

# **The Seduction and Lure of the Universe of Hindi Cinema**

## **A Tribute to 100 Years**

Tied to the notion of the popular once again are Kanchan Chander's portraits of Bollywood heroines. Her treatment of the images lend a more glossy appeal to the already glamorous female superstars. Chander does not only select images of some of the most famous female superstars of Bombay cinema like Waheeda Rehman, Madhubala and Meena Kumari, but also some iconic Hollywood stars like Marilyn Monroe and Marlene Dietrich as well. Chander embellishes photographs of these stars with sequins, Swarovski crystals, bits of lace, painting mehendi-like designs over their faces at times. In doing so the documented photograph becomes practically a fetishized painting or object of the female super star. Chander appears to be raising questions about the consumption of a commodified female body. On the other hand, by the excessive 'dressing up' of her female protagonists, Chander creates an aspirational longing and desire on the part of the viewer for the female star by freezing her glamour in a historical time. However, this longing for the female star is subverted. In fact, it is not the male gaze, the one long dominant in the discourse of cinema, but the female one, that Chander seeks. In actuality the artist seeks to look at herself through the fetishized images of female film stars. In an interview with Sushma Behl, 2011, she has said, "If I hadn't become an artist, I would have loved to become an actress". In this way Kanchan Chander has been able to arrive at her own gendered form of self-spectatorship and narrativity, an approach that raises some critical issues related to feminism and the female body.

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