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Virtual Art Tour: Shelf-Life

By [Editors](#) | September 2, 2010 | [Leave a Comment](#)



Freud would have had a field day looking at Gallery Maskara's roster of artists. In the gallery's two-year history, an inordinate amount have shown works that have made inventive use of bodily fluids, excrement and other decomposing oddities. There was Belgian Peter Buggenhout and his dust and vacuum fluff sculptures, Shine Shivan and his human hair and dung installations, Tatheer Daryani and her delicate blood and saliva chandeliers, and now Prashant Pandey whose manages to out do them all by using, quite literally and wondrously, blood, sweat *and* tears.

Pandey's show is aptly called "Shelf-Life" because nothing is likely to last even the duration of the show, which runs until September 26 (especially a work made of chocolate that was so done as to last only through opening night). In the exhibition, it's the perishable nature of, well... life that comes under the microscope. Using cobwebs and expired chocolate on the tamer side, and blood and urine on the other, the show is deliberately cast to have little lasting tangible value to either Pandey or the gallery. The artistic value, however, is likely to leave a longer impression, and for this, it is hoped that Pandey, a first-time solo artist soon to leave for the prestigious École des Beaux-Arts in Paris, stands the test of time. It is a testament to his nifty handiwork that the delicate and the monstrous are wrought in such pretty form. Even when the faint smell of urine never quite lets you forget what exactly it is you're looking at.

That aside, there are three works in particular that elicit a strange cocktail of responses that vary from disgust and repulsion to admiration and even the urge to touch. In "Gift", Pandey has sewn little packets of dank urine, sweat and tears (all his own) to create the skull of a female foetus. By the time you can smell it, you're close enough to realise what it exactly is—not a misshapen skull, but the gently undulating head of a baby girl. "Universe" appears to be a circular tapestry of tiny flower buds stretched precariously inside a glass frame. The flower buds are actually painfully unravelled and flattened cigarette butts that Pandey collected off the streets for months, a realisation that does little to dampen rising admiration for the skill required to string the work together. "Crash Trash", made of dried sugarcane stalks, is perhaps the least likely to offend. Pandey has carved out the impression of a plane from the centre, a nod to the terrorist attacks of 9/11, he says. If you peep in through the tip of one of the wings from the side, you can see right through to the centre cut-out. It's the delicate and the monstrous, perishable material used to fashion forms that ultimately perish themselves—nature, urine, chocolate, blood, cigarettes, aborted babies, and of course, eventually our own bodies.