



BOLLYWOOD BADDIES ON TRACK



Artist Atul Dodiya turns to iconic filmi villains to present the city in the right light

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Since the Doordarshan days, artist Atul Dodiya, then a young lad, has been fascinated by the anti-hero. "There was something about them — their stylised manners, clothing, diction — that was classic. The villain in Bollywood is special. The twist in the film sets in with his entry. A hero, in comparison, is too flat a character," says the 53-year-old artist, whose latest exhibition features some of the most iconic Bollywood baddies, from Gabbar Singh to Mogambo. Last month, photographer Chirodeep Chaudhuri showcased his work titled Commuters, featuring portraits he took on his daily

travels from CST to Thane. Now, Dodiya's work explores his relationship with the life-line of the city. "I used to travel from Ghatkopar to JJ School of Arts. It was an experience, watching commuters, seeing women cut vegetables, the whole energy of the city."

A part of Cinema City, a multi-disciplinary project that addresses the relationship between the metropolis and its film industry, Dodiya's works comprise signage of train stations off the Central Line that come juxtaposed against iconic film villains, placed as a

mugshot on the upper left corner. "I'm a fan of cinema from the '50s-'60s. But with this work, I do more justice to the city than its cinema," he feels, adding, "People laugh when they see a villain placed at a station they associate with."

Featuring 14 station signboards, set against a cracked backdrop, Dodiya follows no chronology or logic while placing his poster boys. "Most of the villains have no association with the stations they are placed in. The only one who does is KN Singh, who I found out was from Matunga, so I painted him there," he says. The Ghatkopar resident, however, has relinquished his home station to accommodate his favourite baddie, Pran.

Dodiya, who calls this exhibit "a gift to the city", presents a picture of the metropolis — interspersed with paint clots



Cinema City is on display at NGMA, Colaba, till June 29

and stains — that is far from rosy. "The surface of the canvas looks damaged, depicting Mumbai and how it's been for the last 20 years — writ with conflict, communal riots and filth," he says, adding, "It shows how simple people can become villains here. Even boarding or alighting from a crowded train makes one selfish."

VAMP ON CANVAS

The only anomaly is the 14th piece, featuring a woman and a station that doesn't exist on the Ghatkopar to CST route. "With Bindu, I wanted to break the monotony of male villains by painting her as a scheming vamp. Also, there's a station called Atul, near Gujarat." In this work, the artist also compares Mumbai to the Italian mafia town of Palermo.

