

# MokshaShots, anyone?

Jenny Bhatt introduces her pop art world of MokshaPets and Chocolate Flavoured Evils in an artistic cultural critique, says Nicole Dastur



Jenny Bhatt poses in front of her MokshaSura painting

Jenny Bhatt's ongoing show is a shot in the arm, or should we say, a MokshaShot in the soul. A continuation, at least in essence, of her last exhibition, this is MokshaShots — Episode 2 — 'Liberation through Consumption'. A MokshaShot, Jenny says, is a "taste of the Sublime" or a "glimpse of fulfilment". Confused? The artist explains, "The concept of MokshaShots was first introduced in my last exhibition in 2008. This series has resulted from a gradual transition from the abstract work I was doing earlier. I believe that since we probably won't get to full-fledged Moksha in this lifetime, we can at least get a glimpse of it. Each individual can make his or her own MokshaShot out of anything he or she finds fulfilling, be it art, a chocolate brownie, a film, a vacation or a tequila shot."

Episode 2 — 'Liberation through Consumption' is a cultural critique that focuses on the consumerist myth that fulfilment or Moksha can be attained through the purchase of a product or an experience promised by it. Through her satirical works, Jenny critiques not just the Indian consumer culture but also the psyche of urban India that is, according to her, a bundle of contradictions. "In the last five years, we have experienced rapid social, economic, political and cultural changes, but these are yet to



Jenny's EurekaSana canvas

Jenny's MokshaBum canvas

be completely assimilated. Urban India has bought into the glossy images, but beneath the surface, there is still discontent and a deeper search for substance," states Jenny, whose concerns as an artist emerged from the mindset of urban India to that of its spirit, well-being and ultimate quest for fulfilment.

"In a post capitalist world, urban

life is very complex, making people increasingly turn to spirituality to find meaning and to be able to cope. Ironically, this has made spirituality a consumable. Just as a brand makes a God out of a product, now even spirituality sells 'new-age' gurus and mantras and alternate healing techniques," continues Jenny.

But even while the core of her

works is spiritual (Jenny has studied colour *chakras* and astrology and has been a meditator for years), her style is more Andy Warhol Pop Art. Taking on the fact that Indians love to idolise — people, commodities and consumerism included — Jenny has created satirical deities called MokshaPets. So you see MokshaBuy, the Consumer Goddess, whose mantra is 'The Incredible Lightness of Buying' — her insatiable appetite for all things consumable is manifested in her multiple hands that hold weapons of mass consumption. Then there's MokshaBum, the Thinker and Armchair Philosopher who thinks but never acts; MokshaSura, the Necessary Evil (the Chocolate Flavoured Evil as Jenny calls it); Reverence, the politically correct one and Irreverence, the politically incorrect one!

Jenny's hard-hitting satire rings through all the works — in order to show the consumption and veneration of American culture in India and the exoticisation of Indian culture for export, she's painted on *khadi* to recall the ideology of Gandhi's Swadeshi movement. Works including 'Who am I?', 'Self Help Industry' and 'Desire and the

(The show is on at Gallery Art & Soul till January 14, 2010)