

## **OTHER: REFLECTING ON THE UNIVERSALITY OF THE HUMAN CONDITION**

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AICON Gallery opened last month in Mayfair, with the objective of focusing on the latest developments of contemporary Indian and Asian art. The London gallery is the newest venture of Arts India, which is the pre-eminent gallery for contemporary Indian art outside India with successful galleries in New York and California.

The opening of this Gallery in London is another complementary way of promoting contemporary Indian artists and Art outside of – in addition to the various Art Camps, in this case in Europe.

The inaugural exhibition of the gallery is “Other”. Two artists Peter Drake and Riyas Komu, respectively from New York and Mumbai conceived the exhibition around their own cultural habitats. Their works comment via the universal theme on the reactions of opposing sides to political wars and particularly that in.

### **Meet the satirist of American Suburbia**



Peter Drake views the Iraq War as having turned out to be more about Death than anything else. In this case it is Death, associated with incinerating a house. This series and the urban violence paintings damn Bush’s administration as a moral fraud. His past and present work has often questioned the phenomenon of “normal” and peeling off facades in order to expose the tensions that lie beneath. There has always been a political subtext throughout his work and he has always “looked for something to critique my own culture and have it patterned under”.

## Meet the Bombay Boy



Komu takes another stand whilst retaining the theme of perpetrated horrors by them, but looking at them as a new version of old colonial and imperial power. Komu's work protests the fate of youths from the Third World be they from a Mumbai slum or from the Amazon region, they remain marked by this modern colonialism. The sculpted piece Tragedy of a Carpenter's Son III is that of a missile inscribed with an Islamic prayer that is said prior to a journey. But it is hollow and the grating shows the futility of the war.

Komu's work is very much influenced by the politics of gender and religion in which has always been very present throughout his career and education. Having started when the riots and bombing were taking place in the early 90s in Mumbai, he felt that the total landscape of the city had completely changed and this influenced him and his work "colours got mixed with the atmosphere and the scenery". His paintings are figurative where as his sculptors are abstract; regardless of the subject.

The Bombay Boys was the emerging Art scene in the 90s and they were only boys. The birth of Art scene coincided with the political background with the events happening in the city. However, it is more of a spirit than a group.

Komu: "Today any emerging artist is perceived to be another Bombay Boy. It is the same with Indian cinema. Any new Indian film is perceived as a Bollywood. The same goes for the Art scene; a new artist is seen as a Bombay Boy. The name of the group is meaningless in terms of aesthetic identification. There is nothing like a groupism that makes it stand out, it's more like a spirit. I love being a Bombay Boy."

### Two minds: one message

Drake and Komu have come together to re-imagine the landscape of a world torn apart by misunderstanding, intolerance and strife. This exhibition is a search to find universality of the human spirit amidst the ruins left behind by and human nature. The artists chose to juxtapose their work in this show, seeing London as the geographical mid-point between their two countries. "It's easier to see your identity and take chances with yourself outside the context".

Meeting was a pure coincidence at a single event. Drake had discovered the tradition of Indian Art camps abroad and the various subjects that are dear to the emerging Mumbai Art scene. Drake's reaction after this was "This is top level international style. These are the guys I want to pursue". Each artist provided insights on their respective works and Art. Komu according to Drake is "from some remote place" and Drake according to Komu is "some guy from some flamboyant place". They both had the same message and anger as a backdrop to their work and wanted to collaborate and "Other" was born.

Drake: It would be great to work with other artists and have a cross-cultural exhibition. There's something seductively dynamic and almost sublime about politically charged artwork that makes fireworks when put together.

Komu: There is a sense of emergency to come up with an Art that goes beyond aestheticism. We are no longer marginalized Art scenes in our respective countries. All artists feel the same, have the same cry but express in their own ways.

Future shows at AICON Gallery include solo shows by Jayashree Chakravartry, Anant Joshi, Ashim Purakayastha, Shibu Natesan, Abir Karmakar and group shows featuring Pakistani and Turkish contemporary art.