

MADE IN L.A.

2012



## VISHAL JUGDEO

Vishal Jugdeo's video and sculptural installation *Goods Carrier*, produced for *Made in L.A. 2012*, extends the artist's ongoing interrogations of television series and B movies and the "repetition, doubling, restaging, slippages in translation, and a certain mutability of meaning" associated with these forms.<sup>1</sup> The artist proposed to shoot the video in dual locations—Mumbai and Los Angeles—with the actors performing a series of theatrical vignettes framed by a set duplicated at each site. Conscious of the clichés around staging a dialectic between the twin industries of Hollywood and Bollywood, Jugdeo is concerned with the contrasting economies of image making: "I am primarily interested in . . . the differences in the technical apparatus for filming in each locale, and the subtle distinctions that may exist within the seams that hold together the fiction. I am especially drawn to the improvised, low-tech and manual fashion in which film and television are produced in India, because it mirrors the way that I produce my own videos, which are themselves a kind of conscious inversion of the technical sophistication of mainstream Hollywood. I'm also interested in a distanced observation of the hierarchical social relationships between the various agents involved in making a picture, which includes a vast amount of cheap and available labor that acts in place of costly technology."<sup>2</sup>

Jugdeo's videos feature absurdist sets and props whose sculptural language echoes that of previous works that take the form of raw yet highly formal and stylized installations. The objects and materials in *Goods Carrier* serve as an index to the process of production and mirror one another, evidencing and theatricalizing the parallel locations of their creation. The audience is confronted with paraphernalia that begs to be read in relation to the video. Dialogue regarding the use, circulation, value, and recontextualization of these overdetermined objects is crucial to the project, and the reiteration of these artifacts in the frame of the video forces audiences to contend with the play between object and image, initiating a process that disallows the estrangement of process and product.

Jugdeo's work underscores an acute tendency to unpack the workings of production, followed by operations of fetishization and aestheticization, further punctuated by debunking and distancing effects. The artist's tableaux pitch objects and actors on equal ground to create a confounded spectacle. There is an inane rawness to the sets, props, and performance—a highly constructed campy naïveté that is deeply sophisticated in its psychosexual and postcolonial positionality. Jugdeo's brand of uncanny theatricalism creates

friction between the exteriority of the actors' performances and the performativity of objects while remaining steeped in a perverse game of semiotics by way of a surrealist script. In his melodramatic lexicon, stock devices of narrative cinema and television are deflated. His approach to performers rests in the operations of acting and reacting when given a script devoid of context. This flattening of words on a page is awkwardly animated by actors who are thrust onto an unstable set that is constantly being rearranged, calling for an extemporaneous responsiveness to the constructed environs as opposed to a fixed, linear approach to character and story. Jugdeo affirms, "I engage performativity as a way of unsettling the order of things, embracing the inherent unpredictability and potential volatility of live situations."<sup>3</sup>

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### Notes

1. Vishal Jugdeo, project proposal for *Made in L.A. 2012*, December 2010.
2. Ibid.
3. Vishal Jugdeo, interview with Chloë Flores, in *2010 California Biennial*, exh. cat. (Newport Beach, CA: Orange County Museum of Art, 2011), III.