

PROJECT 34

Asad Raza

2019

Absorption

3 - 19 May 2019

The Clothing Store, Carriageworks, Sydney

BIOGRAPHY

Born in 1974 in Buffalo, USA, and of Pakistani background, Raza works with experiences, human and non-human beings, and objects. He conceives of exhibitions as metabolic entities, zones of activity in which he constructs dialogue and scenarios between visitors and participants. Past works include *Untitled (plot for dialogue)*, for which Raza installed a tennis-like game in a deconsecrated church in Milan. *Root sequence. Mother tongue*, first shown at the 2017 Whitney Biennial, is a forest of twenty-six living trees with human caretakers in the museum. For *home show*, which took place at his apartment in New York, Raza asked friends, family and artists to intervene in his own life.

FACTS

- *Defining yourself through a job isn't satisfying, and actually I think it's crucial for people to get away from defining their usefulness in terms of jobs.*
- Asad Raza
- Asad Raza's practice is multifaceted, and comprises the roles of artist, curator, dramaturge, editor, producer and director.
- Project 34 was a site-specific work, which occupied the entire Clothing Store building with almost 300 tonnes of soil.
- Raza collaborated with Professor Alex McBratney and the Sydney Institute of Agriculture to create a new soil mixture, or neo soil. They varied the components of the soil to cultivate specific properties, including the ability to react and absorb elements, in order to improve its productive capacity.
- Raza invited a number of artists to create interventions, taking the form of installations, performances or experiments, and focusing on dialogue and collaboration.
- A number of 'cultivators' were present at all times throughout the exhibition, acting as custodians and caretakers of the soil, prompting informal conversations with visitors and enacting daily rituals and processes of mixing, watering and testing.
- The project was a network of living organisms and non-living materials, which changed, developed and grew over time. This process of constant evolution is characteristic of Asad Raza's artistic practice.
- The engagement of the audience is central to Asad Raza's work. He aims to foster new encounters, produce moments of active and participatory dialogue, and explore what the experience of exhibitions can make possible for visitors.

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PROJECT OVERVIEW

Asad Raza's *Absorption* was presented by Kaldor Public Art Projects and Carriageworks.

Absorption brought the ground beneath us to the forefront, drawing our attention to the living and changing nature of soil. The work constituted almost 300 tonnes of organic and inorganic material, including sand, silt, clay, phosphates, lime, spent grain, cuttlebone, legumes, coffee and green waste, combined into a new soil mixture, or neo soil.

A group of cultivators enacted this process of mixing, creating a composite material that visitors were free to take for their own uses, allowing *Absorption* to continue to grow and be nurtured beyond the Clothing Store.

Developed in collaboration with a team of scientists at the University of Sydney Institute of Agriculture, *Absorption* transformed the Clothing Store into a site for active processes, collaborations and conversations. Within the world created by *Absorption*, Raza invited artists Daniel Boyd, Chun Yin Rainbow Chan, Megan Alice Clune, Dean Cross, Brian Fuata, Agatha Gothe-Snape, Jana Hawkins-Andersen, Khaled Sabsabi and Ivey Wawn to create interventions in the form of installations, performances and experiments.

Raza drew together the approaches and ontologies of art and science, allowing for absorption to take place across multiple levels of understanding in the creation of this work.

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Raza, *Absorption*,
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Photo: Pedro Greig



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