

INDIA 2: MUMBAI

## **UNDER THE SURFACE:**

**ANANT JOSHI, TUSHAR JOAG, HEMA UPADHYAY**

CURATED BY BETH CITRON

**OPENING FRIDAY, 19 JUNE 2009 FROM 7 P.M.**

**DURATION: 19 JUNE – 22 AUGUST 2009**

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“**Under The Surface**” presents new installation works by Bombay/Mumbai-based artists Anant Joshi, Tushar Joag, and Hema Upadhyay, each exhibiting for the first time in Vienna at **Krinzinger Projekte**. The exhibition is a collaboration with Chemould Prescott Road, Mumbai and the second show in a series focussing on contemporary art from India, that started in autumn 2008 with “India 1: Bangalore”.

**Anant Joshi, Tushar Joag, and Hema Upadhyay** prioritize real, pressing problems of urban India in their practices, often through the disguise of playful imagery drawn from sources including popular cartoons, toy action figures, and comic book fantasy. In their installations conceived specifically for Krinzinger Projekte, all three artists draw their viewers into subversive and cynical warnings on sinister realities lurking beneath attractive and fun surfaces – by using plastic or wooden toys and pop-up books as their primary medium.

**Anant Joshi's** “Tampering with the Muse Trap” is a multi-part installation composed of agglomerations of reworked plastic toys. Joshi fashions the toys into semi-abstracted forms including a “Smiley Castle” and a “Smiley Tower,” with the plastic figure “Smiley” as Joshi’s starring, ironic muse. Melting the toys into new shapes disables their conventional function as entertainment for children and comments on the excessive waste and inanity of fabricating the toys in overheated and dangerous factory conditions in places like China and India. The series uses dramatic spectacle to convey Joshi’s revulsion for the accepted, subtle violence and rituals of ordinary urban life.

**Tushar Joag's** project builds on his work as an artist-activist through the mock corporation UNICELL that he “founded” in 2004. UNICELL publicizes common problems in Bombay by mimicking the problems of a single-bodied governmental bureaucracy, and publicizes fanciful solutions that could never be implemented. In these works, Joag uses the form of colorfully illustrated, open pop-up books to comment on the irresponsible redevelopment of Bombay without consideration for the city’s heritage or socio-economic needs. When opened, “Suitcase of the Urban Planner” shows a haunted replica of Bombay’s historic and central Crawford Market (a grand century-old wholesale market), which the government has recently threatened to move out of the city and into the fast developing satellite township of Bombay, known as “New Bombay.” . Shifting Crawford Market would result in the loss of thousands of jobs and revenue, and would be an irreparable loss for the city’s history.

**Hema Upadhyay**'s practice confronts issues of displacement and belonging for an emigrant to Bombay, with her work often privileging impressions of the urban landscape and the performative gesture. In "Cell," Upadhyay painstakingly constructs a large-scale abstract form from flat wooden puzzle pieces sourced in Chinese markets. "Cell" ironically denies the expectation that a completed puzzle should depict a recognizable image, instead highlighting the fragility, individuality, and mutability of each piece. Sourcing the pieces from China reflects on the changing capital and availability of imported goods in India, and the loss of one's own identity in a global market. Upadhyay's construction at once evokes a womb-like "formless form" in which organic cells intermingle and adapt in the body, and a claustrophobic prison cell in which the viewer as consumer is locked into a role in a commercial market.

These interlinked projects explore the dynamic possibilities of Krinzinger Projekte's space, enticing viewers to engage the installations from multiple perspectives and distance so that what seems readable at first and on the surface as elements of fun and games are, on closer looking, provocations about personal boundaries/identities, social/urban violence, and political action. Together, these three artists compose a trenchant and subtle commentary on some of the most pressing anxieties facing urban India today, and offer an innovative context to see contemporary art from Bombay/Mumbai in Vienna.

Beth Citron

### **Tushar Joag**

Born 1966 in Mumbai, lives and works in Mumbai.

Selected Solo and Group Exhibitions: 2008 *Reconciliation and Truth*, Solo Show Gallery Chemould, Mumbai 2007 *Focus India Contemporary Art from India*, curated by Deepak Ananth Rome Film Fest, Rome, *India Art Now: Between Continuity and Transformation*, curated by Daniella Palazzoli, *Here, There, Now: New and recent work by artists from India*, curated by Brian Curtin Souflower Gallery, Bangkok, *Pink*, Galerie Mirchandani + Steinruecke, Mumbai, *Mumbai Metronomes*, Museum Art Gallery, presented by Gallery Art & Soul, *New Narratives: Contemporary Art from India*, Exhibit Hall and Sidney R. Yates Gallery, Chicago Cultural Center, U.S.A, *Classe de Danse*, curated by Alessio Franson and Ilari Valbonesi, Bern, Switzerland

### **Anant Joshi**

Born 1969 in Nagpur, Maharashtra, lives and works in Mumbai.

Selected Solo Exhibitions: 2007 *NAVEL one and the many*, Chemould Prescott Road, Mumbai 2006 *LOCAL: kiss me kill me, push me pull me*, Talwar Art Gallery, NYC 2005 *Black to play and draw*, Phillips Contemporary, Mumbai; Selected Group Exhibitions: 2006 *Long happy hours, thereby happiness, and other stories*, Gallery Chemould, Mumbai 2005 *NEW*, Gallery Espace, New Delhi, *KAAM*, Arts India, New York, *Span*, Sakshi Art Gallery Mumbai, *Configurations*, Anant Art Gallery, New Delhi, NGMA, Mumbai, Anant Art gallery, New Delhi, *Whose space is it anyways?* Gallery Espace, New Delhi, *Indian Summer* curated by Deepak Anant, Ecole Nationale des Beaux Arts, *Are we like this only ?* Lalit kala Academy, New Delhi

### **Hema Upadhyay**

Born 1972 in Vadodara, lives and works in Mumbai.

Selected Solo Exhibitions: 2008 *Yours Sincerely*, Nature Morte, New Delhi, *Universe Revolves On*, Singapore Tyler Print Institute, Singapore, *Acrobats and their Scene*, Bodhi Art, Singapore 2007 *Glass House*, Grosvenor Vadehra, London, UK; Selected Group Exhibitions: 2009 *Die Macht des Ornaments*, Belvedere Wien, 2008 *The Audience and the Eavesdropper*, Phillips de Pury, London, *Chalo India*, Mori Museum, Tokyo (cat.) *Six degrees of separation: chaos, congruence and collaboration in South Asia*, Khoj International Artist Association, Anant Art Centre, New Delhi, *Eurasia: Geographic Cross-Overs in Art*, MART Museum, Trento, Italy, *Indian Focus*, Espace Claude Berri, Paris *Indi-Genius*, Sakshi Gallery and Soka Contemporary Art Centre, Taipei *India Crossing*, Studio la Citta, Verona, Italy, *New Narratives*, The Zimmerli Art Museum, New Jersey (cat.)