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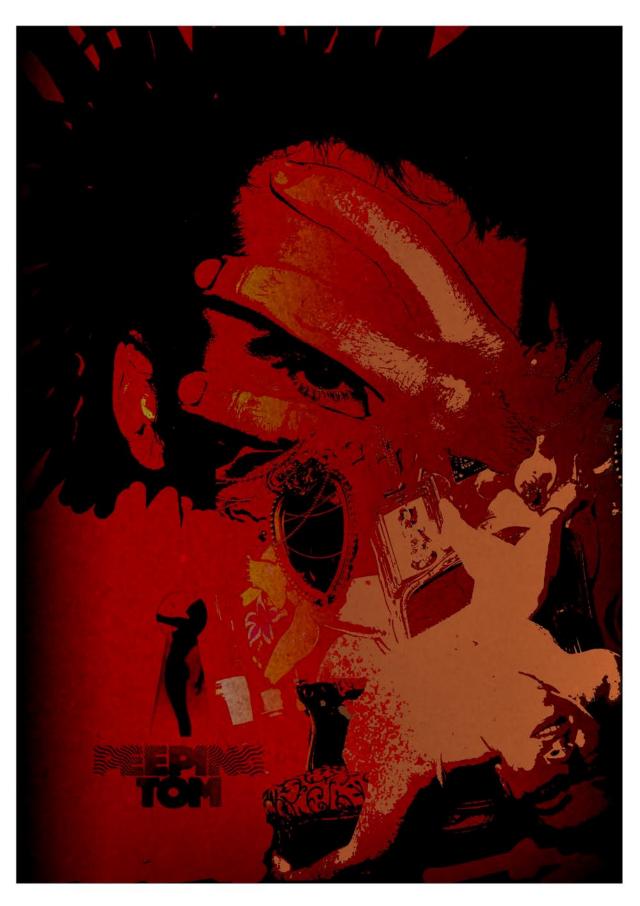
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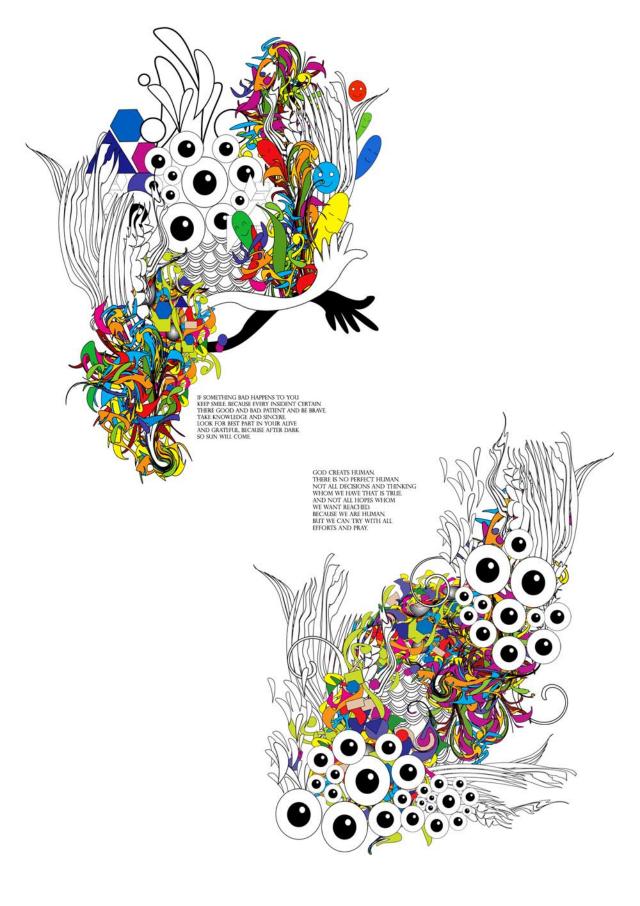




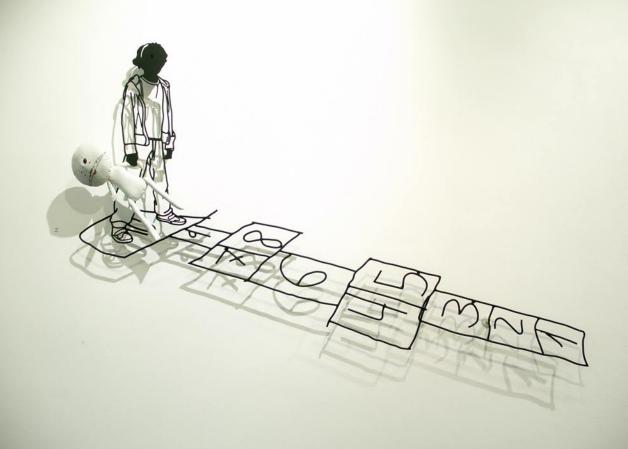
















Too much Deception





















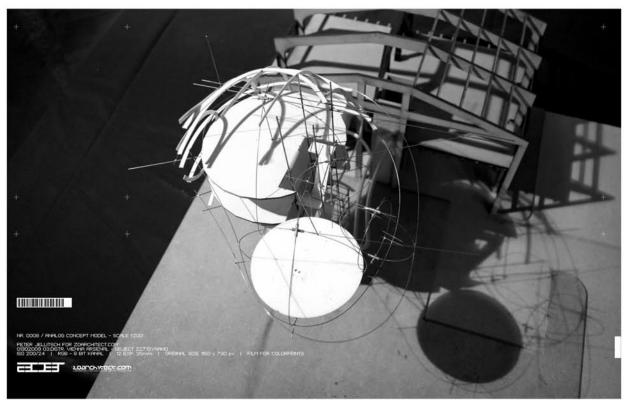






















LIVOMI OSOMI





Muscle N of Mysore NOW WRESTEING TO SURVIVE



War, Conflict. Some say it all began since the rise of the state, about 5000 years ago. But I know otherwise. Maybe that's the good thing about being Indian. Indian bedtime stories came filled with pure action, all the way from an era a million years ago. Just like everything else in Indian tradition.

In a way, war is instinctive behavior that confers survival benefits. The key word being instinctive. So I believe the concept of a fight was alive since the day man became aware of his need to survive. And anything that brings human instinct to the forefront compulsively becomes an art of sorts. A sport soon - after.

Mystical Gods employed dhanurveda (archery) to vanguish the evil. Several years later we see bows and arrows as an exotic art. A sport with machismo. Kalarippayattu, Malla yuddha or Kushti (wrestling combat), vajra mushti (lightning fist) and many more were passed down several generations. Very few still view it as an honorable sport from the ancient times, from Ramayana and Mahabharata.

Jayaram who sells tea beside Mysore Zoo, spoke at length to me about the city's passion for the art of Kushti. I found, it was more his than the city's. Proud about once being an enthusiastic part of the kushti culture, yet only reluctantly willing to tell me his stories, I saw he felt deeply for the nearing death of the art. So did I. He directed me to the garadis and akhadas in Mysore city, where I chanced upon a renowned wrestler Lokesh Jaisimha formally titled Pehalwan owing to his victories at matches like Dasara Kanteerava, Dasara Kesari, Bharath Kumar and Mysore Arjun.

sunt Want Lie Trian



Garadis or akhadas all boast of mud pits, healthy old trees and a deep well. Most of them have bright paintings on the walls with depictions of Lord Hanuman, Garuda and other dramatic scenes portraying physical power from Hindu Mythology, turning the garadi into a tribute to the God of Courage Himself, Anjaneya.



The actual wrestling arena is just soft red mud, comfortable enough to use all your might and prove your bodily skills, because after all it's not about strength alone, it's an art, a tactic.

The ritual begins with warm up exercises and a luxurious massage, with butter. Some even dab some red mud on themselves to help the body stay warm. They finally seek to be blessed by the Lord and their Guru. The kushti session begins and ends with worship.

Now, the actual match begins. The fight for the glorious victory. Sounds of struggle fill the room while players start their trials to pin the other down. The older ex-fighters look on, trying to encourage and keep the sport alive.

Interested kushti patrons are from various professions like fruit sellers, timber merchants and more coming together only for the passion for the sport. This passion took 'Tiger Balaji' as far as the silver screen where he shared the stage with the most popular actor Dr. Rajkumar. Now at 53 he reminisces about his pahelwan days when he was literally feared.

Age is not the only reason why people drop out. Cost of maintaining a healthy lifestyle becomes essential with a rich and nutritious diet. Some say a minimum of Rs.500 a day would keep a pahelwan fit enough to continue the sport. Enthusiasts with small incomes and families to feed find it a painful passion to pursue.

Marketed very less, the sport of Kushti remains a passion for localites alone, without a chance for people to know about the sport. If more people know about it, there could be more patrons, making it easier to get sponsors as the number of people involved will get bigger. Be it in schools or at health clubs, all the enthusiasts ask for is to be recognized and give more people a chance to taste this sport.

This is my attempt in reviving the original sport of India, Kushti.









Dallas



























