

Varun Desai

**Spectre**

December 04, 2021 – January 08, 2022

Experimenter – Hindustan Road

Kolkata

Experimenter presents *Spectre*, Varun Desai's first solo exhibition. *Spectre* explores human perception through sonic experiences and spatial installations, testing the limits of what we see and hear and what we think we know.

The viewer is confronted by three distinct yet interconnected bodily experiences in the gallery that anchor themselves in exploring what is necessarily not visible, but always present in contemporary life, which envelops us with signals, electromagnetic waves and sound. *Radiation*, a grid of lines which chart a flowing series of graphs, is projected on the central wall of the gallery. A prompt in the form of a phone invites the viewer to place their smartphone on a surface which then immediately activates the projection with noises that are disharmonious and harsh, amplifying the electromagnetic waves that are constantly emanating from our handheld devices. The work underscores Desai's interest in the sonic manifestation of perception and how vulnerabilities shift when one becomes cognizant of forces at play.

Rooting himself to definitive science that combines sound experiments, wave mechanics, sono-kinetics and video, Desai constructs his own system of operation. These interests are largely explored in *Spectre*, a four-channel inverted video passageway. Desai is a tinkerer, who often deconstructs and reconstructs materials which throw up unexpected possibilities. Within *Spectre*, one is confronted with a pixelated view of themselves, not of what they can see, but of what they cannot see. It acts like a digital mise-en-scène of what is invisible in the background, a stage set-up of a digital world, incorporating ideas of surveillance and digital metaverse of the Web 3.0, a reality at our doorsteps.

The final work of the exhibition, a sound installation titled *Almost Immersion*, proceeds further inward, inviting the viewer to place their hand inside a black box. The work deconstructs the black box highlighting what is hidden. Upon the insertion of one's hand in the installation, sounds simulated from its motion are audible, counterbalancing each other with an animated screen of the hand above, bringing alive a sensorial visualisation of our inner selves.

A visceral embodiment of sounds creates a charged environment in the exhibition leading to spatial and bodily involvement of the viewer through all the works on view. It is this intersection that is fundamental to Desai in determining a sense of reality,

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perception and experience. With the aural manifestation of physicality in the space, the viewer becomes an active participant. The act of exposing how things are made, traversing the gradients of wave and form, whether in the gentle buzz of vibration to severe noises, the music created in the exhibition allows us a feel into the pitch of our world.

**Varun Desai** is a multi-disciplinary artist and an electronic musician, working in the field of music production and arts. Desai is also an instrument maker, and has been teaching in both hardware and software platforms. He is the founder of Synthfarm, an annual music and technology residency.

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