

Interior Illusions

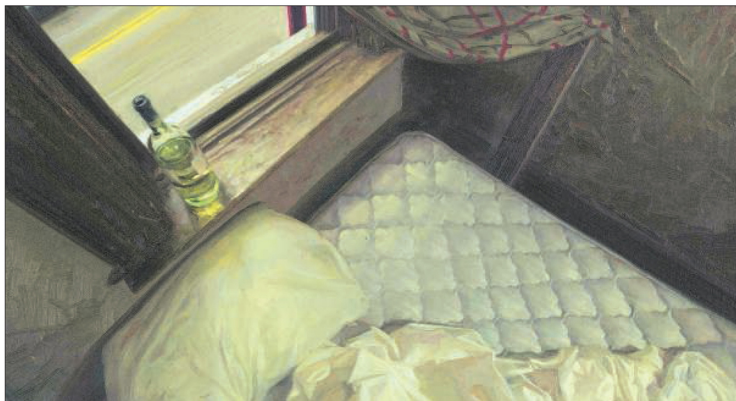
Abir Karmakar's new set of works dwells in hotel rooms and looks upfront

SANKHAYAN GHOSH

IN "Room, Interrupted in Passage", an exhibition that opened on Wednesday at Galerie Mirchandani + Steinruecke in Colaba, a suite of 30 paintings that bear remarkable resemblance to photographs, capture the interiors of hotel rooms and their bathrooms in various angles.

The common thread that runs through them is the absence of any human character. But there are his imprints — the curtains rolled up at the window sill, scrambled bed sheets and glasses full.

In his paintings, Karmakar is after these moments of disregarded images. He paints the same room, bed and windows from various angles, pushing the conventions of perspectives. "It is a lot like the photographs taken at a crime scene, from all kinds of angles," he says. The scene of his work are hotel rooms, towards which he has an unflinching fascination. There are pornographic associations, but no nudity. The pornographic references, he says, just gets unwittingly into his work, probably acting as subversive agents. "Maybe, it's just the fact that people are hypocritical about it and I want to thrust it upon them," he tries to explain.



One of the works from Karmakar's 'Porno Painting' series

Nudity appears, explicitly in his video installation, *Shadows of Distressing Dreams*, where Karmakar puts four naked men and women under his camera. He gathered four strangers, and made one sleep with the other clothed and naked. The figures are juxtaposed with one another, making it hard to differentiate between the man and woman, probably harking back to the themes of his earlier works that dealt with the mythological concept of *Ardhanarishwar*. "It's conducted in today's reality show language where we are surrounded by voyeurism," says the 35-year-old artist who graduated

from MS University, Baroda. He has had solo exhibitions in London, Germany and New York apart from major cities in India.

In his other video installation, *A Long Whisper*, he projects a silhouette through flowing white curtains. The image, being conceived from the other side, projects itself as a thinking, waiting black shadow of a man at the walls. The wavering curtains help, as it creates the illusion that a man might be standing behind the curtain. The curtains act as metaphors, he says, that deceives the viewers behind the bright projector light that someone might be standing on its other side.