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Disturbing art from India and Italy confronts the issue of violence at home



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AS you step into Arts.i, a Religare gallery at Connaught Place, you may reconsider - biting into your hors d'oeuvre, as art evoking violence and gore unfolds. Italian artist Marko Mäetamm presents an animated video-art piece that portrays a father sawing his family, while Cecilia Lundqvist's flash-art projection depicts a woman covered in bruises doing a cardio workout. A Freudian psychotherapist tempts her with a raw steak and apologises for the violence with a little present. Another Italian performance artist, Betty Bee, has fixed a hidden camera in her bathroom to capture her father who sexually abused her as a child, in the vulnerable act of taking a bath.

These three artists are not alone in their choice to present the macabre side of family life and the hidden violence of domesticity. There are seven others from Italy



and India who challenge the notion of happily-ever-after while foregrounding the taboo topic of domestic violence and abuse. Shelly Bahl, Giulia Caira, Gopika Chowfla, Sanchayan Gosh, Sonia Khurana, Chintan Upadhyay and Ultra Violet, have all displayed a variety of works, from paintings and drawings to installations and video art, for the exhibition titled *Home Sweet Home*.

The show has been curated by New York-based Om-bretta Agró Andruff, who began the process of piecing the

show together in 2004. "I have known Betty and Giulia Caira (who is showing photos and a video work) for years. When I thought of this exhibition, they were the first artists who came to mind. Through discussions and contacts, the list of artists began to swell and soon I had Indian artists on my list too," says Andruff, who is the international art consultant for Religare. "Juxtaposing the works of Indian artists alongside Italians underlines an international dialogue on the issue of domestic violence. There are commonalities and differences, with culture playing a defining role," adds Bee.

Evidence of this cultural difference is clear especially when you see the works by Indian artists on the murky issue of domestic violence. Violence is depicted obliquely in most Indian works. There is a grand setting of Indian culture and heritage that is challenged through a subtle drama. Chowfla's lenticular print showcases a seemingly happy married couple. As one steps closer, the faces change to a more sinister and gruesome mask of the bride and the groom.