

THE YOUNG MAN WAS ...

(a few chapters)

Naeem Mohaiemen

8 April - June 9, 2011

PRESS RELEASE

Experimenter presents Naeem Mohaiemen's first solo show in India. Naeem works in Dhaka and New York, using essays, photography and film to explore history, especially that of failed utopias. Since 2006, he has been researching the 1970s revolutionary left, and how it functioned as an "accidental trojan horse" for the rise of rightist political forces— with convergence and bifurcation in Asian, African and European narratives. Chapters have appeared across multiple platforms: essay in Sarai journal (Delhi), performance at New Museum (New York), collage in Pavilion (Budapest), photography at Laboral Center for Art & Technology (Gijon), and video wall at Finnish Museum of Photography.

Naeem sometimes inverts the idea of photographs as frozen time, instead deploying sequential images with micro-shifts, as film strip or storyboard. Text is a parallel object here, working as a title sequence in a silent film, while the photos function as the Zapruder film used in the Kennedy assassination investigation. Polaroids trapped in resin expand, leaking the image they have been trying to hold. Someone forgot to check expiry dates.

Each chapter within this project passes through a particular moment of accidental history: the residue of the 1971 Bangladesh genocide facing off at a London party, the brutal 1975 coup that killed Sheikh Mujib, and other spectacular failures within the third world solidarity project.

After viewing an earlier chapter of this work, Live True Life or Die Trying (also shown at Experimenter), historian Vijay Prashad described the protagonists as "wanting something that the world has not given them thus far, but not yet disillusioned fully with the capacity of human society." (Take on Art, Issue 1, 2009). Brian Boucher sketches the medium as "wry photo-and-text works, which gently question the efficacy of activism-- and of his own art vis-a-vis political change." (Art in America, January 2010).

Naeem is co-editor of the anthology "Between Ashes and Hope: Chittagong Hill Tracts in the Blind Spot of Bangladesh Nationalism" (Drishtipat Writers' Collective). His essays include "Syed Mujtaba Ali: Amphibian Man" (The Rest of Now, Rana Dasgupta ed.), "Islamic roots of hip-hop" (Sound Unbound, MIT Press), "AdMan Blues" (Indian Highway, Hans Ulrich-Obrist & Julia Peyton Jones), "These guys are Artists and who gives a shit" (System Error, Siena), "Beirut, Silver Porsche Illusion" (Men of the Global South, Zed Books), "Kazi in Nomansland" (Manual for Treason, Sharjah Biennial), and "Everybody wants to be Singapore" (The Good Life, Art in General).

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Opening Preview: Friday, 8th April, 6 - 8pm

Artist in conversation: Saturday, 9th April, 6 - 7pm

Exhibition dates: 8th April - 9th June 2011. 11 am - 7pm. Sundays closed