

# Thomas Erben Gallery

Press Release



*Shiva*, 2014. Oil on linen, 108 x 72 inches (detail).

## Schandra Singh

### *God Don't Like Ugly*

January 8 – February 14, 2015

Opening reception: Thursday, January 8, 6-8:30 pm

Thomas Erben is pleased to present the gallery's first solo exhibition with **Schandra Singh**, after her inclusion in two group shows, in 2012 and 2013. Working in oil on exposed linen – often at a monumental scale – Singh takes on the fraught landscape of the vacation industry, letting intricate detail sprawl into sketch-like brushstrokes.

One of the most immediate features of Schandra Singh's work is the almost grotesquely rendered bodies of her subjects, with the skin at first glance seemingly turned inside out, exposing muscle and tendons. The people depicted are brought so far into abstraction that the result is almost caricature-like, but Singh's fervent devotion to detail turns them into so much more. Each painting becomes a complex landscape, where every minute variation in skin tone or fabric pattern, every facial highlight or gleam of sunlight in water is elaborated

continued...

Thomas Erben Gallery  
526 West 26<sup>th</sup> Street, 4<sup>th</sup> floor  
New York, NY 10001  
212-645-8701  
info@thomaserben.com  
www.thomaserben.com

and expanded. Here lies the source of the carnal quality in Singh's paintings: detail splinters into detail in a virtually fractal manner, transforming extremes of the flesh into intricate ornamentation. As if representing several realities at once, faces grow multiple eyes, bodies multiple limbs. Heads erupt in surreal imagery of animals, people, objects – thoughts, dreams and alternate futures taking physical form.

Singh's method of arriving at the final result is an important aspect of her process. From hundreds of photos from vacation locations, one is selected, and translated through an extensive series of drawings. One of these, in turn, is used as a basis for a painting, often incorporating elements from several other sketches. Each step removes the image further from the subject, turning the person from an individual into a projection of the artist's psyche, filtered through the facets of her own gaze. And as she turns her eye to tourists and hotel staff alike, everyone is immersed in the same kaleidoscopic universe.

In a world where representation of The Other has become increasingly difficult, Singh uses her fractured visuality as an equalizing element. The surface of a swimming pool takes on the same shattered structure as the wrinkled stripes of a maid's uniform; all her subjects are enfolded into one fluid pattern. Puppets both of the artist's will and of ever expanding global forces, they seem both anxious and exhilarated, with their internal turmoil laid bare. As cooling water merges with emotional chaos, they are all faced with a similar choice – to go with the flow or struggle against the currents.

Schandra Singh (b. 1977, Suffern, NY) completed her BFA (1999) at the **Rhode Island School of Design** and went on to receive her MFA in painting (2006) at **Yale**. She had solo exhibitions at **Nature Morte**, Berlin (2011), **Bose Pacia**, New York (2010), **Galerie Bertrand & Gruner**, Geneva, (2008), **Rare Gallery**, New York (2007) and has shown internationally, most notably in *The Empire Strikes Back*, **Saatchi Gallery**, London, *The Silk Road*, Saatchi Gallery at **Lille 3000**, Lille (both 2010), and *India Xianzai*, **MoCA Shanghai** (2009). The artist lives and works in Poughkeepsie, NY.

The exhibition is accompanied by a catalogue with an interview by **Ellen Gallagher**, a conversation with **Huma Bhabha** and **Jason Fox**, as well as an essay by **Greg Tate**.

The exhibition will be on view January 8 – February 14. Thomas Erben Gallery is located at 526 West 26<sup>th</sup> Street, 4<sup>th</sup> floor. Gallery hours are Tuesday – Saturday, 10 am – 6 pm. For more information, please contact us at 212-645-8701 or [info@thomaserben.com](mailto:info@thomaserben.com).

Thomas Erben Gallery  
526 West 26<sup>th</sup> Street, 4<sup>th</sup> floor  
New York, NY 10001  
212-645-8701  
[info@thomaserben.com](mailto:info@thomaserben.com)  
[www.thomaserben.com](http://www.thomaserben.com)