



Feral forms

VISUAL ARTS

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Prabhakar Pachpute's *Lone Runner's Laboratory* (Experimenter Outpost at Alipore Museum) turns from scarred landscapes towards the creatures who inhabit them. Mining and damaged land have long shaped his work. In this exhibition, paintings and sculptures ask what those conditions do to mind and body. Figures develop hollows; human and animal forms merge; a fox and rabbit appear caught in the tense pause before a chase. The images are strange, yet their fears are recognisable.

The most haunting work is perhaps *Museum Menagerie*, which grew from visits to mining and anthropological museums. Its altered creatures ask the question: who is predator, and who is prey? Elsewhere, *Crawling through the Jungle* lets forest animals bear human anxieties about danger and escape. Such transformations recall the troubling creatures of Goya and the impossible bodies of Surrealism. Pachpute gives them a weight of their own. His use of bronze, wood and jesmonite produces rough

surfaces and uneasy shapes. Their rawness magnifies the impact: these bodies seem to have been changed by what they have endured.

Orwell's *Shooting an Elephant* and Kafka's *Metamorphosis* provide further clues to the show. Orwell describes the pressure to perform authority; Kafka makes a changed body the site of isolation and shame. Pachpute draws these concerns into a practice grounded in conversations with workers and activists. His current work gives more space to inward distress than his earlier panoramic views of mines and barren terrain. Its strongest moments allow the sculptures' cavities and strained forms to make that connection without pressing for a single interpretation.

The setting makes the inward turn more pointed. The Outpost is at the heart of the erstwhile Alipore Jail, a prison complex that held freedom fighters and later political detainees. Here, Pachpute's enclosed bodies speak to a history of actual confinement and hard labour that transformed bodies and broke minds. It offers a stark reminder that 'freedom' is a relative state of being.