

Urbane Change, a collection of images of a city, has been put together by curator Andrea Kuenzig, an international photographer based in Berlin. It is essentially a dialogue that started "a few months ago, in May". It was an attempt to show "how artists and photographers can approach a topic," says Kuenzig, through a three-week course at the Max Muller Bhavan, Mumbai. "We wanted people who were talented and had something to say." In the workshop, seven individuals — Baptist Coelho (Mumbai), Claire Arni, Vivek M, Mahesh Shantaram (Bangalore), Alefiya Akbarally, Jagath Deerasekara (Colombo) and Sohail Abdullah (Karachi) — came together, took pictures, talked about them and then displayed their work in *Urban Change*.

It was important that "everybody should find their own approach", Kuenzig explains, a process by which the project attained a special diversity. And it was not as easy to do as the brief sounded, since "You cannot force artists to do anything. For instance, I tried to force Mahesh to take photographs of Mumbai, but then his work did not have the same intensity" as what he really wanted to photograph, she recalls.

As guide and mother-ben to the group, Kuenzig herself saw little of Mumbai, except "through the images and art. The city has a rich, lively culture that I would love to come back to see." For now, she is "happy with the results" of the collaboration.

There are plans — "but it depends on the funding" — for the show to travel to other cities in the country and "maybe even Germany". For now, each of the artists involved will continue to document urban change in their own special way.

A change in cityscape

Seven photographers came together at a workshop in Mumbai to describe the evolution of an urban landscape, each with a different point of view. Ramya Sarma takes a look at the results



Mahesh Shantaram

I'm always interested in subject matter that is typically considered unworthy of attention — urban landscapes, crumbling streets, middle-class housing. I got it all without having to step out of my house. In a busy city like Bangalore, we crave familiarity, but hesitate to introduce ourselves. My work is a take on the natural tendency to stand by the window and rack our brains over who the girl next door is seeing.



Clare Arni

I wanted to concentrate on disappearing trades, villages within the city that maintain their old order, so I decided to find the oldest trade in my own region. I found change in the silk industry — it was being pushed out, there were very few people doing it. In Mumbai, I looked at five different subjects and zeroed in on the fishing community, one of the oldest in the city, but now marginalised. It's just the start for me.



Vivek M

I was documenting a community of scavengers who had taken up the profession ten years ago; they were agriculturists originally. I want to continue my work in Bangalore and get a more intimate view of the social existence of these people. Their psyche and the interaction between them and other strata of society is interesting. I start with observation, then I let it develop on its own; sometimes I don't have a conclusion.



Alefiya Akbarally

I am somewhat happy with the work I have done; it's difficult to know when to be happy with your work and sometimes when to stop. I think the work represents a valuable insight into urban change and much can be gained from different audiences seeing it. I learned a lot from this — from how to do a story in a city which is not your home, to editing images, making friends, selecting topics, creating a story and more.



Sohail Abdullah

There is no limit to how long the artist can maintain his own and his audiences' interest. I do not have the distance with my city, Karachi, to look at it with wonder, as I looked at Mumbai. This was the first in a long time that my approach was more documentary, if not journalistic. It is essential to be versatile and open to new ideas; to allow one's self to be inspired and catch the flow of things.



Jagath Deerasekara

This was my first visit to India. I chose Sweet Sugarcane because I wanted to explore and document the lives of the people at the end of the value chain of the sugarcane juice industry. I would love to explore the complete value chain. Its existence amidst big brands with billions in advertising money intrigues me. It was not only a fabulous photo assignment, but a good photographers' networking project for the region.



Baptist Coelho

I don't fit the idea of being a photographer with a documentary style. I use my own space, exploring it from where I am. This new series has helped me to see other views as a kind of compilation. It showed me how important people are — there are six degrees of separation that I have tried to depict with six images taken from a single window in six minutes, making it into an installation with six-minute-long soundscapes.