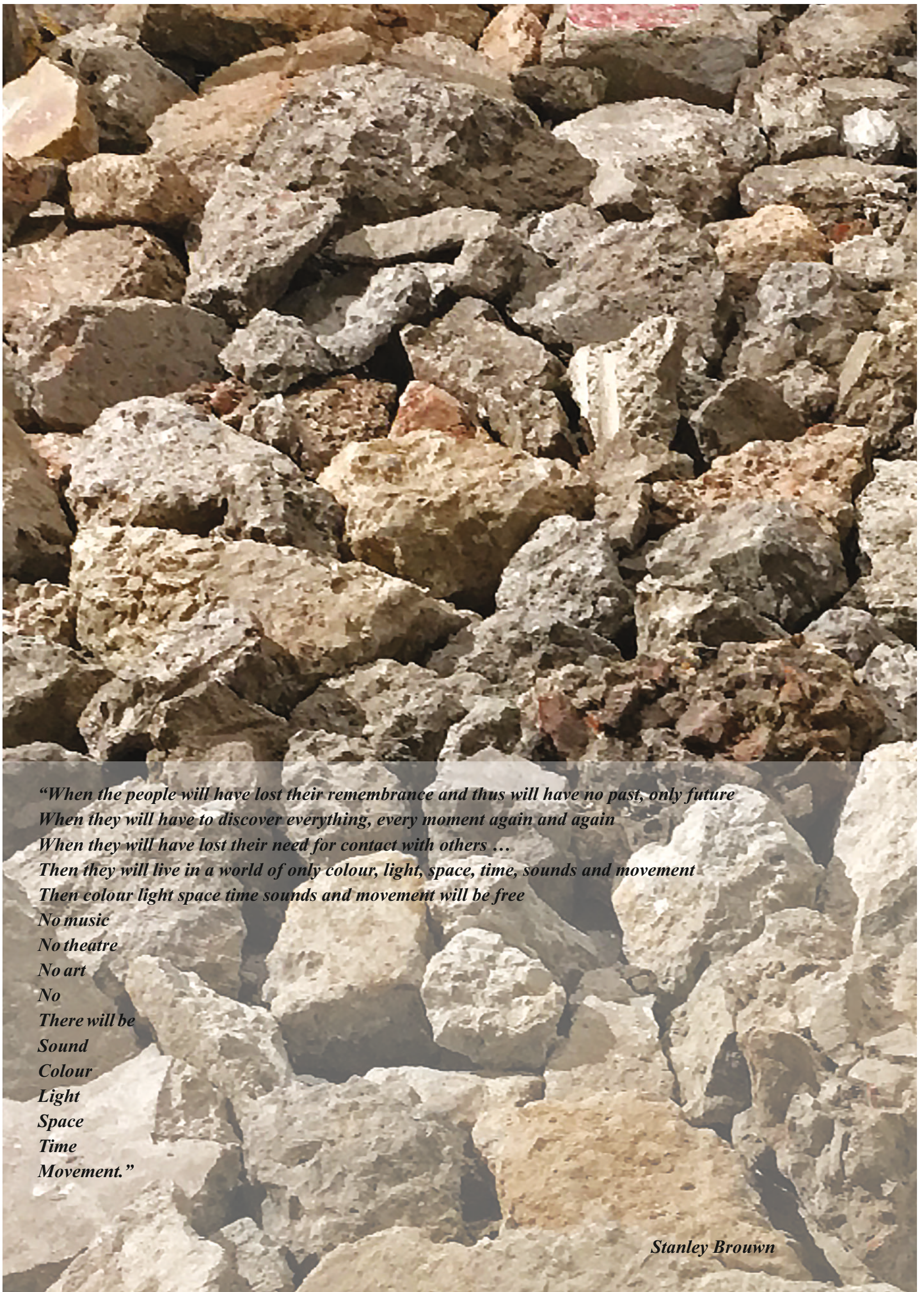


[IN]SANITY IN THE AGE OF REASON

VIBHA GALHOTRA

18th MARCH - 17th APRIL, 2017



*“When the people will have lost their remembrance and thus will have no past, only future
When they will have to discover everything, every moment again and again
When they will have lost their need for contact with others ...
Then they will live in a world of only colour, light, space, time, sounds and movement
Then colour light space time sounds and movement will be free
No music
No theatre
No art
No
There will be
Sound
Colour
Light
Space
Time
Movement.”*

Stanley Brown

EXHIBIT 320



Exhibition view - [In]sanity In The Age of Reason



When the River of Life Nears Zero Time

Vibha Galhotra’s (In)Sanity In The Age Of Reason”

M. Neelika Jayawardane

As I write about Vibha Galhotra’s work from Upstate New York, where I live and work, we should be in the depths of winter. It is the last week of February, and temperatures should sit well below zero Celsius. There should be mounds of old, dirty snow on the roadsides, tainted by de-icing mixes of rock salt and sodium or potassium chloride, scraped aside by the army of snow ploughs that troll the highways and by ways after each snowfall. Low clouds should be greying each day, with barely a hint of the nearing spring equinox. So harsh is the long winter in this post-industrial city with little to prettify its rows of abandoned warehouses and obsolete smokestacks that there is no month in which we long more for Spring than during winter’s last stretch in February. Yet, this morning, I woke up to thunderstorms and torrential rain. The tulip and crocus bulbs I planted in the autumn – late March harbingers of spring, antidote to the rusting cityscape are already sending up their long green leaves.

This environmental and climate “weirding” is how most people in this region, deeply invested in the brand of political conservatism specific to the U.S. one that dictates that climate change is a “liberal” invention intended to curb industry and gum up progress have been forced to realise that something is wrong. Although it is commonplace today to hear news reports about noxious spills of livestock faecal matter from factory farms, exploding oil rigs that destroy an entire Gulf’s ecosystem, meltdowns at nuclear plants poisoning surrounding farmland, climate science literacy alone has not been sufficient to change minds. In the face of push-back and misinformation promulgated by lobbyists trained to oppose environmental protection laws, and the politicians whose careers and campaigns powerful industry leaders fund, science seems to be losing. Years of scientific research, with facts, figures, and graphs to support claims of imminent environmental collapse, seem powerless. Rationality that hallmark characteristic of the enlightenment, on which modern (European) man’s superiority over beast and nature was constructed has not been enough.

As Heather Davis and Etienne Turpin argue, the emergence of an appreciation for the beauty of industrialisation and destroyed environments is intimately linked to imperial ventures; in their introduction to Art in the Anthropocene, they note that according to visual culture theorist Nicholas Mirzoeff, “[t]he aesthetics of the Anthropocene emerged as an unintended supplement to imperial aesthetics—it comes to seem natural, right, then beautiful—and thereby anaesthetized the perception of



modern industrial pollution.”¹ We can see this fascination with the altered environment through “the ever more colourful sunsets caused by particulate matter in the atmosphere, or to the aestheticized presentation of environmental destruction or explosive urbanization in the photographs of Edward Burtynsky and Vincent Laforet respectively”². Jessica Lack, too, notes, “art about man’s impact on the environment, spearheaded by the land art movement in the 1960s, was largely fatalistic and sought to reveal its grubby beauty.”³ As examples, Lack reminds us of Richard Billingham’s “amber-lit photographs of a deprived industrial backwater near Coventry, The Black Country, or Tomoko Takahashi’s seemingly chaotic installations of modern detritus.”

What does it mean for artists to work within a world that is undeniably altered and possibly irreversibly damaged by human activity? What does it mean for artists, and their visual practices, to encounter the Anthropocene, without simply aesthetically arresting works that inevitably draw attention to the artist

and normalise devastating problems? And will their singular, often locally-focused efforts undermine the need for more systemic, interdisciplinary changes? Even as we feel our impotence in the face of catastrophic changes to the five great elements, water, earth, fire, air, and space or the panchabhuta which, according to Hindu mythology, is the basis of all cosmic creation – can artists and art become more relevant – more present, more here – even as we feel our impotence in the face of catastrophic changes? Most importantly of all, can aesthetic practices and audience encounters with art be fashioned in such a way that we are better able to address the social, economic, and political implications of climate change? That is, can art and aesthetics often a practice of the elite properly address the fact that the Anthropocene era will effect more damage on the daily, lived experiences of the poor, the marginalised, and disenfranchised, partnering and including their political presence?

These are questions that conceptual artist Vibha Galhotra attempts to

address in her exhibition, **(IN)SANITY IN THE AGE OF REASON**. What artistic expression can she, as an artist, thinker, environmental activist and ordinary inhabitant of Delhi, find in the effluvial sludge clogging up the Yamuna River – this undeniable, material, and visible toxic evidence of the slow devastation of the health of an entire city’s inhabitants? One cannot walk in to Galhotra’s exhibition expecting “prettiness” to meditate the troubling realities that she addresses. Like other artists whose work recognises that we have, irreversibly, “entered the ‘Anthropocene’ – a new geologic era marked by the impact of human activity on the earth” – her work also engages in a variety of modes, “ranging from critique to practical demonstrations and shading into other current tendencies like social practice, relational aesthetics, environmental activism and systems theory.”⁴

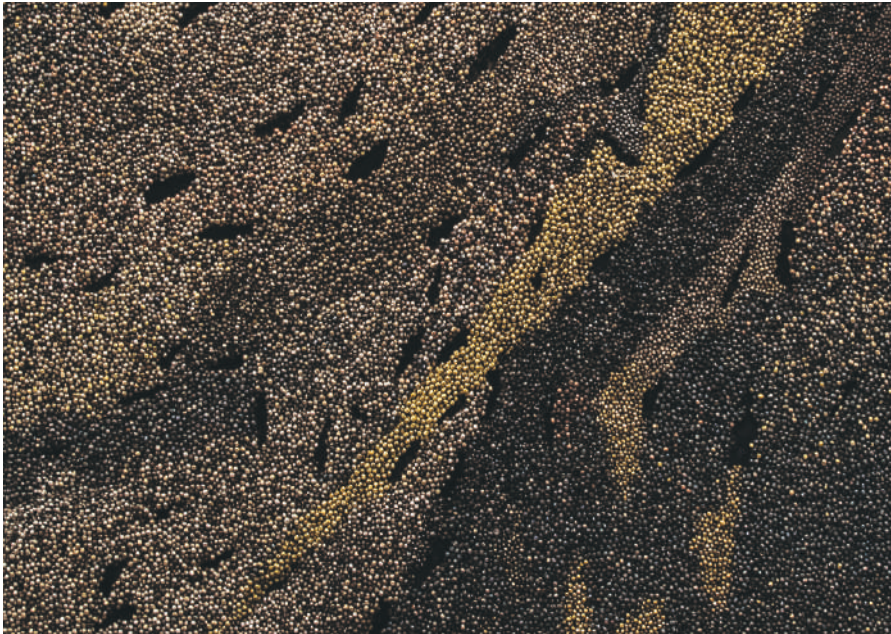
In “The Land and Water and Air That We Are: Some Thoughts on COP 21,” Heather Davis beautifully renders the feelings that accompany the slow suffocation and poisoning of life forms in ethereal, poetic language.



MARKS / linoleum and foot prints / 18 x 30 in / 2016-17



ACCELERATION / ghungroos, fabric, wood and steel / 2 x 117 in / 2017



She illustrates how the very molecules of which we, as human beings, are composed are poorer because of pollution and species extinction:

“Every time we breathe, we pull the world into our bodies...We become the outside through our breath, our food, and our porous skin...We have come into existence with and because of so many others, from carbon to microbes to dogs...[but we] are losing, with the increase in aromatic hydrocarbons and methane and carbon, the animals and plants and air and water that compose us.”⁵

Galhotra’s work – like Davis’ writing requires an emotional and psychological engagement; it demands that we meditate on our daily breath as an essential part of our ecological awareness, reconnecting us to indigenous practices that interconnect human hopes and dreams with flora and fauna, fire and water, earth, sun, stars, and the atmosphere. It insists that we bend our practices according to seasonal changes. It also requires our rational modernity to be part of this process, calling for our intellectual, scientific, and political engagement.

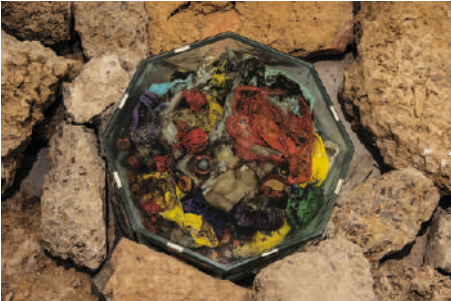
The space that her multimedia

installations occupy, for this exhibition, spans about 2500 square feet, which is divided into several rooms through which observers can meander in small groups. Galhotra’s practice ranges across various mediums, including photography, animation, found objects, performative objects, installation and sculpture, and site-specific works and public art interventions that create experiential spaces investigating the age of Anthropocene; here, she uses abstractions of organic processes, which are divided into five sections meant to evoke one of the five elements: water, earth, fire, air, and space. These elements are woven together to present a narrative about the sustainable, and – more often – the destructive ways in which we approach these elements. In each room is a glimpse into the death-processes inherent to building and construction – practices that are about constructing immortality, rather than creating living and sustainable spaces.

As her practice draws its inspiration from the manifesto 4000 AD by Stanley Brouwn (published as an artist’s book in 1964), Galhotra employs the manifesto metaphorically to signal her own concerns; for instance, the pieces Brouwn considers to be his earliest works were collabo-

rative works with passers-by who were unaware of their creative activity – or the weight of their footprint on the environment. He “laid paper sheets on the street and an unsuspecting cyclist or pedestrian created the art work as they cycled or walked over them. Without realizing it, the passers-by became anonymous partners in these works capturing movement and time.”⁶ Similarly, Galhotra mirrors Brouwn’s artwork and environmental concerns, by capturing the ways in which our daily actions and journeys leave an indelible track through the cityscape.

The work **ACCELERATION** uses her signature material ghungroo to follow the shape of the graph that measures our progress into the Age of Anthropocene. This graph is based on Will Steffen’s climatic change graph depicting the “great acceleration.” It begins at about 1750 and continues to the present day, showing how increases in human agricultural activity causes gradual increases in concentrations of CO2 and methane, culminating in a sharp spike, commonly called “the Great Acceleration.” The levels of CO2, methane, and toxic materials grow ever higher at the advent of the Industrial Revolution and its attendant exploitation of fossil





BREATH BY BREATH /digital print on archival paper / 18 x 36 in / 2016-17

fuels. At the beginning of the nuclear age in the mid-1940s, we notice, for the first time, traces of radioactive materials in soil, and ozone depletion. Together with decreases in potable water, increases in temperatures in the Northern Hemisphere and polar icecap melt, The Great Acceleration is accompanied by ever-exponential increases in population growth and energy use, as well as ever-higher levels of species extinction. Galhotra's ghungroo work attempts to draw our attention to this beautiful, toxic, and inevitable disaster, twinkling their metallic warning.

The form of the ghungroo is inspired by seeds worn by ancient people, who used them for ornamental reasons. Galhotra's usage of ghungroos began with a search for material that could create the effect of "sprawl" and tactile surfacing, much like the way algae or termites cover or "grow" over a surface. She notes that "the process of working with the material was equally important to her as she wanted to witness the process of deconstructing the image" that the ghungroos covered. As the metallic bells "sprawl" and colonise the surface, they replace the "original" image with their glittery presence. Though they are sonorous and pleasant, ghungroos also resonate with the vulgarity and conspicuous consumption one of the ways in which we attempt to announce our "arrival" at greater wealth and power.

In this age of Anthropocene, or "The Age of Man," Galhotra notes that we are the ones responsible for transforming the planet, suffocating a breathing living surface under multiple layers of concrete, metal, and toxic chemicals. In her use of debris – piles of dusty, broken, intentionally unaesthetic construction debris; bits of plastic, copper and aluminium she obtained from scrap

dealers, encased in glass cubes (thus "museumised," they are elevated to art or ethnographic object value); a singular, golden rock that one can pick up and examine as an object of desire – she interrogates the modern urban obsession with tearing down the old in order to erect the shiny and new. Whilst cities like New York are exceedingly good at eliding destruction – hiding their debris by disguising construction sites behind painted canvas backdrops portraying dreamscapes of the buildings that will emerge from the chrysalis of the façade Galhotra laughingly tells me that Delhites often do little to cover up the brokenness and destruction that goes into constructing their modernity. "Delhi is always breaking and making...it is constant," she says. There is such a push to build, to deconstruct and reconstruct that greenbelts and parks are being razed over to create new residential and commercial spaces; because there is economic and political pressure, little of existing precautions and plans to make the city habitable are being paid attention to. And with each layer of concrete, the ecosystem is indelibly changed.

The city attempts to hide the "brokenness" that shadows the gleaming and modern portion by carting destroyed material, along with the dust and toxic matter, into ghettos and slums, where the inhabitants have little political power. Yet, this debris, though it is "disappeared," much like the poor and the disenfranchised of Delhi, returns: the wind blows particulate material back to the city that attempted to get rid of it. And because Delhi's gleaming new skyscrapers those structures that announce a city's arrival into global modernity are being built on a known seismic zone, with little precaution and attention to incorporating earthquake safety – she fears that to dust it will return. Thus, for

Galhotra, debris whether disguised by an alluring, cinematic dreamscape or nakedly visible – is evidence of climate change and the age of Anthropocene; it is indicative of happy-go-lucky, oblivious capitalism, its attendant, insatiable desire to consume.

Among Galhotra's works for this exhibition, there are many stark elements of lost ethereal beauty among all the reminders of destruction. Among them, the most unsettling might be her work recording the high levels of faecal matter and the chemical pollutants in rivers in India. In particular the poisoning of the river Yamuna moved Galhotra to focus her attention to the daily effects that the water from which Delhi gets its supply - will have on the health of the city's inhabitants. In order to help observers visualise the dire reality, the film **MANTHAN** is shown in this exhibition. First, we see sediment and sludge from the river being churned by four people dressed in rubber wetsuits and protective gear. They dip the shroud in the water, in an action that mimics the way people have washed clothes in the river since time immemorial. One of two white cloths is dipped into the river at a point before raw sewage, before biological and chemical wastes are dumped into the Yamuna River; the second is "washed" in a portion of the river after sewage is dumped in. One can see so clearly which is the "uncontaminated" and which the "contaminated" or "polluted" cloth. **MANTHAN**, thus, provides a visceral, disturbing, and unforgettable visualisation of the water that supplies Delhi.

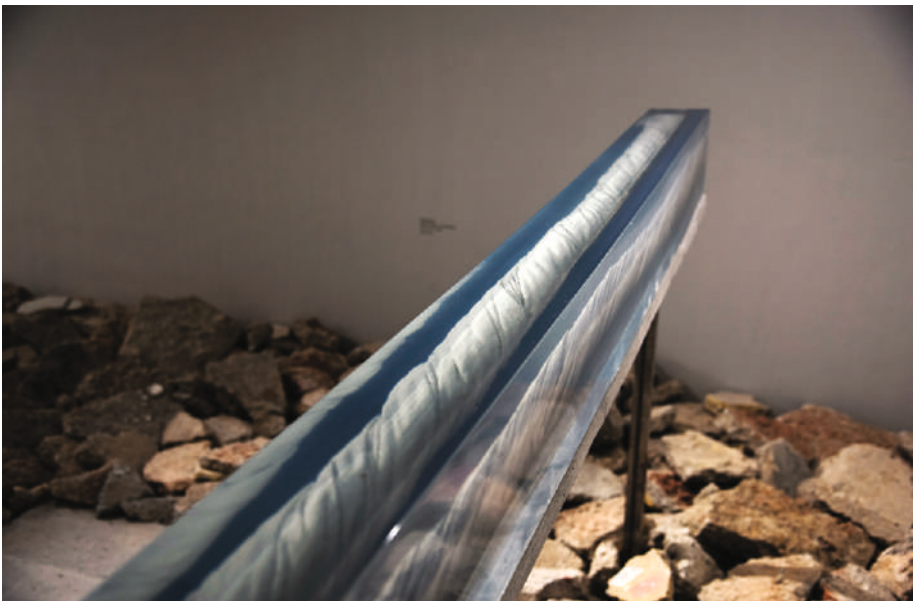
Galhotra encased these shroud-like cloths that were "washed" in the Yamuna within jewel-green resin rectangular forms; the forms reminds us of steel beams essential for the construction of reinforced concrete,

which form the foundational structure of all skyscrapers. These are the very building blocks that hold up our dreams for an indestructible, concrete future structures that help us forget mortality and decay. Yet, because these "beams" are made of synthetic resin and translucent – they give us a view into the destruction that is inherent in our processes of manufacturing immortality the poisonous, the death, the immensity of grieving. Galhotra notes that although much has been done to curb the worst offences, the river continues to be heavily polluted; 1% of this polluted water goes into the city's municipal system to meet its inhabitants' daily needs, and this same water is used to irrigate the surrounding farms – and thereby, the city's food supply, and its inhabitants' bodies are intimately tied to the poisonous waste poured into the water. She says, resignedly, "After all, whether we die 'clean' or 'dirty,' we die. In one death, the river can accept our body, and our life will become a part of that flow of water. But the death we meet after we have wreaked destruction and poison is one that the river water will never be able to absorb or cleanse.

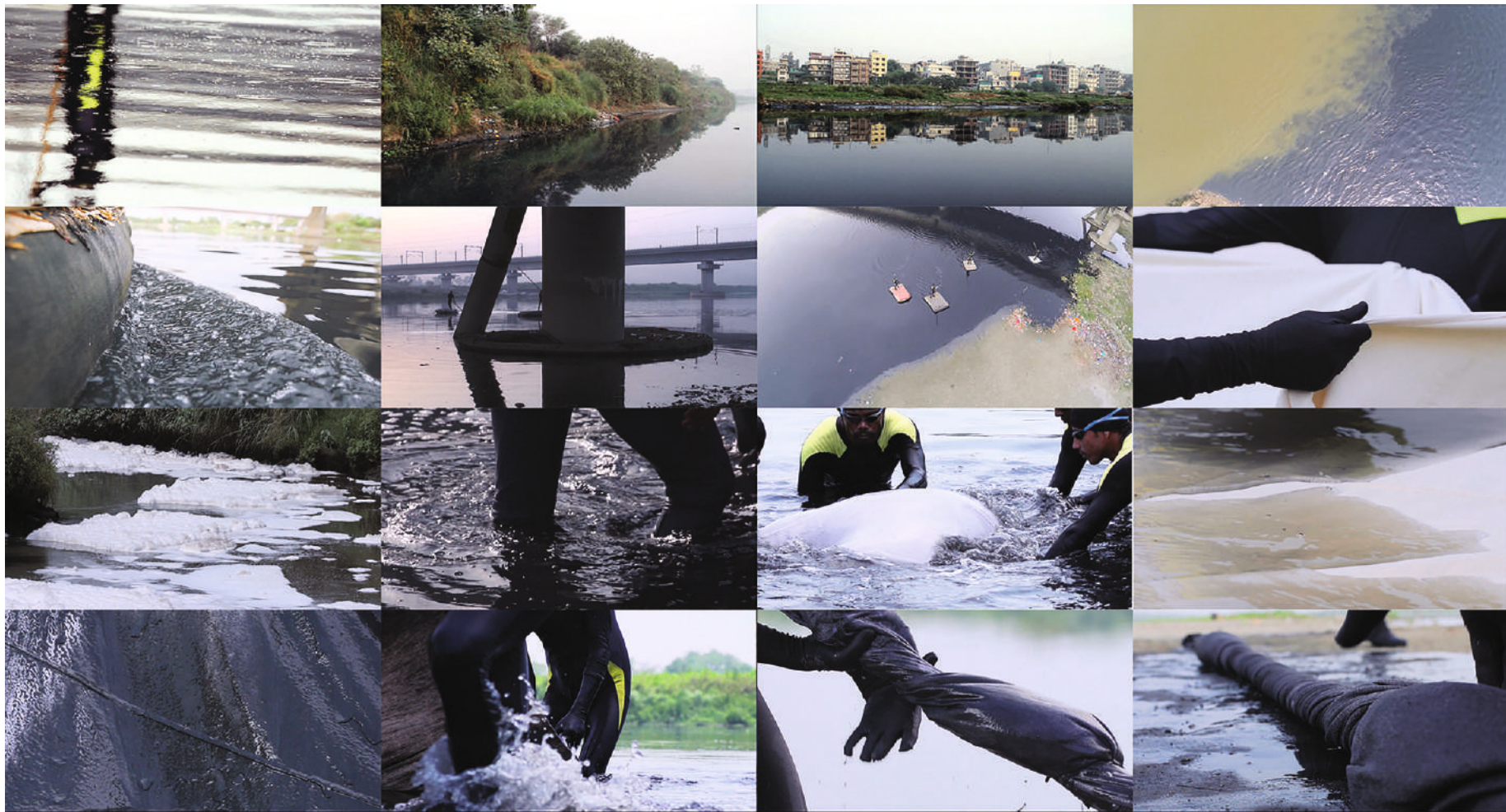
To create a tactile sense of our interdependency to organic and inorganic matter, she created an interactive sound wall in which multiple sounds can be triggered on touch at multiple points. These sounds signal the different "energies" that move and motivate us, connecting our own energies to that of other living and non-living beings. She notes, "It is said that energy is like a boomerang, what you send out into the world is what is reflected back towards you." Because each living and non-living being is composed of a vast network of atoms, as well as spaces between the matter within each atom, these spaces literally resonate when moved by sound and other energy waves. The



MANTHAN / film duration 10:44 mins /2015



REMAINS / resin, fabric & metal / 8 x 5.5 x 94 in / 2015-16



Stills from the film MANTHAN



TIME SYMPHONY OR CACOPHONY / steel and sound / 96x 168 x24 in / 2016-17





work will create a new symphony out of the incomprehensible cacophony we often hear. At times, the sounds will come together to create a symphony. Together, both the cacophony and the symphony create an atmospheric reference to our present condition.

In the work **BREATH BY BREATH**, Galhotra collected air from different parts of the Delhi; it is an ironic wink that mocks consumer practices. She notes that people are resorting to purchasing oxygen masks in order to get a breath of fresh air, at times paying as much as \$115 on the Internet retail site Amazon.com or buying air purifiers for their homes. Consumer practices that led to poisonous air actually means that we are now trapped into believing that only further consumerism will save us. Clearly, environmental degradation and air pollution only further existing social hierarchies; only the “haves” will be able to afford such luxury. Galhotra protests this impossible situation where the ordinary inhabitant of the city cannot access the right to clean air. To bear witness, and freeze time itself as a record of this catastrophe, Galhotra collects the air of the city surrounding her.

Given that we face something as vast as environmental collapse, artist and engineer Natalie Jeremijenko points out that we experience “a crisis of agency – we don’t know what to do as

individuals⁷.” But Eleanor Heartney suggests that because of its “tendency toward metaphor and verbal/visual play, its resistance to received ideas and its willingness to colonize new areas of knowledge,” art can have an important part in persuading “us to think differently about our relationship to the environment.”⁸ People need “personal stories, with implications and solutions rather than only facts to become pro-active,” contends Jill Scott.⁹ She believes that artistic practices allow us to play with “new forms of communication,” which “can become a viable interpretative catalyst for scientific debate.” Scott explains that visual semiotics – or the “analysis of the ways visual images communicate or interpret a message and the associated psychologies, signs and patterns of symbolism” is an essential part of art school training; it means that artists are – if they fully utilise the arsenal of psychological and aesthetic tools available to them – masters at analysing “behaviour and how it changes, including collective “grass roots” actions...bringing together aesthetic form and content within the context of everyday reality.”¹⁰

Scott argues, further, that often, the public “does not benefit from the dissemination of facts and graphs about disaster – these often cause the general public to become less pro-active” because they are overwhelmed.¹¹ Whilst the scientific community may believe



that slamming people “with horror stories— the collapse of the Gulf Stream, unprecedented glacial melt, desertification or mass extinction” will help change their behaviours; instead, the “sheer information overload” and the accompanying feeling that it is impossible to address such a massive cascade of interlinked problems “increases ...denial.”¹² She notes that this reaction explains why people then “seek scapegoats” to blame, “deliberately engage in wasteful behaviour like trashing the streets during a parade...[or] even totally shut down” because the problems seem too complex and too big for them to handle.¹³ Because art is able to create a dialogue beyond the newspaper’s headline of the day and the screaming urgency of the latest report, it can help us – beyond our class, race, and caste divides – to contemplate the ways in which our understanding of beauty, and even our ways of dreaming of liberation are affected by such challenges.

Galhotra’s practice as an artist is deeply committed to engaging with the question of what one can do – as an artist, as a product of the modern Indian education system who has been taught to comprehend scientific facts and figures, and as a human being concerned with the impact of poisons that daily enter the bodies of the inhabitants of mega-cities like Delhi. She is concerned with the lack of knowledge available to the poor and

marginalised of these cities who are the most affected by the by-products of capitalist modernity – like Flint, Michigan’s residents, who have been drinking water with highly toxic levels of lead for decades, Delhi’s residents, too have been at the mercy of their municipal water. Her work focuses on a localised issue. However, it is also a story that is globally relevant, interconnecting communities that would have otherwise struggled alone, and often in obscurity. Without threads of social media sites that grassroots activism now depend on to disseminate news of the uninhabitable conditions in which they are forced to live, and to publicise the whitewashing efforts of industry and local governments, most of them would have, without a doubt, been “disappeared” from consciousness.

Ultimately, Galhotra’s work is not reaching for a utopian return to a Romantic period, where idealised forms of nature were valourised in art. Rather, her dark optimism employs the philosophy first outlined by Timothy Morton in *Ecology Without Nature*, where he argues that nostalgia for “unspoilt” and idealised nature is more of an obstacle, rather than a catalyst for effective environmental activism. Galhotra, then, leaves us to contemplate, “Who owns the Earth” and what is our individual and collective responsibility, in the face of human-engineered destruction?

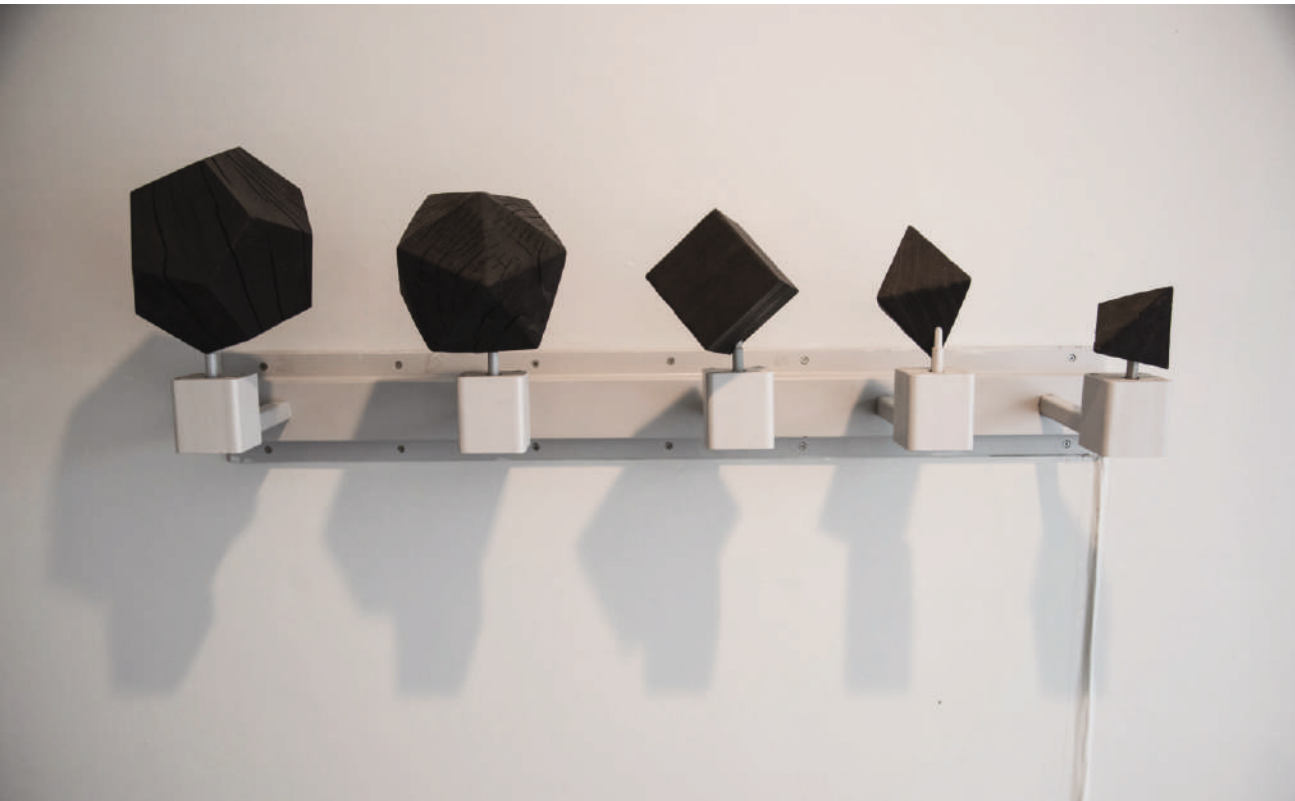
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²Ibid, 11.
³Lack, Jessica. “Can art help us understand environmental disaster?” *The Guardian*. <https://www.theguardian.com/artanddesign/2011/mar/21/art-environmental-disaster-oil>. Accessed 27 Feb. 2017.
⁴Heartney, Eleanor. “Art for the Anthropocene Era.” *Art in America*. 06 FEB. 2014. <http://www.artinamericamagazine.com/news-features/magazine/art-for-the-anthropocene-era/>. Accessed 27 Feb. 2017
⁵Davis, Heather. “The Land and Water and Air That We Are: Some Thoughts on COP 21.” *SFAQ/ NYAQ/ LXAQ: International Art and Culture*. <http://sfaq.us/2016/03/the-land-and-water-and-air-that-we-are-some-thoughts-on-cop-21/>. Accessed 26 Feb. 2017.
⁶Van den Boogaard, Oscar. “In Search of Stanley Brouwn: The Man Who Wishes to Remain Invisible.” *Frieze* blog. 12 Mar 2014. <https://frieze.com/article/search-stanley-brouwn>. Accessed 27 Feb. 2017.
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⁸Ibid. Accessed 27 Feb. 2017
⁹Scott, Jill and Kueffer, Christoph. “Environmental Justice, ‘Collapse’ and the Question of Evidence: What Can the Arts Contribute? A Dialogue.” *Environmental Justice and the Arts*, Vol. 3, 2015. 3.
¹⁰Ibid. 4-5.
¹¹Scott, Jill and Kueffer, Christoph. “Environmental Justice, ‘Collapse’ and the Question of Evidence: What Can the Arts Contribute? A Dialogue.” *Environmental Justice and the Arts*, Vol. 3, 2015.
¹²Ibid. 5.
¹³Ibid. 5.

[IN]SANITY IN THE AGE OF REASON

VIBHA GALHOTRA

18th MARCH - 17th APRIL, 2017



ELEMENTS / wood, steel, motors / 16”x 46”x 13.5”

The work FIVE ELEMENTS is inspired by the mathematical three-dimensional forms of the Platonic solids, named after the ancient Greek philosopher Plato, who designed them around 350 A.D. to represent the atomic pattern of the five classical elements: earth, water, fire, air and ether. The mathematical symmetry of these solids which are composed of congruent regular convex polygons with identical faces meeting at a vertex, led Plato to theorize in his dialogue ‘Timaeus’ that these solids were the building blocks of nature or life itself. To the five solids composed including tetrahedron, cube, octahedron, dodecahedron, or icosahedron, he attributed the atomic patterns of the elements fire, earth, air, water and ether or cosmos respectively. Through this depiction, Plato presented an account of the formation of the universe and believed it to be “the handiwork of a divine Craftsman... who, imitating an unchanging and eternal model, imposes mathematical order on a preexistent chaos to generate the ordered universe (kosmos).” Impressed with these geometric shapes which lie at the cross-section of science and spirituality, Galhotra tried to revisit the formlessness of these elements which give form to everything that exists.



ACCELERATION / ghungroos, fabric, wood and steel / 2 x 117 in / 2017

The work ACCELERATION, is based on Professor Will Steffen’s climate change graph “**The Great Acceleration**”, which shows the changes in Earth’s ecosystem and atmosphere owing to changing economic patterns of production and consumption, the latter especially gaining momentum post the 1950s. Ghungroos, which have been a trademark of Galhotra’s practice, provide fluidity, and therefore tactfully employed by her to deconstruct the anthropogenic trends and reconstruct Steffen’s graph. The metallic sheen of this graphical representation is ambiguous, since while the shiny surface draws the viewer close, bringing him face-to-face with Anthropogenic realities, yet the aesthetic appeal is almost evasive of the very dire realities the work represents, in the process, presenting a satire of sorts concerning our attitude towards our environment.



MANTHAN / film duration 10:44 mins /2015

Water or Jal is the underlying concern of the work MANTHAN, a short film. The element water is dualistic in character, being eternal in its atomic form and yet being perishable in the form of water bodies. The film depicts four people dressed in rubber suits churning the sludge and sediments from the river, thereby invoking Hindu mythology where the gods churn the ocean to obtain the nectar of immortality. By referencing this immortality, Galhotra examines the ecological threat facing the sacred Yamuna river and its repercussions on the mortality of those who come in contact with it. Focusing on the faecal content and chemical pollutants that have polluted the river to the extent of turning it into a sewage, its continued supply of drinking water to the residents of Delhi forces the viewer to contemplate the implications of the latter on not only the health of its immediate consumers, but also the larger ecosystem of the city. Through the work, Galhotra urges us to find a solution before it is too late.



COMBUSTION / steel, brass and brunt fossil fuel / 60 in dia / 2016

The work COMBUSTION is based on the ancient water clock concept encapsulating the element of Fire or Agni. The clock, which denotes time, is made using a big pan filled with burnt oil, containing a small bowl with a pinhole that measures time intervals. Resonating with fire’s essential characteristic i.e. heat, the use of diesel instead of water is a metaphor for humans running out of time to save our planet from becoming ashen through the overuse of fossil fuels.



BREATH BY BREATH /digital print on archival paper / 18x36 in / 2016-17

The work BREATH BY BREATH allegorizes the element Air or Vayu. While air pollution levels in most urban areas have been a matter of serious concern, the data generated through the National Ambient Air Monitoring Network does not cater well to understanding the air quality a common person breathes. The present system of air quality information, therefore, does not facilitate people’s participation in air quality improvement efforts. In this light, the installation works on many levels incorporating a room constructed for the viewers to rejuvenate themselves by breathing in fresh oxygen through a mask or sitting under UV lights. Simultaneously, the room is also equipped with a television screening the performative staged photo-documentation of Galhotra collecting polluted air from different spots in the city of New Delhi. In addition, a LED screen next to the television, displays Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB) data on pollution from the Board’s real time data collection archive. While the experience of “a breath of fresh air” reinvigorates the memory of what only seems to be an extinct forgotten thing, the subsequent juxtaposition of this former experience with visuals and data about our present air scenario aims to creates an urgency in the mind of the viewer. On another note, it calls to question the increasing consumerism which not only led us to such a state of the environment, but which further capitalizes on our lack by creating products like air purifiers and cans of a breath of fresh air, stratifying the socio-economic structure even further. The work resonates with Galhotra’s cry “Who owns the Earth”, forcing us to introspect the extremes to which we will go before we decide to take ownership of our actions.



CLEANSING / video in loop / 2016

The work CLEANSING is an amalgamation of the concerns associated with the elements Air and Earth. Environmental pollution due to mining and quarrying activities coupled with the rise in road traffic and congestion is leading to escalating dust levels. The latter is causing dust deposition on plants and vegetation in turn adversely affecting internal plant processes like photosynthesis, respiration, transpiration, and absorption of phytotoxic gaseous pollutants.[1] In this rapidly changing world, we, humans, considering ourselves to be adaptable creatures barely acknowledge the modern-day pollution levels and passively accept it to be the new reality of the world we inhabit. To retract this passive attitude, three performers will be appointed to clean each leaf of a plant carefully (as in the practice of Zen), without engaging with the viewers, solely focusing on the connection between them and the plant. In this age of Anthropocene, the work is a commentary on the choking breath of plants, ironically the latter being the life saviors of our own breath.



REMAINS / resin,fabric and metal / 8 x 5.5 x 94 in / 2015-16

The work REMAINS is formed from the shroud-like cloths dipped in the Yamuna in the film Manthan firstly before it mixes with the sewage and secondly after it becomes a real cesspool, the color of the fabric revealing the level of contamination of the polluted river in each case. In the sculptural works thus created, the churned fabric along with sediments from the river are inserted in resin, and then encased to archive the contamination of the river, their toxic translucency capturing the contamination of the present times itself.



TIME SYMPHONY OR CACOPHONY / steel and sound / 96 x 168 x 24 in / 2016-17

Ether or Akasha, the most pivotal yet subtle of elements, represents the space the other elements fill in. The origin of ether is shabda or sound in its primordial, un-manifested form, in the form of vibrations which emerge long before they take the form of sound in the ear. Sound and ether are, therefore, inseparable. As a homage to these sound vibrations, the work TIME SYMPHONY OR CACOPHONY, therefore, presents an interactive sound wall incorporating sounds from different time periods, which can be triggered on touch at multiple points. Incorporating both positive and negative sounds of our times and the energy, which moves us, the sound waves connect us to other living and non-living beings. The work, then, will create a symphony or rather cacophony of sounds, orchestrating the atmosphere of our present chaotic times.



MARKS / linoleum and foot print / 18 x 30 in / 2016-17

The work, MARKS, inclines towards the element Earth or Prithvi, resulting from the unknown participation of people walking on linoleum mats laid out at different public places including school, market, parking lot, temple, bank post-demonetization (November 2016), hospital, traffic, metro station, spice market, etc. Resonating with Stanley Brouwn's practice which explored the impact of our daily actions on the environment, the work captures the abstract imagery of people's footprints, metaphorically representing the imprints or rather stains we are leaving behind on our planet.



Vibha Galhotra is a recipient of prestigious **Rockefeller Grant** at their Bellagio Center, 2016. At present, she is an **Asian Cultural Council** fellow in the US, pursuing continual research on belief and reality to intervene on the subject of Anthropocene.

Galhotra's practice ranges across photography, film, video, found objects, performative objects, sculpture, installation, text, sound, drawing, and public interventions. Vibha shares, that her art practice crosses the dimensions of art, ecology, economy, science, spirituality, and activism and constantly trying to create a parallel between belief and reality, absence and presence, construction or [De] construction within the social, political and economical domain of our constructed structures. The constant negotiation of human with ecosystem and win the mystery within that ecosystem, interest her to continue her practice based on research and intuitive imagination to understand and question the alienation of human in the atmosphere or the atmosphere in the human dominated world.

Through her massive but aesthetic work (both philosophically and structurally) she tries to redefine her own existence and ownership in this commerce driven world. Vibha studied art in Kala Bhavan Santiniketan, where she completed her Masters in 2001, and earlier in Chandigarh, Government College of Art. She is been honored with **YFLO Woman Achiever of the Year Award** in 2015, Inlaks Foundation Fine Arts Award in 2005-06, the National Scholarship from the Human Resource Department, Government of India in 2001-02, and the Artist Under 30 Award, Chandigarh State Lalit Kala Academy Award in 1998.

To mention a few of Galhotra's exhibitions, her solo exhibitions include: “Absur–City–Pity– Dity” at Jack Shainman Gallery, New York (USA, 2015); “The Black Cloud Project”: A Public Participatory Project (2014); “Metropia” at Southeastern Center for Contemporary Art, Winston Salem, North Carolina (USA, 2012); “ReBirth Day” at Centro per l’Arte Contemporanea, Piazza Cavour, San Giovanni Valdarno (Italy, 2012); She has exhibited at the Dhaka Art Summit (Dhaka,2014) Kathmandu International Art Festival (Nepal,2012); “Between” at Colombo Art Biennial (Sri Lanka, 2012); “India Awakens - Under the Banyan tree” at The Essel Museum of Contemporary Art, Austria (2010); 4th Aluminum BAKU Biennial (Azerbaijan, 2009). In 2009, she was also featured in Younger than Jesus: Artist directory co-published by Phaidon Press Limited, London, England and New Museum, New York.

Galhotra’s work will be features in the upcoming book of Dr Michael Petry, Book Of Words. Her work is in collections worldwide including the Casa Masaccio Arte Contemporanea, Italy; Gates Foundation, USA; Singapore Art Museum, Singapore; Essl Museum, Austria; Devi Art Foundation, India; Casoria Contemporary Art Museum, Italy; Galerie Gut Gasteil (an open-air art museum), Austria; Saga Art College, Japan; the Europas Parkas, Lithuania.

[In] Sanity In The Age Of Reason will be followed by another Solo exhibition of Galhotra’s collective works from previous exhibition at the LUX institute, San Diego, USA opening on March 29 th 2017 and her presentation at Darkened Mirror, curated by Lauren Dickens at San Jose Museum, US.

The artist lives and works in New Delhi, India

EXHIBIT 320

Exhibit320 is located in the hub of Lado Sarai, New Delhi, India with a focus on exhibition making and discourse on art from the sub-continent. Exhibit320 showcases contemporary art with a focus on India, Pakistan, Sri Lanka and Bangladesh, creating a platform for new ways of creating layered relations between global art histories to that of varied local narratives.Exhibit320’s alternative space 1After320, supports projects in collaboration with artists, writers, researchers and curators as a way to extend the conversation in tandem with those generated within the commercial space.



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