

Positive / Negative 24 Juror's Statement

Just as artists symbolize themselves through their work, jurors, curators, gallerists, and collectors symbolize themselves via the artists they select and attend to. In other words, there is a complex intertwining between the 'self' and the material world, and the 'self' and the societal. Even the title of the exhibition, 'Positive / Negative 24', symbolizes this intertwining process. The artists in this exhibition traverse a zone that folds from the extremely personal to the political to the satirical, but this tendency results at least in part from a combination of their interests meshing with those of the juror. This intertwining of expression and interest raises questions about artistic output, such as at what point does the expressive process stop, and is authorship really as singular and personal as is generally believed?

If the boundaries between the individual artist, passionately working away in the studio to express her or himself and (in this case) the call for proposals, the juror, the gallery, the viewer are all blurred and considered as being profoundly intertwined, then whose expression, whose creation is any given work of art? Or to consider it another way, who is responsible for it? And to whom or what is this complex artistic effort responsible to?

Michael Ignatieff, in a reprint from "Articles of Faith" published in the May, 1996 issue of the Index on Censorship, wrote that "the truth that matters to people is not factual truth but moral truth; not a narrative that tells what happened but a narrative that explains why it happened and who is responsible... truth is related to identity. What you believe to be true depends, in some measure on who you believe yourself to be. And who you believe yourself to be is mostly defined in terms of who you are not."

I believe that an artist's greatest challenge and calling is to make impassioned work while being aware of the complex societal intertwining of the expressive and creative process. This kind of an approach inevitably brushes with concerns related to truth, morality, and identity, of the kind that Ignatieff writes about. It places responsibility of expression not just on the artist, but also on the other players in a process that may ultimately bring any given body of work into the public realm. The works in the exhibition have been selected, as best I could, with these thoughts in mind. Many artists were not selected, and to them, I apologize for my limited vision and lack of correspondence with their interests. To all who submitted work, I thank you for your endeavors and commitment.

Pradip Malde
January, 2009.