



(Left and below) Artist Priyanka Choudhary spun threads and tied them around her feet at Ypres, a town in Belgium that houses 160 cemeteries. (Far left) The one cent souvenirs that she made at New York



WORLD WAR Z

Artist Priyanka Choudhary visited conflict-ridden zones across continents to capture images of how war heroes are remembered. Her works titled 1914-2014 are on display at a city gallery

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IT'S not just love. War too has the uncanny ability to bring people together. In her latest art exhibition titled 1914-2014, which opened on January 9 at Gallery Maskara at Colaba, artist Priyanka Choudhary explores this thought by paying an ode to people who lost their lives in conflict-ridden zones. The idea stemmed from the fact that 2014 is the centenary year of World War I, which changed the geo-political and economic landscape of the 20th century.

Choudhary started working on the exhibition last year by visiting five conflict-ridden zones in different continents and performing at these places by spinning a *charkha* and inviting onlookers to have a conversation with her. By using the *charkha*, she was juxtaposing this symbol of non-violence, used by Mahatma Gandhi, to the specific country's violent past. Her first stop was at the Tlatelolco square in Mexico last May where, in 1968, large number of students were killed by the government in cold blood as they were protesting against the latter's policies. After spinning the yarn, Choudhary invited onlookers to come and wrap her body with the thread that she had spun and write on her body. The exercise, which was documented, is on display as part of 1914-2014.

Her second stop was the Ground Zero, where the twin towers once lit up the New York skyline before 9/11 wrecked havoc

across the world. A little further away from this spot, Choudhary found, was the African burial ground where black slaves were buried in earlier days. While there was a long queue of visitors at ground zero, the Delhi-based artist observed that the second spot was conspicuous by its lack of visitors. She says, "It was a forgotten memory in people's minds. To draw parallels between the two places, I started making little boxes with the thread that I had spun and sold it on the streets of New York. They were known as one cent souvenirs."

Then, Choudhary travelled to Ypres, a town in Belgium that houses 160 cemeteries. Over there, she conducted a 10 km walk from the Tyne Cot cemetery to Menin Gate cemetery. "Sixty thousand Indian soldiers lost their lives at this spot in World War I. At Menin Gate, plaques with names of those soldiers, whose bodies weren't found, are put up." She followed it up with a visit to Soweto in South Africa where the blacks had fought for equal rights as their white counterparts and Jallianwala Baugh where thousands of Indians were massacred by the British.

Choudhary reveals she wants to visit more countries and continue the exercise. "I don't want to stop here. The search is still on," she concludes.

WHEN: Till February 28, 11 am - 7 pm
WHERE: Gallery Maskara, Colaba
CALL: 22023056