

The interview / Abhishek Basu

From Rome Toward the World (for once)

On June 5, at the Spazio Cerere in Rome, "Incidents of Phenomena" was inaugurated. An exhibition which brought together ten artists from India (Atul Bhalla, GR Iranna, Gigi Scaria, Sachin George Sebastian), Myanmar (Phyu Mon, Zaw Win Pe) and Italy (Pietro Ruffo, Michela De Mattei, Giorgio Orbi, Elisa Strinna). The theme? The relationship between nature and the urban environment. But there is also much more. Find out in this interview.

[by Maria Teresa Capacchione]

published Saturday 28 June, 2014



Courtesy Spazio Cerere - vista della mostra

The peculiarity of "Incidents of Phenomena", inaugurated on World Environment Day, is not only having put together artists (and curators) from three countries that are so different and distant from each other, but the very formula with which it was conceived. To better understand the meaning and the "concept" of this project we interviewed the person who had conceived it, Abhishek Basu, a young lawyer from Calcutta who, after finishing his studies in London, returned to India to cultivate his passion for art. Basu created a foundation: the Calcutta Arts Club in 2008, founded with the principal aim of promoting young Indian artists (especially Bengali) at international level, situated in a wonderful family mansion that is also used for artist residencies.

To expand and complete the sphere of activities of the foundation, Abhishek subsequently created the Abhishek Basu Contemporary Gallery (ABC). Here is how he describes his project.

Can you explain the work and the idea behind this gallery?

"It is an initiative designed to promote and encourage emerging Indian and international artists through a professional platform and a very active space in Calcutta. Our mission is to create a global awareness of the value of these talented artists' works, curating exhibitions in different continents and putting them in contact with collectors, galleries, foundations and museums, to enable them to have the best exposure in the right networks. To do all this, ABC employs a team of experts in the field of art and business whose passion and mission is to make sure that the best emerging artists can be successful and already established ones can achieve their goals and aspirations without compromising their artistic integrity. Our experts also provide support to collectors to build a significant collection."



Courtesy Spazio Cerere - vista della mostra

However, in Rome on June 5, you did something else too, didn't you?

"Yes, with the inauguration of 'Incidents of Phenomena', which, by no coincidence, we opened on World Environment Day, I also launched my new foundation, the Basu Foundation for the Arts (BFA), a non-profit organisation that deals with, among other things, the organisation of exhibitions and performances (including music, dance and theatre) in India and the rest of the world, because the thing that attracts my interest in particular is the exchange between art forms, people, cultures and professionalism."

Is that why you involved three curators, one for each country?

"Yes, because at the basis of what I'm doing is the desire to create a strong dialogue between all the protagonists of the art system. That's why the formula of this exhibition envisages the involvement of a curator for each country represented: Veeranganakumari Solanki for India, Sein Myo Myint for Myanmar and Ilaria Gianni for Italy. I was the one who set the theme - a reflection on nature as a mechanism that works cyclically - because I have

always been fascinated by the contrast between the urban environment and nature, and the three curators have had to debate with one another on this theme to create a dialogue between artists and works to bring in this first stage of the exhibition."

The exhibition is not going to stop in Rome. Where will it go afterwards?

"Rome is only the first of a long series of sites; there will be other cities around the world involved. The next place will be New York in November 2014, and then Delhi in January 2015, after that it will go to Myanmar and then Istanbul in May 2015."

What will happen in the other cities? Will the artists and curators be the same?

"When the exhibition reaches a new destination it will gain more artists and an additional curator from that country, giving rise to a continuous dialogue between artists, curators and spaces. The space, in fact, is another of the essential components of this project: in each country a place was chosen that - as in the case of the Spazio Cerere, an ex-warehouse where the flour for an ancient Roman pasta-making building was stored - had a strong connotation, an important history, and a space with which artists and curators must exchange ideas. In New York, for example, the exhibition will be held in the Christopher Henry Gallery, a very unusual gallery, housed in a deconsecrated church in the Lower East Side: it will be interesting to see how the curators will develop the theme of Incidents of Phenomena inside that space."

So the exhibition might be completely changed by the time it reaches the end?

"Exactly. It will never be the same because, in a game of continuous references, it will arrive at each new site having added - or subtracted - something from the previous stage, each time "adapting itself" to the site where it is hosted. So much so that at the end of its itinerary, whose place and time has not yet been decided, it may be so transformed, so full of artists and ideas to start off a new."

And we will follow all the future stages of this long journey for Exibart.



Courtesy Spazio Cerere - vista della mostra