

DAILY CONSTRUCTIONS

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The globally established format of the daily soap is also extremely popular in India. The individual episodes of TV series that air daily with themes taken from everyday life and the world of relationships invariably have an open plotline, whose idea is to maximize viewer involvement. In general, the series do not rely on happy endings but instead finish with a heightening of existing conflicts in, for the most part, the protagonists' family and private milieu. This ratchets up the tension to a climax and thus whets the audience's appetite to watch the next episode as well. The production costs of these series with their rather trivial content are generally comparatively low, partly because the action always takes place in the same place with the same set.

The scenes in these series usually play out in the characters' private living rooms, which are installed as permanent set constructions in the film studios. The furnishings of these living spaces can be seen as a mirror reflecting the tastes of India's aspiring middle and upper class. The furniture and décor have a referential value and are a depiction, in a monotone, accentuated form, of contemporary tastes in interior design and modern-day lifestyle trends. Real living rooms typically serve as models for these sets.

My photographic work *Daily Constructions* takes this world as its theme, documenting these filmic reproductions. The illusion of supposed reality is cancelled out by the fact that these reproductions are recognizable as such. By showing larger details than one sees in the film, the trappings of the construction are

made visible in the photographs. Open ceilings, elements to provide shade or brighten the scene, spotlights, tripods, and one-dimensional backgrounds highlight the architecture of the scenery.

India's population still includes a broad underclass, for whom a living environment of this kind will remain an unattainable illusion throughout their lives. However, the opportunities for the middle and upper class to obtain greater material prosperity have been steadily growing for some years. The two TV series I focus on, produced by the Vandana Film Enterprise in Kolkata – *Dwiragaman* (a Bengali term describing the official end of a traditional wedding ceremony on the eighth day) and *Tumi Asbe Bole* ("Come back to me") – depict two key positions in the creation of identity among the Indian population and reveal the state of dynamic tension that is increasingly at play in Indian society in its process of global development: a traditional, conservative attitude that can be deduced from the interiors in *Dwiragaman*, and a lifestyle geared to a Western sense of modernity, which can be seen in the furniture in *Tumi Asbe Bole*.