
Living Pictures /

Ecstasy **Extase**

2005 / Video installation, silent / 4 screens - 4 parts, each 4:25 minutes / Commissioned by the French Embassy in India.

2005 / Installation vidéo silencieuse / 4 écrans flottants + 4 vidéos : 4:25 minutes chacune / Produite par l'Ambassade de France en Inde.



I represented France at the New Delhi Triennale, an exhibition torn between reactionary tradition and an openness to contemporary art from around the world, which makes for a rather strange site of experimentation. After a visit to Singapore some years earlier, I had wanted to make a video with men in a moment of total abandon, in ecstasy. This is a motif recurring throughout the history of art. I was interested in a non-religious sense of ecstasy, though, a forgetting of the body that can lead to its transformation. It seemed appropriate to ask this of men who, because of social convention and surveillance, believe they are in control of themselves. The French Embassy let me use their screening room as a studio but refused to let me put an advertisement in the newspaper. Their opinion was

that if I published an ad asking men to come make a video about ecstasy, there would be a million people standing in front of their gates the next day. The Bollywood effect! I was therefore asked to find the men myself, which I did. All those I asked accepted, from young men on the street to men from different social conditions. The filming became the subject of gossip. What was I doing with these men to bring them to states of ecstasy? I responded that I created a space of freedom, without moral constraints, where everything was possible and experimental. A space of emancipation where fears and constraints could, for several moments, leave them and let them go into an unknown part of themselves. It was long and difficult, but the 15 men entered a state of ecstasy.