

# Train to the past

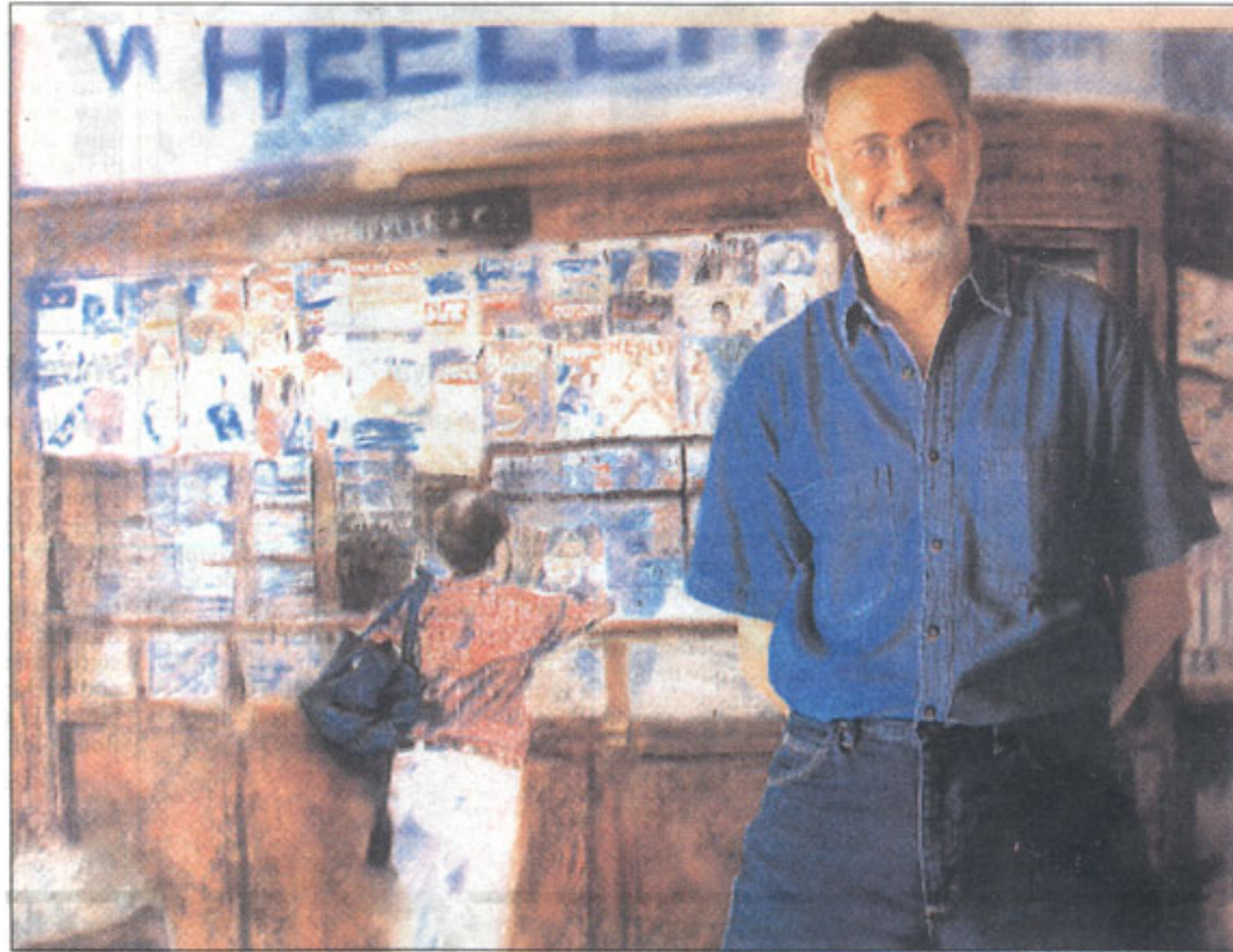
Artist Jaideep Mehrotra makes a journey into history

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JAIDEEP Mehrotra travels back in time and chooses to do so by train. In his latest collection of paintings he revisits forgotten moments of travel by the good old Indian Railways.

Opening on October 14 at the Jehangir Art Gallery, this show is titled *Retracked*. Mehrotra is showing a collection of his work in a solo show after five years. He touches upon his personal moments experienced in his childhood and also explores social and political issues using train as the metaphor. Capturing the present and the past in his compositions, he shows the transition in time contrasting it with certain elements that have not changed.

Says the Mumbai-based artist: "I am showing 20 works in all. I started working on this series a year ago. I have tried to bring out the significance of trains. On one level it encompasses India as it stands in reference to today's social and political climate, and on another level, a personal journey of evolving. It's about growing up



Jaideep Mehrotra poses before his painting titled *Wheeler Dealer*

with imbedded images of going to school or work and how distant it seems to me in my present lifestyle."

The omnipresent Wheeler magazine stalls, soft drink vendors, coolies in red grouping for discussions during easy hours,

children packed in a compartment, man with a laptop in the dim light of the coach, and the tempting Re 1 weight machine are subjects of

Mehrotra's memory and keen observation. In a couple of paintings he revisits the time of Partition, when people climbed on top of trains to get across the border. In *Division That Multiplied* he has painted Mahatma Gandhi at a train entrance with group of people gathered around him. He has divided the canvas by creating a thin painted veil to show the partition of those willing and those unwilling to cross the border. Mehrotra explains, "There are some people who hold Gandhi responsible for the Partition and what followed it."

Mehrotra is known for his mastery over technique. In the past we have seen paintings where he created illusions and in others where he brought out the fuzzy effect using oils. In this exhibition, he experiments further with technique and medium, bringing about a fascinating radiance to his canvas. In differing light conditions and by varying distance from the canvas you see multiple shades of colours, adding nuance to the viewing experience. He has used acrylics and oil colours, besides giving the surface a grainy texture to achieve luminosity.

Mehrotra takes a nostalgic look at train journeys as it is a "distant" experience for him now. His creations provide an intriguing train ride even to those for whom train rides are part of the present.

**Retracked is on at Jehangir Art Gallery from October 14 to 19**