



ART

# Draw bridge

**In line:** (above) A series called *Divine Comedy*, on display at the show; and the artist with the works at Gallery Maskara, Mumbai.

Shine Shivan, contemporary art's enfant terrible, revitalizes the medium of drawing in his new 'open studio' solo

BY SANJUKTA SHARMA  
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Shine Shivan opens up the ancient medium of drawing with sensual materiality in his new show, *Language Of Deceased | Open Studio*, at Mumbai's Gallery Maskara—a fitting response to what the early 19th century French painter Paul Delaroche proclaimed: If painting is dead, drawing is "deader". Through these works, made during a ferment that lasted around a month, Shivan is saying drawing is far from dead. He makes it playful and loose, without losing the referential depth that the larger themes of the exhibition—mortality, rebirth and after-death—demand.

Charcoal, and a rufescent material derived from natural colours that the artist calls "blood sanguine", create horror and comedy on rice paper. Some canvases are complete and hung on bamboo poles, some are rolled up, some dangle from a pole in rows, like saris displayed in a retail store. For the duration of the exhibition, Shivan will draw at the gallery; visitors can watch him at work and also participate or pose for the artist. While this show has little of the



sensationalist that Shivan can be, its structure and the invitation to engage with him are quintessentially him.

The show's opening on 14 November coincided with New Delhi-based Gallery Espace's commemorative group show of

drawings, covering seven decades of Indian drawing—two examples of a worldwide renewal of interest in painting and drawing. Many art curators and gallerists believe there is a return to the rigour and materiality of the classical canvas, after more than a

decade of artists experimenting and pushing boundaries with the three-dimensional space.

Besides the obvious reference to the death of drawing, Shivan's paintings are about mortality, how we view the dead, and concepts of rebirth. Dismembered limbs, limbs decorated in blood, Plato and Carl Jung's new avatars ("Plato as Monkey", "Jung as Donkey"), vampiric eyes staring right at the viewer—the drawings have a surreal, graffiti-like quality.

And there aren't many penises. No taxidermic birds or provocative performance pieces. For his debut at the same gallery in 2009, Shivan constructed a pair of oversized penises made from cow dung, grass and wood, and named it *Psycho Phallus*. Smaller sculptures made from human hair, feathers and dentures, and a video called *Sperm Weaver*, in which he wrapped his naked self in white tuffeta, were also part of the show. Sex, taxidermy, fashion excess, homo-eroticism—Shivan uses many tricks to provoke.

But gimmickry is only one part. This is meticulously crafted, cleverly presented art. He usually uses objects from rural and natural settings for his works—Shivan works out of his studio at Faridabad, near the Capital, and makes the neighbouring Aravalli forests his repository of material.

Part of the inspiration for this show came from his interactions with Warli artists at their villages on the Maharashtra-Gujarat border. Shivan wants to ensure long that Warli, and drawing, live on.

*Language Of Deceased | Open Studio* is on till 8 January, 11am-7pm (Sundays and Mondays closed), at Gallery Maskara, 3rd Pasta Lane, Colaba, Mumbai. The prices of works range from ₹1.5-9 lakh.

# The not-so-shocking reality of Shine Shivan's outré art

Artist SHINE SHIVAN's *Language of Deceased* is showing at the Maskara Art Gallery in Mumbai. AKHIL SOOD talks to him about the exhibition, his work and why he isn't out to shock the public.



**C**an you tell me a little about your exhibition titled *Language of Deceased*?

**A.** In 1839, French painter Paul Delaroche said, "Painting in dead." Furthering that thought, I feel drawing is "deader". Thus, I'm trying to show how drawing, as a form of language, is deceased. I do work across different forms — performances, sculptures, fabric work, taxidermy. But I've kept all that aside and kept drawing as a central theme in this show.

The concept revolves around many different segments based on my own experiences, living in north India, travelling to different places, as a medium for what I want to say, and I found drawing to be an appropriate medium. There are many threads that I'm trying to bind together under the theme of "language of deceased".

**Q.** Could you elaborate on some of these themes?

One of them is the role of the body. The body has traditionally had strong spiritual connotations in India, even while it's been looked at on a very surface level in the West. Now, things are changing; people are influenced by, say, Bollywood; body-building supplements are being sold all across the country and consumed without any understanding of the effects they have. I'm affected by these things, and I want to show how the youth views itself and what it aspires to.

Another aspect is the idea of clothes — of dresses and costumes in India. Clothes are manufactured here, then they are exported abroad to the first world, after which the first world dumps them back on us, the third world, with branding. Everyone's looking at brands these days, without looking at the factors that go into defining them. It's about context and how certain ideas are being adopted without any understanding of their background.

I've also focussed on what I've noticed during my travels through villages in the country. I see tribal artists and try



*Language of Deceased* is displayed at Gallery Maskara till 8 January.

to recreate their line and mode of expression. The nature of surnames, of titles given to entire generations based on the *karma* of their ancestors, and how that could be unfair — this is another theme I have explored through this exhibition.

The language of the writer, who interprets a work of art and writes about it — how we, as artists, create something and the writer interprets it a certain way — as well as my own experiences with international cultures, are further motifs that I have incorporated into the underlying theme.

**Q.** Tell me about the concept of this show, wherein the gallery functions as an open studio and patrons can view you, the artist, work on the drawings in real time?

**A.** The whole exhibition, it is a live incident. This doesn't normally happen, at least not in India. Drawing is considered an introverted, internalised exercise. But in this case, it is an entirely extroverted exercise presented openly to the audience. You come to the gallery, you stick around, you can be a part of it — you could be a model, you could be a thought that the artist uses. It's an open-ended experience for all, and everyone can understand the process behind the creation of the art and share the communal experience.



Shine Shivan at work at the gallery.

*As an artist, I look at things a certain way.*

*I want to portray reality; the truth is the truth. If I try to bide behind something or sanitise the work, it will lose honesty.*

*What I'm trying to say won't be clear.*

**Q.** An interchangeable and flexible idea of sexuality and gender identity is a theme that runs through your work. Why have you focussed on this particular subject?

**A.** Context becomes essential when it comes to gender, and how you feel and absorb things in a particular situation. These experiences might differ greatly from socially constructed gender roles, and clearly defined ideas of what is feminine and what is masculine. Experiences vary based on the circumstances, and multiple gender identities are created. It's a way of trying to break the stereotype

and traversing a spectrum of emotions.

For example, if you look at my work *Sperm Weaver*, it is an infusion, a combination of two gender identities, right from its name onwards. It conveys a clear message: the aggressive male, who is adorned by the white cloth symbolic of sperm, on the farm land, the *dharti*, which is feminine. The sperm is symbolic of the *beej* from the *khet*, with a blend of traditional masculine and feminine tropes.

When you try to incorporate the whole spectrum of these gender identities, you also integrate homosexuality, the idea of effeminate tendencies,

the masculine traits of the female, and how empathy and understanding of the female form is an essential part of existence, which is where the role of the mother also comes in.

**Q.** You have displayed works across multiple disciplines while using unconventional "found materials" including cow dung, deer droppings, rooster heads and prosthetics. Would accusations of using "grotesque" or "disgusting" materials be valid?

**A.** You have to realise that any incident or experience is not sudden. If I select a material, automatically people assume that I'm trying to "shock" them. But it's not like that. I try to incorporate materials that I've been influenced by or exposed to right from childhood, and I feel I'm capable enough to use them now. When I was in the seventh or eighth standard and I'd see deer droppings in the forest, I would find it beautiful and would want to take it home. It's something every kid wants to do. And now I'm actually following through on those dreams, while a lot of people deny that same thought they had when they were younger. It's always a very meditative process; it's how you connect with something and what is appropriate. Even if you look at my work *Psycho Phallus*, I've had drawings of that work

since as far back as 2003. It's not a sudden inclination to just pick up something; it's how you look at the medium and perceive it.

**Q.** Your performance pieces often contain strong sexual undertones and nudity, including a video piece of you masturbating in the forest. How would you respond to critics who opine that you rely on shock value?

**A.** People need to learn how to face the truth; they get scared and stay away. What one terms as "shock" is not actually shock but more a denial of reality. If I showcase animal bones in my work, it's because that's what reality is; we are made of flesh and bones. The audiences are often not ready to face reality. They need to understand the roots of the vision. They try to avoid such concerns when it comes to art. There is a certain hypocrisy. I am accused of going for shock value when I collect rooster heads and use them in my pieces. But those same people would eat hundreds of chickens in their lifetime without a second thought about the head that was chopped off and thrown away at the back of the butcher's shop. Internationally, a lot of artists use such an approach, but here, people proclaim that this is not "art". This is a form of denial that a lot of them tend to live in; they want to live in a make-believe world. I'm presenting a kind of reality to them, while they look away and refuse to accept it.

**Q.** How do audiences usually respond to your work?

**A.** What if I were to present this same question to you? How would you respond to my work? I, as an artist, look at things a certain way. I want to portray reality; the truth is the truth. If I try to hide behind something or sanitise the work, it will lose honesty. What I'm trying to say will not be clear. The integrity and the honesty I work with, the things I want to show, people will often see it that way. They will understand my vision. But some people do deny it, and everybody's point of view is not always the same. The role of the artist in society is to show things the way he sees them, in a real and honest manner. How an audience responds is up to them.

# Art, and much more...

**Ashlesh Shah**

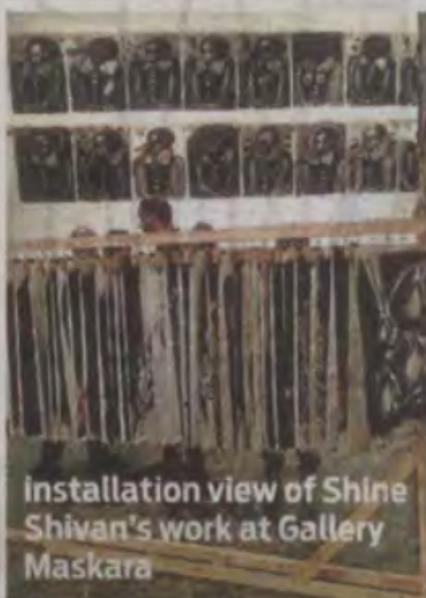
With the Kochi Biennale and the upcoming Christie's auction fast approaching, the city is in a whirlwind of art events and activities. Last week's highlights included Delhi-based gallery Nature Morte's exhibition at Famous Studio and Dayanita Singh's new show at the Max Mueller Bhavan. This week, the cities galleries came together and organised one of the best Art Night Thursday's I've attended this year. This week has also been excellent for viewing work by young artists, with the opening of three debut solo shows. My personal highlights included artists like Pallavi Paul at Project 88, Parul Gupta at Lakeeren Gallery and Shambhavi Kaul at Jhaveri Contemporary. It was also great to see new works by young artists like Shine Shivan at Gallery Maskara and Minam Apang at Chatterjee and Lal.

## **Pallavi Paul at Project 88**

Thanks to my ongoing collaboration with White Owl, food is constantly on my mind. Paul demonstrates an interesting way of combining food and art with a series of works made seaweed on paper. The gallery itself is transformed into a labyrinth, each section showcases the artists many different works, from drawings, sculpture, found objects and video work; Paul experiments with a wide range of materials and techniques.

## **Parul Gupta at Lakeeren Gallery**

Drawing on influences like architecture, space, light, geometry and perception, Parul Gupta's creates exquisite minimal drawings that are reminiscent of the late Nasreen Mohamedi. The artist debut solo includes drawings, etchings, photographs and a single video work. Attention to detail and technique is key to the artists work, the carefully constructed pic-



Installation view of Shine Shivan's work at Gallery Maskara

es imbue a sense of calm and tranquility.

## **Shambhavi Kaul at Jhaveri Contemporary**

Another debut solo to open this week, the experimental film maker Shambhavi Kaul presents three of her videos at Jhaveri Contemporary. The artist takes the viewers through fictive geographies, encounters and landscapes that appear familiar yet resist description.

## **Shine Shivan at Gallery Maskara**

In an innovative new exhibition, Gallery Maskara is converted into Shivan's temporary studio for the next few weeks. The artists will spend the next few weeks working in the gallery space itself adding works to the series of drawings and sketches that are ingeniously suspended from a large wooden construction.

I saw Shivan's work exhibited after a significant amount of time and it was great to see such a considerable amount of work on display. One often encounters Shivan's sculptures, videos and performances making this exhibition of drawings all the more original.

## **Minam Apang at Chatterjee and Lal**

Apang's detailed drawings often take several weeks to produce and the artist often showcases her pieces once every few years. It's always interesting to follow her trajectory as familiar imagery like the 'bat' subtly make their way into her uncanny drawings.

# Shine: Artist first, provocateur next

SOMUDRA BANERJEE

 "If you ask me what I came to do in this world, I, an artist, will answer you: I am here to live out loud," had said the French writer Émile Zola. And close home, artist Shine Shivan is doing exactly that. Through his latest collection of work he reiterates the issues that bother him — formal as well as social.

Formally his latest works are based on a reaction to the French painter Paul Delaroche's statement: Painting is dead. "Artists have often drifted away from paintings and even further from drawings; more and more have taken up other forms of art like sculpture, performance and videos. I am going back to the language, which is believed to be dead," says Shine who usually works with taxidermy but for this exhibition, chose to work with drawings.

*Language of Deceased* has shaped up from his experiences and knowledge from extensive travelling within as well as outside the coun-



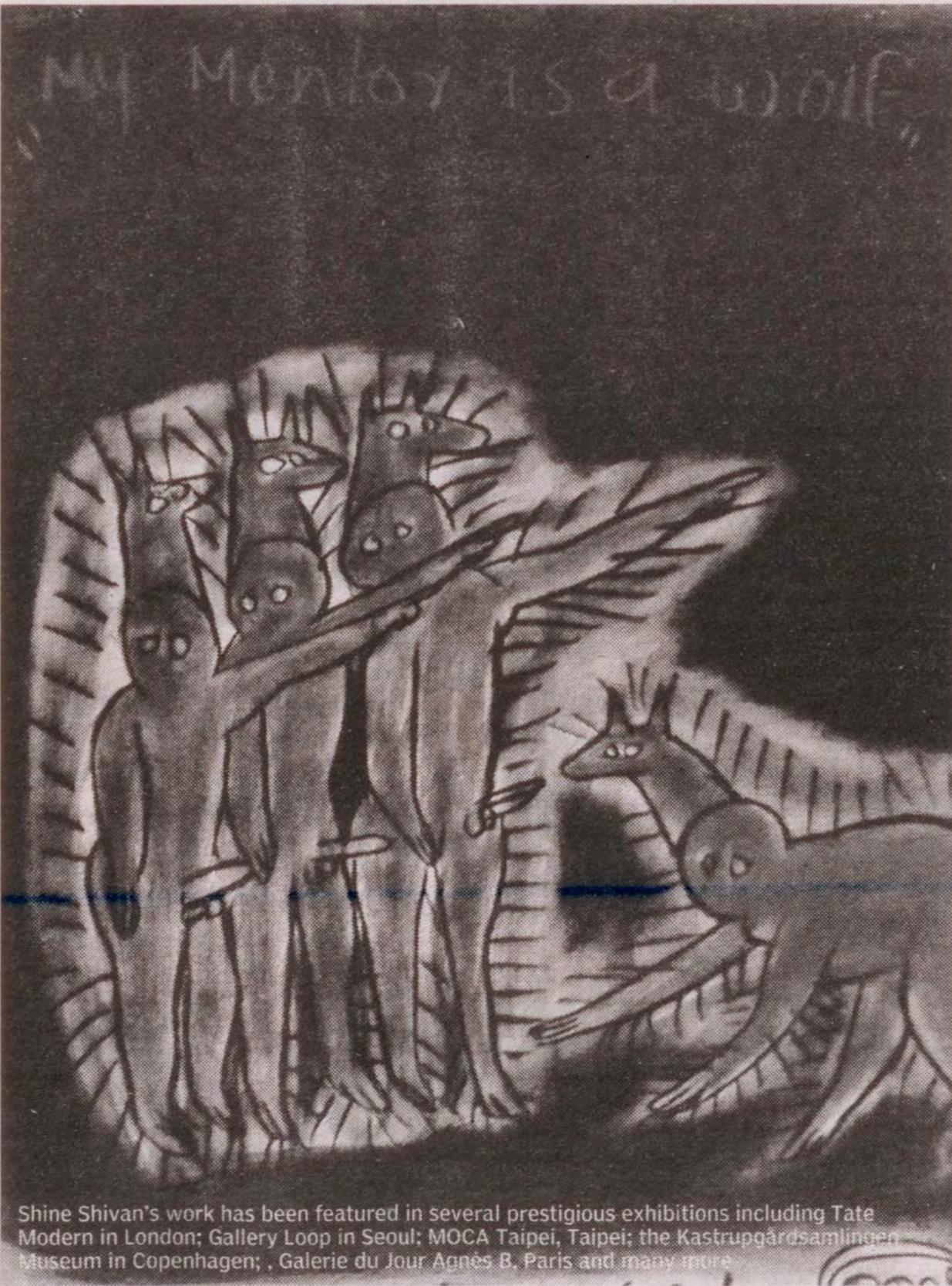
try. "I had stayed and worked closely with the famous Warli artist Jivya Soma Mashe for a few days. It was during that period that I had come to know that the last names of most of the tribal regions come from the colonial era. For example, 'Mashe' means 'one who went to the furnace and turned black'. Another popular name is 'Pasari', which suggests 'one who has hanged herself from a tree'. It's in history that during the colonial attacks many gave up their lives to escape the embarrassment from the invaders. "These names were given by others. Through my drawing in this series I want to question why are they still using those names instead of abandoning," says Shine.

Apart from invoking the

past and asking to question certain facts that have seeped into our collective conscious, Shine also tries to provoke — true to his style. "During my trip to Antwerp in Belgium, I had learnt that there's a rule where one can evade taxes by placing a statue of Virgin Mary. The place is famous for having the statues at every other corner. It is clearly not devotion," exclaims Shine.

Another observation that Shine has used in his collection is the 'dresses of the deceased.' "In the streets of Delhi, I have often seen high-end branded clothes being sold in the hand-me-down shops, and surprisingly people end up buying just for the lure of the tag names without thinking of the diseases that the clothes might carry."

Around 400 of his latest works will be up at the Gallery Maskara starting today. "Since the gallery is an open studio, I will be also be working here for the next seven weeks. And everyone is welcome to join us to be a part of the show — they can look around, be models or simply enjoy.



Shine Shivan's work has been featured in several prestigious exhibitions including Tate Modern in London; Gallery Loop in Seoul; MOCA Taipei, Taipei; the Kasturparksamlingen Museum in Copenhagen; , Galerie du Jour Agnès B, Paris and many more



Shine Shivan from a previous show

# Dead serious

Starting today, a one-of-a-kind art show will see the talented Shine Shivan bring his drawings to life in an open studio space at Gallery Maskara for seven weeks, as a part of his show, *Language of the Deceased*



## THE GUIDE TEAM

theguide@mid-day.com

“FRENCH painter Paul Delaroche was often quoted as saying ‘From today, painting is dead;’ so if painting is dead, I felt that drawing might be a better idea,” 32-year-old artist Shine Shivan recalls this quote by the celebrated French painter, to give us an idea of the main focus of his most recent show, *Language of the Deceased*. “Be it cave etchings or later, in the 14th century, with greats like Leonardo da Vinci, drawing was in the forefront. I want to bring back that mood with my new show.”

Shivan, who has in the past, wowed and shocked audiences alike with his costume play and taxidermy-themed installations in shows, now wants to negotiate

with drawings. “I don’t intend to touch any other medium. These drawings will focus mainly on my life experiences. The ‘language’ will be via medium and subject; be it trying to interpret what today’s youth are saying or the many layers to religion in our times. I will use different mediums to create my drawings — from charcoal and pastel to Chinese ink.”

In a first time for an Indian gallery, Shivan claims that the viewer will have the freedom to watch as the artist is at work. “In the past, this was always a private process. My drawings will be openly displayed for seven weeks. It will be unlike anything seen before.” We can’t wait.

**ON November 13, 6.30 pm to 9.30 pm; from November 14 to January 8, 2015, 11 am to 7 pm (Tuesday to Saturday)**

**AT 3rd Pasta Lane, Colaba.**

**CALL 22023056**



Shine Shivan’s works in progress will be an open display at his new show



# ARTS ILLUSTRATED

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BI-MONTHLY ARTS AND DESIGN MAGAZINE //  
JUNE - JULY 2014 //





# SHINE SHIVAN



Second-hand Pepe, 2009

MEDIUM: Used dentures, human hair, bird feathers, glass lenses, used fabric, semi-precious stones, aluminum wire, jute, coconut thread  
DIMENSION: 22 in x 27 in x 20 in, IMAGE CREDIT: David de Souza, COURTESY: Gallery Maskara

#### BORN

1981, Kerala, India

#### ARTISTIC DISCIPLINE

Sculptural installations

#### LIVES AND WORKS IN

Faridabad, India

#### CONCEPTS AND INSPIRATIONS

Gender, masculinity, identity, mythology, sexuality, stereotyping

#### MEDIUM

Sculptures, photography, video, performance

#### STUDIED ART AT

Dr. Bhim Rao Ambedkar University, Agra, India

#### AI LOVES

*his daring,  
capricious art*

#### ONE OF HIS MOST EXCITING WORK

*Glimpse Of Thirst*  
GALLERY MASKARA

**S**hine Shivan shocks with his art. His installations are lurid, deformed and vivacious with a flair for sensationalism. It's a trippy road to his art that is outlandishly layered with violence. In his exhibit *Glimpse of Thirst*, his ensemble of art is hysterical and morbid, reminiscent of the perverse fear

that one feels at the thought of smiling clowns who lurk in dark spaces. It bears thought for the undercurrents that exist within such in-your-face pungent art. It is this ease of creative potency that makes Shine Shivan an exciting artist. Not because his art screams but because his art is not scared to scream.



←  
Glimpse of Thirst (13),  
2012  
MEDIUM:  
Used fabric, jute, fiber,  
dentures, marbles, fiber  
glass, glass lens, mango  
seeds, artificial hair,  
feathers, sequins, beads  
DIMENSIONS:  
45 in x 42 in x 22 in  
IMAGE CREDIT: David de  
Souza  
COURTESY: Gallery Maskara

# Death Becomes Him



DEEPAK SHILAGURUMAYUM

An affinity for the dead has artist Shine Shivan get his hands dirty with skin, blood and bones, making him the latest enfant terrible of the Indian art scene

BY PALLAVI PUNDIR

**T**HERE IS a disconcerting sense of calm at the Raja Nahar Singh Palace, an 18th century *haveli*-turned-heritage hotel in Ballabgarh, Faridabad. As we walked in, rose petals floated down on us from above; we mistook it for some over-the-top tourism greeting. But a dusky 31-year-old appeared soon after, with traces of flora on his hands. Artist Shine Shivan does know a thing or two about first impressions.

In 2009, Shivan approached Mumbai-based gallerist Abhay Maskara and left a note behind. It read: "We will create history together." "Shine is all about grandeur, wanting to do

big things and making an impact," says Maskara. When Maskara opened Shivan's debut solo "Sperm Weaver", it left the viewers aghast. An avian sculpture, titled *Rape of Ganymede*, was pinned against the wall with its wings spread, attached to a penis. Another titled *Used Dicks* employed the nest-weaving methods of Baya Weaver bird in phallic shapes.

Perhaps, along with the indiscreet visuals, the objects used to create these installations caused some anxiety — taxidermied eagle and crane wings in the first, human hair and real Baya nests in the second. So in 2013, Maskara thought it only fair to add a disclaimer at the entrance for Shivan's third solo show "Glimpse of Thirst": the artist had created a macabre

the decaying and the dead. Taxidermy, the science of stuffing and preserving dead animals in their original skin, leaves the hallowed portals of natural history museums — only to be contorted, moulded and taken out of its original context. Think fibreglass skeletons draped in garish garments made of bones, goat hooves, sequins, with appendages covered in his mother's hair that he collected over two years; mounds of cow dung; or gargantuan structures made of quail eggs, deer faeces, mango seeds and carcasses.

"American performance artist Marina Abramovic sat on a pile of bones and cleaned them for a performance. But if I want to keep fresh bones in India (in *The Passage*, 2011), why are people reacting strangely?" says Shivan. "Look at Chapman Brothers or Damien Hirst and his cut-up cow (*Mother and Child Undivided*, 1993), and you'll see it's a sensitive medium. Those who write about art ignore the process and see it with a limited perspective."

Without contemporaries in India, the artist as well as the critic is often bound to look to the West, to Hirst, Iris Schieferstein or the controversial Xiao Yu. "In the West, artists hire other people to do that job. There's a distance between what the artist wants to convey and the person doing that job. I blend both these aspects — of a taxidermist and a sculptor," says Shivan.

Tending to the dead came early. As a teenager, Shivan kept a pet rat and after its death, it became his first taxidermy project. "I have gone through a lot of stages in relationships — be it with friends, family or even pets. The fact that they will all leave me one day triggered this need for preservation," says Shivan. His fascination for the body and anatomy drew him to a pit in Pratapgarh, Haryana, where people discarded bodies of animals and birds.

"His work is a fascinating balance of art, fashion and found objects," says Asheish Shah, a Mumbai-based architect and collector who met Shivan in 2009 and owns *Rape of Ganymede*, an instant conversation starter at home. This year, Rajshree Pathy, entrepreneur and collector from Coimbatore, bought Shivan's untitled panel work at the India Art Fair for Rs 20 lakh. "I think seasoned collectors are bored of the safe and predictable. You can't ignore a Shine Shivan. It stops you in your tracks," says Maskara.

For Shivan, any space becomes the platform for his large-scale installations, made of

ket. "For days I practised detachment," says Shivan. When the birds died from starvation, he began skinning the animals, using his mother's washing machine to wash, dry and soak them in taxidermy chemicals. "The whole time, I worked without assistance. When I mounted the corpse, I felt as if I had resurrected it," he says. At the India Art Fair this year, Shivan created his "most horrible" work — from a distance it appears to be a panel of feathers, but on closer inspection is revealed to be composed of 3,700 cock heads.

Shivan's earlier years — as a student at the Delhi College of Art — have been eventful as well. When the etching department refused to give him Etching for MFA, he created the "Rossetta" technique, employing cactus thorn, paper and snake poison to create

miniaturist and classical style of drawings. Last year, it was exhibited for the first time by Parisian gallery Hervé Perdiolle. "Transformation of the medium is more important than the medium itself, be it the taxidermy of poison and cactus pulp on paper," says Maskara.

Shivan's exhibitions are visual dialogues between the personal and political, the masculine and the feminine, the aggressively sexual and passive androgyny. But away from the stage, with his boyish restlessness and easy laughter, Shivan

is reticent and prone to oversimplifying his methods. His *Psycho Phallus* — giant phallic-shaped mounds of cow dung — tips its hat to the Bitora, a structure created traditionally by women in north India to store dung, 10,000 quail eggs, all the way from Kottayam, formed *Suck Spit* a labyrinthine architectural structure. His video installations show him in the nude, to make the viewers feel vulnerable; his crude visual and textual reference to sexualities leaves one with a raw aftertaste. Shivan simply calls them his long-term engagement with a larger canvas: an exploration of his own sexuality and nature.

Shivan has mapped out several projects at once, including a show with his mother who will show her drawings after 40 years. For now, he is preparing for an upcoming show this month at Hervé Perdiolle, in which he will show 300-400 sketches from 2003 to 2007. "You will find skeletons or blueprints of some of the works that are materialising now. It's like a continuation of my form," he says. ■

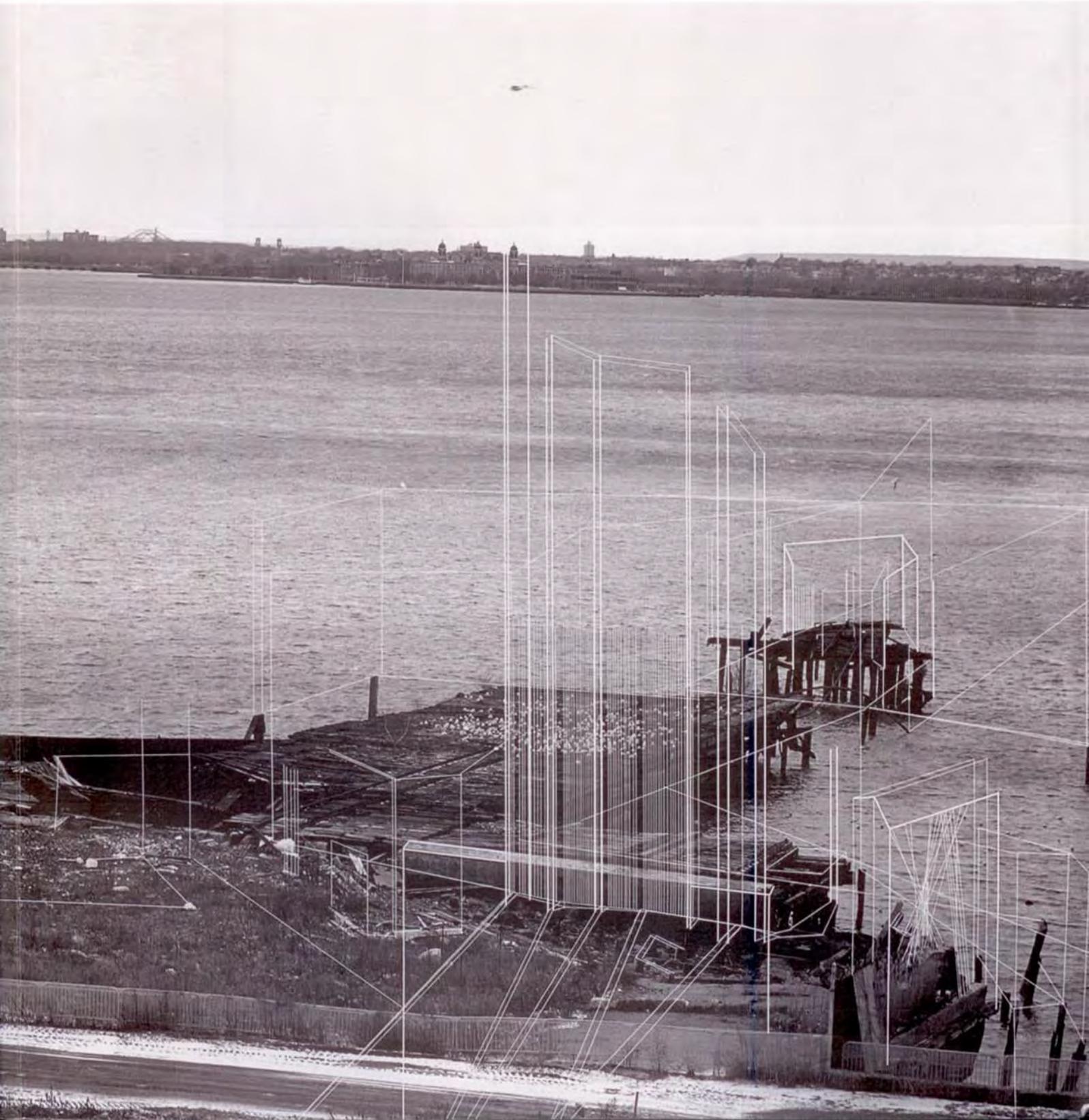


**AVANT-GARDE** (Top & above) *Psycho Phallus*; *Glimpse of Thirst*; Shivan strikes a pose at the Raja Nahar Singh palace in Faridabad

# ART *India*

THE ART NEWS MAGAZINE OF INDIA

## TRAVELLING ART



## HOUSE OF GORE



Shine Shivan. *Glimpse of Thirst*. Installation view at Gallery Maskara, Mumbai, 2013. Photo by David de Souza.

We've come to associate Shine Shivan with penises. We admit that it is a rather crude connection that undermines the range of Shivan's engagement with sexuality but one that we can't shake off given the titles of his exhibitions – *Sperm Weaver* (2008), *Suck Spit* (2011), and his most recent solo, *Glimpse of Thirst*, which was held at Gallery Maskara, Mumbai, from the 10<sup>th</sup> of January to the 28<sup>th</sup> of February.

Yes, there were many penises in *Glimpse of Thirst* and even a video in which the artist pleased himself while embracing trees in a verdant forest in his...ahem...natural state. The biggest departure in the bulk of Shivan's new body of work was his inclination towards a fashion-driven aesthetic. The artist created a cast of characters with costumes and props that framed a fascination with fatherhood, homosexuality and violence. A profusion of colours, sequins, skeletons, fake eyes, dentures and flamboyant fuschia flourishes gave each of the sculptures a kitschy flavour that seemed more garish than horrific.

Through these grotesque titillations and provocations, Shivan sought to offer fluid depictions of masculinity and its relationship with femininity. The use of violence and seemingly deviant behavior was meant to "illuminate the anxiety of being categorised or being judged". But, the creations born of Shivan's painstaking labour – each of the costumes was exquisitely worked upon – seemed to have severed their conceptual connections with an exploration of sexuality. The "amorphousness of gender differences" that the wall-text highlighted appeared to have been subsumed by the hyperbolic personas of the characters.

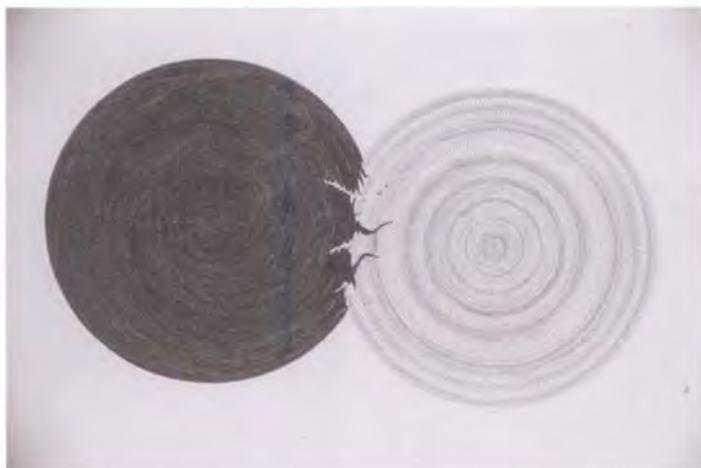
Shivan's skill of working with unusual materials – of organic and animal origin – was on abundant display in *Glimpse of Thirst* but where earlier works featured subtle suggestions, the new series appeared simplistically gory.

ZEENAT NAGREE

## ON THE DOT

Pakistani artist Waqas Khan returned to Mumbai with his second solo, *Dance of the Retina*, which was mounted at Lakeeren between the 8<sup>th</sup> of November and the 31<sup>st</sup> of December. Khan's practice combined the traditional pointillist method of Bardhakhat, used in Mughal miniatures, with abstract forms. Using a 1 mm rapidograph pen to make dots, the artist created stark patterns on large sheets of wasli paper with a view, according to the catalogue, to "making these forms...that dance".

There were spurts of dynamism – *Axis of Verticality* was a jagged, dully coloured oblong set against a black background. Sharp-edged with a wavy brown shape widening out and tapering up from the base, the work was expressive and kinetic. A closer look revealed a certain rhythm in its composition. Seeing the minuscule dots painstakingly aligned, the brown ones momentarily resembling scales of a tiny reptile, made the artist's intention clearer. Similarly, the formal finesse of the fingerprint-like *Red Sun* was noticeable when one paid attention to how it had been made. Another work that manifested Khan's desire to represent the energy of his shapes was *Conjecture*, which featured black and white concentric circles with the former extending two ominous tendrils onto the latter's surface.



Waqas Khan. *Conjecture*. Rapidograph pen on wasli paper. 70 cms x 53 cms. 2012.

The level of meticulousness and craftsmanship was impressive of course, but one wondered how to view a work such as *Lines of Force II* which comprised a series of horizontal red lines on a white background and looked like something one might see in a doctor's lab. The question of the difference between the artisanal and the artistic reared its head here. One was bound to think of how the history of a traditional practice loomed over a unique one. Bardakhat was used in miniatures and wasli paper was the material the miniaturists drew on. How do form and content interact in the case of a practice that draws on a centuries-old technique but bears on imagery that it wasn't intended for?

KAMAYANI SHARMA

# Harper's BAZAAR

MAY 2013, ₹150

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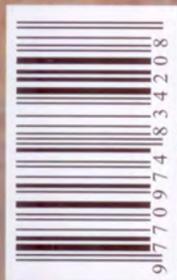
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# THE CANVAS OF STYLE

*Bazaar profiles eight Indian artists whose  
PERSONAL STYLES are as DISTINCT as  
their works of art*

*Photographs by DIA BHUPAL*

*Text by Ankit Gupta*

## JITEN THUKRAL AND SUMIR TAGRA

Nobody defines quirk the way the artist team of Thukral and Tagra does. Working in collaboration in a wide variety of media including paintings, sculptures, installations, and video, graphic and product design, the duo blurs the lines between fine art and popular culture. T&T, as they are popularly known, also love dressing alike; Jiten Thukral sums it up in two words—"Colourful chic!" Adds Sumir Tagra, "I love mixing textures and always dress for the event." The artist-duo enjoy customising their outfits and often design their clothes themselves. Both love the Japanese label Comme des Garçons and cannot do without its T-shirts and accessories.



## SHINE SHIVAN

Since his debut in 2009, Shine has been hailed a provocative new talent on the contemporary art scene. His very first exhibition, *Sperm Weaver* was a promising solo show with five clusters of provocative works toying with traditional notions of masculine identity. His works combine virtually every kind of material thinkable, from taxidermy and dung towers, to dentures and feathers, and of course his own body. To that effect, his personal style mirrors his work—over-the-top and out-there. “You walk into a room and you can instantly spot Shine,” says Campbell. “He is always in crazy-coloured outfits and contrasts, sometimes even feathers and sequins. He’s very inspired by fashion and is constantly looking to push the boundaries of dressing with his edgy, outlandish style. Often his clothes have elements of his artworks. Every time I see Shine, he outdoes my expectations.” ■

## Shine's horror picture show



Personal isn't political Shine Shivan with one of his installations  
Photo: David De Souza, Courtesy Gallery Maskara

**THE FIRST** time the Indian art world saw Shine Shivan, it was in a 2009 series of photographs titled *Sperm Weaver* and he was wearing a white, frothy wedding dress. On one occasion, it seemed to drape down the bark of a tree, like the beanstalk that Jack climbed in the fairytale. Instead of Jack, it was a naked Shivan climbing the tree in the photograph and, because it was taken from below, his magic beans were proudly and unmistakably on display.

There were a few things a viewer could glean from that debut show: Shivan's art seeks to disturb the viewer and he likes dresses. These have remained constants in his work. In every show since *Sperm Weaver*, which established Shivan as one of Indian contemporary art's most promising artists, he has tried to up the ante. The imagery has got increasingly more graphic. The undercurrent of violence in his early works has turned into obvious brutality. A Shine Shivan show isn't simply about viewing art. It's like getting into a staring contest with the artwork. This is a particularly apt description of *Glimpse of Thirst*, Shivan's most recent show, because of how many lidless eyeballs you encounter the moment you enter the gallery.

*Glimpse of Thirst* is made up of a wardrobe's worth of unwearable dresses and jackets, ghoulish dolls, a video and a couple of installations that could perhaps be described as sculptural. The massive space of Gallery Maskara (it was once a warehouse) is crowded by dresses and installations. A video is tucked away, at the back of the gallery and behind a sign that warns the viewer of adult content. To reach it, you

must make your way through Shivan's gory dolls' house. Every work in *Glimpse of Thirst* is desperate to grab your attention. Perhaps the most muted piece is the massive pile of electric pink hair-like strands vaguely reminiscent of Mr Snuffleupagus from Sesame Street. Like the muppet, and despite its colour and size, this installation maintains a low profile. Unlike the muppet, it's entirely forgettable.

The moment you enter the exhibition space, it feels as though you're faced with an army of snazzily-dressed zombies. Lidless eyes stare at you from heads that have brutally-rear ranged bone structures. Eyeballs adorn jackets. Dentures, parted or taken apart, catch the light and make the face seem like it's mid-scream. Viewers of delicate dispositions may go all out with their own screams, given the macabre elements in *Glimpse of Thirst*. Teeth cluster over the side of a face, marbles made to look like eyeballs stare out of jackets. One sculptural work, made mostly of fabric, has something that looks like a half-formed foetus. The goriest of them all is a hanging installation, made out of artificial hair, doll heads, feathers and fake skeletal bones. Blood-red paint coats most of this installation. Under it, on a wooden board, is a hunched skeletal form.

Gender is a shifting, uncomfortable business in Shivan's works and *Glimpse of Thirst* suggests we construct our gender identity by cobbling together elements from different experiences and sources. Consequently, the idea of the man or the woman is a Frankenstein's monster, much like the characters and outfits Shivan has created for the show.

Ever since *Sperm Weaver*, Shivan's work has suggested a complicated and uncomfortable view of femininity. *Glimpse of Thirst* reiterates this old theme. The dresses are opulent and flamboyant, but they're not beautiful. They reek of violence and are extremely menacing. In Shivan's work, the feminine is not maternal but murderous, wearing phalluses like plumage and stringing up bloody skulls. In comparison, the masculine is the one that tries to nurture, and so Shivan has a pregnant man and comparatively tender images of men making love. Although most of the show uses black elements, Shivan has used rich colours — like red, pink and yellow — as accents. There's grandeur and opulence in his horrorcouture creations. Come up close and you'll see there's an explosion of detailing: sequins, mirrors, stitches, appliqué, quilting, fur trimmings, beadwork, embroidery, penis-shaped appendages, marbles, a used shoe, skeletal bones, fake hair, cement, feathers and goat hooves.

Perhaps the most elegant-looking piece is 'Second Hand Pepe II', which is a gown, complete with a fitted, corsetlike top and a flouncy skirt. The top, however, is open and you can see a spinal column, white and gleaming in the light, emerge from the darkness of the fabric. 'Second Hand Pepe II' is suspended from the ceiling and circles slowly, at the same spot. It's a haunting sight.

After all this carnivalesque gore, the video with its muted greens feels like a relief initially. Set in a fog-obscured forest, it begins with a naked Shivan who is seen preening and parading himself (and his visible erection) rather aimlessly. After striking a few elegant poses, he begins masturbating and this becomes an increasingly frenetic activity. Shivan scampers around the forest, his face pinched with concentration and discomfort. He presses against a tree, almost squats, leans back, runs away, comes close; all the while persevering with the task in hand. At times, it seems like Shivan is trying to avoid the viewer's gaze. Yet, there are moments when he walks up to the camera (and consequently, the viewer gets an eyeful). By this time, the video is anything but soothing and it's worth wondering why Shivan felt the art world needed to know what he'd look like if he masturbated in a forest.

**WHEN SHIVAN** made his debut, it wasn't just the provocative nature of his work and his willingness to make an exhibition of himself that drew people's attention. The sophistication with which he layered stories and ideas into his works, and the way he used material unconventionally suggested here was an artist who could create a sensation. His work was simultaneously bold and coy. It commanded attention because of how accomplished and clever Shivan's technique was, and because the ideas in his work lingered with the viewer.

While the technical aspects of Shivan's work remain as strong — whether it's taxidermy or stitching or sculpture, he does a commendable job — the determination to be disturbing is steadily robbing his work of depth, subtlety and novelty. This was evident in his last show, *Suck Spit*, which tried to shock viewers by using faeces and marrying his 'post-feminism' with crude puns (like "Cock Dump") in the titles. *Glimpse*

*of Thirst* slides further down that slippery slope. It isn't just that Shivan persists with themes that have reappeared in every show, but that he has relied almost entirely on shock value. Garishly red blood, skeletons and skulls are ploys used by low-budget horror flicks and TV serials. When an artist uses such devices, one expects something insightful or a clever take that seems novel. Glimpse of *Thirst*, teetering between disingenuous and self-indulgent, is neither.

*On till 28 February at Gallery Maskara, Mumbai*

[letters@tehelka.com](mailto:letters@tehelka.com)



## MONDAY IN BUSINESS OF LIFE **WORKPLACE**

### SHUT UP OR SPEAK UP?

R. Gopalakrishnan's new book attempts to understand the balance between questioning and accepting your boss' decision



### Art

#### Glimpse of Thirst

Till 28 February

In his latest body of work 'Glimpse of Thirst', Kerala artist Shine Shivan furthers his artistic and theoretical constructs of exploring homoerotic masculinity with an all-out sculptural experiment in fabric. Shivan, whose earlier shows at Gallery Maskara were titled 'Suck Spit' and 'Sperm Weaver', creates sculptural dresses from fabric and found and collected objects, modelled after Aboriginal art, voodoo and the south Indian temple culture and its rituals, as well as architectural and design elements from the Mughal period. This multiplicity of references creates a map into Shivan's mind, turning the viewer into the puppeteer who found the doorway into John Malkovich's head. In some ways, Shivan allows you to live out your desires, fantasies and fears through his own by presenting them in an experiential hyperbole.

11am-7pm (Sundays and Mondays closed). Gallery Maskara, Warehouse, 6/7, 3rd Pasta Lane, Colaba (22023056).

or relationships.

8.30pm. *The Comedy Store*, Third floor, Palladium Mall, High Street Phoenix, Senapati Bapat Marg, Lower Parel (43485000). Tickets, ₹400, available at [Bookmyshow.com](http://Bookmyshow.com).

### Girija Ke Sapne

17 January

In this comment on farmer sui-

## CHENNAI

### Dance

#### The Heroines of Raja Ravi Varma

12 January

Known for their beauty, Raja Ravi Varma's painted heroines were personifications of passion whose lives were filled with romance, love and tragedy. Hear their stories as they come to life through dance. The Indian premiere of this production is being presented by Kalapradarshini Trust, Chennai. *The Heroines of Raja Ravi Varma* brings to life a selection of heroines—Sita, Bhoomadevi, Damayanthi, Radha, Shakuntala and Yasodha—from the Ramayan and Mahabharat, as depicted in 14 well-known paintings of Varma.

7.30pm. *Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan*, 18, 20 and 22, East Mada Street, Mylapore (24643420/50).

### Music

#### Classical music concert:

#### K.J. Yesudas

15 January

Sri Krishna Gana Sabha will present this programme with Gana Gandharvan and Padma Bhushan awardee K.J. Yesudas. This classical music concert will feature some of the most famous works of the maestro. Yesudas has lent his voice to many classical, devotional and popular songs. He is credited with singing the most officially recorded songs by any singer in the world,

### Music

#### Thaka Dhimi Thai Utsav

15-17 January

This musical extravaganza has been designed to match the fervour of the harvest festival, Pongal. The line-up includes percussion maestros Vikku Vinayakram, Zakir Husain, Fazal Qureshi, Sivamani and Abbas Kosimov, and eminent Carnatic vocalist M. Balamuralikrishna.

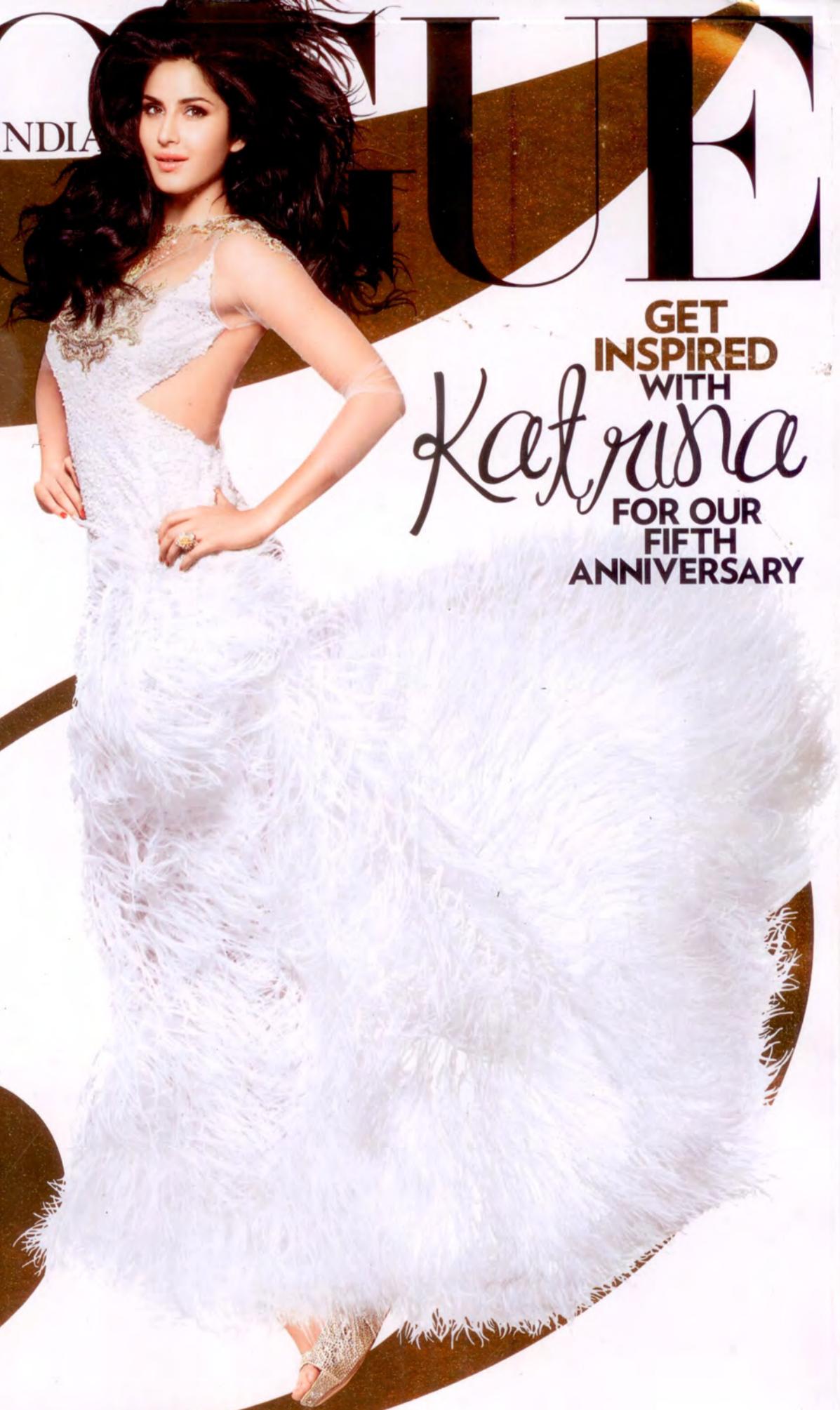
7pm. Music Academy, Cathedral Road. Tickets, ₹100, ₹500, ₹1,000 and ₹2,000, available on [Bookmyshow.com](http://Bookmyshow.com).



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## SHINE SHIVAN, 31

Throws together taxidermy roosters, quail eggs, deer dung and buffalo bones

You will be shocked, you will be awed—but that's if you walk into a Shine Shivan exhibition and manage to stay. Several visitors to the artist's second solo show, 'Suck Spit' at Mumbai's Gallery Maskara in 2011, were turned off by the putrid smell from *The Passage*: an installation of a wooden boat with freshly-scraped buffalo bones. Elsewhere lay a mass of quail eggs (that the artist had sucked the yolks from, lending the exhibition its title) and a flock of taxidermy roosters coming together in an installation called *Cock Dump*.

Shivan, who lives and works in Faridabad, employs a long list of materials in his sculptural works: animal bones, used fabric, seeds and leaves that he collects on random strolls. He is also a self-taught taxidermist, and says that the process of killing the birds (he has worked with eagles as well) informs his practice. "It's a difficult thing, to take a life, especially as an artist. This way, I feel like I'm also resurrecting them."

Most of Shivan's works are semi-autobio-

"Boldness lies in persistence"

—SHINE SHIVAN

### BLOW OUT

*Cock Dump* (2011), an installation of taxidermy roosters, is a comment on the nature of masculinity

graphical excavations on the nature of masculinity. The methodology he uses is deeply personal—he only incorporates found objects into his art once they've assumed a special significance for him. A sculpture called *Used Dicks* (2009), for instance, features baya weaver nests and his mother's hair. "I'd been seeing these nests for years before I decided to do something with them," he says.

For him, courage lies in taking ideas all the way to fruition. "We all want to do so many things on a daily basis. Not all of us manage to. Boldness lies in persistence."

"When we started showing Shine [in 2009], he was already removed from art that is considered readily consumable," says his gallerist, Abhay Maskara. "With him, it's always a surprise. It's not about putting out more of something that 'worked.'"

Right on cue, Shivan says he's now interested in moving on to plastination—a method of anatomical preservation in which the water and fat are replaced by plastics, yielding specimens that don't smell or decay. He is currently working on his third solo exhibition at Gallery Maskara, to be held in January 2013. [Gallerymaskara.com](http://Gallerymaskara.com) >



IMAGE COURTESY: GALLERY MASKARA

# Wallpaper\*

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# THE GREAT PRETENDER

Contemporary Indian art has suffered from both global great expectations and local suspicion. But are collectors, gallerists and artists finally ready to take flight?

WRITER: DEEPANJANA PAL PHOTOGRAPHY: EDMUND SUMNER

Standing outside Gallery Maskara, in the belly of Mumbai's art district in Colaba, you'd never guess you're looking at one of India's most avant-garde galleries. Since 2008, the Colaba gallery has had inflatable babies, dust sculptures and other odd objects that can only belong in an art exhibition. One of the most memorable shows at the gallery was Shine Shivan's solo debut in 2009. Titled 'Sperm Weaver', it made Gallery Maskara's previous exhibitions look tame. Shivan's gender-bending works looked at sexuality with a dark mischief and brutal frankness that is rare in Indian contemporary art. One installation was titled *Used Dicks* and was made of empty nests of weaver birds and Shivan's mother's hair. *Psycho Phallus* was a site-specific installation comprising two 11ft towers made of grass, wood and cow dung patties. It created quite a buzz, literally. Along with viewers, the cow dung attracted a swarm of flies.

But 'Sperm Weaver' established Shivan as one of the most promising young artists in India today. His work used elements that were intrinsically Indian, like the cow dung patties that can be seen all over rural India, but Shivan's concerns and practice were not limited by his nationality. Of course, the question that hovered in most visitors' minds was: who would buy something like *Psycho Phallus*?

Exhibiting shows of unsaleable work has been the MO of most Indian galleries of repute. The artists who receive critical acclaim are rarely the ones who are popular among Indian buyers, much to the frustration of gallerists. While bland landscapes and paintings of doe-eyed women, Buddhas and Ganeshas have a steady market, only a few collectors are willing to put their money into the innovative contemporary art that respected galleries showcase. 'India-based commercial galleries, especially those based in Mumbai, are the driving force for the Indian contemporary scene,' says

Mortimer Chatterjee, who runs the Mumbai gallery Chatterjee & Lal with his wife Tara Lal. 'But we are waiting for a new generation of collectors to emerge.'

In comparison to the art markets of America and Europe, the subcontinent is a still a tiny cog in the global art machine. The habit of buying art is a new one in India and most contemporary art galleries complain that those who buy art are mostly speculators, not collectors. Rather than judge a work for its aesthetic value, the question that is regularly asked is will the financial value appreciate. 'The market is still very conservative and fixated on painting,' says Peter Nagy, who came to India as an American tourist in the early 1990s and became so fascinated with the country that he returned to stay, opening the gallery Nature Morte in Delhi in 1997. Today it's one of the leading contemporary art galleries in India, with a branch in Berlin and a tie-up with Bose Pacia in New York. Nagy's list of artists include superstars like Subodh Gupta, Anita Dube and Raqs Media Collective, all known for making the kind of avant-garde art that few would consider suitable for the living room wall above the sofa.

'If you take someone like Subodh Gupta, Indian collectors are more likely to pay the amounts his works are worth for a painting,' says Nagy. 'But he is primarily a sculptor and the international market is interested in his sculptural work.'

While many Indian contemporary art galleries are heavily dependent upon foreign collectors and institutional buyers, there is a select set of Indian

**Shivan's cow dung created quite a buzz, attracting viewers and a swarm of flies**

collectors who are more interested in the present than the past. The hotelier and co-founder of the Devi Art Foundation, Anupam Poddar, for example, is one of the most respected collectors of Indian art precisely because of his strong emphasis upon the contemporary. The Poddar collection was begun in the 1980s by his mother, Lekha, who put together noteworthy Indian art, mostly paintings, from the early 20th century. Anupam broadened the scope when he began buying unconventional works in the 1990s, when today's stars of Indian contemporary art, like Subodh Gupta and Anita Dube, were young upstarts.

'My love for Indian contemporary art developed through my deep friendships with artists who were making courageous works when I started collecting,' says Poddar. 'But it's also about a desire to possess those objects, images, moving images that affect you at a gut level, and how they grow on you over time in living spaces.' His collection today includes every Indian contemporary artist of note and some of the most bizarre pieces that have been shown in India, including Sudarshan Shetty's large-scale sculpture *Love*, which shows a metallic dinosaur skeleton simulating sex with a sports car. The Devi Art Foundation, opened in 2008 in Gurgaon, near Delhi, is the first attempt at a private museum for contemporary art in India. It shows exhibitions of work pulled from the growing Poddar collection.

For Rajshree Pathy, an entrepreneur who bought her first painting at 17 (it was by MF Husain and set her back INR17,000 (\$377) – peanuts compared to what any Husain painting is valued at today), the works of contemporary Indian artists resonate in a way that art from other periods and countries cannot. 'I only collect Indian contemporary,' she says. 'I visit international museums and major art fairs, but I've decided to focus on >>



## Shine Shivan

Faridabad-based artist Shine Shivan, in front of a mural by Brazilian artist Nina Pandolfo at Mumbai's Gallery Maskara, where he debuted in 2009 and is now exhibiting 'Suck Pit', a show featuring cock feathers, deer faeces and chirchita seeds



SHINE SIVAN AND  
(FACING PAGE) HIS ART

# S/HE

## FOR SHINE SIVAN, A YOUNG DELHI-BASED ARTIST, SEXUAL IDENTITIES ARE FLEXIBLE, MERGING INTO EACH OTHER

Shine Sivan, 28, has lived a rich and interesting life. From using the penis as a metaphor for masculinity to loving and leaving two women to embrace loneliness, Sivan lives life canvas size. He believes sexuality is not carved in stone and it can have several dimensions. The young artist says that every work of his is a question, which he answers by the time he finishes it.

### What has inspired you to erase the gender divide in your work? Is it an autobiography?

Almost all my works are autobiographical. The self within me is very contented. I see myself attached to abstract forms and that is what I depict in the sculptures I erect. I have no friends in my life. When I create, I feel like my creations are talking to me. The spirit within me inspires me.

### Elements of nature are very strong in your work and so are architectural forms. How do the two merge?

I am closely associated with nature, and architecture is like religion to me. I am in love with the ceilings, pillars, interiors and carvings in the Parisian as well as Mughal architecture. Nature connects me to a higher spiritual plane and I combine it with objects that give the expanse to my art.

### You are being hailed as one of the rising stars of Indian contemporary art. Any thoughts about this movement?

Art anywhere and any time is nothing else, but art. And its growth in contemporary India is exciting. It is attracting people who actually want to learn and not just pretend. There are many young artists who are doing exceptional work. Though I think the art scene in a country as culturally rich as ours could have been better.

### At 28, you have an impressive bank of exhibitions and awards. How would you rate yourself?

When I look back at whatever little I have achieved, I just sit back and relax for a while. But I need to do a whole lot more. Life has just started and I am taking the baby steps.

### You were on the longlist of the prestigious Skoda Prize and jurors had the best praise for your work. How important was that achievement?

I wasn't surprised—I just had a good feeling. It feels nice to have made a niche among the number of great artists I was competing with. Any kind of recognition brings a measure of happiness, though, I confess.

### Your work at the India Art Summit was very strong, revolving around dead hens and cocks.

The work I exhibited was titled "Cock Dump" and was based on taxidermy, a technique of skin preservation. I preserved real roosters for it. It is a new form for the art world and sends out a strong message. But my art is not meant for beauty alone! &c.



■ Inspired by the Turner Prize, which is awarded each year to a British contemporary artist less than 50 years of age, the Skoda Prize 2010-2011 is the first ever award celebrating contemporary art in India. This year's award went to Mithu Sen. The cash reward was ₹ 1 million.

Words **Vatsala Shrang**

**Lives:** and works in Faridabad

**Debuted:** with a solo show, 'Sperm Weaver', at Gallery Maskara, Mumbai, in 2009

**Recipient:** of a Lalit Kala Academy Scholarship in 2008.



Sperm Weaver IV, Digital Print on Hahnemühle Photograph Paper, Edition of 4+1 AP, 24" X 34" 5", 2009



Rape of Ganymede, Taxidermy Eagle & Crane Wings, Semi-precious Stones, Fabric, Cotton Thread, 18" X 40" X 12", 2009



## Shine Shivan

Born in Kerala, a BFA from the College of Arts, Delhi and a Masters in Visual Arts from Dr. Bhim Rao Ambedkar University, Agra, Shine Shivan currently lives and works in Fandabad. He received the Lalit Kala Academy Scholarship in 2008 and also showed at Khaj Studios the same year. Shine debuted with *Sperm Weaver*, his solo show at Gallery Maskara, Mumbai in 2009. Following the success of his video work shown at *Move on Asia 2010* at Gallery Loop, Seoul he has recently shown at *The Tate Modern*, London. In November 2010 his work was a part of an exhibition at *Museum of Contemporary Art*, Taipei. Shine is a trader of identities, through his sculptural and performative works he attempts to redefine psychological constructs, experiences and roles attached to masculinity. His sculptural works use natural as well as architectural forms. And his video, photographic and performance works serve to depict an aggressively male, yet often gender-bending and homoerotic identity.



BETA

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This fortnight's print edition

## Glimpse of Thirst

Mon 04 Feb, Art

Editor's pick

Shine Sivan presents his LGBT-themed exhibition at Gallery Maskara



Shine Sivan's work stands out in the Mumbai art aficionado's memory for being explicit, yet thought-provoking. In the hypocritical morality that has recently underlined the city's social structure, Sivan's in-your-face exploration of his sexual identity has been known to overwhelm his viewers with a sense of shock and wonder, yet has managed to keep offence at bay. His work "queers" masculinity, invoking fresh imagery of feminised manliness through interpretations of his own experiences: his 2009 singlechannel video, "Sperm Weaver" had Sivan roll about in frothy liquid, reminiscent of a number of similar images of Bollywood actresses in the throes of passion.

In *Glimpse of Thirst*, Shine furthers his artistic and theoretical constructs of exploring homoerotic masculinity with an all-out experiment in fabric. Inspired by designers such as Dolce & Gabbana and Alexander McQueen, Sivan creates sculptural dresses from fabric and found and collected objects, modelled after aboriginal art, voodoo, the south Indian temple culture and its rituals as well as architectural and design elements from the Mughal period. This multiplicity of references creates a map into Sivan's mind, turning the viewer into the puppeteer who found the doorway into Malkovich's head.

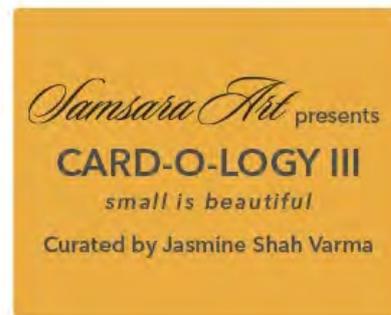
In this collection of 18-20 hand-tailored "dresses", we see Sivan's work mature along with his own considerations of the homoerotic male. He considers, of course, sexual desire and partnership, but he also weighs in on views of family and parenthood. Sivan, whose close relationship with his parents, especially his mother, often makes an appearance in his work – for instance, he used his mother's hair in the installation "Used Dicks" (2010), where he replicated nests of the Baya weaver birds, built by the male of the species. Sivan attributes a lot of this body of work to his mother, who he is extremely close to. "My mother has been very important to my creative process," he told *Time Out* in an interview. "She has been incredibly supportive of my choices, and my work both mentally and physically," and even lends her the title of the co-creator.

Clearly, in this body, Sivan is thinking of progeny, but not in the most traditional sense of the word. For instance, one of the dresses shows the visual of a man holding what Sivan terms a "dream-baby", a child with an adult's head. The work is suggestive of various emotions the artist sees himself dealing with, as a homosexual man looking at the idea of parenthood – not just fatherhood, but also motherhood – through a Freudian construct. This exploration is furthered by the mango seeds stitched on another dress, referring to the mythic fertility powers of the mango (Kamadev's most potent missile holds a mango blossom; the impotent Dashrath impregnates Kaushalya by feeding her mangoes). The

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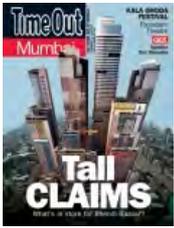
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resulting image certainly invokes stronger feelings than Katrina Kaif's tryst with the fruit in a TV commercial.

He further questions the long-term acceptance of relationships without the feminine presence, and considers the ways in which this absence is dealt with, by questioning normative roles in relationships, as being homosexual, female, male, or simply human. Yet another dress sports a fountain of hair that holds a number of bottles with figures compressed in them, suggesting the multiple sexual and asexual beings that live in our heads, their multiple tongues offering up a multiplicity of being.

*By Phalguni Desai on January 18 2013 6.37am*

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### Event details

**Date:** Mon Feb 4, Sat Feb 9 - Thu Feb 28

### Gallery Maskara details

**Address**  
[Gallery Maskara](#)  
 Warehouse, 6/7 3rd Pasta Lane,  
 Colaba, 400001

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# Art



**Hair raising** "Used Dicks", a 2009 installation by Shine Sivan

## Queer by design

Shine Sivan's latest solo is a fashionable affair of constructed dresses and queer identity, says **Phalguni Desai**.

**S**hine Sivan's work stands out in the Mumbai art aficionado's memory for being explicit, yet thought-provoking. In the hypocritical morality that has recently underlined the city's social structure, Sivan's in-your-face exploration of his sexual identity has been known to overwhelm his viewers with a sense of shock and wonder, yet has managed to keep offence at bay. His work "queers" masculinity, invoking fresh imagery of feminised manliness through interpretations of his own experiences: his 2009 single-channel video, "Sperm Weaver" had Sivan roll about in frothy liquid, reminiscent of a number of images of Bollywood actresses in the throes of passion.

In his as-yet-untitled body of work, which will be on view at Gallery Maskara this fortnight, Shine furthers his artistic and theoretical constructs of exploring homoerotic masculinity

with an all-out experiment in fabric. Inspired by designers such as Dolce & Gabbana and Alexander McQueen, Sivan creates sculptural dresses from fabric and found and collected objects, modelled after aboriginal art, voodoo, the south Indian temple culture and its rituals as well as architectural and design elements from the Mughal period. This multiplicity of references creates a map into Sivan's mind, turning the viewer into the puppeteer who found the doorway into Malkovich's head. In some ways, Sivan allows you to live out your desires and fantasies and fears, through his own, by presenting them in an experiential hyperbole.

In this collection of 18–20 hand-tailored "dresses", we see Sivan's work mature along with his own considerations of the homoerotic male. He considers, of course, sexual desire and partnership, but

he also weighs in on views of family and parenthood. Sivan, whose close relationship with his parents, especially his mother, often makes an appearance in his work – for instance, he used his mother's hair in the installation "Used Dicks" (2010), where he replicated nests of the Baya weaver birds, built by the male of the species. Sivan attributes a lot of this body of work to his mother. "My mother has been very important to my creative process," he told *Time Out* in an interview. "She has been incredibly supportive of my choices, and my work both mentally and physically," and even lends her the title of the co-creator. This intimacy with his parents crosses over into his contemplation of homoerotic relationships beyond the romantic or sexual, and towards a more mature implication of family and settlement.

Clearly, in this body, Sivan

is thinking of progeny, but not in the most traditional sense of the word. For instance, one of the dresses shows the visual of a man holding what Sivan terms a "dream-baby", a child with an adult's head. The work is suggestive of various emotions the artist sees himself dealing with, as a homosexual man looking at the idea of parenthood – not just fatherhood, but also motherhood – through a Freudian construct. This exploration is furthered by the mango seeds stitched on another dress, referring to the mythic fertility powers of the mango (Kamadev's most potent missile holds a mango blossom; the impotent Dashrath impregnates Kaushalya by feeding her mangoes.) The resulting image certainly invokes stronger feelings than Katrina Kaif's tryst with the fruit in a TV commercial.

Sivan also explores the effects of an intimate and yet highly violent relationship, hoping to normalise prevalent archaic views of BDSM as the refuge of the perverted and the psychopathic. The well-read and forward-thinking will concur it is not, but Sivan speaks of it with reference to his own experience. He explicitly puts forth a Gothic corner in the world he felt compelled to explore in his own interactions, only to have found the joy and liberation that is also at the heart of a BDSM relationship. He further questions the long-term acceptance of relationships without the feminine presence, and considers the ways in which this absence is dealt with, by questioning normative roles in relationships, as being homosexual, female, male, or simply human. Yet another dress sports a fountain of hair that holds a number of bottles with figures compressed in them, suggesting the multiple sexual and asexual beings that live in our heads, their multiple tongues offering up a multiplicity of being.

The prospect of being witness to Sivan's maturity of thought and work is tremendously exciting, as he is a young and highly expressive queer voice in a society that is slowly opening up to everything that is different and queer.

The exhibition opens on **Thur Jan 10** at **Gallery Maskara** See Exhibitions.

## Queer curiosity

Contemporary artist Shine Shivan is known for his edgy art. He shot to fame with his photo art series Sperm Weaver at Gallery Maskara in 2009. After exhibiting around the world, he is back with his latest body of work *Glimpse of Thirst*. This series of sculptures depicts repressed homosexual or homosocial desires through flamboyant, cross-dressing, role-playing characters. The bodies don't have points of origin and are not stable configurations. You will find tailored dresses made of colourful fabric and found objects. His art expresses queer identity using the elements of imagination and fantasy. The show closes on February 28.



**WHERE:** Gallery Maskara, 6/7 3rd Pasta Lane, Apollo Bunder, Colaba

**WHEN:** 11 am to 7 pm (Tuesday to Saturday)

**ENTRY:** Open to all **CALL:** 22023056

# Icky but interesting

Never mind marble. Sweat, deer faeces and cobwebs can be moulded into sculpture

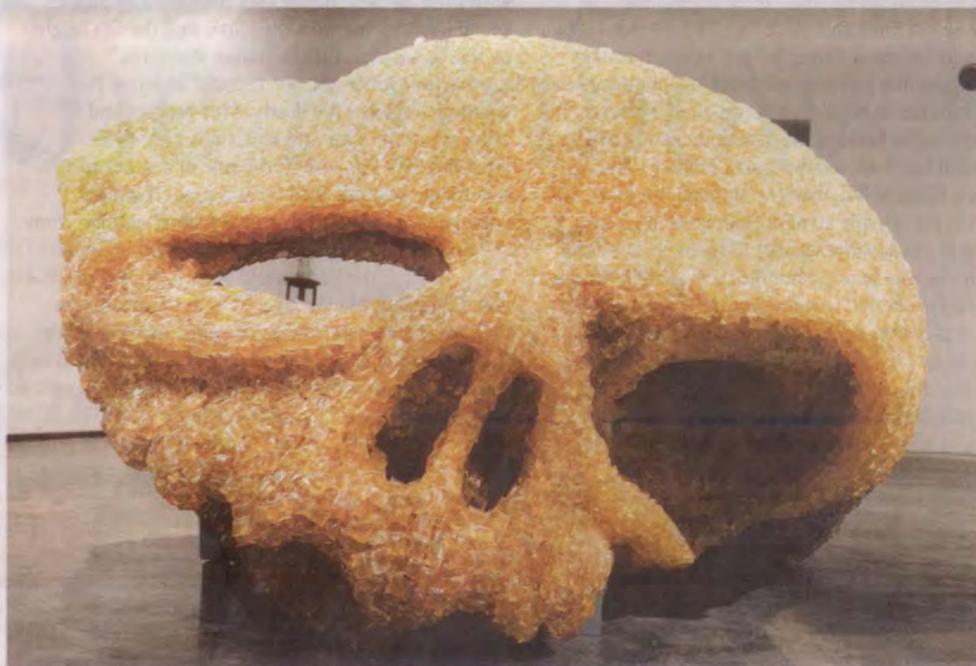
SHARMILA GANESAN-RAM  
TIMES NEWS NETWORK

For almost nine months last year, Prashant Pandey's family did not know how to react to him. The sane 28-year-old had suddenly started behaving in strange ways. Every day, he would enter the loo with an empty plastic bottle and emerge with one full of a light yellow liquid. Sometimes, he even followed this routine in and out of a giant plastic box. Inside, Pandey would stand and brood until the tiny glistening beads formed on his forehead. These droplets were carefully collected. Sometimes, he would even let go and cry.

Pandey assured whomsoever it concerned that he was simply collecting raw material. His family, traditional stone-carvers from Jaipur, worried about his new affliction. They were only used to seeing marble as material. His sweat, urine and tears, Pandey told them, would eventually culminate into a thing of beauty. With a little help from the chemical formaldehyde, Pandey turned an entire collection of one lakh pouches of urine and countless litres of sweat and tears into a giant ball-shaped shiny, smelly sculpture that visitors at Mumbai's Gallery Maskara were tempted to touch. Until they were told what this artwork on female foeticide was made of.

Pandey wanted to show how female infants are brutally discarded from the body just like these fluids, some even ruthlessly flushed down a drain pipe. It all now made more sense than marble, even to his father. In their bid to experience, feel, shock

Every day, Prashant Pandey would enter the loo with an empty plastic bottle and emerge with one full of a light yellow liquid



A SMELLY STATEMENT: Pandey's artwork on female foeticide made from sweat, urine and tears



GREAT EGGS-PECTATIONS: For his 'Suck Spit' show, Shine Shivan drilled quail's eggs. To keep the shell intact, he had to suck out the yolk, and spit it out

and convey, artists like Pandey are increasingly venturing in search of material that others find icky. Just like standup comedians who are overcoming their inhibitions about using words like 'sex' or 'Mahabharata' in their material, these artists too seem to be exercising their creative freedom to put things that people usually like to hide out there in the open. As a result, urine, deer faeces, cowdung, blood, cobwebs, taxidermised animals, wax strips and even tampons are now making their way into that fragrant, wine-aided territory called the art gallery.

Twenty-eight-year-old Shine Shivan has worked with things like human hair, teeth, old work clothes, deer faeces and cow dung, baya weaver nests, bird's eggs and taxidermy. "Each material has its own rules, foundations and meaning attached to it,"

he says. "In order to work with these kinds of materials I had to be very patient to find the material in its natural habitat." The titles he uses for his art are equally shocking — *Used Dicks*, *Sperm Weaver*. A recent show in Mumbai was titled *Suck Spit*. That's because this show entailed drilling quail's eggs. "The only way to remove the yolk from the egg while keeping the egg intact was to suck the yolk manually out of its shell, and spit, to let it out of my mouth. The first few times the process seemed easy, however, after that it began to disturb my senses and felt like a really violent act," says Shivan, whose works in this show are the result of a long adventurous experience. "These particular words came together from those two acts that I had to

perform over and over again, one in response to the other. This repetitive motion was representative of the intense processes and transformation that the materials, as well as myself, went through for the creation of these art works and it felt appropriate for the title."

Shivan even spent six to eight hours a day collecting deer faeces from the dense and dark Aravalli Hills. "I was so focused on finding what I needed that I did not realise I had ended up coming quite close to a black cobra," says Shivan, who spends his time wandering in the deep valleys of Aravalli near his house and observing the flora and fauna. These materials, he says, are a part of the natural habitat, so in that sense they are not unusual. "It is only when you bring these materials into an urban

As a kid, Shilpa Suchak always thought menstruation was impure till she realised its scientific basis. She hopes to translate that thought into mixed-media art

setting that they are considered different." To label materials that are part of the natural world 'unconventional' or 'unsavoury' is subjective, feels this young artist. "All these materials are part of our lives, we can choose to acknowledge or ignore them, we can be attracted or repulsed by them — that depends on a person's own experience."

Abhay Maskara of Gallery Maskara in Mumbai says artists have been using unconventional material for the longest time. "Arte Povera and Fluxus were movements that encouraged and celebrated the use of such 'ordinary' material," he says. "What is important for me is not the material but how artists transform them." It is this process that is most fulfilling for the artist — to experience what they

want to convey personally before it becomes a part of the political realm. Pandey, for whom the process of collecting material for this project took as long as it takes for a baby to come out, explains, "Female foeticide is an act where you first attach and then you detach. As an artist, it's important for me to experience and feel that."

It is for similar reasons that Shilpa Suchak has been collecting her used tampons for the last three months. "I like to explore those aspects of human emotions and memories that people like to suppress, hide or throw away," says Suchak, who as a kid always thought menstruation was impure till she realised its scientific basis. She hopes to translate that thought into mixed-media art. Suchak, who has even showcased her deceased father and brother's letters in exhibitions in India and abroad, has often faced discouragement and confusion. "The problem is Indians not only think you are crazy but also go all out and say it," says Suchak, who has grown more private about her works now.

She has managed to keep the reason for her wax strips collection a secret. "I think hair on a woman's leg is beautiful. I feel judged by this new standard of beauty where someone at some point decided that women need to wax," says Suchak, who plans to play with the photocopies of these used wax strips. Suchak initially shocked the women in her beauty parlour by asking for the strips. Now, she simply says, "It's for a science project." And it works every time. ■

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### Suck Spit

2011/04/13 by admin



An unusual show of Art

Gallery Maskara has often displayed challenging art. Their latest show **Suck Spit** by **Shine Shivan** too, lunges against conventional art. The artist is known for his unusual perception of art, society and its sexual boundaries. His first exhibition *Sperm Weaver* was as analytical of the society and its norms as is his second exhibition, *Suck Spit*.

*Shivan* describes his work as, "a reflection of what I see in society especially as it relates to gender and sexuality. My experiences are informed to a large part by nature and it is that relationship between nature and culture that my works explore." Every art piece revolves around biological elements and questions the psychosomatic building of characterising contemporary gender issues. There is a

thin line between masculine and feminine traits. *Shivan* opposes the roles and perceptions attached to masculine power in our society.

As you enter the exhibition, you are caught off guard with *Cock Dump*; an organised arrangement of taxidermal cocks. These dead cocks are placed on a table covered with white blanket and tell of all the cocks that died in a battle for the female. Metals like steel and wire are also used. Due to the ignorant attitude towards taxidermy in Indian society, *Shivan* learned the taxidermal art through Youtube.

When asked about the reaction from society regarding issues like animal worshipping in India and his taxidermal act, the artist replied, "There is no correlation between animal worship and my approach to the work such as *Cock Dump*. These are contemporary art practices that go beyond such socio-cultural boundaries."

In *Sex Fumes*, deer faeces are extensively used to form a rectangular piece on a wall. It tempts the audience to have a closer look and contemplate its creation and its purpose. "Its sheer rawness asserts an inner quality more significant than anything that could be cast or moulded" writes **Sonia Nazareth** describing *Sex Fumes*.

In a work called *Nightfall*, chirchita seeds, dried branches and golden sand are used. These raw materials cover a wooden shelf that belonged to the artist's mother. The concept of preservation is quite obvious and materials points out a faint resistance to the ever increasing materialistic trend in society. It showcases *Shivan's* extraordinary imagination.

The Passage not only astonishes but also speaks of a very creative artistic language. *Nazareth* writes, "The structure is precariously positioned like a vertical gash slicing into the cavernous space of the gallery- evocative of the transient space between being, non-being and coming into being." A perpendicularly positioned boat with traces of animal bones articulate long lost adventures in an imagination.

*Shivan* has left the contemporary ways far behind. With two shows in his kitty, he is definitely a promising artist.

### Radhika Raje

#### About Suck Spit

Place: Gallery Maskara, Warehouse 6/7 3rd Pasta Lane, Colaba, Mumbai

Days: March 28-May 15, 2011

Timings: Daily 11am to 7pm (Mondays Closed)

#### Who is Sonia Nazareth?

Sonia Nazareth was a freelance writer for The Times of India, Outlook Traveller Guide Books, Hindustan Times, DNA Incredible India, Man's World, Mail Today, Femina, Marie Claire, the Taj and Oberoi hotel groups, Mumbai Mirror, various in-flight magazines and The National and Gulf News. She now travels around the world for various freelance assignments and lectures in English Literature and Anthropology at St.Xaviers College, Mumbai.

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# The Material Man

For his second solo, Shine Shivan uses taxidermy to explore themes related to sexuality

PRADIP DAS



Shivan with one of his creations

TAKING unconventional to a whole new level, Kerala-born artist Shine Shivan works with natural materials that people would otherwise shy away from. Taxidermal cocks arranged in a manner that suggest the scene of a fight; an imposing 'wall' made using deer faeces as the base material; a large structure somewhat resembling a beehive, constructed using *chirchita* (prickly chaffed flower) seeds; and a vertical, boat-like structure full of animal bones are some of the magnificent, but quirky, sculptures being showcased at the artist's second solo show, titled 'Suck Spit', on at Gallery Maskara till May 15.

The exhibition is by no means intended for the faint-hearted. For those who can stomach it, the show presents an unparalleled experience. "Shivan is an excellent artist and amongst the very few in India who work with articles such as these," says Abhay Maskara, Curatorial Director of Gallery Maskara. Shivan's interest in these unusual materials as artistic media began when he was a child. "I have been interested in skin preservation and treatment since I was a child, and seeing Egyptian mummies in a museum increased that interest," he says. A great deal of time and research goes into creating each sculpture, with the collection of articles for the cur-

rent exhibition having begun in the Aravalli Hills in Haryana close to a year and a half ago.

*Cock Dump* — a sculpture completed earlier this year — uses taxidermal cocks, steel, wire and a blanket to create a piece that, like many others by the artist, has sexual undertones, showing cocks that have fallen in a battle for the female. Because of the lack of knowledge regarding taxidermy in India, Shivan was forced to learn the entire process through *YouTube*.

Lending its name to the title of the exhibition is *Suck Spit* — a sculpture made of treated quail eggs and babul tree branches. An example of the homoerotic nature of a lot of his work, this particular one gets its name from one of the steps during the treatment of the eggs. "I literally had to suck and then spit out the content of the egg," says Shivan.

Constructed to resemble a wall, the massive *Sex Fumes* uses animal waste to broach the subject of seduction versus repulsion. While the shiny appearance of the sculpture is likely to attract the viewers at first, knowledge that the substance used is likely to repel then. Speaking of this, Maskara says, "Your response to the art changes when you find out the substance used is deer faeces." The substance itself is suggestive of territorial disputes between the males, and battles for the attention of the female.



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# Gland Opera

Shine Shivan uses deer feces, animal bones and quail eggs to ruminate on the stuff between your legs



Vishwas.Kulkarni  
@timesgroup.com

In his second solo in Mumbai, Faridabad-based artist Shine Shivan returns to the thorny subject of a peculiar sexuality — psychologically repressed and organically unleashed — using motifs that best suit the theme: nature. Stuffed roosters, preserved with a knack for taxidermy that would do Norman Bates proud, are unleashed in an imagined homosexual orgy, starring cocks; quail eggs and the gnarled branches of a babul tree become symbolic of testicles guarded by a viciously protective ecosystem; a vaginally-shaped boat is eviscerated of ox bones to represent a cycle of birth and death; and deer droppings glisten against a wall like malevolent black pebbles to elucidate the appeal and repulsion inherent in nature.

To start with, *Cock Dump* is literally cocks

on a table. These symbols of masculinity are splayed atop a dining table in "an orgiastic frenzy" as the introductory write-up puts it. To complement these roosters and their obvious phallic reference an installation titled *Suck Spit* ruminates on the inaccessibility of the scrotum — for some at least. Numerous quail eggs, whose ingredients have literally been sucked out, have been stuck together and perched between the branches of a babul tree. *Suck Spit* embodies, like much of the artist's work, the appeal and dangers of the reproductive machinery.

*The Passage* uses a boat to replicate the convex of the vagina; a rattle of bones cascades out of it, life and death embodied in a macabre still life. Much of Shivan's work could be too visceral for squeamish audiences. But there is dexterity with material that makes *Suck Spit* special, like an opera of carnal delirium, or perhaps even the flowering of a mofussil school of sexuality that should have a place in our discourse.



*Suck Spit* by Shine Shivan at Gallery Maskara, 6/7, 3rd Pasta Lane, Colaba Tel: 22023056

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## Giving You The Bird

By [Nayantara Kilachand](#) | March 29, 2011 | [Leave a Comment](#)



“Cock Dump”, 2010 by Shine Shivan.

For his debut at Gallery Maskara in 2009, Shine Shivan constructed a pair of 11 feet-high penises made from cow dung, grass and wood. He named the work “Psycho Phallus” and paired it with a couple of smaller sculptures made from human hair, feathers and dentures, and a video, called “Sperm Weaver”, of his naked self wrapped lightly in white tulle. Two years later, Shivan, a doe-eyed 28 year old from Faridabad, is back with more dung, stuffed cockerels, quail eggs and animal bones in a show called “Suck Spit”. There are just five works in the show, all with equally provocative titles (the other four are “Nightfall”, “Cock Dump”, “Sex Fumes” and the somewhat milder “The Passage”), not coincidentally evocative of certain male sexual acts.

The problem, of course, with using icky material to provoke a response is that it risks coming across as a gimmick. In other words, substitute penises for paint and voila, you have a show suddenly worth talking about. Gallery Maskara in particular [we've noted](#) has a history of showing artists unnaturally obsessed with using off colour material (Prashant Pandey, Tatheer Daryani, Peter Buggenhout) and macabre subject matter. So it's something to the credit of Shivan that despite the cheesy titles, he manages to escape the dreadful fate of appearing like a cliché. In large part, this is due to Shivan's process; he studied at the Delhi College of Art, but his skills at taxidermy and preservation are largely self-taught (through YouTube instructional videos of all things). Not that you'd be able to tell save for the mildly pungent smell, which we were told emanated from the pile of ox and buffalo bones.

Shivan spent much of his youth playing in the forests around Faridabad, and it's from here that he's collected much of the material you see on display: he took a year to amass the thousands of balls of deer droppings used to fashion the heavily varnished mural that is “Sex Fumes”; another few months and a lot of cut fingers to collect the prickly chirchita seeds in “Nightfall”; and some trial and error perfecting both the taxidermy of the 13 fighter cocks (he went through 25) in “Cock Dump”; and the embalming of the 2,000 quail eggs in “Suck Spit” (he went through 4,000 to 5,000). For the unfortunately named “Cock Dump”, Shivan spent hours scooping out the innards of each of the 25 cockerels (which he killed himself) before perfecting 13 to pose in this strange twisted formation. Cocks (the birds) have long been used as a substitute for the male appendage (both Ranbir Kaleka and T. Venkanna used them in shows last year), so if you're going to re-work this trope, then it had better be in a way less suggestive than the punning possibilities of the word alone. Luckily, the title “Cock Dump” is the only hackneyed thing about it.

Plump and wildly feathered, the birds are strewn across a blanketed table. Some with their necks bent at strange angles lie, almost at if at rest, next to each other. Others are feet up, their feathers extended as if in mid-flight, a hustle of movement and struggle for life, now frozen in a peculiar formation. Shivan has attached errant parts—a head, a couple of feet—to single bodies so they look almost cruelly malformed. It's a sick but strangely seductive mediation on beauty and deformity, on the vibrant and showy fluff of the feathers versus the detritus of a genetic experiment gone horribly wrong perhaps.

“Suck Spit”, a foilage of quail eggs and branches of the Babul tree, is also worth calling out. Villagers in North India have a tradition of hanging the clothes of dead people on the branches of the Babul tree, here used instead to hold together clusters of roughly 2,000 quail eggs. Shivan embalmed each egg himself, first sucking out the insides, and then spitting them out. It’s Shivan at his best: a tangled intersection of the beginning of life and it being cut abruptly short, an enshrinement of life before it’s even allowed to begin.

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## LISTING INFORMATION

### Location:

Gallery Maskara at Warehouse on Third Pasta  
6/7, Third Pasta Lane  
Colaba

Phone:  
2202 3056

Relevant Dates:  
Until Sunday, May 15

### Hours:

Tuesday to Sunday, 11am to 7pm. Monday closed.

### Official Website:

[www.gallerymaskara.com](http://www.gallerymaskara.com)

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## Second coming

Shine Shivan's second solo show promises to be as provocative as the first, says **Zeenat Nagree**.

Shine Shivan's art has a knack of shocking viewers. It often begins with the titles of his exhibitions: his 2009 debut solo show was called *Sperm Weaver* and his second solo exhibition, which goes on display at Gallery Maskara this fortnight, is titled *Suck Spit*. Then there are the unusual materials that Shivan uses to construct his artworks. In his last show, Shivan presented sculptures made from cow dung, human hair and taxidermied animals. This time, add animal bones and deer faeces to the list. Most provocative, perhaps, is Shivan's preoccupation with creating homoerotic artworks that challenge gender stereotypes and reclaim what he describes as a "masculine space in a post-feminised world".

*Suck Spit* will see Shivan return to the theme through a series of imposing site-specific sculptures. Among them is *Nightfall*, a hive-like work in which hundreds of seeds of the chirchita plant cover an almirah. Shivan's choice of material often reveals much about



AMIT CHAKRAVARTY

**Show and tell** In *Suck Spit*, Shine Shivan makes a clean breast of it

the works' theme: he used chirchita seeds not only because they resemble bees but also because they are used in herbal sexual enhancers. In a hive, male drones exist only to impregnate the queen bee and a solitary sexual experience, which Shivan describes as "purely masculine", is not available to them. So, Shivan empties the hive of its femininity to assert a masculine presence. Disturbingly, the almirah used in the sculpture was part of

Shivan's mother's trousseau. (Her hair was used in an installation in the last show. His parents might even turn into artworks themselves. "Over the last two years, I've taught myself taxidermy," Shivan said. "After preserving my first subject – my pet mouse – I began thinking about preserving my parents.")

Shivan says his art is semi-autobiographical. He explores his own gender conflicts by presenting phe-

nomena that he observes in nature, mainly in the outskirts of his hometown of Faridabad in Uttar Pradesh. In this show, he has created the eponymously titled *Suck Spit*, a cloud-like sculpture of quail eggs that rest on the thorny branches of the babool tree. The sculpture suggests a situation in which "sperms no longer perform the function of reproduction," Shivan said, adding, "People often wonder why I am still unmarried. I am questioning the role of a man in society."

In another sculpture, *Sex Fumes*, Shivan combines his interest in nature and sexuality. The 16-foot wall-like sculpture, made from 300 kilos of deer faeces that Shivan collected over the last year, explores the territorial instincts of human beings. The sculpture mimics dung heaps that Shivan noticed while following herds of deer around the outskirts of Faridabad. The piles, Shivan noticed, helped the alpha male of a deer herd mark its territory and declare its readiness to mate, just as walls allow men to demarcate their share of land and assert their masculinity. See *Gallery Maskara in Exhibitions*.

## Drama queen

Zuleikha Chaudhari makes a big noise with her new installation, reports **Zeenat Nagree**.

Expect a room full of bright tube-lights and garbled sounds sneaking out of suspended speakers in theatre director Zuleikha Chaudhari's new installation. Titled *On Text and Space II*, the project follows the 2010 installation *On Text and Space*, based on Henrik Ibsen's play *John Gabriel Borkman*. The new work interprets German playwright Roland Schimmelpfennig's *Before/Afterwards*, a play with 51 scenes that captures incidents from the lives of several people living in a hotel. The fragments bring into focus everyday characters and surreal moments – a 70-year-old woman evaluates her body in the mirror, a 30-year-old woman contemplates cheating on her husband and man walks across the ceiling of his hotel room.

The Delhi theatre director first ventured into an art gallery in 2008 with a project based on Haruki Murakami's *On Seeing the 100%*

*Perfect Girl One Beautiful April Morning*. The 2008 performance, as with the installations that have followed, draw from Chaudhari's background as a lighting designer. The artist majored in theatre directing and light design from Bennington College in Vermont in 1995. "My installations developed out of a desire to explore light as a way to articulate and define space sculpturally," she told *Time Out* in an email interview.

### How have you interpreted Schimmelpfennig's play?

I have previously created a performance based on another text [*Arabian Night*] by the same author. Schimmelpfennig's plays are very descriptive, almost like looking at photographs or paintings, which I find exciting. This text reflects people and their engagement with space. These spaces could be real, physical landscapes or they could be the private unconscious spaces of the imagination. The installation maps these spaces that are suspended between the real and the imagined.



**Light sensitive** On Text and Space

### How does your theatre mesh with installation art?

My work is essentially an investigation of the nature of performance. It explores how images are constructed and experienced: what is the relationship of the text and performer, what is the dynamic between the performer and space, how are narratives created and understood, and finally, what is the role of the spectator in the performative experience.

### What reaction do you hope to evoke from the viewers?

There are some questions I am interested in exploring through this project: what if there is no performer through which the text is mediated – if there is only text and space? How can the experience of space and the text create a performative narrative within an installation? In the absence of a performer, does the viewer become central to the experience so that the space becomes a performative site for the viewer and, in a sense, the viewer becomes a performer and a part of the installation?

The live three-dimensional body has a particular presence and engagement with space. What quality and manner of spatial interaction can be created with the presence of the body on video? The installation becomes a frame in which the viewer locates his body and experience. Meaning unfolds through the viewer's constantly changing physical experience of installation and the space that it occupies.

See *Project 88 in Exhibitions*.

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# art affairs

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THE WORKS OF SHINE SHIVAN, T. VENKANNA AND PRIYANKA Choudhary, lately showcased in solo shows at Gallery Maskara, Mumbai, had little in common in terms of what Meyer Schapiro calls 'object matter', but in essence, they all evoked and represented the corporeal.

Shine Shivan's show, *Sperm Weaver*, which ran from the 17<sup>th</sup> of December last year to the 29<sup>th</sup> of January this year, was all about subverting the normative socio-taxonomic standards of 'masculinity' and 'femininity'. Shivan is a celebrant at the High Mass of virility and male fecundity. For the work, titled, *Psycho Phallus* (it should have been phalluses), Shivan recreated a couple of large wattle-and-daub structures simulating the *bitora* used to store dung cakes in North India. By appropriating the role of women who traditionally create this structure, Shivan 'queered' his male identity and made a homo-social statement about the right men have to engage with the organ – other than their own, that is. Shivan's challenging of gender norms manifested itself in references to transvestism. Some of his photographic stills were redolent of *haute mode* images of diaphanous tulle dresses with fantastic trains, worn by female models. Shivan's works exuded an atavistic sexual energy, which was particularly detectable in the tribal-fetish-like installation *Rape of Ganymede*.

## The Phallus Fallacy

Reuben Varghese plays the voyeur at three shows at Gallery Maskara – all of which deal with some pleasures and pains.



Shine Shivan. *Sperm-Weaver*. Gallery View. 2009.



Shine Shivan. *Rape of Ganymede*. Installation view. 2009.



Shine Shivan. *Sperm-Weaver-I*. Digital C-print. 24" x 31.5". 2009.

In a similar vein, T. Venkanna's solo *Sacred and Profane*, which was on view from March the 15<sup>th</sup> to April the 15<sup>th</sup>, was also about sexual identity and fantasy. Venkanna has a penchant for quoting from art history thereby making him an example of Fredric Jameson's idea of the Post-modern artist. As Jameson said in his 1985 essay *Postmodernism and Consumer Society*, "In a world in which stylistic innovation is no longer possible, all that is left is to imitate dead styles, to speak through masks and with voices of styles in the imaginary museum." Venkanna's canvas *Too Hungry Lion* was a sort of deconstruction of Henri Rousseau's painting *The Hungry Lion Throws Itself on the Antelope*. Here, the lion subduing the antelope was a highly sexual image, with the lion and the antelope symbolizing male and female principles respectively. The large canvas was juxtaposed with a series of toy figurines, arranged next to it, depicting inter-generic love. These figurines from Venkanna's bestiary trespassed against the food chain and the 'normal' order of things making Venkanna a flower child, displaced in time. His oil and acrylic on canvas, *Untitled Beauty*, could well be understood as a kind of post-modern Vanitas.

In contrast, for her show *NUL to Now*, from the 2<sup>nd</sup> to the 23<sup>rd</sup> of August, Priyanka Choudhary worked in an abstract, minimalist mode. Utilizing plaster, red clay, muslin, thorns and twigs, her canvases exemplified a stark aesthetic – a starkness that was compounded by the industrial space of the gallery. Opposite the canvases and facing them, were textured logs reminiscent of the crossbeams of crucifixes. There was a latent violence in Choudhary's works thanks to all the nailing and slashing that went into their creation. Occupying pride of place was *Pubic*, a large installation of bamboo scaffolding that seemed frozen in time. Dynamic in potential, it was like a large angry crotch, with curare darts embedded in its hollow crevices. The work seemed to speak about the violence women and their bodies suffer in contemporary society.



**T. Venkanna.** *Too Hungry Lion* (Detail). Oil and acrylic on canvas and sculptural installation made with acrylic on wood, encased in individual acrylic boxes. 2009.



Installation view of **Priyanka Choudhary's** *NUL to Now*. 2010. ALL IMAGES COURTESY GALLERY MASKARA.

**Erratum:** The *Special Report* on three shows at Devi Art Foundation by Deeksha Nath in Issue 1, 2010, did not carry her final edits.

# Art in America

INTERNATIONAL REVIEW

## Shine Shivan

12/31/69

MASKARA

by susan haggood



MUMBAI “Sperm Weaver” was a promising first solo show for the 27-year-old Indian artist Shine Shivan. Five clusters of provocative works made in 2009, all of which toy with traditional notions of masculine identity, filled the cavernous warehouse space. Leaving the chaotic street outside, one found a cool, dark interior and a dream world of gender play, manifested in a diverse array of sculptures, photographs and video. Shivan explicitly appropriated a female role with his in situ construction of two 11-foot-tall dung towers (these traditional rural forms are customarily built in India only by women); he does the same in his fabrication techniques, which include crocheting, weaving and sewing, and in his nude performances for the camera, where he vamps with bolts of transparent white fabric and frolics suggestively in a pool of white foam. While the actions and processes may be feminine, the forms most often refer to male genitalia and male sexuality: feminizing the masculine, he also does the reverse.

Notwithstanding the strength of Shivan’s video and photographic work, the most innovative pieces on view were sculptures hanging on the walls. Just inside the entrance was *Empty Spaces between Desire and Fantasy*, an arrangement of lozenge-shaped forms handcrafted from dried thorns, gourds, pumpkins and cloth, and stitched together with thread. Bristling threateningly, these ingeniously crafted shapes invite close scrutiny. Even more labor intensive is *Used Dicks*; its dangling forms are made from real bird nests fastidiously covered with a woven layer of Shivan’s mother’s hair. Navigating between the two phallic towers of cow dung, one was confronted by the most potent work in the exhibition, installed high up on the wall. A winged penis assembled from eagle and crane feathers, braided and coiled woven rags, and a bejeweled erect black phallus made of cloth, this exuberant expression of male sexuality is homoeroticized by its title, *Rape of Ganymede*. (In Greek mythology, the boy Ganymede was the most attractive of all mortals. Taking the form of an eagle, Zeus swooped down and abducted him.)

Shivan casts a wide net of references: to mythology, to earthworks, to fellow Indian artists Tejal Shah and Sheela Gowda, certainly, and maybe to American artists Petah Coyne and Harmony Hammond as well. With his formal ingenuity and charged subject matter, Shivan will be a compelling artist to follow.

*Photo: Shine Shivan: Rape of Ganymede, 2009, taxidermy eagle and crane wings, semiprecious stones, fabric and thread, 18 by 40 by 12 inches; at Maskara.*

## Five (more) reasons to update your art

They're young, multi-platform and already on a commercial and critical success path. We navigated a crowd of emerging artists to pick the ones to watch out for.

**Shine Shivan, 27**

**Soul-searching gender issues**



In what was christened as one of the most striking debuts in the recent past, Faridabad-based artist Shine Shivan overwhelmed viewers with a sense of shock and wonderment at his solo show, Sperm Weaver, which ran through December and January in Mumbai's Gallery Maskara (the sculptures were priced between Rs1.75-6 lakh). There was, among other sculptural installations, the Rape of Ganymede (2009), made with taxidermied eagle and crane wings, semi-precious stones and fabric. The piece was a throwback to the Greek myth of Zeus abducting the beautiful shepherd boy Ganymede. It highlighted the complexities of the gay male identity. The eagle wings represented independence, pride, resilience and physical strength—all traditional attributes of masculinity. The crane wings signified the diffident, emasculated identity of the stereotypical gay male. Using wings as a representation, his installation depicted the dominant male triumphantly penetrating through his more effeminate partner. Evoking this theme was ambitious by all counts, considering the Rape of Ganymede has been covered by masters such as Michelangelo and Rembrandt.

Another installation, Used Dicks, was based on an exploration of the nest-weaving habits of the Baya Weaver bird. Although weaving is socially viewed as a feminine act, in the case of the Baya

Sexual subtext: Shivan's Rape of Ganymede is made with taxidermied eagle and crane wings. Photo: David De Souza

Weaver bird these roles are reversed. The male Baya Weaver weaves the “cockswing”-shaped nests that Shivan recreated. He used Baya Weaver nests, grass, coconut, cotton thread and human hair—his mother’s hair.

Like these works, all of Shivan’s creations are semi-autobiographical excavations of the nature of masculinity. He redefines psychological tropes attached to gender. His methodology is deeply personal—a fact that renders an authenticity to his works while



posing a threat at the same time. He employs a range of materials: animal bones, used fabric, seeds and leaves that he collects on random strolls. Those who have observed him at close quarters, such as Natasha Ginwala, who was a critic-in-residence with Shivan at Khoj in 2009, speak of how committed he is to these objects. “He will collect and preserve things

that fascinate him for years,” Ginwala says. Shivan explains how he only injects these objects into his art once they assume a special significance for him. “I don’t jump into things. I’d been seeing these Baya Weaver nests for 10 years before I decided to do something with them,” he says.

Shivan has a bachelor’s degree in fine arts from the Delhi College of Art and a 2008 master’s in visual arts from Dr BR Ambedkar University in Agra.

Shivan shifts between performance, new media, photography and sculpture, though presently he is most interested in exploring the performative aspect of his work and intends to weave in his training in Bharatanatyam to add to his performances. He is presently working on another solo for Gallery Maskara to be held later this year or in early 2011.

Shivan’s art suggests the instability of gender, implying that it can always be subverted by practices such as drag and cross-dressing. It is here that his interest in high fashion comes through. He admits to being highly influenced by designers such as Alexander McQueen and John Galliano.

Speaking with him, one would know instantly that he is a compulsive multitasker. Although he is almost childlike in narrating his ideas, his sculptures are extremely sound technically. Take Psycho Phallus for instance, an 11ft structure made from cow dung, grass and wood resembling the bitora (used for storing cow dung in north India).

One reason Sperm Weaver made waves is because Shivan is exceptionally young. It came about by happenstance. On a visit to Mumbai in early 2009, he had stopped by Gallery Maskara and left the curator Abhay Maskara a note along with a CD of his works. “Many young artists come by the studio but I was especially touched by that note,” recalls Maskara, who even went down to Faridabad to meet the artist.

What the curator values in Shivan’s art practice is his original visual language. “I work intuitively and I believe that art, no matter how complex it is, has to first grab me at a visual level,” Maskara says, explaining why he signed on Shivan. “Another thing I value is how connected the artist is to his work. Shivan’s art comes from his very core.”

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Shine Shivan: *Psycho Phallus*, 2009. 136 x 72 x 96 inches each. Cow dung, grass, wood.

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## Interview: Shine Shivan

The Indian art market is today the 4th most buoyant art market in the world. With a still stronger economy and the development of a dynamic gallery scene, the constantly rising interests in its artists and the unprecedented boom in private collecting have made the Indian market one of the most promising environments for contemporary art in recent times. This also means that the new generation of artists are facing new possibilities, and they have not only embraced the new media, but are equally addressing the complex issues characterising the globalised post modern society.

As an exponent of these tendencies, the young Indian artist, **Shine Shivan**, is a trader of identities and gender relations, expressing himself through various media such as photography, video, sculpture, installation, and performance. In a search of new forms of male identity as a reaction to a 'feminized' society, he plays out his sculptural and performative praxis in the slippage between stereotype and abnormality, drawing on both aggressive, effeminate, and homoerotic subtexts. At his recent solo show at Gallery Maskara in Mumbai, he presented a series of semi-autobiographical works, in which he investigated and excavated the psychological tropes, experiences, and roles, that is traditionally attached to masculinity. But equally he used gender bending and role playing as strategies to negotiate the fixed and often biological determined categories of the 'masculine' and 'feminine', as they appear in an Indian context. Mirroring the subtle content of the works he skillfully played on the different modes of representations, while his selection thought provoking materials - a mix of biological elements and cultural artefacts - further highlighted the debate about whether sex and gender is a matter of nature or social constructs.

Kopenhagen has asked the artist in what sense the Indian society has become 'feminized', how the audience received his controversial show, and not least to tell about his experiences and challenges as a young artist on his way up.

**Shine Shivan** (b. 1982) holds a Masters in Visual Arts from Dr. Bhim Rao Ambedkar University, Agra, India, and a Bachelor in Fine Arts from the College of Arts, Delhi. He has previously shown at Khoj studios, Delhi and was the recipient of a Lalit Kala Academy Scholarship in 2008.

Interview: **Anna Holm**Foto: **Gallery Maskara & Anna Holm****Shine Shivan (IN)***Sperm Weaver*

17. december - 23. januar 2010



**Shine Shivan:** *Sperm Weaver*, 2009. Single channel video, 2 min. 12 sec. (looped), ed. of 3.

**To set the scene, please make a brief introduction to your show and to its title *Sperm Weaver*?**

I explore the self through my works, looking at how masculinity is defined socially and psychologically. In my exploration I find myself continuously drawn to nature to find answers to questions related to gender and sexuality. The title in some sense is suggestive of the content and context that is created by the works presented. *Sperm Weaver* was the title of a series of works in the show and exemplified the thought process and ideology that run through each work. The title references two extremes of gender role-playing. The first word, 'sperm', is a typical male referential, and 'weaving' connotes a socialized feminine activity—I question both these extremes of gender stereotyping and everything in-between.

**In connection with the exhibition, you have stated that the male has become feminized in modern society, and that you have your own idea of masculinity in a 'post-feminist' world – could you elaborate this idea about a new masculine identity?**

For me it extends beyond the vague constructs of 'masculine' and 'feminine'. I like to discover, try on and further explore the in-between spaces between these two monolithic constructs of identity that socialized human beings subscribe to. There are so many nuances in how we think and behave 'male' or 'female'. That is what I mean when I say that the male has become feminized. The female has also taken on male qualities and behaviours. In *Second Hand Pepe*, for example, an assemblage of found and used elements, I speak directly to this blurring of the boundaries between the two. Through my work I am highlighting the instability of gender (which is different from our biological sex).



**Shine Shivan:** *Used Dicks*, 2010. 48 x 120 inches. Baya Weaver nests, human hair, coconut extracts, grass, cotton thread, natural gum.

**If I may be so frank – in what ways does it make sense to talk about a feminized masculinity in a country like India where male dominated religions as Islam and Hinduism still has a strong hold on gender relation?**

It is this very reason that makes my art relevant. Indian society is

largely patriarchal, especially in the rural areas. Further, homosexuality, transgender, cross-dressing - all of these notions which defy mainstream sexual norms continue to be widely decried. I feel that art builds awareness, and needs to question, confront, and brave general practice and opinion in order to begin to create that awareness.

**It seems to me that your use of both natural and cultural materials and object is not only related to a aesthetic purpose, but also mirrors the complex discussions about whether gender and sexuality are anchored in nature or if they are results of social, context related constructions. Is that a correct interpretation?**

Yes. I do find the materiality and textural nuances of natural materials very enjoyable to work with and also very suited to experimentation with form, function and context (which interests me). I feel that there are so many examples in nature which also raise as many questions as answers in terms of sexual roles. For example *Used Dicks* is based on an exploration of the nest-weaving habits of the Baya Weaver bird. Although weaving is socially viewed as a feminine act, in the case of the Baya Weaver bird, these roles are reversed. The male Baya Weaver weaves the "cockswing" shaped nest in order to lure the female in to mate and eventually nurture the resulting offspring. So this is an instance in nature which raises questions for me of whether the notion of fixed socio-sexual identity is desirable or even tenable.



**Shine Shivan:** *Rape of Ganymede*, 2009. 18 x 40 x 12 inches. Taxidermy eagle and crane wings, semi-precious stones, fabric, cotton thread.

**Your exhibition must have been quite controversial because of the very explicit references to sexuality and gender bending, how has the press and the audience reacted to your show?**

There have been strong reactions to the show. The point is that it seems to have shaken people's notions of gender in a more socio-political context and notions of materiality in the artistic context. The viewer don't necessarily have to agree with me, but if my work has made him/her think about and question the stereotype, then to me that is a success.

**Where do you seek and find your sources of inspiration – and how are they incorporated into your works?**

I look within myself and without to the natural world. The works are semi autobiographical in that I question set societal norms of sexuality and what it means to be an Indian male, as refracted through my individual set of experiences. At the same time, I look towards nature to find some of the answers and paradoxes that exist with regard to sexual roles.



**Shine Shivan:** *Empty Spaces Between Desire and Fantasy*, 2009. 84 x 76 inches. Palm thorns, dried bottle gourd, dried pumpkin, fabric, cotton thread, aluminum wire.

**Even though India is one of the oldest cultures in the world, you don't really have a long tradition when speaking of a modern 'language' of art, how has that influenced you as a young, upcoming artist?**

Each generation creates its own language, I feel. While it is nice to have history on your side, it does not necessarily impede creativity especially in this day and age when travel as well as the dissemination of and access to information has become so much easier. It is easy for one to feel a part of a shared history.

**Lastly, what are the greatest challenges facing you right now as an artist, and what are your wishes for the future of contemporary Indian art?**

As an artist I am focused on continuing the dialogue begun with these works and exploring new media, materials to express my ideas, thoughts and feelings with the world. I hope my work inspires a shift in thought processes of even a few individuals who come in contact with the work. I hope to inspire a new generation of young artists to speak their minds freely and innovate with form and material so as to take forward Indian art as we now know it.

**Thanks.**



**Shine Shivan:** *Second-hand Pepe*, 2009. 22 x 27 x 20 inches. Used dentures, human hair, bird feathers, glass lenses, used fabric, semi-precious stones, aluminum wire, jute, coconut thread.



**Shine Shivan:** *Sperm Weaver I-V*, 2009. 24 x 32 inches. Digital print on Hahnemuhle photo rag paper, ed. of 4.

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01.21.2010

Sperm Weaver at Gallery Maskara by Shine Sivan and Our Breath Concrete at Volte Gallery by Qusai Kathawala, by Deblina Chakrabarty

Categories: Contemporary Art and Exhibitions

## **Sperm Weaver at Gallery Maskara by Shine Sivan and Our Breath Concrete at Volte Gallery by Qusai Kathawala**

**By Deblina Chakrabarty**

Perhaps its coincidence that I should see Sperm Weaver and Our Breath Concrete one after the other on the same afternoon. Ostensibly they couldn't be more thematically apart. Sperm Weaver is bold and visceral, questioning and subverting larger questions of identity via sexuality. Our Breath Concrete is almost ethereal in theme and execution, drawing upon the human breath and its power to calibrate the universe once we find its rhythm.

Artist Shine Sivan in his first exhibition in Mumbai at Gallery Maskara, takes all held notions of sexuality and the blurring of the lines between maleness and femaleness by the horns. In the installation of dried up baaya (weaver bird) nests in Used Dicks he highlights the fact that in nature, sexual roles aren't written in stone – after all its the male baayas who weave a nest and entice the females to come and mate – so why should the bastions of role play be impenetrable in humans? Who decides what's male and what's female?

And who decrees that crossing over of functions denotes erosion of sexuality? The 'real boys don't play with dolls' belief is as facile as it is dangerous. Continuing to cock an ironic snook at prevalent sexual codes and symbols, Empty Spaces Between Desire and Fantasy takes elements from nature evoking sexual thoughts (like modern day sex toys) and then gives it a threatening edge as one comes near; the nestling furry look of the dried cones are thorns from up close while the dried mushrooms are bludgeons.

I personally loved the exhibit Ganymede, a throwback to the legend of Zeus where he fell in love with Ganymede picked the young shepherd boy and took him to Mount Olympus where he was cupbearer to the gods and Zeus's lover. While highlighting a story and a universe where homosexuality was neither an aberration nor a reflection on one's sexuality, he also focuses on the power play within same-sex relationships, denoted by the spread out eagle wings and the submissive crane wings and the eagle forcing its way over and above the

crane with its head resembling a turgid penis! This is as much a statement on the interrelationship power politics as it is the battle of personas within the same person while grappling with their homosexuality.

Hop across to Our Breath Concrete at Volte Gallery and artist Qusai Kathawala (quite literally the storyteller!) envelopes you in a world of dreamy silence. In the dimness you see the 3-D LED grid suspended like a blue starburst till you realise it's not there for static admiration only. Before you know it, a machine (much like a PSP console!) is strapped tight across your chest and you start walking towards the grid, breathing tentatively and see the grid mirror you with tentative blinks of its own. New-age healing has perhaps told us ad nauseam that the power of the human breath is immense and just harnessing the same can not only heighten our living but also take us to another dimension. Now we see that power in action. As I walk through the grid, first straight, then zigzag, breathing shallow, breathing hard I see the world of those tiny blue lights blink and dance in harmony with me. And technology meets age-old wisdom in one invisible yet unbroken chain. Then there is the coffee table, innocuous in itself with a backlit LED top framed in dark wood. I strap myself again, only this time with a partner. Because this baby doesn't work alone you see. And what would you know; start breathing and the colours below the surface swirl and mingle with each other, creating a kaleidoscope of sun hues that go from bright enough to hurt your eye to dark enough to suck you into nothingness. And then you realise that calibrating your own breath isn't enough sometimes. You need to fall in rhythm with your partner's, inhaling as they exhale and vice versa to create the prettiest palette of them all. Sometimes the power of two is indeed better than one!

How are these two chalk and cheese connected you'd ask. Well between the gut, blood, dung and sperm of Sivan's exhibition and the controlled breaths of Kathawala's there is the larger theme of recognising one's one self, identity and thereby power potential. Only when we can unlearn the role stereotypes fed to us by mass culture and harness the invisible power within all of us can we hope to reach out to a freer existence shaped by creation and not just consumption.

## Fertile Art?

by Avni Doshi

*Sperm Weaver*

Gallery Maskara

Warehouse on 3rd Pasta (b/w Dena Bank ATM and Sanghvi Exports) 6/7, 3rd Pasta Lane, Colaba, Mumbai, India

December 17, 2009 - January 23, 2010

After studying in Delhi and Agra and working at Khoj, Shine Shivan has his first solo show at Mumbai's Gallery Maskara. Provocatively entitled "Sperm Weaver," the show centers around Shivan's sexually charged sculptures, photographs and video work.

Considering questions about historical and societal controls on sexuality, the artist turns the lens away from modes of femininity towards the idea of the masculine. The exhibition as a whole makes clear that Shivan is trying to weave an alternative narrative for the postmodern masculine body. In the photograph "Sperm Weaver" (2009), Shivan seems to be balletically inseminating a barren wasteland, furtively moving while carrying a bundle of white tulle. "Second Hand Pepe" reveals the simultaneous fear and desire contained in multiplied opened mouths, while "The Rape of Genemede," an eagle-winged phallus that recounts the Greek allegory of sexual deviance, where the thunder-god Zeus ravishes a mortal man, playfully creates a mythological lineage for his own tale.



The most beguiling thing about Shivan's work is the way his choice of imagery and textures characterize masculine anxiety. However, these choices lack subtlety to say the least. In his video work, Shivan rolls back and forth in a pool of frothy liquid, at once in agony and ecstasy. Two mammoth cow dung structures stand in the middle of the gallery floor, while "Used Dicks," the abandoned nests of the male Baya weaverbirds, hang like desecrated and decaying wombs.

-- Avni Doshi

(Images, from top to bottom: Shine Shivan, *Sperm Weaver*; Shine Shivan, *Angel*. Images courtesy of Gallery Maskara and the artist.)

Variety

art

# THE EROS OF FARIDABAD

Shine Shivan's art is a riot of gender-benders that tweak our perceptions of masculinity and sexuality

VISHWAS KULKARNI

Sex and sexuality are natural, gender is created by society," says Shine Shivan from Faridabad, who has mounted a show that coruscates with astonishing originality and an incredible dexterity with the stuff between your legs. For instance, an artwork titled *Used Dicks* lines up many Baya Weavers' nests. The male-dominated insertive motif we associate with copulation is reversed here; it is the male who creates a soft, inviting cavity to attract the female. The female 'enters' the opening of the nest, and a union is thus forged, the evidence of which is manifest in the remainder of the nest, a dangling phallus of straw and hay. Instead, Shivan uses these elements along with human hair to demonstrate the role reversals at play in nature.

*Empty Spaces Between Desire and Fantasy* is a mini-museum of the perversions prevalent in (and inherent to) nature. With dried palm thorns, dried bottle gourd, dried pumpkin, fabric and cotton thread, Shivan illustrates with an encyclopedic obsession the very dilemma that sex (or even merely allure) can represent. One approaches an attractive array only

to find a vicious wickedness at the centre of it all: a *swadeshi* hybrid of S&M gleefully created by the Eros of Faridabad. And there are Hellenic flourishes at play as well in this internalized Khajuraho: *The Rape of Ganymede* is ingenious and hypnotic.

The legend goes that so besotted was Zeus by Ganymede's beauty that he transformed himself into an eagle and swooped over the young man all the way to Mount Olympus. What might have transpired there tickles Shivan no end. Thus a taxidermied eagle and crane wings, semi-precious stones, fabric and cotton thread all merge to create a hyper-erotized shrine revering an erect phallus and what could be interpreted as very angry, demanding and hairy legs. The work is mounted at a height so that we are forced to 'look up' to the violation as a divine act.

*Sperm Weaver* is a dazzling exercise in pushing the boundaries, with two gigantic installations and even a drag photo fantasy. Make it a point to visit the show. It's an exhibit that simultaneously elevates and shames our art world.

PIC: SACHIN HARALKAR



*Sperm Weaver* by Shine Shivan opens tomorrow at Gallery Maskara, 3rd Pasta Lane, Colaba. Until Jan 23. Call 22023056

# Time Out

## Mumbai

### Two in one

#### New Works, Warehouse at 3rd Pasta

Inspired by Carl Jung, the Vastushastra, John Galliano and Jesus Christ, Shine Shivan's show will begin with a performance that he promises will be dramatic. He will be wearing an elaborate dress

that is "designed to confuse" with its frills and layers of net that will "cover my nudity without hiding its beauty". Shivan's performance was inspired by the story of Christ's last supper. "I'm fascinated by the idea of transformation, blood becoming wine and flesh becoming bread," he said in a telephone interview from Faridabad, where he lives. "In the performance, I treat the dress as though it is my own skin, transforming that feminine form into my masculine content. In some sense, it becomes sacred even though it is only a dress being worn by a man."

Shivan's preoccupation is with the idea of masculinity in a "post-feminist" world. "You can say they are my personal experiences with feminism," said Shivan, who counts his mother as one of his major inspirations. "The male has become feminised in modern society. I don't think that's wrong but I have my own idea of masculinity." This "feminised" male is recalled in the aforementioned "Used Dicks",

an installation made of empty weaver-bird nests. The conflation of the feminine and the masculine in the nests is of interest to Shivan. The weaving, considered women's work, is done by the male weaver bird to attract a mate. The used nest to Shivan is "emptied of erotica" and, somewhat disturbingly, Shivan chooses to fill it with coconut extracts, sacred grass and Shivan's mother's hair. "I believe there are situations where a female wants to become a male," he said. "She prepares the masculine element using secular rituals." The coconut and sacred grass, both of which are staple requirements in most pujas, are the artist's nod to practices that have traditionally buttressed the position of the masculine.

Although Shivan was careful to stress that he personally believed in the importance of women in society, his art is focussed quite clearly on reclaiming an old-fashioned masculinity. "The feminine is required to make the masculine manifest," said Shivan.

"Feminine ideology may be behind something, like a structure as described in Vastushastra for example, but the structure itself is masculine." In the piece titled "Spermweaver", a man aggressively walks through a field that is "fertile for intercourse". He drags behind him a froth of white material, a sign that he is the spermweaver. The resemblance to a Christian bride dragging her bunched bridal gown is possibly unintentional.

Shivan is fully aware that his debut show might make some viewers uncomfortable. Having given his works titles like "Used Dicks", Shivan is well-prepared for raised eyebrows. In fact, when we spoke to him it seemed he was quite excited at the prospect but at the same time, Shivan is not looking to only shock people. "My works are provocative, I agree," he said. "But I've worked very hard to be original and they are all made with honesty. There's no deceit in my work and I believe people will appreciate that, even if they are shocked by what they see." DP



From "Spermweaver"