

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"