

A tale of human survival



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NEW DELHI: Artist Samar Singh Jodha's solo exhibition titled *Outpost* deals with the conditions of the mining community that works deep inside the ground in the Northeastern part of India. In the remote mines, once the minerals have been extracted, roads are built using tar that is supplied in metal cans.

After the cans are discarded they are collected by the locals who construct houses out of them. These people are not architects but more like craftsmen who flatten the metal and put them together, giving rise to a spontaneous, individual expression.

Samar was fascinated by this method and photographed these houses over a period of time. Since these sheets are exposed to the elements, they start changing colour and get a unique hue that was an accidental by-product of a non-aesthetic pursuit.

The artist then decided to take this language to the Venice Biennale so what he did was buy scrap from metal dealers in Mumbai and use their skill to weld, flatten and create sheets like the type used in the houses he had photographed.

As Mumbai was a very humid place, the sheets already had a natural colour to them and they were further treated with organic products to make



Artist Samar Singh Jodha's depiction of the mining community is on display at Apeejay Arts Gallery.

a unique canvas for Samar to print his photos on in such a way that the two blend together and one cannot differentiate between the natural colour of the metal and the colours in the photograph. The graffiti on the walls of the houses photographed also adds an interesting dimension to the artworks.

Another way in which the artist has interpreted the condition of the miners is by making hanging sculptures out of door hinges which are actually a metaphor for the humans working there.

Samar says many of these places where these houses are located are like ghost towns as there are typically migrant workers who live without their family in an area that has been completely destroyed by mining. He feels that the need to recycle or being responsible towards resources is very need-based in India and the people of the area recycled because it was the cheapest option, much cheaper than

concrete.

"The exhibition is not only about the Northeast but is about human survival of mine workers across the world. It is about recycling, the environment, and how people live in remote parts of the world," says Samar.

He says the exhibition more importantly highlights the craftsmanship and creativity to construct with material that was totally thrown away.

The artwork is on display over three levels at the Apeejay Arts Gallery near the Badarpur Metro station. The sculptures have been showcased in the basement so that the viewer can feel as if he or she is entering a mine. There will be a background score playing right through which is a collection of recordings by Samar during his trips to the region. Specialised lighting has been used to highlight the images.

The works have been previously showcased at Venice Biennale 2013 and Venice Architecture Biennale 2014.