# 10 Year Book

Kriti Residency

kriti

# Introduction by Vittoria Bonifati

## Curator - 10 Year Book

The 10 Year Book - Residency is part of the 10 Year Book project, a visual documentation of the art that made its way through Kriti Gallery in the last ten years. Kriti's Residency program started in 2007, three years after the gallery space opened, and now offers six studios for artists to live in and work communally, along with owners Navneet Raman and Petra Manefeld.

Kriti was founded to create a cultural dialogue between artists, as well as between artists, the local people of Varanasi and art itself. The residency gives to artists from around India, and from all over the rest of the world, the time and space to focus fully on their practice and research. The program is free and unstructured; artists are under no pressure in making their work, in putting together an exhibition, or in leaving any artwork behind at the end of their residency. Apart from sharing the same grounds, the gallery and the residency are separate spaces with different functions.

Varanasi allows a unique and intense experience that has proved inspiring to generations and even centuries of artists, musicians, dancers and travel writers. But difficulty with the language, and the fact that it remains one of the most traditional cities in India - and also one of the busiest – can make it challenging for newcomers, at first. Kriti helps its resident artists to adjust, assisting them with the materials they need and introducing them to the widest possible range of local creatives, as well as academics from the Banaras Hindu University, and craftsmen who work with schools and the local communities at large.

After travelling around India to gain experience and familiarity with burgeoning Indian art movements, I arrived at Kriti in October 2014, and for six months I lived in one of the artists' studios to work on the 10 Year Book project together with Navneet Raman and Petra Manefeld. Living and working alongside the artists in residence was consistently thought-provoking for me. As a curator, it was compelling to observe each artist's practice and research, because through their work I could recognize and relate to aspects triggered by the city of Varanasi, observing how each artist developed their own language provoked from the surrounding space.

Rightly or not, the roles of artist and curator are often subject to separation and division, not only as a matter of practice, but also how they approach each other and perceive 'the other'. During my residency at Kriti, I could see 'the other' as myself: I could see myself reflected in the artists as we all adjusted with the same excitement, occasional frustration, and above all, wonder, about the great old city.

In my six months I exchanged material with the artists  who, for the last ten years, have been part of Kriti, and reading their experiences and looking at the work produced during their residency - or after a period of time - I could understand their words and perceive their work with a different awareness.

I often feel that the intention of a catalogue has something to do with memory and the idea of wanting to remember something through its documentation. The idea of memory is suddenly very present, not only by the memories I am reactivating in this moment - which are now part of my being - but also through the memories of the artists on their residency experience at Kriti. Tatiana Musi's work was always concerned with memory: "While drawing the house for the first time ... I remember the light, can feel the air ..." Through the work, her personal experience must become ours; having experienced the same place, I recognise what she meant. Just sitting down to write this introduction, the sensations of that time – now embodied in the artworks of this catalogue – are activated, and still feel urgent.

The incessant soundtrack of the place comes back to me – particularly the constant traffic, the honking cars and the roaring old engines. For the first few weeks, my energies were all but absorbed in trying to resist this sound; of course, in the process I noticed every nuance in the sound all the more, while assuring myself that each honk would have to be the last. So I immediately related to Urs Aushauer's work, which reproduced the busy streets of the city, the irregularity of it all, which comes to seem like some virtual reality of all cardboard and cables. Remaining in this concrete forest-like scenario, Gabriella Sonabend's acrylic paintings bear artistic witness to the considerable housing development problem. Some beautiful buildings from the 1920s still survive in Varanasi, with exquisitely ornate decorations and traditionally luxuriant floorplans; but unfortunately too many are being destroyed to make way for new buildings, the construction of which is horribly dangerous for the workers, and inflates the property market, and ruins the old aesthetic of the city.

Racing around the city in the back of an auto-rickshaw, the business of the city is in your face, and your adrenalin cannot fail to surge. It is a reality so far beyond your control – you too must leave it all to fate. Like in Brian Paumier's video, where slow images of a tranquil boat ride down the Ganges are interrupted by bomb explosions witnessed in the street, as if driving a car in a video game.

Everywhere around the city, there are a great quantity of street dogs. Ursula Sulser chose to make work on this subject, exploring the power of image and its representation. By juxtaposing images of the live dogs with images of images of dogs, she explores the sentimentality of our response by disseminating the latter around the city and surprisingly attracting more attention by the people walking. A similar impact was reached by another work made by Gabriella Sonabend, whereby bringing images of women along to the ghats, she drew attention on how absent women are in such a male-dominated environment.

Above all, it is that light – as mentioned by Musi – that will haunt every visitor to Varanasi – it is known to Hindus as 'Kashi', the City of Light. In Oh Soon-Hwa's photographs and in Kathryn Myres paintings, that light seems to be captured, either flooding into a room or slipping down the small 'gallis' (lanes) of the old city to bring out the brilliant hues of the facades. Varanasi is considered among the holiest cities in India. It is believed that he who dies here, reaches Moksha – liberation – and for centuries countless people have made their way here to breathe their last breath. The proximity to death becomes a mundane aspect of everyday life. Inevitably the artists would respond to this: Jacopo Maino's photographs and Theo Besemer drawings focus in on the wood used for funeral pyres, or the stretchers which would carry the dead there.

The rapid, uncontrolled modern growth of the city has led, sadly, to a lack of green space – a lack of any real respite in nature. Except for the park around the property of the Theosophical Society, and around the Rajghat Besant School of the Krishnamurti Foundation, the beautiful trees which were once a part of the 'Forest of Bliss' have disappeared. And Kriti too resists, standing as a witness to the past: it is an oasis, now for art, and the artists there would broach this issue. Tatiana Musi grew plants in found vases and other objets retrouvés while Kanchan Wali-Richardson designed an intricate cabinet to bring together fragments of hands made of stone and potted plants. In Rachel Hecker's work, the idea of representing a seed or a bud stands in reference to the totality of nature; collecting odd seeds and buds from around the grounds and representing them in a scientific way, she emphasizes their peculiarity against all the concrete, the urban void, and asserting the potential, the power – the life – that is nature.

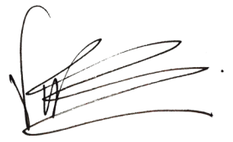
Whatever the surface problems, Varanasi will always succeed in enchanting the eye, and through it the soul, of those who choose to stay and look more deeply. All the sounds, the colours, the smells, the people, the animals, it is an Olympic Games for the senses – or an Art Olympics, as Olga Titus would say – and thus the absorption into oneself becomes natural and necessary. Jakob Jenzer tested this absorption in his work, making drawings like Rorschach blots, exploring how far ones impulses, and perceptions, may be altered under such strenuous conditions.

Curators may now travel all over the world to put on their shows, but perhaps too often there is a lack of pause, a lack of consideration for the essential differences between cultures and how they relate to art. Truly, to understand a foreign place takes time, as well as curiosity and sympathy. Culture is always local; and so art is always local – if we fail to respect the fact, applying our generalized criteria to every situation, we will surely fail to understand. I believe that often misunderstandings occur because Western critics and curators often apply Western criteria to understand non-Western art movements and practices instead of changing their approach and understanding the art within its local context. For this reason, it's been very important to shape the 10 Year Book as a long duration project considering cultural, social, political and religious contexts of the artists and of the city they found themselves in. Not simply out of respect, but because there just seems no other way to treat the quality of experience found at Kriti.

The works of Malù Alvarez, Urs Aschauer, Theo Besemer, Fabian Biasio, Deborah Boardman, David Bruce, Terry Burrows, Mahadev Cometo, Chotsani Dean, Amelia Ducker, David Gagnebin, Phyllis Galembo, Erica Harris, Helen Hasse, Rachel Hecker, Stephanie Holt, Sharon Horvath, Oh Soon-Hwa, Jakob Jenzer, Ariane Keller, Tiiu Kirsipu, Ani Leidner, Jacob Maino, Piret Milderberg, Tatiana Musi, Kathryn Myres, Johanna Naf, Samuel Nigro, Amber Haines, Kyle Page, Beatrix Reinhardt, Marianne Rinderknecht, Camila Do Santo, Gabriella Sonabend, Ursula Sulser, Loeka Thomassen, Olga Titus, Brian Paumier, Joaquin Trujillo, Kanchan Wali-Richardson and Kay Walkowiak are, of course, different – unique – responses to such a deeply resonant place, and such a paradoxical position as they had elected to take up. Varanasi is a city of myth and mystery – and so it will always lend itself to art.

I feel proud, and so grateful, to have been a part of this project – to have lived Kriti, which deeply affected not only the way I now relate to artists and the understanding of their practice, but also the way I perceive life.

Vittoria Bonifati



# MALÙ ALVAREZ

Lyoo'-ve-ah day o'-ro, 2012

Sari, 2012

Untitled (Green Chair), 2012

MALÙ ALVAREZ

Untitled (Blue), 2012

I had one of the most beautiful experiences of my life in Varanasi, India – both personally and artistically. Specifically through Kriti Gallery with Navneet, Petra, and their community of friends and family. I feel very fortunate that my first encounter with India was through the hearts of this group of Varanasi locals - each so passionate and eager to share the wonders of their city and culture with the residents.

Navneet is committed to helping open all possible doors for the work that you envision creating during the residency so that you can achieve your highest expression. Kriti is equally invested in organizing activities outside of the residency that left me with a strong and positive impression not only of Varanasi and its people, but India as a whole – whether it was a visit to a temple or a field trip for a lunch generously offered by the residency's cook in her village home.

India was always a dream destination for me, and the country had a surprising impact on me in its similarities to Mexico, my birth country. The sub-tropical climate and culture sparked memories of my family and the landscape in Mexico and the residency grounds inspired the work that I made in Varanasi. During the residency I had the opportunity to direct my observations towards the conceptualization of new images and to talk through ideas with fellow residents throughout the process. The photographs and video work that I came home to New York City with gave me a newfound confidence in my identity as an artist and opened new avenues for exhibiting and publishing my work.

Coming from Mexico, I grew up seeing a similar 'can do' attitude to the one that I experienced at Kriti – a happy willingness to help by everyone in the community, and general mentality to work around blocks and find solutions - to make our visions a reality. This is true of the gallery director in conceptual and practical discussions related to your project as much as the driver who helped me navigate through the city at all hours of the day - pre-dawn to observe a religious ceremony, early morning for a shoot appointment, or late in the evening to return me safely to the residency from a shoot location (or a Bollywood dance class!)

The Kriti office is an open door and after each conversation you leave even more curious than before - desperate to discover more of India, with a deep desire to experience other parts of the world and your own home culture with the same intensity, dedication and sprit. My experience at Kriti strengthened my ambition to imbue my work with the honesty and power that I developed at Kriti.

# URS ASCHAUER

Chowk (installation view), 2008
cardboard and wood

Varanasi Connection, 2009
Videofilm, 4 min.39 sec

I feel my understanding of death yet far of being achieved together with Even after my stay in Varanasi I still feel that my understanding of death is stI still don't understand death and cannot better understand the omnipresent devoutness which I experienced in Varanasi which represents the sacredness, so much presented in every day life.
But true life existence has presented itself in impressive pictures.
Never ever I saw more existential scenes and never I felt more alien from a cultural point of view.
When I experienced encounters at that time in North India I had to rely on my intuition and my perception was challenged at its highest during my stay in 2008 in Varanasi.

Thanks to the close friendship with the other two artists at Kriti Residency Hans Koch and Robert (last name ???) , I was able to discuss, put into perspective and context, what I experienced during my days.
Most helpful were the discussions and expeditions with Shanti Raman which helped to see and better understand the North Indian culture.
Navneet Raman, the owner and director of Kriti Gallery, as well as Rakesh Singh, the owner of Harmony bookshop, were very helpful with their tips and networks.
A Swiss resident with lots of experience living in the city also became part of my network and helped to see the interesting and sometimes hidden gems of the city.
The huge hospitality, the sense of humor, the joy towards life and the true devoutness determined my positive image of Varanasi.
On the more darker side of my experiences are to see the still existing caste system which is still reality in day to days lives even though the government tries hard to change this like many people told me.
For a visitor coming from a republic-democratic society it is not easy to understand how this cemented, strongly hierarchical system can still survive.

Varanasi is not easily accessible for art production and art mediation based on Western characteristics. But Kriti presents in a couragous way contemporary art like seen in Europe or North America. The audience is smaller and consists either of foreign artists or people from the educated upper class. From my point of view, Kriti's offerings at that time were not targeting the non-educated audience.
Why not inviting young and non-educated parts of the society for an exhibition which is especially curated for them e.g. in collaboration with the university BHU, facultuy of fine arts?

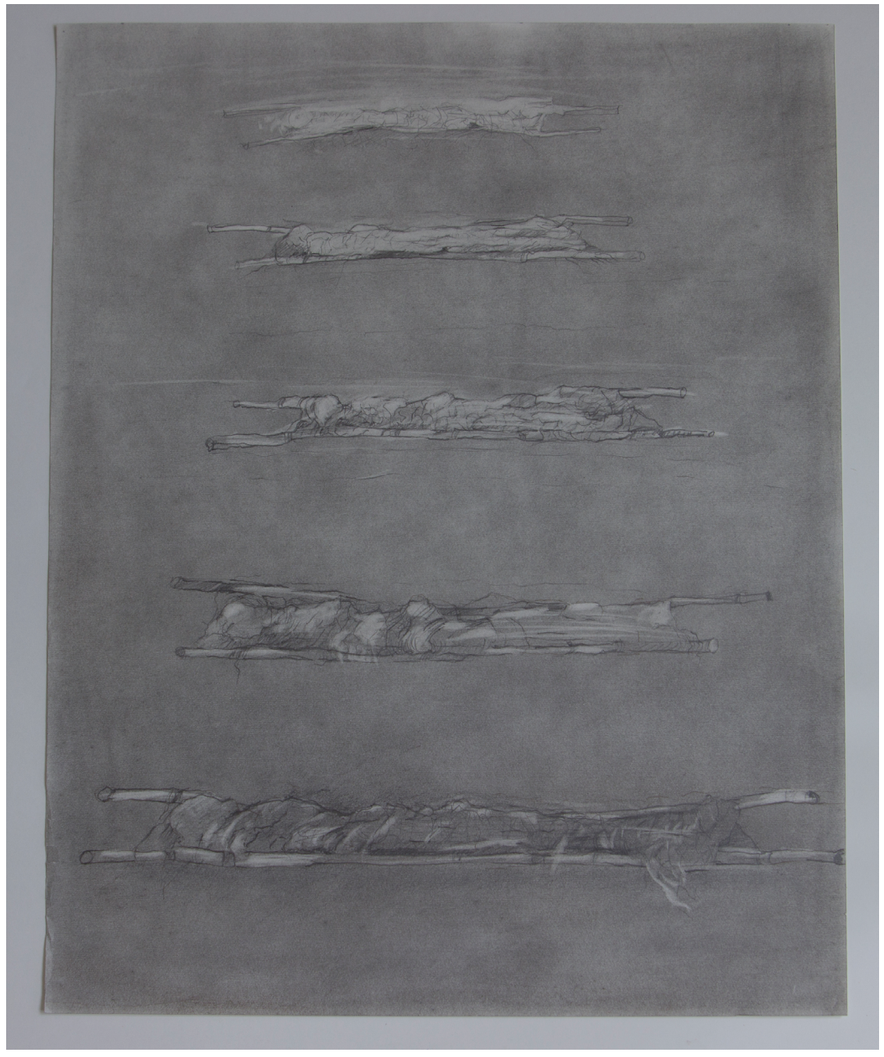
To extend my horizon, to better understand life and to gain a new, fresh view on my home environment in Switzerland I chose to come to India.

I experienced the Indians, male and females, as highly innovative and able to cope with life. Even under the most difficult circumstances they are able to create exciting things. This created courage and confidence in me to focus on my own work and not so much on perfection and on a pre-defined concept, but more on the originality of the idea and the process.

The do's and don'ts of indian culture did not play any role concerning the making of my work. Unless it relates to the conservation of heritage: One of my videos produced in Varanasi is showing the beauty and the elegance of the old city of Benares which now became a victim of profit and greed of it's own inhabitants. Buildings with old facades are plastered with advertisement boards beyond belief, capitalism rules with no limitations and shows the missing sensitivity towards the beauty and specialty of the city.

The second video shows an example of the precarious electric supply in the context of the day to day fight for survival of the local residents in Varanasi.

# THEO BESEMER



They come and They go, 2013
drawings on paper

Varanasi is a mad overcrowded city with all the harsh environmental problems one can experience in trying to understand the way of life in this huge ants-nest. How to filter out the essentials of this thrilling city: bodies, forms, colors, contradictions, assimilations, chaos, chaos, etc.
Having the  change to stay at Kriti Gallery art residency was a real welcome, with all the care the organization took of me and the other artist members. Here the turbulent circus of Varanasi doesn't penetrate so violently in one's mind and body. One can find space, silence and moments to release and renew thoughts and intentions.
Indian life in general is a cumulus of unknown and unexperienced phenomena for an european mind. The culture can be challenging for the creative process of western artists, who generally have the attitude to dive audaciously in the reality of daily life.
My stay at Kriti residency became a twenty-days limited one. I worked on some significant, expressive drawings with a recognizable meaning for the viewer: a crucial moment in every human life, his or her disappearance. Without taboos, fear or religion-related conventions, I often recognized the freezing aspects in Indian imagination and in their ways of thinking.  Even in the so-called "free"artistic profession. We come and we go. It is an obliged highway that everybody walks. Just the body is not eternal. In Varanasi I saw openly the happenings and rituals around funerals and dead bodies. It inspired me to think about the start and the finish points in life and all the relativity of brief, expanded scenes in between.
I can imagine the difficulties of managing an art gallery in Varanasi. Besides the interest of locals there must be too a lively interest of foreign people passing by the gallery and not only the city trip  for rituals, shoppings and other consumeristic related activities. In general there is a task for the city to give insight in the old culture but in the new artistic movements too.
I suppose the most decisive policy implies to attract artists from inside and outside of India. They can be the messengers who make publicity for both the residency and the gallery. For local support, international exchange of ideas, periodical projects and shows, a clear direction for the future, intelligence and patience are the tools. Good luck Kriti.

# FABIAN BIASIO

Mishra Family, 2008

Shekh Family, 2008

Agarwal Family, 2008

FABIAN BIASIO

Raman Family, 2008

The conference of the Swiss cities for cultural activities KSK collaborated with Kriti Gallery and offered stipends for Swiss artists in Varanasi. I had the unique chance to live and work in the city from January through May 2008.

For most of us Western visitors Varanasi is like a roaring beast: Behind the scenery of grand Maharaja Palaces with their crumbling facades along the river Ganges there starts a mucky moloch.

From a Western point of view this holy place for hindus pilgrims deeply remains in the medieval times, with limited respect for all kind of creatures, the overall atmosphere tends to be aggressive, the noise ear battering and the smell of labour and excrements disgusting. I used ear plugs to protect myself from the unbearable horns of cars and motorbikes, and like many Indians I tied a cloth in front of my mouth and nose which turned dark of smut in no time.

It was surprising for me to see how run-down one of the oldest cities in the world, has turned into.

Compensatory was the work with the camera: The foreigner with the over-designed camera equipment in their living rooms and bedrooms, sometimes for hours I was the most welcomed and interesting alien in their private environment. Confronted with the making of a picture of their own family, as of a sudden unexpected questions came up: Is the grandfather, the grandmother or father in the center of the image? Who can hold the baby?So unexpected I witnessed different family dynamics and politics.

To have access to Indian private family spaces in their houses was not an easy task at all. The scepsis was huge especially with muslim families.

The anxious question was raised right after my arrival in Varanasi. Where to start with?Varanasi is not Mumbai, English is the language of the upper and educated people.So I decided to start with my work in my direct environment, with the team and people of Kriti Gallery. I was invited to their private homes where communication was based on sign language

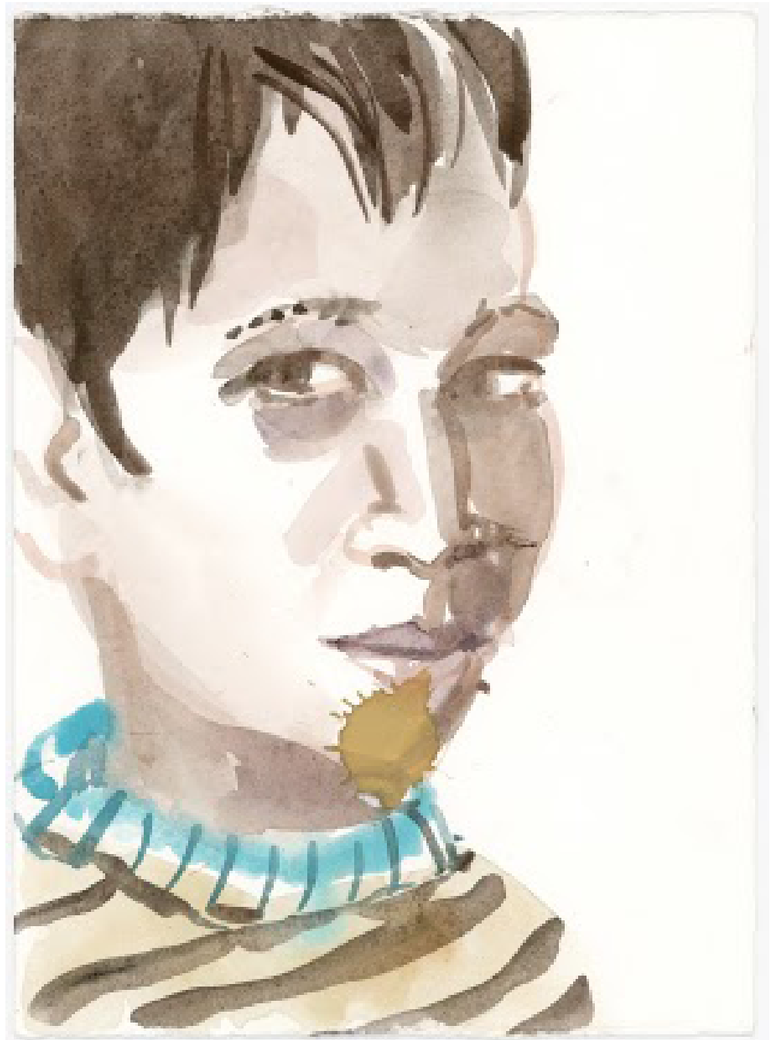
My stay in India was – of course – determined by cultural misunderstandings. After two ineffective attempts, cumbersome drives with photo equipment on a bicycle rikshaw, it seemed the photo shoot with the muslim silk weaving families seemed to happen. The sudatory climb with the equipment on the roof top was granted with a wonderful delicate sunset light. But missing were all the women of the family I was supposed to take portraits of.

I insisted, begged, the glamour of the light disappeared while I supposed the mothers, daughters and sisters were getting ready in front of the mirror. Finally the head of the family declared the ladies of the house will not appear. With compassionate gestures of the male community I packed my equipment again. What had happened? Very simple. Navneet Raman explained to me later: Once the head of the family appears the female members of the family disappear in traditional households. The family together for a picture on the roof top, what will the neighbors going to think?

Over time I learnt how to move within Indian culture without causing misunderstandings. Most important, do not fight the obstacles, the motto is: go with the flow: Skin to skin with the people, where the sweat of Brahmins and untouchables and Western people mix. In the surge of the traffic, where it is vital to move smooth between rikshaws, trucks, bullock carts, busses and bicycles. In the disappearance of ambitious plans which become subordinate to the compelling heat and the rhythm of the locals.

India lives in the here and now: Do we meet tomorrow? Yes-maybe. Day after tomorrow? I do not know. Next week? A smile and head shake, a pecularity of the Indian communication.

# DEBORAH BOARDMAN



From the Varanasi Gouaches series, 2012
gouache on paper

DEBORAH BOARDMAN

From the Varanasi Gouaches series, 2012
gouache on paper

# DAVID BRUCE

Sadhu, 2014
house paint and watercolour on paper

Pilgrims, 2014
house paint and watercolour on paper

DAVID BRUCE

At 6:30 one morning in mid march I briskly dipped out of my studio door with eyes to the sky, scouting through the branches for any monkeys in attack position—or looking to sneak into my air-conditioned bedroom to wait out the day's heat. I meandered down the path at a pace faster than a walk but slower than a jog through the shrubbery and past the other studios. At the front gate I was greeted by Anil's full-toothed grin. He whisked me inside his rickshaw then shuttled me off to the northern end of the city. This was the morning that I was to be introduced to the Akhara Bara Ganesh, one of Varanasi's sand pit wrestling gyms.

I was handed a piece of cloth. Nobody at the wrestling gym spoke english so my conversation that morning was limited to mimes and gestures. The cloth I was handed was lime green, as electric as a Sprite can. Apparently it was my garment for the morning. My rugby shorts I chose to wear—the most athletic garb that I carried in my 75L backpack were not adequate. I was to commanded to strip down and stand as an elderly man tied me into that neon green a lion cloth that left me as revealed as a sumo wrestler. I looked around at the others—they wore white, beige, and brown. Lime green? It must have been the freshman treatment.

I looked over at Anil, who sat down to watch my inauguration to the sport, his smile had grown 10 degrees steeper. Petra told me that photographers had been to the venue before, but nobody had ever asked to participate.

I was invited into the pit for my first trial.

Before entering, I graced a designated mound of clay adorned with flowers—that I had seen others do before me so had assumed was the right thing to do— I shook hands with the man across the pit and we began to wrestle. Navneet suggested that I would be trained first, but no. We just got right into it.
At one point during the match, two monkeys, each foaming from the mouth, jumped down from that oak tree and started chasing each other around the ring, scattering the crowd that had formed to watch. I took a knee and tracked them—the world was spinning in ellipses I was too exhausted even to fear being bitten—then took mental notes on their moves in the hope that it would improve my own.

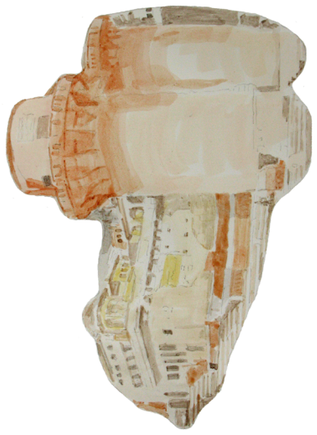
They called me the red man, mostly intrigued by the amount my body sweat and the color my skin switched to in fatigue. After the work-outs, the wrestlers sand themselves off— they rub the clay into their skin. However, I was always coated in a film of sweat after practice. The clay turned to mud. Often times, I had three helpers around me, each scrubbing my muddy body.

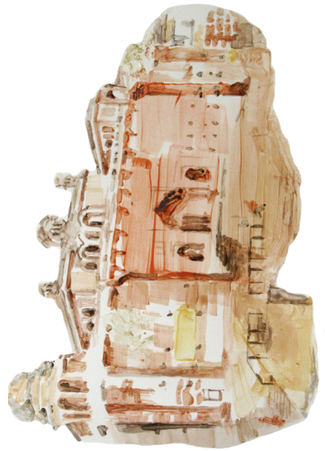
On my third morning, I got interviewed. Age? 23. Married? (I was always told to say yes so that I wasn't exiled as a social reject—'Yes, to Sarah, a teacher back home in New Hampshire'). Caste? (oh jeez, how do I answer this). I had no idea what to say, so I just said "me only" with a sideways head nod of insecurity. They cocked their head in incomprehension. So I reverted my answer with confidence.

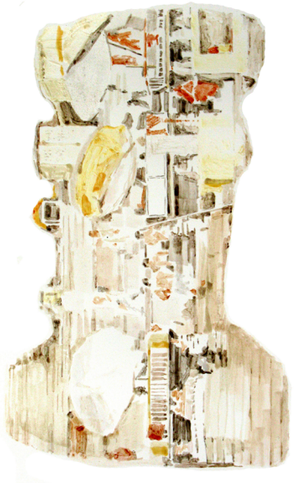
"David Caste." Ahh David Caste, they chimed back in unison, feigning understanding.

In a manner that was perhaps more exposing that you hoped for, I think this account hints at the unrestrained and utterly extra-ordinary a residency at Kriti Gallery can be. It is an outstanding space, a refuge among the chaos of the city. It was my first art residency, and my knowledge of the art world is limited, but I can speak to the outstanding character of the two people that run it. Petra and Navneet were a pleasure to get to know. They opened up the city to me and were supportive as I ventured through it. During my year of travel as a Thomas J. Watson fellow, I stayed put for the longest consecutive period in Varanasi. As I reflect on the morning riverside walks, engaging meal time conversations, startling observations, techerious bike rides, deaths and cremations, I find that my memory is very anchored to Kriti Gallery at to the marvelous city of Varanasi. I hope to return again soon.

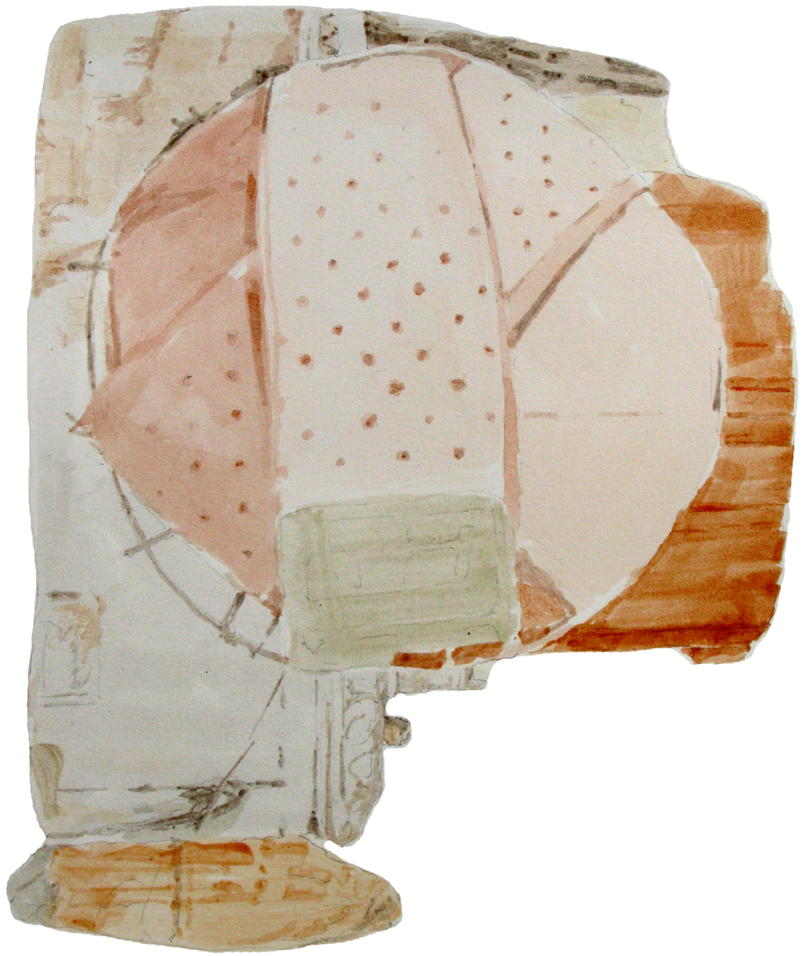
# TERRY BURROWS







Ghat by Ghat, 2011
acrylic on paper



I had visited Varanasi on an earlier sojourn in India and knew that I would return sometime, to explore in more detail, a fascination I had developed for the Ghat area along the banks of the Ganges here. This interest being twofold - the phenomena of the Ghats themselves, with their daily 'theatre' of activities both religious and secular, and the continuation of a journey through India and South east Asia, witnessing religious devotional practices associated with various temples and shrines of worship, predominantly Buddhist, Jain and Hindu in origin. The plethora of deities and related avatars with associated paraphernalia belonging to the Hindu religion offer a smorgasbord of visual and aesthetic stimulus - the multi-dimensional Durga, the austere Shiva Linga, the bright orange Hanuman, either in naive or more sophisticated form, are omnipresent throughout India but in abundance in Varanasi due to its privileged position in the hierarchy of Hindu sites. I have a particularly 'phenomenological' interest in these 'objects' of devotion.

In 2009 I first discovered that the Kriti Residency was in Varanasi. I have now spent a total of twelve months over the past four years at the Kriti Residency and in other Indian cities on related projects. I must mention that Petra Manefeld was instrumental in encouraging the Australian High Commission in Delhi to also support my projects, to which the High Commission very graciously responded by collaborating on the exhibition Ghat by Ghat at the Rabindranath Tagore Center in 2011 and promoting and launching the exhibition Banaras Backs at the Lalit Kala Akademi of Fine Arts in 2014.

I provide the above as example of just one resident artist's interaction with Kriti, and as testament to the efficacy of the Kriti Residency and its Directors in their endeavors, to not only provide an environment for artists to work and interact, but also to assist them in their endeavors to interact and exchange with India and its multifaceted cultural offerings.

Navneet Raman and Petra Manefeld are both incredibly helpful and encouraging and appear to thoroughly enjoy their involvement with the visiting artists and their idiosyncratic pursuits. Introducing them to the city and any person, location or institution they may be interested in researching.

The three completed projects I have worked on at Kriti - Ghat by Ghat (paintings), Ganga Dancing (video) and The Banaras Back Book (photography), co-published by Kriti Gallery, have all taken as their subject matter either the structures or activities along the Ghats. Therefore, the close proximity of the residency to the river was advantageous in that it enabled me to spend time each day, both researching at the Ghats and working back at the studio.

Regarding working as an artist in another country, another culture - I have no difficulties with the differences to my western-oriented ways of seeing and experiencing. As previously mentioned, I had already travelled throughout India and made my decision to return based on those experiences. Leaving aside political and social issues, which may actually be the basis of other artist's research, I was working with the phenomena of religious imagery and ritual where the do's and don'ts of my encounters only added to the intrigue.

Given that I have returned to the Kriti Residency two more times since 2010, my last in January 2014, I have been able to witness the development of the facilities and the evolving strategies of the Directors. With the construction in 2012 of another floor with new office, curatorial and storage facilities and an extra residency, plus the addition of an event/ performance space on the ground floor, Kriti is growing from its desire to interact with contemporary artists from around the world and looking to the future. Varanasi is such a traditional city in so many ways, one of the classics. Yet Kriti is thoroughly contemporary - a dichotomy that definitely works in its favor.

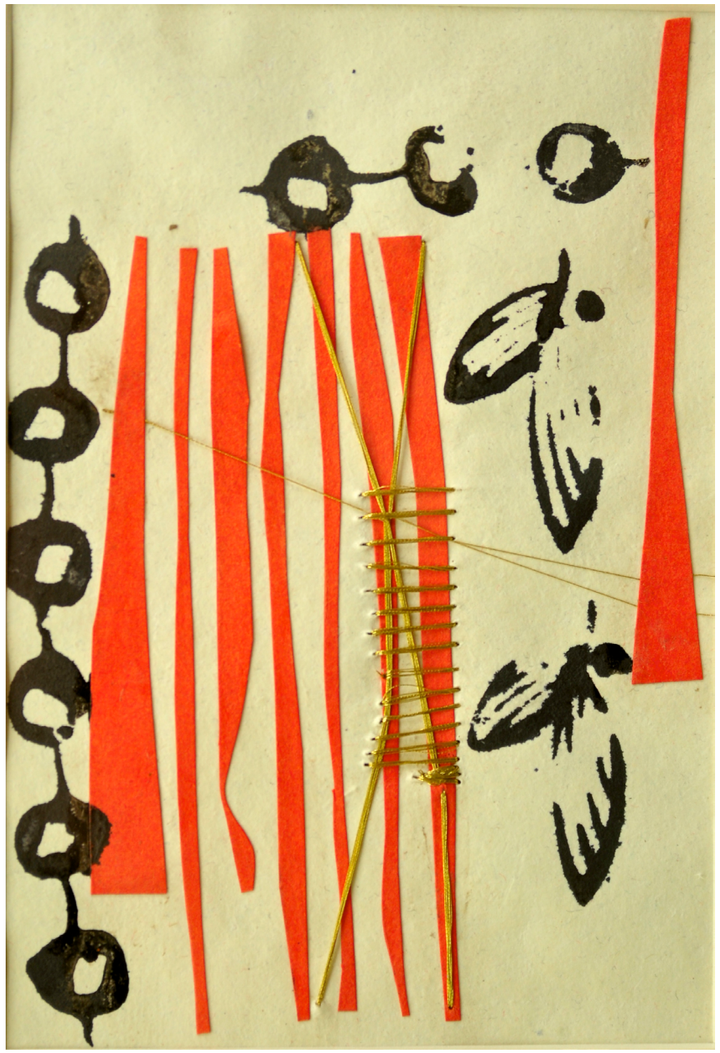
# MAHADEV COMETO

Alain Monod (Yound Gods) aka Mahadev Cometo playing sitar
Visuals by Jean Louis Gerstan

VB: What's the impact of your music in Switzerland? Do you feel people understand this fusion between east and west? (indian music and electronic beats?)
AC: It's coming, slowly. You know I feel that in Europe people need some beats. Everybody is stressed out, running all over the place and this music makes you keep cool. For one hour or so you are somewhere else. The music combined with with the psychedelic visuals connect you with your inner self. If the concert is good you make a good trip, calm down.. still power, good energy, but calm down. An this is my target. And this is kind of working, more and more people are coming to the shows. There is more possibility to play so it's pretty much working. The difficulty business wise is that this music nobody is going to play it on a radio station. Is not into format..
VB: That's a good thing maybe..
AC: It's a good thing but your out of the business. CD's: one category...you don't know where to put it. It's out of everything. It need's more time to grow.
Flying ver Katmandu..
Then I understood the situation. Let's say 70000 meter, flat down, full speed ready for landing. And then when the mountains pass. Yeah yeah I understand yeah yeah!
VB: Do you fly planes?
AC: I did military pilot school when I was young and beautiful. I had my license for more than ten years. My speciality was with acrobatic stuff..
NR: That's why he is doing acrobatics in music..

Because the situation with music I was frustrated initially, because I thought I will never have the possibility to do as many shows as I want cause of the money.. And I started to get stressed and pushing people to have shows.. So I decided to find another solution to do some money and could leave music go by itself. Actually I have an indian friend in Friburg. We were talking together and he told me why don't you make something with this
aviation. You have the skill to do it,  you know how to fly planes so you can make monwy with it. I was like hey look there is a ten years gap in my curriculum of aviation.. Nobody is going to hire me. The next day I saw a ------ I had no money to buy it so I tried to forget. But the next day I went on the internet checking out what they were doing. Everything i was looking was very bad! I never flew a ----- but I know how to do it because I know how to fly planes. All the things i checked out were very bad and I was sure I could do it better.  So I found the money, bought --- , camera and started. First flight with a ----- went very good. So I start shooting with the camera.. This will be the traveling of the camera. I am inside the ---. I have a camera that has a transmitter, on my google I have the receiver.

# CHOTSANI DEAN



Banarsi silk thread and lane, 2013
handmade paper Jaipur, silk thread, block print, collage

source image:Jaipur and Varanasi, Craft Traditions, 2013
wooden blocks carved in Varanasi, handmade paper Jaipur

# AMELIA DUCKER

My time as a resident artist at Kriti Gallery is a time in my life I will never forget. It was an incredibly enriching and fulfilling experience for me during my Fulbright Scholar Grant in Varanasi, India. From the first day I arrived at Kriti, I was immediately brought into the familiar and welcoming environment of Kriti Gallery. Navneet Raman and Petra Manefeld made me feel like an instant member of the Kriti community. Both Navneet and Petra have made a significant commitment and investment to support and advocate the diverse arts and crafts traditions of India while simultaneously infusing contemporary art, both national and international, in the city of Varanasi. Kriti Gallery has successfully established a myriad of valuable alliances of vital significance in the city of Varanasi that in turn extends beyond the boundaries of the city to the many regions of India. These well established relationships provide Kriti residents the opportunity to travel throughout India, returning to Kriti to share their individual experiences and research with other members contributing to the wellspring that is Kriti Gallery. During my time at Kriti, spanning 8 months, I was fortunate to meet and fellowship with talented artists from India, Europe and Russia who were all engaged in serious scholarship centered on India.

Most important to me during my time at Kriti Gallery was the opportunity to bring clay to the Kriti community. I was fortunate to have the opportunity to work with a wonderful group of women and a beautiful group of school children who worked with clay for the first time. My time with the women and children at Kriti Gallery is an experience I have been able to incorporate into my teaching in America. The curiosity the children exhibited in working with the clay and eagerness of the women to learn and experience working with clay was inspiring and beneficial to me as both an educator and artist.

Another remarkable aspect of Kriti Gallery is the sophisticated gallery space and state-of-the-art photo archives. I was provided the privilege of exhibiting the work I made in Varanasi with two fellow Fulbright Scholars - Tanya Gill and Kathryn Myers - in Kriti Gallery. What was great about the exhibition was that I was able to exhibit new work I made in India. During my research in Jaipur, I fell in love with traditional block printing after visiting a museum that shows this ancient technique. When I returned to Varanasi, I immediately found a block printer in the Khojwah area of Varanasi and with some handmade paper I brought back from Jaipur I began to make prints.
I was able to work in a new medium and with the support of Kriti, exhibit this new work.
Best of all, the students attended the gallery opening and in turn, worked with the same block printer with the coordination of their teacher and made prints at their school.

I feel confident in claiming Kriti as my home in India. Kriti has lovingly lodged its way into my heart and I treasure its presence.

AMELIA DUCKER

Before arriving at Kriti Gallery, Varanasi, one of my major intentions was ‘to get to know and understand the city more deeply’. After spending five weeks within Varanasi, I soon realized that this initial intention was somewhat difficult. When I looked for moments of clarity, insight, and understanding, I was struck with moments of ambiguity, contradiction, and uncertainty. When I attempted to plan, order or structure my days; I needed to exercise flexibility, patience and learn to embrace the chaos.

Each day was wonderfully intense, and an experience that I will fondly look back on for many years.

Kriti Gallery was my first international artist residency; it was an experience that I highly valued and a residency that I would recommend to others.

With a background in performance making, over the years I had noticed that my practice had been slowly been extending into the realm of photography. I was interested to work within this single area, spending time fully immersed within my investigations and developing a new body of work.  For me it was essential that the residency was self- directed. I enjoyed setting myself goals, intentions and finding and working from my own internal rhythm.

What I found interesting working within Kriti, was that the Residency could successfully facilitate very different artistic processes. At the time of my residence there were two types of very distinct creative processes presenting. Those who opted to work ‘inside’, be it painting/ choreographing / writing/ reflecting. Kriti was excellent for facilitating this type of process, for the grounds were quiet (in comparison to the city centre), and without any formal daily commitments outside of meal times, there was the time and space to just simply work within the studio’s.

I found Kriti was also excellent for artists like myself who wanted to work primarily from the ‘outside’. Over the five weeks I spent almost every day walking amongst the central Ghat’s, pursuing investigations which were responsive to what I was finding and questioning within the city itself. As Kriti was only a short Rickshaw ride from the center, it was nice to feel close enough to the action, however appreciate a quiet site to retreat to at the end of the day.

For me, one of the major highlights of the Residency was the opportunity to meet and work alongside a very small group of artists from other disciplines.

Through gathering each day, for breakfast, lunch and dinner, there was time and space to get to know the other residents, share ideas, discuss work, and dissect the often wild and memorable encounter’s one would have each day within Varanasi.

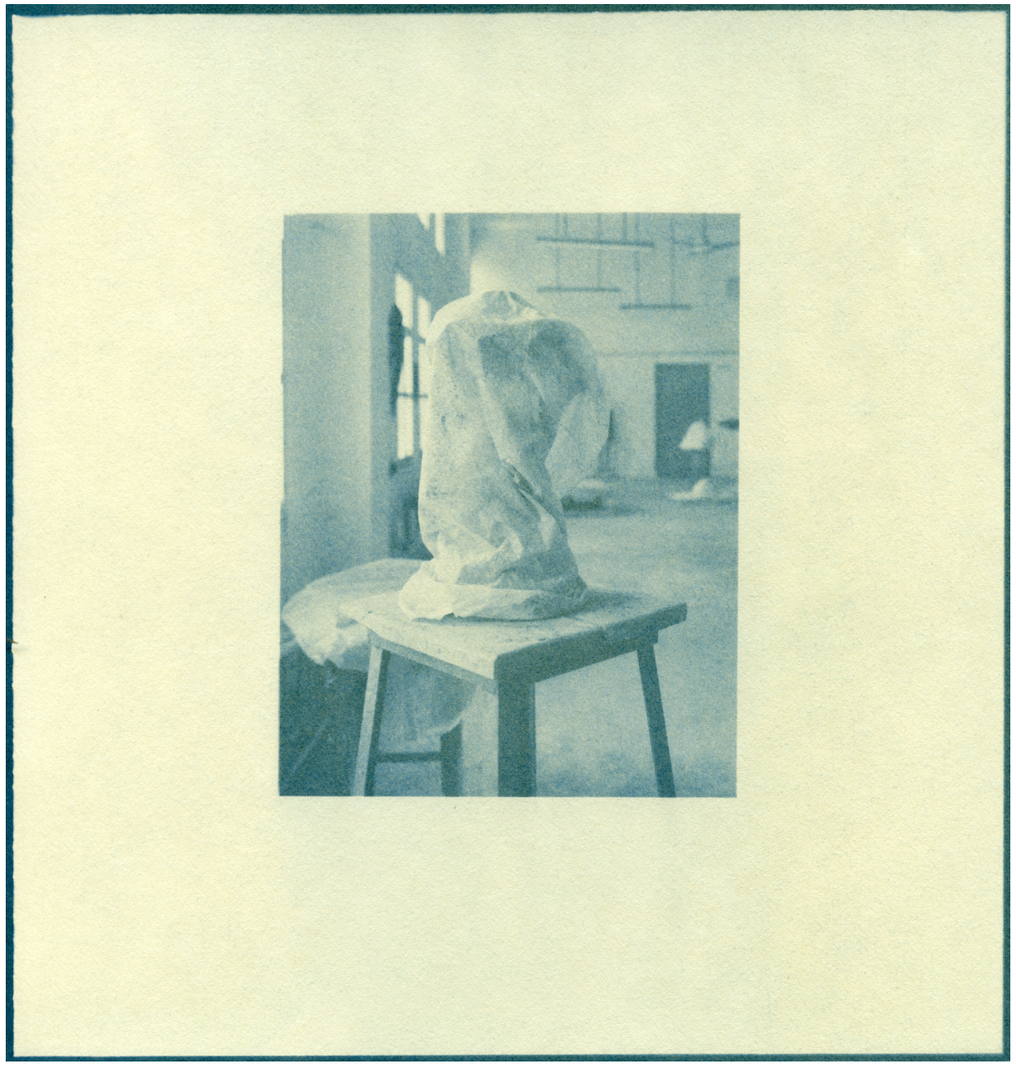
Over the period of the residency, collaborations started to naturally and organically take shape. There were points where other residents entered my work, and points where I enjoyed entering the work of others. Although all artists were holding their own very distinct investigations, I personally loved the moments of sharing and collaboration.

I feel that it is inevitable that I will return once again to the city of Varanasi.
Somehow the city can manage to take a hold of you, finding its way under the skin.

I hope that Kriti remains a valued, and supported residency. It is an incredible city to work and learn from.

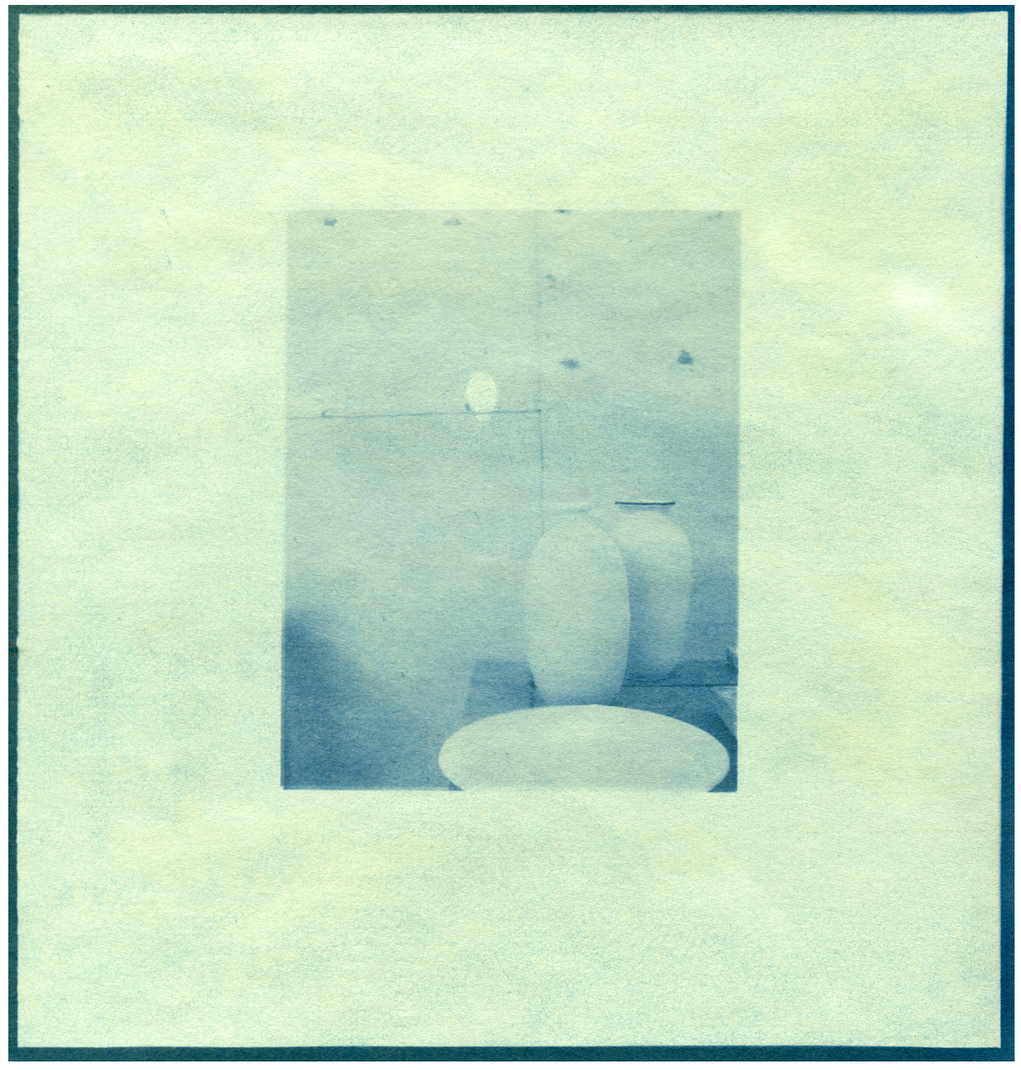
# DAVID GAGNEBIN

From the Banaras Hindu University (BHU) series, 2010
cyanotype

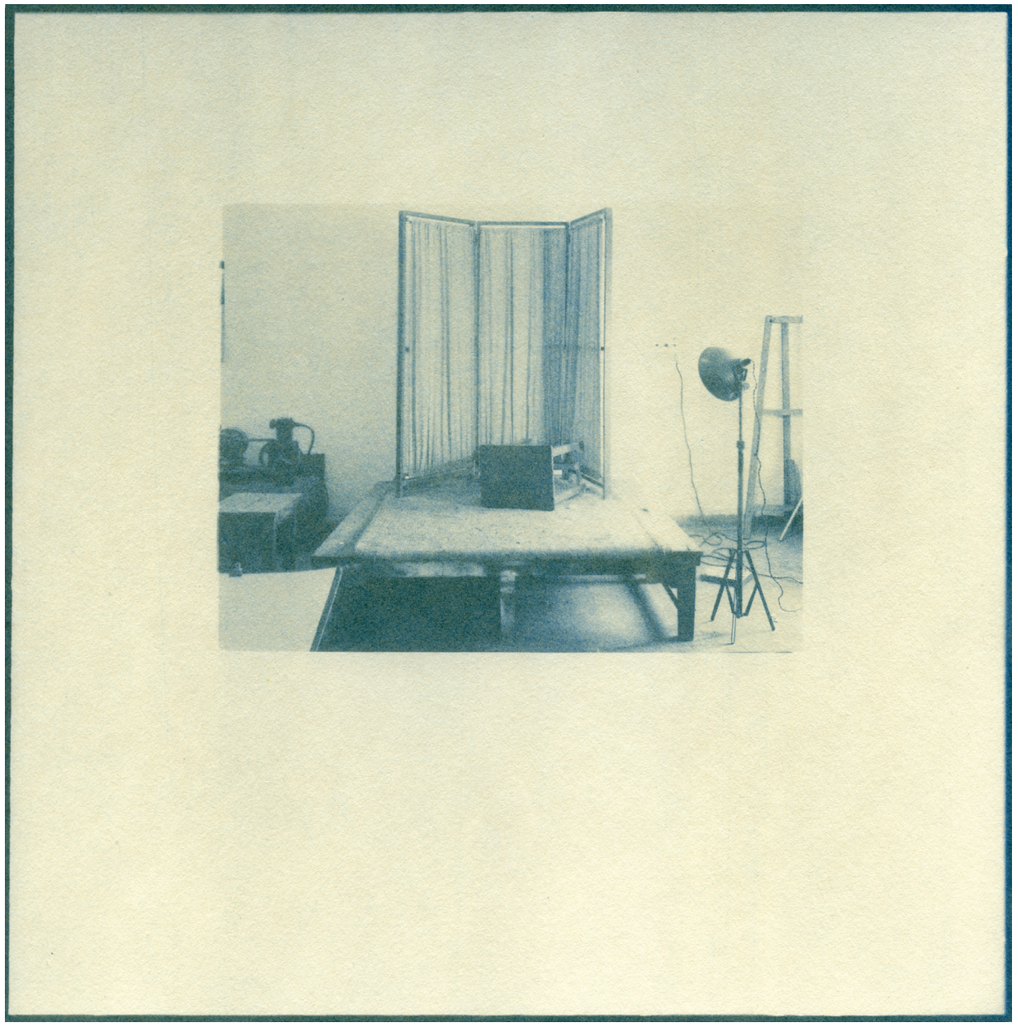


From the Banaras Hindu University (BHU) series, 2010
cyanotype

DAVID GAGNEBIN



From the Banaras Hindu University (BHU) series, 2010
cyanotype



From the Banaras Hindu University (BHU) series, 2010
cyanotype

8 a.m. And I am not yet accustomed to the rhythm India seems to impose on me. 8 a.m. , as if it were already too late.

In front of the studio, the garden is still damp and the earth smells good. The already full light (The sun, already high, shines.. ) shines on and through the leaves. A full, veiled light. (The light, full and veiled.) “Even the light is sacred”, my neighbor is fond of saying.
I arrived with an open mind, and a little scared, with books as my only companions and a few cameras to escape from boredom. A boredom I feared and expected, but that never really showed up. The city plunged into my depths. (The city overwhelmed me).

Inside, the books are stored, the pictures I am working on hang on the wall. The studio: a simple place. The tool: a simple camera for a simple work.  A slow work, that finds its own rhythm. Pictures in the likeness of the place (Images with the image of a place or Images representing a place). Fragile, borderline, hallucinatory (at the limit of hallucination) , dazzled, poor. Made of the stuff (objects) taken from this side of the river. Unique and precious. Brimming over with authenticity, their very form reflecting  the heat, the sun, the water ; the city’s nostalgic metamorphosis.

Inside, the light continues to shine fully. Playing on the walls and the furniture. Allowing the gaze to rest. Far off, in contrast, the street rumbles and its constant roll sounds like an unleashed ocean. By a constant and profound stream that disturbs and fascinates at once – in short, a fairly apt definition of the sublime.
Ten of us, at the most, live in the residency. (It’s ten of us who live at the residency) One half talks about art (and among us, half speak of art). The others about the rest of life. We ten (The ten of us) cover the whole of our worlds. A congruous geography.

The Western-centric place of origin, or more simply the ancestral place (forest of bliss) – the garden – is the closed world of creation. To which a few inhabitants are added. A place where things are made whilst being irreparably unmade in the stream outside.
In the flood, if you prefer.
(But also, the garden is the place to stroll, with its ambulatory (vagabonds). Solitary or collective dialogue, keeping pace with their interlocutors. We confront, digest and rethink what we do and think in a rhythm that reconciles for a time here and over there).

Outside : the stream and the flood. Each time, into the sound and the fury, we take a piece of the garden with us. (In the sound and the fury, we carry every part of the garden). When we go outside, we transport it and bring it with us to those who want some of it. But outside, in the streets, in the constant and reversed ceremony, the rhythm is different. Deafening, spaceless. There, to my sensitive eyes, life and death are at stake. Not Art.
From outside, the garden regains its Western position of paradise lost. A paradise for those who got lost on the paths of creation and sharing.

Workshop and garden. Residency and city. Our cultural archetypes and frontiers, simplistic and arrested (restraining), do not allow porosity. And yet I have become porous. A dilatation due to the warmth (be it of human relations or temperatures ). And just like a bow net, what has come in will not leave. Head and body with the extra weight of a content that I carry (of what i’m carrying) with me everywhere.

8 a.m. too late ? Not really, since a change can occur within a second – if I hadn’t learnt that, what would I have learnt in India – and time too seems to have dilated. Brought to their point of fusion, sensations and emotions form, for a moment, a glue that sticks differently to reality and alters my relation to the world.
As it dries up, the glue takes on a new, unexpected form: it bears the indelible trace of my time at the residency.

# PHYLLIS GALEMBO

Durga, 2014
inacted by Laloo

Laxman, 2013

Ram Laxman, 2014

PHYLLIS GALEMBO

Angad, 2013
inacted by Sanjay

Durga, 2014
inacted by Harsh Mishra

My experience working at the Kriti Gallery was fabulous. The generosity of Navneet Raman, Petra Manefeld and my assistants Chandra Kishore Singh now known as Can Do and Pinku Ajay Pandey was amazing. Their efforts helped me complete a new photographic project "The Ramlila".

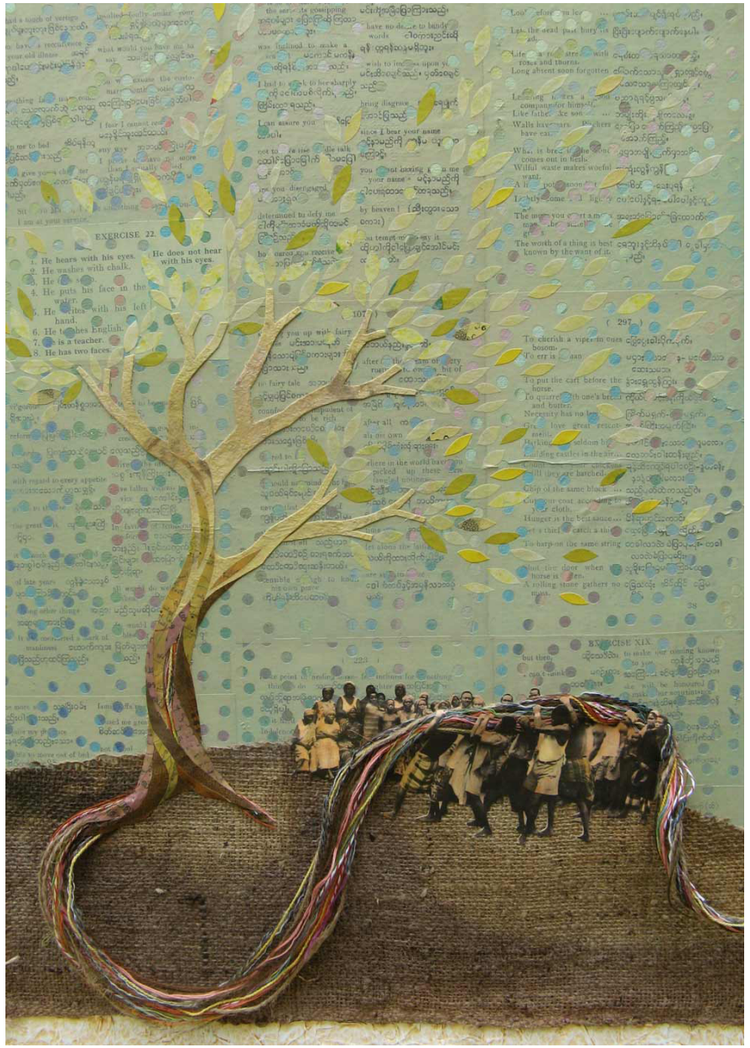
Spending time based at the Kriti Gallery was a wonderful opportunity to work in India. The resources Kriti and its staff provided helped me to have a great base to work from in Varanasi. Petra and Navneet and the entire staff are amazing problem solvers and nothing is too much for them.

I also wish to thank Esa Epstein, of Sepia Eye and Nandita  Raman who led me to the magical place known as Kriti Gallery.

# ERICA HARRIS

Mindfull, 2012
acrylic and collage on canvas

Something, 2012
fabric and collage on board




String Funeral, 2011
acrylic and collage on canvas

ERICA HARRIS

Divers, 2012
acrylic and collage on canvas

Sarnath, 2010
acrylic and collage on book board

I live in Brooklyn, New York. The history, debris, languages, and industries of my metropolis are a huge source of materials and inspiration. I also teach art to children, both here and internationally. In recent years I have facilitated projects in India, Central America, Southeast Asia, Macedonia, Brazil and New York City. These settings have had a profound influence on my work, and the collaborations with children have been extremely rewarding exchanges. I learn as much, if not more, from looking at children's art and talking with them about their process and ideas as I do from museums and galleries. Using art as a tool to outline and interpret relationships to family, school, work, play, death, violence, society, and the environment, I am provided with such a simple visual vocabulary, so eloquent and universal.

Working in collaboration with communities where English is not spoken has also shaped the content of my work, particularly my relationship to language. I like using text; I use the printed word as a pattern, and I often refer to how words and images are interchangeable symbols. The story of the 20th century as told through an English as a Second Language primer is one I am compelled to cut up and re-tell. The basic sentences found in these elementary grammar books narrate customs, historic events, and approaches to everyday life in poetic ways that no history textbook has outlined.

While traveling, I concentrate on collecting collage material: children's story and alphabet books, found photographs, sewing patterns, maps, string, gravestone rubbings, diagrams and instructional manuals, mid-century magazine advertisements, medicine labels, food packaging, candy wrappers, matchbooks and other ephemera. I incorporate what I find and see in the streets, neighborhoods and marketplaces into the narratives of my pieces: people carrying towers of goods on their heads, toys constructed from tin cans and old bottles, houses and bird-feeders made of corroding metal bomb carcasses. In these countries that have been so damaged by years of war and poverty, I became fascinated by how everyday experiences and ordinary objects related to destruction, chaos, immigration, memory, survival and loss. Something very mundane and ordinary could be a symbol of safety, shelter, or peace, while simultaneously being a relic of war. It is in this context that I am drawn to the use of simple imagery: an airplane, a house, water, shoes, birds. Combining discarded materials to make these narratives, such as a schoolgirl with a dress quilted from teabags, or a nest of old road maps, is like creating a shrine, or providing a sanctuary for people, places and objects that need mending.

# HELEN HASSE

From the Narangerel and Chanstadulam series, Mongolia, 2013

From the Narangerel and Chanstadulam series, Mongolia, 2013

From the Narangerel and Chanstadulam series, Mongolia, 2013

HELEN HASSE

From the Narangerel and Chanstadulam series, Mongolia, 2013

I came to stay at Kriti Gallery when I was just 18 years old and fresh out of school. I knew I wanted to study something creative – I came to India to figure out a path. Varanasi was an intense experience, not only because it was the first time I travelled on my own, but because the city stimulates all your senses. Yet, this overwhelming flood of new impressions made me realize that my work had to ultimately feature people. It was the personal stories I heard in the city that I was most intrigued by. Navneet Raman and Petra Manefeld took me along to numerous vernissages around the city and offered a lot of guidance on how to creatively engage with my new and intense surroundings.

Kriti Gallery offers a two-way interaction with art, a sort of exchange. Foreign artists have the opportunity to interact with a culturally different community than their usual audience and get new feedbacks and ideas. But Kriti, through its openness, also offers the local community the opportunity to see art from all over the world. Kriti is a centre for a fruitfully creative interaction.

Kriti is a beautiful, peaceful garden in the hustle of a busy city. It is both loud and very quiet. It gives you space and inspiration, a source of dialogue and retreat. And it will make you want to come back.

Kriti is special in that accommodates both young and old artists: visual artists, dancers, painters, photographers or any other form of creative spirit. It is a melting pot of ideas, skills and visions. It also offers a context that is radically different from what most people experience on a day-to-day level, making the experience spiritually, culturally and historically stimulating.

I hope that Kriti continues to develop as a giver of opportunities to young artists to find new inspiration, as it did for me. I wish Petra and Navneet all the best on this journey and want to thank them for their big heart.

Finding myself in a new, and initially alien place, my hand automatically reached for the camera not for the pencil. I can proudly say that I discovered that I wanted to be a photographer whilst at the residency. The stay also broadened my horizon. Most importantly, I was only vaguely familiar with Fazal Sheikh's work before I saw his exhibition at the gallery. This experience left a lasting impression, and kindled my interest for 'humanitarian' and 'social' photography, which now is the centre of my academic and artistic life.
Narangerel and Chanstaldulam live as nomads in the northern province of Bulgan in Mongolia. They are mother and daughter, both widows and all eight children/grandchildren have moved towards the cities. Only two sons/grandsons still live close by. With harsh winters and draughts endangering the lives of their 30 goats, the two are looking for new ways of income to survive. Thus they are turning towards tourism and invite travellers to stay in their ger for a '7 day nomadic homestay'. We were the first to be invited to live with them and participate in their nomadic routines and the first to introduce them to Western culture.

In Western countries we often feel that everything is possible, unlimited and with no boundaries. In India, and especially in a more traditional city like Banaras, the do's and don'ts of Indian culture are very much present. How did this influence your work and the making of your work?

I became more sensitive to the way I approached people and how I interacted with them. I always tried to ask the right questions at the right time. I also learned that conceptions of what comprises a good photograph are very different from Europe. It appeared to me that in India people posed stiffly and seriously in front of the camera. What was a good family picture for them was a challenge for me, because I needed to adapt my own vision of good and bad, appropriate and inappropriate.

# RACHEL HECKER

From the Untitled: From the grounds of Kriti series, 2011
watercolour and pencil on paper

RACHEL HECKER

From the Untitled: From the grounds of Kriti series, 2011
watercolour and pencil on paper

# STEPHANIE HOLT

studio view, Kriti Residency, 2014

drawings on paper, 2014

As an emerging artist I discovered that the next stage in my new found art career would be to participate in a residency. I felt that it would provide me with the time and space to develop my practice and preferably to go overseas would remove me from the distractions of my daily life. My decision to come to India was in order to experience a lifestyle and culture that was completely opposite to my own in Australia, I was curious also to see how this would affect my work and what I'd be inspired to create in a completely new environment.

I feel fairly privileged to stay at Kriti gallery. Not only have Navneet Raman & Petra Manefeld created a beautiful environment to escape to, but nearly all routines and distractions of daily life are removed and one can entirely focus on the making on ones art. (meals are provided each day and they take the time to make sure each artists studio is equipped with all that they need in order to begin their work.) It certainly feels like a luxury to be able to spend each day as I please creating as much work as I feel inspired to with no restrictions on my time.

Taking part in a residency is also a fantastic opportunity to live with other artists. As a newcomer to the art world I feel very fortunate to be able to hear advice from more experienced artists and learn about what is going on in other artistic communities around the world.

Staying for an extended period of time in Varanasi (four months) has been more beneficial to me than a quick visit as it has allowed me to become localized with the city and to have the ability to interact on a more personal level with people living here. This has been a positive influence in my art since I'm not seeing the city on a surface level but from many varying perspectives.

It's also allowed me the opportunity to participate in a Nathadwara painting class, which was a great chance to learn a traditional Indian art practice and also to meet young artists living in Varanasi. There isn't a great deal of space assigned to art in Varanasi however there are a lot of young people studying art and have an interest in being part of the artistic community. So I think it's very positive that Kriti is providing a space in Varanasi for art to live and also bringing in international art that wouldn't be available to the community here otherwise.

Personally I've always found traveling to new places has inspired artwork, after long periods of travel I'm generally itching to get home and begin working. I feel a residency is the ideal solution as I can immerse myself into a new culture, explore new places, and return to my studio my eyes a little wider with new wonders and start drawing right away.

When I arrived in Varanasi I felt as though I had fallen down the rabbit hole. While I have traveled to many places, it has been a completely fresh experience for me. I intentionally didn't do a lot of research before coming to Banaras as I wanted to learn about the city and India through my experience of living here, and every day I do learn something new about the traditions, culture, politics and society. There are more restrictions in a traditional city like Banaras compared with many Western countries however in my own artwork I have been finding it interesting to depict my discoveries and the way I see Banaras and Indian culture. So through incorporating the city into my work I haven't felt restricted in what I feel inspired to create.

# SHARON HORVATH

Calvino's Blood Sea, 2010-2014
pigment, ink and polymer on paper on canvas

Cosmicomic, 2014
pigment, ink and polymer on paper on canvas

SHARON HORVATH

Varanasi Notebook I, 2014
pigment, ink, polymer on paper

In short, it was great. Petra and Navneet showed me and my husband Tom Pappas how to navigate Varanasi and how to deal with the customs that shape everyday life there. We went on walking tours of the old part of town, the road to Sarnath and many other places. We met interesting artists, visited traditional weavers, cooked together and took yoga classes nearby. We lived a full life and had plenty of time to do our work in the comfortable studio spaces.

I was pleased to discover that everything that my husband and I hoped for was surpassed by our experience at Kriti Gallery residency. Out of a four month journey through India, our one month as artists in residency at Kriti was the highlight for me. The grounds, the accommodations, the food, great conversation with artists and writers and the intellectual stimulation added to the magic of Varanasi. The city itself can be overwhelming and intense, but our hosts were most helpful in orienting us and finding ways to solve myriad of problems that travelers in India encounter. Everything from studio furniture, wifi, good books, transportation, tips on where to buy almost anything. Our activities included an historic morning walk from the Krishnamurti grounds to sacred Sarnath, following in the Buddha's footsteps, a trip to a traditional brocade weevers studio, a temple walk through the winding alleyways to view hidden shrines, a concert of sublime dhrupad vocal music, trips to the Harmony bookstore (best in India as far as I have seen). Our host, a native Banarsi, made the stories of Shiva clearly accessible to me, a most welcomed gift, since the mythology is mind-boggling and complicated. It was in the context of Varanasi that I began to understand the connections between the vast history of India and contemporary religious practice there. This was possible, thanks to the well organized, intelligent and highly educated hosts. Don't get me wrong, they are a blast to be around as well. Especially at mealtime, after we were finished praising the wonderful dishes prepared for lunch and dinner, there were always Varanasi stories to swap, and not just the typical India stories. Everyone brought something interesting to the table.
All in all, it was a fantastic month, an oasis in Varanasi that we hoped for. I intend to return to Kriti when next in India.I hope to visit every year and share the experience with other American artists. I wish that my colleagues and friends that have expressed interest in applying to the Kriti Residency could figure out their travel plans to get to India!

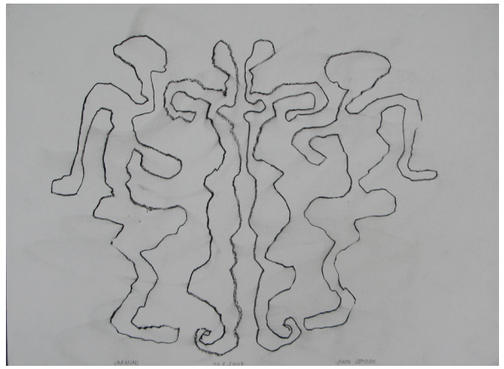
Indian painting is one of my lifelong passions. My sabbatical from teaching at Purchase College came at a time when I wanted to shake up my work and have a life-changing experience.My paintings broke open. After returning home I completed a body of work that was shown in NYC, October 2014 at the Lori Bookstein Gallery in two simultaneous shows "Cosmicomics" and Varanasi Notebook". They were very well received.
While at Kriti, I worked in the studio every day, painting two different groups of work. One project was to complete canvases that I had sent from Brooklyn to Varanasi ahead of time. Of the three canvases I finished one, titled "Cosmicomic" named after the Italo Calvino book of stories that I read over and over through my four months of traveling throughout India. This painting turned out to be a seminal painting that spawned a whole series that I showed in the Fall of 2014 at Lori Bookstein Gallery—"Cosmicomics"
The other series I worked on (on the huge bed-size table that Petra helped me put together in the Kriti studio) was a ledger series called "Varanasi Notebook". In this series, I sat down to "just paint" as I was completely full of India at that time, and needed some time to let it all come out through my hand. The rather abstract forms were inspired by Indian miniatures, the dark flames of the burning ghats, the temples of Khajaraho, whose domes represent the forms of consciousness. The ledger paper was purchased during my travels from the Hussein paper manufacture in Sanganar.

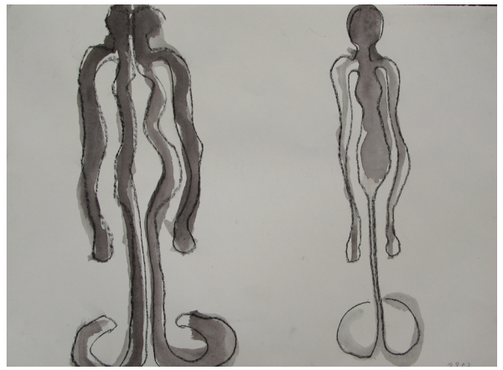
# OH SOON-HWA

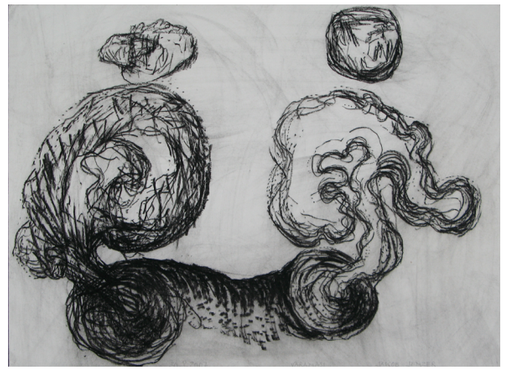
OH SOON - HWA

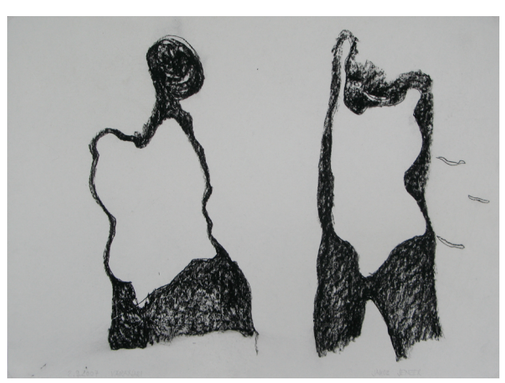
During my first stay in India in 2008 through the UNESCO-Aschberg bursaries program at the Sanskriti foundation, I became interested in the silk craftsmanship and decided to explore the city of Varanasi, a famous place where silk weaving industry is the leading manufacturing activity. There, through interaction with locals and personal research, I discovered the working and living conditions of a whole community (i.e., nearly 90 % of the Muslim community in Varanasi) who relies almost exclusively on the success of silk weaving business.
The silk weaving has known a considerable interest from numerous foreign luxury brand companies and European interior designers, opening new markets. However, Muslim weavers somehow seemed not to have benefited from the new prospects for the weaving industry. On the contrary, they have been exposed to the increase competition from Chinese silk traders who can mass-produce at lower costs and efforts, and the technical changes of weaving techniques practiced in other countries that integrate computer design.
Upon returning to Varanasi in December 2012, with the support of several leaders of the Muslim community, I was given access to the social pillars of their community (e.g., madrasa and dispute resolution council), master weavers' workshops, and many weaver family households. They shared with me their way of life, their traditions, and their concerns regarding the dim prospects of an activity that has been passed through generations, and recently threatened by both industrialization and globalization.
They allowed me to capture and understand the working process, and the hierarchical relationship existing between Master weavers and weavers; the first ones providing the raw materials and work opportunity, and the latest providing their labor.
In weaver family homes, everyone over the age of 10 contributes to the tasks. Men are assigned with the physically strenuous work such as weaving while women do embroidery and clean up the textile surface. Children quit school to support the weaving family business by either weaving or embroidering. In one room, family members representing up to 4 generations weave together, from the grandfather, father, and son, to the grandchild. The business model based on craftsmanship and family household on which the Muslim community of Varanasi relies for its subsistence is seriously at stake

# JAKOB JENZER









Left and Right series, 2007
carbon on paper

Spiegelung Varanasi, 2012
acrylic on canvas

JAKOB JENZER

Vision of Colours, video installation, 2008
HDV Video Blue Ray, 4 min.20 sec

studio view, Kriti Residency, 2012

My stay at Kriti Artist Residency was possible due to a grant by the SKK of the city of Thun. This allowed me for 6 months to work and life in an entire new environment.
Already in 1981-1982 I travelled through India as visited Varanasi at that time.
So the Indian culture was not new for me at all, I thought…
In the beginning of my stay at the residency it was very tiring, took a lot of energy out of me mainly due to the high noise levels in the city caused by the traffic. It took about two months to arrange myself with this nuisance and I did not bother anymore.
During that time the studio became my oasis but also my cave. After being adjusted to the noise I started my journey through the city, by bicycle, walking or Rikshaw down to the river. So I experienced the environment and built my own relationship with the city. Slowly I had the feeling of integration and acceptance in the city.

In 2007-2008 during my stay the exchange with the other Western artists was not too fruitful and inspiring. I came to India to engage with the Indian culture.

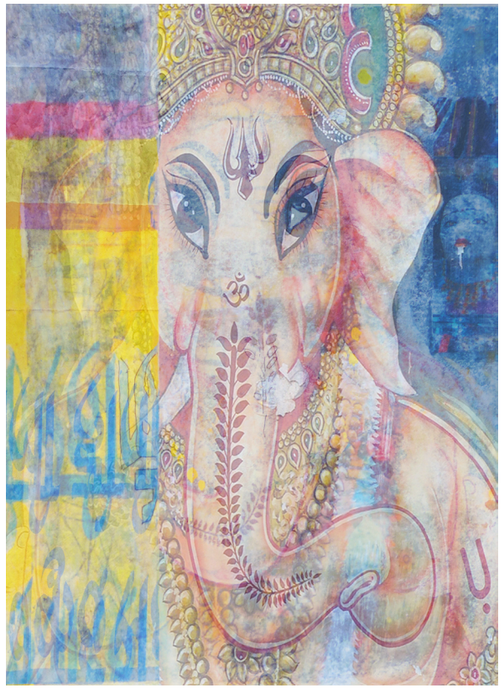
In contrary the relationship and cooperation with Navneet was very helpful and stimulating. He shared his networks and organized two exhibitions for the Swiss Artists of the Residency. The first one at Kriti Gallery and then at the Swiss Embassy in New Delhi.

The advice for my friends would be to not set their expectations  too high. The place to stay and to work is not at all comparable with our Western consumer society.
 The motto can be, discover the small in the large picture.

I wish lots of visitors interested in arts would visit Kriti Gallery and take advantage of this interesting space.

The facinating challenge to work in an environment totally new to someone has been my learning curve.
The influences on my work are visible and noticeable until today itself.

# ARIANE KELLER



Best Friends, 2014
acrylic colours and mixed media on canvas

Kriti is like a green island in the ocean of the big city. A place to reside of the hectic of the Indian traffic and the tourism. At the same time it is close to the pulse of the local people. On one side there is a close contact with the Kriti team, the gardeners, the cook, the people working at Kriti. On the other side there is a close network of local artists and the students of the Banaras Hindu University.

Very important for the northern India, one of the very few places where an artist can work artistically, experiment and where one can coordinate the production of the work and exhibit.

Once you have survived the traffic jams, to arrive at Kriti feels like an arrival in paradise. The size of the ateliers are pure luxury.
Especially considering the day to day needs like the availability of a generator as well as the wonderful experience of wedding processions close by. One simply feels good at this place!
Not to forget the possibility to meet international artists from all over the world who are staying as residents or visit the place and having the chance to get to know them and exchange creative ideas.

For the cultural landscape of India I consider Kriti as a wonderful bridge between West and East.I wish they will have a chance to further integrate and connect with the international art scene.

During my stay in Varanasi India became like a second home for me. A home where I can experience all aspects of day to day life: living, working, travelling, meditation and experience contacts with the local population. This is my medium for cultural interaction.

Varanasi as a religious and spiritual center is a very important force for my creative work: the comparison of Hindu and Eastern forms of gods that are revealing their appearances to us in different forms, in supporting us to master the day to day challenges in life.

One drawback was the lack of art supplies which was a limitation to me at the beginning but which lead me to a new technique, the form of collages! Which at the end became a great source of new ideas….

# TIIU KIRSIPUU

From the Colours of Varanasi series, 2013

From the Colours of Varanasi series, 2013

COLORS, COLORS, COLORS.....

In 2013 I visited India after 26 years. I have always had an interest in eastern philosophies and in the eastern way of looking at life and the world. The reason of going back to India was to have a new, different and closer look at India´s wonderful ancient culture and people. This time I wanted to experience India differently, living in an art residency and finding the time for my art. I found Kriti Gallery on the internet and was very pleasantly surprised in receiving a quick and nice response to my letter. Petra's good English and warm way of communicating made the choice easy, I had no more doubts or feelings that I should search for some other place.

I knew that Varanasi wouldn't have been an easy place to live in but after moving there I realized it was much harder than I thought so. So many people, so much noise, so much dirt..... and yet so interesting. I had no particular work or plan in my mind before my arrival at Kriti Gallery. I think that from time to time one needs to be in a different context, far away from home while observing a very different side of the world with wide open eyes. Looking, collecting material, waiting it to be processed and eventually be used in the future. Only later you can see the real reason of going somewhere or how a certain experience influenced you and your art work. I wanted to see as much as possible and absorb fully the city of Benares, its people and culture.

During my stay at Kriti Gallery I was mainly interested in making photographs and through these I discovered a very colorful, unique, ancient and interesting city. Houses from different eras and centuries, unusual colors, local people...

To walk in the older part of the city close to the river was a fantastic journey through history. You never know what you can see and find around the next corner, whom you meet and what emotions you will get. Looking back I could say that the biggest impressions I got were the colors of the city and the colorful people I met. Hundreds and hundreds of photos of Varanasi and its people are in my computer and I will use them one day when the time is right and I am ready. I do have plans in my mind of how to use this material and what to make out of it, we will see...

Kriti Gallery seemed to be an island of peace in the constant movement and noisy atmosphere of the city. It was like a green oasis in the desert where you can escape from. This was my home for a month where I could go back after a tiring day - a place to rest and think about what I had seen or gone through. I was lucky to have a very good companion - book illustrator and graphic artist Piret Mildeberg - which came with me at Kriti Gallery during the same time. We shared this special time together, our emotions and we supported each other in the difficult moments.

For me it was also interesting to see how the other artists at Kriti Gallery were living their residency and hear about their experiences. As Navneet Raman and Petra Manefeld said there are not so many modern art galleries in India and Kriti Gallery has a very good potential to fill this empty space. I wish all the people of Kriti Gallery a lot of strength and determination to continue giving to so many artists from all over the world this wonderful possibility of staying and working in  a city like Benares.

# ANI LEIDNER

People in the rice field, 2012
egg tempra on kitchen towel

studio view, Kriti Residency, 2012

Ani Leidner and her portable studio

In the Krity residency I felt like in a bubble, safe and like in an international place that could also be somewhere else, except for the daily food and some codes of behavior. Coming home or going out I found there was a big change while passing through the gate. I felt well in "both" worlds, the more comfortable residency area familiar to western culture on one hand and the noisy lively Varanasi streets on the other.

The encounter with the people living in or around the city was a main point of interest for my work and also for me personally. I had therefore tried to learn Hindi before coming. I found out it would take a lot of time to really get to know somebody because the Indian culture is organized in a lot of fragments, each with its specific norms, that make it difficult (for me as a greenhorn) to recognize the place of each individual. Nevertheless I was lucky to get to know some people a little bit better than just superficially like for example Pinku Dji, my Hindi teacher who was recommended to me by Petra and Navneet. A lot of other contacts were precious to me too, even though they remained unreachable in a certain sense.

In the abundance of unattached acquaintances, it was enriching to see some persons every day. I would like to mention the people in charge of the Kriti residency like Anup who picked me up at the station, Chinta who cooked deliciously, Subash, Sonu and the other friendly gardeners who tried to answer my questions about the Tulsi and the other plants in the entrance. Last but not least I remember Navneet and Petra who gave a special ambience at breakfast times, often asking for some polarizing subject of debate, who took us on different trips in their ambassador and gave me a lot of preventing advices for my undertakings.
In the microcosm of the Kriti residency I could observe a lot of the Indian culture in a quiet setting – that at first seemed to be so different from life observed in the streets. In the end it looked to me like a mirror of the society from Varanasi gathered in one palace.

To have exhibitions taking place in the same areas was perfect to fertilize the exchange among artists and to get involved in the actual arguments.

The exposition I witnessed showed works that come out of a big tradition even if the creations were contemporary. I appreciated to meet the very accurate paintings of Raja Ram Sharma and to learn more about some of the Indian Gods, speaking with the artist, with Norman and Pinku ji. I think it would increase the interaction if there were more artists involved in one exposition, showing different associations to a specific topic.

I would tell hother artists, it's a good place to get in touch step by step with the Indian culture and to meet other artists. The studios are beautiful, in a nice setting, there are not too much nor too little spaces, just a good number to get to know everybody else and have a good exchange. Then I would explain how it is organized, how the initiators Petra and Navneet are present and care about people, how they give their advice and sometimes prevent cultural conflicts.

I see Kriti as a place that could become very well known because there aren't that many contemporary art spaces in the region of Uttar Pradesh. Compared to other art spaces, it's nice, it keeps its bonding to the local heritage as well.

I wish Kriti, that it functions like a spring-board for some unknown artists, through the exchange with other more established ones in Kriti itself.

It was an intuitive decision, the completely diverse culture attracted me, the pictures I saw from India and its people looked so appealing it made me want to paint and also understand a society that is organized differently. I was very curious about the interactions that would take place, asking people for making their portrait

The residency gave me a safe and organized structure; Navneet and Petra helped me to find some indispensable material like the hand made

frames to put the canvas on.
They lent me a bike for the whole time in Varanasi, so I could ride to Sarnath and realize portraits in a more rural settlement. I can say they helped me to focus on my project.
In questions of heath they convinced me not to go to a street doctor to clean my clogged ears.

It was difficult to find a married woman whom I could paint. When I asked the husband if he would allow me to paint his wife after painting him before, he would generally answer “no”. That’s why I have many more portraits of Indian men than Indian women. The women I was allowed to paint were either widows or grandmothers or young and unmarried.

# JACOPO MAINO

From the A Conversation (Between Yama and Yudhishthira) series, 2013

From the A Conversation (Between Yama and Yudhishthira) series, 2013

From the A Conversation (Between Yama and Yudhishthira) series, 2013

From the A Conversation (Between Yama and Yudhishthira) series, 2013

JACOPO MAINO

From the A Conversation (Between Yama and Yudhishthira) series, 2013

From the A Conversation (Between Yama and Yudhishthira) series, 2013

My experience in Varanasi was very intense. I had already been to the city before, but this time I discovered other sides of the city which I had never knew before.

This played a huge role in the development of my project, "A Conversation (Between Yama and Yudhishthira)". I felt the need of confronting the concept of death from my point of view of photographer, and Varanasi and its landscapes were my choice. Such a topic is not easy to research on, and I hoped that Varanasi and its people would have offered me the occasion of investigating upon it.

The staff at Kriti was extremely kind and helpful to me with my researches - I can surely say they gave me a big hand in the development of my project, in all of its delicate phases.

I think that it is important for a city like Varanasi, so rich in terms of cultural and social vibrance, to have a unique space dedicated to Art. The Artist-in-Residence programme of Kriti Gallery is an amazing point of encounter for different people, with different cultures and different approaches to Art: in a place like this, surely an artist can find himself inspired.

I do not think I can explain Kriti without explaining - if it is even possible - Varanasi. Varanasi is a busy city, full of life, chaos, history and vibrance. It can be a bit overwhelming sometimes. In fact, Kriti is almost a heavenly place of tranquillity, the perfect space where to find inspiration, peace and an environment that helps you push your work forward.

I was extremely impressed with the quality of the artists who were staying during the period of my Artist-in-Residence programme. Working with mixed media, they were all of very high level - and provided a true source of inspiration for me. I think that with Artists of this level, Kriti can go a long way.

I hope that Kriti keeps on its mission of becoming a paragon for art and culture in Northern India, and a reference for worldwide artists.

I had been to Varanasi before, and was deeply touched by the atmosphere of the city, as many before me. In 2013 I was working on a project which revolved around the concept of Death. The starting point was to investigate the rationalisation of death, through rites and institutions that form what I call "Landscapes of Death". I thought that the city of Varanasi would have provided an excellent setting.

The Residency had a hugely positive impact on my work, in three ways.

First of all, being involved in a Residency programme means to come in contact with other artists from all over the world. Working with them, talking with them, spending time with them was a true source of inspiration, and provided an excellent context for critique and advices.

Secondly, in the busy everyday life is often difficult to find the space and time to produce and experiment with Art. Being a Resident in Kriti helped me a lot. I had the time and space to reflect upon my work, correct it, and finalise it.

Last but not the least, Navneet Raman, Petra Manefeld and Kriti's staff were incredibly helpful with me with their advices. By this I mean they not only offered me help on the practical side (contacts in the city, etc.), but also on the "authorial" side they helped me push my work forward.

It is certainly difficult to work and live, even for a short amount of time, in a country so different from one's own such as India. As said, my project revolved around the concept of death, and in order to document and photograph the needed activities, I had to interact with many people and many delicate situations such as funerals, private family rites, and so on.

My background in Indian Studies surely helped a bit, but still I always felt under the pressure of making a mistake in the way I was talking to people, asking questions, etc. I had to be cautious, always ready to step aside in case of problems, and that surely influenced my work.

Nonetheless, I think every project has its difficulties and these situations often helps you to move away from your comfort zone - with the positive side effect of exploring and understanding better a different culture, and ultimately become a better human being.

# PIRET MILDEBERG

Hare Nandi! (My memory stick from Varanasi), 2014
paper and plastic

Hare Nandi! (No. 23), 2013
mixed media, collage, paper

PIRET MILDEBERG

TORT (My dog), 2013
mixed media, plywood

# TATIANA MUSI

My first brief encounter with hindu culture happened years ago on the island of Mauritius. The glorious temples and elegant ladies dressed in saris of vibrant colors sparked within me curiosity for this culture and made me wish to visit India myself. In November 2013 that wish came true. Sculptor Tiiu Kirsipuu as my companion, I arrived in Varanasi to spend a month in the art residency of Kriti Gallery.

Kriti is a delightful oasis of green amid the tensely populated and boisterous Varanasi. It was a privilege to inhabit a two-room studio in this sacred city, one of the oldest in the world. The residency operates like a wholesome family. Petra Manefeld and Navneet Raman provided me care and knowledge. They are irreplaceable guides when adjusting to the hectic life of the urban environment and entering the local art and cultural scene -that is concerts, book launches, lectures on indian culture and religion, the grandiose re-enactment of Ramlila, visits to temples and walks on the ghats; without mentioning Kriti Gallery's own exhibitions and sharing the experience with artists from different nationalities, working together at daytime, and in the evenings having elaborate conversations that in some cases lead to quite heated discussions.  No  travel bureau offers a program like this! Even my personal request to get acquaintance with the local toy manufactory was fulfilled.

I kept an elaborated journal both in words and pictures of my days in the residency. The images I sketched lead to the making of a 27 piece series of post cards, named "Hare Nandi!", a hommage to the animals that I met in virtually every place in the city and who, with their serene calmness, helped me to adjust to the noise and cope with the crowds of humans. I found a children's book called "Magical Indian Myths" on one of my first days in Varanasi, so I knew how important Nandi - the holy bull - is in Hindu religion.

The sun rising gently over the Ganga River, hundreds of women, dressed in colorful saris, are busy with their rituals every morning on the ghats. Durga Puja and thunderstorms, the remarkable Ramlila show, the monumental BHU campus and the Nharat Kala Bhavan Museum with its treasures and then temples, temples, temples... Three thousand digital photographs in my archives are waiting for the time to be right for an exhibition...

One month is not enough to  get hold of a civilization this antique and of a city this sacred, but with the help of Kriti Gallery our short time in India was used in the best possible way to get a glimpse of the culture. For me, the residency was an excellent self development, and the impact is clearly visible in all my art from the year 2014. The pigments of the streets of Varanasi are still present in my creations up to date. Radiating in color, my works have become more vibrant than is usual in Nordic countries. Hinduism for me is a much merrier and more free religion compared to Christianity and it's Church with its restrictions and responsibilities. In Europe, there is no festival like Durga Puja, with its sheer cheerfulness and weeks of preparation in order to immerse the holy sculptures in the sacred River Ganges. Inspiration from Durga Puja dolls can be recognized in my Hampelmänner (Jumping Jacks) and paper objects.

This particular joy, in a way almost childish hope and faith, is what I gained / (achieved) in Varanasi. My Hare Nandi (Memory stick from Varanasi Trip) was created relying on these feelings and thoughts. In addition I had a lot of inspiration for the works I did for Estonian Mythology Exhibition from the five marvelous children's books I obtained in India, not to mention plenty of ideas of how to use the ancient block printing technique in my lino cuts.

Kriti Gallery is a significant bridge between cultures, bringing them together and connecting their pieces / (the dots). Wishing all the best for future endeavors, willpower for organizing exhibitions, workshops and art events, and the strength for handling so many artists from all over the world

garden

library

drawing #2
While drawing the house for the first time ... even though this project is about the garden and the house should be the background, certain images start to appear ... I remember the light, can feel the air ... dim dusty light up the stairs ... with curiosity.
I am understanding the shape of the house, what I thought were windows are pathways.
... I begin to wonder how will it feel when I arrive ... excitement.

TATIANA MUSI

"a memory is not preserved,
it is reconstructed"

(M. Halbwachs)

When I arrived in Varanasi for the first time it was clear to me that at some point of my life I wanted to come back for a longer period, Navneet Raman was finishing the residency apartments and in a dreamy tone we said “maybe...maybe one day I will do a residency here!”.
A few years later in 2010 it happened and it was beautiful to see how the dream had become reality, both for Kriti, having become a formal residency program, and for myself to be back in India.
My experience in Varanasi was of many shades all accumulating into a great lesson of life and internal growth. The city is so much like anything else that breaks contexts, preconceptions, and yourself. I felt a need to move, reconstruct and create. Finding a balance between the input of the city and the quiet studio time. The life in the residency was enriched by every member, from those who were working in the kitchen and in the garden, to the ones in the office and the main house and the other artists in the studios. During my stay I met great artists from other disciplines with whom I could discuss and share creative inputs, attend music concerts, experience the holiness of the city together with Ganges days, temple days, Durga days, market days... share Varanasi and it’s life.
In more concrete terms I had a very interesting encounter with the city producing the piece Ordinary Garden. I was going around with the help of Vallery (an indian girl graduated in graphic design or who is a local?) asking people in markets, chai stands, food stands, sadus, etc, to exchange their everyday objects for new ones or for money. I was asking for old pots, old broken baskets, old everything, and trying to explain that it was for art purposes. Most people were confused and doubtful of the crazy tourist, others very surprised and happy, some just completely attached to their objects. The happiest of all was a sadu, very very happy to exchange the begging pot for money, that made me really happy too!

I think Kriti Gallery is a great space that more and more should involve the community. It is so unexpected to find a place like Kriti in Banaras, it is like an oasis in the city and I can perceive how slowly people from all different contexts and backgrounds will take a sip from it.

I would describe it as a great opportunity to get inspired by a country, a city and a place like any others. A place where everything is taken care of and all you have to do is relax, merge into the crazy flow and create!

Having a quiet work space, with fellow artists and a gallery in Banaras is such a unique context and therefore a generator of special content. I think Kriti could create stronger connections with other galleries in India, so that a flow of international artists can influence and be influenced by the local scene.

To let the art explode! Maybe to include more people from the Banaras community, organizing exchanges with the art faculty of the Banaras Hindu University and organize public programs. I wish them to push even more for strong creative forces.

I just knew I wanted towork and experiance Banaras, from the moment I was there. Intuition.

Being here in Banaras at Kriti, irst of all reminded me how enjoying is for me to live in different contexts, more unique than what we see in any other city of the world that has become globalized. It helped me realize that my inspiration and connection with myself lies more in a raw (unstructured) world.

In a way I feel this is a stereotyped point of view as there are many things that would be possible in India and impossible in the West, it just depends on the nature of the idea. On my own point of view I do the work that feels sincere and necessary to me, it has never been very provocative work, but still I have found some walls/boundaries both in the West and in India. But whatever happened I have always pushed to the limit and try to get as close as possible to what I want to create.

# KATHRYN MYRES

Remnants, 2014
gouache on paper

Ascendance, 2013
gouache on paper

KATHRYN MYRES

Half Remembered, 2013
gouache on paper

The Warehouse, 2010
oil on wood

KATHRYN MYRES

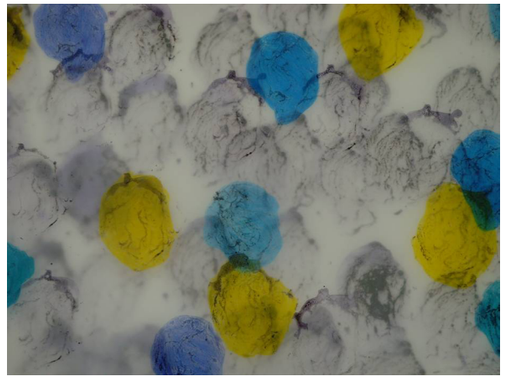
Stand Outside Yourself, 2010
oil on wood

I had traveled to India many times and had stayed for lengths of time Varanasi several times before coming to know Kriti Gallery and residency.  In 2009 I was a guest of artists Michael and Charlotte Cain and stayed at Kriti for a week, coming to know Navneet and Petra and enjoying the beautiful grounds, conviviality of the other residents and delicious meals. Navneet was kind enough to organize my lecture on western artists who have been inspired by the art and culture of India at Jnana Pravaha , a beautiful small museum and cultural space on the ghats. This is just one example of how willing Navneet and Petra are at making fruitful connects for their visitors. It is what made me decide, during my eight month sabbatical from my university teaching position in 2013, to "treat" myself to a month-long stay at Kriti. Admittedly it can be a hard decision to live away from the ghats, but having already experienced that many times, I was interested in exploring more of Varanasi and particularly enjoyed the neighborhoods in proximity of Kriti.  It was also perhaps less distracting than dealing with the daily crowds and activities of the ghats and was easy to get to and from in a bicycle rickshaw or on foot.  I was in need of a "serious" studio space to create some paintings and videos while I was traveling for over six months. The Kriti spaces are spacious, well lit and really comfortable.  Because they have their own kitchens, you can be quite private as I often was, or engage in conversation or activities with any of the other residents. It was nice to work all day and talk to the other residents during meals. During daily walks I was delighted to discover the winding streets near Kriti, particularly a weavers neighborhood across the road and the grand and now often greatly modified mansions along the main road in Mahmoorganj, of which Raman Niwas, where Kriti is set, is one of the most wonderfully preserved.  Petra took us on magical wind walks through the narrow lanes behind the ghats and although I had spent a lot of time in Varanasi on prior trips, I discovered things I had not known of.

Kriti gallery is a generous space, with its front lawn for openings to spill out on.  Petra and Navneet are always available for conversation and are very knowledgeable about contemporary and traditional art. I participated in a three-person show through presenting several videos from my Regarding India series, featuring one I made at Kriti, on the photographer Dinesh Khanna that I had interviewed a few weeks earlier in Varanasi.
I appreciate Kriti's combination of exhibitions of established artists such as Dayanita Singh and Fazal Sheikh with emerging Indian and western artists.
The gallery serves an important role in a city with a major university and layers of history, but otherwise no consistent contemporary gallery presence. It is a place where students and faculty from Banaras Hindu University, the local community and foreigners can get to know one another.

I created several paintings, two series of photographs and a video interview while at Kriti. A subsequent painting came out of reference photographs I took of a neighborhood I spent time in near the railroad tracks.  I would not hesitate to "treat" myself to another stay at Kriti and always recommend it to artists.

# JOHANNA NAF



Coloured Places, 2007
ink on foil, coloured pencils

studio view, Kriti Residency, 2007

The Indian culture was foreign to me. Kriti shaped and determined everyday life from the very start. I was profoundly impressed by the dexterity with which handicraftspeople completed their intricate work. Dealing with the juxtaposition of light and dark in real life required a great deal of tolerance and understanding.

Kriti is a place where you will find yourself.

A place where you can work in peace and may experience the Indian culture.

Kriti makes good exhibitions, whether in fine art, photography, etc.

I wish Kriti that they will continue their commitment to culture and the Indian culture centre.

In 2007 I was chosen at the artist-in-residence by the Culture Commission from the city of Zug and lived for six month in the atelier in Varanasi, India. I am thankful for this experiance.

In the studio in Varanasi, there was a quiet athmosphere, I could get very engrossed in my work, without pressures to produce work.

# SAMUEL NIGRO

Indian Cairn, 2014
15 ft granite

Shard 1 of 7, 2014
indian black granite

Working with stone in Kriti was not done before but they worked hard with me to find the right sources in the city and also connected me to sculptures in south india. They coordinated my trips and interaction and this was such a beautiful way to entre the craftpersons netowrk in India in my field.

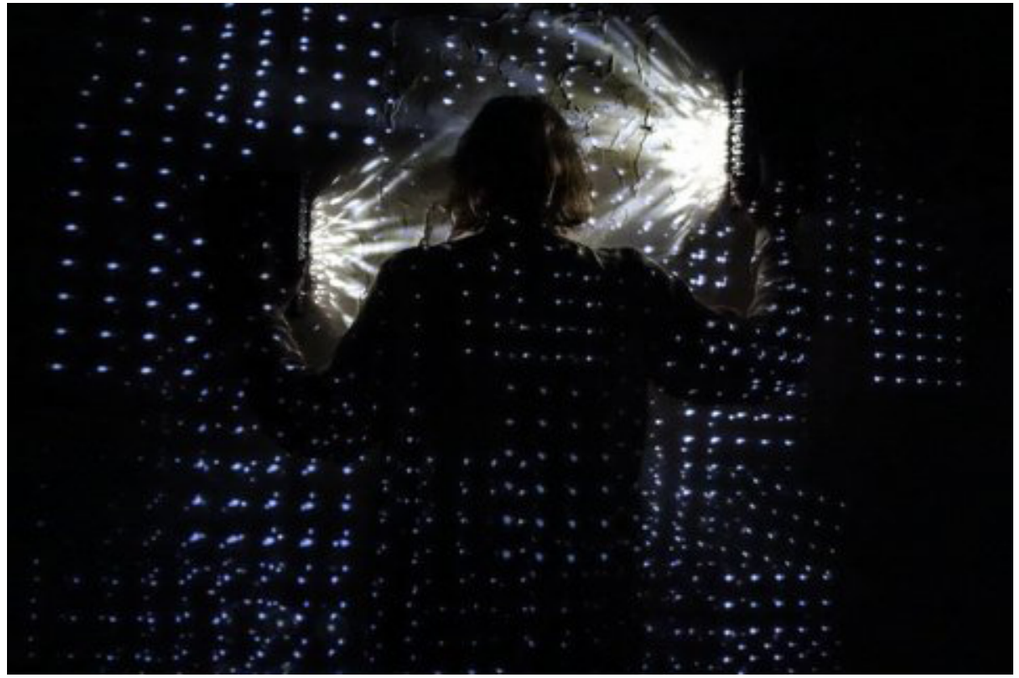
My practice was enriched by being and interacting with Kriti Gallery and its team and network. I wish them the best and hope others who want to embark on this journey find them.

# AMBER HAINES AND KYLE PAGE

Dance Performance at Kriti Gallery
Photogrph by Archna Singh

Rehearsal at Kriti Gallery

AMBER HAINES AND KYLE PAGE



Our time at Kriti was both pivotal and formative, contributing heavily to our ongoing research into methodologies surround how we make art. The rich diversity of culture and customs within India and in particular Varanasi offered us a wealth of inspiration from which to work from. The extreme contrasts we encountered whilst on residency at Kriti have broadened our views and expanded our potential for creating innovative, thought provoking works of contemporary dance.

Kriti is an oasis amidst the many colors, sights, sounds, tastes and textures of Varanasi. To have access to such a space is imperative for reflection within such an overwhelming and intense city.

Wonderfully equipped and extraordinarily supported within the hectic and seductive city of Varanasi. Kriti is an ideal base from which to explore the city and soak up the myriad of experiences and influences that are available to you.

Kriti is an emerging force within the art world, that will continue to develop its position as a globally recognized organisation.

India is full of extremes, everything exists there, from life to death and everything in between… There is no richer place on the planet for the creation of unique and inspiring art.

The isolation and focused time for creating work in such a drastically different space from that which is familiar ensured that the output was well considered and of a particularly high standard.

We found inspiration everywhere we looked, from the ultra traditional to the incredibly progressive… We consciously assimilated all that we experienced into our work and the results were incredibly rich and diverse.

# BEATRIX REINHARDT

From the Etrüchtigung series - Chapter IV: Kumbha Mela, 2013

BEATRIX REINHARDT

From the Etrüchtigung series - Chapter IV: Kumbha Mela, 2013

BEATRIX REINHARDT

From the Etrüchtigung series - Chapter IV: Kumbha Mela, 2013

My experience at Kriti residency, the city of Varanasi and its people was refreshing and rejuvenating to all my senses. I also must mention that exactly this awakening is what I am after when doing a residency outside of familiar places.
I absolutely loved both of my stays (February and August 2013) and I am looking forward to return eventually. I feel that I have had the privilege to have so many special moments with the city and its people, and with artists and people at the residency that shaped my thoughts and work.

Kriti is indeed a place that advocates and hones cultural and artistic exchange. It is a place that dares to combine multiple difficult tasks in one space: exposing Varanasi to unfamiliar concepts of art, cultivating and engaging an audience that is not accustomed to certain notions of art production and art consumption. On the other hand, Kriti facilitates Western artists with diverse artistic approaches and processes realizing their artistic projects. These are two "tall orders" and at the same time it is exactly this facet that makes Kriti such an exciting and strong place from my point of view. The mix of these different people, people who are motivated by very different modes of curiosity, produce a unique and manifold discourse about art and life.

Go to Kriti and experience it! Pack humor, patience and lust for life in your backpack, remind yourself that self-irony is of essence in all situations in life, and enjoy exploring city and its people. Allow the place to re awake your senses, have your own adventures and see how all of it possibly translates into your work.

Whose art world? Kriti is a place of cultural and artistic exchange (amongst artists and country, and amongst the artists themselves). Artists from all walks of life and distinct artistic convictions work at and interact at Kriti.
It is precisely that, the inability to categorize Kriti into anything of THE art world that makes this place so special and fresh.

Kriti is a product of labor of love and strong convictions. I wish Kriti that it continuously generates the energy, love and persistence to be the place it is, and that it stays true to its convictions.

I was keen on going to the Kumbah Mela 2013 to create a chapter for an ongoing body of work called "Ertüchtigung", and to see how it feels to be with 100 Million fellow human beings in one location. I did a residency in 2001 in Kerala and this residency and my experiences there changed my work fundamentally.

As mentioned above, my stay in Kerala changed my work quite a bit. Till 2001 I did a lot community based projects. In 2001 in Kerala I found myself unable to produce portraiture that was satisfying to me. As a result I did not photograph people for almost 10 years. My residency at Kriti and my work at an Akarah (arena) in Varanasi brought me back to concepts and notions I have not worked with for more than 10 years. I was able to do a show at Kriti about the community and with an active participation of the community.

I am not sure that I share the notion that in the West everything is possible, unlimited and without any boundaries. In most instances the boundaries in the West are very clear defined and respected. In India on the other hand, especially being a foreigner, these are much more fluid and flexible.
India, as many countries outside of the Western realm, is a country in which nothing and at the same time everything is possible from my point of view, which is part of its charm and excitement. One has to be creative, creative and persistent!

# MARIANNE RINDERKNECHT

permanent installation at Kriti Gallery

Bir Baba

"Incredible India"

Varanasi was a deep immersion into a parallel world. Everything was new or different: the light, the smells, the sounds, the food, the climate, the interaction with the people, the religion, the culture etc…

For 6 months in 2010 Kriti Residency was the important oasis, the quiet island in this incredible chaos. It was not only the studio but even more the garden and most important the kitchen where we enjoyed wonderful home cooked meals, shared our stories and experiences which were often followed by many new ideas of exploring the place.
The artists I met during the time at the residency and even afterwards became good friends as we all share a deep sympathy for the place and our common time at Kriti.

The concept to have private rooms, the garden as well as the shared kitchen and the gallery as the public space is fantastic. Even though similar concepts are seen in other parts of the world but to have a place like Kriti Gallery and Residency in an ancient, religious place like Varanasi is unique.
Kriti Gallery started with

Kriti Gallery has a large vision to create an understanding with the local communities for contemporary culture and art with the engagement of local and international artists
From my point of view they created a meeting point of international reputation. I wish them and all artists working in Varanasi that they will find ways to further foster and strengthen their rich culture as well as finding ways to give space for a strong contemporary Indian art.

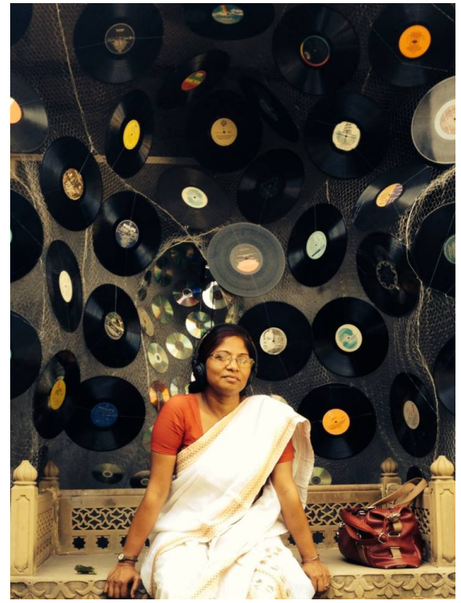
The stay in Varanasi was personally enriching, the time at Kriti Artist Residency allowed me the time, a lot of time, to concentrate on my artistic journey and work.
Next to various paintings and different experiments in the field of painting the outcome were various computer based drawings, sketches as well as a wall painting in the garden of the gallery.
Time was my main luxury, I was able to explore Varanasi in small bits and pieces and was totally overwhelmed by the entanglement of people in the city, their rituals, life at the temples, local weddings and markets, the colors of the saris, having tea at the corner shop, the small lanes, the cows, flies, the river, the life of the dogs, Bollywood, the garbage, the festivals celebrated, the cremation of death bodies, the mud along the river, the lights and many things more…
A city according to imaginations like in the medieval ages without a discotheque but lots of horns and spirits!

The light, the colors and their variations left a deep impression during my explorations in the city and I was keen to collect images and glimpses.
Also I was deeply impressed by the religious- as well the advertisement wall paintings. So over time a collection of photos developed and pieces of it I used for my paintings.

My Western style day to day life faded over time and only from time to time I missed the perfect world and it's working infrastructures, a cool breeze, a pool or the perfect art supplies shop. The biggest change happened in my expectations, I had to cut them down to reality. I started to improvise and to become patient.
In return I was showered with traditional, family and religious values. They were celebrated with lots of implicitness and my Western thinking was strongly questioned.
This was the most important process for me, my own limitations and values were overturned. But wasn't an experience I was seraching for?
An inspiration not only for my views, my art but also the way I see things.

My stay in Varanasi was an overwhelming experience for my life, ideally I wanted to pack this "incedible India" in my suitcase to carry on.

# CAMILA DO SANTO



Chamber of Listening, installation view Kriti Gallery

In April 2014 I was in residency at Kriti Gallery supported by the Brazilian Ministry of Culture to establish cultural exchange.
The proposal for the residency was a mixing of different art expressions and I felt very much supported. First of all, they helped me understand what was around me by translating the local culture into a western way of thinking. The introduction I received from the gallery team helped me introduce myself to the local community. On the other hand, listening to my needs allowed them to promote my work to the local communities.
My work consisted in mixed music and visual arts, looking for connections between sacred art from Brazil and India. I'm longing to go back in spring 2015 for more opportunities of research.

Kriti created more than a space for art consumption, a space for deep observation and dialogue. When I'm there I don't feel to "work", and I think that also the audience doesn't feel the need of "looking" either. There, human relations are possible between strangers.
It is a true oasis in the city of Varanasi. A place where we can enjoy art with intimacy, and stay with our true nature.
Kriti is one of the few galleries where tradition and contemporaneity match together. Perhaps this is what gives this place this magical sense of "familiarity".
I wish Kriti to receive more support from different institutions both in India and abroad.

I feel India has many things in common with my country, Brazil. But in India traditions are very much rooted in the culture, while in Brazil traditions are still being built. Its been a great learning for me to visit this country and have the opportunity to exchange and share with the local artists. Being in India represents to me a door towards Eastern culture, that is not always open in Rio de Janeiro.

The impact of the residency on my work has been the comprehension of the connection between continuity -in the creative process- and interaction with the audience. In Varanasi I really felt that the audience was very interested in art, more than in other cities where art is much more available. Because of that, it was easier for me to focus on the work itself instead on the presentation of it.

Often when we think of India as a place where we talk about very abstract things of life. Instead I discovered a very practical place. And this was the best challenge for me of being in an art residency in Varanasi. After my experience at Kriti, I realized how the "local reality" brought in me more awareness about what is essential, vital, what I really want to do, and what is really possible. I guess that to experience this is a great opportunity not only for any artist but for any human being.

# GABRIELLA SONABEND

Thirty Over Ten,2014
acrylic on canvas

GABRIELLA SONABEND

Moments of Stillness, installation view Assi Ghat, Varanasi, 2013
pencil drawings framed with saree fabric

Varanasi was an incredibly inspiring and challenging place to live and work as an artist. I found myself both hating and loving the city and over the three months that I spent working there I found that every day I saw a new corner of the city, a new layer, which provoked extremely conflicting emotions. As a haven in the centre of Varanasi, Kriti was a wonderful base and Petra and Navneet were really engaged and interesting people who provided a great deal of insights into life in India as well as helping to facilitate all types of work.

Kriti is trying to forge a way for people from Varanasi to interact with art and this works to an extent but Navneet is a visionary and his gallery is further ahead in time than the city itself. In the future the gallery could grow to be a place of real cultural engagement but at the moment it seems the city (which exists in another time entirely) might not yet be ready to know how to engage with the gallery. What Kriti certainly does do though, is create a point of reference for an international art community and provides a space for interaction between artists from all over the world. I hope that in the future as the city develops people of all backgrounds will be able to engage with the gallery space and that it will become a place of inspiration to the people of Varanasi. I feel it has the potential to do this, it is just a matter of time.

For me working in India was something that I had wanted to do for a very long time. I travelled around India as a student in 2009 and since then became obsessed with the country, its mythologies and cultural complexities. The Kriti residency really propelled and challenged my work and I feel it was an extremely important period in my career. During this time I made a large scale installation on Assi Ghat and a film about the development of the city's roads. Below is an extract about the work I made in India:

'Moments of Stillness' was an effort to faithfully portray the women of Varanasi.
In Varanasi the population is heavily imbalanced, the streets and ghats are filled with lingering men, most of whom are unemployed and seemingly spend their hours waiting. Women are scarcely seen in public and are constantly occupied with household duties and work, when seen at the ghats they are continuously moving - washing, praying and bathing.
This three month long project was a result of rare and highly intense interactions with women who I met along the ghats. Each day I approached different women and offered to draw them, remarkably they were very willing and extremely generous with their time - sitting for me for up to an hour at a time. I drew females of every age, caste and background and each was drawn with the same attention and respect; some sat nervous and shy, others laughed and smiled but all sat with great honesty, sharing their precious moments of stillness.
The works were installed at 6.30am on the 20th December at Assi Ghat in Varanasi. Crowds gathered to look at the installation, throughout the event there were scarcely any women in sight. The portraits reminded of their absence, they stood in for the women who are so rarely awarded moments of stillness. '

'Thirty Over Ten' is a series of paintings ..... (we should start with something like this and find a way to put together the text below in context).

"2013 Varanasi, India - The local municipality has had an idea to help develop the city. They have decided to widen the main road leading to the Dashashwamedh Ghat, they want the road to be wide enough for two estate cars to drive down; Varanasi is a city of tuk tuks, rickshaws, animals and pedestrians. With only a few days warning they order everyone living and working on this road to move their houses and shops thirty feet/ten metres back. They order them to destroy their own homes, destroy homes to widen roads for imaginary cars in a city of pilgrims, a city of people travelling on foot.
The people are obedient, in Varanasi there is a greater sense of acceptance, it is a holy place, it is the final destination for Hindus, a place to escape reincarnation, a place to rest.
For three months I walk alone through this city, along this road everyday and the image of 'thirty over ten' carelessly painted in red is burnt into my mind. I watched the bricks crumble and layers of colour from past coats of paint reveal themselves. I watch the men standing on the roofs of their homes hammering at the brick work, they work with a sense of defeat and hopelessness. I see the same men in the same positions everyday, slowly shifting the roads. I did not take photographs, these images were burnt so strongly into my mind."
Thirty over Ten is a series of paintings painted from memory of this road and this peculiar time.

# URSULA SULSER

From the Every dog has his day / Let sleeping dogs lie series, 2011-2012
l¨rs dqÙ¨ d¨ l¨us n¨

From the Every dog has his day / Let sleeping dogs lie series, 2011-2012
l¨rs dqÙ¨ d¨ l¨us n¨

URSULA SULSER

Changing Room, 2011-2013
Two Channel Video with sound, 36 min
part of the installation 'Words In My Head Are Like Voices Underwater' at Counter Space Zurich, 2013-2014

An artist residency is for me a  gift. This was the case for a country like India, especially for a more traditional and still rural place like Varanasi. Finding my own workday life in a slightly predefined role as a new one and a stranger. At the same time it was the absence of predetermined functions and roles, which opened up to fall into the frame of mind of that offered place and the dizzying day-to-day heterogeneity, a get together with the unknown and familiar. This is a paradoxical encounter which is important for my work attitude: A time free from a particular use or meaning, going with resilience into the unknown, approaching it and to possess it. My stay in Varanasi added to my working method of not needing to create an artwork of a particular place but I ended up with a lot of mental and physical material that shows a flexible transition from research to work.

The documentary approach of Dog's Image is twofold. Firstly, there are the photos of sleeping dogs in Varanasi (India) titled "Every dog has his day". Countless of these animals are sharing the densely populated public space with people and other creatures expecting some food and closeness. Their social status is low and therefore during daytime the straying dogs are most of the time calmly observing, waiting or sleeping in the middle of the hubbub. Their attitude seems to be successful and, hence an Indian proverb says that "Every dog has his day", meaning that eventually there will be some food, affection or whatever they might be waiting for.
Taking pictures of sleeping dogs on the streets irritated not only the people but also the animals, which are not used to get the attention of somebody with a camera. In the second part of my interaction it made sense to return to those places and to scatter prints of the sleeping dogs in the street. This was again documented and often, the pictures were collected by the garbage gatherers, swept to a pile or taken away after being looked at. Those photographs are subsumed under the saying "Let sleeping dogs lie", which is not known in the Hindu language.

# LOEKA THOMASSEN

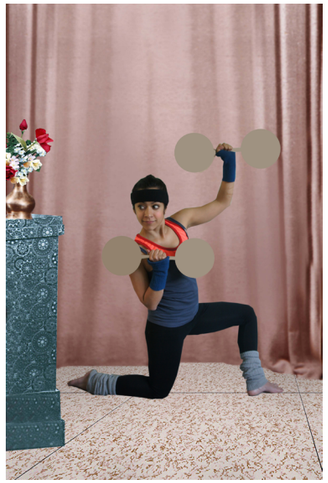
Together, 2013
oil painting on solid prepared paper

In January 2013 I spent 20 days as an art residency at Kriti Gallery. I was glad to be in Banaras having the opportunity to work in a studio, and concentrate on my work. Arriving I was surprised by the green surroundings of the gallery and residency -relatively far away from the chaos- where artists can exchange their experiences and ideas, and talk about finding materials for the making of their art. When coming back after adventurous rickshaw trips through Varanasi's hectic traffic, the residency grounds felt like a welcoming landing-stage. It is an essential space to ground oneself down and digest experiences and share with other artists from all over the world ideas and projects.
I had the necessary equipment to work in silence and focus in my studio, and Navneet Raman and Petra Manefeld are always ready and available to help artists adjusting to the city and in the making of their art.

I enjoyed the opportunity to stay in Banaras, as this city is rich in showing the illusion of life and death. Showing all the intense moments of life, not in the usual way by glitter and sparkle only. Feasting these "family- moments", as there are birth, marriage and death, Varanasi is the city where death is the most important also because of the start of (re-)birth. The relativity of life as such. Because of that the city is absolutely full. I wondered every time there is still place for new coming family-groups coming from far, singing while walking colorful through the city to end on the Ganges to burn their loved ones at the burning ghats, or for their last dip into the Ganges. It was for me very impressive. This madness of mix, hearing everywhere the almost intolerable noise, smelling the intense incense and polluting smells , feeling bodies around my body, tasting different kind of food and sweets, seeing people's way of acting and living, as well as in their way of being practicing religion; all this had the most important impact on my work. But my stay was too short to get really deeper in to it! I made 6 paintings around these themes.

It would be wonderful when the people of Varanasi could enjoy contemporary art in Kriti; perhaps some courses could help them to understand, and start to love and so further on. For instance history of art, instructions or experiencing themselves by making some painting, photography etc.. By meeting artists of India and of the whole world who are in the residency or are invited to instruct. Visiting other galleries as well. Art-library. These initiatives could be also for tourists, but of course no mix with tourists in the residency. Kriti can be a wonderful place for artists at first. I wish Kriti can support them; through the support of the sponsors for Kriti, benefactors and the government. This is a real not to underestimate need to get on. The artists are the ones to make the publicity by their work and ideas, also abroad. More and more an excellent gallery of international quality that is what I wish to Kriti with all my heart.

# OLGA TITUS



From the Art Olympics series, 2013

From the Art Olympics series, 2013

My experience in Varanasi and at Kriti Gallery was very positive. Varanasi is a very intense city – which can teach you the profane and the devine as Petra would say. Petra and Navneet made our stay even more interesting and great.

The interaction of Kriti within local and outside artist is very good. They try to interact with all kinds of people and also to be open to local artists.

I wish Kriti a lot of succsess in the art world. And that they may be accepted among other art institutes around the globe! And of course that they will be there for many other artists.

For me as a transcultural artist with indian origins it was very important to discover Varanasi and the indian culture.

I worked with local photo studios. A work with traditional analog photographie and digital backgrounds. My theme/ project was on «Art Olympics».

India alway teaches me to be patient whitin my work and with others. India is a great school for western people.

# BRIAN PAUMIER + JOAQUIN TRUJILLO

Thank You Mrs. Raman, by Brian Paumier, 2012
pigment print

Gratitude | Forgiveness, by Brian Paumier, 2012
pigment print

Autorretrato Varanasi, from Mal de OjO, by Joaquin Trujillo, 2012

BRIAN PAUMIER + JOAQUIN TRUJILLO

Mexican Baba, Varanasi, by Joaquin Trujillo, 2012

Ladies of Varanasi, from Las Flores, by Joaquin Trujillo, 2012

PTSD, by Brian Paumier, 2013
Two Channel Video, 4 min.48 sec

I cherish the time I experienced in India but the staff at Kriti gave me the access and tools to create in India. With the sanctuary and convenience that Kriti provided me it gave me the focus and dedication to accomplish all of my goals while in India.

I think Kriti is a great entry point to Varanasi and all of India.  The different events held at Kriti provided me with introductions to local artists and students that helped me find the people I wanted to work with.

I would say, "If you want to save time and meet great people and get things done, Stay at Kriti !"

Kriti is above the art world in my opinion. There is nothing in the art world that compares  to what Kriti offers.They just need to have their own fleet of motorcycles.

I have had a distant love affair with India since my childhood. Being a product of the 1980s my number one ultimate hero was Indiana Jones. In the second Indiana Jones film Indiana Jones goes to India not by choice but by mistake. In my opinion you do not go to India, India goes to you. I have been to many places on earth but nothing compares to my experiences and relationships in India.

I found reconciliation and forgiveness in a borrowed ritual. Self-realization and divine focus are just a few things that I brought back from India. India gave me a Creative recharge and higher level of respect in moderation. In my opinion one has not lived until they have ridden a Royal Enfield 350 bullet on the roads of India. This experience will remind you what it is to be alive.

It doesn't and it never will, maybe this is the optimistic American speaking, but that's who I am. "Do's and don'ts" (?) How about "I will and I can" with the respect and appreciation of other cultures. India keeps time on its own clock, I respect this clock and want to run my own life on this clock. Patience is key respect and understanding is sanity. The invisible energy that is present in India is infectious and intoxicating one just needs to tare down their preconceived fortifications and see the beauty and reality of what India is.

JOAQUIN TRUJILLO

As I arrived to Kriti in Varanasi late at night, the dim light through the city was thick with dark colors and unfamiliar smells. After a long 28 hour trip, I didn't unpack my camera right away, a first for me.

Looking back, I realize that this opportunity came at the right time in my life. By my first week, I was taking all different kinds of transportation to the old city – on the river, through the old alley. I toured the temples, schools, and neighborhoods. I was filled with familiar feelings. It felt like my second home. I got to know this new place and my new housemates over the next month. We would often gather in the kitchen and talk. I began to understand why I was there and my expectations for the trip changed. As I let go, my curiosity for the familiar began.

Chinta taught me to make Chai tea. Even though we didn't speak the same language, we both spoke cooking. It felt familiar. We both knew that the most important ingredient is love.

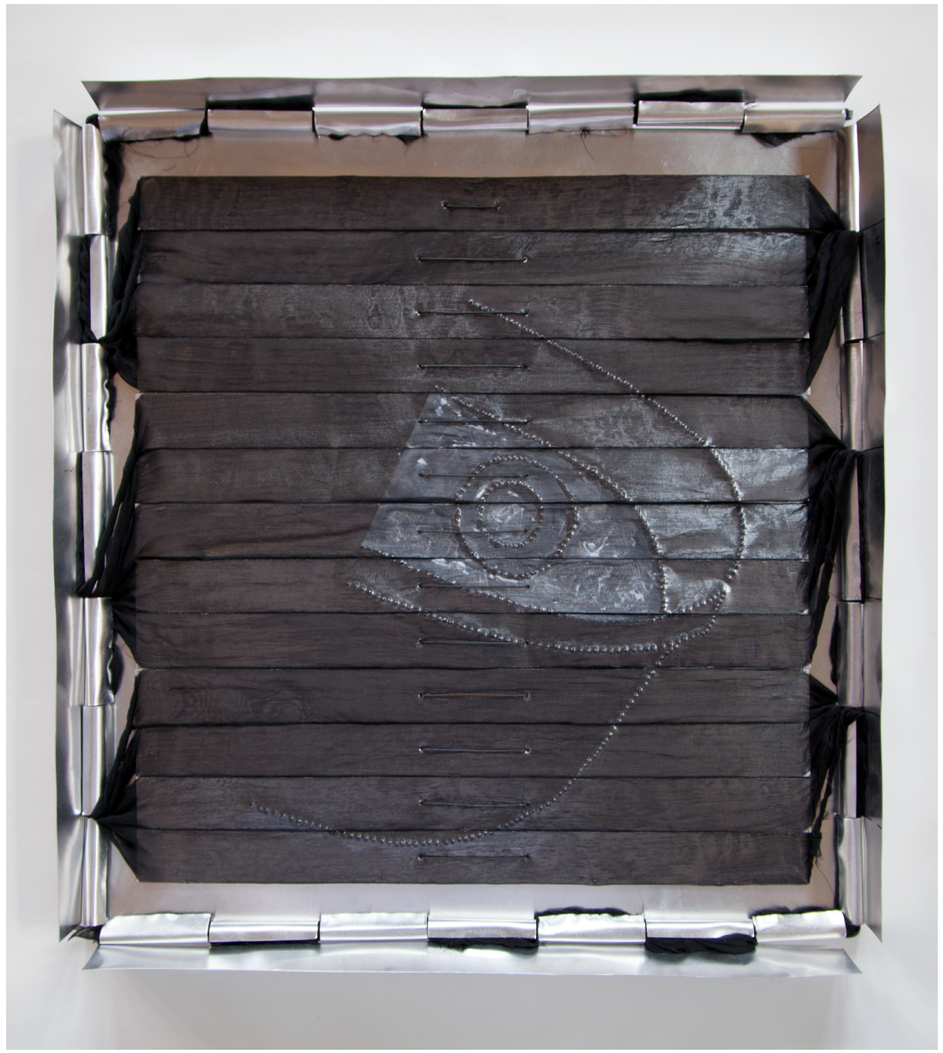
Kriti became home fast. It reminded me of how I work when I am in Mexico. I set up a space for a studio and collect things to make work. I gather things from my adventures through alleyways and in stores, finding textiles, sculptures, jewelry – anything the catches my eye.
By the second week, I started to bring my camera with me on my journeys. Brian and I had been shooting together for years by this point, but this time we had different agendas. He ventured out on an Indian motorbike to the outskirts of Varanasi dodging cows, dogs and other motor vehicles. While I asked people to sit for portraits. I learned the we are all the same. We are curious. We want to know how we are different and we are not.

When I was a child in Mexico, I was cured of the "evil eye." I learned that Indian tradition has cures for this affliction too. Mal De OjO was borne out of this realization and began with a portrait taken at an antiquated Indian photo studio. The print became the center of a collage that included evil eyes and my friend's mother's placemat that we use for tea. Today, I am in Zacatecas, Mexico continuing to work on this series for my upcoming solo show at De Soto Gallery.

I can't wait to be back in Kriti. I can't wait to be walking through Varanasi. I can't wait to visit my Indian friends and family.

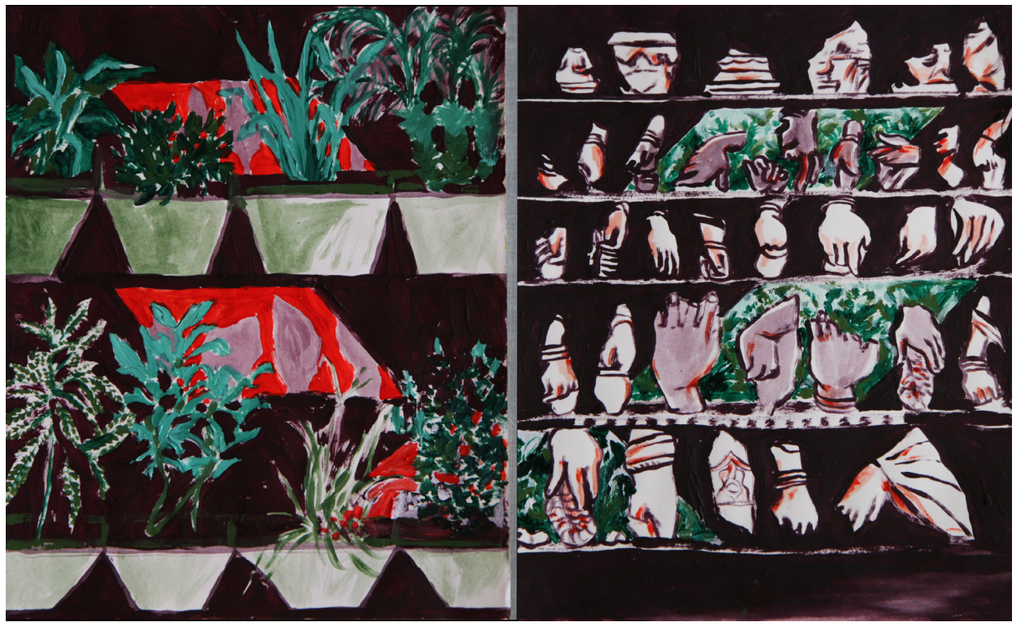
# KANCHAN WALI-RICHARDSON

How to feed hungry ghosts I, 2014
aluminium, rope, acrylic on fabric



How to feed hungry ghosts II, 2014
aluminium, rope, acrylic on fabric

Fragments I, 2014
aluminium fabric acrylic



Fragments II, 2014
mixed media on paper

KANCHAL WALI-RICHARDSON

Veiled Cyborg, 2014
mixed media on paper

I came to Varanasi on a Fulbright research grant to study the worship and environmental degradation of the Ganga and spent the first two months within the Kriti Gallery Residency. Though my mother is Indian and I had traveled through India before to visit family, I had never stayed for more than a couple weeks, or had the opportunity to really dig into life here.
I used my residency as a safe base for letting all the visual stimulation of Benares flood through me. I am so in love with the density of this city. It's put me through a whirlpool of emotions and philosophical crises, but wandering the alleys, watching people's flamboyant body language, the sometimes comedy of the myths that describe every square inch a thousand times over, the politics, the grime, the hustle, it's all enchanted me so far beyond what I expected. And Kriti was like being in the eye of the storm: supportive in every way, the community so instantaneous, Navneet Raman and Petra Manefeld a trove of practical, cultural and historical knowledge. From motorbike rides to the semi dubious shop selling recycled hand painted truck bed beams, to info about the old Sadu palm leaf book binder, to hearing stories about Navneet's families long time patronage of the arts and musicians and getting the inside scoop on the passage of time here. Having the relationship with Kriti has made so many more possibilities realizable, like connections to fabricators and craftsman that I would otherwise have never known how to seek out.
At times it's been a challenge to come to terms with what contemporary art work means in the context of India's intense culture of sacred image making. But I think the way Kriti is able work on so many levels, the Gallery, the residency, concerts, cultural preservation, community and craft projects within and outside of Benares, is a really fantastic model for how to engage with art here.
I came with the intention of letting my experiences here totally drive the work I would make, and it's been exciting to watch it unfold. A large part of my residency was realizing that my first responses were strikingly grid obsessed and stiff compared to the experience here outside of the front door. I was grateful to have Kriti as a place to work out that incompatibility, and for having an open studio at the end of my stay as a way of pushing the work forward.
Because the Ganga is the central topic of my proposed work here, its been fascinating to be in Varanasi as P.M. Modi's leadership focuses attention around the river's pollution and the city in general. The media hype about "developing the most ancient city in the world into a Smart City" has especially caught my eye, making me question how technological modernity will manifest here where there is such a different mythological narrative and experience of history. This questioning is what lead me to the drawings included here, the preliminary work for a project pet-named "Veiled Cyborg". How will the aesthetics of a sci fi world morph with the technicolor land of the Hindu pantheon?

# KAY WALKOWIAK

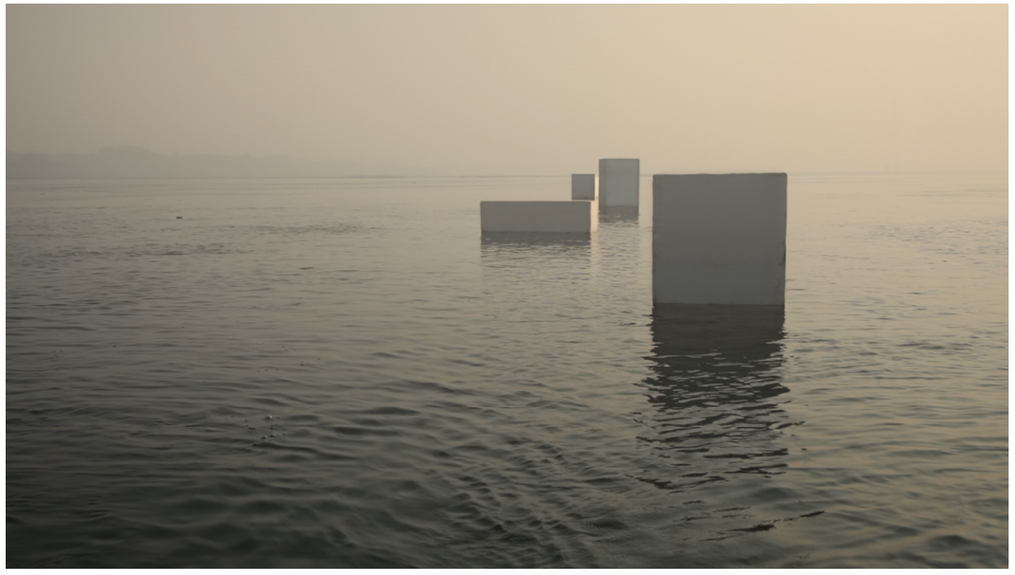
From the video Dislocated Traces, 2014
HD-Video, 6 min.24 sec

From the video Dislocated Traces, 2014
HD-Video, 6 min.24 sec

From the video Dislocated Traces, 2014
HD-Video, 6 min.24 sec

From the video Dislocated Traces, 2014
HD-Video, 6 min.24 sec

KAY WALKOWIAK



From the video Dislocated Traces, 2014
HD-Video, 6 min.24 sec

My stay in Kriti Gallery was my sixth visit in India, but the first where I could really widen my insight in the culture and society in depth. Ever since my first travels to India, more than twelve years back, I have been looking forward and longing to exchange knowledge, not only in everyday life but also at an intellectual level. Furthermore, I also was searching for a place where I could follow my artistic practice over a longer period of time.
Kriti Gallery offered the right space and surrounding, where all this could come together. It was a great gift to exchange this with all the people there. Kriti Gallery is truly a place of encounters. It is a place where artists, thinkers and more in general people from different social and professional backgrounds are welcomed. The Gallery tries to establish a place where local people can get in touch with contemporary art, which in my opinion is of great value for such a traditional city like Varanasi.
On the other hand, Varanasi with it´s inhabitants is a unique city, so rich in tradition and history that you can´t escape it. It draws one in and makes one rethink and relearn many things in the everyday life. Even the pattern of my artistic practice had to change: I had to slow down and adapt to the local rhythms of how things are done here. It was a constant mapping of possibilities and borders, of questions and answers that would instantly open up new questions again. Therefore my work became more spontaneous and very often the concept changed many times during production. All this happened in exchange with the people in and around Kriti. I see this as a true quality of the place and it is here, where I see even greater potential in the future: gradually Kriti can become a place, where local artists find a platform to exchange.
I don´t see Kriti on the map of international art venues yet and I think at it´s current stage it is good this way. Maybe it will be there some day but for now I see its true value in connecting local people from Varanasi with people from all over the world, which opens up the possibilities of sharing experience and knowledge, which is what art is all about.

# Afterword

The 10-year journey of Kriti Gallery would not have been possible without the helping hand of a countless number of people. I would like to take this opportunity to thank them all, and to try and find a way to mention them individually. This publication was conceived as a way to acknowledge the artists who have made Kriti what it is and who are the pillars and strength that holds Kriti Gallery together. This is a celebration of the friendships, collaborations, and coming together of people from around the world.

I would firstly like to acknowledge my family: my mother Aruna Raman, my father Shanti Raman and my sister Nandita Raman, for their support, belief and encouragement in this initiative. I would like to thank Robyn Beeche and Michael Duffy for their encouragement and invaluable introduction to the world of art. Brij Bhasin has influenced the way I look at things as he quietly guided and influenced my eye.

When the thought of the Gallery came up, it was Victoria Munroe and her generous motivation and support that became the foundation stone of the idea. Victoria Munroe Fine Art in Boston and Elizabeth Reluga guided me through the labyrinths of setting up a gallery. I consider myself a student of the Victoria Munroe School.

When the gallery opened its doors, several people came forward with their guidance and help. Dayanita Singh was among the first to extend her encouragement. Fazal Sheikh, with his soft, generous nature, was always present; his art and personality have been a source of constant inspiration. Robert Polidori has been a veritable pillar. His last 10 years of photography in India have been a great learning process for me and have helped start a process of reflection regarding my own country, India. His generous contribution to Kriti Gallery is an invaluable resource.

In 2006, the vision of starting an Artist-in-Residence programme took shape, but only thanks to the help and encouragement of Rashna Imhasly, O.P. Jain and Robyn Beeche. KSK Switzerland, which is now SKK Switzerland, and Eszter Gyarmathy were indispensable at this stage, being the first collaborators on this project, which lasted 6 years and enabled us to host 36 Swiss artists at Kriti Art Recidency. Chandrika Grover and Pro Helvetia supported the Swiss artists in Banaras and also gave me an opportunity to work with the FOTOMUSEUM, Winterthur in 2007. We are now hoping to be able to create a museum for the visual history of the city of Banaras together with a Museum of Photography. Urs Stahel, Thomas Seeling, Therese Seeholzer, Andrea Widmer, Oliver Gubser, and Teresa Gruber from the FOTOMUSEUM helped me understand the working of a museum in a short span of 2 months and continue to guide me in response to my queries.

Norman Smith came to visit the gallery in 2009 and became an integral part of it. I can only say that he is god's gift to Kriti Gallery. His quiet unassuming presence might not be felt by many but his contribution is unparalleled.

This acknowledgment would be incomplete without a tribute to Petra Manefeld, who has stood by me tirelessly, and who joined the Kriti Gallery in 2007. Her contribution to the gallery and the Artist-in-Residence programme cannot be described in words though I feel it profoundly every day. Her experience of working in a multinational environment has helped Kriti Gallery move to the next level. She has been my strength for the last 7 years through the ups and downs of my life and work.

Needless to say, it is the people who make an organization and it is the great team we have at Kriti that makes it what it is. Chinta, Anup, Subhash, Sonu and Gabbar are the force behind this organisation.

Vallery has been of great help with all the different designing projects of Kriti Gallery. Juhi Saklani is a dear friend and writer who wrote about our first exhibition years ago and continues to share her thoughts and words with great generosity.

Lastly, I would like to take this opportunity to thank Vittoria Bonifati for joining us in this project of celebration by accepting to curate the **10 Year Book**. The idea would not have taken shape if she had not joined the project.

One last point: In all the artists's statements, the names Varanasi and Banaras have been used interchangeably. This depicts the multifaceted nature of our city, as well as the sometimes official-sometimes intimate relationship that a visitor comes to develop with it. We have let this quirk remain.