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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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