

Ramakrishna Bihara

Seven Art Gallery.

Ramakrishna Bihara's first solo show in the capital places softly washed, finely detailed watercolours of familiar structures like the Hirapur Temple in Orissa and the Ajanta Caves in Maharashtra against the backdrop of outer space, complete with a dark sky pin-pricked with planets, stars, even galaxies.

The effect is disorienting – a kitchen garden, for instance, has Saturn and its rings looming over the neat vegetable beds. This disorientation is highlighted by the fact that the watercolours are twisted and cut over the backdrop to appear as though narrowing to a single point, sort of like the illustrations in physics textbooks that explain what happens near a black hole. An example is "A Cup of Coffee", where what's presumably a café blossoms from a cup in the centre, as well as "Likir Gompa", in which the Leh landscape is distorted and stretched around the canvas. In a few other paintings, the watercolour sections swirl around, a free-flowing mass of colour, as in "Ajanta Arc", giving it a timeless, ageless feel. Also striking is "More Plains" in which a lonely road, flanked by mountains in Ladakh is set against the stars.

One painting, "Remembering Tarkovsky", is perhaps intended to tie all the others together thematically. It shows a deserted corridor with a distorted, fluid perspective

set off by a slash in the right-hand corner of the image. Russian filmmaker Andrei Tarkovsky, known for his exploration of metaphysical themes, believed that making a film was a process of "sculpting in time" and believed that cinema could alter a viewer's experience of time. This notion of time-sculpting seems to run through Bihara's works as well and he is probably influenced greatly by the vast, beautiful images of space in *Solaris*, arguably Tarkovsky's most famous work. Drop by for a bit of cinematic, spatial distortion.

Janice Pariat

See *South in Exhibitions*.

Art

