

Kapital & Karma

Recent Positions in Indian Art

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Hatje Cantz

Madan Gopal Singh on Ranbir Kaleka

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installation still

MAN THREADING A NEEDLE 1998/1999

Single channel video projected on 59 x 91 cm, (23.3 x 35.8 inch) oil painting. 6 minute loop with sound



MAN WITH COCKEREL 2001-02

2 channel video, 19 minute loop

There once existed an aperture before the mind's eye. Images would pass through the defile in a stop-go movement weaving narratives of tender melos before dissolving into the continuum of life. The flood of images mingled with forgotten songs of celebration. These imaginings were more like plaintive wakes within the heart of remembrance - as possibilities of sleep. They seemed to rise from clearings of light and volumes. Were these choices of technique? Compulsions of memory? Or just a unique way of reclaiming history put under erasure? So many cellars of remembrance would resonate in unison. The musty aroma of time, the muted sounds of uncertainly beckoning ghosts.

Friendly. Inapproachable. Ranbir's work during student days had the profundity of light sitting quietly, almost unobtrusively, beside you. And it seemed to spring from perhaps a very finely developed sense of sound. It caressed submerged histories that had been put indifferently away but had mercifully continued to exist.

Within the technologies of the cinematograph, an image could get stuck in the defile. And having got stuck, it could not manage to move itself away from light. Not being able to bear the intensity of light, it would burn before our eyes. It would stick like the molten melt caught in a single image memory carrying scars of neurosis to endless repetitions.

And then the technologies of power brought us into a world of virtual maze. The signs of fire began to recede. Neuroses now reappeared as so many playful ghosts in a dance of unpredictable repetitions. The ghosts recovered differences through spans of durative stillness now broken quite unexpectedly by the twitch of eyelids, a slight movement of hand unexpectedly astir to put the freeze back into time. The homogeneity of a small image demanding a heterogeneity of 'gaze'. The water trickles down against what is perhaps a blue window. Light filters across like the intensity of a mild ember - staining the window filling it with volume. Like the luminous poetic word - aglow from within. Light sitting on a painted surface in a projective play. There is a ghost within this light and another within the pigment. This is the moment of their encounter. Of their magic. These ghosts reside within digital loops - infinitely replayable, alongside partial narratives of continuously distracted gaze outside.

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holds a doctoral degree in film semiotic. He is a literary and film theorist, script writer, singer and composer. He teaches at Delhi University and has lectured extensively in India and abroad on film theory.