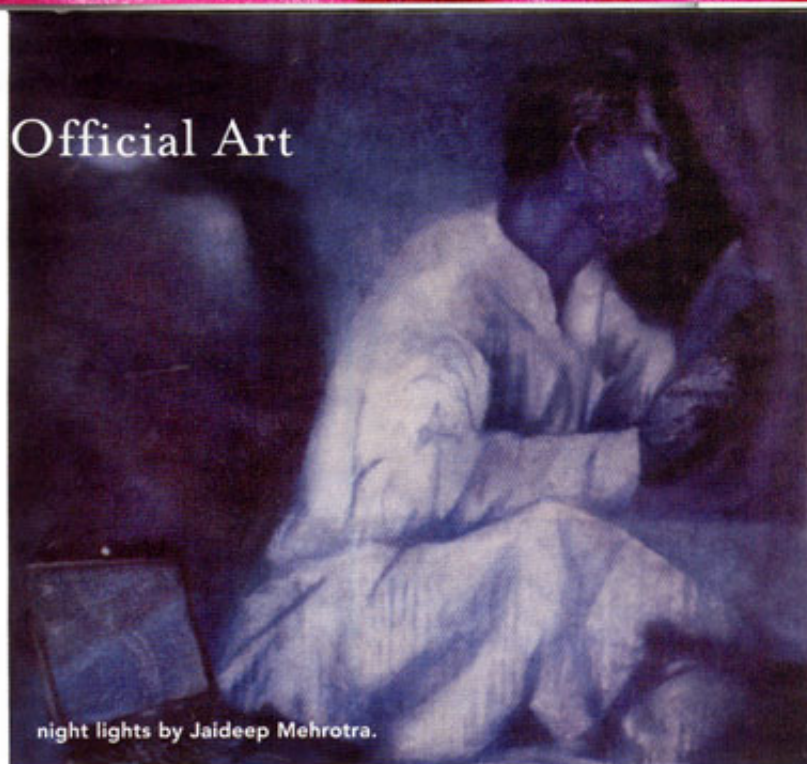


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# L'OFFICIEL INDIA

## Official Art



night lights by Jaideep Mehrotra.

### JOURNEYS THROUGH TIME

Jaideep Mehrotra's forthcoming exhibition, titled *Retracked*, is a step back in time. As the title suggests, it visits an era of train travel, replete with its memories, emotions and history. "Railways are an integral part of India and I thought it was a great subject. There is so much to show, I am literally touching the tip of the iceberg," muses Mehrotra.

In this nostalgic space, one sees a typical train compartment lit by the familiar blue light bulb, the unchanged train bathrooms, earthen tea cups, unwashed exteriors of trains...forming simple, yet evocative scenarios. However, you are asked not to be fooled by their overt simplicity. As Mehrotra explains, "When you look at the painting, it appears absolutely normal, but you have to look at it a little longer. Simple images from the past are juxtaposed with what you would relate to today." So on closer inspection, you see the airline tag casually tied to the wooden trunk, a map of India slowly revealing itself behind Gandhiji, or a laptop placed on the train seat—secondary symbols that tease us into reflecting on our progress through time. Mehrotra calls this style "hyper-real." It's real, yet the objects placed with it make it unreal. "When travelling by train, one would look outside, observe the surroundings...people don't do that anymore. The laptop is like a satirical element—people have jet-set lives, they fly and don't take trains. If they have a laptop, they are unlikely to travel by train. It's almost an impossible situation. Life has changed." What else has changed? Well, this body of work marks the artist's departure from surrealism to realism. "I had to use realism for this subject. There is a flat finish in my previous works. Here, all have layers and layers of finish, so that you are playing with the image and the surface. Also, I have kept a low intensity in the works. I'm simply observing and cataloguing," reveals Mehrotra. This experiment, combined with the use of novel texturisers, the unusual mix of acrylics in oil, all heighten the experience of a bygone era.

*Retracked* will be on display from 14th to 19th October at the Jehangir Art Gallery, 161 B, Kala Ghoda, Mumbai—400 001. Telephone: 022-2284 3989.