

The small exhibition at Andrea Rosen Gallery, consisting of twenty drawings and prints by Inokuma from 1958-71, affords a glimpse into this history. The show is organized in collaboration with Joshua Mack and Miani Johnson, daughter of Marian Johnson of Willard Gallery, who represented the painter during his twenty-year stay in New York.

The exhibition prominently features Inokuma's obligatory exploration of expressionist vocabulary during his first years in America. His exuberant works from 1962 are covered with amorphous orange shapes and accentuated by calligraphic lines—they eloquently speak for a freedom he discovered in abstraction. He soon found his own voice in the densely hatched canvases inspired by the cacophonous cityscape of Manhattan. Inokuma's signature style, often compared to an aerial view of the city, is represented by two large drawings from 1965-66, executed in a more simplified and clarified mode that allows ample breathing space around structures.

The true gems of this exhibition, however, are three tiny works on board from 1968-71. In them, thin slices of the horizon are layered vertically, dotted with a schematic rendering of high-rises and other urban structures, which are cryptically juxtaposed with triangles somehow reminiscent of sharks' fins coasting amid waves. The pictorial surface is enlivened by cutouts of small circles and other incisions, as well as daring daubs of opaque watercolors. Viewed in the context of the current interest in drawing, these works from more than three decades ago look remarkably fresh and relevant. ■ **REIKO TOMII**

NEW YORK

Pushpamala N.

Bose Pacia Gallery

The photo-romances seen in Bangalore artist Pushpamala N.'s solo debut in New York quickly bring to mind the early work of Cindy Sherman, albeit with a real difference. As *New York Times*' art critic, Holland Cotter, pointed out in his perceptive review of the show, the Indian artist embraces the melodramatic realism of Bollywood kitsch, while the American conceptual artist Sherman is at pains to distance herself from the medium she so consciously exploits. In this sense, the two artists could not be more different: Pushpamala embodies, in the lurid humor of many of her photos, the spirit of Indian film,



Pushpamala N. ■ *Sunhere Sapne (Golden Dreams)* ■ 1998 ■ Hand-painted black-and-white photographs Set of ten images in five versions ■ 7" x 9" each

while Sherman depends on a nearly Brechtian alienation from her subject matter to make her point. The contour of such differences is important to bear in mind, for Pushpamala relies on our eager, if somewhat disingenuous, treatment of her as a star, even if her celebrity carries with it the knowing laughter of the spectator who sees through the costume.

The photo-performance series are encompassed in many cases by a turn-of-the-century atmosphere: "Sunhere Sapne (Golden Dreams)" (1998) and "Dard-e-Dil (The Anguished Heart)" (2002) are both suites of hand-tinted photographs, and in the *Bombay Photo Studio* (2000-03), the artist collaborates with the eminent Bollywood photographer J.H. Thakker, creating sepia-toned images that refer to the glamour and glitter of 1950s films. In "Sunhere Sapne," the colorization is quite extensive: pastel colors dominate the palette of the individual images. Pushpamala reclines in the grass beneath a tree, or climbs out from the open trunk of an old car, or walks down a broad road flanked by verdant foliage. The kitsch elements of much of Pushpamala's work give it flair and at the same time a jadedness regarding the notions of masquerading and fame; the artist cannot help but erect faded monuments of desire in her highly posed photographs, which she coyly manipulates for their erotic flair.

In the "Bombay Photo Studio" series Pushpamala offers a triptych: portraits of a Mohammedan woman, a Hindu woman and a Christian woman—are studies in the stereotype of religious devotion. The Islamic woman is completely covered from the top of her head to the tops of her shoes and beside her sits a simple vase of flowers. The Hindu woman wears a sari and is seated in a heavy wooden chair, her back turned to us. She, too, is accompanied by a small flask of two blossoms. The artist plays her role as a Christian bride in the third image and wears an elaborate white dress highlighted by a white veil, through which the viewer can see her smiling. Again, a vase of flowers accompanies her.

The sepia tones in "Bombay Photo Studio" give the artist's work its atmosphere of a historical past, yet the power of the three pieces on view have as much to do with the way we categorize and stereotype people today. Pushpamala is a sharp-eyed artist who realizes our stereotypes are visual as much as mental. She creates art that plays off the standard versions we expect of different cultures but, in her way, she is quietly, but profoundly subversive. She creates seemingly traditional icons only to undermine them by theatrically exaggerating their traditional meaning—a strategy that successfully implies the new as well as using the old.

■ **JONATHAN GOODMAN**