



A domestic problem
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The Indian EXPRESS

Updated: Thu, 5 Sep 2013, 17:00 IST

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Art in Motion

Zaira Arslan : Tue Aug 20 2013, 05:06 hrs



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A string instrument is delicately plucked, but no music is heard. Seconds later, an orchestra takes shape, the music begins, but a trumpeter struggles to keep time. As the video progresses, it soon becomes apparent that the entire orchestra is troubled, much like the trumpeter, and consequently, their performance is rather off-key. This six-minute video, titled *My Lifetime* (Malaika), by Serbian artist Katarina Zdjelar relaying a performance by the National Symphony Orchestra of Ghana, is currently on display at Project 88 gallery. It is one of four such videos on display as part of an exhibition titled "Touched". It is the gallery's first collaboration with London's Whitechapel Gallery for a programme by the latter called Artists' Film International. The collaboration also marks the first time an Indian gallery has been associated with the programme. The works in the show, selected by Project 88's artist, Neha Choksi, whose video *Minds to Lose*, and eight drawings – based on her 2008 performance *Petting Zoo* – will be part of the exhibition till September 4.

"I tried to select work that was allied in spirit in some way to the bodily concerns underlying *Minds to Lose*, works which were not

predictable or pat, and which took some measure of spunk to envision and make," says the Mumbai/LA-based Choksi. In her video, for instance, the bodies alternate between those of a woman and animals. "In my video, one could realise that anaesthetising a group of domesticated animals and a human artist are the acts of a person lightly touched with madness," she explains.

Choksi's work was nominated by Project 88 to be their first entrant to the Artists' Film International programme, one that was initiated by the London gallery in 2008 as a temporary project while their gallery underwent renovation. "As all our galleries were closed, the only available public space we had to show artists was our auditorium," says Candy Stobbs, Assistant Curator, Whitechapel Gallery.

Beginning with only six partner venues, Artists' Film International has now expanded to 14 partners around the world, including galleries in Africa, Afghanistan, Serbia, Argentina and Norway. On a touring basis, works by an artist from each of these countries is showcased at these partner organisations.

"Touched" also includes two other videos – Buenos Aires-based Ana Gallardo's *Estela 1946/2011* and Norwegian artist Kaia Hugin's *Five Parts – A Motholic Mobble (Part 5)*. In the former, the focus lies on two pairs of hands, immediately bringing the 'touched' aspect into focus. The viewer sees these hands massaging an old lady in a wheelchair, who, Choksi says in her exhibition note, is a retired prostitute, Estela. "Gallardo met Estela in a geriatric facility for retired prostitutes in Xochiquetzal, Mexico City, where she put in hours of social work," she says.

Hugin's contribution is possibly the most abstract of the lot. A single arm creeps into the frame from

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the top left corner of the screen and is soon followed by a number of other individual limbs. They move in a manner that could well be likened either to convulsions or dance movements. "If, as Minds to Lose asks, unconsciousness is a body part, then here in Motholic Mobble consciousness is a vicious live animal part. The body parts are fractious, restive, and dangerous, absurdly and comically so," says Choksi.

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