

Simrin Mehra-Agarwal

The Hidden Courtyard

23 September–14 October 2013

JAMM Art in association with IXI Art Gallery and Empty 10 will host an exhibition, curated by Caterina Corni, of paintings, digital works, drawings and installations by young Indian artist Simrin Mehra-Agarwal. The private viewing will take place at 7 pm on Sunday 22 September 2013 conjointly at JAMM Art Gallery and Empty 10 located in Al Quoz, Dubai.

Simrin Mehra-Agarwal's work bears one of the most interesting characteristics on the panorama of emerging contemporary art: the perfect balance between tradition and modernity. Originally from Kolkata, she completed her studies both in India and in Europe. Indeed, it was on the basis of this training that she developed her own highly personal language, used to conjoin two apparently opposite realities. Simrin makes Western teachings her own without breaking away from her original roots, and without falling foul of the ever-enticing trappings of emulation.

Observing – filtering – re-elaborating

Her works speak of a time gone by, through a language which manages to bring different worlds and cultures together harmoniously.

The black and white light boxes feature architectural glimpses, buildings gone to ruin. The sharp contrast, the choice of framing and the minuteness of detail remind us of etchings by Piranesi. The works stress the development of shapes: from their ideal form to their ultimate deterioration.

For ruins still show signs of life. That which is most striking in the spectacle of ruins is their ability to provide the sense of time without summing up history and without concluding it in the illusion of knowledge.

White – paper works: handmade paper produced in the Sicilian countryside in which the mechanical element à la Francis Picabia comes together with the organic, thus evocating all the iconography of 19th century herbaria.

Life – Femininity

Simrin investigates the memory of life through the places of her childhood, and she observes complementary aspects arising between man-made objects and the miracle of nature, transposing the connections between feminine memories and those of the places she belongs to.

Through her own language, Simrin sets free and reveals the indivisible bond between inner landscapes (self-built) and outer ones (concrete spaces where she has lived over her life).

Simrin's works place emphasis on the journey of forms: from their ideation to their final decay, for ruins still show signs of life. The most striking aspect of this display of ruins is their ability to give a sense to time without summarizing history or trying to reach conclusions. They are memories without a past.

The women who feature in her memory are also bearers of an age-old message of dignity and pride, 'biologically' inherited by their daughters and granddaughters, now the new guardians of such values.

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Her works transforms the deterioration of modernity and represents it as a propitiatory ritual for a humanistic vision looking towards a New Culture.

– Caterina Corni

Simrin Mehra-Agarwal's exhibition will run from 23 September – 14 October 2013 at JAMM Art Gallery and Empty 10, Street 8, Warehouses 10 & 11, Al-Quoz I, close to Alserkal Avenue.

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Opening hours: Saturday – Thursday, 11 am – 7 pm.

About the artist: Born in 1979 in Kolkata, Simrin Mehra-Agarwal currently lives and works in Milan and New Delhi. She has completed a BFA and an MFA in Painting from the Delhi College of Art and obtained a diploma in Photography from Triveni Kala Sangam in Delhi. She is the recipient of the French government scholarship and artist-in-residence programme 2007-2008. She also received the national scholarship from India's Department of culture 2004-2006 and Nokia Arts Award Asia Pacific in 2000-2001.

A descendant of the royal family of Jhargram that has a legacy spanning 500 years, Mehra-Agarwal grew up hearing stories of her family's past glory, power and wealth. Her work examines the history and transitional phase of royalty from grandeur to decline, from medieval to the post-colonial era, from monarchy to democracy. She has participated in a number of workshops and residencies including Tate Modern in London, INSA Art Centre in Seoul and the World Trade Centre at Jakarta. She has held solo shows in Delhi, Kolkata, Mumbai and Milan and has participated in group shows in Singapore, Bangkok, Bangalore, London, Vienna, New York and Dubai.

About the curator: Caterina Corni began her career as an external collaborator for several magazines specializing in contemporary art, including the Italian based magazine Flash Art. She has worked for many Italian galleries as an art curator as well as a consultant. Then, she developed her career through the curatorship of exhibitions in Italy and abroad for internationally renown artists. From 2002 Corni became a promoter of cultural events focusing on young emerging artists in the fields of painting, photography and video installations. She started to focus on contemporary Indian art in 2003. Through many periods of research in Mumbai and New Delhi (as well as continued contact and interaction with Indian galleries, artists and collectors) she has deepened her knowledge of modern and contemporary Indian art.

About JAMM: JAMM Art was founded by Kuwait based art-journalist and former Middle East Director for Phillips de Pury Sheikha Lulu Al-Sabah. The mission of JAMM is to create cultural projects without geographical boundary, from large-scale exhibitions to small-scale events and activities, which advance Arab and Iranian artists in the West and Western artists in the East, thus furthering collaboration between the two. JAMM currently operates exhibition spaces in Kuwait and Dubai.

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