



GALLERY MASKARA

Max Streicher - solo show

Curated by Abhay Maskara

March - June 2008,

'THE GODOWN' 6/7, 3rd Pasta Lane, Colaba, Mumbai

Curatorial Note:

Inflatables conjure memories of play and innocence yet it also brings forth the fragility and impermanence of existence. Children are at once fascinated by balloons – soap bubbles and air filled toys - enamored by their lightness, enchanted by their buoyancy, and devastated when they break.... I first encountered these weightless and playful works in 2006 on a trip to South America and was immediately drawn by the wonder and tragedy that the works evoke. Max Streicher has taken the inflatable, and rehabilitated it by creating tension between the liveliness of the medium and an experience that is both colossal and considerate. Streicher combines industrial fans and simple valve mechanisms with light weight materials which recall, quite eerily, the sensation of breath. His work provokes strong, spontaneous, and deeply psychological reactions in people of all ages and backgrounds

Artist's Statement:

Inflatables have had an important place in my work since 1989. In most of these sculptures and installations I have used industrial fans and simple valve mechanisms to animate sewn forms with lifelike gestures. Most of these works have been made of lightweight and papery fabrics such as Tyvek or nylon spinnaker. The weightlessness of these materials allows them to respond with surprising subtlety to the action of air within and around them.

Generally inflatables are an expression of naive optimism. In an art context they signal popular culture, anti-art and irony, I play with and against these expectations. The movement of air within them recalls our own sensation of breath – and of breathlessness. Thus, the force that animates the work is the same elemental, powerful and tenuous force that animates us. These works are as much about deflation as inflation; as much about absence, shrinking and vulnerability as they are about the robust occupation of space. My work with the inflatable medium is about moving the viewer from a playful and ironic headspace toward a physical connection to his or her most vital forces.



Max at his studio working on *Silenus*



Works:

Silenus

The giants in their great mass heave and sigh to the timed intervals of industrial blowers. Lying on their backs and sides, heads raised from the floor, legs stiffened, chests inflated, only to relax again, as if in some futile attempt to get up on their feet. The giants recall the body as gross anatomy - of a soul trapped within spoilable flesh - the dispirited body, incapable of action because of the sentiment of futility. The giants also recall the tragic body - needy, voracious, desiring, and independent of consciousness and will.



Nylon spinnaker, electric fans,
each figure approx 26 feet

Romulus and Remus

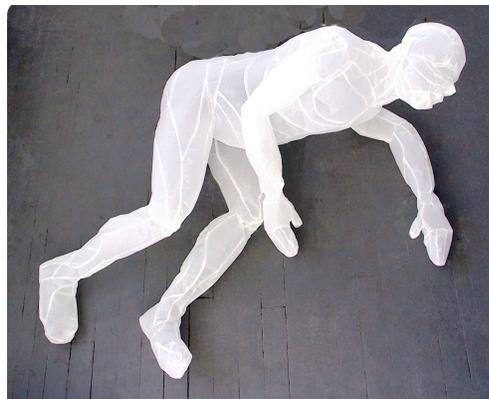
Connected through the backs by a short piece of flexible duct, Romulus and Remus resemble blow-up Siamese twins, symbiotic melancholy and brutal co-dependent. These babies inflate quickly and forcefully, literally sucking the air from its counterpart while deflation is experienced empathetically, as though it were a complete human expiration.



Life size, Spinnaker, electric blowers, flexible duct
Each figure approx 3 feet

Untitled Figure

Three inflatable figures arranged side by side, pulse and writhe in response to changing air pressure as if in some kind of seizure that inspires feelings of revulsion and morbidity. This movement takes place quickly and creates the impression of a certain type of childish play energy -- manic, reckless, dizzying, out of control, eliciting strong feelings of fear and loathing



Spinnaker, electric blowers, flexible duct
Life size, each approx 6 feet

Photogram

These images are created by positioning deflated and flattened figures directly on a large format photographic paper and exposing them to light. The seams, the result of Streicher's inflatable fabrication process, create lines that read as various internal systems – musculature, nerves, and veins. These images have the mysterious and puzzling appearance of some unconventional imaging source, of an ultrasound perhaps, or the x-ray of ancient mummified corpse.



Dung Beetle, 44 by 23 inches

Please Note: The artist is currently in Mumbai and will be available for an in-person interview until March 10th. To schedule, please call Abhay Maskara at 9819986485 or email abhay@gallerymaskara.com

Credits: Explanatory text adapted from conversations with the artists and from essays by Gordon Hatt

Mission Statement:

Abhay Maskara has a clear and compelling mission to taking a *global* and *multidisciplinary* approach to art that responds to the cultural fabric of our time thus fueling critical dialogue, collaboration, and public engagement. More simply put it is to *EXHIBIT AND PROMOTE ART OF THE PRESENT.*

The project space known as *'The Godown'* is democratically located in the heart of downtown Mumbai between 2nd and 3rd Pasta lane in Colaba, and functions as a hub for the exploration of emerging ideas in the contemporary art. The freestanding 3,250 square foot building served as a cotton warehouse and motor repairs garage during India's pre independence era and it has been renovated by noted conservation architect Rahul Mehrotra to maintain its historic character. With nearly 50 feet ceiling height and walls that run 100 feet in length the cavernous space marks a shift from the typical white cube neutral space and is raw yet flexible, making the building extremely well-suited for contemporary art practices



Photo of the space under construction

"My intention is to overwhelm the gallery space and impose on the viewer a sense of scale like that which a toddler might experience. I am attempting to recreate a situation like that of childhood encounters with humongous snow banks or haystacks; structures that invite a physical exuberance which in turn leads the imagination..." Max Streicher