



View of a City: A visual record of Kolkata and the omniscient camera-eye

Dr. Madhuja Mukherjee, Department of Film Studies, Jadavpur University,
Kolkata, India.

Workshop for Bachelor's students

Date: 22nd Jan. 2019

Time: 2.15 pm – 5.30 pm (inclusive of 15 mins break)

Room: STU 102

This presentation brings forth a massive pool of visual data emerging out of an art project conducted by Mukherjee, CAMP, Mumbai, and Kenneth Cyrus (cinematographer), in the context of the art show, Response, held at Kolkata/ Calcutta, during January-February 2018. The project was possible by setting up a camera on top of a defunct theatre, namely GEM, and by shooting ceaselessly for over 10 days, an immersive and 360-degree time-space tour was constructed. We discuss and debate on the ways in which the city environs has transformed over centuries; and more importantly, examine how technologies – the intrusive camera-eye – facilitate us to embark on a historical and art project.

To register for the workshop write to: madhuja001@gmail.com

Details:

The location of GEM cinema at the crossroads of many roads becomes significant. Situated at AJC Bose Road, the cinema is set amidst complex chronicles of the city. For instance, 200 years back the road was a 'ditch', which was later filled up and renamed as Lower Circular Road, and hence, became a thoroughfare of Bengal's much debated 'modernity'. GEM stands perpendicular to the holy river (about 15 kilometres away), and as our camera zoomed in and out, it recorded images of several iconic structures, and streets, which connect the 'white-town' with the 'black-town'. In the process several significant British-period monuments, as well as mosques, churches, schools and cinemas merged into the mist, and into one another.

Thereafter, as the camera-head panned, tilted and zoomed we immersed into a dynamic journey and observed -- at a distance of about 6 kilometres -- enormous structures, which reveal the colossal environmental changes of the wetlands of eastern Kolkata; those which have become a part of our contemporary mega-urbanisation. The project thus, involved a cinematic journey through spaces, by means of the camera (the "kino-eye"); it travelled through copious zones and disparate time frames -- those which are marked by history, memory, and narratives of many centuries, and a range of noted and forgotten events. The omniscient camera-eye becomes intimate with its immediate and distant surroundings, and produces a thick tapestry of social history; even when, many layers of the city remain hidden and unfathomable.

Resume:

Dr. Madhuja Mukherjee is Associate Professor of Film Studies, Jadavpur University, Kolkata, India. Currently she Heads the Department. Mukherjee has published extensively in reputable academic journals; she is the author of the book *'New Theatres Ltd.: The Emblem of Art, The Picture of Success'* (2009), editor of *'Aural Films, Oral Cultures: Essays on Cinema from the Early Sound Era'* (2012), and of the award-winning anthology *'Voices of the Talking Stars: The Women of Indian Cinema and Beyond'* (2017). She is the (co) editor of the forthcoming volumes -- *'Popular Cinema in Bengal'* and *'Industrial Networks of Cinemas of India'*.

Mukherjee is also a practicing artist, writer and filmmaker. *'Carnival'* (2012), her first film as director, and *'Qissa'* (2013), co-written by her with the director, are still screened across the globe, taught in academic courses, and have received international recognition and awards. Her (solo) art installations, exploring archival material, have been exhibited at renowned galleries and at international programmes such as *'International Film Festival Rotterdam'* (2012); she has also presented her work at the collateral programmes of *'Kochi-Muziris Biennial'* (2016-17), and *'Kolkata Arts Festival'* (2017). She has received various fellowships, including *'ArThink South Asia Fellowship'* (2013-14) for Arts Leadership, and was selected for the German Federal Government's *'Vistors' Programme'* (2017). Since 2014 Mukherjee is organizing the one-off TENT *Little Cinema International Festival* for 'experimental films and new media art' in Kolkata. Presently, she is working on her second graphic-novel *The Dog Star* (supported by India Foundation for the Arts, Bangalore), a sci-fi set in Kolkata.