

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



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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*.