

**For Immediate Release****THROUGH A LENS, DARKLY (2009)****Photographs and photo animations by Madhuban Mitra and Manas Bhattacharya****Preview: Saturday, 18<sup>th</sup> December, 2010**On view till 12<sup>th</sup> February, 2011

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Photoink is pleased to present *Through A Lens, Darkly*, an exhibition of photographs and photo animations by Madhuban Mitra and Manas Bhattacharya.

*Through a Lens, Darkly*, a collaborative photographic project explores the ruins of India's first and only still camera factory, National Instruments Ltd. in Jadavpur, Kolkata. The National 35 was meant to be the iconic Indian camera which, as history would have it, it never quite became. From the late 1980s, the company dissolved its workforce, was declared a sick industry, and eventually handed over to the Jadavpur University in January 2009 for establishing a new campus. Ironically, at the time it was shut down, the factory had been developing the National Reflex 2000, which would have become India's first SLR camera.

Today, the place where the camera was born is a silent, eerie and dusty repository of broken camera shells, spare parts and debris. In the absence of the workers, the factory bristles with objects of personal significance scattered on worktables and in the workers cupboards. It seems the workers just got up and left. Rather than invoking a nostalgia for that which is disappearing, the project attempts to excavate a certain history of labour and of technology and their slow but inevitable passage.

Apart from photographs, the work also incorporates photo-based animation. The photo animations emerged from the need to record small movements, mutations, discreet and subtle variations in the space that were not possible to examine through the still photograph. Composed of photographs, the animations explore a liminal space between the still and the moving image, and invoke both early silent cinema and the photographic slideshow. In a way, the photographs and animations are the last images of a shipwreck.

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## **BIOGRAPHY**

Madhuban Mitra (b. 1973) studied English literature and classical dance, and holds a doctoral degree in Cultural Studies. She worked as Programme Executive at the India Foundation for the Arts and subsequently at the Centre for Studies in Social Sciences, Kolkata. In 2008, she gave up her job to pursue her interests in writing, photography and film.

Manas Bhattacharya (b. 1977) has a Masters degree in Comparative Literature from Jadavpur University, Kolkata, and went on to study Cinematography in the Satyajit Ray Film & Television Institute. Other than photography, he works with and in many media including digital imaging, film, video and sound. He has received two grants from the India Foundation for the Arts (IFA) for new media work. His photo essays, *Bitter Bodies* and *Slow Loss*, have been published in *ArtConnect* and *Marg*. Manas' work has also been shown in the juried group show, *Edgy: Pushing the Limits of Photographic Art* at the Centre for Fine Art Photography, Colorado, USA, in 2008.

*Through a Lens, Darkly* is their first collaborative photographic project. Photographs from the project have been shown in the Thessaloniki Photobiennale, Greece (May-July, 2010) and, more recently, at the Singapore International Photography Festival in October, 2010.