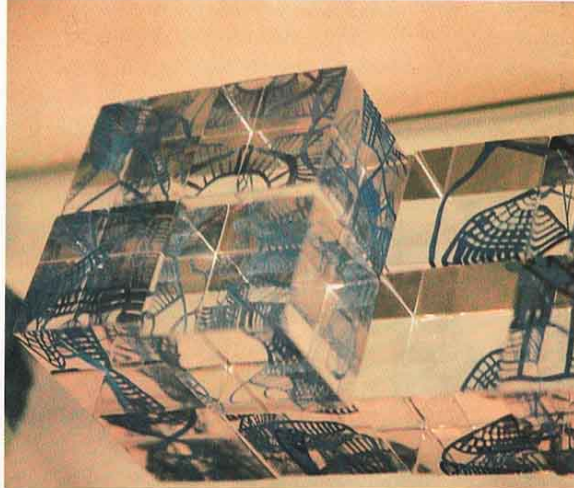


Complex Visuality



Sheila Makhijani. *Butputs*. Paint on acrylic. 1 x 1" per cube. 2003.

Sheila Makhijani loves to work to the sound of silence. One can scarcely believe this on seeing her solo show at New Delhi's Art Inc. The explosion of colour and line in her work, in fact, seems to be the consequence of frenetic activity rather than quiet contemplation. If anything, her trademark brushstrokes and ladder-like striations seem to have become more complex than ever before, presenting a greater cerebral and visual challenge to the viewer. These works show a deeper meditation on the idea and experience of controlled chaos. In contrast to her earlier small-format works where she was often content leaving the surface blank, here, every inch of the canvas seems worked over.

As the eye tries to keep pace with her meandering lines snaking across the canvas, the more subtle markings tend to get overlooked. The points of entry in her seemingly abstract works are often objects which have captured her imagination. These could be objects from everyday life or from memory: they could be haystacks, favourite sweaters or even sofas with upholstery as in *Whirly, whirly, whirl* where the artist renders them in a manner that makes them quite unrecognisable. Using the palette knife or the back of the brush, Makhijani produces linear and planar forms that exist cheek by jowl with more spongy organic forms (which, in fact, remind you immediately of her knitted cocoon-like structures created at an earlier Khoj workshop). But the showstealer by far in this exhibition has been her work titled *Butputs*, consisting of acrylic cubes which she has painted over in chosen colours, especially at the edges. Recalling a child's building blocks, the viewer can juggle the cubes around, and create structures that both startle and delight.

- M.M.

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