

domus

Volume 01 • Issue 10 • September 2012 / **DCOOP** scripting architecture / **RLDA** materiality of ideas / five questions for **David Chipperfield** / when the sky is the context: Shard London Bridge by **Renzo Piano Building Workshop** / **Bradley L Garrett** scaling the Shard / **Julian Jain** region of the rings, cities of the void / **Naresh Fernandes** everybody loves a useful slum / **Grandmother India Design, Emmanuel Grimaud, Sameer Tawde** of gods and robots / **Majlis** archive through practice

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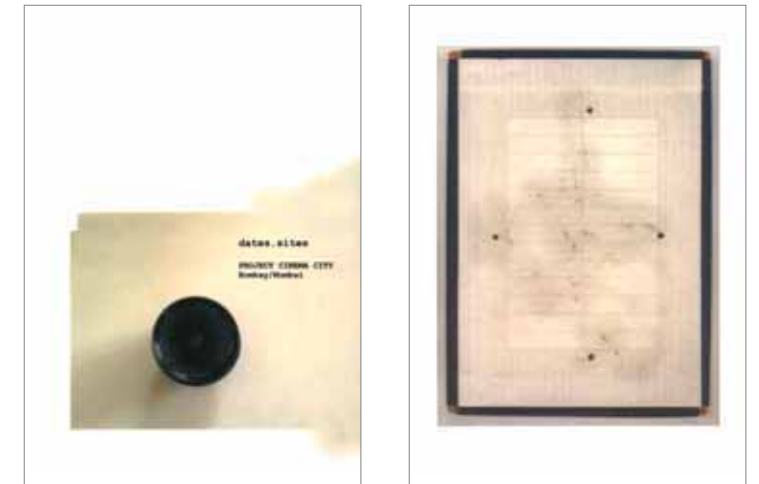
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Cover
The Hostel building for the university at Cudappah emerges out of visual and formal imagination, where space and structure are integrated to achieve the architectural language

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Archive through practice

The city explored through a creative timeline — a reading of Bombay and Mumbai of the twentieth century through one of its most symbolic and adored institution — cinema, is what makes up the book *dates.sites*. A collage of found objects that went into making the reference-resource for the Project Cinema City, is designed into a reading of production and practice — of urbanity, of cinema — of cultural and spatial experiences located in registers of visuality

Text
Kaiwan Mehta



1896 'Living Photographic Pictures in Life-Size Reproductions' by Messrs. Lumiere Brothers at Watson's hotel, (Esplanade Mansion), Kala Ghoda

THE SEA BATH ARRIVAL OF A TRAIN A DEMOLITION LADIES & SOLDIERS ON WHEELS and LEAVING THE FACTORY moving images that become leitmotifs of cinema in the next century

Public screenings open at Novelty Theatre, Grant Road

1896 Colaba railway station opens under BB&CI - by 1900, daily run of 44 local trains

1898 TRAIN ARRIVING AT BOMBAY STATION filmed & commercially screened at Tivoli Theatre by a foreign entrepreneur/magician who names his apparatus after himself **Andersonscopegraph**

As the 20th century begins First planned suburban scheme (Dadar-Matunga-Wadala-Sion) to decongest the city modelled on British garden suburbs

this eventually leads to the creation of Hindu colony and Parsi colony in Dadar, and Tamil colony in Matunga

1899 WRESTLING MATCH & MONKEY DANCE IN HANGING GARDEN **Bhatwadekar** Save Dada ^ shoots the first moving images produced by an Indian

1900 Tent cinema exhibitor F B Thanawalla shoots assorted footage of Bombay city and events, and shows it as **GRAND KINOTOSCOPE NEWSREELS**

New Year's eve 1900 **Tivoli Theatre** at Bori Bunder shows variety film programme with music by a string band

Pila House hybridization of Play House a cluster of theatres staging Parsi Theatre plays and Tamasha performances - bordered on the east by the red light area of Kamatipura (named after Telugu-speaking community of masons), and on the west by migrant courtesans and other entertainment artists at Congress House (named after the office of the Congress Party nearby)

is at its peak at the turn of the century

Parsi Theatre plays are staged at Grant Road, Pila House and Bori Bunder, in Gujarati, Urdu, and occasionally, Marathi and English. (The salient features of these plays: painted backdrops; stories from Persian legends, Sanskrit epics, Arabic Arabian nights, Shakespearean plays and Victorian melodrama; and performance conventions from eclectic sources)

1900 The number of functioning spinning and weaving units touches 138

WORKERS/ARTISANS

EMBROIDERY, AND LACE AND MUSLIN MAKING: 1000
TOBACCO AND SNUFF MANUFACTURERS AND SELLERS: 2800
LIME KILNS, AND BRICK AND TILE MAKING: 1200
MARBLE WORK: 800
LEATHER INDUSTRY: 5500
SWEETMEAT MAKERS AND SELLERS: 1750
BAKERIES: 1400
BLACKSMITHS: 1901
COPPERSMITHS: 5000
Census 1901, Vol. II-II A, Bombay (Town and Island)

62 dialects, including Marathi, Gujarati, Hindustani and English, are reported to be in use in Bombay
Gazetteer of Bombay City and Island (1901), Vol. I

1903 Singaporean Abdullally Esooffally travels around Asia with **tent cinema** (comes to India in 1908)

Raja Ravi Varma sells his lithographic press at Bhatwadi for Rs 25,000

Newsreel footage of Second Boer War released at Novelty Theatre

R P Paranjpe, Wrangler from Cambridge University, becomes protagonist of the first 'newsreel' in India as Save Dada shoots his return from England on Lumiere equipment

At Gaiety Theatre, Boribunder, a 12-year-old boy plays Desdemona/Sundari in Gujarati **will be known as Jaychanikar Sundari for the rest of his life**

1903 Taj Mahal Hotel opens

Jamsetji Tata dies - *so do his plans to develop north Bihar*

1903 Ratepayers' Associations are formed to resist the ECIT scheme to acquire land, citing hygienic town planning as the reason, by demolishing dwelling units in dense residential areas

1904 Kolis (traditional community of fisherfolk) are prohibited from fishing or running fish markets at Chowpatty, on grounds of public health

1904-07 Land prices escalate as a result of ECIT's land acquisition drive

1905 Prince of Wales Museum of Western India

1910 Cowasji Jehangir Hall for visual and performing arts (currently NGMA)

1911 Gateway of India

British architect George Wittet attempts to incorporate Indian motifs within colonial architecture

1910 Cowasji Jehangir Hall for visual and performing arts (currently NGMA)

1911 Gateway of India

Bombay Photographic Society

Bombay Presidency Cricket Match: Europeans vs. Parsis at Gymkhana Ground

Maharashtra Vyayamshalas (gymnasiums) with Baniyas, Bhaiyyas (north Indians), Marathas and Muslims as members

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To get a sense of what a city means to us, in what ways do we encounter it, meet it and experience it or get absorbed in its churning of daily life is an essential aspect of understanding culture and the inhabitation of physical world we build at all times. This man-made physical environment, built out of materials and colours, weaves for us a sense of the world (-view) and its attitudes, attributes and memories. Architecture that forms the mainstay of this constructed physical world we live in is crucial since it is visual, spatial, and also lives across times and images. Images as carriers of a reality represent a fairly specific understanding of space and physicality — it is specific by virtue of the fact that an image controls depth and movement within its formal structure. The photograph of a cityscape, an iconic structure, or a panoramic view — they all contain the idea of an experience, or project the

need to adopt/assimilate that idea. We see an image, and we (think we) know what that space, that physical experience of scale and volume is going to be like 'in real'! The city as an agglomerate of sights and images, sounds and moving objects formulates an experience that holds in an overlapping series of visuals and times. The panning of viewing cones in a series of temporal registers would be an adequate but nearly impossible diagram to represent urban experience. Cinema and its tool box engage with the dialectics of space and space representation. The space within a frame, the temporality of frames, and the moving yet constant image as well as viewer — all generate a set of conditions that urbanity also encompasses. The "Cinema City" project by Majlis, which is a Mumbai-based organisation (www.majlisbombay.org) was a

mammoth attempt to grasp the sense of urbanity and/through the medium of cinema in the context of a city such as Bombay/Mumbai which is also the home and nestling ground to the Bollywood film industry. As much as relationships between cinema and city, city and cinema, can be explored in diverse ways, this project invited multiple collaborations making the project only a medium and a platform to explore the breadth of culture and politics, history and the practice of making things, industry and art in the life of this city in India, as well as this city in the world. Many projects in architecture and urban research, artistic practices and documentation, archival modes and urban neighbourhood studies emerged from "Cinema City" — there were workshops, conferences, exhibitions as well as new films. What also emerged is a book — *dates.sites* PROJECT

CINEMA CITY — which puts together a kind of timeline for the city's history — a timeline that essentially emerges from the research and material collected for the project. Madhusree Dutta, filmmaker and curator of the project, put together a research-reference guide for all artists, scholars and practitioners who were invited to work on the project. In an attempt to define what it means to engage with the study of 'cinema' — especially trying to argue against an increasingly popular understanding of film studies as narrative studies — she collated material that in her view was the expansive breadth of cinema, city and a study that brings these two together. From migration patterns in cities to the kinds of labourers and artisans involved in the making of films to the history of techniques and production of the medium were all part of the world of cinema for Dutta. The

project in the process of inviting collaborators as well as in the process of collecting data and research material displayed its sense of anxiety but also belief in what 'cinema' or 'city' could mean to us — this produced many ideas and objects, scenarios and studies that could belong to the basket of "Cinema City" but could grow into detailed projects themselves. The book then seems to be a result of this churning between collaborations and collections that went in to the structuring of this abstraction — 'cinema city'. Both cinema and city are as much real and physical objects as they are abstractions of ideas and experiences — infrastructure-city/infrastructure-cinema, Bombay-city/Bombay-cinema. To then add the dimension of History to these obviously comes with its own set of attributes and conditions; but then History also becomes the tool and principle that can help

in giving some structure to the collected material-sense of cinema and city. Meaning then emerges from within the materials that are structured around the decided system; but ideas also emerge from the spaces in between the collected material once it is put within the mould of a timeline. What do we make of this emerging meaning as well as from the ideas that peep out of the interstitial spaces? Dutta as the curator, who envisions the practice and medium of cinema as well as sense of the city in certain very particular ways, worked with artist Shilpa Gupta to give shape and form to this book, and obviously to this exercise of writing history about the city. "Since 2008, more than a hundred artists, architects, filmmakers, researchers, commentators on culture, cityphiles and cineastes have been digging tunnels and excavating paths to unearth a configuration

Side-effects of Sound

Formal studio spaces with roofs, electricity and rudimentary sound-proofing; extra equipment; decrease in outdoor shooting; compulsion of songs; refurbishing of cinema houses etc.

1933-40 Homi Wadia produces short musical films and supplies them to exhibitors for screening before action films without songs

Early '30s Shree Sound Studio, Pasta Lane: first independent post-production studio to cater to the new demand for technical finesse - it later houses the initial phase of trade union activities

1932 Film songs as independent entertainment begins as maestro of Gwalior gharana, Vinayakrao Patwardhan, acts in the film **MADHURI** and the songs are recorded by HMV

1933 Music director Madhav Lal uses Japanese and Chinese singers from Safed Gulli (**White Lane**) (demarcated area for prostitutes with fairer skin than the Indians) to create a 'Far East ambience' in **HATIMTAI**

By the mid-'30s film companies without a good music component bow out

1931-38 Imperial Film Co. produces films in Hindustani, Urdu, Gujarati, Marathi, Tamil, Telugu, Malay, Burmese, Pashto and Farsi

1931 first ad film in India - For General Motors - where a Chevrolet car races with the newly inaugurated, superfast Deccan Queen train at the ghats - the hero finally catches the villain at V T Station - made by J Walter Thompson

1933 At Prabhat Studio V Shantaram makes Marathi film **SALANDHARI** with a few scenes shot in colour on b/w negative - processed and printed in Germany using Bipack colour printing process

1934 Himanshu Rai's **Bombay Talkies** functions as a joint stock company managed by a corporate board

1934 **BOMBAY MAIL** by Hollywood's Universal Picture - murder mystery set aboard a train from Bombay to Calcutta

1932 West End Cinema runs Marathi film **SHYAMSUNDAR** (by Pundalik director Dadasaheb Torne) for 27 weeks, starting Indian cinema's tryst with the silver/golden/platinum jubilee

Kohinoor Film Company, the first professional film outfit in the country, closes after making nearly 100 silent films in 10 years

Motion Picture Society of India (precursor to Film Federation of India) set up by documentary enthusiast K S Hirekar

Hindi weekly **Cinema Sansar** published from Bombay

that can be broadly termed Cinema City: an interface between the city that produces cinema on an overwhelming scale and under an overarching organism, and the cinema that has developed a hegemony to define the notion of the urban. They are twin products of the 20th century, reared and developed through its wars, migrant peoples and moving goods, and technologies of reproduction." A close look at the book, which invites you to develop your own method of dealing with it and its material, also strikes you as one that makes suggestions towards a collaboration of visualities — where various kind of visual forms, structures and mediums indicate a series of shared locations and journeys. Dates and sites are residues of these journeys and collaborations. A production of visuality — its techniques and processes — emerges from this timeline and the way this book-box-object structures its text and images. In these collaborations and productions and the emerging practices of making the visual as well as

its distribution, we also see the idea of that which is urban — that which defines a sense of being a city. As Dutta notes, the image and the city are two defining aspects of the twentieth century anyway! "This volume is divided into sections by decades, and the decades in turn are separated by a series of calendars designed by visual artists, filmmakers and designers. The body of text is a stitching together of found information, received knowledge, scribbles and oracles, from formal and informal, acknowledged and discarded sources. It is layered with images which too are either found in circulation in streets and bazaars, or from personal archives. The relationship between text and image, far from being umbilical, is associative — in a playful way. Just as the body of written text incorporates both contemporary readings and deliberately dated markers, contemporary works are inserted alongside 'period' images in the body of visuals. These incorporations and insertions appear with detectable marks of joints in order to

snap the magical spell of *snippets from the past*." In this way the book is also a manual of history, and a manual of experience; what from history enters our experience and in what ways is also crucial, and that is something that the design of the book indicates to the user-reader, and it leaves it to him/her to deal with it. Collected notes and events can be organised in a chronological sequence, but what they mean as residues of memory, and in what form, or how they linger around the contemporary and with what characteristics — is something that this book strongly edges towards, or at least it creates the scope for such a reading to someone already steeped in issues of city history, urban experience and visual cultures. Zooming into images, blurring them, repeating them, fragmenting them are all attempts to understand as well as represent our changing and nuanced dealings with the visual world and its scattered objects. However, these scattered objects, once again collected — from flea markets or personal collections, reappear as memorabilia as well as

1930 System of multiple shifts introduced in textile mills - this enables landlords to rent out rooms to multiple batches of workers, where they sleep in rotation (an average of 10 people per batch in each room, multiplied by 3 batches)

1929-38 Despite heavy subsidies offered by the BCIT, owners of only three mills come forward to build housing complexes for their workers

1932 J R D Tata lands Puss Moth aircraft on mud flats in Juhu to inaugurate **Tata Airlines** - a mail carrier between Karachi and Madras via Ahmedabad and Bombay

1931 Two-thirds of Bombay's labour force is employed in the textile industry and three-quarters of the city's population live in single-room tenements **Census 1931**

Ambedkar Jalsa traditional performing artists from the Dalit Mahar caste evolve a new performing art form to counter the Hindu overtones in Marathi folk forms

After a prolonged struggle the **Mill Owners Association** manages to obtain state protection against Japanese competitors in the textile industry

1933 After demolishing 36,317 dwelling units and building 61,868 new units, BCIT merges with BMC

Colaba railway terminus dismantled to facilitate **Back Bay Reclamation scheme**

Sassoon Mills: Clash between organized workers on strike and casual workers hired by management to break the strike

Girni Kamgar Union: The textile workers' union is declared illegal along with other communist outfits

By the mid-'30s Marathi Sangeet Natak and Parsi Theatre witness an exodus as singers, actors, writers and technicians rush to join the film business

With the entry of theatre artistes/writers, the popular stunt film genre bows out, and more and more historical and mythologicals with dense dialogue tracks are produced

The charm of dialogue and songs in Indian languages elbows out Hollywood films from the market

With the talkie, the homogeneity of Indian cinema gives way to regional specifications - Marathi, Gujarati, Bengali, Telugu, Urdu, Hindustani

Art Deco movement in south Bombay at its peak

1933-38 Cinema theatres become important city landmarks

Regal Cinema at Colaba (air-conditioned and underground parking lot)

Central Plaza Cinema at **Dadar**

renovated **New Empire Theatre** opens at Fort

Metro Cinema (owned by MGM Studio) at **Dhobi Talao**

Eros at Churchgate

1000-seater **Broadway Cinema** at **Dadar Flats (East)**

contemporary citations of lost and mysterious pasts, to hint towards the shape of things remembered, as well as structuring a contemporary that often revels in blissful amnesia. Curating this collated material, as a resource for collaborators and participants in the beginning of the project soon took the shape of an independent project where stories, ideas, events and reminiscences were collated along a time line and annotated with various kinds of comments, extensions and cross-connections; as the parent project grew and new material was added to this amorphous archive. However, visual material and images were a large and crucial part of this archive, and these were independent pieces of information and stories, ideas and memories — and not simply illustrations of the textual archives; as much as the visual material were like archival units, the text with its timelines and annotations was strongly visual too — image and text lost boundaries here. The image as part of this visual material, often

contained the unit of visual references — for example the first decade begins with a picture of the sea front near Apollo Bunder, but here Gupta extracts the waves of the sea and treats it as an independent image — an everlasting relation of the city with the sea; or extracting details from family portraits; or repeating a studio photo of a seated man and standing woman reading. The collated material was grouped into decades, and this material contained snippets from the past as much as notes from the present moment, but themes were developed to insert the visual material for each decade — the theme for each decade may have emerged from a very small reference in there, and not necessarily the essential overarching focus of the decade, but this theme then gave the decade its visual mooring, and its notional sense of experience — for example a decade focussed on the link between the World Wars and the Princely States in India, or hand-written letters across continents passing through the city, images of cities across the world

passing through Bombay as pictures on postcards and pamphlets. Speculative of a changing past, this book attempts to construct that mischievous past, and build a series of narratives that comment on, and connect to the current experiences of the urban-physical, exploring those patterns through a medium and form like cinema and its sites and structures of production, distribution and reception. Many planes for discussion and exploration emerge, as you weave across the pages to search for familiar references, passing by hinted interconnections, finally comparing the lived sense of a city and the archives of the eye's memories.

— **KAIWAN MEHTA**
Architect and urban researcher

dates.sites (Project Cinema City, Bombay/Mumbai), Tulika Books, 2012. Text by Madhusree Dutta and designed by Shilpa Gupta and Madhusree Dutta

Madhusree Dutta, the curator of Project Cinema City, is a filmmaker and executive director of Majjis, which is a Mumbai-based centre for rights discourse and multi-disciplinary arts

Shilpa Gupta is a visual artist based in Mumbai