

# Sandhini Poddar



Sandhini Poddar is assistant curator of Asian art at the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum in New York, where she has organized "Anish Kapoor: Memory" and "Being Singular Plural: Moving Images from India," which was on view this past fall at Deutsche Guggenheim in Berlin and travels to New York in an expanded form in early 2012.

PHOTO: DAVID HEALD

# BEST OF 2010

Every December, *Artforum* invites a wide range of artists, critics, and curators to take a look back at the year in art. In the pages that follow, fourteen contributors choose their top ten highlights of 2010, while three others pick single standout exhibitions. And to round out our reflections, philosopher **Bruno Latour**, critic **John Kelsey**, and artist **Michael Smith** give three very different takes on the year that was.

**Thomas Crow**  
**Daniel Birnbaum**  
**Christine Macel**  
**Richard Hawkins**  
**Okwui Enwezor**  
**Lynne Cooke**  
**Jack Bankowsky**  
**Anne M. Wagner**  
**Matthew Higgs**  
**Michael Ned Holte**  
**Pauline J. Yao**  
**Jeffrey Kastner**  
**Victoria Noorthoorn**  
**Sandhini Poddar**  
**Chris Dercon**  
**Helen Molesworth**  
**Hal Foster**

View of "FischGrätenMelkStand" (Herringbone Milking Parlor), 2010, Temporäre Kunsthalle Berlin. Structure designed by John Bock. Photo: Jan Windszus. (See page 194.)

**1 Amar Kanwar** (Marian Goodman Gallery, New York) Kanwar is interested in the trajectories images take as they enter the public domain and assume a life of their own. His complex and poetic multi-channel video installations such as *The Lightning Testimonies*, 2007, and *The Torn First Pages*, 2004–2008—parts of which may also be viewed as single-channel works outside of an art-world context—appeal to different audiences around the world, each with its own historical moorings. Deploying documentary and archival footage that unflinchingly addresses sexual violence and political repression, Kanwar aims to disturb the status quo of image absorption.

**2 “Who Knows Tomorrow”** (Friedrichswerdersche Kirche, Alte Nationalgalerie, Neue Nationalgalerie, and Hamburger Bahnhof—Museum für Gegenwart, Berlin; curated by Udo Kittelmann, Chika Okeke-Agulu, and Britta Schmitz) Curating an exhibition based on national representation is never straightforward. Rather than develop a large survey show (which rarely succeeds) on Africa (still too often mistaken for a monolithic entity rather than a diverse continent), the curators invited artists whose works take up a multiplicity of African histories and communities, while engaging the site-specific architectural and socio-political inheritances of four major venues in Berlin. Certain pieces—El Anatsui’s bold tapestry *Ozone Layer and Yam Mound(s)*, 2010, with its hundreds of hand-beaten aluminum scraps that partly shrouded the Alte Nationalgalerie, as well as Zarina Bhimji’s meditative 2007 film *Waiting*, at the Hamburger Bahnhof—went further, standing apart for their deft melding of accumulative processes (weaving, recording) and the layering of historical memory.

**3 Adam Fuss** (Cheim & Read, New York) Visitors to Fuss’s exhibition were invited into a small, chapel-like room in which three large daguerreotypes were on view: The two depicting bare mattresses (one covered in writhing snakes, a leitmotif of the show) were mounted on dimly lit gray walls, which beautifully offset the pictures’ mirrored surfaces. Lying on the floor, where one might have expected an altar to stand, was an enormous daguerreotype of a vagina (a nod to Courbet, and one of the show’s many art-historical allusions). In a second, brightly lit room, images of snakes predominated, and



8. Anders Krisár, *Sonja*, 2007–2008, used clothes and hemp rope, 11 x 21 ¼ x 46”.

their visceral symbolism attracted as powerfully as it repelled. Fuss’s fecund interests in ancient mythologies, archaic photographic practices, and spiritualism coalesced in this indelible exhibition.

**4 “Resemble Reassemble”** (Devi Art Foundation, New Delhi; curated by Rashid Rana) Artist Rashid Rana’s group show brought together the work of forty-five established and emerging talents from his native Pakistan, with standout contributions from Hamra Abbas, Bani Abidi, Asma Mundrawala, and Mohammad Ali Talpur. The exhibition, which took the rebus as its structuring principle, so that correlations between otherwise unrelated works had to be deduced through visual, formal, and linguistic clues, upended stereotypical views on contemporary production from the region by steering clear of tropes and subjects prevalidated by the West.

**5 Apichatpong Weerasethakul, Uncle Boonmee Who Can Recall His Past Lives** With a Palme d’Or from Cannes under his belt and a Hugo Boss Prize nomination this year, Thai filmmaker Apichatpong Weerasethakul is forging a new filmic language. Working out of the forests of northeast Thailand, this quietly humorous artist prefers to collaborate with the same actors across projects, enabling audience members to acquaint and reacquaint themselves with his recurring characters. The almost primeval setting of Apichatpong’s latest film, its enveloping dreamlike atmosphere, and its cast of half-human, half-animal characters from another life conspire to demolish our linear understanding of time and beguile us into believing in reincarnation, if only for two hours.

**6 Ai Weiwei** (Tate Modern, London; curated by Juliet Bingham) Ai’s site-specific instal-

lation for the Turbine Hall at Tate Modern is sublime. Filling the monumental space with a thick carpet of one hundred million handcrafted and handpainted porcelain sunflower seeds, the artist has achieved the impossible—meeting a spectacle-oriented mandate with the most minimal of means. Visitors were invited to walk across the bed of seeds, transforming the installation into a participatory, and symbolic, sound-based work—until the realization that the ensuing porcelain dust was a health hazard led, alas, to the work’s being roped off from the public.

**7 William Kentridge** (Museum of Modern Art, New York; curated by Klaus Biesenbach, Judith B. Hecker, and Cara Starke) The large-scale thematic exhibition of Kentridge’s animated films, mechanized miniature theaters, prints, and drawings paid fitting tribute to a famously complex oeuvre. In perhaps the show’s most memorable passage—a room containing two miniature theaters, *Black Box/Chambre Noire* and *Preparing the Flute*, both 2005—visitors were transported beyond the museum’s walls by inventive, fantastic, yet politically charged stories that unfold through magic-lantern-like video projections, animated sculptural collages, and music.

*An earlier iteration of the exhibition, co-organized by SF MOMA and the Norton Museum of Art, West Palm Beach, FL, was curated by Mark Rosenthal.*

**8 Anders Krisár** (Galleri Thomas Wallner, Simris, Sweden) Largely an autodidact, Krisár decided to become a visual artist only in his late twenties, and despite having garnered recognition quickly, he remains an outsider. His work—primarily in sculpture and photography—is, for the most part, hermetic, even morbid, playing as it does with casting, molds, and deformation. Krisár has, nonetheless, created in a few

9. View of “Sopheap Pich: The Pulse Within,” 2009–10, Tyler Rollins Fine Art, New York, 2010. Foreground: *Junk Nutrients*, 2009. Middle ground (on wall): *Silence, Version 4*, 2009. Background: *Raft*, 2009.



short years a poetic, deeply felt body of work, exemplified in sculptures such as *Sonja*, 2007–2008, and *M*, 2008–10.

**9 Sopheap Pich** (Tyler Rollins Fine Art, New York) Following in the footsteps of Chen Zhen and Montien Boonma, Cambodian artist Sopheap Pich conjures his art from an intensely personal place, with a refined eye for material and craft, as convincingly evinced in “The Pulse Within,” his first solo exhibition in New York. His rattan and bamboo sculptures simulating human organs, environmental waste, and water rafts are deeply woven into the artist’s daily existence (his studio is near a lake), dredging up recollections of life in Cambodia under the brutal Khmer Rouge. Despite their recognizable themes, Pich’s works never succumb to sentimentality, but, rather, stay afloat as poignant engagements with issues of time, memory, and nature.

**10 8th Gwangju Biennale: “Maninbo—10,000 Lives”** (various venues; curated by Massimiliano Gioni) Gioni’s sprawling interrogation of the multifaceted lives of images and the equivocal ties we develop with them spans the twentieth century and the first decade of the twenty-first, gathering artworks, relics, found objects, and photographs as its evidence. Within the massive historical sweep of the show, which unfolds in a labyrinthine design, individual works such as Tehching Hsieh’s *Punching the Time Clock on the Hour, One Year Performance April 11, 1980–April 11, 1981*, in which the artist investigates time through self-portraiture, as well as contributions from E. J. Bellocq, Harun Farocki, Jean-Luc Godard, Yasmine Kabir, Hito Steyerl, and Haegue Yang, expose and undermine our codependent relationship with visual representation. □

10. Tehching Hsieh, *Punching the Time Clock on the Hour, One Year Performance April 11, 1980–April 11, 1981*, time clock, time cards, color photographs, color video. Installation view, Gwangju Museum of Art, 2010.

