

## Abir Karmakar – *The Morning After*

2011 October 21 – November 23, 2011

Press Preview & V.I.P. Reception: Friday, October 21, 6:00pm – 9:00pm

New York, 35 Great Jones Street

Aicon Gallery, New York's leading venue for Modern and Contemporary South Asian art, is pleased to present *The Morning After*, a solo exhibition of Abir Karmakar's most recent cycle of works. Following on the heels of his successful 2007 exhibition *In the Old Fashioned Way*, at Aicon's London gallery, Karmakar's current work continues to explore the presence and absence of the human body as a conceptual structure. While his large-scale androgynous self-portraits took center stage and established the notion of presence in his prior work, Karmakar's current scenes of recently vacated hotel rooms locate their human presence through its deliberate and conspicuous absence.



Abir Karmakar, *Scent of a Bed*, 2010, Single-channel video, 7.5 hrs.

Two ingeniously crafted single and multiple channel videos that accompany the exhibition set the tone for the viewer's complete engagement with the work. Karmakar's dexterous superimposition of images, gleaned from footage of three individual sleeping figures obtained over a period of three separate nights, suggests more than what meets the eye. Evocative of sexual play and titillation, these tableaux compel the observer to weave their own version of what might have transpired through the night. Despite the presence of human bodies in the video images, these fleeting, transitory glimpses of intimacy anticipate their absence and the viewer's need to provide signs of human presence and interaction in the accompanying oil paintings.



Abir Karmakar, *The Morning After* (Installation Shot)

In a series of eleven masterfully rendered and often monumentally-scaled oil paintings, Karmakar's highly realistic images of empty hotel rooms remain charged with the tactile signs of human presence and intimacy. The creased sheets, rumpled blankets and indexical marks of body shapes on the pillows spur on our imagined recreations of prior human dramas into realms of perception far deeper and more evocative than the simply visual. For the artist, the stark absence of any human form lends these scenes a powerful and almost extrasensory reminiscence of such, through which we come to

perceive the rooms themselves as extensions of their human occupants. This heightened sensorial engagement of the viewer through associative forms is central to Karmakar's theme of an impersonal space that has been transformed by our constructed recollections into a host for subjective memory.

Reminiscent of Felix-Gonzales Torres' seminal billboard series, in which a photograph of an empty, unoccupied bed was prominently displayed in public spaces throughout New York City, Karmakar's paintings create an opportunity for the viewer to conjure his or her own interpretation of these scenes premised upon their individual experiences and cultural contexts. The subject of the works then is not defined by pictorial content so much as their functioning as a conduit for myriad interpretations, through which we may reevaluate our understanding of the ephemeral nature of human relationships within our unique and varied sociopolitical frameworks.



Abir Karmakar, *Scent II*, 2011, Oil on canvas, 48 x 72 in.

In addition to these vacated hotel rooms, are scenes of disheveled private bedrooms filled with cast-off clothing that the artist describes as “the skin of the body.” By juxtaposing the suggestion of urgent prior movement and activity with a profoundly still space, the viewer is challenged to produce a narrative in conjunction with their own immediate, visceral response to the work. Through mastery of spatial construction and a painstakingly realistic yet texturally flat style, Karmakar is able to visually lure us into the spaces depicted while requiring the active participation of our subjective memories to

complete an interpretation of just what's being represented. In this sense, the overwhelming impact of the paintings in *The Morning After* lies in their power as transformative agents, constantly mirroring and reflecting our own thoughts and memories back at us.

Born in Siliguri, India in 1977, Abir Karmakar studied at the Faculty of Fine Arts, M.S. University, Baroda (2003), where he was awarded the Gold Medal for Fine Art, Painting, and at B.V.A. Rabindra Bharati University, Kolkata (2001). He has exhibited widely in India – De Tour at Gallery 88, Mumbai (2005), Fusion at Baya ABS Gallery, Baroda (2004), Birla Academy of Arts and Culture, Kolkata (2003). His previous solo exhibitions include *Within the Walls*, Gallerey Espace, New Delhi (2008), *Interiors*, Galerie Heike Curtze, Berlin (2006) and *From my Photo Album*, The Museum Gallery, Mumbai (2005). His work has been covered in the The Art News Magazine of India and the Telegraph of India. Abir Karmakar currently lives and works in Baroda, India. This is his first solo exhibition in New York.

---

Please contact Aicon Gallery ([Bansie@Aicongallery.com](mailto:Bansie@Aicongallery.com)) for more information.

\*\* All Images are not hi-resolution, but available upon request.

## ABIR KARMAKAR



Abir Karmakar, *Scent I*, 2011, Oil on canvas, 48 x 72 in.



Abir Karmakar, *Scent II*, 2011, Oil on canvas, 48 x 72 in.



Abir Karmakar, *Scent III*, 2011, Oil on canvas, 48 x 72 in.



Abir Karmakar, *Scent IV*, 2011, Oil on canvas, 48 x 72 in.



Abir Karmakar, *Scent V*, 2011, Oil on canvas, 48 x 72 in.



Abir Karmakar, *Scent VI*, 2011, Oil on canvas, 48 x 72 in.



Abir Karmakar, *Scent VII*, 2011, Oil on canvas, 48 x 84 in.



Abir Karmakar, *Scent VIII*, 2011, Oil on canvas, 48 x 84 in.



Abir Karmakar, *Scent IX*, 2011, Oil on canvas, 36 x 48 in.



Abir Karmakar, *Scent X*, 2011, Oil on canvas, 48 x 36 in.



Abir Karmakar, *Scent XI*, 2011, Oil on canvas, 36 x 48 in.



Abir Karmakar, *Scent of a Bed*, 2010, Single-channel video, 7.5 hrs..

## ABIR KARMAKAR

Born 1977 in Siliguri, India

After graduating with a Master of Fine Arts degree from Maharaja Sayajirao University of Baroda in 2003, Karmakar began participating in a number of group shows throughout India. He landed his first solo exhibition in 2005 with his *from my photo album* series, where he created a photo-realistic atmosphere full of titillating, androgynous self-portraits. He has been a part of several group shows all over the world following his solo show.

His informal, yet highly-detailed and voyeuristic self-portraits, in which he places his naked body in intimate settings, are a recurring theme in his work. Karmakar questions the notions and formalities of gender, sexuality, intimacy and the complex relationships a person can have, not just with others, but with oneself.

Lives and works in Baroda, India.

### Education

2003 M.A (Fine Art, Painting), Faculty of Fine Arts, M.S. University, Baroda  
2001 B.F.A. (Painting), Rabindra Bharati University, Kolkata

### Select Solo Exhibitions

2008 *Within the Walls*, Gallery Espace, New Delhi and Galerie Mirchandani + Steinruecke, Mumbai  
2007 *In the Old Fashioned Way*, Aicon Gallery, London  
*Whispering Palette*, Red Earth Art Gallery, Baroda  
2006 *Interiors*, Galerie Heike Curtze, Berlin  
Catalogue essay by Kamala Kapoor  
2005 *from my photo album*, The Museum Gallery, Mumbai

### Select Group Exhibitions

2011 *Window in the Wall: India and China – Imaginary Conversations*, curated by Gayatri Sinha and Gao Minglu, Pearl Lam Fine Art, Shanghai, China  
*Dolls*, Sumukha Gallery, Bangalore and Chennai (in association with Art Chennai 2011), and Rob Dean Art, London  
*Of Gods and Goddesses, Cinema, Cricket The New Cultural Icons of India*, curated by Arshiya Lokhandwala for RPG Academy of Art & Music, Mumbai  
*Pills*, curated by Avni Doshi, Latitude 28, Delhi  
*5th Anniversary Exhibition*, Galerie Mirchandani + Steinruecke, Mumbai  
*India Art Summit*, New Delhi  
2010 *Changing Skin*, The Fine Art Company at Coomaraswamy Hall, Prince of Wales Museum, Mumbai  
*Trial and Error*, Abir Karmakar, Debraj Goswami and Rahul Mukherjee, Faculty of Fine Arts, M.S. University, Baroda  
*INDIA AWAKEN: Under the Banyan Tree*, Essl Museum, Vienna  
Curated by Dr. Alka Pande from the permanent collection of the museum

- Have I Ever Opposed You? New Art from India and Pakistan*, Gallery Faye Fleming and Partner, Geneva
- 2009 *Failed Plot*- curated by Gayatri Sinha for KIAF  
*A New Vanguard: Trends in Contemporary Indian Art*, Saffron Art and The Guild Art Gallery  
*New Fables: Contemporary Voices*, Gandhara Art Gallery, Kolkata  
*Long Gone & Living Now*, Gallerie Mirchandani + Steinreucke, Mumbai  
*Threshold: Forging Narratives in South Asian Contemporary Art*, Aicon Gallery, New York  
*Shifting Shapes – Unstable Signs*, Yale University School of Art, New Haven, Connecticut, USA  
*PANORAMA: INDIA* at ARCO\_Madrid  
Presented by Galerie Mirchandani + Steinruecke, Mumbai  
*Mutant Beauty*, Anant Art Gallery, New Delhi  
Curated by Gayatri Sinha
- 2008 Gallery weekend at the Baumwollspinnerei Factory Complex, Leipzig, Germany, presented by Galerie Mirchandani + Steinruecke  
*A MAZ ING*, Jehangir Art Gallery, Mumbai  
Curated by Anupa Mehta for RPG Academy of Art and Culture
- 2007 *1st Anniversary Exhibition*, Galerie Mirchandani + Steinruecke, Mumbai  
The Harmony Show, Mumbai  
*Reality Bites*, CIMA, Kolkata
- 2006 *Beyond Credos*, Birla Academy of Art & Culture, Kolkata  
Annual Exhibition of Birla Academy of Art & Culture, Kolkata  
*Two x Two*, Sarjan ArtGallery, Baroda  
*Red Earth And The Pouring Rain*, Lanxess ABS Gallery, Baroda  
Feb Group Show, Baroda
- 2005 *De Tour*, Galerie 88, Mumbai  
*The Harmony Show*, Mumbai
- 2004 *Fusion*, Bayer ABS Gallery, Baroda
- 2003 *Read*, Birla Academy of Arts and Culture, Kolkata
- 1995 Annual Exhibition of Academy of Fine Arts, Kolkata

#### **Awards**

- 2007 The Harmony Award
- 2003 Awarded Gold Medal, M.A. (Fine Art, Painting), Faculty of Fine Arts, M.S. University, Baroda