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Folly Measures celebrates architecture as an indicator of urban experiences

Artist Vishwa Shroff presents a solo exhibition at gallery Tarq with works reacting to the built environment, focusing on the idea of transience and impermanence.

by [Rahul Kumar](#) | Jan 08, 2020

When one encounters the architecture inspired works of Vishwa Shroff, there is an immediate sense of wonderment. They sit at the intersection of drawing and sculpture; at first, they seem ornate documentary renditions, but on closer inspection one can easily experience the narrative layer. "My fundamental interest is in drawing methodologies. The architecture comes from the urban environments I live in and have a longevity that permits them to become temporal maps of both, transitory occupations and architectural fashions," says Shroff.

STIR speaks to her on the eve of her solo show titled *Folly Measures* at Gallery Tarq, Mumbai.



Party Wall Bombay Series, 5
Image Credit: Courtesy of gallery Tarq

Rahul Kumar (RK): Your works are most often reactions to architectural structures. Why do you feel the 2-dimensional drawing justifies an ideal format for your expression? Have

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the surface. The semiotic ambiguity is furthered by play that is possible through distortion. Paper offers its own potential with folding, bending, tearing, and cutting. Within my work I do explore such suggestive three dimensionalities by combining perspective, axonometric, plan, elevation, and probably most of all, by hinting at what is not drawn.

RK: How do you manipulate the imagery to make your point through your art? You make works with meticulous detail, straight lines and clean angles. Is the inspiration sourced from actual buildings, or rather, architectural drawings as a format?

VS: The very potential to document a visual experience through a drawing is interesting to me. The way in which we experience our lived environment or spatiality is intriguing. We don't look straight...even when we stand still, our eyes wander. I have been looking at the methods employed by architects, furniture makers, toy makers, manga artists and artists (or drawers as I like to call them) to explore the ways in which such eye wandering and movement can be represented. The decisions of manipulation or distortion are informed by both, the historical methods and by the way in which I am gallivanting through the city or the building.



Bombay Stairwell Series 3
Image Credit: Courtesy of gallery Tarq

RK: What do you desire to communicate through your works?

VS: I am fascinated by the non-linearity of our thought process, be it about time or history or architecture and how these are coloured by literature, films, cultural semiotics and even by what our mothers have told us. My work is an attempt to prompt discussions on this curious jumble that we all carry with us. I think of architecture as a repository of indicators or cues that are most common to the urban experience. They are an in-between: seemingly permanent and yet momentary, both in their own existence and in our encounters with them.

RK: Please share the genesis of your love for architecture and buildings. Why did you create the Party Wall series using inspirations from three different cities?

VS: I am not sure when I fell in love or if I did, but I live in (and have always) in a very built environment, surrounded by architecture and in recent years architects! But jokes apart, I do think that my own urban existence is the default that I rely on. It is my stimulant, so to speak, that sparks off many thoughts on many things, it allows me make up stories in my head, and wonder who did what where when and why? The *Party Wall* series is my question... who did what where when and why? When I first started to notice them and was told that they are officially called 'Party Walls', it was an explosion or party in my head! Certain rudimentary characteristic of material appearance become common within the city, and it is these that I explore in the *Party Wall* works. They are akin to texts that appear and disappear as material artefacts within the city and one cannot help but wonder about all that had transpired within these now empty spaces that have left a temporary residue.

The narrative that is held in the void sits in-between historical and speculative. So far, I have done four series: from London, Tokyo, Bombay (where I have been living these last 10 years) and one that is multiple cities that I had travelled to that year. In that since, the geographical specificity is unimportant to me and I intend to continue drawing these walls as I find them over the next few years. Let's see how far I can go.

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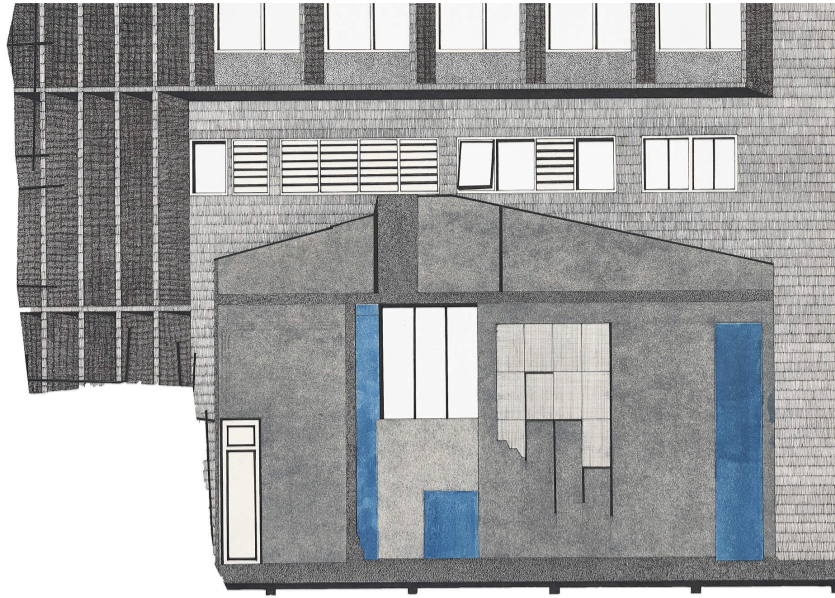
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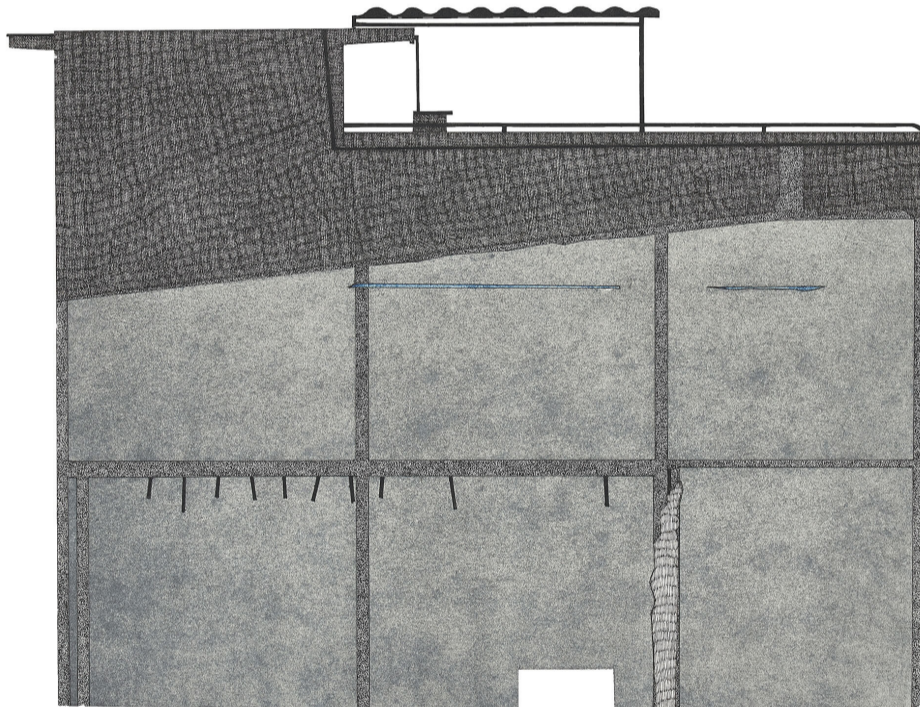


Party Wall Bombay Series, 3
Image Credit: Courtesy of gallery Tarq

RK: Your drawings have a contemporary feel to the built structures. Have you worked with old monuments, especially since your concerns are around history and time?

VS: I choose the buildings to document based on where I am walking most. And as I have said before, this tends to be within cities. Moreover, I am interested in observational discoveries that one makes, and the thoughts provoked by these rather than in historical structures. The fact that time markers are abundant on older buildings is just the way it is... somethings need to have existed long enough for it to develop these markings. I also find myself increasingly interested in the domestic experience, how we live, how we navigate homes and neighbourhoods and what we find there.

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Party Wall Bombay Series, 1
Image Credit: Courtesy of gallery Tarq

RK: Are you celebrating the 'absence in the presence'? Please elaborate how you explore the idea of transience and impermanence?

VS: You could say my works are about 'presence in absence' rather than 'absence in presence', but either way I do not think of my work as a celebration. I think of them as experiments in drawing spatial and ontological experience and narrative. Both of these are somehow emphasised and exaggerated by the transient impermanent nature of materials with the city and the domestic scenarios.

RK: 'Folly' literally means a structure, though ornate, with no real purpose. What is the thought behind your exhibit titled *Folly Measures* and all that is being shown as part of it?

VS: This question is more for the curator, Veerangana Solanki. She is the author of this title. Folly to me is the idiosyncrasies of drawing in this way, with time, history, documentation and narrative on my mind. I do not think that either Veerangana or I are looking at 'folly' as a structure. Rather we have spoken about the playful foolishness that comes from drawings as distorted histories, as conjectural futures and as very lived experiences of the present, which is clouded by both.

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Artist Vishwa Shroff
Image Credit: Courtesy of gallery Tarq

Folly Measures is on display from January 09, 2020-February 28, 2020 at Tarq gallery, Mumbai, India.

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About Author



Rahul Kumar

Having switched from corporate consulting after almost twenty years, Rahul now practices as a ceramic artist. Besides exhibiting in shows, he also teaches and curates programmes. His passion for arts has led him to write regularly for various leading journals, and with STIR, his roles extends to that of putting together the arts section.

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