



■ Anita Dube with her camouflage creation

## Artist Anita Dube makes her point at Newark exhibition

■ MONIKA JOSHI

Last September, when an exhibition on India opened at New Jersey's Newark Museum, one of the pieces that drew acclaim was a video — *Kissa-e-Noor Mohammed (Garam Hawa)* — by Anita Dube.

It featured Noor Mohammed, a middle-aged Muslim man, who transforms during the course of a monologue from an affable narrator of his life's events to an aggressive fundamentalist. The performer was Dube in disguise.

An exhibition of the Delhi-based artist's recent works opened at the Bose Pacia gallery in Chelsea, New York, May 15. One of the three sections, *Phantoms of Liberty*, is a suite of eight sculptural compositions. There is an armoire full of camouflage clothes, shoes and ties, and a carriage with household fixtures wrapped in the same material.

The theme extends outside, where a series of photographs of words molded from raw meat are displayed. The third section is a wax sculpture spelling out the word 'void.'

"What I am trying to say is that war is not just happening on the battlefield," Dube says, "it is everywhere." In *Phantoms of Liberty*, she brought war to the place least expected — the home, which is meant to be a sanctuary, a happy space.

By using camouflage fabric, the artist is also attempting to convey chaos. "When you have the background and the foreground of the same material, everything cancels out," she says. She points to a painting in the collection. "When you look from afar, you don't see anything." There's a nothingness she is conveying. That theme

stretches into *Void*, the large wax sculpture that one sees on entering the gallery.

About using meat as a medium, Dube says it was an attempt to gather two entities not spoken of in the same breath. One is meat, or flesh, which conveys rusticity, and the other is language, which conveys civilization. "The only way for flesh to be liberated is by understanding and it becoming language," she says.

Dube studied art criticism at the Faculty of Fine Arts, M S University, Baroda. *Phantoms of Liberty* first appeared as a solo exhibition at Galerie Almine Rech, Paris, last year. She has also exhibited at the Gallery SKE in Bangalore in 2006, and at Bose Pacia, New York, in 2005. Among her recent group exhibitions are *Bombay, Maximum City* at Lille 3000, France, in 2006. Dube was also part of *Tiger by the Tail! Women Artists of India Transforming Culture*, a celebration of artists from South Asia that has been running at New Jersey's Rutgers University since January.

At the Newark Museum exhibition, Dube was in the company of acclaimed artists as well as emerging talents like Shilpa Gupta (whose work is part of the Asia Society's permanent collection) and Atul Bhalla.

For Dube, *Kissa-e-Noor Mohammed* demanded that she change not only her gender but also class and religion. "I consider Noor my alter ego," she says. "I was Noor, the camera was on me; he was talking to the camera, so he was in dialogue with me."

Her work *Offering* is to be part of a Christie's sale of South Asian Modern and Contemporary art in London, June 11. The sale will feature work by Indian masters F N Souza and Tyeb Mehta.