

Waste Work: the art of survival in Dharavi

Edited by Ben Parry and Graham Jeffery

This book documents a long-term project about waste, work and survival in the city of Mumbai which uses arts-based methods to establish an experimental learning space and innovation lab for young people in Dharavi. Compound 13 Lab is situated close to one of the city's main recycling hubs, where each week thousands of tons of hard waste are sorted, cleaned, and processed. Tens of thousands of people work in this industry and they are amongst the lowest paid and lowest status workers in the city. Using art, design, music, media and experimental science as a platform for generating knowledge and sharing learning, Compound 13 Lab explores the complex politics of the informal city and the biopolitics of disposability: how to make a living and survive within the everyday exclusions and expulsions of such highly contested urban spaces. The flows of dirty materials and hard manual labour in exchange for cash within the alleys of the 13th Compound undercut and unsettle the spectacular images of a clean, weightless, electronic, hypermobile, digital 'global city' preferred by urban planners. Tonnes of waste materials discarded without thought by a growing consumer society are transported to Dharavi to be recovered and mined for their residual value by undocumented and precariously employed workers. *Waste Work* reflects on some principles, pedagogies and processes that can begin to uncover some of this injustice and inequality, and offers 'materials of hope' for young people and workers caught up in the vicious cycles of an economy and society that treats them as disposable.

The project is built on a collaboration between ACORN India, who have a long history of advocacy and support for waste workers, and a team of academics, artists and activists drawn from India and the UK, including Bath Spa University, the University of the West of Scotland, and Shiv Nadar University, New Delhi. The book is edited by Dr Ben Parry, Senior Lecturer in Curatorial Practice at Bath Spa University and Professor Graham Jeffery, Professor in Arts and Media Practice at the University of the West of Scotland. Other contributors include artists Aqui Thami, Vrishali Purandare, Ajamal Shifaz, and Akhila Krishnan, Assoc. Professor Sharmila Samant from Shiv Nadar University, Ravi Agarwal (Toxics Links), Sharmila Joshi (Peoples' Archive of Rural India), Ian Dawson (Winchester College of Art) and Dr Penny Hay (Bath Spa University). The research underpinning this book was supported by grants from the Global Challenges Research Fund through the UK's Arts and Humanities Research Council and the British Academy.

www.compound13.org

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