Art

Dark shadows Michael Kunze; (right) an untitled painting from the suite

The impatient artist

Don't wait to see Berlin painter Michael Kunze's images of floating objects in "architectural compositions", says **Karanjeet Kaur**.

German quarterly magazine *Zoo*, termed Michael Kunze's work "strange images with their own logic, breathtaking perspectives, flying objects, swirling figures". There are no runaway objects in his 2010 series Paolo's Theorie, deliberately hazy illustrations inspired by scenes from Italian filmmaker Pier Paolo Pasolini's 1968 film *Teorema*, but the perspectives remain breathtaking. In an email interview with *Time Out*, Kunze discussed his palette of references that also includes German philosopher Friedrich Nietzsche and Danish filmmaker Lars von Trier. Edited excerpts.

Architectural spaces make several appearances in this suite. Is it an abiding concern in your work?
Architectural spaces that always float between a futuristic and an apocalyptic aspect, are an essential part of this exhibition. The alluded historical fields are very different, but also have closer connections than they seem to have at first sight: one fundamental

ground is the famous Carceri etchings [of imaginary prisons] by [Italian artist Giovanni Battista] Piranesi that turns the monumental-imperialist architecture of the Greek and Roman period into absurdity. [Then there is] the so-called revolutionary French architecture (by Claude Nicolas Ledoux, Étienne-Louis Boullée)... the architectural visions of [Italian artist] Giorgio de Chirico's early Pittura metafisica (Metaphysical art)... the totalitarian architecture [during the time] of Mussolini and Stalin... to the deconstructivistic visions of [Iraqi-British architect] Zaha Hadid. The only thing that doesn't seem to exist is a house where you want to live your daily life!

You have referenced the works of Pasolini and French novelist and philosopher Albert Camus in previous exhibitions. This time there's Nietzsche and von Trier. How has their work affected and inspired yours?
In the shadow-line of modernism lie all the motifs and historical references that present another

image of the world other than the mainstream modernity we are accustomed to. It's a sort of anti-modern modernity, a dark but rich and large cloud, from Nietzsche's tragedy studies to Lars von Trier's *Antichrist*. And the more we can discover of this confusing context, the more we can also understand the apparent "light-line" that is often based on errors and contradictions about which nobody is allowed to talk.

So, most of the motifs refer to the pre-modern history of art, one moment before the epoch of Modernism really started. This is the period of late Romanticism in continental Europe; for example in the art of Arnold Böcklin, and in the philosophy of Nietzsche. Then I follow through the whole epoch of Modernism to the influences of this strange labyrinth... until, say, Trier's *Melancholia*. The images are full of allusions and quotations of this trans-historical field, constructing connections between today and yesterday that one rarely can realise in our fast-imaging world.

> To know something of the past, means to know something of the future

In a previous interview, you spoke of the "continental European way [that] is more difficult, more esoteric, and all but forgotten in our daily lives". Does this consciousness inform all your work?
Esotericism is irrelevant and trivial, because it tries to name and to fix conditions. In contrast to this an idealistic metaphysical essence is part of the shadow-line. Every phenomenon on this side shows us an exit from a labyrinth we [have] constructed ourselves. And the big simulation machine [in which] we live, shows us that the shadow that accompanies us, is not strictly ours. We don't see things, but distances.

Although the artist today seems like a superfluous person, he can remind us, for example, of the half-forgotten cultural context I mentioned before. He can make us aware of invisible absurdities in the simulation-machine and open superfluous windows by a superfluous medium in a superfluous game.

Tell us something about your

choice of different media. You've worked with watercolours, oils and etchings in the past.
I only use photographic images for historical quotations that one should be able to rediscover, although they are often defamiliarised by transformation. But in the present exhibition, all works are completely constructed. You don't find the locations on a map, or in a movie, but you find many allusions to locations and sceneries that exist in your mind. Walking between reality and imagination, you often believe you remember things and events you never really saw and experienced. Here the real montage happens, without any photography or other technical help! The three places mentioned in the short text to this exhibition – Patusan, Sparta and Minusio – are located in this middle-line between a real story and a fantasy surrounding.

Can you tell us a little bit about your training, and how it has affected your artistic practice?
When I studied in the Academy of Fine Arts [in Munich] in the late '80s until the early '90s, the Internet and the digital possibilities of imaging (I like them!) – and painting – were completely forbidden. And if one intensified his interest exactly in this blind spot despite the prohibition, everybody looked at you as [though] you were uneducated. Such a stupid, mono-theistic view… raises the spirit of opposition. So it got clearer and clearer that my interest would lie here. The roots of the contemporary understanding of imaging and computer games…. you don't find in our days, but you find them in the epoch of painting where painters discovered the illusionist and perspective possibilities of a constructive reality-simulating image; for sure, you find these roots in the old Greek [tradition] when the idea of mimesis was invented. It's important to know these things today, with all the accompanying cultural connections, to understand our today better: because we don't descend from the nothing, and to know something of the past, means to know something of the future.

Studies on the Formation of Impatience opens on **Sat Dec 15** at Galerie Isa. See Exhibitions.

Five things you need to know about…
Rise of the BROWNationals
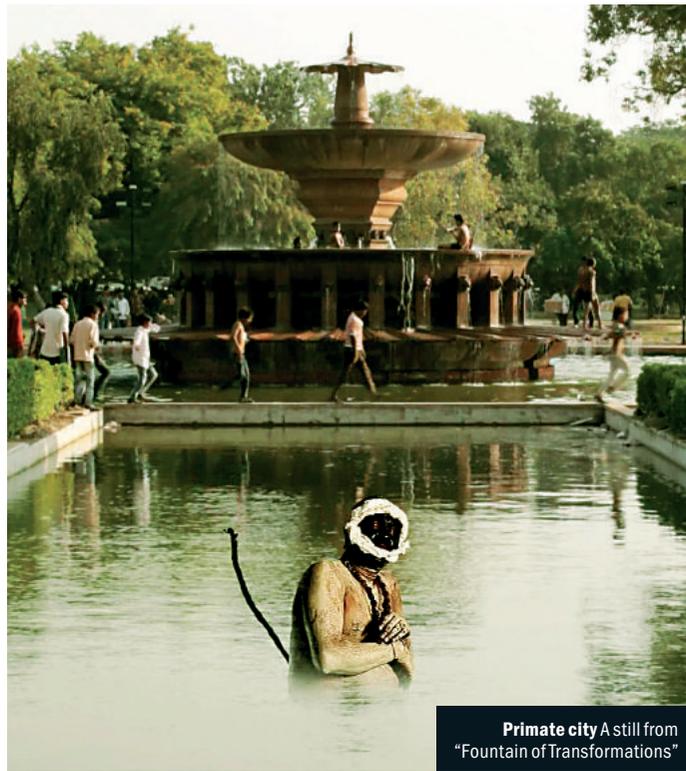
Primate city A still from "Fountain of Transformations"

Delhi artist Vishal K Dar continues to engage with the local Indian's view of India in *Rise of the BROWNationals*, in collaboration with historian Kaushik Bhaumik and media arts practitioner Siddhartha Chatterjee. **Phalguni Desai** puts together a primer on the artists' investigation into the concept.

We don't just have brown skin. We have brown thoughts.
This is an inquiry into pre-existing notions of state and community, and the multiple identities and aspirations that are indiscriminately plastered upon Indians as a people, especially by those governing the "BROWNation". The BROWNational has blasphemous dreams – in his eponymous 2010 solo at Gallery Espace, Dar's Gandhi shot lasers out of his eyes as he rested on a currency note in "C for Cutter".

Dar has been doing this for a while now.
BROWNation is a state of mind of every Indian national, as they struggle to reconcile the projected idea of the Indian state with their personal aspirations.

Earlier ruminations led to a 2007 show curated by him (also called *BROWNation*), and "I am a Monument" that came out of a 2009 KHOJ Residency. He then elaborated on the Espace show with a series of prints, videos and installations, with works such as "We the People" which show Indian symbols such as Gandhi and Mother India, alternately mocking, questioning and despairing of the socio-economic flux India seems to be in.

Delhi gets a makeover in this one.
In the words of Bhaumik, "*BROWNation* 2010 was a very general take on a set of artefacts that people think of as the principal symbols of the Indian nation – Gandhi, the national flag, banknotes etc… This time around the show has been very clearly charted as a response to a tightly defined location – the area around the India Gate, the Rashtrapati Bhavan and the Parliament House." The swing in "Girl on Swing"*,* a single channel video, hangs from India Gate, as hundreds of tourists mill around. Bhaumik adds, "The works are in dialogue with one another here."

It's about the idea of a new India, brought about using new media technologies and collaboration.
In Dar's 2010 show, Bhaumik and Chatterjee contributed to the catalogue with an essay and interview respectively. As Bhaumik says, "The collaboration came about through the growing realisation that the three of us, despite belonging to disparate fields of expertise, were keyed into certain cultural scenarios that we individually found fascinating and hilarious. Additionally, we were very interested in new media technologies and their artistic possibilities especially in dialogue with urbanity and the sea-change in perceptual regimes that cinema has produced through the last 100 years or so. The content of the work came together in intuitive ways but what really guided our output was our desire to work with the digital medium in interesting ways."

The artists, as BROWNationals, use multiple references that bring together the past and the present with a sense of the ridiculous.
When asked about the origin of these works, Bhaumik noted, "On the whole, we have reacted deeply to the physical space we chose to work in, the kinds of surreal juxtapositions of things that happen in our imagination when we are in that space. We worked with all kinds of associations elicited within us by activities happening in said space – movies, myths, bodily perceptions, pop culture fetishes, etc... There is a lot of cinema there. For instance, a work might resonate [with] multiple references, such as album covers of the American band Little Feat, [Satyajit] Ray's *Charulata* and actress Mahie Gill. Another work might have something to do with simply imagining aeroplanes landing on the Rajpath."

Rise of the BROWNationals opens on **Mon Dec 17** at Chemould Prescott Road. See Exhibitions