

Jagged little pill

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With technical imagery “Electronic City” creates the fragmented city of Gurgaon. I want to reverse the process, that’s why my performers shoot themselves, instead of being shot – Amitesh Grover, Director, Electronic City.

Directed by Amitesh Grover and written by Falk Richter, “Electronic City” reaches out to the audience by alienating them. Staged recently at Max Mueller Bhavan, this performance art piece is a combination of digitised media and acting. Th rough an intelligent use of electronic media, it shows the dehumanising effect of the technological age. Grover chose Richter’s script finding it a “global text”. The script has remained unchanged, but visuals ground it in Gurgaon.

The plot is a neo-love story set around Tom and Joy. Tom is a travelling consultant. Constant jet-setting has made him lose his sense of location. He is unsure whether he is in Berlin, London or New York. Joy works at an airport. She becomes overwhelmed as machines seem to take over and customers lose patience. They meet at the airport; where an airport is essentially a microcosm of the modern world. It is a place of transit and dislocation, where meetings are circumstantial and often based on loneliness. This chance meeting leads to a torrid and sexual coming together. Set around these two characters the play, also, includes a chorus. The chorus is conceptualised as “ghosts of an electronic city”.

This abstract play works largely through symbols and projections. But symbols always run the risk of being either missed or misunderstood. At times the play veers toward the incomprehensible. But it does finally succeed in creating the fragmented world of Gurgaon, where growth and change have not occurred naturally, but have been artificially implanted from outside.

Live telecast “Electronic City” is a play that addresses issues of the corporate world

Action is both enacted and presented. While the actor acts, his image is also recorded and broadcast simultaneously, using two handycams, a television screen and a cinema screen. An NSD Graduate, Grover explains that this technique reverses the usual power equation between man and machine.

“We are not in control of technology,” he says, “I want to reverse this process, that’s why my performers shoot themselves, instead of being shot.” The juxtaposition between real action and the televised image shows the possible manipulative power of the media.

A camera makes visible angles and positions that would normally remain invisible. For Grover, this serves as a reminder that our reality is manipulated.