

Festivals

11/12–3/12/17

11TH SHANGHAI BIENNALE

“Why Not Ask Again?”



MOUSEN+MSG, *The Great Chain of Being — Planet Trilogy*, 2016, experimental theater space with videos, sound, objects and bees, dimensions variable. Courtesy Power Station of Art, Shanghai.

Raqs Media Collective convened more than 92 artists from 40 countries at Shanghai’s Power Station of Art (PSA) and at sites in the city for the provocatively titled “Why Not Ask Again: Arguments, Counter-arguments, and Stories.” Referencing the relationships between logic, intuition and mystery in Ritwik Ghatak’s film *Jukti, Takkoar Gappo* (1974), the curators invited artists to explore how one lives among the realities of today’s unstable world. Within the thematic exhibition at the PSA, four artists presented clusters of artwork, dubbed “Terminals,” that concentrated the Biennale’s thematic interests in the body, consciousness and perception. In one of these, the artist group MouSen+MSG created a monstrous dystopian theme park, *The Great Chain of Being – Planet Trilogy* (2016), a barren landscape with a bee-infested tree encased in a glass box and a garden strewn with technological waste, collectively marking our inevitable decline “toward darkness.” Extended projects at PSA included the Infra-Curatorial Platform where seven young curators developed sub-exhibitions, such as Didem Yazici’s “Freedom Is a State of Mind,” which featured artworks by Şener Özmen, Khaled Barakeh and Simone Fattal that expressed the potential for personal liberation in repressive conditions. Raqs Media Collective themselves performed a reading of Jimena Canales’s multipart show *Einstein and Bergson in Three Acts* (2015) within the action-implemented “Theory Opera” section, guided by the idea that “when theory gets to work, it sings.” Meanwhile, the “51 Personae” spanned the city with a program of citizen-created, guided city walks, gatherings and encounters. **YC**

12/12–3/17/17

KOCHI-MUZIRIS BIENNALE 2016

“Forming in the Pupil of an Eye”

The third Kochi-Muziris Biennale was again curated by an artist, this time Sudarshan Shetty, known for his installations that graft artisan craftwork onto contemporary themes. The title “Forming in the Pupil of an Eye” comes from an old Vedic belief that when a sage opens his eyes he assimilates all the multiplicity of the world in a single glance. Fittingly, Shetty organized the Biennale around a series of philosophical questions about time, tradition, knowledge and imagination. Building on its past editions, the projects by 91 artists, were installed in nine rehabilitated Dutch and British colonial-era structures in Kochi. Shetty invited several writers too, including “third generation” Chinese poet Ouyang Jianghe, Chilean poet Raúl Zurita, novelist Sharmistha Mohanty and graphic novelist Orijit Sen. Like Shetty himself, many of the visual artists inhabit realms between various genres including painting, installation and performance. Prabhavathi Meppayil, for instance, is known for her minimal painting-like objects made with jeweler’s materials. Yuko Mohri’s kinetic installations are responses to the distinctive qualities of a given place. Ravi Agarwal is an environmental activist but has come to use photography and public installations to raise awareness of specific places and topics. Praneet Soi’s project “Notes on Labor” is a series of slideshows, miniature paintings and video depicting the small-scale factories and one-room workshops in Kumartuli, North Kolkata. Mansi Bhatt reconstructs, in costume and with props, scenes from rural India. **HGM**



MANSI BHATT, *Untitled*, 2009, from the series “A Suite,” digital photograph on archival paper, 80 x 121 cm. Courtesy the artist.