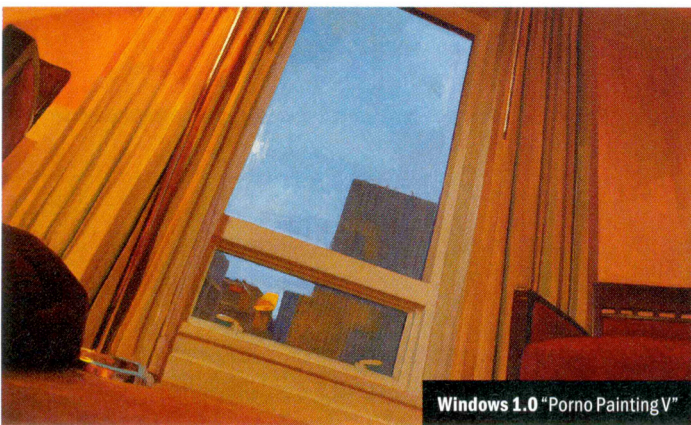


Reviews

Room, Interrupted in Passage



Windows 1.0 "Porno Painting V"

Languid portraits of friends, set within the living room and the bedroom, populated Abir Karmakar's 2005 show *from my photo album*. Seven years later, Karmakar's paintings have returned to Galerie Mirchandani + Steinruecke, but the people inside them have vanished. In this suite of 30 paintings and two videos, Karmakar has traded precise, photo-realism for a softer, feathery style and fleecy brushstrokes.

That is immediately apparent in

the short, monochromatic video "A Long Whisper", projected on a white curtain, where a man's silhouette dissolves into several others. The video has echoes of the rich, 1968 Canadian film, *Pas de deux*, directed by Norman McLaren, where a ballerina seems to be dancing with images of herself. Karmakar employs the same cinematic techniques of superimposition and fading in the 90-minute "Shadows of Distressing Dreams". Five actors in various stages of undress are

filmed asleep or half-wakeful, tossing around on a bed. Each of the figures messily blends with another – coupled with the upside-down projection, the video serves to heighten the viewer's confusion and anxiety.

The sleepers have left their dishevelled beds in the oils on canvas. Each of the 30 exhibits in the tantalisingly titled "Porno Paintings" suite, is numbered and sorted into nine groups that seem to be dominated by a particular hue, from grey-green to a dull yellow. Several of the pictures are set in hotel or motel rooms: at times tawdry, at times, functional and subdued. Many of them are defined by a photographic eye. The set "VIII-X", for instance, is a panorama of the room, split into different canvases, while "XXV-XXIX", bathed in a late-afternoon glow, is a Dutch-angle view of another. There are three different perspectives of the view from a hotel-room window in "V-VII" (almost flat-on-the-back, a top-angle and eye level) and the set is characterised by a Karmakar

conceit – a lovely interplay of natural and artificial light. In each of the paintings, the air is thick with the suggestion of an encounter – possibly, but not necessarily, sexual. According to the accompanying essay by Ranjit Hoskote, "...some of his paintings bear an animated, if distant, affinity to Edward Kienholz's 'Roxy's', his elaborate 1961 reconstruction of a 1930s Nevada bordello as a stage set, replete with period furniture, bric-à-brac, and figures sculpted from junk, the whole resembling a tableau of vanitas reminders, mingling symbols of illicit pleasure with those of toxic extinction." Viewed in conjunction with *from my photo album* and 2008's *Within the Walls*, *Room, Interrupted in Passage* serves as the thematic coda, the epilogue to a narrative that began with the earlier exhibitions. **Karanjeet Kaur**

Room, Interrupted in Passage is ongoing at Galerie Mirchandani + Steinruecke. See Exhibitions.