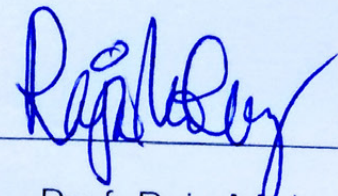


**DRS**

# **Understanding art installations at Kochi Muziris Biennale 2016**

Salik Ansari - 156250001  
MDes, Visual Communication  
2015 - 2017

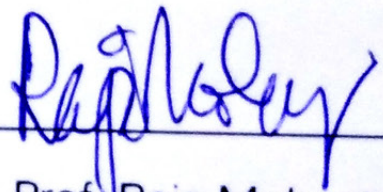
Guide: Prof Raja Mohanty

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Prof. Raja Mohanty

# Approval sheet

The Visual Communication  
**DRS**

**Titled:** Understanding art installation at Kochi Biennale  
by Salik Ansari, roll no 156250001 is approved, in partial  
fulfillment of requirements for the degree of Master of  
design in Visual Communication.

Guide:   
Prof. Raja Mohanty

# Declaration

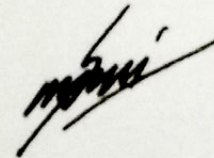
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I declare that this submission represents my ideas in my own words and where other's ideas or words have been included, I have adequately cited and referenced the original sources.

I also declare that I have adhered to all the principles of academic honesty and integrity and have not misrepresented or fabricated or falsified any idea/data/ fact/ source in my submission.

I understand that any violation of the above will be cause for disciplinary action by the institute and can also evoke penal action from the sources which have, thus not been properly cited or from whom proper permission has not been taken where needed

Signature



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Salik Ansari 156250001

The Kochi-Muziris Biennale is an international exhibition of contemporary art held in Kochi , Kerala . It was the first Biennale of its kind that was held in India. The Kochi-Muziris Biennale is an initiative of the Kochi-Biennale Foundation with support from the Government of Kerala . The exhibition is set in spaces across Kochi , Muziris and surrounding islands with shows being held in existing galleries, halls, and site-specific installations in public spaces, heritage buildings and disused structures. It is an event that happens every two years. It is most commonly used within the art world to describe large-scale international contemporary art exhibitions. As such the term was popularised by Venice Biennale, which was first held in 1895.

In May 2010, Mumbai based contemporary artists of Kerala origin, Bose Krishnamachari and Riyaz Komu , were approached by then culture minister of Kerala, M.A Baby to start an international art project in the state. Acknowledging the lack of an international platform for contemporary art in India, Bose and Riyas proposed the idea of a Biennale (a large scale international exhibition) in Kochi on the lines of the Venice Biennale .

The first two editions of the Kochi-Muziris Biennale – in 2012 and 2014 – used art to initiate a dynamic dialogue between the Indian port town of Kochi and the ancient trading city of Muziris, which have been settled over the centuries by Arab, Chinese, Jewish, Portuguese, Dutch, English and migratory South Indian working-class communities. Under the curatorial leadership of Mumbai-based artist Sudarshan Shetty the third biennale, titled 'forming in the pupil of an eye', has brought together 97 artists from 35 countries, whose work is shown across 12 venues, students biennial and collateral projects. the curatorial note draws from mythical account of various rivers giving life to land despite of many difficulties and whether if a biennale can accumulation such meaning over time and spill into the future?

Throughout the talks of sudarshan shetty about the biennial the word 'multiplicity' is stressed upon. It is evident in the selection of the 97 artists and various other projects such as the inclusion of students, poets, visionaries and intellectuals for talks, independent and folk dancers, musicians etc. the diverse disciplines of these artists under one roof truly reflected the multiplicity of india and its harmonious diversity. In aspinwall under one roof two artists share the space, one a traditional muralist PK Sadanandan and a performance artists anamika haksar.

The biennale is divided into three parts :

1) Artist's biennale - Artists are invited from around the globe and given main venues to display their works

2) Collaterals - Exhibitions running parallel with KMB

3) Student's biennale - selected works of students from 50 art schools across india under

the guidance of 15 curators were given 7 venues to display their works. Student's biennale is undeniably the most refreshing step taken by the KMB foundation. The idea behind student's biennale is to introduce students to the contemporary art practices and to cultivate a habit of questioning and dissent. the Kochi Muziris Biennale has succeeded in creating "a site where many discourses can happen" stated by riyas komu in an interesting discussion between the union minister Dr Tharoor, KMB co-founder Riyas Komu, politician Shazia Ilmi and art curator Alka Pande.

The panel was moderated by biographer and writer Aditi Anand. Given the context of the Biennale, the conversation focused on the art and the role of BM

Anand, specifically the subaltern, within society and the civic and social power of art as a voice of dissent and a tool for advancing social justice. "To create an illusion of freedom of speech is among the more insidious ways to stifle dissent in society" according to Dr. tharoor. The dissents through art should be like that of BM Anand "absolutely fearless in his language of art and never played to the market and was absolutely honest to his craft." states Alka Pande. And, evidently so the visitors saw continuous dissents happening and continuous exploration of multiple layers of art practices unfolding.

The works which imprinted on the heart and memory of the viewers were poets. It is interesting to note that the works of the heaviest gravity were that of the poets, raul zurita, alex stager created huge structures submerging the viewers to experience their understanding of words in a wholesome way.



Raul Zurita standing in his work, at Kochi Muziriz Biennale, 2016. Image courtesy Kochi Biennale

'The sea of pain' by raul zurita was one of the greatest work present at the KMB, the sea of pain is a poetry installation. Raul's poems are to be seen and felt not just read. In the installation raul creates an ocean in terms of the emotion it conveys.

A lengthy storeroom is submerged in knee length of water. The wall parallel to the ocean has question for the viewers "Don't you listen? Don't you look? Don't you hear me? Don't you see me? Don't you feel me?" once The viewer walk the length of the room feeling the weight of ocean on his body and discovers a poem by zurita at the end. About Galip kurdi, This is an ode to a faceless child drowned in the waters. His three-year-old brother Aylan Kurdi, a Kurdish Refugee, had been washed on the shores of Turkey. The poet ends the poem by saying "I'm not his father, but Galip Kurdi is my son." it is then when one realizes that he is standing in a sea full of misery where millions dies seeking refuge and as one walks back the weight of the waters starts feeling heavier and heavier with every step.



A scene from *Inverso mundus* by AES+F, at Kochi Muziriz Biennale, 2016. Image courtesy Kochi Biennale

'Inverso mundus' by AES+F displayed at the anand warehouse is one of the highlights of the biennale . *inverso mundus* is a video installation by a russian collective drawing from the absurdist scenes from the medieval carnival appear as episodes of contemporary life. Characters act out scenes of absurd social utopias and exchange masks, morphing from beggars to rich men, from policemen to thieves. Metrosexual street-cleaners are showering the city with refuse. Female inquisitors torture men on IKEA-style structures. Children and seniors are fighting in a kickboxing match. *Inverso Mundus* is a world where chimeras are pets and the Apocalypse is entertainment.



Dream Stop by Garry Hill, at Kochi Muziriz Biennale, 2016. Image courtesy Kochi Biennale

**'Dream stop'** by gary hill is an immersive video installation with 31 spy cameras concealed in a large circular aluminium frame suspended from the ceiling, to splinter gallery visitors into 31 overlapping images of themselves. It transforms the entire room into an alternate reality of holographic projections. The viewer sees 31 manipulated projections of himself overlapped all across the hall. Giving the sense of multiplicity through various perspectives. While standing in the work it places a deep impact on the psychological mind pushing it in the realm of dream and surreal.

**'Aloidia Piorm'** is another installation by the Hill in which more than a dozen of glass shapes are on exhibit. He repurposes the discarded fragments of glass sculptures by other artists in his work it is supplemented with installations titled 'Sine Wave (The curve of the world)' and 'Klein Bottle with Image of Its Own Making'. Sine wave is audio-video installation in which one hears the heavy breath of someone as a sound track in a forest glade steadily moving back and forth a half-full glass of water perched at the end of a level plank. Klein Bottle sculpture is a curved glass trumpet that intersects with itself. Video imagery of the trumpet's firing emerges from its base and, due to the reflective properties of the glass, spreads all up and through its form.

One work which took the public by surprise was the performance piece by Shiv Nadar University. Drawing from the play Ram-leela re-enacted in Banaras since ages and deconstructing such prolonged myths to understand its effect on the belief system of the people. It is a response to the experience of injustices in the society, targeted towards the religious minorities, or the Dalits and lower caste people, to maintain certain power balances or towards women as a result of gender bias and patriarchy ingrained within the country. The performance takes the shape of an introspective and contemplative position and simultaneously as a protest.

In the performance multiple layers are unfolding in different spaces and different contexts simultaneously. A fellow student plays the role of record keeper documenting everything. Another student trying exhaustingly to look beautiful, portraying the role of the female gender in the society. A student trying to build a temple in air which in fact exists virtually and other students trying again and again to do the job they've been given so efficiently almost forgetting the futility of the job.

The performance was a marvellous example of students coming together to express their anxiety and questions about the contemporary world. The scale of the biennale spread all across Fort Kochi welcomes millions of viewers and is famously called 'people's biennale'. And it truly is so, a pioneering event in the field of art weaving the diverse society of India with its thread of multiplicity. A space appreciated by people from all walks of life, distant from the confusing contemporary art world KMB has emerged as a space where people's energies can be reflected and absorbed through the mysterious language of Art.

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