

Gandhi Jayanti 2019: Artists across generations find ways to connect with, question Bapu through their work

“Unfortunately, in India today, we don’t think enough about Gandhi. We should think of Gandhi every day because he had so much to say about quotidian life,” says Nalini Malani. The artist has turned to Gandhi on numerous occasions.

Debanjan Roy

In his exhibition at Aicon Contemporary in New York, artist Debanjan Roy presents Gandhi as a “veritable toy”, who is reduced to being “a plaything by those with a vested interest”. “Gandhi as a image is overused since his lifetime,” says the Kolkata-based artist. Titled “Inappropriate: The Toy Gandhi” in the show we see Gandhi in numerous forms – from him as a silicon figure standing with a broom to a soft toy that shows a more familiar depiction of him spinning the charkha. He smiles at people as the American Munny Doll. Roy documents the different stages of his life on painted Russian dolls. “People recognise Gandhi as the maker of a great idea – non-violence. While we use his image all the time, we are not willing to adapt his way of life,” says Roy. Those following his work would recall his previous portrayals of Gandhi hooked to his laptop and iPad. “In this day and age everyone falls for corporate tyranny... we need someone like Gandhi says Roy.