To Forget is to Remember is to Forget

Exhibition-Performance by Nimi Ravindran

Synopsis: *To Forget is to Remember is to Forget* is an exhibition-performance that attempts to trace layered relationships between memory, mirror, mind and mother. Traversing through visual and sound installations, video, photography, print and performance, the show tries to reimagine the idea of the inheritance of loss.

Artist's Statement:
The works in the show trace layered relationships between memory, mirror, mind and mother– in my attempt to reimagine the inheritance of loss.

'The future of museums is inside our own homes', said Orhan Pamuk in 'A Modest Manifesto for Museums'. I read this in 2013, the year I started work on writing a play about memory and loss. I had several questions: What do we remember and why? What do we forget and how? What do we inherit and when? I was struggling with material that was personal – thoughts, jottings, scientific research, only to discover that nothing was really coming together. Pamuk's words got me thinking, perhaps the future of novels, plays and movies could also be inside our homes. Which meant that the central characters of these stories were probably hiding somewhere inside our homes. It might have been a coincidence, but I eventually abandoned the idea of a play and decided, instead, to simply tell the story of a daughter struggling to remember all the things her mother forgot. The more I remembered, the more I was unsure of the line blurring fact and dramatic reconstruction – my words were beginning where hers were falling off. I now wanted the obscure landscapes of loss and memory to be navigated through photographs, in objects, on film, and as songs and sounds. And thus, the project was born – To Forget is to Remember is to Forget – with its many components:

Video: Placebo
Two channel Video installation: A multitude of selves engrossed in what seems like a banal activity sits in sharp incongruence against the dramatic backdrops of the two-channel video 'Placebo'.

Video: Mirror Mirror
Complementing this scenic inquiry is the video loop 'Mirror, Mirror', with its surreal, shapeshifting landscapes that swallow both past and future, self and (m)other.

Installations: While both the interactive installations – **'Library of the Lost'** and **'Erase'** – speculate an imaginary archive where forgotten facts would end up, the sound installation **'Akashavaani,'**scattered across and outside the venue, celebrates the lost art of rewinding-recalling-recreating during the pre-internet era of tape recorders and All India Radio.

Photo Booth: The inherent complications between memory, identity and photography are probed in the installation which also houses several oral reminiscences of childhood episodes and recent incidents that connect my personal memories to larger, shared narratives.

And lastly, a live solo performance, sparse and bare, which completes the exhibition – a still body and voice simply narrating a story.

Scientists have been telling us for years now that human memory is unreliable, that we fill in the gaps with fiction. If memory is so fallible, why then should we mourn its loss? Is it because we are probably just the sum total of our memories? Or because our memory, even if unreliable, is what makes us, us? I have been fortunate to collaborate with artists who are more like friends and family than professional colleagues. Working together, we realised that all we imagine as 'lost' is not lost. Nothing is ever truly It just exists somewhere else, in someone else's memory. Someone else will now make up new stories and start filling in the gaps.

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