



Subodh Gupta,
Untitled, 2011, bronze,
55 x 55 x 13".

The arrangement suggests the kind of welcoming gesture—simple but laden with meaning—that one might offer to a houseguest. *Atta* (Flour), 2010, too, features a table. On it is a bronze cast of a lump of dough, which looks as if it has been left out to rise. Bearing impressions of kneading fingers and coated in a thin layer of real flour, the painted bronze has a striking, realistic softness: it's a disquieting *trompe l'oeil*. Simple, vital, and essential, the substances on these tables—water and dough—are common to mankind, implying survival, depletion, and hunger.

If the kitchen utensils in previous installations, alluded to food, *Atta*—like *Untitled*, 2011, a painting of nacreous, doughlike forms—actually depicts it. All, however, discreetly offer a view of a private female world, the grace of domestic gestures, often made in silence and solitude, that satisfy life's primary, essential needs. In Gupta's work, though, such needs are not only physical. The artist is concerned with the spiritual as well as the ordinary, affirming the ritualistic character of universal, everyday activities, the innate sacredness of even the simplest of gestures. While titillating, and thereby exposing, the West's exoticization of India, Gupta offers something fresh and poetic: a socio-cultural examination that translates the local into a global language, focusing on shared values and universal symbols.

—*Ida Panicelli*

Translated from Italian by Marguerite Shore.

Subodh Gupta

HAUSER & WIRTH

Over the past twenty-some years, Indian artist Subodh Gupta's work has been characterized by the use of stainless steel. He has employed the shiny metal—a material Jeff Koons has called “proletariat silver”—to create replicas of Indian kitchenware, formally arranging the utensils into spectacular, large-scale installations.

In the context of such installations, these glittering objects take on powerful meanings. Culturally specific, the cups, *thali* pans, and tiffins underscore difference: Western spectators may view the kitchenware as exotic, while Indian audiences might find the items banal, commonplace. But the objects also have universal resonances. Domestic tools tied to the preparation of food inevitably brings into play the tension between accumulation and deprivation, a dichotomy certainly relevant to contemporary India, where rapid socioeconomic development has created extreme inequality in the distribution of wealth, but one that is also meaningful around the globe.

For this exhibition—his first at Hauser & Wirth's New York branch—Gupta again showed replicas of ordinary objects. Here, however, he cast four of them in bronze at a monumental scale. (A button, *Untitled*, 2011, for example, is four and a half feet wide.) Though dented and ruined, the items are treated with respect, seeming to stand above time, history, and decay. The large, bent sifter; the broken lamp; the snapped-off button: All live new, majestic lives and emanate poetry, freed from their primary functions and suggesting cyclical time, the potential for constant transformation. Meanwhile the folded measuring tape that measures not length but weight is an homage to Duchampian irony, distorting our expectations and eluding logic.

Two other works maintain ordinary proportions. In *a glass of water*, 2011 (which gives the exhibition's title), an aluminum cup, full to the brim with water and on the verge of spilling, rests on a wooden table.