

BOSE PACIA

Bhupen Khakhar is one of the most provocative, and important, artists on the contemporary Indian scene, achieving widespread popularity and respect throughout the world. His sometimes absurd, always affecting works ask questions of significance, role, and relationship. Working in Baroda during the 1960's, Khakhar quietly rejected the lofty themes that were pervasive in contemporary Indian art and exposed, instead, the irreverent subject matter of everyday lives of the common middle class, creating a new iconography for Indian art. His naïve style further underscored his rejection of lofty ideals and techniques. In the 1980's, his voyeuristic glimpses into the interiors of modest homes gradually peeled back more layers of the social fabric exploring overtly homosexual themes -- a daring occupation in modern India. His exposure of this previously shrouded subject catapulted him into the realm of social critic and saboteur.

As an artist known more for her complex video installations, **Nalini Malani** clearly shows the depth reachable with water and pigment. Her deft touch and subtle hand find the same themes accessible there that she does within her larger, more technology driven work. Like many modern Indian artists she speaks to ideas of nationalism and globalization, yet lets their humanity scream out from beneath the weight of world politics.

Arpita Singh is perhaps best understood as a master narrative painter. In her work she provides a discourse on the emotional content that make up her gender, country, and world. This is portrayed in the vibrant hues and subtle textures of her deftly executed watercolors. As a figurative painter and a modernist, she is in touch with the history of Indian aesthetics from classical miniaturists to traditional folk painters. Her surfaces teem with cars, guns, planes, flowers, and animals creating an enchanted, magical world. Her understanding of context and form paying the greatest tribute to the folk traditions of India's past and present.

Madhvi Parekh is one of the most successful painters working at the difficult question of integration. In her dialogue, Parekh engages in a bit of subterfuge, by so clearly showing her folk roots, she becomes both urban and urbane at the same time. Like Bhupen Khakhar, she destroys the boundaries of culture by highlighting them so clearly. The childlike qualities of her work adding such a needed freshness to the sometimes dry workings of typical artist/intellectuals. Like many before her (and many after) she chooses to trick the viewer into an artificial sense of security by expressing such complexity within such simplicity.