

Beyond the Edge, Kolkata: Erasures and Resistances

curated by

Oindrilla Maity

Concept Note

Situated at the southern edge of the city of Kolkata, the Thakurpukur-Haridevpur area is part of the South 24 Parganas, a district that stretches to the Bay of Bengal. The site is part of a major riverine system: the Adi Ganga (a circuitous route that ends in the Bay of Bengal) and the Tolly's Canal (a colonial invention of the 19th c, a more pragmatic and shorter route connecting the Bay of Bengal to avoid the Adi Ganga)—the banks of which stand witness to a spectacular cultural amalgamation. Dotted with countless historical architecture—a synchronous coexistence of churches, mosques, temples, the Brahma Samaj house, a 19th c residential building of freedom fighters and members of the secret society (the Anushilan Bhavan), and the Bratachari village (a movement for spiritual and social improvement which aimed to raise the self-esteem and national awareness of people of undivided India)*—the area is steeped in history. Once a thriving economic hub in the 17th c, the southern edge of the city turned into a dream town of a migrant community from Bangladesh who sought refuge in India during the Partition, subsequently, converting into an industrial belt. The area is marked with several factories ranging from electronic equipment and the Bengali film industry and was a major hub of Naxalite supporters in Bengal. It has numerous educational institutions, notably the Jadavpur University in the

neighbourhood (an educational institution, which challenged the hegemony of the British establishment). Situated within the historical fabric of commerce, transnational trade, and geopolitical changes (the Sundarbans that fringe the banks of the sea is threatened by the rising water levels and are constantly combating landslide), the area can be identified within the relationship of a push and pull of modernity and industrialization; of politics, education and culture. Despite its remarkable history, this piece of geography has almost always been at the margin, often overlooked by the city proper. And yet its inhabitants have infallibly exhibited a strong cultural interest and retained their identity. Their voices have been heard in many forms and expressions, either through creative pursuits or through their history of several protest movements (trade union movements; student uprisings; far-Left radical communist movements) dating back to the 1950s and '60s. Through these myriad expressions the inhabitants—predominantly a community of migrants—have always decisively resisted one thing: obliteration.

In a convulsive time like ours, when the voice of dissent is at risk in the country, our very being is eclipsed; the subject is silenced and an indiscriminating obliteration of our nuanced racial histories began to make its presence felt conspicuously—it is time to remember our present and our future. One has to fight by not forgetting. The inhabitants of the area began to feel a strong urge for resuscitating the cultural fabric. From this urgency, an industrial and commercial hub took a turn toward contemporary art, serving a very different purpose. This step taken toward creating a new platform for meaning and knowledge production also aims at research and experimentation toward gathering knowledge about what is there on the horizon. This new space is one where one would address the power of the present and remember not to forget, for, forgetting is the ultimate erasure.

In addition, there was a growing concern about identifying and

giving form to this new space for, it had to be different from what has already become the normative—'always a construction, an ideal, rather than an actuality'. It had to be one where one might constantly argue and 'discuss the changed and changing possibilities for art production as communicationary toolbox and representational politics in the public realm.'

The proposed exhibition is, thus, a reflection of these thoughts. It is aimed at exploring how power acts in various forms (through silence, obliteration, and ignorance) and how the cultural sphere becomes a place of freedom to think and reflect; to pose a challenge to the social order by the construction of values and ideals. It wants to explore how some of the many elements such as shared networks, crops and materials (jute, for instance), thoughts and writings, and minuscule local movements for the resuscitation of the cultural fabric can act as tools for resistance against ways in which erasures act on us. In addition, the exhibition also wants to explore how a nation is made from the unresolved dialectics between the masses; how a subject is formed via its class, caste, and other identities. Orbiting around these ideas, the proposed exhibition invites works of art that would respond to these growing concerns.

* initiated by Gurusaday Dutta in 1932 it was a comprehensive programme of physical, mental, and intellectual culture, based on folk traditions of physical exercise, art, dance, drama, music, singing and social service.

(Sheikh)

ibid

Participating Artists

Beyond the Edge, Kolkata: Erasures and Resistances

1. **Aishwarya Das** (installaion)
2. **Anupam Saikia** (performance)
3. **Birati Samuho** (play)
4. **Gigi Scaria** (single channel video)
5. **Inder Salim** (performance)
6. **Joyraj Bhattacharjee** (performance)
7. **Madhuja Mukherjee** (film)
8. **Panihati Patrak** (play)
9. **Panjeri Artists' Union**
(installation/ performance)
10. **Pushpamala N** (performance)
11. **Ram Rahman** (photographs)
12. **Saikat Surai** (video installation)
13. **Sharmila Samant** (installation)
14. **Sonia Mehra Chawla** (installation)
15. **Srabanti Bhattacharya** (performance)
16. **Vinayak Bhattacharya** (installation)

Program List

Film Screening

3 pm to 4:30 pm

12 - 14

January

2024

**Putiary Brajamohan Tewary Institution
Putiary Brajamohan Tewary Girls High School
And KMC ground (opposite)**

Installations and Performances

4:30 pm to 10 pm

12 - 14

January

2024

**Putiary Brajamohan Tewary Institution
Putiary Brajamohan Tewary Girls High School
And KMC ground (opposite)**

Plays

5 pm to 9:30 pm

15

January

2024

Mahanayak Uttam Mancha

Hazra

Site Map

