



**PERSONAL GNOSIS FOR PUBLIC CONSUMPTION:
THE PRACTICES OF MICHAEL BÜHLER-ROSE**
introduced by his gallerist
Peter Nagy

A common characteristic shared by all religions and mystical doctrines is the distinction between appearance and reality. There is a general agreement that 'truth' lies beyond the everyday and the ordinary, what we perceive and experience directly. No longer relegated to matters of the spirit alone, this principle now pervades science and philosophy, the visual and literary arts. In short, things are always much more than they appear to be.

Art now resides in a space between the crafting of objects or pictures and a practice of value in and of itself (so thoroughly have all manner of materials, images, actions and endeavors been accepted as Art.) The artist is cartographer and navigator, a conduit for influences and ideas, an explorer of earthly realms and the metaphysical. Michael Bühler-Rose, born in 1980 and raised in the United States, has been a student of the Vaishnava branch of Hinduism since the age of 14. Having studied Sanskrit and philosophy for many years in India, he is today an ordained Brahmin priest. He received a BFA degree from Tufts University and his MFA from the University of Florida in Gainesville and presently is employed as an Assistant Professor in the Department of Photography of the Rhode Island School of Design. His practices on multiple platforms influence his production and he has described his subjects as 'theatrical cultural realities' and 'feats of representation through place and displacement.'

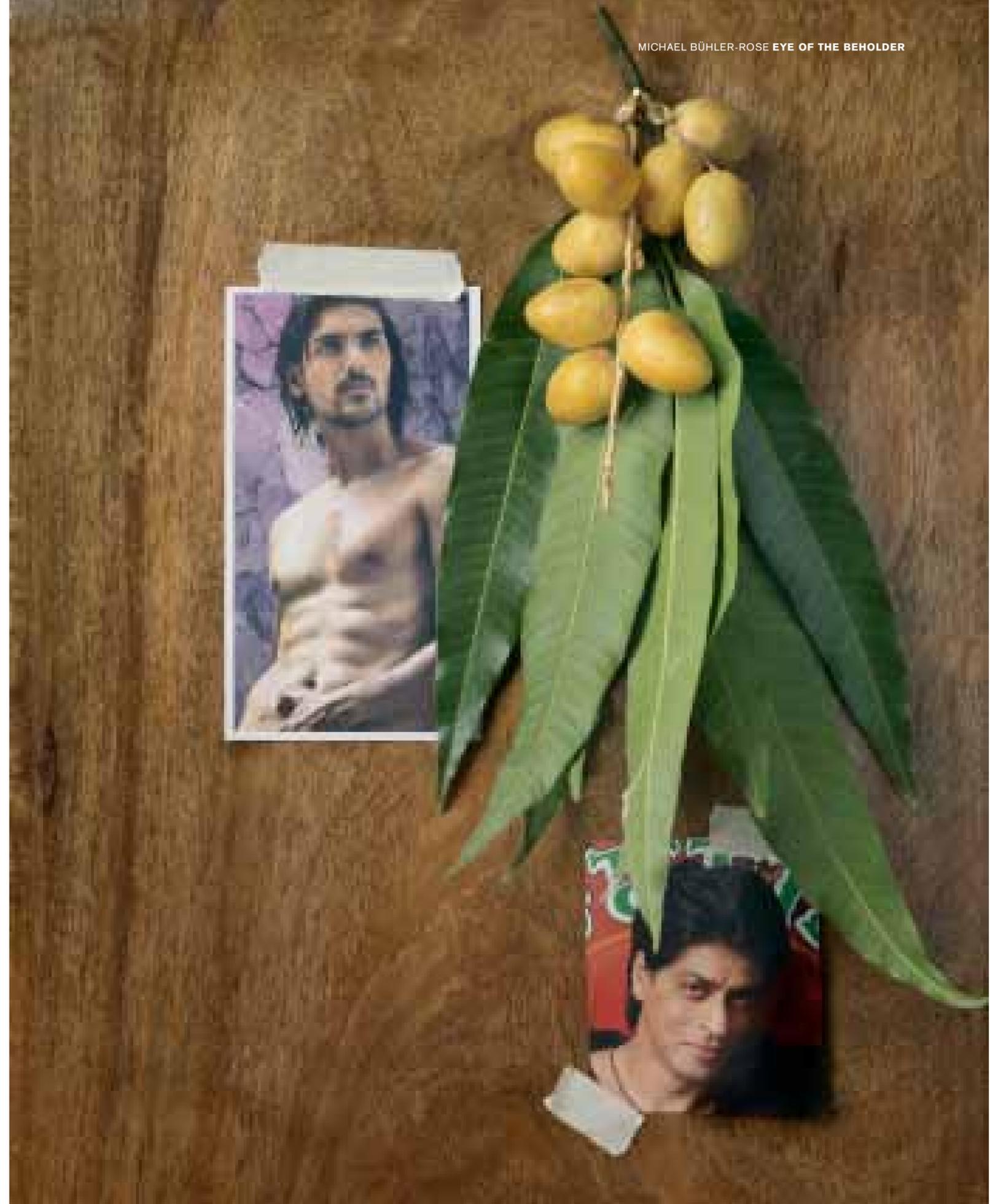
Darshan, literally Sanskrit for 'sight,' implies much more than simply vision and seeing. It also connotes being in the presence of the divine and a reciprocity of the gaze (to see and to be seen by the deity,) as well as an interactive event in consciousness. It therefore moots distinctions between animate and inanimate beings, allowing for multiple directions of exchange, a sort of panopticon built of infinite mirrors that amplifies the visual conditions of everything. To then consider relatively new hypotheses (such as Conceptual Art, Psychedelia, Deconstruction, Quantum Mechanics and the Internet) leads one to another fundamental concept of Hindu philosophy, that being Maya, the web of illusions in which human experience exists, the perception of which is entirely of our own creation.

In a variety of works, both photographs and videos, Bühler-Rose touches on multiple aspects of these concepts. Whether of realms earthly (Bollywood films and actors, American students of Indian classical dance) or transcendental (the rituals and refuse of Hindu piety,) Bühler-Rose focuses on instances of metamorphosis: from matter to spirit, from traditional to contemporary, from Indian to international, from private to public, from naïve to corrupted, from polluted to purified, from anonymous to famous. Pendulums, however, oscillate continually, and any direction also implies that its reverse is not only possible but certainly inevitable. Bühler-Rose's practice, as telescope and microscope, translator and encryptor, retrofits our perceptions and understandings of all manner of visual evidence (art) and metaphysical inquiry (religion.) Mighty claims for a group of photographs but today the photographic, once the harbinger of a scientific rationalism, gloriously sustains the penultimate predominance of Maya over human society.





Pages 10-11 Kashmiri Landscape, Switzerland (Allen St. and Hester St.) NY, 2010, cm 60,9 x 101,6, C-print. Page 13 Women & Lychees, 2011, cm 40,6 x 50,8, C-print. Above Afternoon, Alachua, FL, 2008, cm 101,6 x 127, C-print. Right Men, Mango Leaves & Dates, 2011, cm 40,6 x 50,8, C-print





Above Kashmiri Landscape, Switzerland (Attorney St. and Houston St.), NY, 2010, cm 60,9 x 101,6, C-print. *Left* Camphor Flame on Pedestal (0432), 2010, cm 40,6 x 50,8, C-print. Page 18-19 4-Channel Blu-Ray Installation, (Production Still). All images courtesy Nature Morte, New Delhi and Chatterjee & Lal, Mumbai

