



Film Show

San Francisco Arts Commission Gallery
San Francisco, California
May 29 – July 13, 2002

Douglas F. Cooley Memorial Art Gallery
Reed College, Portland, Oregon
August 26 – October 6, 2002

Jesse Amado
Rick Danielson
Guillermo Gómez-Peña
Ethan Jackson
Les LeVeque
Annu Palakunnathu Matthew
Yasumasa Morimura
Stephanie Snyder
Ryan Stone



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Curated by Rupert Jenkins, Director
San Francisco Arts Commission Gallery

Introduction by Silas B. Cook, Acting Director
Douglas F. Cooley Memorial Art Gallery

Annu Palakunnathu Matthew

Film allows us to navigate the world at will. The very first motion pictures were, for the most part, simplistic one-shot travelogues that nevertheless astonished audiences in theatres and arcades throughout Western metropoli. Today, hours after the latest blockbuster debuts in the U.S., pirated versions appear on the internet and on tapes slotted into VCRs in New York, Asia, and sub-Saharan Africa. Worldwide, India's film industry—known as “Bollywood” in the West—is the largest and most productive. Its movies are melodramatic yet oddly chaste: musical potboilers that, like a Britney Spears video, gyrate with syncopated rhythm and sexless passion. Bollywood's movie posters are likewise lurid and sensational, reflective, in the words of artist Annu Palakunnathu Matthew, of the melodramas and stereotypes of Indian life. Matthew was born in England, grew up in India, and now lives in the United States. Fusing strong graphic imagery with language lifted from the news and entertainment media, Matthew—in the spirit of the Guerilla Girls and Barbara Kruger—subverts media strategies to launch a critique of East Indian society and, because of her re-location to the States, Western assimilation as a cultural hybrid. *Bollywood Satirized*, her re-invented movie posters, turn advertisements for shallow, soap opera-like dramas into biting commentaries on arranged marriage, acid throwing, and domestic violence, to name just a few of her concerns. Gary Hesse, in a recent introduction to her work, notes that throughout her career Matthew has used photography as a means to make connections with her own cultural background. Engaging with Indian society through the other side of the looking glass, he writes, “Matthew . . . underscores the very aspects of Indian society which in turn separate [her] from her culture as much, if not more, than geographic distance.”¹