

## Mithu Sen

### *Devoid*

27 october - 28 december 2012

Galerie Nathalie Obadia is delighted to present the work of Mithu Sen on the occasion of her first solo exhibition in France.

Born in 1971 in West Bengal (India), the artist lives and works in New Delhi. She holds a BFA and an MFA from the prestigious Visva Bharati University in Santiniketan, one of India's leading art schools, followed by a year course in The Glasgow School of Art.

With her disturbing shadow theatre installation, Sen sheds light on her darkest imaginings and confronts us with her personal world: a procession of finely cut-out forms – animals, objects, bits of dismembered, disjointed bodies and nightmarish visions. As a storyteller, she confronts us with our own subconscious and takes us with a subtle dark humour on a journey of initiation into the city of Paris. By presenting us revisited *pop icons* of our immediate environment seen as an outsider, Mithu Sen's installation is the critical diary of her three weeks residency in Paris. The shadows, fading memories and perceptions of the land she encounters, immaterial traces, layers and fragmented parts stands for a response to the blending of two different times : the present duration, and the history of her past experiences and memories of the city. The shadow theatre is made profane here by Mithu Sen : she manipulates the effigies in her magic artefact in order to deceive our perceptions. This doom-laden set-up brings together the Eiffel Tower as a phallic image, Mona Lisa as a migrant, and The Little Prince that seduces and fascinates the beholders, inviting them to observe the ultimate *danse macabre*, the better to confront him with his own chimerical obsessions.

In line with her most emblematic works, here the artist repeats a visual vocabulary characteristic of her drawings and sculptures: the eroticism of a frank femininity and the unveiling of an intimacy that makes us uncomfortable, the reactivation of inanimate objects in order to create a confusion of identity – whether sexual, emotional or geographical, and an insistence on depicting the body as an organic, material entity and on dissecting and isolating its parts as pictorial motifs, alongside to deny the notion of the body as a shape, an entity as a whole that she deconstructs. With *Devoid*, Mithu Sen succeeds, in a way that is new to her, in making new strides in her quest for abstraction, losing none of her droll impertinence or the insubordination of her precise line.

Produced by the darkening of the light beams of the silhouettes, the farandole of these cast shadows has only the reality that we project on it. By titling this installation *Devoid*, the artist is trying to make us see a bare space. "*Bareness is the void,*" explains the artist, "*but a void after there has been a presence: a withdrawn existence.*" By inviting viewers to experience the immateriality of the voids of hidden light and the fullness of projected light, Sen rules out any kind of passivity: the viewer becomes a dynamic support for disseminating these shadows, and a mobile actor of these active forces.