



Boy Without Reflection 2004
305 x 152 cm
120 x 60 inches
oil on canvas

The Sunday Indian Express April 25 2004

review of
After Dark Exhibition
28 April to 31 May 2004
Sakshi Gallery, Mumbai

THE WONDERING EYE (*excerpt*)
The Moment of Truth

by Rupika Chawla

...and the artist who is stricken by reality's horrors will express it through art. It is impossible to say when an assertion against tyranny will grip the collective imagination and make a difference. But it becomes important to try with whatever weapons one is equipped with and hence to the painter his brush, paints, thoughts and outrage.

We get shaken out of our complacency when there is a loved one we need to protect and the world appears full of dangers. And so it was with the painter Ranbir Singh Kaleka as he grew into his other identity of parenthood. The result was *Boy without Reflections*. The protest was against man-made violence and terror that threatened the particular and society in general. None of the forceful images in the painting are to be taken literally for what they are. All of them contribute to the visual and emotional impact of menace and insecurity. Birds lose their shelter as nests are shattered and twigs fly about; living beings, not specifically human, flee the evil that stalks them. The dogs of terror are unleashed, their collars redundant and their threat multiplied. One of them bares its teeth and howls in a manner that would intimidate the brave.

But all is not lost and there is always hope for a threatened society. The dominating canine painted in red displays its vulnerability and its impermanence through its bony skeletal structure, for, like all of us, it too will perish.

Here lies another metaphor, for it is in the conquering of fear that fear will be no more and it is in defying the red canine that it will cease to be important. For a troubled society does the answer lie in shaking off indifference and fear and collectively helping each other in time of need?

Rupika Chawla is a art restorer, independent art critic and writer on Indian Contemporary Art