

SELECTED EXTRACTS FROM REVIEWS AND ARTICLES ON THE WORK OF THE RAQS MEDIA COLLECTIVE:

"The Model of the Artist Intellectual"

"For me they (the Raqs Media Collective at the Sarai Programme in Delhi) represents the model of the artist intellectual. Their productions are really quite plural. They are filmmakers, editors of books, they write open source programs that can be shared by different people. They are urbanists in terms of their interest in all forms of life within the urban domain. This idea of collectives and community, this shared horizon that we've seen is a model of Documenta 11."

Okwui Enwezor, artistic director Documenta 11, in an interview with Tom Griffin, in Art Press 280, June 2002

A Mediation on Locality and Everyday Life at the Urban Margins, Cartography as Power and Communication as Resistance

"...Consider, also, the inter-media installation produced by the New Delhi-based Raqs Media Collective: a meditation on locality and everyday life at the urban margin, cartography as power and communication as resistance, it attempts to breach the various walls separating the formal exhibition space from the public space of the street, natural-born citizen from migrant labourer, artist from technologist, developed world from developing world... Such art-works represent a dramatic prospect for the global art of the 21st Century: their logic and trajectory may be conditioned by the contexts of their origin, but they offer a vivid take on the globalised contemporary reality, not splenetic but optimistic. They bear a visceral relationship to the hopes and terrors of the subaltern and the marginalised everywhere - whether in those former Third-World sites of ethnic otherness, supposedly "mired in history" according to Fukuyamist mythology, or in the world's global metropolitan centres, which have woken up to the alien, immigrant and disempowered within themselves. Far from being peripheral elsewhere, regions like sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia will soon have to be acknowledged as dynamic centres, as situations from which artists of impressive energy and protean inventiveness have emerged, their redemptive gestures creating resolute, if small and temporary Utopias against the pervasive catastrophe of the present.

Global Art : of catastrophes, redemptive gestures, by Ranjit Hoskote, The Hindu, November 24, 2002

Turning the Focus from Individual to Collective Art Production

"...Among the Indian participants, the focus was essentially on displacement and territoriality. The Raqs Collective from Delhi, like other group participants from other parts of the world, turned the focus from individual to collective art production and issues. Raqs' installation invited responses to the multiple, frequently conflicting efforts to "control" city spaces in Delhi. It found an echo in David Goldblatt's photographs of areas of contested control in South Africa..."

Diatribes or Art? An Overview of Documenta 11, by Gayatri Sinha, The Hindu , September 1, 2002

"...We need to consider works such as these within the context of a three way relation or what we might call a socio-technical-ethical assemblage"

It is important then to locate 'Location⁽ⁿ⁾' itself - not within the nation or even place 'India' nor as manifestation of an aesthetic that might be generalised through the direction - 'Indian new media art' - as such. To do either would be to presume the operation of an aesthetics grounded only in a politics of identity, manifesting some essential quality or basis of otherness.

Rather we need to consider works such as these within the context of a three way relation or what we might call a socio-technical-ethical assemblage that pays attention to first, the specific time zone relation the Indian IT economy holds to globally networked information flows.

Second, the asynchronous development of electronic cultures within India. These, Ravi Sundaram has argued, work via a model of recycling, producing an alternative experience of the now or modernity, outside of both national/state regulation and irreducible to western, global sensibilities such as postmodernism (Sundaram, 1999).

Third, we need to consider the cultural work done by groups and organizations such as Raqs Media Collective and the Sarai New Media Initiative to produce an alternatively positioned public domain through the global deployment of new media technologies against standardisation - such as the standardisation of time. This three way relation at once situates the new media art work coming out of Delhi... and catapults it onto the global arena, making time-ontological, durational, historical times - the arena of conflict and contestation.

While I am not claiming that work such as 'location n'... (carries) the weight and force of political transformation, I do want to suggest that their differential interventions into the speeds of electronic life provide us with a resource for what Appadurai has called: 'self-imagining as an everyday social project' (Appadurai, 1997: 4).

Anna Munster, in a review of Location(n), an inter media installation produced at the Sarai Media Lab in "Travelling at the speed of life: world time and global politics in new

media ", paper presented at the Australian and New Zealand

Art Association Conference, 2002 and posted on Fibreculture, 16 December 2002

"Raises the Bar for all Future Practical and Theoretical Work Dealing with Digital Authorship."

"One great new media project that I did see at Documenta was OPUS (software and accompanying theoretical package) ...Unveiled in Kassel, OPUS is definitely the most interesting new media project I have encountered in quite a while. It is a sophisticated, both theoretically and technically, system for multi-user cultural authorship in a digital network environment. Do take a look at the site and check their new concept of "Rescension" (in OPUS Manual) that offers a very interesting way to address the difficult issues of authorship in our "remix" culture. OPUS raises the bar for all future practical and theoretical work dealing with digital authorship."

Lev Manovich, in a review of OPUS, produced at the Sarai Media Lab in "Welcome to the Multiplex", posted on Nettime, July 1, 2002

The Reality of One Space Carried by the Inequality of Another

"...In it's video and text installation A/S/L (Age/Sex/Location) Raqs Media Collective uses the example of Indian female tele workers to look at sex specific working conditions within the externalized online data industry. The working conditions of this new "digital proletariat" necessitate constantly switching between the online and offline world, between each cultural and economic situation. The reality of one space is carried by the inequality of another."

From a review of 'Geography and the Politics of Mobility' - curated by Ursula Biemann at the Generali Foundation in Vienna. This review appeared in 'Absolutearts.com' on 17.1.2003