

Noman Ammouri

Workshop held at Dept. of Fine Arts, Andhra University, Visakhapatnam

The whole process culminated in site-specific interventions at Hawa Mahal, Beach Road, Maharani Peta, Visakhapatnam Andhra Pradesh.

Dates: 16 to 22 August, 2016

Number of participating students:

Six MFA final year students from Kala Bhavan Santiniketan: Sayantan Samanta, Supriyo Manna, Suman Chandra, Samiksha, Rangskhembor Mawblei, Bijith R;

14 MFA and BFA final year students from Dept. Of Fine Arts, Andhra University, Vishakapatnam: Rajasekhar Tippana, Srinivasarao, Maruthi Manohar, Rama Devi, Krupavaram Konda, Prathyusha, Sri Kavya, M. Rambabu, M. Vasavai, Ratnamala and BFA 3rd year students as observers: K. Pooja, Shaik Ashraf Ali, S. Raja, Ashok Baski.

A SITESPECIFIC DIALOGUE IN TRANSIT

A workshop on methods of study as a process of socially engaged art practice in context to the city of Vizag. Any location or a site operates in a twofold situation of one as continuity and the other as a transition. There is an inherent nomadic nature to a site that emerges and dissolves every day. The daily accumulation of marks collectively frames the memory of a site or the site specificity of a location. Site-specific art activity in this respect is about engaging with both on the nomadic traits and the “close range” on a micro level and also to observe and participate in the general lifestyle on a macro level. Site-specific art activity is also about exploring the links between interconnected parts to visualize a space and observe the functions of a system and its links. This present project will focus on this aspect of nomadism within the site-specific situation of the city of Vizag.

This present site-specific activity will investigate the method of study from an anthropological point of view as a possible dialogical process of relationship with the city of Vizag, its past, its loss and rejuvenation and explore the multiple layers of materiality from the point of view of process, ritual, and temporality. It will explore study as a process of deterritorialization of public sites of Vizag and translate them into site-specific art projects by the students of the Art Institute. In the process, students will engage with the local history, archive both as document and as material residue and translate them into site-specific visual dialogues.

The workshop initiated with the presentation *Site Specific Art Activity: An Overview* by artist Sanchayan Ghosh to the participants in Dept. of Fine Arts, Andhra University. The sessions continued discussing the works of Robert Smithson, Joseph Beuys, Christo, Richard Serra, Susan Lucy, Vito Acconci, Hans Hack, Mark Dion, Francis Alÿs, Gregor Schnieder, Mike Nelson, Vivan Sundaram, Mohini Chandra, Otolith, Camp, Raqs media collective, Tushar Joag, and Performance Art. In Q&A initiated dialogues with participants on sites in Vizag city and the methods of functioning site-specific activity. The session continued with brainstorming about workshop and artists' works. Discussed on methods in site-specific activity like Sites, how does it functioning? Did city make of specialized sites? Characteristics and dialogue of sites? Preindustrial sites, faith/material interpretations, notions of time in sites? Viewer vs. participants, site specificity on temporality, ritualistic, architectural faith? What are Specific location/values on sites and the process for initiating a dialogue? Who is the viewer of art/specific viewer? How to take part of daily life in the process as an artist who is changing space and dialogue. In responding to the condition of art by merging installation with painting and sculpture, what is the role of minimal, conceptual art and body space relationship? How to assemble the fragments in site-specific place of action. The session continued with the screening of the documentary of Mikhail Kaufman's *Man with a Movie Camera* and left for a site visit in the city, started from site *Poorna Market, Old Post Office, Queen Mary Pavillion, Harbour port and Ramakrishna Beach*.

The second day Session started with Film Projection of Hans Hacke, Mark Dion works, and discussion on Documentary Strategies of engaging with a site. Discussion continued on the aspects of practicing of preserving bodies comes from the colonial period, preserving species/biological bodies/interviewing the idea of biological bodies and intervening space/museum. Understanding ecological features with narratives in museum/white cube. How Science/Zoology intervening in art in the works of Mark Dion, the methods as dialogue in urban space as (dead)/preserving trees as "signs" of breath in the concrete jungle in urban space. Discussion continued with Q&A on the methodology of the first site visit.

Third-day session started with a second site visit, a walk with Edward Paul an active member of INTACH in Visakhapatnam, sites includes *Kurupam Market, Old Cemetery, Town Hall, Uppu Taru, Queen Mary School, Pappula Veedi*. Paul giving a brief history of each site and their contemporary shifts in architecture, culture and functions from ancient, colonial to present. The session continued on methods of documentation, fragmentation, revealing the process of documentation of collective experience of the city with elements in one notion/methodology and criticality.

- Bringing criticality with multiple sites
- Strategies' of looking at space through the camera
- Unfolding the process of space
- Politics of language through use of camera

- Documentation within a documentation process of documentation by unfolding the methods
- Discipline/design of city by mapping by how urban surface behaves
- Science of tools of/from camera
- How a place could be generated by layers from the practice in reference to the Hans Hack mapping sites with minimalistic drawings

Sessions continued by brainstorming with participants on elements of methods in detail from site visit like Symbols, record, accessories, official documents, notions of pictures as elements, reminiscence, relevance, memories, location, space and locating the materiality of space from the chosen visited sites.

Third-day session continued with a site visit to Vishaka Museum on RK beach, understanding the local history, culture, architectural role of building & history, collective fragments/memories/collections of the museum through artefacts, initiating dialogue museum as public space and are the methods of interventions in the museum for site-specific activity. Afternoon Session continued with my presentation of my research on Vizag School and my curatorial process of *displacement and emplacement* with brainstorming and mapping the sites visits of participants as abstract before finalizing the site of activity in Fine Arts School AU.

Methodology

- Cartographic/ mappings of city/sites in own dynamics
- Geographical mappings of site-specific art activity
- Merging the relationship with material and its role outside and inside in merge space
- Impact of space
- Freedom of speech by artists in public space

The fourth day of workshop, session started by introducing to work with *Hawa Mahalas* a site and left participants for research of their chosen sites for interventions. The session continued in afternoon with the presentation of Sanchayan Ghosh's works on Site specific activities and public space projects. Evening session started by readings of conceptual notes of participants and their materials of choice (collective material) from their space/sites. The whole process was shared as site-specific interventions in Hawa Mahal, Beach Road, Maharani Peta, Visakhapatnam.

SITE: Hawa Mahal on the Beach Road of Visakhapatnam was once a landmark of the city. It belongs to the erstwhile Maharaja family of Jeypore, Odisha. Before the formation of the state of Andhra Pradesh, almost One-Third part of the District of Visakhapatnam fell under Jeypore Samasthanam, which was a part of Madras Presidency. Hence it was imperative for the family to have a house in Visakhapatnam in order to travel the long distance from the

jungles of Orissa to Madras. It was mostly used as a summer palace by the Royal family as this place use to remain cool facing the direct breeze from the sea. Hence the name Hawa Mahal, i.e. Palace of Winds and Breezes was appropriate.

The palace was built around 1917 and the construction was completed in 1924. It is built on the Madras plan of architecture. A strong stone building, with veranda, supported by strong stone pillars around the building and a center courtyard with rooms all around. The roof of the building is made of Madras slab, with Burma Teak beams and rafters supporting the slab made of lime mortar and terracotta tiles packed in the center. The window shades are also in Madras style, supporting the sloping tiled canopy with wooden frame. Italian marble imported during that time adorns the floor in geometric designs. The walls are adorned with 3 feet high borders with Italian ceramic tiles. The height of the roof is between 15 to 18 feet. Doors and windows are made with Burma Teak adorned with stained English glass. The building has a kitchen complex at the back and garages and outhouses for servants' quarters on the sides. The boundary wall of the Palace uses to extend to the sea earlier until the Government took the front part of the house to build a direct beach road. There are guardrooms on either side. The main gate of the house was protected by canons. Which are now placed in the District Court premises.

The building has hosted a number of British Governors and Dignitaries. Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru stayed here when he came to Visakhapatnam to inaugurate the first ship launched from Hindustan shipyard. Dr. Radhakrishnan was a good friend of Maharaja Vikram Deo and often visited this place. Dr. Rajendra Prasad, Rabindranath Tagore also came to this place and M.S. Subbulakshmi gave a performance here. The building was used as Allied Army Head Quarters during World War II. Later it was taken over by the Govt. under rent control Act and a Nurses training school was started here. Later the first Woman's College of Andhra Pradesh was started here and later it shifted to new premises on court orders.

After several site visits and four days of brainstorming, participants moved in group exploration & few with individual projects in specific locations as a temporary intervention. Sessions continued of discussion on strategies of recollection and sharing of site-specific dialogues in another architectural context: addressing issues like displacement and nomadism as a strategy of the display. Installation based on the memories and residue of site-specific intervention in the city of Vizag inside an architectural situation as a collective memory. The participant's explored different site of the city in groups like Rambabu and Vasavi's project was on *Jalaripeta* fishing harbor site through the installation with collective materials of fishermen's everyday objects such as fishing net, nylon ropes, weaving tools, sand, and stones from the seashore and fishing hook. The exploration of the site on fishermen's community there daily life and fishing and selling captured visually with found objects from their surrounding's as an act of documentation. The very existing and happening from one place to another, cover-up from Jalaripeta fishing community. Collective elements which are a source for the installation from their regular objects to become a visual dialogue.

Participant Krupa and Srinivasa explored the fishing harbor of Visakhapatnam port with the installation of collective materials and video projection as *Sunday Walk*. The notion of the fish market as site initiating dialogue with a movie camera as a tool to document and preserve the daily life of fishermen's trade.

In Bijith's Installation from collective structure *Mainsail* (The lowermost sail on the mainmast) assembled with fabric juxtaposed with text from his poetry. His work plays a centerpiece in this heritage complex. Installation *Let the winds come down...* is an icebreaking point from personal and artistic experience to their expressions and encounters. It serves as a point of intersecting to start a conversation or start a new idea of work. More than this takes up the historical space to have a meaning of traditional knowledge and the knowledge of the visitors.

Bijith says:

The direction and target of a journey were more a sense of boatman than in the map unlike sailor, the boatman first sensed where he went. He heard the winds...touched the seas. Felt the coordinates that point of intersection is this touchdown point of the winds, his maps are visual narratives of his fading memories. The uncharted voyages he made on a little boat the fishermen sails. The rural peninsula fishermen community holds several characters, this stark difference in their culture makes their identity. Fishermen including Paravar of South India listens to the signs of the sea. Sounds those made under and over water winds that come from a different direction, nature of waves their life depends on minute signs from the ocean. Their coded knowledge on various narrative pictures acts as a non-uniform sea maps.

Bijith's interest to initiate multiple dialogues in this subject with visitors to discuss around the installation are about the unheard and unseen customs of the local fishermen's, their remarking on his jagged map. In Rajasekhar and Prathyusha explored with collective material from the site in making reflections of local history, culture, and memories from the *Poorna Market* with its socio-cultural dynamics. Sayantan's work reflects from the collective materials and tools from goldsmith jewelry makers, his exploration of displacement and emplacement in fading away of ancient Andhra jewelry making practices which are being replaced by newer practices. His interventions at the site of jewelry making workshops near the Town Hall area to be realized that the traditional jewelry makers of Andhra were being gradually replaced by machine-made designs. Most of the jewelry makers are from Bengal, according to him this displacement brought changes in jewelry makers which are reflected in the gold designs of the region which have gone through a change.

Participants in a group Rama Devi, Maruthi, Suman, Raja, Ashraf explored the site study by mapping streets as a process of deterritorialization of public sites of Vizag city and translate them as a site-specific art project. Their mapping streets from *Town Hall to Kurupam Market*

intervenes the local history, colonial, Zamindars memories, by negotiating private space and public space and the shifts of time frame how the space changes private to public and public to private from the aspects of architectures and new infrastructure's with the use of blueprints and digital prints of architecture from these streets.

The next two groups explored the sites like *Govt. Queen Mary Girls High School* and *Jalaripeta*, participants of first group Kavya, Pooja, and Samiksha reflect the architectural history of the site from colonial period with the present new architecture of school, initiating dialogue in one site with two bodies. Their interventions in location and observation on the transiting and emerging character of the site by documenting traveling of sound within the walk recalled by gestural influence, quoting the antiquated vintage part of that space and to the bodily active part of the space. The sound portrays the quietness, echo and vice-versa, from the entrance of the new building with the glimpse of the old generates variation in space. The dilapidated site of the old building has overloaded history and layering of multiple practices. The memory of past to the present, the perseverance of the historical architecture and variation in religions, which indulges some or the other way in women involvement and their encouragement. The scenario of the site driven to involve active participants in the space and their understanding through their various point of view. From this aspects, participants conducted a workshop on drawing (architecture of school) for the students in school. Their involvement in the complete process brought forward the thought and immature lines of their favorite frame of their mind to the school reveals their thought process of understanding the space with relevance to the past and the present part of the space. The use of recording as a mapping tool for interpreting and visualizing to amalgamate Supriyo and Ranagshembor explored the site *Jalaripeta* of fishermen community through installation, intervening site to understand the relation between the sea life and the land. Their mappings on fishermen's skills, knowledge, and understanding their navigation on sea through an intimate relationship with space. Their interventions with the site were through materials collecting from the site, through communication with the people there, negotiation (especially regarding the collection of the materials), photography and videos. Through this process, they came up with the rope which was part of the anchoring rope of the boat. The interesting part of this material is the accumulation of different elements in it. These elements are once used by these people and they are being accumulated by the help of the waves. Layer after layer many elements came together with time, one can trace the history of this particular place from this material. It has a certain quality of life in it which they want to improvise through the process of displacement and emplacement.

WORKSHOP UNFOLDS:

The workshop intrigued to the idea of site specific art to the participants, site-specific art activity is a time based due to its continuous long process and how the process creates a mark on participants and participants also create marks on site, so this interaction and dialogue are about what is site specific art. Through this workshop they tried to introduce the process of

engaging site and what are the tools and what are the methods, what are the dialogues that can happen. So some of the participant's work directly engaged with the people and into a kind of locational exploration of space and some of them have gone into a very specific individual and some have gone on politics of space how different spaces are being. The workshop unfolds not just trying to do an exhibition but trying to learn and find a method how to share a certain experience that participants had with a specific location in another method. The heritage complex also guided where to place the certain experience of outside on the inside as what we call now Deterritorialisation, as a studio or sharing and how the building has become a journey of the outside.

The participant's work has two different dialogues in space one with physical dialogue and one with space and one with the reminiscence of the space how it has been accumulated with different notions of cultures to an outside viewer, as the building itself transformed into another site. In remark of how an architecture become a social space and how it can create memories of space outside and inside, it is operating on the idea beyond which is in transit, going to be vanished and also going to be transformed. Participant's work was challenging to the idea of what is space, what is a memory and what is the notion of architecture. But this was a revert process of engagement it is not about view deciding but through observing and engaging with a certain rapport. This was an ongoing process of outsider and insider in any site-specific location which starts from the outsider point and the intention to become inside.

QUOTES FROM RESOURCE PERSON:

"Birds of same feathers" –Edward Paul (INTACH member Visakhapatnam)

"Don't take public for granted this is the first rule for site-specific art activity" –Sanchayan Ghosh (Artist)

Noman Ammouri

28 August 201

Hyderabad

Workshop supported by Sher-Gil Sundaram Arts Foundation.

Special thanks to all the workshop facilitator Sanchayan Ghosh and resource person Edward Paul, and also to the faculty to Dept of Fine Arts, Vishakapatnam, in particular Prof. Sistla Srinivas, for their support in hosting the workshop