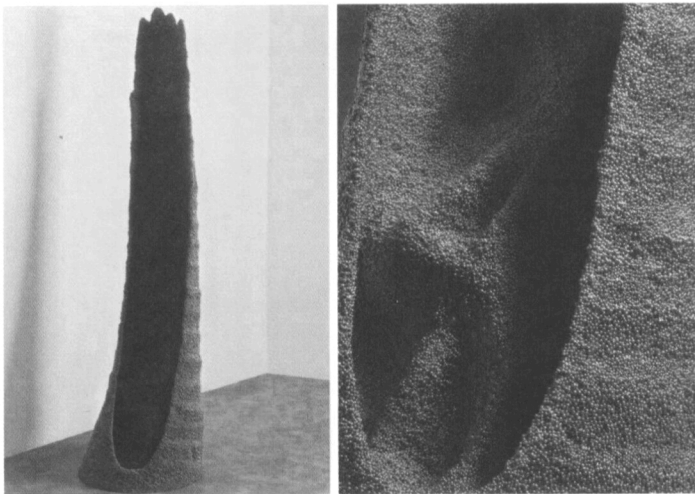


THEATRE OF ENTRAPMENT

Whatever has happened, has happened good, the title of Saravanan Parasuraman's debut solo, is a literal translation of the Hindi saying "Jo hota hai, achche ke liye hota hai." It was on this philosophical note that the 30-year-old Chennai-based artist showcased sculptures, drawings and photographs at Seven Art Limited, New Delhi, from the 17th of August to the 29th of September.



Saravanan Parasuraman. *Gathered*. Steel balls, FRP. 78" x 20". 2012. Image courtesy Seven Art Limited and the artist.

Delicate but taut skeins ensnared creatures, either suspending them in mid-air or anchoring them to the surfaces of boards fixed to the walls. A red spider was trapped in a web of its own making, casting a grotesque shadow on the wall, while in a corner, a fish seemed to be caught in entangled fishing lines. The wood and fibreglass works exemplified Parasuraman's preoccupation with Vedantic philosophy, the cycle of multiple births and the entrapments of worldly life.

Parasuraman's amorphous sculptures brought to mind organic forms like ant hills, dunes and knolls. One of the more striking works on display was a series of photographs titled *Accumulation*. Here, Parasuraman captured abstract patterns on sand made by insects and crustaceans. The photographs helped the organic speak to the industrial – the pattern-clusters in sand resembled the surfaces of many of Parasuraman's fibreglass sculptures covered with tiny steel balls. The material served as a metaphor, with the balls possibly referencing the tiny particles that make up a cosmic whole. In his towering ant hill, *Gathered*, Parasuraman continued the use of visibly inert and inorganic material to reference the organic.

Parasuraman's attention to detail and craftsmanship was also in evidence in the *Manuscript* series where graphite doodles mimicked the nervous energy of atoms with electrons spinning in their orbits. However, his untitled installation comprising rusty grinding equipment, alluding to our slowly vanishing cultural artefacts and values, appeared a little too literal. Parasuraman is at his best when he doesn't try too hard to make a statement but creates works that sensitively revisit patterns and rediscover their associations.

MEERA MENEZES

THE INCOMPLETE CITY

Upon entering Gallery Maskara, Mumbai, we were confronted with a bright orange metal structure, about 25 feet tall. Titled *Another Documentation (Scaffolding)*, it disoriented and overwhelmed. This work by Avantika Bawa, part of her solo, *Another Documentation*, from the 9th of August to the 13th of September, hinted at Mumbai's real estate frenzy in much the same way as Jitish Kallat's scaffolding installed at the Bhau Daji Lad Mumbai City Museum last year referred to the spectre of urban 'regeneration'.

Bawa attempted to "present the gallery as a construction site". Typical of her style, the works brought together aspects of art, architecture and design. Was the scaffold, then, meant to be a sculpture, an architectural feature or was it simply an everyday utility device? It was, perhaps, a bit of each.

A series of photographs, titled *Another Documentation (Prints)*, depicting work-in-progress high-rises in Mumbai, Delhi and Faridabad, was displayed in a corner of the gallery. Emptied of people, the images presented examples of the lopsided model of urban growth we see being followed all around. In the pictures, workhorse-like easels held up what appeared to be architectural drawings. A closer look revealed that the drawings would serve no purpose in real construction settings. Perhaps, this was an ironic comment on projects that are never completed due to a lack of planning, resources or clearances? An actual easel was placed in the gallery near the scaffold. It was painted in monochromatic grey much like the piled-up cartons in Bawa's previous solo *Mathesis: dub, dub, dub* at the same gallery in 2009. Two white sheets of paper with oblique black lines, hung from the gallery's high ceilings much like giant Chinese scroll paintings, looking a little misplaced and disconnected.

If it was Bawa's intention to capture the messiness of construction sites and burgeoning cities, her work seemed too meticulous and neat to explore their confusing disorderliness. The exhibition space was far removed from the chaos of an actual building site. Ironically, as we stepped out of the gallery and its quiet confines, we were assaulted once again by the visual noise of Colaba.

VARSHA RESHAMWALA



Avantika Bawa. Installation view of *Another Documentation*. 2012.