



# SHOTS AT SALVATION

**F**ree shots – that’s what artist Jenny Bhatt’s tongue-in-cheek comments on the art community in general and contemporary Indian artists in particular were, when she dabbled in stand-up comedy for a while a few years ago. Some struck where it hurt, others just drew laughter. Humour is an essential ingredient in her recipe for art, and her vivacious works inevitably bring a smile to the face of the viewer – as you will see in *MokshaShots: Swimming in the Subconscious*, her most recent solo project...episode 18 of her ongoing series.

Bhatt works within a concept called MokshaShots, that she created. The reference comes from Eastern philosophy, as ‘moksha’ literally means salvation. Taking the unconventional route of making pop surreal art in India, Bhatt’s influences include pop art, pop culture, Eastern philosophy and spirituality, alternative healing practices, quantum physics and psychedelia.

The current MokshaShots series is about the state of the urban mind. Laced with humour, these ‘shots’ are pop surreal abstractions that explore subconscious states. It’s as if the mind is in conversation with itself. Diving into deep recesses, the intuitive, playful mind grapples with everything from meditative states, memory and nostalgia to the influence of pop culture and media. The works often reference digital imagery that is easily recognisable for its everyday use.

Since the mid-90s, Bhatt has had more than 15 solo and numerous group exhibitions to her credit, both in India and internationally. Her work has been auctioned by Christie’s, besides other auction houses. She has also participated in prestigious artist residencies in New York and Berlin and exhibited her work at the Santorini Biennale (Greece) in 2016.

1. Artist Jenny Bhatt.

2-9. Laced with humour, the new series is a collection of pop surreal abstractions that explore subconscious states of the human mind.

## CONVERSATION WITH THE ARTIST

### What triggered off the idea of this new collection?

I was looking to free my visual language, make it more intuitive and spontaneous, so I looked back into the abstract work I had been doing about a decade ago. Using that as a springboard, I then integrated my more recent pop imagery into it.

### Where do you draw your inspiration from?

I draw my inspiration from varied sources like pop and surreal art, comics, digital graphics and humorous literature. On my last trip to Berlin, I discovered the works of AR Penck and was completely blown away by his spontaneous and uninhibited style of painting.

### How important is humour to your expression?

Humour is not only an integral part of my artistic voice, but also my world view. I like to think of it as my life jacket!

The artist is now expanding her work into design, comedic performance and comic narratives. In July 2016, she started the MokshaShots Webcomic, featuring deity characters called MokshaPets. These characters were created as part of the first MokshaShots series in 2009. The first MokshaShots Comic Book, released at the exhibition preview, will be available on Amazon and Flipkart. **BY**  
*By Maria Louis*

*Note: ‘MokshaShots: Swimming in the Subconscious’ is on display at the Jehangir Art Gallery, Mumbai, till December 11.*