

**Artist:** Ranbir Kaleka

**Title:** Fear Of A New Dawn

**Dates and Venue:** 8 March 2018 to 3 January 2019, Vadehra Art Gallery D-53  
Defence Colony

*My memory is again in the way of your History.\** Bodies falling, fallen, prone, smouldering, pierced by flying arrows, dissolving, are castaways, debris from refurbished histories. Ranbir Kaleka returns with a sombre body of work that reflects on the present times haunted by the stubborn afterimages thrown up by fear, hate, and violence. In *Fear Of A New Dawn*, Kaleka brings to bear his proto-cinematic practice to offer an experience of abjection that blurs the borders between the conscious and the subconscious, and the self and the Other — the one that is excluded, jettisoned — which returns, in an act of resistance, to confront what it was othered from.

In the three-channel video *House of Opaque Water* (2012), Sheikh Lal Mohan, a victim of rising sea-levels swallow island after island in Sundarban, points at a vast expanse of water and declares: “This is my home”... Our cows grazed by the Banyan tree...” What we see is nothing but endless sea. Lal Mohan is as much a castaway, railing defiantly at his circumstances. In *Fearsome Acquiescence of a Monotonous Life*, a video housed in an architectural structure that invokes both the *haveli* Kaleka spent the early years in, and a biscope, an earlier ersatz form for both cinema and worldly experience. Through one of its two peeping bays we see balls of dried vegetation rolling on the ground in front of a door. Through the other bay, we see a man watching himself walking into the house and into himself, in an endless loop. The digital collage-painting *The Unremarkable Life of The Man With Tiffin*, depicts surreal scene of a man about to step out of his house finding his doppelganger staring at him from across the threshold. Both hold a tiffin box. In the background, the unfolding of a violent event in the background belies the normalcy of the street scene.

*Not Anonymous Waking to the Fear of a New Dawn*, a video projection on six surfaces at various depths, shows a man, only half visible, in a wasteland, falling victim to arrows shot randomly by an archer projected on a different panel. Each time the man falls a severed head of a donkey, the only painted element in the work that brought ‘alive’ by projected image, bleeds from the mouth. Kaleka learnt early that donkeys were the builders of civilizations and here the donkey’s severed head, the anchor of the work, symbolises the demise of civilizational values. In *Bound*, projected on a coffin-like block of charred wood is a black and white image of a man lying on the ground, in the grip of convulsions. Now and then the earth claims his body. At other times, he strains to pull out of his pocket a folded paper that is at that instant blown away by the wind. Official papers? Proof of identity?

**Ranbir Kaleka** (born 1953) is a multi-media artist based in New Delhi. Kaleka was trained at College of Art, Chandigarh, and the Royal College of Art, London. Initially trained as a painter, his work has increasingly animated two-dimensional canvases within experimental film narrative sequences. Kaleka has been exhibited in a range of major international gallery and museums. In 2007, Dr. Felicitas Heimann-Jelinek, Senior Judaica curator, Spertus Museum Chicago commissioned Kaleka to make a Holocaust memorial. The site-specific video installation is titled "Consider", an installation consisting of two projections, a painting and an audio narrative of oral testimony from Auschwitz. In 2005 Kaleka showed at the 51st Venice Biennale in the exhibition 'iCon - India Contemporary' Co-curated by Julie Evans, Gordon Knox and Peter Nagy. In 2002 Kaleka exhibited at the Kunsthalle, Vienna, Austria in the exhibition *Kapital and Karma: Recent Positions in Indian Art*. Kaleka was awarded the National Award by the president of India at the 22nd National Exhibition of Art organised by the Lalit Kala Akademi in 1979 in Delhi.