

Response to Artforum review of Shambhavi Singh's exhibition:

In the March issue of *Artforum* magazine, Ryan Holmberg wrote a review of the recent exhibition of Shambhavi Singh at Talwar, New Delhi, in which he acknowledges some works as “truly beautiful” and “haunting metaphors...seductively wrapped in luminous color and texture.” Mr. Holmberg, however, goes on to criticize the exhibition for the location, architecture and status of the gallery itself, as well as to reprimand the artist for “moral detachment.” Ms. Singh, a descendant of generations of farmers, has spent a great portion of her decades-old practice addressing the issues faced by the rural population of India, especially that of her native state of Bihar. Her subjects are matters of personal history, absorbed over a lifetime – not material gleaned from web browses or picked up from dinner conversations. Ms. Singh’s personal and creative expressions are poignant, soulful, and instilled with beauty, and the gallery provides an environment for those elements of Ms. Singh’s work to come through.

Mr. Holmberg expresses his “irritation” that works addressing the concerns of the farmer are presented at a high-end gallery in India. Perhaps he would have been more in agreement if they were in a space with cow dung on the walls? If so, then perhaps Picasso’s *Guernica* would be more aptly exhibited in a war-ravaged Spanish village rather than the walls of Reina Sofia, Kentridge’s films screened only in the ghettos of Johannesburg, and Jacob Lawrence’s *Migration Series* viewed in the interiors of the Deep South, instead of at MoMA.

Mr. Holmberg complains that the works do not address the root causes of India’s corruption, caste and class. Here he simply follows in the footsteps of a long line of foreigners who know all too well what ails India and how to address those issues. And if he was looking to find root causes of all that, what is he doing in an “upscale high end commercial art gallery?” Doing his job for high end art magazine filled with advertisements from top commercial art establishments from around the world displaying works addressing all kind of concerns that ever afflicted mankind, and it is the revenues from them is what pays his salary. There lies the “moral detachment” Mr. Holmberg, not in Ms. Singh’s work nor that of the Gallery.

-Deepak Talwar