



# VIDEO WEDNESDAY [iii] FESTIVAL

November 21 - 23, 2012  
Wednesday-Friday, 3:00 - 7:00 pm

curated by  
Gayatri Sinha/Critical Collective

Gallery Espace is proud to announce that the **Video Wednesday II** festival will run on November 21, 22, and 23. Located on all three levels of the Gallery, the festival will present over 35 videos, many of which will have their first screening here. "Our intention is to give video an absolute primacy, to trace and share its different creative strains in India" says Gayatri Sinha, curator Video Wednesday II. As such this festival is unique in India in both the private and public domains, a seminal effort to bring video art from all over the country to the city's public.

The **Video Wednesday II** festival will comprise the latest work of early video artists who initiated the medium in the 90s as well as very young video practitioners. The artists include Vivan Sundaram, Jitish Kallat, Sonia Khurana, Sheba Chhachhi, BM Kamath, Atul Bhalla and several

others. Different strains, such as various techniques of animation, documentary and performative video will be on view. Together these mark the progress in Indian video art in nearly two decades since it was first used as an art medium. Humour, surreal affect, critique and autobiography are arrived at through a series of distinct strategies and styles.

The work on view reflects on the themes of water, ecology and the environment, including a critique of the Commonwealth Games. Artists perform the anxieties of gender and sexuality, as well as the threat of a growing urbanism. With this festival **Video Wednesday II** will also travel to other destinations in India and abroad.

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## BAPTIST COELHO

*"Beneath it all... I am human..."*, 2009  
Duration: 9.51 min, single channel video, loop

Since April 13, 1984, the endless conflict between India and Pakistan over the ownership of the Siachen Glacier has been fought at an altitude of around 18,000 feet, which is the highest battlefield on earth. Bitter cold temperatures reaching to -60° Celsius make living conditions unbearable for the soldiers.

"Beneath it all... I am human..." explores the notion about what is concealed is often revealed. This video illustrates a Siachen soldier's clothing being systematically and mysteriously removed to reveal his bare body. The act reminds us that beneath the layers of protective gear there exists the human form; an inner layer that is vulnerable.

The meticulous unzipping and unbuttoning is reminiscent of the laborious task that each soldier endures daily; in a climate where the brutal weather conditions are life-threatening. During the process of undressing, details of the soldier's body are exposed and this simple act expresses a sense of liberation from the conflict and his identity as a soldier. These contrasts are not without peril; as an exposed body would soon perish in the cold.

"Beneath it all... I am human..." is part of the multi-disciplinary project entitled "You can't afford to have emotions out there...". The project focuses on the life of the soldier; not as a machine of war but as a man coping with the day to day complexities of conflict; a soldier with emotions and vulnerabilities like any other human being.

Baptist Coelho Baptist Coelho's projects frequently merge personal research with collaborations from various cultures, geographies and histories.

Solo Exhibitions have included Grand Palais, Bern (2009); Project 88, Mumbai (2009) and BIAD, Birmingham (2006). Two Person Exhibitions include Pump House Gallery, London (2012) and Visual Arts Gallery, Delhi (2009). His work has been exhibited at Ullens Center for Contemporary Art, Beijing (2012); Contemporary Art Centre, Lithuania (2011-12); Zacheta National Art Gallery, Poland (2011); Essl Museum, Austria (2010); Gwangju Museum of Art, South Korea (2010) and Devi Art Foundation, India (2008). Baptist currently is Artist-in-Residence at Récollets, Paris.



## CHITTROVANU MAZUMDAR

*A composite fiction based on several realities*, 2012  
Duration: 7.40 min, single channel video  
Village: Jharmundi. P.O.: Jamui. District: Godda.  
Name: Ragantha son of Munia.

Ten years ago he went to prison for a crime committed by someone else. He chose to do this in exchange for promises. Financial security for his family beyond his own capability, even if he slaved for a lifetime. Protection and shelter for them and him. Plus the threat of retribution if he refused. Behind bars he aged. His innocence did not protect him. He submitted. There was no choice.

A decade later he was let out. He found his family shattered, gone, destitute, all promises lies.

He was on his own now, a convict. He passes his days in the prison of these four walls, watchman of this empty house. He feeds and cleans his cow. The days wheel on.

...and still the old song breathes in him, circling, soft, and he pours it out into the vast vast earth beyond his walls ...

Chittrovanu Mazumdar (b. 1956) a gold medallist from Government College of Arts and Crafts, Kolkata, started his career as a painter best known for his huge canvases and mammoth solo showings. He has since explored a broad spectrum of media and technology in his work establishing his reputation as one of the most innovative artists working in India.

His multicultural upbringing in a family of artists and writers in Kolkata and Paris, and his own restlessly seeking temperament, have led to his developing an international vocabulary and grammar of art which unselfconsciously draws on any manner of aesthetic, literary, and socio-cultural sources and influences.

Chittrovanu finds multi-disciplinary collaborations a source of excitement, and he is known to engage with professionals from various disciplines including theatre and publishing.



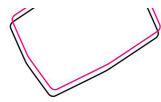
## GIGI SCARIA

*Let it be*, 2012  
Duration: 3 min, single channel video with sound

Invasion and resistance are the two phenomenon as old as human civilisation. These are in fact two sides of the same coin. When we toss the coin most of the time we witness one side of it as coin lands on the ground. It could be a site devastated by the invaders or pushed back constantly by the people who resist them. Linear history most of the time played the character of the one who wins or the one who loses, which means coin was always flat on the ground showing either the winner or the loser. But the present time shows a third view of the situation where one is witnessing the coin stuck on the ground straight without falling on either side. There is an attempt of invasion and resistance in such a way that coin stands motionless. World is

no more a playground of the innocent victims and powerful oppressors. Rather it has started showing the symptom of a puzzled existence of the invaders as well the oppressed. A complex phenomenon in which every attack has its own counter attack built within.

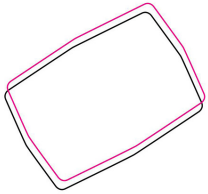
Gigi Scaria (b. 1973) is a Delhi based artist working in mixed media. Scaria was selected to represent India in the country's first-ever participation in the *Venice Biennale* (2011). Recent projects include the *Singapore Biennale* (2011) and the artist-in-residence at the Ian Potter Museum of Art at the University of Melbourne (2012). Scaria's practice - often manifesting in sculpture, photography and film - explores his interest in issues of urban development. His latest work 'Wind Chime' - commissioned for the Govett-Brewster's current exhibition *Sub-Topical Heat: New art from South Asia* (14 July - 4 November 2012) - is representative of international practices engaging with issues of globalisation.



# A COMMUNITY FOR

# PRACTICE AND ITS

# SEVERAL CONTENTS



So pervasive is the spread of video in art practice that to isolate the medium – as much as to isolate the video artist – appears like a misplaced insistence. In VWII the fact that video is being seen as a unitary art form carries implications for its currency and circulation as much as for its reading. As a curatorial decision it also reveals a critical intent: to map the making, to trace a convergence of concerns, to enable visibility to a little documented medium.

It is the particular destiny of the lens based image that it must ride the register from pure to impure states, often entering an art work as part of a whole, rendering it mobile, dynamic. In the process it can render time as elusive, looping in and out in manic repetition, with images flickering in memory long after the experience of the art work is over.

Embedded in this festival is the history of India's over two decade long video art practice, as well as its implications for the future. Through many

sewage flows into a deep and irreversible sense of stasis. In Asim Waqif's **Andekhi Junna**, which follows his earlier work **HELP**, the river is cast as an unseen presence in the city, playing out a sharp contrast to the highly poetized myths of the river from the Bhakti period onwards. This intent, of personifying the river as young and beautiful, is in sharp contrast to existing water bodies in Sharmila Samant's evocative **Mrigajal**. The politics of water's distribution among poor and the wealthy in urban settings is suggested through the metaphorical presence of a woman, whose 'pure' and beautiful presence serves as conscience keeper in the city's contaminated, shambling waste. Samant's **Bombay** is in a sense a brazen city, one in which the filth, the enclaves of wealth and the performative aggression are all played out in full public view.

Singly and together, art works engaging with animation allow for a philosophic engagement with time; anarchic and fantastical in intention,

the suggestibility of drawing is heightened. That the body is a site for constant comparison, the touting of normalcy and the desire for beauty is further developed in Shreefalee Jain's **The Strangest sights of Man**. Her work evolves from the tension around an insistence on possessing the (beautiful) female body. **The Strangest sights of Man** develops on the idea of the freak, the object of prurient interest from the circus or freak show, or the apparently diseased body as an object of revulsion.

Sarnath Banerjee's **Sophistication is Fragile** is in the mode of animation as we recognize it – plithy and aphoristic, even as it develops an identifiable 'character'. Sarnath, whose graphic novels are rooted in sociological shifts uses a combination of found visual material, drawing and animation to create a quasi historic comic view of the middle east political imbroglio. Through the roving eye of his commentator Digital Dutta, Sarnath blends drawings with candid tourist shots and found

(2009) plays on a similar trope of the scale that the artists' body can occupy. In a fetishized act the artist stages the eating one's own body, thus marking acts of consumption and the belief in continuity and renewal. Mithu Sen's work uses a selective body part not unlike her mixed media works, in this case intertwined hands, caught in an intimate play of desire and extreme violence. In Mithu it is this cusp of extremes of the process rather than the complete state which lends her work its delicious tension.

In other performed works, Neha Choksi in **Minds to Lose** enacts different levels of consciousness with – four farm animals – under the effects of anaesthesia. Shaheen Ahmed's direct, and provocative work **Refuse/Resist** turns to what she describes as the politics of her own identity – as an Assamese woman Muslim. As cultural and civilizational conflict in different parts of the world peaks and wanes, she posits the question "what does it mean to be a liberal

there is the process of uncovering the hidden. Sunil Gupta who works through the ethos of Alice Munroe's stories creates a mid narrative context in **The Alice Stories 1: You Stay here and I Stay There 2012**, as it were, of a gay couple in disagreement, leaving us guessing about the beginning and the end of the argument. The levels of intimacy in the relationship and which way it is headed remains tenuously poised. The artist by extension speaks of some of the basic tensions faced by gay couples, issues of housing and a sense of 'locating' oneself in the city. Baptist Coelho in the short work **Beneath it all** .....performs the Kargil soldier in his work, one who peels away layers and layers of clothing, in an act of disarming vulnerability.

Pratul Dash and Pooja Iranna animate their work by oscillating between states of the real and the unreal, past and future rendering nostalgia ironic and curiously displaced. Dash memorializes the pre Commonwealth Games landscape of Delhi,

and anonymous, threatening the very landscape that it was cleared to accommodate. However there is also another memory, of the origins of ownership, of conquest and possession, which underscore the ephemeral nature of rights and historical determination.

Abhishek Hazra, like Baiju Parthan, often positions himself on the cusp of conceptual enquiry between the arts and the sciences, the one informing and enriching the other. In trying to create a visual lexicon for a subject as complex as the Bose – Einstein lectures, Abhishek brings into play the many tropes of animation itself, thus allowing the correspondence between the two great minds to hover and then cross beyond the domains of exploration and play. Paribartana Mohanty, who uses video in a way that challenges the expectation of time in the 'moving image', holds areas of movement and stillness within the same frame. In his recent body of work **Temple** stands out for the

disciplines at its core, video artists have worked towards an unfolding aesthetics, energized by a growing 'community for practice' even as the 'community for reception' remains poorly identified. Video's success in dislodging meta narratives, and allowing for a play of many identities have all been rendered in the absence of a consolidated structure. Too small to be chaotic, disruptive or influentially iconoclastic, video art produced from India nevertheless lays out many micro narratives that connect and enrich our reception of 'art'.

Like photography video serves as an artist's sounding board, a sketchbook of self confession, of artistic intention. It can mark a moment of a biographical self portrait. In some other cases it has the steady output, a serial document to be mined as an archive of engagement. Whatever the intent, Indian artists tend to work with video with compact intent: most video works are single projections, where content is often determined by the technique.

Among its several contents, video has lent itself intensely to the artist and his environment as it sprawls, spreads and chokes into view; the landscape has reneged from the canvas to echo its perpetual state of flux in video. Atul Bhalla has used a lens based practice to create a meandering and philosophic relationship between the city and its river, the Yamuna. Since Bhalla's first work with the Yamuna water in vitrines, the life/death association of the river has been played out. Together and variously photographs and videos which show the interchangeability of the body and the river gain as apotheosis as the world and the self, sociality and the psyche. In the work of Ravi Agarwal, there is a shift in the tone to a heightened expressionist sense of the self mirrored in the river and its debris, its forgotten banks. In the present work **The Sewage Pond's Memoir** the memory of a familial home, migration and stagnant water contaminated with

they aspire for entertainment and 'development' harking back in a memory loop to the first such Films division animation, **Ek aur anek**. Mythologizing the landscape has found its contemporary mirror image in animation – the cartoon, the naïve mimicry of the drawing of non-art. Animation has become a refuge for the landscape, an accommodation of its ills and its unpredictability. It is here in the manner of the Amar Chitra Katha comics, that the landscape can sway and swell, change colour, even move and migrate. Archana Hande's watercolour based silent film plays on the notion of an imaginary nature of the future, a chromatic envisioning of the world as we know it, seen through the troubling lens of the politics and possession of land. Aditi Chitre's engagement with the landscape in her highly controlled work invokes the landscape as a site of migration and memory. Aditi Chitre's remarkable work **Journey to Nagaland** (2010) integrates an extremely well rendered drawing board into a slow and meditative rhythm. The inner and outer migrations within India from village to district to town to metropolis evoke different time cycles, and circular journeys. In Chitre's work, space as alienation and unbelonging gain a fine painterly dimension. BM Kamath brings animation into the domain of the personal and the anecdotal, invoking a trapped beast as a symptom of nature and individual creativity. Working through the narrative of a child, he locates animation within the stream of the informal and the domestic.

In **Everything is Beautiful** seen during the course of the year – long Video Wednesday 2, Subba Ghosh's combination of drawing and performance projected both processes into the trajectory of the hyperreal. **An Oral History of the Mouth** (2012) born out of 400 drawings is a feat in the way it locates the mouth as the locus of all expression and desire. The familiarity of narrative strategy is overturned, and the power of

material to speak of the literary and hermetic sciences in the Arab states, oil and oligarchies, and the imperatives of civilizations.

Animation also draws on strategies of inventiveness Rohini Devasher has excelled in the technique of video feedback to evoke bio-morphic forms – in this case, of the double channel work **Doppelganger**, two dragonflies go through nine states of 'transition' and the consequent effects on their forms and being. Vishal Dar creates a short cryptic work that snatches images from the web; these intersect free floating text that recall mass technology and images of art or mediatric history. Images and stock texts appear and die away devoid of context, markers in our experience of a non linear visual history.

Video in India like photography tends to be performative with the artist leaving a quasi biographical imprint. Vivan Sundaram, who stands in the avant-garde of video in India is seen with an unusual staging of the self in **Wigwam Tune**, (2009) a short performative piece. As the artist protagonist, he stages the making of an archive as text, tome, structure. As work and text are made before us, memory of Sundaram's own works and processes from his large and complex oeuvre may be read. The short performance reads like a valedictory, a summation of a life's work – stark and pared down, one that stages an interchangeability between one's lifework and a material archive. Sonia Khurana who performs much of her own work, using her presence and auto-biographical location excels in **Closet**. This work which appeared during some of the more rigorous debates around the beauty myth highlights the neurosis around self imaging and the 'imperfect' female body, through the repetitive gesture of clothing the body, even as real time is complicated to convey an anxious, even neurotic self gratification. Bharathesh Yadav in **eXtra Large**

Muslim woman in today's day and age?" Following Partha Chatterjee's argument, she states that in times of conflict, it is the female body that is claimed, identified and culturally appropriated as a mark of continuous tradition.

Video as interpretive documentary, which converges with film is played out in narratives that explore sexuality, politics and the record of a harsh underbelly of urbanism. Surekha's **Unclaimed** (2010) with its matter of fact record of the burial of unclaimed bodies in Bangalore, uncovers issues of anonymity and the city means of dealing with the dispossessed. Sheba Chhachchi returns to images from her own archive, which in this act of retrieval become document to a personal and the political interweave, through different registers of impassioned engagement. The evocation of the past as cross referent with the present of cycles of violence and their inadequate redressal also interwork and play out in Riyas Komu's double channel Tamil/English work **Agam Puram**. Kannagi as the third Tamil archetype, of the Silapadikaram, (1<sup>st</sup> – 3<sup>rd</sup> CE) whose tragic story is centred on her husband's death without trial is quoted within the context of the Tamil massacre in Sri Lanka. Komu's resurrection of Kannagi in this narrative asserts the unabated need for redressal and of women at the centre of violence and genocide. What disappears through the cracks in mass genocide is naming, identity and commemoration.

Documentary/performance as an act of uncovering compels the confronting of ideas on different registers. In Navjot Altaf who brings an intense social consciousness to bear in her work, testimony is pared down to a straight documentary record of the testimony of sex workers. **Touch IV** (2010) which is part of a larger installation allows for commentary and questions and through that,

its smaller streets and itinerant hawkers, and the massive displacement of such figures. The city animated as a house/home then comes to bear a number of symbolic messages. Pooja Iranna's identification within her work is as a dialogue with India's newest wave of urbanism, of the growing city as a consumer of the elements. In the present work she takes a side sweep at the concept of green cities and spaces as cosmetic, green rendering a surface response rather than a genuine redressal of the environment. Seen within the context of her sculptural work Pooja recognizes and isolates industrial elements as repetitive that accumulate and finally choke and seal life within themselves.

Video also maps the world of whimsy, and the artist's world of private questioning and resolution. Baiju Parthan quite typically in his work associates apocryphal ideas, challenging our expectation and materiality. His concise and visually terse video addresses the figure of Abbe Faria, the Goan prelate who introduced 'oriental hypnosis' to Paris in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century. Faria as the father of Hypnotism was also a seminal figure in the Goan uprising against their Portuguese masters, and was imprisoned for his political activities.

Madhu D in **Three views of Hugh Cloud** plays upon the ordinary and the mundane image of a man painting a water reservoir to make the case that change is cosmetic and desire is constant, and that all human aspiration is in a state of becoming rather than being. This cryptic, witty video of the mundane and seemingly endless task of painting brings on a dead pan vein different registers – of notions of beauty, and aspiration.

In Gigi Scaria flights of fancy invariably have a conflicted content. The middle class migrant's ultimate aspiration, a house in the city becomes through the sheer process of iteration replicated

reductive symbology and the near tactile sensation that the work creates of the potential for change that human intervention must bring within an unspoilt landscape.

Chittrovanu Mazumdar approaches video with the same faculty that he uses for his painting and his installations: a sensuous engagement with colour, the human or mystical presence as a trace, and the looking on at an art work as an act of immersion. His work **A composite fiction based on several realities** is drawn on the story of a tribal imprisoned for a crime he did not commit, and the devastation he faces as a released convict, which renders his 'innocence' redundant. Swathes of colour, textured with an entrapped silence render the video work painterly.

Finally in Raqs Media Collective's work **The Surface of Each Day is a Different Planet**, which is part of a larger installation, the very potential of video for linear unfolding is turned inside out. Episodic impressions and images collide and merge seamlessly like a cascade of historical simultaneities. The medium fulfils its promise in the play of hypertext and image, perpetually on the cusp of retrieval and creation.

Gayatri sinha  
November 2012





**V**ideo Wednesday II, the second season of Video Wednesday, a year long education-outreach program of Gallery Espace holds a special place in my heart. It is a program in which team Espace takes great pride.

The Video Wednesday II festival is a culmination of videos shown in a loop on the last Wednesday of every month. Curated by Gayatri Sinha, this program has further strengthened and taken a significant step by hosting Chinese video art in India. We are grateful to Zhou Tiehai the curator of the Minsheng Museum, Shanghai for curating the Chinese video section.

'Video Wednesday' is one of the most ambitious endeavours by the gallery, as it hopes to bring together its twin ambitions of supporting practice and scholarship on contemporary Indian art. The programme was started in 2008, with the aim of showcasing Indian artists' extensive output in the medium.

With technology advancing at a very fast pace and artists of today exploring and creating some exciting videos, films and animations. Video Wednesday II, festival will debut several works marking certain trajectories in video art. Espace is known for its medium based shows our interest and support to varied mediums in art will continue with the same zeal and enthusiasm.

I owe the successful completion of the second season of Video Wednesday to its committed team of Kiran Sachdev, Jaya Neupaney, Pawan Rana, Neerah Kumar, Neelam Sinha, Bahadur, Rakesh, Anil, Dinesh and Sandeep. Pawan Rana deserves a special mention for his technical support to this program. My abundant thanks and gratitude to my friend and curator, Gayatri Sinha who has supported me and has taken this program forward.

Akshay Rathore for his designs. My special thanks to Jaya Neupaney who has worked tirelessly to coordinate the festival and for bringing forth the idea of Video adda.

I express my thanks to all the participating artists who have had faith in this project and have shared their videos with us.

I also thank all the galleries who agreed to share their artists' videos and supported our program.

Thank you to my family for their patience and understanding.

**Renu Modi**  
Director  
Gallery Espace