

THE ART FACTORY

Culturally and gender transcendent, blend of past and present, Durga Kainthola's pratibha (creative energy, vision and imagination) infuses The Art Factory series with a dynamic spirit. Seemingly controlled, at once riotous, playfully irreverent and alluding, these works compose illusion and reality. Trans-conceptual flashes of allegory resonate and push open the portals of perception.

Commenced in 2001, in subject matter and the materials wielded, The Art Factory series differs from Kainthola's earlier work; yet it retains her fearless exploration and visualisation. Reconfiguring the textural, thematic nature of Pop Art silk screens, her brush introduces the lore of India and global mythology. Three large-scale acrylic light boxes, Warhol, New York and September 11th, Goddess Comes to New York, and Warhol, Christ and St. Veronica with Sudarium, juxtapose recent reverberating events and cultural icons with saints and seekers from the East and West. In fifty smaller works on paper, Andy Warhol and the History of Art, an inexhaustible treasury of images and narratives is transfigured, rendered supra-natural and transmogrified.

Celebrating and challenging the erstwhile 'protean nature of art', the artist's rootedness revolves about a seemingly figurative vortex, fusing influences and grammars. Her work questions codicils of metaphor: "Externalising it by approximation to abstract forms...out of its natural context...to render it necessary and irrefragable, to appropriate it to its absolute value." (William Worringer, *Abstraction and Empathy: A Contribution to the Psychology of Style*. London, 1953, p. 16)

An ironic twist, a mockery of originality...a call for ocular probing beyond the veneer. Each work, a subtly altered paradigm, claims its singularity and its continuity. As each leaf, burgeoning from one branch possesses a distinct identity. Durga Kainthola weaves disparate, diverse strands into tapestry, as if 'through a glass darkly'. The Art Factory series defy, even refute stereotypical nomenclature.

Against monochromatic inkjet backdrops, depicting Andy Warhol, Marilyn Monroe and Valerie Solanas, her deft hand plays with the unexpected. Visualised spontaneously, transpicuous and nebulous characters, colours, notes, and notions pool in an assimilated amalgam. Permissible, even enviable, potential casualties provoke and bemuse even the artist. Thus, each piece realises an experiment of its own. Embracing such uncertainty, waving her inspirational wand, the work unfolds. As the inkjet effect once printed cannot be changed, Kainthola unequivocally acknowledges, "This helped me to build greater confidence in my drawing."

In The Art Factory, Kainthola's conjured visual realm, symbols are interwoven and uncovered by the mind's eye. Painted upon the surface: mythological personae, deities of creation and destruction, fantasies incarnate drawn from millennia of poetic transmission, flora and fauna... such fecund depictions hover and soar beyond place and time. Warhol, inheritor of Dada and foreshadower of conceptual art, provides the backdrop for this animated, ever-changing stage. These works connect and blend metaphors; blue-bodied Durga thrust beside Marilyn Monroe, magenta tinged violet-coloured lotuses betwixt bursts of flames and newspaper headlines of Ground Zero, Mondrian's coloured geometry wrapped around Shakti. A vision of New York City on fire, burning with dense clouds of smoke; around it, the lotus parallels the fronds of flame and carries them to the land of the sacred flower, symbol of eternity, spirituality, and timelessness. 'Christ upon the Cross' detailed in Warhol, Christ and St. Veronica with Sudarium, a fascinating and astoundingly feasible (not only in societal but in aesthetic terms as well) parallel with the fifteenth century painting St. Veronica with Sudarium, proffers a pop art floating head of Christ at the foreground. Kainthola re-examines the banality and profundity of iconography. By juxtaposing eternal and recognisable global elements, the context is no longer limited nor trivialised.

A cosmos of canvases, infinite panoply of connotation invites delight, query and humour. Warhol (adapted from Greg Gorman's 1983 photograph), as a consummated metaphor, the penultimate voyeur of the 20th century, proffers a palette across which myriad narratives unfold. Through her Eastern perspective and knowledge of Western art, the eye perceives multi-fold meanings from one work to the next. The viewer faces the recurring image, staring implacably from behind dark glasses outward beyond the picture frame. Raising the query: Who is looking at Whom? Yet, complete delineation in art falls short of the ideal: one must accept evocation. This is left to the spectator who, in

the words of Marcel Duchamps, "through a kind of inner osmosis deciphers and interprets the work's inner qualifications, relates them to the external world, and thus completes the creative cycle". (Calvin Tomkins, *The Bride and the Bachelors, Five Masters of the Avant-Garde*. London and New York. Penguin, 1976, 12th printing, p.9)

Out of blackness - elegant lacquered backgrounds, tonal harmonisation, shadow as drapery, obscure borders - metaphors and images highlighted by shots of colour appear. As if within an aqueous fluid, surfaces imbibe, swirl and permeate the foreground, until a momentary calmness arises; then the pictorial emerges. Seduced, the viewer is drawn into a dreamy world of hard and soft, past and present vocabularies. Vision emanates within the spatial nature of a higher dimension, and therefore, is timeless. A visually stunning commentary on this fragilely interconnected planet. The Art Factory appears, as the Chilean surrealist Matta wrote, "To paint the moment of change, change itself...the morphology of form, relativity...." (Op.cit. p.23).

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