

Walking into a mirage

An ongoing art show is as much an archive of discarded objects as it is a statement on the importance of waste

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Seven artists conjure surreal artworks out of discarded elements at *Waste Land*, an ongoing group exhibition at Tarq. Curated by Birgid Uccia, *Waste Land* is part of the biennial public diplomacy campaign, “70 years of Swiss-Indian Friendship: Connecting Minds - Inspiring the Future” by the Consulate General of Switzerland in Mumbai.

Entering the gallery space, mundane objects are defamiliarised; instantly generating a deliberate havoc in our mind. The gallery almost resembles a mirage – playing with our understanding of the identities of the said objects. A few artworks speak more eloquently than the rest. Delhi-based artist Asim Waqif extrapolates a reality that has ceased to exist by reconstructing demolished ruins. In one work, he juxtaposes a car door salvaged from an accidental vehicle with an abstracted map of an area destroyed by aerial bombardment. The bright colours stand in stark contrast with their implications, as we stand witness to the profound agony of strangers. Waqif reminds us that certain obliterated stories can only be accessed through painful remnants.

Lost and found

Tanya Goel's use of found debris of demolished buildings as a surface allows us to ponder over a sense of loss and nostalgia – collateral damage of development. Aditi Joshi alludes to the fallacy of our consumerist lives through a large installation of fused plastic bags, morphing trash into momentary treasure. Boshudhara Mukherjee weaves canvas, cutting through it as she binds these scraps into a material that is repurposed, defying its previous nature; while Kaushik Saha uses the discarded tools of a labourer, like copper wire, nails and bicycle tyres to create a compelling vision of dark beauty.

The fragility of materials as a disturbing metaphor of life is highlighted in the delicate works of Prashant Pandey. Both Pandey's works draw you in deceptively with a translucent and tender facade as they lead us to unsettling truths. In ‘Universe’, one encounters a microcosm of a galaxy. A yellow sphere, seemingly embroidered on air, levitates unaffected by gravity. On closer look, one sees that it is formed by floral-shaped textures which are discarded cigarette butts have been stitched together, only to be sliced by a shadow. In ‘Missed’ the viewer enters a skeletal structure of burnt and crushed shards of paper, an



New eyes: The gallery resembles a mirage ■ SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

installation that exudes melancholic hues owing to the texture of light.

One can imagine the infinite memories and stories concealed in past objects by animating them. It's much like how Kausik Mukhopadhyay has created intricate kinetic sculptures out of old and redundant material. These magical contraptions made from bygone objects seem to resurface from oblivion. You encounter the work as a trigger - a medium of reflection; but if you spend enough time with it, you can experience a moment of release. Each object in these sculptures is categorised into irrelevance, and yet they retain a connect with time for the artist. Mukhopadhyay excavates the trajectory of objects to expose this cycle of existence. He animates a life into discarded remains, constructing an algorithm for memories. We can now trace the many tangled threads that

weave the identity of objects. For instance, in Mukhopadhyay's work ‘Mother's House’, we glimpse the remains of a relationship. The viewer experiences belonging as activated by solid remnants – like the dials of antique broken watches tied together. His sculptural experiments hold the key to many encrypted stories in our minds.

Testament of our times

In her curatorial note Uccia says, “waste is addressed as a phenomenon that holds collective memory and personal stories. It also testifies history, in that it connects the obsolete object to its past...” One wonders then, is there an archive hidden in every attic? If materials had memory, what stories would they tell?

Uccia states that its the act of defining an object – the instant when an object turns into waste, that has most impact. It's as if we recognise that this is the moment that our relationship with materials has been permanently altered. We can now feel the pulse of past remnants, slowly etching their way into the present.

Waste Land is ongoing at Tarq, Colaba until August 4

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BIRGID UCCIA
Curator