

There is a good reason why 'New York-London-Paris-Shanghai-Mumbai' sounds like the daunting flight plan of a well-heeled traveller or in the case of Sanjeev Khandekar's , a busy day in the life of a well-heeled brand, schmoozing across the globe. The five megalopolises together form the conceptual glue that brace the 24 paintings, which comprise Khandekar's new body of work.

By employing , the universally accepted symbol for medical prescriptions, Khandekar proposes that the moneyed classes treat brands as their panacea and shopping as therapy. Their attitude is best described by the ingenious Calvin, from Bill Watterson's *Calvin and Hobbes*, who once proclaimed, "Endorsing products is the American way to express individuality." Calvin made this remark in 1992. A decade and a half removed from the original context, in 2008, this comment is applicable to new economies that are striving to find their own individuality in brands.

This culture of availability, accessibility and subsequently homogeneity is being played out at various levels. If Mumbai wants to be Shanghai then Beijing wants to be the OC or the elitist Orange County in Southern California. If Mumbai is bulldozing its slums to create dim-witted, architectural monstrosities that will replicate the razzmatazz of Shanghai, then a gated community in Beijing, unimaginatively called the Orange County, is replicating the US county, hummer for hummer.

Red, yellow, blue, black, green and brown are the six principal colours employed in these paintings; all others are gradations of the original colour chart. The progression of attractive colours is complemented by the bling faucet but interrupted by the superslag, which seeps out of the faucet.

has its moorings in Khandekar's triptych *I Love It - Shanghai Noodles* (2006). Although the final panel of this triptych was where Khandekar first intercepted the intense din of brand interactivity across nations, the three panels collectively were a pointed criticism of China's unfathomable policies, which vacillate between the rabidly communist and the incorrigibly capitalist.

The box-frame display strategy employed, replicates shop windows that tantalise passers-by into submitting to their wily charms. The 24 works may also be read as a timely nod to Robert Rauschenberg's (1925 - 2008) 'combines'. Much like Rauschenberg, who in iconic works such as *Monogram* combined painting and found objects, Khandekar creates new combinations when he affixes a tap to his paintings. That said Khandekar's combinations do not derive anything from the maximalist approach adopted by Rauschenberg, with minimal surface the artist succeeds in launching conceptual current.

The convulsive patch of colour makes the paintings appear as though they are frothing at the mouth. Over the last few years, Khandekar has, in a majority of his works, nursed and unleashed the unhealing blister-like metaphor with alacrity. Each time he reinvests in this metaphor it gains new resonances. In the current exhibition the superslag smearing across the face of the paintings, attempts to trip the flow of brands.

Earlier this year, Louis Vuitton and Marc Jacobs infiltrated Takashi Murakami's (c)*Murakami* at the Brooklyn Museum, New York City, with a boutique showing off their nifty designer wonderland goodies. In the not-so-entirely-distant future, it is foreseeable that Murakami and his confrères will tout their art from behind cash counters. With ingratiating smiles, they will deliver their art in carry bags, necessarily made of recyclable paper, on which the fine print will read, 'Available in New York-London-Paris-Shanghai-Mumbai'.

Gitanjali Dang  
May 23, 2008  
Bombay