

Baptist Coelho

thread by thread

(Solo Exhibition)

Curator Monisha Ahmed

9 - 24 October 2015

Goethe-Zentrum, Hyderabad, India

1 May - 25 June 2015

Ladakh Arts and Media Organisation (LAMO),
Leh, India

Supported by Goethe-Institut / Max Mueller Bhavan;
LAMO, Leh; Inlaks Shivdasani Foundation &
Project 88, Mumbai

www.baptistcoelho.com

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Updated: September 2017

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Exhibition Invite



Nowhere but here, 2015 (detail)

Goethe-Zentrum Hyderabad presents

thread by thread

a solo exhibition by

Baptist Coelho

Curated by Monisha Ahmed

Opening: Friday, 9 October, 6:30 pm

On view till 24 October 2015

9:30 am to 6:30 pm, Sunday closed

Entry free

Goethe-Zentrum Hyderabad
20, Journalist Colony, Road no. 3, Banjara Hills,
Hyderabad 500034. Tel. +91 40 23350473

Supported by Goethe-Institut / Max Mueller Bhavan;
Ladakh Arts and Media Organisation, Leh;
Inlaks Shivdasani Foundation and Project 88, Mumbai

Invite

Exhibition Note

“I know that most men, including those at ease with problems of the greatest complexity, can seldom accept even the simplest and most obvious truth if it be such as would oblige them to admit the falsity of conclusions which they have delighted in explaining to colleagues, which they have proudly taught to others, and which they have woven, thread by thread, into the fabric of their lives.”

- Leo Tolstoy, “What is Art?”(1897)

The title of the exhibition, **thread by thread**, is taken from an essay by the Russian writer and philosopher Leo Tolstoy (1828-1910). The quote informs Baptist Coelho's practice, which attempts to reveal and understand conflict and war through observations and conversations that have been woven into the fabric of the lives of people, whether directly or indirectly affected.

Since 1984, India and Pakistan have been zealously guarding their territories on the Siachen Glacier. Beyond the complexities and politics of war, Coelho draws his inspiration from the soldiers posted in this icy terrain, who at 17,000 feet serve their three-month terms on one of the highest battlefields of the world. These works reveal their challenges and valour, but also the paradox of heroism, confronted by brutal cold and the perils of a high altitude on an uncertain terrain, more lives are lost due to the weather than fighting.

In 2006, Coelho began researching life on the Siachen Glacier; in 2009 he presented new works in **"You can't afford to have emotions out there..."**, a solo exhibition in Delhi and Mumbai. This project focused on the life of the soldier not as a machine of war but as a man with emotions and vulnerabilities. Continuing with his research over the years, he has now created six new works that draw their strength and inspiration from the various fabrics and materials used by the Siachen soldiers. These and earlier works comprise the exhibition at the Ladakh Arts and Media Organisation (LAMO), located below Leh Palace in two restored historic houses dating to the 17th century. Creating this exhibition in Ladakh, positioned high in the mountains of northern India, at an altitude of 11,500 feet, allows Baptist to situate his project within the landscape that it is derived from. At the same time, it raises the possibility of interchange with army personnel including the Ladakhis, who as porters, soldiers and officers, have all contributed to life on the Siachen Glacier.

Baptist's practice has been influenced by Louise Bourgeois who once described clothing as "an exercise of memory. It makes me explore... like little signposts in the search for the past." As the central focus of this exhibition, Baptist has re-appropriated the soldier's clothing and discarded materials associated with the Glacier to explore untold stories. Powerful in their own right for their inventiveness and strength, these assemblages take on new meanings when juxtaposed with other materials. These works are emblematic of certain themes: humanity, relationships, survival, history, honour and perseverance. This focus results in work of intense psychological complexity, exposing relationships and hierarchies that occur during war.

thread by thread resonates with the progression of time, to the years of conflict that have passed on the Glacier. Threads collectively add greater strength and endurance to fabric, and Coelho uses weaving and stitching metaphorically, to reflect on the soldiers who have joined together to strengthen forces. The soldiers' clothing, made from both natural and synthetic fibers, is technically sophisticated, insulating them from sub-zero temperatures (which fall as low as -60°C). They are thus more functional than aesthetic: camouflage, protection and durability are all crucial. Obvious signs of mending and repairing on the soldiers' clothes reveal the need to recycle and extend the life of each garment, reminding us of broken political borders in need of repair. Baptist's stitched and constructed three-dimensional sculptures are both symbolic and psychological: they evoke the corporeality of the body, yet are ghostly in their absence of the user.

Nowhere but here consists of thermal shirts and pants that have been stitched together to form the actual size of the canopy of an army-supply parachute, symbolizing solidarity among the soldiers. **Ribbons I** depicts six individual bars made of various clothing worn on the glacier. The patchwork of fabric is inspired by actual award ribbons given to soldiers and questions the relevance of these honours within the context of the army. **The Rose I** creates an association with the American painter Cy Twombly's work and the roses that grow wild around the base camp of the Siachen Glacier; from which the glacier derives its name. The rose shaped sculpture consists of white gauze bandages that reveal how a fragile material can also protect and heal. **Dream Speech** consists 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 a study of how the mental state affects the body in the absence of clothing. A series of photographs illustrates the warp and weft of the body as a way to contain and protect itself. **No one knows where or when** refers to the fear of the unknown crevasses found on the icy terrains. The suspended work is fashioned out of bitumen felt, an industrial material that forms the negative space of a crevasse and attempts to construct the visible and disturbing void encountered by soldiers.

Baptist's fabric collages and assemblages, with their many disparate pieces assembled and sewn together, attest to the conceptual and psychological connotations associated with cutting, weaving, stitching, and mending. Textiles speak to us in many ways, but as narratives on life, they encapsulate experience and memory. While Baptist explores the textiles that protect the soldiers, he brings a new perspective to the understanding of what it means to live and fight on the Glacier.

- *Monisha Ahmed*

Artworks Images and Notes

Nowhere but here, 2015

Ribbons I, 2015

Dream Speech, 2015

Attempts to contain, 2015

537, 2007

“Beneath it all... I am human...”, 2009

“I’m not sure if I will return...”, 2009

“Altitude Sickness, Frostbite, Chilblains, Arterial Hypertension, Deep Vein Thrombosis, Snow-blindness, Hypothermia, High Altitude Pulmonary Oedema, High Altitude Cerebral Oedema...”, 2009

(un)identified #2, 2009

Nowhere but here, 2015

Siachen thermal shirts and pants, nylon cords
and metal rings

Parachute's canopy dimensions: 320 inches

Display dimensions: variable

Nowhere but here, takes its starting point from the artist's large scale installation, "**We waited for days but no sign of hope...**", 2009, which consisted of a large army-supply parachute juxtaposed between an intimidating barricade of sand-filled nylon bags.

Nowhere but here continues to explore the use of the parachute as a metaphor for conflict. The work seems to be an abandoned military parachute that has fallen out of place, but the soft sculpture has actually been fabricated from soldiers' thermal clothing stitched together to form the canopy. Nylon cords and metal rings, attached to this parachute, connect to the supply box and are essential in order to carry life-sustaining goods to the soldiers. The supply parachute is also constructed with a vent in the canopy which allows for a slower and more controlled descent. However, due to sudden changes in wind patterns, these parachutes drift from their targets and often become abandoned in the landscape or suspended from cliffs. If retrievable, it takes days for soldiers to locate them.

The thermal clothing, used to form the canopy of the parachute, metaphorically draws a connection to the thermal currents of hot air which a parachute interacts with while descending toward its hopeful destination. The stitching together of the clothing represents the solidarity and strength of the soldiers during this endless struggle under freezing weather conditions. As part of the barren and isolated world of the soldier, the supply parachute is also seen as a symbol of hope and connection to the outside world. During these unstable times, when destinations are often unclear, a soldier's survival depends on the immediacy of each task and his awareness of being nowhere but here.

- *Davide Allison*



View



Details



Detail

Ribbons I, 2015

6 bars made of various Siachen soldier's clothing, sponge and wood

Single bar dimensions: L 72 X B 9.5 X D 1 inches

Approximate display dimensions:

L 70 X B 68 X D 22 inches

Ribbons I consists of 6 vertical forms in which different colors, textures, and patterns create intricate geometric compositions. Made from pants, jackets, socks, blankets and other articles used by soldiers posted on the glacier, they were inspired by the service ribbons worn by a Siachen officer. Each bar consists of 4 different awards which have a unique design that represents bravery and an achievement of service that would have been presented to a soldier during his service in the Indian Army.

The clothing, which was worn to protect the soldiers from the inhospitable temperatures (which drop to as low as -60 °Celsius), has been transformed into an award of valour. Ribbons and other such awards are part of a political and social system that support the act of heroism. These decorative, multi-coloured, ribbons raise several questions about the meaning of such an award within the context of the army and whether this external display of bravery can actually reflect a soldier's honour and his personal struggle between aggression and protection.

- *Davide Allison*



View



Details



View and details

Dream Speech, 2015

Installation with five Siachen sleeping bags,
five headphones and audio

Approximate installation dimensions:

L 94 X B 65 inches

5 channel audio running time:

29 minutes 58 seconds loop

Audio running time: 21 minutes 8 seconds

loop

Audio extract: <https://vimeo.com/134809563>

Complete audio:

<https://vimeo.com/134809188>

(Please request password)

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Dream Speech consists of five sleeping bags that have been placed adjacent to each other and were used by soldiers on the Siachen Glacier. This installation includes a five-channel audio with voices of four soldiers and an officer who appear to be communicating with each other through a dream. The Siachen Glacier lies at an altitude of 5,753 meters above sea level. The lack of oxygen disrupts the sleeping patterns of the soldiers; often making their dreams even more vivid. The artist reflects on the dream state of these soldiers and how they might communicate with each other through a subconscious medium.

Dreams are an outlet to express our subconscious thoughts. Our dreams are endless even though we may not remember them; in fact during a lifetime we spend an average of six years dreaming. Sigmund Freud (1856-1939), an Austrian neurologist, theorized that the content of dreams is shaped by an unconscious wish fulfillment. The title of the artwork is taken from the writing of Emil Kraepelin (1856-1926); a German psychiatrist who developed the important concept of "dream speech", (originally written in German as *Traumsprache*), which describes the internal speech that occurs during a dream.

Dream Speech facilitates a personal conversation between four soldiers and an officer while they are sleeping. After a typical day of rigid military protocol, the soldiers find solace in their dreams, often expressing their feelings of anxiety, vulnerability and repression; sometimes with a sense of humour, from the confinement of their sleeping bags. The durable fabric of the sleeping bag is crucial to a soldier for his comfort and protection. This envelope of security that surrounds him while he sleeps represents the intimate inner world of the soldier and the safeguard of his ominous dreams.

A dedicated head phone is attached to each sleeping bag, where the viewer is only able to listen to one soldier's voice at a time. The participant could attempt to piece together the fragments of the narrative by individually listening to the audio tracks of all five headphones. The silent pauses between words and sentences allow the participants to include their own subliminal thoughts about the soldiers' dreams. The intimate narrative developed by the artist uses references from various literary sources about war; as well as personal recorded conversations that he has conducted with various army personnel since 2007.

- *Davide Allison*



Installation view



Installation details

Attempts to contain, 2015

8 digital prints on archival paper

Print dimensions in centimeters: 2 Nos. (Width 76 X Height 50.5), 2 Nos. (Width 40.5 X Height 50.8), 1 No. (Width 38 X Height 30.5), 2 Nos. (Width 45.5 X Height 30.5), 1 No. (Width 30.5 X Height 38)

Archival Paper: PhotoRag, 308 gsm, acid-free

Display dimensions: variable

Attempts to contain explores how the body responds to the physical and psychological need to protect by forming a mesh of interlocking body parts. The work takes its starting point from the artist's audio/video, "**Beneath it all... I am human...**", 2009, where a Siachen soldier's clothing is mysteriously removed layer by layer to finally reveal the skin. The soldier's body can be safeguarded by sophisticated clothing manufactured to endure extreme temperatures and to withstand illnesses such as, Hypothermia, High Altitude Pulmonary Oedema, to name a few. However, beneath these fabrics there exists the vulnerable inner-layer of the human body. The artist broadens his investigation by asking; 'How does one shield the body from a mental state, when these protective layers of clothing are removed?'

Attempts to contain is a series of photographs of varied dimensions layered in tandem. Here, the artist illustrates the trajectory of various attempts at weaving and intertwining the human body in order to provide its own layer of protection. The work draws similarities to the act of weaving, which involves interlinking the warp: a set of vertical threads with the weft: a set of horizontal threads to form fabric. Creating textiles is a fundamental human interaction and one of the oldest surviving crafts.

This work begins to explore the corporeality of the Siachen soldier's body when confronted with the intricate relations of the psyche; where fingers, toes, hands, legs and other parts desperately attempt to weave and interlock; forming its own composition of twisted and tense shapes. This interaction between the warp and weft of mind and body implies a deeper psychological understanding; where the soldier seeks his own personal resolve; often unconsciously weaving a mesh that would psychologically hold, protect and contain.

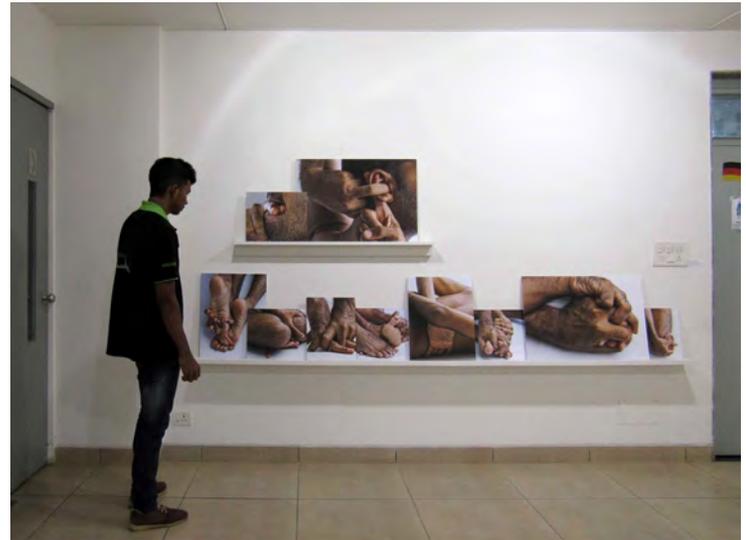
- *Davide Allison*



View



View and detail





Digital prints



Digital prints





Digital prints



537, 2007

Installation with 537 white gauze bandages

Approximate installation dimensions:

L 85 X B 110 X H 21 centimetres

537 is an entreaty for peace, a call to end the ongoing conflict between India and Pakistan, who have been fighting for control over the Siachen Glacier for the last several decades. Coelho has used gauze fabric as a metaphor for the care, protection and healing of the many lives lost during the conflict. The white bandages, which have been rolled and assembled together, add up to a total length of one mile and represent the Siachen Glacier, which is 47 miles long. This was the first artwork created for the Siachen Glacier Project and has continued to inspire the development of new works.

- *Davide Allison*



Installation view



Installation views and details

“Beneath it all... I am human...”, 2009

Audio/video running time:

11 minutes 5 seconds loop

Audio/video extract:

<https://vimeo.com/69136182>

Complete audio/video:

<https://vimeo.com/69135736>

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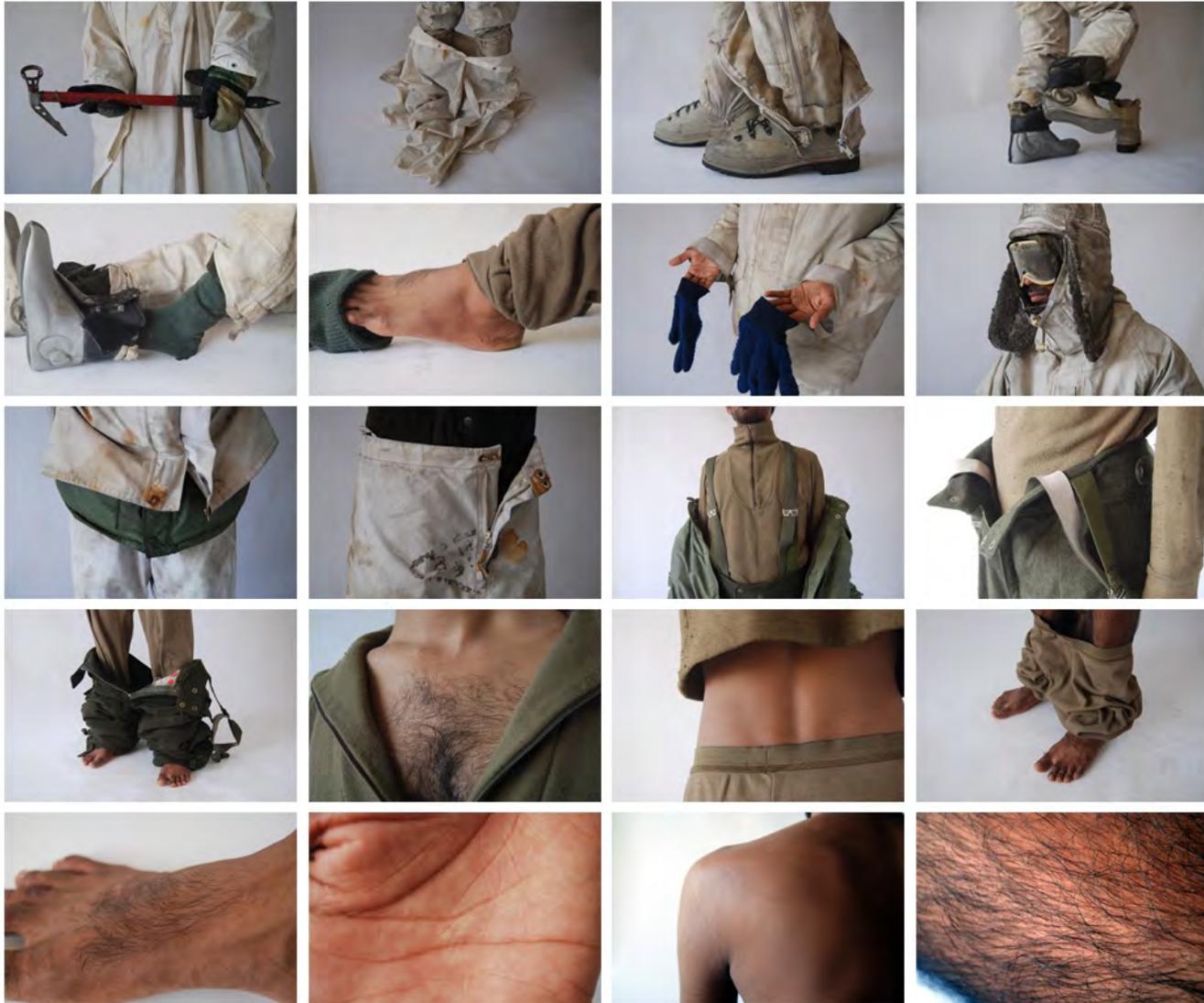
“Beneath it all... I am human...” explores the notion that what is concealed is often revealed. This video depicts a Siachen soldier’s clothing being systematically and mysteriously removed to reveal the nature and physical body of a man. This act reminds us that beneath the protective fabric there exists the vulnerable inner-layer of the human body and psyche.

The meticulous unzipping and unbuttoning is reminiscent of the laborious task that the soldiers endure daily, in a climate where the brutal weather conditions are often life-threatening. In conclusion of this undressing, detail of the soldier’s body is exposed which appears to liberate him from the conflict and his identity as a soldier. These contrasts are not without peril: as an exposed body would soon perish in the cold.

- Davide Allison



View



DVD stills

"I'm not sure if I will return...", 2009

Digital print on archival paper

Print dimension: L 32.25 X B 43 inches

Archival Paper: Epson Premium Semi
Matt, 260 gsm

Printer: Epson Stylus Pro 11880

In the life of every fearless soldier there comes a time when he faces the uncertainties regarding his own life. **"I'm not sure if I will return..."** reflects on a soldier's thoughts concerning the return to his family. The construction material used in the fabrication of the army shelter is in stark contrast to the hand which appears from a small window. Doubts about survival can weaken a soldier's resolve to continue the fight and yet at times the thought of family gives him hope and strength to survive; to move past fear itself and accomplish heroic acts.

- *Davide Allison*



Digital print

“Altitude Sickness, Frostbite, Chilblains, Arterial Hypertension, Deep Vein Thrombosis, Snow-blindness, Hypothermia, High Altitude Pulmonary Oedema, High Altitude Cerebral Oedema...”, 2009

Digital print on archival paper

Print dimension: L 32.25 X B 43 inches

Archival Paper: Epson Premium Semi Matt, 260 gsm

Printer: Epson Stylus Pro 11880

Altitude Sickness, Frostbite, Chilblains, Arterial Hypertension, Deep Vein Thrombosis, Snow-blindness, Hypothermia, High Altitude Pulmonary Oedema, High Altitude Cerebral Oedema... refers to the fatal illnesses that might befall soldiers during their posting on the Siachen Glacier. These illnesses contrast sharply with the bandages which have been abandoned in the snow. The discarded white fabric is camouflaged against the harsh reality of the cold and unforgiving environment. This work reflects on the casualties of conflict and how the memory of a soldier's pain are easily forgotten.

- Davide Allison



Digital print

(un)identified #2, 2009

Digital print on archival paper

Print dimension: L 32.25 X B 43 inches

Archival Paper: Epson Premium Semi
Matt, 260 gsm

Printer: Epson Stylus Pro 11880

(un)identified #2 is part of a multi-disciplinary series which focuses on personal objects and protective fabric which have been abandoned during war and have often mysteriously resurfaced on the hostile terrain of the Siachen Glacier. The stories relating directly to these objects have been lost, but what remains is a ghostly reminder of the warfare that so many soldiers have endured. The cropping of this image allows the viewer to question the outcome of these objects or complete the story of what has transpired.

- *Davide Allison*

© Baptist Coelho



Digital print

Press

Hans India

The Hindu

The New Indian Express

The Times of India

Deccan Chronicle

'Exploring untold stories' by Askari Jaffer, Hans India (India, 15 Oct 2015)

08

HANS INDIA
WORLD OF
MINDS

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CITY TAB

Exploring untold stories

The multimedia art exhibition 'Thread by Thread' at Goethe-Zentrum Hyderabad displays works of artist Baptist Coelho. His works comprise of fabrics and materials used by the Siachen soldiers

ASKARI JAFFER

Presenting emotions in an art form is difficult, but how can a simple piece of fabric tell a tale that is emotional, deeply personal and yet universal? Baptist Coelho, a Mumbai-based visual artist knows how to achieve this. "I have been researching the conflict in Siachen Glacier since almost ten years; I expressed what I observed and read, through art," he shares.

Coelho focussed on the life of soldiers, throughout his pieces. "I presented installations, photographs and sound based on the life of soldiers - not as a machine of war, but as a man with emotions and vulnerabilities. I am trying to reveal and understand conflict and war through observations and conversations that have been woven into the fabric of the lives of people, whether directly or indirectly affected," he says.

A panel discussion on "Border Stories and the Role of Fabric" was held on October 10. This is related to the theme of the exhibition, which seeks to explore the impact of conflict and war through the medium of textiles that were used by soldiers on the Siachen Glacier. The theme of the exhibition, "Thread by Thread" was chosen based on a famous essay. The artist explains, "It is taken from an essay by the Russian writer and philosopher Leo Tolstoy. The quote describes my practice aptly."

His works include, 'Nowhere but here', a parachute's canopy 320 inches long, that is made up of thermal shirts, pants, nylon cords and metal rings. The parachute is seen as a sign of hope for a soldier whose survival depends on his awareness of being in the present moment - nowhere but here.

Further describing the beginnings of his work, he says, "My practice has been influenced by Louise Bourgeois, who once described clothing as an exercise of memory. It makes me explore like little signposts in the search for the past." As the central focus of this exhibition, he has re-appropriated soldiers' clothing and other discarded materials associated with the Glacier to explore untold stories. His works are emblematic of themes such as humanity, relationships, survival, history, honour and perseverance. This focus results in work of intense psychological complexity, exposing relationships and hierarchies that occur during the time of war.

Baptist Coelho received his Masters of Arts from Birmingham Institute of Art & Design (BIAD), UK (2006). He received various awards and exhibited internationally in museums, galleries and film screenings. He has conducted workshops, artist talks and panel discussions in Asia, Europe and South Africa as well. Coelho is the 2015-16 Leverhulme artist in-residence at the Department of War Studies, King's College, London.

The exhibit is on till October 24 at Goethe-Zentrum, Banjara Hills.



PDF link: http://baptistcoelho.com/download_files/70_BCoelho_HansIndia_2015.pdf

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What it means to be a soldier

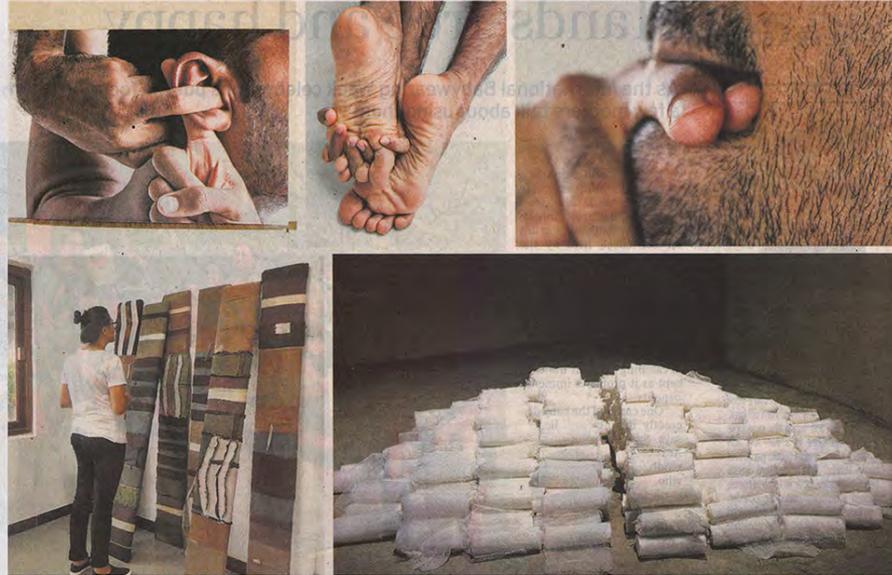
Baptist Coelho's art installation throws lights on the human conditions of conflict zones

NEERAJA MURTHY

His demeanour and warm smile are instant ice breakers. As Baptist Coelho walks into the auditorium of Goethe Zentrum and makes himself comfortable, he talks of the *biryani* lunch he relished before coming for the interview. "I could eat *biryani* every day. If I had a dull day and or think life is hopeless, I just need to eat *biryani* and it will be like an instant change of situation," he says with a smile. At the German centre, the hall is brightly lit and looks unusual too. There are a pile of bandages in the centre, a collection of photographs on the walls and five military uniforms on the floor. The art installation by Baptist is titled 'Thread by thread' and narrates stories from the icy battlefield of Siachen Glacier. More than the stories of heroism and valour, these tales are about the human conditions of conflict zones. "It is looking at how soldiers or civilians deal with it; for that matter how Ladakhis cope with it as there is constant vigilance in the entire region. Some of the art works that you see here are like stages in between a journey. It is not like the end of a certain question or an observation; It is like a conversation that continues for me," he points out.

Have you ever wondered what it means to be safe; what it means to be a soldier; what does bravery mean? These questions kept haunting Baptist till he began a unique project. This project is close to Baptist's heart and has been on for a while. "I started doing research on it in 2006 and have shown different works at different stages of the research. It will continue as long as I live and I can give," he smiles.

Strangely, Baptist has not gone to Siachen Glacier for the project. "There's a glacier and base camp, but only Ladakhis are allowed there or you need



STAGES IN BETWEEN A JOURNEY (From top) Photograph showcasing how body weaves itself to create a mesh of protection; Pile of bandages

to have permission from the Army. I only went till a point called Panamik, where civilians are allowed. It was a point that I could go at that time," he states.

Although he could not interact with them on a daily basis, his constant research, interaction with mountaineers over the years and a Siachen officer he stayed in touch with, shared their experiences. "My questions were about the human conditions. How did they eat? How did they sleep? How did they brush their teeth? The basic questions that no one talks

about. It's also disturbing because you cannot confront reality. I recollect the first day in Ladakh, when we were waiting for the solar panel to heat just to get one mug of warm water to brush our teeth."

The bandages in the hall, It's also disturbing because you cannot confront reality.

which look like a mound of snow, are the first work Baptist did on the Siachen Glacier. "The bandages number 537. A satellite view of the glacier would be something like that," he explains.

His photographs focus on the mental state of soldiers, coping with the challenges of cold. "The entire project is looking at how fabric plays a role in the conflict zone. How fabric has more of a sense of protection than the aesthetic value. In my journey, I also came across something called warp and weft. These are at-

tempts to contain. Here the body is trying to weave itself and create a mesh of protection. You can have a physical protection with clothes, but what about the mental state?" he asks and continues, "Here the body is coiling in itself and weaving its fabric."

Accompanied by an audio, the five uniforms depict a scene where five men, sleeping in a shelter, are dreaming and talking to each other in a zone. "This dreaming, hallucination and this conversation that we hear is constructed and scripted by me. And all these five

men are meeting in a dream and this dream is in an audio situation. They are talking to each other — on simple to complex topics. One soldier speaks of how he misses his family. In my research I also found that some soldiers have no families. There is no baggage of relationships and one of them is in that kind of situation. One of them comes from South of India and is completely overwhelmed by snow. One of them is a ghost; he has seen life and he is now in the afterlife," he sums up.

(Thread by Thread is on till October 24)

PDF link: http://baptistcoelho.com/download_files/69_BCoelho_TheHindu_2015.pdf

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CITY EXPRESS

THE NEW INDIAN EXPRESS

Fabric of The Borders

ARTIST BAPTIST COELHO GETS TALKING ABOUT HIS ART INSTALLATION IN THE CITY THAT PONDERES OVER A NUMBER OF QUESTIONS THAT DEAL WITH CONFLICT, VULNERABILITIES AND FABRIC

by Rajitha S

What is hidden behind that uniform? Who is the person behind that brave persona? Are you vulnerable like anyone of us? What makes you stand up against the chill that cannot be described in a phrase?

These are questions Mumbai-based artist Baptist Coelho wanted to explore and has been trailing behind soldiers who are posted at the Siachen Glacier since 2007. In the city, in between setting up his art installation titled Thread by Thread at Goethe-Zentrum's auditorium, and giving instructions to his team he sits down to talk to us.

The combination of mediums is slightly unusual – horizontal arrangement of cloth patterns leaning on to a wall, a large parachute in one corner, a series of head phones connected to an audio device, a projector, photographs of hands, feet and body parts intertwined and some others, that are yet to be installed.

"It is a mixture of mediums that talk about the meaning of fabric in a conflict and a war zone. It is beyond aesthetics or the weft and the warp. In places such as these, fabric is an essential. It is about security and safety," begins the artist.



Thread by Thread was first showcased in Mumbai and Delhi in the year 2009. Eventually, Coelho felt that it needs to go to the place where the whole idea emerged. "In May-June this year, we showcased it in Ladakh. It was a different experience altogether," he recalls.

With a couple more additions to this installation in Hyderabad, Coelho explains the idea behind each element. "The chords that bind the parachute

are original but the rest of it has been replaced with thermals that were worn by soldiers – the innermost layers of their body. They have all been collaged to form the canopy of the parachute," says Coelho.

It is also about abandoned parachutes you find along Siachen that somehow couldn't make it to the ground. "I have heard stories from the many conversations I have had with army officers



over the years. The parachute is also a depiction of soldiers' strength to fight any situation and conflict as a team," adds Coelho sharing that the fabric has been sourced from soldiers who served at the Siachen glacier. One can always dig further and find more layers to a piece of art, feels Coelho.

This particular piece is also intimate he tells us. "Thermals are the closest to the soldier's skin and this is an ex-



ension of the video that is also part of the installation. I wore the uniform that Siachen soldiers wear when I was in Mumbai and I couldn't see myself. There is no air, there is no space for anything to pass out. The video is where a ghost removes this uniform – layer by layer," explains Coelho while adding that there is an intention behind creating this video too. "By the end of the video, only the soldier's skin is visible.

It shows vulnerability. We have clothes to protect our body, but what about vulnerabilities of the mind? Do we have a fabric to guard our thoughts, our fears?" he questions.

And this question is partly answered by the next element in his installation – photographs. "How does one feel secure? Your body is trying to create a weapon and that's when this weft and warp happens. The body is trying to weave itself. It is again, only an attempt. Can it protect the mental state? I don't know," elaborates the 38-year-old.

How the soldiers guard their mental state is also part of the installation. That, we recommend you go and watch it unfold, rather, hear it unfold.

With no connection to the army or conflict in the family, for Coelho who started off as a web designer and went on to study design in the UK, the whole idea of borders seems absurd he tells us. "How can someone enrol in the army? How can someone enrol oneself to die? What makes people opt for a career like that? I always had these questions in my mind. This pushed me to delve deeper and that's when I started my research," he says, signing off.

Thread by Thread will be open to viewing from 6 30 pm today till October 24.

'Mumbai artist set to take city on a journey to Siachen' by Deepu Joseph, The Times of India (India, 9 Oct 2015)

MY CITY

FRIDAY 9 OCTOBER 2015

Mumbai artist set to take city on a journey to Siachen

Baptist Coelho

Deepu.Joseph@timesgroup.com

Setting up an art installation for his solo show in Hyderabad, Baptist Coelho cuts a busy figure, like a symphony instructor assembling his orchestra. On his third visit to the city, Baptist says that this show at Goethe-Zentrum will focus on the condition of soldiers posted at the Siachen glacier — world's highest battle front. "I'm using materials, fabrics, audio-video clips that one would associate with soldiers and battle stations in Siachen. It opens up a window into understanding how soldiers over there are able to stay sane and sustain themselves in such a unforgiving system and terrain," says the Mumbai-based artist.

It took years of research and travel to

those who had been posted there. "They told me about the food, the materials that they wore, the sleeping bags and tents."

The 38-year-old hopes that the exhibition will give room for people to interpret and think about the soldiers and the idea of sacrifice, and at what cost. "My art is not on behalf of the soldiers, rather it is my interpretation. The sacrifices they have to make is unparalleled. I'm even using large size award ribbons of soldiers in the exhibition — it's my take on bravery awards given to soldiers; but at what cost?"

Baptist, however, says that he still hasn't figured out Hyderabad. "All of my visits to Hyderabad have been touch and go. This time around, though I am on a mission to understand this city," he says.

frontier regions to eventually integrate the elements of touch, sight and sound into this complex topic. "I had travelled to a place called Panamik in Ladakh for my research of the terrain, and to experience the area. It is the furthest one can go as a civilian," says Baptist, who also met a mountaineer — Harish Kapadia who knew a great deal about the glacier; while he understood how life would be from

PDF link: http://baptistcoelho.com/download_files/67_BCoelho_TimesOfIndia_2015.pdf

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'All set for his big show' by Jaywant Naidu, Deccan Chronicle (India, 8 Oct 2015)



The screenshot shows a news article from the Deccan Chronicle. At the top, the newspaper's name 'DECCAN Chronicle' is displayed, along with the date 'Sunday, Aug 20, 2017' and the time 'Last Update: 08:56 PM IST'. Below the masthead, there are navigation links for 'Nation', 'World', 'South', 'Entertainment', 'Sports', 'Technology', and 'Lifestyle'. The article is categorized under 'LIFESTYLE, VIRAL AND TRENDING' and has the title 'All set for his big show!'. The author is identified as 'DECCAN CHRONICLE | JAYWANT NAIDU'. The article was published on 'Oct 8, 2015, 4:23 am IST' and last updated on 'Jun 13, 2016, 3:53 pm IST'. A social media sharing bar is visible below the title. The main image shows a man, Baptist Coelho, in a blue patterned shirt, looking intently at a piece of art he is holding. A caption below the image reads: 'Baptist Coelho is in Hyderabad for his exhibition, Thread by Thread'. The article text describes Coelho as a Leverhulme Artist-in-Residence at King's College London and mentions his exhibition 'Thread by Thread' based on an essay by Leo Tolstoy. It also discusses the exhibition's focus on conflict zones and Coelho's interest in Indian soldiers. A quote from Coelho is included, along with information about the show's opening on October 9th. At the bottom, there is a bio for the writer, Jaywant Naidu, and a social media sharing bar.

DECCAN Chronicle
Sunday, Aug 20, 2017 | Last Update: 08:56 PM IST

Nation World South Entertainment Sports Technology Lifestyle

LIFESTYLE, VIRAL AND TRENDING

All set for his big show!

DECCAN CHRONICLE | JAYWANT NAIDU
Published: Oct 8, 2015, 4:23 am IST Updated: Jun 13, 2016, 3:53 pm IST

The exhibition curated by Monisha Ahmed reflects on the life in conflict zones



Baptist Coelho is in Hyderabad for his exhibition, Thread by Thread

Baptist Coelho is a Leverhulme Artist-in-Residence at the Department of War Studies, King's College London, for the year 2015-16. He is in Hyderabad to exhibit his installation Thread by Thread, based on an essay by the Russian writer Leo Tolstoy.

The exhibition curated by Monisha Ahmed reflects on the life in conflict zones. The main focus is the situation along the Siachen glacier which has always remained a point of conflict between India and Pakistan. This comes from Baptist Coelho's deep interest in the lives and times of Indian soldiers and their families.

And about taking up art as a full-time profession, Coelho has a word of caution. "It's always better for any youngster to have a "proper job in hand which can take care of life's most basic needs. The process of an art journey needs patience and is sometimes painful. Even top performers are sometimes found endorsing products for nothing but commercial reasons. India will still take quite a while before we can see things like 'Arts Councils' emerging in a big way," he says. His show opens on October 9, at the Goethe Zentrum from 6.30 pm.

The writer is a musician, creator of 'Jaywant Guitar' and a freelance photographer

Tags: [hyderabad](#), [lifestyle](#)

PDF link: http://baptistcoelho.com/download_files/66_BCoelho_DeccanChronicle_2015.pdf

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Exhibition Views



Exhibition view



Exhibition view



Exhibition view



Exhibition view



Exhibition view



Exhibition view

Panel Discussion

Topic:

Border stories and the role of fabric
(*Safety, Dignity, Boundaries*)

Panellists:

B.V. Papa Rao (*Founder of art@telangana, the Advisor to Government, Policy & Institutional Development, Government of Telangana; worked for UN in post-war Kosovo*)

Bina Rao (*Designer and CEO of Creative Bee*)

Baptist Coelho (*Visual Artist*)

Moderator:

Koeli Mukherjee (*Artist, Art Historian and Curator*)



Panel discussion



Panel discussion

Exhibition Walkthrough



Exhibition walkthrough



Exhibition walkthrough



Exhibition walkthrough

Exhibition Preview



Exhibition preview



Exhibition preview



Exhibition preview

About

Baptist Coelho

Monisha Ahmed

LAMO

Goethe-Institut / Max Mueller Bhavan

Inlaks Shivdasani Foundation

Project 88

Baptist Coelho received his Masters of Arts from Birmingham Institute of Art & Design - BIAD, UK (2006). He was awarded the 'Sovereign Asian Art Prize' (2016) by The Sovereign Art Foundation, Hong Kong; 'Façade Video Award' (2011) by Art Today Association, Plovdiv-Bulgaria; 'Promising Artist Award' (2007) by Art India & India Habitat Centre, Delhi-India and 'Johnson Prize Fund' (2006) by BIAD, UK. Solo Exhibitions include, Goethe-Zentrum, Hyderabad-India (2015); Project 88, Mumbai-India (2015); Ladakh Arts and Media Organization in Leh-India (2015); Pump House Gallery, London-UK (2012); Grand Palais, Bern-Switzerland (2009); Project 88, Mumbai-India (2009); Visual Arts Gallery, Delhi-India (2009) and BIAD, UK (2006). He has exhibited internationally in museums, galleries and film screenings. Coelho has participated in various artist residencies; as well as conducted workshops, artist talks and panel discussions in Asia, UAE, Europe and South Africa. The artist lives and works in Mumbai, India. www.baptistcoelho.com

Monisha Ahmed is an independent researcher whose work focuses on art practices and material culture in Ladakh. Her doctoral degree from Oxford University developed into the book *Living fabric - Weaving among the Nomads of Ladakh Himalaya* (Orchid Press 2002), which received the Textile Society of America's R L Shep Award in 2003. She has published several articles on textile arts of the Western Himalayan World, including four in *The Encyclopedia of World Dress and Fashion* (Berg Publishers, Oxford, 2010). She has also written on textiles in other areas of India including a chapter on textiles for *The Arts and Interiors of Rashtrapati Bhavan – Lutyens and Beyond* (Rashtrapati Bhavan 2016). She co-edited *Ladakh – Culture at the Crossroads* (Marg Publications 2005). More recently she was advisor for the Bhau Daji Lad Museum's online exhibit *We wear Culture* for the Google Cultural Institute. Formerly Associate Editor of Marg, she is co-founder and Executive Director of the Ladakh Arts and Media Organisation (LAMO).

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Ladakh Arts and Media Organisation (LAMO) is a public charitable trust established to articulate an alternative vision for the arts and media in Ladakh. The LAMO Centre was set up in two historical houses in Old Town Leh that were restored and are today some of the best remaining examples of domestic vernacular architecture of the 17th century. The Centre is designed to conduct outreach programs, lectures, film screenings, research and documentation projects, workshops and exhibitions that showcase Ladakh's material and visual culture, performing arts and literature. For more information: www.lamo.org.in



The **Goethe-Institut** is the cultural institute of the Federal Republic of Germany with a global reach. We promote knowledge of the German language abroad and foster international cultural cooperation. We convey a comprehensive picture of Germany by providing information on Germany's cultural, social and political life. Through our network of Goethe-Institutes, Goethe Centres, cultural societies and reading rooms, alongside our examination and language learning centres, we perform the principal tasks of cultural and educational policy abroad. We work in partnership with public and private cultural bodies, the German federal states and municipalities, and the corporate sector. For more information: <http://www.goethe.de/ins/in/en/lp.html>



The **Inlaks Shivdasani Foundation** was previously called The Inlaks Foundation and was created by Mr. Indoo Shivdasani in 1976 and registered as a Charitable Trust in Liechtenstein in the same year. The Foundation was created to incorporate the existing philanthropic work of the founder, and to provide a permanent independent body for the expansion of these activities. The major objective of the Foundation is to identify exceptionally talented young Indian students and support them financially to develop their special skill and talents to the maximum. Over the last three decades, more than 350 scholars have benefited from these scholarships. For more information: <http://www.inlaksfoundation.org/default.aspx>



Project 88 inhabits 4000 square feet of what was formerly a century old metal printing press in Colaba, Mumbai, with a roster of some of the most thoughtful and exciting artists working in the Indian subcontinent today. From its inception in 2006 and under the adventurous directorship of Sree Goswami, Project 88 has developed a context for the exhibition of experimental and ambitious work in all media by artists whose practice have strong conceptual foundations. For more information: <http://www.project88.in/index.php>

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