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## THREE QUESTIONS WITH RANBIR KALEKA

Sonam Joshi



Although he trained as a painter, Ranbir Kaleka is most well-known for blending video projections with painted canvases to create magical moving images. In *Fables*, his first solo show in Delhi since his return to the city from London in 1999, Kaleka will exhibit five recent works – three videos and two digital stills on canvas – with elements of the fantastical. An elephant and a stork walk around in a lavishly decorated bedroom in the video “Chimeric Enrapture”, while animals and birds hover over a post-apocalyptic Delhi in the digital print “Conference of Birds and Beasts”. Video-paintings such as “Fables from the House of Ibaan” and “18 Allegories of the Self” take a deeply meditative look at questions of intimacy and existence. Kaleka spoke to Sonam Joshi about the exhibition and the self-reflective nature of his art.

**SJ: How are the works in the show connected thematically?**

RK: I usually don't work with themes, although the viewers are welcome to project them on the works in the current show. My desire is to create works that are complex devices capable of meaning-making. The device, its capacity to create many possible meanings, and the meanings themselves, are all equally important.

**SJ: There is a recurring presence of animals in your work, often juxtaposed with urban or domestic backdrops.**

RK: I have not thought of this inclusion of animals thematically, but I have to say that I love all animals and all things living. Animals share our space and I think their needs should also figure in the human design for greater comfort, or what one calls progress. Also, animals are symbols; they are part of a narrative in which they sometimes act as human surrogates, reflecting our deeper yearnings, fears and complexes.

**SJ: You seem to have shifted to more introspective work. Has your practice changed since your return to India?**

RK: Yes. My earlier works dealt with hybridity, miscegenation and cross-cultural shift in context. They somewhat corresponded to my own situation at that time. After coming to Delhi, I feel that my work is coming unmoored from any event or phenomenon-specific concerns and moving towards more reflective, existential narratives. This is one of the reasons why I revisit many of my earlier works or part of my earlier works.