

suite of nine drawings anchors Akakçe's practice. While the various series use disparate mediums, they are implicitly linked through the practice of drawing. These black-and-white images capture the movement of the second film, *Garden* (2007), with freeze-frame articulation. They are considered studies. Akakçe is said to first sketch the storyboard of his films and then scan them into the computer, digitizing his drawings into motion.

Akakçe's mirrored reliefs uses line in a more formal conversation. They occupy a different space. Their abstraction is architectural: louvered screens, windows, and illusionary rooms that frame the viewer. Their reflective surfaces confirm Akakçe's theory that everything is in transition, undefinable, the fragments captured in their surface constantly distorted and changing depending on the viewer's angle. Deeply active works, their colored edges are revealed as the visitor moves around them, intensify to a solid field at the extreme angle. They have the spirit of retro-optical art updated with the slick minimalism of mirrors.

In *Garden* forms and lines drop into place in a choreographed dialogue with dimensionality, like the movements of props on a stage, flattened to the single plane. It has a direct relation to an earlier film, *Blind Date* (2004), showing concurrently at Istanbul Modern. In both Akakçe questions the modes of representation, volume, temporality, and time—its very *definition*. Stripped of the acid-pop colors of the foyer projection, *Garden's* minimal black and white emphasizes the forms as they emerge and recede from a neutral surface. Their whiteness has the plasticity of sci-fi utopia, presenting a cosmic drama without conclusion.

The exhibition's simplicity is deceiving and, if one can move beyond its fashionable retro-references, the exhibition does present a cohesive dialogue on a micro and macro level, connecting to Akakçe's training as an architect and earlier work, which contextualize Galerist's spectacular show. There is

clearly no lack of definition to Akakçe's personal expression and professionalism.

By Gina Fairley

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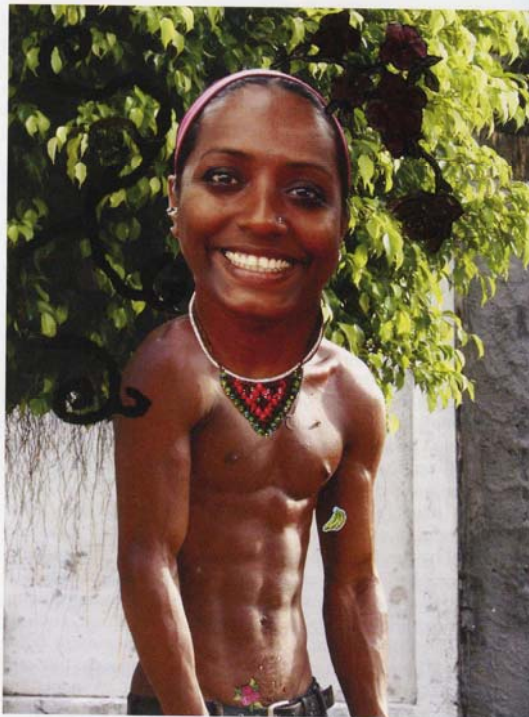
THE UNITED STATES

New York

Mithu Sen at Bose Pacia

Ringlets of intestines adorn the hair of a wistful-looking female face, antlers stick out of the head of a dolled-up female face, a shiny blue hat tilts to one side over a horse's face, a trunk protrudes from the nose of a traditional Indian woman's face with the trademark red dot on the forehead and black kohl in the eyes. These are just some of the numerous provocative images in New Delhi-based artist Mithu Sen's wonderfully over-the-top show called *Half Full*, an oddly tepid title for such an abundant show.

The show, which is a large-scale installation, has 32 works, including nine large works on paper, 20 photo collages and three videos. Most of the works are so rich and

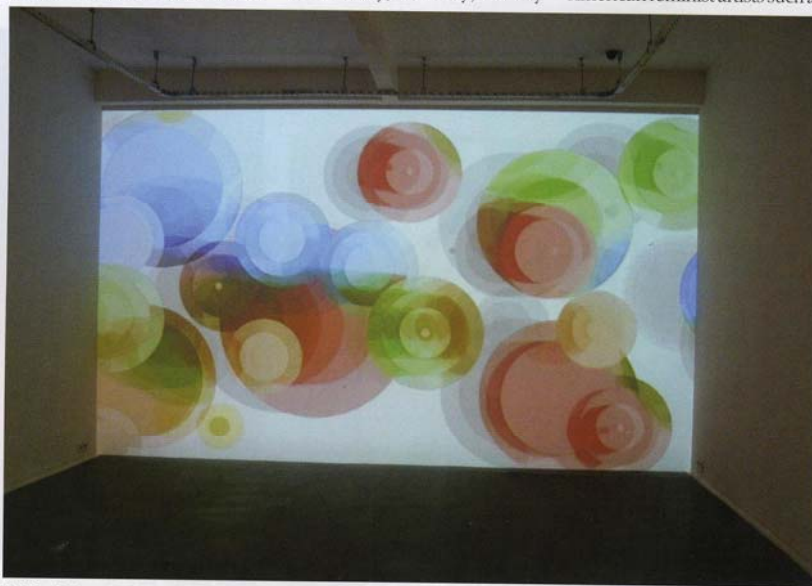


Mithu Sen, *Working Class Hero*, 2007, mixed media photocollage on archival paper, 24 x 17 inches. Photograph: Courtesy of Bose Pacia.

profuse with the works on paper seeming like they might jump out of their frames and extend into the wall any minute.

Sen explores ideas such as the body, sexuality, identity

and fantasy, territory which has already been well-trodden by many from iconic surrealists such as Salvador Dali and René Magritte to well-known American feminist artists such as



Haluk Akakçe, *They Call it Love, I Call it Maddness*, 2007, DVD 8:00 loop, color projection with sound.

EXHIBITION REVIEWS

Cindy Sherman and Kiki Smith to younger New York-based artists such as Wangechi Mutu and Chitra Ganesh. Although Sen's subject matter is not unusual, her work stands out because of the way she plays inventively, unpretentiously, and, above all, eccentrically with those classic themes of the tenuous boundaries between the beautiful and the grotesque, the feminine and the animalistic, the external and the internal. For example, in the nine large drawing/collage works on paper, she has made striking self-portraits where she metamorphoses herself, generally beyond recognition, into a large mythological-looking brown creature with teeth on its forehead, a very thin woman in a tiger skin *sari* and antlers on her head, a devilish four-armed girl with a tiger's face between her legs and a tiger's tail in one pair of hands. Her art is visceral, quite literally so—a variety of innards and entrails float around in her work—but the crowning glory of this visceral reality is a big white sculpture of intestinal tracks that looms over a video installation in a darkened room, looking both revolting and fascinating.

Sen unravels the world of the unsightly body beneath the skin and the world of the shadowy unconscious lurking beneath the conscious mind, but does it with such an exuberant sense of humor that her work is a delight to view. *Dance After Depression*, the drawing collage of the artist in a tiger skin *sari* made of faux fur with antlers on her head and big goat ears, and *Working Class Hero*, a digitally

manipulated photograph of the artist as a young boy with a small, flat chest, are absolutely hilarious. Sen deserves a lot of credit for striking a great balance between levitas and gravitas.

Priya Malhotra

Alex Webb at Sepia International

American photographer Alex Webb's subtly evocative photographs of Istanbul portray a city that is pensive, melancholy, and filled with unexpressed emotions. In some ways straightforward and, in other ways, profoundly mysterious, these well-crafted images, by a member of Magnum, beautifully capture what Orhan Pamuk, the Nobel Prize-winning Turkish novelist, explains as *buzun*, the Turkish word for melancholy, in an essay that accompanies the thick coffee-table book containing the photographs in the show.

"For the poet, *buzun* is the smoky window between him and the world," wrote Pamuk. "The screen he projects over life is painful because life itself is painful. So it is, also, for the residents of Istanbul as they resign themselves to poverty and depression. Imbued still with the honor accorded it in Sufi literature, *buzun* gives their resignation an air of dignity, but it also explains their choice to embrace failure, indecision, defeat, and poverty so philosophically and with such pride, suggesting that

buzun is not the outcome of life's worries and great losses but their principal cause..... *Huzun* does not just paralyze the inhabitants of Istanbul; it also gives them the poetic license to be paralyzed."

One of the best examples of this *buzun* is *Sea of Marmara* (2001) where you see a well-dressed old man cutting a proud, brooding figure as he sits alone in what looks like a boat or ferry. He sits upright, his hands clasped below his stomach, seeming like he is contemplating something. Or is he mourning? Regardless of what it is, there is a stillness, as if whatever he is thinking or feeling is nothing new, but something that has been present for a long, long time. This is an incredibly beautiful image with the dark, heavy expression on the man's face contrasted by the soft, soothing green of the ferry's interior and the ethereal purple of the dawn or dusk that tints the sea and the sky merging into one.

Webb's vision of the metropolis that is Istanbul is not a teeming city filled with exotic bazaars and picturesque mosques, but is a slow, understated, enigmatic place, a place with many shadows, blurs, and incomprehensible facial expressions. Ambiguity is central to the photographer's work, compelling the viewer to linger on each image for a long time in the hope of decoding its meaning. Even though spending time with the pictures reveals more and more layers, the images retain their air of mystery, resisting easy explanations.

In *Sultanahmet* (2001), one of the most sumptuous and dramatic images in the show, a very young boy, nicely dressed in a black-and-white sweater and black pants, has an undecipherable expression on his face that might be interpreted as bewilderment, fear or simply an unease caused by someone taking a picture of him, as he stands alone holding a cone of pink cotton candy in front of grand, jade green doors. Why is such a small boy standing alone? Where are his parents? The doors are open with a chain latch sweeping upwards from one door, its shadow, along with other shadows, imbuing the photograph with an ominous beauty. Through the open door you see the vivid burnt orange background, you can make out windows, stairs, and two adults in the distance dressed in black, but it is not clear what this place is. Is it a street, a palace, or some other historical monument?

A master of composition, Webb juxtaposes indoor and outdoor images by incorporating mirror and window reflections in works such as *Taksim* (2001), *Galatasaray* (2001), and *Suleymaniye* (2004), confounding the viewer as they try to unravel the complicated spatial relationships in some of the most interesting compositions in the show. However, as is the case with most of Webb's photographs, a little extra effort goes a long way.

Priya Malhotra



Alex Webb, *Sea of Marmara*, 2001. Courtesy of the Photographer, SEPIA International, and Magnum Photos.



Alex Webb, *Sultanahmet*, 2001, photograph. Photograph: Courtesy of the Photographer, SEPIA International, and Magnum Photos.