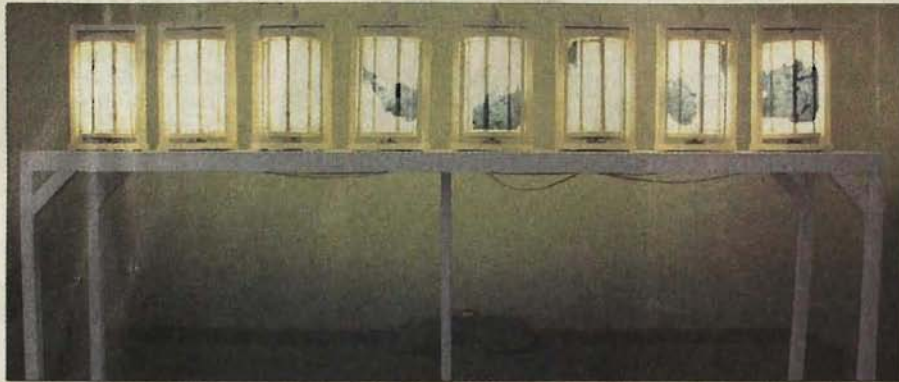


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Loss of Identity

Four artists delve into the notion of identity and how memory plays an important role in its formation

PALLAVI CHATTOPADHYAY

WHEN the Dalai Lama escaped from Tibet into India in 1959, a number of Tibetans followed in his footsteps. Today, many of them rely heavily on memory and reconstruction to retain their cultural identity while in exile. Kolkata-based Paula Sengupta's installation titled *Turning the Wheel (The Monkey and the Dog)*, on display at Shrine Empire Gallery as a part of the exhibition "Invented Identities", features a story told to her by two women refugees. She has

these illustrated on Tibetan prayer wheels, illuminated from within by a yellow light.

The story is about two Chinese men, dressed in blue uniforms, who arrive at a peaceful village with a dog and a monkey. The monkey would make the dog plough a field, which the villagers found very entertaining. Little did they realise, this was a trap set by the two men, who would ultimately capture the village. Sengupta says, "My work delves into how memory plays a role in the construction of identity and

how many of the refugees depend on it to rebuild their lives and the identity of their community."

"Invented Identities" comprises 12 works in the form of drawings, prints and installations by four artists, including Sri Lankan artist Anoli Perera. Curator Paroma Maiti mentions in her curatorial note, "Identity and the process of its fabrication are intriguing issues. Facebook is one of the greatest contemporary examples of being a platform that urges and forces one to 'invent' identities and project them in keeping with the protagonists' tastes and preferences."

Adip Dutta's untitled installation stands out in one corner of

the gallery, and resembles a large carcass, probably of a large animal. A closer only look helps distort the illusion — and the skeleton emerges as an object of everyday use, an enlarged hair clip. Just by changing its physical appearance, the Kolkata-based artist has given the object a completely new identity.

Another artist, Alice Dittmar, has made use of 69 Chinese hand fans, placed spaciously across an entire wall. Her work seems to indicate how these fans denote feminism, as men are rarely seen using them.

*The exhibition is on at Shrine Empire Gallery till May 9.
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Paula Sengupta, *Turning the Wheel (The Monkey and the Dog)* (left); Adip Dutta's untitled installation