



## Exhibition Review

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**Arunkumar HG**, " Silence of the other end", installation with fiberglass, pvc toys, autopaint, wood, Astroturf and TV set, 2007.

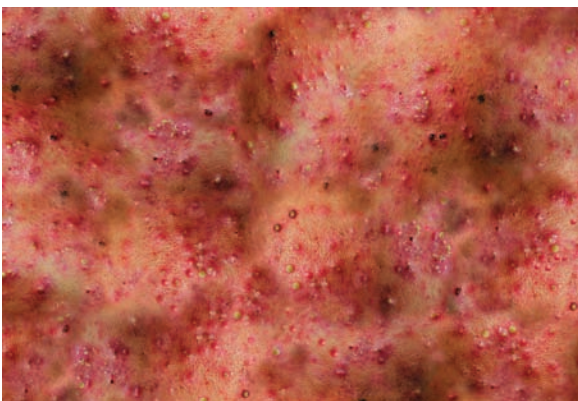
**Arunkumar HG**, " Silence of the other end", installation with fiberglass, pvc toys, autopaint, wood, Astroturf and TV set, 2007.

# Here, there, now

## contemporary art from India



**Justin Ponmany**, " room no. 12, zebra shawl, achanak nagar, near shankar mandir," 55 x 109 in., 2007.



**Pajakta Potnis**, "Static electricity", installation with nylon, plugs and sockets, 2007.



**Justin Ponmany**, "ib, indraneel bldg, rdp 1/38, sector 2, charkop" 55 x 109 in., 2007.





*Vaneet Kakar, "Sutra stones," ceramic, 22 x 12 x 10 in. each, 2006-2007.*

## Here, there, now contemporary art from India

**Gallery Souflower Silom Galleria, Bangkok, September 28-November 3, 2007**

The space where art galleries abound at the far end of the Silom Galleria shopping mall is buzzing with activity on the opening night of this exhibition. The central area of the mall is filled with partitions, chairs, and lights.

A row of television screens along one side shows elderly Indians reminiscing about Mahatma Gandhi whom they knew. Two oxen, themselves made of hundreds of pvc toy plastic farm animals, watch programs in a television covered with ghastly green astroturf. The animals present their bottoms neatly to the invited guests and the Press.





*Mithu Sen and Kumar Kanti Sen. "SENse-2", installation with wood, plywood, fabric, foam and autopaint, 2007.*



*Pushpamala N and Clare Arni. "Yogoni" from "The native types", 2000-2004.*

Most of the 10 Indian artists have flown in from India for the occasion. They sit in a group and listen to the opening speeches by H.E Latha Reddy, the Indian Ambassador, Natali Tuli, Director of Gallery Soufflower, art theorist Chaitanya Sambrani and Brian Curtin, curator of the show.

"We are not used to an opening like this," said gentle **Gigi Scaria**. **Arunkumar HG** and **Vineet Kakar** agree, all sitting back bemused at the pomp and ceremony arranged in their honour. Even from my brief meeting with them, the artists's focus on observing the truth is clear, all to be done with their very recognisable Asian humour, gentleness and wisdom.

The other artists are **Tushar Joag**, **Pushpamala N**, **Justin**

**Ponmany**, **Prajakta Potnis**, **Sharmila Samant**, **Mithu Sen** and **Kumar Kanti Sen**. All are established artists, graduated from Indian universities and now show their work internationally.

Gallery Soufflower is to be commended for bringing these important contemporary artists from India to show their work in Bangkok, many of whom for the first time. The show is part of an ongoing program by the gallery to display the best Indian contemporary art here. The exhibition catalogue of this show is large and comprehensive.

The art on display hangs together well, presenting an artistic glimpse into the India of the present. I imagine that the show would communicate well with Thai viewers who are familiar with the materi-





*Pajakta Potnis, Detail from " Membranes and margins series", 2007.*

als used and the contemporary art language spoken. But more than usual I suspect, Thai viewers will be asked to try to dig deeper into the layers of meaning and to take trouble to decode less-familiar symbols.

"By not creating a realistic image of the bullocks/oxen, that is, having them represented by many other farm animals, the sculpture becomes a metaphor for voiceless people or the masses in general. On another level the artwork refers to the large population of our agrarian-related sector which is in crises at the moment," wrote **Arunkumar HG** of his "*Silence of the other end*" sculpture. The artist's love for his people is apparent in his work.

The video installations "*Indian lady*" and "*Rashtriy Kheer and*

*Desiy Salad*" by **Pushpamala N.** capture your attention, inviting interpretations about identity, social and familial roles and colonialism. In one photograph, the artist stands in an elaborate dress in front of a traditional Indian painting, transposed there from our time, her presence linking us to that past. There is strange power in the simple imagery of her photographs.

Two large digital images of **Justin Ponmany** immediately confront the viewers. Two male faces and heads have been flattened or peeled by our digital technology so that both the faces and the back of the heads can be seen at the same time. Our system of knowledge tries to examine everything. "But what do we learn? We learn about the obsessive need to know and our failure to ever truly know,"





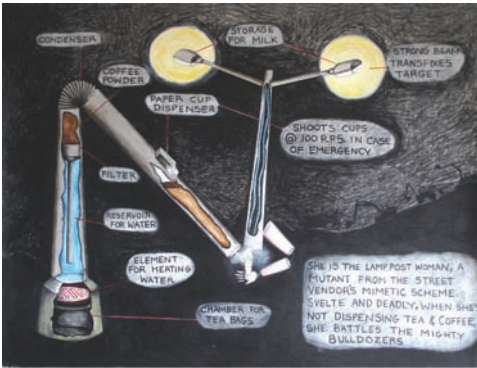
Sharmila Samant, "7/11", digital prints, 16 x 24 in. each, 2006.



Pushpamala N, "Indian lady", video, 1997.



"Untitled", mixed media on paper, 30 x 40 in., 2007.



Tushar Joag, "Lamp post woman", mixed media on paper, 60 x 45 in., 2007.



photo of Pajakta Potnis.



Arunkumar HG (centre) and Vaneet Kakar.



Artists (back row) and dignitaries at the show's opening.



Kumar Kanti Sen (left) and Pushpamala N.

writes Curator Brian Curtin in the exhibition catalogue.

**Prajakta Potnis's** image of facial skin covered with pimples, from the "Membranes and margins" series, is an alarming landscape of volcanoes of pus ready to erupt. It both attracts and repels the viewer in same way as Justin's images do. In "Static electricity", woman's long black (nylon) hair forms an attractive flowing pattern on the floor. But then one steps back, realising that the end of the strand is plugged into a power point in the wall, electrifying the hair.

Along one wall are wise Indian faces speaking at the same time."My video work interviews people who met Gandhi during his last days in Delhi. I would like to submit this project as a testimony, as material evidence of a contemporary world taken over by historical

amnesia," writes **Gigi Scaria** in the exhibition catalogue about his installation "Raise your hands those who have touched him."

In "SENse-2", brother and sister **Mithu and Kumar Kanti Sen** collaborated to make two designer chairs with wooden backbones to support the backbones of those who will sit on them. But both the chairs are hung on the wall to be seen as artwork, and at different levels to reflect social classes or inequality between male and female.

**Mithu's compelling drawings dissect and reduce animals and humans to blood and bone, as if that is all that the world is made of.**

**Well done, Gallery Souflover.**

