

Bombay Conversations

started after a week of wandering in the city with my camera.

I was working on video-images, gathering resources for video-installations and creating video-performance in the What About Art?-studio.

I came to Mumbai, looking for a city with a huge energy comparable to the one New York has, but without the comfort of me feeling at home. My trip was meant to be an uprooting exercise, and I named it "Bombay Exercise". I wanted to break through the boundaries of my established frame, being an artist living in Europe, in Belgium.

So on my wanderings, what touched and attracted me most in Mumbai are the women that live in this city. They carry the future in their stature, while they all work so very hard to build their life. They have a moving sadness and a smile in their deep dark eyes. The harshness and the hectic rhythm of this hot maximum city does not seem to affect their inner strength. There is a meaningful work of art hidden behind their eyes and I wanted to make that. That is why I began to record a series of "One minute conversations". I looked around in different areas, to meet women in all layers of society. In fact it was all very natural, I simply asked them: "Can I make your picture please?" Most ladies answered "Yes" and gave me at least one minute of their time and interrupted their activities for a while, also the ones who were in a hurry. Some ladies really took the opportunity to perform a proud statement in front of my lens. I recorded them all in the same classical composition, a torso, with the streetlife unsharply visible in the background. With some women I had a verbal conversation, with most of them I only had an "eye-conversation" and sometimes it was rather intense.

Most of the ladies that contribute to my project, I do not know by name. And with some I became closer. I think all these ladies deserve much more than a "one minute portrait", but it is at least a start. This project, I am sure, is a work in progress and the next time I come to Mumbai or maybe other places in India, I will go on with it.

The beat of Mumbai also vibrates in cold misty Belgium. We had a first screening of "Bombay Conversations" on November 30 2014, at Kristof de Clercq Gallery in Ghent in the show VIBRATIONS Off the format by Honoré δ'O.

I want to thank Eve Lemesle, the director of What About Art? and her staffmembers Jigna and Gargi, for helping me moving around Mumbai, by giving me very usefull information about the artscene and interesting places to go to. I also felt comfortable in the residence flat, where I could hide from the dust and the racket, I have to admit that this contributed very much to the success of my Bombay Exercise.

I also want to thank Girish Shahane, and Lissa Kinnaer for giving me good advice to find my way around Mumbai.

And thank you to Sneha Madiath and Ashwin, and last but not least to Hedwig and Perti.

Marie Julia Bollansée, December 4 2014