

Press Release



**Nicola Durvasula
Chitra Ganesh
Tejal Shah**

January 26 – February 18, 2006

Reception: Thursday, January 26, 6 - 8:30

Thomas Erben is excited to present three artists whose work employs signifiers of Indian culture and mythology, both historic as well as popular, to challenge traditionally prescribed notions of femininity, sexuality, and form. The media used are hybridized (mainly video, drawing, and collage) as are the cultural influences:

Nicola Durvasula was born 1960 in the U.K. and, after studies in France, taught for several years at the University of Hyderabad, India; of Indian ethnicity, Chitra Ganesh (b. 1975) was raised in Brooklyn, New York, and received an MFA from Columbia University; Tejal Shah (b. 1979) grew up in central India, eventually moving to Bombay in 1995. She completed her BA in photography in Australia and went on to the Art Institute of Chicago as a Visiting Scholar. Since 2001, she has been working and living in Bombay.

The delicate, figurative line drawings of Nicola Durvasula draw inspiration from recognizable, eclectic sources such as miniature painting, Kama Sutra illustrations, Western art history, and popular culture, both East and West. For Durvasula, exploring the potential of the medium and emphasizing the problems of structure and style is as important as the imagery itself. Her work has been exhibited with important venues in India such as Gallery Chemould and Sakshi Gallery, both in

Mumbai, and with public and private venues in Europe and the U.S. This coming March, her work will be included in *Lila/Play: Contemporary Miniatures and New Art from South Asia* in Victoria, Australia.

Chitra Ganesh's wall drawings and installations have been quite visible over the past years. Works appeared in *Fatal Love*, Queens Museum of Art, 2005, and *Treasure Maps*, curated by Janine Antoni, Apex Art, 2004. This fall, she will be part of a survey exhibition of Asian American art at the Asia Society, New York. Internationally, the Gwangju Contemporary Art Museum, Korea, included her in a survey of wall works. On view are several re-photographed collage drawings mining the exuberant campness of Hindu comics. Although traditional in appearance their subverted subject matter brims with sexual desire and up-roots social expectations and female gender roles.

Chingari Chumma/Stinging Kiss, 2000, 8:30 min. Tejal Shah's seminal video (made in collaboration with artist Anuj Vaidya) is a 'fairytale fantasy' which transports us right into a Bollywood film climax. Typically, the abducted heroine is taken to the bandit's den where he inevitably ties her up or makes her dance; the hero comes in time to save his beloved, just before the villain can commit the ultimate atrocity. Only here, the hero never arrives and the sequence ends in a queerly consensual fantasy where nothing is fixed any longer. Besides screenings at numerous international film festivals, this work has been shown in such notable exhibitions as *Indian Summer*, Eole Nationale des Beaux-Arts, Paris, 2005; and *Indian Video Art: History in Motion*, Fukuoka Art Museum, Japan, 2004. Upcoming are solo shows with Galerie Mirchandani + Steinrucke, Bombay, Devi Art Foundation, New Delhi, and her inclusion in the inaugural presentation of the Elizabeth Sackler Center for Feminist Art at the Brooklyn Museum, NY. Shah is considered one of the most important Indian video artists of her generation. She will also have a solo exhibition with this gallery opening May 27, 2006.

Gallery hours: Tuesday - Saturday, 10-6
For more information, please visit us at www.thomaserben.com
or contact the gallery at 212-645.8701.