

MOBILE SKETCHES/MEMORY CARD 01

by Cybermohalla Ensemble

Delhi, 2008

08:03 minutes

(No sound)

*An ocean is always in movement
But still it waits for a storm
After which
What might change
What might get left behind
and
For how long it can be remembered –
This even the ocean doesn't know.*

Streets are spaces of banal repetitions, encounter with world of things, gathering of people, and occasional events. This is also how streets enter our conversations. To stand still in a street or to observe a street over a certain duration of time could make the street re-appear in conversations and thought with renewed vividness and perplexity. With a mobile phone, this act gets inflected in a specific way. Pressing ON the “record” button of a mobile phone camera precedes the story that gets created through having been recorded – it is as if a small gap in time is opened up, a slice of time is *created*. The familiar and the banal is noted to be re-encountered, and ways of re-thinking and re-imagining the disruptions, surprises and flows in it remain to be discovered. If the everyday is a stitch of events, a mobile phone video is a tear from the everyday, inserted right back into it. It finds its own life and trajectory as an insertion. The videos circulate from phone to phone, are seen and revisited – it is as if this slice of time, carved out of the everyday, now becomes a dreamtime, which can reappear anywhere else, at any time.

The videos in “Mobile Sketches/Memory Card 01” have been taken by different practitioners of the Cybermohalla Ensemble* between 2006-2008, as part of their daily travels through the city. Cybermohalla practitioners use the mobile phone to make “mobile sketches”. This is part of a larger process of actively registering the daily life of a rapidly transforming city, and an extension of the daily writing, photography and sound recording practices over the last seven years. Recycled economies, ofcourse, have allowed for an access to mobile phones at a very low cost. “Mobile Sketches” emerge from this conjunction.

Every mobile video is accompanied by a log – the time during which it was taken, what it is that was sought to or has been registered, how the self re-created itself through posing before the camera, what escaped the frame, what about the familiar got disrupted, which inexpressible emotion it stirred, what thought it evoked. It is to one of these logs that we returned to weave together “Memory Card 01” (2008), so that in the weaving we retain with us our initial wonder of how *that* story entered our frame.

***ABOUT CYBERMOHALLA**

In Delhi, a group of young researcher-practitioners has emerged in working-class and quasi-legal settlements, under the rubric of the Cybermohalla (a collaboration of *Sarai-CSDS/www.sarai.net* and *Ankur: Society for Alternatives in Education*, Delhi). These settlements are LNJP colony (lab since 2001-), Dakshinpuri Resettlement Colony (2002-), Nangla Maanchi (2004-2006) and Ghevra, a new resettlement colony emerging at the northern frontier of Delhi. Over a duration ranging at present from seven years to a few months for different researcher-practitioners, they practice thinking about and inscribing the city in different registers of sound, images, and texts within the context of a series of media labs located in their own neighbourhoods.

Over the years, these labs have evolved a vast repertoire of "minor" practices for engaging with each others' ways of thinking through the complexity of the neighbourhood and the city. These include writing texts, taking photographs, recording sounds, interviews and conversations, making animations, animated films, drawings and graphics, making lexicons, doing street logs, making mobile phone videos etc.

Nesting within the media environments of their localities, the labs also produce a vast range of media forms to flow into and keep activating the media practices and networks within the locality. These include circulating wall magazines, pamphlets, stickers, and broadsheets, broadcasting radio programmes, planning and creating wall paintings with locality-based painters, screening videos over cable networks in the locality, designing and making bioscopes, as well as producing contexts like events, readings, etc.

Tapping into the media environment is not limited to the locality alone, but also extends to the media practices of the city. A recent work of these practitioners has been an intensive documentation and commentary on the process of demolition and eviction of a large settlement of more than 300,000 people at Nangla Maachi on the eastern bank of the river Yamuna in Delhi. This process has been meticulously rendered on a set of twin blogs:

<http://nangla.freeflux.net> [English] & <http://nangla-maachi.freeflux.net> [Hindi]

There are presently close to 70 practitioners in Cybermohalla in three different working class localities in Delhi. A recent publication by the practitioners is "Bahurupiya Shehr" (Rajkamal Prakashan, 2007). See

<http://www.sarai.net/practices/cybermohalla/public-dialogue/books/bahurupiya-shehr>

Read more about the Cybermohalla process at

<http://www.sarai.net/practices/cybermohalla>