

**German lensmen who like the machine age; and a Belgian installation artist who likes to play with dust**

COURTESY MIRIAM DEVRIENDT

### Res Derelictae II at Warehouse on 3rd Pasta, Mumbai

Were you to mistake his sculptures for junk, Peter Buggenhout wouldn't necessarily be offended. Coated in layers of dust so wondrously thick and layered, his works, careful compositions of discarded material, are indistinguishable from the weathered debris you're likely to find rotting in a shipyard. In a sense, your confusion, and maybe even repulsion, would mean that the Belgian artist has accomplished his goal.

"My main intention is to declassify things," he says, standing amid his furry installations.

Buggenhout's sculptures are not easy to view. For one, they are monstrous looking, great crumbling relics that would seem more appropriate placed in an archaeological museum. For another, they escape symbolic projections—metaphors for lost things and moral decay are futile, and not a little bit silly. They are in essence exactly what they are (dust sculptures) or, as Buggenhout puts it, "The only conclusion you reach is that the thing you see is the thing you see."

It is perhaps apt then that the exhibit *Res Derelictae II* (a legal term for abandoned assets) will only feature four of his works spread out across more than 3,000 sq. ft. The viewer is given plenty of space from which to circle and assess the sculptures. Approached from one angle, the works, priced at around €25,000 (about Rs17lakh), and

all titled *The Blind leading the Blind* (referencing a painting of the same name by Flemish artist Pieter Bruegel), are vaguely recognizable—bits of metal shards and ceramic pieces that peep through gaps in the dust coating. They might have belonged to a tub or a shelf, objects that Buggenhout chances upon on his way to his studio in Ghent, Belgium.

"It belonged elsewhere and has been withdrawn from its original context, lost its original shape, and, in doing so, its meaning," Buggenhout says. "We reject it. It's not classified because when you declassify, you really look at things."

If you approach the works from a different angle, you are tempted to run your hand over the soft crumbling dust (warn-

ing: Don't, it has been hardened by fixative, despite appearances to the contrary). Buggenhout has made an art of taking unsavoury materials and transforming them into sculptures both repugnant and riveting.

The dust procured from cleaning companies by Buggenhout's assistant is probably his most benign medium; his other favoured media include blood, hair and animal intestines that are similarly forced into unfamiliar shapes and structures. "My way," Buggenhout admits, "is not aesthetic."

*Res Derelictae II is on at Warehouse on 3rd Pasta, Colaba, Mumbai, until 7 September.*

Tara Kilachand

