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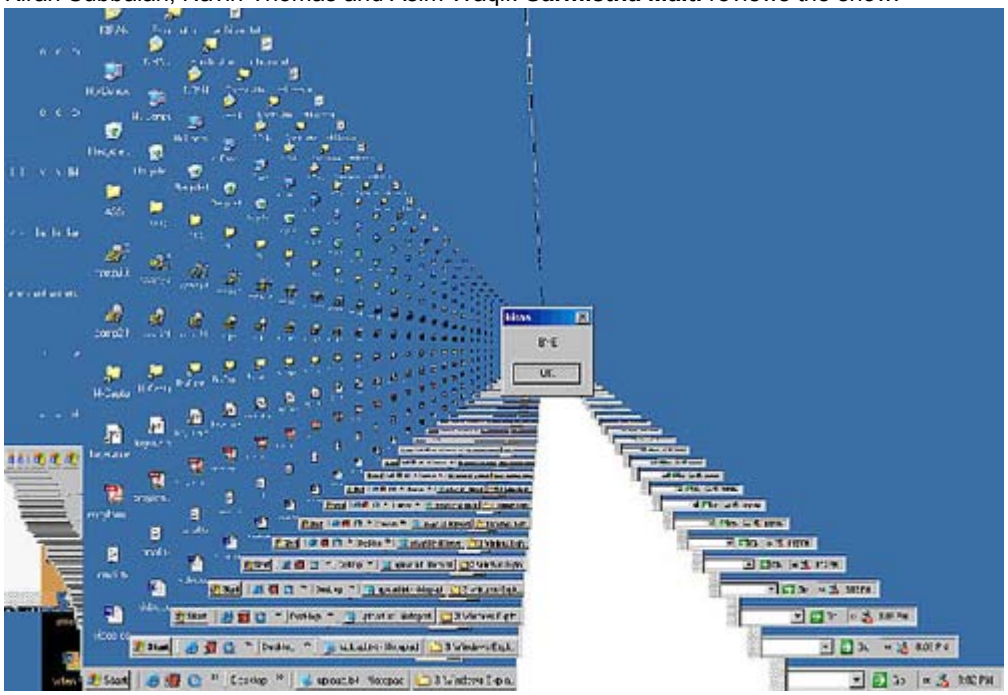
EXHIBITION REVIEWS

EXPERIMENTING AN ANALYTICAL JOURNEY THROUGH NEO ART MEDIUMS

Bose Pacia Kolkata recently concluded **Analytical Engine,** a show curated by **Heidi Fichtner.** The artists whose works were included in the show were Sophie Christopher, Rohini Devasher, Anita Dube, Abhishek Hazra, Lavanya Mani, Rakhi Peswani, Mona Rai, Kiran Subbaiah, Navin Thomas and Asim Waqif. **Sarmistha Maiti** reviews the show.



A Work by Kiran Subbaiah

Analytical Engine – the name calls for attention! True. This was the title of the show recently held at Bose Pacia in Kolkata curated by Heidi Fichtner with a purpose to give you an idea about the expanded domain of art that no more remain confined to the clichéd tenets of aesthetics and techniques applied to create and express art. Let's not get into the unnecessary jugglery of words or even beat around the bush with the lame excuse that it wasn't our cup of tea. Precisely to get into the bottom-line of this show, it is a must to understand the curator's intention and her decision to select these ten artists and show their different works that they have done in various stages of their career which can be understood as handmade in either their conceptual orientation or in a more literal sense, in terms of their materials and processes. Fichtner went in search for the artisanal quality of an artist or in other words it was a serious hunt for deriving the artisanal quality from a piece of an artwork. Sounds interesting, but this was not all. Had it been only the intention to showcase the skill of an artist, the curator would have been bogged down for conceptualizing something very much bereft of intellect. Thus **Analytical Engine** at the surface level took interest in the exposure of various attitudes towards artisanal quality but deep within knitted the confluence of several independent discourses very intelligent carrying layers of meaning challenging the hegemony of dogmas and conventions not only in art practice but also in the very process of thinking of and about art.

A Work by
Abhishek Hazra

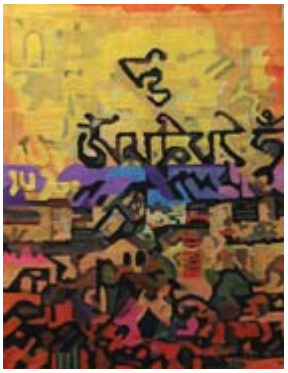
Heidi Fichtner is much known as an independent curator, consultant and critic and at present she is based in Bangalore. She has lived and worked in New York, Paris and Berlin and contributes regularly to international art magazines and reviews, as well as translating from French and German. **Analytical Engine** is her first exhibition in India. For this particular show,

the selected ten artists were Sophie Christopher Rohini Devasher, Anita Dube, Abhishek Hazra, Lavanya Mani, Rakhi Peswani, Mona Rai, Kiran Subbaiah, Navin Thomas, Asim Waqif. As the show aimed to reveal the trajectory between codified systems of making and ordering - from the warp and weft to paper index cards to the uses of language - and the potential for analytical human intervention, the range of works in the show therefore underscore the primacy of artisanal skill and humble materials, avant-garde methods in painting and printmaking, and hands-on or "hacker" approaches to digital and sound works. The ten of them innovated with the trivial to shape their analytical discourse on a common platform.

A Work by
Rohini Devasher

As Rakhi Peswani and Lavanya Mani employ traditional means and materials like the embroidered scraps of old saris, lace, home made dyes that have more or less nothing to do with hard-core technology to enter into discourses on history and language, Rakhi keeps of referring to areas of art history where as Lavanya onsets for a mythical journey. The conjugation of the tradition and the modern thereby leading to a third meaning came out of their works. Others in the team reflected much more to be techno-lovers exploring some fine forms of video art. Kiran Subbaiah presented one of his net art works in the show: a computer virus, or rather carefully constructed simulations of a virus attack on a personal computer. The basic material of the work, then, is the handcrafted code that produces this humorous simulation complete with a range of visual and sound effects triggered off by specific user interaction. Consisting of hand-written code, in the context of this show his works expressed the very idea that new media works may also be embedded with the human element of craft. Where as Abishek Hazra's two digital print works in the exhibition elaborated upon the ideas explored in the video while also sampling formal elements from it and digitally transforming them into a dense mesh of visual symbols that play with the memory of a certain modernist language. Thus the intermingling of conventional art forms and avant-garde, experimental forms was vivacious in the show.

Again Waqif presented a wall sculpture-cum-helioflex device patched together from wood, metal, architectural drawings and suspended photo lenses and intended to elaborate upon simple materials and traditional methods while accentuating the formal beauty and cultural value of rudimentary handmade apparatuses. Anita Dube engaged in the transformation of rough found materials into resonant objects, almost talisman-like, through the meticulous application of lustrous finishing elements. The core of ideation in each work was formulated through metamorphosis. Mona Rai continued her assertive interventions into the field of painting which followed more from a tradition of action painting or abstract expressionism than from classical Indian Modernism. But Rohini Devasher through her new digital photo and video works expressed some unique lithographs and solar etchings that are a product of creative invention into the processes of printmaking and reflected her enduring interest in the intersection of science and visual forms. Navin Thomas conceptually grounded his works based on sound component. He devised sound designing into art material and finally the work represented to be leading to a process of interrogation of the tenets of art history and the apparent irreproachability of history.



A Work by
Sophie Christopher

Art countering art, art countering art history or in a nutshell the journey through the analytical engine allowed the audience of Kolkata to confront with the post-modern wave in art that had initiated through installation but now doesn't even remain within the limited parameters of installation art as well. Heidi Fichtner – the brainchild of the exhibition **Analytical Engine** placed some live examples to substantiate this idea. A great endeavour in totality!

Analytical Engine
Curated by Heidi Fichtner
Sophie Christopher, Rohini Devasher, Anita Dube, Abhishek Hazra, Lavanya Mani,
Rakhi Peswani, Mona Rai, Kiran Subbaiah, Navin Thomas, Asim Waqif
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Bose Pacia, Kolkata

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