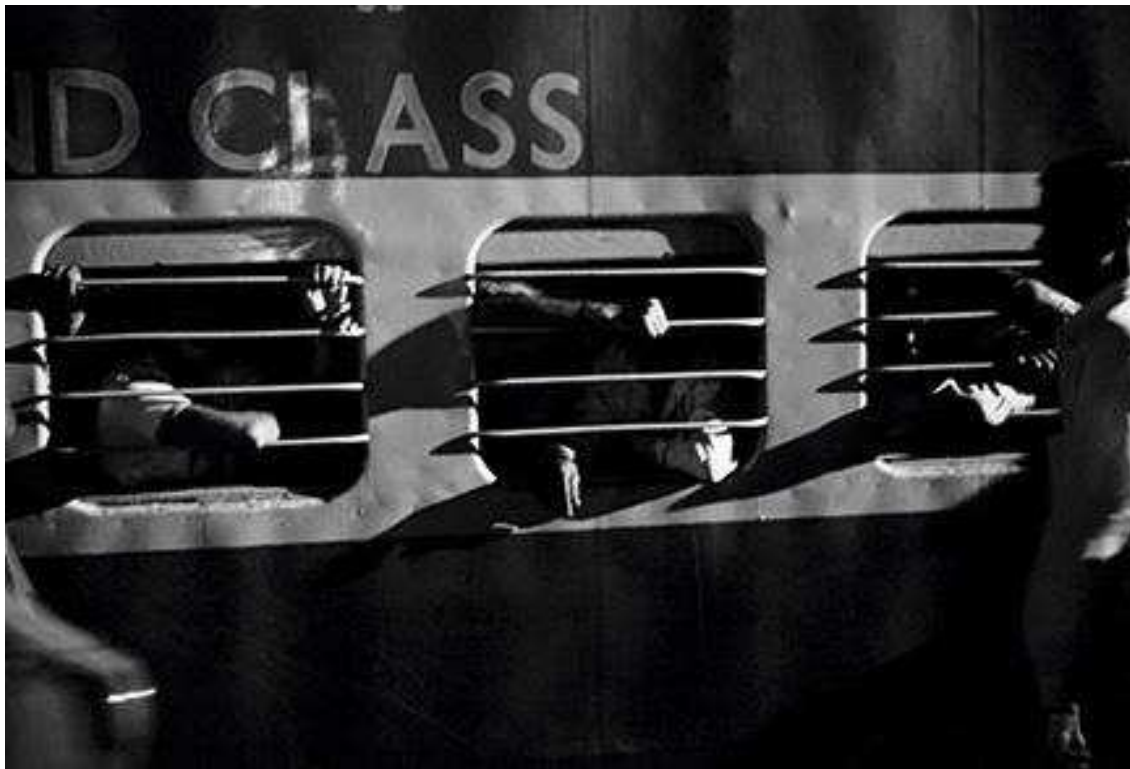
Archival Pigment Print

2007, Edition 2/7

43" x 29"

Nizamuddin at Night (ongoing since 2005)

Gauri's intimately stark renditions of the area of Nizamuddin shot during the night time gave a beautiful gray-scale representation of the winter vibe in one of oldest areas of Delhi. Placed randomly across the still wet grey walls of the rooms the photos almost enacted a watery washed out collage rendering a psycho active tapestry of solitary socio-cultural glimpses of Nizamuddin. Charged with a prolific eye for the most visually self contained images from the vicinity Gauri's entire photo 'installation' assumed the appearance of a multi windowed black box with windows into a different space and time...very connected to the immediate area and yet completely ethereal in it's entirety.



Untitled, Nizamuddin at Night

Archival Pigment Print

2007, Edition 2/7

43" x 29"

Born in 1970 in Chandigarh, India.

EDUCATION

2002 M.F.A. Photography Stanford University, California

1994 B.F.A. Photography, Parsons School of Design, New York

1992 B.F.A. Applied Art, Delhi College of Art, New Delhi

EXHIBITIONS-SOLO SHOWS

2008 - 09

'The Americans' - Bose Pacia Gallery, Kolkata

Chatterjee and Lal Gallery, Mumbai

Nature Morte Gallery, New Delhi

Thomas Welton Art Gallery, Stanford University

Chicago Cultural Center, Chicago

Bose Pacia Gallery, New York

SELECTED GROUP EXHIBITIONS

2010

'Where Three Dreams Cross' – 150 years of photography from India, Pakistan and Bangladesh, Whitechapel Gallery, London; Exhibition travels to Fotomuseum, Winterthur, Switzerland

2009

'Outside In: Indian Art Abroad', Sun Valley Center for the Arts, Idaho

'Rememory', Two-person show with Tomoko Yoneda, Lucy Mackintosh Gallery, Lausanne

'The Astonishment of Being', Curator: Deeksha Nath, Birla Academy of Art and Culture, Kolkata

'The Self and The Other - Portraiture in Contemporary Indian Photography' Curators: Luisa Ortinez and Devika Daulet Singh, La Virreina Centre de la Imatge of the Institut de Cultura (City Council of Barcelona), Palau de La Virreina. Exhibition travels to Atrium in Vitoria

'Shifting Shapes – Unstable Signs' Curators: Robert Storr and Jaret Vadehra, Yale Art Gallery, Yale University, New Haven

2008

'The Nature of the City' Curators: Alexander Keefe and Nitin Mukul, Religare Art Gallery, New Delhi

'Zeitgeist', Curator: Latika Gupta, Palette Art Gallery, New Delhi

'Click! Indian Photography Now', Curators: Sunil Gupta and Radhika Singh, Vadehra Art Gallery, New Delhi and London

2007

'City Cite Site', Curator Latika Gupta, Anant Art Gallery, New Delhi

'Photoquai', Curator: Helene Cerruti, Musee Quai Branly, Paris

'Public Places, Private Spaces' - Contemporary Photography and Video Art in India, Curators: Paul Stemberger and Gayatri Sinha, The Newark Museum, New Jersey

'Autoportraits' Photographic portfolio of 12 Indian artists, Khoj at Freize Art Fair, London

'Gill and Gupta', Curator: Radhika Singh India International Center, New Delhi

'I fear I believe I desire', Curator Gayatri Sinha, Gallery Espace, New Delhi

2005

'Women Photographers from SAARC countries', Curator: Alka Pande, Italian Cultural Center, New Delhi

2002

Award Winners Show, Fifty Crows Foundation, San Francisco

1998

'In Black and White' - What has Independence meant for Women, (Point of View/Ford Foundation) Admit One Gallery, New York

1995

Alliance Francaise prizewinners exhibition, exhibition traveled all over India

RESIDENCIES

Oct – Dec 2005: Photography Residency at Khoj, New Delhi

PHOTOGRAPHY RELATED

Since Jan 2007: Co-editor of 'Camerawork Delhi' a free newsletter about independent photography from New Delhi and elsewhere

2005: Curator of 'Nobody's Children' - a photography exhibit on Delhi's street children by Tarun Chhabra, India Habitat Center, New Delhi

BOOKS

India Now, published by Textuelle and Thames and Hudson 2007

Sarai Reader 2007

1000 Women for the Peace Prize, published by Scalo 2005

Sharmila Samant

Notes by the artist :

Fear:

I'm scared maybe the vehicle that has stopped next to me is going to blow up. I don't know, maybe there is a guy, he wants to kill himself. To take one's child to the cinema, to go shopping with ones friends to a market. . .if one's spouse is late and has taken the train/subway. . . The fight against terrorism to some extent depends on luck. If by chance one of us sees something suspicious and reports it, but, if no one does, a blast happens. But then again every abandoned suitcase or attaché case is obviously not a bomb waiting to go off.

Anxiety:

The paranoia makes us headless. It makes us consider identity cards and massive surveillance, it makes us treat all Muslims, Asians, the Other as suspects, and it makes us vote for right wing politicians, want changes in foreign policy, and give massive powers to the state, suspend human rights, further clamp down our airports with mindless security procedures. It makes us condone torture of innocent people because there's a chance they might be guilty. Toys, radios, liquids, shoes, laptops, tiffin-boxes, pressure-cookers, mobile phones, planes, knapsacks- any personal or household object and even fellow humans could be a bomb in disguise. Its components can be easily bought in any household store without provoking suspicion. So. . .does our routine have to include waiting because the road/ airport life, comes to a stand-still everytime an abandoned object is found?



7/II

Hahnemuehle Photo Rag archival paper

2006

41 x 61 cm each

Sonia Khurana

Notes by the artist :

Somnambulist's Song:

A series of performance-based images as photo, video, lightboxes, billboards. Often accompanied by text [poem], within an installation, or as solo images.

Size variable.

“.. A woman is lying on the ground in a public square. The attitude of her body is desolate and yet peaceful; both visually separated from the frenetic chaos of everyday life, and also profoundly grounded in the subtle rhythm of the quotidian. The hard rectilinear grid of the pavement provides a sharp contrast to the soft curves of her body and her fluid posture. She occupies and transforms social space in this performative act of lying down and her embodied stance offers a quiet yet powerful poetics that confounds the binary boundary between public and private.

The woman lying down is Sonia Khurana, and this public performative intervention has taken place in a number of settings, in various cities across the world. She offers [this gesture] as a stance of removal and rejection.

Her “small acts,” such as lying down in public, gently but pointedly violate norms of social behavior, and her presentation of the work as looping video and series of light box photographs at different degrees of remove offers a circularity and seriality that is antithetical to the . . .contained linear spatial order that makes up—both metaphorically and physically—so much of the social and functional landscape of the modern city, and regimes of governmentality and discipline that order our daily lives and behaviors.

—Maya Kóvskaya

[Independant write and curator] excerpts from her review : Living Off the Grid—Visual Dialectics of Autonomy and Dependence for the exhibition: “living off the grid” Nov/Dec 2010.

Artist's notes on Somnambulist's song III

“...Over a period of time, as I formulated and reformulated the image of this body lying down, I began to form a notion of what I call a surrogate self; a presence that is marked by absence.

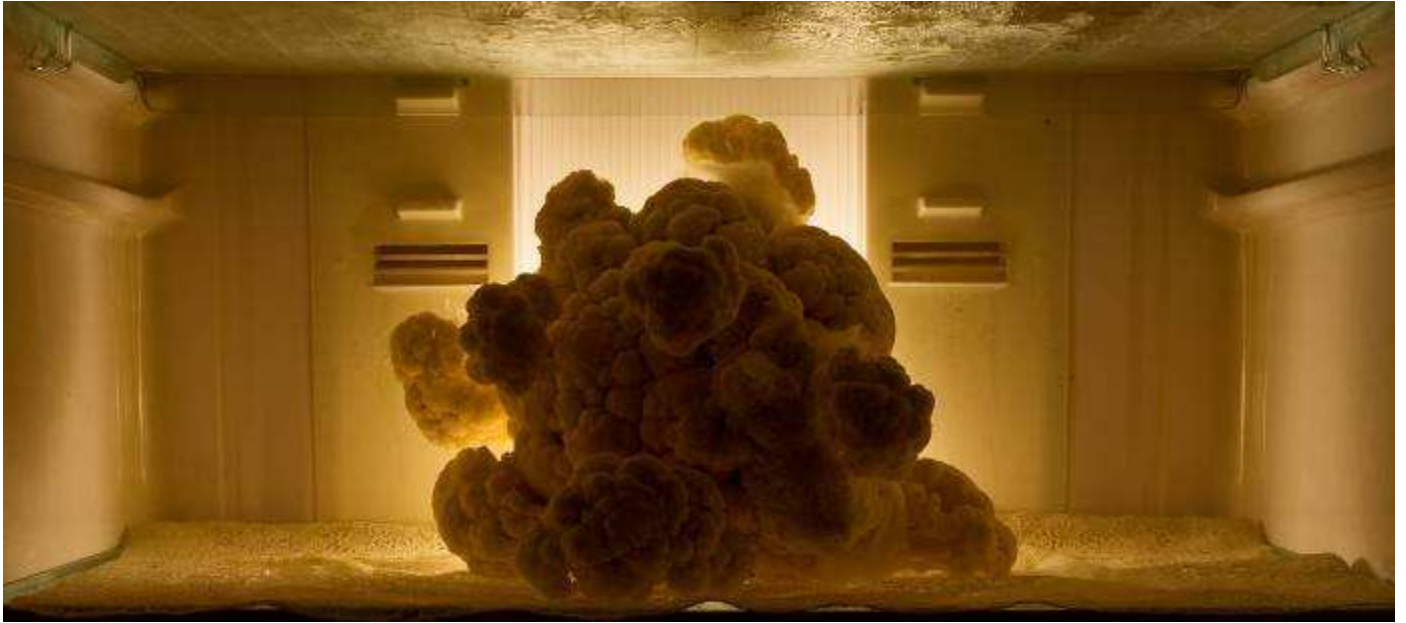
This notion of the surrogate self is articulated through a series of placements: of cut-outs of oneself in different land-scape, thus playing with the idea of virtuality, the poetics of space and the polemics of belonging.

I suppose the ephemeral sculpture and temporary drawing thus inscribed within landscape, lending the landscape a certain corporeality, could be thought of as a means to assimilate these spaces and cities that one has never really belonged to. . . .”



Somnambulist's Song III
Lightbox, Translite Print
2009,
19" x 25"

Prajakta Potnis



Still Life

Digital Print on Archival Paper

Edition 3/5, 2010

30 x 60 inches



Still Life

Digital Print on Archival Paper

Edition 4/5, 2010

34.3 x 54 inches

Yamini Nayar

Notes by the artist

My photographs of imagined spaces are constructed on tabletops using found materials and imagery. They are documented with a large-format camera and are disassembled and discarded after the picture is taken. Transition and memory are central themes in my practice. Architectural spaces are proposed as repositories for hyphens, erasures and ruptures. The image emerges over time, through the building, dismantling and reconstructing of a structure and contents in a given scene. Ultimately, the final photograph serves as an entry point into a world, in transition and assembled for the lens, and held together for the document.



Make It Happen
Digital Print on Archival Paper
Edition 2/5, 2009
30 x 40 inches



Strange Event
Digital Print on Archival Paper
Edition 3/5, 2009
30 x 40 inches