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## The Empire Strikes Back: Indian Art Today

Saatchi Gallery, London

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**Adrian Searle**

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Her suburban Dream (2009) by Huma Mulji at the Saatchi Gallery, London. Photograph: Jonathan Hordle/Rex Features

The Empire Strikes Back is a wet punch. One might expect Charles Saatchi to show just the sorts of things that are presented: a stuffed camel in a suitcase, a taxidermied dog morphing with a furry vacuum cleaner, photographs of veiled women whose burkas turn out to be pixelated with tiny porn shots, yet more of Subodh Gupta's over-familiar sculptures made from cooking utensils, a black medical cot piled high with tarry mattresses that breathe wheezily to the sound of compressed air. There are painted gags about Jasper Johns, dystopian jokes about technology, including a rattling old Xerox machine with half its gubbins missing, and an army of figures made from old floor lamps, neon tubes, discarded bits of plumbing. I see a GCSE-level art project coming on.

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This isn't to say that The Empire Strikes Back is all bad. Some pieces are worse than bad, others just obvious. A speech by Gandhi spelled out in bones adds nothing to any argument. It just took a long time to make. T - Venkanna's reworked versions of Douanier Rousseau are fun and sexy, and so is Chitra Ganesh's cartoon of a liberated Indian superwoman. Rashid Rana's pixelated view of an endless sea of rubbish is queasily beautiful, and – **best of all – Yamini Nayar's photographs of half-abandoned rooms take us somewhere strange and oddly threatening.**

A lot of the work looks exoticised for the gallery, the artists playing up their post-colonial otherness as a gimmick, rather than making art of substance. This exhibition gives us no clearer view of the art of a subcontinent than did a recent Serpentine gallery exhibition. There's also no film or video – areas where some of the best work is made.

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