

ARTnews

Arpita Singh and Robert Kushner

DC Moore

Indian artist Arpita Singh's watercolors are as intriguing as interrupted dreams. In her stunning show, exhibited in a side gallery, the heavily outlined figures of men and women often seemed to hover over fractured landscapes, maps, or diagrams. With their surreal settings, the works combine folk art and modernist traditions to conjure a menacing netherworld. Haunted-looking people inhabit this realm. Sometimes they wander, as if lost; sometimes they run, cower, or wield guns. Their angular bodies and sculpted faces suggest they might be marionettes or expressionist automatons sent on missions they don't understand.

In one painting, a baffled-looking, tattooed man in a sarong is surrounded by a green expanse with areas neatly labeled "Desert," "Mosque," and "Sand." In another, two identically-dressed men—one with a pistol—move in for the kill, across an orange map that shows roads, rivers, and highways. Singh's subjects are at once enigmatic and disturbing. Her colors, textures, and lines are so seductive they pull us in.



Arpita Singh, *Boys*, 2012, watercolor on paper, 14 $\frac{3}{4}$ " x 11". DC Moore.

Showing in the larger gallery space were paintings by one of the founders of the Pattern and Decoration movement of the '70s and '80s, Robert Kushner. Here the artist seemed to be deconstructing his earlier, unabashedly sensual art. Asian tradition remained a touchstone. The strips of gold leaf, silver, or copper, overlaid with floral designs, which anchor each work, evoked 17th-century Japanese screen paintings.

In all but a few pieces, Kushner stripped down his palette to something stark. Gone are the warm harmonies of golds with greens and blues, or reds with oranges and clarets. Instead, Kushner offered canvases with a cacophony of blacks, whites, silvers, and mottled grays, punctuated by the occasional dark green or cobalt. Sections of canvas were marbled with swirls of gray paint, suggesting winter blizzards. In his works on paper, Kushner painted flowers on the printed pages of antique books, creating jangles of patterns much like those in his larger works.

—Mona Molarsky