

# Art review: thread by thread

By Rinchen Dolkar



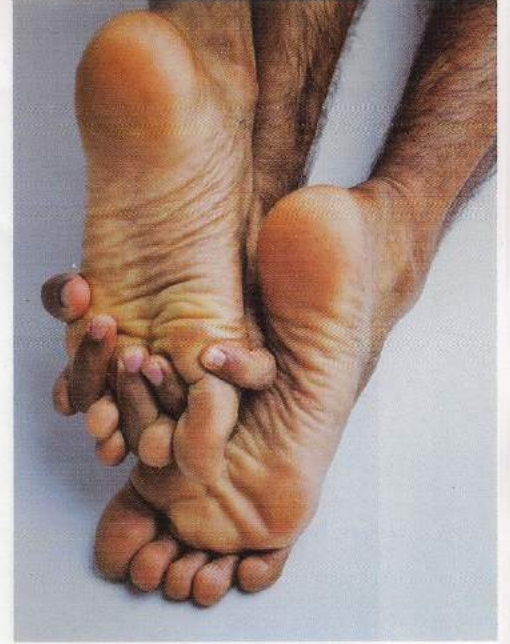
**A**rtist Baptist Coelho's exhibition 'thread by thread' has been on display at the LAMO Centre in Leh since 1 May 2015. The exhibition touches on various aspects of the lives of soldiers posted on the border, especially on the Siachen Glacier. The exhibition is a unique display of unseen connections between the lives of Ladakhis, their families and soldiers in the army.

My brother is in the army and was once posted on the Glacier. I did not know anything about the challenges he faced during this posting. The exhibition was thus a very personal journey for me to understand his experiences and that of countless soldiers like him.

The artist's use of fabric as well as different materials allows a unique peek into the private lives of soldiers, their feelings and emotions. The use of different media—objects, audio-visually, photographs—also goes beyond the conventional idea of art being wood carvings, stone sculptures, and paintings. It's refreshing to see an artist use everyday items from the lives of soldiers, including threads and clothes that he has imaginatively stitched together to compose unique installation pieces. In this regard, 'thread by thread' is a welcome trend of modern art exhibitions in Ladakh.

The exhibited artefacts, especially the photographs, seem to be carefully chosen to give a sense of the pressure and the daily physical and mental stress experienced by soldiers. The use of sleeping bags

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and the audio recordings provide an intimate connection between the viewer and the soldiers, while the parachute made with inners used by soldiers fuses the basic human need for warmth and the will to survive.

Another exhibit is about crevasses that are held together by thin, almost invisible threads, which capture the unseen and unknown factors that impact a person's life. At the same time, it also depicts how people are connected with each other, with the connecting threads supporting and holding together the lives and well being of each person.

The exhibition is a powerful expression of the human face of soldiers, which makes them more accessible to civilians. The artist makes interesting use of different media to confront us with the experience and understanding of the lives of other people, which challenges our preconceived experiences of soldiers as cold, heartless men.

In addition, the exhibition also helps expand the idea of art in Ladakh. While there is a rich tradition of art and culture in Ladakh, this exhibition opens a new space to engage with contemporary experiences in Ladakh. In 2014, LAMO held an exhibition of Ladakhi artists, which underlined the depth of talent in Ladakh. It would be exciting to see how Ladakhi artists use different media to engage with the issues and questions of our everyday lives, like Chimet Dorjey did with the lives of *reda-pas* (water suppliers) in 2013. ■

