

Res Derelictae II

Warehouse at 3rd Pasta, Colaba

Walk in to the gallery and you are greeted with silence and crisscrossing shadows. In front of you is a large, brown slab of something. Go up close and you'll be able to tell that the something is made up of bits of old metal, dust and scraps of junk that Peter Buggenhout has tried to make as unrecognisable as possible.

Last year, Chinese artist Xu Zhen exhibited what he claimed was the pinnacle of Mount Everest. Zhen titled the work "8848 minus 1.86" which refers to what the Chinese claim is the height of the Everest (8,848 metres) and the measurement of the mountain's peak which the artist claimed to have sliced off (1.86 metres). Like Buggenhout's dust sculptures, Zhen's exhibit stood silent in a large vitrine. "8848 minus 1.86" questioned the nature of truths that are considered unambiguous, like the measurement of a physical

structure, and the accompanying video footage of Zhen and his team atop Everest showed how truth may be manufactured.

Buggenhout's sculptures are reminiscent of Zhen's "8848 minus 1.86" but while the Chinese artist's sculpture carries in it questions and critique, one wonders what issues these dust sculptures raise. There is a delightful vagueness to the bizarre works that look like bits of a shipwreck but without much promise of treasure. They invite you to appreciate their form



The Blind Leading the Blind

but demand no dialogue. The abstraction of their forms and the materials used may add to the debate about what qualifies as art even though most of us have accepted that an inventive artist can transform anything into something artistic.

There are some half-formed ideas that don't come through entirely. The factory-feel of the interiors could be a comment on the increasing commercialisation of art. The fact that Buggenhout turns modern products like thermocol into seemingly-ancient objects may have been a point of debate if there was some history being referenced. What also might have added to the show would have been footage of Buggenhout at work. As it is now, *Res Derelictae II* is an invitation to let your imagination conjure up contexts and explanations for the dust sculptures. However, by the end, it feels like an inadequate experience which promised more than it delivered. *DP*