

Time Out

Delhi

GET MORE OUT OF DELHI
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Bharat Rang Mahotsav

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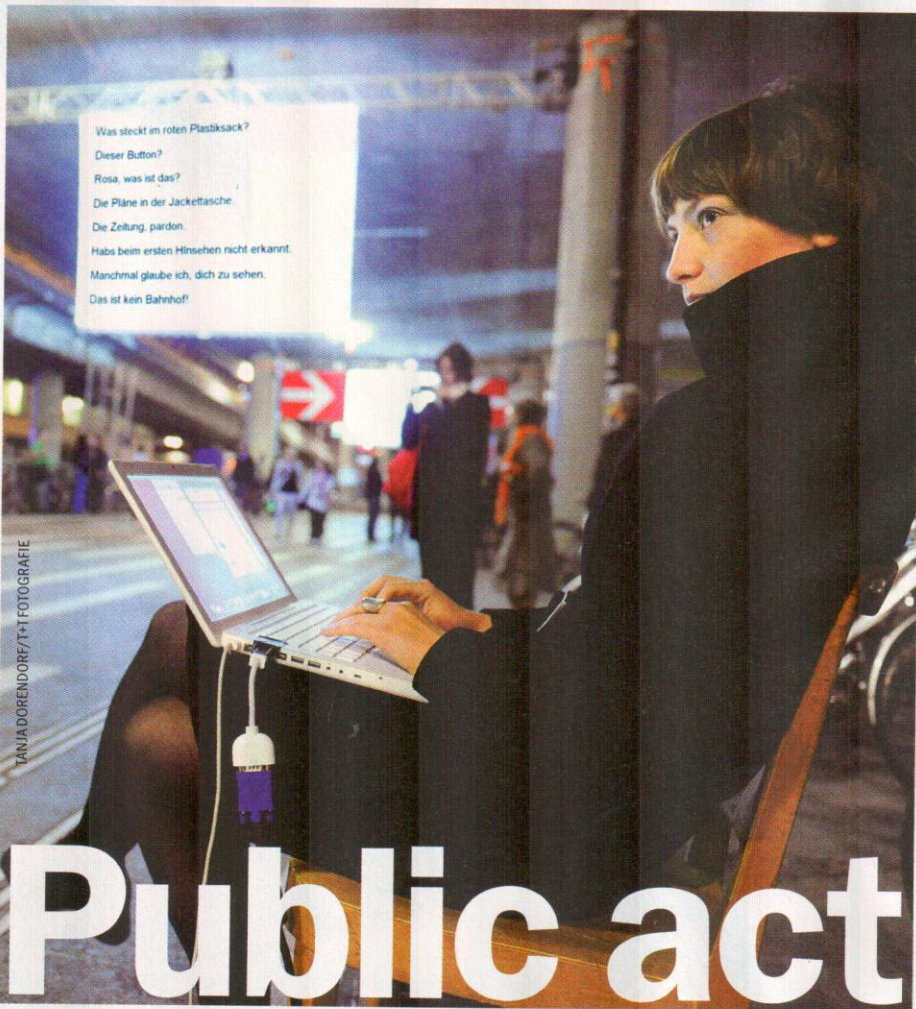
Parallel Cities



RIVER CROSSING

5 Yamuna walks

MEKAAL HASAN | ZAKIR HUSSAIN | NEMAI GHOSH | PANKAJ KAPUR



TANJA DORENORE/T+T FOTOGRAFIE

Public act

The Parallel Cities project creates theatre in public spaces, finds **Sonam Joshi**.

The relationship between Delhi and its public spaces is often an ambivalent one, fraught with concerns over security, crowding, and neglect due to plain apathy. This often leaves little scope for visual or performing arts to speak to a larger audience. This fortnight, the performance festival Parallel Cities Delhi 2013 will attempt to reacquaint Dilliwalas with their city through a series of public interventions in places as diverse as a shopping mall, a rooftop, the National School of Drama (NSD) and the National Archives of India. The festival will be accompanied by a crowd-sourced photography exhibition in conjunction with *Time Out* (see p18 for selections).

In each of the public interventions, members of the audience become the protagonists and the city their stage. "The projects are saying that yes, we can use public space," festival director Stefan Kaegi told *Time Out*. "We don't need to hide ourselves inside dark theatres to create art, but we can go out there and look at, consume or interact with art in public spaces and thereby understand more about those spaces." Conceived by Swiss theatre director Kaegi and Argentinean Lola Arias in 2010, each intervention takes the form of a small-scale participatory event

that blurs the boundary between audience and participants.

Kaegi told us Parallel Cities partly stemmed from dissatisfaction with the fleeting interaction that conventional performances offered with the touring city. "We thought can we not invent a theatre festival that lets artists stay in the city for a longer time and interact with the local community?" he said. The project was premised on the idea that there are ubiquitous functional sites like malls, hotel rooms, train stations and factories, based on similar models all over the world, but with local variations. Kaegi and Arias invited artistes to devise performance interventions in Berlin, Buenos Aires, Warsaw, Singapore and, last month, in Kolkata. "The project tours ideas and concepts instead of performers, then makes them explode in the city," Kaegi said. "It asks a global question and gets a local response."

Only four of the eight original projects, or "questions", will travel to Delhi, due to difficulties in getting permissions here. For the last six years, Kaegi has been visiting Delhi en route to Kolkata for another project, so he drew on his familiarity with the city when selecting local venues. In Mariano Pensotti's "Sometimes I think, I can see you", four

authors are transformed into "literary surveillance cameras" while sitting in a railway station (the Zurich intervention is pictured at left). They type out their observations on the people and happenings around them as they unfold. This is then projected on a large screen, allowing passersby to become a part of the narratives being written. Since they were unfortunately unable to get permission to do this at a Delhi Metro station, this intervention will be held during NSD's annual Bharat Rang Mahotsav.

Other sites fall between the public and private spectrum, which creates a productive tension. Ant Hampton and Tim Etchells' "The Quiet Volume" will be staged in the National Archives of India (generally open only to researchers and academicians) because of its status as a repository of history. Kaegi's "Review" takes place on some of the evenings, on the rooftop of a Central Delhi apartment. Participants will listen to a visually impaired person's experiences of negotiating the city, hopefully sparking off discussions about how they see the city. They will also review earlier interventions. The intimate and interactive nature of the project may sound like performance art, but Kaegi identifies himself as a theatre practitioner. "I prefer to use the term theatre because it relates to role play and to fact or fiction," he said, "It has a long history that people can easily relate to while performance art sounds elitist."

While it focuses on the common nature of social spaces like libraries and rooftops, Parallel Cities also carries an implicit critique of the architectural and cultural homogeneity that globalisation entails, and its inequalities. This is most evident in "The first international of shopping malls", developed by the Hamburg-based group Ligna as an interactive radio ballet. Each spectator is led through a shopping mall with a portable headset, and directed to perform certain gestures such as picking up products to think about consumerism, or asked to imagine an alternate vision for the building, and even break into an impromptu dance. "It is a deconstruction of the way people move anonymously through those spaces, almost remote-controlled with the desire of consumption," Kaegi said.

Alongside these performances, the photography exhibition, co-organised by Pro Helvetia, Goethe-Institut and *Time Out Delhi*, focuses on images taken in a shopping mall. "Certain people feel that a shopping mall is a public place where they spend their afternoons, but it's not. It belongs to a certain class," Kaegi said. "You are controlled by security checks at the entrance and everything you do is evaluated in order to make you consume more."

At the heart of Parallel Cities is an attempt to provoke questions about the similarities and differences in the urban experience around the world. "We live in parallel worlds and parallel cities all over the world but they are the not the same cities, luckily enough," Kaegi said. The interventions "are very local experiences, but they talk about the parallel worlds that exist within the same city". *Parallel Cities Delhi 2013 is on from Wed Jan 9 at various venues. See Art and Theatre.*



IMRAN AHMED

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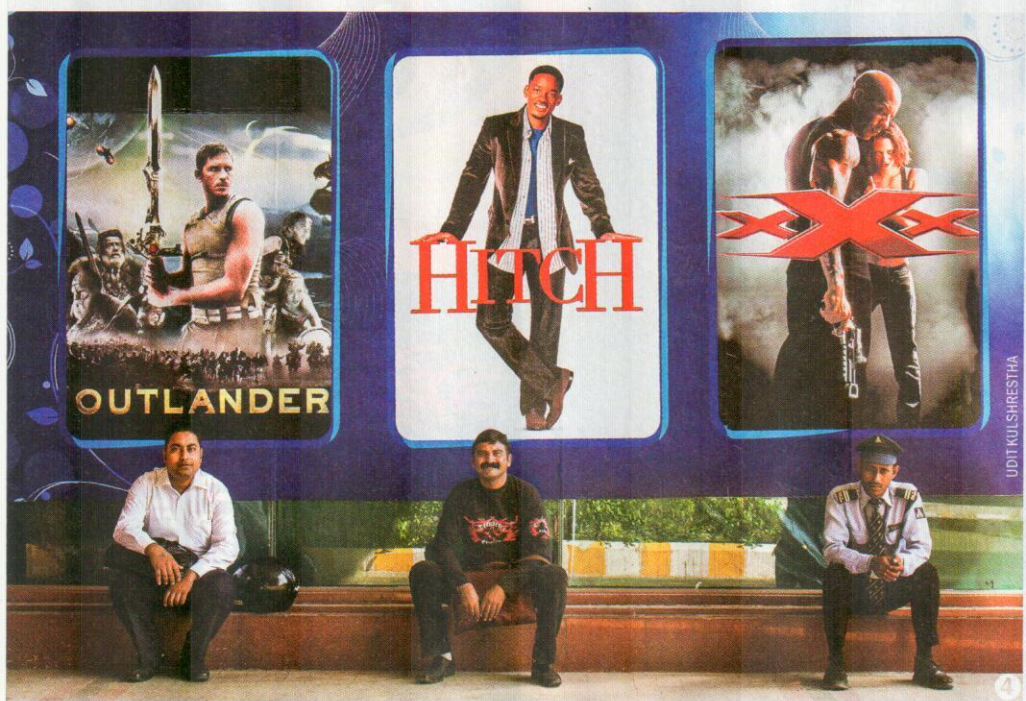
JULIA GUTGE

2



KAROLINA GAMBARA

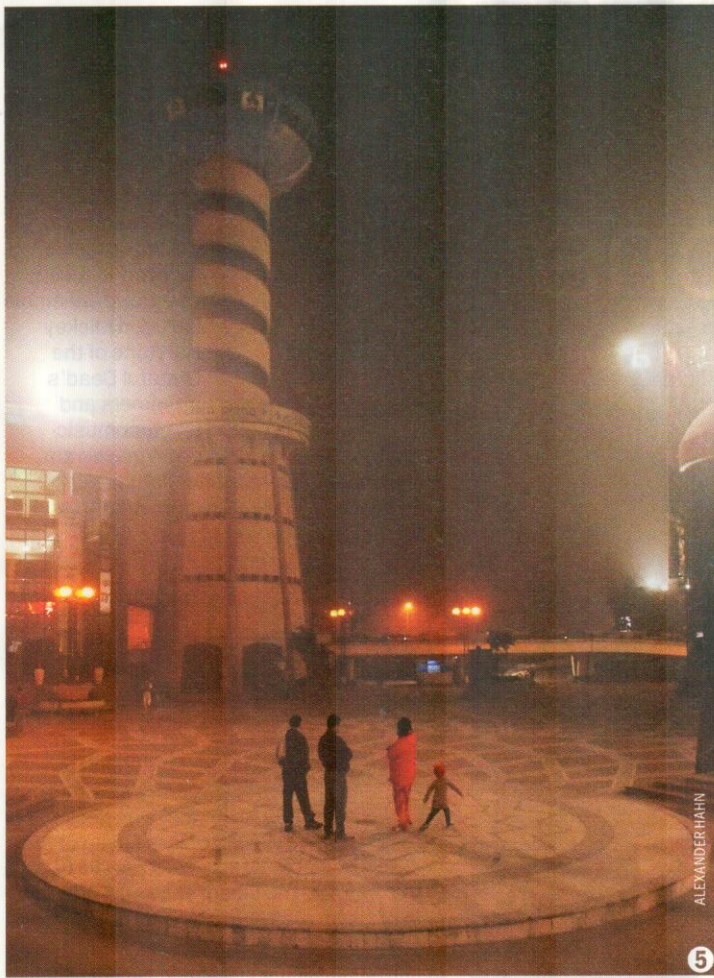
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UDIT KULSHRESTHA

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ALEXANDER HAHN

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SOUMITA BHATTACHARYA

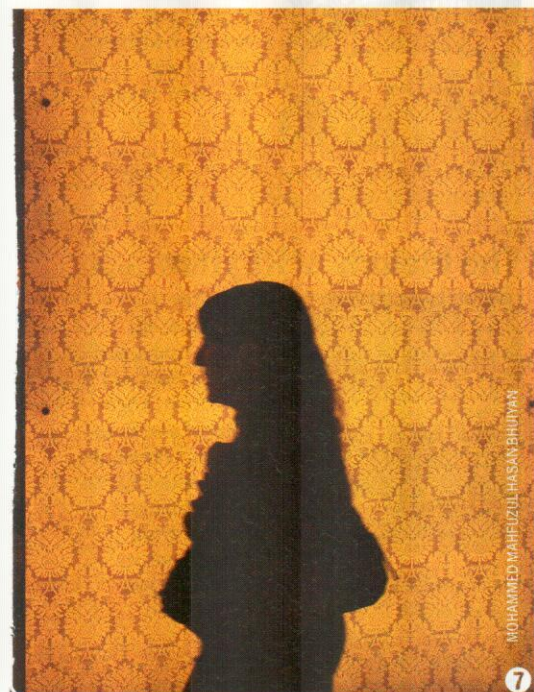
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As an extension of Parallel Cities Delhi 2013, *Time Out Delhi*, in collaboration with Goethe-Institut/Max Mueller Bhavan Delhi and Pro Helvetia - Swiss Arts Council invited professional and amateur photographers to submit photographs that capture a shopping mall. The final selection of work by 20

photographers on exhibit was made by Devika Daulet-Singh, director, Photoink gallery. Here's a sampling from this set.

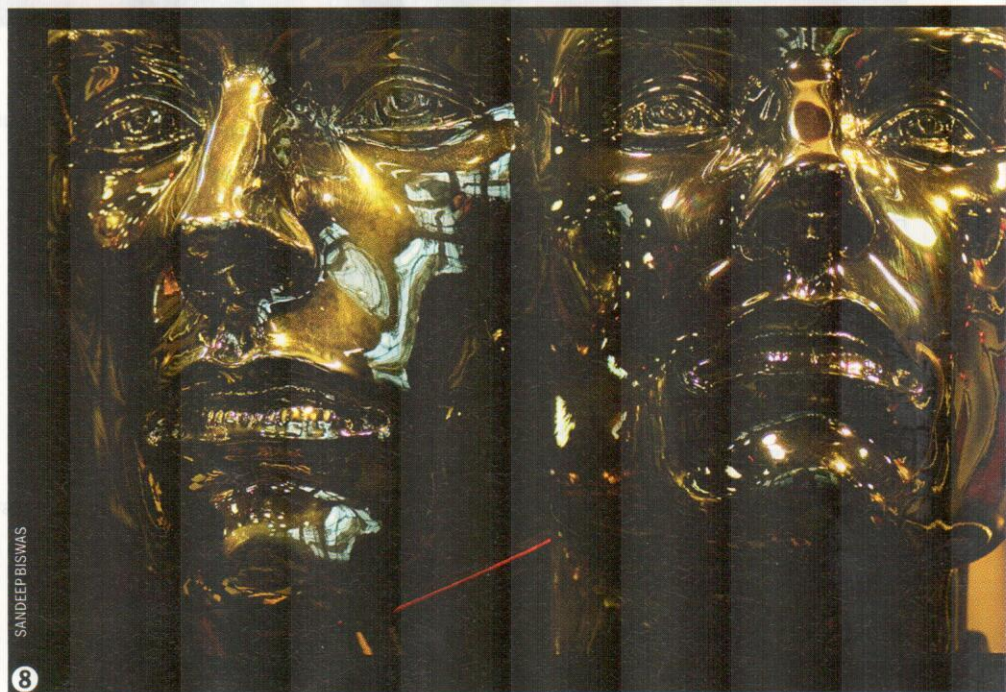
- 1 Imran Ahmed's "The Game of %", 2011
- 2 Julia Gutge's "freedom of consume", 2012

- 3 Karolina Gambara's "Adventure Mall", 2012
- 4 Udit Kulshrestha's "Suburban Gurgaon", 2009
- 5 Alexander Hahn's "Ansal Plaza"
- 6 Soumita Bhattacharya's "Wellness Inside/Out", 2012
- 7 Mohammed Mahfuzul Hasan Bhuiyan's "Fashion", 2010
- 8 Sandeep Biswas' "Urban Gaze 03", 2010



MOHAMMED MAHFUZUL HASAN BHUIYAN

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SANDEEP BISWAS

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