

Post-Visual World

25th Feb,2008-15th March,2008

Pablo Bartholomew, Atul Bhalla, Hemali Bhuta, Chirodeep Chaudhuri, Shahid Datawala, Munir Kabani, Sanjeev Khandekar and Vaishali Narkar, Riyas Komu, Sunil Padwal, Hema Upadhyay and Avinash Veeraraghavan

Every expression of art becomes valuable when it goes beyond the implicit meaning, unusual and usual images that make you think or feel, images that come out of artist's personal or unique expression: and despite the uniqueness can connect to many lives. Images which are of historic importance, capturing legends, images that depict everyday common objects-re-arranged or intervened with, images which suddenly become meaningful when they are entitled.

All this and more can be created using different tools of Art. Photography is one powerful tool, which can create all this and more. But the final value which is given to it may have several factors..

Photography was used for documentation, capturing events, celebrating occasions, preserving lifestyles, fashion, social, economic, cultural and architectural scenarios. This was when the camera was just invented, slowly as people became familiar with its handling, they transgressed boundaries and experimented. Today it's been used as a medium for artistic expression. There is a constant intersection of art with technology in every era. Fine art photographers have given birth to a creative medium of art and expression, which is a contribution of our time. Photography for long remained isolated from mainstream art in India but it's only recent that we have woken up to its intrinsic and creative worth, unlike internationally where this art form is highly valued and preferred. Not many people are aware that a fine art prints can last anywhere between 50 to 100 years and have limited editions thus making it valuable. The challenge is for the mind to incorporate digital processes into creative visualization and that's what makes these fine art photographers cross over into the realm of art. Today art is not about techniques but about language. " Post Visual World" features eleven fine art photographers who have unleashed momentary vignettes of life from the space of shutterbugs to the canvas.

Priyasri Patodia

Visuals of a Post-Visual World

TRIPTYCH

PANEL 1 - This panel will appraise the aesthetic of the urban consumerist landscape that is cold, hysterical and hard-nosed in equal parts. This would enable us to appraise our own fascination with a consumer culture that is homogenously seamless.

PANEL 2 - Self-portrait

PANEL 3 - Portrait of city dwellers

With this triptych one hopes to establish linkages, that will hopefully be startling in their visuality, and explore consumerist landscapes as possible road maps to our future.

In an age where the death of virtually every art practice has been announced it would be scandalous to suggest the death of the visual. Post-visual does not imply that the visual or the image is dead. It merely postulates that fatigue is taking over.

The connect between the visual stimuli and its receiver has eroded and each image is received, if at all, as a dormant creature. Controlled environments, such as the one offered by a gallery could be a possible exception to the rule.

The post-visual conundrum is particularly ironic since we are all habitués of a *communications landscape*, where glib visualities collide with the hope that new desires are born.

The suggestion of a post-visuality may seem paranoid to some, but paranoia is one of the great gifts of the 21st century. We need to extricate paranoia from its precarious position, as something feared and employ it to our advantage, as something that deserves to be exploited.

In order for us to exploit this bounty of **PARANOIA** we must implicate without delay the slick urban culture. Consumerism is often accused of being the lynchpin of the post-visual situation, in that the onrush of consumerism has been accompanied by a surfeit of visual stimuli, which are held responsible for the gradual stultification of our sense perception and our nous.

In *Crash*, J G Ballard plumbed the *nonsexual roots of sexuality*. With *Visuals of a Post-Visual World* one intends to engage with the imperfect, not impoverished – as it is often misunderstood – aesthetic of cultures of consumerism and new urban spaces.

We are enamoured of the flawed; consumerism is our fallen hero and it equips us with the vocabulary of numbness. The rising bile and the sickness that slumbers into our guts seek to engage with the catatonic.

This comfortable numbness and debasement of senses is a part of our masochist culture. We want to be delivered from vibrancy to ennui.

“For if consumerism is like the plague, this is not just because it acts on large groups and disturbs them in one and the same way. There is both something victorious and vengeful in consumerism just as in the plague, for we clearly feel that spontaneous fire the plague lights as it passes by is nothing but a gigantic liquidation... The plague takes dormant images, latent disorder and suddenly drives them to the point of the most extreme gestures.”

In the lines above culled from Antonin Artaud’s essay *Theatre and the Plague* I have taken the liberty of replacing the word theatre with consumerism. The thought, however, is to establish that the two are interchangeable. What we are witnessing around us is a plague, is the theatre of cruelty and it excites us.

It would be worth our while to zoom on the vicissitudes of consumer culture and explore its formal values.

Fatigue is taking over...

Gitanjali Dang

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The suggestion of postvisuality may seem paranoid to some, but paranoia is our double-edged sword, our great gift and Achilles' heel. We need to extricate paranoia from its precarious position, as something perennially feared, and employ it to our advantage.

Paranoia, in addition, to being a rich asset in the exploration and understanding of the pictorial researches that comprise this exhibition, is also the key trigger to our rapacious living habits.

In order to exploit the reserves of paranoia, we must implicate with vigour. Consumerism is often thought of as the lynchpin of the postvisual situation. In that the onrush of consumerism has been accompanied by a surfeit of visual stimuli, which are held responsible for the gradual stultification of our sense perception and our nous.

Jean Baudrillard writes in *Hypermarket and Hypercommodity*, “The objects are no longer the commodities: they are no longer even signs whose meanings and messages one could decipher and appropriate for oneself, they are tests, they are the ones that interrogate us, and we are summoned to answer them, and the answer is included in the question.”(1)

When summoned, our paranoia keeps us from resisting new interrogative spaces such as

malls 'n' multiplexes. We delight in the inquisition, the gradual slippage into frenzy and the impalement of our senses by the brutish strength of the commodities.

By employing the services of implication one desires to create a situation wherein the gestures we loathe in the everyday consumer become an insight into what we love about our ostentatious lives.

The process of implication or tattling is often overlooked and occasionally derided. In *postvisual world*, the 11 photographers have endeavoured to give it new respectability.

The participant photographers have contributed a triptych each. Panel one, appraises the aesthetics of urban consumerist landscapes and in the process enables us to assess our fascination with a homogeneously seamless consumer culture. Panel two, implicates the photographers as we encounter their auto-portraits. And in the final panel the photographers plunge their lenses deep into the megalomaniacal heart of the city. To draw final blood they incarcerate the city's denizens in portraits.

With these triptychs one hopes to establish linkages, that will be startling in their visuality, and will explore consumerist landscapes as possible roadmaps to our future. With *postvisual world*, one intends to reach down to the imperfect aesthetic roots of burgeoning consumerism.

Long before Doris Salcedo installed *Shibboleth*, a 167m-long crack in the floor of the cavernous Turbine Hall at the Tate Modern, Leonard Cohen had sung, "There is a crack that runs through everything". We are enamoured of the flawed; consumerism is our fallen hero. It equips us with the vocabulary of numbness. The rising bile in our throat and the sickness that slumbers in our guts, all seek to engage with the catatonic. This comfortable numbness and debasement of the senses is a part of our masochist culture. We want to be delivered from vibrancy to ennui.

"For if consumerism is like the plague, this is not just because it acts on large groups and disturbs them in one and the same way. There is both something victorious and vengeful in consumerism just as in the plague, for we clearly feel that spontaneous fire the plague lights as it passes by is nothing but a gigantic liquidation... The plague takes dormant images, latent disorders and suddenly drives them to the point of the most extreme gestures," wrote Antonin Artaud in *Theatre and the Plague*. (2)

In these lines, culled from the essay, I have taken the liberty of replacing the word theatre with consumerism to establish their transposability and throw into relief the thick connectivity they share. At the risk of sounding needlessly dramatic... consumerism is the new plague. Just as it has swiftly usurped our mental space, it has also subverted Artaud's original contention. Plague and by extension the theatre of cruelty, as suggested in Artaud's writings, are not about brutality but about the dissipation of false identities. By revealing their alluringly vapid pith, consumer goods expose their extreme gestures and draw us into their ambit.

Within this exhibition postvisuality has a double theoretical framework: on the one hand, it assesses the cold, hysterical and hard-nosed aesthetic of urban landscapes; on the other hand, it hopes to follow the thread of postvisuality and observe how it splits its end – be it by way of appropriated and/or found image, performative photography or the purposefully mutated image.

The thought here is to do a Christo and Jeanne-Claude trick. Use postvisuality as a wrap that will starkly accentuate the formal values of urban spaces. This would enable us to read the fine print of our attraction for consumer culture.

NOTES

1 Jean Baudrillard, 'Hypermarket and Hypercommodity' in *Simulacra And Simulation*, translated by Sheila Faria Glaser (The University of Michigan Press, 2005)

2 Antonin Artaud, 'Theatre and the Plague' in *The Theatre and its Double*, translated by Victor Corti (Calder Publications, 1999)

Gitanjali Dang

She is an independent curator and art critic. She was the art critic at Hindustan Times from 2005 to 2008. She has a Masters in English Literature and a Diploma in Indian Aesthetics (Mumbai University).

WRITE UP

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of naming, as he does with titles such as *Pulpo* (Octopus, 1991) which bestows a symbolic, associative meaning onto a tangle of pipes, and *Dos parejas* (Two Couples, 1990) which anthropomorphizes pairs of clay vases. Another photo appears to be of a cloud-streaked sky, but it is actually a reflection captured in a puddle (*Pelota en agua* [Ball on Water, 1994]). Recording his movements and artistic activities, Orozco's photographs also serve as poetic markers of the simple but essential relationship between objects and bodies.

That is the great trick for artists, finding images that go beyond their own personal circumstances into something which people can connect with. These artists we've been talking about do that in very different ways, and you could hardly find three people from more dissimilar backgrounds - working class Pittsburgh, affluent Tokyo, and pre-war Catalonia. Artists make the unique into something that connects with everybody's life in the end, rather than just drawing on common culture

Since the 1980s, the artist has been photographing common objects as he finds them-- "self arranged" on the streets--or as situations in which he has gently intervened, creating striking but temporary compositions in the urban landscape. Orozco's photographs inspire his work in other media, including sculpture, installation, video and drawing.

Gabriel Orozco creates lyrical works in sculpture, drawing, photography, installation, and video—mediums as diverse as the issues that Orozco's art engenders and explores: how the random and mundane create meaning, the construction of space and time, the mutability of forms.

This dialogue with the readymade continues in Orozco's photographs, which document chance encounters with sites and things in his native Mexico and other locations around the world, including India, Iceland, and New York. The artist frequently intervenes in what he discovers, arranging found materials and photographing his constructions. Sometimes, he transforms the ordinary just by the act of naming, as he does with titles such as *Pulpo* (Octopus, 1991) which bestows a symbolic, associative meaning onto a tangle of pipes, and *Dos parejas* (Two Couples, 1990) which anthropomorphizes pairs of clay vases. Another photo appears to be of a cloud-streaked sky, but it is actually a reflection captured in a puddle (*Pelota en agua* [Ball on Water, 1994]). Recording his movements and artistic activities, Orozco's photographs also serve as poetic markers of the simple but essential relationship between objects and bodies.

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