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GALLERIA PRESENTS THE EXQUISITE CORPSE BY UDAY K DHAR

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New Delhi: Galleria presents **New York based visual artist Uday K Dhar's first solo show in Delhi titled "The Exquisite Corpse"** at Visual Arts Gallery, India Habitat Centre, New Delhi from **December 6 to December 14, 2010**. Part of the proceeds from the exhibition will go to Pratham, an NGO working for under-privileged children.

Born in London and having studied art at Columbia University in New York and then in Berlin, Dhar has previously exhibited at various highly respected forums. In 2007, for instance, Dhar's painting - in acrylic, sand, pigment, wax and oil titled *Purva Akash* - was part of a show that was displayed during a UNESCO conference in Bali. His works have also been exhibited in places like New York, Los Angeles (US), Berlin (Germany), Budapest (Hungary), Bali (Indonesia), and Mumbai (India). He is also the recipient of the prestigious Jackson Pollock- Lee Krasner Foundation Grant in 2005, and is a 2006 fellow of both the MacDowell Colony and Yaddo.

Says Dhar, who is also a member of the Asian American Arts Alliance: "My art focuses on the common ground between diverse cultural experiences and backgrounds. As an American artist of South Asian descent, I am interested in introducing non-western ideas into the current discourse about art in the US, particularly for an audience unfamiliar with foreign concepts and ideas. The works are the result of research into various things, Indian and American magazines, survey of fashion ads, research and reading of newspaper article, art history books etc. My work changed dramatically in 2005 after my father passed away one month after I received the Pollock-Krasner Grant. But as you will see looking at the older works, one theme links all my works - a deep conviction about translating my Indian heritage and reinterpreting that for a new context with new feeling."

According to Dr Alka Pande, curator of the show: "Uday Dhar is an artist of Indian origin, and like many global citizens, is at home any where in the world. In this age of a cosmopolitan internationalism, he too is engaged with the fluidity of identities. His work is complex, deeply layered with a painterly, poetic quality to it."

The title of the current show in New Delhi, "*The Exquisite Corpse*", according to Dhar, is derived from a game played by Surrealists in Paris in the 1930's. The parlor game involved passing a piece of paper between different people who did not know what the previous image, which was covered, contained. At the end of the game, there was a curious but shocking juxtaposition of strange images that formed an enigmatic diagram. The meaning of the final image was for the viewer to determine.

Dhar connects his own multi-cultural upbringing which he calls a "life full of collages" to the multi-layered dimensions in his work.

As a son of Bengali father and a Maharashtrian mother and raised in Patna, Bihar, and then his upbringing as an Arya Samaji influenced by Rabindranath Tagore, Dhar's heterogeneous life experience have found resonance at a personal level too. He studied architecture, chucked a career as an architect to pursue art and came out as a gay artist in 1979 when there were no South Asian openly gay men in NY!

Says Dhar: "All of these layers and fragments have led me to express my work as a layered object. I am fascinated how different elements, images, concepts, cultures and materials are combined, processed, reworked juxtaposed to create a new synthesis of form and feeling. With this as inspiration, I have created works that are a commentary of how we now live life in the age of globalization. As we are constantly bombarded by images through advertising, marketing, social sites, flashy web content, a sensory overload is created. How we create meaning in our lives as consumers of this flood of visual stimulation is the subject of these paintings."

The selected images create juxtapositions that are transgressive and defy easy resolution. They refer to ways we define what is considered Eastern and Western cultures. But in an age dominated by a global economy and international pop culture, boundaries are breached and differences become irrelevant. In this context, the challenge lies in the task of creating a new synthesis. Specific cultural definitions of gender, art history, and mythology become ambiguous; marketing, branding, and self promotion become paramount – and contradictions are irresolvable. That is the new identity.

The paintings for the series titled "**Mirror, Mirror on the Wall**" include identically sized works. Each painting starts with a rough human outline representing the "*Purusha*", or "man as the representation of mankind". In each of fourteen works in this series, the profile remains the same but different material is used inside the profile to express the transformation of the elemental man into a multiplicity of avatars because of the dynamics of a trans-national global society. Each painting in this series employs a different strategy to make a similar point about the fluid nature of identity. They are made with materials that are unique for each work; at the same time, all the paintings are inter-linked by the repetition of a human silhouette. The sequence of the images is presented more or less in the order they were made. It is intended to create a narrative of self-containment, implosion, fragmentation, and reconstitution. Says Dhar: "Hence the idea of an *avatar*, the spirit reappearing in different forms through time, and locations."

The "**Exquisite Corpse series**" is a different take on this notion of a fluid identity. The paintings for this series are created through a process that combines various strategies. Magazine ads, cell phone downloads, art history books, entertainment magazine pictures, comics etc. are used to create unique collages. These are scanned and reworked digitally and are laser printed on canvas. The works are then enhanced with hand painted sections of oil color; lastly, they are collaged with graphics.

Says Dhar about this series: "One might call them 'self-portraiture' without the portrait. It comments on how identity is forged through the consumption of specific images, products that define who we are, and what we are engaged with. It is the nature in the age of globalization and information access, that where one is located does not restrict the exploration of other experiences at other locations. i.e geography is not a restriction as it was before air travel, internet etc."

In a work titled **Bad Boy/Good Boy** (48" x 54", Chalkboard spray paint, Crayon, chalk on blackboard), Dhar refers to his childhood experience at St Xavier's in Patna while in **Celebrity** (48" x 54", Cellphone pictures digitally printed on canvas, layered with sprayed stencil), he refers to the celebrity culture of the Facebook phenomenon. In **Twinkle Twinkle** (54"x 54", Unique collage digitally printed on canvas, enhanced with paint, glitter and spray painted text), he refers to the condition of the hijra; symbol of the in-betweenness of gender, cultures and media transformation in the age of Facebook and Twitter. It also refers to media creations like Lady Gaga, while **Sweetie Darling** (54"x 54", Unique collage digitally printed on canvas, enhanced with paint, glitter and spray painted text) refers to Andy Warhol's Marilyn pictures transformed to the new age of transgendered people as celebrities and porn stars.

Since Dhar's show is about a fluid human identity in the age of global consumerism, Dhar places himself as a truly global citizen through these works. He says: "I believe that all societies are participating in this sort of global consumerism. Perhaps not in remotest Amazon forests, but certainly in all places where the markets and IT operates. It is called aspirational consumption

and exchange. It does not have to be products, but can be cultural experiences, religious aspects, charity work etc.”

Locations:

Asia (</en/keywords/geographical-scope/beyond-europe/asia/>)

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