

Press Release

**PRABHAKAR PACHPUTE**

The Land Eaters

Sep 28 – Nov 16 2013

Experimenter in collaboration with the Clark House Initiative presents *The Land Eaters*, Prabhakar Pachpute's first solo in Kolkata. Through a new body of work, Pachpute continues to explore his interest in labor ethics, economic exploitation, unequal social development and land politics.

Pachpute belongs to a family with a three-generation history as miners in Chandrapur, Maharashtra, in one of the country's oldest mines located within a land, that has over the years, born the brunt of relentless excavation. It is through his repeated revisits and personal experiences of growing up in Chandrapur, that he upholds the paradoxical metaphor of almost every small town in developing countries like India and at what cost that 'development' is attained. In his first solo last year, Pachpute drew murals of his descents deep into the coalmines, conveying the sublime trauma of the mine's psychological impact on those who work in and those who live above the mines. In a later series of works, Pachpute pushed back the character of the miner to the figure of the cotton farmer, driven to trading his land for a job in the mines, and then forward to the city's industrial cotton-mill worker, to be displaced once again after the Great Bombay Textile Strike of 1982.

The use of charcoal in his works are as much a direct reference to the charred recesses of the deep mines and that of the souls of the people who work in them for generations as they are to the uncertain ephemerality in aspirations of the labor class India and the rest of the world. *The Land Eaters* oscillates between the stop-motion animated sweeps of a windscreen wiper and the devastation of land consumed by mines in the Vidarbha region – synonymous in India with damning statistics of farmer suicides. In the background, the figure of the 'Coalmine Manager' persists greedily undervaluing, and then buying up farming land; but the works turn a corner, and Pachpute expands his characters to a new reality: one of collective action, of collective dreaming. On a recent trip back to Chandrapur, he saw for the first time, a sign of real hope.

In early 2013, a special collective – *sapta-ranga* was formed, between seven individuals in Chandrapur who decided to return to farming, in defiance of their helplessness to the exploitation. This must resonate deeply with Prabhakar's own experiences, being himself part of a collective of seven artists called *shunya*. Central to the exhibition at Experimenter, is an expansive work of wall-drawings, shadows and small sculptures, throwing the spotlight onto the characters of this collective; comprising three coal miners, a school teacher, a life insurance agent, and a shoe keeper, the last being Pachpute's oldest friend, a differently-abled poet and writer. In one of the drawings, the head of the miner, looking out at the devastation of his ancestral land, has turned into a farming implement, evoking the potency of this initiative and that of the idea of collective dreaming for Chandrapur, for the thousand of such towns and that of our own futures.

Prabhakar Pachpute (b.1986, Chandrapur, Maharashtra, India) graduated with a degree in Fine Arts from Khairagarh University, Chhattisgarh and continued to pursue his MFA from M.S.U, Baroda. Pachpute opened his debut solo, *Canary in a Coalmine*, at the Clark House Initiative, Bombay in 2012. Select group shows include *L' Exigence de la Saudade*, curated by Clark House, at Kadist Art Foundation, Paris, *Black OR White*, curated by Galit Eilat, Van Abbemuseum, Eindhoven, Netherlands.

For further information please write to Uma Ray at [admin@experimenter.in](mailto:admin@experimenter.in) or call on +91.33.24630465 / 4001.2289. Experimenter is open between Mon – Sat, 11 am – 7pm. The gallery will remain closed during 11 – 20 October, 2013. The exhibition will continue thereafter until November 16, 2013.