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ART

Draw bridge

Shine Shivan, contemporary art's enfant terrible, revitalizes the medium of drawing in his new 'open studio' solo

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Shine Shivan opens up the ancient medium of drawing with sensual materiality in his new show, *Language Of Deceased | Open Studio*, at Mumbai's Gallery Maskara—a fitting response to what the early 19th century French painter Paul Delaroche proclaimed: If painting is dead, drawing is "deader". Through these works, made during a ferment that lasted around a month, Shivan is saying drawing is far from dead. He makes it playful and loose, without losing the referential depth that the larger themes of the exhibition—mortality, rebirth and after-death—demand.

Charcoal, and a rufescent material derived from natural colours that the artist calls "blood sanguine", create horror and comedy on rice paper. Some canvases are complete and hung on bamboo poles, some are rolled up, some dangle from a pole in rows, like saris displayed in a retail store. For the duration of the exhibition, Shivan will draw at the gallery; visitors can watch him at work and also participate or pose for the artist. While this show has little of the



sensationalist that Shivan can be, its structure and the invitation to engage with him are quintessentially him.

The show's opening on 14 November coincided with New Delhi-based Gallery Espace's commemorative group show of

drawings, covering seven decades of Indian drawing—two examples of a worldwide renewal of interest in painting and drawing. Many art curators and gallerists believe there is a return to the rigour and materiality of the classical canvas, after more than a

In line: (above) A series called *Divine Comedy*, on display at the show; and the artist with the works at Gallery Maskara, Mumbai.

decade of artists experimenting and pushing boundaries with the three-dimensional space.

Besides the obvious reference to the death of drawing, Shivan's paintings are about mortality, how we view the dead, and concepts of rebirth. Dismembered limbs, limbs decorated in blood, Plato and Carl Jung's new avatars ("Plato as Monkey", "Jung as Donkey"), vampiric eyes staring right at the viewer—the drawings have a surreal, graffiti-like quality.

And there aren't many penises. No taxidermic birds or provocative performance pieces. For his debut at the same gallery in 2009, Shivan constructed a pair of oversized penises made from cow dung, grass and wood, and named it *Psycho Phallus*. Smaller sculptures made from human hair, feathers and dentures, and a video called *Sperm Weaver*, in which he wrapped his naked self in white taffeta, were also part of the show. Sex, taxidermy, fashion excess, homo-eroticism—Shivan uses many tricks to provoke.

But gimmickry is only one part. This is meticulously crafted, cleverly presented art. He usually uses objects from rural and natural settings for his works—Shivan works out of his studio at Faridabad, near the Capital, and makes the neighbouring Aravalli forests his repository of material.

Part of the inspiration for this show came from his interactions with Warli artists at their villages on the Maharashtra-Gujarat border. Shivan wants to ensure long that Warli, and drawing, live on.

Language Of Deceased | Open Studio is on till 8 January, 11am-7pm (Sundays and Mondays closed), at Gallery Maskara, 3rd Pasta Lane, Colaba, Mumbai. The prices of works range from ₹1.5-9 lakh.