

T. Venkanna

Born in 1980, T. Venkanna's powerful and virulent imagery, together with his prodigious output, has gained him the reputation of being his generation's most exciting, versatile, and unconventional artists. He holds a Masters in Fine Arts (M.F.A.) in Printmaking from the Faculty of Fine Arts, M.S. University of Baroda and Bachelors in Fine Arts (B.F.A.) in Painting from J.N.T.U, Hyderabad where he was awarded a Gold medal.

In 2025 Venkanna had his 16th solo show titled *Black Blue Yellow*, Gallery Maskara, Mumbai.

In 2024, Venkanna had his fifteenth solo show titled *Venkanna Drawings 2014-2024 : Part I*, Gallery Maskara, Mumbai, India. He participated in various group shows including *Politically Charged* at Aicon, New York, USA, *Inked Legacies Linked Geographies* at Srishti Art Gallery, Hyderabad, India, *Siren's Lullaby in a Forgotten Realm* at Gallery Dotwalk, Gurgaon, India, *Miracle of Absence* at Art Exposure, Kolkata, India and at *India Art Fair*, New Delhi, India. In 2023, Venkanna had three solo shows titled *Reworkings* at Gallery Maskara, Mumbai, India, *Looking for Peace*, that opened at Modesti Perdrille Gallery, Belgium and *LOVE ME AS I AM* curated by Abhay Maskara at Gallery Maskara in Mumbai, India. The year 2022 also marked 20-years of his printmaking practice and he had his eleventh solo show titled *AS I AM* at Gallery Maskara in Mumbai, India. During the same year, he also participated in various group shows including *Inside India*, Espace 251 Nord, Liege, Belgium curated by Laurent Jacob. *Radical Enchantments*, AICON Gallery, NY, curated by Jason Vartikar. *Inside India*, Modesti Perdrille Gallery, Belgium. In 2021 Venkanna was part of a group show titled *The Art of India*, Clarinda Carnegie Art Museum, Iowa, USA curated by Anne Pagel. In 2019 the artist had two solo shows titled *LOVE ME* and *Tradition/Transformation* - both shows at Gallery Maskara were curated by Abhay Maskara. In 2018 Venkanna was invited to participate in *Inde* at Manoir de Martigny, Switzerland. In 2017 his solo show *Looking for Peace* opened at Sakshi Gallery, Mumbai, India. In 2016 he was part of a group show *TIME* at Gallery Maskara, Mumbai, India. In 2015 his solo show *CELEBRATION* curated by Abhay Maskara opened at Gallery Maskara. In 2014 his shows include *Residual Remnants*, Site art space, Baroda, India; *Midnight's Grandchildren* curated by Girish Shahane, Kitab Mahal, Mumbai, India; *Trajectories: 19th-21st Century Printmaking from India and Pakistan* curated by Dr. Paula Sengupta and Camilla H. Chaudhary, Sharjah Art Museum, UAE. Major shows in 2012-13 include *Air Sri Lanka*, Galerie Krinzinger Projekte, Vienna, Austria, *Lunch with Olympia*, curated by Dr. Robert Storr, Yale University School of Art, CT, USA, *Between the Lines: Identity, Place, and Power*, National Gallery of Modern Art (NGMA), Mumbai, India, *Pancha Mahabhuta (The Five Great Elements)* at the Kochi-Muziris Biennale, Kochi, India, *Cynical Love: Life in the Everyday* curated by Gayatri Sinha at the Kiran Nadar Museum of Art, Noida, India, a solo presentation at Art Brussels 30th Contemporary Art Fair, *ProjectStage* at Art Stage Singapore, the India Art Fair, India, the VIP Art Fair, (online). 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, India. Other key projects during the year included; *CROSSROADS: India escalate* (India Pavilion) at the Prague Biennale 5, Czech Republic, a solo presentation at the Art Brussels 29th Contemporary Art Fair, Belgium, *Fabular Bodies*, curated by Gayatri Sinha for the Harmony Art Foundation, Prince of Wales Museum, Mumbai, India, *Printmaking: Open Studio*, at Gallery Maskara, Mumbai, India, *(M)other India* at Galerie du Jour – Agnès B, Paris, France and *Window in the Wall*, Pearl Lam Galleries, Shanghai, China. In 2010 his work was part of *Finding India: Art for the New Century*, Museum of Contemporary Art (MOCA) Taipei, Taiwan. His solo show, *NERO* opened at Gallery Luce in Torino, Italy and he simultaneously showed at Artissima 17 Torino, Italy. He was also the youngest artist featured in the Saatchi Gallery show *The Empire Strikes Back: Indian Art Today*, London, UK.

His works are in major collections in India, Japan, Russia, Netherlands, France, USA, UK, including the Burger Collection, Switzerland, the Swagemakers collection, Netherlands, the Karen and Robert Duncan Collection, USA, The Kiran Nadar Museum of Art, India, amongst several others.

Artist Statement

The predominant subject in T. Venkanna's works is sexual imagination which questions and confronts the stereotypical ways in which sexuality is understood and defined.

"The sexual behavior of human beings is habituated by societal norms and conditions. I believe it is due to this, that sexual fantasy gains importance in a human being's life and an individual achieves extreme pleasure out of this simple act of day-dreaming, wherein s/he escapes from the harsh realities of this world via an undisturbed and uninterrupted flight of imagination."

"In this endeavor of mine, I also have been (re)presenting certain imageries/motifs taken from artists of yester years [like Hockney, Rousseau, Mondrian, etc.] as well as from specific forms of traditional art. The political and social contexts underlying these works were quite different when they were made. I re-present these imageries according to my idea, in the process critically evaluating the norms and terms that exist within contemporary society."

His continuous persistence with this subject has stimulated his interest to explore image-making in all kinds of media, including drawing, painting, embroidery, sculpture, installation, and performance. Venkanna's most important linguistic device is the integration of the personal and the social using material as per the subject's requirement with complete freedom and ease.

T. Venkanna

Born 1980, Gajwel, India. Lives and works in Baroda, India

Education

2006 M.F.A. (Printmaking) Faculty of Fine Arts, M.S. University, Baroda, India

2004 B.F.A. (Painting) (Gold Medal) J.N.T.U, Hyderabad, India

Solo Exhibitions/Projects

2025

Black Blue Yellow, Gallery Maskara, Mumbai, India

2024

Venkanna Drawings 2014-2024: Part I, Gallery Maskara, Mumbai, India

Asia Now, Paris, France, Modesti Perdriolle Gallery, Brussels, Belgium

2023

Reworkings, Gallery Maskara, Mumbai, India

Looking for Peace, Modesti Perdriolle Gallery, Belgium

LOVE ME AS I AM, Gallery Maskara, Mumbai, India

2022

AS I AM, Gallery Maskara, Mumbai, India

2019

LOVE ME, Gallery Maskara, Mumbai, India

Tradition/Transformation, Gallery Maskara, Mumbai, India

2017

Looking for Peace, Sakshi Gallery, Mumbai, India

2015

CELEBRATION, Gallery Maskara, Mumbai, India

2013

Art Brussels 31, Contemporary Art Fair, Brussels, Belgium

Pancha Mahabhuta, Gallery Maskara, Mumbai

2012

Art Brussels 30th Contemporary Art Fair, Brussels, Belgium

Pancha Mahabhuta, Kochi-Muziris Biennale, Kochi, India

2011

Printmaking: Open Studio, Gallery Maskara, Mumbai, India

Art Brussels 29th Contemporary Art Fair, Brussels, Belgium

Here I am yours, I am yours, be mine, ArtStage Singapore, Singapore

2010

NERO, Gallery Luce, Turin, Italy

Sacred and Profane, Gallery Maskara, Mumbai, India

2009

For Identity, Gallery Maskara, Mumbai, India

Group Exhibitions

2024

Politically Charged, Aicon, New York, USA
Inked Legacies Linked Geographies, Srishti Art Gallery, Hyderabad, India
Siren's Lullaby in a Forgotten Realm, Gallery Dotwalk, Gurgaon, India
Miracle of Absence, Art Exposure, Kolkata, India
India Art Fair, New Delhi, India

2023

Vichitra Desh: Queer Nation, New Delhi
India Art Fair, New Delhi, India

2022

Inside India, Espace 251 Nord, Liege, Belgium
Radical Enchantments, Aicon Gallery, NY
Inside India, Modesti Perdriolle Gallery, Belgium

2021

The Art of India, Clarinda Carnegie Art Museum, Iowa, USA

2018

Inde, Manoir de Martigny, Switzerland

2016

TIME, Gallery Maskara, Mumbai, India

2014

Residual Remnants, Site art space, Baroda, India
Trajectories: 19th – 21st Century Printmaking from India and Pakistan, Sharjah Art Museum, UAE
Midnight's Grandchildren, Kitab Mahal, Mumbai
India Art Fair, New Delhi, India

2013

Air Sri Lanka, Galerie Krinzinger Projekte, Vienna, Austria
Lunch with Olympia, Yale University School of Art, New Haven, CT, USA
Between the Lines: Identity, Place, and Power, National Gallery of Modern Art (NGMA), Mumbai, India
Skoda Prize Show, National Gallery of Modern Art (NGMA), New Delhi, India
India Art Fair, New Delhi, India

2012

VIP Art Fair, Online
India Art Fair, New Delhi, India
Mumbai Gallery Weekend, Mumbai, India
Cynical Love: Life in the Everyday, Kiran Nadar Museum of Art, Noida, India
ProjectStage, Art Stage Singapore, Singapore

2011

(M)other India, Galerie du Jour – Agnès B., Paris, France
Window in the Wall, Pearl Lam Galleries, Shanghai, China
Fabular Bodies, Harmony Art Foundation, Prince of Wales Museum, Mumbai
CROSSROADS: India escalate (India Pavilion), Prague Biennale 5, Prague, Czech Republic
New Trends from South India, Lalit Kala Academy, Chennai, India
Group Show, India Art Summit, New Delhi, India

2010

Finding India: Art for the New Century, Museum of Contemporary Art Taipei, Taiwan

Artissima 17 International Fair of Contemporary Art in Torino, Torino, Italy

The Empire Strikes Back: Indian Art Today, Saatchi Gallery, London, UK

2005-2008

loosentiefirst, Gallery Maskara, Mumbai, India

789, Faculty of Fine Arts, Baroda, India

Chronicles of the Unspoken, Travancore Gallery, Delhi, India

Show-off, Kitab Mahal, Mumbai, India

Group Show, Jehangir Art Gallery, Mumbai, India

Student Show, Faculty of Fine Arts, Baroda, India

Residencies

2013

Krinzinger Projekte/One World Foundation, Colombo, Sri Lanka

Collections

Major collections in India, Japan, Russia, Netherlands, France, USA, UK, including the Burger Collection, Switzerland, the Swagemakers collection, Netherlands, the Karen and Duncan Collection, USA, Kiran Nadar Museum of Art, India amongst others.

Press Quotes

"In every good exhibition, if it's really good, there will be good paintings...And in Art Brussels, the one that really stole the show was from Indian artist T. Venkanna, represented by Maskara Gallery from Mumbai. There is a vibrant, life and death quality to all of Venkanna's work, though I personally most enjoyed this painting. Though it is dark and features the face of death, it rises also with such urgency that it seems to spring to life. The multi-layered compositions and deft use of colors further expand not only the painting's depth, but its reach. It's no longer European or Indian painting – it's pure, vibrant, source of life painting." - Hadelin Feront, May 1 2011, Pulp Gazette – Art Laboratory and Journal, Brussels, Belgium

"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, painting - all ways of thinking-in-pictures from which understanding emerges without having to be expounded." - Sonia Nazareth, Feb 15, 2011, Art & Deal, India

"Mumbai painters T. Venkanna and Atul Dodiya variously hijack twentieth-century westerners such as Henri Rousseau and Jasper Johns, in paintings that force Western primitivism and avant-gardism into historical dialogue with the mixed iconography of India's aesthetic traditions and its urban present" - JJ Charlesworth, Feb 4, 2010, Time Out London, UK

"T Venkanna's reworked versions of Douanier Rousseau are fun and sexy..." - Adrian Searle, Feb 2, 2010, The Guardian, UK

"As the gallery going crowd dubs him one of the more radical voices in today's Indian Contemporary art scene..." "T Venkanna, a bold and scathing Hyderabad artist explores a world of fantasy" - Georgina Maddox, Jan 12, 2009, The Indian Express, India

"A young artist pushes the limits of sexual imagination" - Vishwas Kulkarni, Jan 30, 2009, Mumbai Mirror, India



"The Baroda based artist, whose works focus on the sexual imagination, re-visits motifs and imageries from artists like Mondrian, Henri Rousseau, and other classical examples, but irreparably tweaks them with his patented perversity" - Vishwas Kulkarni, Sep 27, 2008, Mumbai Mirror, India

"Subversive, daring imagery inspired by the profane and the prohibited" - Georgina Maddox, Sep 24, 2008

Bibliography

Reviews

- Maddox, Georgina, *Vichitra Desh – Queer kinship in the capital*, The Hindu, Nov, 2023
- Shah Verma, Jasmine, *Between Death & Desire*, Art India Magazine, Q3 2023
- Singh, Pia, *T. Venkanna: Looking for Peace*, Brooklynrail.org, May 2023
- Iyengar, Radhika, *The Fearless Disruptor*, Vogue India, March-April, 2023
- Balaram, Rajashree, *Love Me As I AM*, Architectural Digest, January-February, 2023
- Shiware, Shweta, *String Instruments*, Sunday Mid-Day, February 20, 2020
- Shah Verma, Jasmine, *Three Robust Enquiries*, Art India Magazine, Q1 2022
- Pillai, Pooja, *The Final Bow*, The Indian Express, Mumbai, India, July 23, 2016
<http://indianexpress.com/article/lifestyle/art-and-culture/gallery-maskaras-last-show-featuring-six-artists-is-a-fitting-tribute-to-the-space-itself-as-well-as-the-art-displayed-within-its-walls-over-the-last-decade-2930714/>
- Lakhe, Amruta, *Sex and the Society*, The Indian Express, Mumbai, India, February 5, 2015
- Banerjee, Somudra, *Erotic but not provocative*, The Asian Age, Mumbai, India, January 19, 2015
- Editors, *T. Venkanna's Celebration opens at Gallery Maskara, Mumbai*, mattersofart.net, January 15, 2015
<http://www.mattersofart.net/newsdetail.aspx?mpgid=4&pgid=4&nid=235>
- Cembalest, Robin, *It's Manet Mania Weekend at Yale!*, Artnews.com, September 19, 2013
<http://www.artnews.com/2013/09/19/manet-mania-at-yale/>
- Arslan, Zaira, *Different Strokes*, Indian Express Mumbai Newslane, Mumbai, India, March 30, 2013
- Sorabjee, Deepika, *Natural Resources*, Mint Lounge, Mumbai, India, March 30, 2013
- Doshi, Riddhi, *Drawing on the elements*, Hindustan Times, Mumbai, India, March 30, 2013
- Uttam, Payal, *Gallery Maskara: What I'm Bringing*, Wall Street Journal wsj.com, Jan 13, 2012
<http://blogs.wsj.com/scene/2012/01/13/gallery-maskara-what-im-bringing/>
- Kalra, Vandana and Arslan, Zaira, *Art From Close Quarters*, Indian Express Mumbai Newslane, Mumbai, India, July 28, 2011
- Nagree, Zeenat, *Prints Charming*, Time Out Mumbai, Mumbai, India, July 22, 2011
- Mumbai Mirror Bureau, *Printmaking for you*, Mumbai Mirror, Mumbai, India, July 16, 2011
- Mehta, Shweta, *Artist Becomes Own Exhibit*, Hindustan Times HT Cafe, Mumbai, India, July 16, 2011
- Feront, Hadelin, *Art Brussels 2011: Reportage*, Pulp Gazette – Art Laboratory and Journal, Brussels, Belgium, May, 2011 <<http://pulpgazette.net/?p=456>>
- Nazareth, Sonia, *Nero*, Art Etc, New Delhi, Issue 34, Vol. 7 No. 4, February 15, 2011
- Maddox, Georgina, *Venus in Vadodara*, Eye, The Sunday Express Magazine, India, October 10-16, 2010
- Shukla, Subhalakshmi, *Sacred and Profane: T. Venkanna*, Art & Deal, New Delhi, Vol-7 No. 2 Issue No. 32
- Varghese, Reuben, *The Phallus Fallacy*, Art India, India, Vol XV, Issue II, Quarter II, 2010
- Pal, Deepanjana, *Two in Hand*, Time Out Mumbai, Mumbai, India, March 2010
- Searle, Adrian, *The Empire Strikes Back: Indian Art Today*, The Guardian -www.guardian.co.uk, London, UK, February, 2010
- Charlesworth, J.J., *The Empire Strikes Back: Indian Art Today*, Time Out London, London, UK, February 2010
- Kulkarni, Vishwas, *Derobing the Mind*, Mumbai Mirror, Mumbai, India, January 2009
- Pal, Deepanjana, *For Identity*, Time Out Mumbai, Mumbai, India, January 2009
- Maddox, Georgina, *Forbidden Fruit*, The Indian Express Mumbai Newslane, Mumbai, India, January 2009

Pal, Deepanjana, *Starting Up*, Time Out Mumbai, Mumbai, India, January 2009

Publications

Phyllida Jay, *Inspired by India*, Roli Books, 2022

Kalhath Institute & Gallery Maskara, *LOVE ME*, India 2020

Olesen, Mads, *INDE au Manoir de la Ville de Martigny*, Manor de Martigny, Switzerland, 2018

Lina Vincent Sunesh, *Between the Lines: Identity, Place and Power*, Serindia Publications, Chicago, 2012

Joshi, Avni, *The Skoda Prize Twenty 2010*, 70 EMG Arts Initiative, Mumbai, 2011

Taipei, 2010: *Finding India: Art for the New Century*, exh. cat., Taipei, Museum of Contemporary Art, Taipei, Taiwan: Taipei Culture Foundation, 2010

Maskara, Abhay, *Gallery Maskara, Volume II*, Gallery Maskara, Mumbai, India, 2010

Maskara, Abhay, *Gallery Maskara, Volume I*, Gallery Maskara, Mumbai, India, 2009

Jumabhoy, Zehra, et.al., *The Empire Strikes Back: Indian Art Today*, Saatchi Gallery, Random House, Jonathan Cape, London, UK, 2009