



Common Threads,
Shared Spaces

**FIVE YEARS OF FELLOWSHIPS FOR VISUAL ARTISTS
FROM THE CALIFORNIA COMMUNITY FOUNDATION**

As had become his custom, **ALLAN deSOUZA** was taking pictures through an airplane window during takeoff, landing and while in flight. While taking these pictures – of “nothing” – on a trip between San Francisco and Los Angeles, deSouza incurred the wrath of another passenger: “I don’t care what you say, those are not tourist photos,” he was admonished. “As an American citizen, I want you to stop taking them.”⁹⁰ Of Indian descent, born in Nairobi and raised in England, deSouza – a brown-skinned person of undiscernable ethnicity – surmised it was his profile, rather than his actions (taking photos of “nothing”), that sparked the ire of this passenger. “And this notion of a suddenly significant nothing came to intrigue him.”⁹¹ DeSouza works with photographs, “often using them as stand-ins for the body, especially the diasporic body that is marked by its multiple locations and history. I wish to create visual representations of the experience of being diasporic, to shift our thinking from how we are formed by geographical locations and racial markings, such as places of origin, places of settlement, etc., to how we are framed by culture and how our bodies and imaginations are marked by those transitions.”⁹² In his recent series *The Divine*, deSouza turns aerial views of landscapes into Rorschach test-like mirrored images that evoke faces of gods and monsters – “foreign bodies that hover at the edge of social acceptance; ... aliens, mythological beings, demons and other figments of the social imaginary.”⁹³

90 Cotter, Holland, “Art in Review,” *The New York Times*, Feb. 2, 2008.

91 *Ibid.*

92 Allan deSouza, unpublished artist statement.

93 *Ibid.*

