



Installation view.

familiar, finding it and then losing it, but without getting lost. There is clarity despite the conundrum.

The tapestries by Correa are highly evocative of the machinations of a contemporary urban mind. There is discipline, but restlessness too. There is structure, but yearning for freedom and fluidity – to just be. Sometimes there is resolve and often resolution too, but many times, darkness descends before lightness dawns. The weaving is skilful. The ideas are subtle and not equivocal. Correa's threads are open to interpretation. Each viewer must find themselves in these thread-ruminations as we do in the fluid, reflective surface of a deep pond.

I found the monochromatic pieces most appealing and the black and white ones most appropriate for the ascetic meanderings of a subtle and refined mind. The exhibition could have been more concisely edited. *Tree-One*, *Homage to Képes*, *Purple Rose of Cairo* and *Bethlehem* brought much coarser elements into play. These detracted from the subtlety of the major body of work, and I felt that had such works not been included, the song of Correa's threads would have touched an unforgettable chord.

Images courtesy: Chemould Prescott Road

Monika Correa, 'Meandering Warps: Variations on a theme', Chemould Prescott Road, 24 Jan - 23 Feb, 2013

03 / M U M B A I

Between the Waves

Deepika Sorabjee

A crustacean creeps along on the coarse grains of a salt pan, a white expanse fills the screen. It's an innocuous, spare opening to the dystopic lushness that follows and ends in a mutant utopia. Shah's video installation, is a trans-millennial ride down evolutionary road that straddles ecosystems, sexuality, gender and civilizations.

Her methods are multivalent, reminiscent of Mathew Barney, it's multi-referential and many layered. A single horned mythical creature, a unicorn, is her device, (referencing and building upon Rebecca Horn's *Einhorn*, presented at documenta V, 1972, which Horn had based on Frida Kahlo's painting, *The Broken Column*) to probe and penetrate several stories that run simultaneously, symbiotically. Roaming the wastelands of Shah's

Tejal Shah, *Between The Waves*, video still, channel II, 2012.

weird landscapes possessed of a strange beauty, these human-horned time travellers, flash codes from the past, get washed up on shores, play under the sea in a coral garden, roam a plastic wrapped rainforest and end up in a bizarre version of utopia.

Shah lays out this primordial to present setting 'Between the Waves' (a misreading of Virginia Woolf's *Between the Acts* says the artist's note), through a five channel video work. Watching it in a cavernous room at Project 88, she presents it through the 'between' of the waves of civilization – the low troughs of environmental degradation, of unbridled desire, of greed and waste. It is freakish and elegant at once – moments flow, the 'doing' of actions, just being in the moment in the pulses of history.

The main channel, *Dreamtime*, *Catastrophe*, *Regeneration*, *Hedonism*, *Ache* (each corresponding to a poem by Minal Hijratwala) is supported by screen time that plays a choreographed sequence in a loop. Plastic, A-lined dressed, unicorned 'people' rise from and move slowly on a virulently coloured garbage dump, the new hills that loom above a not-so-distant city. As the camera moves in, even this heap of refuse is suffused into a mesmeric bed of teeming life – in the fertile, decomposing end of things, new life seems to emerge, amid these never still, constantly evoking, white, plastic clad angels.

Three other screens play out: an animation of seeming mutations and regeneration; a burning moon that is reduced and raised in its lunar cycle, metronomically marking the passage of time, and one of a 'Rosetta' stone that is meant to be decoded for clues to it all. Whether one can or cannot, becomes irrelevant, they seem extraneous to the live action screenings. The main channel video sucks you in, into its first spare, then verdant world, tweaked and wrecked in a fluid plasticity to the accompaniment of a soundtrack that transports and transforms – each episode is characterised as much by the sound as the visual, from beeps and staccatos of flashing signals, to the loud whispers of the mangrove forests, this is where it's all at – one immersive world in which to suspend all disbelief in.

Can reproduction be asexual, what's an airplane doing at the start of time, are we in an Octopus's garden under the sea, does sex in a future age defy Woody Allen's clinical capsules of copulation seen in *Sleeper*? What's an iPhone App (also part of the show) going to show you? It is a tactile world of mangroves and appendages, of the world and the body. An entire episode shot underwater has life-forms cavorting in a coral reef regeneration after the waste of the previous episode, the plastic clad bodies washed up on the shore amid the flotsam of ages gone by. Change is the leitmotif drawn on, transition is where she pauses the live action in, even as familiar worlds are glimpsed in the background.

Tejal Shah, *Between The Waves*, video still, channel I, 2012.

This is Shah's alternate take on the ecosystems, natural and manipulated, of gender stories – yet without playing the cards out too heavily she takes the marginal, the edges, the detritus and makes them all central agencies, as they exist in contemporary life. She manages parallel conversations to resound and resonate all together. But it is the affective experience that is her success – in slow unhurried movements and sound, there's eroticism and innocence, science and the psychological – one listens to the wind, one notices a plastic wrapped reed, one smells as a maggot roams in refuse, one travels in a flash of light.

In her improbable worlds, she seeks probability through sensuousness and pure sound, it's a wordless world of fantasy: at once grotesque, at once sombre, at once poetic. It's an alternative take on the historical; like the mythical unicorn, meant more for interpretation rather than to be taken earnestly, less a classroom, more a contemplation.

Images courtesy: Project 88

Tejal Shah, 'Between the Waves', Project 88, 4 April - 10 April, 2013.

04 / K O L K A T A

A Score for the Uncharted

Oindrilla Maity Surai

An uncharted territory unfurls before me. Its emphatically achromatic ambience with barely a few elements cautiously mapped and placed within the space – photographs, texts, installations, graphs – almost takes me to a plane I do not encounter every day. A strange serenity pervades with occasional overlaps of faint muffled sounds spilling out from the recorders placed along the walls traversing it. The sounds, meditative and yet eerie, transcends the boundaries of the known and the unfamiliar. Their faint nearness and unfathomable distance create an aberration from the grittiness of everyday, making me enter into a dreamy realm of mysticism and spirituality that coalesces with elements of technology and science.

Soundscape. Perhaps this is the word that best describes this realm – Mehreen Murtaza's second solo show 'A Score for a Film' at Experimenter, Kolkata. A film score is the original music written specifically to accompany a film. The score forms part of the film's soundtrack, in which instrumental or choral pieces called cues that are timed to begin and end at specific points

during the film in order to enhance the dramatic narrative and the emotional impact of the scene in question. The artist writes the score to narrate the story of Mohammad Abdus Salam, a theoretical physicist whose restyled epitaph at his grave near Jhang awkwardly reads: "First ----- Nobel Laureate", from which the word "Muslim" has been deleted under court orders; it has not been replaced with the word "Pakistani" either. Salam was a science advisor to the Government of Pakistan from 1960 to 1974, a position from which he played a major and influential role in Pakistan's science infrastructure. He was the guiding spirit and founder of Pakistan's nuclear programme as well as Pakistan Atomic Energy Commission, and Space and Upper Atmosphere Research Commission (Suparco). A devout Muslim and a member of the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community who saw his religion as fundamental part of his scientific work, Salam became the victim of rigid social attitudes and state discrimination against his community when Z A Bhutto through constitutional amendment declared the Ahmadis non-Muslim in 1974. Heartbroken and humiliated, Salam left Pakistan in protest to live in Europe where in 1979 he was awarded the Nobel for his groundbreaking research in theoretical physics. Leaving Pakistan in protest was one of Salam's greatest regrets.

The score written for 'Score for a Film' focuses on a 'Su-fi' rendering to the realm of science fiction where Dr. Abdus Salam is a "magician scientist", "invoking incantations, a self-serving hagiography; as well as embodying itself as a sort of a secular prayer". Often baffling as abstract, incohesive signs, Murtaza re-tells the story addressing existence and non-existence; erasures; the friction between science and religion with a consummate skill.

Using recordings of low frequency transmissions, noise patterns, historical recordings, and a fictitious narrative performed by a team of voice actors – conversations on ufology, space travel, crop circles, and the mapping of imaginary cartographies. With the help of voice over actors and musicians, a 'score' is developed for Murtaza's 'ghost world', probing buried or unknown areas of the brain as potential components of such unreal archives. The music directed by Mehreen Murtaza and Shehzad Noor deserves accolade. I was amazed with the discovery of how these different sound sources interact across spatial scales through time, and the relationship between the geo-phony and the anthro-phony. Murtaza's range of imagination, an uncanny sense for the minimal with an almost edgy balance is surprisingly amazing.



Installation view. Image courtesy: Experimenter

Mehreen Murtaza, 'Score for a Film', Experimenter, 9 Aug - 9 Sep, 2013.