

# The New York Times

---

October 17, 2008

## Art in Review

By THE NEW YORK TIMES

PUSHPAMALA N.

Paris Autumn

Bose Pacia

508 West 26th Street, 11th floor, Chelsea

Through Oct. 25

Pushpamala N. is a performance artist whose work appears as photographs. In the past she made a series of documentary-style pictures of South Asian “types” based on 19th-century European ethnography, playing all the parts herself. In another series she was a Zorroesque super-heroine in a Bollywood film.

A real film, although an unconventional one, is the centerpiece of her third Bose-Pacia solo show. Titled “Paris Autumn,” it’s a kind of cinéma vérité ghost story; and it isn’t a moving picture in the conventional sense but a rapid-fire succession of black-and-white still photographs arranged in a sequential narrative. As always, Pushpamala N. has the leading role. But she shares the film with other characters, notably the spirit — if that’s what it is — of the 16th-century figure Gabrielle d’Estrées, who was the beloved mistress of Henry IV and who died, precise cause still unknown, at 26.

Everything in the film is uncertain. The plot wanders. It may or may not be pure fantasy; the main character may or may not be Pushpamala N.;

the ghost may or may not be a hallucination. There are funky touches: A [Caravaggio](#) painting comes to life; thought balloons pop up. And there are stabs of violence with the interjection of internet images of Parisian ethnic uprisings.

The overall pace is dark and suspenseful, but a happy ending — a cast party in progress — puts the film-as-fiction question into perspective. Or does it? Pushpamala N., who lives and works in Bangalore, India, never quite resolves this and probably doesn't want to. She's trying something out here. And if the results are a little disheveled, they also mark another promising step in an extremely interesting career. HOLLAND COTTER