

# The Material Man

For his second solo, Shine Shivan uses taxidermy to explore themes related to sexuality

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Shivan with one of his creations

TAKING unconventional to a whole new level, Kerala-born artist Shine Shivan works with natural materials that people would otherwise shy away from. Taxidermal cocks arranged in a manner that suggest the scene of a fight; an imposing 'wall' made using deer faeces as the base material; a large structure somewhat resembling a beehive, constructed using *chirchita* (prickly chaffed flower) seeds; and a vertical, boat-like structure full of animal bones are some of the magnificent, but quirky, sculptures being showcased at the artist's second solo show, titled 'Suck Spit', on at Gallery Maskara till May 15.

The exhibition is by no means intended for the faint-hearted. For those who can stomach it, the show presents an unparalleled experience. "Shivan is an excellent artist and amongst the very few in India who work with articles such as these," says Abhay Maskara, Curatorial Director of Gallery Maskara. Shivan's interest in these unusual materials as artistic media began when he was a child. "I have been interested in skin preservation and treatment since I was a child, and seeing Egyptian mummies in a museum increased that interest," he says. A great deal of time and research goes into creating each sculpture, with the collection of articles for the cur-

rent exhibition having begun in the Aravalli Hills in Haryana close to a year and a half ago.

*Cock Dump* — a sculpture completed earlier this year — uses taxidermal cocks, steel, wire and a blanket to create a piece that, like many others by the artist, has sexual undertones, showing cocks that have fallen in a battle for the female. Because of the lack of knowledge regarding taxidermy in India, Shivan was forced to learn the entire process through *YouTube*.

Lending its name to the title of the exhibition is *Suck Spit* — a sculpture made of treated quail eggs and babul tree branches. An example of the homoerotic nature of a lot of his work, this particular one gets its name from one of the steps during the treatment of the eggs. "I literally had to suck and then spit out the content of the egg," says Shivan.

Constructed to resemble a wall, the massive *Sex Fumes* uses animal waste to broach the subject of seduction versus repulsion. While the shiny appearance of the sculpture is likely to attract the viewers at first, knowledge that the substance used is likely to repel then. Speaking of this, Maskara says, "Your response to the art changes when you find out the substance used is deer faeces." The substance itself is suggestive of territorial disputes between the males, and battles for the attention of the female.