

URBAN GEOGRAPHIES

Mapping Personal Histories

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As a methodology for going about our work, before embarking on construction of any of our images, it was preceded by one of us initiating ideas that could be taken up for representation, followed by council of discussions where each of us could opine as to how the image could be taken forward and what language could be used best to effectively communicate the conceptual idea.

In our initial proposal, we had mentioned the desire to talk about personal histories. This was supposed to be one of our primary objectives. The scope of this project has extended to us being able to demarcate the areas of concern, viz. Null bazaar and approach it by representing it through a new lens.

So far, we have managed to speak about a living condition that exists in this area. The images primarily dwell on issues of co-existence, a dependence on the inhabited space, one's idea of the private space, the ability to use one's surrounding to its own advantage (gain), peculiar narratives about commercial spaces and spaces of mixed use. The work has just begun to speak about personal narratives at this point.

Presented below are some excerpts from the diary introducing and describing some of the work undertaken.

1. bird's eye view.

This image have been conceptualized based on narratives, which transport the reader/viewer down from a bird's eye view to smaller local details in the later images. The fabric of Null Bazaar constructed visually true to scale based on the building heights data, certain landmarks like the Heritage listed Police chowki, the JJ flyover, hints at the city's Industrial past and the presence of Port and the new layer of development taking over the fabric. The image also contains multiple smaller narratives of the presence of local informal market, the only street wide enough for buses to pass, traffic islands and the new apartmental typology promising green open spaces and swimming pools.

-Saurabh

2. streetscape

Second in the series the painting drops down from the bird's eye view of null bazaar, to give a view of a typical street in Null bazaar. The painting began with the need to look at and represent the nature of street activity that exists today in some of the inner city regions of the city and to draw attention to the transformations that are facing the landscape.

As visible from the illustrations, the painting began on similar terms as the third painting, where we intending to speak about the nature of the place more through the objects and built form that frame it rather than directly representing the activity that inhabits it. The exaggeration of the skyscraper and the sense of portention that has enveloped the painting was not done with a sense of bias against the emergence of the skyscraper, but more so to draw attention to questions that remain unanswered when such transformations are undertaken in such a precinct. What does it entail when such neighborhoods are brought under the anvil of urban renewal? Especially one such as this. Do the people really want it? Is it in the fashion that one sees it happening in our city? Are their interests and livelihoods taken care of? Is the infrastructure capable of handling such changes? This is a moment in time when the flux and tension of such drastic changes are most apparent and visible, which we wished to capture before the place and the people that inhabit it are lost to our future.

-Aditya

3. internal courtyard

This was the last of the first three images that we had begun after we had decided to take our CESS buildings study ahead and talk about it through new modes of representation that we had not managed so far. The three images were conceived as some form of introduction to null bazaar with this one trying to describe one of the typical null bazaar building typologies. The idea for the image stemmed from one photograph of a building courtyard and to take it beyond what gets represented in the photograph. The image expanded from the photograph to include other parts of the building that could not be seen. Details that were seen and recorded in other built forms from our many site to null bazaar got added on to the image as it got constructed. Broken balustrades, passages used as storage areas, objects of everyday use that did not find space in the cramped interiors of homes spilling onto the interior facade are some of the things that the image tries to talk about. Although human activity is conspicuously absent from the image, (we debated for long whether we need to include humans into the image) it was felt that image inherently spoke about intense human activity present in the building because of what and how we chose to draw. Other issues also got debated simultaneously, as to how the image need to be rendered and what needed to be highlighted and which parts should get suppressed.

-Aditya

4.(process drawing)

During their CESS study, Aditya and Saurabh encountered a number of unique building typologies housing different living conditions. Initially, the true nature of how these occupancies lent themselves to the built up structures was not always clear. These unique built forms have been possible in certain areas of Bombay due to the high densities that are constantly changing and getting accommodated within. The current living conditions encountered are usually a result of many years of formal and informal/secret pacts between tenants and landlords/co-tenants, walls being dropped/erected, enterprise-related changes taking place in the built form, and unique living conditions. This image was an attempt to represent the complexities housed within one such typology, we called the Qureshi house.

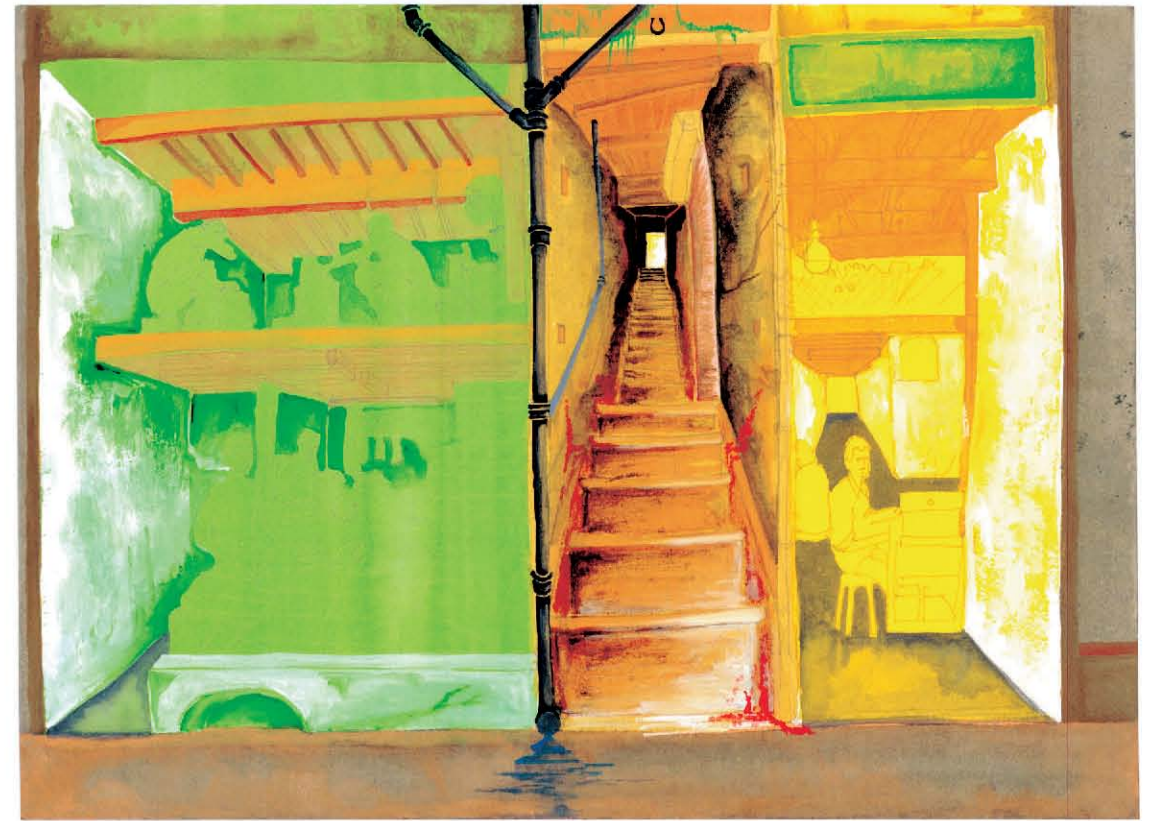
-Ranjit



1-birds eye view
watercolour on cartridge paper
2006
29 x 22 in



2- streetscape
acrylics on cartridge paper
2006
29 x 22in



4-(process drawing)
acrylics on cartridge paper
2006
16 x 11 in

◀ 3-internal courtyard
acrylics on cartridge paper
2006
16 x 11 in