

2016 : the year of Indian artist Sudarshan Shetty

With three events this year, 2016 appears to be 'the year' of Sudarshan Shetty, one of India's most innovative conceptual artists. In January 2016, a personal exhibition of the artist 'Shoonya Ghar' (Empty Is This House) was organized at the National Gallery of Modern Art (NGMA) in New Delhi. In addition, Shetty is the first artist from India to join the Rolls-Royce Art Programme. The film and a scaled down model of the architectural elements of his show were exhibited at the 2016 Sydney biennale. They will be presented in Mumbai in November 2016. Shetty was also appointed curator and artistic director of the 2016 Kochi-Muziris Biennale which will open in December 2016, a consecration to the artist.

As a whole the past decade has been good for Shetty. He had many exhibitions in reputed places such as Frieze Art Fair's sculpture park in London, Solomon R Guggenheim Museum in New York, Ullens Center for Contemporary Art in Beijing and Astrup Fearnley Museet for Modern Kunst in Oslo. In 2010, the Mumbai museum, the Dr Bau Daji Lad Museum, chose Shetty for the first contemporary art exhibition organized by the museum, « This Too Shall Pass ». Also Shetty was commissioned by the real estate developer and art collector Manish Maker to create an amazing installation 'Flying Bus' at the Bandra Kurla Complex in Mumbai in 2012. An approximate range for the artist's sculptural installations is \$20,000-200,000 depending on size and medium.

At the JJ School of Art where Shetty studied, he learned about the modernists in the West. He said he was particularly influenced by the American 1960s artist Robert Rauschenberg. He also describes the famous artist Atul Dodiya who was Shetty's senior in the JJ School of art, as one of his early gurus. The latter introduced him to the Gujarati poetry. Initially, Shetty painted, but he was unhappy with it, so he turned to sculpture. "Shetty creates hybrid constructions that question the fusion of Indian and Western traditions and also the domestic concerns and the movement", Galerie Daniel Templon sums up. Interviewed by the Indian economic newspapers livemint.com in early 2016, Sunitha Kumar Emmart, the owner of GallerySKE, Bangalore, which represents Shetty in India, says that some of Shetty's later works are qualitatively different from those that brought him success earlier. She explains that in 2005 he collaborated with architects on a set of computer drawings on which he used watercolours and pencil. And referring to Shetty's last exhibition at the NGMA in early 2016, she adds: "Nothing is random. It's not like he just had an idea and went and batted it out. This NGMA show joins a lot of dots of his preoccupation over time,". "His interests, from music to cinema to performance, come together in this work". 'Shoonya Ghar' (Empty is this house), the title of Shetty exhibition at the NGMA, is drawn on a poetic work by 12th century AD poet Nirgun Gorakhnath which preached humanism and a love for God that soared above religious divide.