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Sakshi Gupta

Sakshi Gupta's solo exhibition has the feeling of a cavernous underworld where the objects are as dark as the ominous feeling they create. Her works, often untitled, emerge from a complex set of references and ideas which are necessarily difficult to decipher. Gupta explains, "I use the word evolution, not in a linear sense of development, or progress, but as a tangled process that involves chaos, contradictions, emotional fluctuations, transformations and tangential leaps." Through an exploration of materiality, Gupta's sculptures bring together a series of oppositional idea. Motorized movement is a crucial part of some of her works, shifting them from a space of stillness into a continuous motion.

Upon entering the gallery, the viewer is confronted with a wall of metal scrap, where the artist has carefully created textures and swirling forms. Although it is designed with metal, the wall has the appearance of compressed layers, like the gradients of color and sediment in a rock formation. On closer inspection, sheets of metal are linked together in joints, curling and unfurling in a series of waves.

Gupta's use of scrap metal to create representations of organic forms results in a dynamic dissonance within each of her objects. A bird is perched on a ladder, rather than a picturesque tree. Its body in profile is sliced with iron precision, like a mechanically winding toy. The bird stands on one leg, unsteadily balancing, but permanently holding its precarious pose. Gupta uses these hard substances and brings together the appearance of organic and inorganic, creating an unusual continuum of form that belies the label of one or the other.

Nearby there is a pulsating patch of ground, inhaling and exhaling, as though in a fantastical forest. The surface glows with a bronzed shine, like subterranean mines. Gupta fashions the earth as dark, visually damp and glimmering with its metallic and mineral wealth. The breath is slow yet shallow, and continues at a steady pace like lungs connected to a ventilator, rather than a volcanic heave. Is it breathing on its own, or has it been put on life support? The artist asks "what...a malignant bloom look[s] like," imagining a formation that is at once living and dying, or nurturing and lethal.

A large metal carcass, reminiscent of a rooster, hangs upside down from a line attached to the ceiling. The form is motionless, lifeless corpse whose gigantic body dwarfs its tiny head and feet. The ridged texture of the surface of the animal imitates ruffled feathers. A fence bisects a furry pig, and its body operates in two separate parts. It turns its head to witness the state of a hanging rooster. The back of the pig's body is constructed like a set of wheels, turning like cogs in a constantly moving machine. The pig looks as dark, and almost as menacing, as the allegory of its fleshly instrumentalization. The work seems to belong in a 21st century Orwellian petting zoo, where animals are transformed into partially mechanized hybrids in a twisted perversion of nature. Gupta's works do not only suggest the harm and destruction humanity has inflicted upon its environment, although they do this rather pointedly. They also dig at deep-rooted psychological fears about nature and the unknown, which have a far-reaching historical precedence. The drive to control nature, and the tenuous relationship with its precarious forces are symptoms of this anxiety.



Untitled, metal scrap, 2009



Untitled, Iron shutter, concrete, raisin, fiber, mat, hair roller, motor, 2009



Untitled, Metal scrap, glass beads, motor mechanism ,2009

Sakshi Gupta's work was part of *Indian Highway* curated by Hans Ulrich Obrist, Julia Peyton-Jones and Gunnar B Kvaran, Serpentine Gallery, London, 2008, Astrup Fearnley Museum of Modern Art, Oslo, 2009, and HEART Herning Museum of Contemporary Art, Denmark, 2010. Gupta has previously shown work at the Belvedere Museum, Vienna, 2009, and Galerie Krinzinger Project, 2008, Vienna. Her most recent solo exhibition was presented at GALLERYSKE, Bangalore, 2009. In 2007, she won the prestigious Inlaks International Scholarship which lead to her participation in a residency at Cittadellarte-Fondazione Pistoletto, Italy. In 2011, Gupta will be part of a two-person show at Galerie Krinzinger in Vienna and her work will be shown at the Centre Pompidou, Paris, the Musée d'Art Contemporain, Lyon, and the National Museum of XXI Century Arts, Rome. She has also been awarded the Civitella Ranieri Fellowship for 2011-2012.

Sakshi Gupta lives and works in New Delhi.