

ART IS NOT WHAT YOU SEE, BUT WHAT YOU MAKE OTHERS SEE. - *Edgar Degas*

HOME LEAD STORIES FEATURES NEWS REVIEWS IN FOCUS SPECIAL INTERVIEWS ONLINE EXHIBITION MORE

THE HIDDEN COURTYARD

Review by **Cristiana de Marchi**

October 15, 2013

The Hidden Courtyard
 Simrin Mehra-Agarwal
 1x1 Art Gallery + JAMM Art & empty10, Dubai
 September 23-October 14, 2013

Magical spaces, like childhood memories, permeate our adult mind and future approach to experience and its elaboration.

The Hidden Courtyard, Simrin Mehra Agarwal's first solo show in Dubai, curated by Caterina Corniand organized by 1x1 Art Gallery in collaboration with JAMM Art and empty10, perfectly illustrates this impression by introducing a quite coherent assemblage of works characterized by significant formal differences, yet all reflecting a sense of frequentation that spreads like an obsession, a sort of cage where the visitor is caught inside.

Agarwal delves in the memories of her privileged, certainly not anonymous childhood, she explores the spaces of the palace, she records its views, she opens the closets and the drawers and she distributes on the floor the tiny objects and the photographs she has found as if they were evidences: she looks at them, repositions segments, moves and recomposes them in a different order, thus recreating the boundaries of a world that seems to be collapsed and totally overshadowed by modernity.

"The strength of Simrin's work lies in her ability to immerse a non-Indian spectator in a complex and – at times – opaque universe with the feeling that s/he was born there. Her works do not present Indian culture as an exotic, extraneous entity, but as a highly familiar environment. The effect, however understated, is overwhelming." (from the curatorial concept)

Moving between photography, engraving and painting, the exhibition presents recent works (all produced in the past few years) characterized by a common perspective, by an almost archaeological approach, where the possibilities of restoration of those found objects lies in the capacity of the artist to give them a new life.

Echelon I (2013) and Hierarchy IV (2010) reproduce and enlarge the minuscule details of coins and stamps, bringing to attention the fugitive, miniaturist rendering of lines that compose the drawing, thus literally reverting the process of inscription and engraving they originated from. These pieces do not seem to aim for a transfiguration, they rather fall under a naturalistic desire of reproduction, of analysis and exploitation that ultimately results in a shared experience, in the generous opening of a secretive world to a wider audience.

The main piece, the catalyst in this show, Hierarchy II (2013) consists of an assemblage of 35 small-scale painting and stucco pieces, which act as a loose collage composed of irreconcilable elements, where the full picture seems present yet always escapes and evades mental capture.

This approach is further explored in a series of drawings on rice and handmade paper, cut in a circular shape, which evoke the feeling of concentration, that of a minute observation of the objects representing Simrin's universe, the real as well as the fantasized one. The Archiver, Ram-1, Entangled I and II (all realized in 2012) act as magnified images, like pierced butterflies examined under the microscope lens.

This fascination for nature and its contraposition to a scientific mind setting also appears in the series The Botanist and the Engineer (2012). The show presents seven of these relief drawings diptychs, pairing a botanical, floral composition with an elaboration on motives of gears and other mechanisms. The fading effect implied by the neutrality of the white dissolves the contrast of natural and mechanical elements, it almost allows to superpose the symmetry of the latter with the irregularities of the former ones.



The Hidden Courtyard - II, Comprises of 54 works of variable dimensions, Acrylic, stucco, wood and linen

Completed by a series of light boxes, among which the Hierarchy VIII (2012) presenting family portraits of women from three generations, "The Hidden Courtyard" introduces and guides the viewer through a world on the verge of disappearance, as if Simrin Mehra Agarwal was holding on it for the brief time to pave our perception with the enchantment of her memories.

[BACK TO REVIEWS](#)

mattersofart 
Copyright © 2011

[Follow us on Facebook](#)

[Follow us on Twitter](#)

Email: mattersofart@gmail.com

Phone: +91-9811168775

727, Sector 28, Noida 201303, Delhi NCR
(Uttar Pradesh) India

[About Us](#) [Advertising](#) [Contact Us](#)

Website Design and Development by Paperinfinity