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OPENING HOURS: TUESDAY–FRIDAY 12–6 P.M., SATURDAY 11 A.M.–4 P.M.

KRINZINGER PROJEKTE

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OPENING HOURS: WEDNESDAY–FRIDAY 3–7 P.M., SATURDAY 11 A.M.–2 P.M.

India 3: New Delhi

REPUBLIC OF ILLUSIONS

Curated by Peter Nagy

Galerie Krinzinger: Anita Dube, Sheba Chhachhi, Probir Gupta, Pushpamala N., Ram Rahman, Raqs Media Collective, Dayanita Singh
Opening: Thursday, September 17, 2009, at 6 p.m.
Duration: September 17 – October 17, 2009

Krinzinger Projekte: Mithu Sen
Bharat Sikka
Opening: Friday, September 18, 2009, at 7 p.m.
Duration: September 18 – October 17, 2009

New Delhi is the third station in a series of exhibitions of contemporary Indian art at Galerie Krinzinger. Since September 2008, the Bangalore and Mumbai art scenes have been on display. The series will now be completed with this exhibition focussing on the New Dheli art scene.

New Delhi is the capital of India, a political and bureaucratic city with a population of 14 million spread across 1480 square kilometers. In many ways it is three cities in one: a capital of the Moghul Empire (dating from predominantly the 17th Century); the planned ceremonial capital of the British Empire (built during the second decade of the 20th Century); and the urban sprawl that has spread in all directions out from these centers since Independence in 1947.

Bombay (Mumbai) is the commercial capital of the country and the more active city for contemporary art and its market. The cultural life of New Delhi is both more intellectual and more international, as it is the site of a number of major universities as well as all foreign embassies and their cultural programming. Just as the cinema, media and advertising industries influence the contemporary art made in Bombay, the political and the historical, which are readily apparent in the daily life of the city, influence the contemporary art of New Delhi. The landscape of the city, like Rome, is littered with the relics of monumental architectural extravagances while the beating heart of the city is the functioning administrative complex, reeking of pomp and circumstance, privilege and dominion. New Delhi is also the melting-pot metropolis, as communities from each part of India have created their own specialized sub-divisions within it.

Without consciously setting out to make “political art,” many of New Delhi’s artists do create works that are redolent of the political and historical currents that pulse through their city. Many tend to gravitate toward the quixotic icons that pepper the city, reminders of both past and recent ambitions and follies, struggles and achievements. Both the Government and the People of India are represented in these iconographies, cross-referenced to spotlight ironies, collaged together to speak of an increasingly complex reality. This exhibition is not meant to be a portrait of New Delhi but rather one of the many possible indexes through which to interpret the city, its inhabitants and how it comes to articulate the nation as a whole.

Anita Dube is a populist and her works, in a variety of medias, often refer to the common man and subaltern communities. She stumbles upon both imagery and materials, recycling both into new constructions that are both poetic and metaphorical. In her work *Little Weapons of Defense* she turns packing refuse into the carved stone screens characteristic of Indian architecture, sprinkling the most rudimentary form of weapon (stones, skinned in her signature velvet fabric) throughout its geometrical façade. *Ah (a sigh)* takes a newspaper image of striving Indians and spells out a Hindi character across its surface with velvet-covered tree roots. Both works communicate something of the omnipresent complexities and struggles of Indian society and the distance of these struggles from the cosmopolitan capital.

Sheba Chhachhi works with a range of photo based forms. Her work often recuperates ancient iconography, myth and visual traditions to calibrate an inquiry into the contemporary moment. In her current body of work, Chhachhi has created moving image light-boxes, which consist of a series of translucent layers of overlapping imagery. When viewed the works take on a startling dimensionality as the layers merge in and out of each other to create an almost cinematic aesthetic. In *The Trophy Hunters*, one of the pair of light-boxes is akin to an illuminated scroll, weaving images of architecture, kings and conquerors into the interstices of a Jamawar shawl. Chhachhi uses the erstwhile royal garment to narrativize a spiraling history of invasion, violence and synthesis. The other light-box juxtaposes a text that reflects on the AK 47 with vignettes of the continuing quotidian violence in Kashmir. The work combines overlapping references to map the mercurial nature of how history is recorded and how both violence and prestige participate in this process of official codification.

Probir Gupta is a painter who also makes sculptural works. His paintings mine the traditions of both Expressionism and Abstraction, blending in literal references to industrial production, political iconographies and linguistic devices. *Capitalist Symbols and Products* pays homage to the body-politic of India, struggling in recent times with profound changes in its economic and social constructions, its very self-image. His large sculptural installation, *The National Product (Gandhi) and Others*, positions a monumental figure of the father of the country amid a plethora of commercial signboards, each with their own tongue-in-cheek reference to India's loss of innocence, its religious and communal strife, or the abuse of Gandhi's legacy by political and commercial forces.

Pushpamala N. stages elaborate costume dramas to create photographic records which question all manner of representations of women in India today. Her *Ethnographic Series* is only part of the much larger project: "Native Women of South India: Manners & Customs" (made in collaboration with Clare Arni). Here, the artist herself poses as a wide variety of characters to re-create late 19th Century sepia-toned photographs, evidence of the British Empire's scientific cataloguing of their colonial subjects. In her *Mother India* series the artist presents the anthropomorphized image of the nation-state (used on posters, food packaging and political propaganda) with all its black humor amplified.

Ram Rahman is a photographer and graphic designer who specializes in architectural subjects and the life of the city. His series of posters created for the activist group SAHMAT, commemorates key events and figures in the history of modern India. He borrows from the visual language of Russian Constructivism, combining images with texts, to speak of memory and to draw parallels with contemporary social struggles. In an on-going series of black-and-white street photographs, he documents the billboards and signage created for political campaigns and public rallies. The photographer deflates these grandiose displays of ambition and ego, picturing them as comical, impotent and ineffectual.

Raqs Media Collective (Jeebesh Bagchi, Monica Narula, and Shuddhabrata Sengupta) work in a wide variety of media and address multiple concerns and issues through their investigative and polyphonic practice. Their sculptural installation *The Reserve Army* examines the intersection of a personal artistic practice (in this case, that of the early 20th Century Indian sculptor Ram Kinkar Baij) with the construction of icons to represent the newly independent nation-state, as well as the rather clumsy union of Modernism and a traditional, folkloric Indian culture. By replicating and embellishing the Baij sculptures created to stand in front of the Reserve Bank of India, the work also addresses the recent changes that have taken place in Indian economic policies within a globalized scenario. *The Interrupted Cartographer* is like a theatrical prop without an actor, a stylized and illuminated table

with chair that speaks of historical divisions and negotiated compromises.

Dayanita Singh has photographed a wide range of subjects, from families to factories, beds to Bollywood theatres. Presented here is *Myself Mona Ahmed* (1989-2001), the photographer's portrait of her long-time friend who is a "hijra" (or "trans-gendered" in Western parlance). This suite of photographs is both revealing and taciturn, deeply personal and collaborative. The story of Mona takes place across New Delhi and involves the power struggles within a marginalized community and the subject's search for both stability and a semblance of family.

At **Krinzinger Projekte**, **Mithu Sen** and **Bharat Sikka** are shown in a concurrent exhibition.

Resulting from her residency at Krinzinger Projekte, **Mithu Sen** will create a suite of new works on the ground floor that combine drawing, collage, photography and sculpture into a synthetic installation. Often autobiographical, frequently erotic and always playful, the artist melds found images and objects into striking juxtapositions and humorous anecdotes. Her style owes something to Surrealism and Art Brut, but also draws heavily on Indian tribal and folk art, urban popular culture, and traditional miniature painting.

On the second floor, **Bharat Sikka** will show his »Indian Men« and »Urban Landscapes«. His photographs often hover between a posed self-consciousness and a more spontaneous snap-shot aesthetic. Examples from two on-going series will be shown together, illustrating the anxieties at the heart of India's entry into a more international realm of business and culture. The photographer's "Indian Men" are generally upper-class and well-off, pictured alone within their homes or at work, seemingly isolated from the world around them. His "Urban Landscapes" can be harsh, desolate, and hauntingly beautiful. In these works he captures the continuing rifts in India society, evidenced in its new architecture and lack of civic infrastructures.