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PRESS RELEASE

SCHANDRA SINGH
The Sun is not Ridiculous



Charlie, 2008, oil on linen, 228.6 x 274.3 cm

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Schandra Singh wants to whisk us off to Paradise. Not the version thought to be crammed with angelic virgins but the one that comes equipped with heated swimming pools, artificial lagoons, gated estates, sunscreens and festive floatation devices. Schandra Singh wants us to reimagine this Paradise as a people-zoo. A place to see real people pretending to enjoy themselves in dioramas and concentric cages of their own choosing. Schandra Singh wants to re-image Paradise—frame a kind of Expressionist vacation slideshow where promises of escape-ism turn out to be Faustian lures for carnivalesque scenes of beached carnage. Hers is not a Paradise Lost but a Paradise Askew. A prismatic Paradise of beefy travelers and beatific natives. A fraught Paradise of turbulent and treacherous swimming pool waters and mean-spirited plastic pool-animals. Singh's paintings have the post-millennium echoing around their bones—no surprise there once you know that unlike most of us she didn't view the fall of the twin towers from the safe haven of her living room television but from her apartment window directly across the street. Having been There on 9/11 and being of South Asian and Austrian parentage, Singh could have easily indulged the current market's passion for readymade identity-paintings. Sold us abstracted narratives of present-day terrors and Holocausts-past.

What she compels us to look at instead is the queasy face of leisure and privilege on holiday. What she would have us sideglance at instead is the invisibility of the ethnic, the servile and the exotic in the eyes of beholders self-marooned in Paradise.

Singh works form and color into a broken and incendiary mosaic of blood-reds and blues—a color scheme that conjures up vitality and violence in an evocative blur of sensations and meanings. Lost paradises are usually meant to evoke lost innocence but our post-millennial age is one whose most pronounced feature is the global loss of faith in Western indomitability. In the tradition of Beckmann and Grosz, Singh has redirected the gaze of our Occidental tourist selves from contemplation of our navels to complicity in our own vulnerability to dissipation. In sight of Singh's obliquely satirical paintings we are made to see ourselves dissolving in acidic torrents of false security, anthropomorphic anxiety and delusional spectacles of excess, waste and wealth.

GREG TATE