

Erotic but not provocative

By *editor*

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Born into a priest family in Gajwel, Medak district of Telengana, T. Venkanna had always loved drawing. And his headstrong passion for the fine arts took him to Hyderabad where he completed Bachelors in Fine Arts (B.F.A.) in painting from J.N.T.U and then went to Baroda to finish his Masters in Fine Arts (M.F.A.) in printmaking from the Faculty of Fine Arts, M.S. University of Baroda.

“I was never good in academics and had also failed in school,” says the artist. However, Venkanna excelled in what he always had a passion for. His work has travelled to many countries — some of his major shows have been in Yale University School of Art, CT, USA, then Between the Lines: Identity, Place, and Power; was at the National Gallery of Modern Art (NGMA), Mumbai; Pancha Mahabhuta (The Five Great Elements) at the Kochi-Muziris Biennale at Kochi.

In 2011, Venkanna presented a controversial solo performance at Art Stage Singapore and was part of New Trends from South India, at the Lalit Kala Academy, Chennai, to name a few.



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T. Venkanna’s works displayed at Gallery Maskara

Speaking about Venkanna’s works, anthropologist Sonia Nazareth says, “Constantly immediate and with raw openness, T. Venkanna creates new art for a new world. His storytelling takes various forms through constellations of images, collage, pastiche, the recourse to allegory, metaphor — all ways of thinking-in-pictures, from which understanding emerges without having to be expounded.”

Sonia further adds, “Although he uses both erotic and sexual imagery in his work, he is not deliberately trying to provoke the viewer. In fact, he transcends what might be perceived as profane reality, by using sexuality as a trope to examine his most pressing concerns. These include the alienation and commodity fetishism that characterise modern consumer society.”

The images examine contemporary challenges to social cohesion, inviting reflection on states of psychological isolation and emotional poverty.

An antidote to alienation and a prerequisite for the emergence of a truly human society, is the artist’s persistent hope for love. In Love Life I and II, same-sex couples celebrate their connection in a playful manifestation of non-reproductive sexuality.

January 16 onwards, 11 am-7 pm
Gallery Maskara, Colaba

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