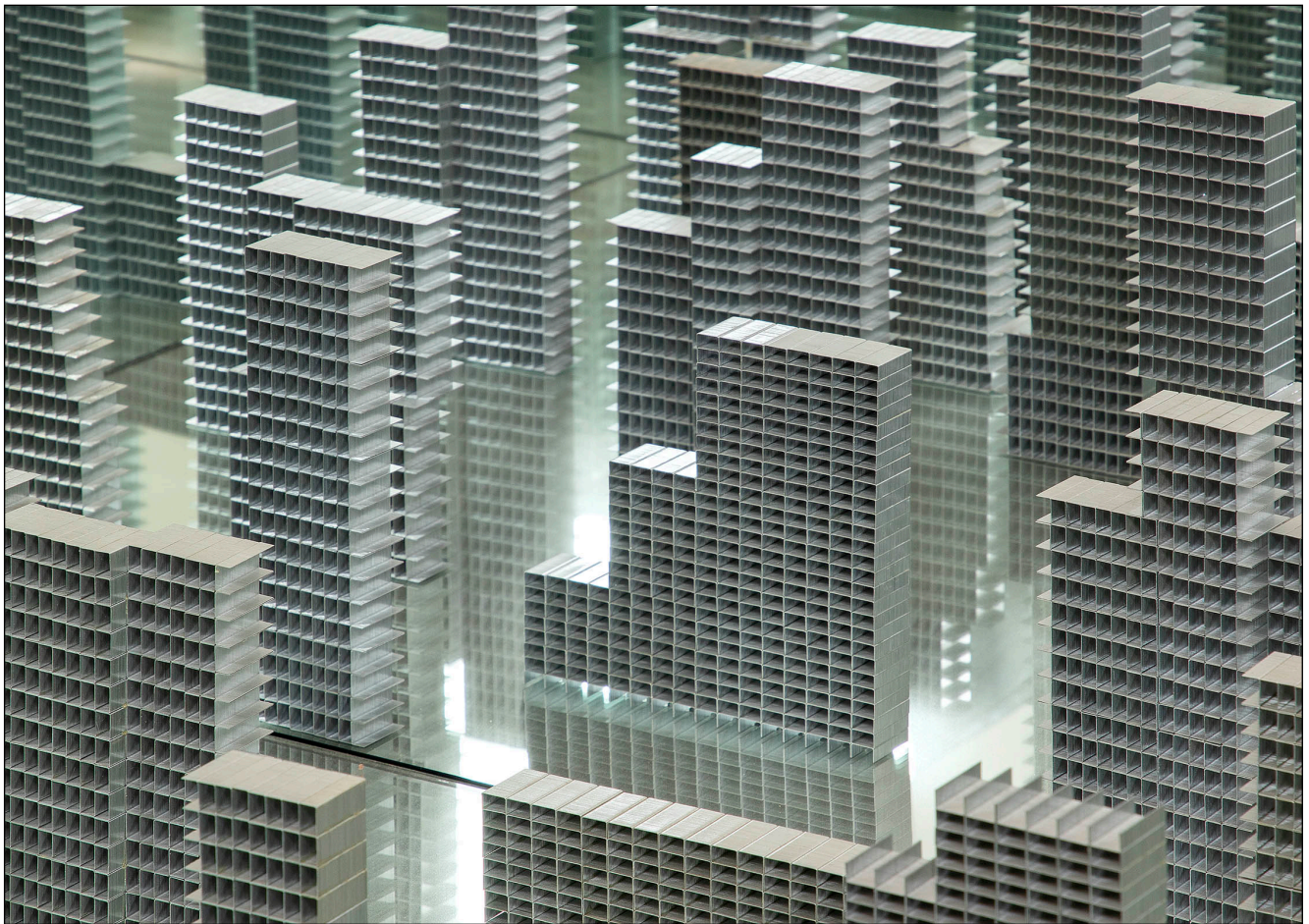

Pooja Iranna : Silently

A proposed plan for rethinking the urban fabric

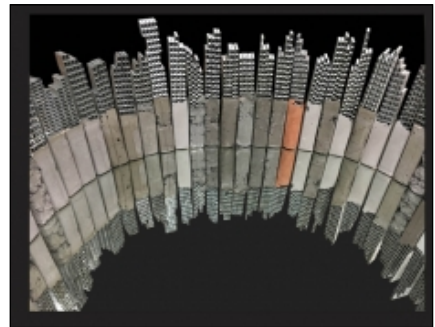
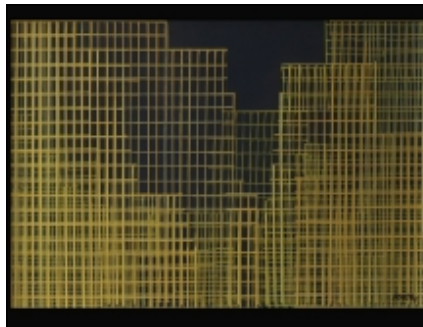
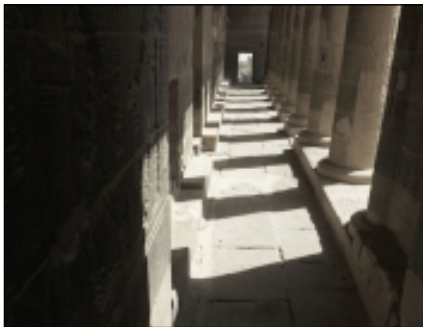
Bikaner House - March 13 - 22, 2020



Introduction

We are delighted to present the installation images and press coverage for *Silently...a proposed plan for rethinking the urban fabric...*, **Aicon Art's** debut solo exhibition of New Delhi-based artist Pooja Iranna. The exhibition also marked the gallery's debut presentation at Bikaner House in New Delhi.

Spanning the breath of her practice, *Silently...* is an endeavor by Iranna to capture the sensations of a city as experienced by individuals and not as designed by architects and planners. The artist's new body of work is extremely sensitive, as it attempts to bring forth what this explosion of urbanization, and its standardization that we see today in the name of modernization and development, would mean for an individual in real terms. Through drawings on acrylic sheets; lens-based works including video and photography and sculptural works using glass, concrete and staple pins, the work in this exhibition attempts to trace the effects of architecture on the emotions and the psyche and attempts to find traces of our emotional and psychological lives in the structures and patternings of architecture. She asks an unignorable question – is the ever-growing colloidal form of the city bringing us closer to the utopian vision it is rooted in?



Aicon Art @ Bikaner House 2020

Exhibition Images



Juxtaposed Expansions Series on the walls, *Permasive Expansion* at far end; pastel and watercolor on acid free paper & staple pins and mirror respectively



Assorted Aggregation, 2018 - 2019, ink on acrylic sheet, 36 x 72 in (each panel)



Unremitting Expansion, 2017-2019, Mixed media on photographic work on canvas, 6 x 8 x 3 in. (set of 24)



Proposed Drawings 1 - 16, 2017 - 2019, Ink on polyester film, 8 x 11.5 in (each)



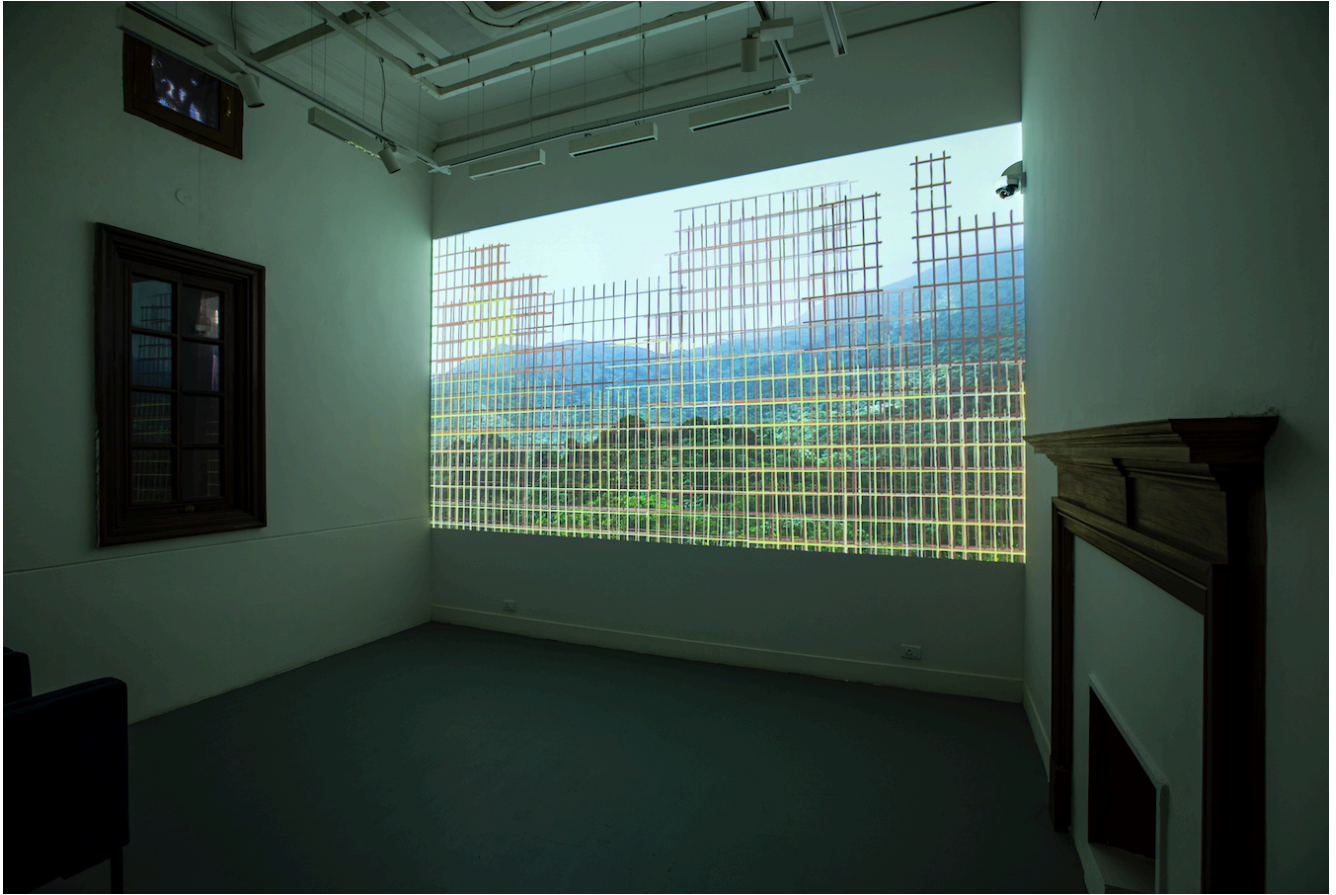
Pervasive Mushrooming 1-8, 2019, cement, color, staple pins



Almost Clones, 2018, cement, color, staple pins, mirror, 14 x 1 x 1 in. (each), display variable



Squeezed, 2016 - 2019, staple pins, 36 x 29 x 3 in.



Silently, 2020, video, 9 minutes



Above: Pervasive mushrooming (concrete, colour and staple pins). Right: Pooja Iranna with her works at Bikaner House

VantagePOINT

'We're digging our own graves'

With a solo show after a decade, artist Pooja Iranna talks about the bane of rapid urbanisation

IT LOOKS like the universe has conspired with artist Pooja Iranna to convey her message more strongly. For, she's opened her exhibition at a time when the world is forced to pause, unwillingly of course. And that's exactly what the artist wants people to understand before it gets too late.

Titled *Silently*, Iranna's exhibition at Bikaner House is a "proposed plan for rethinking the urban fabric". Anything wrong that happens mostly occurs silently and that's why the show is called this," says the artist, sitting at Bikaner House.

Iranna is putting up a solo show after a decade and unfortunately that's coincided with the Coronavirus outbreak. But she's not complaining. "People who love my works and me are coming and that's enough. "Perhaps this is the kind of contentment she is expecting from the world through her works. Her head and clear eyes "don't construct". The daughter of prominent artists Rameshwar and Shobha Broota, Iranna created a niche for herself when she

started dabbling with installations of staple pins, using them as a metaphor to show urbanism. In this exhibition too, her staple pin installations speak her mind. For instance a work titled *Squeezed* shows collective claustrophobia. Iranna says, "We're all living a cluttered life and are getting suffocated. On the face of it, everything looks good but it's not all comfortable." Like the staple pins which are jutting out from different urbanism and how the space shrinking by the day.

Iranna first showed an exhibition with staple pins.

works in 2009. "This seems to be a very intimate material for me because I'm talking about architecture and solid structures so they fit very well. Each staple pin becomes like a brick for me. I'm now creating cities with it." Done over a decade, *Silently* also has video, digital artworks, photographs, canvases and acrylic works. The common thread is Iranna's about-out against urbanism. She says, "We've gone overboard with our construction to the extent that we're producing clones. We're losing our creativity and our culture to it. You go to any city across the world and everything looks the same, like a replica. With so much technology, you've come to almost a standstill when it comes to globalisation. Is it a brave thing? We



Unrelenting expansion 4, mix media on photographic work on canvas is part of the show

are digging our own graves." A work titled *Almost Cities* talks exactly about this. "We're making clones. The character of any place is lost. Earlier monuments would talk about a time but now talking about time through architectural spaces is gone. The worst thing is that we're happy

and not trying to question all of this at all." She talks about farms being taken over for construction. The show also features photographs Iranna has taken of cities. Summing it all up is a video on the grim reality of deforestation. *Silently will be on at Bikaner House till March 22.*

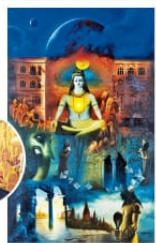
HUES OF REALISM



Clockwise from above: Celebration, an oil on canvas by Raghu Vyas, the artist's impression of Lord Shiva, the artist and his depiction of Venus



By **Rewati Rau**
IN the midst of upheaval around the world, the Shridharani Art Gallery seems like a beautiful haven with beautiful canvases of myriad hues welcoming you into another zone. With sublime depictions of the Buddha, Shiva, Durga and Venus – artist Raghu Vyas's paintings exhibited at the gallery are mesmerising. Titled *Melange: The Art of Raghu Vyas*, the show presents a set of oils on canvas in the artist's unique style. After the initial wonder at the beauty of the subjects, the second thing bound to make people wonder about Vyas's paintings is the deep shine of the colours. The artist says, "I use the Renaissance masters technique from Europe. This entails using four layers of colours in the paintings. The canvas is first



treated and then four layers of colours used. This is basically the school of Raja Ravi Varma that I follow. I use the Williamsburg colours that I import from the USA for this."

Known for his unique style popular as contemporary imaginary realism but firmly rooted in the Basohli school of miniature art, Vyas picked up his unique art technique in Italy. The *piece-de-resistance* of the show is a 6 x 9 feet canvas titled *Celebration* about Krishna's return to Dwarka after the victory of Mahabharata. The painting is significant not only for its scale but also the craftsmanship with which Vyas is able to get every human form and emotion down to its finest detail, much in the spirit of miniature art. Then there is *Shiva*, in a meditative pose, who rises high against a landscape of modern buildings and ruined palaces. "Nature is Shiva, everything around comes from him and goes back into him," says Vyas. "In me he is the eternal god and that's how I imagine him. No one knows what he looks like, but he is peaceful even amid destruction." *The exhibition will be on at the Shridharani Art Gallery till March 20.*

Empty glass houses: Urban degradation and staple pins

Iranna had recreated an urban agglomeration of shiny, speckle-free monotony



By Sneha Bhura | March 19, 2020 17:49 IST



Artist Pooja Iranna with her artwork in the background | Arvind Jain

A glittering glass skyline is an aspirational aesthetic. Most commercial buildings want to project modernity and urbanization of the glass-and-chrome kind. These slim, tall shimmery glasshouses are the future of cities, they want to tell us. It is only when we witness Pooja Iranna's sculptural musings in columns and columns of staple pins that the stark, cold sameness of our big-city experience hits us in the gut.

By building upon stacks and stacks of staple pins one over the other for more than three years at a stretch, the artist's recently concluded exhibition at the Bikaner House in Delhi sought to highlight the "psychogeography" of mindlessly constructed urban spaces. Pooja Iranna's "Silently, A Proposed Plan for Re-Thinking the Urban Fabric", along with Nataraj Sharma's 'Travel Log' was the first India show of New-York based Aicon art gallery outside of India Art Fair.

Using her most preferred medium of staple pins, apart from watercolours, ink, polyester film, photographs and a wooden box with puzzle pieces, Iranna had recreated an urban agglomeration of shiny, speckle-free monotony and claustrophobia. In one separate room of the new wing of Bikaner House, an exhibit titled "Assorted Aggregation" had sets of nine big drawings of rectangular buildings sandwiched between plastic and acrylic sheets hanging from the ceiling. Going around these sheets, with white lines crisscrossing its surface, one emerges unsettled and wobbly. A set of ninety buildings, built solely with staple pins bound together with a special glue, was amplified with mirrors in another section of the gallery, giving the impression of seamless, thoughtless, chilling expansion. To the common man, this could be New York, Hong Kong, China, Dubai or DLF, until they realize it is no longer pretty. In "Squeezed" which took four years to make, the same staples are tightly packed, honeycomb-like, as if these shiny buildings have closed in on our thoughts and emotions, choking us into despair.

And Iranna hasn't tried to embed elements of rebirth or renewal in this endless desert of glass and concrete sprouting. "Right now there is no hope. I want to place this reckless growth as a serious problem to the extent that you have to feel suffocated," says Iranna who has been articulating urban degradation with staple pins for more than 10 years now. "Unless and until we human beings don't reach the edge, we don't react. The coronavirus that has come about is a reaction to many many things, it just didn't come in a day. Till we reach a calamity, we are not ready to change ourselves," Iranna sounds a note of warning drawing attention to our complacency and how things tend to revert to an older, simpler way of living.





see. think. inspire. reflect

Amid the COVID-19 lockdown, Pooja Iranna's staple-pinned plea to slow down rings true

In her latest solo, *Silently*, at the Centre for Contemporary Art in New Delhi, artist Pooja Iranna talks about encroachment and urban overgrowth, urging for ecological redressal.

by Sukanya Garg Published on : Apr 23, 2020

Where does the forest end

And man's dominion begin?

Where does the land disappear into the sky?

Wiping the slate clean of his whim?

These words left an impression on me as I watched artist Pooja Iranna's video work *Silently* at her recently concluded solo exhibition *Silently... A Proposed Plan For Rethinking The Urban Fabric* at the Centre for Contemporary Art, Bikaner House in New Delhi. The video's imagery of mountainous greens amidst the backdrop of chirping birds changed into lines that inter-crossed their way across the video screen, one drawing at a time, one construction at a time, till at the end, over 60 of Iranna's drawings cumulated into an architectural construction that eclipsed any memory of the original green landscape. The subtle artistic rendition is what is so remarkably characteristic of Iranna, who has been calling attention to transgressive expansion, to encroachment, to nature and ecological redressal and to slowing down, albeit without, raising her voice, and letting her work echo her concerns.

Talking about the exhibition that opened in a gallery space located in Lutyen's Delhi, Iranna reminisces about her upbringing in this part of Delhi and the tremendous influence the latter has had on her artistic thought process and practice. She says, "Those buildings that I saw or went around when I was a child, left a much more serious aesthetic impact than what happened after that". For her, the architectural spaces in Lutyen's Delhi "had a soul". Being an artist who has constantly been working in the architectural element, for Iranna, buildings were never merely concrete spaces. Describing the source of finding inspiration in buildings and architectural spaces for her early drawings, she says, "It's like faces full of emotions where people live their lives, they have their own relationships. I think a building or a space you enter says a number of things, not just about the individuals who live in it, but also the culture that the building tends to reflect - our lifestyles, our thoughts, everything becomes a part of it. It's like the proverb that walls speak to you. Each texture, each corner can speak to you if you are sensitive enough to understand".

For someone with the sensitivity of Iranna, it is no surprise then that she experimented tirelessly to find a visual language and medium that could synchronise with her concerns. It was in 2007 that she discovered staple pins when her work completely transformed. The discovery came right after a period of extensive work in digital photography, installation and experimental water colours. Iranna says, “There was this dire need in me to go 3D. I had to deal with this feeling of how do I come about a new material which has not been used before, and for which I don’t have to depend on anybody else. For me, my art is first solely my experience and then I love to share it with people, not before it”. Luckily, staples pins, fit the bill.

Researching and experimenting tirelessly with staple pins, Iranna, however, does not like to master just one medium. She constantly shifts between mediums, discovering each of them in depth and circling between them. Her latest solo is a testament to this as it included selective works from the last 10 years of her practice; the exhibition displayed works in staple pins, acrylic, wax, pastels, water colours, cement, video, as well as digital photography

Resounding with the issue of increasing encroachment and over-construction, the work *Pervasive Expansion*, which was displayed on and against mirrors, created the mirage of infinite construction, except the reality of it isn’t merely a mirage.

In the work *Assorted Aggregation*, Iranna spoke of overgrowth. Acrylic sheets with linear drawings in white descended from the ceiling, spaced out so the viewer could walk through them. The walk, however, culminated in a view which was the summation of the nine acrylic panels, the final rendition creating a claustrophobic architectural space, the initial minimal beauty of the white colour being eclipsed by the excess of it all. The work *Squeezed* echoed the feelings of the artist who continues to live in the city she once thought was beautiful. With a note of melancholy, Iranna says, “Thirty years ago, I was seeing the building of Delhi, now I see Delhi in deterioration”.

For someone who advocates ecological redressal and a shift back to natural sustainable ways of living, the choice of construction materials in her work leaves the viewer perplexed. Explaining the irony, Iranna says, “I am working on plastic with plastic, with cement, with metal to make you understand that you need to get to a level where you get sick of it, where you are choking, where you can’t take it any longer. Unless you get choked, you will not understand what you are heading towards in no time”.

While the ongoing coronavirus pandemic is a tragedy that her exhibition fell prey to, having been shut down a few days after its opening; perhaps, on a deeper level, Iranna’s message of slowing down together is the gospel of the times we are living in. Her conclusive remarks even as I interviewed her were, “We have to think as a society, come to consensus together. Individual approach is not enough”. Nothing seems truer now!

VOGUE

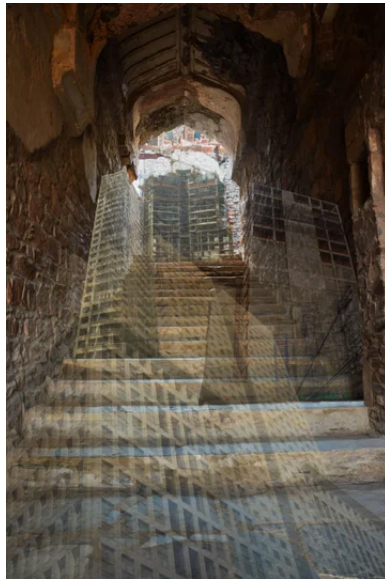
16 shows you need to visit this summer for the best of South Asian art

BY RAHUL KUMAR

12 MARCH 2020

Even amid cancelling biennales and fairs, South Asian art remains active.

Find the best of art shows between March and April closest to you



This show spans the breath of Pooja Iranna's work. Her works are an endeavour to capture the sensations of a city as experienced by individuals, and not as designed by architects and planners. For lovers of art that questions the urban, this is a must-visit.

March 13 to March 22, Bikaner House, Pandara Road, India Gate, New Delhi, Aicongallery.com