



Prateek Raja (right) with Prabhakar Pachpute at Experimenter Outpost, Alipore



A series of woodcarvings titled 'A Flame of the Forest' is also part of the exhibition



'Crawling Through the Jungle'



'Looking at Shooting an Elephant After Orwell, 2025'

Laboratory of dissent

With 'Lone Runner's Laboratory' at Experimenter Outpost, Prabhakar Pachpute weaves a critical narrative of the mind

Pune-based Prabhakar Pachpute's 'Lone Runner's Laboratory' has evolved from his previous series, Museum Menageries, which resulted from his frequent visits to mines, museums, farms and barren landscapes. His latest work continues his critical introspection on a larger canvas. He explores the idea of a laboratory — within him, and the world around him — through a series of evocative paintings and wooden, jesmonite and bronze sculptures.

His 'Crawling Through the Jungle IV' and 'V', featuring a deer and a sloth bear, though rooted in personal memory, talk about a sort of confinement, of both the mind and the body, and are aligned quite organically with Experimenter Outpost at Alipore Jail Museum. The half-perfect, and half-confined body of these two animals, along with a rabbit in motion with similar body form,

talks about the strained and strange relationship between the man and the wild. Pachpute creates a surreal backdrop, with perspectives where nature and human ideas collide. It's hard to ignore the stare of the deer and the bear who seem to carry piercing questions that remain unanswered. Perhaps, through Lone Runner's Laboratory, he intends to find those answers.

"The lab, actually, is a vast concept. It could be all about me; it could be a laboratory which we are functioning into, or it could be the home system as well. So, it is not just a laboratory as a system where things are only happening for someone, but it's happening to everyone," said Pachpute, sharing that the acrylic painting with the sloth bear stems from his childhood memory of finding a bear who was trapped inside a house.



'The Length of a Dream' in bronze

His work also draws from literary figures and their works. *Looking at Shooting an Elephant After Orwell* draws heavily from the English novelist George Orwell's work and explores the politics of exploitation and confinement. Pachpute, who has worked extensively with miners and mining workers and farmers from across the world, attends to the psychological burden that the bodies of both men and animals carry. "So I'm talking about that layer of the psychology; the psychological burden, which one carries. For instance, the sculpture, *Close observer* that draws from Kafka's *The Metamorphosis*. It also talks about durational dream, which is constantly making its way or branching out to new dreams, within the spaces," said Pachpute, who has used the Outpost to its optimum, connecting each painting and sculpture.

Prateek Raja, co-founder of Experimenter, who facilitated the walkthrough of the exhibition, on view till October 17, shared: "This venue (Alipore Jail, now Alipore Jail Museum) has been a place of incarceration and of revolutionaries, and to situate the exhibition within this space is distinctive and unique. He speaks of a kind of mental confinement and the kind of confrontation and negotiation within a mind. This marks a turning point for him and his practice."

Farah Khatoon

Pictures courtesy: Experimenter