

'Thread by Thread' exhibition by Baptist Coelho



Hajira Bano Balkhang

LEH: Ladakh Arts and Media Organisation (LAMO) held an exhibition 'thread by thread' by artist Baptist Coelho and curated by Monisha Ahmed, Executive Director LAMO, on the life of soldiers at Siachen Glacier. Ambassador P. Stobdan was the chief guest on the inaugural function that was held on 1 May and the exhibition will last till June 15.

Through these pictures, the artist Baptist Coelho attempts to reveal and understand conflict and war through observations and conversations that have been

woven into the fabric of the lives of people. Through his photography, Coelho expresses the complexities and politics of war and drew his inspiration from the soldiers posted in the icy terrain at 17000 feet, one of the highest battlefields of the world for three months. His work revealed their challenges being faced by the soldiers.

Baptist has re-appropriated the soldier's clothing and discarded materials associated with the Glaciers to explore untold stories. His works are emblematic of certain themes like humanity, relationship, survival, history,

honour and perseverance.

In his art thread by the 'thread by thread', Coelho uses weaving and stitching to reflect on the soldiers who have joined together to strengthen forces.

'Nowhere but here' consists of thermal shirts that have been stitched together to form the actual size of the canopy of an army supply parachute, symbolizing solidarity among the soldiers.

'Ribbon 1' depicts six individual bars made of various clothing worn on the glacier. The patchwork of the fabric was inspired by actual awards given to a soldier.

'Dream speech' consist of five sleeping bags each with an audio track that intimately narrates the dreams of four soldiers and an officer; expressing their anxiety and vulnerability while sleeping in an army shelter.

'Attempts to contain' is the study of how the mental state affects the body in the absence of clothing.

'No one knows where or when' refers to the fear of the unknown crevasses found on the icy terrain.

Baptist Coelho received his Masters from Birmingham Institute of Art and Design- BIAD, UK (2006). He has received various awards and exhibited internationally in the museum, galler-

ies and film screening. Coelho has participated in various artist residencies; as well as conducted workshops, artist talks and panel discussion in Asia, Europe and South Africa.

During the event, a panel discussion was held between Ambassador P. Stobdan, Monisha Ahmed, Baptist Coelho, Tsewang Rigzin, Councillor Khardong and Porter Stanzin Letak.

During the discussion, former Ambassador P. Stobdan said that through the pictures of Baptist he has understood the human aspect of war. His pictures re-

fect the inner struggle and the emotional conflict a soldier goes through his tenure. He further talked about the importance of recognizing the role of the porters at Siachen glacier and the nomads of Changthang area. "The people of Changthang have been the real guardians of our borders, they have been patrolling that area. Since last six months, 17 square kilometer of land has been captured by the Chinese troupe in the Demjok area. If the government does not take the necessary steps then we might lose it permanently", he said.

Tsewang Rigzin said that most of the youth of Khardong become porter that has a great impact on the traditional agricultural system as youth do not take an interest in agriculture. "I fear if the troops are withdrawn from glaciers, lots of youth will become jobless. Army is linked with the sustainability of Nubra.

Baptist Coelho expressed his inspiration behind choosing the life of soldiers for this exhibition.

Porter Stanzin also shared his experiences as a porter since last seven years.

D. D. Enterprises

For details contact M.C. Complex- Balkhang Chowk
Main Bazar Leh Ladakh. Mob: 09622957240, 9622985566