

# STARING AT THE TRUTH

The sense of having frozen the flux of vision and language is rendered explicit in Ratnadeep's recent series

One of the most prolific among Indian contemporary artists, Ratnadeep Gopal Adivrekar participated in numerous highly acclaimed international exhibitions. 'Discourses of Prismatic Truths' marks Ratnadeep's second solo in Europe and makes him the first Indian artist to feature at the Pavillion Du Centenaire in Luxembourg. The current suite of paintings by artist Ratnadeep Gopal bring in cultural as an object whose meaning is produced and consumed within the context of two compositional themes, i.e., Art history/history and the universal corpus of discourses, both of which, in turn, are produced and perceived by the artist and viewer in accordance to his own cultural context. The work offers the viewer immense scope to negotiate the meaning of visual codes and arrive at alternative interpretations, depending on his own cultural context. This sets the stage to explain how visual codes, which are perceived to possess definite meaning when compared to linguistic codes, can actually become arbitrary when placed in a 'group' of visual codes.

Evolving technical prowess, which compliments his incisive subject matter also extends in the manner in which he juxtaposes the subject matter of the imagery and proffers it into open ended narratives. Ratnadeep combines drawing, painting, and graphics within a photographic framework characterized by transgression in the *métier* of this wild strain; and since its great

subject is the complexity of the broader culture and our complicit lives within it, the stratified moral reifications of refined culture are its perpetual adversaries. It aspires to the

Ratnadeep Gopal Adivrekar  
Discourses of Prismatic Truths 2  
Oil on Canvas  
48 X 68 Inches, 2011







Ratnadeep Gopal Adivrekar  
Discourses of Prismatic Truths 3  
Oil on Canvas  
48 X 68 Inches, 2011

vernacular aspects do and conspires with it - and seeks to redeem it by infecting it with felicity. At any rate Ratnadeep's use of photography seems designed to hold his work at one remove from this redolent objectification, the photograph reifies neither the image nor the text, but represents them both as retinal moments-'freezing' them, as it were, in the same way that a photograph will freeze a cloud or a gesture, leaving the implication of their continuing permutation in phenomenal reality. This sense of having frozen the flux of vision and language is rendered explicit in Ratnadeep's recent series. His evocation of cultural flux 'frozen' by the shutter-click seems obvious in these pieces; and the relative advantage of 'freezing' an image over objectifying it

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would seem to be that the covert sentiments that accrue behind (within? in front of?) the objectified image is emptied from the photographic trace. With this photographic retreat from 'authenticity,' then, Ratnadeep dispenses with the woozy cultural 'aura' that apparently accrue round objects d'art and neutralises, as well, the theatrical melancholia that all too often lurks behind camp transfigurations of popular culture.

There are also examples of the small drawings Ratnadeep would sketch on paper in between intervals of his large canvases he initially adopts this time-worn theme and aims at making a fresh



interpretation of it. These small format works articulate a certain conception of light and a synthesis of abstraction and figuration that resulted in images that Ratnadeep to this day continues to explore. The gemlike quality of these small-format works is emphasized by the wide, flat, profiled frames, which also underscore the individuality of each image. They link, in my mind, to the experience of finding small treasures in dimly lit places and they also form a part and represent some of Ratnadeep's most extra sensory visions of the forces of objects in his larger works.

The series 'Prismatic truths' concerns Ratnadeep, not what purports to lurk behind those visuals. The pleasures and uses of these complex visuals, in Ratnadeep's aesthetic, would seem to define art's singular virtues. As Ratnadeep remarks this truth also made the modernist reductions trans-culturally efficient-crossing a cultural border is in many ways like crossing the limit of the present. Thus, during the period of modernity the power of the present could be detected only indirectly, through the traces of reduction left on the body of art and, more generally, on the body of culture.

Ratnadeep Gopal Adivrekar  
Discourses of Prismatic Truths 5  
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