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The lived realities in Aban Raza's art

Her emphatically social paintings make us see the “invisible” people whose labour fuels the economy.

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Aban Raza by Pablo Bartholomew | Photo Credit: Pablo Bartholomew

Aban Raza's solo exhibition of large-format oil paintings is dominated by bodies—bodies bearing the charge of dissent, bodies engaged in constant labour, and the invisible but ever-present body of the Constitution as a site of contestation. Running from November

3 until December 28 at Galerie Mirchandani + Steinruecke in Mumbai, Raza's show, titled "There is Something Tremendous About the Blue Sky", serves as a memory log of the events that have marked public life in India in the past two years, charting both the excesses and assaults of the state and the widespread civic eruptions that challenged these. Nestled between the great events are ordinary moments, depicted through train journeys, construction work, or the after-hours of a wedding celebration. Made between 2020 and 2022, the period darkened by the COVID-19 pandemic, the paintings are marked by a refreshing publicness; they look outward and are consistently social, drawing attention to those who could not afford to retreat into safety in the fractured republic.

Delhi-based Aban Raza (b. 1989) held her debut solo exhibition titled "Luggage, People and a Little Space" at the same gallery in Mumbai in 2020. "I paint because I feel the need to respond to events and also because this is all I know," she says. Having studied painting and printmaking in Delhi College of Art, she has held exhibitions at Art Heritage, New Delhi, and the Lalit Kala Akademi, Lucknow. Currently Visiting Faculty in the Graphics Department, Faculty of Fine Arts, Jamia Millia Islamia, Raza curated "Celebrate. Illuminate. Rejuvenate. Defend the Constitution at 70" in 2020, and "Beyond Dispute: Landscapes of Dissent" for SAHMAT in Delhi in 2018. She received the Somnath Hore Award in 2013, the AIFACS Award in 2014, and a Lalit Kala Akademi research grant in 2013-14.



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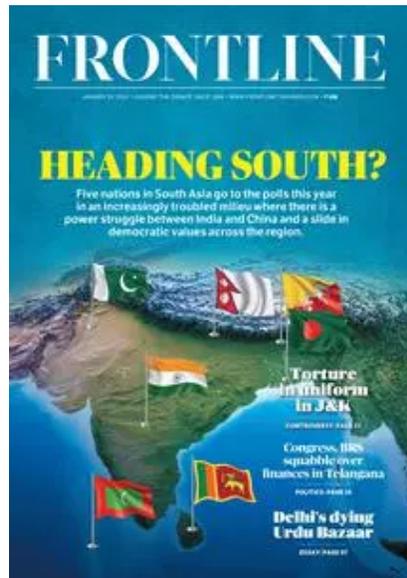
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