

On the Double Edge of Desire (catalogue excerpt page 33)**Edge of Desire** Recent Art from India

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by Chaitanya Sambrani

A significantly different take on the song-and-dance vitality of popular culture is embodied in the thoughtful, joyous as well as melancholic work of Ranbir Kaleka. His video *Windows* (2002) features here under a colourful circus tent, and is projected on a wheeled screen, as though ready for travel as part of a wandering village show. *Windows* can be read as a bittersweet love story, with its evocative soundtrack of lilting melodies from vintage Hindi movies. It is at one level a commonplace story without heroic grandeur. At the same time though, the work suggests potential for the extraordinary. Kaleka takes up everyday dreams, joys and sorrows as his material, and extracts from it an essential, existential sorrow, and a meditation on the fleetingness of emotion even as light fleets across the screen to create images. Kaleka's work in video is distinguished by its insistence on holding the momentary, acknowledging its passing nature, meditating on its impermanence, gently grinding away at two ends of the video—first as incomplete narrative and then again as impermanent apparition.

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WINDOWS 2002 (installation still)
single channel video/sculpture, 6 minute loop with sound

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When I use video I do not set out to do something which could be described as , 'video art'. I have been interested in cinema. That's the medium I have been familiar with. I know that through cinematic forms meanings can be created. And then I find video accessible. So I use the tools which are available to me but my interests remain the same.

I am interested in using light to create an image and in watching what the aura of an image created through light is. It quite different from the aura of a painted image. Even a photographed image, which is created by using light, has a different presence. Using something like holograms for a greater presence of an object or a different kind of presence of an object, that would interest me. Not so much that it's a development in scientific terms. Also that's fascinating. I always like to follow it up. But only because it will allow me to reach areas of meaning which for me do not seem to be accessible through the painted image or the photographed image or the video image. .

I don't think that changing to a new medium or using technology in my work has greatly shifted in what I have always been interested in. You rightly mentioned rooms. Most of my earlier paintings did consist of interiors. it took me a long time to venture out of that interior where I introduced the landscape. But that landscape also in many ways is like a large and closed space. That space does interest me. Again as a space of an event, and that's a psychological event. And the actual happening of the event, when art happens, that happens outside of the frame of the painting. There are indications, there are gestures, there is a trajectory from the eye travelling from one point to the other. But if we need to experience as to what is happening, then we have to close our eyes and let the event happen.

(Edited excerpts from a conversation between the artist and the curators Michael Wörgötter and Angelika Fitz. From *Capital and Karma: Recent Positions in Indian Art*, Hatje Cantz Verlag, 2002, pp. 151 - 56.)