

# BOSE PACIA

**November 2006 New York** - Bose Pacia Gallery presents *Native Women of South India: Manners and Customs*, a photo-performance exhibition by Pushpamala N and Clare Arni, originally conceptualized through an arts collaboration grant from the India Foundation for the Arts in Bangalore, India. The gallery is located at 508 West 26<sup>th</sup> Street on the 11<sup>th</sup> Floor, in the Chelsea district of New York City. Gallery hours are Tuesday through Saturday from 12 to 6 pm and by appointment. There will be an opening reception with the artist in attendance on Friday, November 10<sup>th</sup> from 6 to 8 pm. The public is invited.

Pushpamala N. meticulously reconstructs existing portraits of South Indian women in order to deconstruct their generic and stereotypical associations. In assuming the role of archetypal female characters derived from both contemporary and historical sources, Pushpamala N. questions the accuracy of photography as ethnographic documentation. Accepted concepts of ethnicity, enumeration and classification are challenged by recreations steeped in artifice which ultimately subvert the normative or expected anthropological gaze.

The exhibition is divided into four different series. *The Native Types* consists of ten tableaux replicating found imagery drawn from an array of sources, including painting, film, calendars and advertising. Each portrait represents an archetypal woman (such as the vamp, the great mother, the outsider) and is exhibited slanting and hung high on the wall as religious and ancestral photographs are often displayed in Indian homes. *The Ethnographic Series* borrow the *Native* characters and renders them specimens of a mock anthropological study. *The Popular Series* is comprised of kitsch collectible-type small-format images based on bazaar photographs. Finally, *The Process Series* are documentation of the shoots themselves and provide a "behind-the-scenes" glimpse of the making of the project.

The final product is a pseudo-archive of different images of South Indian women and references diverse genres of photography and image-making. The dynamism of each series coupled with Pushpamala's emphasis on artifice with complex sets, costumes, props, make-up and lighting render this installation uniquely compelling. Although a critical examination of notions of archetypes and authenticity, the exhibition is inherently humorous, light-hearted and playful. Indeed, Pushpamala N. herself states "As a performance work, it is a manic and obsessive exploration of different kinds of characters, crazy and liberating in its sheer excessiveness and exuberance."

Born in Bangalore, India in 1956, Pushpamala N. studied at M.S. University in Baroda, Gujarat and obtained a BFA & MFA in sculpture. She has had several solo exhibitions in India, Europe and the United States. She has also participated in numerous group exhibitions, including *Indian Summer* at the École Nationale Supérieure des Beaux-arts (Paris, 2005), *Edge of Desire* at the Asia Society (New York, 2005), *India Express* at the Helsinki City Art Museum (Finland, 2006) *Cinema Prayoga: Indian Experimental Film and Video 1913-2006* at the Tate Modern (London, 2006) and the upcoming *Fotofluss* (Austria, 2007). Pushpamala N. currently lives and works in Bangalore.