

Rashid Rana - Perpétuel Paradoxe - Musée Guimet

By Nicolas Bernheim

Rashid Rana's first Parisian exhibition opened on July 7th at the Musée Guimet. This museum is probably one of Paris' most interesting and beautiful gems. It presents a permanent exhibition of Asian ancient art, including magnificent sculptures, paintings and jewels. Although you would probably know some of the pieces featured in the museum (The Ming dynasty vases, the Samurai's armored vest, etc.), you will discover many more.

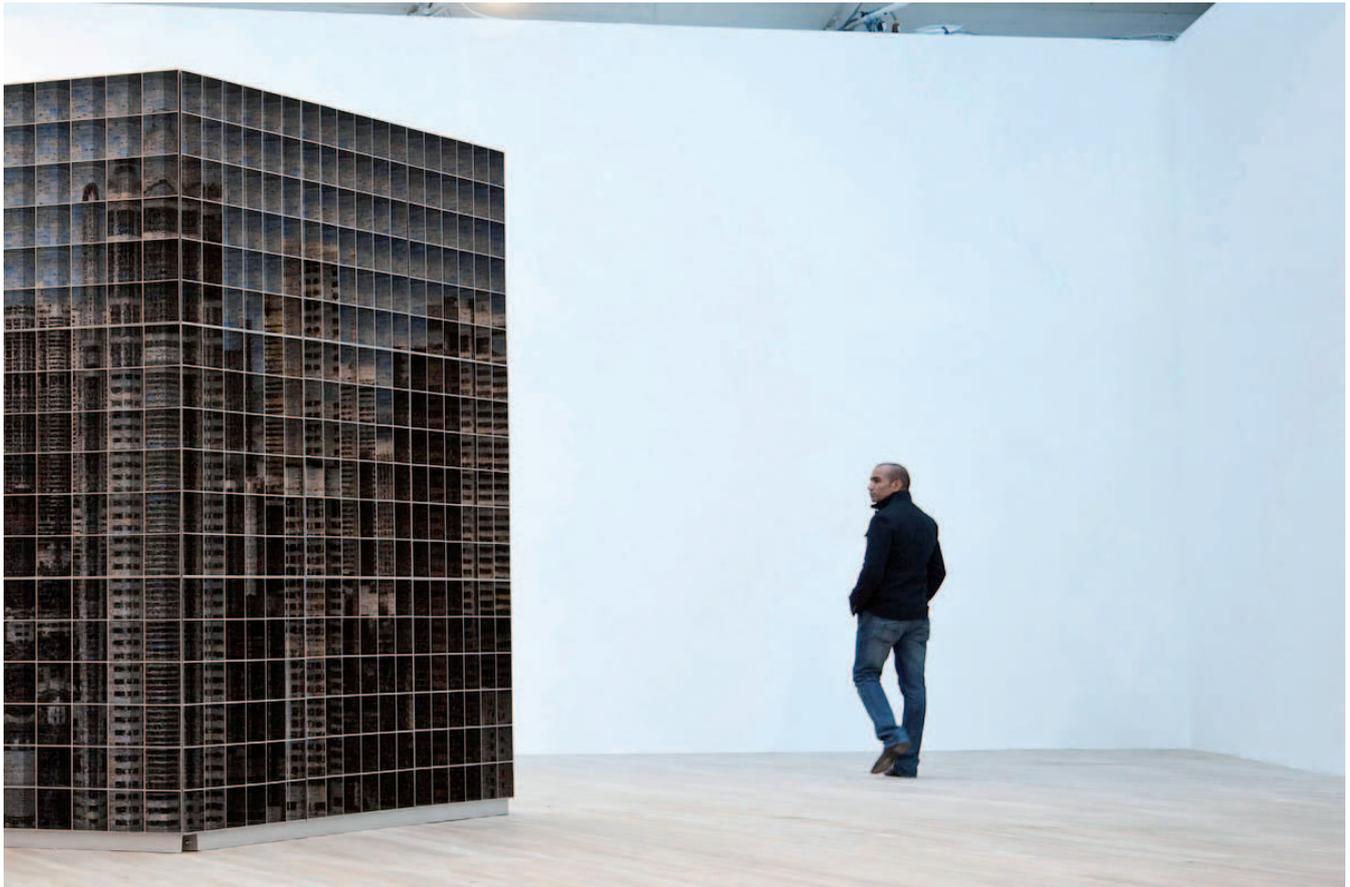
The Rashid Rana's exhibition is the first contemporary art exhibition ever hold in the Musée Guimet. Jacques Giès, its President, justifies this innovation: *"In view of the value of the Asian dynamic in our modern-day world – where Asian cultures are for the first time in Western history making a place for themselves that grows larger every day- the time has come, we believe, to reflect on and reconsider our notion of the museum."*

Originally a painter, Rashid Rana has for the last ten years chosen to work on digital imaging. Using computer software to mix his images, Rashid Rana creates works that are both ironic and disturbing. By associating the "seen" with the "unseen", the artist highlights the hostility between cultures. According to Rashid Rana, *"in this age of uncertainty we have lost the privilege of having a one world view. Now every image, idea and truth encompasses its opposite within itself"*.

Rashid Rana is nowadays Pakistanis' leading contemporary artist and, along with other artists like Subodh Gupta, is the symbol of the emerging "Indian" art scene. With shows all around the world over the last ten years that included some of the most famous art fairs (Art Basel 2006) or Biennale (Singapore 2006), he has imposed himself as an artist who just can't be missed.

What we really liked was that the pieces are actually presented within the permanent collection. Rana's reconstructed images or installations are blending in the museum with an easiness that is just stunning. It is at some point very disturbing for the visitor to notice how Rana's work (like the portraits) finds its natural place in a Museum dedicated to Ancient Arts.

The exhibition is located on the two first floor of the museum. In the lobby, you will first be amazed by a giant silver cube. This cube is a great expression of Rana's work where you will find not only the miniature images, but also a great game of mirrors. On the first floor, some portrait re-composition through miniature Pakistanis' images are showed in the "Coupole" library, which is probably the museum's signature room and a must see when there.



Rashid Rana, *Desperately Seeking Paradise*, C Print + DIASEC and Stainless Steel, 3 x 3 x 3 m, 2007-08 (photo credit Vipul Sangoi)

Rashid Rana is actually creating a great bond between contemporary art and traditional Pakistanis culture and symbolic. His pieces representing carpets or houses in the street are quite interesting and stimulates the reflection regarding our own linkage with our own personal ancient local culture and symbolic. Rana's most prominent work, representing a house or a street corner, composed of smaller pictures of the same house or street corner at different times of the day amazed us by all the efforts he puts in order to actually re-create the original picture. In this exhibition, most of his work is actually made of representations (like carpets, portraits or houses) composed, as usual, of smaller pictures but that are not the same at all (for example you will find swords, Buddha, etc.). Although the message of the artist is still well communicated and the artistic beauty preserved, the compositions are not expressing the same level of technique and mastering that you can see in his street corners for example (also in the exhibition). If a negative point had to be named, it would probably be that one. We could also have enjoyed more of Rana's "veil series" pieces which are very engaged politically and critiques, according to the Saatchi Gallery, "*culturally, negative, constructed stereotypes of women (...)*".

Nevertheless, A&E, the invited curator's duo composed by Arianne Levene and Eglantine de Ganay did an absolutely amazing job inside the Guimet Museum. We could only wish that this exhibition will open a new way of showing contemporary art.

Appearing hand-in-hand with a "classic art" exhibition also dedicated to Pakistan: "Pakistan:

Where Civilisations Meet. Art from the Gandhara, 1st-6th centuries AD (<http://www.guimet.fr/Pakistan-Land-of-encounters-1st>)”, the Musée Guimet provides a one-off chance to experience ancient heritage alongside contemporary creations.



Rashid Rana, *Red Carpet - 1*, C Print + DIASEC, 2007, 294,64 x 220,98 cm

Rashid Rana - Perpétuel Paradoxe
Until November 15th, 2010
Musée national des Arts asiatiques Guimet
6, place d'Iéna, 75116 Paris
Every day except tuesday from 10am to 6pm
www.guimet.fr (<http://www.guimet.fr/>)

<http://artyparade.com/en/flash-news/41>