

ARTslant

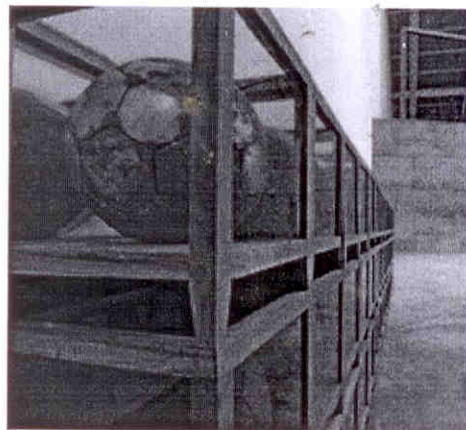
Football Forum Mumbai
by Avni Doshi

Subrato to Cesar

Gallery Maskara

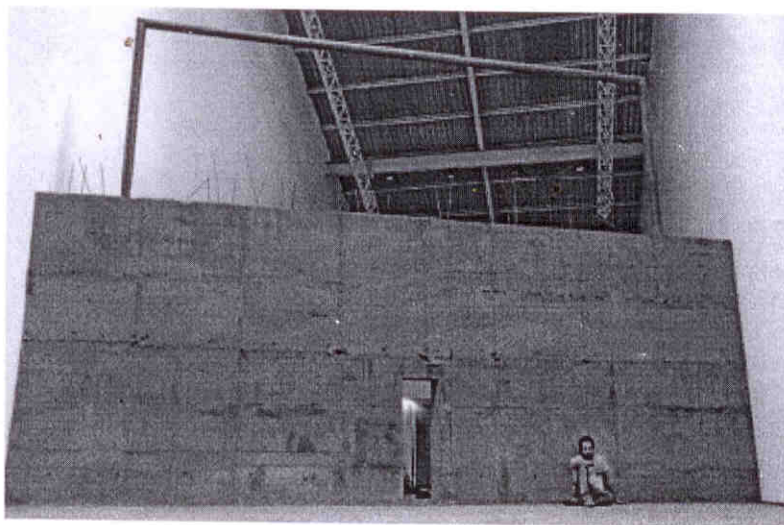
Warehouse on 3rd Pasta (b/w Dena Bank ATM
and Sanghvi Exports) 6/7, 3rd Pasta Lane,
Colaba, Mumbai, India

June 11, 2010 - July 13, 2010



In India, football has always inhabited a blind spot behind the bright lights that shine on the country's pastime, cricket. With the relatively new manifestation of cricket in a shorter (and more palatable) 20 and the coming together of a cricket league, glamorized by the infusion of Bollywood stars and an abundance of financing, it is no surprise that the country as a whole holds its breath when legendary batsman Sachin Tendulkar comes to strike. With the current World Cup in South Africa gathering attention to football, the palpable anticipation of Indian participation in this sport is palpable.

Riyas Komu's *From Subrato to Cesar* highlights football, with all its global fanfare, as a space for gathering and interaction while calling into question its ghostly presence in the artist's own country. Komu has always been a football aficionado, and the game has been central in much of his work. For Komu's portraits of Indian football players, *Mark Him* from 2007, football historian and professor Jenni S. S. remarks, "He frames his players according to a precise logic of heroism—not that of the athlete, but of the proletariat." [1]



With an interest in exploring the current climate of football in India, Komu turned Abhay Maskar gallery space into a place to watch the World Cup. On the opening night, groups of people entered large concrete wall, which had the suggestion of a football pitch. Viewers were made to duck through opening cut in the thick wall to get to the other side, where a projector showing the live match was above everyone's heads. Passing through the wall became a right of passage, through an entrance of stealth and secrecy. The way in felt like a form of trespassing, where Komu was able to pinpoint the status of the sport. Among the crowd were Indian football players, who were invited to be spectators like everyone else.

-- Avni Doshi

(All images courtesy of Gallery Maskara and the artist)

[1] Jennifer Doyle, "Athletes and Artists: Riyas Komu's *Mark Him*," *Art21 Blog*, December 10th, 2009. <http://blog.art21.org/2009/12/10/athletes-artists-riyas-komu-mark-him/#more-12592>.