

## Immersive probing

“Project Cinema City” at the NGMA (November 2 to December 2) was an extraordinarily spectacular, if also rough and layered, display adequately in tune with the world it addressed.

Curated by Madhusree Dutta in connection with the centenary of Indian film-making, it reached under the skin of the mutually reflective relationship between the realities and ethos of Bombay/Mumbai and the cinema it has produced.

Considering the manifold immensity of the subject with its present and its history, it was indeed right to approach it as an intensely exuberant but also ambiguous and changing process, which took shape during an interweaving of research and documentation with evocation, interpretation and comment, while collective effort contrasted with as well as was complemented by individual works.

Rather than focus on glamour and superstars, the project aimed at bringing to the surface indications of the less evident yet revelatory aspects of the phenomenon – existentially and sociologically as well as in terms of the imagination, emotions, ways of perception and values.

The event in which a vast number of artists participated, many of them important names and very talented younger ones, was conceived by Dutta as simultaneously separated and eventually intertwining dual strands of short films and artworks, space letting one consider here only the latter part co-curated by Archana Hande. Referring constantly to the process of questioning film-dom fantasy within the modest urban environment, the exhibition with differing ac-



‘Cinema City Live,’ collaborative installation.

cents oscillated between offering a broader perspective on ample, collected and scrutinised documentary material with commentaries and allowing for a stronger personal expression in close-up towards specific areas within the topic.

Thus, the spectator experienced it in shifts from the immediacy of visual-emotive immersion to the distance of information and awareness. Overall and close sights permeated throughout the very expansive display which, on the one hand, conjured effects and sensations of the street with its humble objects, mapping too, and, on the other, of elusive and alluring cinematic images.

The dynamism and the large scale of the optical and the viewer’s actual progression could be felt together with the intuited as well as verbalised presence of narratives regarding cinema as such, its history and the human spirit along with both ordinary lives behind the industry including its sweatshops, workmen travelling and viewer-ship as well as stardom tales or character and pathways of iconisation of images on the verge of the cin-

ematic and real. This was pronounced in the multi-angle works done collaboratively by several artists as much as in the individual contributions.

Well balanced on the whole was the pervasive but transient coexistence of enchanting, often ambiguous and intangible effects and feelings with the rawness of its low-end production base, the frequent use of popular culture motifs and styles from various periods reflecting it in its coarseness capable of emotional saturation and specific beauty, its naivety holding poetry too.

Varied movement, sometimes speed playing a role there, the exhibition finely mediated visual clarity and suggestive darkness, while sometimes there prevailed tactility or sound. An essential thread belonged to acted out as well as inherently adopted erotic attractiveness and make-believe.

Among the collective installations, even environments ‘Table of Miscellany,’ ‘Cinema City Lived’ and ‘The Calendar Project’ drew particular attention. Those were completed by significant individual works

by Pushpamala N, Atul Dodiya, Anant Joshi, Shreyas Karle and Paromita Vohra, one by Archana Hande bringing the spectator into the work.

## Hybrid symbiosis

“Have space will grow,” Urmila V G’s exhibition at Gallery 545 (November 3 to 20), had a fair collection of large woodcuts which proved the artist’s usual technical solidity blending effortless grace able to suggest playful lyricism with sufficient roughness to evoke a bit of real sensations.

Urmila does not take grand gestures or concepts, instead in a modestly authentic manner looking for natural complexities in the surroundings today, this time on the hybrid edge between the inanimate objects of urban domesticity and plant-life.

With acceptance, perhaps admiration, and warm humour, she pushes both sides to a surprising but charming coexistence, organic beings finding new ways to survive among potentially suitable situations, foliage and flowers erupting from the pressure and moisture of a gas stove or an iron, meandering dynamically in tune with shoes, blossoming trumpet-like from a transistor radio and winding around the firm but open support of a sewing machine.

At this, the printmaker effectively oscillates between design and animation stressing the liveliness of floral patterns on fabrics or wall papers versus the ornamental aspects of live plants.

The clear graphic qualities of her woodcuts too mediate the partial painting-like impact, while she finely induces translucency and reflective properties.

**Marta Jakimowicz**