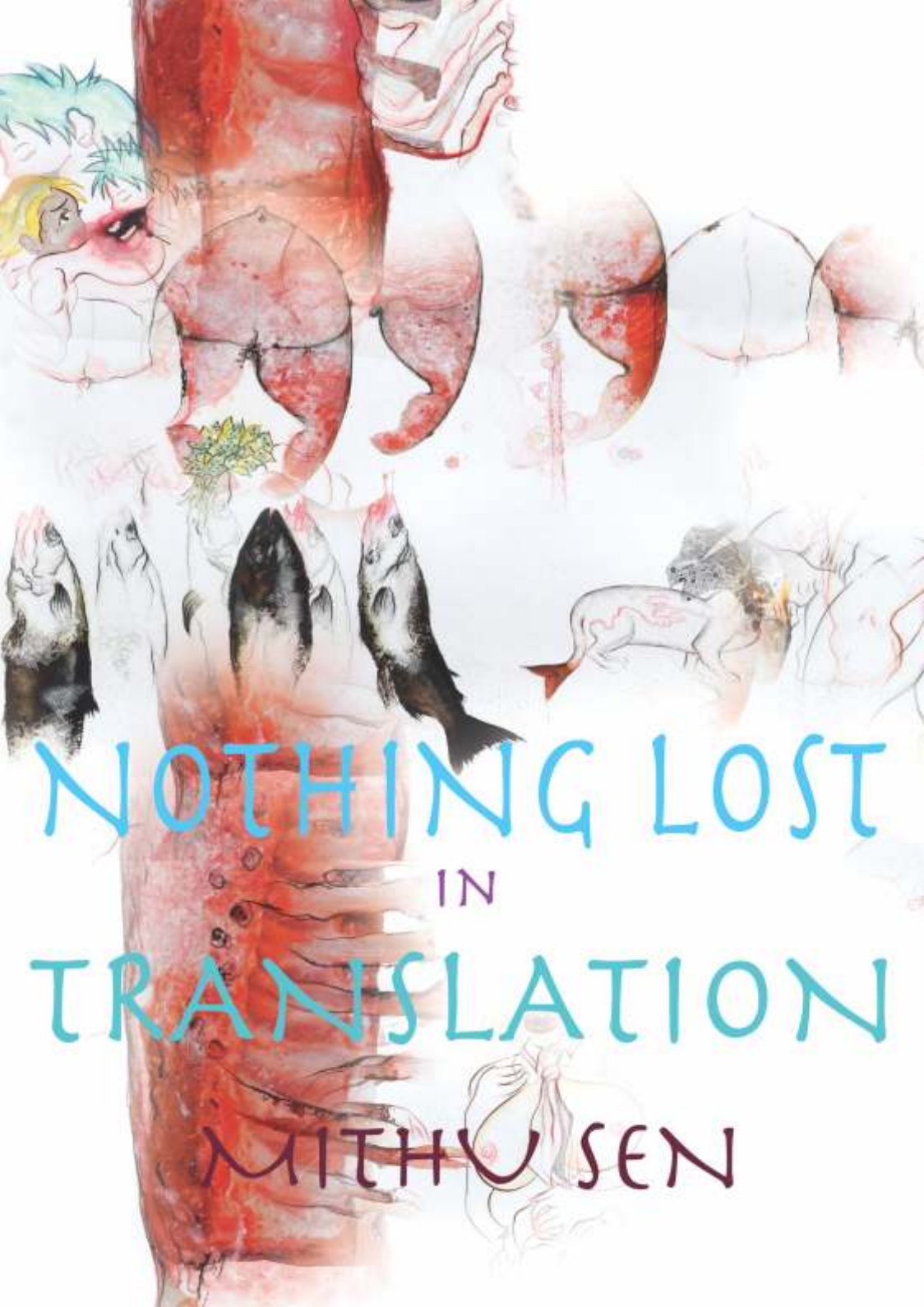




NATURE MORTE

BERLIN



NOTHING LOST  
IN  
TRANSLATION  
MITHU SEN



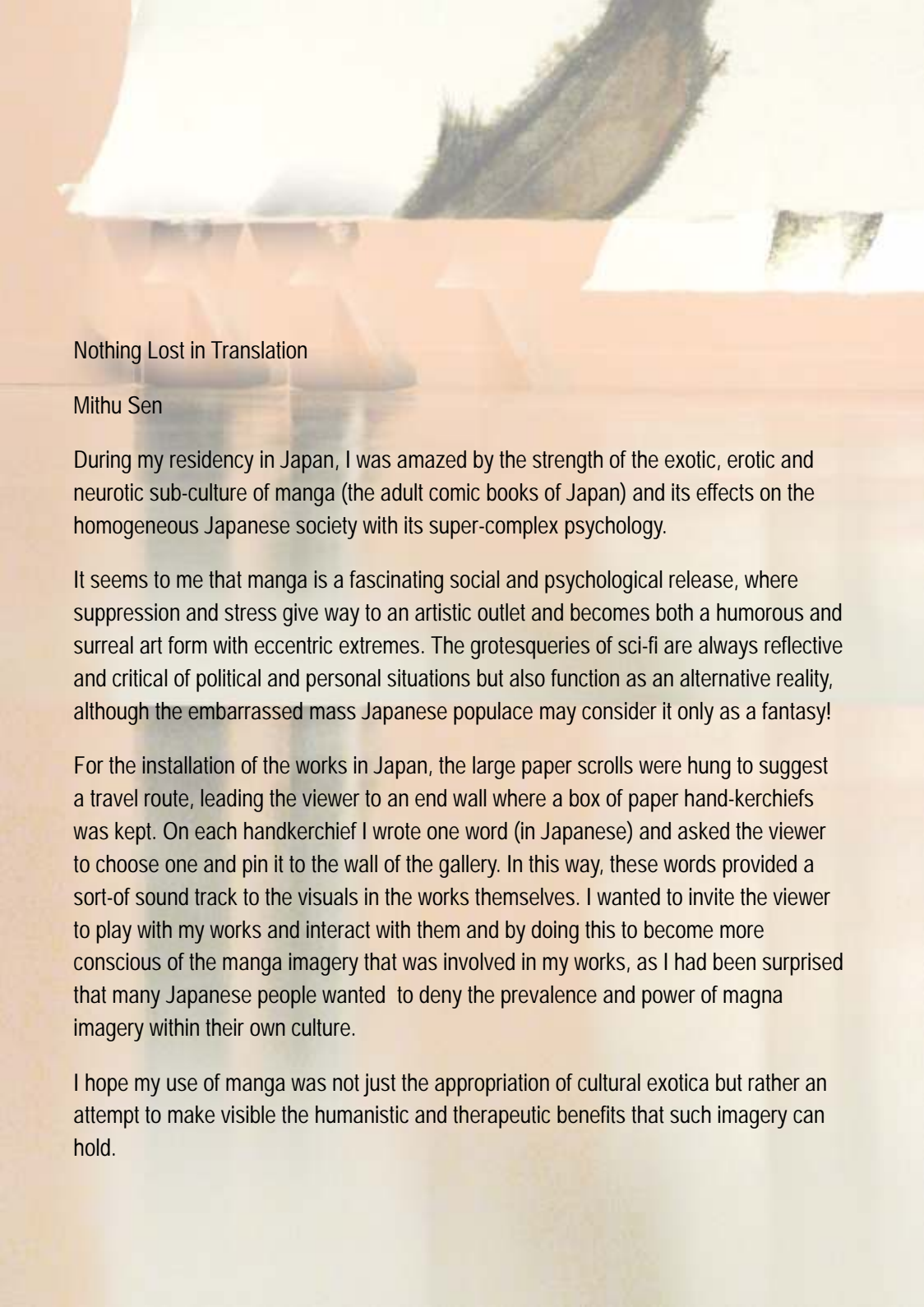
NOTHING LOST  
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## Nothing Lost in Translation

Mithu Sen

During my residency in Japan, I was amazed by the strength of the exotic, erotic and neurotic sub-culture of manga (the adult comic books of Japan) and its effects on the homogeneous Japanese society with its super-complex psychology.

It seems to me that manga is a fascinating social and psychological release, where suppression and stress give way to an artistic outlet and becomes both a humorous and surreal art form with eccentric extremes. The grotesqueries of sci-fi are always reflective and critical of political and personal situations but also function as an alternative reality, although the embarrassed mass Japanese populace may consider it only as a fantasy!

For the installation of the works in Japan, the large paper scrolls were hung to suggest a travel route, leading the viewer to an end wall where a box of paper hand-kerchiefs was kept. On each handkerchief I wrote one word (in Japanese) and asked the viewer to choose one and pin it to the wall of the gallery. In this way, these words provided a sort-of sound track to the visuals in the works themselves. I wanted to invite the viewer to play with my works and interact with them and by doing this to become more conscious of the manga imagery that was involved in my works, as I had been surprised that many Japanese people wanted to deny the prevalence and power of magna imagery within their own culture.

I hope my use of manga was not just the appropriation of cultural exotica but rather an attempt to make visible the humanistic and therapeutic benefits that such imagery can hold.



"Nothing Lost in Translation 1" 2008

Mixed media on Japanese Kozo paper ; 350 cms high x 240 cms wide







Detail from 'Nothing Lost in Translation 1'



Detail from "Nothing Lost in Translation 1"



"Nothing Lost in Translation 2," 2008

Mixed media on Japanese Kozo paper; 350 cms high x 240 cms wide

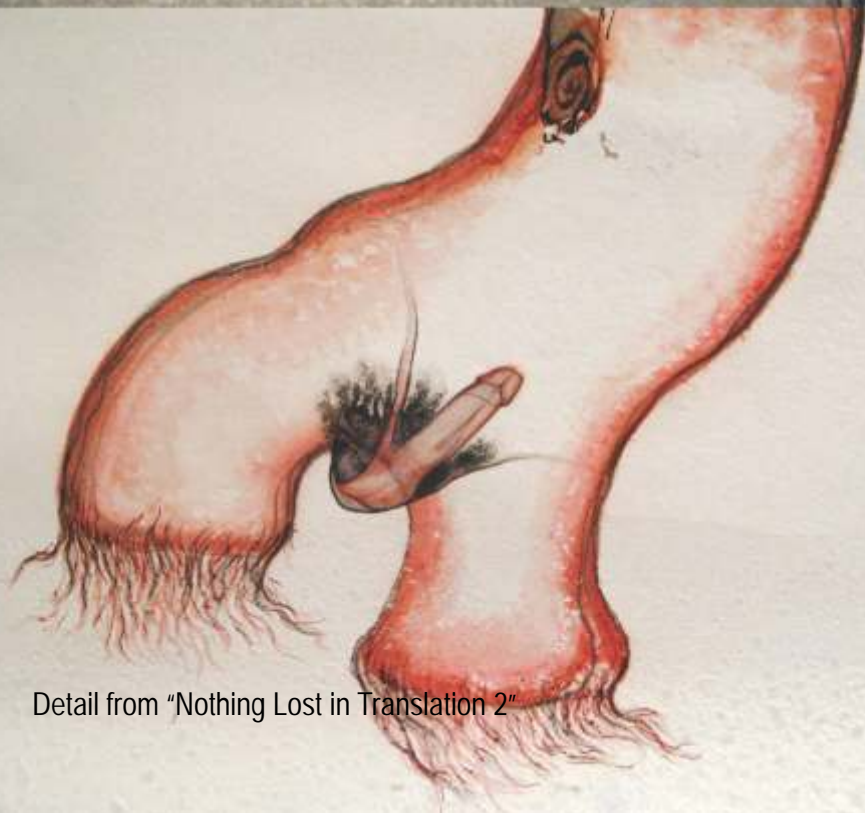






Detail from "Nothing Lost in Translation 2"





Detail from "Nothing Lost in Translation 2"



"Nothing Lost in Translation 3 " 2008

Mixed media on Japanese Kozo paper; 350 cms high x 240 cms wide





Detail from "Nothing Lost in Translation 3"





Detail from "Nothing Lost in Translation 3"





Installation at National Museum of Modern Art (MOMAT)  
Tokyo, Japan 2008





"Nothing Lost in Translation 4 " 2008

Mixed media on Japanese Kozo paper; 350 cms high x 240 cms wide





Detail from "Nothing Lost in Translation 4"





Detail from "Nothing Lost in Translation 4"



## The Map for Escaping

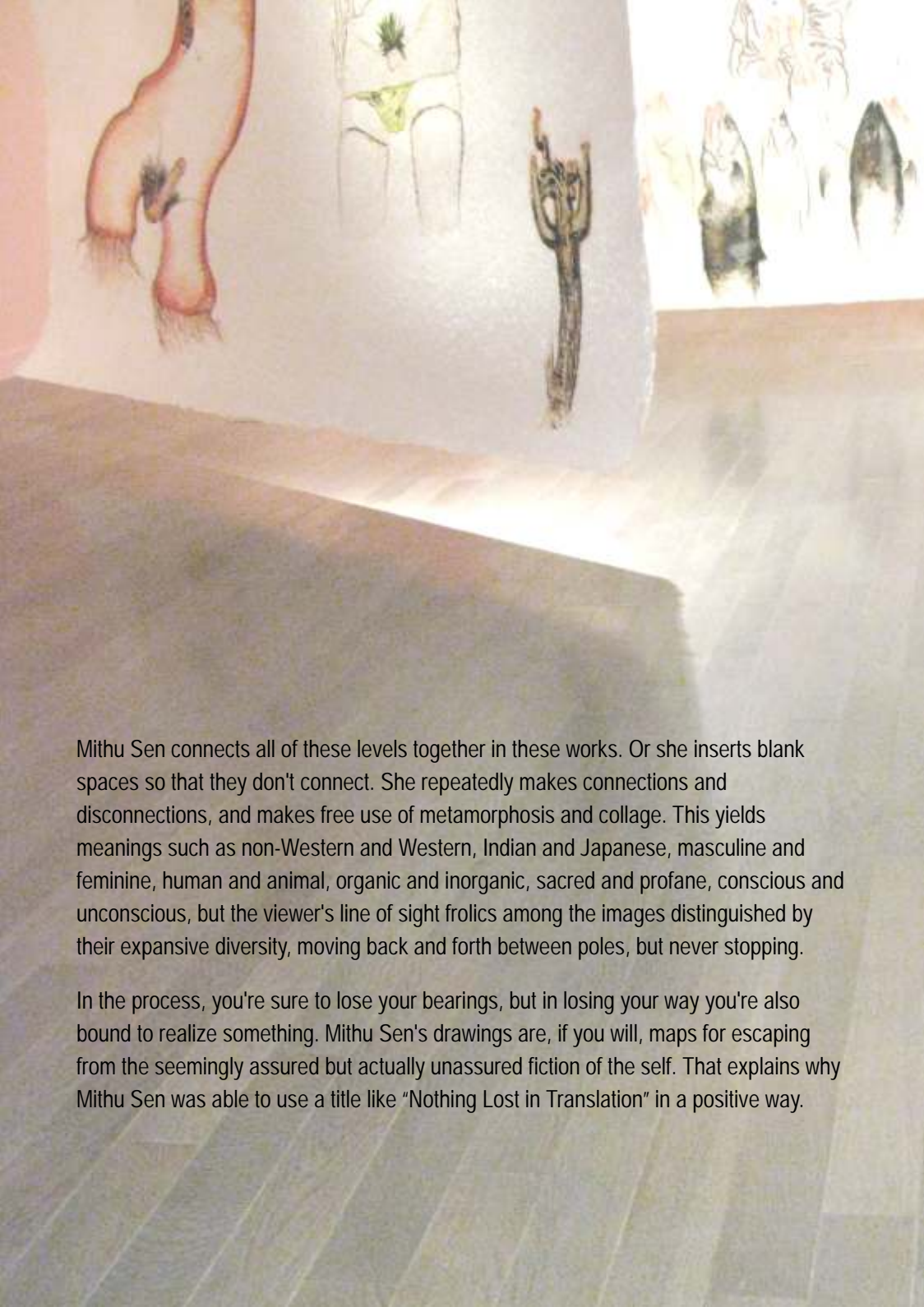
Kenjiro Hosaka

Assistant Curator, The National Museum of Modern Art, Tokyo

Translation – that's when you take A from a certain language system and connect it with B from another language system. A and B might look as if they're linked (that's the basis of communication) but the fact is, they're not (all the more reason then for "trans"). A coexistence between the gentle and the rough – that's what characterizes "translation."

That's also what characterizes Mithu Sen's drawings. It's partly because of all the depictions of flowers and blood, but what's even more important is her scattering of images from all different kinds of levels.

Particularly in her works entitled "Nothing Lost in Translation," produced in Japan, her inclusion of manga, and what's more, erotic manga, makes the images truly diverse. There are levels of "genres" like photography, drawing, manga, and patterned paper. Juxtaposed there is another level of "species" made up of plants, fish, human beings, and manga characters. And, in addition, a level of "body parts" such as nerves, genitals, and bones, while there's also various levels of "styles" such as realistic, elegant, and pornographic.



Mithu Sen connects all of these levels together in these works. Or she inserts blank spaces so that they don't connect. She repeatedly makes connections and disconnections, and makes free use of metamorphosis and collage. This yields meanings such as non-Western and Western, Indian and Japanese, masculine and feminine, human and animal, organic and inorganic, sacred and profane, conscious and unconscious, but the viewer's line of sight frolics among the images distinguished by their expansive diversity, moving back and forth between poles, but never stopping.

In the process, you're sure to lose your bearings, but in losing your way you're also bound to realize something. Mithu Sen's drawings are, if you will, maps for escaping from the seemingly assured but actually unassured fiction of the self. That explains why Mithu Sen was able to use a title like "Nothing Lost in Translation" in a positive way.



"Nothing Lost in Translation 5" 2008

Mixed media on Japanese Kozo paper; 350 cms high x 240 cms wide









Detail from "Nothing Lost in Translation 5"





## Paper-Making with Mithu Sen

Yoichi Fujimori

Awagami Factory, Fuji Paper Mills Cooperative, Tokushima, Japan

In May of 2008, we received a request from the Japan Foundation to produce papers for the Indian artist Mithu Sen who was invited to participate in the exhibition “Emotional Drawing” to be held at The National Museum of Modern Art in Tokyo.

The first challenge was to make paper which incorporated digitally printed images: to print an image on our inkjet Japanese paper first and then add this piece into one large sheet by layering to each other when the final sheet is made. First, Mithu provided us with the image that she wanted digitally printed on to our inkjet paper. We then cut the piece of paper into the shape of the image and then we added the piece to the larger sheet when it was still at the stage of being made, so that the two pieces will be incorporated into one.

The finished size of each sheet was 3.5 meters by 2.4 meters and Mithu also worked on it when the paper was still wet. For the large sheets of paper we used Kozo fiber which is a traditional material for Japanese paper. It has superb strength



and the paper itself needed to have a good intensity since the art works were planned to be exhibited by hanging from the ceiling. Also, we added the sizing to the paper according to Mithu's request since she would be drawing on the sheets with a variety of materials.

Although we have experience with making large format sheets of paper for many years, this was the first time we literally combined the digital print and traditional paper making. Also it was interesting to see how the artist is involved from the first phase of paper making and then afterwards. We were able to see how she worked on the paper in our presence until she completed the large work, with a variety of materials and types of imagery.

It was our honor and privilege to work with Mithu Sen and had a chance to be involved with her works and share the remarkable experiences together. We are truly hoping this experience can be exploited by her in the future and her continued outstanding success.





Awagami Paper Factory in Tokushima, Japan





## NOTHING LOST IN TRANSLATION

Nature Morte Berlin

April 30th to June 19, 2010

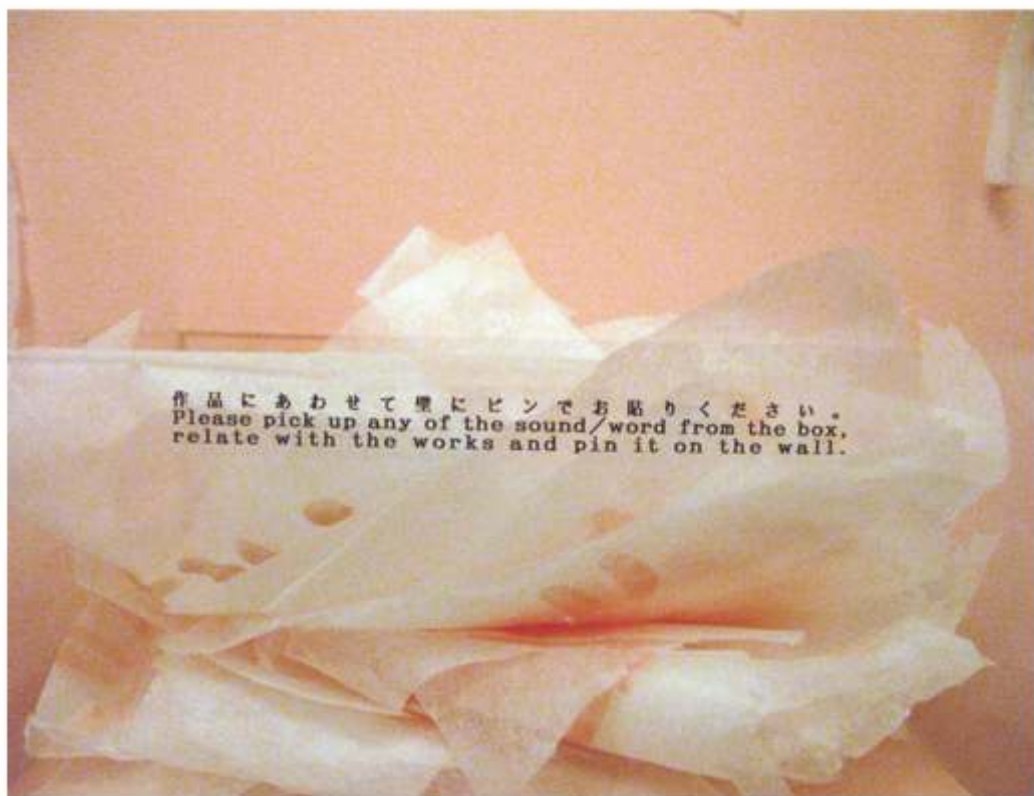
The works were created during a residency at the Awagami Paper Factory in Tokushima, Japan, sponsored by The Japan Foundation, for the exhibition "Emotional Drawing," curated by Kenjiro Hosaka, at The National Museum of Modern Art (MOMAT), Tokyo (August 26 – October 13, 2008) and subsequently at The National Museum of Modern Art, Kyoto (November 19 – December 21, 2008) and SOMA Museum of Art, Seoul (February 19 – April 19, 2009).

"Nothing Lost in Translation: " 1,2,3,4,5 2008

Mixed media on Japanese Kozo paper; 350 cms high x 240 cms wide (138"x 95" each)







The installation at the museum included two boxes of paper handkerchiefs with hand-written texts for the viewer to interact.



Mithu Sen was born in Bengal in 1971 and received both a Bachelor's (1995) and a Master's Degree (1997) in painting from the Visva Bharati University in Santiniketan, India. In 2000 she received a Charles Wallace India Trust fellowship to study at the Glasgow School of Art in Scotland for one year.

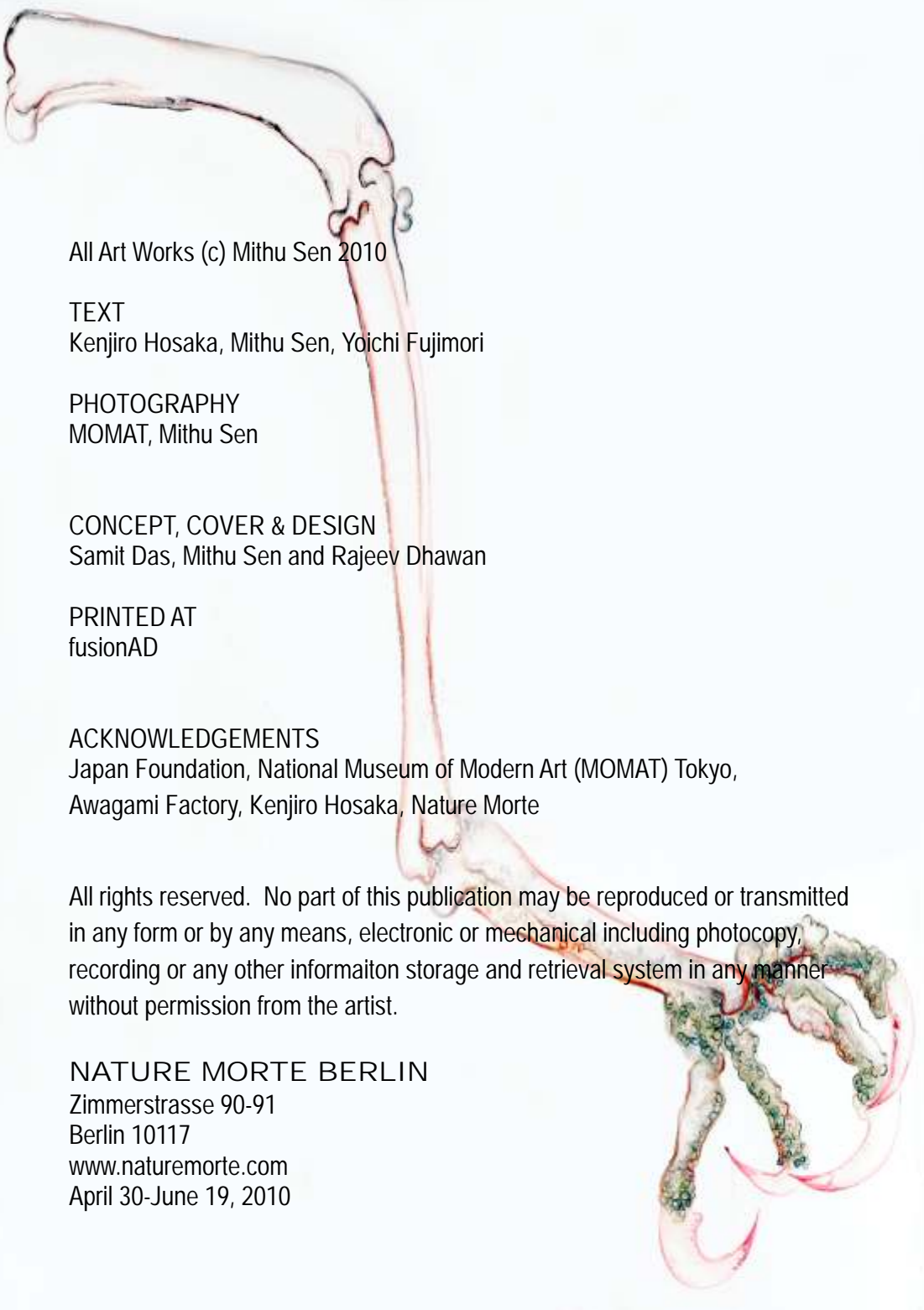
She has held solo exhibitions of her works at Nature Morte, New Delhi; Chemould Gallery, Mumbai; Bose Pacia Gallery, New York; Albion Gallery, London; Suzie Q Projects, Zurich; Krinzinger Projekts, Vienna; Lakeeren Gallery, Mumbai; and the British Council, New Delhi.

Her works have been included in group exhibitions in many international museums including IVAM, Valencia; Devi Art Foundation, New Delhi; Kunst Museum, Berne; Daimler Chrysler Collection, Berlin; Museum of Contemporary Art, Shanghai; Museum Of Modern Art, (MOMAT) Tokyo; SOMA Museum, Seoul.

She lives and works in New Delhi, India.







All Art Works (c) Mithu Sen 2010

TEXT

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