



# Museum of Contemporary Art

Free admission – thanks Telstra!  
The MCA may ticket occasional special exhibitions

## Navjot Altaf

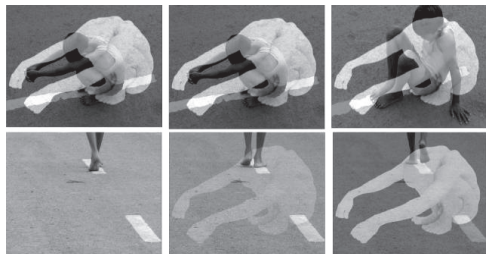
born Meerut, India, 1949  
lives and works in Mumbai and  
Kondagaon, India

text:  
Artist statement

*Lacuna in Testimony* (2003) is about listening to testimonies and questions whether one can enumerate and describe events when they remain opaque – when one truly seeks to understand them. Testimonies contain a lacuna, the threshold of the lack of distinction between inside and outside, which I see as a connection or a dialogue. The material incorporated in this work is from footage, stills and recorded interviews with people singled out in the Ahmedabad riots in 2002 – when Gujarat State came under an intense bout of communal carnage, of the kind never experienced before in India, except at the time of partition. It also incorporates archival material from various sources concerning similar events in India and from elsewhere in the world.

**Navjot Altaf**

*Mumbai Meri Jaan* 2004 (stills)  
courtesy Apeejay Media  
Gallery, New Delhi and Musée  
d'ethnographie, Geneva

**Zarina Bhimji**

born Mbarara, Uganda, 1963  
lives and works in London, UK

text:  
Artist statement

History serves the present. What is not recorded does not exist. The stillness of a quiet line of plantain trees is not 'stillness' at all. Remove all cues from the outside, the voices of the inner state become louder, clearer. It is difficult to reach. It feels like being pushed to the edge. I find that the more intense my experience of a place making a work, the more power the piece absorbs for itself. A landscape mediated by a solitary individual. The natural landscape is the raw material of the human psyche. To transform the physical into the psychological.

**Călin Dan**

born Arad, Romania, 1955  
lives and works in Amsterdam,  
Netherlands and Bucharest,  
Romania

text:  
Artist statement

*Emotional Architecture* is a concept engineered in order to facilitate a new perspective on converging phenomena such as habitat, religion and crowd management under the dominance of media. The work for the Biennale of Sydney brings to the audiences three examples of the way this concept works in different places and under different circumstances. The videos were made in the Netherlands, Romania and Estonia. The material spans a period of ten years, but the issues at stake are much older: political power versus individual freedom, urban entropy, migration, relation with the divine, fear, drugs and the liberating power of music.

**Meschac Gaba**

born Cotonou, Benin, 1961  
lives and works in Rotterdam,  
Netherlands

text:  
Artist statement

*La Maison* (2006) is based on a Nigerian game called *Luda*. It consists of four coloured territories. The goal is to pass through all parts of the game to arrive home. But each time there are road blocks posed by the other territories and the risk is finding one's self in prison in one of the four territories. The person who wins is the one who can bring these four prisoners home. The form of the work is a woven carpet, upon which people stand to play the game. The concept of weaving plays an important role in my work. It represents to me a unity of crossroads - the more threads and the more treads on the carpet, a symbol of harmony. At the same time *La Maison* deals with the idea of migration - social unity connected with the concept of weaving.

**Mona Hatoum** *Webbed* / 2002  
courtesy of the artist.  
Alexander and Bonin, New York and  
Jay Jopling / White Cube, London

**Rachael Rakena, Fez Fa'anana  
and Brian Fuata**  
*Pacific Washup* 2003 (still)  
courtesy of the artists



---

## **Brett Graham / Rachael Rakena**

born Auckland, Aotearoa New  
Zealand, 1967  
lives and works in Auckland /  
born Wellington, Aotearoa  
New Zealand, 1969  
lives and works Palmerston North

text:  
Artist statement

*U.F.O.B.* (2006) is composed of a fleet of suspended wood and glass forms reminiscent of ships, planes, submarines, canoes and spaceships. The fleet alludes to Polynesian migration stories. *U.F.O.B.* is an acronym for 'unidentified flying object' combined with 'fresh off the boat', a derogatory term for Pacific Island immigrants, highlighting Island immigration history in Aotearoa New Zealand. The viewer looks up through glass portholes into each vessel to floating images of Maori and Pacific Islanders. Wearing only 'refugee bags', they journey from idyllic origins to wash up on a Sydney beach. Both funny and strange they bring, and are, their own baggage. Their vulnerability casts the observer into doubt as to whether they have arrived into a safer environment or not. Ironically Papalangī, the Samoan word for European, translates as 'Sky Breaker, one from beyond the horizon', bringing strange customs and alien ways.

---

## **Dmitry Gutov**

born Moscow, Russia, 1960  
lives and works in Moscow

text:  
Artist statement  
translation by David Riff

Excess (The excess of pure, uninterested contemplation)

The story of King Wei, who lived in China during the 4th century, tells us that the ruler's greatest pleasure was to observe the dance of the cranes. The movements of this bird were a paragon of unpretentious looseness of poise; in a broader sense, they were a constant reminder that one should never renounce one's freedom under the pressure of circumstance.

The King paid dearly for his love of cranes. One day, he looked at one of them for too long while a battle was taking place - and he lost. The strength of his aesthetic experience was defrayed by his loss of command. Among China's men of letters, this fable became the object of discussion for centuries to come.

---

## **Mona Hatoum**

Palestinian born Beirut,  
Lebanon, 1952  
lives and works in London, UK  
and Berlin, Germany

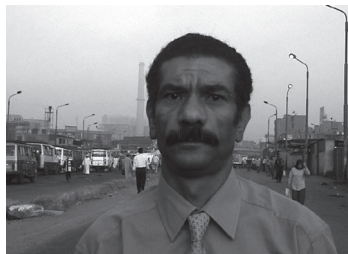
text:  
from the interview 'The Idea Is  
What Matters!', Mona Hatoum with  
Urs Steiner and Samuel Herzog,  
*Neue Zürcher Zeitung*, Switzerland,  
20 November, 2004.  
Translated by Isabel Cole

The feelings my work inspires cannot be localised so unambiguously; it is never about a specific situation. Instead, these are general statements which everyone can understand in their own way.

For example, if I talk about incarceration, about being shut up in a home, there may be women who relate this to their own situation as prisoners of their household ... an everyday trauma that doesn't have to have anything to do with Palestine. I like keeping my work so open that it can be interpreted on different levels. Art can't be compared with journalism; it can't discuss concrete issues ... Each work is a new risk for me.

**Hassan Khan**

*The Hidden Location* 2004 (still)  
courtesy of the artist and Galerie  
Chantal Crousel, Paris  
© Hassan Khan

**Šejla Kamerić**

Also exhibiting at Campbelltown Arts Centre, and on JCDecaux Citylights, see p 30 and 38 for more information.

**Amar Kanwar**

born New Delhi, India, 1964  
lives and works in New Delhi

I began with no fixed destination in mind and harboring an unspoken thought – this could be a final journey. It wasn't, of course, but the outcome lay in the passage rather than in the ending. *A Season Outside* (1997–98), *A Night of Prophecy* (2002) and *To Remember* (2003) emerged from an exploration of power, violence, sexuality and justice. The trilogy of films searches the passages of time for translucent symbols hidden within the 'ordinariness' of our lives. Do these spaces connect intimate zones with larger social processes, public events and legends? *To Remember* completes the triangle – a strange gallery with the smell of death, a curse with no sound. Its harsh silence seems to have pushed this work into the centre of the triangle.

Note: Amar Kanwar's films will be screened in the following order: *A Season Outside* (1997–98), 30 mins; *To Remember* (2003), 8 mins; *A Night of Prophecy* (2002), 77 mins. A screening schedule will be available at the MCA, and also on the Biennale website: [www.bos2006.com](http://www.bos2006.com)

text:  
Artist statement

**Hassan Khan**

born London, UK, 1975  
lives and works in Cairo, Egypt

It is the force of the city that is a central preoccupation of Hassan Khan. He perceives the power it holds in structuring lives, framing narratives, positioning identities. But rather than contesting that power, he taps into it, explores its nuances, exploits it – in as far as he can exploit something that is, in turn, exploiting him every minute of the day. Sitting through any one of Khan's video installations, one is immediately involved – never as a passive recipient, but rather as an active participant in the propagation of the very representational systems Khan is exposing. In this neighbourhood, everything is loaded.

text:  
Negar Azimi, *Bidoun / We Are Spatial*, issue 01, Summer 2004

**Ruark Lewis**

born Sydney, Australia, 1960  
lives and works in Sydney

*Transcription for the Perfect Place* is a sequence of six works that exchange and interchange. I call it a chamber work. The overall plan of the transcription gives me the opportunity to score source material for two spoken word performances. In this instance *Perfect Place* has two headphone listening posts where visitors can experience a line through the transcriptions. Without meaning to give too much away, I have named the parts of this work, *Mis-Readings of Australian History*, *The Silhouettes*, *Shipping Tales*, *The Edge of Everything*. In constructing this I used maps, a group of anonymous bark paintings, the re-writings of the explorer Ernest Giles, and the names of 30 ships that visited Australia between the 1920s–1970s. I call the disparate elements an allegorical constellation. Spatially this configuration provides meaning and interpretations that are meant to be unfixed and plastic. The idea of perfection is up to you.

text:  
Artist statement

**Hayati Mokhtar and  
Dain-Iskandar Said**  
*Near Intervisible Lines* 2006  
[still from work in progress]  
courtesy of the artists



---

## **Julie Mehretu and Stephen Vitiello**

born Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, 1970  
lives and works in New York, USA;  
born New York, 1964  
lives and works in Richmond, USA  
and New York

text (top):  
artist's website,  
[www.stephenvitiello.com](http://www.stephenvitiello.com)

text (bottom):  
Jody Zellen, Gallery at REDCAT  
(Roy and Edna Disney CalArts  
Theater), Los Angeles, 2004

Electronic musician and sound artist Stephen Vitiello transforms incidental atmospheric noises into mesmerising soundscapes that alter our perception of the surrounding environment. As an installation artist, he is particularly interested in the physical aspect of sound and its potential to define the form and atmosphere of a spatial environment.

Julie Mehretu has remarked that she draws from the past and imagines the future. Her spaces capture the sense of our time in history. They reference the networked environment of cyberspace as well as the Baroque. She uses gestures and stylistic elements from Albrecht Dürer, Japanese and Chinese calligraphy, as well as modern graffiti and contemporary comics ... She depicts a world that is in constant motion.

---

## **Hayati Mokhtar and Dain-Iskandar**

born Kuantan, Malaysia, 1969;  
born Kelantan, Malaysia, 1957  
live and work in Kuala Lumpur,  
Malaysia

text:  
Artist statement

We found ourselves on a tract of sand, a spit at the intersection between the Setiu River and the South China Sea. There was once a settlement here but erosion had forced its inhabitants away and erased all visible markers. Its existence would have remained hidden had it not been charted by a survey, or by memory. That is: there is the landscape that one sees, then another layered beneath it, structured less by matter than history. We realised that we stood before an expanse that was not characterised by emptiness - rather, a rich zone, criss-crossed with invisible lines. Delineations which created not only a foreground and background, contours and lots, but that engendered a series of oppositional and yet inter-related forms of experience - between actuality and potentiality, past and future - abstractions that reflected the shifting and permeable tensions that function at the foundations of the concept of landscape itself.

---

## **Rose Nolan**

Also exhibiting at the Art Gallery of NSW, see p 09 for more information.

---

## **Milenko Prvacki**

born Feradin, former  
Yugoslavia, 1951  
lives and works in Singapore

text:  
Artist statement

On the surface it seems I am analysing and questioning 'mundane life' using ordinary subjects. But the truth is that I am generalising very subjective, intimate and memory-based subject-images only as metaphors and support to build up my painting. Creating a net of colours as a support for the very subjective world to nest in. My personal issues are my creative starters, but colours, structure and painting are my asylum. Art should be constantly dangerous. There is no room for pleasure, only for agitation. The relationship with the viewer should always be reciprocal, never one-directional. Artists shouldn't modify the artwork to please the audience. I do not trust cheap shoes or easy art.

**Jayce Salloum**  
everything and nothing and  
other works from the ongoing  
project, untitled 1988–2006 (still)  
courtesy of the artist



---

## **Tawatchai Puntusawasdi**

born Bangkok, Thailand, 1971  
lives and works in Bangkok

text:  
Khetsirin Pholdhamplait, 'Peculiar perspectives', *The Nation*, Bangkok, 23 July, 2005

Tawatchai Puntusawasdi explores how perspective changes when ideas are transferred from the drawing board to models. At first glance his works seem rooted in architecture, but while many are of houses, they are strangely out of shape. 'When I was a child, I enjoyed writing and drawing on a slate ... When you draw a three-dimensional house on a two-dimensional surface, the image is distorted and out of proportion ... I transferred the perception of those wrong proportions to my installation'. As well, texts from an ancient astrology book explaining how to construct a house are copied onto slate sheets scratched with images of houses.

---

## **Raqs Media Collective: Jeebesh Bagchi / Monica Narula / Shuddhabrata Sengupta**

Jeebesh Bagchi,  
born New Delhi, India, 1965;  
Monica Narula,  
born New Delhi, India, 1969;  
Shuddhabrata Sengupta,  
born New Delhi, India, 1968  
live and work in New Delhi

text:  
Artist statement

Waiting Rooms everywhere are full of Impostors waiting to be auditioned, waiting to know and to see whether or not their 'act' passes muster, and whether they can cross the threshold and arrive on to the plane where 'history is truly made'. The paradox is, of course, that the impostor in the waiting room is not a figure awaiting modernity. The 20th century itself is the architect of the waiting room, and the impostor is modernity's preeminent figure. Through the work we register our provisional understandings of the relationship between the unifying fantasy of progress, and the heterodox 'ways of being' that trouble this dream with their own anxious distractions.

---

## **Jayce Salloum**

born Kelowna, Canada, 1958  
lives and works in Vancouver,  
Canada

text:  
Artist statement

This ongoing project is a video installation extending and building relationships, constructing an environment where spheres of histories are situated in a web of connectivity. It is a sculptural space that presents the effect of walking into a videotape itself, a stillness, a silence of moving images juxtaposed, flowing and colliding, waves of scan lines, an active meditateness picturing the interstitial. This work seeks to articulate the conditions of living on (or in) and moving between or through borders, nationalisms, ideologies, polarities of culture, geography, or histories. These *zones of being* are situated in the contested and conflicted notions of homeland, nation, diaspora, exile, travel, assimilation, refuge, native, and *other*.

**Lidwien van de Ven**  
*Desert in the night* 2002  
courtesy of the artist and Galerie  
Paul Andriess, Amsterdam



---

## Imants Tillers

born Sydney, Australia, 1950  
lives and works in Cooma, Australia

text:  
Artist statement

In hindsight two defining movements for me were the advent of Conceptual Art as a compelling but marginal practice in Australia in the early 1970s and secondly, the Papunya Tula art movement which began to rise like a phoenix in Central Australia in 1972 from the collective ashes of several displaced Aboriginal cultures. From this tragic and unlikely beginning, Aboriginal art everywhere was spectacularly re-invigorated and transformed so that today it undeniably constitutes the mainstream of Australian contemporary art. In *Terra Negata* (2005) these two powerful influences have come together. It is both a meditation and commemoration of the over 460 tribal / language / nation groups that once occupied Australia, presented as an alphabetically-ordered list of names, with the addition of several visual and textual elements as well.

---

## Lidwien van de Ven

born Hulst, Netherlands, 1963  
lives and works in Rotterdam,  
Netherlands

text:  
from an interview with Mariska van  
den Berg 'Silent Positioning', *Seule*  
*/ la main qui efface / peut écrire*,  
Artimo, 2003

For me photography is not primarily a means of representation, but a medium that always obliges you to express yourself *vis à vis* the real world ... I think that via the photographic image you end up exactly on the border between representation and reality; not just for me, but also in terms of how it intervenes in the social; in terms of how things are photographable; or on the contrary cannot be registered because of technical limitations; or because of a prohibition or because it just doesn't allow itself to be represented. On the other side of the photographic image there is a spectator who can read things in the image in all manner of ways, or thinks he / she can. There is always a fusion between what you deduce from the visual information and the technique.

---

## Akram Zaatari

born Saida, Lebanon, 1966  
lives and works in Beirut, Lebanon

text:  
Artist statement

Part of my interest in existing documents is researching personal documents made by individuals, who have been through political / territorial / military conflicts. As well as my interest in writing an alternative history of war(s), I am interested in studying the geography of fear, and the mechanism of surveillance, particularly in post-war situations. *Saida June 6th 1982* (1982–2003) is a composite image of six pictures taken from the balcony of my parents apartment when I was 16 years old – the exploding missiles of an Israeli air raid on June 6th 1982, the day Israel invaded Lebanon. The piece combines photographs of explosions that happened on the same hill over a few minutes. For me, as a child, it was the ultimate firework.