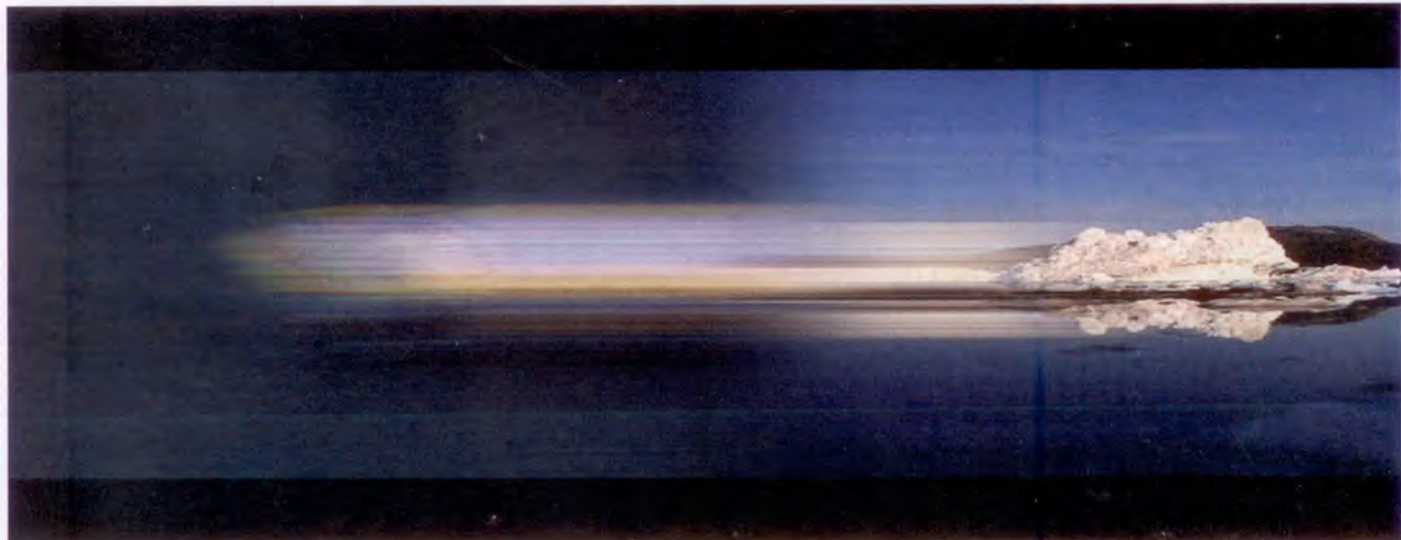


## Grasping power



**Fast and furious** In *Hold On*, Marek Ranis juxtaposes clips of a NASCAR race with shots of glaciers to reflect on the speed at which the world is changing

A group exhibition explores what it means to hold on in the face of change, finds **Zeenat Nagree.**

In American artist Marek Ranis's video, *Hold On*, race cars zoom across one half of a screen while glaciers melt on the other half. The collision of footage of a NASCAR rally in North Carolina with clips of the pristine expanse of northwestern Greenland prompts reflections on the speed at which the world is changing. Ranis and six other artists featured in an exhibition opening at Gallery Maskara this fortnight grapple with the desire to hold on to places, journeys and ideas that are under constant mutation.

The exhibition displays videos, photographs, sculptures and installations by Ranis, Stuart Keeler, Mansoor Ali, Joshua Smith and the collective Satellite Bureau comprising Jen Hamilton, Jen Southern and Chris St Amand.

The show, also called *Hold On*, is curated by gallerist Abhay Maskara, artist Avantika Bawa and art historian Celina Jeffery, and features diverse interpretations around a central question: "Can one hold on amidst the

onslaught of rapid, indeterminate and exhausting change?"

In his video, Ranis attempts to grasp fleeting moments while meditating on the threat of global warming and the rapid changes it is likely to bring to the landscape. "Historically, huge events have often been realised only retrospectively," said Ranis, whose current body of work focuses on climate change. "What inspires me is the unsettling feeling of passing time. For me, this subject matter is a way to express a sense of loss about disappearing landscapes, which many of us will never see."

Where Ranis comes to terms with changing landscapes, Canadian artist Keeler focuses on the disappearance of green zones in cities. Through *Vestige*, a performance set to take place on June 4, Keeler will invite viewers to ponder on how we can "allow place for green gardens and lush jungles in our minds when we inhabit a dense built environment". Keeler will turn himself into a moving landscape by walking around in a green suit made of paper and carrying a large leafy plant. The artist will offer passers-by a chance to stand under its shade to experience and hold on to the verdant expanse of their imaginations.

"To hold can also be a mental state," said Keeler. "A place that we fixate upon in search of an ideal."

Keeler's exploration of the experience of living in urban areas gives viewers a chance to mull over the everyday. The theme finds a different interpretation in Indian artist Ali's *Beautifully Corrupt*, a series of photographs of a decaying chair infested with termites. The artist uses the process of decay to

**'Historically, huge events have often been realised only retrospectively.'**

symbolise the effects of rampant corruption in the country: just as termites consume the chair, politicians weaken the nation in their lust for power.

"The work is inspired by the many scams that have rocked India," said Ali, whose work often employs the motif of the chair to critique the flaws of democracy. The idea is addressed in *Alliance 4*, the sculpture of a chair with dissimilar halves. The work is from Ali's *Alliance* series, which comments on the political coalitions of

India. "In the work, the chair becomes non-functional," noted Ali. "The idea of sitting together becomes unbearable."

*Hold On* also showcases installations by UK and Canada-based collective Satellite Bureau and American artist Smith. Both present the most abstruse interpretations in the exhibition. Smith's work turns wooden stands used to display art into sculptures. The Satellite Bureau's site-specific work, like most of their creations uses data from satellite navigation devices, in this case to reference Mumbai's significance as a trading port and Gallery Maskara's past as a warehouse. Satellite Bureau's Hamilton said that the artwork, which wasn't ready at the time of publication, maps trading routes to reflect upon "the global impact of transportation and the movement of goods throughout the world".

The installation, made of crates and other salvaged shipping equipment, traces journeys across continents. "One doesn't know how many people move through a given area until it's tracked," added Hamilton. "But once it's tracked, it becomes less fluid. This is the conflict in representing movement." See *Gallery Maskara in Exhibitions*. Also see *Sat June 4 in Lectures etc.*