



Huma Mulji

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How would you introduce yourself as an artist? As a sculptor, even if it is an outdated description, I think sculptor-ally. I love objects and I enjoy ways of 'making'.

What are the influences, subjects and thought processes that govern your artwork? The flâneur is traditionally (as Baudelaire describes, in its cultural and literary significance) the idle wanderer, the 'intellectual parasite of the arcade'. I like to think that this idea in and of itself requires a relatively stable and secure environment. Urban environments we live in today do not offer that, and for me, driving around the city, which is never at a significant speed, allows the wandering of the mind, the visual feasting and consuming of the city, without literally thinking about it. This is an exact contemporary equivalent of the flâneur. These wanderings are my raw material. With this, and a million other thoughts made available through information, research, material exploration, conversation and play, something is created. Sometimes this is art. Most times it is not.

In your opinion what purpose does your art serve and what is it you try and communicate through it? It would be arrogant to think it can make a difference. It's difficult to say what it does — be it a joke or a story. Does anything make a difference? Everything makes a little bit of difference. Each film makes a

difference. Each book makes a difference. But so does each conversation. Art is no better or worse. It is an attempt to share or give visible life to something you are engaged with. I think it is about belief.

Apart from being represented by an Indian Gallery, what is your connect with India? This is an interesting question to re-think. My father comes from Bombay, and my entire family is an echo of that part of India, an echo of its food, language and taste, but only an echo, frozen in time. The India that I know or have discovered for myself is nothing like this echo. It is not a country I visit frequently, or have extensive knowledge of, and in that context, it is a theoretical 'idea', and an inherited nostalgia.

If you had to trace your artistic lineage who would your ancestors be? I don't think I have ever entirely outgrown the artists I looked at as a student at art school. I made a whole lot of modernist, welded steel sculpture, while still in school, and I still love artists like Julio Gonzales, David Smith, Giacometti etc. And much as I would, as a younger artist refuse to acknowledge this, I owe a huge part of my artistic vision to artists who taught me, and these include, David Alesworth, Samina Mansuri, Durriya Kazi, Elizabeth Dadi, and all the work they produced in the 90s when I first started 'looking'. These artists initiated what can in retrospect be called a 'movement', in Karachi in the mid 90s. I am sometimes shocked by sparks of what I can now see as theirs and therefore entirely derivative, in my own work. _