

PRESS RELEASE

Adip Dutta

MAN | NAM

27 April to 05 June, 2007

Aicon Gallery, London, is delighted to present the UK debut of Kolkata-based artist Adip Dutta (born 1970). Dutta is best known for his sculptural installations which continually seek to communicate issues of gender and displacement. For this exhibition, the artist invites the viewer to question motifs of identity and replication, by disestablishing boundaries of the conventionally accepted notion of the 'MAN'. There is also an exploration of intimate, interwoven stories, with resonating themes of 'appearance' in society and the individual.

The work entitled *NAM | MAN | the SELF* (2007) is Dutta's mirror wordplay of 'Man', to which the opposite meaning is not necessarily 'Woman'. The artist observes, through personal association, the invisible borders of the in-between, the ambiguous – the body of a man inhabited by the soul of a woman? This triangular, three-part installation is an arrangement of self-portraits: *NAM* – dramatic in scale, could at first be read as narcissistic; but there are self-deprecating elements involved here. *MAN* is the facing group of seven smaller, elevated heads wearing various forms of head gear (eg. turban, hard hat). It seems Dutta is commenting on our occupying and negotiating terrain which is constantly shifting in relation to our identities – meeting different needs by wearing different hats on different occasions. There is recognition of uniqueness, through an understanding of similarity. *the SELF* is a head be-wigged, and stands on a lone plinth to complete the formation.

The Mould Confronting the Snake (2007) juxtaposes elements of past and present. A large, genderless figure is seated, calm in its elegance, opposite a cobra whose proud stance belies any possible, imminent threat from its reared head. Both are inlaid with ritualistic written text. Dutta discovered a period photograph of a relative as a child playing with a snake, later used as a promotional still for an early Bengali film. The mystery remains whether this is a truthful image, or had some trickery been involved? A modified version of the image showed a plaster mould in place of the child. The artist's use of archives and biographies is in play here and one can discern a subliminal reading of the difference between object, image and identity. The snake is especially resonant for both its biblical and Oriental associations.

Other works include a series of sculptural steel wool *Garments* (2007) suspended from the ceiling. The objects of clothing suggest comfort and intimate use, but they appear deceptively delicate: there is a balance between risk and beauty. Four *Panels* (2007) involve body parts as reliefs (in association to the NAM) and are akin to traditional Roman friezes; the artist Robert Gober readily comes to mind. Both bodies of work seem to critique the institutions of family and home, of individual space being merged and privacy compromised. Dutta always grappled with his gay identity within a claustrophobic familial environment. *Copulating figures* (2007) defines two figures by death and looks at an act of the living being performed by the dead. The figures are lit from within, referring to the ritualistic burning of bodies in the furnace. Dutta engages in the divides between public and private, reinforcing issues that disturb system, order, and identity; delineating borders are evident and central to his oeuvre.

Inspired by Mesopotamian society, *The Requiem* (2000) is a sequence of Egyptian mummies, which are displayed in the gallery's basement. The work brings one back to the *Mould*, where the process of casting is shown in the negative form. The incessant pursuit of questioning identity and transformation continues in Dutta's artistic journey.

Adip Dutta's practices, to date, involve sculptural objects, drawings, photography and scripts. He writes on post-Independence Indian art with particular reference to the debates around globalisation, and is a member of the Faculty of Visual Arts at Rabindra Bharati University in Calcutta (where he attained his MA in Sculpture, 2000). In 2002, Dutta was invited to partake in Documenta 11, Kassel, Germany. Solo shows include Art Heritage, New Delhi (2003) and Birla Academy of Art and Culture, Calcutta (2001). Group shows include Rashtriya Lalit Kala Kendra, Calcutta (2003) and Aicon Gallery New York earlier in 2007.

For further information and visuals, please contact:

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