

After India



Site 1 QPAC Window

24 April – 11 June

Site 2 Metro Arts Galleries

16 May – 2 June

By **Mandy Ridley** with soundscape by **Linda Neil**

This body of work attempts to unravel the experience of my 2004/05 Asialink Indian Residency, exploring both motivations and responses. Installed across two sites, the project demonstrates the intense and powerful impact on my life and broader art practice.

Through the project I wish to express the integration of art making in my daily life. Of central importance is the meaningful exchange and dialogue that occurs during the process of making art. Beyond formal concerns of colour, pattern and the object, the making of art is focused around the making of a life, establishing relationships that uncover identity and build community.

BACKGROUND

In February 2005 I undertook a residency with Khoj International Artists Association at the JNU Campus in Delhi. My response to the factors of site, context and daily experience was to create *the intimacy project*.

I contacted the School of Languages in order to work with translation. Fortunately I was referred to Ravikesh Mishra, a Korean language Professor who became a very keen collaborator. Ravikesh liaised with his colleagues, and we collected translations of the word “intimacy” in 10 different languages.¹ The very act of explaining just what it was that I wanted to translate illustrated nuances of meaning between languages/cultures, and the perils of translation. It also hinted at the potential for miscommunication and the joy, which a flash of shared understanding can give.

The project unfolded over several weeks with momentum developing as contacts were made, resources gathered, formal permission to carve the stones was sought and granted by the University. Jagdish, a stone carver, inscribed the texts into large boulders. The site by the library was a meeting place for many people in the gentle spring sun. Often in the morning people would sit and chat or share food together. Thus a traditional skill was used to permanently express an elusive state, marking a site of intimacy.

AFTER INDIA: SITE 1 THE WINDOW QPAC

Made as a direct response to my Asialink Residency to India, I have selected the motif of bougainvillea blooms to express the intensity and fascination of my Indian experience. These plants are found as commonly in many Indian cities as the blooms that we encounter daily in Brisbane. In fact the widespread and dynamic global colonisation of bougainvillea provides a potent metaphor for both the experience of the traveller and indeed human survival: beautiful vibrant colour, strong voracious growth and even the tenacious thorny structure of the very plant!

I love pattern and colour; especially patterns, which are found on traditionally crafted objects. In this artwork the pattern is sourced from Mehendi designs, available as wax stencils used for the practise of henna body decoration.

The blooms are laser-cut in an industrial material, polypropylene, which when layered creates beautiful colour on colour. I have worked directly with light, as this particular element is powerful in conveying the elusive and precious warmth that can be experienced when intimacy occurs.

AFTER INDIA: SITE 2 METRO ARTS GALLERY 2

This project has been an opportunity to consider the nature of the collaborative process & the materiality of art making.

In what is a significant departure I have worked with Asialink resident Linda Neil to produce a sound piece. The exhibition is expressed in materials and media not usually associated with my practice, sound and photographic imagery.

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¹ Arabic, Chinese, French, Hindi, Japanese, Korean, Persian, Russian, Spanish, & Urdu,

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Upon reflection I realised that undertaking the Intimacy Project highlighted many of the factors that a traveller to India encounters: extreme cultural and linguistic diversity, issues of caste and social protocols, encountering the multi-layered bureaucracy and even the naivety of the traveller. However finally, the work is about intimacy, about the possibility of a connection between individuals that overrides differences in culture, experience and reality.

I acknowledge Ravikesh, Jagdish, Khoj International Artist Association, Metro Arts, Mia Kempel (QPAC), Peter Ridley and Linda Neil, amongst many others for their gifts and talents contributed to the project.

ARTIST STATEMENT BY LINDA NEIL

This collaboration with Mandy Ridley has evolved from our initial chat over chai at a coffee shop close to where Mandy lives and where I study and work at the University of Queensland. I was interested in the way Mandy spoke about the experience of working and travelling in India and in particular her work on the Intimacy Project. I found her spontaneous talk expressed very naturally and directly her feelings and thoughts about why she chose the word intimacy, particularly in the context of India and its culture. When we first spoke about having a sound element to the “After India” project I suggested recording some of our conversations as a way of capturing first hand the verbal expression of a visual artist. This oral narrative aspect was something I have explored in my own work as both a documentary maker for ABC Radio National and in my non-fiction writing work, which uses transcriptions of oral narratives as part of its text.

I chose to use the song “Rapture”, which I co-produced several years ago with Ed Kuepper, because it was an expression of another more personal dimension of intimacy—between a man and a woman—that, while not Indian in either tone or sound, sonically captured the delicate, sometimes ephemeral nature of these moments that Mandy describes in her narrative and artist’s statement as “fragmentary”.

The decision to “marry” the song and Mandy’s oral narrative regarding the Intimacy Project seemed to add another dimension to the aspect of interconnectedness which Mandy explores and which our own creative relationship has embodied. We first met in New Delhi early in 2005, and then reconnected

in Brisbane early in 2007 to collaborate on this project. Now we meet again in the soundscape to the “After India” exhibition in which Mandy’s voice speaks about cultural aspects of intimacy while another voice sings about the personal aspects of intimacy. The addition of an Indian violin to bookend the piece gives the non-generic sound of the words and music a specifically Indian context to reflect the concerns of Mandy’s work.

JAWAHARLAL NEHRU UNIVERSITY Khoj Public Art Residency 2005

Assistance with translation by Ravikesh Mishra
Stone carving Jagdish

Project support Hemant Sree Kumar & Vibha Galhotra
from Khoj, Rashmi Kaleka & Shambhavi Singh

SITE 1 QPAC

Mia Kempel Visual Arts Coordinator
Lighting design consultant Chris Eichler
Design and fabrication of lighting system by
Peter Ridley
Laser cutting by Laws Laser
File preparation by UAP
Vinyl installation Innovative Signs Systems
Installation support Romy & Janice, Artworkers

SITE 2 METRO ARTS

Chief Executive Officer — Liz Burcham
Director, Operations — Robert Kronk
Catalogue design — Lead Based Ink
Soundscape: produced by Linda Neil
Words and music: “Rapture” by Linda Neil
(co-produced with Ed Kuepper)
Violin: Linda Neil
Sound Engineer: Willie
Sound system: Linus Monsour, Sicuro

Project Photography

Image of Linda Neil taken by Kelly Thompson
Images of Mandy Ridley taken by Hemant Sree Kumar
& Janice Kuczkowski
All other images courtesy of the artist
Artist prints produced by Martin Barry, Brisbane
Digital Images