

NIV Art Residency

Making a living as an artist has always been a precarious thing. So artists are always finding different ways to make money and gain exposure. I am a practicing artist from Baroda, who is a part of a two-month International Residency program at the NIV Art Centre in New Delhi. The residency is conceptualised by Shaji and Aruna Matthew who are new but enthusiastic to this venture. It caters to upcoming artists, most of them who have just completed their post graduation in Fine Arts. The fifteen artists are from New Delhi, Santiniketan, Mumbai, Hyderabad, Agartala, Gwalior and Baroda along with international artists from Holland and the USA.

Sometimes, the confidence to openly discuss the arrangements of their own context on all fronts connects the art gallerist and the contemporary artists. This understanding is spiked by an unusual combination of aesthetics and politics, whereby both the parties harness the forces of creativity to push forth their specific agenda. During my stay at NIV, certain compromises and negotiations and a desire to maintain a peaceful association have allowed a happy dynamic experience.

In one sense, the residency is a group production of individual expressions and art forms within the collective. I use the term group production as there is a unique combination and exchanging of processes and philosophies. Within the labyrinth of varied backgrounds artists have contrived to explore the possibilities within the limitations of the space. The location of NIV in 'Neb Sarai', a semi-cultivated 'rural-urban' area, with badly maintained, underdeveloped roads is paradoxically located in the posh neighbourhood of South Delhi, this having its share of frustrations but giving way to a distinct creative pulse.

Where few artists explored new media and materials, they were other newcomers who were grappling to recreate their own artistic expression more conceptually. As there are no doors for each studio, the artists are forced to accommodate and consider certain ideas and interference, which works in both productive and counter-productive ways. In a funny way, our two month long residency can be compared to the Big Boss scenario, where trivial clashes drove our energies in

`miscellaneous' directions.

In the aspect of art production, it has been more or less a gratifying experience. For example just opposite my studio is an artist from Holland, Ilona Broeseliske, who explores very interestingly different mediums and processes. Influenced by her use of thread, I re-contextualise the material in my paintings. My role as a painter working alone in my studio in Baroda is now restructured as a discussant with the other young artists like Rahul Chauhan, a painter and Sailesh Ojha, a sculptor, who have graduated from colleges located in the city. And they also serve as a required mode of `transport' around Delhi, being familiar with the surroundings and locations of spaces and galleries in this bustling capital of art experiences. Another example of the group unity, was when Laura Napier an artist from NY, USA, who works on collaborative or public performance-based projects, gathered all the artists to repeatedly to cross the road at Connaught Place, to discuss or relocate the patterns of `urban' New Delhi, adding another dimension to her study on public crowded places. On practices relating to performance art, Naresh Kumar a young artist from Bihar, transfigures the daily mundane activity of reading the newspaper into a narrative elucidating the public and the private domain.

An important feature of this residency are the studio visits and guest lectures by few noteworthy art personalities of the city namely Arpana Caur, Ram Rehman, Radhakrishnan, and Johnny M L etc. Also the slide presentations by the resident artists has proved a advantageous factor to motivate these artists to get out of studios and discuss their work. In this context, it is necessary for me to mention the encouraging and introspecting participation of Professor Shivji Panikkar who raised thought provoking queries and suggestions during these presentations probing the artists' to indulge more deeply into their art-making processes. The interactions made us realise the need of a mentor, which is lacking in this residency.

A new development in the residency is the preparation for our show scheduled to open doors on the 16th of September 2011. This is where our Art consultant Georgina Maddox steps in. Georgina addresses three concerns overarching all the diverse art works, uniting and solidifying them into a show titled `Movement, Medium, Metaphor'.

The large gallery spaces at NIV are going to be transformed into a dialectical representation of our studio practices just below. With so many things happening concurrently... this experience of human interactions and upheavals has ironically worked at different levels for the artists. For me, I understand this residency as unique learning experience in making new friends and exchanging various thoughts and ideas across borders.

Nirali Lal (*Artist in Residence*)