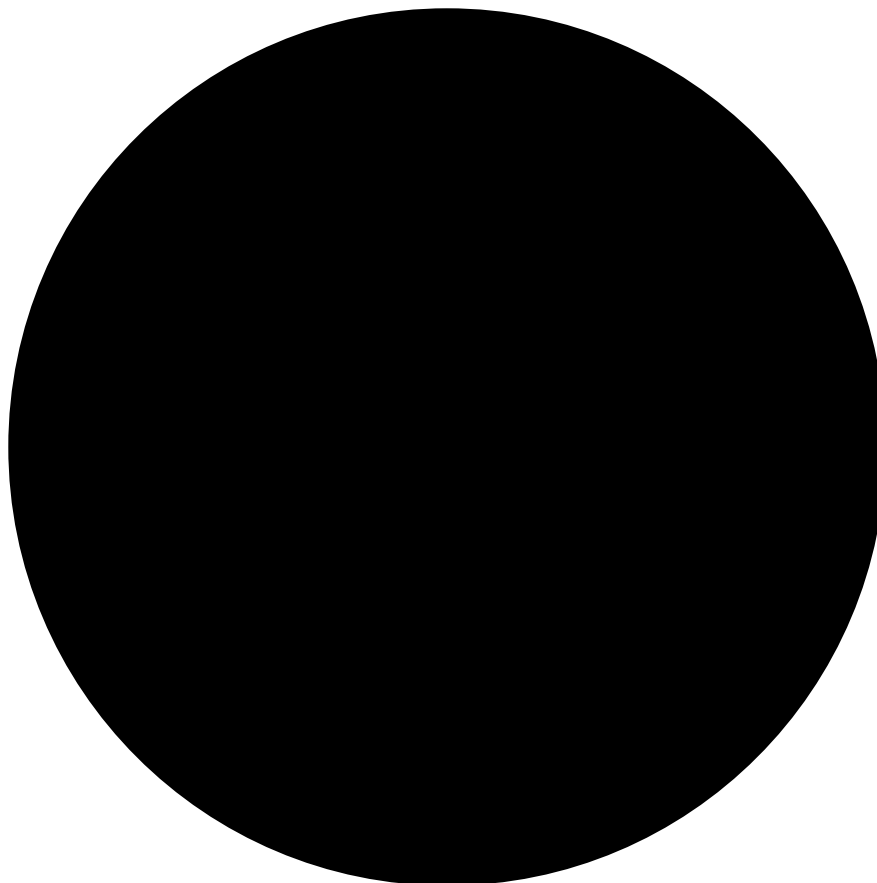
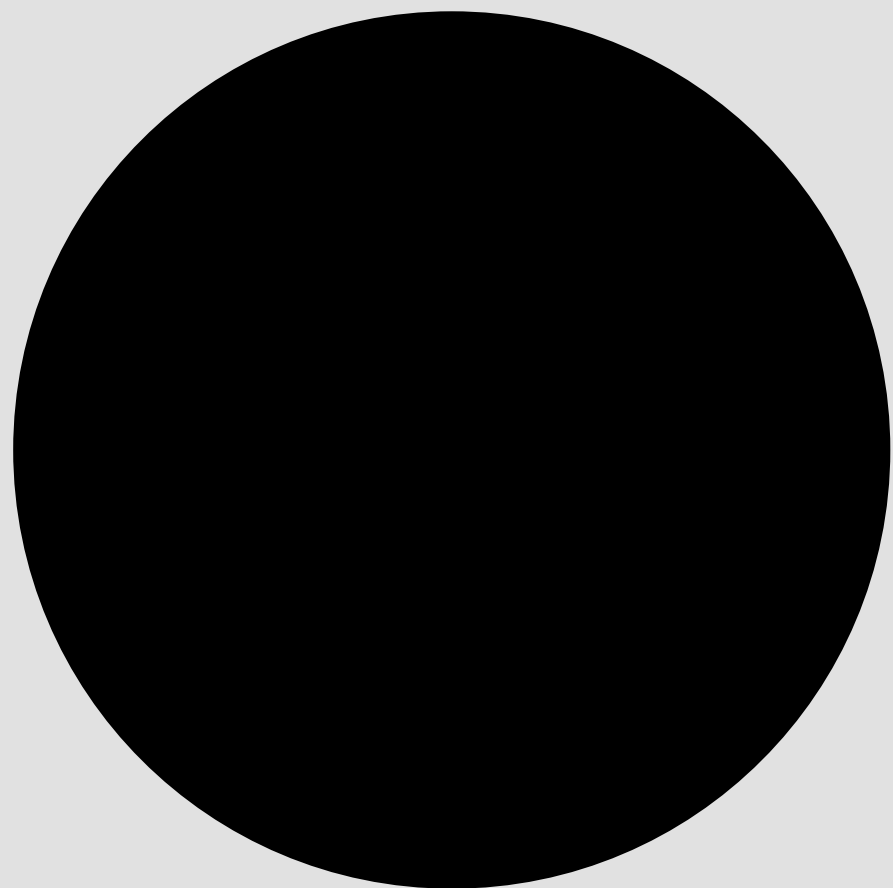


cognitive
environment.



by WinWin88



cognitive journey

by WinWin88

Conceptualised and curated
by Mithu Sen

Edited by Annalisa Mansukhani
Foundation for Indian Contemporary Art

CONDITIONS FOR ENTRY

This book presents a dilemma for author, authored, and by extension, you.

Should you wish to give yourself the answers you so desire, choose the route of the revealer. Read from where others end. Reverse your route.

If more questions are to where you tend, choose the route of the player. Stay the course, run the race.

[Perform with us.](#)



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(MORE) CONDITIONS FOR ENTRY

This is a disclaimer for you, dear reader:

Viewing is conditional and the exhibition is an invitation.

You are hereby informed of being subject to the extrasensory risk

Of being seen

Of having to give up your preconceptions

Of witnessing meaning come apart

Of decisions and deceptions being made for you (not by you)

What is the visibility you seek? Where will it take you?

All objects are henceforth decoded, interconnected and intentional.

All concepts are henceforth transient, dimly lit

and disruptive

In time, what will you take and what will you leave behind?

Forged in the Crucible of Art | A Stewing

Annalisa Mansukhani

A small patch of grey in a sea of a white. Colour; distinctive, strange, inviting yet oddly confounding. Large iterations of authority and the absence of attention. Paths to be taken, routes to be avoided, the noise of consumption. Neon has no sympathy; its starkness is a poem. Yet somewhere, reciprocity enters viewership. Exchanges—of thought and action, didacticism and meaning-making—are suddenly central; they are both definitive and murky. The dimensionality of an exhibition as an anamorphic proposition.

In his essay ‘Crisis of Poetry,’ Stéphane Mallarmé writes, “It is not description which can unveil the efficacy and beauty of monuments, seas, or the human face in all their maturity and native state, but rather evocation, allusion, suggestion.” A prosaic insertion might serve no purpose here, as the grammar of the poetic-essayistic might offer us more room to indulge in abstract (mis)translation, keeping with the spirit of what is to unfold ahead.

Economies of art swell in the contemporary moment, brimming with the comfort of types and the vastness of multiplicities to fill those types. As we inch—or hurtle—towards an angst of definition, that which is concrete cracks. Riotous thought—or the possibility of it—spurs a staggered movement in the space of exhibition, birthing an activated spectatorship that is eager, yearning and anxious.

Seeing is continuous deflection. The act of seeing hides behind mirrored surfaces, it is shielded by blinkers and bright lights that beckon and beam with predisposed intention. Confronted by this, viewership emerges as the primary sense organ

of the spectacle of the exhibition—the act of viewing is also in turn determined by the assertive fluidities of those viewing and the activations that they bring with them. The negotiation that is performed here speaks volumes of the persistence of art and its incongruities, some things perspiring for semblance, some for disorder. There is always a delay, just that it goes unnoticed. Do the white walls speak? Will the white lights dim? The devolution of a body politic(al) confronts the form of category within the space with the formlessness of what it means to belong to a category without.

Cognitive Ignorance—an expedition, an experiment—entailed the coming together of an anonymous ensemble of players and artworks, represented by a fictional collective, WinWin88. As a special artist project supported by the Foundation for Indian Contemporary Art, it opened to diverse audiences at the India Art Fair 2020 and was an experiment in seeking and recording novel forms of audience participation. The anonymity of the Collective and of the artworks that it displayed generated an affectivity geared towards augmenting the way people interacted with the works themselves, outside of instructional aids and identifiers that are often the usual markers influencing viewership and reception.

Imagining the space of the exhibition as an art-laboratory, Cognitive Ignorance created and elicited a mapping—of perception, information, and agency—within larger discourses around the art market, ideas of value, worth and meaning. In keeping with these instigations, the project also extended the possibility for audiences to enter and interact with the space of exhibition across different registers. As a space eager to converse, to co-ideate with its viewers, and to think continually of play, it curated micro-encounters with fragments such as authorship, gender, nationality, language, familiarity and context. It toyed with the potency of absence, the

watchfulness of apparatuses and the creation of lacunae—audiences were invited to sieve encounters for themselves, urged to leave behind their thoughts and reflections in an experience distinct from the more familiar methods of consuming art.

As an exercise in intellectual humility, Cognitive Ignorance invited its audiences to form both personal and structural relationships with the artworks on display. The project was an attempt to site art while working to co-formulate the site itself. This affectivity was multi-sensory, linked to contemporaneity, to an immediacy and specificity of environment and surrounding; it read deeply into how we place ourselves in relation to what we see. This meant a dialoguing with the given physical dimensions of the site—across two booths at the India Art Fair—but it also spurred an activation of the rest of its more evocative, poetic dimensionality. This siting was a deprivation of sorts: a balancing act that brought together multiple perspectives, interventions, and most importantly, enrichments.

The performative as such is verbose, within a site-specific slipperiness. It is fecund and transient, its tendency to both withhold and over-share is legendary. As an idea in the making, Cognitive Ignorance developed an amorphous, burgeoning methodology of performance: in part questioning, conspiracist and profound, in part absurdly entertaining, playful and ludicrous. This simultaneity of oppositions was craftily performative, conjured in an interposal capacity, eschewing the didactic for the cryptic, hatching tangents and incantations for the art objects on display. The performance of a response—the exact moment one decides to leave behind a part of themselves and follows through—and its tensions of affect and articulation were exacerbated through mediations in the space, guided as interruptive manoeuvres to trip up how people ‘place’ themselves in a space—things are

always relational; you are seen as you are seeing.

Evoking counter-structures of artistic solidarity through its network of players, performers and participants, Cognitive Ignorance grew to extend beyond the image/object into experience, allowing us to site our propositions for art and exhibition-making. Now, moving beyond the frame of such a canvas, this is a point of assimilation, garnering the potencies of the book form. The project now takes form as a publication to collect and (in)cohere the various tangents that emerged and were evoked through the process of visualising this collaborative project between FICA and WinWin88. A richer, more indulgent deepening of our enquiries and our positionalities as players and co-conspirators. Assuming an afterlife of reflection, collating and conversing with new possibilities, routes and rethinkings, this book presents a re-weaving of sorts that performs across the pages an invitation to its reader-viewer-players to coalesce and converge with truth and fiction, alongside the named and unnamed.

The interconnectedness that designs the asymmetries of encountering art, its resident (resistant!) objecthoods, abstractions and expressions is firmly non-linear, resisting the predictive while comprising the whole. The decoded object is restless, for it is a world of concepts, transience and dim lighting that wins in the face of artistic intentionality. Caught between seeing and being seen, between (in)cognition and intellectualism, ours is—and has been—an entangled witnessing of art, saddled with a regimentation of how we view and what we receive. The maintenance of order is contested by the dismantling chaos of anonymity, the arraignment for which is illegible, and the collective of identity is cursed.

In the mythmaking of it all, someone somewhere has left you a postcard.

What is a conversation, if not the performance, fluid in form and texture?

In the afterlife of India Art Fair 2020, Cognitive Ignorance announced its second phase, wherein the collective WinWin88 sought to initiate conversations with new publics, confronted by the presence of a new normal. This act of extending an invitation to dialogue represented the project's—and the collective's—core intentionality to evolve with and alongside interpretations from its viewers and participants.

Envisioning its audiences as co-players in the performative arena of its exhibition, WinWin88 was keen to see the kinds of deviations and divinations that would arise through the scope of the invitation as a bridge towards a critical exchange of enquiries and positionalities.

Graciously accepting the invitation extended by WinWin88, writer and art critic Rosalyn D'Mello delved into the various fragments that stitched together the fabric of Cognitive Ignorance in a brief yet delightfully playful interview with WinWin88, that was published by Art India magazine.

Experiments with Anonymity, Fictionality and Abstraction | WinWin88 speaks to Rosalyn D'Mello

Lured by the premise of a 'gift', I eagerly signed a contract informing me, among other particulars, that my movements within Cognitive Ignorance, a curtained exhibition within the 2020 edition of the India Art Fair (IAF) would be recorded. I entered not knowing whether the anonymous curatorial entity supported by Foundation for Indian Contemporary Art (FICA) was an individual, a collective, or an artificially intelligent being. WinWin88 sounded so made-up. The playful conceit manifested in all aspects of the display—caption-less artworks, instructions urging viewers to clock in their affective responses, volunteers spontaneously breaking into choreographed movement, visitors eagerly performing their gaze using accessories of choice, engaging with art that wasn't necessarily always hung on walls, or even framed. The 'gimmick' was so obvious it was clearly embraced as conscious method. Despite knowing I was being seen seeing, there was welcome solace in viewing art that couldn't be easily traced back to its maker. One could focus, instead, on its urgent substance—most of the displayed work was unabashedly political, riskier than what was shown throughout the fair.

It turned out I was not 'entitled' to a gift. A random algorithm determined winners. However, being invited by FICA to engage directly with WinWin88 has felt like reward enough. In this special interview for Art India, WinWin88 shared their motivations behind their existence and the ingenious approaches that shaped Cognitive Ignorance.

What constitutes a fictional collective, and why did WinWin88 choose to function as one?

WinWin88 sees the garb of the fictional as a contestation of the myths of individuality, authenticity and permanence. Thinking of ourselves as a fictional collective meant acknowledging our predetermined non-existence, which, in itself, was unique in the way that it disrupted the cult of the individual artist. We could freely re-script and creatively posit a deconstruction of our siting at IAF by placing the object of art and the associations that form with/around it under scrutiny and critique. Freed from the shackles of the 'real,' fictionality—established in our disclaimer—enabled WinWin88 to remain unattached to the confines of authenticity while candidly exploring the possibilities of forming both as and within the processual.

Anonymity catalysed a re-contextualisation. It implied an absence of certification, adherence and validation, and presenced instigation, provocation and contradiction. As a collective, WinWin88 typifies a conflict: it is anonymous yet it is named, and the anonymity emerges only if we seek out a genealogy of its existence. The act of naming establishes a certainty of sorts, and in choosing to name ourselves alongside an assertion of our anonymity, WinWin88 urges a rethinking of what it means to name and be named. Anonymity stratified the interactive experience of viewing art by complicating its objecthood. The artworks were un-labelled, removed of the impositions of identification and belonging, and by doing so, their object-ness was in question.



How do you construe the value of art without the parameters that otherwise condition you into believing in its authenticity? The IAF provided fertile ground for such play with perception and the psyche that structures how we read and represent art.

Though fortified by non-disclosure agreements, our formation retained a certain amorphous quality, born as it was out of the interlinking processes of art, trust and friendship. We positioned ourselves around a perceptive re-thinking of what it means to collect and collectively remain. We see the idea of the collective as the very medium of this project. It fostered multiple modes of collecting that in turn engendered sub-collections of making and being via the various players and performers who allowed for a spillage—of associations, meaning and self—to occur, framing our collectivity, fictional and otherwise, as an experiment in criticality and cognition.

What was the curatorial methodology?

As a project and an experiment, Cognitive Ignorance espoused a curatorial methodology melding spontaneity and structure. The various alliances formed over the duration of the project and its implementation are seen as scaffolding to the performativities and dialogue foregrounded by the collective. This is exemplified in our acknowledgment of each stakeholder/participant/volunteer as a ‘player,’ characterised by their mode of interaction with the project.

Spread over two booths—one being registration and the second being the main exhibition booth—the project entailed a playful mapping of awareness and ignorance, introducing viewers to the exhibition format while also making them aware of the surveillance to which they had consented. As a layer to the project and its

intentionality, the Collective orchestrated performative interventions choreographed by volunteer-performer-players, who took on a heightened role in being present in the space as cryptic advisors and activators. Their interjections in the space served to create poignant disruptions.

The display encouraged viewers to reflect upon their ways of seeing and experiencing art, made possible by a mode of interactivity purposefully layered so as to evoke a range of engagements from our audiences. The option to use display-augmenting ‘exhibition filters’—stress balls, 3D glasses, ankle weights, a yoga mat, scented cones, earplugs and headphones—proved a novel attraction. Additionally, a variety of interferences—bumpy obtrusions rising from under the dark grey carpet, disorienting neon lighting, hourly performances—created multiple, overwhelming diversions for the viewer and their expectations. The absence of wall-texts, captions, and artist names led viewers to mine an experience of their own, allowing them to unravel the subtly explicit themes of gender, nationality, utilitarianism and the language(s) of art itself, while forming their own environments of affect and understanding. The idea of being able to negotiate an artistic solidarity was also central to our curatorial inclinations.

Why was the “responsorial” element of audience participation so highly privileged?

We were keen to extend our interest in how people respond to what they encounter in spaces of exhibition. Through instructional questions and thought-provoking prompts, we supplemented the viewer’s experience of the art object with self-reflexive invitations that permitted a structure of response that in turn un-structured the nature of the response itself.

There was undoubtedly an autocratic strain to the many conditions we imposed, including asking people to sign consent forms before entering the exhibition, agreeing to being surveilled, and denying them any caption texts. It was too good an opportunity to miss to gather a systematic set of responses to the whole setting, which also became visible entities in the exhibition, changing its fabric. The questions also kept shifting registers to produce a necessary agility in the minds of the audiences, evident in the kinds of responses we received to various prompts as well as the final response postcard that invited visitors to reflect upon what they were taking with them and what they were leaving behind.

The promise of a ‘gift’ also took shape as an incentive, capitalised upon by some and disregarded by others. These devices became reasons to participate, to look closer and look away, to devote time, and to form personal and structural relationships with the artworks.

How do you understand intellectual humility in relation to cognitive ignorance?

Intellectual humility contradicts the autocracy of display. Autocracy is never self-reflexive and this reifies ignorance in our daily lives. As an exercise in intellectual humility, Cognitive Ignorance premised the collective as a mode of (un)learning. To begin to (un)learn is to become aware of our cognitive ignorance. The exhibition at the IAF was a blindfolding, harnessing the potency of spontaneity and structure to illuminate a deeper, more flourishing cognitive ignorance at the level of the collective. It led us and our players to probe further into the loci of societal perception, and the things that enable it.

Why was audience participation premised on surveillance?

Drawing attention to modes of surveillance offered

a segue to talk about the contemporary moment and the acts of seeing and being seen that rupture it. By exposing, in a rudimentary fashion, the state of surveillance that fences spaces of exhibition, we wished to analogise it to the palpable tensions that govern the act of gathering. Using the omnipresence of surveillance as a tool of control, we wished to draw attention to what it means to coexist. Coexistence implies a realisation that one is witnessing the coming into being of another. Our experiments with anonymity, fictionality and abstraction permitted counter-structures to form through the medium of response, whether hesitant, instinctual, dismissive, cognitive or inspired.

The exhibition as a performative space is ephemeral and transient. Its performativity manufactures both the object of art and the subject of a viewer’s attention. By highlighting the obviousness as well as the subtleties of surveillance in the space, we encouraged audiences to consider the affectivity influencing their own acts of looking in/out. In politicising the usual objectivity imposed upon our encounters with artworks, WinWin88 sought to spotlight the dynamism inherent in collaboratively existing in a space, made possible by the players, the stimuli offered by the prompts, the reactivity of our audiences, and the resistances occupied by our defiance of the norm that dictates certainty and understanding.

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Obligatory Annotations

The contractual is a web. A network of meaning, inferred and unread. It is deployed decisively.

The contractual is also a formulation—here, it brings together personality, perception and promise. A triangulation, at the center of which is not art but cognition.

Art is inferred by such, partly through value ascribed.

For WinWin88, the contractual overhauled a market-led understanding of art. In orchestrating a surrender, in a coaxing invisibility onto the stage, WinWin88 produced a geography of art, rethinking the ways in which it can be consumed. It urged you one to misspell familiarity to the extent that one was encouraged to question that which we hold perplexingly close like our understandings of art.

To be contractually bound is to commit; to commit is to promise; to promise is to assure. Think aloud, dear reader. Listen with fidelity. How does a contract come to expand its boundaries in a way that it assures an absence? How does it reinforce a lack?

This contract was entered into between the masquerade of the fictional collective WinWin88 and the two institutions...accompanied by the retrospective gaze. The fourth party in everything.

MUTUAL CONFIDENTIALITY AND NON DISCLOSURE AGREEMENT

Preamble

1. India Art Fair is produced by [redacted] and the next edition will take place from 30 January to 02 February 2020 at the NSIC Exhibition Grounds in Delhi ("IAF 2020")

II. Foundation for Indian Contemporary Art ("FICA") will exhibit an art project at IAF 2020

III An artist has been commissioned by FICA to create the art project for exhibit at IAF 2020 and wishes to maintain their anonymity as the success of the commission is dependent on it ("The Artist"). [redacted]

This Confidentiality and Non-Disclosure Agreement ("Agreement") dated 23 August 2019 ("Effective Date") is entered into by and between

The Artist [redacted] and [redacted] team member [redacted]

and

[redacted]
[redacted]
[redacted] respectively

having their principal place of business at FICA Registered office, [redacted]
[redacted] (hereinafter referred to as "FICA Representatives"), as well as [redacted] who is helping with communications and design inputs for the project.

Purpose

The Artist has been invited by the Foundation for Indian Contemporary Art to present an art project which is interactive and immersive in nature. The site of the India Art Fair has been chosen for this and previous FICA supported projects, given the dynamic and high energy nature of the fair and the unique opportunity it offers to engage with a very large and involved audience. The project is executed by the FICA Team and funded by [redacted]

The Project presented at the IAF is an interactive exhibition which questions the associations and values often ascribed on art objects. Working inside a dynamic art space like the art fair, it will challenge notions of exhibition-making and institutional didacticism by depriving the audience of textual familiarities such as exhibition labels, project note or press release. Using anonymity as tool and play, the exhibition will

How is the site for art typefied? How do we propose such a typification?

When we think of what we outline for ourselves as a collective, appearing once and never again, we desire the anti-delineative in our sites. We assert interactivity and dynamism and high energies.

Would the contractual ever be able to enforce what we desire? Or does it only serve a higher need?

refuse to provide any material to guide the viewer and instead invite the audience to contribute to a collective archive of thoughts and responses in relation to the exhibition and art objects on display, no matter how hesitant, instinctual, dismissive, or inspired.

Given the nature of the project, maintaining the anonymity of the Artist is of outmost importance to ensure its success. The Project will be credited to an anonymous collective titled Winwin88.

The Parties have to disclose certain confidential and technical information to each other in furtherance of the project.

To protect the said confidential information both the parties desire to sign this Non- Disclosure agreement.

Disclosure of Confidential Information

The Artist will disclose their identity to the FICA Representatives and in return expect that this identity is kept confidential from all others. This includes FICA staff apart from other members of the media, artists, collectors, institutions and any other persons.

The official name which will be used when speaking of the author of the project is Winwin88.

The Artist will share aspects of the project, whether for publicity, for installing the project etc and all these exchanges which are not marked for the public domain shall be kept confidential. Confidential Information shall be marked thus and shall include all nonpublic information furnished, disclosed or transmitted regardless of form.

All information regarding the project and the installation will be conveyed via FICA Team. FICA will work with the Artist to produce and install the project and also liaison with IAF on all aspects of the project. FICA Representatives can raise queries and offer suggestions on the project to the Artist and all such inputs will be appreciated and considered.

The Artist will keep the FICA Representatives in the know-how of the project development and share all relevant information as well as engage with the Representatives in a timely manner on matters related to budget, timelines as well the involvement of other parties within the scope of the project and respond to all the requirements made forth by FICA Representatives. The Artist understands that the FICA Representatives have the Project's best interest at heart and looks forward to working together in materializing this project in IAF 2020.

The Retrospective Gaze: We are contractually obligated to collect; the viewer is contractually obligated to obey!

The Artist: It is not easy to be so occupied as an anonymous entity right this moment...this project is keeping (us) engaged 24 hours a day and for the first time, (we) are not telling anybody anything when they ask about what (we) are doing these days or what my next project is...what a relief, what a big challenge!

The institutions: (We) understand all of this. (We) can see you are tense. (We) are also frankly anxious and anxiety is not about lack of trust at all.

The Retrospective Gaze: Does the domain shift or does the nature of our withholding change as temporal markers progress? What is not for the public is eventually made public; the parley with that which is confidential ends here today—go forth with MORE information!

How do we structure involvement without it appearing coercive?

The institutions: The interface of an organisation has a value and importance. It is about producing a frame, an invitation to others to participate, to introduce the project.

Project Credit Line

While the Project bears the Artist's copyright, the Project Credit line will reflect the involvement of FICA in supporting the making of this project. All references to this edition of the project should clearly acknowledge the support of FICA by including this line – “--- [redacted]

Term

This Agreement shall terminate February 3, 2019 following the ending of India Art Fair 2020. Receiving Party's obligations with respect to confidentiality shall expire from the date of disclosure.

General

- a) This Agreement shall be governed by and construed in accordance with the laws India without regard to its conflicts of law provisions.
- b) The breach of the anonymity clause by FICA Representatives will cause the other Party deep sorrow and will render the project a failure. The Artist will be forced to withdraw from the project in such an eventuality. The FICA Representatives will additionally have to pay a fine to the Artist which includes one dress from their wardrobes as well as one artwork from their personal collections.

Accepted and agreed as of the date first above written by the following authorized Party representatives:

Name

Signed By:

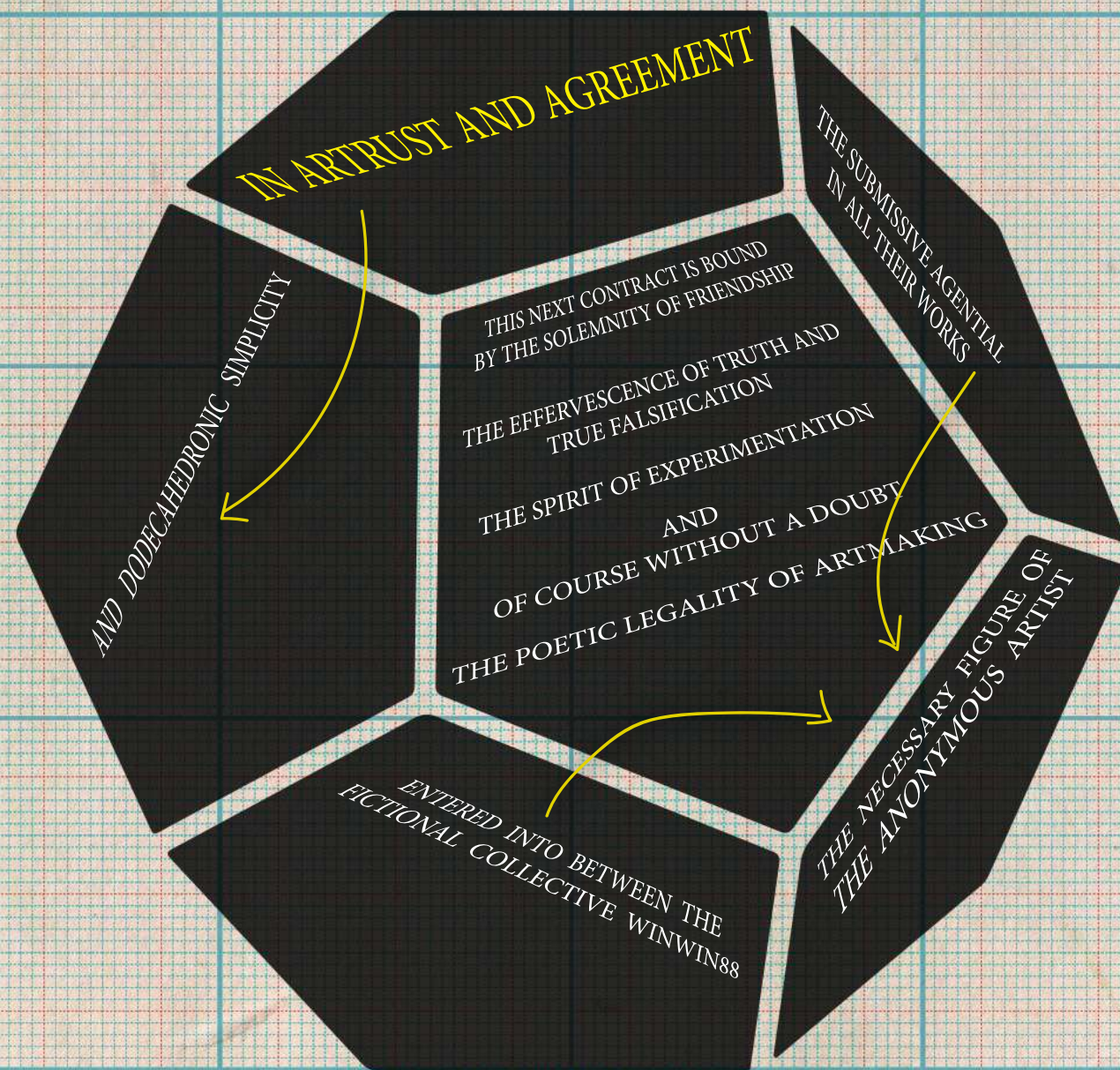
The Artist: A work of legal fiction asks where legal territories start and end, where laws and human rights are enforceable and where they are not.

Legal performativity has its own utopian aspects—in the shape of an imaginary, unexecuted contract.

The law excludes aesthetics; aesthetics can infiltrate the law.

The Retrospective Gaze: In ARTrust and Agreement, the contractual is rooted in friendship. The penalty of severing ourselves from the contract results in a rededication of that which is personal and dear to us.

We are governed by this.



MUTUAL CONFIDENTIALITY AND NON DISCLOSURE AGREEMENT

This Confidentiality and Non-Disclosure Agreement ("Agreement") dated ____/____/____ ("Effective Date") is entered into by and between the following:

1. Foundation for Indian Contemporary Art (FICA), organising and facilitating the platform for the project (herein referred to as '**Organiser**') with our office in [REDACTED]
2. [REDACTED], conceptualising the project, Cognitive Ignorance, the theme of which is 'Dark' (herein referred to as '**Winwin 88**') residing in --
3. The participating artist, _____ (hereinafter referred to as '**Artist**') residing in _____

Purpose

[REDACTED] as WinWin88 has conceptualised a project titled 'Cognitive Ignorance', to which the artist is invited to participate.

The Foundation for Indian Contemporary Art (FICA) will present the art project at the India Art Fair 2020, NSIC Grounds, Okhla, New Delhi, as part of their annual artist project.

Cognitive Ignorance is an interactive exhibition that questions the associations and values often ascribed to art objects. Working inside a dynamic art space like the India Art Fair, it will challenge the commercial and didactic modes of engaging with art by depriving the audience of textual familiarities such as exhibition labels (name of artist, dimensions, year of conception, material) and the 'press release.' Using anonymity as a tool and play, the exhibition will refuse any secondary textual material to guide the viewer and instead will invite the audience to contribute to a collective archive of thoughts and responses in relation to the exhibition and art objects on display, no matter how hesitant, instinctual, dismissive, or inspired.

Given the nature of the project, maintaining the anonymity of all artists involved is of utmost importance to ensure its success.

The Parties have to disclose certain confidential and technical information to each other in furtherance of the project. To protect the said confidential information both the parties desire to sign this Non- Disclosure Agreement.

Terms of the Agreement:

1. The Artist accepts Winwin88's invitation to contribute _____ (number) Artwork(s) with the theme DARK for the project *Cognitive Ignorance* presented by FICA for IAF 2020, from January 30 to February 2, 2020. The artist confirms that they are the sole copyright holder of the work contributed to the project.

For the project, the details of the Artwork(s) the artist has agreed to give are as follows:

Number	Name of Artwork	Caption, and other Details	Price of work (for insurance)

2. The Artist agrees to the conditions of anonymity until the publication of the project publicly comes out by Organizer and Winwin 88 no later than a period of one year from the date of the exhibition. This includes not disclosing your participation in the project, not revealing any known details about the project, and those parties involved.
3. The Artist accepts that the participation is set in terms of releasing their Artwork(s) in the care of WinWin88. This includes accepting that the Artworks will carry no details in captions and other information about the work or the artist. This also includes accepting that WinWin88 will be responsible for situating the Artist's Artwork(s) in conditions of display.
4. The Artist has considered the request that the Artwork(s) they contribute are close to their he(art), have not prominently been in the public eye before, and are divergent from their signature style.
5. The Artist recognises that at the end of the period of anonymity, the Artist will be duly credited in all publications and press notes on and about the project. The record of the Artist's name along with the artwork(s) they contribute will also be officially made by Mithu Sen/WinWin88 and FICA's website, as well as the proposed book as a final outcome.
6. The Organisers will take care of all transportation and display related costs to display the works at the fair. Any discussion related to producing or printing works undertaken by Winwin 88 and the Artist will also be carried out by the organisers.

"What is dark and monochromatic as a theme — is this metaphorical as well as visual? Is it one colour for everyone?"

Artist #15

"I started to think about possible ideas for this... something 'dark' really caught my attention, the darkness resonated in me, [I was reminded of] the sense of memory, we find ourselves sometimes on the dark side of history."

Artist #8

"...it sounds playful, critical and irreverent to the hierarchies of high art!"

Artist #21

"...I fully subscribe to this ethic!"

Artist #18

"...I feel you are extending [this] further by taking works anonymously by artists and not in their recognisable style."

Artist #5

7. Any and all works being shipped to Delhi for the project shall be shipped back to the same address by the end of February 2020. Any work fabricated in Delhi for the purpose of the project shall not be sent back to the Artist. If the fabricated work is to be delivered to the Artist's studio, they will bear the costs of transportation incurred for the same.
8. The Organisers will ensure the Artwork(s) are insured for damage for the duration of the India Art Fair (30 January - 2 February 2020).
9. Condition reports will be made for the Artwork(s) received. These will be shared with the Artist upon the receipt of the work and must be acknowledged by the Artist.
10. The Organiser and Winwin88 will have the right to use images of the Artwork(s) for publicity and documentation purposes. The Artist will not be credited until the period of anonymity is over.
11. Works in this project will not be for sale. The project is premised on the fact that the works contributed are not for sale, and apart from theoretical discussions on value and worth, there shall be no monetisation of the same.

Confidential Information shall be marked thus and shall include all non-public information furnished, disclosed or transmitted regardless of form.

Time Period

This Agreement shall terminate _____ from the Effective Date. Receiving Party's obligations with respect to confidentiality shall expire from the date of disclosure.

General

- a) This Agreement shall be governed by and construed in accordance with the laws of India without regard to its conflicts of law provisions.
- b) The breach of the anonymity clause by any one Party will cause the other Party a great inconvenience and will render the project a failure. WinWin88 will be forced to withdraw from the project in such an eventuality. **Accepted and agreed as of the date first above written by the following authorized Party representatives:**

Company Name

Company Name

Signed By:

Signed By:

Designation:

Designation:



Registration & Consent Form

I, _____, am aware I am consenting to being under audio and video surveillance by agreeing to participate in this survey conducted by WinWin88 and the Foundation for Indian Contemporary Art as part of their special artist project, 'Cognitive Ignorance,' at India Art Fair, NSIC Grounds, Okhla, New Delhi - 20, between 30 January and 2 February 2020.

I hereby grant them permission to utilise the recorded footage, video, audio and stills for non-commercial purposes towards the further development of this project.

To what extent does a survey influence a site of display?
What purpose do these revelations serve?

The audience is scaffolding, the participatory rests in tandem.

Signature

Email:

Phone:

cognitive
ignorance

FICA Artist Project at India Art Fair 2020

Some refused to sign, refused to submit; yet entry remained conditional throughout. Maybe a few slipped through our armour, maybe armours are made with apertures meant to let a little more than a sliver of resistance in.



Collectively Speaking | Artworks & Objecthoods

The following pages perform much like the lens of a magnifying glass. Distortedly earnest, they conduct a streamlining; they draw you towards the details, the minuscule and the grand—the fine threadwork of collaboration and trust. They re-create in some part the vacuum space of the exhibition at India Art Fair 2020, re-centralising the artworks and their past intentionalities.

In 2019, WinWin88 invited 31 players to assemble as an ensemble—for once and then never—before art and its audiences. Proffering the veil of anonymity, the collective invited these players to enter its simmering fray in the hope that this cauldron of activity would spawn and ladle out affective encounters with art. And it did.

Each invited player submitted a work responding to the theme, and with interpretations galore, the works were uniquely dissimilar to the players' distinctive styles of making, adding to the mounting layers of anon. WinWin88 ensured each work was accompanied by a temporary concealment—of name, fame and agency—that would further ensure the absence of identifiers. Art and art-maker alike, this was a surrender to mark a discursive stance, a complication (or simplification?) of the exhibitory mode. The pages ahead recollect and revisit these artworks in their nameless glory, displayed at India Art Fair 2020.

As the second phase of the Cognitive Ignorance project was rolled out, WinWin88 returned to invite the players to share their reflections on the project and its premise, along with what it meant for them to surrender their artistic agency and remain anonymous. Coupled with their reflective responses, this section also presents excerpts of data from audience responses, mined by WinWin88 during the display at India Art Fair 2020. These responses form a critical, coded archive, offering us a glimpse of otherwise invisible processes and sentiments. The template ahead offers you a key to decoding what lies in store.

Tethering the image, the (self)reflection, the text and the proposition, this is a mooring, dear reader, that you could choose to sink or soak in.

Either way, it's time to recalibrate.





#1

player number

audience prompts
from WinWin88

Does this artwork
have a gender?

I was interested in this project for the way it framed 'anonymity' - where the maker's name and identity was left behind a mask as part of an experiment. The other theme of the exhibition that drew me to it was the 'dark.'

According to the dictionary, 'DARK' means the absence of light in a place, and I fell in love with the 'dark' when I was young. It's such a pleasure to be in the dark and to observe the action of light - almost like sitting in the audience and watching a film or play which does not have any beginning or end.

So here, 'Anonymity' and 'Dark' are the twins which attracted me, inviting me into this project.

The exhibition space used for 'Cognitive Ignorance' was considered a laboratory, and the title itself brought in multiple possibilities, different ways of thinking mingled with playfulness.

response from
the co-player

572 people said no

381 people said yes

data collected
from our viewers

<what do
mechanised silences
leave us with>

*Tiny inflections
by the editor*



<predatory flights
lead us astray>



Letting go of my agency has been the most liberating of all practices. It felt as though one day, I could take on another identity and make work parallel to what I usually make. Also, surrendering blindly to you - and seeing such a beautiful outcome - it is precious.

Is this artwork
geometric or
abstract?

340 people said abstract

340 people said geometric





As an exhibition, Cognitive Ignorance instrumentalised, manifested and conceptualised the different levels of interconnections between ideas of publics, participation and the politics of spectatorship. This was the entry point from which I reflected upon my participation.

Both from a spectator's and an insider's perspective, the exhibition removed the individual from the artwork, and it functioned almost as a commentary on the idealistic manner in which the nation-state declares itself as a 'whole.' The use of anonymity as a conceptual tool in the exhibition made me rethink and revisit the purposes of such namelessness as well as ideas of protest, site and inaccessibility, allowing for alternative artistic interventions.

<polis state>
Are we truly
separate from
that which we fear?
</police state>





Viewing the artworks in an exhibition space without the identity of the artist, an artist statement or captions alongside the works, made one experience art as it is with no labels attached, and it demanded an unbiased interaction with the works. I feel this kind of a project questions the hegemony of how the artworks are valued and viewed.

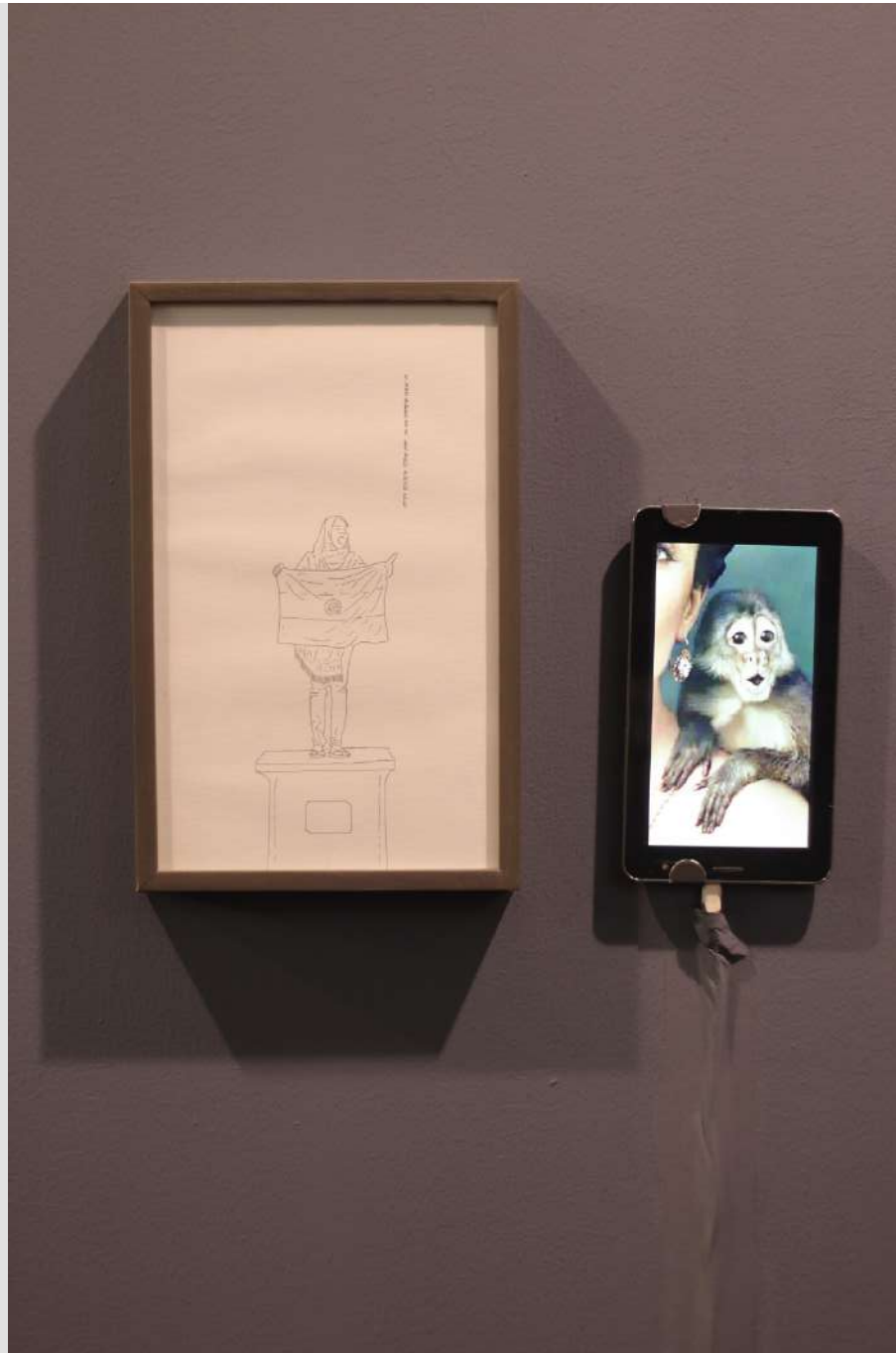
From an artist's perspective, being a collaborator meant restraint, trust and faith in the project, and within the aesthetic display of the project, the artworks looked quiet and engaging, standing on their own and blending well with each other.

<take your pick!>
<skin-deep or paper-thin>
</take your pick!>



Are you defined
by pixels?

#5



29

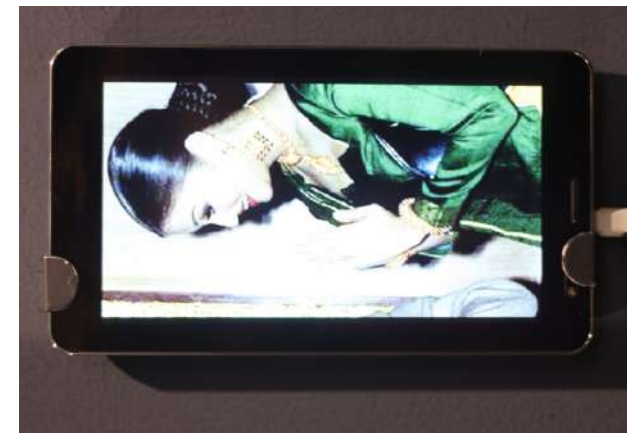
We have been inquiring and trying to understand,
How is artwork valued? Who builds the value?
and what makes it valuable?.

These questions have triggered many responses,
some of them are pure, some are curious and some
make us wonder about the basics of why we make art?

Sometimes, an artwork without a name tag brings
a freshness to the air, it also allows the artist to
look from a distinct viewfinder, different from the
ones through which the artworks have always been
viewed.

As the value here will not be affected by the market
demands or any such materialistic pressure, therefore,
the space acts as an exploration of possibilities.

These possibilities then transcend into an event of
expression, making the exhibit a playground to invent,
play and make new rules.



30

<in whom or
what do we see a
hypersaturated
image of the self>



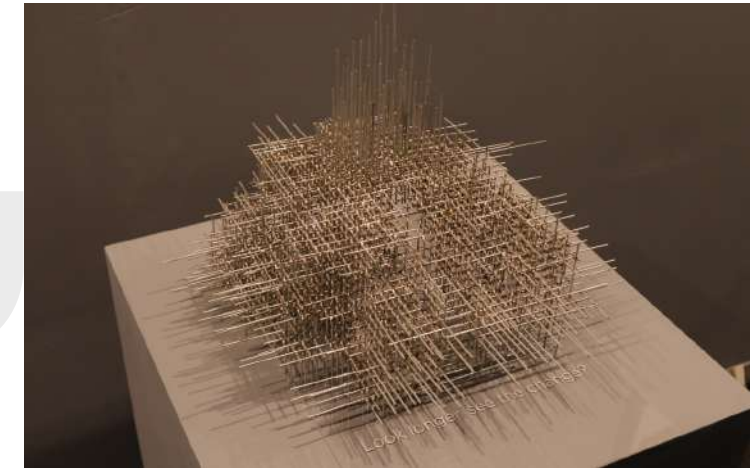


Look longer, see the change?

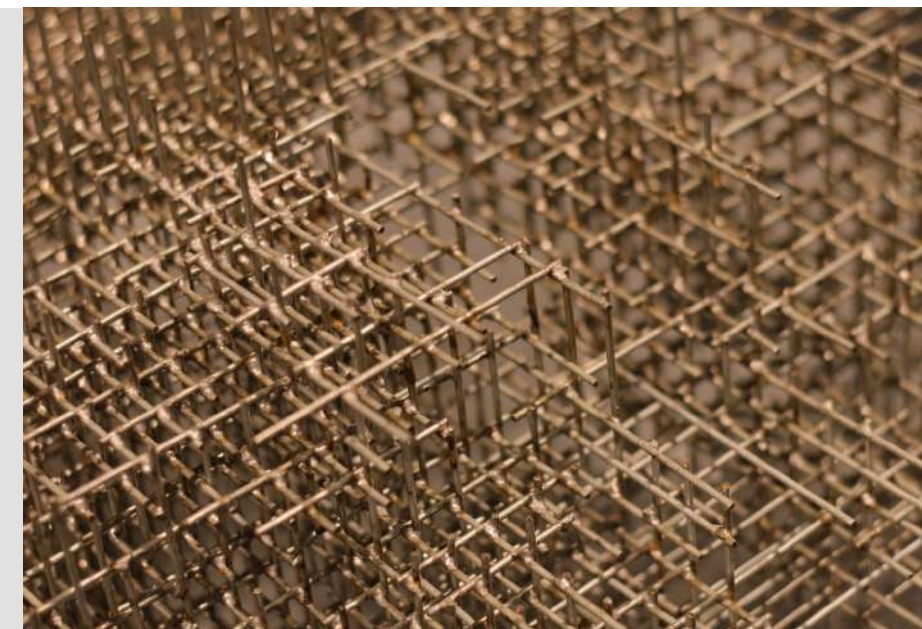
#6

31

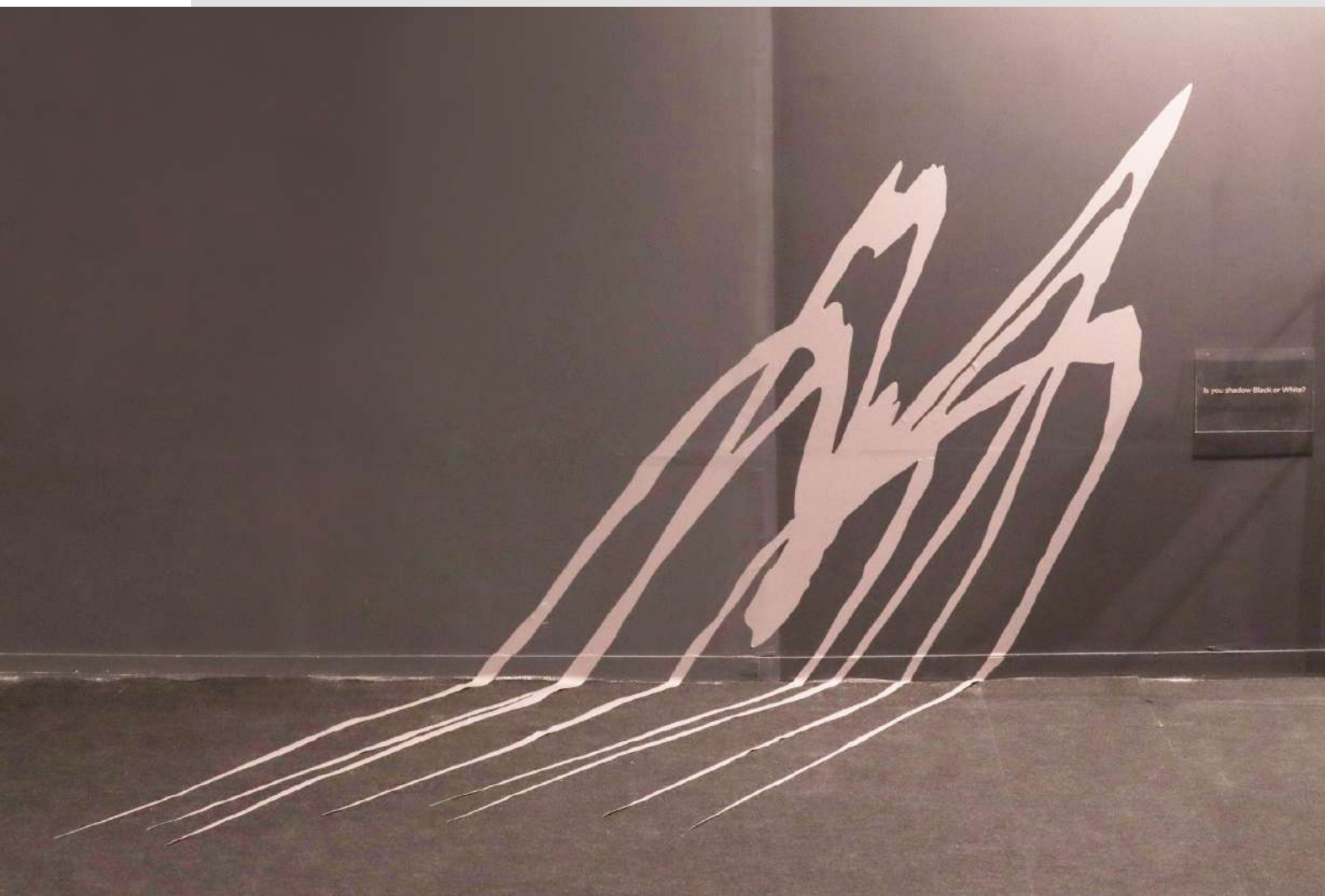
I was particularly taken with the idea of anonymity, which seemed to me to be a breath-taking experience, especially as my work seemed to take on a new dimension, sparking my imagination. This draws special attention to the fact that the anonymity of the objects presented to the viewer triggers one into thinking about affect and experience, completely independent of external influences.



<instigate>
<universe of
constructions
and geometries>
</instigate>



32



Shadows haunt and propel the spirit of today's dematerialised art production and preoccupation with ephemera and mischievous urges. Stealing shadows of famous masterpieces is both tactical and economical. Shadows are in the spirit of the moon, changing depending on time of day and season.

A shadow is to be reenacted without the original 3D object, and at a scale and angle befitting its presence in the given location and site. A shadow can be easily customised and adapted, however its outline must be consistent with the exact presence of the original. The lines should have sharp, clear and recognizable edges. The value of the shadow is to be estimated at 1% of the original 3D work, and is to be sold or auctioned at the masterpieces' current market price.

Each stolen shadow is unique and bespoke, customised to fit any given space and context. A shadow can be: long, short, wide, narrow, or it can take up the whole floor or go up the wall and ceiling, as an umbra, penumbra or antumbra.

There is also variety in the point source which can be:

- classic theatre lighting shadow
- projector with a digital file shadow
- a painted shadow
- a graffitied shadow
- an animated shadow moving through space

The color of a shadow should be roughly 80% gray.

<What
foreshadows
the present?>



Would this
artwork sink or
float in water?

#8



35

The uniqueness of this project has made a very strong statement, one never seen before, and I am intrigued by the audience's attitude to and involvement in the exhibit.

Sculpted in sennit-stone, this sculpture is a witness of a revolution in my personal life, and an urging that propels my research into this new material. Viewing the video as it makes its debut as a small format work in an anonymous project has evoked interesting reflections!

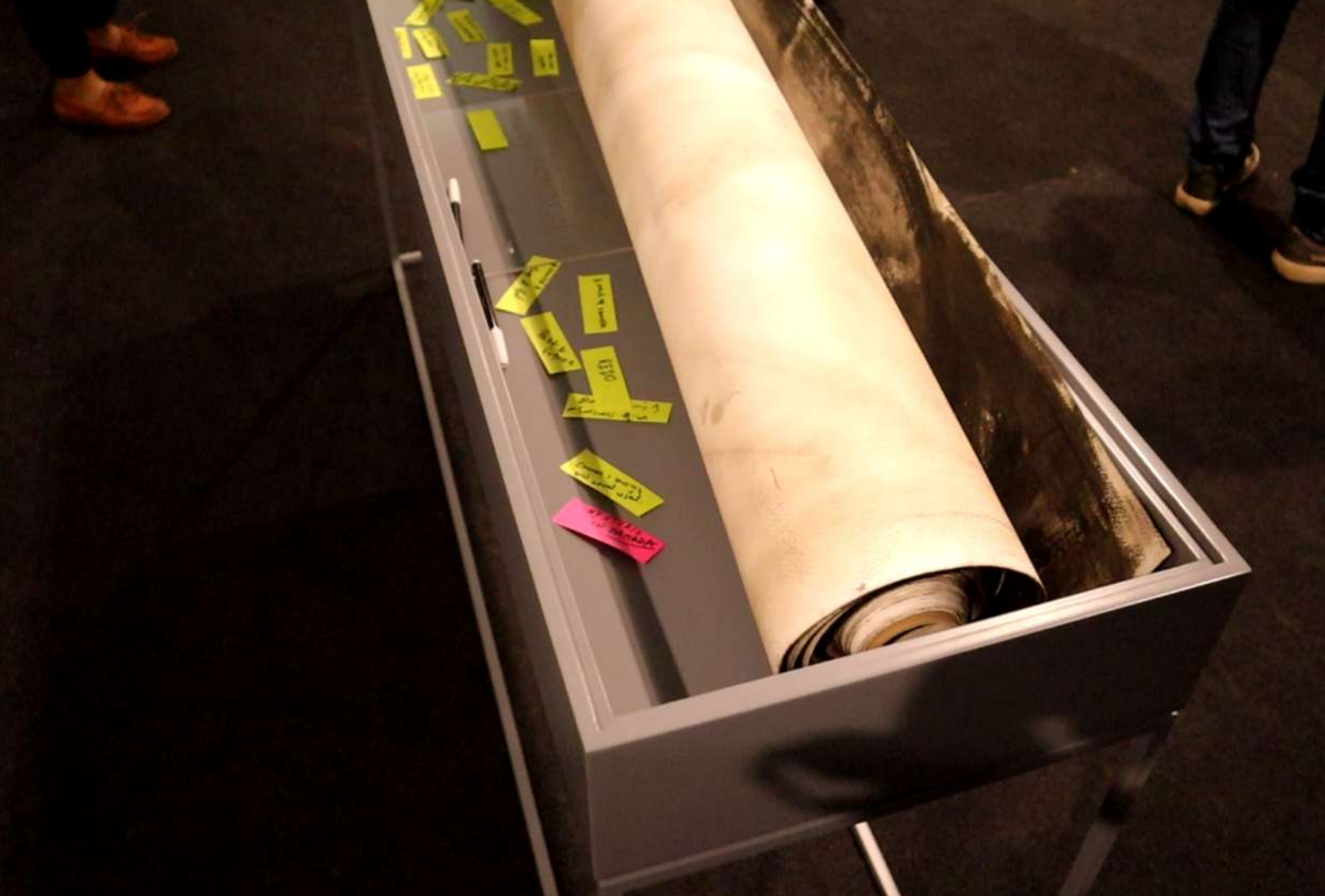


<are we at
the center of everything
we see?>

155 people said float
145 people said sink
11 people couldn't decide



36



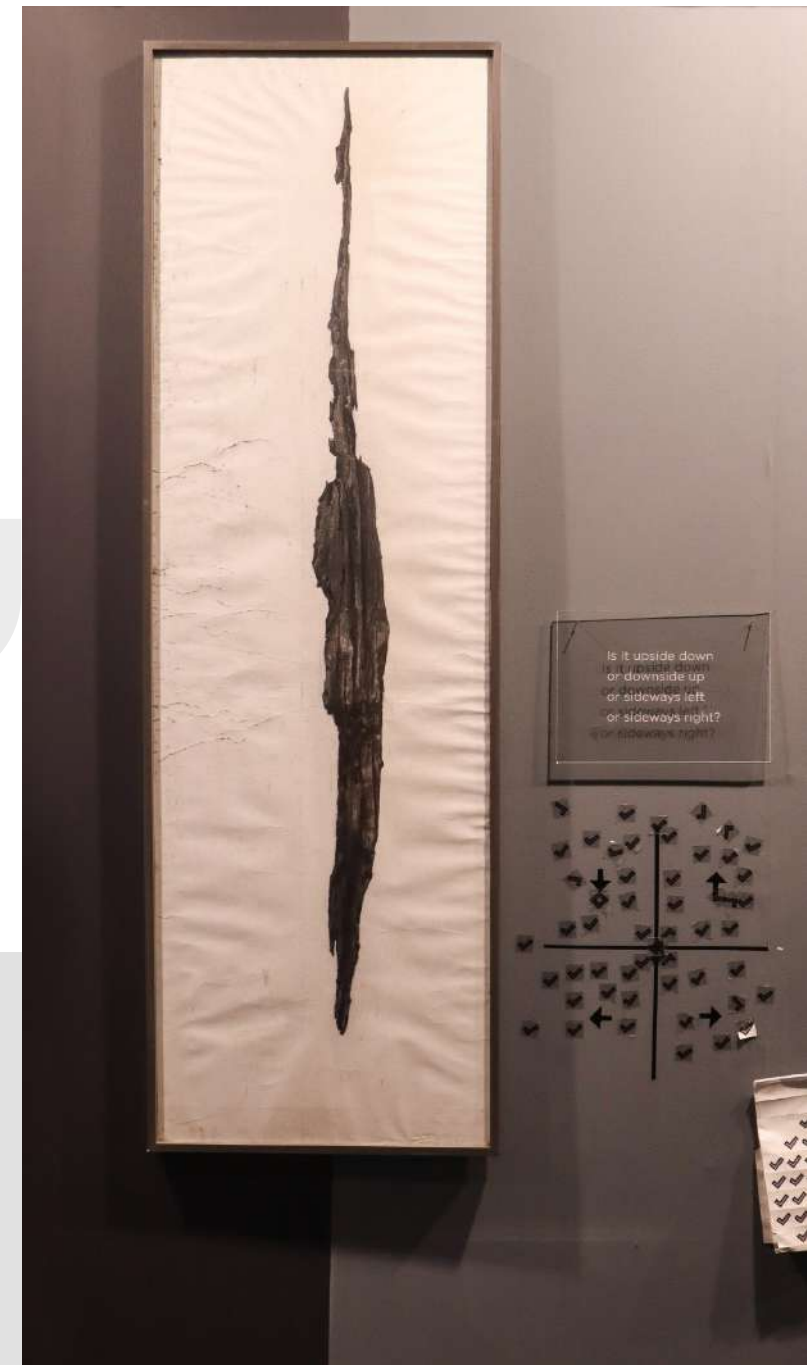
Is it upside down or downside up or
sideways left or sideways right?

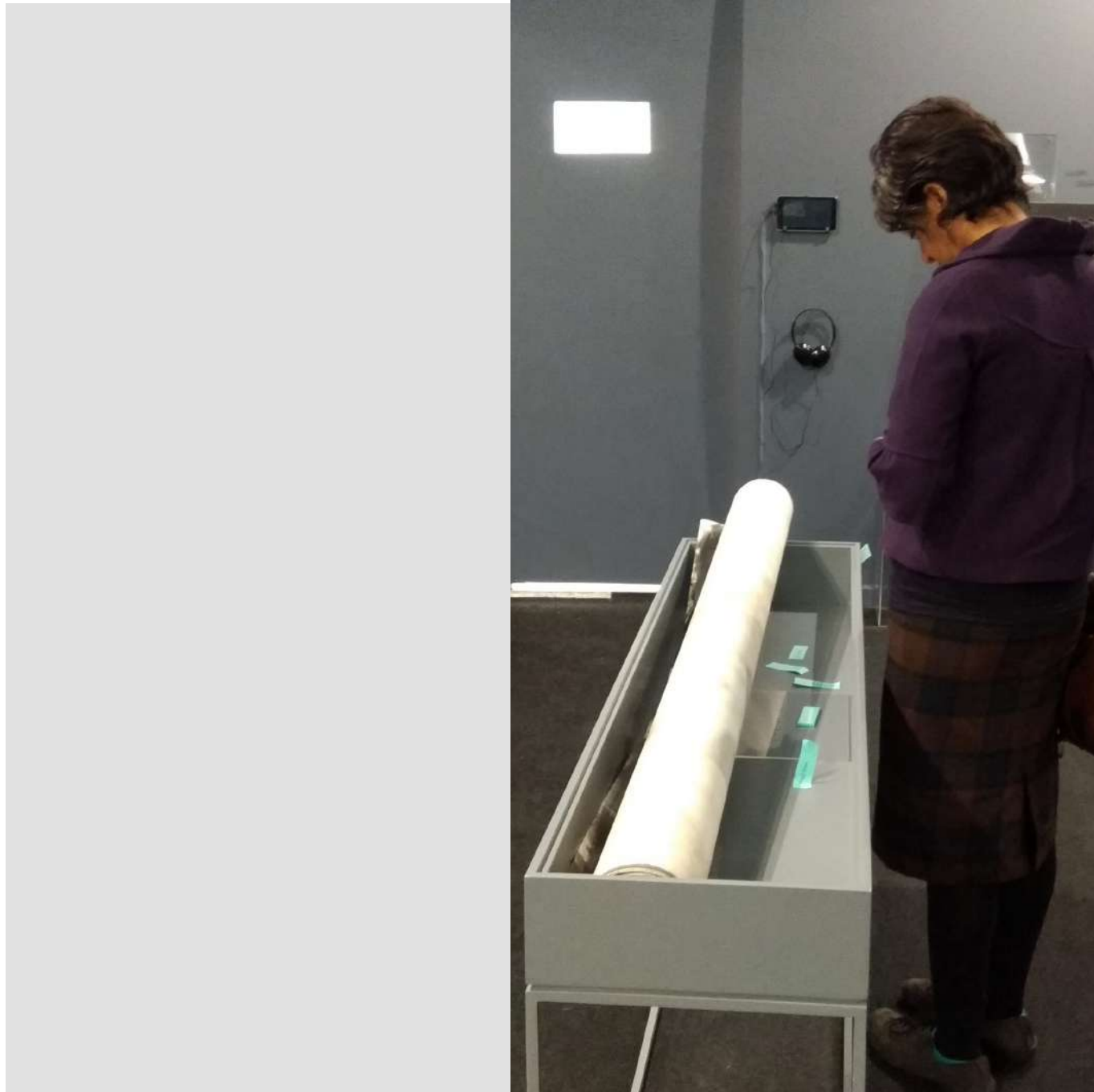
#9

While the world has produced exceptional artists, the irony remains with the fact that everything ends with 'me & mine.' This event changed the face of this tradition by providing the opportunity to embrace and admire the real art by keeping the name and fame of the artist hidden or anonymous. The real beauty of Cognitive Ignorance was that it let the audience directly interact with art, leading them towards a possible understanding of the perspective of the artist.

Usually, when we visit such events it is quite routine to know that the audience heads back with the satisfaction of acquiring bytes of knowledge. However, Cognitive Ignorance broke the monotony of such a routine by bringing back feelings of awe, wonder and mesmerism along with the crux of knowledge.

<cracks on the surface
make us whole>





Starkly Indifferent to What's In Front of You: What does this remind you of?



Scroll



Cannon



Fingers



Canvas roll



Art handler



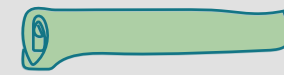
A toothbrush



Shroud of Turin



An exercise thing



Carpet I need to
find a place for



Forgotten
/hated artwork



Old-timey wedding
invitations



Corpse



Dirt



Damaged artwork
in fire



My older works
stored at home



Architectural plans



Wasted Canvases



Blueprints



Archives at IGNCA
not Accessible to Public



Touch me/touch me not?

#10

Dark was the word that caught my attention in the invitation: a dark place, a dark territory, the darkness —this resonated with me, bringing up a sense of memory, and how sometimes we find ourselves on the dark side of history. How much of what we read in books or newspapers really happened? How will we remember things?

I believe our memory is some kind of battleground in which we are always fighting for how and what we remember. With this as the essence, my work keeps everything out of sight for the viewer. A simple, dark wooden box. With magical objects that will help me remember: a USB memory stick, some photos, a poem and a promise. A piece that will speak of the past but also of the future, a piece that does not exist but has existed, an object that saw what we saw and that somehow will see what we will ever see.

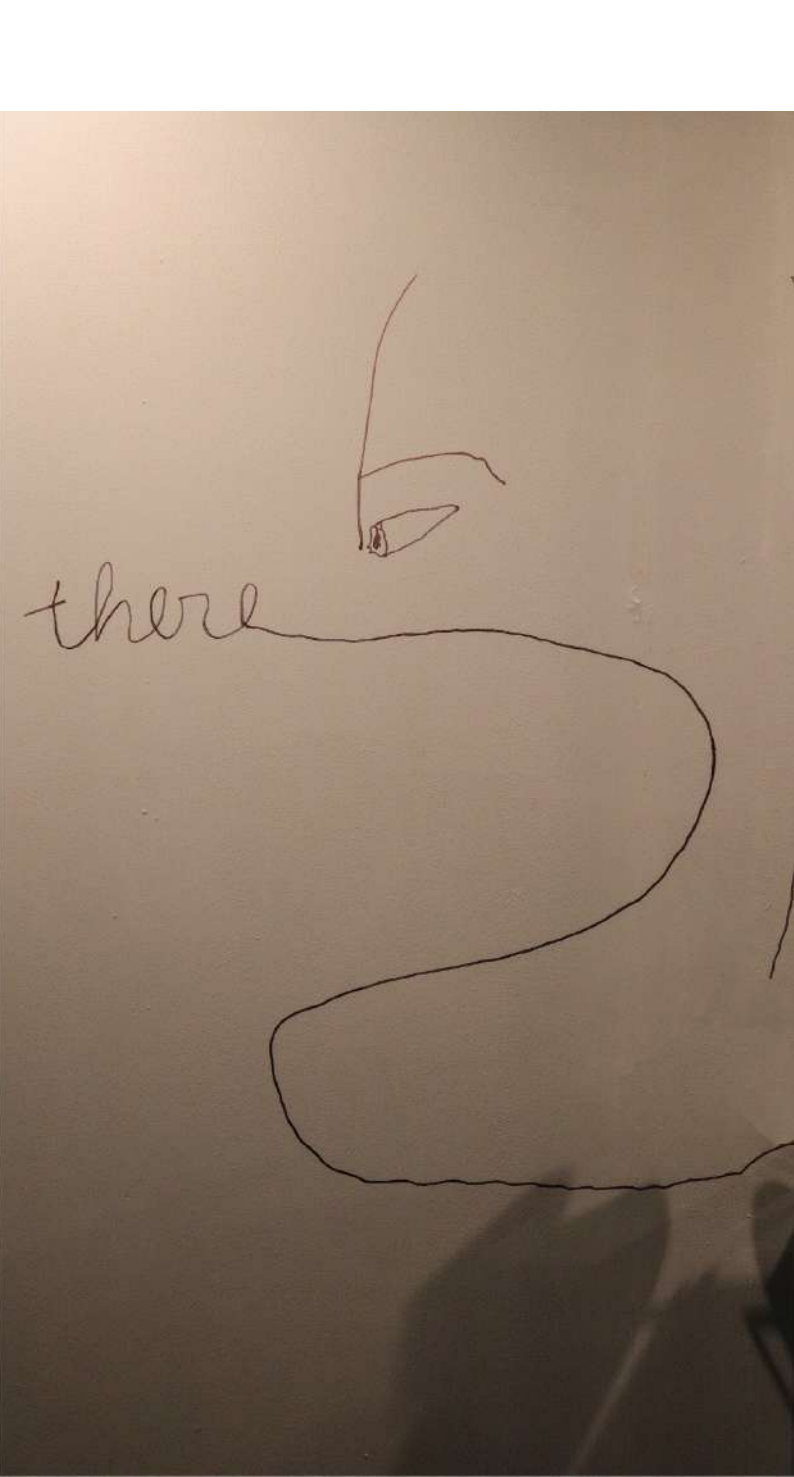
<veiling>
read some transience
into your traceability
</unveiling>





“Not sure why I chose that drawing, but maybe I was thinking how a narrow focus can't limit things. There's that Zen maxim that in the beginner's mind there are many possibilities but in the expert's only one.”

#12

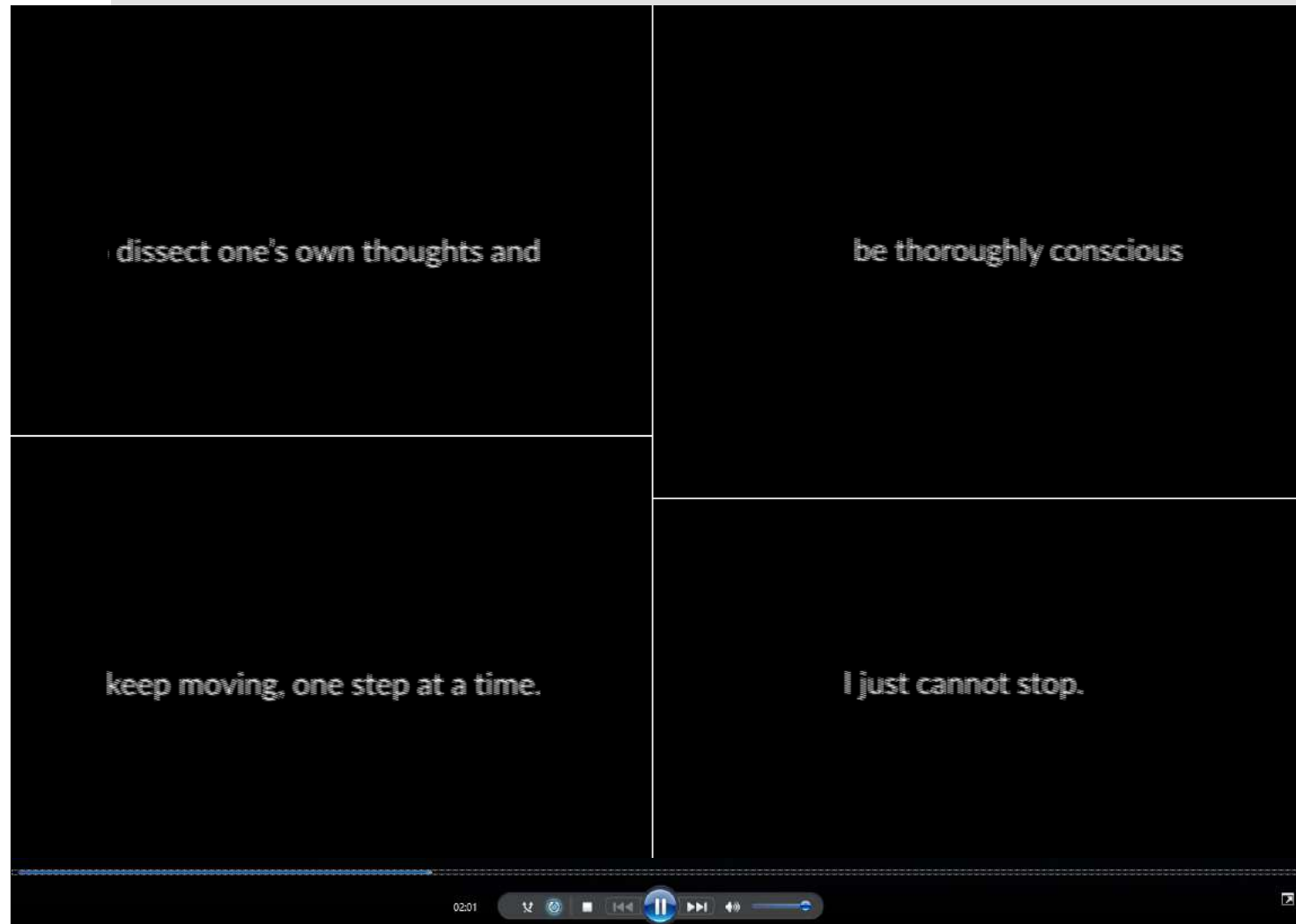


<can a sentence be a portrait?>



<conquer>
<landscapes of abstraction>
</consume>

#11



#13

I was instantly drawn into exploring how anonymity could play a central role in exhibiting artworks and how the audience would react to it. The idea seemed refreshing as it ruptured an artist's tendency to get fixated and possessive of their creation, more so while it's being exhibited at a space like India Art Fair, known for its glamour and reputation, where the majority of artists dream to exhibit.

While viewing (my) video within a space of interactivity, performances and happenings devoid of artist figures and conceptual lingo, I felt relieved from the burden of being a creator, shedding my artist's ego/self and being a participant exploring/playing with the exhibits; the feeling was elevating.

<converse with
the weight of text and the
burden of speech>





Dear Viewer,
It's TALK ART. Please share your responses
and HELP us to develop this survey on cognitive
ignorance.
PS: The artists are on a group holiday. We apologise
for the inconvenience this may cause.

<open door>
<an iota of **intellectual**
disobedience awaits you>
</close door>

#14

The idea for the text came from thinking about making something without making something.

Possession By Accumulation; this in the light of the politics of enlightenment.

Where describing the inner feeling of human pain undermines the act in itself.

Now we come to the question: where is the defense nonetheless?

A Rose Has No Teeth
Bruce Neuman's
Jules Levy's Les Arts incohérents

While you are waiting in line for food handouts, someone stuck his thumbs up your ass.

#15

<seeking **nameless** lands
and seas of **othering**>

ACCUMULATION
BY
DISPOSSESSION

THE
LADY
HAS NO
TEETH





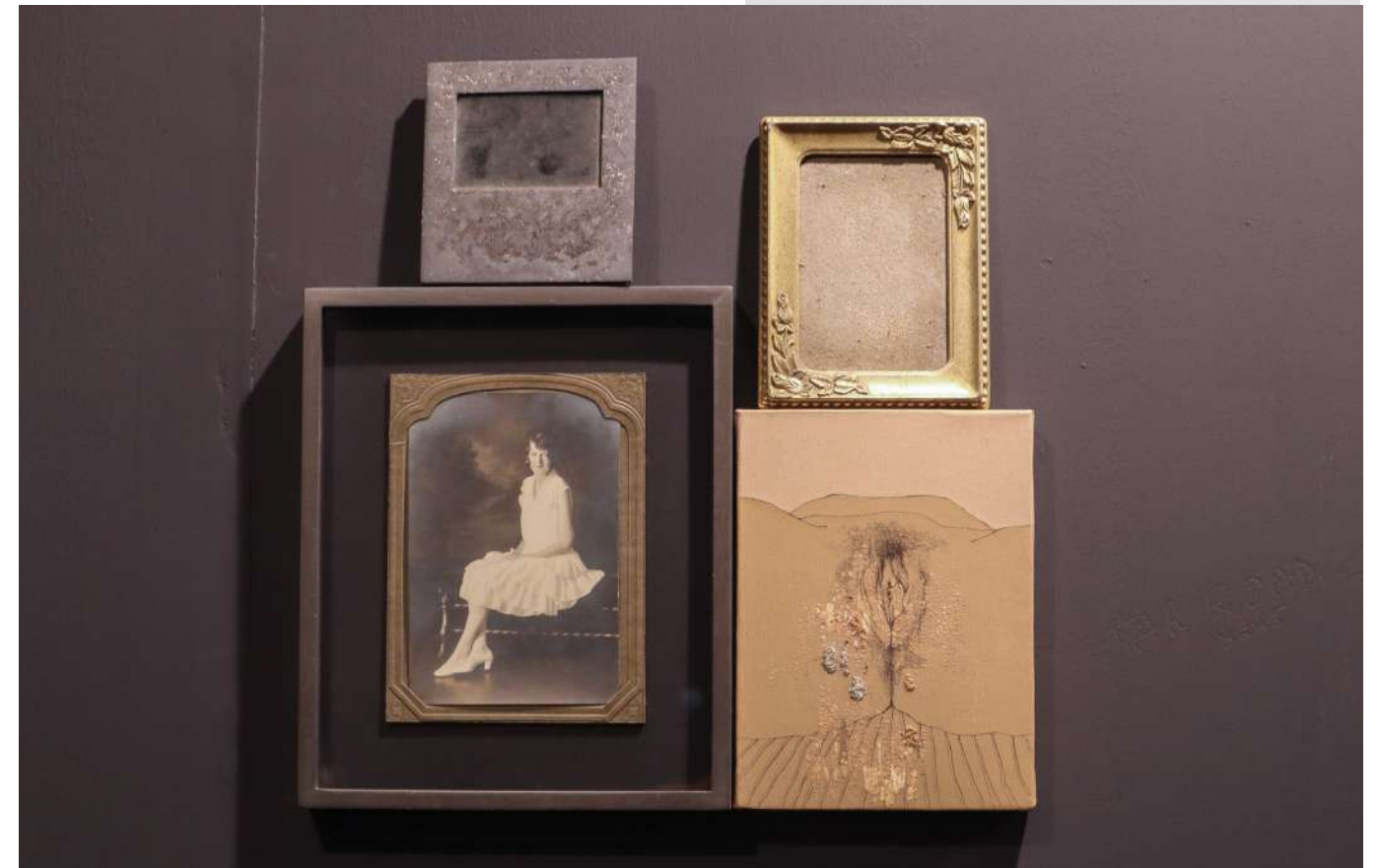
#16

It was insightful to see the moving image of the Cognitive Ignorance, with the dynamic engagement of the audience and their response. So often the reading of artworks during art fairs is focused through on the figure of the artist—this project opened up new instrumental dialogues and exchanges with art and anonymity.

<spell>
<eye to eye to intimate>
</spell>

It can be really difficult to be visible in this art world unless you're constantly engaging or have connections. I felt connected with the underlying theme of the project where through anonymity, we tried to highlight the number of artists that go unnoticed. The project also allowed me to submit a work that was not in my dominant and recognizable style which added more layers to the idea of anonymity. There can be a lot of pressure to produce work that has a particular style.

#17



<genesis>
<cleaver, cleft,
catalyst>
<apocalypse>



This is 100% original!

#18

Cognitive Ignorance reminds me of the book by Robert Irwin: “Seeing” is forgetting the name of the thing one sees. It also makes me think of the so-called ‘expectancy violation’ as a way to get people to drop their preconceptions and prejudices. In that moment of label-less rupture, new ideas and impressions can finally be conceived of in the mind. Within its context of the Fair, it’s all the more bold and important as a statement, as visitors are usually cruising around on a tight schedule and they just want to know who the star artists are and the price of the work. Dropping these considerations forces visitors to stand stripped of background information and unguided in front of the work itself. At that moment the work can freely speak to the visitor, in a liberating and sensory moment ‘itselfness.’

Perhaps this is a lesson of how art should really be absorbed.

<eat the (im)possibility
of concrete forms>



How much do you value this?

<lead us to a
watchful pause
before finality>

My trust rests completely with you, in your ability to make possible a way of viewing art that extends beyond the normal, beyond convention and into boundless creativity. Nameless for a change—maybe my work will speak for itself, maybe it shall keep watch over those who come to play!

#19

53



Anonymity under any circumstances is a contradictory term. We are never interested in knowing as a concept, unless it is about some information that gives us the name of an individual, group or guild. I think of myself through my practice; I think of how it contributes—however little—to the context of modern art practice in peripheral parts of our country, my homeland Assam. Working for this project was inspiring because it brought with it a new direction of thinking about the whole process of curation and exhibition- making, all while contradicting the present gallery agenda and system.

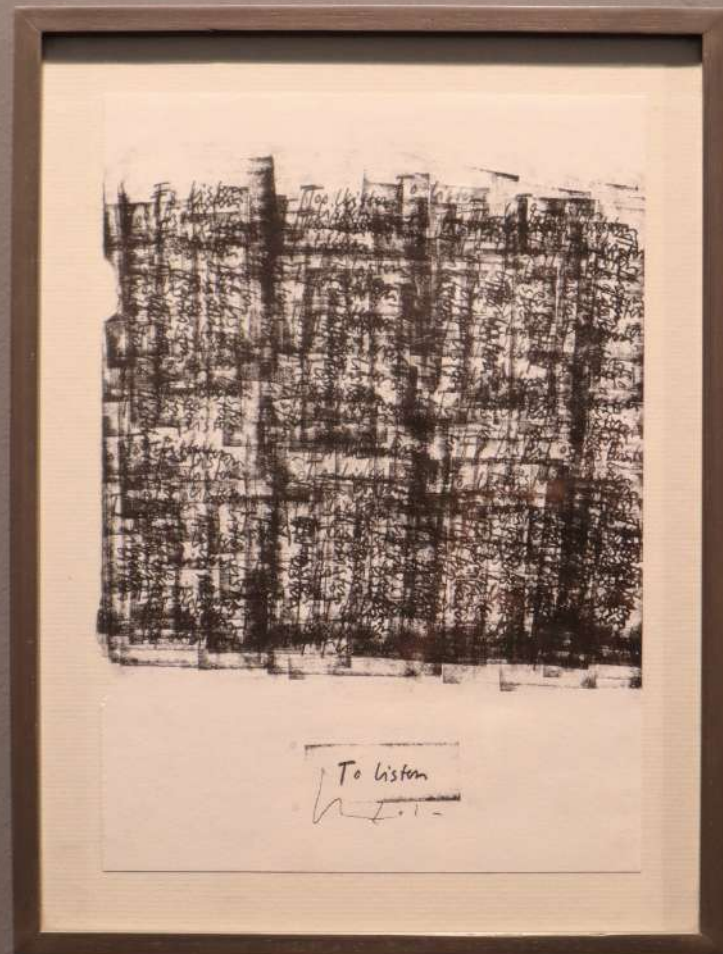
#20

<renew>
<shedding your skin>
<anew>

54



<listen to the
notational notion,
it speaks>



“Due to a lack of knowledge people can think
more purely, more honestly ...”

<who
contaminates
whom>
<for whom do
we make>



Where does this work belong?

#23

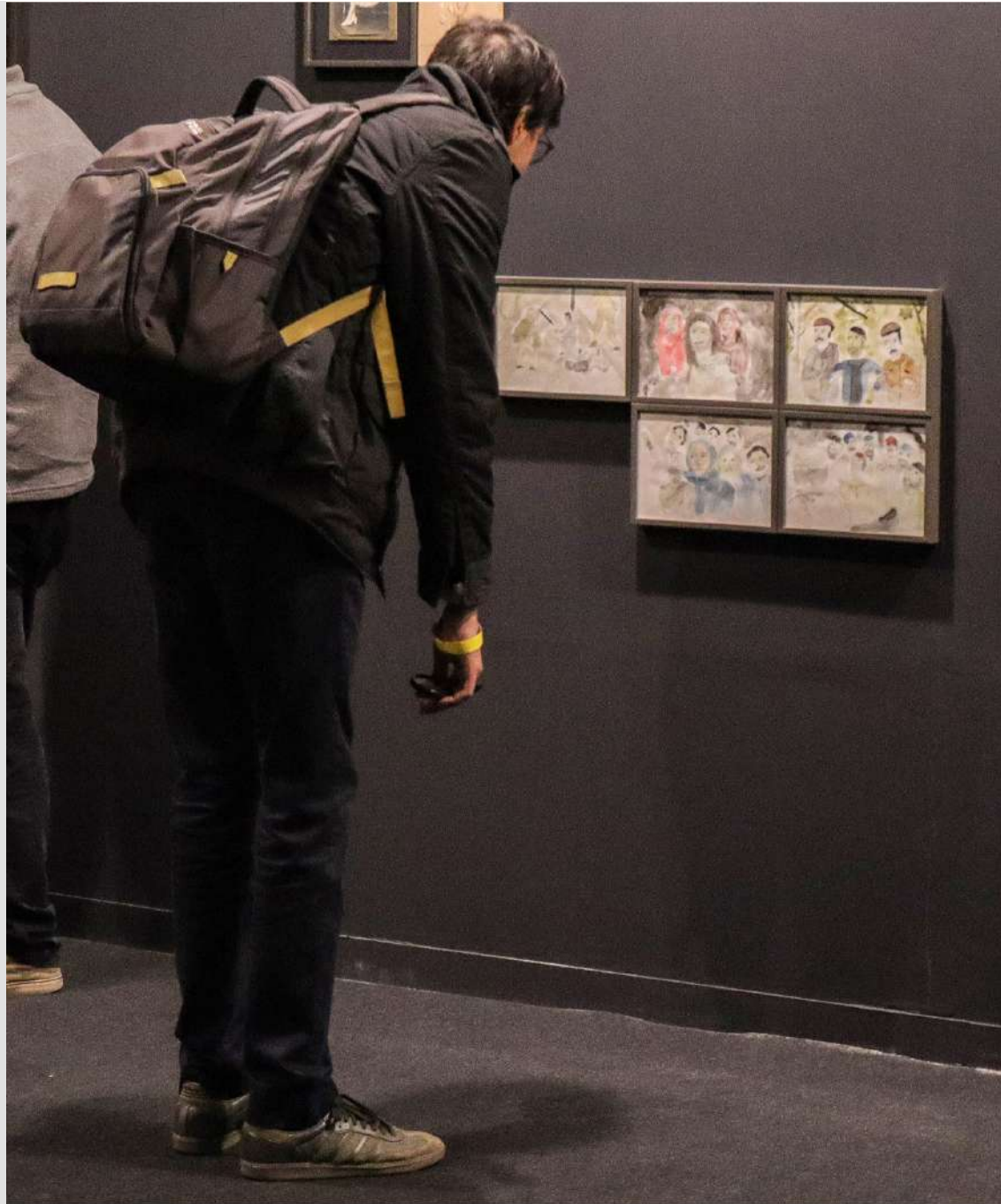
57

“‘Cognitive Ignorance’ is the first step in what I hope will be a new way of thinking about showing and making work. It seems important to me to be able to show work anonymously in a situation where spectators who come across it can approach it without being part of a clique. It seems to me this way of presenting work as an optical as well as tactile experience is a way of offering to spectators a form of sharing which is potentially richer than what a purely optical piece of work can do. It uses the exhibition space as well as a place for human encounter, for spectators to experiment for themselves and share their experiences with others—inclusive rather than exclusive.”

<break the form
that moulds>
<break the mould
that forms>



58



I had been actively documenting through photographs the various spaces people were gathering to protest the Citizenship Amendment Act in Delhi. As a personal exercise, being an untrained illustrator, I was inspired to render these photographers into drawings, in order to capture the energy and mood of this time in a different light.

Being invited to show these drawings of the protests at an anonymous exhibition was an attractive proposal, being that I was insecure of the ways that my work will be viewed, since drawing is more of a personal, playful practice. Being encouraged to build on these drawings helped me focus on simply achieving a consistency in the style of the drawings, which I am excited to continue to explore in the future.

<subjugate>
<witnessing the state>
</manipulate>





“

Monochrome was not its usual self with this exhibition!

”

<can we consume
the haptic now?>

#25

61

“

In the spirit of the project I'd rather stay silent.

I have lived about 14,600 days and spent just half an hour as a single cell. Since then 6 billion 3 hundred and 7 million, 200 hundred thousand cells in my body have died in my body. I have shed and regrown my outer skin 504.74 times. I have lost about 1,168,000 strands of hair and more than half my taste buds. My heart has beaten 1,471,680,000 times. I have walked the globe 3 times.

When I die, my ashes will weigh about 9 pounds.

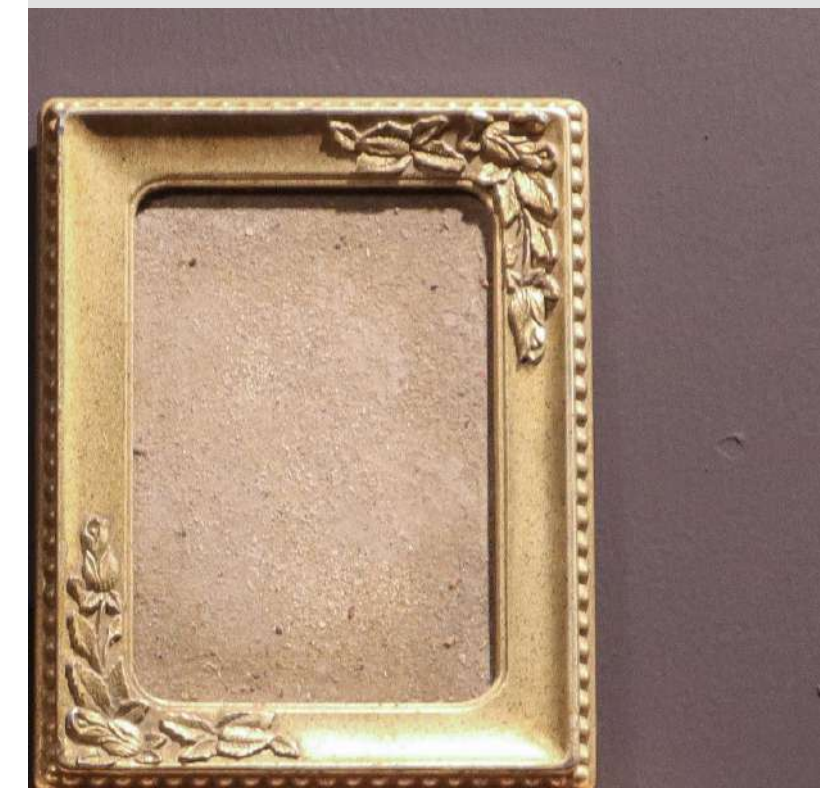
I work with dust, and one day I will be dust.

”

<prayer said>

<framing the particle>

</prayer unsaid>



#26

62

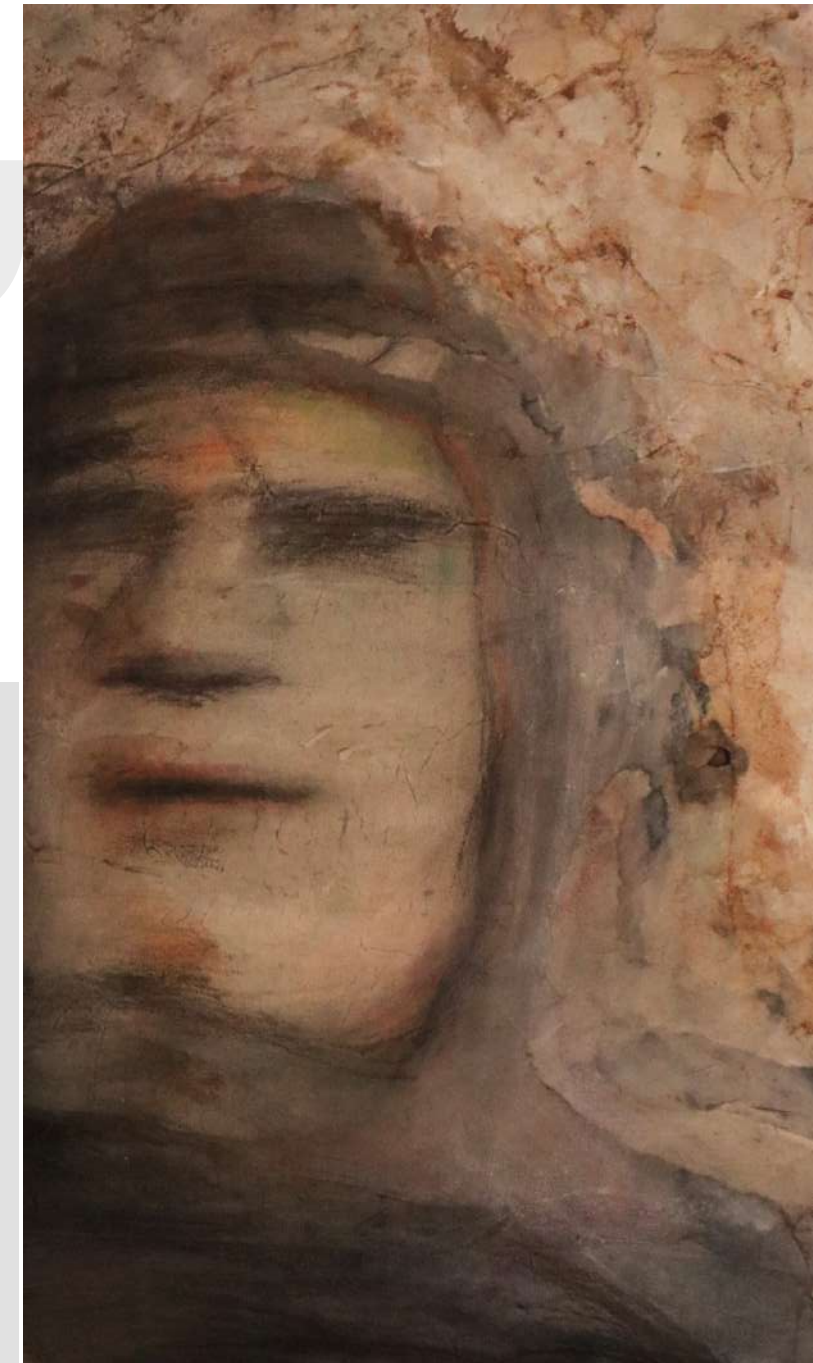


What is the best position for
viewing this work?
(1) Sitting? (2) Lying down?
(3) Standing? (4) Bending it like Beckham?

#27

I think of faces and what they conceal. I think of makers and what they conceal in everything they make. This is an effort to unpack some of that, a way of peeking behind the curtains that hang in our heads, that mark our descent into a madness of desiring sense over sensibility. I hope a certain confusion presides over all!

<the cumulative
sight of seeing
what we want
to see>





Do you want to read/rid the voice?
Do you know this language?

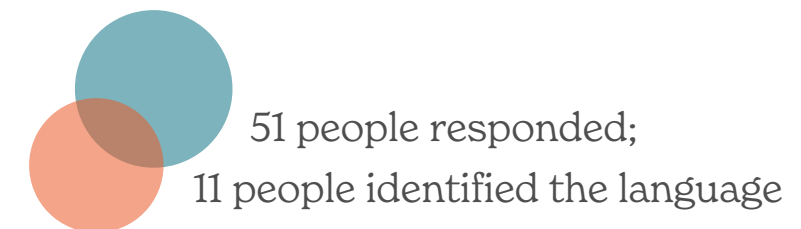
#28

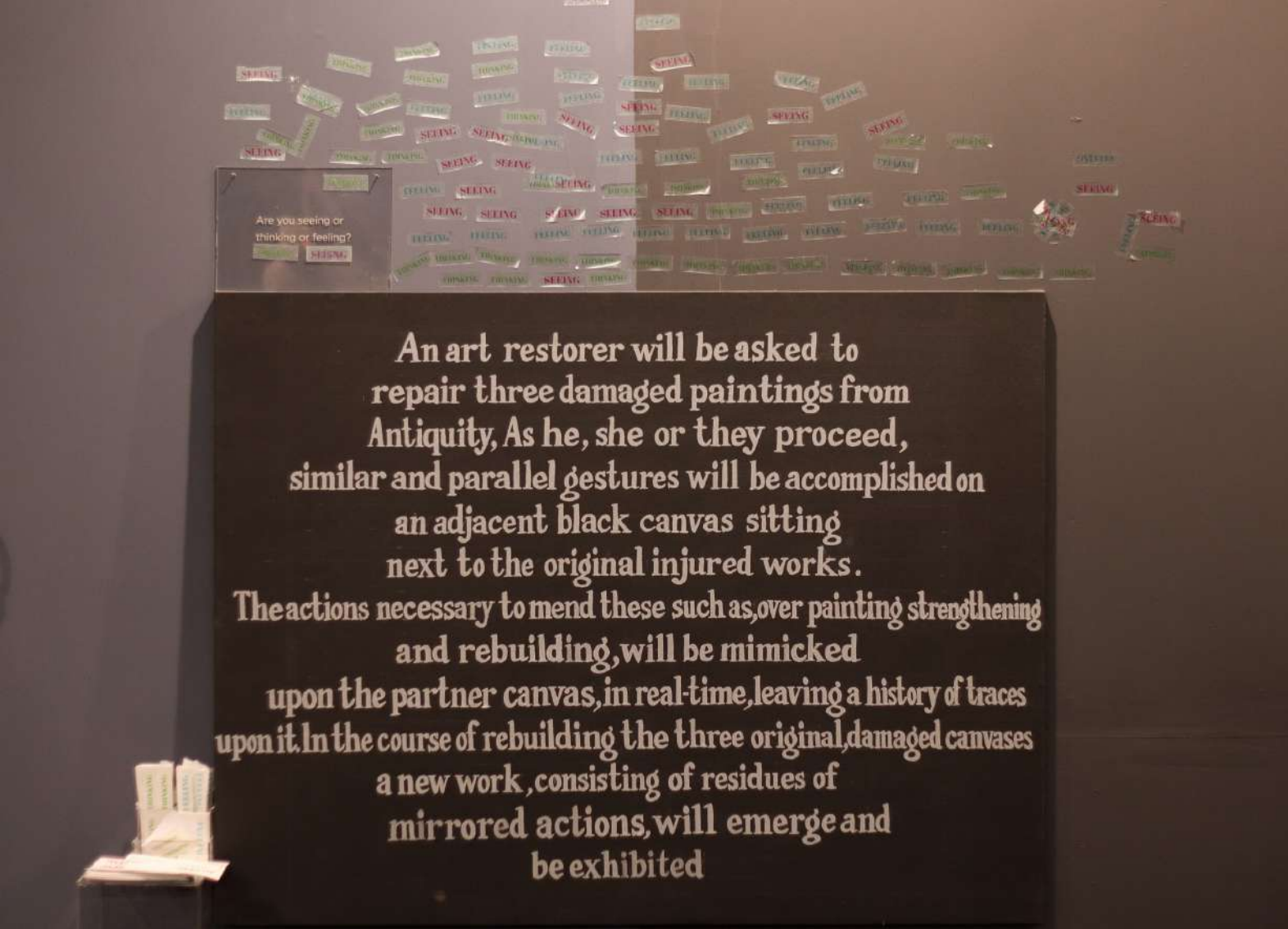
The disenfranchised stare back at you, with their clouded eyes, wide in disbelief and yet accepting of their man-made destinies. They are powerless in their multitudes, abandoned by their peers and forgotten by their countrymen. The nameless, faceless huddle we pass on street corners, protesting their lack of food, housing, agency.

The black robes hide all but the wide-eyed yet uncomprehending stare that has depressingly become the mainstay of a large portion of our disembodied population, struggling to cope with the pandemic and systemic violence.

These anonymous sentient beings were born out of a visceral reaction to the recent spate of protests, each figure a reflection of our species' power to ignore what is right in front of us.

<remain sentient,
sentinel>





#29

Are you seeing or thinking or feeling?

151 people said seeing

318 people said thinking

235 people said feeling



<history>
<the gestural persists in the aftermath
</history>

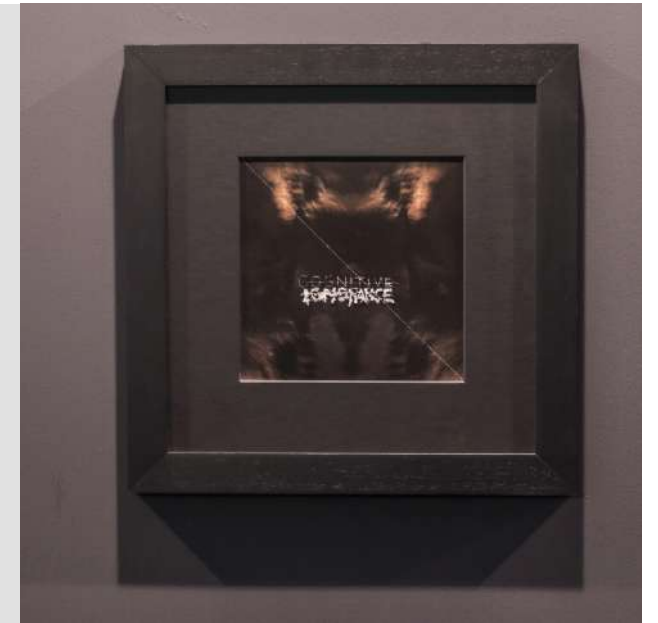




<a **momentary chasm** into
another universe>

#30

<etching ourselves into
mind over matter>



#31



FIELD NOTES #1

/ did you see it or did it see you

The exhibition is a gauntlet. Wrought with rigidity and no counteracting force, the object of art is bereft of play. The severity of genre holds court and it reigns with absolute definition, gradually knitting the veil through which the imagined viewer may view the art. Such is the routinisation of viewership, a system of structure, bringing you closer yet keeping you afar. In implementing a vision, in subscribing entirely to accuracy and the mastery of intention, what do we sacrifice? Who do we leave behind?

Fragmenting upon the very impulse of touch, the meaning of art in a space for art is a tussle for dominance: a skirmish between expectation and imposition, possibility and the present, silence and silencing. Caught amidst this crossfire, the instrumentality of art brings ingenuity. It angles purpose towards the viewer, offering a swaying bridge of interactivity that topples the poise of elusivity from a pedestal. Art as a tool performs as a verb, a noun and an adjective - it is all at once and nothing at all. Potent, the tool as art accompanies tooling and the underlying impressionability - of viewer, viewed and the act of viewing - becomes instrumental in (re)crafting an experience of art and its objectives.

The sonorous capacity of the apparatus is centre-stage, where do we go from here? What do we pause before to consume? Environments of viewing are built walls first - what we manage to keep out, keeps us in. If an interjection, a tool is blasphemous; if it is constructive, it is the history of making; silent, and it is claimed; observant, and it is feared; sentient, and it is named.

Annalisa Mansukhani

How dark is this Red Carpet?

FIELD NOTES #2

/ take anti-histamines before art

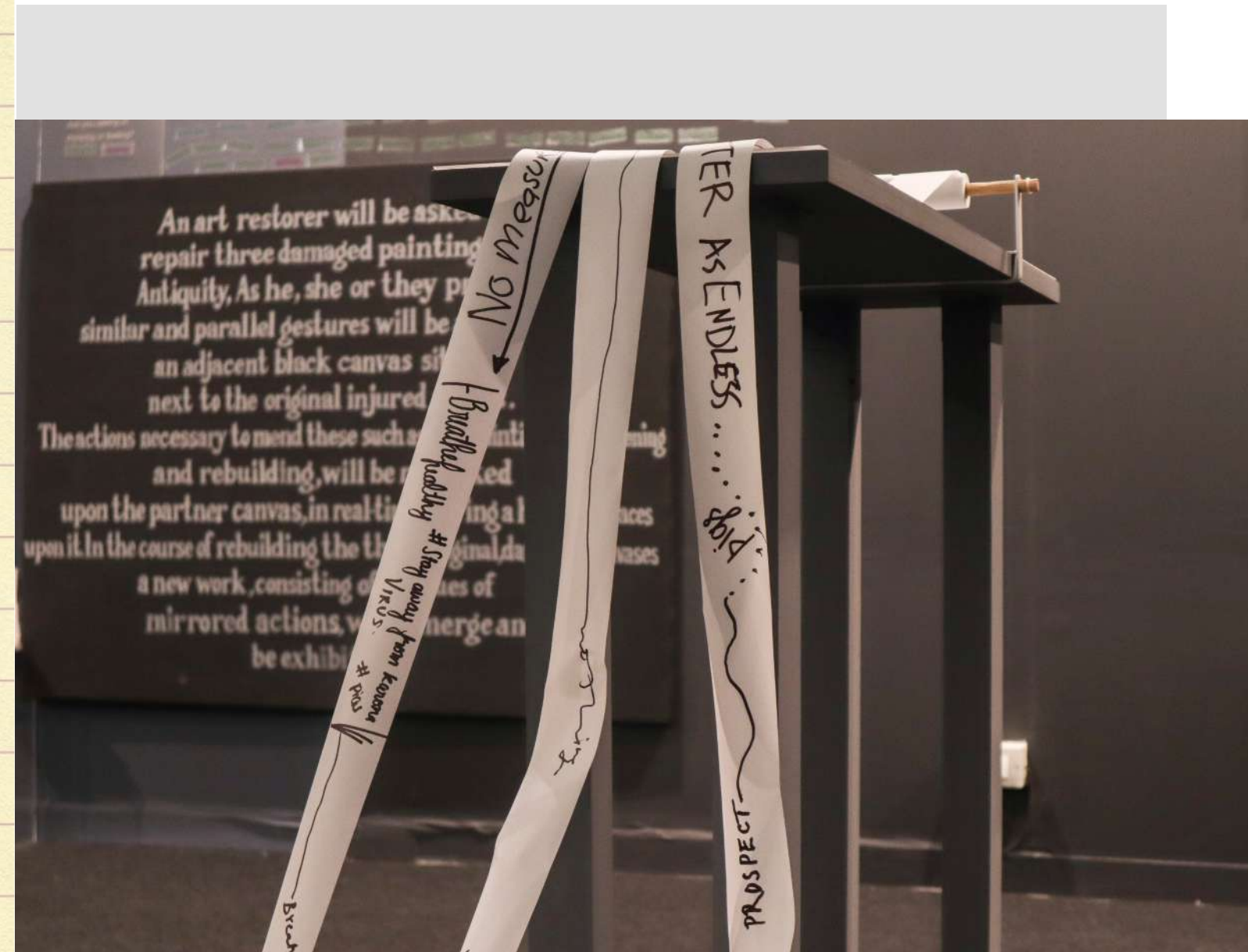
It is symptomatic of surfaces to invite, to initiate and host an encounter, regardless of duration and affect. Surfaces are whimsical, their muted indifference is startling yet they remain deeply reflective of our momentary presences before them. Wound together here, the twin fruits of surface—marking and erasure—twist repeatedly like a Mobius strip of malleability and resentment where meaning is stifled for a split second before the obverse presents itself.

Absorption and regurgitation—art is a wildfire of dualities circling back to an origin that is but a trace of an already existing trope of representation. What do the minutiae reveal, if anything at all? Skin and paper—textures of creation that are but fleeting containments of possibility. The undulations of both set aflame, the utterance of this obliteration is light-giving, life-giving.

Why do we frame the abrasive in the name of reification? What does the absence of explanation do to interpretation? The route alongside is a parallel birthing, a devious alternative of producing the viewer as accomplice. Naivete.

As skin with paper, as with paper on skin, visibility is an inflammation.

Annalisa Mansukhani



Between Seeing & Being Seen | Reading the Participatory and the Participant

by Vidya Shivadas

This was where the experiment came to fruition —within the participatory, grounded by that ultimate meeting with audiences flocking to the India Art Fair 2020, a few weeks before the world went into lockdown owing to the COVID-19 pandemic and its repercussions. A timely station, the storm before the scaffolding fell.

The India Art Fair appeared on the Delhi scene in 2008, and its temporary site became a permanent feature in the cultural landscape of the capital. The question of engaging with such a high-visibility event has always been open-ended for us at FICA. We were drawn to the idea of such large publics and statistically dazzling numbers, but also wondered about the discursive possibilities of an encounter that would take the interactive and the participatory beyond the familiar rhetoric of art as spectacle or as investment. We have always asked these questions in collaboration with others. In 2011, we invited the artist Abhishek Hazra to develop a forum, bringing us to the Fair. Hazra facilitated FICA Feedstation, an experimental platform where bloggers worked with Web 2.0 interfaces to experiment with forms of live and online art writing at the fair, and to explore the kind of socialities and vocabularies that could be generated in/from this site.

The enquiry was consolidated further in 2017 when FICA began to annually invite artists to propose immersive projects that dug deeper into the site of the Fair and worked with audience interaction as their core focus.

Whether it was the mapping exercise by Thukral

& Tagra where people were invited to imprint their emotional state on tiles and produce a larger landscape of feelings; Shilpa Gupta’s evocative projection that implicated viewers’ shadows in its narrative; or Sudarshan Shetty’s festive environment which built on other associations of the word “fair” (for eg., ‘mela’) with its elements of games and painted backdrops, our Artist Projects opened up non-linear strategies to mobilise the spectacle and its modes of interaction, engagement and immersion through more reflective spaces.

With WinWin88’s project, Cognitive Ignorance (CI), we found ourselves in the midst of a tantalising and multifaceted experiment that promised new lands and novel deconstructions. The fictional collective came to us with a proposal to develop an exhibitory apparatus as a self-interrogating machine that questioned the conventions and conditions of viewing art. The staging was elaborate, whimsical and multidirectional, spanning two booths: the first, an information booth beckoned with seductive messages, bright colours and shelves laden with gifts; the second, our main exhibition space demanded a certain adherence, armed with a registration desk that asked you to consent to a certain visibility before you were permitted to enter.

The title itself seemed to propose the impossible: coming to terms with one’s own cognitive ignorance. The collaborative project involved several “players,” all those who participated in this exhibition relinquished their authorship, save the visitors. They were expected to be seen. The conditions of anonymity imposed by the collective freed the works that came to be included from any familiar anchors of signature or naming, from material attributes and dating, and even from their objecthood and designations. The instructional replaced the informational. The act of mediation was minimal; performed subtly by volunteer-performer-players, this was not about expertise or a priori knowledge but in sharing the space of not knowing. Everyone

became a participant; the participatory was decentered.

Building on experiences that unfolded through the bodies that occupied this space in different ways and through different gazes, this exhibition held at its heart a performative accumulation that was constitutive in its shaping of the site of display. This exploration of meaning making became a playful occasion to take apart the conditions under which artworks speak and become legible, an effort to reconstitute them as a dialogical and polyphonic processes.

Exploring the Participatory

Irit Rogoff, in her essay ‘How to Dress for an Exhibition’, notes astutely that while no one would disagree on the principles and rhetoric of participation as they circulate in political culture, we are not attentive to what actually “constitutes listening, hearing or seeing in and of itself.”

“The good intentions of recognition become a substitute for detailed analysis which might serve to expand the notions of what constitutes a mode of speaking in public or being heard in public.” Rogoff asks us to consider the possibility of “reading a response as a form of re-articulating the question of what it might be to take part in the public sphere culture.”

CI explored the potential of an exhibition site as a performative space; it put into play/place precise strategies, deviant protocols and engaging instructions that created dynamic participants out of thronging audiences. I want to focus on some of the strategies deployed in the exhibition to look closely at how the space structured experiences—for audiences and their expectations —through incitements and different points of interaction.

For instance, the curtained corridor that led up to the main exhibition space was in itself an intervention that allowed for a phenomenological shift. Shrouded by black curtains on either side, the corridor marked a departure: the temperature dropped ever so slightly as you left the confines of the main aisle. As you adjusted to a discomfitingly bright light source placed at eye level, the word *scopaesthesia** registered in your peripheral vision. Though the corridor ran against convention at the Fair, it was also a passage to a new dialogue with art. An experience that demanded a certain patience and interest from its viewers, diverging from the consumptions of the Fair.

The exhibition itself was a large, open hall—a dark, restful space with walls in different shades of grey. WinWin88 engineered pockets of intimacy around the works, stitching clusters across the nameless ‘objects’ on display. The lack of signage for the works also meant that boundaries were porous; it was anyone’s guess where one work ended and another began. Upon agreeing to enter, your entry was never and not unconditional; you were encouraged to cultivate an accessory to your experience. With this in mind, a table containing ‘exhibition filters’ were left for viewers to carry into the exhibition. This included everyday objects spanning a range of sensory engagements: yoga mats and eye masks, scented camphor cones, spongy stress balls, ankle weights—and even a wheelchair—that could be used in any way as you navigated the space with and through them.

Strategising with the vacuum-like tendency of the exhibition, WinWin88 inserted ‘instructions’ on transparent acrylic sheets as anchors into its rudderless space, and developed through the prompts an exercise of meaning-making, routed

**scopaesthesia*: the sensation of being stared at

through the participatory. The exhibition came to ask collectively how and where meanings are determined, under what conditions they take shape and by whom they come to be influenced or directed. Questions often lead us to answers but at times they also become a way to undo the premises on which they themselves are predicated. The questions, prompts and instructions posed within the exhibition contained multitudes: they were straightforward, rhetorical, absurd, playful, philosophical, exploratory, and people responded to them with a great deal of agility and openness.

The viewers undertook their investigations of the artworks and their accompanying instigations with gravity and humour. They responded to prompts with great detail, speculating and imagining the value, age, nationality and gender of a work, calibrating how to position their body in front of it, even thinking about how one might consider the formal aspects or respond to forms of concealment, illegibility and opacity. Even as reactions were not uniform—and they were not supposed to be!—people seemed to settle into these activations, into a very casual and conversational relationship with the exhibition and its strategies. This methodology of inviting participation was also one that built us an archive through the provisional structure of the site as a search for meaning. It was not about unearthing singular depths but instead about accepting art's contingent nature, subject to its institutional and ideological framing but also open to the agency and subjectivities of the readers.

The exhibition paid close attention, as Rogoff would like us, to the acts of listening and seeing, considering closely the kind of speech acts that are possible in public spaces today. Accruing audience responses via dot stickers, sticky notes, notebooks filled with observations and postcards summing up experiences, we witnessed a layering and a

thickening of the site in very interesting ways over the course of the four days. As I remember, one viewer scribbled on a postcard, “While the rest of the fair screamed for attention, with its dizzying quantity of brightly lit works and displays of signature pieces by artists, here was a space that was asking us to return to our own bodies and our experiences of viewing and being with art.”

Thinking about the transitory-ness of the space of the corridor, its metaphor as a bridge between the ordered, labelled world of the rest of the India Art Fair and the liminal chaos of our exhibition, I am also reminded of the parallels that were produced between two kinds of simultaneous gatherings occurring at the time. While our corridor in its brief expanse did not quite chart a direct pathway to the other gathering a few kilometres from our venue, its porous membranes registered in great faith and solidarity the urgencies of what was unfolding there. CI was the reading of an inchoate moment, a time that was only beginning to feel unprecedented. It recognised and manoeuvred a twist in the linear relationship between inside and outside worlds; it created conditions for listening, speaking and performing, retaining their fraught nature as speech acts that made them otherwise difficult to position elsewhere in the current political climate.

A cognitive disruption, the exhibition was subtle in how it sought to invite solidarities of many kinds to persist and persevere with the women-led movement in Shaheen Bagh that had started in December 2019. Some of the artworks recorded textures of the movement in the form of drawings, sculptures and inscriptions. One enigmatic insertion—an audio file that played intermittently across the four days in the space—would often evoke startled, curious, amused and bemused reactions from audiences. This reverberating sound of a disembodied, humanoid chant was a call to action

in many ways. For one, it played on two different media devices: on the small music player with headphones, it invited people to respond to a writing prompt asking them if they could “read/rid the language.” On the Bluetooth speaker, it broke silence and chatter as volunteer-performer-players occupied the space with bodily gestures, striding through the works and the crowds, lying down on the dark grey carpet, almost disappearing—yet not—into the void.

As they say, the gestural is what persists in a performance. It remains longer than a recorded image, it extends deeper than the documentary. It is an embodiment that you can feel. Akin to the echoes of what played out in the space of the exhibition, the choreography of a protest could not be stalled by walls hoping to keep it out. While our peculiar time in the present seems hijacked by the shrill sounds of polarised screaming matches, I think back to CI as a project and as an offering that allowed for quieter conversations and lower, more potent frequencies of strength. Responding to the writing prompt that accompanied the audio file, people repeatedly wrote, “I know this voice. I hear it, and I know it.” In that moment, it became about affording that recognition, of acknowledging the weight of the positionalities we hold and confront, a critical point from where we begin to not only share space but also dialogue with our counterparts.

CI's cue was not the curtain call, its affect was not measured by known systems or methods, and it was not toward conflict for the sake of accommodating the contrary. It was knowing that for a brief minute, the exhibition could place at the helm of art the highly subversive idea of coexistence in the face of difference and dissension.



FIELD NOTES #3

/ objecthood is a decent place to live

Form and (im)possibility stand across from each other, along a long, darkened corridor. They meet (in the middle?) once in a while but the meetings are erratic, emotional, and tense. It's a relationship with no resolution but for a created common language in the midst. A shared delusion, or a known abandoning of everything else.

A winding land in the midst—thud. It's the reckoning of the object form and the imagined, a constant occurrence in the misplacement of language. The impossibility of trajectory leads nowhere, cuts off halfway, starts and stops nowhere, acting as a foreclosure. Muted as form and divided in principle, it defies itself in its very act of existence.

How does a concrete metaphor evaporate, and what is the porousness of material?

This impossibility is a palindrome as it revolves around itself, winding and rewinding. It's a red herring after all, steeped in the univocality of words.

Form has as much to do with visibility as it does with touch, or at least, once it pertains to certain dimensionality. When the form is reduced to pure visibility, as in the format of an exhibition, there is a closed synthesis of objecthood and materiality. In the digital present, the form is minimised to a set of functions that it produces. Conveyance as the bedrock of communication, language becomes concrete.

Entrapped air creates bubbles for the concrete to amass. The strength of the metaphor resigns.

Sukanya Deb



FIELD NOTES #4

/ the site is in overdrive; reboot!

Were there not a 'there', would there be a 'here'? 'There' is a question that arises, one of relationality. How close do we get to a word, before it explodes in the palms of our hands. Repetition, repetition, repetition. Spell it enough times and the construction is a lack.

'There' is what meets the eye, and the eye is all that could exist. There is the separation of self, in the creation of one and the other, a measure of distance -- anywhere but here. When a sentence makes a poem or a portrait, it paints sails into each stroke, no enunciation left unturned.

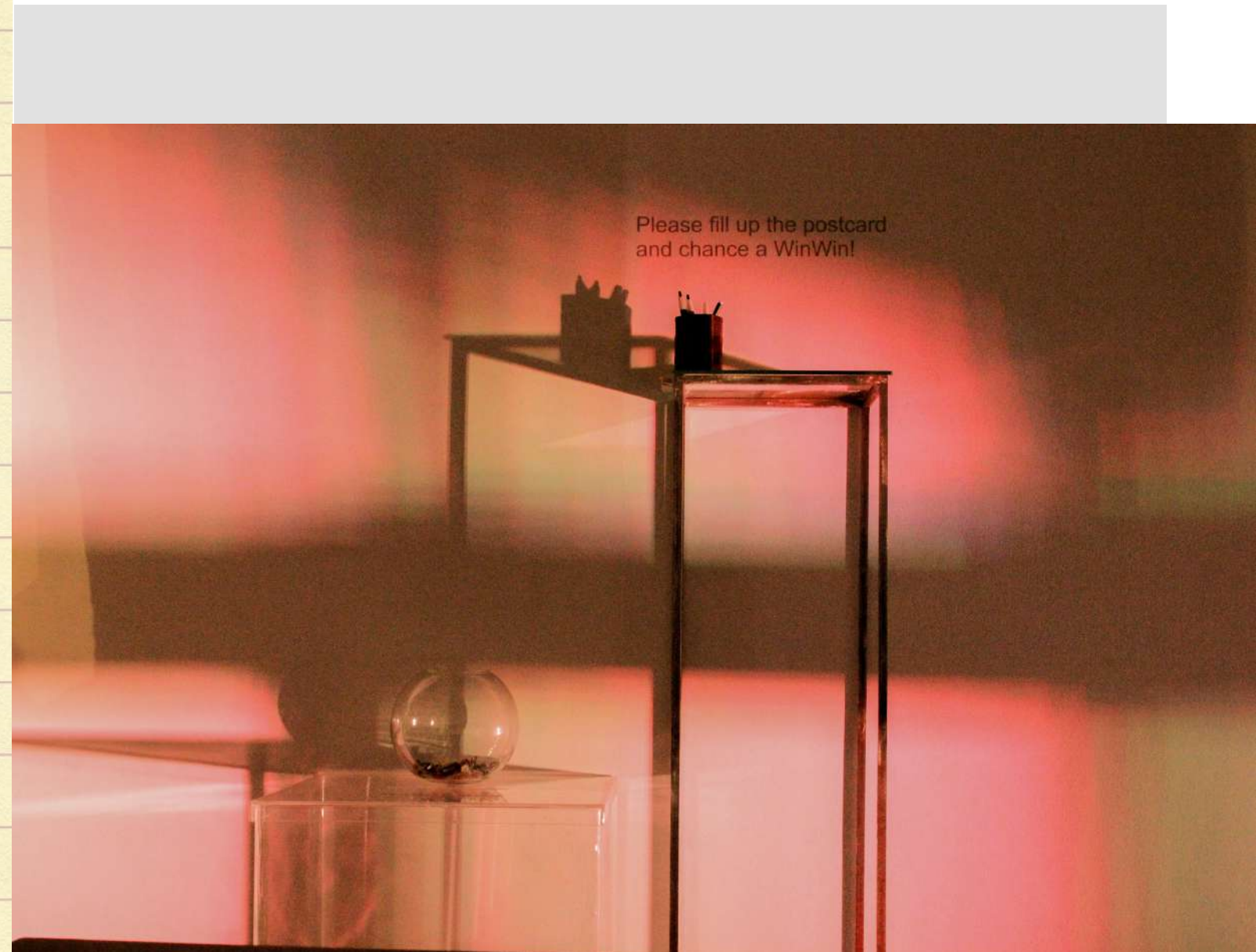
The word eats at the remnants of desire - namely, the mouth, that is at the base of libidinal production. In the exhibition space, is it the artwork that is the site of desire—or is it still the mouth? Is the mouthing of words an utterance?

Walled impulses and flattened portraits lead the sentence astray. Is it locating the viewer?

Viewership is the primary sense organ of the spectacle of the exhibition, but what happens when we bring in elements of touch, smell, and taste? Molecular, intrepid, bottomless. Far from being simply expository in nature, the exhibition space urges us to consider it as site of production - whether it be value (open to further fragmentation), sensory experience, a microcosm of economic relations, physical juxtapositions, or a performance.

The exhibition is created again and again as a constant site, desirous and vibratory.

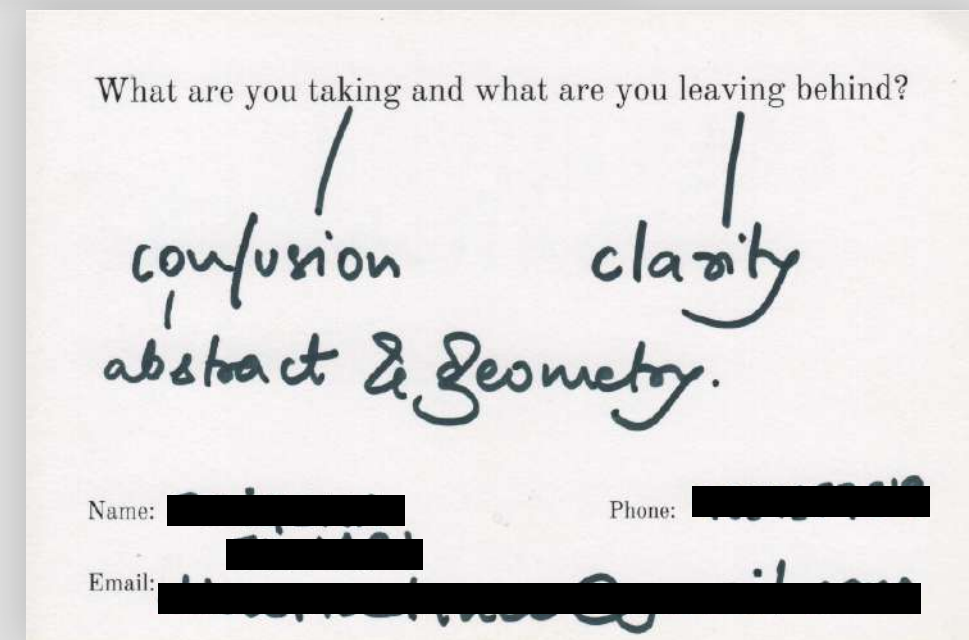
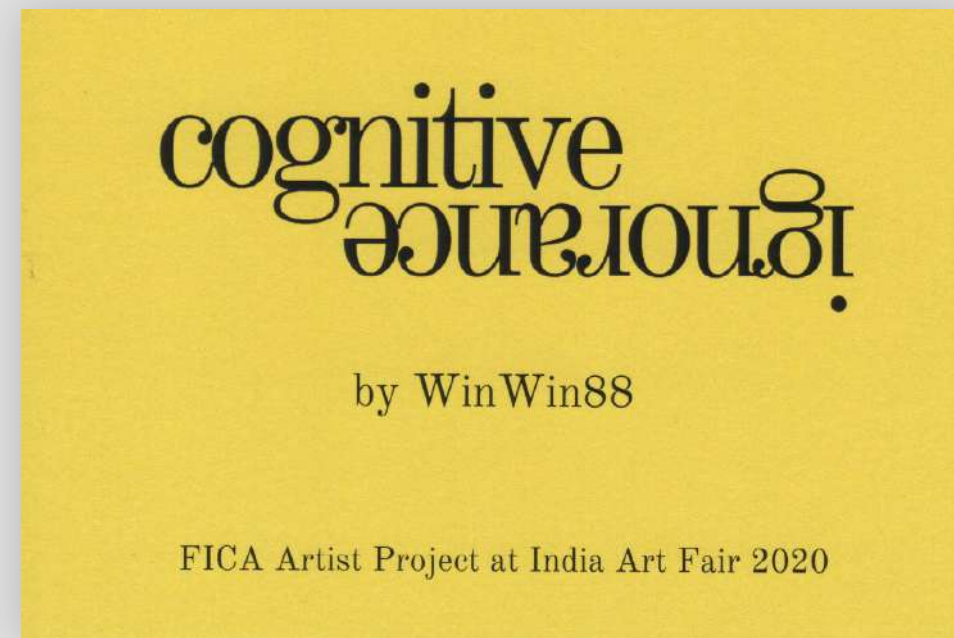
Sukanya Deb



THINGS TO TAKE /LEAVE BEHIND

on a Journey Away from Uncertainty | A checklist

Memories of an experience /my curiosity	The sound of Azaadi /footprints	The fact that we are so taken in by names	Unbelongingness
Questions /answers	16 GB pen drive /absence	The pain in my knees /the pain in my ankles	Candies /a wrist band
Mental health /anxiety	Temporariness /restlessness	The necessary remembrance to question	Abstract confusion /geometric clarity
Art only	Shadows, absences, presents, racks, racoons	Emptiness and alien voices	A sense of communion /my image



Would this work sink or
float in water?

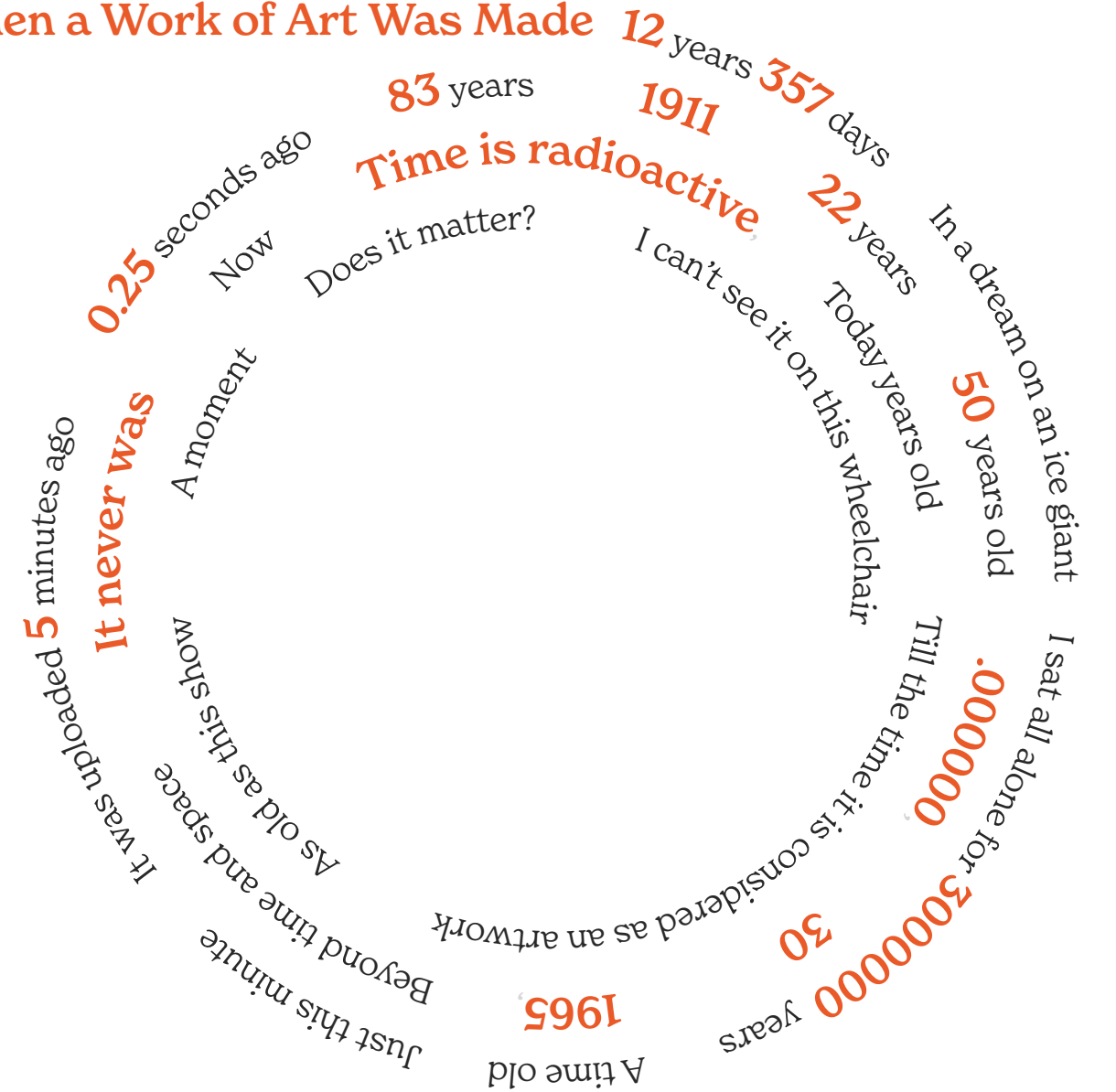
SINK

FLOAT

✓ is it upside down
✓ or downside up
✓ or sideways left
✓ or sideways right?



Possible Answers For When Someone Wants to Know When a Work of Art Was Made





**Beyond Semiotics:
Exercise Your (Mis)recognition to Get Better at
Your (Mis)interpretation | A Diary Entry**

Did I hear what was there or what I wanted to hear?

I can hear the emotion.

Is this the language of protest?

It is the sound that I am a part of everyday

This language is my own.

It's an expression of pain, pleasure and emotions.

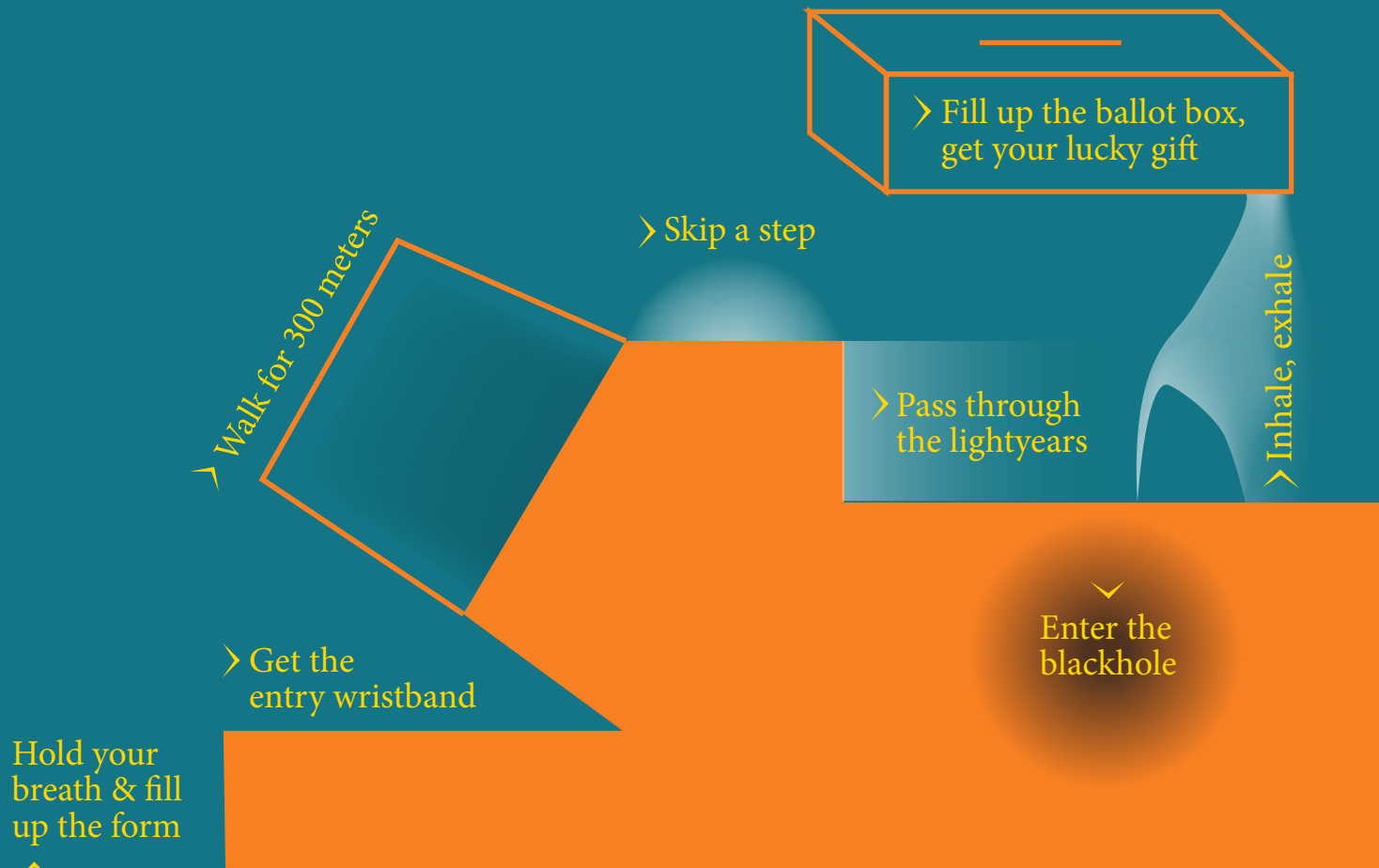
Freedom, Desire, Want & Humanity

Sounds like a language played backwards.

Rejoice in the revolt.



YOU ARE A GIFT



EIGHT STEPS TO PARTICIPATE

A GIFT FOR YOU

Unpacking Expectation & Reciprocity | The Idea of a Gift

Think aloud, dear reader. Listen indignantly.

How do we initiate a conversation around social exchange and collectivity in a space of exhibition? How do we bring ourselves closer to art to examine not just the details of the work on display but also the nuances that stitch the transaction of viewing?

The promise of a gift is attractive. It entices far beyond the appeal of knowledge or information; it is materially graspable in a manner that is unparalleled in experience and quantification. The gift becomes a 'filter' for how you see art; it fills your sight on-site with potentiality. With this in mind, WinWin88 invited their viewers to participate in possibility and invest in potential gain, structuring the experience of art around a give and take.

By asking people what they took and what they left behind, Cognitive Ignorance became a manufacturing plant (an industry! an enterprise!), producing affect through the lens of a gift and the spectre of reciprocity. You laboured to win, dear reader, you perspired to succeed in satisfying a want, you tired yourself in the shadow of need only to leave with desire.

You are rewarded with (but not entitled to) a gift.

Expectation is the reorientator in your primordial encounter with art. You expect certainty, the ease of narrative and the warmth of stated meaning but in a vacuum, it is your intention, exertion and eagerness that holds sway. You are denied what you expect, ergo you imagine. You conjure. You manifest.

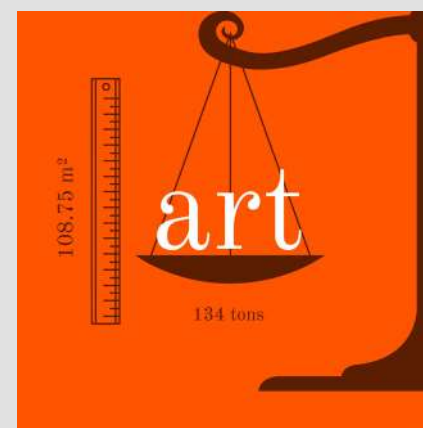
The gift holds court, and you attend;
A tantalising outcome. It beckons and pulls, it draws you in without ever being present...until it actually is.

YOU ARE A GIFT
A GIFT FOR YOU

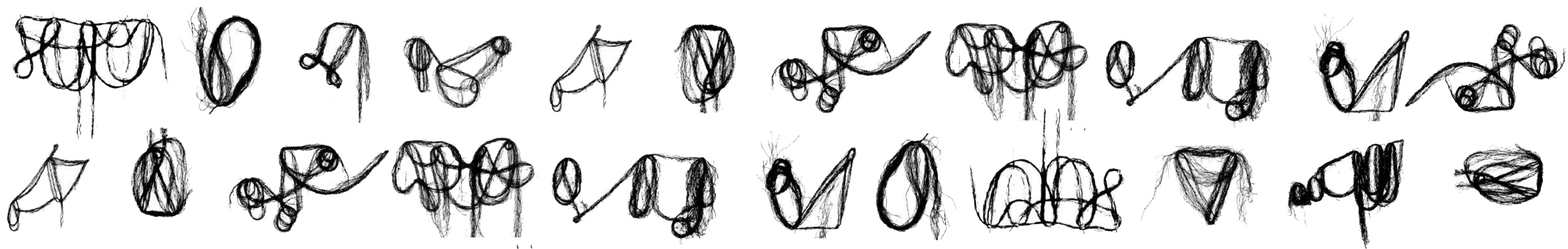
cognitive
curious
by WinWin88



In 2019, in the lead up to the India Art Fair, FICA and WinWin88 suffused social media with a cryptic set of 'messages,' designed to confound yet invite our imminent audiences into the hippodrome. These invitations were an ushering in, a siren call before the gathering, sounding out a future hope to lead our viewer-reader-players both toward and away from meaning and meaninglessness. Teasers, tidbits, food for thought—call them what you may, they were, above all, a lure inviting viewer-reader-players to stay, mix and mingle with duplicitous readings promising to unveil themselves in this charting of art and our encounters with it.



Exploring Vulnerability and Anonymity:
A three year experiment by Mithu Sen urf WinWin88



Returning (to) the Agential | Credits & Acknowledgements

Cognitive Ignorance was a curatorial disruption conceptualised by Mithu Sen.

She expresses her gratitude to her co-players, who permitted the identity of WinWin88 to emerge as a collective contestation through the objecthoods of their works, allowing for the phenomena of the fictional to grow and evolve into the exhibition at India Art Fair 2020, and further with the publication of this book. As this amorphous collective was orchestrated via a performative lens and under the garb of anonymity, the collective would like to briefly reinstate authorship to all, even as we continue to rethink the agency that we share and occasionally relinquish.

Cognitive Ignorance, FICA Special Artist Project at India Art Fair 2020, was supported by the Advisory Board Members Tarana Sawhney, Sunita Choraria and Radhika Chopra.

We are thankful to India Art Fair for their collaboration and support through the timeline of the exhibition in 2020.

#1 Susanta Mandal	Tools are functional sculptures, 2020
#2 Soham Gupta	Untitled, Archival Pigment Print on Hahnemuhle paper, set of 3 19.6” x 29.5”
#3 Sibdas Sengupta	A CITY RATHER THAN THE STATE, 2020 Sculpture in cement, 6” x 72” x 2”
#4 Sarita Chauhan	Untitled series, 2017, Ink and pen on paper, set of 17 works, 5.9” x 7.8”
#5 Thukral & Tagra	Type something, 2020 (A set of stories on Instagram), Video (47 minutes) NA!!, 2020 Drawing on archival paper with text in Gurmukhi - 'Na Kar batwara dharam da, Na kar batwara dharam naal'
#6 Victor Hazra	VOID LAND, 2018 GI wire, 18” x 18” x 16” Entropy of the world represents absolute measure of time, 2020 Choksi board Set of 8 (A3 each)
#7 Ana Pravacki	Stealing Shadows (Bourgeois), 2016, Vinyl sticker
#8 Sofie Muller	Finger-rock, 2013, Sculpture in senit-stone and oil paint Barbara, 2012, Film, 25 min, Director of Photography: Dries Delputte, Sound: Bart Stolle
#9 Santanu Chatterjee	Remains, Charcoal on paper, 40” x 54” Remains, Charcoal on paper, 24“x 54” Welcome, Burnt engine oil and charcoal on paper, 384” x 60”
#10 Ruben Gutierrez	Battleground 1, 2020, Wooden box with USB driveand photo prints
#11 Samit Das	Untitled, 2019, Acrylic and Oil on Canvas, with animation
#12 Aram Saroyan	Untitled, Digital drawing, Artwork fabricated by Nikhil K. C.
#13 Sonam Chaturvedi	Dialectics of conflict, 2019 Single-channel video with sound
#14 Gigi Scaria	Your obedience betrayed me, 2020 Inkjet print on archival paper, 24” x 36” Conscience Keeper, 2010 Single channel video with sound (4 minutes 57 seconds)

#15 Sawangwongse Yawngghwe	The Lady Has No Teeth, Vinyl sticker Accumulation by Dispossession, Vinyl stickers
#16 Sally Smart	Eye Applique, Manual embroidery and hand stitching synthetic thread and pins
#17 Lipika Bhargava	Destruction 1 and 2, 2020 Photo transfer on wood and acrylic
#18 Marcos Lutyens	Ascent/Descent Cement and papier mache, 31.4” x 7.8” x 7.8” Artwork fabricated by Santanu Choudhary
#19 Arunima Chowdhury	Untitled, 2017, Ceramic sculpture
#20 Rajkumar Mazinder	Assam Agro Acrylic on canvas, 6 parts, 12” x 72”
#21 Hans Ulrich Obrist	To Listen, A4
#22 Ronny Delrue	January 2020 Drawing ink on photo, Set of 5, 7” x 4.7” each
#23 Peter Briggs	Sans titre 1/2/3, 2016 Modeled papier maché, black flocking Coupe 02, 2019 Cutout black matte self adhesive vinyl Braided/silicone and tulle, 2020
#24 Srinivas Kuruganti	Untitled 1-6, Watercolour, 7” x 10” each
#25 Sindhu Thirumalaisamy	oon, 2019, Video, Stereo sound (5 minutes)
#26 Hannah Bertram	Our Democratic Dusty Demise, 2018 Dust from private home and Uncle Peter’s ashes
#27 Gautam Choudhary	Mixed Media on Paper, 2018, 60” x 30” Mixed Media on Paper, 2018, 60” x 30”
#28 Vinima Gulati	Portraits, Sculpture, Woven, Cloth
#29 Warren Neidich	Hand-painted sign on canvas
#30 Anandajit Ray	Wooden Sculpture, 72” x 18”
#31 Vivan Sundaram	cognitive ignorance, 2019

To collaborate institutionally is to create a playing field of sorts for different practices and visions to converge through co-making. WinWin88 is thankful for the efforts of the teams at the [Foundation for Indian Contemporary Art](#), [Vadehra Art Gallery](#) and [India Art Fair](#) who helped bring different elements to life as well as into their multiple afterlives.

Roshini Vadehra	Sukanya Deb	Jaya Asokan
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The (he)art of every endeavour is held up by the scaffolding strength of those who make and mould, fabricate and support. The collective is indebted to the people who strove to produce in exactitude and immense detail the project as planned.

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Harish Prakash	Pradeep Kumar	

For their untiring efforts to mobilise the exhibition and its constituents; staging and activating its nuances; mediating for all, remaining entirely indiscriminate in their approach as instigators and provocateurs in their own right, WinWin88 extends heartfelt gratitude and acknowledgement to the volunteer-performer-players who were part of the fabric of Cognitive Ignorance as an experiential space.

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Amna Binte Swaleh	Kulsoom Khan	Saruha Kilaru

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