

Atul Dodiya

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Indian visual culture, which proliferates in city centres, is remarkable for its vivid colours and diverse imagery. Small shopfronts, just a few metres in width and jammed together, line downtown streets in Indian cities, and at night shop-owners pull down steel shutters to protect their stores from theft – and sometimes from rampaging mobs.

For Indian artist Atul Dodiya these shutters are ideal canvases, offering a two-dimensional surface that is familiar to average city dwellers. Dodiya installs the painted shutters on the gallery wall, the images he paints disappearing when the shutter is rolled up, but revealing other pictures painted on the wall behind it. By combining two paintings in this way, Dodiya gives complex depth to two-dimensional artworks.

In one work Dodiya has painted images of the traditional Indian goddess Lakshmi on the surface of a shutter, while the picture underneath, exposed when the shutter is rolled up, is copied from a news photograph of three women who died by hanging themselves because they could not afford a dowry. In this work the images of the traditional goddess, suggesting peace and nirvana, are contrasted with a real problem in contemporary Indian society.

Dodiya has created a rich, kaleidoscopic world of imagery, including portraits of the major protagonists in contemporary Indian history, as well as traditional culture and myths, and social problems in contemporary India. More recently, and in watercolour,

Dodiya has painted images of a naked man floating in agony – an allegory for his nation. Dodiya is an artist with one of the sharpest critical sensibilities in India today.

Atul Dodiya was born in Bombay in 1959, graduating from the Sir J. J. School of Art in Bombay in 1982. He has had numerous solo exhibitions in India and abroad, including at the Reina Sofia Museum, Madrid (2002); The Japan Foundation Asia Center, Tokyo (2001); Fine Art Resource, Berlin (2001); and Gallery Chemould, Bombay (1989, 1991, 1995, 1997, 1999, 2001). He has also participated in numerous group exhibitions, such as 'Secular Practice: Recent Art from India', Contemporary Art Gallery, Vancouver (2002); 'Capital & Karma: Recent Positions in Indian Art', Kunsthalle, Vienna (2002); 'New Indian Art: Home-Street-Shrine-Bazaar-Museum', Manchester Art Gallery, Manchester (2002); 'Century City: Art & Culture in the Modern Metropolis', Tate Modern, London (2001); Yokohama Triennale (2001); 'Moving Ideas: A Contemporary Dialogue with India', OBORO, Montreal (2001); 'Out of India: Contemporary Art of the South Asian Diaspora', Queens Museum of Art, New York (1997); and 'Epic Reality: Contemporary Narrative Painting from India', Contemporary Art Museum, Houston (1997). His works are in several private and public collections in India and abroad. Dodiya lives and works in Bombay.



left and right: ATUL DODIYA, *Mirage*, 2002, exterior: enamel paint on metal roller-shutter, 274 x 183 cm; interior: acrylic and marble dust on canvas with iron hooks, 226 x 153 cm, collection the artist.