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# The Sunday Guardian

## Greenhouse art experimentation

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**T**he Khoj Studio in Khirki village has transformed into a beautiful garden oasis sitting in the midst of this monochrome, claustrophobic neighbourhood. The space is more alive than I have ever seen it, with patches of turf grass adorning the walls and different species of insects and birds buzzing overhead. While this may seem like an environmental campaign, it is,



Work by Ackroyd and Harvey

in fact, the second edition of Khoj's unique Residency In Context: Public. Art. Ecology. This four-week residency blends art and science from an artist's perspective and will eventually culminate in an exhibition.

There are four artists showcasing their work here: Brandon Ballengee from USA, Heather Ackroyd and Dan Harvey from the UK, Pratik Sagar from Baroda and Navin Thomas from Bangalore.

Ballengee, a biologist/artist, is building a micro-habitat for insects living in urban areas. He has kept pots of flowers in one room, which attract insects. "The kind of species that gets

attracted to these reveals a lot about the area we live in. If there are just a few insects, it suggests that due to pollution insects cannot survive in the neighbourhood. But I noticed a rare moth which is a bio-indicator of a clean water source nearby and I am trying to find out its source," Ballengee says, pointing at a small green moth on the wall.

During the exhibition, he will place a huge steel lotus flower at Select Citywalk along with a small garden with lots of flowers, and call it the Love Motel for Insects. "This lotus will be a 24-hour habitat for insects. In the night, the exterior of the structure and the UV rays will support the Love Motel and provide a nocturnal habitat for moths," he says.



Work by Brandon Ballengee

Ackroyd and Harvey have built a green court. The duo has received numerous awards for their work, making photographic images using chlorophyll. At Khoj, the artists have grown vertical barley grass on the walls. "This experiment is to create a breathing space within a hot and polluted city," says Harvey.

art and nature city, by sara sagar

Harvey has also planned a series of portraits of women using a projector in a dark room. The area exposed to the light is coloured green, while the dark area is painted yellow. "Through this experiment I am trying to show the light sensitivity of chlorophyll. Within a few weeks, it will turn into a beautiful painting," he adds.

Thomas is a new media artist and is interested in sub-sonic frequencies and ecology. For one project, he is catching Catfish. "I went to listen to the sound of Yamuna, but could not hear anything. This suggests that it is dirty and cannot sustain life. But the boatman told me that there were a lot of catfish in the water. I researched and found that catfish are voracious eaters and can survive on anything, including the faeces of pigs. My presentation will tell people how unhealthy it is to eat Catfish," says Thomas.

Baroda artist Sagar's project aims at interacting with and observing nature. He has created an 'interactive bird eco-habitat' by arranging water-filled mud pots in the form of the word 'Forgive' to feed birds. The idea is to encourage forgiveness.