



When My Sky was Snatched Away

Pratap Morey

As the construction of the Metro gathered steam near my housing colony in a suburb of Mumbai, I realized two contradictory things. One, I was excited to be part of the larger transit network that would make travelling in the city easier. And two, my access to the sky was being snatched away.

As you stand under the crisscrossing beams and the looming columns, you experience in that void-like space, a deep sense of fear and chaotic urgency. You look at the construction all around, from below, and a sense of deep foreboding descends, an intimation of some dark emergency-to-be.

The construction seemed to take place at a slow pace. The barricades, the steel rods, the concrete mixers, the thrum of machines became part of the new cityscape. But, one night, suddenly, without you knowing it, the bridge arms were placed over the columns. When I got up in the morning, the space had totally transformed. I felt asphyxiated and bereft, deprived and suddenly very small. The naka where Sujith SN, Ritesh Meshram and I used to have chai often in the evening had disappeared.

I remember this experience and realise the sense of uncertainty that human beings feel at any change – the pandemic has made this doubly clear. Another realization I've had is about the *karmabhoomi*, our place of work and dreams. The stability it promises is mythical. There is no guarantee of security. I left Mumbai as the pandemic struck like thousands of other people and returned to Amravati, poised between hope and hopefulness, assurance and doubt.

In my work, realistic but somewhat blurred white drawings of gates and windows of chawls in Kandivali are superimposed over photos of buildings. Between the drawings and the morphed images, a strangely superimposed, lost landscape of the real is produced.

Is the new landscape *more* real? Is the landscape *within* more real than the landscape *without*? As we wander around between states, spaces and emotions, I find myself asking questions that can only have imprecise and ambiguous answers.

(Facing Page) **Pratap Morey**. *Superimpose 2.0.8*. Ink on archival paper. 12.5" x 20.4". 2019. Image courtesy of the artist and TARQ.