

## **Sweet Unease**

16 December - 15 February, Volte Gallery, Mumbai

Ranbir Kaleka's works have achieved significant international saliency during the last decade: they have been exhibited in museum, biennial, foundation and gallery contexts in Venice, Berlin, Lisbon, Vienna, New York, Mexico City and Sydney, among other centres. Born in 1953, in Patiala, Kaleka was educated at the Punjab University, Chandigarh, and the Royal College of Art, London; he has lived and worked both in Britain and India. Across the three decades of his artistic activity, he has produced both a remarkable body of paintings, vibrant with phantasmagoria and epic disquiet, as well as a body of trans-media works that combine conceptualist sophistication with a calibrated opulence of image.

'Sweet Unease' is Kaleka's first solo exhibition in Bombay, and constitutes a major survey of a decade of his trans-media activity. The earliest works shown here date back to the early 2000s; the latest were realised especially for this occasion. Those who have already savoured Kaleka's art will find 'Cul-de-sac in Taxila' (the new, stand-alone avatar of the chapter titled 'Man with Hammer' from 'Crossings', a 2005 installation that mobilised a fourchannel projection with corresponding acrylic paintings), as well as 'Fables from the House of Ibaan' (2007) and 'He was a Good Man' (2008). And while 'The Kettle' and 'Sweet Unease' (both 2010) embody Kaleka's most recent inquiries, the early work, 'Man with Cockerel' (2001-02), is also on view in an enclosure parallel to the exhibition.

Ranbir Kaleka celebrates the poetics of the liminal moment: that threshold of potentialities at which, as Victor Turner has pointed out, the self becomes transitive, poised to metamorphose into any of several others. During the last 12 years, Kaleka has orchestrated a number of arrangements of the painted image and the projected image, arranged so as to cohabit in the same space. However, he does not embrace the simple juxtaposition, superimposition or mixed use of media to achieve a pluralising effect. On the contrary, he produces a meticulously calibrated adjacency of media, with which to disrupt the civilities of the layered image. Kaleka's images are only apparently simultaneous and palimpsestual. In experienced actuality, they are asynchronous: they lag behind one another, snag at one another, hold together in a spectral shimmer only to split apart in brief bursts before regaining a deceptive stability. In the subtle gap between the manifestations of these images, Kaleka breaks open a difference of spatiality, temporality, sensation and significance, making us intensely alive to the condition of viewerly reception.

Text by Ranjit Hoskote.