

On Rashid Rana's Work

"Rashid Rana's art could be said to be similar to art being made anywhere in the world today. But, to his credit, the artist creates works that address the specifics of the culture in which he lives and, with globalisation, more and more people around the world are actually interested in these specifics. When the works travel to locations as diverse as India, Indonesia, Australia, or the United States, they hold on their roots yet also acquire new facets of meaning. The point seems to be how an artist employs strategies first developed by others elsewhere so as to effect creative change in his immediate surroundings. Or, in other words, what does this mean for myself here and now and how can I effect your perception of who I am and what I do?"

Peter Nagy, New Delhi 2005 /from 'Rashid Rana: Identical Views' publication text

"Among the new generation of Pakistani artists, Rashid Rana is the most important figure today. Distinct for his ideas, imagery and pictorial strategies, he has been showing both in Pakistan and abroad. His work is exhibited and collected by institutions and individuals in the United States, Europe, India and many other parts of Asia.

With its different medium and scale, his work deals with multiple issues: both the formal and conceptual. It investigates the representation of reality, two dimensionality of an image, as well as the politics of gender, violence, popular culture, and the authenticity of a work of art, in this age of global distribution."

Quddus Mirza, Lahore 2004/ from brochure for 'Identical View' show at VM gallery Karachi, Pakistan

Of the new crop of Pakistani artists – Pakistani's YBA – Rashid Rana is indubitably one of the most arresting. Over the past five years he has built an oeuvre that is as formally inventive as it is thought provoking. Every few years Rashid takes up a new medium or a method of working, teases meaning out of it and then discards it for something else. Thus there are the acrylics on canvas, slick triptychs that look like enormous photographic negatives; the punning text on textiles; the collaborations with hoarding painters; the performative photographs and videos; and most recently digital/compound prints.

Kavita Singh, New Delhi 2005 /from 'Rashid Rana: Identical Views' publication text

Rashid Rana is an artistic chameleon, working fluidly in a multitude of mediums and styles. Trained as a painter, Rana's early grid works explored the language of minimalism and geometric abstraction. A growing interest in popular culture, art history and language resulted in significant shift in the late nineties. In his early work, found fabrics with repeating floral and animal prints were wittily juxtaposed against photorealistic paintings executed in oil and acrylics. Sourcing subject from popular film, media and art history text books, Rana also introduced textual puns in both English and Urdu to his canvases. Over the last five years, Rana's artistic methods have shifted again, moving from analog to digital. His recent forays in performative photographs, videos and compound prints continue to explore similar themes, however the technologies of new medias have enabled Rana to refine his technique. Rather than occupying discrete spaces, oppositional elements are made to function simultaneously in the same visual field.

Peter Nagy, New Delhi 2006/ from Asian Contemporary Art, Christie's, May 2006