

Bark is the Song of the Dog

Anuj Ambalal



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Strange as may it sound but absurdity is of great interest to me. I have often found myself, albeit subconsciously, gravitating towards things, conversations, situations, individuals, visuals or even thoughts that can often be categorized as absurd.

Absurdity is extremely engaging for it has its roots in reality. Absurd is as close as reality can get to abstraction. When a thing crosses a certain threshold, it enters into the realm of abstraction. And in abstraction I lose that intensity to engage as the room for interpretation becomes wide open. Usually the backdrop of absurdity is essentially real and hence believable, but it is its context that fractures this reality.

A few years back while working on a series, suddenly in the middle of my shoot I struck a block. I started feeling depleted and exhausted of ideas. No matter how hard I tried, I could not think of a way forward. It was then that I decided to pick up my father's 35mm camera - an old Pentax - and loaded some black and white film that I had picked up on one of my



travels. It was a deliberate move for I had neither shot an analogue camera nor had I done any monochrome work

before. I found this process liberating for I expected nothing to come out of it. I exposed a few rolls over the next few months, marveled

at the charm of shooting film, and resumed my work feeling rejuvenated. The plan worked.

After a few months, out of curiosity I got these rolls processed and had a contact sheet printed. Looking at those contact sheets with a magnifying lens was the first time that I got a glimpse into their absurdity. I had the negatives scanned.

When the pictures first appeared on my computer screen they seemed to have a kind of intimacy about them. There was a touch of strangeness too in these tragicomical objects. Were these mundane objects in strange surroundings or were they strange objects in mundane surroundings?

For me these pictures contain a certain amount of Kafkaesque humour along with a sense of tension that is inherent to isolation. Perhaps my extensive reading of works by the Japanese writer Haruki Murakami before the shoots had something to do with it. The subjects of these pictures and their

surroundings form a fusion of realism with the fantastic and the process infuses almost a sense of an alternate reality into them. I don't see these pictures falling into the genre of classical still life as they lack a certain formality of composition and the required play of light. I rather see them as a snapshots of a fantastical world that exists and thrives in its own isolation. A world in which the characters play their part whilst still being frozen in reality.

This extraordinary world, with its undertones of cynicism and black humour, is set up in our world - the real world. But the strange juxtapositions of these objects with their disjointed surroundings give us a sense of the bizarre. It is as if one is peeking into a child's dream...but then I have always dreamt in colour - how absurd ! Anuj Ambalal



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Two's a company



The joke



Lion's share I Lion's share II



After dark



Men without women











Eyes of a blue dog



Thing T



The elephant vanishes II The elephant vanishes I



Pinball A dream



Contemplation



Hear the wind sing



The revenant



Whiplash



The metamorphosis



The knock on the manor gate



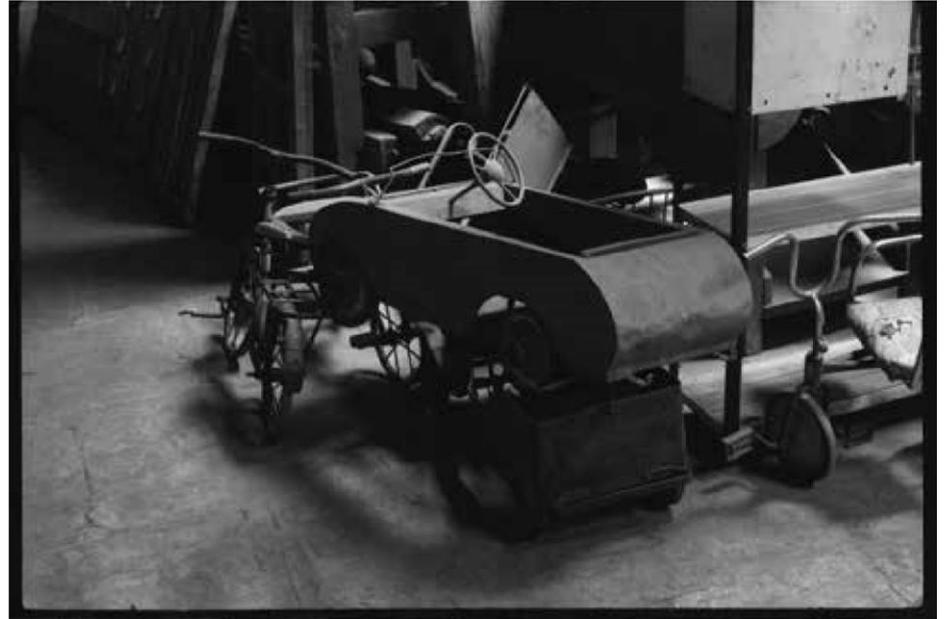
Love in the time of Cholera



Maharaja



Spellbound



The famished road



Hitchhiked



Elephant in the room



One hundred years of solitude



Room with a view



Memoirs of a geisha



Strange Pilgrims



Living to tell the tale



Out of the closet



Loose strings Fossils



Stopwatch



In the right company



The cares of a family man



A strange library I



Virgin of the wall



Description of a struggle



As I please



Family affairs - I Family affairs - II



Silence of the siren



Sahib, Biwi aru Gulam



Story of a shipwrecked sailor



Fish out of water Noah's arc



A crossbreed

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