

Story in Audio | Email | Print | text view | Add to Clipping

Marked for eternity



RAJNISH KAKADE

From Left: Bose Krishnamachari, Riyas Komu, Tejal Shah and Anup Mathew Thomas stand alongside a sculpture by Sumedh Rajendran

■ Gitanjali Dang

Sleepglue is what the protagonist/ antagonist Alex of Anthony Burgess' *A Clockwork Orange*, calls the substance that his eyes secrete when he slumbers. It is this sleepglue that fastens the eyelids and propagates indifference that the group exhibition *Markers* hopes to combat.

With *Markers*, Bose Krishnamachari reprises his curatorial role, albeit less diffidently. Krishnamachari is no longer 'conceptualiser', as was the case with *Double Enders* (2005), but 'curator'. *Markers* embraces works executed in different media — photographic prints by Anup Mathew Thomas, Riyas Komu's paintings, sculptures by Sumedh Rajendran and video installations by Tejal Shah.

Sculptor Sumedh Rajendran's positions himself as a futuristic taxidermist who perseveres at rescuing and reconstructing dismembered mutants, stuffing them with his own pathos and stretching unlikely skins over them. The often-stained ceramic tiles, which litter the city's subways, the smoothly amputated limbs are all employed

to create what can be best described as the Indian chapter of the mid- 1980s Mutoid Waste Company.

Riyas Komu's set of five portraits *Systematic Citizens - 9 to 9* are portraits of five potential social ciphers. Each of the five boys/men had earlier appeared in Komu's *Grass* (2005). The portraits however don't seek to return to the preliminary disquiet over migrant labour and the gradual dissipation of their aspirations as seen in *Grass*. Though the five subjects that make up the present suite have all been integral to *Grass*, where they were contained by the boundaries of an intimate scale work, in *Systematic Citizens - 9 to 9* the portraits are monumental in their scale.

The luminous city lights, the trigger for all its nocturnal impulses can be seen squirming behind the large facades. As the patina of age and masculinity greens their jowls and their gaze transfixed us we grasp fully what Komu means when he suggests that portraiture

for him is a form of 'emotional practice'.

From the deliberately clumsily rubric, *I Love My India*, to its setting — a site of absent-minded urban revelry — Nariman Point, video artist Tejal Shah's video installation negotiates populist cultural catchphrases like 'India is the world's largest democracy'.

The video suggests that the hubris innate to the idea of a democracy lies in the fact that it is as pliable and forgiving of amnesia. *I Love My India* telescopes in on this endemic amnesia as it questions the youth on the genocide in Gujarat. With the

presence of a gun weighting on them as they contemplate shooting their target, the balloons they regurgitate cheerily force fed propaganda or simply a lack of interest.

Untitled III Shah's second video installation as it ostensibly moves away from the broader arena of flawed politics and apathy and withdraws into the solitude of the inviolable self in fact gets



Above: A photograph by Anup Mathew Thomas

Left: Riyas Komu's *Systematic Citizens - 9 to 9*

Below: A still from Tejal Shah's video installation, *I Love My India*



The group exhibition, *Markers*, by way of innovation hopes to combat the indifference that inundates our lives

wrapped in the play of sexuality.

In *Untitled III* the bodies are often only a fragmentary presence, a knee, a breast, an elbow, but the viewer is well aware that beyond the frame lies a compendium of probing not into the nature of homosexuality. A telling denouement has Shah and the other female protagonist stand nebulous their heads bowed their arms slack in a puppet like stance of capitulation.

Their stance is not always ceremonial as they smile lopsidedly at Anup Mathew Thomas' camera or even search for cover by holding an umbrella aloft.

Metropolitan, a suite of large scale photographs by Thomas frames 14 Presiding Bishops of Episcopal Churches. The intricate vestments of the Bishops apart the photographs are unadorned by any overt stylisations. This lack of stylisation in turn allows the viewer to approach and enter the works with ease. The photographs, however, are fraught with the religious diversity that unburdened itself in the land of Kerala.

Markers at Bodhi Art, 28 K. Dubash Marg, Kala Ghoda, on view till July 22. Monday to Saturday, 11am - 7pm.

TOP

