GALERIE MIRCHANDANI+ STEINRUECKE

seekrajan

CK Rajan: A Selected Retrospective

Curated by Grant Watson January 12 – March 9, 2023



*"seek*rajan |CK Rajan: A Selected Retrospective" presents a survey of the artist CK Rajan, dating from the late 1980s to the present. It assembles a comprehensive range of work, as well as archival material which has never been exhibited together before.

As a student at the Faculty of Fine Arts, MS University, Baroda in the late 1980s, Rajan was a member of the Kerala Radical Group, a collective of painters and sculptors who sought to politicise the Indian art world. After the group had dispersed, Rajan moved to Hyderabad in 1990 where he lived until recently returning to his native Kerala. His output since the 1980s has mostly included small-scale sequential bodies of work that can be organised into distinct phases, each of which is represented in this exhibition.

Paintings made on the inside of cigarette packets between 1989 and 1990, collectively titled *In Search of Utopia*, suggest pocket-sized Constructivist utopias, defined by architectonic and geometric shapes painted in monochrome. Here, miniature cityscapes, stadiums, stage sets, and astronomical observatories are empty apart from singular matchstick figures. *Survivors* (1991), a series of still lives using Indian ink on paper, depict arrangements of objects from the artist's studio. Elements such as a knife, pliers, and a brick hint at menace, but any allegorical interpretation associated with still life as a genre remains opaque.

The *Mild Terrors* collages—produced between 1992 and 1996—use cuttings from papers and magazines to create small jewel-like compositions. Surreal in their distortion of scale and juxtaposition of images, they register the impact of economic liberalisation through the culture of popular print media. Besides being directly represented, violence appears in the dislocations and estrangements that can be seen in both urban and rural contexts, the clash between poverty and wealth, and the array of products aimed at a burgeoning middle class out of kilter with traditional ways of life. Here, women appear as a central motif but are rescaled to become giants who intersect with architecture and seem bestowed with superhuman agency.

Small paintings on unstitched canvas produced in 2013 depict abstract landscapes that cohere around a few cryptic interventions, such as a dab or brushstroke of paint that bring whole narratives into play. These fragmentary elements give the viewer clues to a storyline, some referencing art history in ways which are ironic or counterintuitive, others creating political subtexts that break out through words freighted with meaning. The human presence is swallowed by the landscape and the sky, to be experienced as a pinprick of consciousness.

Over the years, Rajan has produced several bodies of sculpture. The *Table Top Sculptures* from the early 1990s are modular primary-coloured MDF structures resembling toy houses, in which objects such as a clock, a knife and a toy car are encased. *Psychic Objects* (2010) play with scale and the distortion of the everyday, and have class associations relating to subsistence agriculture, construction work and domestic labour. But with the power to shapeshift, they suggest a subversion of the social order, or perhaps offer the rudimentary tools for an insurrection. More recently in 2017 the artist produced a series, loosely moulded in clay, titled *Small Sculptures*. Cast in bronze, then painted, these sculptures are presented for the first time in this exhibition.

Grant Watson London January 2023

COLLAGE



Installation view at Galerie Mirchandani + Steinruecke



Installation view at Galerie Mirchandani + Steinruecke





































































































































Entropy or the Second Law of Thermodynamics 1994 Collage on paper 18.5 x 27 cm / 7.2 x 10.6 in



Middle class Masses in Agony 1994 Collage on paper 18.5 x 27 cm / 7.2 x 10.6 in



SPACE – TIME 1994 Collage on paper 18.5 x 27 cm / 7.2 x 10.6 in



Study for the vampire planes 1994 Collage on paper 18.5 x 27 cm / 7.2 x 10.6 in

PAINTINGS



Installation view at Galerie Mirchandani + Steinruecke



Land Series VIII 2013—14 Oil on canvas 13.5 x 19 / cm 5.3 x 7.4 in



Available Online Only 2013—14 Oil on canvas 17.5 x 27 cm / 6.8 x 10.6 in



Homage to Caspar David Friedrich 2013—14 Oil on canvas 19.5 x 22.5 cm / 7.6 x 8.8 in



House at the edge of pond 2013—14 Oil on canvas 13 x 15.5 cm / 5.1 x 6.1 in



Waste Land 2013—14 Oil on canvas 11 x 16 cm / 4.3 x 6.3 in



Hunter in the snow, Homage to Franz Kafka 2013—14 Oil on canvas 17.7 x 27.5 cm / 6.9 x 10.8 in



Homage to Impressionists 2013—14 Oil on canvas 12.5 x 18 cm / 4.9 x 7 in



Homage to Monet 2013—14 Oil on canvas 19 x 28 cm / 7.4 x 11 in



Forgotten 2013—14 Oil on canvas 12.5 x 16 cm / 4.9 x 6.3 in



Moon 2013—14 Oil on canvas 24.5 x 29 cm / 9.6 x 11.4 in



Monochrome Picture 2013—14 Oil on canvas 14 x 18 cm / 5.5 x 7.1 in



Lonely Highways I 2013—14 Oil on canvas 13 x 23.5 cm / 5.1 x 9.2 in



Post Capitalist Slogan 2013—14 Oil on canvas 21 x 25 cm / 8.3 x 9.8 in



Untitled II 2013—14 Oil on canvas 12.5 x 17 cm / 4.9 x 6.7 in



Definition of Matter 2013—14 Oil on canvas 15 x 22 cm / 5.9 x 8.6 in



DON QUIXOTE redressed 2017 Oil on canvas 12.7 x 15.2 cm / 5 x 6 in



Wanted 2013—14 Oil on canvas 10.5 x 16.5 cm / 4.1 x 6.5 in



Untitled 2018—19 Oil on canvas 20 x 25 cm / 7.8 x 9.8 in



A Low Angle View of Hell 2013—14 Oil on canvas 11.5 x 14.5 cm / 4.5 x 5.7 in



Damocles Knife 2013—14 Oil on canvas 13.5 x 17.5 cm / 5.3 x 6.8 in



Inner Voice 2013—14 Oil on canvas 27.5 x 31.5 cm / 10.8 x 12.4 in



Land Series I 2013—14 Oil on canvas 12 x 17 cm / 4.7 x 6.7 in



Land Series II 2013—14 Oil on canvas 11.5 x 16.5 cm / 4.5 x 6.5 in



Land Series III 2013—14 Oil on canvas 11.5 x 14 cm / 4.5 x 5.5 in



Land Series IV 2013—14 Oil on canvas 10 x 11.5 cm / 3.9 x 4.5 in



Land Series V 2013—14 Oil on canvas 10.5 x 14 cm / 4.1 x 5.5 in



Land Series VII 2013—14 Oil on canvas 14.7 x 9.5 cm / 5.7 x 3.7 in



Lonely Highways II 2013—14 Oil on canvas 13 x 14 cm / 5.1 x 5.5 in



Once upon a time 2013—14 Oil on canvas 14 x 19 cm / 5.5 x 7.4 in



Reverse Gravity 2013—14 Oil on canvas 13 x 14.5 cm / 5.1 x 5.7 in


Telugu Script 2013—14 Oil on canvas 14.5 x 28 cm / 5.7 x 11 in



Tourists II 2013—14 Oil on canvas 14.5 x 28 cm / 5.7 x 11.02 in



Troubled Waters 2013—14 Oil on canvas 20 x 21.5 cm / 7.8 x 8.4 in



Untitled III 2013—14 Oil on canvas 11 x 17.7 cm / 4.3 x 6.9 in



man between a house and a coin 2017 Oil on canvas 15.2 x 25.4 cm / 6 x 10 in



Study for anxious, Three Trees of Rembrandt 2017 Oil on canvas 11.4 x 17.7 cm / 4.4 x 6.9 in



Punnam 2013—14 Oil on canvas 11.5 x 16 cm / 4.5 x 6.3 in



Untitled 2018—19 Oil on canvas 13.9 x 17.7 cm / 5.5 x 7 in



Untitled 2018—19 Oil on canvas 12 x 17.5 cm / 4.7 x 6.8 in



Untitled 2018—19 Oil on canvas 14.4 x 14.4 cm / 5.7 x 5.7 in



Untitled 2018—19 Oil on canvas 11.4 x 15.2 cm / 4.5 x 6 in



Untitled 2018—19 Oil on canvas 6 x 15 cm / 2.3 x 5.9 in



Untitled 2018—19 Oil on canvas 5.5 x 11.4 cm / 2.2 x 4.5 in



Untitled 2018—19 Oil on canvas 19.3 x 21.5 cm / 7.6 x 8.5 in



Untitled 2018—19 Oil on canvas 20.3 x 21.8 cm / 8 x 8.6 in



Untitled 2018—19 Oil on canvas 14.4 x 26.4 cm / 5.7 x 10.4 in



Untitled 2018—19 Oil on canvas 20.3 x 25.4 cm / 8 x 10 in



Untitled 2018—19 Oil on canvas 13.9 x 13.9 cm / 5.5 x 5.5 in



Untitled 2018—19 Oil on canvas 8.8 x 10.1 cm / 3.5 x 4 in

SMALL SCULPTURES



Installation view at Galerie Mirchandani + Steinruecke



Installation view at Galerie Mirchandani + Steinruecke



From the series *Small Sculptures* (Figure in doorway) 2022 Cast bronze, paint 4.5 x 8 x 1.5 cm / 1.7 x 3 x 0.5 in Ed. of 3



From the series *Small Sculptures* (Yellow house) 2022 Cast bronze, paint 6.5 x 5.5 x 2.5 cm / 2.5 x 2.1 x 0.9 in Ed. of 3



From the series *Small Sculptures* (Blue house) 2022 Cast bronze, paint 3.5 x 5 x 1 cm / 1.3 x 1.9 x 0.3 in Ed. of 3



From the series *Small Sculptures* (Pink house) 2022 Cast bronze, paint 4 x 8 x 2 cm / 1.5 x 3 x 0.7 in Ed. of 3



From the series *Small Sculptures* (Brick) 2022 Cast bronze, paint 6 x 6 x 2 cm/ 2.3 x 2.3 x 0.7 in Ed. of 3



From the series *Small Sculptures* (House with coin) 2022 Cast bronze, paint 6 x 8 x 1.5 cm / 2.3 x 3 x 0.5 in Ed. of 3



From the series *Small Sculptures* (House with flat roof) 2022 Cast bronze, paint 5 x 7.5 x 4 cm / 1.9 x 2.9 x 1.5 in Ed. of 3



From the series *Small Sculptures* (Grey door) 2022 Cast bronze, paint 3.5 x 5.5 x 1 cm / 1.3 x 1.9 x 0.3 in Ed. of 3



From the series *Small Sculptures* (LOVE) 2022 Cast bronze, paint 5.5 x 12.5 x 2 cm / 2.1 x 4.9 x 0.7 in Ed. of 3



From the series *Small Sculptures* (HATE) 2022 Cast bronze, paint 5 x 11 x 1.5 cm / 1.9 x 4.3 x 0.5 in Ed. of 3



From the series *Small Sculptures* (Palm tree) 2022 Cast bronze, paint 10 x 3.5 x 0.5 cm / 3.9 x 1.3 x 0.1 in Ed. of 3



From the series *Small Sculptures* (Eye) 2022 Cast bronze, paint 3.8 x 7 x 1 cm / 1.5 x 2.7 x 0.3 in Ed. of 3



From the series *Small Sculptures* (wall) 2022 Cast bronze, paint 4 x 15 x 1 cm / 1.5 x 5.9 x 0.3 in Ed. of 3



From the series *Small Sculptures* (Mountain range) 2022 Cast bronze, paint 3.5 x 8.5 x 2 cm / 1.3 x 3.3 x 0.7 in Ed. of 3


From the series *Small Sculptures* (Fish eye) 2022 Cast bronze, paint 3.3 x 10 x 1.5 cm / 1.2 x 3.9 x 0.5 in Ed. of 3



From the series *Small Sculptures* (Highway) 2022 Cast bronze, paint 10 x 2.5 x 1.5 cm / 3.9 x 0.9 x 0.5 in Ed. of 3



From the series *Small Sculptures* (Tree on a beach) 2022 Cast bronze, paint 12 x 6 x 1.5 cm / 4.7 x 2.3 x 0.5 in Ed. of 3



From the series *Small Sculptures* (Imprinted leaf) 2022 Cast bronze, paint 6.5 x 4 x 1 cm / 2.5 x 1.5 x 0.3 in Ed. of 3



From the series *Small Sculptures* (Lady) 2022 Cast bronze, paint 5 x 2 cm / 1.9 x 0.7 in Ed. of 3



From the series *Small Sculptures* (Car) 2022 Cast bronze, paint 4 x 9 x 3.5 cm / 1.5 x 3.5 x 1.3 in Ed. of 3



From the series *Small Sculptures* (House with terrace) 2022 Cast bronze, paint 6.6 x 9 x 2.5 cm / 2.5 x 3.5 x 0.9 in Ed. of 3



From the series *Small Sculptures* (Immersed) 2022 Cast bronze, paint 5 x 7.5 x 5 cm / 1.9 x 2.9 x 1.9 in Ed. of 3

PSYCHIC OBJECTS



Installation view at Galerie Mirchandani + Steinruecke





Psychopathic Killer Fan 2010 Wood and iron 257 x 390 cm / 101 x 153.5 in (height x diameter)



Golden Broom 2010 Gold paint on broom 7 x 100 cm / 2.7 x 39.3 in



Guest Faculty from Third Reich 2010 Wood and iron 27.1 x 126 cm / 10.6 x 49.6 in



Silent Assasin 2010 Wrist watch and rexine 416.5 x 3.5 cm / 163.9 x 1.3 in



Untitled 2010 Wood, iron and oil paint 26 x 3.3 cm / 10.2 x 1.2 in



Corporate Pickaxe 2010 Wood and iron 46.5 x 100 cm / 18.3 x 39.3 in



Urban Blues 2010 Wood and iron 30 x 58 cm / 11.8 x 22.8 in



Untitled 2010 Wood, iron and oil paint 20 x 4 cm / 7.8 x 1.5 in



Stalker Knife 2010 Wood and iron 59.5 x 206 cm / 23.4 x 81.1 in



Newly Wed Bucket 2010 Iron and paint 142 x 24.4 cm / 55.9 x 9.6 in



Seeking Ladle 2010 Wood and iron 71 x 11.1 cm / 27.9 x 4.3 in



Cosmetic Scalpel 2010 Wood and iron 42.5 x 7cm / 16.7 x 2.7 in



Untitled 2010 Wood, iron, oil paint 37 x 4 cm / 14.5 x 1.5 in



Untitled 2010 Iron and paint 13.5 x 4 cm / 5.3 x 1.5 in



Obsessive Compulsive Disordered Garden Cutter 2010 Wood and iron 46 x 15 cm / 18.1 x 5.9 in



Time Running Out 2010 Wood, glass and iron 78.5 x 205 cm / 30.9 x 80.7 in

IN SEARCH OF UTOPIA



In Search of Utopia 1989—90 India ink and gouache on reverse of cigarette pack 7.6 x 12.7 cm / 3 x 5 in



In Search of Utopia 1989—90 Ballpoint pen and watercolour on reverse of cigarette pack 7.6 x 12.7 cm / 3 x 5 in



In Search of Utopia 1989—90 Glass mark pencil and watercolour on reverse of cigarette pack 7.6 x 12.7 cm / 3 x 5 in



In Search of Utopia 1989—90 Colour pencil on reverse of cigarette pack 7.6 x 12.7 cm / 3 x 5 in



In Search of Utopia 1989—90 Colour pencil on reverse of cigarette pack 7.6 x 12.7 cm / 3 x 5 in



In Search of Utopia 1989—90 India ink and watercolour on reverse of cigarette pack 7.6 x 12.7 cm / 3 x 5 in



In Search of Utopia 1989—90 India ink and gouache on reverse of cigarette pack 12.7 x 7.6 cm / 5 x 3 in



In Search of Utopia 1989—90 India ink on reverse of cigarette pack 12.7 x 7.6 cm / 5 x 3 in



In Search of Utopia 1989–90 Watercolour and glass mark pencil on reverse of cigarette pack 12.7 x 7.6 cm / 5 x 3 in



In Search of Utopia 1989—90 India ink on reverse of cigarette pack 7.6 x 12.7 cm / 3 x 5 in

TABLE TOP SCULPTURES



Table Top Sculptures Early 1990s MDF board, oil paint, pen, brick, sunflower, clock, gun, ball, knife, toy car



Installation view at Galerie Mirchandani + Steinruecke

Installation video —

https://youtu.be/5c7muevmjzk

www.galeriems.com