

**Nikhil Purohit**

**Review**

**Wasteland**

**@ TARQ**

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## **WASTE LAND: Expulsion of today into yesterday and tomorrow**

Wasteland = Landfill?

Wasteland = Barren Land?

Waste = Material Discard?

Waste = Social Rejection?

Waste = Cultural Disposition?

Waste = Economic Futility?

The connotations of the term 'waste' are many but what dogs us today is the ignorant consumerism that creates displeasure through waste as a byproduct of consumption to each one of us. The world appears to be separated by the era before polythene products and after it. All media has been issuing cautionary messages against the hazards caused due to improper disposal of waste. Scientists are trying to bring value to the worthless turned matter and the creative minds are finding means to make aesthetic statements using materials disposed of as waste giving them alternate value, and some of us are busy choking our drains. Waste appears like the unleashed Godzilla treading the urban lands destroying public properties and all the armies are deployed to fight it out. At times, all this hullabaloo is comic and even hysterical.

We're dealing with a combination of useful ibid matter now turned useless or perhaps no 'place to keep' unwanted in homes and offices, and industries, societies, communities, and now to be decorated at the landfills with heaping cultural mounds to be excavated by future archaeologists to find SHITE! One can poetically call it redundant human belonging randomly layering the land. Perhaps the waste we have produced, if placed together, could become the only monument of the redundant human belongings to be visible from the moon. Phew! Or, maybe we could choose to become proud of a utopian dream of reducing waste to a manageable worthy element. Reusing or upcycle of waste though has been a significant part of Indian lifestyle it is diminishing as a result of increased erratic consumption patterns resulting into extra, infrequently used household things that end up in the waste bins unsegregated. However, we also see an insignificant group of people the rag-pickers bringing our plastic, electronic, metal waste into the recycling economy. In fact, the *raddiwala* or the *bhangarwalas* run a widespread network, an industry in itself, though informal but viable. With an increasing awareness about challenges posed by heaping solid waste, start-ups like Sahas Zero Waste are banking upon the solid waste management in India to create a fortune making an industry. With the recent ban on a range of plastic products, the diversity of the material and its form as waste have become more evident. It has also highlighted other aspects of the general solid waste.

Several artists too have been engaging with a variety of solid waste viz. PET bottles, bottles, metal junk of old machines, vehicles, tyres, making sculptural forms. Arunkumar HG, Vivan Sundaram, Prajakta Palav and artists from the exhibition Waste Land are known to upcycle/use/employ redundant, thrown away objects as raw material for making artworks. The artists of the exhibition Waste Land including Aaditi Joshi, Asim Waqif, Boshudhara Mukherjee, Kausik Mukhopadhyay, Kaushik Saha, Prashant

Pandey, and Tanya Goel perform a transformative act with their pet waste material into objects of aesthetic use. Hosted by the TARQ art gallery in the art district of Mumbai and curated by Birgid Uccia, the exhibition is part of the biennial public diplomacy campaign “70 Years of Swiss-Indian Friendship: Connecting Minds - Inspiring the Future” of the Consulate General of Switzerland in Mumbai. Artists in this show are found to be using tyres, metal scrap, construction rubble, soiled plastic bags, cigarette buds, old newspapers, canvas pieces as their raw material for creative production.



Untitled, Aditi Joshi 2018

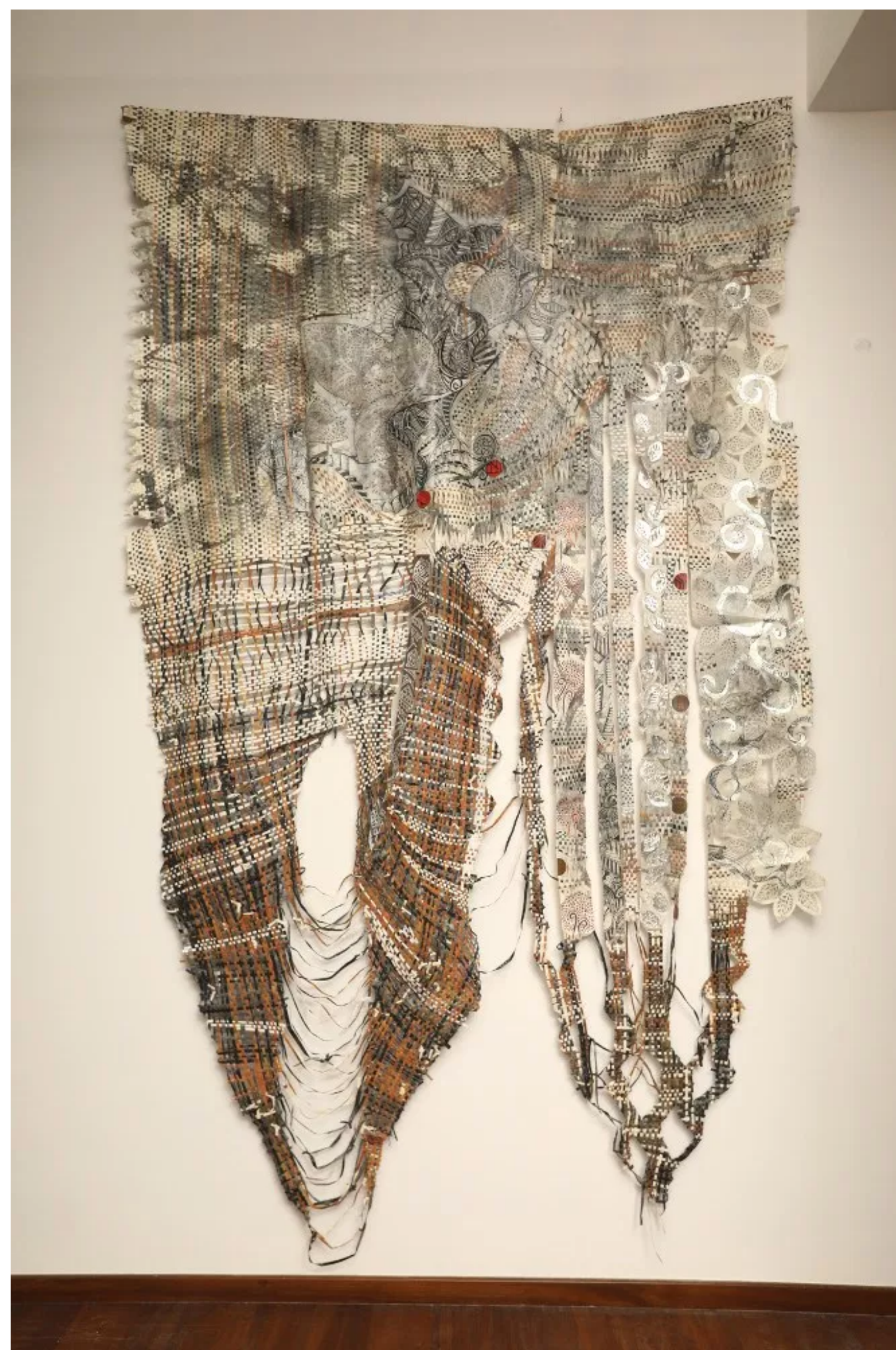
Waste is a cultural problem fuelled in the past (recent and distant) by industrial development motivated by the progress. The plastics have taken a distinct place in the urban landscape with small and big piles of domestic waste noticed in our surroundings held together by the bonds of meandering polythene bags. Aaditi Joshi uses the plastic bags to create forms resonating with the piles she witnessed while walking the suburban roads of Mumbai. She transforms the material into a sculptural form by heat treatment to the bags by using a blow torch in a way exposing it to temperature enough to shape them as required, forming a cloud of manually coloured bags stapled together around an armature base. The piece installed at the exhibition looks like a hanging multicoloured breathing nest or perhaps an incubator of demonic siblings bound together waiting to be released on the touch of a potent electric touch.



Asim Waqif, Collapse analysis of concrete slabs due to aerial bombardment (Case Study Raqqa) (1)

Geographies are in continuously moulded by human aggression towards nature and against the humans themselves through the acts of war. The hunger for political expansion and stronghold is drastically shattering the cultural economics, destabilising the fundamentals of an organic evolution of regions and communities. Asim Waqif's work *Najafgarh Road Industrial Area* an archival print collage reflects a region of New Delhi that makes one feel a spider web woven around the prey, referring to chaos, conflict, disgust of development prone land mass.

His second work in the show is a damaged taxi door sourced of an accident victim car placed upon with a shiny road signage-sheet (micro-prismatic sheet) is folded like a tangram map. It hints upon the collapsed buildings under the aerial bombardment in the Syrian city of Raqqa. It is required of the viewer to recall the map of the region screened on news channels for a correlation. The Syrian landscape is symbolised to be mutilated like the car door dismantling the socio-cultural economics dismembering the civil landscape, turning it into a wasteland. A land of debris worthless and treated as a nuisance by an unsustainable polity. Asim's oeuvre transits from the critique of the urban consumerism to regional remodelling-under the impact of global politics.



U Trun by Boshudhara Mukherjee

The works of Boshudhara Mukherjee make the viewer curious about the material used to create her collage-like woven fabrics that are made up of found and collected/rejected fabrics of some sorts. Her canvases though painted are unconventionally used for creating an interwoven mat like fabric mixed with strips of sari, tape and plastics.



Father's House by Kausik Mukhopadhyay

Kausik Mukhopadhyay's assemblages viz. *Cloud House*, *Father's House* and *Mother's House* induce frenzy irritation that is a reconfiguration of a lot of material sourced from discarded or redundant household gadgets, tools etc. They are surreal! The Cloud house being an electronic assemblage has a pail being moved up and down hanging to a string operated by a motor. The pail is seen to descend and ascend back periodically from a metal cloud-lined with a bunch of stars. The Father's house and Mother's houses are surprising assemblies of unexpected long forgotten household objects and some created pieces that add to the surprise of the viewer. However, it does not add any serious meaning but just curious viewing of the maze-like assembly.



Kaushik Saha, Order of The Age, 2016, copper wire, nails, used bicycle tubes, oil and enamel paint on ply, 183 x 274 cm 72 x 108 in (9 panels)

The nine panelled work of Kaushik Saha is a peculiar symbol of a socialist apprehension. The material he uses belong to the working class. The bicycle tyre tubes, nails, copper wires are used to form the rugged imaginary terrain like the surface of the wall mounted work with subtle narrations on each panel. He is seen to comment on the struggles of the working class under the dismaying conditions. The use of the redundant material is the connect to the idea of waste where the working class is treated with the least dignity as the capitalist waste. The flattened valves of the tyre-tubes reflect the fissures of the downtrodden life.



Universe by Prashant Pandey

Prashant Pandey's pretty flower circle is a pleasure to the eyes displayed casually and hung with the light casting a shadow of the weave forming an image of the astronomical *Universe*. The use of the material is of interest as the flowers are made of discarded cigarette stubs joined together to form a circular mat. His second work, turtle-shaped suspended paper joinery is titled as *Missed* indicating the endangering acts of human industry to marine life. It indeed reflects the fragility caused to the resilient nature by human acts of the irresponsible and uncompassionate industry.



Tanya Goel, \_Fragment of cement rail, A-block, Defence Colony, New Delhi', 2018, silver foil on found debris, 7 x 11 inches

The works of Tanya Goel are resonant with the idea of disruption in Asim Waqif's work where she has used rubble as a medium for her sculptural and selectively painted objects. The rubble, a major chunk of non-reusable material is inscribed, painted, carved with varied geometric patterns. The concrete and brick pieces may not be reusable but certainly incite the memories that can be associated with habitation, living, and home. Tanya

sources the fragments from debris which she further makes geometric designs by various methods viz. engraving the surface, using the paint layer to create her own pigment to draw the lines.

May the exhibition not bring any change in the immediate perception of our society but bears a potential to present lateral views through aesthetic engagement with found, created, assembled, juxtaposed material of artistic interest. The hysteria about waste continues with our struggles to educate ourselves subject to the unstable definition of what is waste. We may hope to be benefited by the technological feats of the Swiss in solid waste management in a phenomenal vogue and the attempt to channelize these efforts through creative dissemination, besides corporate acts of legitimate economic exchanges and responsible consumerism.



Image Courtesy: TARQ Mumbai

**Nikhil Purohit** is an artist interested in art education, writing, arts management, research and documentation.

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