

WORDS: A USER'S MANUAL

Friday 25th November - Saturday 24th December 2011

The architecture of words is mysterious; they conceal as they reveal, they fall apart and reconfigure, they constrain and they liberate. They are missing links and they are empty spaces. In all these paradoxes, they are the story.

Curated by Himali Singh Soin

Hanif Kureshi | Prayas Abhinas | Sachin George Sebastian | Sarnath Banerjee
Raqs Media Collective | Vibha Galhotra | Zuleikha Chaudhari

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DISCLAIMER: THE MISSING PART

The title of this text-spaced show is inspired from the French prankster, Georges Perec, whose stories are systematic and formulaic. The linguistic constraints imposed by the author become the hurdles experienced by his protagonists. For instance, in *A Void*, he utilizes the Lipogram, eliminating the letter 'e' from an entire novel. His protagonist, Anton Vowl, cannot sleep until he discovers the missing link.

Perec's books are manuals, with mathematically arranged chapters and calculated characters. Once the structure is visible through a series of clues, myriad combinations of stories may be created. The potential of words is alarming, amusing, absurd and magically real.

This series of archi-types are some such puzzles that render you, the reader, the protagonist of these stories. The end—A or Z—is a mission or an omission, defined by the choices you imagine: there are multiple realities, and only one of them will be yours, awake or asleep.

Text by Himali Singh Soin

INSTRUCTIONS FOR USE

“Things may look normal and natural, but a word is but a faux-naif talisman, a structurally unsound platform from which to sound off, as a world of total and horrifying chaos will soon start to show through its sonorous inanity. A gap will yawn, achingly, day by day, a gradual invasion of words by margins, blank and insignificant, so that all of us, to a man, will find nothing to say.” Georges Perec.

When things around or within us seem to disintegrate, it seems that the arbitrary nature of words and their corresponding concepts distances our real selves from true, lived experience. This atmosphere of mistrust was particularly ripe in the years post the world wars during the Dada and Futurist movements, during which language was literally reduced to nonsense: sounds and rhythmic symbols that refused narrative, devoid of meaning. If language embodies the ideology of a culture, then to deny one's culture, one must defy its language.

'Text' is a codified system of signs and signifiers, with symbols that represent each word, syllable and letter. When written, these letters contain a shape and form; when spoken, they carry a certain sound and character; and when strung together in a deliberate order, they assume a concept, a meaning and an effect.

'Art', in contrast, is a mode of perception, without a 'said', essential meaning. A text object becomes an art object specifically when it attempts to transcend itself: where the story—or the absence of it—does not necessarily signify anything, rather the meaning is contained in its form. And thus do Perec's tricks with words inspire this set of seven artists from diverse disciplines to play with the physiology of type, storytelling, books and paper.

And whilst in some instances the world of words can alienate—as in Vibha Galhotra's satirical 'Inconvenience is Regretted' or Sachin George Sebastian's depiction of endless news folded into everyday lives or Hanif Kureshi's play with fonts, tricking the mind in flux—in others, they stir empathy—as in Sarnath Banerjee's drawings of memories of lost objects and ideas and Prayas Abhinav's existential pursuit of an

illusion with a hope of instant salvation, with meaningless words—and in yet other moments—words may exist simply in their silence—as in Raqs Media Collective's ode to the unwritten word and Zuleikha Chaudhari's architectural depiction of a self in kinesis.

Each artist also manifests the paradoxical nature of words in exposing dualities within their ideas, in form and in story: Zuleikha utilizes metal and wood, negative and positive space, light and darkness, the self and the elimination of the self; Raqs depicts a bookshelf full of empty books; Sarnath finds lost things; Vibha deconstructs physical spaces and constructs mental ones; Prayas makes two sides of the same self; Sachin folds paper to erase and reveal the word and Hanif comments on free will and predestination.

The statements that accompany each piece attempt to gather the rhythm of the work and function as parallel texts that reflect the form of the art, rather than attempt to define that which contains numerous possibilities. Stories beget stories beget stories.

'Words: A User's Manual' seeks formulas that deconstruct text to tell a story through the presence and the absence of words. Words can transcend themselves to assume the role of an image, an object, a sound, a character and a body. Simultaneously, they are accidental, nothing but blank space.

The Writer is inclined to think that paragraphs are created by its margins, that sound might be heard because of its silent punctuation and that words cannot be written without spaces in between. The eaten, stacked, folded, lost, morphing, deconstructed, asymmetrical, unwritten word might tell as true a story as the one that lies idle, drooling, in limbo.

Text by Himali Singh Soin

Hanif Kureshi | Flux | Wood, Laser-cut, Motor, Automotive Paint | 43" x 164" | 2011

Your timing is perfect: everything is about change.

If you read the manual with code and care
Learn the formula and the controls,
You will have the Power
To steer Change off its churning path~

This is the essence of the Flux Machine.

Text by Himali



Press the button- Click,
Jump.
Eat a word!
Run- Faster-- FASTER---
You're chasing you!

*imagine the night
thoughts not crashing into
themselves,
like dim-witted fish in a fishbowl.
imagine the night.*

Exhale. SLOW.. Slower... STOP.
CRASH, BANG, LIE!
You into You

Rebuild . Reborn . RE:configure . Rise
Eat EAT : Only Good Words

*the if and because
are only typos on your screen.*

Full-Unstoppable
Now the Good Words are Bad
Lives ticking
How many will you be?
Running in circles
Again
RethinkRessurrect
Click.
Merge-youintoyou.

*change dresses,
jokers, toys,
ghosts leak out of the machine.*

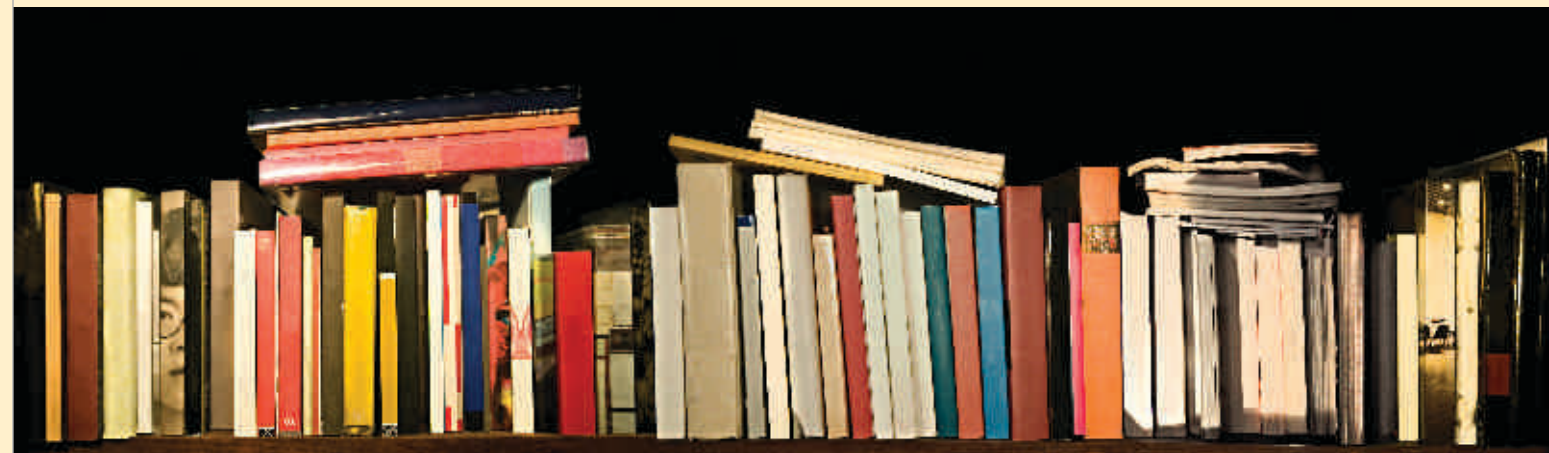
Text by Prayas and Himali



Every book demands another, but not all of them get written. Every debt demands to be paid, but not all are redeemed. Then there are the debts that we owe to the all that we read, which we can never really repay. In that sense we are all 'Namak-Haraams', defaulters to the debt of purloined knowledge. Someday, a Hamlet will issue a stern reprimand, saying, "There are more things on heaven and earth, Namak-Haraam, than are dreamt of in your philosophy". He will be reminding us of the things we owe, with interest.

Somewhere, there might exist a library dedicated to the philosophy of the namak haram, stacked high with books filled with the unwritten word. What titles would one browse if one came across its stacks, folded into the course of a tiring day, like a mirage in a desert? Can books be desired into existence by reciting the spells that are waiting to be read off the surfaces of their wished-for spines? Can the Namak Haraam ever repay his debts, with interest?

'The Philosophy of the Namak-Haraam' speaks to bibliophilia, day-dreams, intellectual debt (which doesn't yet have lawyers, unlike intellectual property) and the pleasures of book-binding. The treasures its invokes are always waiting to be read.



Sachin George Sebastian | Multi-Story | Newspaper, Coffee Table, Coffee Cup, Resin | 62" x 28.5" x 50" | 2011

New Delhi, 8am: Just as residents sipped their morning tea, words stacked the city. The atmospheric pressure of the everyday, everywhere happenings in newspapers weighed down on its people, leaving everything vulnerable to combustion and eternal folds. The residents found their shadows winding through lanes of recycled stories, fontificating total collapse....

Text by Himali



Every thing lost is somewhere else found.

This is an index of lost things.
Tiny tales of displacement and misplacement.
Briefcases and books and houses
Fountain pens and Zippos.

An imagination of a memory.
A call to the past, to the blue cardigans
That as yet remain on a bench at Grand Central

To the things that we rated, lived, idolized
Some found again: an October leaf pressed into a Moleskine
A museum ticket in last season's woollen pocket
Others laid to rest: in foreign countries or national archives
In a scar or in the white linen tablecloth
With a big blot of wine.

Text by Himali



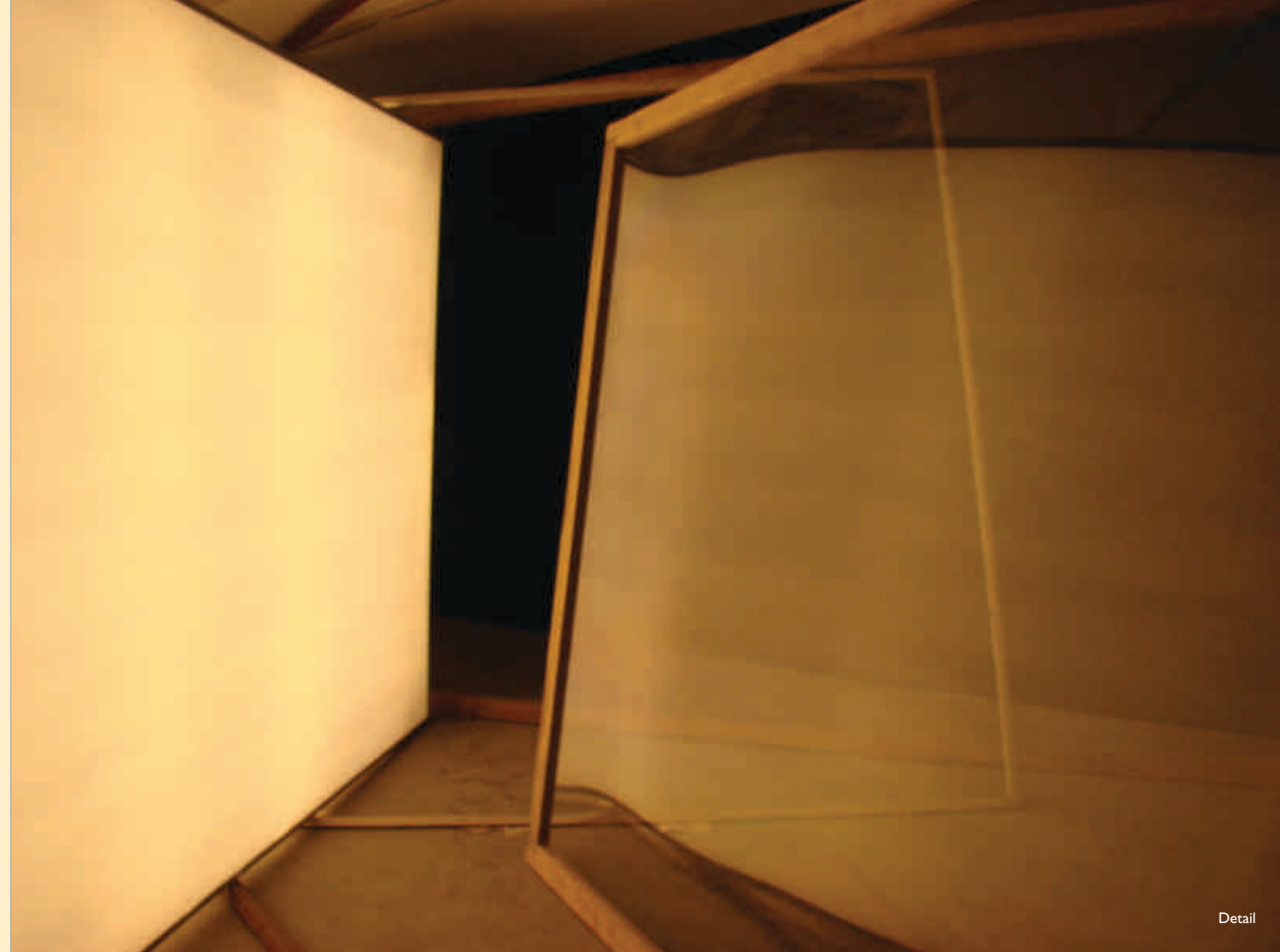
It is where Line meets Curve that the Strictures of Law Collide with the Liquid Human In Passive Voice
With Polite Apprehensions
Tape | Torn | Borders | Boundaries | Walls | Wires
Physical construction | Mental deconstruction
Keep out
Watch where Line meets Curve
Then Step Away.

Text by Himali



असुविधा के लिए खेद है

A metal frame contains space, or the space contains a metal frame, depending on the way you look at it. To turn. Straighten up | please. To disarrange. Take a moment | to feel your head balancing on your neck. Of grouping. The metal meets wood at an angle that begs re-placement. To distill. Are your arms supported | to help maintain the position of your trunk and shoulders? To simplify. Are your shoulders back? Is your back straight? Is your body weight distributed evenly | on both hips? Are both your feet squarely on the ground? Of symmetry. The light is bright, so you walk around. This is a container, containing you. Of tides. It stands still, you move. Of refraction. It moves, you stand still. Occasionally | you take a deeper breath. Of context. Intermittently | when your neck feels stiff | you move a little to stretch it out. . Can you see the form? Of layering. You know exactly where you are. But this isn't always clear to you. To impress. To smear. When you wake | for instance | in a panic. To surfeit. Your mind facing a wall. At these moments | the self has to be re-constructed. Of carbonization. You force yourself to remember. There is a secret. To continue. You cannot grasp it.



Hanif Kureshi is a typographer who digitalizes the different fonts of street painters in India, and has shown a film about this process both at the Pompidou in Paris as well as recently at the Association Typographique Internationale in Iceland. From the Faculty of Fine Arts, M.S. University of Baroda, he currently works at Wieden+Kennedy, Delhi. Kureshi is also an undercover graffiti artist.

Prayas Abhinav engages with computational aesthetics, psychoanalysis, narratology and poetics in his work. He studied experimental media arts and teaches at Srishti School of Art, Design and Technology in Bangalore. His projects include Coded Cultures in Vienna, dis-locate in Tokyo. He recently curated 'On the Sidereal' at The Guild gallery (Mumbai).

Raqs Media Collective (Jeebesh Bagchi, Monica Narula & Shuddhabrata Sengupta) are cultural historians and text artists. The forms their work assumes are varied but fall largely under the canopy of new media. Previous exhibitions include The Things That Happen When Falling in Love at the Baltic Centre and Manifesta 7, most recently Reading Light at the Communist HQ in Paris. They live and work in Delhi.

Sachin George Sebastian works with paper, creating handcrafted designs with the fold, crease and texture of paper. With a degree from NID in Delhi, he has been part of Khoj's The Idea of a Book residency in 2009. He has advised paper product development in Jaipur, and recently exhibited at Paper Tongues at Exhibit 320 and participated in the Bookaroo Children's Literature Festival in Srinagar.

Sarnath Banerjee is a graphic novelist who has written several books, and made drawings for diverse and eclectic projects, for which he has been recognized widely. He recently published The Harappa Files, a humorous retelling of the cultural excavations of New Delhi. Now based in Berlin, he continues to create scenes that utilize stories and the drawn image.

Vibha Galhotra received an MFA from Shanti Niketan, after which she has experimented with public sculptures that dialogue with her city and its internal ecological systems. Her beehives, made from ghungroos was shown in the Best of Discovery at the Shanghai Contemporary. Her upcoming show is at the Jack Shainman Gallery in New York City.

Zuleikha Chaudhari's work is an investigation of the nature of performance. She is the recipient of the 2007 Sangeet Natak Academy National Award and her variety of set and light design led her to create her first 'Propositions on Text and Space' at the Khoj Studios in 2010 before a solo at Project 88 and most recently in the Sarai library, with support from the IFA.

Himali Singh Soin is a poet, art writer and curator whose writings span from Art India, Bomb, Kritya, Pyrta, Art Slant, Asia Writes, CNNGo, ArtEtc., New Quest, Take on Art, Quay journals amongst others. She has also self-published a book of poems titled 'egg notes' sponsored by the IFA. She is inspired by little things and their hyperbolic metaphors. Herein lies her interest in curating poetry into galleries or theatrical spaces.

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