

Caught in the Rhetoric

Siddharth Choudhary's ongoing exhibition is an interesting take on being an Indian in Paris

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THE giant zip which appears as a recurring metaphor in Bihar-born Paris-based artist Siddharth Choudhary's latest works seem to be a bit of a tease, but the artist is quite insistent that it is no more than a metaphor in his exhibition *Bliss*, that is on at the Stainless Art Gallery in Okhla. A suite of paintings, digitally constructed photographs and an animation piece make up the exhibition, in which the zip becomes a

metaphor for looking inwards—a kind of device that closes you off from the world at large. "The process of looking within began in Paris. Over the last two years I felt alienated and began missing my country. It was strange because I had always aspired to live in Paris. I realised then that one can be happy or unhappy in any country because happiness and bliss come from within," says the 34-year old who had his first solo show in Mumbai in 2005, which was dedicated to Span-

ish surrealist Salvadore Dali.

The current body of work is vastly different from the photo-realist paintings that one encountered in his maiden show. Here the canvases feature male and female protagonists who for most part, look like traditional dancers. On closer inspection one realises that the postures are inspired by different genres of classical



(Above) A photo montage from Choudhary's exhibition; the artist

dance. "I like my works to have a sense of kinetic energy to them, which is why I chose dance," says the

artist. The costumes of the figures also bear resemblances to Indian motifs — from arabesque designs to Ganapati motifs — while the eyes are zipped shut. Some of the can-

vases even have the dancers performing the timeless actions of Gandhiji's famed monkeys.

The photographs, on the other hand, include street scenes in Paris but there is something unusual happening here too. The cleverly constructed photographs plug into an Indian fantasy of being omnipresent in Paris, when one is actually anonymous. The five feet large photographs are carefully constructed in Photoshop, and Choudhary has wishfully placed his paintings among

the hoardings in the Paris underground metro. Outside the Louvre Museum, he has boldly placed a zip sculpture. "I pieced together over seven separate shots to make up one panorama. I also had to carefully blend my sculptures and paintings into the background, which is why these are not simple photographs — they are in fact montages and photo sculptures," says Choudhary.

The exhibition is on till November 20. For details, contact: 42603167

