

Asim Waqif

Indian Visual Artist

Born 1978 in Hyderabad, India

Lives and works in Delhi, India

Delhi-based Asim Waqif studied architecture at the School of Planning and Architecture, Delhi. After initially working as an art-director for film and television he later started making independent video and documentaries before moving into a dedicated art-practice. His recent projects have attempted a crossover between architecture, art and design, with a strong contextual reference to contemporary urban-design and the politics of occupying/intervening/using public spaces. Some of his projects have developed within abandoned and derelict buildings in the city that act like hidden activity-spaces for marginalized people.

Concerns of ecology and anthropology often weave through his work and he has done extensive research on vernacular systems of ecological management, especially with respect to water, waste and architecture. His artworks often employ manual processes that are deliberately pain-staking and laborious while the products themselves are often temporary and sometimes even designed to decay. He has worked in sculpture, site-specific public installation, video, photography, and more recently with large-scale interactive installations that combine traditional and new media technologies.

Education

- 2000 :Bachelor of Architecture at the School of Planning and Architecture, Delhi

Selected Exhibitions

Solo

2013, Khalal [Disruptions], at Nature Morte, New Delhi.	http://asimwaqif.com/Solo-at-Nature-Morte-2013
2013, Epreuves, at Galerie Daniel Templon, Paris (scheduled for Nov-Dec 2013)	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ujOLFEEhIE
2012, Bordel Monstre, at the Palais de Tokyo, Paris	http://asimwaqif.com/Bordel-Monstre
2012, Punha:, at the Bhau Daji Lad Museum, Mumbai	http://www.bdlmuseum.org/bigImgTextLayout.aspx?mnuId=22

Group

2013, Lateral, curated by Heidi Fichtner at KONA.	http://www.bringhomestories.com/video_lateral.shtml
2012, Sarai Reader 09, curated by Raqs Media Collective at the Devi Art Foundation	http://www.deviartfoundation.org/content/exhibitions/sarai-reader-09-exhibition
2012, Days of Overlap, curated by Anne Maniglier at Rosenfeld Gallery, Tel Aviv.	http://dalitnemirovsky.telavivian.com/2012/09/06/days-of-overlap/

2012, 2+2=5, at the Palette Gallery, Delhi	http://www.paletteartgallery.com/exhibition/past/works/details/372
2012, Cynical Love, curated by Gayatri Sinha at the Kiran Nadar Museum of Art.	http://www.knma.in/exhibition/cynical-love-life-everyday-0
2011, Tolstoy Farm, curated by Gayatri Sinha, at the Lalit Kala Academy, Delhi.	http://www.meraevents.com/event/Tolstoy-Farm--Archive-of-Utopia-
2011, To be continued..., a group show by FICA, Volte Gallery, Mumbai.	http://volte.in/exhibition-fica-past.php
2011, What after First Showing, curated by Deeksha Nath, NatureMorte, Berlin.	
2010, Scratch, curated by Swapan Seth for Sakshi Gallery, Lalit Kala Academy, Delhi.	http://www.sakshigallery.com/?category=exhibitions
2010: Form and Phenomenon, Project 88, Mumbai.	https://groups.google.com/forum/#!topic/leonardolassi/BcgmQ416BXQ
2010: Contested Spaces- Incursions, curated by Heidi Fitchner, at 7Art Limited, Delhi.	http://www.sevenartlimited.com/exbdetail-1006-PAST.html
2009: Analytical Engine, curated by Heidi Fitchner, at BosePacia, Kolkatta.	http://www.bosepacia.com/exhibitions/2009-01-24_group-show-curated-by-heidi-fichtner/press-release/

Text

1. <http://schoomagazine.com/AsimWaqif>

Interview, Asim Waqif

Delhi-based artist Asim Waqif comes to Galerie Daniel Templon in Paris to showcase his bamboo project, “Venu.” Having studied architecture, Waqif integrates structural design methods into his work, in which he focuses on ecological issues. Schön! sits down with the artist to discuss his latest work.

What was your inspiration behind “Venu?”

I was doing a lot of research in vernacular design in India. I’ve been using bamboo since my student days, because it is a very cheap and versatile material. When I made my first two bamboo installations, I felt that a lot of people were typecasting me as a romantic traditionalist, as though I was trying to say that the modern world was bad, and that we should go back to an old way of living. But that was not what I was trying to say. Over the years I’ve been trying to integrate experimental electronics, robotics, and custom manufactured hardware into something that is visually vernacular and traditional.

What does Venu mean?

Venu is an orthodox Hindi word, which means bamboo. It also has musical connotations because of the flute, and also refers to the traditional Hindu text. One of the avatars of Vishnu is Krishna, where he has to play the flute, so even he is referred to Venu at times. It has various meanings.

What are the sounds you have incorporated in the installation?

To a certain extent, the sounds are trying to replicate the sounds of crickets. It is actually an electronic device that just goes “click” when it goes on, and “click” when it goes off. I’m trying to use electronic sounds to create a natural ambiance. The way the electronic system is designed is almost as if it is a living creature that has slowly taken over an abandoned space.

How does your background in architecture influence your work?

Fortunately, I didn’t study art. Art students are too conscious of what has already been done. A lot of the time they are running away from what has been done, to do something new. This obsession of doing something new can be counterproductive in the creative world.

The other thing is that once an art student comes out of art school, they feel like they have to make art for the rest of their lives. That is a very complex compulsion to have. I don’t feel the need to make art for the rest of my life. I look at it as a medium, rather than as an end unto itself.

How does Delhi influence your vision?

Urban design in Delhi is pathetic. Most of our urban planning has been following European or American models for 30 or 40 years. While America has moved to other models, Delhi still follows some ancient models. People don’t realise that space can have a strong impact on them. It affects them subconsciously.

A lot of my work is in public spaces, so I’m curious as to how much you can push the boundaries on what is public and what is private. Public space is a very strange word because in public spaces, you’re not allowed to do anything. In private spaces, on the other hand, you can do anything. Public spaces are not really public in that sense.

How do you feel about isolation or rural life?

I love isolation. I do a lot of hiking by myself in the Himalayas, especially in desolate areas. Sometimes I don’t meet anybody for days. I don’t have a guide and I use my own maps. I think in essence, I’m a loner.

People in cities are more alone than people in rural areas. People in rural areas have a much more integrated lifestyle with their community and their environment.

What upcoming projects do you have?

I’m creating a large installation in Marrakesh that will be focusing on the idea of waste. I’m also doing a project for the Bangladesh Art Summit in February 2014. There are a couple of projects I plan to show at

the Queens Museum later, maybe in 2015. I'm actually quite happy not having too many things planned out for the future. I prefer short-term projects.

2. http://www.nytimes.com/2012/12/06/arts/06iht-rartwaqif06.html?pagewanted=1&_r=0

Indian Artist Looks to Bring Works to the Everyman

MUMBAI — “I wasn’t interested in contemporary art, and I never thought I would become an artist,” said Asim Waqif, whose debut European solo show, “Bordel Monstre” (Monstrous Mess), opens at the Palais de Tokyo in Paris on Friday.

But Mr. Waqif, a former architect, said he felt limited designing within the confines of an office, and about seven years ago he started producing avant-garde installations.

For the Palais de Tokyo display, which runs through Jan. 21, Mr. Waqif, whose previous works have incorporated video, sound, dance and sculpture, has used unconventional material, weaving debris — like discarded wood panels, wiring, plastic waste, metal and dry waste — into an elaborate, interactive sculpture.

The 34-year-old multidisciplinary artist described the exhibit as a “means of making people aware of their own movement, to take into account an element of risk in their lives, of being careful and conscious.”

In an effort to stimulate all five senses, he built mechanical pedals and electronic panels into the mazelike structure so that spectators could actively engage with the work.

“People will be actors in the work, which includes light and sound,” said the show’s curator, Daria de Beauvais, by telephone. “It will be a unique experience for the audience because they will be able to hear, see, walk, feel and smell the work.”

“Bordel Monstre” is the culmination of Mr. Waqif’s fall residency in Paris, which was supported by SAM Art Projects, and is the first exhibition to be displayed in the recently expanded Palais’s Music Temple room, a space originally dedicated to creating electronic music. Describing the large room as “challenging to work in,” Ms. Beauvais said she was impressed by the artist’s ability to make it his own. “The way some people work with canvas, Asim works with space,” she said.

Mr. Waqif’s art is deeply informed by his background. “Because Asim trained as an architect he has a strong understanding of materiality and space,” said Pooja Sood, who runs the artists’ association Khoj, based in New Delhi.

Sunita Choraria, a prominent Mumbai-based contemporary art collector, whose garden displays the artist's large-scale bamboo and rope sculpture "Zuk 1," agreed. "He gets scale, volume and how to intervene in large spaces," she said.

"Zuk 1," a site-specific installation meant to act as an entrance to Mrs. Choraria's garden, draws on the multiple ways bamboo is used in India, including scaffolding for construction projects. Light but extremely durable and able to handle weight, bamboo is considered a pedestrian material in India because of its abundance.

The use of bamboo underscores Mr. Waqif's specific interest in vernacular architecture — the creation of innovative constructions using traditional, local materials — as well as in environmental sustainability. Since his initial foray into art seven years ago, he has built an oeuvre that comments on India's consumerism and its effect on the environment.

His focus on India's rapid economic development reflects a wider concern here about the price of such growth. Two years ago, Mr. Waqif created "HELP, Jumna's Protest," with his own funds, spending about 60,000 rupees, or \$1,100, to install a work made of plastic bottles, LED lights and a metal frame spelling out "help" on the heavily polluted Yamuna river flowing through Delhi.

"We have such a strong association with water bodies in Indian culture but modern Delhi has been designed with its back to the river," said Mr. Waqif. "The sheer amount of waste and sewage that is dumped into the city has obliterated the river. I tried to recreate the persona of the river goddess coming back using new-age technologies like LED lights."

At a summer residency last year at the Skowhegan School of Painting and Sculpture in Maine, where he was one of 65 artists selected from 2,041, Mr. Waqif deconstructed a studio space and transported the walls to an old, partially open-air shed on campus, where he reinstalled them, and then placed dead wood, moss, leaves, blankets and plastic around the work, to document the way these elements had been incorporated and absorbed, said Sarah Workneh, the co-director of the school.

3. <http://madhu-madhusree.blogspot.com/2013/09/artist-asim-waqif-sets-off-contemporary.html>

Artist Asim Waqif sets off contemporary against vernacular in mixed media art

Contemporary art in India is a mirror of urban realities and global concerns — painting the canvas with imagery in colours and structural forms that speak of stark truths — the nation of 1.2 billion contends with in its daily grind in the larger context of world issues.

The notion of contemporary in the history of Indian art is distinctive in the sense that it combines the local with the global, universal with the micro in a language of aesthetics that is essentially indigenous in soul but international in practice.

Young New Delhi-based architect-turned artist Asim Waqif blends the local concerns of the mindlessly-growing capital city and its drift away from the vernacular salt of the earth in his installations and mixed media art. He draws from a variety of western aesthetics genre like Dadaism, abstract expressionism, arte povera, surrealism, cubism and minimalism.

Waqif uses bamboo, coir, paper, recycled waste and photographic prints as his primary material for installations that explores issues related to ecology, town planning, kinetics and the mechanics of sound, light and digital aids in synergy with natural elements and ancient art traditions.

In an exposition, “Disruptions” at the Nature Morte Gallery in the national capital (New Delhi), Waqif has used paper as a tactile medium to build a “pop-up” landscape of the capital— throwing the spotlight on the enormous urban decay that threatens to consume the capital’s current skyline.

Two installations, “Urban Ruins at Ashram Chowk 1 & 2”, capture the waste generated by the demolition drive that the civic authority in the national capital had unleashed on the encroached concrete spaces to rid the megapolis of its spatial bottlenecks and inhabited illegalities accumulating over the decades in violation of the city’s masterplan (that goes through a 20-year cycle). But the half-hearted nature of the drive – abandoned midway — left behind mountains of modern ruins of putrid builtscapes massed in empty highrises, sealed buildings, demolished homes, walls and plinths, strewn in ramshackle, eerie and ungainly mess around the capital.

Waqif uses this geopolitico social situation as an inspiration to create a photographic wall shelf. The flat surface of the photographic wall is blown up to create three-dimensional contours of the city’s masterplan — that serves as the town planning template — and at the same time points to the distortions as well.

Fold 1 (at the showcase) is a photo-effect plate that the artist has cut and fold to craft “Hazard”, a urban narrative of the manifolds of layered images that pile on one to suggest the blueprint of a de-constructed building — and advocate new and alternative use of them.

“I trained as an architect. I have studied experimental structures. Structures which have very good strength but the sameness in relief become heavy and boring,” says Waqif, explaining the necessity of feasible structural alternatives in art as well as in the layout of cities.

Waqif punctuates his solid city landscapes with video essays of life along the river Yamuna – the contaminated yet the sacred lifeline of the capital. The to-part art documentaries series, "Help", swivel the camera on people inhabiting the banks talk of sustenance in the lowlands — motley characters like Jagdish, a scavenger from Madhya Pradesh who ekes his meals from the trash thrown into the river.

While a floating installation made of plastic water bottles cries “HELP” on the surface of the river, Jagdish narrates his everyday treasure hunt in the dirty foaming waters that have thrown up a new laptop (which he sold at Rs 20,000) and Rs 100,000 worth jewelry for his daughter, Pooja, who goes to an “English school”. He rears Pooja and Rani – his pet monkey whom his dog had rescued from a dying brood — with the same zest. Man and animal cohabit in peace along the river. The bank of the river Yamuna is one of the capital’s favourite dumping sites that no amount of “government and private action” can clean.

“It was difficult to make the documentaries,” Waqif said. ... Money was the crunch. “But an advertising agency pulled him through,” the artist divulged.

The artist sees the city as a vast urban jungle with “so many ruins”. Most of them the ruins are left to die as the city grows. They either disappear or are sucked into the race for fresh spaces and new urban milestones. “I document the ruins and throw them in a computer-controlled mechanical environment to corrupt the images to look into the playful aspects of decay,” Waqif says.

The result is distortion and new structural landscapes – where the ends merge into beginnings.

Two digital images “Acid on Free Paper 1 & 2” prints on archival paper worked with hammers and then covered with bubble wraps alk defacement and degradation. The artist says it is a critique of the art market “where buyers are conscious about the money and the archival value of the work”. Waqif believes that the “residua memory of the object is more important than the object itself” and hence he uses a peel-off effect on the surface of the archival print to compare art and decay. The array of odd articles used by the artist includes empty cigarette cases, sheep skin, wood panels from an old dining table and old metal scrap.

The young artists – who has shown his works extensively in India and Asia- has been experimenting with bamboo as a vernacular medium for a long time. “I have been trying to explore the vernacular method of treating bamboo because it takes time to do the treatment. The bamboo stalks have to be of good quality to ensure long years,” Waqif says.

An installation, “Jaandaar Savaari, Shaandar Savaari” sets off a treated Rajdoot Excel T motorcycle of 1979 model inside a grove of treated bamboo. The two-wheeler, which belonged to the artist’s father, is an auto-biographical reference in a medium (bamboo grove) that is alien to the mechanical junk. The bamboo — connected to the mysticism and magical myths of the Nagaon district of Assam (Afoliyabori village) from where it comes to New Delhi — is a symbol of adventure for the modern biker to follow.

Another installation, “Besuri Baansuri”, in Jati bamboo turns a grove of treated bamboo stalks into a musical instrument with radio parts and speaker amplifiers. Modern technology is often propagated as the solution to an old problem – and this turn leads to the polarization between the old and the new,” Waqif says, explaining the contradictions in his work.

The traditional vernacular is contrasted against the new age digital in these two installations that juxtaposes bamboo with mechanics- India with the west, which is the pulse of the emerging idiom in Indian contemporary art today

Articles and Reviews

Article, Milan – Asim Waqif, moussemagazine, 2010	http://moussemagazine.it/milan-asim-waqif/
Interview, Asim Waqif, Sheri Chiu , schonmagazine , November 14th, 2013	http://schronmagazine.com/AsimWaqif

Article <i>Indian Artist Looks to Bring Works to the Everyman</i> By <i>GAYATRI RANGACHARI SHAH</i> December 5, 2012	http://www.nytimes.com/2012/12/06/arts/06iht-rartwaqif06.html?pagewanted=2&_r=0
Article, Artist Asim Waqif sets off contemporary against vernacular in mixed media art, Madhusree Chatterjee 2013	http://madhu-madhusree.blogspot.com/2013/09/artist-asim-waqif-sets-off-contemporary.html
Article ,Keep off the Grass Tora Agarwala , Indian Express, June 17, 2012	http://indianexpress.com/article/cities/delhi/keep-off-the-grass/
Article,Out of the Bin, Vandana Kalra , Indian Express, September 20, 2013	http://indianexpress.com/article/cities/delhi/out-of-the-bin/
Article, Junk Food For Thought, PRIYA KHANCHANDANI, THE TEHELKA FOUNDATION, 2013	http://www.tehelka.com/junk-food-for-thought/

Videos

Documentary, Asim Waqif Artist,2012	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=D1eC8V1006E
Documentary, Asim Waqif – Épreuves, Galerie Daniel Templon 2013	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ujOLFEEhIE
Lateral @KONA bringhomestories 2013	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aEGnFccEGdU
Video art, Exploring Dereliction, 2010	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fujWBJcJJXw
Documentary, Zuk,	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=j_n0lKBtQSI

Artworks

1. **Asim Waqif**, *Kabadaah*, Junked aluminum automotive parts, 2012

2. **Asim Waqif** ,*Exploration with Sowat, Lek and Sam, 2013*
3. **Asim Waqif** ,Pavillion de Debris, site-specific installation at the Palais Badii, for the Marrakech Biennale, Salvaged wood from the Palais Badii, embedded with an interactive acoustic system, 2014
4. **Asim Waqif** ,Solo at Nature Morte, 2013
5. **Asim Waqif** ,*Urban-ruin* at Ashram Chowk 1 48x99x14in 122x251x35cm
6. **Asim Waqif** ,*Besuri Bansuri*- 2013
7. **Asim Waqif** ,*Untitled* 2013 -48x84x6in 121x213x15cm
8. **Asim Waqif** , *Chrysallis decayed*- 2009 - 2013 -56 x 26 x 18 inch
9. **Asim Waqif** , *Crumpled*- 2013 32x24x24 in
10. **Asim Waqif** ,*Fold* 1 -14x16x10in
11. **Asim Waqif** *Use*- 2013 24x23x23 inEd 1of 2 _800
12. **Asim Waqif** *Zaya* 2- 2013 -43x32x10in 109x81x25cm Unique_800
13. **Asim Waqif** *Another Dead Dog*- 43.5 x 29 inEd 1 of 3_800
14. **Asim Waqif**- Etching 1 -16x21x2in 40x53.3x5 cm Unique_800
15. **Asim Waqif**- Etching 2- 2013 -16x21x2in _800
16. **Asim Waqif** *Sixteen Abused Prints*- 20138.5x5.5in 21.6x13.9cm- Unique.._800
17. **Asim Waqif** *Acid on acid free paper* 232x46 in _800
18. **Asim Waqif** ,*exploration with Sowat, Lek and Sam, 2013*; Inkjet print mounted on dibond and folded; 42 x 63 x 7 inches;
19. **Asim Waqif** Bordel Monstre, Trash from Palais de Tokyo, Miscanthus Giganteus, electronics, mics, sensors, speakers, motors, etc.
20. **Asim Waqif** Bordel Monstre, Trash from Palais de Tokyo, Miscanthus Giganteus, electronics, mics, sensors, speakers, motors, etc.
21. **Asim Waqif** Bordel Monstre, Trash from Palais de Tokyo, Miscanthus Giganteus, electronics, mics, sensors, speakers, motors, etc.
22. **Asim Waqif** - *Untitled* - Mixed Media 2_800
23. **Asim Waqif** - *Recollection* - 2012 - Junked Aluminum Automotive Parts - 18 x 198 x 9 inches.._800
24. **Asim Waqif** - *Recollection* - 2012 - Junked Aluminum Automotive Parts - 18 x 198 x 9 inches.._800
25. **Asim Waqif**, *Venu*, 2012; Bamboo, rope, tar and interactive electronics.
26. **Asim Waqif** ,*Zuk* 1, 2012; Mumbai.
27. **Asim Waqif** ,*Lavaris Vastu*, 2012; Special Project at the India Art Fair, Collected bags, single channel audio and actor.
28. **Asim Waqif** ,*Andekhi Jumna*, 2011; Recycled plastic bottles, LED and battery + boats and drummers for performance; Delhi
- 29 **Asim Waqif**, *Untitled (Skowhegan Shed)*, 2011; Deadwood, moss, dead-leaves, plastic gutter, quilt, archival digital print in a shed.

30. **Asim Waqif** - *Tricone*

Artwork Links

1. <http://asimwaqif.com/Kabadah>
2. <http://schonmagazine.com/AsimWaqif>
3. <http://asimwaqif.com/Pavillion-de-Debris>
4. <http://asimwaqif.com/Solo-at-Nature-Morte-2013>

5. <http://asimwaqif.com/Solo-at-Nature-Morte-2013>
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15. <http://asimwaqif.com/Solo-at-Nature-Morte-2013>
16. <http://asimwaqif.com/Solo-at-Nature-Morte-2013>
17. <http://asimwaqif.com/Solo-at-Nature-Morte-2013>
18. <http://asimwaqif.com/exploration-with-Sowat-Lek-and-Sam>
19. <http://asimwaqif.com/Bordel-Monstre>
20. <http://asimwaqif.com/Bordel-Monstre>
21. <http://asimwaqif.com/Bordel-Monstre>
22. <http://asimwaqif.com/untitled>
23. <http://asimwaqif.com/Untitled-performance>
24. <http://asimwaqif.com/Untitled-performance>
25. <http://asimwaqif.com/Venu>
26. <http://asimwaqif.com/Zuk-1>
27. <http://asimwaqif.com/Lavaris-Vastu>
28. <http://asimwaqif.com/Andekhi-Jumna>
29. <http://asimwaqif.com/Untitled-Skowhegan-Shed>
30. <http://asimwaqif.com/Artiger>