

The Map for Escaping

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Translation - that's when you take A from a certain language system and connect it with B from another language system. A and B might look as if they're linked (that's the basis of communication), but the fact is, they're not (all the more reason then for "trans"). A coexistence between the gentle and the rough - that's what characterizes "translation."

That's also what characterizes Mithu Sen's drawings. It's partly because of all the depictions of flowers and blood, but what's even more important is her scattering of images from all different kinds of levels.

Particularly in her works entitled "Nothing Lost in Translation," produced in Japan, her inclusion of manga, and what's more, erotic manga, makes the images truly diverse. There are levels of "genres" like photography, drawing, manga, and patterned paper. Juxtaposed there is another level of "species" made up of plants, fish, human beings, and manga characters. And, in addition, a level of "body parts" such as nerves, genitals, and bones, while there's also various levels of "styles" such as realistic, elegant, and pornographic.

Mithu Sen connects all of these levels together in these works. Or she inserts blank spaces so that they don't connect. She repeatedly makes connections and disconnections, and makes free use of metamorphosis and collage. This yields meanings such as non-Western and Western, Indian and Japanese, masculine and feminine, human and animal, organic and inorganic, sacred and profane, conscious and unconscious, but the viewer's line of sight frolics among the images distinguished by their expansive diversity, moving back and forth between poles, but never stopping.

In the process, you're sure to lose your bearings, but in losing your way you're also bound to realize something. Mithu Sen's drawings are, if you will, maps for escaping from the seemingly assured but actually unassured fiction of the self. That explains why Mithu Sen was able to use a title like "Nothing Lost in Translation" in a positive way.