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For Two Lovers by Radhika Agarwala

Fantastic Vistas Inspired by Botanical Illustrations

For too long now, the contemporary art world has been trying to gain a better understanding of trends in South Asian art and the complex histories that surround them. Yet most approaches to non-Western art continue to be very much situated within the framework of otherness and exoticism. [Radhika Agarwala's](#) paintings and sculptures stand in contrast to these fixities of knowledge, and are unique for taking direction from both her cultural experiences in her native country of India as well as Western cities. Her new show at ArtEco Gallery (the brainchild of curator Kristin Hjellegjerde) is inspired by a riot of colourful influences, from 17th and 18th century botanical illustrations to Tarot cards to her personal memories of her childhood.

Says Agarwala of the visual references that she uses in her work: "I love looking at old photographs, and classic cinema and all those moments that I've enjoyed are always from black and white movies," says Agarwala. "I wanted to juxtapose snippets from my subconscious or present state of mind with a rich, theatrical feeling, and I felt I could best do so with a monochromatic palette." Her magnificent and extraordinary beasts and birds are borne from the intertwining of Eastern and Western mythologies, leaping out from the surface of her works. Creating a "language of distorted reality", Agarwala offers us a tantalising glimpse into an alternate universe that exists free of cultural markers.

For Two Lovers is on from 15 November to 20 December.

[ArtEco Gallery Ltd](#), 533 Old York Road, Wandsworth, London SW18 1TG

Images courtesy of the artist and the gallery.

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