

Documenta 11: The Indian Entries



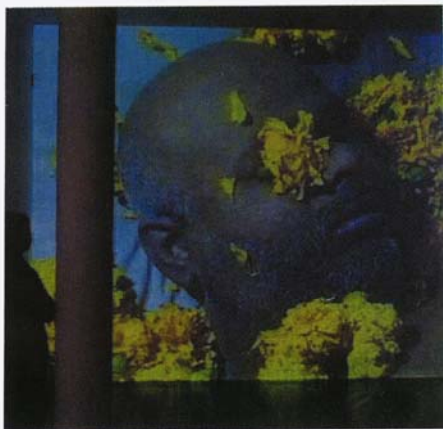
Amar Kanwar. *A Season Outside*. Video: colour, sound, 30 min. 1997.

Documenta 11, one of the most important forums for contemporary art in the world, is being held at Kassel, Germany between the 8th of June and the 15th of September. Held every five years, this Documenta is unique in more ways than one. For one, the exhibition at Kassel is just the final platform in a series of five platforms which have been held over the space of a year and a half in locales such as Vienna, New Delhi, Lagos, Berlin and St. Lucia. Another first is the choice of artistic director Okwui Enwezor, the first non-European for the post. While two thirds of the 118 artists are from Europe and North America there is a fair representation from Africa and Asia as well. This year three Indian entries find a place on the coveted Documenta list of artists. All the three are Delhi-based and work with film, video or photos. Amar Kanwar is an independent documentary filmmaker whose recent films have touched on subjects like ecology, politics, art and philosophy. His 30 min film, *A season outside* begins its exploration at the Wagah border and deals with the conflict between India and Pakistan.

The environmentalist Ravi Agarwal is a keen photographer as well. He has published a photo-book on migrant labour in Gujarat. His work at Documenta comprises 18 photographs on street dwellers and labour. Monica Narula, Jeebesh Bagchi and Shuddhabrata Sengupta are part of the artists group **Raqs Media Collective**. Independent filmmakers, they are also known for their work in new media. Their website www.sarai.net offers a democratic forum for showcasing creative projects inviting discussion and debate. At Kassel the group are exhibiting an installation called *Coordinates* which will be a melange of video, soundscape and print material. **(An in-depth analysis of the Documenta exhibition will be carried in the October issue.)**

- M.M.

Salvaging the SELF



Subba Ghosh. *Remains of the Breath*. 2001.

The Institute of Modern Art (IMA) in Brisbane, Australia, will be the first foreign art gallery to present an exhibition of the second generation of Indian artists that use video to explore their world. The IMA has commissioned the Dutch art historian Johan Pijnappel, who lives in India and whose research focuses on video art in Asia, to curate the show. This exhibition which takes place between 4 to 20 July 2002, has come at a time when video art has gained popularity and prestige as 'the new painting' in the field of Western contemporary art and it appears that no international show can do without it.

In India, video art was taken up by artists in the mid-nineties. After the internationally successful first generation, **Nalini Malani**, Vivan Sundaram and Navjot Altaf, there is now a rapidly growing group of about twenty artists who are in their twenties and thirties, that come from the big metropolises all over the country. The selection of artists and works that are included in the exhibition *SELF* are: Subba Ghosh *Remains of the Breath* 2001, **Shilpa Gupta** *Untitled* 2000, Subodh Gupta *Pure* 2000, Sonia Khurana *Bird* 1999, Umesh Maddanahali *Between Myth and History* 2001, Tejal Shah *Stinging Kiss* 2000 and Surekha *Juhannus/Midsummer* 2001.

The works that will be shown in Brisbane, are mainly videotapes that are presented as single projection installations. It is significant that in all these works the artist her/himself appears as the central protagonist, as the actor or as the voice, or as an autobiographical subject. They use their bodies as instruments for transformation. The body is therefore stripped, purified, decayed, changed in gender, multiplied into clones etc. The artists' search is a fundamental self-questioning in a rapidly changing Indian society, in the time of despair. The exhibition *SELF* attempts to foreground this aspect of Indian time-based art.

- J.P.

Contributed by Karin Miller-Lewis (New York), Meera Menezes (New Delhi) and Johan Pijnappel (India).