

Max Kandhola



Eye I by Max Kandhola

British Indian artist Max Kandhola has been creating haunting images of death through sketches and photographs for the past two decades. This exhibition includes a series documenting his father's struggle against a terminal illness that finally claimed his life. In a telephonic interview, he spoke to **Janice Pariat** about how his art has helped him deal with loss.

How did your preoccupation with death begin?

I think it began in the '80s, when I was about 18 or 19, when my mother passed away. At the time, I was contemplating studying the arts and also contemplating the emotions of what death and dying really meant. [Also] I remember my parents receiving calls very early in the morning and those calls filled us with fear because obviously a loved one had passed away in India.

While my mother was in hospital, I ended up being by her bedside nearly every day of her 12 days [there] and I talked to a lot of patients around the ward. During that period, I spent time sketching, doing a lot of pen-and-ink drawings of my mother on her deathbed. I also drew the other patients and unfortunately most of those patients and my mother passed away. So that set certain ideas in motion: the notion of death, dying and bereavement, and also the trauma afterwards. I'm in my 40s now, and various life experiences have changed how I manage to deal with trauma. I think through

experience and time one can, maybe not accept it, but learn how to manage all these different emotions.

The pictures in *Illustration of Life* are of your father dying. How do you feel about showing such intimate family moments to the public?

It's very difficult because in England, when the work was first exhibited, *The Guardian* did a big piece. I'd forgotten to tell my sister and she picked up the paper and saw this double spread and she was traumatised. Over a period of time, because of the work I've been dealing with and the work I've been making, I think they've come to respect the art and what I do... What's also helped is a sense, not of being removed, as much as detached. The lens captured only my father [leaving out the family mourning in the periphery] and therefore it became accessible to a lot of different people. That could be somebody else's father or somebody else's uncle.

How do the *Flatland* pictures, which are also part of this show, follow thematically?

That work itself manifested very quickly after I concluded *Illustration of Life*. It's part of a trilogy I'm doing – the first part is the death in the family, the second part is going back to my father's homeland and the third part, which I'm working on, is looking at how my extended family have migrated to new pastures. So, the connection from

Illustration was directly related to the cremation of my father, as a metaphor of how the ashes go back to the land. My family come from Punjab, and it just hit me straight-away: I have to go to India, I have to go to Punjab and start researching.

You went back to the same village that your family originally came from?

Yes I did. I sat down with various elders of the family and they gave me so many narratives and fanciful stories about Punjab. I'd last been back in 1978 for my maasi's wedding and I remember that quite vividly. But I came back to take pictures in 2004 to try and look at it with, it's a cliché, with a fresh eye.

The *Flatland* pictures are completely devoid of people. Why?

For many reasons. I was very conscious of the type of photography and documentary made by photographers [from] India. I felt that if I put people into my pictures, the project would have drifted away, it would have become something else. To place someone in a picture, for me, I have to know more than just about the land, and my research was purely on the land. The land is cultivated by these hands that are invisible. So, to place somebody in there, I felt that I might be patronising, that by placing a farmer or a village in there and taking it back to a European audience, it would bring out different types of connotations about the work. See *Photoink in Photography*.

How to use this section

Galleries and other venues are listed by geographical region. Exhibition listings also include information on related activities. Listings relating to photography, contests and workshops are at the end of the section. Events include student shows, lectures, performances and screenings. Admission for all art venues is **FREE** unless otherwise stated. Venues are shut on public holidays, unless otherwise stated. * denotes critic's choice. ⊕ denotes the nearest Metro station, if applicable.

If you want to be listed

Submit information by mail (*Time Out*, 21 Feroze Gandhi Road, Lajpat Nagar-III, New Delhi 110 024), by fax (4656-5733), or email (listings@timeoutdelhi.net) to Janice Pariat. Include details of event, dates, times, address of venue, nearest Metro station, telephone and any entry fee. Send images (scanned to at least 300 dpi and at least 5"X7" in size) to timeoutart@gmail.com. *Time Out* is a fortnightly publication, appearing on the stands every other Thursday. **Deadline for information is a fortnight before publication.** Listings are free, but inclusion cannot be guaranteed due to limited space.

Central

American Centre

Art is Ability: Abstract paintings by Saurabh Mohan. Mon Oct 5-Thu Oct 15. 24 Kasturba Gandhi Marg (2347-2000). Mon-Fri 8.30am-6pm, Sat 11am-6pm. ⊕ Rajiv Chowk. Carry ID.

AIFACS

A Frame of Life: Paintings by Divya Suri, Jyoti Kalra, Kiran Dangi, Mamto Monika Vijay, Rajkumar Aggarwal, Satish and Simran. Until Wed Oct 7. 1 Rafi Marg, near Le Meridien hotel (2371-1315). ⊕ Central Secretariat. Daily 1-7pm.

arts.i (Religare)

Home Sweet Home: Curated by New York-based Ombretta Agró Andruff, the show addresses the theme of domestic violence in a variety of ways and from widely different perspectives through the media of video, animation, drawing, photography, performance and installation. The participating artists are Shelly Bahl, Betty Bee, Giulia Cairra, Gopika Chowfla, Sanchayan Gosh, Sonia Khurana, Cecilia Lundqvist, Marko Mäetamm, Chintan Upadhyay and Ultra Violet. There will be workshops and lectures organised through the month to complement the exhibition. Check www.religiarearts.com for more