



From the series *The Archaeology of Absence*

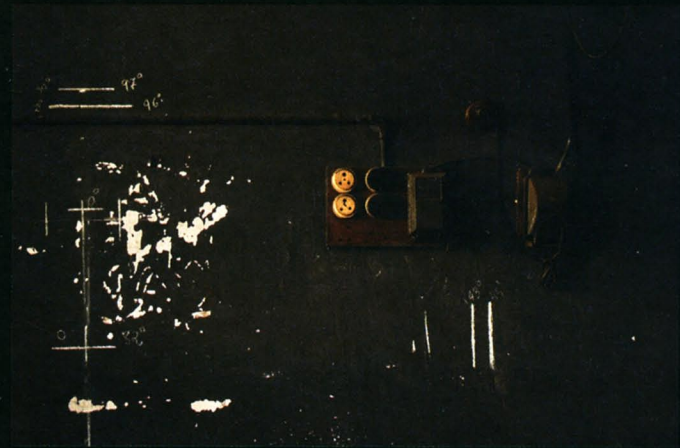
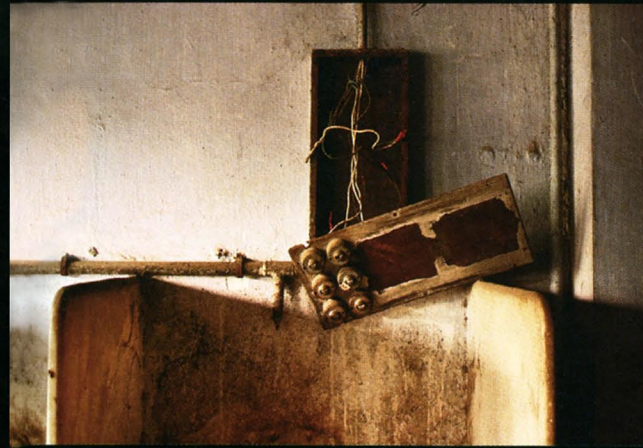
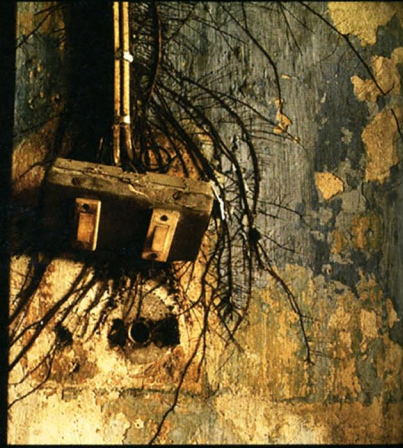
Madhuban Mitra and Manas Bhattacharya

## Through a Lens, Darkly

*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 worker's cupboards. It seems the workers just got up and left. Rather than invoking a nostalgia for that which is disappearing as we speak, the project attempts to excavate a certain history of labour and of technology and their slow but inevitable passage. Photographed in the digital format, the images bear witness to the death of the analogue. They are, in a way, the last images of a shipwreck.





The strongest man  
is he who stands most  
alone. — Henrik Ibsen

Persistent Circuits



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**Madhuban Mitra & Manas Bhattacharya**

Madhuban 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 and Social Sciences*, Kolkata. In 2008, she gave up her job to pursue her interests in writing, photography and film. Manas has a Masters degree in Comparative Literature from *Jadavpur University*, Kolkata, and went on to study Cinematography at the *Satyajit Ray Film &*

*Television Institute*. Other than photography, he works with and in many media including digital imaging, film, video and sound. *Through a Lens, Darkly* is their first collaborative photography project. Photographs from the project have been shown in the *Thessaloniki Photobiennale*, Greece in 2010 and, more recently, at the *Singapore International Photography Festival* in October, 2010.

On till February 12<sup>th</sup>, 2011 at *Photoink*, [www.photoink.net\\_](http://www.photoink.net_)