

Zero Opacity

Jehangir Art Gallery,

Kala Ghoda

If you think charred bits of plastic belong in the garbage bin, then you're not likely to be a favourite with 24-year-old Aaditi Joshi. A graduate of LS Raheja School of Art, Joshi's first solo show is dedicated exclusively and obsessively to the wonders of burnt plastic, which she has used to configure a slightly disturbing collection of artworks.

Joshi's process is painstaking. She sandwiches brilliantly coloured acrylic paint between clear, thin plastic sheets and heats the sheets over a candle flame, cementing the separate layers together and peppering the surface of the work with black-rimmed holes. The results aren't exactly pretty. A 3-D misshapen blue-black torso, with a burnt-out centre, is encased in a transparent plastic box; a pock-marked greeny-blue

"painting" with puffed out bubbles of distended plastic crouches against a wall. Plastic tentacles protrude from an insect-like assemblage with a black base and a yellow-green contraption resembles a mouldy, food-encrusted vessel. But they are not all gruesome: a vase-type object is so delicately translucent, it is reminiscent of hand-blown glass. And life-size



plastic "T-shirts" add dollops of humour to the display.

Joshi loves plastic because it has been a constant factor in her experience of the city. She lives on Mumbai's busy Grant Road, where roadside vegetable markets and jewelry shops commonly use transparent bags and boxes to parcel their goods. The see-through property of transparent bags makes their contents visible, a fact Joshi finds works well for her art. Five years ago, she switched from painting on canvas to squashing acrylic paint within clear sheets because they allow her to map the different stages in image-making. "I wanted to view my process," she explains.

In fact, Joshi's visuals are more puzzle-like than this explanation suggests – something that adds to their appeal. The transparencies make it possible to look through them, but Joshi's heating process gives rise to smokey, charred surfaces that rob them of their clarity. This interplay of clearness and obscurity is most zestful in the 3-D sculptures, where twisted forms cast unnerving shadows. ZJ